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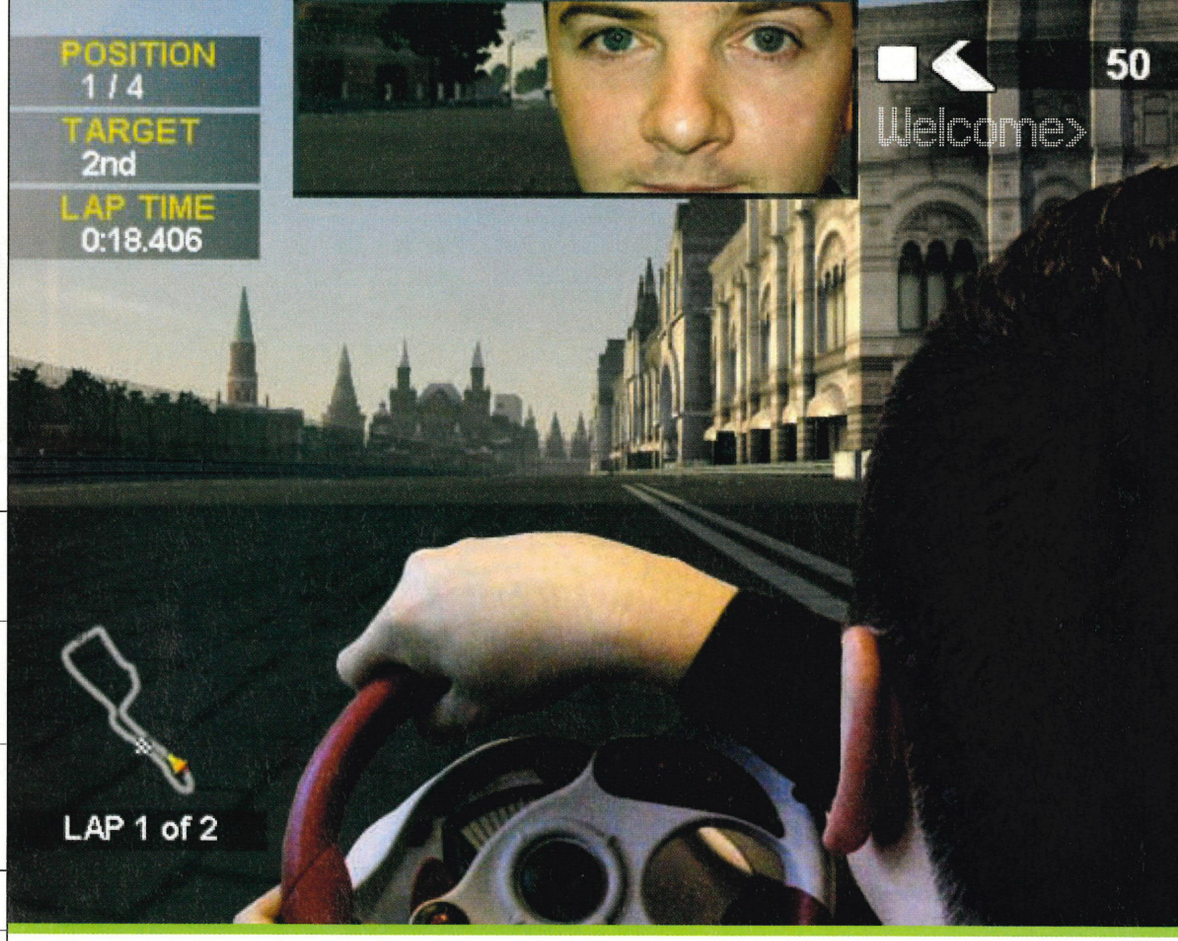

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»***OFFICIAL Xbox Magazine*** **is written by a group of experienced gamers who've spent their lives playing games. We believe that games are the most exciting form of entertainment there is. This magazine will reflect that at all times.**

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Hubs!

WE CAN SAY with pride that the Xbox has raced ahead and completed its first circuit of the console track now, heralded this month by our reviews of storming sequels to some of the biggest Xbox launch titles, headed up by the magnificent, Xbox-exclusive *Project Gotham Racing 2*.

The original *Project Gotham Racing* helped to launch the Xbox, filling that essential grid-slot in the driving genre. The Xbox Live-enabled *Project Gotham 2* laps its classic predecessor with stylish ease, becoming beyond any doubt the finest racing game across any platform. You can tell your mates to leave *Turismo* to their *Grans* and join a *Club* that stays open beyond *Midnight*. Doubters need only be given a thrilling test-drive of the playable *PGR2* trial version on this month's packed disc and shown the exclusive review on page 056.

Again we've got a disc heaving with eight playable Xbox games and *PGR2* is followed closely by trial versions of *Metal Arms: Glitch in the System, SSX 3, Midtown Madness 3, Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure, Magic: The Gathering - Battlegrounds, ESPN NHL Hockey* and *Kao the Kangaroo 2*. Quite a mix!

We've been making some extreme press trips this month to bring you the earliest news of the latest Xbox happenings. When I say we, I really mean that while Gavin experienced a sizeable earthquake at the Tokyo Game Show (see The Big Story, *Red Ninja, StarCraft: Ghost* and *Phantom Dust* in this issue), Ben spent the night in a State Penitentiary in West Virginia and freelancers braved Bratislava, I sat safe in the office and ate my way through a large giftbox of fine pungent cheeses that arrived mysteriously on my desk.

Despite my fromage-fest, it turned out that the dreamy reviews section for this month wasn't just a fondue-fuelled fantasy and in fact we've squeezed so many top titles into this issue that we had to expand the magazine before it burst its bindings. Elite awards have kissed more pages than a bridesmaid at a wedding reception, proving that it's not just quantity but absolute quality that the Xbox autumn and Christmas line-up signals.

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3, Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon, Grabbed by the Ghoulies, XIII, Crimson Skies, Top Spin, Amped 2 and *Metal Arms* are just a few of the outstanding games reviewed. A surprise arrival was review code for *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King*, its release date changing to 14 November - a whole month before the film. Find out if this Ring will rule them all on page 062. Now, where's that box of spare thumbs? The team need a refit.

See you next month,

STEVE BROWN
EDITOR, *OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE*

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RACE DRIVER 2
TOCA sequel on page 010

STARCRAFT: GHOST
New shots on page 046

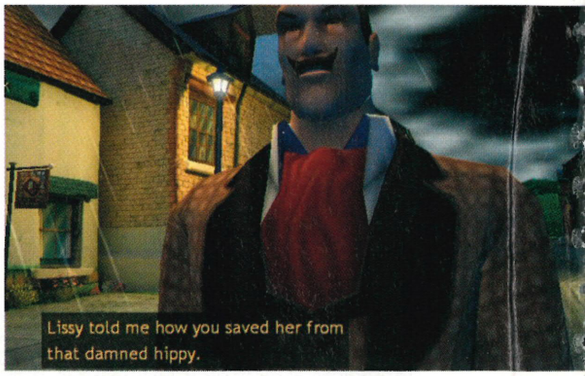
PROJECT GOTHAM 2
Lead review on page 056

LORD OF THE RINGS
Huge review on page 062

STARCRAFT: GHOST

They say that no one likes a sneak, but we love this stealthy *Splinter Cell* beater. Exclusive shots and info from the Tokyo Game Show!

046



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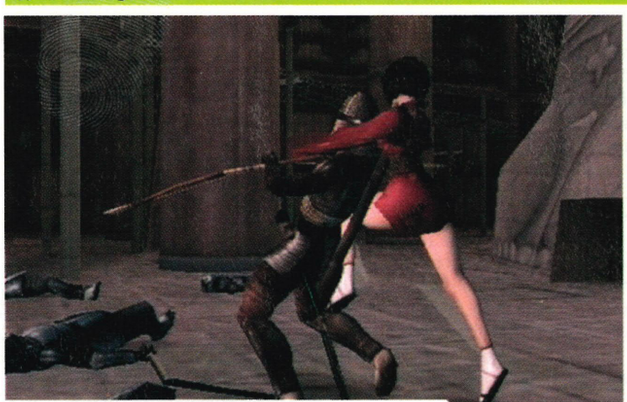
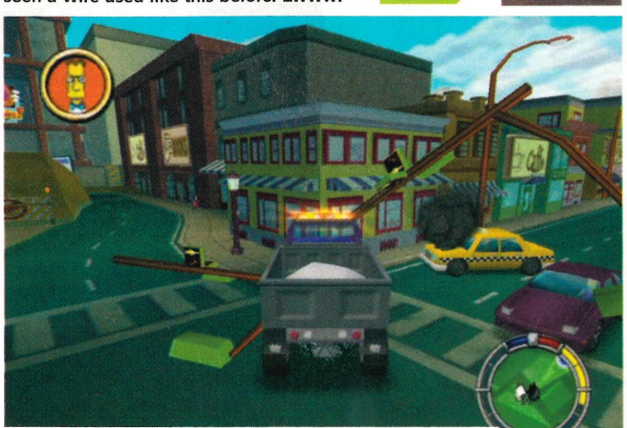


RED NINJA: END OF HONOR

You've heard of wire-fu, but you've never seen a wire used like this before. Ewww!

008



THE SIMPSONS: HIT & ROBBERY

GTA3 meets Springfield's finest. It's all good!

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PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

Read the exclusive review and then try the amazing trial version on this month's playable disc. Racing has been redefined.

056

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

Is this going to be the team shooter of the year? Find out in our exclusive review. Go! Go! Go!

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TLOTR: RETURN OF THE KING

Old Hobbits die hard they say, but what happens when you put that to the test?

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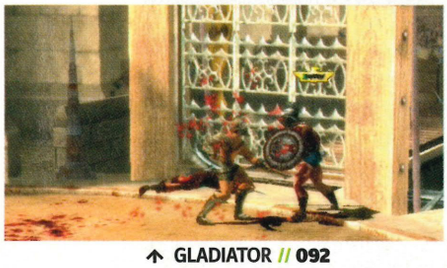
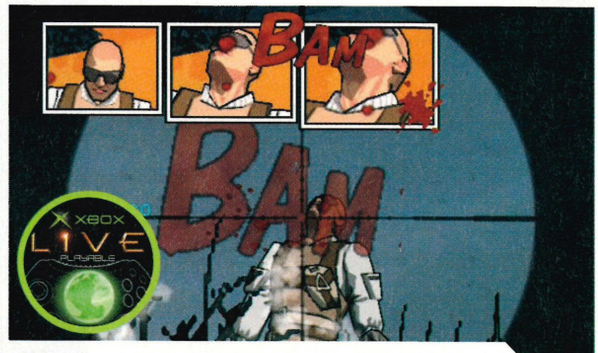


↑ GLADIATOR // 092

METAL ARMS

Get down to the nuts and bolts in this *Halo*-style game of robot wars.

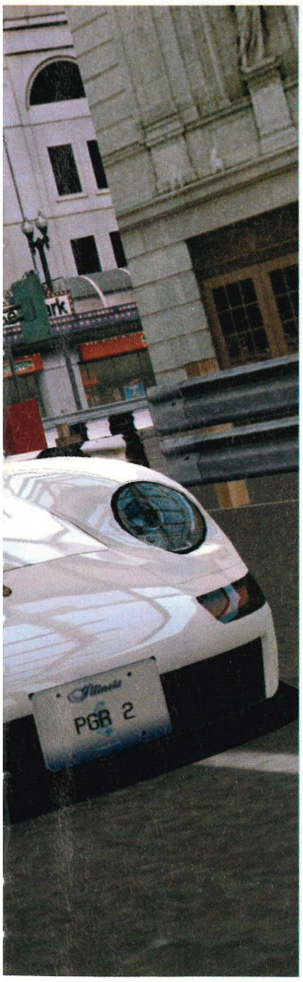
090



XIII

Innovative, stylish, great multiplayer, Xbox Live support and an intriguing plot. Sounds okay then!

094



TOP SPIN

Gavin thought it was impossible to get tennis elbow from a gamepad until this beauty came a-courting. Could this be the best tennis game ever made?

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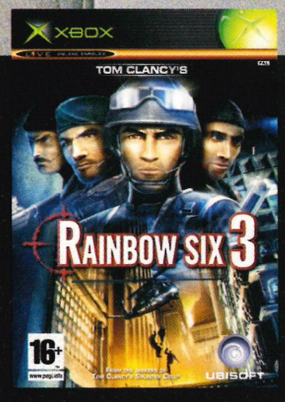
CARELESS TALK COSTS LIVES

"No shooter comes close to what Rainbow Six 3 is doing"

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

Take control of RAINBOW SIX an elite 4 man anti-terrorist squad. Use revolutionary voice command technology to lead your team mates. Be careful what you say, they might not forgive and forget. GET THE TEAM SPIRIT. www.rainbowsix3.com



Tom Clancy's RAINBOW SIX® 3

XBOX LIVE

XBOX

UBISOFT

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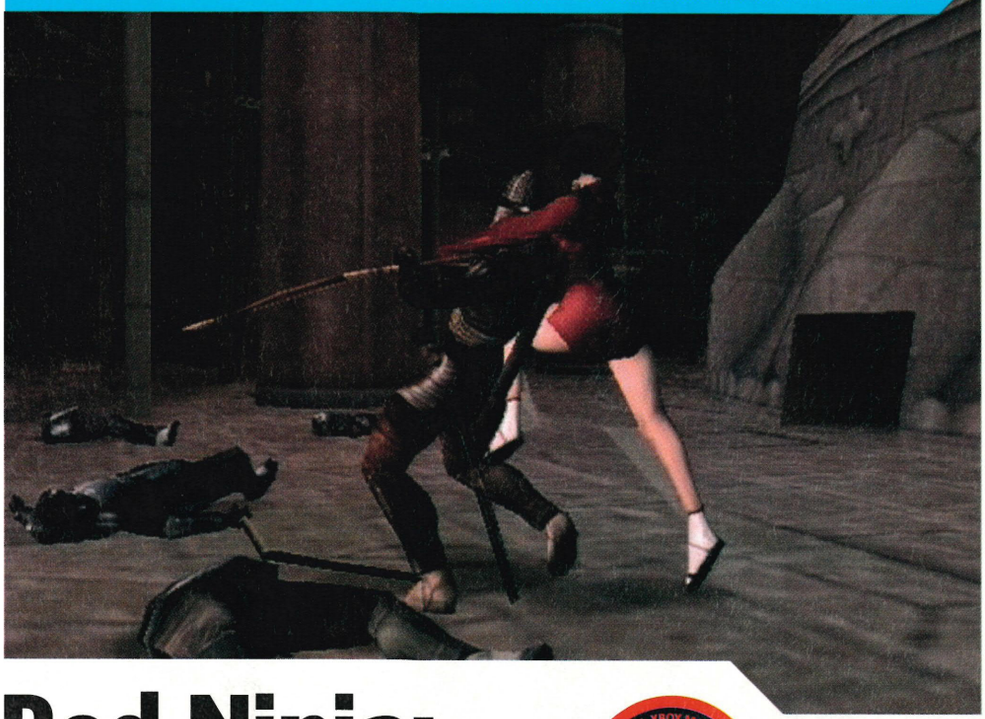
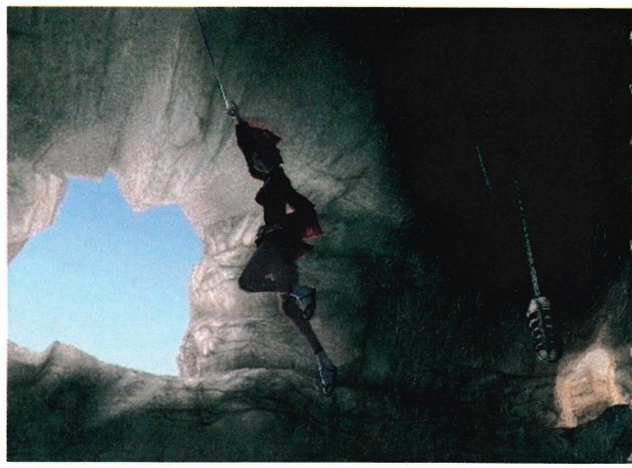
FIRSTLOOK

World exclusive looks at the very newest Xbox games in development

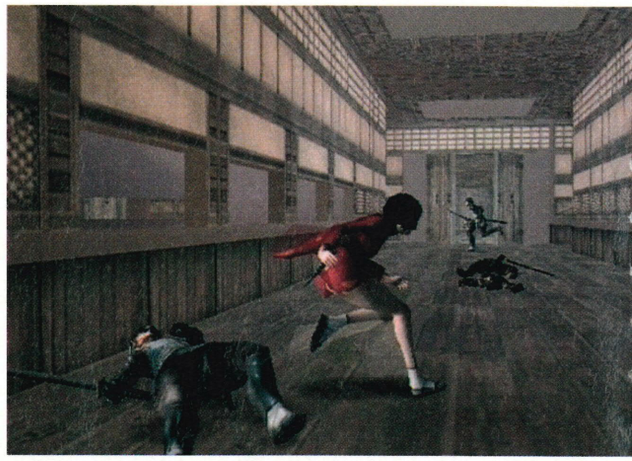
RED NINJA: END OF HONOR // This brutal title give a whole new meaning to 'close to the wire' 008

RACE DRIVER 2 // Codies' *TOCA* sequel speeds into view, with stunning graphics and full Xbox Live play 010





↑ Use your steel wire for swinging as well as slicing.



↑ Kurenai moves fast but keeps low to avoid enemies.

Red Ninja: End of Honor

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE EXCLUSIVE SCREENSHOTS

Samurai action penned by Japanese movie director

WORDS: **GAVIN OGDEN**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **TANJI**

PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI**

RELEASE DATE: **NOV 2004**

PLAYERS: **1**

RED NINJA was shrouded in secrecy for ages until it was finally unveiled at the Tokyo Game Show in late September, and *Official Xbox Magazine* was the only UK magazine on hand to see the world's first demo of the game in action.

Set in Japan in the 1500s, you play a sweet young girl by the name of Kurenai whose world is shattered when she and her father are attacked by the shady Black Lizard Clan. Dad doesn't survive and Kurenai is left hanging out to die with a wire wrapped tightly around her neck. In a stunt good enough to open ITV's *Great Escapes* show, Kurenai somehow lives through it and she's understandably a bit pissed off. God help the Black Lizard Clan when she gets her hands on them...

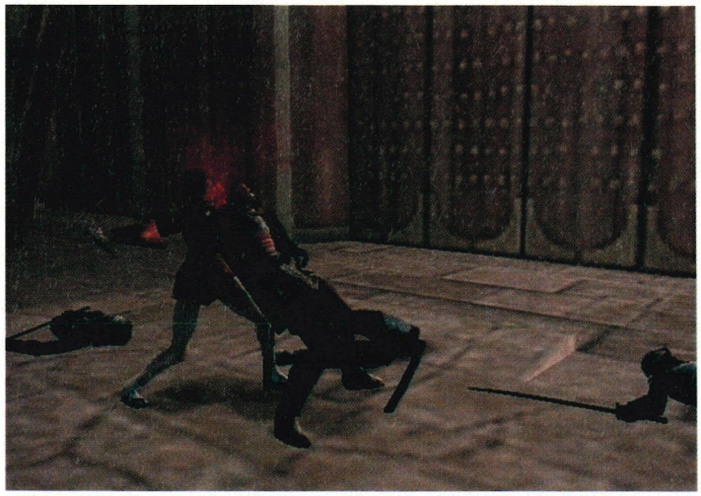
Producer Sean Krankel walked us through a very early version that showcased what he believes is the key feature of the adventure fighting game - a deadly wire weapon that can slice and dice the opposition into bloody pieces. Obviously this is the same piece of wire that was used to kill Kurenai's father, so you can guess that things are going to get very messy indeed as the bad guys get their comeuppance.

This noose becomes the main weapon in the game and it has a variety of different uses. Of course, the main use is to violently kill anyone that comes into contact with it, but there are several ways of dismembering the enemy. It's possible to target specific body parts and cause havoc by knocking opponents off their feet, slicing them clean in half and hanging them till their heads explode. Not for the faint-hearted.

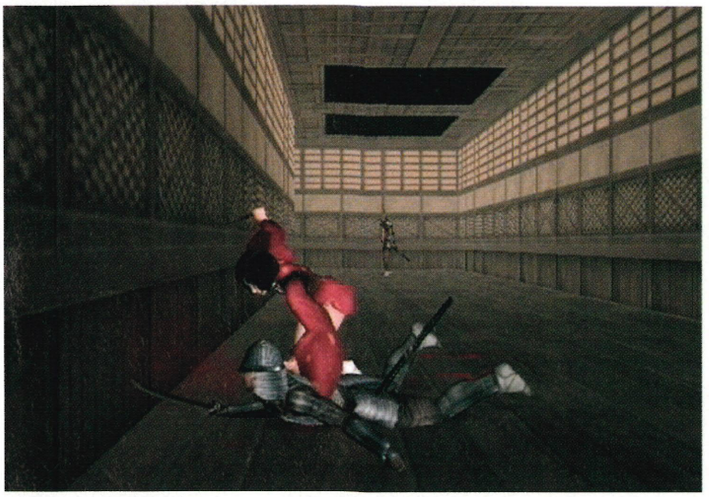
In keeping with the theme of extremely painful finishing moves, Kurenai has the ability to dislocate her own limbs in order to escape any tricky situations she finds herself in. Exactly how she does this has yet to be revealed, but we've been promised we won't be disappointed.

As with any female assassin who's hot, a wink of the eye rather than a finger in the eye is all men need to be distracted. We're a weak bunch at times... Kurenai takes advantage of this and is able to use her womanly charms to get guards into situations they shouldn't be in. What you do with them then is entirely up to you. Our first impressions of the game are that it's going to be interesting. The amount of options the wire weapon can be used for are mind-blowing - quite literally! More soon.

↑ Your wire can be used to dish out some serious neck-breaking pain.



↑ Every finishing move is accompanied by a bucketload of bright red blood. Nice.

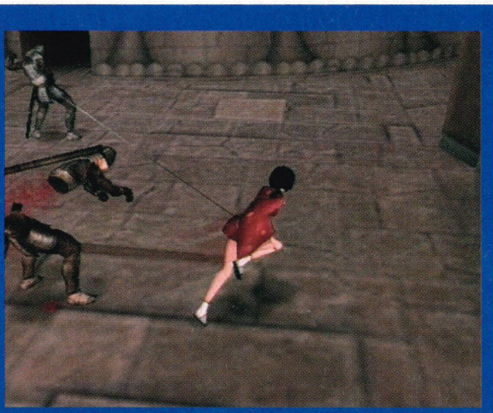


↑ Use the wire to get enemies on the floor and then give them a good pounding.

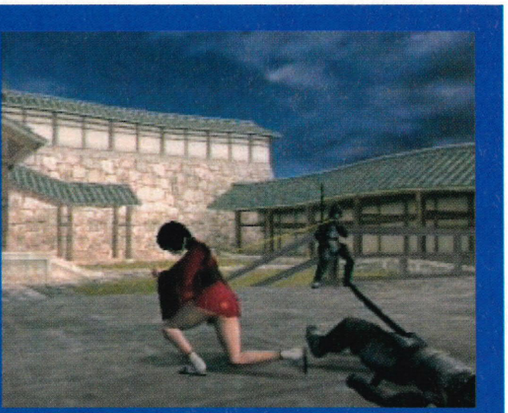
↑ Stealth will be needed to sneak past guards at certain points.

HEADS WILL ROLL

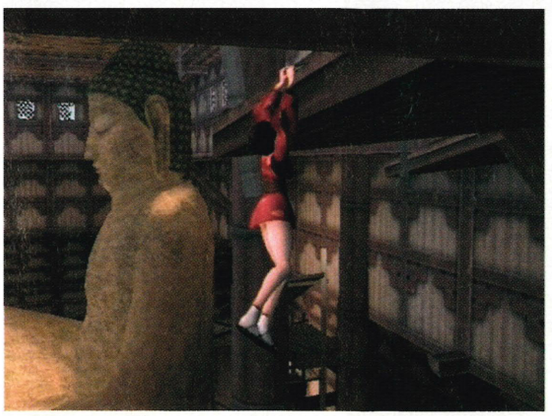
AS YOU CAN see from these shots, flying body parts is a common sight. Using the steel wire, you can hack multiple enemies into bits with a quick press of a button. By locking on to the head and firing the wire, you can drag opponents to their death or wrap it tightly around their heads until they explode. If other foes come into contact with the wire, they'll meet a grizzly end indeed. Once you have them on a leash, you can jump over posts and pull the wire hard to hang them. What goes around comes around and revenge is sweet.



↑ Multiple foes can be killed in the same quick move.



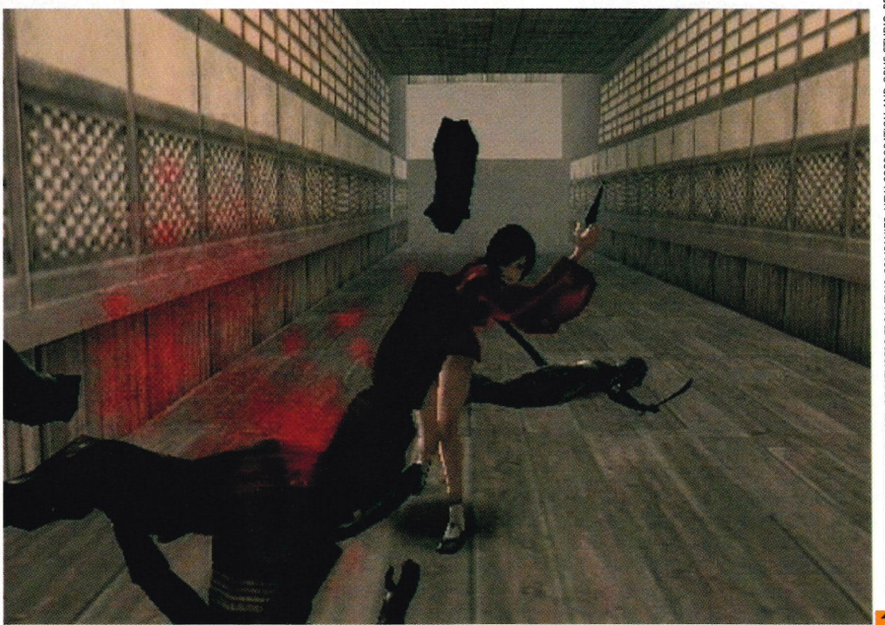
↑ It's like fishing, only with humans instead of fish.



↑ Traverse buildings with a little help from your wire friend.

"It's possible to knock opponents off their feet, slice them clean in half and hang them till their heads explode. Not for the faint-hearted"

↑ Kurenai quickly gets a taste for revenge after her dad's death.



↑ The ultimate finishing move of justice. We can't think of a game that beats this for bloodletting.

CO-OPERATION: TRANJI IS COMPRISED OF MEMBERS FROM TWO COMPANIES, NEW CORPORATION AND OPUS STUDIO. RED NINJA IS THE TEAM'S FIRST GAME AS TRANJI.

XBOX LIVE PLAYABLE

PLAYED

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE EXCLUSIVE SCREENSHOTS

Race Driver 2:
The Ultimate Racing Simulator

TOCA sequel is a real circuit breaker

WORDS: STEVE BROWN

GAME INFORMATION
DEVELOPER: **CODEMASTERS**
PUBLISHER: **CODEMASTERS**
RELEASE DATE: **SPRING 2004**
PLAYERS: **1-2 SPLIT-SCREEN, 1-12 ON XBOX LIVE**

THE EXCELLENT *TOCA* series has never been afraid to reinvent itself. The introduction of a strong and involving storyline to a racing simulator made the last outing, *TOCA Race Driver* (Issue 15, 8.5), not a mutant but a significant evolutionary jump for racing games. Confirming theories on successful genes, the story element carries forwards strongly in this *TOCA* descendant, although the new trait that *Race Driver 2* exhibits so powerfully is absolutely astounding diversity. We enjoyed a few exclusive laps of the only playable level so far constructed with the producers from Codemasters.

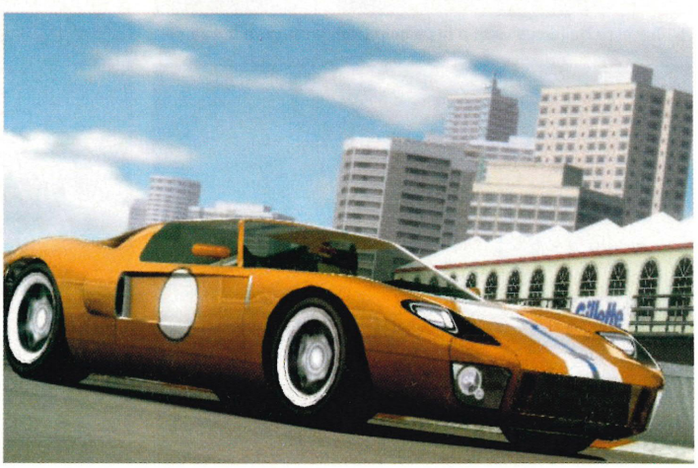
The first thing that dings your bumper is the massive graphical leap that *Race Driver 2* has made, even over the shiny bodywork of *TOCA*. A new rendering engine shows just what the Xbox is capable of, with amazing lighting and textures given even greater vibrancy and realism by true motion blur and depth of field and iris effects, which make the game world far closer to our human experience of the real thing. The deeper plot may fool your heart into being there on the track, but these new features trick your eyes and brain too.

The next surprise that bounds out in front of the test drive, causing hearts to brake into mouths, is the casual explanation that *Race Driver 2* will not just feature touring car circuits, but involve a career that spans around 15 styles of racing. From Rally and Rally Cross, through GT Sports Car, V8 Supercar and Global GT, to Ice, Classic Car, Street and even Grand Prix! No wonder they dropped the *TOCA* part of the title and added the sub-title, *The Ultimate Racing Simulator*. If *Race Driver 2* ends up with just half of the promised racing styles it's going to take us to places that no other single racing title ever has. It'll probably take us to more new places than all the other Xbox racers put together.

Not only is it more eclectic than the *Top Gear* garage, but *Race Driver 2* will have full head-to-head Xbox Live support for all its racing styles. We did ask, but unfortunately the one thing you won't be able to do is take different classes directly against one another on Live. So no Rally versus Grand Prix then. However, yet another bonus is the inclusion of terminal damage to all of the fully licensed car models. We can't wait to blow up an Aston Martin V12 Vanquish. So *very* James Bond!

↑ Even tyre deformation will affect your handling on corners.

↑ 10-4 Smokey. This is the Bandit. Seen any jam sandwiches lately?



↑ Yes, it's another Ford, but we promise you this isn't *Ford Racing 3*!

BONUS INFO

LET'S GET PHYSICAL
A new physics system will pander to advanced factors, including tyre deformation when cornering, centrifugal engine forces and complex aerodynamics for all of the car models, which include Jags, Fords, Mitsubishis, Audis and Mercedes to name but a few. There will be 35 cars in total. Forty motorsport game engineers are working on this at Codemasters.

WORLD SERIES
Many races and circuits have been licensed as well as the cars and these famous locations span the globe, including Donington Park, Laguna Seca, Surfers Paradise, Euro Speedway, Kyalami and Road America. New circuits will also be situated in Miami and Tokyo. In fact, there will be a whopping 56 circuits in total.

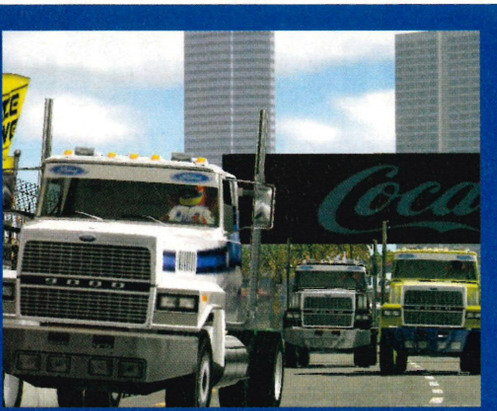
↑ Yes, okay Codemasters, we understand that you've secured the Formula Ford licence. Next month: some of the other licenced manufacturers!

↑ At last! Tearing around the first corner we have... No, no, it's a Ford.

↑ Ford.

POP CARS: THE RIVALS

THE NEW PLOT has the task of drawing into the story diverse driving styles from every field of racing. The answer, as seems to be the solution for all of today's entertainment conundrums, is reality TV. *Race Driver 2* will feature 12 individuals battling it out across all race formats for the ultimate reward - the chance to drive in a Masters Grand Prix. Elimination is the name of the game and the cinematic plot will be viewed from a first-person perspective for your competing character.



↑ Everything you do is driven by Ford. At the moment!

↑ Ford. There are 30 other licences on their way though!

MAX POWER: RACE DRIVER 2 IS NOW ONE OF THE TITLES THAT EX-OXM EDITOR MAX EVERINGHAM IS WORKING ON IN HIS NEW ROLE AT CODEMASTERS. WE HEAR HE'S THE CRASH TEST DUMMY.

INCOMING

LATEST NEWS // FIRST SCREENSHOTS // BRAND NEW GAMES

Headlines

DUST IS A MUST
Microsoft Japan sets out to re-write the action rules with a spectacular Xbox-exclusive action game with full Live options. 016

SALES OF THE CENTURY
Get the lowdown on how well Xbox is fairing across the pond against the competition. 016

ROAD RAGE
We take Midway's super-violent action driving game for a spin and come back sick to the stomach. Find out why over the page. 018

ALIAS IN ACTION
Sydney Bristow gets down and dirty in a stealth-action game with some impressive little touches. 018

HIT AND GUN
Italian developer Milestone unveils a new project featuring cars, weapons and Xbox Live play. Sounds good on paper... 020

SPREADSHEET GAMING
Codemasters brings in its brand new *LMA Manager* game – that uses the Xbox Communicator – for us to shout at. 020

NINJA SPECTACULAR
See just how good Tecmo's *Ninja Gaiden* is really shaping up to be. This is going to be something extra special. 021

DEUS EXCELLENT
Ion Storm's stunning-looking action shooter flashes the world with new screens of awesome quality. 024

DEAD AND ONLINE
Those cheeky *DOA* girls dish out a welcome batch of new *Dead Or Alive Online* shots that look good enough to eat. 025

ONCE UPON A TIME
New screens of Big Blue Box's fantastic-looking *Fable* escape from X03 and we've got them ready to be eyeballed. 025

BATTLE OF THE PLANETS
Another Japanese-developed action game is unveiled in Tokyo. Take a look at the first screens of *Magatama* right here, right now. 027

VOGUE
With the autumn season now in full swing, we're delighted to present to you the Fall collection of Xbox clobber. 030

SEX ON TAP
Gamer.tv is trying to find the sexiest male and female gamer. We thought it only right that we enter Ben in both categories. 030

↓ The calm before the storm before the earthquake. TGS is go!

↓ *Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball* bikinis – on sale now.

THE BIG STORY

Tokyo Game Showdown

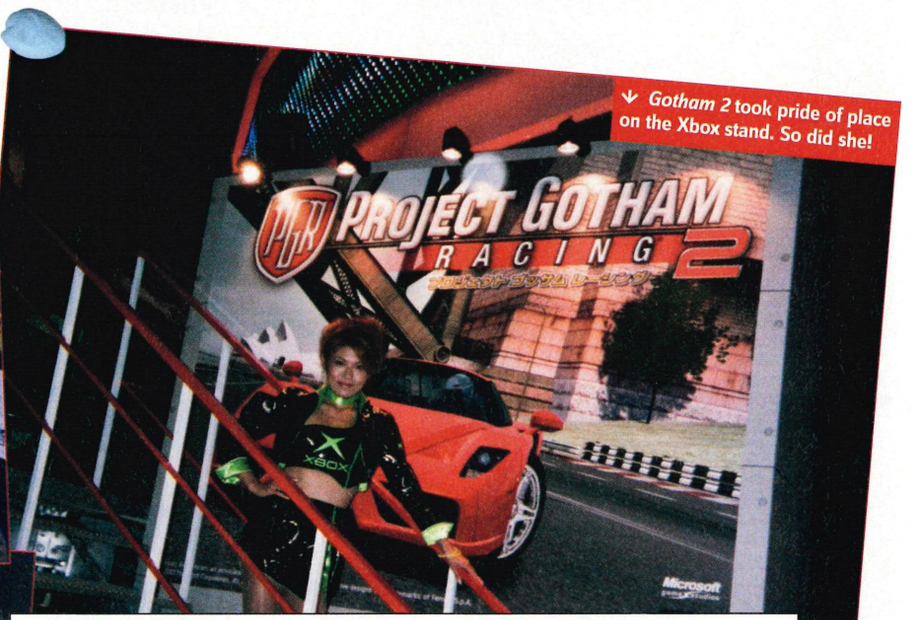
27 Xbox games stun TGS as earthquake rocks Japan

SEPTEMBER 26 saw the 2003 Tokyo Game Show open its doors at the Makuhari Messe in Chiba, Japan. No fewer than 27 new Xbox games were featured on Microsoft's booth, the majority of which were fully playable to onlookers.

The announcement of BioWare's incredible-looking Xbox-exclusive RPG *Jade Empire* was held back from X03 in order to make waves in Japan – and it did! Also getting their first airing at the annual event were a two-month free Xbox Live trial for the online Japanese otaku and three brand new promotions.

The 'Kasumi and Hawaii' campaign (working title, thankfully) will see gamers invited by lottery to fly off to a sunny beach to be pampered like a king while playing the latest games. Over the coming months, ten more gamers will be selected at random to experience the madness that is E3 in America. But by far the most interesting is the 'Dress Up the X' promotion, which encourages owners to come up with original designs for their Xbox cases. After a showing like this one, it's not surprising an earthquake hit Japan the following day...

↓ TGS attendees didn't know which game to play first.



↓ Gotham 2 took pride of place on the Xbox stand. So did she!

← You're lucky if you get a free sticker at E3, but at TGS they really know how to give away cool free stuff.

BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

THE EXPERT VIEW

//JOHN LAGRAVE
//PRODUCER, BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

The Asian market is important to the global success of a title and TGS is the perfect place to capture the audience.

ALTHOUGH WE'RE mostly known for our work on PC with the *WarCraft* and *StarCraft* series, we're very interested in hitting the console market and the Asian market has always been an important one for Blizzard as a Western developer. Most people don't know us as a console developer here, so we thought the best way to change that was to come to TGS. The fact that the show allows the public to come in and look around gives it an extra edge the other shows don't have.

We've had an overwhelming response from the press here, which was great to see after picking up a few awards at E3 for *StarCraft: Ghost*. The *StarCraft* name is huge in Korea – over two million units sold of the *StarCraft* series so far – and we're hoping that they find *Ghost* just as interesting.

XBOX Official Xbox Magazine

OUR VIEW

//OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE
//TO CUT TO THE CHASE AND TELL IT LIKE IT IS

A stunning portfolio of games and quality Xbox Live special offers made Japan sit up and take notice.

IT'S CLEAR from the size of the Xbox booth at the Tokyo Game Show that Microsoft is in no way shying away from the competition – even if the playing field is Sony's back yard. Heavy emphasis was placed on *Project Gotham Racing 2* – the game was fully up and running over Xbox Live with tournaments taking place every hour. The racing game's eye-popping visuals stopped attendees in their tracks and drew them into the world of Xbox. Once inside the stand, they had to walk past a plethora of amazing-looking games to get out.

The first ever footage of *Jade Empire* was unveiled to the world and seemed to go down a storm. But how could an Xbox-exclusive Chinese role-playing game made by BioWare fail to excite? Japanese-developed action games *Phantom Dust* (see page 016) and *Magatama* (see page 027) also made waves. Namco's interesting first-person fighting game *Breakdown* had a whole wall to itself, but getting a go was as hard as sitting through *The Nutty Professor* next to a fat person without laughing at the jokes.

Microsoft put on a great show – the Xbox Live girls were by far the breast, er, best – and wasn't intimidated by being the only Western company in sight. The Japanese can run but they can't hide from Xbox. It's only a matter of time...

ROAD TO RECOVERY: THE NUMBER OF VISITORS TO TOKYO GAME SHOW 2003 WAS 150,089 – UP FROM 118,080 VISITORS WHO ATTENDED THE SHOW BACK IN 2001.

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News Wire

Easily digestible nuggets of key Xbox information

Gone Square-shaped

Microsoft Japan has scooped the CEO abilities of SquareSoft's boss Yoshihiro Maruyama, who takes on the role of general manager of the Xbox Division. Peter Moore, the man with the longest job title ever (corporate vice president for worldwide retail sales and marketing in Japan and Europe for the Home and Entertainment Division), said, "Yoshihiro is going to be a tremendous asset to our Japanese initiatives. He has proven to be a stellar trans-Pacific talent over the years and he has a great depth of understanding Japanese and US market issues."

X03 Aftermath

Hal Rotholz - gamertag is Zamees - from the US was crowned winner of the Xbox Live Clash of the Continents Tournament at Microsoft X03 event in France in September. Finalists from eight European countries plus the US and Canada cracked heads to see who was the best at Ubi Soft's stunning *Rainbow Six 3* (see review on page 068).

Starsky Gets Butch

Hot on the heels of *Starsky & Hutch* (Issue 19, 6.8), Empire has announced a sequel is already in development. The cross-platform game should slide across our bonnets late 2004 and will feature new cities, enhanced visuals and a selection of '70s tunes to groove to.

No Hard Feelings

Interplay has ended a distribution deal with Vivendi Universal Games and boss Herve Caen is pleased. He said, "In the interest of our company we had no choice but to terminate this agreement. After several notifications to Vivendi of its failure to perform in accordance with our agreement, we still did not receive the payments owed to us." Luckily, *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II* and *Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel* have not been affected by the split.

Arabian Knight

THQ will now release its colourful action adventure *Sphinx* on Xbox. Set in an Egyptian-styled world, you embark on a quest to discover new planets. Surely they can't be that hard to spot (it's not like you can drop one down the back of couch)? The game will also be full of spells, monsters, portals and you will have an ability to change your form too. Keep an eye out for an exclusive First Look next issue.

Phantom Spectacular

Panzer creator aims even higher with Phantom Dust

ANOTHER GEM FULLY unveiled at the Tokyo Game show was *Phantom Dust*, an Xbox-exclusive online-enabled action shooter with effects to die for. But would you expect anything less from the man who led the team on Sega's stunning *Panzer Dragoon Orta* (Issue 15, 8.8)?

The story tells of a mysterious dust that has blanketed the Earth and any human who survived has total memory loss and now lives underground. The upside to this conundrum is that these humans have somehow acquired psychic abilities. It's up to you solve the dust problem and return happy childhood memories to everyone concerned.

A third-person action game at heart, players get to uncover over 300 different skills through the game that have to be harnessed if you're to successfully whip the opposition online. A fully destructible post-apocalyptic futuristic Earth is the setting for over 200 mind-blowing missions. *Phantom Dust* will be sneezed out next year.

↑ Just one of 300 moves to learn.

↑ The future's orange thanks to alien dust.

↑ Up to four players will be able to launch amazing effects at each other online.

↑ Look out for death from above.

MINDSCAPE UNVEILS BRAIN-TEASING 3D PUZZLE COMPENDIUM MOJO! FOR RELEASE THIS YEAR

↑ *KOTOR* whips up a sales storm in the US and UK.

↑ *Soul Calibur II* rockets straight to the top of the UK charts.

Xbox Outpaces Competition

Strongest line-up ever boosts sales beyond belief

STAT-CRUNCHING company NPD Group has revealed Xbox sales increased six per cent from this period last year, while PS2 figures dropped 36 per cent and GameCube sales hit a low of 22 per cent. Xbox captivates 27 per cent of the US market share and is on track to dominate this Christmas. Recent best-sellers include *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder*, *Soul Calibur II*, *Star Wars: KOTOR* and *Madden 2004*.

"The latest data is really a harbinger of what we expect to see this holiday season," grinned Mitch Koch, VP of sales and marketing for the Home and Entertainment Division. "With close to 400 games, 50 Live-enabled games, a global Xbox Live community, and a holiday promotion offering tremendous value, Xbox is appealing to an ever-growing audience of thrill-seekers."

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State of Play

America

RECENTLY, MRS Frank has taken to playing Xbox games. I could live in wedded bliss with a spouse who will join me in Blood Gulch, but no. Mrs Frank, like a parody of a girl gamer, is entranced by *Xbox Music Mixer*. *Halo*, she says, makes her nauseous.

The good news for Xbox is that it's reached high enough levels of penetration for mass-market games to emerge. And younger players are getting a look in too. But back to Mrs Frank. We've got a karaoke-fuelled party coming up this weekend, complete with dance mat, microphones and girl-drinks with umbrellas. I'm glad about the variety but please, just kill me now.

Frank O'Connor
Executive Editor
Official US Xbox Magazine

Roadkill

Take to the mean streets in this gunning gorefest

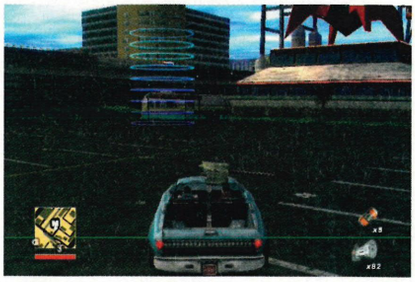
FAR FROM BEING a flat, lifeless game akin to its namesake, what we've played of *Roadkill* indicates this is gonna be an all-out combat driving blast. Set in a post-apocalyptic future where rival gangs rule the land, you play Mason Strong (a classic anti-hero name if ever we heard one) on a one-man quest of vengeance.

There are 30 objective-based missions, each with numerous mini-games. Forty-two vehicles are at your disposal, though nearly all have to be unlocked. Once you get behind the wheel of these mean machines however, several customisable options are present, including meaty weapon upgrades.

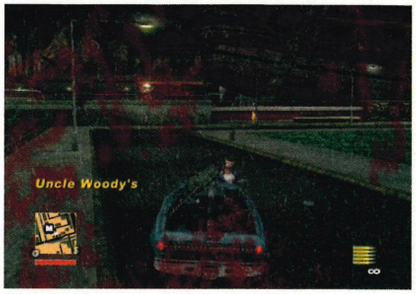
In keeping with its very violent nature, gore is definitely on the menu, with Strong's reputation being bolstered by the more bystanders you take out (complete with a satisfying splatter against the windscreen), thus rallying more members to your cause. With the addition of a multiplayer four-way combat mode, *Roadkill* should last the distance too. Keep an eye out for this one.

GAME INFORMATION	PERCENTAGE COMPLETE
DEVELOPER: MIDWAY	
PUBLISHER: MIDWAY	
RELEASE NOV 2003	

↑ Bang! Road rage is (nearly) the name of the game here.



↑ Enter the magic circle for your next mission.



↑ Uncle Woody didn't last long.

↑ Wreak havoc with a rear-mounted cannon.

NAMCO ANNOUNCES TODD McFARLANE-INSPIRED ACTION EPIC, SPAWN: ARMAGEDDON FOR 2004

Bard's Back!

Retro RPG gets makeover

THE CLASSIC RPG that appeared on our screens almost 20 years ago is to make a return in full next-gen 3D. *The Bard's Tale* was originally created by a chap called Brian Fargo and he'll take the helm on the reinterpretation of the classic RPG with his new company, inXile. "After a nice break I'm recharged and anxious to make great games again," he said. We can't wait to sneak around dungeons for hours on end again. Seriously!

↑ Wolves are no match for Bard.

↑ Bard brings his dog to sick balls.

Alias Exposed

Sydney Bristow steps out from the shadows

THE LAST TIME we saw the video game rendition of *Alias* (Issue 17), leading lady Sydney Bristow was looking good. Several months further down the line and she's now looking better than a large donor kebab after a skinful of strong continental lager... and we're happy to report that the game is looking great too.

There's lot of standard stealth stuff in there, but Acclaim has worked hard at upping the cinematic feel by including a unique split-screen feature similar to what was seen in the TV series *24*. It allows you to see what's going on in a different area at key points in the level, such as a patrolling guard or surveillance camera. This feature really does give the game a unique feeling. Even the *Splinter Cell* guys were impressed, according to Acclaim. And if it's good enough for them, it's good enough for us.

↑ Sydney is a master of hand-to hand-combat.

↑ Grab the enemy's gun and run!

↑ We want to be this doorman.

↑ Play as a part-time barmaid.

↑ Very interesting...

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News Wire

Easily digestible nuggets of key Xbox information

Power Ranger

Xbox has become the sponsor of Powerleague, which you may or may not know is a leading UK five-a-side organiser. As of September, our beloved Xbox logo will be rammed down the throats of more than 100,000 amateur players every week with the message 'Powerleague Powered by Xbox'. Each venue will be Xbox branded and there will also be Xbox booths showcasing the latest games. Powerleague boss Sean Tracey said, "We're delighted to have secured Xbox as Powerleague's headline sponsor for the next two years."

KOTOR Rumours

The web was recently awash with rumours suggesting that BioWare may not be the developer of a *Knights of the Old Republic* sequel. Instead, honours could be handed out to Obsidian Entertainment. BioWare has also revealed that a new planet full of brand new quests will be released over Xbox Live soon. In more *Star Wars* related news, we could see the release of a kind of *Rogue Leader* medley. Apparently the game is known as *Rebel X* and work is already underway. We'll keep you posted.

It's Coming Right For Us

Cabela's Dangerous Hunts is a US game that allows you to take to the hills and pick off some of the world's most dangerous animals. In the boots of a hunter, you get to shoot the hell out of grizzly bears, rhinos, leopards, cape buffalo and many more. There's no word on a UK release but we'll keep an ear to the ground.

Seeing is Believing

Eidos has launched a website designed to give fans of the upcoming *Deus Ex* sequel a taste of what to expect from the conspiracy-riddled action game when it launches early next year. By pointing your web browser in the direction of www.dxinvisiblewar.com you'll have access to trailers, screens, downloadable wallpapers and features including some interesting plot details. Take a look around.

Cheeky Little Fellow

Vivendi has slashed the price of *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* in half. It scored 7.0 back in Issue 10, but we'd only suggest taking the £20 plunge if you've hammered EA's *Two Towers* (Issue 14, 8.0) game to death.

Murder by FX

Italian developer tries something totally different

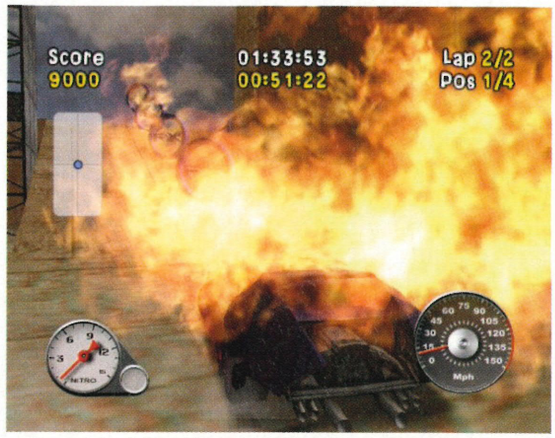
DEVELOPER Milestone has set its sights on a car combat title that's fully playable over Xbox Live. After *Racing Evoluzione* (Issue 14, 7.3), the Italians believe that if they can create a game that captures how badly they drive, they're onto a winner.

MD Antonio Farina said, "Italians love to drive cars like maniacs – have you seen how they drive in Rome? Totally crazy! They might not have the weapons that we have in *FX Racing* but the fear of tearing around the city is real and we've tried to capture those feelings in a game." Okay...

Aside from driving like a maniac, your super-charged cars will be able to perform stunts, powerslides and two-wheeling to earn weapons. More soon as *FX Racing* launches early next year.

↑ One wrong move and it's all over.

↑ Futuristic cars with big guns! What more could you ask for?



↑ Doesn't look like this car's making that jump at all...

VIVENDI REVEALS DRAKE, ACTION ADVENTURE BASED ON A US COMIC BOOK CHARACTER

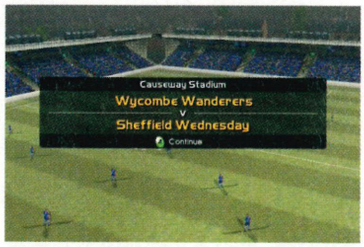
Injured Manager

Extra time needed to ensure game's quality

LMA MANAGER 2004 should have been with us about now, but Codemasters has decided to delay the game until January. The delay means that all the features we've been promised will make the first team game such as all the 2003/2004 seasons stats, South American clubs in the transfer market, a brand new look, individual player tactics and a new Fantasy Team mode.

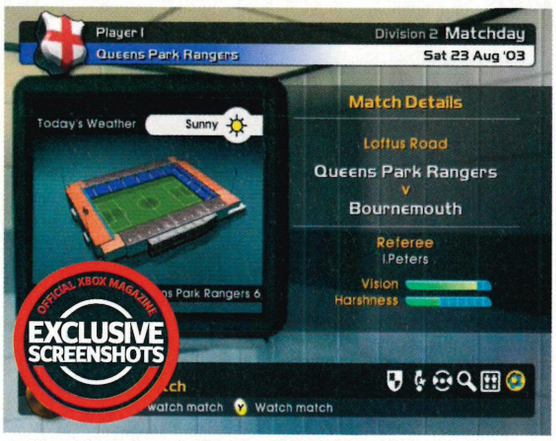
Codemasters recently popped into the office to show us how the game was coming along. The feature that impressed us most was being able to use the Xbox Communicator to shout out commands like 'defend' and 'attack' to your players while watching the game on-screen. Thanks to Xbox Live you'll also be able to download all the new players' info once the transfer window has closed early next year.

↑ Get to know your team inside out.



↑ Start at the bottom and work hard.

↑ Review your team's performance.



↑ The calm before the Division Two storm.

↑ Select your colours and start shouting at your team.

Gaiden of Eden

Tecmo stuns world with latest Ninja Gaiden shots

AFTER CASTING OUR eyes on these new shots we had to punch ourselves to see if we were dreaming. If you're feeling a bit lightheaded yourself, [don't - ed] do the same. Just look at the sharpness, the colours, the detail and the shadows! This is as real as it gets and it will only ever be on Xbox.

According to Microsoft, Tecmo has created a revolutionary new Xbox Live-compatible feature that's developed specifically for *Ninja Gaiden* and is like "nothing any gamer has experienced in an action game before it". If that doesn't cause a little flutter down below, then you clearly have no soul.

Thankfully we've been blessed with some in-game shots that show Ryu's quest for domination of the stealth-action genre while at the same time slicing the evil Vigor Empire into little bits. We've still got all our fingers and toes crossed for a release sometime this year, but as far as we're concerned Tecmo can take all the time in the world (well, within reason, of course) if the final game's going to play half as good as it looks. More soon.

↑ We don't see enough pink monsters these days but Tecmo has brought them back.

↑ Ryu shows off his super-cool ninja moves.

↑ Stun the skeleton thing with your dazzling moves before taking its head off.

RUMOURS ARISE THAT PRO EVOLUTION 3 MIGHT SEE AN XBOX RELEASE WITH ONLINE PLAY!

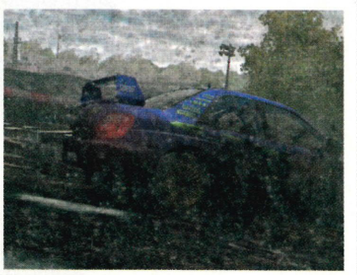
RalliSport Challenged

Track progress against your rivals via XSN Sports

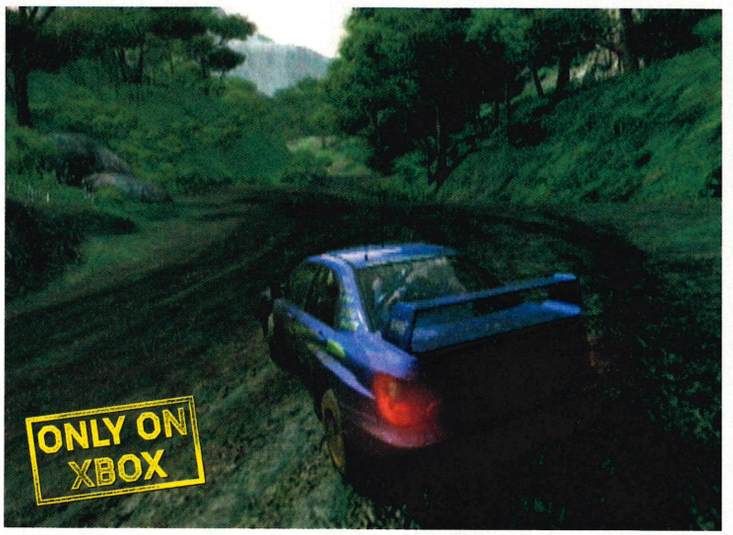
THEY'RE BOTH rally titles but there is a world of difference between *RalliSport Challenge 2* and *Colin McRae Rally 04* (Issue 21, 9.1) as far as gameplay goes. You can't kickflip the car in *McRae* but you can in Microsoft's OTT arcade extravaganza, without losing a second.

RalliSport Challenge 2 is one of the first racing titles in the new XSN Sports brand that lets you compete in an online virtual league. Through XSNsports.com you'll be able to set up a league, take on your mates and track up-to-date stats on a PC through your very own season.

↑ Expect some cool replay sequences...



↑ ...and more mud than's good for you.



↑ We've played it and it's every bit as chaotic as the original.

↑ Drive your mates up the wall in a variety of online game modes.

STATTASTIC: THE XBOX LIVE DOWNLOADABLE UPDATE FOR LMA MANAGER 2004 WILL BE FEATURED ON A FUTURE DEMO DISC SO NON-SUBSCRIBERS DON'T MISS OUT ON THE TRANSFER WINDOW.

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PC CD ROM

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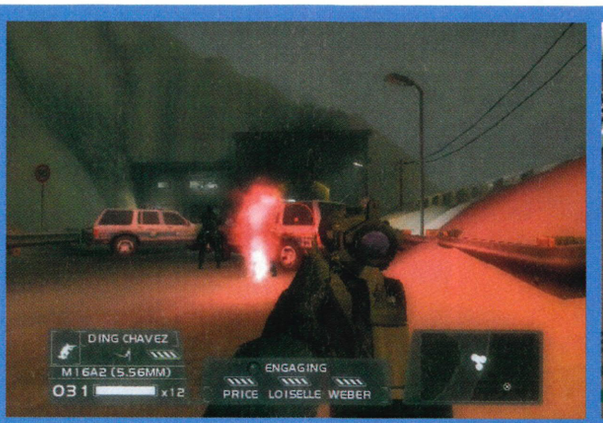
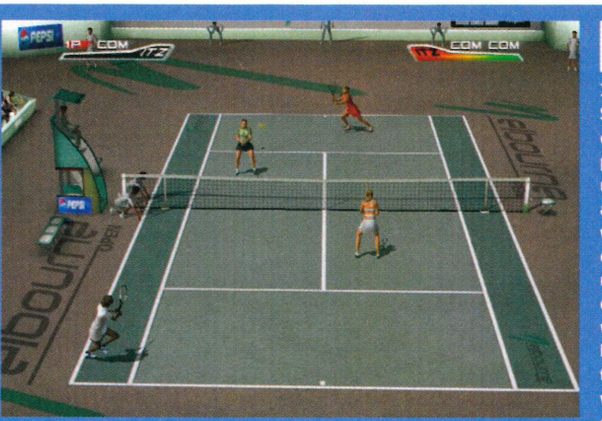


↑ We expect *Rainbow Six 3* to be the new *Ghost Recon* for Live.



↑ Play in four-way tournaments with *Top Spin* on Xbox Live.

BONUS INFO

SHHH...

Some of the most exciting Live game prospects are those yet unannounced. As well as the Live footy game we now know to be in development, expect new games from *Unreal* developer Epic, which will almost certainly be Live driven. More Rare titles are also in the works that will focus on Live experiences.

EXCLUSIVE DEVELOPER INTERVIEWS

↑ *Project Gotham Racing 2* will be a tour de force on Xbox Live.

↑ Cam says yes to Xbox Live footy!

Cam Ferroni

The general manager of the Xbox platform and Xbox Live team talks to OXM at XO3

INSIDE

WITH THE NEW slogan, 'It's good to play together', Microsoft was obviously keen to get the message across at its annual XO3 conference that Xbox Live is high on its agenda for Christmas and the new year. We cornered Cam Ferroni at XO3 and pressed him for details on the Live year ahead. We even managed to get an answer on the big question for Live in Europe - when will we see the first Live football title?!

***Official Xbox Magazine*: How will Microsoft push Xbox Live over the next 12 months?**

There are 50 new Live-enabled titles on their way. Well over half of these will be fully multiplayer, not just Live-aware or with content download. Approximately ten of these are Microsoft first-party titles.

Which do you consider your most important upcoming Live games?

The biggest upcoming Live games will be: *Rainbow Six 3*, *Project Gotham Racing 2* and the sleeper hit will be *Top Spin*, which is a great game to broaden the Live demographic. There are so many women who are into tennis and it's such an easy pick-up-and-play game.

So, women need easy pick-up-and-play games?

Compared to FPSs, games like *Top Spin* have a wider appeal. It's *Pong*. It's the first video game, but with great graphics.

"We're working on a Live football game for Europe"

What are the new Live subscription options?

With most of the Live games this Christmas there will be an offer so you can just put in the game, sign up and go online for free for two months. At the end of that two months you'll be able to renew it either monthly (£4.99), or for a year (£39.99). It gives everybody the chance to try before they buy. You can buy into one game, or play for a season with a sports title, for example.

What do you think of additional Live costs for games, such as MMORPGs?

It's up to publishers to determine their own pricing models on top of Xbox Live subscription, the same way as you pay for a standard cable TV package and then pay for extra channels. We don't tell publishers how much they should charge - it's up to them to set their own models.

Does Microsoft have any plans for Content Download that you have to pay for?

We will definitely have some titles, starting this year, that will have pay-for Content Download - download a level for a fee sort of thing. Starting in the US, but hitting Europe within months.

When will we get a Live football title for Europe?

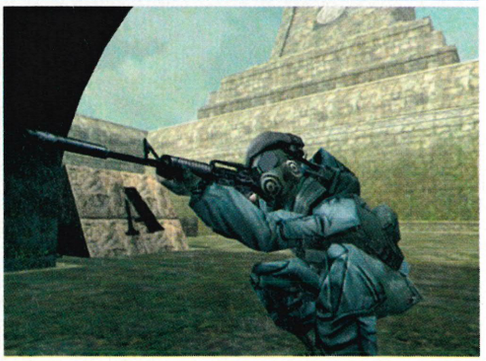
We're absolutely working on a Live football game for Europe with a bunch of various publishers. We don't have anything specific that I can announce. Rest assured we understand how critical it is for this market and for the Japanese market, who also love *proper* football.

WEB CAM: CAM FERRONI, ALONG WITH EVERY OTHER MICROSOFT EMPLOYEE AT XO3, WAS KEEN TO REPEAT THE NEW XBOX SLOGAN: IT'S GOOD TO PLAY TOGETHER. SO HE DID.

Gallery A snapshot look at the hottest Xbox games on the planet

COUNTER-STRIKE DEVELOPER: RITUAL ENTERTAINMENT PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT RELEASE: DECEMBER 2003

↑ *Counter-Strike* is the most popular online game in the world ever. We kid you not!



↑ Exclusive Xbox levels, 16 players online, 25 weapons and downloadable content. What more could you want?

↑ Not got Xbox Live yet? Don't worry - there'll be a fine single-player game to hone your headshot skills with.

DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR DEVELOPER: ION STORM PUBLISHER: EIDOS RELEASE: MARCH 2004

↑ These latest shots show how well the HUD is coming along. It's changed a lot but Ion's finally getting there.

↑ Unfortunately the game's slipped into the beginning of next year but a fully playable demo is in the pipeline.

↑ From the looks of this shot, aliens will again play a big part in the conspiracy-riddled futuristic story.

DEAD OR ALIVE ONLINE

DEVELOPER: **TECMO** PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT** RELEASE: **TBA 2004**

↑ A brand new trailer of Tecmo's online beat 'em up was showcased at the Tokyo Game Show. It was smiles all round.

↑ Previous instalments of the games in the *DOA* fighting series will all feature in the final version.

↑ Both *DOA1* and *DOA2* were shown in the trailer and they looked great considering they're pretty old now.

FABLE

DEVELOPER: **BIG BLUE BOX** PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT** RELEASE: **MARCH 2004**

↑ Head honcho Peter Molyneux was on hand at X03 to walk us through the latest version of this ambitious role-playing game.

↑ Molyneux told us players will be able to marry a girl from each town, should they wish.

↑ At the end of the game, the scars on your face will show what kind of man you were.

Counter-Strike™ and Xbox *Live*.
A match made in "holy-*#!%-did-you-see-that" heaven.

Microsoft game studios VALVE

Counter-Strike,™ the world's #1 online action game*, is even better on Xbox *Live*.™ With graphically superior action, 7 exclusive maps, up to 16 player game play and a vast arsenal of weapons, this is the best Counter-Strike yet. You may want to practice offline before you enter the merciless online arena. Here, you can go it alone or you can assemble an elite team of gamers and talk strategy over the ***Live*** Communicator on how to defuse bombs, rescue hostages and take on terrorists from all over the world. The competition will be tough, so you'd better come prepared.

XBOX LIVE

COUNTER STRIKE

XBOX

it's good to play together

xbox.com/counterstrike

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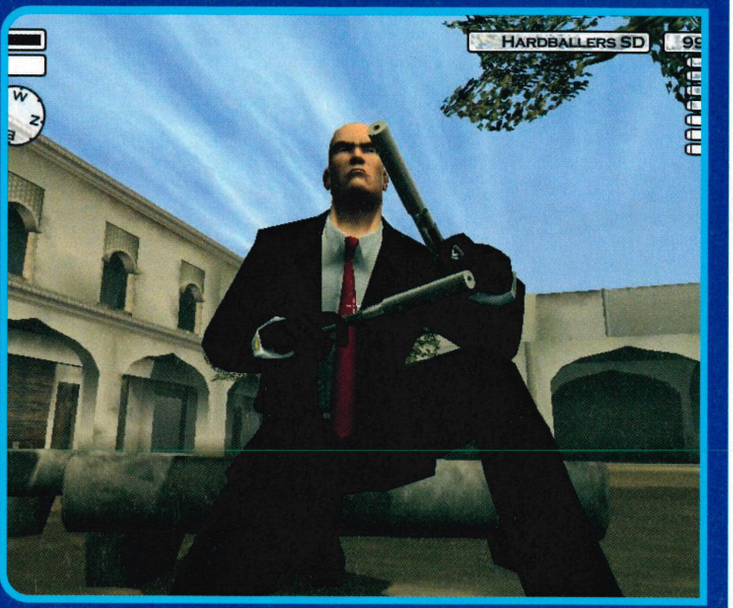
TOP SECRET: THE MOLE

The latest chunks of underground gaming information straight from our personal sleuth

CREEPING DEATH
Eidos seems to have a few surprises locked away in a top secret vault that's sealed tighter than a... I won't go there actually. Anyway, its famous silent killer looks to be making something of a comeback if the whispers I've heard are true. And this little one could spring out from the shadows at you earlier than you might think. You might even hear more next issue. Stay tuned.

GUERRILLAS IN THE MIDST OF SOMETHING NEW?
Euro-developer Guerrilla is currently hard at work on a PS2 title that's jokingly being touted as a *Halo*-beater, but I've heard that the team is in talks with a big name publisher for an Xbox game. There's no more for the moment, but I'll keep searching. Just remember these three words: Guerrilla on Xbox. You heard it here first.

ANGER MANAGEMENT
Codemasters' *LMA Manager* is set to take advantage of Xbox Live by offering downloadable information on the latest player moves and transfers early next year. There's no online option for the PS2 version because Sony couldn't get its act together in time by our reckoning, but I'd expect the next *LMA* to be fully playable online. Going head to head in a league brimming full of real people. Interesting...



↑ Is Eidos's silent but very deadly *Hitman* coming back for more?

JAPANESE SHOOTER DINOSAUR HUNTER GETS PICKED UP BY METRO 3D FOR RELEASE OUTSIDE OF JAPAN

Alternate Reality

XBOX LIVE PLAYABLE

World's first neo-Asian fantasy game spotted at Tokyo Game Show

MICROSOFT'S JAPANESE-developed *Magatama* was unveiled to rapturous applause at the recent Tokyo Game Show. Xbox needs more Japanese action games and *Magatama* looks set to plug the gap perfectly with a heavy blend of medieval fantasy and big bad broadsword-waving play.

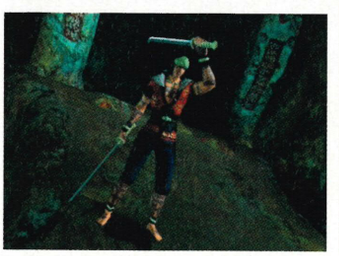
The events of the game take place in an alternative version of medieval Japan and centre around a conflict of interests between the Yamato clan and bulletproof Buddhist monk, Shinato.

A short but very intense movie clip was shown at TGS and the emphasis has definitely been placed on action. Body parts were flying around the screen for fun. As Shinato, you have several flash combat moves at your disposal that can pulverise several enemies at once. A special power called Orochi can be combined with your sword attacks to produce some bonkers special effects. It all looks good. The game's due for release in Japan before the end of the year but we've yet to hear anything solid on a possible UK release. We'll keep you posted but we expect to see this beast of a game come for us in the UK sometime next year.

↑ Even our video game characters are getting in on the Halloween antics.

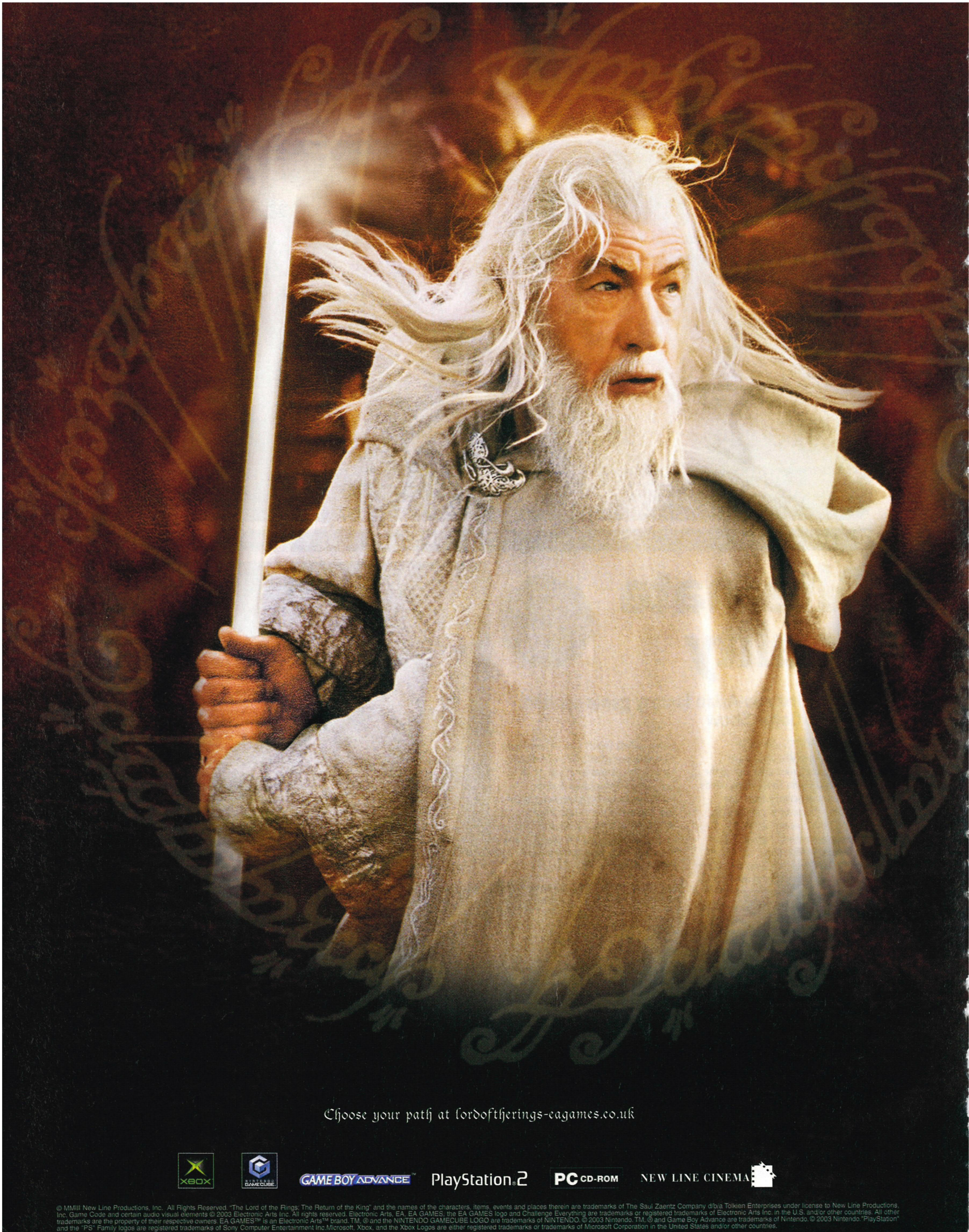
↑ Something doesn't look right here.

↑ Fire-breathing dragons rock.


↑ Two swords are better than none.

↑ Carnage everywhere! Think this looks good? It looks even better in action.

SUPER TOP SECRET: THE GUYS BEHIND THE LATE LAMBORGHINI ARE BACK IN BUSINESS WITH A RACING GAME THAT'S "EVERYTHING LAMBORGHINI WAS AND THEN SOME." MORE SOON. MOLE OUT.



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DVD CARRY CASES and Xbox bags don't really fall under our Hardware category, but Gavin thinks he looks 'hard wearing' (geddit?) the Xbox bag, so that's a good enough reason for us to showcase the winter 2003/2004 range on this very page.

UK-based Planet 21 Group recently won the coveted contract to produce Xbox-branded goods and, from what we've seen so far, the team has done a sterling job. Initial items from the range include a console carry case, despatch/courier bag, games DVD carry case, CD case and an Xbox keyring with dazzlingly bright green torch.

As you can see, the whole range looks bang on the money and the console carry case does an excellent job of holding all your worldly Xbox goods. The end of October should see the release of all the items and there are plenty more to come next year. Handy little stocking fillers maybe? Keep an eye out in your local gaming emporium for details.

DESPATCH/ COURIER BAG
£14.99

XBOX CARRY CASE
£24.99

GAMES CARRY CASE DVD CASE
£9.99

CD CASE
£ 6.99

KEY RING
£3.99

MOTORCROSS MADNESS SWINGS ROUNDS AGAIN WITH THQ'S MX UNLEASHED DUE NEXT YEAR

AND FINALLY...

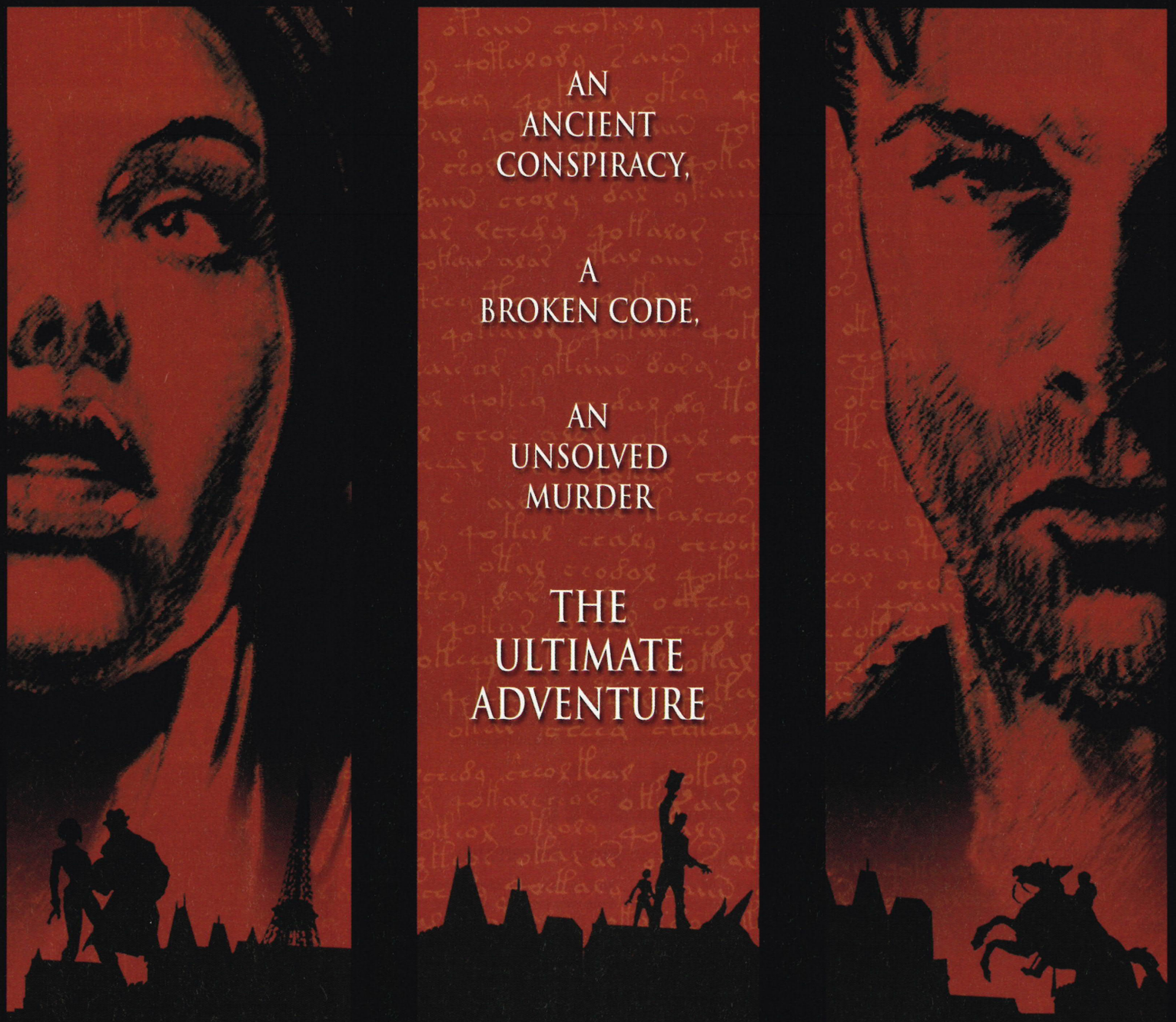
Sex Idol

Are you the world's sexiest gamer?

IT'S NO SECRET that Ben truly believes himself to be the sexiest man in Wales. Strange. But stranger still is that fact that some of you agree with him. But could he be described as the sexiest gamer in Britain? Probably not, but that hasn't stopped us entering him into Gamer.tv's search for the UK's sexiest gamer. It's time for him to put up or shut up.

The three-month campaign will climax with a grand finale in London on December 12. A judging panel will pick one male and one female winner from the entrants, with a first prize of an all-expenses paid trip to Hollywood. Initial heats will be covered online and the 'celebrity-studded' final will be filmed for one of Gamer.tv's shows. To be eligible to enter, you have to be over 18 years old and be able to prove you're a gamer. No glamour models now, Ben. Hit the website for more info at www.sexiestgamer.com

↑ Are these the UK's sexiest gamers? Surely not!



BROKEN SWORD

THE SLEEPING DRAGON

PC CD ROM

XBOX

PlayStation 2

REVOLUTION

THQ

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QUOTES OF THE MONTH

"Unfortunately, it was determined that *Lord of the Rings: The Treason of Isengard* was not going to achieve the strict, but crucial, standards for our Tolkien games."

Vivendi Universal brand manager Andrew Shiozaki puts the final nail in the coffin of the action game that had been in development for ten months.

"I've never screamed so much in my life. Maybe someday they'll make an *Everything or Nothing* movie that I'd love to be in."

Singer Mya expresses her excitement over landing the theme tune to EA's new Bond game and begs for more.

"Frankly, the PS2 couldn't do the math calculations for the geometry acceleration, real-time shadows and light. GameCube is the same thing, no version planned."

Id software boss Todd Hollenshead reveals in an interview that PS2 and GameCube couldn't handle *Doom 3* if they tried. Only on Xbox it is then!

"Starting around 9/11 of this year, someone other than me was accessing my email account. This has been determined by looking at traffic on our email server versus my travel schedule."

***Half-Life 2*'s main man Gabe Newell breaks the news to the community that the source code for the upcoming shooter has been leaked and they're trying to track the culprit down.**

"Speaking as a gamer, we're fed up with being labelled as playground geeks, so we've decided to dispel this myth by showing that gamers can be sexy as hell."

Gamer.tv head honcho Chris Bergstresser is not a geek and our Ben will show them. See page 030.

"Brown takes helm on *Official Xbox Magazine*."

Steve wouldn't send the press release about him becoming the new editor to his mum. Wonder why...

↑ Bilbo might be a little fellow but he packs a mean orc-crunching punch.

The Hobbit

Hands-on with Tolkien's original adventure

RETURN OF the King will hit cinemas this Christmas as hard as Hurricane Lili hit the US. *The Hobbit* was the prelude to the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy and was written for a younger audience, and the game reflects this. It's more of a light-hearted platformer than an all-out action game with Hollywood effects.

In the role of young Bilbo you must set off to find the Lonely Mountain and steal riches from under the nose of the mighty dragon Smaug. Combat is very simple – repeatedly bash X to lash out in whatever direction you're facing. You'll occasionally end up dead and have to replay the section from your last save. Annoying at times...

Presentation is good and Middle-Earth looks the part. We'd have liked a little less jumping and there's no need for instant death moments. But with a bit of luck Bilbo will hold his own in the platform-adventure arena. Full review next issue.

GAME INFORMATION
DEVELOPER: **INEVITABLE ENT.**
PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI**
RELEASE NOV 2003
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

Pick and Mix

SCATTERED AROUND the various environments on Bilbo's journey are treasure chests that have to be unlocked so you can raid the goods. Each one has a different style of lock to pick that basically involves timing and the A button. Not too taxing on the brain, but the deeper into the game you get, the faster you have to be.

↑ Fastest finger gets all the gold.

↑ Use the first-person mode to throw stones and distract the big dumb troll.

↑ Try your hand at pond-skipping whenever you can.

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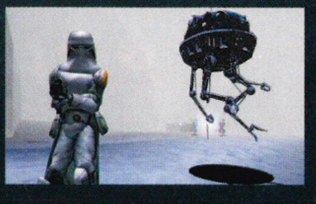

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XBOX LIVE

RAVEN

ACTIVISION.

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

LucasArts

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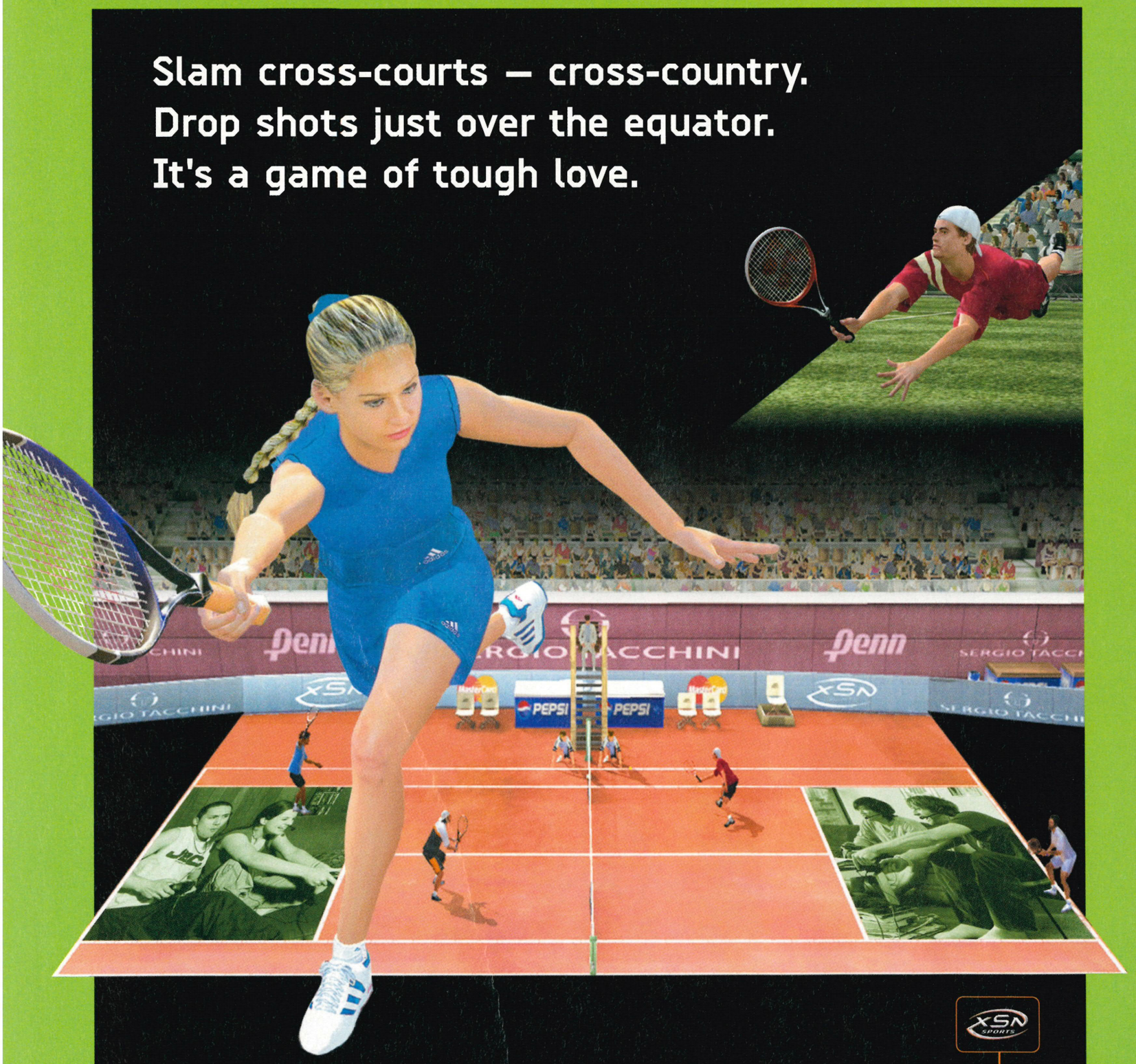
Slam cross-courts — cross-country.
Drop shots just over the equator.
It's a game of tough love.



Microsoft game studios

"Quiet please"? Let's dispense with the formality shall we? Top Spin™ is a tennis game that isn't afraid to play it like it is. All the excitement of baseline battles, diving volleys and temper tantrums is in your hands. Get on the court with the Xbox *Live*™ service and serve up back-handed comments along with your vicious backhands. Use XSN Sports online to track your current world ranking. Whether you play as Sampras, Kournikova, Hewitt or yourself, you'll have to take risks and play mean to be crowned king of the court.

XSN SPORTS

XBOX LIVE

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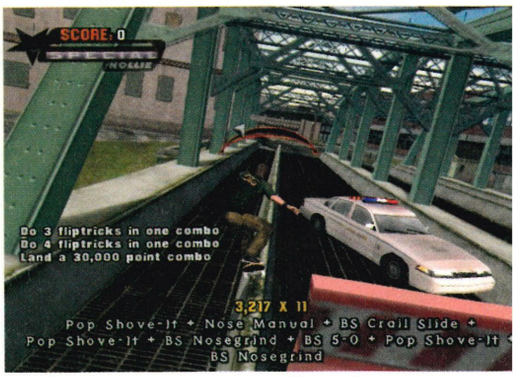
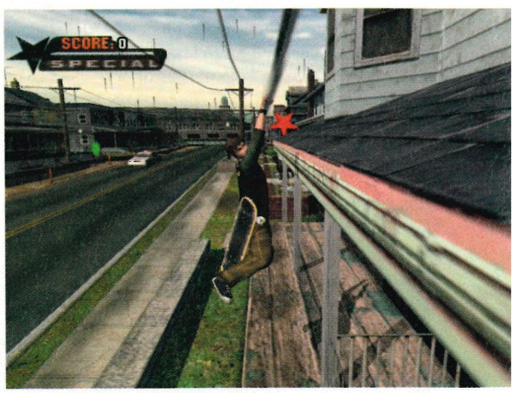
↑ If you run into trouble, just jump off your board and quickly find something else to grind within the given time limit.



↑ Insane combos still generate millions of points.



↑ Reach for the stars by jumping and climbing.

Tony Hawk Underground

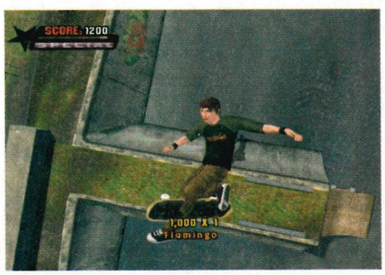
A change of pace for the skateboarding king

NOW IN ITS fifth instalment, you have to wonder how new versions of what's turning into the same game can be justified. A massive online element via Xbox Live would have been a good start but alas it's not to be as Activision has decided against it. Shame.

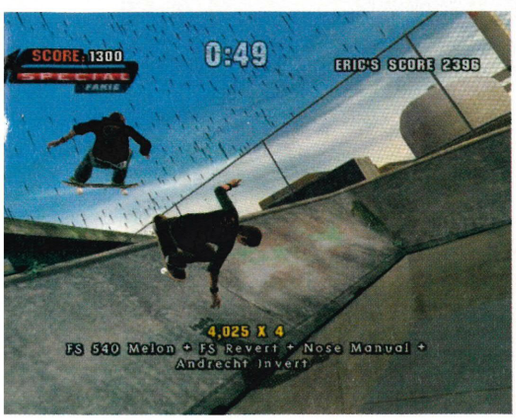
Instead, the popular series has taken a walk down storyboard lane, as you play the part of an upcoming young skater trying to make his mark in the premiership of skateboarding. Impress the locals and you'll be halfway there. Don't and you won't!

Even if you've only played a *Hawk* game once in your life, you'll be right at home here. All the controls are exactly the same, but there's one new addition that opens up shin-splintering avenues. You can now pick up your skateboard and run with it. It's certainly a nice extra, but will it be enough to keep the hardcore faithful coming back for more? Find out in our review next issue.

GAME INFORMATION
DEVELOPER: **NEVERSOFT**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
RELEASE NOV 2003
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE



↑ Special moves are back for more...



↑ Beat Eric's score for extra stat points.

↑ It might not look at home in a *Hawk* game, but you now get to race cars!

Roll with it

RUN AND JUMP straight onto the high score table by using the new feature of picking your board up and carrying it to where ever you want. Cool!

↑ Run to some street furniture.

↑ Jump and get ready to grind.

↑ Slide along the rail. Rock hard!

CHOOSY: ACCORDING TO TONY HAWK'S BIOGRAPHY, SEVERAL DEVELOPERS WITH VISIONS OF A SKATEBOARDING GAME PITCHED THEIR IDEAS TO HIM BEFORE NEVERSOFT WAS SIGNED UP.

Sonic Heroes

Sega's blue buddy is preparing to 'hog your Xbox

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG, Sega's famous spiky blue mascot of yesteryear, is all set to return to our TV screens in his Xbox debut this Christmas. Back in 1991, the original Mega Drive version set both the visual and velocity benchmark with smooth animation and a breakneck pace, and this evolution continues with *Sonic Heroes*, utilising the powerful RenderWare software.

A change in gameplay sees the player controlling three characters at any one time. Choose from four different teams; Sonic (Sonic, Tails and Knuckles), Dark, Rose and Chaotix. Each comprises of different characters with different attributes, and it's vital to make the most of the individual's particular strengths to progress through each stage. Barricades up ahead? No problem, just switch between your lead animal (a quick press of the Y button), and use Knuckle's physical power to bust through.

There are four different story modes to play through the game, each relating to a different team. Added to this, there are multiple paths through the 14 huge levels on offer, so the replayability factor certainly won't be an issue. With a fluid look and unbelievable speed, we can expect to hear this Sonic booming into the spotlight very soon.

GAME INFORMATION
DEVELOPER: **SONIC TEAM**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
RELEASE DEC 2003
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE

↑ Use a variety of crazy vehicles, even faster than Sonic himself.

↑ Fly through the hoops to propel to the next one.

↑ How the hell does that fat purple guy fly?

I believe I can fly

JUMPING WILL do you no good here, so bring out Tails. Pop him atop your column, then double jump to fly free as a bird and up over the wall. He's a strong little fella, you know.

↑ Can't go under it, can't go round it...

↑ ...will just have to go over it.

↑ The environments are as vast as ever. Keep your speed up for the big loop ahead.

↑ Choose from four different teams.

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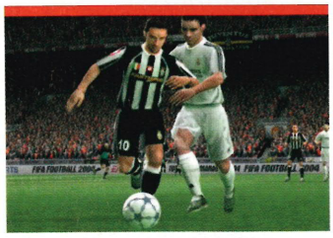
READERS MOST WANTED

LET US KNOW the Xbox games you're most looking forward to. Use the coupon on page 138, include a Top Five with anything you send us or drop us an email at **staff@fxmi.com** - remember to indicate your order of preference.



OUR SHOUT

OUR READERS' violent tendencies reared their heads this month, though with the prospects of *MOH: Rising Sun* and the fantastic-looking *Return of the King* (along with chart stalwarts *Half-Life 2*, *Halo 2* and *Doom 3*) this is no bad thing. It seems you lot are getting sporty too, with *FIFA 2004* storming to number two and the appearance of *Top Spin*. You wouldn't get us doing anything remotely athletic outside at this time of year, though.

1. HALO 2
DEVELOPER: **BUNGIE** PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT**
RELEASE: **2004**

2. FIFA 2004
DEVELOPER: **EA CANADA** PUBLISHER: **EA**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2004**

3. HALF-LIFE 2
DEVELOPER: **VALVE**
PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI UNIVERSAL**
RELEASE: **2004**

4. MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN
DEVELOPER: **EA** PUBLISHER: **EA**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2003**

5. PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2
DEVELOPER: **BIZARRE CREATIONS**
PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT**
RELEASE: **DECEMBER 2003**

6. TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW
DEVELOPER: **UBI SOFT** PUBLISHER **UBI SOFT**
RELEASE: **SPRING 2004**

7. FABLE
DEVELOPER: **BIG BLUE BOX**
PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT**
RELEASE: **SPRING 2004**

8. DOOM 3
DEVELOPER: **ID SOFTWARE/VICARIOUS VISIONS**
PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
RELEASE: **SUMMER 2004**

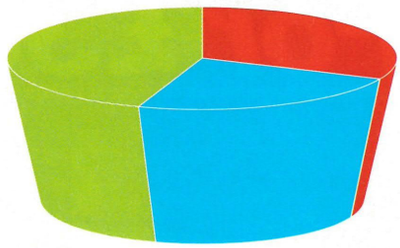
9. TLOTR: RETURN OF THE KING
DEVELOPER: **EA** PUBLISHER: **EA**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2003**

10. TOP SPIN
DEVELOPER: **PAM** PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2003**

THE HOT TOPIC

Startlingly relevant Xbox issue of the day

Is cheating a bad thing?



KEY (per cent)	
Yes	40
No	30
Not if you've completed the game	30

SOURCE: *Official Xbox Magazine* forum

THIS MONTH'S CHART THROB: ANDY IRVING

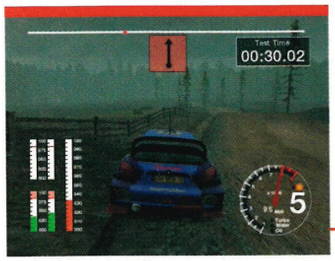
1. **Rainbow Six 3**
2. **Amped 2**
3. **Return of the King**
4. **Project Gotham 2**
5. **Top Spin**

ANDY SAYS: I've always had a soft spot for FPSs, so I've been looking forward to meeting the *Rainbow* boys for a while now and, after immensely enjoying all three of their predecessors, *Amped 2*, *ROTK* and *PGR2* should see me through the long winter months. Although it's not exactly the weather for shorts or strawberries, *Top Spin* is shaping up to be the best tennis game ever, and definitely one for the Chrimbo list. Bring on 25th December!

Virgin megastores

VIRGIN MEGASTORES CHART

WHEN YOU BUY a game from Virgin Megastore, a secret military-designed surveillance bug will tail you home. Disguised as a gnat/cranefly (depending on the time of year), they'll stealthily slip into your room and report back, via hidden communicator, your game of choice. Big Brother's still watching!



↑ IT'S A TOUGH month, with the release of many top quality titles, but the most realistic and searingly exciting rally game ever still comes in a respectable fifth. *CMR04* is fantastic in single-player, and even more of a laugh in multiplayer. A perfect post-pub dispute settler.

1. SOUL CALIBUR II NEW
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO** PUBLISHER: **EA**
The king of all beat 'em ups cuts through the opposition like butter.

2. STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC ↓
DEVELOPER: **BIOWARE** PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
Like a dignified Jedi accepting his fate, *KOTOR* gracefully steps down a place.

3. CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II NEW
DEVELOPER: **PIVOTAL GAMES** PUBLISHER: **SCI**
A well-placed sniper round takes this shooter sneakily into number three.

4. TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004 NEW
DEVELOPER: **EA** PUBLISHER: **EA**
A nice chip shot lands an updated *Tiger* classic comfortably on the green.

5. COLIN McRAE RALLY 04 NEW
DEVELOPER: **CODEMASTERS** PUBLISHER: **CODEMASTERS**
A hard left, easy right steers this ace rally title into fifth position.

6. GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER NEW
DEVELOPER: **UBI SOFT** PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**
This strategic squad-based shooter excels on both Live and single-player.

7. FREEDOM FIGHTERS NEW
DEVELOPER: **IO INTERACTIVE** PUBLISHER: **EA**
You can take seventh spot, but you'll never take our freedommmm!

8. FIFA 2003 (CLASSICS) ↓
DEVELOPER: **EA** PUBLISHER: **EA**
The best footy game around holds the fort until its successor trots out this month.

9. MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER NEW
DEVELOPER: **WARTHOG** PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI UNIVERSAL**
Blast aliens from both inside and outside your ship in this top space shooter.

10. MOH: FRONTLINE (CLASSICS) NEW
DEVELOPER: **EA** PUBLISHER: **EA**
A 20-quid price mark breathes new life into this WWII first-person shooter.

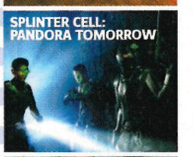
↑ AFTER MONTHS OF waiting for the PAL version to finally hit our shores, *Soul Calibur II* hacks and swipes its way straight to its rightful place at the top of the charts. Fluid and graceful swordplay, with a decent single-player storyline and the coolest console-exclusive character, Spawn, make Namco's baby a winner.

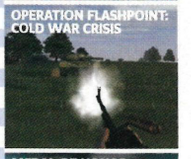
↑ THIS MONTH'S CHART is littered with first-person shooters, occupying a whopping five out of ten positions. *Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter* dares to be different, incorporating ship-to-ship space combat and offers a bit of welcome variety to the usual frantic blasting. It's definitely worth checking out.

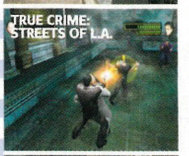
XBOX GAME RELEASES

The forthcoming games you need to know about

DATE	GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
AUTUMN	ALIAS	ACCLAIM	ACCLAIM	17
	BATMAN: RISE OF SIN TZU	IN HOUSE	UBI SOFT	N/A
	CRIMSON SKIES	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	4
	CURSE	WANADOO	WANADOO	N/A
	DEUS EX 2: INVISIBLE WAR	ION STORM	EIDOS	12
	FALLOUT: BROTHERHOOD OF STEEL	BIOWARE	VIVENDI UNIV.	16
	FREEKSTYLE	EA BIG	EA	4
	GHOST MASTER	SICK PUPPIES	EMPIRE	N/A
	HARRY POTTER: QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP		EA	EA
	LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE	CRYSTAL DYNAMICS	EIDOS	18
	MAFIA	ILLUSION SOFTWORKS	TAKE 2	19
	NHL RIVALS 2004	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	17
	OPERATION FLASHPOINT: CWC	CODEMASTERS	CODEMASTERS	N/A
	PSYCHONAUTS	DOUBLE FINE	MICROSOFT	6
	ROLAND GARROS 2003	TBA	WANADOO	N/A
	ROLLING	RAGE	SCI	N/A
	SHINING LORE	PHANTAGRAM	PHANTAGRAM	N/A
	SHREK 2	TBA	TDK MEDIACTIVE	N/A
	SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS	THQ	THQ	N/A
	SPY VS SPY	TDK MEDIACTIVE	TDK MEDIACTIVE	10
	TORK	TIWAK	TBA	4
	TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF LA	LUXOFLUX	ACTIVISION	5
	UNREAL II	EPIC GAMES	ATARI	N/A
WINTER	007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING	EA	EA	18
	ADVENT RISING	MAJESCO	VIVENDI UNIV.	20
	ARX FATALIS	ARKANE	D'CATCHER GAMES	19
	AUSTIN POWERS	TBA	TAKE 2	4
	BATTLESTAR GALACTICA	VIVENDI UNIVERSAL	VIVENDI UNIV.	17
	BEYOND GOOD & EVIL	UBI SOFT	UBI SOFT	17
	BLOODY ROAR EXTREME	KONAMI	KONAMI	N/A
	BREED	BRAT DESIGNS	CDV	N/A
	CELEBRITY DEATHATCH	BIG APE	TAKE 2	22
	COUNTER-STRIKE	VALVE	VIVENDI UNIV.	N/A
	CRASH NITRO KART	VICARIOUS VISIONS	VIVENDI UNIV.	22
	DINOTOPIA: THE SUNSTONE ODYSSE	TDK MEDIACTIVE	TDK MEDIACTIVE	17
	DR. SEUSS' THE CAT IN THE HAT	MAGENTA	VIVENDI UNIV.	N/A
	ESPIONAGE	MIDWAY	MIDWAY	17
	ESPN NBA 2K4	SEGA	SEGA	22
	FIFA 2004	EA	EA	17
	FOUR HORSE. OF APOCALYPSE	3DO	3DO	8
	GOBLIN COMMANDER: UTH	JALECO	JALECO	N/A
	KAO THE KANGAROO 2	TITUS	TITUS	N/A
	LMA MANAGER 2004	CODEMASTERS	CODEMASTERS	17
	MAGIC THE GATHERING: B'GROUNDS	SECRET LEVEL	ATARI	18
	MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN	EA	EA	16
	MEMORICK THE APP. KNIGHT	MICROIDS	MICROSOFT	16
	MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: OP. SURMA	PARADIGM	ATARI	3
	MURAKUMO	FROM SOFTWARE	UBI SOFT	N/A
	PAINKILLER	DREAMCATCHER	MINDSCAPE	N/A
	ROADKILL	MIDWAY	MIDWAY	17
	ROBIN HOOD DEF. OF THE CROWN	CINEMAWARE	CAPCOM	N/A
	SCOOBY-DOO! MYSTERY MAYHEM	ART. MIND & MOVEMENT	TBA	N/A
	SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORM.	LUCASARTS	ACTIVISION	17
	SEGA GT ONLINE	SEGA	SEGA	22
	SNIPER ELITE	REBELLION	WANADOO	12
	SPY HUNTER 2	MIDWAY	MIDWAY	N/A
	STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT: JEDI ACAD.	RAVEN	ACTIVISION	N/A
	STARCRAFT: GHOST	BLIZZARD	VIVENDI UNIV.	10
	STRIDENT - THE SHADOW FRONT	PHANTAGRAM	PHANTAGRAM	4
	SUDEKI	CLIMAX	MICROSOFT	11
	TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACH.	ATARI	ATARI	N/A
	THE HAUNTED MANSION	HIGH VOLTAGE	TDK	N/A
	THE HOBBIT	SIERRA	VIVENDI UNIV.	15
	THE SIMS BUSTIN' OUT	EA	EA	20
	THE SUFFERING	MIDWAY	MIDWAY	20
	THE X-FILES: RESIST OR SERVE	SIERRA	VIVENDI UNIV.	N/A
	TLOTR: RETURN OF THE KING	EA	EA	17
	TOTAL CLUB MANAGER	EA	EA	N/A
	WHIPLASH	CRYSTAL DYNAMICS	EIDOS	N/A
TBA 2003	ARMADA 2	TBA	METRO AUTUMND	4
	A SOUND OF THUNDER	COMPUTER ARTWORKS	BAM!	13
	CHARLIE'S ANGELS	TBA	UBI SOFT	4
	COLD WINTER	SWORDFISH STUDIOS	VIVENDI UNIV.	N/A
	COMANCHE	NOVALOGIC	NOVALOGIC	4
	DRONEZ	ZETHA GAMEZ	METROAUTUMND	4
	DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS: HEROES	ATARI	ATARI	N/A
	FALCONE: INTO THE MAELSTROM	POINT BLANK	VIRGIN	N/A
	FLAT-OUT	BUGBEAR ENT.	3DO	N/A
	FROGGER CLASSIC	KONAMI	KONAMI	N/A
	HAVEN: CALL OF THE KING	TRAVELLER'S TALES	MIDWAY	9
	INSIDE PITCH 2003	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	16
	LEGION	SEVEN STUDIOS	MIDWAY	4
	LOOSE CANNON	DIGITAL ANVIL	UBI SOFT	4
	MOTO X	KONAMI	KONAMI	N/A
	MUZZLE FLASH	JVC	MICROSOFT	10
TBA 2003	PILLAGE	BITS STUDIOS	TBA	20
	POWERDROME	ARGONAUT	TBA	N/A
	RUN LIKE HELL	INTERPLAY	VIVENDI UNIV.	N/A
	SHAYDE: MONSTERS VS HUMANS	TBA	METRO 3D	N/A
TBA 2003	WILD RINGS	MICROSOFT JAPAN	MICROSOFT	N/A
SPRING 04	ARMED & DANGEROUS	PLANET MOON	ACTIVISION	18
	AUTO MODELISTA ONLINE	CAPCOM	CAPCOM	N/A
	BC	INTREPID ENT.	MICROSOFT	7
	DANCING STAGE UNLEASHED	KONAMI	KONAMI	19
	DEAD MAN'S HAND	RAVEN	ATARI	N/A
	DRIVER 3	REFLECTIONS	ATARI	N/A
	FABLE	BIG BLUE BOX	MICROSOFT	12
	GRAND THEFT AUTO 3 / VICE CITY	ROCKSTAR	TAKE 2	22
	HALO 2	BUNGIE	MICROSOFT	9
	KAMEO: EOP	RARE	MICROSOFT	10
	KILL.SWITCH	NAMCO	TBA	18
	KOREA: FORGOTTEN CONFLICT	PLASTIC REALITY TECH.	CENEGA	16
	LINKS 2004	IN-HOUSE	MICROSOFT	N/A
	MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE	SAVAGE	TDK	N/A
	MIDWAY TREASURES	MIDWAY	MIDWAY	N/A
	MUSIC MIXER	WILDTANGENT	MICROSOFT	18
	NINJA GAIDEN	TECMO	MICROSOFT	18
	PILOT DOWN	WIDE GAMES	WANADOO	N/A
	PRINCE OF PERSIA	UBI SOFT	UBI SOFT	18
	R: RACING EVOLUTION	NAMCO	TBA	18
	RACE DRIVER 2	CODEMASTERS	CODEMASTERS	N/A
	RICHARD BURNS RALLY	TBA	SCI	N/A
	ROGUE OPS	BITS STUDIOS	KEMCO	N/A
	SONIC HEROES	SEGA	SEGA	N/A
	SPLINTER CELL 2: PANDORA TOM.	UBI SOFT	UBI SOFT	19
	TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES	KONAMI	KONAMI	N/A
	THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS	GENKI	VIVENDI UNIV.	N/A
	WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP POOL 2004	BLADE INTERACTIVE	KEMCO	22
	WRATH UNLEASHED	THE COLLECTIVE	ACTIVISION	18
SUMMER 04	KILL BILL	BLACK LABEL	VIVENDI UNIV.	N/A
	FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR	PANDEMIC	THQ	N/A
	SHADOW OPS: RED MERCURY	ZOMBIE	ATARI	18
	SPIDER-MAN 2	TREYARCH	ACTIVISION	N/A
	STEEL BATTALION: LOC	CAPCOM	CAPCOM	N/A
	THIEF 3	ION STORM	EIDOS	N/A
AUTUMN 04	CONAN	CAULDRON	TDK	N/A
	MEN OF VALOR: THE VIETNAM WAR	2015 INC	VIVENDI UNIV.	20
	RED NINJA: END OF HONOR	TRANJI	VIVENDI UNIV.	23
WINTER 04	CALL OF CTHULHU	TBA	HEADFIRST	12
TBA 2004	AREA 51	MIDWAY	MIDWAY	N/A
	BALLERS	MIDWAY	MIDWAY	4
	BLACK & WHITE: NEXT GEN	LIONHEAD	MICROSOFT	4
	BLACK 9	MAJESCO	VIVENDI UNIV.	20
	BLOODRAYNE 2	MAJESCO	ACTIVISION	N/A
	BREAKDOWN	NAMCO	TBA	N/A
	CALL OF DUTY	SPARK	ACTIVISION	17
	CARVE	ARGONAUT	TBA	19
	CONKER: LIVE & UNCUT	RARE	MICROSOFT	18
	COPS	FOX	VIVENDI UNIV.	4
	DEAD OR ALIVE 4: CODE CRONUS	TECMO	MICROSOFT	N/A
	DEAD OR ALIVE ONLINE	TECMO	MICROSOFT	18
	DINOSAUR HUNTING	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	N/A
	DOMINION	PHAROAH	TBA	4
	DOOM 3	ID	ACTIVISION	N/A
	DUALITY	TRILOBYTE GRAPHICS	PHANTAGRAM	4
	ENCLAVE 2	STARBREEZE	SWING	16
	FAHRENHEIT	QUANTIC DREAM	VIVENDI UNIV.	18
	GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS	GAME FACTORY	CAPCOM	16
	HALF-LIFE 2	VALVE	VIVENDI UNIV.	19
	JADE EMPIRE	BIOWARE	MICROSOFT	22
	MALICE: KAT'S TALE	ARGONAUT	VIVENDI UNIV.	9
	MAGATAMA	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	23
	MICRO MANIA	BLADE INTERACTIVE	KEMCO	N/A
	MORTAL KOMBAT VI	MIDWAY	MIDWAY	N/A
	NFL STREET	EA	EA	20
	NIGHTMARE CREATURES 3	KALISTO	UBI SOFT	N/A
	OTOGI 2	FROM SOFTWARE	TBA	N/A
	PHANTOM DUST	MICROSOFT	MICROSOFT	23
	PERFECT DARK 2	RARE	MICROSOFT	10
	QUAKE IV	RAVEN SOFTWARE	ACTIVISION	N/A
	RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2	DICE	MICROSOFT	N/A
	RESERVOIR DOGS	TBA	SCI	16
	SERIOUS SAM 2	CROTEAM	TAKE 2	21
	STARSKY AND HUTCH 2	EMPIRE	EMPIRE	N/A
	SOLE PREDATOR	APALOOSA	TBA	N/A
	SPEEDBALL 3	BITMAP BROTHERS	TBA	N/A
	STARSHIP TROOPERS	EMPIRE	EMPIRE	N/A
	TEMPLAR	STARBREEZE	TBA	16
	THE BARD'S TALE	INXILE	TBA	23
	THE MATRIX	SHINY	ATARI	19
	THE MOVIES	LIONHEAD	ACTIVISION	16
	THE THING 2	COMPUTER ARTWORKS	VIVENDI UNIV.	N/A
	TRINITY	GREY MATTER STUDIOS	ACTIVISION	17
	TRUE FANTASY LIVE ONLINE	LEVEL 5	MICROSOFT	N/A
	UNFORGIVEN SWORD	KNIGHT TABLE GAMES	TBA	N/A
	WORLD CHAMP. SNOOKER 2004	BLADE INTERACTIVE	CODEMASTERS	N/A
	X-MEN: LEGENDS	RAVEN SOFTWARE	ACTIVISION	N/A
	ZANZARAH: THE HIDDEN PORTAL	VIRTUACRAFT	XICAT	N/A







THINK PINK: BARBIE HORSE ADVENTURES IS DUE OUT THIS AUTUMN. PUBLISHED BY VIVENDI UNIVERSAL

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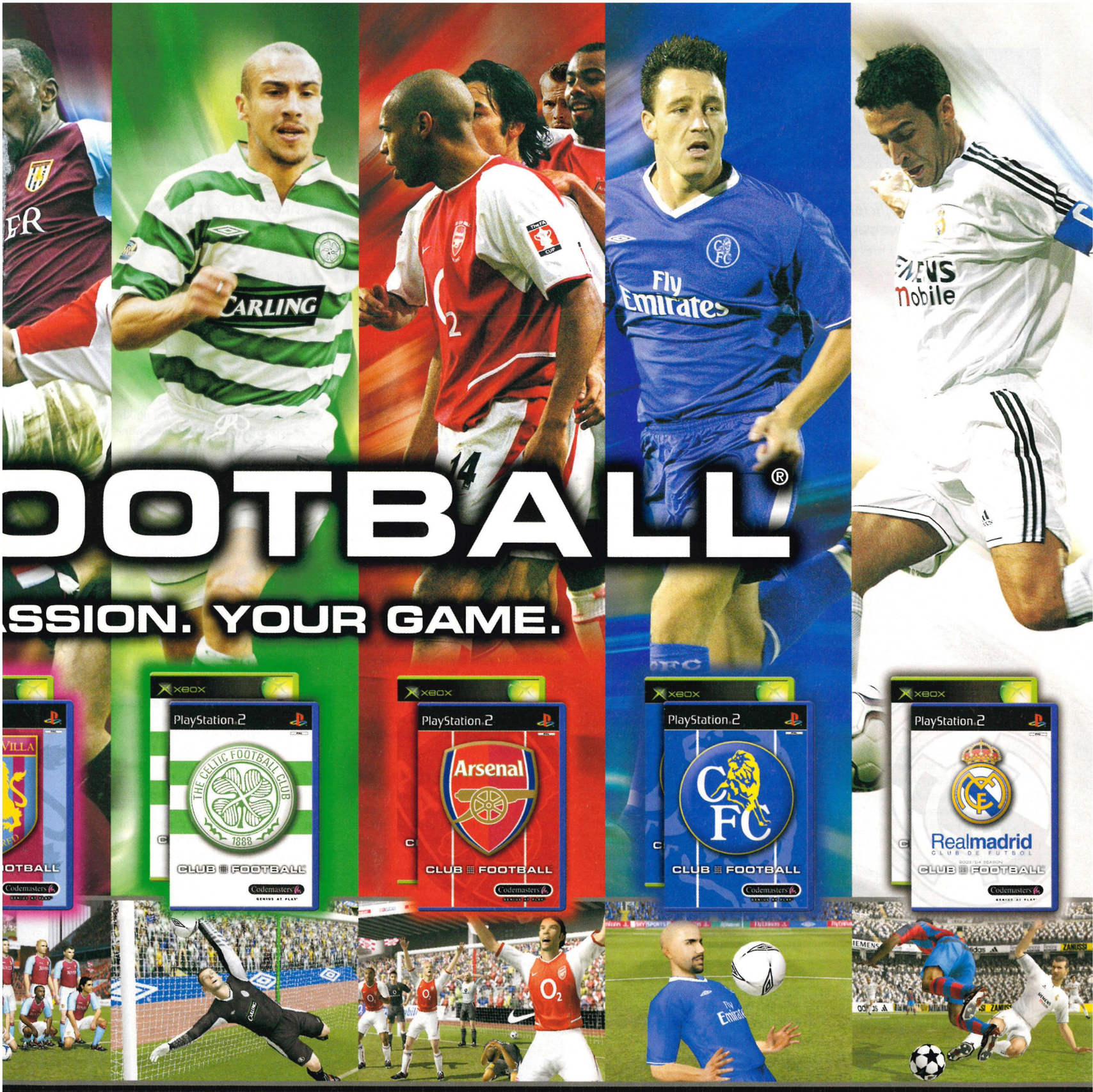

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LETTERS

WRITE TO US AT: *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP. Email us at: **staff@fxmi.com** Or get stuck into the forums on our website at **www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk**. Your opinions count - we want to hear them

STAR LETTER

LINK VS LIVE

I'm worried about the increasing number of titles with Xbox Live but no System Link. For example, *Unreal Championship* was System Link compatible, yet *Unreal II: The Awakening* only shows Xbox live compatibility. I have three Xbox consoles in my home linked up to a network, and have regular Xbox parties. My friends bring round their consoles and up to eight of us play into the wee hours of the morning. Is System Link going to be phased out?

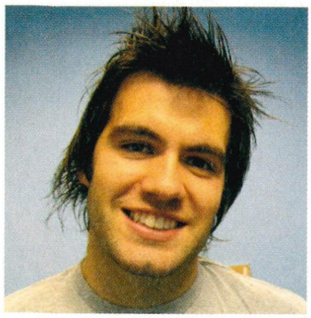
Martin Boyle, via email

Live was always going to be part of the big Xbox picture; the machine was designed with online play as a critical component. But System Link is, and will continue to be, just as important for multiplayer gaming.

There's nothing like getting a few mates together and spending an evening blowing the crap out of each other in the same room. The laughter, the tears, the disgusting profanities... it's all part of the fun. Hell, every week I go round a friend's house where a bunch of us play *Halo* into the small hours. Aged between 18 and 50, and from all walks of life including builders, firemen, and insurance traders, nobody wants to leave at the end of the night.

As if any further proof were needed, check out the feature in last month's mag to see we're all keen advocates of System Link.

↓ The writer of the star letter wins HMV vouchers worth £50.



LETTERS 23 EDITOR

ANDY IRVING
GAME OF CHOICE: **TOP SPIN**

There's fighting talk in the office. Ben's entering a 'Sexiest Gamer' compo, but a few of us reckon ourselves as the rightful heir to the throne. Success is being judged on the amount of mail we each receive, so keep your letters pouring in.

LAZY DAYS UPDATED

Last issue, CT clan member Steve asked why there was no web page that let gamers check their Live account info without having to boot up their Xbox. Steve has spent too much time in Live Clan matches and not enough time on www.xbox.com/live. By simply linking your Gamertag and passport (Hotmail), you can see if your friends are online from your PC. Neat, eh? Check out www.gamertagdatabase.com too. It's an online database of, well, Gamertags. Pretty useful for looking up your Live opponents' stats.

Keep up the awesome demos.

Jonathon Jones, via e-mail

Looks like Steve's been put in his place by Microsoft and eagle-eyed Jonathon. For more Clan trash talk, turn to page 131.

DOUBLE TROUBLE

I cannot believe *GTA3* and *GTA Vice City* are coming to Xbox! I am *soooooo* getting those games because of the double package feature! Will it be double price though, because it's two games, or will there be two games on one disc?

Jules, via email

P.S. Ben - if you're reading this, I will definitely buy some of those X-Fronts pants that you're planning to sell. Good luck with them!

Well, you'd better believe it boyo, 'cos the *GTA* double pack is comin' atcha at the beginning of next year. As far as we are aware, it'll be a two-disc set, yet still at the standard retail price of around 40 quid. Now That's What I Call Value 36.

As far as the X-Fronts go, Ben's setting up the sweatshop as we speak, though why you'd want to get your hands on his pants is beyond me....

DAYDREAM BELIEVER

Hey *OXM*. As you may know, we 14-year-olds have a hell of a lot of coursework to do and I hope mine doesn't all go to waste, as the job I'd like to do when I'm older is a game designer, working at Bungie for example. I'm hoping you can tell me what I need to do to get my dream job.

Lloyd Austin, via email

Nothing gets handed to you on a plate Lloyd, but if you've got your heart set on something then there's no reason why you can't achieve it. Practise writing your own programs and games at home, and keep checking game developers' websites. In your case, Bungie has a vacancy section on its home page, but look to some smaller British developers to start with. Experience and contacts are invaluable, so hassle any similar companies for work experience during the holidays.

WINTRY STORM

Whatever happened to the games that made developers like Blizzard so well respected - like *StarCraft/Broodwar*, *Diablo II*, and *WarCraft*? Why the hell can't we have Blizzard's finest on Xbox? I know there would need to be some changes made to the control system due to the lack of a keyboard, but surely this can be overcome? I played *Diablo II* for about two years and it has to be one of the best online games ever! *StarCraft: Ghost* may have some nice touches, but does anyone really believe it will be any sort of competition for the likes of *Half-Life 2*, *Halo 2*, or *Doom 3*? Blizz, we all know you're the daddy when it comes to strategy/RPGs, so let's have some on Xbox.

Another thought - if Bill Gates wants to spend some money on a software developer with some serious clout, then why doesn't he go after Blizzard?

Johnny Stevenson, via email

Gav's just got back from Japan where he saw the upcoming *StarCraft: Ghost*, and he's been raving about it non-stop. For further proof, check out the Exclusive Access on page 044. As for Microsoft buying Blizzard, I'm sure there are legitimate reasons behind all corporate acquisitions - Microsoft isn't just a big company that buys out all the competition, you know...

SHINY HAPPY PEOPLE

Well done on being the number one Xbox mag. It is good to read honest reviews of games. I've been playing games since the ZX80 (yes, I know!) days, so I have a great understanding of games. It makes me laugh when people go on about "my console is better than yours" and I think we should count ourselves lucky that great companies make and develop great games, and that ALL consoles are fun.

Peter Hussey, via email »

↓ *StarCraft: Ghost*: Blizzard's finest is heading our way.

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OXM Hall of Shame

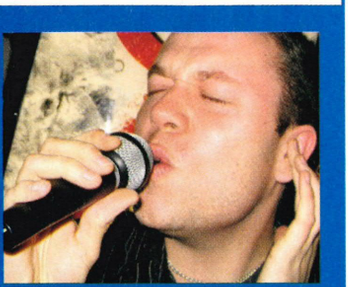
The terrible things we got up to this month

On Steve's first official day as editor, he went out for a "celebratory drink". He rolled in the following lunchtime, still blazing drunk. There's nothing like leading by example...

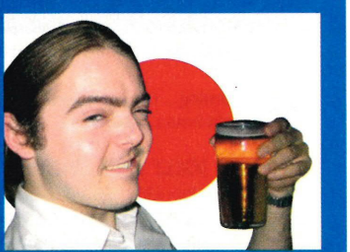
Gav went Tokyo, the land of culture and refinement. What did our Ogden end up doing? Belting out *Trouble* by Shampoo in a karaoke bar to an audience of bemused businessmen.

Vanessa received the attention of an avid fan this month. He called and requested an autograph, but reports that he's got a tattoo of her on his chest are unconfirmed at this time.

Ben went down the pub and got absolutely smashed on two pints of Japanese lager. He kept babbling on about how he had to get home in time to watch *Squid Attack* on Channel Five. Oh dear...



↑ Craig David is bricking himself.



↑ Ben: a very, very cheap date.

↑ *KOTOR*: don't break limbs on purpose just to get some gaming hours in, okay?

Quick, make this man President! Between the hand-holding and singing, we could end all war and promote world peace for ever. Why can't everybody just get along? Well they could, but there's nothing wrong with a bit of healthy competition, is there?

LOONEY TUNES

Whilst playing my Xbox, I tried to read your magazine. To my amazement, I found out that you can't do both. Why is this? I mean, if I want to shoot aliens and read at the same time, why can't I? And what is the crack in *Ghost Recon: Island Thunder*? I mean, why would you want to go through a forest when it is misty? Obviously you would wait for it to clear so you don't get killed. And in *MOH: Frontline*, why can't you kill a person in your team? I shot this guy like 50 times and he wouldn't die. Is he Superman?

C Clark, North Scotland

P.S. As I write this I'm in a mental institute and they are making me watch *Countdown*... NO!!!!!!

We get a lot of mad folk writing in to the mag, so you'll be glad to hear you are not alone. But then, maybe you're sane and the rest of the world is crazy? By balancing the mag next to the TV, and learning to independently operate each eyeball, there's no reason why you can't effectively peruse and play. Multitasking, posh office types call it. Oh yeah, and never ever diss *Countdown* within these pages again.

PLASTERED

I've just broken my leg, and I'll be in plaster for six weeks. Bummer. But, seeing as I have so much time on my hands, and the fact that I've been given *KOTOR* as a sympathy present, I thought what better time to have a go at that challenge you set when you reviewed the game – the longest possible session. So I sat down and played. And played. And played. I lost myself in this fabulous game for an eight-hour shift, before my sister and mum kicked me off the TV to catch *Corrie* (where's the sympathy?).

Tom Walker, Kent

Ah *Corrie*, the queen of British soaps. Exciting, groundbreaking storylines coupled with both seasoned actors and impressive newcomers provides a well-rounded and thoroughly enjoyable soap. Many of us here at *OXM* love it, and the previous night's episode (along with *EastEnders*) is always the first topic of conversation in the

Shorts

WHY NOT TEXT US AT: 0778 148 2669
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BADLY DRAWING BOYS

Did you make up the 'Only on Xbox' sign that is placed upon some games because, if you did, I bet you're well chuffed, aren't you?

Jules, via email

No, it's a Microsoft design. Besides, our art team is only ever chuffed whilst berating Vanessa or if Spurs manage to scrape a draw.

SELL US YOUR SOUL

Star Wars: KOTOR is even better then *Halo* but why can't I enter your site if I'm not a subscriber? I buy your magazine every month in my local games shop

Ronny Biesmans, via email

By subscribing you'd be killing three birds with one stone, rather than the regular two.
1) You'll get the mag delivered to your door before it hits the shops, and at a knockdown price too.
2) You'll receive a free game.
3) And you'll have full access to our website, along with an exclusive monthly newsletter.
Need any other excuse?

BRING IT BACK

I buy your mag regularly, but I have missed a few issues. Is there any way to get back issues of the ones I've missed?

Jamaine Jacobs, via email

Easy. Give the nice subscriptions people a call (see page 050) and they'll sort you out with back issues. If you're really sad, order additional copies and keep them sealed in the bag. They'll be worth money someday you know...

FANTASY WORLD

I was wondering if any of the *Final Fantasy* series would end up on Xbox?

Madhu, via email

There are no immediate plans to bring the series over, but with *KOTOR* and *PSO* already out, and the mouthwatering prospect of *Fable*, *Jade Empire* and *Sudeki*, who needs *Final Fantasy*?

BLAINE-IAC

Having seen the *Halo 2* trailer, I can no longer wait for it to be released. I'm off to freeze myself in a block of ice. See you in the spring.

Jonathan Bethell Aldred, via email

A cunning plan. Then, 44 days before the release date, suspend yourself in a glass box outside your local games shop in a bid to be the first person in the UK to get a copy.

IT'S COMING HOME...

Is *GTA Vice City* coming to Xbox?

Kevin T, via email

Yes it is. Check out last month's preview for some juicy tidbits.

UNGRATEFUL

Why are there so few demos on the *Official Xbox* demo DVD? Why can't you put more demos on the CD?

Paul Gluick, via email

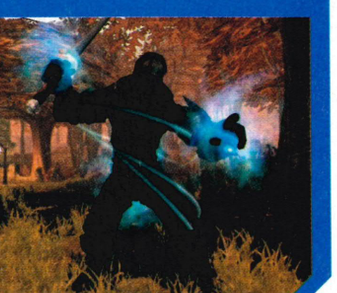
Hang on just a minute. We've had eight for the last two months running, and this still isn't enough? What do you want? Blood?

COD PHILOSOPHER

You don't play with Xbox. Xbox plays with you!

Meric Zero, via email

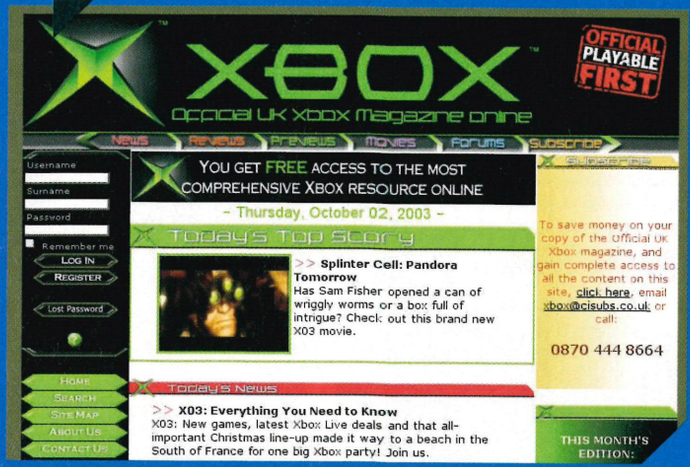
You may let your Xbox play with you, Meric, but I play with myself.



↑ *Fable*: who needs *FF*? Pah!

SHOP RUN: IT'S 4.45PM AND PHIL'S GOING ON A SHOP RUN. WHAT'S EVERYONE HAVING? OWEN: RAISIN & BISCUIT YORKIE. PHIL: DOUBLE DECKER. STEVE: CAN OF TOP DECK SHANDY. VANESSA: GALAXY CARAMEL. ANDY: MAYNARD'S SOUR GUMS. BEN: SCAMPI FRIES. GAV: DIET COKE.

LETTERS



Website Story

Visit the new improved **www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk**

YOU'RE NEVER ALONE in your love of Xbox. Our brand new internet forum is open to everyone (not just subscribers). All you have to do is register a username and password and post in the following sections.

GAMES
Want to know what other *OXM* fans are playing? Read opinions on games and whether you lot agree with our scores.

GENERAL DISCUSSIONS
Your destination for non-Xbox topics including film, TV, sport, music...

HARDWARE
Having technical problems with your Xbox? Suffering from a loose lead or a broken pad or just want to find out about the hottest new kit? Look here.

PLAY:MORE
Find out what's coming up on the Game Disc. Swap cheats, glitches and ideas for Play:More movies.

RANTS
Disappointed with the mag or Xbox? Post here and tell us what's wrong.

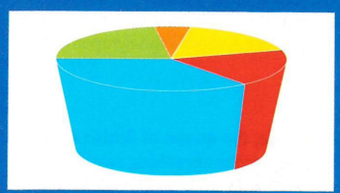
XBOX LIVE
Join a clan and arrange online matches through this hotbed of Live gaming action. Also find more info about installing broadband.

YOU DECIDE

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

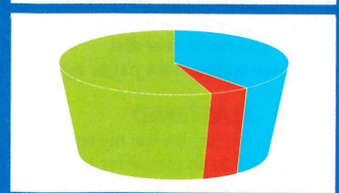
Best comedy programme ever?

KEY (per cent)	
Bo Selecta	9
Red Dwarf	38
I'm Alan Partridge (too low)	21
The Office	15
Family Guy	17



Are you a fan of *The Blood Gulch Chronicles*?

KEY (per cent)	
Hell yes: It's what the Internet was made for:	58
Hell no: I'm a fool	8
Red vs what?!? Blood eh?	34



SOURCE: *Official Xbox Magazine* forum

»GET ON THE FORUM NOW! To join the discussions on the forums, just head for our great new 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.

↑ ***Project Gotham Racing 2*: will it be adorning your Christmas tree?**

»» morning... Oh yeah, the game. Eight hours. Well done.

JOLLY NICE CHAPS

I thought I'd write to dispel a myth that Microsoft is trying to rip us all off in the software or gaming world. I bought an Xbox on the launch date and, to my horror, it broke this month. I thought, here we go, an expensive repair bill, or buy a new one.

I rang the Xbox technical helpline and found that they would repair my Xbox for free even though it is over 18 months old, along with free pickup and delivery. I double-checked this with the guy on the phone and he reassured me that I was not hearing things. My Xbox was picked up within two days and is currently being repaired. WAY TO GO MICROSOFT!

Microsoft is really pushing Xbox and Xbox Live, and it should be an interesting next 12 months in the console world.

Mick Loake, via email

Well it's clear Microsoft wasn't taking the mick (sorry) when it pledged total support to the consumer in developing the best console in the world ever™. If the customers are happy, then everybody's happy.

EXTRA RARE

After reading Nick Chaffey's letter 'Well Done or Medium Rare' in Issue 21, I was a little peeved to say the least. First of all, doesn't he (and the rest of the Nintendo fanboys) realise that Rare is a long-term investment for Microsoft? Look at the company when it was with Nintendo, on the NES and SNES. It produced some classics that people are gagging for a remake of in this generation. Also, he mentions *GoldenEye* and *Donkey Kong 64* as Rare's greatest games. In fact, *DK 64* wasn't that good compared to *Conker's Bad Fur Day*, *Perfect Dark* and *Diddy Kong Racing*.

Just thought I'd let Xbox owners know that Rare hasn't turned rubbish now it's with Xbox - I'm sure its shining moments are still to come.

Darren Gargette, via email

Well, this steak's still got some juice left in it. Rare has definitely not "turned rubbish". Check out the awesome *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* on page 076 for proof, and the upcoming *Conker* title looks outstanding too. I'm sure that the creative think-tank that is Rare has got more surprises up its sleeves too.

'TIS THE SEASON...

As the festive season is fast approaching, I thought it might be a good idea to break the tradition of sticking a star or fairy atop the tree. I've come up with the ultimate Xbox Xmas tree instead. Gone are the days of dangling baubles and tinsel on the tree - instead, adorn it with copies of the best games, like *PGR2*, and twinkling Xbox lights leading all the way to the top, where sits a joypad in all its glory. A festive tree for the hardened gamer.

Stuart Gregory, Cwmbach, Aberdare

P.S. I hope you enjoy the enclosed model tree.

↑ **Santa's been generous this year.**

Thanks for the tree, Stuart - if only my family would go for something like that. But don't you think you're a tiny bit early? At least you're not as bad as supermarkets - their aisles are filled with advent calendars in September. No more festive shenanigans until next month's Christmas issue, please.

Use the streets of Florence to show your friends the true meaning of art.

BIZARRE CREATIONS

Microsoft game studios

Let the world know how good you look. Project Gotham Racing® 2 is the next level in racing. Take on anyone, anywhere on the Xbox *Live*™ service and show them what you've got. PGR™ 2 is as much about looking good as driving fast and with the cars you have to choose from, you have no excuse. Featuring the Enzo Ferrari and over 100 of the world's most desirable cars in which to take chances, earn Kudos points and climb up the rankings. Tear up the streets of over a hundred courses in 10 realistic international cities including Sydney, Chicago, Barcelona, Yokohama and Moscow. With PGR™ 2, winning never looked so good.

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EXCLUSIVE ACCESS

Where we go behind the scenes of the biggest games currently in development

↑ Nova can climb into the hardest-to-reach areas, creep up behind an enemy and rip their heads off without making a noise. She's fit too!

STARCRAFT: GHOST

Nova was playable behind closed doors in Tokyo and we were the only UK Xbox magazine invited. Here's why you need a ghost in your machine.

WORDS: GAVIN OGDEN

GAME INFORMATION	
DEVELOPER:	**BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT**
PUBLISHER:	**VIVENDI**
RELEASE DATE:	**MAY 2004**
PLAYERS:	**1**
WEBSITE:	**WWW.BLIZZARD.COM**

A LOT'S ALREADY been said about *StarCraft: Ghost* and with good reason. For a start, the universally respected US studio Blizzard is behind the game. It's also the first time a third-person action title has been seen in the phenomenally popular real-time strategy series (over six million copies sold on PC) and, after being one of the privileged few to play it, we have no doubts that this could be one of the strongest action games of 2004. Female badass Nova really does demand your complete attention.

Since we last saw the game in Issue 14 much has been added to beef up the sci-fi action extravaganza. Trained assassin and leading lady Nova has a bunch of super-cool abilities which are essential to progress through the game. These come in the form of stealth, enhanced vision and being able to slow down time. "Nova's psionic powers have now all been finalised since you saw the game last," explains producer John Lagrave. "The speed ability was the hardest to lock down because it really is a powerful asset. If we weren't careful, players could use it to dominate the entire game."

If you're completely unfamiliar with the world of *StarCraft: Ghost* then allow us to quickly recap. After much training, Nova has become an experienced Ghost unit. The action takes place on various planets of the *StarCraft* universe and features the three distinct races from the series: Terran, Zerg, and Protoss. You have to work with and against the various races in order to steal and secure a very important object. Plot specifics are being kept under wraps as giving the game away this early wouldn't please anyone - especially Lagrave.

The first level we sunk our claws into saw Nova having to sneak her way in and gun her way out of a huge station called the Pinnacle Base, set in the middle of a frighteningly realistic tornado. As you're right in the middle of the vortex, you can only see debris and clouds swirling around. Our jaws almost hit the floor when we looked towards the top of the tornado to see a gaping hole and bright sunshine peeking through. One wrong move here and you'll be whipped up and swirled around like a mouthful of Chianti at a wine-tasting convention before being spat out.

↑ Enemies will team up to bring you down.

Weapons on display included a standard pistol, heavy machine-gun and sniper rifle. Expect a lot more in the final game, but for demo purposes this tiny arsenal served its purpose well. We began the level by having to tiptoe around the platforms avoiding the Terrans. If one spots you, others will be »

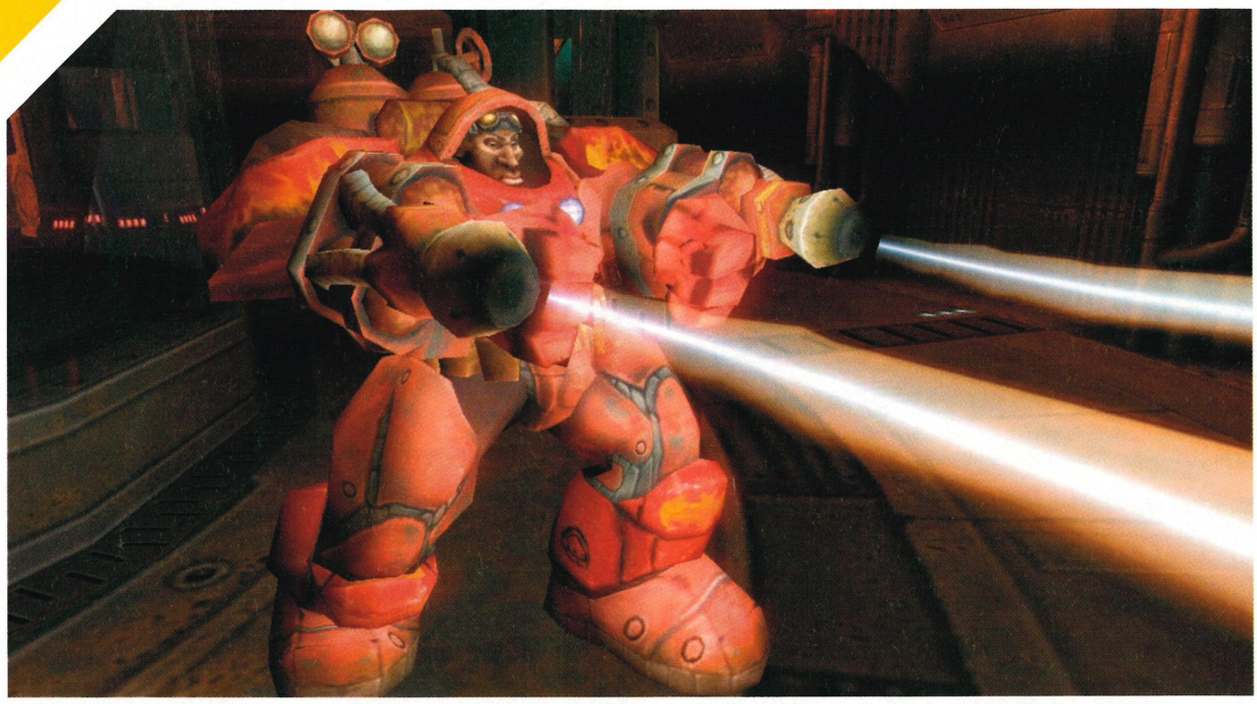
BONUS INFO

»ORGAN GRINDER
Nova is a prodigy of Hauler, an old Ghost commando. In the *StarCraft* series, he runs the black ops division and is head of the Terran government. In *Ghost*, he maintains control of the division that Nova is part of.

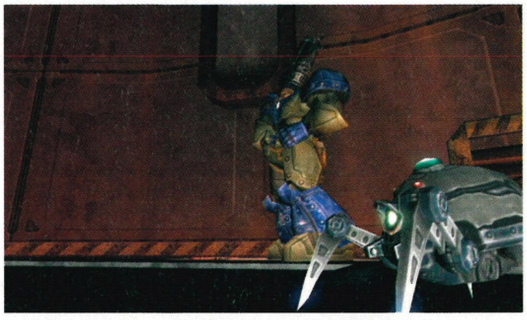
BONUS INFO

THREE KINGS
The Terrans are a mobile unit that can use anything and everything in a variety of combat. Pretty much the same as Nova then. Zergs are described as animalistic characters that feed off other races, absorbing genetic material into their species to become stronger. The Protoss are classed as an enigmatic race that use mental powers and cutting-edge technology.

SILENT STRIKE
No stealth action game would be complete without a steal kill move. Nova's hand-to-hand combat skills include a lethal silent kill. By creeping up behind an unsuspecting enemy, an icon will appear serving up the chance of a silent kill. Just hit the Right trigger and Nova will jump on top of them and snap bones, backed by some cool animations.



↑ Aim for his head and take him out easily. If he pulls his visor down he'll be a lot harder to kill, so make sure you're bang on the money.



↑ Spider Mines can be lethal at close range like this.

↑ This looks like the perfect opportunity for a silent kill.

alerted and before you know it, you'll be swamped. We found this out the hard way.

Second time round we took the silent but deadly approach. "Using Nova's stealth ability you can turn invisible and creep up behind enemy units and perform silent kills with a flick of the Right trigger," Lagrave continues. Nova can only remain undercover for a limited time, so we chose to hide inside boxes and wait for our psi energy to regenerate before continuing, occasionally picking off any single units.

Cameras can spot Nova in stealth mode and alert guards, but pulling your pistol and taking a few out soon puts an end to being watched by the eye in the sky. Once inside the base we revealed ourselves to the Terrans and unleashed hell. If at any time the heat got too fearsome, we'd go invisible, creep into the shadows and wait for the threat to pass by, performing bone-crunching silent kills on stragglers.

By double-jumping up to pipes running along the ceiling, Nova automatically attaches

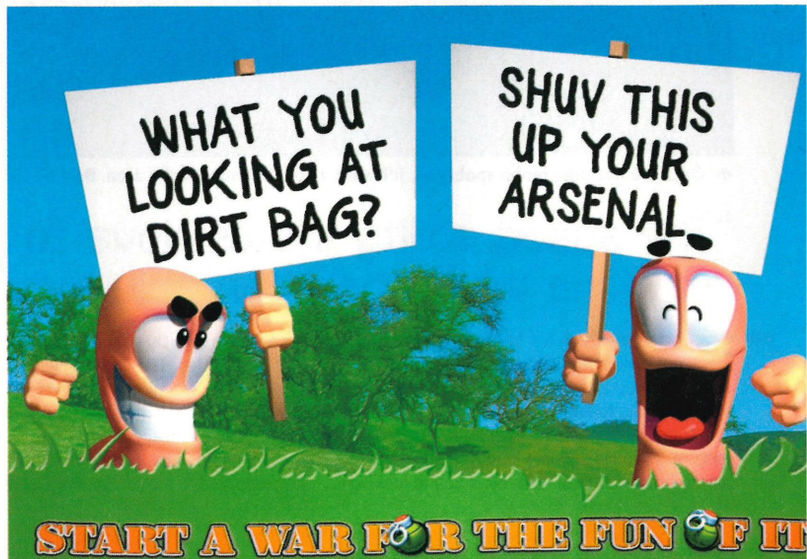
ELEC-TRICKERY

Use your psi energy powers to turn lights on and off

ONE OF NOVA'S many skills is the ability to tamper with all things electric. She's equipped with a special psi energy power that can be used as a dampener to disrupt the energy fields of cameras and power stations. Many in-game objectives will require you to knock out the enemy's electrical eyes and ears before moving on up to land a crushing blow.

↑ Take out energy fields using your extra-special energy psi powers.

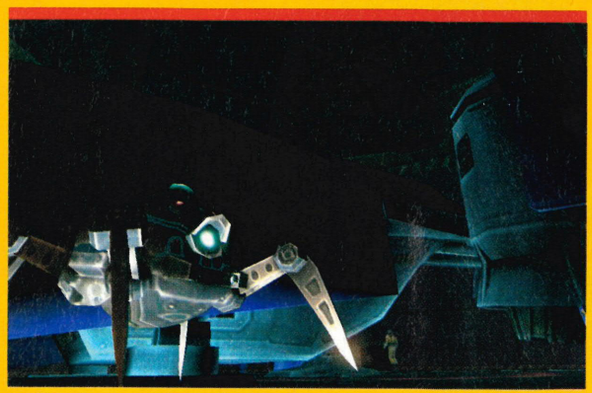
MORE THAN ONE THAT GOT AWAY. WE ALL KNOW JAPAN IS THE HOME OF SUSHI BUT GAVIN DETESTS FISH. HE SPENT EVERY DAY DODGING IT LIKE THE PLAGUE.



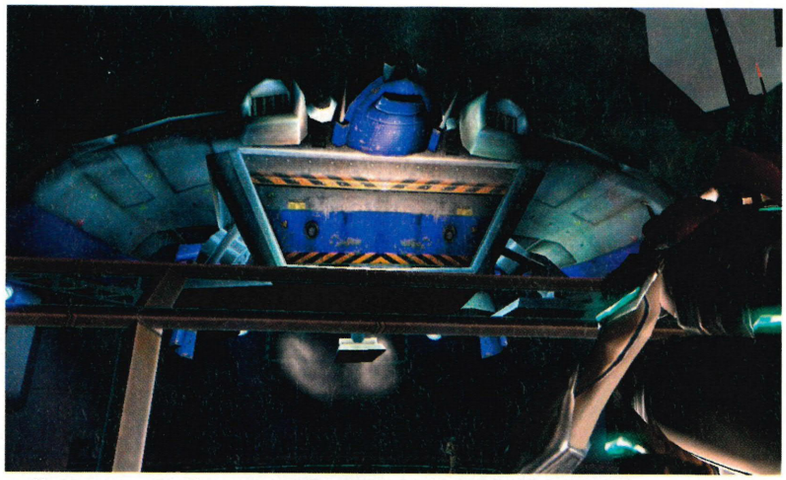
BIG BAD BOSS

AS NOVA ATTEMPTS to bring down both *StarCraft* races, she'll have to go head to head with the bosses of the family.

↑ Nova scales a ladder to get a bird's-eye view of whatever the hell that is in front of her. It looks very, very messy...

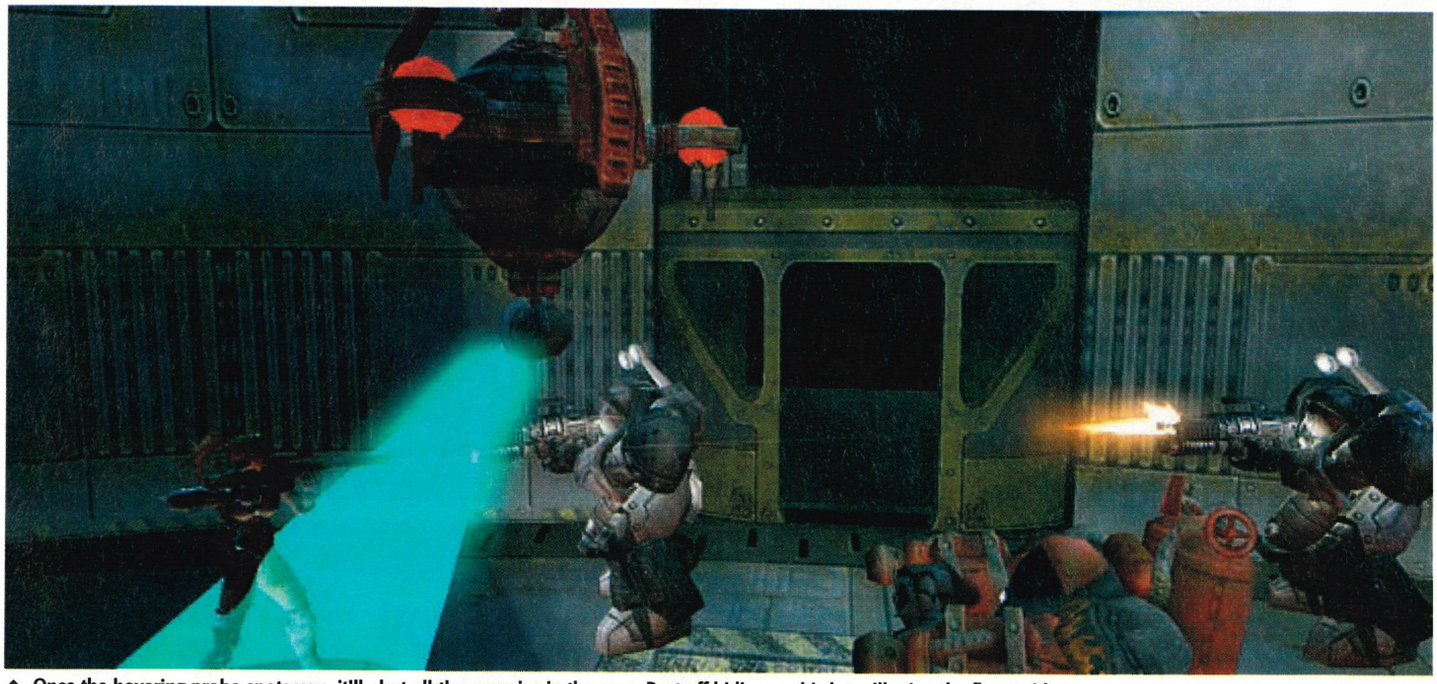


↑ The classic mechanical spider boss. Every game should have one. We hope it's not as hard as it is big though.



↑ Nova creeps up to the enemy without them having a clue she's staring them in the face.

↑ Give Nova a chance and she'll make the hardest men alive cry like babies for their lives.



↑ Once the hovering probe spots you, it'll alert all the enemies in the area. Best off hiding as this lot will wipe the floor with you.

"The speed ability allows Nova to run at her enemies in real-time while they can only move in slow motion"

herself by using her lovely long legs. Pull out your sniper rifle and she hangs there while lining up a target who has no idea his world is about to end.

A special sight ability illuminates weak spots on enemies and any kind of object that can be interacted with close by. If you're looking for a switch to flick, go into this mode and all will be revealed. The speed ability allows Nova to run at her enemies in real-time while they can only move in slow motion. Handy when an enemy's going for the alarm.

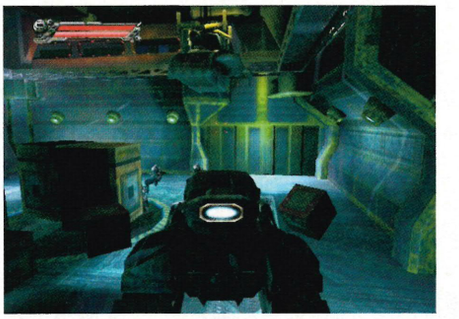
The kind of gameplay we experienced could be compared to that of *Splinter Cell* (Issue 10, 9.0) - the only difference being that if you do get spotted it's not game over. *Ghost* gives you the chance to get yourself out of trouble as well as into it, a feature Sam Fisher's adventure lacked.

After a load of chat about hopping into a vehicle for extra firepower, we got to see the escape feature in action. This

BONUS INFO

STORYBOARD
Set a few years after the end of the PC expansion pack *Brood War*, *Ghost* will be a familiar world to fans of the series.

↑ This location requires you to use stealth rather than bullets. Use the trees for cover and keep low.

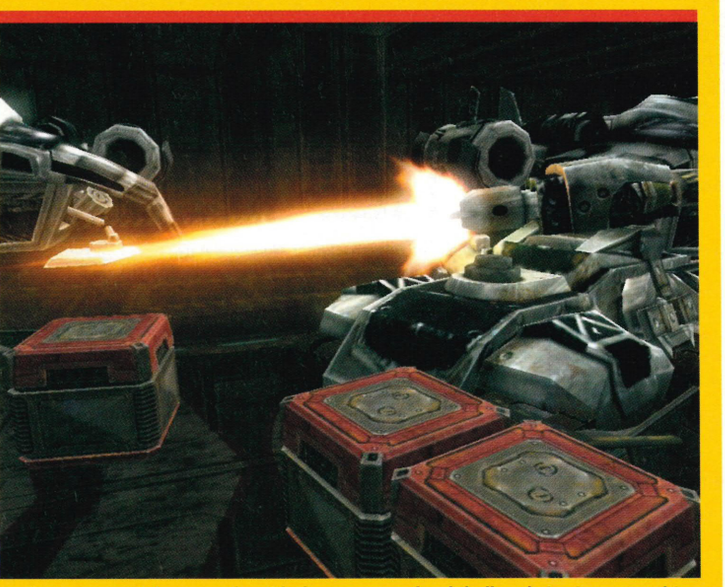


↑ Several vehicles will make the final game.

↑ Pick up robots and dump them overboard.

TANK GIRL »» When the going gets a little too tough for standard firearms, nab yourself a rock hard vehicle

↑ Now you've found yourself a state-of-the-art tank with a huge turret, get moving and find the action. You can cause all kinds of trouble in that...



↑ Once contact's been made with the enemy, unleash hell and give 'em everything you've got. And then some more. Don't stop just because you're on a roll.

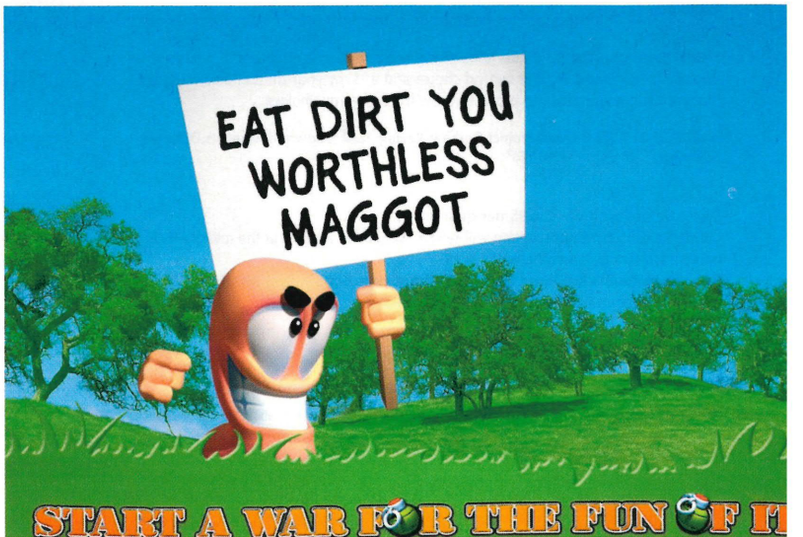
SING ALONG: A FIRST FOR GAVIN IN JAPAN WAS SINGING KARAOKE IN A BAR. HE COULDN'T BE PULLED OFF THE MIC AFTER DOING SHAMPOO'S 'TROUBLE'. OH DEAR...

»» BONUS INFO

»» BIG BAD BOSS
Everybody hates the boss, right? Well, you'll be glad to know that the final game will feature four boss battles where Nova comes up against the strictest of timekeepers. Several huge-scale battles will also be played out over the game's 23 missions.

»» mechanic worked in a similar fashion to *Halo* (Issue 01, 9.7) and the Warthogs, only the turret produced a much larger burst of gunpower followed by walls collapsing on enemies and the entire screen shaking. We liked. And if shaking the foundations of the very game itself with a rocket wasn't enough, you can call in the famous nuclear strikes from the RTS game, shattering bones into millions of tiny fragments.

StarCraft: Ghost is shaping up to be something very special. We saw the Xbox version running next to the PS2 build and the difference was instantly apparent. So much more detail was present in the Xbox version, and visually Nova has come on leaps and bounds since our last visit. After playing the game for hours it was clear to see that everything is coming together beautifully. Add to that the prospect of Xbox Live downloadable missions and you can see why we're excited. That's why we spent 12 long hours sat on a plane going round the twist. Worth every cramped, sleepless second.



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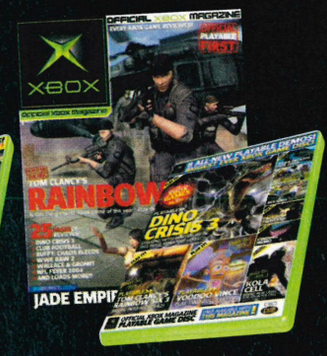

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News, previews and reviews before anyone else

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☐ Project Gotham Racing OXB P22P

☐ Oddworld Munch's Oddysee OXB P22M

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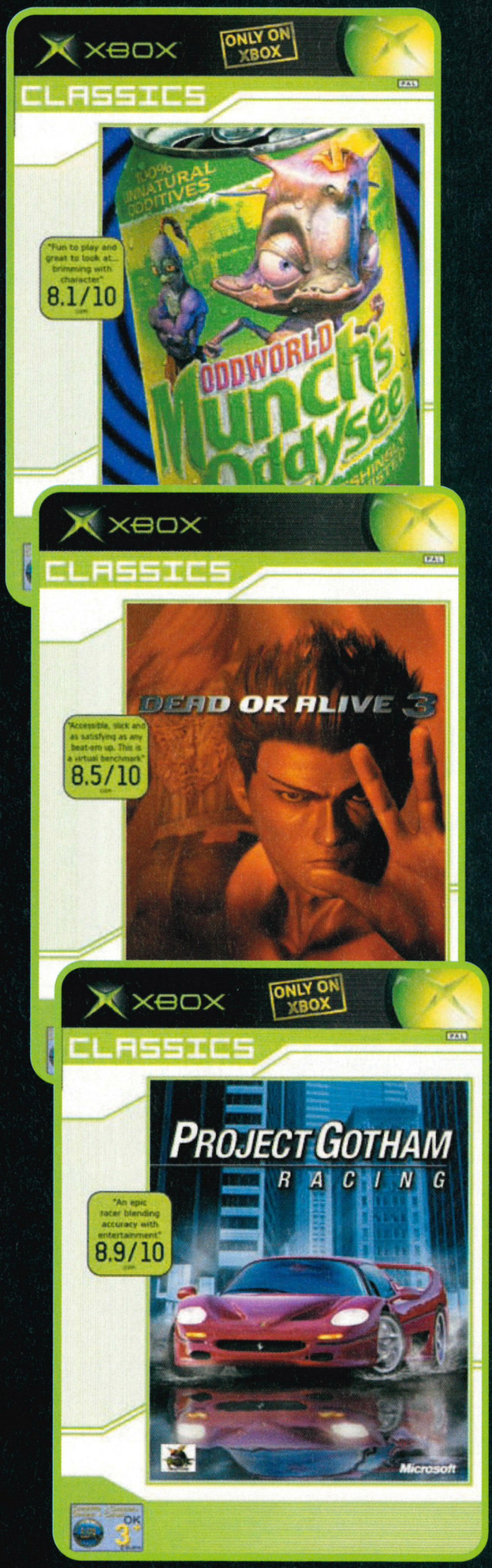

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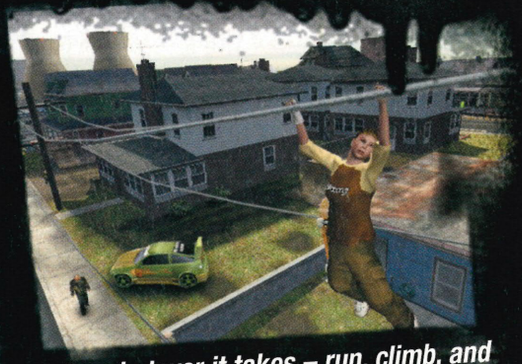
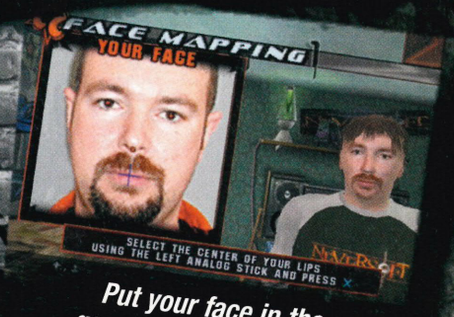
YOU OWN

THUG™ stars YOU as a skate punk out to make it big.



Do whatever it takes – run, climb, and of course, skate – to make it to the top.



Put your face in the game to skate as YOU.*

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PlayStation.2 XBOX NINTENDO GAMECUBE GAME BOY ADVANCE POWERED BY gamespy NEVERSOFT

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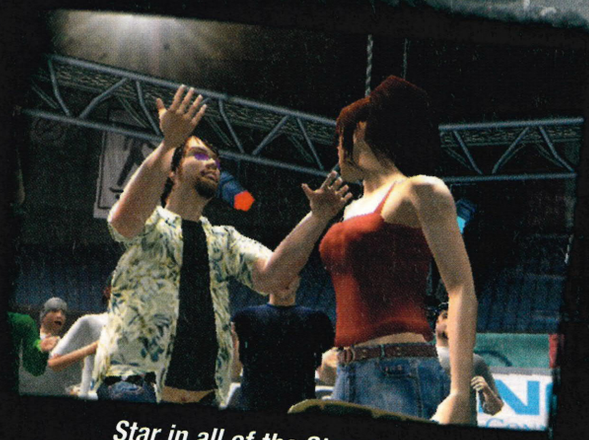
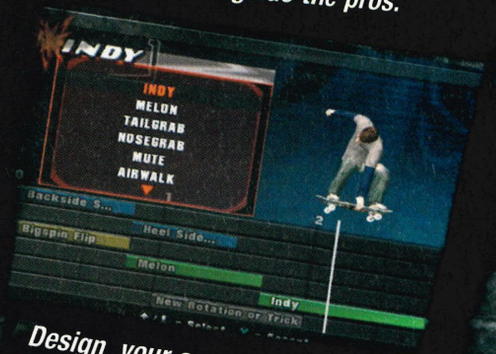
THE UNDERGROUND

Tear it up in cars or other rides.



Star in all of the Story Mode movies alongside the pros.



Design your own tricks, decks, goals, and levels. It's your game!

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

This time it's YOUR journey.
Break the rules. Beat the odds.
Become a Star!

NOW AVAILABLE
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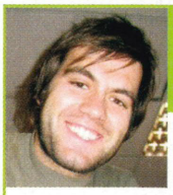
ONLINE BROADBAND AND DIAL-UP

*Face mapping technology is exclusive to PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system and requires online connectivity.

REVIEWS

Written by gamers who live and love games. We pride ourselves on bringing you the very best reviews possible. Enjoy



ANDY SAYS...

SIMILAR TO A heroic England footy team performance, or like Vanessa Williams warbled back in the early '90s, sometimes we really do save the best till last. The games industry is a sucker for trends, and despite a steady flow of quality titles throughout the year, they really have pulled out all the stops for Christmas.

In our biggest ever reviews issue, there are 11 Elite-rated games! And no, we weren't drinking the odd tot of whisky with our morning coffee; all of these titles genuinely deserved the praise heaped upon them. It's a testament to the Xbox that there's such a wide variety of top-notch games for its second Christmas.

The nights are drawing in, so pull up a comfy chair and settle yourself in front of the TV. For all you violent types out there, there are several FPSs to choose from, with the ultra-tense *Rainbow Six 3* and ultra-stylish *XIII*. Sports fans have the eagerly awaited *FIFA 2004*, the delectable *Top Spin* and the beautiful *Amped 2*. And for all you petrolheads out there, you'll not find a better racer than *PGR2*. And film buffs can enjoy *TLOTR: Return of the King* early. 'Tis indeed the season to be jolly.

THE TRUTH

WE ONLY REVIEW the finished UK version of a game - the version that you will be paying for and playing. The US or Japanese release will often differ from its UK counterpart. By sticking to this policy, we will never mislead you by reviewing imported games or preview versions.

Microsoft has no access to, or influence over, the *Official Xbox Magazine*. The company supplies us with info, screenshots and games before any other magazine. We don't do deals with Microsoft, or any other publisher, to get access to finished games. As a result, we're in the best position to give you what you deserve - balanced, objective and accurate reviews on which to base your buying decisions.

REVIEWING SETUP

WE REVIEW games on a 32-inch Philips Matchline III TV. As well as a brilliant widescreen picture, this beauty boasts Dolby Digital surround sound and wireless FM rear speakers. It gives us an unbeatable environment in which to review every Xbox game.

STATISTICS

Number of games reviewed 28
Number of Elite games 11!
Highest score 9.4 Lowest score 3.1
Xbox Live Playable 6 Xbox Live Content 10
Number of *OXM* staff obsessed with *KOTOR* 6 / 7
Amount of times we were promised *PGR2* would "arrive tomorrow" 8
Number of days before deadline *PGR2* actually turned up 2
Number of times James screamed at the TV during those days playing *PGR2* 57
Number of *OXM* staff hangovers there'll be the morning after this issue's finished 7 / 7

↑ ***PGR2*: arrived late, but it's so perfect we instantly forgave it.**

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

5.1–6.4
AN AVERAGE TITLE WITH NOTHING OUTSTANDING TO OFFER

2.6–5.0
A BAD GAME, AND ONE YOU REALLY SHOULDN'T BOTHER WITH

0.0–2.5
CALLING SUCH A RANCID STINKER A 'GAME' IS LIBELLOUS

WHAT OUR BADGES MEAN

AT THE START of a review, along with the Game Information box telling you who's made the game, when it's out, how many people can play and the official website address, you may see a badge or two. This is what they stand for:

XBOX ELITE
Any game scoring 8.5 or more.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Our favourite Elite game this month.

XBOX LIVE
Downloadable content or online play?

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

ON THE DISC: PLAYABLE
A playable trial version of the game is on our cover disc.

SEE IT ON THE DISC: MOVIE
Watch the game in action with a movie on our cover disc.

THE TEAM

PHOTOS: JIM BOWEN / MADGE BISHOP

STEVE BROWN // EDITOR

ON THE DAY before deadline, Steve wore a camouflage shirt to work in an attempt to escape the bedlam. It didn't work.

NOW PLAYING: *Star Wars: KOTOR, Project Gotham Racing 2, Voodoo Vince*
FAVOURITE CAR: Big Trax

OWEN NORRIS // ART EDITOR

OWEN KNOWS all about driving. He went to a wedding up North and ended up on a nightmare ten-hour return journey.

NOW PLAYING: *Star Wars: KOTOR, FIFA 2004, Top Spin*
FAVOURITE CAR: McLaren F1

GAVIN OGDEN // NEWS EDITOR

GAV WENT to Japan and slept through the largest earthquake they've seen in ages. Ah, the joys of Saki and a comfy bed.

NOW PLAYING: *TLOTR: ROTK, Star Wars: KOTOR, Rainbow Six 3*
FAVOURITE CAR: Lamborghini Diablo

ANDY IRVING // STAFF WRITER

ANDY DID so many reviews this month he now swans round the office in a smoking jacket and cravat, calling himself a critic.

NOW PLAYING: *Project Gotham Racing 2, Star Wars: KOTOR, Top Spin*
FAVOURITE CAR: Aston Martin DB7

VANESSA HARDS // PRODUCTION EDITOR

VANESSA received some mail about an upcoming film festival. We all think she's making home ritual sacrifice movies.

NOW PLAYING: *Buffy: Chaos Bleeds, Ghoulies, Star Wars: KOTOR*
FAVOURITE CAR: 1959 Cadillac

BEN TALBOT // PRODUCER

BEN WENT to prison this month, or a State Penitentiary in West Virginia to be exact. He still can't sit down properly, and hasn't taken a shower since he got back.

NOW PLAYING: *Soul Calibur II, XIII, Otogi*
FAVOURITE CAR: Bigfoot

PHIL MADGE // DEPUTY ART EDITOR

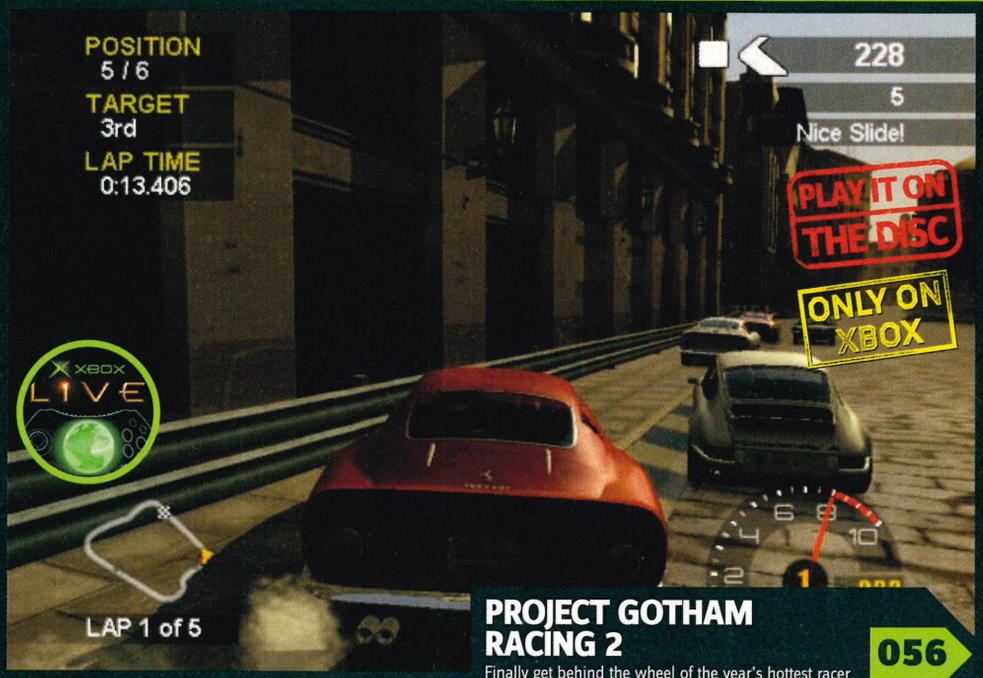
PHIL'S FINALLY got round to playing *Halo* and proving he's not crap at games. Fifty quid says he doesn't finish it before the sequel. He's also been eating Miracle Gro with lunch every day.

NOW PLAYING: *Halo, Top Spin, WC Snooker*
FAVOURITE CAR: Porsche GT2 Turbo

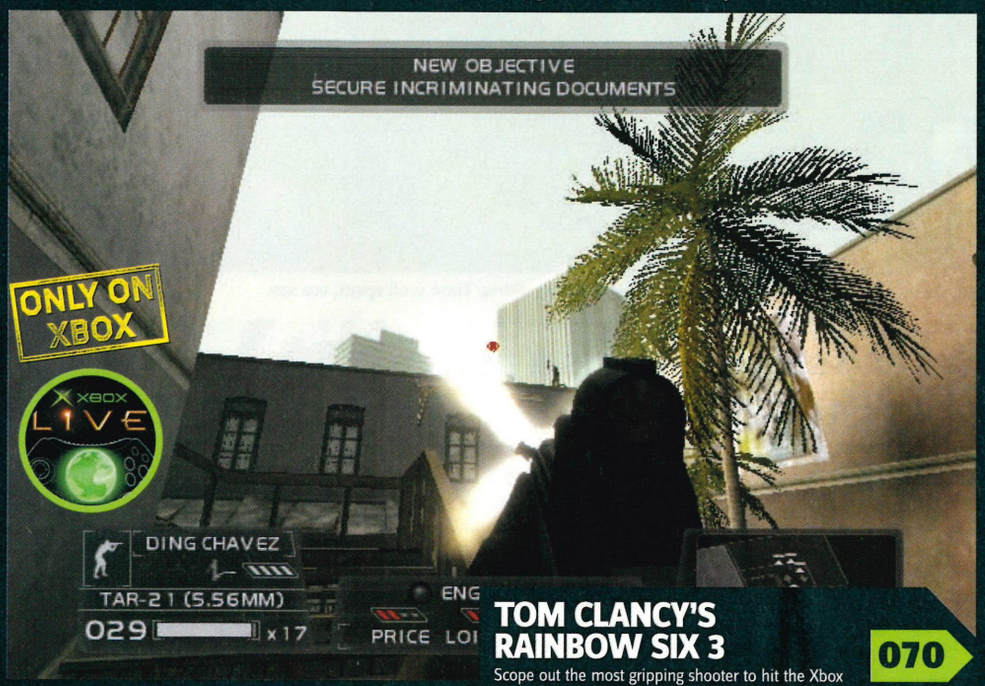
DING CHAVEZ // TEAM LEADER

DING'S BEEN out of the office this month. He wasn't allowed to tell of his whereabouts, but he does seem a bit edgy, and dives under the desk every time we discuss the new cover!

NOW PLAYING: What do you think? And *Wallace & Gromit*
FAVOURITE CAR: Armoured Humvee



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2
Finally get behind the wheel of the year's hottest racer
056



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3
Scope out the most gripping shooter to hit the Xbox
070

GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES
This comic adventure grabs you where it feels good
076

TOP SPIN
Anna Kournikova is only half the attraction of this groundbreaking title even non-tennis fans will enjoy
066

THE REST

THE LORD OF THE RINGS, RETURN OF THE KING 062
The king of movie licences returns with this top title

FIFA 2004 068
Lace up your boots for the next *FIFA* fixture

THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN 078
Hit Springfield *GTA*-style with our four-fingered friends

D&D: HEROES 080
Not the '80s cartoon, but a sword and sorcery quest

CRIMSON SKIES 082
The Red Baron flies again in this dogfighter's dream

BROKEN SWORD: TSD 086
If it ain't broke, don't try and fix it

METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM 090
There's definitely no glitch in this manic blaster

GLADIATOR 092
What we do in life, echoes in eternity

XIII 094
There's nothing unlucky about this cel-shaded shooter

SWAT: GLOBAL STRIKE TEAM 097
Foil terrorists SWAT-style in this first-person shooter

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 098
No scrapping oil barons here, unfortunately

NBA JAM 100
He's on fire! Well, this arcade b-baller certainly is

NHL HITZ 102
Hard-hitting ice hockey fun

AMPED 2 104
Hit the slopes with this fantastic snowboarding sequel

SSX 3 106
No *SSX* please, we're British. Go on then, just a bit...

ESPN NFL FOOTBALL 109
A big sports network does 'football'...

ESPN BASKETBALL 110
Has a go at basketball...

ESPN NHL HOCKEY 113
And also hockey. Phew!

BACKYARD WRESTLING 114
Grrrrrrrr. Don't try this at home kids. Seriously

ROLLING 116
As Mr Durst says, keep rollin'... rollin'... rollin'...

NBA LIVE 118
It's (a)Live! The basketball sim, that is

FORD RACING 2 120
Everything they do, is driven by you

GLADIUS 122
Don swords and sandals for some turn-based combat

BIONICLE 124
Lego comes to life in this kids' platformer

DIRECTORY 126
Every Xbox game ever released in the UK rated

>>NEXT MONTH: Because it doesn't end here, oh no. We've got stacks of stuff coming up, including *Tony Hawk Underground, True Crime: Streets of L.A., Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy, Hunter the Reckoning: Redeemer, Need for Speed: Underground, Sega GT Online, Harry Potter: Quidditch World Cup* and much, much more. It's going to be a very merry Christmas issue, on sale 27 Nov.

↑ Three hours on a Sunday morning and look what you get. A nice shiny motor to impress girls in even shinier skirts. Time well spent, we say.

Forget the string-backed gloves and shades, there's a new definition of driving style making its way onto Xbox

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

ONLY ON XBOX

PLAY IT ON THE DISC

WORDS: **ANDY IRVING**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **BIZARRE CREATIONS**

PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT**

RELEASE DATE: **15 NOVEMBER 2003**

PLAYERS: **1-4 SPLIT-SCREEN; 1-8 SYSTEM LINK AND XBOX LIVE**

WEBSITE: **WWW.BIZARRECREATIONS.COM**

» THE BRIEF

TAKE A ride through exotic locales as the best street racer shifts up a gear.

EVERYBODY LIKES to drive fast cars. Deep down, there's a Michael Schumacher in all of us, fighting to rev their way out. But although it may be the most prestigious, F1 isn't exactly the most exciting form of motor racing. No way baby, it's all about the streets.

Aside from the obvious *Max Power* petrolheads in lowered Renault 5s, give anybody a clear stretch of road and like bored housewives on their way back from the school run, they'll get delusions of grandeur that they're the next Penelope Pitstop. But we're not advocating tearing round your local town centre at ridiculous speeds, because salvation is found in the form of *PGR2*, blasting onto Xbox with the hearty roar of a V8.

As every lad in a souped-up XR2 knows, when it comes to driving it's all about being stylish (ahem). This was where the original *PGR* (Issue 01, 8.9) brought innovation to the racing genre; that driving with flair and style was just as important as fast lap times. This feature has been given something of a polish in *PGR2*, in fact something akin to a vat full of Turtlewax all over the bonnet. The whole game pretty much revolves around earning Kudos points, through a variety of stylish driving moves, like powersliding round corners, drafting (slipstreaming), good racing lines and completing a clean section of track. Link several moves together for a nice Kudos combo, but keep your eyes on the road because causing damage to your car, either from other vehicles or the surroundings, wipes these combos out.

↑ SUVs can often get in the way.

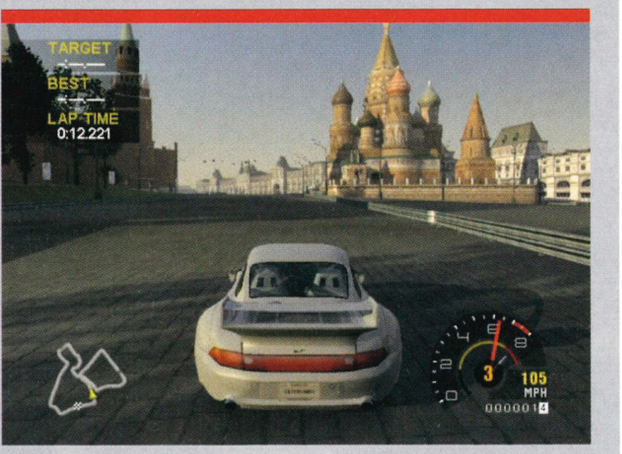
↑ The locations are modelled on real cities.

They say patience is a virtue, but for all you unvirtuous types there's an Instant Action option that allows you to jump straight into an arcade-style race for a quick speed fix. However, look under the bonnet of this beauty and you'll find a huge and fulfilling career mode driving her along. Take your pick from Kudos World Series, Arcade Racing or Time Attack. The former two all help you build up Kudos points, while the latter is just for pride. »

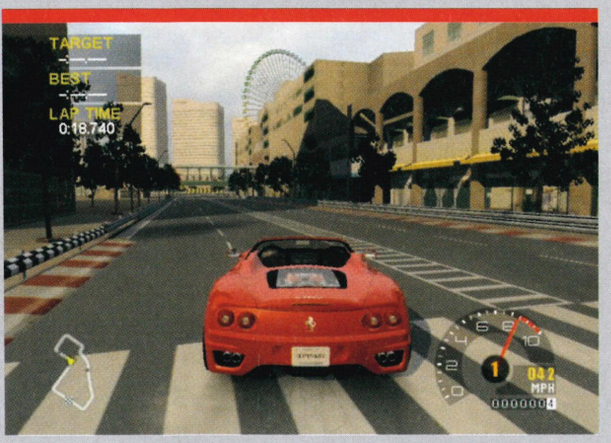
A VROOM WITH A VIEW » Take the scenic route around a host of exotic cites

THERE'S A certain glitz and glamour about street racing, and we don't mean supermodels hanging round your garage. Check out this selection of exotic locales you'll take in on your travels, all perfectly replicated in glorious detail. It's a tough life, this jetset existence.

↑ Check out a sun-drenched Barcelona.



↑ Moscow's Red Square is wide enough to drive a tank through...



↑ No, not the London Eye but the beachside paradise of Yokahama.

↑ Stockholm, complete with monorail and barge ships.

↑ Opponents will do anything to prevent you from overtaking.

↑ The driver's-eye view is a bit scary.

↑ Narrow back streets are pretty unforgiving.

"When it comes to driving, it's all about being stylish"

» The World Series contains 14 different classes of car, ranging from Sports Compaq (Minis, Focuses), SUVs (BMW X5s) up to good ol' American muscle cars and the fabled Ultimate series (Enzo Ferraris and the like). A string of challenges must be completed in each class before advancing on to the next, and a handy option is that the player decides the difficulty of each challenge. Varying »

BONUS INFO

» HEY, WATCH OUT!
There's now a realistic damage feature that destroys your beloved beauty the more you crash into other vehicles and track sidings. Cracked windscreens and crumpled bonnets are all par for the course (if Phil's driving).

» CAMERA ACTION
One of the Kudos challenges involves driving as fast as you can along a designated stretch of road, thus setting off a speed camera. There's no such thing as points on your licence here.

» STAMP DUTY
As well as personalising your number plate to spell out what you want (OUTMYWAY in *OXM*'s case), there's the option to choose which distinctive region your plate relates to. We went for Washington DC.

» YO DJ!
There's a choice of several different radio stations, all with real-life DJs spinning 'racing tunes'. Alternatively, put on a pre-set CD or even better, rip on your personal soundtrack from the Xbox hard drive.

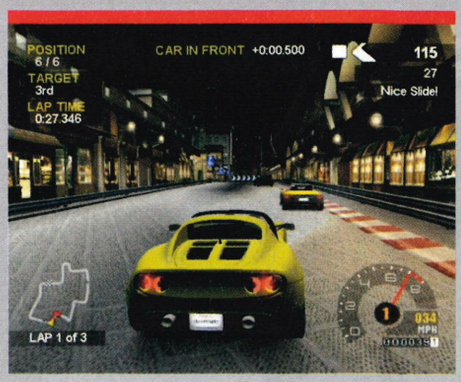
» DON'T MESS
The AI drivers take no prisoners, and are both aggressive and ruthless. As well as driving defensively, preventing you from passing, they'll ram you from behind and spin your car off, just when you're about to post a fastest lap time.

» RETAIL THERAPY
Before you gain access to all the top-notch motors, take a look around the virtual showroom, where you can take each little beauty out for a spin on the test track.

NAME OF THE GAME: THE NAME OF PROJECT GOTHAM IS A DIRECT FOLLOW-ON FROM BIZARRE'S PREVIOUS DRIVING TITLE, METROPOLIS STREET RACER ON THE DREAMCAST. METROPOLIS IS SUPERMAN'S HOME CITY, AND GOTHAM IS BATMAN'S. CLEVER, EH?

ALL THE RIGHT MOVES » Forget speed, looking good is what counts here

YOU NEED KUDOS points to unlock all the tasty motors in the garage, so follow these simple steps to vehicular heaven. There's a fine line between keeping a good racing line and pranging your pride and joy into the crash barriers, so go easy on the gas when approaching those hairpins. Then watch the points rack up.



↑ Slide away, and give it all you've got...

↑ Slipstream behind someone to 'draft' past them.

↑ Take the inside line for a sneaky double overtake.

↑ Pesky council workers, doing roadworks during rush hour.

↑ Both the huge range of cars and tracks look gorgeous.

↑ Night races are common, but surely no need for full beam?

↑ Multiplayer mayhem beckons as up to four players can battle it out in split-screen.

"How does the game play? Well, bloody brilliantly to be honest"

» amounts of Kudos points, related to the difficulty setting are awarded on completion of the task, then these in turn are exchanged for tokens which allow you to buy more cars. Phew.

Now that's all the technical stuff out the way, so how does the game actually play? Well, bloody brilliantly to be honest. It's always hard for programmers to get the right combination of speed, handling and realism, but we're pleased to say Bizarre has got things bang on the money. Each model of car has distinctly different handling abilities, and it's surprisingly realistic for an 'arcade' racer. How would you know, I hear you cry? Well, from personal experience of Mini Coopers, VW Beetles, TVRs and Z4s this reviewer can attest to the realism, and whilst he's yet to rag a Ferrari round a circuit, he'd put money on it feeling something like the way *PGR2* portrays. Any doubts about speed are put too rest too, as when you're going balls out at 140mph, believe you me, it really feels like it.

In the vain society that we live in, looks are everything, and *PGR2* comes off as the handsome and popular kid at school who always got the cute girl. The cars are amazingly detailed and realistic, and there are 105 to unlock. Take a trip to the garage to see which models are presently unlocked, and just like an arranged marriage, feast your eyes for the first time upon the veiled beauties within that have just become available. Real-time lighting is used to great effect, both in the reflections off the cars' bodywork and the shadows they cast in the setting sun. »

DREAM MACHINES >> Unlock a fleet of minxy motors

UNLESS YOU'RE a film star, rock star, millionaire entrepreneur or international playboy, chances you won't ever drive, or be able to afford, the car of your dreams. Luckily, *PGR2* allows you to do just that. Feast your eyes on these little beauties. Just be careful - you don't want to look a twat wrecking a £100k Ferarri.

The TVR Tamora. It's a bit special.

The brand new Enzo Ferrari.

An odd-looking Lotus roadster.

The sleek Ferrari F60 Spyder.

Another Ferrari - the classic 275 GTB.

A gentleman's favourite - the Porsche 356.

"The environments, too, look gorgeous, with 11 cities around the world all accurately and photorealistically recreated"

>> The environments, too, look gorgeous. Take in 11 different cities around the world, all accurately and photorealistically recreated. Each has its own unique atmosphere and style, and you'll spend more time looking at the scenery than the road. Not good when approaching a hairpin at over 100mph, or taking a shunt from an over-aggressive AI driver.

So single-player mode seemingly has everything a budding racer needs, but multiplayer makes the considerable racing upshift from second to fifth without even breaking a sweat. As well as split-screen action for four players, eight mates can now enjoy a bit of full-screen action via System Link, a welcome addition. Full Live compatibility is also available, with up to eight players simultaneously racing, as well as leaderboards and downloadable 'ghosts' to race against and improve your single-player ratings.

It's a tough old market out there, where racing games are two for a penny on Xbox (not literally, that would be ridiculous), but *Project Gotham Racing 2* returns as the leader of the pack (broom broom), storming over the finish line whilst other racers stall at the grid. Outstanding.

Nissan Skyline in morning - high speed warning!

THE VERDICT

POWER
Astounding graphics and hugely detailed tracks demonstrate the speed and power of Xbox.

STYLE
Gorgeous to look at, even better to play. There's a great sense of individuality to each city.

IMMERSION
Instant race for a quick fix, but the Career mode is intuitive and addictive.

LIFESPAN
A hefty single-player mode complemented by virtually limitless enjoyment on Xbox Live.

GOOD POINTS
- VISUALLY AMAZING
- TONS OF CARS
- HEAD TO HEAD ON XBOX LIVE
- GREAT SENSE OF SPEED
- REALISTIC HANDLING

BAD POINTS
- THE AI DRIVERS ARE A BIT AGGRESSIVE

SUMMARY
The most complete and best-looking street racer steals pole position - the consummate and definitive driving experience.

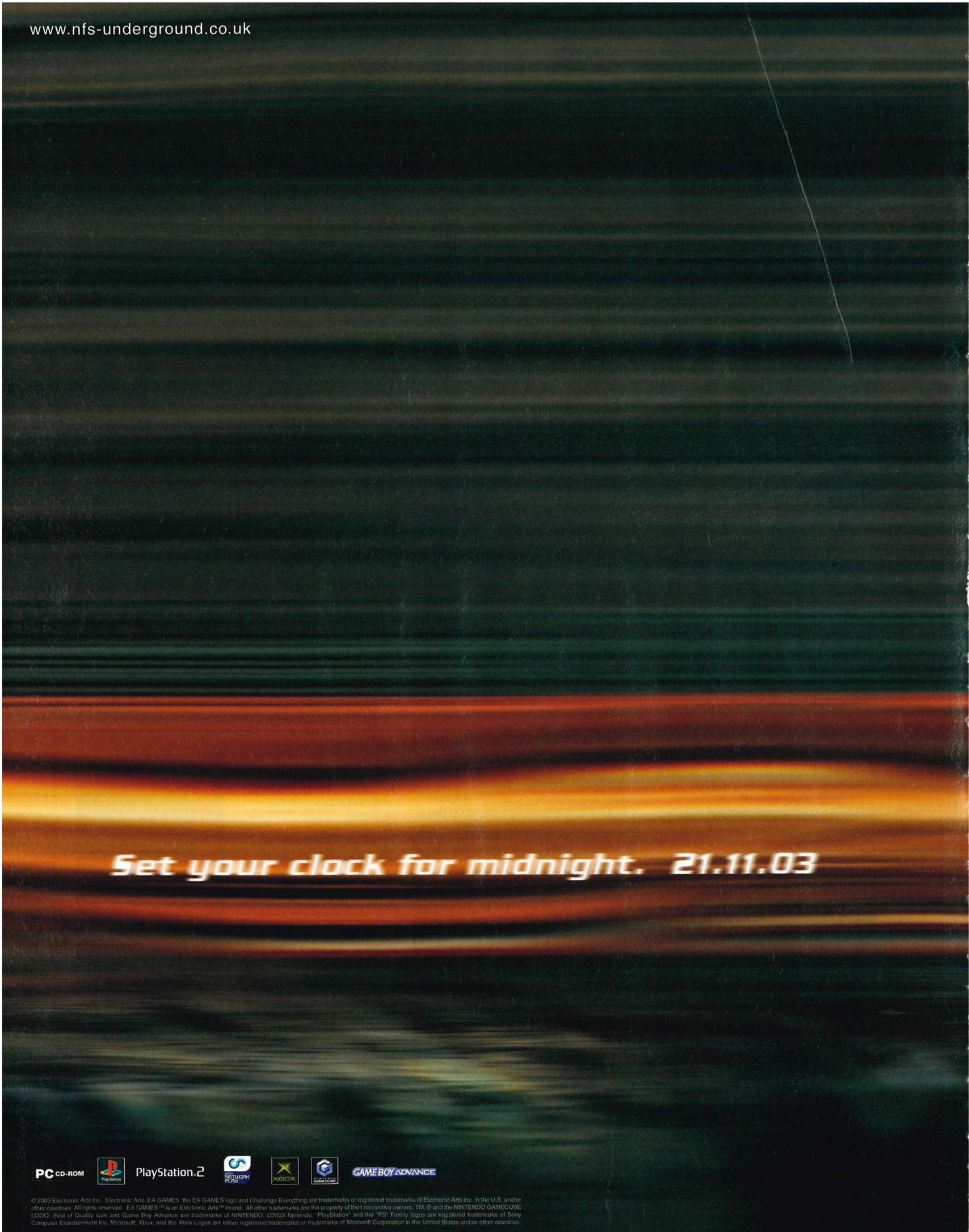
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

9.3//10

>> **PREVIOUSLY:** Incoming - Issue 15 & 18; Exclusive Access - Issue 21
>> **COMING SOON:** Hints - Issue 24

QUICK ON THE DRAW: THE GRAPHICS IN PGR2 ARE DRAWN AS YOU GO ALONG VIA A RATHER CLEVER STREAMING SYSTEM. THIS ALLOWS FOR A MUCH FASTER FRAMERATE AND SMOOTHER RIDE.

www.nfs-underground.co.uk



PC CD-ROM PlayStation PlayStation.2 NETWORK PLAY XBOX GAMECUBE GAME BOY ADVANCE

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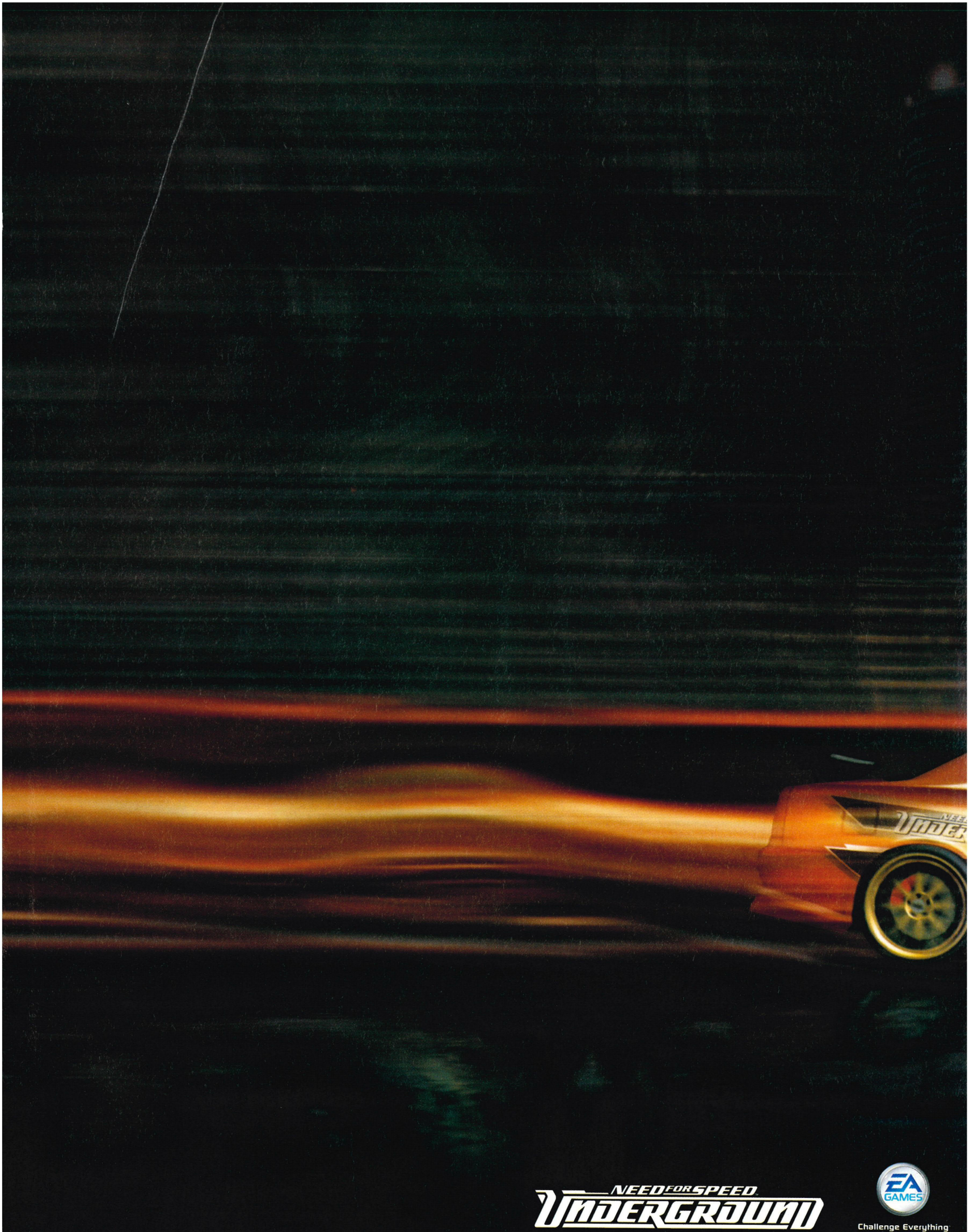

NEED FOR SPEED
UNDERGROUND
EA GAMES
Challenge Everything

↑ Certain stages of a level require you to kill a specific number of enemies before being allowed to continue your quest. Only 67 more to go...

A real blockbuster, in case you were One Ring

THE LORD OF THE RINGS RETURN OF THE KING

WORDS: **GAVIN OGDEN**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **EA**

PUBLISHER: **EA**

RELEASE DATE: **14 NOV 2003**

PLAYERS: **1-2**

WEBSITE: **WWW.EA.COM**

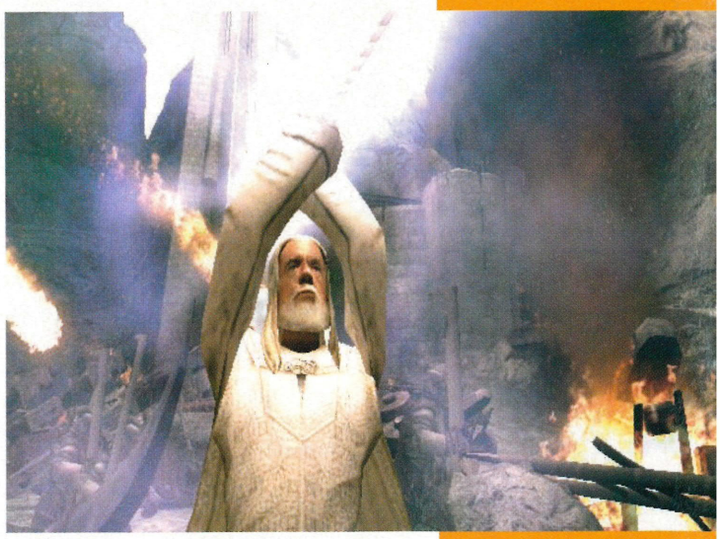
» THE BRIEF

HACK YOUR way through the final part of Tolkien's epic adventure, with a variety of characters.

GALADRIEL DESCRIBES the broken enemy, over movie footage of the battle for Helm's Deep. On the fifth day, Gandalf the White appears under a brilliant light with the Riders of Rohan. They charge down the hillside and meet the army of Isengard head on at the bottom. Movie instantly becomes game as you control Gandalf at the foot of the wall while war rages around you. Legolas calls for help as the camera swoops across the top of the wall. You hack your way through the Uruk-hai as fireballs pelt the ground causing total devastation in their wake. You scale the enemy's ladder and use lightning bolts to take out the orc archers.

Aragorn warns the gates are in danger of being breached. You descend the ladder, and fire the enemy's own catapult at them as they smash their way into Helm's Deep. On your third attempt you strike the battering ram and it explodes, taking the enemy with it. Gandalf raises his staff in victory as a paralysing white light engulfs the valley. Back to the movie and the Fellowship (minus Sam and Frodo) look towards the fire in the sky that covers Mordor...

This is the incredible opening level of a game that, once it's got both hands around your neck, refuses to let go for an instant. Everything described above comes at you, one thing after another with no loading screens, vocals supplied by actual actors, and music and sounds ripped directly from the upcoming film's third and final part of Tolkien's mighty trilogy.



↑ The hardest wizard in the world ever.

Once you've got your breath back after the mesmerising intro, you get whisked off to a screen that tells you how many experience points your slaying earned you and, more importantly, what upgrades to your character you can buy with these points. There are several different upgrades for each level of experience you reach. The higher the level of experience you're at, the stronger the powers and abilities on offer are. Unfortunately they're more expensive too, but that's the economy in games for you. You can choose to upgrade the character you just finished playing the level with, or upgrade your entire party. But this obviously costs a packet.

After the battle for Helm's Deep is over, you're taken through to a ladder that allows you to choose which way to go »

» BONUS INFO

»YOU FIRST
Multiplayer options come in the form of co-op play only. You and a friend can each pick a character and hack your way through from start to finish. There are hours of fun to be had in this mode, which is just the way we like it.

»TREASURE TROVE
As you make your way through the levels, various unlockables open. These include interviews with the leading actors, what they think about the games, concept art and a special feature that documents the making of the game. You'll have to work to get your hands on them all though...

QUICK... THE BOSS!

IT WOULDN'T be complete without the end-of-level boss fights. And these ones are tough...

SHELOB: Once you've navigated your way through the caves, you come face to face with the deadly spider, Shelob. And she's as hard as she is large.

KING OF THE DEAD: After making your way through the Path of the Dead, Aragorn comes before the King to recruit his undead army. He's not easily persuaded though.

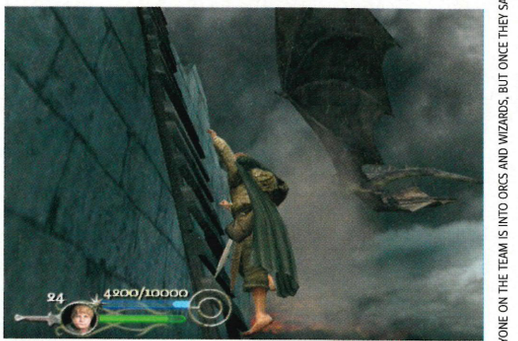
↑ **Use your crushing finishing move to bury the opposition six feet under before they do you over. Quick now.**

↑ **Take a pop at the Nazgul whenever you can.**

↑ **Truly breathtaking. We nearly fainted...**

↑ **If screenshots could talk, you'd hear Gandalf calling you every name under the sun for this move.**

↑ **The catapult of justice waits to be unleashed.**



↑ **Sam might be a fat Hobbit, but he can still climb.**

» through the adventure next. There are 12 levels in all, each telling the story of the eight playable characters of the Fellowship in their battle to free Middle-Earth from the clutches of the evil Saruman. Just like the book really. The first four offer a recap about where the Fellowship is up to in its attempt to destroy the One Ring. You get to basically play the *Two Towers* movie and game from a different perspective, before diving straight into the third instalment.

But what really sets *Return of the King* apart from all the other big movie licensed games knocking about, is the fact that it captures its source so well. *Enter the Matrix* (Issue 17, 8.5) pales in comparison to this beast. The visuals are truly jaw-dropping, and there's so much movement happening on screen at the same time, it conveys the feeling that you're actually in the middle of this immense battle. Ents stomp around crushing orcs with their huge tree-trunk feet, while the Nazgul comb the skies looking for the ring bearer. It's a level of visual excellence that captures the feel of the movies and books so aptly you'll want to cry with joy.

There's nothing really revolutionary in terms of gameplay, as the meat and veg of the action is »

SHOW-STOPPER: NOT EVERYONE ON THE TEAM IS INTO ORCS AND WIZARDS, BUT ONCE THEY SAW AND HEARD THE GAME IN ACTION THEY WERE ROOTED TO THE SPOT, GASPING AT WHAT THEY SAW ON SCREEN.

↑ Gandalf rules the Minus Tirith walls.

» just swinging melee weapons around your head faster than a cadet swings her baton. Each button performs a different attack or special ability that you really do need to know, as this is endurance gaming at its best. Imagine standing in front of an army of 10,000, and then imagine ploughing your way through them in levels that can last in excess of 20 minutes because the enemy just won't give in. It's relentless and your wrists will ache, but it's worth every swing.

Because the movie isn't out yet, sitting through snippets of actual footage was hard. We didn't want to spoil the film for ourselves, but it's virtually impossible to tear your eyes away from the screen. The transition from game to film and back again is remarkable. If you played through EA's first game, *The Two Towers* (Issue 14, 8.0), you'll know what we're talking about. *Return of the King* is a blockbuster of an action game in every sense of the word. The sights are mind-blowing, as are the sounds - if you have access to a surround sound system, this is what it was made for. There's so much going on it's almost too much to cope with. Buy it now if you don't mind seeing a lot of the unreleased film. Otherwise wait until you have watched it. But whatever you do, don't miss it.

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS»

HERE'S A LITTLE taster of one of the many setpieces you'll come across. Just sit back and enjoy the ride.

Fight your way to the top of the stairs, keeping out of sight from those nasty buggers, the Nazgul.

Okay, so you've hit a dead end, but that bell's there for a reason... it's just waiting for a shove.

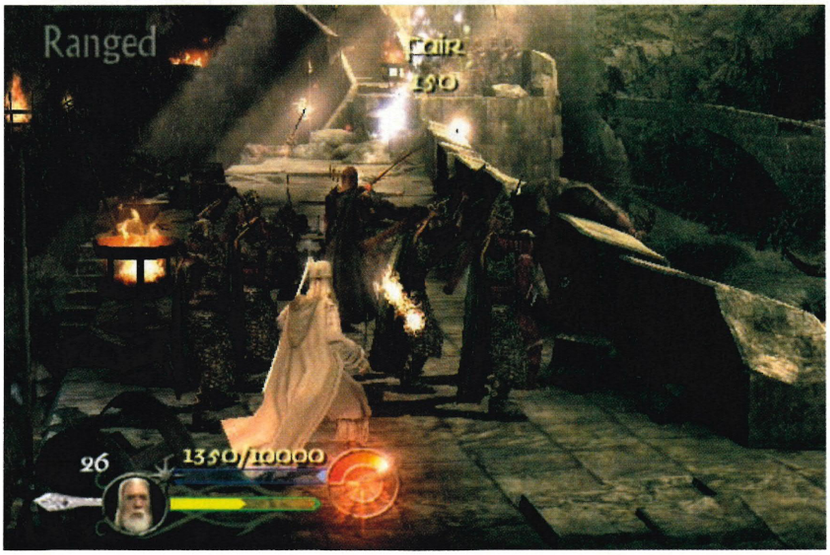
Get behind the bell and push it down the stairs. Watch with glee as it bounces to the ground.

When it gets to the bottom, it crashes through a pile of rubble giving you a new opening. Handy.

"Captures the feel of the movies and books so well you'll want to cry with joy"

↑ The special FX are on a par with the film.

↑ Save 200 women and children in one level!



↑ Take out the orc archers then scream down the phone to your mates about how good this is!

THE VERDICT

POWER
Visuals have been taken directly from the film and look stunning. There's almost too much going on.

STYLE
You could mistake it for the actual film. Looks and sounds like Peter Jackson made it himself.

IMMERSION
You're ripped out of your chair and launched into Middle-Earth. You won't look back.

LIFESPAN
It takes a while to complete the 12 levels on the three difficulty settings if you're to unlock everything.

GOOD POINTS

+ RECREATES THE FILM BEAUTIFULLY
+ LOOKS AND SOUNDS LIKE THE REAL THING
+ UNLOCKABLE SECRETS

BAD POINTS

- GAMEPLAY COULD BE DEEPER
- NO ONLINE PLAY

SUMMARY
The biggest action game of the year based on the biggest action movie of the year - a truly winning combination.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

8.5//10

» **PREVIOUSLY:** Incoming - Issue 19; Gallery - Issue 20
» **COMING SOON:** Hints - Issue 24

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SECRET LEVEL

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XBOX LIVE

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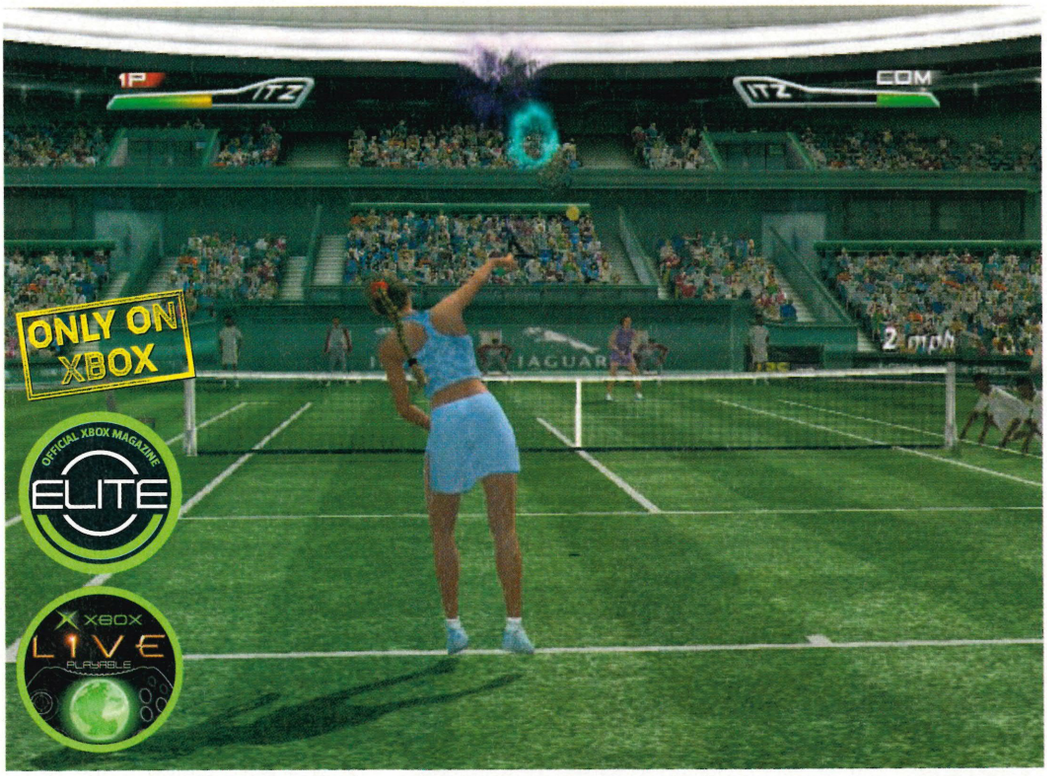


↑ This camera angle allows you to play from a close third-person perspective. Go Anna!

↑ Kournikova makes another excuse...

↑ Ball boys go on strike for this game.

↑ Create one player to rule them all.

The best tennis game on the planet. We're serious

TOP SPIN

WORDS: **GAVIN OGDEN**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **PAM STUDIOS**
PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT**
RELEASE DATE: **NOV 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
WEBSITE: **WWW.XBOX.COM**

» THE BRIEF

WORLD'S first online tennis game backed up by an immensely deep single-player experience.

WIMBLEDON fever might have passed us by but we've finally got a tennis game to keep us gagging for strawberries and cream all year round. But we've not just got 'another tennis game', oh no, Xbox is now host to the richest, deepest, most accessible tennis experience ever, and yes, that does include Sega's once mighty *Virtua Tennis*. In fact, we would go as far as to say it's even better than the real thing. And that's coming from a genuine fan of the sport.

Since the launch of Xbox we've had to endure some simply shocking attempts. *FILA World Tennis* (Issue 09, 2.6), *Tennis Masters Series 2003* (Issue 10, 3.0) and *Pro Tennis WTA Tour* (Issue 07, 1.9) weren't worth the grass they're played on. Why quality tennis games are so few and far between is beyond us, but we're thankful to PAM for giving Xbox a tennis game to not shout 'fault' at.

Every button on the controller is vital in making your Grand Slam dream reality, but if you've never played a tennis game before, you'll be acing opponents in no time thanks to the A button. This is basically your safe shot. It won't go like a rocket but you're assured a shot that will get over the net. A good starting point.

Once you've got this licked, you can bring in the other buttons to spice up your rallies. The B button is your top spin shot. Timing this perfectly produces a fast low return of the ball and if you get the angle right, it can be turned into a clean winner with a little practice.

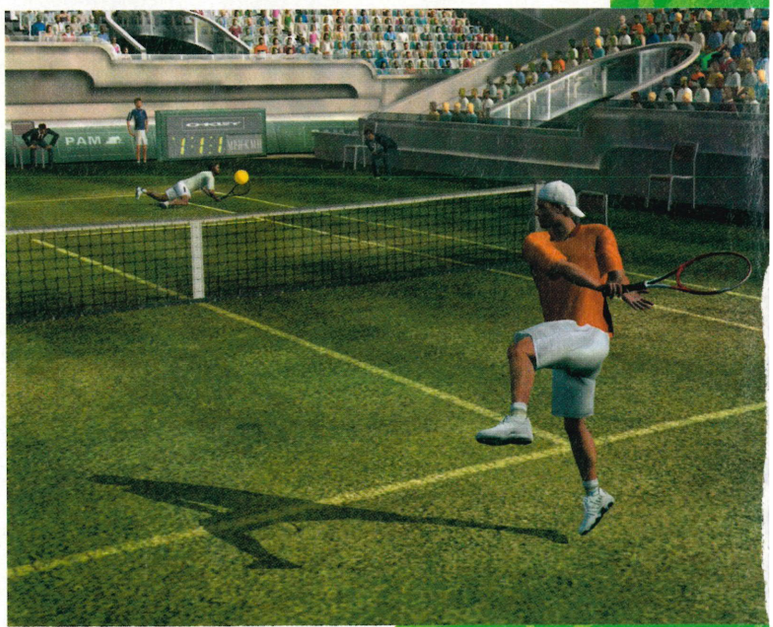
On the other side of the court is the spin shot (X). This can be used to return a ball slowly over the net, allowing you to get back into position ready to receive. Once you've improved your character's stat points, you'll be able to slice and curl the ball left and right, which really annoys a human opponent.

The Y button is the classic get-out-of-trouble shot, otherwise known as the lob. If your opponent's dominating the net, just hit this and watch them run backwards swinging at the ball like it's a pesky fly. On the other hand, you can flick the Left trigger to perform a drop shot if you're getting pummelled from the base line.

Pressing and holding down any button causes your player to wind up his shot before letting rip, while a quick tap produces more of a reflex shot. After playing a few games you'll soon be using your favourite shots in your favourite situations.

But there's one extra level that'll truly separate the men from the women and that's the Risk shot. Hitting and holding the Right trigger serves up a small meter with a line »

↑ And here's the Risk shot in action, perfectly struck too!



↑ Hewitt has one serious backhand.

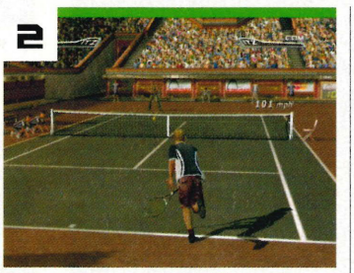
COURTING SEASON >> Build the best player in the world from scratch

START OFF THE GAME as an unseeded no-hoper and work your way through the ranks until you become the best around. It's easier said than done though as you begin the game with almost no decent abilities at all. You have to work hard in the training modes to improve every shot you have before taking on the best players.

1

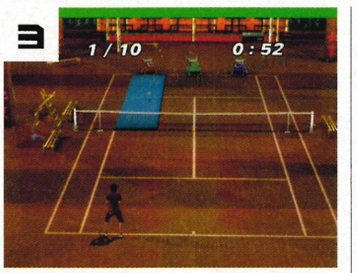
↑ First things first - find a sponsor who has the right deal and equipment for you to grow as a player.

2



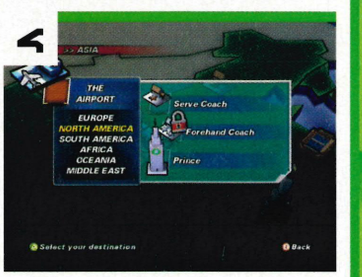
↑ Once you've got your kit sorted, enter a few tournaments for some serious cash to help you up the ladder.

3



↑ Hit the training court and brush up on your technique before tackling the harder competitions on the tour.

4



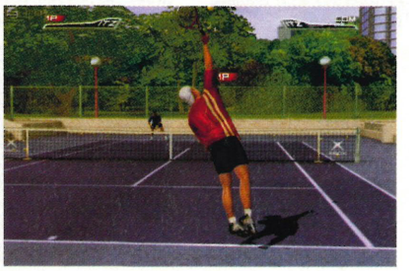
↑ When you think you're ready, hop on a plane and try a different country for bigger matches and winnings.

BONUS INFO

>> IN THE ZONE

By taking a few risks that pay off, your In The Zone meter will fill up. This means that when you're playing well, you're playing well. When it all goes tits-up, you can show emotion by hitting the Black or White buttons. You can pump your fist in the air after an ace or launch your racket at the ground after a bad call.

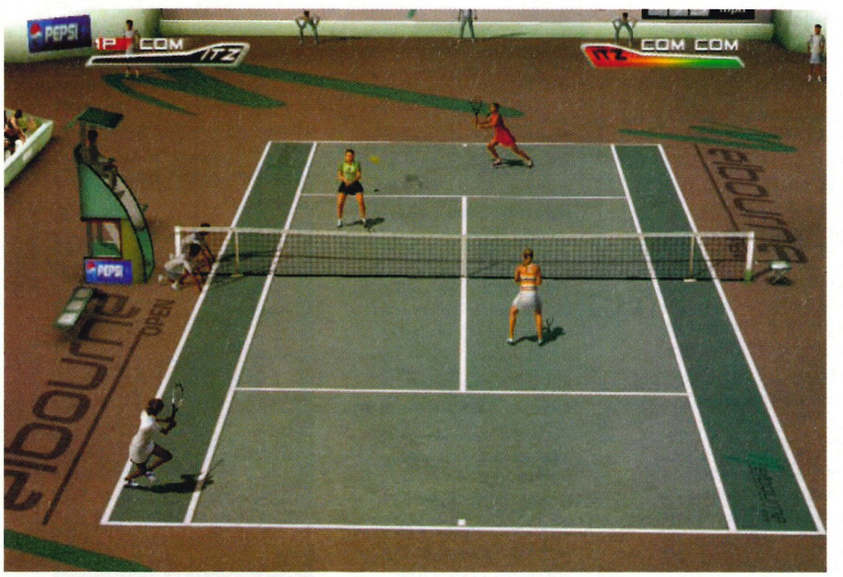
"Xbox is now host to the richest, deepest, most accessible tennis experience ever"



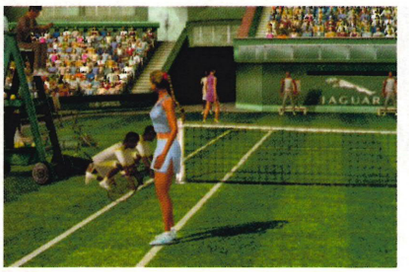
↑ There's no crowd at this practice court.

>> across the middle. The idea is that as another horizontal line moves up and down the column, you have to let go of the trigger when the line's in the middle. Release it perfectly and you'll hit a clean winner, miss the bar and you'll miss the court. It's your choice but it's worth it when you get it right.

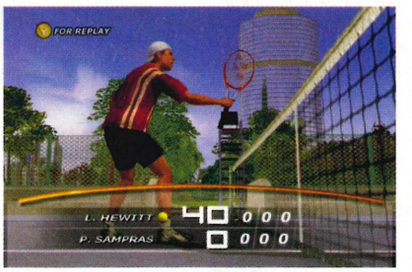
If you're not hooked up to Xbox Live, don't worry, there's plenty to see and do in the single-player game. It's a bit slow to start, as you begin as a rookie vying for attention at the bottom of the leader board. Win small-time matches for cash to buy equipment or travel the world to enter bigger tournaments. Earn even more cash from completing training tasks and landing big-name sponsors and you're halfway to becoming the next Pete Sampras. It's more like a role-playing game than a tennis game, but you'll come out the other end a champion. Over Xbox Live you will be able to whack your mates' balls in both singles and doubles tournaments. You really couldn't ask for more. *Top Spin* has the lot.



↑ Ladies doubles is the stuff of dreams. Just make sure to keep the whole court covered.



↑ Anna seems to disagree with the umpire.



↑ Tennis can be a dirty racket.

XBOX THE VERDICT

POWER
Player and stadium details are incredible. It's the best looking tennis game we've ever seen.

STYLE
The single player game has been put together beautifully. There's as much to do as in any RPG.

IMMERSION
The ball sounds are perfect, as are the other effects, down to squeaks from trainers on hard courts.

LIFESPAN
The single-player game is massive but you'll be playing forever with your friends and on Xbox Live.

GOOD POINTS
+ LOOKS INCREDIBLE
+ SPOT-ON RECREATION
+ LOADS OF SHOTS
+ PLAYABLE OVER LIVE

BAD POINTS
- RUNNING BACKWARDS CAN BE FRUSTRATING
- SLOW TO START IN SINGLE-PLAYER

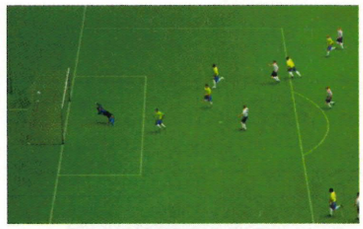
SUMMARY
Hands down this is the best tennis game in the world. Buy it even if you don't like tennis - you'll soon get hooked.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE
9.0 // 10

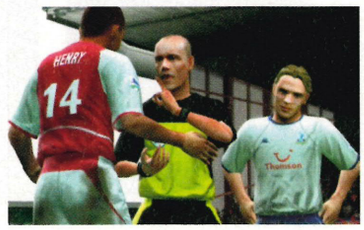
>> PREVIOUSLY: Inside interview - Issue 21
>> COMING SOON: Live update - Issue 24

CREATE A GREAT: USING THE GAME'S SUPER HIGHLY DETAILED PLAYER CREATOR, IT'S POSSIBLE TO PERSONALISE A PLAYER'S LOOK, STYLE AND PERSONALITY.

↑ The new Off the Ball control feature in action. Eenie meanie minie moe...



↑ Pick that one out.



↑ Is that Spurs fella checking me out?

↑ Penalty boxes become battlefields.

↑ Hone your setpiece plays.

The annual substitution turns the game on its head

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004

WORDS: **MARK SUTHERNS**

BONUS INFO

>>DEAD BALL GAMES
Off the Ball is extended to setpieces which take mini-game form as you tussle for space. Direct free kicks get spin and power meter controls.

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **EA SPORTS CANADA**
PUBLISHER: **EA**
RELEASE DATE: **OUT NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-2**
WEBSITE: **WWW.EASPORTS.COM**

>> THE BRIEF

ANNUAL update of the football sim with 90 great minutes to finally match all the licence hype.

REMEMBER THAT kid at school? The one with the brand new team shirt, a fancy pair of boots, even those flashy shinpads with the velcro? You know, the brat who looked the part but still got nutmegged by the spotty urchin in skins? That's *FIFA*, that is. Talking the talk and stumbling the walk, taking the beautiful in 'the beautiful game' too literally while failing to cut the mustard where it mattered most. Yep, that's *FIFA*. At least, that was *FIFA* until now.

Last year we saw a well-aimed clearance from its arcade past. This year *FIFA* brings the ball down and surges forward with purpose. Predictably the sheen of presentation is still blinding - 16 leagues and 10,000 players tell the tale of the tape; kits, sponsors and player likenesses to make Madame Tussards weep do the rest. A seductive package, enough to bring out the green-eyed beastie in the most zealous of *Pro Evo* fans, but this time that's not all, folks.

We're edging ever closer to the perfect match here. Pace is slowed, the pitch expanded as more emphasis is piled on the passing game, compounded by a new Off the Ball control feature that allows control of a pass receiver, steering their runs via the Right thumbstick before supplying the killer pass. With time and space it's a potent weapon, but these are valued commodities in a match that congests the midfield, demanding craft and probing to eke out chances.

Goals are hard to come by until the intricacies are mastered. Shooting is vastly improved but you'll only get to test the theory from long range until you've sussed crossing via your new tools. It doesn't help that the defensive game, boosted by improved tackling and a feature that throws extra bodies at the ball carrier, is hugely improved. Marking is disciplined, the timing impeccable. It takes patience and subtlety to break down... qualities we'd never thought we'd need in *FIFA*.

The rest is gravy, which is handy because it's typically half-baked. The new Career mode is a simplified version of *Pro Evolution Soccer*'s Master League, where transfers and training are traded for prestige points gained for achieving club objectives. A weak link in *FIFA* 's new lineup, but it at least introduces the likes of Yeovil Town and their Nationwide peers to rub shoulders with the usual star suspects.

Of course, the lack of Xbox Live play reduces *FIFA* to ten men before kick off and the post-pub kickabouts just won't be the same without those basketball-like scorelines. But *FIFA Football 2004* shirks this challenge and bears down on goal. Maybe next year it will apply the finish.

THE VERDICT

POWER
Incredible player models, fluid animation. Like watching the Premiership without the adverts.

STYLE
All the teams, players, sponsors, kits and stadia. It prances around like Cantona at a photoshoot.

IMMERSION
Improved chants and the vocal talents of Motson and McCoist. The best commentary ever.

LIFESPAN
If the Career mode is a shot in the arm, the rather lenient difficulty settings are a kick in balls.

GOOD POINTS
+ RIDICULOUSLY PRETTY
+ A DEEPER, MORE REWARDING MATCH
+ NATIONWIDE CLUBS

BAD POINTS
- BALANCED TOWARDS DEFENCE
- EASILY BEATEN ONCE MASTERED

SUMMARY
Emerges from the shadow of the licence to fulfil its potential as the best Xbox footy title. The boy done good.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

8.7 //10

>>PREVIOUSLY: Exclusive Access - Issue 20
>>COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 24

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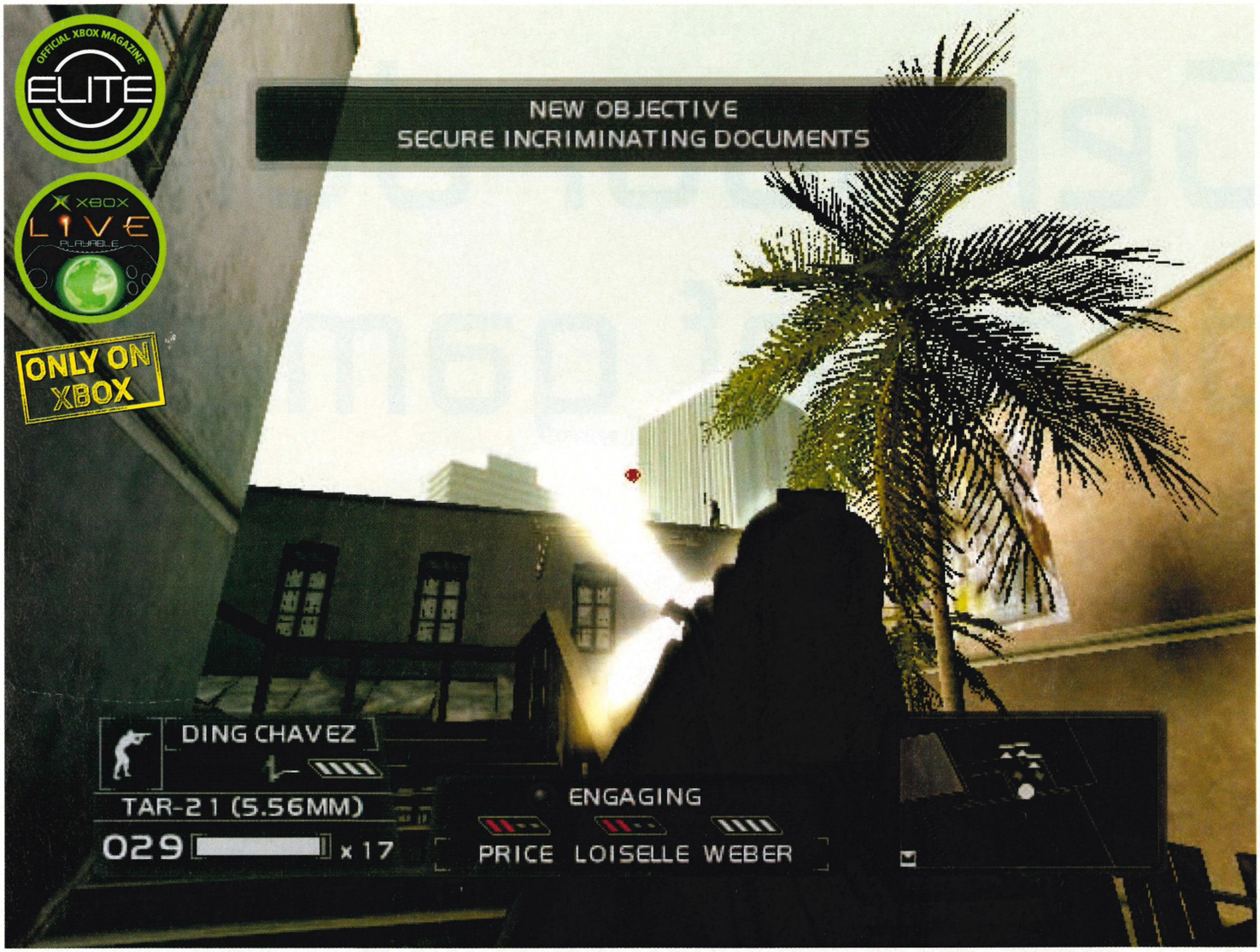


↑ As soon as your team-mates spot this fiddler on the roof they'll provide covering fire. Now you can make your way up the staircase to storm the building.

The year's biggest shooter explodes onto the squad-based scene

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3

WORDS: **GAVIN OGDEN**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **UBI SOFT**
PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**
RELEASE DATE: **15 NOV 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-16 SYSTEM LINK / XBOX LIVE**
WEBSITE: **WWW.UBISOFT.CO.UK**

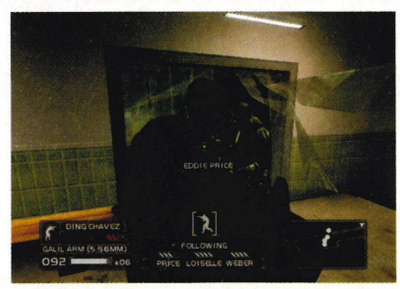
THE BRIEF

HOTLY anticipated squad-based first-person action shooter from the makers of the *Ghost Recon* series. It's here!

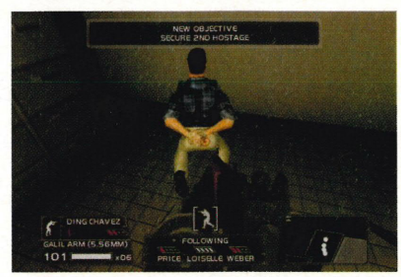
BY THE TIME you read this review, you should have already gunned your way through our exclusive playable demo and eyeballed every single sentence to death in our Exclusive Access feature in last month's issue. *Rainbow Six 3* has got everything Tom Clancy's famed *Ghost Recon* series hasn't, which you might think is not a lot, but let us assure you that this is where the future of squad-based action lies – especially online or over System Link.

Little has changed in the final version compared to the build we hammered last month. There's a lot more vocal activity in there now, especially from the hostages and terrorists. Hostages will now shout at you not to leave them alone after you've secured them and the area, while terrorists scream and shout like a bunch of teens in an American horror movie. Granted, terrorists only scream like girls when you blow holes in their bodies, so we'll forgive them for that. Even your team-mates shout out to let you know what's going on, and more importantly where.

The game's setup is similar to that of *Ghost Recon*. You can choose to play through a meaty campaign with a politically themed storyline, or opt to play a variety of quick missions with the usual variables such as map type, game type and difficulty settings. Three difficulty levels (Recruit, Veteran and Elite) are also ➤➤

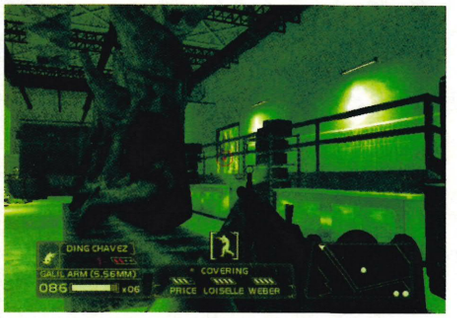


↑ In-game physics make objects look real.



↑ Secure hostages and leave them behind.

↑ Watch in awe as your team takes covering positions behind the crates, ready for the incoming assault.



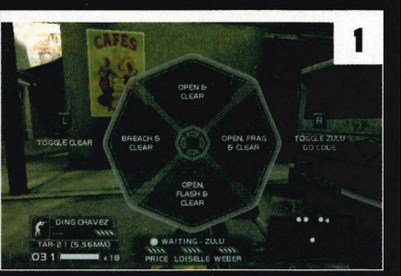
↑ Night vision means there's no hiding for baddies.

↑ Throw in a tear gas grenade and make them cry.

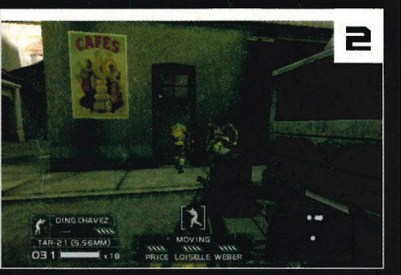
"Your team-mates shout out to let you know what's going on, and where"

BREACH OF THE PEACE

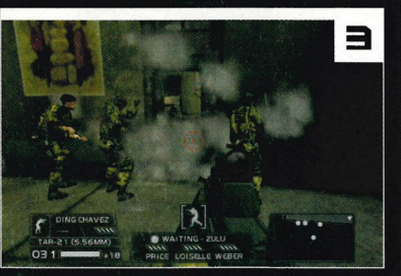
THERE'S NOTHING quite like waking up a bunch of terrorists with an almighty ear-piercing bang before storming a room. Imagine how much fun this'll be in multiplayer.



↑ Command your team-mates to 'Breach & Clear on Zulu' while pointing at the door.



↑ Your team wires explosives to the door ready to blow it off it on your command...



↑ As soon as you give the word, the door shatters into a million pieces. Job well done!

BONUS INFO

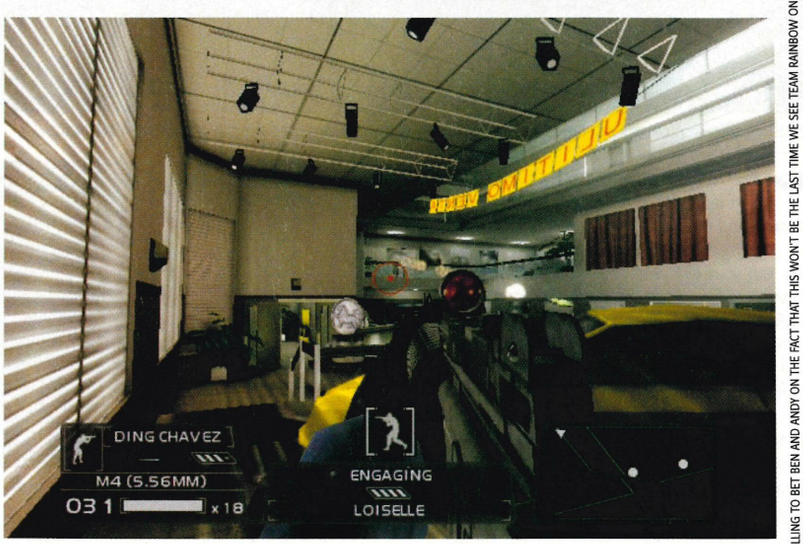
A SOUND JOB
As soon as you press the trigger, you'll notice how great everything sounds. Bullets ricocheting off different surfaces have a unique sound, depending on what they hit. This adds to the great sense of realism, and the classical music backing track is a nice touch.

TALK SPORT
Thanks to the Xbox Communicator you can shout commands at your team offline in the single-player game. Just shout one of the commands from the menu clearly and they'll do it without question. This neat feature really does set the game above the competition.

presented in the Campaign mode and as you've probably already guessed, it's quite a challenge whatever level you choose (nothing compared to the rock hard PC version, mind you). Easy isn't easy and Hard doesn't come anywhere close to doing this level of difficulty justice. But a *Clancy* game just wouldn't be the same without the pain. You love it and so do we.

As team leader Ding Chavez, you get to command an elite squad of special operatives against all manner of terrorist foes. Usually they come clad in really bad Hawaiian beach bum shirts, or sport George Michael stubble and shades. This makes you want to hit them more though, which is good. Because you play the role of team leader, if you get it in the face, it's game over. No one else is skilled enough to lead the charge, so make sure you don't get shot. Sending in your guys first and mopping up the dregs is a class tactic. There's no shame in hiding. Controlling team-mates is as simple as pressing A in the direction you want them to move.

The third instalment in the series takes you across the globe, visiting locations from London to the Cayman Islands and everywhere in between. The overall goal is to stop a madman (dead) in his tracks before his doomsday plot is realised. Some of our favourite locales include the meat factory, oil tanker, and a very wealthy CEO's house. The variation in settings is truly amazing and helps keep the game nice and fresh. You never feel like you're covering the same ground twice.



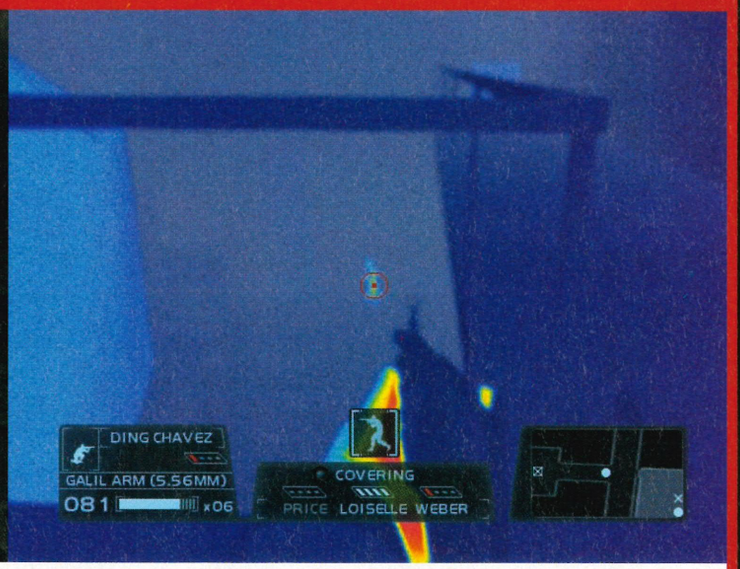
↑ Watch out for terrorists carrying rocket launchers. Even if they miss they'll catch you.

Each level is pretty linear and straightforward. You won't ever find yourself getting lost or not knowing what to do next. Objectives are continually updated and a handy little map labels where your next target is – be it a bomb to defuse, a

WAY FORWARD: WE'RE WILLING TO BET BEN AND ANDY ON THE FACT THAT THIS WON'T BE THE LAST TIME WE SEE TEAM RAINBOW ON XBOX. HAVE 'EM IF WE'RE WRONG!

SEEING IS BELIEVING >> Heat vision is a vital piece of kit no special operative can live without

↑ Thanks to a random smoke grenade the enemy is completely obscured from your sights. Luckily, you've got more than just guns in your arsenal...



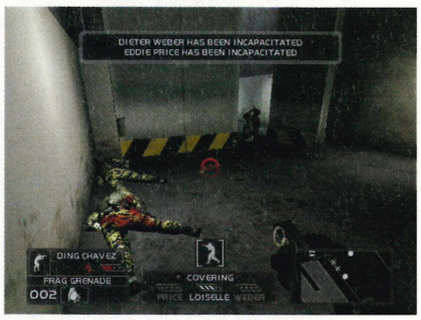
↑ Just flick on your heat vision and everything becomes crystal clear. There he is, the thing that looks a bit like a gas flame. Aim for the head – more mess.

↑ Shooting explosives causes devastation and death for anyone standing nearby. Poor fella...

>> hostage to secure or a phone to bug. If you just follow your nose, you'll always find more trouble to deal with.

During the pre-mission briefing you can opt to pick out your own weapons and accessories, though we found the standard weapons for every level very entertaining and this way you get to know each weapon of massive destruction. There's also a shipment of different grenades to choose from that'll bring tears to the eyes of your enemies and blind them for life. Over the course of the game you'll have to defuse bombs, capture key members of the terrorist organisation you're up against, hack into laptops to steal information and rescue hostages caught in the crossfire.

There's never a dull moment in the single-player game, and this translates beautifully into the multiplayer arena. There's no split-screen action but those of you with access to System Link, or better still, Xbox Live, will lose countless hours of your life never to be found again. You can team up against each other or the terrorists, in modes such as Mission, Survival, Terrorist Hunt, Team Survival and Sharpshooter. All of which pretty much do what they say on the tin. You'll also be able to download new maps soon after the game's gone on sale. Bonus.



↑ Your crew is expendable – you are not!

Rainbow Six 3 is the ultimate package for fans of realism-based first-person shooting. It looks great, sounds incredible and the action is relentless. It holds a great single-player game but fire up multiplayer and you'll be in FPS heaven. It's the best shooter of the year. Go! Go! Go!

"There's never a dull moment in the single-player game, and this translates beautifully into the multiplayer arena"

XBOX THE VERDICT

POWER
Squeezes out every little ounce of power to produce sights and sounds like the real thing.

STYLE
Easy to navigate and work your way through the menus. Setting up multiplayer games is easy.

IMMERSION
You'll be completely drawn into the world of counter-terrorism from the word go.

LIFESPAN
With downloadable content and full online play, you won't put this down until *Halo 2* comes out.

GOOD POINTS
+ SUPER-EASY TO CONTROL TEAM-MATES
+ GREAT VARIETY OF MISSIONS
+ EXCELLENT MULTIPLAYER OPTIONS

BAD POINTS
- CONTROLS COULD BE A BIT TIGHTER

SUMMARY
***Rainbow Six 3* has delivered in every area possible. By far the best squad-based shooter to be released this side of Christmas.**

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

9.4//10

>> **PREVIOUSLY:** Exclusive Access – Issue 22
>> **COMING SOON:** Walkthrough – Issue 25

MIDWAY

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- Official Xbox Magazine

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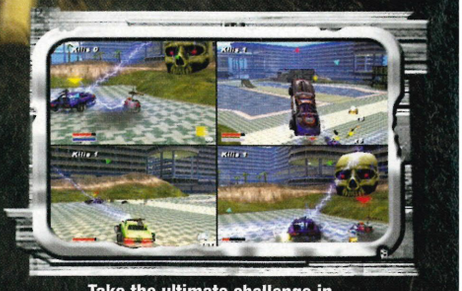

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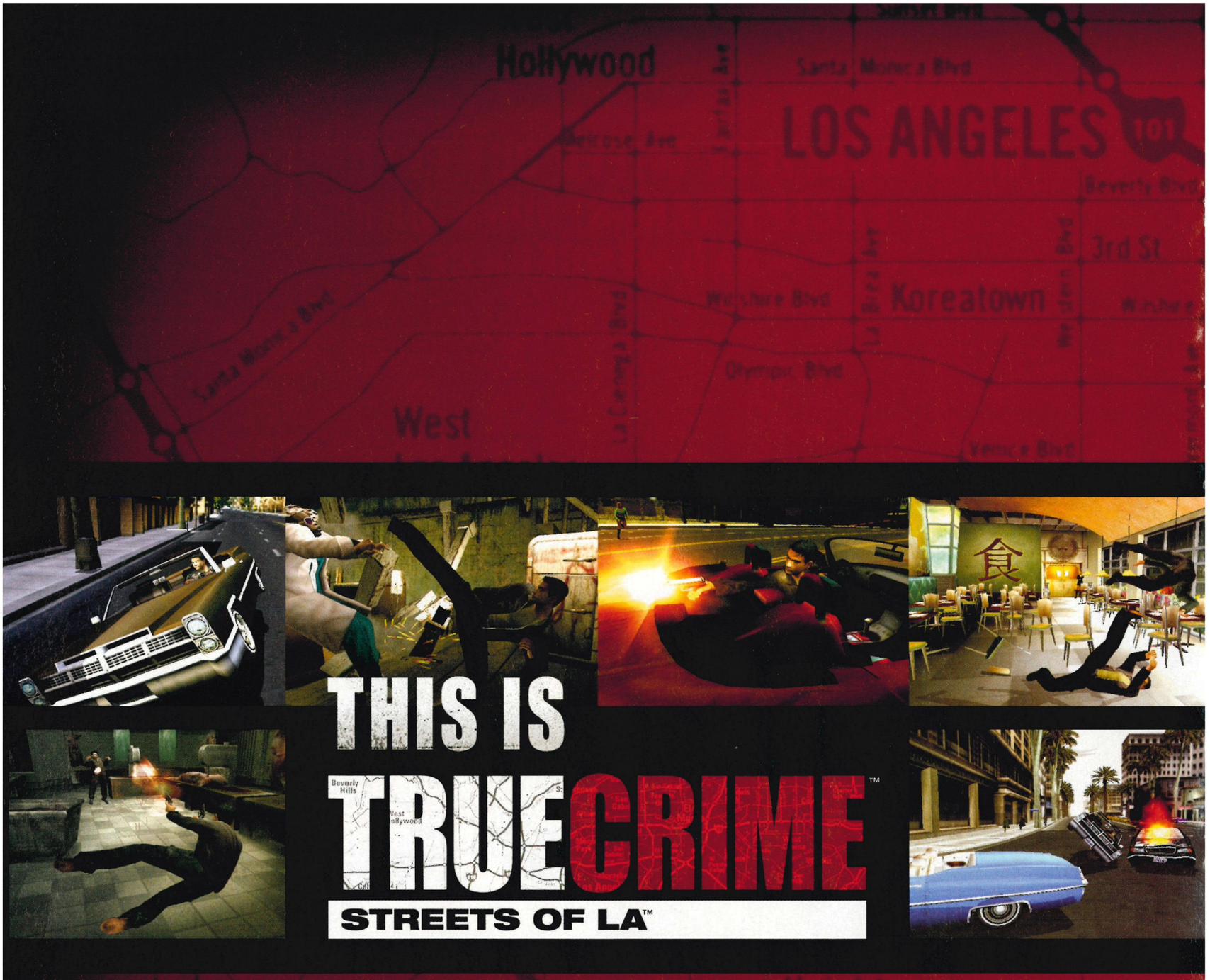

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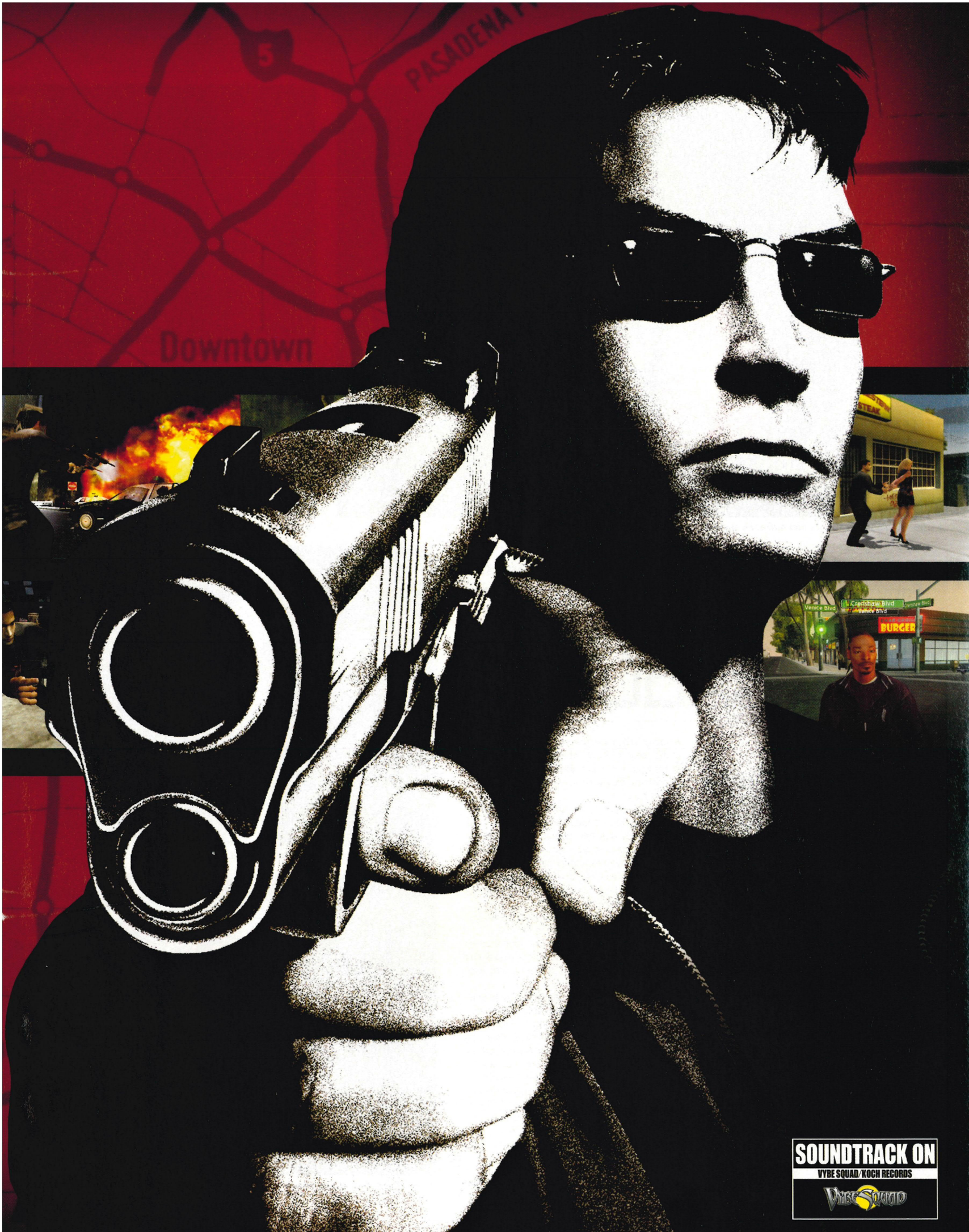
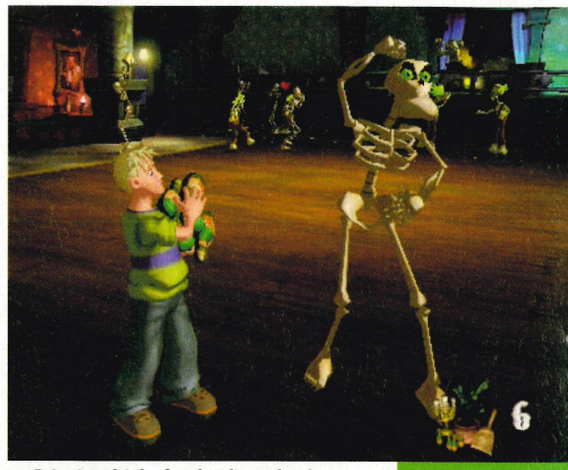

Downtown
Crenshaw Blvd
Venice Blvd
BURGER
SOUNDTRACK ON
VYBE SQUAD/KOCH RECORDS
VYBE SQUAD

↑ Hit their funny bones and make the skeletons go to pieces.



↑ Bringing drinks for the disco dead.

↑ Cooper receives a super-scary shock.

Been bashed in the bits or kicked in the cobblers? Fortunately Rare's new adventure is much more fun

GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES

WORDS: **BEN TALBOT**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **RARE**
PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT**
RELEASE DATE: **NOV 2003**
PLAYERS: **1**
WEBSITE: **WWW.RAREWARE.COM**

THE BRIEF

HELP COOPER to rescue his girlfriend. Brawl with zombies, skeletons and other spooks.

A SOUND CAN be scarier than anything you can actually see. Have you ever been up late at night and heard a rustling in the bushes? It could be just a cat, but maybe it's a 13-eyed bloodsucking freak from hell...

It's enough to make you hide under the bed, bolt the bedroom door and never come out again.

Grabbed by the Ghoulies is far from being a spine-tingler but it'll still have you locked away for days on end. As an audio experience, the game just can't be beaten. If your ears could talk, it'd be very strange, but they'd tell you how much fun *Ghoulies* is.

Rare has done such a gratifying job here, because every zombie groan and skeleton shuffle is pure entertainment. Imps chatter from the shadows and Medusas warble mirthfully after turning you into a statue. Mummies utter bandage-veiled swearwords and the ghost pirates bellow "Pieces of eight" while trying to splice your mainbrace. Best of all is the cowardly hunchback who starts to cry when you punch him in the face.

The phantom of British humour inhabits every nook and cranny of Ghoulhaven Hall and it's extremely welcome. Character design and animation are as gorgeous as you'd expect from any of Rare's games. Rather than make the mistake of reinventing the classic movie monsters, it's kept them gloriously camp and unfailingly appealing.

Ghoulies also revels in having a pleasingly clichéd plot. Out hiking in the woodlands, Cooper and his girlfriend stumble upon a creaky old mansion. Moments later, Amber is abducted by invisible phantoms and the young hero sets out to rescue her.

Everything satisfies expectations, until you tackle the unconventional gameplay. *Ghoulies* looks like a platformer, but Cooper's feet are firmly planted on terra firma. Instead, it's a beat 'em up where anything you come across can be used as a weapon, and we do mean anything. Frozen hamburgers, picture frames, potted plants... all can be utilised. Your movement is controlled with the Left thumbstick while the Right stick lets you attack in eight different directions. This makes it possible to run backwards while attacking enemies who are in hot pursuit. This technique is used from beginning to end and is surprisingly easy to master... maybe a little too easy. »

↑ Ghoulies like to chill out in the f-f-freezer.

↑ Extinguish the flaming imps.

BONUS INFO

HE SLIMED ME!
In true *Ghostbusters* style, Cooper is often frightened by transparent phantoms. Unless you move out of range quickly, you'll be a quivering wreck for the next ten seconds. At this point you take double damage.

"Character design and animation are as gorgeous as you'd expect from a Rare title. The monsters are gloriously camp and unfailingly appealing"

Cooper doesn't pick up any new skills as the game progresses, only new weapons. This would be okay if the weapons could be used in different ways, but the only real difference between them is their attack range and the amount of damage they cause. Nevertheless, the number of household items you can use to bash and bludgeon in your quest is very impressive.

That's not to say that you'll always have weapons to hand. Many missions make it more difficult for you by saying that you can only use punch or kicks. Other missions are 'weapons only' – difficult when there are loads of ghoulies and a shortage of kitchen utensils. The most fiendish missions of all are in environments where no furniture can be broken. You really have to play these ones with kid gloves.

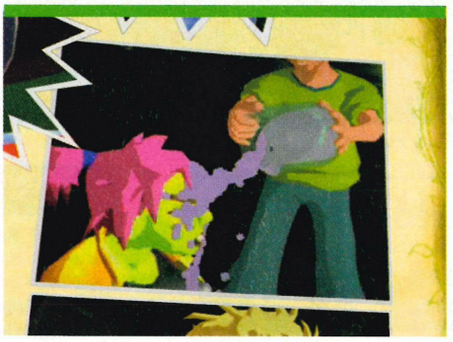
Unlike many games where breaking the rules results in instant failure, *Ghoulies* goads you into doing things your own way. Do it wrong and the Grim Reaper appears, chasing you around with an instantly fatal touch. The beauty of this is that you can still escape with a little cunning and skill.

So, there's a dash of puzzle-solving which manages to stand out amongst a huge glob of fighting. What impresses most though, are the dazzling presentation, loveable characters and mind-boggling attention to detail. While the gameplay isn't going to prove too addictive, it's fun and engaging. *Ghoulies* oozes with the qualities that made Rare famous as a developer – it's a surefire crowd-pleaser with a potentially massive audience.

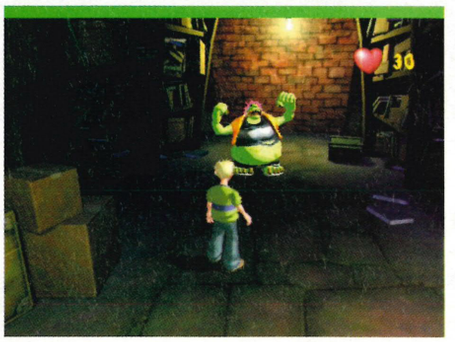
AMBER AFFLICTED — Amber turns green and Cooper sees red

SOME OF OUR favourite moments in the game revolve around Amber being turned into a hideous beast. Although Cooper is determined to save his missus, things go from bad to worse. You have to create a special potion to turn Amber from a hideous beast back into an ordinary girl. That's not the end of it, though.

↑ It's what's on the inside that counts.



↑ Always apply your potions carefully.



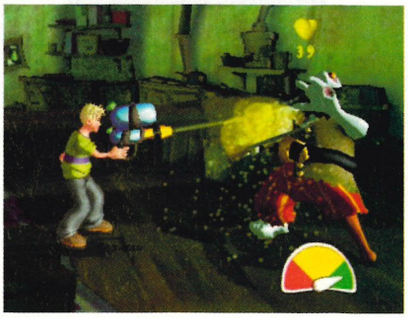
↑ Should have read the label properly!

BONUS INFO

OLD STONEFACE
Powerful ghoulies like the Medusas have the power to deliver a super-scary shock. You have to bash out a random button combination to pull yourself together.

REAP REWARDS
When summoned, the Grim Reaper pursues you relentlessly. Use this to your advantage – any enemies caught between you and his icy touch will die. Even bosses can be killed this way.

↑ This girl really takes care of her appearance.



↑ Squirt the evil Ghost Pirates.

↑ Don't fear the Reaper.

THE VERDICT

POWER
The graphics aren't awe-inspiring, but everything's so amusing you'll be having too much fun to notice.

STYLE
This has to be one of Xbox's best-sounding titles. Proves that audio can make or break a game.

IMMERSION
The plot sucks you in, but *Ghoulies'* gameplay isn't complex enough and you don't feel tested.

LIFESPAN
You won't finish it more than once, but it's good to dip back into. Loads of challenges to unlock.

GOOD POINTS
+ TOP PRESENTATION
+ PACKED WITH INNUENDO
+ REQUIRES TACTICAL THINKING

BAD POINTS
- WEAPONS ARE A LITTLE SAMEY
- PLOT IS VERY CLICHÉD

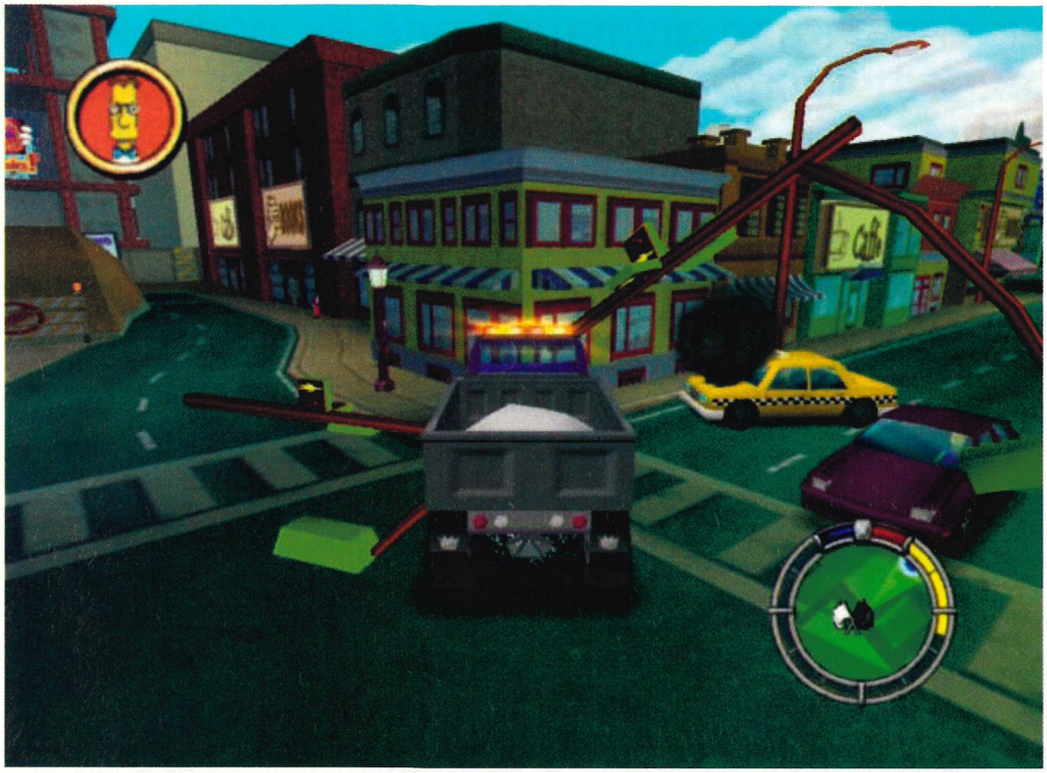
SUMMARY
Very polished. Should have been more demanding, but could be what Xbox needs to entice a new breed of gamers.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

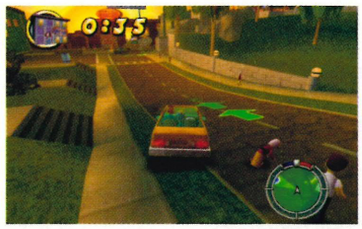
8.9/10

PREVIOUSLY: First Look – Issue 18
COMING SOON: Hints – Issue 24

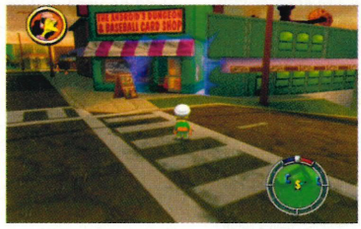
GRABBED BY THE GATES: GHOULIES WAS ORIGINALLY SLATED FOR AN N64 RELEASE. TALK ABOUT LONG DEVELOPMENT TIMES...



↑ Cause mayhem, death and destruction in Homer's trusty Mr Plow truck.



↑ "I'll get you, like I got Charlie in 'Nam!"



↑ Ben's favourite shop everrrrrrr.

↑ Chase down the mysterious black van.

↑ "Erm, I'll just take a Muumuu..."

Take the wheel with our four-fingered yellow friends

THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN

WORDS: **ANDY IRVING**

BONUS INFO

>>SO LONG, SUCKERS! Patti and Selma run illegal street races with Nelson and Ralph. Race to unlock goodies, and gamble with the mob to win prize money.

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT**
PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI UNIVERSAL**
RELEASE DATE: **7 NOV 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
WEBSITE: **WWW.THESIMPSONS-HITANDRUNCOM**

THE BRIEF

GUIDE the family around the town by car or on foot, completing tasks for the oddball inhabitants.

IT'S A TESTAMENT to the quality of *The Simpsons* that not only is it the longest-running cartoon series on TV, but also the most successful comedy show of all time. So it's unfortunate that games based on this fantastic licence have been a big disappointment. Until now.

It seems Homer and co have a penchant for tearing around Springfield in all manner of vehicles, only this time things have been considerably moved up a gear (ahem). Every conceivable contraption that you've ever seen is here, from Otto's schoolbus to Lisa's Malibu Stacy car. The game follows a bizarre storyline, kicking off with the appearance of strange surveillance wasps all over town and, after Bart disappears, things take a turn for the surreal.

After a basic tutorial level, the real genius of the game strikes home. Along with a frantically paced driving game, you get the opportunity to get out of your vehicle and explore Springfield on foot. The whole town. Anywhere you like.

Not unlike another famous driving/running/exploring title, violence is at the forefront of the game's third-person aspect. Players can attack and smash any nearby people or objects, and hijack passing vehicles. Springfield is faithfully recreated here - you'll instantly recognise all the locations that serve as backdrops for the mission-based tasks, which mostly involve beating the clock or collecting items in a set time.

The humour is perfectly captured here, with plenty of in-jokes and characteristic dialogue. Along with controlling Homer, Bart, Lisa, Marge and Apu, practically every *Simpsons* character ever created is here, and all play an integral part in the story. All the original actors do the voice-overs too, which adds to the authenticity.

As with all platformers, collecting things is the Krusty Burger order of the day, and amassing hordes of gold coins will let you purchase new cars and outfits relating to each character. Look out for the sets of collectors packs too, which, when completed, give access to bonus games and nuggets of real episodes. All very interesting for comic book store guys and the like.

After a while some of the driving missions feel a bit samey, and repeating a failed task can be more boring than one of Skinner's lessons. The camera is a bit limited on the platform side of the game too, often forcing you to take a blind leap of faith into unseen areas, but apart from that, *Hit & Run* is a tidy little game that finally does a great licence justice.

THE VERDICT

POWER
Fluid animation and character modelling means Xbox works reasonably hard.

STYLE
The whole of Springfield looks gorgeous and the in-game humour really is spot-on.

IMMERSION
Immediately accessible and with constant saves you can pick it up and play anytime.

LIFESPAN
It'll take ages to find and unlock everything, and huge levels mean you'll keep coming back for more.

GOOD POINTS

+ IT'S A DECENT SIMPSONS GAME!
+ GREAT ATMOSPHERE
+ TONS OF EXTRAS

BAD POINTS

- MISSIONS CAN GET A BIT REPETITIVE
- AWKWARD CAMERA IN THIRD-PERSON

SUMMARY

Think *GTA3* meets *Burnout 2* all wrapped up in a *Simpsons* fan-fest package. As Mr Burns would say, "Exxccellllent!"

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

8.0//10

>>PREVIOUSLY: Preview - Issue 22
>>COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 24

For a thousand years the Imperial court had dealt in death -until Raikoh, the last member of the clan charged with carrying out these evil deeds, defied them. As punishment Raikoh was cast into a state somewhere between Life and Death. Raikoh must now fulfill his destiny and defeat a ferocious demonic army and in so doing purify his clan.

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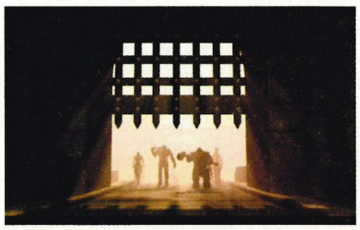
↑ Rudimentary traps rear their clichéd heads in yet another meticulously maintained dungeon.



↑ The team looks rather striking here.

↑ A healer is very useful in multiplayer.

↑ Irritating NPCs dish out sub-quests.

↑ Where be dragons?

It's Lord of the Rings! Without a licence! Or a story!

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS: HEROES

WORDS: **SIMON PARKIN**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **ATARI**
PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
RELEASE DATE: **31 OCT 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
WEBSITE: **WWW.DANDHEROES.COM**

THE BRIEF

DEFEAT dragons, goblins, evil wizards and the like in this perennial *Lord of the Rings* rip-off.

DUNGEONS and Dragons is the grandaddy of all role-playing games. The franchise has been around almost as long as there have been RPGs so it follows that, after years of refinement, a *D&D* video game released in 2003 should be pretty bloody fantastic.

Unfortunately for *Dungeons and Dragons: Heroes*, it comes hot on the heels of the genre's acme, *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* (Issue 20, 9.5) and, not least failing to match that title, Atari's RPG even falls a little short of last year's obvious influence, *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* (Issue 08, 8.5).

D&D: Heroes launches you into a world of sub-Tolkien cliché as you take on the role of one of four resurrected legendary heroes in a bid to defeat the returning evil wizard Kaedin. The linear gameplay takes you on a straightforward hack 'n' slash path beginning in ominous catacombs and taking you through Castle Baele and then finally to a portal that leads to various elemental-themed stages. As you travel through the levels you must find 20 missing shards from your weapon which, once gathered, return it to its former glory, equipping you for the final battle. As far as the story goes that's about it and die-hard RPG narrative fans will be disappointed with the clunky inconsistency of interchanging FMV and awkward in-game cutscenes. There are no plot twists, no interesting characters and no moral decisions needing to be made. You might call this an action RPG-lite.

Fortunately, the fighting gameplay is implemented competently as you equip your weapon and choose your magic upgrades as you level up. You have the ubiquitous HP and MP bars and can also equip a variety of interesting secondary projectile weapons found in the multitude of boxes lying around. If anything, the game makes it all too easy for the player, with an unbalanced profusion of overly strong weaponry and skills. You hack, slash, heal and follow the carefully plotted map around the arenas in what is gameplay-wise essentially the 20-year-old classic *Gauntlet*. The similarities with *Gauntlet* 's heritage are heightened when up to three friends join you in your quest. Unfortunately, the developer has failed to make the experience any richer in team multiplay and there are no extra attacks or combos. A missed opportunity if ever there was one.

D&D: Heroes is not a bad game. It's good for a rainy afternoon, can pass the time quite enjoyably and there are certainly worse games out there. It's just that titles such as *Star Wars: KOTOR* have raised the Western RPG bar so high that basic hacking RPGs seem a little more hackneyed than they used to.

BONUS INFO

DICE 'EM UP
Heroes **uses the D20 3rd Edition Dungeons & Dragons boardgame rules, but the formula and tactical elements have been distilled.**

THE VERDICT

POWER
Some good effects but doesn't really push the system that hard. Solid nonetheless.

STYLE
Very typical Western top-down RPG styling but a superb musical score helps immeasurably.

IMMERSION
It's fairly compulsive but sadly the lack of gameplay variety quickly starts to grate.

LIFESPAN
Not a big game by RPG standards and a dedicated sit down can get you a long way through.

GOOD POINTS

+ FUN FOR A WHILE, ESPECIALLY IN CO-OP
+ TOP ENVIRONMENTS
+ INTUITIVE CONTROLS AND CLEAN, CLEAR HUD

BAD POINTS

- UNWIELDY PLAYER-CONTROLLED CAMERA THAT NEVER SETTLES

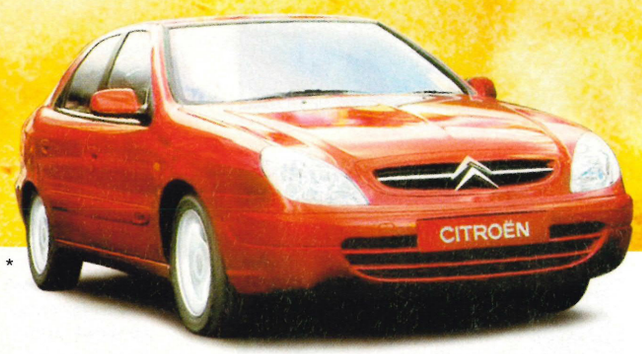
SUMMARY
Varied gameplay and a more interesting story could have made *Heroes* much more enticing, but it's a great rental.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

6.9/10

PREVIOUSLY: Nothing – it's been hiding out in a dungeon until now
COMING SOON: Hints – Issue 24

Win



*

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Official Xbox magazine

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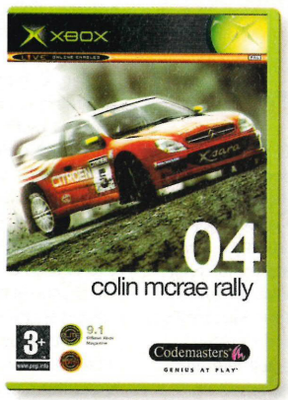

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↑ Screaming in for the kill inches from the surface of the water is nothing short of exhilarating.

Dogfighting has never looked so snappy

CRIMSON SKIES: HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE

WORDS: SIMON PARKIN

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **FASA STUDIOS**

PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT**

RELEASE DATE: **31 OCT 2003**

PLAYERS: **1-16 SYSTEM LINK & XBOX LIVE**

WEBSITE: **WWW.CRIMSONSKIES.COM**

» THE BRIEF

TAKE ON the role of a post-war US air pirate in a messy interstate conflict over a super-weapon.

STORMING the fantasy land of Tatooine and the reality of Baghdad are both good options for gamers, but only a few brave games try to create an alternative version of actual history. Microsoft's long-awaited *Crimson Skies* does just that and to great effect.

The story goes that after the Great War and depression of the 1930s, the US was split into a clutch of regional, estranged fiefdoms. This has caused a state of almost permanent in-land fighting leading to the destruction of the interstate railway systems. With no other effective land-based transport, the people have turned to aircraft for both commerce and travel. And so *Crimson Skies* introduces the player to a beautifully populated skyscape filled with huge zeppelins and punctuated by gun-mounted fighter planes.

You take on the role of air pirate Nathan Zachary, an entrepreneur who has jumped on the pirating bandwagon in plundering the nouveau rich skies. The game opens with Nathan's pants literally down while a rival pirate steals his beloved plane. In true Bond style, Zachary dumps the girl and heroically manages to retrieve his plane. From here on you're in the sky, and that's mostly where you'll stay as the light-hearted opening tone soon gives way to more sinister dealings with a super-weapon.

Crimson Skies is lush to look at, with shiny good-looking graphics and planes that handle beautifully. The wonderfully implemented visual effects such as exhaust heat, propellers and wreckage augment the joy of the sunset-filled graphical vistas.

The game places its loyalties firmly in the arcade school of handling, eschewing the flight simulator pacing so beloved of bearded PC types. Each of the ten attainable planes has a primary and secondary weapon handled by the Left and Right triggers, and all-important boost and brake buttons allow precision player control. Boosting as well as the host of available aerobatics all use the equivalent of a constantly refilling MP gauge whilst your plane also has a refillable life bar. Collect health packs for your plane by shooting down enemy planes or drop by a hangar for a quick tune-up.

↑ The beautiful explosions are film-like.

↑ Zoom in for a better turret aim.

↑ Anti-aircraft guns come in different flavours.

» BONUS INFO

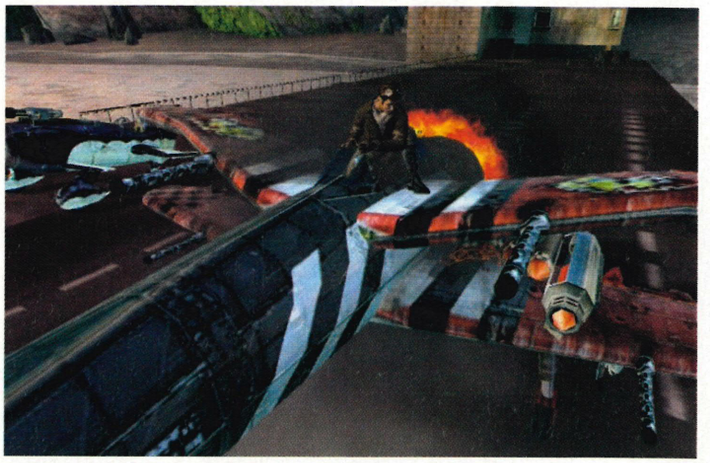
» CHICKEN RUN
We've all played Capture the Flag a million times, but this mini-game takes a different angle. Here, you need to catch and deposit a flying chicken at your home base for points. While you can earn points for shooting down other players, the real winnings come from catching the chicken.

» LETHAL WEAPON
The death of a scientist friend brings a huge weapon into the balance of state power. He had been working on a weather-changing weapon for philanthropic reasons (to bring an end to droughts and flooding), but the warring pirates have other plans for it...

» NAME CHECK
PC gamers may recognise the name *Crimson Skies* from somewhere else. That's because in 2000 Microsoft released a namesake title for PC. The Xbox game is not a port of this game and, despite both titles sharing similar ideas, they are distinct and both worth your time.

» I SAY, OLD CHAP
A perfectly pitched soundtrack makes you feel like you're starring in an Errol Flynn movie and helps to offset the miss-and-miss American voice acting somewhat. You can't help wishing this had been voiced by a Biggles-esque toffee-nose instead.

↑ Downed planes drop extra weapon ammo and health should you need it.



↑ Swapping planes mid-mission is a very simple proposition.

CHOCKS AWAY» A time to kill...

IN THE FIRST AREA you can check in with a betting emporium to see if you can complete a tough flying race...

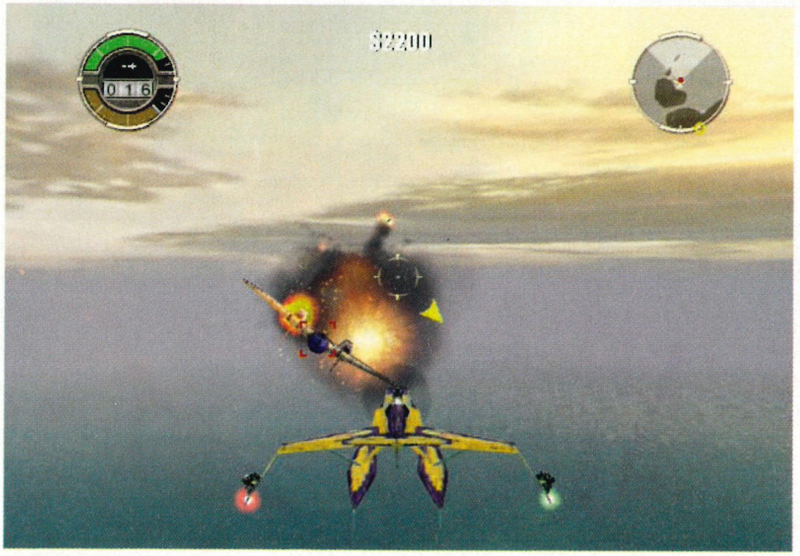
» **PLACE YOUR BETS NOW:** Choose how much of your carefully collected wonga you want to wager.

» **GATECRASHING:** Steady as you aim your craft through the cunningly arranged checkpoints.

» **SPEEDO:** A well-timed acceleration boost can mean the difference between winning and losing.

» In terms of missions, *Crimson Skies*' gameplay is very open-ended. Undeniably, there is an over-arching plot that you follow, but in terms of individual missions you can fly around and pick and choose which NPCs you approach and help. Successfully completing missions earns you money and tokens which you can use to upgrade your plane. There's a range of missions to select, varying from protecting a small ship to taking on a fleet of enemy incomings. This variety is simply delightful and the fast-moving action makes the game extremely hard to put down.

Multiplayer options are extensive with six different types of game, and the ever-welcome promise of Xbox Live bodes extremely well. *Crimson Skies* is a quality package and a very important title in Microsoft's pre-Christmas campaign. It will hit all the right buttons for pretty much every type of gamer, and you should reserve a space on your shelf for what will certainly become an enduring and endearing title.



↑ Playing chicken in the skies is not for the faint-hearted.

THE VERDICT

POWER
One of the best and fastest-looking titles on Xbox. It all moves along perfectly.

STYLE
The front end is slightly dated but get stuck in and it's better looking than Jodie Kidd.

IMMERSION
The non-stop action draws you in and shakes you around like a kite in a thunderstorm.

LIFESPAN
Unlockable difficulties and extreme multiplayer both on and offline make a full package.

GOOD POINTS
+ SO BEAUTIFUL IT COULD BE A FILM
+ DEADLY PLAYABILITY
+ STACKS OF VARIETY IN BOTH GAMEPLAY AND MISSIONS

BAD POINTS
- BAD VOICE ACTING
- TOUGH AEROBATICS

SUMMARY
A great package that's been well thought out and playtested to death - and it looks gorgeous too.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

8.9/10

» **PREVIOUSLY:** Incoming - Issues 15 & 18
» **COMING SOON:** Hints - Issue 24

TOYS 'R' US: THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF COLLECTABLE FIGURINES, THOUGH YOU'LL NEED VERY GOOD SCORES ON THE MINI-GAMES TO NAB THE RAREST.

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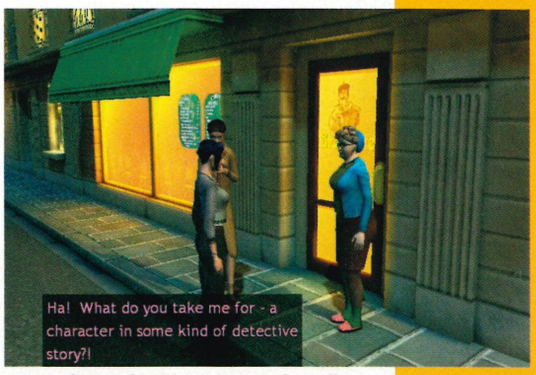
Pummel opponents with over 15 weapons

Race 18 mind-bending tracks

Battle for bragging rights in multiplayer mode

Battle for the chequered flag with Crash, friends and foes. Use missiles, bombs, tornadoes and more to pass or blast up to 4 friends in multiplayer mode. Race to win... using any means you can.

↑ The considerable sexual tension between exes George and Nico allows for some wonderful moments.



↑ Revolution does irony extremely well.

↑ Sussaro's castle is a bit foreboding.

A rip-roaring and esoteric puzzler where you get to play detective. So how brainy are you?

BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON

WORDS: SIMON PARKIN

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **REVOLUTION**

PUBLISHER: **THQ**

RELEASE DATE: **NOV 2003**

PLAYERS: **1**

WEBSITE: **WWW.REVGAMES.COM**

THE BRIEF

INVESTIGATE murder and a spate of strange meteorological phenomena. It's very intelligent.

THERE WAS A time, in the land before polygons, when adventure games were mainly served *à la* point and click. This meant that rather than directly move your character, you would use a mouse pointer to direct him in working out fiendishly complicated puzzles such as how to fly to the moon using only a crowbar, condom and a cheese sandwich.

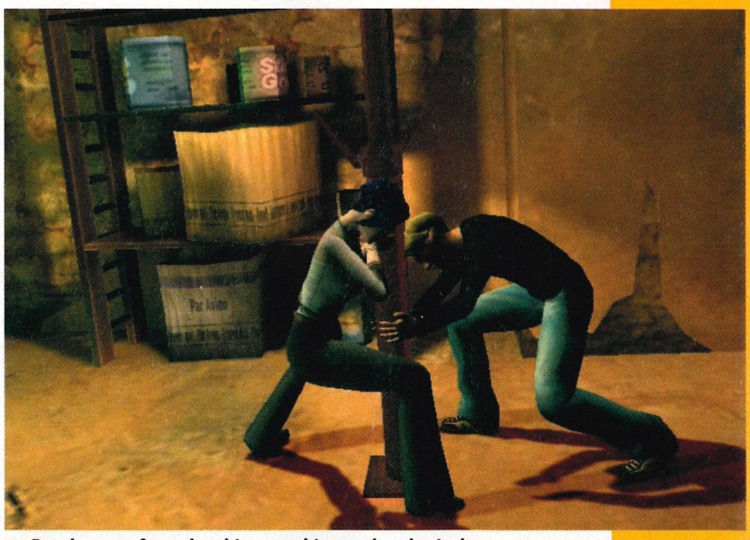
Though it all sounds a bit deathly, we can assure you it wasn't. The *Broken Sword* series, with its clever scenarios, expressive 2D cartoon visuals, knowing dialogue and refreshingly witty protagonists was one of the finest examples of this peculiar sub-genre.

But then the 3D video gaming storm arrived and everyone decided all games made before *Tomb Raider* must have been crap. 2D point-and-click adventures were deemed outdated and were mercilessly downtrodden in the identikit action game stampede. Fans mourned as it looked as though the genre was gone forever. However, Revolution, *Broken Sword*'s maker, quietly bided their time and kindled their vision. Now, three years after work first began, the third game in the series, rises in glorious 3D Technicolor, bringing George and Nico back together again in a fast-paced and effortlessly engaging, humorous detective yarn. It's what the world's been waiting for.

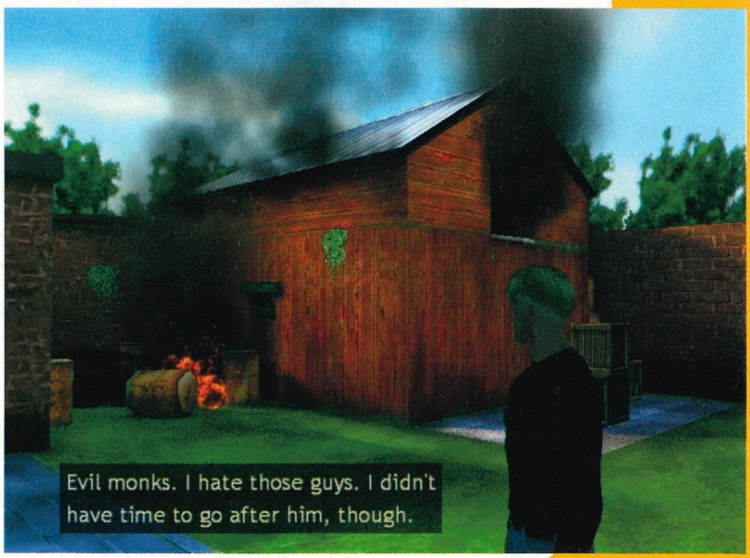
The game opens in the Congo where unsuspecting hero George finds himself in a downed plane, teetering over the edge of a cliff with nothing but a beer bottle, crate and unconscious pilot to help him out of, what is to become, a typically perilous position. The dazzling plot quickly unwinds, taking you on a whirlwind tour of the various sights and sounds of Paris, Glastonbury and the Czech Republic.

George and Nico, at first apart, and latterly together, set off on the trail of evil cult leader Sassaro. The *Broken Sword* games have always blurred the line between history and fiction, and *The Sleeping Dragon* follows this trend. It's based somewhat esoterically on the Voynich manuscript, Geomantric lines and The Templars, but there's also a large dose of in-jokes thrown in for those who played the first titles.

As far as the actual gameplay goes, this is essentially a puzzle game. You collect various seemingly useless menial objects and use your own cryptic lateral thinking to work out how to utilise them for your goal. Although the game is single-player, you don't necessarily have to play it on your own. On the contrary, »



↑ Puzzles vary from the chin-scratching to the physical.



↑ Time is frequently of the essence.

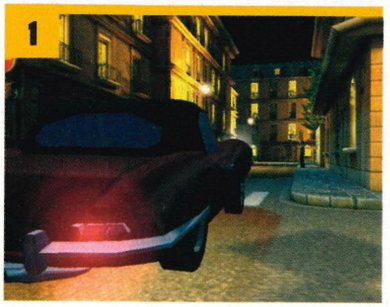
BONUS INFO

QUOTE ME HAPPY
The gags are a bit hit and miss, though they do hit the mark more than not. There's something in there for everyone, from the obvious double entendre through to poetry plagiarism.

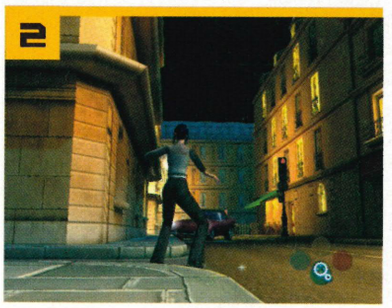
REALITY CHECK
In amongst the Tintin-esque adventuring is a healthy dose of reality, which you can read about in the options screen. Don't rush in – make sure you get all the background first.

ACTION REACTION » So, you think you're fast, huh?

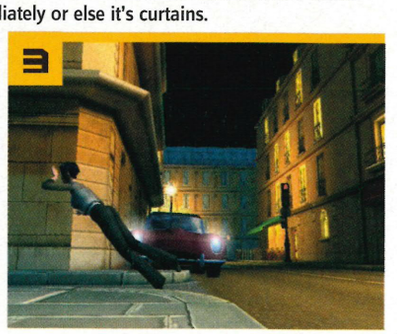
OCCASIONALLY THE game throws a reaction-based challenge at you, usually during the course of a cutscene. The context-sensitive menu on the bottom-left of the screen highlights at the critical moment, and you must react immediately or else it's curtains.



↑ **CAR-MAGEDDON** Here, in a nod to the previous game, a sports car attempts to run over the unsuspecting Nico.



↑ **READY FOR YOUR CUE** At exactly the right moment, your context-sensitive menu lights up for just a split-second.



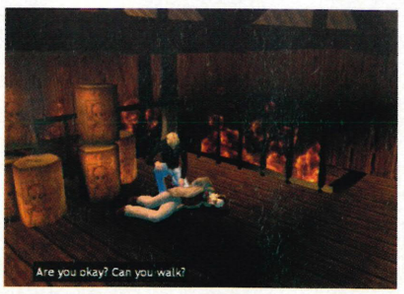
↑ **DEATH BECOMES HER?** Hit the button in time to jump out of the way avoiding certain death gracefully.

"Gamers who love a good detective story and fancy themselves as lateral thinkers will be in their element"

» you can have a lot of fun sitting down for the night and playing through with a friend, coming up with all sorts of possible solutions for the increasingly difficult challenges.

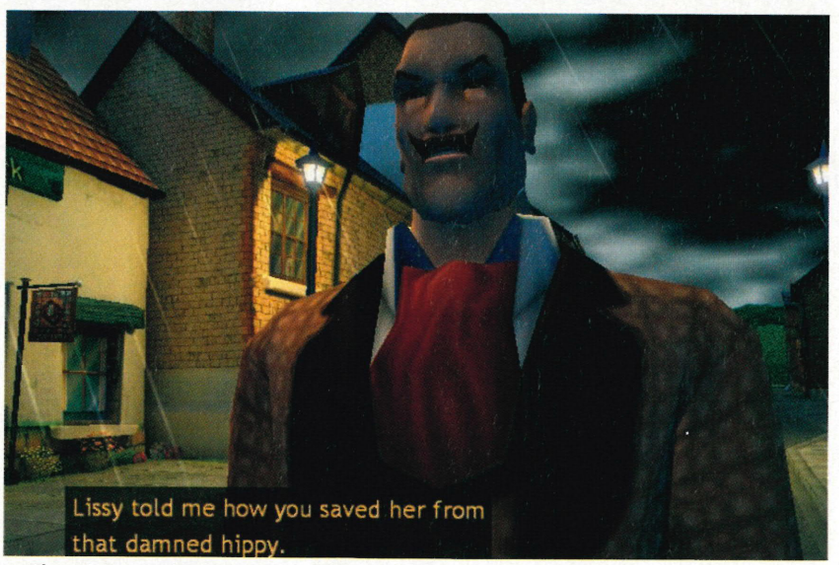
Veterans of the first two games will be pleased to hear that the shift to 3D has not hurt the sublime gameplay one little bit. You now directly control George and Nico, and can move them around the large play areas to investigate clues. A context-sensitive control scheme means you can easily locate important items and areas, and it's extremely straightforward telling your character to try and fit the underpants in the keyhole should you so desire. In order to keep the difficulty of puzzles up, Republic has introduced a hefty dose of platforming, crate-pushing and stealth challenges, albeit in the somewhat basic style of the original game. These do begin to grate after a little while, but thankfully the emphasis is mainly on lateral situation puzzles so it's not too unbalancing.

But this is Xbox gaming at a very different level to your typical modern title. *The Sleeping Dragon* is more adult in content (in terms of cerebral challenge), dialogue (you probably won't get all the jokes) and pacing. The soundbite teen gaming generation will need to accept a cultural shift in terms of approach. If you prefer *Pokémon* to *The Simpsons*, *Unreal Championship* to *Knights of the Old Republic* or *Pop Idol* to *The Office*, then this probably isn't for you. Gamers who love a good detective story and fancy themselves as lateral thinkers will be in their element as *The Sleeping Dragon* ushers in an entirely new experience to Xbox owners longing to opt out of the squad-based shooter conscript.



↑ **Stars of previous games make cameos.**

↑ **Sussaro's complexion has suffered a bit.**



↑ **The voice acting is consistently brilliant.**

THE VERDICT

POWER
The shift to 3D won't appeal to all the fanboys but Revolution has done a good, solid job.

STYLE
Witty and knowing, as well as self-deprecating, this is the cleverest Xbox game to date.

IMMERSION
Once you get stuck on a puzzle it'll lodge in your head forever. You'll be losing sleep over it.

LIFESPAN
It's a good-length game you'll get sucked into, but you won't go through it a second time.

GOOD POINTS
+ COOL DIALOGUE
+ GREAT CONTENT AND EXECUTION
+ INTELLIGENT PUZZLES
+ BEAUTIFUL SOUNDTRACK
+ FRESH CHARACTERS

BAD POINTS
- ONCE YOU'VE DONE IT, YOU'VE DONE IT

SUMMARY
A classic detective game that will stick with you after you've finished. But not enough to make you play it through again.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

9.0//10

» **PREVIOUSLY:** Incoming – Issues 20 & 22; Gallery – Issue 17
» **COMING SOON:** Hints – Issue 24

A KNIGHT'S TALE: FEATURED IN THE GAME ARE THE INFAMOUS KNIGHTS TEMPLAR, FROM THE FIRST BROKEN SWORD GAME. SHROUDED IN MYTHOLOGY, THEY ARE REPUTED TO BE DIRECT DESCENDANTS OF CHRIST HIMSELF.

Halo Invades PC

NEW Multiplayer Terrains

NEW Multiplayer Vehicles

NEW Multiplayer Weapons

BUNGIE gearbox software POWERED BY gamespy Microsoft game studios

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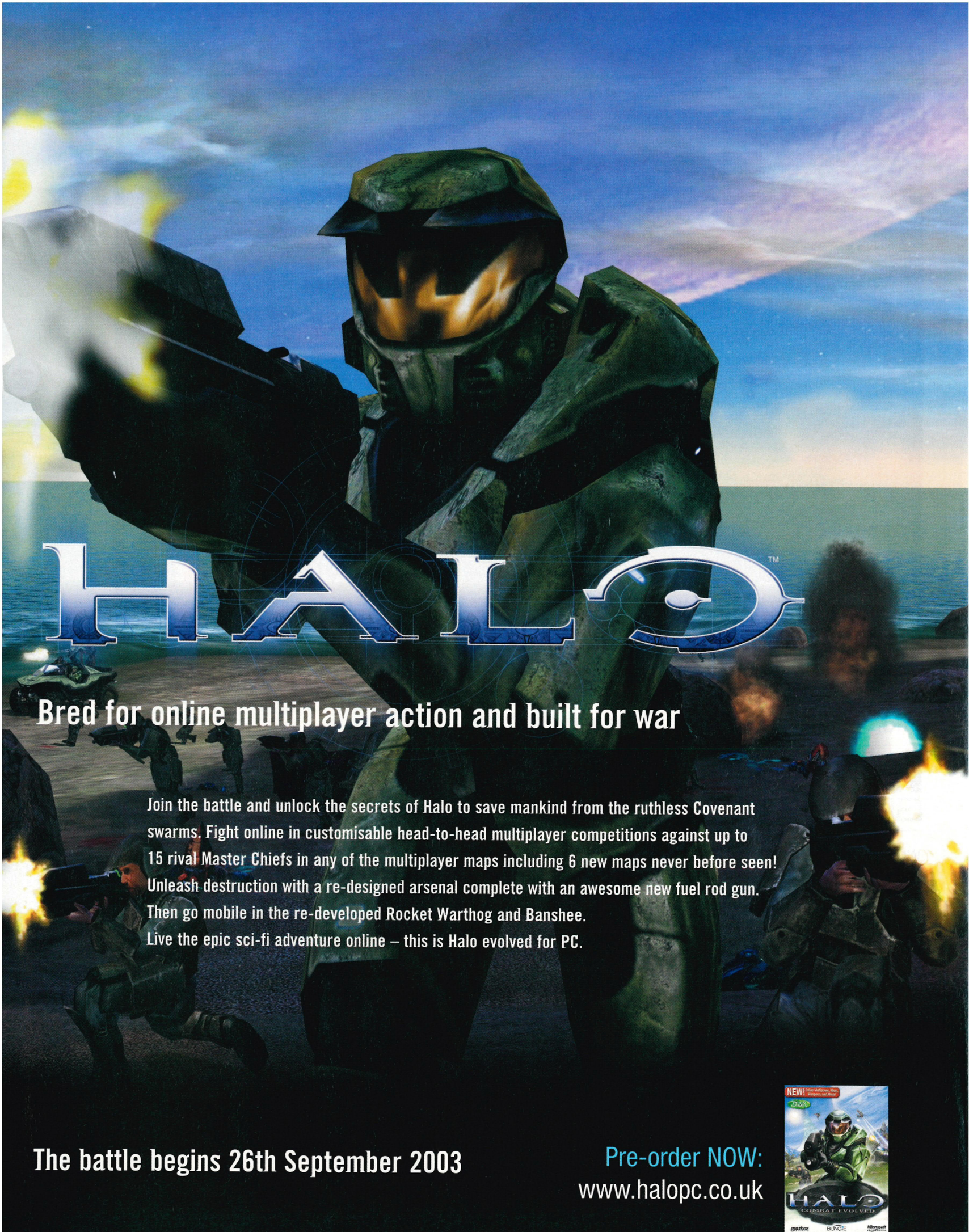
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Live the epic sci-fi adventure online – this is Halo evolved for PC.
The battle begins 26th September 2003
Pre-order NOW:
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NEW!
HALO
COMBAT EVOLVED

↑ The Zombiebot King is astoundingly fierce but he does have one weakness. As with all good bosses, you have to discover it.

A fatal error has not occurred. This paranoid android is really pushing all the right buttons

METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM

WORDS: **BEN TALBOT**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **SWINGIN' APE**
PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI UNIVERSAL**
RELEASE DATE: **NOV 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
WEBSITE: **WWW.METALARMS.COM**

THE BRIEF

PICK yourself up from the scrap heap of life and embark on an epic platform/shooter with 40 missions.

BACK WHEN I was just a nipper, there was nothing more enjoyable in life than tearing open my Pandora's toy box and unleashing epic plastic hell. My mum and dad would wake each morning to the sounds of Optimus Prime being smacked headfirst into a Tonka Truck. In their minds it was a heinous racket, but in my imagination it was the ultimate battle. It's time to relive that feeling with *Metal Arms*.

Blow holes in doors, demolish buildings, flatten Mil bots in a tank or shoot them into teeny little pieces. Everything in range is a potential target. All shooters have explosions, but none of them are as spectacular as this adventure. *Metal Arms* employs a dramatic particle system where shooting an enemy results in tiny shards of metal scattering everywhere. This simple effect transforms the act of shooting into an act of "Oh my God, I'm such an incredible badass!" Lobbing a grenade into a pack of evil Mil bots creates devastation to rival even that of the mighty *Otogi* (Issue 21, 8.0).

Everyone needs a battery recharge at times, and to prevent the mayhem becoming too much, there's also a lot of humour in the game. Not only do Glitch and his partners engage in some snappy exchanges, but they all look really chunky and fun. The same can be said for the evil Mils, who would probably get on well with Covenant grunts in the conversation stakes. Their goading and bold threats make it all the more satisfying when you finally manage to nail them. And we do mean 'finally', because the Mils are light-footed and extremely sneaky. They'll attack in formation when »

↑ Use jet packs to demolish structures.

↑ Mozer hits the Mils with an iron girder.

↑ Possess a Mil drone and go kerazzy!

BONUS INFO

OVEN CHIPS
Adding much replay value to the game, you need to discover secret microchips in the game to unlock some of the multiplayer maps. There are three or four chips on every level so there's a lot of searching to do.

CHOP SHOP
Glitch's Ripper weapon can not only slice Mil bots' limbs off, it can also cut wires holding up pieces of scenery. You can cut down bridges or make the roof collapse on your enemies' heads.

BORN TO SERVO
There are other heroic droids to control besides Glitch. Mozer is a 20-foot behemoth who lashes out with a steel girder, and Krunk is a peg-legged mechanic whose vicious mouth more than makes up for his lack of fighting ability.

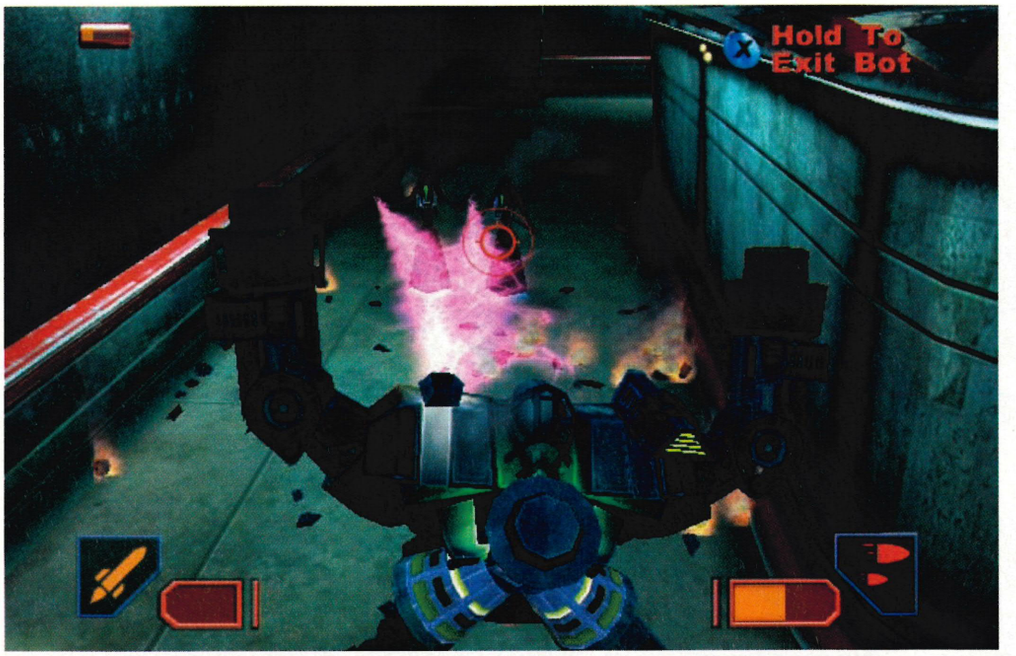
THINK TANK
Rest your batteries and hop on the extermination express

WE'VE LOST COUNT of how many vehicles you can control in Campaign mode, but the three you'll use most often are the tank, hovercraft and dune buggy. Unfortunately, your enemies can use them too.

↑ Armed with a gun turret and a machine-gun, this tank beast can also crush enemies.

↑ The hovercraft is harder to steer. The front pincers can drop enemies into water or lava.

↑ There are no brakes on the buggy so you'll have to shoot obstacles before you hit them.



↑ Even the mighty Mil Titans can be controlled using the Tether gun.

↑ Zombiebots reform even after you've killed them.

↑ Run around as a pair of legs!

» you're low on ammo and bleeding lithium or hop away wailing and screaming if you shoot their arms off.

It's these glowing details that remind us another top-flight Xbox shooter - *Halo* (Issue 01, 9.7). The AI is like *Halo*'s, the great characters are like *Halo*'s, and even the sniper scope is (knowingly) like *Halo*'s, but all without feeling like a rip-off. This wouldn't be possible without the game's unique graphical style and accelerated gameplay.

Of the whopping 40 missions in Campaign mode, about 30 are a combination of platformer and shoot 'em up. We've already talked about the shooting aspects, but the running and » jumping are equally good, courtesy of some responsive controls. The other ten levels, including driving a dune buggy and manning a gun turret, are really diverse and help to keep the adventure fresh.

Another streak of variety comes in Glitch's ability to hack into enemies and take over their bodies. Sneak up behind a 15-foot security droid, 'tether' him and spend the next five minutes wreaking great vengeance and furious anger on his buddies. There are no limitations with the Tether gun, meaning any robot of any size can be yours to command.

Everything you can do in Campaign mode also applies to the excellent multiplayer game. It's a split-screen affair for one to four players with seven variations. There's nothing groundbreaking here but at least you've got the reassuring goodness of King of the Hill, Capture the Flag and Tag modes. Playing the levels with vehicles is eye-wateringly joyful, although it could have been even better with a System Link option or Xbox Live mode for 16 gamers.

Unless you've been following our news pages religiously, chances are you probably won't have heard of *Metal Arms* before today, but rest assured it's a title you'll be hearing again and again. Perfect entertainment for kids and even better for anarchistic grown-ups, this has to be one of the biggest and brightest surprises of 2003.

"Take over a 15-foot security droid to wreak great vengeance and furious anger on his buddies"

XBOX THE VERDICT

POWER
Exhilarating explosions and a cool particle system. Gameplay is solid and the controls are responsive.

STYLE
Solid graphics, excellent voiceovers and funky music are all dripping in humour. Superb.

IMMERSION
Multiplayer could've been better with support for more players. So much variety you'll cry oil.

LIFESPAN
One huge campaign, hundreds of secrets and an ace multiplayer mode makes a toolbox full of bliss.

GOOD POINTS
+ SHOOTING LEGS OFF
+ SHOWERS OF METAL
+ ALL THE HALO VEHICLES IN DISGUISE
+ USING THE TETHER GUN ON GIANTS

BAD POINTS
- NO XBOX LIVE
- NO SYSTEM LINK

SUMMARY
Gorgeous, chunky graphics, engaging characters and stacks of variety make *Metal Arms* an essential shooter.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE
9.0//10

»**PREVIOUSLY:** Preview - Issue 20
»**COMING SOON:** Playable Demo - this issue!

KRUNKED: ONE OF THE MOST EVIL TECHNIQUES IS TO TETHER A ROBOT AND MAKE HIM WALK INTO ONE OF THE DISINTEGRATION CHAMBERS.

↑ These overgrown apes are actually Cyclops, who'll tear your head off at the first opportunity.

↑ Repel the onslaught of Wraiths.

↑ Cinematic finishing scenes abound.

↑ That's not dirt - it's dried blood.

↑ Gladiator fights: not family viewing.

Combat and humiliation, but no Ulrika or Fash

GLADIATOR: SWORD OF VENGEANCE

WORDS: **ANDY IRVING**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **ACCLAIM**

PUBLISHER: **ACCLAIM**

RELEASE DATE: **31 OCT 2003**

PLAYERS: **1**

WEBSITE: **WWW.ACCLAIM.COM/GAMES/GLADIATOR**

THE BRIEF

IT'S UP TO you to deliver mankind from the clutches of evil in this historical hack 'n' slash.

ALTHOUGH not an official licensed product of 2002's Oscar-laden film, *Gladiator* could easily be a continuation of the epic - it shamelessly rips off and incorporates elements of the movie.

We pick up the story as Thrax (Maximus), the greatest gladiator ever, gets ready to defend his title. The evil new Emperor, Arruntium (Commodus), has turned much of Rome into a combat area in the bloodiest games to date, and is intent on global domination. He's enlisting the help of evil gods, and the games are just a trap for murdering our valiant hero.

Things kick off with the mandatory tutorial level. Combat is introduced via simple two-button combos which serve you throughout the game: up/down slash and left/right slash, with countless permutations of these resulting in various linked attacks, and the triggers used for locking on to nearby enemies. Everything's looking good at this point - nice graphics, atmospheric lighting, and there's no sign of slowdown, even with multiple enemies on screen. Every hit results in a satisfying spurt of blood, and the combat's smooth and fluid.

After an untimely, unavoidable death, Thrax finds himself in Elysium, the warrior's afterlife, complete with long grass, tranquil atmosphere and soothing classical music. We soon run into two little brats in theatre masks, apparently the sons of the gods, who set us on our quest of delivering mankind from evil. And so begins an adventure around lost islands of the dead, mysterious temples, and violent encounters with mythological creatures. By undertaking time challenges, the player can upgrade Thrax's stats, making him quicker and more powerful.

Unfortunately, things head downhill from here. A dodgy camera seems to dog so many third-person actioners and, sure enough, it rears its ugly head here. There's limited camera manipulation - you can only zoom in and out - which prevents the player attacking hidden enemies around corners, but proves very frustrating when the game requires you to carry out specific tasks. Need to smash objects in a particular order? No way José - with no directable attacks you'll be left floundering next to the object, then you'll automatically move to lay into an enemy halfway across the room. After repeated attempts, and getting ironed out for your troubles every time, this really irks.

Problems like this prevent *Gladiator* from being a more solid title. Everything's presented well but, for a free-roaming adventure, the action's pretty railed. The lead character dies after the first act, and regrettably *Gladiator* does the same. No mercy!

BONUS INFO

GORE BLIMEY

***Gladiator* features an impressive amount of blood, especially in the stylised *Mortal Kombat*-esque finishing moves. Not one for the kiddies.**

THE VERDICT

POWER
Fast-paced action with a good framerate and no slowdown puts Xbox through its paces.

STYLE
Atmospheric lighting and bone-crunching sound effects, plus a Sean Pertwee voiceover!

IMMERSION
Gladiator's combat is dead easy to master but the challenge levels will infuriate.

LIFESPAN
Expansive levels but unfortunately the dodgy camera hinders long-term progress

GOOD POINTS

+ NICE GRAPHICS AND SOUNDS
+ SEAN PERTWEE!

BAD POINTS

- TERRIBLE CAMERA
- FRUSTRATING CHALLENGES
- OVERBLOWN CUTSCENES

SUMMARY

A generic hack 'n' slash that's well presented but is ultimately let down by fundamental camera flaws.

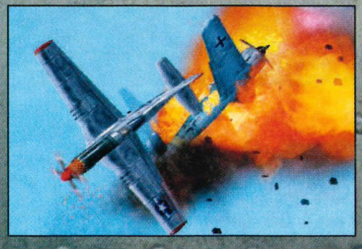
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

6.7/10

PREVIOUSLY: Preview - Issue 16
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 24

Achtung!

Hauptmann – Ihr Flugzeug brennt*



*(Translation: Hey, Captain! Your airplane's on fire.)

The fortunes of German pilots everywhere are about to take a severe downturn. In this intense WWII flight-action game, from Secret Weapons of Luftwaffe,® TIE-Fighter,® and X-Wing® creator Lawrence Holland, you'll join a secret, elite fighter squadron. Your mission: thwart the most insidious plans of the Third Reich. Over Europe and other theaters, you'll pilot nearly two dozen authentic aircraft, and face over 30 air-to-air and air-to-ground combat scenarios. And you won't need any flight training. Just nerves of steel, a steady hand, and a burning desire to rid the world of tyranny, one mission at a time.

WWW.OVERNORMANDY.COM

SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY

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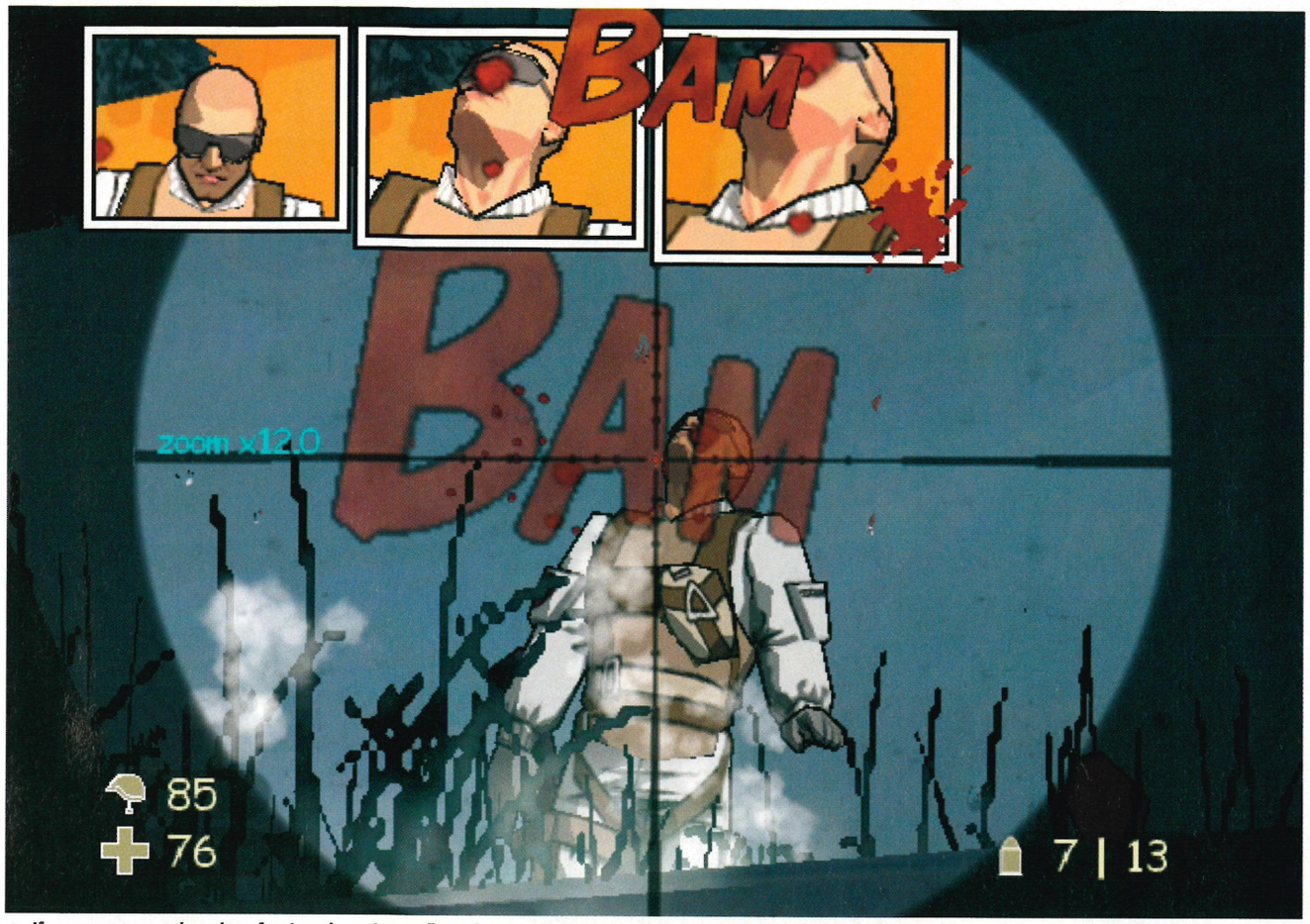


↑ If you want to make a lot of noise, the sniper rifle is the way to go. Just check out that giant "Bam!"

Got too much time to kill? How about a president?

XIII

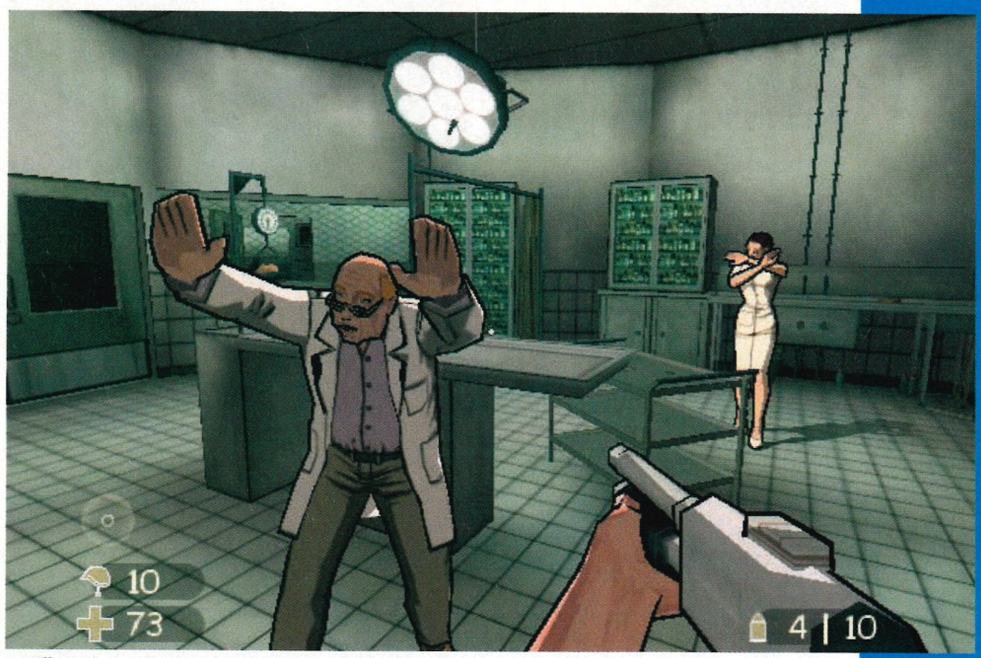
WORDS: **BEN TALBOT**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **UBI SOFT FRANCE**
PUBLISHER: **UBI SOFT**
RELEASE DATE: **11 NOV 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-4; 2-8 ON XBOX LIVE**
WEBSITE: **WWW.WHOISXIII.COM**

THE BRIEF

FPS based on a graphic novel, featuring several multiplayer game modes for Live and split-screen.



↑ I'll teach you for keeping me on an NHS waiting list!

PREPARE FOR a reality check. *XIII* is about to suck you into another world completely – that much-underrated sphere of the imagination. It's a risky business, but one that raises this first-person shooter off the scale. As you'll soon discover, the freshness extends far beyond the beautiful cel-shaded graphics.

Cel-shading is rarely used, particularly in this genre, but there's a good reason for using it in *XIII*. Everything is tied into this distinctive look, from the character's origins (a Belgian graphic novel) to his special 'sixth-sense' abilities.

Although he's an amnesiac at the start of the game, it isn't long before the oddly named XIII discovers the skills that once made him the ultimate assassin. Simply by standing still for a few moments, he can start to sense the enemies around him. You not only hear the bad guys approaching, but actually see the tapping of their footsteps in the form of on-screen

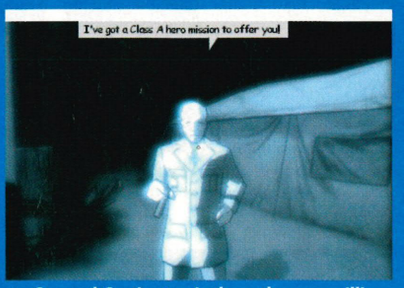
BONUS INFO

KILLER INSTINCT
Performing certain actions during the game will increase XIII's abilities. These include being able to hold your breath for longer and becoming better at healing yourself. You can even hold two handguns at once, John Woo style.

DEAD AND BURIED
The great thing about using a shovel to kill an enemy is that, theoretically, you can use it to bury him afterwards. Other household weapons in the game include ashtrays, broomsticks, pool cues and bottles.

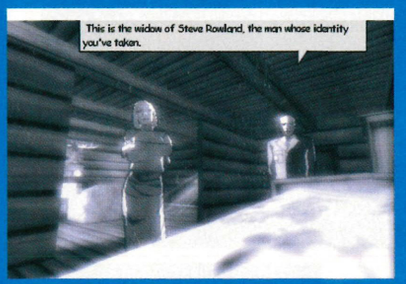
FORGET ME NOT

XIII HAS HIS memory jogged by things around him. Flashbacks are completely interactive and are gorgeous and dream-like.



↑ General Carrington is the only man willing to help you clear your name. He explains the stitch-up before things go terribly wrong.

↑ We already know from his name that XIII was a part of the XX, but what were the other conspirators planning at this meeting?



↑ Still recovering from a spot of plastic surgery, XIII is tucked up in bed when he has his first identity crisis.

↑ You can throw grenades right inside enemy choppers.

↑ Villains take time out to build a wonky snowman. Everyone's a critic...

onomatopoeia, making it possible to anticipate their movements even when you can't see them. Try lurking around a corner, then jumping out behind your enemy as he passes by. You can either take him hostage, thwack him with a blunt object or slip by unnoticed. Stealth or slaughter, it's completely up to you.

Also tied into the sixth sense are the pop-up boxes that let you see events taking place in other parts of the level. This varies between watching enemies bump off civilians to friends having important conversations. Pop-up boxes also give you a better view when throwing grenades. Chuck one over a high wall and you can see if your shrapnel attack has been successful. That's not to mention all the pop-up animations for spectacularly gory kills (see The Gore Score, page 096).

Innovations like this make for great gameplay and even better storytelling - *XIII* has appealing characters and a gripping plot. Waking up on a beach at the start of the game, Steve Rowland - aka XIII - is accused of assassinating the President of the United States. His friend and mentor General Carrington has been imprisoned in the Arctic wastelands and a guild of conspirators known as the XX are after their heads.

It sounds straightforward enough, but as the game progresses, you start to doubt whether Stevie-boy is a real American hero after all. Remarkably, it's only the acting of David Duchovny (of *X-Files* fame) that lets the character down. It's lucky that XIII is the strong, silent type because his dialogue is flat and uninspired. With that exception, the voice acting is superb, especially the defiant Major Jones who has bad attitude in spades.

"Room to do things your way makes XIII a game with bags of replay value"

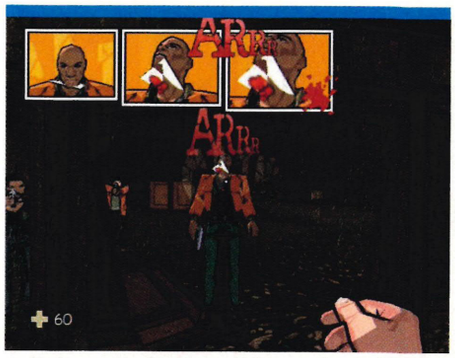
And spades are just one of many household items you can use as a weapon. One of the best scenarios in the game is where XIII is institutionalised in a high-security lockup. The wardens try to batter you in the showers, but you can grab bottles and broomsticks and teach them the real meaning of prison brutality.

Ashtrays, chairs, pieces of glass and loads more items can be wielded to deadly effect. Obviously, there are plenty of real weapons to use as well. *GoldenEye* fans will be overjoyed that *XIII*'s arsenal is almost identical, but there are two important differences. All firearms have a secondary fire mode and come accompanied with comical onomatopoeia like "Blam!" or "Baoom!!" Sadly, a major flaw with the multiplayer game is that the weapon set for each level is pre-configured and can't be changed. This is especially disappointing when one of the major appeals of the story mode is the huge arsenal and high-tech gadgets.

One of the best gadgets available in story mode is the grappling hook. This device can be attached to certain points in the level and comes with a remote control to ascend and descend. Hanging from the rope with one hand, you can whip out a rifle and rain lead on your foe below. A feature we've never seen in an FPS before is your ability to take hostages. Sneak up behind any daydreaming villain and grab them around the throat. You can then parade around and some enemies won't attack. Brilliantly, this is never mandatory for completing a mission. You're just as free to unholster your gun and start blazing away

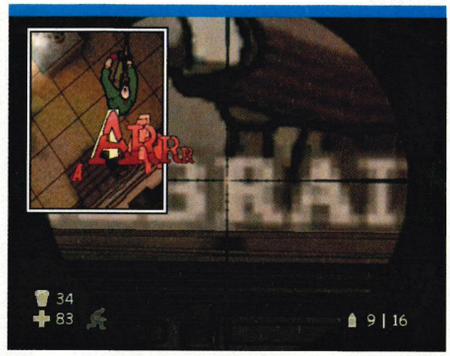
CHECKLIST: YOU HAVE TO HUNT DOWN AND ELIMINATE EVERY MEMBER OF THE XX. EACH ONE YOU'VE KILLED APPEARS IN A SPECIAL MENU WHICH EXPLAINS A FEW DETAILS ABOUT THEM.

THE GORE SCORE >> Every headshot is accompanied by pop-up boxes showing the kill in detail

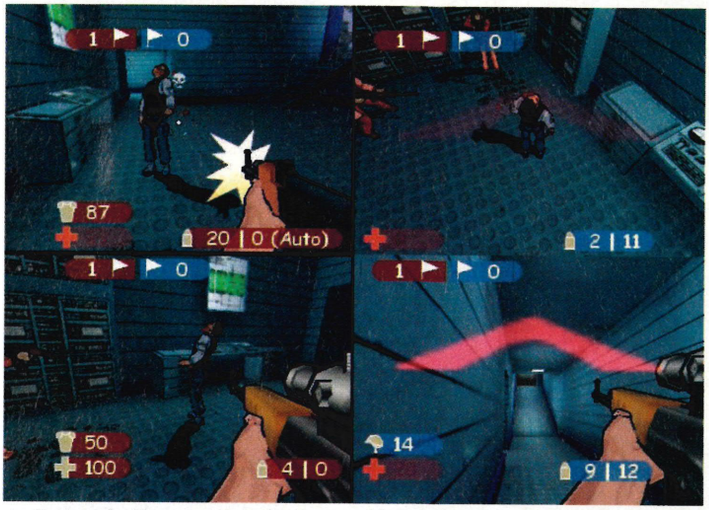


↑ In desperate situations, pick up a shard of broken glass and aim for your enemy's throat. They won't be shouting for help after that.

↑ Throwing knives are another excellent way of killing silently. You have to be dead on target though, because they're weak against the body.



↑ Snipe one of the hitmen sent to kill you and they'll fall to their death in spectacular fashion. This happens in real-time.



↑ Capture the Flag games can be improved by adding up to six AI bots.

↑ Shoot from the cover of a human shield.

↑ There's a pleasing amount of blood splashed about.

>> with the protection of a human shield. Room to do things your own way transforms *XIII* from a linear experience into a single-player story with bags of replay value.

While the multiplayer levels are compact, there are enough hidden routes, crawlspaces, balconies and ramps to keep things interesting. Along with Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch and Capture the Flag, there's also a romping Sabotage mode. Similar to the multiplayer missions in *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, one team must defend three strategic points while the other team have to destroy them. We can see the fast and frenetic gunplay being a welcome addition to Xbox Live, especially with eight players on the go. Failing that, you can always rely on the sophisticated AI bots for opposition. Downloadable content including new multiplayer maps are promises worth holding onto.

Few FPSs on Xbox deliver the single-player goods as well as *XIII*. Gripping story, appealing characters and unique melee weapons are all united perfectly by a graphical appeal and some astute gameplay innovations. You don't need a sixth sense to tell that Christmas 2003 just got a whole lot bigger.

THE VERDICT

POWER
The cel-shading is great. Manages to be vivid and colourful without losing detail or seeming childish.

STYLE
Lots of thought has gone into the storytelling, from the pop-ups and onomatopoeia to the flashbacks.

IMMERSION
Superbly executed missions allow you to play your way. Decision making adds replay value.

LIFESPAN
Enthralling single-player with 33 levels will take ages to complete. Multiplayer's slightly less enduring.

GOOD POINTS
+ IMPROMPTU WEAPONS
+ LIKEABLE CHARACTERS
+ COMPLEX STORYLINE
+ EXCELLENT MULTIPLAYER AI BOTS

BAD POINTS
- DAVID DUCHOVNY
- FEW MULTIPLAYER WEAPONS

SUMMARY
Unique, stylish and captivating from beginning to end. You simply cannot afford to miss this superb FPS.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

9.0//10

>> **PREVIOUSLY:** Interview - Issue 20
>> **COMING SOON:** Playable demo - Issue 25

↑ This weak-minded fool will surrender quicker than France during WWII. Arrest him to earn upgrade points.

↑ Dirty tactics, eh? Grab your gas mask.

↑ Tramp? No, it's a terrorist. Arrest him!

↑ Deserted Tube. Must be another strike.

'Swat' up on your gunplay and join the boys in blue

SWAT: GLOBAL STRIKE TEAM

WORDS: **ANDY IRVING**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **ARGONAUT GAMES**
PUBLISHER: **VIVENDI UNIVERSAL**
RELEASE DATE: **NOV 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
WEBSITE: **WWW.SWAT.SIERRA.COM**

» THE BRIEF

COMMAND a crack team of coppers to fight worldwide terrorism in this SWAT sim.

TO USE AN old cliché, video games are a lot like buses. In this instance, you wait for ages for an involving FPS with voice-activated commands to come along, then two arrive at once. And while the release of *Rainbow Six 3* (see page 070) was accompanied by a flashbang of hype and anticipation, *SWAT* used stealthy tactics to slip relatively unnoticed into our office.

TAC-3 (Commander Kincaid, sharpshooter Lt Lee and Tech expert Lt Jackson) are an elite unit of the LA SWAT division, and are leased out to resolve global terrorist situations. Take in various locations around the world, such as Russian Power Facilities, LA banks and London Tube stations as you strive to thwart the exploits of the Dragon and Omega gangs - an international drug cartel and all-round bad guys to boot.

There's no 'I' in 'team' - you'll need to use each member effectively to accomplish tasks throughout all 21 missions. Issue a wide range of orders via the D-pad or, impressively, the Voice Communicator, including "Breach door", "Secure area", "Diffuse bomb" and "Use control panel".

While not quite pot-smoking hippies, these peace-loving guys prefer to use non-lethal force to neutralise enemy threats. Missions are graded on several performance criteria, including melee attacks, peaceful restraints and hostages rescued. The better the rating, the more upgrade points you'll earn, enabling you to customise your weapons, resulting in some ferocious firepower. And so begins a novel spin on an otherwise run of the mill shoot 'em up, where rather than blasting through the entire level, it's in your best interest to take your time and subdue opponents rather than kill them. Wounded enemies can be cuffed and restrained, while others will surrender when they feel threatened, or are ordered to. Rules of engagement state that you may only fire when fired upon, and any use of unnecessary force will significantly harm your performance rating. This greatly increases replay value, as you'll want to get every medal in every mission.

Add a Time Attack mode, two-player co-op and four-player Deathmatch modes, and *SWAT* proves a reasonably well-rounded shooter. Reasonably, because the inclusion of Xbox Live play would have taken this title from good to great. Downloadable maps and uploadable scores are offered, and are some consolation. It's a pity that players can't jump between squad members during levels, and can only use them at certain points predetermined by the game. There are always going to be comparisons between this title and *Rainbow Six 3*, and unfortunately for the former, the Rainbow boys swat this clean out of the air.

» BONUS INFO

» GOT THE TIME? Time Attack mode lets you play each mission against the clock. Capturing bad guys earns you time, but the use of force will lose it.

THE VERDICT

POWER
Smooth animation and real-time lighting make this a real looker. Long loading times, though.

STYLE
Realistic graphics mixed with arcade action. Pity about the terrible voice-overs.

IMMERSION
The first missions ease you in gently, but you'll want to collect every accolade.

LIFESPAN
Twenty-one missions, all with a good deal of replayability, will keep you going for a while.

GOOD POINTS

+ TACTICAL ELEMENT MIXED WITH FPS
+ ISSUE ORDERS WITH A LIVE COMMUNICATOR
+ LOOKS GREAT

BAD POINTS

- CAN'T CHOOSE WHICH TEAM MEMBER TO PLAY
- NO XBOX LIVE PLAY

SUMMARY
An accomplished FPS, but the tough competition this month weakens the impact and innovation.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

7.7/10

» **PREVIOUSLY:** Incoming - Issue 18
» **COMING SOON:** Hints - Issue 24

SWOT UP: THE ACRONYM SWAT STANDS FOR 'SPECIAL WEAPONS AND TACTICS', AND THE LAPD DIVISION IS ONE OF THE BEST HOSTAGE RESCUE TEAMS IN THE WORLD.

↑ Xiahou Dun loses his eye on the end of an arrow, then eats it in defiance. What a guy!

↑ Mousou attacks are the highlight.

↑ Blast enemies with a charge strike.

↑ When health is low, you fight harder.

↑ Horses are much braver this time.

Consistent or complacent? The saga continues

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4

WORDS: **BEN TALBOT**

GAME INFORMATION

- **DEVELOPER:** KOEI
- **PUBLISHER:** KOEI
- **RELEASE DATE:** 14 NOV 2003
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **WEBSITE:** WWW.KOEI.COM

THE BRIEF

UNIQUE hack 'n' slash against 1,000 rivals. Huge campaign and split-screen multi-player modes.

DYNASTY Warriors is rapidly becoming one of those series that never really has true sequels anymore. Last year's solid game was heavily criticised for being the same as the previous one... and it seems that very few lessons have been learned.

It's a hack 'n' slash adventure where three warring kingdoms struggle for control of medieval China. Playing as one of 45 different officers, you run around the battlefield slaying as many adversaries as possible. The more you defeat, the harder your allies will fight as everyone's morale increases. Morale is affected in a variety of ways, from the death of one of your fellow officers to the destruction of an enemy stronghold or the capture of a traitorous informant. Short cutscenes appear mid-battle to offer hints about these decisive subquests.

Although the gameplay is identical to *DW3*, the missions have been shortened considerably. No longer do you have to hack and cleave for hours on end just to complete one mission, which is definitely a good thing. This also helps when you want to replay a mission to try and complete the various subquests.

Another new feature is the duelling against lone enemy officers. It's a nice idea, but the execution is poor. With a simple control system best suited for fighting multiple enemies, it just doesn't cut it for one-on-one battles. They are nothing more than a button-basher from the word go, and exactly the same is true for the pitiful two-player Versus mode.

DW4's multiplayer modes also expose significant graphical weaknesses. In the single-player game, you're too busy chopping away to notice that the characters are only fractionally sharper than last year's game. Your enemies don't look any different and there certainly aren't any more on-screen enemies at one time. All these things should have been addressed, yet there's still plenty of slowdown, very flat and empty landscapes and too much fog.

But for all these criticisms, *DW4* is still an addictive experience when you're smashing your way through hundreds of foes at once. That sensation of "Holy crap!" when you execute cataclysmic Mousou attacks is downright undeniable. If only Koei had come up trumps with some graphical improvements over the PlayStation 2 version and maybe even some Xbox Live content, this sequel would have felt so much more worthwhile. If you've never played a *Dynasty Warriors* game before then this is a reasonable time to start. Otherwise, you might just as well dust off last year's game and save yourself some money.

BONUS INFO

RAM MAN

Siege weapons play a bigger part in *DW4*. You'll have to protect ramps and battering rams to break through enemy fortifications.

XBOX THE VERDICT

POWER
Graphics are lacking, with poor textures and scenery. Only the character design satisfies.

STYLE
No significant improvements over the PS2 version or last years' game. Slightly disappointing.

IMMERSION
Gameplay still rocks; it's addictive battering hundreds of bad guys. Mission structure is slightly better.

LIFESPAN
Enough to keep you hooked on Campaign mode for days. You'll be hooked on multiplayer for seconds.

GOOD POINTS

+ MIGHTY ATTACKS
+ MORE INVOLVING SUBQUESTS
+ SHORTER MISSIONS

BAD POINTS

- HARDLY CHANGED
- COULD LOOK BETTER
- NOT ENOUGH ON-SCREEN ENEMIES

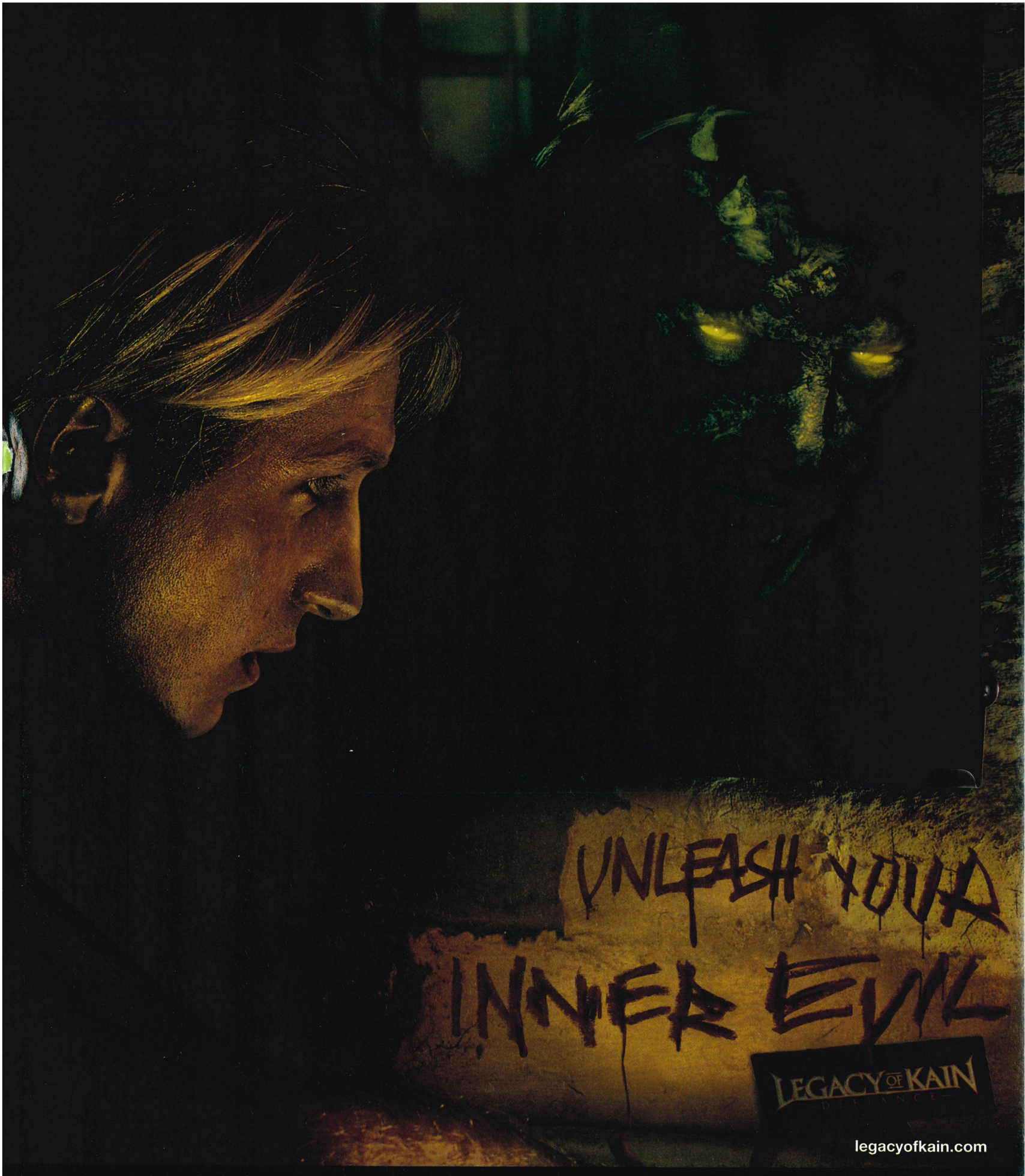
SUMMARY

Average. Lacks all the new features you'd expect in a 'proper' sequel. It's hard to see if the series will ever move on.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

6.5/10

PREVIOUSLY: First Look - Issue 19; Inside Interview - Issue 22
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 24



Use the destructive powers of both vampire Kain and his archrival, the soul-devouring Raziel, to take the lives of your enemies in brutal and bloody style. This is a dark and action packed odyssey, from which only one of these anti heroes will survive.

PlayStation.2 XBOX PC CD-ROM CRYSTAL DYNAMICS eidos

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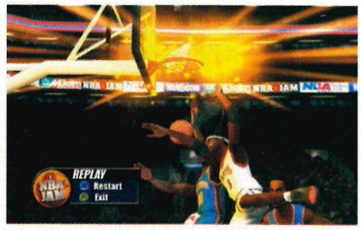
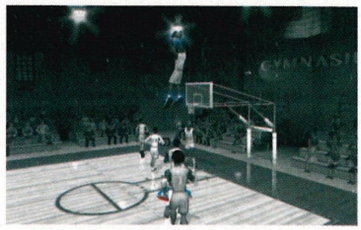
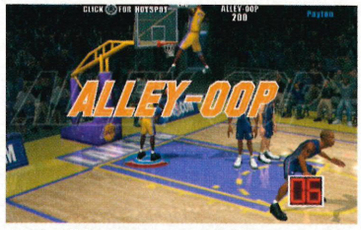
↑ Remember *Space Jam*? That film was rubbish, luckily this game isn't. Spectacular dunks are the way forward here.



↑ It burns, burns, burns, that ring of fire.



↑ Trainers were cooler in the '70s.



↑ You'll be doing a lot of this.

↑ I believe I can fly...

There's nothing fruity about this. It's all about style

NBA JAM

WORDS: **ANDY IRVING**

GAME INFORMATION

- DEVELOPER: **ACCLAIM**
- PUBLISHER: **ACCLAIM**
- RELEASE DATE: **24 OCT 2003**
- PLAYERS: **1-4**
- WEBSITE: **WWW.ACCLAIMSPORTS.COM**

THE BRIEF

OUTCLASS the opposition in the latest instalment of the crazy arcade b-ballin' classic.

I WAS rubbish at basketball during my school years. Despite possessing a surprising amount of physical ability, and a certain degree of hand/eye coordination, I couldn't get used to the idea of running and dribbling the ball, often resulting in a painful wayward bounce. The next Michael Jordan I was not. But solace could be found when I returned home for tea and booted up my faithful Mega Drive. *NBA Jam* was a benchmark title that combined arcade action with the bad boy b-ballin' sport. And I was good at it.

Which brings us to the latest *Jam* title. The action centres around three-on-three action on smaller courts, with the emphasis on outrageous scoring moves and showboating plays. The player interface is relatively simple – pass, shoot, spin or set up an alley-oop. All fouls have gone out the window, so feel free to knock opponents around and block in the most unprofessional manner. Fun is the name of the game here.

And part of that fun comes from the over-the-top effects. If a player is doing well, he'll start smoking. Keep him on top of his game, and before long he'll be on fire, enabling even more spectacular moves, along with being more adept at scoring/blocking for a short while. If the team as a whole plays well, their power bar will fill up, and by placing a hotspot at the opposing end of the court, three-pointers turn into crazy supercharged five-point dunks, adding a surprisingly strategic element to the game.

It's the added touches, however, that make *Jam* stand head and (considerable) shoulders above the competition. For every crowd-pleasing stunt performed, points are awarded, which vary according to the difficulty of the tricks. Points can be exchanged in the Jam Store for goodies and upgrade features, including customisable players and teams, cheats, concept artwork and loads of renowned stadiums (plus the Acclaim building's very own rooftop court).

Heroes of the sport are available through the Legends Tournament, where the action is played out through black and white and accompanied by the restrained commentary of the '70s. Everything is well polished, and the translation into 3D looks slick. But then, like an airball from downtown, things start to bounce uncertainly around the rim. While it's fun performing loads of demented dunks, there's not much other skill involved, so things can quickly get repetitive. There are only two main game modes, there's no Xbox Live play, and the CPU opponents are a bit of a pushover. The inclusion of four-way multiplayer goes some way to redressing the balance though, and makes *NBA Jam* a fun b-ball game that both fans of the original and newbies will lap up.

BONUS INFO

WE'RE JAMMING

The soundtrack is a funky slice of R&B through the ages, from Chuck Berry and James Brown, to Kool and the Gang and, er, Cameo.

THE VERDICT

POWER
Frantic gameplay and smooth character movement, but not so much that the Xbox is "On Fire!"

STYLE
Cartoony graphics with a banging soundtrack make this arcade title a nice break from sports sims.

IMMERSION
You'll be pulling off triple alley-oops in no time, but there's not much else after that...

LIFESPAN
It'll take ages to unlock all the features. There are downloadable secret characters on Xbox Live too.

GOOD POINTS

+ OUTRAGEOUS MOVES
+ NO FOULS
+ FUN MULTIPLAYER

BAD POINTS

- REPETITIVE GAMEPLAY
- COMPUTER AI COULD BE HARDER
- NO SYSTEM LINK OR XBOX LIVE PLAY

SUMMARY

This is a fun arcade title that does justice to its forebears, and is an absolute riot in multiplayer.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

7.9/10

PREVIOUSLY: Incoming – Issue 19
COMING SOON: Hints – Issue 24

07:53. 7th December 1941.
In two minutes time,
paradise will be lost forever.
New mission coming soon.
MEDAL OF HONOR
RISING SUN
EA GAMES
Challenge Everything
You Don't Play. You Volunteer.™
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↑ It's just not the same without the alien heads, but it's still a great game.

Get yer skates on for a 'pucking' good laugh...

NHL HITZ: PRO

WORDS: STEPHEN DAULTREY

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **NEXT LEVEL GAMES**
PUBLISHER: **MIDWAY**
RELEASE DATE: **21 NOV 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
WEBSITE: **WWW.MIDWAY.COM**

THE BRIEF

CRAZY arcade ice hockey action upgraded with five-on-five action, realistic play and rules.

ICE HOCKEY IS the sport of men. At least it was until Midway dipped its fingers into its icy throes. The *Hitz* titles, arguably the most underrated and fun sports games in the history of the gamepad, were so OTT they even featured teams of horse, shark and alien-headed mutants. Mental? *Hitz* games defined the word.

With *Pro*, bestiality is eschewed in favour of enhanced realism. Instead of three-aside action, this one features standard five-on-five matchplay. Serial goalscorers don't explode in balls of flames, and punch-ups occur with marginally less regularity. In fact, *Pro* even tries to skate down the EA route by brandishing coaching options, basic tactical plays, line changes and - gulp - rules! Hell, you can even be penalised for offside, which must be a first in a Midway game. Yet despite all these tweaks, *Hitz: Pro* still manages to be mad. Those expecting anything other than chaotic arcade excitement should be ashamed. The controls are virtually identical to the originals', one-timers are still key to scoring and players crash through the glass like they've been hit by freight trains. We were amazed at just how closely this plays to its predecessors - even with the increased number of players on the rink and the slightly different graphical style.

As before, the main mode is the 'travelling' franchise season. You lead a fictional team through a series of qualifying matches, before pulverising opponents from the prestigious NHL. And although the animal heads are sadly missing, you can still customise the look of each of your players, and that includes revamping them into bulky 7ft giants with skinny legs and laughably minuscule heads. There are also options for schoolboy hockey which enables you to fight it out on frozen park ponds and parking lots, with retro-style graphics adding to the charm. Complete? We reckon so. And it looks much nicer than the PS2 version too.

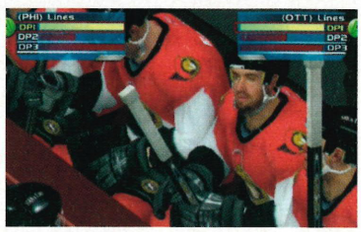
As sports game go, *NHL Hitz: Pro* is great fun, the multiplayer riotous and the presentation humorous and immaculate. Highly recommended for those yet to sample the series, and equally rewarding for those who already have but want more depth. For the rest of us, though, we were kinda hoping for a farmyard team of giant pig-headed beasts... Next time, eh, lads?

↑ Turn your players into freaks in the editor.

BONUS INFO

>> NHL HITZ: RPG Matches offer bonus tasks, such as scoring with a certain player. Completing these tasks gives you the chance to increase player stats.

↑ Watch the bone-crunching highlights.



↑ The faces in the dug-out say it all.

↑ Play cameraman in the replays.

↑ You can't shoot from there!

THE VERDICT

POWER
It looks very nice indeed with excellent cutscenes, but some occasional slowdown.

STYLE
Styled in the series' distinctive comical vein with genuinely funny commentary.

IMMERSION
Easier to pick up than a baby's rattle complete with gratifying, bone-crunching action.

LIFESPAN
Simple in concept, and if you played the original to death, you might tire of this quickly.

GOOD POINTS

+ GREAT FUN TO PLAY
+ EXCELLENT HUMOUR AND PRESENTATION
+ GREAT MULTIPLAYER

BAD POINTS

- TOO MUCH LIKE THE PREVIOUS GAME
- NO ANIMAL HEADS
- SOME SLOWDOWN

SUMMARY
Outrageously good fun - one of the best hockey games around. Sadly, despite some new depth, it's very similar to the originals.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

8.1/10

>> **PREVIOUSLY:** Preview - Issue 21
>> **COMING SOON:** Hints - Issue 24

"GO BUY IT." XBOXGAMER

"AMAZING STUFF." OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE ELITE

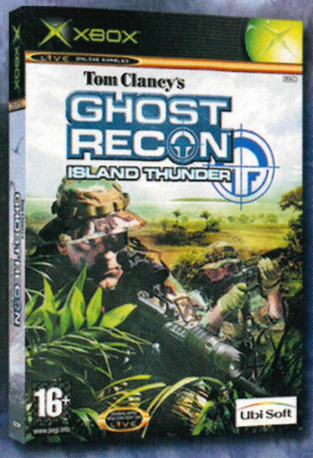
Tom Clancy's GHOST RECON™ ISLAND THUNDER™

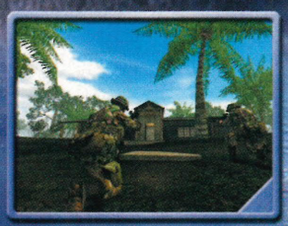
XBOX'S BEST WAR GAME

Official Xbox Magazine UK - APRIL 2003:
"the best Live-enabled game"

Xbox World:
"Island Thunder should, no, WILL be one of this year's best online games. Quote us on that"

- Engage in combat down gritty urban streets, in dense jungles, and across lush mountainsides
- Join intense multiplayer battles on 12 dedicated maps, including new desert terrain and 4 fan favorites from Ghost Recon™
- Get access to exclusive downloadable content with Xbox *Live*™
- Prove your strength & skill on Xbox *Live*™ with real-time stats tracking & enhanced game match-making features





16+ www.pegi.info

Red Storm ENTERTAINMENT

BT www.bt.com/xboxlive

★ Xbox Gamer UK April 2003

XBOX LIVE

XBOX

Ubi Soft ENTERTAINMENT

LUDI FACTORY

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↑ The famous Mt Hood halfpipe. Style is the name of the game here, so tweaking and boning grabs will get you far.

↑ Beat the Pros to unlock the next stage.

↑ Trees make effective, if unlikely, rails.

↑ Snowskating: street style on the slopes.

The best ever snowboarding game just got better

AMPED 2

WORDS: **ANDY IRVING**

GAME INFORMATION
DEVELOPER: **MICROSOFT**
PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT**
RELEASE DATE: **DEC 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-8 SYSTEM LINK AND XBOX LIVE**
WEBSITE: **WWW.XBOX.COM/AMPED2**

THE BRIEF

TRICK AND style your way to the top of the world rankings over eight fantastic-looking locations.

AH, SNOWBOARDING. The golden media lovechild of the last few years. Having featured in adverts for just about everything, along with glamorous appearances in 'extreme' Hollywood blockbusters, it seemed only natural that games would follow suit in bringing this radical recreation to the masses. It'd be fair to say I've got quite a bit of interest in snowboarding, so when the review copy came into the office, I was eager to get my gloved mitts on it.

It's only during the last few years that snowboarding games have become popular, and *Amped 2* epitomises everything about their evolution. As one of Xbox's launch titles last year (Issue 01, 8.7), the title set a new benchmark for graphical quality combined with amazing free-roaming gameplay.

So what's new about the sequel then? Well, after the customary video intro and familiar menu screen, you'll notice a considerable number of additions. A tutorial, absent in its predecessor, kicks things off, taking beginners through all the moves required for the game from basic jumps and rails to more complex, stylish spins. A major change this time round is the introduction of the 'butter' move, whereby balancing on the nose or tail of your board allows the rider to link tricks in between jumps. This can amass astronomical scores, much like the manual roll technique in the *Tony Hawk's* series. Style Points (or 'Steez' if you're ghetto) are now awarded for slower, smoother-than-silk rotations, adding a bit of variety to the 'hit every jump and spin as hard as you can' mentality.

Career mode is the next port of call and things have definitely snowballed this time round. The basic premise is still the same; travel the world, beating challenges and completing specific tasks, before moving onto the next resort. Select and fully customise your rider, but although there are 14 Pros available, you can't play as any of them. Points, Media and Pro challenges return, along with the new Photoshoot and Legend modes.

The babbling snowmen are back (Hey, Amigo!) and form part of the Own the Mountain challenge. By exploring the whole mountain, find eight of these frosty fellows per stage, then execute all the named moves on both the Tricks and Gaps lists to unlock the aforementioned Legend category. Over a large number of perfectly rendered, gorgeous-looking peaks, the huge Career mode will have you nailing each specific task again and again to earn more skill points and get more media coverage.

If you've ever seen the movie *xXx* then you'll know the act of snowboarding can

↑ Mmm, you can almost taste the Gluhwein from the village below.

↑ Get out of my shot!

FAME ACADEMY >> It's all about the cover shot

THERE ARE several different ways of improving your media profile and filling your personal portfolio. The more coverage you get your sponsors, the higher your world ranking. This in turn leads to unlocking further mountains, as well as movie clips and Pro Rider bios. Just don't forget about us when you're famous, okay?

↑ Pull a good trick in front of photographers to score some media points. That's the kinda thing...

↑ Complete a photoshoot by passing through all the rings while amassing the required number of points.

↑ Follow the resident Pro Rider around their home mountain, and beat their scores.

>> BONUS INFO

>> EVENT HORIZON
In *Amped 2*, new Event stages have been introduced, where you must compete simultaneously against seven other Pros. Come out top of the rankings after three rounds to earn skill points and unlock further levels.

>> CRAGGY FEATURES
There are eight huge mountain environments available, each split into three sections. Each mountain is accurately modelled on its real-life counterpart, from the foggy runs of Laax to the rocky, dirty glacier of Mt Hood.

>> TAKE ON THE PROS
Fourteen different world-renowned Pro Riders feature in the game, though unfortunately you can't play as them during Career mode. However, by beating them in a challenge you can unlock film footage and bios for all of them.

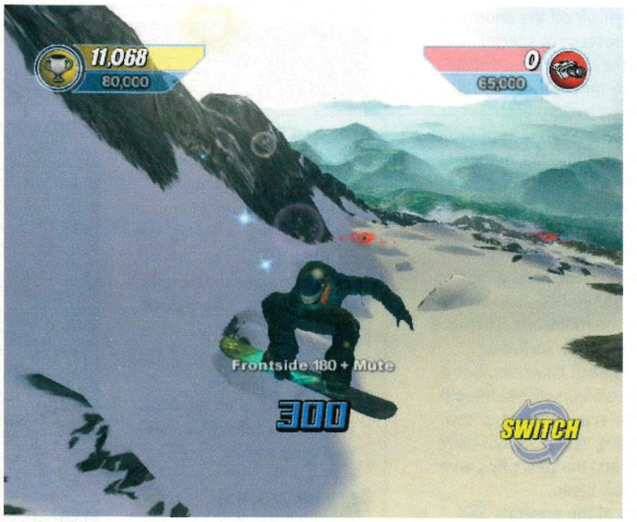
"The 'butter' move allows the rider to link tricks in between jumps, amassing astronomical scores"

>> appear a bit lame if not done properly, but here we're pleased to say things are the complete opposite. It's clear that a lot of time and money was spent on the motion-capture process for the riders, because every last move performed on screen is an exact replication of how things would happen in real life - like the barely noticeable correct hand positions when over-styling a rail slide. The animation is astounding, and you'll positively wince as your rider happens to land on their back every once in a while.

All fun and games, but everybody knows snowboarding is a lot more enjoyable with a bunch of mates. Last time round, the multiplayer mode was a bit weak, but in *Amped 2* things have been given a bit of a polish. There are now several impressive modes to choose from. Go head to head with a mate split-screen - or get up to eight connected via System Link. Out-trick each other, play games of H.O.R.S.E (again, similar to S.K.A.T.E in *Tony Hawk*) or team up four-versus-four in a team King of the Mountain. Sounds good?

Well, that's not the half of it because *Amped 2* is fully Xbox Live-compatible (and accompanied by a free Live voucher), meaning that not only can you play against other gamers from around the world, but you can also set up individual leagues and tournaments, compare stats and scores and download new riders, mountains and gear.

Some sequels never deliver the same impact as the original but, like a backside 900, *Amped 2* stomps its authority all over this fun park.



↑ Keep things smooth and simple for maximum points.

↑ Don't get caught in a nose press.

↑ Styled-out grabs equal big rewards.

XBOX THE VERDICT

POWER
Beautifully rendered landscapes and consistently fluid animation, plus great snow effects.

STYLE
Gorgeous-looking, great 'shussing' sounds and a punky hip-hop soundtrack to boot.

IMMERSION
Dead easy to pick up and play but furiously addictive. Could that be any better?

LIFESPAN
The Career mode is extensive enough, but multiplayer increases the fun tenfold.

GOOD POINTS
+ STUNNING GRAPHICS
+ EXPANDED CAREER MODE
+ MULTIPLAYER IS VASTLY IMPROVED

BAD POINTS
- TRICKY TO LAND RIGHT
- CHALLENGES HAVE A STEEP LEARNING CURVE

SUMMARY
A vast improvement on the original, this is the definitive extreme sports title of the year, aided by fantastic Live play.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

8.9//10

>> **PREVIOUSLY:** First Look - Issue 16
>> **COMING SOON:** Hints - Issue 24

WHO AT OXM HAS TRIED SNOWBOARDING? STEVE AND PHIL: TWO DAYS ON A SKI HOLIDAY. VANESSA: NO, BUT GOING SKIING AGAIN THIS YEAR. ANDY: DID IT FOR SIX YEARS. GAV: A BIT AT SHEFFIELD DRY SLOPE. HOW COOL ARE WE?

↑ Sing while you're winning but watch out for the mulleted maestro hot on your heels.

↑ Check out those peaks. Bet she's cold.

↑ Use a boost as you fly through the city.

↑ Wall rides and suicidal cornering. Yes!

↑ Reach for the stars.

Summer's over - grab your board and hit the slopes

SSX 3

WORDS: **ANDY IRVING**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **EA**

PUBLISHER: **EA**

RELEASE DATE: **OUT NOW**

PLAYERS: **1-2**

WEBSITE: **WWW.SSX3.CO.UK**

THE BRIEF

BECOME King of the Hill in the third instalment of the fast, frantic and frankly mad snow-set racer.

WHETHER you've actually done it or not, everybody knows snowboarding is immense fun, and has a somewhat extreme image associated with it. The previous two *SSX* games concentrated on this aspect rather than being realistic simulations, and now the third title comes blazing down an icy black run of fun onto Xbox.

An all-new feature is the Conquer the Mountain mode. Three huge environments (peaks) are available, but have to be unlocked in numerical order. Each peak is divided into Race, Freestyle and Freeride disciplines, which are split into a further four different routes to, once again, complete in numerical order to unlock the next.

Far from lycra-clad funboys slaloming through poles, the Race sections involve breath-taking rides down sheer faces incorporating jumps, gaps and rails. Freestyle is pretty much the same sort of deal, only you're up against the clock to amass astronomical amounts of points through amazing combos. Yep, that's right, the crazy cats with the even crazier moves are back with a vengeance and, as we said before, the emphasis here is clearly on over-the-top, totally unrealistic tricks.

Pull off several good combos in a row, and your Special meter will fill up. Once this reservoir of radness is complete, hold the boost button for a quick burst of speed - vital for a sprint finish or to get bigger air off the enormous jumps. Perform several consecutive special moves and you'll fill up the Uber-meter, which allows you to pull off mad moves for big points.

Freeride is exactly that; explore each environment and complete tasks to unlock more costumes and earn cash. Pop into the mountain lodge to upgrade your stats and buy clobber - it's all standard fare for extreme sports titles.

So how does it differ from its predecessors? Well, it doesn't. The races are searingly fast, and whilst the exploration aspect does add a bit to the gameplay, you're far too limited as to where you can and can't go on the mountain. There's a decent amount of stuff to unlock, including special tricks individual to each character, but it still feels like we're just retreading the same old territory. There are only so many tricks you can pull before it feels repetitive, and although there are only three environments, the difficulty curve on the races is considerably steep.

If you don't own any of the previous *SSX* titles, this is definitely worth checking out but, at the end of the day, it's just a glossy remake of its predecessor.

↑ Use the slippery U tubes to rack up points.

BONUS INFO

IN THE GROOVE
The soundtrack consists of funky mixes of loads of tracks including Royksopp's *Poor Leno* and N.E.R.D.'s *Rockstar*. Or just rip your own.

THE VERDICT

XBOX

POWER
Lush visuals and a break-neck pace ensure the Xbox is put through its paces.

STYLE
Funky soundtrack and the looks of a supermodel make this one cool cat.

IMMERSION
Jump right in and get shredding. Various paths down each route keep things fresh.

LIFESPAN
Loads of stuff to find and unlock, but the novelty may wear off sooner than you think.

GOOD POINTS

+ BLISTERINGLY FAST
+ ACE UBER-MOVES
+ LOTS OF CHARACTERS AND UPGRADES

BAD POINTS

- REPETITIVE GAMEPLAY
- STEEP LEARNING CURVE
- PRETTY LIMITED ENVIRONMENTS

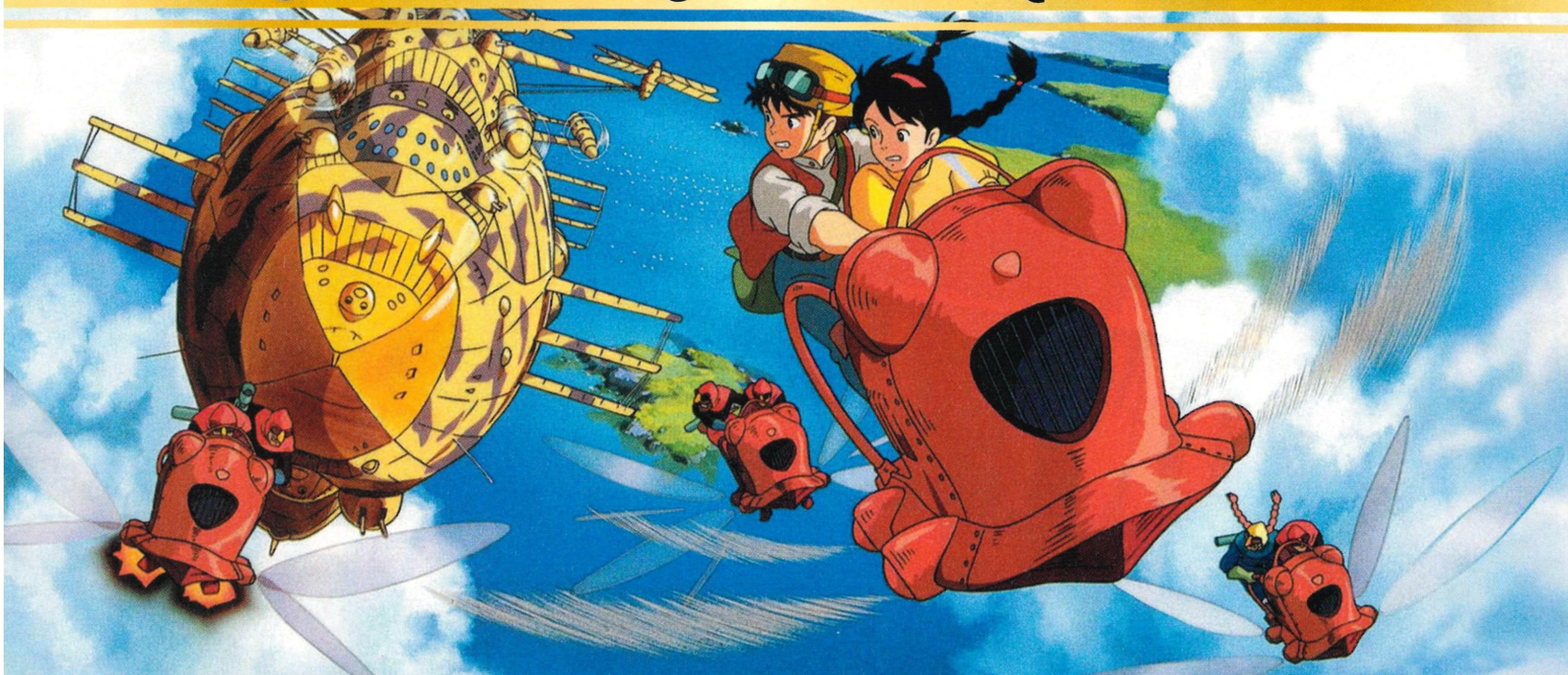
SUMMARY
This is one small step for snowboarding titles, unfortunately, instead of one giant leap for the *SSX* series.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

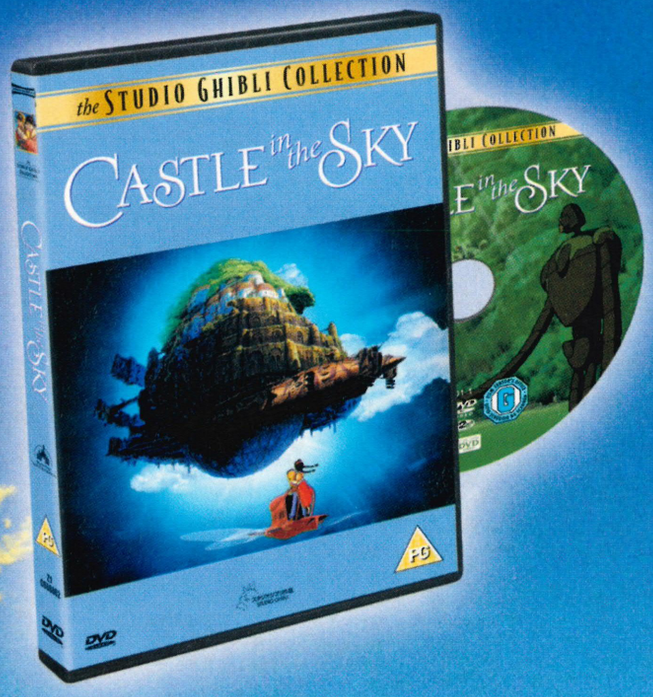
7.9 //10

PREVIOUSLY: Preview - Issue 19
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 24

the STUDIO GHIBLI COLLECTION



FROM THE OSCAR® WINNING DIRECTOR - HAYAO MIYAZAKI



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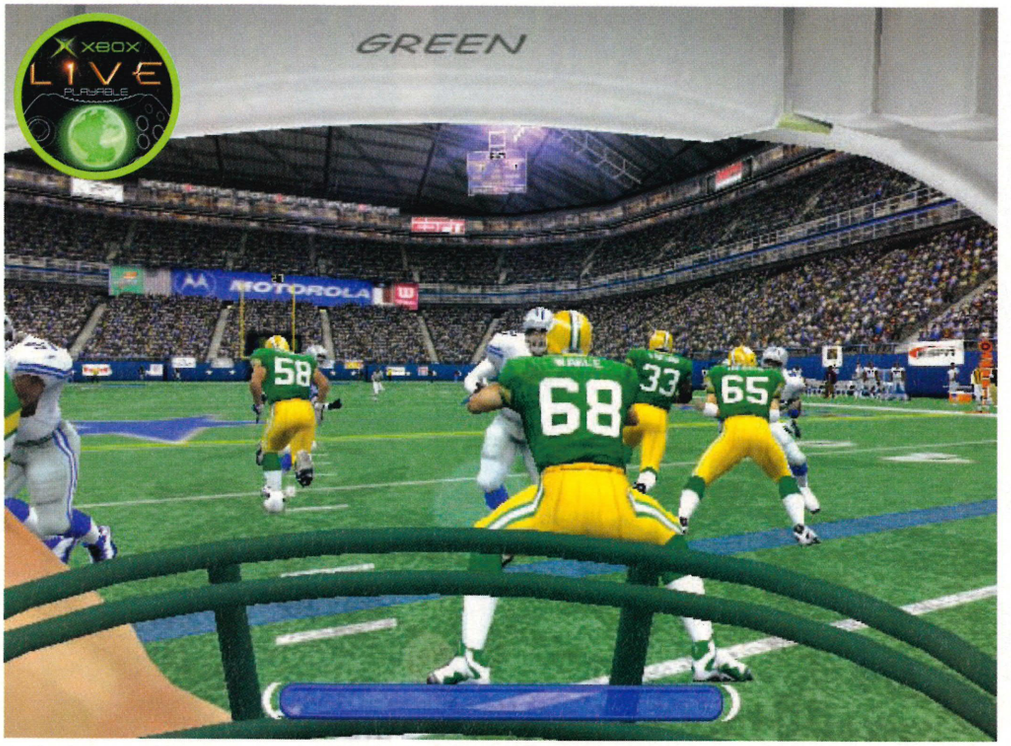
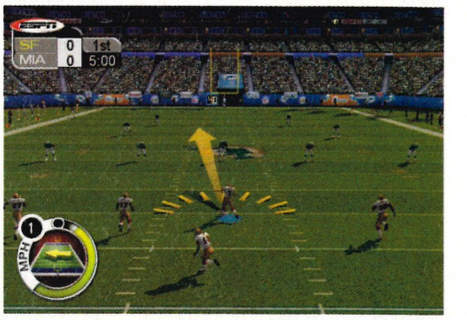


↑ If only you could remove your gum shield and spit, first-person football mode would be perfect!

↑ No wonder the Giants are crap these days...



↑ Don't kick the ball out of bounds. Not good...

↑ Take a break and rest your battered bones.

New name but is it the same old game?

ESPN NFL FOOTBALL

WORDS: **GAVIN OGDEN**

GAME INFORMATION

- DEVELOPER: **VISUAL CONCEPTS**
- PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
- RELEASE DATE: **NOV 2003**
- PLAYERS: **1-4 XBOX LIVE**
- WEBSITE: **WWW.SEGA.COM**

THE BRIEF

THE LATEST instalment of Sega's popular online-enabled American football series.

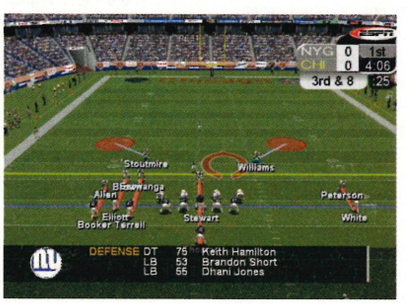
ANOTHER MONTH and another American football game comes charging into the office and dives across our desk for a touchdown. But rather than just being an annual update in the style of EA's *Madden* series or Microsoft's *NFL Fever* titles, Sega has changed the face of the game forever, or at least until the deal with sports network ESPN runs out. It could be *Late Night Football on Five* in a few years, who knows?

The emphasis is on making you play through the game like you're watching it on the box. Everything from the opening title screen to the instant replays is taken directly from EPSN's TV coverage of the sport. Even the commentators have been drafted in to make the game seem as close to its television counterpart as possible. And it works well although the commentary isn't anywhere near as exciting as that of its rivals.

A completely new addition to the formula is the Crib, which basically acts as an adult playpen where you can chill out between matches by playing classic arcade games, fiddle around with your jukebox (behave yourself) and get into a bit of air hockey and table football.

Another new addition to the series - and indeed the genre - is first-person football. This does exactly what it says on the tin. You get to play the entire game through the eyes of your selected player. But while this does serve up a completely new way of playing - and viewing - America's greatest game, it's rock hard to do anything other than get yourself completely lost on the field.

ESPN NFL Football is a good game, with everything you'd expect in there. But with *Madden NFL 2004* (Issue 21, 8.5) and *NFL Fever 2004* (Issue 22, 8.7) already on the pitch, there's not much room for a third. The fact that there's full Xbox Live play in there should save this, though.



↑ Flick both triggers to see your play.

BONUS INFO

»HE'S NO SAPP

Tampa Bay Buccaneers' defensive tackle and Super Bowl champ Warren Sapp has signed up as the official spokesperson and cover star of the game.

XBOX THE VERDICT

POWER
Somewhat lacking in looks though players move well. Doesn't take advantage of the hardware.

STYLE
Beautifully wrapped up in an authentic ESPN manner. Captures the spectacle of the NFL well.

IMMERSION
Not as deep as its rivals but the Crib and first-person football modes will keep you occupied.

LIFESPAN
Xbox Live should keep you in shape over many months to come on top of a deep Career mode.

GOOD POINTS

+ GREAT CRIB AND FIRST-PERSON MODES
+ CAPTURES THE ESPN VIBE WELL
+ XBOX LIVE PLAY

BAD POINTS

- NOT GREAT LOOKING
- DIFFICULT TO GET STARTED FOR NEWBIES

SUMMARY
A good American football game boosted by the addition of some very clever and completely new game modes.

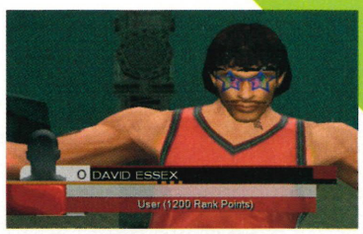
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

8.0//10

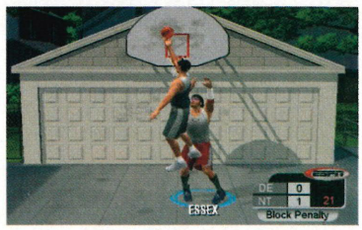
»PREVIOUSLY: No, nothing on this one
»COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 24

MIDNIGHT HOUR: THE SUPER BOWL IS BROADCAST TO MILLIONS OF HOMES IN 182 COUNTRIES. IT'S ON HERE IN THE EARLY HOURS OF THE MORNING, IF YOU FANCY IT.

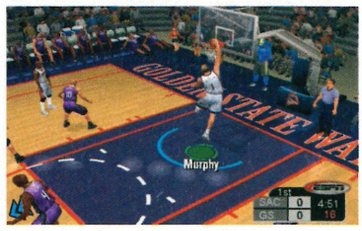
↑ Dallas wins the opening tip-off in a game that promises to get quite heated.



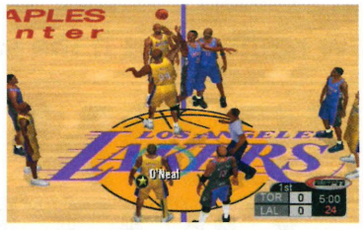
↑ Create your own fictional star.



↑ Start at the bottom in 24/7 mode.



↑ And Murphy puts his team ahead!



↑ The Lakers are the best current team.

Get out the big afros and squeaky trainers... it's b-ball time again!

ESPN NBA BASKETBALL

WORDS: STEPHEN DAULTREY

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **VISUAL CONCEPTS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
RELEASE DATE: **28 NOV 2003**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
WEBSITE: **WWW.ESPNVIDEOGAMES.COM**

THE BRIEF

LICENSED b-ball action from Sega. Guide a franchise to glory or a rookie through the ranks.

GOD IS certainly smiling down on American sports fans at the moment. The number of decent ice hockey and gridiron video games falling from the sky can only be described as an act of divine intervention. This month, it's the turn of basketball, and Sega's outing has been blessed with style.

ESPN NBA Basketball represents the sport's cultured side. Here, you'll need to learn how to dribble with a touch of class, how to steal and block without conceding a 'personal' and how to execute a cheeky behind-the-back pass. This brand of basketball, although far from unkind to beginners, is sim-like, and requires careful patience if you're to emerge cooler than Shaquille O'Neal parading designer fashion gear on an iceberg.

Opposing defences can be pretty stubborn, and will stick to your players like glue. So you'll need to turn those 'double-teamers' inside out by swerving and swaggering with the panache of a '70s Travolta (the Right thumbstick can help you do this). Defending is equally troublesome. Time those steals carelessly and you'll be penalised for reaching in. Jump to block too soon, and your opponent will be dunking the ball before you've even landed. This game is a weird one. You'll launch into it immediately and think it's a bit of a simpleton, but the longer you persevere, the more the hidden depth will suck you in.

ESPN NBA features all the seasons, play-offs and franchise modes you'd expect. However, an intriguing addition is the appropriately named 24/7 mode, which is essentially a basketball rendition of the career game proffered by Dreamcast's *Virtua Tennis*. Create a fictional hoop fiend, tone his skills in one-on-one training sessions and enter prestigious tournaments (for which you'll need partners). The real-time clock, however, provides the twist, requiring that your character be trained on a daily basis to avoid losing shape.

The street sub-games are also a lot of fun. *ESPN NHL Hockey* (reviewed on page 113) has the ice ponds, this has the local yards and city parks. Fed up with the licensed arena of NBA? Then compete in half-court one-on-one games. *ESPN NBA* can be as relaxed or burdening as you want it to be, with more potential managerial dilemmas to face than the England footy manager.

While not visually in the same league as *NBA Live 2004* (see page 118), *ESPN NBA* marginally sneaks it (just) as the best 'serious' basketball game on the streets. What it lacks in immediacy, it makes up for in its hefty lifespan. NBA purists will undoubtedly get the most out of its bottomless depth, but the attraction of Live play should also make it worth a peek for the casual sports gamer too.

THE VERDICT

POWER
Hardly great-looking this one, but performs the job amiably enough nonetheless.

STYLE
It's an *ESPN* product, so what do you expect? Excellent commentary and replays.

IMMERSION
Too skill-based to really grab you, though still compelling in a kind of obsessive-compulsive way.

LIFESPAN
The 24/7 mode is an excellent idea, the sub-games are a laugh and it's got Live play too.

GOOD POINTS
+ LOTS OF SKILLS TO MASTER
+ INCREDIBLE DEPTH
+ EXCELLENT BONUS MODES

BAD POINTS
- AVERAGE GRAPHICS
- UNEVENTFUL AND SLOW AT FIRST

SUMMARY
A definite grower in the long term, though you might need an interest in the sport to really appreciate it.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

7.6/10

>> **PREVIOUSLY:** First time through the hoop
>> **COMING SOON:** Hints - Issue 24

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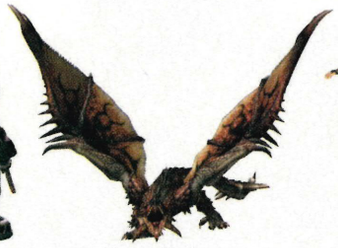
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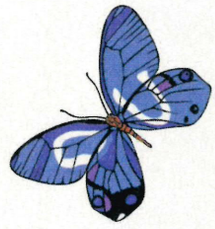
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The winter collection

The end-of-year game invasion has begun

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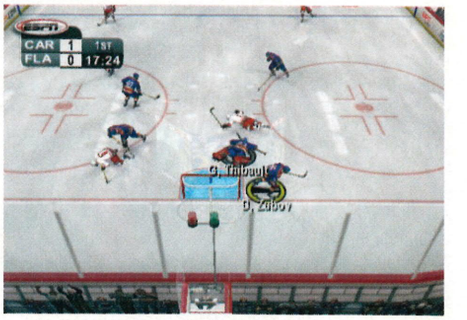
↑ The Florida Panthers give a textbook lesson in how to intimidate opponents by sketching a large beast on the ice.

↑ Replays capture every dramatic moment.



↑ Well 'puck' me, it looks like we scored.

↑ Test your skills in special challenges.

Take to the ice, and then take it online

ESPN NHL HOCKEY

WORDS: STEPHEN DAULTREY

GAME INFORMATION

- DEVELOPER: **VISUAL CONCEPTS**
- PUBLISHER: **SEGA SPORTS**
- RELEASE DATE: **31 OCT 2003**
- PLAYERS: **1-4**
- WEBSITE: **WWW.ESPNVIDEOGAMES.COM**

THE BRIEF

SIM-LIKE ice hockey fun with tons of options and presented in a spectacular TV style.

SEGA'S *ESPN NHL Hockey* is the perfect comedown pill for those still shaking after playing too much *Hitz*. Rather than overdosing on wincing, cranium-cracking checks (although *ESPN* does boast its fair share of these), this more sober outing offers options galore, right down to puck friction and referee collisions. There are more menus on offer here than in a global chain of McDonald's restaurants. Get off on your line changes, strategies and player trades, do you sir? Then this title will send you to statistic heaven, with premature greying the only possible downside to managing a full-scale franchise operation.

As is the norm with hockey sims these days, the Season and Franchise modes provide the biggest tests. Endless pages of rosters and free agents litter the screens, as you toy aimlessly with your tactics. Adding to the pressure is a wealth of player attributes. Each budding star is graded in everything from defence awareness down to pass bias, making this as numerically sound as *Championship Manager* (Issue 11, 8.1). Fortunately, if the stress proves troublesome, you can always retreat to a comforting TV room, where not only is a guitar-favouring jukebox available to sooth away the troubles from your sorry soul, but a tranquil game of air hockey is on offer too. Pure bliss...

In terms of fluidity, *ESPN*'s matchplay is pristine. Like EA's *NHL 2004* (Issue 21, 7.7), there are two types of pass to exploit – the flat pass and the daring lifted pass which, when used correctly, can turn a defence into an offence at the push of a puck. The only real concern we found was the all-too-predictable scoring. Eighty per cent of goals come from hitting 'one-timers' (release a pass and hit 'shoot' before the puck reaches your destination player) and zig-zagging towards the goal on one-on-one breakaways. Of course, nailing these becomes far more awkward on higher difficulty settings (or if you're playing with a wimpy side like Edmonton, in which case your players dawdle around the rink like they've been coached by Emilio Estevez).

Sega has certainly pushed the *ESPN* licensing to its fullest capacity too. It seems that any half-noteworthy check, foul or shot cannot pass by without some form of multi-angled replay swinging into action. While this certainly adds drama, it becomes mind-numbingly irritating for anyone not warmed to po-faced American TV. The commentary also veers dangerously towards the naff, with comments repetitive and not always 100 per cent appropriate to the on-screen action.

ESPN NHL Hockey is polished sports frivolity with a near-endless pit of options, and it's easily the best-looking ice hockey game around. It's highly recommended, especially to the purist player who knows the game inside out. With competitive Xbox Live play also in the offing (we'll bring you an online update soon), it's well worth a shot if you've got plenty of time to invest.

BONUS INFO

PUCK-ER UP

As well as Tournaments and Seasons, you can also compete in fun Skills challenges such as Hardest Shot and Shot Accuracy. There are mini-games too.

THE VERDICT

POWER
ESPN is the best-looking ice hockey game around with six impressive playing views.

STYLE
Pure *ESPN* glamour, with more cutscenes and replays than a real broadcast.

IMMERSION
Less violent and chaotic than *Hitz* (page 102), for example, but still fast and fun from the off.

LIFESPAN
There are tons of game modes and plenty of depth for anyone in love with the sport.

GOOD POINTS

+ LOOKS FANTASTIC
+ HUGE DEPTH AND LONGEVITY
+ IT'S GOT XBOX LIVE!

BAD POINTS

- SCORING METHODS TOO PREDICTABLE
- POOR PUNCH-UPS
- REPETITIVE COMMENTARY

SUMMARY

Ice hockey fans are spoilt with three great titles. This is the best choice for enthusiasts, and is the only one with Live play.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

8.2/10

PREVIOUSLY: News – Issue 22; Playable Demo – this issue
COMING SOON: Hints – Issue 24

↑ Shaggy 2 Dope is courteous to women - he lets them go to the table first.

↑ Everyone's yard has a flaming mattress.

↑ What?! Sexist?! Nooo...

↑ This is *not* how to use a megaphone.

↑ How can Sabu be in a game like this?

If hillbillies could make a game, this would be it

BACKYARD WRESTLING: DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME

WORDS: **BEN TALBOT**

GAME INFORMATION
DEVELOPER: **PARADOX**
PUBLISHER: **EIDOS**
RELEASE DATE: **OUT NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-2**
WEBSITE: **WWW.BYWGAME.COM**

» THE BRIEF

BEAT 'em up with breakable background objects and wrestling moves and weapons.

NOT EVERYONE wants to admit it, but we've all tried wrestling at some point. How many times have you put someone in a headlock, dished out a Chinese burn or even tussled underneath the duvet?

Some nutters crank it up to another level - maiming each other using baseball bats, barbed wire and flaming tables. Violence is the bottom line here. There's no ring, very few grappling moves and absolutely no rules at all.

You'll realise within minutes of firing up the disc that this is barely a wrestling game at all, rather a poorly executed beat 'em up. Punch, kick and wave weapons menacingly until the fickle collision detection decides you've landed a hit. There's not much more to it.

Each of the 30 backyard wrestlers has only four moves. With the exception of the finishers, which are fairly impressive, most of the grapples are poorly animated. Since when did every move in wrestling begin with a headlock? You'll start to feel the monotony all too quickly. There are a bunch of weapons dotted around the arena but they disappear as soon as you've used them once. They even respawn back at their start position, making it far too easy to use the same one over and over again.

Reversing attacks is great when it works, and sometimes the holds can go back and forth two or three times. It's extremely difficult to perfect though, because every move must be reversed at a different time. Unless you play for hours against the same opponent, you won't learn the timings correctly.

Still thinking it could be fun? Well how about battling a computer opponent who knocks you down and keeps you down permanently by chucking the respawning weapons? If you're lucky enough to stand upright, the projectiles actually home in on you as you try to run away. Turn the tables and you can stop your foe from recovering with a simple kick combo. Just boot him in the head every time he stands up and there's nothing the AI can do to counter your attack. You can complete the entire game with this one combination.

Some wrestling titles compensate for poor gameplay with numerous match types and multiplayer laughs. No laughs here, only tears. There are only three special match types and you can't even play with more than two players.

A stirring soundtrack featuring Machine Head, Insane Clown Posse and Sepultura is the game's only redeeming quality. You can even download tracks to your hard disk for use in other games. Common sense dictates, though, that if you like the music you should buy a CD instead. Don't try this at home... in fact, don't try this at all.

» BONUS INFO

» GIVE BLOOD
There are three kinds of stun: weapon attacks, punching and grapples. Dizzy opponents can be placed on a table for a super-damaging slam.

THE VERDICT

POWER
Glitchy graphics. Grapples often go completely wrong. Characters have the same moves/animation.

STYLE
Awesome soundtrack. Unlockable footage of the hot backyard babes. (pity they look so awful in-game).

IMMERSION
Doesn't really play like a wrestling game. Moves are limited and you don't have to pin anyone.

LIFESPAN
You can finish the story mode in about two hours using the same move over and over again.

GOOD POINTS
+ INTERACTIVE ENVIRONMENTS
+ ACE FINISHING MOVES

BAD POINTS
- EXTREMELY POOR AI
- TEMPERAMENTAL COLLISION DETECTION
- TWO PLAYERS ONLY, NO TAG TEAMS

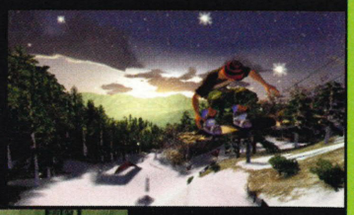
SUMMARY
It's been ages since a wrestling game set the world alight and this is a real step backwards. Deserves to be slammed.

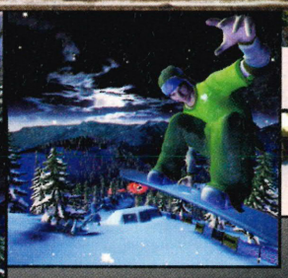
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

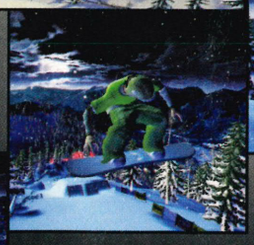
3.3/10

» **PREVIOUSLY:** Preview - Issue 15
» **COMING SOON:** Hints - Issue 24

Throw a stylish backside 5, impress the press, stoke your sponsor and diss your mate who's 100 miles away.







Microsoft game studios

Don't call it a sequel. Amped2 is here to declare itself the best freestyle experience on land, sea or air. Shred with friends from across the planet on the Xbox *Live*™ service and run your mouth as you go on endless runs. Compete with friends or take on some claimer through XSN Sports and get paid in praise. Over 300 indie tunes will play as you reap rewards for pulling tricks like stalls and butter with smooth style. It's your chance to ride with pros and try the new mountain sport, snowskate. The slopes are yours. How they're ripped-up is up to you.

XSN SPORTS

XBOX LIVE

amped 2®

XBOX

it's good to play together

xbox.com/amped2

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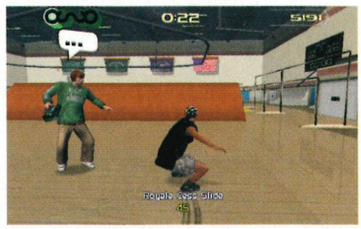
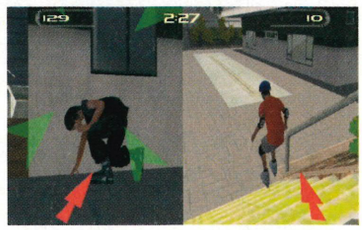
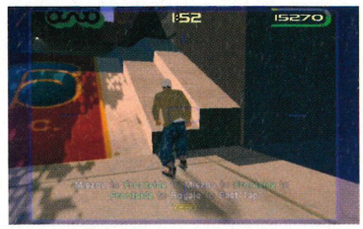
↑ Ah, a lovely coastal view. And a flying man.



↑ Rack up 3,000 points in a video shoot.



↑ Two-player fun in 'follow the leader'.



↑ Grind combos build big scores.

↑ Enter tourneys to skate with the best.

A skating game that's full of Rage and wants blood

ROLLING

WORDS: STEPHEN DAULTREY

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **RAGE SOFTWARE**
PUBLISHER: **SCI**
RELEASE DATE: **OUT NOW**
PLAYERS: **1-4**
WEBSITE: **WWW.SCI.CO.UK/GAMES**

THE BRIEF

INLINE skating action as you grind, grab and grunt through challenges and tournaments.

NOTHING TO DO with the Limp Bizkit song of the same name, *Rolling* is actually an 'aggressive inline skating' product of the sadly now-deceased Rage. It was left in limbo for months before SCi swooped down like beanie-sporting angels and decided that it was way too 'street' to be dumped in the trash.

This offers more of the usual head-cracking extreme sports mayhem, combining realistic challenges with the offbeat, and plagiarising the seminal *Tony Hawk's* series for everything it's got. The controls and premise are virtually identical. B and X for flip and grab moves, Y for grind and A for jump. The sweetest trick is maintaining a series of grind moves, flicking off a wall and returning to a rail to keep the combo flowing. More ambitious manoeuvres (the Rocket Fishbrain is guaranteed to dislocate a shoulder or two) can be unlocked as your reputation builds, and these will inevitably contribute towards cracking those elusive 'ill' scores. And your face too, if you're not careful. This game features an unhealthy appreciation for blood.

Other *Hawk* derivations rear their heads throughout. Letter/logo collecting features prominently and the modicum of bizarre tasks on offer, such as winching boats in, are *Tony Hawk* through and through. We also discovered a giggling vampire lurking on a schoolyard level, which we can only assume acts as some kind of ode to Buffy's Sunnydale High. However, maintaining seriousness are the many video and photoshoots, which you'll find littered at various corners of the courses. Dazzle the onlookers with your individualistic brand of street swagger to win magazine cover recognition, or fall on your arse to enter the *You've Been Framed* hall of fame. The varying difficulty between challenges is alarming - some are simple, others are harder to nail than a plank of titanium.

There are six decent multiplayer games too, including the wacky Time Bomb chase, plus the customary park editor. But that, sports fans, is just about it. Had this been released two years ago, it might have felt quite ordinary. Now, it's almost bordering on the retro. The character models are big and bold, but alas a little clumsy, and although a fidgety-yet-fluid camera tries its best to snazz up your airborne panache with drama and sparkle, the overall look remains somewhat bland. *Rolling* is certainly playable but virtually single-handedly defines the word 'mediocre'. *Wakeboarding Unleashed* (Issue 17, 8.6) is far more fulfilling and worthy of your dosh, and it won't be too long before *Tony Hawk Underground* (*THUG*) hits the decks either. We reckon you should make a leap for those two instead. Dude.

BONUS INFO

GET COMPETITIVE
As well as unlocking new skate parks by completing challenges, there are several authentic inline skating tournaments to unlock.

THE VERDICT

POWER
An excellent, dramatic camera is not enough to save this from looking sterile.

STYLE
Typical extreme sports cool but lacks the glamour of rival products out there.

IMMERSION
If you've already played *Tony Hawk's*, it will be a case of 'seen it all before'.

LIFESPAN
There is a fair amount to unlock and a decent park editor... if you can be bothered.

GOOD POINTS

+ SUPERB CAMERA
+ PLAYS AND HANDLES FAIRLY WELL
+ GREAT SOUNDTRACK

BAD POINTS

- DATED AND DERIVATIVE
- OVERLY FAMILIAR CHALLENGES
- AVERAGE COURSES

SUMMARY

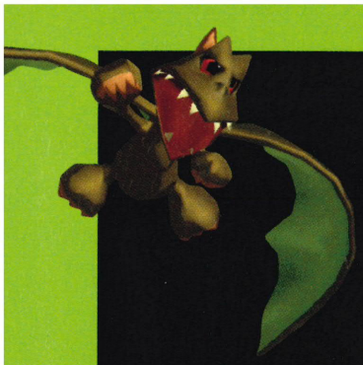
If you love extreme sports, this will pass the time, but with *THUG* just around the corner it's already past its sell-by date.

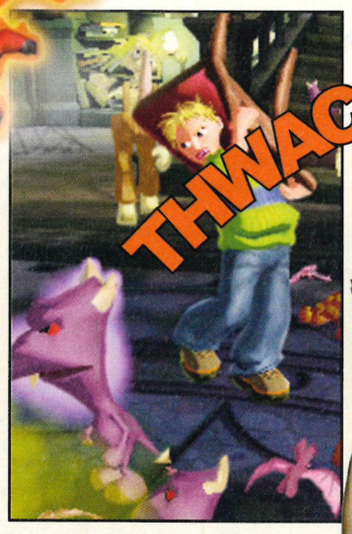
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

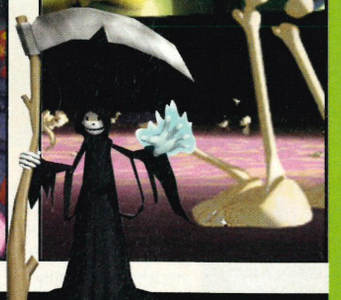
5.9/10

PREVIOUSLY: First Look - Issue 08; Preview - Issue 12, 21
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 24

Zombies are nothing to be afraid of. Especially after you've beaten them silly with their own arms.

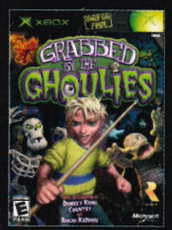






From the Creators of Donkey Kong Country and Banjo-Kazooie

Microsoft game studios



Welcome to Ghoulhaven Hall, the haunted home of the dastardly Baron von Ghoul. It's you and Cooper, battling anything the evil Baron puts in your way. Armed with chairs, pool cues and tables, you'll smash your way through over 50 rooms, crushing Skeletons, kicking Ninja Imps, bashing Vampire Chickens and hordes of other dirty fightin' ghoulies. All the while, trying to avoid being bitten, burnt and even mummified. So take a deep breath and get over your fears, you've got a house to wreck.

GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES™

RARE

XBOX

it's good to play together

xbox.com/ghoulies

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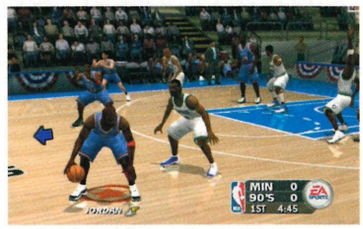
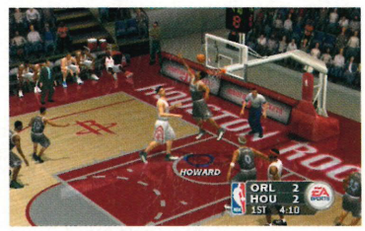
↑ Even seven-foot beefcakes get out-jumped from time to time. Though that might actually be a freak.

↑ Get 'street' in the backyard challenges.



↑ It's Michael Jordan in the '90s All-Stars!

↑ Relive your greatest moments in replay.



↑ The Press Box camera has the best view.

Court-based drama for basket cases everywhere

NBA LIVE 2004

WORDS: **STEPHEN DAULTREY**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: EA CANADA
PUBLISHER: EA
RELEASE DATE: 07 NOV 2003
PLAYERS: 1-4
WEBSITE: WWW.EASPORTS.COM

THE BRIEF

NEW instalment of EA's glossy basketball series, with lots of options and furious action.

THIS IS THE UK, right, so basketball shouldn't be allowed to be fun. It should be flat, repetitive matchplay of lanky, lumbering giants running backwards and forwards, swapping 'baskets' and getting reprimanded each time a stray arm catches an opponent. Right? Well, someone forgot to tell that to EA because *NBA Live 2004* is actually... ahem... rather enjoyable.

Somehow, the company's Canadian development team has managed to convert a pallid sporting experience into a full-blooded and surprisingly speedy affair. Sure, contact isn't allowed, but that shouldn't stop you leaping full-pelt into a crowded 'post area' and delivering a textbook dunk. For an immediate sports game, *NBA Live 2004* is a bit of a dark horse and holds its own amongst the likes of *NHL Hitz: Pro* (see page 102) and *Club Football* (Issue 22, 8.0).

The usual game modes rear their enormous, statistic-crazy heads. Just like EA's recent ice hockey game *NHL 2004* (Issue 21, 7.7), the RPG-like Dynasty mode proves the top dog for players with a few months to kill. Guide your favourite NBA side through a full season, train up your stars in the gym, hire coaches and even create new players to trade. There is as much to do here as in a bikini-themed fantasy park.

However, despite all the options, it's the on-court action that really matters, and this delivers admirably. Despite the default Baseline Low camera proving unnecessarily claustrophobic, the game enters its own once switched to the Press Box vantage. The players are big, bold and chunky with excellent definition and 'realistic' cartoon appearances. They may not move across the shiny surface with the utmost conviction, but their upper-body motions are certainly impressive.

The gameplay is also a harder-hitting, more end-to-end affair than ESPN's rival NBA product (see page 110). You can literally steal from one end of the court to the other in a matter of milliseconds. Passes are intercepted with greater frequency, and weaving your way into a slam-dunking position can be ably executed with a sly use of the 'sprint' button - especially handy once you realise just how difficult it is to nail three-pointers.

The problem with *NBA Live 2004*, however, is that its appeal is limited over time. The AI in the game is so impressive that it's possible not to feel entirely in control of your players. And while the multiplayer game is inevitably engrossing, it appears to suffer from annoying graphical slowdown.

If it's an immediate, hard-hitting and exciting sports game that you're after, *NBA Live 2004* is definitely worth the bucks. Don't expect it to change your life, but it might at least warm you to one of America's most popular sports...

BONUS INFO

FREESTYLIN'
An excellent video tutorial named Freestyle teaches you all the game's 'cunning' moves, so you can play it like a native.

THE VERDICT

POWER
Great, larger-than-life character models and excellent camera. Slight slowdown in multiplayer.

STYLE
Typically ballsy presentation and swish cutscenes. Choose the right camera setting, though.

IMMERSION
The action is incredibly fast-paced, and the controls make it easy to offend and defend.

LIFESPAN
Lots to do, but it's too straightforward to want to play it forever - and it lacks Live.

GOOD POINTS
+ SURPRISINGLY FAST AND FURIOUS
+ GREAT IN-GAME VISUALS
+ INTUITIVE CONTROLS

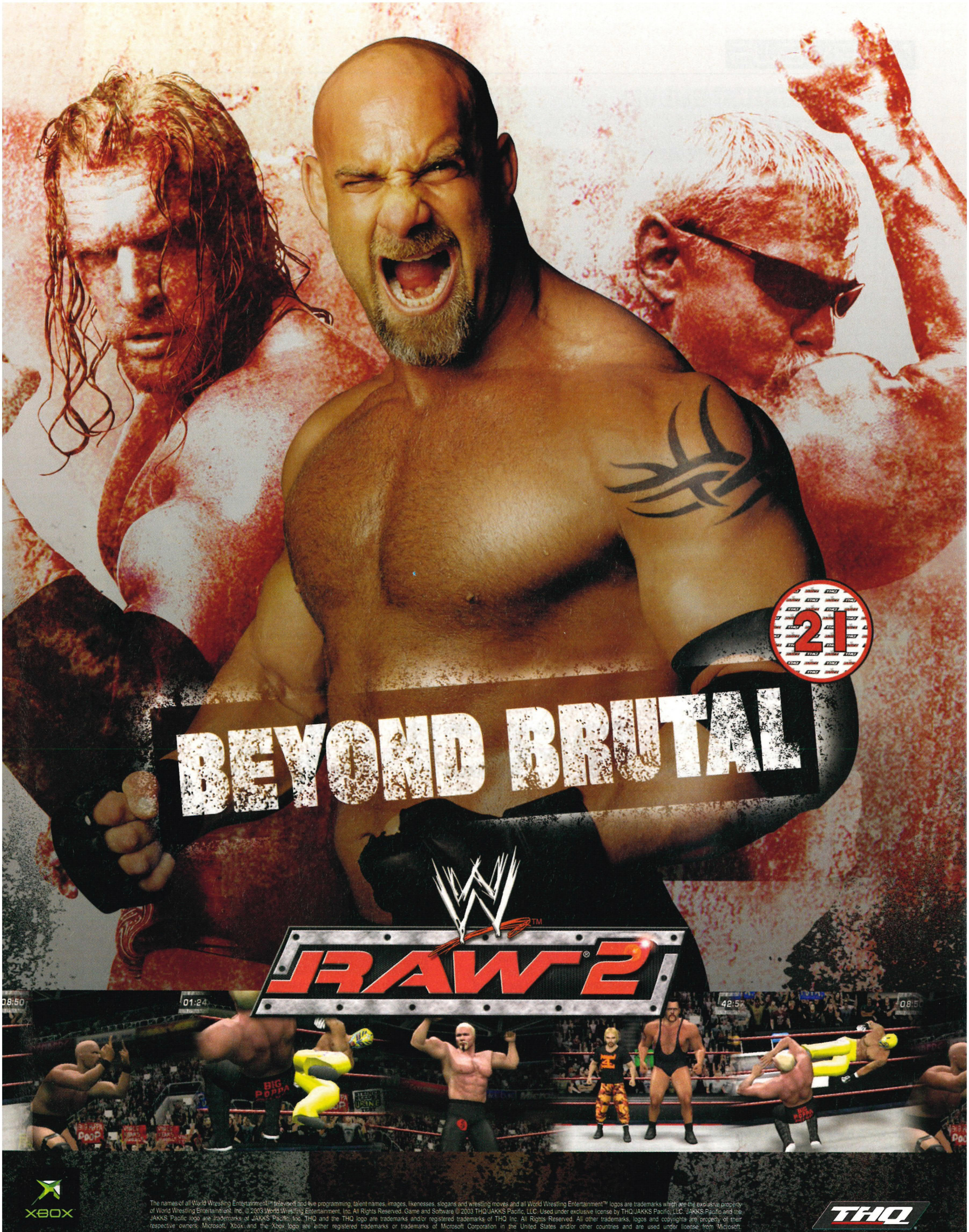
BAD POINTS
- TOO MUCH FRANTIC BUTTON-BASHING
- SUSPECT LONGEVITY

SUMMARY
A bit too arcade-like, but still a rock solid basketball sim, and certainly a decent improvement over its predecessors.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

7.3/10

PREVIOUSLY: This is the first time this baby's bounced into view
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 24



XBOX

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THQ

↑ There are heaps of American monsters, but where are the likes of the Fiesta Pop and the Capri 1.6?

A budget-price title that proves a Ford is indeed the safest place to be. Zzzzzz...

FORD RACING 2

WORDS: **RICH MARSH**

GAME INFORMATION
DEVELOPER: RAZOR WORKS
PUBLISHER: EMPIRE INTERACTIVE
RELEASE DATE: 31 OCT 2003
PLAYERS: 1-2
WEBSITE: WWW.EMPIRE INTERACTIVE.COM

» THE BRIEF

SAMPLE A half century of Ford motors in this arcade racer all at the slimline price of £20.

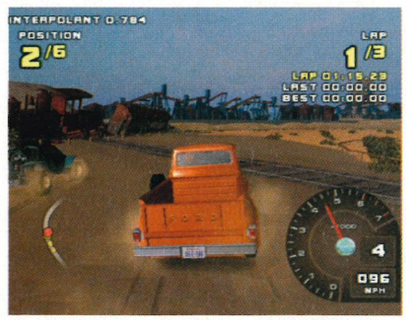
IN THIS WORLD, we're constantly told that you get what you pay for - and that's doubly true when it comes to games. Games don't grow on trees - they take countless man hours to make and it's not unusual for a game to take three years from start to finish. Which is why games aren't going to get cheaper anytime soon.

But here comes *Ford Racing 2*, a brand new racing game for under 20 notes. Surely if Empire can do it, anyone can. Or so the argument goes.

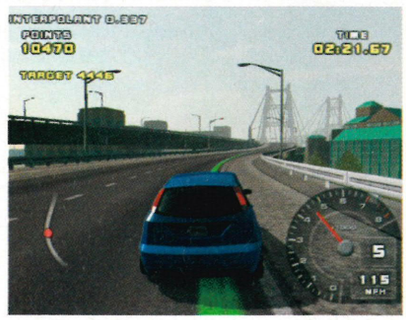
So, how *has* Empire done it? Well, it claims to be making a reduced profit on each game sold as well as taking advantage of Microsoft's multi-layered publishing model. The thinking behind this bold move is that people will see the unbelievable price and buy it on impulse, thinking "Well, it's not even the price of a night out/DVD/takeaway/massage." It's the gaming equivalent of a supermarket's 'sell 'em cheap and stack 'em high' philosophy. Which begs the question: is this a cheapo tin of beans or an altruistic shot in the arm for Joe Punter?

In truth, it's a bit of both. There's no way this can stand comparisons with the likes of *Project Gotham Racing 2* (page 056), but at the same time it's not a complete dog. It's pointedly aimed at casual gamers, who in the makers' opinion, won't recognise that this isn't in the same league as the Xbox's premier racing games. What they'll see is a stack of instantly recognisable Ford motors from the last 60 years and a package that screams "Pick me up and play, I'm a friendly game!"

And just as soon as play starts it becomes evident how they conjured up this game for the price. It's not that it looks hideous, it's more a case of it looking bland and uninspiring. The game world looks solid enough but it's all reliant on things seen a hundred times »



↑ This is one of only two racing views.



↑ Keep on the green line for a challenge.

» BONUS INFO

»T'BIRDS ARE GO
To be fair, Ford has made some interesting cars, and *Ford Racing 2* features 32 of them. So far we've spotted a Ford GT, the new 2004 F-150, SVT Lightning, SVT Mustang Cobra, 2002 Thunderbird, Mustang Mach III, Gran Torino, 1971 Mustang, 1955 Thunderbird, Focus Rally, and 49 Coupe. But where's the 83 Sierra?

»GOING LIVE
Let's give credit where credit's due. Twenty quid is a great price for a mildly entertaining racer, and it's even better value when you add Xbox Live to the equation. Yep, you read that right - you can post your best times into league tables.

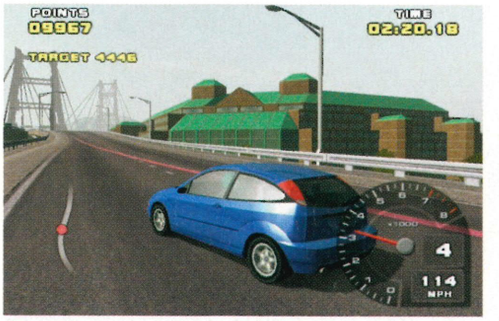
FORD FUSION

YOU CAN TAKE any of the cars, track and race types unlocked in single-player and create your own bespoke racing challenge. So if you have a hankering for pick-ups, wooded tracks and the thrill of chasing another man's slipstream, you can indulge that fantasy...

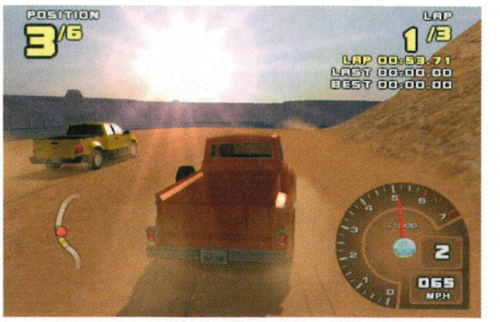
↑ There's a wide choice of cars, tracks and challenges. Pity about the quality of the racing.

↑ The other drivers never really get angry, however much you provoke them. We tried.

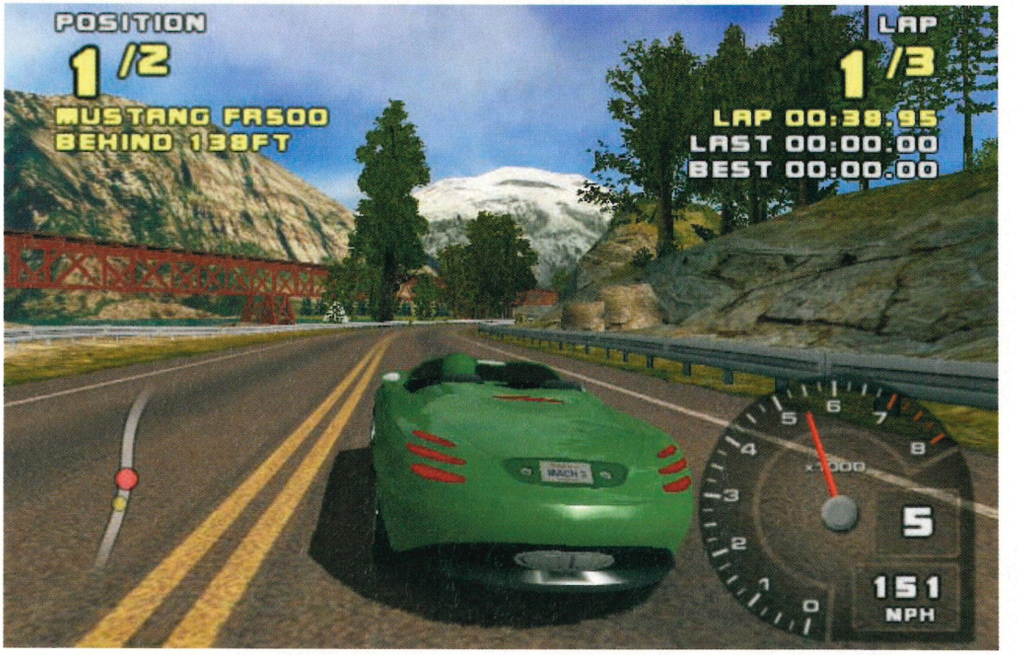
↑ Even with the sports cars the feeling of speed is somewhat underwhelming.



↑ We're not sure if a Ford Focus is all that aspirational...



↑ The pick-up trucks are amongst the slowest rides.



↑ This green goddess is a concept car. Its suspension is made out of jelly, which explains its hideous handling.

» before, whether it's a helicopter buzzing over the track or a sweep past a fairground.

Nothing sticks out, even after hours of play, and the same can be said for the actual track layout. Yes, there are corners and stuff, but if you asked us to pick out a stand-out moment of racing beauty we'd be hard pressed to think of one.

The same could be said for the cars. They look exactly as they should, with a bog-standard reflective sheen that's as generic and familiar to this type of game as wheels on all four corners of a car. And you can't damage them, or even crash them. Nor can you tweak them or change their colour. And once at the wheel it's apparent there's a one-size-fits-all approach to handling.

There are minor differences to how the various cars feel, but nothing that would make an inexperienced gamer struggle to adapt. Careless cornering is seldom punished, in fact, everything conspires to keep you in the race, making you feel for a brief moment like a racing god. That is until you rumble the ruse and drive like a paralytic joyrider, intent on self-defeating stupidity, only to find that a Ford is indeed the safest place to be.

But there are plus points - notably the number of racing challenges and the way they're fed to the player. It's not just first past the post races, although you can fill a cavernous pair of boots with that style of race if you want. There are also challenges that ask you to keep a racing line, to stay in the slipstream of a twitchy opponent, to avoid being in the last two places by the end of a lap and many other worthwhile tests of vehicular skill.

Success is always rewarded with a new car, type of match-up or track, and this is to be applauded, as is the way you can dip in and out of the different car classes. Basically, short of blindfolding yourself or tying one hand behind your back, you're never going to get to a point where you can't progress any further.

And in the end, that's what the makers probably intended. This is a game that anyone can excel at, especially someone who breaks into a cold, gibbering sweat at the merest mention of 'learning curves' or 'realistic handling'. So whether Razor Works intended it or not, the fact is this game plays like most Ford cars - safely and predictably. This is perhaps what you want for the daily schlep to work, but in a racing game it's far from a winning formula.

"This is a game that anyone can excel at. It's safe and predictable"

THE VERDICT

POWER
At least there isn't any slowdown, but then again, you never feel as if you're really motoring.

STYLE
As undistinguished and derivative as an entry-level Fiesta. Identikit tracks and plain car models.

IMMERSION
The level of difficulty and the lacklustre track design means you'll never be truly engaged.

LIFESPAN
It's highly unlikely you'll ever be bothered to unlock every car, track or match-up.

GOOD POINTS

+ ONLY £20
+ LOTS OF DIFFERENT CARS AND RACE TYPES

BAD POINTS

- UNCHALLENGING GAMEPLAY
- LOOKS LIKE ANY NUMBER OF RACERS
- SOME OF THE CARS ARE JUST PLAIN CRAP

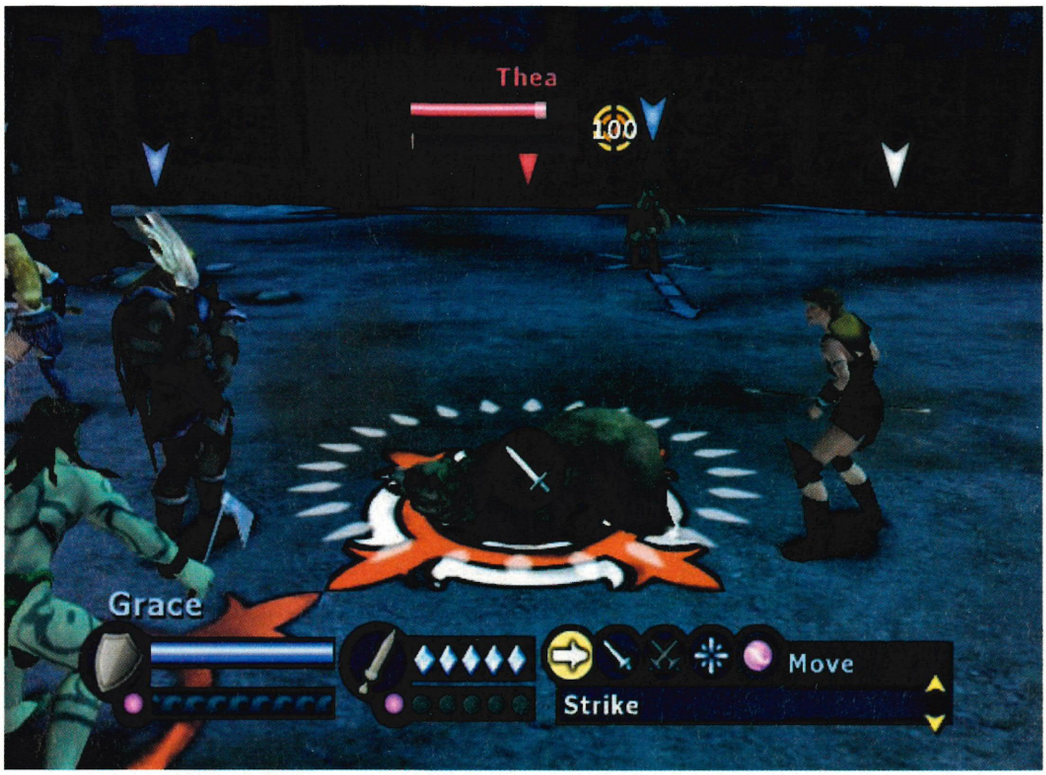
SUMMARY
Aimed at casual gamers after cheap racing fun, but it has predictable tracks, simpleton challenges and dull graphics.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

6.4/10

»PREVIOUSLY: Preview - Issue 22
»COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 24

DID YOU KNOW? ON AVERAGE, EACH FORD FOCUS THAT TAKES PART IN THE WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP MAKES 163,170 GEAR CHANGES PER SEASON.



↑ Slay bears and dogs during the tournaments. Animal rights campaigners would've been up in arms.

↑ Last the longest on top of the crates.

↑ Destroy the barrels to earn money.

↑ The intro is better than the game.

↑ When fireworks go bad, part IV.

Win the crowd, and you will win your freedom

GLADIUS

WORDS: **ANDY IRVING**

GAME INFORMATION
DEVELOPER: **LUCASARTS**
PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
RELEASE DATE: **29 OCT 2003**
PLAYERS: **1**
WEBSITE: **WWW.LUCASARTS.COM**

» THE BRIEF

GRAB YOUR sword and work your way through gladiatorial school in this RPG-a-like.

GLADIATORS. They've provided the material for several Oscar-laden blockbusters, and made women swoon at guys in leather skirts, but these so-called warriors have done little to grace the video game world.

Gladius starts off well, with some very stylish cutscenes (a mix of storyboard and watercolour images) detailing the main story: a lengthy war between Imperia and Nordagh is finally brought to an end when the gods intervene after a raid by the Valkyries. All well and good so far. This is followed by more cutscenes. And yet more.

We pick up the story (after more cutscenes, you see where I'm going here) and take in our hands the destinies of Ursula and Valens - two very different warriors who must build up each of their fighting schools and prove themselves worthy of competition throughout the land.

This would be okay, apart from the fact that during the first 15 minutes of the game, there are only about two minutes of actual playing. Boring cutscenes and unnecessary blocks of cheesy dialogue, wrapped up in corny American accents immediately ruin the experience. Not good.

After an overlong tutorial, you'll have learnt the basics of turn-based combat. When it's your go, position the cursor around the arena, and move, attack or pass. Your movement is limited though, to three squares in total, in all directions. Depending on the type of warrior you've recruited (there are 16 classes), your fighters will have different strengths and attributes. Thus, by pitting your stronger fighters against weaker enemies, you should win hands down, but the random AI means this is rarely the case.

Combat is centred around a swing system - after selecting the appropriate attack (Strike, Range, Magic or Heal), you must stop the marker in the red section of the power bar for the most effective action. Supposedly moving your warrior to the side or rear of an enemy will also result in a more damaging assault, but seeing as they will turn and face you as you approach, this negates the point. Another strategic element is the positioning of your warriors before battle commences, as we're informed this will "affect the tide of war", but as we don't actually have a choice in their positioning, this is also pointless.

On the bright side of things, with countless tournaments, leagues, upgrades and weapons available, *Gladius* is deeper than a slave trader's pocket, and will take a fair while to work through. There are a couple of nice additional touches too, like the way the crowd's mood significantly affects the performance of your team. However, after an age of tiresome cutscenes and unfair AI, you may not want to see much more. What say ye, Emperor? Thumbs down.

» BONUS INFO

» IT'S ELEMENTARY
Your warriors have affinities to different elements, which can be upgraded with your winnings. Concentrate on one element.

THE VERDICT

XBOX

POWER
Cinematics are nice but the slow-paced action hardly tests the Xbox to its limits.

STYLE
Good-looking environments but combat is uninvolving and tedious with no sense of tension.

IMMERSION
Takes an age to start playing the real game, and the end result is less than inspiring.

LIFESPAN
If you do manage to get through the early levels, there's enough here to ensure some longevity.

GOOD POINTS
+ LOADS OF TOURNAMENTS
+ TONS OF UPGRADES

BAD POINTS
- UNFAIR AI
- TOO MANY CUTSCENES THAT GET IN THE WAY
- UNNECESSARY AND TEDIOUS DIALOGUE

SUMMARY
Neither RPG nor actioner, unfortunately *Gladius* lies slain in a pool of its own blood after its first fight.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

4.6/10

» **PREVIOUSLY:** Preview - Issue 14, Playable Demo - Issue 20
» **COMING SOON:** Hints - Issue 24

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↑ Absorb enemy attacks then repel them back. Can you tell what the hell's going on? No, us neither.

↑ Fight the block monster to progress.

↑ Use the leaf as a springboard.

↑ Like, Lego goes snowboarding. Dude.

↑ Get this fella to open doors for you.

It's Toy meets World in this Technics transmutation

BIONICLE

WORDS: **ANDY IRVING**

GAME INFORMATION

DEVELOPER: **ARGONAUT**
PUBLISHER: **EA**
RELEASE DATE: **OUT NOW**
PLAYERS: **1**
WEBSITE: **WWW.LEGO.COM/ENG/BIONICLE**

» THE BRIEF

PROTECT the island of Mata Nui in the latest spin off of the mega-successful Lego franchise

ASK ANY ten-year-old boy about Bionicle and they'll wax lyrical about the Lego phenomenon that's been around for a few years. To complement the range of toys, a series of comic books, trading cards and a complete backstory have been developed, and this title is the first venture into the video game world. So it's a pity that from the instant the game started up, things were not looking good...

The convoluted story goes along the usual lines of good versus evil. The island of Mata Nui is under threat from the evil spirit Makuta until the arrival of six mysterious Toa - elementals drawing their power from fire, water, ice etc - who must seek out the Kanohi masks of power to accomplish their destiny (almost finished now). The insect-like Bohrok swarms have now awakened, bringing total chaos and destruction everywhere they go, and once again it's up to the Toa to save the day. Phew.

We've been reliably informed the toys are both imaginatively and intricately designed, and there is a genuine feel of quality to their construction. Unfortunately for fans of the toys, this game is the complete opposite.

The first thing that strikes you is the graphics, or rather the lack of them. Blocky characters with a lower polygon count than *Tetris* and bright, garish colours are not exactly the best advert for Xbox graphics. The animation is poor and clunky, and the enemies look like something from an '80s arcade machine. The gameplay centres round a lethargic 3D platformer, with the customary diet of jumping, collecting and shooting.

By amassing certain tallies of moonstones, you're able to unlock bonus features such as concept art, movie trailers and new toy previews, if that sort of thing floats your boat. The combat system is based on the novel idea of harnessing the power of your enemy's blows, then converting said energy into your own attacks. This could have worked quite well, but it's not well executed. When facing multiple enemies, the screen becomes a confusing mishmash of shields and energy bolts. *Bionicle* doesn't give you a clue as to what's going on, leaving you non-plussed and frustrated.

The occasional change in tack, such as the Ice Toa's snowboarding level, do provide a bit of welcome relief, but completely random camera angles ruin the fun. It's a shame, because as a powerhouse licence, the addition of some half-decent graphics and better gameplay could have made this a pretty good title. Give me small plastic men with clip-on hair to play with any day.

» BONUS INFO

» CALL THE LAWYERS
The Bionicle franchise once ran into hot water amid claims the backstory shamelessly exploits ancient Mauri legends. Cheeky Lego!

THE VERDICT

POWER
Your Xbox could run a game ten times better than this while in a deep slumber.

STYLE
Bright clashing colours, blocky animation and weak sound effects do it no favours.

IMMERSION
Tedious gameplay and a stupidly hard level boss mean you may give up after the first stage.

LIFESPAN
Those who dare to play it will zip through in a day. Not great value for money.

GOOD POINTS
+ UNIQUE LICENCE...

BAD POINTS
- ...THAT'S TOTALLY WASTED
- HORRIBLE GRAPHICS
- CONFUSING, FRUSTRATING COMBAT
- BORING, REPETITIVE GAMEPLAY

SUMMARY
Forty quid will buy you a lot of Lego, which will be infinitely more enjoyable than this pile of drivel.

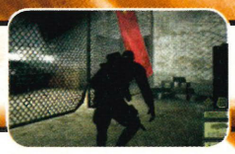
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE SCORE

3.1/10

» **PREVIOUSLY:** *Bionicle* has slipped past our monocle until now
» **COMING SOON:** Tips - Issue 24

XBOX LIVE

Play *More* : Play *Live*



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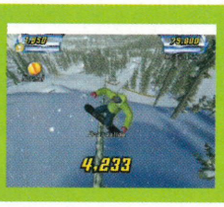
REVIEWS DIRECTORY

THE XBOX ELITE

THESE ARE the best games available for Xbox, scoring a whopping 8.5 or more.



AMPED: FREESTYLE SNOWBOARDING
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Addictive, impressive and deep. Makes a perfect landing"
SCORE: **8.7**

BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE
REVIEWED: Issue 08
TYPE: Action RPG
"Absorbing RPG with a healthy dose of hack 'n' slashing"
SCORE: **8.5**

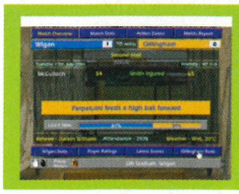
2002 FIFA WORLD CUP	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Sports	"A return to form for the franchise"	Score 8.0
AGGRESSIVE INLINE	**Reviewed** Issue 07	**Type** Extreme sports	"Entertaining extreme sports. Fresh ideas and a lasting challenge"	Score 7.7
ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR EXTINCTION	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Real-time strategy	"Drab maps, but will entertain old RTS fans and newbies for a while"	Score 6.6
ALL-STAR BASEBALL 2003	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** US sports	"Fine sim of the hit-and-miss sport"	Score 7.0
ALTER ECHO	**Reviewed** Issue 22	**Type** Shooter	"Original-looking game with some style. Repetitive gameplay though"	Score 6.9
ANTZ EXTREME RACING	**Reviewed** Issue 07	**Type** Driving	"Average, and too awkward for its target audience"	Score 5.0
ARCTIC THUNDER	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Driving	"Loads of bugs and glitches. It's just limp and lifeless"	Score 2.4
ATV: QUAD POWER RACING 2	**Reviewed** Issue 13	**Type** Driving	"This is a solid, entertaining game with some great mini-challenges"	Score 7.7
AZURIK: RISE OF PERATHIA	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Action adventure	"A colourful but underwhelming fantasy adventure"	Score 3.8
BARBARIAN	**Reviewed** Issue 07	**Type** Beat 'em up	"A solid, playable arcade beat 'em up with some nice ideas"	Score 7.4
BATTLE ENGINE AQUILA	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Mech shooter	"Good shooting and strategy mix. Arcade shooter with depth"	Score 8.0
BATMAN: DARK TOMORROW	**Reviewed** Issue 17	**Type** Action	"An awful game that warrants neither your time nor your money"	Score 2.0
BATMAN: VENGEANCE	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Action adventure	"Bat-lore heavy, but too easy, too samey and nothing new"	Score 4.5
BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Driving	"Original idea, but let down by poor handling and execution"	Score 6.6
BLACKSTONE: MAGIC AND STEEL	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** RPG	"A straightforward action RPG, but there are better ones on Xbox"	Score 7.0
BLADE II	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Action	"Violent, repetitive and enjoyable in bursts. Lots of vamps to kill"	Score 7.2
BLOOD OMEN 2	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Action adventure	"Linear gameplay dampens the otherwise vamped-up action"	Score 6.3
BLOOD WAKE	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Driving/action	"Much of the time you're fighting the controls instead of the enemy"	Score 4.5
BLOODRAYNE	**Reviewed** Issue 17	**Type** Action	"A slick combination of melee combat and run-and-gun action"	Score 7.4
BMX XXX	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Extreme sports	"Drunks and expletives. Unattractive and undeserving of your cash"	Score 3.0
BRUCE LEE: QUEST OF THE DRAGON	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Beat 'em up	"Appallingly shoddy game that's an insult to the great man"	Score 1.0
BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER	**Reviewed** Issue 06	**Type** Action adventure	"Captures essence of the TV series; good enough to please non-fans"	Score 8.3
BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS	**Reviewed** Issue 22	**Type** Action adventure	"Extremely playable and atmospheric. Even non-*Buffy* fans will enjoy this"	Score 8.0
BURNOUT	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Driving	"Arcade racer delivering a massive dose of testosterotainment"	Score 8.2
CAPCOM VS SNK 2 EO: MOTM	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** Beat 'em up	"If it's 2D combat you're after, you won't find better than this" XBL★★★★	Score 7.7
CEL DAMAGE	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Driving	"Dreamy looking, but hectic and frustrating gameplay"	Score 5.5
CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER: SEASON 02/03	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Sports	"Doesn't break new ground, but will keep fans interested for ages"	Score 8.1
CHASE	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Action	"Bare-bones stunt action that makes you want to scream 'Cut!'"	Score 4.0
CIRCUS MAXIMUS	**Reviewed** Issue 05	**Type** Driving	"Sub-standard, gimmick-driven racer lacking in almost every way"	Score 3.5

BLINX: THE TIME SWEEPER
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: Platformer
"Takes platform gaming into uncharted territory. Essential"
SCORE: **9.3**

BRUTE FORCE
REVIEWED: Issue 18
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Multiplayer elevates *Brute Force* from a good to a potentially great game"
SCORE: **8.5**

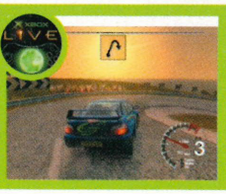
BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Driving
"A classic arcade racer that makes you sweat and grin"
SCORE: **9.0**

CLUB FOOTBALL	**Reviewed** Issue 22	**Type** Sports	"Great four-player multiplayer with pretty good AI. A promising franchise"	Score 8.0
COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE	**Reviewed** Issue 05	**Type** Tactical action	"Extremely tough but rewarding war game. Some control issues"	Score 7.9
CONFLICT: DESERT STORM	**Reviewed** Issue 07	**Type** Squad-based shooter	"Basic but entertaining tactical shooter providing top war stories"	Score 8.1
CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Squad-based shooter	"A top squad shooter just got better. Great multiplayer, but too short"	Score 8.3
CRASH	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Driving	"Instant, lo-fi, demolition derby fun for the few hours that it lasts"	Score 6.6
CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Platformer	"One of the best cartoony worlds, but has no new tricks"	Score 7.1
CRAZY TAXI 3	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Driving	"Lots of fun with great mini-games but similar to previous versions"	Score 8.0
CRIMSON SEA	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Action/Shooter	"Satisfies the strongest bloodlust while making sure it never gets boring"	Score 8.0
DAKAR 2	**Reviewed** Issue 18	**Type** Driving	"If you've got no qualms about realism while off-roading, this is fun"	Score 7.8
DARK ANGEL	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Action	"Repetitive gameplay. Dull, uninspiring levels. You won't play for long"	Score 4.5
DARK SUMMIT	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Extreme sports	"Half-hearted gameplay fleshed out with a storybook aspect"	Score 3.5
DAVE MIRRA FREESTYLE BMX 2	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Extreme sports	"Pulling tricks is fun, but poor controls spoil the experience"	Score 6.9
DAVID BECKHAM SOCCER	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Sports	"Outdated footy that should be left alone, even by fans of Becks"	Score 4.2
DEADLY SKIES	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Flight sim	"Not fast or exciting enough to fulfil that fighter pilot dream"	Score 5.2
DEAD OR ALIVE XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** Sports	"Great to look at and fun to play, but it's an acquired taste"	Score 8.0
DEAD TO RIGHTS	**Reviewed** Issue 12	**Type** Action adventure	"Some fun gunfights but too much dull, unarmed combat"	Score 7.0
DEATHROW	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Sports	"Average. Tries (and fails) to hide shortcomings with naughty words"	Score 5.5
DEFENDER	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** Shooter	"Prompts a bit of nostalgia, but it doesn't have that vital spark"	Score 6.6
DIE HARD: VENDETTA	**Reviewed** Issue 19	**Type** Shooter	"If you persist, you'll catch brief glimpses of decency amongst the mess"	Score 3.5
DINO CRISIS 3	**Reviewed** Issue 22	**Type** Action/Shooter	"Cool dinos, huge ship to explore, but bad camera and it gets repetitive"	Score 6.4
DISNEY'S EXTREME SKATE ADVENTURE	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Extreme sports	"Best kids' game on Xbox; loved by adults too! Looks good, plays great"	Score 8.3
DR MUTO	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** Platformer	"Enjoyable if you've not played loads of other cartoony platformers"	Score 7.0
DYNASTY WARRIORS 3	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Action adventure	"Pure aggression and drama. Masses of characters and battlefields"	Score 7.8
EGGO MANIA	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Puzzle	"Decent two-player, brain-scratching fun"	Score 6.5
ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** RPG	"By turns, wondrous, unconventional and boring. Unique, but slow"	Score 7.6
ENCLAVE	**Reviewed** Issue 06	**Type** Action adventure	"Involving, but the catalogue of annoyances becomes annoying"	Score 5.8
ESPN INTERNATIONAL WINTER SPORTS	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Extreme sports	"Pathetic sports anthology... a game stuck firmly in the Ice Age"	Score 3.2



CHAMP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02
REVIEWED: Issue 02
TYPE: Sports
"Easily the best game of its kind... indefinite lifespan"
SCORE: **8.8**

COLIN McRAE RALLY 3
REVIEWED: Issue 10
TYPE: Driving
"Great handling, scintillating rallying, and more realistic than *RalliSport Challenge*"
SCORE: **8.9**



COLIN McRAE RALLY 04
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Driving
"Rallying at its grandest, prettiest and most absorbing. The best rally game ever made"
SCORE: **9.1**

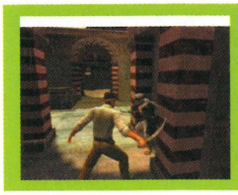
KEY: Xbox Live features

DEAD OR ALIVE 3
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Accessible, slick and as satisfying as any beat 'em up. This is a visual benchmark"
SCORE: **8.5**

ENTER THE MATRIX
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Action
"A slick action romp that genuinely adds something new to the licence"
SCORE: **8.5**

HALO
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: FPS
"Quite simply, a masterpiece and without question one of the best games ever made"
SCORE: **9.7**

ESPN WINTER X GAMES SNOWBOARDING 2	**Reviewed** Issue 05	**Type** Extreme sports	"A decent boarding game but a bit clumsy to play. Lots of features"	**Score** 7.0
EVIL DEAD: A FISTFUL OF BOOMSTICK	**Reviewed** Issue 18	**Type** Action adventure	"Provides laughs but nothing too involving. Clever weapon combos"	**Score** 6.7
F1 2002	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Driving	"Solid, with all a fan could want, but it's evolution, not revolution"	**Score** 7.1
F1 CAREER CHALLENGE	**Reviewed** Issue 18	**Type** Driving	"Solid F1 racing fun that delivers in the important areas but lacks bite"	**Score** 6.6
FIFA 2003	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Sports	"Accurate, playable and authentic, but the controls are flawed"	**Score** 8.4
FILA WORLD TOUR TENNIS	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Sports	"A derivative tennis game with more faults than the San Andreas"	**Score** 2.6
FINDING NEMO	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Platformer	"Looks gorgeous, oozes humour. Challenging, but frustrating in places"	**Score** 7.9
FIREBLADE	**Reviewed** Issue 12	**Type** Action	"Duff controls, poor graphics and no spark"	**Score** 2.8
FREAKY FLYERS	**Reviewed** Issue 22	**Type** Racing	"Easy-to-pick-up wacky racer that delivers both fun and firepower"	**Score** 7.0
FREEDOM FIGHTERS	**Reviewed** Issue 20	**Type** Squad-based shooter	"Atmospheric and film-like squad-based shooter, but a bit repetitive"	**Score** 7.9
FREESTYLE METALX	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Extreme sports	"A deep but intuitive motocross game, with a massive range of tricks"	**Score** 7.8
FUZION FRENZY	**Reviewed** Issue 01	**Type** Party	"More party pooper than party popper. Too simple and repetitive"	**Score** 4.5
FURIOUS KARTING	**Reviewed** Issue 13	**Type** Driving	"Quickly grows tiring thanks to wafer-thin gameplay and average looks"	**Score** 5.0
FUTURAMA	**Reviewed** Issue 19	**Type** Platformer	"An extremely likeable package of simple, solid gaming. Crucial for fans"	**Score** 7.7
GAUNTLET DARK LEGACY	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Adventure	"A fun-free game that's sluggish and frequently confusing to play"	**Score** 3.8



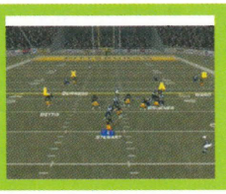
INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB
REVIEWED: Issue 14
TYPE: Action adventure
"One of the best single-player adventures on Xbox. Brilliant"
SCORE: **9.0**

INDYCAR SERIES
REVIEWED: Issue 18
TYPE: Driving
"You won't find a better racing sim on Xbox. Very technically demanding"
SCORE: **8.6**

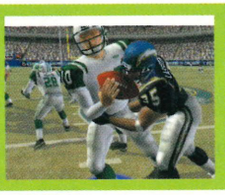
JET SET RADIO FUTURE
REVIEWED: Issue 02
TYPE: Platformer/Extreme sports
"Supremely playable and very stylish. Huge, intricate levels"
SCORE: **8.9**

GENMA ONIMUSHA	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Action adventure	"No-frills hack 'n' slash that takes a while to crack. Fun, but flawed"	**Score** 6.9
GODZILLA: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS MELEE	**Reviewed** Issue 17	**Type** Action	"A fun masher with multiplayer laughs and highly detailed monsters"	**Score** 6.1
GRAVITY GAMES: STREET.VERT.DIRT	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Extreme sports	"A horrible extreme sports game. Dire"	**Score** 0.8
GROUP S CHALLENGE	**Reviewed** Issue 20	**Type** Driving	"Loads of cars and tracks, realistic handling and an addictive career mode"	**Score** 7.8
GUN METAL	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Action/Shooter	"Enjoyable robo-death combat - if you can stomach the controls"	**Score** 8.3
GUN VALKYRIE	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Shooter	"Not for the faint-hearted, this has intense, skilful action all the way"	**Score** 7.6
HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS	**Reviewed** Issue 12	**Type** Action adventure	"A good looking, highly playable and authentic slice of Potter Pie"	**Score** 7.0
HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Action	"Great stealth game that rewards patience and planning"	**Score** 8.3
HUNTER: THE RECKONING	**Reviewed** Issue 05	**Type** Action adventure	"A repetitive rumble. Good, unclean fun but multiplayer is messy"	**Score** 6.7
ISS 2	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Sports	"Fans should treat this bitterly disappointing sequel with caution"	**Score** 5.1
JAMES BOND 007 IN... AGENT UNDER FIRE	**Reviewed** Issue 05	**Type** First-person shooter	"Makes you feel like Bond, but the bad guys interaction is stupid"	**Score** 7.2
JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Action/Shooter	"Looks great. Entertaining but nothing particularly groundbreaking"	**Score** 7.5
JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VERSUS DEATH	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** First-person shooter	"Authentic comic book style, but poor, buggy AI and tired level design"	**Score** 6.6
JURASSIC PARK: OPERATION GENESIS	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** World builder	"Want to be master of your own universe? You'll waste serious time"	**Score** 8.0
KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Extreme sports	"Cool ideas mixed with aquabatics and satisfying play. Original fun"	**Score** 8.2
KNOCKOUT KINGS 2002	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Sports	"An excellently presented but scrappy punch 'em up"	**Score** 6.3
LEGENDS OF WRESTLING	**Reviewed** Issue 05	**Type** Sports	"Nostalgic appeal for wrestling fans. Causes chuckles in multiplayer"	**Score** 6.0
LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Sports	"Lots of modes and characters. A must-have for fans"	**Score** 7.4

KUNG FU CHAOS
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: Party/Beat 'em up
"Highly playable. Very funny and looks great. Very intuitive with excellent multiplayer too"
SCORE: **8.6**



MADDEN NFL 2003
REVIEWED: Issue 08
TYPE: US sports
"So much to learn and master, so much multiplayer fun. Could, in theory, last forever"
SCORE: **8.9**

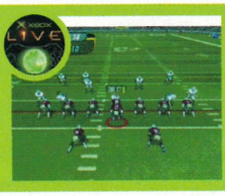


MADDEN NFL 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: US sports
"Stunning rendition no Gridiron fan should underestimate. Looks and sounds real"
SCORE: **8.4**

LEGO DROME RACERS	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Racing	"Watered-down futuristic racer. *Quantum Redshift* meets *Mario Kart*"	**Score** 5.6
LMA MANAGER 2003	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Sports	"Be the gaffer without being blinded by science and statistics"	**Score** 8.0
LOONS: THE FIGHT FOR FAME	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Action	"Short-lived fun, but all done in real *Looney Tunes* style"	**Score** 6.5
LOTUS CHALLENGE	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Driving	"Umpteen modes, stunts, and challenges, but cars look dreary"	**Score** 6.5
MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER	**Reviewed** Issue 19	**Type** Shooter	"Looks great, lacks longevity. Highly enjoyable shooter just short of Elite"	**Score** 8.4
MAD DASH RACING	**Reviewed** Issue 01	**Type** Driving	"Just enough Mad, too much Dash and not enough Racing"	**Score** 6.5
MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 2	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Beat 'em up	"Fun, but the limits of 2D combat are all too obvious"	**Score** 7.5
MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Extreme sports	"Average extreme sports game with dodgy controls"	**Score** 5.0
MAX PAYNE	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Action	"Stylish, repetitive and worthy of your time... Bullet Time is brilliant"	**Score** 7.9
MECHASSAULT	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Mech shooter	"Stands tall as one of the best online games available"	XBL★★★★ **Score** 8.0
MEDAL OF HONOR FRONTLINE	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** First-person shooter	"An average FPS that doesn't really impress on Xbox"	**Score** 5.7
METAL DUNGEON	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** RPG	"Strong strategy element, but repetitive gameplay and no story"	**Score** 5.0
METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE	**Reviewed** Issue 13	**Type** Action adventure	"Lots to admire but constant cutscene interruptions can really grate"	**Score** 7.2
MICRO MACHINES	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Driving	"Sacrifices longevity for arcade action and short-term fun"	**Score** 6.6
MIDNIGHT CLUB II	**Reviewed** Issue 19	**Type** Driving	"Fun arcade racing, although the handling is twitchy"	XBL★★★ **Score** 7.8
MIDTOWN MADNESS 3	**Reviewed** Issue 18	**Type** Driving	"Pick-up-and-play action. Live opens new gameplay doors"	XBL★★★★ **Score** 7.3
MIKE TYSON HEAVYWEIGHT BOXING	**Reviewed** Issue 05	**Type** Sports	"Plenty of depth and strategy but sketchy and lacking a killer punch"	**Score** 7.2
MINORITY REPORT	**Reviewed** Issue 12	**Type** Action	"Offers little more than an extremely repetitive fight fest"	**Score** 5.5
MONOPOLY PARTY	**Reviewed** Issue 13	**Type** Party	"A solid take on the game but it's not the most fun multiplayer out there"	**Score** 6.5
MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE	**Reviewed** Issue 13	**Type** Beat 'em up	"Multiple fighting styles and high blood count. A worthy purchase"	**Score** 7.8

MOTOGP
REVIEWED: Issue 04
TYPE: Bike racing
"Hotly contested bike racing combined with a perfect control method. A real winner"
SCORE: **8.9** XBL: ★★★★★

MOTOGP 2
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Bike racing
"Stupendous visuals. Brilliant bike customisation. So thrilling it'll make your knees bleed"
SCORE: **9.4** XBL: ★★★★★

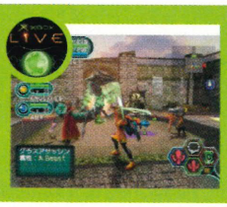


NFL FEVER 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: US Sports
"Easy to get into, with an emphasis on action rather than stats. Xbox Live play too!"
SCORE: **8.7**

QUAKE: GAV WAS IN TOKYO FOR THE GAMES SHOW WHEN AN EARTHQUAKE STRUCK. IT REGISTERED EIGHT ON THE RICHTER SCALE, BUT LUCKILY GAV WAS FAST ASLEEP WITH THE HELP OF COPIOUS AMOUNTS OF SAKE, AND WAS BLISSFULLY UNAWARE.

REVIEWS DIRECTORY

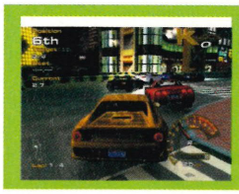
PANZER DRAGOON ORTA
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: Action/Shooter
"Cutting-edge looks and classic blasting. Gorgeous"
SCORE: **8.8**



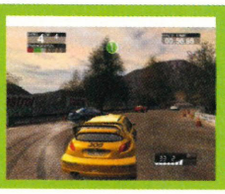
PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP. I & II
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: MMORPG
"This should be the most addictive online game ever"
SCORE: **N/A** XBL: ★★★★★

PHANTOM CRASH
REVIEWED: Issue 10
TYPE: Mech shooter
"Extremely enjoyable. Frantic action backed up with an impressive career mode"
SCORE: **8.5**

MX2002 FEATURING RICKY CARMICHAEL	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Extreme sports	"A limp yet slightly enjoyable dirt biker with two-player mileage"	**Score** 5.0
MX SUPERFLY	**Reviewed** Issue 13	**Type** Bike racing	"Much better than *MX2002* but far from being a classic biking game"	**Score** 6.5
MYST III	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Adventure	"Bonkers-but-beautiful series of increasingly difficult logic puzzles"	**Score** 7.0
NBA2K3	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** US sports	"Solid b-ball game with all the fundamentals. Top presentation" XBL★★★	**Score** 6.2
NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2002	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** US sports	"A decent, playable basketball game, but not brilliant by any means"	**Score** 7.2
NBA INSIDE DRIVE 2003	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** US sports	"Good pace and novel passing system. Best b-ball game on Xbox"	**Score** 7.6
NBA LIVE 2002	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** US sports	"B-ball's end-to-end flow is somehow distilled into tedium"	**Score** 5.2
NBA LIVE 2003	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** US sports	"Accessible and immediate, but not much fun. Too easy to score"	**Score** 6.5
NBA STREET VOL.2	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** US sports	"Grab some friends and get stuck in. Easy to play but harder to master"	**Score** 8.2
NEED FOR SPEED: HOT PURSUIT 2	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Driving	"Good arcade racer that's a bit sluggish but offers solid driving fun"	**Score** 7.2
NEW LEGENDS	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Action adventure	"A flawed game that quickly becomes repetitive and boring"	**Score** 4.9
NFL 2K3	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** US sports	"A great game but too much of a challenge for total novices" XBL★★★	**Score** 7.8
NFL FEVER 2003	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** US sports	"A blast to play. All the thrills and none of the pain of NFL" XBL★★★★	**Score** 8.2
NHL 2K3	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** US sports	"Great AI. Realistic physics. As good as ice hockey sims get" XBL★★★★	**Score** 7.9
NHL 2002	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** US sports	"Excellent multiplayer game with joyful passing and shooting"	**Score** 8.2
NHL 2003	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** US sports	"Fast and furious, this is the definitive ice hockey experience"	**Score** 8.2
NHL 2004	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** US sports	"A joy to play. Looks gorgeous with incredible depth. Too easy though"	**Score** 7.7
NHL HITZ 20-02	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** US sports	"Great-looking, polished and ultimately simple entertainment"	**Score** 7.4
NHL HITZ 20-03	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** US sports	"Big-laughs, high-adrenaline arcade ice hockey with depth"	**Score** 8.4
NICKELODEON PARTY BLAST	**Reviewed** Issue 13	**Type** Party	"Ummm, do they get any worse than this?"	**Score** 2.0
NIGHTCASTER	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Action	"Idea is good, but the execution isn't. Wizard? Not by any stretch"	**Score** 4.2
NIGHTCASTER II: EQUINOX	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** Action	"Drab and messy from its box art to its core. Better than the original"	**Score** 4.5
ODDWORLD: MUNCH'S ODDYSEE	**Reviewed** Issue 01	**Type** Platformer	"Fun to play and great to look at... brimming with character"	**Score** 8.1
OTOGI - MYTH OF DEMONS	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Hack and slash	"Slick and great-looking. Bold characters and special effects aplenty"	**Score** 8.0
OUTLAW GOLF	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Sports	"Light hearted, but only three courses. Humour quickly wears off"	**Score** 6.6
OUTLAW VOLLEYBALL	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Sports	"Months of play on Xbox Live, and plenty to get through in single-player"	**Score** 8.0
PIRATES: THE LEGEND OF BLACK KAT	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Action adventure	"Everything in this ropey game feels lazy and uninspired"	**Score** 4.0



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: Driving
"An epic racer blending accuracy with entertainment"
SCORE: **8.9**



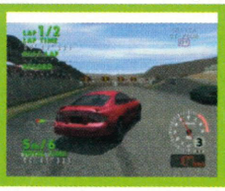
RALLISPORT CHALLENGE
REVIEWED: Issue 01
TYPE: Driving
"Searingly fast. Never fails to get the adrenaline flowing"
SCORE: **8.5**

RED FACTION II
REVIEWED: Issue 18
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Plenty of missions and a ludicrous 60 multiplayer maps. Excellent fun"
SCORE: **8.6**

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** RPG	"Lush RPG with a swashbuckling story that thrills but also frustrates"	**Score** 7.0
PRISONER OF WAR	**Reviewed** Issue 06	**Type** Tactical action	"Ambitious, intelligent strategy game marred by camera problems"	**Score** 7.2
PRO BEACH SOCCER	**Reviewed** Issue 16	**Type** Sports	"Fresh idea, but looks poor and the passing system is flawed"	**Score** 3.5
PRO CAST SPORTS FISHING	**Reviewed** Issue 20	**Type** Sports	"A perfectly competent game... except it's really hard to catch a fish!"	**Score** 2.0
PRO TENNIS WTA TOUR	**Reviewed** Issue 07	**Type** Sports	"Unresponsive controls. Unrealistic action. Chronic lack of options"	**Score** 1.9
PROJECT ZERO	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Survival horror	"A fresh take on survival horror. Extremely creepy and atmospheric"	**Score** 8.0
PULSE RACER	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Driving	"Some decent ideas, but fails to deliver on any level. Feeble"	**Score** 1.9
QUANTUM REDSHIFT	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Driving	"Fast, hardcore racing fans will love it. Steep difficulty curve"	**Score** 8.0
RACING EVOLUZIONE	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** Driving	"Fails to deliver on the promise of running a race team, but enjoyable"	**Score** 7.3
RALLY FUSION: RACE OF CHAMPIONS	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Driving	"A great racing game for people who aren't hardcore racing fans"	**Score** 8.0
RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Platformer	"Not just for kids. This 3D adventure will appeal across the board"	**Score** 7.4
RED CARD	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Sports	"Innovative cartoon footy, but a lack of decent CPU opponents"	**Score** 7.0
REIGN OF FIRE	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Action/Shooter	"Awkward controls and glitchy feel mean the potential is wasted"	**Score** 5.0
ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Mech shooter	"Stylish anime designs, flashes of excitement, but not much depth"	**Score** 7.3
ROBOT WARS: EXTREME DESTRUCTION	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Action	"Realistic damage, true to the TV series, but repetitive gameplay"	**Score** 6.0
ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON	**Reviewed** Issue 16	**Type** World builder	"Ultra detailed. Absorbing and addictive, but outdated, flat presentation"	**Score** 7.0
SAVAGE SKIES	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Shooter	"Pretty decent, with solid multiplayer, but *Panzer* sets the benchmark"	**Score** 6.3
SEABLADE	**Reviewed** Issue 17	**Type** Shooter	"Derivative, difficult bog standard arcade dogfighting shooter clone"	**Score** 4.0
SEGA SOCCER SLAM	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Sports	"Decent, frantic footy, best played with a friend. Ideal to rent"	**Score** 6.8
SERIOUS SAM	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** First-person shooter	"Hectic blasting with a smattering of laughs. Slick and distinctive"	**Score** 8.2
SHADOW OF MEMORIES	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Adventure	"Drab, clumsy and low on enjoyment. A messy gimmick of a title"	**Score** 4.0
SHENMUE II	**Reviewed** Issue 13	**Type** RPG	"A giant of a game that requires time, patience and an open mind"	**Score** 8.0
SHREK	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Platformer	"A very plain and unrewarding kids' game"	**Score** 5.0
SHREK SUPER PARTY	**Reviewed** Issue 12	**Type** Party	"No more sophisticated than a freebie Shockwave game"	**Score** 4.0
SILENT HILL 2: INNER FEARS	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Survival horror	"Best survival horror on any console and the creepiest game ever"	**Score** 8.4
SIMPSONS ROAD RAGE	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Driving	"A game made bearable by funny voices and two-player mode"	**Score** 5.9
SLAM TENNIS	**Reviewed** Issue 06	**Type** Sports	"Enjoyable and recommended, despite its few broken strings"	**Score** 7.2
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: DOUBLE HELIX	**Reviewed** Issue 18	**Type** First-person shooter	"Standard FPS that capitalises on gore. Clunky controls" XBL★★★	**Score** 7.0
SPEED KINGS	**Reviewed** Issue 18	**Type** Driving	"*Burnout* on bikes. Stylish game - everything looks and feels sweet"	**Score** 8.0
SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Platformer	"Highly enjoyable use of a licence; crackles with superhero smarts"	**Score** 8.0
SPLASHDOWN	**Reviewed** Issue 07	**Type** Racing	"A truly entertaining jet ski racer with lots of great courses"	**Score** 8.1

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN
REVIEWED: Issue 16 TYPE: FPS
"Cracking action shooter. Superb single-player, outstanding team play experiences on Xbox Live"
SCORE: **9.2** XBL: ★★★★★

ROCKY
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: Sports
"Brilliantly evocative, this is dramatic multiplayer scrapping at its finest"
SCORE: **9.0**

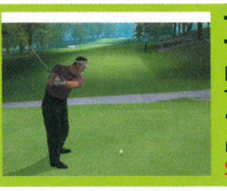


SEGA GT 2002
REVIEWED: Issue 10
TYPE: Driving
"An incredibly comprehensive and polished game very much in the style of *Gran Turismo*"
SCORE: **8.5**

KEY: Xbox Live features

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**

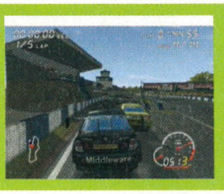
STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
REVIEWED: Issue 20
TYPE: RPG
"One of the most compelling games on any console ever"
SCORE: **9.5**



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003
REVIEWED: Issue 11
TYPE: Sports
"Great swing system. Loads of modes. Fantastic courses"
SCORE: **8.5**

SPY HUNTER	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Action	"Instantly enjoyable, totally superficial shoot 'em up chase action"	**Score** 6.7
SSX TRICKY	**Reviewed** Issue 05	**Type** Extreme sports	"Fast and furious, but it needed souping up to become great"	**Score** 7.5
STAKE FORTUNE FIGHTERS	**Reviewed** Issue 19	**Type** Beat 'em up	"Not a bad idea but a mess of a game with few redeeming features"	**Score** 2.5
STARSKY & HUTCH	**Reviewed** Issue 19	**Type** Driving	"Easy to play, good control, with lots to unlock and interesting modes"	**Score** 6.8
STAR WARS JEDI KNIGHT II: JEDI OUTCAST	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Action adventure	"Better than *SW: Obi-Wan*, but it still doesn't pull up any trees"	**Score** 6.5
STAR WARS: JEDI STARFIGHTER	**Reviewed** Issue 05	**Type** Shooter	"A dose of enjoyable space combat needing more action to shine"	**Score** 7.4
STAR WARS: OBI-WAN	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Action adventure	"A criminal waste of the *Star Wars* licence"	**Score** 3.3
STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS	**Reviewed** Issue 18	**Type** Action	"Forgettable solo. Online, it's an intense mix of action and strategy"	**Score** 8.0
STATE OF EMERGENCY	**Reviewed** Issue 17	**Type** Action	"Simple, comic book arcade thrills with no pretensions of greatness"	**Score** 6.6
STEEL BATTALION	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** Mech shooter	"Will only appeal to gamers who appreciate a truly in-depth simulation"	**Score** 7.8
STREET HOOPS	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** US sports	"Unrewarding and uninvolving sports fest with little substance"	**Score** 6.2
SUPER BUBBLE POP	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Puzzle	"No addictive qualities, and full of bad techno cheese"	**Score** 4.0
SUPERMAN: THE MAN OF STEEL	**Reviewed** Issue 12	**Type** Shooter	"Boring levels, rubbish combat, and a dreadful control system"	**Score** 3.0
SX SUPERSTAR	**Reviewed** Issue 19	**Type** Extreme sports	"Formulaic average-looking racer with a few aesthetic pleasantries"	**Score** 6.6
TAZ: WANTED	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Platformer	"Swish cartoon graphics, but confusing and frustrating gameplay"	**Score** 8.0
TAO FENG: FIST OF THE LOTUS	**Reviewed** Issue 16	**Type** Beat 'em up	"Highly enjoyable, frenzied and fun. Lovely arenas to trample"	**Score** 8.2
TD OVERDRIVE	**Reviewed** Issue 04	**Type** Driving	"Bad handling makes this depressing"	**Score** 3.8
TERMINATOR: DAWN OF FATE	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Shooter	"Hardly any strategy, but a repetitive and enjoyable shooter"	**Score** 7.0

TIMESPLITTERS 2
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: First-person shooter
"The most complete FPS package on Xbox. Rife with features. Just buy it"
SCORE: **9.3**



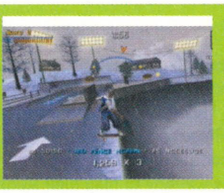
TOCA RACE DRIVER
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: Driving
"A top-notch, thrilling racer that doesn't need its tacked-on storyline"
SCORE: **8.5**

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON
REVIEWED: Issue 11
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Confident and addictive. The strategy/action benchmark"
SCORE: **8.9** XBL: ★★★★

TENNIS MASTERS SERIES 2003	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Sports	"Another tedious tennis title with almost nothing to recommend"	**Score** 3.0
TEST DRIVE OFF-ROAD: WIDE OPEN	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Driving	"The lack of vehicle/ground interaction will drive you nuts"	**Score** 3.5
TETRIS WORLDS	**Reviewed** Issue 09	**Type** Puzzle	"Dilutes the impact of the original. Okay, but there's nothing new"	**Score** 6.0
THE GREAT ESCAPE	**Reviewed** Issue 20	**Type** Action adventure	"Tense and pretty exciting with varied gameplay and well-paced missions"	**Score** 7.6
THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD III	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Shooter	"A fun, polished arcade game. Looks wonderful but gets repetitive"	**Score** 7.1
THE HULK	**Reviewed** Issue 18	**Type** Action	"Standard, fun arcade smash 'em up. Lots of moves and easy controls"	**Score** 7.5
THE ITALIAN JOB: L.A. HEIST	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Driving	"Easy to pick up and play, but the story's dull and the maps are boring"	**Score** 5.0
THE LOTR: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Action adventure	"A half-decent and smart-looking stab at the *Rings* world"	**Score** 7.0
THE LOTR: THE TWO TOWERS	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** Action adventure	"Great. Captures the spirit of Tolkien's world. Lots of extras for fans"	**Score** 8.0
THE SIMS	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** World builder	"No visceral action but it's satisfying controlling little people's destinies"	**Score** 7.7
THE THING	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Survival horror	"Plenty of action and atmosphere but doesn't live up to its promise"	**Score** 7.4
TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Sports	"Not so much a sequel as an update. Think twice if you own *2003*"	**Score** 7.4
TOEJAM & EARL III: MISSION TO EARTH	**Reviewed** Issue 13	**Type** Platformer	"A very enjoyable platformer for both newbies and veterans alike"	**Score** 7.9
TOTAL IMMERSION RACING	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Driving	"Original ideas and solid visuals, but slow with unspectacular AI"	**Score** 5.7
TOUR DE FRANCE	**Reviewed** Issue 06	**Type** Racing	"Great idea, but everything about it is sub-standard"	**Score** 4.6
TOXIC GRIND	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Extreme sports	"A few imaginative tracks can't disguise the lack of flair or polish"	**Score** 4.8
TRANSWORLD SNOWBOARDING	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Extreme sports	"A looker, but boredom sets in once the views have been admired"	**Score** 6.1
TRANSWORLD SURF	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Extreme sports	"Some really great water effects but not enough variation"	**Score** 6.1

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Atmospheric with online play"
SCORE: **8.5**

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL
REVIEWED: Issue 10
TYPE: Action adventure
"Gritty, good-looking, exciting and amazingly atmospheric"
SCORE: **9.0**



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3
REVIEWED: Issue 02
TYPE: Extreme sports
"The biggest and best extreme sports title in the world"
SCORE: **8.8**

TUROK EVOLUTION	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Action/Shooter	"Disappointing sequel. Feels older than the dinosaurs it features"	**Score** 6.6
TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER	**Reviewed** Issue 10	**Type** Platformer	"Not just for kids. There's plenty here to challenge older gamers"	**Score** 7.6
UFC: TAPOUT	**Reviewed** Issue 03	**Type** Beat 'em up	"Brutal two-player fighter but a bit one-dimensional if it's just you"	**Score** 7.4
V-RALLY 3	**Reviewed** Issue 16	**Type** Driving	"Good car damage and framerate, but tracks can be a bit mundane"	**Score** 6.4
VEXX	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Platformer	"Darker than your average fare. Fun, absorbing and distracting"	**Score** 8.0
VOODOO VINCE	**Reviewed** Issue 22	**Type** Platformer	"An accomplished, instantly involving 3D platformer with dark humour"	**Score** 7.9
WALLACE & GROMIT IN PROJECT ZOO	**Reviewed** Issue 22	**Type** Platformer	"Perfectly rendered characters, huge levels and addictive gameplay"	**Score** 8.2
WHACKED!	**Reviewed** Issue 11	**Type** Party	"Shows how a party game should be done. Fun to play" XBL★★★	**Score** 7.5
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP SNOOKER 2003	**Reviewed** Issue 18	**Type** Sports	"Deeply immersive. A wealth of extras and sprawling career mode"	**Score** 8.4
WORLD RACING	**Reviewed** Issue 14	**Type** Driving	"Good technical racer, but a bit sterile. Nirvana for Mercedes fans"	**Score** 6.8
WORMS 3D	**Reviewed** Issue 22	**Type** Turn-based Strategy	"Very funny, loads of maps, mad weapons, but no System Link or Live"	**Score** 7.3
WRECKLESS	**Reviewed** Issue 02	**Type** Driving	"Awesome demo of what Xbox can do, but not enough game in it"	**Score** 7.5
WWE RAW	**Reviewed** Issue 08	**Type** Sports	"Completely out-of-date roster, lack of modes, sluggish gameplay"	**Score** 5.3
WWE RAW 2: RUTHLESS AGGRESSION	**Reviewed** Issue 22	**Type** Sports	"Graphically great, ace multiplayer season mode, but sluggish gameplay"	**Score** 7.3
X-MEN: THE NEXT DIMENSION	**Reviewed** Issue 12	**Type** Beat 'em up	"Awkward controls, sluggish pace and uninspiring visuals"	**Score** 5.0
X-MEN 2: WOLVERINE'S REVENGE	**Reviewed** Issue 17	**Type** Action	"Entertaining action title. Plenty of challenge and lots of levels"	**Score** 7.4
XGRA	**Reviewed** Issue 21	**Type** Racing	"Futuristic bike-racing game. Fast, but the weapons system is clumsy"	**Score** 6.5
YAGER	**Reviewed** Issue 15	**Type** Shooter	"A decent, enjoyable blaster that falls a wee bit short of greatness"	**Score** 7.6
ZAPPER	**Reviewed** Issue 16	**Type** Platformer	"Horrible controls, repetitive levels, but multiplayer provides laughs"	**Score** 5.0

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4
REVIEWED: Issue 11
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Silky trick system. Absolutely tons to do, and then some"
SCORE: **8.6**

UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP
REVIEWED: Issue 10
TYPE: First-person shooter
"This sets a new standard for multiplayer shooters"
SCORE: **9.2** XBL: ★★★★

WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEAT. SHAUN MURRAY
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Outrageous arcade action"
SCORE: **8.6**

FISTICUFFS: DURING A PRESS TRIP TO COLORADO, ANDY AND A GROUP OF JOURNOS WENT TO A STUDENT HANG-OUT KNOWN AS 'THE SINK'. THEY WERE THERE FOR A WHOLE 30 SECONDS BEFORE AN UN-NAMED MEMBER OF THE GROUP WAS THROWN OUT FOR STARTING A FIGHT. TSK TSK!

XBOX LIVE PLAYLIVE

XBOX LIVE ONLINE ENABLED

REVIEWS UPDATES // WHAT'S HOT // COMMUNITY

TOCA RACE DRIVER 132

THERE ARE SOME massive Live games coming your way in the next month, with *Project Gotham Racing 2* heading the pack that includes *Top Spin, Amped 2, Rainbow Six 3, XIII, Crimson Skies* and the *ESPN* sports titles.

These are all outstanding single-player games that will play even better in their multiplayer online forms. Head-to-head racing, four-way tennis tournaments, thrilling aerial dogfights, high-adrenaline sports and the best team shooter yet. Add to this the fantastic new monthly Xbox Live renewal, free two-month trials with many Live-enabled games and a new standalone Communicator headset and you'll see that Xbox Live is an option you can no longer afford to live without!

See you on Live

Steve

BT

XBOX™ COMPATIBLE

THIS MONTH Xbox Live two-month trials will be available with many Live games, with monthly renewal options and a standalone headset available. There's never been a better time to sign up for BT or BT Yahoo! Broadband service.

On 13 October, BT launched Broadband from BT for online gaming, a new service for UK gamers wanting to play their Xbox online with broadband. To play Xbox Live you require a high-speed broadband connection and a compatible router (which links your console to your internet connection). Broadband from BT for online gaming is a fully compatible 'one-stop' service where you can buy your combined modem and router and your broadband connection in one. You also have a choice between signing up to BT Broadband, for fast and easy internet connection, or BT Yahoo! Broadband, a full service connection combining broadband with Yahoo! content and customisation features including free spam filters and virus scanning.

Broadband from BT is currently available to 80 per cent of UK homes, and an ever-growing number of gamers are being turned on to the benefits of broadband online gaming. Information regarding the service and how to purchase it can be found at www.bt.com/xboxlive and there is currently a £30 cash-back offer for all new subscribers who sign up before 31 March 2004. So what are you waiting for...?

BT www.btyahoo.com/xboxlive XBOX™ COMPATIBLE

BT www.btyahoo.com/xboxlive XBOX COMPATIBLE

Clanning Permission

Short, ugly members welcome

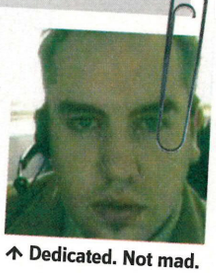
THIS MONTH we visit Xbox Live clan Assassins X, a 49-strong organisation who admit that they, "excel at no particular game, but do badly at all". Team member EZLP says, "The beauty of our clan is that there is no discrimination against any player, be they short, tall, beautiful, or ugly enough to bewilder pensioners. We are all in it purely for a laugh, and you'll find no 'order-spouting warlords' amongst our ranks!"

AX is large enough to run its own internal leagues and competitions, but stress that they are open to anyone that wants a laugh. Visit AX at http://assasinsx.dk3.com

↑ Assassins X welcome all but order-spouting warlords.

The Man Who Thinks He's it...

Yes, it's the Gamer of the Month



↑ Dedicated. Not mad.

TEMPEST FUGIT describes himself as "a true gamer through and through", which we don't think goes halfway to describing his, well, let's call it dedication. He thinks he should be Gamer of the Month because he's having his name changed by deed poll to include his Gamertag as his middle name. That's quite, err... dedicated, but that's not where it stops. Oh, no. Tempest is also having Xbox tattooed across his arm. He does play Live games as well as leading a 'dedicated' lifestyle, however, and has been a member of three clans including CGS, "the best European Clan out there", he insists. You may find Tempest Fugit online at the community website www.britxbox.com. Ask him to show you his tattoo. And remember, a tattoo is for Live, not just for Christmas.

STATATTACK

Tempest Fugit says that one of his "many greatest achievements on Live is getting the invincibility award on *UC* ten games in a row whilst topping the scoreboards".

Livecharts Live and let play!

↑ Get a *Ghost* in your machine.

WHILE WE WAIT for the first Live tasters of the games on sale in November that include *Project Gotham Racing 2, Rainbow Six 3, XIII, Top Spin* and *Amped 2* to name but a few, we're still totally besotted with *Ghost Recon: Island Thunder*. This is likely to remain our online team shooter of choice until the *Rainbow Six 3* Live action kicks off. At only £20, if you still haven't taken a trip to Cuba in *Island Thunder*, then nice try, but definitely no Cuban cigar.

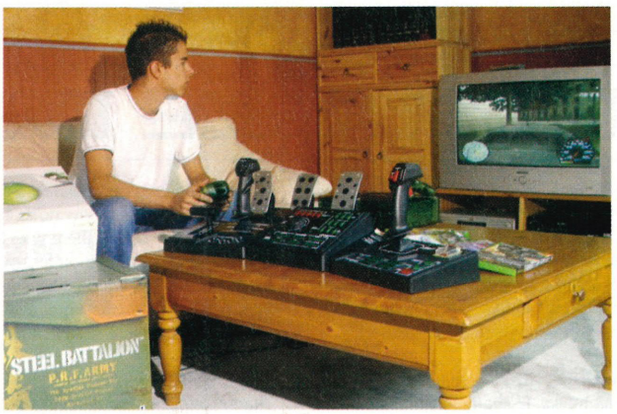
1. **GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER**
   The best team shooter until Tom Clancy's next one.
2. **MIDTOWN MADNESS 3**
   Madcap arcade racer with loads of Live game modes.
3. **RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN**
   Superb team combat in occult WWII settings.
4. **MOTOGP 2: URT**
   The best head-to-head racing sim on two wheels.
5. **SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II**
   Gory but gripping, with plenty of downloadable content.

Gamertag Winner

Deadly rodent steals the prizes!

WE'RE HAPPY to announce the winner of the *Official Xbox Magazine* International Gamertag competition. As voted by the *OXM* team, the best tag was supplied by Romain LeGall of Le Pontet, France, who goes by the Gamertag, Hamsterminator.

Thanks to the generous prizes supplied by MSL, Romain is now the proud owner of a limited-edition Xbox, a copy of the excellent *Steel Battalion* (together with its humongous controller – see below), five other top Xbox games and one year's subscription to this fine magazine. Look out for Hamsterminator on Xbox Live and wish him "Felicitations" if you bump into him!



↑ That's one happy French hamster with all that lovely new kit!

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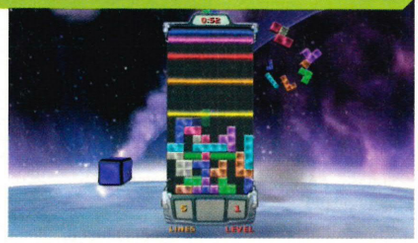
IT'S GOOD TO SLAY TOGETHER: TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3 WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE BUNDLED WITH A STANDALONE LIVE COMMUNICATOR HEADSET.

LIVE UPDATE REVIEW

↑ I... have... the... power!



↑ Pile tiles to the line to gain big points.

Time for another load of block-dropping feats

TETRIS ONLINE

TETRIS WORLDS (Issue 09, 6.0) was the latest instalment in the hugely popular *Tetris* series, and now the next stage in the evolutionary process takes the title Live with *Tetris Online*.

THE GOOD BITS

Up to four people can play against each other vertically, split-screen-style. There are six gameplay modes to choose from, including Race, Knockout, Hot-Line and Cascade, all with slightly different objectives. The 3D graphics are good looking but simplistic, though the gameplay is addictive as ever as there's no slowdown or lag. A ladder ranking system means even the most competitive gamer will get a kick out of it.

THE BAD BITS

At the end of the day, despite the addition of extra game modes, the gameplay is still a bit same old same old, and the novelty may wear off quicker than you'd think. The inclusion of a lame storyline and annoying 'character' blocks don't help either.

CONCLUSIONS

Tetris Online does bring something new to the table, excelling far more in multiplayer than single-player mode. Although only four players at a time can participate, the numerous game modes mean there should always be something for everyone.

THE VERDICT

ENHANCEMENT
Play against different people instead of just your three other friends. If you've got that many.

SETUP
Quick and easy to jump in - choose your game type and you're ready to roll.

VARIETY
The game modes add a teensy bit of spice, but basically it's still your faithful old *Tetris*.

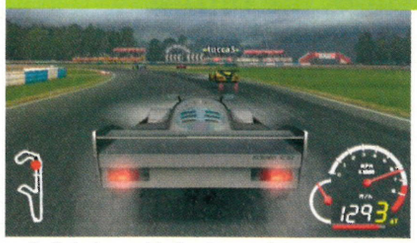
LIVE RATING
Addictive gameplay is the driving force behind this, so if that's your bag, you'll love it.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE RATING

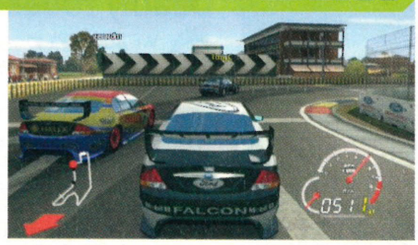
★★★★☆ Endlessly while away more hours of your life, but with trash talkin' thrown in.

↑ Get promoted in the *Tetris Online* Army.

LIVE UPDATE REVIEW



↑ Definitely a wide boy's car, this one.



↑ Brake! Brake!

"Hey you! Outta my way!" Vent your virtual road rage online

TOCA RACE DRIVER

TOCA Race Driver (Issue 15, 8.5) is one of the most impressive and realistic racers on Xbox, and thoroughly deserved its Elite rating. The only letdown was the lack of full-screen multiplayer options, but it looks like things have been put right with this updated Live version.

THE GOOD BITS

All 38 tracks, 12 championships and 42 cars that had to be unlocked in the original game are immediately available on Xbox Live. There's now no reason why you can't race up there with the big boys. A System Link option for up to 12 players is available, too (see last month's Missing Link feature for how to set up a System Link party).

THE BAD BITS

The single-player mode revolves around the storyline, which in turns revolves around an even naffer bit of character acting. Ignore all this, create your own driver, then get on Live.

CONCLUSIONS

A consummate racer whose playability is expanded no end with the inclusion of online opportunities. If it's fast and frantic four-wheeled fun you're after, check this out. Vent that pent-up road rage on real people too. Bonza.

THE VERDICT

ENHANCEMENT
Really comes alive online - waste no time telling Euros to drive on the other side of the road.

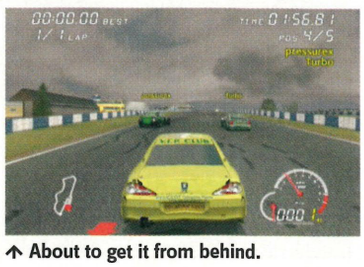
SETUP
Pick a car and track and away you go. It's that simple. Oh, and switch your Xbox on.

VARIETY
The huge number of tracks and cars at your fingertips should ensure this'll go the distance.

LIVE RATING
The best (and only true) car racer on Xbox Live, and a tour de force of armchair racing.

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE RATING

★★★★☆ Perfect for a quick blast or a virtual career, this delivers on all levels on Xbox Live.



↑ About to get it from behind.

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Xbox Live - The Games

WANT A GAME? An Xbox Live-enabled game? Thought so. Here's the info: what's out, what's coming out... and how Xbox Live is used to make things better.

OUT NOW Buckling the shelves of your local games store right now...

GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	PLAYERS ONLINE	D/L CONTENT?	ISSUE	SCORE	GAME TYPE
Brute Force	Digital Games	Microsoft	n/a	Yes	Issue 18	8.5	Squad-based shooter
Burnout 2: Point of Impact	Criterion Games	Acclaim	n/a	uploadable scores	Issue 17	9	Racing
Capcom Vs SNK 2 EO	Capcom	Capcom	two	No	Issue 14	7.7	Beat 'em up
Colin McRae Rally 04	Codemasters	Codemasters	n/a	uploadable scores	Issue 21	9.1	Racing
Godzilla: Destroy All Monsters Melee	Atari	Atari	n/a	Yes	Issue 17	6.1	Beat 'em up
MechAssault	Microsoft	Microsoft	two - eight	Yes	Issue 11	8	Mech shooter
Midtown Madness 3	Dice	Microsoft	two - eight	No	Issue 18	8	Racing
MotoGP Online demo	Climax	THQ	two - sixteen	No	Demo	8.9	Racing
MotoGP 2: URT	Climax	THQ	two - sixteen	No	Issue 17	9.4	Racing
MX Superfly	Pacific Coast P&L	THQ	n/a	Yes	Issue 13	6.5	Extreme sports
NBA2K3	Sega	Atari	two - four	No	Issue 14	6.2	US sports
NFL2K3	Sega	Atari	two - four	No	Issue 15	7.8	US sports
NFL Fever 2003	Microsoft	Microsoft	two - four	No	Issue 10	8.2	US sports
NFL Fever 2004	Microsoft	Microsoft	two - four	No	Issue 24	8.7	US sports
NHL2K3	Sega	Atari	two - four	No	Issue 15	7.9	US sports
Outlaw Volleyball	Hypnotix	TDK	two - four	No	Issue 21	8	Sports
Phantasy Star Online Episode I & II	Sonic Team	Sega	two - four	Yes	Issue 17	N/A	MMORPG
Return to Castle Wolfenstein	Nerve Software/id	Activision	two - sixteen	No	Issue 17	9.2	Shooter
Soldier of Fortune II	Gratuitous Games	Activision	two - twelve	Yes	Issue 18	7.0	Shooter
Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic	BioWare	Activision	n/a	Yes	Issue 20	9.5	RPG
Star Wars: The Clone Wars	LucasArts	LucasArts	two - eight	No	Issue 18	8	Action
ToeJam & Earl III: Mission to Earth	Sega	Microsoft	n/a	Yes	Issue 13	7.9	Platformer
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Red Storm Ent.	Ubi Soft	two - sixteen	No	Issue 11	8.9	Squad-based shooter
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Whacked!	Microsoft	Microsoft	two - four	No	Issue 11	7.5	Party
Unreal Championship	Digital Extremes	Atari	two - sixteen	Yes	Issue 10	9.2	Shooter

COMING SOON Talented folk are programming this lot at the mo

FX Racing

Phantom Dust

Race Driver 2

GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	GAME TYPE	RELEASE DATE
Amped 2	Microsoft	Microsoft	Extreme sports	Nov 2003
Armed & Dangerous	Planet Moon Studios	Activision	Action	Winter 2003
Black9	Majesco	Majesco	Action	Winter 2003
Conker: Live & Uncut	Rare	Microsoft	Action	TBC
Counter-Strike	Valve	Vivendi	Squad-based shooter	Dec 2003
Dead Man's Hand	Human Head Studios	Atari	FPS	Mar 2004
ESPN: NHL, NFL, NBA, NCAA	Visual Concepts	Sega	US sports	Nov 2003
Ford Racing 2	Razorworks	Empire	Racing	31 Oct 2003
Full Spectrum Warrior	Pandemic	THQ	Tactical action	Spring 2004
FX Racing	Milestone	TBA	Racing	Spring 2004
Halo 2	Bungie	Microsoft	Shooter	2004
Hunter the Reckoning: Redeemer	Interplay	Virgin Interactive	Action	Winter 2003
Jade Empire	BioWare	Microsoft	RPG	Nov 2004
Links 2004	Microsoft	Microsoft	Sports	Dec 2003
LMA Manager 2004	Codemasters	Codemasters	Sports	Winter 2003
Men of Valor: The Vietnam War	2015	Vivendi	Shooter	Summer 2004
Music Mixer	WildTangent	Microsoft	Music	Christmas 2003
NHL Rivals 2004	Microsoft	Microsoft	US sports	Nov 2003
Operation Flashpoint	Bohemia Interactive	Codemasters	Squad-based shooter	2004
Phantom Dust	Microsoft	Microsoft	Action Shooter	Summer 2004
Project Gotham Racing 2	Bizarre Creations	Microsoft	Racing	Nov 2003
Race Driver 2: URS	Codemasters	Codemasters	Racing	Spring 2004
Run Like Hell	Interplay	Virgin Interactive	Squad-based shooter	Winter 2003
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	LucasArts	Activision	Action	Winter 2003
Sega GT Online	Wow Entertainment	Sega	Racing	Winter 2003
Serious Sam 2	Croteam	Take Two	Shooter	Autumn 2004
Shadow Ops: Red Mercury	Atari	Atari	First-person shooter	Summer 2004
Steel Battalion Conflict	Capcom	Microsoft	Mech shooter	TBC
StarCraft: Ghost	Blizzard	Vivendi	Action-adventure	Summer 2004
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy	Raven Software	Activision	FPS	Nov 2003
SWAT: Global Strike Team	Argonaut	Vivendi	FPS	Nov 2003
Tenchu: Return from Darkness	K2	Activision	Stealth action	March 2004
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	Ubi Soft Montreal	Ubi Soft	Squad-based shooter	Nov 2003
Top Spin	Microsoft	Microsoft	Sports	Nov 2003
Unreal II: The Awakening	Tantalus	Atari	Shooter	Dec 2003
XIII	Ubi Montreal	Ubi Soft	Shooter	Nov 2003

NORMALITY RESTORED: BEN'S HAD A STRESSFUL COUPLE OF MONTHS - AFTER MOVING HOUSE AND LOSING XBOX LIVE. EVERYTHING'S BACK TO NORMAL NOW THOUGH, SO LOOK OUT FOR THE LITTLE TAFF ON MM3 AND WOLFENSTEIN.

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Armed & Dangerous	Planet Moon Studios	Activision	Action	Winter 2003
Black9	Majesco	Majesco	Action	Winter 2003
Conker: Live & Uncut	Rare	Microsoft	Action	TBC
Counter-Strike	Valve	Vivendi	Squad-based shooter	Dec 2003
Dead Man's Hand	Human Head Studios	Atari	FPS	Mar 2004
ESPN: NHL, NFL, NBA, NCAA	Visual Concepts	Sega	US sports	Nov 2003
Ford Racing 2	Razorworks	Empire	Racing	31 Oct 2003
Full Spectrum Warrior	Pandemic	THQ	Tactical action	Spring 2004
FX Racing	Milestone	TBA	Racing	Spring 2004
Halo 2	Bungie	Microsoft	Shooter	2004
Hunter the Reckoning: Redeemer	Interplay	Virgin Interactive	Action	Winter 2003
Jade Empire	BioWare	Microsoft	RPG	Nov 2004
Links 2004	Microsoft	Microsoft	Sports	Dec 2003
LMA Manager 2004	Codemasters	Codemasters	Sports	Winter 2003
Men of Valor: The Vietnam War	2015	Vivendi	Shooter	Summer 2004
Music Mixer	WildTangent	Microsoft	Music	Christmas 2003
NHL Rivals 2004	Microsoft	Microsoft	US sports	Nov 2003
Operation Flashpoint	Bohemia Interactive	Codemasters	Squad-based shooter	2004
Phantom Dust	Microsoft	Microsoft	Action Shooter	Summer 2004
Project Gotham Racing 2	Bizarre Creations	Microsoft	Racing	Nov 2003
Race Driver 2: URS	Codemasters	Codemasters	Racing	Spring 2004
Run Like Hell	Interplay	Virgin Interactive	Squad-based shooter	Winter 2003
Secret Weapons Over Normandy	LucasArts	Activision	Action	Winter 2003
Sega GT Online	Wow Entertainment	Sega	Racing	Winter 2003
Serious Sam 2	Croteam	Take Two	Shooter	Autumn 2004
Shadow Ops: Red Mercury	Atari	Atari	First-person shooter	Summer 2004
Steel Battalion Conflict	Capcom	Microsoft	Mech shooter	TBC
StarCraft: Ghost	Blizzard	Vivendi	Action-adventure	Summer 2004
Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy	Raven Software	Activision	FPS	Nov 2003
SWAT: Global Strike Team	Argonaut	Vivendi	FPS	Nov 2003
Tenchu: Return from Darkness	K2	Activision	Stealth action	March 2004
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3	Ubi Soft Montreal	Ubi Soft	Squad-based shooter	Nov 2003
Top Spin	Microsoft	Microsoft	Sports	Nov 2003
Unreal II: The Awakening	Tantalus	Atari	Shooter	Dec 2003
XIII	Ubi Montreal	Ubi Soft	Shooter	Nov 2003

NORMALITY RESTORED: BEN'S HAD A STRESSFUL COUPLE OF MONTHS - AFTER MOVING HOUSE AND LOSING XBOX LIVE. EVERYTHING'S BACK TO NORMAL NOW THOUGH, SO LOOK OUT FOR THE LITTLE TAFF ON MM3 AND WOLFENSTEIN.

XBOX COMPATIBLE www.btyahoo.com/xboxlive BT

play:more©

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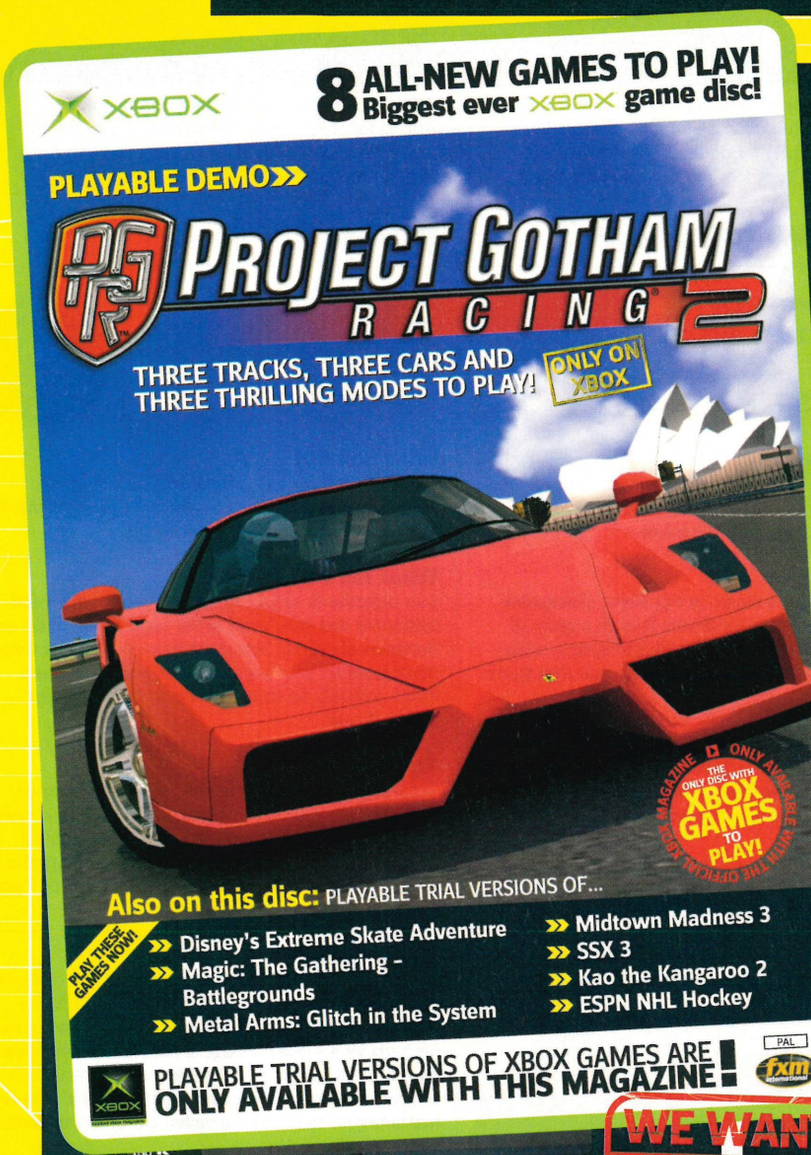
MASTER CLASSES

YOUR OPINIONS

GAME CLUBS

PRIZE CHALLENGES



»DEMO CHALLENGES: GOOD AT GAMES? PROVE IT!

WE WANT YOU!

Review a game, take up the Demo Challenges, join a Game Club. Do it!

XBOX official xbox magazine

inside

PLAY:MORE IS, QUITE SIMPLY, about getting more from your games. From straight tips and cheats to Masterclasses and Beginner's Guides, 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 rightful place among our elite community of Xbox gamers.

It's about winning stuff, beating the challenges and earning respect.

Play:More is where you make *Official Xbox Magazine* your magazine.

Playable Demos: Project Gotham Racing 2, Metal Arms: Glitch in the System, Midtown Madness 3 — 136

Playable Demos: Kao the Kangaroo 2, Magic: The Gathering - Battlegrounds, Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure, SSX 3, ESPN NHL Hockey — 137

Demo Challenge League Tables and Entry Form — 138

Hints & Cheats — 139

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»GUIDE: CONFLICT: D.S. II

»HINTS: OTOGI

»GAME CLUBS: YOUR BIT

»CHALLENGE LEAGUES

»NEW DEMO CHALLENGES

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OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

Play these Games

HEADLINING THIS issue's crammed disc is the ultra-realistic *Project Gotham Racing 2*. Try out three game modes and three alluring motors, then join *Metal Arms'* Glitch and friends in a shoot 'em up to remember. Why not explore a chunk of Paris in *Midtown Madness 3*? Then try *Kao the Kangaroo 2* – a brand new platform adventure, and *Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure* is brilliant for young guns too. You can also play *SSX 3* and *ESPN NHL Hockey 2K4* for the first time. All this fantastic action is rounded off nicely with *Magic: The Gathering – Battlegrounds*. It's a strategy title brimming with fantasy monsters. So go on then, play:more!

Project Gotham Racing 2

GAME INFORMATION
REVIEWED: **THIS ISSUE, PAGE 056**
SCORE: **9.3**
DEMO PLAYERS: **1**

What You Get
Three tyre-shredding game modes – Street Racing, Timed Run and Cone Challenge. There's a trio of cars too – Nissan Skyline GT-R, Ferrari 246 Dino and Pontiac Trans AM.

What You Do
Battle against five roadsters in a two-lap Street Race and try to place in the top three. Timed Run mode gives you a rolling start and a lap of the Florence Duomo 2 circuit. You're at the wheel of a Pontiac Trans AM in the Cone Challenge – finish the course without hitting any obstacles.

Top Tips
PGR2 awards Kudos points for skilful driving. Apart from your time and position, techniques like sliding and hitting the perfect race line earn Kudos. On the Cone Challenge, you're awarded more bonus points for a flawless run.

Anything Else?
String driving moves together to earn a Kudos combo bonus at the end. You'll lose all your combo points if you bump into an object before the score has registered. A 'whoosh' sound indicates your points have been banked.

PRIZE CHALLENGE PROJECT GOTHAM

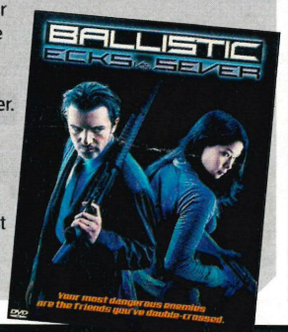
Here's What You Do...
Complete the Cone Challenge with the highest number of Kudos points in a single run. That's your Best Kudos, not your Total Event Kudos. We managed 2,342 – beat that!

The Reward
Our top three scorers will each take away a DVD copy of the ace action movie *Ballistic: Ecks Vs Sever* starring Lucy Liu and Antonio Banderas. Available now on DVD and VHS from Warner Home Video.

Proof Required
If you achieve a qualifying score, we'll contact you to ask for a video of your entire run through the Cone Challenge.

Closing Date
Thursday 27 November.

The Rules
Refer to the prize challenge rules on page 138. Due to the film's rating, you must be aged 15 or over to enter this challenge.



Midtown Madness 3

GAME INFORMATION
REVIEWED: **ISSUE 18, PAGE 086**
SCORE: **7.3**
DEMO PLAYERS: **1**

What You Get
Where better to flaunt some of your worst driving than in the city of romance? You have six loopy races and a massive chunk of gay Paris to explore.

What You Do
There are three game modes in this demo. Checkpoint Races are against five other drivers through a series of markers. Blitz Races have a punishing time limit, while Cruise mode lets you tour the city under your own steam.

Top Tips
Having trouble completing the Checkpoint Races? You don't need to take the suggested route. Try working out a quicker route between the markers and you won't have to worry about crashing or being overtaken by other cars.

Anything Else?
There are two vehicles to choose from – the popular New Beetle RSI and a chunky ambulance. Your opponents will always choose the same vehicle as you, so it could be easier (and slower) to start off using the ambulance. Hop inside the Beetle for a faster and funnier competition.

PRIZE CHALLENGE MIDTOWN MADNESS 3

Here's What You Do...
Complete the checkpoint race 'Turn Around' in record time. Beat Ben's time of 02.45.12!

The Reward
Our top five players each win a Phlat Ball (see below).

Proof Required
If you achieve a qualifying time, we'll contact you to ask for a video of your entire run through the course.

Closing Date
Thursday 27 November.

The Rules
You can use either vehicle and can take any route. Refer to the prize challenge rules on page 138.

← Is it a ball or a frisbee? Time will tell. From Re:Creation plc.

Metal Arms

GAME INFORMATION
REVIEWED: **THIS ISSUE, PAGE 090**
SCORE: **9.0**
DEMO PLAYERS: **1**

What You Get
Join Glitch and his two companions for one atomic adventure. This complete mission takes you right into the heart of General Corrosive's fortress city.

What You Do
Your objective is simple: to venture through the metal metropolis and stow away in the cargo loader at the end. Hundreds of evil Mil bots stand between you and victory. Don't count on your friends backing you up because they'll probably be scrap metal even before the first assault is over.

Top Tips
Glitch carries both a primary and secondary weapon. Some of them can be combined to make an even more devastating attack. Use grenades in cahoots with the catapult for a long-range explosive strike. Alternatively, try using the sniper scope along with the Bolt Gun or Ripper to take the enemies' arms and legs off.

Anything Else?
Two extra treats lie in store for the second half of the level. Collect the Tether gun and shoot it into the back of a prone Mil Titan (one of the big metal dudes) and possess his body for a mega-rampage. If that doesn't satisfy your thirst for destruction, climb inside a tank instead. This vehicle is armed with a grievous gun turret and a heavy machine-gun. You can even flatten Mil Grunts underneath your caterpillar tracks.

At various points in the level, your path is blocked by a powerful laser grid. To gain entry, you have to find the laser's energy source which usually looks like a big green power generator. Blow them up with a few well-aimed grenades to clear the path.

↑ Dismantle the enemy, one bolt at a time.

Kao the Kangaroo 2

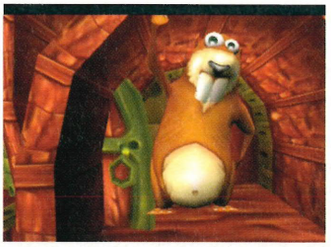
GAME INFORMATION
REVIEWED: **COMING SOON**
SCORE: **TBA**
DEMO PLAYERS: **1**

What You Get
One complete level of this Down Under adventure. This game sees the yellow antipodean helping out a nutty beaver.

What You Do
Everything would be quiet in the forest if it wasn't for the stampeding badgers, hammer-wielding dwarves and a giant copyright-infringing Piranha Plant. Help the squirrels return things to normal and free their leader from captivity.

Top Tips
Kao's no boxing chump - he has more fighting skills than Ivan 'The Machine' Drago. Press B three times to produce a bruising 1-2-3 combo. Press it mid-jump for a cutting tail spin or hit the X button mid-jump to execute a stomp.

Anything Else?
Break all the crates, pots and barrels to find coins - there are over 100. Some barrels contain booby traps so remain at a safe distance. Collect the ring bells to activate helpful restart points.



↑ He needs help finding the dentist.

Magic: The Gathering - Battlegrounds

GAME INFORMATION
REVIEWED: **COMING SOON**
SCORE: **TBA**
DEMO PLAYERS: **1-2**

What You Get
Five huge tutorial missions culminating in a battle against the ferocious force of nature, Multani. Or play against a mate.

What You Do
If you cross into your opponent's half of the arena, you'll lose energy. Instead, cast spells from your area and summon creatures to inflict punishment for you.

Top Tips
Collect white mana crystals. If you see one appearing in your opponent's half, steal it. The more crystals you have, the more powerful creatures you can summon. Cast enchantments to increase your creatures' prowess.

Anything Else?
Multani will send elven warriors after you. Summon lots of Goblin Kings and help them with the inferno spell. Steal the crystals while Multani's defending.

↑ A magical adventure.

Disney's Extreme Skate Adventure

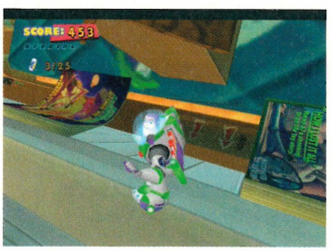
GAME INFORMATION
REVIEWED: **ISSUE 21, PAGE 092**
SCORE: **8.3**
DEMO PLAYERS: **1**

What You Get
Woody, Buzz, Mallie Ann and Ryan are shredding Andy's Bedroom skatepark in this great demo bursting with objectives.

What You Do
Grind dominos, handplant building blocks and manual over chessboards. Speak to the toys with blue arrows over them by moving close and pressing B.

Top Tips
Wheezy the penguin has a top mission to start you off. His squeaker is missing and you'll need to knock the globe off the chest of drawers to reveal it. Another fun objective is to rescue Hamm from the toilet lid. Activate the extra-strong flush to prove that pigs *can* fly.

Anything Else?
X, Y and B execute aerial grabs and kickflips. Press any of these buttons to grind poles and edges. When going up one of the halfpipes, press Y at the peak of the jump to do a handplant.



↑ To infinity and beyond!

SSX 3

GAME INFORMATION
REVIEWED: **THIS ISSUE, PAGE 106**
SCORE: **7.9**
DEMO PLAYERS: **1**

What You Get
Two boarders on a mountain full of snow. Complete a run down the slope and challenge five opponents to a high-scoring race. Do plenty of sick tricks.

What You Do
Hotfoot it down the slope and pull off as many grabs, handplants and flips as you can. There's a race meet halfway down the slope and you don't want to miss it.

Top Tips
The Super Uber bar on the right of the screen fills up as you bust moves and land them well. Fill it up and you'll be able to execute sick mid-air specials by pressing L and Y together. Prefer gibbing to boosting? Hit L and B for a rail slide.

Anything Else?
If it looks like you're going to crater, keep tapping the X button mid-leap to recover and land the right way up. The same technique works if you've landed headfirst in the snow. Keep tapping X to stand upright more quickly.

↑ Dude, these fireworks are totally phat!

ESPN NHL Hockey

GAME INFORMATION
REVIEWED: **THIS ISSUE, PAGE 113**
SCORE: **8.2**
DEMO PLAYERS: **1-4**

What You Get
Over 20 different teams from the NHL. More rock-hard players than you can shake a hockey stick at.

What You Do
You only have one period to play through, so make the goals fly in thick and fast. Use X to shoot. The longer you hold it down, the more powerful your swing will be. The Y button dumps the puck and A passes it to another player.

Top Tips
A new feature is the use of the Right thumbstick to execute special moves. Pressing diagonal up/left or up/right performs an accurate deke. Press left or right to sidestep and down to stop.

Anything Else?
Hockey just wouldn't be so popular if it wasn't for the odd punch-up. Check the same player over and over to cause a brawl. In Fight mode, press the A button to duck and avoid, the B button to grab, and the X button to punch.

↑ Making a clean break for the goal.

NAME CHANGE: KAO THE KANGAROO'S ORIGINAL NAME WAS DENNIS BEFORE IT WAS CHANGED FOR THE DREAMCAST RELEASE.

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DemoChallengeLeagues

THE LEGEND LIVES ON: Here are your entries for *Colin McRae Rally 04* and *Conflict: Desert Storm II*. See next month's leagues for all your Game Disc 22 scores. Good luck!

COLIN McRAE RALLY 04 Game Disc 21
THE CHALLENGE: Fastest race time for Tachikawa.

NAME	ADDRESS	BEST TIME	PROVED?
GLYN HORSLEY	NOTTS	02.23.04	PENDING
BEN PARRINGTON	CUMBRIA	03.14.30	PENDING
MICHAEL RYDER	BIRMINGHAM	03.18.55	PENDING
JOHN HUMPHRIES	LEICESTER	03.19.19	PENDING
DARRON EDEN	LIVERPOOL	03.20.95	PENDING
COLIN PARRY	LYDNEY	03.20.98	PENDING
PHIL CHAPMAN	CARDIFF	03.24.95	PENDING
ROSS THOMAS	WEST SUSSEX	03.27.31	PENDING
JASON BONFIELD	EAST SUSSEX	03.28.99	PENDING

APPARENTLY Glyn Horsley managed to beat everyone by almost a minute. Be assured that we'll be closely scrutinising the proof. The top three each win a *KOTOR* poster.

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II Game Disc 21
THE CHALLENGE: Most headshots scored.

NAME	ADDRESS	SCORE	PROVED?
STEVIE CARR	TYNE AND WEAR	4628	PENDING
STEVEN DUNN	CASTLE DOUGLAS	1509	PENDING
PAUL DAY	CO. TYRONE	1234	PENDING
A. ROWLANDS	SHREWSBURY	1214	PENDING
GLYN HORSLEY	NOTTS	1108	PENDING
ROSS THOMAS	WEST SUSSEX	1074	PENDING
GOVIND SONDH	BUCKS	1024	YES
PAUL ROWLAND	OXFORD	946	YES
DARYN MCGARVA	DUMFRIESSHIRE	884	PENDING

THERE WERE SEVERAL sneaky ways of achieving a high score in this challenge but it must have taken some extreme patience from Stevie Carr. He wins a L'espion camera.

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER Game Disc 20
THE CHALLENGE: Fastest time to complete mission.

NAME	ADDRESS	BEST TIME	PROVED?
GLYN HORSLEY	NOTTS	04.15.00	YES
ROSS THOMAS	WEST SUSSEX	04.27.00	YES
PETER NICHOLS	ESSEX	04.49.00	YES
MICHAEL SMITH	LLANDDOGED	05.00.00	PENDING
ALEX DAVIES	HANTS	05.05.00	PENDING
SIMON SMITH	NORFOLK	15.12.00	PENDING
ROSS PARKINSON	EDINBURGH	15.37.00	YES
LEE HENTON	PORTSMOUTH	16.12.00	YES
ABDUL ALHAZ	HAMMERSMITH	18.43.00	PENDING

NEXT MONTH we've got playable demos of *Grabbed by the Ghoulies, Wrath Unleashed, Armed & Dangerous, Buffy: Chaos Bleeds* and more.

OTOGI: MYTH OF DEMONS Game Disc 20
THE CHALLENGE: Most experience points earned.

NAME	ADDRESS	BEST TIME	PROVED?
LUKE GOODGE	CAMBS	99999	YES
MATTHEW TAYLOR	LONDON	99999	YES
GLYN HORSLEY	NOTTS	99999	YES
DANIELLE WINTON	ESSEX	73800	YES
MATTHEW MORGAN	STAFFS	36900	YES
ABDUL ALHAZ	HAMMERSMITH	36900	YES
THOMAS OVERTON	SOUTH YORKS	29040	YES
LEIGH SHERVAL	SURREY	29040	YES
TIMMY FULLER	CO. WATERFORD	27900	PENDING

DON'T FORGET THAT you can send in your top gaming moments on video. We include all the best ones on our Playable Game Disc. It's time to get creative.

Enter the challenges now!

It's all very simple really. Help us to help you into the Challenge Leagues by proving your excellence

» TO ENTER A PRIZE CHALLENGE, FILL IN THE COUPON BELOW AND POST IT OFF TO US.
» IF YOUR SCORE WINS YOU A PRIZE, WE'LL ASK YOU TO PROVIDE PROOF OF YOUR SCORE:

PROOF BY VIDEO

By playing your Xbox through a normal VCR, it's possible to record your exploits onto a standard video cassette. Please note we will need to see you actually achieving the score, not the just the sight of the high score table. Please do not send in your proof unless we contact you to ask for it.

PROOF BY PHOTO

In some instances - when we're certain that there's no possibility of cheating to manipulate the evidence - we may only require a photograph of the game's High Score screen. Polaroid is obviously the easiest way to do this (no film development) but normal flash photography is acceptable. NO DIGITAL PHOTOS PLEASE - they are too easily manipulated.

RULES FOR ALL PRIZE CHALLENGES

» The closing date for Issue 23 challenges is Thursday 27 November 2003.
» You will be contacted within 14 days of the closing date if you are in a prize-winning position.
» To be eligible for your prize you must be able to prove your score in the manner specified.
» The editor's decision on proof validity is final.
» Proof of posting is not proof of receipt.
» *Official Xbox Magazine* will not be held responsible for entries or proof lost or damaged in the post.

THAT'S IT - PLAY:MORE! GOOD LUCK!

ISSUE 23

DEAR OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE,

Here are my Demo Challenge scores for you to admire.

(NB You can enter as many or as few challenges as you like)

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2
Most Kudos points earned.

.....

MIDTOWN MADNESS 3
Fastest time to complete demo race.

.....

NAME

.....

ADDRESS

.....

.....

.....

CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBER
(This is so we can get in touch with you quickly if we need to ask you for proof.)

.....

While I'm on, here are the games I'm most looking forward to on Xbox.

1) .....

2) .....

3) .....

4) .....

5) .....

EITHER CUT out or photocopy this coupon, fill it in, and send it to Game Disc 23 Demo Challenges, *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP.

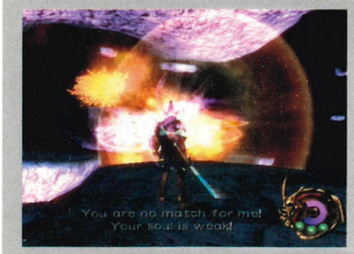
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

HintsandCheats

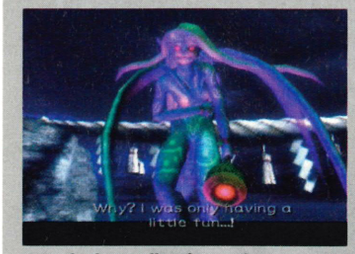
BEING SEXY ISN'T just a talent, it's a state of mind. This month I'm entering myself in Gamer.tv's Sexiest Gamer competition. As soon as I've won that, I'll be taking a year off work. When I told the team this, they were all behind me 100 per cent for some reason. If you want to vote for your favourite Welshman (i.e. me), log onto www.sexiestgamer.com. I thank you. (Shameless - ed.)

Cheats in Motion

OTOGI ISSUE 21, 8.0



↑ **Unlock Moon Sword: release 100 per cent of souls on every level.**



↑ **Unlock Needle of Fury: beat A Clouded Moon in under one minute.**

↑ **Unlock Skylarks: beat Golem's Ravine (Stage 6) in under 1.39 to earn these deadly twin blades.**

↑ **Unlock Orchid Malevolence: kill the Hydra on Spirit Tower (Stage 25).**

↑ **Unlock House of Genbu Level 3: beat Canyon of Death in under 1.39.**

ALIENS VERSUS PREDATOR EXTINCTION

Issue 21, 6.6

MASTER CODE
Press Start to pause gameplay in Campaign, then press R twice, L, R, L twice, R, L, R twice, L, R, L twice, R, L

CARTOON MODE
Create a soundtrack with the name «<GIGGLES>»

WWE RAW 2

Issue 21, 7.3

UNLOCK BONUS COSTUMES
To unlock bonus costumes, steal from other wrestlers' lockers.

UNLOCK KEN SHAMROCK
Complete seven seasons in Season mode to unlock Ken Shamrock.

UNLOCK MICK FOLEY
Complete five seasons in Season mode to unlock Mick.

UNLOCK TITANTRON MOVIES
To unlock the Titantron movie for a wrestler, steal from him three times.

↑ ***Raw 2*: steal some costumes.**

FINDING NEMO

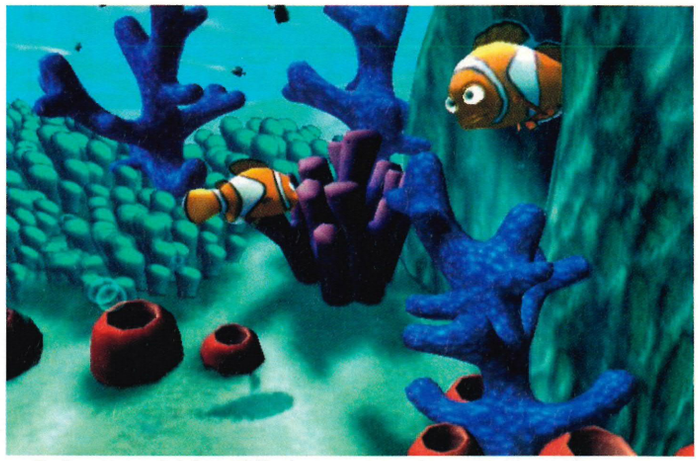
Issue 21, 7.9

CHEAT MODE
Press Y three times, X twice, B, X, Y, B, X, Y, X, Y, X, Y, B, Y twice at the main menu.

HINT: EVADE BRUCE
On the submarine level, look out for an exclamation mark above Dory's head. This indicates that you must move otherwise Bruce will catch you.

PUZZLE SOLUTION
On the submarine level, you must solve a pipes puzzle. The back wall of the pipes room holds the full solution.

UNLOCK BONUS LEVELS
To unlock bonus levels, you need to earn the gold starfish. Win races, move coloured pebbles to the correct pedestals and swim through all the bubble hoops in a normal level.



↑ ***Finding Nemo*: fish have difficulty inputting codes.**

FUTURAMA

Issue 19, 7.7

UNLOCK FMV SEQUENCES
Find the Nibblers on all levels to unlock movie sequences at the Extras menu.

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

Issue 21, 7.0

Enter the following codes while on land:

EARN 100,000 GOLD
A, X, Y, B, Y, B, X, B, B, A

GOD MODE
A, Y, X, X, Y, Y, B, Y, X, A

EARN 50 SKILL POINTS
A, B, Y, X, Y, B, B, Y, B, A

NEUTRAL REPUTATION
A, X, Y, X, Y, B, B, Y, B, A

HINT: EASY MONEY
Enter a tavern and hire an officer. When the dialogue text comes up, pick "Isn't that too much?" Keep selecting this choice until the amount you will spend for the officer is a negative number. The officer will pay you to work for you!

HINT: EASY ESCAPE
Flee from difficult enemies and go past the last loading point. They won't follow.

↑ ***Pirates*: unlock free booty!**

FREAKY FLYERS

Issue 22, 7.0

UNLOCK ANDRE LATOILETTE
Fly to the log cabin at the start of the Bigfoot Mountain race and shoot the snowman standing near the porch.

UNLOCK CACTUS ROSE
Fly through the Coyote Canyon race until you reach a hanging platform with Rose standing on it. Shoot her down.

UNLOCK CHEF MICK
In the Intestinal Track race, follow the normal route and fly into the yellow circle power-up.

UNLOCK ISLAND JACK
On Danger Island, fly down the waterfall and follow the path until it forks. Choose the left path. Shoot the big yellow snake.

UNLOCK MARCEL MORESO BROS.
Fly through the Bombsburg race as far as the hollowed-out buildings near the factory entrance. Fly inside the second building on the left to find the brothers.

UNLOCK MARGARET BASHER
Fly under the bridge in Thugsville and shoot the box with the Union Jack flag.

UNLOCK PROF GUTENTAG & SVEN 209
In the Torpedo Run race, blow up the golden sub that the Prof and Sven are standing on.

UNLOCK SAMMY WASABI
In the Monster Isle race, go to the forest and shoot the monkey attacking Sammy near the temple.

UNLOCK SHEIK ABDUL
At the beginning of the Cave of Blunders race, dive until you reach ground level. Shoot the executioner lurking there.

LOCK HIM UP: WE GET OFFERED SOME GREAT PRESS TRIPS HERE AT OXM. STEVE RECENTLY RETURNED FROM THE SOUTH OF FRANCE, ANDY WENT TO COLORADO, GW WENT TO TOKYO, AND BEN? WELL, HE'S CURRENTLY IN A PRISON IN PENNSYLVANIA. HA!

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OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

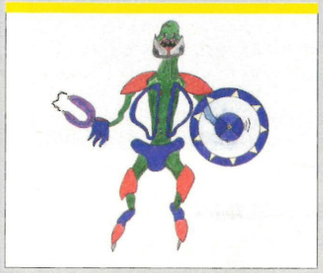
GameClubs

GAME CLUBS IS your guide to the newest ways to play, unlocking secrets and discovering cool stuff you won't find in manuals. Using your imagination, guile and skill you can unlock characters, bonus levels and unexpected glitches. You are the pioneers of Game Clubs and Xbox is your uncharted territory. Play:More Reviews lets you have your say on games and your achievements feature in Champions of Play:More. It's a showcase of your greatest gaming moments.

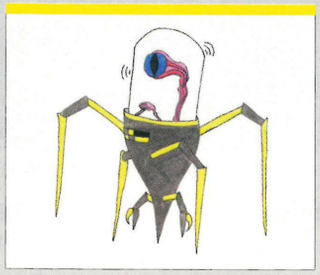
ClubHalo 2

WE CAN'T HELP but think that Bungie is making a mistake by holding *Halo 2* back until next year. The first *Halo* is great but it still causes too many office arguments. In a recent game, Ben single-handedly trounced two members of *Xbox Gamer*, causing all kinds of name-calling and "my dad's bigger than your dad" antics. Even Phil has resumed his *Halo* career. Could things get any worse?

Alan Wild is one of Play:More's most dedicated followers. Not only has this top bloke sent in loads of tapes for Play:More on the disc (see next month), but he's also come up with two Covenant creations...



↑ **There's nothing little about this green man. He's named Raikoh (after the hero of *Otogi*) and has a shield and plasma claw.**



↑ **Selich is a much weaker creature than Raikoh. That's why his fragile body is protected by an evil spider-walker robot.**

Covenant Competition Corner

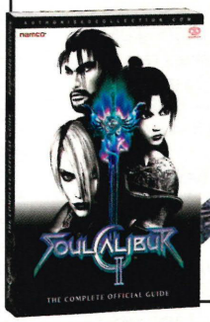
HELLO HUMANS! Even your masters, the Covenant, know *Soul Calibur II* is the best beat 'em up in the universe. Sadly, our tiny hands aren't equipped for special moves, so we've teamed up with Piggyback Interactive to give away ten of their Official Strategy Guides.

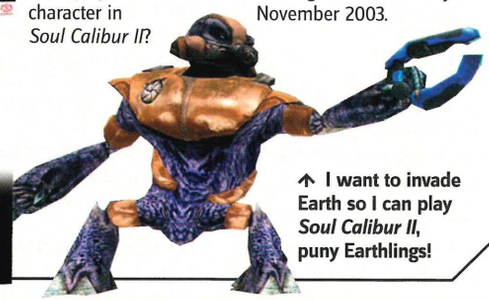
To enter, answer this question: Which one of the following warriors is not a playable character in *Soul Calibur II*?

1) Ivy Valentine
2) Hwang Sung Kyung
3) Cervantes de Leon

Send your answers on a postcard to: The Legend Will Never Die, *OXM*, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP.

Entries not on a postcard and multiple entries will be destroyed by the Flood. Closing date is Thursday 27 November 2003.





↑ **I want to invade Earth so I can play *Soul Calibur II*, puny Earthlings!**

play:more On the DISC

BEN TOPPED EURO Clan's list of enemies by claiming in last month's Play:More On the Disc that they are dirty cheats. That's not true at all and we're sorry for saying so. Please don't shoot us! We've got more action from the Clan with a plan next issue.

This issue's Top Plays include some novel ways of hiding a corpse in *Splinter Cell*, a mega explosion in *Brute Force*, several *Burnout 2* smashes and lots more.

Send in your tapes marked 'Play:More On the Disc'. Your video must be clearly labelled with your name and address and must be less than ten minutes long. Please include a full description of your Top Play. Don't have your custom soundtracks playing or we'll have to dub over it with *James Ashton Sings the Blues*.

↑ **Wesley Stamford and friends certainly know all the ins and outs of the excellent *Ghost Recon*. This clip shows a few of the tricks you can do to get outside the level. There were a few things we couldn't show because they could ruin Xbox Live!**

↑ **We're still having trouble working out how Nick Chafer created this 20-second explosion in *Brute Force*. Apparently it has something to do with placing loads of Sentry bombs inside the hut and then blowing them all up in one go. Wicked!**

↑ ***Burnout 2* is rapidly becoming the most popular game on Play:More On the Disc. Stuart Watkinson went a bit overboard and sent us over four hours' worth of crashes. We picked a few of the best ones for this month's disc.**

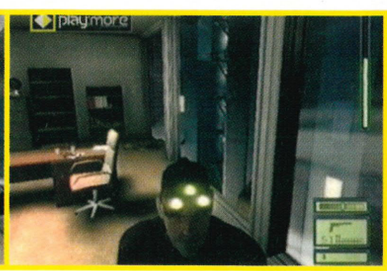
↑ **Wayne and Matthew Hinwood pulled off the same trick in both *Halo* and *Enter the Matrix*. Okay, so we've seen frozen soldiers in *Halo* before, but this has a twist. The petrified SWAT team member in *ETM* is something completely new.**

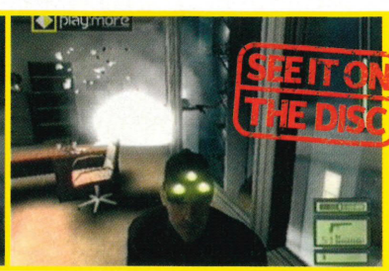
↑ ***Midtown Madness 3* is another game with loads of potential for tricks and glitches. In Stuart Wright's clip, Nickeb shows us how to drive right around the inside of the subway tunnel. You'll need a really fast motor to pull this one off.**

Hup

YOUR TOP PLAYS FRAME BY FRAME

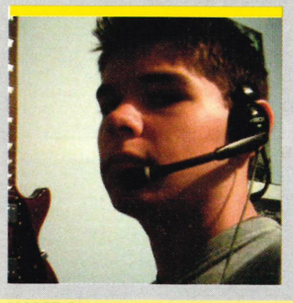
SAM FISHER has no respect for the dead. In David Curry's *Splinter Cell* clip, he chucks bodies out of windows and blows them up.





play:more Profile

WANT TO SHOW the rest of the Play:More community your smiling face? Play:More Profiles lets you do just that, as well as showcasing your greatest gaming achievements. It doesn't have to be on Xbox Live - it could be anything. If you want to see your mug on this page, tell us your name, age, Gamertag (if you have one), location, fave Xbox game and your greatest gaming achievement. We'll need a photo of you, either normal or digital. Send entries to Play:More Profile, *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP or email ben.talbot@fxmi.com with the headline 'Play:More Profile'. We will send a mystery prize to everyone who features.

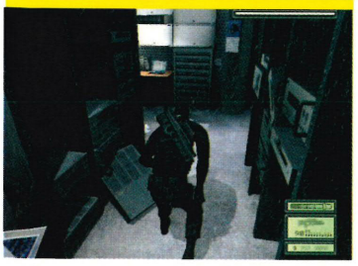


NAME Dean Murphy
GAMERTAG Vyse X
AGE 16
LOCATION Kidderminster, Worcs.
GREATEST GAMING ACHIEVEMENT Won a *MotoGP* race while gorging myself with handfuls of Pringles.
FAVE GAME *Return To Castle Wolfenstein.*
NOTES Proud member of FSUK (FireStormUK) and co-webmaster of www.xboxonlive.co.uk. I'm also an official Sponsor of CLAN-WARS2003 too. Check out www.clan-wars2003.tk for details.

↑ Burn, baby, burn!

play:more YOUR Reviews

HAVE YOU EVER wanted to be a games reviewer? Play:More is here to give you the opportunity you've been waiting for. Every month, we'll print your reviews for the best and worst Xbox games. If you disagree with Ben, Andy or Steve's reviews, tell us why and give each game a score out of ten. Send your reviews - no longer than 160 words, please - along with a portrait-style photo of yourself to Game Clubs, *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, W1U 6FP. The best review that we publish next month will win a Logic3 Xbox Link Cable.



↑ Immerses you in a world of intrigue.

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL

BY MATTHEW BERRY, SOMERSET

YOU PLAY AS Sam Fisher, a highly trained secret operative, whose mission is to avert World War III by crushing cyber-terrorism and dampening international tensions. This will be done by infiltrating terrorists' positions, obtaining classified documents and executing each level with caution and a sharp awareness. You will often be outnumbered and outgunned, but Sam's gadgets will get you out of most situations.

With its stunning environments, great lighting and sound effects, *SC* immerses you in a world of unparalleled stealth and intrigue. Interactive environments allow increased gameplay options and the ability to get strategic. A classic, must-have game.

SCORE: 9.0 / 10

↑ A spectator sport? Surely not.

STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC

BY RAVI SACHDEV, VIA EMAIL

EXCITEMENT, adventure, a Jedi craves not these things. Yet, who hasn't dreamt of living in the *Star Wars* universe? Every *SW* game has been snapped up by the public, only to end up in the bargain bin a week later. But here's a knight in shining armour!

KOTOR is a third-person RPG set 4,000 years before the first movie. The game is huge, and deeply immersive. You will be rewarded for taking your time with this, speaking to everyone, playing all the mini-games and exploring the universe. The downside? Combat could have been better. You don't actually get to control the fighting directly - it's more of a spectator sport. Other than that, this is a fantastic game.

SCORE: 9.0 / 10

↑ Millions of characters to create.

ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

BY OWEN MILLS, VIA EMAIL

MORROWIND IS a great game - the level of freedom is incredible. You can be a hero, respected by everyone, or a criminal. The character customisation means that yours is one of millions of possible characters. The game is huge, with loads of towns, dungeons and wilderness to explore, and hundreds of items to use or sell. The main story takes ages to complete but doesn't get boring and there are hundreds of side-quests to keep your interest going.

The combat system could be more interesting, and the draw-distance and some of the textures could be better, but the water effects are the best I've seen and *Morrowind* still deserves Elite status.

SCORE: 8.5 / 10

STAR REVIEW
RICHARD Wins an Official Xbox Shoulder Bag

↑ Absolutely unmissable platforming.

VEXX

BY RICHARD BAGSHAW, BRISTOL

OUR CONSOLE is blessed with many platformers, but *Vexx* is one of the best. The aim is, simply, to collect enough Wraithearts to power up an ancient teleporter and defeat the final boss. As you gather more of these grotesque collectables, you unlock more worlds, each with harder and more obscure challenges in them. This is where *Vexx*'s real strength lies: the brilliant diversity of its tasks. You could be playing a game of football one minute, fighting a rolling mummy the next, climbing a tower, collecting rings, jumping through 2D tapestries... even battling your way through Hell. The level design never lets up, and the soundtrack is superb, the best since *Halo*.

Vexx is also darker than the happy worlds of Mario or Sonic, and the combat never becomes boring. The only disappointment is the fiddly final showdown... otherwise, this is not to be missed by platform enthusiasts!

SCORE: 8.9 / 10

THP

YOUR TOP PLAYS FRAME BY FRAME

ONLY THE most reckless stunt drivers attempt a mid-air head-on collision. See Nickeb and o0STV0o do just that in *Midtown Madness 3*.

OFF THE SCALES TO UNLOCK UZARDMAN IN SOUL CALIBUR II. COMPLETE EVERY MISSION IN WEAPON MASTER MODE.

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masterclass

YOUR SQUAD LEADER: **SIMON PARKIN**

STORMING KUWAIT with a four-man squad from middle England was never going to be a walk in Iraq. So, if you don't want your team to fold faster than a Japanese man in a paper shop, you're going to have to get to know them. *OXM* has spent some quality time with each of the boys and is here to point out some of their finer points to you.

Conflict: Desert Storm II

Training

WE ALL LOVE to dive into a game feet-first, but with *Conflict II* it's best to view it all like a real campaign: rookie upwards. The game was designed in conjunction with an SAS war hero, Cameron Spence, and is based on the Victor-2 battle. Victor-2 was fought by the SAS's Sabre Squadron and was officially the most successful special forces operation of Operation: Desert Storm. So, before you get started on the missions proper, it's a good idea to go through all the training modes. These will point you in the right direction as to what each team member's particular strengths are. Skip this section and chances are you'll just be floundering and confused for your first couple of hours in Iraq

SAS or Delta Force?

YOUNG BRIT dreamers looking to join the army will argue with their American counterparts until they're blue in the face and beyond about whose special force is better. In *Conflict II*, choosing SAS or Delta Force will affect the different team accents and uniforms, plus how your statistics are distributed between your characters. Arguably Delta Force comes off slightly better due to the fact that all the SAS members are given medical points. This might seem like a good thing but medipacks are never really in short supply and the skill points don't seem to influence how much health you recover very much at all. This means Delta Force have more weapon skill points to go around - especially useful for Foley who gains all-important rifle skills.

We know you're all fiercely patriotic and will play as the Brits anyway but as, for once, the game was released in the UK first, it only seems fair that the Americans get a slight team advantage.

Paul Foley

ROLE: Sniper
SPECIALITY: Sniper guns, silent shots, bit of a wuss

SYNOPSIS: When it comes to that most satisfying of modern gaming warfare staples, the sniper headshot, Foley owns the rest of your team. He allegedly ranked top of the class in every sniper school he attended and, according to the booklet, currently holds the record for the longest distance single-shot kill ever recorded, taking down an enemy soldier from nearly two miles away, using the M82A1 Barret 0.50 rifle.

Foley works best when you want to get in undetected. He can take out gunners and searchlights with equal and expert aplomb. The key to controlling Foley is to make sure the red pointer is directly in the centre of the crosshair before firing. It's steadier if you lie down.

Case Study

↑ You've cleared the bridge area, now get that stealth kill bonus up. Leave your team a short way behind, in case you need backup. Quietly continue to get a good view of the clearing. Take enemies out one by one, avoiding the alarms.

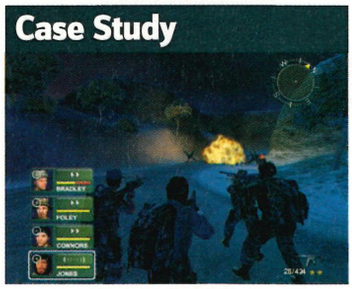
David Jones

ROLE: Infiltration, demolitions
SPECIALITY: Silenced weapons, explosives, sneaky son of a gun

SYNOPSIS: Jonesy is indispensable - without his explosive skills you won't even get past the barbed wire fences to let loose on the opposition. Demolitions are Jones's game and he carries out his duties with speed and skill. Whether it be C4 Plastic Explosive (which he uses to destroy barriers and mission-critical targets) or Anti-Tank mortars, you'll be needing this man more often than you'd have thought. Defusing bombs is a favourite pastime and, just as *Ghost Recon* veterans will know, any man who carries a silenced MP5 can wreak havoc on unsuspecting enemies.

Jones is a dab hand with a spanner too, and can be called on to fix any damaged vehicles you need to procure.

Case Study



↑ The team is up against barbed wire. Position the lads a safe distance away and send Jones in with his C4. Get the boys to provide covering fire while he's busy. Now back off and detonate so your team can drive through undetected.

Case Study

↑ Foley comes into his own when you encounter your first night mission. Bring your Jeep round the corner, being careful to blow up all the mines first. Now leave the boys in the jeep and make for the mountain path. Kneel in position and take out the sentry guarding the searchlight. All the guards are looking for the Jeep down below so steal the opportunity to amass some headshot kills on the confused Iraqis.

Case Study

↑ This section is particularly difficult, with enemy tanks arriving left, right and centre. You are running low on rockets, so it's time to send Jones in with an anti-tank mine. Create a distraction with one of the other boys and dodge the bullets to get next to the tank. Now quickly lay the bomb and get out of there as fast as your legs will carry you.

John Bradley

ROLE: Team leader
SPECIALITY: Assault weapons, communications, all-round psycho

SYNOPSIS: Stubbly, broad-shouldered and chiselled, Bradley is every Texan girl's dream and when it comes to taking out Iraqis he excels in the most skills at the circus of pain. He's the man you should send into a skirmish first - his proficiency with all types of assault rifle and sub-machine gun, coupled with brilliant leadership qualities, makes him perfectly suited for hitting them where it hurts right from the off. He is fast and has a good solid aim which, providing you've not been a wuss and turned auto-aim on, is essential for those John Wayne-with-a-sub-machine gun moments.

Bradley carries the communications gear, including the air strikes beckoning laser designator, which you call in to blow up the big things pistols won't hurt.

Case Study

↑ **You've settled into the first couple of missions so now it's time to see what Bradley is made of. Position your other team-mates up on the first floor looking down and take Bradley downstairs into the clearing. While the lads are keeping the Iraqi troops busy, wreak some havoc.**

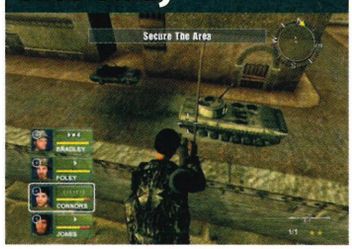
Mick Connors

ROLE: Heavy weapons specialist
SPECIALITY: Light and heavy machine guns, rockets, hard bastard

SYNOPSIS: In every squad there's the gatling-carrying brute who provides the human tank backup. The biggest of the team, Connors makes the others look like a bunch of spindly-legged girls on a very dangerous and slightly exotic Far Eastern picnic. Maximum firepower is Connors' game and he can carry the maximum amount of firepower. Gun fans rejoice as Connors carries the best of the team with modern classics like the M60, M249 and PKM.

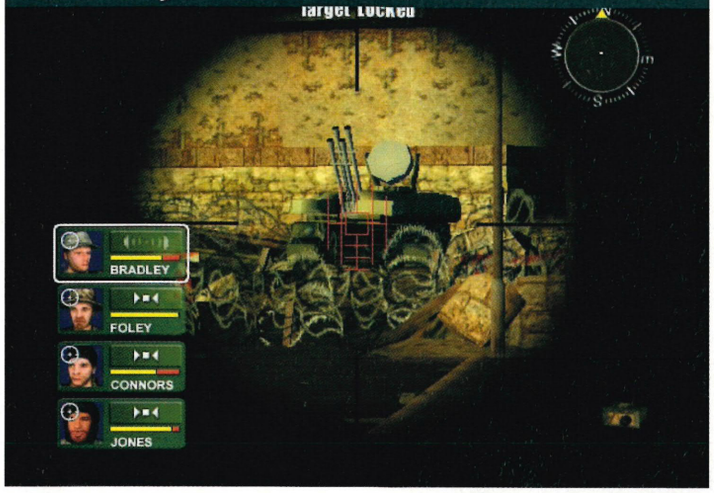
An anti-tank specialist, he usually starts the mission carrying at least one LAW66 or LAW80 rocket to deal with any armour the squad comes across. A great support man, Connors is a good person to select to back up one of your other team going into a tricky situation.

Case Study



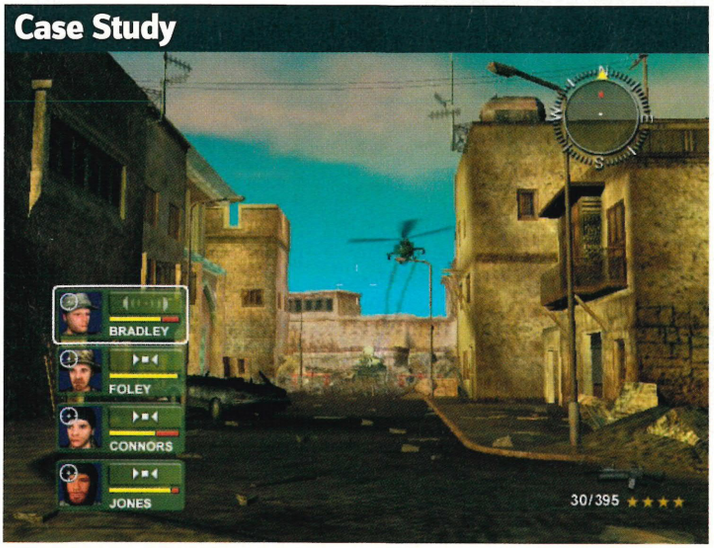
↑ **You're about to meet the Marines, but before you get to the area they're held down in, leave Connors on the roof overlooking the square. Use the other boys to establish contact and, while they're clearing out the riflemen, get Connors to put a rocket up the tank's backside.**

Case Study



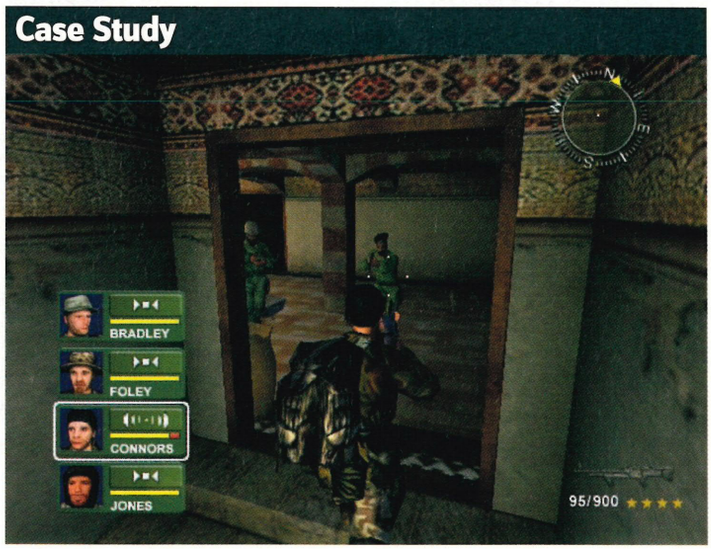
Case Study

Case Study



↑ **Don't rush in here - there's a mighty large tank at the other end. Instead, leave your buddies in the room and make your way carefully so you can just see the menace through the window. Time to crack open the laser tag so the air strike knows exactly where to hit hardest. Now it's simply a matter of sitting back out of the way and waiting for the life-giving chopper to blow the artillery sky high, clearing a path for your team to advance deeper into the city.**

Case Study



↑ **Connors' proficiency with machine guns makes him an awesome, fearsome, close-range foe. By far the most fun to be had when controlling him is to storm into close quarters (such as the one shown above) and let rip on the unsuspecting Iraqi soldiers listening to their radio sets. As a rule, you should send Connors into rooms first to take out the most immediate threats and let the rest of the team follow him to pick up the pieces.**

READY FOR MORE?: THE NEXT CONFLICT GAME WILL BE CALLED CONFLICT: MISSING PRESUMED DEAD AND WILL BE SET IN VIETNAM. IT WILL BE DEVELOPED BY SCI, WHO HAS JUST BOUGHT PIVOTAL. EXPECT TO SEE IT AROUND AUTUMN 2004.

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STAFF
Editor: **Steve Brown (020 7317 2478)**
News Editor: **Gavin Ogden (020 7317 2473)**
Operations Editor: **Vanessa Hards (020 7317 2479)**
Producer: **Ben Talbot (020 7317 2477)**
Art Editor: **Owen Norris (020 7317 2476)**
Deputy Art Editor: **Phil Madge (020 7317 2474)**
Staff Writer: **Andy Irving (020 7317 2475)**

CONTRIBUTORS
Writing: **Stephen Daultrey, Richard Marsh, Simon Parkin, Mark Sutherns** Illustration: **Spencer Wilson** Subbing: **Rosanna Negrotti**

ADVERTISING
Advertising Manager: **Duncan Ferguson (020 7317 2603 / 07770 648500)** duncan.ferguson@fxmi.com

MANAGEMENT
Publisher: **James Ashton (020 7317 2470)** james.ashton@fxmi.com
Publishing Director: **Dom Beaven (+44 (0) 1225 822846)** dom.beaven@fxmi.com
European Brand Manager: **Emma Parkinson (+44 (0) 7766508897** emma.parkinson@fxmi.com
Business Manager: **Claire Morgan (+44 (0) 1225 442244)** claire.morgan@fxmi.com
Global Brand Manager: **David Barrow (+1 206 4231921)** dbarrow@imaginemedia.com
Circulation Manager: **Ron Kelly**

PRODUCTION
Production Manager: **Mel Wittmaack (+44 (0) 1225 442244)** mel.wittmaack@fxmi.com
Commercial Buyer: **Colin Polis (+44 (0) 1225 442244)**

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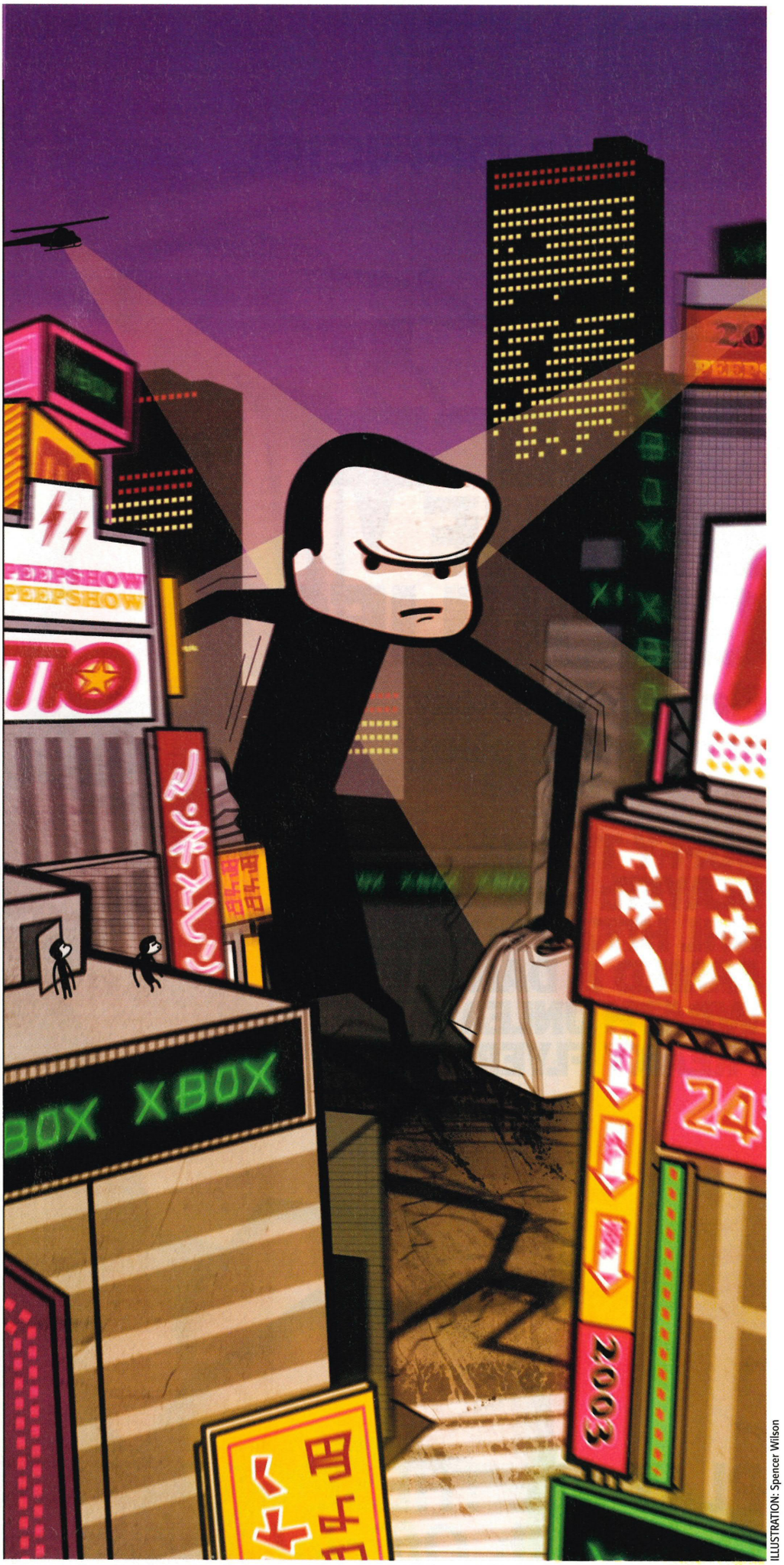

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Half Life 3*
Halo
Hidden & Dangerous 2*
Jedi Knight 2
Judge Dredd: D. vs Death
Mace Griffin B'nty Hunter
Max Payne 2*
Medal of Honor: All. Ass.
Rainbow Six 3: R Shield*
Rise of Nations
Roller Coaster Tycoon
Silent Hill 3*
Sim City 3000
Star Wars Galaxies*
Star Wars: Jedi Knight
Stronghold
The Sims: Makin' Magic*
Theme Hospital
Tomb Raider 4
Tomb Raider: Angel of D.
XIII (Thirteen)*
Yuri's Revenge
Plus Many More...

GAMECUBE

ATV Quad Racing 2
Back to Baghdad
Blood Omen 2
Conflict: Desert Storm 2
Desert Storm (Conflict)
Die Hard: Vendetta
Eternal Darkness
FIFA 2004*
Freedom Fighters
Freekstyle
F-Zero GX
James Bond: Nightfire
Legends of Wrestling 2
Medal of Honor Frontline
Metroid Prime
Mort.Kombat: Deadly All.
PGA Tour 2004
Resident Evil
Resident Evil Zero
Rogue Leader
Rogue S. III: Rebel Strike*
Sims
Sonic Adventure DX
Star Wars: Jedi Knight 2
Star Wars: Rogue Leader
Super Mario Sunshine
Super Smash Bros Melee
The Return of the King*
The Simpsons: Hit & Run
Tiger Woods Golf 2004
Tony Hawk's 4
Tony Hawk's U'ground*
WWE Wr'mania XIX
Zelda: The Wind Waker
Plus Many More...

PS 2

Age of Empires 2
Alias*
Bond 007: Nightfire
Buffy: Chaos Bleeds
Chaos Bleeds
Chaos Legion
Colin McRae Rally 4
Conflict: Desert Storm
Conflict: Desert Storm 2
Cr.Bandicoot: Wr.of Cort.
Dark Cloud 2
Dead to Rights
Desert Storm 2
Die Hard: Vendetta
Dynasty Warriors 4
Enter the Matrix
Escape Monkey Island
FIFA 2003
FIFA 2004*
Final Fantasy 10
Fire Warrior
Freedom Fighters
Getaway
Gran Turismo 3
Grand T Auto: Vice City
Grand Theft Auto 3
Great Escape
Harry Potter C.of Secrets
Headhunte: Redemption*
Headhunter
Hunter: The R. Wayward
Indiana Jones: E's Tomb
Kingdom Hearts
Largo Winch
LMA Manager 2003
Lord of Rings Two Towers
Mace Griffin B'nty Hunter
Madden NFL 2004
Max Payne
Medal of Honor Frontline
Metal Gear Solid 2
Midnight Club 2
Mort.Kombat: Deadly All.
Primal
Pro Evolution Soccer 3*
Project Zero
Ratchet and Clank
Res.Evil: Code Veronica X
Return to C. Wolfenstein
Riding Spirits
Run Like Hell
Silent Hill 2
Silent Hill 3
Smackdown! 4: Shut Y.M.
SOCOM: US Navy Seals
Soul Calibur 2
Soul Reaver 2
Splinter Cell
Syberia
Tekken 4
The Getaway
The Thing
Tiger Woods Golf 2004
T. Raider: Angel of Drk.
Tony Hawk's 4
Tony Hawk's U'ground*
True Crime: Streets of LA*
Warhammer Fire Warrior
WWE Smackdown! S.Y.M.
WWE Smackdown!:HCTP*
XGRA
XIII (Thirteen)*
Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Monst. 2
Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel. of Roses
Plus Many More...

X-BOX

A = 0 1
A Fistful of Boomstick
Agent Under Fire
Aggressive Inline
Air Force Delta Storm
Aliens vs Predator: Ext.
Amped Snowboarding
Apex (Racing Evoluzione)
ATV Quad Racing 2
B = 0 2
Back to Baghdad
Baldur's Gate: Dark All.
Baldur's Gate: Dark All.2*
Batman: Dark Tomorrow
Battle Engine Aquila
Battlecry, Robotech
Big Mutha Truckers
Blackstone: Magic & Steel
Blade 2
Blinx: The Time Sweeper
Blood Omen 2
Blood Wake
BloodRayne
BMX XXX
Bond 007: Nightfire
Bond: Agent Under Fire
Bounty Hunter: M. Griffin
Br. Sword: Sw. Dragon*
Bruce Lee: Quest Dragon
Brute Force
Buffy The Vampire Slayer
Buffy: Chaos Bleeds
Burnout
Burnout 2 Point of Impact
C = 0 3
Call of the King - Haven
Castle Wolfenstein, Rt. to
Chamber of Secrets
Champ. Manager 2001
Champ. Manager 2002
Chaos Bleeds
Chase: Holl. Stunt Driver
Chris Edwards Aggr.Inline
Clone Wars - Star Wars
Club Football*
Colin McRae Rally 3
Colin McRae Rally 4
Commandos 2
Conflict: Desert Storm
Conflict: Desert Storm 2
Cr.Bandicoot: Wr.of Cort.
Crash
Crazy Taxi 3: High Roller
Crimson Sea
D = 0 4
Dakar 2
Dark Alliance (B's Gate)
Dark Angel (J.Cameron)
Dark Legacy
Dark Tomorrow - Batman
David Beckham Soccer
Dawn of Fate
Dead or Alive 3
Dead or Alive Volleyball
Dead to Rights
Deadly Alliance
Deadly Skies
Deathrow
Defender
Desert Storm (Conflict)
Desert Storm 2
Die Hard: Vendetta
Dr. Muto
Dragon's Lair 3D
Dredd vs. Death*
Driven
Dung.& Drag.: Heroes
Dynasty Warriors 3
E = 0 5
Elder Scr. III: Morrowind
Emperor's Tomb
Enclave
Enter the Matrix
ESPN Int.Winter Sports'02
Evil Dead: F.of Boomstick
Evoluzion - Racing
Exile: Myst 3
Extinction (AvP)
Extreme Destruction
Extreme G-Racing Assoc.
F = 0 6
F1 2002
Fantasy Star Online 1 & 2
Fatal Frame
Fellowship Of The Ring
FIFA 2003
FIFA World Cup 2002
Finding Nemo
Fire Blade
Fist of the Lotus
Fistful of Boomstick
Freedom Fighters
Freestyle Snowboarding
Frontline (M. of Honor)
Furious Karting
Futurama
G = 0 7
Genma Onimusha
Ghost Recon
Ghost Recon: I. Thunder
Gotham Racing
Grand Heat
Grand T Auto: Vice City
Grand Theft Auto 3
Gravity Games Bike: SVD
Great Escape
GT 2002
Gun Metal
H = 0 8
Halo
Harry Potter C.of Secrets
Haven: Call of the King
Heroes (D&D)*
High Roller - Crazy Taxi 3
Hit and Run (Simpsons)*
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
Hollywood Stunt Driver
Hot Pursuit 2
House of the Dead 3
Hulk
Hunter: The Reckoning
I = 0 9
Incredible Hulk
Indiana Jones: E's Tomb
Indycar Series
Inner Fears - Silent Hill 2
Int. Superstar Soccer 2
Int. Winter Sports 2002
Island Thunder
Italian Job: L.A Heist
J = 1 0
James Bond: Agent U.Fire
James Bond: Nightfire
James Cameron D.Angel
Jedi Knight 2
Jedi Star Fighter
Jet Set Radio Future
Judge Dredd: D. v Death*
Jurassic Park Op Genesis
K = 1 1
Kakuto Chojin
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer
Knights of Old Republic
Kung Fu Chaos
L = 1 2
L.A Heist - The Italian Job
Leg. of Kain: B. Omen 2
Legend of Black Kat
Legends of Wrestling
Legends of Wrestling 2
LMA Manager 2003
Lord of Rings Two Towers
Lord of Rings: Fel. of Ring
M = 1 3
Mace Griffin B'nty Hunter
Madden NFL 2002
Madden NFL 2003
Madden NFL 2004
Magic & Steel
Man of Steel - Superman
Marvel vs Capcom 2
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2
Matrix (Enter the)
Max Payne
MechAssault
Medal of Honor Frontline
Men of Courage
Mercedes Benz Racing
Metal Gear Solid 2: Sub.
Micro Machines
Midnight Club 2
Midtown Madness 3
Mike Tyson Boxing
Minority Report
Mission to Earth
Morrowind
Mort.Kombat: Deadly All.
Moto GP
Moto GP2: U.R.T.
Munch's Oddysee
MX Superfly
Myst 3: Exile
Myth of Demons - Otogi
N = 1 4
NASCAR Thunder 2003
NBA 2K3
NBA Inside Drive 02&03
NBA Live 2003
NBA Street Volume 2
NBA Tonight 2002
Need for Speed H.Purs.2
New Legends
Next Dimension: X-Men
NFL 2K2
NFL Fever 2003
NFL Primetime 2002
NHL 2003
NHL 2004*
Night Caster
Nightfire
O = 1 5
Obi Wan (Star Wars)
Oddworld: M's Oddysee
Off Road Wide Open
Onimusha Genma
OO7 Agent Under Fire
OO7 Nightfire
Op. Genesis Jurassic Park
Otogi: Myth of Demons
Outlaw Golf
Outlaw Volleyball
Overdrive - Test Drive
P = 1 6
Panzer Dragoon Orta
Paris-Dakar Rally 2
PGA Tour 2004*
Phantasy Star Online
Phantom Crash
Pirates of the Caribbean
Point of Impact
Prisoner of War
Pro Race Driver
Project Gotham Racing
Project Zero
Q = 1 7
Quad Power Racing 2
Quantum Redshift
R = 1 8
Racing Evoluzione
Rallisport Challenge
Rally Fusion
Raw - WWE 2
Raw - WWF
Reckless: Yakuza Missions
Reckoning - Hunter
Red Card Soccer 2003
Red Faction 2
Reign Of Fire
Restless Dreams (S.Hill 2)
Return to C. Wolfenstein
Rise of Perathia - Azurik
Road Rage
Robot Wars: Extreme Dst.
Robotech: Battlecry
Rocky
Roller Coaster Tycoon
Run Like Hell
S = 1 9
Sea Blade
Sega GT 2002
Sega Soccer Slam
Sega Sports NBA 2K2
Sega Sports NFL 2K2
Serious Sam
Shadow of Memories
Shenmue 2
Silent Hill 2: Inner Fears
Simpsons: Hit and Run
Simpsons: Road Rage
Sims
Slam Tennis
Smashing Drive
Soldier of Fortune 2
Soul Calibur 2
Speed Kings
Spiderman The Movie
Splashdown
Splinter Cell
Spy Hunter
SSX Tricky
Star Wars Jedi Starfighter
Star Wars: Clone Wars
Star Wars: Jedi Academy*
Star Wars: Jedi Knight 2
St.Wars: K. of Old Rep.
Star Wars: Star Fighter
Starsky & Hutch
State of Emergency
Steel Battalion
Street Hoops
Substance (MGS2)
Superman: Man Of Steel
Syberia
T = 2 0
Tao Feng: Fist of Lotus
Tapout UFC
Taz Wanted
Terminator: Dawn of Fate
Test Drive: Overdrive
The Emperor's Tomb
The Fellowship Of Ring
The Great Escape
The House of the Dead 3
The Hulk
The Italian Job: L.A Heist
The Legend of Black Kat
The Return of the King*
The Man of Steel
The Matrix
The Reckoning - Hunter
The Simpsons: Hit & Run
The Simpsons: Road Rage
The Sims
The Thing
The Time Sweeper - Blinx
The Two Towers
Tides of War
Tiger Woods Golf 2003
Tiger Woods Golf 2004
Time Splitters 2
TOCA Race Driver
ToeJam & Earl 3
Tom Clancy: Ghost Recon
Tom Clancy's I. Thunder
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
Tony Hawk's 3
Tony Hawk's 4
Tony Hawk's U'ground*
Total Immersion Racing
Totaled!
Toxic Grind
Transworld S'boarding
True Crime: Streets of LA*
Turok: Evolution
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger
U = 2 1
Ult. Race. Tech. MotoGP2
Unreal: Champ. Edition
V = 2 2
Vendetta: Die Hard
Vice City, G.T.A.
V-Rally 3
W = 2 3
Wakeboarding Unleash.
Whacked!
Wolfenstein, Return to
Wolverine's Revenge
World Chmp. Snooker 03
World Cup 2002
World Racing Merc. Benz
World Series Baseball
Wrath of Cortex
Wreckless: Yakuza Miss.
WW2: Prisoner of War
WWE Raw 2:Ruthless A
X = 2 4
XGRA
X-Men 2: Wolverine's Rev.
X-Men: Next Dimension
Xtreme Beach Volleyball
Y = 2 5
Yager
Z = 2 6
Zapper
0-9 = 2 7
007 Agent Under Fire
007 Nightfire
2002 FIFA World Cup
4x4 Evolution 2
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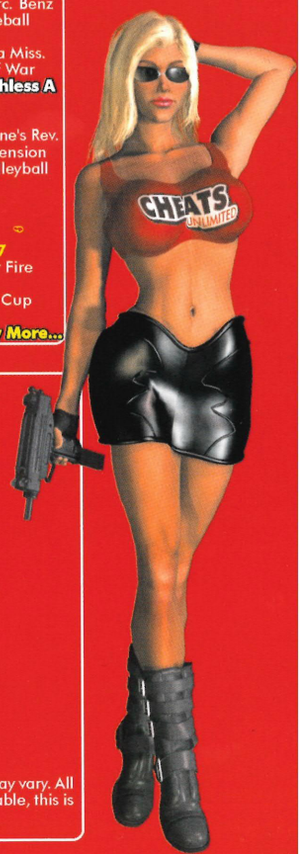

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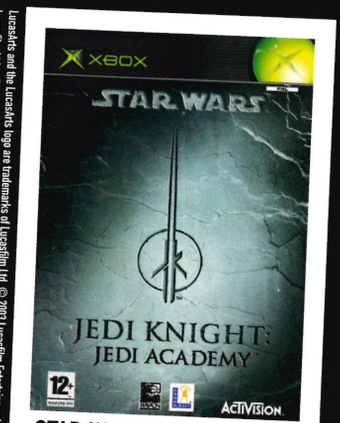

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SWAT
Global Strike Team

Released 21/11

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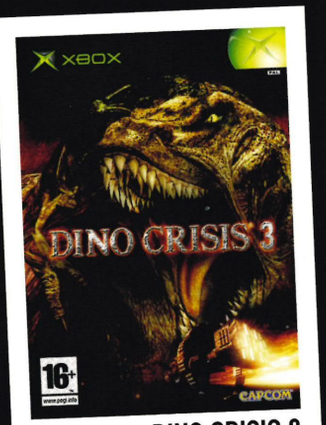
TOP SPIN

Released 07/11



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DINO CRISIS 3

Released 07/11

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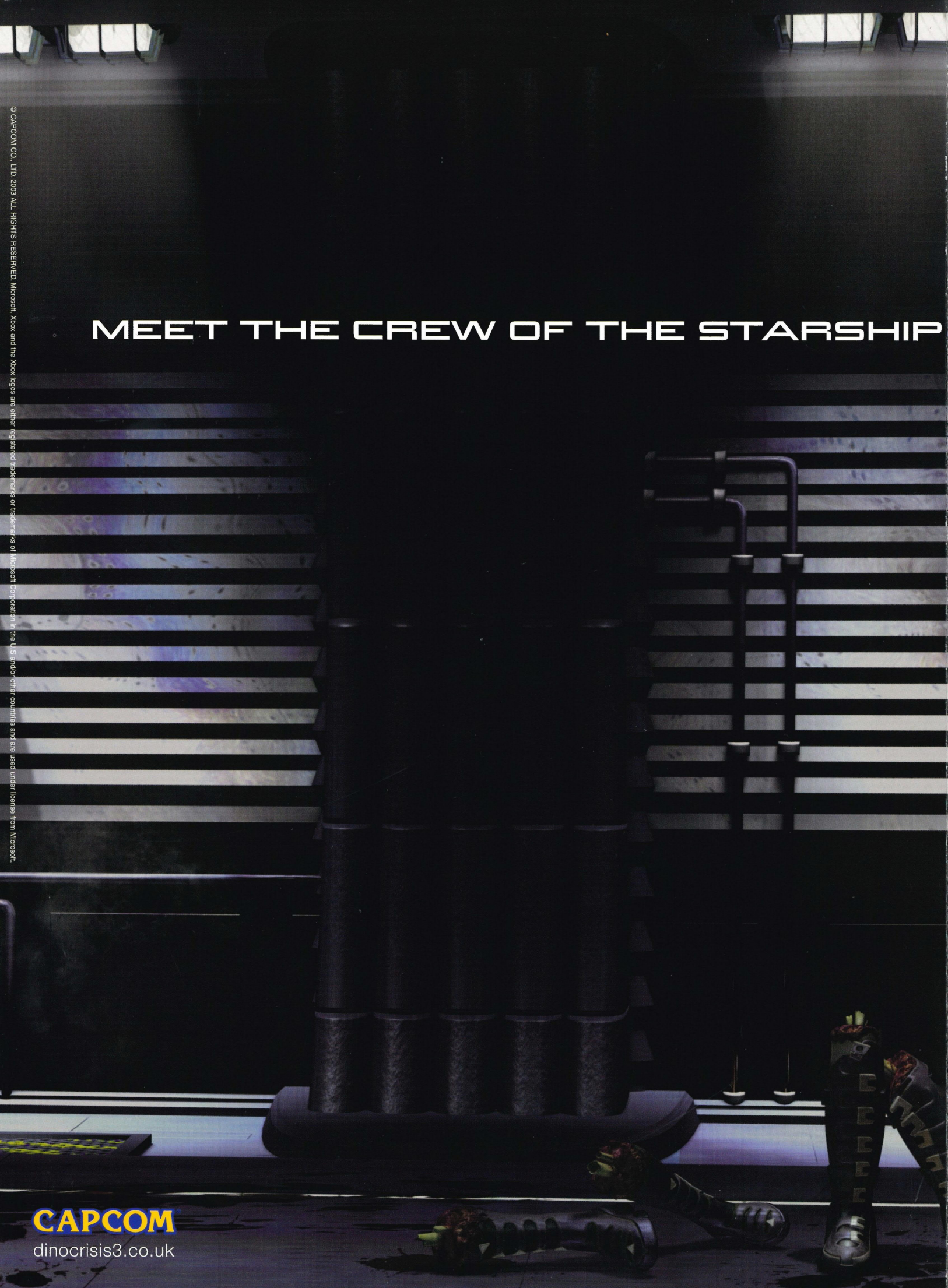

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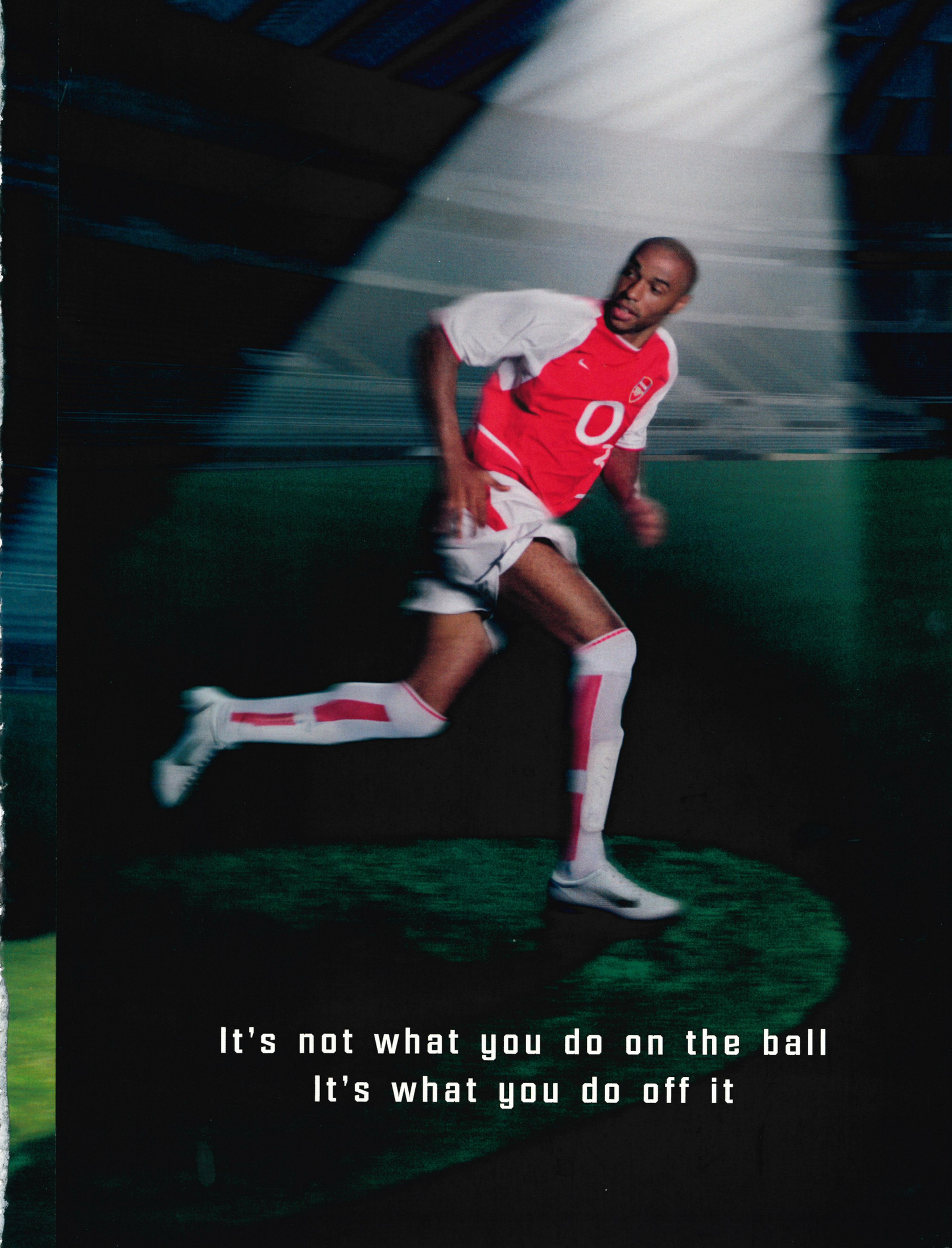
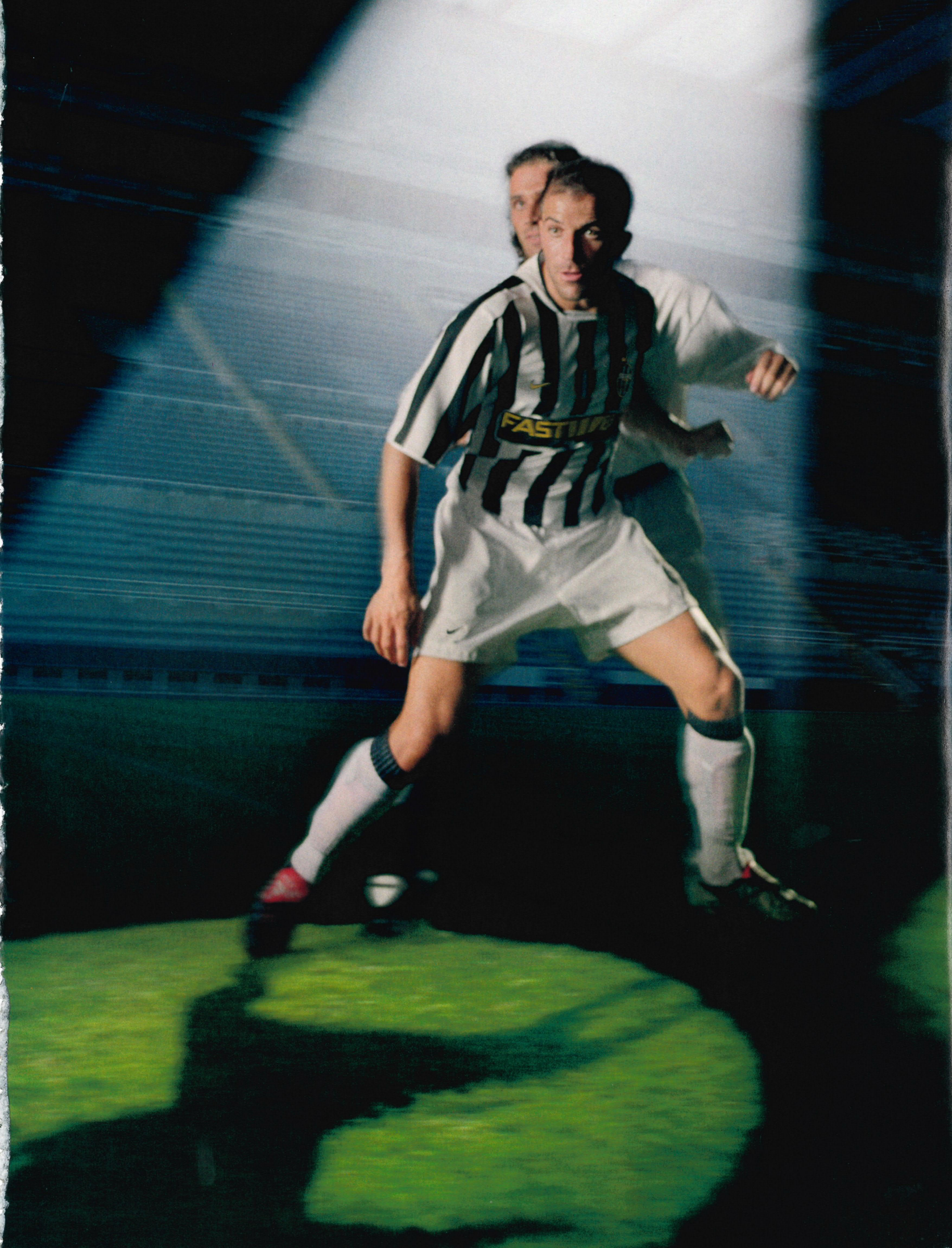
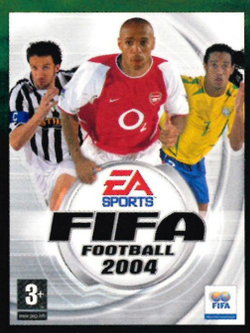

It's not what you do on the ball
It's what you do off it



Great players know that it's what they do Off The Ball that makes them great. A world class striker is a master of Off The Ball™ Running, tearing open the defence to make himself available for the killer pass. He fights for every inch of turf, jostling with defenders to steal a yard and gain the advantage. While a great defender closes down an opponent who is on the ball so that a team mate can steam in, make the tackle and win the ball.

Create brilliance. With OFF THE BALL™ Control.



EA SPORTS

It's in the game.™

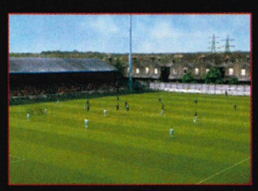
FIFA

Spotlight Off The Ball™ Vision. Now your reading of the game makes all the difference. Achieve complete control over every player on the pitch. Not only the one with the ball. Play passes into space and anticipate the movement of team-mates. Pick out the player who has made the most prescient run and deliver the perfect pass to split the opposition.

Spotlight Off The Ball™ Running. Great players know that what you do without the ball matters just as much as what you do with it. Make dummy runs, find the space and pull defenders out of position. So that, when the killer ball comes your way, you're in the right place to inflict maximum pain.

Spotlight Off The Ball™ Receiving. Invade the space and then defend it. Off The Ball™ Control means that you have to fight over every inch of turf for the good of the team. And risk losing your shirt in the process. Because you need to be strong to get into the best position to receive the ball. And brilliant to bury it.

Spotlight Innovative Gameplay. The enhancements to FIFA Football 2004 don't end with Off The Ball control. In-game Team Management lets you change tactics and call plays in real-time. Plus you can create set pieces and introduce them into the action at the touch of a button thanks to Set Piece Play-Calling. It's a whole new ball game.



Spotlight Career Mode. Assume the manager's role and take your team from zeroes to heroes. The inclusion of lower league teams and stadia brings greater depth to the gameplay, with the added spice of promotion and relegation battles. If you can balance the books and take your team from nowhere to the big time in successive seasons, immortality awaits.

Spotlight Football Fusion. Get even more from FIFA this year with Football Fusion. Import a team from Total Club Manager 2004 and play their games for real in FIFA, then export the result and continue managing. You can create an all-star team in Total Club Manager 2004 and play their fixtures in your new FIFA game. Or export a team from Total Club Manager 2004 not featured in FIFA Football 2004 and play their matches in real-time.

www.fifafootball2004.ea.com

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