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Alcohol Reference
Mild Language
Violence

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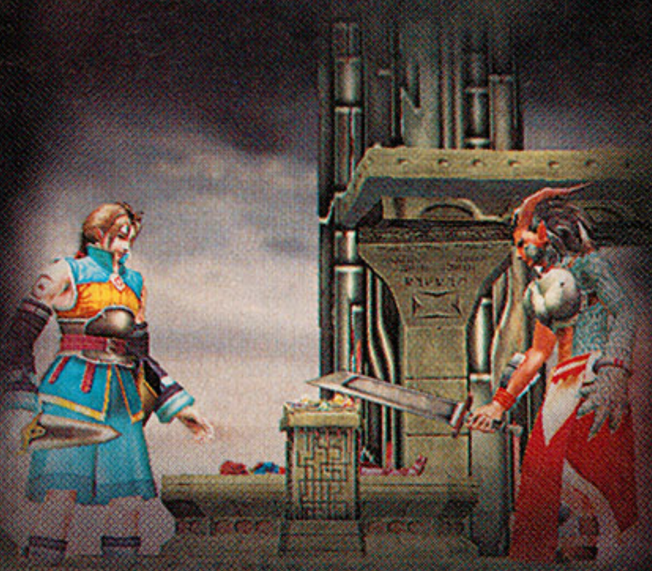

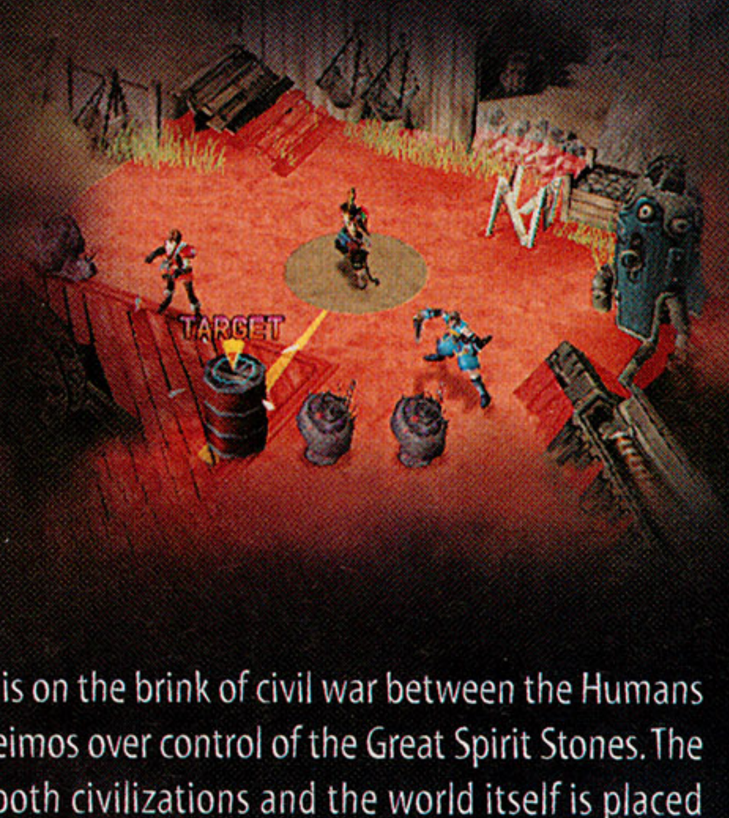

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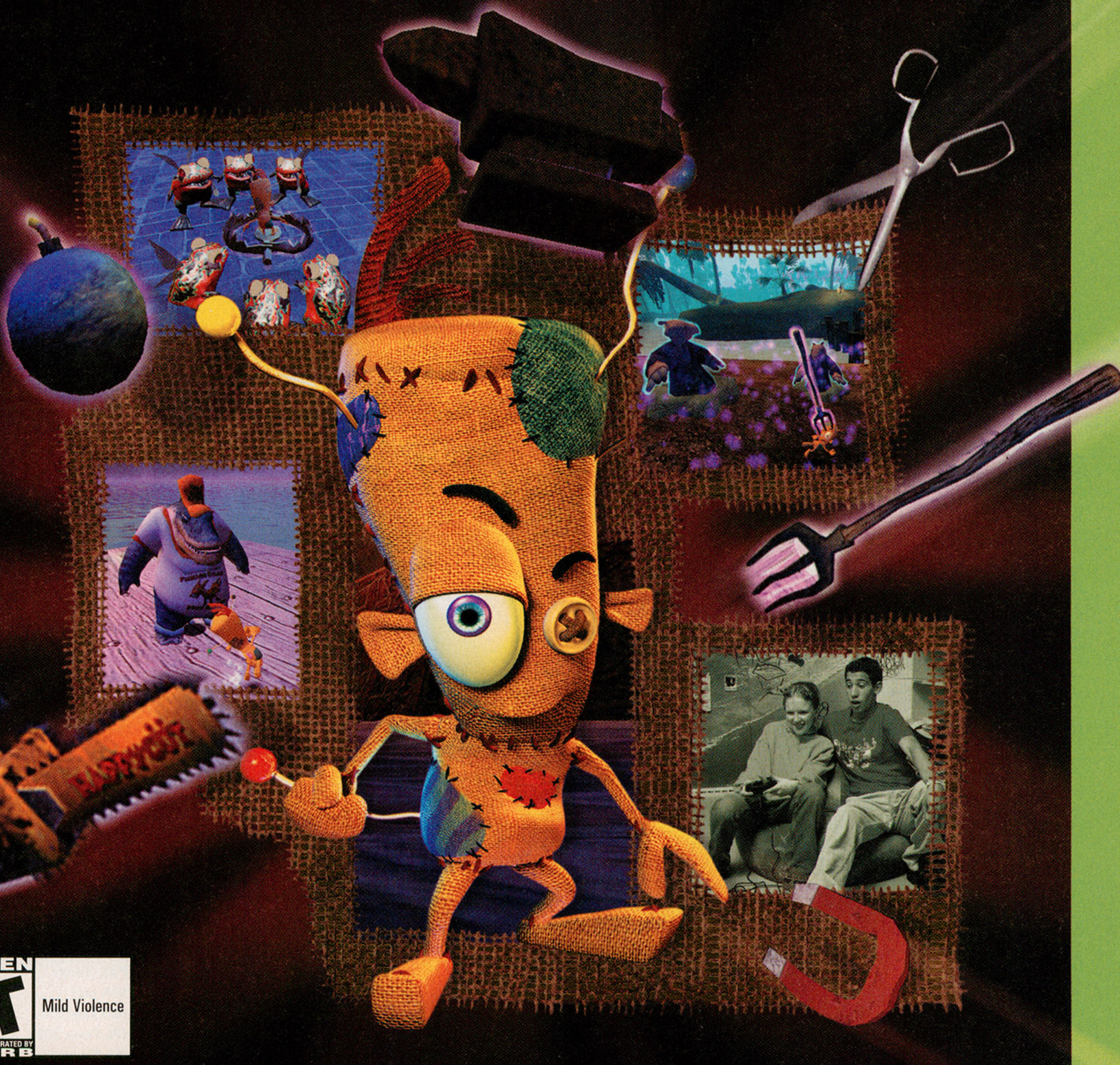

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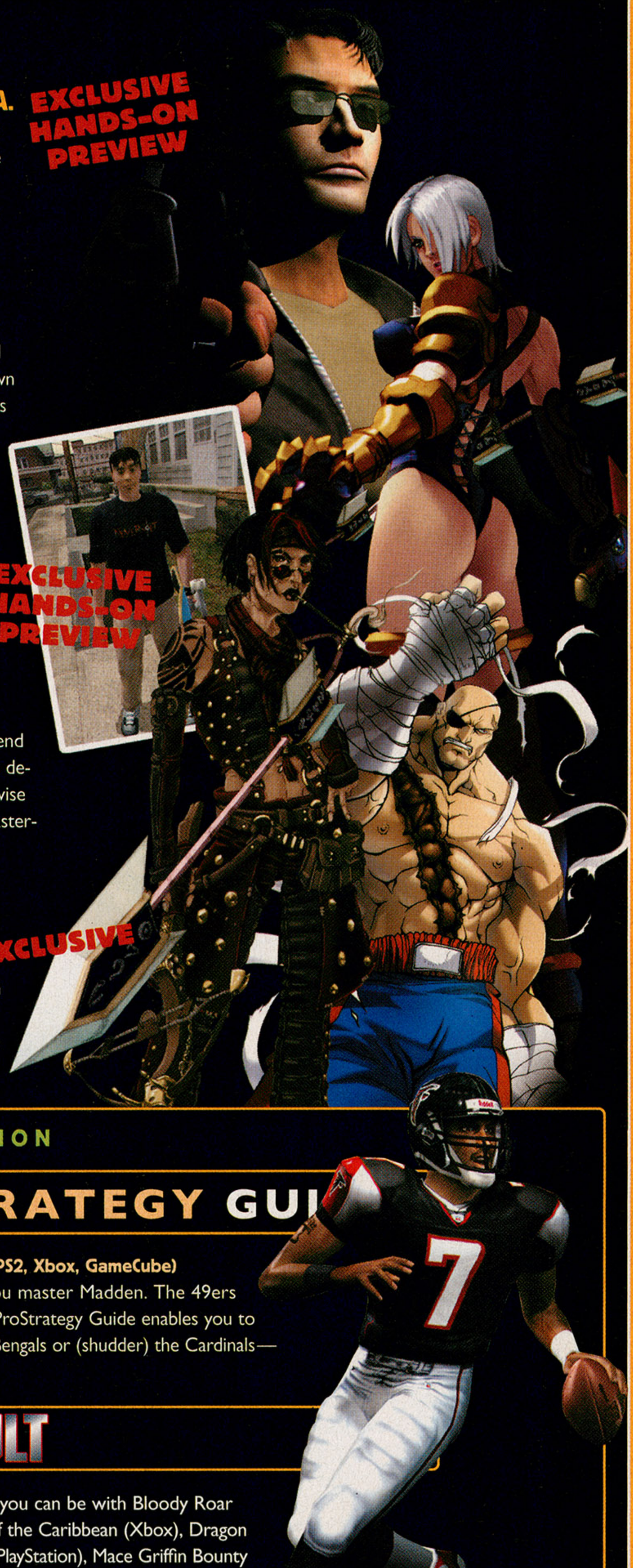

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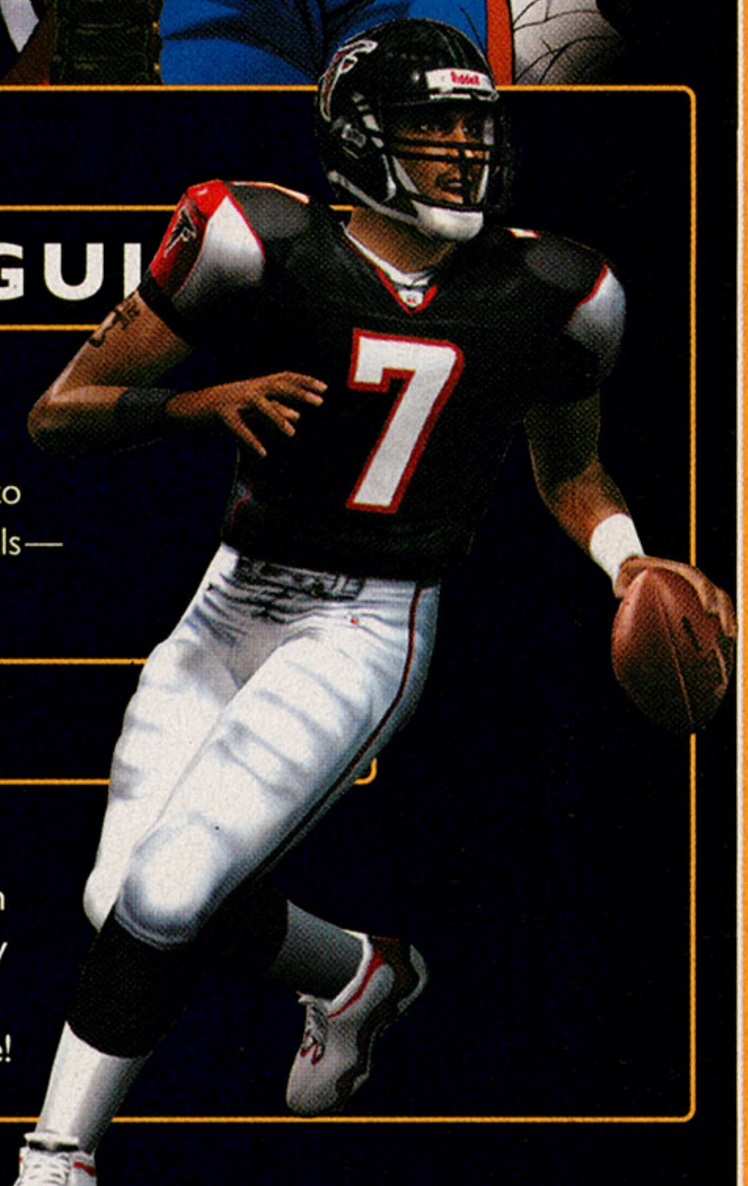

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Go to GamePro.com for reviews and previews of *all* the hottest games for the PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, PC, and more. Enter contests to win awesome prizes, find the latest cheats, print out strategies, and chat with a different GamePro everyday.

This Month

- ESPN NFL Football (PS2)
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- Half-Life 2 (PC)
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Check out the entertainment channel for reviews of newly released movies, comics, anime, toys, and all the latest DVDs. Be sure to check out New Comics Day every Friday.

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It was written in the prophecy that a great hero would come to strike fear in the hearts of his enemies.

Apparently, the big hairy ape didn't get the message.

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EDITOR'S LETTER

Do or Don't Do the Crime

Last year, Grand Theft Auto: Vice City's free-roaming game design was an unqualified success. But with "go anywhere" came "do anything," and the perceived lack of conscience in GTA's criminal-as-role-model approach mainlined directly into America's love-hate affair with crime.

There's no new Grand Theft this year, but there is True Crime (this issue's cover story). This ambitious project, homegrown at Activision, is also a free-roaming crime caper, but it attempts to make you deal with the consequences of your actions...just like in the real world.

As an undercover police officer, you progress along the multiple threads of the game's intricate branching story line depending on whether you play Good Cop or Bad Cop. Your decisions and your behavior toward other characters, private property, traffic laws, etc. propel you along paths toward one of three different endings. Assist citizens in distress, and your cooperative informants might lead you to a Good Cop ending. Make like Vic Mackey from *The Shield*, and you've got to bust knuckles for a one-way ticket to the Bad Cop ending.

The innovative twist here is that you continually switch tracks based on your real-time gameplay decisions. When confronted with a crisis situation, what would you do to get what you want? Right or wrong? Good or bad? Now that's an interesting challenge. A video game that attempts to show some conscience is an idea whose time has come. If more games don't begin to follow this lead, now that would truly be a crime.

The GamePros
Oakland, CA
letters@gamepro.com

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PS2Pro?

I've noticed something about your magazine. You should name yourself *PS2Pro* instead of *GamePro* because everything is PS2. The screen shots that you show for games that are multiplatform say "All screens are from the PS2 version." Every other magazine I know shows Xbox because usually the Xbox version is better looking, but not you guys. Your best-selling list is always PS2 games; sometimes a GameCube gets in there, but there are games that are released for the Xbox that are never on the best-selling list. That means you're telling your readers that everyone is only buying PS2 games, but I know more people who want or own an Xbox. I wish you would stop doing Xbox because you disgrace it. From now on, every time I get your magazine in the mail, I'll just look at the cover, see all the "PS2"s next to game titles, and throw it away. If you do not have Brute Force as a best-seller for May, then everyone will know you're lying because the game didn't do so great, but a hell of a lot of people bought it!

▶ **Unknown–Via Internet**

Many developers create their games on the PS2 first and then port it over to the Xbox and GameCube. That's why many times you will see "All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version"—because at the time that the article was written, that was all that was available. Whenever we can, we show screens from as many formats as possible, but often, companies only offer the one that's the furthest along, and more often than not, that's the PS2. The Xbox is catching up, though.

Furthermore, the best-selling list that runs in the Loading... section is created by NPD Funworld, an independent sales-tracking organization. If no Xbox or GameCube games are listed in the top 10 (the February 2003 list, which ran in our June issue, was all PS2 for the top 10 for the first time ever, and a comment was made about that extremely unusual fact in our Static column), it's only because PS2 games outsold them that month and does not reflect *GamePro*'s opinion or any editorial decision.

As it turns out, Brute Force was number-five on the best-selling games list for the month of May (check our September issue for those results). In fact, three of the five best-selling games that month were Xbox titles. We can't take credit for that because, again, *GamePro* is just the messenger. But in the meantime, it would be very nice if you would stop making your biases sound like our biases. It's great you like your Xbox—we like ours, too. But ultimately, the hardware really doesn't matter to us; it's all about the games.

Too Fast Forward

Hey dudes, I'm 25 years old, and I've owned the 8-bit NES and the Turbo-Grafx 16, and now I own the Xbox and PS2. I've noticed that the games made for each system tend to get better graphically a year or so after the machine is released, then once we reach the stage where the games themselves start getting better, new systems come out. Take for example Ocarina of Time for the N64 and Wind Waker for the GameCube. If it could be done on the N64, why isn't the GameCube version astronomically bigger and better, considering the difference in capacities between the consoles? My question is, do developers ever utilize the full potential of a game console, or do they just release a new system for sales' sake?

▶ **Ruben Martinez–Vineland, NJ**

Progress waits for no man, Ruben—not even Shigeru Miyamoto. There are a few things to consider here. One is Moore's Law, which states that every 18 months, computer chips double in storage capacity. Take a look at history, and it's more or less true. New game consoles come out every five years or so and usually utilize the most affordable, impressive technology available at the time. It doesn't mean that the existing hardware is bad—just that there's better stuff available now.

Graphics are one of the easiest improvements enabled by new hardware and, for better or worse, they're also the first thing most people notice on a game. Who hasn't found themselves saying, "That looks gorgeous!" when they see the first screens of a new console's software lineup? Gameplay innovations—advances that establish new

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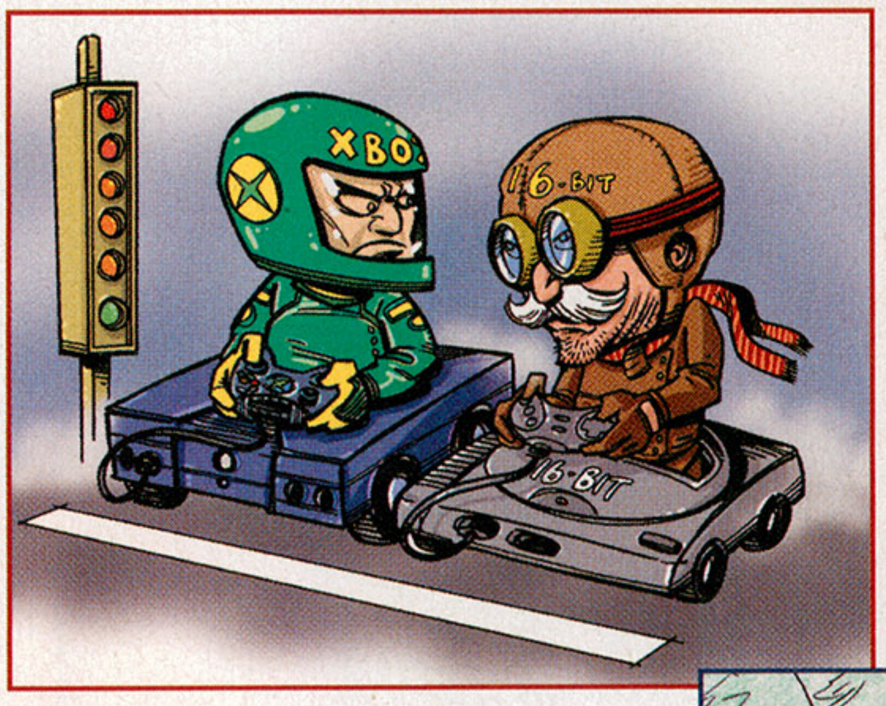
genres—are significantly harder and take more time (just ask Will Wright—The Sims took him eight years).

Thankfully, brilliant ideas are not hardware-dependent, but some ideas, like Grand Theft Auto III, admittedly have to wait for new hardware to be fully realized. Plus, game development cycles have grown apace with the industry; a team of 12 people used to create a game in about a year, but now many games take twice that long and four times the staff. When new systems come out, companies want to publish games for them. It's a business, after all, and being associated with the latest and greatest is usually what game creators and publishers want. Why edge by in an Edsel when you can floor a Ferrari?



But here's a Zen riddle for you: How do you know when a game console's potential has been completely tapped? Be careful of answering too quickly; there are programmers still making homebrew games for the Atari 2600, exploiting that hardware in new and clever ways. Maybe the answer is that, for financial reasons, the motivation to push the hardware envelope changes, but as fans of technology, the desire to see that envelope pushed never does.

Gimme Goodies

Why do people who go to the store to buy your magazine get special treatment? I'm not trying to sound rude, but you're neglecting your longtime supporters. With the newsstand version, you try to lure newcomers in with DVDs, codebooks, and other stuff (which is completely understandable). Many subscribers want to have that stuff, too, but we can't because we've already signed up. I think subscribers should have something exclusive, like a coupon for a free rental at Blockbuster or something. In my opinion, those ideas would be worth it even for an extra $5 per year. I say we subscribers should have a package just like the one in the stores.

▶ **C.J. Gross–Southaven, MS**

It's a fair point, C.J., and we agree with you—so much so that we did exactly what you suggest a few years back. In late 2000, we started a program called GamePro Plus, where, for an extra $5, subscribers would receive the newsstand edition of *GamePro* as well as an extra page with special notes from the editors and coupon-like GamePro Dollars, which were redeemable for special offers. It failed spectacularly—it lasted only six months before the program was terminated. Like you, we thought it would be a nice option for anybody who felt like they were missing out, but unfortunately, the majority disagreed—very few subscribers took us up on the offer.

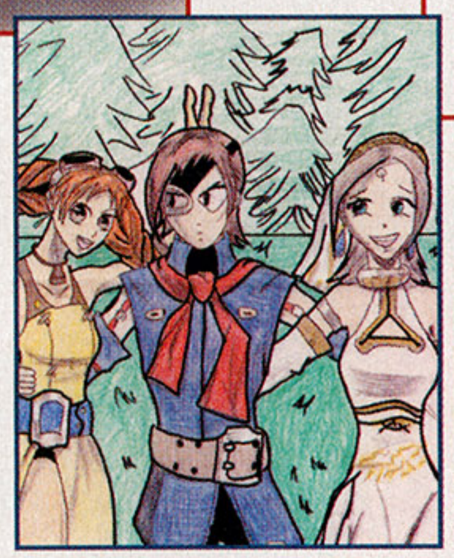
Thanks for understanding why we do the goodies, though. Competition is fierce at your local grocery-store magazine rack—many magazines put a little something extra in the baggie to entice casual readers (if you bought this issue on the newsstand, you received a GamePro Action Disc with the entire Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater trailer on it). Subscribers don't get those goodies, but they do get an amazing discount on the price of the magazine. In *GamePro*'s case, it's just $18 per year for a subscription as opposed to $72 a year at the newsstand. So it's not that we don't value subscribers' loyalty—subscribers are already being paid over $50 for sticking with us in the long run. And wouldn't you rather use that extra money on more games?

For more letters, go to GamePro.com!

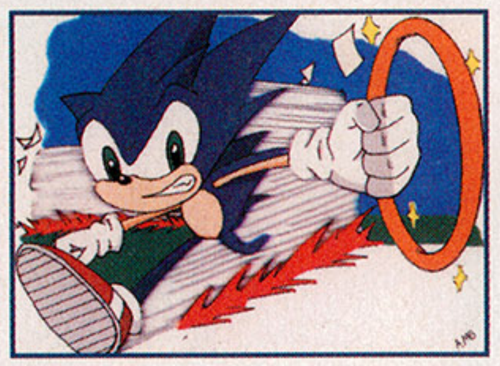
Art Attack!

Pick of the Month!

V. Frey–Upper Black Eddy, PA



C. Frazier–Memphis, TN



A. Grahn–Glencoe, MN

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GamePro magazine
Art Attack
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Oakland, CA 94623-2210

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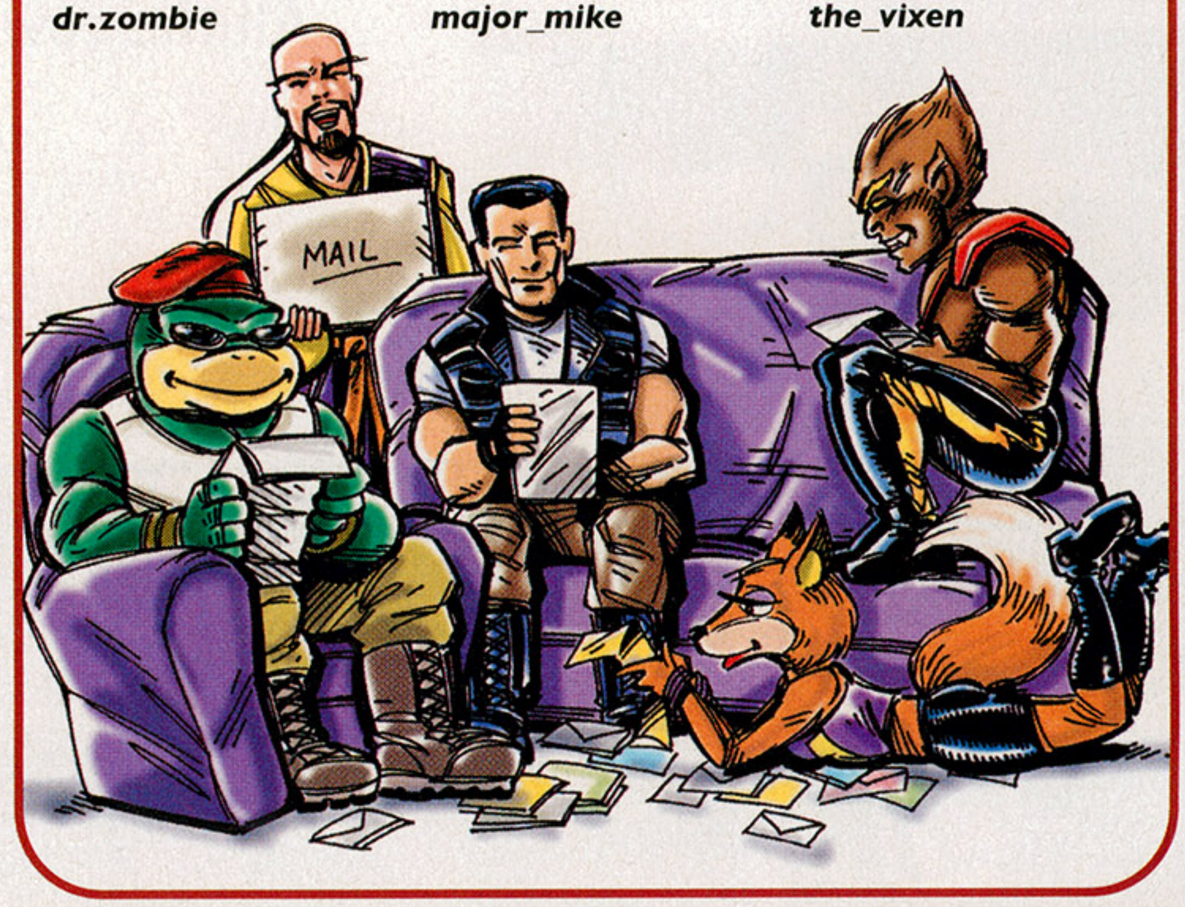
Got a strange urge to communicate with the *GamePro* editors? E-mail them at **"editor's name"@gamepro.com**!

air_hendrix	***dunjin_master***	***miss_spell***
brobuzz	***fennecfox***	***pongsifu***
danelektro	***four-eyed_dragon***	***star_dingo***
dpad_destroyer	***jen_x***	***tokyo_drifter***
dr.zombie	***major_mike***	***the_vixen***



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PlayStation

XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

PlayStation 2

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Comic Mischief
Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes

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LOADING... BUYERS BEWARE

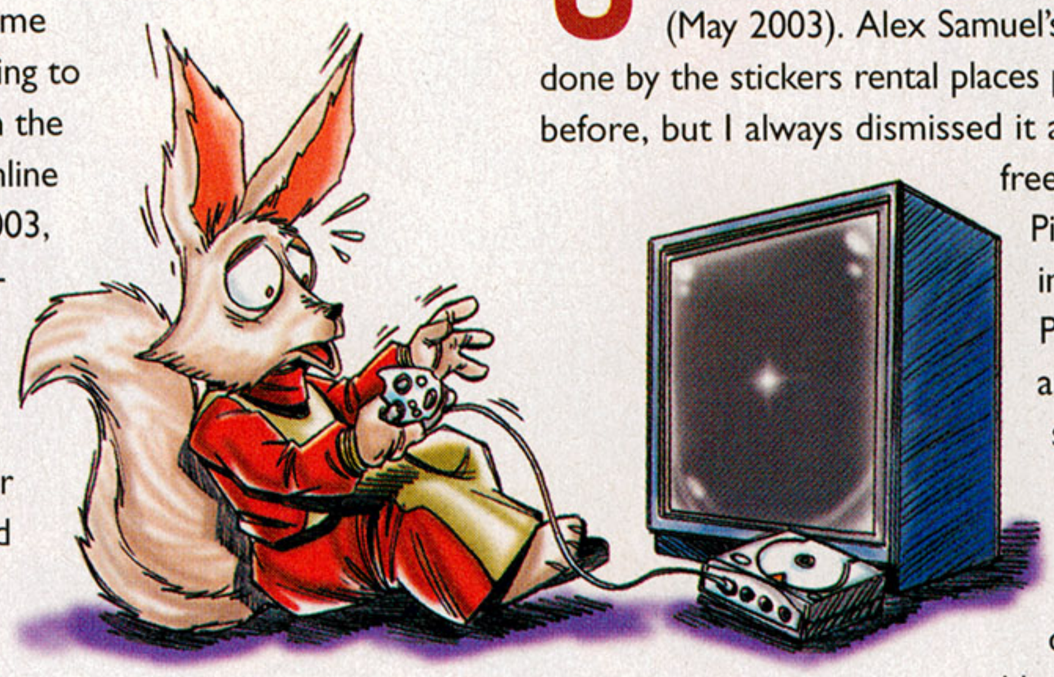
By The Watch Dog

The Dreamcast goes offline, the HDTV invasion, and a couple of readers give their two cents in the column that even a yeti would love.

Q I tried to play Chu Chu Rocket for the Dreamcast online and found out that Sega is no longer supporting the game online. Have they discontinued online service for all of their online games?

Terrence Gavin—Via Internet

A Sega has disconnected online support for the majority of the Dreamcast's game library but not all of them as of yet. According to a press release: "As we continue to focus on the future, it is time for us to disconnect our online Dreamcast game servers. Effective June 2003, the only Dreamcast titles that Sega will continue to support online are Phantasy Star Online and Phantasy Star Online ver. 2. No other Dreamcast titles will be playable online after this time. We hope you enjoyed our online gaming services that were extended six months beyond the original shutdown date. Thank you for supporting Dreamcast online gaming!"

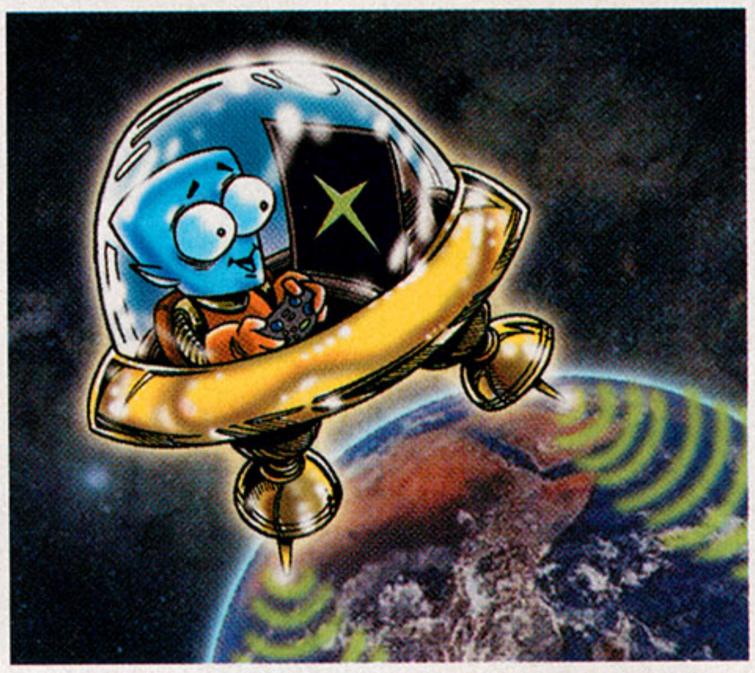


Our resident online gaming guru and Sega sultan Fennec Fox adds: The shutdown of the Dreamcast's online servers is historically significant because Sega's final game console was the first ever to include a built-in modem that supported network play out of the box. Phantasy Star Online, the Dreamcast's most popular online title, may fade away on the Dreamcast but will still live on in its GameCube and Xbox incarnations.

Q Will Xbox Live work with a satellite Internet connection?

Alex Potter—Via Internet

A It should be no problem. As long as the Internet Service Provider provides your signal over an Ethernet cable at the point that it connects to your actual computer, it should not matter whether it is cable, DSL, or satcom. Standard Ethernet cable is called RJ-45 cable; that's what actually carries the data from your Internet modem to your computer or console. But beyond that, the delivery method does not matter—as long as there's data flowing at one end of the RJ-45 cable (and the ISP has to deliver that; that's in the provider's contract), then the Xbox will happily accept it.



Q All too soon enough, HDTVs (high-definition televisions) will take over the playing field. I was wondering if you knew what the different platforms were going to do as far as the HDTV takeover is concerned. Are they going to just re-create the systems and people will have to repurchase them, or will all gamers just have to trade in their system/games for ones compatible with the HDTV format?

Spam—Richmond, VA

A The PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube already support the higher resolution levels HDTV offers. The Xbox is the most HDTV-friendly, supporting the three possible "modes" of display. They're commonly referred to as 480p (the max detail level of current DVD movies), 720p (sharper, how most PC titles look), and 1080i (top-of-the-line resolution). The GameCube and the current PlayStation 2 support 480p, but the 720p and 1080i require a very specialized cable. A new PS2 with simpler progressive scan capability hit Japanese stores recently and may come over to the States soon. So, you won't have to buy new gaming hardware, just a new TV and maybe a new cable. Don't rush out just yet, though, because the amount of games available supporting the higher resolutions is still pretty modest.

U I was just reading a letter in the Buyers Beware section of issue 176 (May 2003). Alex Samuel's letter got me interested in the damage done by the stickers rental places put on their products. I have heard of this before, but I always dismissed it as someone trying to get something for free. I am an assistant store director with a Pittsburgh-area Hollywood Video. I used my inside track to test VHS tapes, DVDs, and PS2 discs. I put stickers in different places and in different ways, and found that the stickers seemed to have no effect on VHS tapes and a slight effect on DVDs (which may be dismissed because I used a PS2 to play the DVDs). The PS2 discs were different, though. In general, the game would work, but it would either delay severely or freeze. I found that by changing the position of the PS2, the games worked better. I brought my findings and the *GamePro* article to my store director's attention. I am now happy to say that we will no longer place stickers on our disc-based games. See? One person can make a difference, Alex!

Tony Krause—Pittsburgh, PA

U In the Buyers Beware section of the February 2003 issue there was a question from D. Yeom about the PS2 Network Adaptor (Editor's note: D. could not play online games when connecting to his Internet Service Provider). I don't think it's his ISP (Charter Cable) that's causing the problem. If you have a router, this is what you need to do: Set that for AUTO, and then for the DNS numbers, access your router info from your computer and set the DNS numbers (the first DNS and Secondary) in your PS2. Save that, and you should be able to log on to all of your games. This took me a little while to figure out, but I hope it will work for you.

Jason Toeller—Via Internet

Submissions

At *GamePro*, listening is what we do best. When you have a problem with a product or feel you've been ripped off, we want to know. Write to:

GamePro's Buyers Beware
P.O. Box 22210
Oakland, CA 94623-2210

Or e-mail us at:
buyers_beware.gamepro@gamepro.com

You Make the Call

Having problems with hardware or software from Sony, Nintendo, or Microsoft? Here are the customer service numbers to call:

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Nintendo: 800/255-3700

Microsoft: 800/469-9269

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New Game Boy Advance SP
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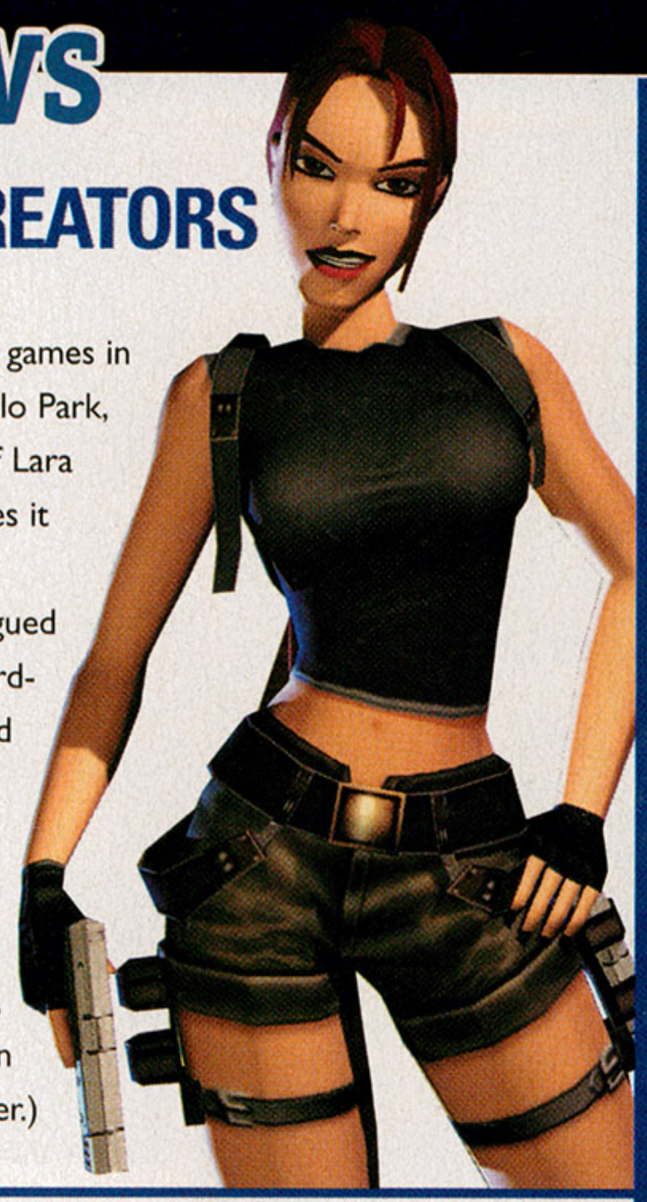
EIDOS TAKES TOMB RAIDER FROM CREATORS

Crystal Dynamics will create Lara's next adventure



At the end of July, Eidos Interactive's London headquarters announced that future games in the Tomb Raider franchise will hereby be developed by Crystal Dynamics, its Menlo Park, California–based development studio—which means that Core Design, makers of Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness, will no longer be involved in the series it created in 1996.

Although the newest Tomb Raider has sold well for Eidos, development was plagued with delays and the project missed an important deadline in Europe in June. According to Eidos, the first Crystal-developed Tomb Raider game is tentatively scheduled for release in the 2005 fiscal year—in other words, by June 30, 2005. The company also said that brisk sales of The Angel of Darkness worldwide will allow it to reach its original financial forecast for 2003.

Crystal Dynamics, mostly known for the Legacy of Kain/Soul Reaver games, said previously that it's currently working on three titles: Legacy of Kain: Defiance, Whiplash, and an unidentified PlayStation 2 project. (This mystery project has been under development for a while, so it's doubtful that the game is a new Tomb Raider.)

STUDY: GAMERS LESS NERDY THAN ASSUMED

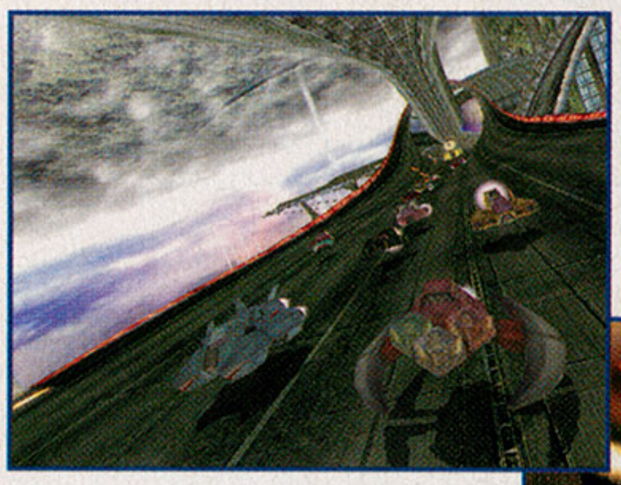
You are not as big a loser as the world might think you are.

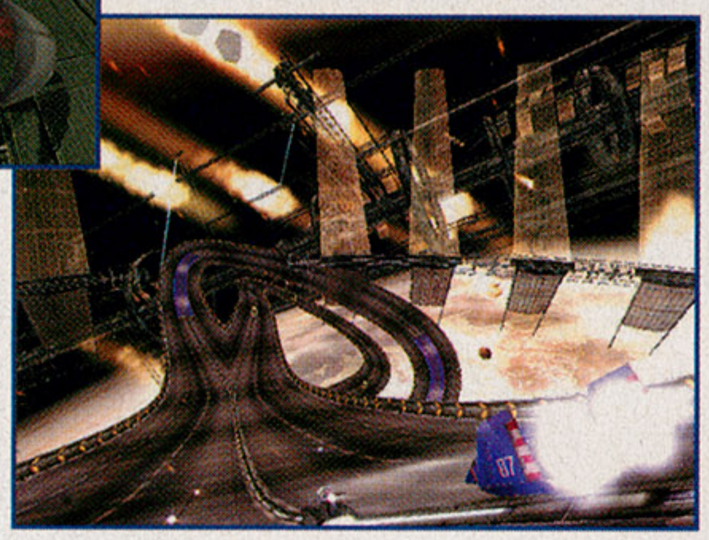
That's the result of research conducted by the University of Illinois, which polled 1162 college students on 27 campuses nationwide last year. Whereas popular society has long reinforced the stereotype of gamers as anti-social hermits who succeed in the virtual world but fail in the real one, the new study suggests just the opposite. "It's not taking the place of studying, nor is it taking away from other activities,'" said researcher Steve Jones, chairman of the communications department at the University of Illinois at Chicago, to the Associated Press. "What they seem to have done is incorporated gaming into a very multitask-oriented lifestyle." And that old joke about never leaving the house or seeing the sunshine? You can throw that away, too. "What we found is that [gaming is] a very social activity," Jones said. Some collegiate gamers who stopped playing games for fear of having their grades suffer found that their social lives took a turn for the worse instead.

Furthermore, while males still make up the largest portion of gamers, females who enjoy games exist—science has now proven it! Of the women who completed the survey, 60 percent said they played online and computer software–based games, compared to 40 percent of men. About the same number of men and women said they played game consoles.

HOT AT THE ARCADES

F-Zero AX





F-Zero AX, a sit-down coin-op unit, features a GameCube memory slot that enables you to transport racers customized in the arcades to your GameCube and vice versa. Additionally, as with Sega's Initial D racing units, AX dispenses license cards that enable you to save customized cars and track progress, and then transport both to other arcades.

AX racing is a total white-knuckle experience with speed-infused visuals that blast you through a dizzying, high-tech environment. It's a tribute of sorts to the graphics that you even notice the six expansive, dazzling track designs as you rocket along diabolically designed loops, spirals, and stomach-squelching drop-jumps among 30 competing racers.

The unit's steering wheel features column-mounted airbrakes with the booster button in the middle of the hub. Foot brake and accelerator are below, and the seat is set on a moving shaft that jerks left and right to simulate lateral movement. Given the intensity of the ride, the hardware may be a bit of an overkill, but as an arcade racer, F-Zero AX is no GameCube gimmick.—*Undercover Lover*

Developed by Amusement Vision/Sega • Published by Nintendo • Available now

UGE Postponed

If you were bummed that you missed the Ultimate Gamers Expo in August, don't feel bad—it didn't happen. UGE, a Los Angeles–based game event similar to E³ but open to the public, announced that its inaugural show, which was set for August 15–17, has been postponed to next year. The show will now take place next summer at the Los Angeles Convention Center; the final date was still to be announced at press time.

According to a UGE representative, the public event was postponed due to a lack of exhibitors willing to commit early to the show. "There's been a lot of late interest," the spokesperson told *GamePro*. "A lot of people wanted to participate at the last minute, but it would have been hard to physically put it together, so we'll be carrying this interest into the next show."

With UGE's postponement, Infinium Labs now has no place to debut its new Phantom console, which was set to have its public launch at the show floor. The PC-based system was scheduled to make its debut online August 17 at midnight at phantom.net. The machine's offline debut will be moved to the COMDEX trade show on November 17 in Las Vegas.

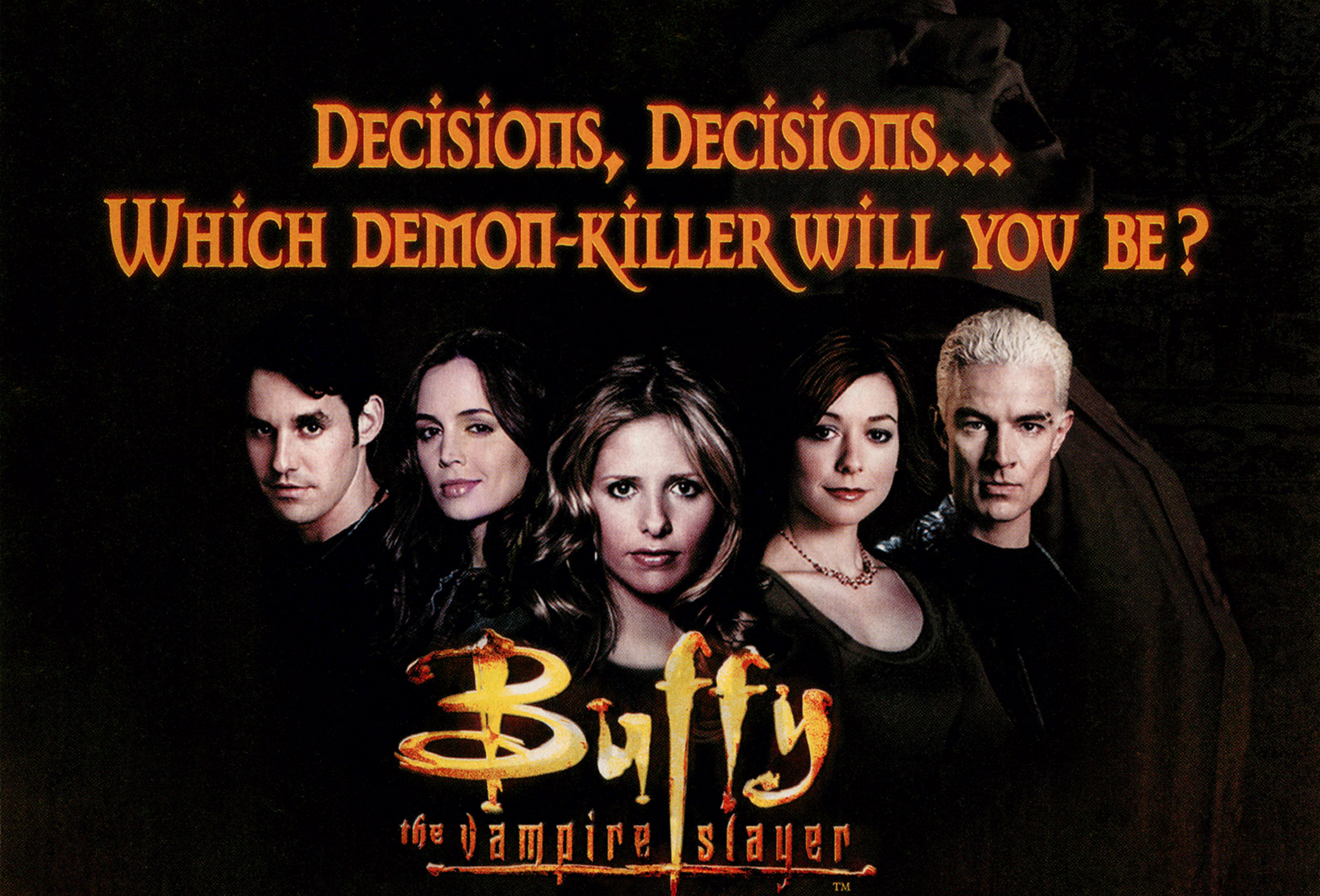
Game Over Hits TV

Hollywood is forever searching for a way to cash in on gaming's culture; the latest is a mid-season replacement show on UPN entitled *Game Over*. The animated sitcom will follow the exploits of the Smashenburns, a family living in an alternate, video-game universe. Fittingly, the entire prime-time show will be computer-generated and will feature the voices of Patrick Warburton (*Seinfeld*), Marisa Tomei (*My Cousin Vinny*), Artie Lange (*The Howard Stern Show*), and E.G. Daily (*The Powerpuff Girls*).

DOAX Bikinis? DOAX Bikinis!

Strange but true: Tecmo has issued a limited edition line of swimwear based on the outfits seen in its controversial hit Xbox game, Dead or Alive Xtreme Beach Volleyball. Designed by Team Ninja and manufactured in Japan, real-life versions of the Lamina, Kepheus, Amaterasu, and Asterope suits can be ordered directly from Tecmo's website, tecmoinc.com. You'll pay a lot for a very little, however—each suit is priced at $149.99.

Decisions, Decisions...
Which demon-killer will you be?



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THE GAMEPRO INTERVIEW: CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH

A ground swell of curiosity has steadily grown around the latest title from the developers behind Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance. Built around the mythology of EverQuest, Champions of Norrath features familiar locations, items, and characters from the popular MMORPG series but will be very accessible to the average action/RPG player. *GamePro* had a chance to speak to Rob Hill, producer for Sony Online Entertainment, about the game.

GamePro: How long has Champions of Norrath been in development?

Rob Hill: Champions of Norrath has been in development for a little over a year. At present, there are over 16 people actively working on the project.

GP: How much of the game's internals are from Dark Alliance?

RH: We started with the core engine of Dark Alliance and began to add many new features to get the look and functionality we wanted for Champions of Norrath. The engine now has the ability to do random dungeons, higher polygon characters, more detailed textures, and support much more art than previously. We also modified the game's interface to allow for more actions to be available to the player while they are engaged in battle. They can quickly bring up spells and skills at a second's notice, which is important due to the amount we provide to players.

GP: What do you feel will make the game stand out?

RH: To start with, the game looks amazing. The detail on the characters, environments, and spells will wow game players. On top of this, the emphasis was placed on providing characters with a deep array of skills, spells, and items to gain during play. This alone adds quite a bit of replayability to the title that will be very appreciated by our audience.

GP: How much leeway has SOE given you with the EverQuest world?

RH: The goal was to make a game that did not require knowledge of the EverQuest world but provided players who are familiar with EQ many recognizable aspects. We took character classes, spells, items, and location names from EQ, and adapted them into a riveting action/RPG experience.

GP: What type of online experience should players expect from Champions of Norrath?

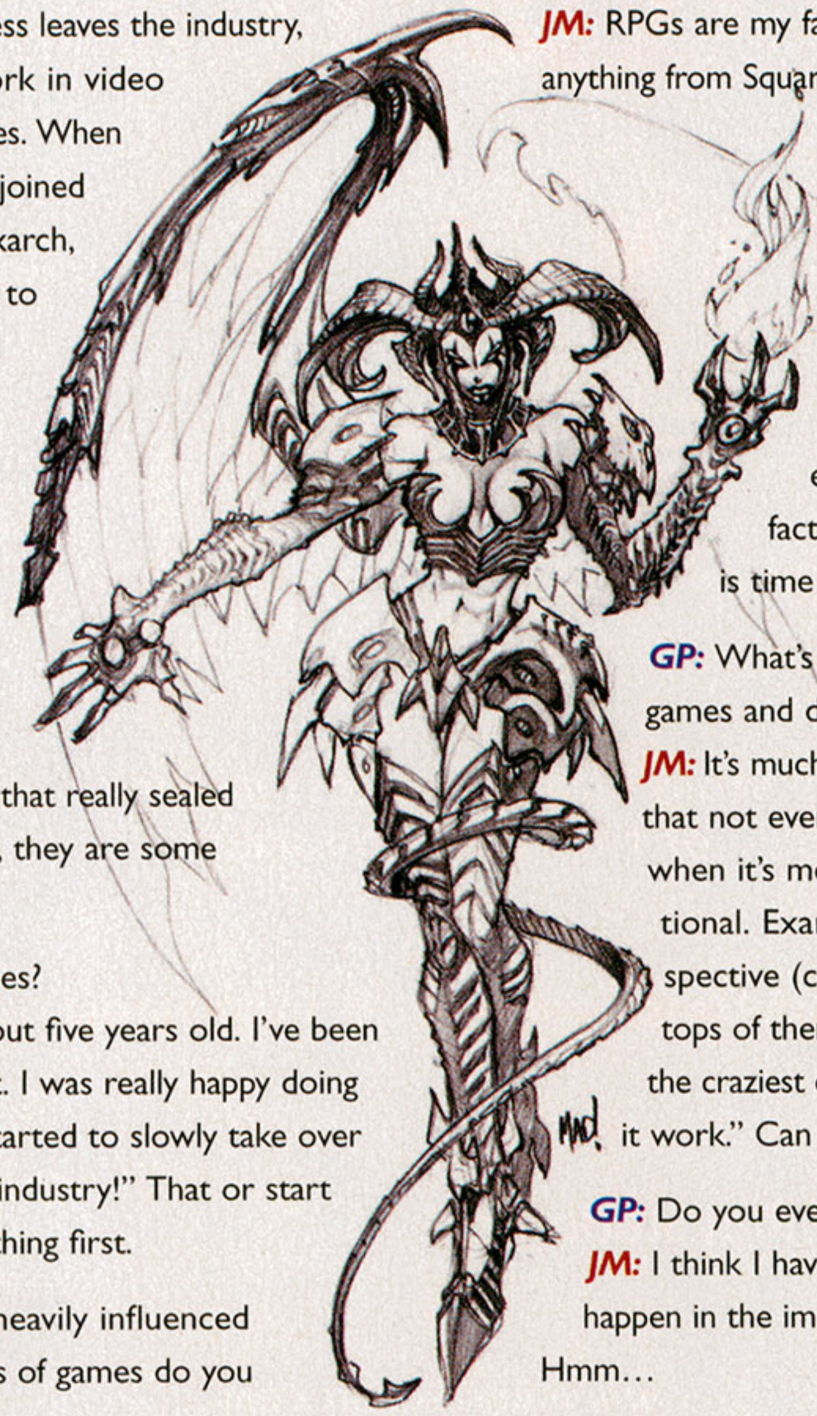
RH: Players can expect the opportunity to join up to three of their friends from anywhere in the world online and enjoy an intense action/role-playing game in a stunningly beautiful game world. We have designed the character classes with many support roles specifically for the multiplayer modes. Clerics will heal and buff friends, warriors will protect them, and the wizards and rangers will support from range. This type of combination is a key component to EverQuest, and we try to maintain it where possible in Champions of Norrath.

Watch for more information on Champions of Norrath in the November issue of GamePro.

GET MORE www.gamepro.com ONLINE

THE GAMEPRO INTERVIEW: JOE MADUREIRA

When one of the hottest comic artists in the business leaves the industry, people notice. And when that artist leaves to work in video games, they tend to wind up interviewed in magazines. When avowed RPG fanatic Joe Madureira (*Battle Chasers*) joined up with developers Realm as creative director on Exarch, a new PC MMORPG from NCsoft, *GamePro* had to get the details.



GamePro: What attracted you to Exarch?

Joe Madureira: MMORPGs are some of my favorite types of games. I think I've probably subscribed to all of them at one time or another. It's an addiction. When I heard about Exarch's style of gameplay (action!) and the sci-fantasy world it was set in, I thought it would be right up my alley. It was meeting the actual team at Realm Interactive that really sealed the deal for me. Aside from being really great guys, they are some amazingly talented people.

GP: What made you interested in working on games?

JM: My addiction to games started when I was about five years old. I've been an avid gamer since—on PC, console, you name it. I was really happy doing comics for a long time, but at some point games started to slowly take over my life until I realized "I have to work in the game industry!" That or start an 80s cover band. Uh, I decided to try the game thing first.

GP: Your work, especially *Battle Chasers*, seems heavily influenced by the style and pacing of video games. What sorts of games do you play for fun?

JM: RPGs are my favorites, whether PC or console. I'm a complete slave to anything from Square or Capcom. I also love 3D adventure and racing games.

GP: How much say do you have in the design of Exarch? Are you involved in the creation of the setting or on the live development team?

JM: A lot of the fiction and design was already in place when I came on board, though as creative director I do have quite a lot of say as to what makes the cut, especially in terms of visual representation. The only real factor that limits my involvement in any aspect of the game is time (or lack thereof).

GP: What's the difference between designing a character for video games and designing a character for comics?

JM: It's much, much more difficult designing for games. The reason is that not everything that looks cool on paper works in 3D, especially when it's moving around, attacking, etc. Everything has to be functional. Exarch presents the added challenge of an isometric perspective (characters are viewed from slightly above), so even the tops of them have to look cool. Luckily, our team's attitude is "Draw the craziest crap you can come up with, and let us worry about making it work." Can you see why I love working with these guys?

GP: Do you ever plan to return to *Battle Chasers*?

JM: I think I have to eventually in some capacity or another. It will not happen in the immediate future; however, how cool would a *BC* game be? Hmm…

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GAMEPRO Labs

Game Elements Solar Pak

Rating: 5.0

Boktai was only the beginning! If the sun's powerful enough to affect your newest Game Boy Advance game, why can't it power the entire GBA? No reason at all, really—and that's where the Solar Pak comes in, functioning as a rechargeable battery pack, a screen shield, and an overhead screen light all at the same time. One charge can power your portable game system for up to 15 hours, and if you don't want to wait until some of the sun's 386 billion billion megawatts reaches you from space, you can always plug in the AC adapter (or stick your GBA under a lamp). Four white, rotatable LEDs illuminate the screen nicely, and the solar cells completely cover and protect your screen with a snap hinge. If you have the original, wide-bodied GBA, the Solar Pak is one of the coolest things you can buy for it.—*Dan Elektro*

Price: $29.99. Contact: Game Elements, 973/471-9050, gemini-usa.com

Datel TalkNet

Rating: 4.5

With more and more voice-chat-enabled games on the way to the PS2, picking up a spare microphone headset isn't a bad idea. The TalkNet Online Voice Communicator fits the bill nicely with a padded earpiece and all-plastic construction (which means it can't twist and permanently kink like the SOCOM metal headset can). The microphone boom arm extends out a few centimeters (but not enough if you have a really big head), and the flexible rubber arm angles easily into a position that suits you. The TalkNet performed admirably during Karaoke Revolution; it handled voices of varying volume and clarity literally without missing a beat.—*Dan Elektro*

Price: $29.99. Contact: Datel, 727/431-0650, codejunkies.com

Best-Selling Video Game Titles: June 2003

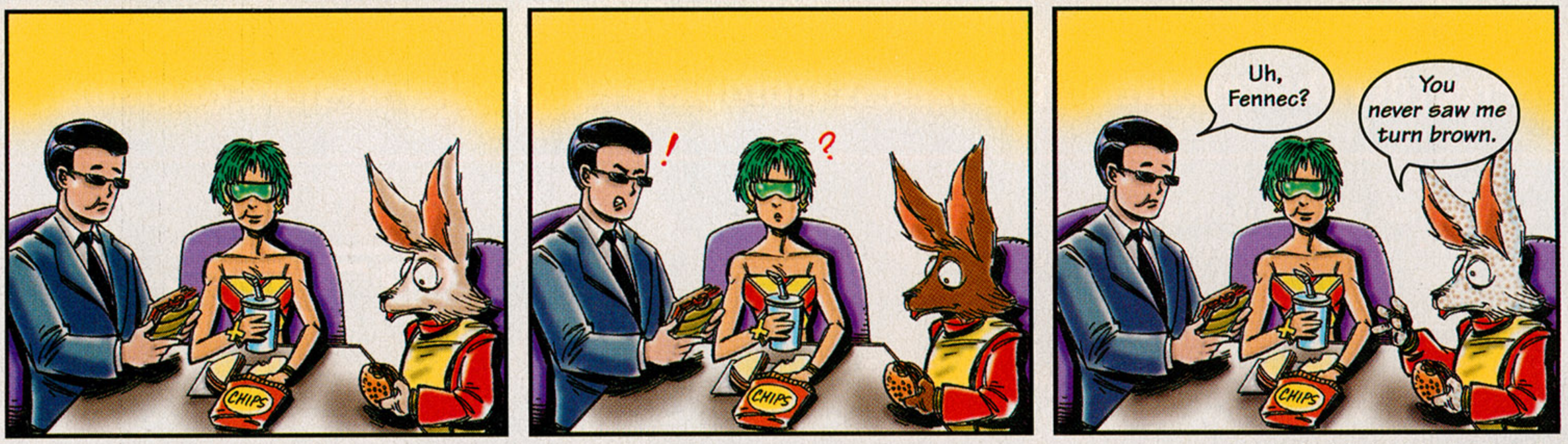
	TITLE	PLATFORM	PUBLISHER
1	Enter the Matrix	PlayStation 2	Atari
2	Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Angel of Darkness	PlayStation 2	Eidos
3	Donkey Kong Country	Game Boy Advance	Nintendo
4	Hulk	PlayStation 2	VU Games
5	NBA Street Vol. 2	PlayStation 2	EA Sports Big
6	Pokémon Ruby	Game Boy Advance	Nintendo
7	Pokémon Sapphire	Game Boy Advance	Nintendo
8	Disney's Finding Nemo	Game Boy Advance	THQ
9	Dragon Ball Z: The Legacy of Goku II	Game Boy Advance	Atari
10	Yu-Gi-Oh! Worldwide Edition: Stairway to the Destined Duel	Game Boy Advance	Konami

Source: The NPD Group/NPD Funworld/TRSTS

static

...mpions of Norrath...Champions of Norrath...In response to some of the long-standing criticism that our game coverage is too short, here's the flip side: Should it take longer to read a review than it would to pick up the controller and make up your own mind based on experience? No. *GamePro* reviews are not supposed to tell you what to think, they're just supposed to tell you what we thought, and then you figure out how much of that applies to your own tastes and needs. Frankly, anybody can take eight pages, put in lots of pretty pictures, and say nothing. Why waste all that space with filler instead of talking about five or six more games that might be worth your money? Brief is better. • Fire International, maker of the Xploder cheat device, bragged that it has developed the first cheats for SOCOM. Yes, cheats for an online game—what a major achievement. Didn't think this needed to be stated, but okay: The whole point of online gaming is that you get to play against other human beings with similar skills—a relatively even playing field, you nitwits. You shouldn't be proud about destroying that. Congratulations—you just ruined SOCOM for hundreds of thousands of players. And they'll remember which company is to blame. • Don't take offense at the "ugly Trenton New Jersey" thing in the Tony Hawk feature—Dan Elektro's from there. He knows what he's talking about. • Latest unwanted trend: music in games with lyrics about the game's subject matter. Racing games with songs about cars, skateboarding games with raps that mention Tony Hawk...you get the idea. Forced. Weak. Stop. • Air Hendrix would really like to launch his own WWII franchise and call it Rise to the Call of Honorable Duty for a Battlefield Medal. It will sell zillions! • Prince of Persia...Prince of Persia...Prince of Pers...

HIDDEN CHARACTERS "Outfoxed"



Babble: Auch 'n Amrich Doodles: Mao

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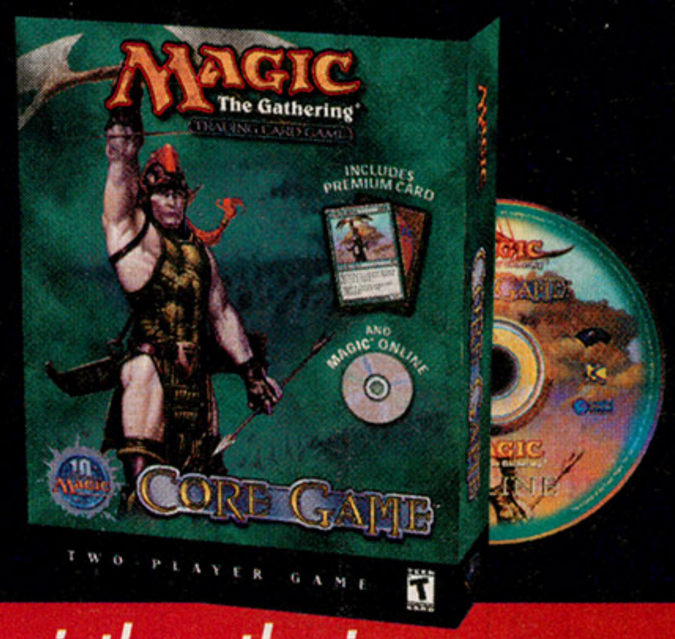

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TEEN
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Lyrics
Suggestive Themes
Violence

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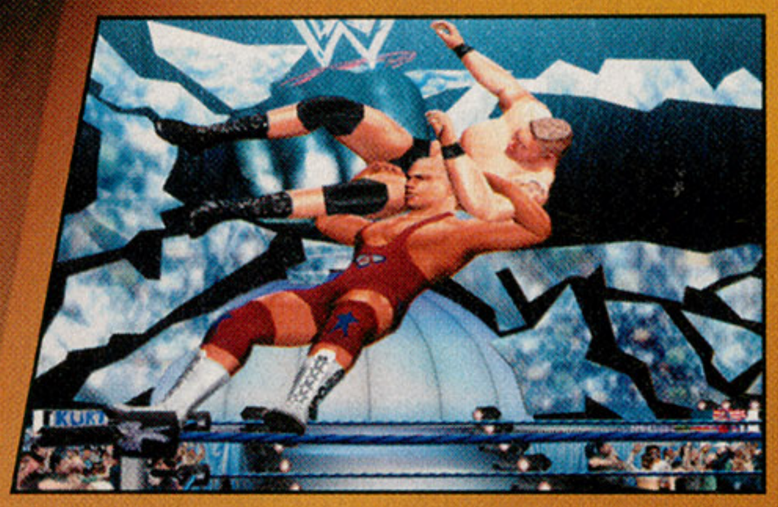

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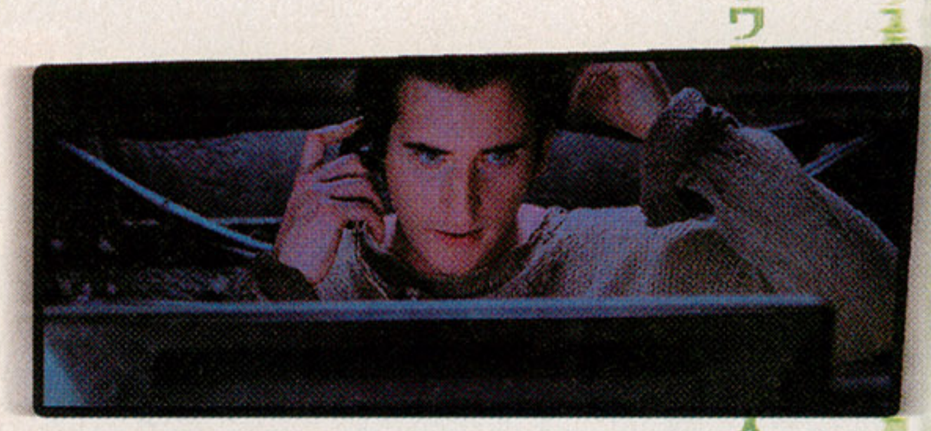

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"...if you are a diehard fan of the films, it doesn't get much better than this.
_Game Informer

"...if you are a hardcore Matrix fan, owning Enter the Matrix is an absolute necessity."
_PlayStation Magazine

"Mark this down: this is the day the entertainment industry changed forever. **A-plus.**"
_Tribune Media Services

"If you're a die-hard fan of the flicks, Enter the Matrix provides exactly what creators Andy and Larry Wachowski had promised." _Electronic Gaming Monthly

"**Explosive and stunning** – Atari's Enter the Matrix revolutionizes 3-D adventure gaming with blockbuster bravado."
_Nintendo Power

"...dodging bullets and pulling off mad kung fu in Enter the Matrix is exactly what I hoped it would be ...**awesome.**"
_Official Xbox Magazine

"Setting a new standard for game and movie studios working together."
_Detroit News

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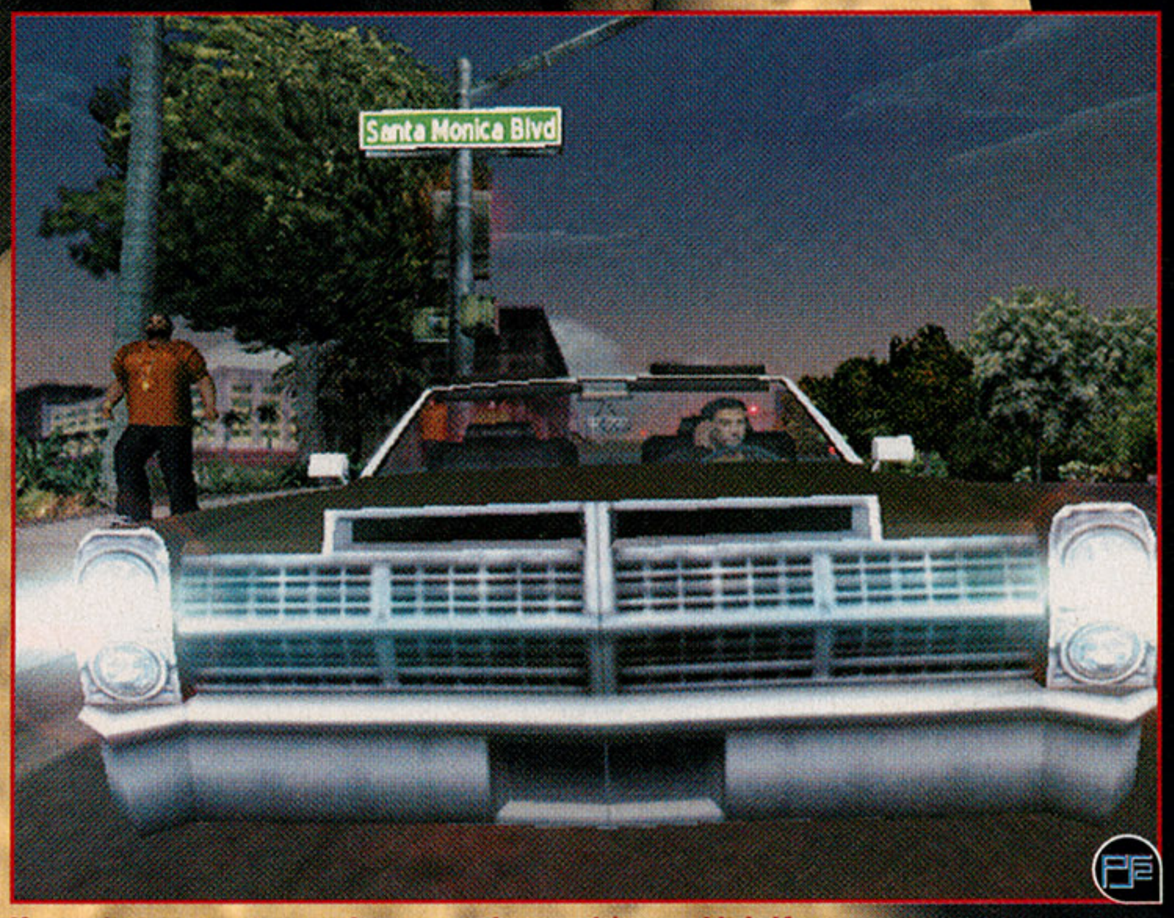
Exclusive Hands-On Preview

To Live and Drive in L.A.



If you lose your car or damage it beyond hope, Nick Kang can always obtain a new one from a local garage.

Welcome to Los Angeles. You carry a badge—and a grudge, a gun, and the keys to a killer car. Can Activision steal GTA's thunder with True Crime: Streets of L.A.?

By Tokyo Drifter

THE CITY OF ANGELS has always been a lightning rod for those seeking fame and power. It's perfectly fitting then that Los Angeles is both home to publisher/developer Activision and the setting of one of its most ambitious video games to date, True Crime: Streets of L.A.

Nick's character will reflect any recent damage he has taken, even in the game's cut-scenes.

Enemies get tougher and smarter as the game continues, as this blocking thug demonstrates.

Scene Of the Crime

True Crime: Streets of L.A. puts you in the role of Nick Kang, a cop who does things his own way to get the job done. His father vanished after being accused of being a dirty cop, leaving Nick to toughen up at an early age and take care of his younger brother. Nick's unorthodox procedures and his family's tainted reputation eventually lead to his indefinite suspension, tantamount to throwing him off the force altogether.

No longer hounded ruthlessly, the crime syndicates grew in power and destructiveness. The department countered with a secret unit, the Elite Operations Division, to fight crime by any means necessary. Of course, Nick would be a perfect operative for such a task, and the game begins as he's about to join up with the EOD.

You can earn better wheels, or you can find nicer rides in the rich part of town.

The Chief

Like Batman's Commissioner Gordon, The Chief knows it takes more than standard police procedures to beat the criminals and is willing to let Nick "do his thing."

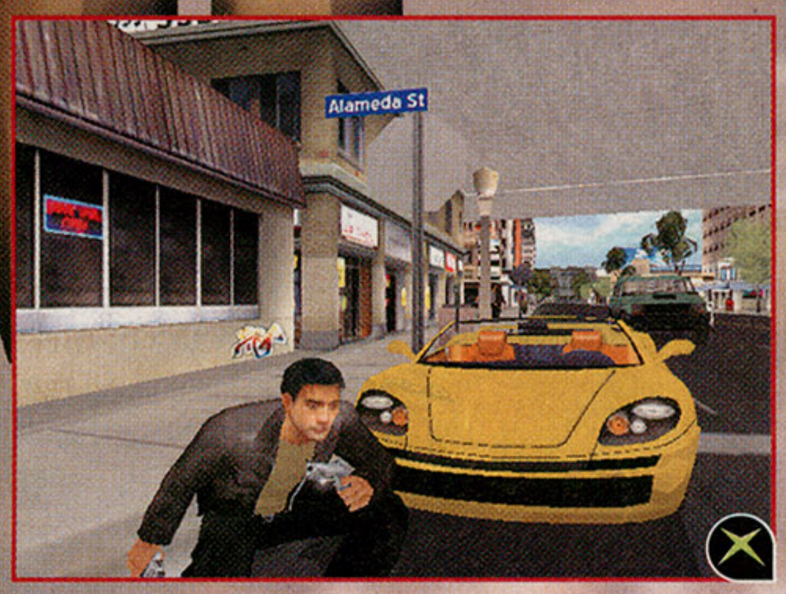
Crime and Punishment

As in life, most everything you do in True Crime has consequences that play out to a natural conclusion. Ideally, you complete objectives, arrest all the bad guys, and observe tasteful behavior whenever possible. Doing such raises your Good Cop meter and leads you to an honorable ending. On the other hand, taking out perps with head shots, shooting innocents, and driving like a maniac places that meter firmly in the Bad Cop territory, and the story branches appropriately to reflect your standing. Go off the deep end enough, and the Civil Unrest meter enters the picture—at higher levels, vigilante mobs will actively hunt you, and your fellow cops themselves do everything possible to get you off the streets…permanently.

As you might have guessed, story branching and alternate paths are a major focus of True Crime. "Probably for the first time, the player gets both a strong story-based experience while still having the freedom to do as they choose," says the game's producer, Chris Archer. This means getting caught or failing an objective won't force you into repeating the mission, but instead branches you into an alternate situation where CONTINUED ▶

The Sexy Partner

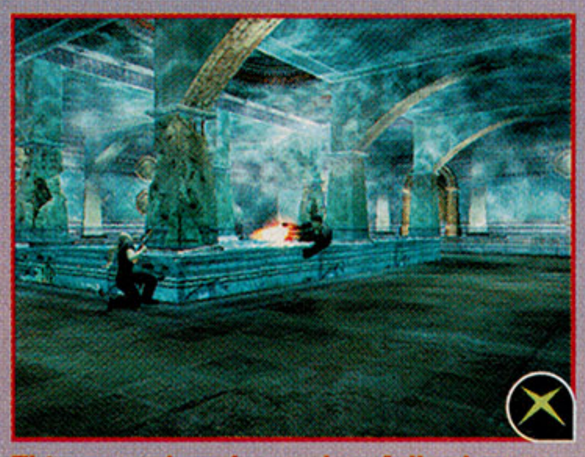
Rosie is an ex-gangbanger who has survived some tough times and now walks the straight and narrow. She doesn't get along with Nick…at least not yet.



You'll have to find cover often and wait for the right opportunity to return fire.

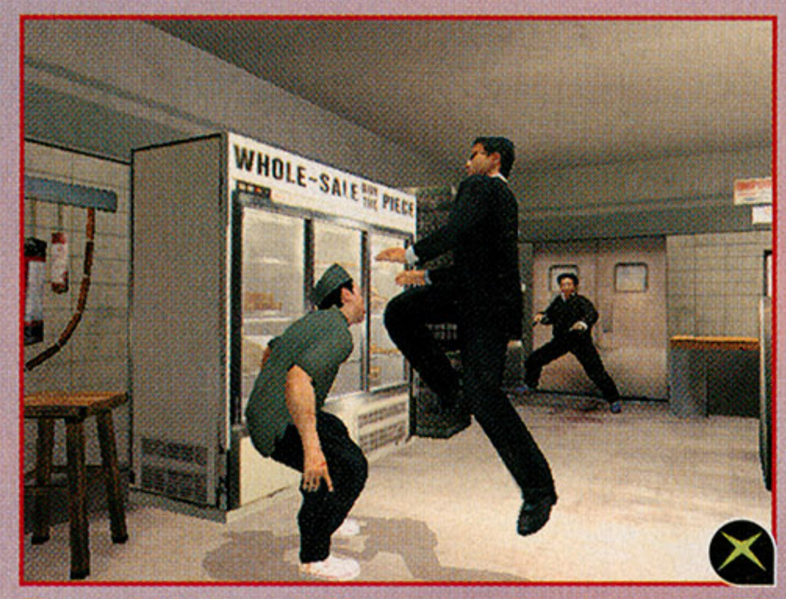
Asian heartthrob Russell Wong (*Romeo Must Die*, *The Joy Luck Club*) voices Nick Kang.

The fighting feels similar to Enter the Matrix's but in a good, more technical way.



This sauna/pool area has fully destructible pillars and objects.

Nick has the ability to hold any two guns in his hands–even weapons as big as these.



The real-life Russell Wong starred in the recent TV series *Black Sash*.

Nick must learn new moves at 24-hour dojos located around the city to do the fancy stuff.

you may have to fight your way out of captivity or face a completely different challenge. You could always go back and "do it right," but you often have the option of just continuing on with your chosen path. "For instance," explains Archer, "in a typical tailing mission, you may choose to tail the suspect to his ultimate destination, which would be one path through the mission, or you may choose to unload firepower on the suspect immediately, causing the suspect to either fight back or flee." It is important to note that only specific driving portions in the game allow you to fully do things as you please, but ignoring too many random crimes from the police radio will affect your standing as a cop.

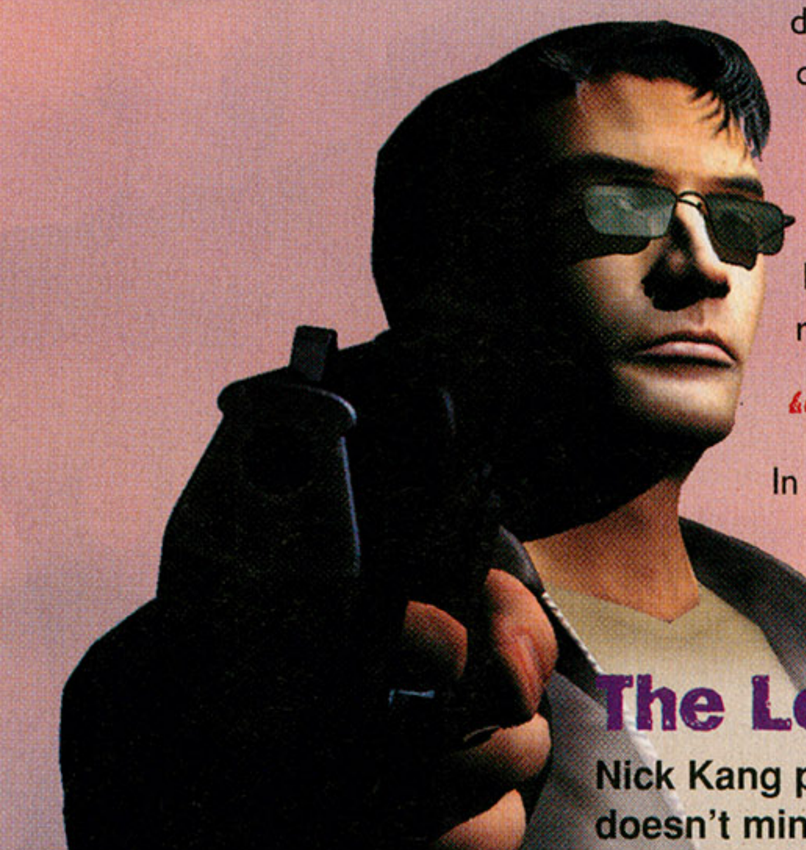
This mission requires Nick to race an opponent five times around a makeshift track.

"I Got To Do It Ninja-Style"

In addition to the fighting, shooting, and driving, Nick must tap in to his sneaky side to infiltrate various gang hangouts. With all these components to the game, it's understandable that one or two will get a little less attention. Archer maintains that gamers will get "driving, fighting, and shooting all at the highest level with no compromise to any of the portions of the game." Indeed, the preview version controlled well in all areas described with the fighting and driving feeling the best. The shooting and the sneaking play mechanics have some kinks to work out, but overall, the game has the potential to meet Archer's lofty goal.

Try to hit bad guys in the leg or arm to raise your Good Cop meter.

Cruising in your ride wouldn't be complete without some tunes to break up the hum of the engine and the squawk of the chatterbox. A top-flight West Coast hip-hop soundtrack remedies that situation and adds a satisfying level of

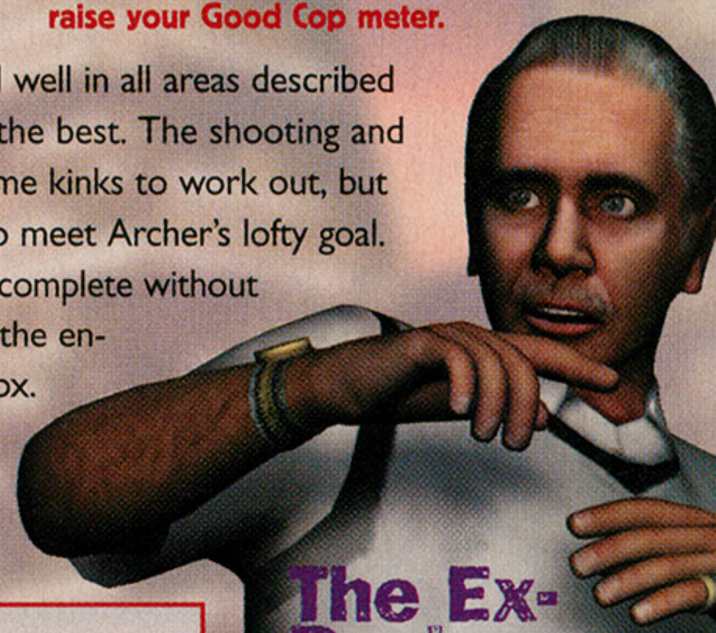


The Loose Cannon

Nick Kang plays things his way and doesn't mind ruffling a few feathers on either side of the law to see justice done. Just how far he goes to achieve his ends is up to you.

True Crime is rated Mature, so avert your eyes, kids! No, seriously! Turn the page now!

Nick can always commandeer another car in the name of the law without filling the Bad Cop meter.



The Ex-Partner

Rafferty is Nick's father's ex-partner on the force, and he gets introduced later in the game. Does he know the truth about what happened to Nick's papa?

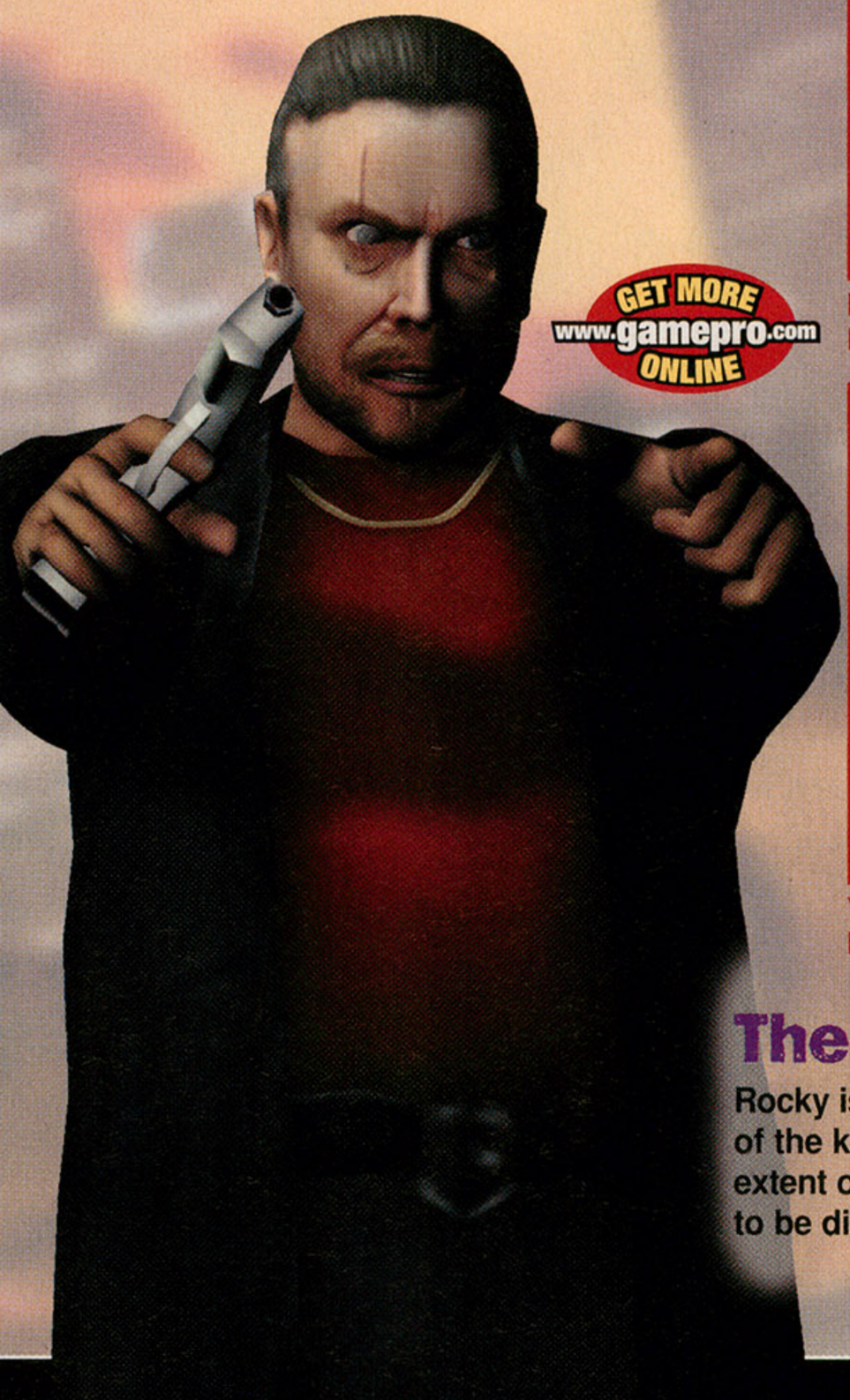
authenticity. All heroes need to have their own background music, so appropriate music kicks in even while they take care of business outside the car.

L.A. Confidential

True Crime: Streets of L.A. was born in the wake of Grand Theft Auto III, and Chris Archer makes no bones about the game's roots, insisting that "True Crime will continue the tradition and evolve the genre even further." One of the evolutions in question is the sheer size of the game's locale—240 square miles of Los Angeles are re-created in impressive detail (see sidebar, "La La Land"). As large as the game is, the story doesn't take you to every corner of town, so there are plenty of little details to uncover and lots of ground to explore.

As you can see from the screens, the other visual elements, like the cars and characters, look good so far. The screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 and Xbox versions, but True Crime will also be available for the GameCube at around the same time. Cut-scene animation was not yet final at press time, but the celebrity voice talent was already fully implemented. You'll hear dialogue from a wide range of big stars and character actors like Russell Wong, Gary Oldman, James Hong, Michael Madsen, Mako, and Christopher Walken.

True Crime: Streets of L.A. has potential as vast as the ground it physically covers, but could still fall victim to its own ambition. With no new entry in the GTA series this year, Nick Kang's crew has a chance to win over gamers hungry for something familiar yet new with perhaps a twist of truth.



Upon impact, Nick's kicks can be devastatingly explosive...literally!

Tear loose too much and your fellow cops will try to bust you.

Nick can slow-mo dive just like in the *Matrix*. This is Hollywood, after all.

You can manually target foes and aim at specific body parts—or just let auto-aim do its thing.

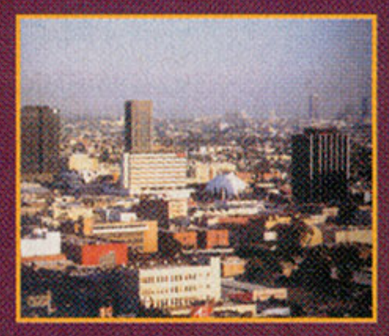
The Crime Boss

Rocky is the head of the Russian gang and one of the key heavies making trouble for Nick. The extent of his plans is yet unknown, but it's sure to be diabolical in some way.

La La Land

So how accurately does True Crime capture the 240 square miles of this vast city? Former L.A. resident Tokyo Drifter looks at five key locations and deals out the preliminary verdict plus a few tips.

Downtown L.A.



The mix of high-tech skyscrapers and run-down apartments is captured perfectly. The many one-way streets and hills in this area may give street-savvy Angelinos a slight edge here.

Hollywood/Beverly Hills

The many landmarks make these locations easily recognizable. You'll find residential structures closer to Hollywood and upscale shops and high-rise buildings in Beverly Hills.

Melrose Avenue

Melrose Avenue is known for its large concentration of quirky stores. This eclectic part of town has few "official" landmarks, so it looks somewhat generic in the game.

The Freeways

Getting around the real L.A. is a lot easier via the extensive freeways, and they're faithfully re-created in the game. To get from downtown L.A. to the beach

in a timely manner, definitely use the 10 Freeway, which runs east to west.

Tokyo Drifter's Neighborhood

This area between Miracle Mile and Korea Town, (don't bother asking exactly where it is) looks nothing like the Drifter's old stomping grounds. On the bright side, it looks a lot less ghetto in the game.

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Soul of a Champion

NAMCO'S WEAPON-BASED BRAWLER RETURNS TO OFFER FURIOUS FIGHTING FOR ALL GAMERS ON ALL PLATFORMS. DOES THE SOUL STILL BURN? BY TOKYO DRIFTER

Sophitia can be unlocked in the Weapon Master mode by defeating one of the dungeons.

Inferno can mimic the moves of any fighter, but only one at a time.

FIGHTING GAMES THAT entertain novice button-mashers yet still appease skilled veterans are hard to come by, but Namco's Soul Calibur II looks like it could be the best ever at giving gamers the best of both worlds.

A TALE ETERNALLY RETOLD

Soul Calibur's plot revolves around two blades: an evil sword, The Soul Edge, and a good sword, The Soul Calibur. Every fighter worth their salt wants to either destroy or claim the former. The last game ended when Nightmare, wielding Soul Edge, was defeated by the duo of Xianghua and Kilik with the help of Soul Calibur. Defeated and weakened, Nightmare slowly began to regain his lost humanity, but the evil sword also began to slowly regenerate and now threatens to consume him once again. Sensing the evil blade's return, warriors from across the globe once again pursue Nightmare.

WAY OF THE SWORD

Like its predecessors (the coin-op Soul Edge became Soul Blade for the PlayStation, while Soul Calibur appeared in the arcade and on the Dreamcast), Soul Calibur II uses a four-button combat system—Horizontal attack, Vertical attack, Kick, and Guard. Pressing certain combinations in a given order creates a combo series that can sometimes be altered with input from the direction

Even if you lose a match, you'll still be able to earn some money and experience in Weapon Master mode.

All the stages in SCII have edges that fighters can fall over if knocked hard enough.

Soul Calibur II has all the makings of a classic with cool characters and a deep fighting system.

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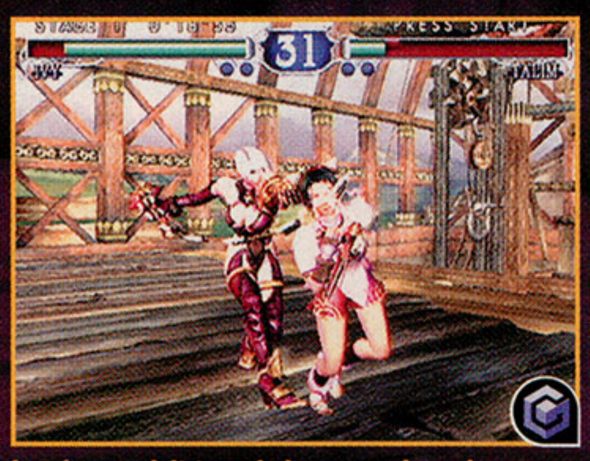
key, like hitting Down to attack low. Holding Guard in conjunction with one of the attack buttons performs a throw if the opponent is close enough.

Things get interesting with the addition of the eight-way run, which is a fancy way of saying you can move your character in any horizontal direction at any given time. As in boxing, maneuvering for tactical advantage before launching an attack or staying on the move to keep your opponent's strike at bay is critical for controlling a match. Many other fighting games allow eight-way movement, but few incorporate it in a way that lets you mimic strategy employed in a real confrontation.

You can run around like a madman, hitting random buttons, and still achieve a modest level of success, but those craving a more involved experience will find many layers to this sword-based brawler. Every attack has some manner of counterattack that varies from character to character, and the differences in weapon range and player agility create a mind-boggling array of options. Soul Calibur II polishes all the above features into an extremely attractive package that comes in three slightly different flavors.

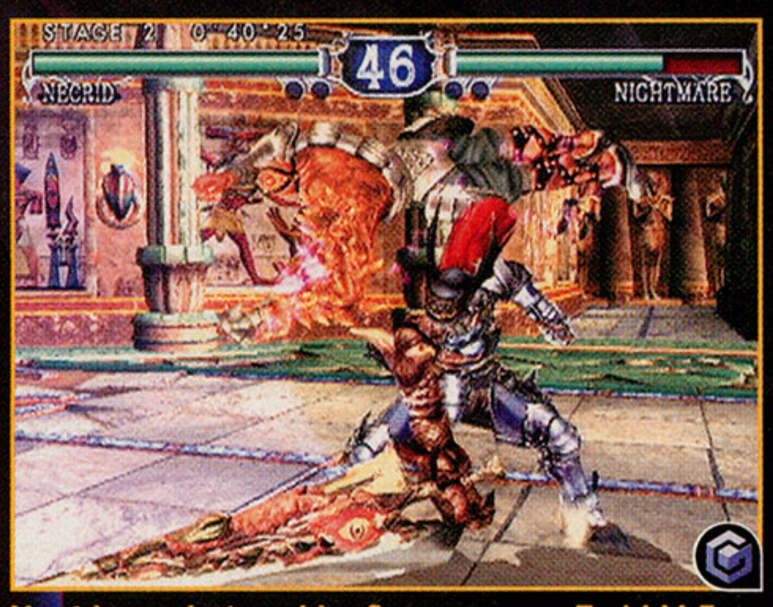
Berserker is one of three U.S.-only playable characters. Lizardman and Assassin are the other two.

Spawn is the only SCII character to use both ground-based and aerial attacks.



Ivy has additional throws when her whip is unfurled.

Link has many familiar attacks from The Legend of Zelda like this slashing strike.



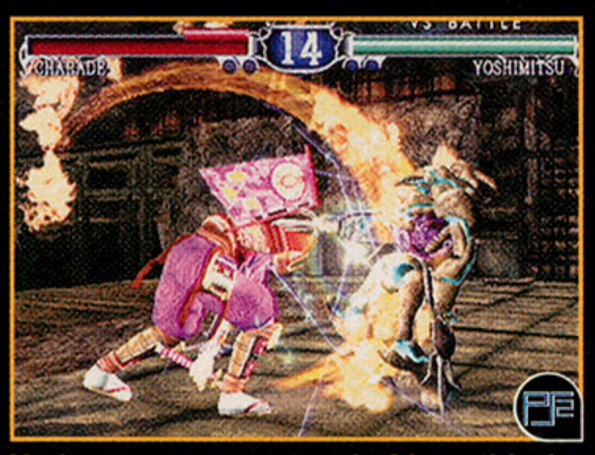
Necrid was designed by *Spawn* creator Todd McFarlane and is selectable on all platforms.

DIVERSIFIED STAR POWER

The Dreamcast-exclusive home version of Soul Calibur didn't reach as many gamers as it could have, so Namco decided to spread its eggs in multiple baskets this time. Soul Calibur II is coming for the PlayStation 2, Xbox, and GameCube in August, and based on the U.S. preview versions, all three editions look great, control well, and sport the same game modes. The lineup of fighters is also the same, except for the system-specific exclusive characters—the PlayStation 2 has Tekken's Heihachi, the Xbox features comic-book antihero Spawn, and the GameCube offers Nintendo's Link. The Heihachi player model is vastly improved from Tekken 4's with lots of new moves and fluid animation. With only a pair of power gauntlets, Heihachi is the first Soul Calibur character to not carry a handheld weapon. No slouch in the "firsts" department, Spawn packs the previously unseen ability to float in the air and launch projectiles, and he brandishes a trusty battleaxe, too. Last but certainly not least, Link from The Legend of Zelda series uses his trademark sword and shield, and he can also produce boomerangs, bombs, and a bow and arrow at a moment's notice.

Whichever version you choose, the quality and Soul of this fighting champion should remain the same, and patient fans probably won't be disappointed. The stage of history awaits!

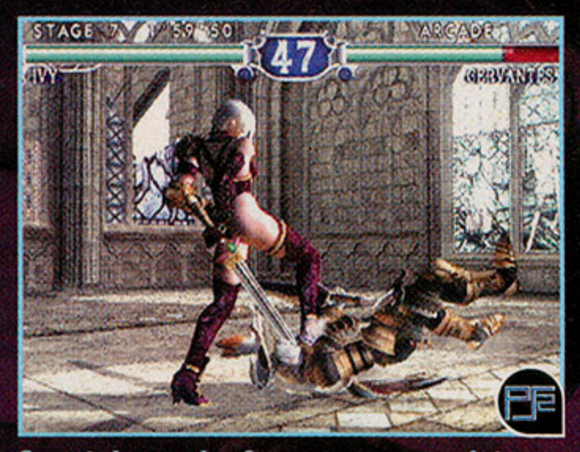
Getting behind opponents opens up new throw combinations.



Yoshimitsu retains several of his unblockable strikes from Tekken.

Link's trusty bow can be charged up, but it doesn't autotrack opponents.

Soul Calibur II
Special Import Review



Special attacks for opponents lying on the ground are more effective than standard low attacks.

A complete U.S. version was unavailable at press time, so here's a quick review of the almost identical Japanese version to chew on 'til next issue.

Namco's weapon-based fighter continues to hone its stellar fighting system, but it also comes into its own as a fully featured single-player experience. The lengthy Weapon Master mode rewards players with unlockable secret characters and over 200 items to collect.

All three versions of Soul Calibur II are practically identical in both presentation and features. The graphics are uniformly superb, and the background music is fittingly epic.

You'll get a great game regardless of what system you own, but fans of fast load times should check out the Xbox version; Zelda completists need to look no further than the GameCube; and PlayStation 2 owners can rest easy that Soul Calibur II is the easiest to navigate with the Dual Shock.

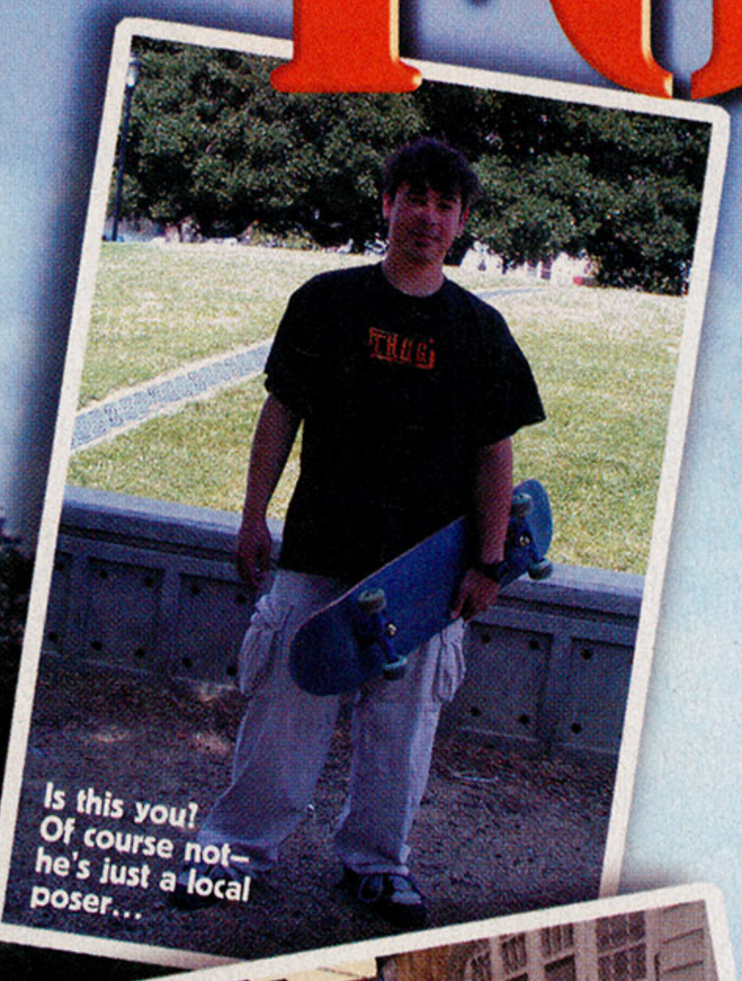
- Developed and published by Namco
- $49.99 - Available now (in Japan)
- Fighting - 2 players

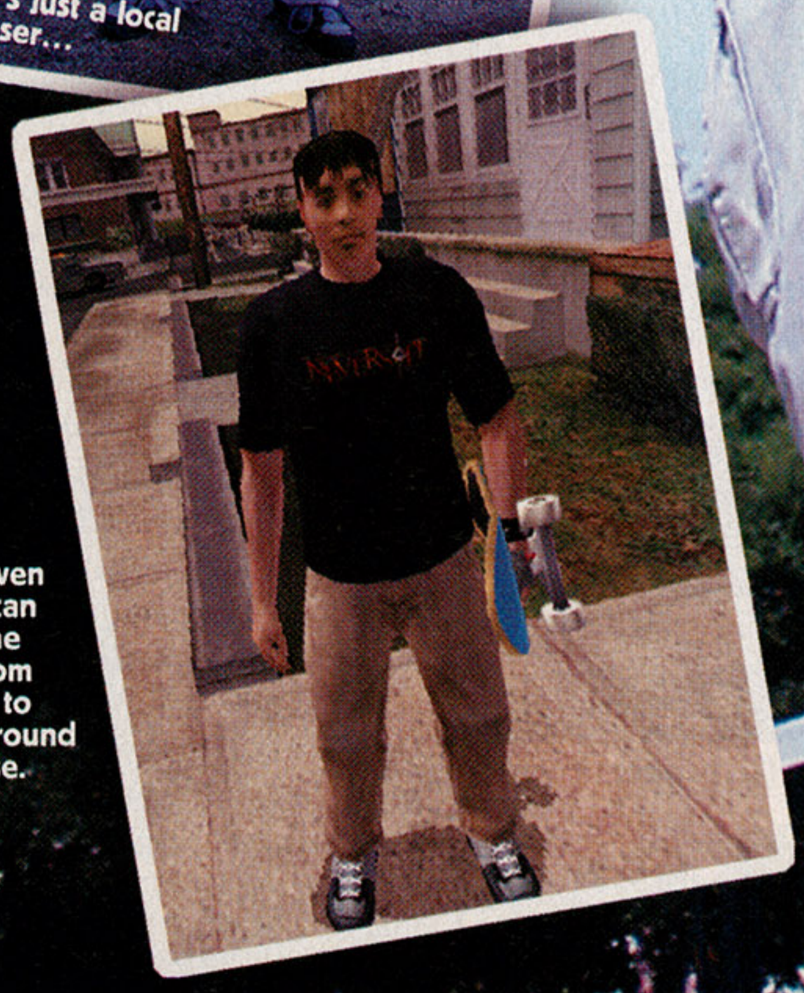
	ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
PS2	TEEN T	5.0	5.0	5.0	5.0
XBOX	TEEN T	5.0	5.0	4.5	5.0
GC	TEEN T	5.0	5.0	4.5	5.0

EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON PREVIEW

WITH A NEW STORY MODE, THE ABILITY TO PUT YOUR OWN FACE INTO THE GAME, AND MORE USER CUSTOMIZATION THAN EVER, TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND FLIPS THE RULES OF SKATEBOARD GAMES—AND FLIPS OFF AUTHORITY IN THE PROCESS. BY DAN ELEKTRO

'GROUND FORCE



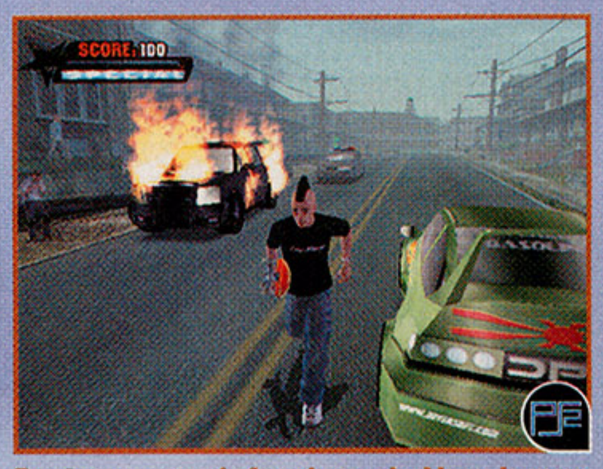


...But even posers can make the jump from real life to Underground with ease.

JOEL JEWETT IS about to drive angry. The president of Neversoft drives a real man's car—a big, white, diesel-powered truck packing 325 horses. The massive engine revs in response to a challenge from Art Director Chris Ward's Porsche, which is stopped alongside Jewett's behemoth at a red light not far from the developers' headquarters in Woodland Hills, California. Ward makes a few inflammatory hand gestures, to which Jewett responds with a steely stare and a lead foot. When the light goes green, both cars peel out, but Jewett intentionally turns wide, forcing the sporty import ever closer to a looming cement wall. Horns blare, the Porsche brakes, and Jewett laughs.

That's the Neversoft way: Never let up, never back down. As Jewett puts it, "We don't hire wussies." And as the company reinvents its signature skate-game series with this fall's Tony Hawk's Underground, that tenacious attitude is as evident as ever—the team is eager to destroy gamers' preconceptions of what a skateboarding game can offer.

"The reason the game is what it is this year is because, once again, we're asking, 'How do we make this better, how do we change it, how do we give people something completely different again, within a year?'" says Jewett. "And here we are—this year we wrote a story and we let you play as you, and hopefully everybody's going to say, 'Wow, that was a totally different thing—we gotta go buy it.'"



During research for the ugly New Jersey level, Neversoft artists and designers took a trip to real-life ugly Trenton.

"We have all the content that centers around skateboarding–its lifestyle, the culture, the people who are involved in it," says Joel Jewett. "We just draw from that and make the most fun game that we can."

PUT ON YOUR GAME FACE

What started with THPS4's more flexible career mode has now blossomed into a proper story mode—and a radical reinvention of the entire franchise. You don't play as Tony or Elissa or even the Muska anymore—you play as yourself, a skater with pro potential who's stuck in the slums of New Jersey, desperate to get out, get sponsored, and maybe get famous. As the story progresses, you'll travel around the globe, meeting challenges and tons of other pro skaters as you go.

All players start by creating a character, but online PS2 owners will have an extra option: Download Face. "The system's entirely automated," reveals Producer Scott Pease. "You e-mail a picture to our server, which will process it and send you a reply with your password. You'll go online with your PS2, select Download Face, put in the password, and it's done. It can all happen in the space of about 15 seconds." Since the process is automated, Neversoft won't be screening the images; if you want to go crazy in a digital photo program or substitute a head of cabbage for your real face, feel free—nothing's off limits.

Getting off the board isn't just for show–you can link combos with a short sprint or jump off to save your run if a vert trick goes sour.

"The question was 'Are people going to accept that you don't skate as the pros?,'" says Joel Jewett. "And we were like, 'Well, there's really only one way to find out.'"

CREATED TO BE SKATED

With or without a custom face, you can tailor your skater to look however you like, and you'll see your digital self star in all the game's cut-scenes. Since your board is every bit as personal as your clothing and hairstyle, you can now create your own skate deck—up to six layers of graphics, stickers, and overlays, all of which can be color shifted, scaled, and rotated. Once saved, you can trade your custom skaters (complete with decks) with friends; you can play as them, and they can play as you.

And yet, there's more. Players can also create and swap their own signature tricks. Up to six movements—spins, flips, grabs, even specials—can be combined into the burliest three-second stunt you can dream up. Double backflip benihana into a 180 spinning samba flip? No problem, as long as you have the skills to pull it off. And the air—when it comes to tricks, the sky is literally the limit.

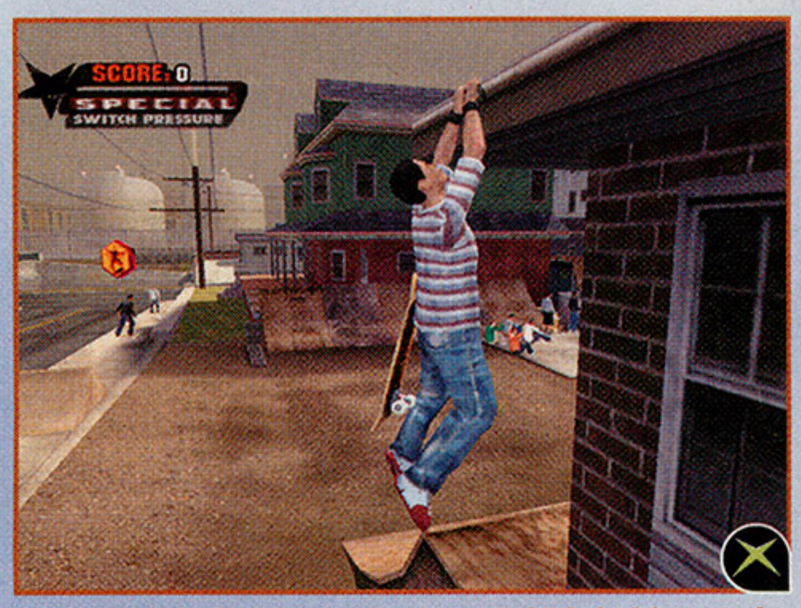
Of course, where will you perform these moves if not in your own custom-made park? And why not throw in some specific goals to that park and make it a complete level for anyone to download? You place the S-K-A-T-E letters, you choose the tricks to perform, you create the lines, you even write the dialogue for the onscreen characters—at last, the player has total control over the game environment. Armed with a PS2 Network Adaptor and some creativity, there's essentially no end to the game now.

CONTINUED ▶

The park creator's new rail editor vastly simplifies grind lines–it's as easy as setting points on a path.

Some goals will require you to jump into a vehicle, such as this tuner car on the first level.

The THUG team is currently comprised of 56 people–nearly twice the staff that created THPS3.



While you're off the board, you can climb ladders and ledges–even shimmy left and right while hanging.

Created tricks can last as long as three seconds, but you'll need serious air to pull them off.

Instead of playing as pro skaters like Chad Muska, you'll interact with them over the course of your own career path.

Tony Hawk's mentor is your mentor! *Dogtown and Z-Boys* Director Stacy Peralta, who essentially discovered Tony, makes a cameo.

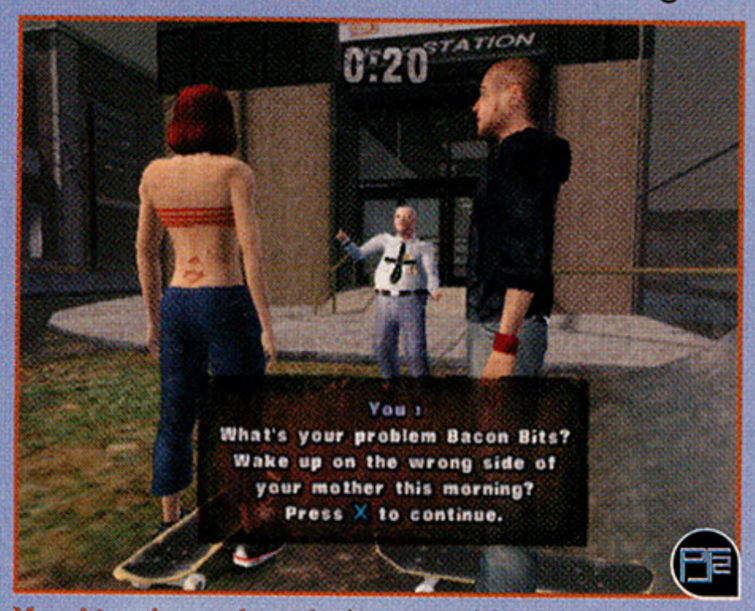
ON YOUR OWN TWO FEET

The ability to leap off your board represents the biggest change to the gameplay mechanics this year. Tap a button or buttons (depending on your console's controller), and your character leaps off and breaks into a run; tap again, and they'll jump back on the deck in stride.

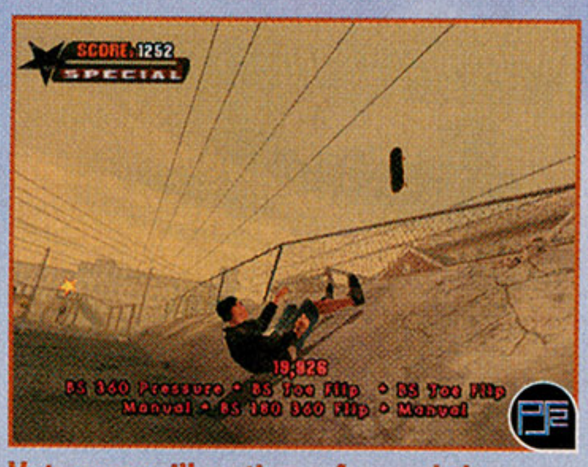
"On a certain level, it's just a convenience," says Pease. "If you just wanna stop and chill and check things out and talk to the dude on the corner, now that's a little bit easier. Then it starts to open up exploration, allowing you to get to places you couldn't get to before. Now you can climb up ladders to get to the tops of buildings. Then on top of that, we start to build it into tricks. You can get to the top of the building and acid-drop down to the ramp, which then gives you a kick of speed and lets you do more tricks on the other side of the ramp—you can really start off a combo in a cool way."

In addition to walking around and leaping between rooftops, you'll also jump behind the wheel—different levels feature different vehicles to drive. In New Jersey, it's a tuner hatchback, which you use to escape drug dealers; in Tampa, you'll "borrow" a cop car to harass the local boys in blue.

And that illustrates another subtle change: Removing the focus from the pro skaters and their marketable public images also frees Neversoft to better reflect true street skate culture in all its gritty, anti-authority, security-guard-baiting glory. No surprises will be ruined here, but you'll see and do things in Tony Hawk's Underground that you've never been able to see or do in a Pro Skater title. Plus, Neversoft hints at bigger and better secret goodies than the ones seen in previous games, too. "I just hope kids think I'm cool" is all a smiling Jewett will say.



You kiss the curb with that mouth? With the focus away from the pros, Underground's story can get a little sassier.



Veterans will notice a few subtle new touches, like how the board flies away with accurate physics after a bail. Decks break, too!

THUG LIFE

Early versions of the game on the PS2 and Xbox (the GameCube edition was not yet playable at press time) already feature the rock-solid control that has become a hallmark of the Tony Hawk games, and with a little practice, getting off the board mid-combo becomes as second nature as a revert or a spine transfer. There are a lot more visual details in the game as well, and the frame rate never slows down.

While it physically feels familiar to Pro Skater vets, actually playing Tony Hawk's Underground reveals plenty of new experiences. "It's a big challenge to mix it up," says Jewett. "I think we've done a pretty darn good job of taking the content and pushing it forward. And a big part of it is that we wanna stay on top—I'd say we're in the top handful of developers in the world, and we like it that way. So... it's back to we don't hire any wussies. We'll kick your ass!"

Users can create, submit, and download their own levels, tricks, faces, and custom skaters–complete with personalized decks.

Time of day–including dusk and nighttime segments–will come into play, as will weather like rain, snow, and fog.

Customizable character elements include hair, skin tone, clothing, shoes, logos, decks, and more.

PS2 owners can send a digital photo to Neversoft via e-mail and import it into their own game literally minutes later.

Players can add their own character dialogue to created levels–THUG supports USB keyboards.

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THE CHOSEN ONE

If you've played Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 or 4 online, odds are that andyTHPS has kicked your ass. In fact, 17-year-old Houston native Andrew Joseph Gentile is so good that the folks at Neversoft didn't just take notice—they hired him.

"You have no idea how happy I was when they asked me to come hang with them and test the game for a month," says Gentile, who skates to and from high school every day. "I thought it would be something that would fall through the cracks and never happen, but it actually did, and I'm living the dream."

Gentile got a good reputation as a regular on Neversoft's official Delphi forums as well as on the THPS game servers. Now, he's using his l33t skillz to help on any and all aspects of Underground. "I've helped test out tons of new tweaks and controls, and make tons of suggestions on what to take out, how this or that should be. I'm also working on premade created parks and tricks because I 'own at making them,'" he says with a laugh. "I'm also looking for bugs, going through the levels and making sure that they rock as they always do."

When his Neversoft tenure is up, Gentile will suffer through his senior year, upload his share of jaw-dropping THUG skate videos to thpsXonline.com, then hopefully do this game thing full time. "It's always been a life goal for me to move to California and do what I love most, which would be to test the games here at Neversoft. So for this month, I'm really getting a taste of paradise."

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Hey, can you take a few minutes to answer some questions for us?

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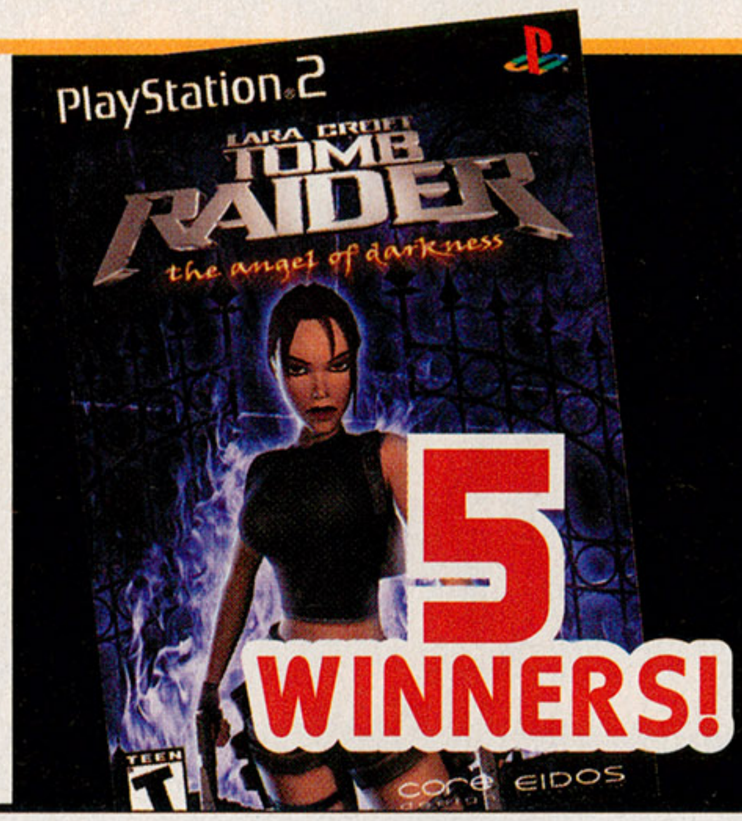
October '03



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Cover	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Table of Contents	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Editor's Letter	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Head2Head	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Art Attack	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Buyers Beware	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
ProNews (GamePro Labs, Static, etc.)	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Cover Feature (To Live and Drive in L.A.)	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Special Feature (Soul of a Champion)	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Special Feature ('Ground Force)	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Special Feature (Destined for Greatness)	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Special Feature (Deep Scars)	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
PC GamePro	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Game Boy Advances	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Sneak Previews	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
PlaySmart	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
PlayStation 2 ProReviews	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Xbox ProReviews	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
GameCube ProReviews	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
Sports Pages	All / Some / None	1	2	3	4	5
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2. Would you like to see more pages devoted to ProStrategies?

☐ Yes ☐ No

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☐ Game Boy Advance SP ☐ Nintendo 64 ☐ Xbox
☐ Game Boy Color ☐ PC/Windows
☐ GameCube ☐ PlayStation 2

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Cell-phone games	Yes	No
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DVD movies	Yes	No
Game developers	Yes	No
Game peripherals	Yes	No
Handheld games	Yes	No
Japanese games	Yes	No
Online games	Yes	No
PC games	Yes	No

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☐ Final Fantasy X-2
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☐ Medal of Honor Rising Sun
☐ Ninja Gaiden
☐ Pitfall Harry
☐ Ratchet & Clank: Going Commando
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Tell us what you THINK!

Destined for Greatness

Hero or thug? Noble or vile? Life is what you make it in Fable, the Xbox RPG that lets you forge your own reputation—for better or worse. By Fennec Fox

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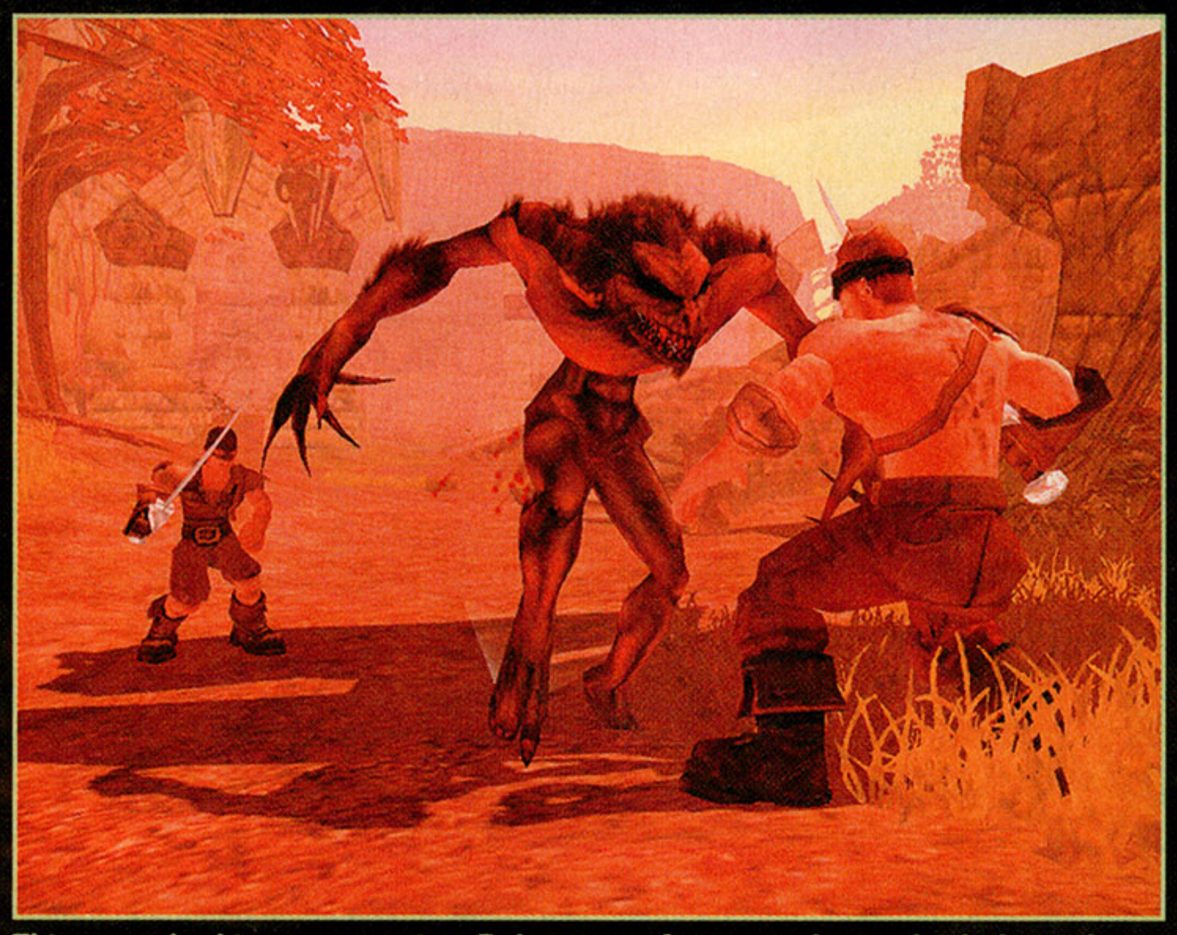
THERE'S NO DOUBT that the PS2 has a firm lock on surreal hyperfantasy role-playing; just look at the Final Fantasy series. In recent months, however, the Xbox has been on an RPG run of its own—first with straight PC ports like Morrowind but now with original masterpieces like Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic. Microsoft's console is becoming the one to own for complex, character-driven, nonlinear gameplay experiences…and Fable, due out this winter for the Xbox, could be the best such RPG the system's seen to date.

You can challenge other heroes to duels to raise your reputation.



This smart-looking creature is a Balverine, a fierce predator who lurks in the bushes and snacks on foolhardy adventurers. Bring a weapon next time.

Becoming a Hero in 32,768 Easy Steps

Developed by Big Blue Box Studios (a satellite outfit of Lionhead Studios, makers of Black & White and the upcoming B.C.), Fable is, at heart, a simple game. As a normal 15-year-old boy in the land of Albion, you return home one evening to find your house ransacked and your family missing. Lusting for revenge, you swear to find out what happened to them—but this is really just a small part of the story. The *main* goal of Fable—one you'll discover over the next 30-odd years of game time—is to become the most legendary hero in all of Albion. If you concentrate on nothing but your family, then an enormous part of the game's world will remain undiscovered right up to the very end.

The environments hold an astonishing amount of variety within. No two areas are completely alike.

The heart of Fable's gameplay is your hometown's Hero Guild, where you pick up missions, learn new skills, and view your popularity on the public hero rankings. To become a hero in Albion, you've got to build a reputation, and you do this by completing guild missions, trouncing fierce monsters, and generally raising a ruckus. You can accelerate this process by using the town's "boasting podium"—a place for you (and your rival heroes) to sell yourself to the villagers. Play the crowd right, and you'll be treated like a pop idol—kids will start copying your outfits, girls will swoon for you, and shopkeepers will bring you gifts. Don't live up to your boasting, and you'll be treated like an idiot and forced to sleep on the street.

The world of Fable constantly shifts between day and night. The light conditions change accordingly.

This is how you start Fable—as a scrawny teenage boy (sorry, no female heroes allowed). You'll grow up soon enough.

Someone head-butt you in battle? No problem—just copy the ability, and you can use it to get back at him next time.

However, there's no rule that says you can't be *infamous* instead of famous—depending on your behavior in Fable, the reputation you build can be one for honorable bravery or murderous barbarism. For example, one mission might have you rescuing some travelers from a group of bandits. Follow your orders to the letter, and the villagers will be thankful; kill the bandits while you're at it, and they'll be ecstatic. On the other hand, what if you decide to take the travelers' loot—or perhaps even kill them—instead of getting them home safely? Well, then you'll get a reputation for being a psychopath. Keep that sort of thing up, and villagers will run away from you, women will hide their daughters, and the barman will let you drink for free because he's too scared to charge you for the mead. You'll become legendary—but for completely different, nefarious reasons.

Fable's plot isn't exactly bright and sunshiney—the world of Albion is full of dark secrets that you explore as the game goes on.

Your personal appearance affects your reputation just as much as your actions. This guy, for example, seems like an honest, reliable fighter.

Marrying and Belching

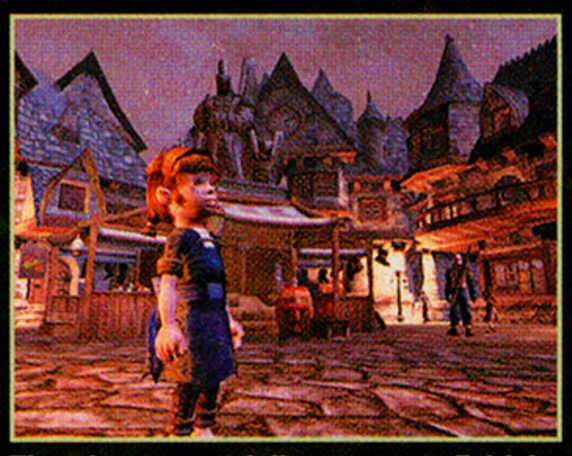
In Fable, everything you do—from completing tricky missions to hanging out in town—can affect your appearance and reputation. Swish your sword around a lot, and you'll grow more muscular; concentrate on will (magic) instead, and you'll age quicker than usual, eventually losing your hair and gaining a ghostly white pallor.

CONTINUED ▶

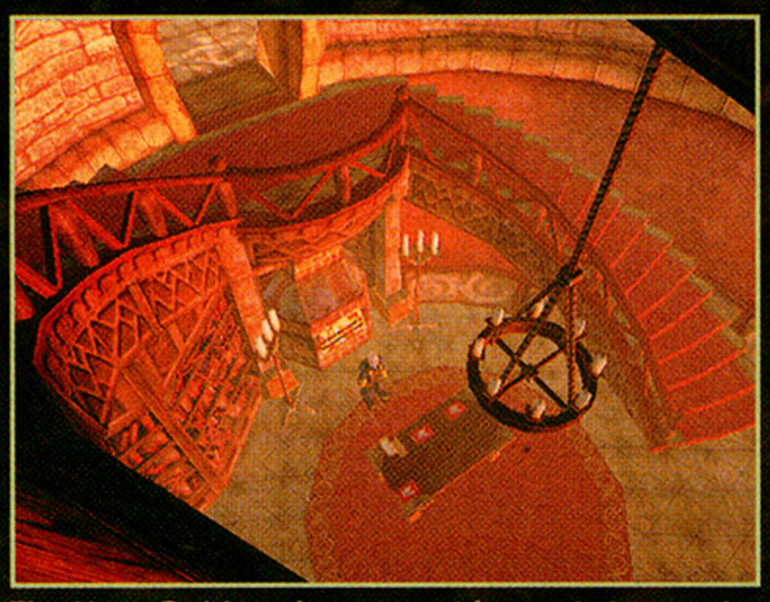
Your social status is even a factor in Fable's skill system—while many skills are learned only at the Guild (you trade experience points for them), others (like bowing or making certain facial expressions) are mastered by mimicking the villagers you meet. Belching at the bar can make you a hit with the guys, but do it around young ladies, and you'll very likely remain single all your life. People have *long* memories in Albion.

The game's real-time combat system is simple but effective—much of it, in fact, is controlled with a single button. There are different attacks and evasive maneuvers available at all times, and you can assign special moves to the controller's buttons in the control menu. The basic moves are context-sensitive—as in EA's Lord of the Rings games, you can simply press the A button to automatically chain together a combo attack. For more complex situations, you can perform special combos and a wealth of will-based spells, including *Matrix*-like slow motion and Hulk-like physical strength. (You can also learn a heal spell, but it must be used sparingly—too much magic can make you die young.)

Two earth trolls enjoy a lazy stroll in the meadow. Fleeing, screaming villagers not pictured.



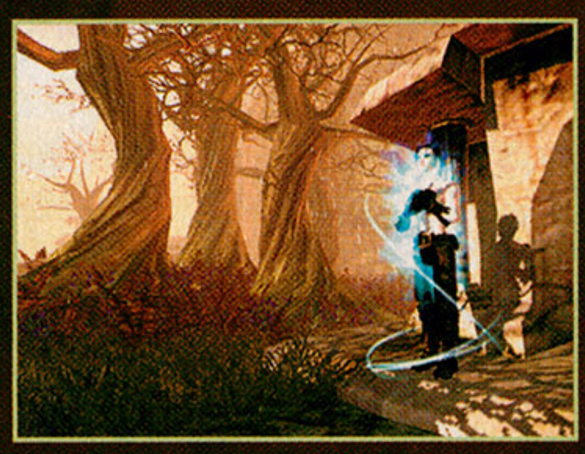
There's never a dull moment in Fable's villages—not with hundreds of NPC townspeople to interact with.



The Hero Guild is where you pick up missions, train your body, and meet your fellow heroes.

If you use a sword, you can learn new attacks from the Hero Guild's sword-master...assuming you have enough EXP to pay for them.

This is what happens to your body if you decide to become a magic-user instead of a buff-n-gruff fighter. Slinky!



Yes, the trees are casting real-time shadows on the ground. Xbox fanatics, feel free to dance a little jig right now.

Where Have You Gone, Peter Jackson?

Fable's visuals, as you'd expect from a game Lionhead Studios is involved in, are ponderously pretty. A tour of Big Blue Box Studios' Guildford, U.K., offices reveals a menagerie of fantastic monsters: nasty giant scorpions, fluttering nymphs, odd-looking zombies, and trolls that stare at you through the screen. "With Fable, we tried to pay attention to the design so it didn't turn out looking like a typical Tolkien fantasy," says Director Ian Lovett. "The model is based more around the works of the brothers Grimm and other dark fairy tales from Europe. People looking for elves, dwarfs, or orcs might be disappointed." Indeed, much of Albion looks like a fantasy version of medieval Germany—thick black forests, small villages with wooden houses, craggy mountains, and unkempt graveyards are only some of it. The backdrops are enhanced by an astonishing amount of light and shadow effects: The game cycles between day and night, and the sun's position in the sky affects shadow placement and local visibility.

Ready, Willing, and Fable

Even after several years of hearing about it, Fable still remains one of the most promising role-playing games in a while. After all this time, though, the game is nearing completion—Big Blue Box Studios has all the individual parts built, and now it's begun the final process of threading them all together into a whole. For anyone with more than a passing interest in RPGs, the Xbox's time has finally come—and this winter can't be here soon enough.

A Director of Legend

Peter Molyneux, leader of Lionhead Studios, is the producer of Populous, Syndicate, Dungeon Keeper, Black & White, and a wealth of other innovative PC games. He's been involved in the development of Fable since it began life as Project Ego five years ago.

GamePro: What do you think was the most difficult thing about making Fable?

Peter Molyneux: The hardest thing to implement is this simulated world. When we were designing Fable, we thought "Why don't we have it so that you can buy anything you like in the world?" Anything from a box of chocolates, to a sword or some armor, to even a whole house or shop.

We thought this would be a really good idea, but then I was watching someone play the game, and I noticed he was hiding in the bushes...and nothing was happening. He was hiding there for two minutes. I asked him, "What are you doing?" and he said, "I'm waiting for the shopkeeper to come out so I can kill him and buy his shop."

And that's the biggest problem. We've got a simulated world where people can do anything—you can go and kidnap people; you can break into someone's house when they're in bed and steal all the stuff in the house; you can become a thief like that. It means that not only do we have all the quests in a role-playing game, but we also have the unique problems of people trying to experiment within the world.

GP: What will the multiplayer mode be like?

PM: We have the ability in Fable to play up to four people on one machine cooperatively. If you're playing Fable at home, you can take your memory card over to your friend's, plug it in, and your character gets imported into the new world. He becomes what's called the "alter ego" of the main character. As an alter ego, you're a sort of ghost—you can fight monsters, pick up experience, and heal the main character. The more you do that, the more of this score you get, and the more score you have, the more likelihood there is that *you* can take over as the main hero. So it's very cooperative, but also a little bit competitive. I think it's quite unique, and the tests we've done so far have been quite interesting.

GP: Can you play this mode online via Xbox Live?

PM: Well, Fable was started five years ago, really before there was any talk of Xbox Live or even the Xbox, to be honest with you. So we haven't currently got plans for it. Personally, I'd love to do it, though.

GP: Will Fable be Xbox-exclusive, or could there be a port later on?

PM: Currently, we are thinking of possibly one other format, and it's not a console (smiles). That's all I can say, but you should be able to figure out what that is. But for the moment, it's Xbox-exclusive.

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If you like what you see here, hit your local comic shop; Issue #2 should be shipping about the time you read this. Use the Comic Shop Locator Service: 888/COMIC BOOK or 888/266-4226. For more information and some free goodies, check out streetfightercomics.com.

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ART BY: LONG VO, SAKA, AND CHARLES PARK

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I CRUSHED ANYONE FOOLISH ENOUGH TO CHALLENGE MY ABILITIES AND SHOWED THE WORLD THAT MY MUAY THAI STYLE WAS THE MOST POWERFUL OF ALL MARTIAL ARTS.

'SAGAT' WAS A NAME TO BE RESPECTED, REVERED...AND FEARED.

BUT I TASTED DEFEAT-AND SHAME-FOR THE FIRST TIME BECAUSE OF ANOTHER NAME...

RYU...

RYU!

RYU!!!

KRA-KAASH!!!

HOW COULD THIS BE?!

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AND HAVE MY REVENGE!

RYU, I UNDERESTIMATED YOU... I DID NOT SENSE WHAT WAS HIDDEN BEHIND YOUR EYES UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.

I DID NOT SEE THE RUTHLESS DESIRE-THE DARK, CONSUMING POWER TO WIN-THAT YOU POSSESSED... UNTIL YOU GAVE ME YOUR 'GIFT.'

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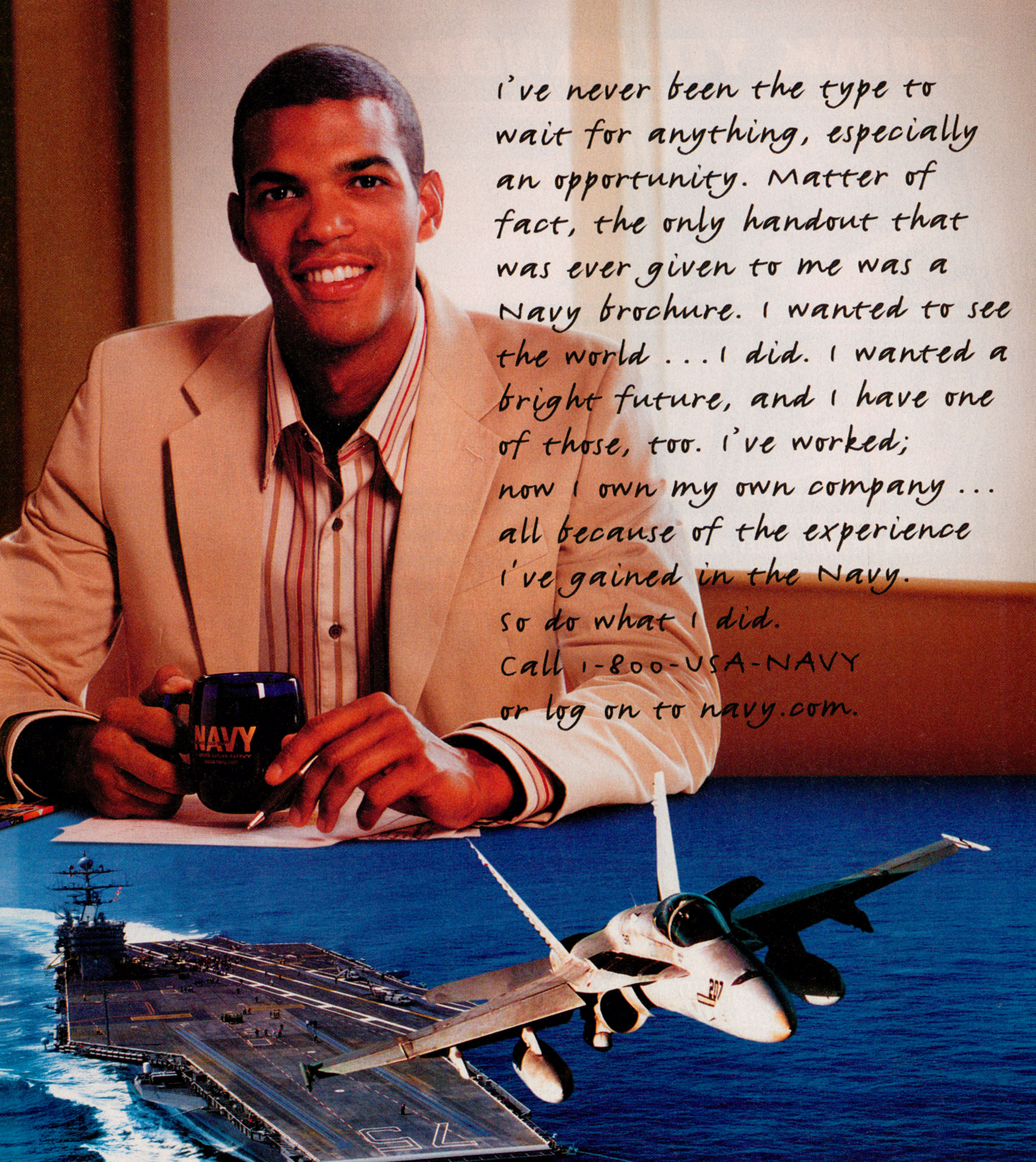
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Call of Duty

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Medal of Honor's cinematic intensity and scope earned the series its reputation, and now Call of Duty is primed to evolve the WWII genre one step further. The "missing link" that Call of Duty has unearthed is an organically operating squad: Sharp A.I. makes the tumult and mayhem of vicious, large-scale combat unfold with a surprisingly natural, nonlinear feel.

And if the word "squad" turns you off, no worries. What's so impressive about Call of Duty is how smoothly you fight alongside your fellow soldiers without ever worrying about orders or other such complications. They know where to go and who to shoot, and they respond intelligently to the tactics you employ.

The dazzling level of detail in its battlefields is also an eye-opener. In the preview version, the visuals and audio already set a new high-water mark, and the amount of background activity in each mission—troops parachuting in, artillery thudding in the distance—leaves plenty to gape at. But you can't play tourist too long without paying the price because the enemy has the brainpower to drop you in your tracks; smart use of cover and flanking tactics is a necessity. Little innovations, like a down-the-barrel precise-aiming option, only add to the natural, authentic feel.

Developed by some of the key members of the Medal of Honor: Allied Assault team, Call of Duty is unleashing the next level of WWII combat with a spectacularly promising first-person shooter.

AN ALLIED OFFENSIVE

Call of Duty approaches WWII from a broad scope as its 24 missions span three campaigns: Russian soldiers storming Stalingrad, U.S. paratroopers on D-Day, and British special forces assaulting Pegasus Bridge. The Stalingrad level, which bears more than a passing resemblance to the movie *Enemy at the Gates*, is the centerpiece in the way that Omaha beach was in Allied Assault, and it's already a jaw-dropping accomplishment.

In each, you'll fight as a different soldier with his own squad, getting to know some guys as regulars, though you'll definitely see some of your compatriots fall in combat. In some cases, they'll be replaced with reinforcements, but other times, your next mission will be a notch harder because you're short on manpower.

When the last round is fired, Call of Duty is destined to earn heaps of medals of its own. This game has mega-hit written all over it, and it's bound to be one of the stars of this holiday season.

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BY AIR HENDRIX

- Developed by Infinity Ward
- Published by Activision
- Target release date: November

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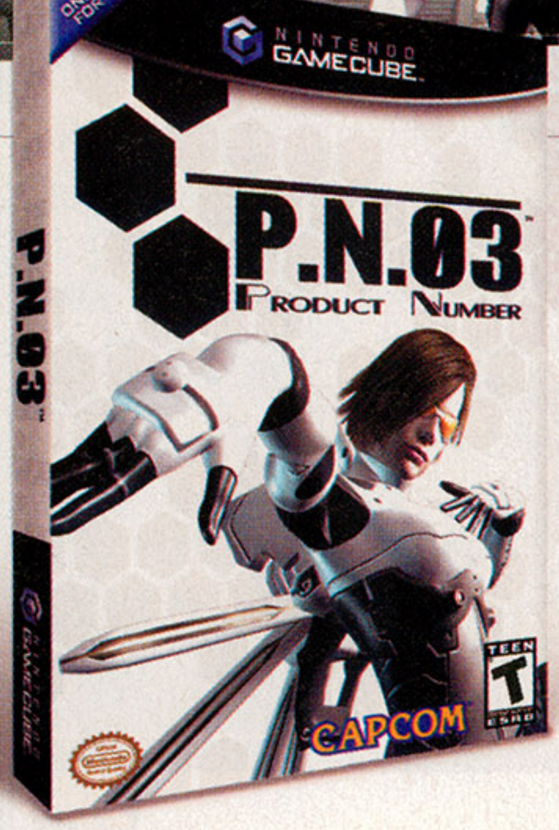

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Final Fantasy XI

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EsperQuest

You might not know this, but Square's massively multiplayer installment in the Final Fantasy series will come to the PC a few months before its PlayStation 2 release, and *GamePro* recently got a chance to tool around in the beta version of this trippy-cool fantasy.

Final Fantasy XI invites you to explore the world of Vana'diel, where you can create your own character from among FFXI's five races: the humanlike Humes, the elflike Elvaan, the small and cute Tarutaru, the Mithra catgirls, and the beefy Galka. As you search the countryside for adventure and magical crystals that enable you to create your own powerful items, you'll also discover new Jobs (as in Final Fantasy Tactics) that give you a chance to further customize your character.

Dunjin fights a Tunnel Worm while a Huge Hornet looks on. Such is the life of a Level 1 warrior in Final Fantasy XI.

License to Print Money?

Final Fantasy XI is, in keeping with Final Fantasy tradition, almost completely different from any previous game in the series, and it's downright original compared to the upcoming slew of EQ heartbreakers due out in the next year. This sort of originality can be both good and bad because while it's refreshing to play a game with a new premise you've never seen before, the decidedly alien controls and gameplay style in the beta version could make getting into the game quite difficult, even for MMORPG veterans. Given the game's lengthy beta stage, however, the controls will likely be smoothed out by launch.

PC is Bettaru?

The beta version showed some clear problems with porting the game to the PC from the PS2, the most obvious being that PS2 graphics look simply horrible on a respectable PC. The environments looked grainy and jaggy as if there wasn't much optimization done for the PC at all. More options for anti-aliasing and higher resolutions would help immensely. Still, combat was peppered with all the requisite FF flair, making mindlessly killing stuff more impressive than in most other MMORPGs out there.

While the PC MMORPG market is beginning to look really crowded, FFXI ought to have the name recognition and the hype to put it over the top. Whether or not American PC MMORPG fans will embrace the title is anyone's guess, but FFXI's PC version could give the old standbys a run for their money.

BY DUNJIN MASTER

- Developed by SquareSoft
- Published by Square Enix U.S.A.
- Target release date: November

PC WINDOWS

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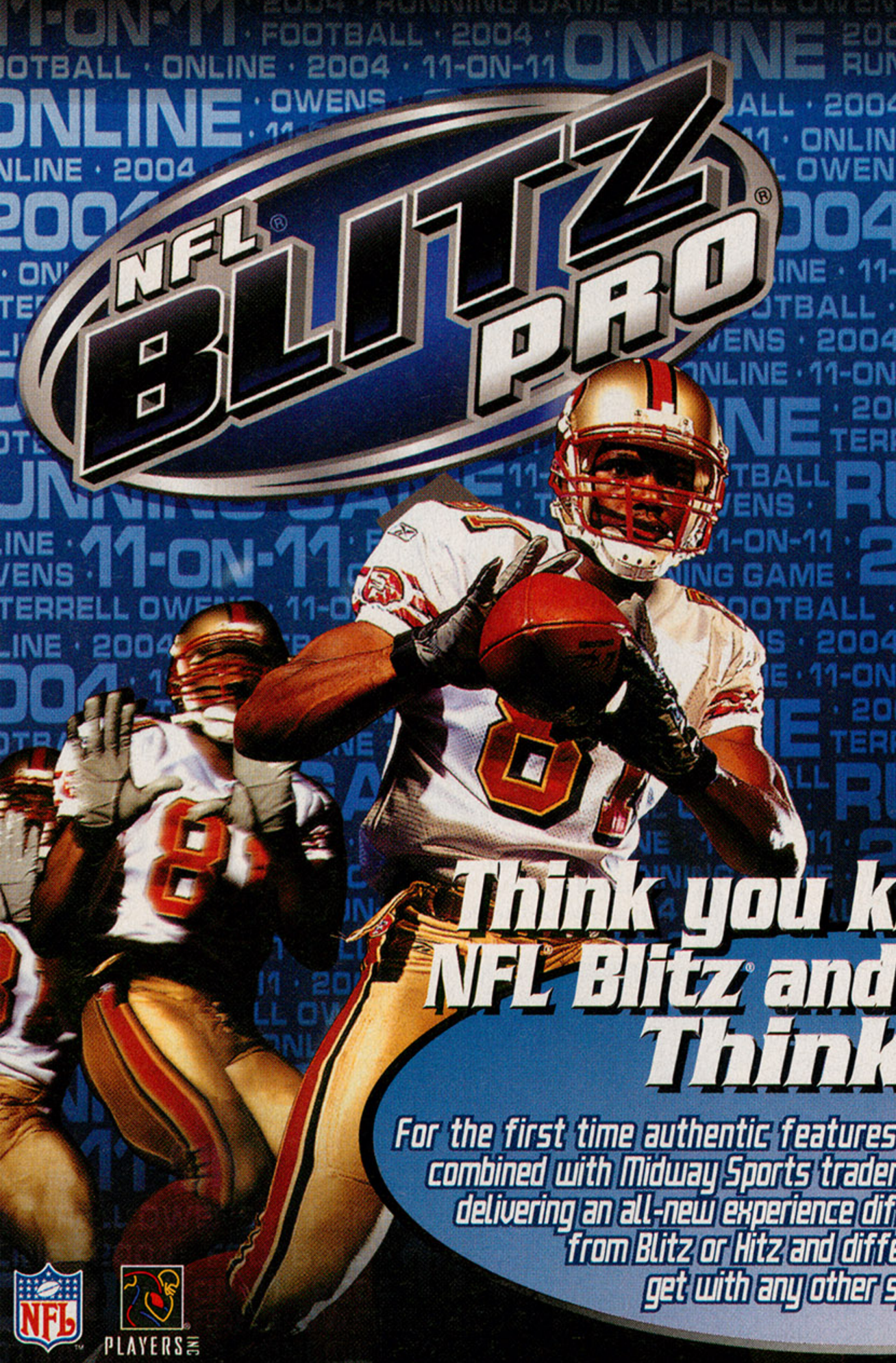

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Temple of Elemental Evil

FOR THE LATEST in the line of Dungeons & Dragons games for the PC, Atari and Troika (a development team made up of folks who worked on the original Fallout) decided to go back to the beginning. Back in the days when THAC0 meant something, Gary Gygax (the creator of D&D) wrote a classic adventure module called Temple of Elemental Evil. The adventure was so huge that it took players from Level 1 to Level 10 (that's a lot in D&D terms) in the course of a single story. Now that classic piece of RPG history is on its way to PCs.

It might not have the graphical bells and whistles Neverwinter Nights boasts, but it's what's under the hood that really counts. TOEE is easily the most complete conversion of D&D's Third Edition ruleset yet, with all the tactical coolness and geekeriffic number crunching hardcore D&D fans expect. While its turn-based combat might seem like a step backward, the preview version showed deep, tactical battles with all the options you'd find in the rulebooks. In a time when the industry seems to be dumbing itself down, TOEE should be a breath of fresh air to true RPG enthusiasts. G

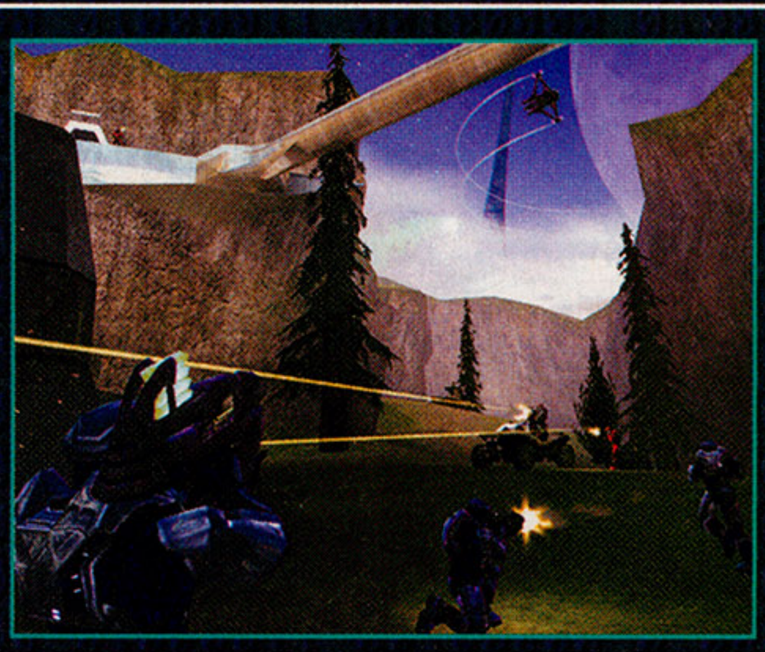
BY DUNJIN MASTER

- Developed by Troika
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: October

PC WINDOWS

HANDS-ON

Halo PC



HALO WITH MOOSE and keyboard? With 3 million copies of the Xbox version out in the world, even Halo with moose and squirrel would probably go over big. Now that it's achieved cult status among console gamers, the Master Chief's fierce first-person combat romp versus the alien Covenant is finally prepped for PC duty.

Halo PC represents an interesting meld of console and PC, although the single-player combat adventure is the same. Gearbox reworked the original Bungie code with a bunch of cool PC stuff like pixel shading, specular lighting, bump mapping, and the like to make even this preview version look completely out of this world. If you've only played the game on a TV, well…you ought to see what it looks like on a *real* display!

Another key development is full multiplayer support over the Internet. There will be at least six new multiplayer maps for up to 16 players composed of areas from the Xbox game. Additionally, gameplay-customization features, which are actually present in the code of the Xbox version (but hidden from players), are now completely accessible, so you can tune Halo to play like other popular shooters such as Counter-Strike or Unreal Tournament. Even if you've played Halo, you've never played it like this. G

BY BROTHER BUZZ

- Developed by Gearbox Software
- Published by Microsoft
- Target release date: November

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*Online and Multiplayer game play available for the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system and PC only. INTERNET CONNECTIVITY required. PlayStation 2 console online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately). All features not available on all platforms. See back of game pack for details.

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Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for something classically "portable," look elsewhere—Boktai asks a lot more from you than your average GBA game. It breaks the fourth wall, leaks into reality, wraps around your brain, and forces you to bask in the life-giving glory of the sun. Weird. Different. Magically delicious.

GET MORE www.gamepro.com ONLINE

PROTIP: Once you drag an Immortal's coffin into a Pile Driver, you have no choice–you *must* go outside and play.

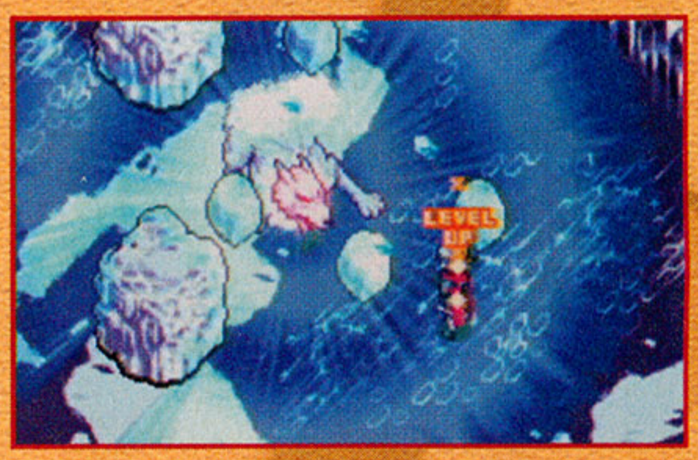
SOL FOOD

In Boktai, your primary weapon is a modifiable zombie-blaster called the Gun Del Sol. It has a meter that drains (very quickly) when fired and fills up if you hold down the A button to "reach for the sky" and recharge it, assuming honest-to-goodness solar rays are hitting the game's built-in light sensor. While you can technically play 90 percent of the game without the sun power, you'll find it's far more challenging and far less fun, and while the game employs a "solar battery" system that stores sun energy in vast "tanks" for when you don't have access to the mother star, access to these tanks during dungeon scenes is very limited. The other 10 percent of the game—the ultimate obliteration of "boss" Immortals—absolutely requires the gigantic nuclear furnace to be present above you. Convenient, no. Mesmerizing, yes.

It's obvious this was made by the same man who did Metal Gear Solid–knocking on walls to divert monsters' attention plays a key role.

Boktai's graphics and sound effects are strangely adorable with colorful areas, crazy-cute anime bank clerks, and zombies that squeak instead of moan. That, combined with the fact that you're harnessing the sun, help craft an illusion that Boktai is a window to a real (and surreal) place.

The gameplay itself is a 3D isometric mix between Castlevania, Metal Gear Solid, and an old-school action/RPG, like Alundra. You enter castles filled with block-pushing puzzles and the occasional number enigma; you sneak stealthily through (sometimes very confusing) mazes, hiding behind walls to avoid enemy detection; you battle bosses like giant wolves and Immortals that feel very much inspired by the Belmont clan. Control isn't super-tuned, however; the gun isn't very precise; the puzzles eventually get confusing, then repetitive; and the rules for sneaking around traps and enemies can sometimes seem unclear. Still, the hybrid is quite unlike anything else, and Boktai would be a super-fine game even without the sun-sensing thing.



PROTIP: In the battle against Garmr (the wolf boss), push the ice blocks into him while he's standing still.

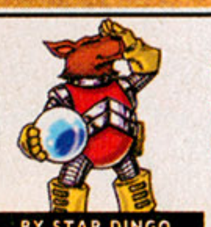
PROTIP: It's okay to go outside sometimes, even if you're not going to play Boktai.

PROTIP: As long as you're outside during the day, you'll get at least one sun bar, even if it's overcast.

SUPERNOVA

Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand could not have been done on any other system: It is uniquely Game Boy Advance, yet not at all like any other GBA game. A paradox, a conundrum, and creativity incarnate.

EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE



BY STAR DINGO

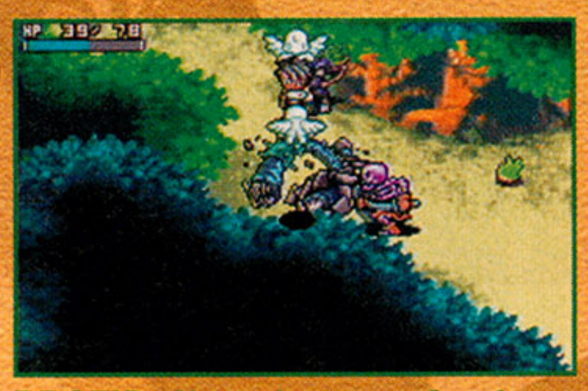
- Developed and published by Konami
- $29.99
- Action/RPG
- Available September
- 1 player

ESRB: EVERYONE

GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
4.5	4.5	4.0	5.0

Shining Soul

EVEN THOUGH IT was usually overshadowed by the likes of Phantasy Star, the "Shining" series (Shining Force, Shining the Holy Ark) has always been one of the hidden gems of the Sega role-playing universe, a collection of cartoony-cool fantasy tactics games and first-person dungeon adventures. Shining Soul, however, is the black sheep of the family. It's an action/RPG, and a pretty boring one at that—a repetitive dungeon attack that feels like an unexciting Diablo.



PROTIP: Always bring one Angel Wing into a dungeon so you can escape when your inventory is full.

Shining Soul lets you pick from one of four characters (a warrior, a wizard, an archer, and a lizardy warrior), hacking up enemies to gain experience and items in the usual ways on an ordinary quest. While the four characters are pretty different, which makes for a potentially interesting second playthrough and fun four-player linked multiplayer, it's the main game (your first solo playthrough) that's the problem. The dungeon layouts are simple—just floors with enemies, an exit somewhere, and random items to pick up. There's one town with about 10 inhabitants. Adversaries (aside from the occasional boss) come in two basic types: shoots or doesn't shoot, each with different graphics and colors. If variety is the spice of life, this life tastes extremely bland.

PROTIP: As the Warrior, specialize in one weapon. Use its charge move (hold down A) whenever five enemies are on screen in a group.

Even though there's not much going on, the control is clunky; your attacks are slow; and collision detection isn't exactly precise. The saving grace is the ease with which you can switch between weapons types and items on the fly, thanks to a shoulder-button-based quick menu system.

Many gamers saw screens of Shining Soul in Japanese form long, long ago and wondered why such a cool-looking game wasn't coming to America right away. That question has finally been answered.

BY EVIL STAR DINGO

- Developed by Sega
- Published by Atlus
- $29.99
- Action/RPG
- Available September
- 4 players

ESRB: EVERYONE

GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
4.0	3.5	3.0	3.0

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FINAL FANTASY TACTICS ADVANCE

FOR ALL ITS portable goodness, Tactics' most impressive achievement is finding a smart way to tell an imaginative story within its nonlinear game structure: This modified *Never Ending Story* is much more interesting than your usual boring "Soap Opera of Kingdoms X and Y" strategy/RPG plot line.

MOOGLE IN MY POCKET

Final Fantasy Tactics Advance tells the tale of a young boy from Earth who's whisked away to a fantasy world modeled after his favorite video game (Final Fantasy, of course). There, he joins a band of warriors to take on mercenary missions while trying to figure out what exactly happened to reality and all his friends. Some missions are purely for profit and items; others get you key objects that you need to take on other missions; and others still lead to story events that move along the game's startlingly compelling plot.

EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE

If you're familiar with the original PlayStation version of Tactics, this game plays the same (i.e. not at all like the "normal" Final Fantasy games)—it's a turn-based, grid-based, six-on-six "fantasy chess" tournament where strategy is paramount. The character design, however, is more whimsical—most of your teammates are moogles, lizardmen, or women with bunny ears. While the original's job-switching system has been slightly reworked to include a number of race-specific classes (like Mog Knight), the coolest change to the usual strategy/RPG rules is the addition of "laws," which can land a character in jail if disobeyed. It's a cool twist that can be especially mind-bending when you're suddenly not forbidden from using the "Fight" command.

As in most other "tactics" games, the battle pacing is a bit slow, and a single turn takes a few more steps than you'd probably like. Level-ups and cool new skills, however, come at a very satisfying pace, and there's a bounty of possible routes for a single character to take.

PROTIP: Rather than using a huge number of characters, focus on a select group of eight or so characters and cycle their jobs often.

PROTIP: After key story battles, you'll get to decide where to place a location on the map. Place them in the "right" spots to trigger special events.

BEWARE OF WALL

If you're into strategy/RPGs, Final Fantasy Tactics is among the finest—obsessively engrossing and perfectly portable. Hopefully you've got medical insurance: You're about to run into a lot more street poles, walls, and parked cars than you used to.

Familiar Final Fantasy elements, such as summoning, Chocobos and Moogles, and spells like Ultima, are all in the game.

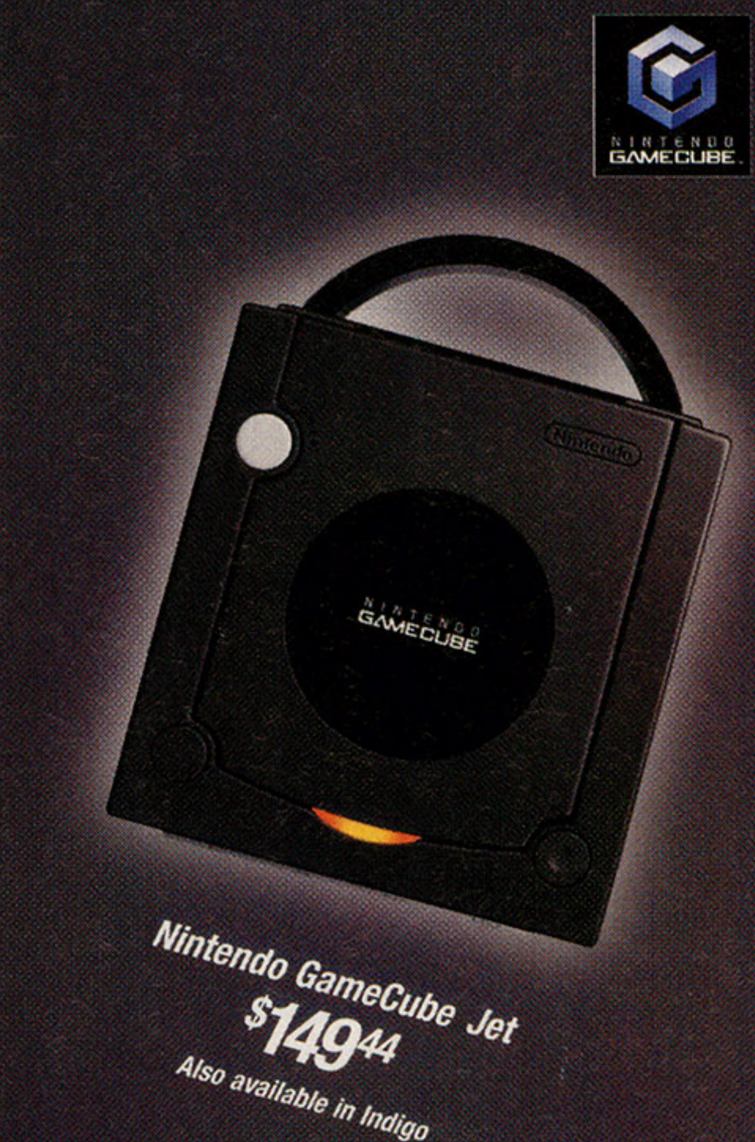
PROTIP: Hold down the B button on an enemy to get its movement scope; that way, you can end a turn outside its melee range.

PROTIP: Keep your clansmen separate so that they can't be harmed by a single enemy spell. Most spells affect a "+"-shape area.

BY STAR DINGO

- Developed by Square Enix
- Published by Nintendo
- $34.99
- Available September
- Strategy/RPG
- 1 player

ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
E (EVERYONE)	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.5



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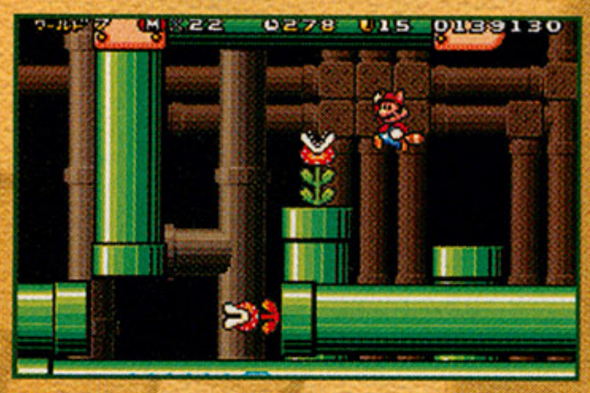
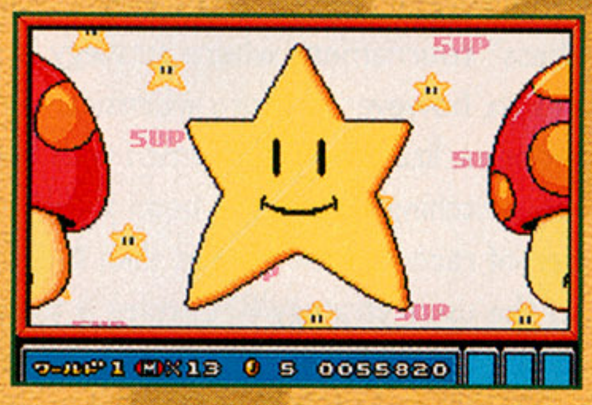
Super Mario Bros. 3: Super Mario Advance 4



"Welcome to Video... *Armageddon*!" Yes, what child of the early 1990s doesn't remember the climactic scene of Nintendo flick *The Wizard*, the U.S. gaming public's first exposure to Super Mario Bros. 3? The latest Super Mario Advance is a port of the greatest NES platformer ever made with Mario going through nine worlds and about 90 levels of blocks, turtles, and 1-up mushrooms. His main offense: a strange variety of power-up costumes that turn him into Raccoon Mario, Frog Mario, Hammer Mario, and other grotesque plumber mutants.

The Japanese version played exactly as you would expect—although the reduced aspect ratio made jumping seem a bit off from the original, this is soon mastered, and old-school gamers will soon be loudly exclaiming, "Oh, yeah, *now* I remember where this 10-coin block was" as they merrily stomp and tail-swish away. It's not just a straight port, though—if you have an e-Reader, you can slide in special cards that add extra functions to the main game, from unlimited-use power-ups to prerecorded demos of neat stuff. There are even special cards that let Mario access brand-new abilities—how would you like to fly with the cape from Super Mario World? Or maybe throw turnips around like in Super Mario Bros. 2? All you'll need, young Wizard, is the right card.



BY FENNEC FOX

- Developed and published by Nintendo
- Target release date: October

Game Boy Advance

HANDS-ON

The Sims Bustin' Out

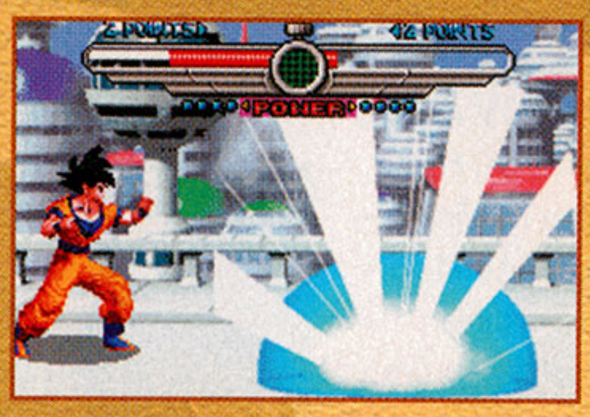
The quintessential virtual pet simulator (yes, they're human... no, don't think about it) finally goes portable—and it's about time, dammit, cuz this series is one of those that's always seemed perfect fodder for a portable port. While the GBA version has some new RPG-ish task-oriented gameplay, eight career-themed mini-games, and daily auctions, most of the gameplay is still essentially the same as its big console brother's, albeit a little smaller. And if you own the GameCube version of Bustin' Out, consider your wife-swapping potential maximized—you can transfer Sims from the console to the GBA to earn money and learn skills, among other things.

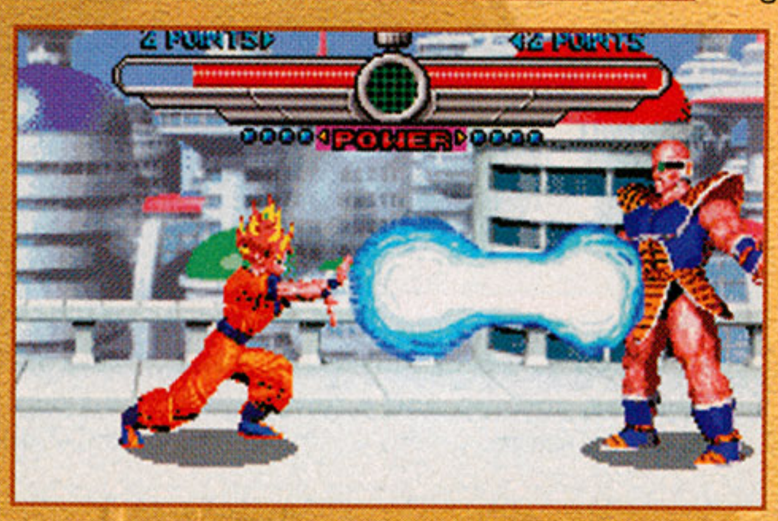
BY STAR DINGO

- Developed by Griptonite Games/Amaze Entertainment
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: December

Game Boy Advance

FIRST LOOK





Dragon Ball Z: Taiketsu

Looking for a little agro Saiyan action on a bit of a smaller scale? Dragon Ball Z: Taiketsu (it translates loosely to "confrontation" or "face-off") is a sort of Budokai-style fighting game for the Game Boy Advance, brought to you by the same developers who did the Legacy of Goku games. Goku, Buu, Gohan, Cell, Piccolo, Frieza, Trunks, and Vegeta will all be selectable characters. If you're Dragon Balling it solo, you can do so in a tournament mode or an endurance mode; or if you have link capabilities, up to two human players and two A.I. opponents can spar at once.

BY STAR DINGO

- Developed by WebFoot Technologies
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: November

Game Boy Advance

FIRST LOOK

Enter the Eye of the Sandstorm!

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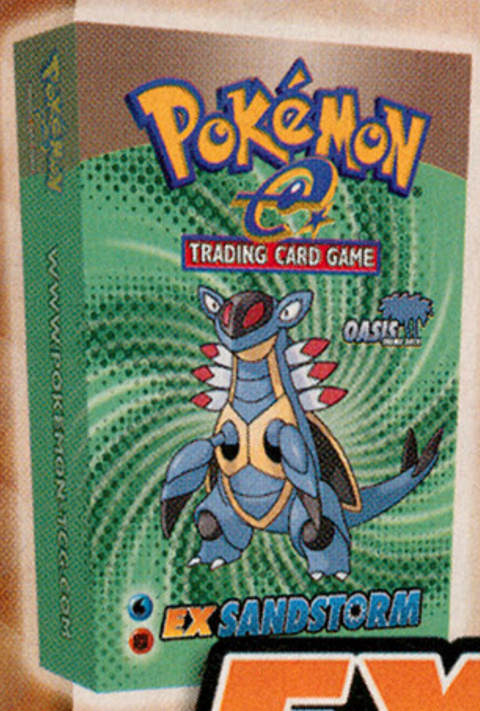

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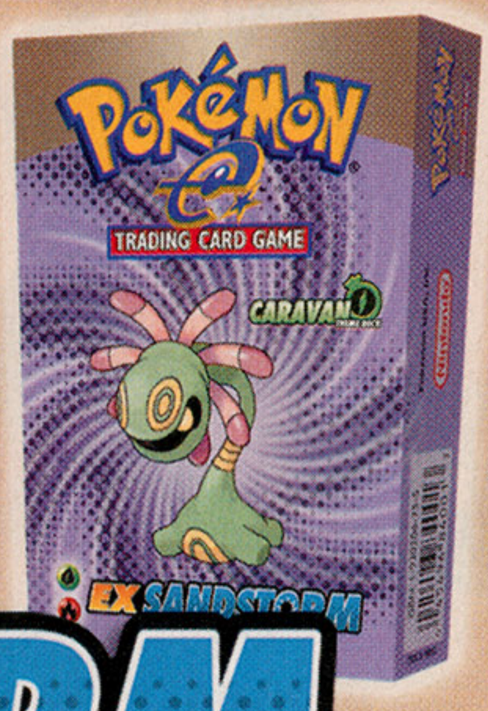

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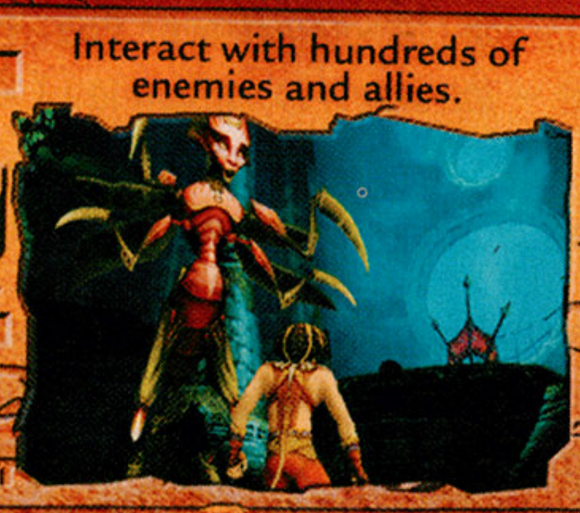

Play as the Mummy, he's a sucker for punishment.

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Castlevania: Lament of Innocence

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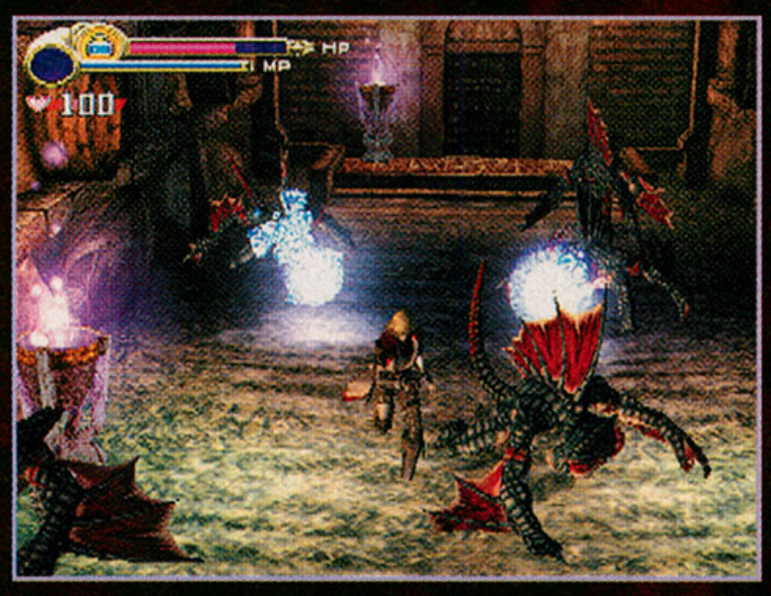
All the Belmonts

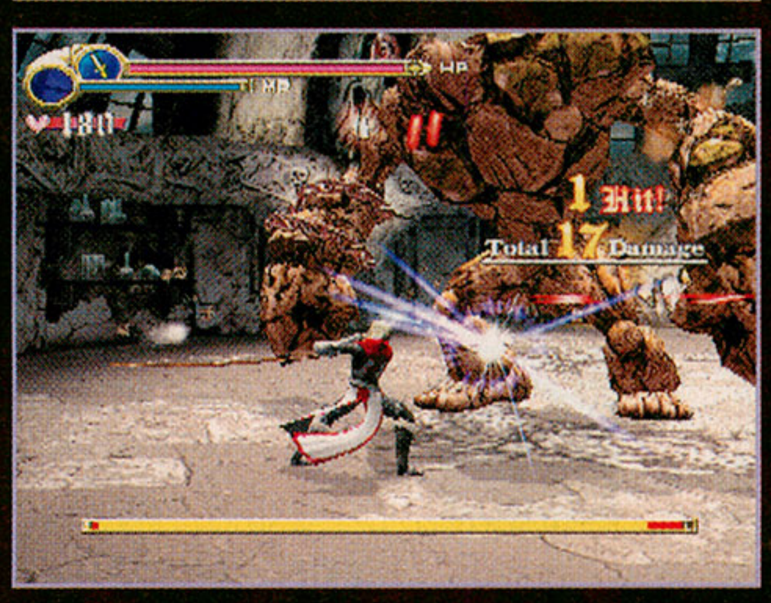
Lament of Innocence will be one of the more story-driven Castlevania games in the series. Taking place before any of the Castlevania titles, you'll play as the first Belmont vampire killer, Leon. Upon Leon's return from the Crusades, he finds that his girlfriend, Sara, has been kidnapped by Dracula. Renouncing his knighthood, Leon sets out for Dracula's castle and encounters Rinaldo, a weapon master who introduces Leon to what will become the trademark Belmont weapon: a whip. Rinaldo also runs the local store, where Leon can purchase potions and assorted items.

The first of the Belmonts, Leon, ventures into Dracula's castle in Lament of Innocence, the forefather of all Castlevania games.

Simon Says...

Dracula's castle is gigantic, and Lament's play time is approximately the same as Symphony of the Night's. The castle is divided into five areas, each of which has hundreds of rooms and several levels (main floor, basement, etc.) to explore. Some areas are initially inaccessible but can later be reached after Leon learns certain abilities or collects the proper power-up. And, in keeping with Castlevania tradition, a powerful boss awaits at the end of each area. Visually, Lament is gorgeous: Rooms are awash with excellent lighting and atmospheric effects, and gory details—such as enemies meeting their demise as they dissolve into a puddle of blood—are a nice touch.





A Lot at Stake

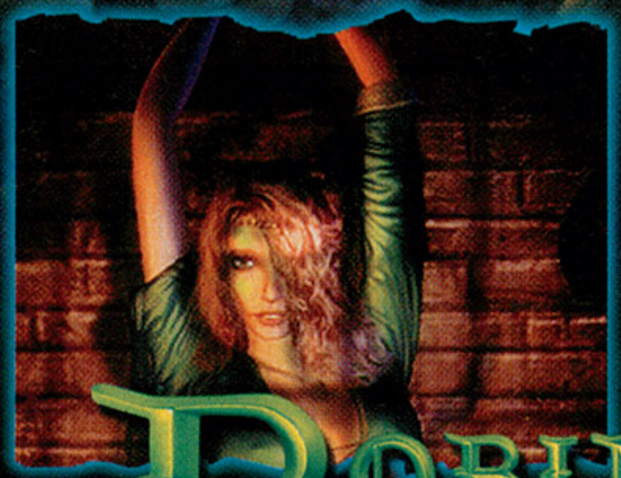
3D Castlevania on the Nintendo 64 left a bad taste in almost everyone's mouth…however, Lament should change that impression. Although this PS2 Belmont adventure is 3D, it plays like it's 2D: Attacks are easy to execute, it's easy to target enemies, and characters don't "float" when they jump. Leon also has dozens of special abilities, and the more you experiment with different button-press combinations, the more likely you are to learn different combo attacks. Another important skill is magic: Leon can block incoming attacks with a gauntlet, and each blow that is successfully blocked is converted to magic energy that can be stored for later use.

BY MAJOR MIKE

- Developed and published by Konami
- Target release date: October

PS2 PlayStation 2

HANDS-ON



Robin Hood Defender of the Crown

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Suggestive Themes
Violence

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Tak and the Power of Juju

SURVIVAL INSTINCT

How do you reinvent the wheel without eliminating its fundamental wheelness? That's the question on the minds of any developer trying to make people interested in 3D platformers again. Crystal Dynamics is chaining a weasel to a bunny; Naughty Dog is tapping into the darkness in Jak's heart; and Avalanche is turning to a little fella named Tak and his amazing powers of Juju.

Much of Tak and the Power of Juju falls into the traditional platformer mold—a big, nonlinear world with lots of sections to explore, rats to smack, and items to collect—but the thing that really sets the game apart is a little more subtle: clichés like switches, catapults, etc. have been replaced by a sort of living animal ecosystem. Puzzles rely on you learning and playing off the traits of the different creatures that live in Tak's world; and rather than pulling a lever to turn on an elevator that opens a gate, you're leading an orangutan into a monkey's throwing range so you can sneak a sheep by on your head to placate an amorous ram. It's a smart, challenging, and rewarding approach to puzzles, and Tak's secret weapon.

The animals are what set Tak and the Power of Juju apart—puzzle pieces with instinct and personality.

ANIMAL MAGNETISM

Tak is also set apart by the fact that the main character has a likeable, bumbling earnestness about him and isn't the result of some marketing survey that says gamers like characters who ride hoverboards and have one eyebrow slanted and raised in knowing extremeness. The animation, bizarre costumes, and especially the animal designs are honestly funny and seem to owe a lot to Nick Park of *Wallace & Gromit* and *Creature Comforts* fame.

GET MORE www.gamepro.com ONLINE

Tak doesn't yet have the polish of a Jak or a Ratchet, but time with the PlayStation 2 preview build (it's also coming for the GameCube) proved he's got personality and a really smart, compelling gameplay idea in his living puzzle zoo. There's no question that originality is desperately needed to keep the 3D platformer species from going the way of the dodo. A little help from some chickens, sheep, emus, monkeys, and rhinos couldn't hurt either.

BY STAR DINGO

- Developed by Avalanche
- Published by THQ
- Target release date: October

PS2 PLAYSTATION 2

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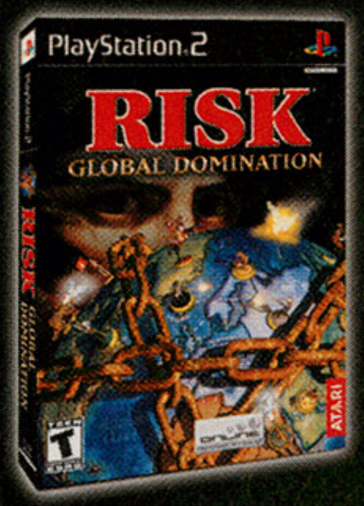

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The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King

JUST AS THE movie series calls it a wrap this fall, so, too, will EA Games complete its current The Lord of the Rings trilogy with The Return of the King. Think EA is going all out? Do Hobbits have big, hairy feet?

In concluding Tolkien's epic fantasy tale of the battle between good and evil, The Return of the King is larger than the previous Two Towers game. The 12 levels faithfully follow the danger-fraught journey of the former Fellowship (of course), and *Lord of the Rings* fans may weep at the loving detail paid to it all, from the spider-monster Shelob's lair to the ghostly Paths of the Dead.

Better yet, the three story threads are true to the novel's structure, and you can tackle them individually in the original interlacing story sequence or in the new two-player co-op mode. Like the other games, Return of the King showcases actual cinema from the film, too.

The PlayStation 2 preview (the game will also be available for the Xbox and GameCube) revealed eight playable characters, including Gandalf, Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, Samwise, and Frodo (a few hidden surprises, too), who wield their unique weapons and tactics. Samwise, for example, can use invisibility to sneak by the Uruk-hai orcs while Aragorn hacks said creatures to pieces. All in all, Return of the King looks tight, and if you haven't already done so…read the books!

BY BROTHER BUZZ

- Developed by EA Redwood Shores
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: November

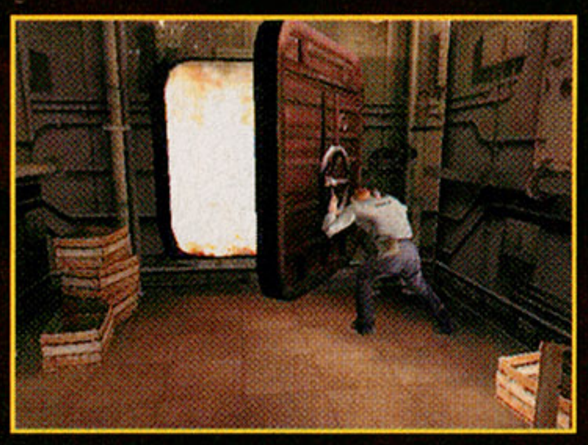
PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

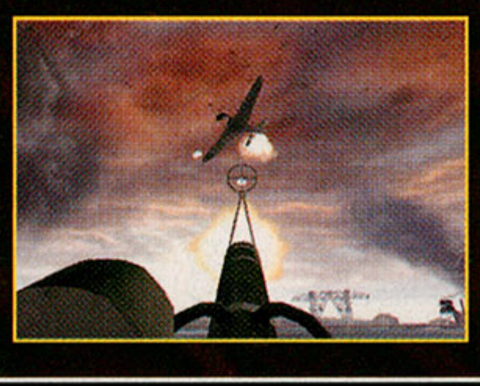
Medal of Honor Rising Sun

RISING SUN IS on the horizon as the Medal of Honor series extends its brand of first-person-perspective military combat to World War II's Pacific theater of operations. You play as Marine Corporal Joseph Griffin, and your tour of duty begins unexpectedly with Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. The game weaves through famous Pacific campaigns right up to Guadalcanal before the final assault on the evil empire. As in previous Medal games, you undertake covert military missions, but here your five assignments represent a hunt for a stolen cache of gold.

Medal of Honor Rising Sun's missions spread over 10 massive levels with multiple pathways, something new for the series. Additionally, you can play the entire game in two-player co-op mode, and there are 10 multiplayer levels for up to four players.



The gameplay features the combat gunning that Medal vets have come to know and love, but the story line adds depth by weaving other characters into the action such as a British commando and a Japanese-American special forces operative. Corp. Griffin even encounters his brother who, by the way, is going to star in a future Medal of Honor title.



When Medal of Honor Rising Sun hits the beach this fall, World War II will officially become the longest military conflict in video-game history. Spoiler alert: We win!

Note: All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version.

BY PRIVATE BUZZ

- Developed by EA Los Angeles
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: Fall 2003

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX GAMECUBE

FIRST LOOK

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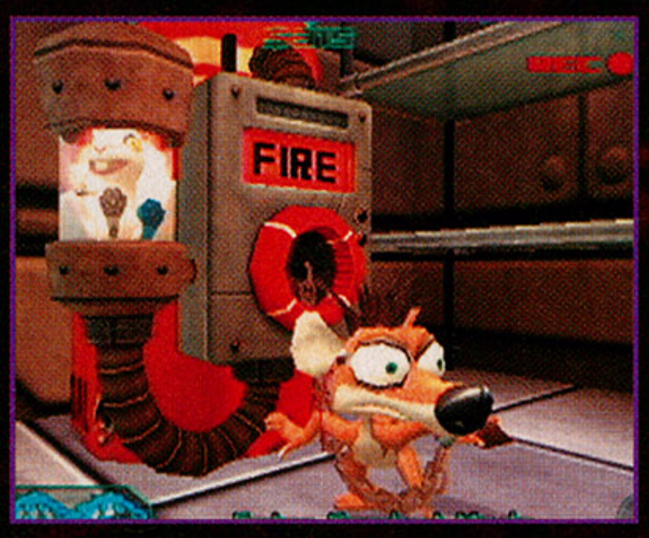
Whiplash

WHEN *GamePro* FIRST saw Whiplash, it was an unknown property. That was before Crystal Dynamics' crazy and cartoony action game went on to become an E^3 showstopper, making naysayers stop saying nay with its creative premise and chaotic gameplay. With the release of the first playable build, it looks like those lofty laurels are, thus far, well deserved.

Whiplash looks and plays like a twisted cartoon, which fits the game perfectly. It took some time to get past the preview version's controls, which played a bit fast and loose, and made precision attacks difficult, but after a while, it became apparent that the game isn't about precision—it's about knocking chairs toward enemies and bouncing on their chests until they fall asleep. The chaos is contagious in Whiplash, and the laughs are actually genuine. One of the coolest things is that after you fill up your combo meter, Redmond (the rabbit on the chain) goes bananas and just starts convulsing and attacking everything in sight. Imagine Simon's whip in Castlevania but with a mind of its own—and in the form of a little rabbit. Overall, a few control tweaks would do the game some good, but the fun is already there.



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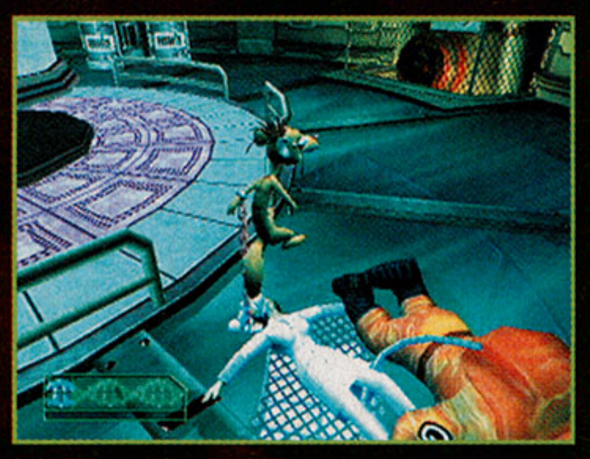

BY D-PAD DESTROYER

- Developed by Crystal Dynamics
- Published by Eidos
- Target release date: October

PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

Legacy of Kain: Defiance

WHAT DO YOU do when you have two branching story lines in one universe, containing two of the coolest, most badass characters in gaming history? Why, you combine them, of course.

That's exactly what Crystal Dynamics has done with Legacy of Kain: Defiance. While the story line is still top secret, some details have gotten out: Raziel has had just about enough of the Elder God, and he has to meet up with Kain, his long-time enemy and former boss. Of course, nothing's ever simple, and Raziel happens to be 500 years in Kain's future. No one's really sure how or why they'll meet, but you can bet it will involve time travel and settling old scores.

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Both vamps have their old powers more or less intact, and they both gain new ones thanks to Defiance's new fighting and telekinesis system. A little time with the game showed the new controls to be responsive and intuitive, and Defiance's new look definitely turns heads with an Ico-like camera system and renewed attention to graphical detail. There should be a playable coming soon, but for now, feast upon these screenshots.

BY D-PAD DESTROYER

- Developed by Crystal Dynamics
- Published by Eidos
- Target release date: November

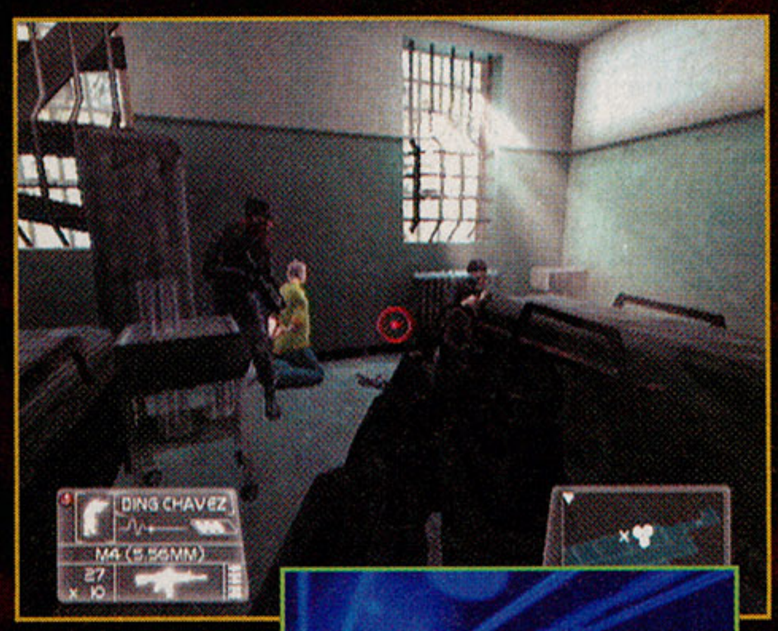
PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX

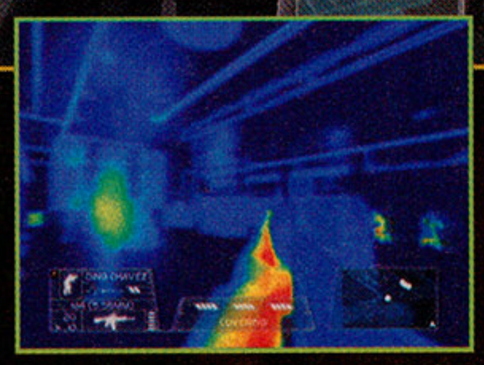
FIRST LOOK

Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3

RAINBOW SIX 3 for the Xbox isn't just a port of Raven Shield for the PC—it's an all-new game with a sort of "faster action, less crazy tactics" kind of philosophy. Still, don't go thinking you can just run into a situation with blind guns blazing. That kind of stupidity will still get you killed right quick.

In the Xbox preview build, holding down the A button brought up an easy-to-use directional-pad menu that issues contextual commands for the other three members of the squad—clear a room, hurl a flash grenade, or simply cover all the exits in a room—though in the final product, you'll be able to use the Xbox Live headset microphone to issue commands verbally. A few more options letting you tell your guys where exactly in a room to focus their attention (as in the upcoming Full Spectrum Warrior) would have been nice, especially in one Alcatraz shower-stall shootout taken straight out of *The Rock*.





The Xbox visuals are already superb, borrowing a lot from Splinter Cell tech with cool night and thermal vision effects and awesome flash grenade afterimages. Whether the game will look quite as spiffy on the PS2 or GameCube is still confidential.

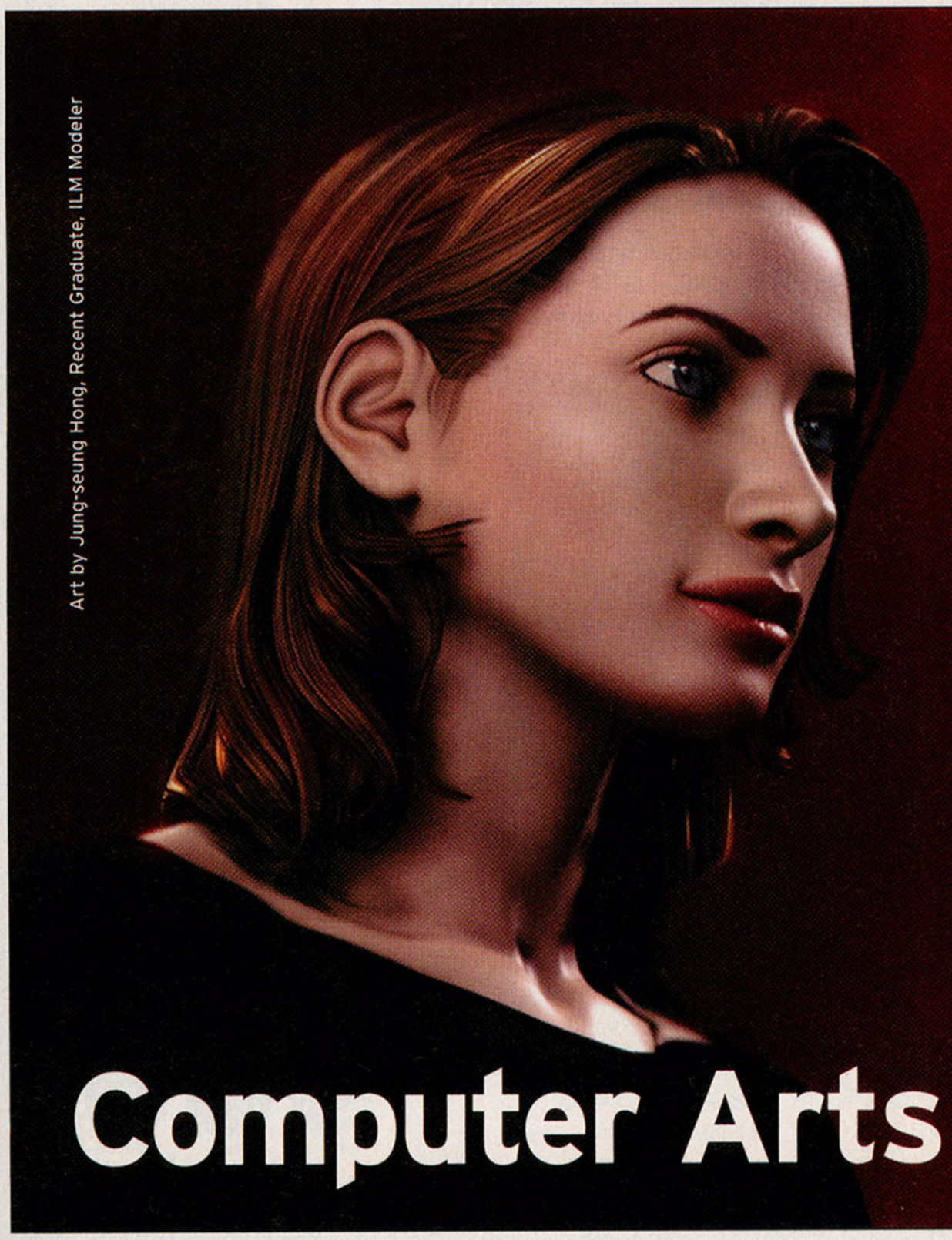
GET MORE www.gamepro.com ONLINE

BY STAR DINGO

- Developed by Ubi Soft Montreal
- Published by Ubi Soft
- Target release date: November

XBOX

HANDS-ON



Art by Jung-seung Hong, Recent Graduate, ILM Modeler

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Computer Arts

SSX 3

FOR SSX 3, EA is abandoning the trick-track presentation of the first two games to give the game a grander sense of scale. The entire game takes place on an enormous mountain; if you surf from the top to the bottom, it will take you 30 minutes in real time. Different sections of the monolith host different events—slopestyle, race, big air contests, and more. The environment is a lot freer this time; you'll find 150 quick challenges hidden around the mountain. If you can perform them, you'll be rewarded with big cash. Some areas are still out of bounds, but if you can survive on the edges of the toughest terrain, you'll earn a bonus for courting danger.

Based on an early PS2 build (it's also headed for the Xbox and GameCube), the visuals are as impressive as ever. You'll encounter 30 types of snow and ice, not to mention avalanches and other weather-related challenges (strong winds will physically push you around the slopes). The controls feel strong, too, and the new nose and tail press moves (similar to manuals in skateboarding) help create longer combos than before. With unlockable gear and songs (N.E.R.D. and Queens of the Stone Age highlight the customizable soundtrack) plus three tiers of Uber tricks and PS2 online play to boot, don't doubt SSX 3—it's coming down the mountain whether you're ready or not.

GET MORE ONLINE www.gamepro.com

BY DAN ELEKTRO

- Developed by EA Canada
- Published by EA Sports Big
- Target release date: October

PS2 PlayStation 2

HANDS-ON

The Sims Bustin' Out

ATTENTION ALL SIMS: Do you want to change your career? Is it time for you to update your wardrobe? Was the last time you went dancing in 1975? If you answered yes to any of these questions, then you need The Sims Bustin' Out. If you order now, you'll receive 10 new career paths, an updated wardrobe, brand-new locations, 100 unlockable objects, and an eclectic mix of friends. But wait, there's more! A new integrated two-player game and memory card support will enable your creator to play with or against their friends and also transport their Sims (that'd be you) to a friend's place. Plus, you'll receive sleek graphics and new voices, sound effects, and original music. Operators are standing by!

Note: All screens shown here are from the PlayStation 2 version.

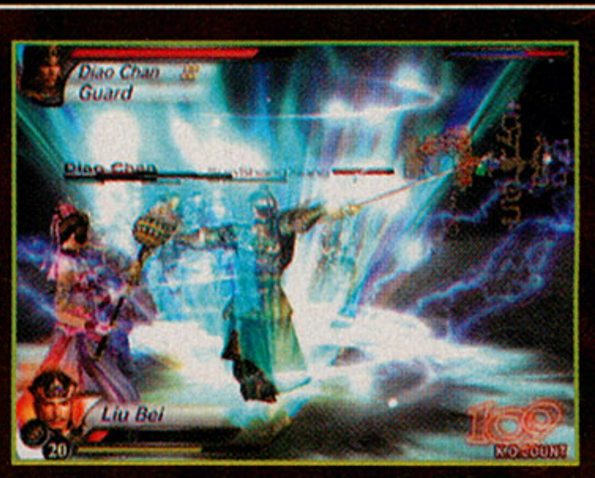
BY THE VIXEN

- Developed by Maxis
- Published by EA Games
- Target release date: December

PS2 PlayStation 2 · Xbox · GameCube

FIRST LOOK

Dynasty Warriors 4



DYNASTY WARRIORS 4 is bringing all its button-mashing Chinese historical fun to the Xbox this September. The end result should be an almost identical experience to the PlayStation 2 version with all the siege engines, officer and bodyguard editors, duels, items, and combo attacks left intact. The big difference is that Xbox owners will be treated to Dolby Digital 5.1 sound, assuming their rig is set up for it. The Xbox preview version was still a little rough around the edges; blocking and parrying was difficult at best, but it was a cinch to key in the game's massive combat combos and trademark Mosou attacks. In the world of Dynasty Warriors, the old saying is true: The best defense is a good offense.

BY DJ DINOBOT

- Developed by Omega Force
- Published by Koei
- Target release date: September

XBOX

HANDS-ON

Lupin the Third

Lupin the Third is already an established anime cartoon in Japan, and with a new time slot on Cartoon Network's Adult Swim, the series is quickly hitting cult status here in the States. In the upcoming Lupin the Third game, you control the charismatic title character, a master thief with a knack for clever disguises and narrow escapes. Using intellect, shadow, and dumb luck, Lupin must pilfer various treasures from around the world—all while evading security guards and the folks at Interpol. The game features stealth-based missions that force the player to mingle among museum security guards and think quickly to evade capture. Original cut-scenes and a battle mode between secondary Lupin characters will be included in the final version. If you haven't met Lupin yet, prepare to be charmed.

BY SIMON LIMON

- Developed by Banpresto
- Published by Bandai
- Target release date: October

PLAYSTATION 2

FIRST LOOK

Wrath Unleashed

IN WRATH UNLEASHED, there's a power struggle between the gods high above for land superiority. Powerful beings called overlords are fighting each other to become the dominating god. Part strategy and part fighter, Wrath Unleashed enables you to control four overlords, each with his own magical powers and groups of loyal mythological creatures like dragons, centaurs, and juggernauts. In a 3D overview, you command your troops to floating islands that contain various mana powers, but if there's a clash with an opposing force on the island, the game transitions to a one-on-one battle. While the gods may be crazy, this unique gameplay style may also prove ungodly in your hands this winter.

Note: All screens shown here are from the Xbox version.

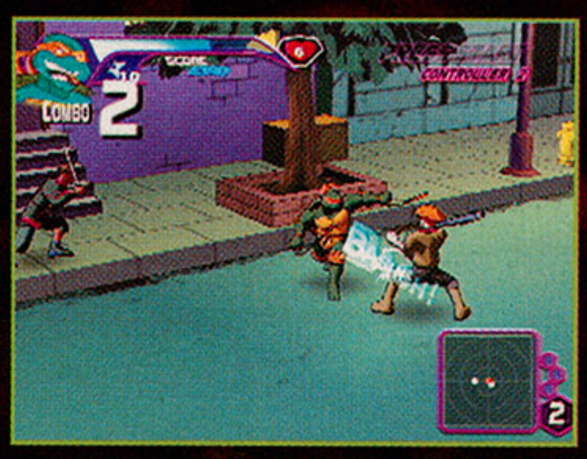
BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON

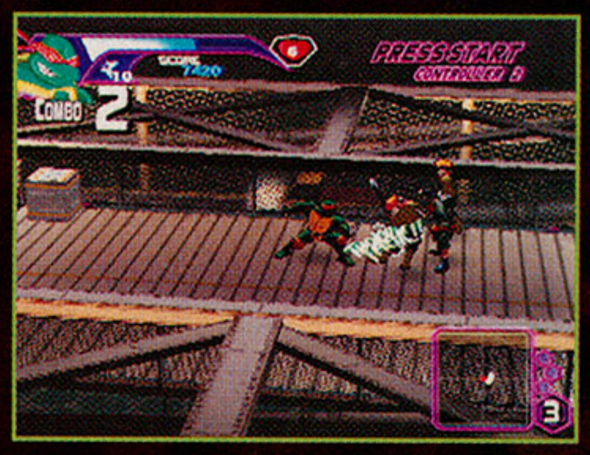
- Developed by The Collective
- Published by LucasArts
- Target release date: Winter 2003

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX

FIRST LOOK

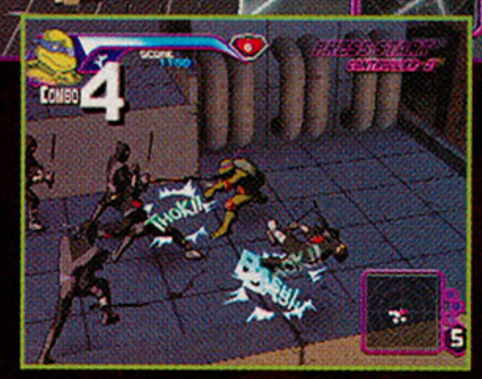
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles





ALMOST 20 YEARS have passed since the heroes in a half shell were first introduced as the premiere pizza-eating urban crime–fighting team (composed of Donatello, Raphael, Michelangelo, and Leonardo). Today the ninja turtles are once again basking in their success with a new animated series, and in October, they'll return to the video-game venue where the real action takes place. An early build of the game featured plenty of reptilian super-powers full of furious button-mashing punches, kicks, and awesome combos with ninjitsu weaponry. The turtles have never looked better, popping with cel-shaded goodness at every turn.

Up to two players can cooperatively bash Shredder's band of Foot ninjas or challenge each other to a friendly versus melee where you can play as any of the shelled heroes or as many of the familiar villains. In the Story mode, you can collect valuable scrolls that unlock new attacks in over 35 levels of unbridled button-smashing that is sure to keep your fingers in motion to the very end. The masters of the sewers are about to resurface for some serious ninja carnage.



BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON

- Developed and published by Konami
- Target release date: October

PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

Project Gotham Racing 2

SURE, THE ORIGINAL Project Gotham Racing had fast, realistic cars and some nifty gut-twisting road tracks—but the game's true highlight was the point system that awarded Kudos for your driving flair, stunt finesse, and, of course, vehicle safety (not crashing). The more Kudos you earned, the more tracks and cars you opened up. This unique reward scheme is also the main attraction of PGR's sequel, paying you dividends for additional moves like powerslides, drafting on the race line, and cornering on two wheels.

So far, PGR2 shows great improvement over the first game. Tracks are designed with much more detail, and even the beginner courses are of a competitive length. A solid lineup of American, Japanese, and European speedsters from such manufacturers as Chevrolet, Toyota, and Ferrari all rumble the pavement with noticeable handling differences and look absolutely sharp traveling at over 100 miles per hour. An extensive list of features on Xbox Live already guarantees some Kudos for Project Gotham Racing 2, too.

BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON

- Developed by Bizarre Creations
- Published by Microsoft
- Target release date: November

XBOX

HANDS-ON

Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu

SIN TZU IS the latest supervillian to get all up in Batman's piece, and he's the first one ever to make his debut in a video game. With help from perennial favorites Bane, Clayface, and Scarecrow, Sin Tzu harries Batman in his usual Gotham City haunts, while the Man Bat enlists aid from Nightwing, Robin, and Batgirl to overcome Sin Tzu and his fiendish friends. A cooperative mode enables two players to join forces on the streets of Gotham. Thanks to comic book artist Jim Lee, the PS2 preview build (the game is also coming to the GameCube and GBA) looks great from a character-design perspective. The levels, however, are straightforward front-scrollers with repetitive brawls and mundane enemies, and there is plenty of room for improvement in the controls and stage design. G

BY DJ DINOBOT

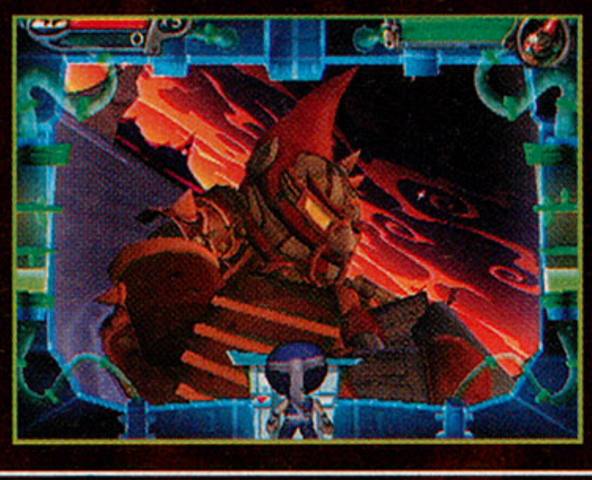
- Developed by Ubi Soft Montreal
- Published by Ubi Soft
- Target release date: October

PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

I-Ninja

I-NINJA RUNS ON walls like Shinobi, helicopters around like Rayman, and pseudo-skateboards like Sonic. The story involves ninjas, robots, and a wizened blue sensei who hands out promotion belts. The four levels in the PS2 preview build include factory- and skate-themed platforms, Robo Boxing, and a mission where I-Ninja must roll a barrel full of gunpowder across a treacherous area to blow open a cage. The designers of I-Ninja—which is also coming to the GameCube this November—seem to be using the "shotgun" method in which you pepper your game with elements that made other games fun in hopes of hitting a good combination. The result so far is a mish-mash of miscellaneous influences that may yet manage to establish a unique identity. G



BY DJ DINOBOT

- Developed by Argonaut Games
- Published by Namco
- Target release date: November

PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

Kya: Dark Lineage

THE PREVIEW VERSION of Kya: Dark Lineage showcases the titular femme fighting, gliding, freefalling, and sneaking through a fantastic parallel universe populated with bizarre creatures. Armed with only a boomerang and her bellbottoms, Kya sets out to rescue her brother from the clutches of the sinister dark lord Brazul. The fighting system demonstrates some potential with Kya using Judo throws and powerful combo kicks to dispatch her foes. The boomerang, unfortunately, uses the same button as the punch command and works inconsistently. Once the controller issues are ironed out, combat should be much more enjoyable. Though it may look like the main character was designed by a marketing committee, Dark Lineage contains some interesting gameplay that may give Kya a life of her own. G

BY DJ DINOBOT

- Developed by Eden Studios
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: November

PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

Killer 7

HARMAN SMITH, THE most feared assassin in the world, has seen better times. Not only is he a decrepit old man who can barely walk nowadays, but he also shares his brain with seven other personalities—some based on real people he killed back when he was working full-time. In this 'Cube-exclusive adventure, Harman must track down crime boss Kun Lan, switching between his seven "partners" to deal with obstacles and blast through Kun's legion of zombified henchmen. The game's five chapters jump between the present and the year 2005, and the way you deal with your targets now could have adverse effects on the story in the future. Sound weird? It is—and the *film noir* graphical style really isn't the half of it.

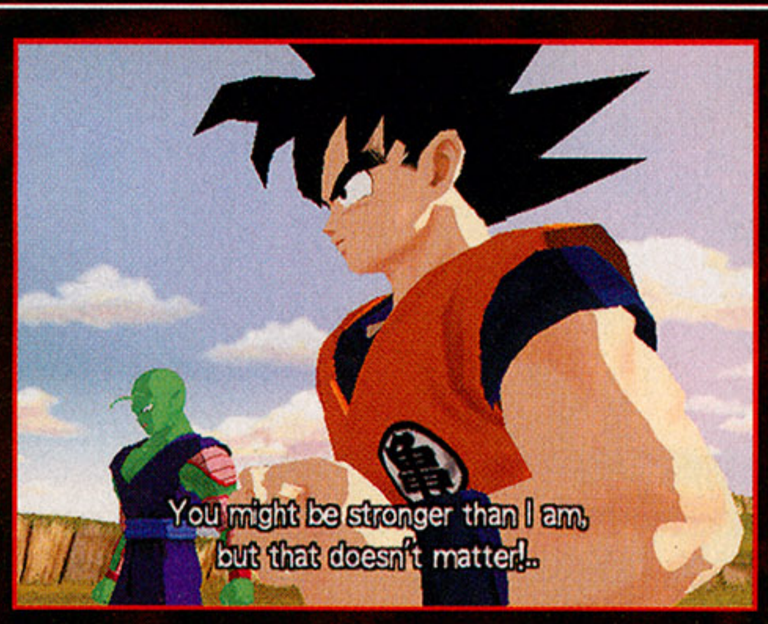
BY FENNEC FOX

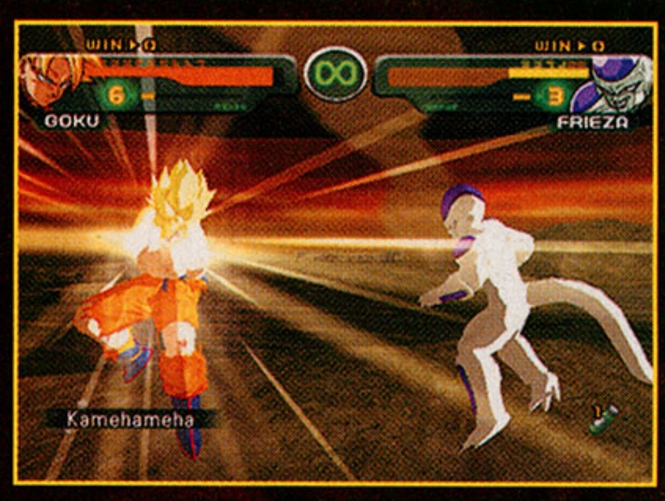
- Developed by Grasshopper Manufacture
- Published by Capcom
- Target release date: 2004

GAMECUBE

FIRST LOOK

Dragon Ball Z Budokai





WHILE GAMECUBE OWNERS are getting Dragon Ball Z Budokai about a year after it originally hit the PlayStation 2, the wait hasn't been entirely pointless. As you've likely noticed by now, the developers at Dimps have devoted some time to improving the first Budokai's graphics for the 'Cube. All the characters look a bit more refined this time around—almost cel-shaded, in fact, in the now-classic The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker fashion. While it's not quite the cel-a-rama that Budokai 2 on the PlayStation 2 will be, it's still a very pleasant effect.

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Other than this quick makeover, though, the GameCube Budokai is the same game Atari released last Christmas: 23 characters, five game modes, dozens of skills to learn, and a story that begins with the Saiyans and ends with the Cell Games.

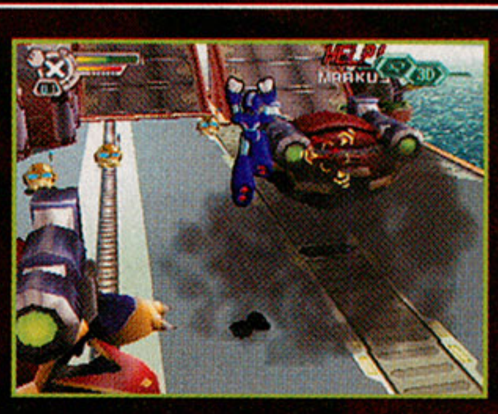
BY FENNEC FOX

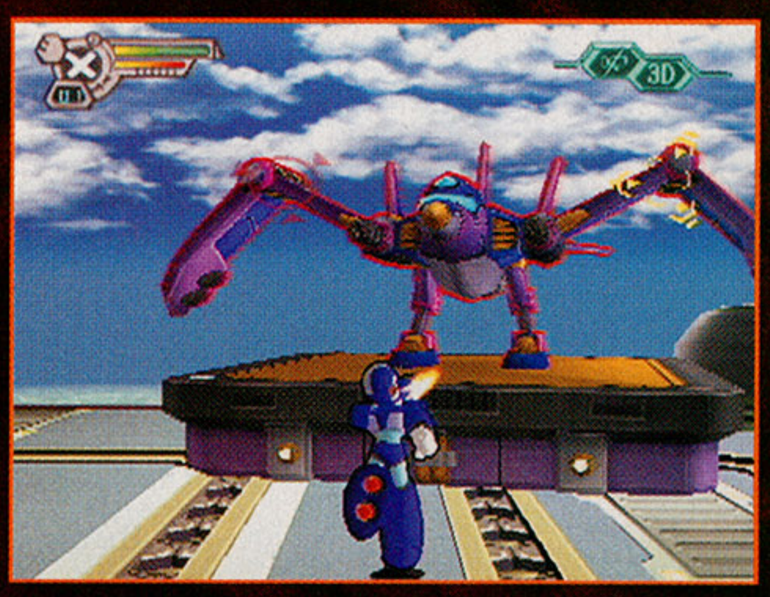
- Developed by Dimps
- Published by Atari
- Target release date: October

GAMECUBE

FIRST LOOK

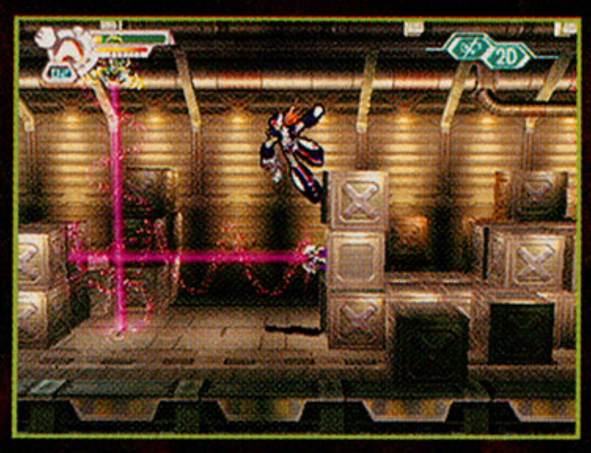
Mega Man X7

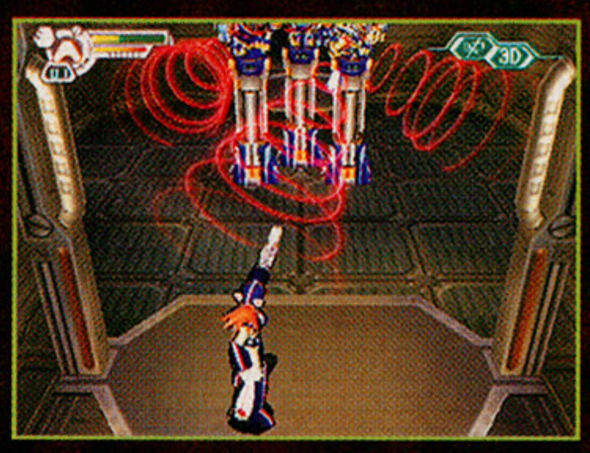




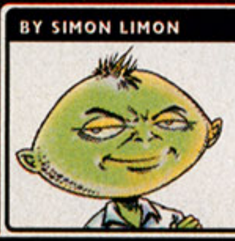
WAIT A SECOND, Mega Man X7 is 3D? Didn't Mega Man 64 already try this—with disastrous results? This time around, fear not.

Mega Man X7 is the first PlayStation 2 installment of the X series, and while it's sporting new 3D environments and cel-shaded graphics, the game hasn't lost its 2D roots. The majority of the gameplay takes place in a 2D side-scrolling format, occasionally switching to a zoomed-out or third-person view. The preview build featured an intuitive lock-on system and the ability to instantly switch between Mega Man, Zero, and Axl—a new handgun-wielding character who is capable of mimicking enemy robots. The switch to 3D is always a scary one, but it may prove to be the needed change for this aging series.





BY SIMON LIMON



- Developed and published by Capcom
- Target release date: October

PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

Amped 2

FORGET THE WILD and fantasy antics of the other snowboarding games. If you crave realism, then Microsoft's Amped series is your lift ticket to the virgin powder. Besides the usual boarding rituals, this season's Amped includes a new recreation: snowskating. It's another extreme sport formula that attaches a ski to a board. The feel is supposed to mimic skateboarding—you can pull off more tricks because your feet aren't attached to the board. Amped 2 also carries an extensive career mode where once again you must compete for stardom by pulling off crazy stunts in front of the media. Punctuating the game's realism are the mountainous environments of Switzerland, Australia, and New Zealand, which have been painstakingly replicated all the way down to each area's known weather patterns.

BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON

- Developed and published by Microsoft
- Target release date: November

XBOX

FIRST LOOK

Time Crisis 3

THE SEARING HOT gun battles in the Time Crisis world are once again coming to the PlayStation 2. Like past ports, this third installment will arrive packed with the complete arcade version, plus extra game modes and a new playable character. Time Crisis 3's big feature is that you can now simply select between four types of guns at any point in the game. A hands-on version played fantastically: fast and arcadey. As usual, Namco's GunCon 2 was dead-on accurate and worked without a hitch. Thankfully, Namco will be packaging the light-gun with the game, or if you already own it, you can opt to buy the game without it for just 10 dollars less than a regularly priced PS2 game. Set your sites on Time Crisis 3 for it's sure to be a hit in October.

BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON

- Developed and published by Namco
- Target release date: October

PLAYSTATION 2

HANDS-ON

Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance

GLADIATOR: SWORD OF VENGEANCE is Acclaim's attempt to recreate the pure aggression and brutality of Roman combat and, by Crom, the previewable version of this sucker is loaded with gore. While 70 percent of the game consists of chopping up rival herculoids until they fall to the ground as arterial-spraying messes, the other 30 percent will have you fetching keys, destroying jugs, and pulling levers. Pressing appropriate buttons when prompted opens up execution cut-scenes depicting gratuitous limb-chopping, decapitations, and intestine-spilling disembowelments. Fast-paced, über violent, and featuring a chest-thumping orchestral score, this should appeal to fans of films like *Gladiator*, *Conan*, and *Jason and the Argonauts* (dig the fight against the Spartan skeleton warriors)—as long as Acclaim does something about the game's frustrating lack of camera control.

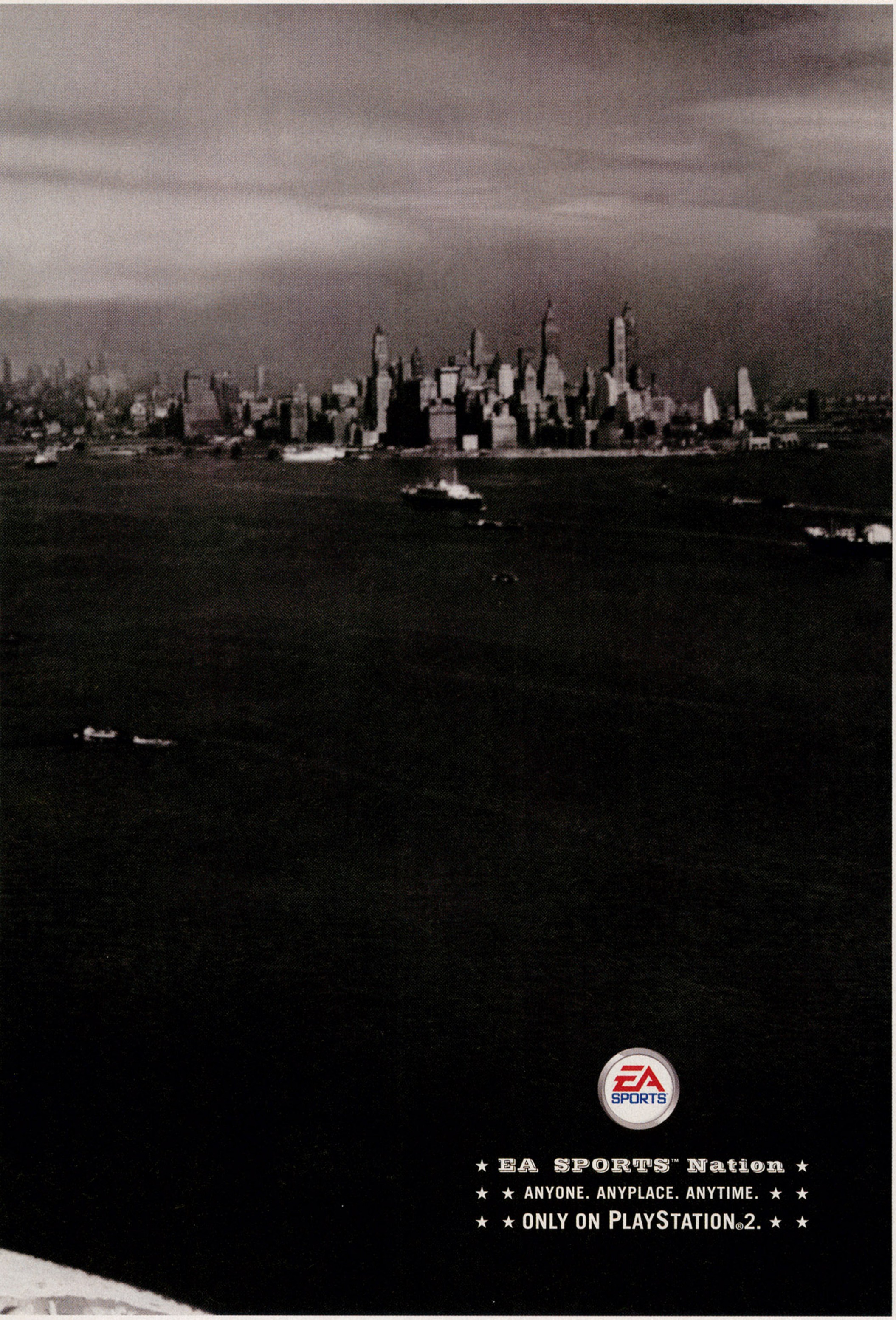
BY PONG SIFU

- Developed and published by Acclaim
- Target release date: October

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX

HANDS-ON

RAPTO
15
easports.com



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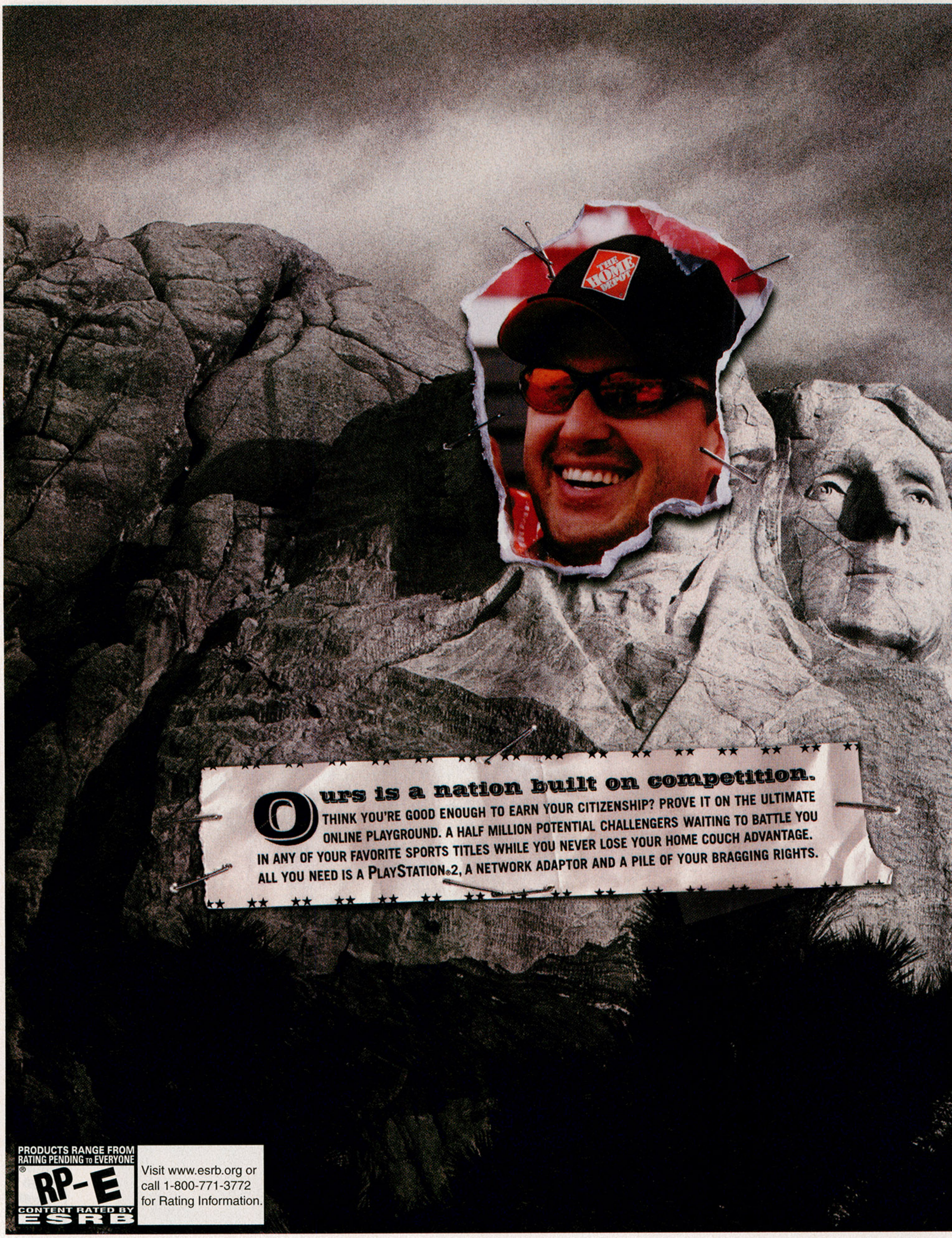
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Maximize your video-gaming fun! Make the right purchasing choices by knowing exactly what kind of content is inside each game.

The ESRB Ratings Guide

The interactive electronic entertainment industry utilizes a voluntary rating system developed by an independent organization—the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)—so consumers know what to expect before buying a video or PC game. The following is a quick key to the most common ratings; for a complete description, check out the ESRB's website at **www.esrb.org** or call **800/771-3772** for more information.

Titles rated **Everyone (E)** have content suitable for persons ages six and older. These titles will appeal to people of many ages and tastes. They may contain minimal violence, comic mischief, or crude language.

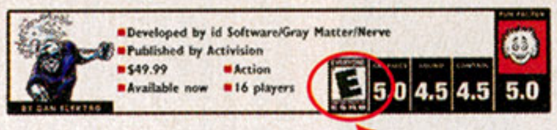
Games rated **Teen (T)** are suitable for ages 13 and up. These games could have violent content, strong language, and/or suggestive themes.

Games rated **Mature (M)** are appropriate for older gamers, generally 17 and up. Mature-rated games may contain more intense depictions of violence, stronger language, and, on rare occasions, sexual themes.

The **Rating Pending (RP)** icon may appear in early reviews of soon-to-be-released products. Look for the actual ESRB rating icon on the game's package, check the ESRB's website, or call its toll-free phone number for updated rating information.

WHERE TO FIND THE ESRB RATING

***GamePro* understands that parents care about the content of the video games their children play. That's why every review printed in our magazine and posted on our website lists the ESRB rating. Below, we've circled this rating in a sample review box to help readers locate it throughout *GamePro*.**

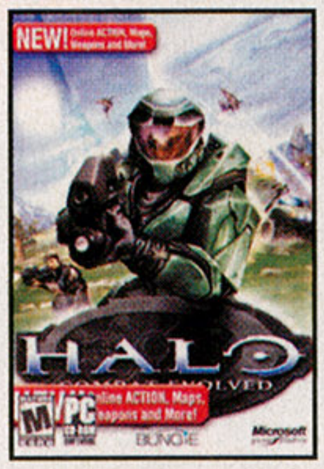


Note: Previews do not carry an ESRB rating as games are often not rated until they're ready for review and purchase.

Halo PC
By Microsoft

MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

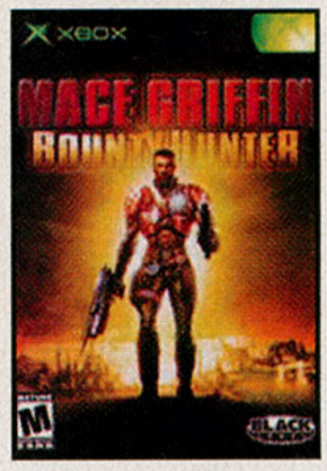
Like Half-Life, Halo PC is a story-based combat game that revolves around battles with alien creatures. The fairly intense action involves gunplay on foot and in a variety of vehicles, and plenty of blood—both human and alien—is spilled. While the violence isn't over the top, it's realistic enough and frequent enough to make Halo PC unsuitable for younger audiences.



Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter
By Black Label Games

MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mace Griffin Bounty Hunter may take place generations into the future, but weird-looking creatures still bleed red and can be eliminated by one shot to the head. Splattering of body parts after a harsh explosion only accentuates Bounty Hunter's violent content.



Reign of Fire
By BAM! Entertainment

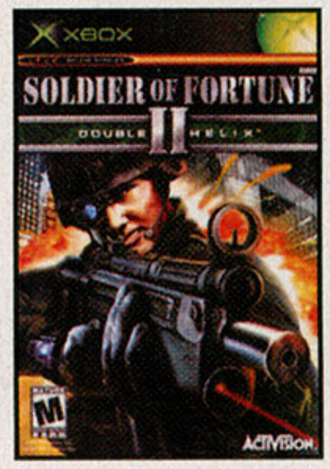
MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

In BAM! Entertainment's tie-in to the Matthew McConaughey action opus, you play as either a truck-driving dragon-slayer or a mythical flying lizard. There's plenty of wanton death and destruction, and since you control a fire-belching beast, you'll basically incinerate people into smoldering crisps. There's nothing in the way of gore, but it still may be a bit intense for the little ones.

Soldier of Fortune II: Double Helix
By Activision

MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Based on the mercenary magazine of the same name, the Soldier of Fortune series is known for serious gore (unless you choose to turn it off, expect lots of blood and plenty of dismemberment). You can target specific limbs and shoot guns out of enemies' hands, among other things. The weapons are realistic, and so is the violence.



Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3
By Ubi Soft

MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

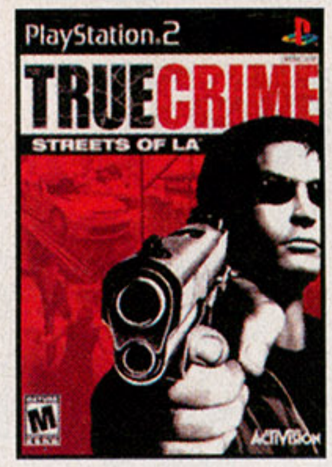
The Tom Clancy universe of games prides itself on realism, and this Xbox game is no exception. Blood sprays on the walls when you kill an enemy, and hostage situations can get brutal (with innocents lost) if things go awry. Your teammates show their injuries realistically, too, with blood and bullet-holes remaining on their clothing.

Box Art Unavailable

True Crime: Streets Of L.A.
By Activision

MATURE M — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

You play a cop who can be guided to stay within the guidelines of the law or to break them and suffer the consequences. Physical violence, shootings, and vehicular mayhem are portrayed with relative videogame realism. There are also very scantily clad women.



Note: Some box art may not display final ESRB ratings.

ESRB RATINGS FOR ALL GAMES REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE

Alter Echo	T
Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds	T
Disgaea: Hour of Darkness	T
Freedom Fighters	T
Futurama	T
F-Zero GX	T
The Great Escape	T
Otogi: Myth of Demons	T
P.N.03	T
The Simpsons Hit & Run	T
Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg	E
Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand	E
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	E
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	E
NASCAR Thunder 2004	E
NFL Fever 2004	E
Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII	E
Shining Soul	E
Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	E

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THE SIMPSONS HIT & RUN

THE SIMPSONS VIDEO-GAME license has languished in the "crappy exploitation" category for so long that it's easy to expect another bland hack job to sully the reputation of television's finest show. But lo and behold, this time something went right—even the Comic Book Guy would be stoked.

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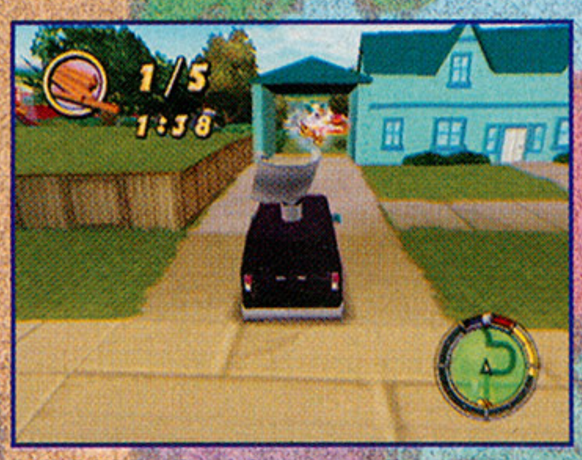
PROTIP: Don't dally in the tomacco field—your Wanted meter goes up quickly with every plant you hit.



PROTIP: Buy the surveillance van from Gil. It's fast enough to race and can take a beating.

PRAY FOR MOJO...

No matter how the developers try to position it (mission-based driving?), The Simpsons Hit & Run's gameplay is virtually identical to that of the Grand Theft Auto series, right down to the Wanted meter and button assignments. Missions have you speeding around Springfield collecting items, racing against NPCs, or preventing Smithers from getting to work on time. Often, you'll have to jump out and do platformy things like collect coins or jump from ledge to inaccessible ledge.

Zany cut-scenes and well-timed quips keep the pace brisk, while the large maps provide ample opportunities for exploration. The music and voice acting are flawless, and the vibrant, cartoony graphics bring Springfield to spectacular life.

Several costumes can be purchased, including Homer's "Casual" dress.

WHAT'S A BATTLE?

For all its charms, there are a few problems. At its root, Hit & Run is merely a scaled-back Simpsons-themed Grand Theft Auto clone and lacks true innovation. The sound levels are inconsistent, requiring constant fiddling with the volume. During platform-based missions, the controls fall apart, and the camera gets stuck too easily. In the car, the map display is practically useless. And finally, the missions are bipolar: either incredibly easy or insanely difficult. Smithers is a boss, for cryin' out loud!

Still, the deeper your Simpsons lore runs, the more references you'll spot and the more you'll enjoy Hit & Run. Whether piloting Chester J. Lampwick's rocket car or harvesting tomacco with the Plow King, The Simpsons Hit & Run is the outstanding game that fans knew the show could become. Mmm-mmm...Sacrelicious! G

Also on the Xbox and GameCube

- Developed by Radical Entertainment
- Published by Vivendi Universal Games
- $49.99
- Available September
- Mission-based driving
- 1 player

ESRB: TEEN

FUN FACTOR	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL
4.0	4.5	4.5	3.5

FUTURAMA

WHILE NOT THE best platformer in town, Futurama manages to sidestep the peg-warmer status usually reserved for licensed games with a fun mixture of addictive action, tough obstacle course maneuvering, and actual wit. In the game, you play three characters from the show, each with unique methods for clipping waves of space-age enemies: pizza-delivering poindexter Fry with laser rifles and shotguns, robot rummy Bender with spinning attacks, and cyclopean fist of fury Leela with lip-busting flurries of punches and kicks. Series creator Matt Groening reportedly oversaw the game's production, and barring frame rate stutters, a smooth blend of pseudo hand-drawn and computer animation combined with dead-on vocal work provided by the series' cast makes the game look and sound incredibly like the cartoon.

Leela's fast-paced kung-fu fighting sequences are the star of the show.

Space Invaders Need To Do Laundry, Too

But the game is not just a mere pandering to the toon's fans. The developers have managed to craft an enjoyable if lightweight ride here. Levels are short and sweet, backtracking and lever pulling are kept to a minimum, enemies are aggressive without being frustratingly tough, and the game moves at a solid pace.

Then again, Futurama is not without its flaws, either. While button ninjas will find its platform leaping and jumping puzzles refreshingly challenging, those who aren't as hop-savvy and prone to controller chucking may want to reinvest in a replacement Dual Shock 2. Unfortunately, the occasional camera spazz-attacks don't help matters much, either.

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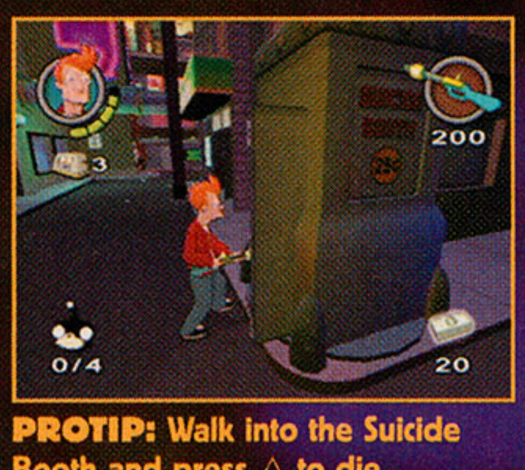
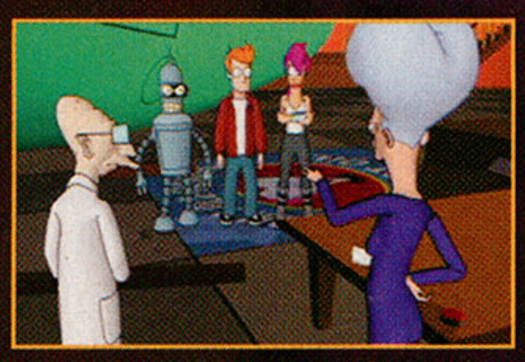
You've Got a Future Around Here

Futurama had a large cult following, and in many ways, it lives on through the game which logically progresses its look and feel. Fans should find the game a temporary salve for post-cancellation blues. Those not enchanted with the show won't be missing out on much by skipping it. G

Also on the Xbox



PROTIP: Walk into the Suicide Booth and press △ to die.



A bit of consolation for fans despondent over Fox's kiboshing of the show: Over 20 minutes of unlockable cut-scenes can be played together at the end of the game.

PROTIP: At the jumping puzzle in the courtyard, press ○ to jump before tapping the directional pad to avoid stepping on the wrong square. However, it's okay to walk over squares you have already unlocked.

- Developed by Unique Development Studios
- Published by Vivendi Universal Games
- $49.95
- Available now
- Adventure
- 1 player

ESRB: TEEN

FUN FACTOR	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL
3.0	3.5	4.0	3.5

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SplashDown: Rides Gone Wild

YOU HAVE TO give the developers of Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild props for not just Xeroxing off a standard sequel. The question is whether a jetski game that found a devoted following for its technical handling and colorful but serious tracks can survive a trip into a cartoon funhouse. The answer is…mostly.

PROTIP: In Polar Plunge, two buoys seem to point you directly at a wall, but you'll actually safely slide on the ice.

The Sky Is Falling

The subtitle says it all: Instead of a second jetski game that feels a lot like ATV Offroad Fury on water, Rides Gone Wild takes its cues from a heavily cartoonish jaunt through crazy tracks inspired by amusement-park rides. As concepts go, that counts as unique, and for Splashdown pros, it will be a jarring switch.

But once the surprise fades, the tracks amount to nothing more than what you'd expect from, say, Mario Kart—and they're done quite well. The level of background activity, ranging from rampaging dinos to dive-bombing planes, is so high that sometimes you'll gawk too much to simply drive straight.

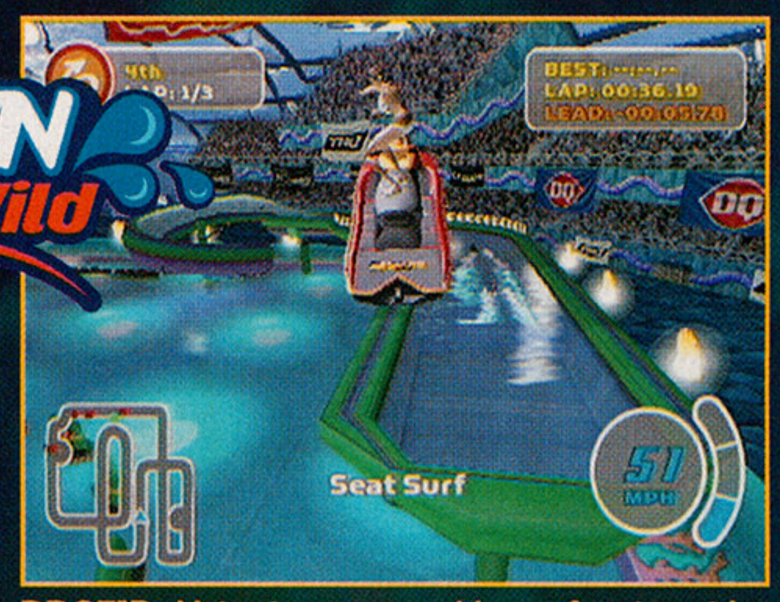
PROTIP: On Javelin, take a fast line through the hairpin turn after the start/finish line by briefly getting off the gas.

Seat Surfin'

Once you're accustomed to all that, the game plays very much like the original. The going gets pretty tough once you ratchet up the difficulty from Rookie, and the bouncy feel of the controls and physics can be troublesome. Largely, though, the gameplay tightly mixes fun, high-speed racing with a well-balanced trick system.

The graphics succeed with an impressive amount of lush color and detail, but that cartoony style might turn off old hands expecting realistic water. The sound fizzles a bit due to a lackluster jukebox of tunes and truly obnoxious dialogue.

Rides Gone Wild amounts to a departure from the original, and that will probably lose some players and attract some new ones. It's definitely fun and challenging, and with its slightly reduced price, many racing fans will enjoy taking it for a spin.



PROTIP: Maintain max speed by performing tricks every time you catch air and by holding ↓ on even the smallest straightaway.

PROTIP: On Dino Dominion, the buoy before the ramp inside the temple makes it easy to drift left and crash onto land after you jump.

BY AIR HENDRIX

- Developed by Rainbow Studios
- Published by THQ
- $39.99
- Available now
- Racing
- 2 players

FUN FACTOR

ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
EVERYONE	4.0	3.0	4.0	4.0

alter echo

THE CONCEPT MAY be really weird and random—Tony Hawk meets Devil May Cry in some surreal purplish pink space future—but Alter Echo is tailor-made for anyone bored to tears by smacking the old fashioned way.

PROTIP: Switch to Sword or Stealth form on Hydras since they're immune to Gun form.

Tales of Nevin Maker

Alter Echo places you in the role of a fellow named Nevin, a "Shaper" who has the ability to morph a substance called Echoplast to his will. This notion manifests itself in the gameplay as the ability to switch between three different forms on the fly—a normal "sword guy" form, a big mech form, and a stealthy canine-lizard form—in order to combat hordes of weird aliens. The game's deep fighting system is the star, requiring thinking on a reflexive pseudo-strategic level, and it's really fun to switch forms and chain moves together in hyper-ridiculous 162-hit combos. The game does a really good job of keeping you from overusing one particular form as certain enemies adapt to repeated attacks, while others are simply immune to one form of attack or another.

Resonant Frequency

The look of Alter Echo is sold through cool reflections, awesome special effects, and a really neat, cohesive, and logical organic style; the game takes place entirely on one "living planet" that serves as your guide throughout the game. Unfortunately, that means almost every area looks pretty much the same (get used to the colors purple and pink); the textures used have a simple, almost PlayStation-ish look to them. The music is a bit too mellow to go with the gameplay, but the voice acting is entertaining and over the top, and the gloopy blast-whacks help sell the exaggerated smack-shooting.

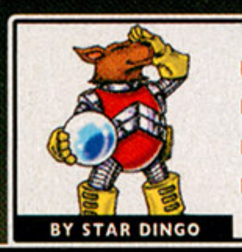
Alter Echo may ultimately wind up going the way of Shinobi, another superficial-looking game with surprising fighting depth for those patient enough to plumb for it. There's more to this planet than meets the eye.

Also on the Xbox

PROTIP: Attack the first boss only when its giant laser reveals itself (use the Gun form and/or Gun turret). Otherwise, keep moving around on the ground.

PROTIP: Use Gun form on the psychic drones; back away from the blue circles they create–they're extremely painful.

To make things weirder, Time Dilation special attacks employ a weird mini-game that's part PaRappa the Rapper and part Tron Light Cycles.

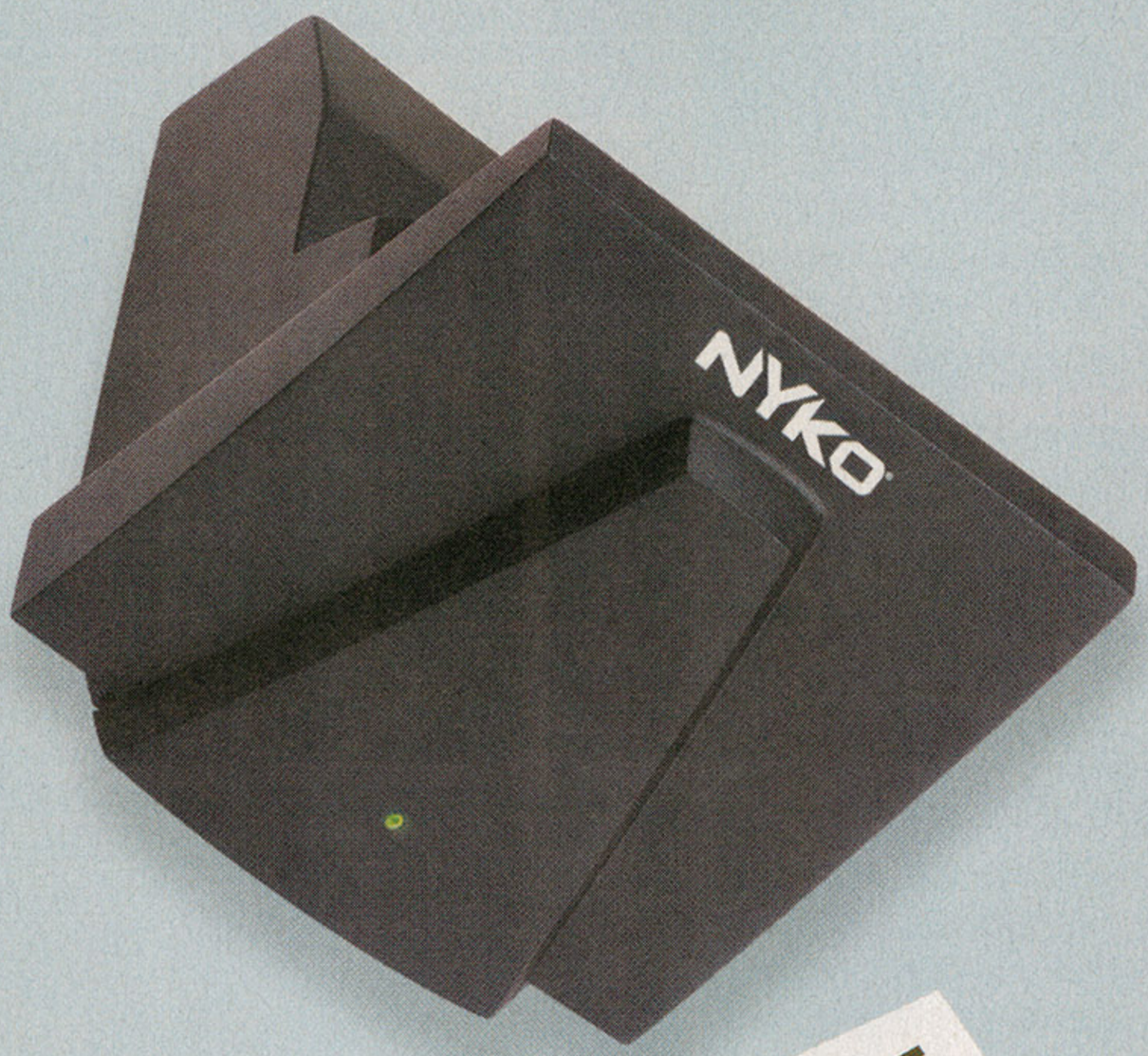


BY STAR DINGO

- Developed by Outrage
- Published by THQ
- $49.99
- Available now
- Action
- 1 player

FUN FACTOR

ESRB	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
TEEN	3.5	3.5	4.0	4.0



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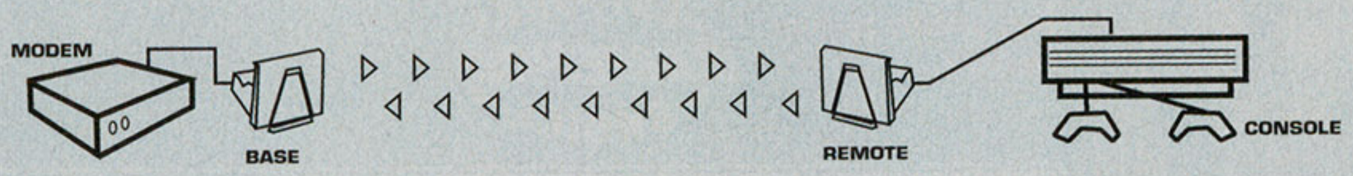

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FREEDOM FIGHTERS

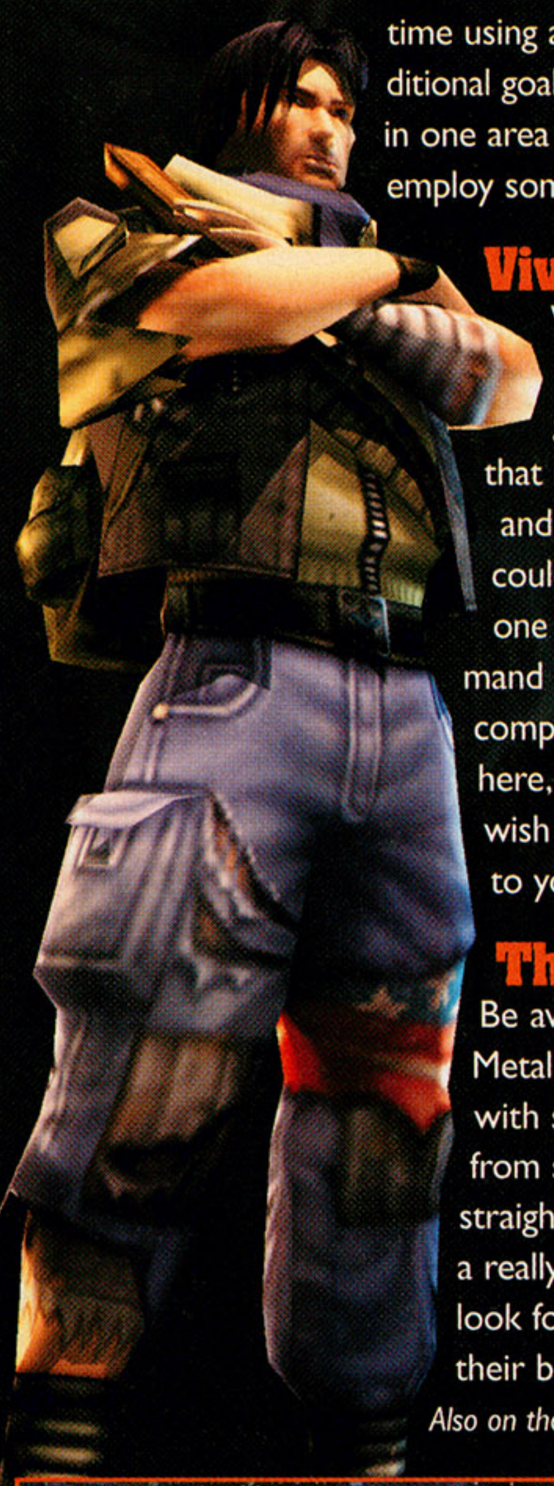
SOMETIMES A GAME almost slips under the radar and surprises you, popping up at the last minute and blasting you with fun gameplay and an über-cool story line. Freedom Fighters is one of those games—a sleeper hit that proves that a game doesn't have to be a sequel to be great.

PROTIP: Blowing up a helipad will stop all helicopter attacks in the surrounding areas–definitely one of the first things you should do in a new zone.

Stone Cold Plumber

You are Chris Stone, a simple plumber faced with the task of assembling a popular resistance against a Soviet invasion of the United States. You start out by yourself with only a pipe wrench and a pair of overalls, and you must somehow become a battle-hardened leader capable of commanding squads of revolutionaries in battle against the occupying Soviets. It's quite a job, to be sure, but Freedom Fighters takes great pains to make it fun.

From within your secret rebel base in the sewers, you stage attacks on key Soviet targets with the goal of hoisting the American flag over each enemy installation. As you complete tasks, you gain Charisma points that add up to enable you to recruit and command ever greater groups of rebel soldiers. At first you're by yourself, but by the end, you'll command up to 12 soldiers at a time using a simple interface that makes giving orders simple and effective. Additional goals along the way help you bolster your Charisma, and individual goals in one area might impact conditions in all other nearby areas, so you'll want to employ some strategy in choosing your targets to best disable the enemy.



Vive La Résistance!

With just a little more work, Freedom Fighters could have been a real monster hit, but a few minor nitpicks keep it down. The game's soundtrack is awesome except for some poor voice acting that invokes a modern retelling of *Braveheart*, and the graphics tell the story with flair but could use a little more polish. Also, while it's one of the game's high points, the squad command controls could have been a little more complex; you're trading control for simplicity here, and it works, but sometimes you might wish for more precision when giving orders to your companions.

The Price of Freedom

Be aware: Freedom Fighters isn't the next Metal Gear Solid. It's a fairly mindless shooter with some cool strategy elements, and aside from some optional tactical coolness, it's pretty straightforward. It's a fun and violent game with a really great reward structure, and it's worth a look for anyone who likes just a little brain with their brawn.

Also on the PlayStation 2, GameCube, and PC

PROTIP: Blowing up a vehicle is a great way to take out multiple enemies at once. Anytime a bunch of enemies stand around a truck, blow it to hell.

From a humble plumber to the leader of a squad of hardened soldiers. These guys will die to protect you, and they never question your orders.

PROTIP: If you're pinned down by a machine gun or helicopter, send a few soldiers out to draw enemy fire away from you. Then just run out while the guns are distracted and sneak away or take them out.

PROTIP: In the last zone, you'll have to go it alone until you take out the ventilation shaft on the waterfront. Do that before you do anything else, and you'll have your squad again.

PROTIP: Whenever enemies attack you from above, don't waste ammo trying to take them out from afar. You're much better off finding a way to meet them upstairs.

PROTIP: When traveling alone, always try to find a way to sneak around and flank large groups of enemies. Orange buildings on your area map usually feature shortcuts.

GRAPHICS	4.5

Really nice but lacking some polish, the graphics more than satisfy any action gamer's need for pretty stuff to blow up.

SOUND	4.5

Ominous Soviet music and the maniacal sounds of battle make Freedom Fighter's sound topnotch. Some work with the voice acting could have made everything perfect.

CONTROL	4.0

While ordering your squad around is easy, it would have been nice to have a little more control. Still, auto-aim and simple squad control guarantee a fast shooter that frees you up for more complex strategy.

FUN FACTOR	4.5

Yeah, it's a run-forward-shoot-stuff game, but it's a fun one with strategy and a cool New York–under-siege story line that really invokes the spirit of an underground rebellion.

EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE

BY D-PAD DESTROYER

- Developed by Io Interactive
- Published by EA Games
- $49.99
- Available September
- Action
- 4 players

TEEN	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB	4.5	4.5	4.0	4.5

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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PlayStation.2

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OTOGI: MYTH OF DEMONS

MELDING ELEMENTS OF Onimusha, Shinobi, and Chaos Legion, Otogi is Sega's latest entry in the hack-n-slash subgenre dedicated to acrobatic, armor-clad samurai who slaughter preternatural beasts and absorb their posthumous chi. Eye-popping visuals and foreboding sound design married with feverish pacing and RPG undercurrents provide solid thrills, but the game never really transcends its brain-dead slice-and-dice trappings, and the initially electrifying experience of playing it eventually disintegrates into monotony.

GET MORE www.gamepro.com ONLINE

PROTIP: Destroy the Tower of Water by heavy-slashing its pillars. Don't worry about wiping out Serpents—they'll respawn interminably.

PROTIP: At the Restless Sea level, the Kesa are interested only in sinking your ship, so use heavy attacks to knock them off the deck.

BY DEMONS BE DRIVEN

An ancient and mythical Japan serves as hunting grounds for your character, a chop-socky demon slasher recruited by a disembodied voice to purify the landscape from ghoul dogs and floating skulls in 30 or so objective-based missions. Armed to the teeth with blades and magic spells, your job is to destroy cursed buildings, fight bosses, and commit the wholesale liquidation of monsters.

Offing enemies and destroying the environment earn you experience that augments your physical prowess and gold that you can use between levels to purchase weapons and learn new spells. Unfortunately, these RPG elements are ultimately hollow and do nothing to improve on the core run-run-run-kill-kill-kill gameplay mantra that feels flaccid after six levels and tedious after 15. New weapons are only eye candy for the same combo-based attacks; spells are no more than flashy projectile weapons; and trashing a dizzying amount of environmental objects, while providing some ancillary thrills, doesn't compensate for predominantly limp level layouts.

PROTIP: If you're having trouble clearing a mission, you can revisit previous levels to earn more gold and EXP to use for purchasing more powerful weapons and spells.

PROTIP: Strike the Kudara in his mouth when he charges you.

ANGEL OF DEATH

As a high-octane slay-a-thon, Otogi knows what it is and what it's supposed to do, and as long as you don't mind leaving your brain at the door, you'll probably dig it. Just be prepared to get bored after the first couple of hours.

BY PONG SIFU

- Developed by From Software
- Published by Sega
- $39.99
- Available now
- Action/adventure
- 1 player

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
4.5	4.5	3.5	3.5

THE GREAT ESCAPE

GENERIC STEALTH FARE in which you play as imprisoned WWII pilots trying to escape various war camps, The Great Escape is the second entry in the burgeoning "escape from a Nazi prison camp" genre (the other being Codemasters' Prisoner of War), and its marketability hinges upon the fact that it's based on a classic male bonding film, which in turn was based on actual events.

Thanks to the magic of video games, Steve McQueen lives again!

"Are All American Officers So Ill-Mannered?"

The Great Escape both shines and suffers when compared to Prisoner of War. On one hand, each mission is satisfyingly brief, guard behaviors are a bit more advanced, and you can sneak up on and choke enemies, or use fisticuffs and weapons to escape capture. On the other hand, there isn't any of the prison-guard palm-greasing and "rush to get back before roll call" elements that made Prisoner of War a bit more compelling.

"I Sink You Vill See Berlin Before I Vill."

Though novel when the first Metal Gear Solid and Tenchu games came out, stealth-based gameplay has become ubiquitous, and The Great Escape offers little in the way of innovation or clever game/level design to keep things interesting. Barring a few brief chase and shoot-em-up sequences, you're given little more to do than crouch around camps, airfields, and forests, and peek around buildings to avoid German Luftwaffe and searchlights while fetching items like guard uniforms, lock picks, and security passes. Said missions get yawn-inducingly monotonous after awhile, and the game's final motorcycle chase sequence is one of the most frustrating ever designed.

PROTIP: At the Delousing Breakout mission, always change uniforms inside one of the huts to avoid being spotted by guards.

On the technical side, The Great Escape features smooth visuals and good sound design, though controlling your character can be a pain, and it can be difficult to get the camera to aim where you need it to. The verdict: rent before buying.

Also on the PlayStation 2

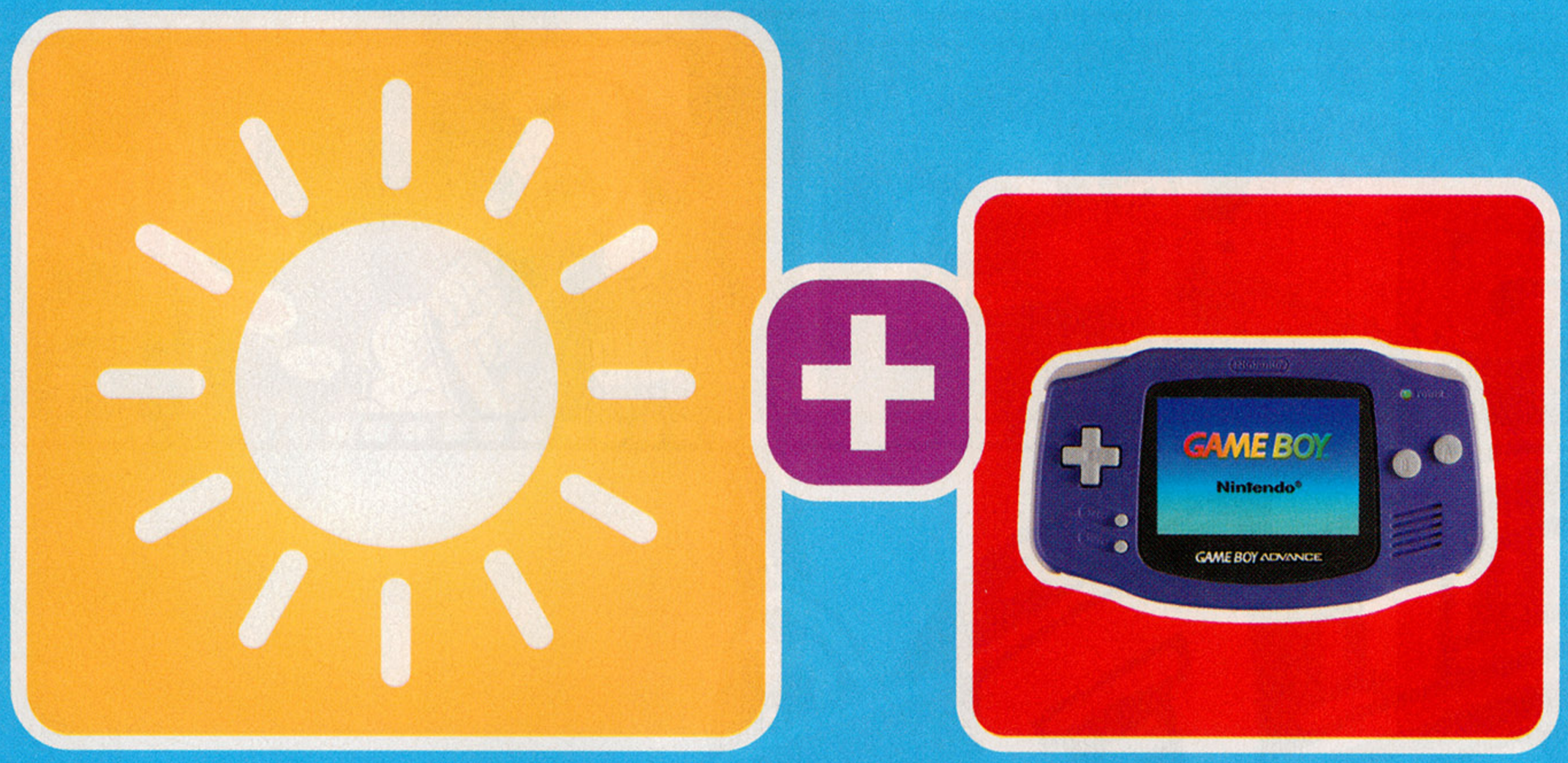
PROTIP: During the Struggle in the Mountains mission, don't bother using the scope on the sniper rifle—it will automatically target enemies for you. In a video-game first, you can even fire when running!

BY PONG SIFU

- Developed by Pivotal Games/SCI
- Published by Gotham Games
- $39.99
- Available now
- Adventure
- 1 player

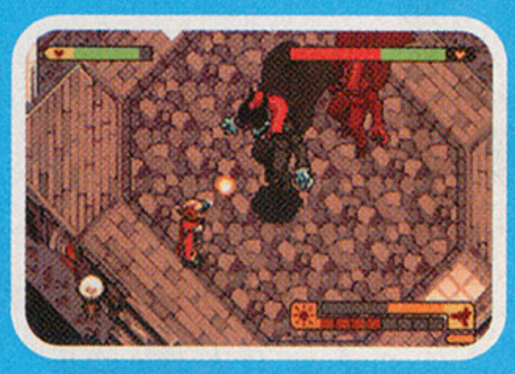
TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
3.0	3.0	2.5	2.5



boktai™

The Sun is in Your Hand



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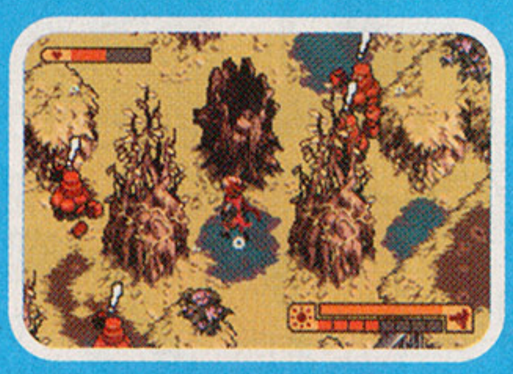
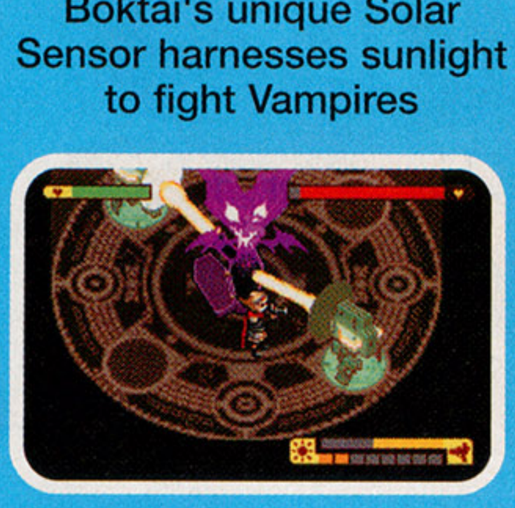


Utilize sunlight to become more powerful by day



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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Fantasy Violence

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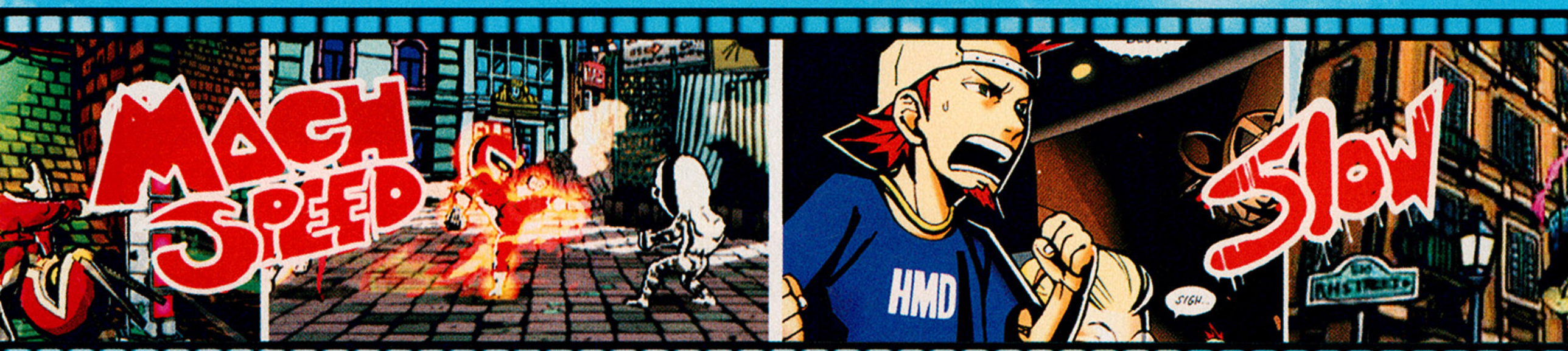

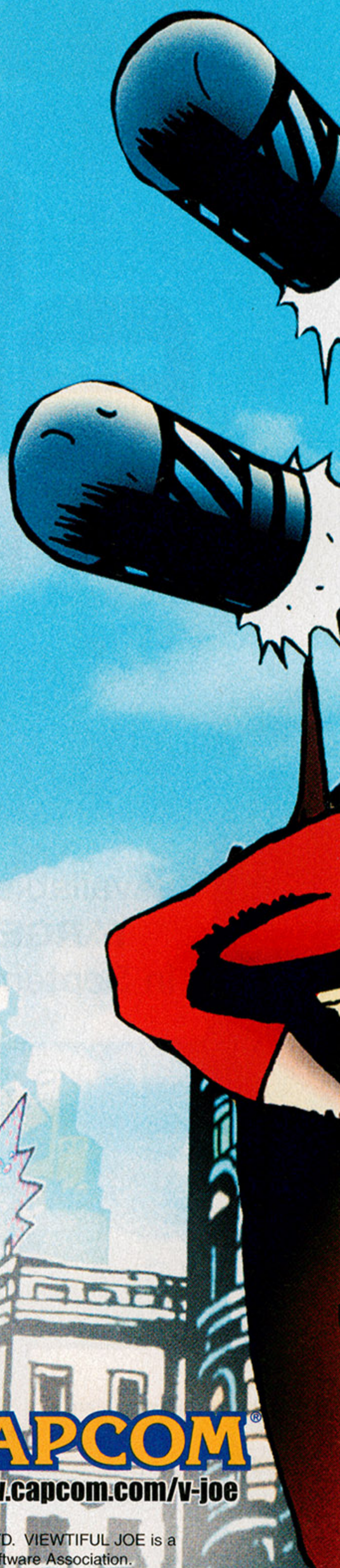

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ZORAN

HENSHIN-A-GO-GO-BABY!

F-ZERO GX

IF WIPEOUT WAS the last eXtreme fUture rAcing game you actually cared about, you're not alone—it was a trendsetting classic that left a million forgettable clones in its wake…clones that quickly and efficiently killed any interest you might have had in any future eXtreme fUture rAcing game. Prepare to have your interest revived and renewed.

PROTIP: Don't abuse your boost button (Y); it drains your shield every time you use it.

Super Falcon Ball

In crafting F-Zero GX, Nintendo wisely enlisted the help of Sega's Amusement Vision to try to tap into the same sort of frantic delight it captured with Super Monkey Ball. While it's not quite the instant party that Monkey Ball was, it's still furiously fast, awfully addictive, perilously playable, and loaded with enough cool stuff to keep your interest until the next big first-party Nintendo title comes along.

PROTIP: On tube-shaped tracks, follow the pack of other racers–they swarm toward yellow acceleration pads.

The four-player split-screen mode is just as fast as the one-player action, and the detail loss is barely noticeable.

UltraHyperOmegaAcutePerilousUpsideDownRacingChallenge

All the basic stuff that makes a solid eXtreme fUture rAcer is here: The tracks are incredibly cool to watch; they twist, knot, and blaze by at absolute maximum velocity, even with 29 other racers on screen and layers of cool-looking, subtly handled effects. The controls are extremely arcadey—the L and R shoulder buttons essentially cancel centrifugal force, and most of your effort is expended figuring out the best place to push the boost button—but, more importantly, it's extremely friendly and fun.

What really sets F-Zero GX apart, however, is all the neat gameplay decisions that make the game feel balanced and varied. Your boost is tied to your shield meter and restricted to second and third laps, so your strategy alters considerably after your first buzz around the track. Certain levels have you racing along the interior and exterior of tubes, a thing which considerably changes how you handle your vehicle.

The Story mode is also a wonderful addition with its wide range of different twists (dodge boulders, smash up a rival) and fun CG cinemas of Captain Falcon's superheroic exploits. There are also tons of customization options and unlockable goodies.

The game can be pretty difficult, however—careening off the side of a track (an instant "game over") can be horribly frustrating when you're on the last lap of the last race in the game's five-track Grand Prix mode.

PROTIP: Press X and either ← or → to create a pink energy barrier and do a lateral slam that damages foes. It's essential in Chapter 4 of the Story mode.

Mode 11

No, F-Zero GX doesn't totally reinvent eXtreme fUture rAcing as you know it; it's simply a complete, polished package with long legs and tons of fun-ness. Heck, it may even rekindle your love for this once-majestic endangered species of game. The momentum is dangerous.

EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE

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PROTIP: Hit yellow acceleration pads on your first lap. On subsequent laps, hit the purple recharge strips instead.

PROTIP: If you're having trouble getting past a Story Mission, try moving your vehicle's Speed Vs. Acceleration slider bar all the way to the far right or left.

PROTIP: If you make a custom racer and save it on your GameCube memory card, you can play that racer on an F-Zero AX arcade machine.

GRAPHICS 4.5

The speed level is impossibly high enough and the "racing effect" convincing enough to keep you from noticing how simple the textures and models really are. It's a more than acceptable tradeoff for such crazily cool velocity.

SOUND 4.0

The sound effects are good, but eXtreme fUture rAcing fans might be a little surprised to learn that the soundtrack leans toward generic electric rock rather than eclectic licensed electronica. It's actually pretty refreshing, in its retro way.

CONTROL 4.5

Elegant, easy to pick up, and extremely fun with lots of valuable handling tweaks available—but don't pick it up expecting anything remotely sim-like; it's pretty much an anti-sim. If you need a complaint, it's that the spin and "energy shield" slide are unresponsive.

FUN FACTOR 4.5

F-Zero GX reclaims the crown Wipeout stole from F-Zero with lots of stuff to unlock, a stout Story mode, and tons of group fun—but it can be frustratingly difficult, too. The chemical response of your adrenal gland could be hazardous.

BY STAR DINGO

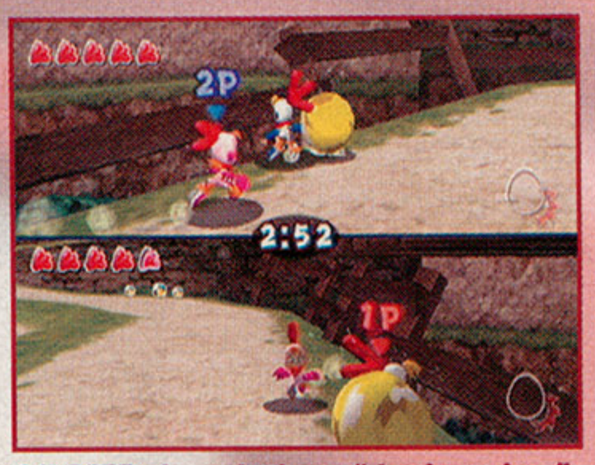
- Developed by Amusement Vision
- Published by Nintendo
- $49.99
- Available now
- Racing
- 4 players

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
4.5	4.0	4.5	4.5

BILLY HATCHER and the Giant Egg

HAVE THE WATERS parted? Is it the end of the world? Has… has Sonic Team made a *non-Sonic* game?! Yes, it has—and while it's not the hard-working, dedicated world-beater it appeared to be at this spring's E³ show, Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg is an inspired platformer in an age when inspiration in platformers has fallen into the "yeah, let's deal with that *later*" category.



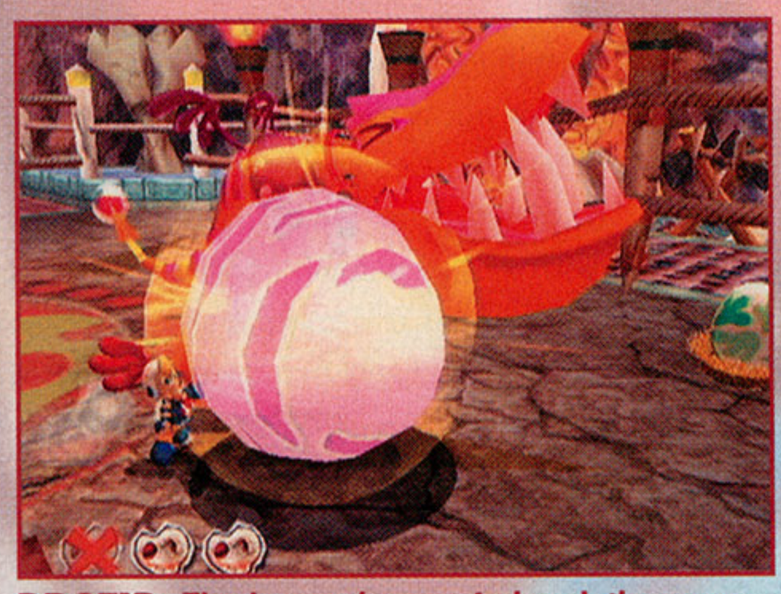
PROTIP: In multiplayer "deathmatches," don't bother hatching eggs–just build large ones to take off the most damage with one hit.

PROTIP: In some stages, you'll have to put your egg on a rail track and rush to catch it on the other side. Bigger eggs roll more slowly.

A GOOD SOURCE OF PROTEIN

Young Mr. Hatcher, a bouncy kid in a chicken suit, has been whisked away to a poultry wonderland where crows have encased the world in darkness. His mission is normal enough—take back the light—but his methodology would probably make Sonic sick. Billy's only weapons in this game are eggs—very large eggs, in fact, that are found willy-nilly in each stage. Besides throwing them at (or rolling them over) enemies, Billy can hatch eggs after he's "fed" them with enough of the food that evildoers leave behind. Depending on the egg you've got in hand (there are 72 in all), you can hatch helper creatures, power-up items, energy-granting butterflies, GBA mini-games, and even a certain blue spiky animal…assuming you can find enough coins to unlock *that* extra.

PROTIP: Pressing B in midair with egg in hand launches it to the ground, pulverizing any unlucky enemies who happen to be nearby.



PROTIP: The larger the egg in hand, the more damage you deal to bigger enemies…but, by the same token, the harder it becomes to control.

PROTIP: Most bosses are defeated the same way–avoid its offense and build up a nice, large egg and bop it with your ovoid between attacks.

One stage features Billy racing through a slopey level against a giant penguin. How eerily familiar.

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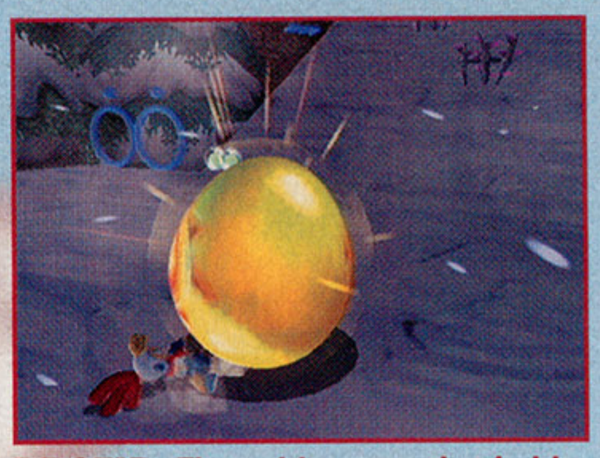
JOIN THE YOLK FOLK

Despite the sheer novelty of rolling eggs over enemies instead of hopping on them, Billy Hatcher is just another mission-based platformer at heart. Basic game structure (not to mention a mission or two) is right from Super Mario 64—you'll know each stage like the back of your hand by the time you complete the five missions in each one. Luckily, most objectives are novel and avoid the "collect X of these" cliché like the plague—it's a shame the controls make everything seem much harder than it actually is.

The problem comes down to this, basically: Although the GameCube's got an analog stick, Billy cannot roll eggs unless he's full-on running. This forces you to run in circles, miss jumps repeatedly, and pull your hair out upon every game over. It's like the 16-bit days all over again—you'll die at one jump repeatedly, but everything after that will be so much easier.

A CRACKING GOOD TIME

Still, this *is* a Sonic Team production, and as such, the platform action is addictive when it clicks. The graphics are lovely, of course, and while the multiplayer modes aren't much, everything (except the controls) is finely polished. It's nice to see Sega's studio try something new…and, even better, to see it mostly succeed. Besides…it's not just another Sonic! Yippee!



PROTIP: The golden eggs that hold the Elders you're trying to save absolutely cannot be broken. Don't use them to attack enemies.

GRAPHICS 4.0

Very much a GameCube-toned product. The levels are huge and decorated lavishly, though that old Sonic Adventure pop-up is back, and slowdown is not unheard of in some levels.

SOUND 4.0

The soundtrack is very trippy and almost ska-like, and while no particular track is very memorable, they all match the game's style well. Billy's bilingual shouting is fun.

CONTROL 3.0

The main bottleneck for most gamers: Eggs roll around wildly, get stuck on ledges, and are more of a nuisance than a boon. The semimanual camera's also pretty unhelpful.

FUN FACTOR 4.0

Despite the novel ideas, Billy is, at its heart, a fairly normal platformer…but with Sonic Team at the helm, you really can't go wrong. The multiplayer "deathmatches" and GBA mini-games are a nice touch.

- Developed by Sonic Team
- Published by Sega
- $39.99
- Available September
- Platform
- 4 players

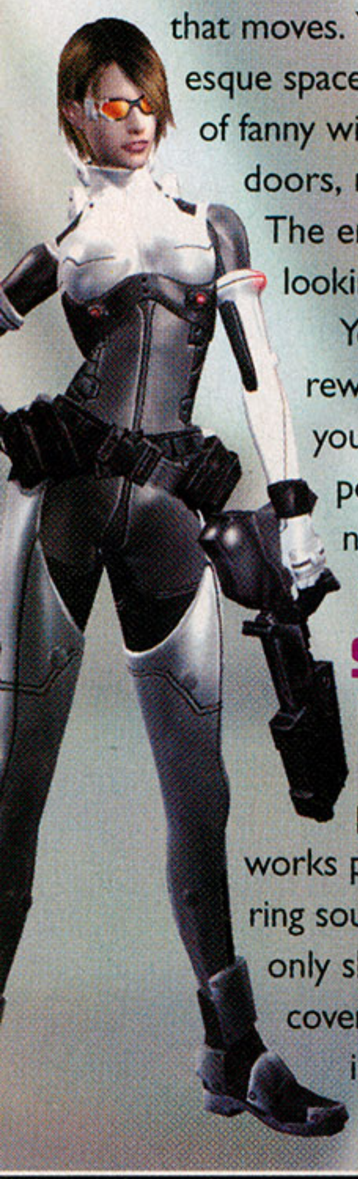
ESRB: EVERYONE

GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
4.0	4.0	3.0	4.0

P.N.03

PRODUCT NUMBER

P.N.03 (PRODUCT NUMBER 03) is a long, intense, thumb-busting shooter that tests trigger fingers and patience levels. If you're looking for an action/shooter whose motto is shoot first, second, third, and ask questions later, P.N.'s your game.



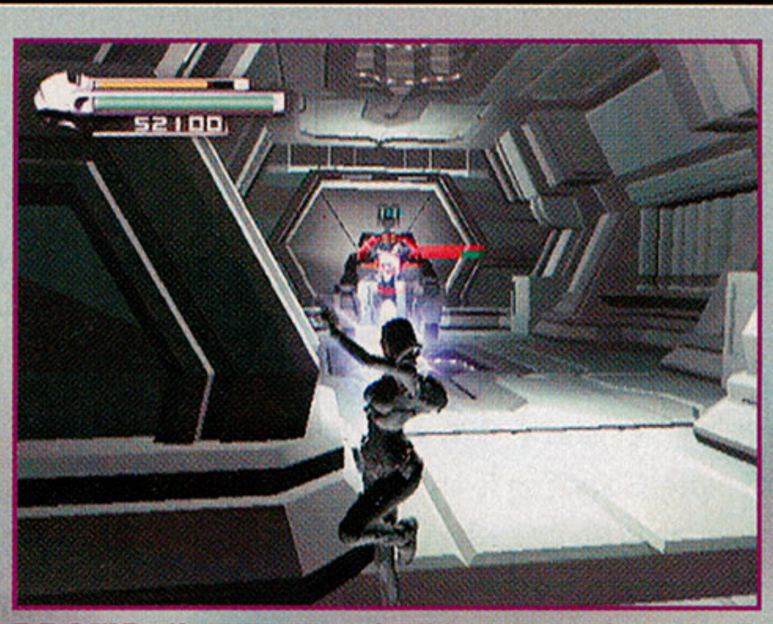
The P.N.0 Player

There's really no plot to speak of—you're simply teleported into one of many connected rooms to start blasting at anything that moves. You play as Vanessa Schneider, all-around Samus-esque space babe whose blazing lasers are coupled with lots of fanny wiggling. Aside from a few stages in the great outdoors, most of P.N.03 takes place in drab, shiny hallways. The enemies lack diversity, too, as you'll zap similar-looking robots throughout.

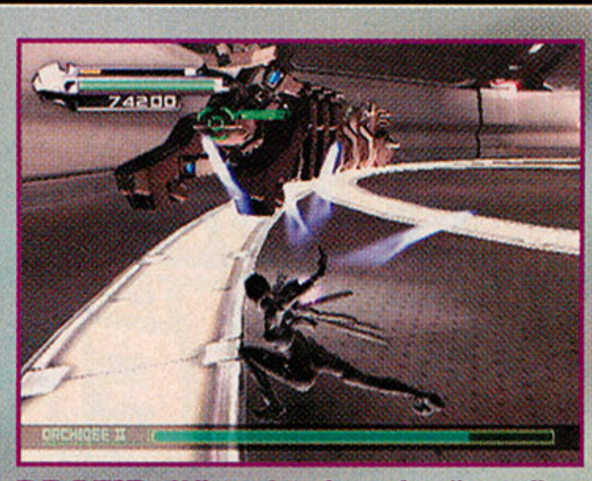
Yet P.N.03 compensates for its repetitive elements with a slick reward system. Depending on your performance in each area, you're rewarded with points that can then be used to purchase power-ups and combat suits with enhanced attributes. You'll need this heavy firepower to take out some of the bosses and make it through most of the tougher stages in the game.

Shooting Starlet

P.N.03's strong aesthetics add flavor to the repetitive gameplay. The frame rate holds its own—even when the screen is packed with explosions, laser fire, and chaos. The audio track works perfectly with the visuals, offering foot-tapping music and jarring sound effects. Solid controls keep Vanessa in line—although the only skills you really need to master are fire, take cover; fire, take cover; repeat. Sure, this may not be the deepest GameCube offering available, but for those who crave a shoot-em-up with old-school inflections, P.N.03 is A-OK.



PROTIP: If you get too close to certain robots, they'll activate a self-destruct sequence–so stay away from any of them that start flashing red.



PROTIP: When battling the "train" boss, be sure to not stand on the white track; if the boss rolls over you, it's instant death.

PROTIP: You can duck under some of the laser shots that enemies fire in your direction.

PROTIP: Keep as much distance between you and any airborne enemies; if they get close, they'll unleash lasers that inflict serious damage.

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BY MAJOR MIKE

- Developed and published by Capcom
- $39.99
- Available September
- Action/shooter
- 1 player

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

FUN FACTOR	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL
4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0

Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds

CHAOS BLEEDS IS not a sequel to last year's Buffy Xbox title, and with a new developer and publisher behind the game, there's no reason it would be. And yet, the game might as well be a sequel because its character/level design and solid gameplay are almost identical to the original title.

DUSTING MAKES ME FEEL GOOD

In Chaos Bleeds, you take on the champions of the First Evil, fighting as members of the Scooby Gang as well as the titular slayer—and Sid the dummy (don't even ask). Dusting vamps and other baddies is immensely satisfying, even with the frequent camera problems. On the whole, the puzzle construction is logical and rewarding, but it has major lapses of logic that prove maddening.

The multiplayer mode is where Chaos Bleeds really shines. Whether it's Slayer Survival mode (three against one) or the completely silly Bunny Catcher (sometimes a name says it all), nothing beats laying the smack down on your friends in an every-man-woman-and-night-creature-for-themselves fight.

YOU SLAY ME

Fans of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* will love the witty script, which includes the occasional Joss-worthy *bon mot*. Unfortunately, the voice acting is uneven at best, and the most realistic readings come from Buffy, who is *not* portrayed by Sarah Michelle Gellar. Willow, on the other hand, is a breathy, whiny shadow of the show's character. The likeable character models don't seem to have advanced much beyond those in that other Buffy game; this becomes strikingly evident in the lengthy in-game cinemas that slow the pace of the game.

While Chaos Bleeds is not a marvel of modern gaming, it is a thoroughly enjoyable title. A must for *Buffy* fans, this is one vampire that doesn't suck.

Also on the PlayStation 2 and Xbox

PROTIP: Use the environment as a slaying tool–throw enemies into wooden shards or fire. Mmm...toasty!

PROTIP: In multiplayer Domination games, wait for other players to fight, then tag the pentacles and get involved. Keep them busy, and they won't steal your points.

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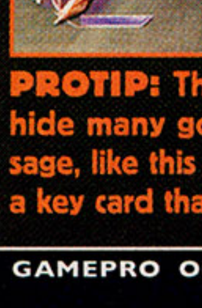

PROTIP: The blood factory's lockers hide many goodies necessary for passage, like this cross bow for Xander and a key card that Willow will need later.

PROTIP: When rescuing Giles from the basement, the back alley is the place to be. Break through the glass tiles in the floor.

BY MISS SPELL

- Developed by Radical Entertainment
- Published by Vivendi Universal Games
- $49.99
- Available September
- Action
- 4 players

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

FUN FACTOR	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL
4.0	4.5	4.5	3.5

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CONTROL.
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OR YOU DON'T.

PlayStation.2

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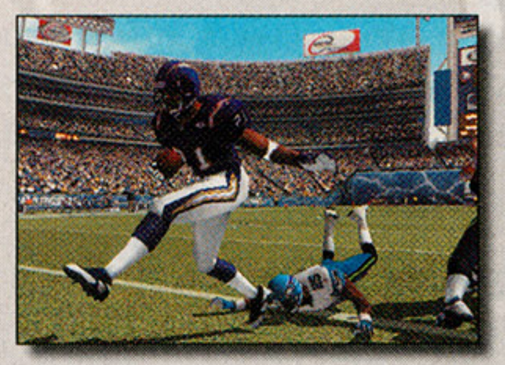
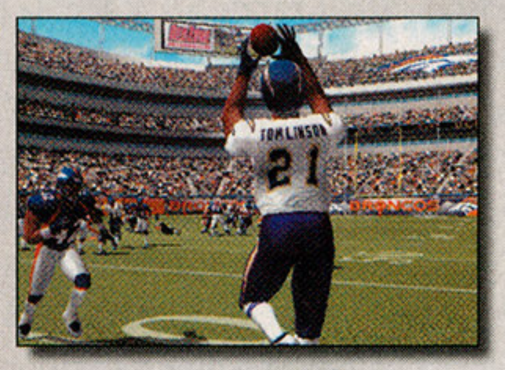
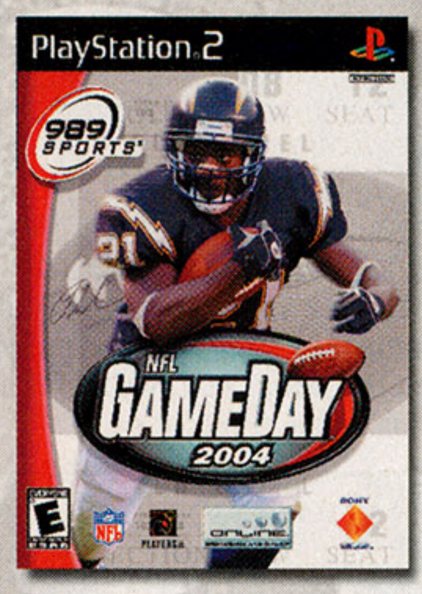
NFL GAMEDAY 2004







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Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004

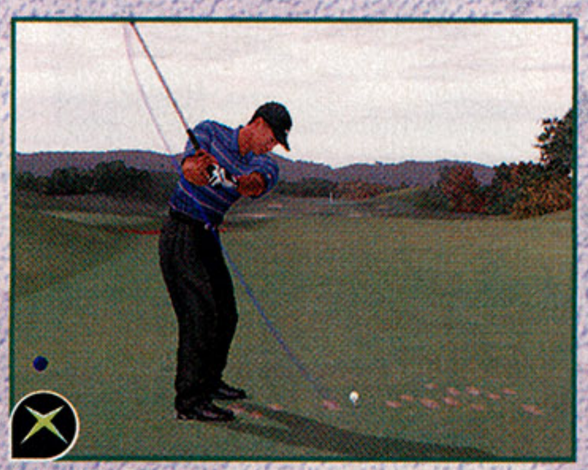
FOR A SPORT that usually gets tagged as boring or elitist, golf certainly comes off as active and inviting in Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004. It's not as arcadey as Hot Shots Golf, but it makes several concessions to the short-attention-span crowd while still offering gobs of options and realism for true fans of the sport.

Mr. Tee

Tiger 2004 is no mere walk on the fairway; in fact, there's so much *stuff* stuffed into Tiger 2004 that it's hard to comprehend ever getting bored by it. In addition to the expected PGA Tour Season career mode and friendly pick-up and practice games, you'll find a new World Tour mode, scenario-based challenges, and arcade-style quick gratification games like target shooting for cash and the aggressive Speed Golf and Battle Golf. PS2 owners can also play peer-to-peer online as well as join Internet tournaments; GameCube players can link up to a GBA to unlock extra tournaments and improve in-game cash flow.

Among the most significant new elements this year are a chip shot and a new grid on the putting green—something EA seemed to resist, but now that they've caved, the game on the green is much better. The player creation, now dubbed Game Face, is frightening, giving you control over every aspect of your golfer's appearance. If you're armed with a photo, EA says you can re-create anyone's face in about 15 minutes—no kidding.

The Course Creator returns, too, enabling players to select their favorite holes from St. Andrew's, Pebble Beach, TPC Sawgrass, Torrey Pines, and 15 more courses to build a personal dream 18. Tiger 2004 also supports the cool new EA Sports Bio feature, which rewards gamers who play multiple EA Sports games.



PROTIP: Draw and fade shots are tricky but worth mastering. Remember: If you want the ball to curve right, aim the marker left, then end your swing pointing the stick to the top left. It only sounds backward.

PROTIP: Lots of accessories add performance bonuses, so it's only worth buying the boost stuff. Watch for daily sales on some excellent gear!

PROTIP: It's not mentioned in the tutorial, but you can use either analog stick on any of the controllers to swing your club.

Five-Hit 7-Iron Combo?

The game uses dynamic camera angles to note especially powerful shots and—if you can believe this—requires a fair amount of button-mashing to affect your shot's power and rotation. Combined with the excellent analog Total Precision Swing, which represents a vast and logical improvement over the old three-press swing meters that have dominated the genre for years, it's as active as you're likely to find a golf game. Handling ball rotation, club power, and wind guesstimates all at once is a pleasantly complex challenge. Oddly, due to the button-layout differences, it's better to swing with the left analog stick on the Xbox and GameCube but with the right one on the PS2.

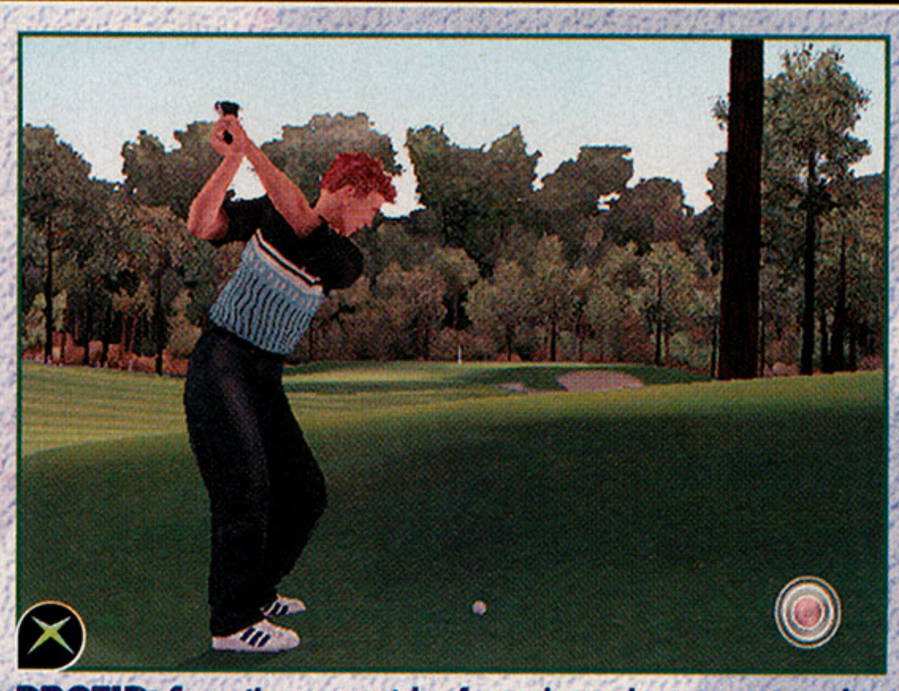
With so few objects moving on the screen at any given time, the overall clarity and beauty of the game world is awesome—lots of little details, from individual blades of grass to ducks in a pond in the background, really get the chance to shine. All three versions look very clean and virtually identical; only the GameCube's frame rate seems to stutter a bit in places, but it's not bad or noticeable enough to ding the score.

Unfortunately, the endlessly entertaining and varied commentary from Gary McCord and the hilarious David Feherty ("So much of golf is mental… and that shot was mental right there,") battles the hodgepodge, made-for-marketing-purposes soundtrack. Snappy pop meets posturing, censored rap (in a golf game?) for a decidedly uneven, mute-worthy experience.

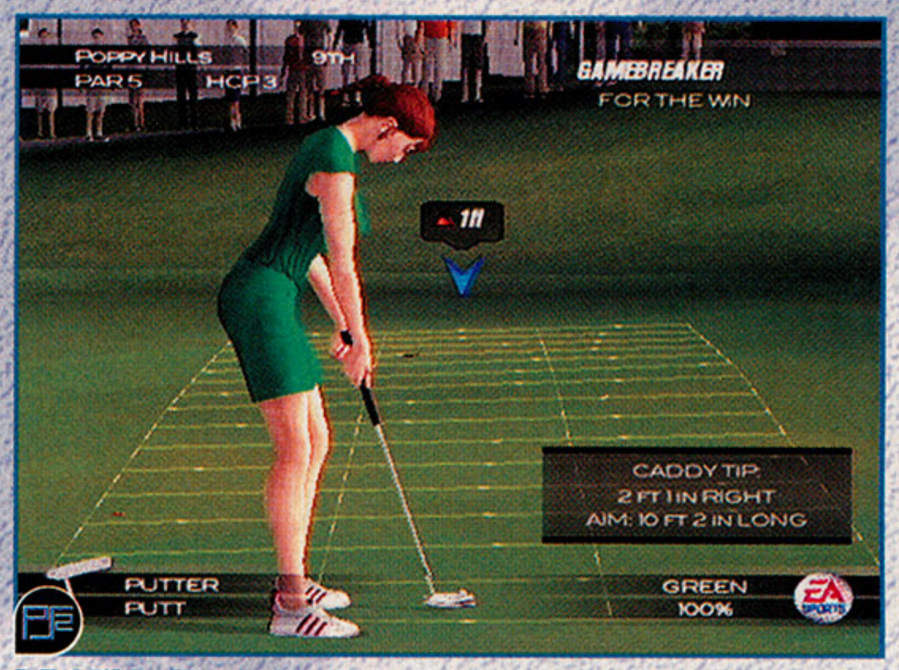
Par for the Course

For all of Tiger Woods' various endorsement deals, he's definitely signed a good one with EA. The mix of true physics, newbie approachability, gameplay depth, and even a sly sense of humor makes Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004 thoroughly enjoyable, whether you're an old pro or just someone who has seen *Caddyshack* too many times on TV. "It's in the hole!"

EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE



PROTIP: Sometimes a patch of rough can become a sneaky shortcut. Just remember to use a little more power to get the ball back on course.



PROTIP: The Caddy Tips are often good advice, but they're not absolute. Factor in your own read of the green.

PROTIP: Before you start a tour, play a few casual games against Downtown and mulligan like crazy. You'll need to get a feel for putting and shot power before starting a career.

Only the GameCube controls combine shot power and ball rotation on one button (Z), which proves to be very comfortable.

BY DAN ELEKTRO

- Developed by EA Redwood Shores
- Published by EA Sports
- $49.99
- Golf
- Available September
- 4 players

		GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
PS2	EVERYONE E	4.5	4.0	4.5	4.5
XBOX	EVERYONE E	4.5	4.0	4.5	4.5
GC	EVERYONE E	4.5	4.0	4.5	4.5

NFL Fever 2004

NFL FEVER 2004 is a game in transition. It's going from arcade-style all-out action to more sim-style football that emphasizes defense as well as offense. As such, it's got all the standard bells and whistles covered, including historic teams, Dynasty mode, and Xbox Sports Network online support. But the key is gameplay and control, and that's where Fever's a little rough around the edges.

Under Control

Like any third-year player, this game's got potential, but right now the controls and gameplay interface run hot and cold. Some individual controls are absolutely sweet, enabling you to execute impressive-looking, intricate moves such as back pedaling on pass defense or dropping a shoulder charge on a run. Moreover, the new Read and Lead passing option is a great control scheme that enables advanced players to enjoy awesome replay value.

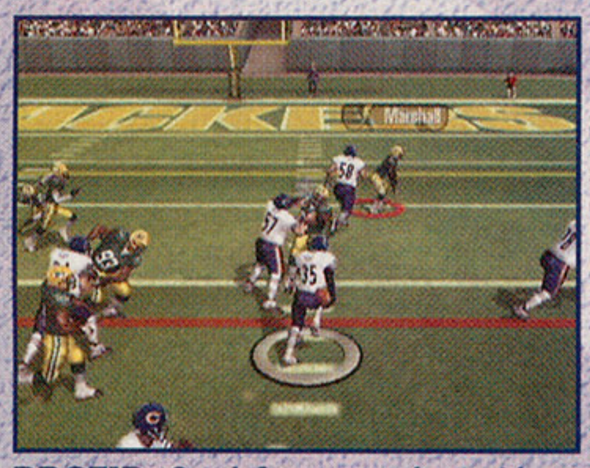
On the other hand, for all the great individual features, the way they work together during gameplay is sometimes lacking. The basic play diagrams are hard to read at first glance, and there are so many potential button presses that often your players don't seem to respond directly to any of them.

Leave It to Fever

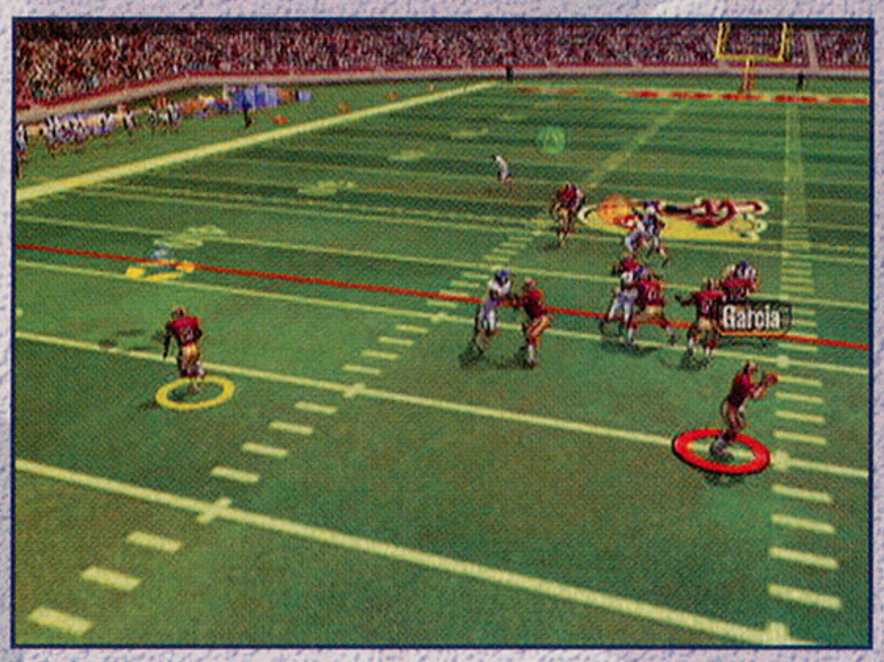
The graphics are similarly schizophrenic. Player models are lushly colored and some player animations show amazingly lifelike movement. On the other hand, teams set up or shift formations like robots, and some players look either too thin or too heavy.

The game's sounds hold up their end of the show. The play-by-play is among the best in the business at calling exact, post-play details.

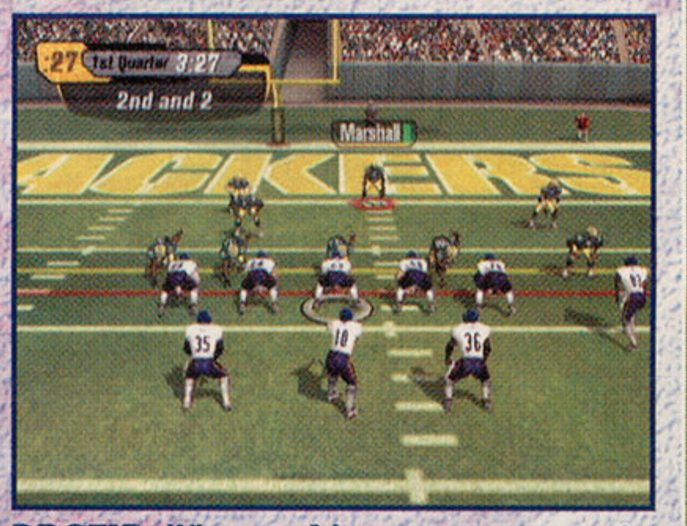
Fever's definitely a game you can grow to love. In fact, Fever 2004 gives every indication that the 2005 edition is going to be some kind of Xbox monster… but that's a season away.



PROTIP: On defense, you know it's a run if the lineman charge off the line at your linebackers.



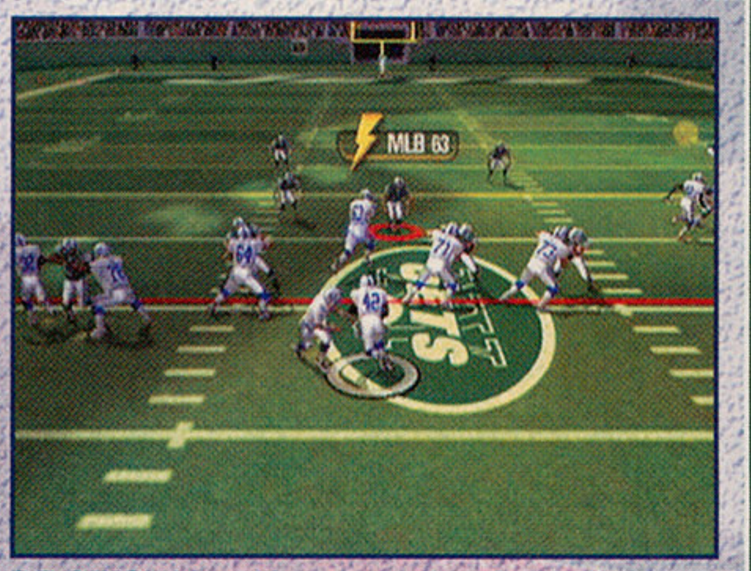
PROTIP: If your pass play has a back running a wide route out of the backfield, always look there first.



PROTIP: When an A.I. opponent sets up in a shotgun formation, it's almost always a pass play. Go ahead and drop linebackers into pass coverage before the snap.

PROTIP: Run a quarterback draw at any time. After the snap, wait for a hole to open, press forward, and then hit sprint once the QB crosses the line of scrimmage.

PROTIP: Running between the tackles is the most effective ground attack. Use the I Form-I Normal formation. Hit Sprint the instant the back enters the hole.

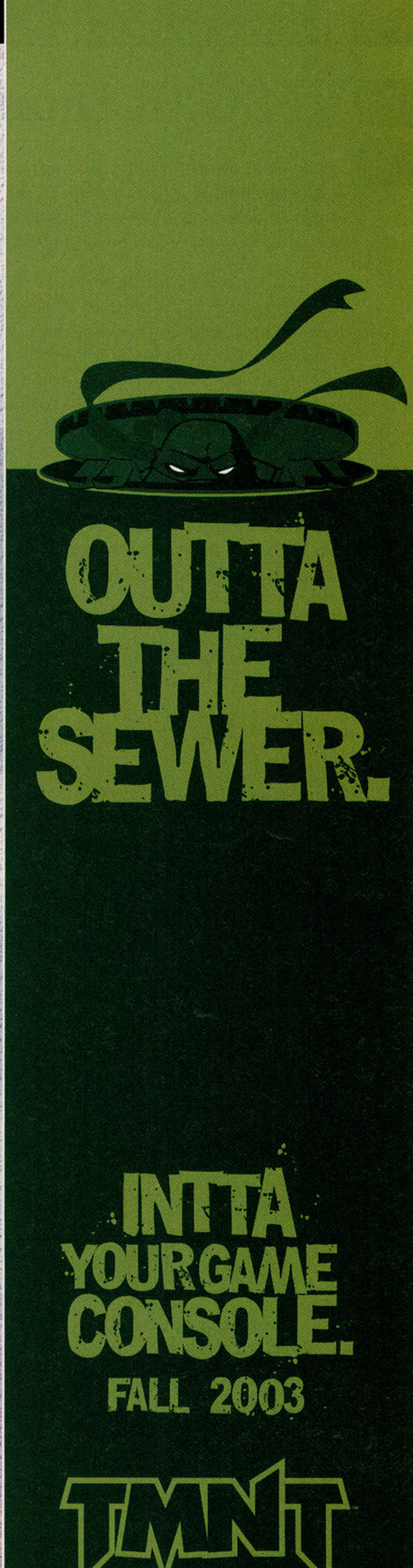


PROTIP: More than any other football game on defense, you'd best be conscious of the run. Play the middle linebacker, and always "read" the halfback.

BY ATOMIC DAWG

- Developed and published by Microsoft
- $49.99
- Football
- Available September
- 4 players (2 online)

EVERYONE	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
E	4.5	4.5	3.5	4.0



NASCAR Thunder 2004

AN EXCLUSIVE LICENSING deal makes NASCAR Thunder 2004 the only NASCAR game this fall, so it's fortunate that EA Sports continues its streak with another strong performance. Some innovative ideas and slick polish give race fans plenty to roar about... unless they own a GameCube, which got bumped from the circuit this season.

Rubbin' and Rememberin'

Alongside a vast array of drivers and all the real-life tracks, the big new feature in Thunder 2004 is grudges and alliances between drivers, which are represented by colorful in-race icons. Slam a fellow driver into the wall, and they'll take note and thump you later. But if you share the draft, you can make friends who might let you pass in a key moment. The downside to this feature is that the icons feel a little busy and gimmicky, but its strong upside is that you start to pay attention to realistic, clean driving.

If you prefer to drive like a battering ram, your hide will chap quickly, but at the finish line, the gameplay benefits big time. The feel of pack racing really shines as you concentrate on driving at high speed mere inches from a jostling crowd while focusing on staying in a slipstream until it's time for a slingshot pass.

Comparing the two versions, the Xbox is more visually polished, and its steering responds more crisply, although it's a photo-finish difference as both games control more smoothly than they did last year. The PS2 makes amends for a slightly rougher performance with excellent online support—its head-to-head racing handled sharply in beta-version tests. Across the board, the graphics shine with a much-improved sense of speed and richer detail, while the sound also raises the bar with excellent new effects for drafting and a solid track announcer.

PROTIP: When you see smoke clouds ahead, there's probably been a mishap that slowed the pack. Get off the main racing line, and chances are you can zip past and gain position.

PROTIP: You can do only one shop addition at a time, so choose carefully and factor in the development time before you make the purchase.

PROTIP: When a certain track starts giving you a hard time, turn laps on it in the Thunder License mode–it's a great learning tool.

PROTIP: The turns at North Carolina are deceivingly tight–set up wide and brake hard.

Sign Here

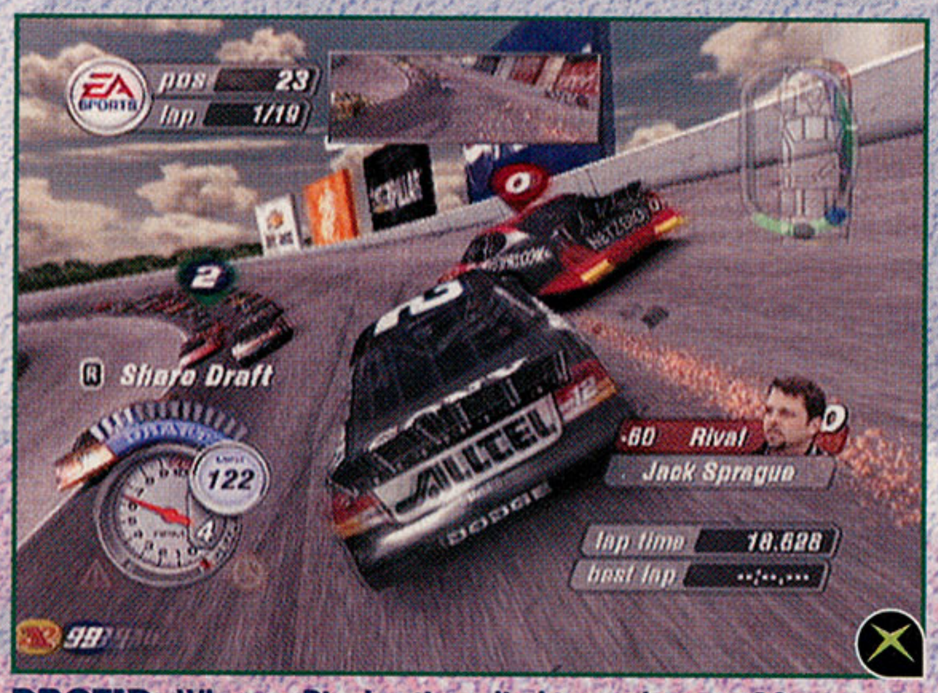
Thunder's one major fault is the balance between its two main modes of play: Season is a bit too light, Career is a notch too slow-paced and challenging, and there's no middle ground. In a career, you build your own car and team from scratch, tackling duties like hiring/firing team members, signing sponsors, bolstering car-design technology, and building/overhauling a stable of engines, chasses, and bodies. It's a very long-term endeavor, and you have to be willing to drive a lousy car and battle tooth-and-nail just to come in 40th for a long time—the pace of improvement and skill-building is really slow. The frustration factor would be much less substantial if you began in a junior racing circuit where the competition was less ferocious.

If you lack the patience and dedication for such a challenge, Season mode lets you pick your favorite driver and race through the real-life season without worrying about anything other than car setups and turning left. It ends up feeling a bit short on depth, though, and the game would really benefit from a Season mode that included optional team-management elements or a Career mode that let you choose to start somewhere besides the very bottom rung of NASCAR.

Peel Out

If you're the kind of hardcore NASCAR fan that will revel in the challenge of Career mode, you'll have an absolute blast with Thunder, particularly now that Tiburon has included a ton of in-game help and redesigned the interface to be massively more usable. On the flip side, more casual players will appreciate the breeziness of Season mode, and the game also scores big with smartly designed mini-games that perfectly mix fast bursts of action with helpful instruction for novices. If you fall somewhere in between, you'll probably lose interest in Thunder pretty quickly, but overall, it's delivered another fine season of racing.

PROTIP: In the Drafting mini-games of Speed-Zone mode, get off the gas any time you creep too close to the other car, and you'll be able to draft for the whole lap.



PROTIP: When a Rival rating climbs much over 20, expect that driver to block you or to rearrange your quarterpanels given half a chance.

EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE

- Developed by EA Tiburon
- Published by EA Sports
- $49.99
- Racing
- Available September
- 2 players

	RATING	GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
PS2	E	4.0	4.5	4.5	4.5
XBOX	E	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5

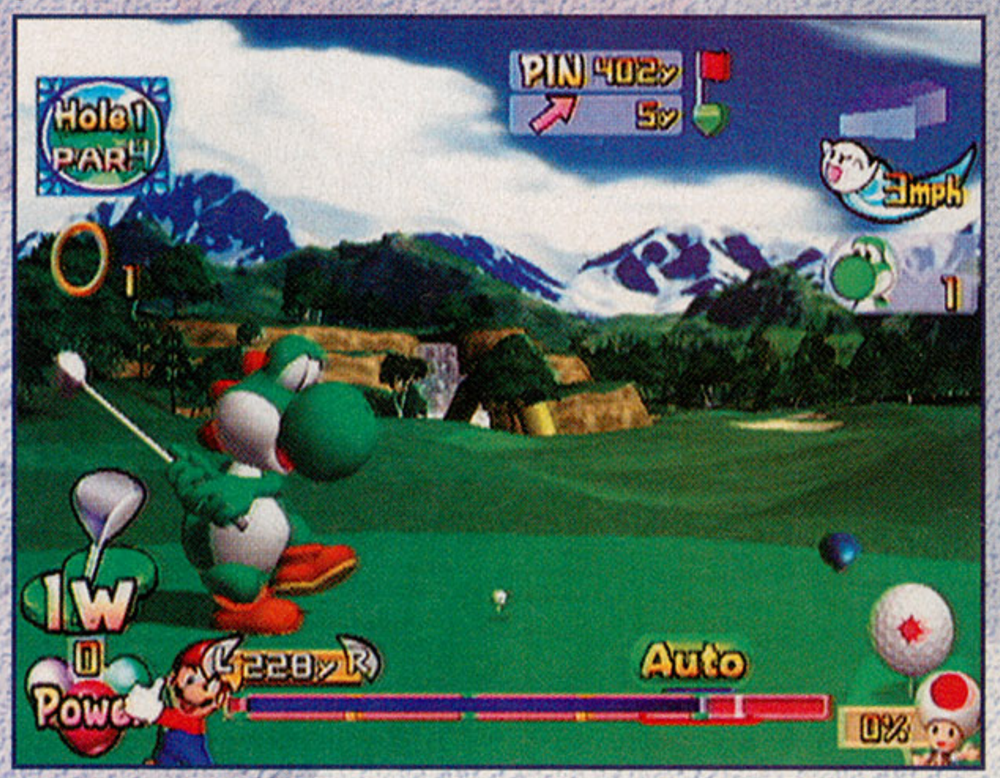
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour

MOST CELEBRITIES TEND to save the golfing for *after* they retire from their "real" job. Not Mario. Whenever Mr. Miyamoto and his crew aren't having the pudgy guy hop on turtles and abuse mushrooms, it seems like Camelot is running right behind them with the golf bag and the mess of nutty subgames. The latest Mario Golf—this one on the GameCube—is a fine expansion on the original N64 title, even though you can count the real gameplay enhancements on one hand.

PROTIP: Curse those infernal rings! To do well in Ring Attack, you'll need to master bending your shots.

"Nice Shot" My Butt

Anyone who played the first Mario Golf will have no problem whacking away with the new game in short time. The three-tap swing system is back, sort of—you press A to start, B at the top of the backswing, and either button at the point of contact, tapping a button again to put extra spin on the ball. If the Grandpa Elwood or Li'l Joey in your family isn't up to this control scheme, then they can use the auto swing instead—just press A to start and A to define power, and you'll hit the ball automatically without hooking or slicing…much. While you can't hit any fancy spin shots with the auto swing, the option helps make Mario far less stressful for beginners than Swingerz Golf (the main 'Cube competition) and its thumb-breaking shot system.



PROTIP: You have a limited number of power shots at your disposal, but the number won't go down if you hit a "Nice Shot"…in the game's opinion, anyway.

Otherwise, however, the differences from the N64 game amount to mere evolution. The "Mario" part of Mario Golf has been greatly expanded—lots more Nintendo characters are available from the start, and the courses you unlock become less real and more Mushroom Kingdom–like in very short order. Most of the mini-games from before are now multiplayer-ready, and a new Doubles mode lets two players alternate turns on the same ball—an oddly fun mix of competition and cooperation.

PROTIP: Putters are secretly great clubs when you need to get out of sand traps–especially if your character's awful with wedges.

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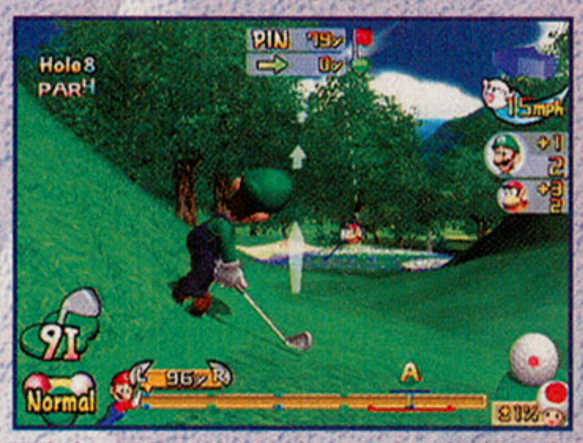
Straight Down the Middle

Nintendo probably realizes by now that people buy Mario Golf precisely because they know what they're getting. As such, Toadstool Tour will disappoint nobody—the audio and visuals are pristine (gotta love that water), the core gameplay's solid as ever, and as a party game, there are few equals. If you wanted a revolution, you probably wouldn't be buying this anyway, so…



PROTIP: Luigi hits very low drives, which is good against strong winds but bad when you're hitting uphill.

Congo Canopy, a lovely par-3 course set in the jungle treetops. Daisy needs to zip the lip already.

EDITORS' GAMEPRO CHOICE

- Developed by Camelot
- Published by Nintendo
- $49.99
- Golf
- Available now
- 4 players

EVERYONE E — CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
4.0	4.5	4.5	4.5

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NFL Street

WOULD YOU LIKE a no-holds-barred football game that follows the mold of the insanely fun NBA Street? If so, you'll have to wait till early 2004 for NFL Street, an over-the-top, seven-on-seven football hootenanny developed by EA Tiburon, which is comprised of some of the same folks responsible for the Madden series.

NFL Street has no rules and none of the usual pigskin trappings like penalties, punting, or even field goals. That leaves players free to smash each other into walls, throw the ball any which way, and showboat to their hearts' content. The rewards for pulling off those feats come by way of the EA Sports Big Trick System that proved popular in NBA Street. Pull off enough fancy moves, and you'll earn Showboat points that go toward a Gamebreaker, which grants extra power to break tackles or create fumbles.

Since style and personality are big features of Street, there are no helmets obscuring the faces of the 300 plus current NFL stars featured in the game. A selection of fictional characters and retired legends like Barry Sanders is also included. Of course, you can't have style without a cool soundtrack, so an as-yet-unannounced lineup of top hip-hop and rock artists will kick out some appropriate jams.

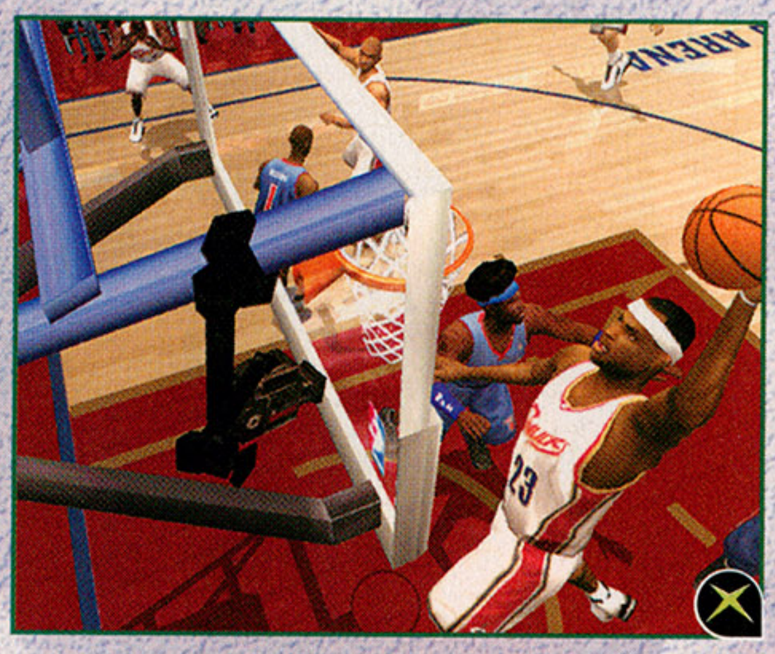
BY TOKYO DRIFTER

- Developed by EA Tiburon
- Published by EA Sports Big
- Target release date: First Quarter 2004

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX GAMECUBE

FIRST LOOK

NBA Live 2004



LAST YEAR'S GROUNDBREAKING Freestyle Control jazzed up NBA Live's offense, but it also completely overpowered the defensive game. NBA Live 2004 is correcting that oversight in a big way, starting with new A.I. logic. Players react realistically to situations, set plays for you, and are much smarter about rebounding choices. Even so, the offense isn't taking a back seat, benefiting from tweaked Freestyle Controls and a new one-button system that simulates on-the-fly point-guard-style offensive and defensive set-play calling.

GET MORE ONLINE www.gamepro.com

Based on the preview versions, the overall speed of the game has been toned down to create a more natural flow. The players arrange themselves on the floor in convincing formations, thanks to the impressive 10-man Freestyle Capture system. Instead of motion-capturing just one or two players at a time, developer EA Canada simultaneously recorded the movements of two complete teams on the court. The game certainly has a smoother feel because of it, and it's easier to run authentic plays.

The graphics are also receiving a face lift—player models are being completely redone, animations reworked, and all arenas are now accurately modeled. Although the screens shown here are from the PS2 and Xbox versions, NBA Live 2004 will also be available on the GameCube when all three are released simultaneously at the start of the season.

Note: These screens were taken from an early preview version, and the graphics aren't final.

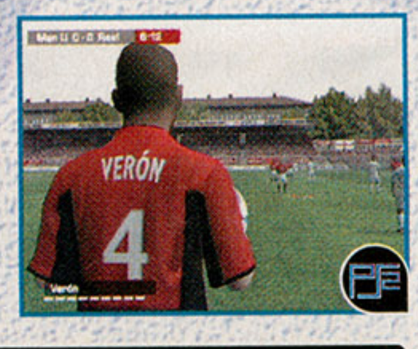
BY TOKYO DRIFTER

- Developed by EA Canada
- Published by EA Sports
- Target release date: October

PLAYSTATION 2 XBOX

HANDS-ON

FIFA Soccer 2004



BY AIR HENDRIX

- Developed by EA Canada
- Published by EA Sports
- Target release date: October

PlayStation 2 Xbox

HANDS-ON

NBA Jam

Less "extreme" than Street, Jam leans toward the Looney Tunes–physics side with players making rocket-footed leaps from the three-point line to lay down dunks that explode and catch the rim on fire.

The preview version played smoothly, though the players seemed overly floaty, and switching players and making steals were difficult. With some control tuning and overall polish, Jam could really appeal to gamers looking for a lighter side to typical roundball.

BY D-PAD DESTROYER

- Developed and published by Acclaim
- Target release date: November

PlayStation 2 Xbox

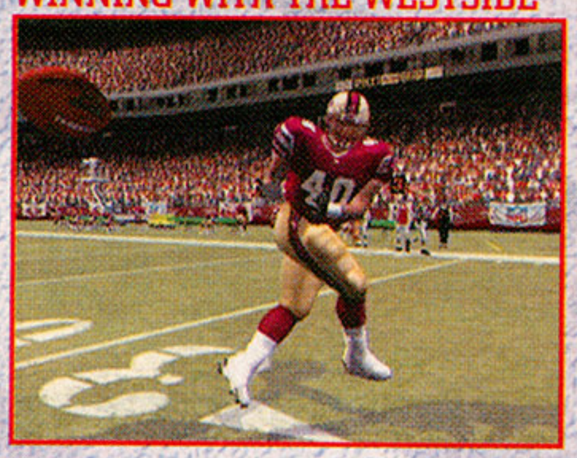
HANDS-ON

How To Master... MADDEN NFL 2004

NFL pro coaches literally script out their strategies. Use these 18 offensive and defensive plays to build your own winning game plan. By Atomic Dawg

BUILDING AN OFFENSIVE JUGGERNAUT

WINNING WITH THE WESTSIDE



This guide is based on the San Francisco 49ers, and Madden can make you look like Bill Walsh himself. But you can find similar plays, if not the same plays, in every team's playbook. The game's A.I. promotes the popular West Coast Offense philosophy that uses short passes as if they're long hand-offs. In fact, with practice, you can use short passes to move the ball steadily down the field five to nine yards at a time with any team.

GO TO THE HOT HAND

The A.I. defense makes calls based on field position, situation, the clock, and to a certain extent, the formation; it doesn't make them based on tendencies. Pass to a hot receiver like Terrell Owens (#81) as much as you like, and the A.I. more or less defends him the same way throughout the game. The A.I. also does not make half-time adjustments either.

READ THE COVERAGE

PLAY #1 I Form-Normal/Triple Slants: The position of the defensive backs before a play can indicate which receiver might be open. If Terrell Owens lines up on the right with inside position on the DB, the slant is almost always a sure catch. This play is good for 10 yards or more. The second receiver in your read is the tight end, Johnson. The slant route can give him inside position, too.

READ THE DBS

PLAY #2 I Form-Normal/FB Under: After the snap, learn to read the DBs. Here, three receivers take deep routes. As the defenders fall back into their defense, look for the receiver who draws a single defender and pass deep to him. Owens is money, but the running back is your safety valve.

BE A PATIENT PASSER

PLAY #4 I Form-Normal/Short Slants: Owens is almost always open with this short pass route. He quickly establishes inside position on the DB, but if you pass too soon—as he makes his move—he will not make the catch. Wait until he's facing the quarterback. The tight end, Johnson, is sometimes open on a slant through the middle, too.

READ THE LINEBACKERS

PLAY #5 I Form-Normal/TE Out: Once you've learned to read the DBs, practice reading the linebackers at the same time. During this play, look to see if the linebacker covers your running back, who's flaring out to the left. If not, pass for a nice catch and run. You can read the safeties, too, and decide to pass to Owens, who's running straight upfield on the right.

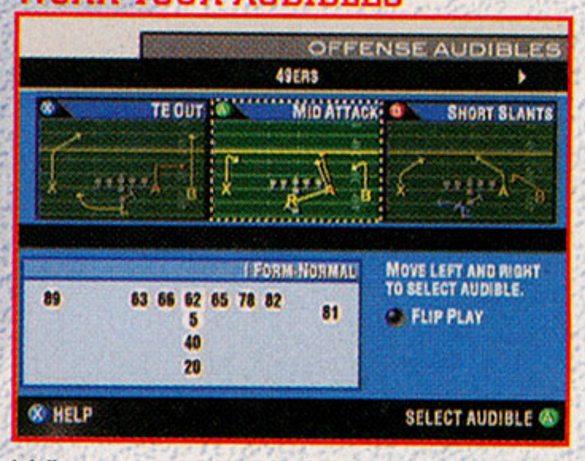
RACK UP RAC (RUN AFTER CATCH)

PLAY #3 I Form-Normal/FL Hook: When receivers run hook routes, one of them is almost always open. If the receiver is a strong runner, like Owens, immediately make an outside move after the catch by pressing Right. If you break free along the sideline, you can run for a big gain or even a TD. Hooks are deadly when you're looking to score from under 10 yards away from the goal line.

MAKE PROGRESSIVE READS

PLAY #6 I Form-Normal/Mid-Attack: With practice and repetition, you can learn to quickly find an open receiver by scanning the field. Here, first look for the tight end, Johnson, over the middle (to gain the most yards). Then, look at the fullback Beasley (who is most frequently open) coming out of the backfield. Lastly, look right for Owens on a comeback move.

WORK YOUR AUDIBLES



When you see a defensive weakness before the snap, call an audible. Consider assigning audibles to buttons whose position on the controller corresponds to the direction of the play. For example, assign Mid-Attack to the middle button; assign Short Slant to a button on the right since you look for Owens on the right side during this play.

AUDIBLE INTO POSITION

PLAY #7 Split Backs-3WR/RB Cross: By placing five receivers into the pattern, this play gives you options all over the field. It's particularly tough for the defense to cover if you audible into it from an I Form-Normal formation. The tight end, Johnson, shifts to the flanker position, and he's almost always open for at least five yards. Sometimes, the A.I. defense doesn't adjust quickly enough to shift a man to cover him. You can take a shot deep, too, if you read man coverage on the receiver running the fly pattern on the left.

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GOTTA HAVE TWISTED SWEET?

DEE-FENSE! DEE-FENSE! DEE-FENSE!

FORCE MISMATCHES

PLAY #8 Split Backs-3WR/Flats: Audibling into this five-receiver pass play creates mismatches by forcing LBs to cover the backs, wreaking havoc on the 4-3 defense (and your eyeballs). As the two backs split to either side, watch the LBs out of the corners of your eyes. If one of them fails to cover a back, pass there. Keep an eye out for man coverage on the right side on the streaking Owens, too.

SPREAD THE DEFENSE

PLAY #9 Singleback-4WR/Posts: When you've mastered the art of quickly reading pass coverages, use a five-receiver play to spread the defense and force man coverage. Here, one of the two flankers or the back out of the backfield is almost always open. Before the snap, you can already read that Lloyd on the right will be open for a quick pass.

USE PLAYMAKER PASSING

PLAY #10 Weak I-Normal/FB Quick In: In lieu of an audible, Madden 2004's new Playmaker Control enables you to change the route of a play's Hot Route receiver at the line of scrimmage. Usually with FB Quick In, the fullback curling in from the left or the halfback in the left flat are open. But if the defense sets up with single safety, there could be single coverage on any deep routes. Press the Playmaker stick up to make Owens, the Hot Route receiver, run deep rather than the square-in pattern the plays calls for.

MIX IN A RUN

PLAY #11 I-Form Normal/HB Slam: Because of Madden's pinpoint passing, the running game is under-appreciated by most players. But you have to run to keep the A.I. honest and to fool human competitors. From the I-Form, the 49ers bust strong runs between the tackles. In general, always follow lead blockers (run right behind them); in this case, the fullback, Beasley (#40).

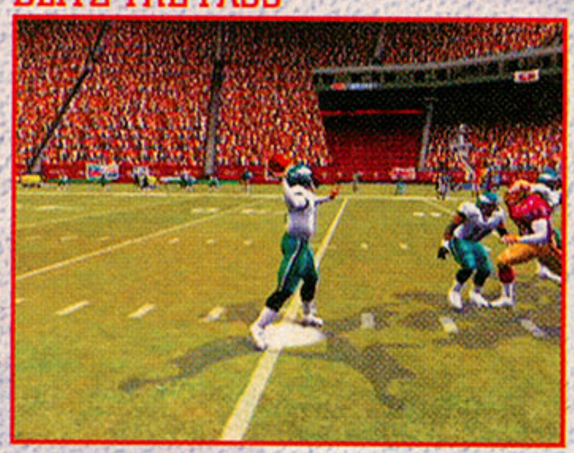
LAY OFF THE SPEED

PLAY #12 I-Form Normal/HB Lead Toss: Running wide is difficult because the A.I. defense pursues very quickly. In general, don't use the Sprint button right away. Let your blocking form in front of you, then pick an open space and hit Sprint. Also, you cut more quickly when you're not pressing Sprint.

BUILD A BASIC DEE

PLAY #13 4-3 Normal/Double QB Spy: With Madden, offense wins games, but defense wins championships. Learn one defensive formation like the 4-3 Normal well. Remember: Zone-pass coverage helps against the pass and man coverage is strong against the run. There's some controversy among Madden gurus as to the best defender to control. The recommendation here is middle linebacker. The 4-3 Normal/Double QB Spy formation is a good combination of the two.

BLITZ THE PASS



PLAY #14 4-3 Normal/Double Z or X: Pressuring the passer is the best pass defense, especially if your DBs are as suspect as they are on the Niners. If that's the case, you must blitz occasionally. From the 4-3 Normal formation, the Double Z or Double X blitzes an outside linebacker while assisting pass coverage by double-teaming an outside receiver. Choose the variation that doubles the opposition's best receiver.

BLITZ THE RUN

PLAY #15 4-3 Normal/Free Fire: If you smell a running play—say, on a short yardage situation at the goal line—run a blitz to clog up the running lanes. The Free Fire sends one linebacker wide to challenge an outside run while another rushes inside to clog the middle. Sometimes, your lineman breaks through.

USE PLAYMAKER CONTROL

PLAY #16 4-3 Normal/Under Man: This is a good basic pass defense, and Playmaker Control is a great way to adjust after the play starts. If you read a run, just press the right analog stick ↓. Your players will head immediately to the ballcarrier. However, watch out for play-action passes! If it's a pass (like you guessed), just press ↑, and they stay back in pass coverage and ignore the run.

USE COVERAGE AUDIBLES

PLAY #17 Dime-Normal/Under Man: Coverage audibles enable you to adjust the defensive backfield at the line of scrimmage when you figure out an opponent's passing formation. Use Coach Cam to assess your defensive matchups. Then, quickly press the audible button and a directional pad button corresponding to the direction you want the backs to cheat toward. For example, the Dime Under Man is a good defense for a passing situation. If the offense lines up with three receivers stacked to the right, press the audible button and hit Right, and the safeties slide over.

CHANGE IT UP

PLAY #18 4-3 Over/Zone Blitz: Mix up defensive calls to confuse the A.I. offense. The Zone Blitz makes the defensive ends drop quickly back into pass coverage while an outside linebacker and the middle LB blitz. A.I. linemen must adjust their blocking, making it easier for a rusher to break through. Control the non-blitzing linebacker and watch the middle. This defense can be deadly against teams that attack with short passes.

SUPER BOWL BOUND!

Master the plays above, and you're ready to tackle the A.I. using the All-Madden difficulty level or to take on any and all human competitors. For an additional challenge, try to beat the A.I. by using just one offensive play! Do that, and you truly are a Madden Master.

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PS2

IMAGINE YOU LIKED Final Fantasy Tactics. No, better yet—imagine you really, *really* liked Final Fantasy Tactics. You liked Square's PlayStation monsterpiece so much, in fact, that you round up a bunch of friends, write a game that's an homage to it in every way possible, and turn it into what's become a sleeper hit in Japan. Oh, yes...and you also like Tim Burton films.

Disgaea: Hour of Darkness

PROTIP: Every party member can master every weapon if you're patient enough—most are better at certain weapons over others, though.

A Trip to the Netherworld

In Disgaea, you play Laharl, Prince of the Netherworld, and while you were sleeping, your father died and every petty demon in the land started fighting for the throne that's rightfully yours. With your castle as a base point, you and your party go through 14 episodes and several dozen game maps, leveling up like mad and proving you're the strongest imp in the world.

The graphics, battles, and magic system in Disgaea are straight out of Final Fantasy Tactics. Really. If you asked what inspired Nippon-ichi, it's highly doubtful anyone there would deny it. However, they've also added a wheelbarrow-load of extras to speed up the pace—combo attacks are triggered like machine-gun fire, you can throw (literally) allies and enemies around the map, and sets of color-coded Geopanels turn some stages into miniature puzzles. It's trippy, but it's also unlike any strategy game before.

PROTIP: Geopanels can take trial and error to figure out, but use them correctly, and you'll get gigantic bonuses at the end of battle.

PROTIP: You can't buy more expensive items in the shop until you make the Dark Council pass a bill allowing it.

A Stopover in Purgatory

The plot in Disgaea is not so deep—in fact, it's really nothing more than an outline. The idea here instead is to explore the game's battle system right down to the coffee grounds, switching jobs, exploring the worlds inside your items (don't ask), and leveling up 'til you're blue in the face. If this is no problem to you, then please buy Disgaea immediately—while it's not for casual folk, the battles are so addictive that hardcore gamers may never need another strategy RPG ever.

BY FENNEC FOX

- Developed by Nippon-ichi Software
- Published by Atlus
- $49.99
- RPG
- Available now
- 1 player

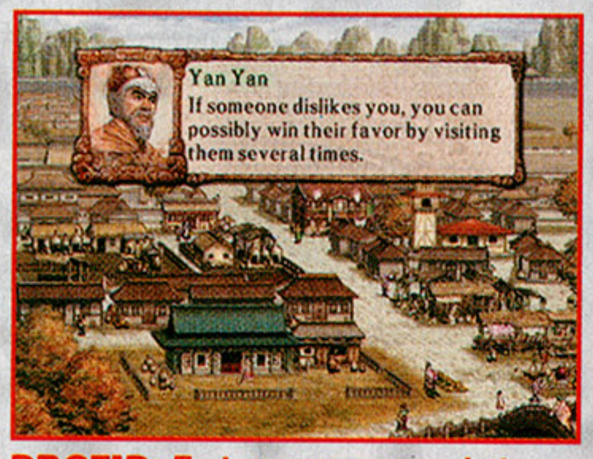
ESRB: TEEN

GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
3.0	3.5	3.5	4.0

PS2

Romance of the Three Kingdoms VIII

THE ROMANCE OF THE THREE KINGDOMS games never cease to promote challenging arithmetic that centers on the trade, commerce, and warfare of ancient China. Number-eight in this long-standing series continues the tradition with even more rigorous computations for the spreadsheet enthusiast.



PROTIP: To improve your relations with officers, don't speak with them about work. Instead, talk about people.

PROTIP: If you're unsure of a recommendation, suggest spying on a neighbor. It will almost always raise your Fame and Deeds.

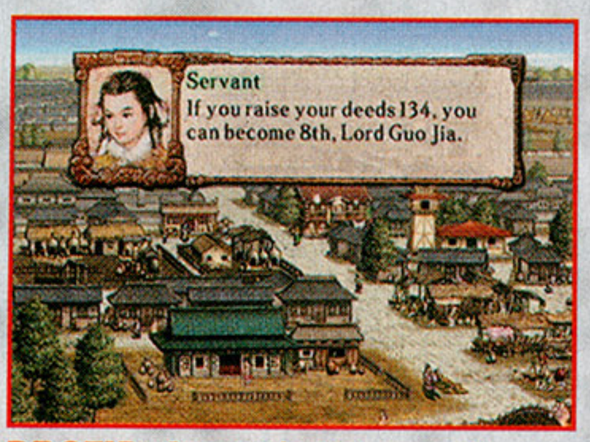
Can't We All Just Get Along?

Romance of the Three Kingdoms thrusts you directly in the middle of the ongoing feuds between warlords, bandits, and soldiers-for-hire in second-century China. But if you're new to this story, don't expect fast, furious action. Instead, you take control of up to eight officers of the land, managing most of your time with food production, policy making, and alliance building through menu-heavy button presses. Periodically, you'll wage war against a province, but even then, the fighting on the battlefield is as slow as your primary duties in the game. Ultimately, you must unify China by fudging numbers upon numbers to your advantage.

Chief Financial Officer in the Making

This latest installment of Romance offers plenty of new features to make veterans of the series excited. You can create bonds between characters, such as marriage and sworn brother oaths, and play as over 600(!) officers based on actual people. The soundtrack is also a notch up from past versions', soothing the ears as you sweat the math. The visuals, however, remain the same mundane menu frames with little or no animation to liven the already slow gameplay.

For Romance followers, this addition to the series is the best yet. An unlimited number of accounting practices combined with more depth to the lives that you control can be an overwhelming if not humbling experience for wannabe rulers of the land. Just make sure you're up for a long lesson in advanced bookkeeping.



PROTIP: Among the townspeople, servants will usually offer the best advice.

PROTIP: You may not be much of a people person in real-life, but talking with residents by Observing will yield positive results.

BY FOUR-EYED DRAGON

- Developed and published by Koei
- $49.99
- Tactical RPG
- Available now
- 8 players

ESRB: EVERYONE

GRAPHICS	SOUND	CONTROL	FUN FACTOR
3.0	3.5	4.0	3.5

A fantasy for wherever reality takes you.

Welcome to the fantasy world of Ivalice. Use swords, magic, spells or whatever tactics you can to return to reality. It'll take strategy and time. Good thing you can take it with you.

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Alcohol Reference
Mild Violence

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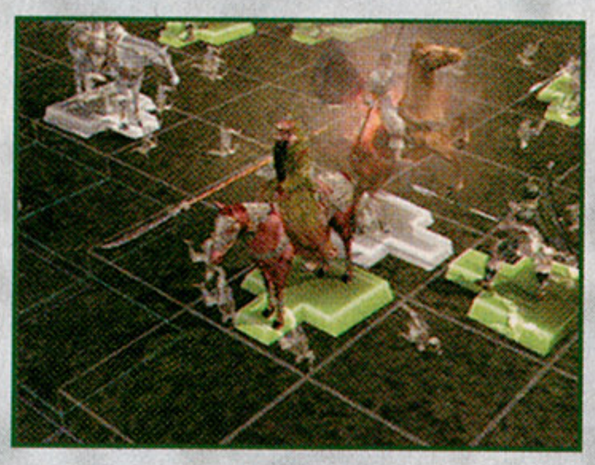
Dynasty Tactics 2



GETTING MORE MILEAGE from the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* stories than humanly possible, Koei is once again tapping into the ancient tomes in its upcoming battle simulator, Dynasty Tactics 2, which continues to document the quasi-mystical exploits of legendary heroes and the women who loved them, and armies from the annals of Chinese history. The gameplay mechanics in the previewable build of Dynasty Tactics 2 were deep and very engaging. Under certain conditions, Tactics could be performed only once per unit but randomly restored when enemies were defeated, while more could be stolen from enemies when attacking them from behind. Combining various armies enabled multiple-unit combo attacks, and up to six of such staggered attacks could be strung together into devastating offensives. Money earned on the battlefield could be used between skirmishes to build armies and also to finance training in battle, intelligence, and leader-type Tactics, and you could also send stealthy scouts to spy on rival armies and recruit assassins to infiltrate enemy bases and take out key opponents. Though Koei may be skimping out on producing jaw-dropping visuals, the breadth and scope of the game's battle system should suck you in and make you forget about such trivial surface details.

BY PONG SIFU

- Developed and published by Koei
- Target release date: September

PLAYSTATION 2

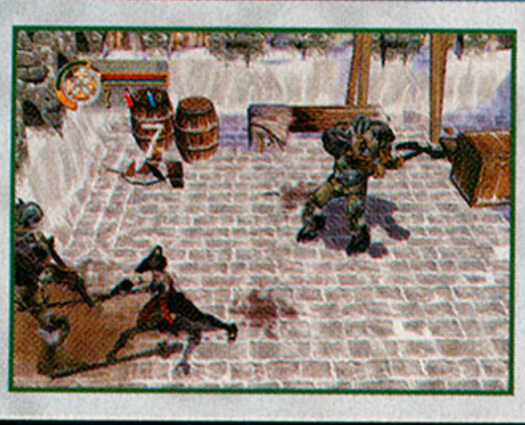
HANDS-ON

Dungeons & Dragons Heroes

GET MORE www.gamepro.com ONLINE

THE XBOX'S SUDDEN run of new role-playing games continues unabated. Atari has decided to make Dungeons & Dragons Heroes—originally a multiplatform title—an Xbox exclusive in order to more fully use the console's powers. A commendable move, and so far, it appears to have paid off—the preview version was night-and-day prettier than previous screen shots, and the highly improved character animation now ranks within the top echelons of its genre.

An action romp similar to Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance, Dungeons & Dragons Heroes pits you (and up to three friends—but with no Xbox Live support) against the second incarnation of a diabolical warlord with seven levels of treasure to loot and goblins to decapitate along the way. For Dungeons & Dragons dorks, the main sell here will be authenticity mixed with accessibility—the class system and enormous item list follow the Dungeons & Dragons world rules as you know them, but if you don't care about that, then you're free to play Heroes as the hack-n-slash it is. Four-player co-op is also key to maximum enjoyment—the game adjusts its difficulty automatically based on how many human heroes are tromping around.



BY FENNEC FOX

- Developed and published by Atari
- Target release date: October

XBOX

HANDS-ON

HALO™

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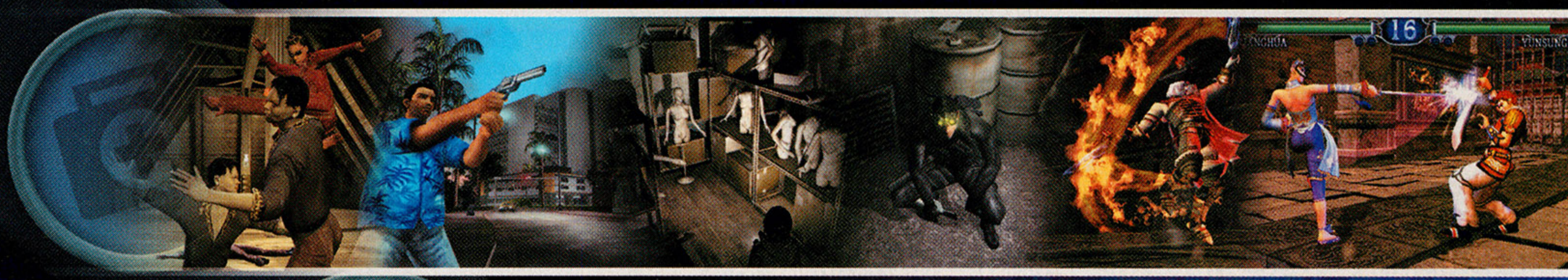

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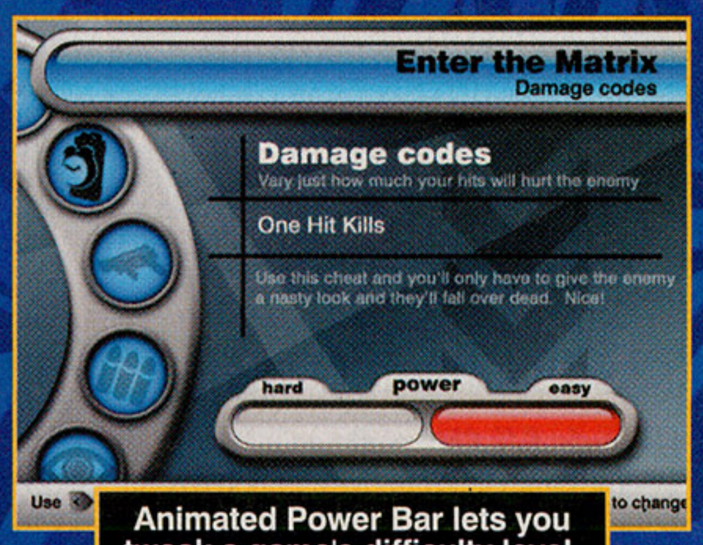

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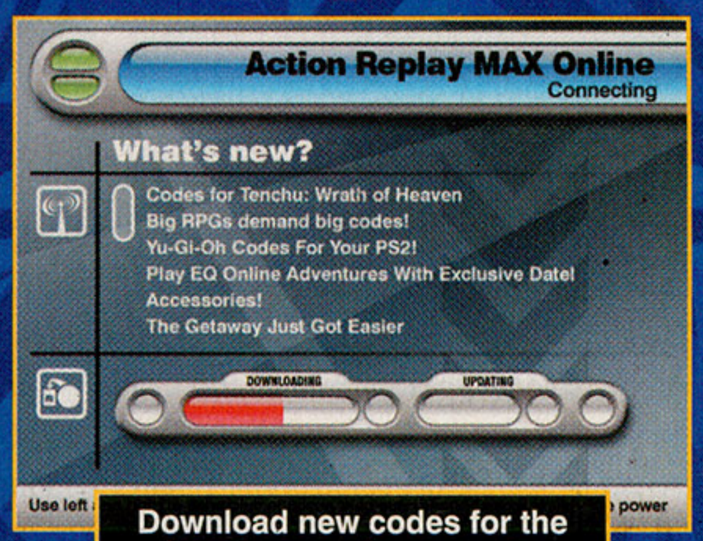

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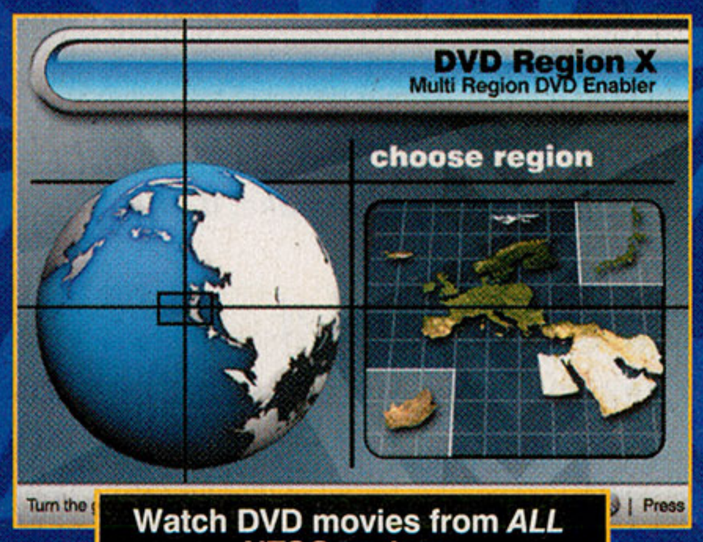

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READER TIP OF THE MONTH

BLOODY ROAR EXTREME

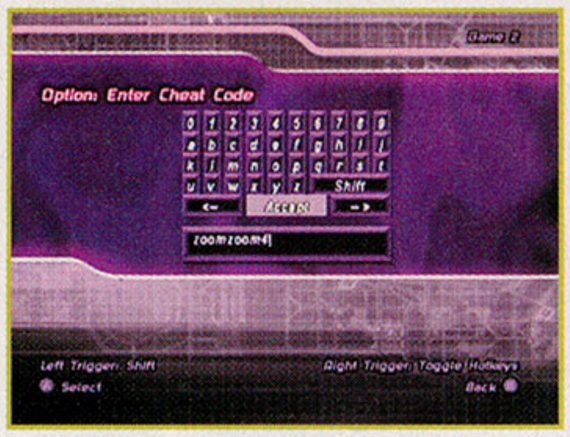
Unlock All Characters

Be sure to have two controllers plugged into the Xbox console. At the main menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, choose Save Load. At the Save Load screen, highlight "Auto Save" and turn it on. Return to Options and select Game Settings. Highlight "Team Members" and then select five. Return to the main menu and select VS Team Battle mode. Choose characters for both sides and then start a match. Pause the game, select Quit, and you'll return to the main menu. Select VS Team Battle mode again, choose characters, start a match, and quit again. Repeat this about 20 times until Fang is unlocked, and all characters will now be available.

Jacob Welch—Crystal Lake, IL

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

Change Game Speed, Guns and Rockets, and More



At the main menu, highlight "Options Mode," highlight "Option: Controller," and then **press Left** to scroll over to Option: Cheat Code. Select Option: Cheat Code, and at the Option: Enter Cheat Code screen, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, it will disappear when you select Accept on the keypad.

Note: Passwords are case-sensitive.

All Car Ability Upgrades:	`greasemonkey`
All Locations:	`theworldismine`
Change Game Speed:	`howfastcanitbe`
Guns and Rockets:	`lovenotwar`
Unlimited Turbo in Arcade Mode:	`zoomzoom4`

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN

100,000 Gold, God Mode, and More

During gameplay, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the name of the cheat will appear.

100,000 Gold: Press A, X, Y, B, Y, B, X, B, B, A.

Gain 50 Skill Points: Press A, B, Y, X, Y, B, B, Y, B, A.

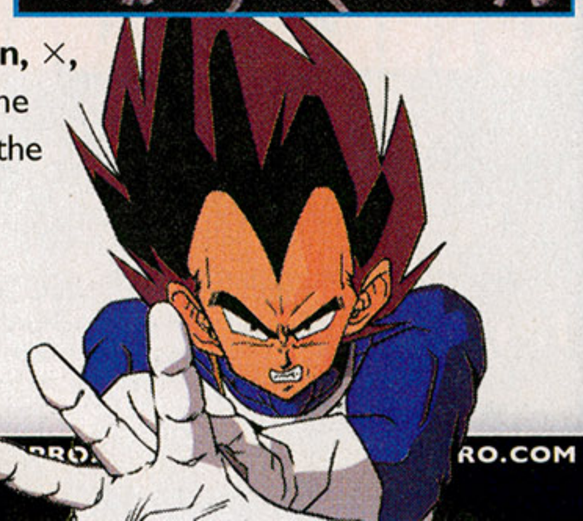
God Mode: Press A, Y, X, X, Y, Y, B, Y, X, A.

Neutral Reputation: Press A, X, Y, X, Y, B, B, Y, B, A.

DRAGON BALL Z: ULTIMATE BATTLE 22

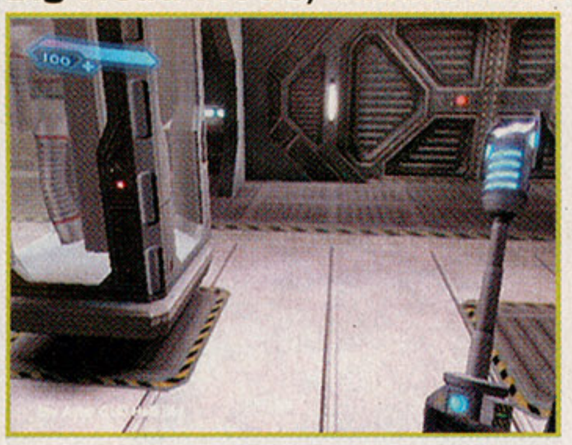
Unlock Bonus Characters

At the title screen, **press Up, △, Down, ×, Left, L1, Right, R1**. If you entered the code correctly, a FMV that introduces the unlocked characters will play.



MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER

Big Head Mode, Infinite Ammo, and More



During gameplay, arm yourself with the Electro-Cosh and then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will immediately take effect.

Auto-Focus Mode: Press L, R, L, R, A, B, B, A, B, A.

Big Head Mode: Press L, R, L, R, A, B, B, A, B, B.

Detach Camera: Press L, R, L, R, A, B, B, A, Y, X.

Double Damage: Press L, R, L, R, A, B, B, A, Y, Y.

Hand of God Mode: Press L, R, L, R, A, B, B, A, A, A.

Infinite Ammo: Press L, R, L, R, A, B, B, A, X, X.

Invulnerability: Press L, R, L, R, A, B, B, A, X, Y.

ROCK 'N ROLL RACING

Larry Voice Test, Play as Olaf, And Unlock Inferno in Vs. Mode

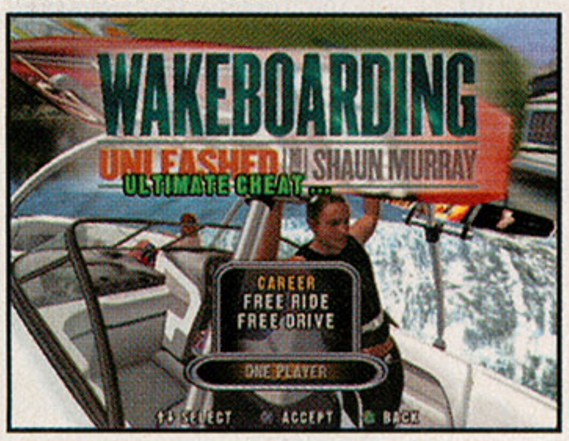
Larry Voice Test: At the main menu, choose Options, highlight "Larry," and then **press L or R** to scroll through Larry's commentary.

Play as Olaf: At the Select Hero screen, highlight "Tarquinn" and then **simultaneously press and hold L, R, Select, and Right**. If done correctly, Olaf will appear at the Hero Select screen.

Unlock Inferno in Vs. Mode: After selecting the game mode, character, and car, return to the main menu and select Change Planets. Highlight "NHO" and then **simultaneously press and hold L, R, Select, and Right**. If done correctly, Inferno will be available.

WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEATURING SHAUN MURRAY

Ultimate Cheat



At the main menu, **press Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right, Left, Right**. If you entered the code correctly, "Ultimate Cheat" will appear onscreen.

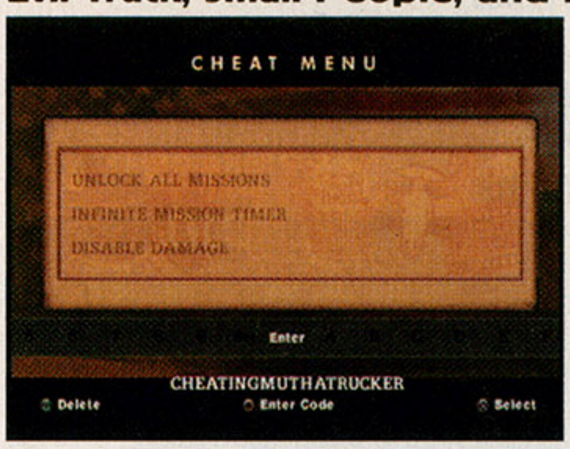
APEX

All Concept Cars

At the main menu, select Dream Mode, and at the Brand Name screen, enter `DREAMY` to unlock all concept cars. If you entered the code correctly, the cars will appear when you start a game in Arcade Mode.

BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS

Evil Truck, Small People, and More



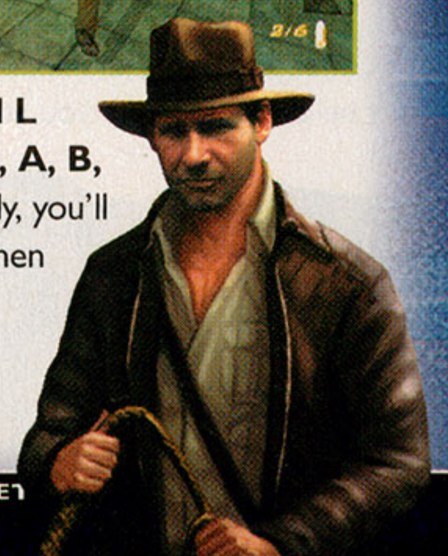
At the Main Menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, select Cheats. **Press Y** to bring up the Cheat Menu and then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the name of the cheat will appear onscreen.

$10 Million:	LOTSAMONEY
Automatic Satnav:	USETHEFORCE
Diplomatic Immunity:	VICTORS
Disable Damage:	6WL
Evil Truck:	VARLEY
Hyperfast Trucks:	GINGERBEER
Master Code:	ATJCEHJMJ
Small People:	DAISHI
Unlimited Time:	PUBLICTRANSPORT
Unlock All Cheats:	CHEATINGMUTHATRUCKER
Unlock Level Select:	LAZYPLAYER

INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB

Invincibility

At the title screen, **simultaneously press and hold L and R, and then press Up, Up, Down, Up, A, X, A, B, Up, Down, Y, Start**. If you entered the code correctly, you'll hear a confirming sound and Indy will be invincible when you start the game.



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: DOUBLE HELIX

All Cheats, Level Select, and Unlimited Ammo

During gameplay, **press and hold the Left Thumbstick**, and then enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, a message will appear onscreen.

All Cheats: Press X, Y, A, B.

Level Select: Press Black, B, A, White.

Unlimited Ammo: Press Black, A, Y, White.

REIGN OF FIRE

All Levels Unlocked and Invincibility

All Levels Unlocked: At the Main Menu, **press Up, Left, ○, ○, Left, Left, □, Down, Up, ○**. If you entered the code correctly, all levels will be available when you start a game.

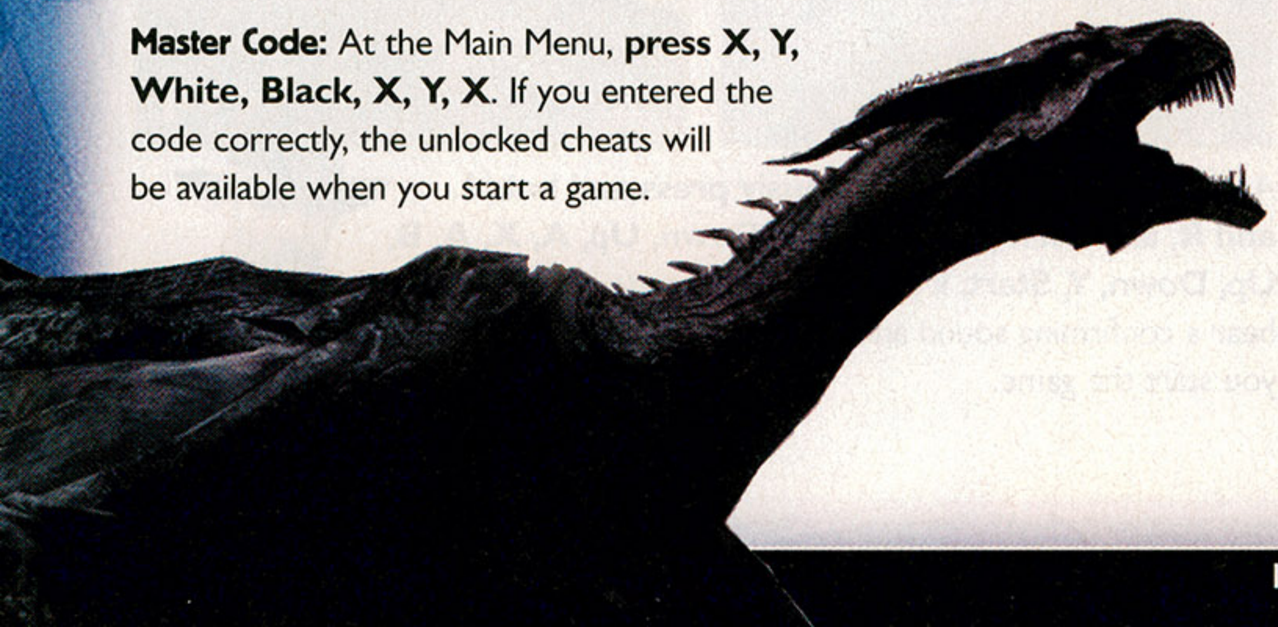
Invincibility: During gameplay, **press ×, △, Right, Left, ○, Up, Down, Down, Right, ○, ○**. If you entered the code correctly, you'll be invincible when you start a game.

REIGN OF FIRE

Invincibility and Master Code

Invincibility: During gameplay, **press White, X, Y, Black, X, Y**. If you entered the code correctly, you'll be invincible when you start a game.

Master Code: At the Main Menu, **press X, Y, White, Black, X, Y, X**. If you entered the code correctly, the unlocked cheats will be available when you start a game.



JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE

All Multiplayer Scenarios, Grapple Upgrade, and More

At the main menu, select Codenames. At the Enter Codename screen, create a new codename or select a preexisting one, and at the next screen, select Secret Unlocks. Enter the following codes to unlock the following cheats. If you entered the code correctly, a message telling you that a cheat has been unlocked will appear.

Note: A "_" designates a blank space.

All Multiplayer Scenarios:	GAMEROOM
Bond Spacesuit:	ZERO_G
Camera Upgrade:	SHUTTER
Decryptor Upgrade:	SESAME
Drake:	NUMBER_1
Elektra King:	SLICK
Golden P2K:	AU_P2K
Golden PP7:	AU_PP7
Grapple Upgrade:	LIFTOFF
Level—Alpine Escape:	POWDER
Level—Deep Descent:	AQUA
Level—Double Cross:	BONSAI
Level—Enemies Vanquished:	TRACTION
Level—Island Infiltration:	PARADISE
Level—Night Shift:	HIGHRISE
Level—Phoenix Fire:	FLAME
Mayday:	BADGIRL
Missile Upgrade:	LAUNCH
Nick Nack:	BITESIZE
Stunner Upgrade:	ZAP
Wai Lin:	MARTIAL

DEATHROW

Unlock Everything, Extra Credits, and More

At the title screen, **press Start**, and at the User Profile screen, select Create. Enter the following codes as profile names to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, the cheat will take effect when you play a game.

Note: Passwords are case-sensitive.

Decrease Field of View:	NOFOV
Increase Frame Rate:	NOSYNC
Unlock Everything:	SouthEnd

Extra Credits: At the Manage Team screen, **press and hold White for about 60 seconds**. If done correctly, you'll acquire extra credits.

IRIDION II

Level Passwords and Unlock Jukebox

At the main menu, select Password, and at the Password screen, enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding levels. If you entered the code correctly, you'll automatically go to the main menu to choose a game.

Easy Difficulty

Level 2:	SBJS5
Level 3:	9CRT5
Level 4:	T3KG3
Level 5:	93PNV
Level 6:	95FN3
Level 7:	5MYCX
Level 8:	6C3L5
Level 9:	PW3NX
Level 10:	649QV
Level 11:	NFK2V
Level 12:	5DS2V
Level 13:	!GDV5
Level 14:	T7H8X
Level 15:	!9ROX
Unlock Jukebox:	CH4LL

Advanced Difficulty

Level 2:	9PTBY
Level 3:	TYHLY
Level 4:	9VDBW
Level 5:	SLZGW
Level 6:	TDZQ4
Level 7:	5M!H6
Level 8:	N59G6
Level 9:	558GY
Level 10:	54!H4
Level 11:	PCGZW
Level 12:	NPH74
Level 13:	9GF46
Level 14:	SOL46
Final Level:	4RC8!

THE SIMPSONS ROAD RAGE

Unlock Everything

At the main menu, select Options, and at the Options screen, choose Set Password. Enter the following icons in order: `Maggie, Willy, Bart, Chief Wiggum, Apu, Moe, Krusty, Barney`. If done correctly, all cars, stages, missions, and extras will be available.

V-RALLY 3

Level Skip

Turn on the game, and at the developer information screen, **simultaneously press and hold Up, R, L, A, and B**. Start a game, and during a race, **simultaneously press and hold Up and Select**, and you'll automatically finish first in that race.

MLB SLUGFEST 20-04

1920s Mode, Ghost Fielders, and More

Start a game, and at the Today's Matchup screen, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, a confirmation message will appear.

1920s Mode: Press B, B, A, A, A, A, R, R, Up.

All Fielders Run: Press B, A, A, A, R, R, Up.

Backwards Fielders: Press B, B, B, B, A, A, A, A, R, R, R, R, Right.

Ghost Fielders: Press B, B, B, A, R, R, R, Down.

Nuke Ball: Press B, B, B, A, A, A, A, R, R, R, Up.

RUGRATS: I GOTTA GO PARTY

Level Passwords

Start a game, and after selecting the number of players, choose Password. Enter the following passwords to unlock the corresponding levels. If you entered the code correctly, you'll begin that level.

Level 2:	CBKBBB
Level 3:	RBHBNB
Level 4:	SNFBBC
Level 5:	TNHHBG
Level 6:	VNFTNG
Level 7:	XNHTFC
Level 8:	ZNFTRJ
Living Room:	CBHBNG

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GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY

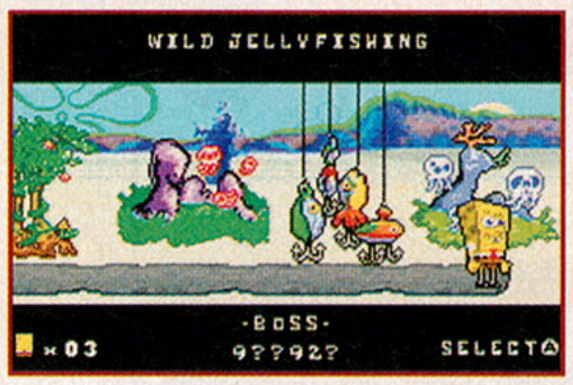
Hidden Characters, Start with 9 Potions and 9 Keys, And Start with 10,000 Gold Pieces

Start a new game and then enter any of the following as a name to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll immediately start the game as the unlocked character or the cheat will be enabled when you start a game as normal.

Dwarf as Large Jester:	ICE600
Dwarf in Bondage Outfit:	NUD069
Jester as Punk:	PNK666
Jester with Chainsaw:	KJH105
Jester with Smiley Face:	STX222
Knight as Football Player:	RIZ721
Knight as General:	BAT900
Knight as Ninja:	TAK118
Knight as Waitress:	KAO292
Knight in Black Armor:	DARTHC
Knight in Black Shirt and Jeans:	CSS222
Knight in Dark Street Clothes:	ARV984
Knight in Karate Uniform:	SJB964
Knight in Street Clothes with Bald Head:	STG333
Knight in Street Clothes with Baseball Cap:	DIB626
Start with 9 Potions and 9 Keys:	ALLFUL
Start with 10,000 Gold Pieces:	10000K
Valkyrie as Cheerleader:	CEL721
Valkyrie as Grim Reaper:	TWN300
Valkyrie as Japanese Schoolgirl:	AYA555
Warrior as Ogre General:	CAS400
Warrior as Orc General:	MTN200
Warrior as Rat General:	RAT333
Wizard as Alien:	SKY100
Wizard as Garm:	GARM99
Wizard as Infested Garm:	GARM00
Wizard as Pharaoh:	DES700
Wizard as Sumner:	SUM224

SPONGEBOB SQUAREPANTS: REVENGE OF THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

Level Select and Unlock Easy Levels



At the main menu, choose Continue, and at the password menu, enter the following passwords to unlock these cheats. If you entered the password correctly, you'll automatically go to the Select Chapter screen.

Level Select:	9??92?
Unlock Easy Levels:	???91?

KIM POSSIBLE

Level Codes and Unlock Extras

At the main menu, select Password, and at the Password screen, enter the following icons to unlock the corresponding cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you'll begin that level.

Level 2:	Rufus, Wade, Kim, Shego, Kim, Kim, Kim
Level 3:	Wade, Rufus, Kim, Shego, Kim, Kim, Kim
Level 4:	Rufus, Drakken, Kim, Shego, Drakken, Monkey, Kim
Level 5:	Kim, Wade, Monkey, Wade, Shego, Monkey, Kim
Level 6:	Rufus, Wade, Monkey, Wade, Drakken, Kim, Kim
Level 7:	Ron, Guard, Monkey, Guard, Shego, Ron, Kim
Level 8:	Rufus, Drakken, Monkey, Wade, Drakken, Ron, Ron
Unlock Extras:	Ron, Kim, Kim, Guard, Guard, Guard, Guard

THE MUPPETS: ON WITH THE SHOW

Unlock All Games, Hard Level, and Medium Level

At the Main Menu, select Continue, and at the Continue screen, enter the following codes to unlock these cheats. If you entered the code correctly, you will automatically return to the Main Menu.

Unlock All Games:	JO9J4
Unlock Hard Level:	H08L2
Unlock Medium Level:	G07N0

SABRINA THE TEENAGE WITCH: POTION COMMOTION

Unlock Levels and Mini-Games

At the main menu, choose Password, and at the Password screen, enter RTVBT4 as a password. If you entered the code correctly, a number of levels and mini-games will be available.

YOU WON'T LAST THE NIGHT

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IN THEATRES FALL 2003

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PLAYSTATION 2
THE ITALIAN JOB

Master Code – Must Be On	0E3C7DF21853E59E
	EE9751D2BCD04062
Unlock Bonus Content	DE94970ABCA99B84
Super Mission Score	DE6AB132BCB8D9DB

Unlock Car Codes

Rental Car	CE91361ABCA99B84
Truck	CE913626BCA99B84
Saloon Car	CE913622BCA99B84
Muscle Car	CE91362EBCA99B84
Armoured Truck	CE91362ABCA99B84
Police Car	CE913636BCA99B84
Henchman SUV	CE913632BCA99B84
Surveillance Van	CE91363ABCA99B84
Cable TV Van	CE9136C6BCA99B84
Super Car	CE91363EBCA99B84

PLAYSTATION 2
MACE GRIFFIN

Master Code – Must Be On	0E3C7DF21853E59E
	EE8E68C6BCB9294E
Infinitive Health (Human)	DE8BC10ABCA99B84
Display Room Number	DE8BC116BCA99B84

PLAYSTATION 2
RTX RED ROCK

Master Code – Must Be on	0E3C7DF21853E59E
	EE84D7EABCC3C27A
All Special Features	DE41A3DEBBA89A82
	DE41A3EEBBA89A82
All Levels	DE44C8CEBDAA9C84
	DE44C8CABDAA9C84
	CE44C8D6BCA99C84

Enable Level Codes

Phobos Station	FE44C8CEBCA99B84
Thermal Research	FE44C8C9BCA99B84
Kuztnetzov Mine	FE44C8C8BCA99B84
Chryse Canal	FE44C8CBBCA99B84
Red Rock TWP	FE44C8CABCA99B84
Xanthe Terra P&W	FE44C8D5BCA99B84
Red Rock Sally Port	FE44C8D4BCA99B84
Red Rock West Gate	FE44C8D7BCA99B84
Aromatum Chaos	FE44C8D6BCA99B84
Shalabatana Vallis	FE44C8D1BCA99B84

PLAYSTATION 2
UNLIMITED SAGA

Master Code – Must Be On	0E3C7DF21853E59E
	EE6D9D62BC1AFCF2
Max Cash	DE77D34EBC413102

Kurt Codes

Infinite HP	CE77D1CEBCA9C292
Max HP	CE77D1C8BCA9C292
Infinite/Max HP	DE77D1CEE3B8C292
Infinite LP	FE77C6D5BCA99B82
Max LP	FE77C6D4BCA99B82
Max Strength	FE77D1DEBCA99B82
Max Skill	FE77D1D9BCA99B82
Max Spirit	FE77D1D8BCA99B82
Max Magic	FE77D1DBBCA99B82
Max Endurance	FE77D1DABCA99B82
Max Fire	FE77D1E6BCA99B82
Max Earth	FE77D1E1BCA99B82
Max Metal	FE77D1E0BCA99B82
Max Water	FE77D1E3BCA99B82
Max Wood	FE77D1E2BCA99B82

Ventus Codes

Infinite HP	CE77C0CEBCA9C292
Max HP	CE77C0C8BCA9C292
Infinite/Max HP	DE77C0CEE3B8C292
Infinite LP	FE77C0D5BCA99B82
Max LP	FE77C0D4BCA99B82
Max Strength	FE77C0DEBCA99B82
Max Skill	FE77C0D9BCA99B82
Max Spirit	FE77C0D8BCA99B82
Max Magic	FE77C0DBBCA99B82
Max Endurance	FE77C0DABCA99B82
Max Fire	FE77C0E6BCA99B82
Max Earth	FE77C0E1BCA99B82
Max Metal	FE77C0E0BCA99B82
Max Water	FE77C0E3BCA99B82
Max Wood	FE77C0E2BCA99B82

GAMECUBE
HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

Master Code – Must Be On	B4F0-8Y7B-WBQEA
	88GB-E3VW-JUBHA
Infinite Ammo + Rapid Fire	PUCU-ZECD-70ZPG
	T5VU-3WKV-D2VPP
	KY2G-CB61-K786Q

Left + X for Level Select

At Main Menu Before Loading	N72D-YR7Z-DHRZ6
	6TZ4-WTCQ-2C125
	B3BQ-VN37-PE055
	V78K-ZZPK-RZAX5
	5PP4-KF67-K8576

Press Down + Y

God Mode	P9KQ-HZVJ-RMX8X
	E1BB-1BVH-P9TMQ
	50EZ-KQ8M-2HZFQ
	Z5E4-HTEG-9C0J0
	M290-X5YM-EZHCP
	XMJH-P6HC-WZ8H5
	EZNR-EFCU-F0M76

Press Down + X

For All Items	JTTR-E7Z0-HVT82
	TRPH-E5CF-N1K5X
	3K89-YZ4Q-11EHK
	DHTB-9YX6-5XF10
	K1VW-F3XM-MQ4UK

Press Left + Y

Nailgun	P4D3-3P87-GDJ3Y
	KV4U-CNFU-53Z4G
	6BN3-85C1-9RY11
	C3NA-XTQJ-YRJM9
	WZXF-B302-YRP1H
	BZX7-NJFU-5BW2A
	UJ46-YJ79-GJA2Z

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Master Code – Must Be On	C444B724 877F8361
	E326E95E 6175058F
Infinite Health	EF376477 510A78ED
Max All Weapons	11664BBD DED1B1B2
	4EEAD3CA 6F7B35D7

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