100% INDEPENDENT

PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE

PSM

UNOFFICIAL.
UNBIASED.
UNRIVALED.

WORLD'S BEST-SELLING PS2 MAG!

SPECIAL ISSUE!
HOLIDAY BUYER'S GUIDE
10 PAGES packed with the COOLEST STUFF on Earth!

PAGE 12!
STREET FIGHTER II HD
The Anniversary Edition

LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE
WORLD-EXCLUSIVE first review
PLUS strategy tips from the creators!

PAGE 39!
MEDAL OF HONOR RISING SUN

FINAL FANTASY XI ONLINE
PAGE 96!

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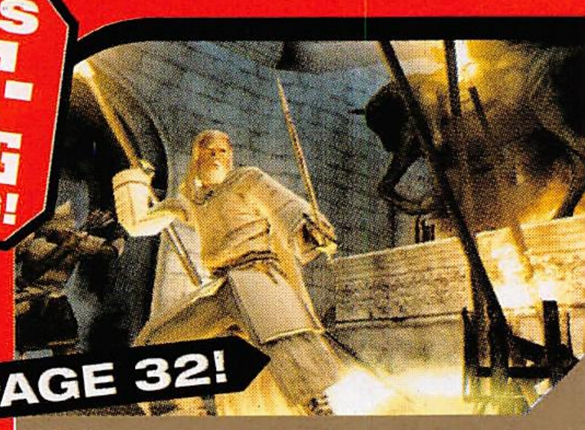

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THE RETURN OF THE KING
REVIEWED! Hobbit revenge! Frodo kicks 1000 asses!

PAGE 25!

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THE SANDS OF TIME
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...V
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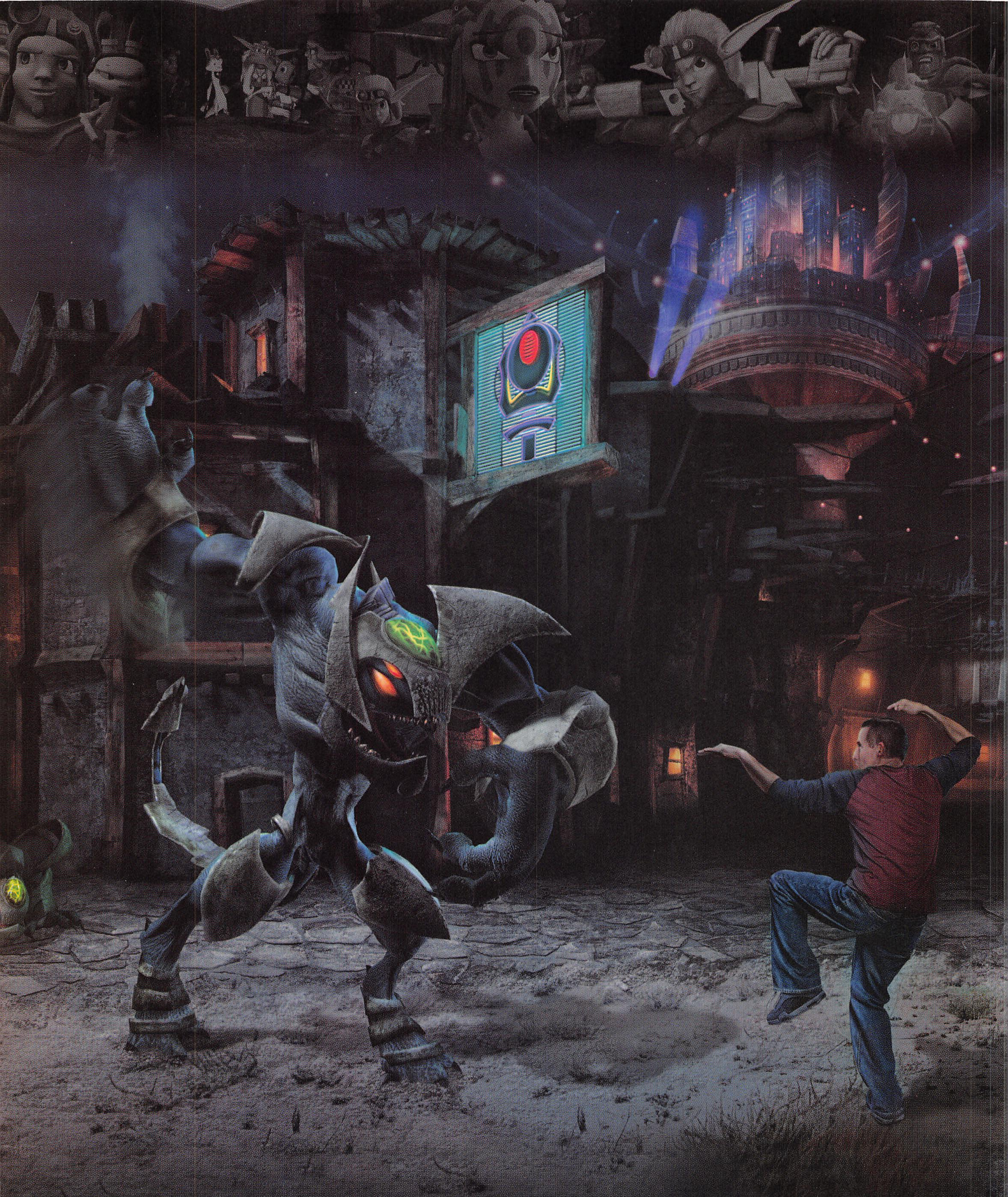
...r • more!

future games
The first choice for gamers

ISSUE 79 ▶ HOLIDAY 2003 ▶ VOL.7

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL: ACTION MASTERPIECE!



TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Comic Mischief
Mild Language
Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes

www.us.playstation.com

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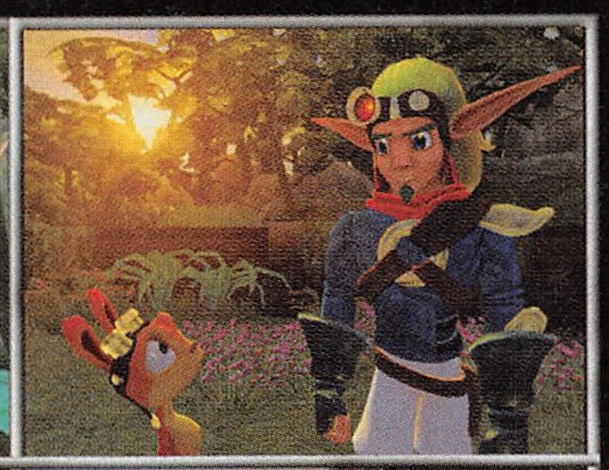
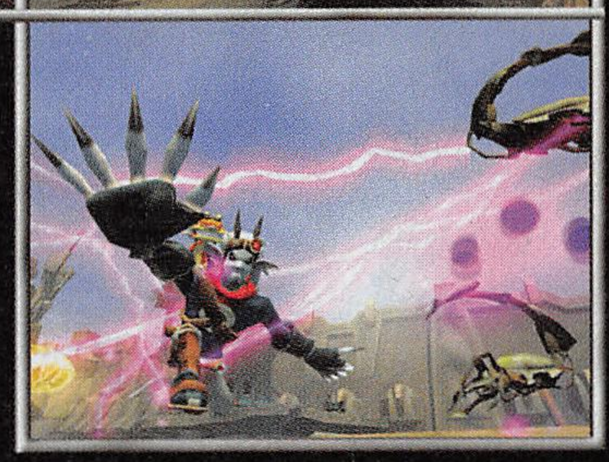
JAK II™

THIS WORLD IS
BETTER LEFT TO JAK.





It ain't no namby pamby fairyland, pal. It's a whole new kind of evil. Crawling with ruthless dictators, backstabbing allies and blood thirsty freaks with an appetite for extra rare meat. All pansies kindly tippy toe on out of here. This requires someone with serious ass-kicking savvy. And that someone, my friend, is Jak. This time he's pissed off and battle ready, with a frighteningly large gun, get-the-hell-outta-my-way hoverboard and a nasty case of mutant powers. So please, save yourself the detached appendages and let him handle it.

NAUGHTY DOG®

PlayStation®2

LIVE IN YOUR WORLD.
PLAY IN OURS.™

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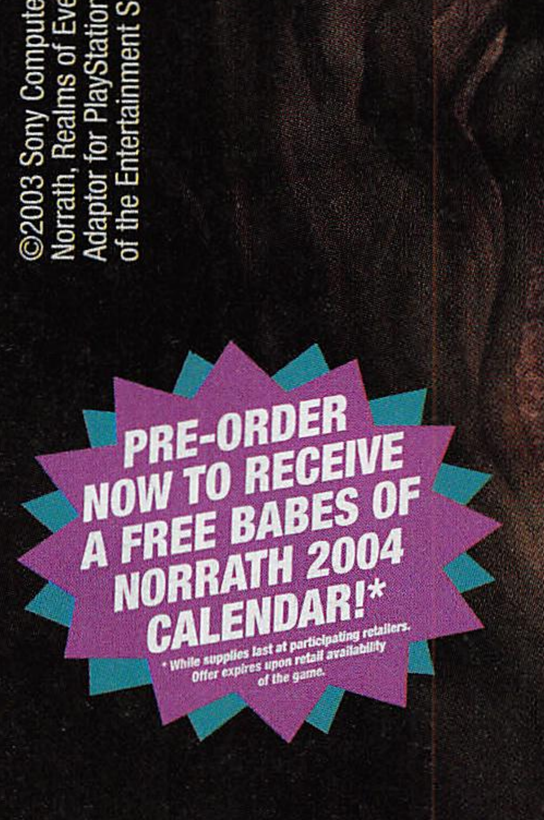
PRE-ORDER NOW TO RECEIVE A FREE BABES OF NORRATH 2004 CALENDAR!*

* While supplies last at participating retailers. Offer expires upon retail availability of the game.



"With a feature set this deep, this may indeed be the new champion of action RPGs." — PSM

SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

snowblind studios

PlayStation.2

Champions of Norrath™

Realms of EverQuest™

4 player combat online via
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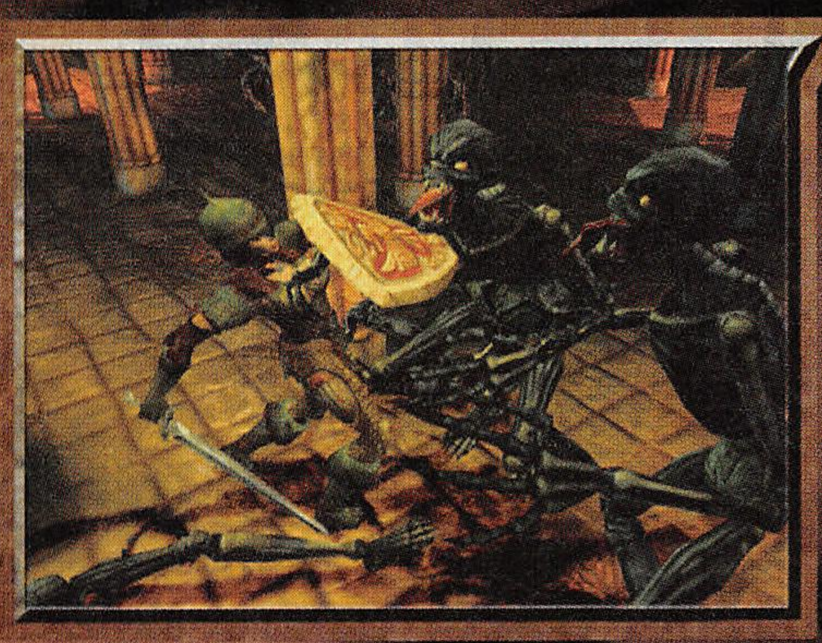
45 levels of non-stop action with
over 50 areas to explore and conquer.



Constantly changing dungeons
and monsters make each
game a new experience.

BE POWERFUL.

Slay your way through the glorious Realms of EverQuest in a non-stop, hack 'n' slash adventure brimming with heroic quests, beautiful locales, enchanted zones and dark, mysterious dungeons.

Create your Champion from 5 mythic races and 5 classes, customizing the look and name that conveys your unique abilities. Discover, collect, buy and trade over 10,000 items, or create your own. Master weapons, magic and combat to conquer hideous creatures and unforeseen evil. But be forewarned - a Champion shall forever be challenged!

www.championsofnorrath.com

ONLINE™
BROADBAND AND DIAL-UP

TEEN
T™
Blood and Gore
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

Game Experience may change during online play

PSM START no. 79
UNOFFICIAL. UNBIASED. UNRIVALED.
WELCOME TO THE WORLD'S BEST PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE ▸ HOLIDAY 2003

<< If you're a hopeless **DualShock addict** like me, it's all about getting that next sweet **PS2 fix** >>

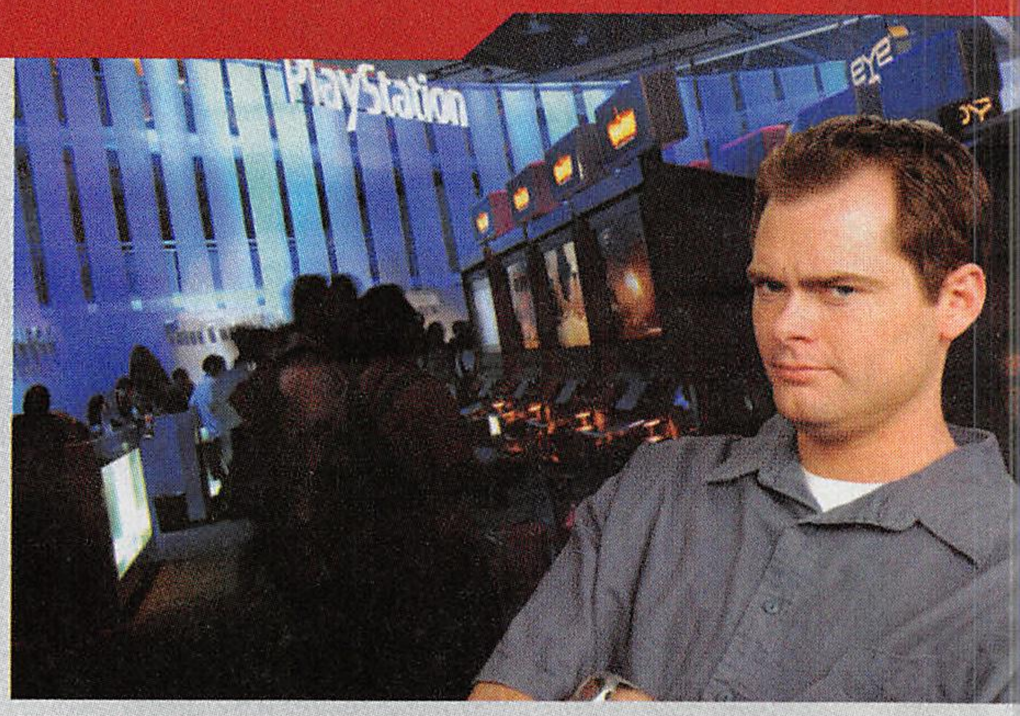
EDITOR'S LETTER

'Tis the season for free PlayStation 2 games!

The Holiday Season is here once again, and you know what that means — *free games!* Yeah, I know there are more important reasons to celebrate this time of year, but if you're a hopeless DualShock addict like me, it's all about getting that next sweet PS2 fix. This year's lineup of blockbuster games is like a trip to the moon, a date with a supermodel and a Super Bowl victory all rolled into one!

...Okay, so that last line was really a load of crap, but you see what I'm getting at — PS2 has got it goin' on. I personally recommend that you ask Santa for *SSX3* and *Jak II* — those games will definitely jingle your bells. Our Holiday Buyer's Guide (starting on pg. 52) is packed with a long list of other top picks, so be sure to check it out.

Everybody have fun, stay safe, and I'll see you guys back here in 2004! **CHRIS SLATE**



CHRIS SLATE Editor-In-Chief

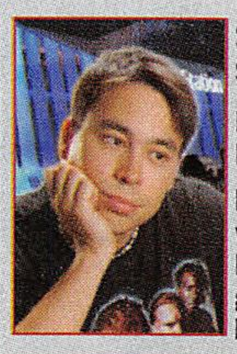
LIKES: Adventure games, platformers, arcade racers

HOBBIES: Comics, hoops, DVDs, movies, anime, drawing, iPod

If I created a holiday, it'd be...
I didn't create this one, but I think we should *officially* observe "Mortal Kombat Monday" by yelling "MORTAL KOMBAAAAAT!" in the streets.

MEET the TEAM

Ever wonder what a crack team of videogame journalists looks like? ...Aw, c'mon folks, just work with us a little, here...



STEPHEN FROST
SENIOR EDITOR

LIKES: Fighters, Lovers
HOBBIES: Holy Matrimony

If I created a holiday, it would be...
Fighters Day, where all the gangs would fight for turf by playing *Street Fighter II*.

RANDY NELSON
REVIEWS EDITOR

LIKES: Platformers, racers
HOBBIES: Comics & Anime

If I created a holiday, it would be...
Hug A Penguin Day. That way, I can finally frolic with them at Sea World!

ERIC BRATCHER
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

LIKES: RPGs, Weird Imports
HOBBIES: Doorknob shining

If I created a holiday, it would be...
Godzilla Pig day, in which everyone watches monster movies and eats a lot.

BILL DONOHUE
MANAGING EDITOR

LIKES: polish-pope.com
HOBBIES: Selling CDs!

If I created a holiday, it would be...
I'd create Everyone In The World Gives Bill Twenty Dollars Day... I ain't stupid...

DAN FITZPATRICK
ART DIRECTOR

LIKES: Cooler weather
HOBBIES: Closing windows

If I created a holiday, it would be...
Beer and Pizza Day... which would have to occur with Designated Driver Day...

GARY LIEW
ASSOCIATE ART DIRECTOR

LIKES: Free money
HOBBIES: Betting on #7

If I created a holiday, it would be...
Doo Dah Day. First, we'd all gather around to do the Doo Dah dance and then...

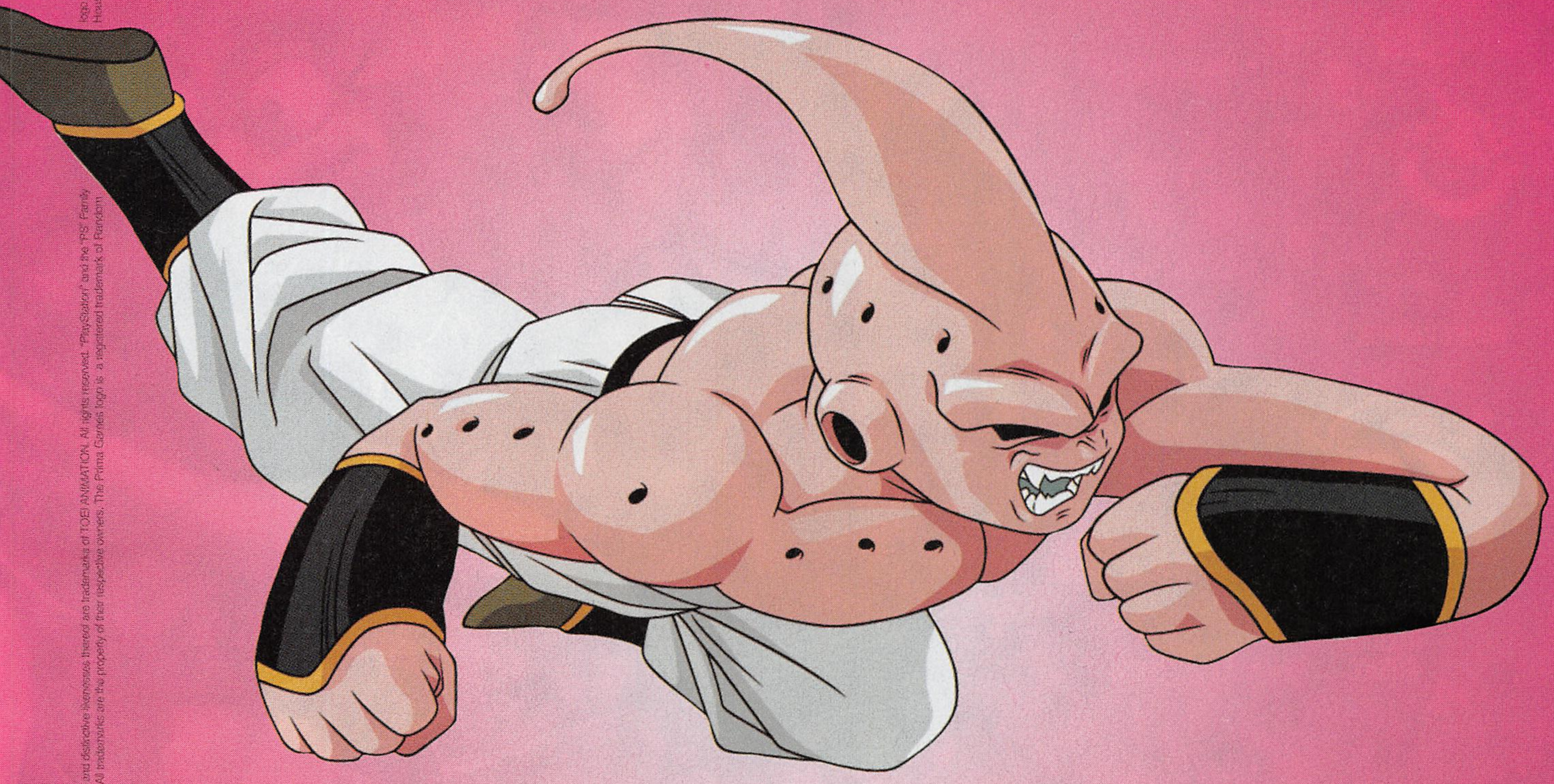
ON THE COVER

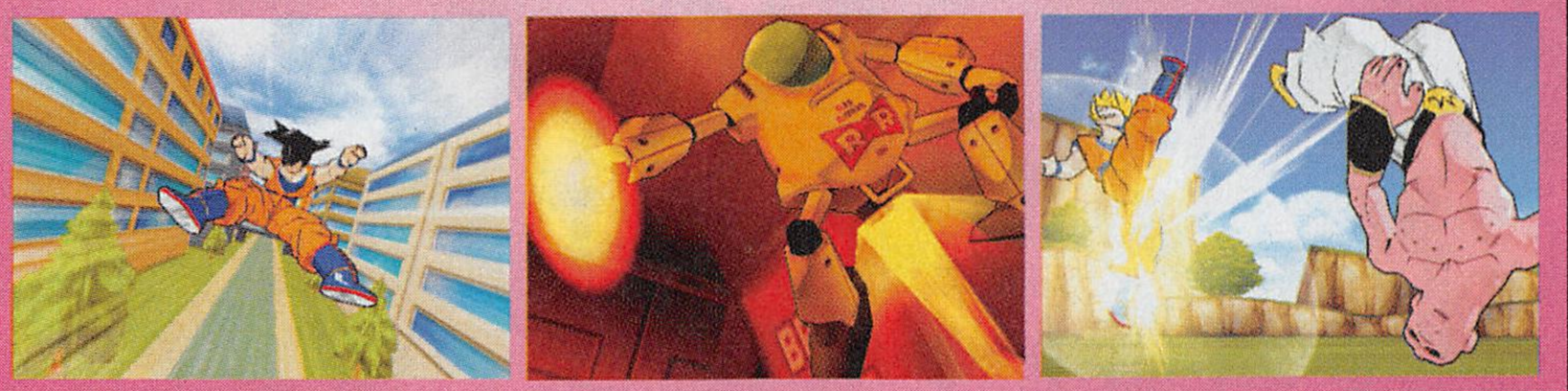
This is not a game for the faint of heart. Check it: you suck out people's blood from across the room, you telekinetically impale people on sharp and pointy things, you burn creatures to a crisp — and that's just in the first level. You've been warned!

PRE-ORDER NOW

Ah, the joys of evil.

ATARI





Not only has Buu™ arrived, but you can fight as any of his three evil forms. Plus there's all new graphics, new fusions, new absorptions, and Dragon World, a new single player mode that lets you create your own DBZ® adventure. If you've got a favorite character, you've got a fight.

DRAGON BALL Z BUDOKAI 2 武道会

PlayStation.2

PRIMA STRATEGY GUIDE AVAILABLE
Limited DVD In Every Guide

FUNimation Productions, Ltd.

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence

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BUST

CHOOSE YOUR WEAPON

Flaming Fur Ball or Radioactive Rabbit? Choose your weapon wisely or you and your fellow fugitive will be forever subjected to a life of twisted animal testing. Shackled together, Spanx must use the indestructible Redmond as a weapon and tool for escape from an evil corporation.

BUNNY CANNON

- Flaming Fur Ball
- Bunny Grinder
- Radioactive Rabbit
- Bunny Fuse
- Hare-sicle
- Electro Static Rabbit

HELIUM BUNNY

- Hungry Bunny
- Hare Clog
- Tug-O-Rabbit
- 10 Ton Bunny
- Bunny Cannon

HARE-SICLE

- Helium Bunny
- Hyper Hare
- Stuffed Rabbit
- Chocolate Bunny

HARE CLOG

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Violence
Comic Mischief

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

eidos

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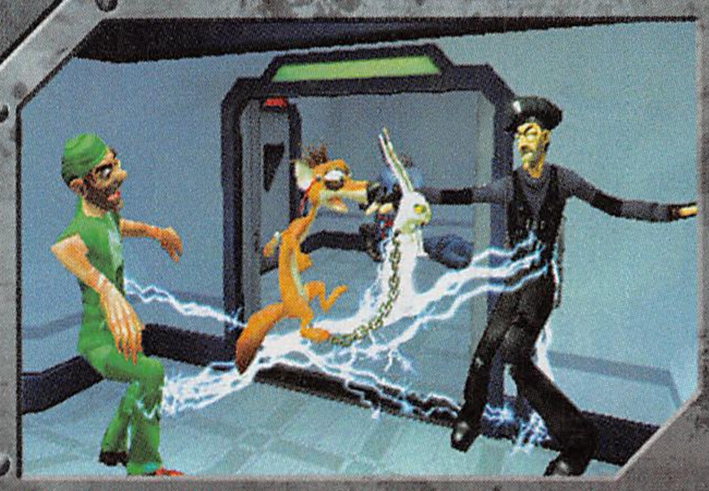
it up!

OUT NOW!



Dip Redmond in toxic waste to poison enemies, electro-charge him to zap attackers and more!

Demolish everything from security cameras to test equipment.

Knock out the evil lab staff with loads of combo attacks.

"Whiplash is one of those games that just oozes cool." – PSM

PlayStation.2

XBOX

Whiplash™

WhiplashGame.com

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PSM MAIN MENU

NO. 79

100% INDEPENDENT PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE ▶ ISSUE 79 HOLIDAY 2003 ▶ VOL. 7

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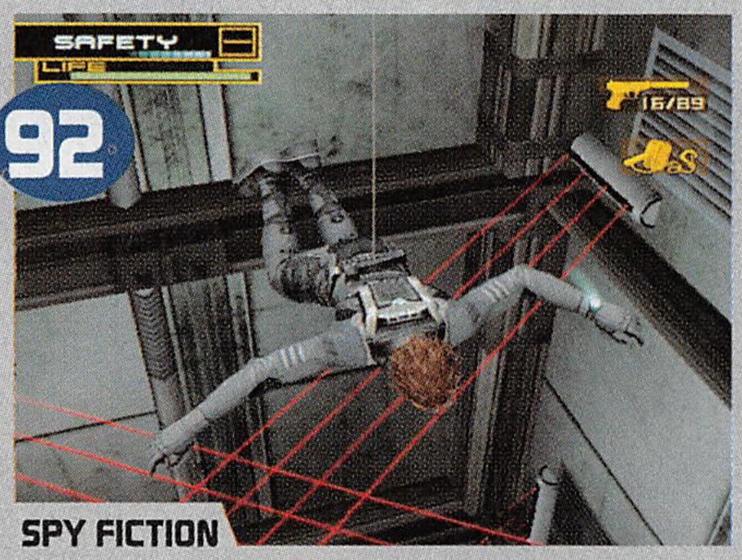
LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

FIRST REVIEW & STRATEGY for the biggest *Kain* adventure yet! Be warned, though — action this hardcore isn't for the faint of heart!

<< SOULS OR BLOOD — WHICH DO YOU FEEL LIKE FEEDING ON TODAY? >>

FEATURED PREVIEWS



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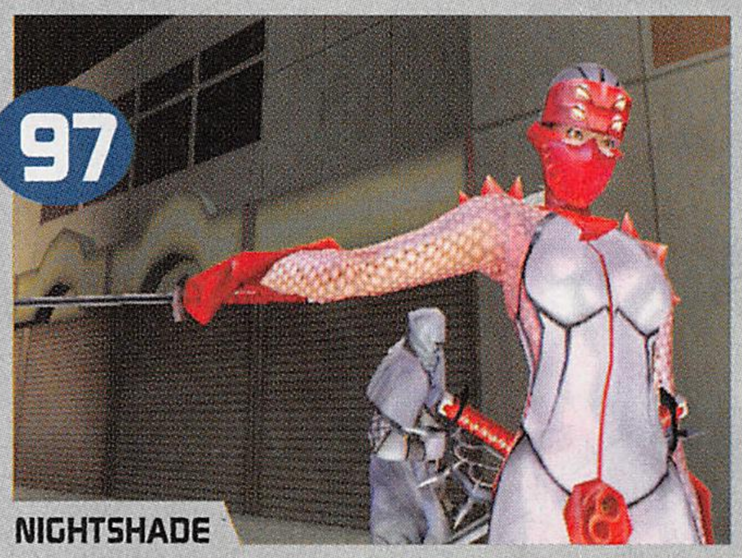
SPY FICTION
WOW: *Mission Impossible* may have looked like this, but it never *played* like this!



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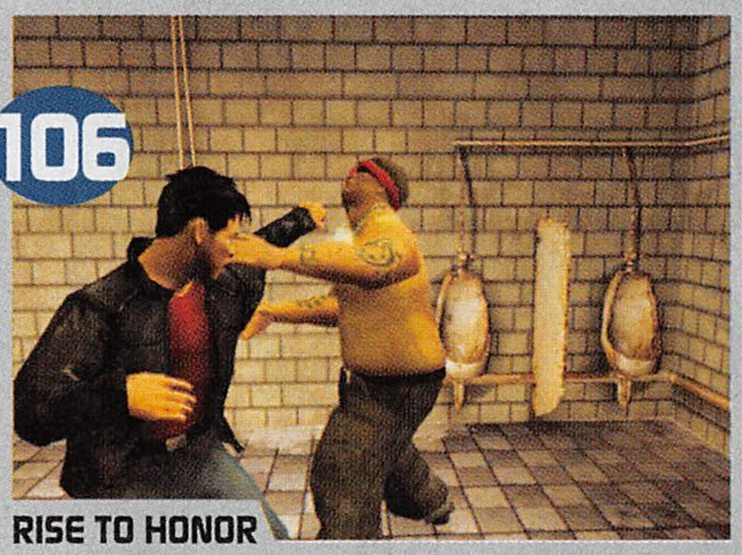
NIGHTSHADE
NINJA BOOTY! She may have Shinobi's moves, but Hotsuma don't shake like that!



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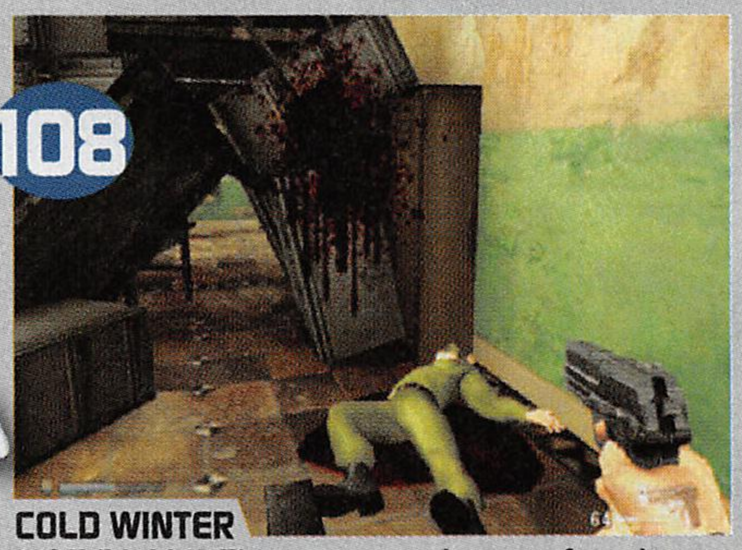
RISE TO HONOR
BATHROOM BEATING! Jet Li goes mad-bananas and destroys everything in sight!



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COLD WINTER
HOT BLAM! First-person shooter fans have another reason to go gun crazy on PS2!

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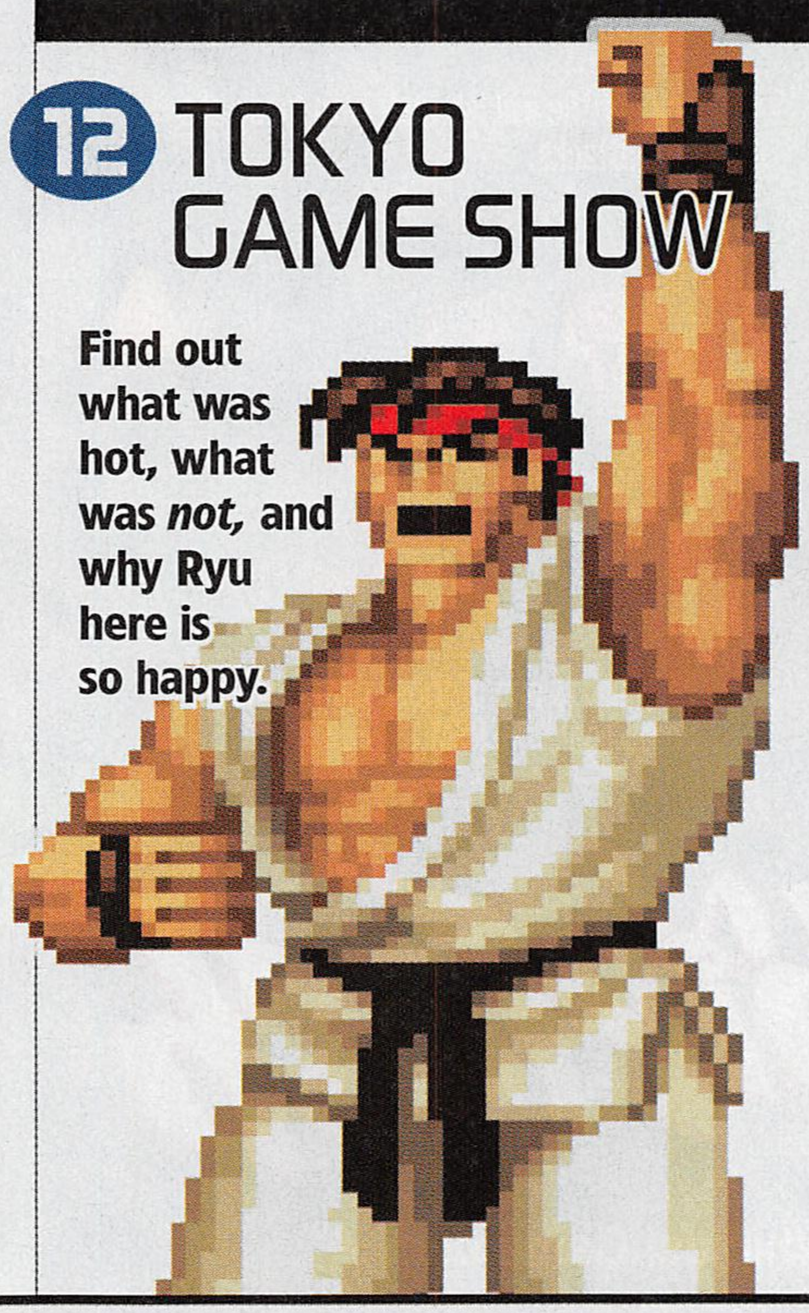
TOKYO GAME SHOW

Find out what was hot, what was *not,* and why Ryu here is so happy.



SONIC HEROES

Get your exclusive look at Sonic's first run on PS2!

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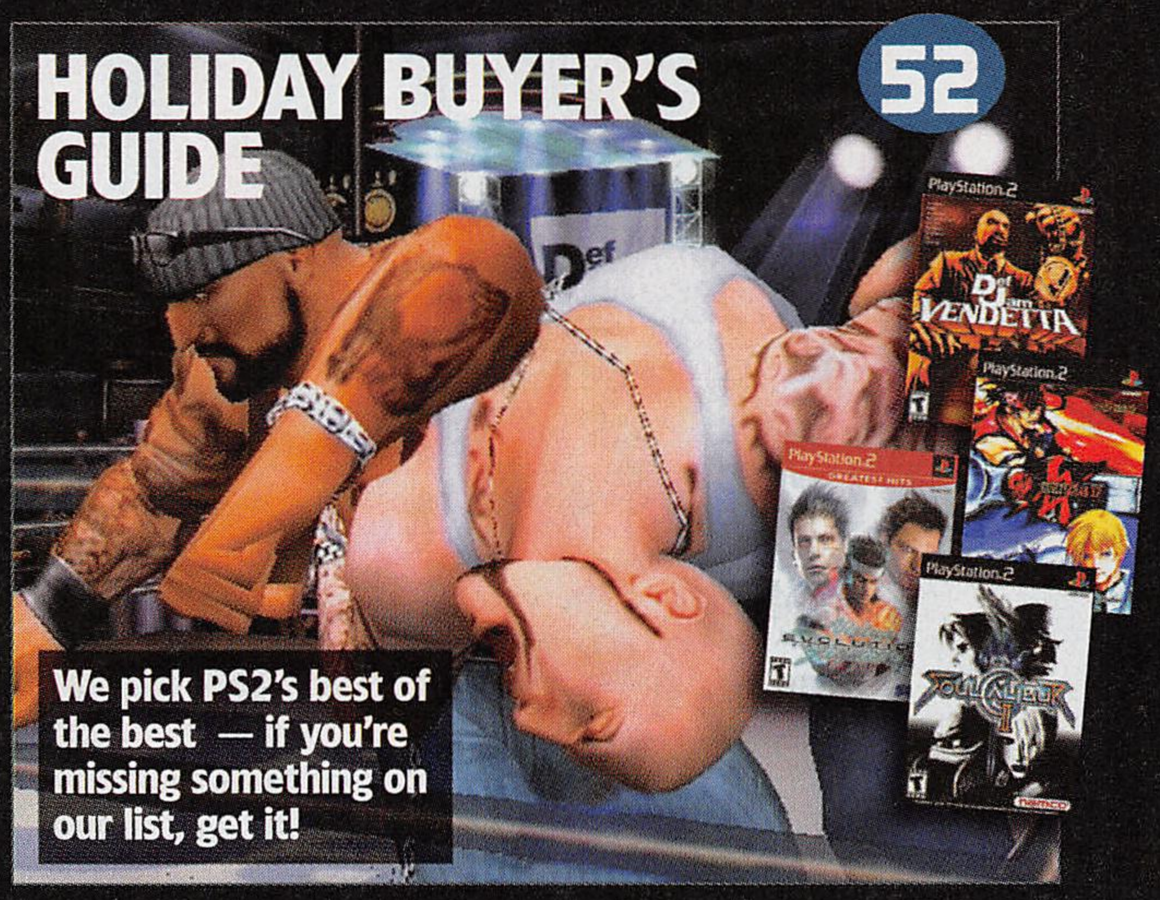

MONITOR

Your inside look at this month's hot topics, gear, and games

TOP STORY 12

SPECIAL REPORT: Tokyo Game Show — see what all the fuss was about (or not).

CHECKPOINT 14
Your one-stop spot for cool games, movies and gear that's coming your way

REVIEWS

The world's most accurate, in-depth game reviews

GAME OF THE MONTH:
Beyond Good & Evil 20
We really, really liked it.

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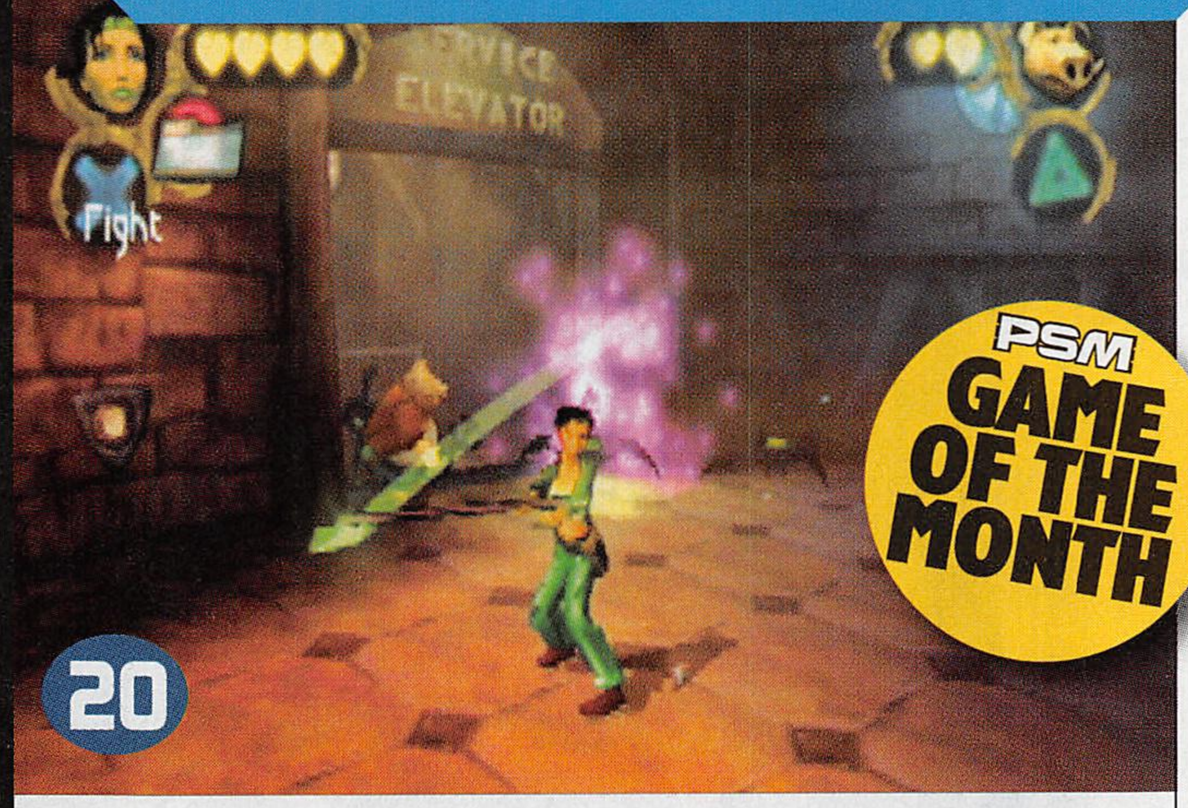
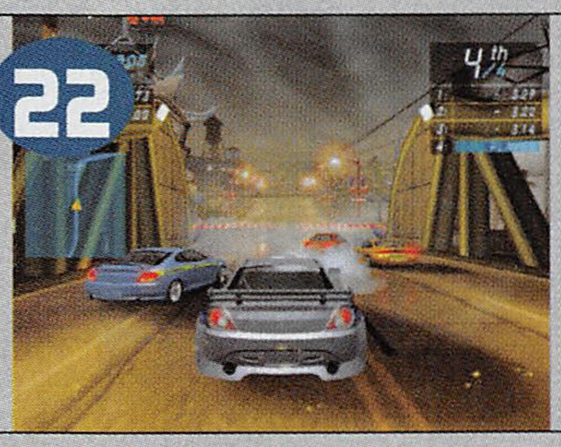


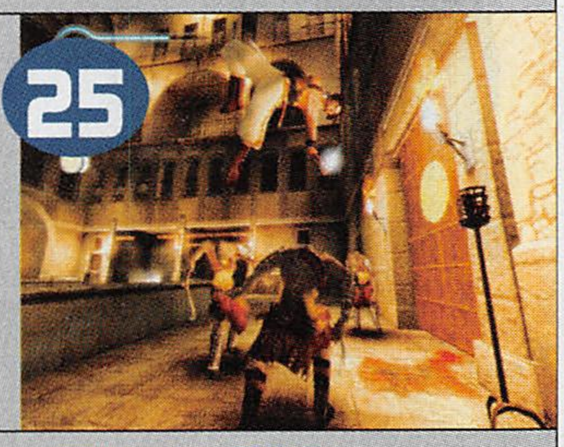
BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

If you've been looking for a killer action game that includes a hot babe, photography, slow-mo martial arts and a flying pig, then your search is finally over. Read all about *Beyond Good & Evil,* and find out how it's going to rock all four hemispheres of your world.

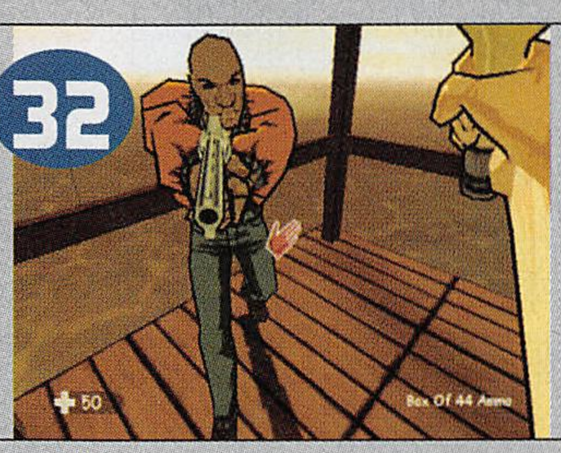
FEATURED REVIEWS



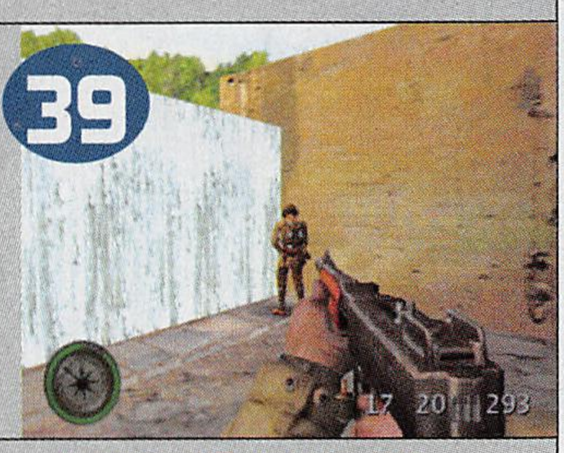
▲ NFS: UNDERGROUND Can it possibly play as good as it looks?



▲ PRINCE OF PERSIA The best tomb raiding we've seen in ages.



▲ XIII Does this FPS serve up the steak, or is it all sizzle?



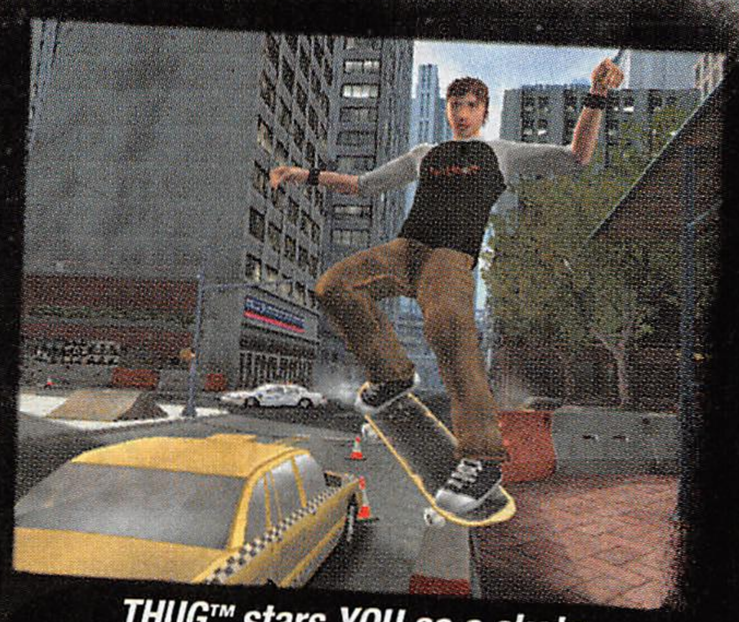
▲ MEDAL OF HONOR: RS How good can this series get?

THE PSM MISSION STATEMENT

PSM is the magazine for the gaming elite—the hardcore gamers that support and drive this industry. This is *not* a "mass-market" magazine. We don't focus on "fun for the whole family," or waste space interviewing movie stars that have nothing to do with games. That's just not what we're into.

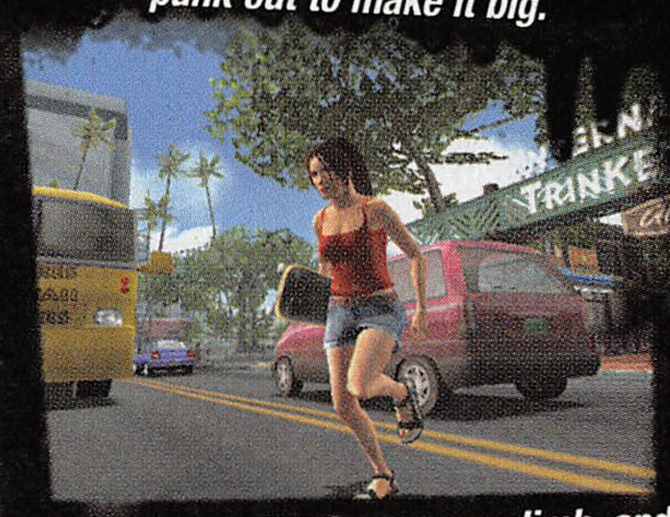
PSM is also proudly independent. We have no official corporate sponsor, so you can trust that our reviews and opinions will always be 100% our own. Our readers always come first, and we would never, *ever* betray your trust. This is our promise to you, the hardcore PlayStation 2 gamer, who deserves nothing less. Now let's get this issue going!

''10 OUT



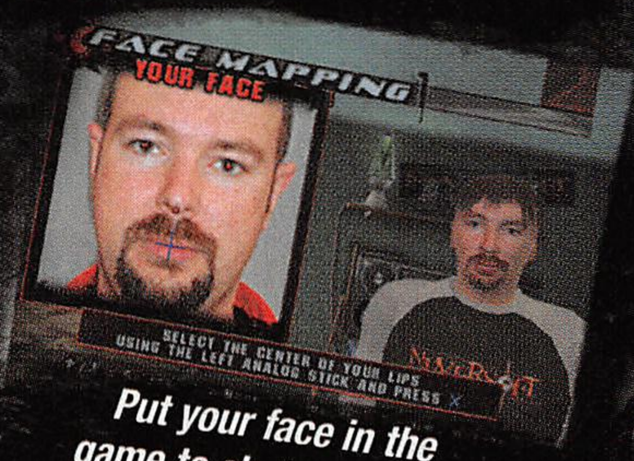
THUG™ stars YOU as a skate punk out to make it big.

Tear it up in cars or other rides.

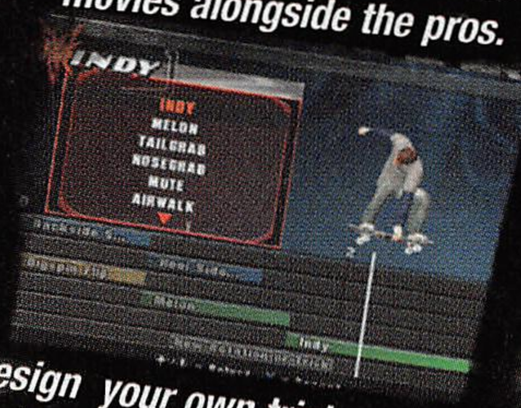


Do whatever it takes – run, climb, and of course, skate – to make it to the top.

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



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



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

PlayStation®2 XBOX NINTENDO GAMECUBE GAME BOY ADVANCE Vicarious Visions POWERED BY: gamespy AT&T Wireless

TEEN
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Mild Violence
Strong Language
Suggestive Themes
Game Experience May Change During Online Play.

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OF '10''

-GMR

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– Maxim Magazine

"...one of the best games of the year."
– GameSpy

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– Official PlayStation 2 Magazine [U.K.]

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SPECIAL REPORT

TOKYO GAME SHOW

Aside from a few standouts, ho-hum show proves Japan is slipping

The world's second biggest annual videogame exhibition has come and gone — the verdict? Japan's got some work to do. First, the good stuff. Capcom made the biggest splash of any publisher at TGS with a new *Street Fighter* (see sidebar), the first-ever playable version of its fantasy online epic *Monster Hunter,* and sweet new builds of *Resident Evil Outbreak* and *Onimusha 3*. Plus, Capcom revealed two new shockers: *Crimson Tears,* a cel-shaded action title, and *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas,* based on the cult hit movie.

Square-Enix didn't bring much to the show for us to play, but it had the biggest new announcments: *Kingdom Hearts II,* a full CG *Final Fantasy VII* movie titled *Advent Children,* and a poster teasing November 19th as the date that *Final Fantasy XII* will finally be unveiled to the world (that's right, *XII*).

There were a few more hot games (see below), but we've got to be honest — overall, this was a pretty weak show. We've been to every TGS, and over the past few years we've seen a steady decline in the game lineup presented by the attending Japanese game publishers.

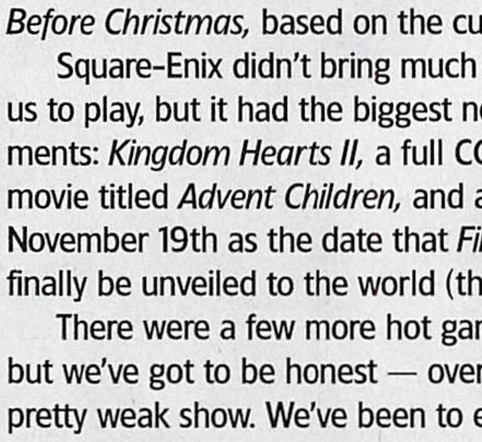
In Japan, the market for games has stagnated, and nobody can agree why. Our guess would be that gamers are just tired of the same-old stuff. Japan gets many more new games each year than we do, and they're all just too similar. Meanwhile, the world's biggest-selling titles now belong to western developers, which used to never, ever happen... ever.

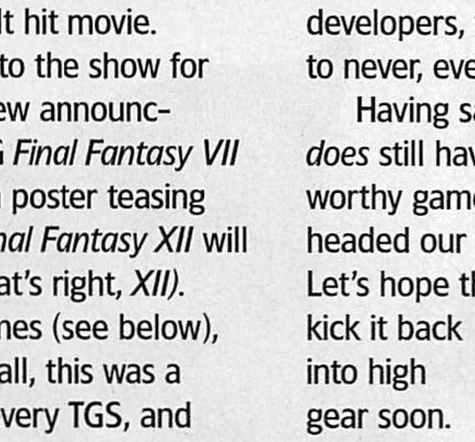
Having said all that, Japan *does* still have several worthy games headed our way. Let's hope they kick it back into high gear soon.

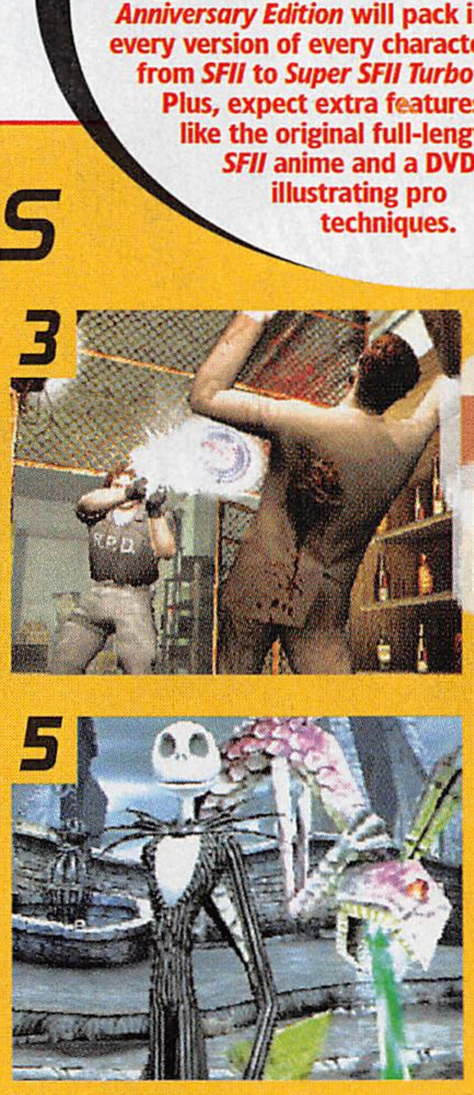
SFII RETURNS

Hyper Street Fighter II 15th Anniversary Edition **will pack in every version of every character from *SFII* to *Super SFII Turbo*. Plus, expect extra features like the original full-length *SFII* anime and a DVD illustrating pro techniques.**

The Hottest Games



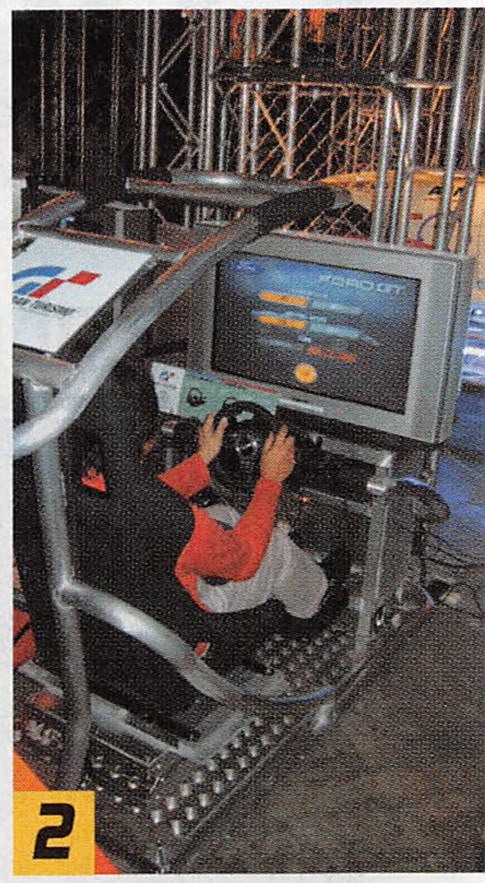




In random order of hotness...
1. RED NINJA Think *Tenchu,* but with crazy new attacks. **2. SUIKODEN V** The fan-favorite RPG series is back and beautiful. **3. RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK** Still a most-wanted game. **4. CRIMSON TEARS** We don't know much about this Capcom action title, but the sexy graphics are to die for. **5. NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS** Another fantastic-looking Capcom game that's on our short list.

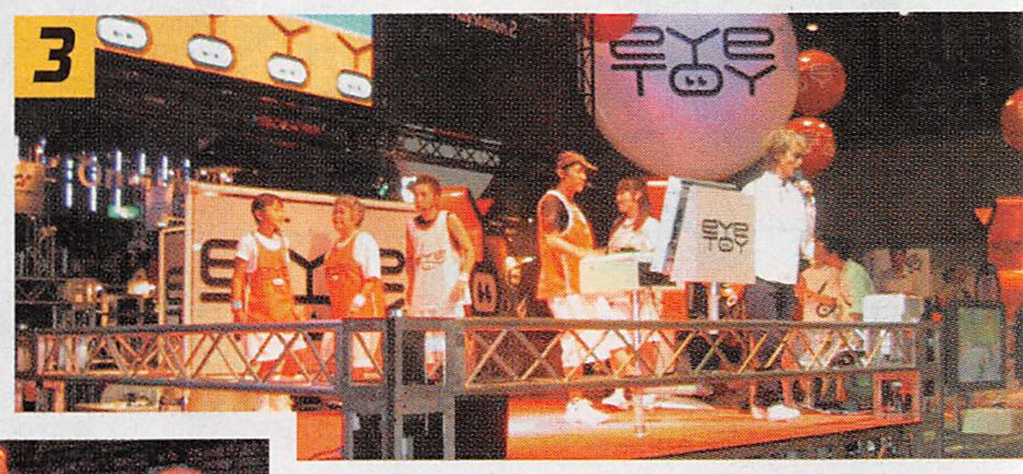
<< WE'VE GOT TO BE **HONEST** – OVERALL, THIS WAS A PRETTY **WEAK** SHOW >>

1. Sony's booth was one of the show's best, but still, there wasn't much on hand that we hadn't already seen at the E3 expo back in May. Still though, we got to play the latest versions of several big-name games (like *Gran Turismo 4*), so who are we to complain?



2. How many of these *GT4* driving rigs do you figure Kazunori Yamauchi (the series' creator) has in his house? He probably has a toliet built into one so he never has to stop racing.

3. Dancers would sing "let's... do... the EyeToy!" **4.** Ratchet made an appearence, and — thank goodness — he wasn't "going commando."



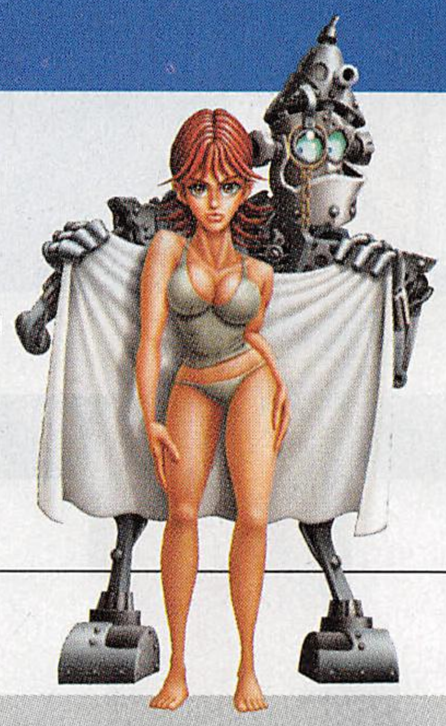
5. The show's mascot ran wild, hammering unsuspecting showgoers from behind. **6.** Capcom's top creators.

Hey Now!

As usual, there were plenty of lovely ladies on hand to... uh, what were they doing there, again?

CHECKPOINT

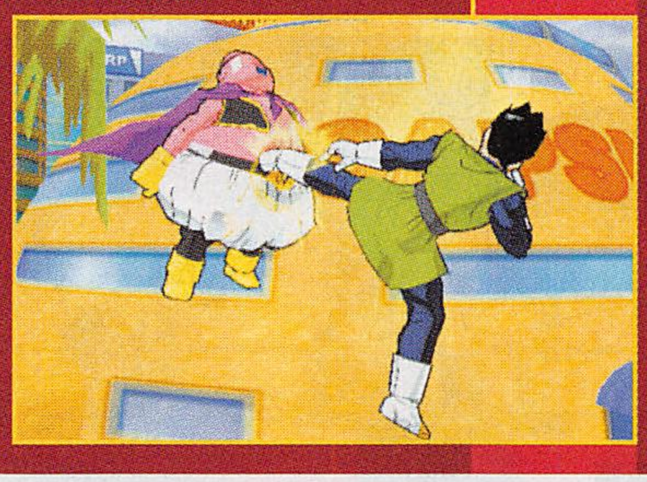
You've found it: your one-stop spot for all the best stuff headed your way (Please keep in mind that release dates do change—don't blame us if they do!)



▶ So what if she's evil? If you were Maximo, would you really want to hurt this hottie?

Current Releases

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER
Alias	Action	Acclaim
Dragonball Z: Budokai 2	Fighting	Atari
Extreme Force	Action	Namco
Final Fantasy X-2	RPG	Square Enix
.hack//QUARANTINE	RPG	Bandai
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne	Action	Rockstar
Metal Slug 3	Action	SNK
Mission: Impossible - Operation Surma	Action	Atari
Gundam: Encounters in Space	Action	Bandai
R: Racing Evolution	Racing	Namco
The Sims: Bustin' Out	Simulation	EA

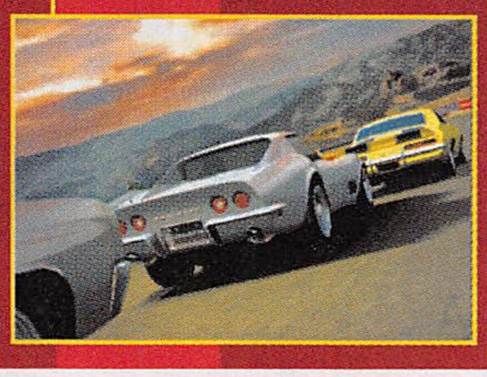


◀ It's here! *DBZ* fans get their second action-packed helping of cartoon fighting.

January's Releases

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER
Gran Turismo 4	Racing	Sony CEA
Manhunt	Action	Rockstar
Maximo Vs. Army of Zin	Action	Capcom
NBA Ballers	Sports	Midway
Syphon Filter: Omega Strain	Action	Sony CEA
The X-Files: Resist or Serve	Action	Vivendi Universal

▶ Get your motor running — what promises to be the ultimate racing game is just weeks away!



February's Releases

TITLE	GENRE	PUBLISHER
Champions of Norrath	RPG	SOE
Drift Racer Kaido Battle	Racing	Sammy Studios
The Fast and The Furious	Racing	Vivendi
Gradius V	Action	Konami
Ice Nine	Action	Bam!
Lobo	Action	Kemco
Pitfall Harry	Adventure	Activision
Rise To Honor	Action	Sony CEA
Seven Samurai 20XX	Action	Sammy
Star Craft: Ghost	Action	Vivendi
Star Ocean III: Till The End of Time	RPG	Square Enix
Wrath Unleashed	Strategy	LucasArts

PSM Game Tracker

Maximo vs. Army of Zin

Publisher: Capcom Type: Action Release Date: Spring

Everyone agreed that the first *Maximo* was a great game — it was even our game of the month in PSM #55 — but there was definitely a lot more that could be done with it. That in mind, Capcom is beefing up the mighty knight's arsenal, creating a deeper fighting system, and generally laying on the polish.

Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow

Publisher: Ubisoft Type: Action Release Date: Spring

This sequel won't just be a hand-me-down from the Xbox. Ubisoft is working on the PS2 version of *Pandora Tomorrow* (no, we still don't know what the name means) simultaneously this time around. We've heard rumors of PS2 exclusive extras (missions? modes? who knows?) but nothing has been officially confirmed — even the online mode remains a mystery.

Drift Racer Kaido Battle

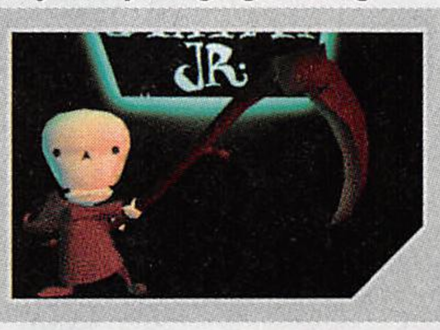
Publisher: Sammy Studios Type: Racing Release Date: Spring

Keep an eye on this low-key racer, because it might just surprise everyone. Drift racing is growing in popularity as a motorsport, and Sammy Studios has brought in the guys behind the cult favorite *Tokyo Extreme Racer* series to design this game. It's not your typical racer, and that may end up being a good thing.

Death, Jr.

Publisher: TBA Type: Action Release Date: TBA

This action-platformer comes from Digital Eclipse, a developer mostly known for reviving classic games on modern-day systems. It's the team's first totally original game, and stars the son of Death (hence the title). Its mix of shoot-'em-up action and unique play mechanics involving daddy Death's scythe definitely has our interest piqued.



Champions of Norrath: Realms of EverQuest

Pub: Sony Online Entertainment Type: Action RPG Release Date: Spring

This isn't the *EverQuest* most people know (and that could be a good thing). If the massively-multiplayer game wasn't your thing, perhaps this cooperative action RPG by the folks who made the stellar *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* will fill your need for online dungeon crawling. It's certainly looking good.

WHAT YOU SHOULD BE PLAYING

1. SOCOM II

Pub: Sony CEA Dev: Zipper Interactive Type: Action

The original *SOCOM* was *the* reason to go online with PS2, and its sequel is not just better — it's a whole lot more game, online *and* off.

2. Tony Hawk's Underground

Publisher: Activision Developer: Neversoft Type: Sports

You'll have to wait until next issue for our review of the game (sorry), but we can tell you this now: it's fresh, fun, and deeper than ever.

3. SSX 3

Pub: EA Sports BIG Dev: EA Canada Type: Sports

If you don't have this game, get it. If you do, by now your stats should be maxed out, so head online and show the world what you've got!

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Cool Stuff

Here's a look at some of the hottest new gear and goodies you should keep an eye out for

Oasis

From: Lay-Z-Boy
Price: $1,730
Available: Now (U.K.)

Though only available in the United Kingdom (a.k.a. jolly ol' England) at the moment, we can only hope that the folks at Lay-Z-Boy decide to bring this bad boy stateside. Why? Because it's simply the ultimate gaming chair.

The aptly-named Oasis doesn't sport any controller holders or speakers — it's all about comfort and convenience. Imagine this: not having to leave the comfort of your big, cushy recliner to grab a cold drink. That's right, the Oasis has a built-in refridgerator! But, as they say, that's not all.

If you've settled in for a nice long gaming session (let's say 12 hours of *Final Fantasy XI)* there's no need to actually leave the chair to stretch or work out kinks in your but... er, back. The Oasis handles it with built-in massage and heating systems. The only thing it needs now is an alarm clock in case you drift off to sleep while playing!

▼ The Oasis comes with equipped with a six-can fridge, 10-motor massage and heat system. Model not included.

Hot In December

TOP FIVE DVD RELEASES

OUR TOP PICK:
PIRATES OF THE CARRIBEAN: CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL
12/02/03
The swashbuckling pirate movie to end all pirate movies comes to DVD with loads of extras, just in time for the holidays. Can we hear an "Arrr!"?

2. Buffy The Vampire Slayer Season 5 12/09/03
Sarah Michelle Gellar's back to kick evil's butt in this season, which saw the introduction of Dawn. The DVD also features outtakes!

3. South Park Season 3 12/02/03
All the Season 3 *South Park* you can shake a stick at, plus the wholesome melodies of "Mr. Hankey's Christmas Classics."

4. Escape From New York Collector's Edition 12/16/03
The classic John Carpenter movie that made Kurt Russel an action star and inspired the character of Solid Snake gets to total makeover.

5. Assassination Tango 12/09/03
Assassins hanging out with beautiful young women, *and* tango dancing? Finally, a movie you can watch with the artsy girlfriend.

TOP FIVE NEW MOVIES

OUR TOP PICK:
LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING
12/19/03
Peter Jackson's thrilling movie treatment of Tolkien's fantasy epic comes to a close, with what is said to be the most impressive on-screen battle ever staged as part of the package.

2. The Last Samurai 12/05/03
Tom Cruise plays a Civil War hero sent to Japan to train rifle soldiers out to kill the samurai warriors — but ends up becoming one himself.

3. Stuck On You 12/12/03
The Farrelly brothers' follow-up to *Shallow Hal* and *Me, Myself & Irene* stars Matt Damon and Greg Kinnear as conjoined twins. Fun!

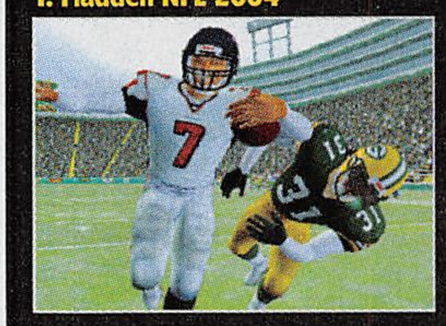
4. Paycheck 12/26/03
John Woo's latest action flick (with a sci-fi slant) sees Ben Affleck as a computer engineer who brain is partially erased after each job.

5. Peter Pan 12/26/03
Hook had us certain that there'd never be a really good live-action adaptation of the classic childrens' story, but this one actually looks like it has promise. Plenty of action and... serious themes? Wow.

NPD Funworld TRSTS SALES CHARTS

TOP 10 PS2 GAMES FOR AUGUST

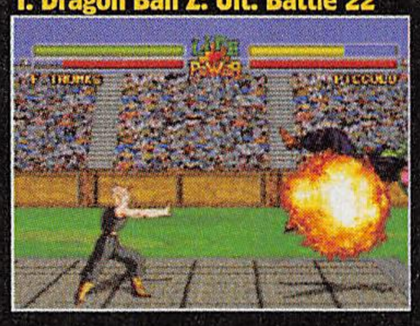
1. Madden NFL 2004



2. Silent Hill III
3. NCAA Football 2004
4. Soul Calibur II
5. Grand Theft Auto III
6. Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
7. Splashdown: Rides Gone Wild
8. Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution
9. Chaos Legion
10. Midnight Club II

TOP 10 PS1 GAMES FOR AUGUST

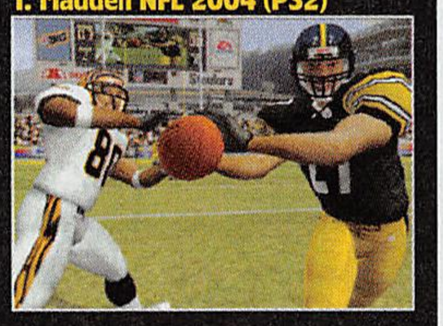
1. Dragon Ball Z: Ult. Battle 22



2. Beyblade
3. Namco Museum Vol. 3
4. Bratz
5. Shrek: Treasure Hunt
6. Madden NFL 2004
7. Spongebob Supersponge
8. Motocross Mania 2
9. Mortal Kombat Trilogy
10. Pac-Man World

OVERALL TOP 10 FOR AUGUST

1. Madden NFL 2004 (PS2)



2. Madden NFL 2004 (Xbox)
3. Soul Calibur II (GCN)
4. Soul Calibur II (Xbox)
5. Silent Hill III (PS2)
6. NCAA Football 2004 (PS2)
7. Soul Calibur II (PS2)
8. Ghost Recon: IT (Xbox)
9. Star Wars: KOTOR (Xbox)
10. Grand Theft Auto III (PS2)

Readers' Most Wanted

1 METAL GEAR SOLID 3
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Konami KCEJ
Release Date: TBA 2004
Snake's still too busy eating tree frogs to give us a release date *(sigh)*.
#1 Last Month

2 FINAL FANTASY X-2
Publisher: Square Enix
Developer: Square Enix
Release Date: December
Come on, admit that import version you bought is impossible.
#2 Last Month

3 KINGDOM HEARTS 2 NEW
Publisher: Square Enix
Dev: Square Enix
Release Date: TBA 2004
The second installment in this odd corporate marriage.
New This Month

4 GRAN TURISMO 4
Pub: Sony CEA Dev: Polyphony Digital
Release Date: January 2004
Because we can't E-brake slide Randy's car.
#3 Last Month

5 FINAL FANTASY XI
Pub: Square Enix Developer: Square Enix
Release Date: Spring 2004
Making up for *Mystic Quest* many times over.
#4 Last Month

6 LOTR: THE RETURN OF THE KING NEW
Publisher: EA Developer: EA
Release Date: December
Arriving exactly when it means to.
New This Month

7 TRUE CRIMES: STREETS OF L.A. NEW
Publisher: Activision Developer: Luxoflux
Release Date: November
Straight gangsta' goin' after *GTA's* hood.
New This Month

8 TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND NEW
Pub: Activision Developer: Neversoft
Release Date: February
More moves, more characters, less Tony.
New This Month!

9 RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK NEW
Publisher: Capcom Developer: Capcom
Release Date: TBA 2004
Oh, that sneaky Umbrella Corp...
New This Month!

10 DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI 2
Publisher: Atarri Developer: Dimps
Release Date: December
Gotta catch em'... er... fight 'em all!
#6 Last Month

CAST YOUR VOTE!
Visit www.psmonline.com and pick your most wanted game from our list of the hottest upcoming releases. We'll tally the results, and print 'em here each issue!

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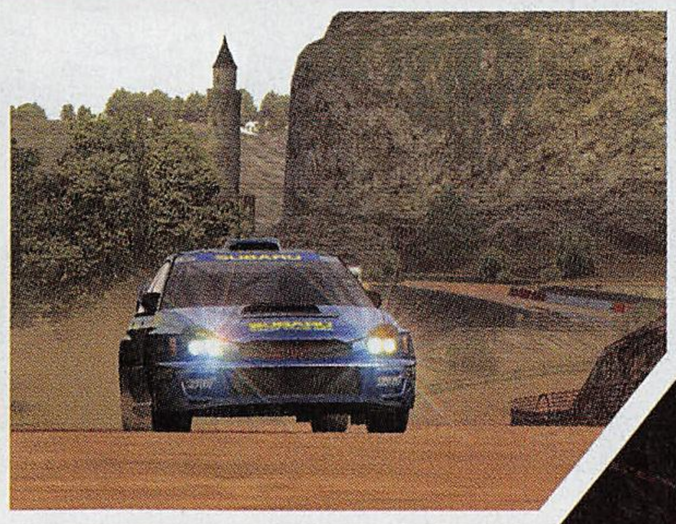

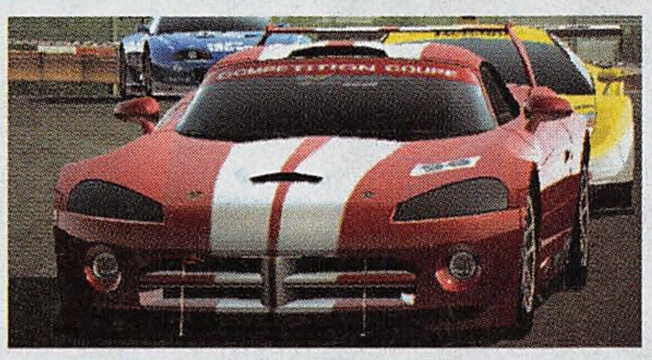

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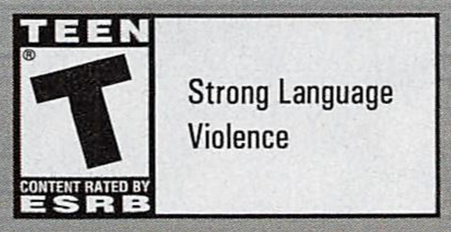
CLEANER

TOASTER



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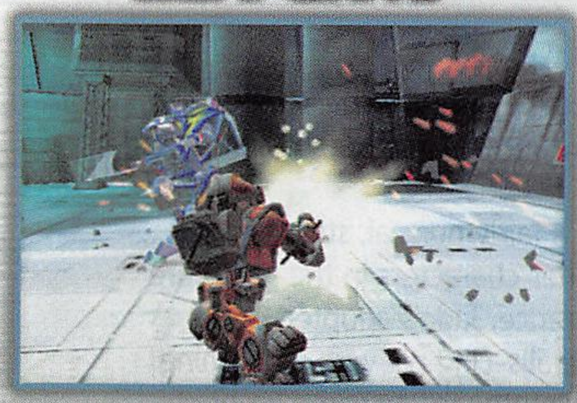
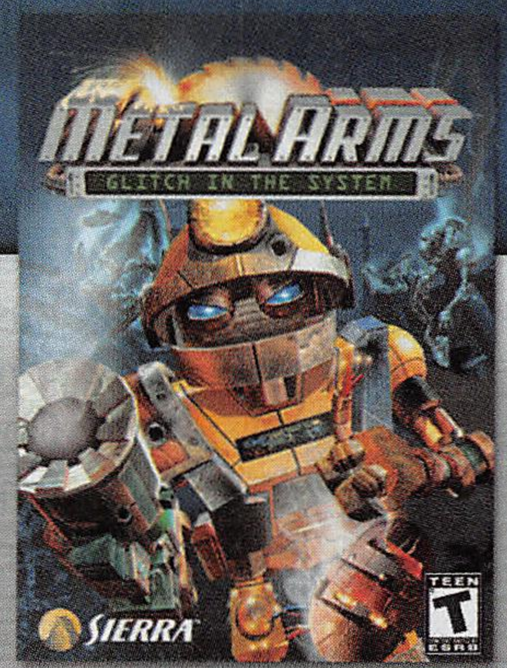


HIJACKING

MULTIPLAYER



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SCORING

10 **CLASSIC** — A rare gem; Our highest recommendation
9 **OUTSTANDING** — One of the better games this year
8 **VERY GOOD** — You can't go wrong
7 **GOOD** — A solid game
6 **OKAY** — Kind of fun, but no big deal
5 **SO-SO** — You've got to love the subject matter
4 **LACKING** — Big flaws really hurt this game
3 **BAD** — Not fun at all
2 **AWFUL** — This game is an insult
1 **WHY?** — Why would anyone do this to us?

We take our reviews very seriously. We spend hours upon hours playtesting each title so that we can give you the absolute best information to help you buy.

Games that score an 8, 9 or 10 earn a Bronze, Silver or Gold **PSM Must-Buy Award.** We don't hand these beauties out easily, so if you see one on a review, a game box or advertising, you'll want to be sure to check that game out.

Finally, when looking up past scores, keep in mind that older games usually wouldn't fare as well if they were reviewed today.

SmackDown! Here Comes the Correction

Rats! In last month's exclusive *SmackDown! Here Comes the Pain* review, we mistakenly left the Online Compatible badge on our layout template. In fact, we owe both you readers and THQ an apology because the game isn't online. Sorry about that. What do you think, THQ? Could you maybe add that feature in to next year's version so we look like prophets instead of goofballs?

GAME INFO | PUB UBISOFT | DEV UBISOFT | TYPE ADVENTURE | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB RATING TEEN

Bewitchingly artistic and full of the unexpected, *Beyond Good & Evil* is not to be missed.

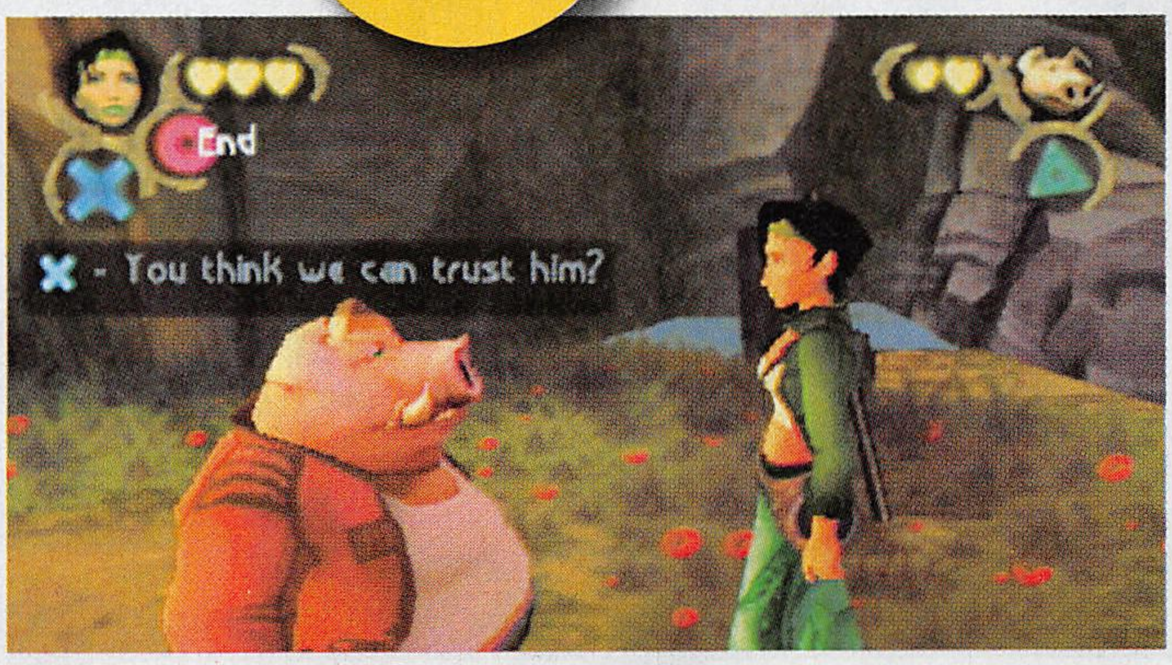
BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

Rayman's originator creates an enchanting new fantasy land

PSM GAME OF THE MONTH

PSM MUST-BUY SILVER

The latest offering from *Rayman* creator Michel Ansel, *Beyond Good & Evil* is a wide-ranging action adventure that chronicles the story of Jade, a young woman who begins the game simply trying to survive as wave after wave of mysterious aliens invade her planet. But things are not all that they seem: Jade has learned that her planet's own defense forces are suspected of aiding the enemy. Not knowing what to believe, Jade sets out to learn the truth for herself, and maybe save the world along the way.

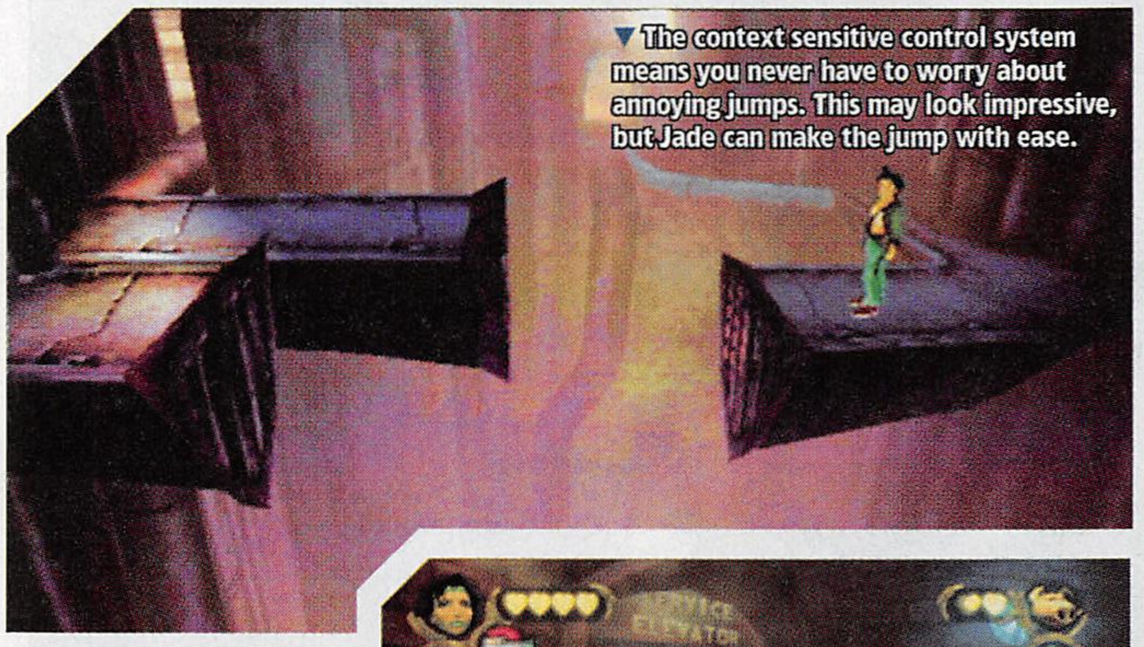


▲ Your trustworthy partners can offer advice about what to do next — and where to find truffles.

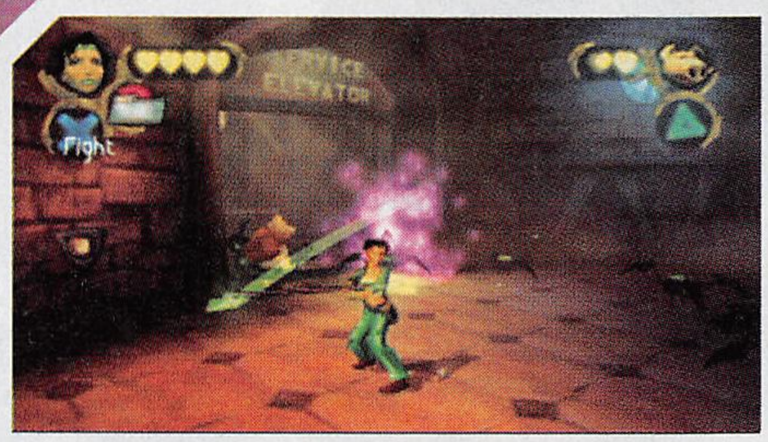
And what a world it is! Whether in videogames or movies, French directors seem to have an uncanny knack for making the surreal seem normal and the odd appear perfectly natural. Such is Hillys, Jade's homeworld. Tattooed pigs are inventors, hovercraft and exotic wildlife are common, and female photojournalists look like Pat Benatar dressed in Army Surplus togs. Yet, it all fits, and it's gorgeous.

Although Jade herself is a fairly normal, strong-willed and capable woman, the other characters in the game are anything but typical. For instance, Jade's adopted uncle and wingman Pey'j is an overalls-clad pig with a booming southern drawl and (ahem) "methane" powered jet boots. Another companion is Double-H, sort of futuristic Arthurian knight, and a third character is a sassy, holographic, AI

<< THE OUTDOOR SECTIONS LOOK AS IMPRESSIVE AS ANYTHING ELSE WE'VE SEEN ON THE PS2 >>



▼ The context sensitive control system means you never have to worry about annoying jumps. This may look impressive, but Jade can make the jump with ease.



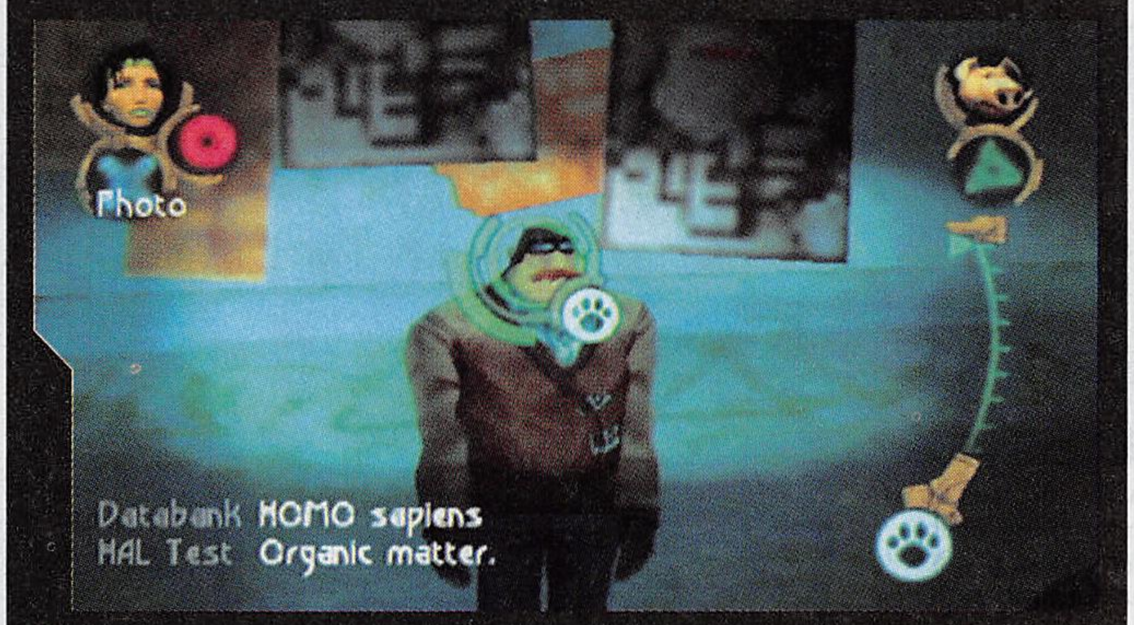
▶ Mechanical spiders? Bah! They're no match for a pig with a southern drawl and a girl with a glowy stick.

▼ Everyone should have a holographic buddy, and the sassier, the better.

▲ Yes, this is a real-time, in-game shot. How Jade can still be pretty in green lipstick and an '80s rock headband is beyond us.

Snap Happy

Freeing your people from alien invaders may be the primary goal in *Beyond Good & Evil,* but a heroine still has to pay the power bill. You will earn most of your funds by shooting with a camera instead of a gun. Key items are given to you after reaching a certain number of photos, so plan on making like a *Pokèmon* addict and go catch 'em all!



▲ When taking pictures, don't forget that homo sapiens is a species, too. Strike a pose, Mr. Moustache!

PSM FINAL SCORE 9

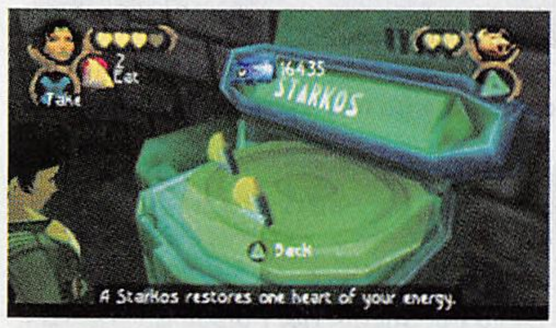
OUTSTANDING
An excellent mix of atmosphere, visual design and accessible gameplay, *Beyond Good & Evil* is an experience that is not to be missed.

program. Hillys itself is nearly as interesting as its inhabitants, showcasing an intriguing mix of technology and magic, and packed with architectural designs that are difficult to tie to any single era. Interior areas of the game can get repetitive, but the outdoor sections look as impressive as anything else we've seen on the PS2.

Jade embarks upon many tasks over the course of the game, from fighting and puzzle solving to piloting attack craft. Despite this complexity, *Beyond Good & Evil* is designed to be easily accessible. Many of Jade's actions, such as jumping and climbing, are context sensitive — you can only perform them when it is necessary to advance. It might be anathema to the hardcore, but it works well.

Combat is kept simple, with most of the player's actions being tied to a single button. Jade can also issue simple commands to her companion, allowing for coordinated attacks. Just because combat is kept simple though, doesn't mean it looks dull. Like every other element of *Beyond Good & Evil,* combat is loaded with cinematic flair.

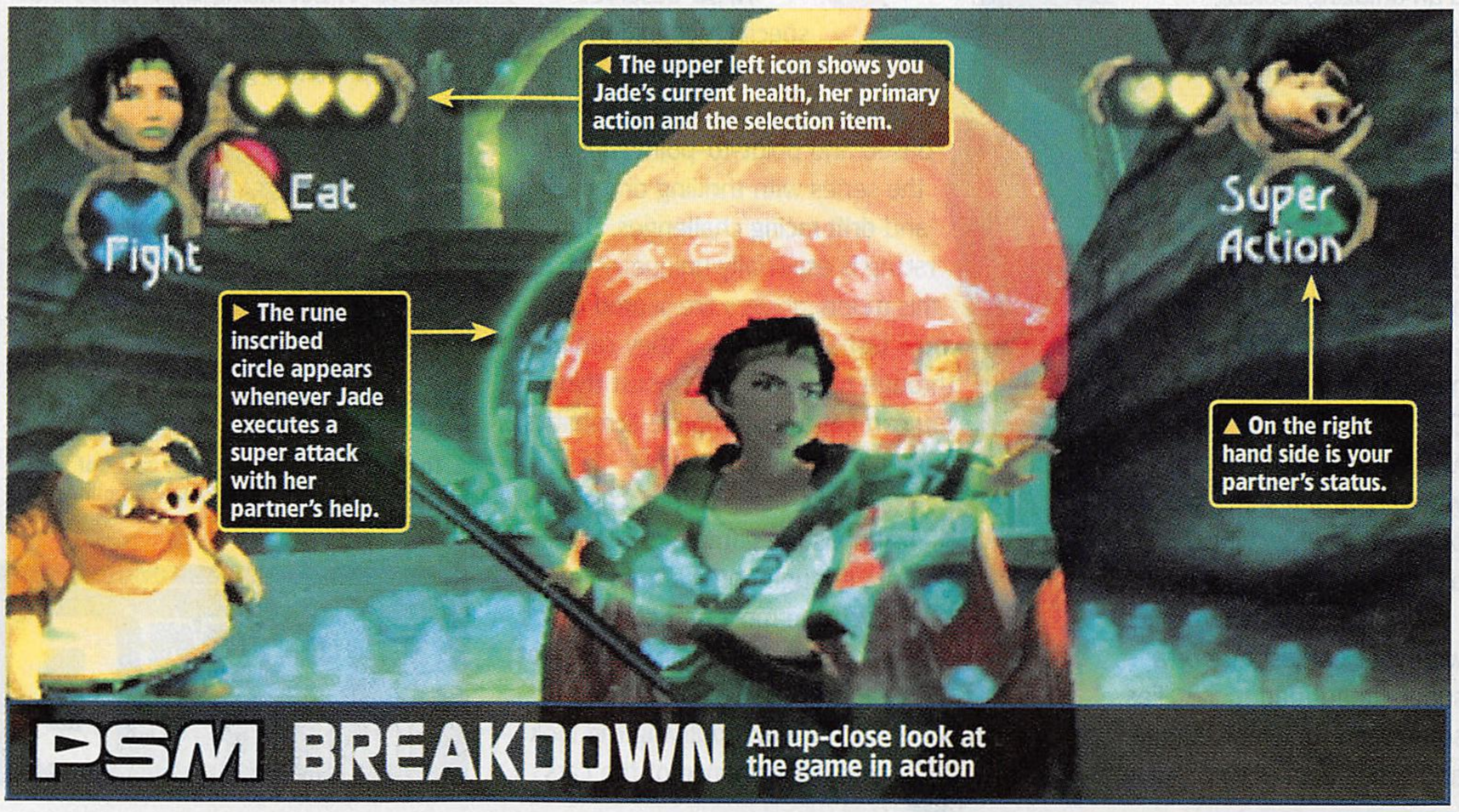
Ultimately, *Beyond Good & Evil* is greater than the sum of its parts. Most every component of the game is standard fare, but UbiSoft has combined them here in a way that is both intriguing and entertaining without feeling like a rehash of old elements. For most games, the satisfaction comes when you beat the final boss. With *Beyond Good & Evil,* it isn't just about the destination, because the ride it takes you on is such a fascinating experience. **ADAM PAVLACKA**



▲ A Starkos vending machine ... they're not Moon Pies and Jolt, but they'll keep you alive.

HOW IT STACKS UP

Jak II	10
Ratchet & Clank: Going Command	10
Beyond Good & Evil	9
Metal Arms: Glitch In The System	8
Prince Of Persia	8



PSM BREAKDOWN An up-close look at the game in action

▲ *NFSU's* online mode supports both head-to-head and four-player races in all of the game's modes.

▲ The wet road effect in this game should win an award — it's extremely realistic.

◀ The visual effects, especially the speed blur, are amazing. It's weird, then, that the sense of speed isn't better.

GAME INFO | PUB EA | DEV EA BLACK BOX | TYPE RACING | MAX PLAYERS FOUR | ESRB TEEN

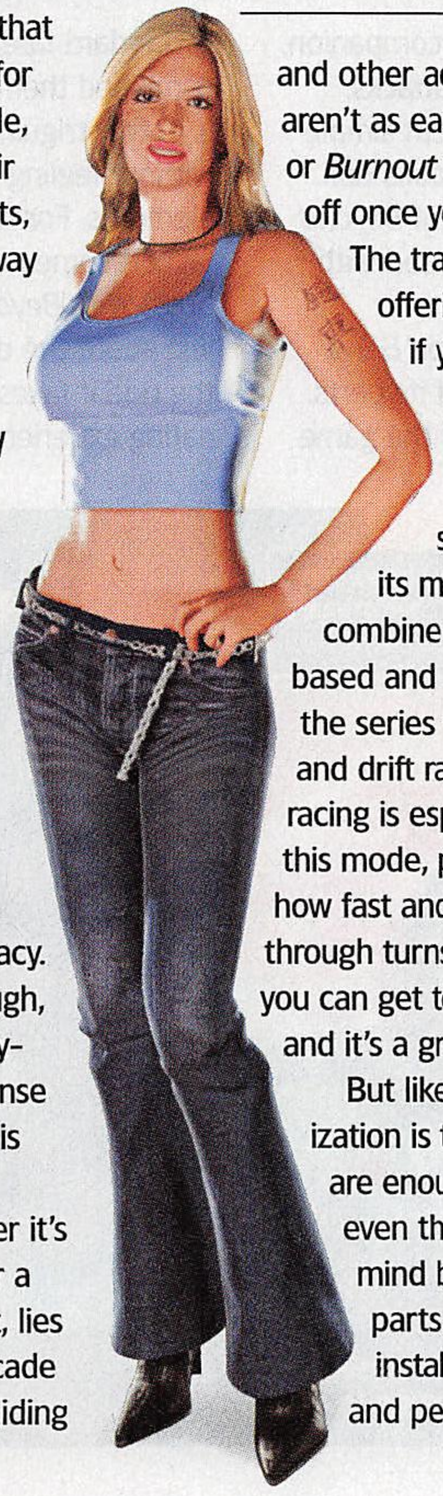
PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

ONLINE COMPATIBLE

NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

The ultimate fix for street racing fans?

It's fast and furious, but the real key to EA's latest arcade-style racing game lies in the incredible amount of customization would-be street racers have over the appearance and performance of their cars. More than anything, this is a game that literally rewards players for expressing their own style, whether it's through their car's paint job, body parts, or vinyl designs, to the way they race.



Compared to its only real rival, *Midnight Club II, NFS Underground* is an amazing looking game — the city, cars, and visuals effects are top-notch. There are even some effects we've never seen done better; wet patches on the road look nearly photo-realistic, and the speed blurring effect is mesmerizing in its accuracy. Despite the effects, though, *NFSU* doesn't convey anywhere near the same sense of speed as *MCII,* which is a shame.

Car handling, whether it's with your earliest ride or a super-tuned road rocket, lies somewhere between arcade and simulation. Power sliding and other advanced techniques aren't as easily mastered as in *MCII* or *Burnout 2,* but are easy to pull off once you've got them down. The tracks are well designed, offering ample shortcuts, but if you're looking for multi-national action you're out of luck.

NFSU deserves special recognition for its mix of race modes, which combine the traditional lap-based and point-to-point runs of the series with thrilling drag racing and drift racing challenges. Drift racing is especially unique — in this mode, players are scored on how fast and sideways they can go through turns. It's the closest thing you can get to automotive acrobatics, and it's a great challenge.

But like I said before, customization is the game's key. There are enough options to make even the most hardcore tuner's mind boggle. Real aftermarket parts can be earned and installed, modifying the look and performance of the cars dramatically. Not only that, they also increase your reputation rating, which gradually increases your style point modifier. So it's not just eye candy — though you can show your ride off online in head-to-head or four-player match-up (sadly without voice headset support).

Added up, *NFSU*'s components make for street racing experience that plays well, looks amazing, and will make gear-heads go gaga. It still trails behind *NFS: Hot Pursuit 2* in terms of overall fun, but it's nevertheless a worthy addition to the *Need For Speed* family. **RANDY NELSON**

▲ Every visual detail of the cars can be upgraded with real aftermarket parts.

▲ The races all take in various areas of the same city, so there's not a huge amount of visual variety.

HOW IT STACKS UP

Midnight Club II	10
Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2	9
Burnout 2	9
Need For Speed Underground	8
Auto Modellista	4

PSM FINAL SCORE 8

VERY GOOD

Good control, good courses, *great* customization options. This game is a tuner's dream come true, and one of PS2's better racers overall.

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MIDWAY

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Violence

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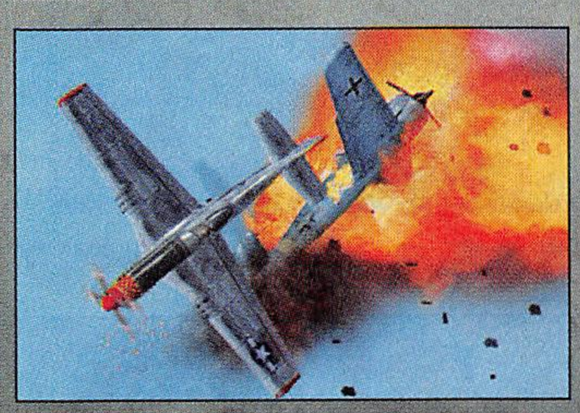
Achtung!

Hauptmann – Ihr Flugzeug brennt*



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

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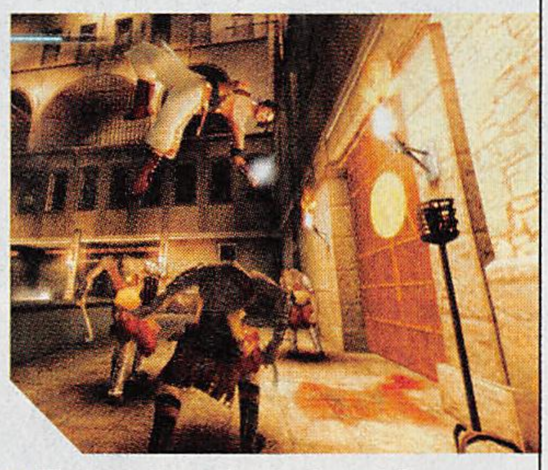
GAME INFO | PUB UBISOFT | DEV UBISOFT | TYPE ADVENTURE | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB TEEN

▲ This is one gorgeous game: everything has a smooth, almost dream-like look to it.



▲ The game's combat looks and flows almost like a choreographed Hollywood fight scene. It's really amazing.

▲ Finishing moves not only look great, but they also replenish the prince's time-controlling abilities.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

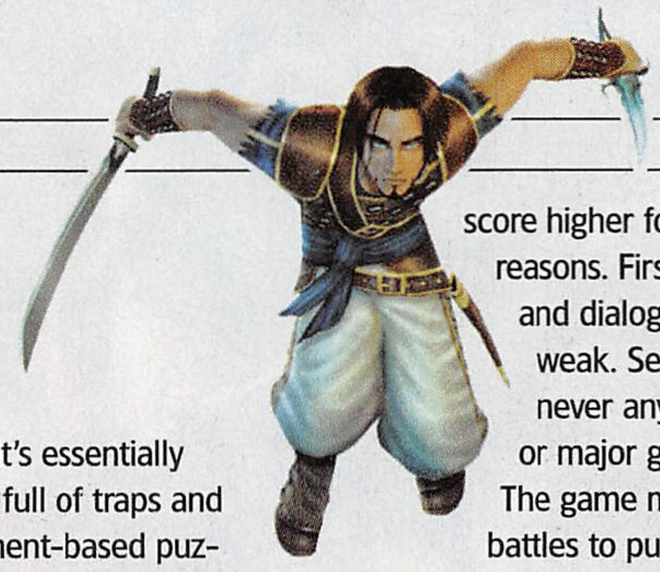
An adventure Lara Croft could only dream of...

The gaming gods have officially blessed PS2 owners with the gift of some truly great retro-game revivals, *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* being the latest of the bunch. It takes the gameplay of the classic 1980s-era computer game, melds it with some of the best graphics yet on PS2, and the result is a memorable adventure with plenty of thrilling fights, clever puzzles, and lots of style.

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

First things first: this game looks amazing. The architecture, lighting, animation, and effects are incredibly lifelike, but also very stylized — like an animated film in 3D. The amount of polish present in the game's presentation is at the very top of the scale. Thankfully, when you're done being mesmerized by its prettiness, the game comes through with solid gameplay to back up its good looks.

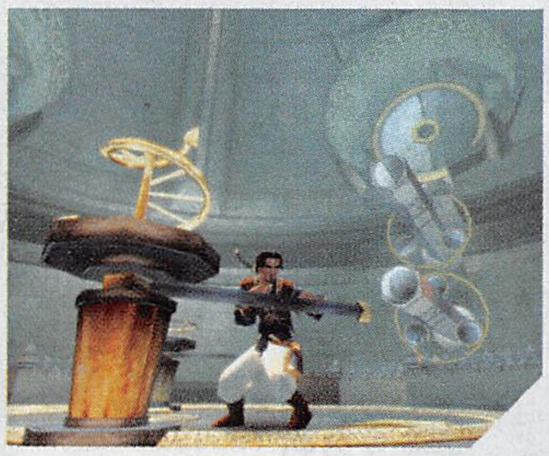
The prince's acrobatic abilities make Lara Croft look like an amateur, but — more importantly — are really fun to pull off. Whether running up or along walls, swinging from poles, or evading traps, you really feel connected with the character. Of course, all the cool moves in the world mean nothing without a great game world to take advantage of them — and the sultan's palace in *POP: TSOT* is exactly that. It's essentially one big puzzle, full of traps and clever environment-based puzzles to outwit and overcome. These puzzles aren't actually all that difficult to unravel, but the process is definitely entertaining.



So is the combat, which introduces even more cool moves, like vaulting off enemies, springing off walls, and manipulating time itself in order to freeze enemies, rewind the action, and more. Fighting is definitely the most challenging portion of the game — there are points when the enemies just keep coming, and coming, and coming... and they're all super-tough.

For all its great ideas and mouth-watering graphics, *POP: TSOT* didn't score higher for a couple of reasons. First of all, the story and dialog are... well... weak. Secondly, there are never any real high points or major gameplay twists. The game moves from battles to puzzles and back, and somewhere along the line it stops surprising you.

Nevertheless, it's a very good game overall, with loads of style and challenge. You'll finish it feeling like you've lived it — but not like you've been told a great story. **RANDY NELSON**



▲ Apart from the occasional hostile enemy encounter, the palace, while lovely, can seem somewhat empty and lifeless.

▲ The prince has a wide array of acrobatic moves at his disposal — useful for getting around and solving puzzles.

HOW IT STACKS UP

Beyond Good & Evil	9
Prince Of Persia: TSOT	8
Indiana Jones: ATET	8
RTX Red Rock	5
Tomb Raider: TAOD	5

PSM FINAL SCORE 8

VERY GOOD

One of the best-looking, best-playing adventure games on PS2, *POP: TSOT* could have been even better had more attention been given to its plot.

"ENVIRONMENTS AS INTERACTIVE AS A LEVEL OF TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER" - PLAYBOY

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MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood
Intense Violence
Mature Sexual Themes
Strong Language

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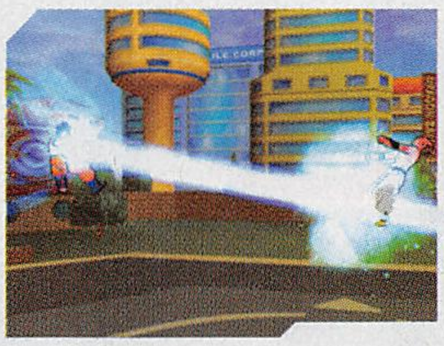
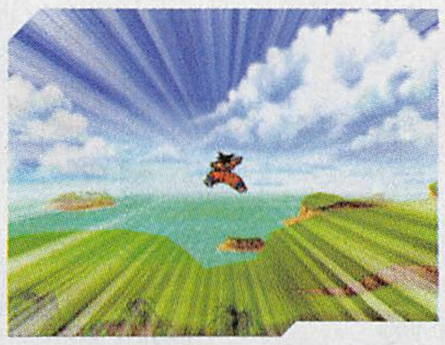


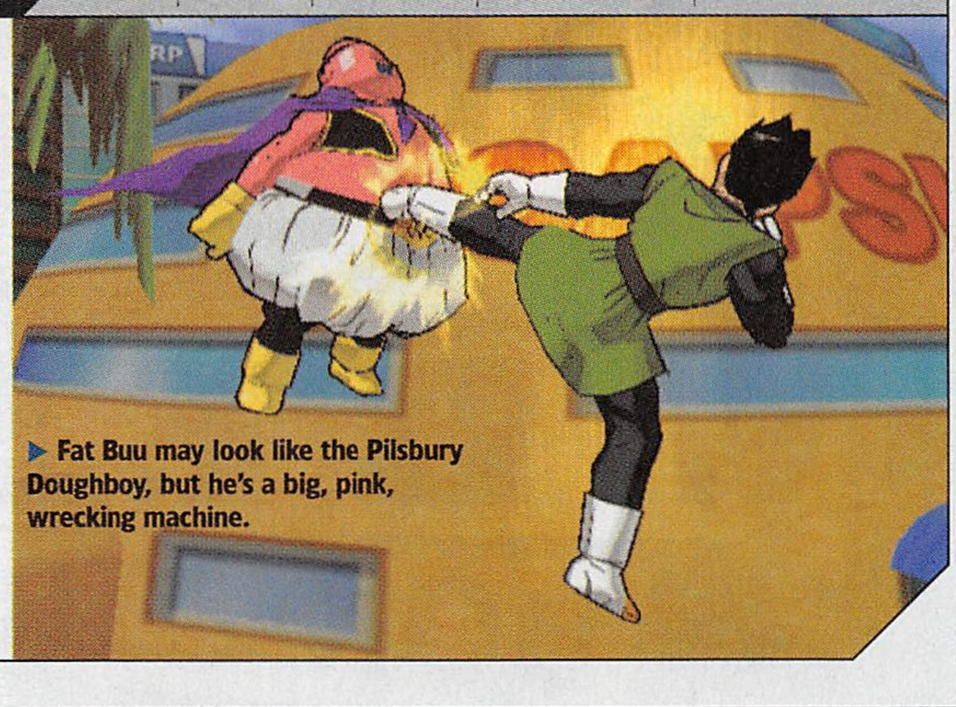
▲ As in the anime and comic, physical combat is often combined with some serious energy blasts.



▲ Ouch! If Goku ever lands, it's going to leave a nasty mark.

▲ The graphics have been given quite an overhaul, and look quite nice in motion.

GAME INFO | PUB ATARI | DEV DIMPS | TYPE FIGHTING | MAX PLAYERS EIGHT | ESRB RATING TEEN



▶ Fat Buu may look like the Pilsbury Doughboy, but he's a big, pink, wrecking machine.

DRAGON BALL Z: BUDOKAI 2

The ultimate anime license returns

Picking up from where the first fun-but-flawed game left off and progressing through to the Kid Buu arc of the anime series, *Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2* comes bearing some nice upgrades from its predecessor. Right off the bat, players will notice that the new shading, dubbed "Toriyama-shading", is 'heavier' in order to better emulate artist Akira Toriyama's style.

Mechanically, *Budokai 2* is better in small ways all around, most notably the counter scheme, which gives those on the receiving end of a combo or special more of a fighting chance. The 'story' mode has been ditched and replaced with Dragon World mode, which takes board game-style form and sends players — as Goku and some player-selected partners — hither and yon across multiple maps in search of Dragon Balls. Or course, you'll encounter lots fighting along the way. Additional modes include duel, Training, eight-player World Tournament competitions, plus mini-games. *DBZ: B2* features numerous new faces as well: Kid Buu, Super Buu, Videl, Goten and Trunks, and Fusion characters.

Atari makes no bones about the fact that *Dragon Ball Z: Budokai 2* is designed to appeal to *DBZ* fans first and fighting game fans second, so this still isn't as deep, responsive, or polished as a *Soul Calibur* or *Virtua Fighter*. Still, it's a major improvement over the last game, and an absolute must-buy for the *DBZ* hardcore.

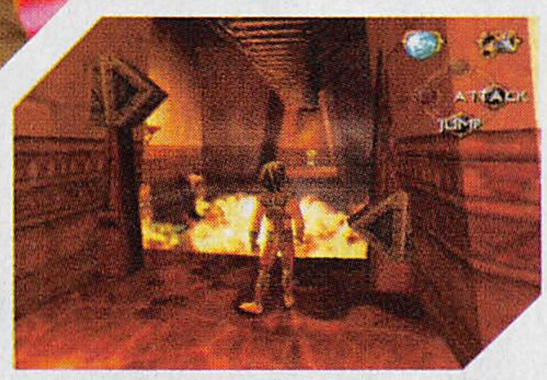
CHRIS HUDAK/ERIC BRATCHER

PSM FINAL SCORE **7**

GOOD

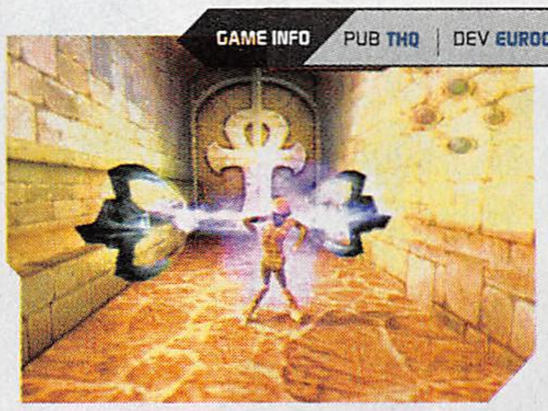
Much of the original game's roughness has been smoothed out, though *DBZ* faithful will still like it more than fighting game fans.

▼ While Sphinx may get lead billing, the real joy of this game is playing as the mummy.



▲ Sphinx does most of the sword-slinging dirty work.

GAME INFO | PUB THQ | DEV EUROCOM | TYPE ACTION | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB TEEN



▲ Tut is smashed flat, electrified, set aflame... it's a tough day at the office.

▲ The special effects tend to be bright and colorful, but never tiring.

SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY

Platform fans get a good one!

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

***Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy* could almost be called *Sphinx and the Legend of Zelda*, given how many gameplay** mechanics it borrows. The story is set around two main characters: Sphinx, a strangely feline, fairly generic action hero, and Tutankhamen, the famous boy pharaoh and puzzle-solving comic relief.

The game starts off slowly, but really takes off once Tut is mummified (which happens quite early). Having already died, Tut is no longer subject to mortality, a rather pesky problem that most adventure heroes face. Thus, because Tut can't die, his levels are all about coming up with creative ways to cause him pain while simultaneously solving puzzles. You can set him ablaze to light torches, electrocute him to activate ancient Egyptian devices, crush him between massive blocks so that he's flat as a pancake and can slip through prison bars, and even throw him into a dicing machine for three mummies on the go.

Sphinx could really use an automatic save game feature, especially because the distribution and strength of health power-ups is also unbalanced: the cat-beast is almost always either at full strength while exploring or on the brink of death during combat.

Players looking for an adventure should try this title. Don't judge *Sphinx* before Tutankhamen is transformed into a mummy, however, as the game simply doesn't catch fire until then. DOUG TRUEMAN

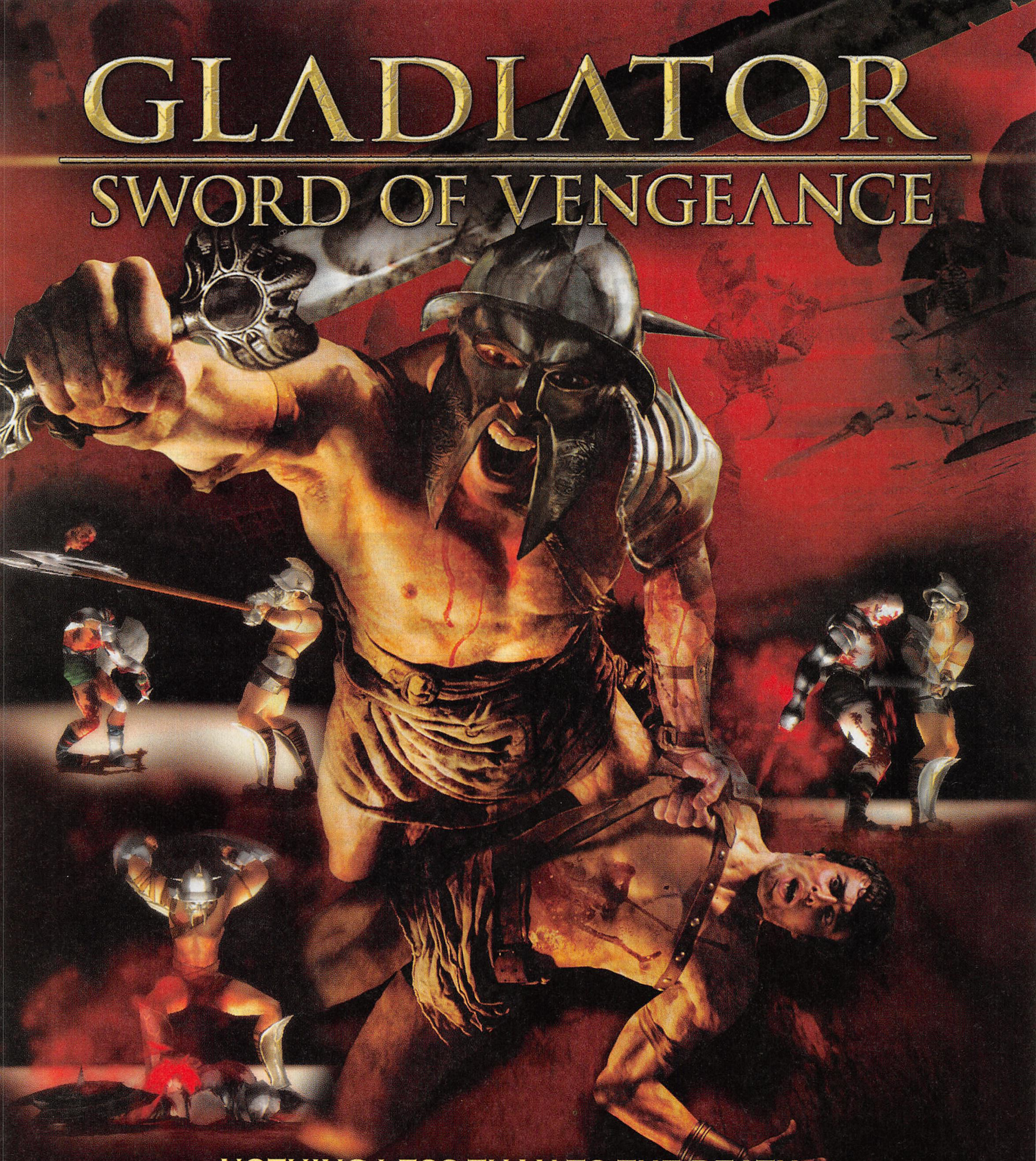
PSM FINAL SCORE **8**

VERY GOOD

It's a very enjoyable adventure title that's marred by the odd misstep and the occasional lack of direction. We have high hopes for the sequel.

GLADIATOR

SWORD OF VENGEANCE



NOTHING LESS THAN TO THE DEATH

IN THE ARENA, WARRIORS WILL CLASH. BLOOD WILL BE SPILLED. CHAMPIONS WILL BE MADE.
IN AN ANCIENT EMPIRE, EVIL WILL ALTER THE STRANDS OF FATE, AND THE GODS WILL SEEK VENGEANCE.
NOT EVEN DEATH CAN STOP A TRUE HERO. FEATURING NEW AND EXCLUSIVE DEATH MOVES. THE END IS SEVERE.

WWW.ACCLAIM.COM/GLADIATOR

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence

XBOX

PlayStation.2

PC CD ROM

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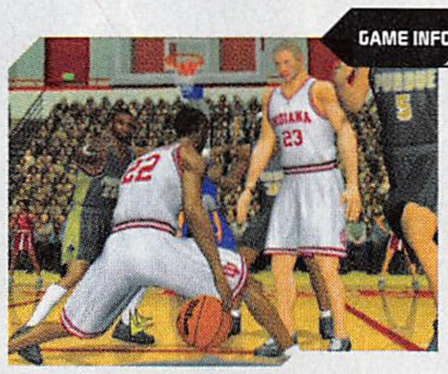
▲ *ESPN College Hoops* has mascots, too, but you've got to earn them, just like the colleges do...

▲ Run the plays and pass the ball. *College Hoops* rewards those who know the fundamentals.



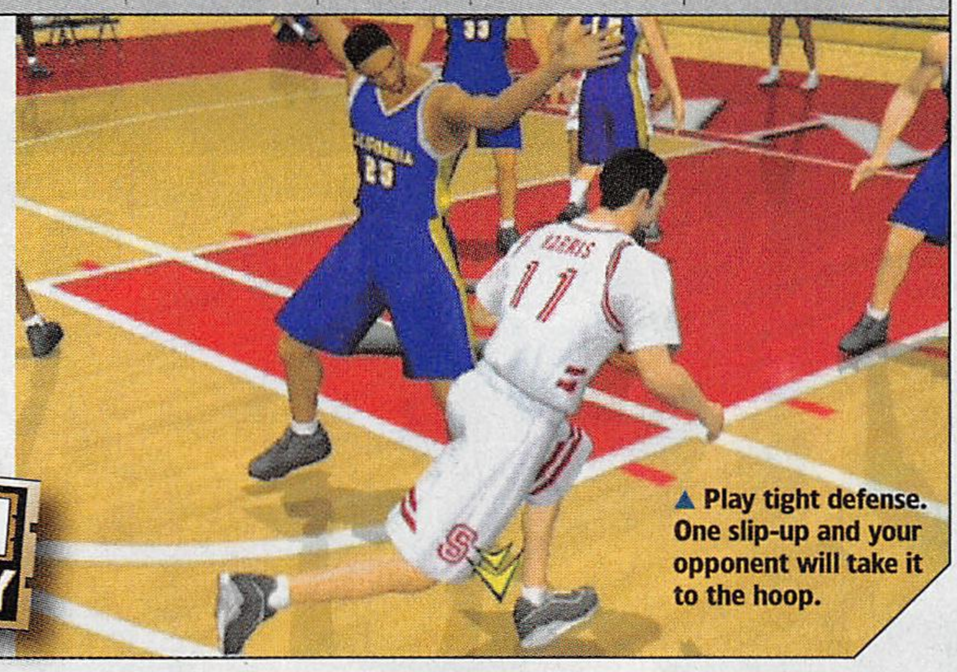
▲ Using the analog stick crossovers, you can get past your defender, but don't expect a dunkfest.

GAME INFO | PUB SEGA | DEV KUSH GAMES | TYPE SPORTS | MAX PLAYERS FOUR | ESRB RATING EVERYONE

ESPN COLLEGE HOOPS

It takes depth to win in the NCAA

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE



▲ Play tight defense. One slip-up and your opponent will take it to the hoop.

ESPN College Hoops may not beat *March Madness 2004*, but you can't fault Sega for lack of effort — it stuffed a lot of improvements into this game. *Hoops* incorporates many of the control upgrades we loved in *ESPN Basketball,* including Freestyle-like analog moves that are effective without turning every game into a dunkfest.

ONLINE COMPATIBLE

Along with Sega's thinking man's gameplay and great online action, *Hoops* is also packed with features. Among them are a challenging dunk contest and a Legacy mode that's as complex as any you'll play. Although its layout and pacing could use a lot of work (like checklists and linear progression), the Legacy mode is a hoops nerd's dream. We also enjoyed the Campus Store where we could "buy" unlockables like fantasy courts, mascot teams, and classic squads.

Unfortunately, all these goodies are hitched to last year's graphics. Compared to the improvements Sega made this year in *ESPN Basketball,* the jerky animations and bland player models are a little disappointing. The sound, however, is great as always.

In a typical year, *ESPN College Hoops* would be tough to beat, but it's facing a *March Madness,* which is playing at the peak of its performance. Perhaps Sega needs to start letting this series use its most current *NBA* graphics engine so this franchise can finally bring its 'A' game.

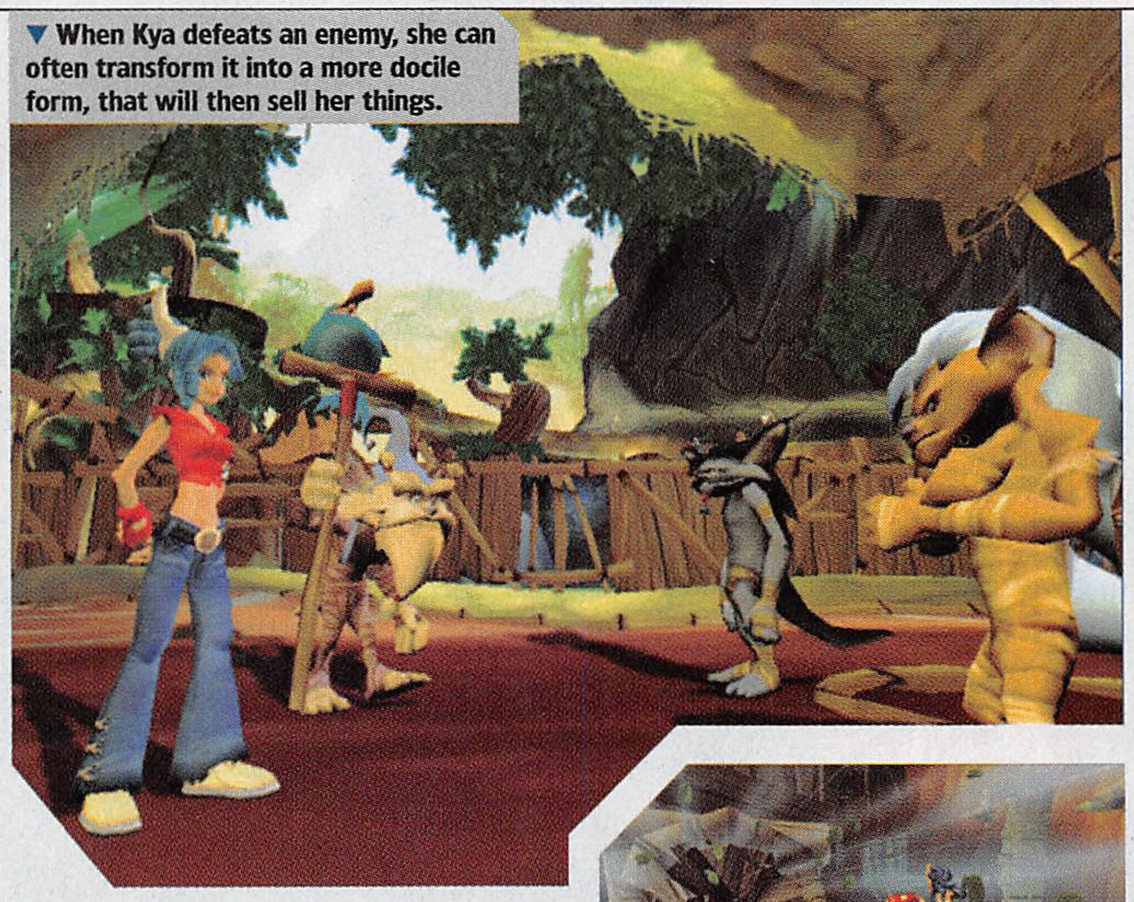
JOHN MARK KUSEY

PSM FINAL SCORE **8**

VERY GOOD

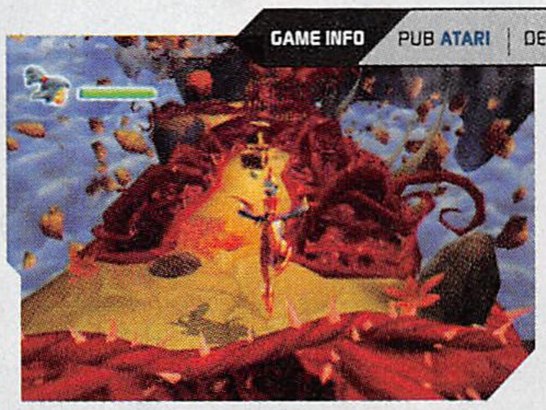
Though not quite as polished or playable as *March Madness 2004, ESPN College Hoops* is still an enjoyable basketball game, especially for hardcore basketball fans.

▼ When Kya defeats an enemy, she can often transform it into a more docile form, that will then sell her things.



▲ There's some interesting use of wind current to travel from place to place.

GAME INFO | PUB ATARI | DEV EDEN | TYPE ACTION | MAX PLAYERS TWO | ESRB TEEN



▲ The Jambuk is like a cross between Dino and a Tauntaun, only less smelly.

▲ There's also a lot of hoverboarding in the game, though it's not always easy.

KYA: DARK LINEAGE

PSM MUST-BUY SILVER

Platform fans get a good one!

***Kya: Dark Lineage* is a story about a young girl trapped in a mystical world. In no particular order, Kya jumps, climbs,** sneaks, rolls, snowboards, skydives, throws switches, collects artifacts and monsters, plays soccer with bombs, hangs from ceilings, kicks off walls, throws a boomerang and rides animals. When she takes a break to fight evil, she has more kicking techniques than the entire cast of *Final Fight.*

Simply put, *Dark Lineage* is a brilliant title. The visuals are on par with *Rayman 3,* the control almost as tight as *Mario*, and the quests and puzzles both epic and innovative. One stellar sequence has Kya riding a Tauntaun-like creature while chasing a train. Players must dodge falling rocks while riding alongside the train, hit a switch with the boomerang to open a freight door, jump off their animal into the train, throw a switch to open the engine door, jump (and land) on their steed, then race to the engine, leap through the new opening and K.O. the driver. Not even *Mario Sunshine* has anything like this.

There are a few problems: Kya's arsenal of attacks sporadically conflicts with her inventory interface, and creatures that must be defeated have an unfortunate habit of being knocked into pits while fighting, which then do not count. The cameraman also takes the occasional leave of absence, but these flaws are easily overlooked. DOUG TRUEMAN

PSM FINAL SCORE **9**

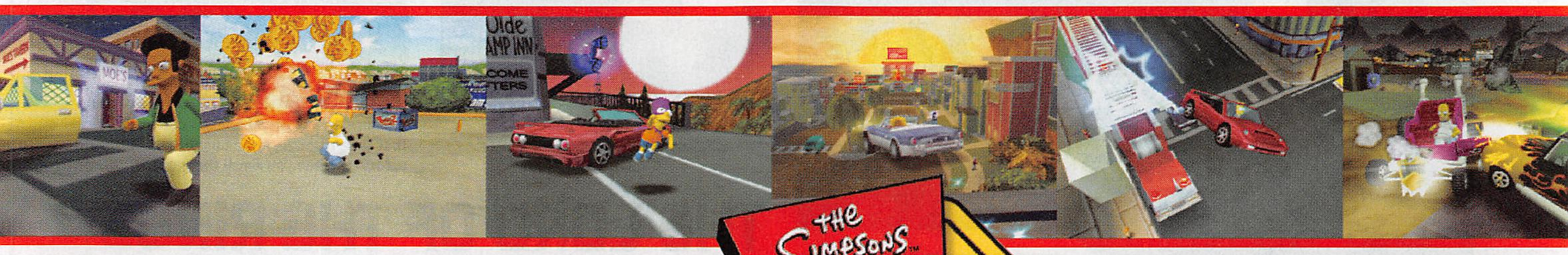
OUTSTANDING

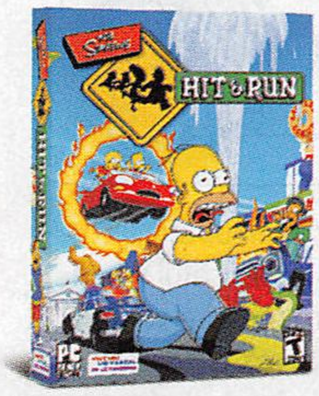
What else can we say? This is a must-have game for platform lovers or anyone with a sense of adventure.

The fate of humanity rests with Homer J. Simpson.

"Best. Simpsons Game. Ever."
- Electronic Gaming Monthly

MATT GROENING





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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Comic Mischief
Mild Language
Violence

PlayStation.2 XBOX NINTENDO GAMECUBE PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE FOX INTERACTIVE™

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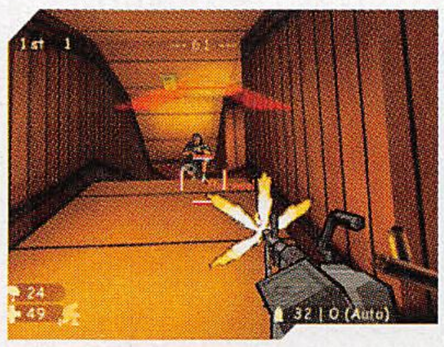
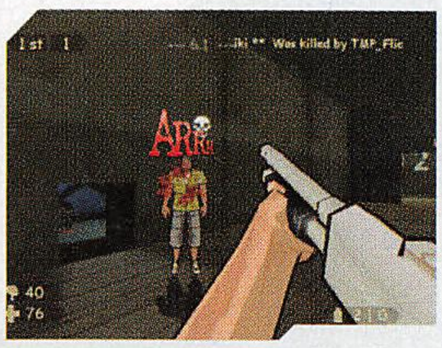
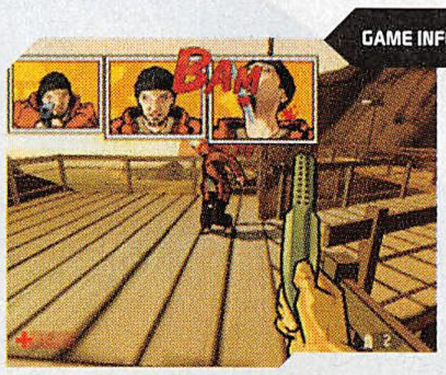


▲ Online action lacks the single-player storyline, but the action's still there.



▲ You can't see it in these shots, but the soundtrack is really great as well.

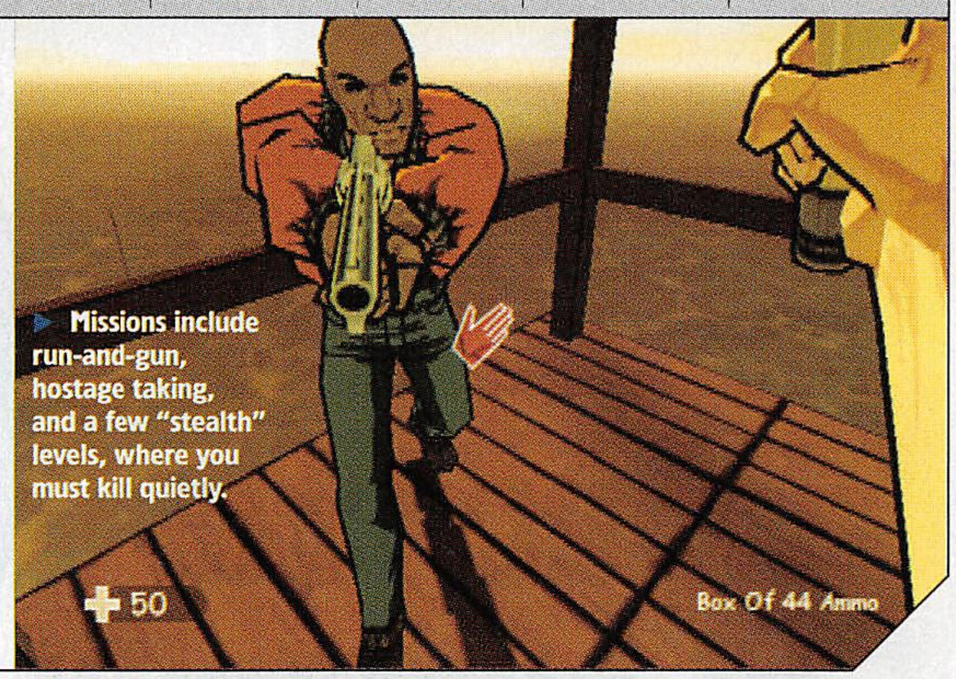


▲ Cel-shading is sometimes used to prop up lackluster gameplay, but *XIII* really uses it well.

XIII

A stylish, cel-shaded, noir thriller

GAME INFO | PUB UBISOFT | DEV UBISOFT PARIS | TYPE SHOOTER | MAX PLAYERS TWO | ESRB RATING TEEN



Based upon a comic book of the same name, *XIII* is an FPS tale of mystery, suspense and intrigue, with enough twists to keep any former *X-Files* fan happy.

It's also heavy on the visual flair. *XIII* is the first FPS to use cel-shading, and while we could do with fewer cel-shaded games overall, the technique is put to good use in *XIII*. It effectively replicates the look and feel of the original comic, even depicting certain events in comic-style story-board format. Sounds are also represented visually, making it possible to track an enemy in another room by literally watching the sound of each footstep. It's a neat gimmick.

Where *XIII* errs a bit is in the gameplay. AI isn't the best we've seen, and it's a little short. Most importantly, as stylish as both visuals and audio are, this is a game that was very obviously designed for PC controls. Precision maneuvering during gunplay is often required, but your player character turns around too slowly. The PC version plays just fine, but the controls are quite poorly tuned for the Dual Shock 2. It's a frustrating, but undeniable shortcoming, especially when compared to the silky-smooth controls and subtle auto-aiming of *MoH: Rising Sun*.

Multiplayer options are varied, with *XIII* offering both split screen and online play. *XIII* doesn't innovate much in multiplayer, but given that there simply aren't many online FPS for PS2, it's still very welcome.

ADAM PAVLACKA/ERIC BRATCHER

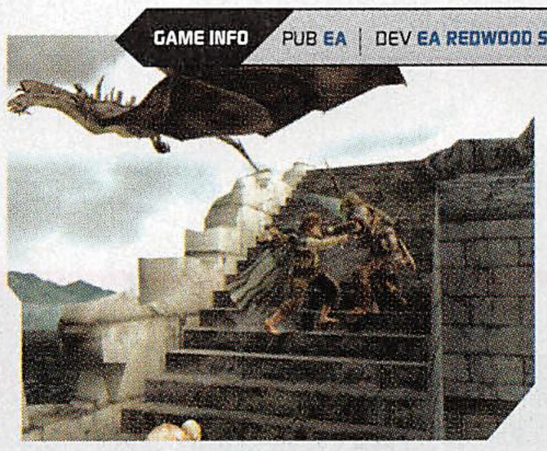
PSM FINAL SCORE 7

GOOD
A cool FPS with sky-high production values, a unique graphical approach, and an interesting plot, but imperfect controls.

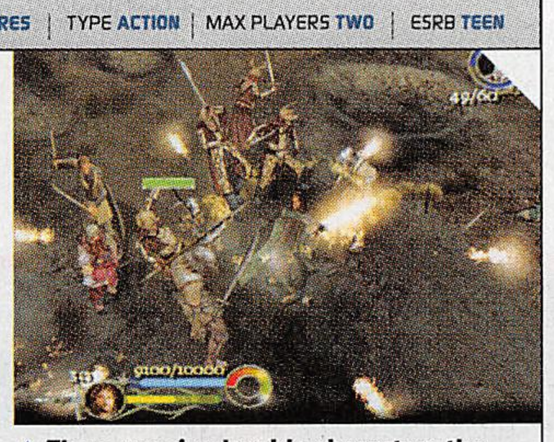
▼ You can use your experience points to buy new attacks for either yourself or the entire party.

▲ Just look at these screens — how impressive is that?

GAME INFO | PUB EA | DEV EA REDWOOD SHORES | TYPE ACTION | MAX PLAYERS TWO | ESRB TEEN



▲ If you've never read the book, be warned: this game will spoil the ending.



▲ There are six playable characters the first time through, and many others are unlocked when you finish the game.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS
THE RETURN OF THE KING

The prettiest beat-'em-up ever!

ONLINE COMPATIBLE

Wow! That's what everybody says the first time they see this game. There's a good reason: EA has raised the bar on production values, combining lavish graphics and thunderous sound to craft a stunning sensory experience.

It plays almost as impressively as it looks. EA has corrected nearly every weakness that hindered *LotR: The Two Towers*. You want two-player co-op? Done. You can even do it online. You need more characters? They've added Frodo, Sam, Gandalf, and more. There are several more missions than before, and the interactive nature of the battlefields — you can grab and throw flaming spears, fire giant ballista, etc — is very welcome.

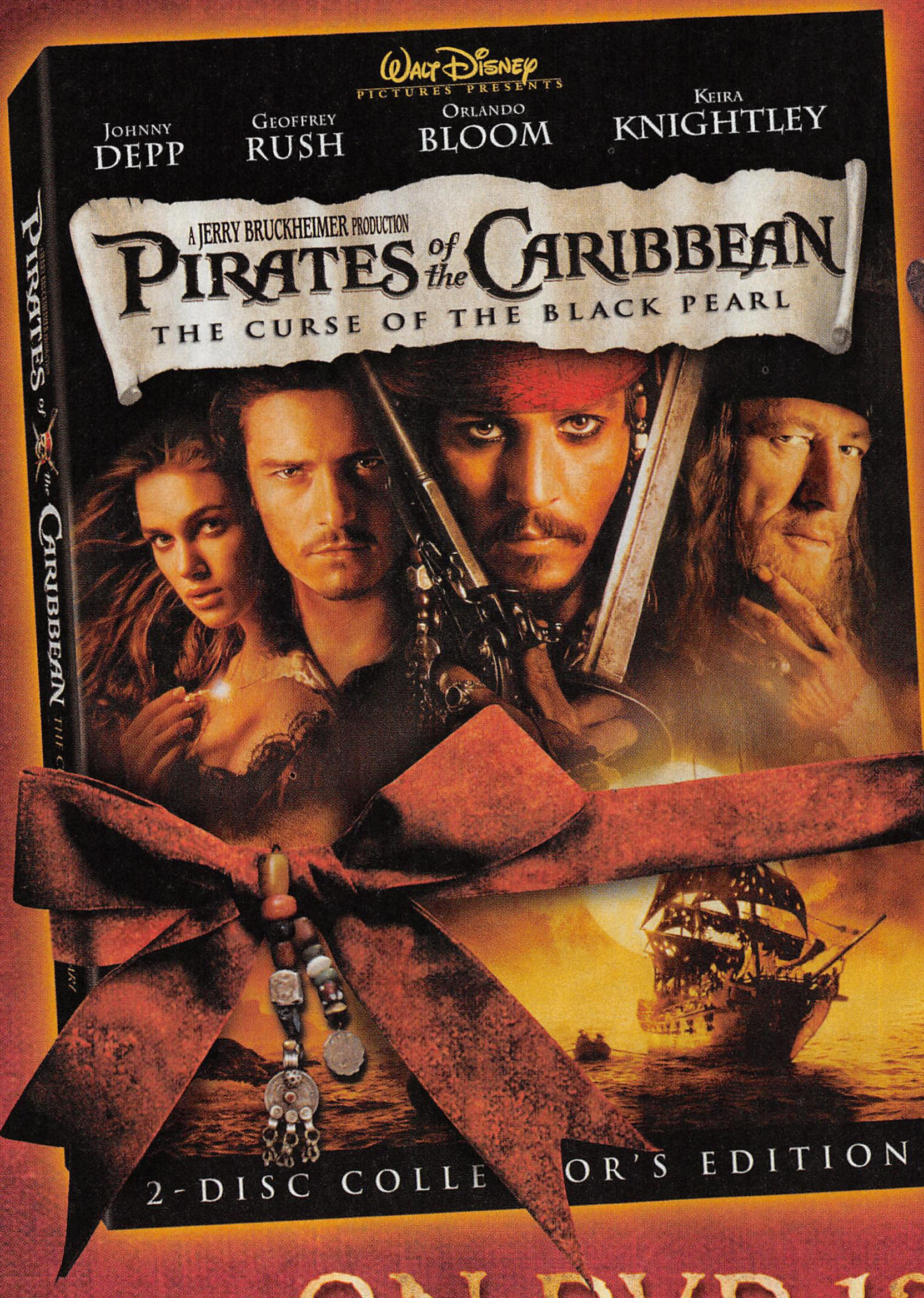
PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

There are only a few weaknesses, all perpetual concerns in beat-'em-ups: although it ends too quickly overall, the endless melee can still get tedious, and the camera adopts some frustratingly unhelpful poses. Also, your combos are too easily interrupted, making them least useful when you need them most — when surrounded. There's theoretically a right-stick aiming technique to counter this, but it's poorly realized. Finally, some of the script triggers are tough to identify — if you're instructed to kick down ladders and destroy siege towers, it's hard to guess that you must shoot a passing Nazgul down in order to progress through the level. Still, you've got to play this game at least once — it's great fun. ERIC BRATCHER

PSM FINAL SCORE 8

VERY GOOD
A beautiful hack-and-slasher that lives up to the considerable scope and grandeur of the filmic source material.

THE PIRATES ARE COMING!



More Pirates! More Action!

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- Audio Commentary With Johnny Depp
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PG-13 PARENTS STRONGLY CAUTIONED
Some Material May Be Inappropriate For Children Under 13
For Action/Adventure Violence
For rating reasons, go to www.filmratings.com
Bonus Material Not Rated

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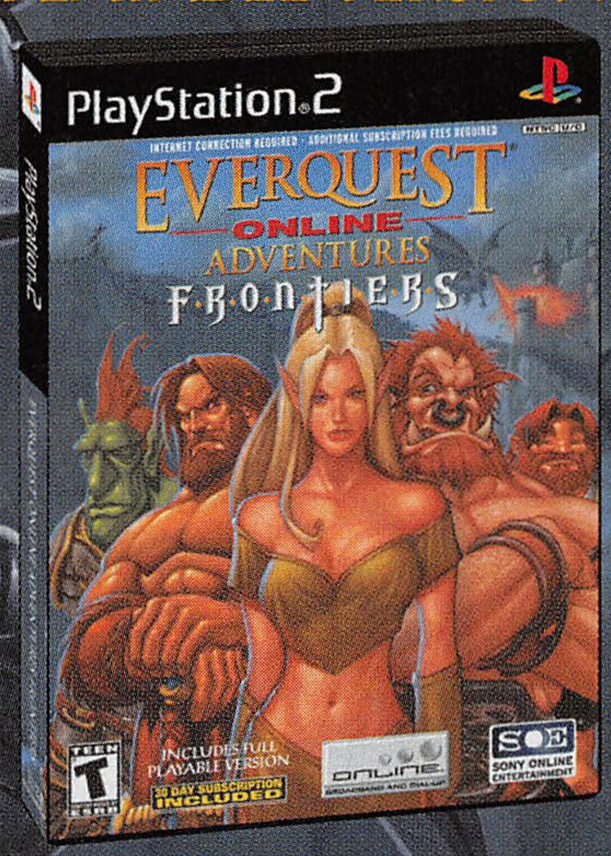

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TEEN
T
Blood and Gore
Violence
Suggestive Themes
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org
Game Experience May Change During Online Play

INTERNET CONNECTION REQUIRED.
ADDITIONAL SUBSCRIPTION FEES REQUIRED.

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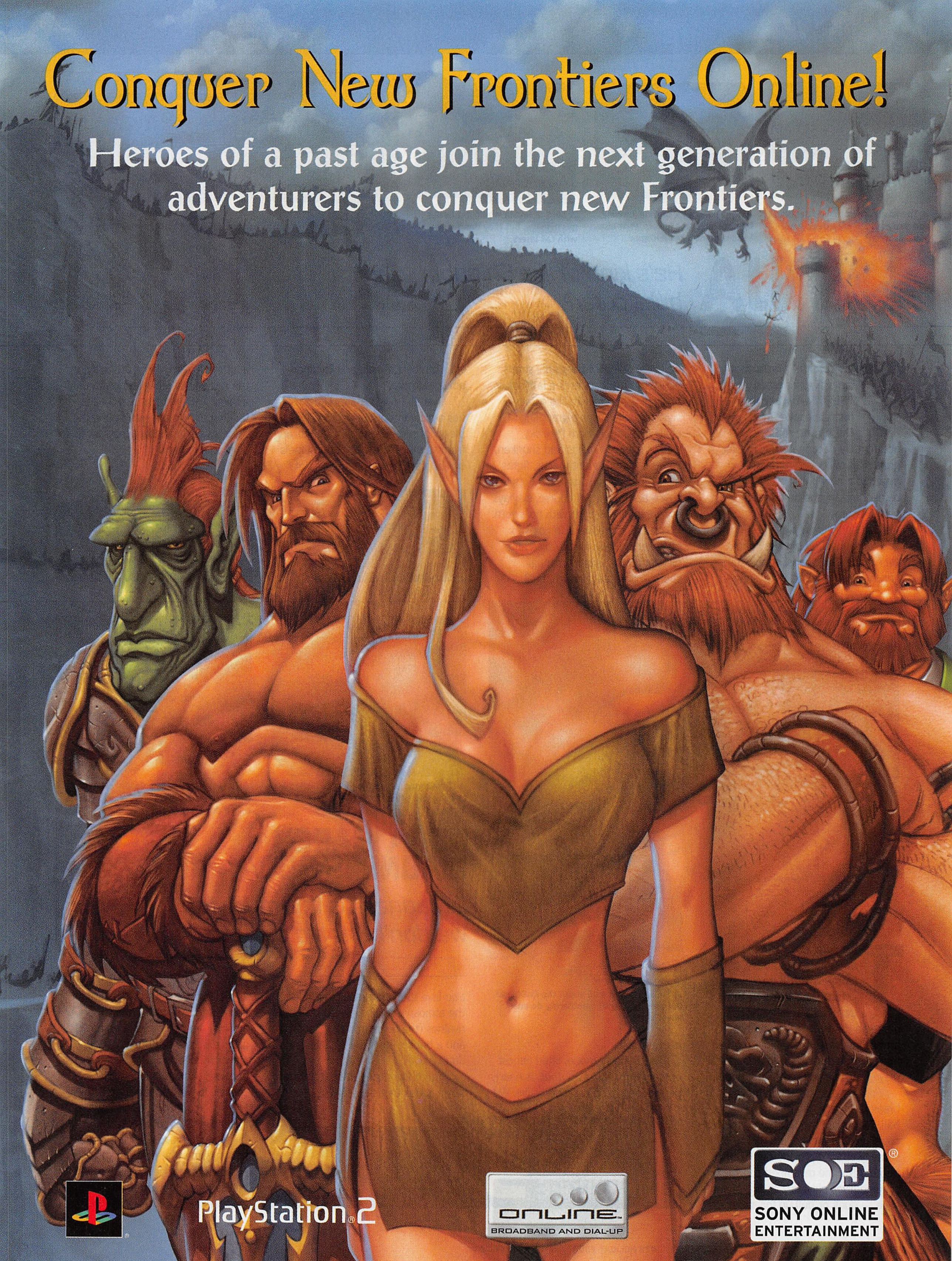
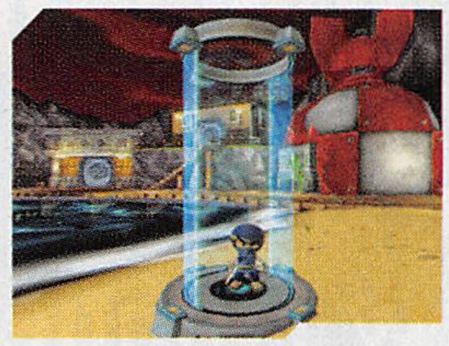


PlayStation 2

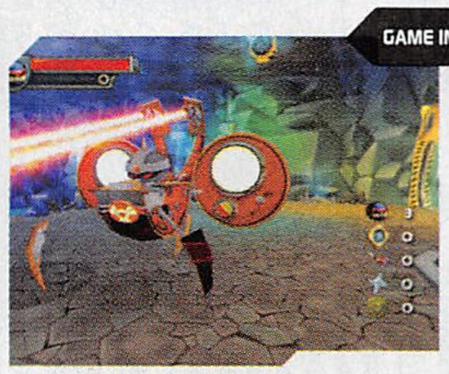
ONLINE
BROADBAND AND DIAL-UP

SOE
SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT

▲ The levels are both well detailed and designed... if only there were more of them!

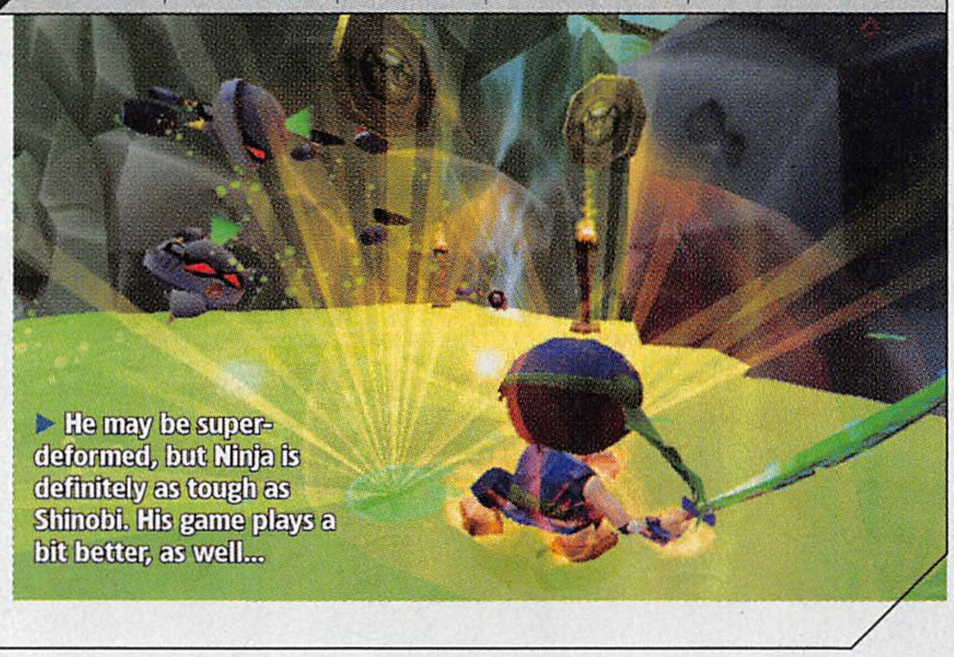


▲ You spend a lot of time jumping, fighting, and who knows what else — save points are welcome.



▲ Sure, a Toyota would get better gas mileage, but they don't come with tail lasers.

GAME INFO | PUB NAMCO | DEV ARGONAUT | TYPE ACTION | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB RATING TEEN



▶ He may be super-deformed, but Ninja is definitely as tough as Shinobi. His game plays a bit better, as well...

I-NINJA

He's kind of like Shinobi, but... cuter?

This colorful platformer stars a guy named "Ninja" who becomes his namesake for all the wrong reasons. He accidentally decapitates his master, grins manically every time he's awarded a new belt, and flatly has no respect for anyone he fights. In short, he's awesome.

Gameplay is simple, and seemingly inspired by every game ever made: Ninja runs, double jumps, grinds rails like Sonic, runs along walls like *Shinobi's* Hotsuma, straps himself to giant spheres à la *Monkey Ball*, spins his ninja-to like a Tails-style propeller, uses a grappling chain like Samus from *Metroid,* throws explosive darts and shuriken, controls various giant mechs, fights mini-bosses (including a *Z.O.E.* style space battle) and, of course, waylays everything in his path with his sword. Of course, there are also coins to be collected, enemies to slice and dice, and new swords or magic spells (increased damage, heal, shuriken blitz attack, and invulnerability) to earn.

Overall, *I-Ninja* is a fun title. Ninja has a nice amount of personality and plenty of moves, and despite drawing from so many sources, nothing feels out of place. However, there's not a lot of longevity here, and playing the same level repeatedly with only a minor twist in gameplay — like beating the clock — isn't quite the same as having entirely new levels to play. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

PSM FINAL SCORE 7

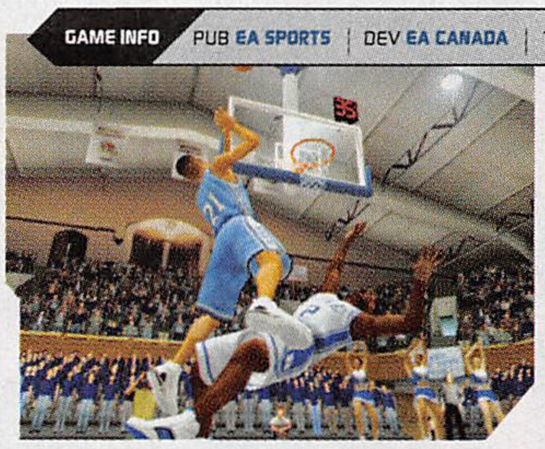
GOOD

It's a cute, but endearing game that's definitely fun for a few hours. It lacks the depth of titles like *Jak II*.

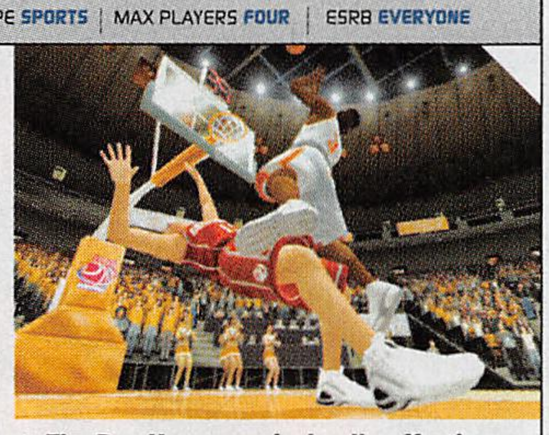
▼ The player models are a bit simplified and unrecognizable, but that's no big deal, and it helps the framerate.

▲ College b-ball is all about the fast break, but playing a tight, smothering defense never hurts.

GAME INFO | PUB EA SPORTS | DEV EA CANADA | TYPE SPORTS | MAX PLAYERS FOUR | ESRB EVERYONE



▲ If your guys are getting worked, choose to get some advice from the coach — and listen to it.



▲ The Pro-Hop move is deadly effective. If your defender gives you an inch, you'll take a dunk.

NCAA MARCH MADNESS 2004

PSM MUST-BUY SILVER

If Madness is this much fun, we don't want to be sane

ONLINE COMPATIBLE

This year, our college basketball choice was easy. *March Madness 2004* decisively established itself as the dominant college hoops game on the PS2. In gameplay, atmosphere and execution, no other title will better satisfy both the casual player and the painted-faced fanatic.

For starters, the action moves at a breakneck pace, just like real college ball. Teams run the fast break, the full court press is wicked and the in-game strategy options provide significant depth. Also, the revamped control scheme gives players a choice of shot style — dunk or pull up for a jumper. It's your call.

The Dynasty mode, lifted almost entirely from *NCAA Football,* is nearly perfect and hopelessly addictive. We also love the little details that add to the atmosphere, like mascot games, rivalries (the heart of college sports) and a bobble-head Dick Vitale... don't ask.

March Madness suffers from the same issues that stalled *NBA Live 2004*. Some still hurt (most notably frame rate slowdown), but others actually aren't a major problem in a college game. The bulky, cartoony player models work in this forum because you aren't looking for specific faces, and the toned-down Freestyle control is still deadly against weaker college defenders.

If you're looking for the one hoops game that best encapsulates what makes this level of the basketball so great, look no further than *March Madness 2004*. **JOHN MARK CUSEY**

PSM FINAL SCORE 9

OUTSTANDING

EA's hoops engine fits well, and is complemented by an immersive NCAA atmosphere and a fine-tuned array of gameplay modes.

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IS LEAVING THE JUNGLE.
SOCOM II
U.S. NAVY SEALS

ONLY TO ENTER ANOTHER ONE.

SOCOM II

U.S. NAVY SEALS

GAME INFO | PUB EA GAMES | DEV EA LA | TYPE FPS | MAX PLAYERS TWO | ESRB TEEN

▲On this level, you can stay on the boat and face the enemy stronghold downriver head on, or you can get off and sneak up behind the bunker on foot. We say, get off.

PSM MUST-BUY SILVER

◀ Direct hit! That's one kamikaze who'll meet his honorable ancestors a bit early.

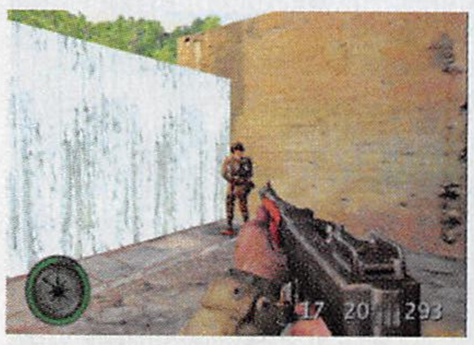
ONLINE COMPATIBLE

MEDAL OF HONOR: RISING SUN

War may be hell, but this plays heavenly

Medal of Honor: Rising Sun opens with the main character resting on his bunk below deck on a ship docked in Pearl Harbor. Suddenly an explosion rings out and the ship starts taking on water. The date? December 7, 1941.

Making your way topside, you leap onto a gunboat and man its turret, doing your best to stave off waves of Japanese Zeros. Once Pearl Harbor is calm again, you're off on a whirlwind tour of the Pacific front: the Philippines, Singapore and even Japan. Variety is the name of the game in *Rising Sun*. There's FPS action, but players will also find themselves employing stealth tactics, riding vehicles, and even commandeering an elephant!



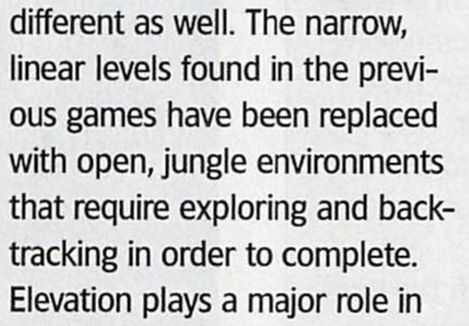
▲ Looks like a bad time to take a bathroom break, buddy.

The levels are drastically different as well. The narrow, linear levels found in the previous games have been replaced with open, jungle environments that require exploring and backtracking in order to complete. Elevation plays a major role in fighting, with a notable advantage being given to troops on high ground.

EA has implemented a whole new set of AI tactics. Enemies coordinate actions much better this time around. Luckily, your controls are spot on, with just a hint of auto-aim helping the player make those difficult shots. Location-based damage is fully implemented, too, so no more lethal shots to the kneecap.

Rising Sun has a slightly rough visual look overall, with only average models and a muted color palette. Some levels feature two-player co-op play, and PS2 owners also get the benefit of eight player online play — complete with headset support. The disc is also packed with bonus historical footage that helps make *MoH: RS* not just a game, but an experience.

ADAM PAVLACKA



▲ Explosive barrels allow you to kill large numbers of enemy soldiers and check out the awesome rag doll effects provided by the physics engine. Get some!

HOW IT STACKS UP

Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun	9
Warhammer 40K: Fire Warrior	9
XIII	8
SWAT: Global Strike Team	8
Medal Of Honor: Frontline	8

PSM FINAL SCORE 9 — OUTSTANDING

Solid gameplay wrapped up in an engaging story with a dab of multiplayer madness on the side makes for one tasty gaming meal.

Step into the boots of a SEAL team in SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALs and face the ultimate challenge: urban combat.

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PlayStation.2

ONLINE BROADBAND ONLY

MATURE 17+ M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood Violence

www.us.playstation.com
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PUB/DEV TECMO | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATED EVERYONE

▲ The ability to train multiple monsters at once gives the pace of the game a nice boost.

MONSTER RANCHER 4

A cult favorite and advocate of modern PlayStation 2 DVD technology, the *Monster Rancher* series is one of the few videogame franchises out there that consistently supports the idea that you can do something a little different with your software. Allowing users to insert a CD or DVD to reveal different in-game battle monsters, this niche series' potentially limitless range of player characters has been one of its strongest selling points for years.

Happily, the team at Tecmo has decided to take their idea of expansion even further this year, opening up *Monster Rancher 4* to the notion that not only can it simulate battles between created beasties, but it can also do so using a role-playing environment.

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

Much heavier in the storyline department than some of today's dedicated RPGs, *Monster Rancher 4* has the same basic premise as its predecessors; players use CDs and DVDs to "hatch" and then train different sorts of monsters, who then do their best to clobber one another. The battle system remains largely the same as that of past adventures, but some new tweaks add considerably more strategy. The end result is a vastly more flexible combat system and one that should please long-standing fans.

Monster Rancher 4's biggest change is the ability to train multiple monsters simultaneously, and then take them exploring. Rolling with up to three different monsters in a single dungeon, players will be able to unearth new items, goodies and boss monsters while traveling. Cleverly limited by a step-oriented countdown system, it prevents players from getting too powerful too fast, but stays accessible enough to remain fun. These changes really improve the game's languid pace, which is important.

The only real chink in *MR4*'s armor is the fact that its somewhat-repetitive cycle can lead to some rather tedious missions later on in the game. By nature, this genre isn't for everyone. For those of us who enjoy *Monster Rancher,* though, this fourth installment is the best one yet. JEREMY DUNHAM

PSM FINAL SCORE **8** VERY GOOD The best *Monster Rancher* yet, with more RPG elements.

PUB LUCASARTS | DEV TOTALLY GAMES | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATED TEEN

▲ Another evil Nazi burns on his way to Hell, thanks to your trusty P-51 Mustang!

SECRET WEAPONS OVER NORMANDY

There have been several air combat sims for the PS2, most of them featuring the antiseptic, push-button warfare of the jet age. Lock on, wait for the tone and blow your opponent to Kingdom Come from six miles away. War in the skies used to be a much dirtier, up close and personal affair than it is today, and *Secret Weapons Over Normandy* does a damn good job of illustrating that fact.

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

In *SWON*, you'll take control of some of history's most glorious warbirds, like the Mustang P-51, the Stuka Type 87, and the Spitfire, and you'll duke it out over war-torn Europe during a variety of challenging missions, from strafing to air interdiction and bombing runs. And when you're not flying missions, you'll be completing challenges to earn life-saving upgrades that can be applied to your current fighter. These upgrades range from heavier armor to more ammo and hotter engines — all valuable stuff to the pilot who values his skin.

The story line is advanced through the journal entries of your character, whose name is Chase. He starts out the war a rookie, and it's up to you to get him through World War Two unscathed. It won't be easy...

This isn't to say that *Secret Weapons Over Normandy* doesn't have its problems. It does; the main one being the lack of a cockpit view. A nose camera view is provided, but I don't think too many aces flew their missions while strapped on the hoods of their planes.

The controls are pretty skittish (you won't be able to roll your fighter until you turn the Yaw option on), and some of the missions are somewhat far-fetched. Another point of irritation was the inclusion of planes that were in their design phase during WWII, and never saw combat in the skies. It's a minor point, but...

In all, though, *Secret Weapons Over Normandy* was a truly fun experience. After all, the best kills are those made a mere 30 feet behind your opponent, with all of your 50 caliber machine guns blazing away. Let's hope this sells well enough to rate a sequel!

BILL DONOHUE

PSM FINAL SCORE **8** VERY GOOD The PS2 has needed a WW2 flight sim for some time. This is very cool.

PUB AGETEC | DEV ENTERBRAIN | MAX PLAYERS ONE | RATED TEEN

▲ With enough time and energy, you too can make a game like *RPG Maker 2's* fu-ma sample game!

RPG MAKER 2

Let's be honest — *RPG Maker 2* is a really hard game to rate. The game gives you nearly complete freedom to create your very own rudimentary, turn-based RPG from the ground up by providing you with a monstrous, labyrinthine toolset. You're able to design buildings, environments, characters, and enemies; you can even write your own dialogue and script events throughout the game. Luckily, the game's compatibility with a PS2 USB keyboard makes the whole "typing in novella-length dialogue" a breeze.

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

RPG Maker 2's comprehensiveness and flexibility is staggering, and enables you to create almost anything your heart desires. Want to populate your hero's town with poisonous cactus people? You can do it. Want to design an RPG that mimics your everyday life? That's entirely possible. Want to make a game that looks prettier than *Final Fantasy X?* Well, you definitely aren't able to do that, because these graphics are much more *Dragon Warrior* than *FF*. But you can make a deep, substantial, yet decidedly less gorgeous one with the wealth of tools in the game's editor.

There is a catch: you have to put some serious time, concentration, and memory card space into it. Most gamers will take one look at the editor interface in *RPG Maker 2* and either cry or have painful flashbacks of Calculus classes. Yes, it's that intimidating and dense. Although it's made as user friendly as possible, the very nature of the game creation process means it's still an incredibly daunting task. And if you want to start creating, or even editing, scripts, watch out: script editing is very close to actual programming. But this detail leads to creative power, and for every gamer who winces at the thought of this game's complexity, there will be another who salivates at the mere suggestion. And for any of us out there who've ever thought "Wow, I could do so much freakin' better than that if I had a chance...," here's one of the best and most completely liberating chances you'll have to put your money, time and sanity where your mouth is.

FRANCESCA REYES

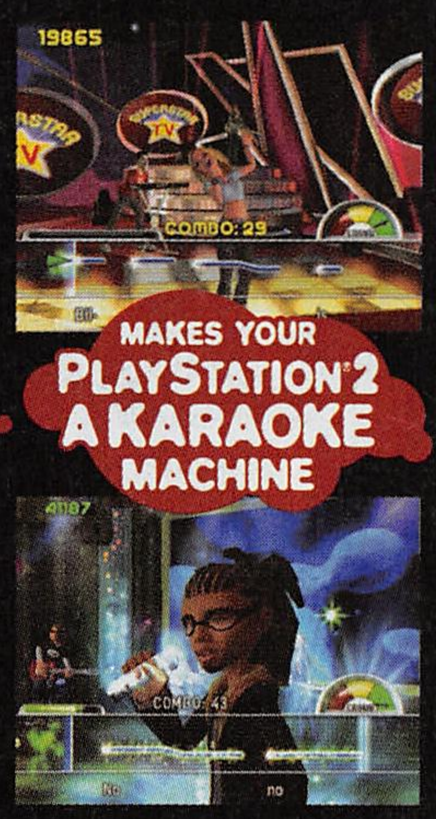
PSM FINAL SCORE **8** VERY GOOD An RPG-making beast that requires serious time and dedication.

THE THRILL OF SINGING MEETS THE AGONY OF DEFEAT.

Karaoke Revolution™

When it comes to singing, you may already be a winner. Find out with the first karaoke video game that actually judges your vocal talents. Karaoke Revolution™ turns you into a star and your PlayStation®2 into an interactive karaoke machine, complete with scoring, training and a built-in audience.

Sing along with 35 hit songs, including chart-toppers popularized by **Michelle Branch**, **R.E.M.**, **Avril Lavigne**, **Nickelback**, **Barenaked Ladies** and more. It's the ultimate party game with multiplayer for up to 8 of your friends, so step up to the mic and discover how well you carry a tune. And just how much fun agony can be.



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PlayStation®2

HARMONIX

KONAMI

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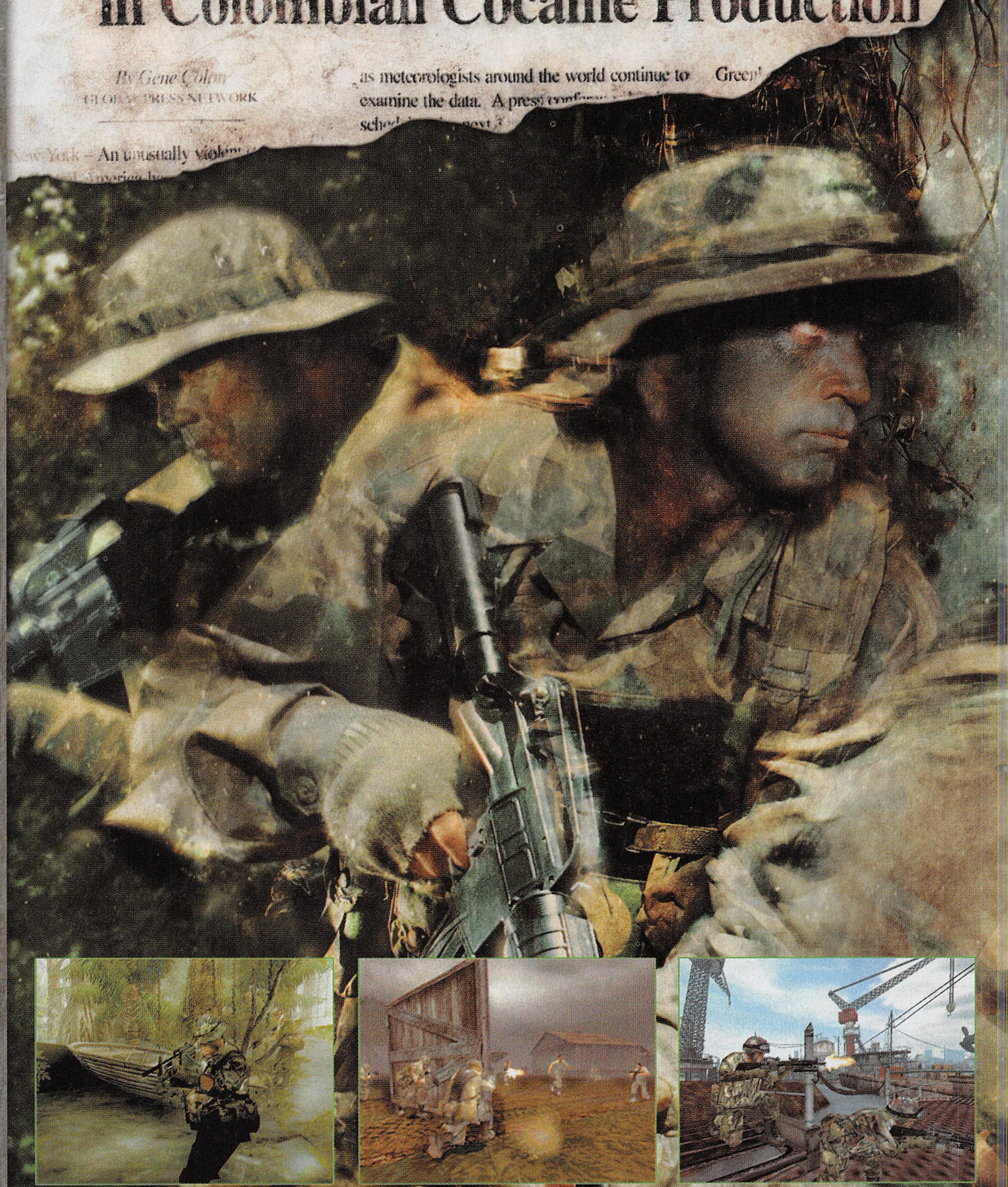
Bad Weather Credited for Sudden Drop in Colombian Cocaine Production

By Gene Colon
GLOBE PRESS NEWWORK

New York – An unusually violent ... Amerigo ... as meteorologists around the world continue to examine the data. A press conf... sched... next ... Green...



EXPERIENCE NEW JUNGLE WARFARE AS THE GHOSTS RESTORE CUBA'S PEACE AND TAKE DOWN AN EVIL COLOMBIAN DRUG CARTEL.

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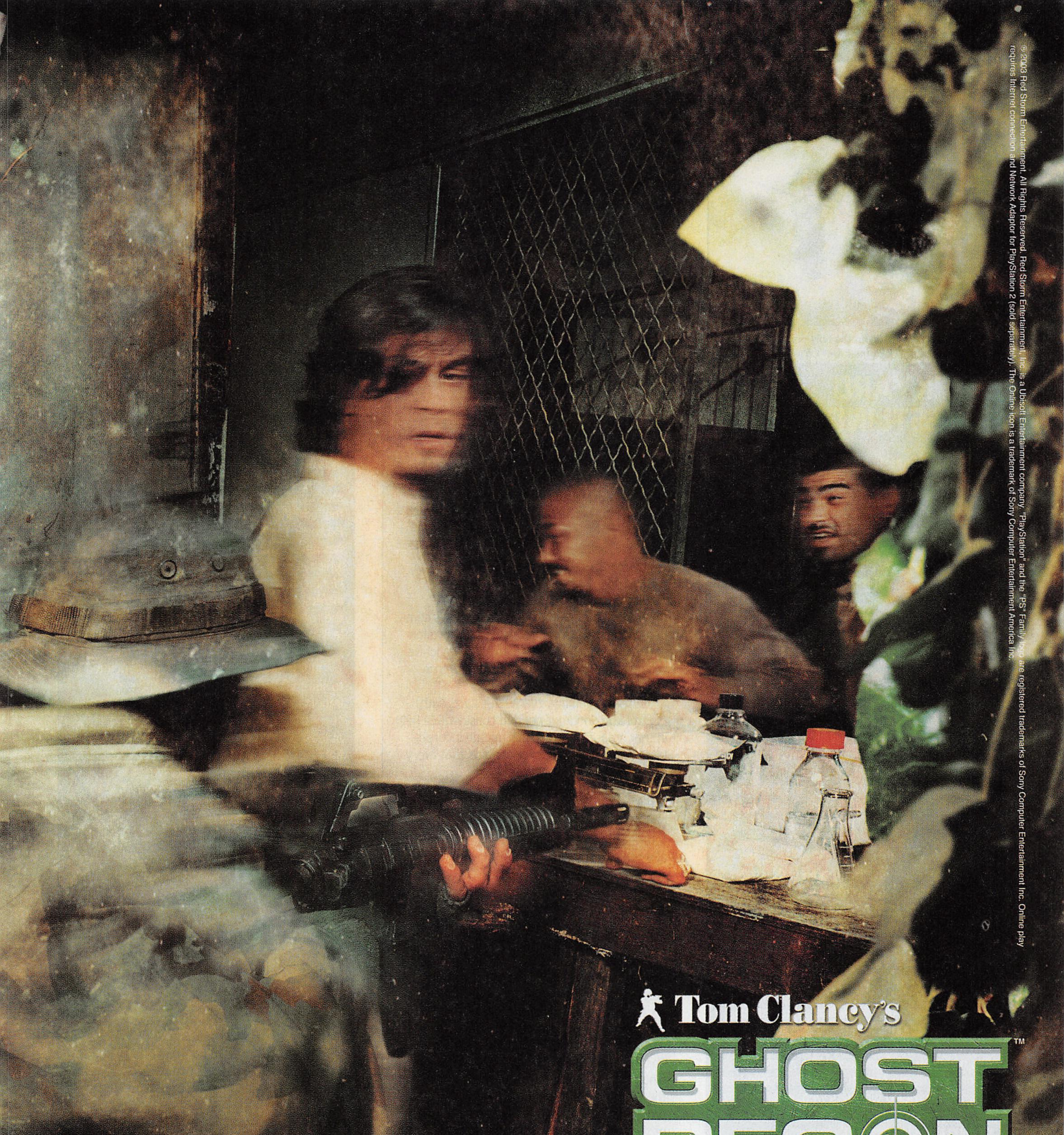

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Tom Clancy's

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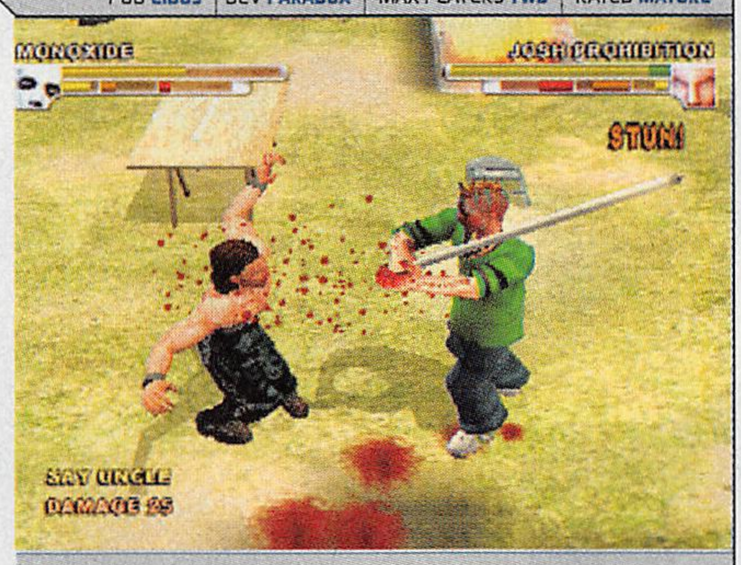
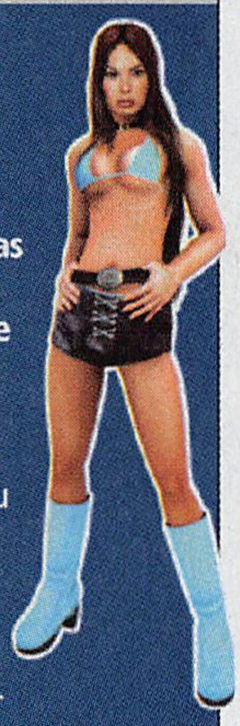
PUB EIDOS | DEV PARADOX | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATED MATURE



▲ The Stun meters are about the only praise-worthy element of *Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home.*

BACKYARD WRESTLING



As legitimately concerned as we are that the *Backyard Wrestling* videos exist, the game could have had some good qualities. But ultimately, the title *Backyard Wrestling: Don't Try This at Home* proves too prophetic. You really shouldn't try this game.

More a shallow party game than a real wrestling title, *BYW* is just a mess. The collision detection is flat out horrible. Moves tear through other moves with no sense of priority, and what works perfectly once might not work in the very next, identical situation. It's a problem too, because there are very few moves per character. Control is also terrible. Players run jerkily through the environments as though they were on speed, instantly mounting ladders and rolling over tables. Graphics and animation are sloppy, with constant clipping, bland texture maps, and some simply unattractive female character models.

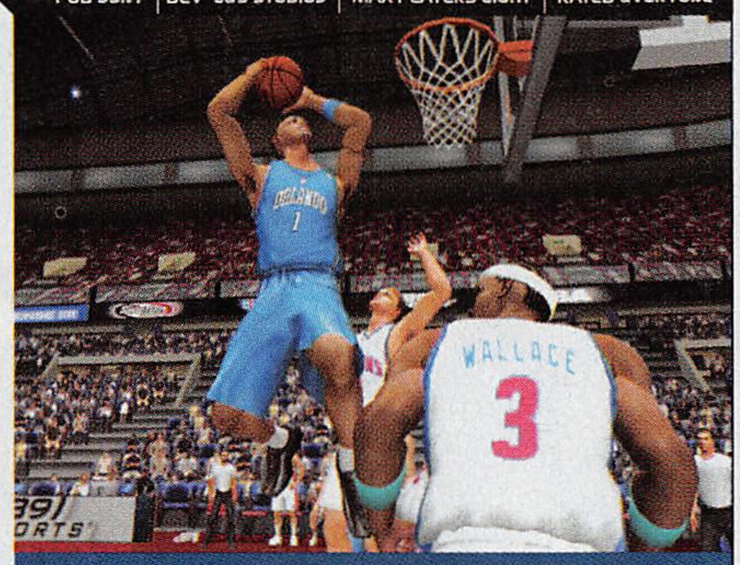
As is typical of the *BYW* video series, the various battlegrounds are packed with foreign objects, from flaming mattresses to barbed wire-wrapped ball bats. But they tend to be poorly implemented. It's possible to throw a rock at an enemy, watch him run fifteen feet to the side, and see the rock steer itself into your target's cranium anyhow.

While the "stun" condition is somewhat inventive, as are the meters for strikes, slams and extreme stunts, it makes it possible for the player to lose the ability to defend your helpless meatbag for what seems like an eternity before you regain control. This is especially true when fighting CPU wrestlers who, when they're not mercilessly stripping you of health, enjoy running in circles or directly into walls.

One nice thing about Backyard Wrestling is that any move except for a finisher can be reversed. Unfortunately, reversing a move requires a lightning fast twitch reaction, so it's easier to do by accident than on purpose. The timing can be learned, but few players will torture themselves long enough to acquire the necessary skills. **DOUG TRUEMAN/ERIC BRATCHER**

PSM FINAL SCORE 4 **LACKING** This game is about as fun as being hit in the face with a chair.

PUB SONY | DEV 989 STUDIOS | MAX PLAYERS EIGHT | RATED EVERYONE



▲ We love the create-a-dunk mode. It's great fun when you jam your own dunk home.

NBA SHOOTOUT 2004

ONLINE COMPATIBLE

During the dawning days of the PlayStation 2, we witnessed the crumbling of a once powerful Sony Sports brand. Today we're in the middle of a slow, sometimes glacial, rebuilding process. While this year's *Shootout* doesn't close the gap on the top hoops titles, 989 Studios certainly didn't phone this one in. *Shootout 2004,* though still fundamentally flawed, shows commendable sparks of improvement, innovation and imagination — three things this franchise will need if it ever hopes to become a true competitor again.

In sports gaming, everything starts with control and *Shootout* needed considerable help in that area. Thankfully, this update incorporates the analog crossover controls that everyone else is using this year.

On the innovative and imaginative side is the game's amazing voice control feature, which gives us a glimpse of sports gaming's future. Using a USB headset, you can actually speak commands to your players. Hit the L1 button and say "Commit Foul" and your teammates will draw an intentional foul. You can even give multilevel commands such as "Defense: 3-2 Zone" and your team will shift into the zone. We also enjoyed the career mode, which takes a different path from the typical franchise mode, and the Legend's unlockable challenges.

Despite these advancements, *Shootout* still has major issues. Most noticeably, its graphics aren't up to par with the best in the business. The animations are often a mess, with players who jitter across the court and slide around the key at inhuman speeds. The AI is equally problematic. Most any player can go to middle of the key, fake a shot and then sink an easy, uncontested bucket. Just pick your player and score 70 points. The defense doesn't adjust.

While *Shootout's* problems still outweigh its innovations, 989 Studios deserves credit for still pushing this series forward. They aren't going to beat the EAs and the Segas this year, but this franchise isn't totally out of the game yet. **JOHN MARK CUSEY**

PSM FINAL SCORE 6 **OKAY** *Shootout* is better, but it still can't compete with *NBA Live* and *ESPN Basketball.*

PUB KONAMI/HUDSON | DEV EIGHTING | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATED TEEN

▲ Not all of the characters look that cool, but there's definitely a decent variety.

BLOODY ROAR 4

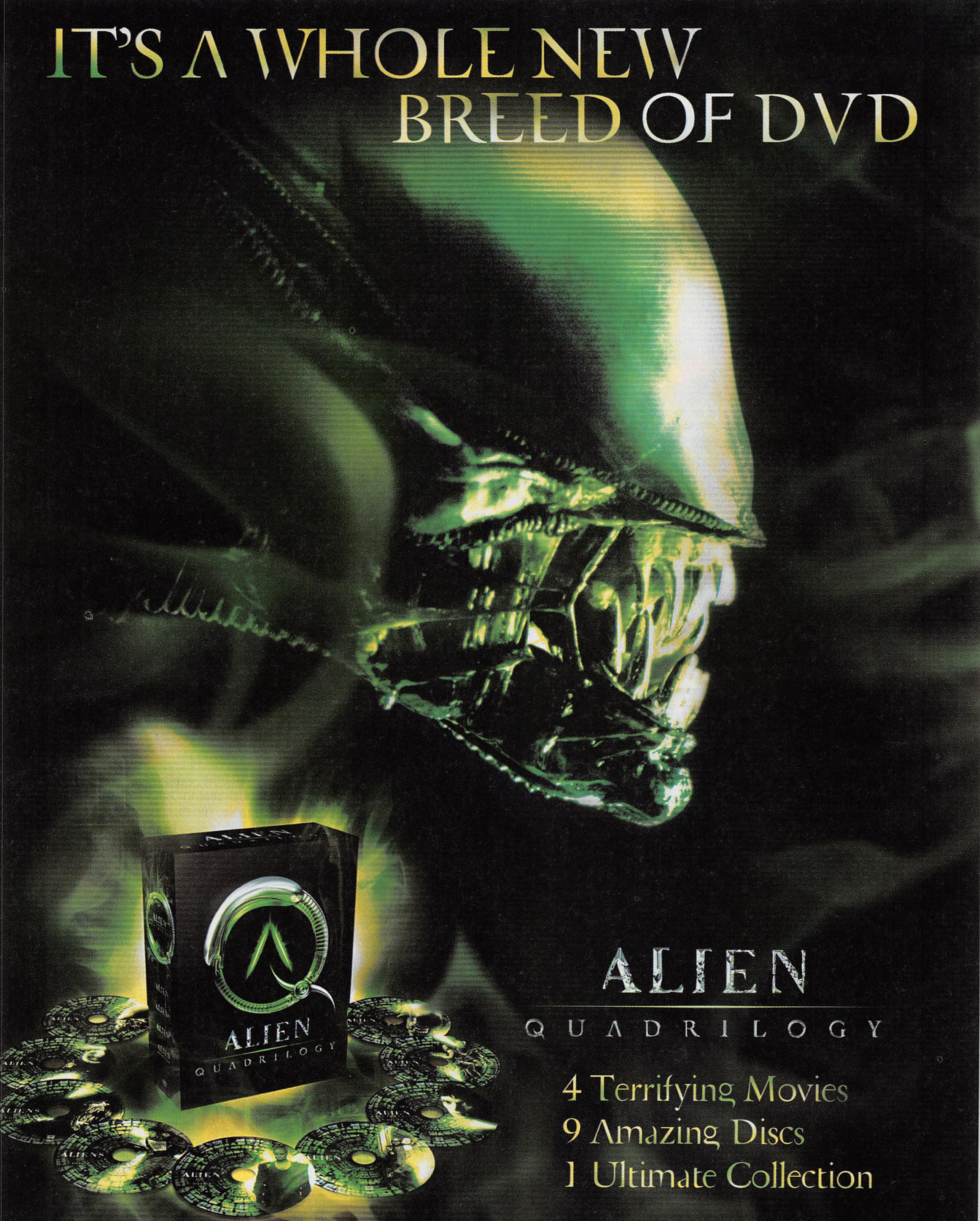
I've always considered the *Bloody Roar* series as a great starting place for those who are just beginning to get into fight-ing games. That's because the core game mechanics are relatively easy to grasp and the learning progression is somewhat smooth. However, the series, including *Bloody Roar 4,* has never really had a good tutorial mode, which is truly a shame. With both the latest *Mortal Kombat* and *Virtua Fighter* showcasing incredibly deep and rewarding ways to learn the ropes, there's no excuse for other titles to lack such a feature. It's the one best way to get newcomers to be interested in your game.

Along those lines, I was also disappointed to see that *BR4* is still lacking in the ever-important single-player experience. It would seem that companies should understand, at least by now, that a simple one-on-one fighting mode is not enough to keep the general gamer continuously interested. You need something beyond the arcade experience to keep them coming back for more, a lesson that *Soul Calibur II* and particularly *Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution* have both learned very, very well. *BR4*'s Career Mode is a definite attempt at that, but it simply doesn't provide anything truly compelling or new. Fighting endless battles in order to enhance your character's abilities and unlock a few features doesn't exactly cry out "innovation" anymore. On another note, the game's story sequences also aren't anything to write home about, as most of you will end up scratching your heads in utter confusion after watching them.

To its credit, there are some definite positives that *BR4* has to offer. It's still one of the easier fighters to get into while managing to retain a surprising amount of underlying depth. The graphics have improved a bit since the last game and the new characters are actually quite fun to use. Yet, despite these upgrades, I still find it hard to fully recommend *BR4* to everyone. That's especially true when you have the likes of *VF4 Evolution* and *Soul Calibur II* already out and titles like *King of Fighters* (and hopefully Capcom's new *Street Fighter*) coming out soon. The bar has been raised and, at least at this time, the *Bloody Roar* series can't quite reach high enough. **STEPHEN FROST**

PSM FINAL SCORE 6 **OKAY** This series hasn't evolved enough to compete with the big boys.

IT'S A WHOLE NEW BREED OF DVD



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PUB EA/LEGO | DEV ARGONAUT | MAX PLAYERS ONE | RATED EVERYONE

BIONICLE

If you haven't heard of *BIONICLE*, it's one of those toys you wish you had when you were younger, a sort of island-themed iteration of LEGO in which the animals and natives are all made of LEGO-like robotic parts. It's weird, but cool and wildly successful.

As far as the videogame goes, it's the final evidence that EA has definitely mastered the PS2 hardware — a quickie, kid-focused game rarely looks this good and runs this smoothly. Gameplay is short, simple, and typical: one by one, you guide six elementally-themed warriors through matching environments — i.e., the blue one can swim, the red one explores a volcano, the white one snowboards down a mountain, etc — in their quest to find the seventh warrior and dispatch the evil Makuta. Sure, it's no *Jak II* or anything, but pro players could definitely play this with a younger sibling and enjoy it. **ERIC BRATCHER**

▲ ***BIONICLE*** **isn't meant for the hardcore, but it has something to offer.**

PSM FINAL SCORE **6** **OKAY** It's not awful; just average, but well suited for families and littler gamers.

PUB VIVENDI | DEV VICARIOUS | MAX PLAYERS FOUR | RATED EVERYONE

CRASH NITRO KART

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

Every kart racing game is inevitably compared to Nintendo's *Mario Kart*. *Crash Nitro Kart* isn't going to best the big N's masterpiece, but it comes darn close.

All of the standard stuff is here: crazy tracks, wacky weapons and solid control. What makes Crash Nitro Kart truly stand out, though, is the unique boost system, which enables you to boost anytime you execute a controlled powerslide. Once mastered, this boost skill completely changes the mechanics of gameplay. It is possible to chain the boosts in succession, so your kart is in a continuous nitrous burn — kart racing at Wipeout speeds.

Satisfying and challenging at the same time, Crash Nitro Kart is a great way to fill that need for speed. It also makes for an excellent party game if you can round up three friends and a multitap. **ADAM PAVLACKA**

▲ **Wacky power-ups aside, the boost system really makes CNK stand out.**

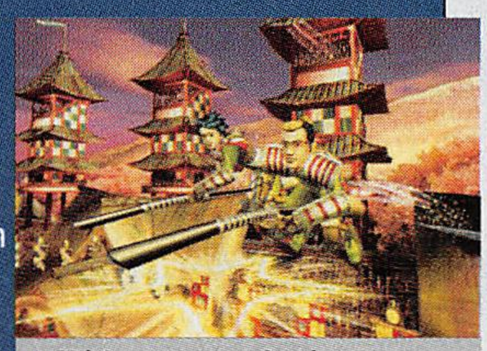
PSM FINAL SCORE **8** **VERY GOOD** It's a creative kart racer with a solid foundation and legitimate depth.

PUB EA GAMES | DEV EA UK | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATED EVERYONE

HARRY POTTER: QUIDDITCH WORLD CUP

Sports behemoth EA has produced a playable and faithful take on Harry's sport of choice: Quidditch, which vaguely resembles hockey with broomsticks, three goals, and self-guided balls seeking to evade or flatten you. The player spends time at every position on the seven-person team during a match, and the AI starts off easy, but ends up brutal by the time you reach the World Cup playoffs.

Unlockable items and special moves help keep interest in the single player mode, but the versus mode is where this game shines. It's good, but it could have been amazing if it had been given the full EA Sports treatment, with online play, career options, deeper playbooks, and player-specific stats... maybe next year? **ADAM PAVLACKA/EB**



▲ **Think you have what it takes to win the Quidditch World Cup?**

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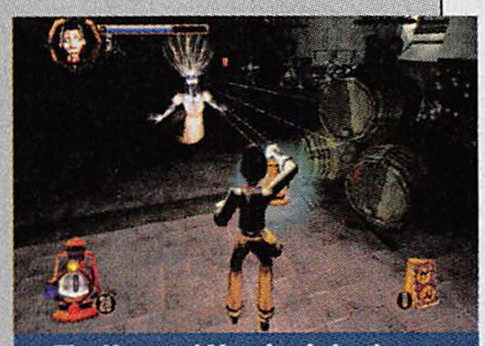
PSM FINAL SCORE **7** **GOOD** Potter fans will adore it, and casual players should like it, too.

PUB/DEV TDK MEDIACTIVE | MAX PLAYERS ONE | RATING TEEN

THE HAUNTED MANSION

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

Disneyland's famous Haunted Mansion attraction has its own videogame — not a movie-licensed train wreck, but an honestly good game. As a reluctant hero (*not* Eddie Murphy) armed with a ghost-busting lantern, players must banish dark forces from the mansion's 40+ rooms — most of which contain clever, surreal action/puzzle challenges, like walls that continually reconfigure, or a haunted pool table upon which the player, shrunk to action-figure size, is forced to dodge now giant pool balls. Of course, there are lots of spooks and spiders to battle, too. Disney or no, this game isn't overly "kiddie", and even packs the occasional good-natured scare. Aficionados will even recognize specific details and fixtures from the "real" Haunted Mansion in this pleasing, spiritually faithful reincarnation. **CHRIS HUDAK**



▲ ***The Haunted Mansion*** **is both spine-tingling and brain-teasing fun.**

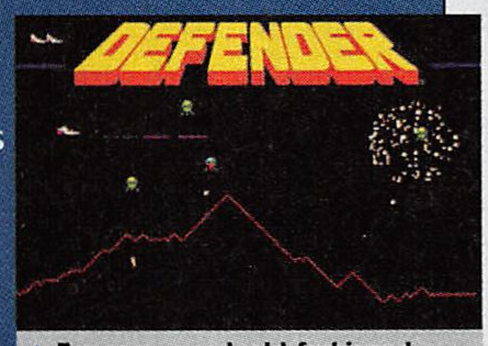
PSM FINAL SCORE **8** **VERY GOOD** Good enough on its own, but a must-play for Disney-park enthusiasts.

PUB MIDWAY | DEV DIGITAL ECLIPSE | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATED TEEN

MIDWAY ARCADE TREASURES

Nobody anywhere was more excited than us when this collection of some of Midway's greatest hits was announced. No matter how cool today's games are, nothing pumps us up faster than a quick game of *Robotron 2084* or *Defender,* and the fact that obscure personal faves like *Blaster* and *Toobin'* were added to the 24-game roster just sweetens the pot.

At $20, the price is right, but the final product is a bit hit-and-miss. Interface screens are terribly ugly, and the emulation is spotty. *Smash TV* has some ugly frame skipping, the color switching in *Satan's Hollow* is wrong, and *Defender's* controls are clumsily mapped. Some of the games are dead on: *Joust* runs perfectly, and *Gauntlet* is so accurate that the arcade bugs are still there. But overall, this seems too rushed to be perfect. **ERIC BRATCHER**



▲ **For some good, old-fashioned arcade action, here's your game.**

PSM FINAL SCORE **7** **GOOD** There's treasure here, but it'd be more valuable with a little more polish.

PUB THQ | DEV AVALANCHE | MAX PLAYERS ONE | RATED EVERYONE

TAK AND THE POWER OF JUJU

Like several other exceptional games this holiday season, *Tak* is a platform action game. The theme is vaguely West African, with unlikely hero Tak tasked with recovering magical moonstones that can save his village and return its inhabitants — who have mostly been turned into sheep — to their proper forms.

It's pretty good stuff, too. It's truly funny, graphics are solid and colorful without being amazing, and Tak's Juju powers and interactions with the jungle animals — certain monkeys can be tricked into attacking enemies, rhinos can be ridden, and chickens... you'll see — add flavor to the gameplay. In fact, the game's most notable weakness is that it's a tiny bit kiddie and typical when compared to the current lineup of top-notch competitors. **ERIC BRATCHER**

▲ **Don't let the Nickelodeon connection steer you away from Tak.**

PSM FINAL SCORE **7** **GOOD** It's a well crafted, if not overly ambitious, jungle adventure.

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ARMAGEDDON

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language

XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE.

PlayStation®2

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PUB KONAMI | DEV KONAMI | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATED EVERYONE

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES

The *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* have been brought back from the 1980s, but the great gameplay that made them famous in the videogame realm sadly hasn't.

TMNT is faithful to the new animated series in sights and sounds, but is otherwise a shallow and repetitive game, despite some cliche character advancement. (New attacks don't mean much when the gameplay basically boils down to "hit the button and move.")

▲ It looks and sounds like the show, but that's about all.

The game is also hurt by the repetitive voice samples that accompany nearly every attack. They're annoying, and they can't be turned off. Also, although the series features four turtles working as a team, it's only a two-player game.

Ultimately, even diehard *TMNT* fans are going to be disappointed. It might be fun for little kids, but grown-up gamers have learned to expect much better. **RANDY NELSON**

PSM FINAL SCORE 5 **SO-SO** A repetitive game that even the biggest fans will have problems with.

PUB GOTHAM | DEV SCI | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATED TEEN

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II: BACK TO BAGHDAD

The first *Conflict: Desert Storm* wasn't stellar, but it sold like autographed, nude pictures of Anna Kournikova. This sequel showcases far better AI in both friendly and enemy forces, resulting in a much improved game. It plays as a sort of *SOCOM* lite, with players controlling a four-man squad of elite soldiers. Each member has his own skills, be it demolition expert or sniper, and you can jump from one member to another at any time during battle. Big explosions are still the quickest way to victory, but it's very difficult to advance in this game using simple run and gun tactics. First, positions must be scouted, roles assigned, then the battle fought.

▲ The AI soldiers fight better than before, resulting in a better game.

Desert Storm II lacks the depth and online play of *SOCOM II*, but armchair generals could do much worse. Fans of the soldier's lifestyle should find much to love here. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

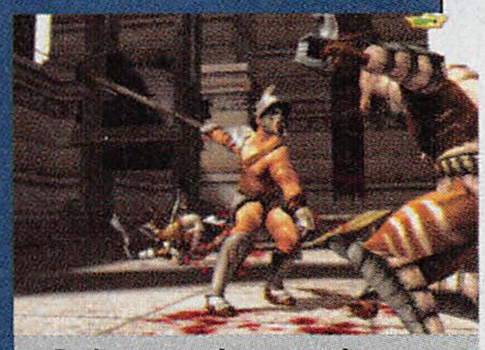
PSM FINAL SCORE 7 **GOOD** A worthy addition to any war gamer's collection.

PUB ACCLAIM | DEV ACCLAIM SM | MAX PLAYERS ONE | RATED MATURE

GLADIATOR: SWORD OF VENGEANCE

Every once in a while, a videogame company finds a way to surprise us. That's exactly what's happened in the case of Acclaim Studio Manchester's epic Roman action title, *Gladiator: Sword of Vengeance*.

Despite its similarities to a certain Oscar-winning Ridley Scott film of a similar name, this is no cheap, licensed knock-off. It offers a simple, yet surprisingly effective battle system, satisfyingly gory battles, and one of the best graphics engines that Acclaim has put together a long, long time.



▲ Each weapon has several gory finishing moves.

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

While it's true that *Gladiator* is a little on the short side, doesn't innovate much, and boasts some occasional camera problems, it has enough of the good hacking and slashing to allow you to overlook these seemingly minor problems. Definitely worth a pickup from casual and hardcore action fans alike. **JEREMY DUNHAM**

PSM FINAL SCORE 8 **VERY GOOD** A mindless actioner in the same vein as *Dynasty Warriors*. Good fun!

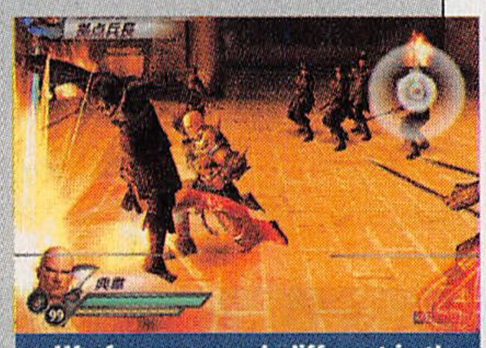
PUB KOEI | DEV OMEGA FORCE | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATING TEEN

DYNASTY WARRIORS 4: XTREME LEGENDS

PSM MUST-BUY BRONZE

For those of you who couldn't get enough of *Dynasty Warriors 4* the first time around, KOEI has crafted an expansion pack. *Xtreme Legends* has added several new secondary modes: Xtreme mode randomly generates skirmishes, Legends mode adds a new level for each of the 42 characters, and Arena Mode is a one-on-one survival challenge.

If gamers have already experienced *Dynasty Warriors 4*, they can import their save to unleash some bonus materials not available otherwise. It's a nice little incentive to reward previous owners, but casual fans may not find enough here to warrant an immediate re-purchase. Thus, *Xtreme Legends* is best recommended for those completely new to the series or feverishly devoted to it. **JEREMY DUNHAM**



▲ Warfare was much different in the days before submachine guns.

PSM FINAL SCORE 8 **VERY GOOD** This remains one of the best beat-'em-up series of all time.

PUB SONY | DEV KILLER GAMES | MAX PLAYERS EIGHT | RATED EVERYONE

NCAA FINAL 4 2004

At least the *Final Four* series isn't standing in place. This 2004 version sports vastly improved graphics (better, in fact, than Sony's hoops flagship, *NBA Shootout)* and revamped controls, complete with *NBA Live*-like analog stick crossovers. It also boasts feature-rich online play, a rough (but passable) career mode, and other expected basketball goodies.

However, one thing that hasn't advanced is the game's remedial AI. After a short time playing, we set the game to its toughest difficulty, took the court against national champs Syracuse, and scored almost 100 points — with a single player. We just repeatedly drove to the key, pulled up, hit the shoot button and watched him launch a ridiculous monster jam from a dead stop. Shortcomings like these really impact the game. Once we learned we could dominate without trying, we returned to the competition. We figure most hardcore hoops fans will, too. **JOHN MARKCUSEY**

▲ With the defense looking the other way, number 2 scores big.

PSM FINAL SCORE 6 **OKAY** *Final Four 2004* is improved, but the AI is still ugly as hell.

PUB JALECO | DEV JALECO | MAX PLAYERS TWO | RATED TEEN

GOBLIN COMMANDER

Developed by a couple of ex-Blizzard employees, *Goblin Commander* is a decent, real-time strategy that borrows heavily from the stylistic trappings of the *WarCraft* series. The characters are appropriately goofy looking and the fantasy setting — Goblin hordes slugging it out with arrows, guns, and magic spells — is stripped straight out of Blizzard's playbook.

Controlling the mayhem is extremely simple: your units are grouped by clan and each clan is assigned to a button on your controller. Place the cursor where you want your boys to attack, press the correct button, and off they go. Similarly, constructing new units is a simple affair.

▲ *Goblin Commander* bears the scars of a very short development cycle.

Unfortunately, the action in the game is only about as deep as a puddle. Every mission is nearly identical, with little tactical depth, and as a result, the missions blur together. The path-finding is also suspect and sometimes your hordes won't do as they're told. Lazy goblins. **WILLIAM HARMS**

PSM FINAL SCORE 6 **OKAY** The controls are perfect, but the gameplay is a little too simplistic.

GAMING ON THE GO!

Here's a look at five portable, retro-gaming systems... and an alternative!

ACTIVISION TV GAMES

Manufacturer: Toy Max / Price: $20

▲ The Activision 10-in-One is discontinued, and may be hard to find.

This was the first entry in the TV Games series, and put 10 of Activision's original Atari 2600 games in one small, portable package. Some of the games rock: *Pitfall, Freeway, River Raid,* and *Tennis*. Some are okay: *Atlantis* (originally an Imagic game), *Spider Fighter, Crackpots,* and *Ice Hockey.* But it's missing some blockbusters, like *Megamania, Fishing Derby, Kaboom!,* and our unit seemed to have some color convergence problems.

PSM Final Score: 6
Needs more AAA (for their time) titles and better layout and video output.

Beyond the software weaknesses, the shoulder-mounted on/off switch is easily bumped when tossing the unit into your bag, thereby accidentally draining your batteries, and why is the fire button cross-shaped? Up is the only direction that does anything. Incidentally, this item seems to have been discontinued, so you may find it for less, or not at all.

NAMCO TV GAMES

Manufacturer: Jakks Pacific / Price: $25

▲ The Namco 5-in-One look vaguely like a little arcade game.

We love the physical design of this little beauty, which features one big button and a fairly solid ball-top, four-way joystick. It features five of Namco's most famous games: *Pac-Man, Dig Dug, Galaxian, Bosconian,* and *Rally-X.* Unfortunately, it's disappointing in many other ways. Only five games? What about *Galaga, Dragon Spirit, Mappy,* or *Xevious* (which was manufactured by Atari over here, but developed by Namco)? Moreover, the emulation is flawed. These aren't the actual arcade ROMs, but recreations. Graphics are slightly off in dozens of ways, sound is screwed up across the board, especially in *Galaxian* and *Bosconian*, and our old *Pac-Man* patterns don't even work because the ghost AI is different. Finally, *Bosconian* had an eight-way stick in the arcade, and is crippled by a four-way stick.

PSM Final Score: 6
Awesome games, but too few and recreated too inaccurately for us.

ATARI TV GAMES

Manufacturer: Jakks Pacific / Price: $25

How can you see this unit, which replicates the classic Atari 2600 joystick, and not want to play it? Granted, it's about as ergonamic as a rock by today's standards, and we constantly hit the front-mounted Start button by accident, unwittingly resetting our game. But it looks great, and we can't imagine this unit having any other form factor.

▶ Now, this is more like it! But those buttons should be on the top.

The emulation here is quite good, but game selection, like the Activision TV Games, is hit and miss. *Adventure, Breakout, Yars' Revenge, Centipede, Asteroids, Missile Command*, and *Pong* rock, but we'd love to trade three duds: *Gravitar, Circus Atari,* and *Real Sports Volleyball* for better stuff like *Ms. Pac-Man, Berzerk, Air Sea Battle, Combat, Defender, Night Driver*... heck, even the original 2600 *Pac-Man* would have had nostalgia value.

PSM Final Score: 7
Move the Start button to the top and tweak the software, and this is a real winner.

INTELLIVISION 25

Manufacturer: Techno Source / Price: $25

This unit boasts a healthy selection of 25 Intellivision games, but we were surprised to see some big names missing: both *Advanced Dungeons & Dragons* games, *Armor Battle, Tron Deadly Discs,* and *Utopia,* not to mention arcade standbys like *Burgertime* and *Bump 'N' Jump.* Still, *Astrosmash, Space Armada, Star Strike,* and most of the best sports games are here. The actual emulation is tough to gauge, because most games have been modified unfavorably. Controls are tweaked, sound and graphics differ slightly, the sprites are huge, and games often seem to run slowly. *Space Armada* has only 24 aliens onscreen at a time instead of 32, and *Baseball* actually crashed on us. Interestingly, the sports titles are all single player contests now, despite originally being two-player only.

PSM Final Score: 6
Strange game selection and bad emulation = wait for the upcoming PS2 collection.

▲ Luckily, this device didn't replicate that cruddy old Intellivision controller.

POWERJOY III

Manufacturer: Power Joy USA / Price: $40

▲ The Power Joy III offers 84 NES games, plus plenty of extra features.

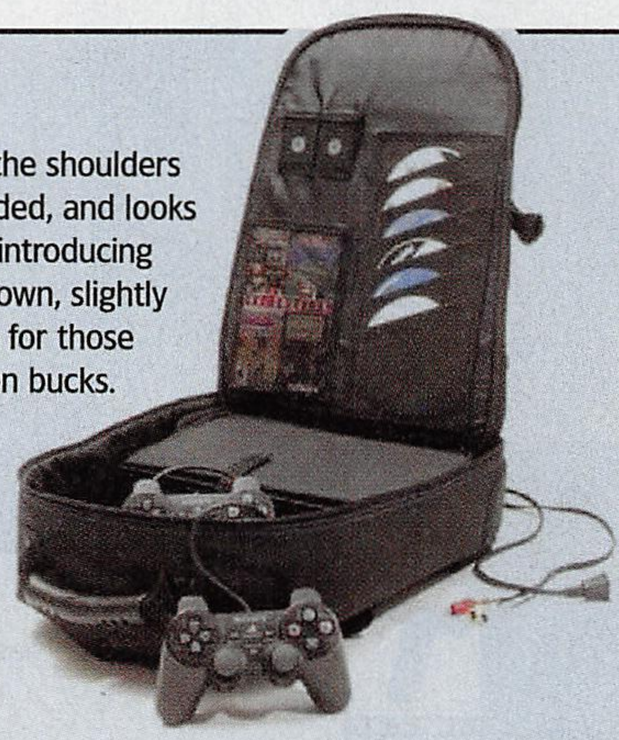
This is actually a NES emulator, which wields a whopping 84 games. We can't list them all, but here are a few of our faves: *Dig Dug, Karateka, 1942, Joust, Elevator Action, Galaga, Goonies, Gradius, Lode Runner, Legend of Kage, Mappy, Pooyan, Paperboy, Pac-Land, Spy vs. Spy*, and *Xevious* The PowerJoy adds several unique features. There's a second controller for two-player games, but the cord connecting it to the main controller is a bit short. Speaking of the main unit, it doubles as a light gun, but only two games use it, and it also has a handy LCD screen with over a dozen additional games — including *Tetris* — and a cartridge slot on its bottom for future collections. The emulation, as usual, is spotty, and don't look for any actual Nintendo games.

PSM Final Score: 7
A system that has some flaws, but offers a lot for your moolah.

LASR GAMEPAK

Manufacturer: LASR / Price: $39.99

Of course, if you're like us, you'd rather just take your PS2 with you wherever you go. You could snag one of these nifty backpacks specifically designed to make traveling with your PS2 safer and easier. It has a snug-fitting compartment that holds your PS2 securely, slots for eight DVDs or games, and pouches for two memory cards, some manuals or DVD cases, your cables and controllers, and even a few other things, like Chap-stik, some sandwiches, and the latest issue of PSM. It's comfy on the shoulders even when fully loaded, and looks sharp. LASR is also introducing a slightly stripped down, slightly less cool GameCase for those who want to save ten bucks.



▶ It's no hard case, but the GamePak is still good protection.

Home ain't that sweet.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Crude Humor
Mature Sexual Themes
Mild Violence

INTERNET CONNECTIVITY required. Online game play available for the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system only. PlayStation 2 online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately).

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GAME BOY ADVANCE

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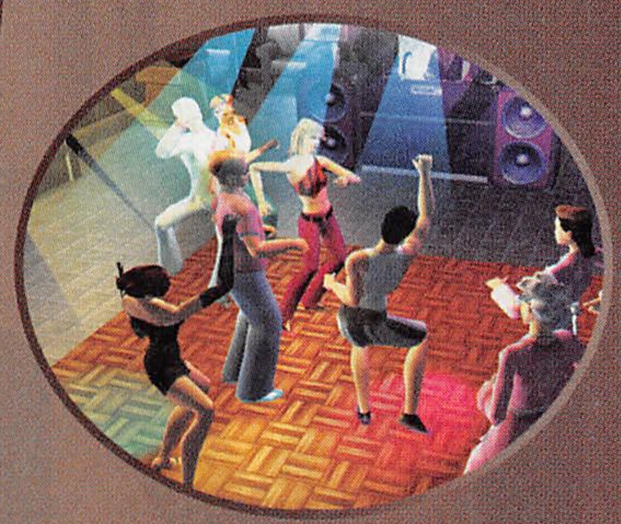
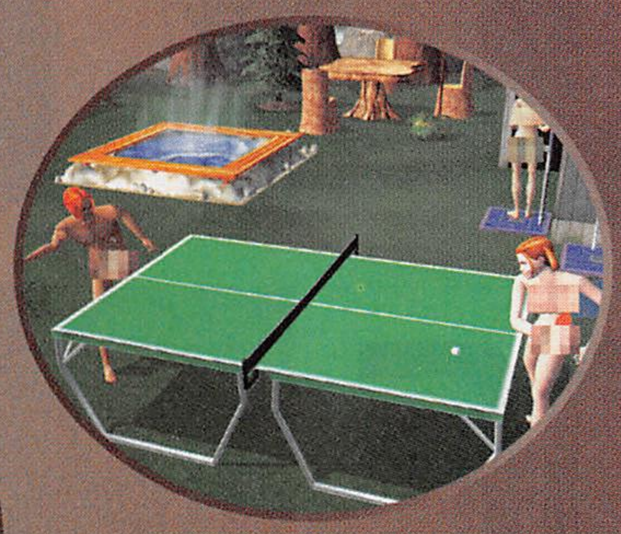
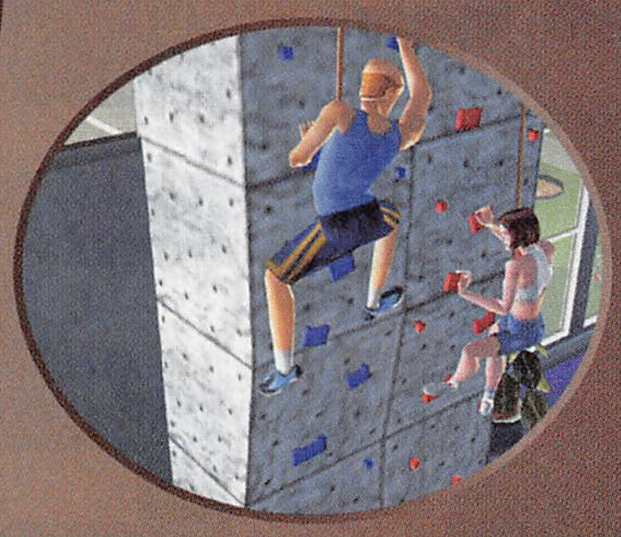
So, where to?



Mona Lott is a dancer at Club Rubb. She digs her man Bing, but, that doesn't mean she won't have some lovin' to spare.



Fran Foofarow lets it all hang out at Pixel Acres. Play your cards right and you'll be seeing more of her. A lot more.



Goldie Toane - flex for her at the gym, and she'll coo over your buff body and maybe tell you a few dirty jokes if you're lucky.

Randy Hart's a regular at Casa Caliente where he loves to give bear hugs on the bear rug. A word to the wise - don't pull his finger.

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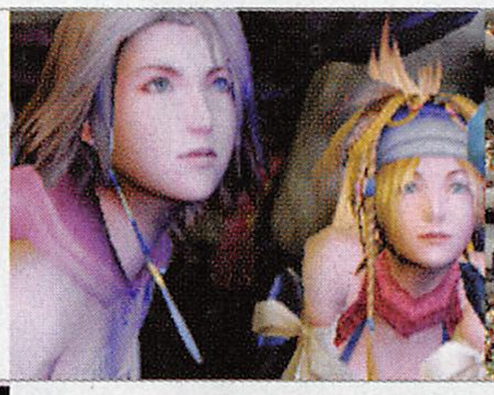
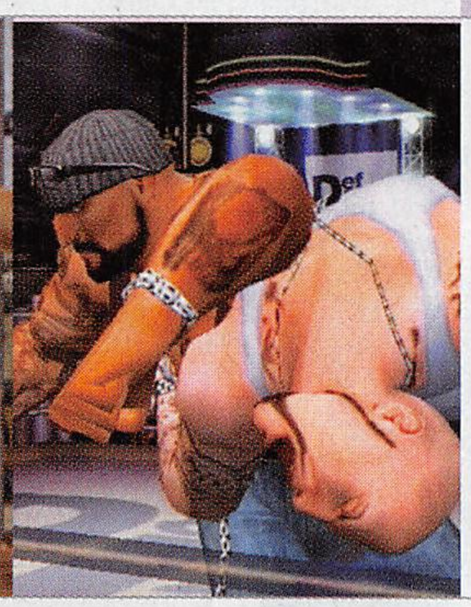
PSM ULTIMATE BUYER'S GUIDE 2003





We originally considered calling this year's buyer's guide special the *PSM Buyer's Survival Guide 2003,* because there are simply so many PS2 games and peripherals in stores this holiday season, it can get downright exhausting trying to sort through all the crap! Thankfully, we've done all the hard work for you. We've played every game released this year, got our hands on loads of gear, and the result is, well... *ultimate*.

No matter what type of game you like, we've got a pick for you, along with some great hardware to take your playing experience to the next level. Don't spend a dime — let alone step into a store — until you've read the next nine pages. And if you do... well, we warned ya! (Just keep the receipts, okay?)

PSM sorts the absolute best from the megatons of "the rest" to bring you the definitive guide to the games and gear you've gotta have!

BEST OF THE BEST ACTION

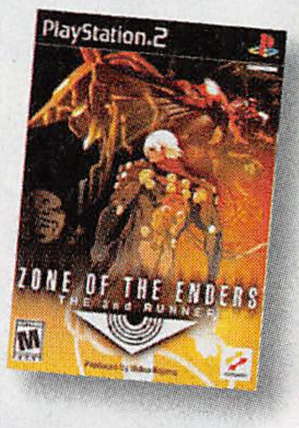
CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

From: **KONAMI** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **9**

Kick some vampire butt... hold on a second, aren't you supposed to stake them through the heart?! Ahem — anyway, this 3D version of the classic series has enough ghoul-whipping action (and some puzzles) to keep would-be slayers busy for days.

ZONE OF THE ENDERS: THE 2ND RUNNER

From: **KONAMI** • Price: **$29.99** • Score: **9**



It's fun to smash things. It's even more fun to smash things when you're piloting a big-ass robot. *ZOE2* is definitely the best "smashing things with a big-ass robot" game we've ever played — heck, it even has some cool story sequences to break up all the smashing. Did we mention it has smashing?

SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALS

From: **SONY CEA** • Price: **$39.99** • Score: **10**

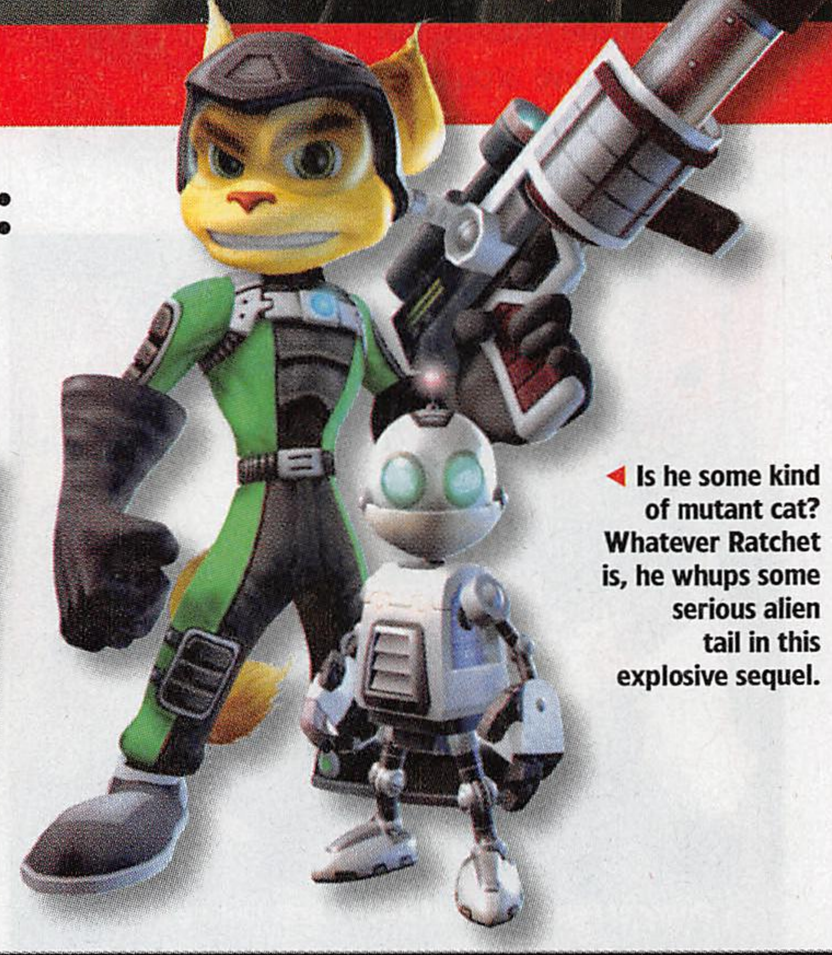
Attention weekend warriors: the end-all, be-all squad combat game is back, and it's ready to kick some serious terrorist tail. Not only has the single-player mode been beefed up with better graphics and more realism, but the online mode has so many new game types and options it'll make your brain hurt.

TOP PICK

RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

From: **SONY CEA** • Price: **$39.99** • Score: **10**

If you're an adrenaline junkie, this game has it all. Loads of weapons and destructive gadgets, plus just enough puzzles to keep your brain from completely turning to jelly. It might not look a whole lot different from the first *Ratchet & Clank,* but there's been a lot of tinkering under the hood to make it a much deeper blast-a-thon overall.



◀ Is he some kind of mutant cat? Whatever Ratchet is, he whups some serious alien tail in this explosive sequel.

LICENSED TO THRILL

It must have been the alignment of the planets, because this year actually saw some really good games based on TV shows and movies. Here are three of our favorites.

BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS

From: **VIVENDI** • Price: **$39.99** • Score: **9** • The show may be over with, but the action continues in *Chaos Bleeds*. The game does a great job of capturing the series' style — but, most of all, it's got some really good fighting gameplay.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS THE RETURN OF THE KING

From: **EA** Price: **$49.99** • Score: **8** • Let's face it: as cool as it would be to live in Middle-Earth, we can't. So, Electronic Arts created the next best thing with *TLOTR: TROTK* — an all-out action fest that looks and sounds like the movies — plus, it has a great online co-op mode!

THE SIMPSONS HIT AND RUN

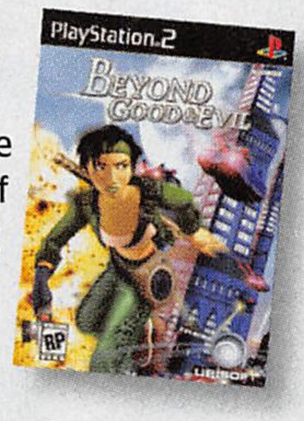
From: **VIVENDI** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **8**

It's the apocalypse! Well, maybe not, but we thought it was when we played the first really good *Simpsons* game in years. *Take Grand Theft Auto,* take out the crime element, set it in Springfield, and you get one really fun game.

BEST OF THE BEST ADVENTURE

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

From: **UBISOFT** • Price **$49.99** • Score: **9**

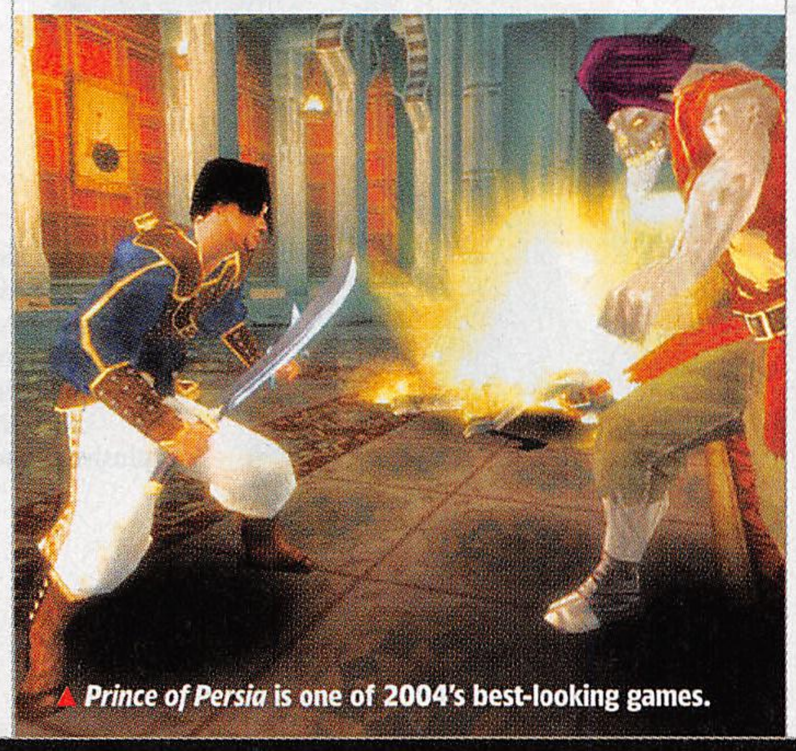


You may not be seeing a lot of ads for this grand action-adventure, but that doesn't mean it's not worth your time and money. In fact, it's one of the most unique and thrilling 3D adventure games ever, with team-based gameplay and a photography system that's a very unique twist.

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

From: **UBISOFT** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **8**

Is it an action game? Is it a puzzle game? The answer is that it's a little bit of both, but mostly it's the most eye-popping adventure game you'll find on PS2. It's extra-heavy on the puzzles, but they all revolve around the wicked acrobatic moves the prince can pull off.



▲ *Prince of Persia* is one of 2004's best-looking games.

TOP PICK

JAK II

From: **SONY CEA** • Price: **$39.99** • Score: **10**

Jak's second PS2 adventure isn't just a whole lot more challenging, it's also the best adventure game yet on the system. For one, it's drop-dead gorgeous. Then you consider the huge world, solid story, and inclusion of new gameplay such as guns, a hoverboard, and races, and... well, it's just a whole lotta great game any way you look at it!

▲ Jak's new, meaner look is great — but the best thing about *Jak II* is its amazing mix of action, adventure, and stunning graphics.

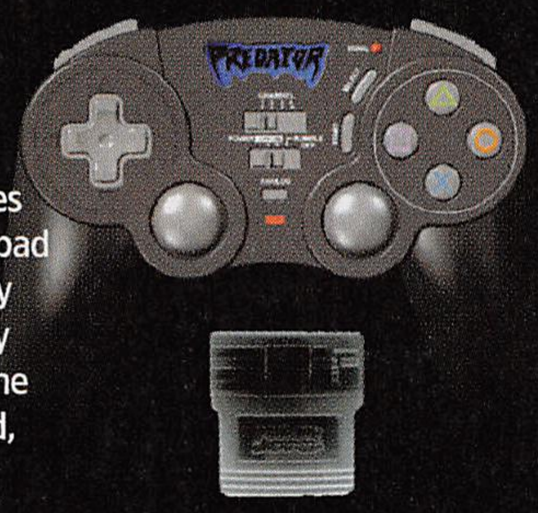
GEAR YOU GOTTA GET

Getting great games for your PS2 is one thing, but there are also a couple of truly must-have peripherals out there that can really increase your enjoyment of them.

PREDATOR WIRELESS CONTROLLER

From: **PELICAN** • Price: **$39.99**

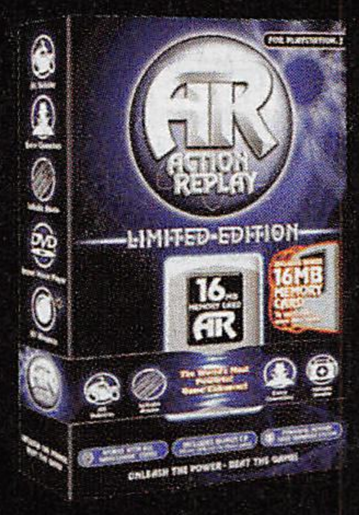
No other wireless pad has pleased our very discerning tastes so thoroughly. Not only does it feel great in your hands, with a superb D-pad and buttons, but we haven't experienced any so-called "dropouts" with its radio-frequency based wireless connection. To top it all off, the L2 and R2 buttons are comfortably recessed, and the feedback effect is surprisingly solid.



ACTION REPLAY MAX 16MB

From: **DATEL** • Price: **$49.99**

Simply the ultimate cheating (and game tweaking) device. This version of the Action Replay (formerly the GameShark) has a great interface, enables automatic code updates via the Internet, and comes with a 16 megabyte memory card — that's twice as much save room as a traditional card, plus you can compress infrequently used saves for even more space.



SHIFT INTO SOMETHING MORE LETHAL

MIDWAY

"With huge levels, branching paths and different styles of gameplay, this isn't a half-assed sequel. It's a tricked-out and expanded new chapter of a burgeoning series."

- IGN

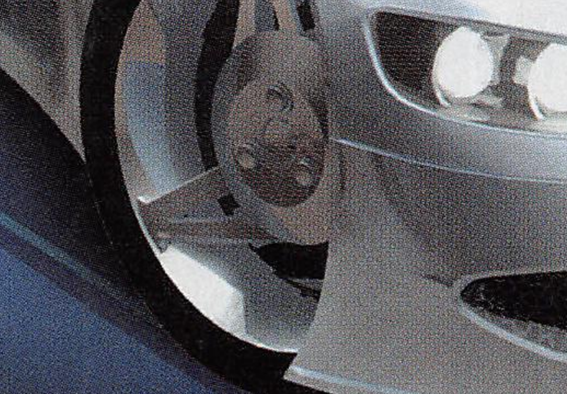
The hunt begins at spyhunter2.midway.com

SPY HUNTER 2

THE HUNT BEGINS AGAIN

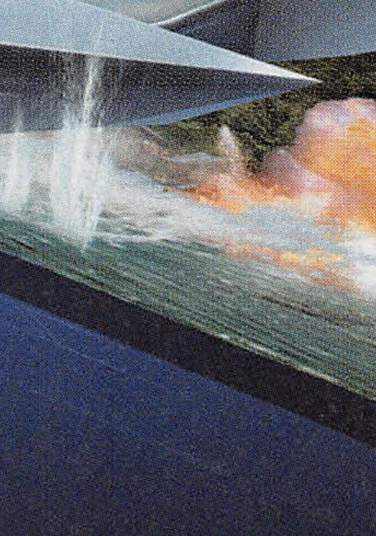
Coming November 21, 2003

Take control of the all-new and fully loaded G-8155 Interceptor. Transform into new vehicles such as a sleek snowmobile and off-road 4x4.



Engage both new and old foes as you trek through more than 15 dangerous missions across four new regions including Russia and the Swiss Alps.

Challenge the leaders of Nostra in all-new end-level boss battles with advanced new weaponry and the assistance of a mysterious new female agent at your side.



PlayStation.2

XBOX

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence

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- PLAY MAGAZINE*

EVERYONE

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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence
Comic Mischief

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NINTENDO GAMECUBE

XBOX

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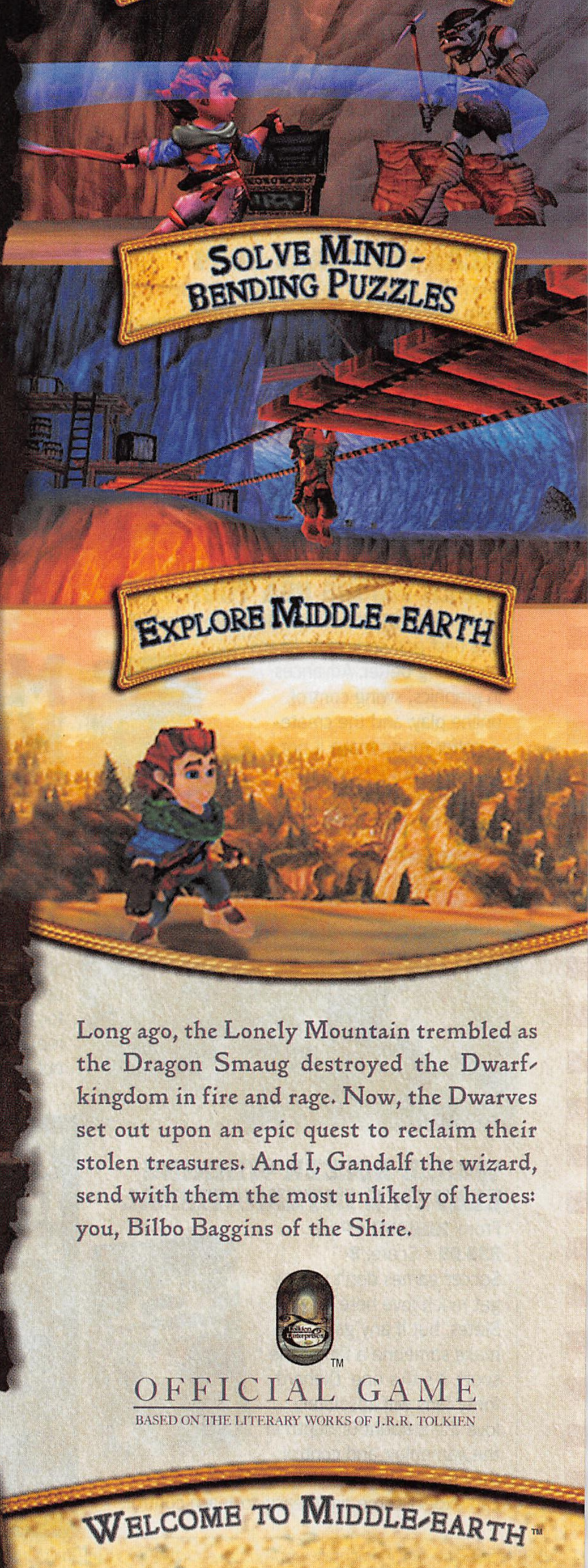
THE ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME BECKONS

ENGAGE IN HAIR-RAISING COMBAT



SOLVE MIND-BENDING PUZZLES

EXPLORE MIDDLE-EARTH

Long ago, the Lonely Mountain trembled as the Dragon Smaug destroyed the Dwarf-kingdom in fire and rage. Now, the Dwarves set out upon an epic quest to reclaim their stolen treasures. And I, Gandalf the wizard, send with them the most unlikely of heroes: you, Bilbo Baggins of the Shire.

TM

OFFICIAL GAME

BASED ON THE LITERARY WORKS OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN

WELCOME TO MIDDLE-EARTH™

thehobbit.sierra.com

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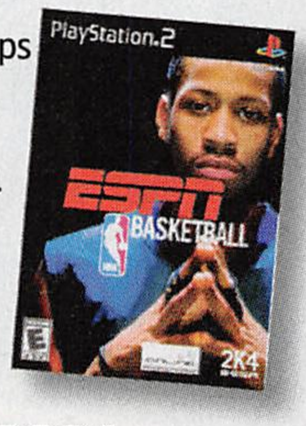
BEST OF THE BEST SPORTS

ESPN NBA BASKETBALL

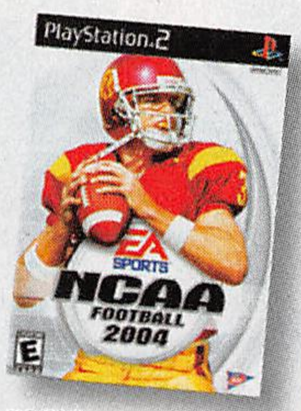
From: **SEGA SPORTS** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **9**



After getting slammed last year by *NBA Live,* Sega's hoops franchise rose like a phoenix from the flames and came back to the front this season. There's not a better looking, better controlling, or more realistic basketball game on the market.

NCAA FOOTBALL 2004

From: **EA SPORTS** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **10**

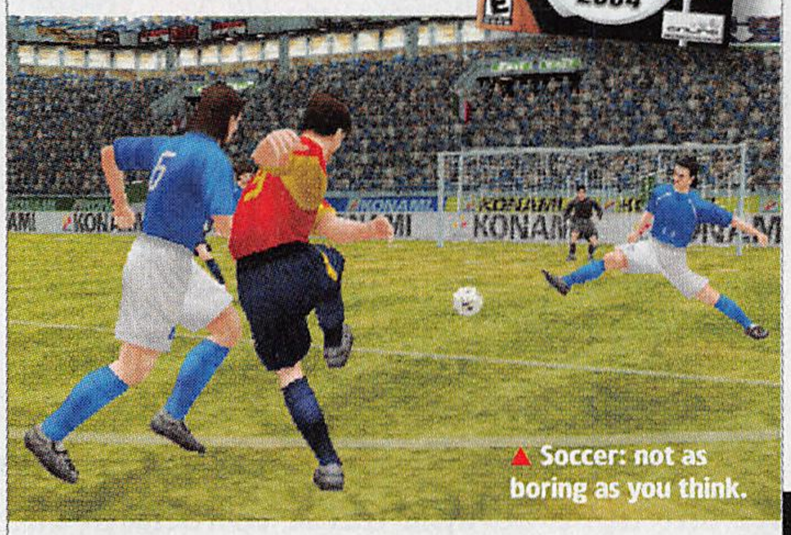


Take everything that's great from *Madden,* focus on college teams (and rivalries) and you have what is still the best college football series on the market. This year's game got a big visual boost, online play, and an even deeper franchise mode. It's a college pigskin fan's dream game.

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

From **EA SPORTS** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **9**

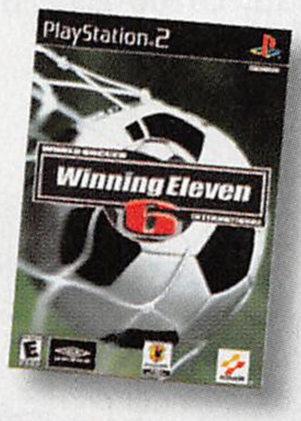
The best golf series just keeps on getting better. Advances in graphics, swing control, online play, and the create-a-golfer mode make it not only a great looking, great playing game, but also the best in the genre.



▲ Soccer: not as boring as you think.

WORLD SOCCER WINNING ELEVEN 6 INTERNATIONAL

From: **KONAMI** • Price: **$39.99** • Score: **9**



Soccer games don't usually get much love here in the States, but if any game can make someone a fan of the sport, it's this one. Diehard footy fans will absolutely love the amount of depth in the gameplay, and control they have over their club, while newcomers can expect some tight, easy-to-learn control.

▲ *Madden* — better than the real thing? Atlanta Falcons QB Michael Vick might have gotten a sore thumb playing the game, instead of a fractured fibula!

TOP PICK

MADDEN NFL 2004

From: **EA SPORTS** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **10**

How does EA keep doing it? Year after year, they manage to make *Madden* the best and deepest football game on the planet, and this year's edition was no different. Everything we love about the series got taken up a notch. If you're looking for the most realistic and replayable football game out there, look no further.

TALK TRASH IN STYLE

SONY USB HEADSET

From: **SONY CEA** • Price: **$29.99**

All of this year's major sports games let you talk to other players when you compete online. There are several voice headsets on the market, but after trying them all, we like Sony's best. It's the most comfortable, and has a nice muting / volume control module built into the cord.

◀ Note: actual headset does not float in midair.

BEST OF THE BEST *EXTREME SPORTS*

▲ **Think you know extreme? You haven't experienced the ultimate videogame rush until you've played *SSX 3!***

TOP PICK

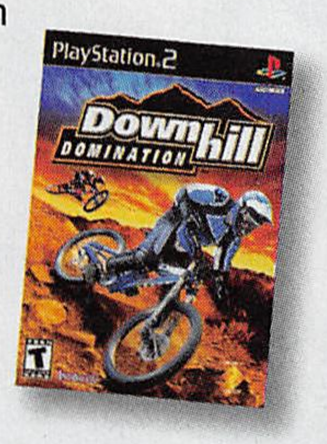
SSX3

From: **EA SPORTS BIG** • Price: **$49.99**
Score: **10** Best. Extreme Sports. Game. Ever! It's as simple as that. *SSX 3* looks amazing, plays even better, and has so much stuff to unlock and uncover that you'll play it for weeks and still not see everything it has to offer. It also classifies as a racing game, but there's so much in terms of trick showoffs (including half-pipes and slopestyle runs) that it will rock fans of both genres.

▼ **Hot tricks *and* hot chicks? *SSX 3* has it all — and then some!**

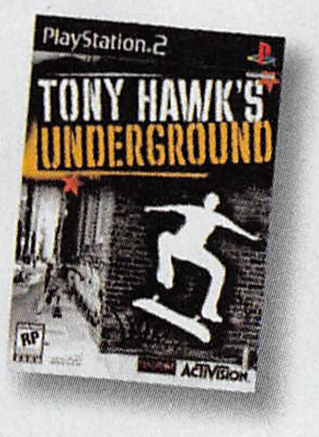
DOWNHILL DOMINATION

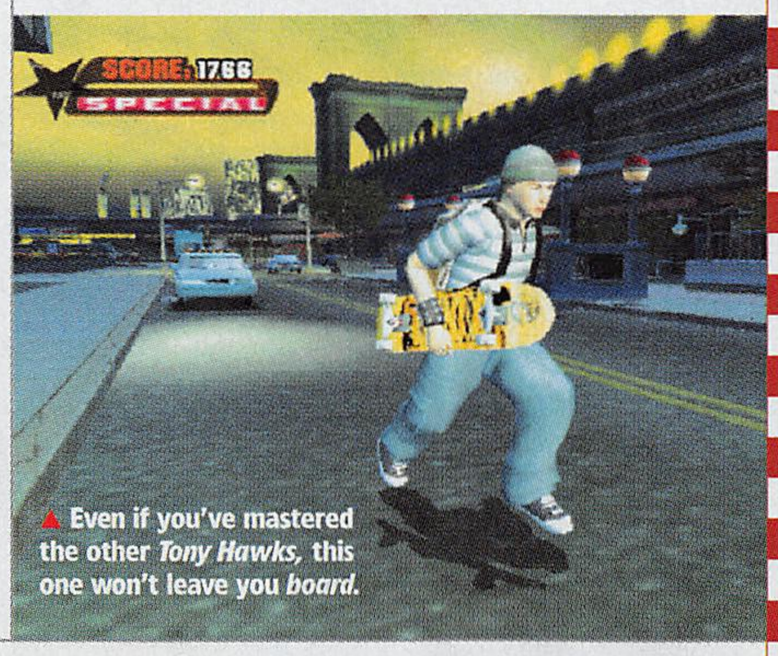
From: **SONY CEA** • Price: **$39.99** • Score: **9**
Who thought a mountain biking game could be so damn fun? This one has a lot in common with the original *SSX:* crazy courses, crazier stunts, and plenty of rider versus rider combat. It's a sleeper hit.



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

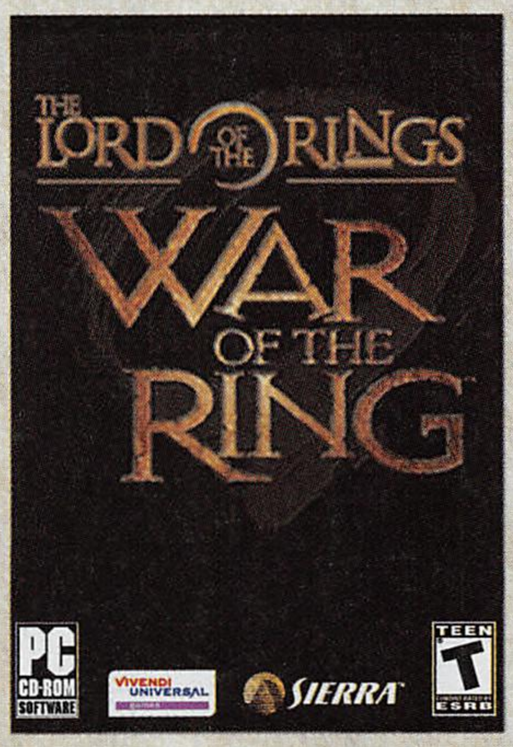
From: **ACTIVISION** • Price: **$49.99**
Score: **REVIEW NEXT ISSUE**
You're the star of the latest *Tony Hawk* game, which takes you off your board and on foot to find even more amazing trick lines. The story mode is great, as is the ability to actually put your face on your skater. Perhaps the coolest thing of all, though: the in-depth trick creation mode. Totally customize!





▲ **Even if you've mastered the other *Tony Hawks,* this one won't leave you *board.***

Welcome to Middle-earth.
The journey begins this fall.



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TEEN T Blood Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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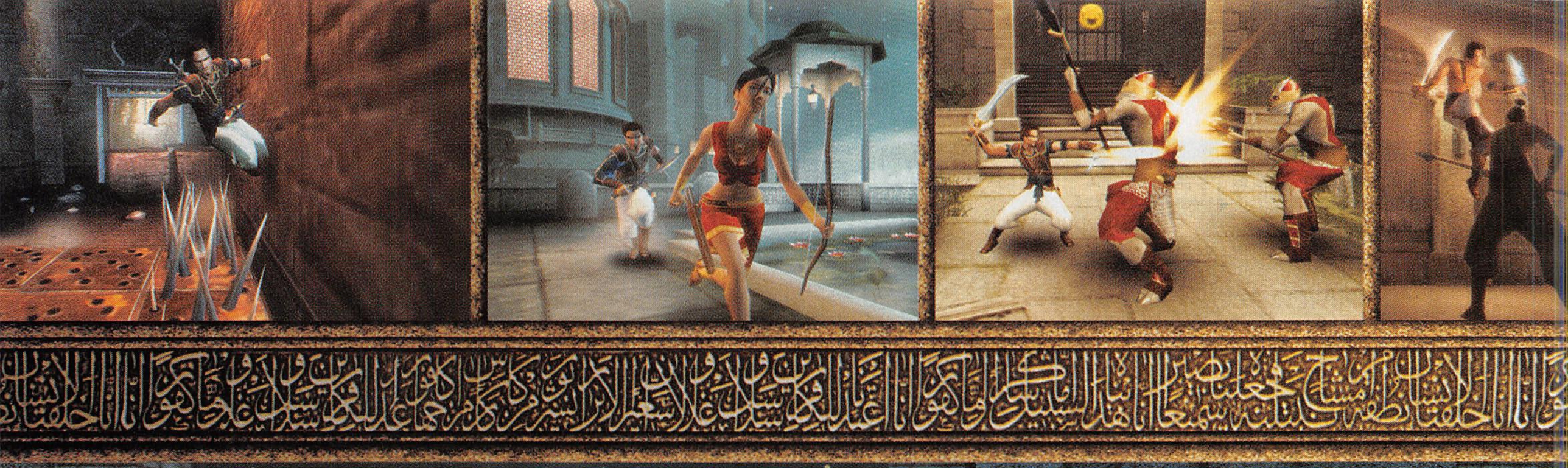

IN MY QUEST
FOR REDEMPTION

NOT EVEN MY
DEATH

I COMMAND THE FORCES OF TIME.

DECEIVED BY A TREACHEROUS VIZIER, I WAS LED TO UNLEASH THE DARK POWERS OF THE SANDS OF TIME UPON THE SULTAN'S KINGDOM. NOW, AS DARKNESS CONSUMES ALL IN ITS PATH, MY SPEED, AGILITY, AND SKILL AS A WARRIOR ARE NOT ENOUGH. I MUST LEARN TO COMMAND THE SANDS TO SLOW, FREEZE, ACCELERATE, AND EVEN REVERSE TIME ITSELF. IF I FAIL TO UNDO MY FATAL MISTAKE, ALL SHALL PERISH WITH ME. MINE IS A FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL. . . NOT GLORY.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Violence
Suggestive Themes

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

XBOX

NINTENDO GAMECUBE

PlayStation.2

GAME BOY ADVANCE

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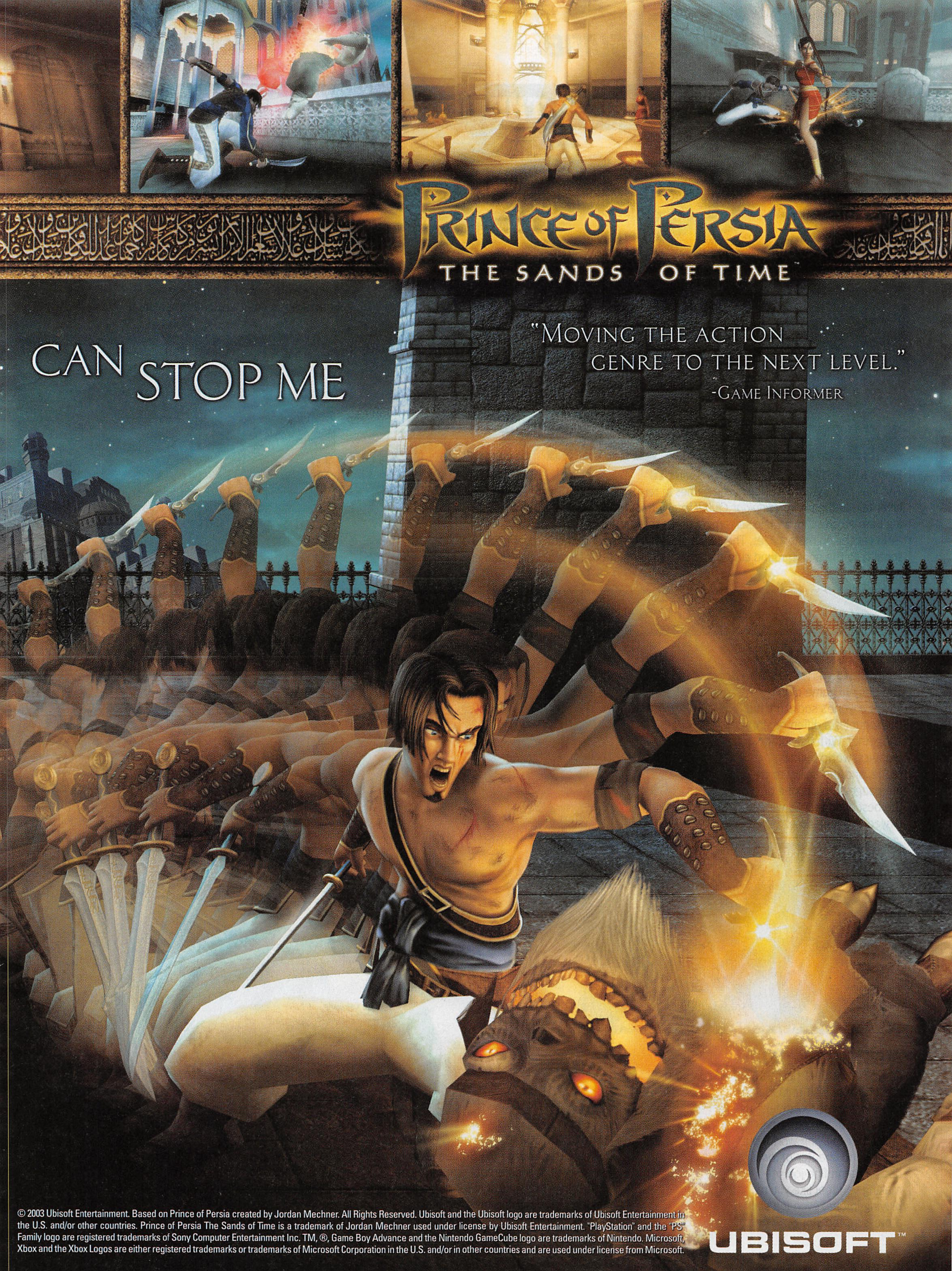

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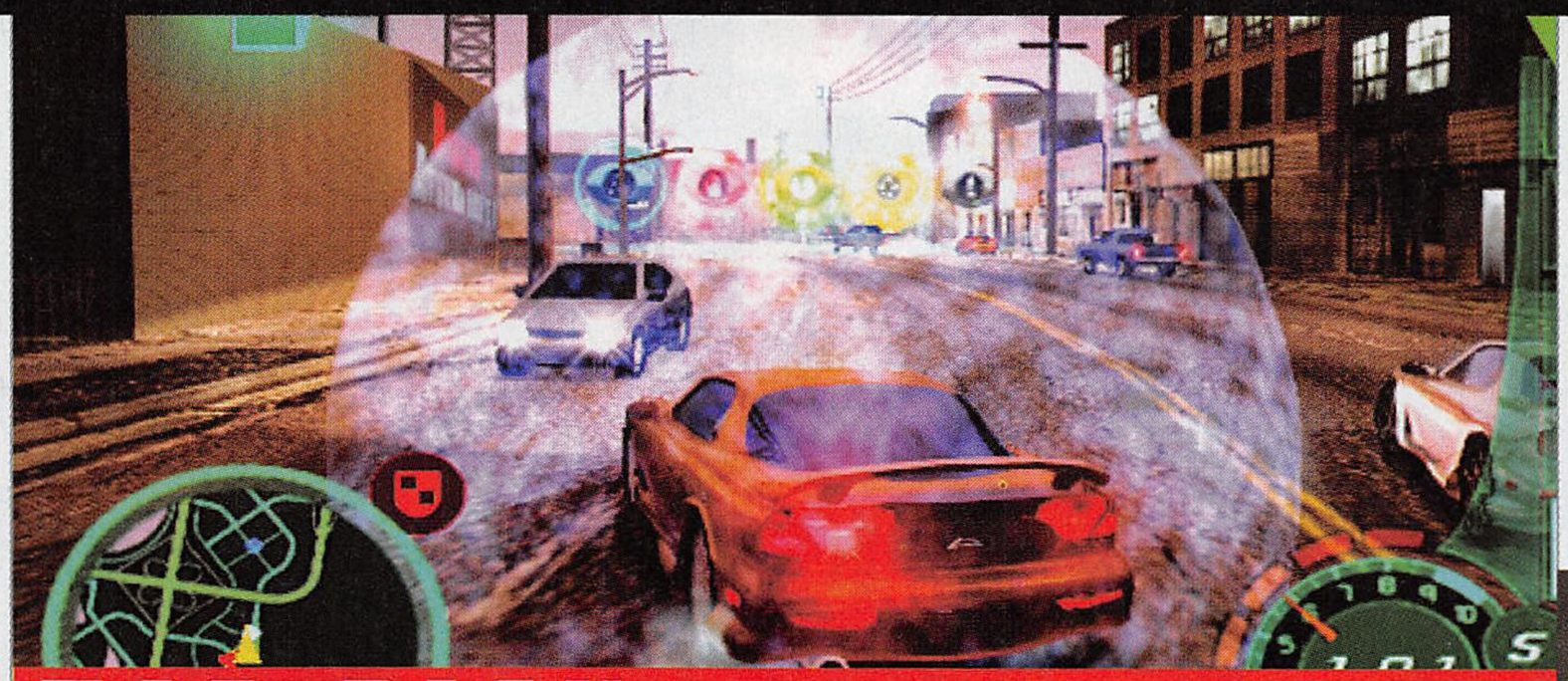
BEST OF THE BEST *RACING*

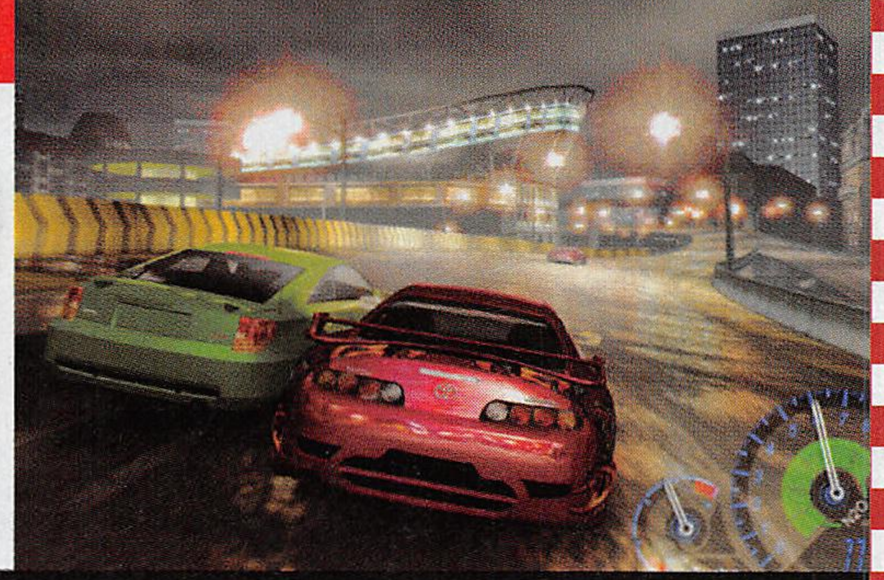


NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

From: **EA** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **8**

The only other really good racing contender this year is not as amazing as last year's *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2,* but its solid control, well designed courses, and huge amount of tuning options make it a great choice nonetheless.

▲ **No other PS2 racer gives you as much control over your car's appearance as *Need For Speed Underground* does.**



TOP PICK

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

From: **ROCKSTAR** • Price: **$39.99** • Score: **10**

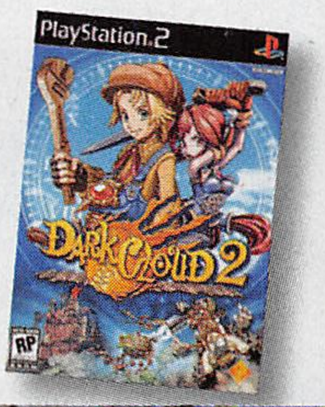
This was not a great year for racing games in terms of quantity, but there was one killer title in the genre. *Midnight Club II* totally trashes the original game, delivering pure arcade thrills while screaming down the streets of L.A., Paris, and Tokyo — in cars or on motorcycles. The sense of speed is amazing, there's a lot of personality to the underground culture, and it's still one of our favorite online games.

BEST OF THE BEST: *ROLE-PLAYING GAMES*

DARK CLOUD 2

From: **SONY** • Price **$49.99** • Score: **9**

The original game didn't knock anyone's socks off, but the sequel is a different story altogether. With its vibrant graphics, world building mode, and the ability to create gadgets, this is one of the best action RPGs we've played in a long time.

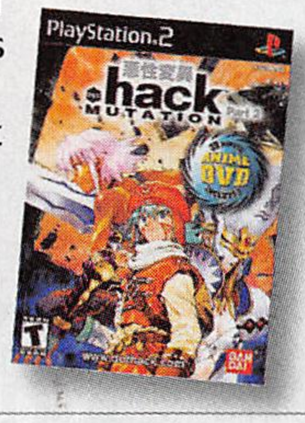


▲ *Dark Cloud 2* **is one of the most unique playing RPGs yet!**

.HACK//MUTATION

From: **BANDAI** • Price: **$39.99** • Score: **8**

We'll have to wait until March for *Final Fantasy XI* to take us into a brave new persistent online role-playing world, but the second chapter of *.hack* does a damn fine job of making you feel like you're playing in one, even if it's all a pre-scripted story.



▼ **Yuna and her gal pals tackle one mission after another in *FFX-2*.**

TOP PICK

FINAL FANTASY X-2

From: **SQUARE ENIX** • Price: **$49.99**

It seems that every RPG Square Enix touches is pure gold, and this one is no different. Well, it is different — in terms of gameplay. It's not just "more *Final Fantasy X;*" it brings in a new style of gameplay which sees Yuna and her all-girl treasure hunting team tackling missions in whatever sequence they choose, and even has the *FFX* heroine sporting pistols and costume change options for crazy combat.

UNLEASH YOUR VENGEANCE

"The best *Legacy of Kain* installment yet"
–Gamespy

"This game will own your soul. It already has ours"
–IGN

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MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Intense Violence

PlayStation 2

XBOX

CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

eidos

SLAUGHTER MERCILESSLY.

Utilize powerful telekinetic abilities to hurl enemies into objects, impale them on sharp objects, or throw them off ledges.

Engage in thrilling combo moves using physical agility, telekinesis, and the formidable Reaver blade to destroy hordes of human, and undead foes.

As Kain or Raziel, feed your dark hunger by sucking the blood and devouring the souls of enemies to survive.

LEGACY OF KAIN
DEFIANCE™

COMING NOVEMBER 2003

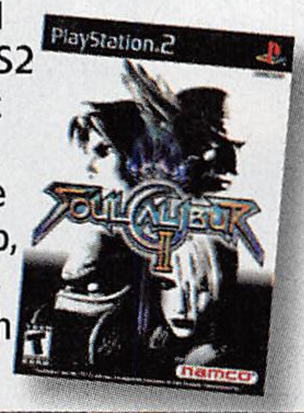
legacyofkain.com

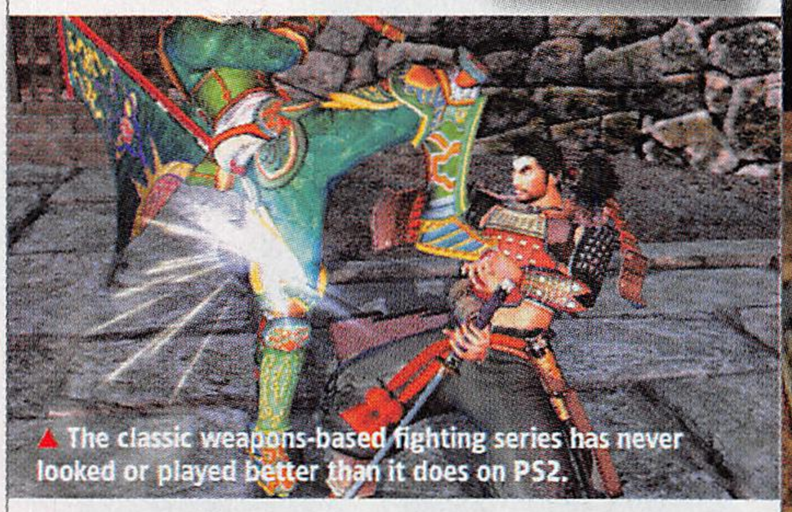
BEST OF THE BEST FIGHTING

SOUL CALIBUR II

From: **NAMCO** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **9**

The ultimate weapons-based fighter makes its debut on PS2 with stunning visuals, a great cast of characters, and loads of depth. This is one of those fighters that's easy to pick up, but rewards more hardcore fighting fans with more depth the more they practice.





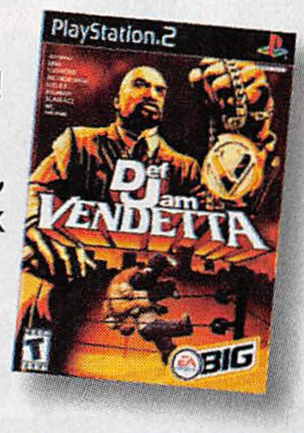
▲ The classic weapons-based fighting series has never looked or played better than it does on PS2.

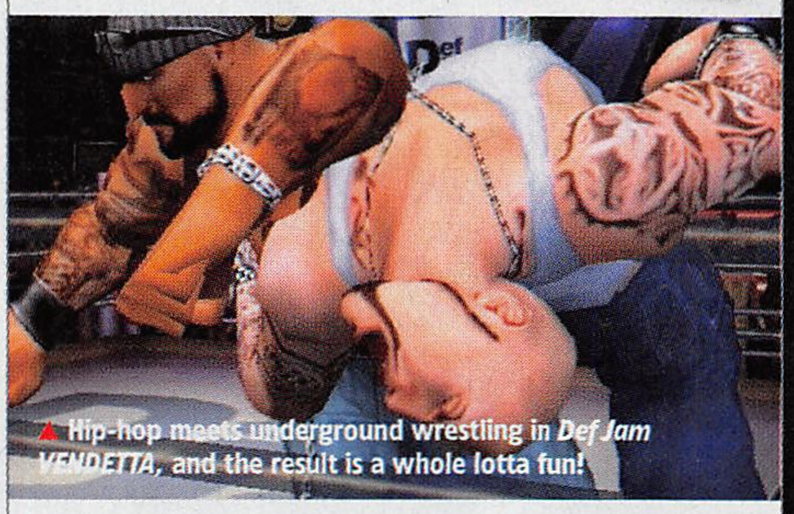
DEF JAM VENDETTA

From: **EA SPORTS BIG**

Price: **$39.99** • Score: **9**

Don't call it a wrestling game! Well, it technically is, but the underground setting, controls, and loads of flair make it look and play more like a truly 3D fighting game. There's just no better grappler in terms of graphics or gameplay.



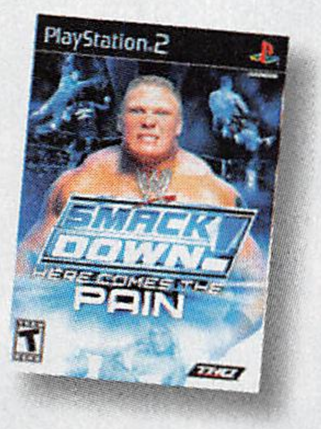


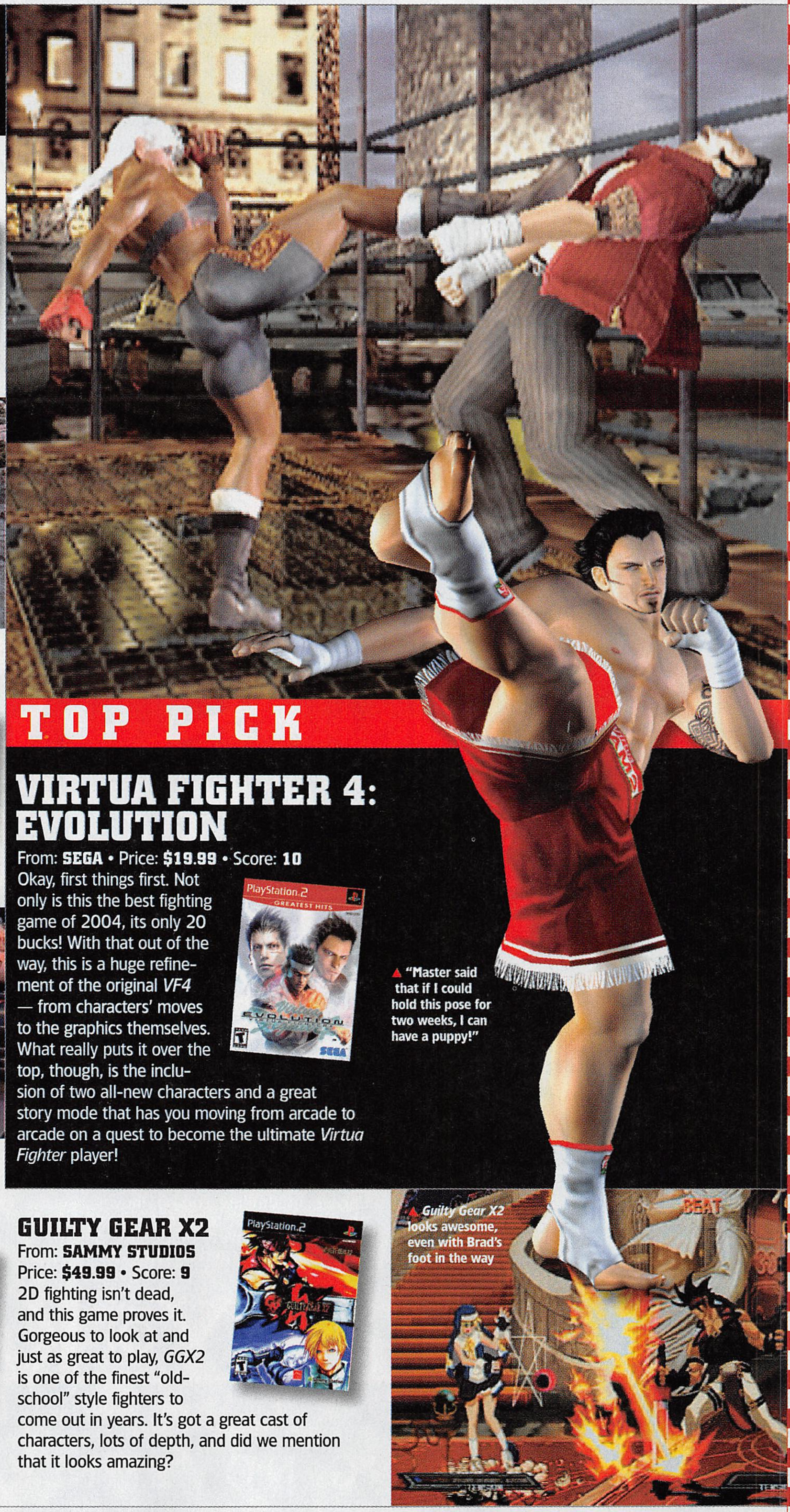
▲ Hip-hop meets underground wrestling in *Def Jam VENDETTA*, and the result is a whole lotta fun!

WWE SMACKDOWN! HERE COMES THE PAIN

From: **THQ** • Price: **$49.99** • Score: **9**

Finally, a really good pro wrestling game for PS2! The season mode in this one's great, but there have been so many refinements made to the gameplay of the past *SmackDown!* games that it's almost like a whole new series. If you're still into WWE, this is a definite must-have.





TOP PICK

VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION

From: **SEGA** • Price: **$19.99** • Score: **10**

Okay, first things first. Not only is this the best fighting game of 2004, its only 20 bucks! With that out of the way, this is a huge refinement of the original *VF4* — from characters' moves to the graphics themselves. What really puts it over the top, though, is the inclusion of two all-new characters and a great story mode that has you moving from arcade to arcade on a quest to become the ultimate *Virtua Fighter* player!

▲ "Master said that if I could hold this pose for two weeks, I can have a puppy!"

GUILTY GEAR X2

From: **SAMMY STUDIOS**

Price: **$49.99** • Score: **9**

2D fighting isn't dead, and this game proves it. Gorgeous to look at and just as great to play, *GGX2* is one of the finest "old-school" style fighters to come out in years. It's got a great cast of characters, lots of depth, and did we mention that it looks amazing?

▲ *Guilty Gear X2* looks awesome, even with Brad's foot in the way

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

*Whether you're as hardcore as they come, love a good scare, or just want to blow off some steam, PSM has rounded up some special shopping lists this year to suit your tastes. **NOTE:** not all of these games were released in 2003, but you can still get 'em anywhere!*

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A GOOD CHALLENGE

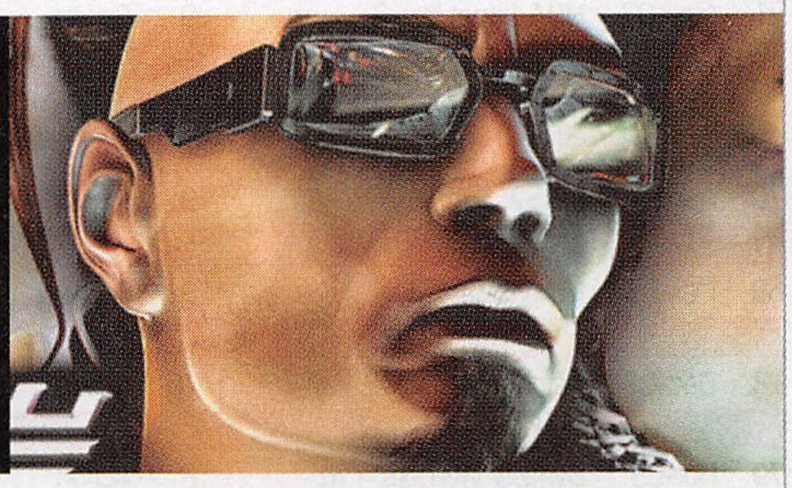
1. JAK II ▶
2. CONTRA: SHATTERED SOLDIER
3. MAXIMO: GHOSTS TO GLORY
4. MIDNIGHT CLUB II
5. RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

IF YOU'RE LOOKING TO BE SCARED

1. SILENT HILL 3 ▶
2. FATAL FRAME
3. THE THING
4. BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER: CHAOS BLEEDS
5. CLOCK TOWER 3

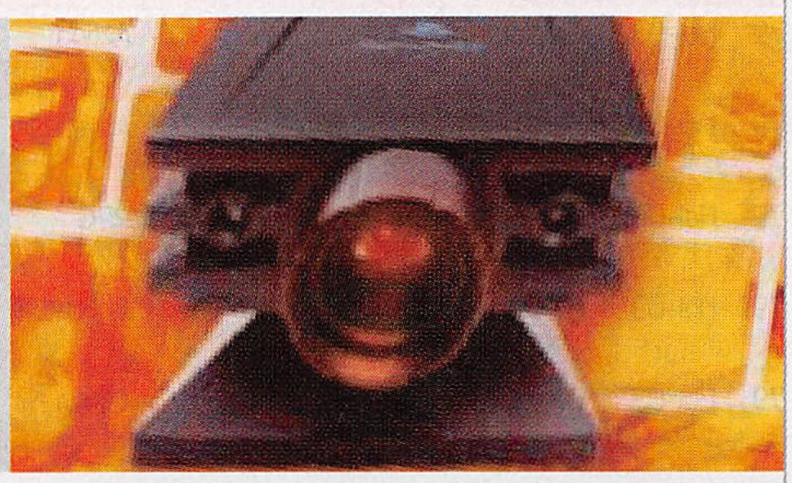
IF YOU'RE AN ADRENALINE JUNKIE

1. MIDNIGHT CLUB II ▶
2. SSX 3
3. BURNOUT 2
4. DYNASTY WARRIORS 4
5. DOWNHILL DOMINATION



IF YOU WANT WEIRD

1. EYETOY: PLAY ▶
2. BOMBASTIC
3. BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS
4. SPACE CHANNEL 5: SPECIAL EDITION
5. APE ESCAPE 2



IF YOU JUST WANT TO BLOW STUFF UP

1. GRAND THEFT AUTO 3 / VICE CITY DOUBLE PACK ▶
2. ZONE OF THE ENDERS: THE 2ND RUNNER
3. FREEDOM FIGHTERS
4. THE HULK
5. RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO

THE COMPLETE MUST-HAVE LIST

It's not easy to become one of PSM's must-have games. Only games that score higher than an eight are bestowed with this honor, and 2003 has been a good year for inductees into our hallf of fame. Below is a list of every PSM Must-Have game for the year — you can't go wrong with any of 'em!

Issue	Month	Game name	Score	Genre	Publisher
78	Dec-03	Ratchet & Clank 2	10	Action	Sony CEA
78	Dec-03	SSX 3	10	Racing	EA Sports BIG
77	Nov-03	Jak II	10	Action	Sony CEA
75	Sep-03	Madden NFL 2004	10	Sports	EA Sports
75	Sep-03	NCAA 2004	10	Sports	EA Sports
75	Sep-03	VF4: Evolution	10	Fighting	Sega
72	June-03	Midnight Club II	10	Racing	Rockstar
79	Hol-03	Beyond Good & Evil	9	Adventure	Ubisoft
79	Hol-03	Kya: Dark Lineage	9	Action	Atari
79	Hol-03	Medal of Honor Rising Sun	9	Action	EA
79	Hol-03	NCAA March Madness 2004	9	Sports	EA Sports
78	Dec-03	Castlevania: LOI	9	Action	Konami
78	Dec-03	ESPN NBA Basketball	9	Sports	Sega
78	Dec-03	Time Crisis 3	9	Action	Namco
78	Dec-03	WWE SmackDown! HCTP	9	Fighting	THQ
78	Dec-03	Warhammer 40,000: FW	9	Action	THQ
77	Nov-03	DDRMax 2	9	Dancing	Konami
77	Nov-03	ESPN NHL Hockey	9	Sports	Sega
77	Nov-03	Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004	9	Sports	EA Sports
76	Oct-03	Buffy The Vampire Slayer	9	Action	Vivendi
76	Oct-03	Soul Calibur II	9	Fighting	Namco
75	Sep-03	ESPN NFL Football	9	Sports	Sega
74	Aug-03	Downhill Domination	9	Racing	Sony CEA
71	May-03	NBA Street Vol. 2	9	Sports	EA Sports BIG
71	May-03	Splinter Cell	9	Action	Ubisoft
71	May-03	ZOE2: The 2nd Runner	9	Action	Konami
70	Apr-03	Def Jam VENDETTA	9	Fighting	EA Sports BIG
70	Apr-03	MGS2: Substance	9	Action	Konami
70	Apr-03	World Soccer Winning 11 6	9	Sports	Konami
69	Mar-03	Guilty Gear X2	9	Fighting	Sammy
67	Jan-03	NCAA College Basketball 2K3	9	Sports	Sega
78	Dec-03	Ratchet & Clank 2	10	Action	Sony CEA
79	Hol-03	Crash Nitro Kart	8	Racing	Vivendi
79	Hol-03	Dynasty Warriors 4 XL	8	Action	Koei
79	Hol-03	ESPN College Hoops	8	Sports	Sega
79	Hol-03	Gladiator	8	Action	Acclaim
79	Hol-03	The Haunted Mansion	8	Action	TDK
79	Hol-03	Legacy of Kain: Defiance	8	Adventure	Eidos
79	Hol-03	TLOTR, Return of The King	8	Action	EA
79	Hol-03	Monster Rancher 4	8	RPG	Tecmo
79	Hol-03	Need For Speed Underground	8	Racing	EA
79	Hol-03	Prince of Persia	8	Adventure	Ubisoft
79	Hol-03	RPG Maker 2	8	RPG	Agetec
79	Hol-03	Secret Weap Over Normandy	8	Action	LucasArts
79	Hol-03	Sphinx & Cursed Mummy	8	Adventure	THQ
78	Dec-03	FIFA Soccer 2004	8	Sports	EA Sports
78	Dec-03	Gladius	8	RPG	LucasArts
78	Dec-03	Karaoke Revolution	8	Music	Konami
78	Dec-03	Metal Arms: GITS	8	Action	Vivendi
78	Dec-03	NBA Live 2004	8	Sports	EA Sports
78	Dec-03	SWAT: Global Stike Force	8	Action	Vivendi
77	Nov-03	Disney's Extreme Skate Adv	8	Action	Activision
77	Nov-03	Freedom Fighters	8	Action	EA
77	Nov-03	Lethal Skies II	8	Action	Sammy
77	Nov-03	NASCAR Thunder 2004	8	Racing	EA Sports
77	Nov-03	NHL Hitz Pro	8	Sports	Midway
77	Nov-03	The Simpsons: Hit And Run	8	Action	Vivendi
77	Nov-03	Space Channel 5: Special Ed	8	Music	Agetec
77	Nov-03	Wallace & Gromit	8	Action	Bam!
76	Oct-03	Bombastic	8	Puzzle	Capcom
76	Oct-03	NHL 2004	8	Sports	EA Sports
76	Oct-03	Romance /Three Kingdoms VIII	8	Strategy	Koei
75	Sep-03	Hunter: Reckoning Wayward	8	Action	Vivendi
75	Sep-03	Indiana Jones	8	Adventure	LucasArts
74	Aug-03	Ape Escape 2	8	Action	Ubisoft
74	Aug-03	The Hulk	8	Action	Vivendi
74	Aug-03	K1 World Grand Prix	8	Fighting	Konami
74	Aug-03	Naval Ops: Warship Gunner	8	Sim	Koei
74	Aug-03	Silent Line-Armored Core	8	Action	Agetec
73	July-03	Wakeboarding Unleashed	8	Sports	Activision
72	June-03	Colin McRae Rally	8	Racing	Codemasters
72	June-03	.hack//MUTATION	8	RPG	Bandai
72	June-03	Indycar Series	8	Racing	Codemasters
71	May-03	Amplitude	8	Music	Sony CEA
71	May-03	Dynasty Warriors 4	8	Action	Koei
71	May-03	Gallop Racer 2003	8	Racing	Tecmo
71	May-03	World Series Baseball 2003	8	Sports	Sega
70	Apr-03	Aero Elite: Combat Academy	8	Action	Sega
70	Apr-03	MLB Slugfest 20-04	8	Sports	Midway
70	Apr-03	MVP Baseball 2003	8	Sports	EA Sports
70	Apr-03	Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc	8	Platform	Ubisoft
69	Mar-03	Dark Cloud 2	8	RPG	Sony CEA
69	Mar-03	Primal	8	Adventure	Sony CEA
68	Feb-03	Battle Engine Aquila	8	Shooter	Atari
68	Feb-03	Pride FC	8	Fighting	THQ
68	Feb-03	War Of The Monsters	8	Fighting	Sony
68	Feb-03	World Tour Soccer 2003	8	Sports	Sony CEA
67	Jan-03	ATV Offroad Fury 2	8	Racing	Sony CEA
67	Jan-03	Pro Race Driver	8	Racing	Codemasters
67	Jan-03	The Sims	8	Simulation	EA

DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE

Two of the "year's biggest games" turned out to be two of its worst. Avoid them at all costs!

ENTER THE MATRIX

From: **ATARI** • Score: **6**

Even if you loved the first and second movies, this big-budget videogame adaptation falls flat. It mixes nearly every genre under the sun, and the result is a game that's not much fun on any level.

TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS

From: **EIDOS** • Score: **5**

Talk about a major disappointment! After years of waiting, Lara Croft's first PS2 adventure — despite promises of revolutionary gameplay — turned out to be the worst playing game in the series, and certainly didn't seem revolutionary (though it was full of bugs).

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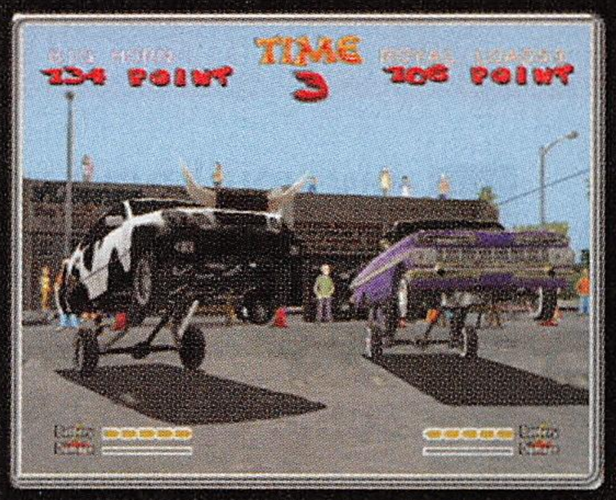

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mild Lyrics
Suggestive Themes

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PlayStation®2

LOWRIDER MAGAZINE™

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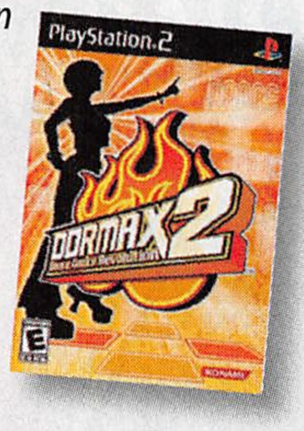
BEST OF THE BEST *PARTY GAMES*

DDRMAX 2

From: **KONAMI** • Price: **$39.99** • Score: **9**

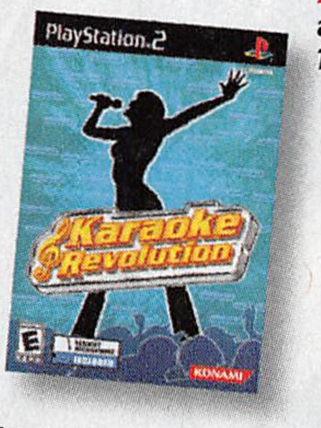


The *Dance Dance Revolution* games are famous for a reason: they're a lot of fun. This latest edition is no exception. It's packed with new tunes to dance to. Be sure to check out last issue's reviews section for the lowdown on the best PS2 dance pads!

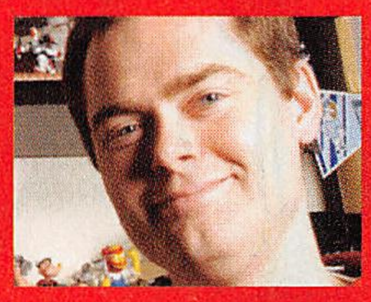
▲ ***DDRMax 2,* a.k.a. *Sweatin' To The Top 40.***

KARAOKE REVOLUTION

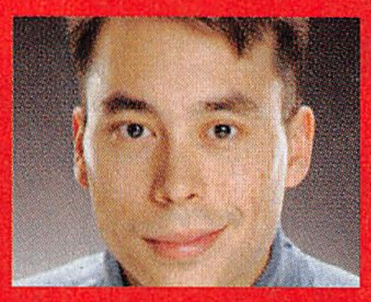
From: **KONAMI** • Price: **$39.99/$59.99** (with headset) • Score: **8** We can't believe no one tried this sooner. Karaoke is a lot of fun, so why not turn it into a game, with scores, competition, etc? That's exactly what *Karaoke Revolution* does. It's got a pretty wide variety of tracks to sing along to, ranging from easy slow tunes to crazy-fast difficulty. It's great to play with friends, even if you can't sing worth a lick!



PSM EDITORS' TOP 5 PICKS

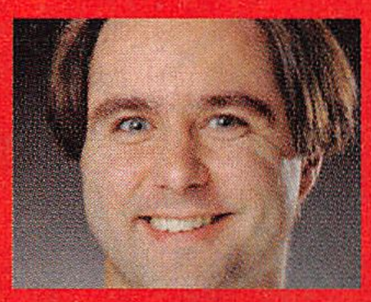


CHRIS
1. JAK II
2. SSX 3
3. RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO
4. KARAOKE REVOLUTION
5. GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK



STEVE
1. SSX 3
2. VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION
3. RATCHET & CLANK: GOING COMMANDO
4. NBA STREET VOL. 2
5. GUILTY GEAR X2

RANDY
1. SSX 3
2. DEF JAM VENDETTA
3. ZONE OF THE ENDERS 2
4. MIDNIGHT CLUB II
5. CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE



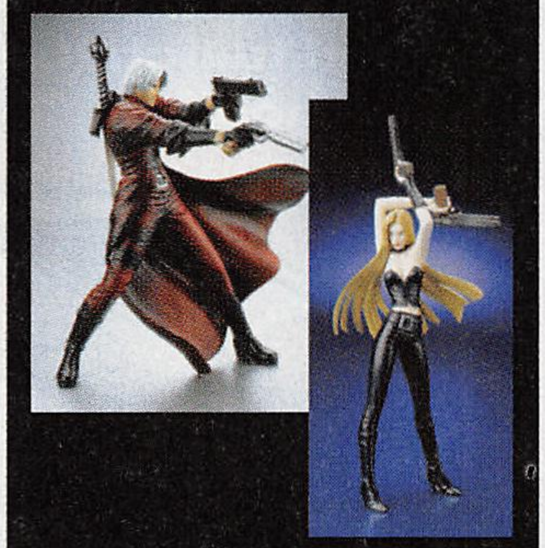
ERIC
1. VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION
2. FINAL FANTASY X-2
3. BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
4. DDRMAX 2
5. TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2004

IT FIGURES

This was a pretty dry year for videogame-based action figures, but these are our favorites of the bunch. They'll look great in any gaming room!

DEVIL MAY CRY

From: **TOYCOM**
Price: **$9.99 EACH**
They may not have a dozen points of articulation (they're more like statues), but these are definitely some of the best-looking videogame figures we've ever seen. Dante and Trish (thankfully from *DMC1*) look perfect!



SOUL CALIBUR II

From: **MCFARLANE TOYS**
Price: **$9.99 EACH**
McFarlane Toys' latest game-related figures are a little smaller than we're used to, but they look hot nonetheless. They're little statuettes on display stands, so they're perfect for shelves.

Now you know what we meant — there really are a lot of must-have games this year, huh? Hopefully we've steered you clear of any potential purchasing disasters waiting to happen (and trust us, there are plenty) and towards some of the best times you'll have had yet with your PS2. And if you're using the guide to buy gifts for others — which is always nice — you won't have to worry about giving them the videogame equivalent of a Chia Pet. That's all for this year, folks — look for our next *Ultimate Buyer's Guide* in the Holiday 2004 issue of PSM, complete with our picks for the best games on Sony's PSP handheld!

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Blood and Gore
Mild Language
Violence

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PlayStation 2

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

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LEGACY OF KAIN DEFIANCE

Crystal's epic, gothic fairy tale is bigger and bloodier than ever

REVIEW

Legacy of Kain: Defiance
Developer: Crystal Dynamics
Publisher: Eidos
Type: Action
Max Players: One
Rated: Mature

Despite no small success, Crystal Dynamics' *Blood Omen/ Soul Reaver* franchise has yet to reach its full potential and become one of gaming's flagship series. Whether starring the tragic, wraithlike hero Raziel or the cold, vampiric anti-hero Kain, previous entries still lacked something. As it happens, it looks like that intangible thing Kain and Raziel were missing was one another. By casting both characters in its massive latest offering, Crystal has crafted the franchise's strongest entry yet.

To explain the entire history of this plot-heavy franchise would take more room than we have here. But to sum it up, Kain is a brutally powerful vampire who carries a blood-drinking sword called the Soul Reaver. Raziel is a blue-skinned, soul-eating wraith who wields the protoplasmic, soul-leeching spirit version of the exact same sword. There's no love lost between the two. To say more would give away too much of the compelling, though initially confusing story, which is told via superb voice acting and gracefully well-written dialogue.

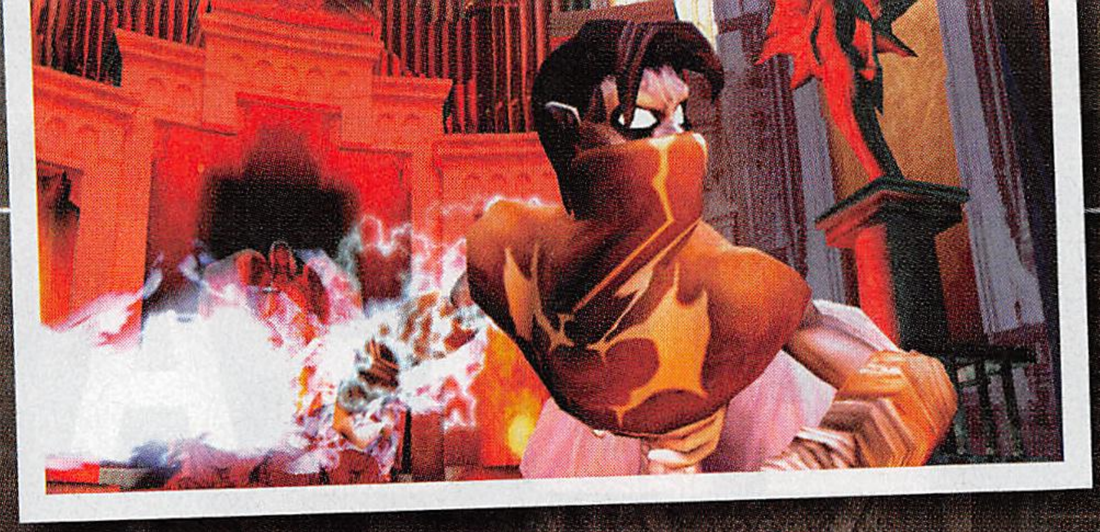
▲ Raziel has the ability to slip into the Spectral Realm, where stray spirits and beasts roam warped terrain.

TELEKINETIC TKO

Of course, there's more to games than story — that's why we don't call them "books." *Defiance* is all about top-notch, third-person combat and exploration. We'll start with combat. Raz and Kain both wield their own simple-yet-effective sword combos, including airborne variations, as well as plenty of state-of-the-art, superhuman bang, bang. The most useful of these powers is telekinesis, or TK, which enables either character to fire blasts of pure psionic energy at opponents, or even hurl an enemy over a castle wall, onto a spike, into a lit torch... whatever your sadistic little heart desires.

Even without TK, combat is a joy to execute, with tight controls and excellent, intuitive auto-targeting, even among multiple targets. There are only a few troubles. First off, that eternal action game Achilles' heel, the camera, occasionally fails to give you a clear view of the action, which sometimes makes both fighting and plain jumping more difficult than necessary. It's wonderfully cinematic, but the additional ability to center the camera behind you with a button press would have been very welcome. As it is, we found ourselves constantly going into first-person look-around mode. Also, we have a couple quibbles with the control scheme. Both feeding your reaver and

LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE



▲ Both character's Soul Reavers can be charged with elemental nuances, like Flame, Spirit, or Darkness. Raziel's has more options, though.

VAMPIRIC VALOR

The vampire Kain roars through his levels like the angel of death himself. Supremely self confident and a tad arrogant as well, this coldly efficient killer is trying to avert a doomed fate.

▲ Kain can kill anyone he sees, but has trouble finding his true enemies.

▲ You know a bad guy is going to be trouble when he's on fire and he doesn't even notice.

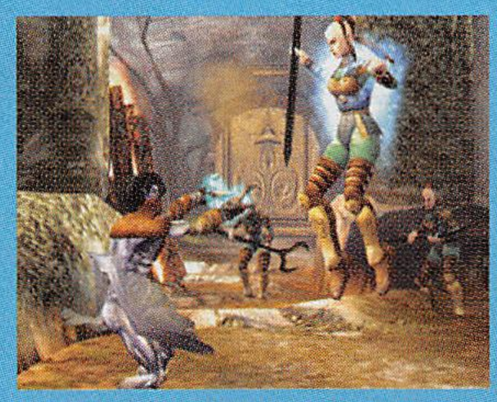
strong attack use △, so we sometimes fed the reaver an enemy we would have liked to consume ourselves, and because jump and dodge use the same button, it's slightly too possible to get hung up on the complex scenery.

BLOOD IS BEAUTIFUL

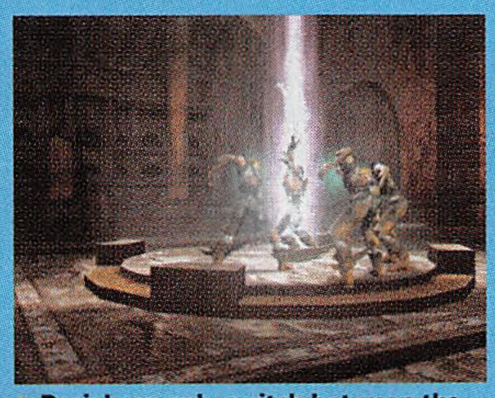
Speaking of scenery, *LoK: Defiance* is sheer eye-candy, one of very, very few games that can compete visually with EA's *The Lord of the Rings, The Return of the King*. The huge levels boast exquisitely modeled architecture, real-time morphing, and awesomely detailed textures. This is a feat made even more impressive when you realize that it's all being streamed in and animates at a silky smooth, near-constant 60 fps. Impressive? Stunning is more like it. The sonic end of the spectrum also pulls its weight, with full surround support, wonderful music and ambient noise, and solid sound effects.

These massive environments not only look and sound wonderful, they enable the non-combat elements of gameplay: the exploration and puzzle solving. This is an area that actually disappointed us a bit, simply because we had hoped for more of it. Raziel's levels feature plenty of navigational puzzles that involve switching from the Material realm to the Spectral realm, but his elementally-charged reaver is underutilized. For instance, the Earth Reaver makes you heavy in water and forms jumping platforms, the Water

▲ Environments are mostly massive structures in various states of decay, but time is spent outside as well. Seems that "sunlight" vulnerability is a myth.



▲ Raziel may have switched from vampire to wraith long ago, but he's still a prime target for human vampire hunters. Not that he's easy prey to kill.



▲ Raziel can only switch between the Spectral and Material Realms at certain locations, making him easy to ambush.

NO TURTLES WERE HARMED IN THE MAKING OF THIS GAME.

(THAT PART COMES WHEN YOU PLAY IT.)

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EVERYONE
E
Violence
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES™

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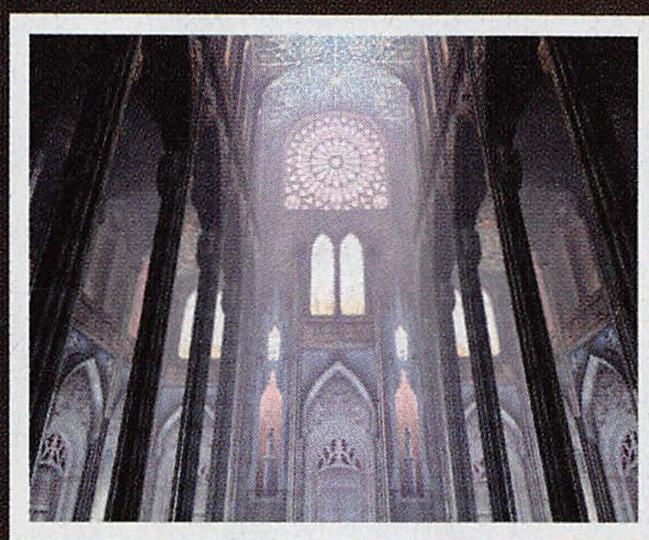
LEGACY OF KAIN: DEFIANCE

Reaver freezes both enemies and waterfalls, the Dark Reaver makes you invisible, etc. We would have enjoyed more puzzles involving these qualities, and their lack makes the game feel a bit misbalanced in the direction of hacking and slashing. This is especially true in the game's first half, where a lack of both boss battles and *LotR*-style gameplay variety makes things drag a little.

Ultimately, none of these minor shortcomings can change the fact that *Legacy of Kain: Defiance* is an inspiring example of what a talented, creative studio can achieve, given the time and manpower to do so. Rest assured, lady Lara is in good hands at Crystal. *Legacy of Kain: Defiance* is a beautiful, gothic, dystopiate fairy tale, and one of the best pure action titles of the year. **ERIC BRATCHER**



▲ To say this game has big levels and impressive architecture is a severe understatement.

▲ Both characters like to knock an enemy up into the air, following up with a brutal aerial combo.

HOW IT STACKS UP

Castlevania: Lament of Innocence	9
Legacy of Kain: Defiance	8
The Lord of the Rings, ROTK	8
Devil May Cry 2	7
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu	6

PSM FINAL SCORE 8

VERY GOOD
Solid gameplay meets incredible presentation. If you have any doubt that Crystal Dynamics can rock *Tomb Raider,* play this and your fears will evaporate.

▶ Kain is simply a wrecking machine, possessed of a strong sword arm, a wicked sword, and some serious telekinetic power.

STRATEGY

Wanna be captain of the Avernus Temple Fightin' Undead fencing team? Here's how to carve up your enemies like Jerk O' Lanterns.

TK IS OK

Use telekinesis, or TK, generously. You can rip guys out of wall-mounted arrow slits, and when surrounded, use it to knock a few enemies out of the way, even over a wall, and make the odds more manageable. However, be aware that most boss and sub-boss types are immune to it.

BELITTLE BATTLE MODE

In combat, the game will automatically switch your character to battle mode. This is fine, but not always ideal. Think of Battle Mode as a target lock that keeps you relative to your target, but severely hinders overall mobility, and feel free to toggle it on and off with R3 throughout battle.

LOOK ALIVE

There's no such thing as a dead end in this game. When stumped, go into first person mode and look for a wall you can climb or break through, bars you can mist through, a reaver trigger, or platforms and stairs you didn't see before. Also, when playing as Raz, try going into Spectral mode and re-examining the area — the level geometry sometimes changes.

HANGING TOUGH

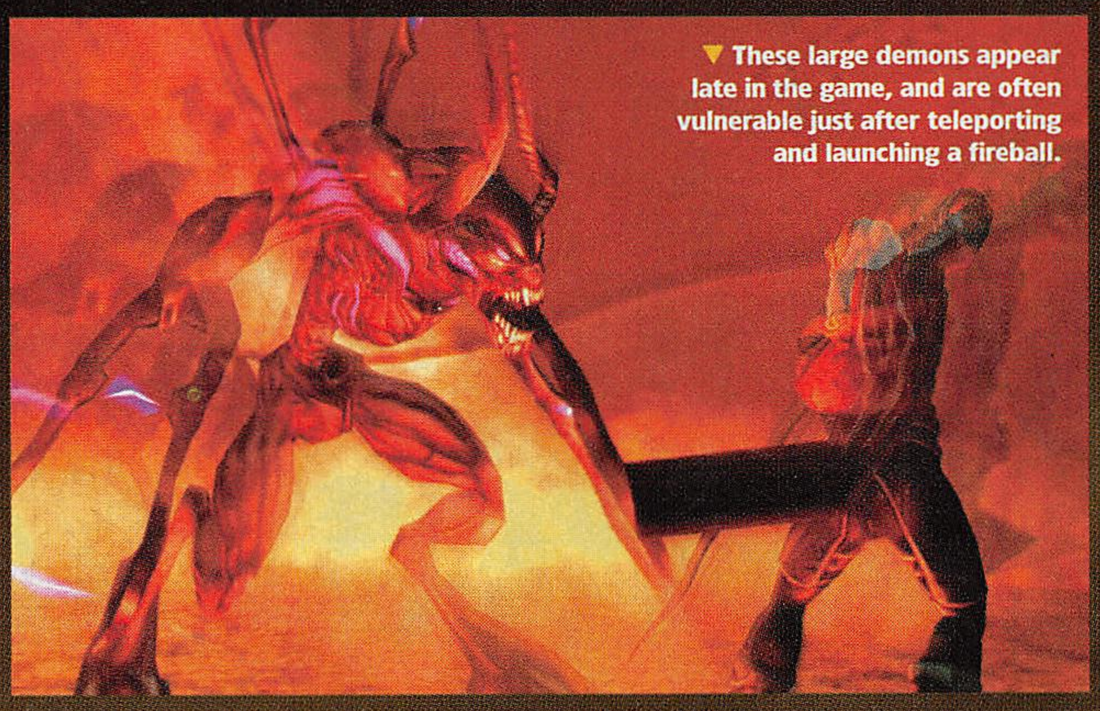
If you find yourself sometimes getting stuck on the scenery during battle, you're probably dodging instead of jumping. Let off the analog stick before pressing ⊗, and you'll jump. You can adjust your direction in the air.

SPECTRAL ESCAPE

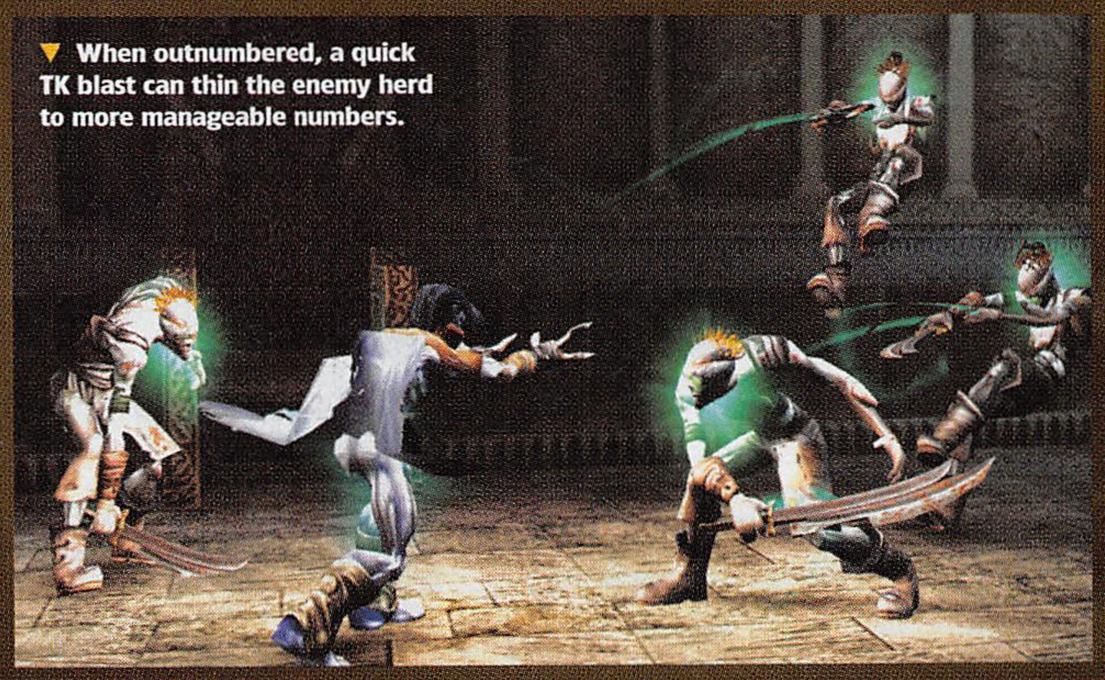
If Raziel is near death and locked in battle, just zap yourself into the spirit realm. The baddies here are much easier to kill, your health won't deplete automatically, and there are plenty of snacks just floating around.

REAVER REWARDS

Many reavers have very powerful secondary effects: the Light Reaver blinds some enemies, and the Water Reaver freezes enemies when fully powered up. And the Spirit Reaver is just murderously powerful. Once you have it, use it constantly.

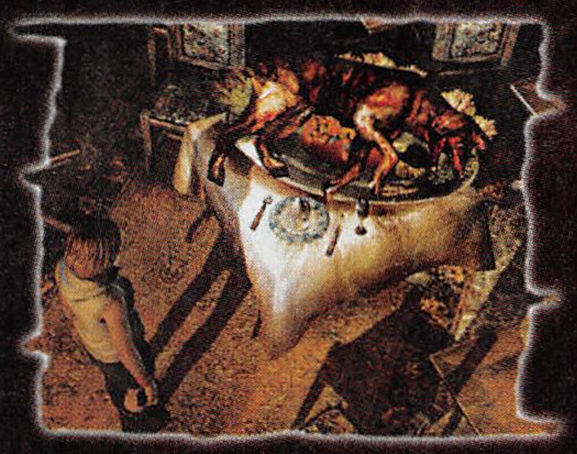


▼ These large demons appear late in the game, and are often vulnerable just after teleporting and launching a fireball.



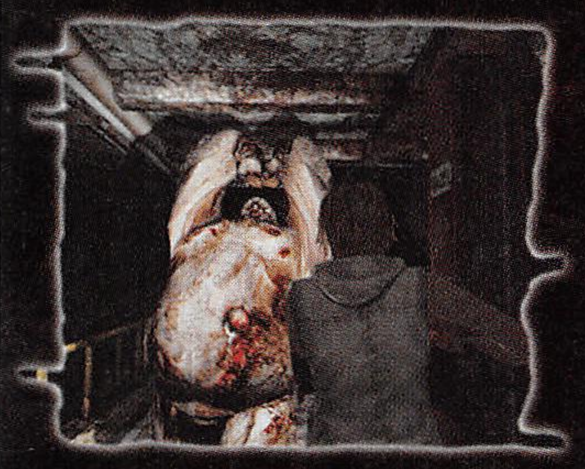
▼ When outnumbered, a quick TK blast can thin the enemy herd to more manageable numbers.

Haunting new tale



Hideous new creatures

Disturbingly detailed graphics



Brutal new weapons

"SH3 is easily the best horror adventure yet..."

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Official PlayStation Magazine

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BOSS STRATEGIES

GUARDIAN SPECTRES

There are way too many of these guys to deal with individually, so we'll offer broad tactics for all of them. Most have some kind of projectile attack and an up-close area attack. Just be patient and methodical. Side dodge or jump over their fireballs, and stay away any time there's a globe-shaped glow about them. If they're just softly glowing or when they enter their "recharging" animations, move in, unleash a combo or two, and retreat again. If they have accessory creatures, kill them off quickly, and if you're fighting two guardians at once, focus upon taking them out one at a time, starting with the more mobile of the two.

HANDLING HASK'AK'GIK

This bizarre boss has a wide range of attacks and is completely invulnerable most of the time. Great.

Dodge, dodge, dodge — the fireballs are actually easy to jump over, and often hit the gongs if you're near them. You're watching for one specific attack — the one in which he roars and you see a yellow circle slowly closing in upon you. When he does this, watch the four giant gongs on one side of the battlefield. One of them will start shimmering. Hit that one with a TK blast before the circle closes, and it will knock Hash'ak'gik into a vulnerable state for a while. Hack at his face until he shakes his head. Repeat. When he's near death, all the gongs will start to vibrate at once. Hit them all with TK to deliver the final blow. Then TK the faulty column and climb out of his pit.

SPIRIT FORGE GUARDIAN

This is actually a puzzle battle. Hit him so he lets go of the Spirit Forge, then jam the appropriate reaver into the matching receptacle before he closes up on the forge again. It'll get progressively harder as he moves the forge further away from the charging stations.

CORRUPTED VAMPIRE

You'll fight this fellow in the Vampire Citadel's main room, shortly after acquiring the Spirit Reaper. Learn his attack patterns. When he leaps up in the air and plasma jets in from the sides, he's about to dive bomb you. Dodge backward and, when he lands, move in and unload a combo or two. If there's a crackle of blue energy and a yellow tornado jets out and tries to pull you in, dodge to the side and you can land a hit or two. If he folds his wings over himself as a shield, back up immediately.

FINAL BOSS

This guy is BIG. It's a good idea to keep your distance to better avoid his slashes and strikes. If one arm starts giving off blue sparks, slash away at it. Eventually, it will sever and it will be safe to approach his head and slash at his face. He'll also launch fireballs at you — the green ones will shoot right over your head, but the blue will dive, so dodge sideways. P

▲ Guardian Spectres fight similarly. Dodge fireballs, and attack when they aren't surrounded by a globe of energy.

▲ Aerial combos are a great way to single out one enemy for attack without exposing yourself to other enemies.

▲ Lesser enemies can be troublesome if they attack *en masse*, but they're outmatched when fighting one-on-one.

▲ Kain and Raz fighting? Could this be true? Well, you didn't honestly think these guys were best friends now, did you?

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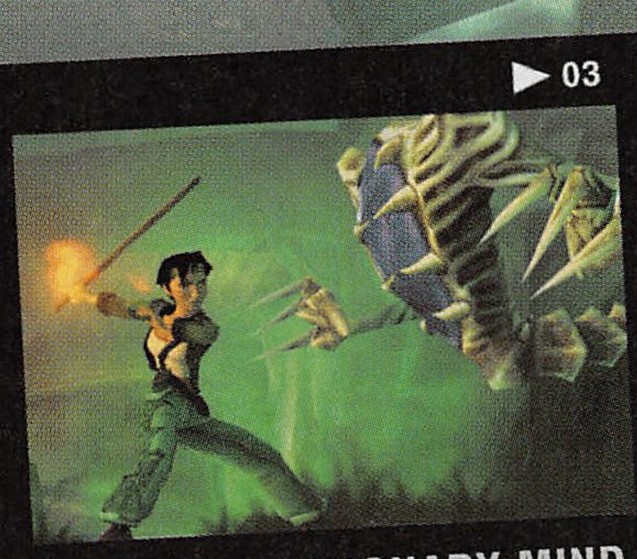
– ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY

"IT'S A MASTERPIECE."
– OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

"9/10. SOLID GOLD." – GMR



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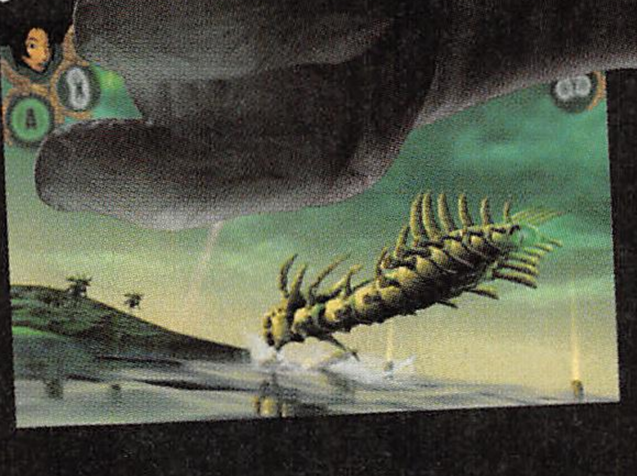

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PSM PREVIEWS no. 79

YOUR FIRST LOOK AT THE HOTTEST NEW GAMES ▸ HOLIDAY 2003

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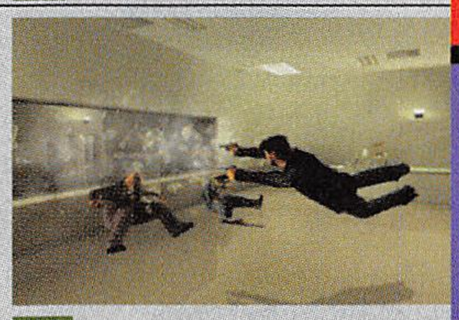

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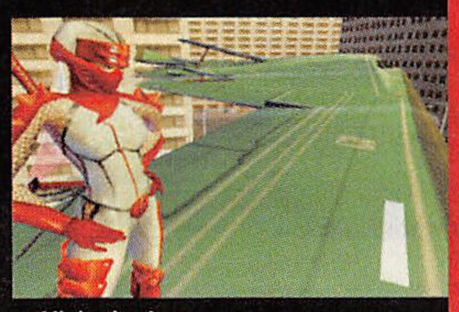
HOT GAMES

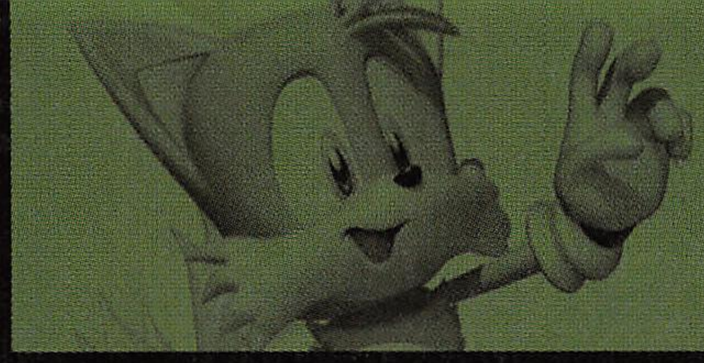
Don't waste a second; turn on over to these big games NOW!

▲ Spy Fiction *pg. 92*



▲ Nightshade *pg. 97*

▲ Cold Winter *pg.108*



<< SEGA IS JOURNEYING INTO NEW TERRITORY AND TAKING THEIR HEROIC HEDGEHOG MULTIPLATFORM >>

▲ Even with the large selection of teams, you can bet that almost everyone is going to play as Team Sonic first. You just can't beat the classic characters, can you?

GAME INFO / PUB SEGA | DEV SEGA (SONIC TEAM) | REL DATE JANUARY | TYPE ACTION | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB RATING EVERYONE

Since his first appearance on the Sega Genesis, way back in 1991, Sonic the Hedgehog has been racing his way into the hearts of gamers everywhere. However, it hasn't been until now that the blue mascot has appeared on a Sony console. Apparently, even system barriers can't hold him hostage anymore. We were recently able to take the world-famous hedgehog for a spin on the PlayStation 2 and found out that teamwork is now most definitely the name of his game.

With *Sonic Heroes,* Sega is journeying into new territory and taking their heroic hedgehog multiplatform. It's a bit of a change, for sure, but one that seemed inevitable for the company. After all, *Sonic* is one of the most popular videogame franchises and it only makes sense to bring him to the largest gaming audience possible. Still, Sega could have taken the easy route and just made one main version of the title and then ported it to the other consoles. Fortunately, it didn't, as the PS2 version of the game was developed from scratch in order to take advantage of the console's specific strengths. In the end, however, all three iterations of the game (PS2, Xbox, Gamecube) should all look relatively the same.

Unlike the *Sonic Adventure* games, which originally started on the now-extinct Dreamcast console, *Sonic Heroes* is more of a return to the series' action-oriented gameplay. Most of the RPG elements and extraneous features (i.e. Chao racing) have been left by the wayside in order to provide an experience that any type of gamer can easily get into. Yet, the familiar depth, elaborate level designs and breathtaking level of speed are still all here... and in a major way.

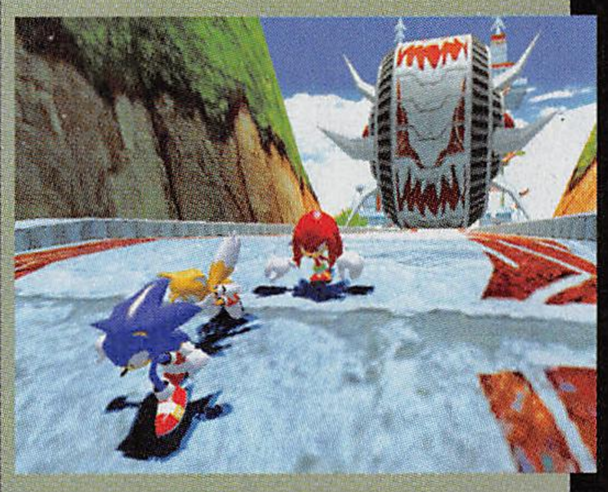
Teamwork Comes In Threes

Compared to the past iterations of *Sonic*, this game is taking a radically different approach and allowing gamers to control three different characters simultaneously. Well, to

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

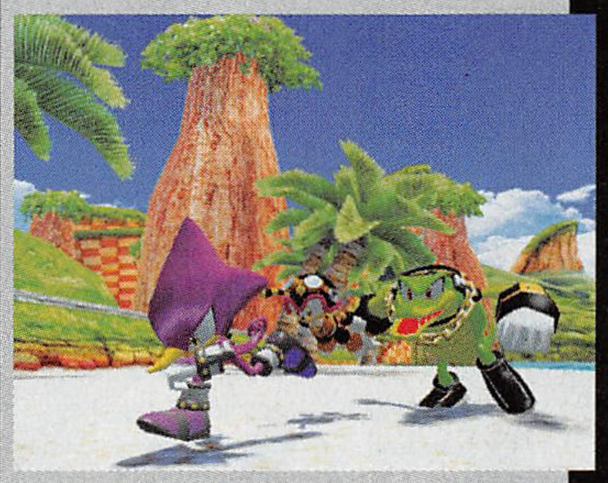
▼ The Egghawk is the first "boss" that you'll encounter in *Sonic Heroes.* You basically just need to attack the cockpit until it blows up. Then, of course, Dr. Eggman escapes.

TEAM SONIC



→ Sonic the Hedgehog [Speed]
→ Knuckles the Echidna [Power]
→ Miles" Tails" Prower [Flight]

TEAM CHAOTIX

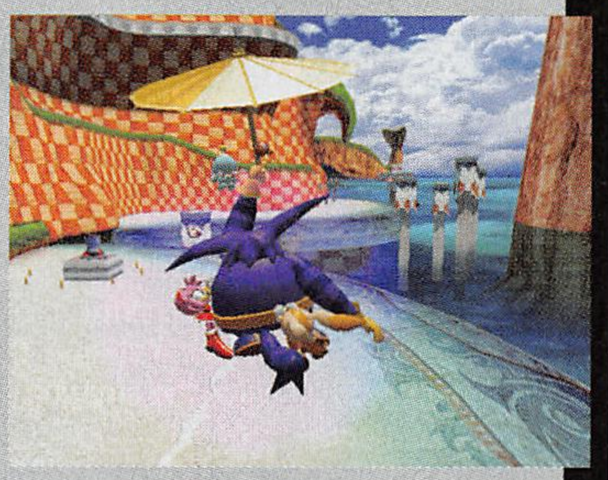


→ Espio the Chameleon [Speed]
→ Vector the Crocodile [Power]
→ Charmy the Bee [Flight]

TEAM DARK

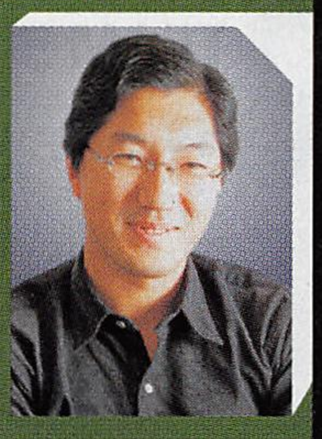
→ Shadow [Speed]
→ Omega [Power]
→ Rouge [Flight]

TEAM ROSE



→ Amy Rose [Speed]
→ Big the Cat [Power]
→ Cream [Flight]

FIVE QUESTIONS WITH YUGI NAKA



Despite a busy schedule and the release of Sonic Team's latest game quickly approaching, *Sonic the Hedgehog's* co-creator Yuji Naka took a few minutes to answer some of our questions. Read what he had to say about Sonic Heroes and the Sonic franchise, in general.

PSM: What caused the decision to make Sonic Heroes a multi-platform title?
Naka: With Sonic now staring in the extremely successful cartoon series, we wanted to give as many people as possible a chance to experience the world of Sonic. That said, we chose to release *Sonic Heroes* on PS2 since it is the most widely owned console.

PSM: Why did you decide to make this game instead of another Sonic Adventure?
Naka: By going multiplatform, we wanted to introduce as many of the *Sonic* characters to those who will play *Sonic* for the first time. Plus, we wanted to focus on the team action, so created a whole new series was a logical choice.

PSM: Why team-based gameplay, and not a game that focuses solely on Sonic?
Naka: We could've certainly pushed the appeal of Sonic to a new level with the current technology level of the consoles. The idea behind *Sonic Heroes* was to extend the depth of the action game to include a more dynamic style of play for the gamer. We felt that a team-based game was the best way to achieve this whereby the user is able to utilize each of the character's strengths as they play through each of the action stages.

PSM: Are there any last thoughts about the game that you would like to share with our readers?
Naka: This is Sonic's first debut on PlayStation, so I'm hoping that this will give many people a chance to play Sonic for the first time. I hope you all enjoy the amazing experience!

PSM: What is your favorite Sonic game of all time?
Naka: *Sonic the Hedgehog*

<< WE CHOSE TO RELEASE SONIC HEROES ON PS2 SINCE IT IS THE MOST WIDELY OWNED CONSOLE >>

▲ **Sonic's and Shadow's ability to hop from wall to wall certainly comes in useful from time to time.**

▲ **Big the Cat may not be that fast, but he's pretty powerful and can even carry his own teammates around. He's come a long way since his support status in Sonic Adventure.**

CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

be honest, you really still only control one character, but the other two teammates do follow right behind you. And, depending on which character takes the lead, each team can be arranged in three different formations (Speed, Power and Flight) and then switched around on the fly. All you have to do is hit the button associated with the character you want to actually control.

Now, in order to make this new gameplay mechanic even easier to understand, let's bring in Team Sonic as an example. With speedy Sonic taking the lead, the team can travel through the levels rather quickly. If the powerful echidna, Knuckles, is in charge, though, then the team has the ability to smash through walls and other barriers. Also, enemies are generally easier to vanquish in this formation. Lastly, if the flighty Tails takes the front position then he's able to grab his two teammates and take to the air... but only for a limited time. He's great for reaching those secret areas that are hidden throughout the game.

Having to learn to switch between the different characters during the right situation is part of the title's overall depth and challenge. It's so important, in fact, that the developers even included a rather thorough tutorial to help gamers hit the ground running.

Size Really Does Matter

If you've had a chance to play a *Sonic* game before then you probably know how large the levels generally are. Even back in the 16-bit generation, a typical *Sonic* level would require hours of exploration just to see everything. With *Sonic Heroes,* it will most often

▲ **Flight-based characters are the only ones that can really attack enemies that are up high.**

◀ **He might not be E-102 Gamma, but Sonic Heroes' Omega is certainly a powerful piece of metal. He can smash through almost anything you see.**

▲ **These special gates automatically switch your team into the correct formation for the particular moment.**

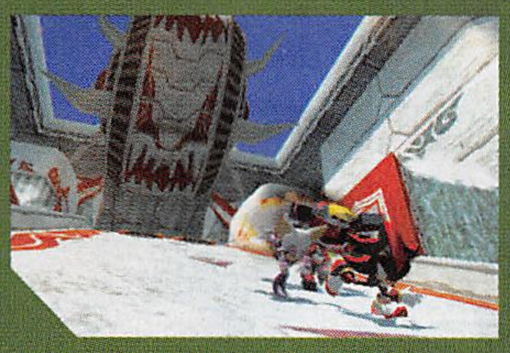
PSM BREAKDOWN An up-close look at the game in action

Ocean Palace

▲ One of the earlier stages and one of our favorites, Ocean Palace is a great mix of beauty and danger. Don't be mesmerized by the water too much, or you'll fall prey to the countless enemies and Indiana Jones-style traps.

Run Away, Fly Away

With three different team formations, the challenge comes in figuring out which one is best for a given situation. Choosing correctly will definitely determine how quickly you can make your way to the end of the level.



▲ Sometimes, it's best to just choose your speed formation and run as fast as you can. You just might miss a lot.

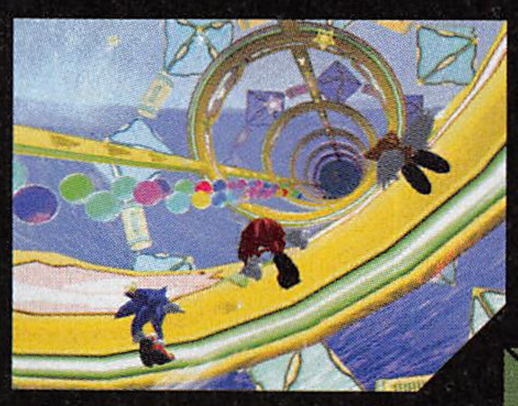
▲ Still, there are also numerous occasions where you simply have to take to the air. There, you can see a lot more.

take even longer than that. That's mainly because the environments are so "gi-normous" and the fact that only certain characters can access specific areas. Along with that, the developers have also revealed to us that every one of the game's 14 levels will have four variations, each of which corresponds to a different team. That means that not only will they look different, but the cut-scenes, specific mission objectives and endings for all of them will vary, as well. So, just imagine how long it will take to see everything now!

Heading Towards the Future

With a lot riding on the success of this title, Sega is backing *Sonic Heroes* with one of the largest launches in the company's history. You can bet that Sonic will be seen everywhere, from fast food promotions to his own Saturday morning cartoon. In the end, though, it's basically going to boil down to how great the game ends up and how well it grabs the attention of the fans and the casual gamer. At least from what we've seen, it doesn't look that's going to be a problem. From the new team-based mechanic to the grand level designs and endless action, *Sonic Heroes* looks to bring Sonic and his pals back into the limelight. And, come next month, the loveable hedgehog is most definitely going to be taking us all for one fun ride. Let's just hope that we can keep up. **STEPHEN FROST**

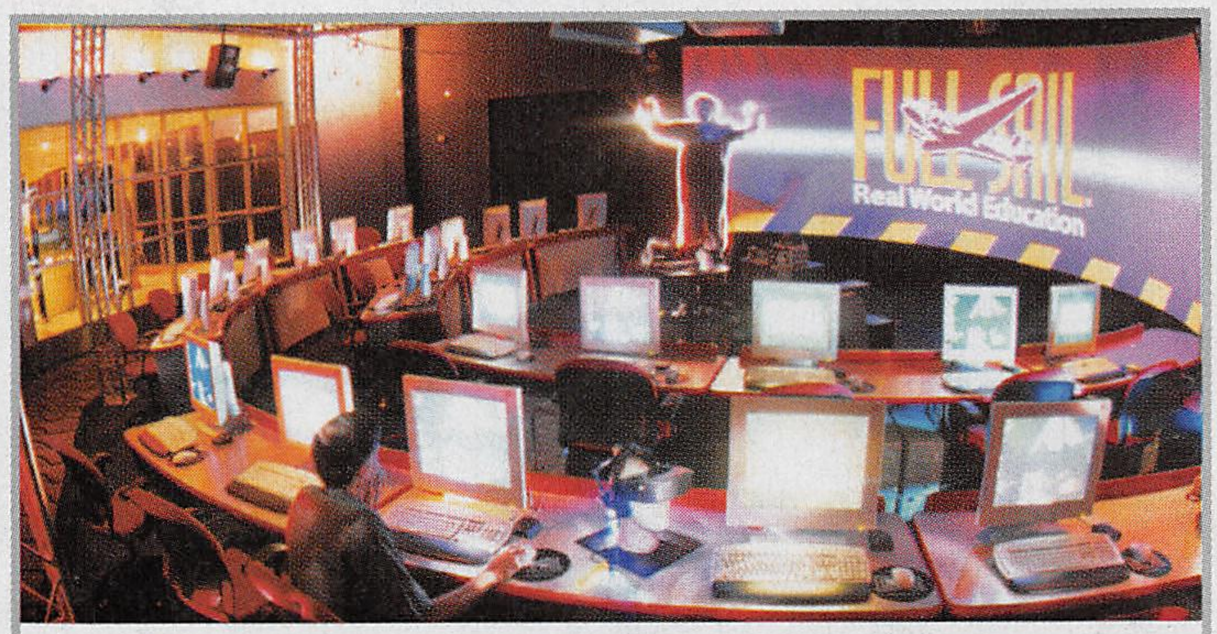
▲ Just like in *Metal Gear,* you can tell when an enemy is aware of you by the exclamation mark above their head. When they are confused, a question mark appears.



▲ In-between some of the main levels, you'll find Special Stages which allow you to earn extra lives and other bonuses.

THE BUZZ

The first PS2 *Sonic* title looks to return to the greatness of the early games.



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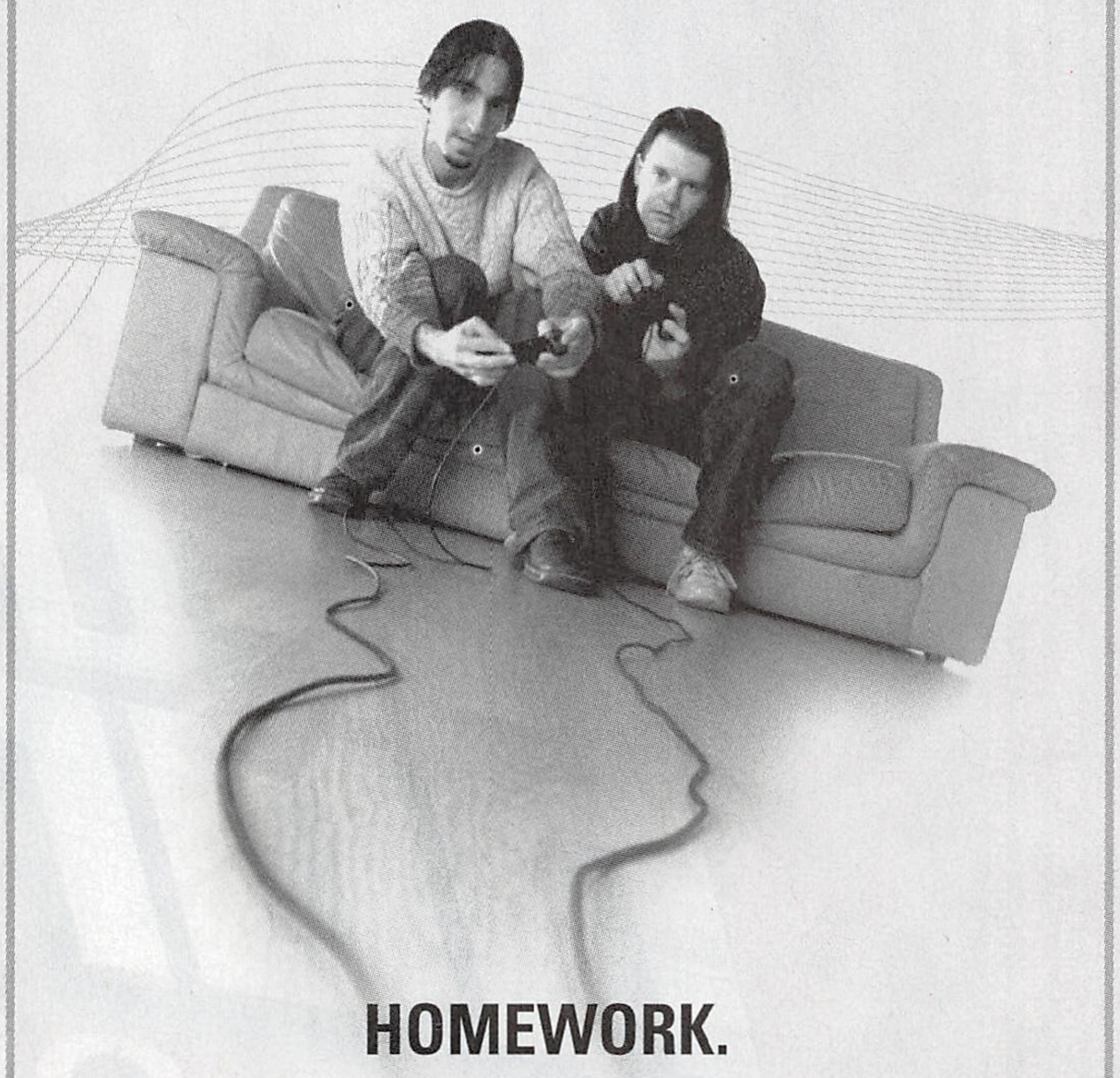

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FUGITIVE HUNTER™

WAR ON TERROR

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MATURE 17+

CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

BLOOD AND GORE
STRONG LANGUAGE
VIOLENCE

BLACK OPS entertainment

PlayStation®2

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TERRORISTS

GUN RUNNERS

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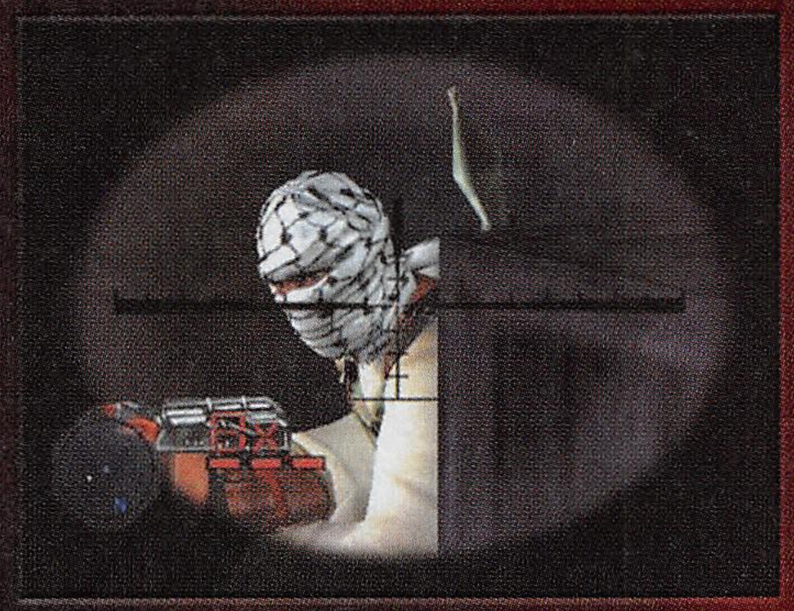
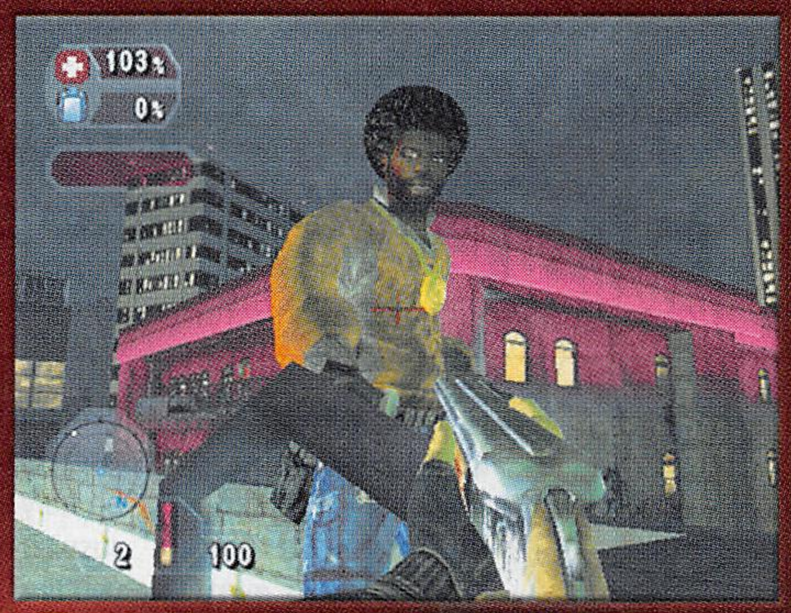


Fight Terror – Lock up bankrobbers, money launderers, gun runners and more.

Switch from a 1st person shooter to a 3rd person fighter for brutal hand-to-hand combat.



Track 11 armed and dangerous felons through Afghanistan, the Caribbean, Paris, Utah and Miami.

Fire rocket launchers, shotguns, sniper rifles and more.

NOVEMBER 2003

www.fugitive-hunter.com

ONLY IN PSM NEW SCREENS

GAME INFO | PUB SAMMY STUDIOS | DEV ACCESS GAMES | TYPE ACTION | REL DATE SPRING | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB PENDING

◀ Along with the ability to assume other people's identities, your Chameleon Suit can also help you to blend in with the environment.

▶ Don't let her cute looks and sunny disposition fool you. Sheila can kick some serious ass.

SPY FICTION

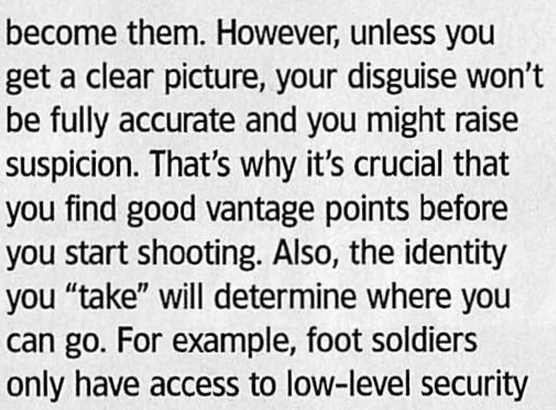
The next great spy game could end up appearing from nowhere

With the "stealth" genre growing quickly in popularity, Sammy Studios is readying its own title to compete with the likes of *Metal Gear Solid* and *Splinter Cell*. Aptly named *Spy Fiction,* the game focuses on the missions of an underground (aren't they all?) espionage agency known as S.E.A. Playing as two different agents, you'll travel the world and end up in such locations as biotechnology labs in the U.S. and the mountains of Austria.

As expected, the game showcases a number of cool features, but the most innovative one would probably have to be the ability for gamers to assume other characters' identities. Sure, we've seen this before, in games like *Mission: Impossible,* but it was never taken to this level. Using a gadget called a 3DA camera in conjunction with a Chameleon suit; you can actually take pictures of someone's appearance and then become them. However, unless you get a clear picture, your disguise won't be fully accurate and you might raise suspicion. That's why it's crucial that you find good vantage points before you start shooting. Also, the identity you "take" will determine where you can go. For example, foot soldiers only have access to low-level security areas, whereas scientists can come and go between labs easily.

Spy Fiction may have been developed by a newly-formed company, but these screenshots definitely reveal a title that could end up leaving a serious mark on the genre. We're just hoping that the storyline and action can keep up with the game's innovative features. Maybe Access can sneak us a copy so we can find out.

STEPHEN FROST



▲ It may look like a scene straight out of *Mission: Impossible.* However, this game looks to one-up both of the *M:I* games.

▲ The best way to knock out a guard is to use your Taser. It's quick and quiet.

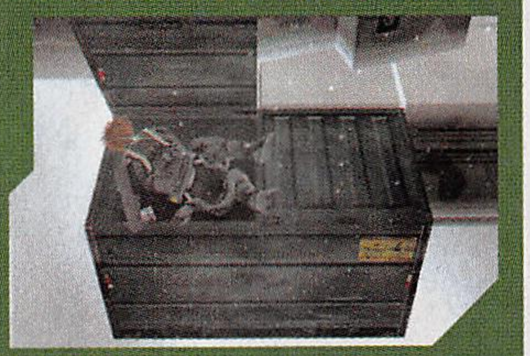
THE BUZZ

This game's innovative features could sneak it to the front of the genre.

Master Of Disguise

There are three main stages to assuming someone's identity in *Spy Fiction.* First, you have to get a clean picture of them. Then, you need to find a safe place to upload that data to your suit. Finally, you can transform into the exact replica of the picture you took.

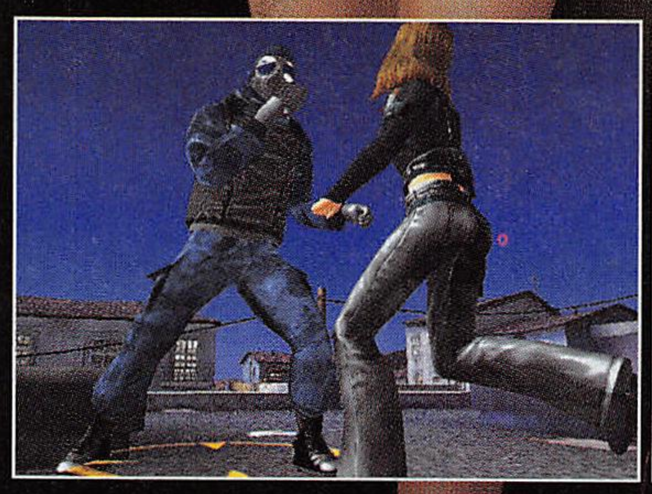
▲ 1. Take a picture with your 3DA camera.



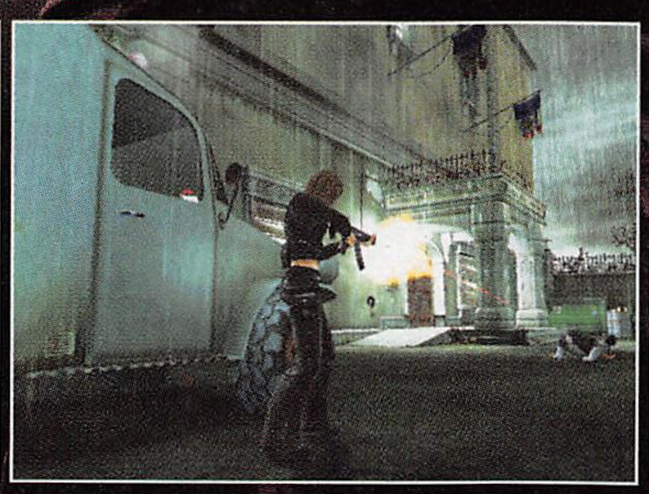
▲ 2. Find a good place to "change."

▲ 3. Emerge looking like your enemy.

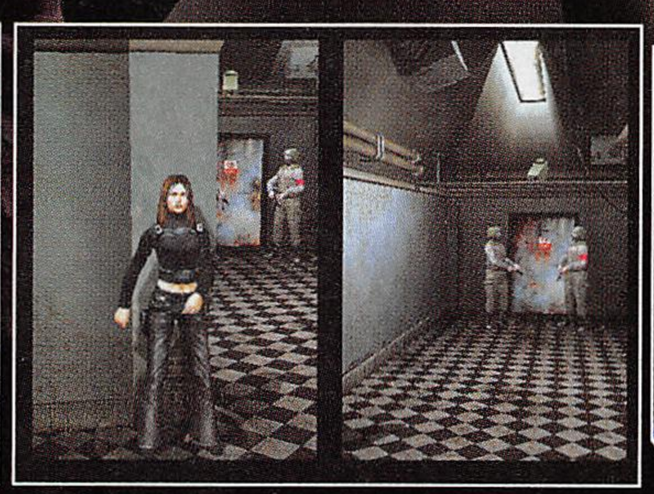
STEALTH BOMBSHELL



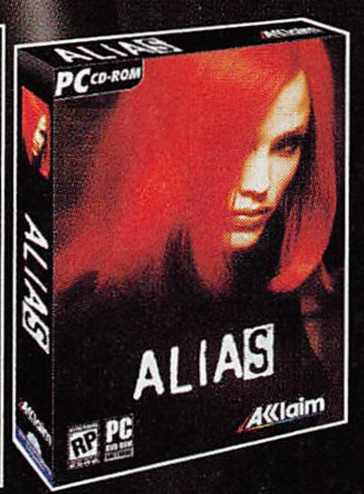
High-impact, motion-captured combat



Spy gadgets, high-tech & makeshift weaponry



Intense camera work from multiple angles



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MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE®

M:I

Operation Surma

PRODUCTS RANGE FROM RATING PENDING TO TEEN
RP-T
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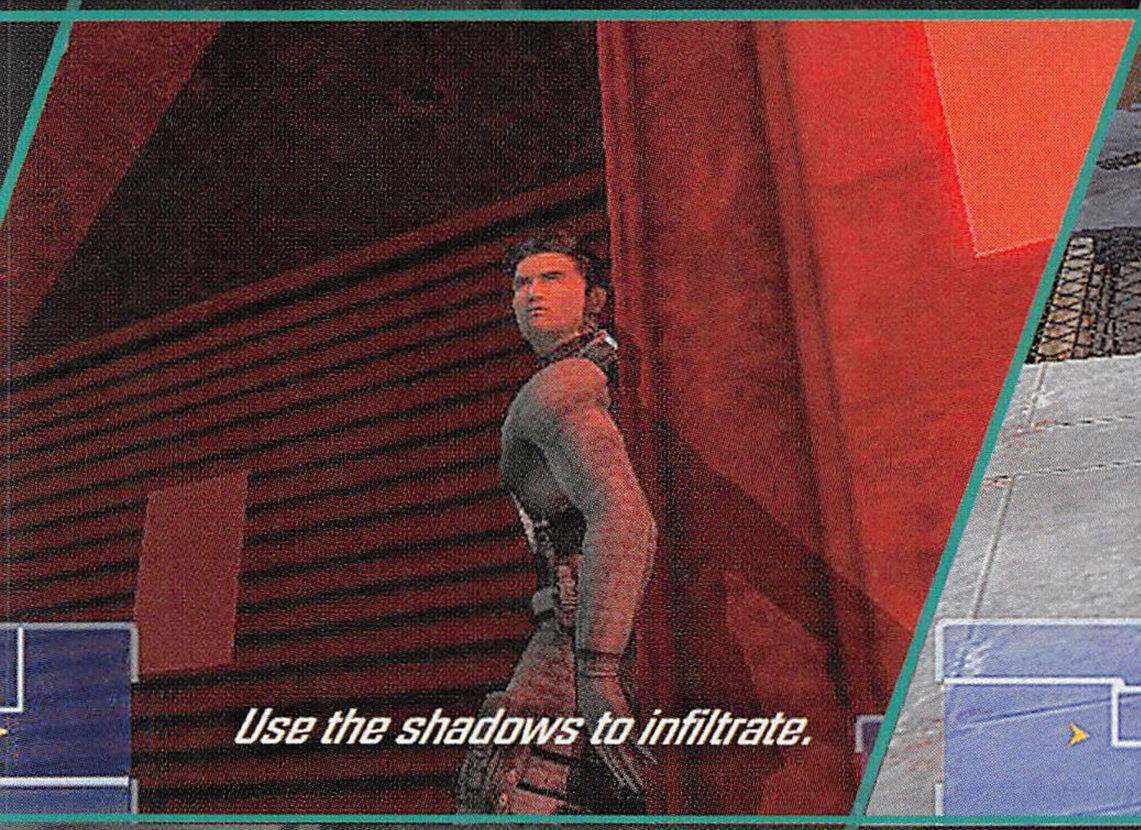
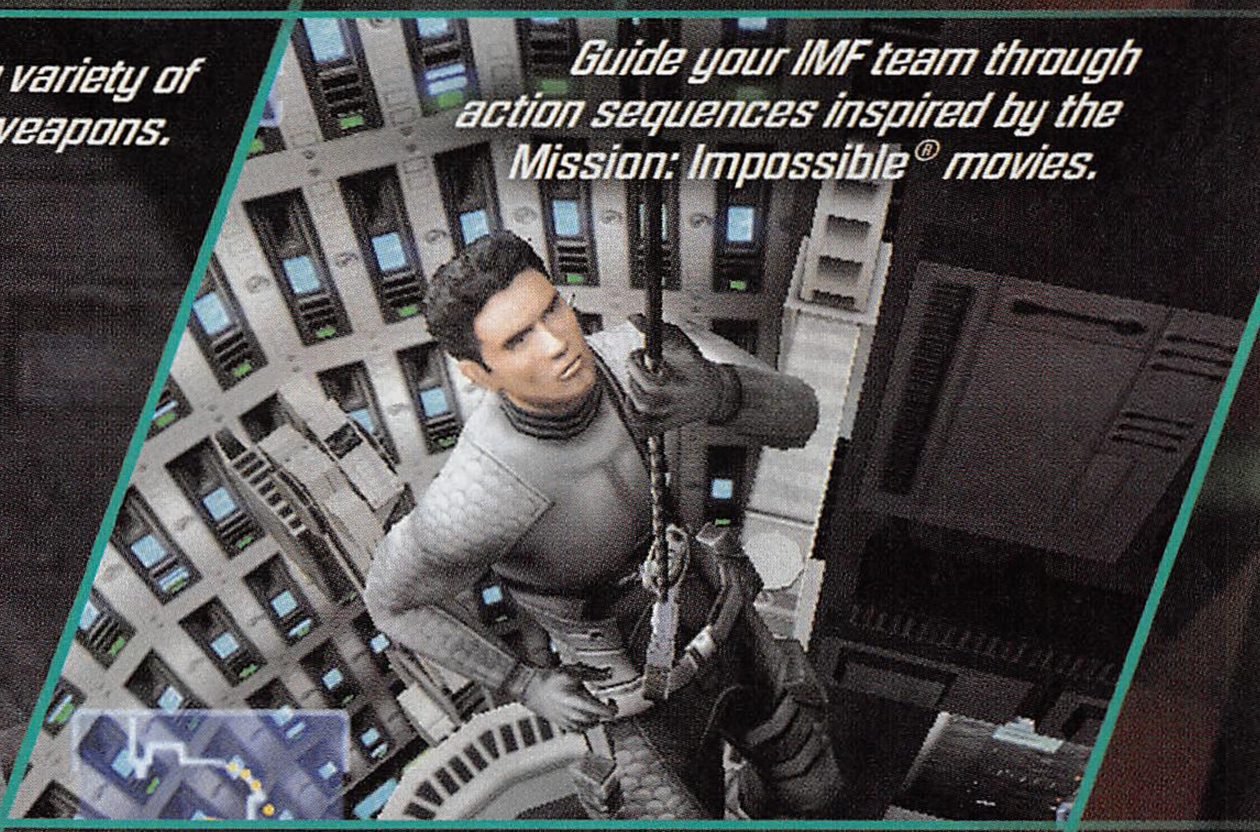
"It's stealthy... and damned if it doesn't look like **an excellent game.**
And there can never be enough stealth gaming"
— Official Xbox Magazine, August 2003



Use the shadows to infiltrate.

Apply a diverse array of stealth tactics.

Choose from a wide variety of IMF gadgets and weapons.



Guide your IMF team through action sequences inspired by the Mission: Impossible® movies.

"The range of moves seems to be matched only by the number of gadgets and weapons in his **formidable arsenal.**"
— GameSpot, May 2003

"We're very excited."
— Game Informer, August 2003

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FINAL FANTASY XI

Some impressions on the massive, multiplayer online RPG

GAME INFO | PUB/DEV SQUARE ENIX | TYPE MMORPG | REL DATE SPRING | MAX PLAYERS N/A | ESRB RATING TEEN

ONLY IN PSM NEW SCREENS

ONLINE ONLY

▲ You won't always just find small creatures traveling around the world. A lot of them are quite large and tough to beat.

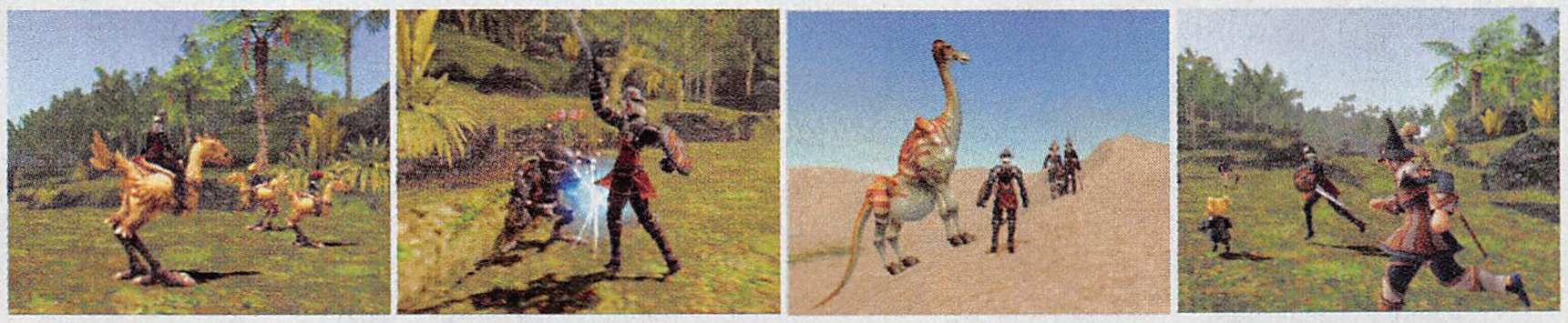
With several tours and countless hours spent in the world of Vana'diel, we've come to both appreciate and be impressed with *FFXI*. However, we do wish that the game's developers had utilized a wider spectrum of colors, as everything seems so grey and dark. However, in most cases, the sheer detail in the environments and the generally eye-catching architectural variety do a lot to take your mind off that fact. There truly is so much to see in the game, from endless deserts to lush forests and everything else you can possibly imagine.

As a whole, we think that *FFXI* will do quite well in the U.S. Our only concern is the high entrance free, which requires the purchase of the upcoming PS2 hard drive (hdd). If fans can get past that $100 speed bump and the relatively cheap monthly tolls, then we're sure they'll find plenty of enjoyment ahead of them. We just can't wait to get final versions of the game and the bonus expansion pack *(Vision of Ziraat)*, so that we can continue exploring the world. For the time being, we can at least look back over these screens, taken during our most recent journey. STEPHEN FROST

THE BUZZ

RPG fans will love the amazingly huge world to explore, but there will be monthly fees.

▼ I don't think anyone will ever get tired of the beautiful scenery in this game. There's so much variety to take in and places to travel to.



GAME INFO | PUB CAPCOM | DEV CAPCOM | TYPE ACTION | REL DATE JANUARY | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB PENDING

MAXIMO VS. ARMY OF ZIN

ONLY IN PSM NEW SCREENS

Capcom's U.S. hero has definitely matured a bit

▲ Bosses, like this Sea Serpent, feature some colorful personalities and are constantly springing up to attack you.

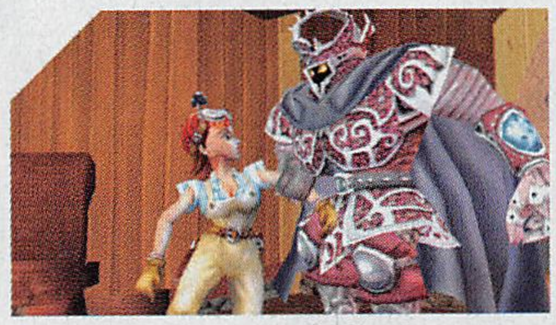
▲ To say the least, this is one colorfully diverse game. That's certainly welcome in today's world of dreary textures.

▶ The Reapers come in a variety of forms, all of which are quite deadly and fast. They're the basic soldiers of Zin.

As we continue to play more and more of *Maximo*, the game just seems to get better and better. We love the more evolved combat system and the addition of being able to protect (and be rewarded by) the villagers. Also, the designs of the enemies and backgrounds, at least at this point, seem a definite improvement over the last game. We just can't wait until January, when the final version of the game lands in our hands and we can travel the land wearing only our treasure-finding boxers. Until then, it looks like we'll just have to admire these exclusive new screens. STEPHEN FROST

THE BUZZ

The improved combat system is definitely a nice addition and action fans will love it.



▲ What's the deal with villains always wanting to dress like one? Didn't capes go out like years ago?

▶ Don't let these scarecrows fool you. They'll jump to life, as you walk by, and grab you by the ghoulies.

GAME INFO | PUB SEGA | DEV OVERWORKS | TYPE ACTION | REL DATE FEBRUARY | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB PENDING

▼ Magical attacks are best used to knock incoming opponents away. Just keep in mind that you only have a limited amount of it at any given time.

NIGHTSHADE

The classic ninja series gets a bit more sex appeal

Sega's *Shinobi* was released late last year to millions of fans who remembered the series' glorious arcade days. While it was a decent platformer, there were a few flaws: the gameplay was repetitive, there were no in-game checkpoints, and the cameraman occasionally consumed a little too much sake. Unwilling to disappoint its fans, Sega is back with a vengeance – and a kunoichi, a female ninja.

Nightshade is essentially *Shinobi*'s sister game. It turns out that after Hotsuma's victory at the end of the first title, another interdimensional rift opened and a group of demons invaded Tokyo. Not too keen on the idea of their beautiful city being overrun with rejects from hell, the government summoned Hibana, a femme fatale with looks as sharp as her swords.

Nighshade will certainly draw comparisons to the original, but Sega has promised a substantial list of improvements. Hibana can move faster, fly higher and dish out more damage than Hotsuma [Never send a man to do a woman's job – Ed.], and she's packing an improved combat system with new techniques that lets her string together attacks almost endlessly. Hibana also knows Hotsuma's famous "stealth dash" ability, and can run rings around opponents, slipping in and out of reach with the touch of a button. No ninja title would be complete without a healthy dose of mystical energy, and Hibana can perform attacks to fill up a new Chakra Gauge that will unleash gorgeous, screen-clearing magic.

As to be expected, surviving enviornmental hazards is half the challenge and half the fun of the *Shinobi* titles, and *Nightshade* is no different: battles will take place atop industrial cranes, moving trains, and even fighter jets. Look for this one soon. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

▲ In classical fashion, the story will unfold through a number of in-game and CG sequences.

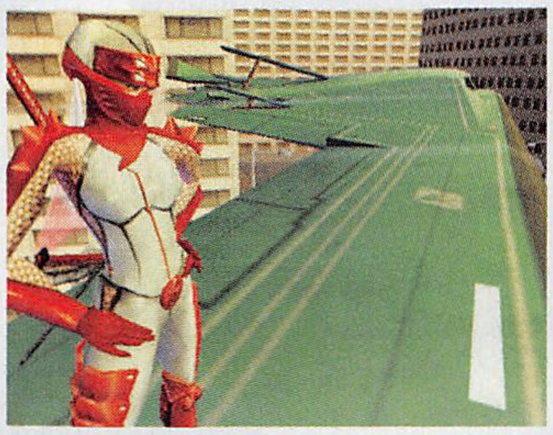
AN ASSASSIN WITH CLASS

One of the more memorable aspects of *Shinobi* was Hotsuma's famous red scarf and the way it followed him as he tore through his opponents. Sega has accordingly given Hibana a translucent pink one – just to let her victims know they were killed by a girl.

◀ We definitely prefer a female ninja over a male one, even if they are trying to kill us.

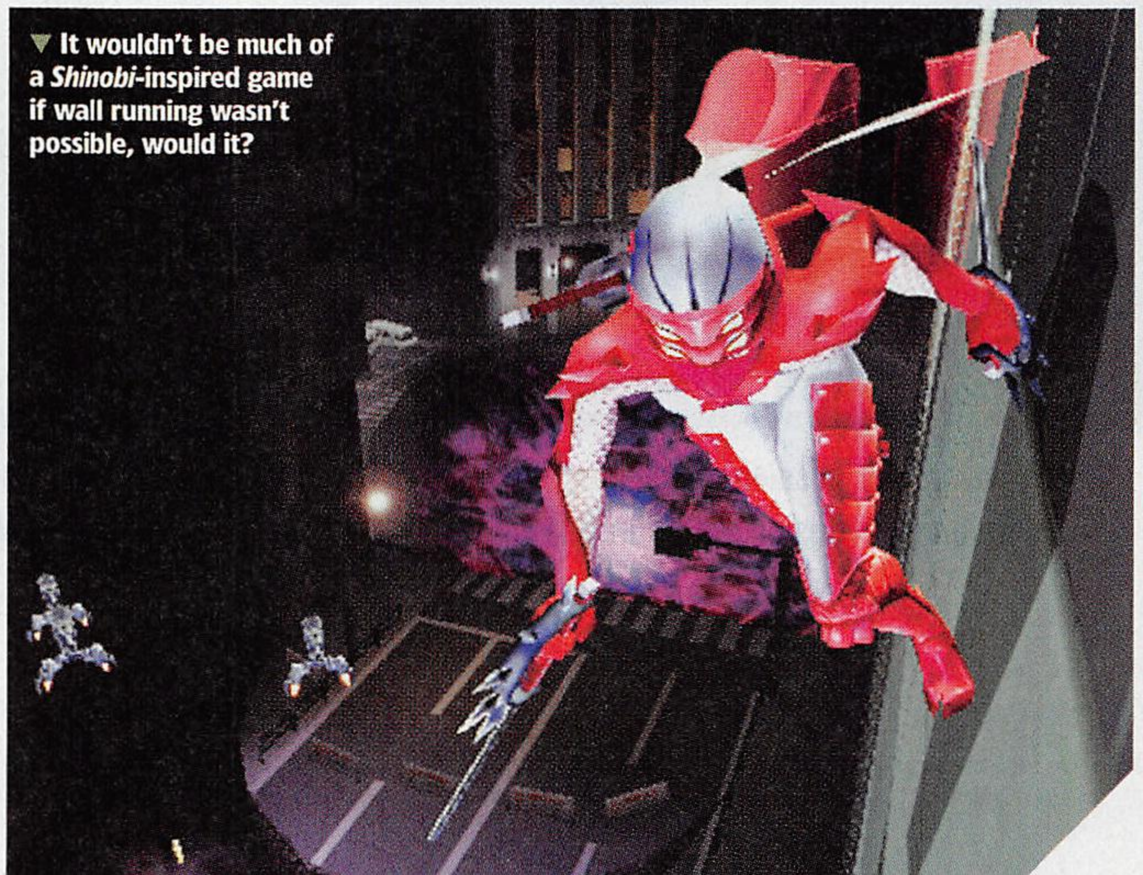
THE BUZZ

Let's hope the camera and texture variety have gotten a bit of an upgrade, as well.



▲ Doesn't Habana look all stunning as she stands atop the wing of a plane?

▶ It's much easier to see who you're locked-on to, thanks to the large icon that appears around the enemies.



▼ It wouldn't be much of a *Shinobi*-inspired game if wall running wasn't possible, would it?

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MATURE M CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Strong Language

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XBOX

GAME INFO | PUB CAPCOM | DEV CAPCOM | TYPE HORROR | MAX PLAYERS FOUR | RELEASE DATE MARCH | ESRB PENDING

RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

ONLINE COMPATIBLE

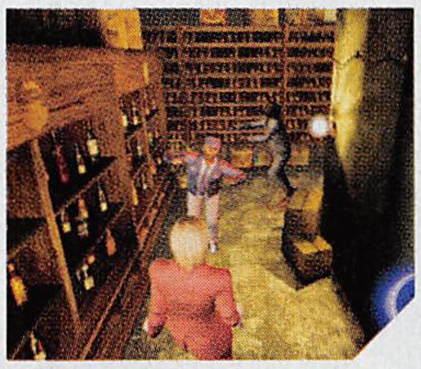
To say the least, Capcom has been very tight-lipped about its latest entry into the genre that it helped make popular. Even with a December release in Japan, *Outbreak* still has an air of mystery about it. Perhaps, that's so fans won't quite know what to expect when they start their adventures online. For us, it just seems to cause even more excitement and anticipation. It's been a while since the PS2 has seen a quality *RE* title and this game looks to make up for that. Fortunately, as we wait, we at least have these three new screenshots to look at. **STEPHEN FROST**

THE BUZZ

The excitement about this game is so high; we can't contain it. We want to be zombies!

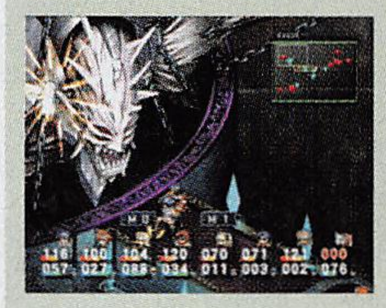
▼ **Even your closest friends could end up as zombies and then come attack you.**

◀ **Can your teamwork defeat the Evil Dead?**



▲ **I think it's going to be all about the R.P.D. officer the first run through the game. They always seem to survive.**

GAME INFO | PUB WORKING DESIGNS | DEV CAREER SOFT | MAX PLAYERS ONE | TYPE RPG | REL SPRING | ESRB PENDING



▲ **This game has some amazingly large boss characters. Look how small your guys look.**

ONLY IN PSM NEW SCREENS

▲ **Spells aren't entirely that amazing to look at, but they definitely can cause some serious damage.**

GROWLANSER GENERATIONS

Combining *Growlanser II: The Sense of Justice* and *Growlanser III: The Dual Darkness* into a single two-disc collection, Working Designs is almost finished putting the final touches on its big compilation pack *"Generations,"* which looks to fill the two-dimensional void left by today's more advanced role-playing adventures.

The two games combined will provide well over 80 hours of play, multiple endings, and numerous enhancements not found in the original Japanese versions. Non-linear conversation trees ensure a different experience almost every time out and the 13 hours of recorded speech should add plenty of personality to the character-heavy presentation as well. **JEREMY DUNHAM**

THE BUZZ

With over 80 hours of gameplay, you should start clearing your calendars right now.

▲ **Enemies come in all shapes and sizes, so be prepared. This Cyclops is definitely no laughing matter.**

▲ **Your battles will take you everywhere, from deserted wildernesses to distant lands of ice and snow.**

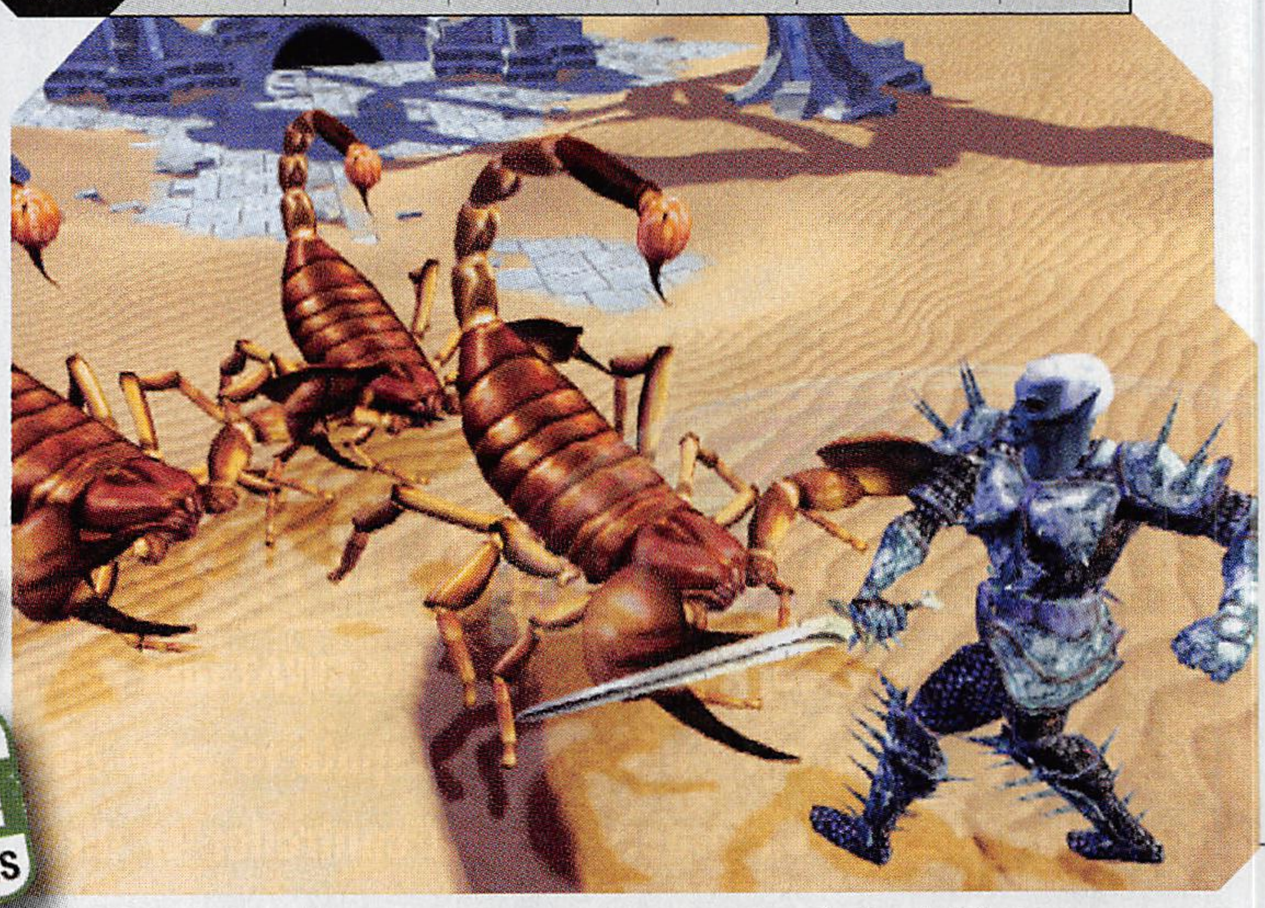
GAME INFO | PUB SONY OE | DEV SNOWBLIND | REL DATE FEBRUARY | TYPE ACTION | MAX PLAYERS FOUR | ESRB TEEN

CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH: REALMS OF EVERQUEST

EverQuest heads in a slightly different direction

ONLINE COMPATIBLE

ONLY IN PSM NEW SCREENS



▲ **Even in alternate worlds, one can't ever seem to get away from the dreaded giant scorpion. They are the bane of fantasy games, as they seem to appear in all of them.**

In its most current state, *Champions of Norrath* shows extreme promise. The gameplay is more refined than *Dark Alliance,* the visuals are nothing short of spectacular, and the addition of four-player co-op — online and off — addresses what was most lacking in *Norrath's* spiritual predecessor.

But that's not to say there aren't doubts about the game. While the randomizing of dungeons has its positive aspects (replay value, anyone?), there's something to be said of calculated level design. Also, the *EverQuest* license seems to lack some of the magic that the established *D&D* license brings to games. Is it something to cry over? Not really, but gamers unfamiliar with the *EverQuest* world may slightly disconnected from the universe presented in *Norrath.*

We're definitely looking forward to *Champions of Norrath* — the game is looking great and playing even better. And with *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II* lacking the fabulous four-player online play, it may soon be time to give up the dungeons and the dragons, and lose ourselves in the world of *EverQuest*... again.

KAISER HWANG/STEPHEN FROST

THE BUZZ

The more action-oriented gameplay should draw more players into the *EQ* world

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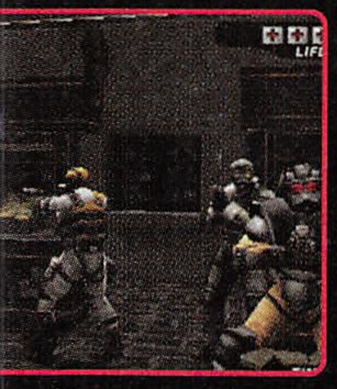

Insanely fast duck and shoot GUNCON®2 action.

New Weapon Select System lets you toggle between multiple weapons.

3 modes of play to keep the bullets flying long after the story's done.

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence

GUNCON2®

PlayStation®2

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SUIKODEN IV

The popular RPG series takes to the sea

GAME INFO | PUB KONAMI | DEV KONAMI TYO | TYPE RPG | REL DATE 2004 | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB RATING PENDING

▼ Characters have had slight graphical improvements, but don't stray too far from the last game's designs.

A surprise hit among the PlayStation 2's serious RPG crowd, *Suikoden III* made it to the top of several gamer's best of the year lists in 2002. Not to be discouraged by its runaway success, Konami TYO is already hard at work on following that story up (or should we say preceding it?) with the aptly titled *Suikoden IV.*

Set several years before the events of the original title, *Suikoden IV* will move away from the confines of land and be focused instead on the unpredictability of the high seas. Utilizing a modified graphics engine first pioneered in *Silent Hill 3, Suikoden IV* will also sport an enhanced combat engine, ship-to-ship warfare, and the expected 108 stars of destiny.

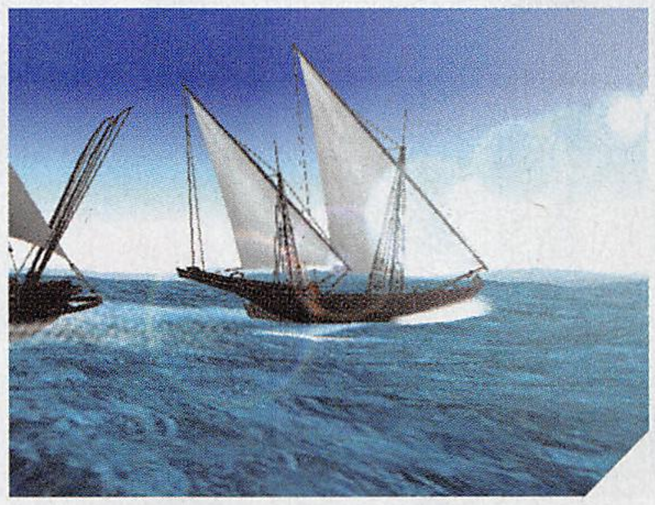
Of course, other popular *Suikoden* staples, like fortress building, embeddable runes, weapon upgrades, and a healthy amount of mini-games, are in store as well, though there's still no word on whether or not the ultra-popular cooking game from *Suikoden II* will return.

An absolute scorcher in most role-playing circles, *Suikoden IV* could be big. We'll be back with more shortly, but we seriously hope that more copies of this game are manufactured than past titles in the series. Just trying to find the last game in most places is near impossible.

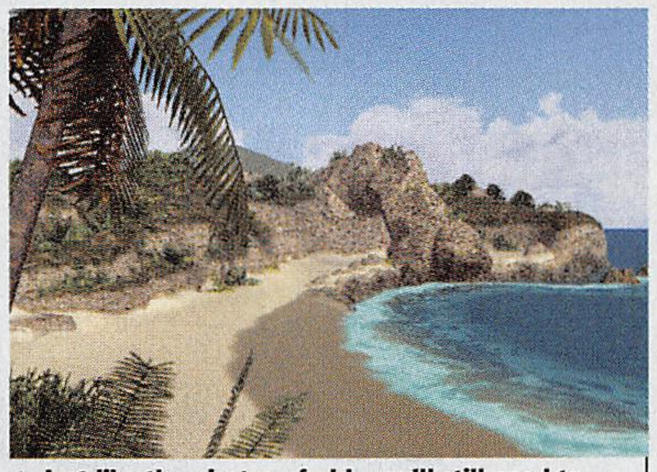
JEREMY DUNHAM/
STEPHEN FROST

THE BUZZ

Improved in virtually every area, this *Suikoden* may shine the brightest.



▶ With most of the game focused on the open seas, you can expect to see some great ship battles.



▲ Just like the pirates of old, you'll still need to come to land from time to time.

▲ Before heading into a mission, be sure to have the right equipment. You can only carry so much.

▲ This doesn't look good. The last place you want to be is in the middle of a fire.

GAME INFO | PUB KONAMI | DEV KONAMI TYO | TYPE ACTION | REL DATE FEB. | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB PENDING

FIREFIGHTER F.D. 18

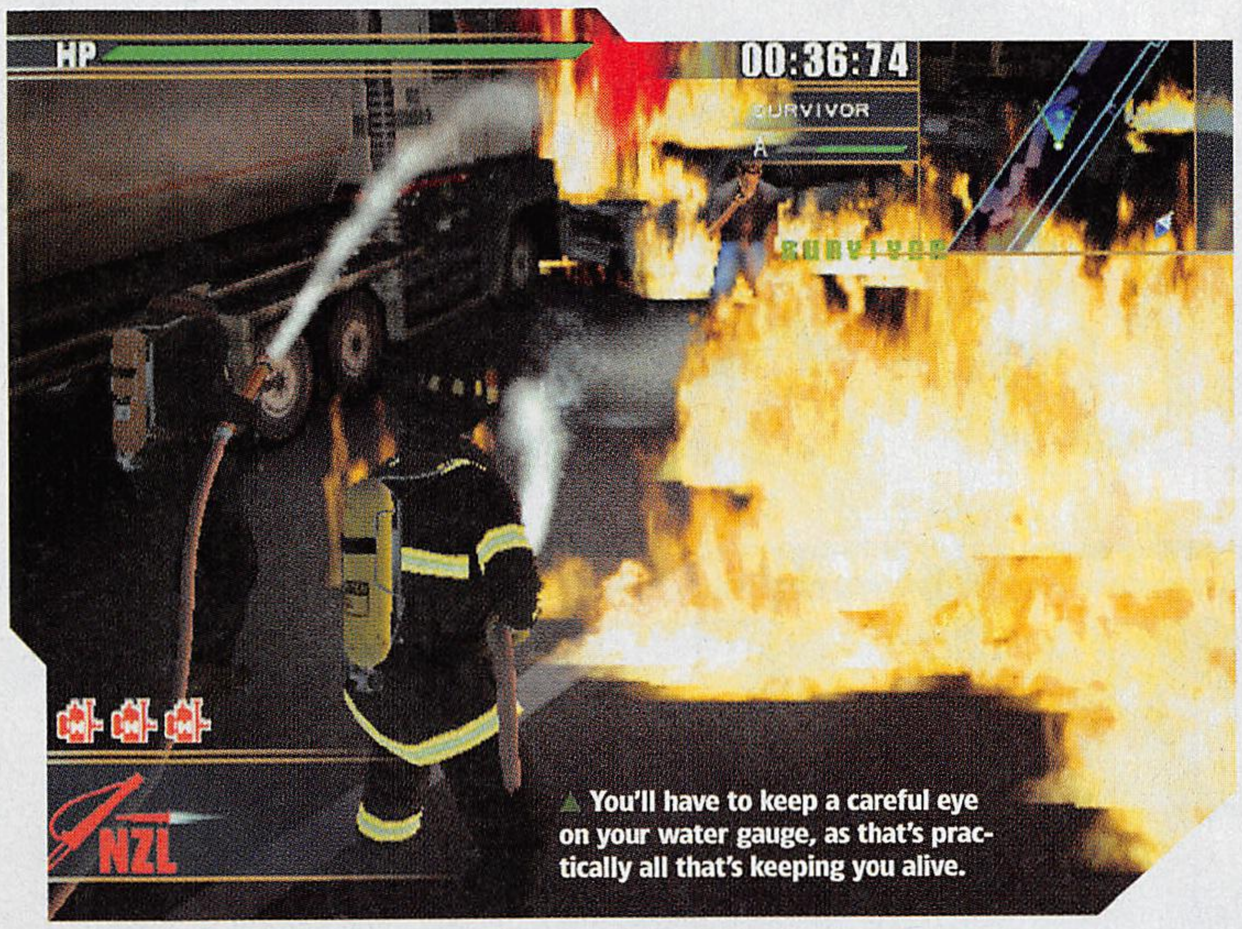
Finally, firefighters get some attention

If there's one category of games that doesn't get much play, it's firefighting. Despite the appearance of titles like *Ignition Factor* and *Brave* *Firefighters* over the years, there hasn't been much to speak of. Luckily, the folks at Konami have decided to get into the action themselves and bring their faithful fans a realistic (but fun) attempt at capturing one of the world's most dangerous professions.

Developed by the same studio responsible for the *Silent Hill* series, *Firefighter F.D.18* is an action-based adventure that prides itself on its compelling storyline. Following its hero through several stages of realistic flames and back drafts, players will fight infernos with hoses, extinguishers, and their wits as they track the identity of an unknown arsonist.

Perhaps the most compelling features of *Firefighter* are the intense boss battles. Reminiscent of the 16-bit days, with their complex, pattern-based superiors, almost every single stage sees some kind of different fire ready to cook your protagonist.

More compelling than we first thought, *Firefighter F.D.18* is one that we'll definitely keep our eye on. Stay tuned. JEREMY DUNHAM



▲ You'll have to keep a careful eye on your water gauge, as that's practically all that's keeping you alive.

▲ When rescuing people, you'll be presented with cutscenes to move the story along nicely. Expect some serious drama.

THE BUZZ

Realistic fire and a strong storyline should help keep it from burning out.

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Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information.

*** INTERNET CONNECTIVITY REQUIRED FOR PLAYSTATION 2 AND PCCD.** PlayStation®2 online play requires Internet connection and Network Adaptor for PlayStation 2 (sold separately).

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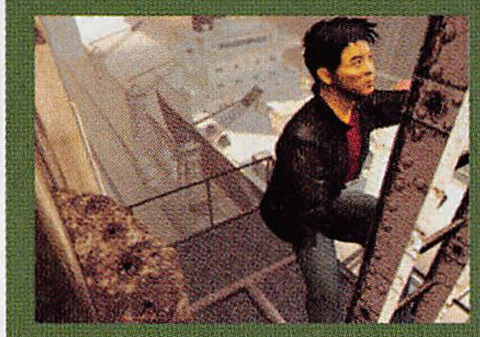
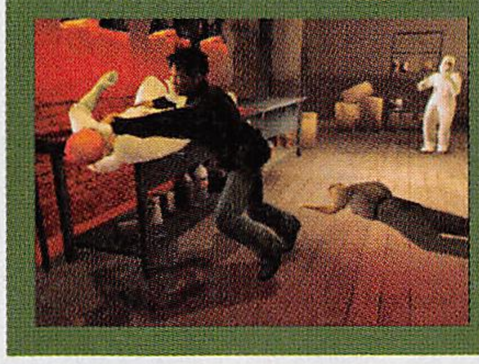
GAME INFO | PUB SONY CEA | DEV SONY FOSTER CITY | TYPE ACTION | REL DATE JANUARY | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB PENDING

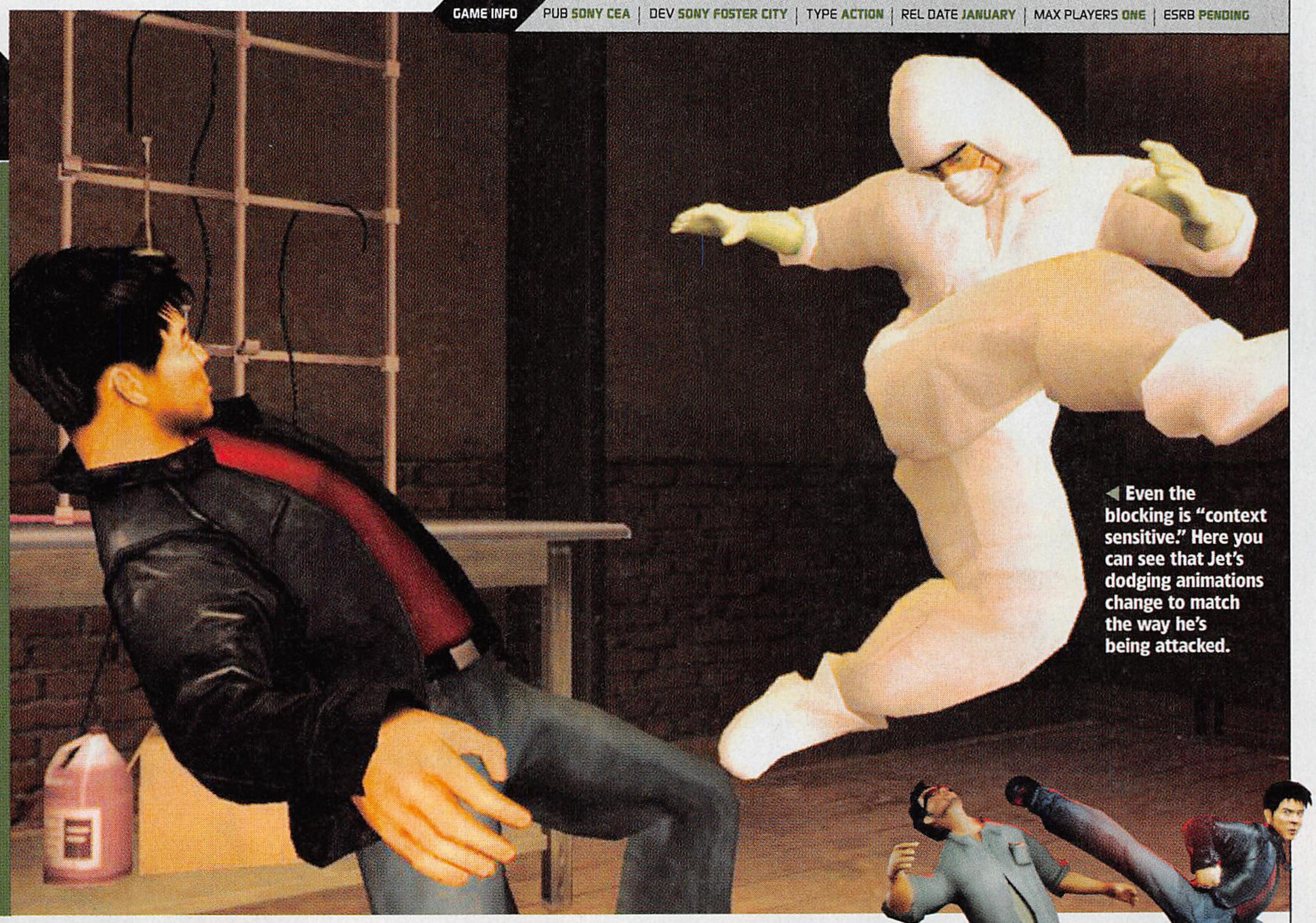
One Button Gameplay?

Rise To Honor uses the R1 button for a *lot* of things, from rolling out of harm's way to leaping along rooftops — it's really a neat idea.

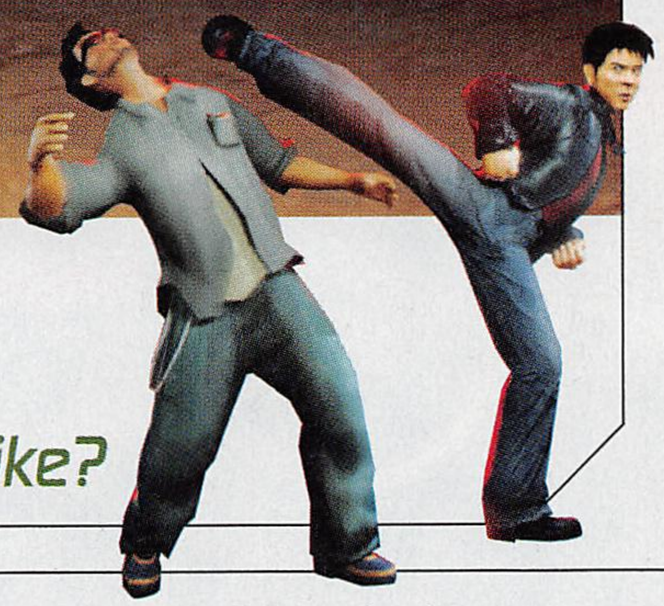


▲▼ Hitting the action button (R1) near a ladder will make Jet climb, while grabbing and enemy and hitting it near a table will initiate a classic "bar toss" move.





◀ Even the blocking is "context sensitive." Here you can see that Jet's dodging animations change to match the way he's being attacked.



RISE TO HONOR

It looks like a Hong Kong action flick, but what does it play like?

The first big PlayStation 2 game to come out of SCEA's U.S. headquarters is nearing the home stretch, getting tweaked and fine-tuned for its release in January '04. We got our mitts on the latest beta version of the martial arts beat-'em-up "starring" Hong Kong movie legend Jet Li, and we're definitely impressed by what we've played so far.

Rise To Honor doesn't play like any other action game on the market, which so far, is a plus. We were a little baffled by the idea of attack by "flicking" the right analog stick towards enemies, but it actually works quite well, even in combos. Early on, we were excited by the potential of using background objects against enemies, but we've found that it can be much more fun to grab enemies and force them into... well, "interesting" objects. How about a red-hot range top? Ouch! *The Bouncer* left us longing for background interaction in this genre, and *Rise To Honor* has taken it to the extreme.

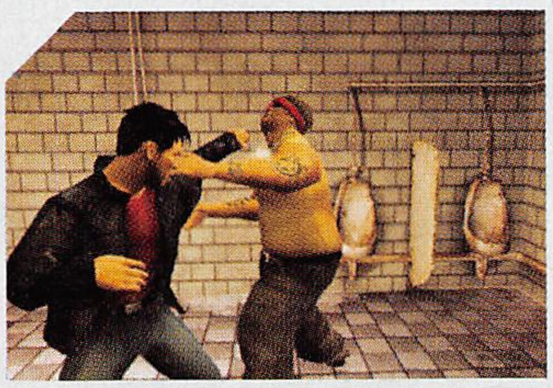
True to classic beat-'em-up form, the game is totally linear, with each fight scene introduced and followed by real time cinemas that look like something John Woo might have directed. We just hope that the final product strikes a decent balance between movies and gameplay.

Gameplay trades off between hand-to-hand and shooting sequences fairly often, and they both have a very different feel to them. When Jet's holding guns, he can take cover, target multiple enemies, and, yes, dive through the air in slow-motion. Beyond the ability to target oil drums and other objects (a la *The Getaway),* this part of the game is by far the most straightforward so far.

One of the cooler things we've noticed about *Rise To Honor* is the way it uses the R1 button to perform nearly every action other than attacking. You might use it to jump, climb, throw the bad guys — it's all about the situation you're in at the time (it's called "context sensitive action," FYI.)

This early taste of *Rise To Honor* has definitely left us thirsty for more.

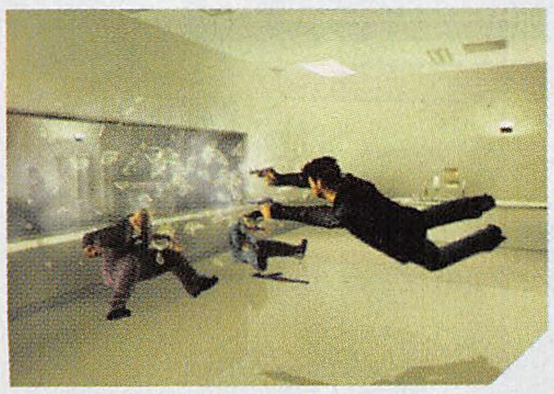
RANDY NELSON



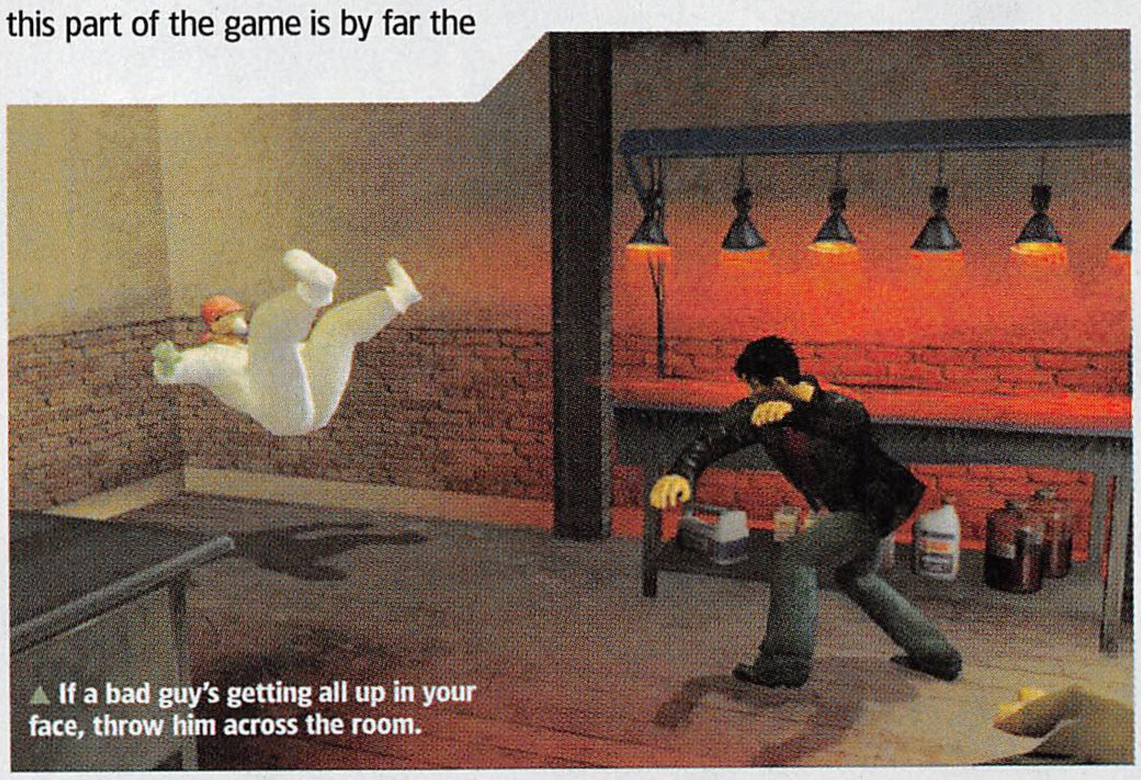
▲ We haven't tried dunking this thug's head in a urinal, but now that we've thought of it, we think we will.

THE BUZZ

The fighting system is unique, but we're worried about the game being too repetitive.



▲ Really now, what would a Hong Kong action game be without lots of shooting while diving through the air in slo-mo?



▲ If a bad guy's getting all up in your face, throw him across the room.

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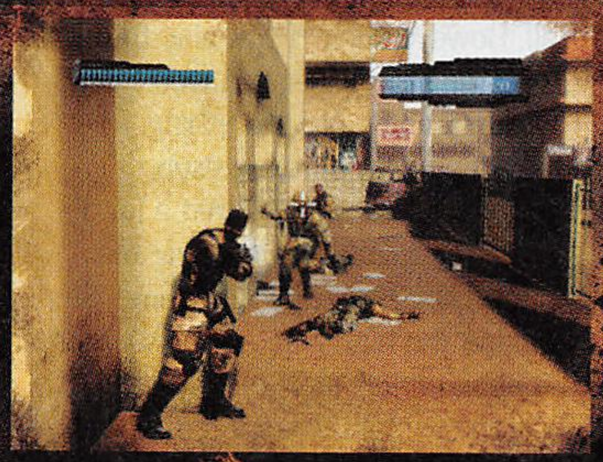

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killswitch.com

GAME INFO | PUB VIVENDI | DEV SWORDFISH | TYPE FPS | REL DATE OCTOBER 2004 | MAX PLAYERS TBD | ESRB PENDING

▲ While a lot of the game will be played solo, it appears that you'll team up with other characters for at least a few different levels.

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COLD WINTER

Things are going to get seriously cold for the competition

While shown to us earlier this year, it's only been recently that *Cold Winter* has truly grabbed our attention. A recent visit from the developers revealed a game that has not only come a long way, but also has the potential to be one of the biggest titles of 2004.

Unlike most other releases in the FPS genre, *Cold Winter* doesn't quite follow tradition with its structure. Instead of one big story arc and a completely linear progression, the game is actually broken up into three distinct story threads that take place in eight different locations (a Chinese prison, Cairo, North Korea, Hong Kong, India, etc.). The unique thing is that each thread is a complete gaming experience, with endings and all. However, unless you play through all three sequences, you won't fully understand or see everything.

Along with that interesting approach, one can tell that a lot of time was spent in developing the underlying engine for the game. Step behind the highly detailed visuals and lighting effects and you'll notice an incredibly realistic world full of truly intelligent characters and highly interactive environments. You can literally pick up and use anything you see. That includes chairs, boxes, heaters and everything else in-between. You can even flip over tables in order to use them as cover!

As you may probably assume, calling this game "impressive" could very well end up as an understatement. It looks like *Cold Winter* is single-handedly looking to set THE standard for future games in this genre. We were blown away by what's been accomplished and yet, the title still has a year left in development. Without a doubt, this is one winter we're definitely looking forward to.

STEPHEN FROST

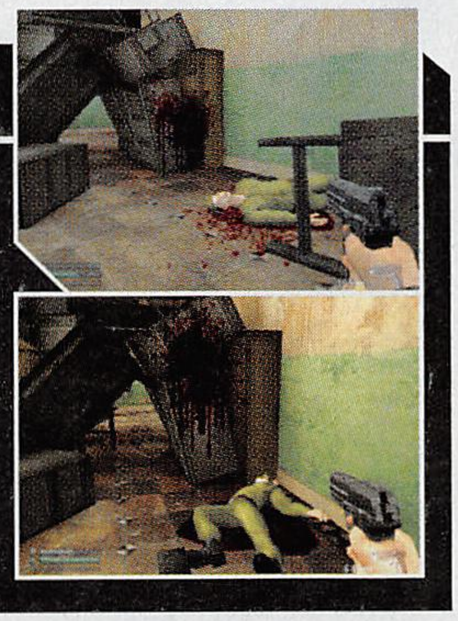
▲ There are no health packs to find or anything like that. You can just actually heal yourself at anytime, as long as you're out of a firefight.

THE BUZZ

Beautiful lighting, amazing physics and intelligent characters are high points of this FPS.

ESRB? What's That?

Cold Winter is definitely not a game for the timid. The blood flows often and easily, especially when you start getting the more powerful weapons. We can't help but have flashbacks of *Kill Bill* during some of the more graphic sequences.



▲ These poor guys never knew what hit them. They obviously weren't getting paid enough to take this kind of abuse.

▲ The lighting and physics systems in this game are simply top-notch and will blow away even the most jaded of gamers.

▲ Guards will attempt to find cover, if there is some. On another note, you can actually pick up that chair and hit the guard with it.

"...some mad 3-on-3 basketball that could prove to put the action-sports ball back in JAM's court."
– GamePro

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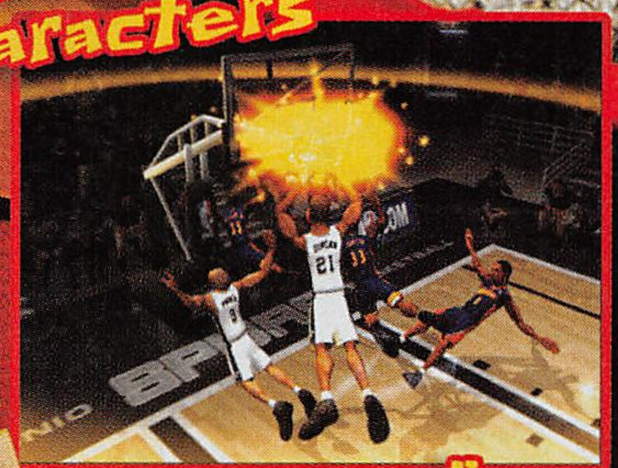
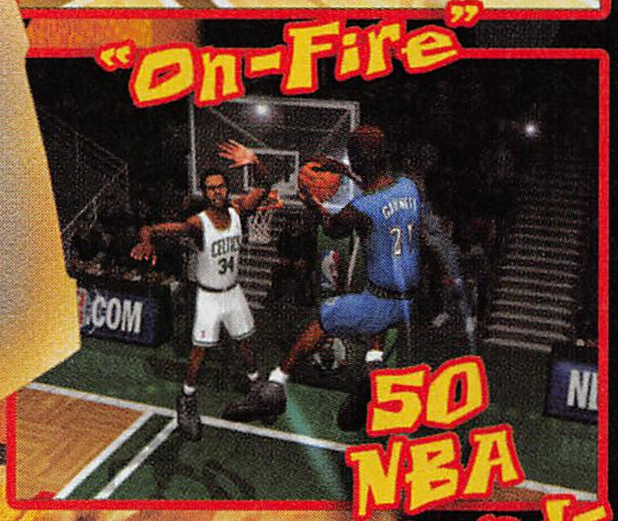
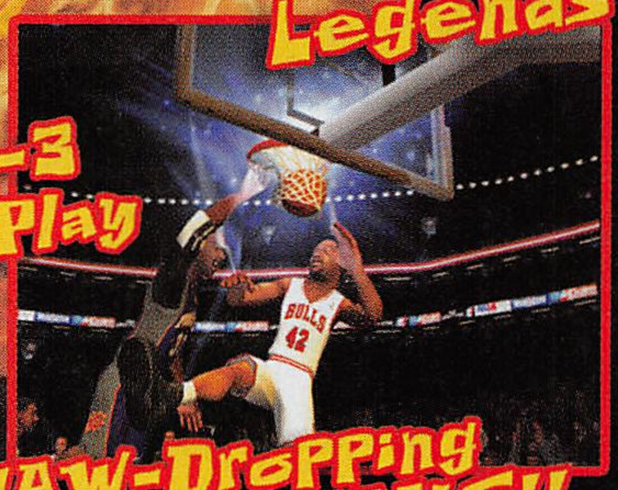
Unlockable Characters



"On-Fire"



50 NBA Legends



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THROW DOWN THE HAMMA

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Score: 9/10 "If you are a *Buffy* fan, you'll want to buy *Chaos Bleeds*. If you're not a *Buffy* fan, you'll want to buy it because it's damned fun."

-PSM, October 2003

Score: 8.8/10 "More moves right off the bat, more areas to check out – it's an action gamer's dream, really."

-Official Xbox Magazine, October 2003

Score: 8.2/10 "...an excellent, well-put-together action adventure game that most fans of the genre should be able to enjoy and any *Buffy* fan will love."

-Gamespot, August 2003

Score: B+ "Not only does the game look better than its predecessor but it outperforms it in nearly every way."

-Play Magazine, October 2003

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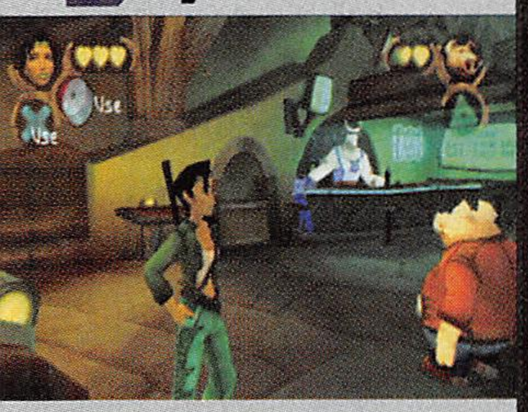
Multiplayer chaos - with support for up to 4 players on the same screen.

Story based on a lost episode of the television series.

STRATEGY

112 Beyond Good & Evil



CODES

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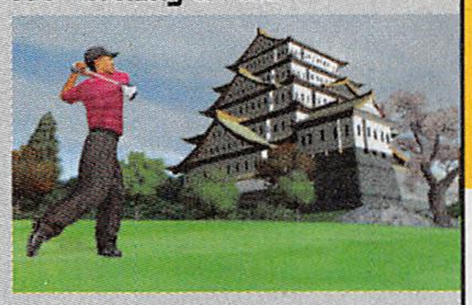

116 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004

DDR Max 2, p. 116

Starsky & Hutch, p. 116

▶ After you grab the Gyrodisk, shoot the spider-looking creature to free Double HH.

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

Our quick walkthrough is so good, it's evil!

Warning: There are a few spoilers in here, so don't read if you don't want to know! Makes sense, right?

Photog the hog

You will need to photograph three different animals to get money to renew the power. Go all Peter Parker on your dog, the kids, Pey'j, and every animal on the island. Repair your hovercraft at the garage and then make your way to Black Isle. Grab some wire cutters from the storage room to cut the fence, and move on to the first boss. Just keep your distance and then close in for a hit when he pops up.

Hit the cantina!

Next stop is the bar, where you will meet the IRIS operatives. Play a round of the custom air-hockey game to win another pearl. The best strategy is simply to aim for the center and fire as quickly as possible. Get the room code from the attendant upstairs and get your first mission. Now is a good time to tackle some of the optional sections, such as the first two races (accessible from the main waterway), as well as the pirate caverns on the edge of the first lagoon. Also, get the cannon upgrade. You'll need it to take out the robot guarding the factory entrance.

Futzing with the factory

Take a picture of the lock — a minute later, you'll receive the code for the door. Jump the beams and then disable them so Pey'j can come, too. Push the block into the next barrier and jump over it. From here, go down to the elevator room and use Pey'j to reach the second floor. Take the catwalk to reach Double H. Inside the locker is Jade's second weapon, the Gyrodisk shooter. Grab it and then disable the creature holding Double H prisoner. Return to the main area.

It's time for another boss battle. Use the Gyrodisk to stun the reaper from a distance and then run up and smack it with your staff. Repeat. Ignore the pearl; you can get to it with the hovercraft later.

Next, return to the lower laboratory and push the cylinders

next to the barrier edges to disable it. Grab the goods in the next room and then cross to the electrical control room. Shoot the fan with your Gyrodisk until it hits the power cable, open the door, and move on. Disable the generator and grab the fuses. Now repair the central elevator. Make sure you have explored this area thoroughly before going up.

Make like Snake

Play this section like a stealth action game. Keep Jade away from the Alpha Sections. If you must engage, shoot their air tanks from behind for a quick kill. Pey'j gets in trouble no matter what, so stay hidden. If an alert sounds, drop down into the lower ventilation ducts until it passes.

One puzzle in this area involves Double H and a fire passage. As he approaches the flames, shoot the switches under the jets to disable them. When he reaches the end, have him flip a switch to disable the barrier leading to the next area.

In the room with the conveyer belt

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

AND SO I SHALL NAME HER AURA

WITHOUT YOU SHE WOULD NOT EXIST

THE SHINING GIRL AURA

WE WILL ENTRUST HER WITH OUR WILL

OUR FUTURE IS IN HER HANDS

SHE IS OUR

I MUST

SPEAK WITH MORGANNA

TO GO WHERE SHE IS

THE LIVING FLESH POSES A HINDRANCE

BUT I MUST

I MUST GO FOR OUR AURA

EMMA PLEASE GIVE ME A LITTLE MORE

COURAGE

NO THE PASSAGE OF TIME

IS IRREVERSIBLE

BIRTH OR DEATH

NOW ONLY THESE TWO

CHOICES REMAIN

AURA THE CHILD OF LIGHT

EMMA'S DAUGHTER

MY DAUGHTER

JUST A LITTLE MORE

TRAVELER TAKE THIS TO HEART

IT IS DARKEST BEFORE THE DAWN

REINCARNATED ELUSIVE LYRIC POET

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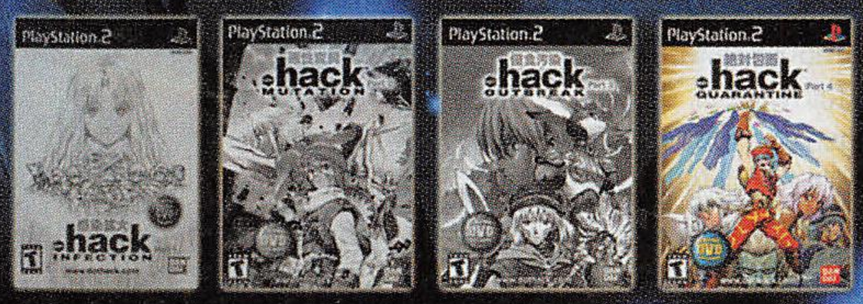
www.dothack.com

After survivi ng parts 1, 2 and 3 of the .hack saga, th e end is in sight for K ite and friends. But the cl]ock is ticking, the bracelet is g one and s}till the virus is ragi ng. Player by play r, The Wolrd is f?lling apart. Now tehy m>st cure th!s vi*r+s or w@tch their fr~ien]ds f^ade% aw|ay — how wlil it e/nd? I t's u^p to y_u.



.hack has spread beyond video games. Also look for DVDs, trading cards, strategy guides and now Manga comics! .hack//Legend of the Twilight available now from TOKYOPOP®.

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Mature Sexual Themes
Mild Language
Violence

.hack//SIGN As seen on CARTOON NETWORK PlayStation.2

BANDAI®

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CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE
and Alpha Sections, grab onto a box and ride along with it on the conveyer. A crane will move you safely across the room to a second conveyer.

When you encounter the boss, use Double H to make it fall over and then shoot out the central orb. Return to the entrance and grab your hovercraft, then get back to the hideout fast.

Slaughterhouse Road — that sounds safe

Buy the jump upgrade for your hovercraft and complete races three and four, then head down Slaughterhouse Road.

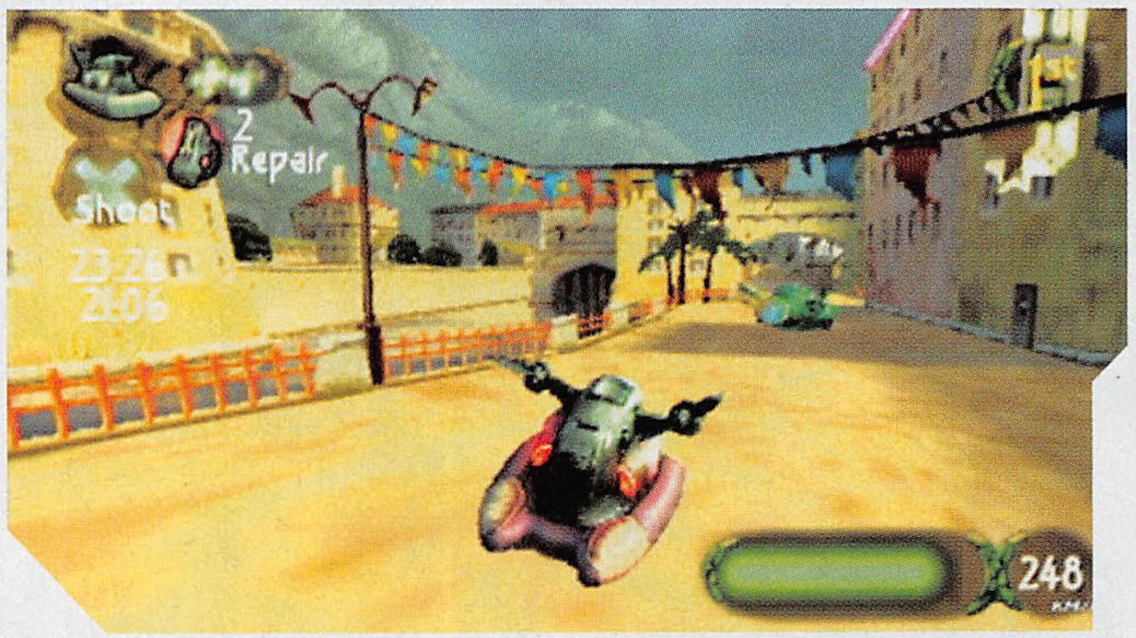
Use the Gyrodisk to activate the switch from a distance and open the Slaughterhouse gate. The Slaughterhouse is fairly linear, though you will need to sneak past a number of Alpha Sections. The population on the ground is safe, but there is still the matter of the abductees. You must acquire the spaceship and make your way to the DomZ moon base for the final battle. Pey'j has left instructions for you on a disk explaining how to access his hidden ship. Go back to the lighthouse and enter the codes in the hidden terminals: one is in the children's room, the other is in Pey'j's workshop.

Ship shape

Inside the hanger, the ship is missing a part. Get it from the garage and fix the ship. You will return to the lighthouse to find it destroyed... and the children kidnapped. Oh, and one other minor problem — the ship still needs a motor. You may need to enter the volcano and retrieve the treasure the bartender told you about early on in the game. Once you have enough pearls, buy the motor from the garage and then take off for the moon.

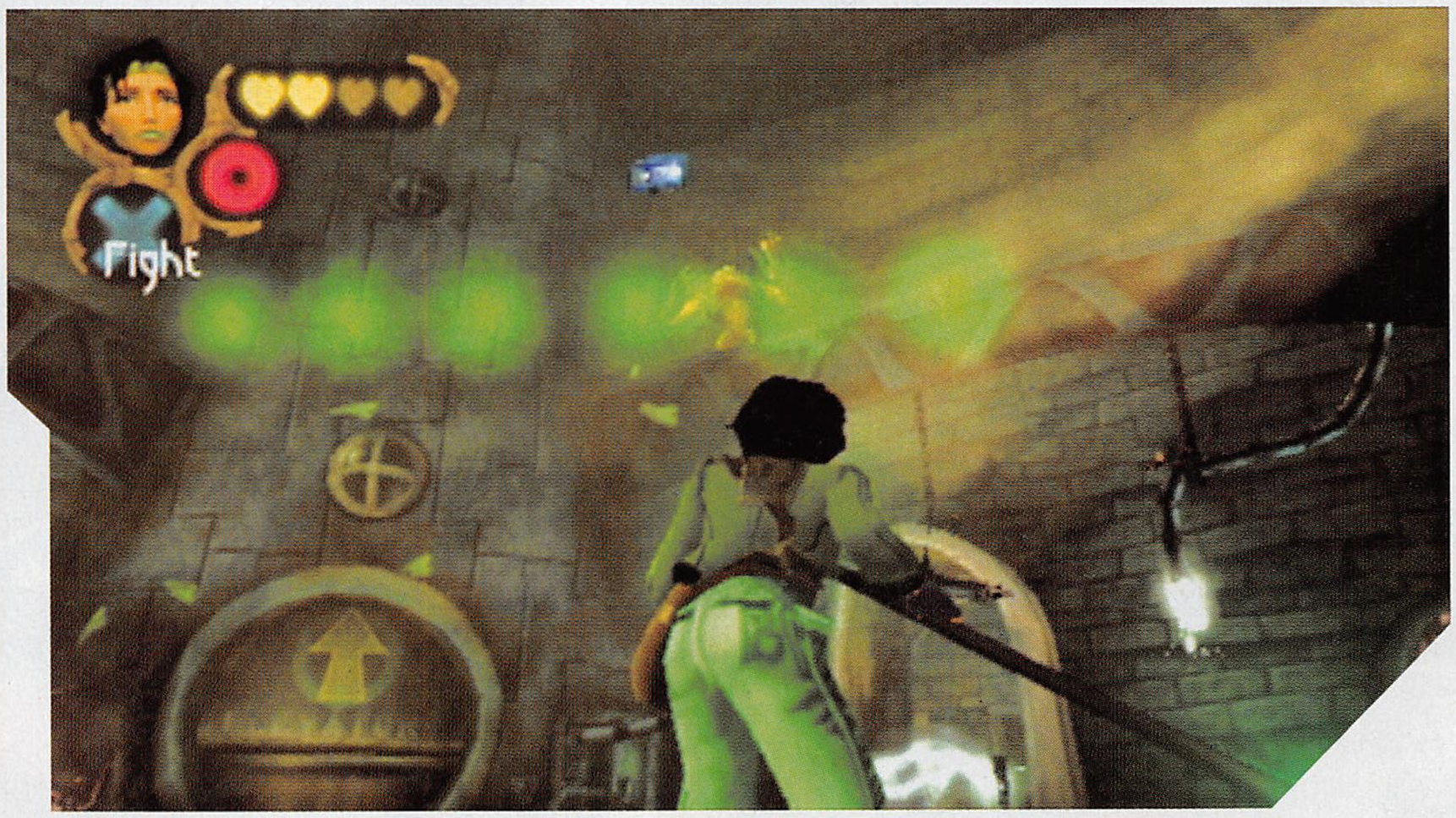
Moon Over My Hammy

The moon is a dirty, dangerous place and we don't want to spoil the ending, so you're on your own for this section. The only thing to keep in mind is the mirror puzzle. At one point, you will need to rescue some prisoners. Use the mirror to reflect a beam and lower the barrier.



▲ **The hovercraft races are an easy way to score some valuable pearls. Winning the first two is child's play. Just keep the pedal to the metal and hit all of the boost pads.**

▼ **The Reaper is deadly up close, but moves with a very predictable pattern. Shoot him with the Gyrodisk to stun and then move in for the kill.**



▶ **Talk to the bartender and then head upstairs to discover the IRIS headquarters.**

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Blood
Violence
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TAKE THE PSM CHALLENGE!

RULES You can't send an entry for each challenge. If you cheat or use codes, you'll be disqualified. The final letter for the contest will be accepted on January 1st. If there are multiple winners, the final winner will be decided by the best paragraph that explains why you're the winner. Send a picture or a videotape (non-returnable) and a short paragraph explaining why you're the winner. Sorry, no e-mail entries! This contest is open only to readers living in the United States, age 18 years or older. PSM reserves the right to substitute prizes of equal or greater monetary value, if necessary.

SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO: PSM Holiday Challenge # (the challenge you're entering) c/o Future Network USA, 150 North Hill Drive, Brisbane, CA 94005.

THE CHALLENGES

Challenge #1: Tiger Wood's PGA Tour 2004
Master the following courses: Tiger's Dream 18, TPC at Sawgrass, Pebble Beach, and Emerald Dragon.

Challenge #2: Monster Rancher 4
Use a copy of the PSM October issue DVD and unlock Tri-Gai, then guide him to the top rank.

Challenge #3: Legacy Of Kain: Defiance
Either collect all the Arcane Tomes or simply beat the game, unlocking all the bonus material.

THIS MONTH'S PRIZE PACKAGE

Beyond Good & Evil game
Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy game
NBA Live 2004 game

SEPTEMBER WINNERS

Silent Hill 3
Melissa Dubln, Spokane, WA

Wakeboarding Unleashed
Tim Lenardi, Lafayette, IN

NCAA Football 2004
Alan selono, Troy, MI

CODES

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004

Codes are entered in the Passwords section of the Options menu. All codes except for the Sherwood Target code are case sensitive. If you enter the cheat correctly, you'll hear Tiger say "Oh, yeah!"; if you duff it, he'll retort "That's... not good."

4REDSHIRTS
Unlock Sunday Tiger

ACEINTHEHOLE
Unlock Ace Andrews

ALLTHETRACKS
Unlock All Courses

BEVERLYHILLS
Unlock Val Summers

CANYOUPICKONE
Unlock All Golfers

CEDDYBEAR
Unlock Cedric The Entertainer

DISCOKING
Unlock Dominic "The Don" Donatello

DTBROWN
Unlock Downtown Brown

DWILBY
Unlock Hamish "Mulligan" McGregor

EDDIE
Unlock Edwin "Pops" Masterson

EMERALDCHAMP
Unlock Takeharu "Tsunami" Moto

ERUPTION
Unlock Moa "Big Mo" Ta'a Vatu

ICYONE
Unlock Erica Ice

SHERWOOD TARGET
Unlock Sherwood Target 3 hole challenge against Tiger

SHORTGAME
Unlock Solita Lopez

THEKITCHENSINK
Unlock All Courses and Golfers

THENEWLEFTY
Unlock "Yosh" Tanigawa

TRAVELER
Unlock Kellie Newman

NBA Live 2004

Use these cool codes to unlock classic Nike kicks.

Air Foamposite Pro Colorway 1
DG56TRF446

Air Foamposite Pro Colorway 2
3245AFSD45

Air Foamposite Pro Colorway 3
DSAKF38422

Air Hyperflight Colorway 3
A0K374HF8S

Air Hyperflight Colorway 4
JCX93LSS88

Air Zoom Flight Colorway 1
367UEY6SN

Air Flightposite II Colorway 2
2389JASE3E

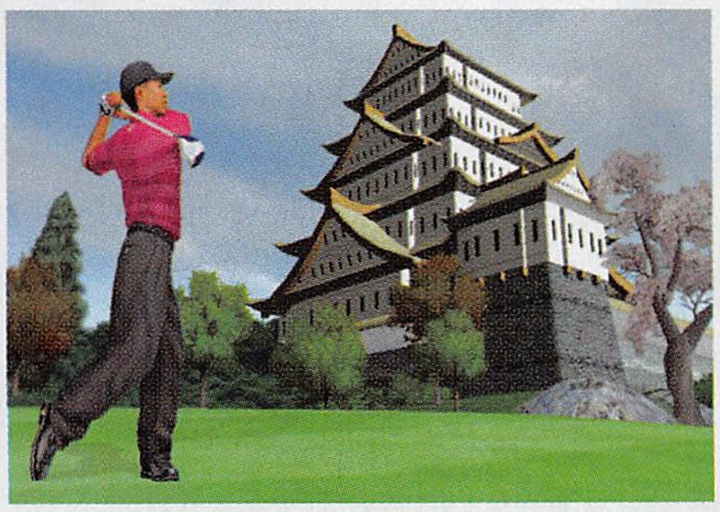
Air Flight 89 Colorway 3
GF9845JHR4

NHL Hitz Pro

The cheats are entered on the Select Teams screen. Once the first one is unlocked, new options will be available under Settings/Game Tuning/Visuals/Cheats.

Press the button beside the USER prompt on your "choose sides" controller option, and use your controller to enter one of the following user names to unlock visual cheats:

herk	Player Head Mode unlocked.
Ingy	Team Head Mode unlocked.
211s	Puck Size cheat unlocked.
Sasg	Puck Shadow cheat unlocked.
Carb	Puck Glow cheat unlocked.



Player Head Mode:
You can make one player's head size big or small
Team Head Mode:
You can make the entire teams' heads big or small
Puck Size:
You can make the puck larger
Puck Shadow Cheat:
You can choose to put a shadow around the puck to make it more visible in the game
Puck Glow:
The puck will have an iridescent trail.

◀ So, you want to unlock all the courses and players without actually beating Tiger at his own game? Here you go.

Roadkill

Money Cheat
△○△○□✕□✕↓↑

Infinite Ammo
△□□○△□□○

Increase RIOT level
△○✕□△○✕□↑

Decrease RIOT level
△○✕□△○✕□↓

Tornado
△○✕□□✕○△

Unlock Vehicles
↑↓↑↓△✕△✕□○○□

Restore Health
□○□○□○□○

Unlock Weapons
△✕✕△□○○□✕□○△

Starsky & Hutch

There's one BIG code for this game. When typing in your license plate numbers and letters, use VADKRAM. Save it, reload it, and it will unlock all the cars, levels, and Huggy stuff in the game.

There are also a few codes that can be entered during gameplay. They only last for about 30 seconds, but they might help you out.

Big heads
△□✕○○✕□△

Funny car
↑✕↓△←○→□

Invisible car
↑→↓← L3 ←→←

Low rider
↑↑↓↓✕○△□

Monster truck tires
L1 L1 ←→ L3 L3 L3 L3

Three wheeler
↑↑←← R1 R2 L1 L2

Triptastic camera
L1 L2 R1 R2 ←←↑↑

GameShark Codes

PSM EXCLUSIVE CODES

DDR Max 2
[M] Must Be On
F440B62A FF7C0C16

Player 1 Rock On!
24501732 B7F001AA
24003F38 BE70012A

24903728 36704118
24903728 36704138
24903728 36704188
24903728 367041A8
24903528 36704108

Player 2 Rock On!
2410B572 957003AA
24009F78 9CF001BA

24909568 14F04108
24909568 14F04128
24909568 14F04118
24909568 14F04138
24909568 14F04198

ADDITIONAL CODES

Unlock: All Songs
244F6FD6 E90F8C33
Unlock: Dancer Options
04503769 3434C5B8
Unlock: Endless Mode
04503769 3434E5B8

Unlock: Information: All Information
44153728 70A4C148
3902D7E1 9FAB91E0
New Item Unlocked After Each Stage
14D03768 3434C518

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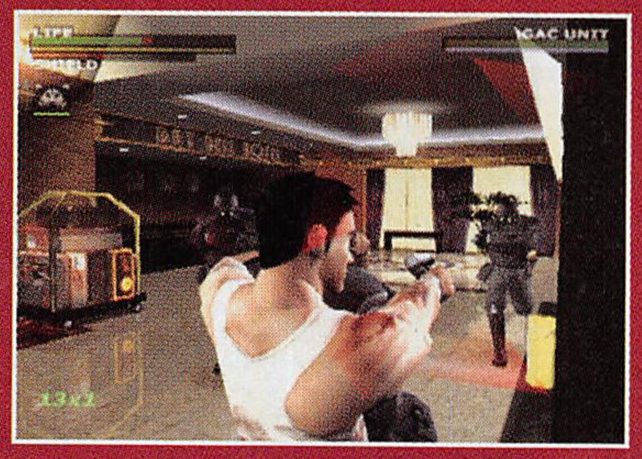
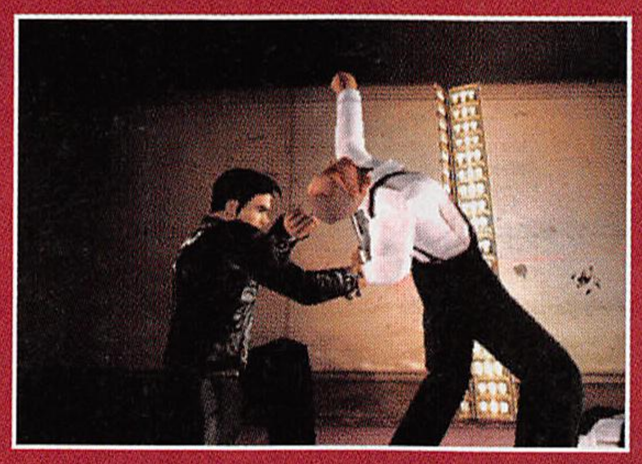


Take down thugs using slo-mo gunplay, lethal disarms and human shields.



Muscle your way through 15 chapters of Hong Kong movie-style action.

Command your K-9 sidekick to attack enemies and retrieve weapons.

MATURE 17+
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CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood
Mature Sexual Themes
Violence

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PSM RESET no. 79

THIS ISSUE'S OVER, BUT ANOTHER ONE IS ALREADY ON THE WAY ▶ HOLIDAY 2003

NEXT MONTH

PLAYSTATION PREVIEW 2004

PREPARE YOURSELF! If you think the PlayStation 2 has kicked ass so far, just wait until you get a load of what's in store! In our sixth annual PlayStation Preview spectacular, we'll reveal:

- When you'll hold your very own **PlayStation Portable (PSP)**
- What role **PlayStation 3** will play in 2004
- Which **blockbuster PS2 games** will shape the year ahead

PLUS, we'll get insider info from those in the know: game designers, company presidents and, of course, psychics! It'll be one big jamboree of fun that only true losers would dare miss!

WRITE THIS CAPTION!

▲ **WRITE A FUNNY CAPTION FOR THIS PICTURE!**

Jot down a funny caption for the above screen, and if we like yours the best, we'll send you a PSM Prize Pack filled with cool PlayStation 2 goodies! Just send an e-mail with your entry to **psm@futurenetworkusa.com**, with the subject header "**PSM Caption #79**" (or send your entry to **PSM Caption #79, c/o Future Network USA, Brisbane, CA 94005**). Be sure to include your full name and address so we can contact you if you win!

AND THE WINNER IS...

ANDREW NEUENSCH-WANDER of Chelsea, MI is the winner of our September Caption Contest. Andrew, your PSM Prize Pack is on the way!

▲ **"The infamous 'Nail Gang', named for their pointy hats, had unfortunately just met their match."**

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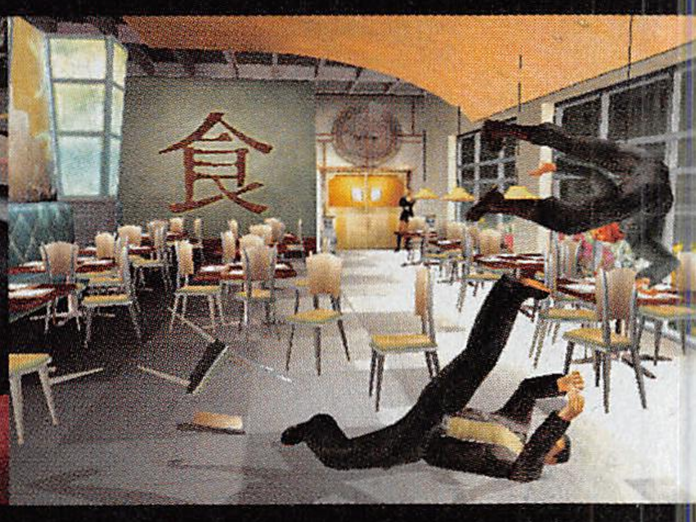

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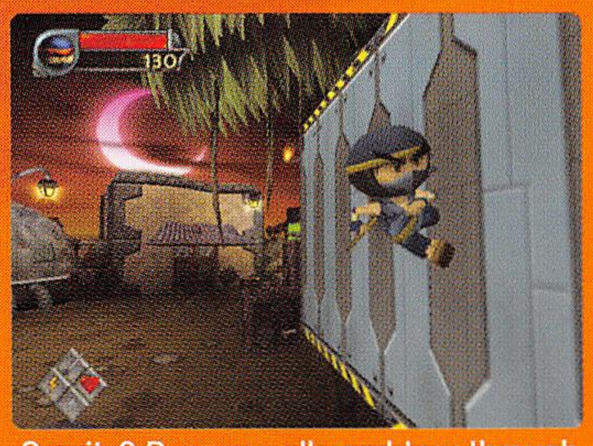
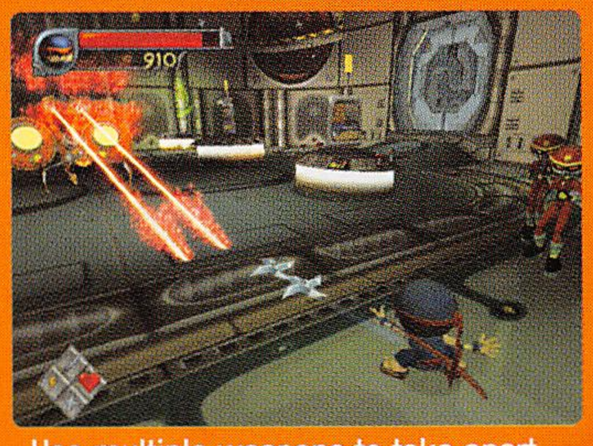
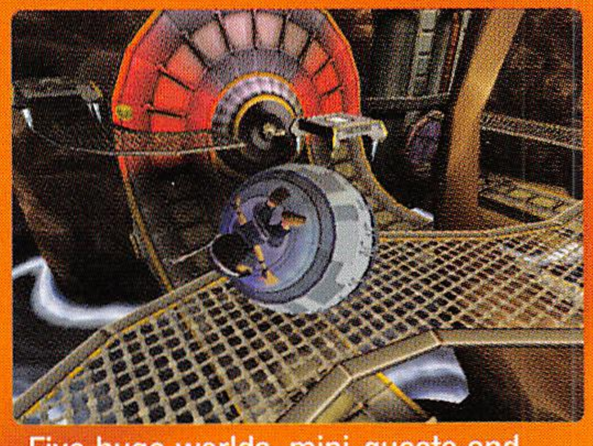


Gravity? Run up walls and tear through levels with moves only the most insane Ninja would try.



Use multiple weapons to take apart any foe that dares stand between Ninja and his missions.



Five huge worlds, mini-quests and grueling missions that will separate the Ninjas from the boys.

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NINTENDO GAMECUBE

XBOX

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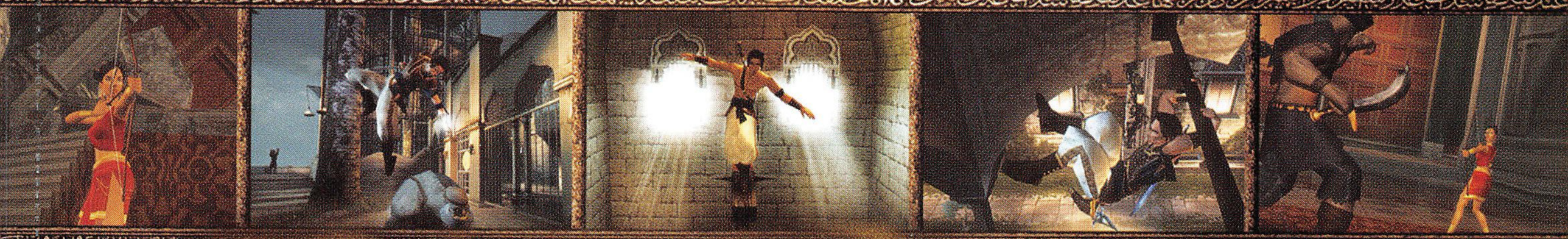

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Blood
Violence
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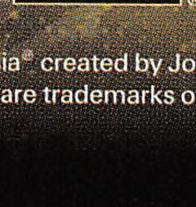

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Violence
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