

FIRST LOOK:
HALF-LIFE 2

OVER 40 NEW GAMES REVIEWED

GAMEINFORMER

Computer & Video Games

E3 2003

24 Pages Of
Nonstop
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The Show
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PSP

Sony's New
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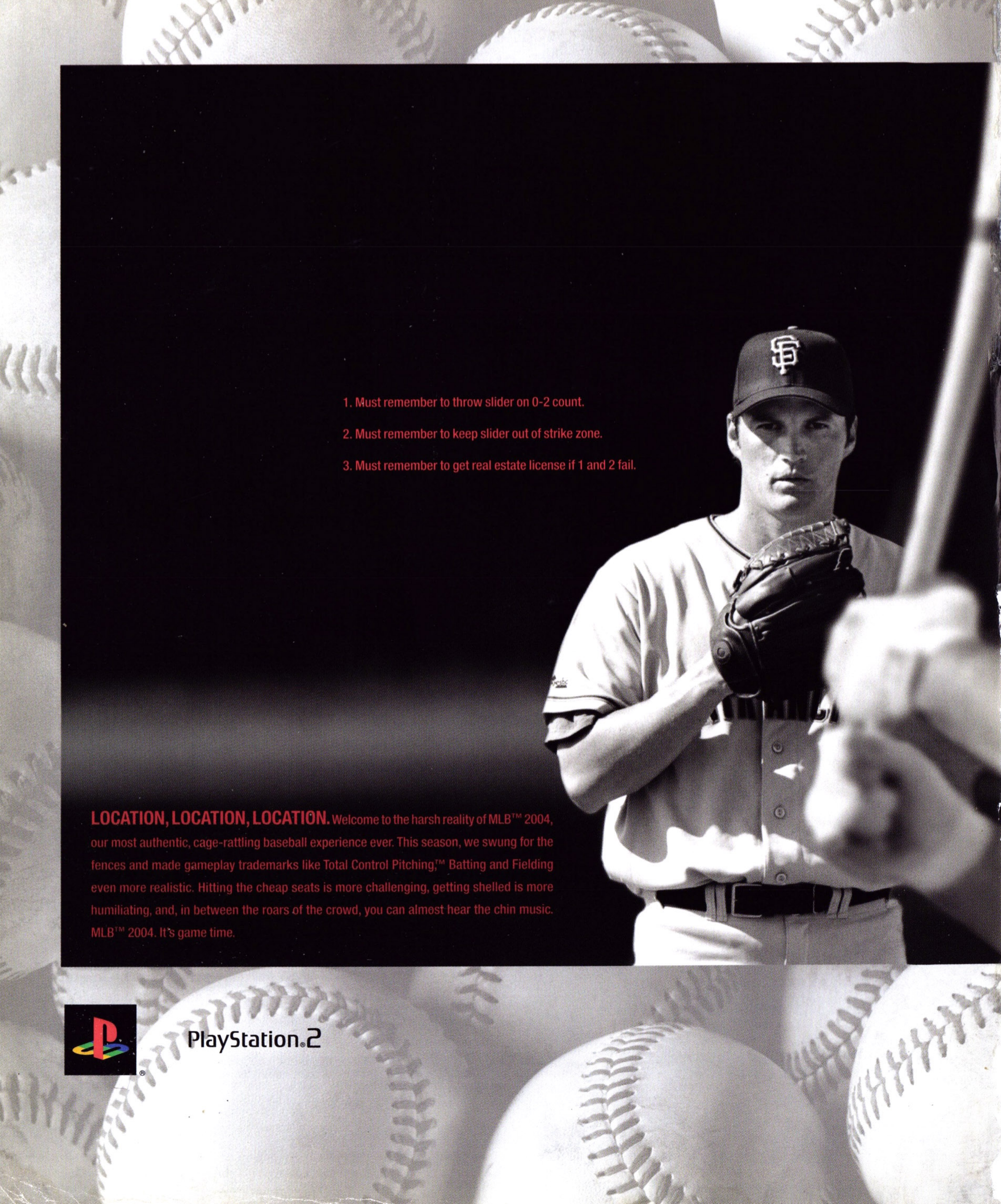
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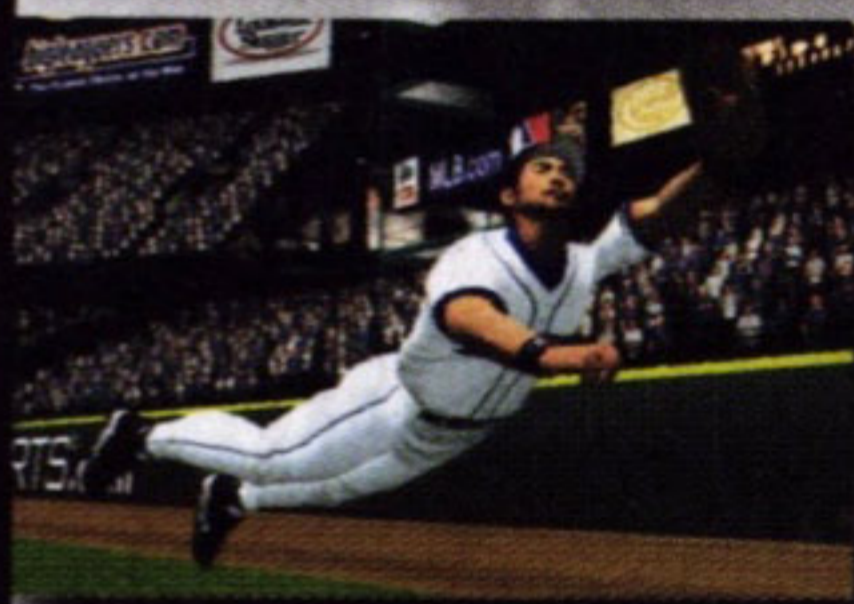
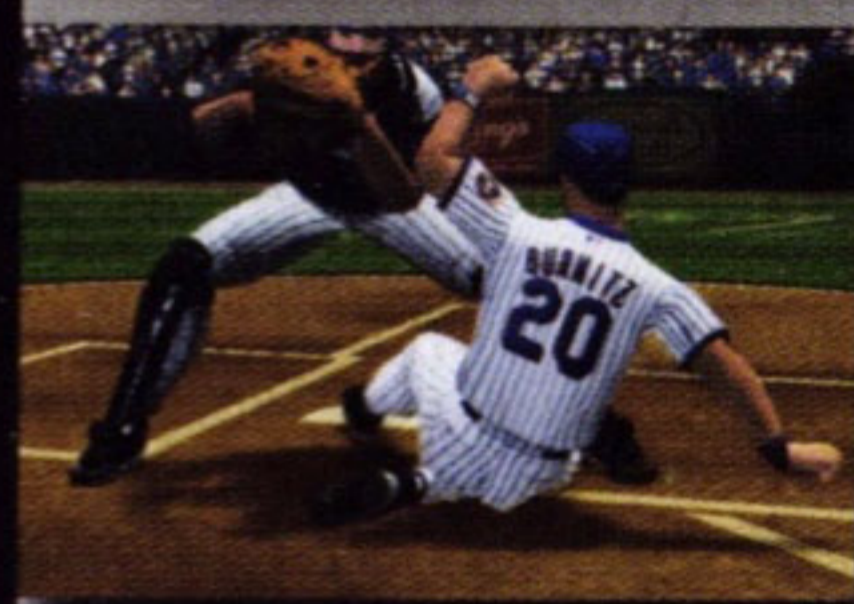
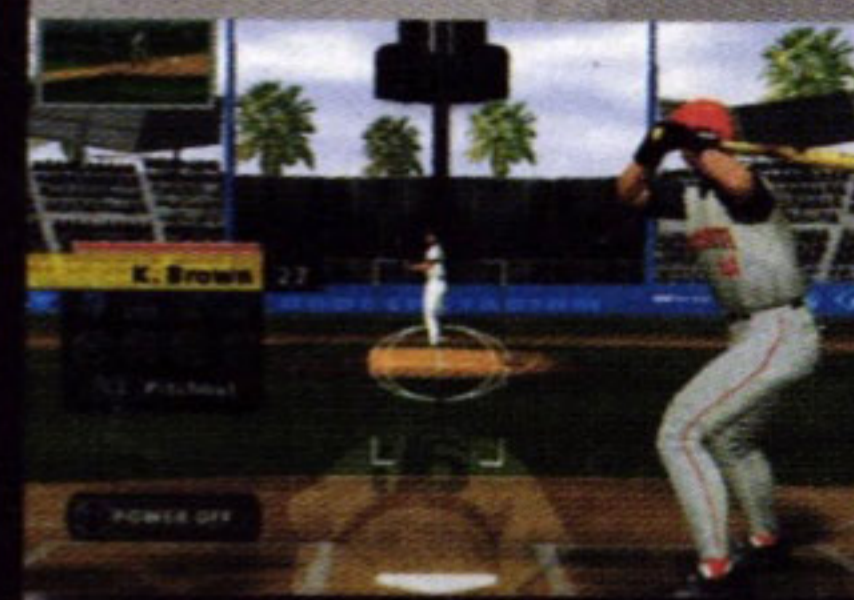
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1. Must remember to throw slider on 0-2 count.
 2. Must remember to keep slider out of strike zone.
 3. Must remember to get real estate license if 1 and 2 fail.

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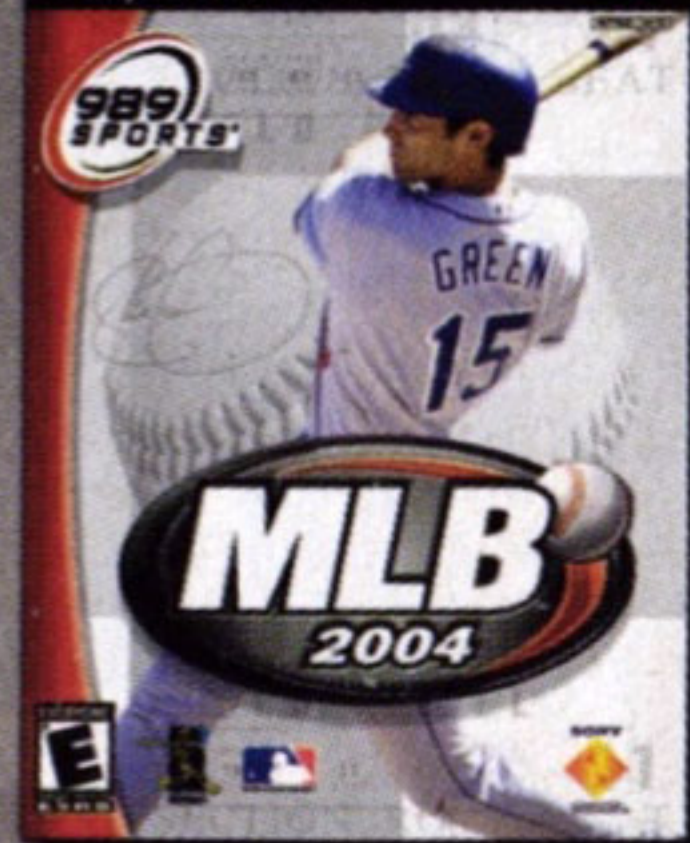


PlayStation®2

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DEEP IN CUBA, THE GHOSTS



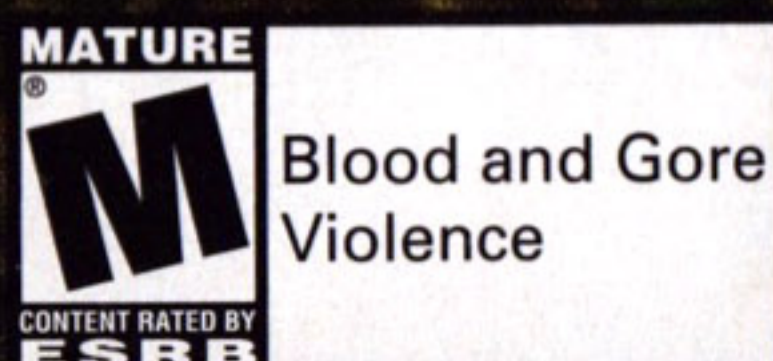
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Xbox screenshots shown



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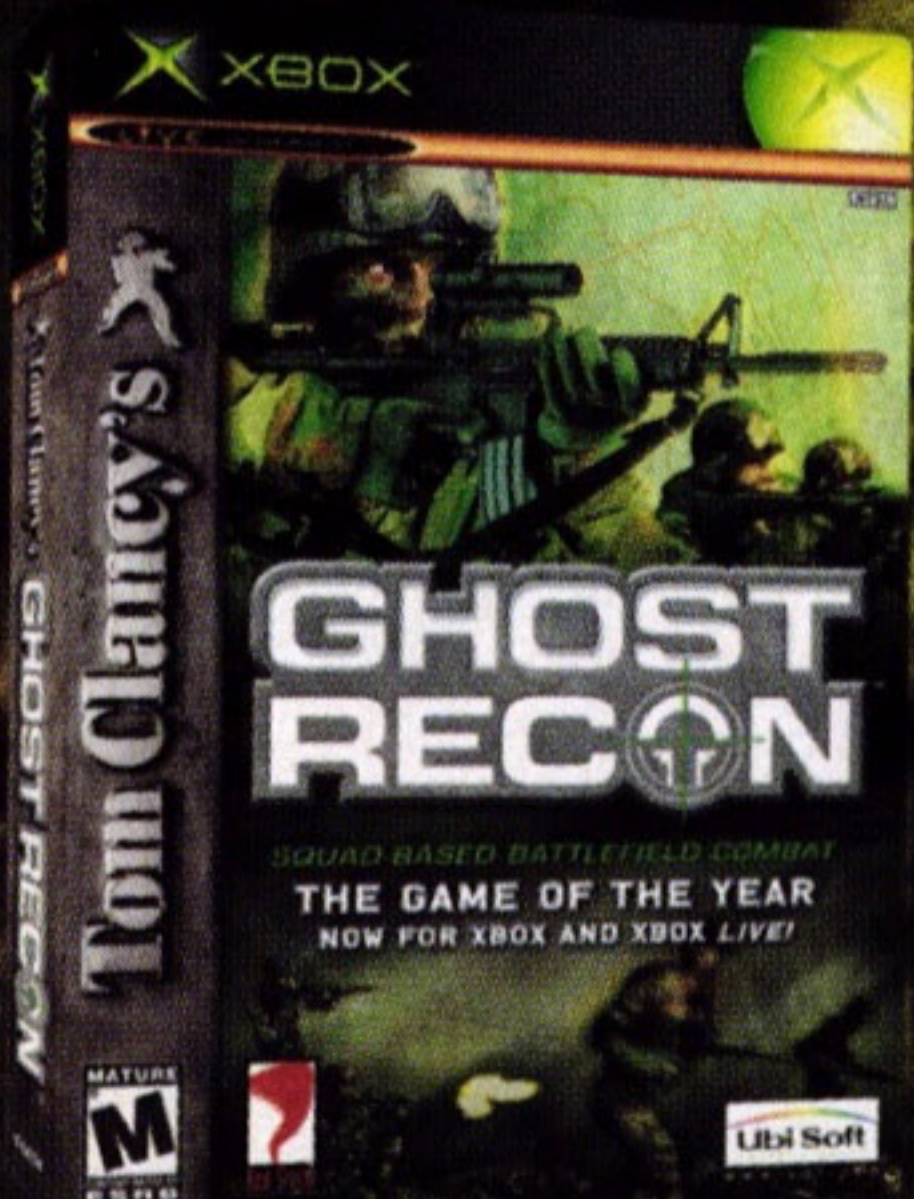


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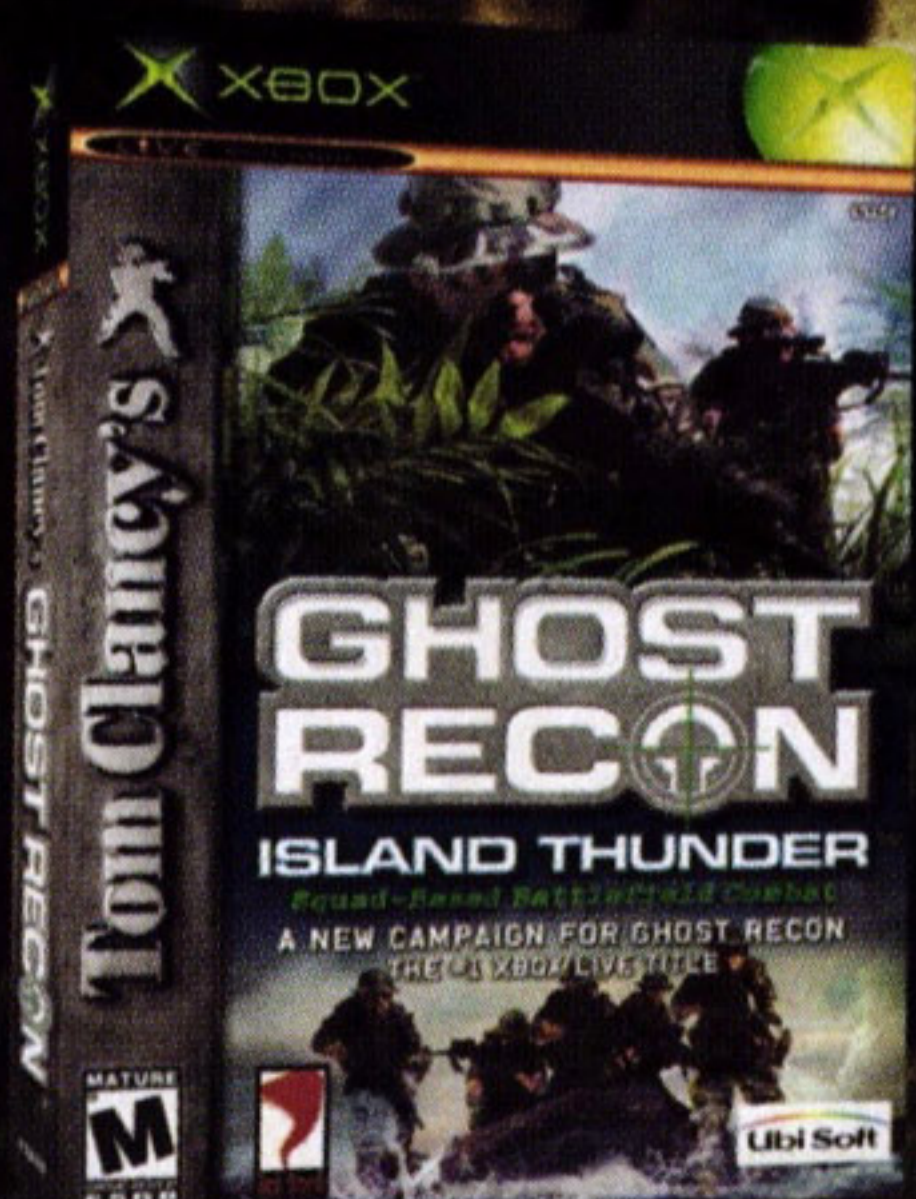
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REALMS of EVERQUEST

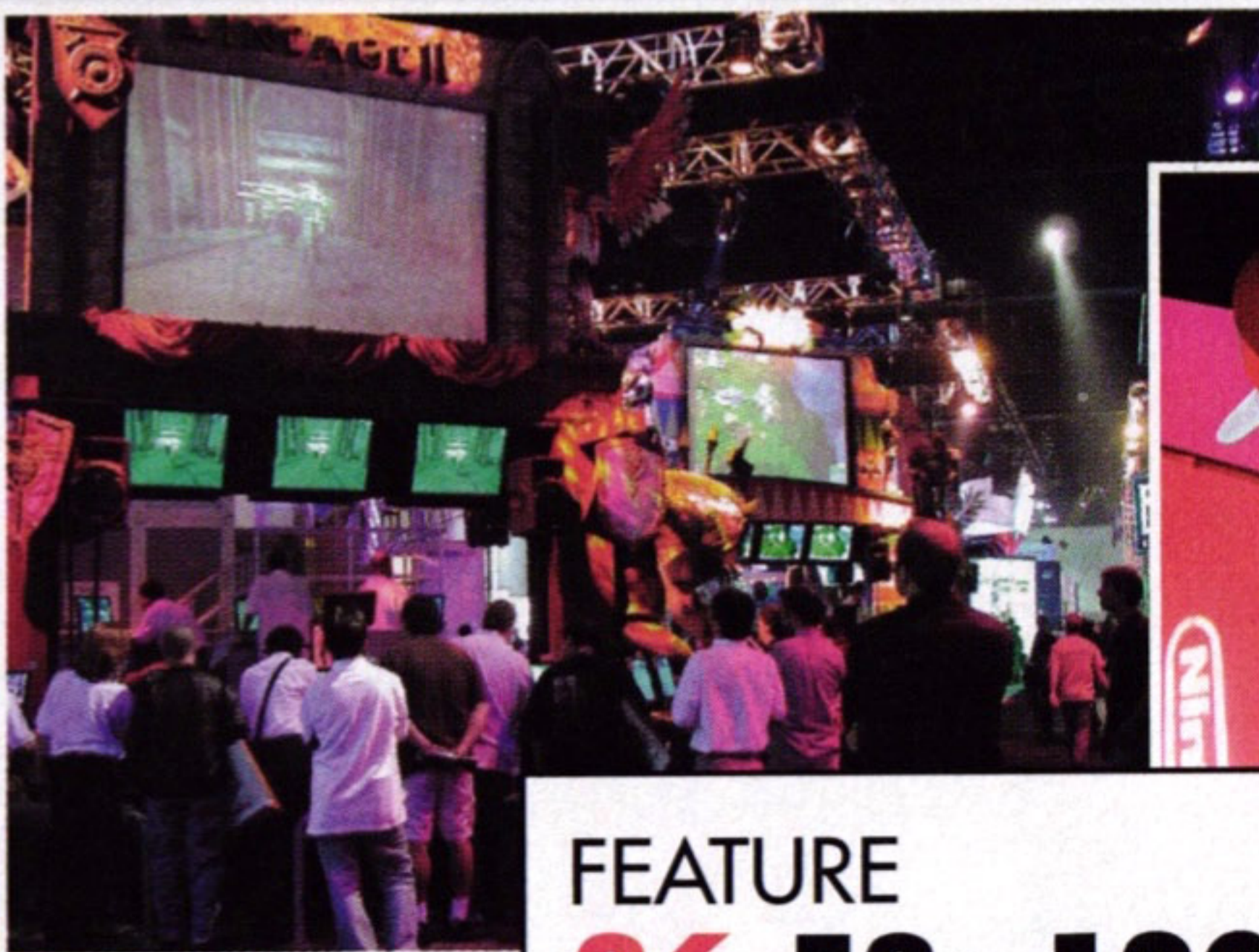
COVER STORY

26 CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH REALMS OF EVERQUEST

Fear not, friends – this is no expansion pack, but a Playstation 2 action/RPG title that makes use of the deep mythology already in the franchise's knowledge bank. Climb on board the EQ boat and see what kind of new game the peeps over at Snowblind Studios have whipped up.



PlayStation



FEATURE

36 E3: 120 HOURS OF MADNESS

With the truly madcap chaos that is E3, we've got the timeline to clue you all in on what it's really like to be there. The celebrity cameos, fashion shows (that's right, fashion shows), executive interviews, and booth antics galore. Although you won't have the ringing eardrums, throbbing headaches, "unique" convention center food, or free t-shirts; we do our best to make the magic real to you at home. All of that with our usual roundup of big announcements, greatest debuts, and word from the street.



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some truly epic convention coverage, GI is able to bring you all there is to see.

100 REVIEWS

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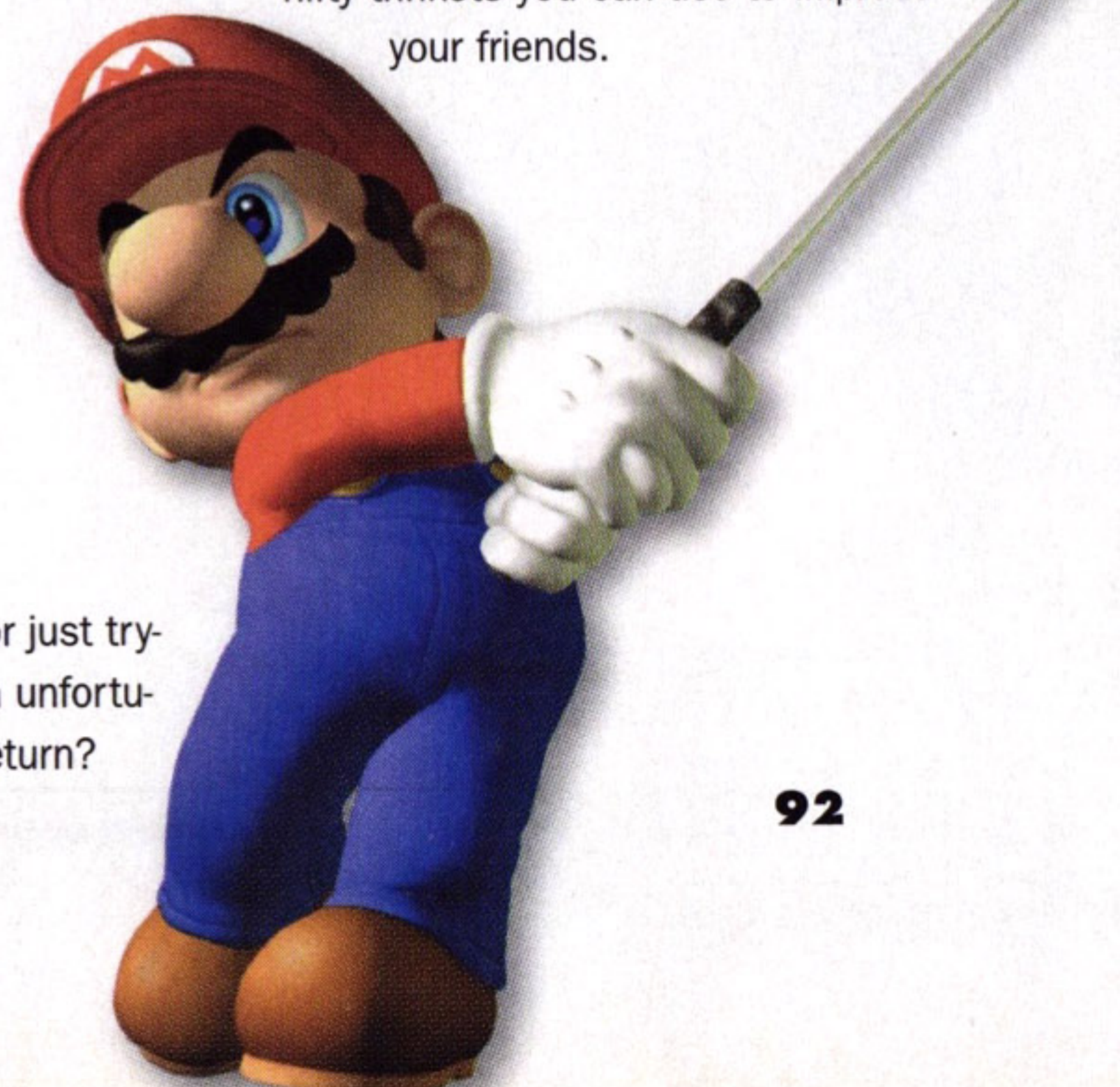
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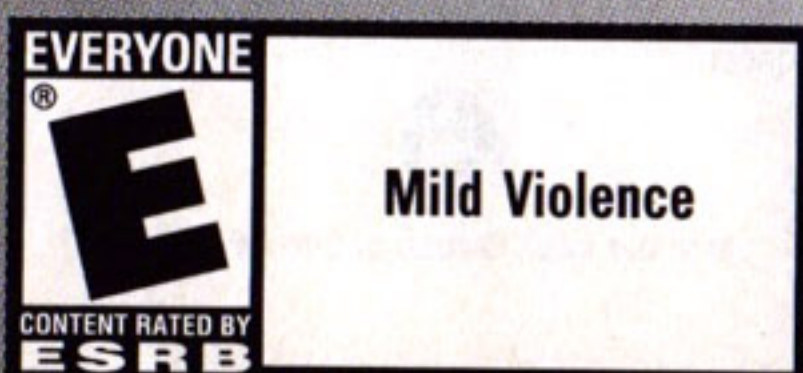


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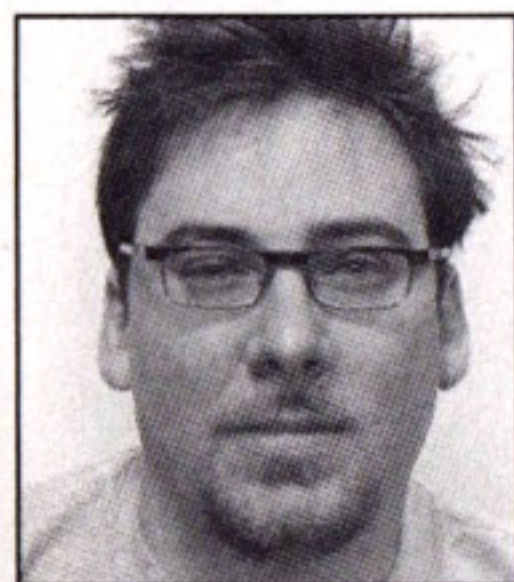
roll out the heavy artillery.



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EDITORS' FORUM



MY BIG, FAT, IRISH E3 GAMES LIST

ANDY McNAMARA
andy@gameinformer.com
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Okay, I'm psyched. Even though I despise E3 on many levels, I do so love the games. Oh yeah, and the parties...and the party peoples...and the.... Well, never mind, you don't want to hear about that, you want to hear about the games. And what a wonderful world of games it was. Not only did Half-Life 2 put my jaw on the floor, there were about 20 other titles that I knew the instant I saw them that I would not be happy again until they were lying defeated on my living room floor.

Sadly, many of these killer games are more than likely coming to a console or PC near you in 2004, but that doesn't change the fact that these titles were outstanding. So without further adieu, here is my list of games (in no particular order) that will make you want to never leave the house and spend your entire existence ordering pizza and ignoring personal hygiene (if you already live like this, and were at E3, please shower 'cause you stink):

- Half-Life 2
- Halo 2
- Need for Speed Underground
- Deus Ex: The Invisible War
- Doom 3
- SSX 3
- Gran Turismo 4
- Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater
- Tony Hawk's Underground
- Spider-Man 2
- SOCOM II: U.S. Navy Seals
- Fable
- Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy
- StarCraft: Ghost
- True Fantasy Live Online
- EverQuest 2
- Breakdown
- Viewtiful Joe
- Monster Hunter
- Knights of the Old Republic
- Soul Calibur II
- Counter-Strike
- Final Fantasy X-2

REINER | reiner@gameinformer.com

I truly hope that the Wachowski brothers make billions off of Enter the Matrix. Who knows, if this game lights up the retail charts, there's a chance that Hollywood will be knocking on video games' door to create more titles like it. Furthermore, cinematics are a big part of games these days, but just imagine how cool it would be if Harrison Ford signed up to reprise his role as Indiana Jones, and Steven Spielberg filmed new sequences just for the game? Better yet, what if George Lucas decided to film exclusive footage for an upcoming Episode III game?

MATT | matt@gameinformer.com

Yet another E3 has come and gone, and the GI staff is still recovering from the hectic post-show deadline. As you go through this issue, you'll notice some changes in our E3 coverage. This year, we decided to dispense with our usual grades and summaries of the big three console makers, and focus on the event as a whole, capturing all the crazy celebrity appearances, legendary game developers, parties, and general chaos that make E3 the insane week that it is. We certainly hope you like it, so if you do, feel free to email me with feedback. Any complaints, however, you can send to Kato. (It was all his fault!!)

KRISTIAN | kristian@gameinformer.com

PC gaming is entering a golden age. As technology develops at an exponential rate, so too does the potential for absolutely incredible games. If you had showed me the Half-Life 2 demo even three years ago, I probably would have told you that what you were showing me was an elaborate cutscene. Same thing with Doom 3, Rome: Total War, The Sims 2, and a bunch of others. It's simply amazing to think how far we've come in such a short time. Imagine what the games of 2006 will look like, for the love of everything good and holy!

JUSTIN | justin@gameinformer.com

E3 2K3 brought about a trend that bothers me: safe games. So many titles shown were obvious rip-offs of successful games (Devil May Cry and Splinter Cell especially) solely in development so companies can be assured they will stay out of the red. I'm sure there would've been more Vice City wannabes if the technology weren't so costly. New ideas are few and far between - as evidenced by the fact that nine of our E3 top 10 games are sequels. At least I can take solace in the fact that I put a few cab drivers' kids through college by spending a month's salary getting around LA.

KATO | kato@gameinformer.com

I was disappointed by each of the three big companies this year. Sony's first-party titles were no surprise, while Microsoft's Rare stuff was laughable. Nintendo was still yapping about last year's message (GBA/GC connectivity), and haven't outlined any solutions to its woes. On the bright side, PlayStation Portable is good, while Xbox is going to have some great titles - Halo 2 is fabulous. I wonder how good Half-Life 2 and Doom 3 will be on the system. In closing, I highly suggest you read David Kushner's *Masters of Doom* - whether you care about Doom, id Software, or FPSs or not. It's that good.

CHET | chet@gameinformer.com

One of the most striking things at E3, for me, wasn't Half-Life 2, Doom 3, or one of the other nominal blockbusters, but the Street Fighter II Hyper Fighting machine at Capcom's booth. Seeing people crowd around the machine waiting their turn to compete brought back a flood of fond memories of the arcade scene a decade ago. It's too bad this scenario is extinct. Impersonal online gaming will likely be its replacement.

LISA | lisa@gameinformer.com

The style of E3 is so completely against my usual choices of how to spend free time, one would think that it wouldn't be fun at all for someone like myself. Given the option, I'd rather go to a coffee shop and babble about pop culture than club hop with a gaggle of party people. E3 is lack of sleep, open bar, loud/random music, bright and flashy lights, lots of running around to meet appointments, and total chaos. Maybe the best thing about it is that it's only once a year and, thusly, a whole lotta fun.

GAMEINFORMER

JULY 2003
Volume XIII • Number 7 • Issue 123

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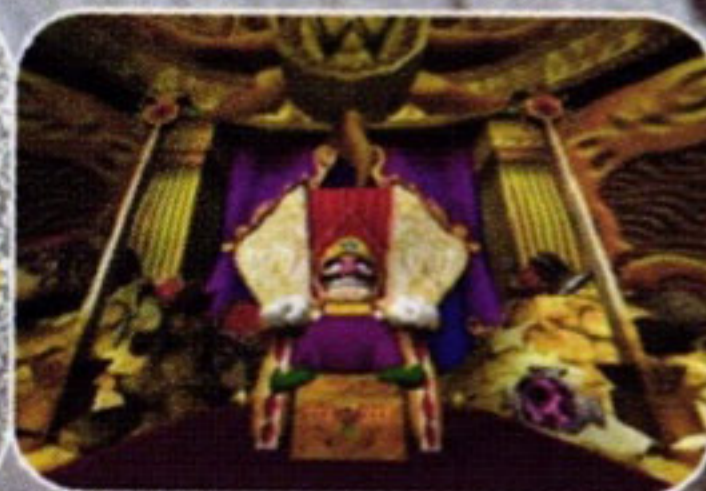
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NEXT ISSUE

Make sure to join us here next month, when Game Informer takes an exclusive look at the most anticipated racing game ever: Gran Turismo 4. Sure, Sony Computer Entertainment unveiled some cars and tracks at E3, but what did we really learn? Find out the whole story next issue when Game Informer brings you the inside scoop straight from Japan. Trust us, you won't want to miss this one.

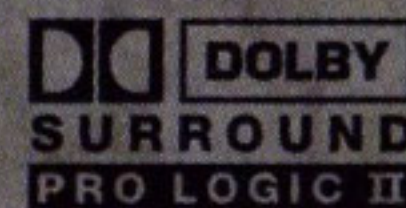
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GI SPY



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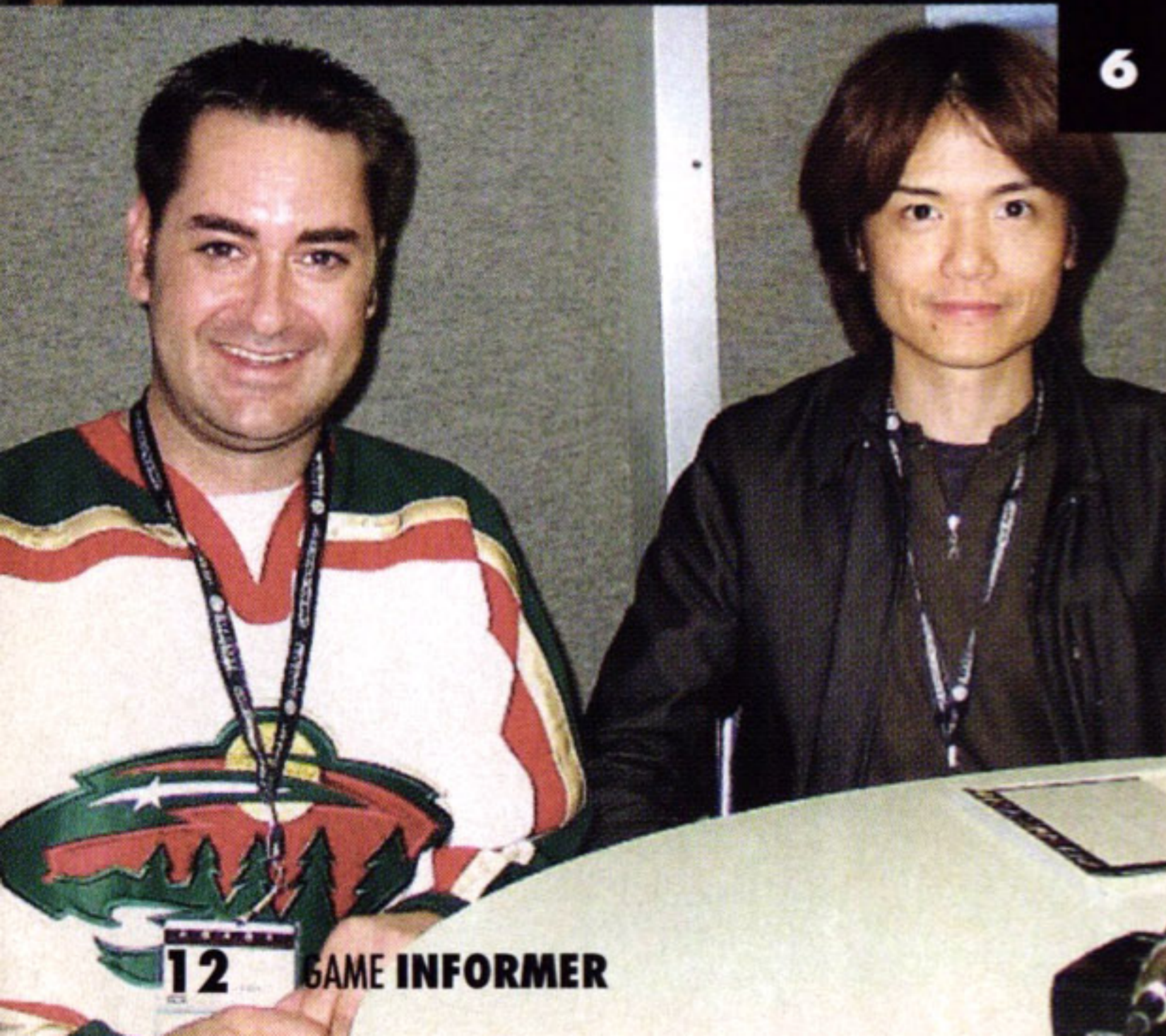
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6

CANDID PHOTOS FROM THE SEAMY UNDERBELLY OF THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY

1 Saddam is alive and well and living in Los Angeles! Hope we didn't blow his cover

2 Eidos' Michelle Seebach, Kristian, and Justin hanging at the Mondrian on the Sunset Strip

3 Lisa meets her hero, Cyan Worlds founder and Myst co-creator Rand Miller

4 Former GI editor alert!! Rockstar's Pickle King and The Artist Formerly Known As The Gonzo Gamer (Jay Fitzloff) send their love

5 We don't know who this guy is, but this shot really sums up what E3 is all about

6 Say hello to Game Informer's new web editor Billy Berghammer, seen here with HAL Laboratories' Masahiro Sakurai

7 Kato hides in the shadows with Konami's Silent Hill team

8 LA's funniest homeless guy, seen here scamming Justin out of a dollar. Hats off!

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PlayStation 2



DEAR GI

PERSONAL AD >>>

I have a very important question to ask you all. Do any of you have lives outside of video games?

Evan Brandt
Via hotmail.com

■ **Witty retorts aside, we certainly do have lives, you disrespectful lout! But really, a poll of Game Informer editors' outside pastimes rated these responses as the big winners:**

1. Reveling in long walks on the beach, nestled within a sunset's handsome glow.
2. Organizing extra knitting supplies by project use, type of skein, and placement on the color wheel.
3. Wishing for Calgon to take them far, far away with luxurious, lavender bubble baths.
4. Attending symposiums on topics as varying as: decoupage, migratory habits of pretty butterflies, monster trucks, and bicycle manufacturing throughout the 19th century.
5. Trading Spaces on TLC (we all just love how free they are with design whimsy).



CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC >>>

I've always been a Nintendo guy. Ever since the glory days of NES, I have supported Nintendo before all other hardware manufacturers. For me, it was SNES over Sega, and N64 over PlayStation. I tried to stay away from the console-alliance arguments during the rumor stages of the next-gen console wave, but I was secretly rooting for project "Dolphin." When I was faced with the choice of the big three, I naturally became the proud owner of a GameCube.

In recent months, however, I've become worried that the GC isn't going to hold its own in the console wars. With the PS2's outrageous game library and the Xbox's recent demonstration of graphic superiority (Splinter Cell, anyone?) and online capabilities, what does the GC have going for it? Of course, Nintendo has the licenses to the familiar series such as Mario and Zelda, but Sega recently pulled their efforts in the sports genre out of the GC, and THQ and Activision followed suit with their GC projects. What is this going to mean for future titles on the console? Will the already-shrinking GC wall at the local game retailer dwindle even faster?

At this point, its lack of online capabilities worries me more than a little, and the Game Boy Advance link-up is both a blessing and a curse. What if gamers hesitate to buy a game because they think they won't be getting the most out of it if they don't own a GBA? Will it become the expansion pack problem that the N64 faced with games like Perfect Dark and Majora's Mask?

Will the GC become Nintendo's Dreamcast? This is one gamer who hopes not.

Alex McKinley
Berwyn, IL

■ **Recent musings by our own Senior Associate Editor, Matt Helgeson, have broached the same topics you bring up. But, it looks like the fan boy favorite has bounced back in recent months by moving more units of both hardware and software.**

Some would point out that the company has released a title for each of its major franchises in the last few months, and one must ask, "What more can it give?" We still have Mario Kart, Mario Golf, and Rogue Squadron III to look forward to; but the brightest point on Nintendo's horizon looks to be a recent quote printed

in USA Today. In reference to Nintendo's current lack of an online strategy, company president Satoru Iwata told Reuters, "In the near future we are hoping to announce something that addresses this issue."

In addition to the rumored online support, Nintendo still has LAN and GBA/GC connectivity, a handful of promising titles, and more than a few rumors of big announcements in the next few months. Here's to hoping.

ACRONYM HAPPY >>>

What is E3?

Holly
Via email

■ **The Electronic Entertainment Expo, better known as E3, is the largest video-game industry tradeshow/event. Thousands of games are shown off in elaborate booths, a cornucopia of free t-shirts are available, and a bevy of booth babes – that most attendants will surely never have a chance of scoring with – look vaguely embarrassed on their lunch breaks.**

From a business standpoint, games are debuted like southern debutantes, the console wars are waged through price drops and hardware announcements, extravagant parties are thrown; and in the midst of all

GOING POSTAL >>>

Hey GI can you please tell the mailmen that they can't go stuffing the best magazine in the world into a tiny mail box, ripping the covers of Game Informer?

Daniel Ingram,
via email
Baltimore, Maryland

■ **Here's due notice to all postal employees: Come rain, snow, sleet, or hail, stop messing up our Game Informers in the mail! We want to receive our periodicals in pristine condition, lovingly packaged with a backer board, if necessary. If these criteria cannot be met, at least make your best effort to gently curve the magazine to avoid wrinkles, or the ultimate injustice, a torn cover. Thank you for your continual dodging of rabid dogs and conscientious attempts to maintain our bulk-metered goods' physical integrity.**

this, more industry business gets done during that one week than any other time of the year.

For an in-depth look at what it's like to be there, check out our E3 coverage starting on page 36. The somewhat-dry official website for the convention can be found at e3expo.com.

DESTROY ALL ZOMBIES: MELEE >

I was just wondering if you knew anything about the *House of the Dead* movie that you covered last year? I would like to know when it would be out in theaters.

Erick
Via email

■ **Featuring a handful of unknown but up-and-coming actors, the forthcoming *House of the Dead* flick tracks a few teens to a remote island. A happening "rave party" – as the kids are calling them these days – is supposed to already be going strong. Instead, the fashionably-late group arrive to find two freaked-out survivors and a minion of the undead.**

The movie was recently picked up for distribution and should release either late this summer, or around Halloween (specific dates for each market are to be set soon). Six months after it hits theaters, the producers are putting out a special edition DVD with additional scenes promising more gore, partying, and general debauchery than the tame, Cineplex version.

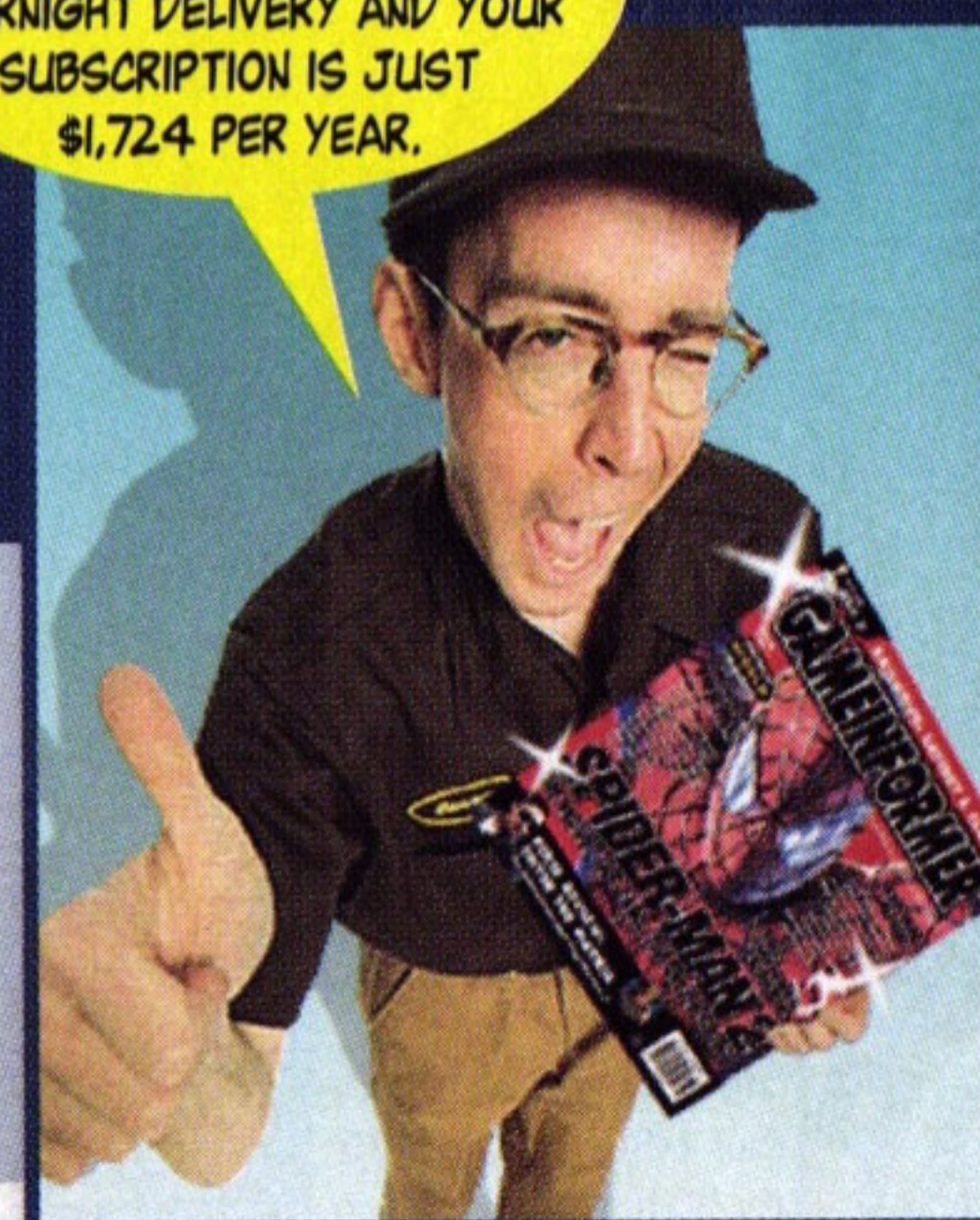
STRUCTURE >>>

I was reading a letter in your May issue in which the author talked about the nonlinear direction many games are taking these days, most notably Grand Theft Auto: Vice City and The Sims. While I admit that these titles have set new standards for nonlinear gameplay, to me they felt lacking in some aspects.

In Vice City for instance, you can complete the missions in almost any order you please; but beyond that, there is little else to do except kill people, blow stuff up, and buy real estate – which isn't exactly enthralling. In The Sims you have nearly complete control over your surroundings and character. But, after endless hours of making my character bathe, use the restroom, sleep, eat, and pay the bills, I realized I could get the same mind-rotting boredom from reality and nearly threw the game away in disgust.

I'm not saying these types of games are completely devoid of entertainment – they are obviously quite appeal-

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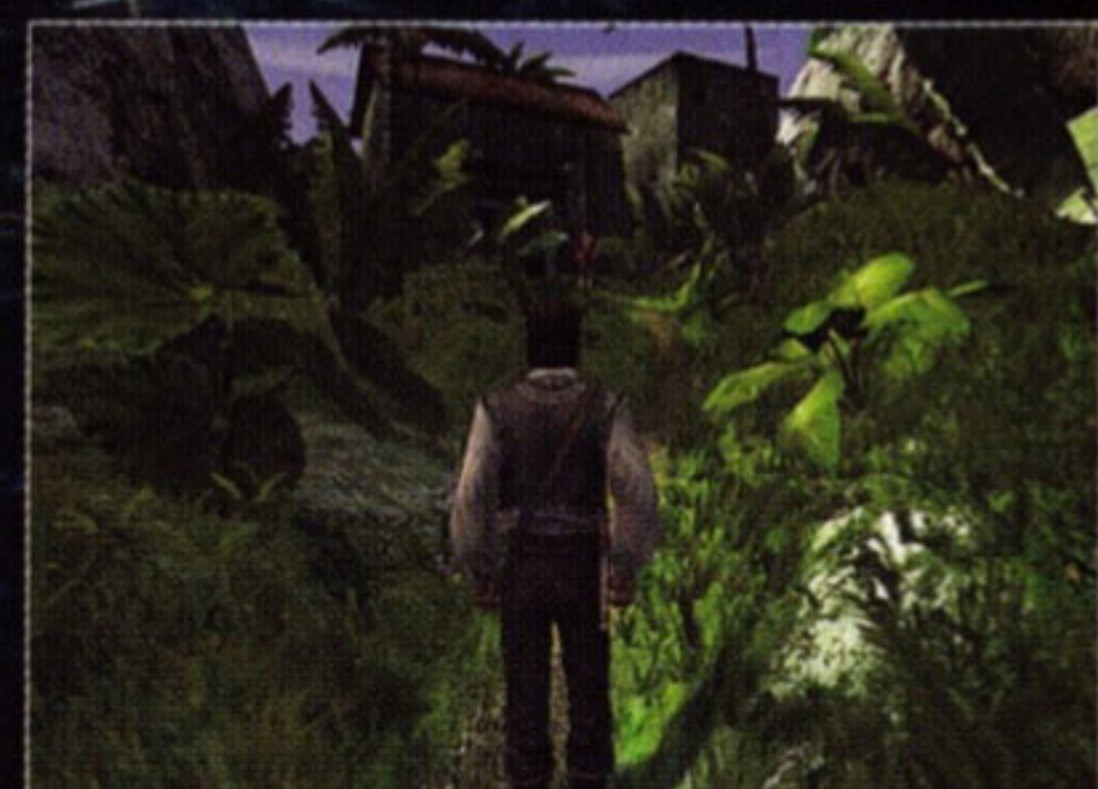
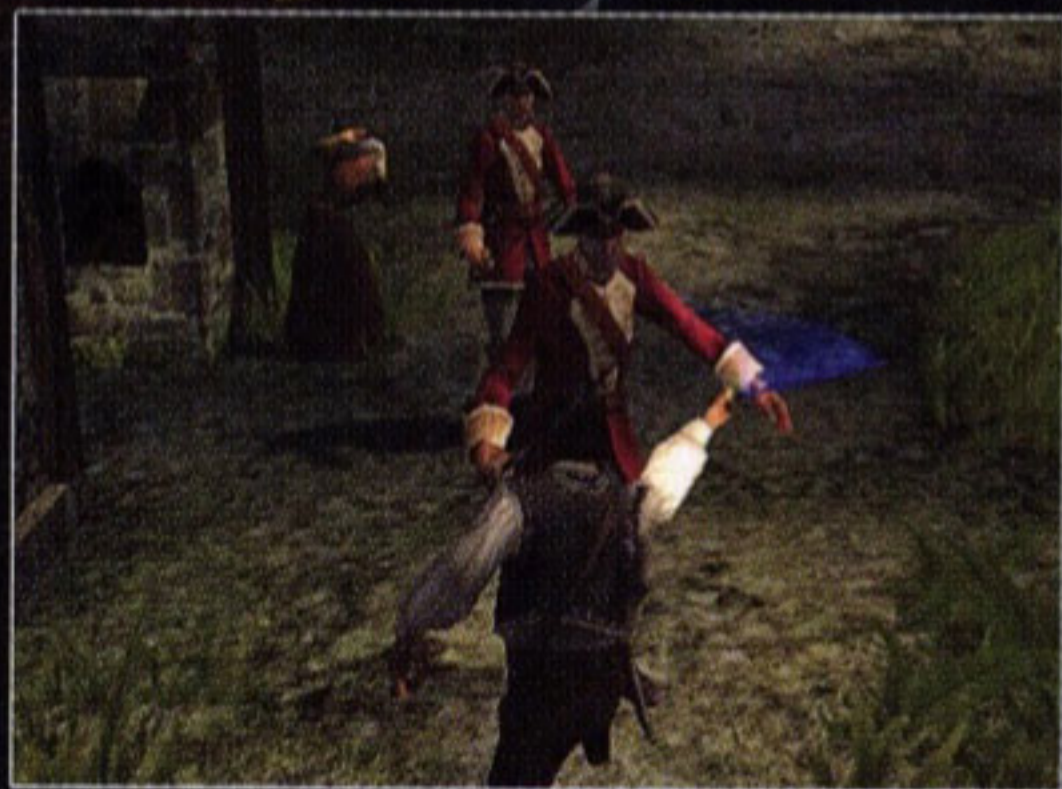


PIRATES of the CARIBBEAN

PREPARE TO BE BLASTED
OUT OF THE WATER!

Visit pirates.bethsoft.com

- An epic role-playing game on sea and land
- Gorgeous graphics and realistic weather effects
- Open-ended gameplay set in exotic locales
- Exciting high seas battles and thrilling duels
- Inspired by the feature film coming July 9th



ALL SCREENSHOTS FROM XBOX VERSION

Bethesda
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**PC
CD
ROM**



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call 1-800-771-3772
for Rating Information.

ing to many gamers (if sales are any indication). On the other hand, as a more demanding individual, I don't believe that they lived up to their potential. I am still waiting for that perfect game that not only allows infinite freedom but also captures and keeps my interest for more than a few passing moments.

Jeremy Holliday
Via yahoo.com

■ It's doubtful that games as a whole will transform into the format used in *Vice City* or the *Sims*, but we must take baby steps toward the ultimate video game experience.

The two aforementioned titles have contributed greatly to the development of gaming as a whole by offering a new type of action. Like FMV games or text-based adventures, their play dynamics capture the imaginations of some players, and leave others out in the cold. But, without them, gaming wouldn't have gotten to where it is – a further point on a long timeline of evolution.

SURE, NO PROBLEM >>>

Would it be even remotely possible for me to get Shigeru Miyamoto's email address? I (somewhat) desperately need it.

Gunner
Via lycos.com



■ Wow. We'll totally hook you up! If the following arrangement is agreeable to you, please place an ad in the *New York Times* that reads as follows, "The blue cow flies over the purple moon. Never hang your pants on the infinite coat hanger of darkness. Stop."

After the personal ad appears in print, have your people call our people and they'll do lunch. Then, driving a cargo van with painted windows, four black-suited men sporting aluminum briefcases handcuffed to their wrists and expensive sunglasses will meet you at an undisclosed location. You will furnish them with \$6.2 million American dollars in non-sequential \$20 bills. After being unknowingly drugged with a non-addictive substance, you will be left somewhere on the Jersey turnpike with a small slip of everyday notebook paper containing a phone number.

Memorize the phone number quickly, as the slip of paper will react with the oils of your fingertips and self-destruct in 30 seconds. Call the number and further instructions will be given. The message will only play once.

Glad we could help, and hope to hear from you soon!

ENVELOPE ART



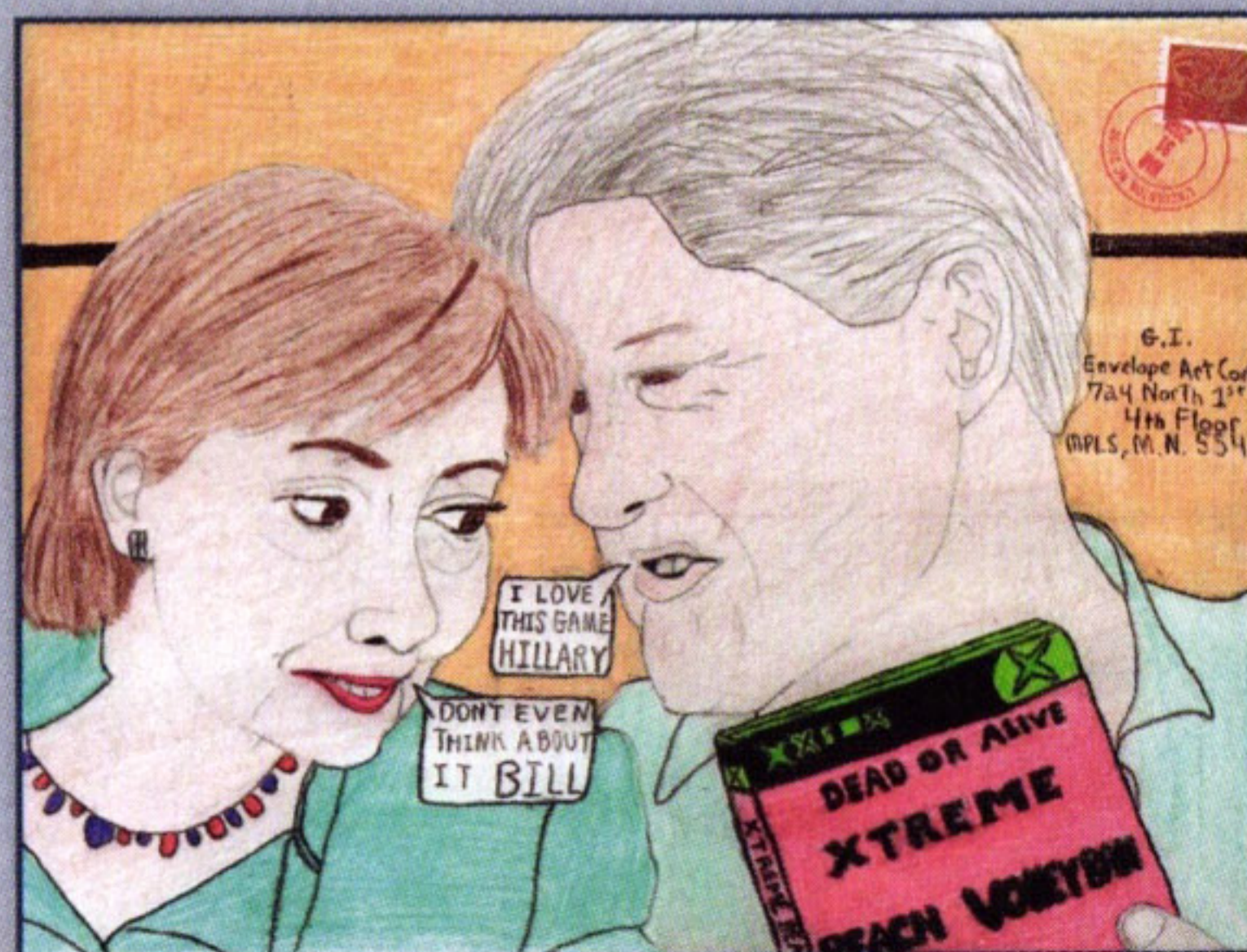
Vincent Cimino III
Don't complain, Hulk. It's better than having incredible camel-toe!



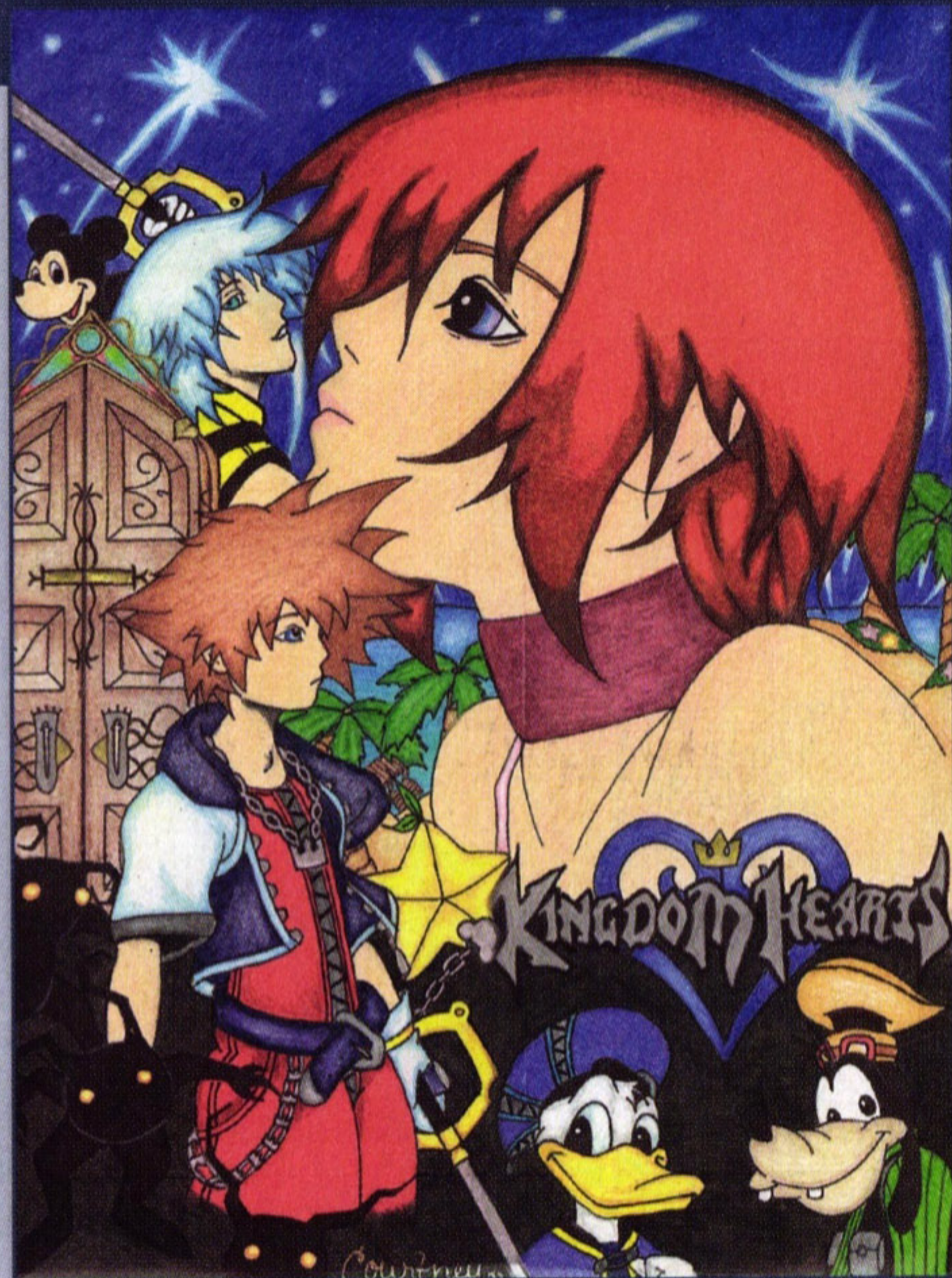
Kenneth Vieira
This picture is best viewed with a blacklight and some incense



Carrie Correa
Link is mean. All Tingle wanted to do was try fart-inflating a balloon



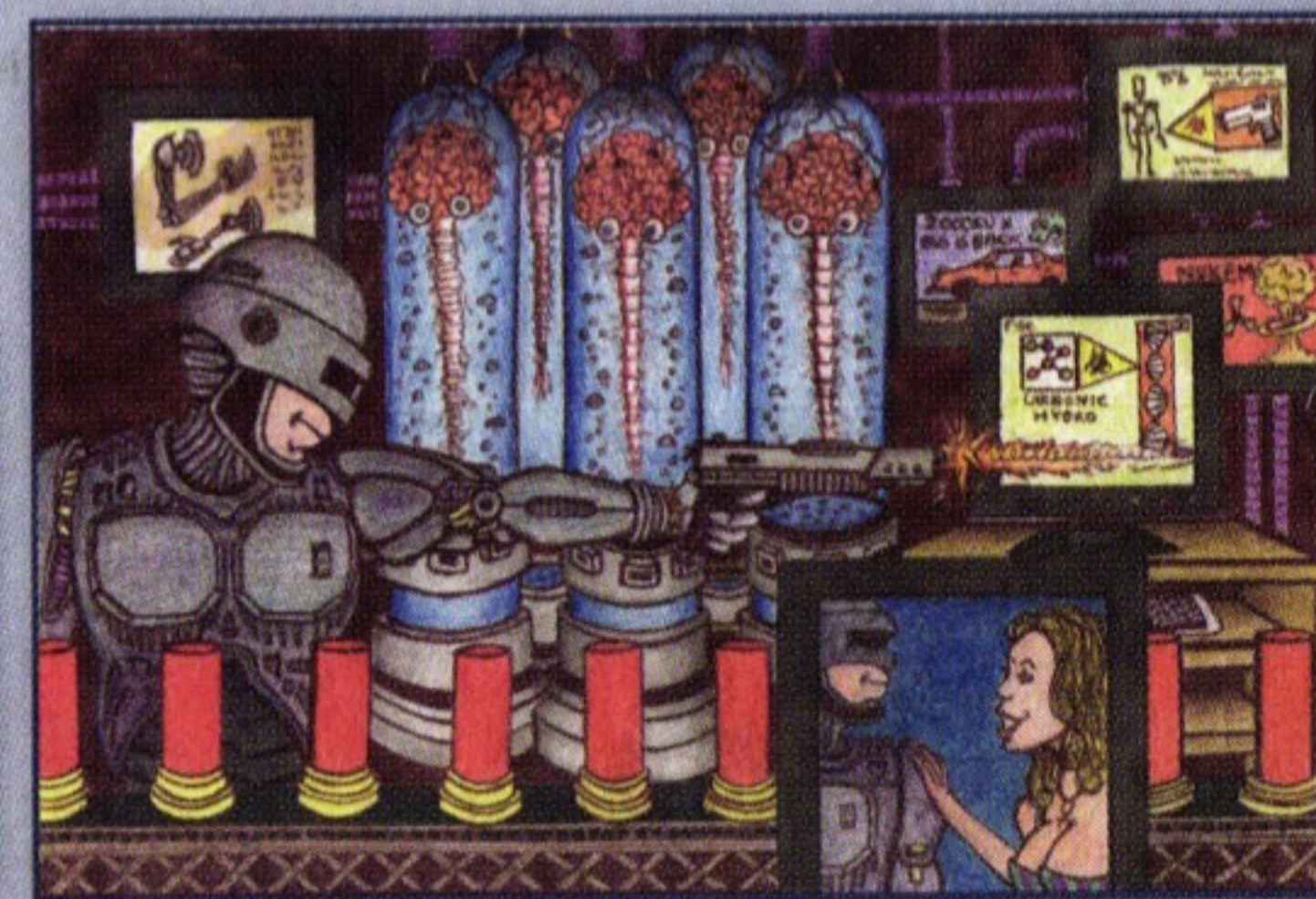
Maurice Young
Be thankful we're showing this envelope. In the other one he sent, Hillary's wearing a thong



JULY WINNER!

Courtney Buffum

Donald and Goofy are a little nervous about explaining to Sora about the birds and the, uh...whatever Goofy is



Ryan Gaw

Robocop tests out his new rapid-fire six-shooter before his big date with Mariah Carey

Enter the Game Informer Envelope Art Contest. All you need to do is draw, paint, scratch, spit, or carve the best darn envelope art you can think of and send it to us. Please include your name, phone number, and return address on the back of the envelope. If you're the monthly winner, we'll feature your work in GI and you'll receive a video game prize from the Game Informer vault.

Send to:

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FLY the FREAKY SKIES



EXPLORE the MOST ENTHRALLING AND FREAKED-OUT
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DISCOVER THE ADVENTURE THAT AWAITS YOU

Freaky Flyers represents the creation of Adventure Racing. You don't just race, you dogfight, you stunt, and most importantly, you explore through fully-open, interactive and enticing 3D locales. And, you share your intriguing experiences with the most alluring characters you could ever hope to play with.

DISCOVERY AROUND EVERY TURN

As you fly through Freaky's 12 massive and enticing tracks, you should take note that your exploration will actually trigger events that will dictate how the story and gameplay unfolds before you.

With unique and mesmerizing mini games and more than 1.5 hours of intriguing animated movies, original music, and a spellbinding back story, Freaky Flyers takes you on a journey that will challenge and intrigue you.

VISIT EXCITING LOCALES



Caribbean Danger Island-
Jungles and lagoons teem with all manner of peril like pirates, man-eating plants, and beautiful mermaids.



Haunted Transylvania-
Explore craggy peaks and haunted castles but steer clear of the giant spider webs, zombies, and diabolic machines of the mad scientist.



Roaring Chicago-
Buzzing around the big city you'll loop and dive around gangsters and g-men exchanging heated words and hot lead.

Frigid Canada-
Fly through the lumberjack village; shoot down woodland targets, and even snag Big Foot in a net as you race.

Mexico's Coyote Canyon-
Travel through abandoned gold mines, rescue a damsel from the train tracks, fly through "East" Indian Casinos, and stop a cattle stampede and the rowdy banditos behind it.

War Torn Germany-
It is up to you to help turn the tides of war by delivering secret documents, fix the resistance factories, and blow up the German's tanks.

Arabian Flights-
Defeat the Genie, find the sultan's treasure, shoot down the 40 thieves, and keep your head off the chopping block by showing off your air combat skills.

Giant Monsters of Tokyo-
Giant monsters are destroying the city, alongside ninjas, fighter jets, and little Freakymon monsters, activate the giant robot and save Tokyo.

Fly the Freaky Skies and see where the adventure takes you.

ONLY THE WILDEST CHARACTERS

Travel with over a dozen unique and alluring characters, each with their own beguiling stories.



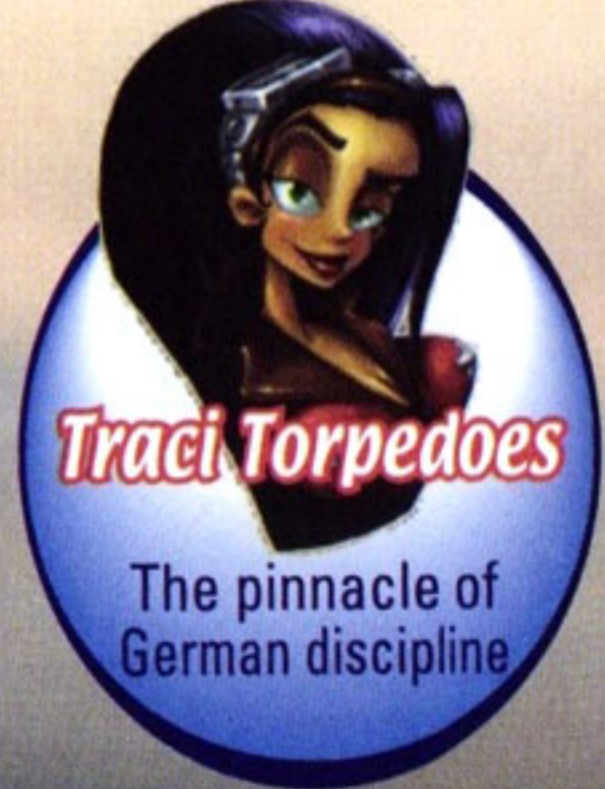
Johnny Turbine

True-blue American hero



Cactus Rose

Spicy bandita from south of the border



Traci Torpedoes

The pinnacle of German discipline



Baron von Slaughter

The terror of Transylvania



Island Jack

The mellow ambassador of a tropical paradise

Sail away into the Freaky skies for the adventure of a lifetime!



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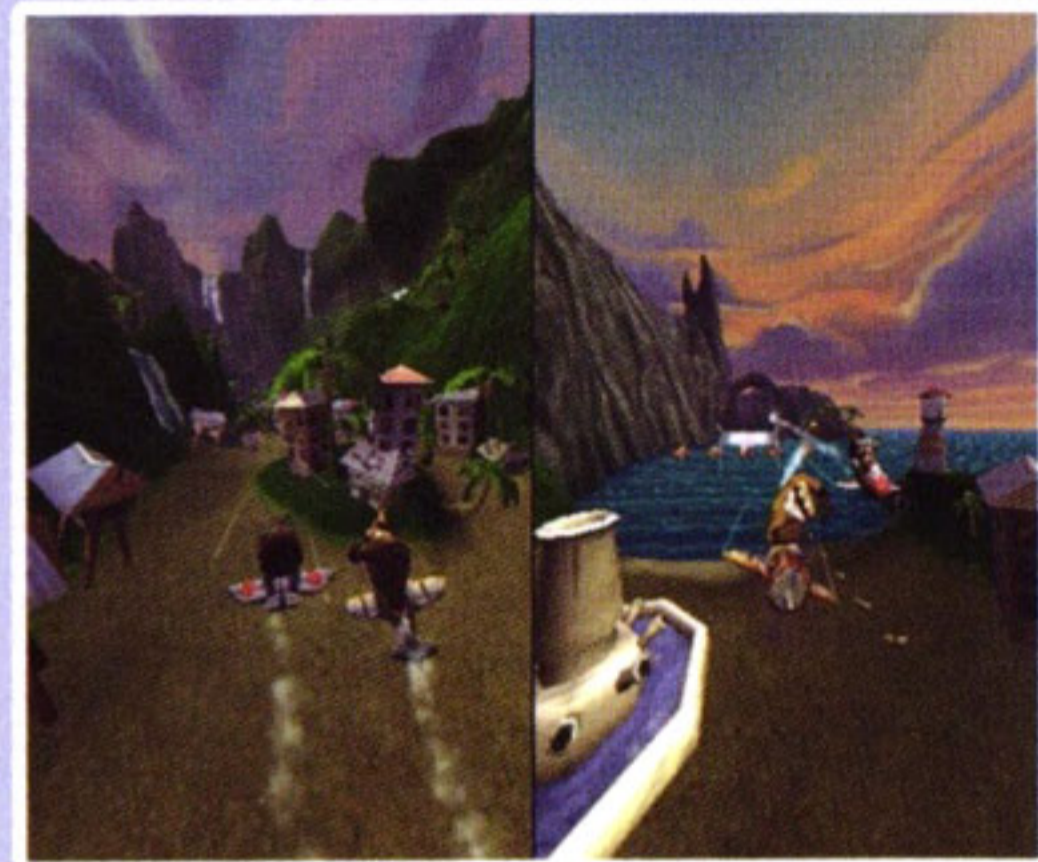
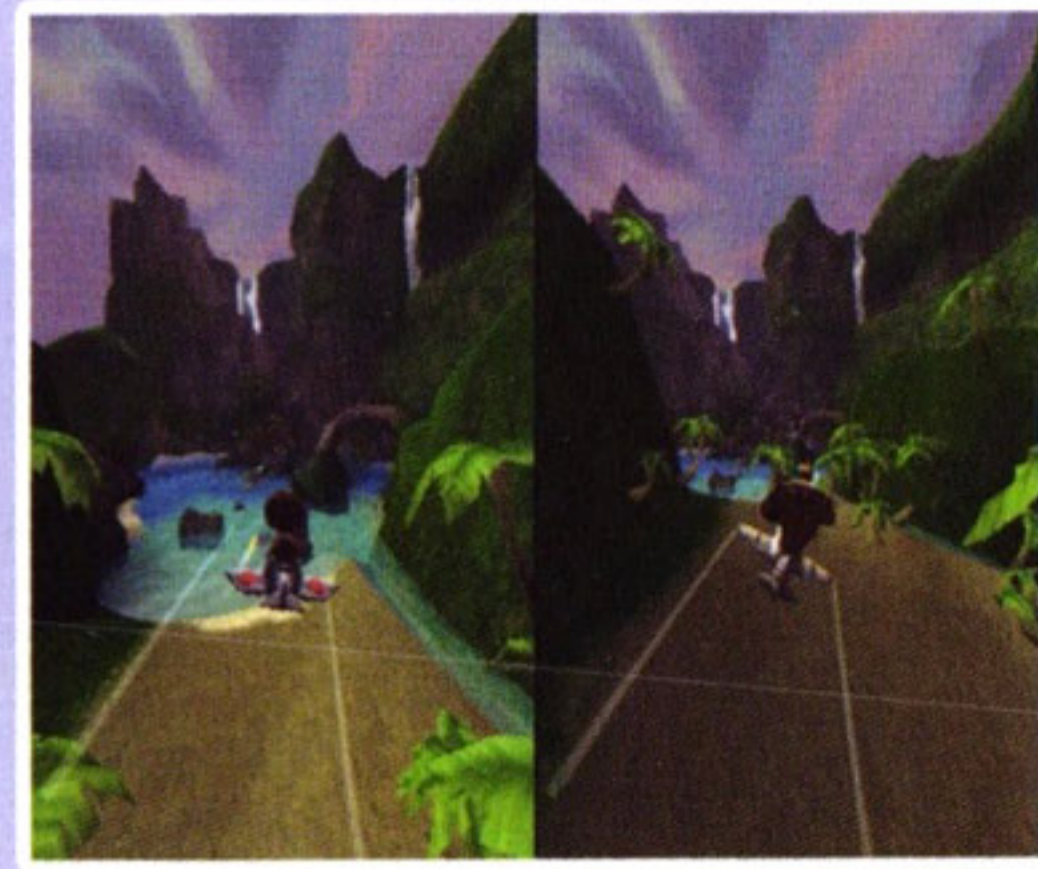
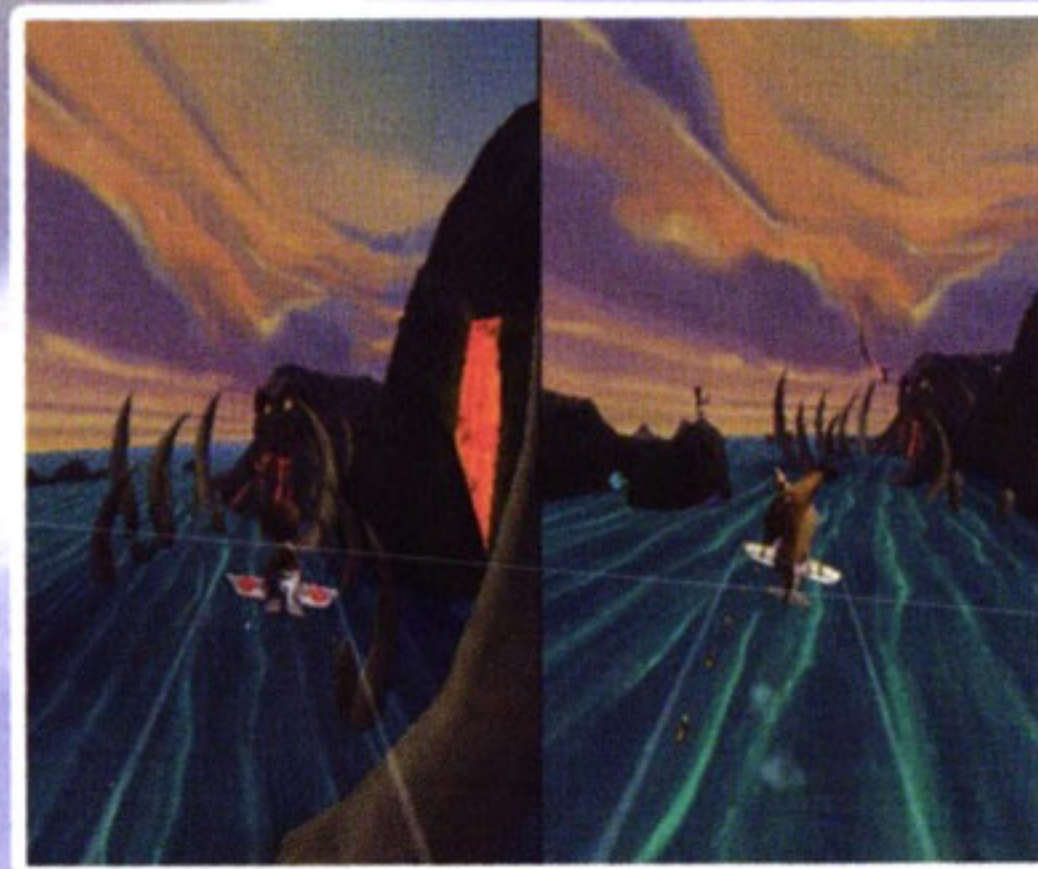
Beware of the Lava Men
as you PILOT THROUGH
the SMOKING VOLCANO!

MAP OF
DANGER
ISLAND

Dodge cannonballs
as you Battle
BITTLEBIRTSy pirates!

Explore LUSH JUNGLES!

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PlayStation 2



Comic Mischief
Mild Violence
Suggestive Themes

GI NEWS

SONY GOES HANDHELD

Sony shocked attendees of its pre-E3 press conference with the announcement that it is developing a handheld system called the **PlayStation Portable (PSP)**.

The platform is expected in 2004, and will feature disc-based software (just under 2.5 inches in diameter with 1.8 GB of storage capacity) and an as-yet-unannounced processor that creator **Ken Kutaragi** says will be "similar to that of the original PlayStation." Sony has not stated a specific release date or a price for the PSP.

The company has ambitious plans for the handheld. It sees the PSP playing movies and other entertainment through the use of MPEG4 technology to deliver DVD-like quality. Sony also expects the platform to connect to your **PS2**, other PSPs, and even cell phones through USB 2.0. Reports indicate that 10 million units of the system are expected to be shipped worldwide by the end of 2004.

Although much is still uncertain regarding this new handheld (such as the control layout), the company has announced that it will offer **PC**-based development tools starting in the fall of this year, and Sony plans to announce a license scheme for PSP software development this summer. For more on this new platform, check out our coverage of Sony's E3 press conference on page 36.



(actual size of disc)

PSP SPECIFICATIONS

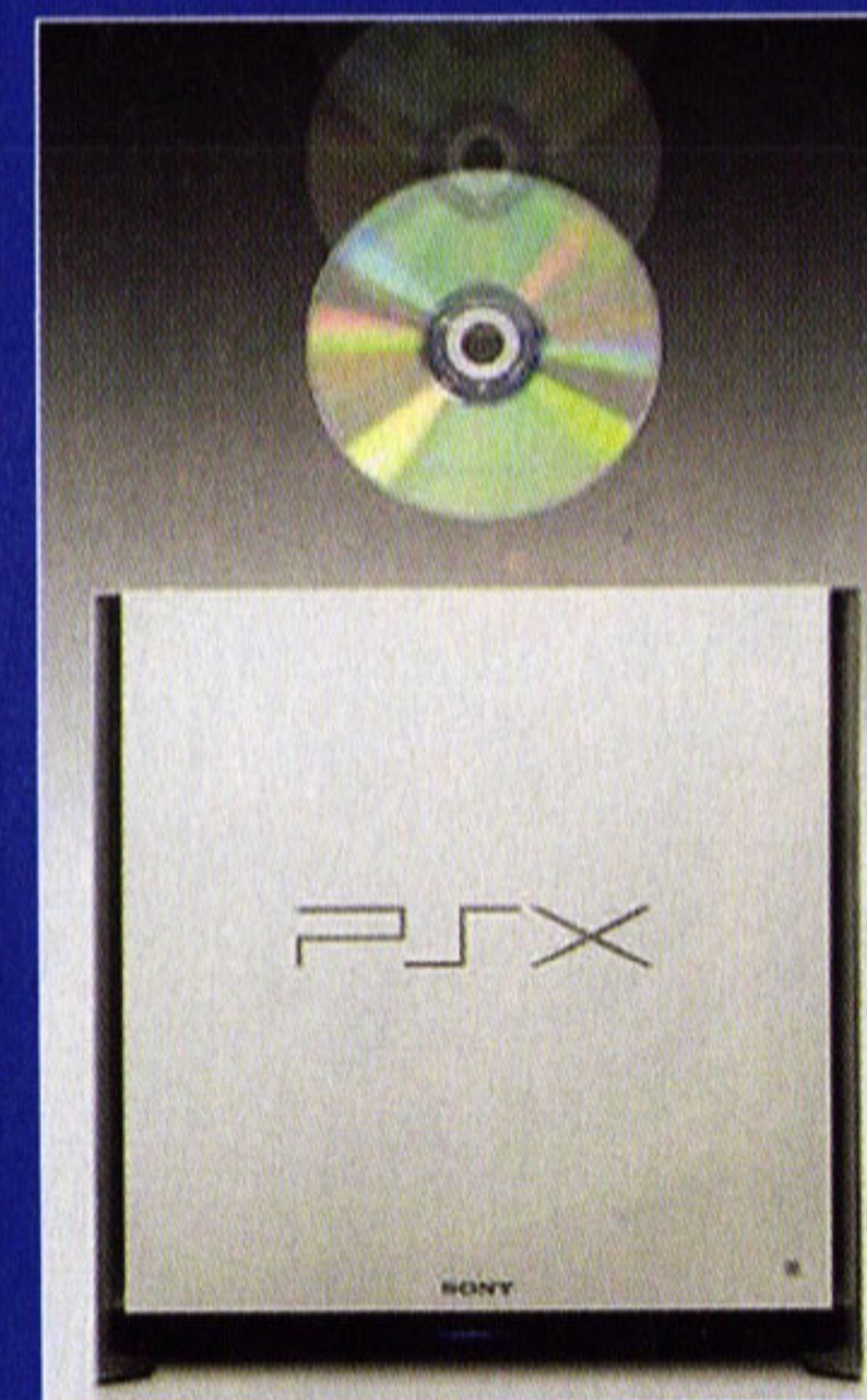
- **Display:** 480 x 272 pixel TFT LCD backlit screen w/ 16:9 aspect ratio
- **Input/Outputs:** USB 2.0, Memory Stick slot
- **Video CODEC:** MPEG4 encoding
- **Processor:** TBA. 32-bit core featuring 3D polygons and curved surfaces with NURBS
- **Disc Medium:** 2.4" diameter, 1.8 GB "UMD" – Universal Media Disc embedded in cartridge
- **Sound:** PCM (built-in stereo speakers, stereo headphone output)
- **Battery:** Built-in rechargeable lithium-ion battery

DVD BURNING LOVE FOR PS2

Sony of Japan has announced a new **PlayStation 2** unit called the **PSX**. This new PS2 not only features the game console, but also contains a DVD burner, 120 GB hard drive, Ethernet support, and a TV/broadcast satellite tuner.

This will allow you to record and store TV shows, and is a first step toward Sony's vision of a unified set-top box where a variety of other media (such as games and more) would be downloadable straight into your home. The PSX also utilizes the Memory Stick and USB 2.0.

Sony expects to make the PSX available in Japan before the end of the year, and to the rest of the world in 2004. Pricing has not yet been announced, but the company hopes that the console will be marketed as a high-end electronics unit rather than a cheaper mass-market product.



Top view



Front view

XBOX BUILDS ONLINE SPORTS NETWORK

Microsoft is adding new features to **Xbox Live** to stoke online sports fans' frenzy. Starting with **NFL Fever 2004** in August, **XSN Sports** will be an all-in-one virtual sports page where you can set up your own tournaments and leagues, see your accomplishments (across all the **Microsoft** sports titles), be automatically alerted to opponents' challenges, track a variety of stats and results, and more. This XSN Sports page can be accessed on your Xbox, on your computer (at XSNsports.com), and eventually through your cell phone or PDA.

The first slate of titles compatible with the network are **NFL Fever 2004**, **NBA Inside Drive 2004**, **Top Spin**, **Amped 2**, **NHL Rivals 2004**, **Links 2004**, and two more in the spring of next year. Microsoft representatives told *Game Informer* that the XSN Sports feature will be free, but will also contain premium content at a later date.

In other news, Xbox Live will support different pricing levels this fall, letting you pay per month (\$5.99), buy the **Voice Communicator** separately (\$29.99), renew your subscription for \$49.99, or get the **Starter Kit** for the price of \$69.99.

Furthermore, Microsoft is coming out with **Music Mixer** this Christmas. This title lets you play karaoke with your favorite songs (microphone included), set up customized party mixes, and share media with your PC so you can transfer music and photos to your Xbox.

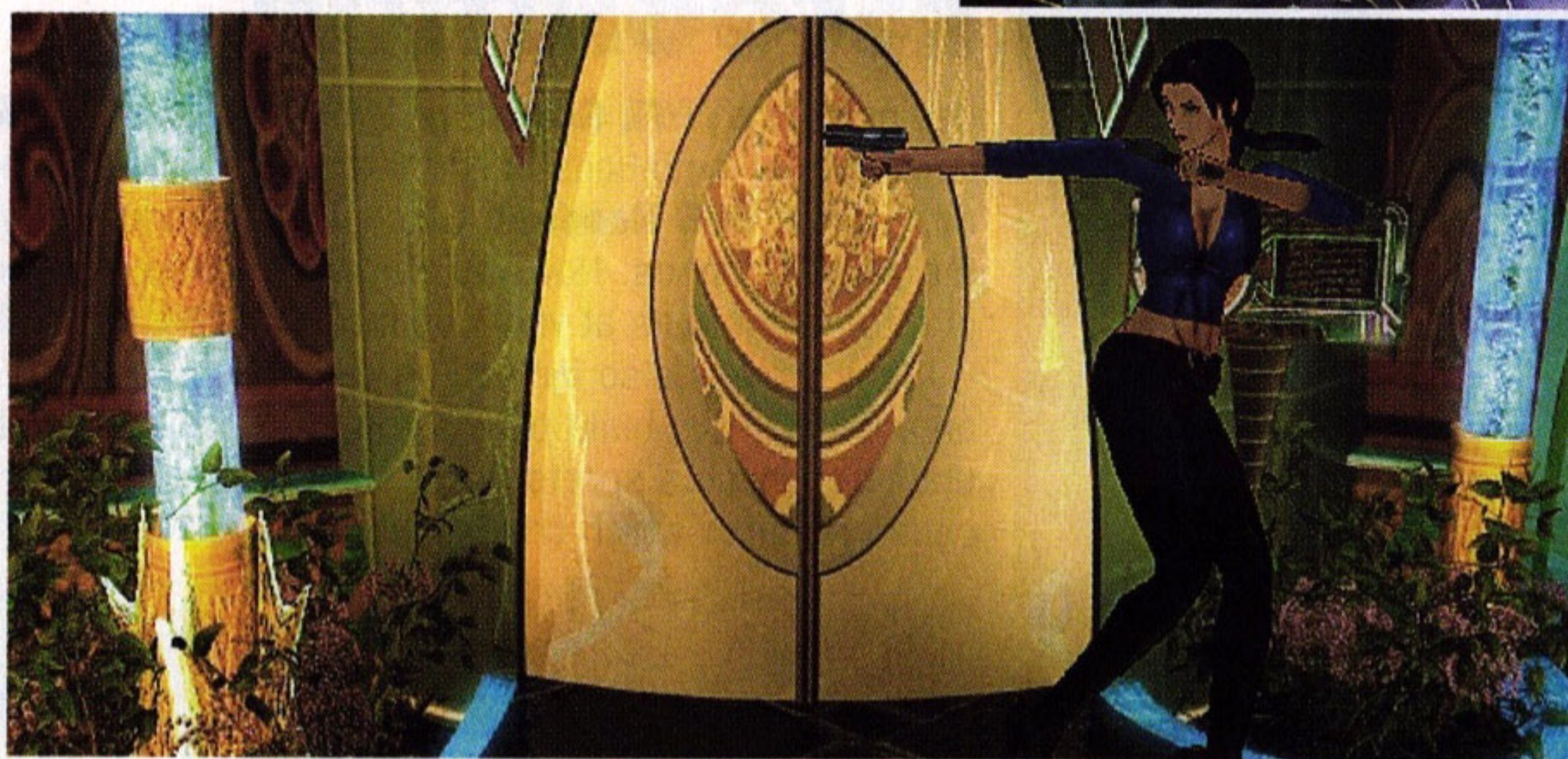


KRONOS FEARS BANKRUPTCY EFFECT

If you've been anxiously anticipating **Fear Effect: Inferno** (see our feature in issue #118), your wait may potentially be much longer. **Eidos** officially cancelled the project, severing ties with **Kronos**, which has put the developer in a precarious financial situation. The main problem is that Eidos owns the license and Kronos currently lacks another substantial title to keep itself afloat. However, both companies are earnestly shopping *Inferno* around to other publishers before Kronos runs out of money.

Bearing no grudges, Kronos president Stan Liu states, "It has nothing to do with them hating us or us hating them. It was just business." Liu objectively reasons, "We think Eidos just got caught off-guard [financially]. It happens, and cuts have to be made." Unfortunately, Liu's impartial attitude towards the pitfalls of capitalism doesn't solve *Inferno's* indefinite hiatus, or Kronos' consequent financial plight. Although Liu and Kronos' chief operating officer, Sandy Abe, feel confident that somebody will eventually purchase the rights, their time is short. In fact, by the time you read this article, Kronos will either not exist in its present form, or it will have signed a contract with another publisher to create one of three new games.

Within a five-week period, Kronos has been arduously developing three demos based on requests from a few publishers in the hopes of striking a deal. One bears a striking resemblance to **Rare's Kameo: Elements of Power** and **Capcom's Devil May Cry**. Called **iSA**, players assume the role of a protagonist who can manipulate light and employ it during combat and to help solve various puzzles.



Fear Effect: Inferno

The next two titles are far less complete, but still show considerable potential. The first is a superhero fighter starring an undetermined cast. If **DC Comics** cooperates, Kronos hopes to create a multiplayer experience (online support included, of course) that plays more like **War of the Monsters** than **Street Fighter II** or **Tekken**. The last project stars a hero with **Tenchu**-style gameplay mechanics set in a medieval environment.

Fans might be disappointed to hear that Kronos has been forced to place *Inferno* on the backburner, but encountering this situation has taught it a lesson. Abe emphatically declares, "If we survive this thing, we will no longer be a one-title studio."



iSA



Kronos' Medieval Game

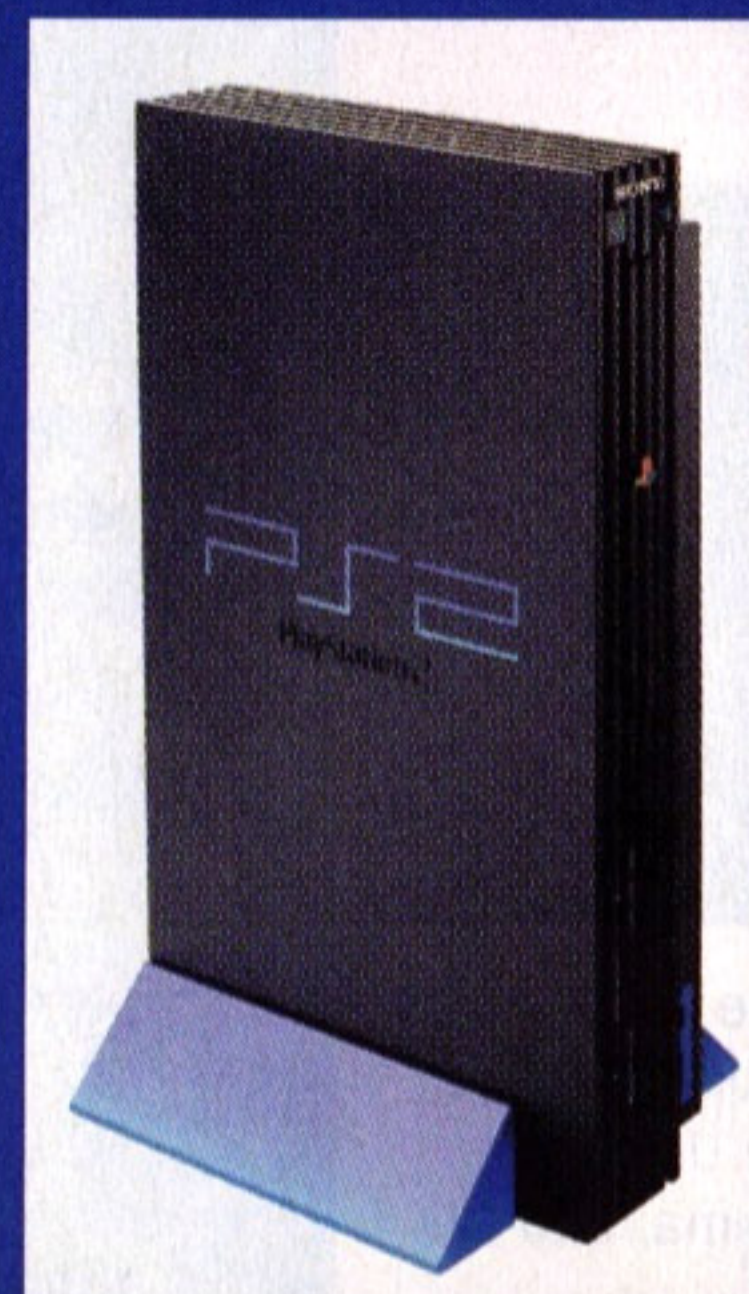
CONSOLES GET PRICE DROPS/BUNDLES

All three platform manufacturers offered deals for consumers this E3. **Sony** announced that it is lowering the price of the **PlayStation 2** to \$179 in order to clear old stock and make way for an improved version of the system (featuring progressive scan playback, expanded DVD playback support, reduced fan noise, an infrared remote sensor, and more) to be available this fall. This new PS2 will be bundled with the **Network Adaptor** for the price of \$199 – after which, Sony representatives have told us the PS2 would not be sold by itself.

In response, **Microsoft** lowered its **Xbox** to \$179, while **Nintendo** offered a bundle of its own. For a limited time only, the **GameCube** will be packaged with the **Game Boy Player**, or your choice of one of four best-selling Nintendo games, for \$149.99 starting June 23. The Player allows you to play Game Boy titles through your GameCube and TV screen.



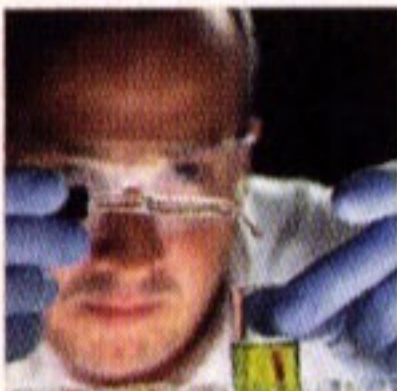
Xbox \$179



PS2 \$179



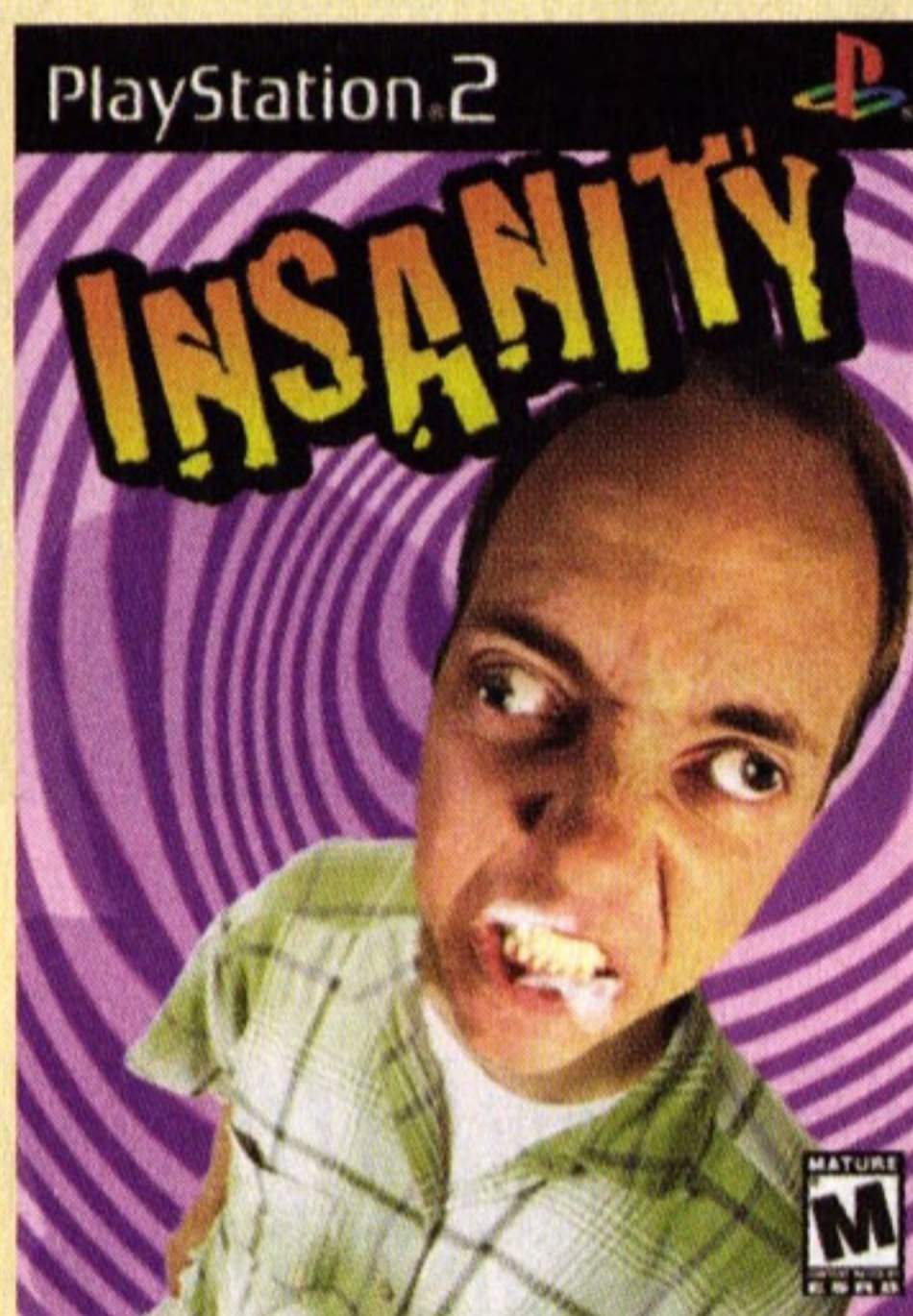
GameCube \$149.99



R&D

Game Informer's research and development operatives search the globe, seeking out the untapped licenses that will become tomorrow's killer games. If you have any great ideas for games of the future, be sure to drop us a line. Maybe we'll use our godlike power over the video game industry to turn you into a millionaire – or just steal your idea.

INSANITY



The mind of a madman is complex. Is it he who is going crazy, or is it the world around him? Imagine, if you will, being that madman. Those who are your friends suddenly turn into ghastly monstrosities. What do you do? Which world is reality, and which is made

up of tricks your mind is playing on you? In *Insanity*, you'd be forced to decide. One day, things start going a little wrong for Devin, a FedEx delivery person. Packages seem to shake violently, as if something inside was alive. The elevator doors open to a flaming pit that then becomes a simple office floor. Is it Hell, or just Night Owl Printing? People with pens to sign for boxes now carry knives and seem like they're going to stab you. In the blink of an eye, the old lady hobbling down the street may sprout horns and leap at you with a murderous shriek. If you attack her, it could save your skin. Conversely, it could land you in jail for killing an innocent person. The branching gameplay means every answer leads to more questions. It's like a *Choose Your Own Adventure* book; but each time you play, the correct choices may be different. *Insanity* would mess with your mind more and more as you go through it and make games such as *Eternal Darkness* and *Metal Gear Solid* seem like mere brain farts in comparison.

NAME THAT GAME

The official sequel to the original *Metal Gear* from Konami was actually a really sweet game – it just never got released in America. This title was a



Japanese exclusive, as it released on the Japan-only personal computer the MSX-2 in 1990. Unlike the stinker that was *Snake's Revenge* in the U.S., this follow-up featured the input of Hideo Kojima, and was a worthy sequel in every way.

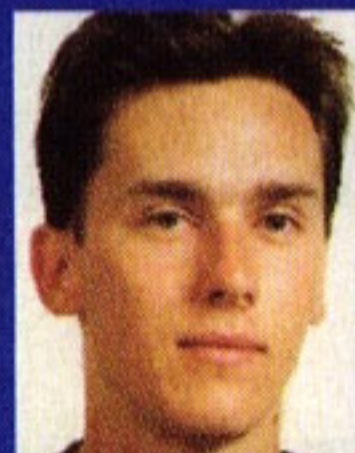
(Answer on page 25)

TOP 10 E3 LESSONS

- 10 To Nintendo: Pac-Man is not cool anymore
- 9 Taxi drivers can get lost even if they are only going a couple of blocks
- 8 The average gamer has nothing to say. More than half couldn't even remember what their favorite game of the show was when interviewed
- 7 To N-Gage: \$299 is too much – even if you paint it on a hottie's stomach
- 6 The Scottish Games Alliance will soon rule the Earth
- 5 Reiner: Farting during an interview with Japanese developers isn't polite
- 4 The best revenge against noisy hotel neighbors is to turn up your TV really loud when you leave the room early in the morning
- 3 *Doom 3* is so sweet, another year of video-only footage is still cool
- 2 *Prince of Persia* is the original gangster, and he's back to make Lara Croft his %!&*#
- 1 From Capcom's Shinji Mikami on *Resident Evil 4*: "Don't pee your pants!"

DEVELOPER TOP 5

ROMAN RIBARIC
CEO, Croteam



- 1 *Pleiads* – Arcade
- 2 *Scramble* – Arcade
- 3 *Boulder Dash 3* – Amstrad CPC
- 4 *Highway Encounter* – Amstrad CPC
- 5 *Command & Conquer* – PC

READER TOP 5

SHANE JUDY
Franklin, PA



- 1 *StarCraft* – PC
- 2 *Serious Sam: The Second Encounter* – PC
- 3 *Ys Book I & II* – TurboGrafx 16
- 4 *Super Metroid* – SNES
- 5 *Ninja Gaiden* – NES

Game Informer is looking for your Top Five favorite games. Please send your Top Fives and a photo of yourself to:

Game Informer Magazine
Attn: Top Five
724 North First St., 4th Floor
Minneapolis, MN 55401
email: topfive@gameinformer.com
(attach digital picture)

Everyone that enters each month will be entered in a drawing to win a GI T-Shirt! So get writing!

EA SPORTS ONLINE FOR PS2 ONLY

EA Sports has sided exclusively with Sony and the PlayStation 2 for its online plans – at least for the upcoming wave of sports titles. Nine titles (including *Madden NFL 2004*, *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2004*, and *FIFA 2004*) will appear online for the console, starting with *NCAA Football 2004* this July. Each (except *NASCAR Thunder 2004*) will be supporting EA Sports Talk – voice chat via a USB, broadband-only headset. Other features include matchmaking, Fair Play settings, roster updates, tourneys, cash prizes, rankings, and more.

Another feature being instituted, starting this year, is the EA Sports Bio. Saved onto your memory card, this profile keeps track of all your accomplishments, time logged, etc. through all of the EA Sports titles you play. Gamers will be rewarded for their efforts through unlockables in each of the sports titles she/he plays from the publisher.

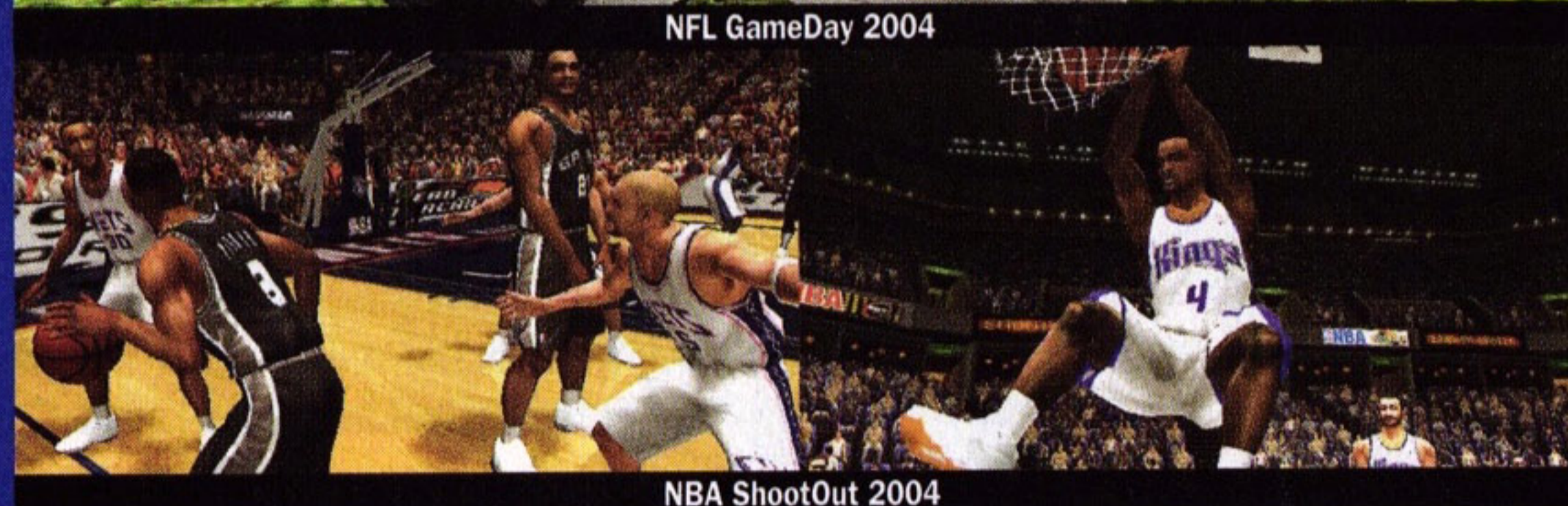
989 USES VOICE RECOGNITION

Beginning with *NFL GameDay 2004* on August 12, Sony's 989 Sports is launching an ambitious online strategy for all its games using voice recognition via the USB Headset, which will be made available for \$29.99 when the game releases. Now you can call for players to perform the pick-and-roll or intentional fouls at your command in *NBA ShootOut 2004*, for example.

Sony's plans also include an online hub where you can see your progress on any 989 title, build player-created tourneys, download weekly roster updates, check a sports ticker showing all the online action, and communication features which cross over to a 989 website on your PC.



NFL GameDay 2004




NBA ShootOut 2004

METAL GEAR ONLINE?

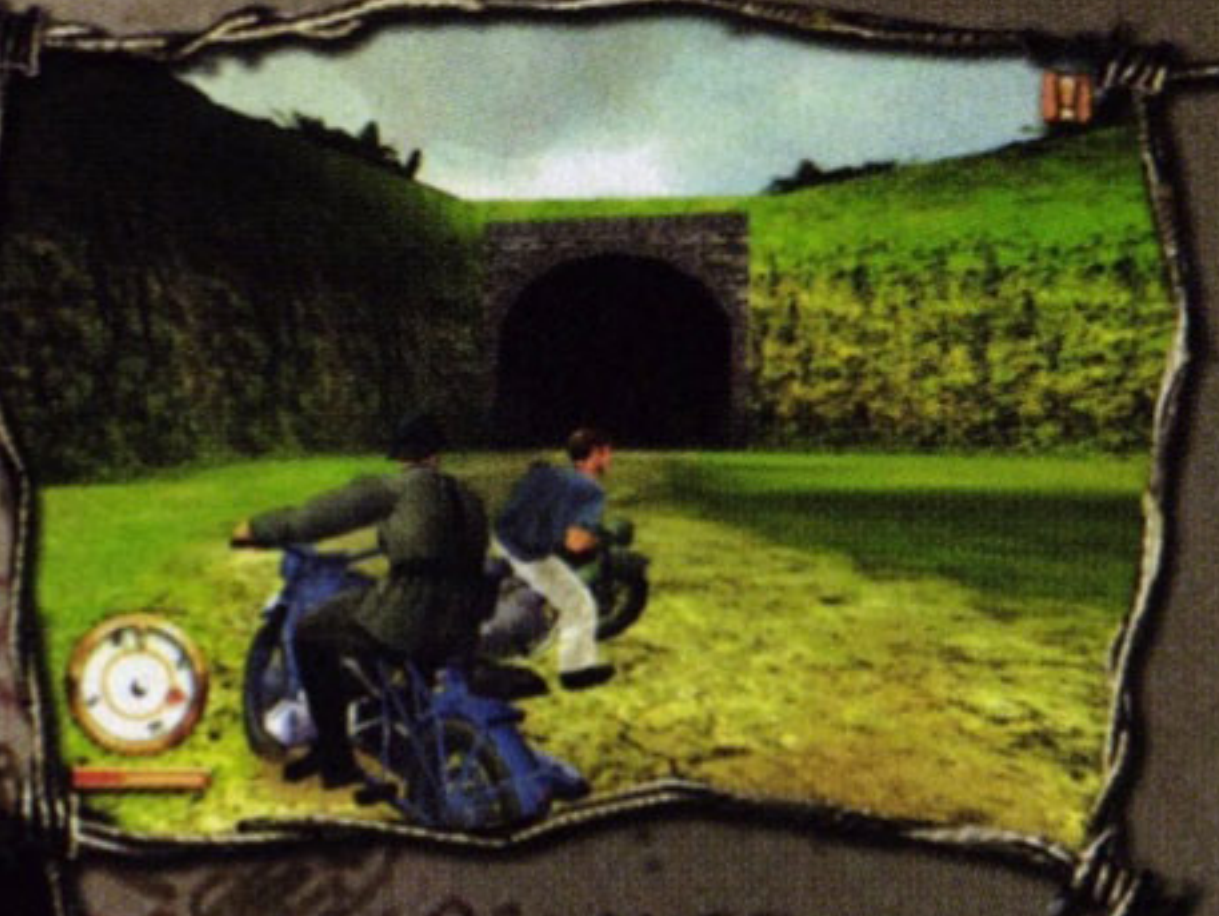
At a Konami event at E3, *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater* creator Hideo Kojima revealed that the game's new engine is online capable. Kojima would not reveal whether the 2004 PlayStation 2 game would indeed feature an online component. In an interview with *Game Informer*, he did say that he wasn't a big fan of deathmatch. For more, check out our preview of the game (pg. 70) and interview with Kojima on page 47.

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PlayStation 2



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TOMORROW NEVER DIES

Work has already begun on **Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow**, a 2004 title from **Ubi Soft**. This follow-up to the hit game will be a multi-platform affair and is even going online. *Pandora Tomorrow* will allow multiple players to work simultaneously during the same mission, as well as offer an equally robust single-player portion. The game will appear on the **PS2, Xbox, GC, and PC**.



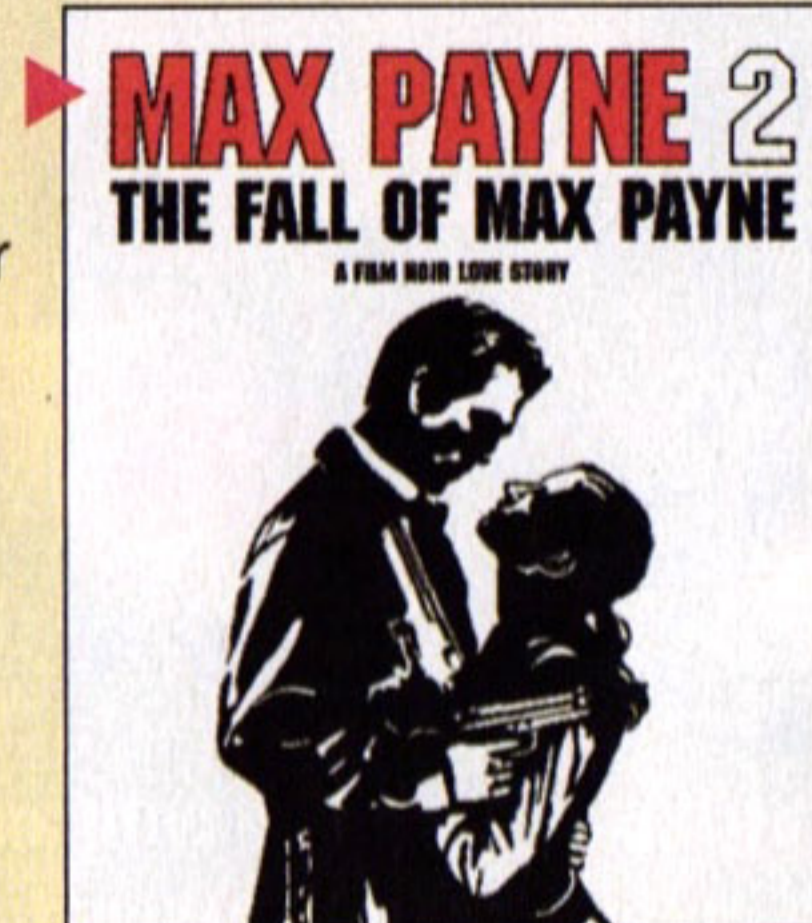
THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE UGLY

GOOD – **Sony Online** is taking pity on all you who quit your jobs to play **EverQuest**. All its titles (including **PlanetSide** and **EQ II** when released) are jointly available for one monthly fee of \$21.99.

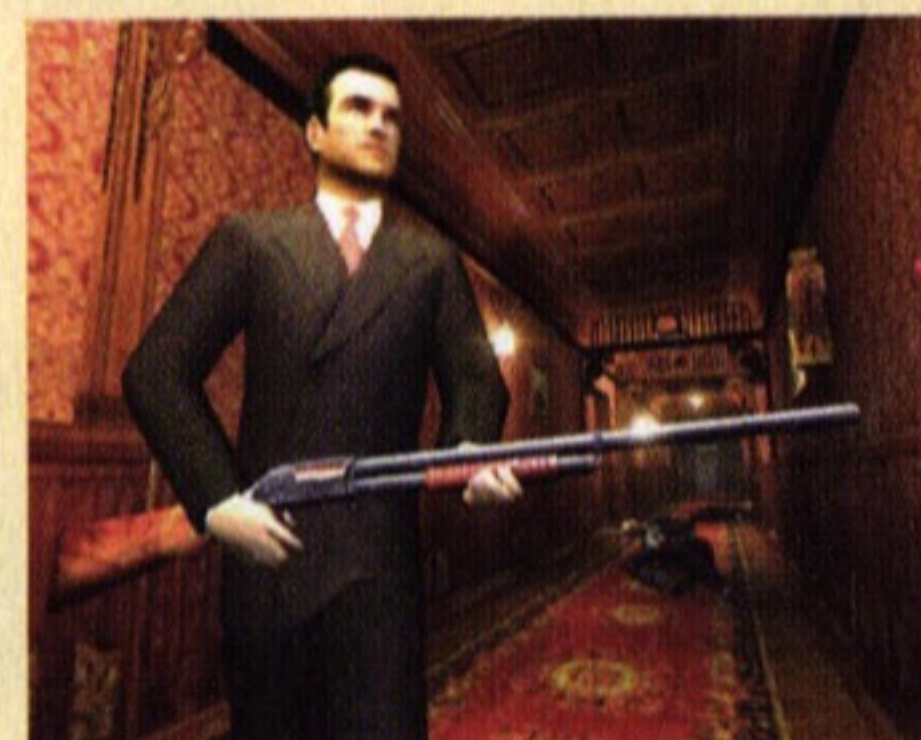
GOOD – **Rockstar** and **3D Realms** have begun work on **Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne**. Lovers entwine in .9mm heat. Or is that yet another dying loved one for Max?

BAD – **Deee-Lite** singer **Lady Miss Kier** is suing **Sega** for using her likeness in **Space Channel 5**. Listen up girl, you are no Ulala.

GOOD – The state of **Washington** has signed into law HB 1009, which makes it illegal for retailers to sell games depicting



violence against law enforcement officers to those under 17. Why is this good? Because we're over 17!



GOOD – **Mafia** is coming to both the **PlayStation 2** (shown) and **Xbox** this winter from publisher **Gathering** and developer **Illusion Softworks**.



LOOSE TALK

If loose lips are spraying hot video game gossip, we're sucking up the secret saliva and drooling it all over this section. Got a secret to tell? Email us at loosetalk@gameinformer.com and we'll be all ears.

Loose Talk has heard from a reliable source that **Rockstar** is bringing both **Grand Theft Auto 3** and **GTA: Vice City** to the **Xbox**. Similar to the company's treatment of **State of Emergency** for the console, extras are expected.

Xbox 2 development has begun, according to several developers we talked to. No details were given as to the tool sets being used, nor the projected release date of the console.

Despite **Nintendo's** claims of now being friendly to third-party publishers, some companies still want nothing to do with the system.

Electronic Arts has already begun work on **NBA Street Vol. 3**. Similar to **SSX 3**, the game is being designed as more open-ended, where the hub is a block party setting, letting you visit places in your neighborhood. **Pepsi** is in sponsorship talks for *Vol. 3*.

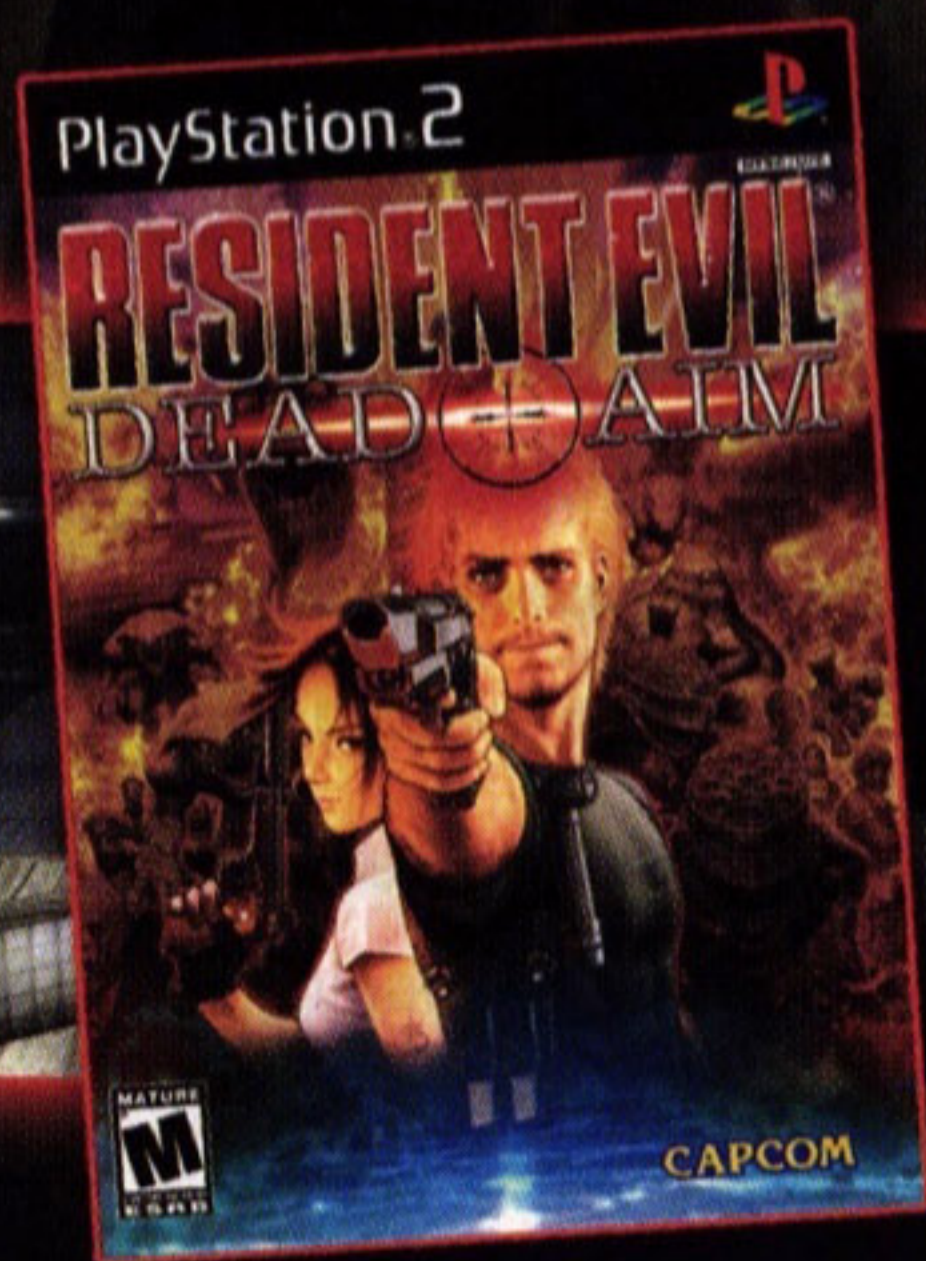
Nintendo has already confirmed a new **GameCube Legend of Zelda** game using the **Wind Waker** engine [see pg. 54 for more]. Word is the company is also considering a *Zelda* title using the infamous "mature" **Space World 2001** Link.





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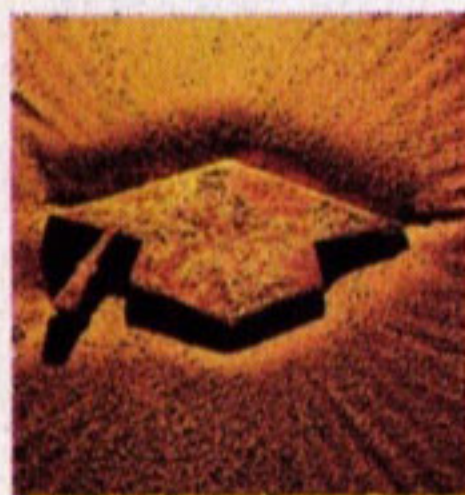


GUNCON2



Blood and Gore
Violence

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VIDEO GAME TRIVIA

Is it just us, or does it seem that Hollywood is obsessed with sequels? Apparently, every good idea has been tapped and transformed into a feature film. If you happen to take up the director's chair in the near future, this month's incredibly challenging quiz accurately determines which sequel you should transform into your very first film!

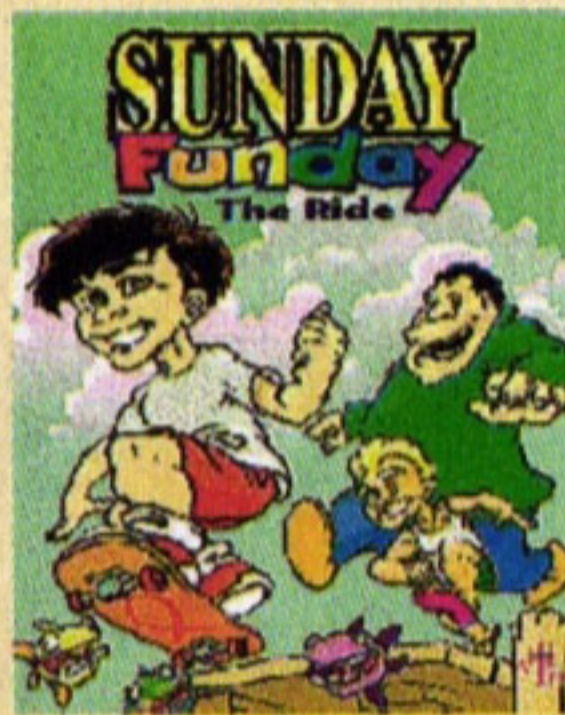
Question 1: On September 18, 1994, Acclaim tapped into the Spider-Man license once again in the release, Maximum Carnage. Along with a snazzy red cartridge, this game featured an atrocious soundtrack created by one of America's worst bands. Who was it?

- A. GWAR
- B. Green Jelly
- C. Pretty Boy Floyd
- D. Bon Jovi

Question 2: Scott Lawrence is an actor who played your military buddy in the Sega CD FMV game, Ground Zero, Texas. He's done voice work for a very famous character in bigger and better video games, too. What is this recurring role?

- A. Kain (Soul Reaver)
- B. Batman
- C. Jax (Mortal Kombat)
- D. Darth Vader

Question 3: In the early '90s, the gaming world was treated to a number of titles with religious ties. From the board game Bible Buffet to the action-packed thriller Sunday Sunday: The Ride, God was representin' on the gaming front. Who was the publisher that released these holy games?



- A. Godsoft
- B. Wisdom Tree
- C. Burning Bush Software
- D. Bibleware

Question 4: What is the name of the dastardly dragon in the arcade classic, Dragon's Lair?

- A. Scree
- B. Snaggletooth
- C. Singe
- D. Strife



Question 5: Camelot, the creator of Hot Shots Golf, is also the company behind Nintendo's upcoming GameCube release, Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour.

Which of these games did this developer not have a hand in?

- A. Zany Golf
- B. Viduzzles
- C. Mario Tennis
- D. Shining Force III

Question 6: Microprose was formed in 1982 by Bill Stealey and another legendary gaming figure. Who was it?

- A. Chris Sawyer
- B. Sid Meier
- C. Chris Roberts
- D. Richard Garriot

Question 7: After manufacturing playing cards for over 70 years, Nintendo decided to expand its horizons with the production of video games. What year was this decision made in?

- A. 1979
- B. 1965
- C. 1982
- D. 1963



Question 8: In Deus Ex, which of the following isn't one of the three endings?

- A. J.C. Denton fuses with the super computer Helios to rule the world
- B. All of the technology in the world is destroyed
- C. J.C. Denton joins the Illuminati conspiracy organization
- D. Computers create a virus that kills off mankind

Question 9: How many colors could the Super Nintendo display onscreen at any given time?

- A. 512
- B. 256
- C. 64
- D. 320

Question 10: Kenji Eno invested all of his money into creating a video game development studio. What is the name of his company?

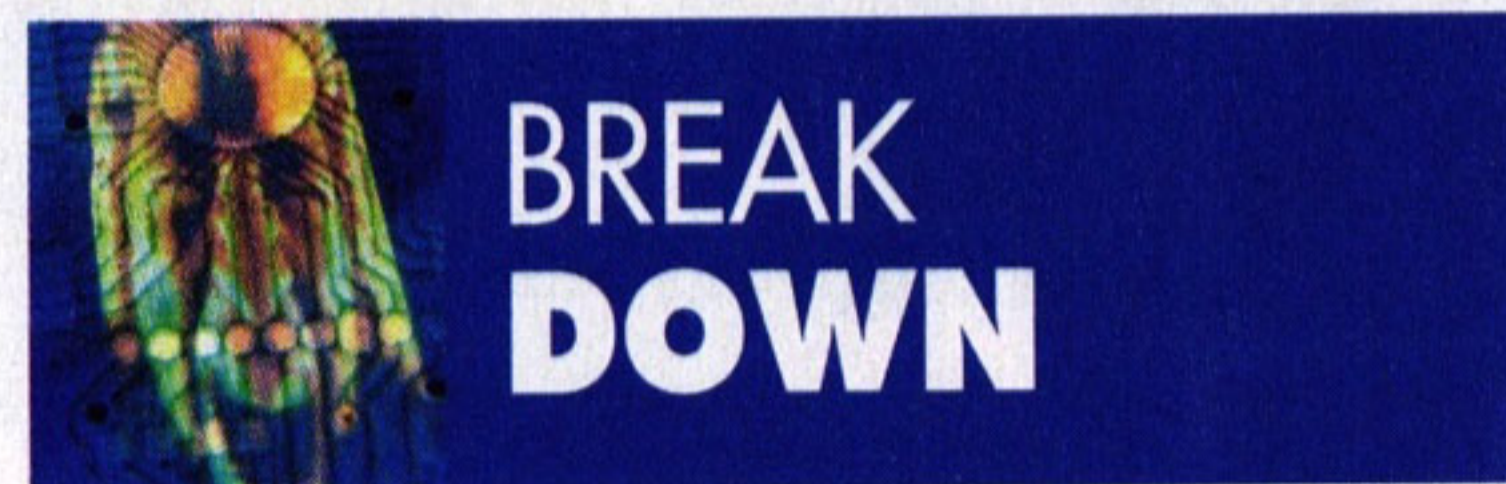
- A. Warp
- B. Xatrix Entertainment
- C. Human Entertainment
- D. Jaleco

DOA'S ONLINE REUNION

Gamers this fall are going to be getting double the fun and twice the jiggle when **Tecmo** releases **Dead or Alive Online**. Not merely an online fighting game, this *DOA* actually gives you the original **Sega Saturn** version of the series which kicked it all off – the first time that particular iteration will be available to U.S. gamers.

Also included and playable online is **DOA 2**, which features upgraded graphics, bringing it up to speed and into full 3D with the **Xbox** – including the break-through environments featured in **DOA 3**.

Players will also be treated to new story revelations regarding the characters' past and tons of new costumes. Tecmo is currently considering future downloads for *DOA Online*.



42% of PS2 online users connect via dial-up, according to Sony

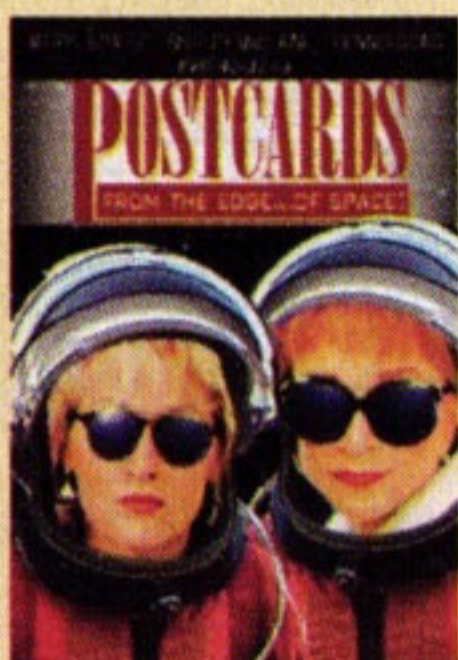
10% The percentage of showgoers impressed by Nintendo's E3 showings

100% of the E3 attendees informally surveyed were blown away by the Half-Life 2 demo

0% The amount of people disappointed by the in-game Halo 2 footage

37% of Matt's Thursday night at the Sony party can actually be remembered. Gratz!!!!

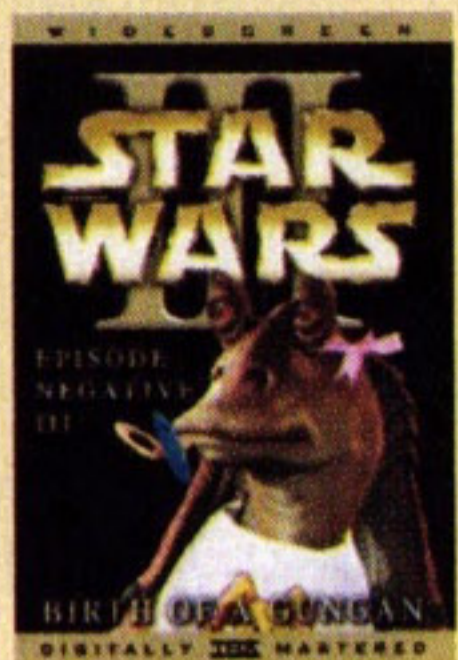
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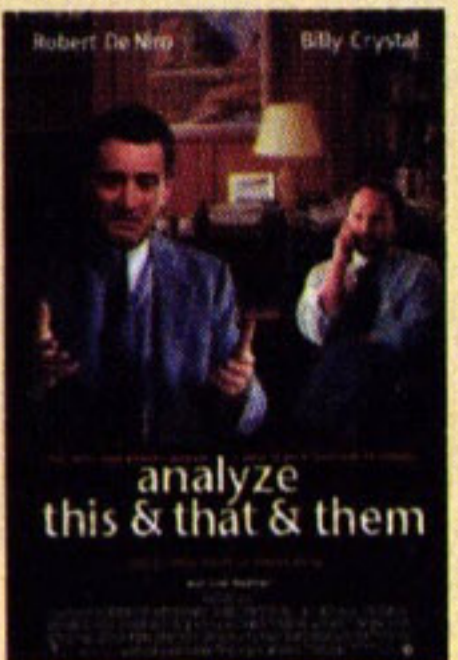
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Postcards From the Edge...Of Space!



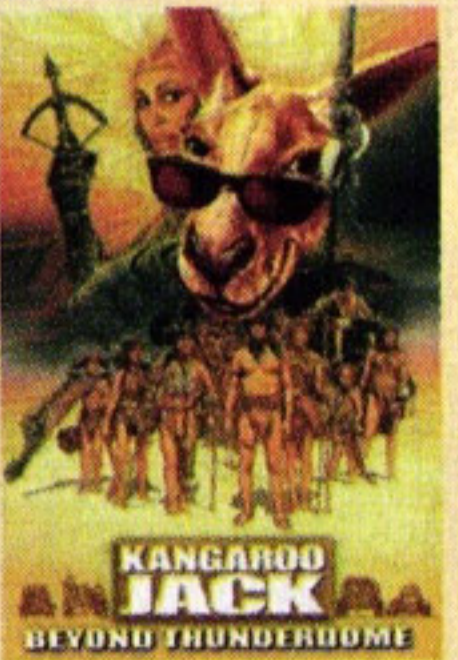
1-2
Jumping Jack Flash 2: From Flashin' to Streakin'



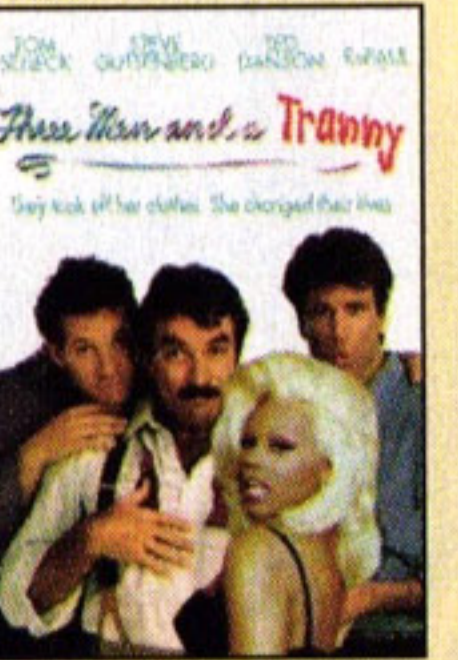
3-4
Star Wars: Episode Negative III - Birth of a Gungan



5-6
Analyze This & That & Them



7-8
Kangaroo Jack: Beyond Thunderdome



9-10
Three Men & a Tranny

DATA FILE

► It's **EA** to the rescue! The gaming giant has signed on **Superman**, so chances are we might finally get a good title from the hero after all.

► **Logitech** is now selling its **USB headset** separately from **SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs**.

► Neither potential merger suitors **Sammy** nor **Namco** are interested in joining up with **Sega**.

► Bugs. Lots of 'em. That's what you're going to get now that **Empire** has picked up the **Starship Troopers** license. The publisher has also signed up **Bad Boys II**. Whatcha' gonna do?

► **EA** has the rights to **James Bond** until 2010 – and that not only includes future films, but all the old ones as well. Pussy Galore, Holly Goodhead, Honey Rider...

► **Super Monkey Ball 3: Banana Crazy**, **Sega's** next edition for the **GameCube**, will feature 8-player LAN support when it releases in spring of 2004.

► Two **Activision Xbox** exclusives for you: **Tenchu Eternal** (Xbox Live-enabled) and **Tenchu: Lord of Darkness**.

► **Nicholas Cage** has signed on to the 2004 **Dead to Rights** movie.

► There will be three new **Yu-Gi-Oh** games from **Konami** this year. Less predictable, however, is whether the sun will come up tomorrow.

► **Dungeons & Dragons** will be going online in a MMORPG in 2005 courtesy of developer **Turbine** and **Atari**.

► **EverQuest** players always come back for more, and **PS2** players will be no different when the expansion title **Frontiers** appears this fall.

► Japanese **Xbox** owners can look forward to **Magatama**. What's that? A new title from **Hiroshi Kawai**, a man who worked on both **Final Fantasy VII** and **IX**.

► Who's the real **Slim Shady**? **Conspiracy** knows. It is giving **Eminem** his own **PSone** and **PC** game.

► **Capcom's** epic western, **Red Dead Revolver** has been given the axe due to recent budget scalebacks. However, following a report in *GI's Loose Talk*, the publisher is planning to put out a **The Nightmare Before Christmas** game in 2004.

► **Infogrames** has officially changed its name to **Atari**.

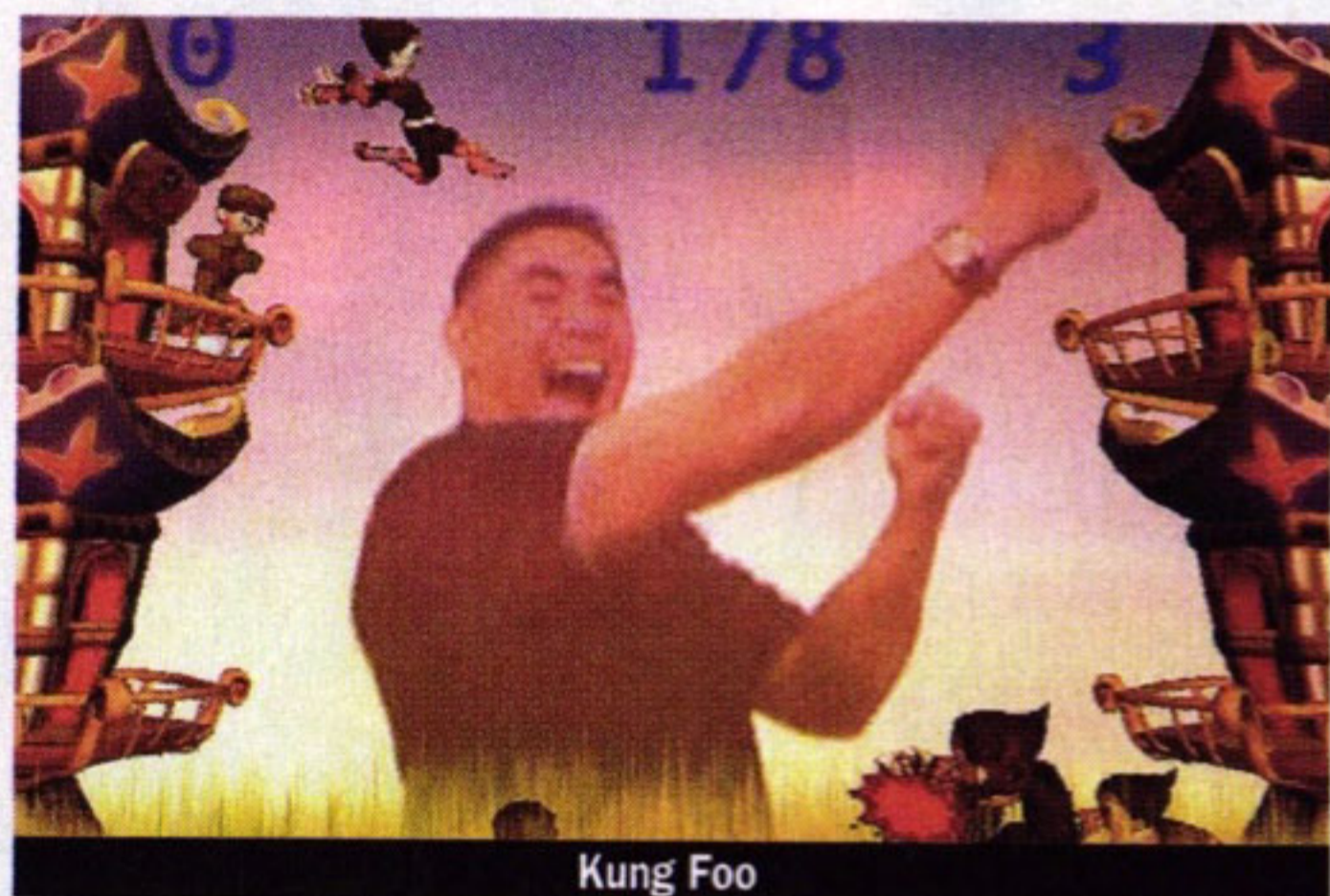
Name That Game Answer:
Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake

PS2 ADDS EYETOY



For the **PlayStation 2** owner who has everything, check out **Sony's** newest gadget – the **EyeToy**. Developed by Logitech, this USB camera lets you play interactive games and even record 60-second videos onto your memory card (clothing optional).

Kung Foo (shown) is one of the many mini-games included in the free pack-in disc that puts you in the middle of the action. Here, players must punch enemies as they jump at you from the sides of the screen. Other titles include **Wishi-Washi** (where you wash windows), and **Beat Freak** (a rhythm game).



NEW HANDHELD ON HORIZON

Tapwave, a company featuring some of the people from **Palm** (the PDA maker), have announced **Helix** – a tentatively titled handheld gaming system. Best of all, how would you like to be playing **Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4** and **Neverwinter Nights** on the system?

The price and release date for Helix have not yet been determined, but some of the handheld's features have. It will boast a 480x320 pixel, 16-bit color screen, trigger buttons, an analog stick, rumble effects, **Bluetooth** support (for wireless gaming), MP3 playback, and more. Helix will also contain the ATI Imageon graphics accelerator and the FatHammer X-Forge 3D graphics engine. **Activision, Atari, Midway, and Digital Eclipse** have all signed up to make games for the system thus far.



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PlayStation 2



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CHAMPIONS of NORRATH

REALMS of EVERQUEST

EverQuest is a successful franchise. Okay, that doesn't quite describe it. EverQuest is an absolute phenomenon in the world of gaming as we know it. That comes closer. For years, players have been flocking to the digital deity of EverQuest for fun, companionship, and simply because they can't stop themselves. No other game in the history of our industry has evoked the kind of response that EQ has. Do you want to talk about a fanatical fan base? Do you want to talk about user loyalty? This franchise has both in spades. To paraphrase a great sports broadcaster, you cannot stop it; you can only hope to contain it. And let's be honest here, you're not going to contain it. At last count, there were over 420,000 EverQuest users playing the PC iteration. That doesn't take into account EverQuest Online Adventures, a PlayStation 2 title, which recently had to activate additional servers to keep pace with demand.

There's no getting away from it: This is a brand that's going to be around for a long time to come – and why wouldn't it? No one can doubt that there are a lot of people getting very, very rich off of EverQuest. At the same time, there are untold thousands of others who are more than willing to pay that monthly fee to live out their medieval fantasies. So, where does the mild-mannered staff of Snowblind Studios fit in with all of this? They're about to hijack this license and make it accessible to a whole different breed of gamer. Gone are the days of ambling around enormous environments and spending obscene numbers of hours obtaining a minute gain in your character's ability arc. Well, maybe not gone, but an intriguing alternative is lurking around the corner.

With the critical and commercial success that Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance brought the small group who make their corporate home in Bellevue, Washington; everyone knew that there would be more products from Snowblind releasing in the future. However, no one guessed that the team would jump the Dungeons & Dragons ship in favor of the EverQuest universe. Although there is a sequel to their first hit being created (courtesy of a different development house), the team is completely dedicated to this project; and for good reason – they've got a lot to live up to. The fans have certain expectations, the publisher has certain expectations, and the development crew themselves have a standard of excellence that drives them to not only succeed, but also advance their particular art form. Will the end result weather the gauntlet facing it? From where we sit, the answer is yes.


Action/RPG fans, your chariot awaits; and its name is Champions of Norrath. From enormous skill trees to stunning graphics and sound, we have a feeling that all comers will be sucked into this game's story and play options – not just those acquainted with the subject matter. So, put on some armor and strap on a sword, people – it's time to hunt some evil. EverQuest style.

■ **FORMAT** PLAYSTATION 2 ■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/RPG (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** SNOWBLIND STUDIOS
■ **RELEASE** FALL

PLOT A COURSE

One challenging aspect of bringing a massively multiplayer online role-playing game into an action setting is deciding what the plot will be. Sure, there's a semblance of a plot in the PC version; but for the most part, players forge their own experiences while following a loose storyline. Some of them don't follow the story at all – they simply go out hunting with their companions and ignore the quests at hand. In a console action title, that type of play just doesn't work. Running around aimlessly in a massive dungeon could be fun, but there has to be some sort of motivation for building a stronger character – which is where the story comes in.

To get the skinny on what makes *Champions of Norrath* tick, we talked to Mark Geithman, president of Snowblind Studios. After settling into the studio's plush conference room, Mr. Geithman gave us the general overview of what this title will deliver on the story side of things. "The game itself is set 300 years before the PC version of EQ, and orcs and goblins are invading Faydwer Forest," says Geithman. "The leader of Kelethin, a tree city, has put out a call for champions to come and help his people. At this point, your character joins the battle; and, after an opening cutscene, you're put to work defending Kelethin against the invading hordes. Eventually, you find the actual culprit behind all of this violence." But we won't ruin it for you. Suffice it to say that you'll be pleasantly surprised. "Players will be travelling to a number of different locations in the EverQuest universe, and at one point, you'll meet up with the Prince of Hate," hints Geithman.




Particle effects have not gone forgotten by the Snowblind team

SOMEWHERE OUT THERE


One of the most important parts of adapting an established property into a new form is making sure that players feel grounded in their surroundings. For example, if you're planning on releasing a first-person shooter based in Vietnam, it's a good idea to scrap the snow-based levels. Likewise, the world of *EverQuest* demands accurate settings. From a purely technological perspective, having the depth of subject matter that this series enjoys at your disposal is a fantastic asset. With previously defined areas and landmarks, simply fleshing out an existing idea is exciting, but there's a responsibility that comes along with building on someone else's creation.

During our time with the team, we saw a number of different locations. Some were more complete than others, but they all looked and felt authentic. We were able to take a long, close look at different parts of Faydwer Forest and Kelethin itself. Although there was a major battle raging throughout much of the forest's canopy and floor, we could see that the ambient scenery and environmental models are all what you would expect to see in this area of *EverQuest*'s geography. We also learned that players will travel to a number of different Planes, including Hate and Air (both of which we saw), as well as Kunark and a host of other locales.

Providing *Champions of Norrath* with this accurate location recreation will not only help experienced players feel more at home when they play, but newcomers will find that they will have a detailed frame of reference should they want to partake in other *EverQuest* titles. However, as we mentioned, *Champions* takes place 300 years before the PC title, so don't be surprised if things look a little different. Three centuries is a long time, so the team does have a bit of breathing room creatively. This allows them to inject their own particular take on the areas most people have only seen from one perspective.




Running away might not always be an option if you get into trouble



Notice how the light accurately plays on the rest of the environment

THE TRANSITION




Spells will gain strength as players move up the skill tree

Most of you know that Snowblind developed Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance. The Dungeons & Dragons rule set is completely different from EverQuest's, and there's a distinctly different feel for each genre. One is over 25 years old and steeped in tradition; the other is under five years old and experiencing an ongoing boom in popularity.


We asked the team what it was like to make the transition from D&D to EQ, and Geithman chimed in immediately, informing us, "That wasn't so bad. They're both high fantasy settings so there wasn't that much difference. We played pretty fast and loose with the D&D rules in Dark Alliance, so we didn't experience a really dramatic transition. There are a huge number of abilities in EverQuest, so we had to kind of scale those back to simplify the project. Other than that, it really wasn't too bad. The biggest challenges were technical."

"The primary focus with Champions of Norrath has always been to make a great action game," adds Sony Online Entertainment producer Rob Hill. "EverQuest, obviously, is not an action game by any means; so we had to pull the reigns in on the rule sets in order to make it cool for somebody who just wants to sit back and play a hot action game with role-playing elements."

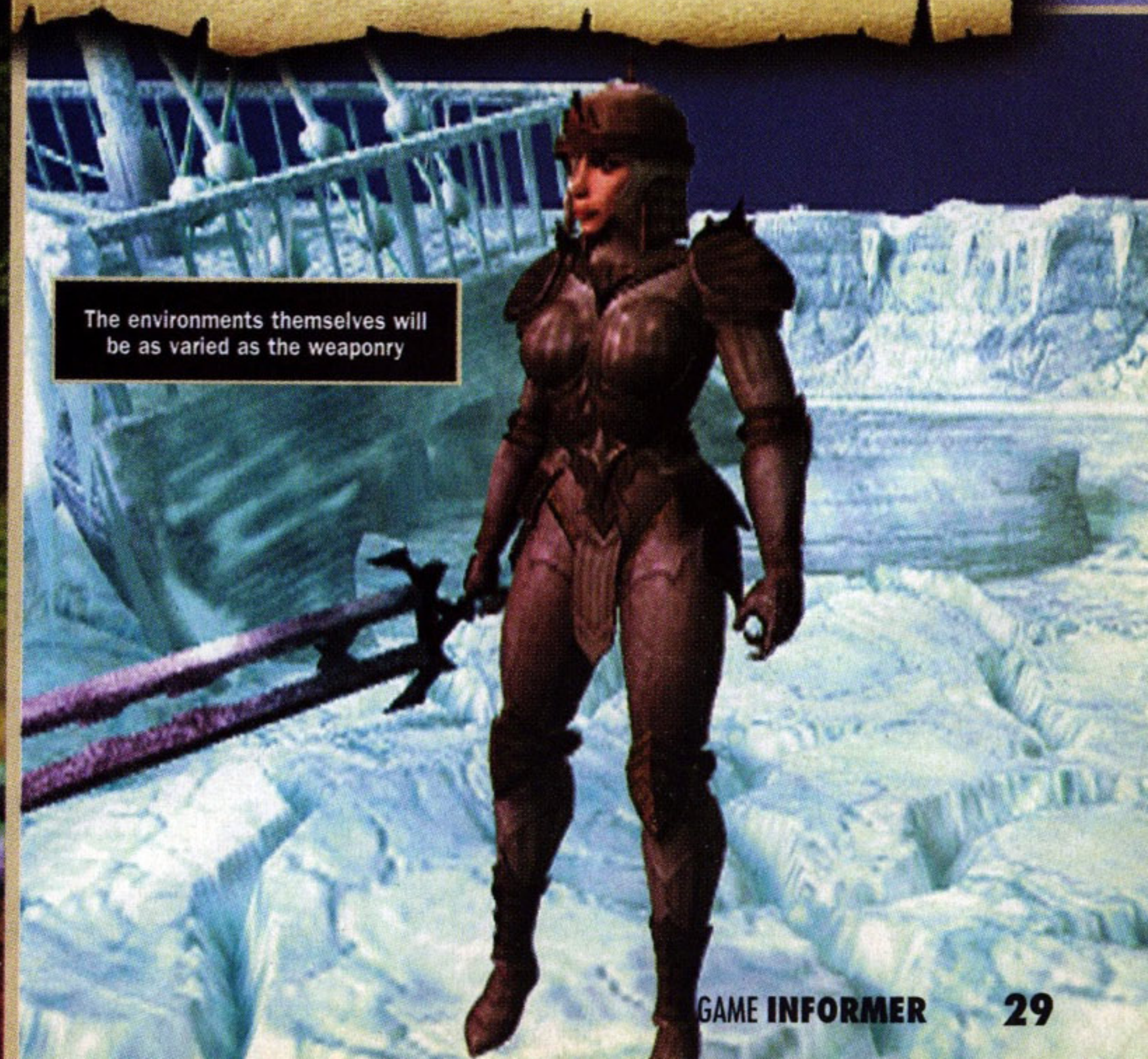
"We also wanted to incorporate some of the flavor of EverQuest," says Geithman. "Things like self-buffing [increasing your character's attributes through spells or items], go a long way towards bringing that EQ feeling to players – that's something we weren't able to do with Dark Alliance. This brings a more community aspect to the multiplayer segment of the game. If you want to sit back with a cleric and heal people as they fight, you're able to do that. It's not all about dealing damage, it's also about benefiting the entire party."



A staggering amount of armor has been painstakingly modeled



This guy looks scary enough without the buff effect



The environments themselves will be as varied as the weaponry



The scale has been greatly improved over Dark Alliance



Each enemy will cough up a randomly generated item when dispatched, so picking up everything on the battlefield is a good idea

PARTY ALL THE TIME

There were a number of distinct – and widely lauded – features in Dark Alliance. The consensus on the most interesting aspect was the absolutely engrossing multiplayer segment. Being able to slice and dice bugbears next to your buddy was an element many of us enjoyed for hours on end. Taking the hint, Sony Online and Snowblind are going to bring the cooperative aspect of this game to the next level. In true SOE form, this project is going online.

“Sony will host a match-making service, and players will be able to connect through their PS2 to this service and link up with up to three other people to play a game,” says Hill. “Once they finish establishing a connection through us and find people they want to play with, the game is actually hosted on their PS2 itself, not on our service. Of course, if you don’t want to go online, you’re able to play with three of your friends using the multitap.” To address power-leveling issues [which refers to a stronger character partying with a weaker character, and destroying enemies that yield high experience rewards, which then grants the weaker member level advancement at a highly accelerated rate], the online service and the local multiplayer game will only allow players to play together at the lowest common difficulty setting.

The difficult setting stems from Snowblind’s mission to increase the game’s overall replayability. To this end, gamers will be able to play through the entire game three separate times, all with the same character. After you complete the game once, a new difficulty level will be made available. Starting again with this difficulty level allows your character to continue gaining experience, thus building on what you accomplished the first time through the game. After finishing the game for the second time, yet another difficulty level opens up, and you can continue leveling up your original character until he or she is insanely powerful. Each level offers tougher enemies, but also increased experience and improved items.

Let’s lay out a scenario incorporating all of the nuances of these simultaneous play options. Imagine that Johnny buys Champions of Norrath, beats the game once, and subsequently starts playing through it a second time. Seeing that Johnny is having so much fun, Jimmy buys the game, but gets lonely. So, he calls up Johnny one evening, and they decide to join a game together online. Because Johnny has already been through it once, he has to play on the lower difficulty setting if he wants to play with Jimmy. Now Sally and Timmy both buy the game because they don’t want to be left out. After

creating their characters and playing for a little while, they also get lonely. All four of them then decide to get together over the weekend and play at Timmy’s house. After downloading their characters onto their own memory cards, they journey over to Timmy’s place, insert their cards into the multitap, fire up their characters, and play together for hours on end.

Just because Johnny has been through the game doesn’t mean he’ll know his way around. Aside from the hub portions of levels (usually small towns where you’re able to buy and sell equipment), every inch of the game is randomly generated. That means each time you go into a dungeon, it’ll look completely different from the first time you visited it, thereby adding even more replayability. To help with navigation, an overland map will be available (think Diablo), as well as auto-save checkpoints which can whisk you back and forth from the level hub via teleportation. However, since everyone is playing at Timmy’s house, they’ll start from his character’s last save point since he’s hosting the game. So, the host determines at which point in the plot characters begin. “We’re even toying around with the idea of not having those multiplayer sessions save to other people’s cards so they can go through the game themselves, but we’re not sure about that yet,” says Hill.



During multiplayer scenarios, this type of spell will only inflict damage on the party’s enemies



A brawler wouldn’t be a brawler without a mountain of enemies to hack through



The clever radial menu at left will make fighting and casting quicker and more intuitive

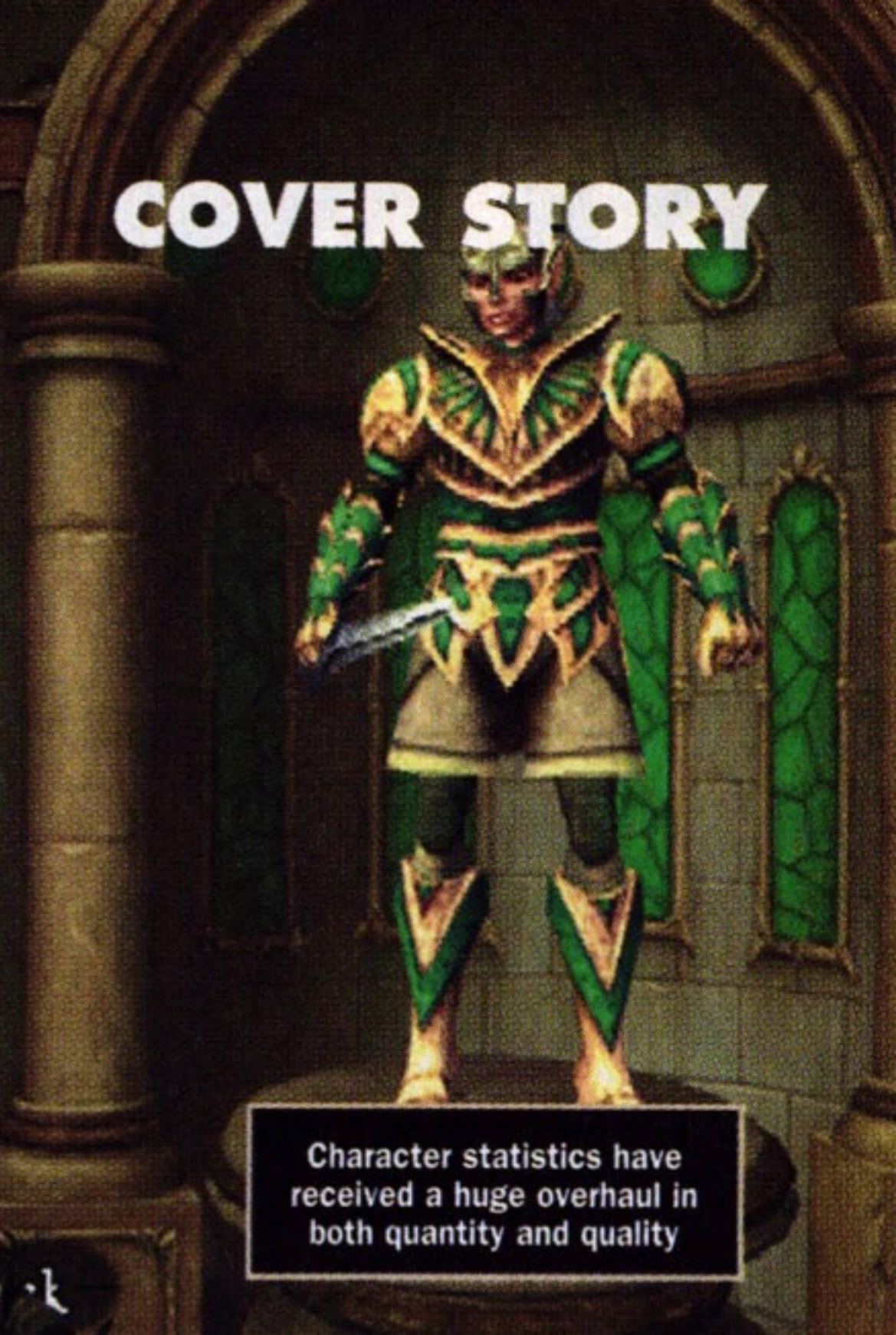
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Lulu IDEBUG STARTUP
Level 1 Wood Elf Ranger

Experience	7000	0%
Next Level	1000	
Health	92/92	0%
Mana	38/38	
Armor	257	0%
Attack	11	0%
Damage	8-14	
Strength	23	0%
Intelligence	25	
Dexterity	30	
Stamina	21	

Resist

Back



COVER STORY

Character statistics have received a huge overhaul in both quantity and quality

YOU MUST LEARN CONTROL

A game's controls are a lot like a movie's cinematography – if you're conscious of it, it probably isn't doing what it's supposed to. With this in mind, the Champions team took the comments and feedback they've accrued throughout their Baldur's Gate experience and incorporated a number of different enhancements.

The first, and most noticeable of these, is camera control. You're now able to swoop in on your alter ego for an up-close-and-personal look, or pull back for a better view of your surroundings – an improvement that many Dark Alliance fans will be happy to see. Aside from basic modifications like this, the overall user interface has been completely overhauled. "You have access to more functionality," says Hill. "It'll be right at your fingertips, and we'll give you quicker access to

be able to change that functionality. For example, instead of having to cycle through spells, you'll have a radial command structure mapped to the d-pad which will allow you to assign two different spells to different buttons for instant use." We saw this system in action, and it's as simple and effective as it sounds.

Other improvements have been made to the overall look of your interface, but some of the core features are still present. The health, experience, and mana bars that appeared in the upper left corner of the screen in Dark Alliance have made a comeback, and are as intuitive as they always were. Being able to gauge all of your vital statistics at a moment's notice is an absolute must in any action game, and this system is a perfect fit for Champions of Norrath.



WEAPONS



Battle Axe Rapier Flamberge Broad Sword Long Sword Falchion War Hammer Halberd Morning Star Bastard Sword



An updated graphics engine has given the artists more control over what you see onscreen



Taking on enemies this big calls for a larger party

CLASS SYSTEMS

A role-playing game is nothing without a varied set of different playable characters. Similarly, an action game just isn't an action game without a protagonist the player can invest in and care about. "We're going to try to be true to both the EverQuest universe and the action genre in terms of character types," says Hill.

From this philosophy, five playable characters were born, each with a male and female iteration. The first, the Barbarian Warrior, will likely act as the tank in many adventuring parties; meaning they will probably take the brunt of the damage during battles, but will also make the lion's share of kills. During a multiplayer session, that's an important thing to take into account, as the person who issues the killing blow on an enemy will reap 60 percent of the experience, and the rest of the party will share the remainder. Second comes the Wood Elf Ranger, who will likely act in a supporting role – shooting arrows from afar during moderate encounters, and leaping into the fray with weapon in hand if need be. Rangers are also typically light on their feet, which will come in handy when attempting to collect the randomly generated items monsters drop when dispatched. Next is the High Elf Cleric who will do what clerics tend to do – keeping people alive and fighting. Each class will have access to various spells, but the cleric specializes in healing and attribute enhancement. Before a fracas, you may find yourself waiting in line to receive a buff or two from your friendly neighborhood cleric; and, when push comes to shove, they've got plenty of power to spare. Rounding out the warrior classes is the Dark Elf Shadow Knight – essentially an anti-paladin. Featuring a deadly mix of casting and melee prowess, we expect this character to be one of the most popular classes in the game. Finally, an Erudite Wizard will be available for all of you who want to blast things into the unknown with the power of the unknown.

Unlike Dark Alliance, the character generation system will be quite robust in terms of appearance choices and skill point allocation. Also, in the biggest technological breakthrough this game possesses, players will now be able to actually name their own characters. "We got a lot of complaints about [the fact you couldn't name your character in Dark Alliance], so we thought it would probably be a good idea to put it in for Champions of Norrath," says Geithman. After you've decided what class to take on, you're given a number of points to put toward one of four attributes: strength, dexterity, intelligence, and stamina. You're able to put points wherever you wish, but creating a wizard who can bench press 342 pounds won't prove to be a wise decision down the road. Don't worry if you set up your character and start playing only to realize that you should have put more points in an area you neglected during the creation phase. You'll be given more points to administer as you level – something the D&D world is very stingy about.



730.2/9999, 13,189

Each skill in your tree can be leveled up 20 times in all, making for some spectacular player abilities

0 Points Remaining



THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

After all of the customization that goes into making your character look and act like you want him to, it's time to jump in the game and start climbing your class' skill tree. Each class will have an average of about 20 different skills, and each ability will be able to be leveled up individually up to 20 times as well. For example, if you spend points to obtain an ice bolt skill, its primary function will simply be a bolt of ice that leaps from the caster and inflicts damage on the target. However, if you put another point in that skill, its effect will increase with each successive upgrade. You can imagine what happens around level 20. Aside from the active skill type like we just described; there's also an active/passive type (putting an attribute enhancement spell on a team member) which will wear off with time, and a passive type which gives you a permanent bonus when you spend a point to obtain it.

What does this incredibly deep skill tree mean? Replay, replay, and more replay. The idea that your onscreen persona is good, but could be better, is a carrot that will drive many to rack up hour after hour of game time. This is coupled with the fact that there will be literally thousands of different combinations of item types due to the prefix/suffix system. Snowblind is instituting these additional descriptive terms on all of their weapons, armor, and jewelry (a sword isn't a sword, it's a "rusty broadsword of weakness," or a suit of armor is a "sturdy full-plate of protection"), giving players yet another reason to keep that disc spinning in their PS2.



The Plane of Hate is no place for the faint of heart



All character animations have taken on noticable upgrades



There's nothing like a good area-effect spell to even the odds



CAUSE AND EFFECT

In the purely technical sense, Champions of Norrath will use a slightly modified version of the engine that Dark Alliance ran on. One of the most obvious improvements is the elevated level of detail for everything you can see onscreen. From increased attention to detail on the weapons and armor to artist-controlled particle effects and eye-popping environmental visuals, this is a game that plans on looking as good as it plays. The industry's best water effect makes its triumphant return, and we look forward to running around in puddles in the near future.

Truth be told, there are many reasons we look forward to playing this game. Not only does Snowblind have the foresight to cater to both EQ fans (you'll see Firiona Vie as an NPC) and newcomers; it also has the presence of mind to fix what needs fixing, innovate on the multiplayer end, and leave its action-packed core gameplay alone. Whether you choose to play this game with one friend or three, online or off, or even alone; Champions of Norrath has all the makings of being a bona fide smash.

THE END



MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

Game Experience May
Change During Online Play



OVERTHROW HITLER'S EVIL EMPIRE.

You are B.J. Blazkowicz, a US Army Ranger recruited by the OSA and the Allies' top specialist in covert operations, heavy weapons and assassination. Hitler's head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, is twisting science and the occult into an army capable of annihilating the Allies. The balance of victory is in your hands.

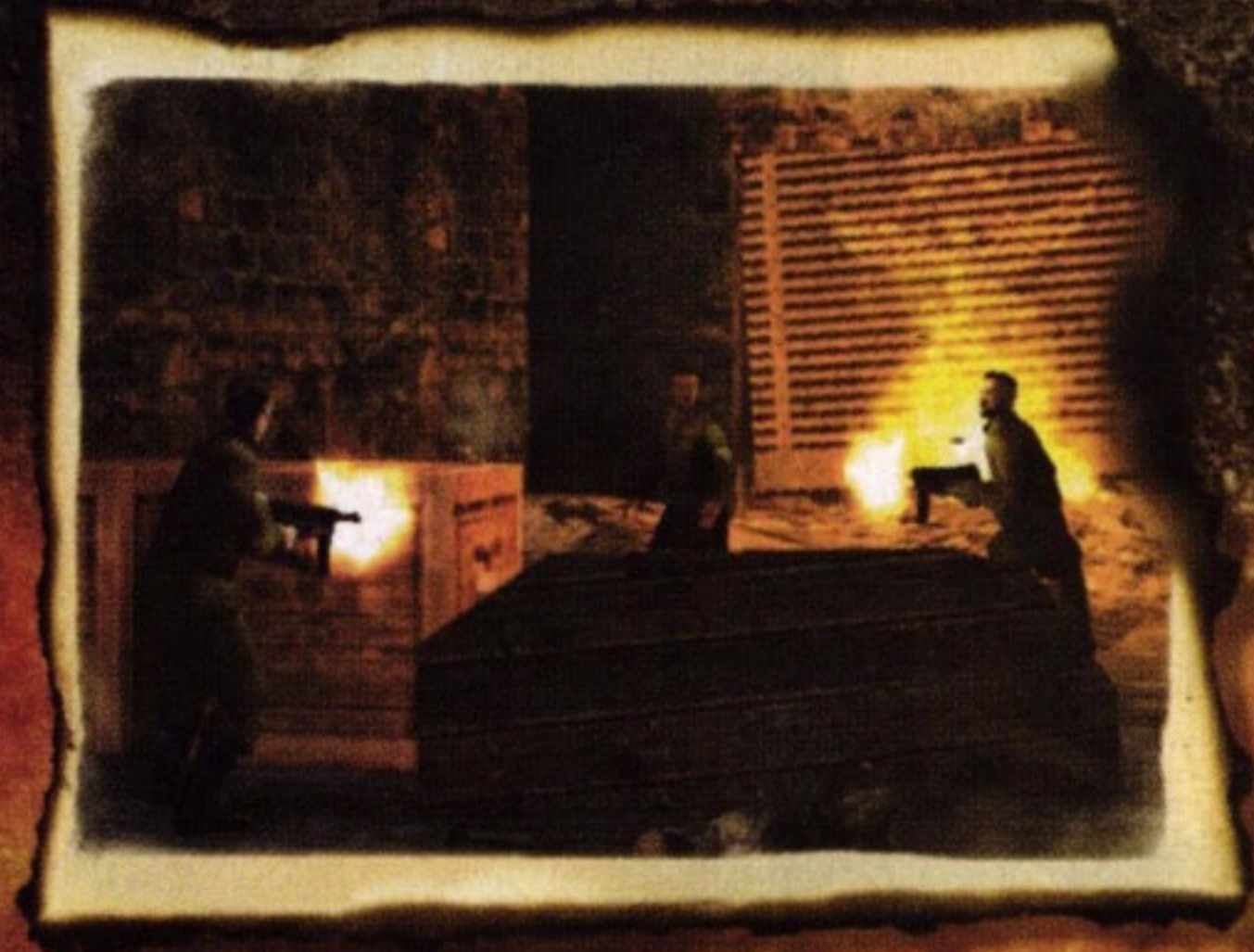
RETURN TO CASTLE Wolfenstein



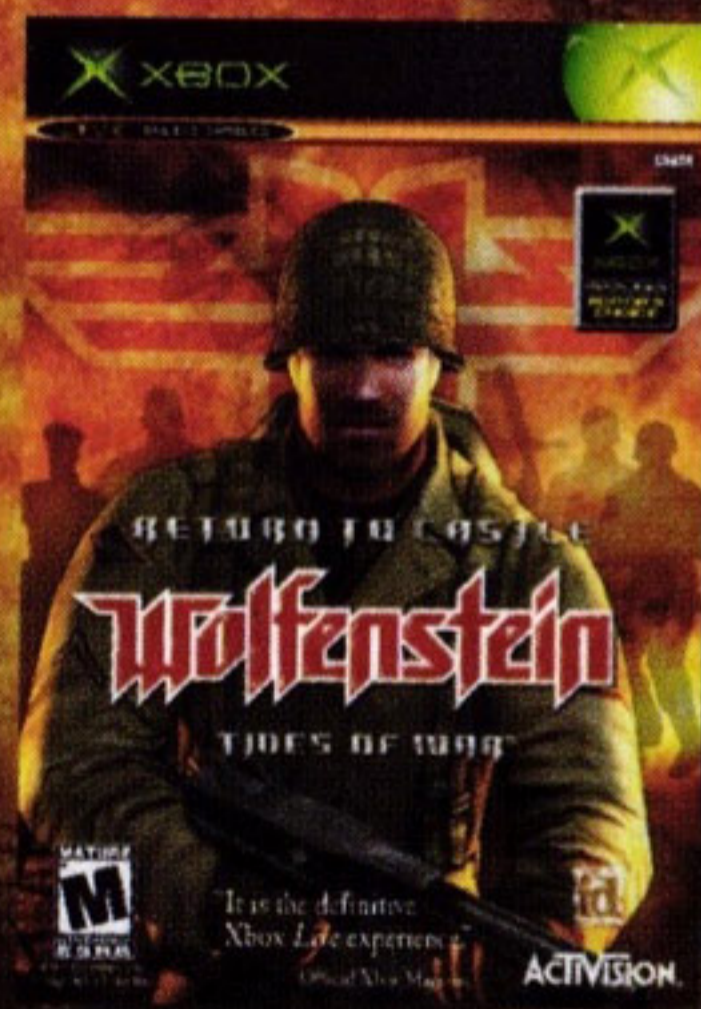
Traverse vast forests, war-torn cities, Egyptian villages and ancient crypts.



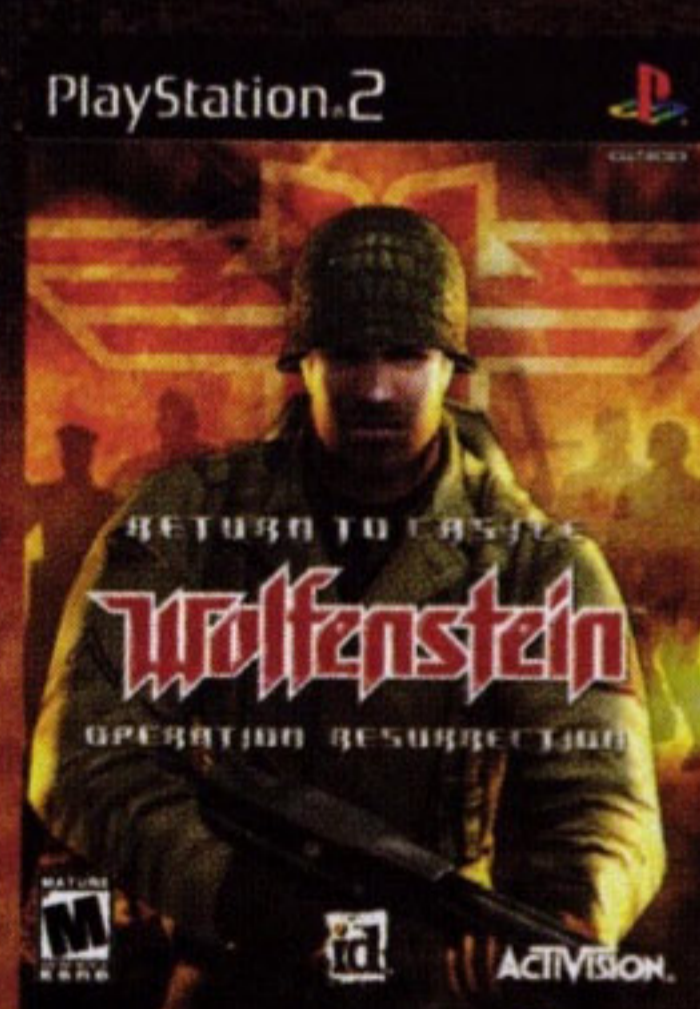
Unleash a brutal arsenal of authentic and experimental weapons.



Engage in an epic, story-driven single-player campaign across over 30 levels.



Face squad-based multiplayer battles against up to 15 others via Xbox Live™ and intense split-screen co-op action.



Complete unique objectives, including silently assassinating Nazi officers.



PlayStation 2



nerve

nervesoftware.com

RASTER

rasterproductions.com



idsoftware.com

ACTIVISION

activision.com

Screenshots taken from Xbox video game system and PlayStation 2 computer entertainment system gameplay.

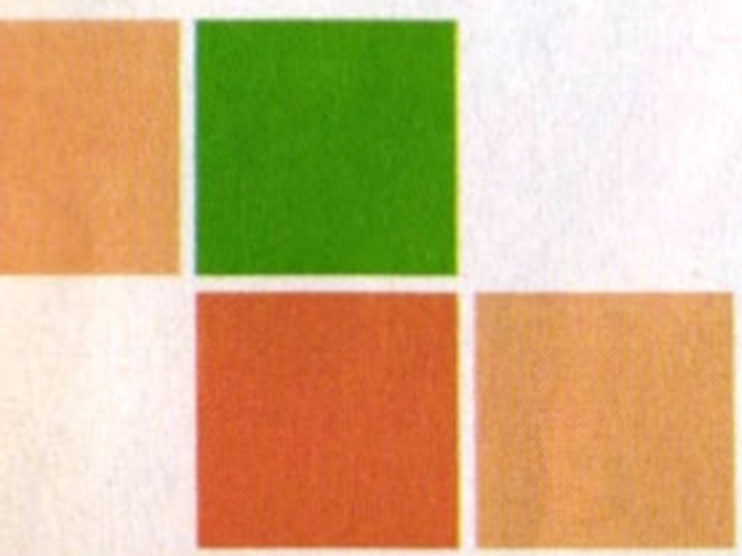
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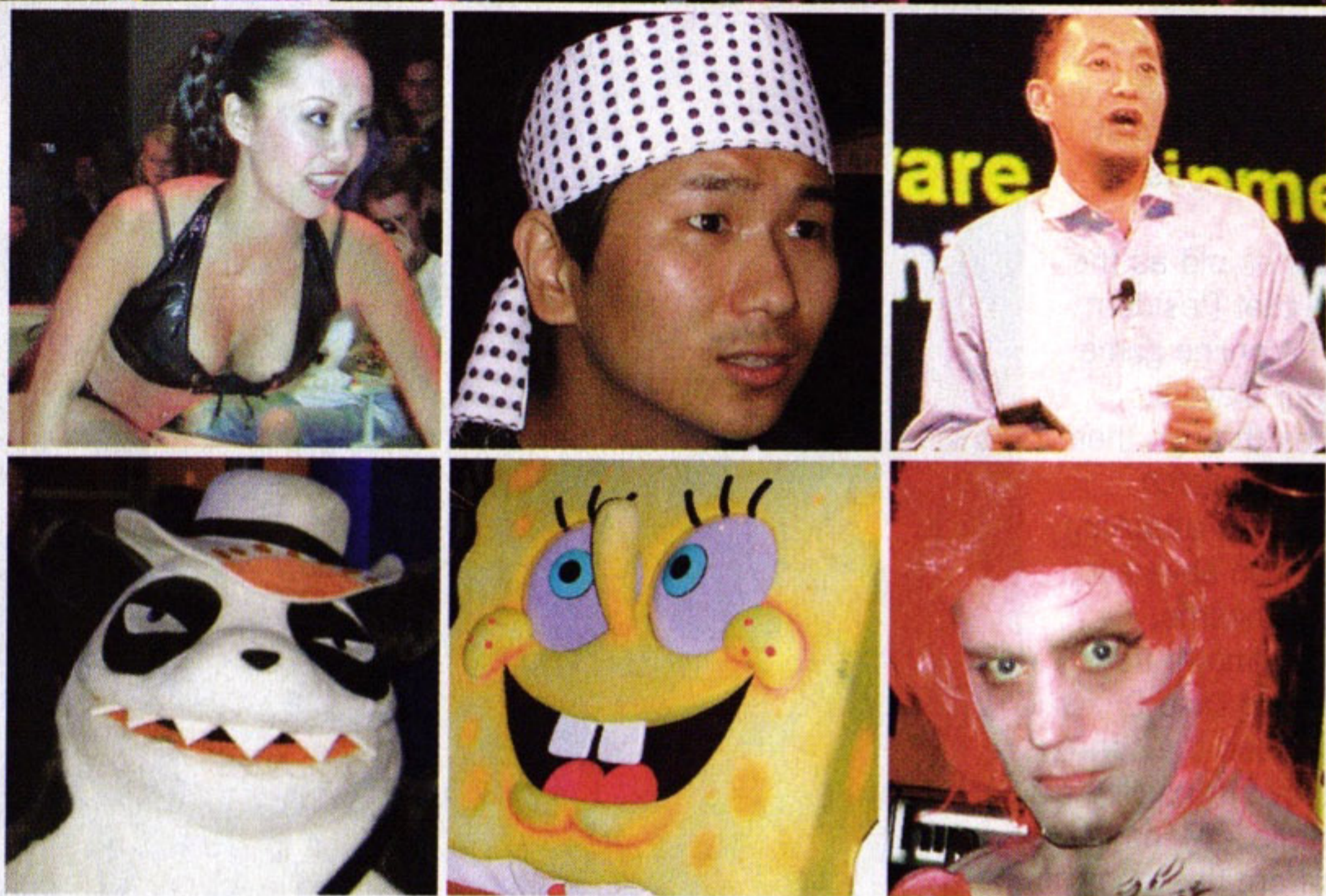
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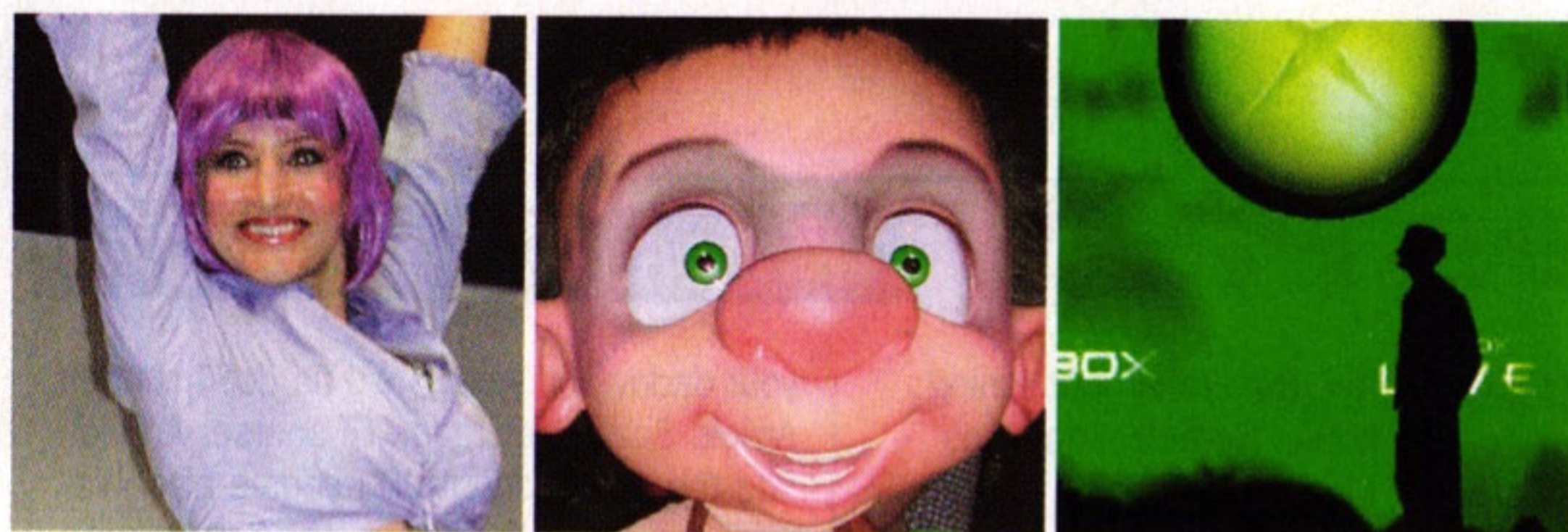
E3

120 Hours of Madness



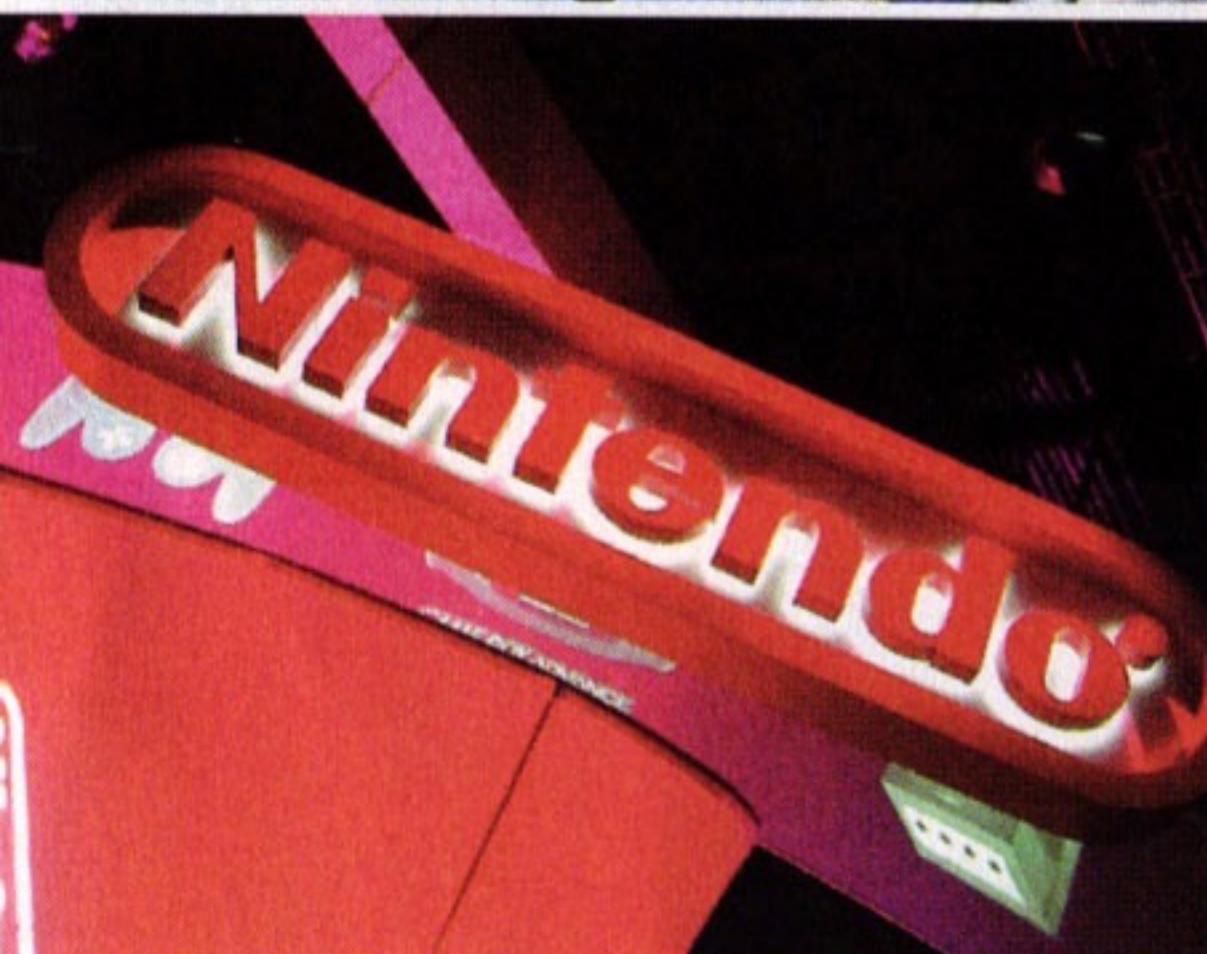
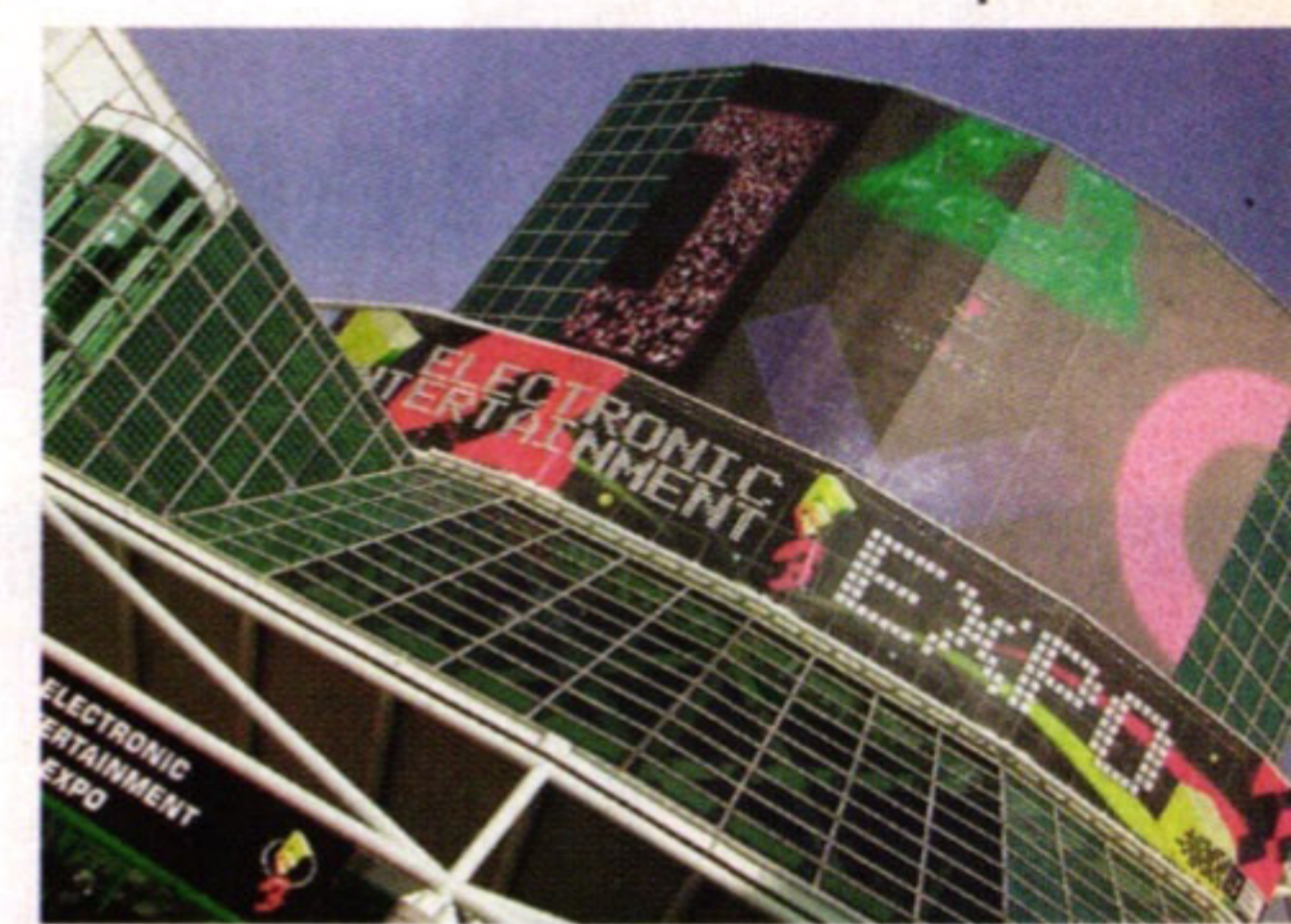


Electronic Entertainment Expo 2003 • Los Angeles, CA



As E3 gets bigger and more over-the-top with each passing year, Game Informer has decided that we need to change the way that we cover gaming's most important event of the year. Because, although every company claims that E3 is all about games, it's really much more than that. From expensive parties to people wearing some of the most bizarre costumes you'll ever see in your life, E3 is a garish testament to the commercial might of the game industry, and its willingness to spend millions of dollars to create a spectacle that Hollywood could only dream of.

In this spirit, we decided to scrap our usual E3 feature and began work on this massive timeline of the events that occurred in downtown Los Angeles between Monday, May 12th and Friday, May 16th. Along the way, you'll get to see every announcement, press conference, celebrity appearance, and gala bash that we could find amidst the chaos. In addition, we managed to interview many of the people behind this year's most anticipated games. So, without further ado, we present the 2003 Electronic Entertainment Expo.



Capcom **MONDAY, MAY 12 10:00 AM** Press Conference

What do you mean E3 is only three days long? Capcom kicked off what could more accurately be described as E3 week with a Monday press conference. Despite a lineup of the usual Capcom suspects like Mega Man (who is joined by a new playable character), Resident Evil, and Onimusha, the company always manages to keep gamers interested – no more so than this year.

What was once thought to be just another cel-shaded game – Viewtiful Joe – was actually one of the games of the show. Hero Joe gets sucked into a movie, and in a nice twist, he is able to apply slow motion and other powers to objects in the environments. For instance, in one scene he moves a helicopter out of his way by slowing down its propellers so it falls out of the sky.

Atsushi Inabe, the game's producer, gave us another



Mega Man X7's new character, Axl

reason to buy Viewtiful Joe: his job. "Please buy this game," he pleaded. "Seriously, my job is on the line."

Resident Evil is an institution as old as the hills, but believe us when we say that Resident Evil Outbreak is like no other. The online game stresses cooperation among four players, each of whom sees cutscenes through their protagonist's eyes. It was cool to watch show goers work together to hold off attacking zombies, conserve items, and even save each other from falling into huge chasms.

After running through known titles like Onimusha 3 and Dino Crisis 3, Capcom ended the conference by introducing a new game – Monster Hunter. This title is also from the team doing Outbreak, and it too features online cooperation between players (as well as an offline mode). Only this time, the setting is fantasy-based and on quite an epic scale. Keep your eyes peeled for this one in the future, because it's going to be big.



Onimusha 3



Resident Evil Outbreak

Atari Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines Party **MONDAY, MAY 12 7:00 PM**



Clockwise from top left: Kristanna Loken, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Claire Danes, and Chris Hardwick



Atari, the French publishing house formerly known as Infogrames, did its part to bring some Hollywood star power to the pathetic geeks that populate E3. At Hollywood's Raleigh Studios, the company held a party to celebrate Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines, a multi-platform video game based on the upcoming motion picture. Most of the actors from the movie made appearances on the red carpet, including Claire Danes, Nick Stahl (who plays John Connors in the film), Kristanna Loken (the beautiful but deadly T-X Terminator), and Mr. "Who is

your daddy and what does he do?" himself, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Of course, Arnold fled the soiree about 20 minutes after his appearance on the red carpet; but Danes, Loken, and Stahl stuck around to rub elbows with the great unwashed. Also spotted in the crowd were *Shipmates* host Chris Hardwick, *News Radio* nutcase Andy Dick, *Crossing Jordan*'s Miguel Ferrer, and Kurtwood Smith (better known as Red from *That 70s Show*). Along with the customary free appetizers and open bar, Atari served up an exclusive look at the European movie trailer for T3, as well as some (not too impressive) footage of the game itself.



top ten
xbox games

1
Halo 2



2
Fable



3
StarCraft: Ghost



4
Counter-Strike



5
Deus Ex: The Invisible War



6
Ninja Gaiden



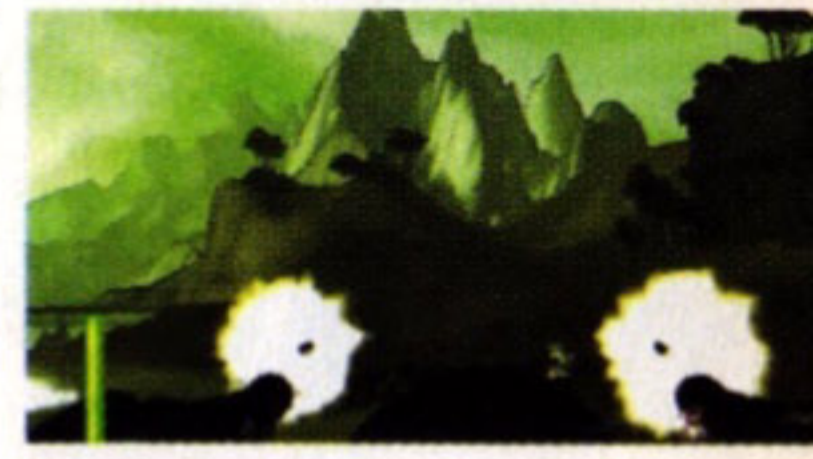
7
Freedom: Soldiers of Liberty



8
X-Men Legends



9
Armed and Dangerous



10
Full Spectrum Warrior



Honorable Mentions:

Breakdown, Dino Crisis 3, Project Gotham Racing 2, True Fantasy Live Online, True Crime: Streets of LA, Thief III, Advent Rising



Doom 3 (PC)



Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

Microsoft **MONDAY, MAY 12 7:30 PM**
Press Conference



"We're not waiting for the future. Xbox is creating the future now."

— ROBBIE BACH,
CHIEF XBOX OFFICER

In past years at E3, Microsoft clearly had something to prove. 2001 was the inaugural E3 showing for the Xbox – and it wasn't a good start. The company made up some ground at the next E3, thanks in part to its overt overtures to third-party publishers to prove that the Xbox could bolster an impressive enough lineup beyond its own Halo. This year, with the Xbox gaining ground in the console wars – but still a ways away from Sony – Microsoft seemed to be coming into its own.

Still, something is obviously troubling the company. The Xbox has yet to really deliver the killer slate of must-have titles that makes people buy a system. Therefore, this year's press conference was, thankfully, very game centered. Revealing the worst-kept secret in the industry, Ed Fries, vice president of Xbox game content, trotted out to announce that the talk of last year's E3, Doom 3 from id Software, was indeed coming to Xbox. While this demo was very impressive, it was likely from the PC edition, as the Xbox port won't be released for some time.

What followed was a collage of exclusive games, including presentations for Star Wars:

Grabbed by the Ghoulies – were underwhelming.

Microsoft's first-party lineup also featured some strong titles, such as Project Gotham Racing 2, Fable, Counter-Strike, and Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge. It would have been nice to see a high-profile surprise title that eclipsed the Halo franchise in terms of gamer interest, but, all in all, this system is amassing a solid software library. It is interesting to note that six of our 10 best games of the show are coming to Xbox – although you may be waiting until 2004 for a few of them.

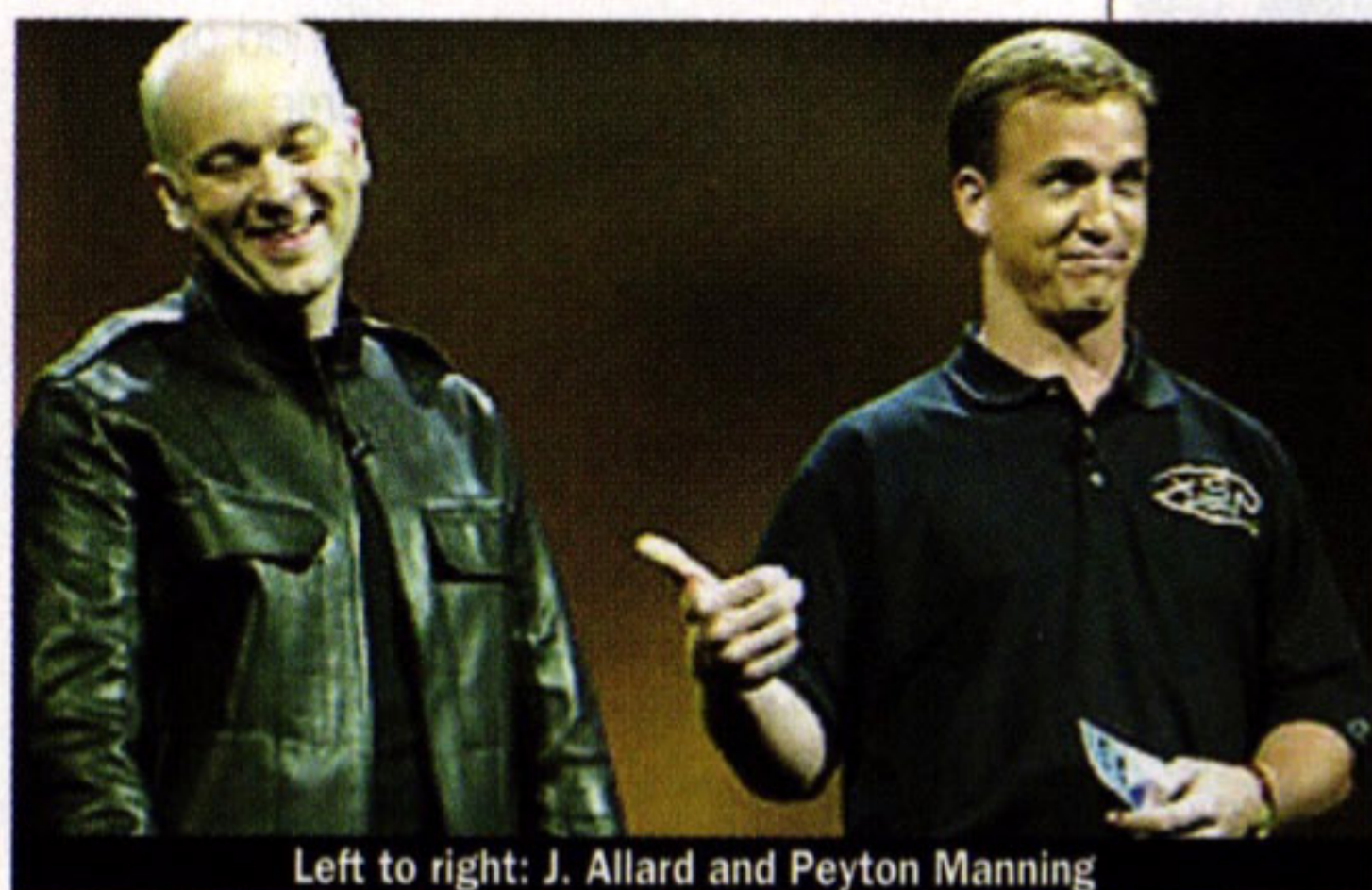
After entertaining the audience before the show with some mixed tunes courtesy of the upcoming Xbox Music Mixer program (which includes karaoke), J. Allard, the system's general manager, took the stage to announce some of the new Xbox Live features; including alerts, voice chat, and more community services. This extends to Microsoft sports games via XSN Sports [see *GI News*, page 18 for more], which was a great opportunity for J. Allard to introduce Xbox Live's *PeyDirt* – a man better known as Pro Bowl quarterback Peyton Manning from the Indianapolis Colts. What followed was a "trash-talking" exchange that proved that the QB is better suited to reading playbooks than cue cards.

So far, Microsoft had shown us some good things, but next came the real pay-off. Ed Fries triumphantly introduced the first in-game demo of Halo 2 [check out our preview on page 76]. It was stunning. For the first time during the conference, the hoots and hollers from the crowd weren't just emanating from the balcony, where Microsoft had planted its own people. This was

genuine applause, and for good reason. As the crowd recovered and went off in search of taxis, they left impressed by Microsoft's steady progress, but also dreaming of the franchise that still best defines the Xbox to gamers around the world – Halo. While it didn't hold any shocking revelations, the conference helped kick off what was Microsoft's strongest showing at E3 yet.



Star Wars: Republic Commando (left)
Project Gotham Racing 2 (right)



Left to right: J. Allard and Peyton Manning

Republic Commando, Level-5's True Fantasy Live Online, and Namco's Breakdown to name a few. In all, Microsoft claims more than 100 games will be online by E3 2004. What was most interesting in that deluge of games was how lackluster Rare's titles looked in comparison to some of the great third-party titles shown. The three at this year's show – Conker: Live and Uncut (an online title), Kameo: Elements of Power, and the debut of



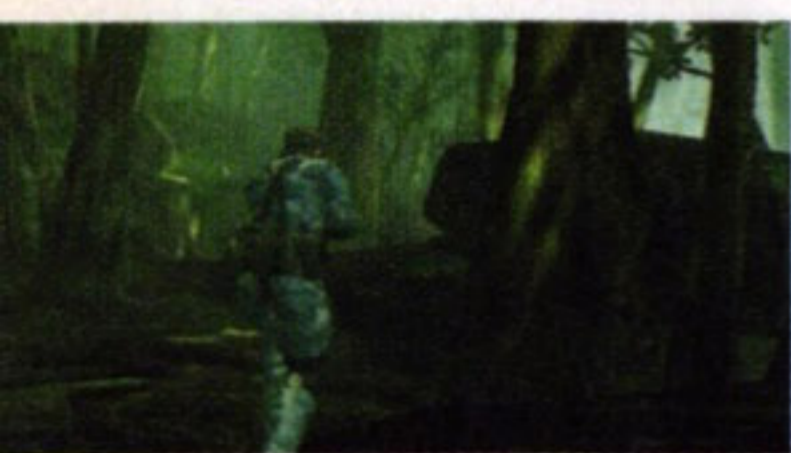
top ten ps2 games



1
Gran Turismo 4



2
**Tony Hawk's
Underground**



3
**Metal Gear
Solid 3: Snake
Eater**



4
SSX 3



5
**SOCOM II: US
Navy SEALs**



6
Spider-Man 2



7
Jak II



8
**The Prince of
Persia: The
Sands of Time**



9
**Resident Evil
Outbreak**



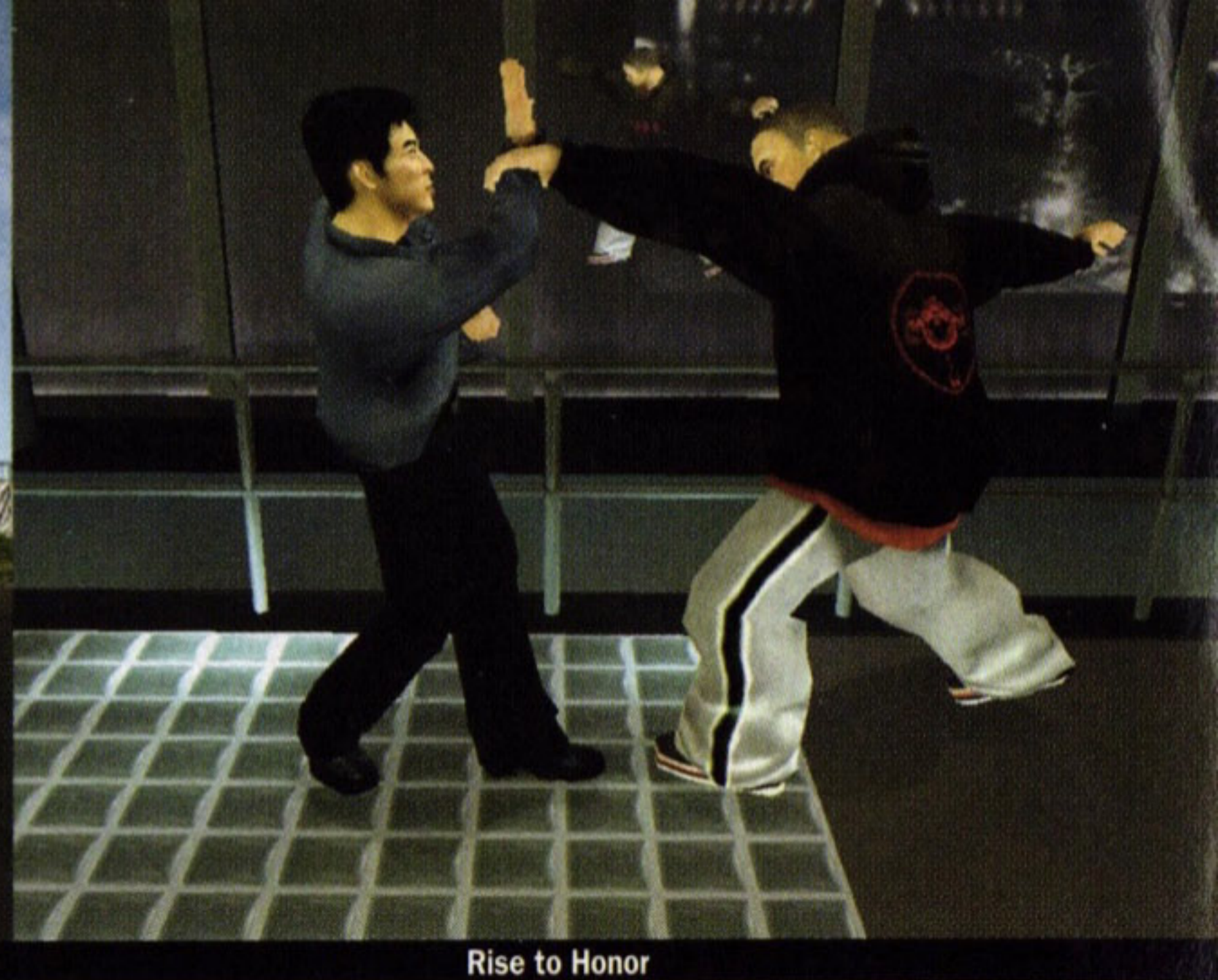
10
**Need for
Speed
Underground**

Honorable Mentions:

Monster Hunter, Castlevania: Lament of Innocence, Final Fantasy X-2, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Onimusha 3, Siphon Filter: The Omega Strain, Medal of Honor: Rising Sun



Gran Turismo 4



Rise to Honor

Sony **TUESDAY, MAY 13 9:00 AM** Press Conference



Sony's EyeToy in action



Industry legend Ken Kutaragi



Polyphony Digital's
Kazunori Yamauchi

Sony may not have the hearts of the hardcore gamer, but they certainly have a stranglehold on first place in the console market. As usual, the company held a pre-E3 press conference in order to drive that point home to the assembled press and retailers. In keeping with tradition, the day started off with a slide presentation by Kaz Hirai, the CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment America. Hirai went through an exhaustive series of facts and figures detailing the PlayStation 2's growth over the past year, its stable of blockbuster games, and the success of its recently released Network Adaptor.

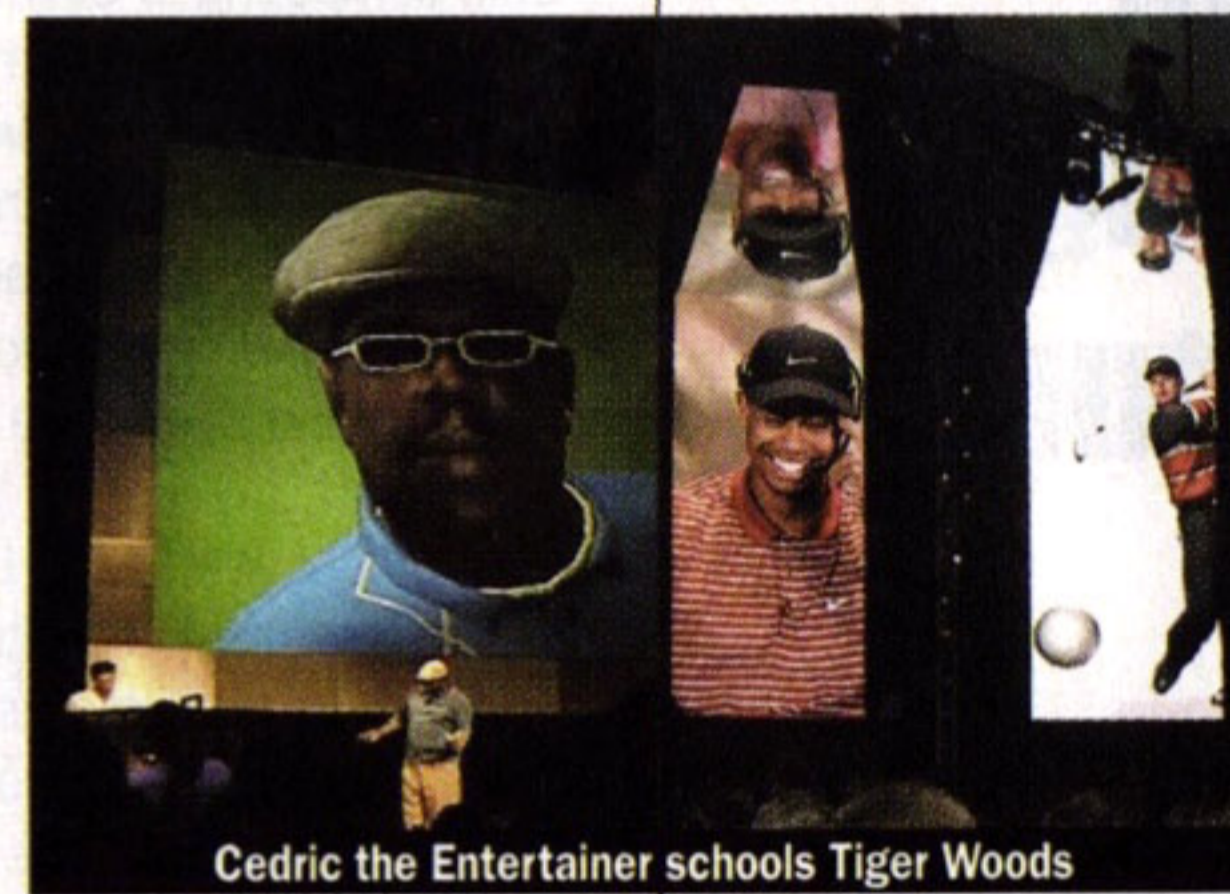
Perhaps sensing that the crowd was growing restless, the focus of the presentation switched to games, kicking off with an impressive video of the company's new Jet Li property, Rise to Honor. Sadly, the game appeared jerky and unpolished on the show floor, so let's hope that some much needed fine-tuning can be added before its release date.

Next up was Sony's "killer app," the highly-anticipated return of the Gran Turismo franchise. Polyphony Digital head Kazunori Yamauchi came onstage to introduce a video that traced the success of GT over the years and the nearly insane level of research and field testing that has gone into creating the latest edition. We fully expect GT 4 to add another 10 million units to the series, which has sold over 32 million since 1998.

After an announcement of a new Network Adaptor bundle and some improvements to the PS2 hardware [see *GI News*, pg. 18] came the conference's first, and strangest surprise: a motion-sensing USB camera attachment for the PS2, dubbed the EyeToy. [see *GI News*, pg. 25] It's certainly intriguing, but we'll have to wait and see if the EyeToy becomes anything more than a \$40 curiosity.

From there, it was on to online, at which point Sony sprung the news that EA Sports would once again only be available for Internet play on the PlayStation 2. Just as you could hear the wind going out of the sails of Microsoft's XSN network, EA head honcho John "Mr. Electricity" Riccitello grabbed the mic to host live demonstrations of no less than six EA Sports online titles, including Madden, FIFA, and NASCAR Thunder. Then, Tiger Woods appeared via satellite on one of the huge monitors. His challenger for the day would be none other than comedian Cedric the Entertainer,

who came out sporting golf attire that made us imagine Ben Hogan starring in *Superfly* (and matched his polygonal alter ego). After trading a bit of smack talk ("Don't get scared by that water splashing; I know you've been a little off lately," ribbed Cedric), the



Cedric the Entertainer schools Tiger Woods

Entertainer proved to be the master of the digital links, besting Tiger by a stroke.

While EA had provided the event with some much-needed entertainment value, the real fireworks would come from a soft-spoken, middle-aged man named Ken Kutaragi. CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment and the visionary behind the PlayStation, Kutaragi came up to deliver what was hands-down the surprise news of E3: Sony's entry into the handheld console market. Beginning with a slightly odd speech about the "new baby in the family," Kutaragi detailed his company's plans to release a disc-based handheld entertainment system sometime in late 2004. Based on the scant spec info [see *GI News*, pg. 18], the unit certainly sounds impressive, although it is not clear yet whether it will live up to Kutaragi's claims that it will be the "Walkman of the 21st Century." Either way, it was one of E3's only genuine shockers – all the more so for the tight lid that the company had kept on the secret project prior to the announcement. Count it as an exciting end to another strong showing by gaming's most dominant company.

top ten
gc games

1
Mario Kart:
Double Dash



2
Viewtiful Joe



3
F-Zero GX



4
Star Wars Rogue
Squadron III:
Rebel Strike



5
Soul Calibur II



6
Final Fantasy:
Crystal
Chronicles



7
Metal Gear
Solid: The Twin
Snakes



8
Resident Evil 4



9
Geist

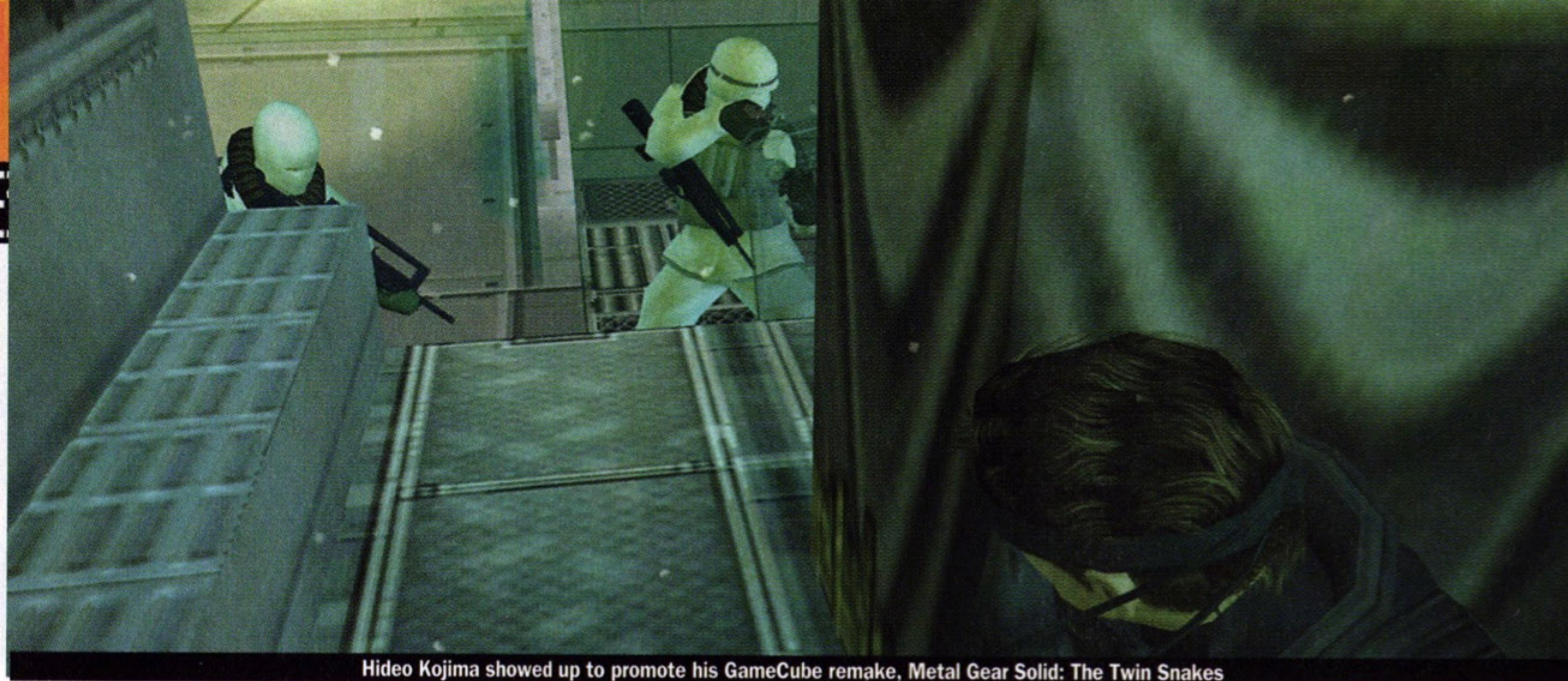


10
Pikmin 2



Honorable Mentions

Pac-Man, Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour, Kirby Air Ride, Beyond Good & Evil, Sphinx, Wrestlemania XIX



Hideo Kojima showed up to promote his GameCube remake, Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes

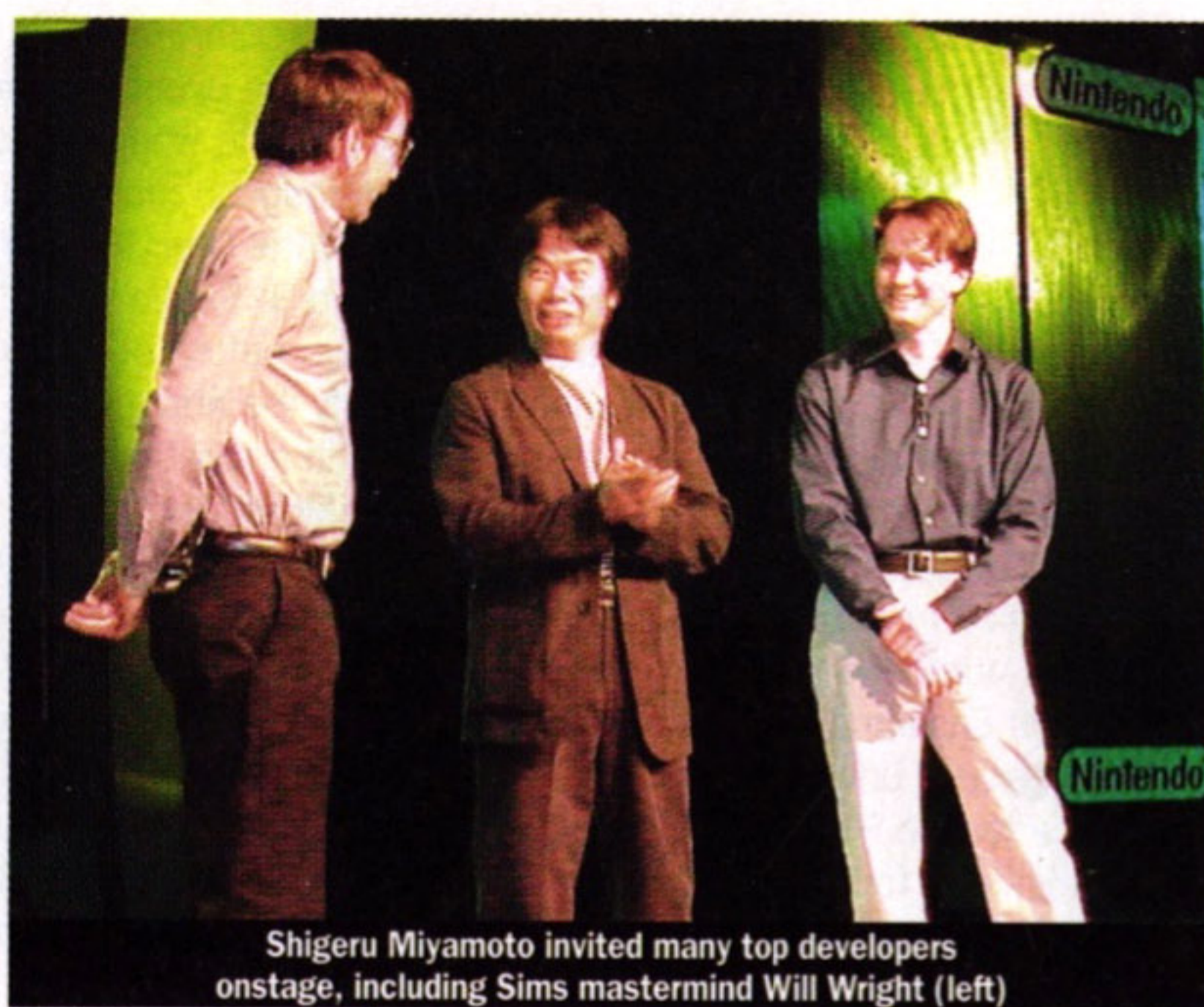
Nintendo **TUESDAY, MAY 13 11:30 AM**
Press Conference

Nintendo usually gets nothing but love from the fan boy contingent at their annual E3 press conference; but this year's show was a subdued, even slightly downbeat affair that didn't even manage to excite the faithful, much less the bitter, cynical industry types that were there to see what the long-running company had in store for the coming months.

Of course, it would have been hard to follow up last year's presentation, which heralded the return of Mario, Zelda, and Metroid; but there did seem to be a definite lack of focus on the part of the Japanese giant, especially in the face of an improved Microsoft and ever-dominant Sony. Nintendo VP George Harrison acted as the emcee for the event, starting out by detailing the company's strong March showing (the result of sales of GBA SP, The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker, and two new Pokémon titles), touting their familiar franchises, and humorously promising that Mario will "never start shooting hookers."

Up next was a montage of Nintendo first-party titles, including Pikmin 2, Mario Kart: Double Dash, Super Mario Advance 4, and Pokémon Coliseum. On cue, Nintendo director Satoru Iwata took the stage as expected. What wasn't expected was the candor with which he addressed the mistakes that the company has made in recent years. Many of Nintendo's much-publicized problems were addressed, from its rocky relationship with third-party publishers to the failure of high profile titles like Super Mario Sunshine and Metroid Prime to meet sales expectations. While it was certainly refreshing to see a Nintendo spokesman be so frank, the overall effect was a bit deflating for those hoping to see the company tout its strengths.

Things lightened up a bit during a spate of cameo appearances by some legendary game designers who joined Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto onstage. First was the one true highlight of the conference – a grainy video in which Capcom's Shinji Mikami showed off his upcoming Resident Evil 4. Shot to make it appear that Mikami was being held hostage in some undisclosed location, it came to an end with some stunning game footage followed by the campy survival horror master warning us, "Don't pee your pants!"



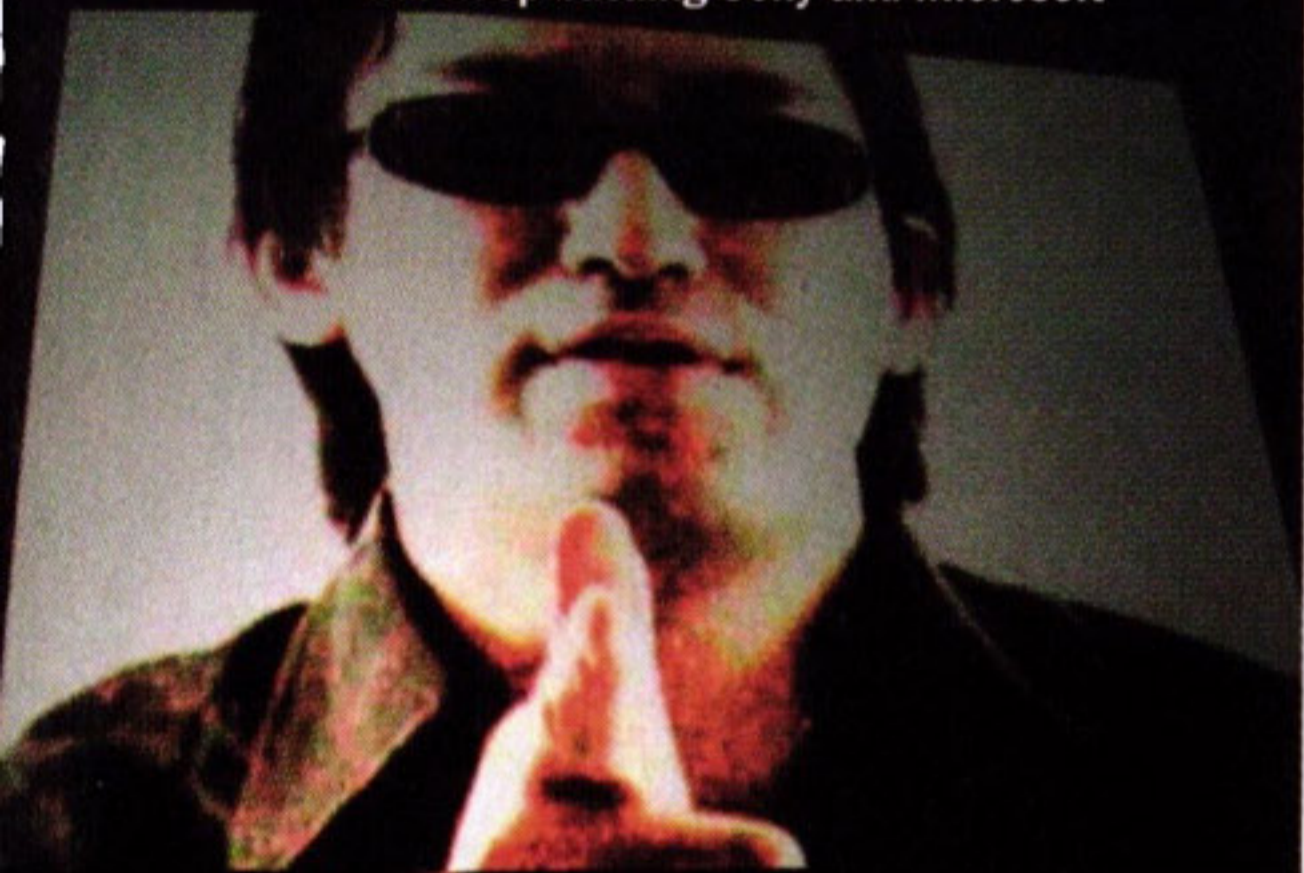
Shigeru Miyamoto invited many top developers onstage, including Sims mastermind Will Wright (left)

The geek star power got even greater as the show went on, as a veritable "who's who" of game development came to pay homage to the legendary Miyamoto. These notables included Sims svengali Will Wright, who announced an exciting new version of The Sims that would utilize the connectivity functions between the GBA and the GC; Pac-Man creator Toru Iwatani, who joined in a pick-up game of Miyamoto's new Pac-Man multiplayer title; EA's ubiquitous John Riccietello (via video); and, finally, Konami's Hideo Kojima. Kojima was there to introduce Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes, a reworking of the original PlayStation game that is being made in partnership with both Miyamoto and Silicon Knight's Denis Dyack.

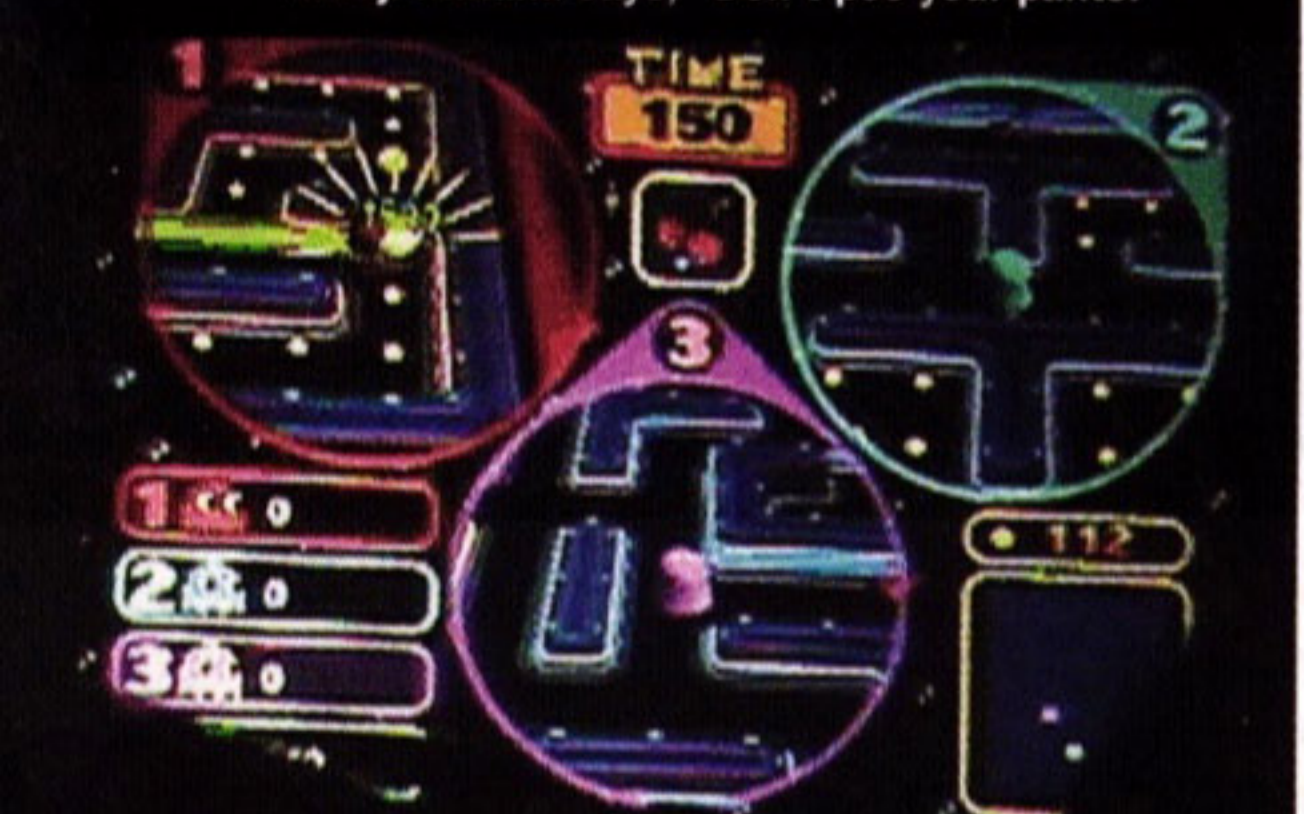
After yet another blitzkrieg of game clips, the show ended on a defiant, and uncomfortably defensive, note. Mr. Iwata took the stage again, and restated the company's commitment to the console business, vowing that "We will not retreat – we are staying in the console battle." He also promised that the next Nintendo console would release at or around the same time as the PlayStation 3. This was heartening news for Nintendo fans who were worried that the company might go the way of Sega. However, with a first-party lineup of games that seems to be one of its weakest in recent memory, it does appear that this might be a slow year for GameCube owners.



Nintendo's Satoru Iwata vowed that Nintendo will keep battling Sony and Microsoft

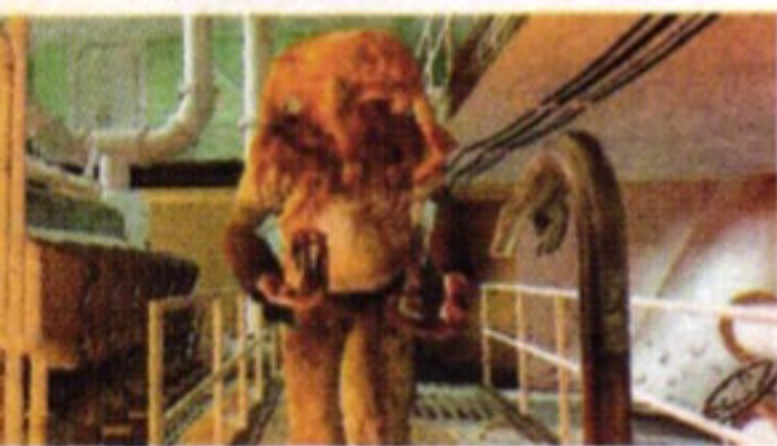


Shinji Mikami says, "Don't pee your pants!"



Many games were shown during the video, including this multiplayer Pac-Man game created by Miyamoto

top ten pc games



1
Half-Life 2



2
Doom 3



3
The Sims 2



4
Call of Duty



5
Deus Ex: The Invisible War



6
Star Wars: Jedi Academy



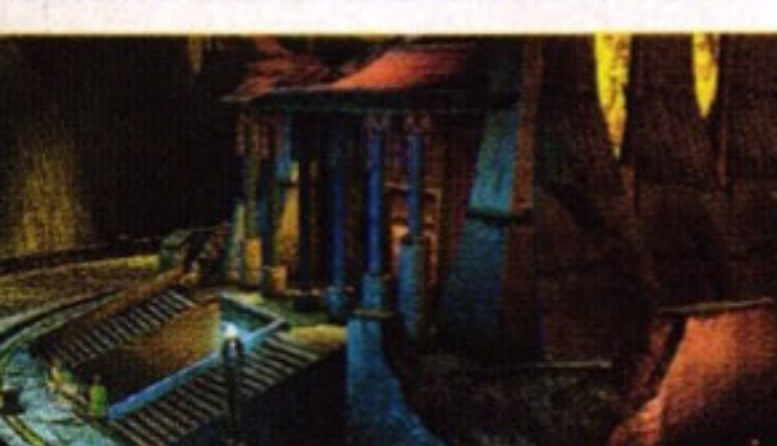
7
Rome: Total War



8
EverQuest 2



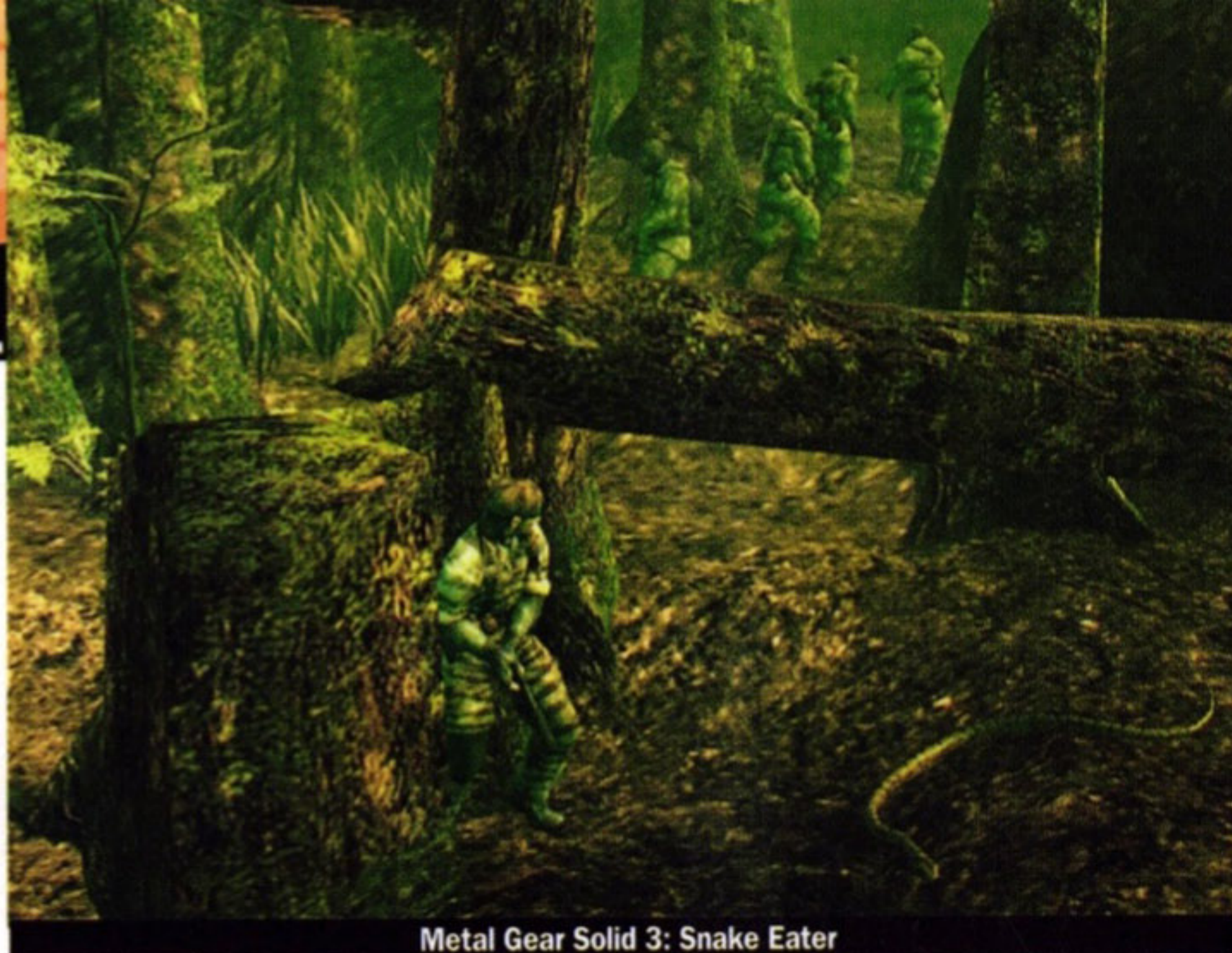
9
S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Oblivion Lost



10
Uru: Ages Beyond Myst

Honorable Mentions:

Vampire Masquerade: Bloodlines, Painkiller, Halo, Counter-Strike: Condition Zero, WarCraft III: Frozen Throne, Lords of EverQuest, Tron 2.0



Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater



McFarlane's Evil Prophecy

Konami **TUESDAY, MAY 13 2:00 PM** Press Conference

Three was clearly the operative number for Konami's press conference – and not just because the event spanned a daunting three hours. It was all worth it, when Hideo Kojima stepped before the crowd and introduced the public to his three new games: Boktai (GBA), Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes (GC), and Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater (PS2).

Having debuted The Twin Snakes trailer just hours before at Nintendo's briefing, the highlight of the afternoon was clearly the first glimpse of MGS 3 – a glorious affair which makes it three years in a row that Kojima has come to E3 and wowed the masses with a new Metal Gear trailer.

After a game demo for Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, a tall, slender figure dressed from head to toe in black bent over the podium. "I can't let Mr. Kojima outdo me after all," said Castlevania producer Koji Igarashi, speaking in English during his first-ever appearance at E3. To prove his resolve, Igarashi unveiled the first footage of Castlevania: Lament of Innocence for the PlayStation 2 – a 3D game he says has been turning over in his head for the last five years. Although results were mixed on the show floor, the gameplay footage proved that the series has lost nothing in exploring three dimensions.

Konami didn't come to E3 with any surprises in hand (yes, more Yu-Gi-Oh is coming your way), but even familiar franchises like Metal Gear or Castlevania more than managed to fan the flames of excitement by outdoing their predecessors.



Cy Girls

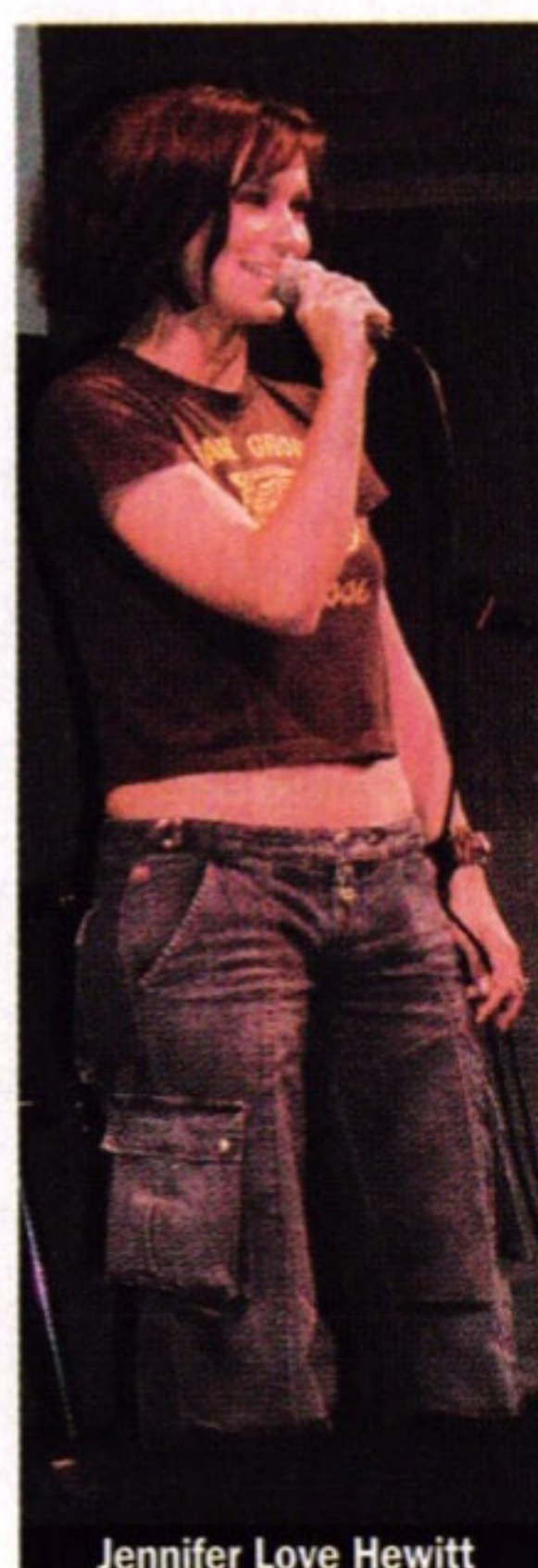
TUESDAY, MAY 13 5:00 PM

Konami Karaoke with Jennifer Love Hewitt



Castlevania's
Koji Igarashi

KONAMI



Jennifer Love Hewitt



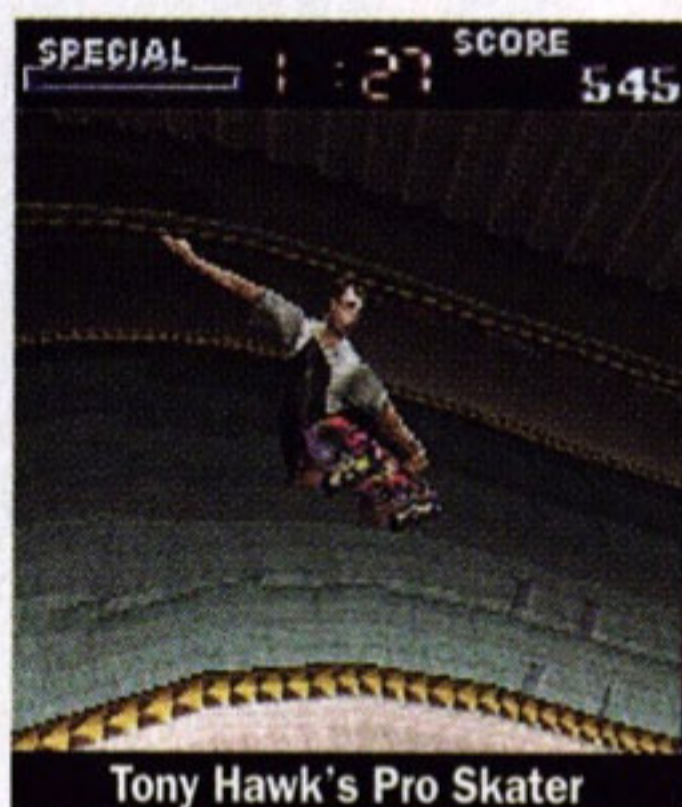
Karaoke Revolution

Despite the intermissions between games, the crowd was getting a little restless, even though Konami assured us that a surprise guest was in store. Having to wait for some technical issues to be sorted out on Konami's end only piqued the crowd's interest over the identity of this mystery person. When Jennifer Love Hewitt bounced on stage, all smiles, to sing for Konami's Karaoke Revolution (an upcoming PS2 music game), some wondered how her low-rider pants were staying put, while others thought, "Since when did she sing?"

Nokia TUESDAY, MAY 13 2:00 PM Press Conference

Here's a riddle: What has spoken word performances, breakdancing, stripping skater girls, and the most bizarre Scandinavian accents this side of Björk or Goldmember? Answer: the Nokia E3 press conference. This strange event was definitely too weird for words, but, as journalists, we'll do our best to capture the experience.

It started with a darkened stage, when suddenly a group of teens that must have escaped from some aborted MTV reality show hit the stage, accompanied by a poetry slam emcee who spewed some barely coherent ramblings about mobility, technology, and...stuff. At this point, much breakdancing ensued, and we were, for once, at a loss for words. Things finally calmed down

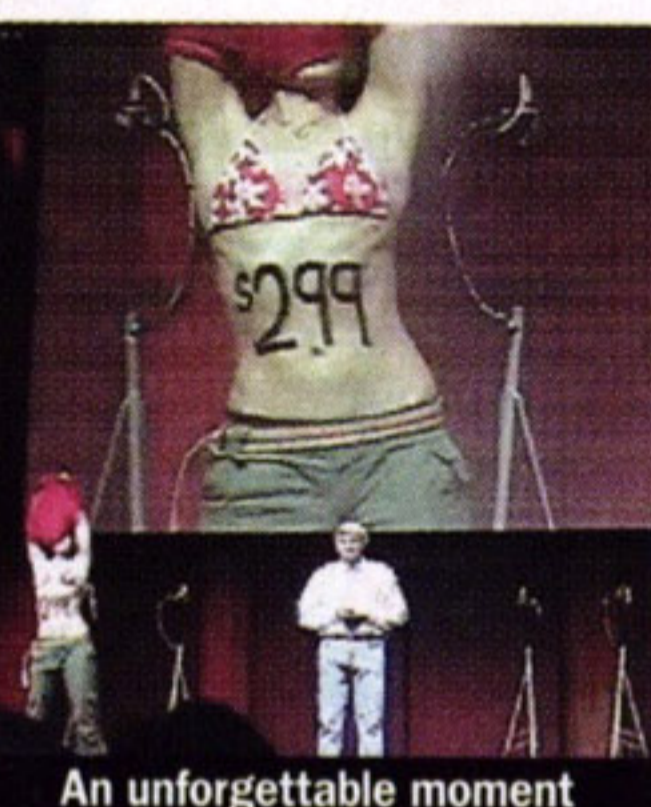


Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

a bit when the main presentation, which was hosted by Nokia executives Anssi Vanjoki and Nada Usina, got underway. The pair detailed Nokia's plans to enter the handheld fray with the N-Gage, and outlined the deals that they have in place with U.S. retailers and such top publishers as Ubi Soft, Activision, Sega, Eidos, and

THQ. Former id Software rock star John Romero (co-creator of Doom) was also on hand to detail his experience in crafting a version of Red Faction II for the handheld.

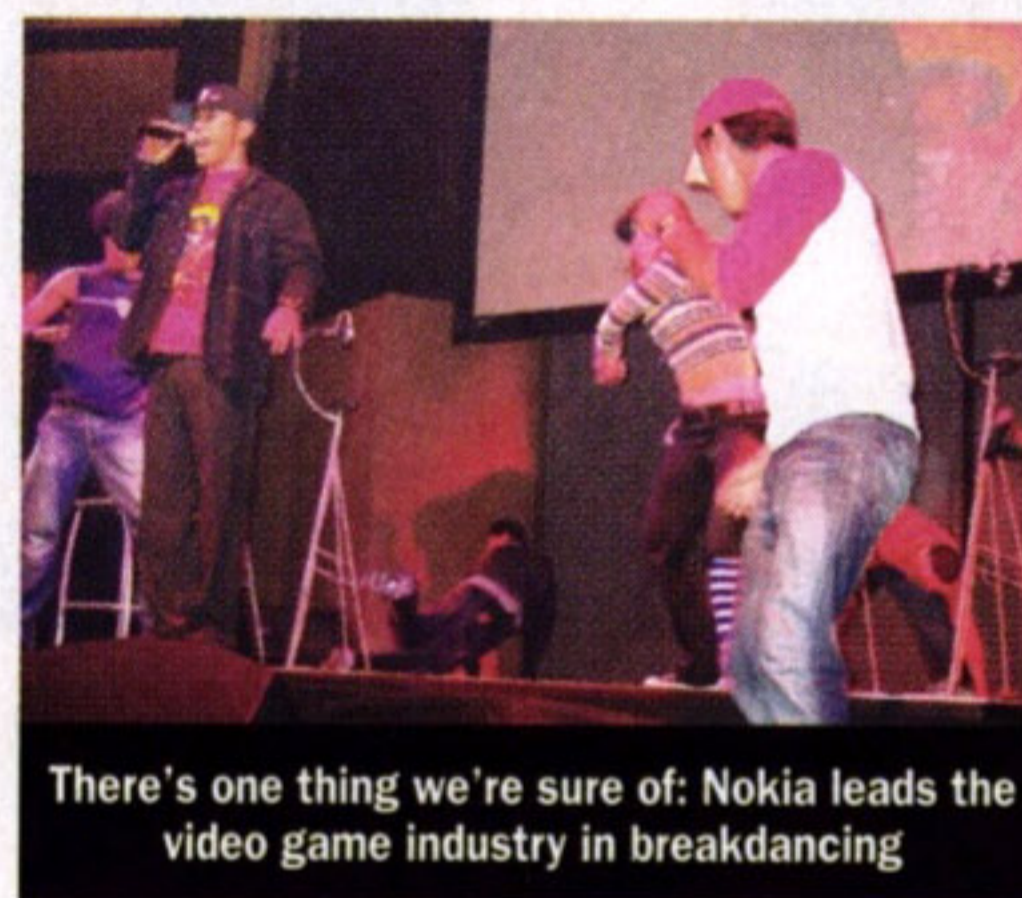
Of course, things couldn't stay normal for long, and sure enough, Nokia had one more surreal moment in store for us. After teasing the crowd about the N-Gage's price point, Vanjoki introduced a comely young lass who pranced around the tall Swede a few times before pulling off her shirt to reveal a bikini top and the number "\$299"



An unforgettable moment

written across her abdomen. That's a pretty penny for a handheld gaming machine, but there is the possibility that the unit will be offered at a discount through package deals from cellular service providers. This, coupled with the fact that N-Gage game carts will be offered for \$30-40, means it would be wise to start saving your nickels for the unit's early October release date.

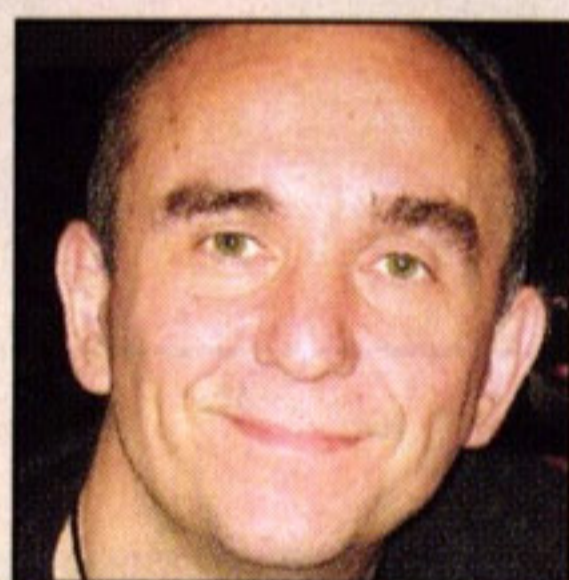
Yes, it was a bit odd, but the Nokia press conference was never boring or predictable – something that you can't say about too many E3 events. We're certainly hoping it won't be the last.



There's one thing we're sure of: Nokia leads the video game industry in breakdancing

WEDNESDAY, MAY 13 4:30 PM

PETER MOLYNEUX | INTERVIEW



"The game that I'm looking forward to seeing is Half-Life 2."

PETER MOLYNEUX
LIONHEAD STUDIOS

Peter Molyneux is the creator of the "god game," the head of Lionhead Studios, and the guiding force behind *Black & White II*, *Fable*, *The Movies*, and *B.C.*

How do you feel about E3? Is it useful to you, or just a lot of bread and circus? Do you enjoy it?

It's interesting because that's the third time today that I've been asked that question – and I've never been asked it before. Because, I think, [E3] is enormously hard work. Over the last 96 hours, I've probably had 9 hours of sleep. Everybody from Lionhead just looks ill because we've been working flat-out. You have to make the game look finished. That's the answer to your question: E3 is a tremendous effort, and you wish you didn't have to do it, but it's also the most exciting place to be. It's one of the reasons that I'm in this industry. I can't think of anything that would be as exciting as this.

Do you get a chance to check out other people's games at E3? Are there any you're particularly excited about?

Well, that's the thing. The first day of E3, you walk through the show and you think, "Oh Jesus, that looks amazing; that's incredible. We're going to have to go back and redesign." There are loads of amazing games. Then, the second day, you see the same games and you realize, "They're using the same trick we are" or "That's not real footage!" So, you start off being terrified, and realize that it's not so bad. The game that I'm looking forward to seeing is *Half-Life 2*. Interestingly, there seems to be a renaissance of PC stuff [at the show]. Also, I'd like to see *Gran Turismo 4*, *Halo 2*, and *Doom 3* again.

B.C. is obviously doing some pretty complex things in a prehistoric setting, and many of your games use aspects of history. How much did you research the time period?

Certainly, we've researched the way that the creatures interact. But, I've got a weird opinion of simulations. It's okay to do research, but sometimes that can get in the way of gameplay. The very fact that you have humans versus dinosaurs is [inaccurate]. This is a schoolboy's fantasy of a prehistoric world. The dinosaurs are bigger; because when I saw a T-Rex skeleton when I was a boy, I was really disappointed. I thought they were the size of skyscrapers.

Here's the inevitable question: When are *Fable* and *B.C.* coming out?

Well, all I can tell you is that we have 70 people working on *Fable* at the moment. I get up in the morning thinking of *Fable*, and I go to bed thinking of *Fable*. *Fable* is definitely going to be out sooner than everything else. I can't say a date, because every time I've ever given a date, I've been wrong. *Fable* will be before *B.C.*

top ten gba games

1
Super Mario Advance 4: Super Mario Bros. 3



2
Metroid: Zero Mission



3
Final Fantasy Tactics



4
Fire Emblem



5
Mario and Luigi



6
Pokémon Pinball



7
Sword of Mana



8
Onimusha Tactics



9
Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



10
Cima



Honorable Mentions:

Harvest Moon, Boktai
Not on Display: Mario and Donkey Kong,
Mother 1 & 2

TUESDAY, MAY 13 7:30 PM

Full Spectrum THQ at the Standard



Downtown LA's hotel, The Standard, is about as hip as it gets – and considering the city, that's saying something. What were we doing there? Well, even the hotel's omnipresent security was wondering that. THQ was showing off its true-to-life army simulator Full Spectrum Warrior (PC/Xbox). Even if you weren't a video game geek, once the game demo started rolling, it was easy to forget the space-age modernist furniture and \$8 bottled beers.

TUESDAY, MAY 13 9:00 PM

Nintendo Party

Nintendo isn't known for debauchery, but this year's fiesta at the Kodak Theater Complex blew the roof off the mutha, courtesy of pop-ska masters Reel Big Fish. While some of the more relaxed members of the crowd chilled at the bar, the rudeboys in attendance danced to humorous covers of a-ha's "Take on Me" and Lita Ford's "Kiss Me Deadly."



TUESDAY, MAY 13 9:00 PM

Vivendi's Pussycat Party

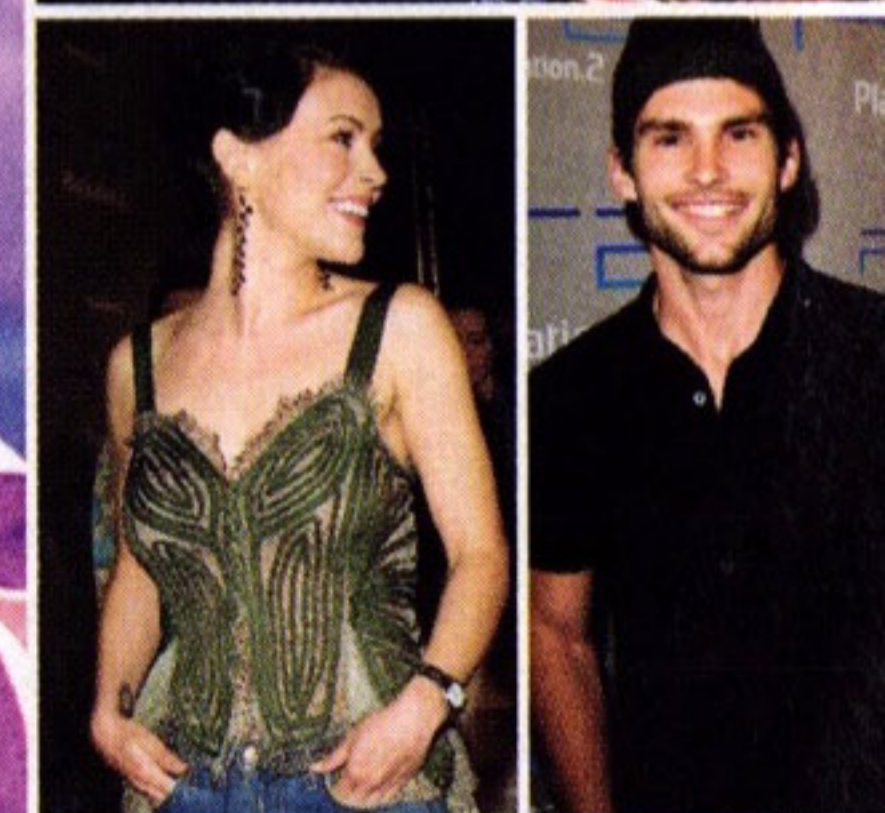
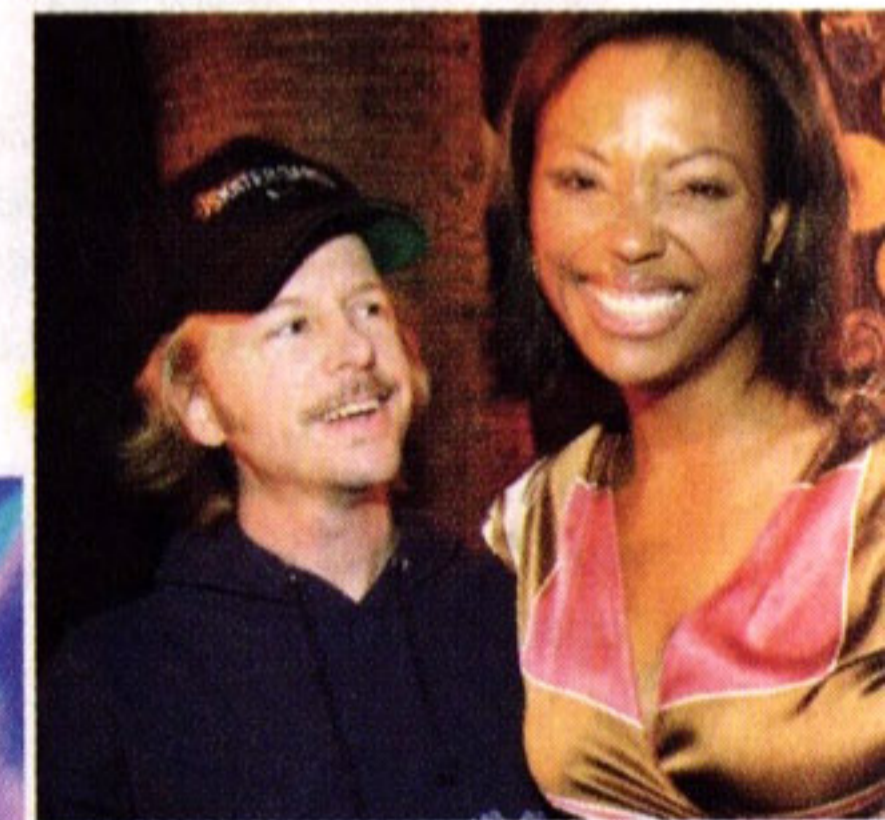
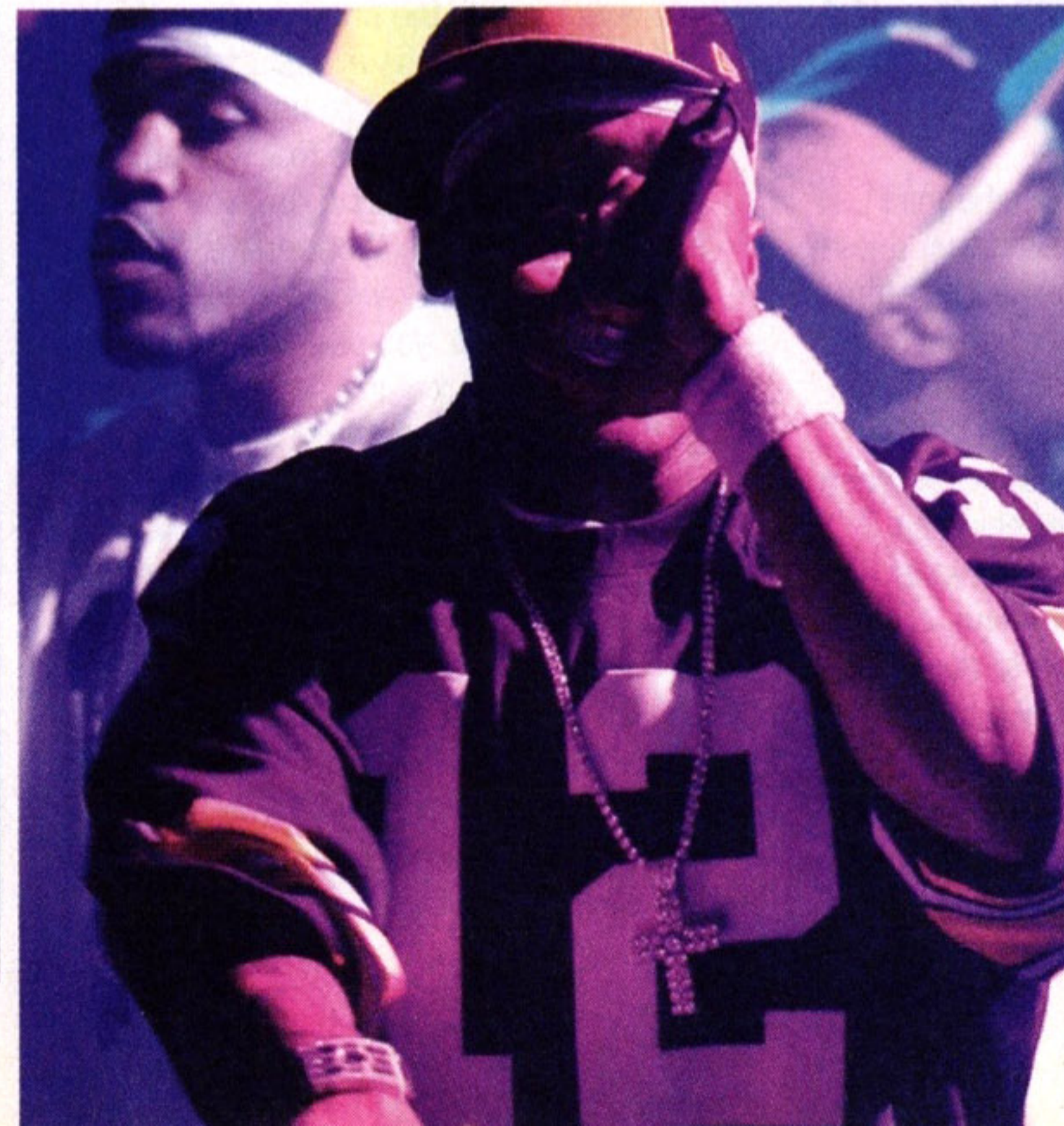
Vivendi might have *The Lord of the Rings* book license, but there was thankfully nary a hairy-toed hobbit in sight. Instead, the theme of the night was vice. Whether it was hitting the craps or blackjack table, or taking in the burlesque show (with an appearance by Carmen Electra), there were plenty of naughty things to be done. Ironically, the area featuring booths filled with Vivendi Universal games was restricted to many of the game journalists there. We didn't complain.



TUESDAY, MAY 13 9:00 PM

Sony Celebrity Party

Sony held another pre-E3 celebrity bash; unfortunately, we weren't invited this year. Not that the crowd, which included supermodel Gisele, The Rock, Alyssa Milano, and David Spade, cared one bit. In addition to free drinks and food, the beautiful people got buckwild to the sounds of America's gangsta of the moment, 50 Cent. Go shawty, it's ya birthday!





WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 9:10 AM
Sammy Unveils
Seven Samurai

When we heard that Sammy was making a video game out of Akira Kurosawa's seminal work *Seven Samurai*, we were giddy. Unfortunately, *Seven Samurai 20XX* is set in the future and not based on the movie. Still, gamers can look forward to some combo-rific action sequences when it releases in the fall. Says Hisao Kurosawa, the son of the film director and president of Kurosawa productions, "I don't ask too much of the producers who are making things, just because I'm an artist too, so I don't try to make too many comments."



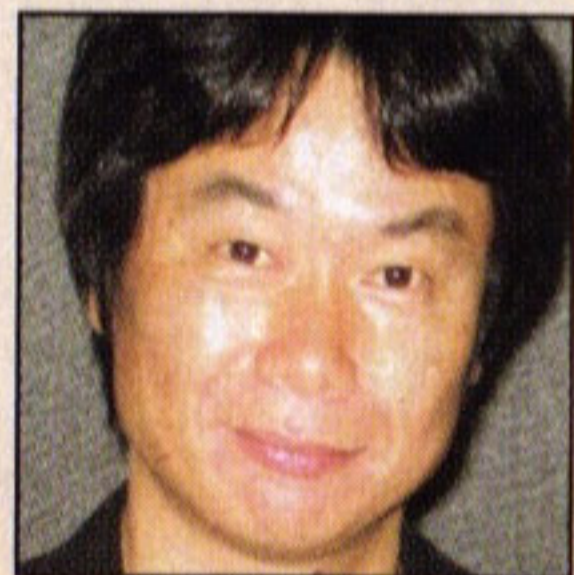
Hisao Kurosawa



Seven Samurai 20XX

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 10:00 AM

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO | INTERVIEW



"I try to focus on new ideas and new games."

SHIGERU MIYAMOTO
 NINTENDO

Mr. Miyamoto is the legendary creator of *The Legend of Zelda* and *Super Mario Bros.*

You oversee so many projects at once now, how do you balance your time between all of them?

It's true that I'm working on many different projects at one time. Really what I've been doing mainly is, if it's a sequel to an established game, leave that up to the director that's working on that game or is familiar with that series. I try to focus on new ideas and new games. *Pac-Man* is one that I'm fairly involved in lately. Of course, I'm working with guys like Mr. Kojima at Konami. Obviously, they are really talented, and I can just let go and let them work on what they are working on.

Zelda has received very good reviews from both the press and

gamers. When it was first shown, a lot of people doubted the direction you were taking with the game. Do you feel vindicated by its success?

We felt that it was great that people received it the way they did. For us, we had faith in it all the way through the project. Really, even in our situation, we don't know how it's going to be received by the end user until they have it in their hands. It's given us the courage to try a few new things differently and try some new challenges.

Is it likely that we'll see a sequel to the Wind Waker in this generation, similar to the way that Majora's Mask followed up Ocarina of Time?

Obviously, you're aware that we've reached an age where it's very difficult to create the basis for a game and a new game engine. So, we're always

looking for ways to take what we've developed and expand it in new ways. For this generation, we're looking not only to use this engine to create something of a similar vein for *Zelda*, like what *Majora's Mask* was to *Ocarina of Time*, but trying to provide *Zelda* in another way, with the *Four Swords*.

What are some of the games or game makers today that inspire you?

I can't really find an answer for that. Overall, the level of all games has really risen in the last few years, but, while people are doing a much better job creating the games, I think you're seeing fewer and fewer unique ideas. *The Sims* is a very unique idea – and I think *Animal Crossing* is pretty unique, too! [laughs]

views
from the floor

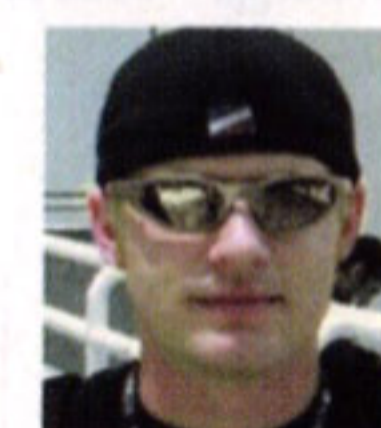
ADAM ARTHUR



"I was impressed with *Doom 3*, *Halo 2*, and I actually really enjoyed *Star Fox 2*. Otherwise, Nintendo's lineup didn't

impress me too much. I first came to E3 four years ago, and there was a lot of exciting stuff and a lot of things on the horizon. Now, companies are doing things that are cliché and there's very little original stuff; little that stands out."

MATT MCCLURE



"I'm pretty much a PlayStation 2 man, so I was playing *Rise to Honor*, the Jet Li game. That game was sick. I was

waiting for *SOCOM II* to come out. At first I thought it was just an expansion pack, but I guess it's a whole game, so I'm pretty excited about that. I was disappointed in the new *Syphon Filter*."

JOSH EVANS

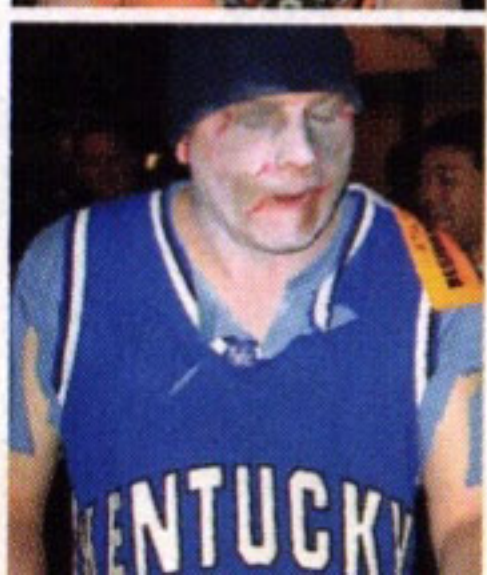


"I liked *1942: Secret Weapons of WWII*; I'm going to love that one, just because of the jet pack and giant wing.

For Nintendo, I love *Mario Kart* and *Star Wars: Rebel Strike*. Everything from Square – there's no doubt. Bandai, I'm enjoying the *Muscle* game, that's truly incredible [and] *Lupin the 3rd*. *Gundam Online*, that's going to be very intense. *Starsky & Hutch*, *The Great Escape*, there's so many titles this year to look forward to."

Capcom **WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 11:00 AM**
Zombie Mayhem!!

To celebrate the company's upcoming online title *Resident Evil Outbreak*, the company hired scores of aspiring actors and actresses to dress up in their Halloween best and storm the Capcom booth. Suddenly, the entire area was engulfed in staggering undead; most of whom played their roles with creepy conviction, leaving more than a few showgoers slightly spooked. Heck, these guys look almost as bad as most of the Game Informer staff did the morning after Sony's big party!



WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 11:00 AM

CHUCK LIDDELL | INTERVIEW



"...I just prefer to hit people."

Chuck "Iceman" Lidell is a UFC light heavyweight, with kickboxing as his main style. His next fight is in Las Vegas this month.

Are you a gamer?

I don't play as much as my brother and some of my friends who play all the time, but I like playing the sports games and the fighting games. We play Madden all the time. We play tournaments, and my brother kicks my ass – he plays too much, dammit. We used to play Halo in two different rooms. [While training] you're laying around a lot. I train a lot, but half of the day you're like this – [slumps in chair]. Playing video games is something to do. I'll

play video games, but I won't get up to do anything, because I'm too tired during training. We actually brought a 27" TV to play games in the room.

Are you seeing to it that you're kick-ass in TDK's UFC game?

I've been asking for that for years. No help, no love. The first game I gave them a pretty hard time because I had no submission skills whatsoever – my character couldn't do submissions in the first Dreamcast game. I said, "Look, just because I do strikes [in real life], doesn't mean I can't do submissions." I've been doing them for five years, I just prefer to hit people.

CHUCK "ICEMAN" LIDELL
UFC LIGHT HEAVYWEIGHT

Do you have a pre-match ritual?

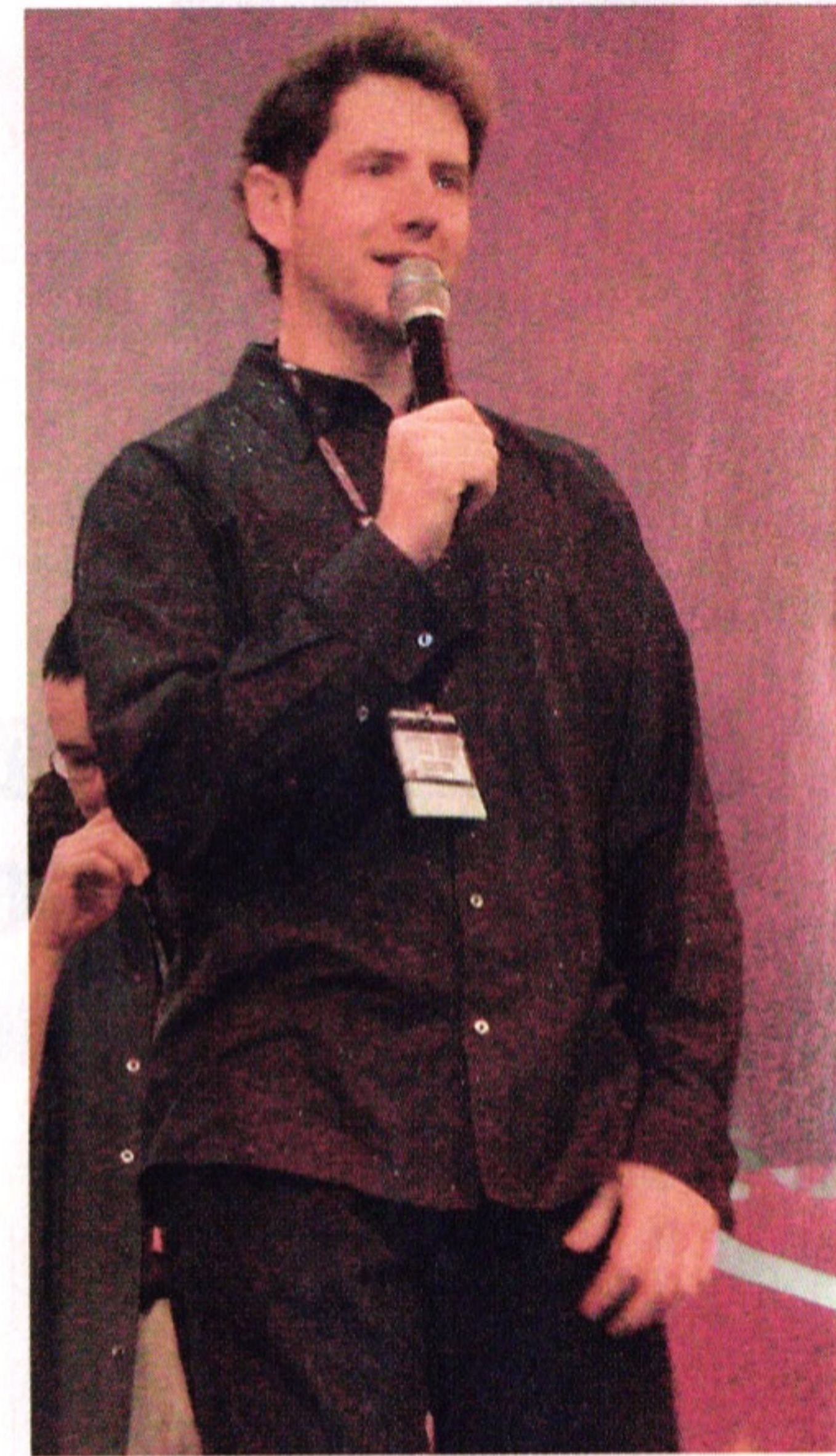
I'm known as Iceman because I'm so relaxed. By the time I get to the fight, after eight weeks of training, I just want to go out and fight – that's my reward for all that training. When we get in the ring, I want the announcer to shut up, get out of the ring, close the cage, then let's go.

If we were in a match, how would you take us down?

My first move would usually be a left hook, followed by my right hand [swings it toward head], and then [sweep] the legs. It's my favorite combination.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 11:00 AM

Jaime Kennedy
Runs the Show



WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 11:15 AM

FATA11TY | INTERVIEW



"I was always into sports my whole life."

Johnathan "Fata11ty" Wendel is one of the world's top online FPS champions. Over the past few years, he's won Quake tournaments around the world and has even been featured on MTV. That's right, kids – he makes money just playing games.

Is this your full-time job now?

Yeah, this is my full-time job. Like over the last three years, I've made \$150,000 just from gaming alone. Now I'm my own line of products with the Fata11ty brand name and my logo and we're going to do some high-end keyboards, some gaming mice, and maybe a bunch of other cool gaming stuff.

How many competitions a year do you enter?

It depends. You have your majors and then you have the smaller ones that you always go to. I would say for majors, there are probably five or so that I go to every year. But, that number's going

to grow a lot in the future. Next year I'll probably be going to maybe 12 or more. And I'll be going around the world to compete. I'm going to Paris next July to compete.

What was the first game that got you hooked?

I was always into sports my whole life. But I had new neighbors move in next door and they were also involved in sports, but also in computers. They introduced me to Wolfenstein 3D when I was 12 or 13. And Wolfenstein, it was like the first first-person shooter, and it was 3D. It was amazing. I was hooked. But then they added multiplayer, like LAN, on Doom and Doom II, I was hooked forever. Me and my friends would go over to their house and they had two computers. Back then, that was nuts to have two computers in your house. We had two computers LANned up and we would run network cable across the street just to play Doom and Doom II. After that, Quake came out and

JOHNATHAN "FATA11TY" WENDEL
FPS CHAMPION

I played that all through high school as a hobby.

How do you keep your edge? Do you practice like a regular athlete would?

If you're a professional athlete, you have to train and practice and live and breathe your sport. That's what I do. Like, before a tournament, two months before, I practice eight hours a day or more. When I'm not practicing that much, I still practice two to six hours a day, just to keep my edge.

Does it get harder for you, being so well known in the media? Because now, all these little kids are gunning for you.

Yeah, they've been gunning for me for the last three years. It's been an uphill battle in some ways, but I just keep my dedication and desire to win and be the best. Fortunately, I have the skills to keep winning.

Malibu's most wanted could be found at Nintendo's booth Wednesday morning. He was hosting a contest featuring various people from reality TV shows like *The Bachelorette* – you know, wannabe stars who wish they were most wanted.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 11:45 AM

id Software

Roundtable Discussion



The legendary John Carmack, from id Software, discusses the challenges of his latest masterpiece, Doom 3. The discussion was moderated by *Newsweek's* N'Gai Croal, who allowed the crowd to ask the designer questions regarding his past and present projects.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 12:00 PM

HIDEO KOJIMA | INTERVIEW

Hideo Kojima's distinguished credits include the Metal Gear series, Zone of the Enders, and Snatcher.

Have you been on the show floor?

No, I've been watching the EA screen from this room...

In the MGS 3 trailer, Snake's eating snakes. Is there a theme there?

There definitely is something I want people to retain in their hearts from the theme, but I really can't tell you what the theme is, so I can't say. [As for eating animals] It's not much of a thematic or metaphorical thing.

Does the constant cycle of new game hardware frustrate you?

Actually, I don't think the cycle of five years is that bad. What we do is, when a new console comes out, we never think of what's coming next. We focus on that one project and do whatever we can do. We don't try to save anything. It's like buying a new car every five years, there's just a cycle there.

In MGS 3, how is stealth different with the open forest?

First of all, there's sound. For example, if you make a small noise it will be stronger element in stealth. And then there's camouflage – this plays a big role.

How did the Nintendo deal for The Twin Snakes come about?

It was about a year and a half ago. It wasn't really Miyamoto, it was Nintendo who approached me about an MG game. If it's a request from Nintendo where Miyamoto works, we can't really say no.

Tell us about working with Silicon Knights for The Twin Snakes.

They are one of the few teams in the world that are very sincere about video game creation. When we got together for a dinner, we discussed our feelings about games, especially those of Denis Dyack, the president. He and his men are Canadian, but they really understand the Japanese mentality. If the Japanese are samurai, then they really are, literally, knights. So we share that code of chivalry.



“As a game creator, I guess I have to meet the needs of those fans.”

HIDEO KOJIMA
CREATOR OF
METAL GEAR

What are your thoughts on online games? Would you put deathmatch in MG?

As a game creator, I guess I have to meet the needs of those fans. I guess one thing they want is deathmatch, just fighting each other, but I personally don't enjoy online games where you don't see each other, but are basically just fighting each other. That's violence, really.

What about a more cooperative move like Resident Evil Outbreak?

Let me tell you about my own online zombie game. I've already explained this to the Capcom guys many times. You register to be a zombie hunter in the game, in Raccoon City. But if you get bitten, you become a zombie – you can no longer control your own character's eyes, but you can still see through your own character. You have no control over it, but you'll be charged the money. That's why you re-register as another zombie hunter trying to kill yourself and others, because if you do not kill that one zombie, then you are going to have to keep paying for it.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 1:30 PM

Buena Vista Games Hosts Tron Reunion

If there is one thing that E3 has a lot of, it's *Tron* dorks (Kristian, we're looking at you). The good folk of Buena Vista Game (formerly Disney Interactive) gave those guys just what they were dreaming of with a brief reunion of the original *Tron* cast and directors. Stars Bruce Boxleitner and Cindy Morgan were on hand, as well as director Steve Lisberger and artist Richard Taylor. As the upcoming game, *Tron 2.0*, played on several video monitors, the foursome signed autographs and fielded questions from the crowd. Lisberger sung the praises of the game, commenting, "These guys really got it. They were really into the movie. I think they did a phenomenal job. They took advantage of the scope and the colors; the glow effects and costumes look great. I couldn't be more pleased." Meanwhile, Boxleitner hoped that the game would aid in efforts to launch the long-awaited *Tron* sequel. "I believe that this should be a big motion picture again," he said. "If this game does well enough, I guarantee you that it will be. That will be the ultimate irony – if the game causes enough interest to do the movie again."



Electric Playground's Tommy Tallarico interviews Cindy Morgan



Steven Lisberger

Bruce Boxleitner

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 2:30 PM

JORDAN MECHNER | INTERVIEW

Jordan Mechner is famous for virtually inventing the action/adventure genre with *Prince of Persia*. He was at E3 to talk about the next-gen reinvention of the series, *The Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*.

Let's talk about *The Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time*. How do you go about creating a game that meets the expectations of today's audience, while maintaining the spirit and strengths of the original?

The challenge of a 3D game is how do you get the fluid gameplay that was so much fun in the old 2D games? Games today look beautiful – that's a given. But the thing about *Prince 1*, at the time, was that it gave you the feeling that, through the controller, you could do whatever you wanted. Like you were playing a hero in an action movie, you could have those kind of suspenseful narrow escapes. If you missed a ledge, you could grab on; if it fell away, you could jump. You could save yourself in unexpected ways. So, to map that into a 3D world,

that was a big hurdle, which this team actually found a way to do. That's what sold me on this project.

How did you get involved with *Sands of Time*?

Well, Ubi Soft approached me two years ago, wanting to do *Prince of Persia* for next-gen consoles. To prove that this was cool, their Montreal team had done an animated demo showing the kind of gameplay they had in mind. Just seeing that gave me the kind of thrill I had felt on the old Apple II. The way they did it is they made levels that are truly playable in three dimensions. When I signed on to write the story and screenplay for this game, I was at that point a gameplay consultant for this project. But, from writing the story and seeing how cool this was becoming, I got more and more involved to the point where now I've basically joined the team until the end of the project.



"...it wasn't really until Tomb Raider that I realized how influential I had been."

JORDAN MECHNER
CREATOR OF
THE PRINCE OF PERSIA

Did you realize at the time how influential *Prince of Persia* was going to be? Because, it really was a 2D template for the whole Tomb Raider genre...

I think it wasn't really until *Tomb Raider* that I realized how influential I had been.

What did you think of *Tomb Raider*?

At the time, I thought it was cool. It had a lot of the *Prince of Persia* moves set with a female character. Since *Tomb Raider* did that, the challenge has been how do you take the next step? The question remains: Where's the fun now? We know that it's 3D, we know it's going to look good. How do we get that same amount of fun that we had in 2D? [The reason] I'm so excited about *Sands of Time*, is that they've done it.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 3:00 PM

MIKE GRASSO | INTERVIEW

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 3:00 PM



"I actually work a Rainbow Six unit for the federal government..."

MIKE GRASSO
FEDERAL AGENT

Mike Grasso is a federal agent who works as a consultant to *Red Storm's Tom Clancy series*.

Tell us about your background in law enforcement.

I was in Tactics Training for the LAPD, which is the instruction arm of SWAT. I am still active. I actually work a Rainbow Six unit for the federal government.

With *Red Storm*, do you make sure that the game is accurate based on tactics and weapons that you would really use?

Under normal circumstances, that's what I would do. But Ubi Soft allows us to actually work together throughout the whole game. All the equipment and all that stuff, if they need a weapon, I go get it from one of my contacts and we take a look at it and play with it. That gives them a feel for everything. In the game, when you look through night vision equipment, that's because the guys got to look through real night vision equipment.

Over the past year, there has been a lot of controversy about violence in video games. As a law enforcement officer, how do you feel about games like that?

You know what? I don't pay attention to games like *Grand Theft Auto* because they have no moral value. The only reason that I work with the Clancy titles is because they have moral value. That's what's nice about these games: You have a set of rules. You don't just go in and shoot everybody. If people give up, you have to take them into custody.

A lot of kids have the perception that they could easily step into a military situation based on video game experience. How do you feel about that?

I get that all the time. I tell them, "You know, if I met you on the street and you had a mouse in one hand and a keyboard in the other, I'd be scared!" [laughs]

DOA Fashion Show Frenzy

Wow. You really couldn't ask for more from Tecmo (the company that puts the "T" in T&A). Not only does it have an absolutely stunning set of beauties prance down the catwalk, but it backs it up with some great games. The company showed off both *Dead or Alive Online* [see *GI News*, page 24 for more] and the first gameplay footage from *Ninja Gaiden*.



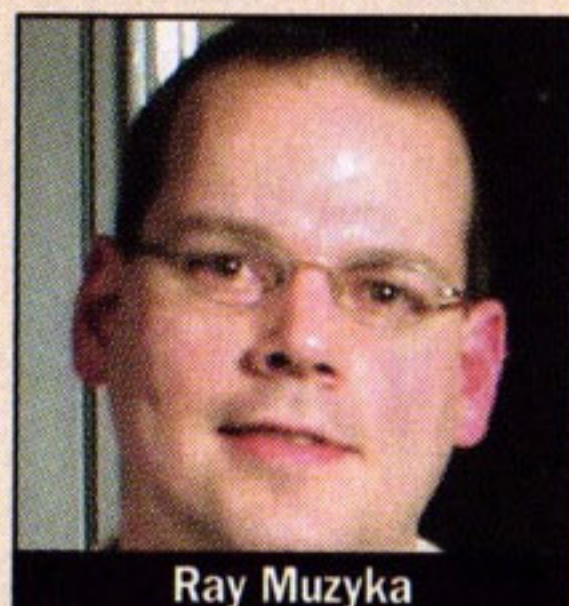
Ninja Gaiden



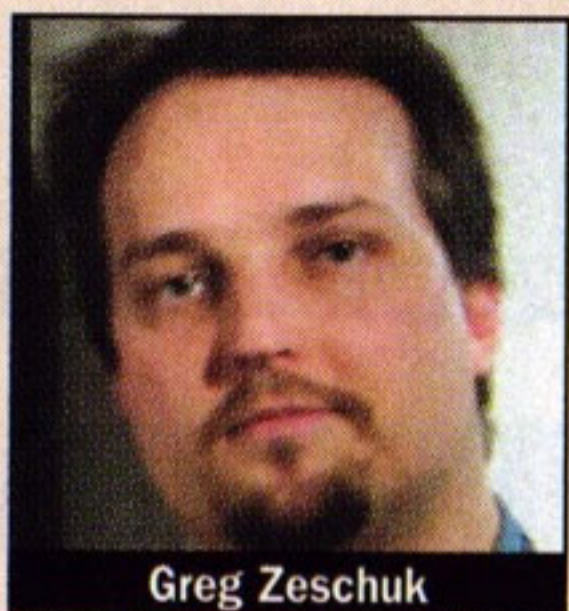
WEDNESDAY, May 14 3:30 PM

BIOWARE | INTERVIEW

WEDNESDAY, May 14 3:30 PM



Ray Muzyka



Greg Zeschuk

"...We've got some tricks up our sleeves..."

RAY MUZYKA
GREG ZESCHUK
CO-CEOS BIOWARE

Doctors Ray Muzyka and Greg Zeschuk are joint CEOs of Bioware, and have spearhead titles like *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic* and *Neverwinter Nights: Shadows of Undrentide*.

What have you seen on the floor that you liked?

Dr. Greg Zeschuk: I was actually quite impressed with *Prince of Persia*. That looks quite good. Sony has a lot of tremendous stuff. No really big surprises, though. I went through Nintendo's booth, and there weren't any real surprises. The one title that we did see that's quite unbelievable is *Half-Life 2*. It's clearly the game of the show.

Who inspires you in the industry?

Dr. Ray Muzyka: The guys out of Japan you have to have respect for: Miyamoto, Naka, Kojima, Suzuki, it goes on and on. And in North America there's tremendous developers here as well. I mean, the stuff we saw at Valve was inspiring. I personally have a big stack of things, GBA, Nintendo, Xbox, PS2, PC, all different piles just waiting to be played. I'm just looking at them every day when I come home, but I usually play [*Knights of the Old Republic*].

Were there changes made to *Knights* since last year?

RM: We weren't satisfied with the combat system last year. Around the fall, we started to realize that it wasn't coalescing the way we wanted. And at Bioware, we tend to be pretty stubborn and everything has to be perfect. Around December, we actually redid the whole combat interface from scratch. We're really happy with the system now, but it took many months of hard work by the team to pull it together.

Do traditional pen & paper D&D fans dig *Neverwinter*?

GZ: The real testimony to *Neverwinter*'s success is the number of modules, it's like 2,500, and there's more going on every day. New tile sets, new monsters, etc. In a sense, it's really a well-kept secret within the industry. People always remember *Neverwinter*, and say, "Yeah, it's very modable," but they don't really recognize what's going on with it.

RM: Journalists and stuff are starting to notice that, "Wow, this is actually the most modded game ever made," and it is. The creativity of the fans has just been tapped. Some of the modules are better than the stuff we've done. So it's fun for us to be able to load *Neverwinter* and download the top-rated modules, and it's just fun to play them. But, we've got some tricks up our sleeves for *Shadows of Undrentide*.

Ethan Embry Reps *For Wolfenstein*

Ethan Embry, who spends his days on *Dragnet* patrolling make-believe Los Angeles with the guy that played Al Bundy on *Married With Children*, stopped by the Microsoft booth to referee the rousing Xbox Live championships of *Return to Castle Wolfenstein: The Tides of War*. As an added bonus, we've also included this shot of N-Sync's Lance Bass who was there for no particular reason at all, just being his cute self! We even got an interview. Here it is:

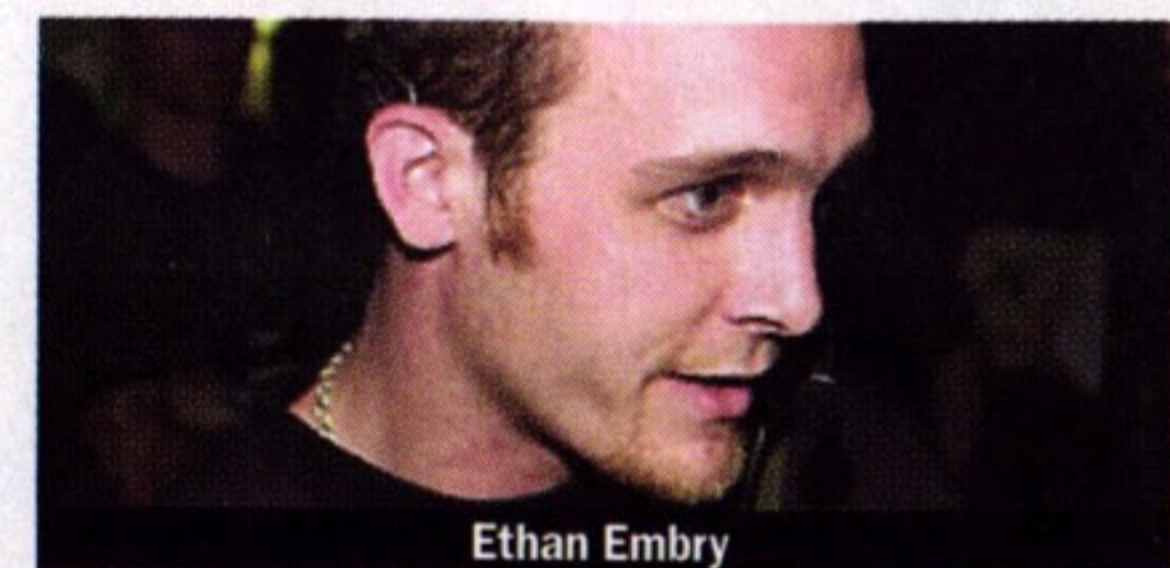


Lance Bass

"Hey Lance, did it hurt?"

"Did what hurt?"

"When you fell out of heaven, silly!"



Ethan Embry

WEDNESDAY, May 14 3:30 PM

KAZ HIRAI | INTERVIEW

Kaz Hirai, president of Sony Computer Entertainment America, has helped guide the company to being the biggest console maker of the last 10 years.

Obviously, the big news of the show is the announcement of the PSP. Why did you decide that now was the time to enter the handheld market?

We felt the technology curve was at a point where we could bring something out in a portable format that would have some compelling entertainment content. With 1.8 gigabytes on the Universal Media Disc and MPEG4 compression technology, we'll be able to pack a lot in there. We'll probably be able to pack close to two hours of full-motion video on a disc.

Technically, we probably could have done it earlier, but we didn't get into this business to copy what other people are doing. We wanted to revolutionize the way things are done – we did it with PSone and PS2 – and I think that the stars aligned at this point in time to give us the confidence to say, "We can really change the way that business is done in the portable handheld market."

What about connectivity between the PSP and PS2 or PS3?

Well, there's no such thing as a PS3! [laughs] Between PSP and PS2 – definitely. There are

a number of things we can do from a technology standpoint. As Ken [Kutaragi, creator of PlayStation and CEO of Sony] mentioned the PSP has a USB port, as does the PS2; so the connectivity is right there.

Last year, you famously declared, "The console wars are over." This year, you reiterated that point. Do you ever worry that you will come off as too cocky or overconfident?

I think that people call that rhetoric or chest-puffing; but, at the end of the day, you look at the hard numbers of where the PlayStation 2 is at: 51.2 million worldwide. Then look at the estimated numbers of where the other platforms are – which is hard, because they don't talk about numbers that much to begin with – [you'll see] that we are in a very comfortable leadership position. We felt that the console wars were over last year, we declared them over, and we just wanted to make sure that people knew it. The numbers speak for themselves.

Assess the job that your competitors are doing. What are they doing well, and what are they not doing in comparison to Sony?

It would be a lie to say that I don't look at their press releases or their strategies to try to figure out what they're going to do. But, it doesn't really make that much of an impact on the strat-



"We felt that the console wars were over last year..."

KAZ HIRAI,
PRESIDENT
SONY COMPUTER
ENTERTAINMENT
AMERICA

egies that we have for the PlayStation 2. I can tell you that, based on the software, the folks at Xbox don't have enough titles that are compelling to the Japanese market, and perhaps vice versa for GameCube in the U.S. Just because the installed base numbers seemed to be skewed towards one platform in one territory and another platform in the other. I think both platforms are struggling with getting software that is universally appealing.

Assess the state of the industry. How healthy is it? Are there any threats to our future well-being that you foresee?

As you can see with what's happening in the music industry, it's basically been decimated by downloading and piracy. It's basically gotten to the point where people think that music should be had for free. I think they were hit hardest because it's the least data-intensive media industry. The music industry got hit, I have a feeling that the motion picture industry could get hit next, because it's a linear entertainment experience, the amount of data isn't as much [as games], and the security copyright protection systems are not as robust. Overall, I think that if we don't stay ahead of the piracy and counterfeiting curve, it's going to have a negative impact on the game industry.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 4:30 PM

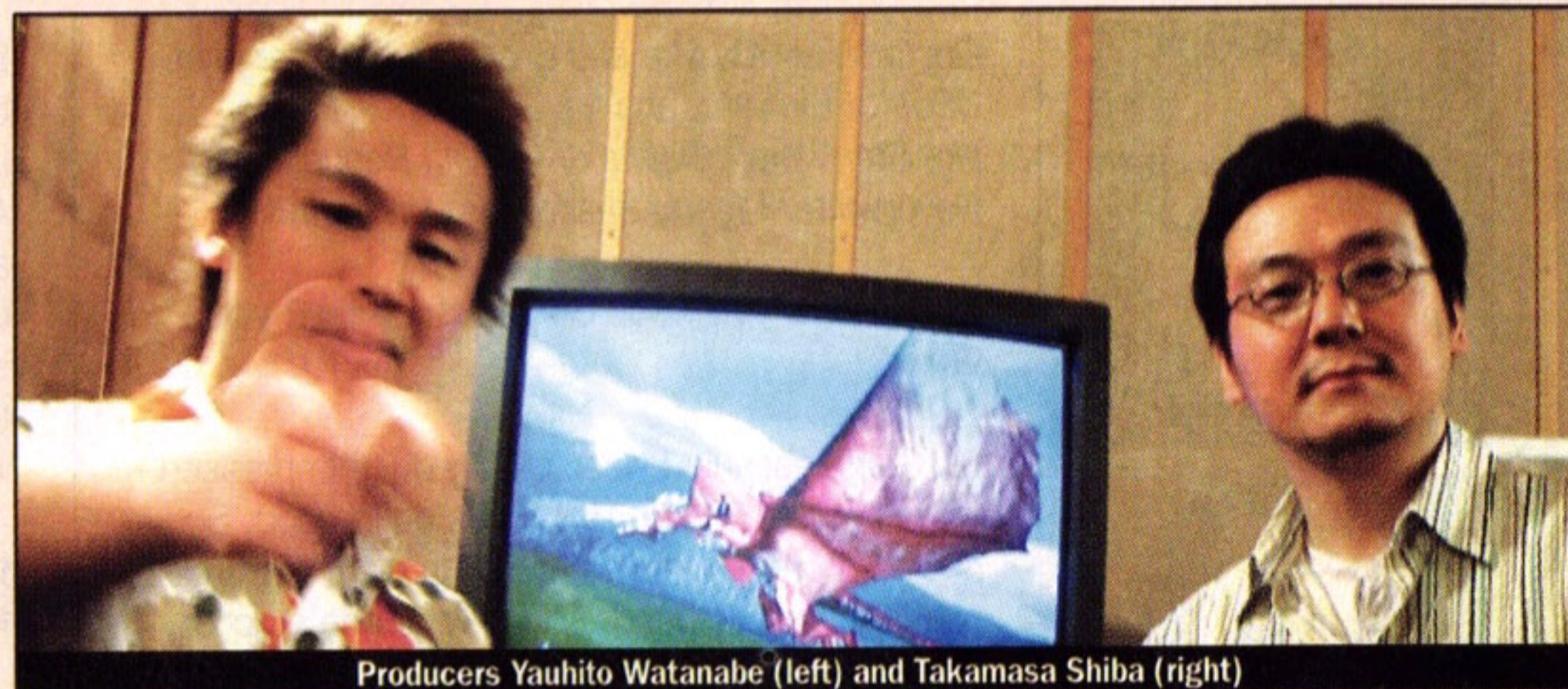
Vanessa Carlton

Amid all the blaring techno and confusion of the show floor, Midway was nice enough to treat everyone to a respite courtesy of piano songstress Vanessa Carlton.



WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 4:30 PM

DRAKENGARD | INTERVIEW



Producers Yuhito Watanabe (left) and Takamasa Shiba (right)

“We already know something, but it’s a secret!”

YUHITO WATANABE
TAKAMASA SHIBA
PRODUCERS, DRAKENGARD

Formerly known as Drag-On Dragoon, *Drakengard* is one of the first results of the merger of Square and Enix.

What games or game makers inspire you?

Watanabe: I like [Shigeru] Miyamoto because of the games, as well as the way he talks, he’s really funny! [laughs] I also like Mr. Chiba, who did *Dragon Warrior*, as well as Sakaguchi [Hironobu Sakaguchi, director of the *Final Fantasy* series].

What did you think of Sega’s *Panzer Dragoon Orta*? Is this a response to that?

Watanabe: There are no great games that show great fighting between drag-

ons and soldiers. Also, we wanted players to basically fight as dragons. It’s a game of humans and dragons, and we want you to share the life of both.

What does the future of video games hold?

Shiba: I’m not sure if TV changes in the future. Right now, Japanese gamers can play games on their cell phones that look as good as the Game Boy. Games will expand into so many different tools. But, people will definitely still enjoy them on TVs.

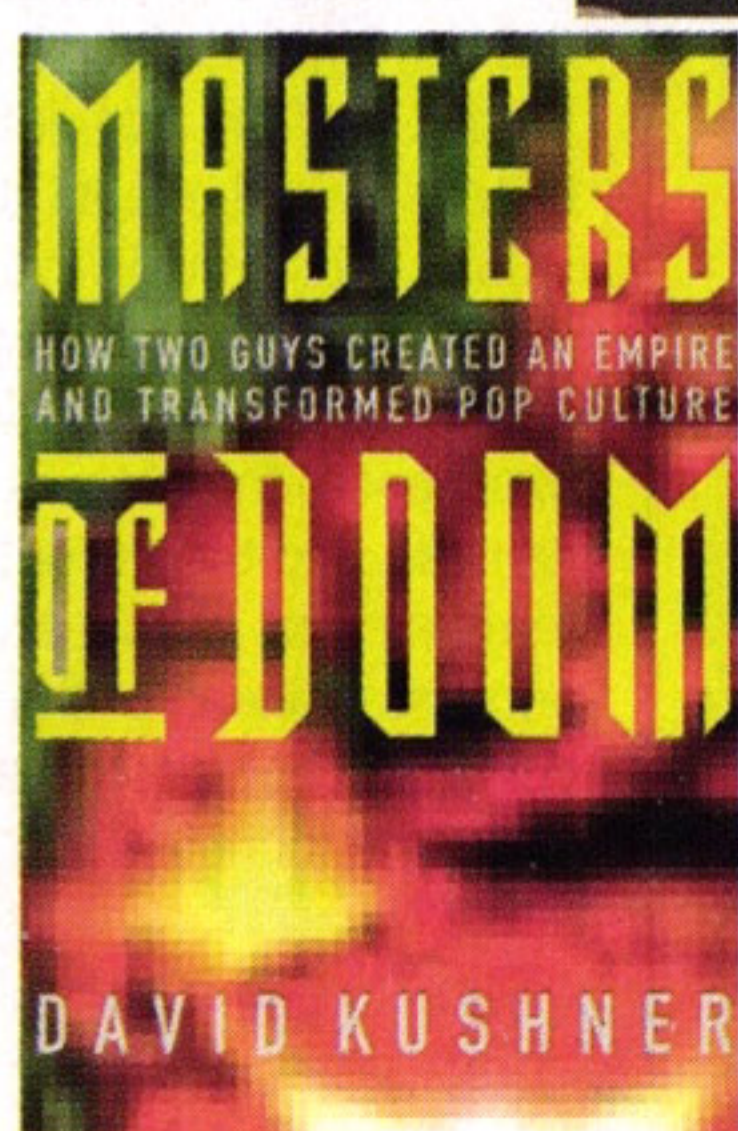
How about the future of gameplay?

Shiba: We already know something, but it’s a secret! [laughs]

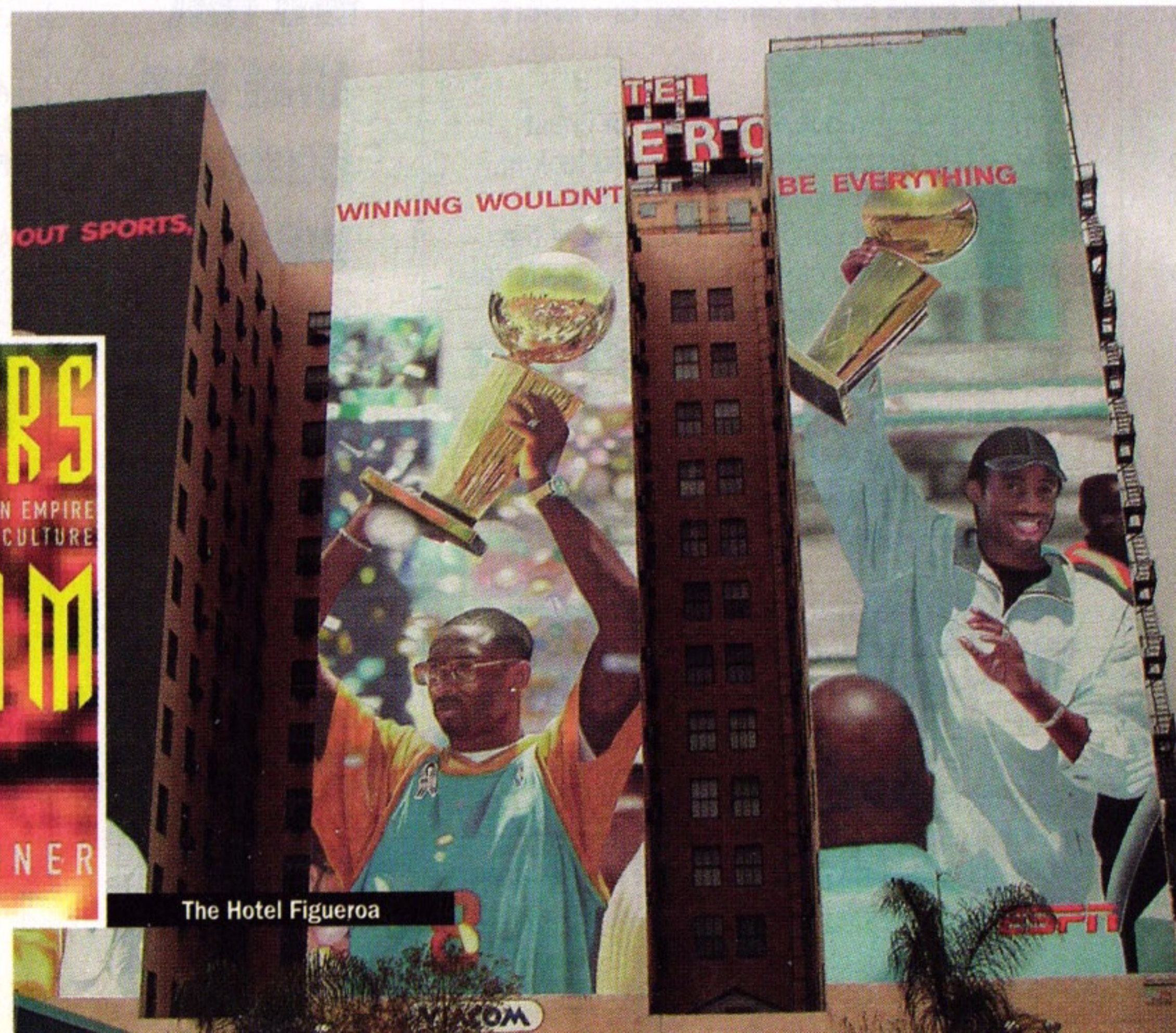
WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 5:00 PM

Masters of Doom Release Party

After the show on Wednesday, the literary elite of E3 were invited to a book launch party for David Kushner’s gripping account of id Software’s rise to power, *Masters of Doom*. Luckily, we snuck in and enjoyed some tasty Mexican appetizers. Yum! The party was held at the classically elegant Hotel Figueroa in downtown LA, providing a nice cool-down for the frazzled few that were there.



The Hotel Figueroa



WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 6:00 PM

Sid Meier Parties with Atari

Not only was Atari happy to announce that it is no longer called Infogrames, but it was trumpeting that legend Sid Meier (and his company Firaxis) is now in the fold. This not only means that the company has locked up the *Civilization* franchise, but it is also putting out an updated version of the 1987 Meier classic *Pirates!* and two more undisclosed projects.



WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 6:00 PM

TODD MCFARLANE | INTERVIEW

Mr. McFarlane truly is a Renaissance man. Apart from being the creator of *Spawn*, McFarlane has made action figures, directed music videos for the likes of Pearl Jam, and even amassed a collection of historic baseballs.

How much control do you exert on a video game project you're involved in?

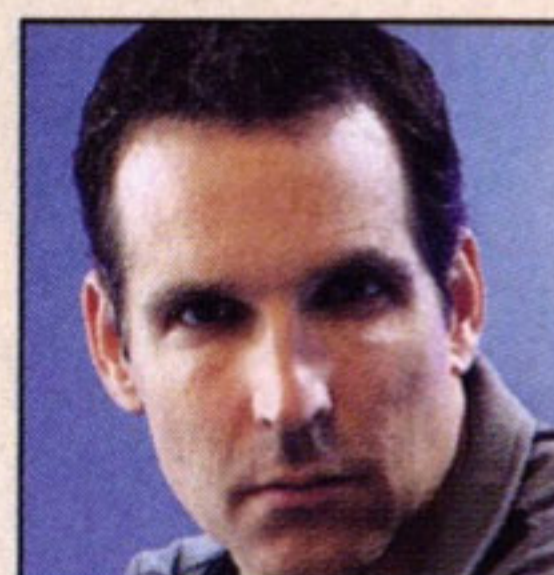
If you put *Spawn* in *SC II* for the Xbox, for example, he has to sort of adjust to their rules and universe. If we're talking about the dedicated *Spawn* game, now you're coming to his world, and I actually get to sort of put my foot down and say, "Here's some things he has to do." But I was pretty flexible overall in telling them to think just outside any parameters they thought. Here's what I find when you license characters sometimes: People become a slave to the history of that character, and my thought process is, "Let the medium be as strong as possible, and then work your character in it."

Our first big problem we came across in *SC II* was the cape. I know they were nervous to ask me. They said, "Todd, the cape's gotta go," without saying it. So before they even asked me, I said, "The cape's gotta go. If you tell me that by keeping the cape, he's not going to be as good of a fighter, then get rid of the cape."

I'm way more concerned, when we're talking about video games, about gameplay than I am about whether it happened in the comic book or the toys. If it's a fan of mine who says, "Todd, that's not quite the comic book," well, if it's a helluva play, you can get over a lot of problems.

Do you play video games?

I run three companies and have a wife and children, so at the end of the day I'm pretty exhausted. So, the music and video games I like go right out the window. Do I have music in my life? Yes, it's the music my eight year-old daughter likes. Do I have video games in my life?



"Let the medium be as strong as possible..."

TODD MCFARLANE
CREATOR OF SPAWN

Yeah, but it's Mario, Pokémon, Donkey Kong, or the equivalent thereof.

How do you pick which sports figures to make?

It's no different than listening to three guys at a sports bar debate about who's the greatest left-handed pitcher of all time. The list that I come up with at the beginning is not that different than the list you would come up with. But it's the fifth or sixth selection – that's where there's gray matter.

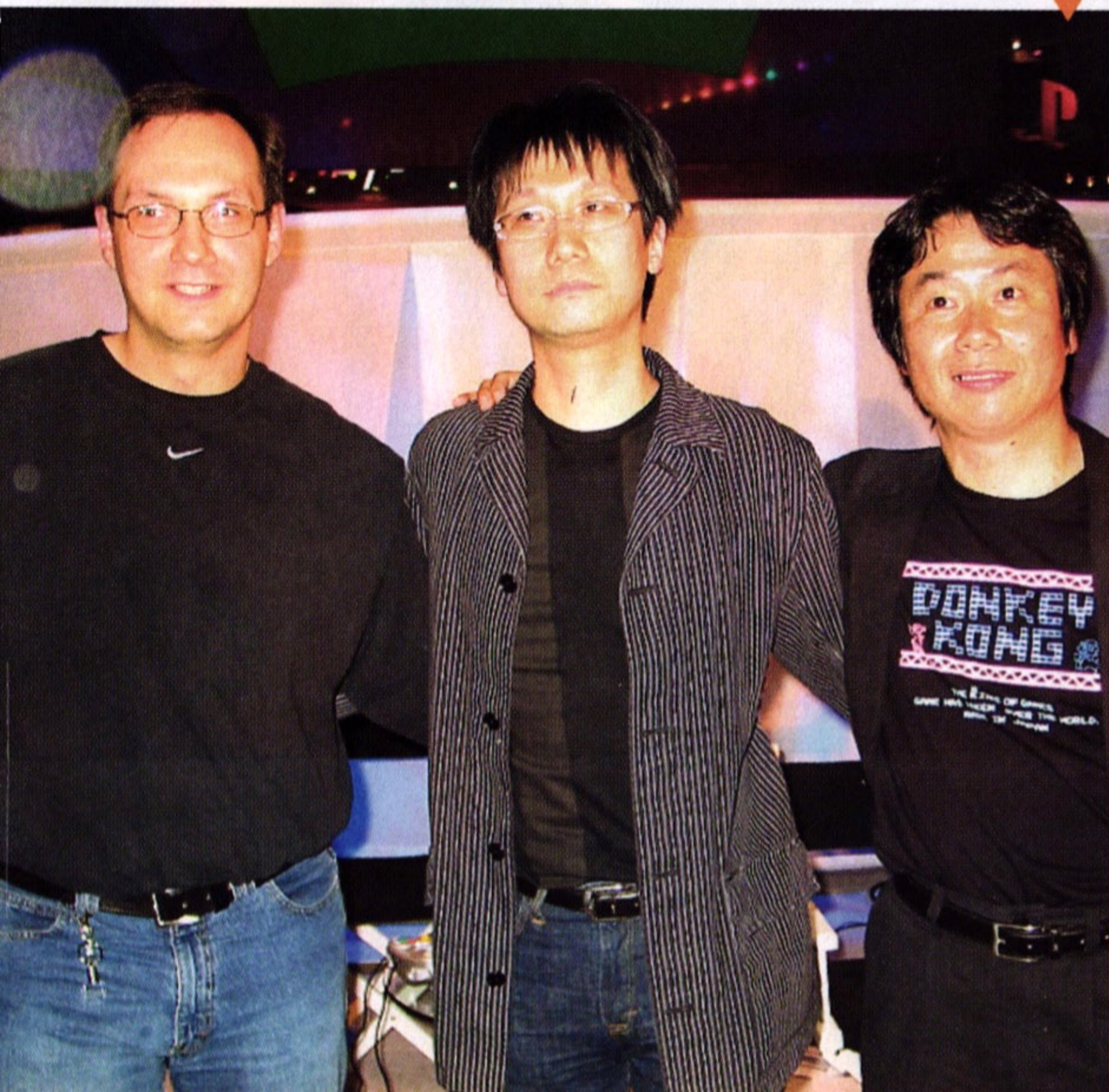
Have you ever demanded that a certain player be made?

I can't just self-masturbate with my ideas, there actually has to be some logic to it. But that doesn't mean that I don't sneak one in every now and then.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 6:15 PM

Nintendo Roundtable

During a Nintendo roundtable event, Silicon Knights' Denis Dyack (left), Konami's Hideo Kojima (middle), and Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto (right), discuss various topics, including using picture technology with the GameCube. Cheer up Hideo, Nintendo's about to pay you mega bucks for someone else (Denis) to port your five year-old title (PSone's *Metal Gear Solid*) to the GameCube!



WEDNESDAY, MAY 14 7:00 PM

Eidos Hits the Strip

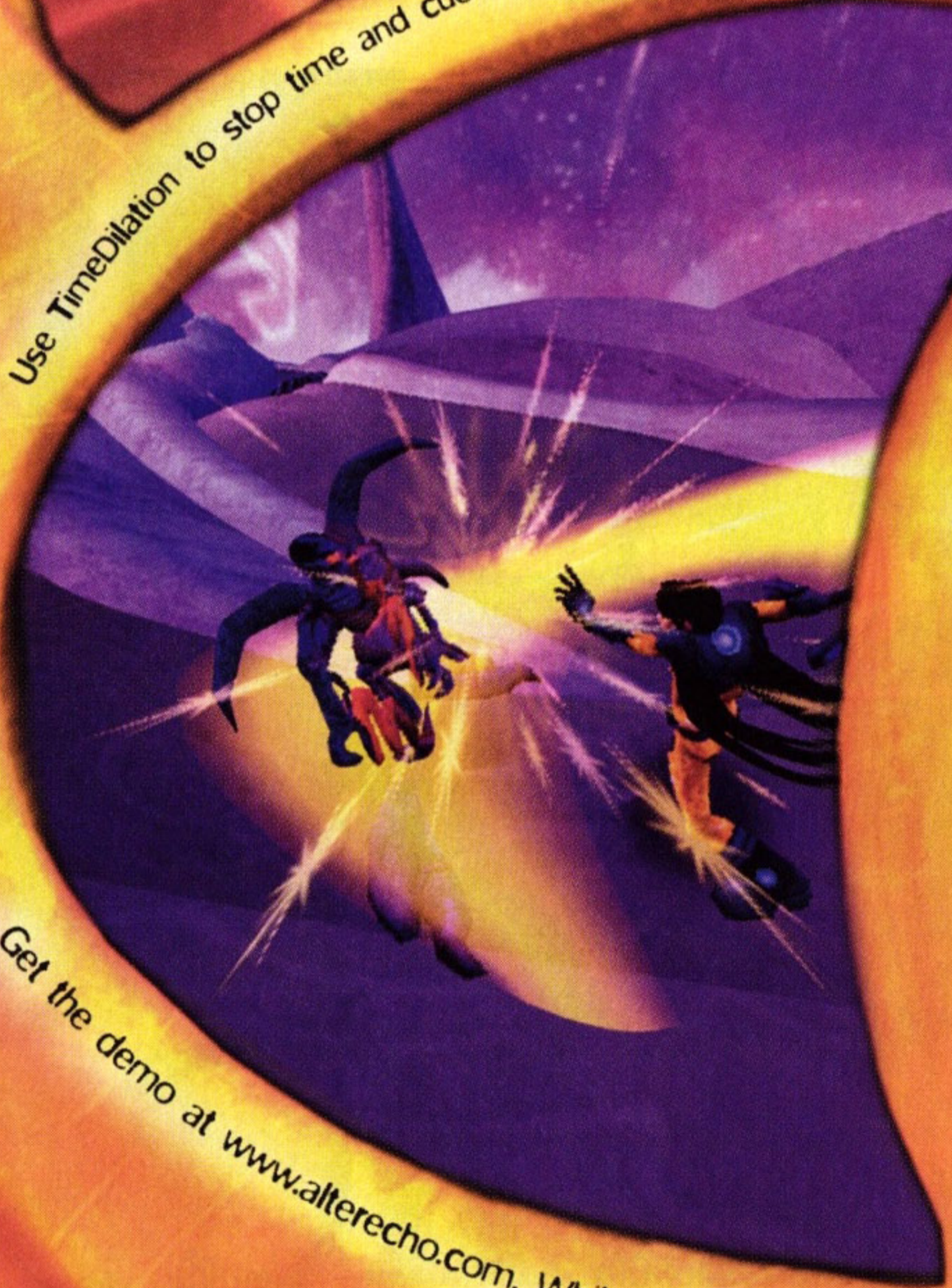
Eidos set up camp at the Mondrian Hotel's elegant SkyBar on the Sunset Strip. Between the DJs spinning (including the company's own turntable titan, Kjell Vistad, shown above) and the models dancing everywhere (including in the hotel rooms), it was a night with the beautiful people high over LA. Believe it or not, we were invited.



Use TimeDilation to stop time and cue up insane combos

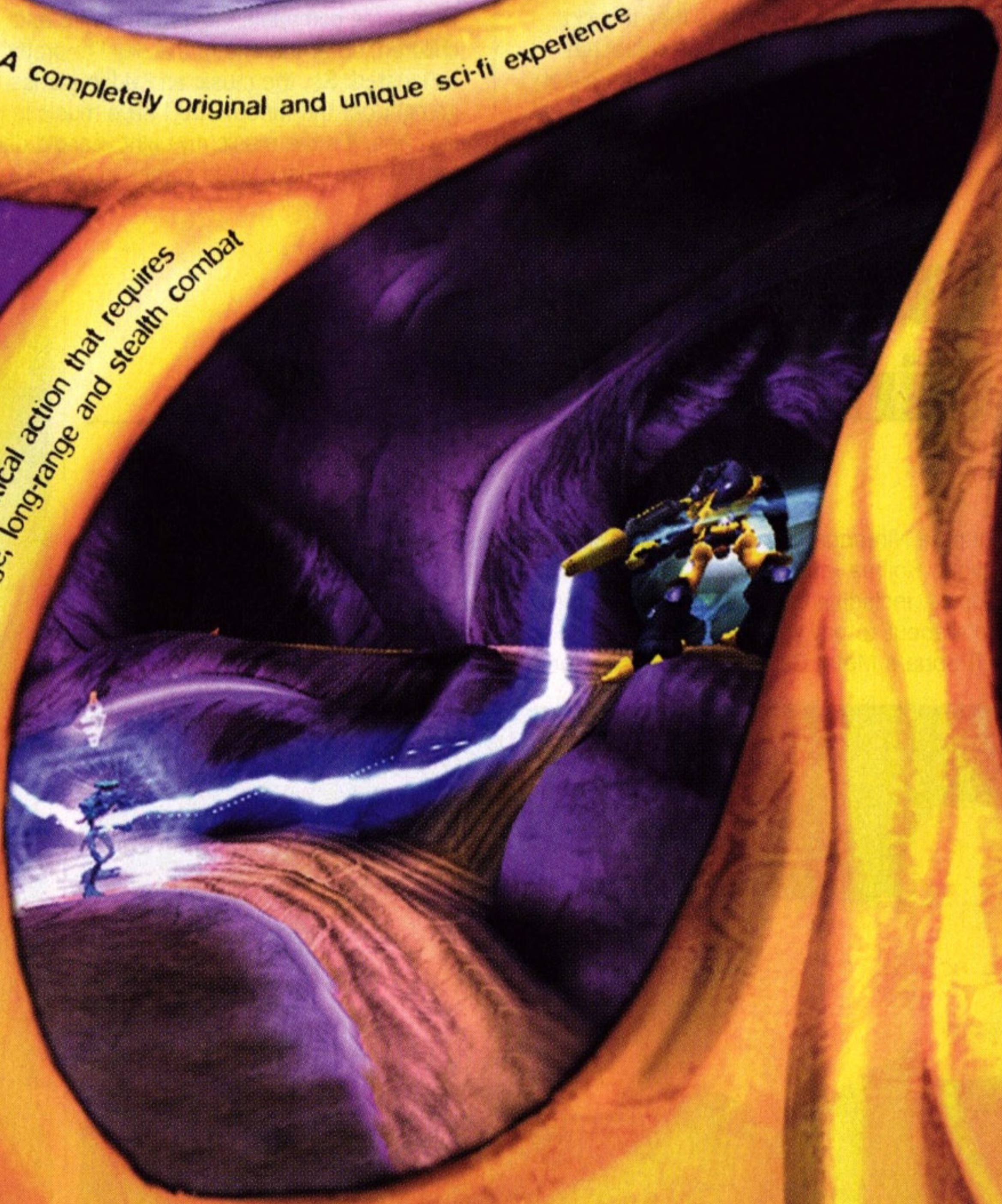


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**disappointments
and duds**

Every E3 has some high-profile games that look like unmitigated disasters, and this year

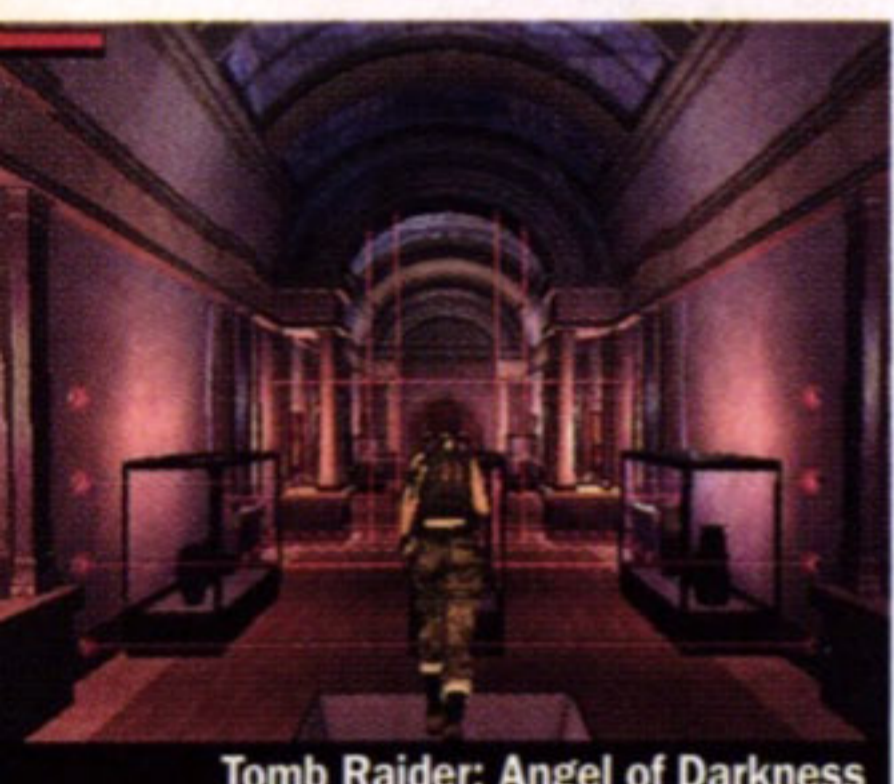


The Fast and the Furious

was no exception. Leading the charge up Suck Hill this year was Rare. From what we've seen so far, Nintendo must be laughing it up and

counting all the money they suckered out of Microsoft. What does \$375 million buy you these days? Kameo: Elements of Power, which doesn't appear to have made much progress since it was shown on GameCube two years ago. What's worse, the one new property Rare showed, Grabbed by the Ghoulies, was just plain awful. The combat and camera were horrid, and the timed-button-press mechanics were actually ripped off from Monsters, Inc. on the PSone!

Visionary, we tell ya! Yes, the Conker online title looked fun, but it's going to have to sell about 7.5 million copies for Microsoft to break even on this deal. Maybe that's got something to do with why Gates and co. didn't throw an E3 party this year.

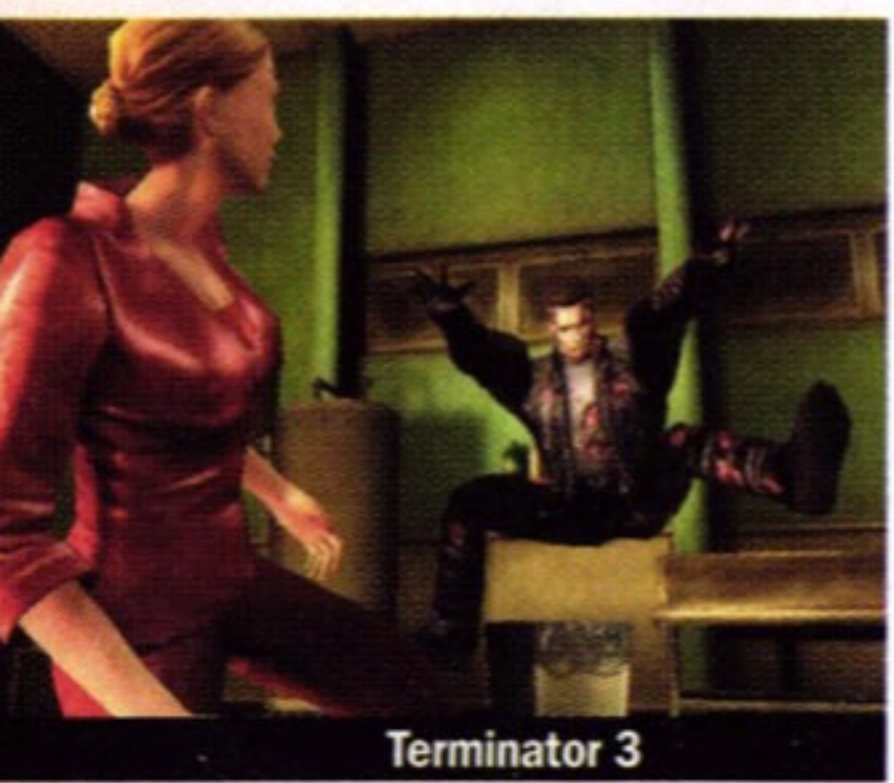


Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness

Other, less surprising let downs were Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines

and Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness. T3's first-person levels look passable, but the third-person fighting brought back memories of Way of the Warrior. Tomb Raider, on the other hand, just looked dated in comparison to many of the titles on the show floor. With millions of dollars already sunk into the project, Eidos better hope they can get it out in time for the next movie.

Throw in the usual spate of piss-poor licensed product (Charlie's Angels, Lobo, Futurama, and The Fast and the Furious, among others); Doom 3 not being play-



Terminator 3

able in the Activision booth and the fact that pizza is still way overpriced at the LA Convention Center; and you've got a show that

gave misanthropic gamers plenty of reasons to be grumpy.

THURSDAY, MAY 15 10:00 AM



"I want to connect all the homes to recreate the arcade experience."

TOMONOBU
ITAGAKI
HEAD OF TECMO'S
TEAM NINJA

Itagaki has been the force behind such series as Dead or Alive and Xbox's Ninja Gaiden.

Talk about your decision to bring Dead or Alive online.

Such games as Dead or Alive 3, that are console based, should also be online compatible for two reasons: Since the arcade business is diminishing, I want to connect all the homes to recreate the arcade experience, and to create the biggest community of online fighters.

What do you think of the other online fighting games out there?

I think that Capcom Vs. SNK is a really good fighting game for the Xbox, so it's at this level [marks spot with his hand], and we want to be at this level [puts other hand at much higher level]. The main feature of DOA's online network is supporting features like matchmaking. We're considering download features, but it's secondary. The first purpose is to build the biggest online fighting community. Since the DOA 2 portion of DOA Online uses an all-new engine I think that it looks better than our own DOA 3. I think that DOA 3 is the most beautiful fighting game in the world right

TOMONOBU ITAGAKI | INTERVIEW

now, so if it's better than that, it's going to be very good, and very competitive to all the fighting games coming out later.

Will you have to restrict the player's move sets?

There is a possibility that we might have to restrict the move sets, but we're going to do everything we can to avoid that.

What kind of downloads are planned?

I hear many times from fans to have booster disc two and three available online, but of course, we can't do any of the downloadable features for free, so we have to consider very carefully about how we are going to deal with such requests. I'm not in the apparel business, but if fans want more costumes I'll consider it.

Were you surprised at how much people loved DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball?

It was as I planned, so it was no surprise to me. I wanted to emphasize that there's always room for other types of games out there.

THURSDAY, MAY 15 10:30 AM

Aonuma has been a driving force on the last three Legend of Zelda games, and is now working on another for GameCube.

What are your thoughts on E3? Is it helpful to you?

This is the first time in three years that I've been able to attend E3, mostly because I've been busy with Wind Waker. Unfortunately, in Japan there is a slowdown in user interest, as well as the amount of strength the companies are putting into their marketing, but I'm not sensing the same thing here in the U.S. All the platforms are really pushing their product and competing very fiercely.

Have you seen any good games?

I haven't seen all the games, but I do know that I want to see the newest in any franchise game. Because I myself am involved in the Zelda series, it's always nice to see what other people are doing. For example, with Kojima's Metal Gear, that's one that interests me quite a bit.

What do you think of the fact that many Zelda fans would be happy playing it in 2D forever?

There's definitely a difference between 2D and 3D graphics, but after making Wind Waker, I'm questioning whether it was too difficult. With the 2D graphics, it's not easy, but it's a different kind of problem solving. I'm always questioning myself after a project is over, and with Wind Waker 2, I might return to some of the basics that made

EIJI AONUMA | INTERVIEW

Zelda what it is. There are a few other qualities I'm reconsidering but that's not definite yet. I hope you're patient and look forward to next E3, when it'll be announced. There should be a playable version on the floor next year.

What do you say to those who, at first, didn't like the younger Zelda look?

Yes, those voices were heard, especially in the U.S. and European markets. However, those same people who made those comments said after playing the game, "No, this is a benefit." I think that when you're playing a game, it's easier to move when you step away from reality, so that was my approach.

What do you think of the trend towards mature themes in video games?

One thing that really surprised me in coming to this E3 is the amount of gun-shooting and violent war games out there right now. I understand completely that war is kind of a hot topic right now in the U.S., and it may be attributed to that. However, I have a child, and if you were to ask me, "Would I expose my child to that?" Then no, I would not. I do not understand the psyche of the people who make those games and if they have children, what they are exposing their children to.

What if you could take the freedom aspect of a Grand Theft Auto that people love, but subtract the violence?

It would become Zelda! [laughs]



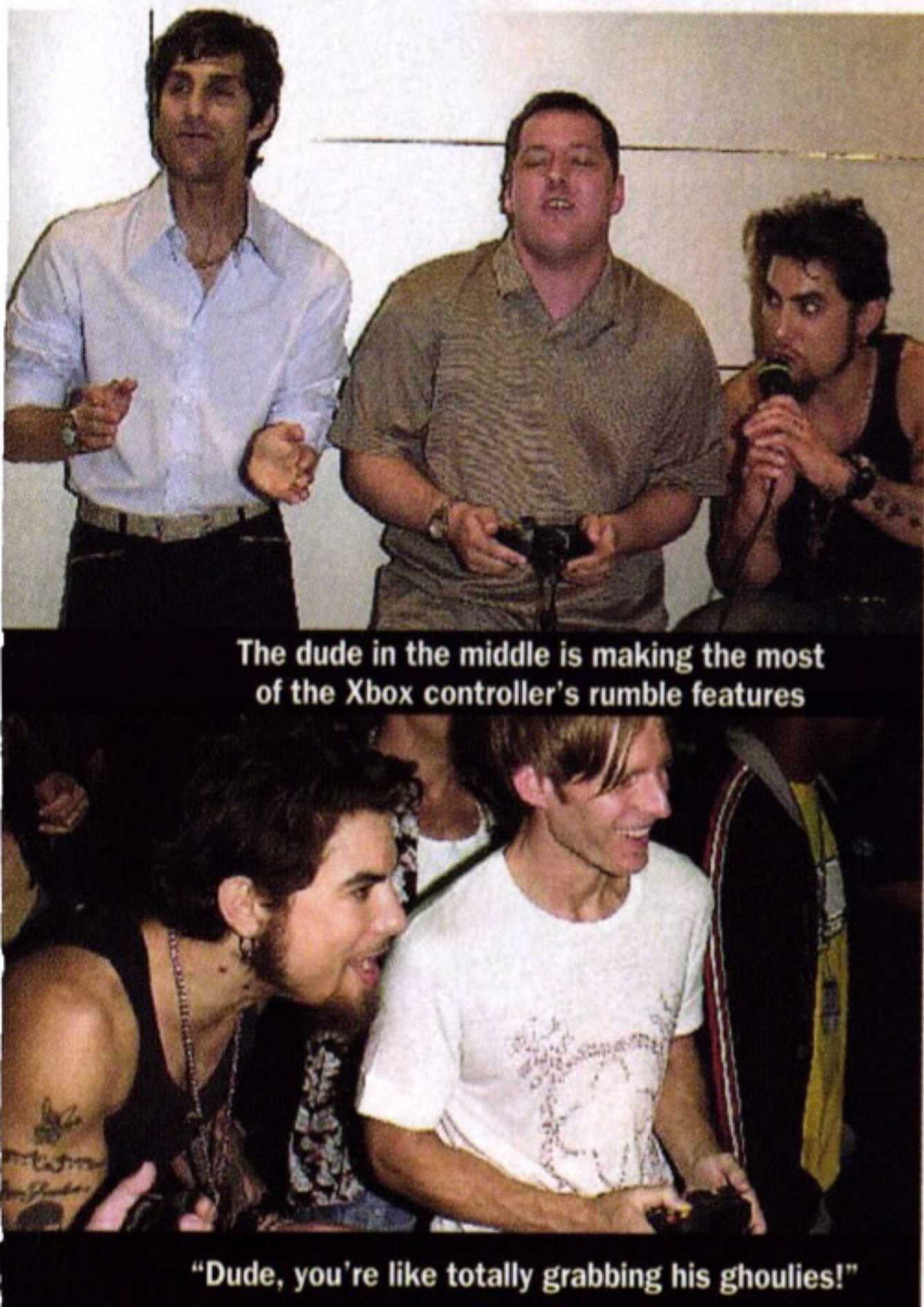
"I'm always questioning myself after a project is over..."

EIJI AONUMA
DIRECTOR OF THE
LEGEND OF ZELDA:
THE WIND WAKER

THURSDAY, MAY 15 11:00 AM

Jane's Addiction Rocks With Xbox

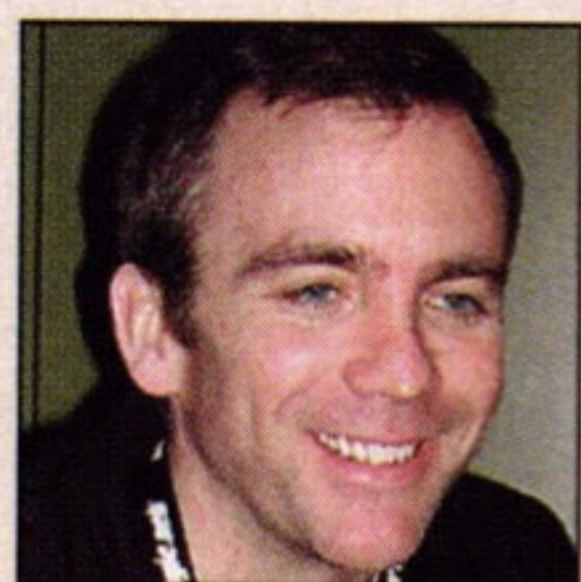
Lollapalooza is back. Jane's Addiction has a new album (*Strays*) coming out. It's 1991 all over again!! Thankfully, the resurrected alternative rock legends are not living in the past, and actually showed up at Microsoft's booth to promote both their upcoming tour (which Xbox is sponsoring) and pledge their love of gaming. To mark the occasion, we heard that guitarist Dave Navarro let Xbox head Ed Fries give him a new piercing. Ouch!



The dude in the middle is making the most of the Xbox controller's rumble features

"Dude, you're like totally grabbing his ghoulies!"

THURSDAY, MAY 15 11:15 AM



"I think it's easy to get distracted by all the things the fans would like."

PETE PARSON
STUDIO MANAGER
BUNGIE

Pete Parson is the studio manager of Bungie, which provided the show with one of its highlights in a playable demo of Halo 2.

Halo 2 is probably the most anticipated game of the last few years. How hard is it to labor under those kinds of expectations?

Actually, I think the team is just focused on making something that they feel really good about. One of the things is that Ed Fries [Xbox games leader] gives us the resources we need to do what we want to do and lets us make the game. We don't think about the external pressure a lot. We think about challenging ourselves. It's an amazingly talented team, and a team for whom good is not good enough.

So, are you pleased with what you've got so far and how the Halo 2 demo is being received?

We talked a lot about what we were going to do at E3. You can make an in-game movie or this or that, but ultimately the goal was to take all these really cool ideas, story, design, and technology and make something that plays well and feels good. That's the most satisfying thing to have happen. Obviously, the payoff is to come here and have people like it. I think it's always good to have to put together a piece of gameplay that's really representative of the game you are creating.

How much do you take stock in the message boards? Do you really pay attention

PETE PARSONS | INTERVIEW

to the fan sites, or do you try not to worry about their expectations?

There's no question that we invest and care a lot about our community. We're having a Bungie Fan Fest tonight where we've invited 200 people to come talk to us and play. But, ultimately, we spend a lot of time thinking about the game that we want to play and doing cool, new things that we hope the fans will like. I think it's easy to get distracted by all the things the fans would like. They have tons of great ideas, and some that maybe aren't as great. On the other hand, they are a great sounding board. We do tons of focus testing, really getting a sense of how people are interacting with the game. Basically, finding out what sucks and how we can make it suck less. [laughs]

What about having Halo 2 mods on Xbox Live?

I give a ton of credit to J. Allard and those guys for creating a really safe, solid, and easy-to-access online experience. I think that Halo 2 will be on Live and we want to have a great experience there. At the same time, we want to create a [game] that everyone can enjoy and take part in. It's hard to think about how modding would fit into that. You have to control the level of [quality] and make sure that people are having a fun experience. For Halo PC, it will be modded. We have a great fan base and we want to support them with what they want to do.

THURSDAY, MAY 15 12:30 PM

KEVIN WEISMAN | INTERVIEW

Weisman, who plays Marshall on ABC's hit series *Alias*, performed voice-overs for Acclaim's upcoming *Alias* titles, and also appears as a playable character in the game.

Are you a fan of games?

Yeah, I've been playing *The Lord of the Rings* lately.

Have you always been a gamer?

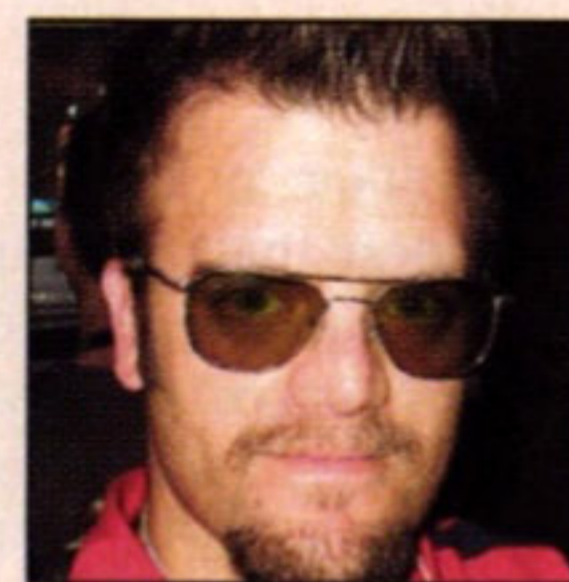
Yeah, since I was a little kid. I had an Atari 800 when I was a kid. Then I had the ColecoVision. I got a Nintendo, then N64, and then just went up the Nintendo route. Then [I switched] to PlayStation and PS2. I like the sports games. My friends and I enjoy Madden football, and I'm a fan of the NBA Live and NBA 2K. My sister actually works for Activision.

So, is it kind of a bizarre sensation to see yourself in a game?

It's a little weird. That, and we have action figures coming out. It's become such of a phenomenon in terms of the peripheral elements. It's cool. All my friends that are gamers...a good friend of mine, Jack Black, is an actor, and we play games together a lot. We used to play *Star Control*, back in the day. We used to have *Star Control* battles late into the night. He was really excited when I told him that there was going to be a video game that I was in. It's every little kid's dream. So, it's interesting that my acting career has taken me to have a video game that I'm in.

Talk about your work for the game.

I'm in the game. I did about 10 hours of audio for in the game. I'm pretty much Sydney's kind of technical right-hand man. So, as you're [playing] as Sydney, I'm constantly talking to you, giving you updates. And I threw in some comedy gold as well, you know, for the kids. Make them laugh. I



"...I don't think it's that hard to fight me."

KEVIN WEISMAN
ACTOR

improvised a lot and I think that it's going to be good. I don't want to give away the ending, but I'm in a couple of the higher levels as a 3D figure and I'm actually captured at one point and brainwashed in the game. Then you have to fight me.

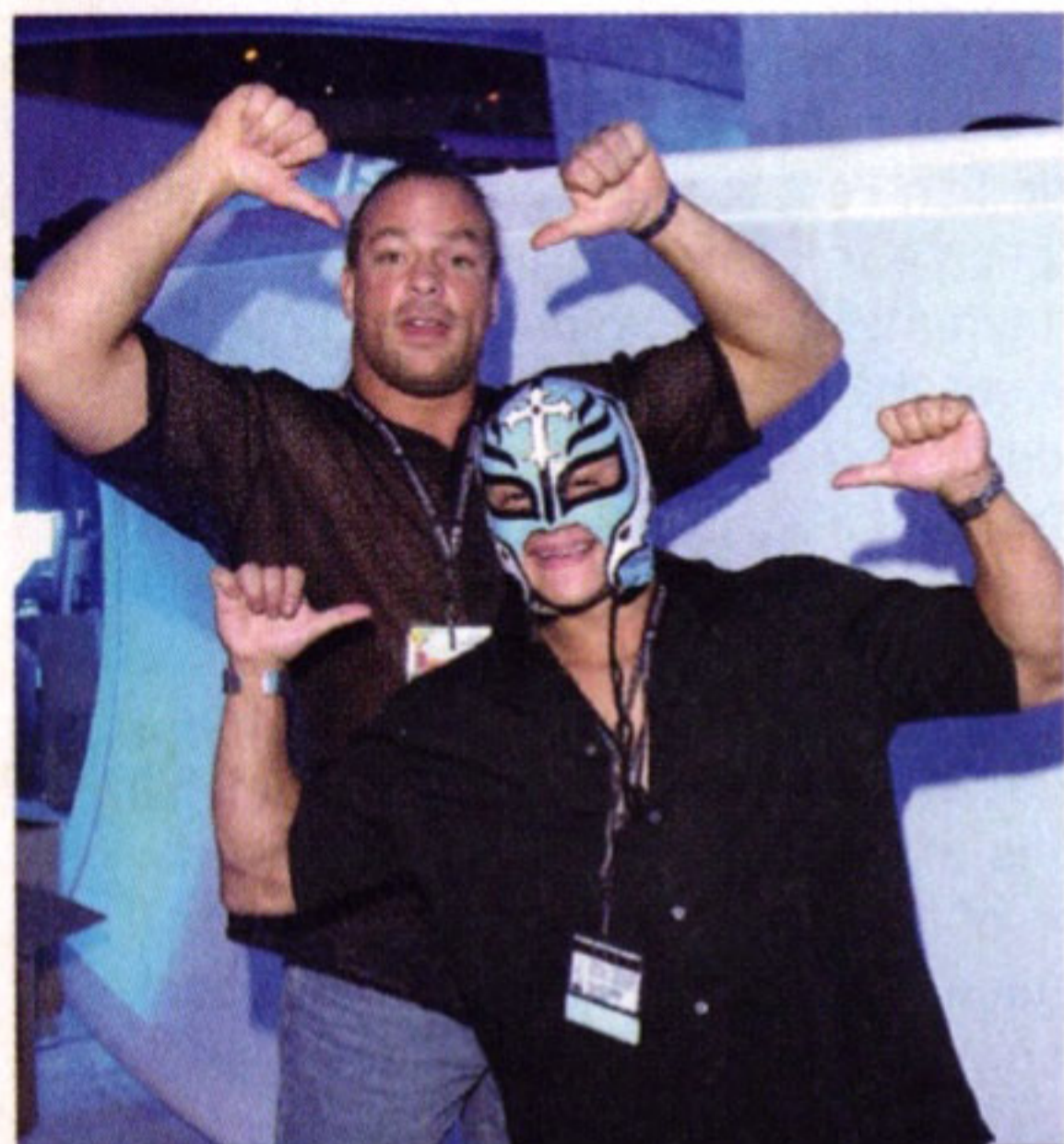
How tough are you in the game?

I don't remember, but I don't think it's that hard to fight me. I had to do a lot of fighting noises, though - lots of punching sounds. But it's later in the game, I would think that it would be sort of hard to kick my ass. You would hope. I hope it's hard. I don't want to be like a girl fighting. [Asking an unidentified Acclaim producer] How hard is it to kick my ass?

Producer: It's incredibly hard to kick his ass.

THURSDAY, MAY 15 1:00 PM

WWE Wrestling

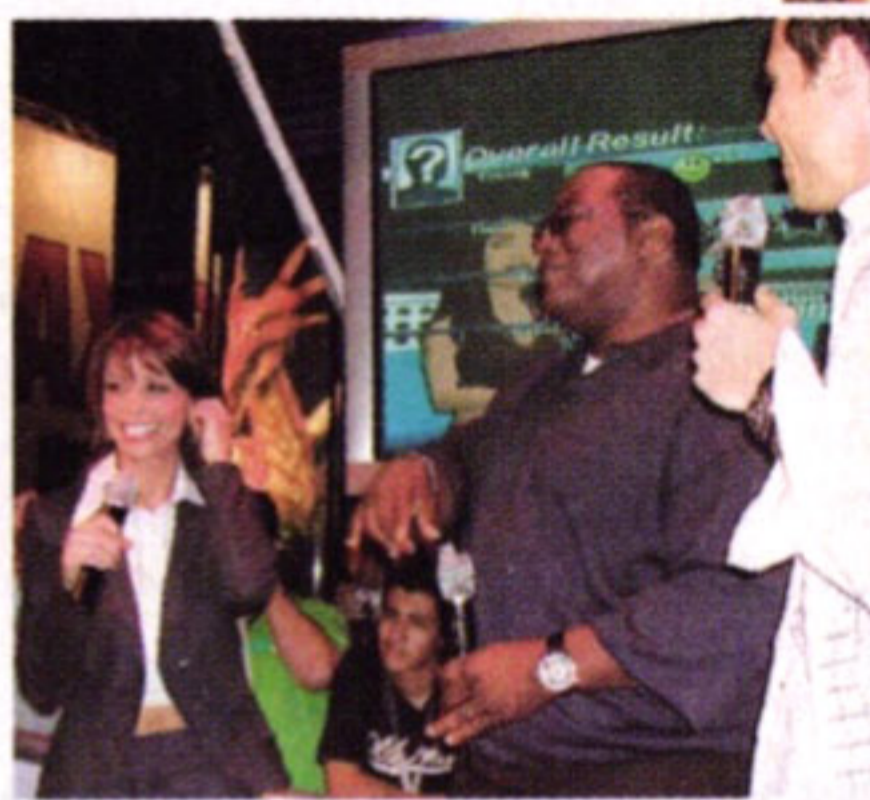


WWE's Rob Van Dam and his little buddy Rey Mysterio Jr. stop by the Nintendo booth to show off their pipes

THURSDAY, MAY 15 1:30 PM

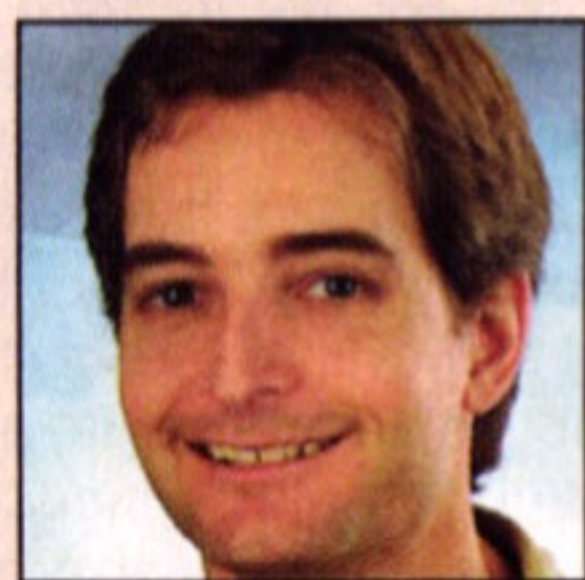
E3's American Idol

If we had to rate *American Idol* judges Paula Abdul and Randy Jackson's punctuality, we'd give them a tongue lashing that would make even Simon blush. Despite being an hour and a half late (some of which was due to Randy yapping on his cell phone in his SUV in front of the convention center for over thirty minutes), the two finally settled in to critique some showgoers' less than inspired performances.



THURSDAY, MAY 15 1:30 PM

ED FRIES | INTERVIEW



"Does the industry really need 200 games a year? Maybe we need half as many, but [ones] that are twice as good."

ED FRIES
VICE PRESIDENT,
XBOX GAMES
DIVISION

Ed Fries oversees the development of games for the Xbox, including third-party support for the system.

Why is E3 important for Microsoft?

I think E3 is important because it sets the tone for the year to come. It's a chance for everyone to bring out their best stuff and see how it stacks up. It also forces a certain amount of discipline in our teams. It's kind of nice because it forces you to have a message [laughs]. It forces you to step back and look at what you're doing and say, "Why are we doing all this stuff?", "What does it mean?", and "How can we explain it to people in the simplest way possible?"

What's the state of Xbox's first-party software?

It's really been a transition time for us. At launch, it was really important that I had a broad portfolio of titles, because I really couldn't count on having strong third-party support. Now, we've obviously established ourselves as the clear number two in the world. We have great support from all of the third-parties, so the role of first party really changes to be about doing amazing stuff, and I've spent the last year really shifting my group to that. And that's kind of a painful transition. That means that we've had to hold a couple of titles to up the quality and we've had some products that weren't making the bar.

What do you think of Sony's online strategy?

I'm a little confused about what Sony is saying. On the one hand, they say dial-up is important, but on the other hand they are trying to introduce voice, which requires broadband. Some of their titles are broadband-only – at least most of the new, interesting ones are. So, if they try and sell someone on getting online on narrowband,

then all the interesting games are on broadband. I'm not sure that's a service to those people.

How about the PlayStation Portable?

It doesn't really affect us. It's an intriguing product, but I think it's going to have to create a new market for itself rather than go against Game Boy. Because to compete in that market, you have to be cheap, and this doesn't sound like a cheap product to me.

Can you get Rare to be more punctual with its product?

I think both of us have a lot of things to learn from each other. I think if Chris Stamper [Rare's tech guru] were here, he'd say that as well. There are some process things, some things about how we schedule and manage projects, which they've already embraced and are learning. At the same time, we're learning a lot from them about how to make great console games. I don't want to change Rare. I don't want them to change from shipping amazing games when they are ready, to shipping okay games on schedule.

What do think the state of the industry is?

If you just look at the raw numbers, there at record dollars coming into this business – that's great. From a game creator point of view, however, development budgets are going up and up, and that's putting pressure on the old way of doing things. I hear a lot of whining about it, but I do think it's a good thing. I think it forces us to do less things, but at a higher quality. Does the industry really need 200 games a year? Maybe we need half as many, but [ones] that are twice as good.



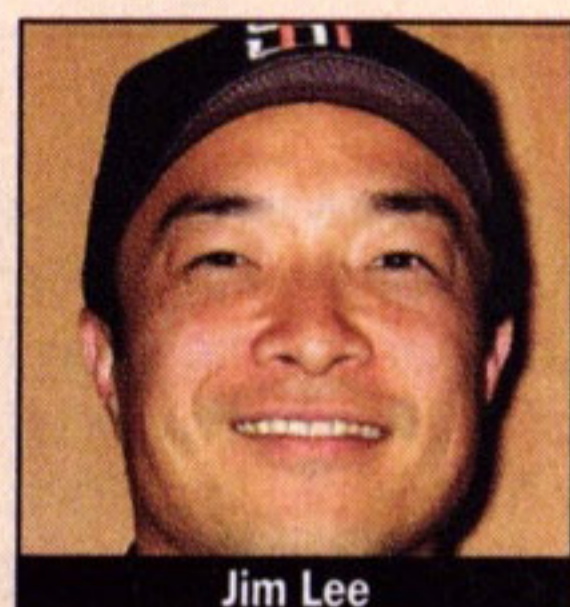
THURSDAY, MAY 15 2:00 PM

Orson Scott Card Signs For Advent Rising

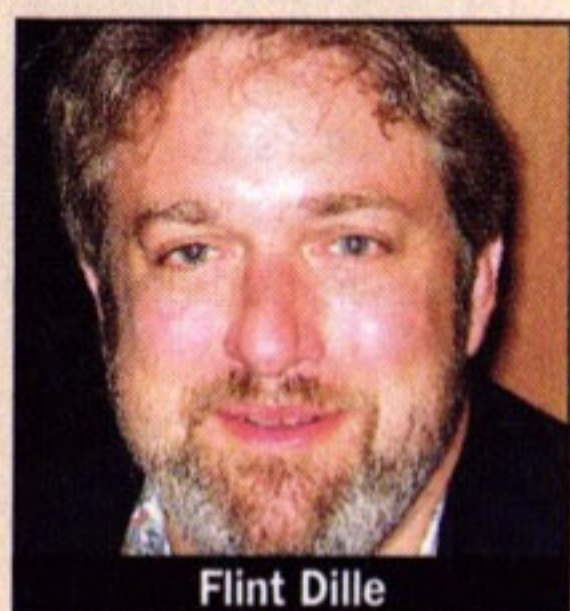
Legendary science fiction writer Orson Scott Card (*Ender's Game*) graced E3 with his presence at the Majesco booth. An avid video game fan, Mr. Card was on hand to promote Majesco's ambitious new title, *Advent Rising*. Developed by newcomer Glyphx and conceived as the first part of an Xbox/PC trilogy, *Advent Rising* will feature a script and story written by Card. As expected, hordes of sci-fi fans swarmed the booth in hopes of getting the author's John Hancock.

THURSDAY, MAY 15 1:45 PM

JIM LEE & FLINT DILLE | INTERVIEW



Jim Lee



Flint Dille

“One of the hardest things to do in comic books is creating villains.”

JIM LEE
COMIC BOOK ARTIST
FLINT DILLE
WRITER

To help create *Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu*, Ubi Soft enlisted the talents of Jim Lee, one of America's most respected comic book artists; and Flint Dille, a long-time script-writer and consultant for film and video games.

How did you start the project?

Flint Dille: Ubi Soft wanted to do a sequel to *Batman: Vengeance*, but they wanted to do something different; they wanted to do an arcadey kind of game. We realized very early, actually at the urging of the guys at DC, that we needed a new villain. We didn't want to try the Joker and Harley Quinn again. Then they called and said, "Hey, Jim Lee's going to design the character." Jim [had the idea] for an Asian character, and that was perfect. Because he's not a Fu Manchu type of character, he's very much the evil, twisted version of Sun-Tzu, the guy that wrote *The Art of War*.

Did you help the art team with the general art style, or did they adapt it to what they wanted?

Jim Lee: The art style is based on the animated series. I drew the character in my style and they interpreted that in an animated style. They would send me their versions of my sketches back, and I would say, "Well, that looks a little too wide here," or "Make him a little taller." We went back and forth. Then, they would send me 3D animated movies so I could see the character from all angles.

Video games don't traditionally have the greatest stories. Can comic book writers and script writers help in that respect?

JL: The stories in games have come a long way, some of them are pretty good. The best

games have the best storylines. But, I think if you're going to do a superhero video game, it couldn't hurt to have guys that know how superhero stories are structured and told.

How has DC received the Sin Tzu character? Are they enthusiastic about it?

FD: They turned it into a graphic novel, and he'll probably turn up in later comic books.

JL: That was not part of the original plan, either. One of the hardest things to do in comic books is creating villains. Most heroes are defined by the quality of their villains. One of the reasons that makes Batman so fantastic is that he's got an incredible rogue's gallery. So, it was really a huge challenge for Flint and myself to come up with something that could possibly fit into that. It's hard, and that's where we made a significant contribution.

Who are more freaky - video game convention crowds or comic book convention crowds? Does there seem to be a big crossover?

JL: How about which interviewers are freakier? [laughs] Here's the thing, whenever I go to a comic book convention, I go, "Whoa, what a bunch of geeks" But there I am, looking for some back issue of a comic book. I'm one of them - that's me, and I take pride in it. I'm a head nerd. [laughs] On one hand, I'm thrown back by it; but at the same time, I love it.

FD: It's a lot of the same people. Jim was out signing today, and there were guys lined up around E3. That's gotta tell you that the same guys that are reading comic books are playing video games.

views

from the floor



ERIC HERNANDEZ

"[Sony's new] handheld excites me, because I love the Game Boy Advance and I've been waiting for Sony to come out with a

handheld of their own. It just depends on the titles they put out, because I know that Nintendo's got the firm footing and that scan card thing [the e-Reader] is great. It'll be tough, because I think that Nintendo's got that whole thing cornered."



JACQUELINE LARICCIA

"It's my first time being here. I think that the enhancement of all the different games, especially with Nintendo, is

awesome. My boyfriend and I have the GameCube and the GBA, so we can hook them together and both play. Connectivity is worth it. I liked Tetra's Tracker and Zelda and Pac-Man. Mario Kart is very cool. I think that the show is really eye appealing with all the different games. I'm having a great time."



CHRISTOPHER ROBINSON

"I'm a Nintendo junkie, so I'm always interested in what Nintendo is going to come out with. This is my

second year. I think that Pac-Man is probably the coolest game that they have over there. Not as many games as last year for a first-party lineup, but there are definitely some good ones. I think that the innovation between Pac-Man and the Game Boy is definitely a good idea. My favorite game of the show so far? I'd have to say Pac-Man, because of the innovation of it."



SHAUN SMITH

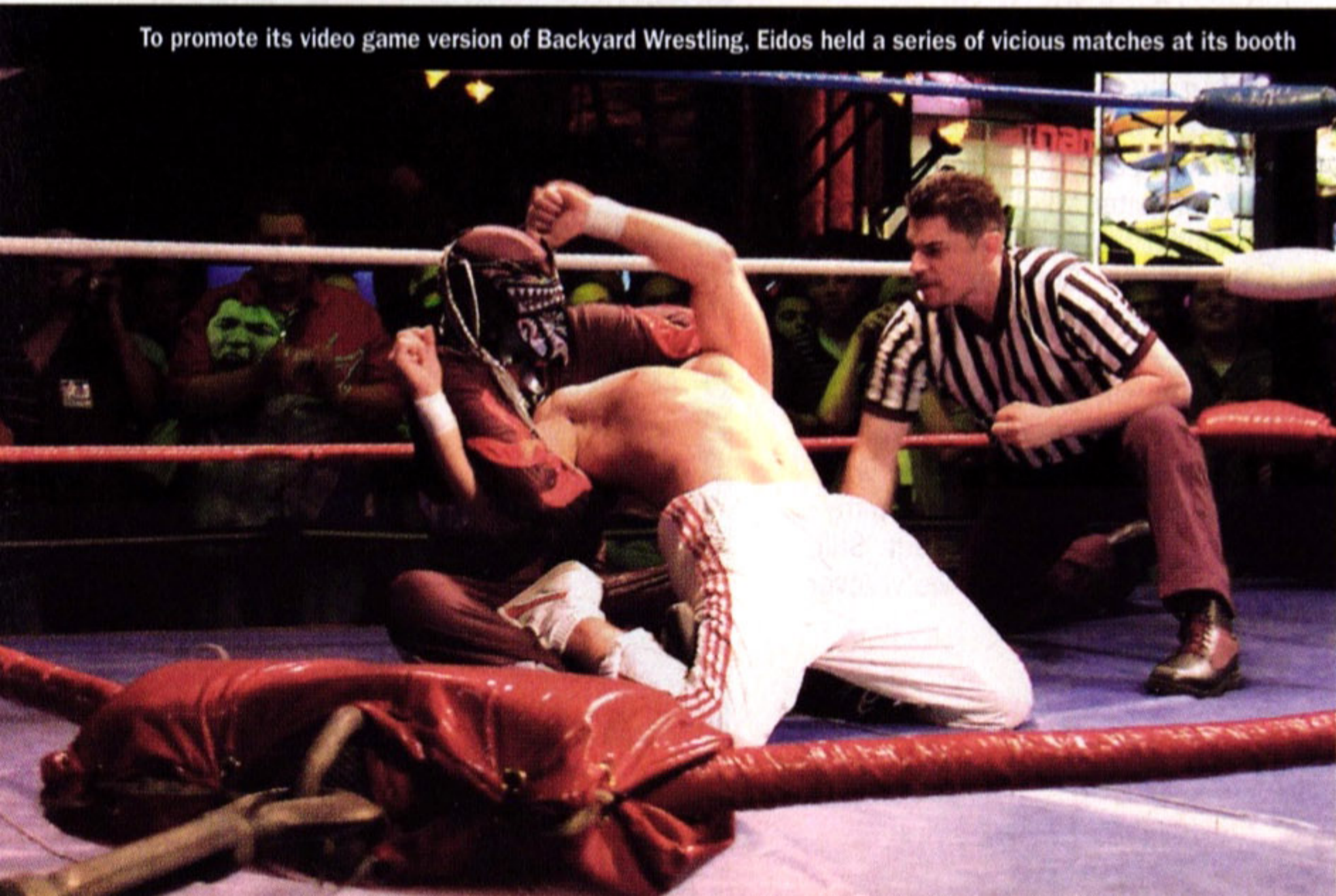
"I like the show. It's a little bit slower than last year, but I like it. Nothing surprised me out of the blue, but I'm

interested in the PlayStation handheld. I'd like to see what they would do with it. I think that it would do well. I like a lot of sequels and a lot of the old-school games that they've brought back. Best of show? I'm still getting into it, because I haven't seen the whole show yet. But, I do like the Castlevania that's coming out."

THURSDAY, MAY 15 3:00 PM

Rumble in the Jungle: Backyard Wrestling

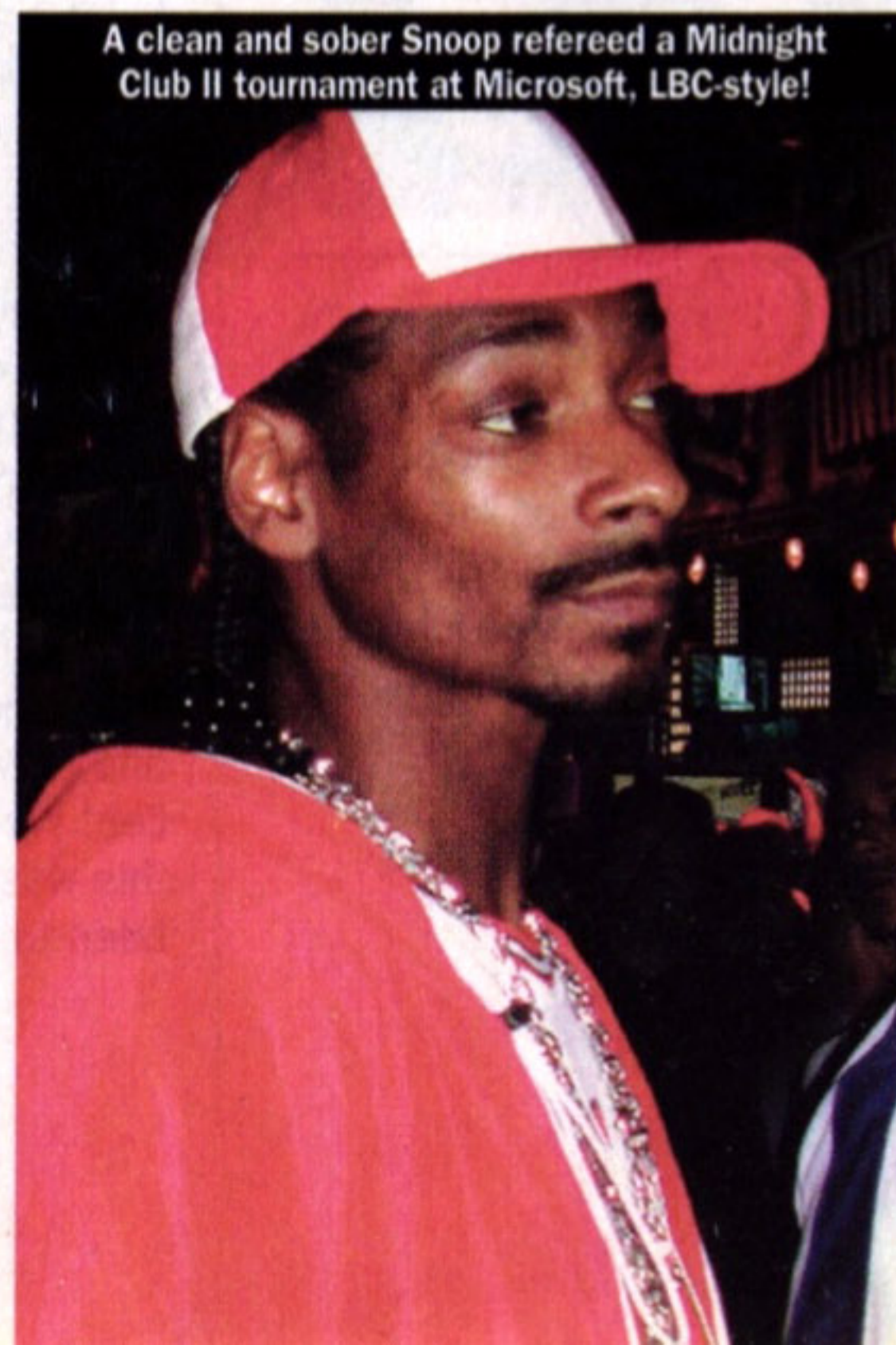
To promote its video game version of Backyard Wrestling, Eidos held a series of vicious matches at its booth

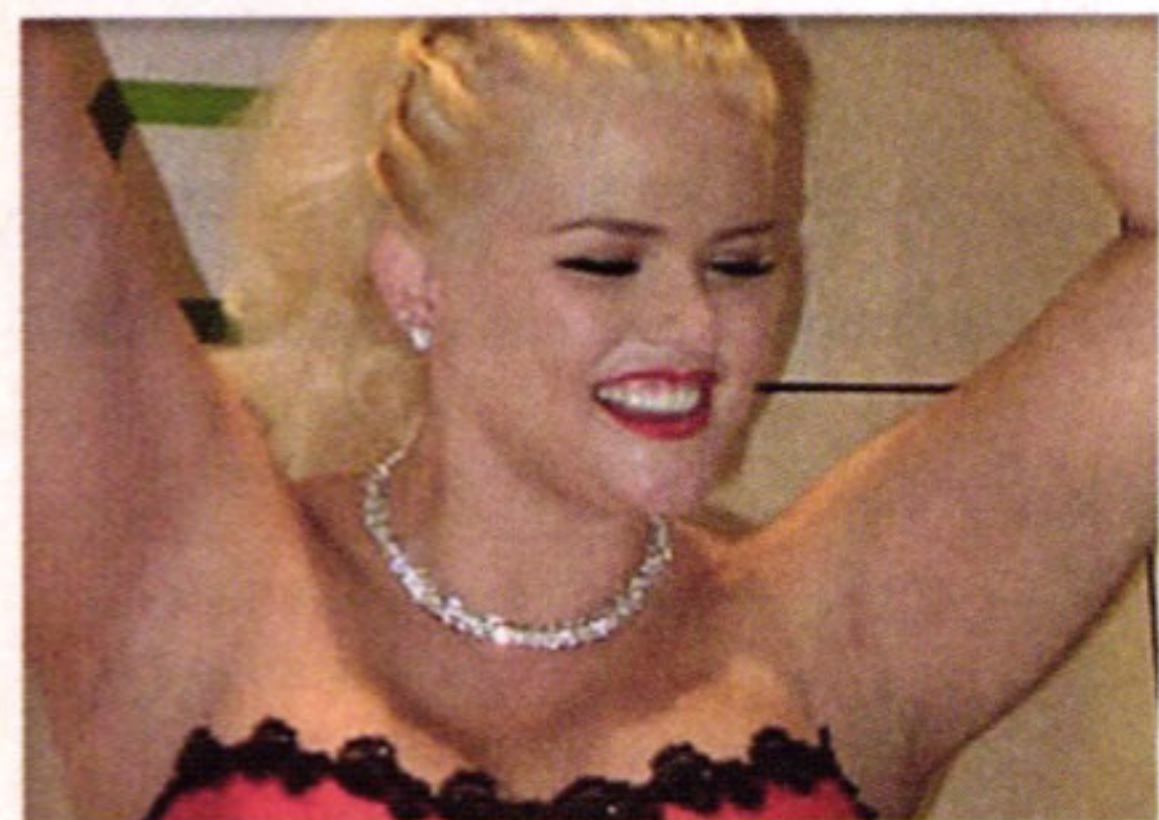


THURSDAY, MAY 15 3:30 PM

Snoop Down With Microsoft

A clean and sober Snoop refereed a Midnight Club II tournament at Microsoft, LBC-style!





THURSDAY, MAY 15 4:00 PM

Anna Nicole Smith Gets Around

Like a moth following the (pretty, pretty) bright lights, Anna Nicole flitted around the show floor on Thursday. After sneaking in the back door to Gotham Games' booth, Ms. Smith visited both Eidos and Microsoft, cutting a pretty wide wake. Rumor has it that she ate her dog Sugar Pie as an after-lunch snack.



THURSDAY, MAY 15 4:30 PM

Cold Concert

Midway has made a tradition of putting on late-afternoon concerts at E3, and Thursday the show rocked to the sounds of Cold, a heavy metal band that is officially friends of Limp Bizkit. Remember them? Sure, nü-metal is getting a little old; but Cold delivered all the nihilism, Rage Against The Machine riffs, and high-pitched whining that fans of the genre demand. It was almost enough to make us hate our parents, but we decided to hate your parents instead!



THURSDAY, MAY 15 7:00 PM

Bungie Fan Fest

No developer has a deeper relationship with its fans than Bungie. Want proof? Just look at these pictures of the Bungie Fan Fest, which was held after-hours at the Microsoft booth on Thursday. Over 200 members of the bungie.net community were invited in for an evening that featured food, drink, and the opportunity to pick the brains of the crew behind the best console FPS ever. Partygoers also got to check out a demo of Halo 2, engage in some impromptu LAN deathmatches, and check out models of an upcoming Master Chief action figure. Stuff like this would warm our heart, if we had one!



THURSDAY, MAY 15 8:00 PM

Sony Party

Sony always pulls out all of the stops for its Thursday night party, and this year was no exception. With a guest list that numbered in the thousands, this was the place to see and be seen for press, retailers, publishers, and developers alike. Of course, the free food and drink was flowing at a rate that must have had Kaz Hirai looking at his pocketbook, and that was only the beginning of the entertainment for the evening.

First up was the Foo Fighters, who played a blistering set of modern rock favorites. Things got even more interesting when frontman Dave Grohl invited one exceptionally drunk partygoer (named Brady) up on the stage after he had yelled out a request for Nirvana's "Smells like Teen Spirit." After declaring Brady Sony's "Employee of the Month" and teasing him about his tousled haircut, Grohl handed his guitar over and let the aspiring rocker rip out a butchered version of Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love" (complete with a screeching '80s-metal guitar solo).

Just when we thought things couldn't get any more weird, the night's "Surprise Guest" came on the second stage – none other than Dr. Funkenstein, George Clinton of Parliament Funkadelic. If this night was any indication, Mr. Clinton is keeping some strange company, as he was joined onstage by soul-freak diva Macy Gray and ex-Motley Crüe and home video star Tommy Lee! We're still trying to figure that one out. Still, this was one of the best Sony parties we've ever been to.



FRIDAY, MAY 16 9:30 AM

PERRIN KAPLAN | INTERVIEW

Perrin Kaplan is Nintendo of America's Vice President of Marketing and Corporate Affairs.

How has this show gone for Nintendo?

It's funny; I always think that people get really hyped over new hardware, and this year is again the year of software. There's a lot of emphasis everywhere on software, and it's clearly Nintendo's emphasis. It might not seem as sexy, but if you take a look at the variety of different games, it's impressive.

During the press conference, Mr. Iwata [president, Nintendo of Japan] was very frank about some of the mistakes that you've made, especially with third-party publishers. But, it doesn't seem like you've really addressed that issue. You have some high-profile support like the thing with Will Wright.

We had a lot of partners on that stage.

But, those seemed to be people that were coming to pay homage to Miyamoto.

I don't know. EA doesn't pay homage to anybody;

they are very much their own businesspeople.

So, where do you think your third-party support is then?

I think it's growing. I think we've been doing a good job with it, and you're seeing the fruits of that labor. I think you'll see that continue.

What were the mistakes that Mr. Iwata referred to?

I think that we didn't make them a priority, especially with the royalty structure. They are definitely a priority now, and he is working hard on that. The reason those people were up on the stage and we have exclusive deals is because we have been working on it. People don't take their whole company and say, "I'm going to have my company stand behind Nintendo because Miyamoto asked me." They are practical businesspeople. That said, they do respect him immensely. But business and admiration are two different things.

Nintendo has, thus far, taken a very "wait-and-see" approach towards the Internet. You've said that you don't think that the



"Nintendo is a very mass-market product company..."

PERRIN KAPLAN
VICE PRESIDENT OF
MARKETING &
CORPORATE AFFAIRS,
NINTENDO
OF AMERICA

business model is there to be profitable. Still, some companies, like Sony Online, are making money online.

I think it's more perception than reality, in that no one is making money on it, but there is a definite cool factor in doing it. Nintendo is a very mass-market product company; we don't do things that are niche, generally. We have yet to see an [online] application that is a "gotta-have" – or a product that is available to every home. Only 12 percent of families have broadband. That's not to say that we're not watching everything very carefully, but the fact is that this is not a profitable business for anybody.

Is Microsoft making a mistake by putting so much stock in Xbox Live?

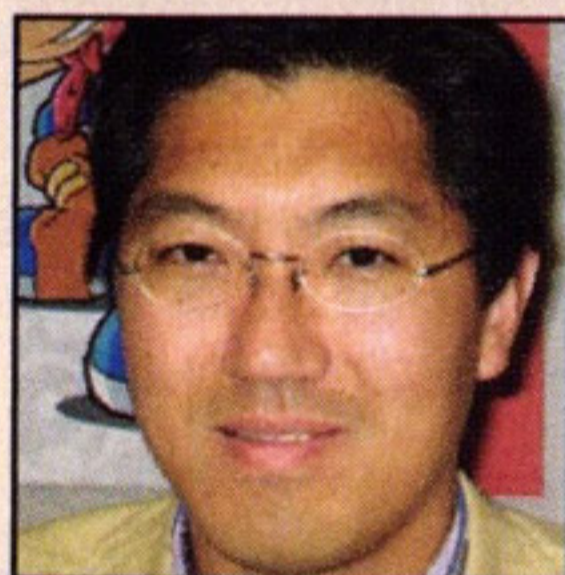
Boy, you'd have to ask them. All I can say is that they are a unique company around the world, in that no other company could survive losing money into perpetuity. It's just because Xbox is a division of the larger company that they are able to do this. Entering this market for them has come at a huge expense.

FRIDAY, MAY 16 10:00 AM

YUGI NAKA | INTERVIEW

FRIDAY, MAY 16 12:30 PM

GEORGE JUNTIFF | INTERVIEW



"Games are to make children happy."

YUGI NAKA
CREATOR OF SONIC

Yugi Naka, the man whose Sonic series helped put Sega on the map, was on hand to discuss his latest project, Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg.

Talk about Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg. How will this game differ from the ones you've done in the past? What new gameplay elements does it bring to the table?

As you know, it's an action game utilizing an egg. This is a little different than the usual action game, because you're not moving alone. You have to do everything with the egg. You can attack or move around with the egg. That's the biggest characteristic of this game.

When did the idea of having a character with an egg occur to you, and how did you come up with that concept?

In the beginning, we wanted to make a game with four-player fighting with balls by rolling them. At the same time, we wanted to make a very solid one-player game as well, and evolve a story. For

that reason, we decided to utilize an egg.

Is there a lack of originality in the game industry today?

I do feel that way. It feels like everybody's making the same thing. We are really trying hard to make something new, and to keep pushing ourselves in new directions. As for the other games, a lot of them are making the second or third sequel to the same game. But, the essence of the game is fun, so we have to make a new, fun thing in every game.

Recently, games like GTA have really pushed the limits of decency. Is this a wrong direction for our industry?

Games are to make children happy. That is our basic direction. Right now, many game people are getting really adult. We never change our direction; we always try to make children happy. Making really violent games is a trend. It's like the movie industry, some years are years of horror and some years are years of fantasy.



"...we don't go into the kind of things that other video games do."

GEORGE JUNTIFF
LT. COLONEL,
U.S. ARMY

George Juntiff is a Lt. Colonel in the U.S. Army and is an advisor on the America's Army free online game, available at www.ultimatearena.com.

How long have been involved with the game?

About two and a half years.

What capacity do you work in?

I work with the development team; I'm a design consultant and technical reference, that kind of thing. I make sure it's realistic and that it's consistent with what the Army does, so we don't go into the kind of things that other video games do.

How is your game different from other military games?

For one, we start out with training. You're going to have to go through the training, and get qualified, then join a squad online. Also, other games have mayhem, and we don't have mayhem. There are rules of engagement, there are laws of land warfare – you go to jail if you do

something wrong! [laughs] That doesn't happen in other games.

Do you guys see this game as a recruiting tool?

It's a strategic communication tool, to let people know what the Army is all about.

How close can a game come to capturing the real experience?

Very close. You move around the wrong way around a corner in a game, and get shot – that's it. You have to sit down and wait for the next round. You'll learn the better way to go around that corner – peek first, lean out, take a look, maybe throw out a smoke grenade, those kinds of things.

What has the reception to the game been?

The reception has been great. We just had our one-millionth graduate from basic training two weeks ago. That's not too bad. [laughs]

FRIDAY, MAY 16 2:30 PM

KOJI IGARASHI & MICHIRU YAMANE | INTERVIEW



Koji Igarashi



Michiru Yamane

"...my philosophy has always been about gameplay..."

KOJI IGARASHI
PRODUCER
MICHIRU YAMANE
MUSIC DIRECTOR
CASTLEVANIA

Koji Igarashi and Michiru Yamane have worked together on perhaps the best Castlevania ever: Symphony of the Night. Igarashi has also lead the series' recent GBA product.

Will you experiment with 3D on the PlayStation 2, yet continue to give fans 2D Castlevania on the GBA?

KOJI IGARASHI: In the 3D game, we think of it as a new start. It's my mission, so to speak, to make an original 3D title that works very well. In the case of 2D, it's just that I personally like working in 2D, and would like to continue to do so. However, with the PlayStation 2 market the way it is, if you create a 3D product of quality and a 2D product of quality, the 3D one is going to be rated higher because it's "new" technology.

Talk about perfecting the camera as you move into 3D.

KI: A lot of games are going for a more cinematic look, and it may look better for that, but from a gameplay perspective, it makes things more difficult. For example, if you take it from a single room, instead of flipping [the camera] around, just let it change subtly from where the player is the room, it will be centered more on the action. This lets you perform your various combos and fight sequences without ever having to worry about it flipping and changing your perspective.

Talk about making music for the GBA versus the PS2.

MICHIRU YAMANE: When you talk about composing music that's appropriate to the Castlevania series, my [technique] is to look at each stage's illustrations and designs; and then getting ideas from that and composing the music.

Why did you change the weapons system for Aria of Sorrow?

KI: Harmony of Dissonance was released in September, and Aria in May, and there wasn't even a year in between them. It was important to make big changes, which is why we decided to change it and the storylines around. It was a big gamble to give up the idea of sub-weapons, but it worked.

What does the future hold for video games?

KI: Creating games has become more and more expensive like the movie industry. It's no longer simple backyard teams. But, my philosophy has always been about gameplay, and Castlevania will concentrate on the gameplay aspects. [It] is maybe an experiment for me to see if gameplay is king or cinematics are king.

Top Ten

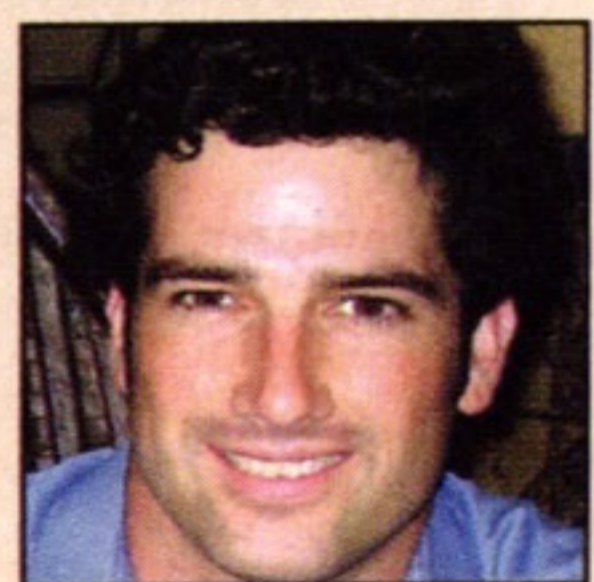


1 Half-Life 2
(Vivendi Universal/Valve)
- PC/Xbox

Simply astounding. Containing a great physics engine that delivers extraordinarily real characteristics to the environments, the demo of Half-Life 2 hands-down stole the show with its gorgeous outdoor environments and blistering action. The game comes out this fall (and later on the Xbox), and you should get a summer job to save up for the best video card money can buy to do this sucker justice.

FRIDAY, MAY 16 3:30 PM

BURTON ROBERTS | INTERVIEW



"The unveiling will be at the Ultimate Gamers Expo in August..."

BURTON ROBERTS
CMO
INFINIUM LABS

Burton Roberts is the CMO of Infinium Labs, the company that plans to bring gamers the Phantom console, a unit that would allow you to download games directly into its hard drive from a broadband connection.

What caused you to start the Phantom project?

We looked at the current distribution model for publishers. If you look at the cost of a game, 50 percent is going to the retail channel. Then there's the marketing and shipping charges. By the time it gets to the publisher and developer, they're not making that much money. With our system, we eliminate those costs. We can offer them more money than they're currently getting, and we can take more money - it's a win-win situation.

We're building our systems on demand, similar to Dell. We're selling them directly ourselves, and probably partner with eBay. But the big way we'll be distributing them is through the broadband providers. Since this is a broadband device; cable, DSL, and satellite providers love this idea because it helps push their services.

Could you walk me through what the typical experience would be for a gamer that buys a Phantom, hooks it up, and turns it on...

You turn it on, it's going to go through an 8 to 12 second boot-up sequence. It will take people to

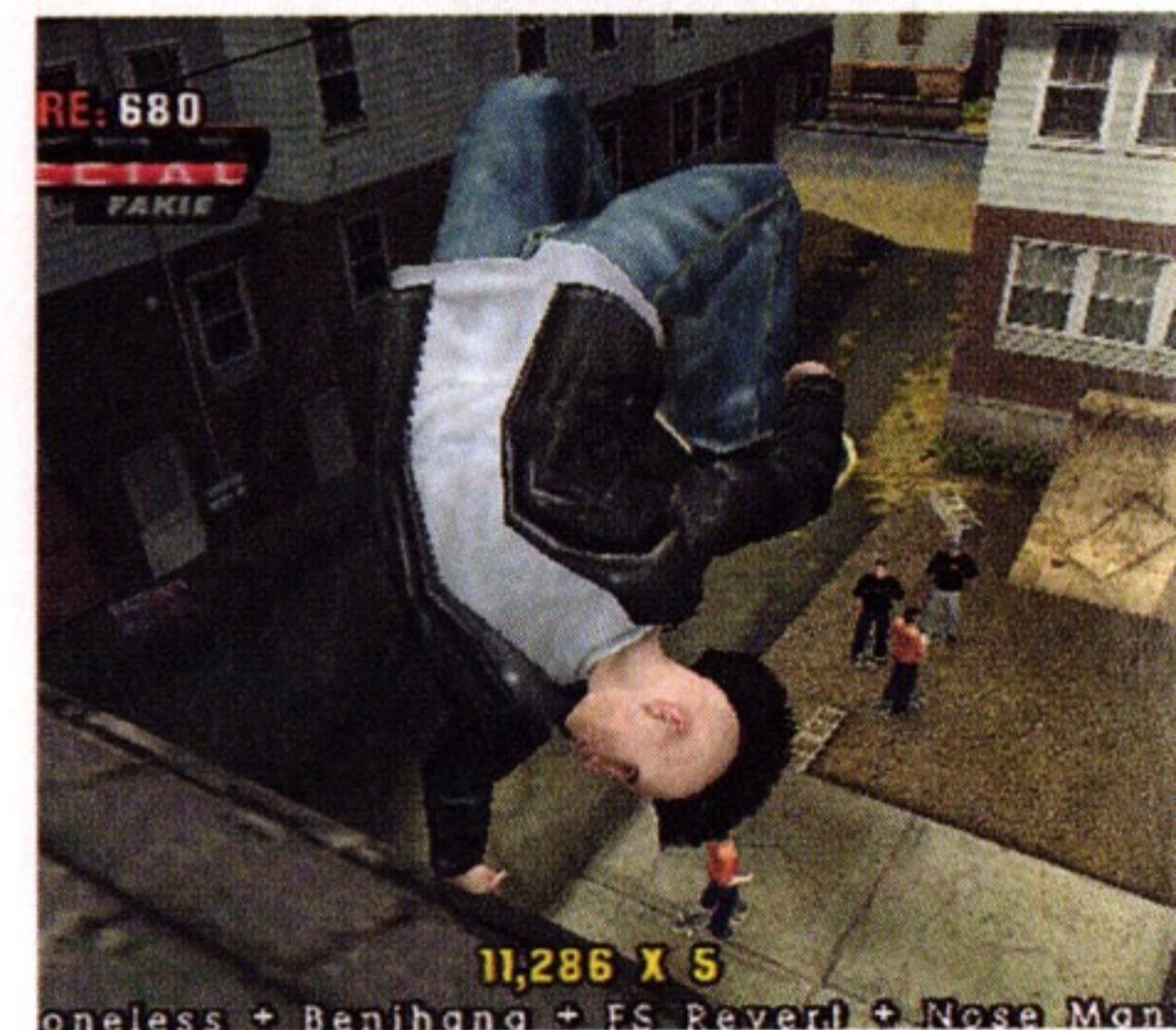
the main menu. The first time you turn it on, you configure the machine. Then, you'll be able to sort and search for games by genre or however you want to do it. Then, when you do find a game, you could watch a preview and get all the information about it, you could demo the game. You could rent it for one-time use, three days, a week, or flat-out buy it. There are a lot of different options for a consumer.

How many games is the hard drive able to hold?

The size of the hard drive will be an option when you buy, but it will be way greater than anything currently available. When you buy it online, you'll configure it with the controllers you want, the hard drive you want, and the amount of memory you want. There are some variables.

Have you announced any publishing partners yet?

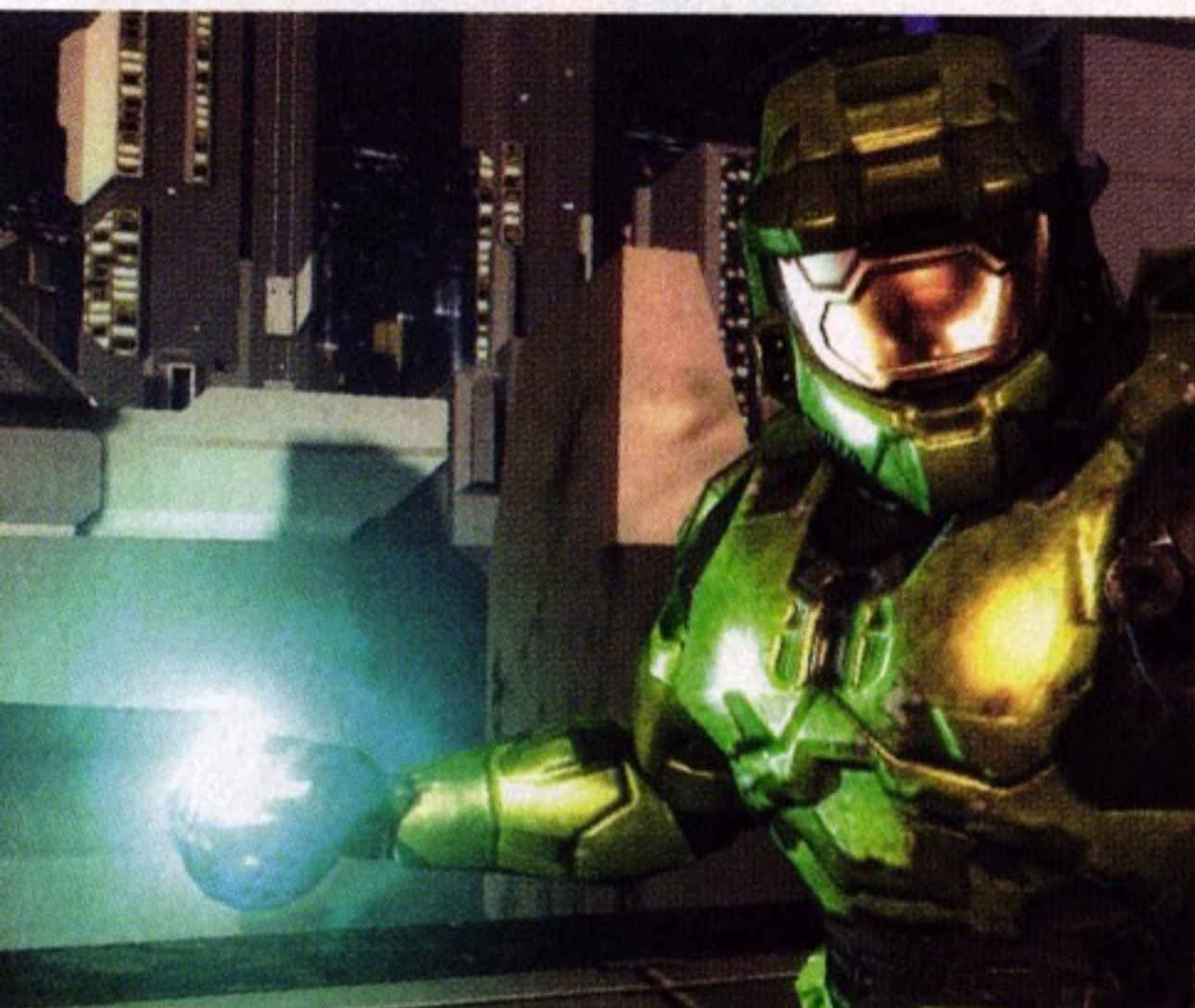
We've met with over 250 publishers and developers, and every single one is really excited from the standpoint that there are not that many alternative channels, so they can use all these games that they are currently sitting on. Keep an eye out over the next few months. The unveiling will be at the Ultimate Gamers Expo in August. We'll have some big announcements then about partnerships.



6 Tony Hawk's Underground
(Activision/Neversoft)
- PS2/Xbox/GC

Just when you were getting tired of playing Tony Hawk, he lets gamers insert their own personality into the game as they play out the career of an up-and-coming skater. In the process, this series just keeps getting deeper and even more addictive.

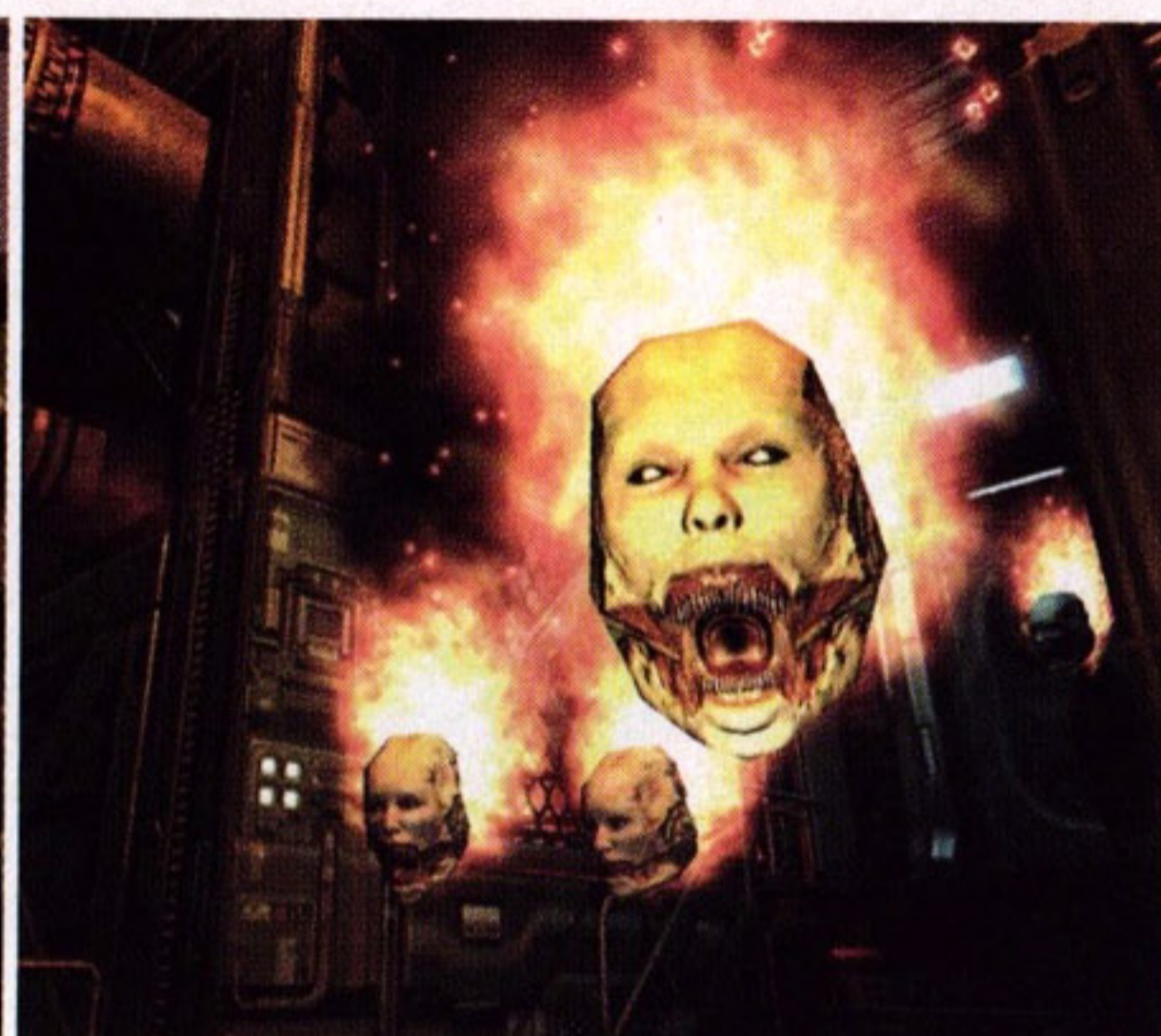
Games of E3 2003



2 Halo 2

(Microsoft/Bungie)
– Xbox

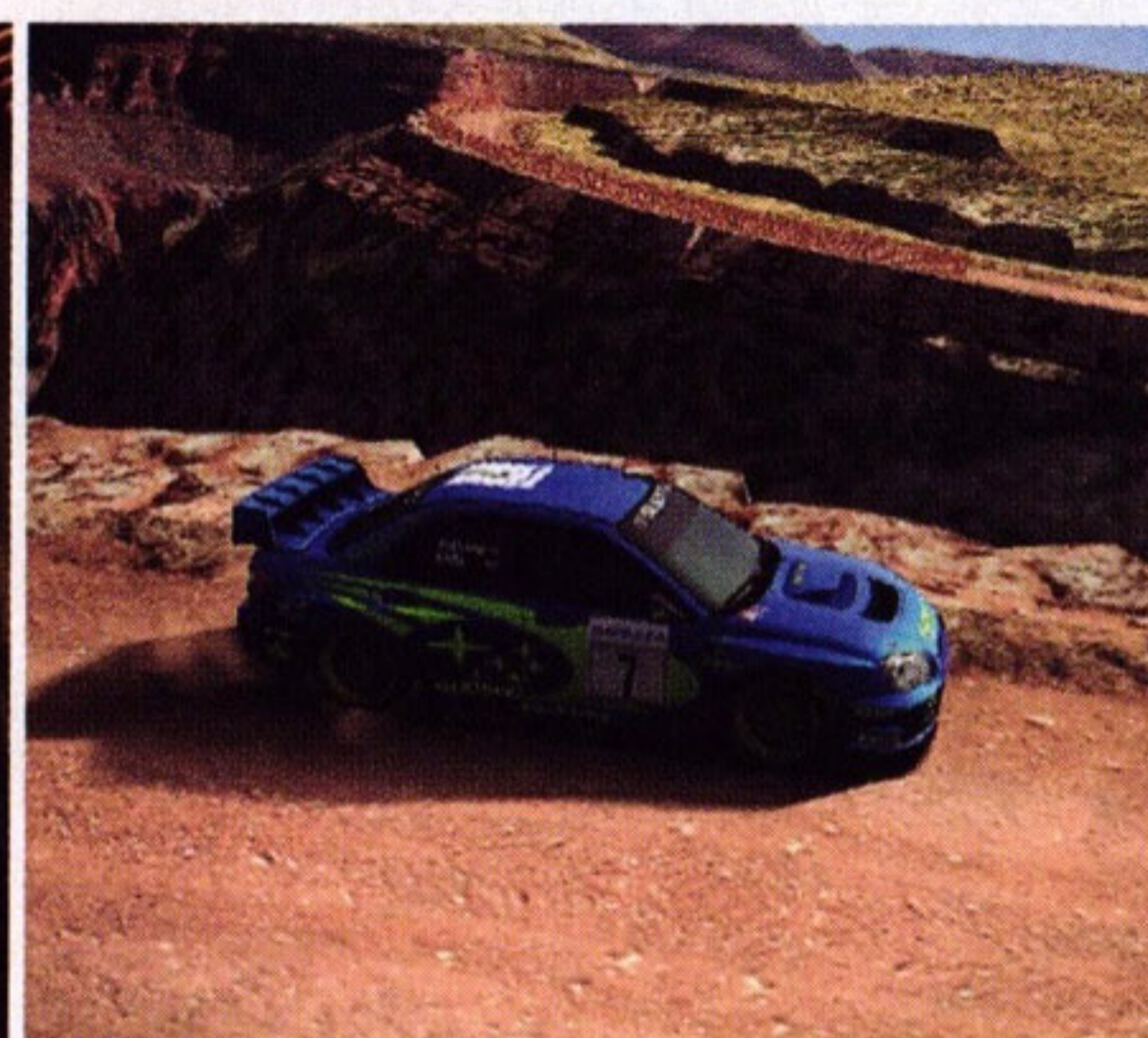
Delays into 2004 aside, Microsoft came out swinging with its best product, and it connected with gamers in a big way. What was great about the title's showing is that it was actual in-game footage. It showed Master Chief dual-fisting two submachine guns, kicking Covenant ass in a hellish cacophony of combat and death amid a city in ruins. Sweet!



3 Doom 3

(Activision/id Software)
– PC/Xbox

Doom 3 was the talk of the town last year, and even though it still wasn't playable, nobody doubts for a second that John Carmack will deliver the goods. One of the showcases of Microsoft's Xbox press conference, the game delights in its use of lighting and shadow to keep you on edge and your trigger finger ready. The game should be out before the end of the year.



4 Gran Turismo 4

(Sony Computer Entertainment/Polyphony Digital) – PS2

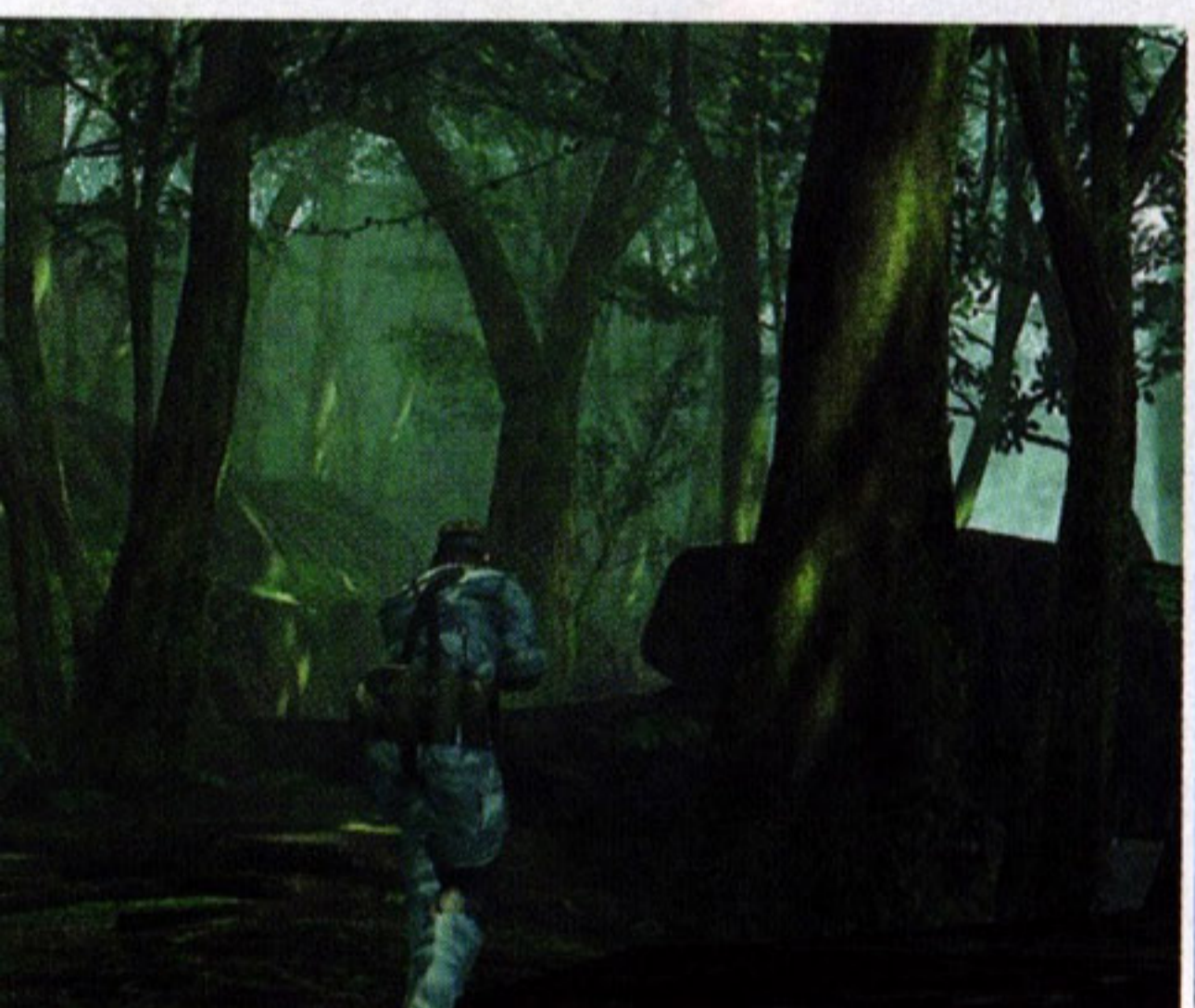
This game would sell millions even if it was an empty box, but that's not an excuse for developer Polyphony Digital to rest on its laurels. An online component has been added, and the environments and cars have been sculpted to wring every last drop out of the PlayStation 2. This series has defined the cutting edge for its competitors, and GT 4 only puts the pedal to the metal.



5 Fable

(Microsoft/Big Blue Box)
– Xbox

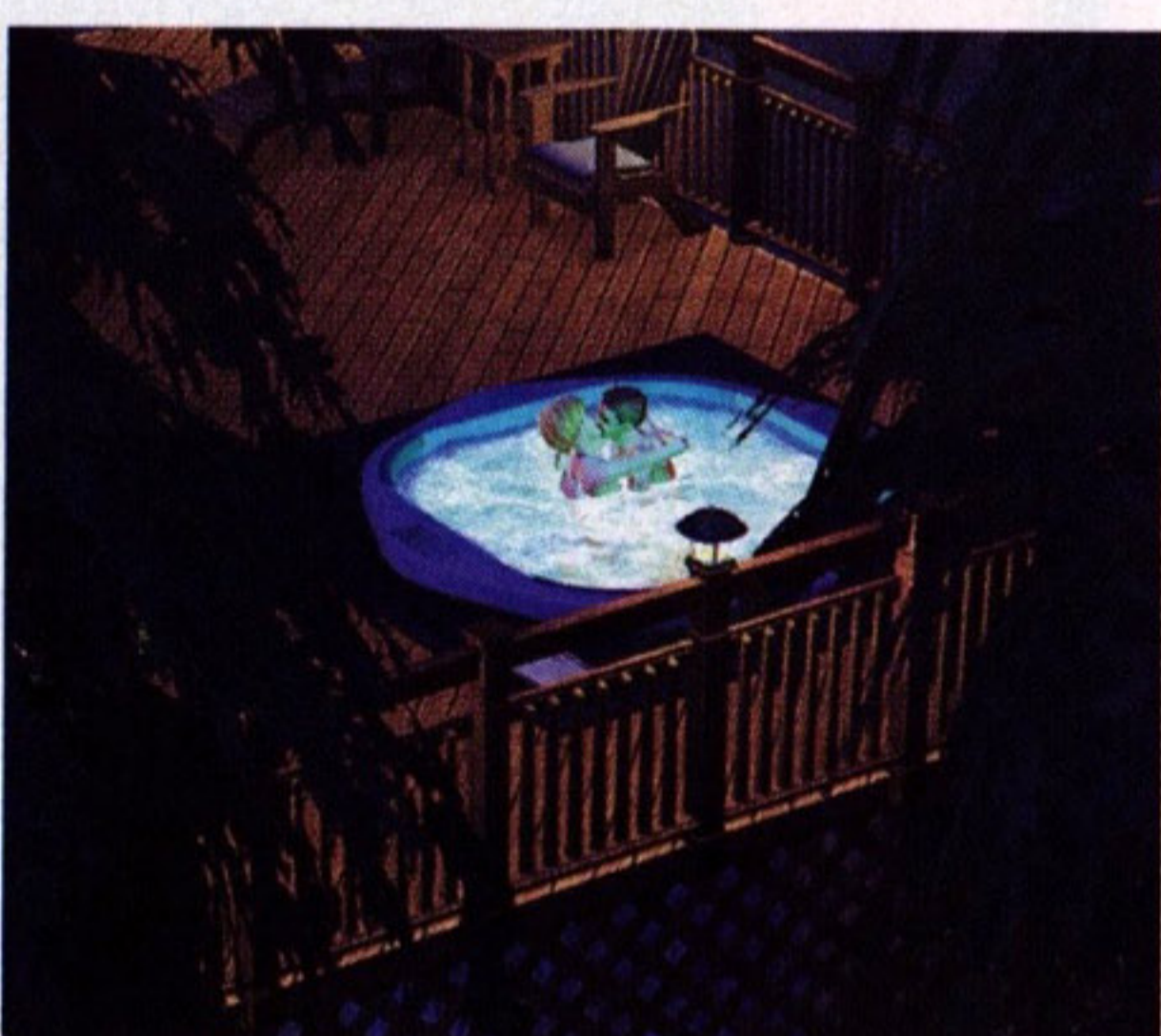
Peter Molyneux's evolving RPG tale wasn't playable on the show floor, but it was being demoed behind close doors and once daily at Microsoft's booth. Xbox gamers have been hanging their hat on this title, as it not only fills a genre void for the system, but does so in spectacular form.



7 Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater

(Konami) – PS2

For the third year in a row, Hideo Kojima has wowed audiences with a stunning new Metal Gear trailer. Snake eating...snakes?! Kojima's newest masterpiece is all about survival of the fittest, as you sneak through outdoor areas and eat animals to persevere. MGS 3 features an all-new engine, and it might even go online.



8 The Sims 2

(Electronic Arts/Maxis)
– PC

As deep as Will Wright's Sims world has been, gamers are going to be taken to realms they've never dreamed of with Sims 2 (early 2004). Not only will you produce children, but you'll play as multiple generations of Sims, as you work to pass your DNA on down the line. You'll get so wrapped up in your Sims' biological clock that you just might ignore your own.



9 SSX 3

(EA BIG/EA Canada)
– PS2/Xbox/GC

SSX is getting itself off the track and going down the deep end. Levels have opened up considerably, letting you traverse a whole mountain's worth of races, challenges, and more. The Uber trick system has been redone and is better than ever.



10 Mario Kart: Double Dash

(Nintendo) – GC

Rounding out the top ten, Nintendo comes back with an old favorite featuring a new twist. Companions are hitching a ride and causing trouble for the competitors. Anyone who calls this a game for your kid sister's going to get a banana in the face – and love it.

STREETS ARE FOR WUSSIES

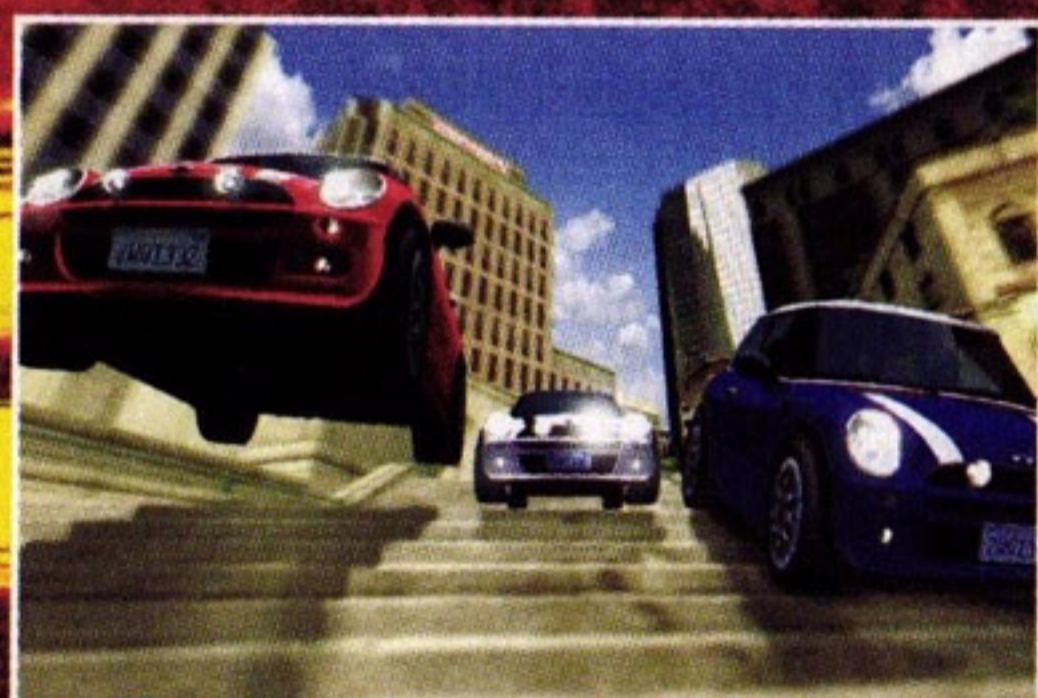


PlayStation 2

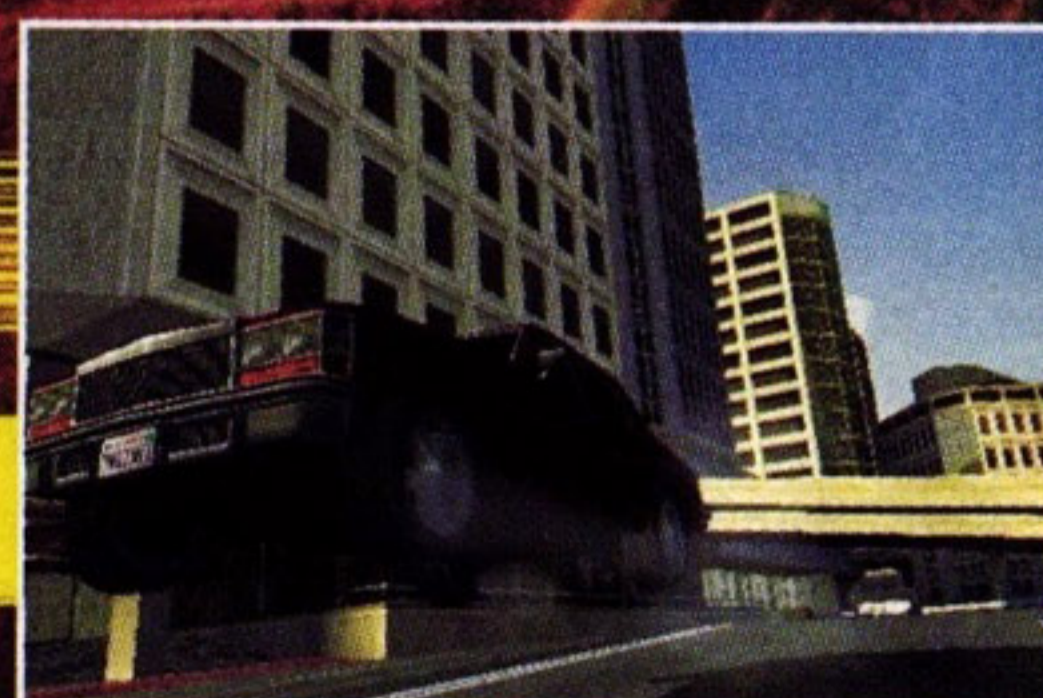
SEE THE
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Who needs pavement when you're behind the wheel of a souped-up MINI Cooper? Tear through subway stations, rip apart golf courses, and plow through storm drains as you pull off the ultimate gold heist.

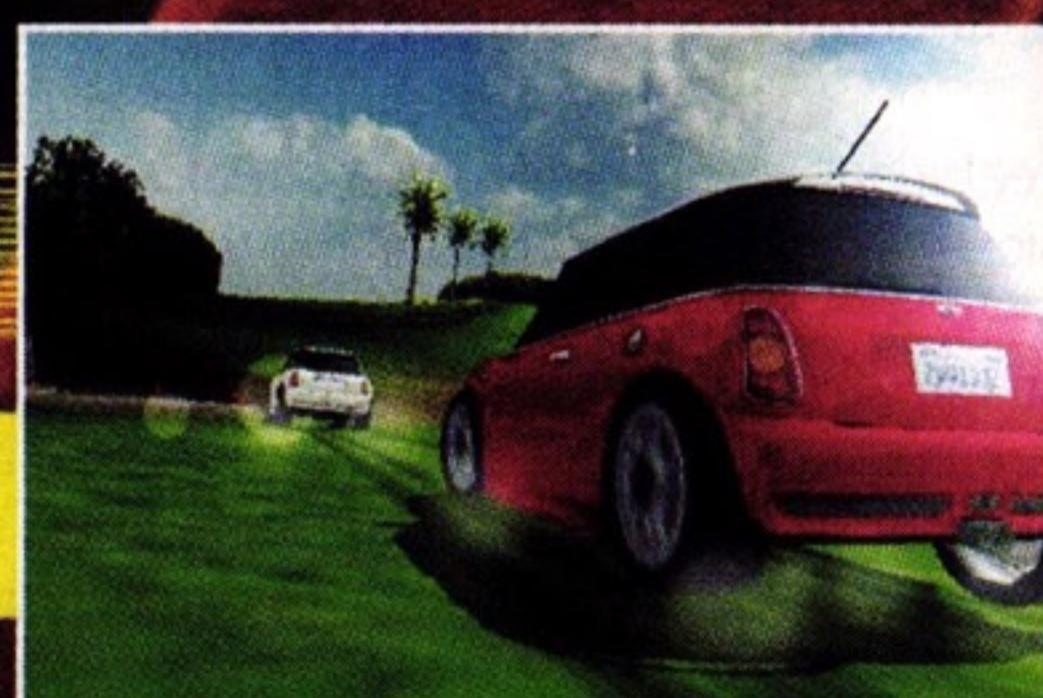
THE ITALIAN JOB[®]



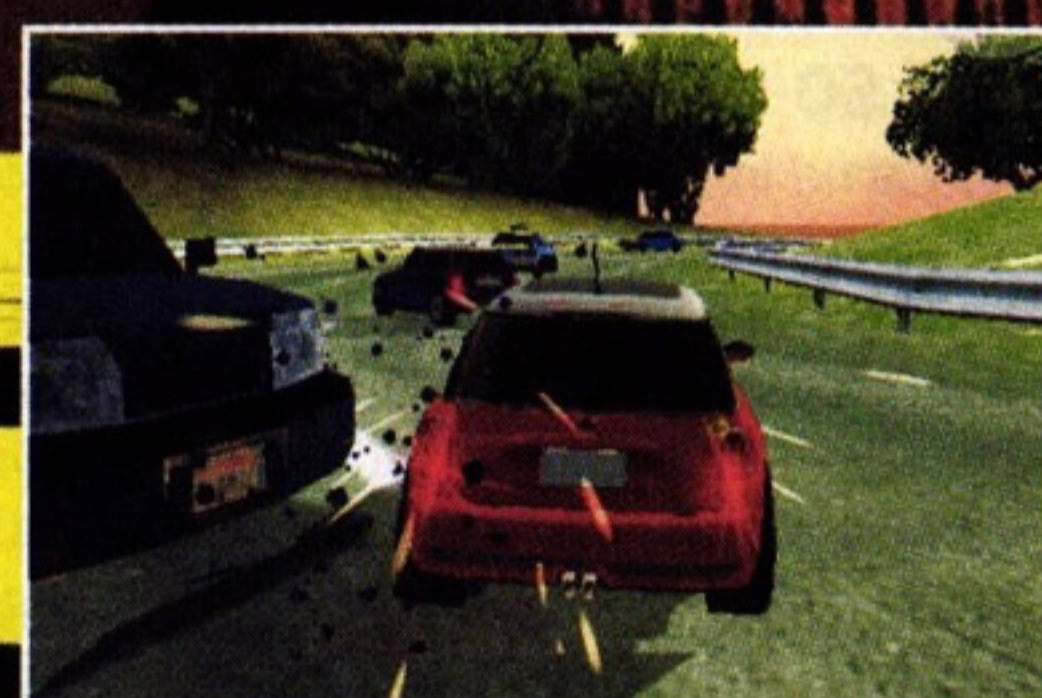
A high-octane arcade racer based on the blockbuster movie.



Race through L.A. driving 10 different vehicles.



Master 4 modes from death-defying stunt driving to multiplayer madness.



Bonus features including movie footage, interviews, and more!

CLimax

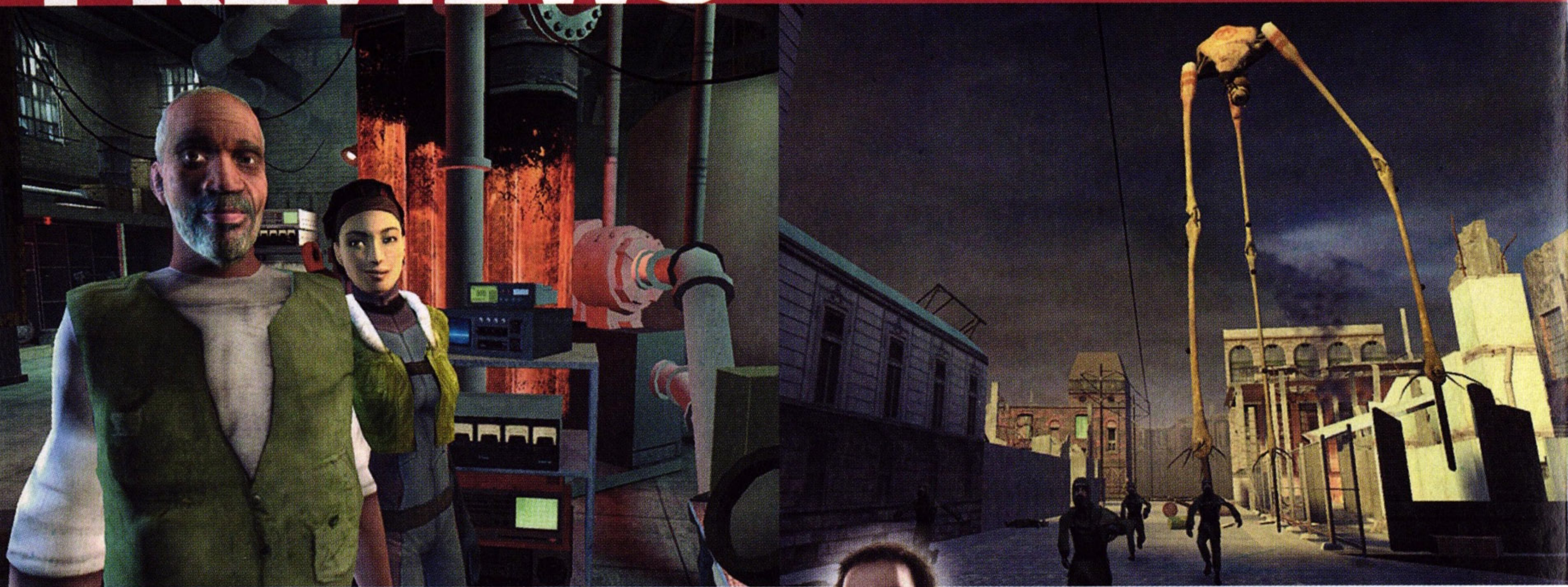


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PREVIEWS



PC/XBOX

HALF-LIFE 2

UN-FREAKING-BELIEVABLE

Every once in a long while, a game comes along that just floors us. Half-Life 2 is one of these games. It's spectacular. The graphics are pushed to the limit with amazing attention to detail. The gameplay is supported by a phenomenal physics engine that not only gives the player a realistic world, but believable and challenging gameplay choices. After Half-Life 2 releases, nothing will ever be the same. Simply because of its innovations, your perception of what a game should be will change.

THE BASICS

As expected, Half-Life 2 brings back the likable hero Gordon Freeman as he fights a new alien force that presumably stems from experiments that took place at Black Mesa. Valve is revealing little on the story penned by Mark Laidlaw at the moment, but it did disclose that you are in City 17 and accompanied by the lovely Alyx Vance (the good-looking lady in the pictures). The rest of the story will unveil itself in Half-Life 2's 12 missions.

WHY IT'S SO IMPRESSIVE

The demo Game Informer saw started off in a room featuring various objects placed around its sparse design. Basically, this is the proof of concept room showing how all the elements of Half-Life 2 work together – most importantly, how the physics engine works and affects the world around it. For example, wood acts and sounds like wood. You shoot it with a gun, and it splinters. You shoot it enough, and its entire structural integrity will fail.

Sounds simple enough – but in practice, it's truly astonishing to see. Valve gives us other examples: Blast a watermelon, and it blows pieces all over the wall. Shoot a metal sheet, and a convincing sound effect and ricochet result.

Then, Valve showed us a magnetic weapon that can pick up and launch almost any item. In one such sequence, the gun wraps its energy beam around a mattress lying against

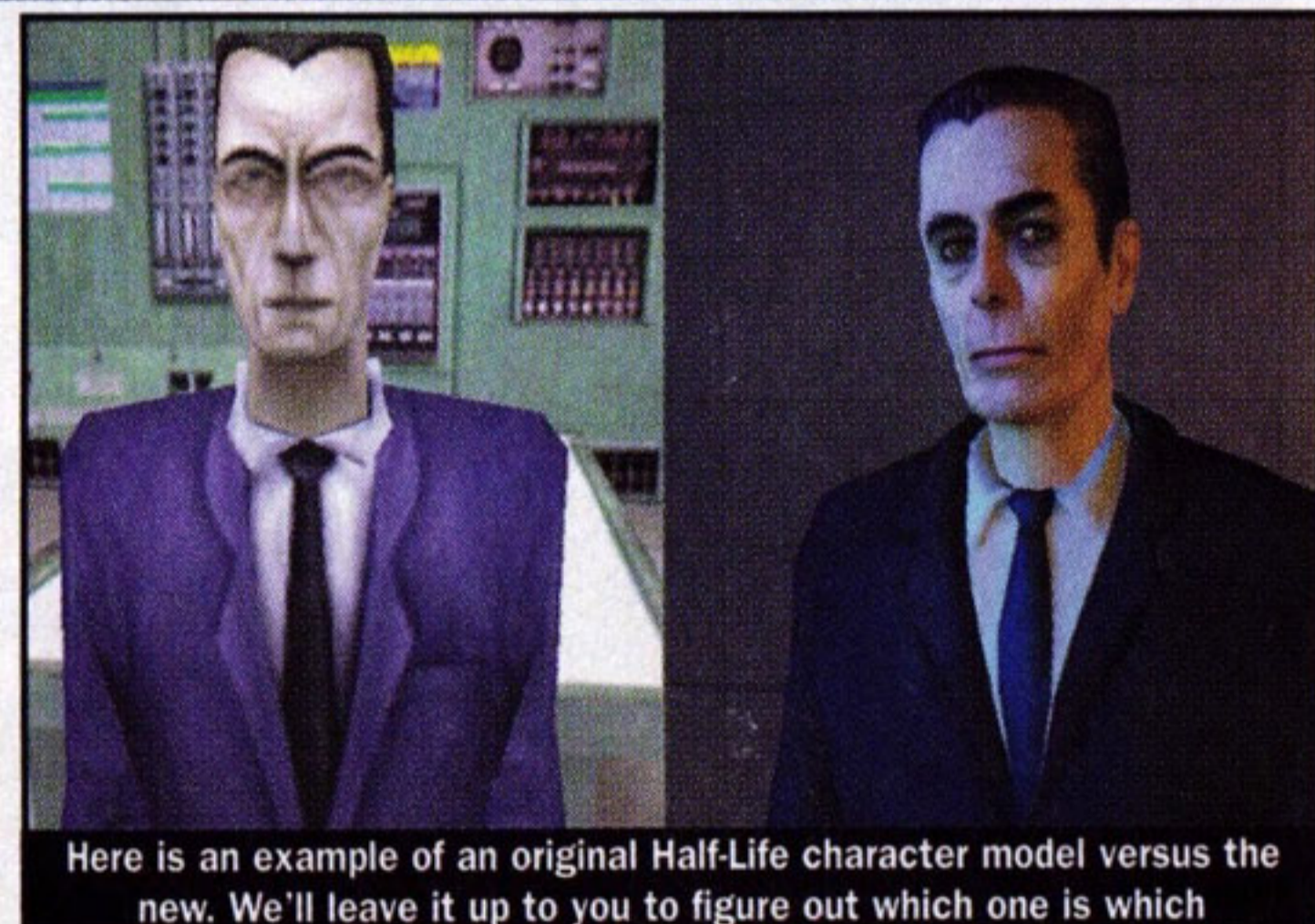
a wall and then starts to swing the thing around the room. While we personally have never seen a mattress fly around a room, it looks all too convincingly real. The mattress flops and folds as it makes contact with metal, wood, fruit, or whatever else is lying around – each and every item follows all the rules of mass, friction, gravity, and buoyancy.

IN PRACTICE

Okay, we have proof of concept. Now what does it mean to in-game scenarios? It means a lot. The next demo we witnessed has Gordon blasting his way through various soldiers. The human characters, like the wood and mattress, all have realistic rag doll physics. Shoot a guy at the top of the stairs and he tumbles down; swing a metal pipe at his mid-section and he folds. Moving through the environment, Gordon uses the magnetic weapon once more to blast a barrel at a pursuer. It merely slows him down. Gordon enters a nearby room, and pushes a desk in front of the door. The soldier starts unloading on him from the window. You can see the glass break and the blinds move. He rips a radiator from the wall and hurls it at the soldier.

Encountering a set of enemies below, Gordon blasts a couple of shots into the crowd. They start to unload massive amounts of lead at our hero. You see wood chips fly and hear the metal resonate as it protects you. Leaning over, Gordon realizes he will lose if he keeps up the firefight. So, he turns and blasts to his right. A structure falls and a huge steel girder suspended by wires swings through the pack of soldiers. Barrels, wood, and bodies fly. Some of the smarter enemies hide against the wall. Drat, they are out of reach. So, Gordon takes out a crowbar and knocks out the supports beneath a nearby garbage bin. It creaks, and slowly falls, crushing the soldiers below. Next...

A single blade sits in a room. Gordon checks its out – it swings lightly back and forth. Ten grotesque looking creatures approach. Gordon drops to the ground and turns



Here is an example of an original Half-Life character model versus the new. We'll leave it up to you to figure out which one is which

on the engine that drives the blade. It slices the minions in half. The top halves keep coming.

Following this amazing sequence is another interesting test in physics. Gordon hops in a dune buggy as a large, almost manatee-looking ship rains bullets from a Gatling gun of epic proportions. The chase is on. As Gordon drives around the absolutely gorgeous environments, he runs over soldiers who tumble across his hood. He blasts buildings, barrels – you name it. He drives up and off numerous ramps and eventually ends up getting cornered by the flying craft above. Gordon ducks for cover under a nearby car. As the sound of bullets perforating the car fills your ears, you can see the force of the bullets push the vehicle on top of you as nearby cars blow up. Then, a ray of hope: Gordon grabs a rocket launcher that he hopes will down the unrelenting fighter. Two rockets are fired, then the ship rears and stumbles like a dying bull. Dying but not dead, it turns its mass on Gordon. Shaking the ground and sending cars tumbling into the air, the lumbering beast slides up the street in perhaps the most amazing show of video game technology ever seen. It looks better than most movies and it's certainly more terrifying.

This is just the tip of the iceberg – showing things that Gordon can and will encounter on his adventures. From the lumbering Striders that rip a City 17 block to shreds to amazing team-based AI, Half-Life 2 promises to be a defining moment in the history of video games. Even more impressive is that the development team at Valve doesn't even blink when it says that the game will ship for PC on September 30. An Xbox version has also been confirmed, but there is no further information than that. We know we'd be more than impressed if Xbox could pull off a fraction of the amazing things that Half-Life 2 does on PC.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL ■ **DEVELOPER** VALVE ■ **RELEASE** SEPTEMBER 30 (PC), XBOX (TBA)



Half-Life 2 is quite simply the most gorgeous game we have ever seen

Ally and enemy units no longer haphazardly engage in combat. They can assess threats, navigate tricky terrain, and fashion weapons from whatever is at hand

At one point in the game, you are able to control a hive of alien creatures that you can send to eviscerate enemy patrols





PLAYSTATION 2

GRAN TURISMO 4

PLAYSTATION 2'S DRIVING FORCE

If you are experiencing conflicting thoughts as to whether or not the screenshot of the Grand Canyon is real, all we have to say is join the club. As crazy as this may sound, Gran Turismo 4 is blurring the boundaries between what's real and what's not. The photo-realistic quality of its texturing is found throughout every inch of the game. From the car models that are each comprised of 4,000 polygons, to the flashing NASDAQ sign and MTV studio in the game's recreation of New York's Times Square, developer Polyphony Digital has seemingly raised the bar as to what we can expect from PlayStation 2 software.

The graphical touches will most certainly get your blood pumping, but it's the new material that has been included that will make you freak out and count the days until the game hits store shelves. Polyphony Digital's president Kazunori Yamauchi is confident that Gran Turismo 4 will feature the largest assortment of cars in the series. Right now, the garage is crammed to capacity with well over 500 vehicles that break down as standard, convertible, modified street, and racing (open-wheeled, rally, etc). Dealerships will once again sell used cars, and from what we hear, the game also boasts classic rides as well as a museum. As always, all of the vehicles in the game are fully customizable. Presently, it is not known if changes will be shown cosmetically.

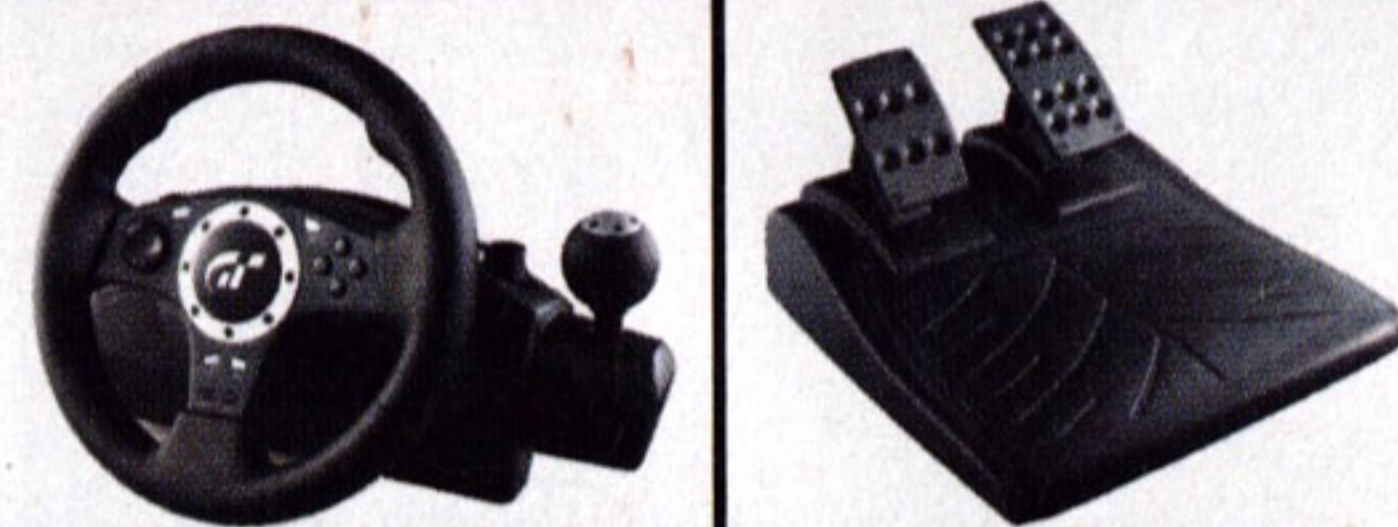
On the racing end, the pack is still limited to just six cars, but the AI has been enhanced dramatically.

Computer drivers will learn from their mistakes and will show true human traits like being courteous or downright aggressive. Along with Tsukuba Race Circuit, the game will boast over 50 different tracks (many of which can be raced in reverse). Since the gameplay and physics engine have been refined to such a point that handling is second nature, all of the courses are tighter in design. On one particular rally track, we watched a car come screaming into a turn. A crowd of dozens of rendered onlookers showed true realism as their cheering transformed into fear, then flight as the car sped toward them. Authenticity along these lines is now included in pitting as well. A full crew will assist in prepping your car to continue the race. No word has been given as to how deep this aspect is, but we have a feeling that you'll be able to upgrade your pit team throughout the course of the game.

The biggest addition to this year's game is the Online Arena, which allows up to six players to hop online and compete for bragging rights or even pink slips. From what we hear, voice chat won't be supported, but you will be able to communicate with others either through the controller or perhaps a USB keyboard.

An exact release date hasn't been issued just yet, but we have a feeling that Gran Turismo 4 will be PlayStation 2's premiere title for the upcoming holiday season.

Realism in Your Hands



The Logitech Driving Force Pro steering wheel peripheral is designed specifically for Gran Turismo 4. This is the first force feedback wheel to feature 900 degrees of rotation. Up until now, other wheels only featured 300 degrees or less. This feature mimics the turning radius of an authentic streetcar. The 10" wheel features a leather-textured rubber mold, an aluminum center hub, and a shift knob that was inspired by Italian performance cars. The wheel also boasts paddle shifters on the back to simulate Formula-style racing. The pedals are weighted and feature a unique carpet grip system that can withstand any amount of pressure you apply to the gas. Conversely, if you're playing on a hard surface, the base has no-slip pads. No price has been given yet, but it will ship on the same date as the game.

Terrain is mapped realistically in the car reflections



■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 6-PLAYER VIA NETWORK ADAPTOR OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA ■ **DEVELOPER** POLYPHONY DIGITAL ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



The pack is still just six cars



Rally racing is dramatically enhanced through the new physics engine



All of the vehicles in the game can be customized to the driver's liking



Thus far, the game already consists of over 500 different rides

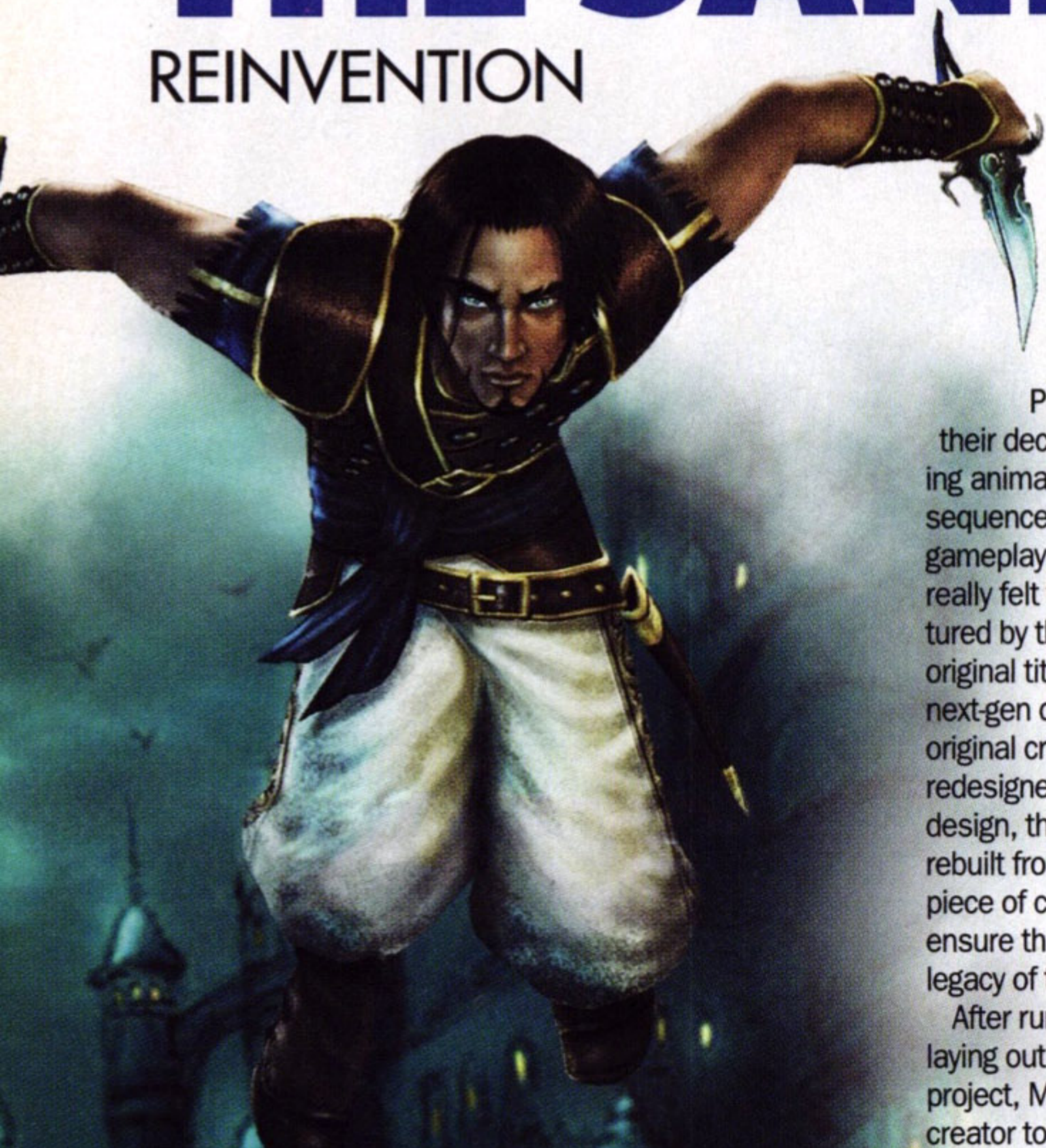




PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC/GBA

THE PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

REINVENTION



Gamers revere the first two Prince of Persia titles as Holy Grails – examples of the action/adventure genre’s continual innovation and sense of immersion. When Ubi Soft started molding the ideas for a new Prince title, their Montreal team sat down to determine what made the first games so unique, groundbreaking, and exciting.

Producer for The Sands of Time, Yannis Mallat, sums up their decision, “Three major elements struck us: the astonishing animations and character movements, the intense fight sequences, the clever and challenging level design, and the gameplay built around that design.” Going on, Mallat states, “We really felt that the ‘true’ Prince of Persia essence was best captured by the first two games, and that drawing inspiration from the original titles was the best way to bring the license successfully to next-gen consoles. Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time is in fact an original creation itself. Apart from the name, everything has been redesigned and rethought. The Prince, the environments, the game design, the story – they’ve all been rebuilt from scratch. Trust me; it was no piece of cake, but it was the only way to ensure that this game will live up to the legacy of the brand.”

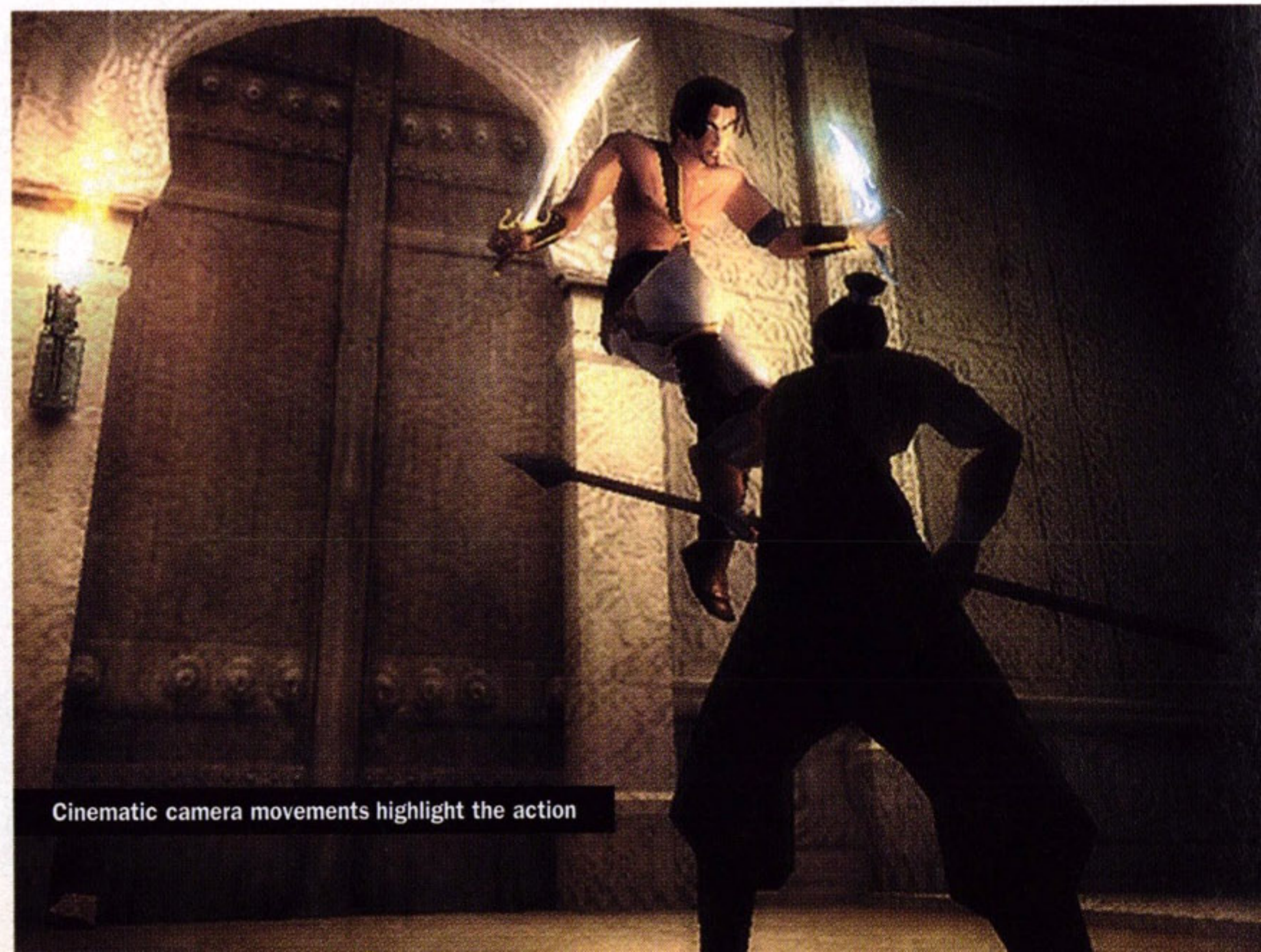
After running animation tests and laying out their design intentions for the project, Mallat invited Prince’s original creator to Montreal. When Jordan Mechner (Prince of Persia creator and consultant on Sands of Time) saw their work, he immediately realized that, “This was more than a business proposition to them [Ubi Soft]. They were out to make a masterpiece.” Mechner agreed to consult on the project, focusing on the story and how to integrate it seamlessly into the game. “The story drives the game, and the gameplay drives the story.” This was a philosophy

Mechner had applied to the original and was insistent that it be applied to Sands of Time.

Although the Prince character remains the same, the all-new story does not tie into the series’ first two titles. In Sands of Time, our young Prince is tragically drawn to a magic dagger. Harnessing this dark weapon, he is corrupted, and unleashes a deadly evil upon his father’s vast empire. To reclaim the cursed Palace and restore peace to the land, our hero snaps out of it and calls upon the feminine wiles of a seductive princess and the unmatched powers of the Sands of Time. He must master the Sands, or be buried by its will.

Ubi Soft Montreal is promising to release the new Prince title on the three home consoles, Game Boy Advance, and PC this November.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE
■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT MONTREAL
■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER



Cinematic camera movements highlight the action



Light effects and extremely detailed environments abound

PLACES TO GO

Using a modified version of the JADE engine (designed for Ubi Soft's *Beyond Good & Evil*), *Sands of Time* displays an unrivaled amount of environmental effects. Ubi Soft Montreal was also responsible for the recent hit and graphical marvel, *Splinter Cell*. Claude Langlais (lead engineer for *Sands of Time*) explains the interaction between the teams, "We developed our environment interaction system based on something done in *Splinter Cell*, and the drapes in *Splinter Cell* were based on a constraint system originally developed for *Sands of Time*." As the team had determined, the environments in *Prince of Persia* have always been important in the storytelling, mythology, and gameplay of the titles. Animation art director Alex Drouin says about the player's interaction with the environments, "Basically, if you can see it, you can play with it. It's all about the interaction between the Prince and the environment – objects, walls, ropes, poles, beams, ledges, curtains. In addition, the Prince is affected by his environment: For example, the wind affects his hair, his clothes, and even his behavior."



MOVING AROUND

Arguably, the most innovative part of the first *Prince* games was the leap that those titles made in character animation. Drouin asserts, "We developed an incredible array of movements that the Prince uses to explore the Palace, avoid traps, and fight enemies. For example, a physics effect is used to animate secondary action and elements like hair, clothing, and wall hangings. It provides an extra sense of life and movement to the hand-animated characters." In addition to revolutionary character animation, much effort has been put toward making the camera movement dynamic without sacrificing the player's ability to see everything that's going on. Creative director Patrice Désilet explains the camera system, "The player can completely control the camera with the right joystick, although we do provide some camera path in each room. Aesthetic comes from a pretty cool idea that we call an alternate cam – it's another camera that a player can access at will that delivers a different look at any given location, with an emphasis on visual quality. And, the fighting camera that we developed provides a very Hong Kong movie feel to the in-game battles."



Battles will continue outdoors



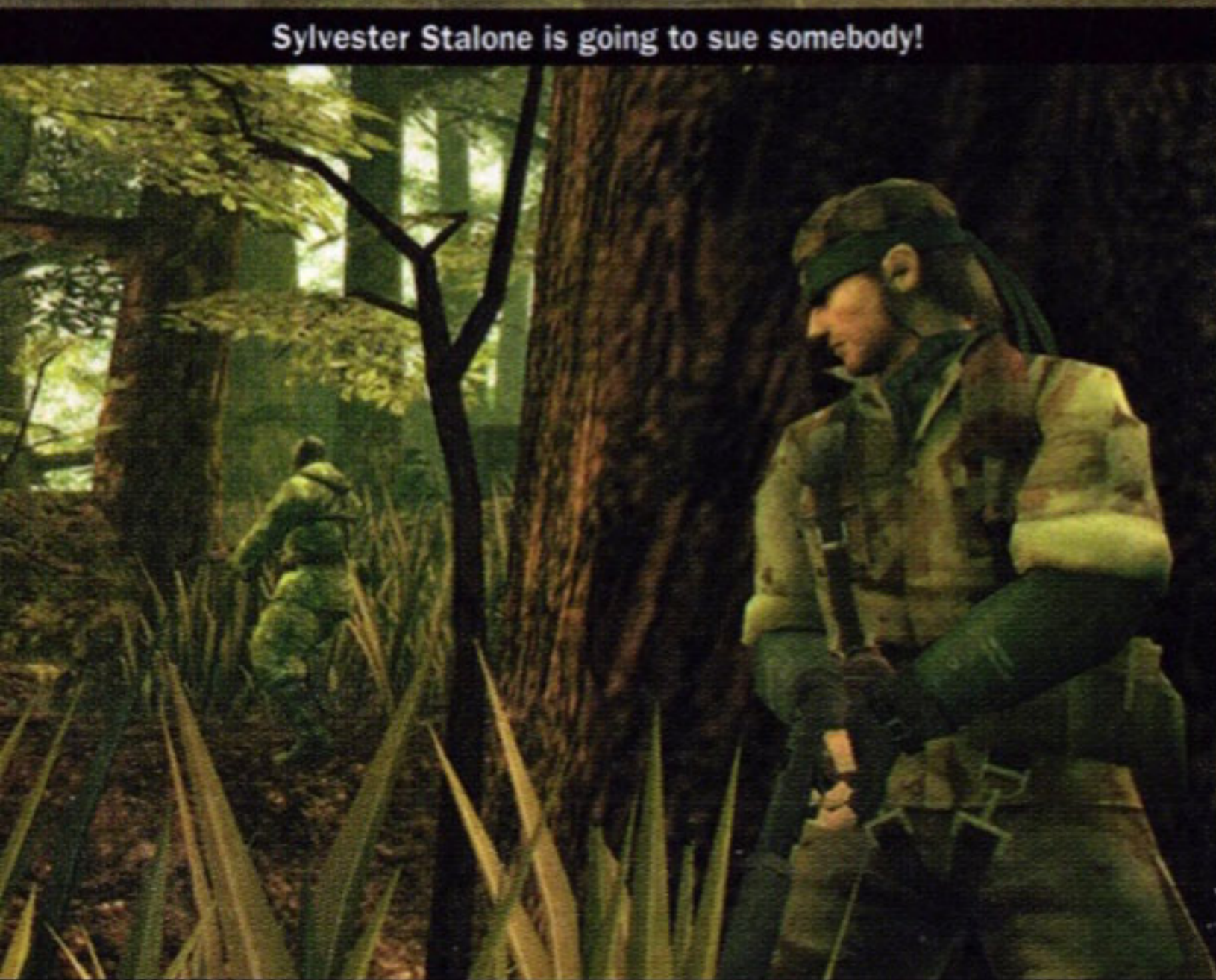
The GBA version won't disappoint with its classic gameplay



Enemy types evolve as the game progresses



"So sorry! I made your arm fall off!"



PLAYSTATION 2

METAL GEAR SOLID 3: SNAKE EATER

ENTERING RAMBO'S PLAYGROUND

Within two years, Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty has sold over 7 million copies on the PlayStation 2 and has already surpassed the mark of 6 million set by its PSone predecessor. Rather than sticking with what works, the series' creator Hideo Kojima and his team at Konami Computer Entertainment Japan have opted to rebuild the game from the ground up for the highly anticipated sequel, Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater. "We think we pushed the console to its limits with the previous game," Kojima comments. "Now we're creating a whole jungle in the game, and we couldn't work with the old engine anymore. So we're basically throwing that out and redoing a new engine for the game."

The jungle atmosphere is a shocking change from Snake's familiar steel surroundings, but we get the feeling that this is a setting that Kojima has been hoping to integrate since the beginning of the series. "In a real infiltration mission, you never land right near the secret enemy base," comments Kojima. "What you do is you land maybe 100 miles from that base in the desert, in the jungle, and maybe you walk, crawl, swim, and then approach the secret base. Why we didn't do that until now is that we couldn't show the grass, desert, and jungle in the game. Now that we can do it, that's why you start there."

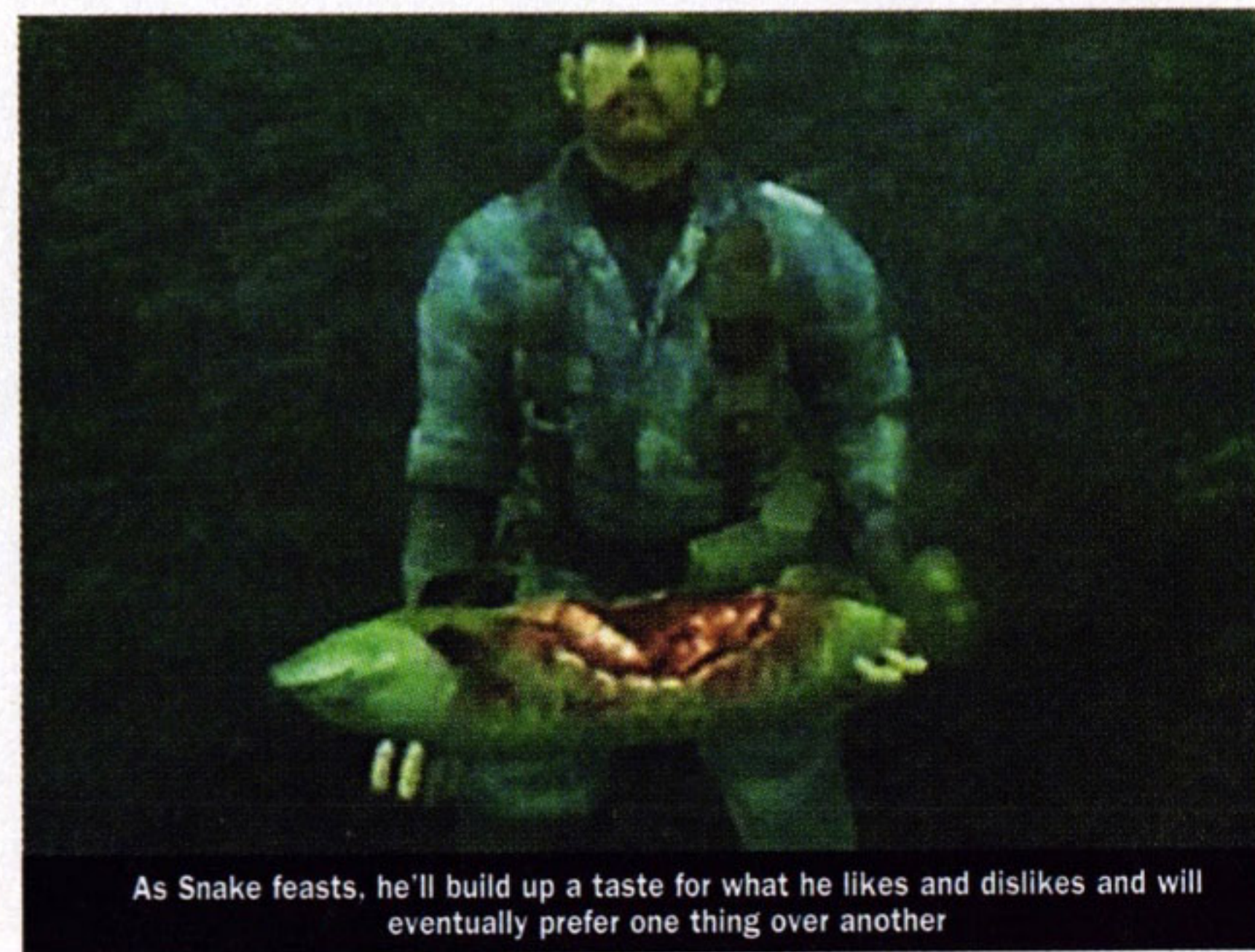
In the 10-minute demo that we were privileged to see, Snake feels at home amid the vines and trees. Wearing camouflage head-to-toe and still sporting his stylish mullet and Rambo-like bandana, Snake's sneaking prowess has expanded greatly. He can blend with the foliage, wait until an unsuspecting guard passes, then lash out and slit his throat. More impressive yet, we witnessed a scene where Snake dangles from a branch with one arm and fires on a trooper with the other.

Given the fact that the environment is alive, enemy forces are not the only thing Snake needs to worry about. Players will be able to interact with their surroundings just as they would in the real world. You never really know when

a poisonous critter will drop from the treetop canopy or slither out from the jungle's thick underbrush. Survival also comes into play as Snake will need to hunt for food. As the name of the game implies, you'll be able to feast on snakes, as well as fish and other forms of wildlife.

"The tension is much higher than the other games," adds Kojima. "You really don't know where the enemies will be shooting from in this jungle system." To add to the intensity of this foreign surrounding, the game will support Dolby 5.1 for all portions of the game.

Kojima was unwilling to talk about the title's story arc, but there have been subtle hints that the Soviet Union is involved in some capacity. From what we've seen thus far, Metal Gear Solid 3 is shaping up to be a welcome change for the series, but at the same time, an extension of the game that we know and love. As of press time, Konami wasn't willing to give a specific release date, but rather a vague 2004 listing.



As Snake feasts, he'll build up a taste for what he likes and dislikes and will eventually prefer one thing over another

A classic Metal Gear move

Sylvester Stallone is going to sue somebody!

The environment is your greatest weapon

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER KONAMI ■ DEVELOPER KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN ■ RELEASE 2004



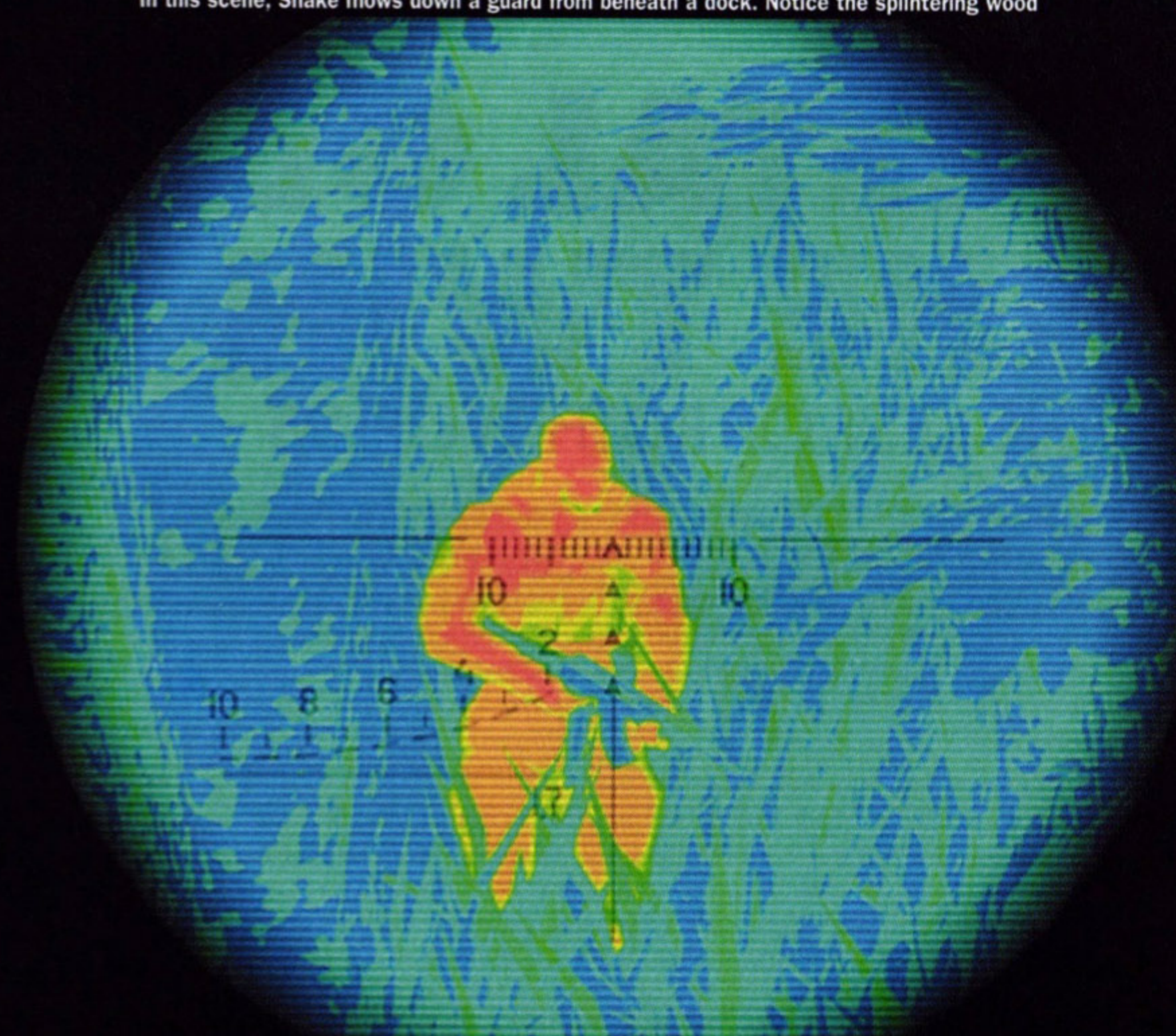
SNAKE hangs loose and caps a foe



In this scene, Snake mows down a guard from beneath a dock. Notice the splintering wood



Yes, you will get the chance to perform a swan dive off of the waterfall



The Predator has nothing on Snake's wonderful technologies



Here's a good look at the graphical detail that the new engine is capable of delivering



"Say goodbye to your Adam's apple, punk!" Rather than choking enemies, Snake will actually slit their throats



GAMECUBE

METAL GEAR SOLID: THE TWIN SNAKES

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

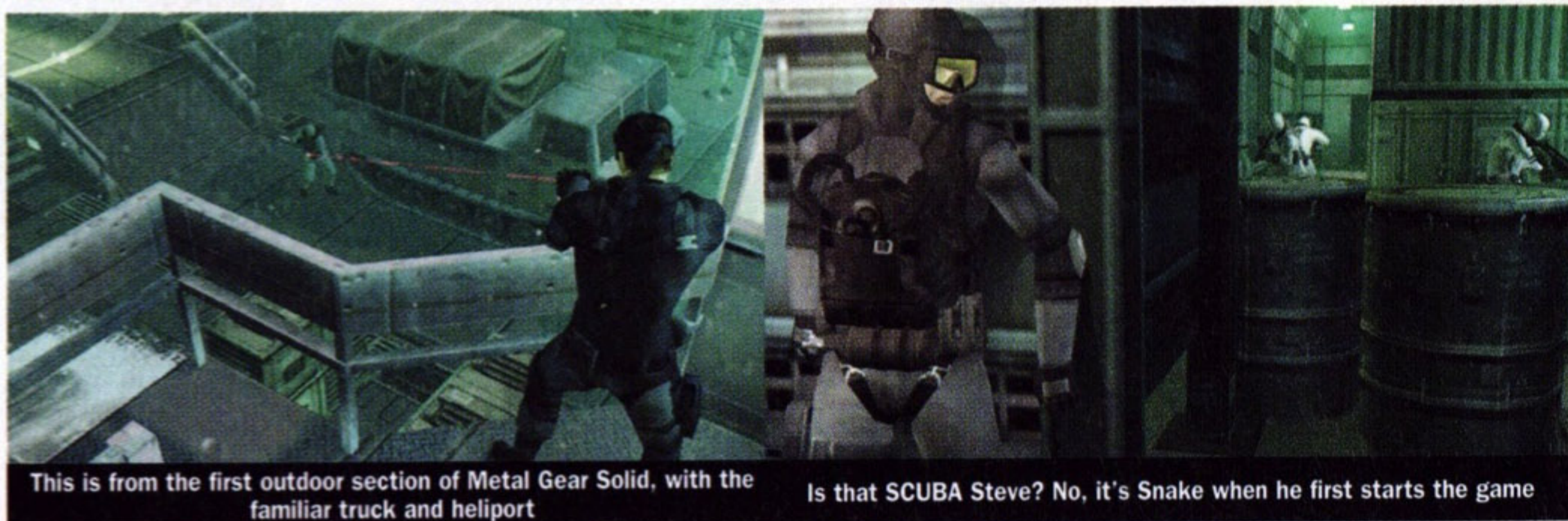


Lock Konami's Hideo Kojima, Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto, and the guys at Silicon Knights in a room together, make sure they have plenty of Cheetos and a few Barcoloungers, and you'd be surprised with what they come up with. Just because we like ruining surprises, we'll tell you: They came up with Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes for GameCube. But, er...you probably know that, since it's in really big letters right in front of your face.

Twin Snakes is not a port of the PSone Metal Gear Solid. Okay, it is, but only in a very loose sense of the word. You see, Twin Snakes features the storyline of Metal Gear Solid, built upon a modified version of the engine from Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty. Considering that the two Metal Gear Solid games are widely regarded as some of the best titles in video game history, this is quite an amalgamation. Also, development is being handled by the good folks at Silicon Knights, heroes to survival horror fans everywhere for their stellar job on Eternal Darkness. The only thing worrisome about this amazing grouping of gaming geniuses would be when the darn thing would come out. After all, we bet the farm that you can't name one game from any of them that didn't encounter some delay before release. However, we are assured that Twin Snakes will come out this November. We hope.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI/NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** KONAMI/SILICON KNIGHTS ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER

THE TALE OF METAL GEAR SOLID



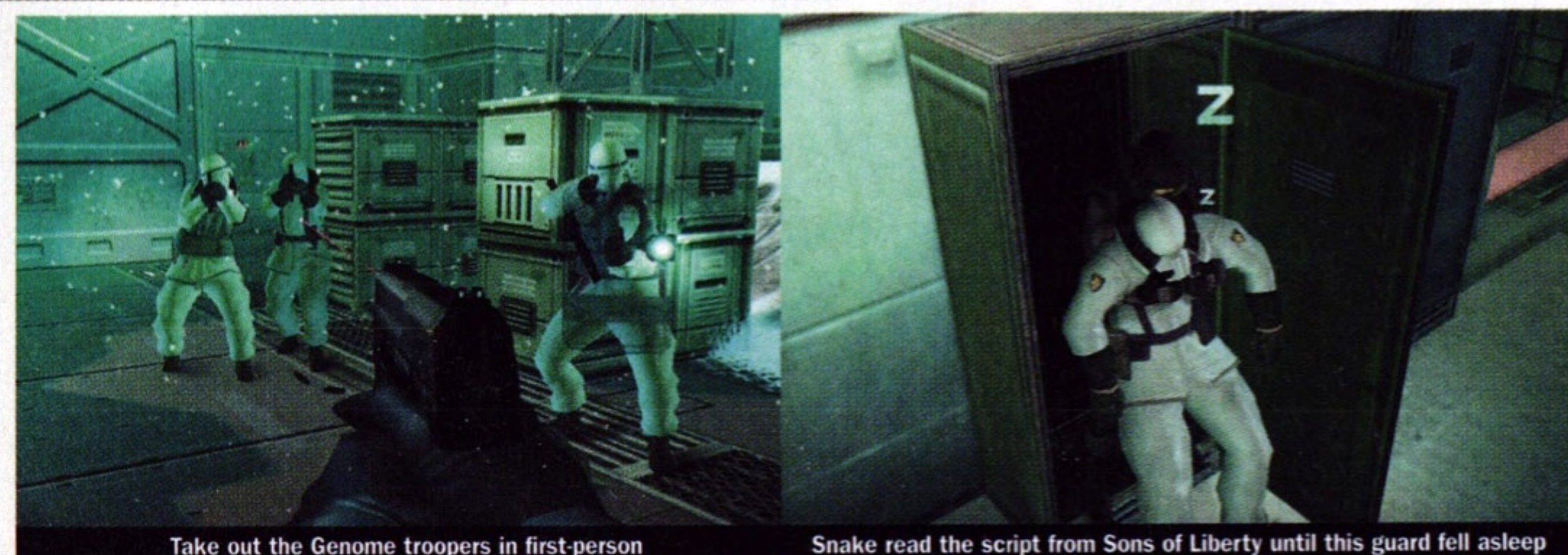
This is from the first outdoor section of Metal Gear Solid, with the familiar truck and heliport

Is that SCUBA Steve? No, it's Snake when he first starts the game

The first Metal Gear Solid is the basis for Twin Snakes' setting and storyline. It broke open stealth mechanics as well as cinematic storytelling. Solid Snake infiltrates a cold climate fortress full of genetically engineered soldiers in an attempt to stop a nuclear armageddon. The twin aspect involves Liquid Snake, the main antagonist, who claims to come from the same DNA as our mullet-loving hero.

Memorable moments include witnessing a heart attack (thanks to the then-new Dual Shock controller), lengthy CODEC conversations, and the greatest boss battle of all time against Psycho Mantis. Its only downfall is the lackluster gameplay. As Reiner said in his review in issue 67, "The combat absolutely blows." Of course, that explains Twin Snakes' adoption of gameplay aspects from Metal Gear Solid's sequel, MGS 2: Sons of Liberty.

THE GAMEPLAY OF METAL GEAR SOLID 2



Take out the Genome troopers in first-person

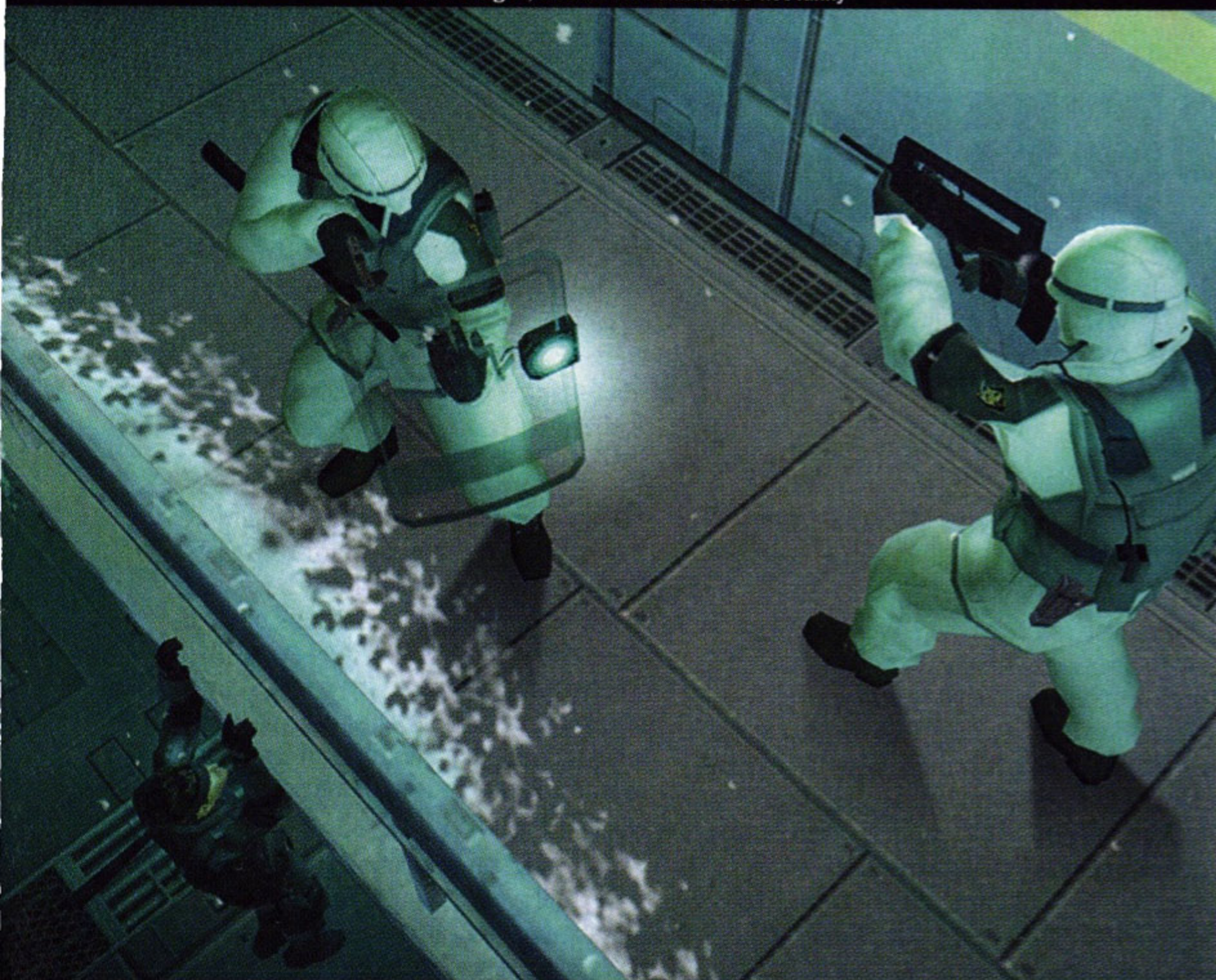
Snake read the script from Sons of Liberty until this guard fell asleep

The sequel, Metal Gear Solid 2, upped the ante in many ways. It features a very refined gameplay package – which is incorporated into Twin Snakes. This includes a first-person view for gunplay, which replaces the clunky laser sighting of the first game. Other, more subtle enhancements include being able to stuff unconscious (or dead) enemies into lockers, and hanging off of ledges.

Though we named it our #1 Game of 2001, the story is extremely convoluted. Raiden, who gets more onscreen time than Snake, is a whiny kid who couldn't be less bad-ass. The plot is full of confusing twists, comes off as very preachy, and the ending doesn't make too much sense. Hence, we're all too happy to revisit the story from the first MGS in Twin Snakes, especially since we played Sons of Liberty twice (if you include the Substance redux).



How's it hangin', Snake? Ha huh...that's not funny



These guys now have shields like their Sons of Liberty successors



Aim about six inches lower, Snake. That'll learn him!



PREVIEWS

PC

LORDS OF EVERQUEST

BLIZZARD BEWARE



Any popular industry will have a fair amount of emulation. Competing television networks saw that Fox had a gigantic hit with *American Idol*, and will soon release their own televised talent competitions. Likewise, the folks over at Sony Online Entertainment took a look at *WarCraft III* and decided they could do it bigger and better than the competition. From this idea, *Lords of EverQuest* was born, and by the looks of it, Blizzard should start paying close attention to this new kid on the block.

Everyone knows that EQ has an installed base only slightly smaller than the Bible. It would stand to reason that producing other titles based on its lore simply makes good business sense. But having 36 single-player maps, and giving gamers the option of choosing between 15 different Lords (who will gain experience and learn unique abilities as they level) and three different factions is also smart. Add to the mix persistent units (aside from the Lords) that will carry over from mission to mission, an incredibly robust spell system, and the ability to command over 100 troops at the same time, and you've got one intriguing RTS. Oh, by the way, a 1600x1200 resolution mode will also be supported. Look for *Lords of EverQuest* on shelves this fall.



A number of different races will be represented in Lords



Spells cast by your Lord can be the deciding factor in a battle



The zoom level allows you to see your units up close and personal

Skeletons have no B.O.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 12-PLAYER VIA ONLINE OR LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** RAPID EYE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** FALL



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC

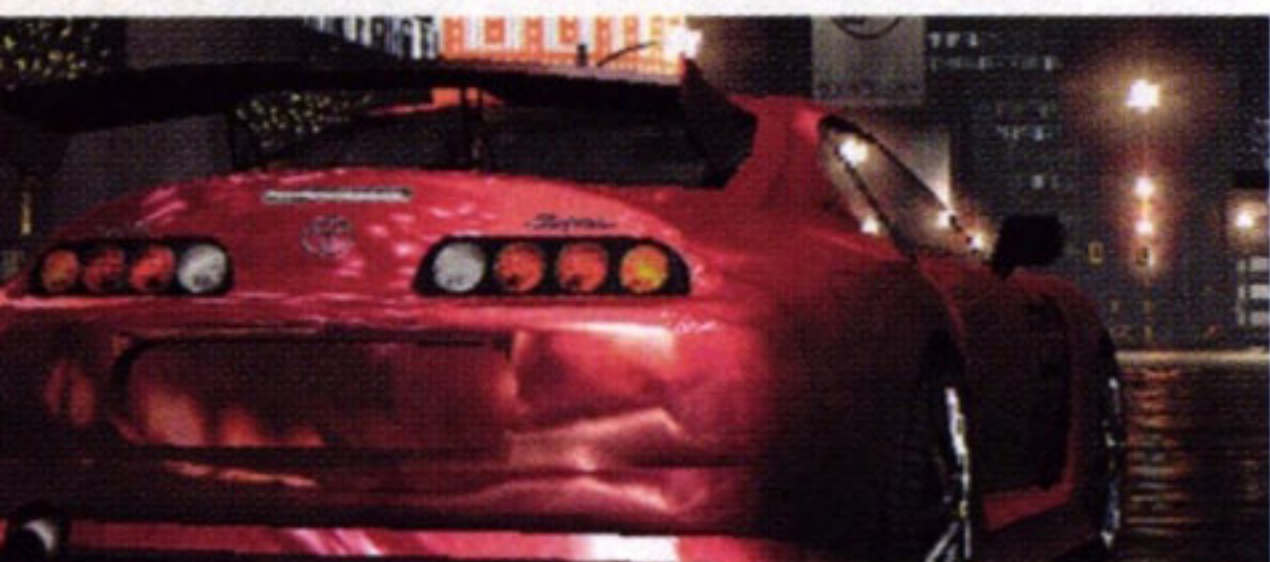
NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

IT'S ALL A BLUR

Can you please explain how the sense of speed is accomplished in *Underground*?

First and foremost, it's a product of one of the most talented development teams in the industry. I know, you're rolling your eyes, but it's absolutely true. It's easy for me, or any other designer for that matter, to say that our game is going to have an unparalleled sense of speed; it's a completely different story to have the people to pull it off.

When we started *NFS Underground*, we talked about how every driving game that we played felt slow. What I mean by that is that the speed on the HUD never matched what I was feeling as a player. One hundred mph feels like 50 in most driving games. If you've ever driven over 100 mph in a car, the sensation of speed is really intense and it has to do with a lot more than just blurring the scenery or changing the focal length of the camera.



Some of the things that can affect it are the car you're driving, the speed you're traveling, the road you're on, time of day, and the location of the drive. There are a lot of ancillary factors that combine to create a great sensation of speed.

The team was able to deconstruct those elements and then build them back into the engine. The programmers worked with the

art team to figure out how the lights should react when you're driving fast, what happens to the textures in the world, and how the camera should move relative to the car and the environment. It's a really involved process that takes a lot of smart people to figure it out. It's a collaborative effort between the programmers, artists, and audio team to get every aspect right. There's a mind-bending amount of mathematics, science, and classic art techniques that are married to produce the effect. We've got the award-winning team that built *NFS Hot Pursuit 2* working with a two-time Academy Award nominee for visual effects and the results have been exactly what we were looking for when we started the game – a frightening sense of speed.

What other innovations can gamers look for besides the sight-blurring speed in this title?

The car customization is one of the focuses of the product. We've spent a lot of time figuring out just what that means in the context of the game. It's finding the sweet spot between what is really cool to customize (and has an impact on the overall look and feel) and what just becomes tedious for the player (i.e. swapping out spark plugs). Not everyone is a "gear head" and we needed to balance accessibility with being true to the tuner culture. There needed to be a significant number of upgrades to allow the player to make their car an expression of what they think is cool, but not be overwhelming for someone who is new to the tuner culture.

We're taking great care to make sure that everything that should be customizable is. There will be over 20 areas that can be visually customized, from paint and vinyl to

installing neon on the car. If you can change it out on a real tuner car then you'll be able to swap it out in *Underground*.

We're also offering nine areas of performance upgrades. These will be available as "kits" or "packages" that the player can buy and apply to the car. These will contain a collection of licensed after-market parts that are applied to the car simultaneously to improve the performance of the car. The performance upgrades not only change the way the car drives, but also can have an effect on how the car looks. If you swap out your suspension, you'll see your car's clearance lower as the body of the car is "slammed."

How many different combinations of vehicles are there?

There will be 20 fully licensed stock vehicles in the game that the player can then customize with hundreds of upgrades. All of the coolest cars that kids are tuning today are in the game, from the leading manufacturers: Honda, Toyota, Nissan, Mitsubishi, Subaru, Dodge, Ford, Hyundai, and more. There are literally millions of combinations that players will be able to create. The goal from the beginning of *Underground* was that if 1,000 people all owned the same car in *Underground*, they could all look completely unique. The selection of body parts and other visual upgrades make this possible in the game right now. It looks amazing. It's really interesting to see how players express what they think is cool through the visual look of their ride.

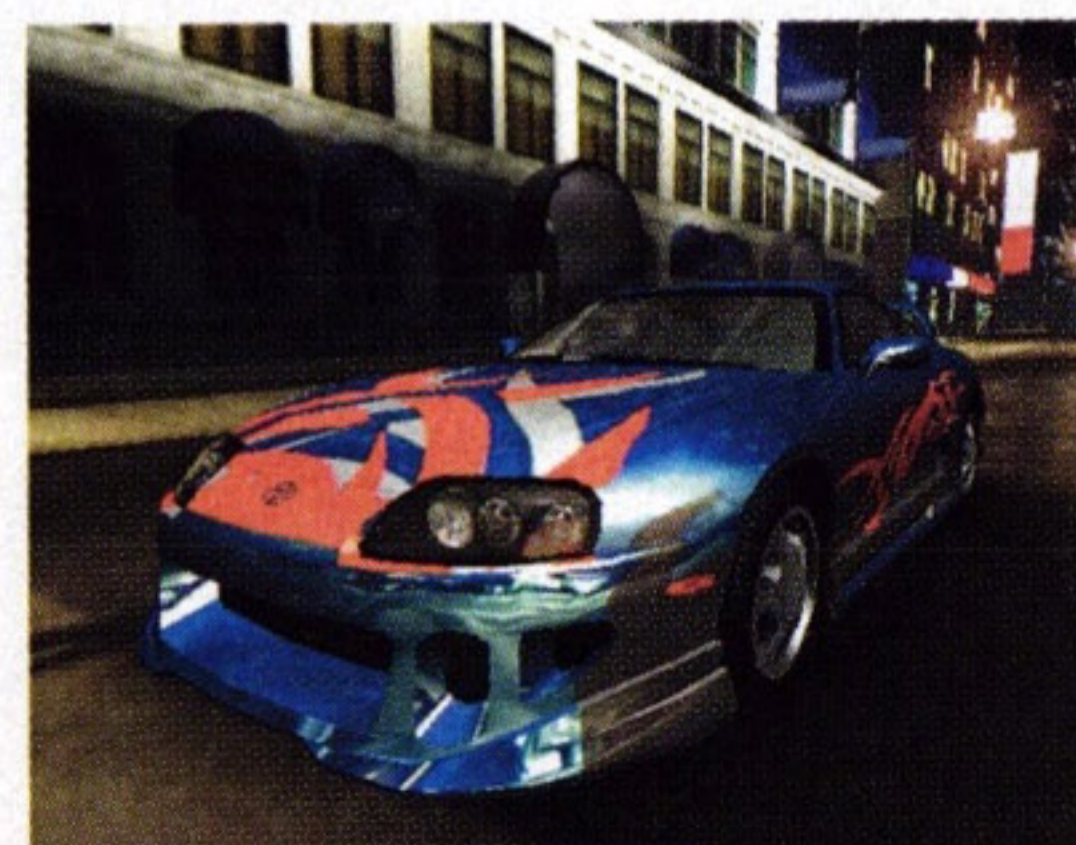
Could you please explain some of the more interesting customization portions of the vehicle creation process?

Game Informer recently got a chance to see the new addition to the *Need for Speed* franchise behind closed doors at E3, and to say we were impressed would be an understatement. Not only does it support online play (for PC and PS2 only) and feature a ton of car customization options, it creates perhaps the most impressive illusion of speed we have ever seen. To learn more, we sat down with the game's executive producer, Chuck Osieja.

There are so many it's hard to hit them all, so I'll pick one of my favorites: wide body kits. Wide body kits are cool not only because they completely reshape the base look of the car, but also because not everyone in the game will be able to get them. They're a pretty prized possession, so when a gamer sees one on his buddy's car (through a memory card or online) they'll know it's something special.

Wide body kits consist of a one-piece application to the car that includes a front bumper, rear bumper, side skirts, fender flares and door modifications. When you apply it to the car, it not only changes the look of the car dramatically, but it also changes the width of the wheelbase. Your car becomes wider. You get fatter tires, which further changes the look and feel of the car.

What I like most about the wide body kits, though, is that you can still modify the rest of the car when it's applied. Swap out headlights, taillights, hood, spoilers, etc. Just because you get a "special" upgrade doesn't mean we take away the flexibility of tuning. You can radically differentiate your car from other players who might also have gotten the same kit.



■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 4-PLAYER ONLINE FOR PS2 & PC ONLY) ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA BLACK BOX
 ■ **RELEASE** EARLY 2004



Believe it or not, these three pictures are all of the same vehicle model



Not only can you change wheels, bodykits, colors, and decals, but you can create your own custom art as well



Even on PlayStation 2, the level of detail in the city is impressive



PC

S.T.A.L.K.E.R. OBLIVION LOST

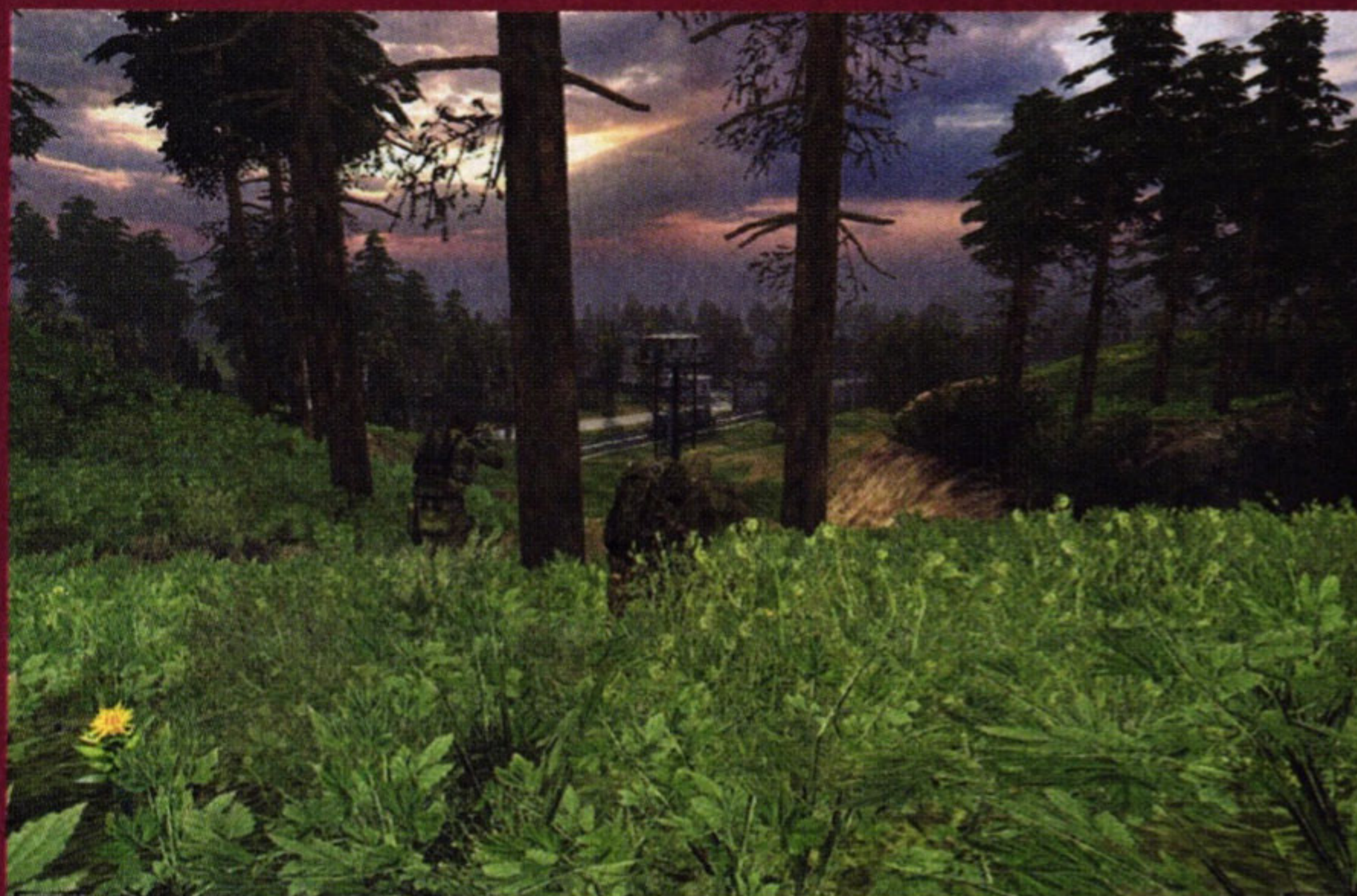
FROM UKRAINE WITH LOVE

Behind **Half-Life 2** and **Doom 3**, *Oblivion Lost* is perhaps the most talked about PC game in the industry. These accolades are mostly due to this game's amazing graphics capabilities, which are driven by developer GSC Game World's proprietary "X-Ray" game engine. This amazing tool allows for massive indoor/outdoor environments, real-time physics, and the capability to push more than one million polygons per frame at 60 frames per second.

According to Jack Sorensen, executive vice president of THQ's worldwide studios, "S.T.A.L.K.E.R. *Oblivion Lost* is an extremely unique game that seamlessly blends the genres of first-person action, survival horror, and role-playing into a single experience." While *Game Informer* has yet to see the game display all the elements that Sorensen touts, we did get an in-depth demo of the technology and a little bit of back story.

The engine, even in its early stages, is very impressive. Using the latest in graphics card technologies, we saw some fantastic looking rag-doll physics for all the human characters in the game, as well as some convincing object interaction. For example, grenades don't just damage players, they also deliver shock waves to disrupt all players in the blast's vicinity.

The backdrop for the game is that, as a stalker, the player earns a living exploring the underground laboratories, abandoned military bases, and radioactive forests of the Chernobyl Zone in search of artifacts to sell to underground dealers. Players will get a chance to explore the Dead Forest, the Cities of Pripyat and Chernobyl, and sneak inside the remains of the atomic facility that was the epicenter of the nuclear accident over 16 years ago. Sounds cool to us. We'll keep you updated as the game develops.



The amount of detail around the environments is incredible. Plus, they are interactive. You can shoot birds out of the air if you are in need of health, or commandeer dozens of different vehicles to drive

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 32-PLAYER ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
 ■ **DEVELOPER** GSC GAME WORLD ■ **RELEASE** 2004



Grenades not only kill, but the blast radius can also stun nearby units to give the player an attack window



If this picture doesn't make you giddy with delight, then nothing will



XBOX

HALO 2

THE EIGHT-MINUTE DEMO THAT ROCKED THE WORLD

Halo 2 still has no release date in sight other than the ambiguous "first quarter 2004." But in the hearts and minds of the people that witnessed the eight-minute Halo 2 demo at E3 (or on the Internet), it meant nothing. No one cared when it would eventually release, everyone just knew they wanted it (Game Informer included).

The footage, which was being played in real-time by a member of Bungie's development team, starts off with Master Chief and a squad of Marines descending into the war-torn city of New Mombasa. After landing and passing by a number of injured Marines and various squads defending the city, Master Chief begins a whirlwind of action that never lets up again until the demo is complete.

After sniping some oncoming Covenant forces with Marines fighting and screaming by his side, MC unloads a grenade into a group of unsuspecting foes that gives us the first glimpse of Halo 2's new physics engine. Debris flies everywhere and the Covenant troops splatter. It is also important to note that all the textures, models, lighting, volumetric smoke, particle effects, reflections, and any other kind of graphic wonder buzz-word you can think of is turned on to its maximum capacity and looking absolutely delicious.

Following the disposal of another horde of alien forces pouring into the city, MC grabs hold of a nearby mounted machine gun and starts to rain death on the soldiers below. Cars explode (complete with shock waves) and slide from the force of the bullets. Things catch fire. Mayhem ensues. While all this is going on, the player can see a gigantic Covenant weapon unleashing massive energy bursts. At this point, in a scripted event, an airstrike flies in from above and obliterates it. We later learned that in the final game, MC will get a chance to control one of these super-weapons.

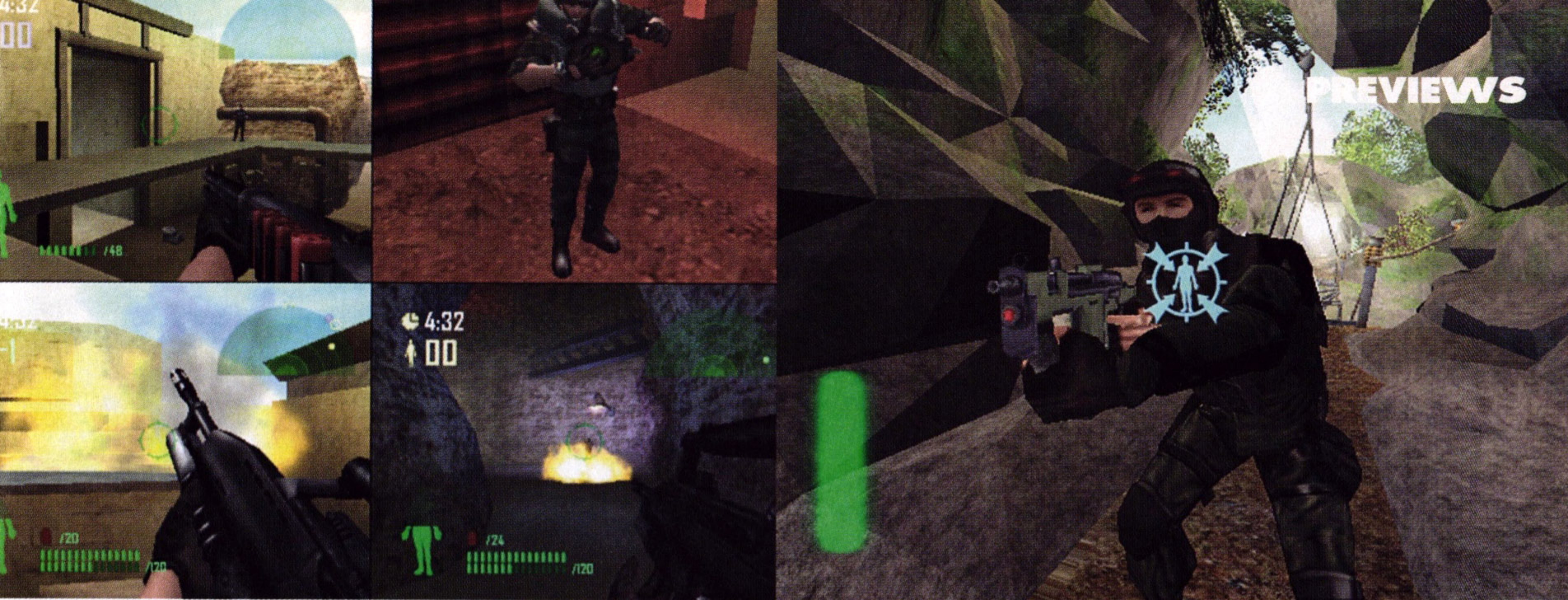
Once the explosion subsides, Master Chief turns toward a sergeant on his left and is given a second machine gun that MC immediately begins to dual-wield. Boo-ya! This is an example of how the player can trade weapons with other marines in the game – another new addition to this sequel.

Slicing through more forces and even peeking around a corner (with the new lean feature currently on the d-pad), MC and a squad of Marines make their way to a waiting Warthog. He takes gunner, and so begins a ride through the city blasting any and everything in sight. This section could certainly be mistaken for a track-based shooter much like Star Fox, but the Marines driving the vehicles actually have AI that determines the best route and how to get you in position to unleash a barrage of munitions. For the demo's sake, this wasn't very amazing, but it most definitely opens the door for some great sequences in the final release.

During this portion of the game, Phantoms (a new Covenant ship) fly overhead and drop more alien forces into the mix. Amazingly, one even lands on the hood of your Warthog. At this point, MC hops off and unloads a melee combo on the newcomers. That's right. A melee combo. More fighting follows and then a fleet of Ghosts come into the fray. In the absolute high point of the demo, MC grabs a passing Ghost and then proceeds to knock the pilot onto the street. This is an example of how the player will be able to overtake moving vehicles. Bungie was unwilling to divulge more info on whether Covenant forces would be able to do the same, but the sparkle in their eye certainly made it appear so.

At this point, Master Chief takes off from the battle and a chase scene commences where he barely slides through a set of closing blast doors that sends him skidding (complete with sparks) to a stop. He stands, and like rain from the heavens, hundreds of pods descend onto the city. Four imbed themselves around him. The pod doors open and out pops the new and improved Elite, who then brandish deadly energy blades. MC takes out a glowing grenade and the demo fades to black. Game Informer later learned that Master Chief will likely be able to actually use the energy blade this adventure. Let the waiting continue.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (MULTIPLAYER CAPABILITIES TBA) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT
 ■ **DEVELOPER** BUNGIE ■ **RELEASE** FIRST QUARTER 2004



GAMECUBE

GEIST

DON'T PEE YOUR PANTS!

Last year, we heard rumblings of a GameCube game in development called Fear. This year at E3, Nintendo debuted this game, retitled Geist, from a new partnership with n-Space – the makers of Duke Nukem: Time to Kill (and Mary Kate and Ashley: Sweet 16...shhh). Geist is a first-person adventure where you play as a spectral operative that needs to explore a compound as a ghost, possessing characters and taking advantage of their physical and mental abilities.

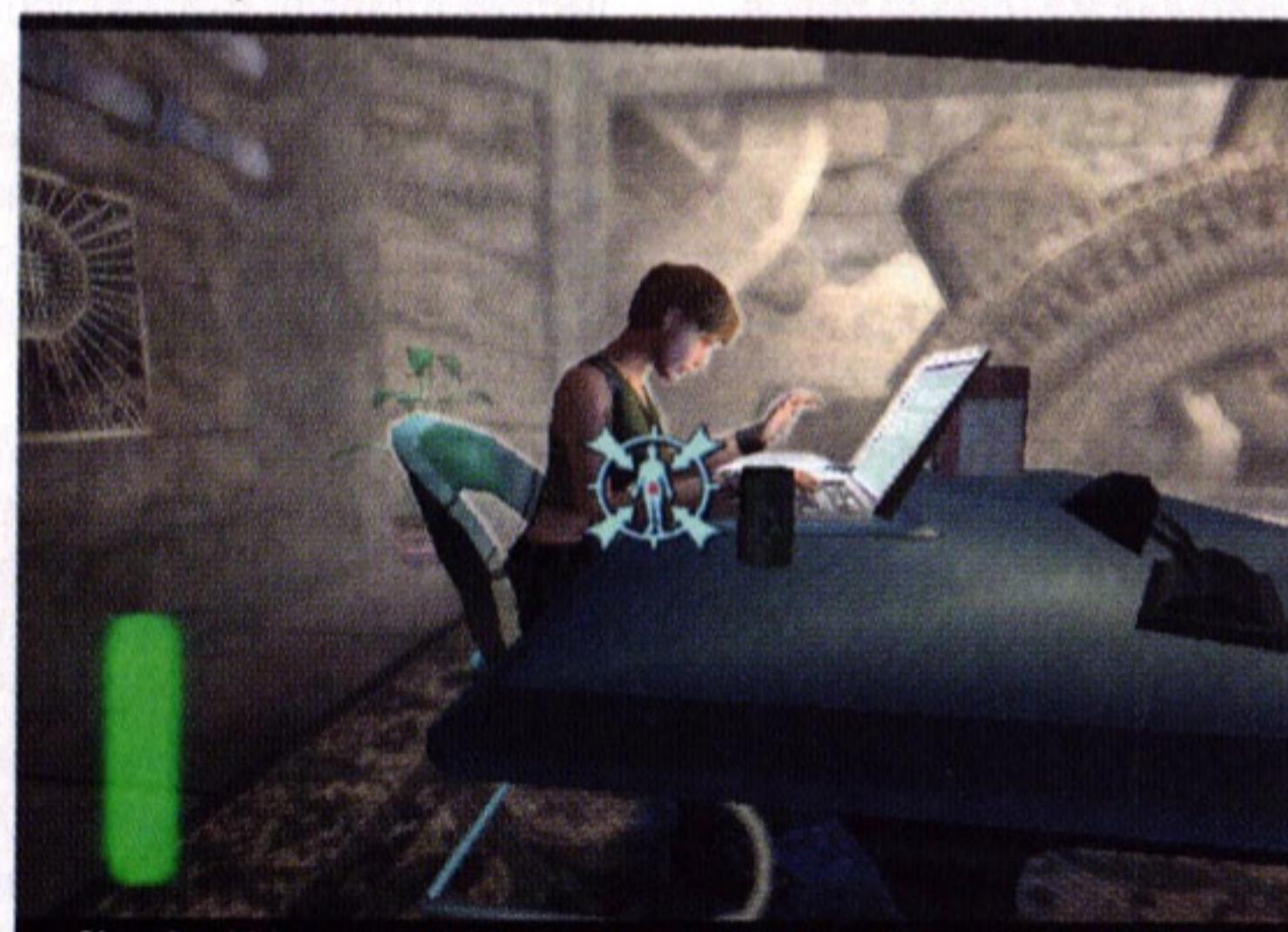
It's basically your job to scare the snot out of humans and animals, slip into their bodies, solve puzzles, and take out enemies. However, you can't just hop into bodies at any time. Before you can inhabit beings, you need to frighten them. In the demo we previewed, a woman was shown typing on her laptop. The player killed plants in the office, and then slammed the laptop closed on the woman's fingers, completely freaking her out and allowing the ghost (you) to possess her.

Being a Geist has a lot of advantages. You can't travel

through walls, but you will be able to slip through cracks, ventilation ducts, and other narrow passages. If you walk into a room as one person that alarmed some guards, you could leave the room and return in another character that wouldn't have the same effect. These are the kind of puzzle elements that differentiate this game from other titles in the genre.

Geist will also include a deathmatch mode where up to four players can battle using both ghost and possession elements in first-person combat. The concept of leaving a character that's almost dead and hijacking another healthy body could add a fun twist in blowing away your friends.

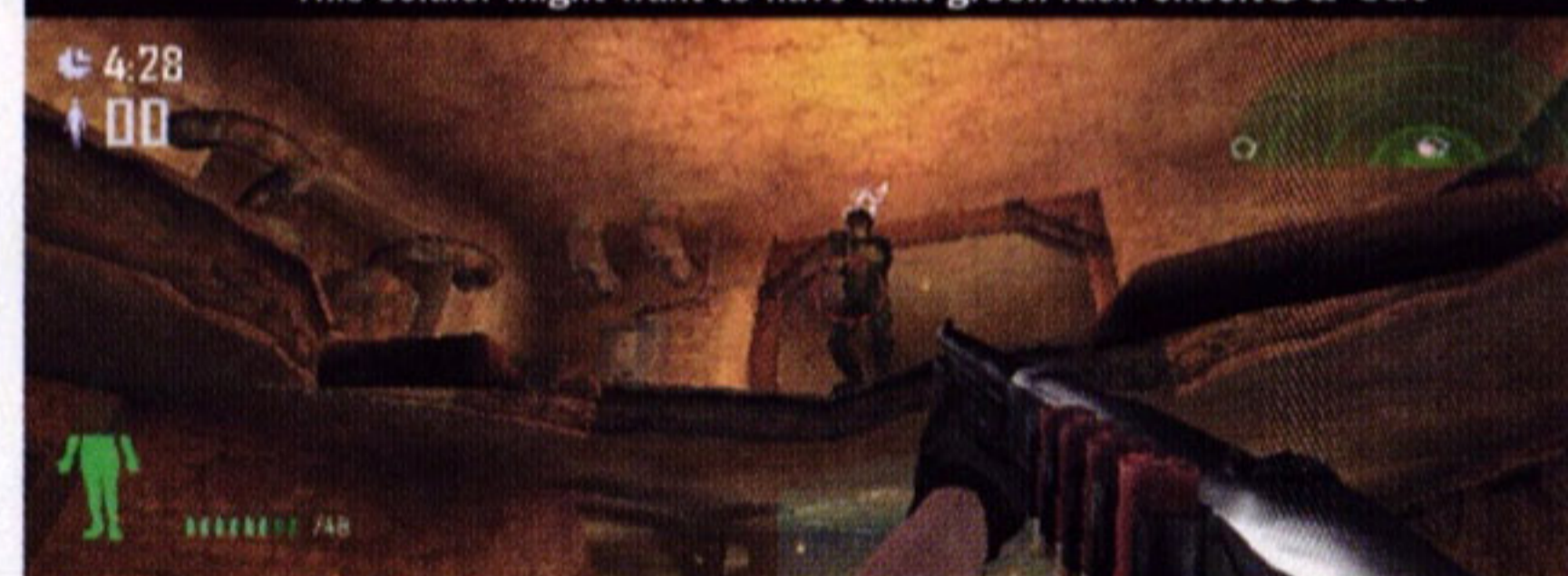
Notwithstanding, though, n-Space's track record makes us a little wary, but Nintendo is collaborating with the Geist team and offering creative and technical support, as it did with Retro Studios on Metroid Prime and Silicon Knights on Eternal Darkness. If polished, Geist could be another much-needed mature GameCube exclusive that Nintendo gamers have been craving.



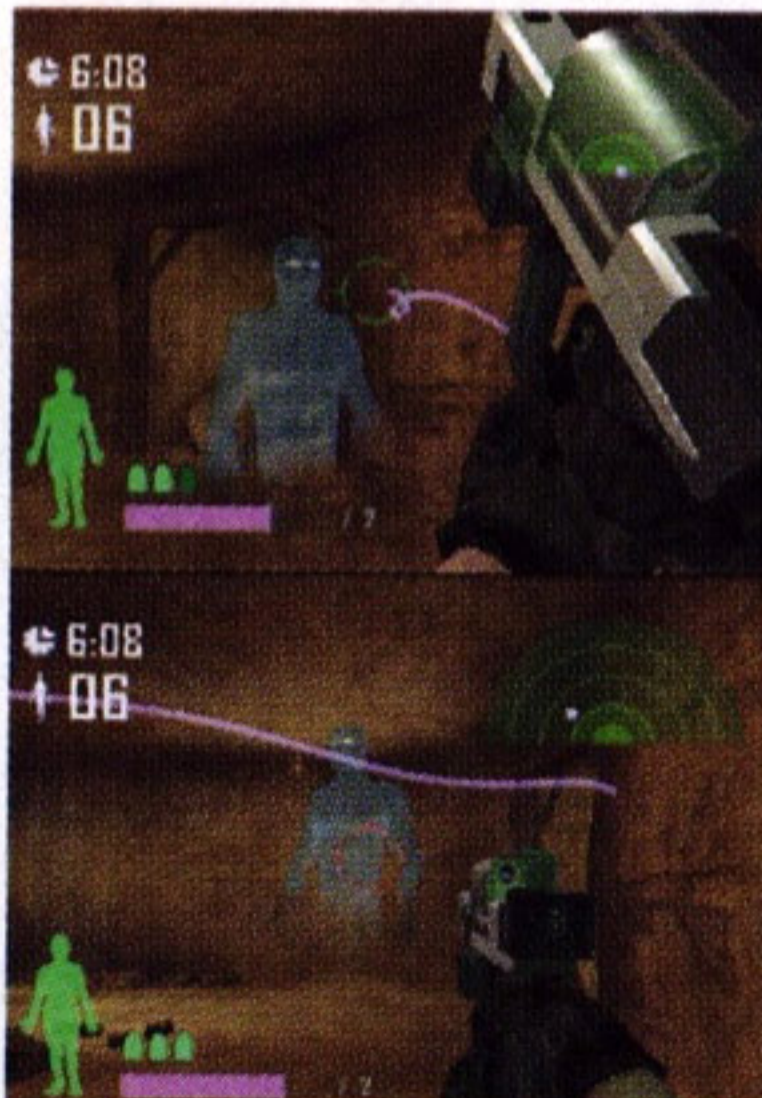
She should be scared because she's surfing for the "naughty" sights



This soldier might want to have that green rash checked out



Hey! Your shoe is untied!



You'll be able to scare and kill your friends

Want this guy's gun? No problem!



Monsters in Geist will kill you and then dance

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER N-SPACE ■ RELEASE WINTER



This is just one of the buildings you'll be able to breach and explore



Organized team movement is a must to achieve victory



The resolution has been enhanced to 480p for those of you with nice TVs

PLAYSTATION 2

SOCOM II: U.S. NAVY SEALS



BRAVO, GO TO X-RAY

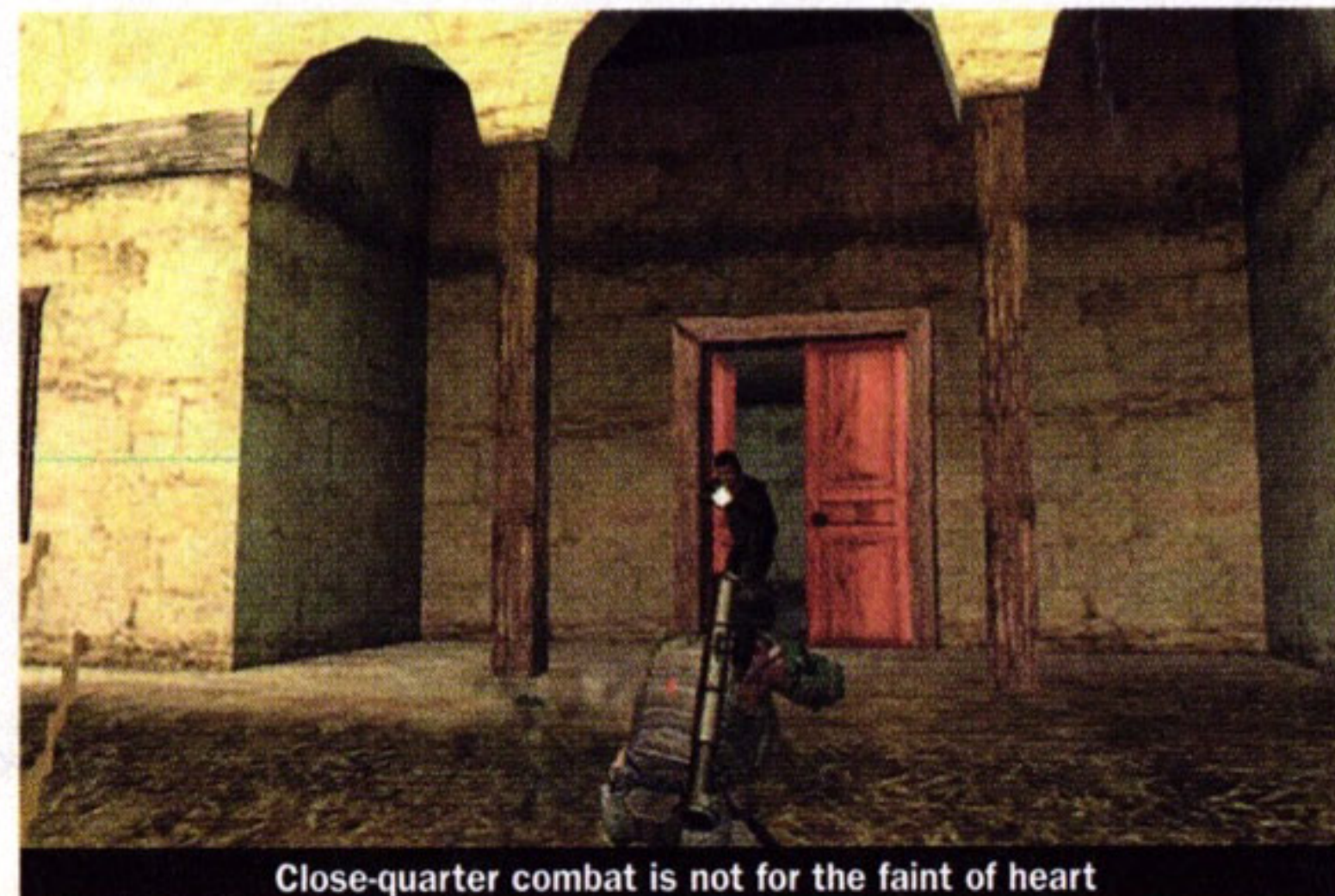
You knew it was coming, and here it is. SOCOM, one of the most popular and innovative Sony titles ever released, is about to get a B12 shot right in the circuits. Over a million of you put the first game through its paces, and now SOCOM II has some new tricks up its sleeve. Don't worry, your broadband adapter will have plenty of new ones and zeros being funneled through it, and unless you're getting your Internet access through some fraudulent means like a degenerate ingrate (please tell us how you did it), that monthly fee will continue to be money well spent.

Starting off the laundry list of updates is a vastly improved location list. Confirmed locales include Algeria, Albania, Brazil, and Russia. With each of these sites comes a detailed environment set, and of course assorted tactical challenges that you'll need to wrap your mind around. You're not going to construct an assault through a stark Russian landscape the same way you will in a Brazilian jungle. Likewise, the mission types themselves have been expanded. Both the 12 mission single-player experience and the multiplayer mode will have Demolition, Hostage Rescue, and Suppression exercises. Online soldiers will also see Breach and Escort as play options as they kick the tires and light the fires, and each mode will have both indoor and outdoor environments.

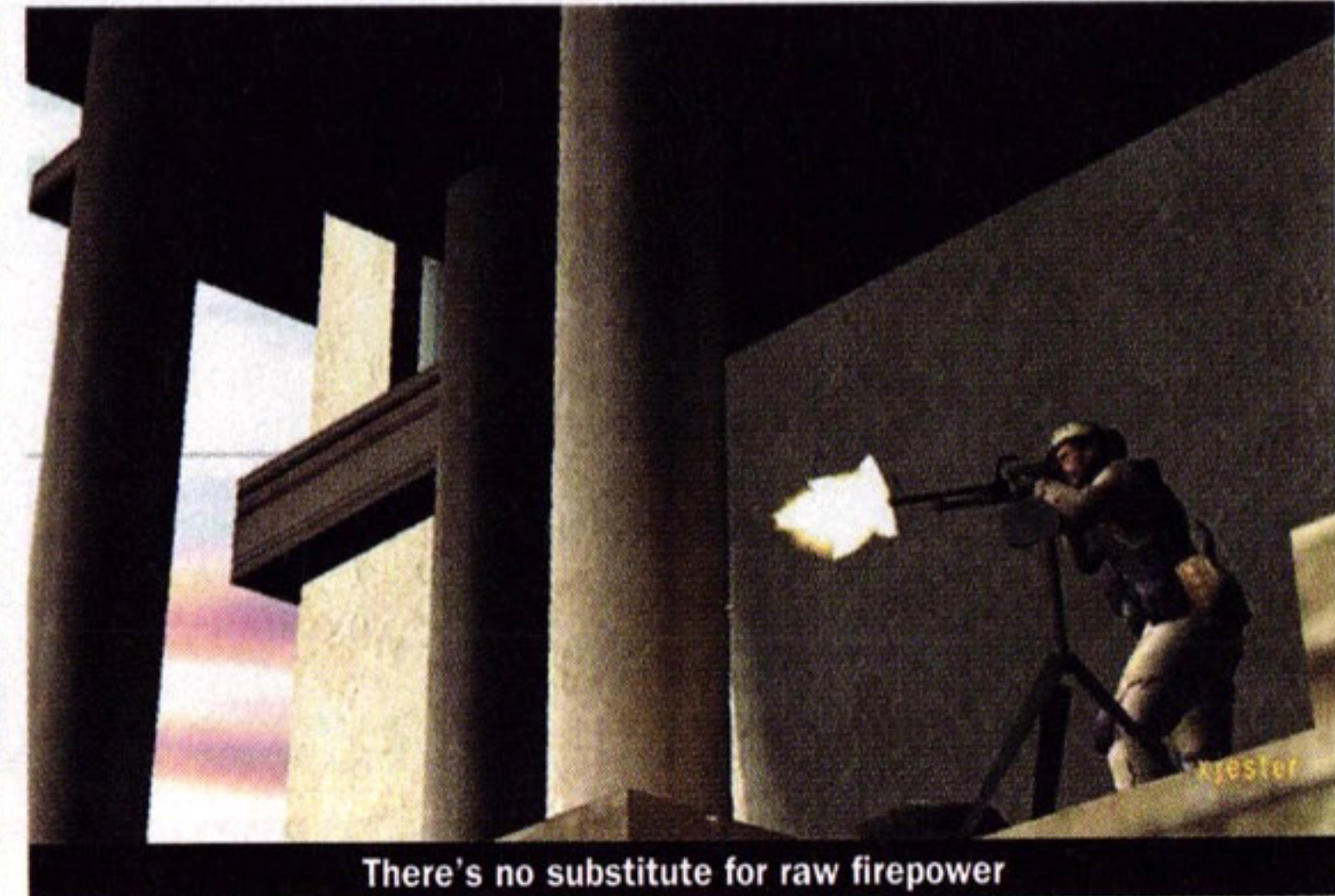
Another notable improvement includes the ability to man weapon platforms. Strategically placing a soldier on a machine gun mount to suppress enemy fire while the rest of your team flanks their position is just one of a hundred possible strategies you may employ. While we're on the subject of shooting at people, SOCOM fans will also be interested to hear that weapon recoil has been implemented for the sequel. That means no more picking people off from afar without having to readjust your aim. If you just can't seem to take out a well-entrenched group, call in an air strike and watch the bodies fly. Additionally, enemies will be aware of their ammo supply and will change their tactics accordingly. Should you surprise a squad of baddies, characters will make a courage check and will either run in fear, or go out in a blaze of glory.

This game would be good without the headset, but with it comes that "being there" sense which has yet to be similarly recreated. As you may have guessed, there will be updated commands and an improved chat system for online users; but the real story is the institution of separate offensive and defensive channels, as well as a "who's talking" display. Through this extended organization will come a more cohesive unit structure, and ultimately, a better play experience for those who are willing to work with their teammates.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 16-PLAYER VIA ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
 ■ **DEVELOPER** ZIPPER INTERACTIVE ■ **RELEASE** NOVEMBER



Close-quarter combat is not for the faint of heart



There's no substitute for raw firepower



PREVIEWS

PLAYSTATION 2

CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

A 3D SYMPHONY?

Castlevania purists certainly

have cause for concern when it comes to drastically altering this series. After all, the disappointing 3D iterations on the N64 tarnished the original idea so artfully realized on the NES and carried out through *Castlevania: Bloodlines*. Then, the Metroid-style *Symphony of the Night* formula stepped in and rectified the universe's reputation, suggesting that *Castlevania* shouldn't be torn from 2D.

Castlevania's father, Koji Igarashi, also wholeheartedly maintains this belief, but only under a more insightful concession to 2D: "You can't take 2D gameplay and make it 3D. One of the flaws that we saw with the N64 version when they went to 3D is that they tried to faithfully bring the 2D-gameplay experience into the 3D world. In the same way that they created 2D games to be the best of the 2D games, we're going to try to make a 3D game the best of the 3D ones." Igarashi will try to redefine *Castlevania* again. This time, however, he will consider the disadvantages – and advantages – that the medium itself presents. Therefore, gamers shouldn't merely expect a 3D *Symphony of the Night*; rather, Igarashi wants fresh gameplay mechanics and a new focus that complements the series and pays tribute to the spirit of *Castlevania*.

The most revealing aspects of the new gameplay are the combat and camera. Our hero, Leon Belmont, apparently wields just a whip, as opposed to having access to various swords. Nevertheless, combat ought to be deeper and more interesting than previous incarnations. By combining any of the 10 different offensive relics with one of the seven special orbs, players can unleash numerous types of attacks. Unfortunately, we only witnessed Leon darting forward, spinning his whip wildly in a circle, and swinging around on parts of the environment.

The camera will remain computer-controlled in every room – similar to *Devil May Cry* – but without confusing or abrupt camera switches. Igarashi chose a camera that steadily follows Leon because he wants action to be the focus of gameplay. Furthermore, consciously or unconsciously, we suspect that Igarashi wants to control the camera in order to direct players towards clues to solve puzzles or overcome obstacles without bogging them down too much.

Igarashi's conspicuous emphasis on the fighting indicates that *Lament of Innocence* will probably resemble *DMC* in many respects, but given his commitment and devotion to *Castlevania*, we have faith in his ability to preserve its essence in the jump to 3D.



Players will encounter five sub weapons: Holy Water, Dagger, Cross, Axe, and Crystal



Outside of tracking the number of hits, the combo meter's function is still unknown



There are hundreds of rooms divided into five sections – the Cathedral, the Theatre, the Garden, the Alchemist Laboratory and the Dungeon

There are 35 different monsters throughout the adventure



The story focuses on Leon, the first vampire slayer in the Belmont family

PREVIEWS



XBOX

FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR

YOUR ORDERS, LIEUTENANT?

For many war-game aficionados, the action onscreen is only slightly more important than the control given to players over their compatriots and granting them the ability to formulate their own unique strategies. From this idea set has come hundreds of games with only a few different play styles. The first, and most obvious, is the first-person shooter. As technology has evolved, titles like Medal of Honor: Allied Assault and Operation Flashpoint have brought the average gamer as close to donning fatigues and

picking up a rifle as is possible. While squeezing off rounds at an enemy as bullets whiz past your head is exhilarating, it lacks that brain-stimulating play that more strategy-centric war titles, and to a lesser extent RTS games, offer. For years, these two genres have remained relatively static, with minor incremental improvements made here and there. Now, a new style of war title is making its debut, and in doing so, blazing a new trail through intense simulation and balls-out action.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ ■ **DEVELOPER** PANDEMIC STUDIOS ■ **RELEASE** 2004



"Larson! Put on your goggles, jackass!"

Issuing orders is as easy as a touch of a few buttons

COMMAND ME

"Our work with the Army produced a compelling and unique game that authentically captures the life of a U.S. Army soldier operating in an urban warzone. Full Spectrum Warrior is a completely new type of game experience that we are extremely excited to bring to consumers." So says the president of Pandemic Studios, Josh Resnick. The game's hook lies in the fact that you, the player, will never fire a bullet. Instead, you will command a squad of nine soldiers

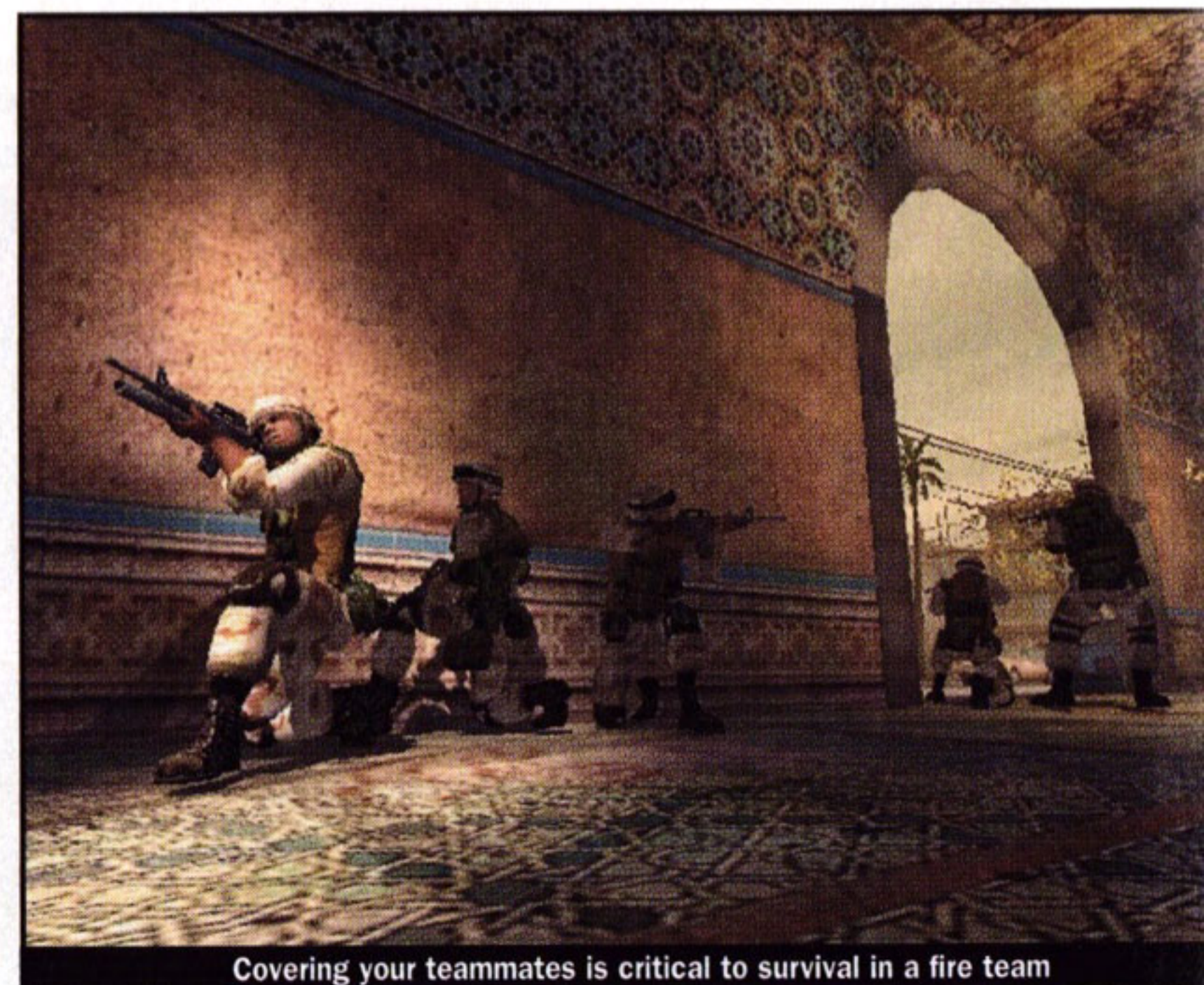
as they attempt to accomplish their mission objectives and stay alive. Your squad will be separated into two fire teams, and through a number of inventive interface systems, you will issue orders to your soldiers on the fly. It's important to remember at this point that you won't actually control them – the AI will take care of that after you've given an order. From there, your team leaders will bark commands to their group, and off they'll go.



Preparing to lay down suppressing fire

SIR, YES SIR!

Although the release date is still a long way down the road, Full Spectrum Warrior is already turning a lot of heads. An innovative title like FSW has many technological hurdles to deal with before release, but we expect to be astounded with varied mission types and twists in gameplay that we didn't see coming. It simply cannot be denied that THQ is sitting on what could be a quantum leap forward in the battlefield simulation category. Everything from the sound to the intelligent camera control we've already seen has us chomping at the bit to get at this game – hopefully we'll see an early 2004 release date solidify in the near future.



Covering your teammates is critical to survival in a fire team



XBOX

BREAKDOWN

FISTS OF FIRST-PERSON

The key to having a successful game system, and something that Xbox has been somewhat lacking during its life, is compelling exclusive content. Namco's Breakdown is a definite step in the right direction, and it's only going to be on Xbox. Microsoft seems to be down with it, since the game took up a good chunk of the Xbox press conference before E3. Can you dig that, sucka?

Breakdown is a first-person shooter with a twist – much of your offense will be hand-to-hand attacks. You'll be just as likely to take out a bad guy with a left cross to the jaw as you would with buckshot to the breadbasket. This melee style of battle isn't necessarily a brand new direction. Nearly every FPS has some sort of kick or punch to keep enemies at bay when your ammo is low. Games like Dreamcast's Maken X have even explored hand-to-hand-centric play with some success. Still, seeing Breakdown in action, we're convinced Namco is executing this mechanic on an unheard of scale. After all, this is the company that made Soul Calibur II, Time Crisis, and Galaga. Namco don't play.

The sci-fi storyline sticks main character Derrick Cole in that popular time period known only as "the future." He's got both amnesia and amazing powers – a deadly mixture, to be sure. Several factions want him for their own wicked purposes, including the military and a cult of seemingly invincible warriors. They're not going to get him without a fight! At least he has one friend to his name, and you can see her playing Trinity to Derrick's Neo in the screenshots.

For you gore-whores out there, Breakdown has the blood and guts you crave. A puncture wound to the throat turns on the crimson faucet and hallways will be littered with corpses like empty Coke cans on Kato's desk. The ESRB rating is still pending, but you'd have to be a "M"oron not to guess which rating this game will get.

Breakdown's stunning environments are vast enough to lead to a little exploring between face smashing. We have seen the future, and it sure is purdy. Nonviolent puzzles will actually challenge the muscle between your ears. Truly, Namco is trying to make Breakdown all things to all FPS gamers.

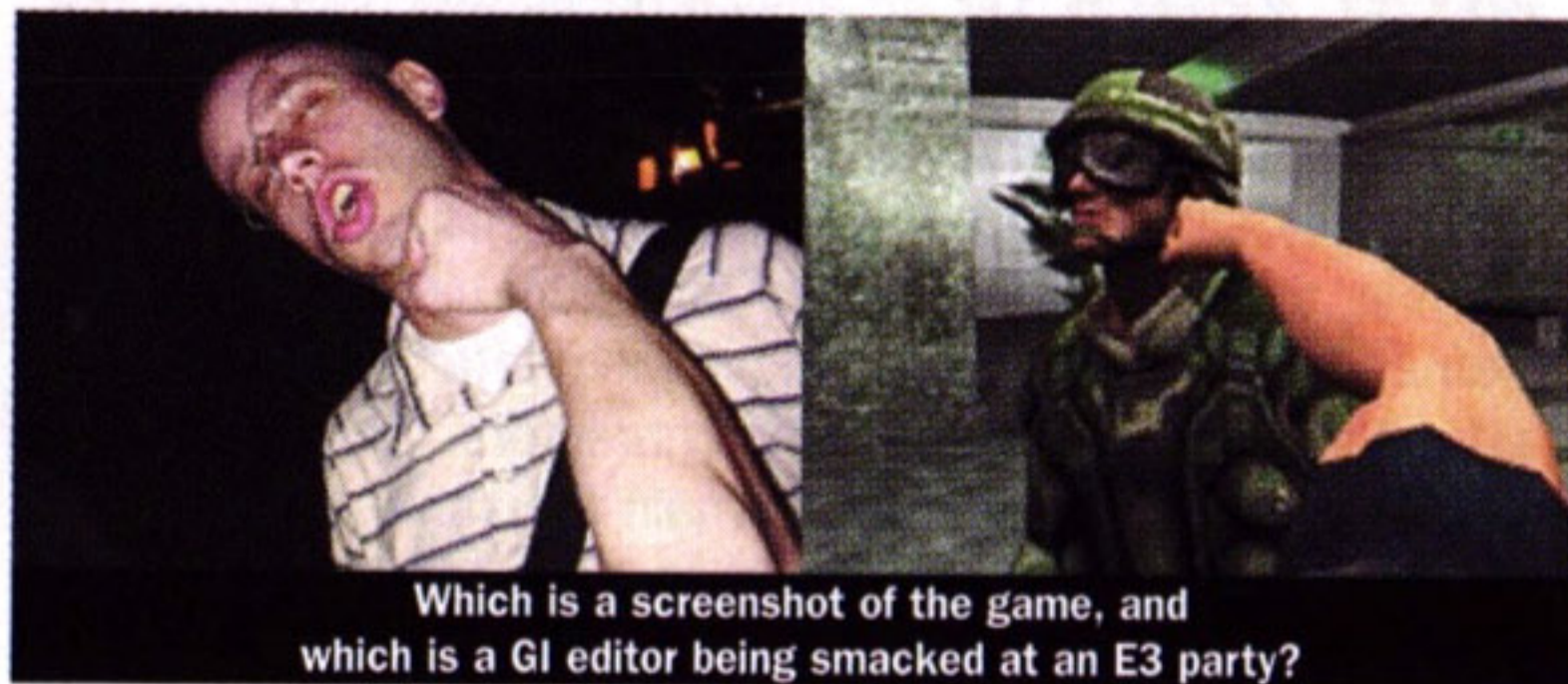
This is definitely a different type of title, which could spell its success or doom. Keep this in mind: Metroid Prime was one of the first FPSs to attempt first-person platforming, and it became one of the best games of this console generation. Breakdown could follow suit and impress a lot of people. It's doing one heck of a job so far.



If you look closely, you can spot a ghostly being responsible for this carnage

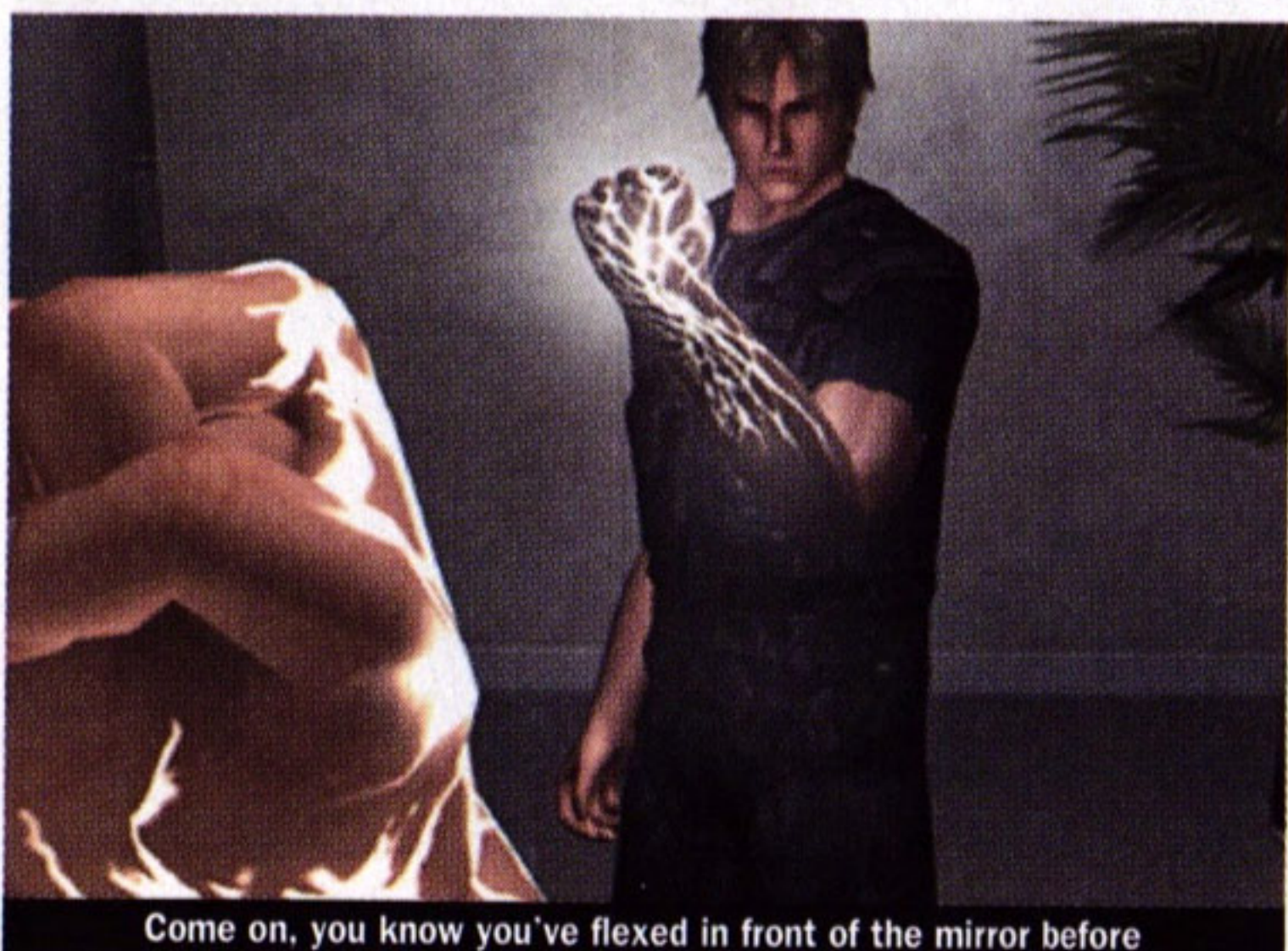


Where have we seen moves like this before?



Which is a screenshot of the game, and which is a GI editor being smacked at an E3 party?

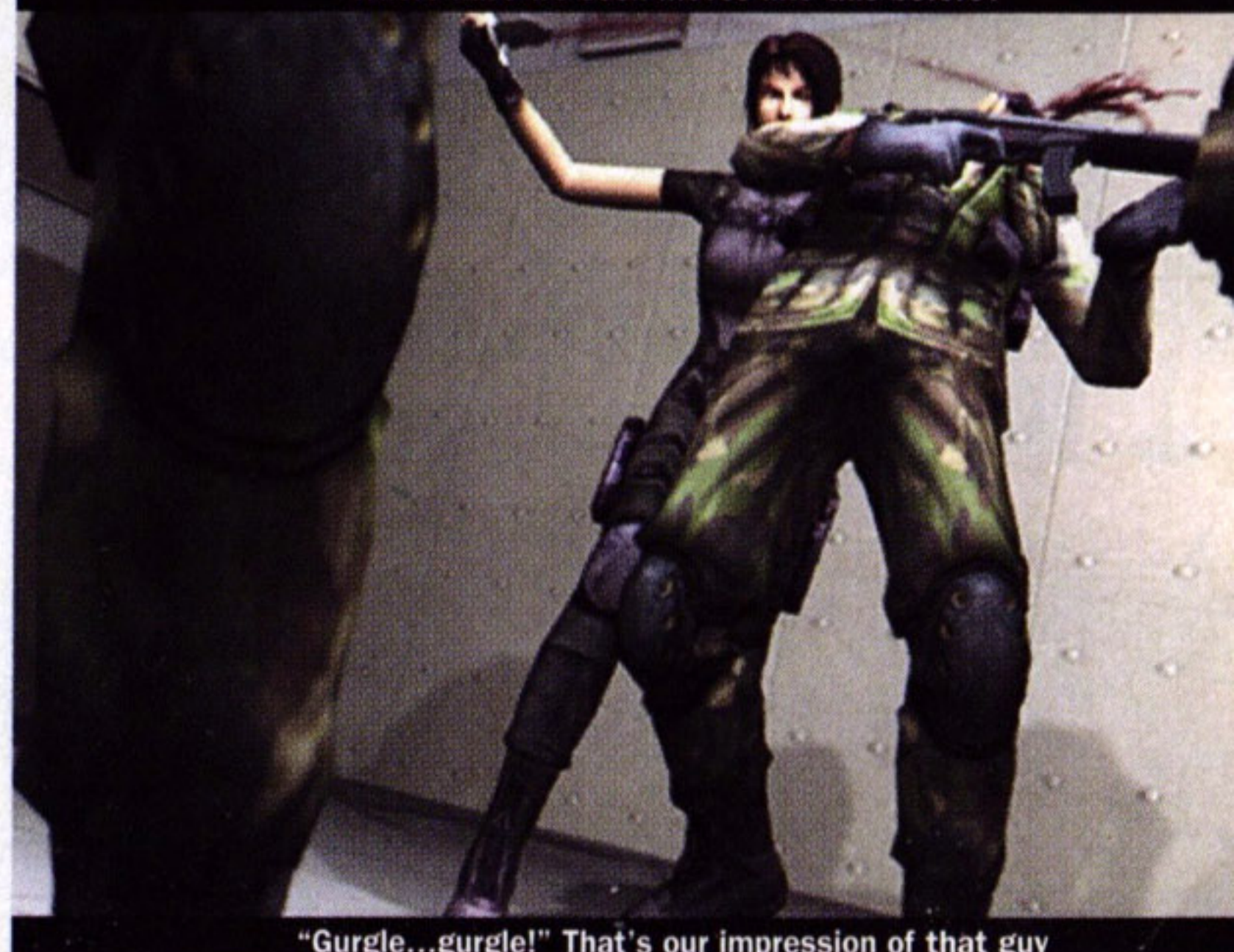
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



Come on, you know you've flexed in front of the mirror before



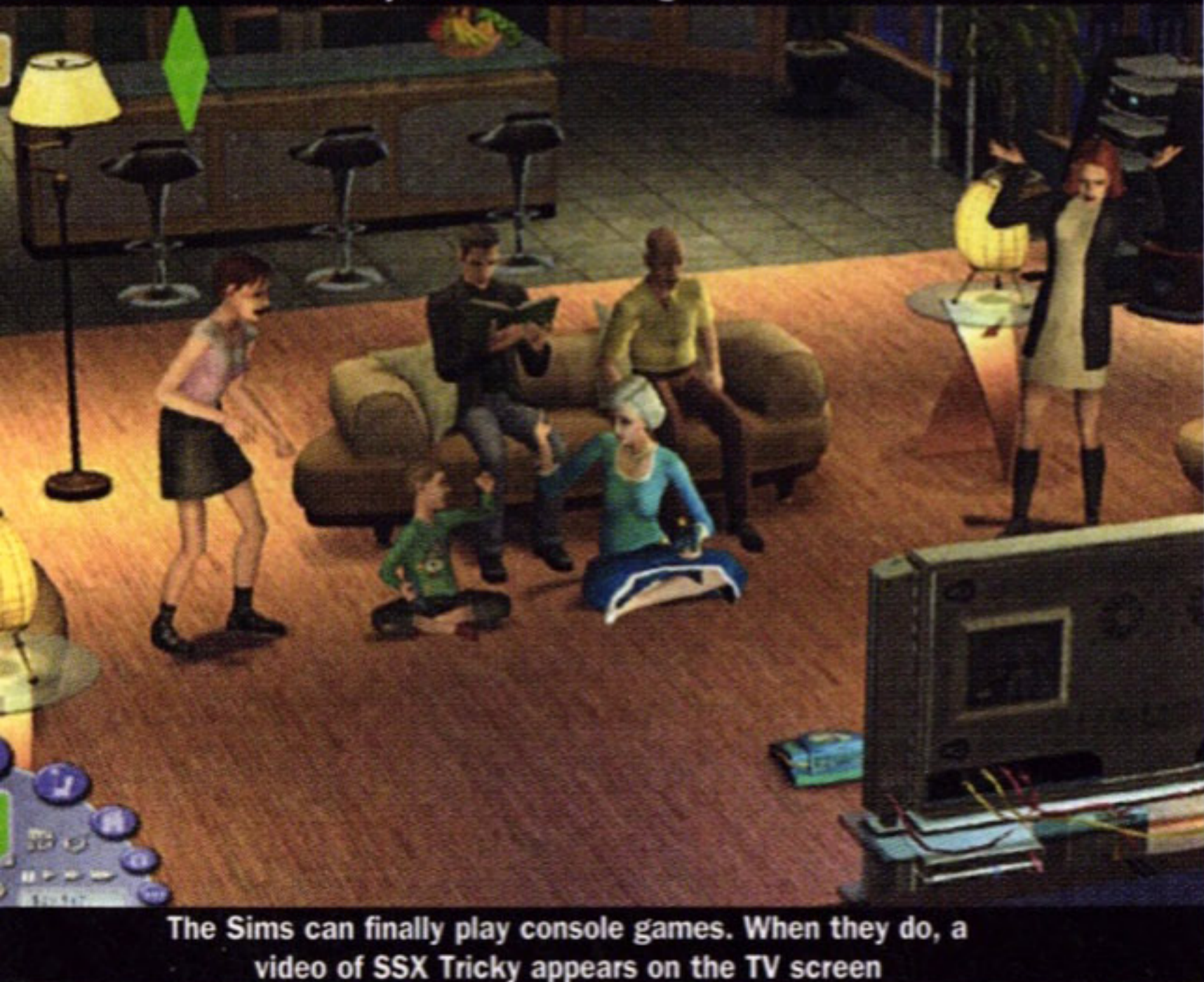
Ah! It's a cat disguised as a cow – or vice versa! Whatever it is, kill it!



"Gurgle...gurgle!" That's our impression of that guy



Your characters will experience life-changing events, such as their very first kiss from a high school sweetie



The Sims can finally play console games. When they do, a video of SSX Tricky appears on the TV screen

PC

THE SIMS 2

THE JOYS OF GROWING OLD

After years of expansion packs and upgrades, the biggest PC game of all time has finally evolved to the next generation of gaming. Along with a brand new 3D graphics engine that allows players to seamlessly change views and zoom in, almost every aspect of the game has changed dramatically. The most shocking implementation revolves around the lifespan of your Sims characters. Your precious digital personas will no longer remain the same age.

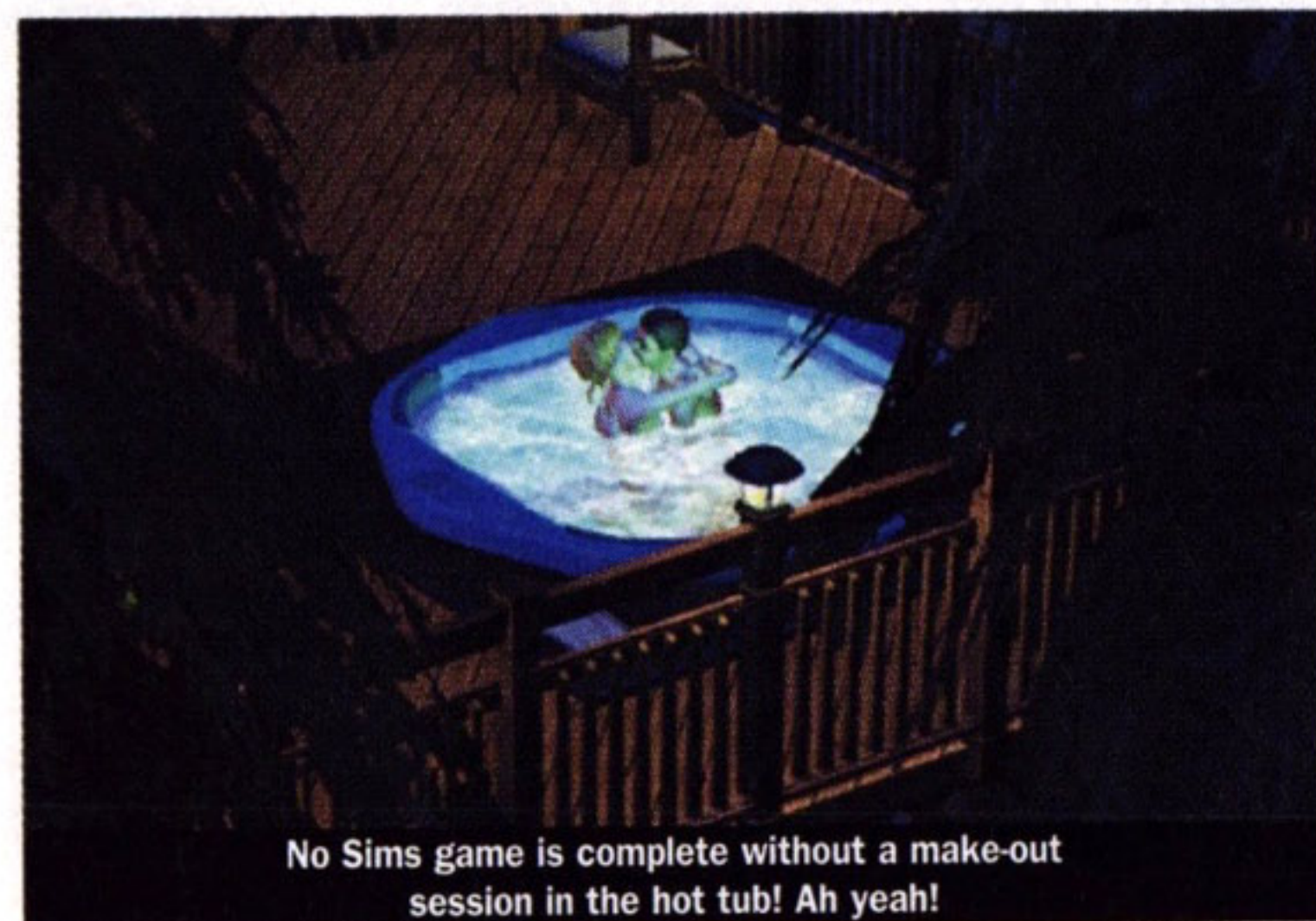
Throughout the course of the game, the characters will grow older and eventually pass on to that big computer in the sky. The big moments that a character experiences in his or her life will have a great effect on how they develop as a person. So, an action performed by a toddler has a direct effect on their teen or adult forms. The appearance of aging is displayed in real-time and all factors are taken into account as to how your Sim will look in the next phase of his or her life. If they sit on the couch all day, they'll develop a beer belly and will probably perish quicker than they should. To round out the experience, the DNA and genetic traits from your characters will be passed down to the family's offspring. So in a sense, the steps that ancestors make will be echoed throughout numerous generations.

Developer Maxis has also upgraded the AI and level of interaction significantly. For instance, your characters may grow frustrated if a baby is crying. Furthermore, if two teenage boys start fighting in the living room, there's a

chance that they could knock over and break a lamp. When a parent finds out that the lamp is broken, they'll scold the teen. If the culprit doesn't take well to authority, they'll walk away and ignore the punishment.

Outside of the gameplay itself, the building aspect of The Sims 2 is rather robust as well. You can change the fabric style and color for furniture, add additional floors, hang things from ceilings, and tweak whatever your heart desires.

In a sense, The Sims 2 has reached the point where anything is possible. You won't believe how deep this game is!



No Sims game is complete without a make-out session in the hot tub! Ah yeah!

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ DEVELOPER MAXIS ■ RELEASE 2004



Confucius say: Dead man hang low



"Do you see, fool? Your profile isn't nearly as perfect as that of myself, James Bond. Now die."

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

JAMES BOND 007: EVERYTHING OR NOTHING

MORE PIERCE, NEW PERSPECTIVE

Electronic Arts was doing pretty good for itself with its last few Bond titles. These games offered plenty of first-person action, loads of gadgets, and entertaining driving sequences. Thus, it's rather surprising that EA is abandoning this formula for the new 007 game, *Everything or Nothing*. But once you hear that Pierce Brosnan's face has been cyberscanned and he finally got his chiseled British rear end (which you'll be looking at a lot, whether you like it or not) into the sound studio to record dialogue, the decision to go third-person seems much more obvious.

The way Bond plays has been changed to accommodate this new direction. He will use a handy auto-targeting interface to blast evildoers, and his physical prowess will get him out of some very sticky situations as only Bond can. Don't worry, this game is nothing like the first 007 title under EA's supervision, *Tomorrow Never Dies*. It's much closer to the Namco hit from last year, *Dead to Rights*. This is no coincidence, as rumor has it that there are a few former Namco employees working on this game.

James will not always be in his snazzy tux, and needs to put on a disguise or two to get where he needs to go in the original adventure. This is just part of the cunning that comes into play. He is a spy, after all. Each mission has multiple solutions. The more Bond-like you are in execution, however, the more bonus points you'll receive. That's just

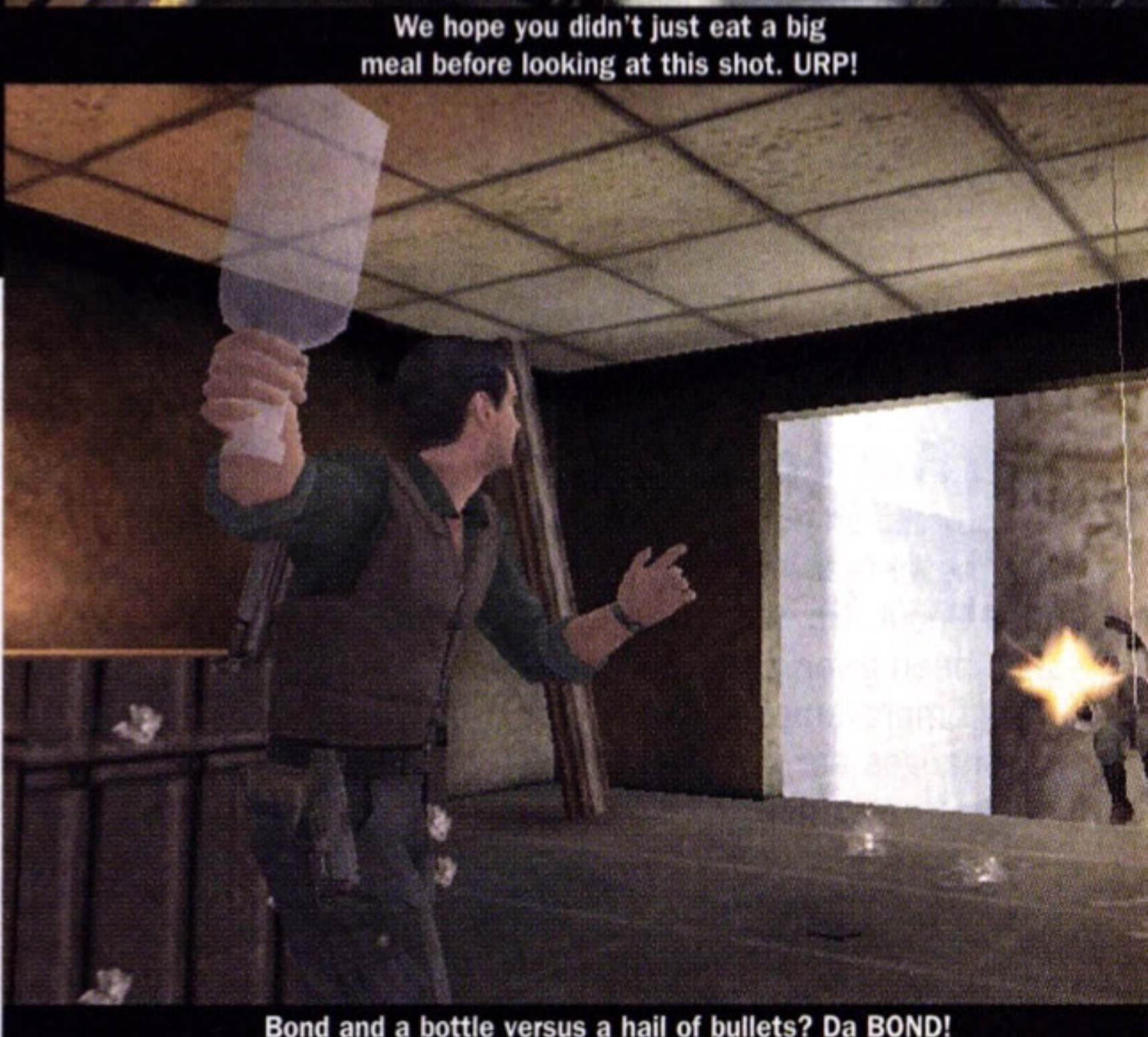
EA's way of being as nonviolent as possible – we say blast the bejeebers out of any enemy who gets in your way! Who needs the cool Q-Lab stuff that gets unlocked anyway? Okay, we do.

Bond also isn't confined to being on foot, and this new perspective makes it seamless to go from hoofing it to sitting in one of the pimpin' vehicles James will get the keys to throughout his journey. We're talking about motorcycles, tanks, helicopters, and even cars (okay, so maybe we should've mentioned cars first)! The exotic locales you'll be hanging in (literally, thanks to the rappel mechanic) are, in random order, New Orleans, Peruvian mountains, Egypt, and Moscow. Imagine the frequent flyer miles!

If you're the lonely type, EA is giving you a co-op mode so you can have a co-pilot along with you. Will you be able to play as *American Pie* and *Jay and Silent Bob* hottie Shannon Elizabeth, who recently signed on to play Bond girl Serena St. Germaine in the game? We certainly hope so. On the more competitive front, four-player arena battles are in *Everything or Nothing*, too. Again, they all use the third-person perspective. Take that, vertigo!

Shannon Elizabeth has been cast as the Bond girl for *Everything or Nothing*

We hope you didn't just eat a big meal before looking at this shot. URP!



Bond and a bottle versus a hail of bullets? Da BOND!

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA REDWOOD SHORES ■ **RELEASE** FALL



PREVIEWS



By wielding two swords, bullets can be deflected...



...and Tediz can be shredded

An Added Bonus!

If you missed out on Conker's Bad Fur Day on Nintendo 64, never fear. Rare is including the entire game within Live and Uncut. No word has been given as to what improvements or changes are in store for this port, but we can assume that the game will feature high-resolution texturing and a steady framerate.



XBOX

CONKER: LIVE AND UNCUT

NOT JUST ABOUT NUTS ANYMORE

Call us sadistic if you like, but there's something genuinely amusing about a squirrel who slams a keg of beer, stumbles around in a drunken stupor, and then urinates uncontrollably all over the place. This is just one of many standout scenarios that made Conker's Bad Fur Day into one of the Nintendo 64's most memorable games. Unfortunately, as entertaining as it was, this killer app never found an audience. With the Nintendo 64 fossilizing by the time the game hit retail shelves, timing was most certainly a factor. Couple this with the fact that the console basked in a kid-friendly atmosphere and you can clearly see why consumers shunned Conker's bad-boy image. The Conker franchise would likely wilt and die in Nintendo's stable, but now that Rare is partnered with Microsoft, everything changes.

The Xbox market is a perfect fit for Conker's wry wit and overly gory content. Given the fact that Rare is designing the game for online purposes just as Xbox Live is booming makes it all the better. Conker: Live and Uncut is an entirely new game that hones in on team-based multiplayer madness. Up to 16 players can compete in an online game. The scenarios that you'll enter are just as twisted as the characters you'll play. In one such scene, dubbed the Hiest, four teams of four race against one another to be the first to successfully rob a bank. If this sounds absurd, the Alien Base scenario pits all

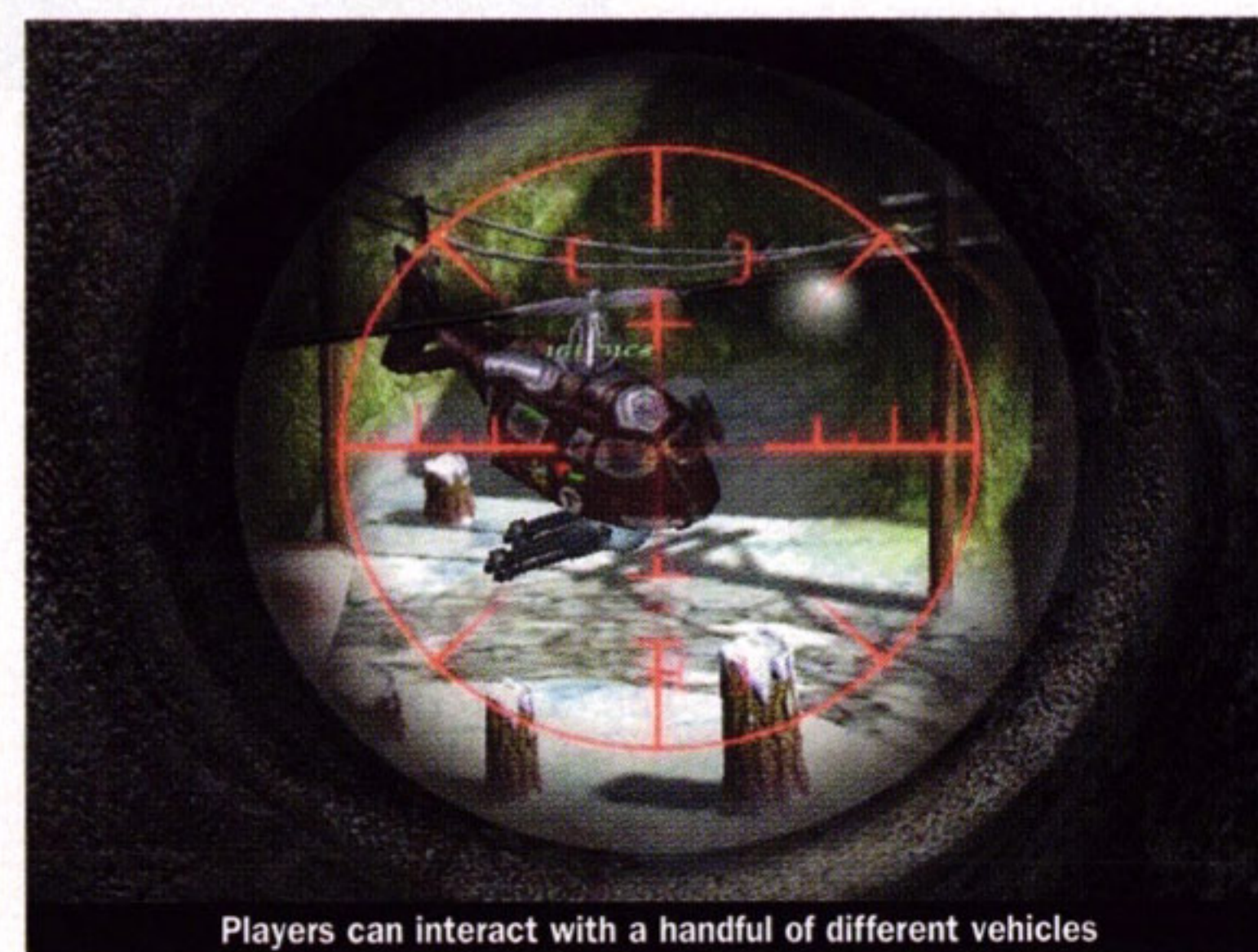
human players against never-ending waves of extraterrestrial beings. To do away with the "everything that moves must die" motif that accompanies games of this ilk, Rare plans to incorporate missions in each stage that you enter. Let's just hope we're not collecting Jinjos or puzzle pieces.

In true Conker fashion, vulgar language, offensive taunts, and gruesome war detailing are all part of the mix. You'll be able to blow the stuffing out of Tediz with a rocket launcher, shoot squirrels right between the eyes with a sniper rifle, and set up turret guns to cut swarms of troops down to size. Interestingly, you'll be able to wield more than one weapon at any given time. Of course, this comes in handy if your ammo is depleted, but there's much more to it than that. If you're carrying a sword and you stumble upon another, dual wielding will produce a number of enhancements. For instance, you'll now be able to hack away like a madman. Deflecting bullets with the blades becomes possible as well.

With its cute cartoon appearance, visceral details, and unique gameplay premise, Live and Uncut has the potential to become one of the Xbox's hottest properties. Wisely, Microsoft has not determined a release date as of yet, but given Rare's track record, it should be on retail shelves in 2004, 2005, or 2006.



DeathSHEAD



Players can interact with a handful of different vehicles



You can only imagine what a rocket will do to a squirrel

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 16-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE) ■ PUBLISHER MICROSOFT
 ■ DEVELOPER RARE ■ RELEASE 2004



PC

LINEAGE II: THE CHAOTIC CHRONICLE

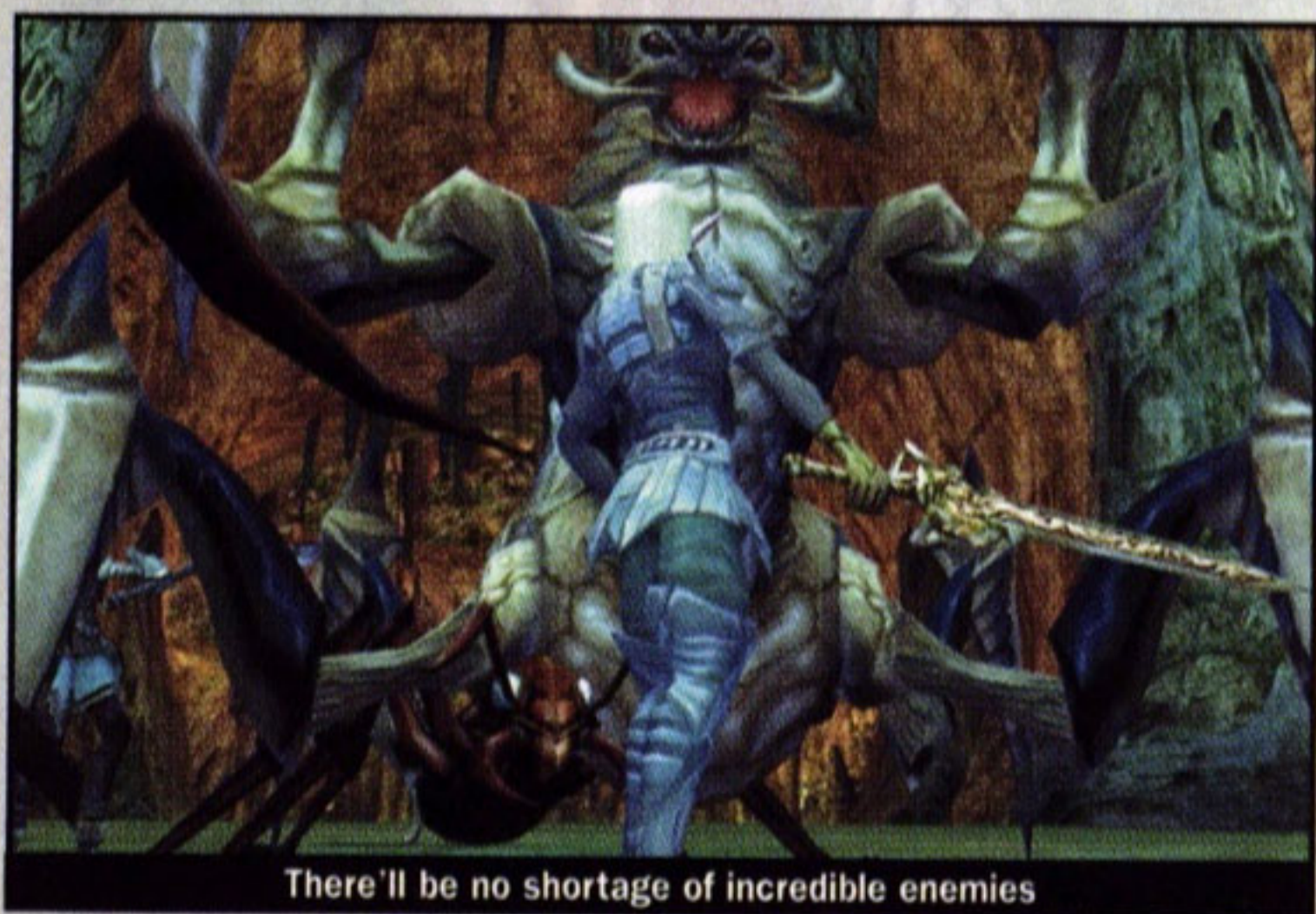
THE NEXT DIMENSION

If there's one thing hundreds of thousands of gamers love to do, it's play Lineage. Riding on this wave, NCsoft has taken its newly accumulated cash heap to aid in the development of Lineage II: The Chaotic Chronicle. From what we've seen, that money is being put to good use. The real question for this sequel will be whether it has the chutzpah to run with the big boys in the American

MMO market. With titles like Star War Galaxies, PlanetSide, EverQuest II, Dark Age of Camelot, Asheron's Call 2, and a host of others squeezing the market share together, the team over at NCsoft has a lot to live up to. In terms of a purely entertaining multiplayer experience, it looks as though this title should be able to offer a bevy of attractions that its competitors don't.

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** NCSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** NCSOFT

■ **RELEASE** SUMMER



There'll be no shortage of incredible enemies

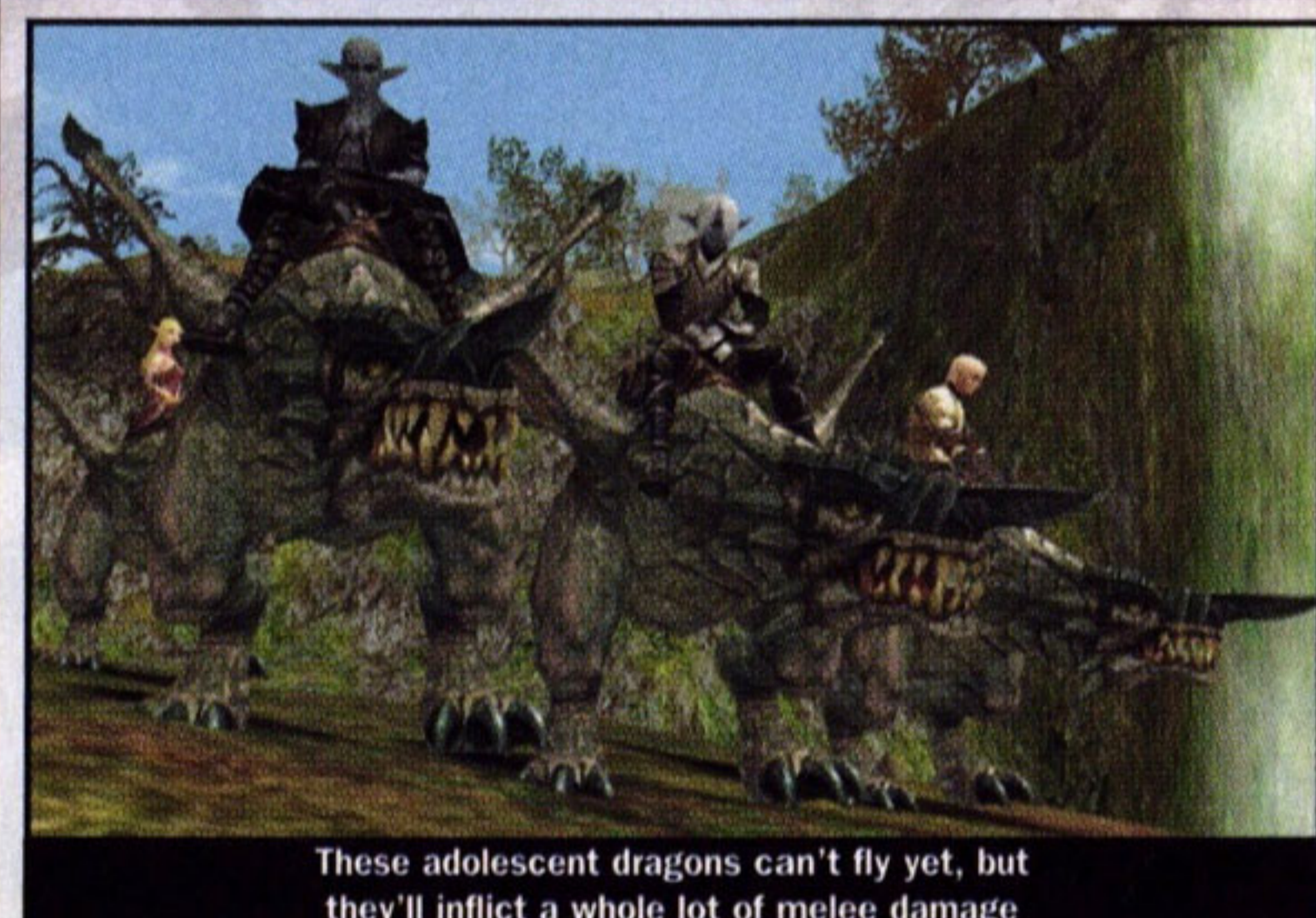


Not pictured: Hot chick with mace

Curb Appeal

By now, you've probably noticed that enormous screenshot on the top of the page. Sure, you've seen big pictures before, but this one is representative of the graphical quality infused throughout the entire game. The first and most obvious visual update is the 3D presentation. Each and

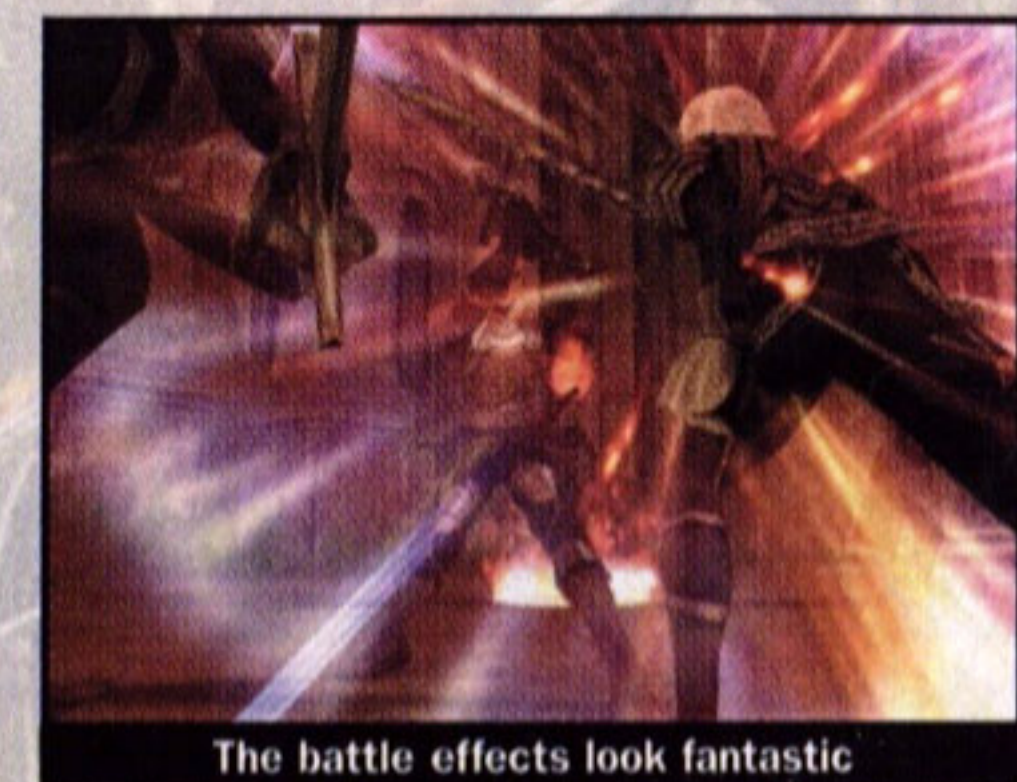
every unit and environment will be painstakingly crafted to lend an aura of realism that most massively multiplayer titles can only dream of. Thanks to a completely new version of the Unreal engine, the items, armor, and every structure you see in the game will look incredibly realistic.



These adolescent dragons can't fly yet, but they'll inflict a whole lot of melee damage

Give Us Game

Looks alone aren't going to get you anywhere in this industry (unless you're talking about action games). To this end, Lineage II will keep much of its predecessor's core gameplay, but will expand on the Blood Pledge system and will offer a more gradual approach to character development than others of its ilk. With the use of a skill tree, players will have the ability to build the avatar they want instead of following a predestined line from the moment they enter the world. Although you will have to decide between being a caster or a fighter in the beginning; from then on, development is up to you. Learning and using the game's plentiful active and passive abilities will be one thing that will keep people playing, but the ability to raise and eventually ride dragons is probably the biggest. Although they'll be relatively scarce, an adult dragon will not only act as an incredible transport, but it'll also inflict huge amounts of damage should the rider be threatened. We're excited to see what else NCsoft can put in this title, and even more excited to see how the rest of the big MMO companies react to an upping of the ante.



The battle effects look fantastic

PREVIEWS



XBOX

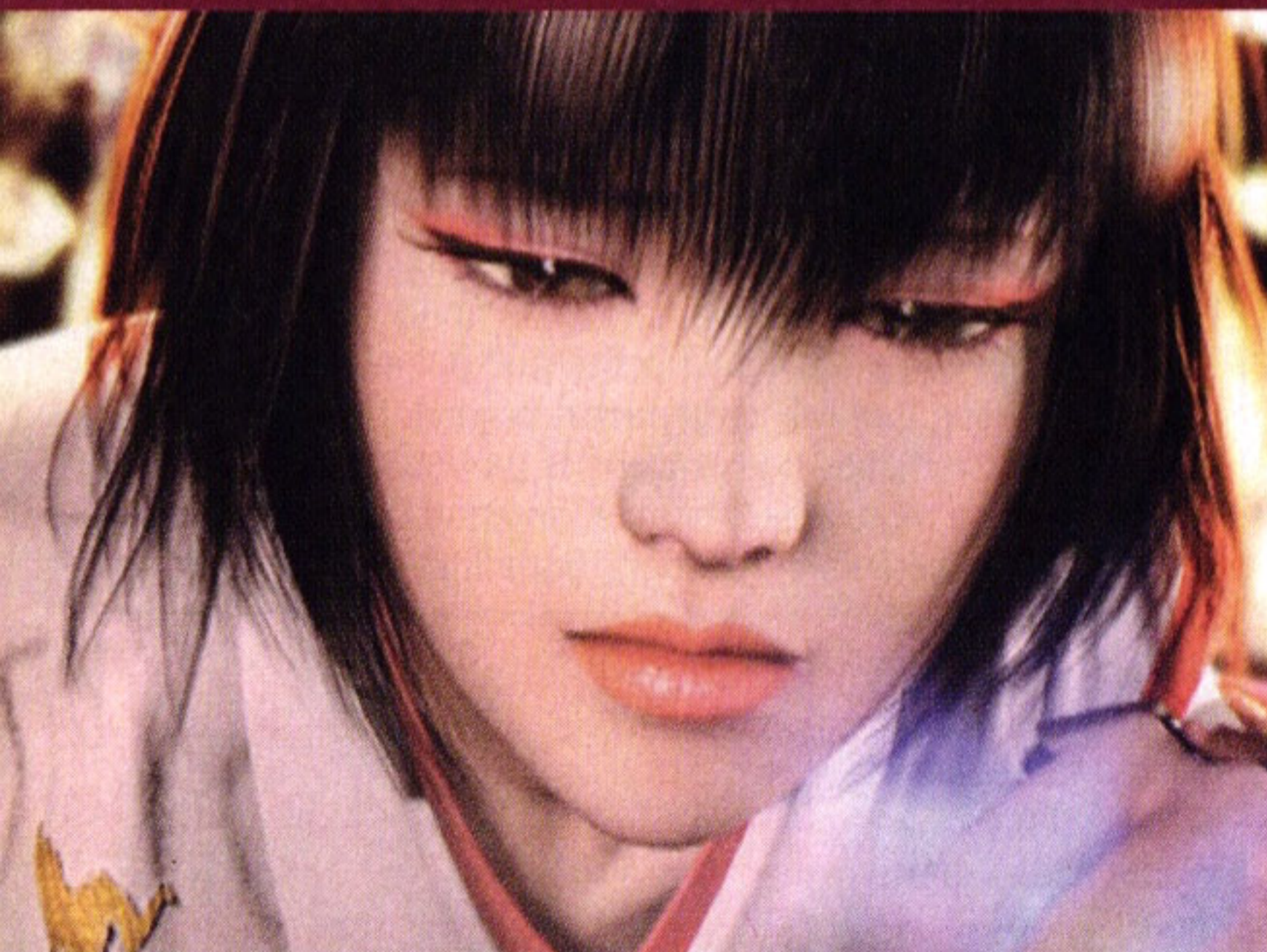
NINJA GAIDEN

GAMEPLAY ELEMENTS FINALLY REVEALED (JUST NO PICTURES)

Yes, it's true, the Ninja Gaiden pictures on this page certainly do look spectacular. Unfortunately, they are both from a CG sequence that was recently unveiled and are not actual gameplay. That said, we do have some exciting new information about the game after witnessing a 10-minute demo at E3. In a lot of ways, Ninja Gaiden reminds us of Rygar for PlayStation 2 since it features expansive areas to explore and many breakable items throughout. That is where the similarities end, since the Xbox-powered graphics leave Rygar in the dust.

Like any good ninja, Ryu Hyabusa has a number of attacks and techniques at his disposal. We saw him perform impressive twirling and twisting combos with both sword and nunchaku (some as big as 21 hits). He can even use a bow to unleash a long-distance barrage of arrows. Ryu is also capable of running and vaulting off walls, or shimmying Tomb Raider-style along ledges. No matter how you slice it, Ryu has an awe-inspiring move set.

All told, Ninja Gaiden looks to be going in the right direction. His moves are sharp with fluid animation. About the only thing that slightly disappointed us was that the environments were a little boring. After seeing the gigantic skeleton boss at the end of the demo, however, we were instantly all right with the environments – if it's the trade-off for getting bosses of that caliber. We'll know more in the coming months.



Team Ninja once again has a lot of hot ladies in its computer-generated movies

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** TECMO
■ **DEVELOPER** TEAM NINJA ■ **RELEASE** HOLIDAY 2003



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

R: RACING EVOLUTION

GIVING NEW MEANING TO THE TERM "SPOILER"

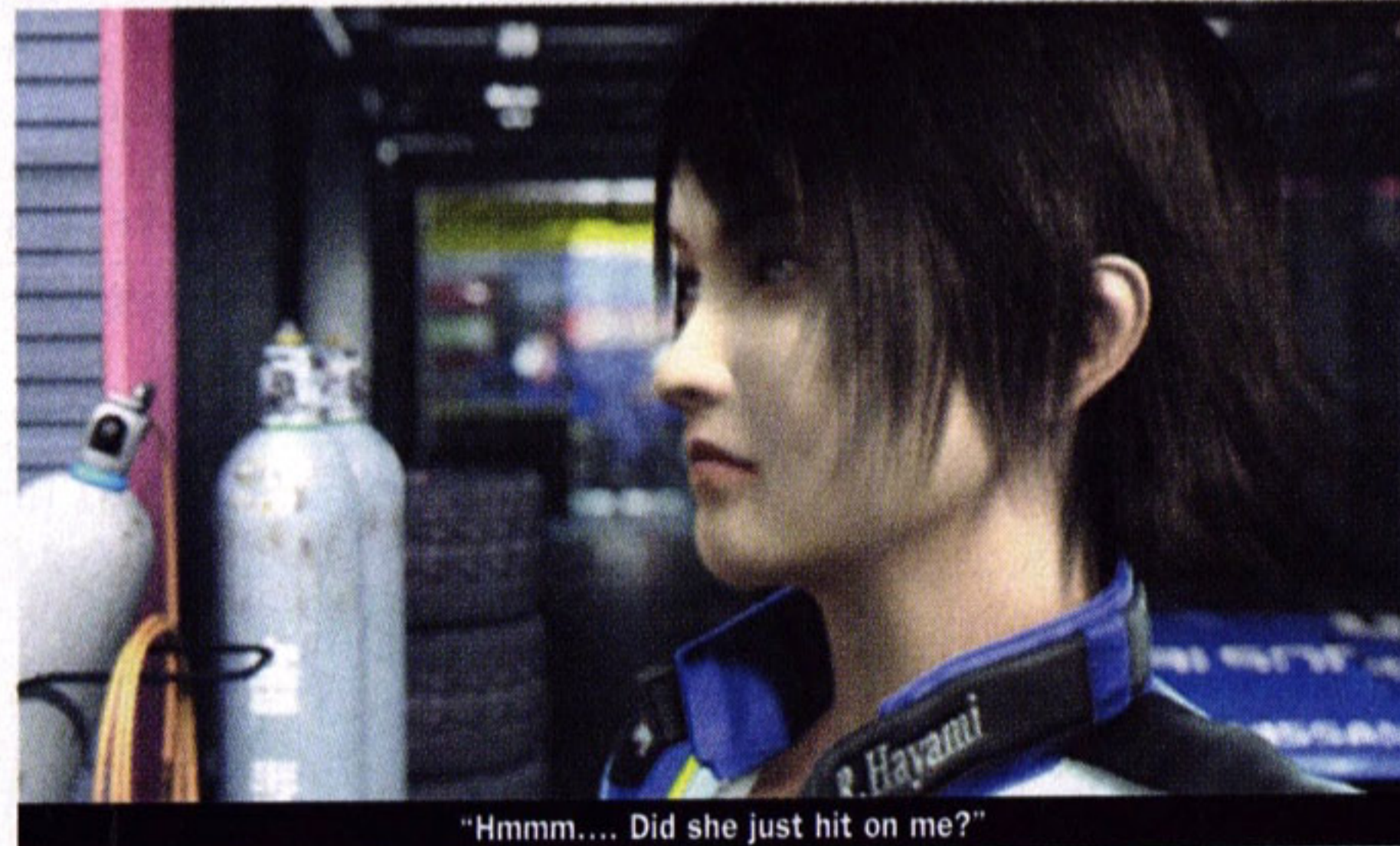


"My chassis is all lubed up, my headlights are buffed, and I cleaned out my intake valve. I'm gonna lap you all race long, little girl!"

Namco knows racing games. After all, it put out the Ridge Racer series and was even responsible for Pole Position back in the day. While R: Racing Evolution does have members of the Ridge Racer team in its ranks (as well as people from MotoGP 3), it couldn't be more different from its arcade ancestors.

Instead of focusing on the vehicles in the game, R: Racing Evolution puts the spotlight on the people behind the wheel. Isao Nakamura, the game's producer, tells us why that decision was made. "Racing games rarely make you feel like you're part of the action," he comments. "We want to put you in the middle of the game, with an emotional tie to the main character." That character is a Rena Hayami, a young woman who's reluctantly forced to don a racer's helmet. Past Namco titles have featured women alongside cars, but this is the first time one will grip the steering wheel.

A Pro Race Driver-esque story mode enlightens the player on why Rena is thrust into this situation, as well as documenting her relationship with other major players in the game. Cutscenes tell the tale masterfully, featuring character designs by the same group responsible for those in Soul Calibur II and the Tekken series. Rivalries will form, as will



"Hmmm.... Did she just hit on me?"

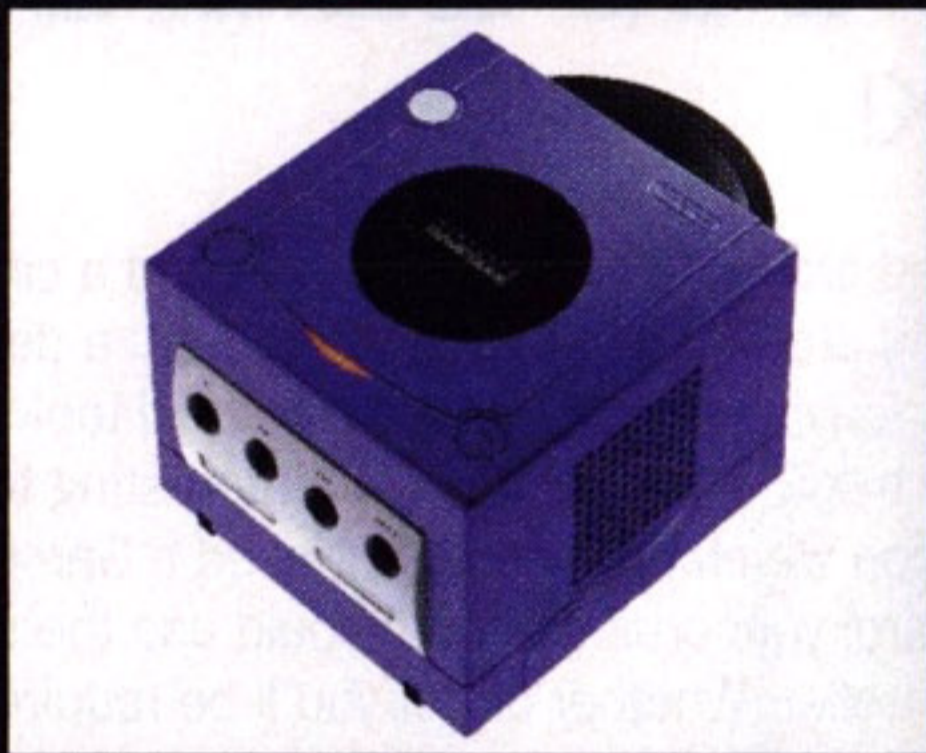
unlikely friendships. Audio will play during the races, as your pit crew issues advice and opponents talk smack. You'll have to play through the entire game to get the whole story – which Namco isn't currently revealing much about.

The action on the course hasn't been compromised in any way, and R: Racing Evolution is playing super-smooth already. It has the physics and the graphical flair to compete with any other car on the racing genre track. There are a variety of different vehicles, which can be upgraded as you go. R: Racing Evolution simply brings more personality to the racing sim.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** NAMCO ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO ■ **RELEASE** WINTER

WIN! The Ultimate Gaming Rig! OVER \$20,000⁰⁰ IN PRIZES!

Rattlebrain
"We Make You Think..."



You have the POWER. In this contest you don't rely on the luck-of-the draw. You determine if you win or not. You win by outscoring others in a game of skill. Can you solve the puzzle below? It looks simple, but it's only the start. Each of five more puzzles will get harder. But this time it's all up to you. Stay in to the end with the highest score and the gear is yours. With whatever options you want. Do you have what it takes? Try your hand and play to win!

Computer Contest. Win a tricked out gaming computer with 4.0 Ghz Pentium 4, 1 Gig RAM, 120 Gig. HD, DVD, Radeon 9800 card and more!

Video Game Contest. Play on the hi-tech cutting edge with this line-up: Microsoft Xbox, Nintendo Gamecube and Sony Playstation 2! Get all three or trade the ones you don't want for CASH! Bonus options include: 33" monitor, \$1,000 in games you choose, Gameboy Advance, cash, accessories and more!

Media Rig Contest. The Ultimate Gaming Environment, 60 inch HDTV monitor, 130 watt receiver w/ Dolby Digital, DVD and all components shown. Win DSS Satellite Receiver as a BONUS OPTION! This rig will blow you away!!

We're talkin' GAMING HEAVEN!

Directions. Fill in the Mystery Word Grid with words going across that spell out the Mystery Word down the side. Hint: use the Mystery Word Clue.

In the future. For each contest there will be four more puzzles at \$2.00 each and one much tougher final at \$1.00 which will be sent to you by mail. You will have 3 weeks to solve each puzzle. We don't know how many will play but typically 55% will have the highest score possible score to Phase I, 43% to Phase II, 36% to Phase III, and 32% to Phase IV. Highest score in the final determines the winner. If players are still tied they will split the value of the grand prize they are playing for.

Mystery Word Grid

	H				M Y S T E R Y W O R D	
		E				
P	I	N	C	H		W
	R					
S						

WORD LIST and LETTER CODE chart

PINCHW PRESS.....K BLASTA WRECKD
 BREAKZ PUNCHS SPRAYC TURBOV
 STOMPT STANDR PRESSE DREAMO
 CRUSH.....I SCOREH SLANTL CHASE.....P

MYSTERY WORD CLUE:

WORLD RULERS HAVE IT AND IN THIS CONTEST YOU HAVE IT

Yes!

ENTER ME TODAY, HERE'S MY ENTRY FEE:

- (\$3.00) Video Game Contest
- (\$3.00) Media Rig Contest
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CLIP AND MAIL



Verifiable retail value of the prize packages as follows: Media Rig Contest package \$7,012.00 core components shown, bonus options \$3,449.00, cash options \$1,250.00. Computer Contest package \$2,500.00 for computer, bonus options \$2,337.00, cash options \$1,250.00. Video Game Contest \$700.00 for systems shown, \$3,549.00 bonus options, \$1,250.00 cash options.

PREVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

THE SIMS: BUSTIN' OUT TAKIN' IT TO THE STREETS

This stand-alone follow-up is loaded to the hilt with new features. As the name of the game implies, your characters can leave the house and travel into the town via scooter or car. Along with a hip-hop dance venue, Club Rubb, and the mysteriously named Love Shack; your Sims can explore a lab, art gallery, family diner, and gymnasium. With these locales comes a plethora of new objects and social interactions. For instance, you can now French kiss your significant other, towel snap their behind when they leave the room, and then signal victory by moonwalking across the floor. Within the particular venues, you can hold a laser light show, test your might on a climbing wall, and even hop into the DJ booth.

EA has also created a handful of characters that are exclusive to the console version. Our favorite, Bing Bling is a party machine who will more than likely make an appearance at any and all of your bashes. To round out the experience, Bustin' Out features a slew of additional two-player options, the ability to transport Sims to a friend's house through a memory card, new original music, and an overhauled engine with seamless UI and real-time shadows. Unfortunately, it won't be available until early 2004.



One of the new interactions is the wall climb

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SIMULATION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** MAXIS
 ■ **RELEASE** 2004



GAMECUBE

FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES

NINTENDO FANS REJOICE! SQUARE'S BACK!

After a 10-year absence on Nintendo hardware, Square is finally bringing out new games for the GameCube and Game Boy Advance. First out of the gates is the highly anticipated Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles.

Crystal Chronicles is a far cry from the usual Final Fantasy game. You won't find Cloud, Yuna, Sabin, Steiner, Locke, or Squall in this game. In fact, Crystal Chronicles isn't a turn-based RPG and won't even have summons. At its core, Crystal Chronicles is a real-time action/RPG that uses the Game Boy Advance to control your character on screen. Emphasis is placed on experiencing the game with more than one person, but you'll still be able to play through Crystal Chronicles alone.

Gameplay is similar to a Gauntlet or Phantasy Star Online game where you and your team roll through each level-based mission attacking foes and battling huge bosses. The main switch is in the battle system – which includes both physical and magic attacks. Physical attacks are as simple as swinging your weapon and striking your foe; but by holding down A, you charge up the attack. The magic system is based on stones that you collect throughout the levels that generate different spells. If you're playing multiplayer, you can combine each of the spells to unleash a "super" attack. When you get to the gigantic boss battles, you'll be happy you brought your friends with you.

The Game Boy Advance is used as the controller for many different reasons. During gameplay, it will give you overhead maps of the level you're in; display character information; and most importantly, manage your abilities. These can be adjusted on the fly, and while you're attention is diverted to your Game Boy Advance screen, your character goes into auto pilot mode.

In the demo we played at E3, one

character carried around a crystal that produced a circular force field, which protected team members from a deadly gas. Party members leaving the protective force field took damage, forcing them to travel in packs. It is also interesting to note that in the version we played, you didn't need a Game Boy Advance to control your character and could use the standard GameCube controller. Whether or not you'll be required to have a GBA to play in the final version is unknown, but we're betting it'll be optional.

Even though Crystal Chronicles is a departure from the typical Final Fantasy game, it's not the first time that Square has tried something different with its flagship series. With intense real-time battles, luscious visuals, GBA connectivity, and multiplayer support, Crystal Chronicles could be exactly what RPG-starved GameCube owners have been waiting for.



Four-player super attack!

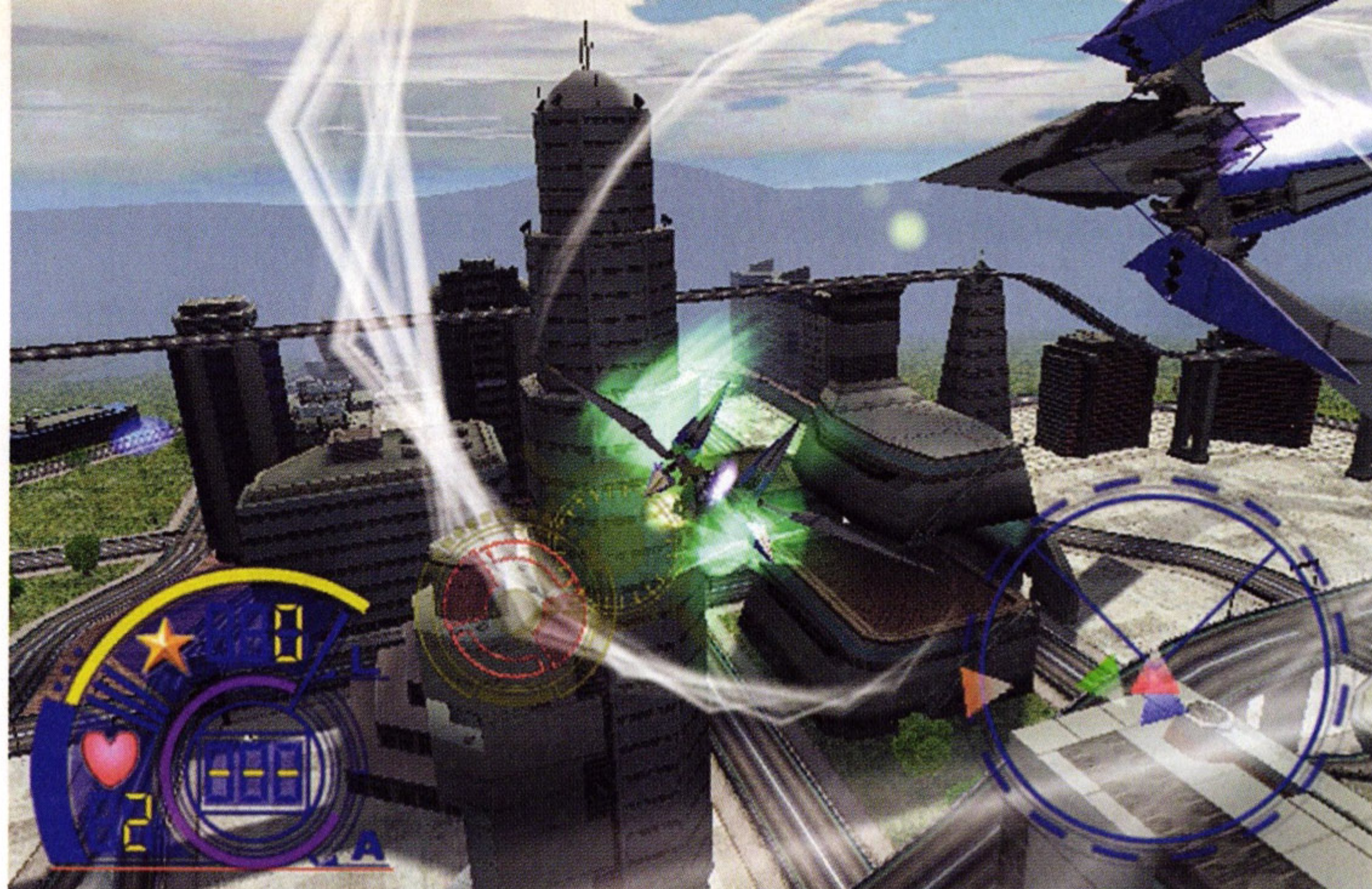


Four against one is a little unfair



Aren't these kids too young to play with fire?

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** SQUARE ENIX ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



GAMECUBE

STAR FOX 2

ANOTHER FAKE FOX

Nintendo's commitment to creating a Star Fox game based on gameplay unassociated with its roots is vexing. Why pursue something like Star Fox 2 when Adventures was disappointing? Listen little "n," and listen very closely: We want to enjoy an updated version of Star Fox 64! Nothing more and nothing less.

Despite our already negative intro, we admit that the idea for Star Fox 2 has potential. Players assume the role of one of the old or new characters. The unique mission structure allows you to proceed through levels in one of three manners: on foot, in a Landmaster Tank, or in the Arwing. Each scenario presents its own challenges, objectives, and gameplay mechanics.

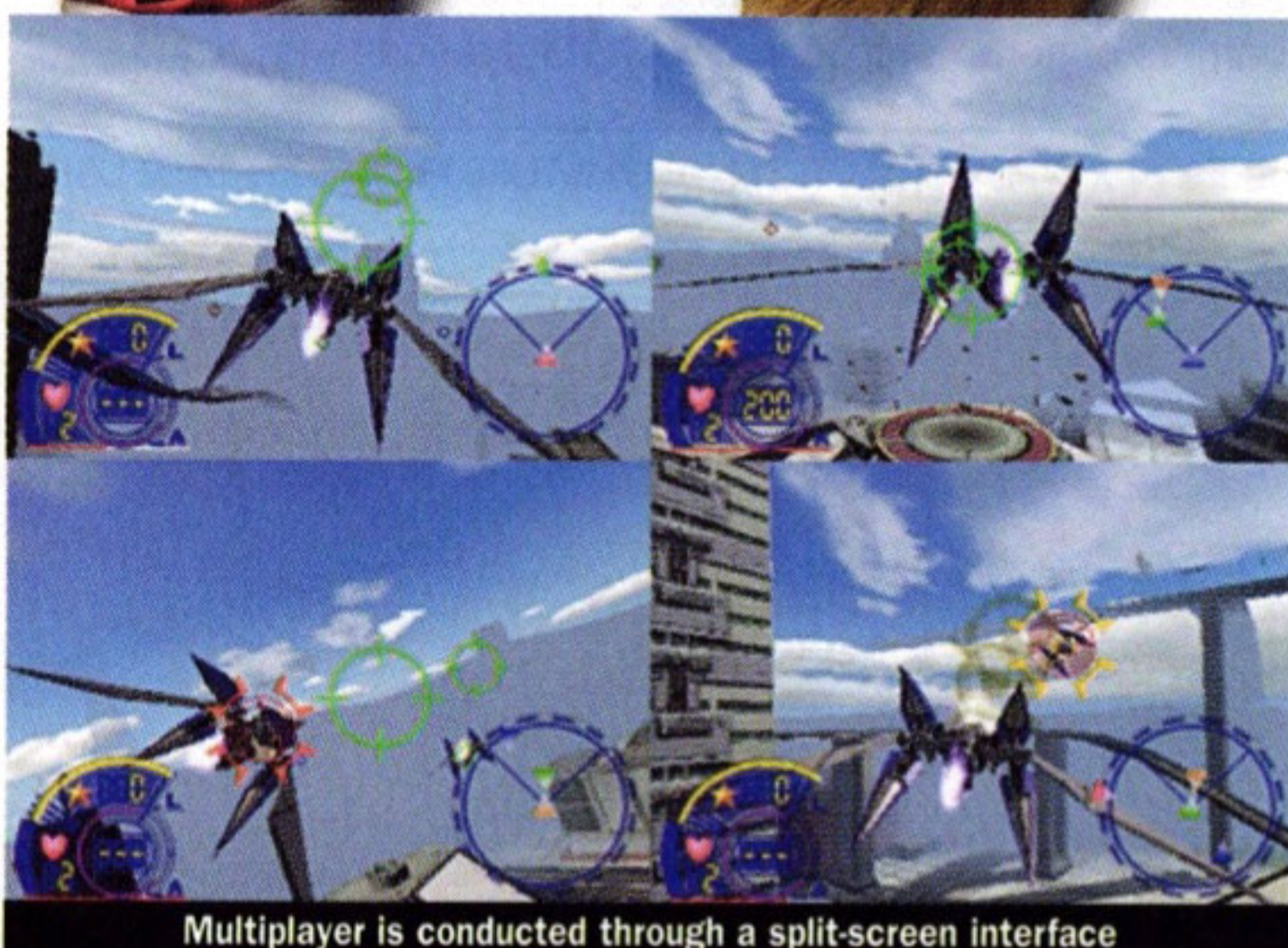
To add further depth and replay value, up to three friends can join in for a cooperative effort. Within the same area, for example, the first player could roam on foot; another would control the tank; while the other two tend to the Arwing – one player flying and shooting within the plane and the second actually fighting on top of the wing!

If cooperative play isn't your style, the four of you can compete in deathmatch-style games. Although the multiplayer mode doesn't really present any original ideas, the maps are very well designed. Each stage is fairly large and complex and contains the two vehicles, yet they're balanced so that players stuck fighting on foot always seem to have an equal chance of winning as those controlling the Arwing and tank.

Our serious technical gripes are few, but conspicuous. First, the control scheme will initially confuse your brain. Instead of pressing forward to move, you must hold the R trigger; and the L trigger in conjunction with the analog stick will allow you to strafe. Second, the graphics still need some work. Seeing that Nintendo won't ship a game until it has been deemed flawless, there's a good chance that these technical problems will be fixed by the time the game ships.



Guns still ablazin', but McCloud just can't decide: handgun or Arwing?



Multiplayer is conducted through a split-screen interface



There are a bunch of new weapons available



The texturing is a bit bland and the geometry looks blocky



PLAYSTATION 2

DRAKENGARD

SQUARE NODS TO KOEI AND SEGA

Focusing on more action than RPG, Drakengard merges the gameplay of Dynasty Warriors and Panzer Dragoon. Players will spend half of their time hacking and slashing away with the hero Kyme, while the rest is devoted to destroying enemies from atop a dragon with a pernicious disposition.

Fortunately, ground scenarios will feature more than the mindless chaos that Dynasty Warriors had perfected. Kyme's attributes improve throughout the adventure, which yields more combos, magic attacks, physical strength, and weapon experience. Players will also participate in story segments and exploration while on foot.

The dragon actually thrusts gamers into two types of fighting: dogfights and strafing. Aerial combat pits players against other flying foes in a 360-degree environment, while strafing will allow you to rain fire down upon ground targets such as buildings and soldiers. Although we're still in the dark in regards to the dragon's capabilities outside of fire breathing, Square revealed that it too will wax stronger, making more defensive and offensive maneuvers available.

Drakengard might not be original, but if Square Enix can properly execute the two gameplay types (which it seems the company will), fans of action titles have cause for excitement.



The fire effects are impressive, but what else would you expect from Square Enix?

■ STYLE 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO ■ DEVELOPER NAMCO ■ RELEASE 2003

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION/RPG ■ PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX ■ DEVELOPER CAVIA ■ RELEASE SPRING 2004

PREVIEWS



PC

MIDDLE-EARTH ONLINE

EARLY IN THE GAME

Vivendi owns the Tolkien license, and by gum, it's determined to make some money off of it! Never mind that Fellowship of the Ring was a steaming pile of donkey crap, Middle-Earth Online looks good enough that we can forgive and forget the besmirching of Tolkien's name. Thousands of players will traverse the lands of Middle-Earth to push back the evil hordes of Mordor. No, you won't be able to play as a Nazgûl, but picking between elves, humans, hobbits, and dwarves should be enough to keep people interested. As your character advances, you'll be able to purchase customizable race-specific dwellings and travel to distant and spectacular regions of J.R.R.'s geographic creation. Stay tuned for more MEO information in the coming months.

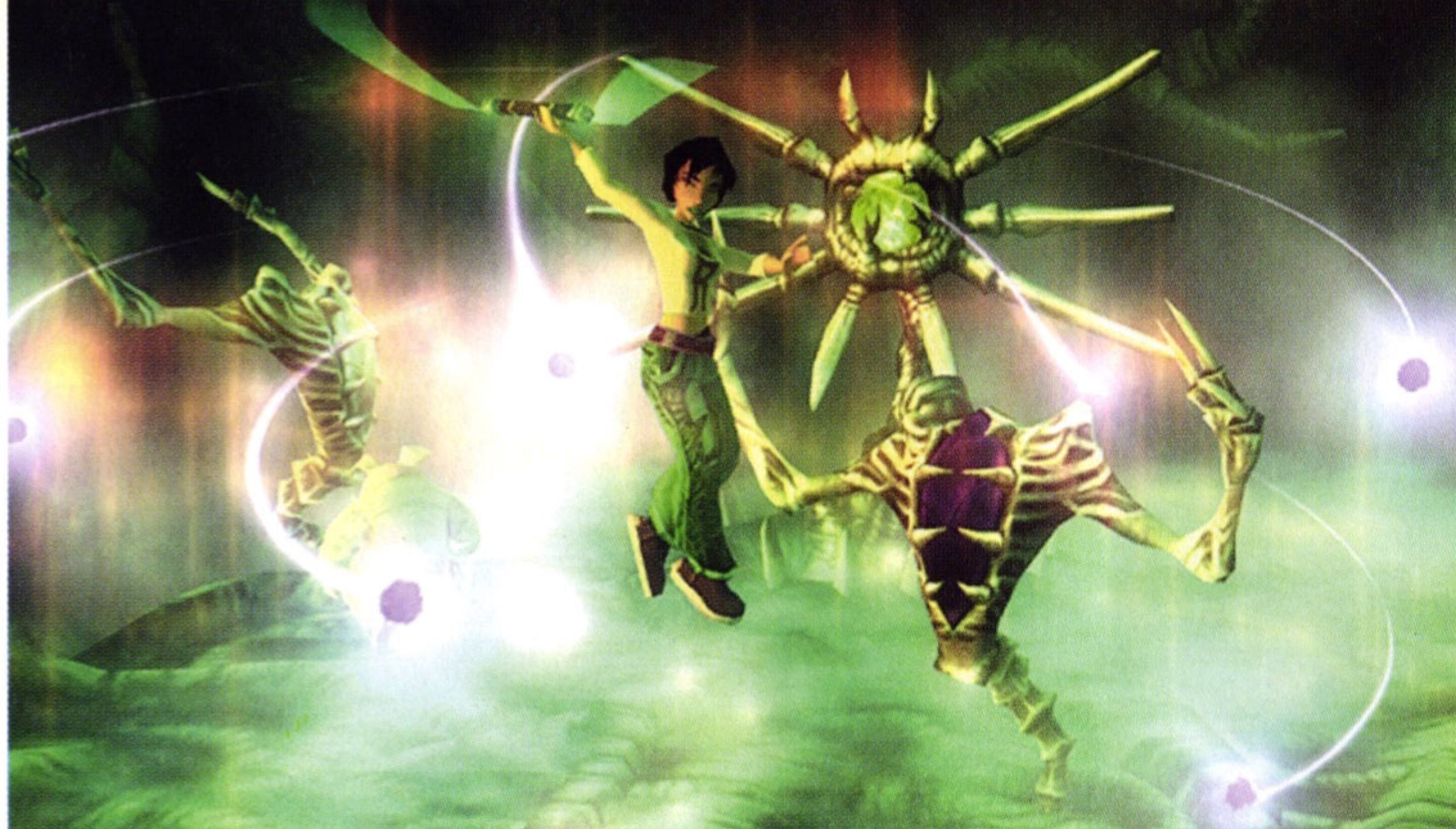


The environmental detail is impressive to say the least



"Oh yeah, well mine's *this* big!"

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ONLINE ROLE-PLAYING GAME
 ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES
 ■ **DEVELOPER** TURBINE ■ **RELEASE** WINTER 2004



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE/PC

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

JACK OF ALL TRADES

Although Beyond Good & Evil has been in production for a few years, details about the title had been fiercely guarded – until now. We know that the plot centers on Jade, a teenage resident of the peaceful planet of Hyllis. Hyllis, of course, has been attacked by the current enemy du jour: a race of relentless aliens. Jade had fought valiantly to save her city during the initial onslaught and was overcome by exhaustion, plunging her into a restless sleep fraught with disturbing visions.

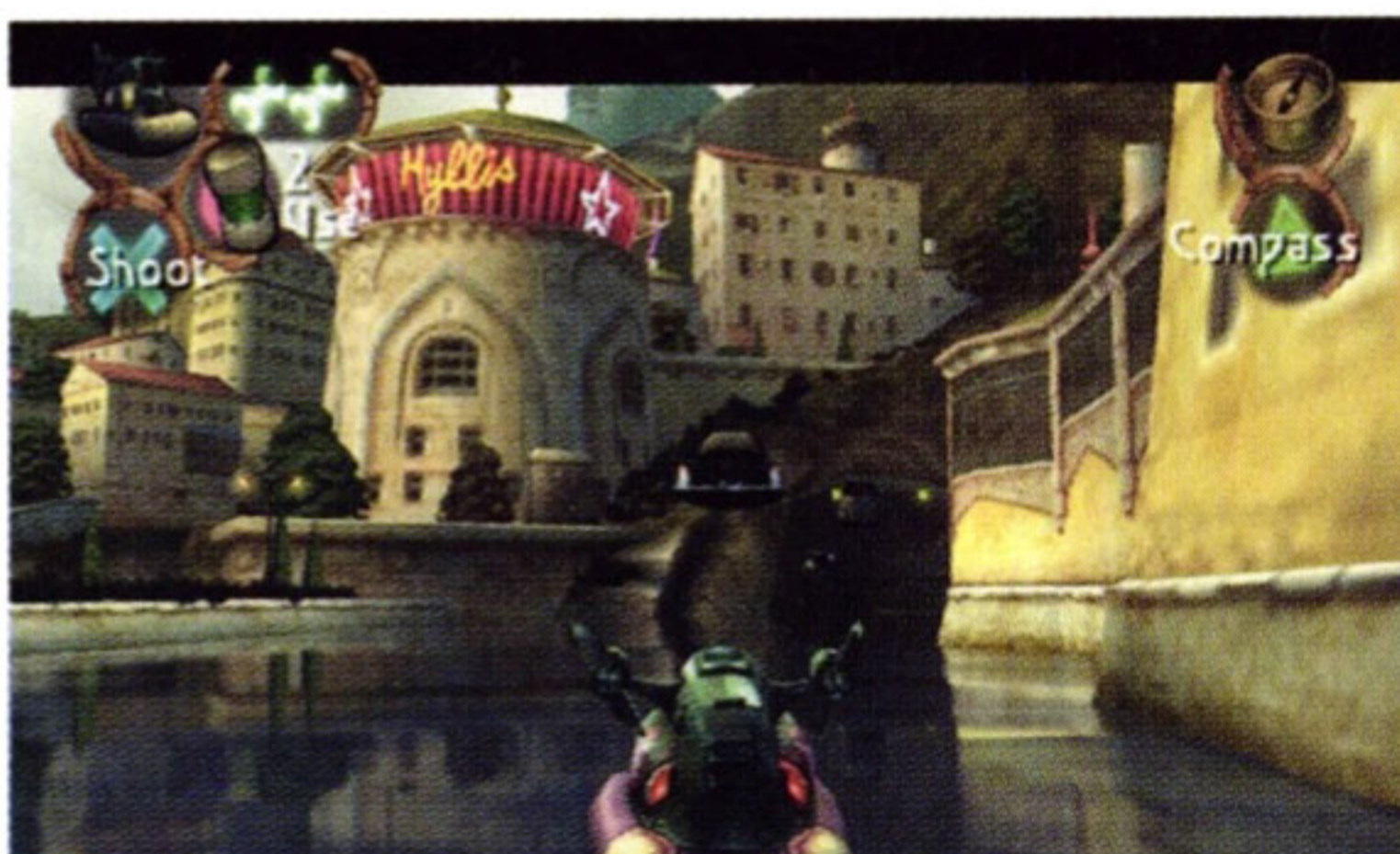
In spite of government-issued assurances, Jade suspects that a greater conspiracy is afoot. Our heroine joins a rebellious resistance organization and offers her camera, aikido staff, and youthful inquisitiveness as weapons in discovering the ultimate truth. While hinting that Jade will pierce the barriers of her existence in a very *Matrix*-esque way, any

further speculations on the plot would be complete guesses on our part.

Michel Ancel, creator of the Rayman franchise, has been working solely on BG&E for the last three years and thinks it inspiring enough to call this game his "latest masterpiece." Although termed an action/adventure title, BG&E looks to feature on-foot exploration, platforming, a respectable amount of vehicle-based combat, magic use, and hand-to-hand action.

A whole new engine, called the JADE Game Engine, was developed for the project and offers an exceptional amount of detail and easy transitions between wandering the cities and cruising waterways in third or first-person vehicle action. This engine is also used in Ubi's upcoming Prince of Persia release, previewed on page 68.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** UBI SOFT ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



Hovercrafts are a frequent mode of transportation



Perhaps an air hockey minigame?



Giant, metal, menacing snake monsters are never good



Special Move: Hammer Time? When will the 2 Legit 2 Quit references end?!



XBOX

GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES

A SACK OF SCARES

Fear and humor. That combination makes some people think of the *Evil Dead* trilogy. It invokes thoughts of *Scary Movie* from others. Add the British element in there, and you get *Grabbed by the Ghoulies*, one of Rare's inaugural Xbox efforts.

First off, you should know that the term "ghoulies" refers to someone's man parts in U.K. lingo. Why should you know that? It's just fun. Cooper is the guy whose ghoulies may be in a vice in this game, as he traverses Ghoullhaven Hall to rescue his significant other. Predictably, the place is haunted to the hilt, and Cooper must battle over 25 different types of ghoulies. Each of them require a different strategy to vanquish.

Luckily, Cooper is a resourceful individual. While he doesn't have much in the way of standard-issue accoutrements, he can turn anything he finds into a deadly weapon. More than 100 household items can be used to blast, beat, or douse the creepy critters. These include pool cues, chairs, squirt guns, and fire extinguishers.

Much like *Eternal Darkness*, GameCube's hit survival horror game, *Grabbed by the Ghoulies* will toss countless frightful surprises in your grimacing face. We won't ruin them for you, but we can say the Rare guys have really used their imagination to make us jump. Not only will these events freak



Even more frightening than this Medusa's snakes is the fact that she isn't wearing a bra

you, the gamer, out; but also, if Cooper is exposed to too many of them, he'll faint.

This isn't necessarily the type of game we were expecting from the company who gave us *Perfect Dark*, *Killer Instinct*, and *GoldenEye*. However, we're not going to write this game off for its childish look. Rare has an unparalleled track record, and its potential with hardware as advanced as Xbox is limitless.

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** RARE ■ **RELEASE** OCTOBER



Careful, Cooper. Their eyes are neon green. They're possessed with the power of Xbox

Cooper puts the "P" in Super Soaker



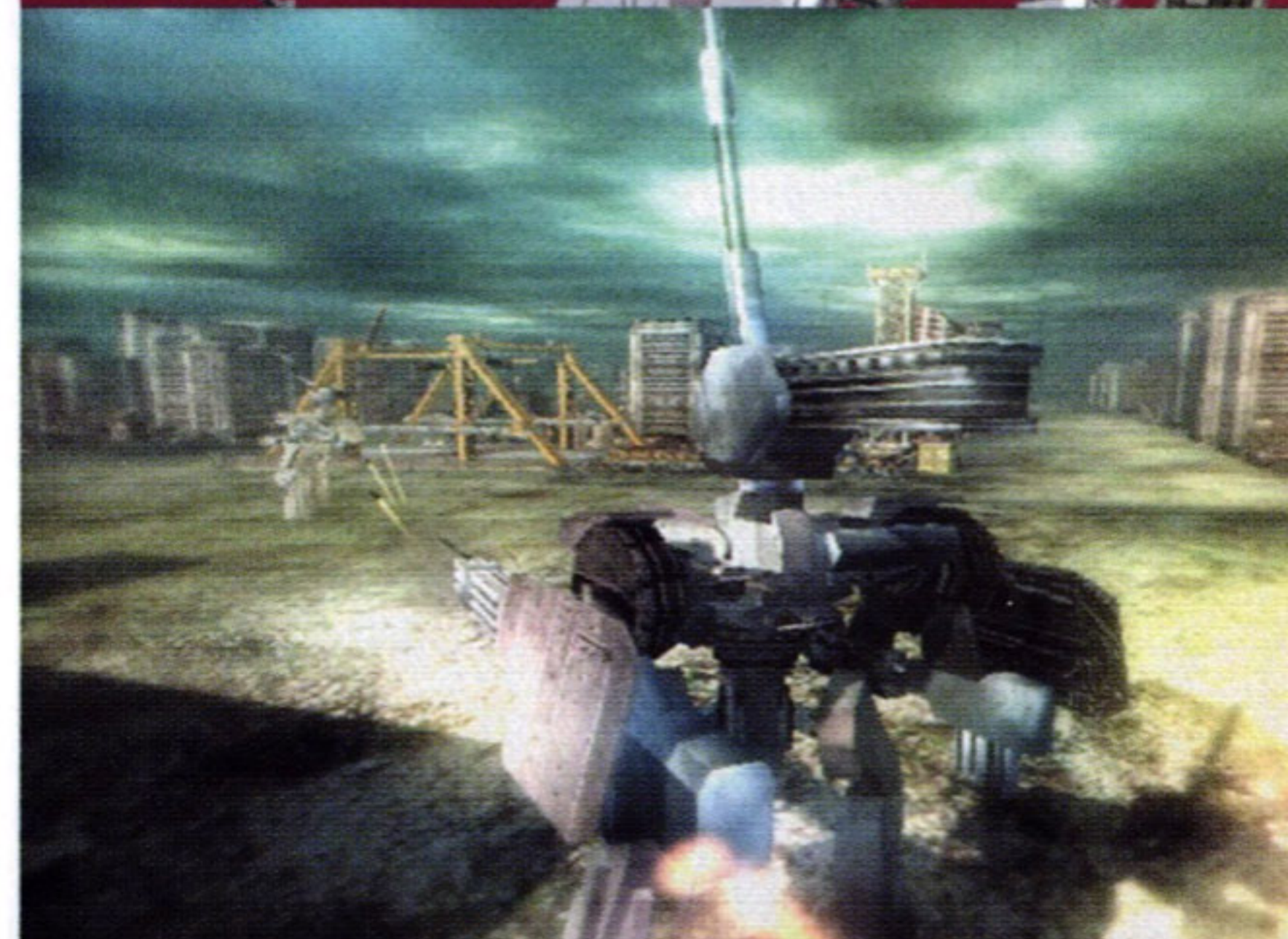
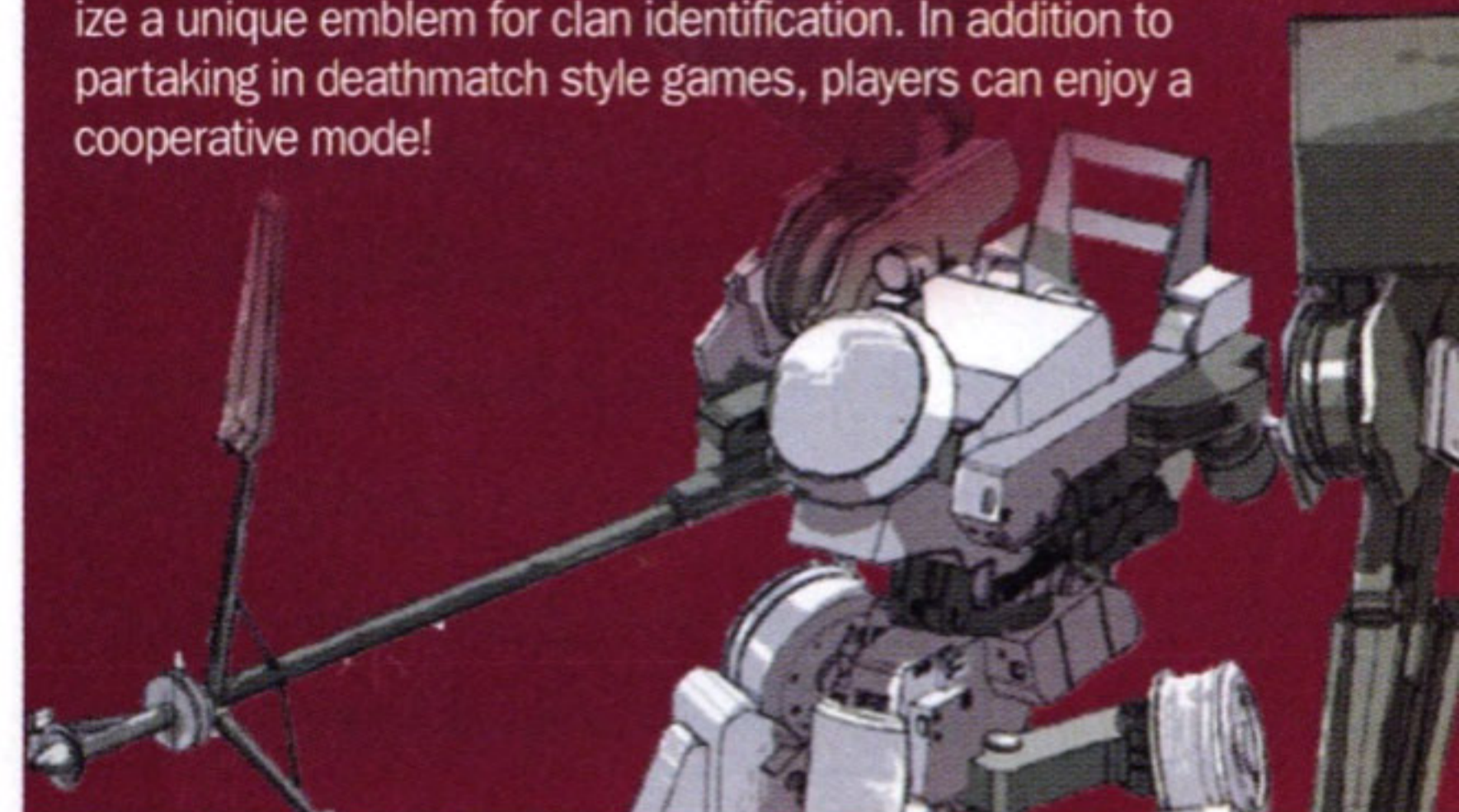
XBOX

STEEL BATTALION: LINE OF CONTACT

A REFRESHING DOSE OF AMBITION

Although many questions regarding Capcom's laudable online venture still need answering, you really only need to know one thing: Mech fans finally get to battle real people over the Internet in the most ambitious, realistic, and engrossing mech game ever created. If online capability isn't exciting enough in itself, at least you can feel slightly more justified knowing that your expensive, elaborate controller has a second purpose.

Fortunately, Capcom has confirmed a few interesting details. First, there will be 10 new Vertical Tanks (mechs) to control; players can engage in combat from first and third-person points of view; and you'll have the option to customize a unique emblem for clan identification. In addition to partaking in deathmatch style games, players can enjoy a cooperative mode!



Capcom scammed us. It should've had Live support to begin with!

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 10-PLAYER VIA LAN OR INTERNET) ■ **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM ■ **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM ■ **RELEASE** WINTER 2004

PREVIEWS



PC

ROME: TOTAL WAR

THE NEXT GENERATION

Riding on the success of Medieval: Total War and Viking Invasion (its expansion pack), the team at Creative Assembly has seen fit to blow all of their previous work out of the water. Rome: Total War is one of the most impressive historical war titles this magazine has ever seen. Showcasing fully 3D modeled units (instead of sprites), and breathtaking environmental effects, it's no wonder that Rome nabbed one of our "Top 10 PC Games Of The Show" slots.

Updates for this Total War iteration include cities that will exist on the battle maps as well as the over map, better unit AI, urban combat, and improved fighting mechanics. For example, let's say your army is setting up for an assault on a town. You'll see different squads clash with the enemy in a realistic fashion as the groups penetrate each other's formations, scale city walls, and flood into the city to put down resistance before many of the structures take damage. That's right, no more starting from scratch when you take a town. Alternatively, the actual number of buildable units will be reduced from Medieval to facilitate ease of use, which will allow players to concentrate on how to use their resources effectively. As you can see, this game looks fantastic – let's hope Creative Assembly can have it in stores by this holiday season.



Each of the units you see here are fully 3D and will use individual AI subroutines

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** CREATIVE ASSEMBLY ■ **RELEASE** WINTER



GAMECUBE

MARIO GOLF: TOADSTOOL TOUR

SMACKIN' BALLS MARIO STYLE



Mario and friends return to the links this summer in Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour. Visually, this title looks like a graphical upgrade to its N64 predecessor, but Camelot seems to have added enough gameplay elements to make it more than just a mere port.

Each of the courses are based in the Mario universe, including a new Mushroom Kingdom Castle course and Mount Mario (pseudo Mount Rushmore), so don't expect to find Pebble Beach or Sawgrass in this game. Sand traps and trees will be the least of your worries, especially when you have a Chain Chomp or a Thwomp blocking a perfect chip to the green. Another new feature sure to liven up the gameplay is the addition of Warp Pipes. Land a ball inside a Warp Pipe, and it'll pop up somewhere (hopefully) closer to the hole.

Toadstool Tour will be just as easy as the original to pick up and play, but has enough advanced features to keep veterans busy. For gamers new to Mario Golf, there's an Auto Shot where the game will control more of the shot mechanics. Experts can use the Manual Shot for advanced controls like backspin and topspin to pinpoint aim more accurately and avoid obstacles.

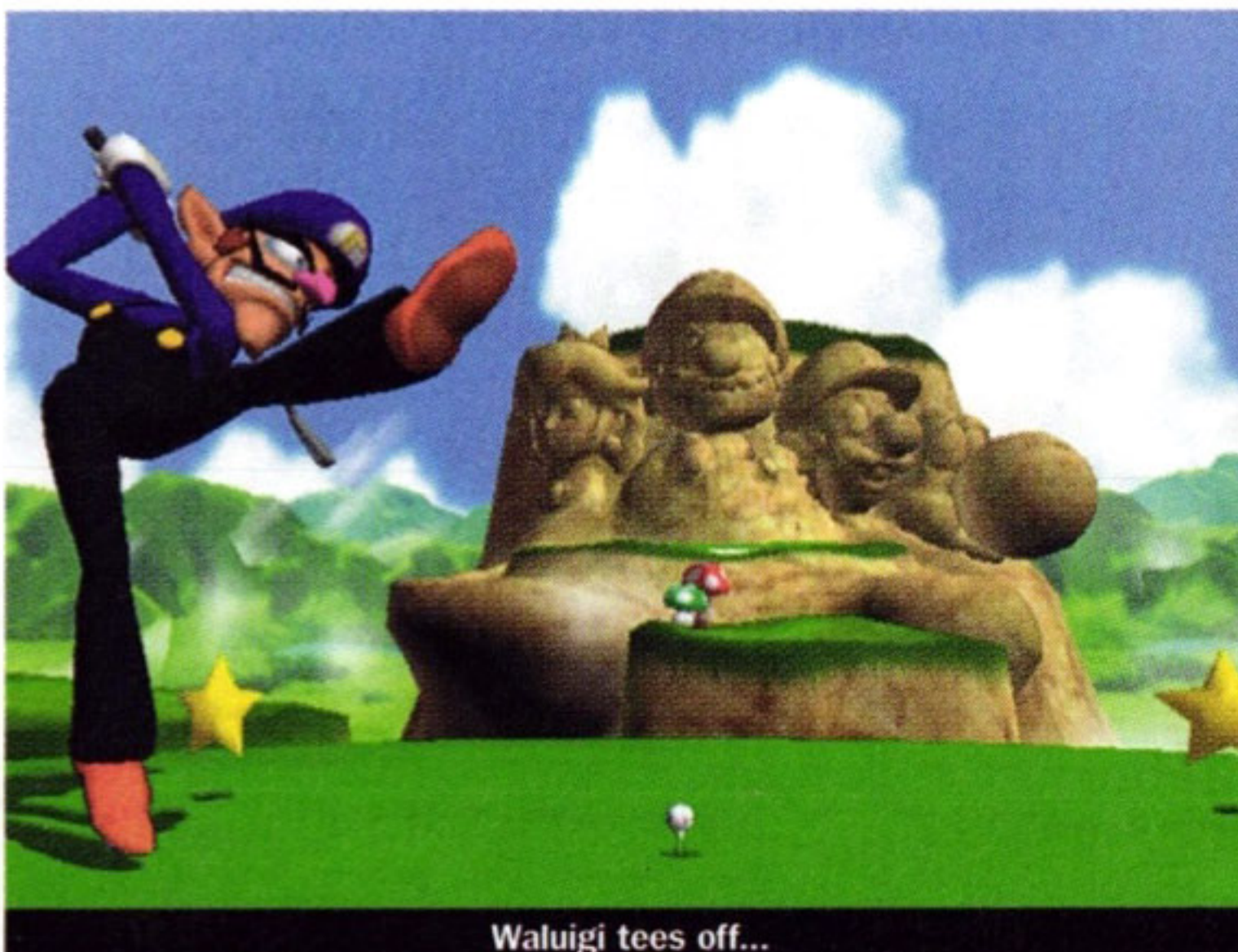
Where Mario Golf shines is playing with friends, and up to four people will be able to take to the course together with their favorite Mario characters. How many golfers will make the cut has yet to be determined, but Nintendo has told us that there should be as many if not more than the N64 version, which had 18.

Much like the N64 version, which could share character data with the Game Boy Color game via the Transfer Pak, Toadstool Tour will also be able to trade data with the upcoming Game Boy Advance version, Mario Golf: Advance Tour. You'll be able to create a character in Advance Tour and upgrade its attributes by beating opponents. With the GBA Link Cable you can then use that character in Toadstool Tour.

What else they'll pack into this Mario Golf to differentiate it from the previous incarnation has yet to surface, but either alone or with friends, Toadstool Tour should be another fun Mario sports title from Camelot. We're still secretly hoping that Nintendo will somehow bring this game online.



That's a lot of Chain Chomps



Waluigi tees off...



...while Yoshi sinks this for par

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** CAMELOT
 ■ **RELEASE** JULY 28



PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

KILL SWITCH

A GAME OF HIDE AND HEAT-SEEK

In a firefight, if you were to jump out into the open with guns blazing, you'd get a toe-tag quicker than Tom Arnold downs an Arby's pot roast sandwich. Kill Switch makes things a little bit more realistic, requiring you to use cover to survive. If there's something in the environment to hide behind, that's where your butt had better be. Namco calls this the Offensive Cover System. We prefer the term "CYA system."

The game reminds us of Winback, Koei's covert N64 title that was later enhanced and brought over to the PlayStation 2. Of course, Kill Switch looks a lot better graphically and is loaded with new gameplay features. The biggest selling point is the ability to shoot over obstacles and around corners. You can do so indiscriminately to freak out the enemy, or you can put your neck out a bit for a better-aimed shot. Namco, again with the fancy buzzwords, labels this the Blindfire combat mechanic. Whatever you want, you crazy publisher, you!

The bad news (or good news, if you're a glutton for punishment) is that the enemy AI won't let you just chill behind a chunk of wall, eating franks and beans until the early morn. They will conspire to surround your temporary shelter and cap you from all angles. When it's the plural "them" against the singular "you," trouble is quite literally around the corner.

Kill Switch's war-themed missions take place in a variety of environments. You'll be wiping grains of sand from your eyes in the desert or getting sprayed in the face by saltwater in the submarine base. Make sure you bring a lot of ClearEyes eye drops, because if you can't see the enemy, you're as good as dead.

This game has a sweet name and an even cooler gimmick. Namco is on a roll after Dead to Rights, so we expect great things from Kill Switch.



Good thing someone dumped this VW Rabbit in the middle of the road like that!

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER NAMCO ■ DEVELOPER NAMCO ■ RELEASE WINTER

PREVIEWS



GAME BOY ADVANCE

METROID: ZERO MISSION

IN THE BEGINNING?

Zero Mission implies that this would perhaps be a prequel. From what we've learned, however, it's actually a glorified remake of the original NES game. To spice things up a little, all of the graphics have received a new coat of paint and all of the animations have been completely reworked. Since the gameplay is severely dated when stacked up against other entries in the series, Nintendo has incorporated elements from Super Metroid and Metroid Fusion. For instance, Samus can hang from ledges and either shoot while dangling or pull herself up. The super speed dash maneuver from Super Metroid is also in full effect.

During some sequences, cinematics are used to flesh out the story. Of course, new areas, enemy encounters, and bosses are all part of the picture. A release date hasn't been given yet, but all signs point toward it shipping at the same time as Metroid Prime 2, in the fall of 2004.



Samus is equipped with all of her gadgets

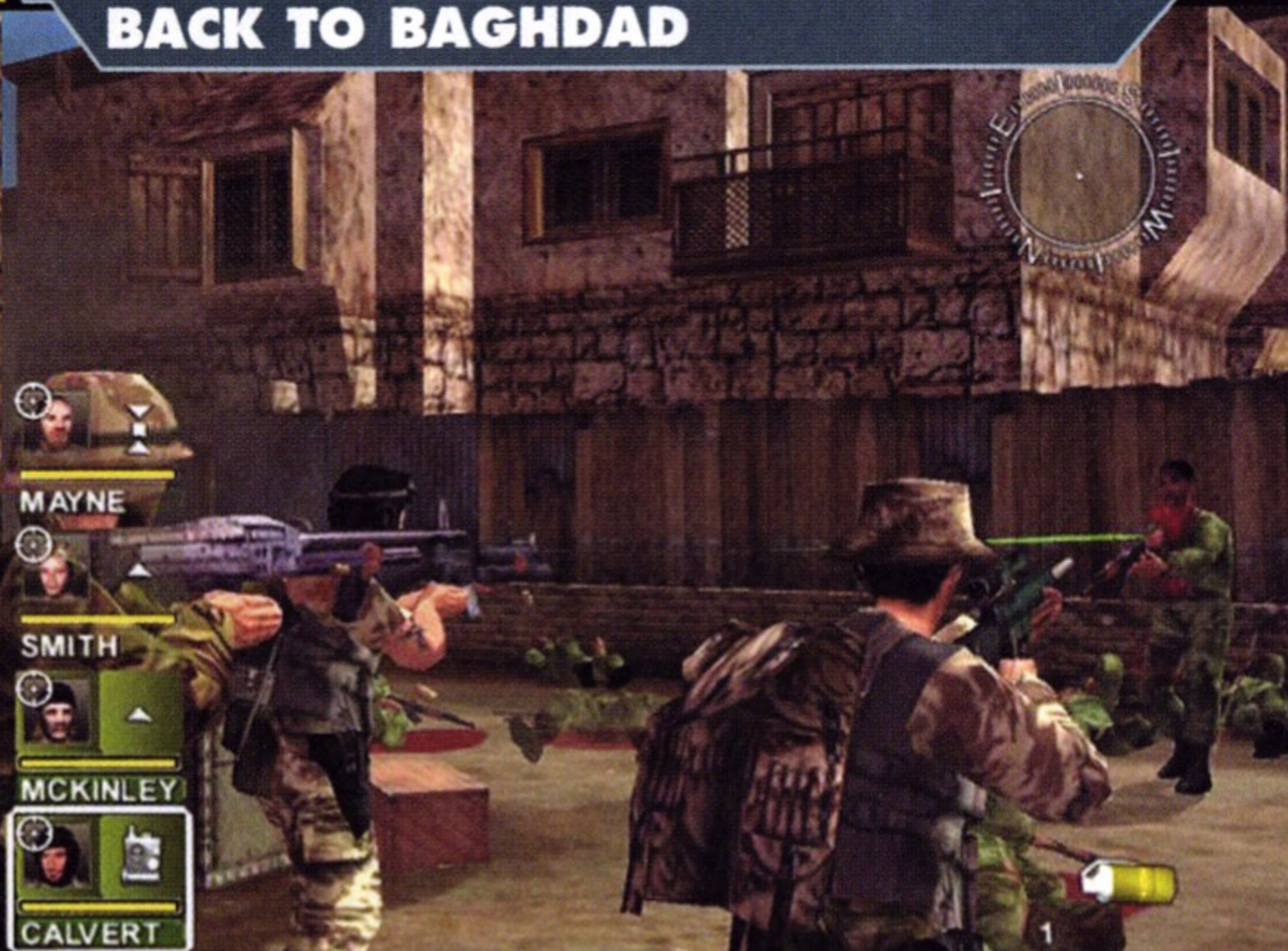
The graphical touches are very reminiscent of Metroid Fusion

■ STYLE 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ PUBLISHER NINTENDO
 ■ DEVELOPER NINTENDO ■ RELEASE FALL 2004

PHOTOPHILE

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II - BACK TO BAGHDAD



The saying goes, "Going back to Iraq-o is wacko, if you're a teen." However, if you're one of the elite members of the U.S. Delta force or the British SAS, it's just part of the job. War was all over our TVs a few months back, and it's going to be all over our game consoles again this fall. Keeping in mind that this is just a game, the AI is actually formidable, coordinating cunning attacks rather than dropping their firearms and turning tail at the mere sight of your imposing firepower. New weapons and vehicles will be at your disposal, and lighting effects promise that fires of the hellish war will at least look bad-ass.

GAMECUBE

POKÉMON COLOSSEUM



Nintendo still won't give you a real Pokémon-themed RPG on a console, but this game does let your monsters battle with more dazzling graphics than ever before. Colosseum (yes, that's how it's spelled) carries on the tradition of the N64 Pokémon Stadium series. Take the creatures you so lovingly raised in the Ruby and Sapphire GBA games and enlist them in a 128-bit fight to the finish - even teaming up for two-on-two throw-downs. Hopefully, they'll actually make contact with one another, unlike in Stadium. You have until winter to get your Pokémon into fighting shape, so get moving! Hut! Hut! Hut!

PC

PAINKILLER



Stuck in purgatory after dying in a car accident with his wife, our hero Painkiller is desperate to rejoin his love by any means possible. Contradicting all that is holy, God essentially blackmails Pain: If he can eliminate every demon and zombie that has invaded purgatory, God will accept him into heaven! The story is ignorant and weird, but that's not where this title excels. Players will undoubtedly be struck by Painkiller's great graphics, intense Doom-inspired gameplay, horrific monster designs, and various multiplayer modes. Dreamcatcher plans to release this surprise title in September.

GAMECUBE

MARIO PARTY 5



It's been less than a year since Mario Party 4 was released, and Nintendo is promising yet another installment this holiday season. Mario Party 5 will include more than 60 all-new minigames, redesigned 3D maps of the game board, and a new single-player experience. Solo players will be able to compete against the Koopa Kid Brigade, a Koopa threesome which take their turns simultaneously – speeding up gameplay. All your favorite characters will make their return, and Nintendo is even jamming in some new ones debuting in their first ever Mario game. Even if you're not done with Mario Party 4, it'll be time to grab your friends (again), pound down a pile of Fun Dip (again), and head back to the game board (again).

PLAYSTATION 2

FIREFIGHTER F.D. 18



Burly firefighter Dean McGregor and news reporter Emilie Arquette will be thrust together next February to figure out who is setting their urban city ablaze. Konami is promising realistic fire simulations to battle including backdrafts, flashovers, and chemical explosions. While a burgeoning romance with Emilie will surely be in the cards, McGregor will also get to play with hoses and impulse guns (insert sly wink here).

PHOTOPHILE

GAMECUBE

POKÉMON CHANNEL



This Nintendo title isn't so much a game as it is a frolicking romp with some of your all-time favorite Pokémon. Set up like a television, there are several channels to flip around to, each containing DVD-quality animation and more Pokémon than you can shake a stick at. We really don't know much else about this, but the fact that it has Pokémon in the title is all some gamers need to know to place it on their must-buy list (remember that Pokémon hemorrhoid donut cushion your little sister had to have last Christmas?). Unfortunately, one of the things we don't know is a release date, so Pokémon fans may be waiting awhile. Notice how we used the word Pokémon in every sentence. Pokémon!

GAMECUBE

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TETRA'S TRACKER



Putting Link and connectivity together spells blockbuster, but this isn't the type of game you're thinking of. Tetra's Tracker is a puzzle-based treasure hunt for GameCube. Link has to find a slew of pirates in the correct order. The Wind Waker's pirate leader, Tetra, will guide you along by showing you maps and dishing out hints. Four-player gaming is possible, and each person's GBA screen will show exclusive information. Put on your thinking cap over those pointy ears, but don't hold your breath too long – Nintendo hasn't issued a release date.

XBOX

OTOGI: MYTH OF DEMONS



Most gamers will immediately cringe as they realize how closely Ootogi resembles Shinobi in appearance. Although it does sport a Shinobi feel, it's a much more ambitious project. Featuring over 25 levels, 30 weapons, and 12 types of magic, Sega claims that Ootogi will take at least 15 hours to complete. Sega's also touting the game's level of interactivity and story. Players will be able to destroy almost any object in the environment – even large buildings! The story, interestingly enough, is actually based on Japanese myth – so at the very least, players will get a peek at Japanese history when this game ships in the fall.

PLAYSTATION 2

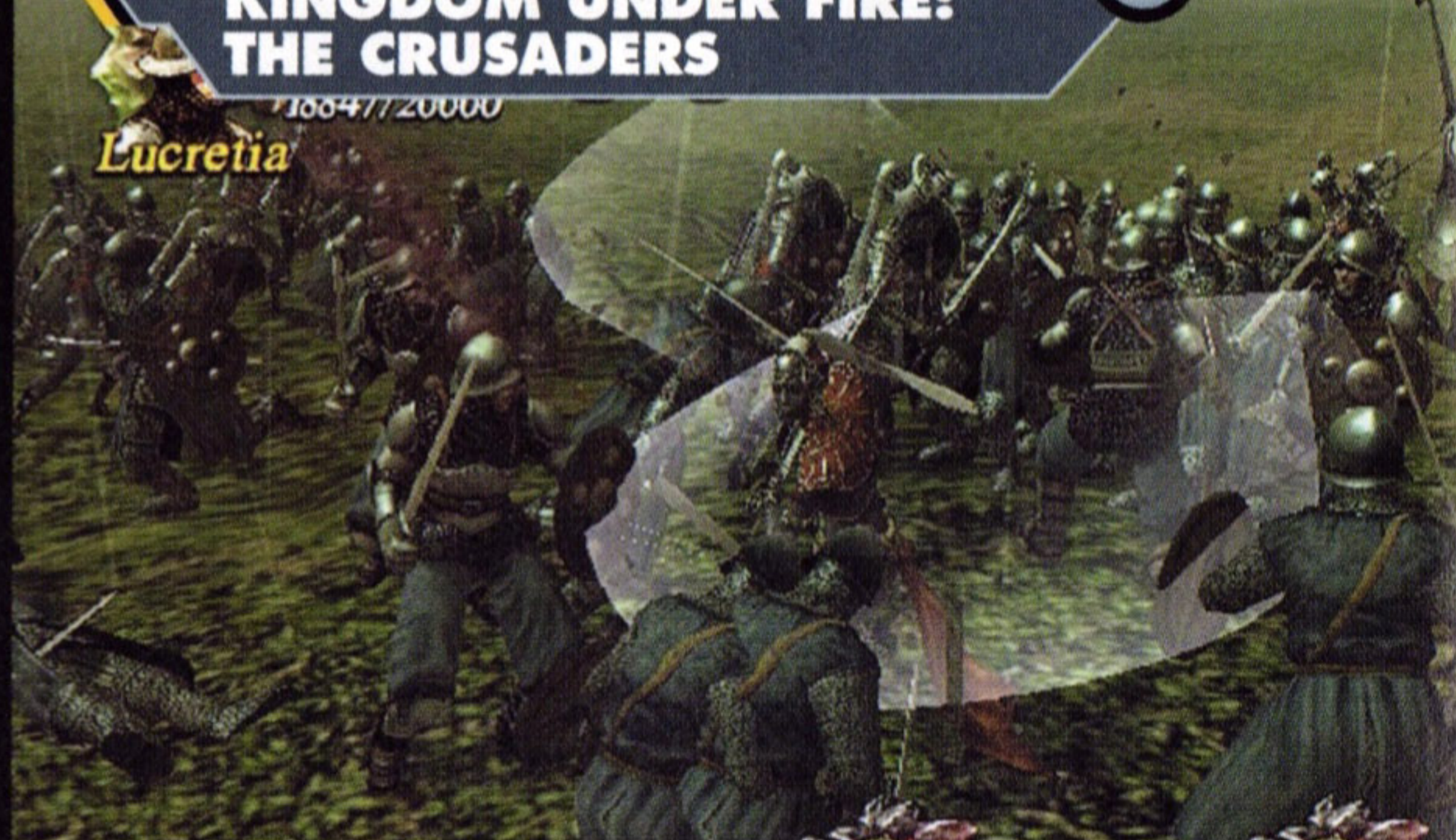
TIME CRISIS 3



Time to dust off those GunCon 2s again, kiddies. This winter, Namco is giving us yet another reason to duck behind boxes and come out firing. This time around, you can pick which weapon you'll use. Choices include machine gun, handgun, shotgun, and a grenade launcher. For this console release, the storyline has been expanded, which means even more cheesy plot twists. What will it be this time? A maniac is poisoning the toys in Happy Meals because his fries were too salty? Perhaps a terrorist organization has stolen Miss Jiffy Lube 2003 and brainwashed her runner-up to do their bidding. We don't really need a reason to bust caps in these games, do we?

XBOX/PC

KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: THE CRUSADERS



Taking place 50 years after the first Kingdom Under Fire, The Crusaders allows players to make every decision in this real-time strategy title. With up to 150 warriors onscreen, you will manage resources, plan attacks, boost morale, and even directly participate in hand-to-hand battles. Additional missions and modifications will be available through Xbox Live after the title's launch, promised by the end of this year.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

THE GREAT ESCAPE



While a Sheryl Crow song arguably bastardized Steve McQueen's good name last summer, his classic flick *The Great Escape* cannot be tarnished. Gotham Games is turning out a stealth/espionage/racing title this summer based on the true story played out in the movie. Starting off in a Nazi POW camp circa WWII, *Escape* features 20 levels and a handful of vehicles to commandeer. While it is confirmed that you will play as multiple characters, Charles Bronson's classic turn in the flick isn't on the list of "for sure" playable characters.

GAMECUBE

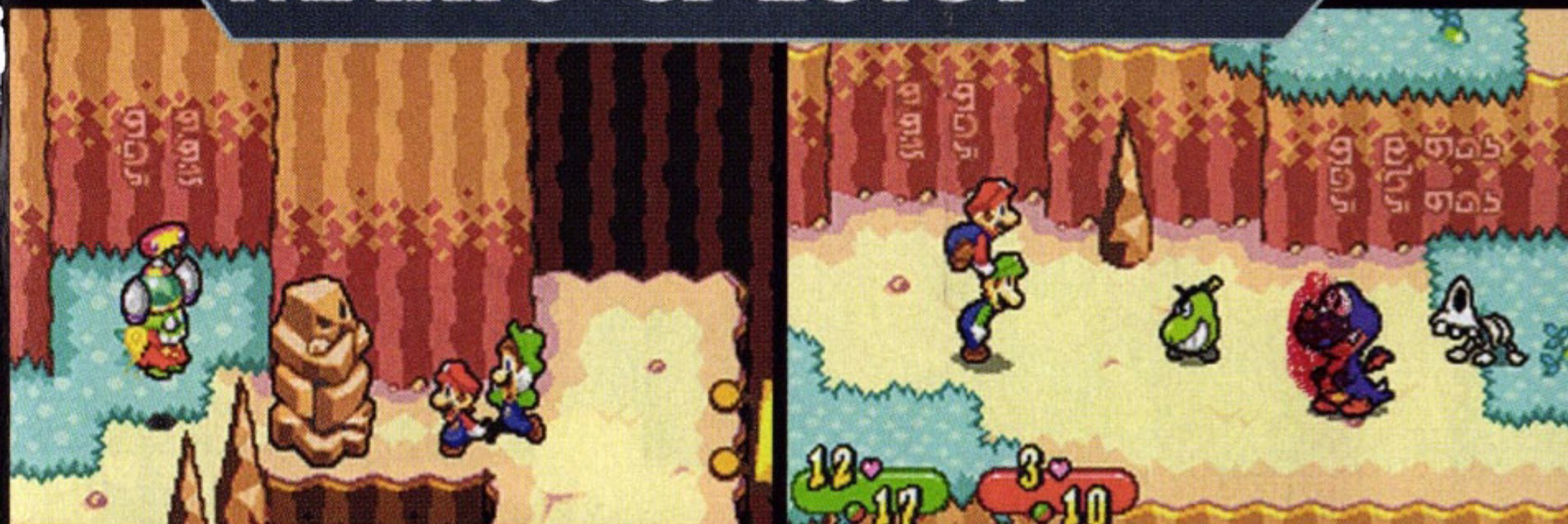
TALES OF SYMPHONIA



Square Enix's Crystal Chronicles may be getting the hype, but Namco is getting its own RPG ready for GameCube. Set to release next year, *Tales of Symphonia* is another chapter in the *Tales* series. Until now, it's been only 2D, but *Symphonia* branches it out into fully 3D battles taking place in real time. Characters can be customized to your specifications, and the anime cutscenes keep the story flowing. *Tales of Symphonia* may have enough to even turn around the role-play hater out there.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

MARIO & LUIGI



Princess Peach has lost her voice. No, it wasn't from doing "I Will Survive" one too many times at the karaoke bar, but because an evil witch has stolen it! Mario and Luigi will simultaneously be under your control (you'll have to play it to believe it), leading to some dangerous double-team moves. Bowser will even pitch in to help the plumbers out. The Paper Mario-esque RPG quest takes them to a kingdom where laughter is valued above anything else, so we expect the journey to take a decidedly goofy turn. Let's just hope Luigi doesn't break out his "pull my plunger" joke, or all is lost! We'll get this buddy game around Christmas.

XBOX

DEAD MAN'S HAND



An FPS set in the wild west presents a rich bevy of material that has, for the most part, been strangely ignored by our industry. The developer, Human Head, plans to immerse its audience with seemingly every element that made the west notorious. Players will be able to take part in poker games; use nine classic weapons, plus whiskey bombs and Gatling guns; master various trick shots; and fight while riding trains and horses! The adventure takes place within appropriate environments: Everything from town saloons to mine shafts in the middle of the desert will make an appearance. Although Atari has yet to announce a specific release date, plan on saddling up this fall.

PLAYSTATION 2

BLOODY ROAR 4

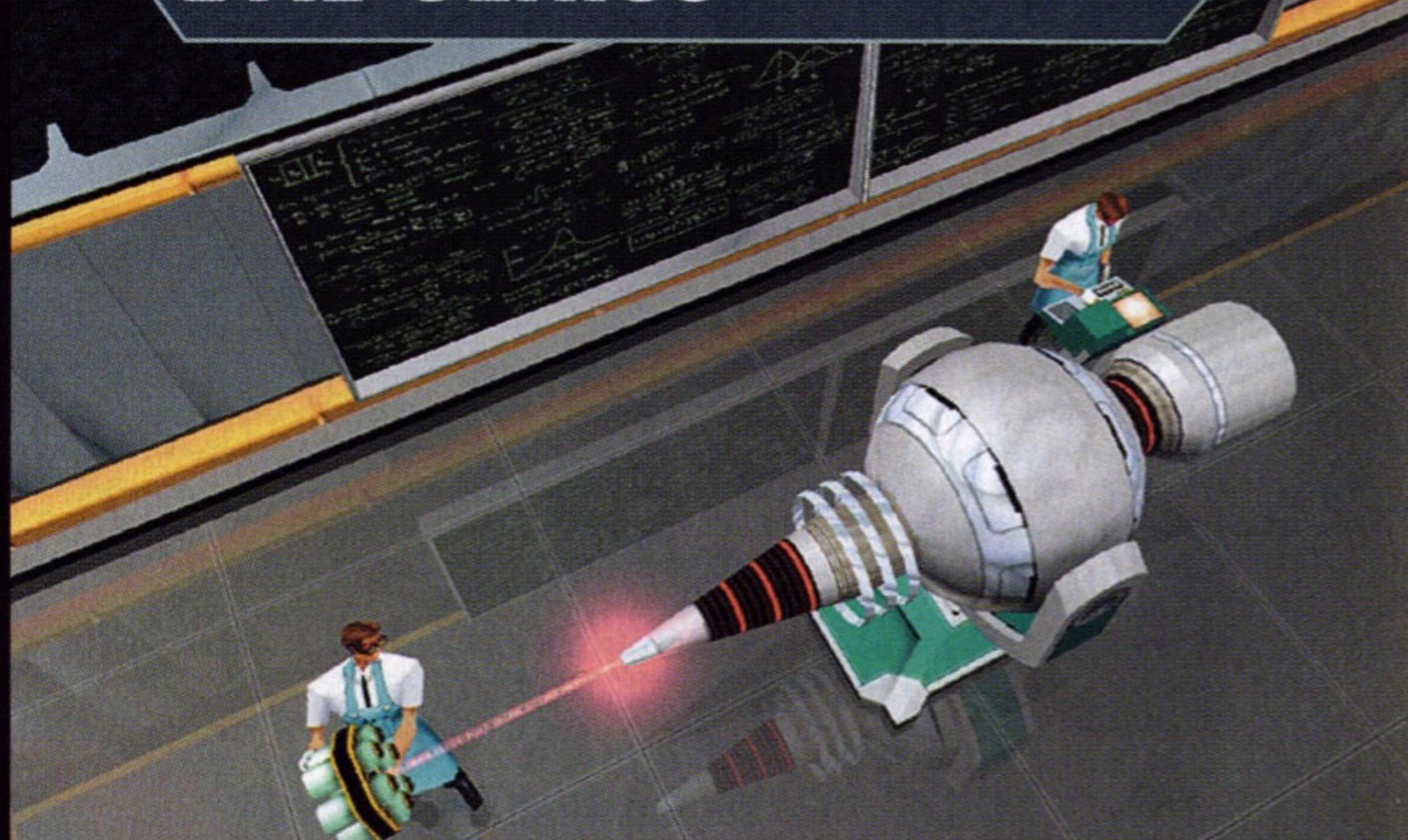


Bloody Roar Extreme is reviewed on Xbox this issue, and already Konami has announced the latest PS2 sequel. The increased roster of fighters (now 17) is far from the biggest advancement. Instead, let us enlighten you about Development Mode. Here, you can modify your character's moves and rack up points to advance your fighter's skills à la Street Fighter Alpha 3's World Tour mode. This may be just the shot in the arm this series needs to elevate it to the top of the genre. By the time the title releases in November, gamers are going to know the ins, outs, and what-have-yous of Soul Caliber II.

PHOTOPHILE

PC

EVIL GENIUS



With intellect and power comes responsibility. But what good is being super-smart if you can't use your talents to rule the world? In Vivendi's new PC game, you're hooked up with [dramatic pause]...\$100 million, as well as your own deserted locale in which to build a COBRA Terrordrome-type base. Set traps and train henchmen to keep do-gooders out of your hair as you go on dastardly missions. Of course, once you have secret agents in your clutches, the natural thing to do is reveal your devious plans, then exit stage right while one of your devices is sure to have them meet their end. You're much too clever to simply shoot them dead. Take over the world this fall.

XBOX

VOODOO VINCE



Beep Industries' debut title strives to "fit the distinctive personalities of [Beep's] staff." We guess that the employees over there must dig a little self-inflicted pain. Masochists! As the dear title character is a burlap voodoo doll, combat in Vince entails running under falling safes or leaping into whirling blenders – any damage inflicted to Vince is parlayed onto his enemies. The zany (really, they are zany) cast of characters live and play in New Orleans, so look for the bayou flavor in the fall.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

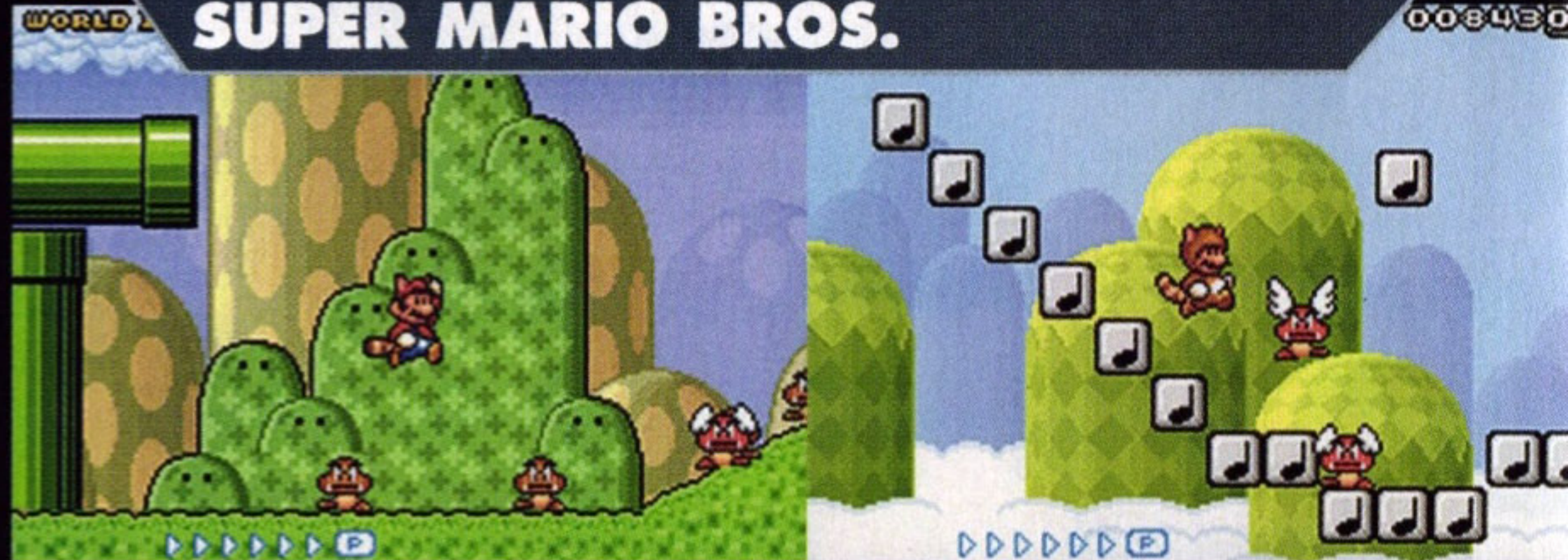
FIRE EMBLEM



With the Advance Wars series becoming an underground phenomenon, it's only natural for Nintendo to explore other avenues of the strategy/RPG genre. Fire Emblem is reminiscent of Sega's popular Shining Force series and Square's Final Fantasy Tactics, with traditional role-playing characters battling over a vast terrain. You'll command several unique soldiers who, if killed in battle, are gone for good. Thus, you must weigh every factor for a calculated strike. Role-playing fans can look forward to Fire Emblem near year's end.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 4: SUPER MARIO BROS.



As much as we love the Mario goodness that Nintendo has given us on GBA so far, this is the one we've been waiting for. Mario 3 is an all-time best seller, and perhaps the greatest 8-bit game in history. Who can forget donning the Hammer Bros. suit, or jumping into the big shoe? Use the whistle to warp to World 4, with its extra-large enemies. Following the Mario Advance lineage, expect updated graphics and sound. It even offers e-Reader support. Get your Tanooki Suit on this September.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX

BATTLESTAR GALACTICA



With Warthog at the developmental helm, this classic sci-fi license will finally get the next-generation treatment that it so rightfully deserves. As part of the Young Adama, players will be thrust into battle against the mechanical Cylons. With 36 missile types, wingmen that gain experience, and a bevy of playable spacecraft, Battlestar Galactica has more than enough substance to lure fans into the fray. Now all Universal has to do is sign Dirk Benedict, Richard Hatch, and Lorne Green before the game's September 23 release date.

PLAYSTATION 2/GAMECUBE

CHARLIE'S ANGELS



Even without Farrah's feathered hair, the first Charlie's Angels movie featuring Cameron, Lucy, and Drew made mad cash at the box office. To coincide with the sequel's release this summer, Ubi Soft is putting out the first Charlie's Angels game on PS2 and GameCube. Fight with each of the Angels through six levels and 32 different enemy designs using disguises, espionage, and bullet-time-infused martial arts.

PC

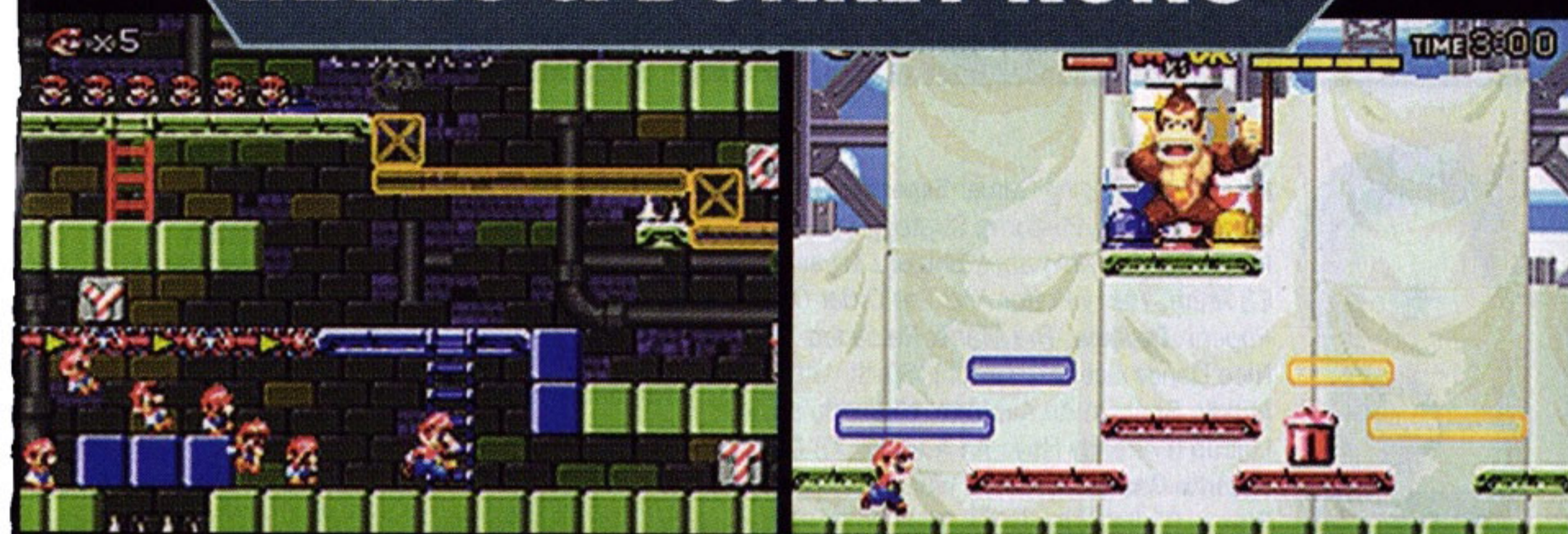
URU: AGES BEYOND MYST



For the first time since Riven, puzzle junkies are getting an all-new fix from Cyan Worlds – the company who revolutionized the genre. While Uru does have a single-player mission along the vein of Myst, the real innovation of the title comes from its online play. A user-controlled 360 degree view, avatars, socialization between online players (some puzzles require multiple people to execute), and voice chat make this an epic revolution in the Myst saga. Uru is tentatively planned for a fall release.

GAME BOY ADVANCE

MARIO & DONKEY KONG



The two mammals that started the Nintendo gaming empire are teaming back up – or rather, facing off. This game looks like the original Donkey Kong arcade classic, but with a new-millennium twist. The graphics bear a resemblance to the high-quality sprites from Donkey Kong Country, but you play Mario's role. The popular hammer power-up returns, but the screen shot with multiple Mario followers befuddles us to no end. Nintendo will unveil the release date when it's good and ready. Hopefully, having Lisa stationed in the Nintendo lobby singing Avril Lavigne covers will help expedite the process.

GAMECUBE

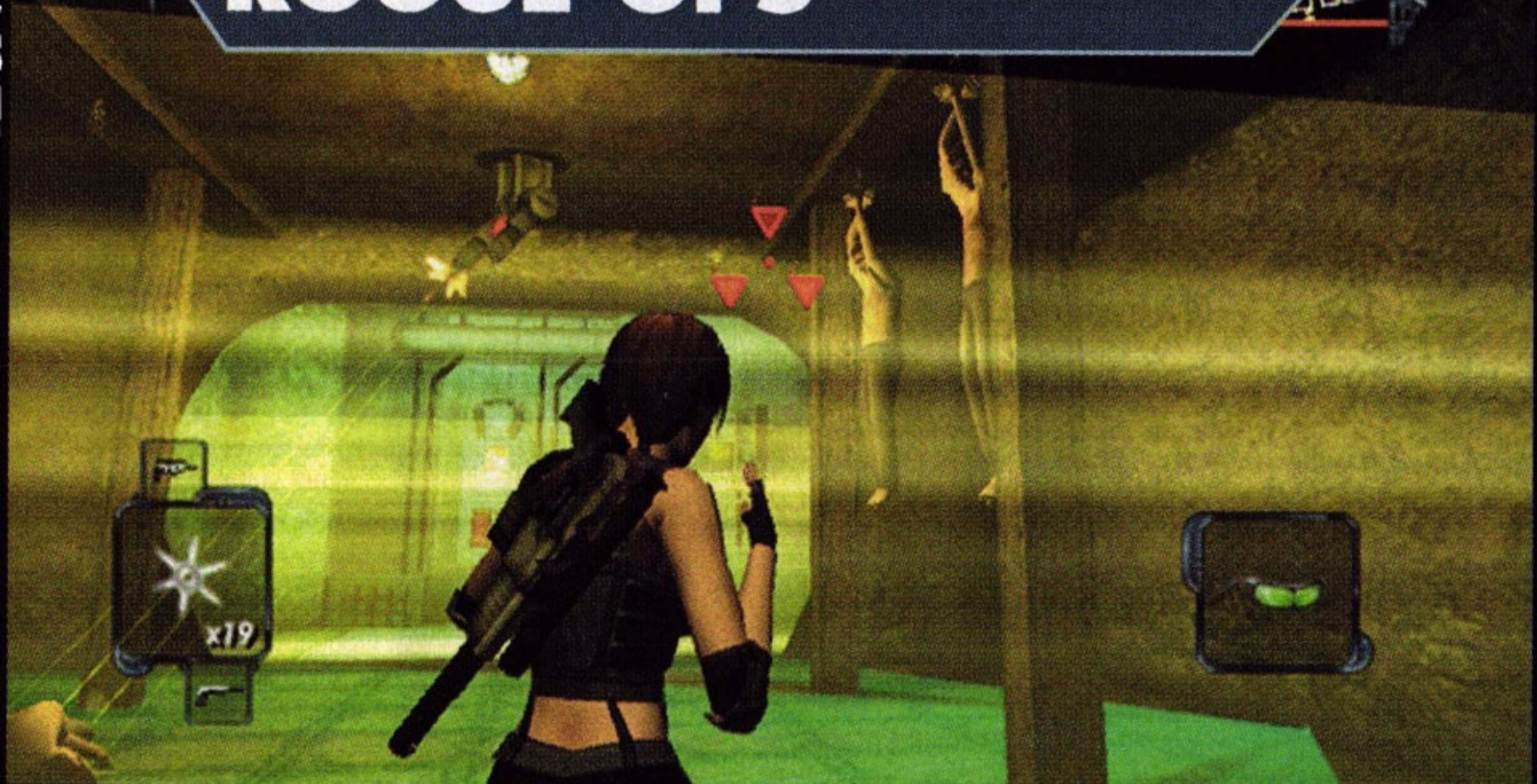
THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS



The fact that Nintendo is bringing this game, which was formerly included with the GBA port of Link to the Past, to GameCube, shows the company's dedication to making "foursome" an acceptable video game term. Instead of having gameplay confined to your own GBA, the GameCube version features some snazzy picture-in-a-picture technology. Enter a room, and a window will pop up both onscreen and on your GBA showing the new area, while your other buds can still be seen hanging around outside in the main window. Enlist their help when needed, but feel free to stab them in the back to snag every precious Rupee.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/PC

ROGUE OPS

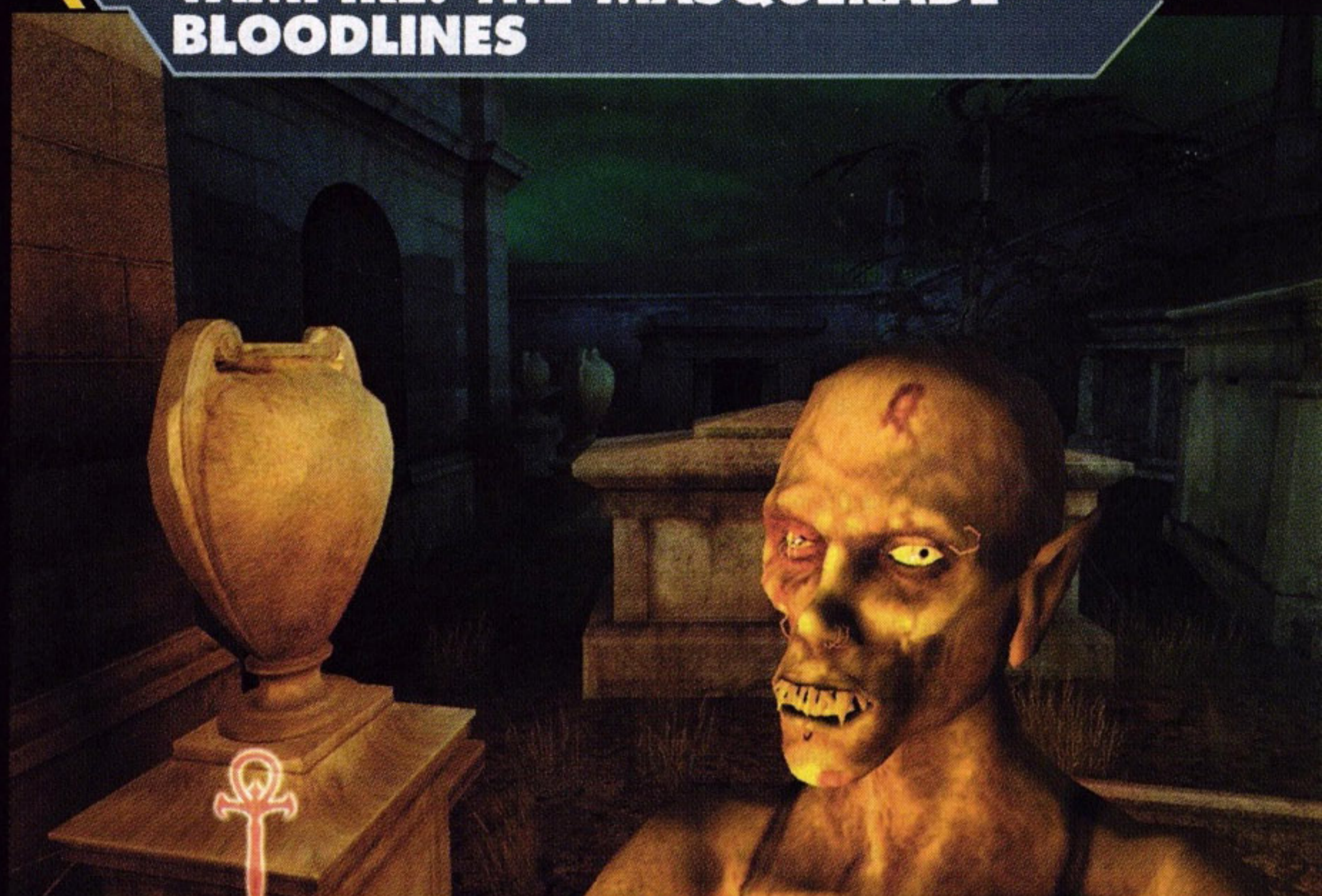


This is a huge step up from Kemco's last big release, Batman: Dark Tomorrow – let us never speak of it again. The fourth quarter of this year brings another naughty stealth girl. Though she reminds us of a certain Eidos covergirl, Nikki Connors has her own style. She can hide in shadows, pick pockets, and do some impressive combat combos. Her spy chick arsenal is packed, and she's loaded with all sorts of vision boosts; including infrared, low light, and x-ray. Don't stand her up on a date, or she'll hunt you down, cut your tongue out, and stick it in your bellybutton.

PHOTOPHILE

PC

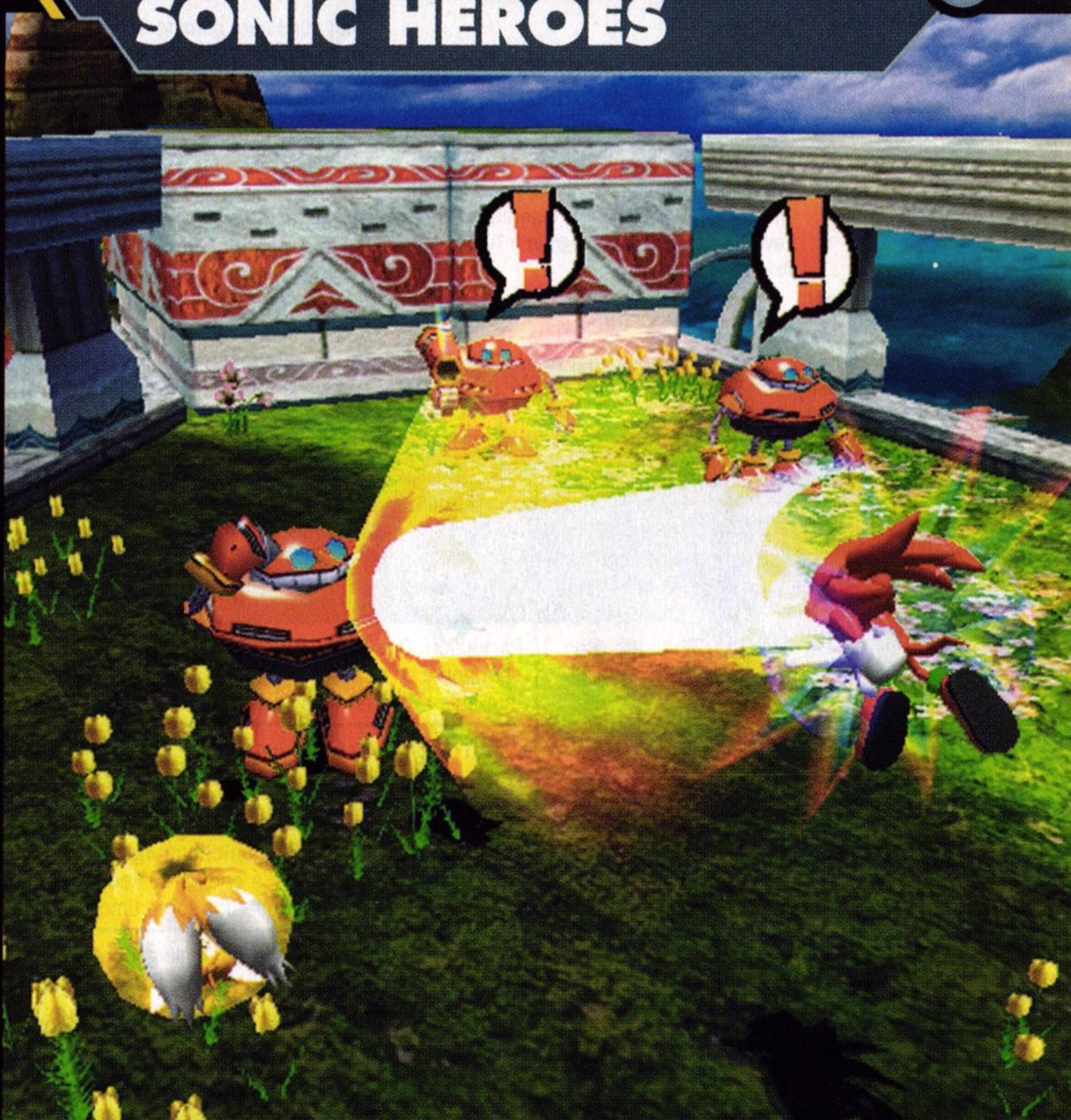
VAMPIRE: THE MASQUERADE – BLOODLINES



Developed by renowned RPG maker Troika, Vampire is a first-person shooter with an abundance of RPG features. Players will choose one of seven unique vampire clans, grow their character, and ultimately rise through the ranks to become Dracula's peer – just kidding! Elaborate computer AI that changes depending on your decisions and actions, and expansive environments will further help immerse players. Luckily, the combat element is no slouch, either. Troika will employ Source technology – Valve's Half-Life 2 engine. Vampire nerds who idolize Lestat and Louis will have to wait until 2004 to play Bloodlines.

PLAYSTATION 2/XBOX/GAMECUBE

SONIC HEROES

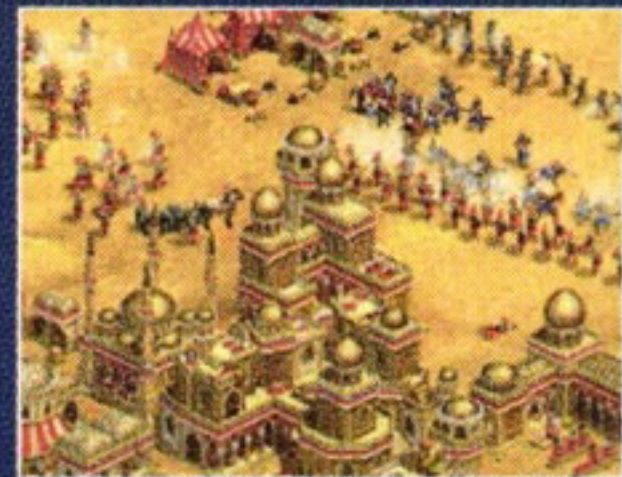


Sega's latest Sonic offering promises a new twist for the blue machine: team-based play. Gamers will battle through levels while controlling three characters at a time. The crew has been shuffled into four distinct teams for players to choose from and each takes advantage of the characters' innate skills and features a unique storyline. Sega is also discussing online and co-op play modes for the release. Look for it sometime next year.



XBOX

Brute Force pg. 112



PC

Rise Of Nations pg. 119



HANDHELD

Dragon Ball Z pg. 122

NEWBIE CHEAT SHEET

For our newer readers, here is a glossary of terms and acronyms that commonly appear in the magazine. Video game veterans should move along (these aren't the droids you are looking for).

1080i – A resolution specification used for HDTV. 1080i stands for resolution of 1920x1080 pixels. The "i" means that the video is being interlaced

480p – Progressive scanning, this option ("p"= progressive), creates a picture signal with double the scan lines of a conventional interlaced picture, 480i (=interlaced), to create a noticeably sharper image. The 480p image offers higher picture resolution and eliminates virtually all motion artifacts in a 640x480 pixel resolution setting

720p – A resolution specification used for HDTV. 720p stands for resolution of 1280x720 pixels. The "p" means that the video is in progressive format

action – A term we use for games like Zone of the Enders and Gauntlet

adventure – A term we use for games like Myst and Escape From Monkey Island

AI – Artificial Intelligence. Usually used to refer to how well the computer reacts to a human opponent

board – A term we use for games like Jeopardy! and Mario Party

bump-mapping – A technique where varying light effects simulate depth on textures

cel shading – A technique used to create 3D rendered objects that resemble hand-drawn animation cels

CG – Computer-Generated graphics

E3 – Electronic Entertainment Expo. The world's largest convention for video games

fighting – A term we use for games like Street Fighter and Dead or Alive

FMV – Full Motion Video. Usually refers to an animated CG cutscene

FPS – Frames Per Second. How many animation frames happen in one second. Also used to denote First-Person Shooters like Doom, GoldenEye, and Unreal Tournament

framerate – The frames of animation used to create the illusion of movement

frontend – A game's menus and options

Gratz! – The patron saint of intoxicated game journalists

GBA – Game Boy Advance

GBC – Game Boy Color

GC – GameCube

HDTV – High Definition Television

isometric – Three-quarters top down view, like StarCraft or Red Alert 2

ISP – Internet Service Provider. The company that provides you with access to the Internet

jaggles – Graphical lines that are jagged when they should be straight

LAN – Local Area Network. Connecting computers or consoles together within a small space to allow communication between them. Provides fast, simultaneous gameplay

minigame – A small, simple game within a larger one

motion-capture – Using human models and infrared cameras to record movement for game animation. Also mo-cap

motion blur – Phantom frames follow an object to give the impression of realistic speed

N64 – Nintendo 64

NES – Nintendo Entertainment System

NPC – Non-Player Character. Those people and creatures you see wandering around in games that are not being controlled by actual humans

particle effects – Things like smoke or sparks created in real-time

PKer – Player Killer. This is a person who thrives on killing newbie or vulnerable characters in MMORPGs or shooting their teammates in games like Counter-Strike

platform – A term we use for games like Super Mario and Crash Bandicoot

pop-up – When onscreen objects, usually distant, suddenly appear

PS2 – Sony PlayStation 2

PSone – Sony PlayStation

puzzle – A term we use for games like Tetris and Chu Chu Rocket

racing – A term we use for games like Gran Turismo and Mario Kart

RPG – Role-Playing Game. A game that involves character improvement through collecting and spending points. A term we use for games like Final Fantasy and Dragon Warrior

shooter – A term we use for games like Mars Matrix and Gradius

SNES – Super Nintendo Entertainment System

sports – A term we use for games like Madden NFL

strategy – A term we use for games like Command & Conquer and Fallout Tactics

third-party – Something made for a console by a company other than the console manufacturer



ADVANCE WARS 2™

BLACK HOLE RISING

GAME OF THE MONTH
ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING

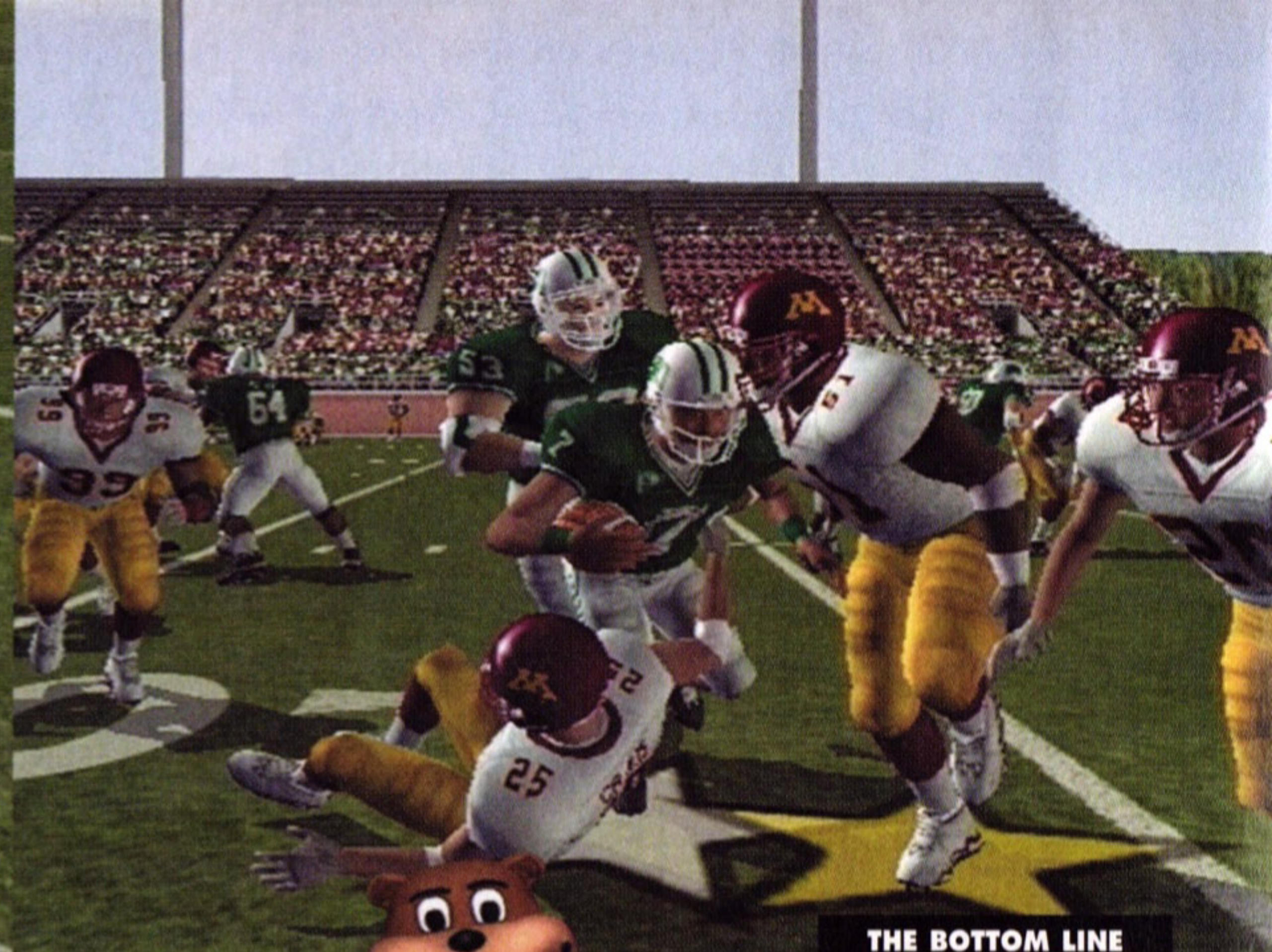
On Game Boy Advance, there has been no finer strategy game made than Advance Wars...until now. This sequel will not only scramble your brains with new units, larger maps, new COs, additional powers, and even larger and more devastating enemy units to conquer; but it will leave you sleepless with its endless hours of single and multiplayer options. Don't have a Game Boy Advance? If the new SP wasn't enough to make you get one, Advance Wars 2 should be. To see why we made it Game of the Month, turn to page 121.

PC GAME OF THE MONTH

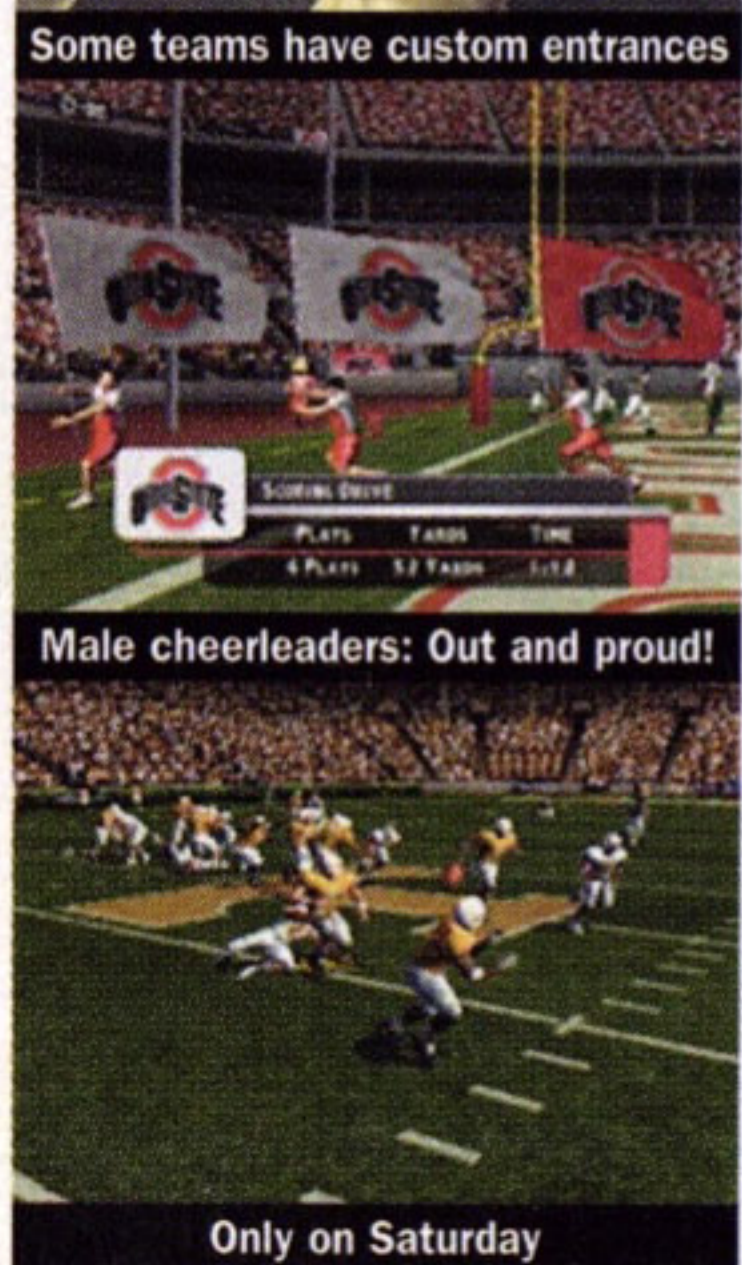
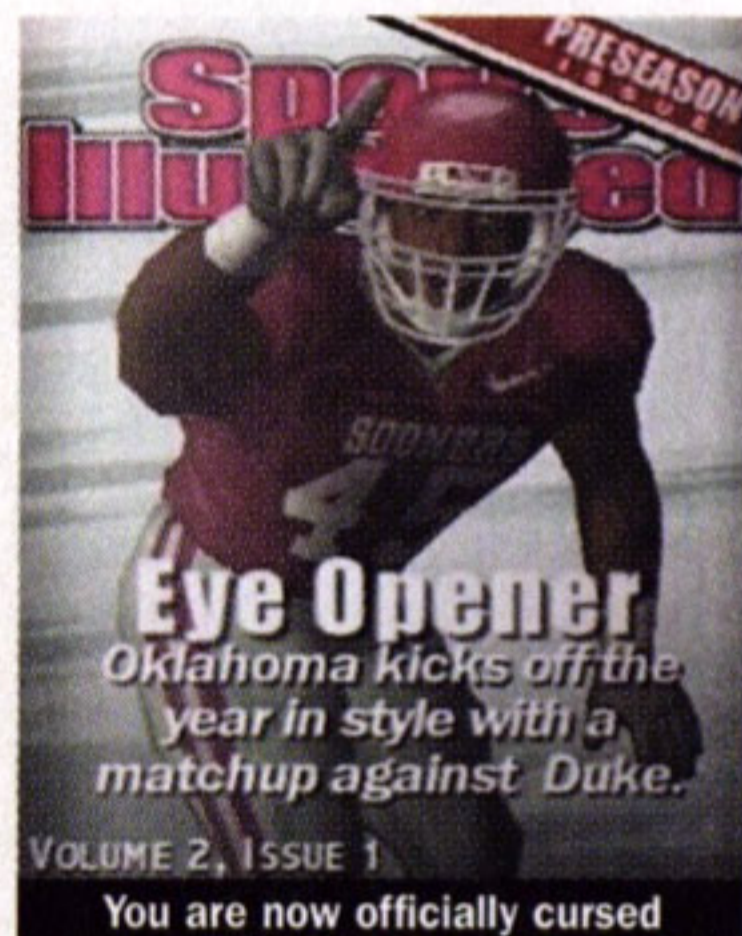
PLANETSIDE

Who would have thought that massively multiplayer online and first-person shooter would eventually come together to make an acronym more annoying than MMORPG? But it's true. PlanetSide, the world's first MMOFPS is upon us, and it's more amazing than we ever imagined. Drive tanks, fly fighters, and battle it out with two other factions for domination of your server. You know you want it. Now get to it, soldier. Page 118





"Very entertaining, but ultimately a prologue for the pros."



PLAYSTATION 2

NCAA FOOTBALL 2004

TROUBLE GRADUATING?

College football is a weird duck. There are millions of people who live and die by their alma maters' performance on a Saturday afternoon, and yet there are also just as many folks who merely see college ball as a diversion until the pro game on Sunday. The former group of fans revels in the atmosphere and unique rivalry of these unpaid athletes (yeah, right), while the latter finds the level of skill at the college level unbearable when compared to the NFL. EA Sports' NCAA Football 2004 finds itself somewhere between these two viewpoints.

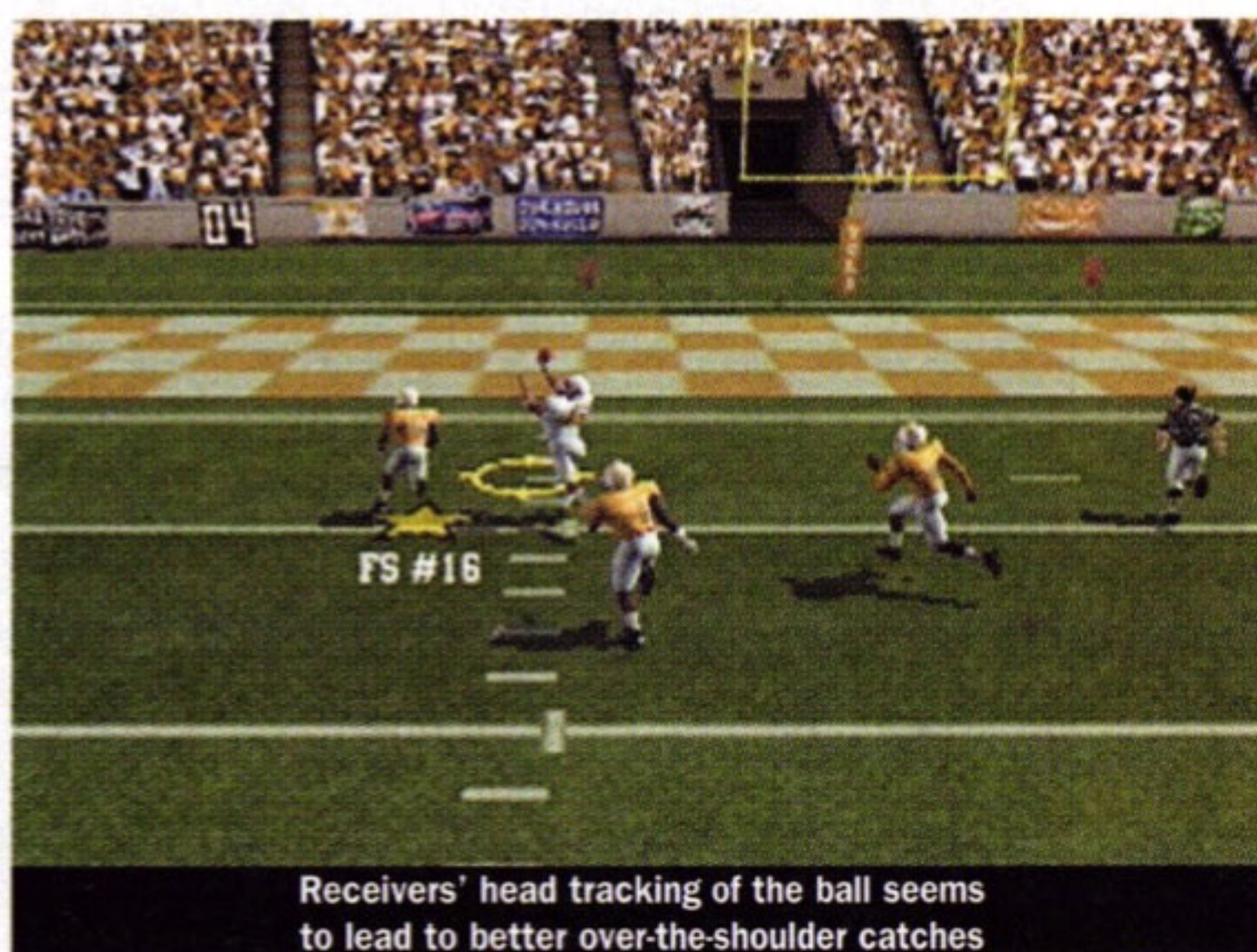
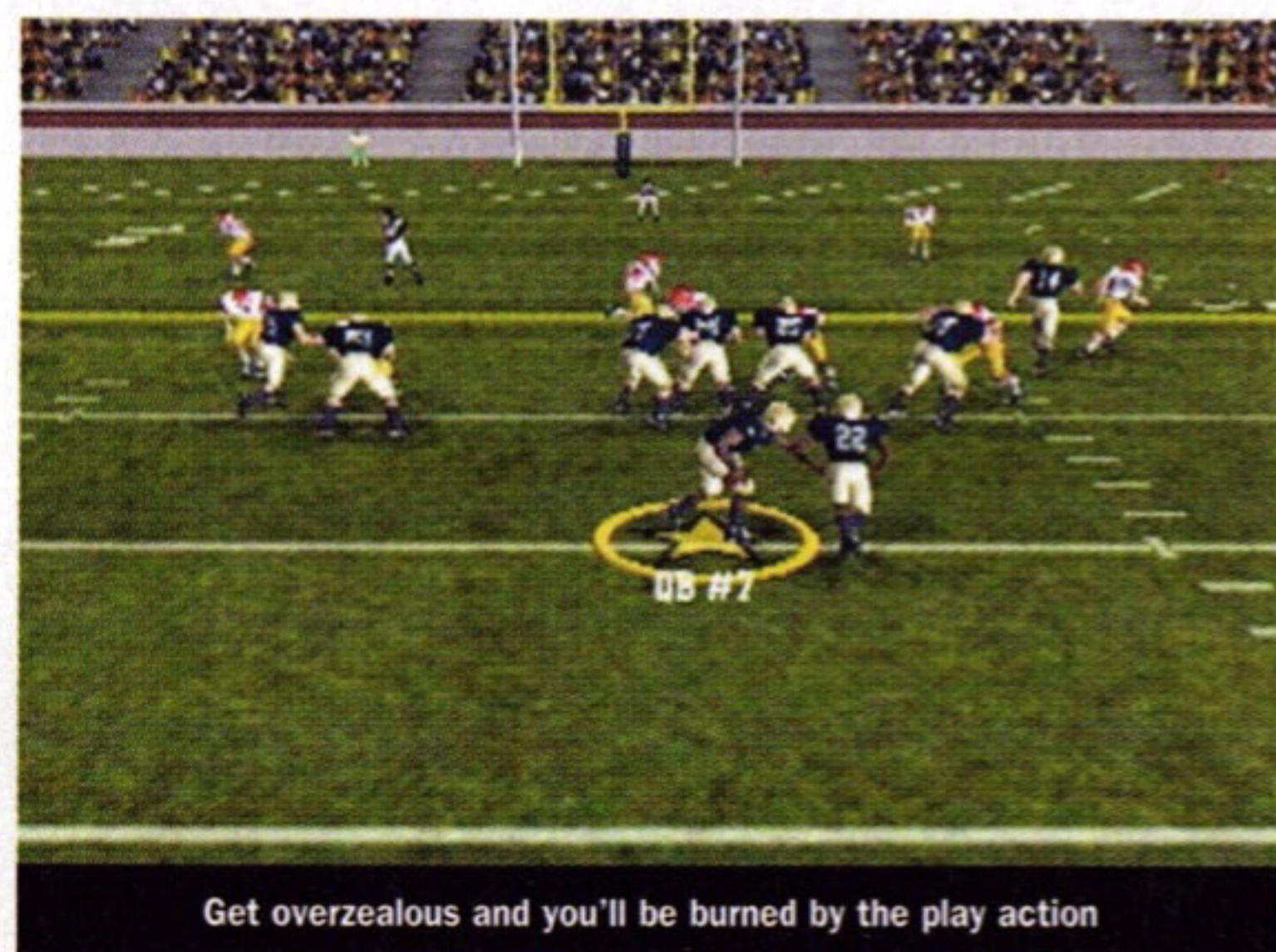
It cannot be denied that developer EA Tiburon has pumped this game with college spirit harder than a partygoer trying to get the keg going, and it shows in almost every aspect of the title. Team-specific introductions (for powerhouses like Notre Dame, among others) get things started, and the atmosphere builds as touchdowns bring out the cheerleaders and the crowd gets into things. Also, the commentary is great, which doesn't sound like much, but it's valuable. The *Sports Illustrated* covers are a nice touch, but the mood is killed in the College Classic games due to a lack of a quick restart button.

While the excitement of football at this level is also replicated on the field, I'm not sure this isn't a drawback at times. College ball is all about razzle-dazzle and big plays. How does a developer convey this? Well, I wouldn't do it by

making QB throws way off target or by having holes for RBs the size of three-lane highways, like NCAA does. Too many times I would set my QB's feet, make the right read, and throw to a wide open WR only to have the ball sail off into the clouds. While this does happen in real life (as not all QBs are created equal), I wonder whether the game should replicate reality to the point where you're just waiting for the next big play to happen for or against you. I definitely wouldn't say that this "realism" breaks the gameplay, but it is annoying.

Interestingly, it may be NCAA's online features which really ignites fans behind this title, and I wouldn't be surprised if due to college rivalries, this component does more for this game than it does for Madden. I personally like that I can be matched up with players who don't onside kick every time and use other "irregular" tactics. Dynasty mode is even better with the new recruiting tactics, but I am disappointed that there isn't more in this department. In the end, it comes down to the fact that NCAA will always trail behind Madden in terms of features and gameplay, simply because this college series comes out before the pro game, and EA (understandably) can't blow its NFL wad early. While it has done a really good job of making NCAA its own brand of football, I feel like this franchise continues to be like college football is in real life – very entertaining, but ultimately a prologue for the pros. – KATO

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS (1 TO 4-PLAYERS VIA ONLINE) ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA TIBURON
 ■ **RELEASE** JULY 1



THE BOTTOM LINE
 EVERYONE
E 8.75
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:** EA Sports puts in enough college fun to keep you in your seat and make your professors worried
- **Graphics:** The slew of new animations are not only pretty, they make the game far more realistic
- **Sound:** The commentary is great in its timeliness, and the crowd swells and sings
- **Playability:** Very little has changed in this department. Where's the slant hot route?!
- **Entertainment:** This will make frat-goers flip, but the rest of us can wait for Madden 2004
- **Replay Value:** Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

If you thought last year's gameplay was robust, I can safely say that you haven't seen anything yet. Improved AI with block and release and zone coverage, amazing rollout and play action camera fakes, additional trick plays, and mass substitutions join a plethora of new animations. As if it couldn't get any better, NCAA now boasts online play with USB headset support and a Fair Play filter that prevents cheating. The popular Dynasty mode has also received a new coat of paint; offering deeper recruiting tactics, flashy *Sports Illustrated* news, and tons of player awards. To round out this amazing experience, EA Tiburon has implemented 20 classic games, 1-AA teams, not to mention the debut of the Bio – which rewards the player with experience points across every new EA Sports game. Simply said, you won't find more bang for your buck. It's bigger and better in every conceivable way.

REINER – 9.5



"This tale is engaging, surprising, and very well-done."

PLAYSTATION 2

ARC THE LAD: TWILIGHT OF THE SPIRITS

PHENOMENAL STORYTELLING

Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Sprits is now the quintessential example of why RPGs have always commanded gamers' attention. With a storyline covering global resource management, race relations, family dynamics, and mob mentality; the list of themes admittedly sounds like a bad night with Dan Rather. Instead, the story is told to illustrate that, like the Gungans and the Naboo, the humans and the Daimos have a symbiotic relationship – they just need to freakin' get along already.

The biggest conflict between the two dominant sects populating Arc's world is over a resource called Spirit Stones. Humans use the stones to power their cities, while the Daimos require them to cast magic – a skill they consider a birthright, and the ultimate reason that Daimos are better than humans. For the player, Spirit Stones must be managed with the same forethought and care, as any special move requires their use and only a small number can be carried at one time.

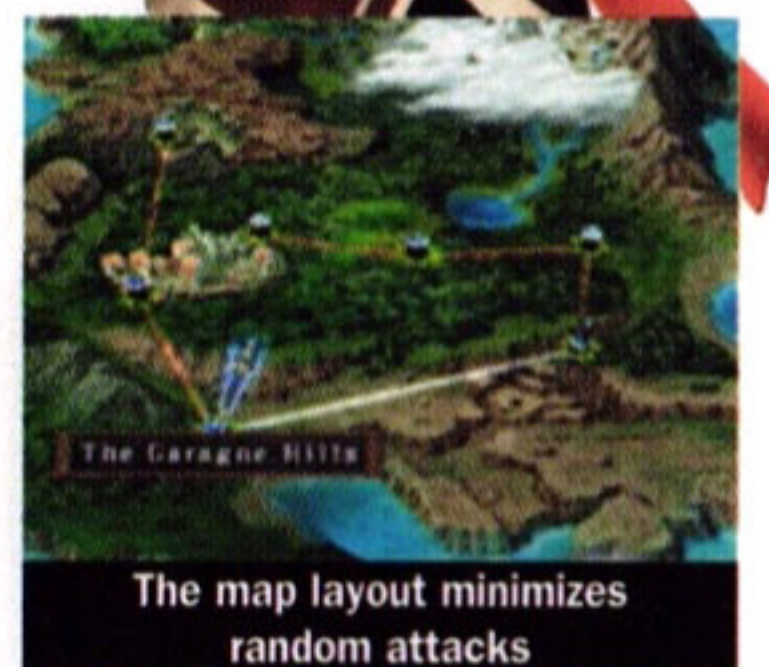
While the voice acting during cutscenes is some of the best in recent memory, the musical score is the only technical aspect of the game that leaves much to be desired. Mixing souped-up versions of what sound like NES-era classics with bagpipes comes off as just plain strange, and at times, a little painful. On the other hand, the

graphics are well above average. Featuring crisp lines; nice colors; and realistic, textured landscapes; Arc elicited more than a few surprised exclamations of, "Wow. That looks really good." Where the variety of Arc really shines, though, is in the character models. Lots of interesting enemies and different variations for humans and Daimos make it a standout feature.

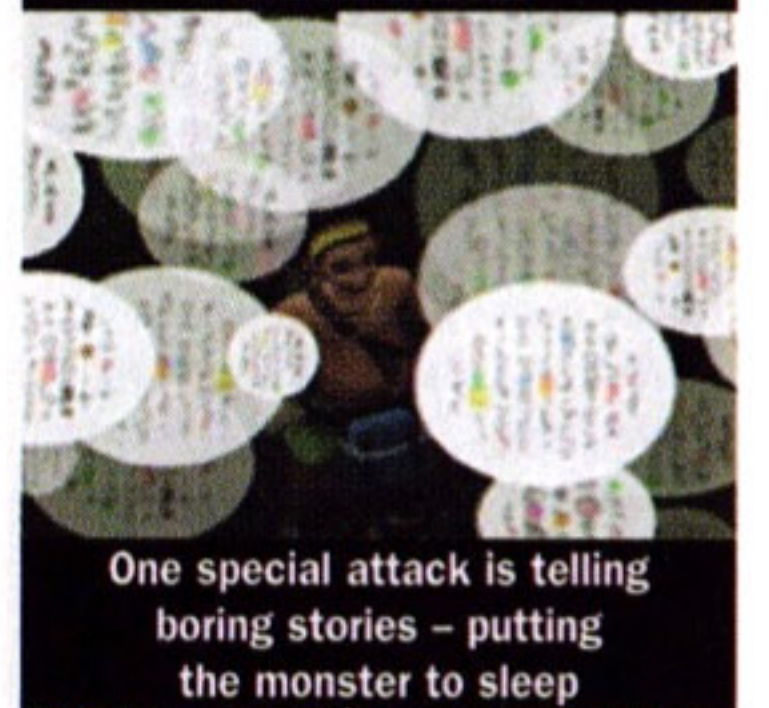
Besides reveling in excellent storytelling and lovely graphics, Arc also has to its advantage engaging battles that are limited in number by the map screen used to move around the world. For example, to go from Darc's house to the Daimos town, there is one stop on the way. This is the only place where you can be assaulted along the path – making the typical tedium of world travel in RPGs much more manageable. This is not to imply that battles in Arc are rare, it's just that most of them take place as a plot point, not as a random attack while you're wandering the desert like Caine in *Kung Fu*. To much surprise, there are no dungeons in the game, though.

Twilight of the Spirits can't be praised enough for its truly excellent storytelling, but the greatest coup for the title is that the game wrapped around this tale is engaging, surprising, and very well done. – LISA

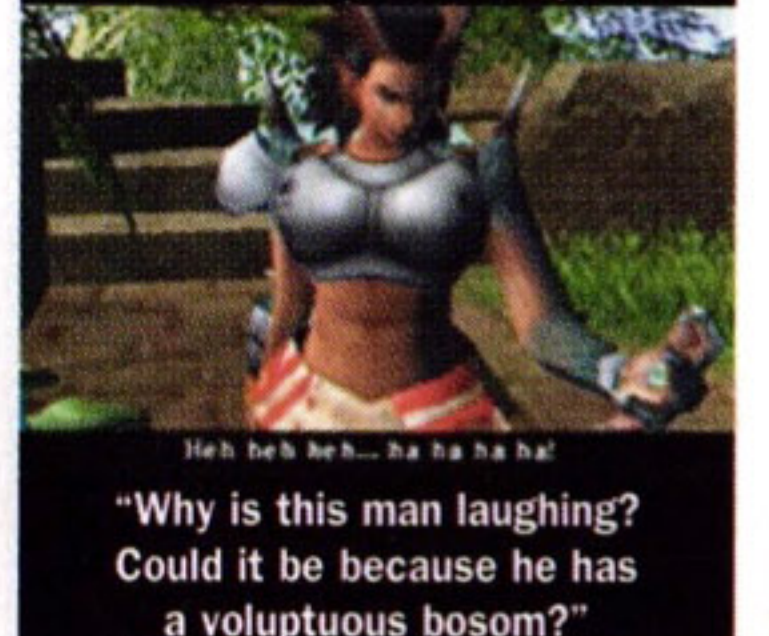
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ROLE-PLAYING GAME ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA
 ■ **DEVELOPER** ARC ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 24



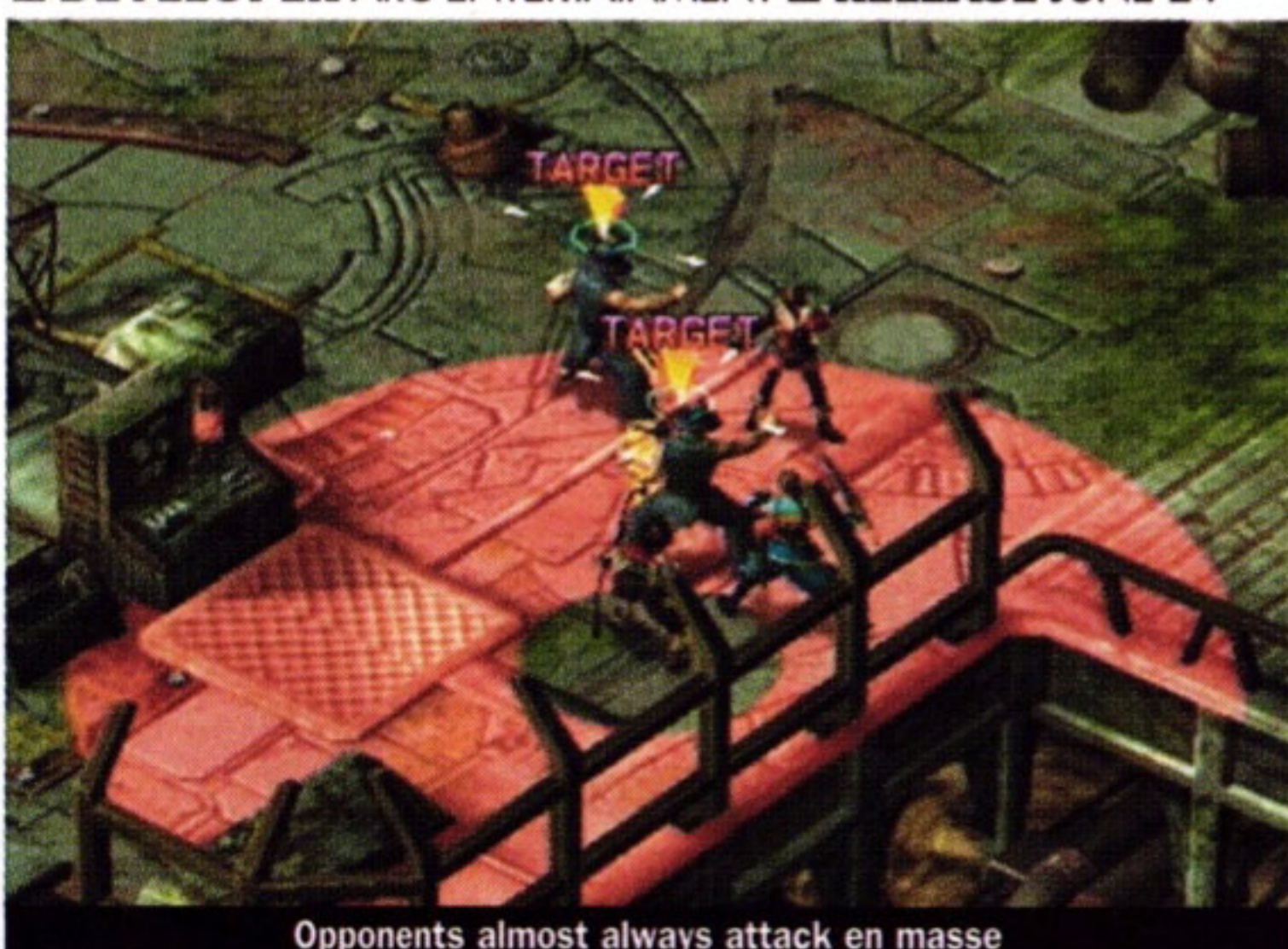
The map layout minimizes random attacks



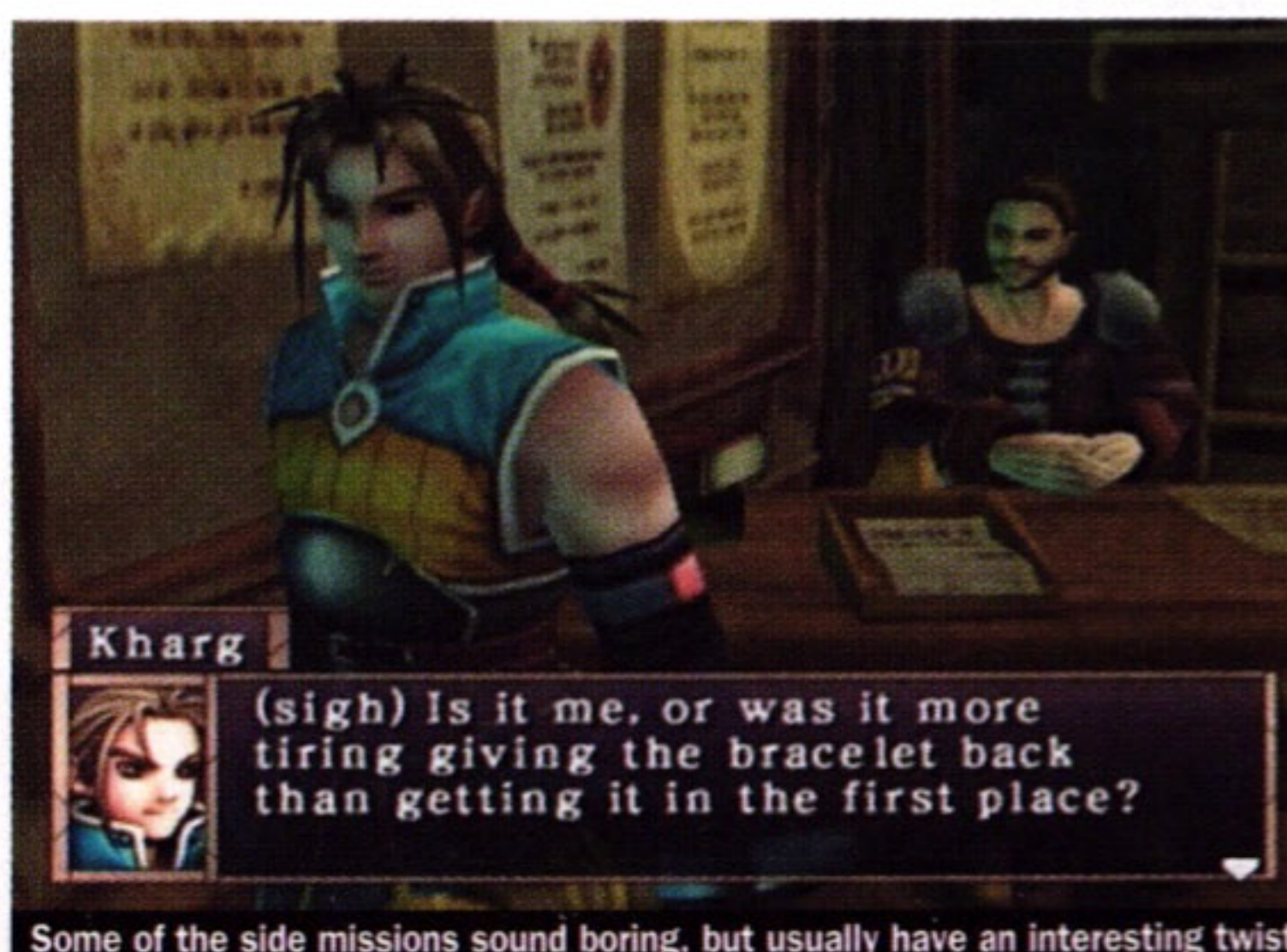
One special attack is telling boring stories – putting the monster to sleep



"Why is this man laughing? Could it be because he has a voluptuous bosom?"



Opponents almost always attack en masse



Some of the side missions sound boring, but usually have an interesting twist

THE BOTTOM LINE
T 8.75
ESRB

- **Concept:** Combine storytelling of a whole new caliber with engaging battle mechanics
- **Graphics:** Areas and characters are surprisingly detailed and varied. The character design is top-notch
- **Sound:** The only downfall to the title. A mix of bad, NES-era ballads and weird Scottish-inspired rock
- **Playability:** It's easy to get the hang of battle mode, although some explanation of how the characters level up would have been nice
- **Entertainment:** My favorite RPG in a very long time
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Twilight of the Spirits is a viscerally engaging game that hammers home unforgettable plot twists, hair-raising action, and infectious gameplay. Most impressive is the sophistication and expeditiousness of its storytelling. Through a blistering pace, the game delves deep into controversial subject matter such as racism and family dysfunction, showing gamers what effect these issues have on the two distinctly different main characters. Unlike most RPGs, Arc the Lad refrains from dabbling with irrelevant material; the story is very concise and never once convoluted or long-winded. The same can be said for combat. Battles are spaced apart perfectly and loaded with interesting strategies. For instance, you'll be able to perform joint two-player attacks and can even target objects in the environments. Twilight of the Spirits excels in nearly every aspect, creating an irresistible package for RPG fans.

REINER – 8.75



"It's cute as hell, fun as can be, but a few steps back on the evolutionary ladder."

PLAYSTATION 2

APE ESCAPE 2

EVOLUTION, INTERRUPTED

Ape Escape is one of my favorite PSone titles ever, and it was good enough to make our Greatest Games of All Time list back in issue 100. As you would expect, I have been awaiting the arrival of Ape Escape 2 on our shores for quite some time and was very pleased that Ubi Soft saw fit to give it a proper U.S. release. Perhaps all the anticipation created some unrealistic expectations on my part. After having played through the game, I can safely state that, while it is still a unique and often-hilarious experience, Ape Escape 2 is not in the same league as Ratchet & Clank or Jak and Daxter.

My disappointment with this game isn't so much about what is here as with what isn't here. Essentially, this is the exact same game that I played way back in 1999. Sure, it looks a little better; there are some (but not many) nifty new gadgets to play with; and the developers have added the *de rigueur* hidden goodies (dispensed from a giant gumball machine) and minigames. Also returning is the absolutely bizarre sense of humor that, to me, is the real draw of the franchise. There are so many funny moments, it's hard to pick just one, but I must mention a comic strip that I unlocked which had a punchline involving a farting banana being boiled to death. (Let it be recorded in the history books that I just wrote a sentence using the phrases "banana," "boiled to death," and "farting.") It's baffling moments like that which make Ape Escape 2 so

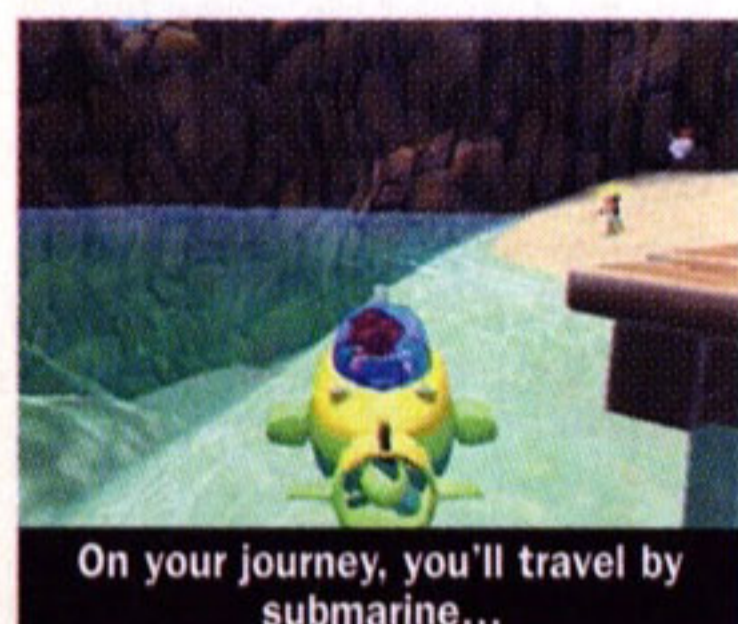
charming, from the hilarious monkey bios to the odd "Monkey Fables" that you can unlock by collecting coins.

The dual-analog control scheme pioneered by the original remains a marvel of game design, allowing you to rapidly switch between your arsenal of gadgets while breathlessly chasing the evasive simians. It's just too bad that the developers weren't able to do much more than recreate the triumphs of the past. If you've played the first, this is essentially the exact same game, save for a few new gadgets and some brief sequences where you pilot vehicles like a snowmobile or a submarine. I will always love this series, but the sense of déjà vu you get from this game is palpable.

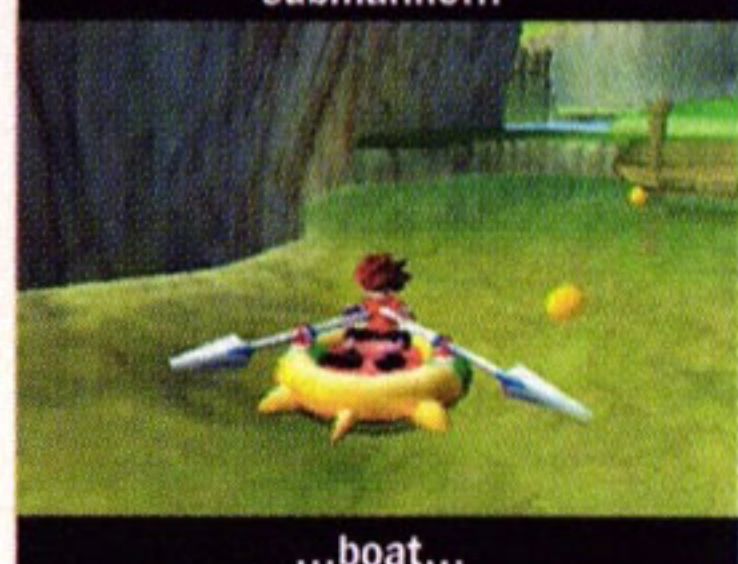
With the good comes the bad, and many of the flaws of the first game are also repeated. Ape Escape was never a graphically ambitious game, but its modest look appears even more dated today in comparison to such gorgeous games as Jak and Daxter and Sly Cooper. Also, the camera system is highly suspect and appears to be at least five years behind the curve of what I expect from a 3D platformer. I'm sure it didn't seem this bad four years ago, but today it makes most of the difficult platforming sequences extremely frustrating.

All told, Ape Escape is a lot like the monkeys that it features so prominently. It's cute as hell, fun as can be, but a few steps back on the evolutionary ladder. — **MATT**

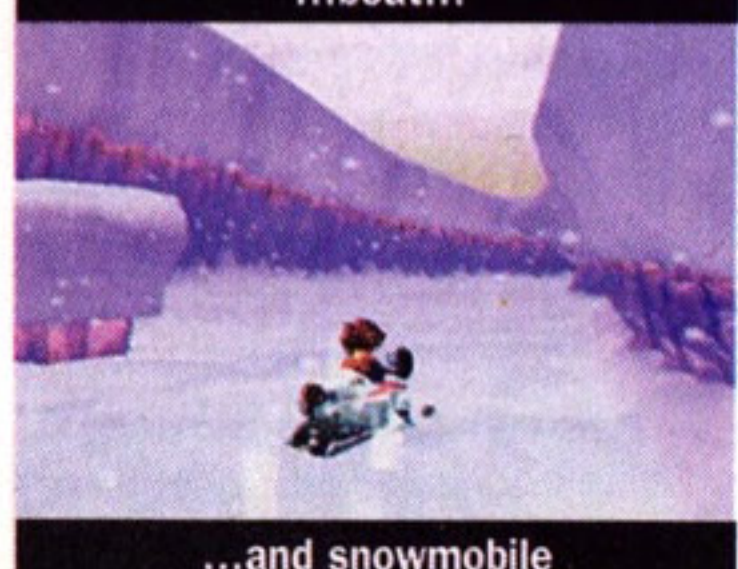
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** UBI SOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN
 ■ **RELEASE** JULY 1



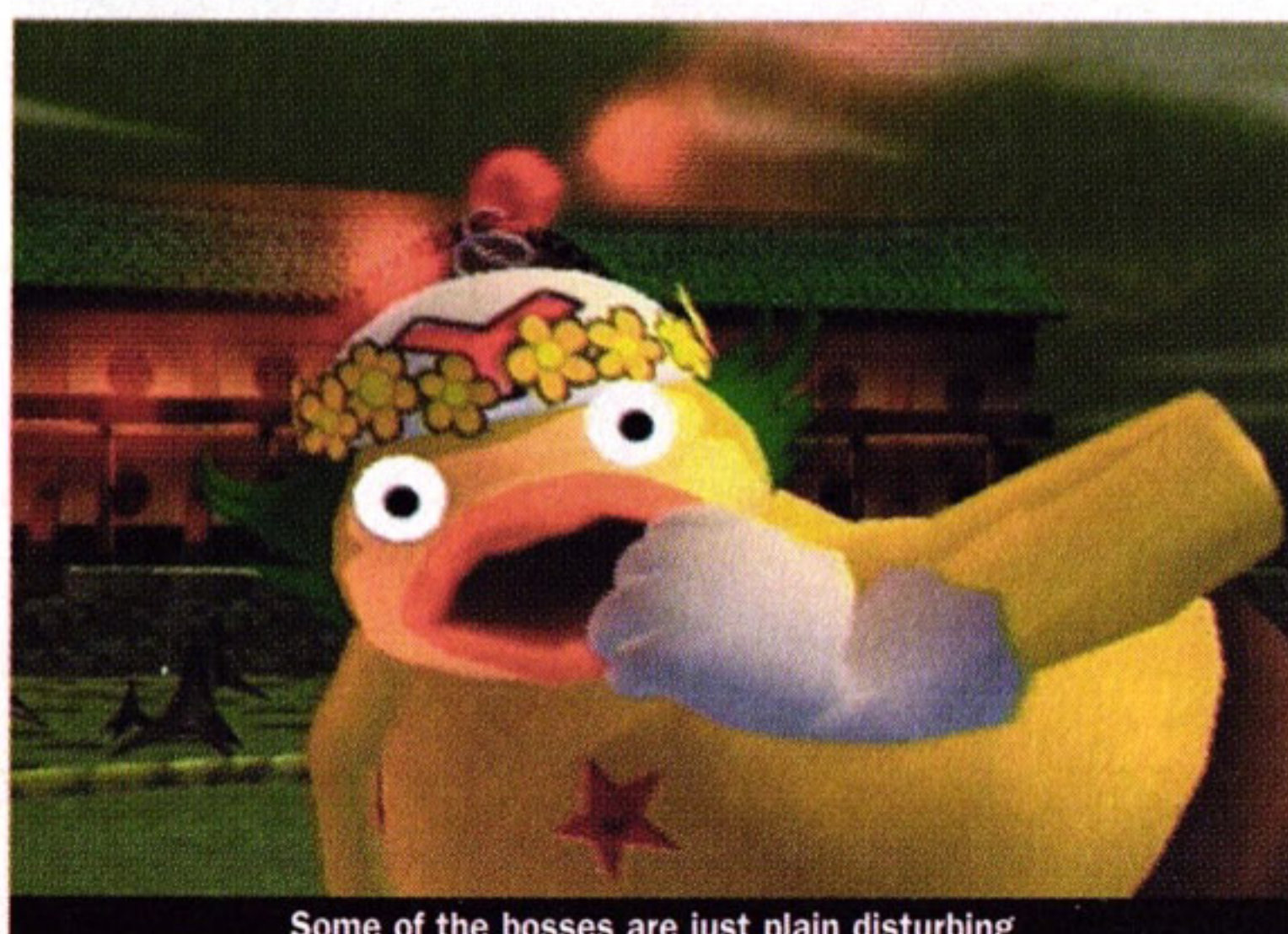
On your journey, you'll travel by submarine...



...boat...



...and snowmobile



Some of the bosses are just plain disturbing



More inventive sequences like this would have been appreciated

THE BOTTOM LINE
E 7.5
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:**
Capture monkeys with a variety of ingenious gadgets
- **Graphics:**
Appears to be running off the Ape Escape 2001 engine – not impressive by today's platforming standards
- **Sound:**
Carnival Cruise Line's Greatest Hits (arranged for Casio keyboard)
- **Playability:**
Same brilliant control scheme, same horrible camera
- **Entertainment:**
I still love this game, but it hasn't evolved since '99
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Monkeys slapping their derriere... Jokes about farting fruit... the ability to beat primates unconscious with a blunt club – could it get much better this? As amusing as its content may be, Ape Escape 2's gameplay leaves much to be desired. The dual-analog functionality and uniqueness of the gadgets combine to create a number of interesting maneuvers, but the levels are far from treacherous and the overall difficulty is a walk in the park. To its benefit, I haven't snickered this much during a game since Conker's Bad Fur Day. If you can work your way through the bland platforming exercises and lackluster action, there are some big laughs in store. The vibrant pastel backdrops also produce an array of gawk-worthy visuals. Altogether, though, there really is nothing extraordinary about it.

REINER – 7.25



"Unlike its Xbox cousin, this version of the PC mega-hit offers no compelling content..."

PLAYSTATION 2

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: OPERATION RESURRECTION

NEIN!

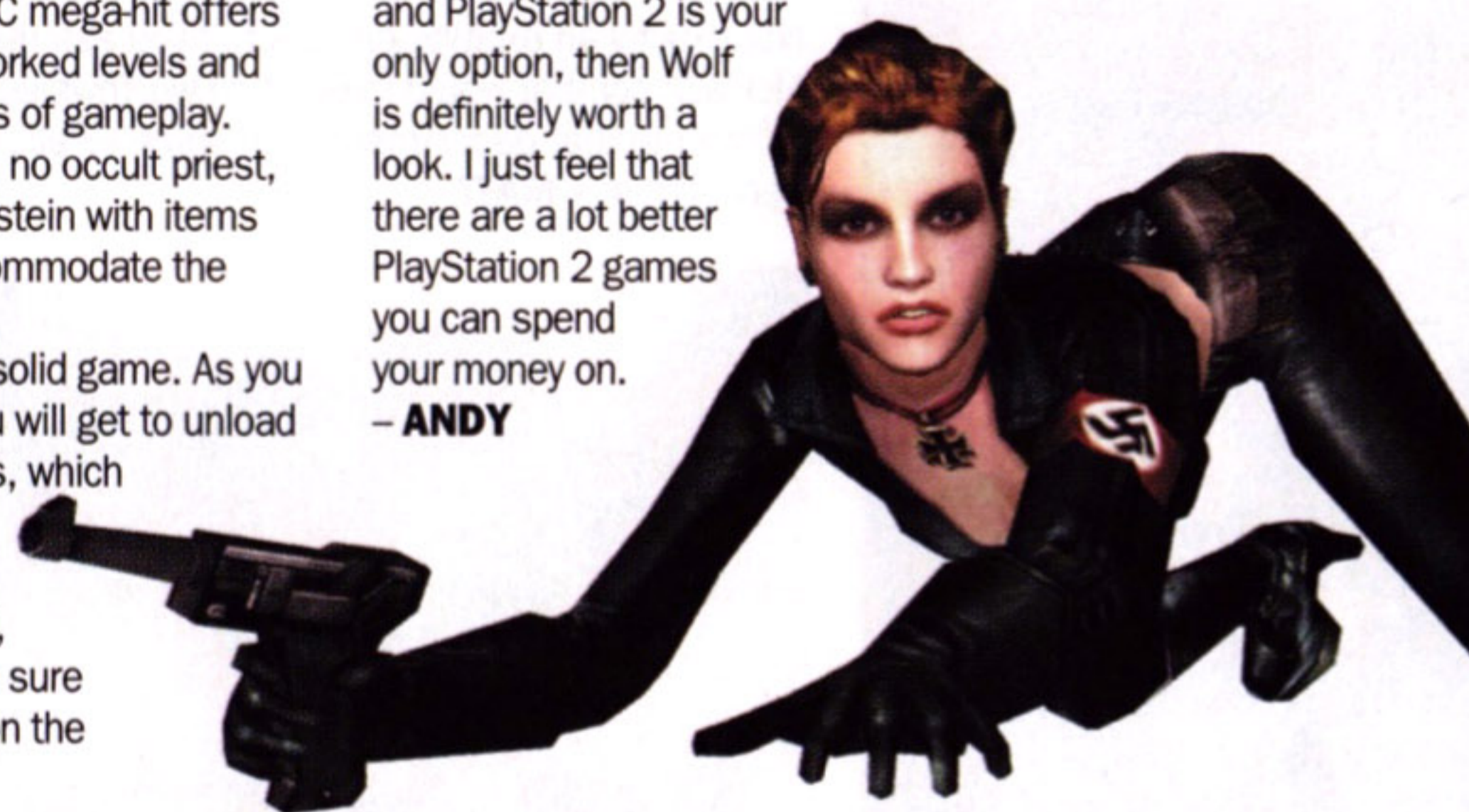
It's a shame really. In my opinion, the PlayStation 2 has yet to have a truly breakthrough first-person shooter, and I really think it would do the system good. Sure, PS2 has a version of Deus Ex (an amazing game that sadly offered more loading time than a dock worker) and now there is Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Operation Resurrection. But, even this game falls short of its PC legacy.

Unlike its Xbox cousin, this version of the PC mega-hit offers no compelling content other than slightly reworked levels and a prologue mission that adds about two hours of gameplay. No online support, no co-op play, no shotgun, no occult priest, no X-Shepherd – just Return to Castle Wolfenstein with items and levels that are slightly rearranged to accommodate the PlayStation 2's smaller memory.

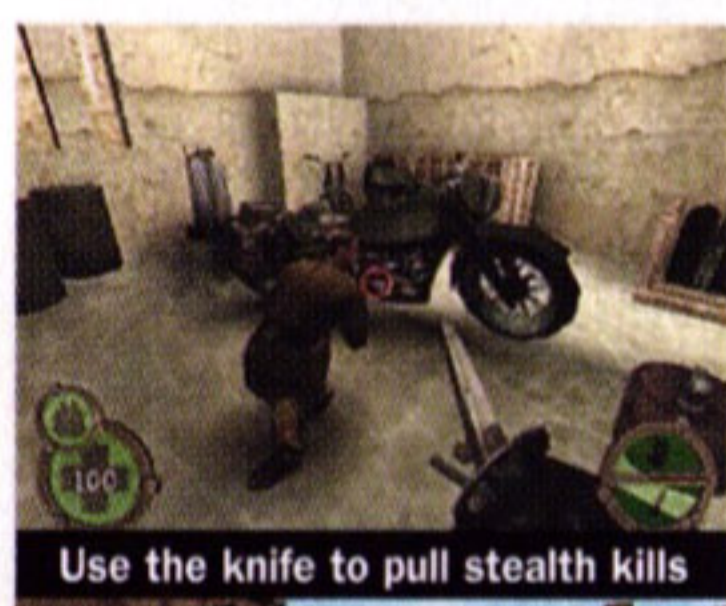
That said, Operation Resurrection is still a solid game. As you trek through the game as B.J. Blazkowicz, you will get to unload large amounts of lead into zombies and Nazis, which is always a good time in my book. Sadly, the control isn't as tight as I would like it to be, even though it is certainly adequate. Also, all the sound effects seem slightly tinny – I'm sure another casualty due to the lack of memory on the PlayStation 2.

Now, I certainly don't mean to turn this into some kind of PlayStation 2 rip fest, it's just one of the facts about the system: It doesn't do first-person shooters well. Now maybe it's just that no one has taken the time to create some amazing technology to make first-person shooter gaming on the PlayStation 2 a reality, but for now I'm going to stand by it as fact. However, if you want to play a first-person shooter, and PlayStation 2 is your only option, then Wolf is definitely worth a look. I just feel that there are a lot better PlayStation 2 games you can spend your money on.

– ANDY



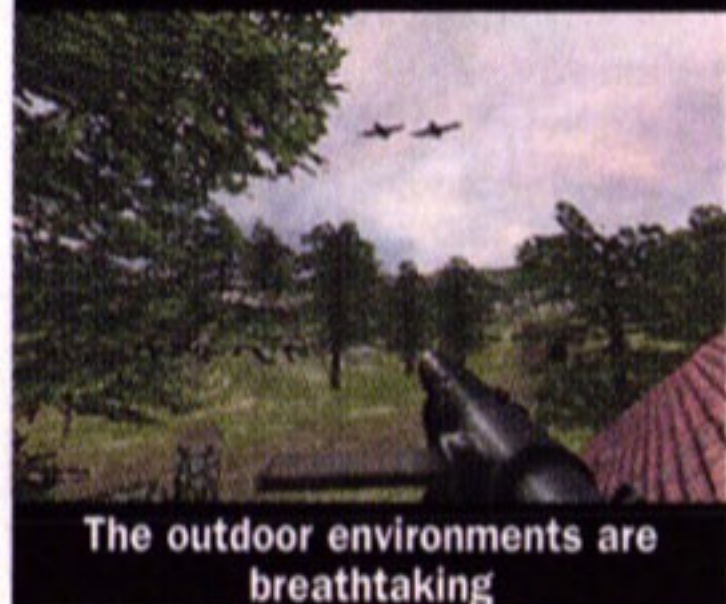
■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** ID SOFTWARE/GREY MATTER/RASTER PRODUCTIONS
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 27



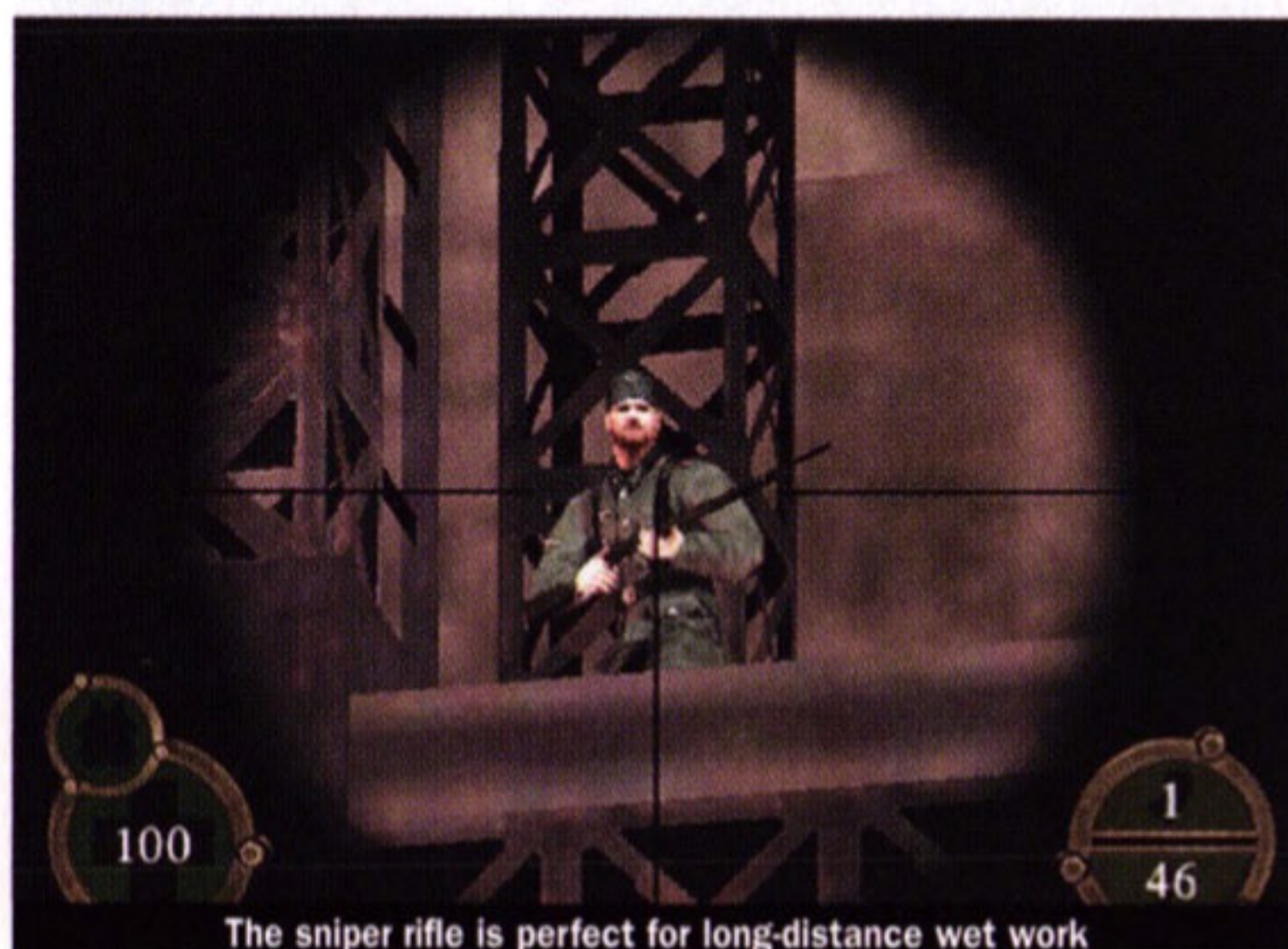
Use the knife to pull stealth kills



Find all the secrets in a level and you can use bonus points to increase various stats or purchase items



The outdoor environments are breathtaking



The sniper rifle is perfect for long-distance wet work



Mounted machine guns make mince meat out of naughty Nazis

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M
 CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

7.5

- **Concept:**
Find a way to make this game work on PS2 and still be cool
- **Graphics:**
Surprisingly good for an FPS on PS2, but nothing spectacular either
- **Sound:**
The samples aren't as crisp as its Xbox or PC cousins, but it's acceptable
- **Playability:**
The playcontrol is solid, but not as tight as I would like it
- **Entertainment:**
Since it needed to be retooled to work on PS2, the game isn't as entertaining as it could have been
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Surprisingly, the PS2 version of this game doesn't seem to suffer from a noticeable downgrade in graphical quality when compared to its Xbox cousin. Likewise, the gameplay and pacing are decent; but as I said in my Xbox review, the story of Nazi zombies is played. Supernatural plotlines notwithstanding, this is a solid first-person shooter with a lot of extras. It will keep you playing for many hours as you attempt to find the plethora of hidden items interspersed throughout. Yet another reason to play and replay this release is the stat tracking. Depending on how efficiently you complete the levels, you're awarded bonus points that you can use to improve a number of the Blast-man's attributes. While all of this is good, the game itself tends to lose momentum as the story draws out. I found Red Faction to be a better experience, but both are excellent games.

KRISTIAN – 7.75

REVIEWS



PLAYSTATION 2

THE HULK

A RADIOACTIVE WASTE

Vivendi Universal is serving up a big, green pile of licensed-game fecal matter, reminding us why we should always be wary of titles bearing the names of TV shows, movies, or comic books. Sure, all of the essentials are included. You play a big, angry guy who groans a lot – and no, I don't mean Andy after a night of partying. Hulk has some spiffy moves, especially the wrestling-related ones like the chokeslam. The environments can take as much damage as the enemies can, with even normal walls registering hits.

What you do in the first ten minutes is what you're going to be doing for the rest of your excruciating experience with the game. Every once in a while I would find a new technique, but I'd be yawning again within a few seconds. The Dr. Banner stages represent what may be some of the crappiest coding on a next-gen title. When the Chicken Run game has better stealth, you know you're in for a one-way trip to Headachesville, USA; population: you.

I can't fault the well-done voiceovers and graphics (awful camera notwithstanding). Wait – yes, I can. They're going to be the things that draw people to play this festering heap. First X2 Wolverine's Revenge, and now this? Superhero games deserve much better. Do yourself a favor: Don't toss greenbacks into this green monster's mouth. – **JUSTIN**



- **Concept:**
Hulk smash! Banner wuss out!
- **Graphics:**
Very nice artistic style, though the camera is hideous
- **Sound:**
Trash-talking security guards will actually make you want to pound them more
- **Playability:**
You won't need the instruction book to figure these out, but controls are inconsistent nonetheless
- **Entertainment:**
As basic and uninspired as can be, except for the Banner stealth scenes – which are even worse!
- **Replay Value:**
Low

SECOND OPINION

I must admit that I really enjoy smashing stuff as the Hulk, but unfortunately, it's only entertaining for so long. Hulk jump. Hulk smash. Hulk repeat. The overall presentation of the game is certainly acceptable, but nothing really stands out to me either. If you absolutely love the movie, you are going to find something to love here, but for everyone else it's just another movie-licensed brawler.

ANDY – 6.75

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
■ **DEVELOPER** RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** MAY 27



PLAYSTATION 2

RTX RED ROCK

EZ TO IGNORE

I will say one thing for this game: It's good to see LucasArts trying to create original properties and taking a break from pimping out the Star Wars license. Unfortunately, if EZ Wheeler (RTX Red Rock's incredibly dorky protagonist) is an example of the new characters it has in store for us, maybe the LucasArts gang would be better off sticking to Queen Amidala Xtreme Beach Volleyball.

The cheesy sci-fi atmosphere won't do much to convince you to play this game, and neither will the derivative gameplay and level design. RTX uses a formula similar to that of Primal (and a host of other Tomb Raider descendents). Basically, you take a simple task (pushing a button to open a door, for example), then make this small errand incredibly frustrating by forcing the player to negotiate a maze of incomprehensible corridors, arbitrary obstacles, and randomly placed enemies. I really dislike this concept because there is no payoff for all the work you've put into an objective. No matter how difficult it was or how long it took, all you've done is essentially turn on a light switch. Not exactly an exciting prospect, if you ask me. Of course, some good, old-fashioned, kick-ass combat would make it all worthwhile, but RTX doesn't have anything more to offer in that department than some erratic auto-targeting and a few vehicle-based sequences. – **MATT**



Here's one of the vehicles you'll be able to control



In science fiction circles, that's called a "space monocle"



If only you could hit enemies as easily as they can hit you



If you like crouching, you're in luck!

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** LUCASARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** LUCASARTS
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 10

THE BOTTOM LINE



6.5

- **Concept:**
Explore, shoot robots, and unlock doors on Mars
- **Graphics:**
Detailed character models and environments, but the framerate and texturing are not impressive
- **Sound:**
Little to no music and the voiceovers are groan inducing
- **Playability:**
It's way too hard to do simple things like shoot an enemy two feet in front of you
- **Entertainment:**
With game design this pedestrian, you need more compelling characters and storyline. Piloting robots just isn't enough
- **Replay Value:**
Low

SECOND OPINION

The developers hit the nail on the head in terms of presentation. This game's look, sound, and feel create a compelling atmosphere that sci-fi fans will appreciate. The gameplay, on the other hand, resembles a nail partially protruding and sloppily beaten down on its side, crushed into the wood. It gets the job done, but hinders the overall sturdiness and refinement desired. RTX's concept is sound. Players must solve puzzles with the aid of various robots while offing aliens here and there. The robots keep puzzles interesting, but because the game doesn't always present the pieces clearly, you spend more time wondering about your objectives than actually solving anything. Still, despite this sometimes annoying problem, it never frustrated me enough to quit. Think of a futuristic Tomb Raider here. If that sounds intriguing, RTX is decent choice.

CHET – 7

K-1 WORLD GRAND PRIX

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** JULY 8



The first next-gen K-1 game – like its predecessors – doesn't knock me out. Its graphics are merely average and the fighting is uninspired. You can't make a fighter,

training minigames are confusing, and the career-esque Champion's Revolution is just wrong. I had to fight six bouts before a tournament, and I won all six. Somehow, I didn't have enough points to make it, so it was game over. Say what? It's the only kickboxing game on PS2 and is far from abysmal, but Knockout Kings and Pride are much better choices. – **JUSTIN**

T 6.5

SILENT LINE: ARMORED CORE

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 12



Although it's not indicated in the title, Silent Line really is an expansion pack to Armored Core 3. You'll find new missions, deathmatch modes, and parts. The most interesting addition

is the ability to create your own AI in Arena mode, but even with this cool feature, I cannot endorse Silent Line at its current \$40 price point. However, if you've yet to play an AC game, add a point to my score. – **CHET**

T 7.5

SPEED KINGS

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 20



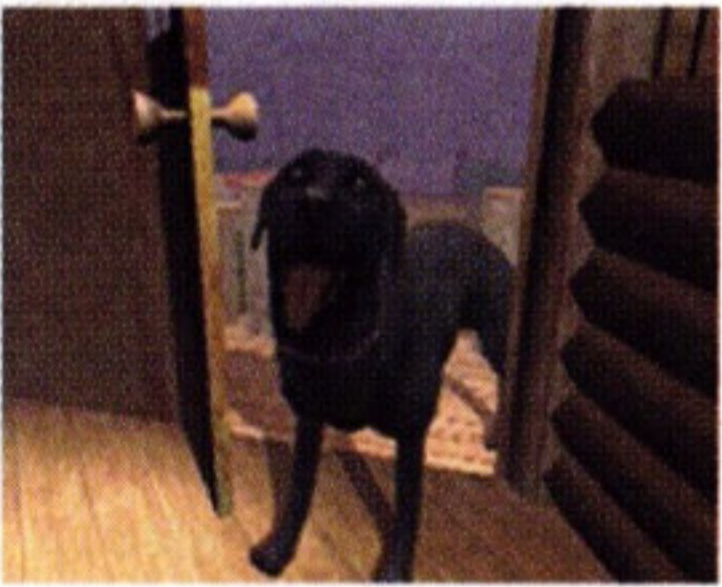
True to its namesake, speed is the draw. Unfortunately, that's the only thing that Speed Kings really has going for it. You'll reach velocities so incomprehensible that your reflexes are paralyzed.

Some of the moves, like sliding on the side of the bike to tuck beneath a fallen tree or semi bed, are pretty slick as well. Notwithstanding, without a hefty career mode or a wealth of options, there's little here that will hold your interest. – **REINER**

E 6.5

REEL FISHING III

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** NATSUME
 ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 16



Generally with fishing games, you really can't go wrong if that is the experience you are looking for. Sure, some games have better interfaces and more exciting fights (Fisherman's Challenge), but rarely do they

just stink like rotting fish guts after five days roasting in the sun. Which, coincidentally, is how bad this game stinks. About the only positive thing I can say about this title is that it has a "fishing lifestyle" story and interface that lets you hang out at a cabin and name your dog. I named mine after Steve Martin's in *The Jerk*. That was entertaining. This game is not. – **ANDY**

E 3

MUSIC MAKER

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** MAGIX
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 28



In the absence of Music 3000 (Jester's sequel to MTV Music Generator 2), Americans with a jones for beats will be able to make do with

Magix's Music Maker, a PS2 music-creation program that basically emulates the MTV series in every respect. I love these kinds of titles, and this is a good one, but it isn't quite as user-friendly as Jester's MTV product. I applaud the easy way in which you can tweak individual sound blocks, but I found the horizontally scrolling song grid very confusing. Also, there is no clipboard to store your frequently used samples, which means you'll spend a lot of time flipping through menus. Still, there is so much to do here, especially when you factor in the excellent beat and sample creator modes. – **MATT**

E 8

FINDING NEMO

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE
 ■ **PUBLISHER** THQ
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 12



There's nothing inherently wrong with Finding Nemo, per se; but at the same time, it's missing the "Wow! That was cool!" or "I can't wait to do that again"

elements. Granted, the swimming physics are nice, the changing water currents add an element of surprise, and you just gotta love being chased by a shark that's roughly one thousand times your size. Finding Nemo has its moments, yet the majority of the game is centered around swimming through rings and collecting snail shell challenges. Yes, the target audience is children, but only for the young tykes out there who are new to the gaming scene. The pacing is just way too slow to appease anyone else. – **REINER**

E 6.5

WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEATURING SHAUN MURRAY

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
 ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 3



What could possibly be next? Perhaps extreme sports curling starring the Canadian great Sandra Schmirler? Better yet, what about street luge racing?

Although wakeboarding seems like an unlikely candidate for Activision's O2 lineup, it's actually one of the better action/sports titles around. The gameplay is stylized in a Tony Hawk vein, yet the uniqueness of the sport gives it an entirely different look. You soar off of the boat's wake, let go of the line to launch into unreachable areas, and grind on just about everything. The missions are quite ingenious and the multiplayer modes are wildly entertaining. – **REINER**

T 8.25

nemy reinforcements inbound for this sector.



PLAYSTATION 2

NAVAL OPS: WARSHIP GUNNER

IN SEARCH OF THE TREASURE TRAIL

Holy Moses, is this a niche game. I thought Gallop Racer would see a limited audience interest, but Naval Ops makes Gallop Racer look like Tetris. The game is absolutely and entirely focused on combat at sea, and while that makes sense seeing as how the title doesn't give a lot of leeway to ground missions, it is one of the more bizarre experiences I've had in gaming. Your game begins with the requisite getting-to-know-you rigmarole, then injects you into a bizarre story (your destroyer is transported to a parallel world), and you begin shooting at numerous enemy craft with varying results.

The most intriguing part of the gameplay is the RPG-like reward and ranking system that tracks your stats throughout missions and elevates your station as you complete tasks. Along with this "grade me" type of mechanic, you're given points to shovel into technology research trees that, when purchased, allow you to buy better ships with better armament. This is all well and good, but the actual play while traversing the oceans of crazy-world is somewhat interesting at its best, and extremely frustrating at its worst. The number of crafts and items available with which to outfit your ship are nice, but the gameplay seems to keep Naval Ops on a short leash – one that will ultimately keep this title from a lot of mass-market appeal. – **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE
T 7.5

- **Concept:** It's a third-person shooter, except you're in a large boat shooting from multiple weapons
- **Graphics:** If there's one area where this game could use a huge overhaul, this is it
- **Sound:** All of the booms and crashes you want to hear in a game about naval warfare
- **Playability:** Like many other Koei games of this ilk, the tutorial is an absolute must
- **Entertainment:** I'm not sure how many sea battle connoisseurs there are out there, but if you're one, you'll love this game
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

I hate to say it, but this is another Koei title that doesn't fully realize its potential. I don't despise any one aspect of it, but define it rather by what it is missing – and zeal is one absent quality. While I enjoyed the combat itself (as well as being able to design my fleet), this game lacks the strategic depth of Koei's other recent naval title, P.T.O. IV. Combining the two would have given you the ultimate sim, but this isn't it.

KATO – 7.25

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** KOEI
 ■ **DEVELOPER** MICRO CABIN ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 24



"...to assert that Wario World is a mere clone insults the game and developer."

GAMECUBE

WARIO WORLD

NINTENDO FINDS RARE TREASURE

Under Nintendo's wing, Rare might not have created the most original games, but nobody can contest its knack for replicating Nintendo's finer formulas. Indeed, titles such as Donkey Kong Country, Banjo Kazooie, Diddy Kong Racing, and Star Fox Adventures made those grueling periods of time without a Zelda or Mario bearable. So, with Rare's departure, there is now a tremendous void for another party to fill. Wario World's successful incorporation of various Mario elements proves that Treasure (yes, the famed developer of 2D shooters) possesses the talent and ingenuity to pull it off.

However, to assert that Wario World is a mere clone insults the game and developer. The Mario 64-esque combat and platforming have been, in a manner of speaking, passed through a Treasure filter. Moves like a Zangief-style Spinning Pile Driver and levels such as the Mirror Mansion inject a unique presentational flair and actually furnish a few original game mechanics. In Mirror Mansion, for example, players must employ the reflective surfaces not only to locate certain secrets and obstacles, but to platform!

Each stage also thrusts players into two types of mid-level minigames. In the first, Wario falls into a tiny room that challenges you to solve a puzzle. The second grouping is a direct rip-off of Mario Sunshine's obstacle courses – the ones where Mario lacks his water cannon. Both minigames prove to be addicting and challenging, and complement the overall experience by adding variety.

Of course, no Treasure game would be complete if it wasn't replete with awesome boss battles. Wario World has them in droves. You'll encounter a boss after beating a stage and then another when you finish an area. Furthermore, each one (the humanoid cow, especially) sports a creative design in its appearance and in the manner players must approach it.

Other highlights include hilarious voice work for Wario, good music (they're mostly remixes from previous Wario titles), and GBA connectivity. The game's problems, such as mediocre graphics and a slightly deficient camera are, for the most part, excusable; but I did find the penalty for dying and failing minigames to be too forgiving. Still, it isn't a flaw that will make you enjoy Wario World any less. – **CHET**

THE BOTTOM LINE
E EVERYONE
8.5

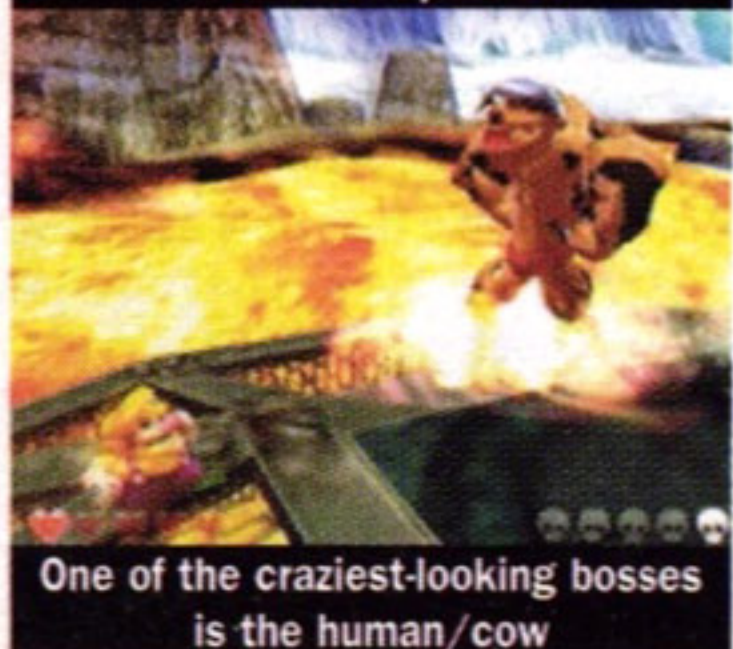
- **Concept:** Treasure takes Mario-style gameplay and gives it an unique flavor
- **Graphics:** The texturing is nice, but the geometry is basic
- **Sound:** Great voice work and pretty good music. The jazz is my favorite
- **Playability:** Outside of an occasionally suspect camera, there's no problem here
- **Entertainment:** Wario won't blow you away, but its original ideas and humor create a captivating gameplay experience
- **Replay Value:** Moderate



The bosses are amazing



Minigames feature a variety of different puzzles



One of the craziest-looking bosses is the human/cow



You can pile give anyone a piledriver – even this large boss!



Using the mirrors on the floor to platform is innovative

SECOND OPINION

Wario World recalls a simpler platforming past, but it still contains a modicum of innovations. At its base, it reminds me of Rare's N64 titles. Each level has a ton of items to collect, although they aren't vital to progression. This makes the game accessible for newbies and hardcore gamers alike. Wario is a very likeable anti-hero, and his greed makes coin-snatching more tolerable because they're HIS coins, and he wants them back! While each stage has its own motif, the enemies are the same recurring handful of models in disguise. New mechanics get introduced – the sticky ball, Mario Sunshine-eque side levels, and advanced combat moves among the most enthralling – but nothing really keeps you hooked. I'm more fond of the new direction platformers are taking: massive worlds, less collection, and grander stories. However, Wario World finds its own niche in the GameCube library.

JUSTIN – 7.5



"...familiar voices and stellar graphics do not a game make."

GAMECUBE
THE HULK
 NOT SO INCREDIBLE AFTER ALL



The simultaneous release of a game and movie is quickly becoming standard practice for the entertainment world. *Spider-Man* set the box office and video game charts ablaze with astronomical numbers, and Atari and Warner Bros. hope to eclipse the wall crawler's success with the collective might of *The Matrix*. As exciting as it is to see Hollywood and video games merging mediums, the results very rarely match expectations or hype. *Spider-Man* and *X2 Wolverine's Revenge* didn't come close to equaling the quality of the feature films. Adding insult to injury, the game based on *The Hulk*, while respectable in some regards, is not the rampaging green goliath that Vivendi Universal was banking on.

Stylized in the typical brawler vein, *The Hulk* hones in on the true essence of destruction and places it into gamers' hands, but expels little effort to make this aspect remotely entertaining. As expected, *The Hulk* can perform Herculean feats. He can leap 20 feet into the air with ease, smash through walls, pummel puny human soldiers, and lift and hurl helicopters like Randy Johnson does a baseball. It sounds like a blast, and it is...but only for a few minutes. If anything, the game specializes in redundancy. If you punch your way through one wall, you'll probably do it another 10

times before the level ends. The same goes for combat. The Hulk's arsenal of moves, while inspired by the movie and comic series, is fairly slim. The enemies that you face are repetitive as well. Throughout the course of the entire game, you'll only confront a handful of different bad guy types. Toss in the fact that almost every mission is designed within the "move from point A to point B" formula, and you can clearly see how this game loses its luster fairly quickly.

Developer Radical Entertainment tried to break up the monotony by inserting stealth missions where players assume the alter ego of Bruce Banner. The idea is sound, but again, the execution is way off the mark and the general design is simply atrocious. I'll even go so far as to say that you'll pray that these stages end quickly. But, of course, once they do come to a close, you find yourself back at square one – bored to death by *The Hulk's* repetitive nature.

The cel-shaded graphics truly are a feast for the eyes – especially the amazing details that accompany crumbling walls and vehicles exploding. Having Eric Bana provide voice work also adds a layer of authenticity. Unfortunately, familiar voices and stellar graphics do not a game make. *The Hulk* may be mean and green, but he's not very sensitive to a gamer's needs. We deserve better. – REINER

THE BOTTOM LINE
 TEEN T 5.75
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

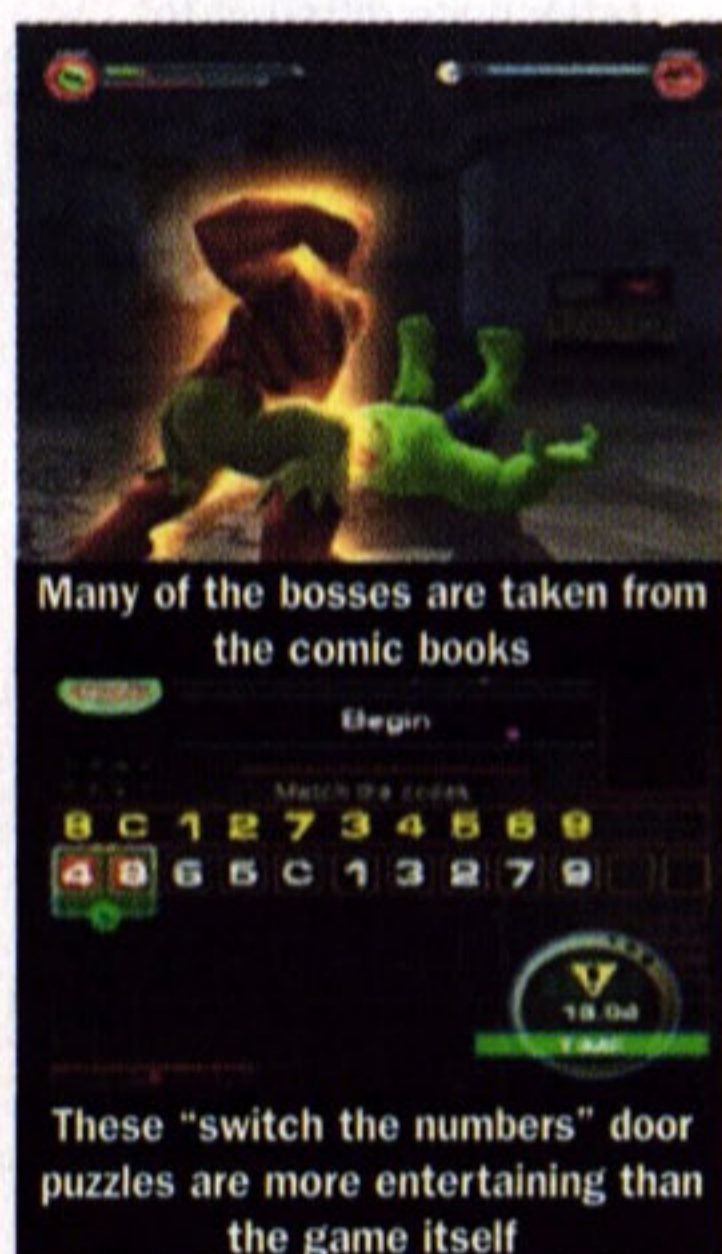
- **Concept:**
A disappointing follow-up to the feature film that blends non-stop carnage with action-less stealth
- **Graphics:**
The cel-shaded Hulk almost looks better than the CG movie model. The animations and effects are also pleasing to the eye
- **Sound:**
The Hulk's ability to grunt and moan is vividly expressed
- **Playability:**
Punch your way through levels and repeat until the credits roll
- **Entertainment:**
The gameplay is too bland to keep gamers entranced
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

I'm skeptical about the return of the Hulk, and this mediocre brawler doesn't do much to allay my fears. I do have to give *The Hulk* props for being at least a playable game. However, there's more than one road that leads to Suck City. *Wolverine's Revenge* was a game that had a lot of good ideas, but horribly botched execution. *The Hulk*, conversely, is visually amazing, and actually seems to have gone through some degree of playtesting; but doesn't have a single new idea in its gigantic green head. Basically, you're doing one of two things: kicking ass on hapless army guys or sneaking around as Bruce Banner in some idiotic "stealth" sequences. Due to the sheer size and power you possess as the Hulk, it's thrilling for the first twenty minutes or so; but once the novelty is gone, this game reveals itself to be nothing more than another ho-hum button masher.

MATT – 6.5

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL ■ **DEVELOPER** RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** MAY 28

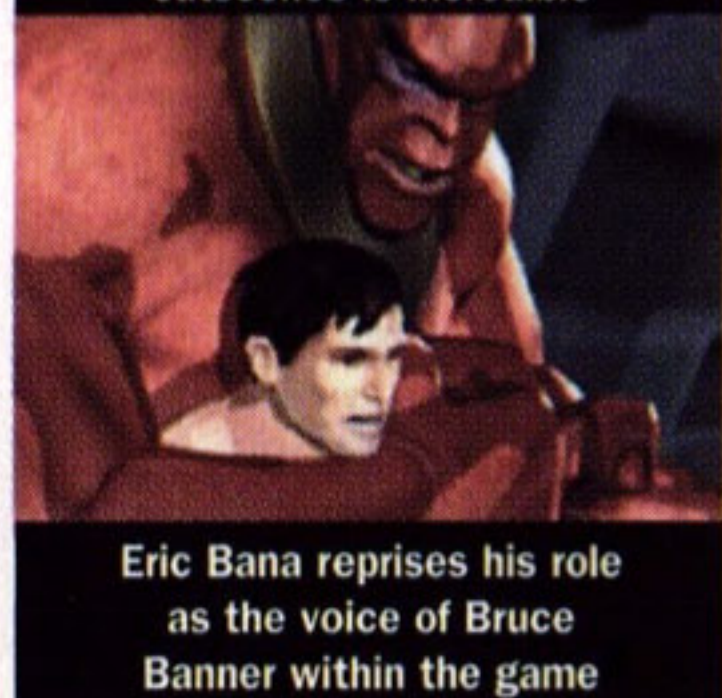


Many of the bosses are taken from the comic books

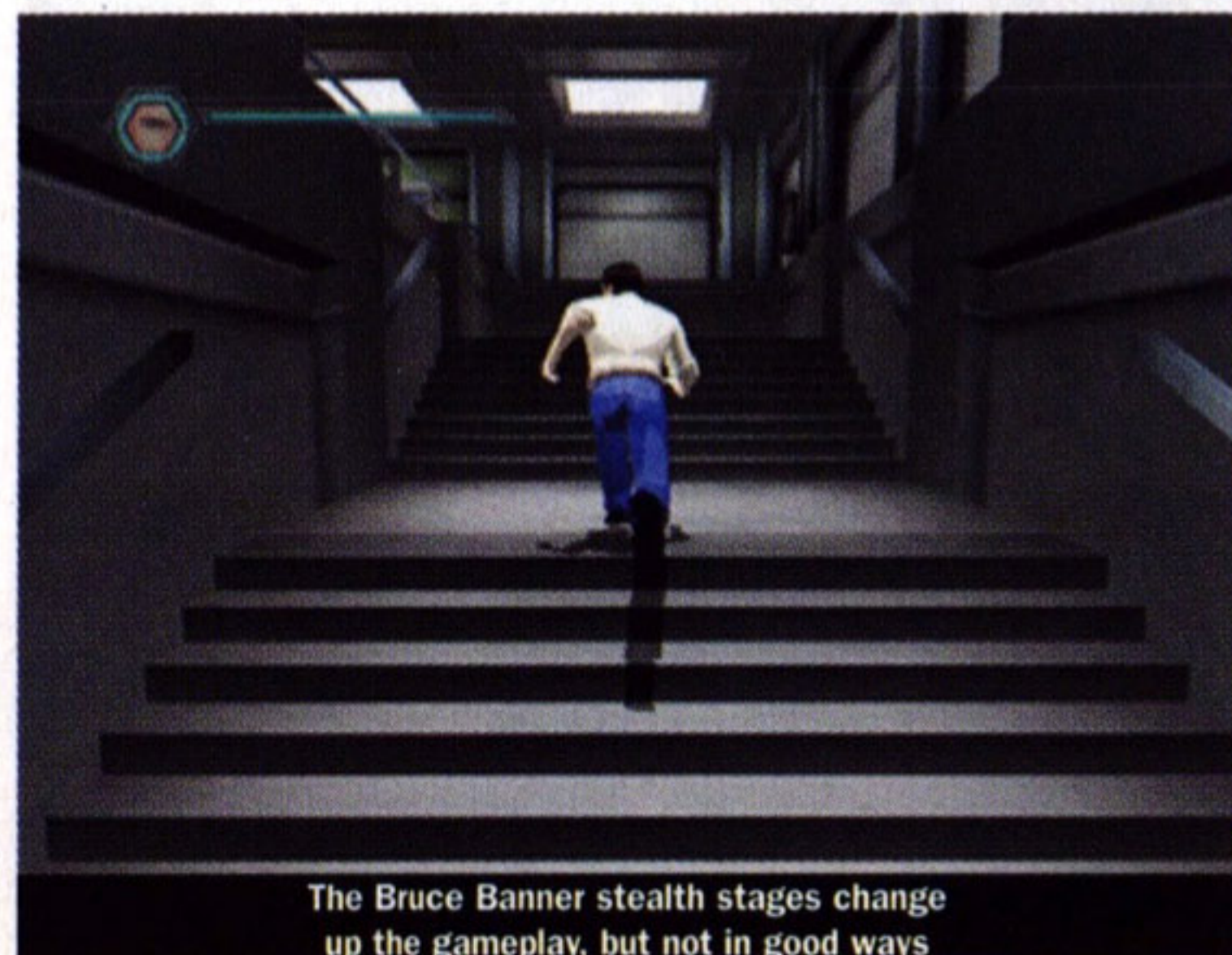
These "switch the numbers" door puzzles are more entertaining than the game itself



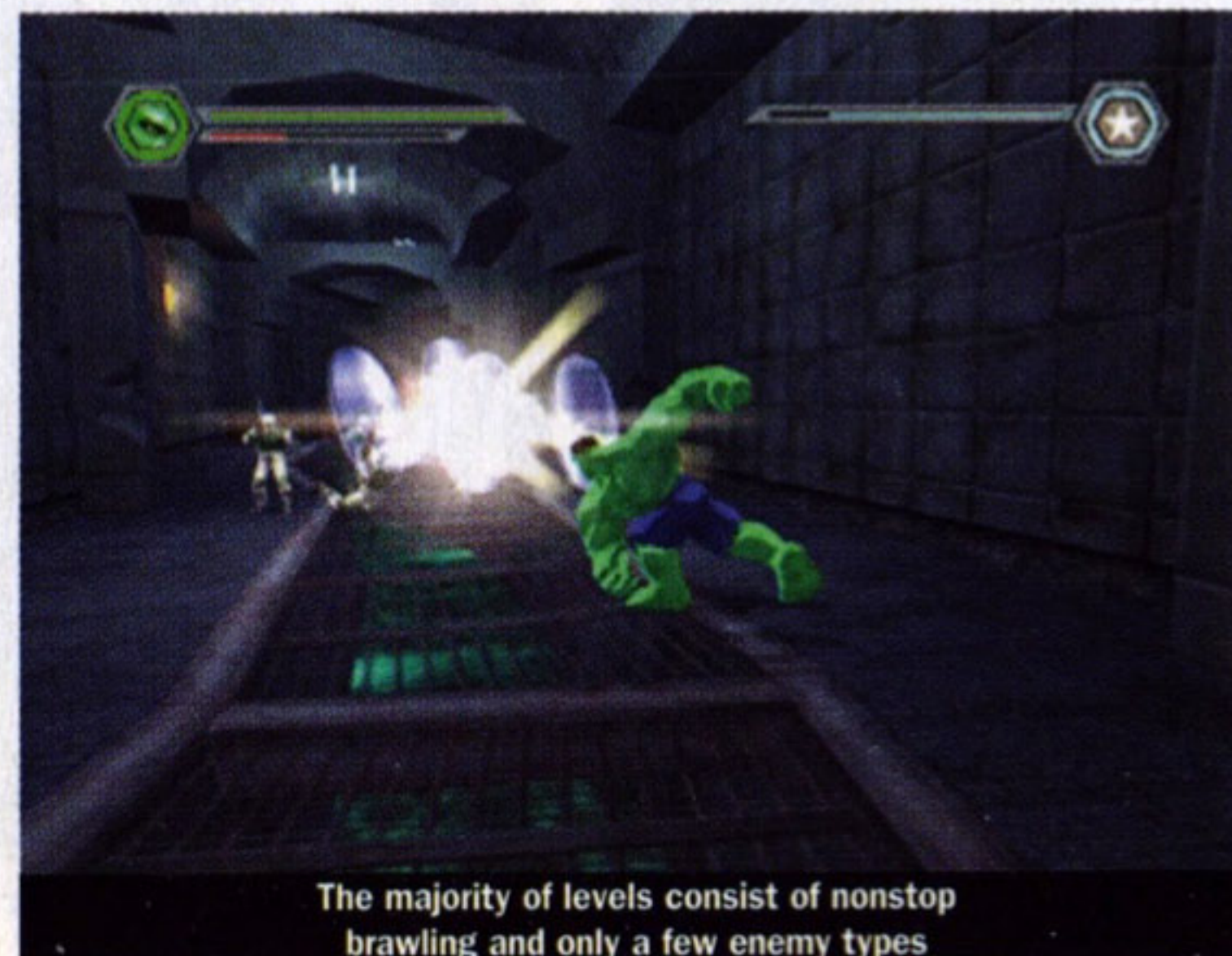
The detail in the cutscenes is incredible



Eric Bana reprises his role as the voice of Bruce Banner within the game



The Bruce Banner stealth stages change up the gameplay, but not in good ways



The majority of levels consist of nonstop brawling and only a few enemy types

REVIEWS



GAMECUBE

SPEED KINGS

HELL ON TWO WHEELS

You might experience a sense of déjà vu when you play Speed Kings, and that's due to the game's similarity to Acclaim's successful Burnout series. In essence, this is the exact same game, only on two wheels. You get to work your way through a (slightly slim) career mode by being rewarded for narrowly averting crashes and engaging in risky stunts. It's nothing too innovative, but I mostly enjoyed what Speed Kings has to offer.

The basic racing is nicely done, although sometimes it's almost too easy to cut perfect corners at 150 mph. The tricks, which are a big part of the gameplay package, aren't nearly as consistent. On the one hand, you have the very fun Powerdown move, which lets you throw your bike to the pavement and grind it under trucks and other obstacles. It's too bad the other moves, like the handstand and surf, are a little bit erratic. You'll hit the same controller presses over and over, sometimes to no effect whatsoever. I also don't like the fact that you actually have to hit cars to get Ding points, as opposed to Burnout 2, which gave you points for brushing by them.

It doesn't match its sister title (and obvious inspiration) Burnout 2 in terms of quality, but Speed Kings does manage to give motorcycle racing fans a decent arcade alternative to demanding sims like MotoGP. — **MATT**



Concept:

Burnout 2 on bikes, just not as good. A good idea done just well enough to get by

Graphics:

Looks good on Xbox – what happened here? Grainy textures and framerate issues abound

Sound:

Rockin' techno – yee-haw! Seriously folks, I'm so sick of these generic soundtracks

Playability:

Features accurate turning and some great tricks, although sometimes feels a bit too automatic

Entertainment:

Good, but missing Burnout 2's polish and addictive Crash mode. Still, I'd take this over realistic racers like MotoGP any day

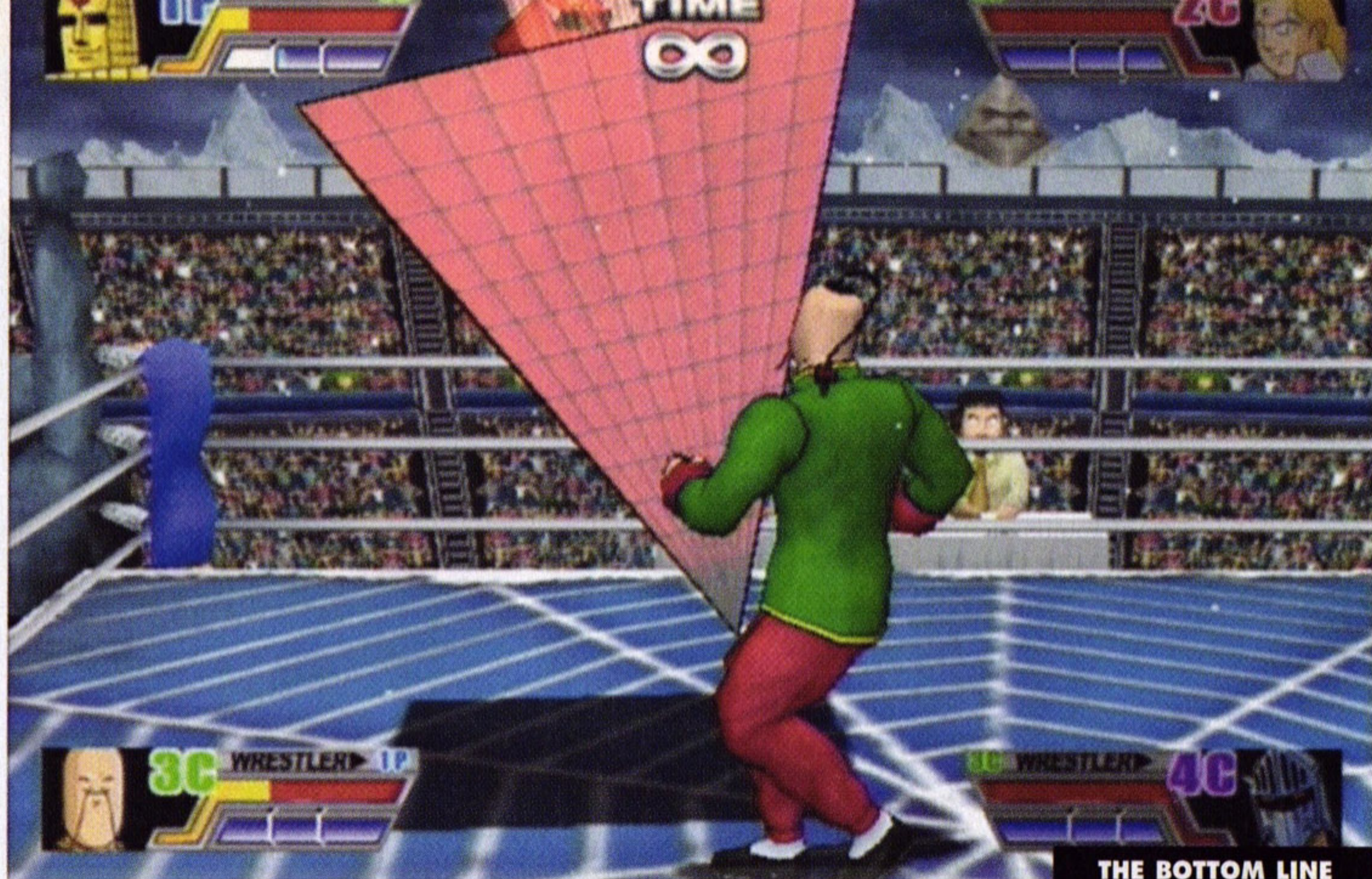
Replay Value:

Moderate

SECOND OPINION

While Speed Kings doesn't rock my world, it gives me that driving game Zen everyone strives for. I do have a few grudges that need pointing out, though – the framerate chugs once in a while, pop-ups are frequent, and the sound is terrible. Then again, the game is fun and offers variety and a nifty sliding move.

LISA – 7.25



GAMECUBE

ULTIMATE MUSCLE

A BULKY LICENSE NOT USED IN VAIN

Muscle figures strike a big, nostalgic chord with me. I loved them as a kid, since there were so many and they were tiny enough to take anywhere. They've always been popular in Japan, and the resurgence with the Saturday morning cartoon here has spawned this decent game.

Despite its child-targeted roots, Ultimate Muscle is developed by AKI – makers of Def Jam Vendetta and WWF No Mercy. I consider this more of a simplistic fighter than a wrestling game, however. Its main mode is short, and it's fashioned to get you to complete it with every character. The difficulty is light, but at least the storylines are entertaining. There are no pinfalls or submissions – you can only win by KO.

The action inside the ring is intense but shallow. There aren't a lot of moves to pull off, though what's there is cool. Each of the wrestlers – which are very unique themselves – have their own devastating finisher, along with some two-on-two moves. These are even more outrageous than Def Jam's and the animated style is really appealing. In fact, the overall look of the game is sweet; this is how cel shading should be.

What I really enjoy is buying painted Muscle figures from the in-game vending machines. There are a bunch that never made it to U.S. shores, and these will be a hit with anyone who remembers the little pink fighters. Ultimate Muscle, while not a must-have, should appeal to fans of the 'toon, the toys, or the obscure. — **JUSTIN**

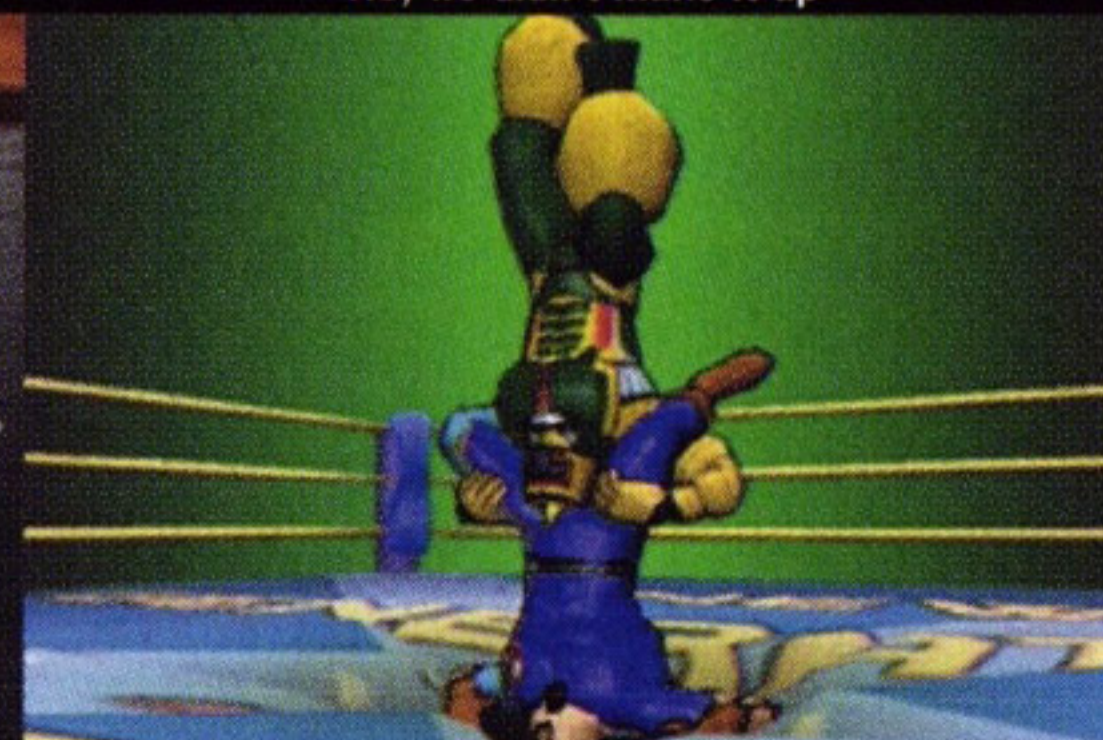


A few innovative moves take advantage of the ropes

Yes, his name is really Dik Dik Van Dik. No, we didn't make it up



Some figures you unlock are actually two together. Sweet!



Pick which crazy finishing move your created wrestler uses



Concept:

A game based on a cartoon about little, pink action figures

Graphics:

Great cel-shaded characters and some impressive crowds. Good collision, too

Sound:

Cheesy voiceovers from the show. The commentary is passable

Playability:

Arcade-style fighting will seem quite different to wrestling game veterans

Entertainment:

Simplistic wrestling with good looks and high-adrenaline finishing moves

Replay Value:

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

I wouldn't classify Ultimate Muscle as a wrestling game. On that same note, I wouldn't call it a fighter, either. What is it exactly? I haven't a clue, but I can tell you that the combat system is incredibly shallow, story mode can be completed in the blink of the eye, and the bonus materials will only appeal to fans of the toys. The stylistic cel-shaded graphics, hilarious over-the-top special moves, and lightning-quick gameplay pace really couldn't be much better; but when the gameplay has about as much functionality as whack-a-mole, there's little reason to invest time into Ultimate Muscle. If you hold this license close to your heart, I'm sure you'll get a kick out of the 400-plus action figure images that can be purchased by winning coins. If this doesn't sound interesting to you, Ultimate Muscle will only hold your interest for 15 minutes tops.

REINER – 6

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** BANDAI ■ **DEVELOPER** AKI ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 3

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM ■ **DEVELOPER** CLIMAX ■ **RELEASE** MAY 20



THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

8

GAMECUBE

HITMAN 2: SILENT ASSASSIN

47: THE AGENT WITH AN EXTRA CHROMOSOME

Hitman 2 follows the "think before you shoot" school of thought, also prevalent in games like Deus Ex and Thief (none of which are on GameCube, so maybe that's a moot point). It relies on wits more than hits and gives you some artistic license in the completion of its missions. Think Max Payne with a higher IQ, and you're on the right path.

Agent 47 starts Hitman 2 as a groundskeeper at a monastery in Italy, trying to put his violent past behind him. Two minutes in, you're using dual pistols to turn guards into Swiss cheese. To have a high success rate on missions, however, you've got to pick your shots wisely and cover your tracks. The AI is very intelligent and will discover any mistake you make. This gives a good sense of tension as you expect to be found out. The stealth aspects are hindered by a snail-paced crawl and overemphasis on taking it slow (I want to run more); but donning disguises, hiding corpses, and blasting light bulbs make up for it.

If you're a patient soul (there is a high frustration factor here), the strategy of Hitman 2 is very rewarding, and it fills a unique niche on GameCube. You're not going to get anything over the other versions, but isn't getting it victory enough? Splinter Cell fans, this should be up your alley. — **JUSTIN**



HEY, PREACHER — COME HERE! AND SHUT UP!
You treat 47's friends like that, you're askin' for trouble

First-person mode is possible

"Don't you recognize me, guys? I'm
Mr. McFeely. Speedy Delivery!"

You know that sniping had to be included

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** EIDOS ■ **DEVELOPER** IO INTERACTIVE ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 17

- **Concept:**
You're a contract killer whose every action may have a consequence
- **Graphics:**
Good-looking ambiance in the environments. Everything else is average
- **Sound:**
The voiceovers don't impress me when compared to many action games out there
- **Playability:**
It plays like a first-person shooter. I like the controls
- **Entertainment:**
It's cool to mix brainpower with firepower, though I give the nod to Splinter Cell
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Hitman 2 on GameCube keeps the pros and cons of its earlier PS2 and Xbox brethren. As a recap for those who missed our earlier reviews, Hitman 2 truly excels in a few areas: an ingenious design allowing one to complete the same level in many different ways, great enemy AI that quickly sniffs out your subversive acts, and a decent story. On the other hand, you will grow to have an annoying amount of familiarity with the Restart Mission command; and, where Xbox got a graphical marvel, this GameCube version is plagued with framerate chugs and extremely repetitive textures. This iteration is more of a rental for most, but those who enjoyed Splinter Cell on GameCube should definitely take a look. And, like we always say, if you only play the 'Cube, this adult title would be a nice addition.

LISA — 7.5

REVIEWS



GAMECUBE

NCAA FOOTBALL 2004 REDSHIRTED

What do college kids do when they wake up with a hangover? Get up and drink some more. EA understands this "hair of the dog that bit you" philosophy and is jamming even more college atmosphere into its newest NCAA title. The result? Just what you'd expect.

The most striking thing about this game — apart from the sheer number of new schools — is the new animations that govern play. You'll marvel at how natural this game looks. A player's momentum is crucial in what happens after first contact. The passing game is perhaps the biggest beneficiary of the added animations, as over-the-shoulder catches are more prevalent. The AI has also smartened up. I once saw a FB take out two different players as he ran downfield to spring my running back. Although Dynasty mode is back with some new wrinkles, the game's lack of online hurts this version. It's simply a dimension that I know will ignite the PS2 fans. Yes, this game is solid through and through and the new animations are nice, but the changes for this year aren't the kind which make you alter the way you play the game. For a long-running series, this is what's needed to keep it fresh. — **KATO**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

8.5

- **Concept:**
A lot of surface changes catch the eye, but look deeper
- **Graphics:**
That's some good grass [Insert laughter from Horatio Sanz's Gobi]
- **Sound:**
The three-way commentary puts Madden to shame
- **Playability:**
Little has changed on this front — unfortunately
- **Entertainment:**
Another solid year, but the lack of online is a blow
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

EA has really outdone itself this time. NCAA 2004 may not have the online functionality of the PS2 version, but outside of this feature, the GameCube incarnation is every bit as good. The gameplay is overflowing with new features like the dynamic play action cam, vastly improved defensive AI, and additional trick plays. For the fantasy junkies out there, Dynasty mode has also been overhauled to an incomprehensible state that should keep you playing well into the next season. Without a doubt, this is one of the most impressive sports games to date.

REINER — 9.25

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS ■ **DEVELOPER** EA TIBURON ■ **RELEASE** JULY 1



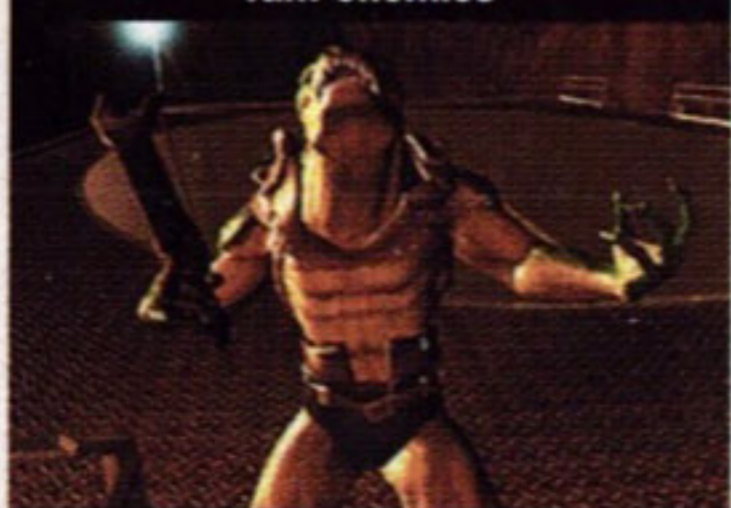
"...the levels present players with enough scenarios to justify each character's presence, which helps prevent the onset of monotony."



Multiplayer is perhaps the most enjoyable aspect



Each character possesses a special move. Part of Brutus' allows him to ram enemies



The character models are impressive

XBOX

BRUTE FORCE

MICROSOFT GETS TACTICAL

Tactical ops games often succeed or fail depending on the quality of ally AI. If it's uncooperative and stupid, the whole experience is ruined, transforming the game into a generic shooter at best. However, if your team actually plays a supportive role, you're often treated to intense combat that requires thinking. Brute Force more closely resembles the latter.

Players control one of four characters, each possessing different strengths and abilities. Although controlling them is limited to four commands, which don't impact gameplay greatly, allies usually perform their jobs efficiently and according to their abilities. The strategic element requires the player to decide which character can best diffuse the given situation. So, if you're outnumbered, taking out guards at key points with Hawk (the female stealth assassin) or Flint (the sniper) will maximize your chances of success. Then, you can safely commandeer BF's commandos, Tex or Brutus, and obliterate the helpless ground fodder.

Fortunately, the levels present players with enough scenarios to justify each character's presence, which helps prevent the onset of monotony. However, compared to the rest, Hawk is the most poorly implemented. Stealth kills mainly consist of

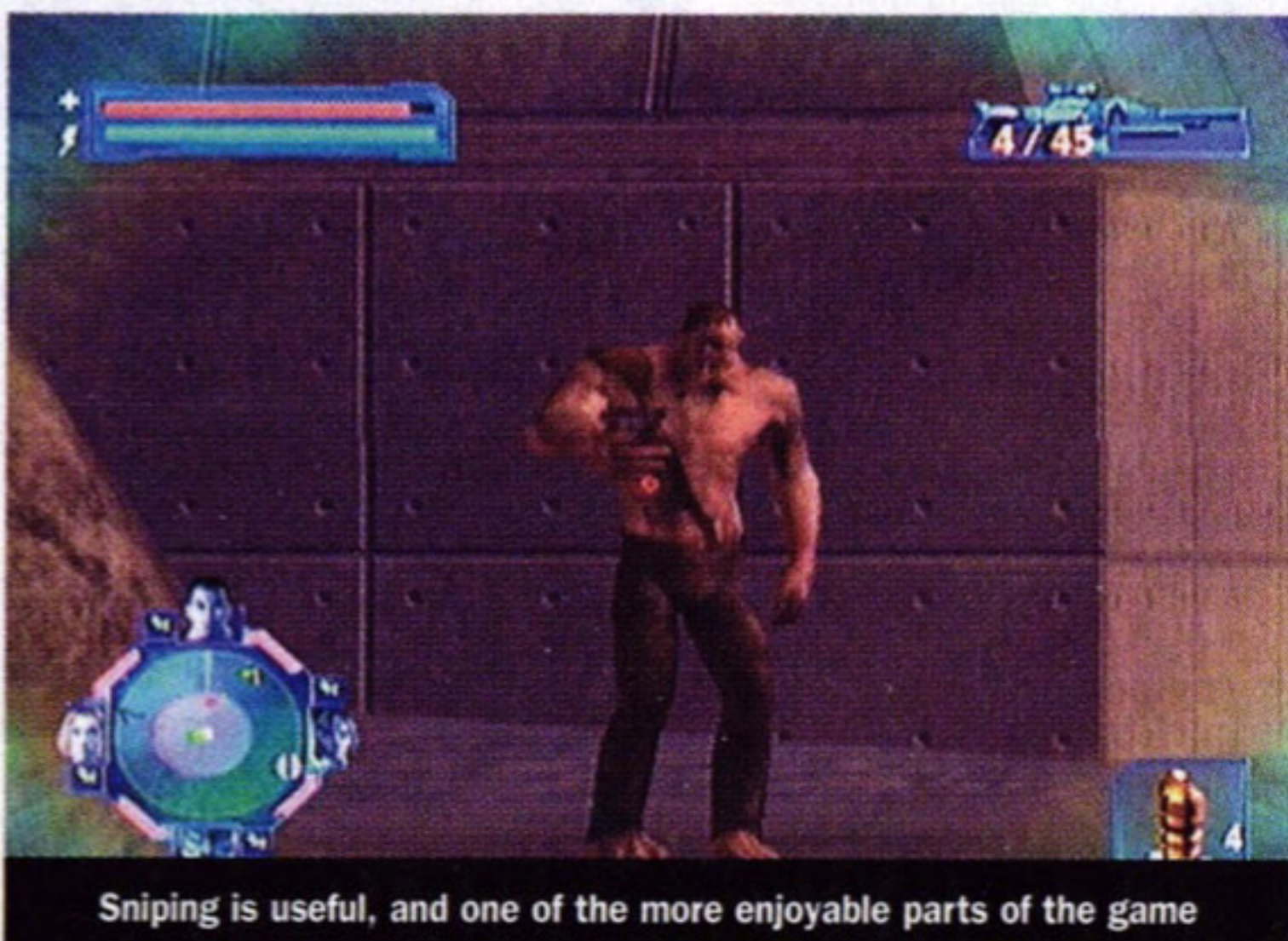
activating stealth (invisibility), closing in, and offing an enemy with your blade. Ooooooh, aaaaaah! You won't find any special techniques or mechanics that would make this gameplay style more exciting.

On a more positive note, Brute Force allows up to four friends to partake in the carnage through cooperative play. Completing levels as a team with each person playing their character correctly proves to be fun. In the case where everyone would rather attack each other, gamers have deathmatch as an option, too.

Unfortunately, these multiplayer modes are restricted to split-screen play and a LAN feature. Despite the fact that Brute Force would make a fantastic Live title, players are merely limited to downloading new content over the Internet. Bummer. But, since this oversight doesn't really hinder the gameplay as it stands, I wouldn't be too disappointed.

Besides, if you had a choice, wouldn't you prefer a game with quality graphics, sound, and control (which Brute Force can claim), than another mediocre Xbox shooter with Live tacked on simply because it's currently hip to do so? — **CHET**

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 8 PLAYERS VIA LAN) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL ANVIL
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 27



Sniping is useful, and one of the more enjoyable parts of the game



Hawk (the character in front) is the stealth expert, but her sneaking skills are kind of boring

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
 M
 CONTENT RATED BY
 ESRB

8.25

- **Concept:**
A fun tactical ops game without the boring realism
- **Graphics:**
They are of Xbox quality, but nothing you haven't seen before
- **Sound:**
The ambience and sound effects get you into the action
- **Playability:**
The control and button maps actually work pretty well
- **Entertainment:**
With solid ally AI and some intense fighting, Brute Force will hook you and your friends for a little while
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

As far as squad-based shooters are concerned, Brute Force fares quite well. The AI for your teammates is commendable — they know when to heal and seek cover — and the strengths and weaknesses for each of the four characters shows great contrast, which forces players to switch control frequently. The differences in personality heighten the team multiplayer aspect as well. You have your sniper, your tank, and so on and so forth. The gameplay is stylized in the FPS vein and showcases fluid movements, but there really is nothing to it. The selection of weapons is rather weak, the missions are as straightforward as can be, and the assortment of enemy troop types are too goofy to be taken seriously. It's a decent multiplayer game — especially if you're playing it eight-player through the System Link. For single-player, however, the thrills are limited.

REINER — 7.25

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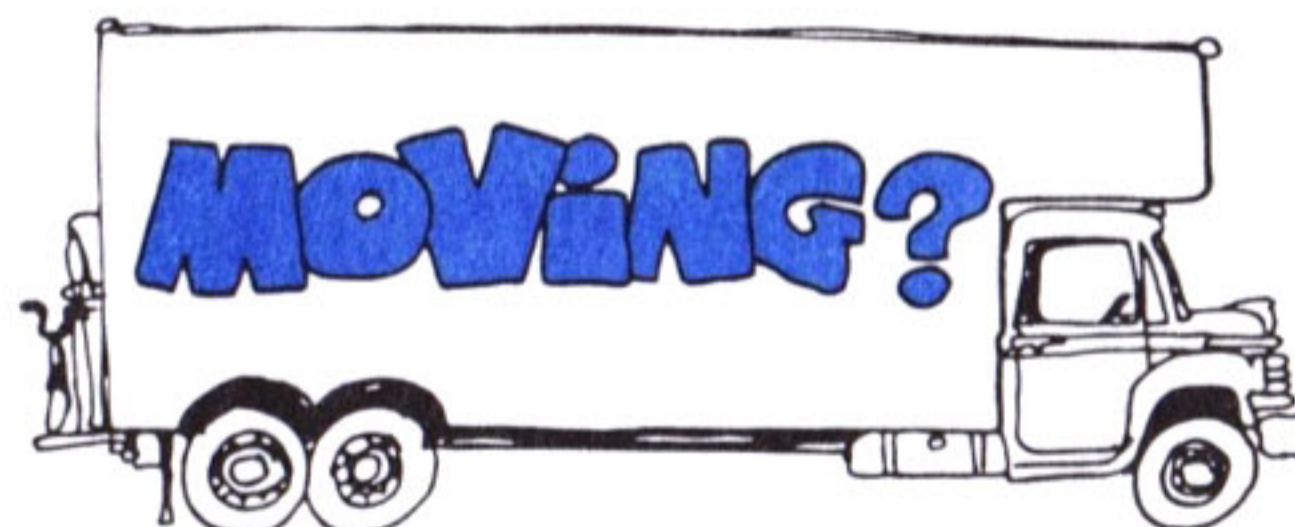
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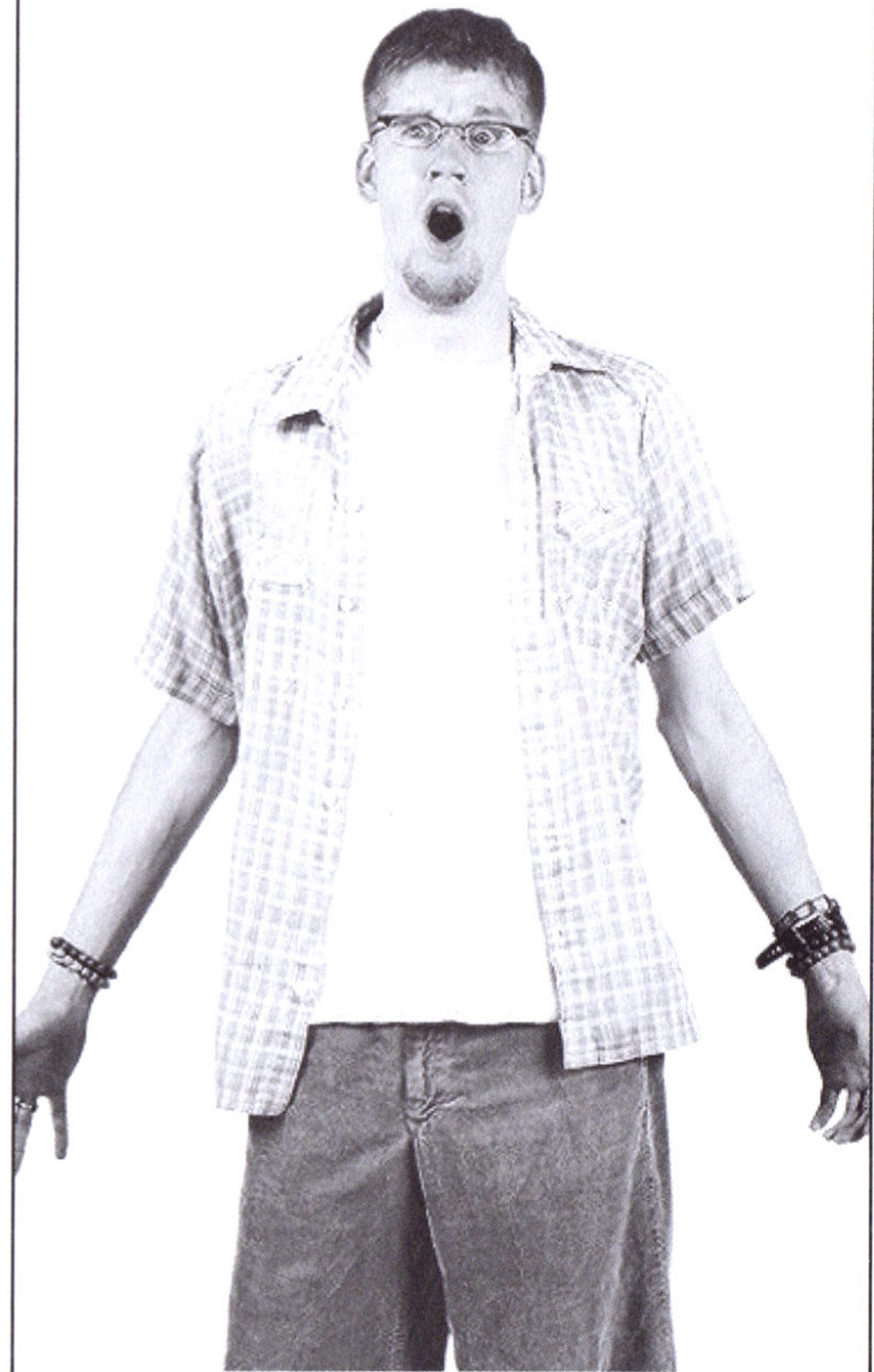
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"...blazing fast with gameplay that constantly has you sliding in and out of traffic riding on the edge of disaster."

XBOX

MIDNIGHT CLUB II

SUPER-CHARGED!

I fell in love with *Midnight Club II* on PlayStation 2. Even though I knew that the Xbox version would be the absolute Mack Daddy edition, I couldn't stop myself from completing the PS2 game in an insane weekend of non-stop *Midnight Club II* action. The game really is that addictive.

But after putting this version through its paces, I definitely should have waited. Not only does it feature all the same high-speed, seat-of-your-pants racing found in the PlayStation 2 iteration, it has been super-charged with all the extras Xbox fans love – better textures displayed in 480 progressive scan, widescreen support, and even better online options with Xbox Live that features a ranking system.

For those of you unfamiliar with the title, *Midnight Club II* is all about the street racing phenomenon. The career mode challenges players to compete against a number of racers through the streets of three exotic cities: Los Angeles, Paris, and Tokyo. As you might suspect, these races are illegal, so the streets are filled with cops trying to thwart the race as well as a sea of traffic that you must navigate – all at insanely mach speeds down any street you wish, as the entire city is open to the player.

I have about a million tales of near misses and amazing finishes from playing this game, since each race is a different

experience. Often times, you'll see cars take separate paths to reach each checkpoint, so expect plenty of sideswipes that come out of nowhere and big crashes from sliding into oncoming traffic. On the down side, you could certainly accuse the driver AI of cheating, and that their cheap tactics are the reason for all the close races, but that would be nit-picking as it certainly does make for some unpredictable racing.

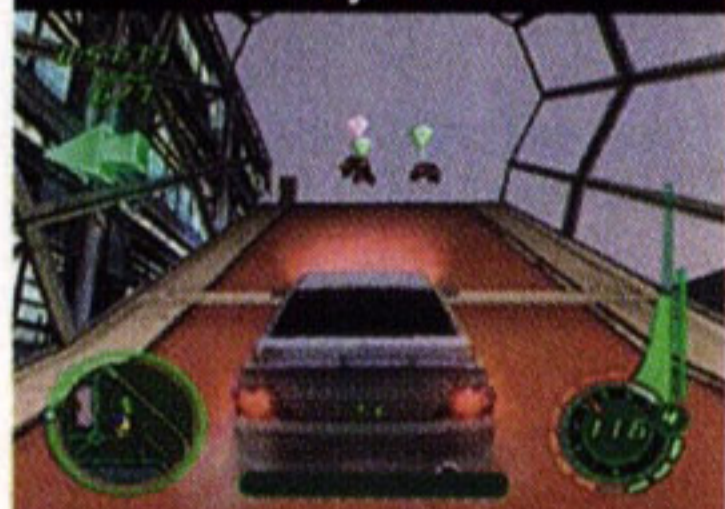
As you progress in the game, not only can you win the pink slips for vehicles you defeat, there are also a number of new moves that become available. These include Burnouts that enable the racer to get a jump on the competition or quickly get back up to speed after a wreck (which happens more often than you'd like). In-air controls allow the player to level out when you catch air (and trust me, you will catch some nice, big, phat air) and eventually the ability to get the car up on two wheels to avoid traffic and slide through tight situations. All are handy upgrades that can make a big difference in a close race.

No matter how you cut it, *Midnight Club II*'s street racing is really a treat. It's not only gorgeous to look at, it's blazing fast with gameplay that constantly has you sliding in and out of traffic riding on the edge of disaster. That's the mark of a great racer, and *Midnight Club II* has got it in spades. – ANDY

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE OR SYSTEM LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** ROCKSTAR
 ■ **DEVELOPER** ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 3



And they are off...



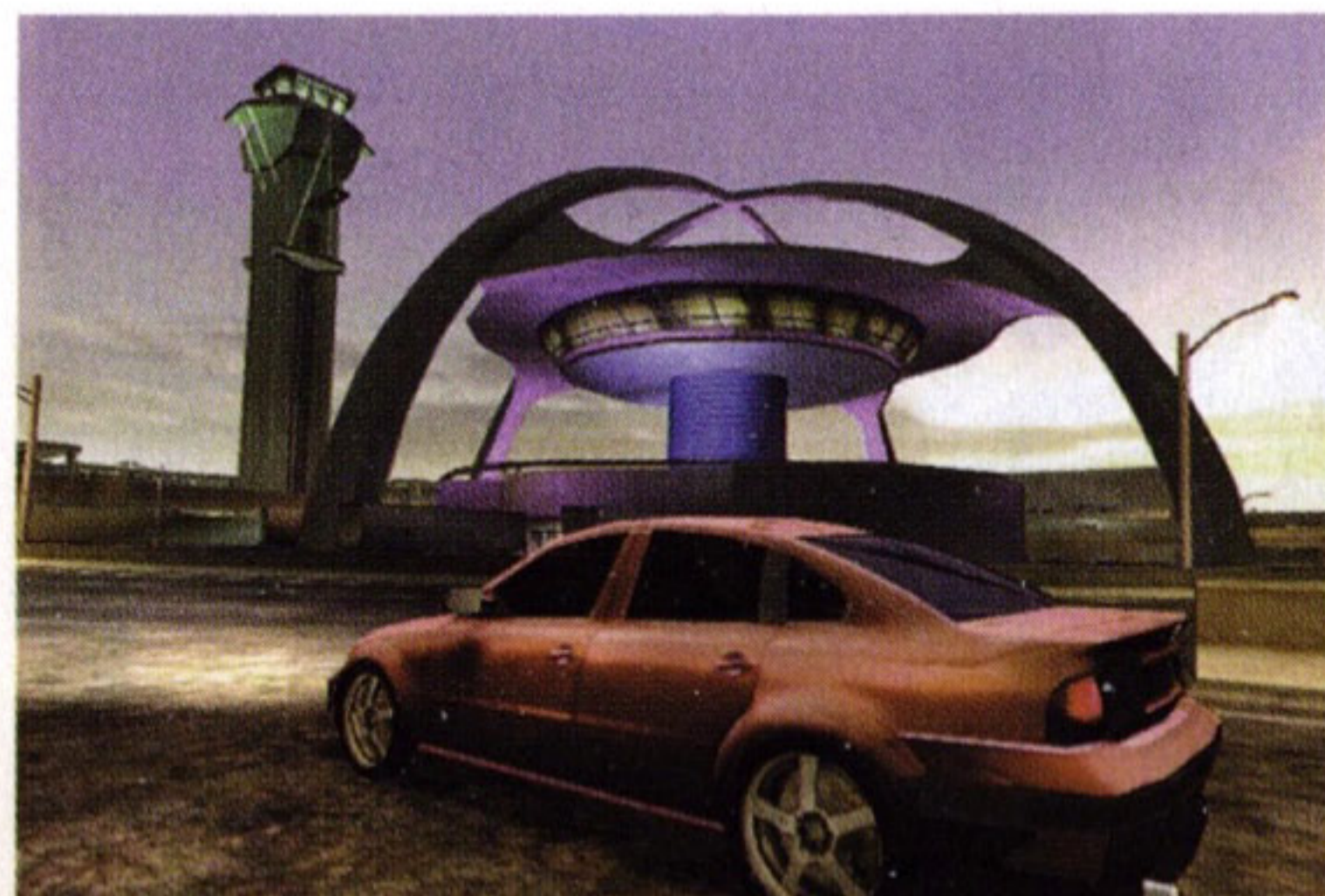
...to catch mad-phat, crazy air...



...and pass through a bunch of hard-to-find checkpoints



The cops will do everything in their power to take you out of the race



All three cities feature classic landmarks

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN T 9

- **Concept:** Race through the streets both on and offline
- **Graphics:** Clearer textures and better lighting on this version turn up the intensity on an already outstanding-looking game
- **Sound:** The trance/club rock can be a little annoying at times, but does fit the racing perfectly
- **Playability:** Spot-on arcade-styled controls that have you sliding through corners and slipping past cars at mach speeds
- **Entertainment:** If you love speed you will love this highly addictive racer
- **Replay Value:** Moderate

SECOND OPINION

Years from now, I think there's a distinct possibility that *Midnight Club II* will be remembered as the defining racing game for this generation of consoles. No, it doesn't have the lush graphics of *GT 3* or *Project Gotham Racing*, but I think it's important to note that those huge hits were, in essence, only better-looking updates of PSone racing games. *Midnight Club II*, with its mind-boggling circuit races and open city environments, is something that could only be accomplished on today's systems. This game is pure exhilaration, all the more so for the fact that you can now talk smack online via Xbox Live. Is it perfect? No. Obviously, the developers (rightly) traded some graphical detail for increased speed and the size of the cities. Also, those prone to frustration issues may have some beef with this game, as the process of learning the best routes necessitates some trial-and-error. However, this high degree of challenge gives *Midnight Club II* longer legs than nearly any racer on the market. MATT – 9



"it doesn't rely on technical gimmicks. Instead, it delivers cathartic action and an absorbing story."



XBOX

MACE GRIFFIN BOUNTY HUNTER

THIS GUN'S FOR HIRE

The story behind Mace Griffin is a long one. While your character in the game gets thrown in the slammer for ten years and will later endure various plot twists on his path to justice, it seems like a similar amount of time has passed since we did a feature on the title. Still, developer Warthog is determined to break new ground by letting players seamlessly partake in both space combat and FPS ground battles with no loading. The game does indeed do this. To my surprise, that is not why I like Mace Griffin. The reason I do is because it actually doesn't rely on technical gimmicks. Instead, it delivers cathartic action and an absorbing story.

Yes, merging genres is impressive. Problem is, I don't find the space portions that interesting. Similar to your vehicles' control in Halo, the ship's cockpit is merely a skin applied to your screen. So despite being in space, the game never really stops controlling like an FPS. It's a practical solution, for sure, but not one that I found enjoyable enough to put up with. A very nice side benefit of Warthog's endeavors, however, is that levels are huge (as is the game itself). Barring the load points that pop up here and there, you'll be amazed at just how much fodder Mace's areas have to find and kill.

"Who needs story in an FPS?" you may cry, but Mace Griffin does an excellent job of keeping your mind running while you're

gunning – something that can't be underestimated. Of course, when in doubt, you'll pull the trigger and just smile. Between the gore, hit-sensitive enemies, and cool weapons (with secondary functions) at your disposal, the game keeps the good times rolling. It does a great job of making sure that each armament gets a taste of flesh. I like having to juggle and get the most out of all my weapons in quick succession to handle a hot situation. For its part, the enemy AI will follow some pretty good evasion routines, and will even hunt you down on occasion. I did, however, have an issue with foes who didn't "play by the rules." How many headshots can one guy take?

Graphically, the title can be a mixed bag. I loved the spinning chamber effect of your rifle (and the accompanying whine), and the way the light plays off of it, but it seems that one of the side effects of Mace's large levels and overall size is that the game lacks some of that Xbox shine. I know that it's been delayed a bunch, and this has not helped the graphics any.

I can appreciate that what Warthog was trying to do was new for FPSs. But in the heat of battle, when you've got a lumbering Jaldari bearing down on you, there is no time for thoughts of any kind. And that's how it should be. In the end, Mace Griffin delivers on its promises, and most importantly, it gives you a solid and rewarding experience that you won't regret. — KATO

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** BLACK LABEL GAMES ■ **DEVELOPER** WARTHOG ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 17



While the game's least impressive aspect, space dogfights have their moments



The AI makes some reasonably intelligent choices during combat

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

8

■ **Concept:**

Mace's mix of space combat and FPS thrills aren't so revolutionary in execution, but the game's core action is a blast

■ **Graphics:**

What it lacks in flair is understandable given the size of the levels

■ **Sound:**

An extremely strong element of the game for many reasons. Oh yeah, Henry Rollins is in there, too

■ **Playability:**

I found space dogfights the game's weakest link

■ **Entertainment:**

Technology aside, Mace is one tough (and fun) customer

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High

SECOND OPINION

First off, you all know Henry Rollins is my mentor, so I'll get my praise for him out of the way early – he delivers dialogue perfectly, and adding the song "Shine" to the intro was brilliant. The rest of this game rocks, too. The levels, while a tad linear for my taste, are massive – filled with enemies, puzzles, and interaction. The weapon set complements them to a tee: Snipe from a distance, use the grenade launcher when you get closer, then clean up with the machine gun. I wish aiming was a touch easier, however; I guess I'm just used to auto-targeting. The spaceship sequences aren't Earth-shattering, but they are a nice diversion and don't detract from the overall experience. Subtle graphical effects impress me, though the cutscenes can be stale. Overall, Mace Griffin is a damn fine FPS. It's no Halo-killer, but you will enjoy killing a few dozen hours with it.

JUSTIN – 8.25



XBOX
MIDTOWN MADNESS 3
 BADNESS TIMES 3!

The scope of Midtown Madness 3 is most definitely impressive. Digital Illusions rendered two massive, breathing cityscapes where thousands of citizens roam the streets, traffic moves realistically, and lighting from different times of day is reflected perfectly onto every structure and object. The environments look fantastic, yet once gameplay commences all of the extravagance and onscreen glitz goes to waste. The entire game is structured in the vein of pizza delivery. From paper routes, limousine services, armored car transporting, and taxi work, your entire time with Midtown Madness 3 is spent transporting items from one point to another before time expires. If this sounds fun to you, I hear that Pizza Hut is hiring.

Crazy Taxi excelled by pushing this concept to the limit. Its gameplay pace was blistering, and it forced gamers to master the intricacies of the control schematic. Midtown Madness takes a different approach. It's slow, and the only things you have to worry about are hitting the gas, turning, and avoiding traffic. That's about the gist of it. In all honesty, I enjoyed the main bulk of gameplay about as much as I do that throbbing sensation when a Q-tip is jammed just a little too far into my ear.

Digital Illusions did implement over 40 checkpoint races and online and link play that supports up to eight players. I enjoy these aspects of the game a little more than the missions, but again, I found myself falling asleep at the wheel. The point-to-point tracks are very generic, the sensation of speed appears to be inspired by a snail, and the car physics must have been captured from someone pushing a shopping cart. There's nothing respectable about this game. The only fun that I had with it was watching the hilarious mockumentary about one of Midtown Madness 3's motion-capture artists. It's funny, but it's not worth the price of admission. — REINER

THE BOTTOM LINE
 EVERYONE
E 5.25
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:**
Another Crazy Taxi clone with delivery missions set in open-city environments
- **Graphics:**
The detail displayed within the cityscapes is incredible. The streets are littered with objects and the lighting is as authentic as can be
- **Sound:**
Annoying scripted dialogue and forgettable beats
- **Playability:**
Hit the gas and follow the arrow to your objectives. That's it!
- **Entertainment:**
Even with online play, there's nothing redeeming about this game. This concept has been done better 100 times over
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

In theory, Midtown Madness 3 should be a great piece of software since it has big expansive environments, fast cars, and online play. Well, guess what? It sucks. Not only are the missions insipid, the graphics aren't nearly as impressive as they should be, considering the power of the Xbox. Even worse, the cutscenes are just plain annoying, especially the voiceover work and the writing. This pizza delivery drivin' is supposed to be funny? It's like the game was designed to please four-year olds. Even the car physics are annoying. I will admit that the bonus movie about the motion-capture guy is hilarious, but that's this game's only high point. Get Midnight Club II if you want a racer. It blows this game away in just about every way.

ANDY - 5



The racing aspect just doesn't have the horsepower or realism to compete with other games

Pick up passengers and drive them across town!

Pick up gold bars and drive them across town!

Pick up wounded people and drive them across town!

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING (UP TO 8-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE & SYSTEM LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT
 ■ **DEVELOPER** DIGITAL ILLUSIONS C.E. ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 17

XBOX
WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEATURING SHAUN MURRAY
 WAKE UP AND SMELL THE GASOLINE

Activision and its squad of developers can do the impossible. If anyone else were making a wakeboarding game, I would laugh in their face and wish them luck. But this company knows what it's doing, and somewhat predictably, Wakeboarding Unleashed is another success story.

The relationship between boat and wakeboarder is intriguing. You're bound by a cord, but far from joined at the hip. One of the greatest joys is getting some air, letting go of the rope, exploring a secret lair, and then hooking back up with the vessel. The boat's wake is like a perpetual ramp to trick off of and environmental objects are well laid out. Levels seem far less constrained than Pro Snowboarder for example, and many — like Hong Kong and a flooded Springfield — are a hell of a lot of fun. You have normal mission-based runs with their grocery list of objectives, as well as specific challenges you tackle one at a time.

Co-op is the most entertaining multiplayer mode I've played in a long time. One person is the boarder, and the other one controls the boat. This mode has its own four-stage career mode, too, but just goofing around is truly a blast. Riding over Reiner's defenseless player is priceless. Hahaha!

Activision made a wakeboarding game so nobody else has to. And really, no other company could do it as well. I urge you to check it out.

— JUSTIN

THE BOTTOM LINE
 EVERYONE
E 8.5
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

- **Concept:**
An extreme athlete who's tied to a boat most of the time
- **Graphics:**
Good water effects and trademark Activision O2 animation
- **Sound:**
A very eclectic and thoughtful collection. Props for the geezer-rock
- **Playability:**
Tony Hawk fans will dive right in, though there are many new mechanics to master
- **Entertainment:**
Lots of single-player thrills and co-op is fun enough to beg your girlfriend to play with you
- **Replay Value:**
Moderately High

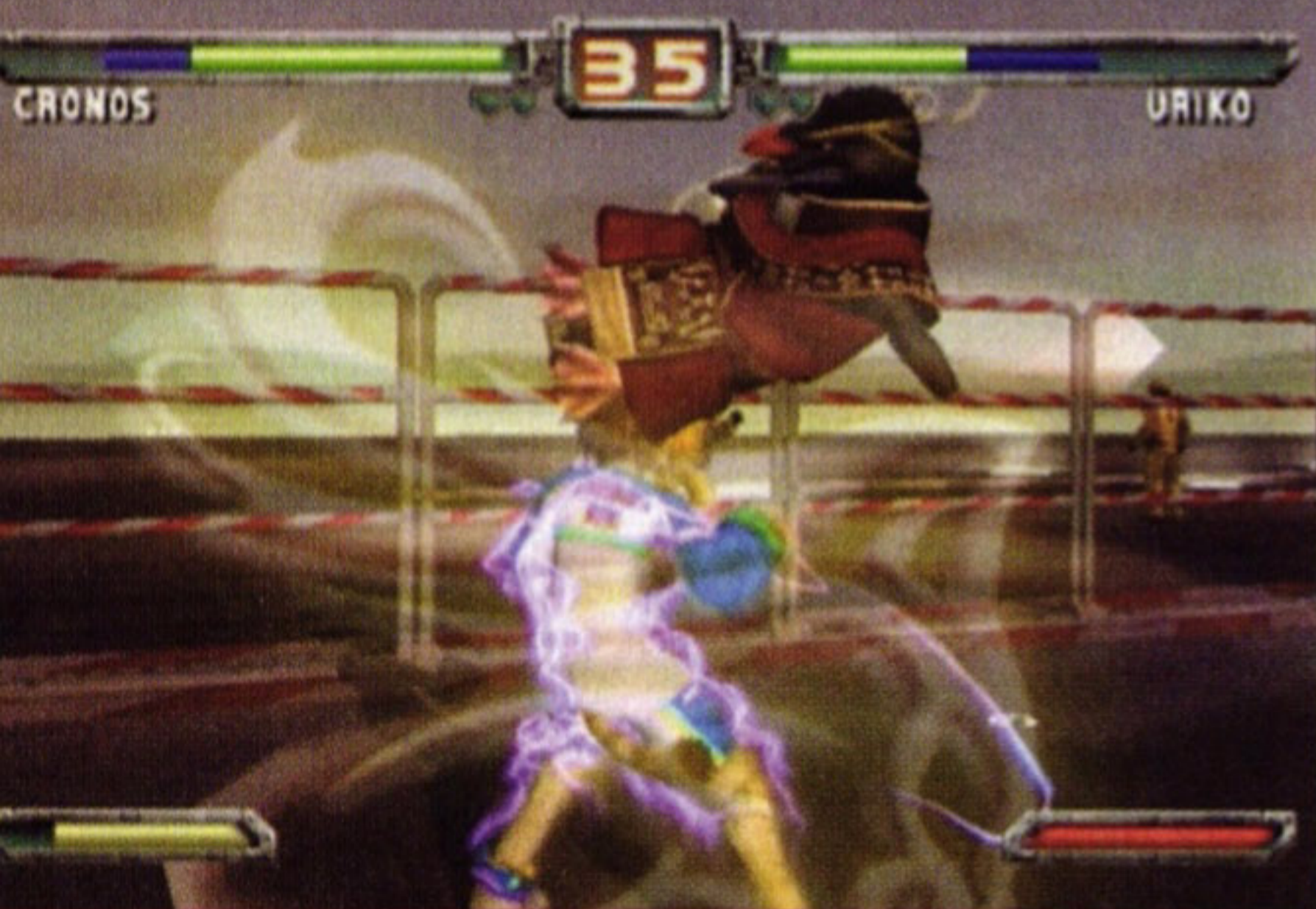
SECOND OPINION

Wakeboarding works quite well within the Tony Hawk context. It may seem like an asinine concept for a game, yet developer Shaba was able to transform it into one of the most intriguing and dynamic titles in the Activision O2 line. Not only is the gameplay a stroke of genius, the missions are diverse, and the selection of multiplayer modes is one of the best in all of gaming. Buying a wakeboarding game may not be in your list of things to do, but I strongly urge that you do it.

REINER - 8.25

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION/SPORTS ■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION O2 ■ **DEVELOPER** SHABA ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 3

REVIEWS



XBOX

BLOODY ROAR EXTREME

IS BLOOD THICKER THAN BOREDOM?

Does the world need mediocre games this badly? Bloody Roar, in all its incarnations, has never done much for me. Yeah, it's got animal forms, but it doesn't offer anything else original. It's not worthless, but I can't find anything to put it ahead of Mortal Kombat or DOA 3 for my playing time.

Bloody Roar Extreme is a 3D fighter featuring a mostly regular-looking anime cast, who possess the ability to transform into unique, animalistic alter-egos. There's an effeminate chap in daisy dukes who turns into a penguin and a young, cute girl who becomes a cat. I say it's 3D, though it plays closer to Street Fighter than Virtua Fighter, and 3D movement is extremely limited. The arenas are enclosed, but a few smacks in key places will reveal an open space where you can grab a "Ring Out" victory. Particles abound as special moves are pulled off like clothes in a game of strip poker.

There are a lot of great games out there, and only so much time to play them. There's no room in my library for Bloody Roar Extreme. Balancing leaves a lot to be desired, and I don't like the button configuration. Don't ask me about any story mode, because you won't like my answer. Fighting newbies may get some kicks. If you thrill at memorizing combos like Chet, it's a rental. If you're everyone else, leave well enough alone. — **JUSTIN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

6.5

■ **Concept:**

People with multiple-personality disorders who think they're their own pets duke it out — on the next Springer!

■ **Graphics:**

All kinds of sparks can't hide the generic environments

■ **Sound:**

You've heard all the music and sound effects a million and two times before

■ **Playability:**

With one punch, one kick, and a beast button, the options are limited

■ **Entertainment:**

Once you get past the dual forms, you'll get past wanting to play this game

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

Although it can't compete with *Dead or Alive 3*, it's a much better playing fighter than *Tao Feng*. There are a decent number of combos to learn and even some technique to master. Its lack of depth and modes won't occupy you for weeks, but if you're a fan of the genre, it will make the wait for *Soul Calibur II* bearable.

CHET — 7.75

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
■ **DEVELOPER** HUDSON SOFT ■ **RELEASE** MAY 27



XBOX

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE II: DOUBLE HELIX

FIGHTING THE TIDE

Any game with 55 single-player missions is worth checking out. Add to that equation Double Helix's excellent graphical system and blistering gameplay, and you've got a hit on your hands. The story is a bit tired — hunt down terrorists, save people, blah, blah — but in the end it acts as a backdrop to hair-raising action. Gratuitous has also taken this porting opportunity (the game originally appeared on PC) to remedy some of the annoying elements that held back the first iteration. For one, the weapon recoil has been toned down to a manageable level; and most importantly, if you're discovered during a stealth mission, you don't have to start over. Hallelujah! I would much rather wade through a sea of enemies than having to sneak around the same parts of one level time after time.

Double Helix's sound and graphics are definitely up to Xbox standards, but the track shooting levels seem a bit forced to me — as do some of the puzzle elements. This is an action game; we don't need any find-the-switch bullroar. Give me a few weapons, an objective, and a nice big level, and I'll be happy. The online components and downloadable content via Xbox Live are cool, and aside from a few bizarre collision problems, the game itself is solid. Worth owning, and definitely worth renting. — **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

8

■ **Concept:**

Hunt down terrorists with a gun in your hand and murder in your heart

■ **Graphics:**

Seeing an enemy double over when you blast him in the guts is almost as good as seeing his head fly off when you raise your aim

■ **Sound:**

Particularly good ricochet effects bring the gameplay to life

■ **Playability:**

The control is very reminiscent of Halo

■ **Entertainment:**

Double Helix is an excellent action title on its own. The online components are icing on the cake

■ **Replay Value:**

Moderately High



Climbing behind a machine gun is great for laying down suppressing fire

"Shot through the heart, and you're to blame..."

That's one powerful shotgun

This game's particle effects look fantastic

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 12-PLAYER VIA XBOX LIVE OR SYSTEM LINK)
■ **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION ■ **DEVELOPER** RAVEN SOFTWARE/GRATUITOUS GAMES
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 17

SECOND OPINION

Soldier of Fortune II: Broken Helix bored me on PC, and it continues to bore me on Xbox. I will admit the game starts off great. The first level is a high-powered blast-fest that makes the title seem a lot more fun than it is. But as the game grinds on, it gets less and less exciting. Plus, this isn't the most eye-pleasing Xbox game ever created. It's solid, and on PlayStation 2 it would look great for an FPS; but with games like *Halo* and *Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War* available on Xbox, there is better product to play (especially online, where *Wolf* just blows *SoF* out of the water). Hardcore FPS fans may find something of value here (there are 55 missions and a random generator), but I'll stick with *Wolfenstein*.

ANDY — 7



XBOX

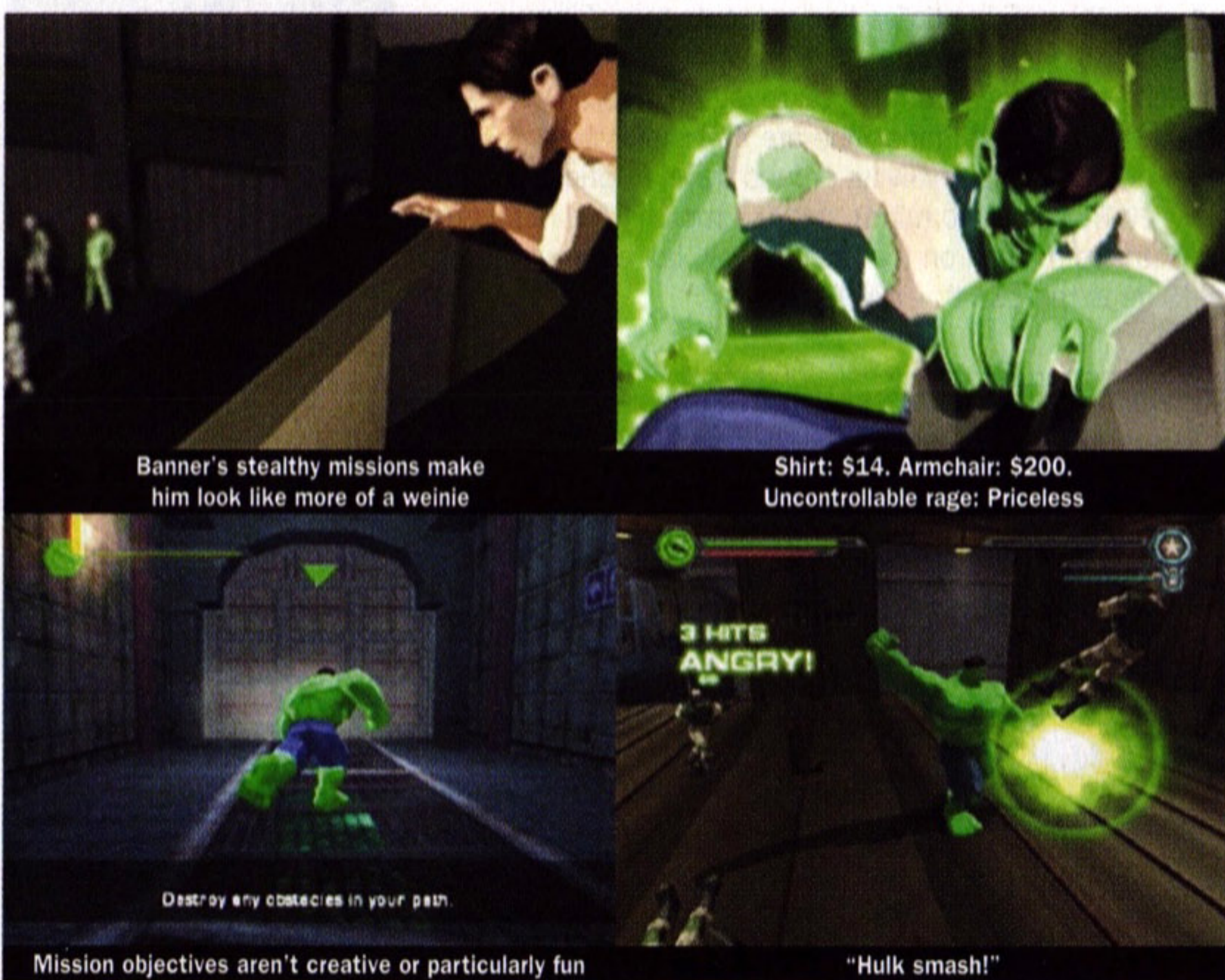
THE HULK

NAP TIME

sometimes feel like all I'm doing is playing games for movies I really want to see. While Enter the Matrix is a blast (with some admitted shortcomings), Wolverine's Revenge introduced new levels of game-induced pain. The Hulk falls somewhere in-between the two. It's far more technically sound and visually compelling than Wolverine; but doesn't have the pulsing soundtrack or "Woah, that was so cool" feeling from Enter the Matrix.

Visually, Hulk has an interesting take on celshading, and the look fits here. Radical clearly spent a lot of time working on character models and animations, as Bruce's meaner side can pick up anything in the environments (including people) and chuck it at anything else in the environment (including other people). This is a load of fun...for about 15 minutes.

Think of Destroy All Monsters Melee – it's supposed to be played in small bursts with friends. The Hulk features the same play dynamics and schemes, but is dragged out through a dull, mindless Story Mode. Presumably, the stealthy Bruce Banner levels are supposed to break up the monotony; but they aren't well developed, and although I thought this not possible, more bland than the action. Three phrases to describe The Hulk: technically solid, aesthetically pretty, and phenomenally dull. – **LISA**



Banner's stealthy missions make him look like more of a weinie

Shirt: \$14. Armchair: \$200. Uncontrollable rage: Priceless

Destroy any obstacles in your path.

"Hulk smash!"

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
 ■ **DEVELOPER** RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** MAY 27

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN **T** 5.75

- **Concept:**
Make a game to coincide with the anticipated Hulk film, out this summer
- **Graphics:**
Stylish cel shading throws back to character's comic book roots
- **Sound:**
Grrr. Growl. Hulk Smash! Grrr. Growl
- **Playability:**
Although the environments are truly destructible, the camera sometimes gets in the way of enjoyable mayhem
- **Entertainment:**
Like a lot of movie games this year – the film looks promising and the game is pretty dull
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

When you're as big, mean, and green as the Hulk, it's hard to be versatile. Nobody expects anything from the rage-fueled monster other than a path of destruction. Accordingly, this game should have stuck to what it does best: carnage. I was pleasantly surprised at how varied and fluid the combo attacks were, and found myself cackling with malicious glee several times. Only two problems here: The camera is no help, and I was disappointed that the game's engine doesn't allow you to take on multiple foes at the same time as fluidly as EA's Two Towers, for example. Elsewhere, the title is a total bore. What did Bill Bixby spend most of his time doing in the TV show? Hitchhiking. Similarly, Bruce Banner's non-Hulk exploits here are of no interest to me. This title would have benefited from focusing on and perfecting its combat segments.

KATO – 6.5

XBOX

SPEED KINGS

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER RACING
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ACCLAIM
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 13



Sometimes you lose something in a translation. This may be Burnout on motorcycles, but it just isn't as fun. For example, because there is little middle ground between your bike being

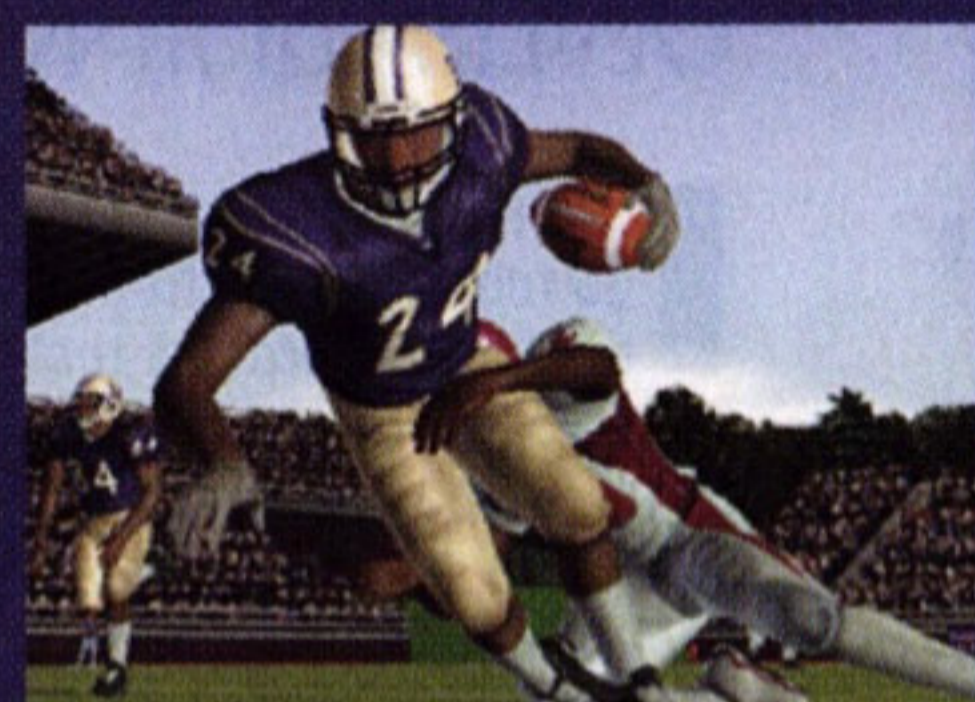
either straight up or wildly tilted for turns, collecting dings by brushing against cars is unpredictable. Sometimes you get one, other times you eat it. The tricks are nice, but executing them is also uneven. I wouldn't say this title isn't fun, but Burnout 2 is simply a better experience in almost every way. – **KATO**

E 7

XBOX

NCAA FOOTBALL 2004

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER SPORTS
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
 ■ **RELEASE** JULY 17



The personalized options for all EA sports titles has just taken a step into the insane with the advent of the EA Bio stat-tracking system, and NCAA is definitely a benefactor. Building my own college

and rising through the ranks of college football's elite is an incredible gameplay element, but I wish the actual football had been a bit more solid. Sloppy passing and suspect AI still hinder this franchise, but make no mistake: This is the best college game out there. Bar none. – **KRISTIAN**

E 8.5

XBOX

ENTER THE MATRIX

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 15



Enter the Matrix is the perfect companion to the trilogy of films. With new footage written and directed by the Wachowski brothers and a story that gives new or deeper meaning

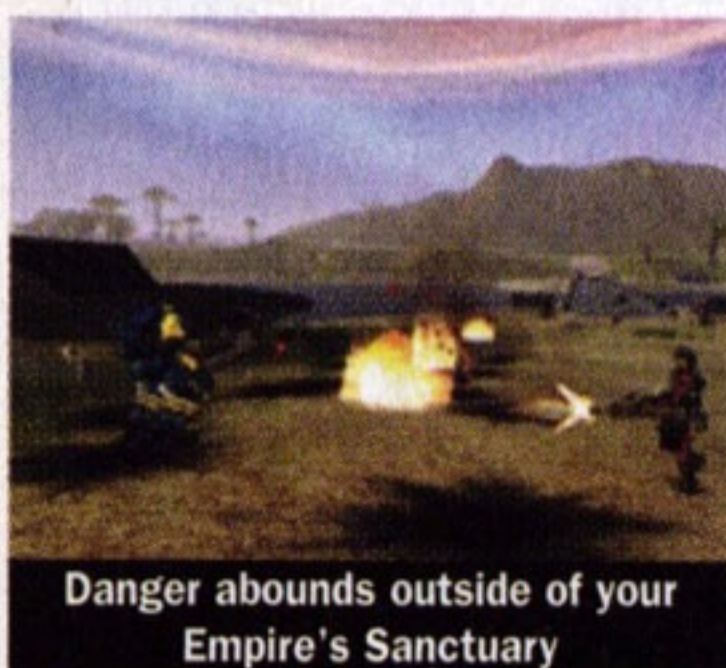
to sequences in the movies, this game is an absolute no-brainer for Matrix fans. It's fan boy heaven and the coolest thing since deleted scenes on DVD. On the other hand, if you're just looking for a solid action game, Enter the Matrix is respectable but not great. Your jaw will drop with each slow-motion kung-fu sequence, and running on walls never gets old. Also, for the tech-junkies out there with HDTVs, the Xbox version can be displayed in 1080i. Unfortunately, with its grandeur emerges a handful of problems: The controls aren't very precise, targeting is finicky, and the driving and flying sequences are nothing short of horrendous. It gets the job done, but in a hobbling-to-the-finish-line sort of way. – **REINER**

T 8.5

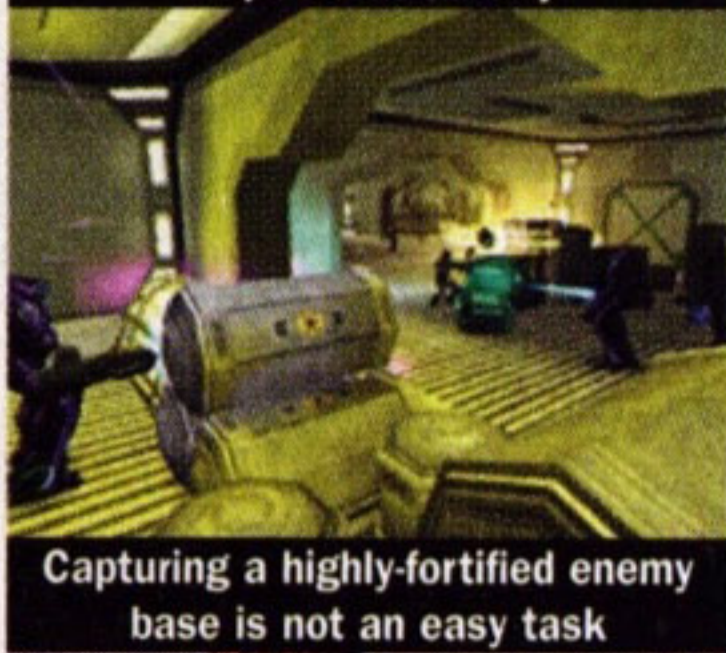
PC GAME OF THE MONTH PLANETSIDE



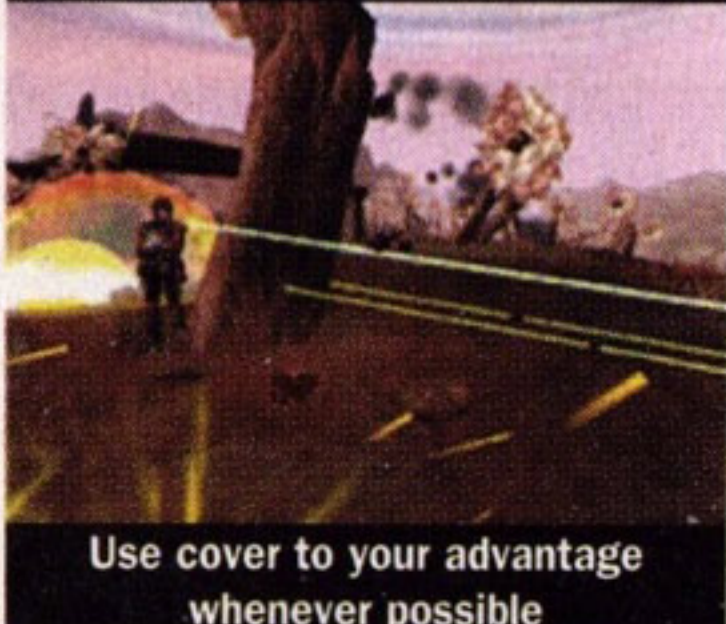
"...the intensity of the battles draws the player in, but the ability to improve your avatar...keeps you coming back for more."



Danger abounds outside of your Empire's Sanctuary



Capturing a highly-fortified enemy base is not an easy task



Use cover to your advantage whenever possible

PC PLANETSIDE UNLEASHING THE DOGS OF WAR

I had my doubts about PlanetSide as it wallowed in development hell for what seemed like forever, but the finished product really is an amazing piece of technology. Not only are the graphics impressive for a game of this scope, the gameplay is phenomenal. There is just so much to do, and once you find yourself wading knee-deep in an all-out war with an army of other players on your server, it's hard not to fall in love.

At the heart of this title is its massively multiplayer capabilities. Like any other RPG-styled MMO out there, the creation and care of your character is the main attraction. Certainly, the intensity of the battles draws the player in, but the ability to improve your avatar and become a more powerful and renowned member of your Empire is what keeps you coming back for more.

At the beginning of PlanetSide, you must join one of three Empires and then create your character's look. While your ability to aim at this point is the same as everyone else's on the server, the resources at your disposal are limited. So like a grunt, you head out to join the war to get killed and earn battle experience. Ideally, you will want to join a squad (which is a 10-man version of a group in a typical MMORPG), as gaining experience is much easier. Also, as you learn from playing the game more and more, squads and the even bigger outfit (much like a guild) are the secret to organizing and executing large-scale attacks on rival Empires.

Back to the point at hand: As you gain experience, you are awarded certification points that can be used to grant your character access to assorted weapons, vehicles (both land and air), and various professions. Learn to fly a Galaxy class flying bus. Master the Reaver fighter. Enhance your medical or hacking abilities. The options are really pretty amazing, and almost all the skills are useful on the field of battle.

Want to take over an enemy facility? You are going to need air-support, a hacker, soldiers outfitted in the latest body armor, and even medics and engineers who can keep it all working. It also wouldn't hurt if you could convince some other squads to join in the battle, because the enemy isn't just going to roll over and let you have it. Beginning to fathom the scope of PlanetSide? I hope so, because not only is this game incredibly deep, it's amazingly entertaining.

My first night with PlanetSide, I found myself doing just about everything. From defending outposts to making hot-drops into enemy territory, the game delivers a very compelling experience from log on to log off. The only knocks I have against PlanetSide are that there are a number of time sinks revolving around travel (waiting for the stinking HART comes to mind), and the monthly fee required to play can be a pinch on the pocketbook, but otherwise PlanetSide is the \$&*#. — **ANDY**

■ **STYLE** MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **DEVELOPER** SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT ■ **RELEASE** MAY 20



Use the Advanced Mobile Station to create a spawning point in the field



Armored powered suits known as MAXs are deadly to infantry

THE BOTTOM LINE
TEEN
T
9.25

- **Concept:** Take the MMO experience and make a kickin' FPS based around the premise
- **Graphics:** For the amount of players and the scale of the environments, the graphics are impressive
- **Sound:** Even though the soundtrack can get repetitive, I couldn't imagine playing without it
- **Playability:** While it doesn't have all the high-jumping action of Unreal, its gameplay is intense
- **Entertainment:** When the action gets heated and you find yourself at the heart of a 200-person battle, this game rocks
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

PlanetSide seems to have come as close to the virtual battlefield concept as is possible. For those who want to jump into an incredibly action-packed environment with multiple units and groups moving on multiple fronts, this is an incredible game. I've never quite had that esprit de corps feeling in an online title like I do with PlanetSide — when I see my brothers and sisters fall, I feel sad, but I know that the innovative spawning system will have them back in harm's way in no time. Similarly, seeing an organized assault being put into action with air cover and infantry-supported armor sends chills down my spine. Not only is PlanetSide fun like any high-end FPS, it's thought provoking like a strategy title as well. The action can get a bit repetitious, but the certification system and grouping options keep things interesting on an impressively consistent basis. What a time to be a PC gamer.

KRISTIAN — 9.5



"All told, Rise of Nations is as solid as bedrock."



PC

RISE OF NATIONS

POWER OF THE PEOPLE

Most interesting games seem to bend the rules a little bit, and Rise of Nations is no exception. In an obvious nod to the popular board game Risk!, Big Huge Games has woven elements of global-level strategy with its efficient and exciting RTS keystone. Although the over-map portions seem to be a little anemic, the gameplay options they represent are startling to say the least. From complex diplomacy to "Give me what I want, or I'll pummel you," this is a title that has a little something for everyone who loves good strategy coupled with solid gameplay.

The story unfolds as you take the reigns of one of 18 different nations. From there, it's your job to shape and mold your people's future through war, diplomacy, and whatever other means you're able to come up with. In terms of sheer variety, having the luxury of such a varied array of nationalities is a beautiful thing; but not all nations are created equal. Some have excellent bonuses incorporated with them, and others are decidedly ho-hum. However, after conquering a nation, you're given its specific ability in the form of a card, which can be used before any battle – but can only be used once. You'll also gain other cards which will give you permanent bonuses throughout your game, but choosing what nations to attack, and with which cards, is the kind of problem that strategy gamers love solving.

In terms of nuts and bolts, advancing through civilization's

assorted ages is interesting, but the way these milestones affect your game is rather odd at times. Although the game does possess an internal "clock" of sorts that advances through the highpoints in humanity's development (Classical Age, Age of Enlightenment, Industrial Age, etc.) on its own, you're forced to re-research the different components that make up the innovations leading to the next major checkpoint over and over again until the game's clock moves to the next age. I suppose it's the nature of the RTS beast to have this kind of technology discovery repetition, but there must be a more fulfilling way to do it. As a pure real-time strategy title, Rise of Nations sizzles with excellent unit intelligence, intuitive formation building, and a mess of ways to gain political and military advantages over your foes. Each side seems to be well balanced, and if you play your cards right, some spectacular battles are in store for you.

All told, Rise of Nations is as solid as bedrock. You're not throwing your money away on something you'll only enjoy for a scant few hours, and there's a lot of fun to be had here. There's even a bit of education embedded as far as historical military units go – *gasp!* So there you have it, chaps and chap-ettes; feel free to pick this one up without fear or guilt – unlike your filthy pilfering of the collection plates at church. – **KRISTIAN**

THE BOTTOM LINE

TEEN
T
ESRB

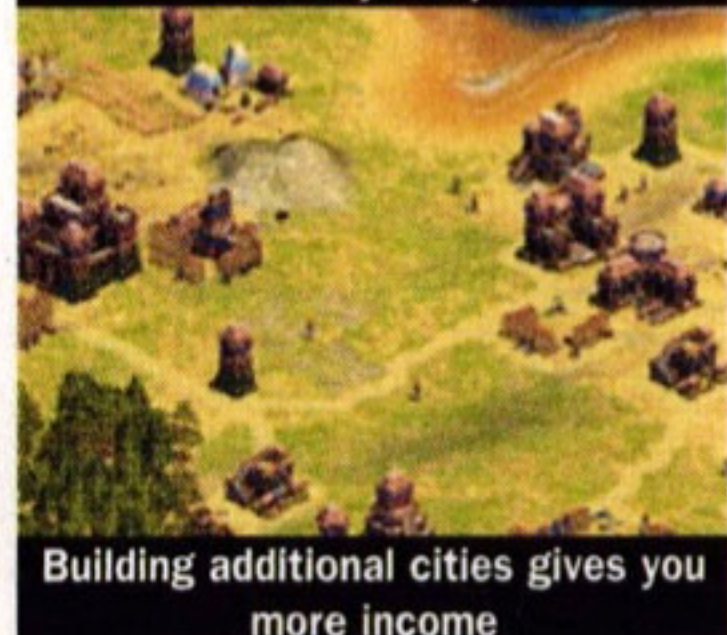
9

- **Concept:**
A refreshing blend of real-time strategy and Risk-like elements combine to produce an excellent experience
- **Graphics:**
Nothing mind-blowing, but nothing to sniff at either – I was satisfied every step of the way
- **Sound:**
Some of the battle effects could use a little touching up, but everything else is gravy
- **Playability:**
The tutorials seem disjointed to me. However, I didn't experience any nagging issues in-game
- **Entertainment:**
A must-have for both strategy and RTS geeks
- **Replay Value:**
High

More guns mean more fun!



An armor battle isn't too easy on infantry troops



Building additional cities gives you more income

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 8-PLAYER ACTION/STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT ■ **DEVELOPER** BIG HUGE GAMES ■ **RELEASE** MAY 20



Deciding on your diplomatic stance is essential to winning the game



These cards will give your nation a boost during the battle phase

SECOND OPINION

This genre usually intimidates because its titles drown gamers in detail. Furthermore, building an empire often takes an exorbitant amount of time, turning all but the hardcore crowd away. Rise of Nations maintains the depth of these so-called god games, but features a very user-friendly interface and offers players instant gratification. Battles sometimes ensue after only five minutes of play, and transforming your village into a bustling industrial city might take a couple of hours. Sure, a few details like worker fatigue were not included, but since such omissions improve the game's overall enjoyability, I couldn't care less. Rise doesn't suffer from any serious flaws. However, it's extremely easy to become disorganized when the action heats up.

CHET - 9.25

REVIEWS



PC

RESTAURANT EMPIRE

NO SOUP FOR YOU

The attraction, and the downfall, of these types of business sims is the ability (or inability) of the gameplay to transcend the subject matter. That is, if I feel like I'm playing a game about maintaining a restaurant, it's probably not working very well. On the other hand, if I feel like I'm actually guiding an eating establishment with savvy business decisions and a modicum of skill, that's something else. With Restaurant Empire, I got the distinct impression that I was jumping through hoops for the sake of the hoop, and not the game.

Apart from the terrible character models and antiquated overall look, Enlight attempts to pack a lot of variety into RE in terms of data-driven details. Details like what kind of food and drink you serve, which ingredients you use in your recipes, how much to charge for which item, and how you manage your staff are all available for the tweaking; but the game soon becomes a lesson in anger management as you watch your staff bump into each other time after time, and your customers leave because their food hasn't arrived yet. This is a nice game to putz around with, but you're not going to be getting an incredible experience out of it. — KRISTIAN

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY ■ **PUBLISHER** ENLIGHT
 ■ **DEVELOPER** ENLIGHT ■ **RELEASE** MAY 1



- **Concept:**
Create a chain of successful restaurants while battling poor pathing and AI
- **Graphics:**
Obviously, you're not buying this game for its visuals, and for good reason
- **Sound:**
See above, substitute sound for visuals
- **Playability:**
What this title lacks in glitz and polish, it attempts to make up for in complexity of play
- **Entertainment:**
I wasn't exactly enthralled, but it was interesting enough to keep me in my seat for a little while
- **Replay Value:**
Moderate

SECOND OPINION

While I resent having to open a French restaurant — although I did rename my snotty wait staff "Freedom Fighters" — I enjoy much of what this game offers. I like the events with customers and the contests, but I wish that you'd gain experience (i.e. getting new recipes) in a different, less random way.

KATO — 7



PC

THE SIMS: SUPERSTAR

MARY CATHERINE NOT INCLUDED

What is this series all about? Living out an alternative life. If you don't know about, or haven't heard of The Sims, then you're living in a cave somewhere, and why you're reading this magazine right now I'll never know. In any event, Superstar adds to the series with a quaint little diversion that puts you into the skin of a modern day celebrity. After finding an agent through the local entertainment industry rag, you'll train your alter ego in a number of categories, then set out to a new location where they'll perform and hobnob with the entertainment industry's elite. At one point, I was badgering Marilyn Monroe for her autograph, and she had to run away to avoid me.

After improving your entertainment skills, it's hilarious to watch your Sim give out autographs and do things like making music videos. This is definitely the best expansion yet released for the Sims, but certain issues still bog this title down. I'm absolutely confounded that the game clock hasn't been slowed yet. It simply should not take my guy 10 minutes to walk from the living room to the bathroom. The problem is only exacerbated when travelling to different areas of the city, as you have only a finite amount of time to do what you want to do before it's time to go to bed. That being said, Sims junkies will definitely get a charge out of Superstar — time-passage problem or no. — KRISTIAN



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER SIMULATION ■ **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS ■ **DEVELOPER** MAXIS
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 15



- **Concept:**
Another add-on to the most successful PC franchise in history
- **Graphics:**
Same ol' same ol'. Obviously there are new items and animations, but nothing radically different
- **Sound:**
Hearing my Sim try to sing with only one creativity point was hilarious
- **Playability:**
Becoming familiar with the new environment won't take you long
- **Entertainment:**
The new subject matter is clever and entertaining — things you expect from Maxis
- **Replay Value:**
High

SECOND OPINION

Truth be told, I haven't been overly impressed with the most recent batch of Sims expansion packs. The Sims Online did nothing for me, either. Superstar, on the other hand, had me in stitches. The gameplay is still limited to the point, click, and watch motif, but the content and variety that it exhibits will keep players hooked and rolling with laughter. The fact that your character can achieve a level of stardom where he or she will be asked to sign autographs for fans is simply priceless. Tack on the ability to record an album, shoot a music video, star in a soap opera, and strut your stuff on a fashion runway and you can see where this game's charm lies. Hopping in limos, schmoozing with celebrities, taking mud baths, watching satellite TV, and visiting the oxygen bar are just a few of the new actions for your precious character. Simply said, this is the most amusing entry in the series yet. Don't miss it.

REINER — 8



"Advance Wars 2 is everything a fan of the series could want."



GAME BOY ADVANCE

ADVANCE WARS 2: BLACK HOLE RISING

STRATEGIC SUPREMACY

While Advance Wars 2's Black Hole Rising tag line may sound like a new Soundgarden album, it is actually the follow-up to one of the greatest games in history. I'm not just talking about handheld titles either; I'm talking consoles and PCs as well. If you weren't lucky or smart enough to play the original Advance Wars, you need to put down the magazine immediately and go buy it...NOW! It's that good.

Okay, now that the uninformed have run off to play the original; we can discuss the sequel that, for all intents and purposes, is a lot more of the same – except with bigger, more difficult missions and some new pieces to spice up the action. While that doesn't sound like much of an improvement on the surface, it really makes for an outstanding sequel.

Sadly, Advance Wars 2 does start off a little slow, as the first four or five missions of the Campaign mode incorporate various training features to help refresh unit usage, as well as map rules such as fog of war and how terrain can be used to the player's advantage. It's a little annoying for the seasoned player, but it's not the end of the world.

The main commanding officers are once again Andy, Sami, and Max for the Orange Army; but as you advance in Campaign mode you will get a chance to control other armies again including Green Earth, Blue Moon, and Yellow Comet. Thankfully, all four armies feature new COs such as the cranky Sensei or the young cadet Colin – each with new and unique powers. Advance Wars 2 has also upped the effect that the commanding officers have on the outcome of battle by adding a new Super CO power (which is basically

a super-sized version of their normal power). This gives players the option to use the standard CO power, or save up for a larger reward.

Perhaps the greatest additions to Advance Wars 2 are the new units and facilities. For example, during certain missions you are given the opportunity to steal secret plans from the vile Black Hole army and then produce the new Neo Tank (an amazing unit that can tear up even MD tanks) from your factories. But even better than that is the addition of Missile Silos throughout various maps. This one-shot weapon enables the player to fire on any ground unit on the map. An amazing weapon, especially when you find a nice set of five or six silos together.

The enemy also has a wide variety of new obstacles for you to overcome. From giant missile launchers that require you to destroy the eight surrounding buildings in 15 days, to weapon factories that will relentlessly spew enemy units until the pipe feeding the structure is destroyed, these new super-structures will challenge you like never before. There are also new super cannons that can fire on any unit in a large array. One of my favorite missions actually has you moving your forces through a forest of trees to avoid the relentless fire of these giant cannons. It's pretty intense, as it basically challenges you to use all the skills at your disposal as well as make perfect use of the terrain.

In the end, Advance Wars 2 is everything a fan of the series could want. There are more opportunities for dual army control (like the final battle in the original) as well as much more challenging maps to defeat. If you own a Game Boy Advance, seriously need this game. – **ANDY**

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER STRATEGY (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA LINK) ■ **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO ■ **DEVELOPER** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS
■ **RELEASE** JUNE 23



To defeat this fortress you must destroy the eight surrounding turrets



Just as in the original, you can create your own maps

THE BOTTOM LINE
E **9.25**

- **Concept:** Deliver more of the gameplay we all loved in the first; but with some nice, new twists
- **Graphics:** Overall, the game looks almost identical to the original, but that's not a bad thing
- **Sound:** The soundtrack is not this game's strong point, especially since you will be playing it for hours on end. Buy an iPod and listen to tunes
- **Playability:** About the only complaint I can think of is that you can't attack and then move, but it's otherwise perfect
- **Entertainment:** Advance Wars 2 is easily one of the deepest and most entertaining Game Boy Advance titles to date
- **Replay Value:** High

SECOND OPINION

Black Hole Rising expands upon the original game in a number of key areas. COs can now unleash two different powers, which as you can imagine, adds great strategic depth, but also makes the enemy forces a bear to handle. One such power, dubbed Airborne Assault, drops troops onto all of your team's cities. If a particular force has captured a ton of cities, this tactic will turn the tides of war in a heartbeat. To inject variety into the missions, many of the maps now feature new enemy installations such as a fortress surrounded by eight turrets. These enhancements give the game a new look and will test your every skill. Once again, multiplayer is supported through single and multi-pack, and the map editor produces an infinite number of gameplay options. Applying turn-based strategy to the handheld medium seems like the ultimate contradiction, but Advance Wars 2 proves that it's the perfect combination.

REINER - 9.5

REVIEWS

GAME BOY ADVANCE

NINJA FIVE-O

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION
 ■ **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
 ■ **RELEASE** MARCH 13



There have been so many 2D action games released over the years that it's hard to describe the difference between a good one and a bad

one. It's almost like the blues – it's either got that feel or it doesn't. Ninja Five-O, a cross between Bionic Commando and Shinobi, has that old-school action vibe in spades. As you jump, spin, and rappel your way through levels; you'll face a variety of tough adversaries and tricky obstacles. It's nothing you haven't seen before (shooting fire, conveyor belts, moving platforms), but you'll have a blast doing it all over again, thanks mostly to this title's accurate control and savvy level design. Ninja Five-O is a great game that probably won't sell half the copies it deserves to. – **MATT**

E 8.25

GAME BOY ADVANCE

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA LINK)
 ■ **PUBLISHER** VIVENDI UNIVERSAL
 ■ **RELEASE** MAY 27



Comic fans will appreciate the little details that have been included. For instance, the story draws inspiration from Jack Kirby's and Stan Lee's work on

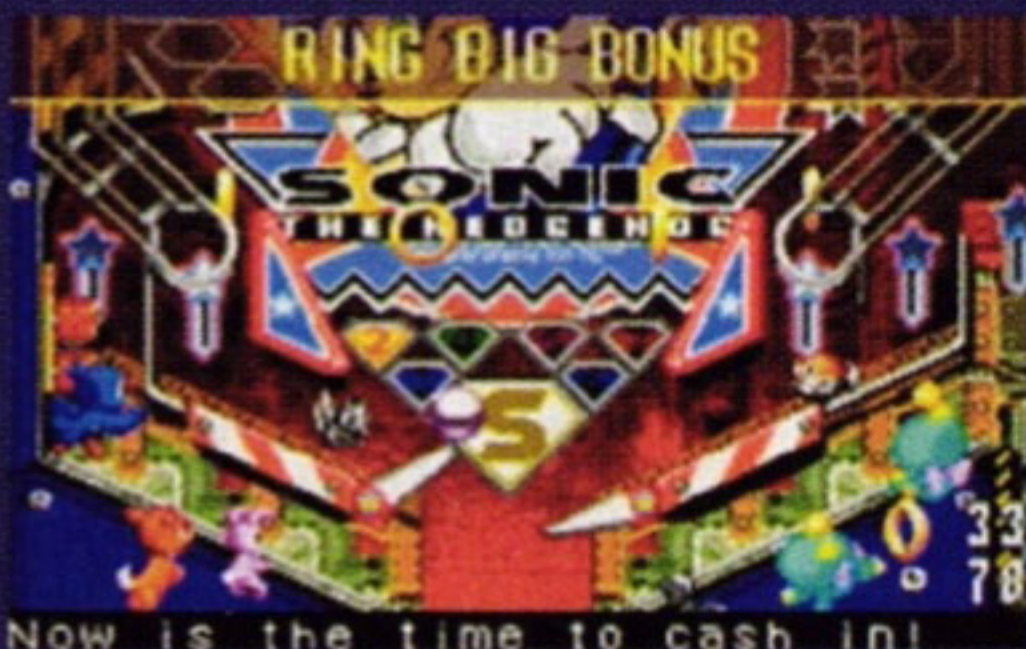
the golden age *Incredible Hulk* and *Tales to Astonish* books. Outside of these trivial highlights, this game has about as much play to it as a crusty green booger. You'll marvel at it for a few seconds, only to realize that it's one of the world's most appalling abominations, then will flick it away. Through robotic movements, shallow combat, and levels that can best be described as hamster mazes, *The Incredible Hulk* doesn't even come close to living up to its namesake. Did I mention that the Hulk eats cookies to replenish health? – **REINER**

E 4

GAME BOY ADVANCE

SONIC PINBALL PARTY

■ **STYLE** 1 TO 4-PLAYER ACTION (UP TO 4-PLAYER VIA LINK)
 ■ **PUBLISHER** SEGA
 ■ **RELEASE** FALL



It's pinball. Pinball is good. Sonic Pinball Party features characters and themes from Sonic, Samba de Amigo, and Nights. This too is good. But a pinball party game with Arcade, Vs., Party, Story, Casinopolis, and Chao Garden modes means that the boards are small and repetitive. Solid physics, colorful graphics, and bearable sound do make this a decent pinball title, but Casinopolis is totally worthless and Chao Garden is exactly the same as other recent versions. – **LISA**

E 6



GAME BOY ADVANCE

DRAGON BALL Z: LEGACY OF GOKU II

THE LEGACY CONTINUES

Legacy of Goku II is an interesting study in how to simultaneously do everything right and wrong in a sequel. Fans of the cartoon series were happy that Atari (née, Infogrames) so closely mimicked the world they love in the first GBA game, and that attention to detail is certainly back. The rest of the planet, however, will surely groan when they find out that Legacy's most aggravating trait – its combat – is also making a return.

It's baffling why a title that pays such close attention to the details of the television show (evident in the character models, humor, and storyline) would not fix the obvious problems that plagued its predecessor. I can understand that real-time combat on the GBA will always be limited, but LoG II's problem is in the fighting's collision and balance. Basically, there is little rhyme or reason as to whether you or your foe will land a hit. Frustrating.

Luckily, the remainder of the title is very enjoyable. With more playable characters (which you can change at the plentiful save points) and areas to explore (the overhead map is simply cool), my efforts in completing sidequests and keeping everyone sufficiently leveled-up kept me going quite happily – something which isn't for everyone. With its pluses and minuses, this Legacy comes out about even to the first in being a slightly above-average game with unrealized potential. – **KATO**

THE BOTTOM LINE

EVERYONE
E 7.5

- **Concept:** Better than the first in almost every way – except the combat. Uurgh!
- **Graphics:** It's a great looking game, and the character models are expressive
- **Sound:** There's some great moody music here
- **Playability:** Despite various special attacks and playable characters, combat remains this series' Achilles' heel
- **Entertainment:** Even with its one glaring flaw, you will enjoy this title
- **Replay Value:** Moderately Low

SECOND OPINION

So, let me get this straight: The game skips the three years where I train to take on the most hideous enemies the world has ever known, but I'm forced to go looking for an open-faced sandwich for some dork? Regardless, next to *Zelda*, *Legacy of Goku II* may be the premier action/RPG for GBA. It's got a great story (even if you're not a DBZ nut), the graphics are sweet, and it moves at a steady clip. Props for the FF 3-esque Mode 7 flying! The combat definitely takes some getting used to, and there are a few frustrating spots. I cursed it at first, but about an hour in, I was getting the timing and strike distance down. Lovers of leveling up will find the task easy and beneficial. The first game sold like mad, and I think Atari has done right by gamers with this sequel.

JUSTIN – 7.75



■ **STYLE** 1-PLAYER ACTION/ADVENTURE ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI ■ **DEVELOPER** WEBFOOT TECHNOLOGIES ■ **RELEASE** JUNE 24

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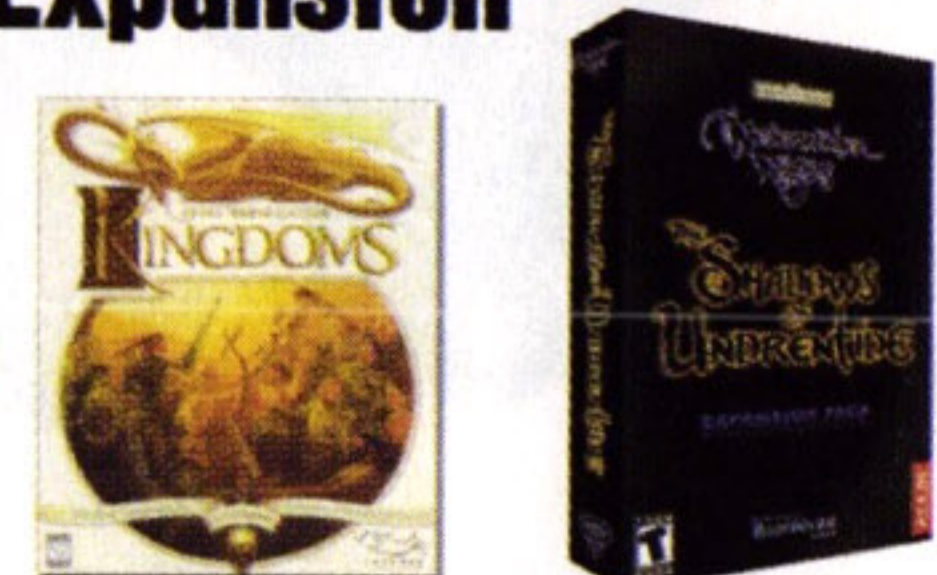


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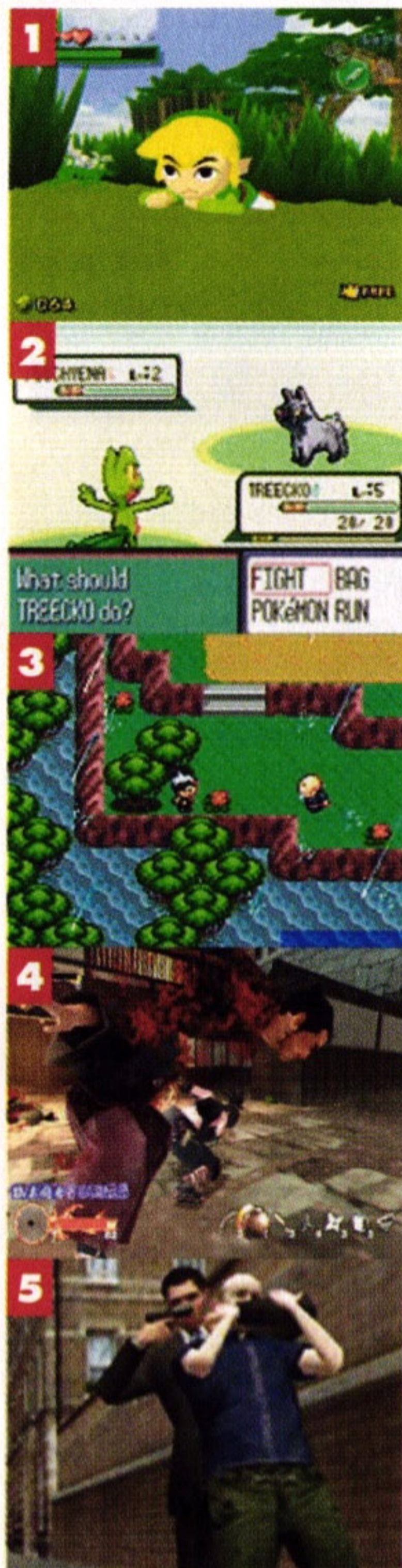


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CHARTS

In association with the NPD TRSTS Video Games Service, Charts presents an in-depth listing of the best-selling software on a month-to-month basis. Are the games you spend your hard-earned dollars on top sellers? Take a look below to find out. We've also compiled a listing of the top-selling Japanese software, and, of course, we included a Top 10 list of the games the GI staff is currently enjoying.



NPD TOP 20

Listings Based Upon NPD Data For March 2003 Based On Units Sold

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
1	N/A	The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker	GC	10	Mar-03	\$50

Everyone is catching Zelda fever. Pat Benetar is even working on a tribute song to this great game, using her hit "Heartbreaker" as a base. Here's a sneak peak: "Link's the right kind of elven, to relieve my inner fantasies! He don't need no shelvin', cuz you know that he was made to be...He's a...Wind Waker! Nap taker! Pot breaker! Don't you mess around with Link, he's a..."

2	N/A	Pokémon Ruby	GBA	7.25	Mar-03	\$30
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Before you start ripping on kids for buying this game for its similarity to the Pokémon before it, look in a mirror. Remember when you got Battle Armor He-Man? It's the same damn action figure, just with a dentable torso. But no, you had to have it. You threw that tantrum at K-Mart and worked yourself up into such a frenzy that you puked. Didn't ya, Up Chuck?

3	N/A	Pokémon Sapphire	GBA	7.25	Mar-03	\$30
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"I choose you, Pikachu!" That's what millions of kids are saying once again these days. "You're choosing Satan, you lost sheep!" some of the Bible belt's elite reply. While we think Pika's Electric Shock attack could counter the effects of Satan's Horn Rush, both sides bring up some pretty good points. Wait until Yu-Gi-Oh does the run-in on this battle, and hits both sides with steel chairs. Sunday! Sunday! Sunday!

4	N/A	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	PS2	9	Mar-03	\$49
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Our grandmas told us to chew 30 times before swallowing; but dear ol' granny didn't have a big sword with which to chop off our heads, so we'll agree with this game that 10 chews is the way to go. We know grandma knitted us those argyle socks, but you don't mess with a ninja. They're like a pack of Keyser Sozes in pajamas. They'll kill you, then - like that - they're gone.

5	1	The Getaway	PS2	9	Jan-03	\$40
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Chrissie Hynde is the obvious favorite, because of her vocals on tracks like "Don't Get Me Wrong" and "Back on the Chain Gang," both of which she got writing credit for. The late John Honeyman-Scott's skills with the guitar are not to be denied, however. When all is said and done, though, The Getaway is our favorite Pretender. It seems like many of you agree.

RANK	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM	SCORE	RELEASE DATE	PRICE POINT
6	N/A	Def Jam Vendetta	PS2	8.5	Mar-03	\$50
7	2	Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	PS2	10	Oct-02	\$50
8	6	Xenosaga: Episode 1	PS2	9.75	Feb-03	\$50
9	4	Yu-Gi-Oh! Duelist of the Roses	PS2	8	Feb-03	\$49
10	N/A	MVP Baseball 2003	PS2	9.25	Mar-03	\$50
11	N/A	Driver 2 Advance	GBA	7.75	Oct-02	\$20
12	19	SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2	9.5	Aug-02	\$60
13	N/A	Dynasty Warriors 4	PS2	7	Mar-03	\$49
14	N/A	NBA Street	PS2	9.25	Jun-01	\$20
15	7	Yu-Gi-Oh! Dungeon Dice Monsters	GBA	8	Feb-03	\$30
16	N/A	Gran Turismo 3: A-Spec	PS2	9	Jul-01	\$20
17	3	The Sims	PS2	9	Jan-03	\$50
18	20	The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past	GBA	9.25	Dec-02	\$30
19	N/A	Ace Combat 4	PS2	8.5	Oct-01	\$20
20	12	Ghost Recon	PS2	8.5	Dec-02	\$49

JAPAN TOP 10

Source: Game Japan Based On Monthly Units Sold

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	Mega Man Zero 2	GBA
2	N/A	Nuroto	GBA
3	N/A	Fire Emblem: Flaming Sword	GBA
4	6	Pokémon Ruby/Sapphire	GBA
5	N/A	Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven	PS2
6	4	Made in Wario	GBA
7	1	Dragon Quest Monsters: Caravan Heart	GBA
8	N/A	From TV Animation One Piece: Ocean's Dream	PSone
9	N/A	Generations of Chaos 3	PS2
10	N/A	Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow	GBA



GAME INFORMER TOP 10

The Staff's Favorite Picks

POS.	L. MO	GAME	SYSTEM
1	N/A	PlanetSide	PC
2	N/A	Advance Wars 2	GBA
3	2	The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker	GC
4	N/A	Midnight Club II	Xbox
5	6	Star Wars Galaxies	PC
6	N/A	Arc the Lad: Twilight of the Spirits	PS2
7	10	Enter The Matrix	PS2
8	1	Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War	Xbox
9	5	NBA Street Vol. 2	PS2
10	N/A	Gallop Racer 2003: A New Breed	PS2



PC TOP 10

Based On Monthly Units Sold. Source: NPD Interactive Entertainment Service Kristin Barnett-Von-Korff (516) 625-2481

POS.	L. MO	GAME	MONTH	PRICE
1	N/A	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	Mar-03	\$37
2	1	Command & Conquer: Generals	Feb-03	\$46
3	3	The Sims Deluxe	Sep-02	\$42
4	6	The Sims: Unleashed	Sep-02	\$27
5	5	Battlefield 1942	Sep-02	\$46
6	7	Zoo Tycoon	Oct-01	\$25
7	N/A	CSI: Crime Scene Investigation	Mar-03	\$30
8	N/A	Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos	Jul-02	\$37
9	N/A	Diablo 2	Jun-00	\$20
10	N/A	Mall Tycoon	Feb-02	\$18



SECRET ACCESS

BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS



Type in the following codes in the Cheat section under the Options menu.

- \$10 Million** – LOTSAMONEY
- All Missions** – LAZYPLAYER
- Automatic Satnav** – USETHEFORCE
- Diplomatic Immunity** – VICTORS
- Disable Damage** – 6WL
- Evil Truck** – VARLEY
- Hyperfast Truck** – GINGERBEER
- Master Code** – CHEATINGMUTHATRUCKER or ATJCEHJMJ
- Small People** – DAISHI
- Unknown** – JINGLEBELLS
- Unlimited Time** – PUBLICTRANSPORT

Rodney Trit
Pensacola, FL

MIDNIGHT CLUB 2



Highlight Options Mode at the Main Menu. Scroll through until you get to Cheat Codes. Enter one of the following case-sensitive cheat codes.

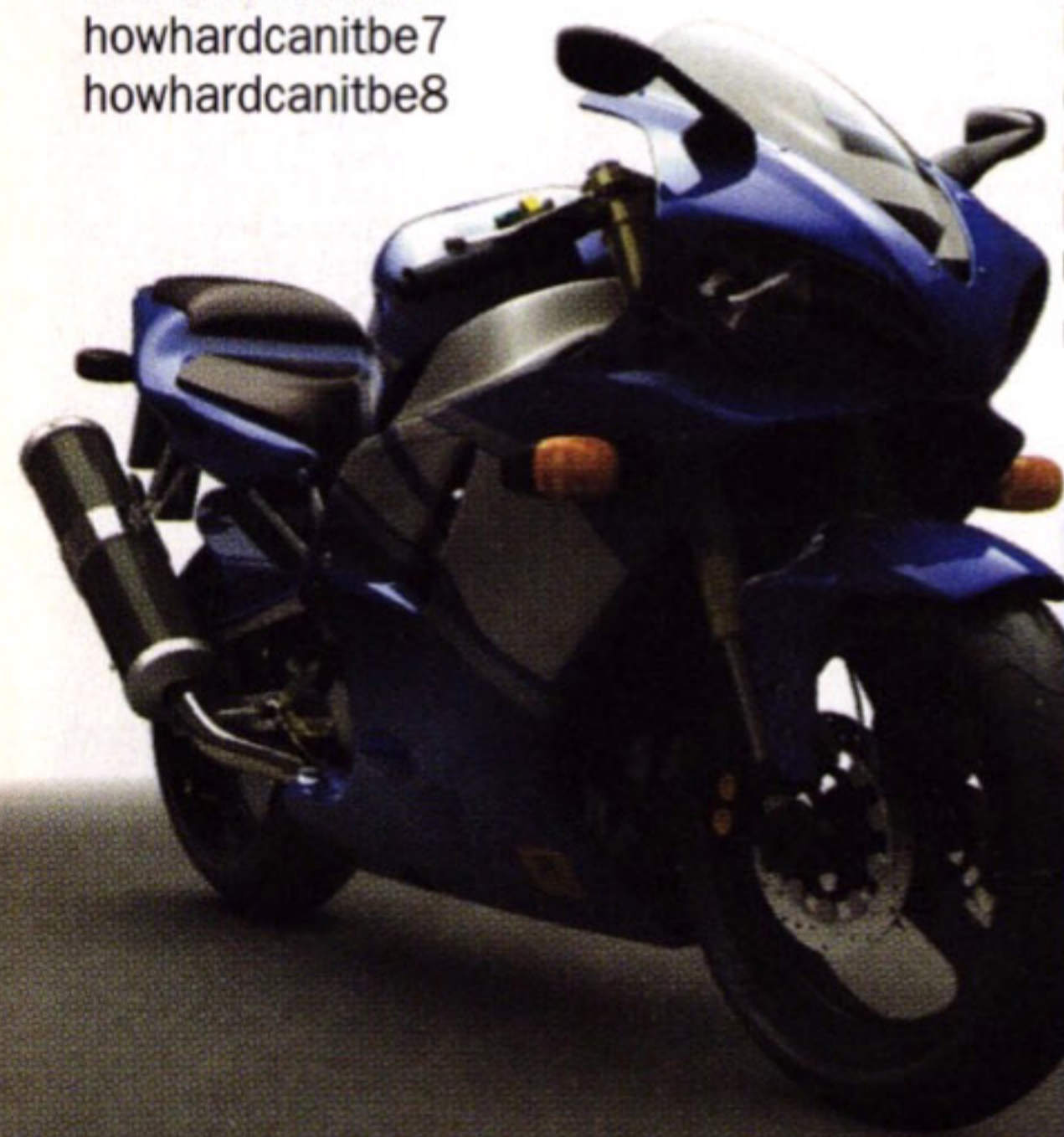
Adjust Game Difficulty

howardcanitbe0
howardcanitbe1
howardcanitbe2
howardcanitbe3
howardcanitbe4
howardcanitbe5
howardcanitbe6
howardcanitbe7
howardcanitbe8

howardcanitbe9
Note that 0 is the easiest setting, and 9 is the most difficult.

- All Cities & Vehicles** – pennyThug
- Improved Air Control** – carcrobatics
- Infinite Nitrous** – greenLantern
- Maxed Out Cars** – immortal
- Missiles & Machine Guns** – savethekids (click R3 to fire missiles and L3 for machine guns)
- No Damage** – gladiator
- Unlock Everything** – rimbuk (Arcade mode only)

Nick Andros
Boulder, CO



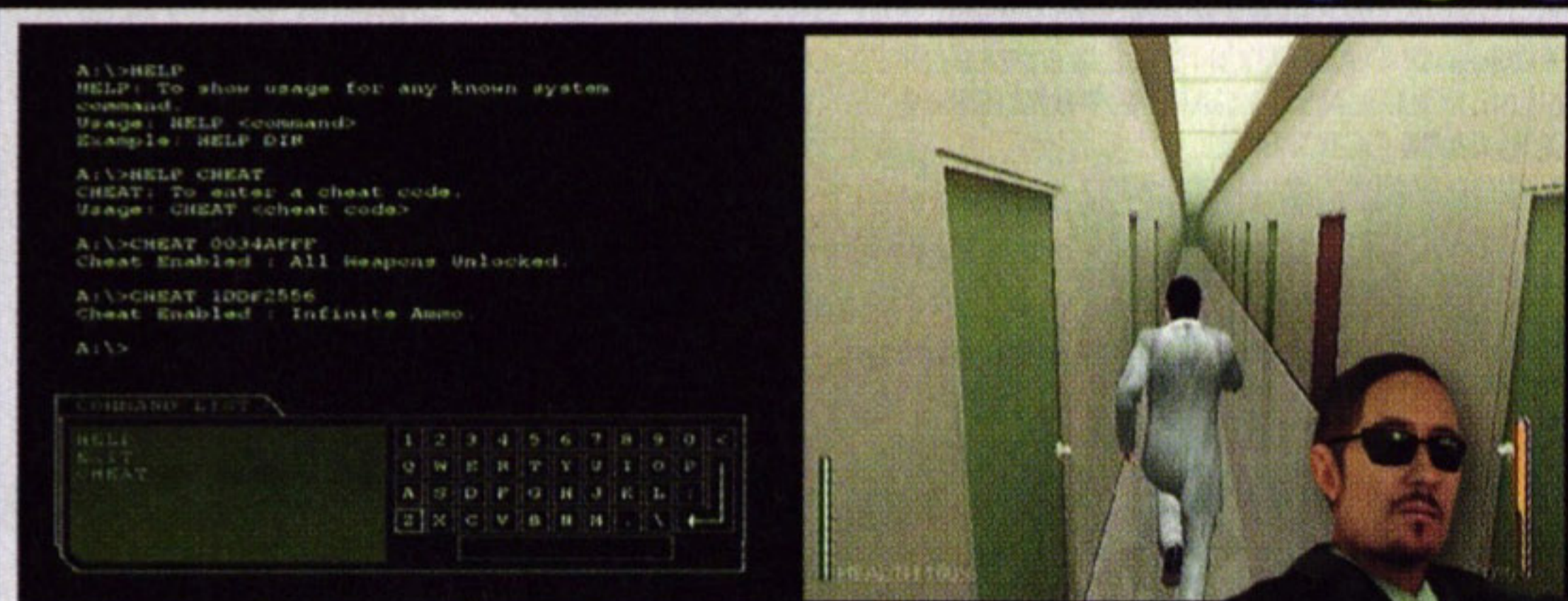
ENTER TO WIN

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CODE OF THE MONTH

ENTER THE MATRIX



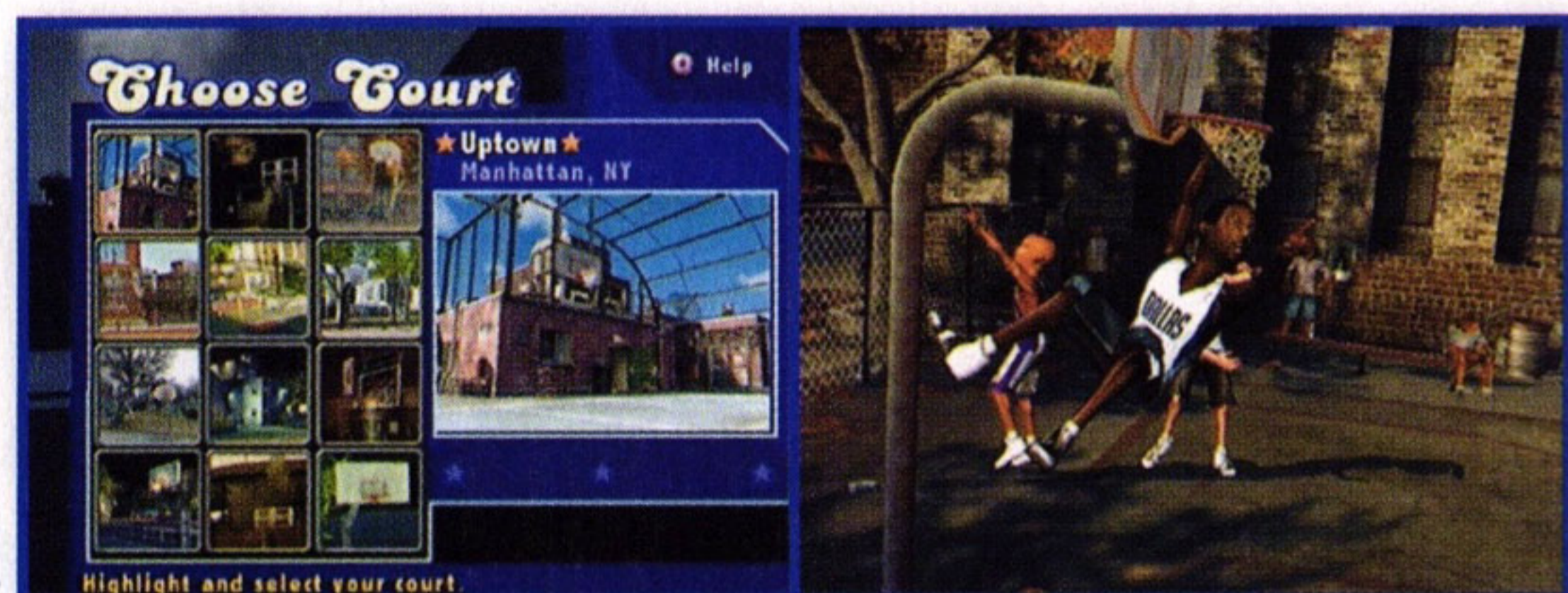
Enter the hacking system. Type in Cheat plus any of the following codes. So, to enter Maximum Firepower, type Cheat 0034AFF. After using the Cheat program once, Cheat will be shown in the shortcut list just left of the keyboard. Select Cheat from that list and enter any of the codes below.

- Bonus Test Level** – 13D2C77F
- Fast Focus Restore** – FFF0020A
- Faster Logos** – 7867F443
- Infinite Focus** – 69E5D9E4
- Infinite Health** – 7F4DF451
- Invisibility** – FFFFFFFF1
- Maximum Firepower** – 0034AFF
- Multi-Player Fighting** – D5C55D1E
- Unlimited Ammunition** – 1DDF2556

Swordfight – Open the Hacking program and then access a file that has a completed game. You must have completed the game first for this cheat to work. Type **LOGIN** and hit Enter. Type **GUEST** and hit Enter. Type **DIR** and hit the space bar. This will cause **DIR** to appear in your command list. Access the B Drive through the DIR command. Select TOOLS and you'll be prompted for an access code. The code consists of 1s and 0s, which you must discover on your own, since it's different each time. Fortunately, it's merely five digits long. Once you gain access to the TOOLS on the B Drive, type all the .EXE files (without .EXE after them). So if you type **DECODE** then a space, DECODE will appear in the command list. Do this for every .EXE file in the TOOLS folder. Now, access VIRTUAL on your command list. Type in **FROZENFISH** as the password and an authentication test will begin. Next, an image of a Chinese symbol will appear, but it'll be scrambled. It's broken into nine squares, with each square having five choices. The object is to change all the pieces so that a complete image appears, but you have a limited amount of time to finish. Once you discover a correct image, the timer will stop and you'll return to the hacking screen. Look at the top of the screen. If it says "Solution: Blue", then the line will be traced and you'll have to enter **TRACEKILL**. Press enter as fast as possible or all progress will be lost. Once you enter TRACEKILL, you'll have to return to accessing VIRTUAL on your command list. If it says "Solution: Red", then you'll hear a message from Neo and gain access to the V Drive. Open the V Drive and retrieve the commands from the TOOLS folder on your command list. Open the ROOTSEARCH program. Now, open the ROOT folder in the B Drive and get the two commands there on your command list. Enter the MAIL command and type **THISISNOTREAL** as the password and type **YES**. You will get a list of phone numbers: 0019495550112, 0017145550187, 0012135550142, 0013105550111, 0019495550101. Select DIAL and dial **0019495550101** to get a message from Persephone. Next dial **0013105550111** to hear a message from Trinity. She'll give you a number. Select PORTKEY and enter the number. She will start to talk to you. Type NO to both questions to get a program called CRACK on your command list. Open it and type 8RAM. It should look like this: "CRACK 8RAM". You now have access to the RAM drive. Go to DIR on your command list and access the RAM drive. A list of folder names will appear. Open the TRINITY folder. Get the Training command on your DIR by typing **TRAINING** then a space. Select TRAINING on your command list. On your command list, select a file called SWORD.DSK, which will appear. It has now uploaded the sword onto you character in the Matrix. Quit the hacking program and select "Save Progress". You can use the sword when you start that game file. You can use it in any stage. To reopen the cheat quickly, go to the Hacking program, select that file again, select TRAINING, then SWORD.DSK.

Tony Wong
Austin, TX

NBA STREET VOL. 2



Enter these codes in Pickup mode after choosing a name. The bottom of the blue box will say Enter Codes Now. Hold L1 and input the following sequences.

- ABA Ball - ○, □, ○, □
- All Courts - □, △ (x2), □
- All Jerseys - □, △, ○ (x2)
- All NBA Legends - □, △ (x2), ○
- All Quicks - △, ○, △, □
- Ball Trails - △ (x3), □
- Big Heads - ○, □ (x2), ○
- Classic Michael Jordan - □, △, □ (x2)
- Difficult Two Pointers - △, □, ○, △
- Easy Two Pointers - △, ○, □, △
- Explosive Rims - ○ (x3), △
- No Counters - △ (x2), ○ (x2)
- No Display Bars - □, ○ (x3)
- Small Players - △ (x2), ○, □
- St. Lunatics Team/All Street Legends - □, △, ○, △
- Unlimited Turbo - □ (x2), △ (x2)
- WNBA Ball - ○, △ (x2), ○

Caleb Carr
Manhattan, NY

WWE CRUSH HOUR



The game sucks, but putting these codes in will make it easier to get through, if you were one of those unfortunate souls that bought it.

- Faster Specials** - Pause gameplay, hold L3, and press △, ○ (x4).
- Level Select and All Vehicles** - Press □, L2, R2, ○, □, L1 (x2), L2 at the Player Selection screen.
- Unlimited Turbo** - Pause gameplay, hold L3, and press X, L1, R1, R2, △.

"GI Droid"
(location unknown - last seen doing something lascivious to the tailpipe of Andy's SUV)

PRIMAL



This slow, tedious game breeds impatience. Further feed that impatience with this nifty little code.

Code Menu - Hold L1 + L2 + R1 + R2 for approximately 5 seconds at the Main Menu. Highlight a letter and hold X. With X depressed, move the d-pad left and right to change the letter. Hit □ to accept the code. Tap △ to exit.

Invulnerability - MONSTROUS

"The Armchair Quarterback"
Canton, OH

NBA STREET VOL. 2

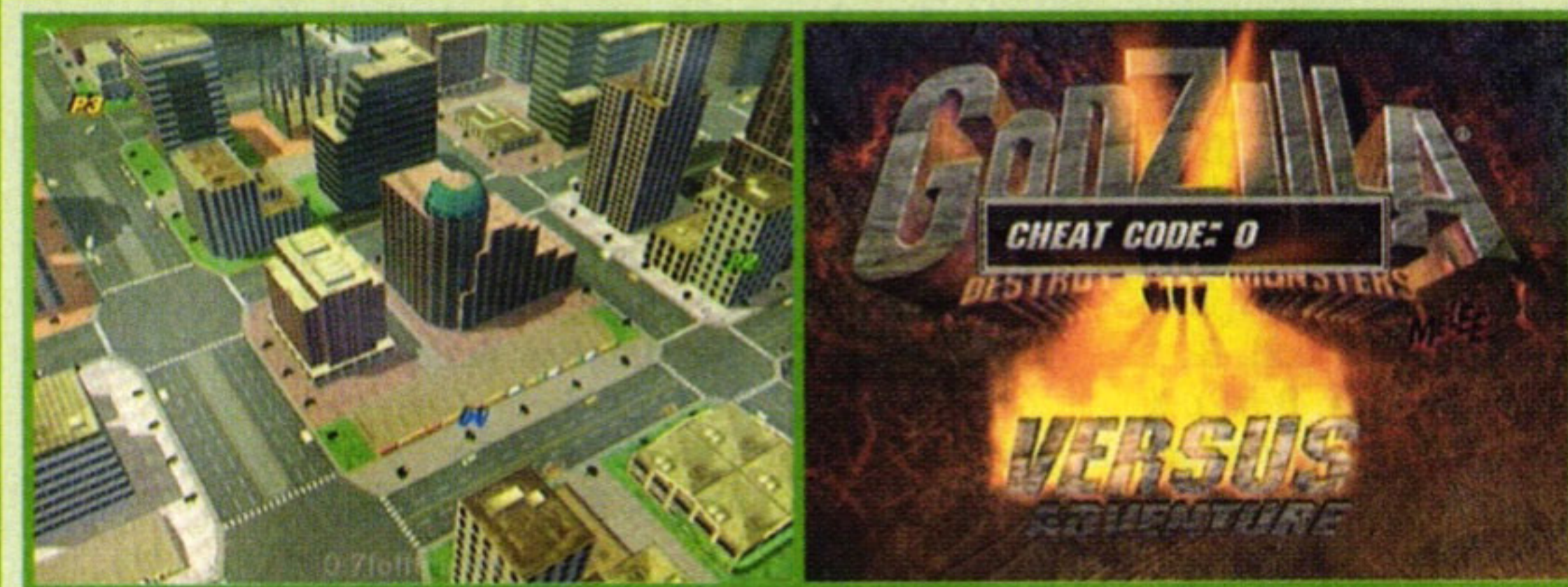


Enter these codes in Pickup mode after choosing a name. The bottom of the blue box will say Enter Codes Now. Hold the L Button and input the following sequences.

- ABA Ball - B, X, B, X
- All Courts - X, Y (x2), X
- All Jerseys - B, Y, X (x2)
- All NBA Legends - B, Y (x2), X
- All Quicks - Y, B, Y, X
- Ball Trails - Y (x3), X
- Big Heads - B, X (x2), B
- Difficult Two Pointers - Y, X, B, Y
- Easy Two Pointers - Y, B, X, Y
- Explosive Rims - B (x3), Y
- No Counters - Y (x2), B (x2)
- No Display Bars - X, B (x3)
- Small Players - Y (x2), B, X
- Unlimited Turbo - X (x2), Y (x2)
- WNBA Ball - B, Y (x2), B

Frida Kahlo
Mexico City, Mexico

GODZILLA: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS MELEE



Hold L + B + R (in that order) at the Main Menu and then release B, R, L (in that order) to open the code entry screen. Enter the following codes. A monster's roar will indicate a correct code entry.

- All Cities - 107504
- All Cities and All Monsters - 863768
- All Gallery Items - 962129
- All Monsters - 209697
- All Monsters are Invisible - 600225
- All Monsters Except Orga - 753079
- All Players are Small - 154974
- All Players Take No Damage - 569428
- Black and White Mode - 860475
- Boxing Ring Level - 440499
- Constant Full Energy (Player Four) - 218967
- Constant Full Energy (Player One) - 778393
- Constant Full Energy (Player Three) - 597558
- Constant Full Energy (Player Two) - 881557
- Destoroyah - 352117
- Disable HUD - 880460
- Display Game Version Number - 097401
- Ending Credits - 339223
- Even Numbered Players are Small - 600095
- Gigan - 822777
- Godzilla 2000 - 637522
- Hedorah (Smog Monster) in Every Game - 288730
- Indestructible Buildings - 451129
- King Ghidorah - 939376
- Mecha Godzilla - 643861
- Mecha King Ghidorah - 504330
- Military Deals Quadruple Damage - 970432
- Monster Island Level - 745749
- Mothership Level - 972094
- No Energy Power-Ups - 803358
- No Energy Recharge/Energy Weapons Do More Damage - 690242
- No Freeze Tanks - 223501
- No Health Power-Ups - 221086
- No Hedorah - 584408
- No Mothra Power-Ups - 491040
- No Power-Ups - 229497
- No Power-Ups Except Energy - 553945
- No Power-Ups Except Health - 270426
- No Power-Ups Except Rage - 660398
- No Rage Power-Ups - 666500
- Odd Numbered Players are Small - 853955
- Orga - 622600
- Player Four Always in Rage - 702905
- Player Four Deals Quadruple Damage - 889610
- Player Four is Small - 495355
- Player Four Takes No Damage - 317320
- Player Indicators Always Visible - 860068
- Player One Always in Rage - 159120
- Player One Deals Quadruple Damage - 940478
- Player One Invisible - 659672
- Player One is Small - 558277
- Player One Takes No Damage - 152446
- Player Three Always in Rage - 450514
- Player Three Deals Quadruple Damage - 537651
- Player Three is Small - 203783
- Player Three Takes No Damage - 367744
- Player Two Always in Rage - 491089
- Player Two Deals Quadruple Damage - 930041
- Player Two Invisible - 493946
- Player Two is Small - 689490
- Player Two Takes No Damage - 724689
- Players' Health Regenerates - 597378
- Rodan - 724284
- Technicolor Mode - 394804
- Throw all Buildings and Objects - 248165
- Toggle Military - 728629
- Twelve Continues in Adventure Mode - 548319

Beat Takeshi
Tokyo, Japan



NBA STREET VOL. 2

Enter these codes in Pickup mode after choosing a name. The bottom of the blue box will say Enter Codes Now. Hold the L Button and input the following sequences.

- ABA Ball** – X, B, X, B
- All Courts** – B, Y (x2), B
- All NBA Legends** – X, Y (x2), B
- All Quicks** – Y, X, Y, B
- Ball Trails** – Y (x3), B
- Big Heads** – X, B (x2), X
- Classic Michael Jordan** – X, Y, X (x2)
- Difficult Two Pointers** – Y, B, X, Y
- Easy Two Pointers** – Y, X, B, Y

- Explosive Rims** – X (x3), Y
- No Counters** – Y (x2), X (x2)
- No Display Bars** – B, X (x3)
- Small Players** – Y (x2), X, B
- St. Lunatics Team/All Street Legends** – X, Y, B, Y
- Unlimited Turbo** – B (x2), Y (x2)
- WNBA Ball** – X, Y (x2), X

Dan D. Lyons
Memphis, TN

SUPERMAN: SHADOW OF APOKOLIPS

Go to the Cheat section under the Options menu and enter the following code.

Empty Superpower Meter – JOR EL

Diego Rivera
Guanajuato, Mexico

DRAGON BALL Z ULTIMATE BATTLE 22



Super Saiyan 3 Goku Moves

Unlock Saiyan 3 Goku simply by entering the Ultimate Battle 27 code. Note that you cannot use the rapid-fire ki blasts or the solar flare moves.

Ultimate Battle 27 Mode – Press Up, Δ , Down, \times , Left, L1, Right, R1 at the Title screen after the FMV sequence, but before the screen that has mode selections. A chime will confirm correct code entry.

Back Flip – Down, Forward, Back, \times

Chou (Ultra) Kamehameha – Down, Back, Forward, \circ

Double Forward Flip – Half Circle Forward, \times

Double Halo Stomp – Forward, Down, \times (in air)

Energy Concentration – Back (hold for 2 seconds), Forward, \circ

Forward Flip – Down, Back, Forward, \times

Hyper Elbow Smash – Quarter Circle Forward, \square

Instant Transmission Meteor

Smash – Back, Forward, Down, Up, \square
To do this attack you must be on the same level as your opponent. So if he's in the sky, you also must be in the sky.

Kamehameha – Half Circle Forward, \circ

SSJ 3 Attack – Half Circle Back, \square

Ultimate Kamehameha (Kamehameha x3) – Half Circle Back, Forward, \circ



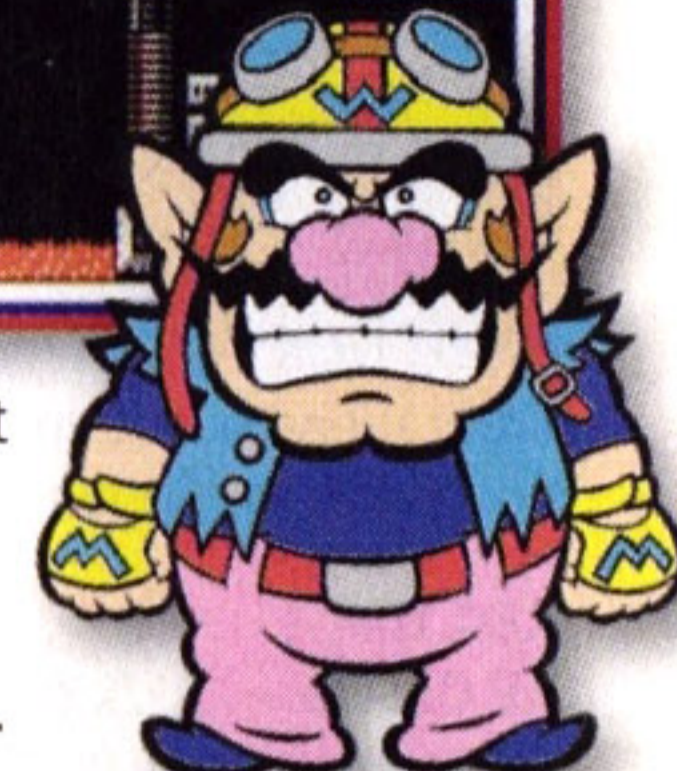
"The Game Molester"
Washington, D.C.

WARIO WARE INC: MEGA MICROGAMES



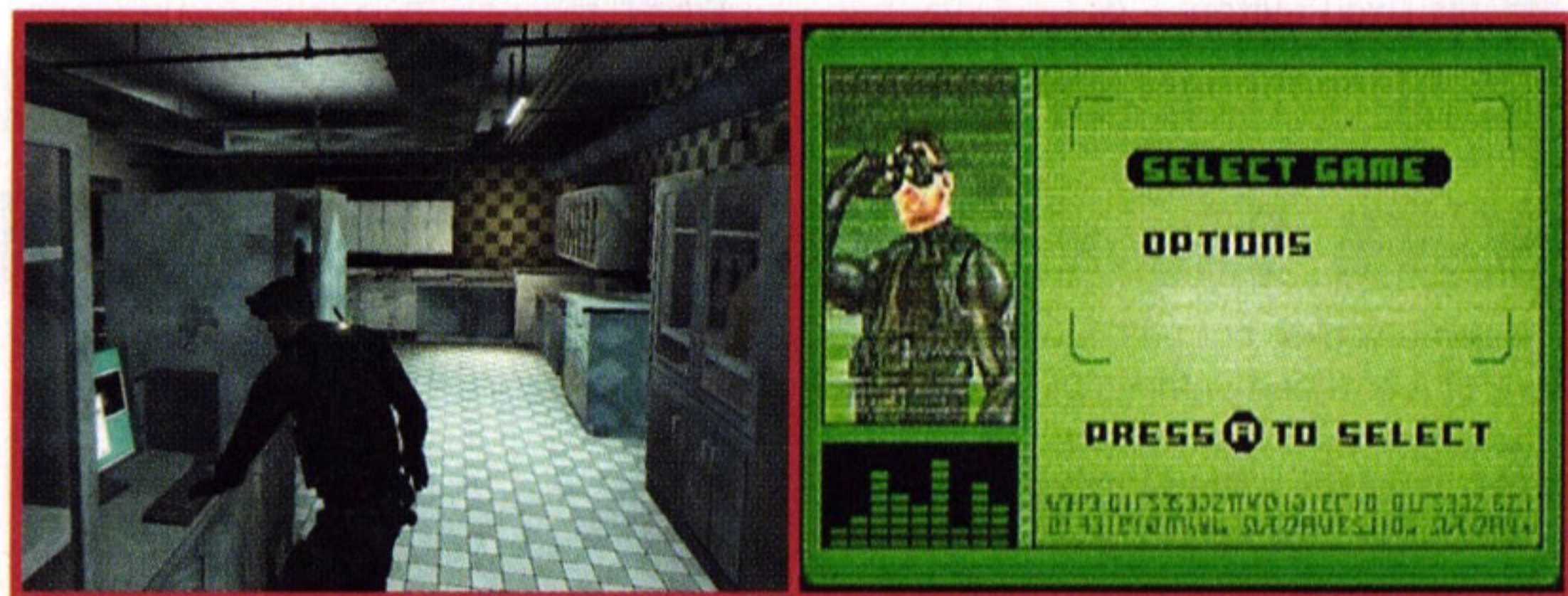
We haven't uncovered very many codes for this weird title yet, but this should hopefully tide you over.

Music Test – Choose the Change Names section at the Options screen. Pick OK to enter a name, but don't actually enter a name. Instead, press L to display the music test screen.



Naomi Klein
Seattle, WA

SPLINTER CELL

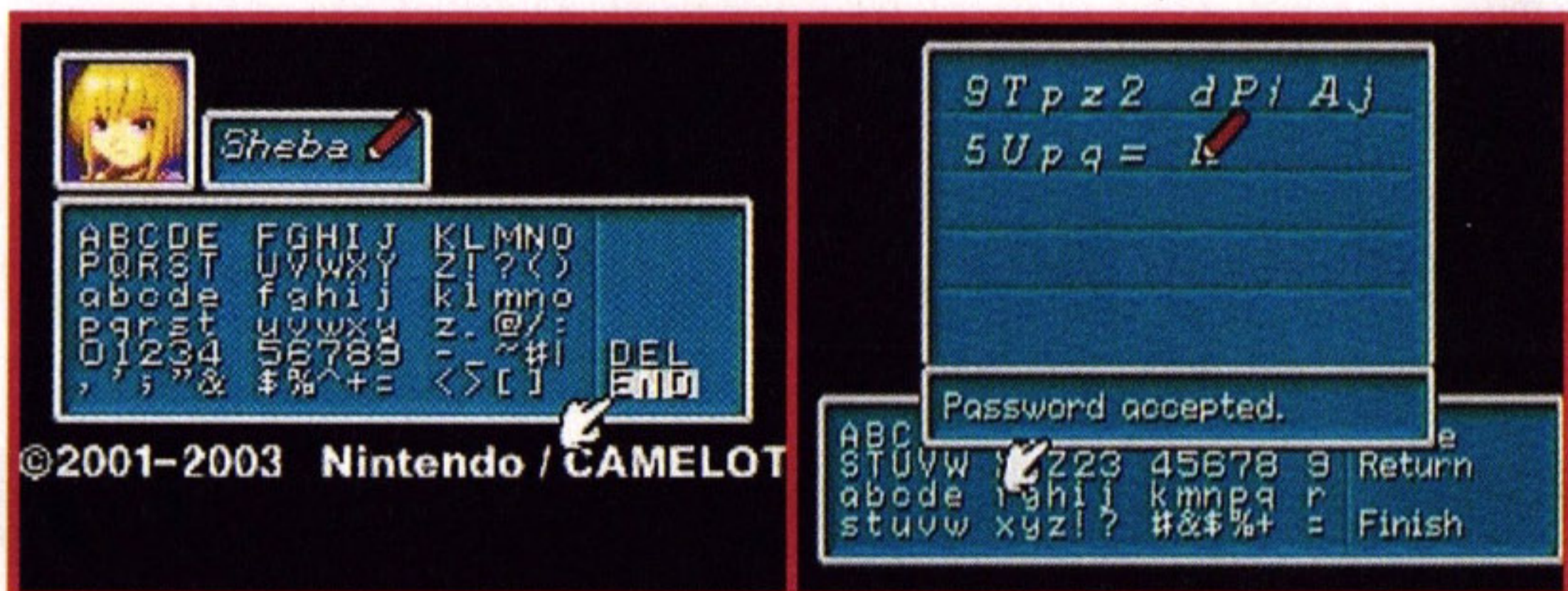


It may not be much, but consider yourself lucky if you happen to own a GBA.

Bonus Levels – If you link the Game Boy Advance to the GameCube version of Splinter Cell, you'll unlock five hidden levels in the handheld game. Take that Internet!

Kalle Lasn
Vancouver, British Columbia

GOLDEN SUN: THE LOST AGE



The Transfer Codes are a pain to input, but they are well worth it. If they don't seem to work, make sure you check your work. We promise they do, indeed, work.

Rename Characters – When you're prompted to enter a name for Felix, press Select (x3). When you enter a new name for Felix, you'll be allowed to rename Jenna, Sheba, and Picard. If you're playing a non-linked game, press Up, Down, Up, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, Up, Right, Down, Left, Up, Select to enter new names for Garet, Ivan, and Mia. A sound will confirm correct code entry.

Transfer codes

Bronze – 9Tpz2 dPIAj 5Upq= H

Silver – iQ8nh JyDZe Y&JG X9mrL 68#U7 2TmGC S7Xwd 6wmBL &y!ve hwajK g8Gpm C+pGk J

Jelly Biafra
Los Angeles, CA

YU-GI-OH! WORLDWIDE EDITION: STAIRWAY TO THE DESTINED DUEL



Hit R and go to the Misc icon. Select Password and enter the following codes to unlock the corresponding cards.

7 Colored Fish – 23771716
7 Completed – 86198326
Acid Crawler – 77568553
Acid Trap Hole – 41356845
Air Eater – 08353769
Akakieisu – 38035986
Akihirom – 36904469
Amphibious Bugroth – 40173854
Ancient Telescope – 17092736
Ancient Tool – 49587396
Anthrosaurus – 89904598
Anti-Magic Fragrance – 58921041
Anti-Raigeki – 42364257
Appropriate – 48539234
Aqua Chorus – 95132338
Arlownay – 14708569
Arma Knight – 36151751
Armaill – 53153481
Attic – 17238333
Axe of Despair – 40619825
Barox – 06840573
Bean Soldier – 84990171
Beast Fangs – 46009906
Beastking of the Swamps – 99426834
Big Insect – 53606874
Black Illusion Ritual – 41426869
Black Pendant – 65169794
Blackland Fire Dragon – 87564352
Bolt Escargot – 12146024
Bracchio-Raidus – 16507828
Breath of Light – 20101223
Bright Castle – 82878489
Burglar – 06297941
Call of the Dark – 78637313
Celtic Guardian – 91152256
Ceremonial Bell – 20228463
Change of Heart – 04031928
Cockroach Knight – 33413638
Confiscation – 17375316
Crow Goblin – 77998771
Cyber Jar – 34124316
Dancing Elf – 59983499
Dark Energy – 04614116
Dark-Eyes Illusionist – 38247752
Destroyer Golem – 73481154
DNA Surgery – 74701381
Dokuroizo the Grim Reaper – 25882881
Dorover – 24194033
Dream Clown – 13215230
Driving Snow – 00473469
Drooling Lizard – 16353197
Dryad – 84916669
Dungeon Worm – 51228280
Dust Tornado – 60082869
Earthshaker – 60866277
Eatgaboon – 42578427
Elf's Light – 39897277
Empress Judge – 15237615
Enchanting Mermaid – 75376965

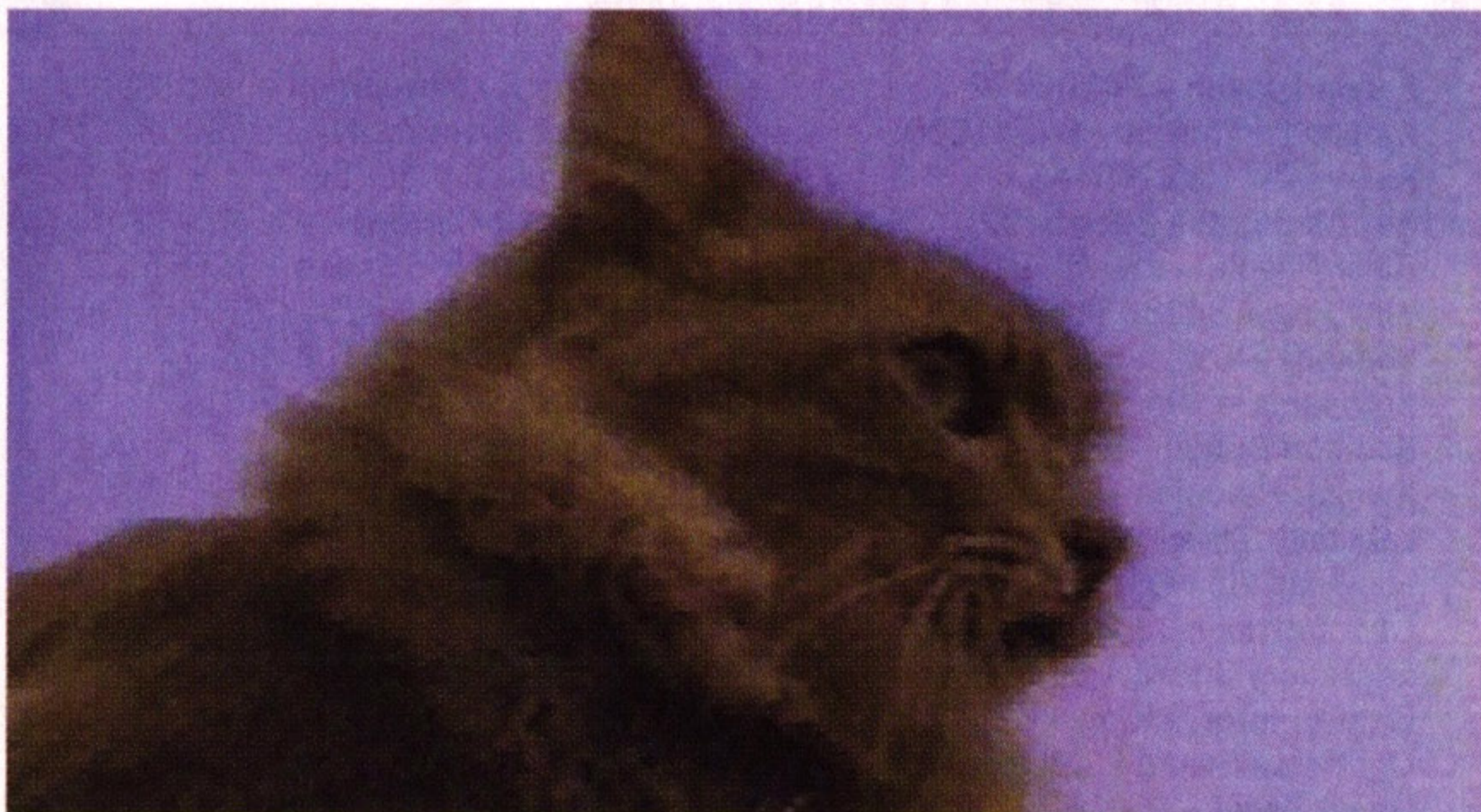
Eradicating Aerosol – 94716515
Eternal Draught – 56606928
Exchange – 05556668
Eyearmor – 64511793
Fairy Box – 21598948
Fiend Kraken – 77456781
Flying Kamakiri #1 – 84834865
Follow Wind – 98252586
Forced Requisition – 74923978
Forest – 87430998
Frenzied Panda – 98818516
Fusion Sage – 26902560
Fusionist – 01641882
Ganigumo – 34536276
Germ Infection – 24668830
Ghoul With an Appetite – 95265975
Giant Flea – 41762634
Gift of the Mystical Elf – 98299011
Giganto – 33621868
Giga-Tech Wolf – 08471389
Giltia the D. Knight – 51828629
Goblin Fan – 04149689
Goblin's Secret Remedy – 11868825
Goddess of Whim – 67959180
Gokibore – 15367030
Graceful Charity – 79571449
Great Bill – 55691901
Griggle – 95744531
Ground Attacker Bugroth – 58314394
Gruesome Goo – 65623423
Gryphon Wing – 55608151
Gust – 73079365
Gust Fan – 55321970
Gyakutenno Megami – 31122090
Hane-Hane – 07089711
Hercules Beetle – 52584282
Hibikime – 64501875
High Tide Gyojin – 54579801
Hinotama – 46130346
Hitotsu-Me Giant – 76184692
Holograh – 10859908
Hourglass of Courage – 43530283
Hunter Spider – 80141480
Hyo – 38982356
Hyosube – 02118022
Hyozanryu – 62397231
Ice Water – 20848593
Ill Witch – 81686058
Imperial Order – 61740673
Invader of the Throne – 03056267
Invigoration – 98374133
Jar of Greed – 83968380
Jellyfish – 14851496
Jigen Bakudan – 90020065
Jinzo – 77585513
Judge Man – 30113682
Just Desserts – 24068492
Kageningen – 80600490
Kairyu-Shin – 76634149

Kaiser Dragon – 94566432
Karbonala Warrior – 54541900
Kattapillar – 81179446
Key Mace #2 – 20541432
Killer Needle – 88979991
King Fog – 84686841
Kojikocy – 01184620
Kotodama – 19406822
Koumori Dragon – 67724379
Kwagar Hercules – 95144193
Labyrinth Tank – 99551425
Laughing Flower – 42591472
Lava Battleguard – 20394040
Legendary Sword – 61854111
Light of Intervention – 62867251
Lightforce Sword – 49587034
Liquid Beast – 93108297
Lord of D – 17985575
Malevolent Nuzzler – 99597615
Mammoth Graveyard – 40374923
Man Eater – 93553943
Man-Eating Plant – 49127943
Metalzoa – 50705071
Millennium Golem – 47986555
Misairuzame – 33178416
Mountain Warrior – 04931562
Mr. Volcano – 31477025
Muka Muka – 46657337
Musician King – 56907389
Mysterious Puppeteer – 54098121
Mystic Tomato – 83011277
Needle Ball – 94230224
Nekogal #1 – 01761063
Nimble Momonga – 22567609
Niwatori – 07805359
Nobleman of Crossout – 71044499
Numinous Healer – 02130625
Octoberser – 74637266
Ocubeam – 86088138
Ogre of the Black Shadow – 45121025
One-Eyed Shield Dragon – 33064647
Ooguchi – 58861941
Oscillo Hero – 82065276
Oscillo Hero #2 – 27324313
Painful Choice – 74191942
Parrot Dragon – 62762898
Patrol Robo – 76775123
Peacock – 20624263
Pendulum Machine – 24433920
Penguin Knight – 36039163
Penguin Soldier – 93920745
Practical – 33691040
Protector of the Throne – 10071456
Psychic Kappa – 07892180
Punished Eagle – 74703140
Queen Bird – 73081602
Raimei – 56260110
Rain of Dark Magic – 27827272
Rainbow Flower – 21347810
Raise Body Heat – 51267887
Rare Fish – 80516007
Ray & Temperature – 85309439
Reaper of the Cards – 33066139
Reinforcements – 17814387

Restructer Revolution – 99518961
Ring of Magnetism – 20436034
Riryoku – 34016756
Rising Air Current – 45778932
Roaring Ocean Snake – 19066538
Royal Guard – 39239728
Rude Kaiser – 26378150
Rush Recklessly – 70046172
Ryu-Kishin – 15303296
Ryu-Kishin Powered – 24611934
Ryu-Ran – 02964201
Saber Slasher – 73911410
Saggi the Dark Clown – 66602787
Salamandra – 32268901
Sand Stone – 73051941
Sangan – 26202165
Sea Kamen – 71746462
Sea King Dragon – 23659124
Shovel Crusher – 71950093
Silver Bow and Arrow – 01557499
Silver Fang – 90357090
Sinister Serpent – 08131171
Skelengel – 60694662
Skelgon – 32355828
Skull Dice – 00126218
Slot Machine – 03797883
Snake Fang – 00596051
Sogen – 86318356
Sparks – 76103675
Steel Ogre Grotto #1 – 29172562
Stim-Pack – 83225447
Swordstalker – 50005633
Tailor of the Fickle – 43641473
Tainted Wisdom – 28725004
Takriminos – 44073668
Takuhee – 03170832
Tao the Chanter – 46247516
Thousand Knives – 63391643
Three-Legged Zombies – 33734439
Thunder Dragon – 31786629
Time Wizard – 71625222
Tongyo – 69572024
Tripwire Beast – 45042329
Two-Pronged Attack – 83887306
Tyhone – 72842870
UFO Turtle – 60806437
Ultimate Offering – 80604091
Umi – 22702055
Umiiruka – 82999629
Unknown Warrior of Fiend – 97360116
Upstart Goblin – 70368879
Uraby – 01784619
Vile Germs – 39774685
Violent Rain – 94042337
Vorse Raider – 14898066
Waboku – 12607053
Wasteland – 23424603
Weather Report – 72053645
White Hole – 43487744
Witch's Apprentice – 80741828
Witty Phantom – 36304921
Yaiba Robo – 10315429
Yaranzo – 71280811
Zombie Warrior – 31339260



CLASSIC GI



SEGA CD FMV GAMES: THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE GRAINY

In hindsight, full-motion video (FMV) games are seen as a curious link in video game's evolutionary chain. Reviled by most players for their one-dimensional gameplay, notoriously B-movie acting, short play time, and (in most cases) multiple-disc requirements; there is still a fierce contingent of nostalgic gamers burning for more FMV.

FMV games are usually classified by their use of digitized video or animation for all onscreen action and plot development. While current titles have eschewed real actors appearing in video games almost entirely, the early 90's saw Sega put forth a Herculean push toward developing the new concept. It saw the technology as a perfect example of what its forthcoming Sega CD was capable of.

Although Sega was the first to mass-produce FMV titles, it was actually a failed attempt by Hasbro that started the efforts of bringing Dragon's Lair's (an arcade favorite at the time) technology into American homes. In the late '80s, the toy maker invested huge sums of money into the development of an interactive videotape console codenamed NEMO. NEMO's technology worked by encoding a number of tracks onto a

modified VHS tape and the console would switch between tracks based on the user's selections in games. One million dollars was spent recording footage, developing the video compression technology, and producing a prototype. Tom Zito had masterminded the FMV plans for NEMO; and when leading retailer Toys 'R Us refused to carry the product, Zito's team at Hasbro was let go and he retained the rights to their work.

The fruit of NEMO's labor, a game called Sewer Shark, had full-color VHS-quality images, lasted 34 minutes, and was completed in 12 weeks. Although Zito felt strongly that FMV was the true future of gaming, he lacked the financial backing of a major corporation to make more titles. Sewer Shark would spend the next few years wallowing in a storage locker.

In the early '90s, Sega was battling a fierce competition with Nintendo and its recently released SNES system. The company was looking for a whole new kind of game to show off the Sega CD. With Sewer Shark rotting in public storage, Zito had heard through friends that Sega had been asking about NEMO's FMV technology. He then formed Digital Pictures to strike up a deal with the

Japanese company – effectively ensuring his ability to make more FMV games with a corporate-sized budget. Launched stateside in 1992, the Sega CD came to the U.S. bundled with Sewer Shark.

By the time Sega CD shipped, Digital Pictures had two offerings for the FMV format: Sewer Shark and Night Trap. Before the backlash against FMV and its shortcomings, Zito had asserted that, "Once kids start interacting with live video, they'll never go back."

FMV games, and Zito, banked on the idea that everyone really wanted to star in their own movie and have control of its characters. Along this vein, Digital Pictures went on to produce almost all of the Sega CD-era FMV titles (around 15 games, give or take) covering themes as divergent as sports, shooters, mysteries, and a truly unfortunate series of "Make My Video" titles featuring Marky Mark and Kris Kross, among others.

Scott Miller, president of 3DRealms and ex-NEMO alumni, pointed out that, "FMV (full motion video) games failed because they lacked possibilities, one of the two key components of gameplay. In general, FMV games offer very few options for players to develop personal and varied strategies."



POPULAR GENRES

With video scenes as their main selling point, FMV games didn't have much to offer when it came to gameplay options. Here is a listing of some of the most popular genres, along with a few examples of each.

CURSOR FIRE

This is by far the most common genre for FMV games. It's also the easiest to make. Basically, you let the computer deliver you to a set location, then aim the cursor at things to shoot them. The aiming is awful and slow, since most don't support any light gun peripherals. Variations include *Ground Zero, Texas*, where you shoot aliens disguised as rednecks with the lamest fake guns imaginable; *Midnight Raiders*, where you play a helicopter gunner on a "Top Secret" mission; and *Tomcat Alley*, a fighter plane title where you spend more time hitting the button on the map's little orange triangles than actual enemy aircraft. If a Sega CD title plays like an Atari 2600 game, this is probably the category it's in.



Ground Zero, Texas



Midnight Raiders

THE TRAPPER

Not all FMV games require gunfire. These use a slightly less violent approach to dispatch enemies. In *Night Trap* and *Double Switch*, you preside over a building full of innocents. When bad guys show up, you set traps in particular areas. As the ghoul hits his mark, spring the trap, and watch them exit stage left. These generally require multitasking, as you're watching over several rooms or areas.



Night Trap



Double Switch

TRACK-BASED

These are similar to the cursor fire games, but you have a little more control over your movement. Most likely, you're navigating a simplistic maze, trying to reach a goal. *Sewer Shark* and *Loadstar: Legend of Tully Bodine* are the two best examples of this. In one, you're shooting mutant rats in a repetitive sewer. In the other, you're piloting a futuristic freight train while blasting traffic cop robots.



Sewer Shark

"Once kids start interacting with live video, they'll never go back."

**TOM ZITO,
DIGITAL PICTURES FOUNDER**



Loadstar: Legend of Tully Bodine

ONE-ON-ONE FIRST-PERSON



Prize Fighter

This type of gameplay takes place in the first-person perspective, but they're not the type of games you'd expect to play this way. You will normally be prompted to execute button presses or directional taps at specific times to "interact" with the onscreen action. Think *Dragon's Lair*, but with sandy images instead of cartoons. Winning generally relied on patience coupled with quick reflexes. *Slam City* used the one-on-one perspective for basketball – pitting your player against four other ballers on the way to taking on NBA All-Star, Scottie Pippen. *Supreme Warrior* used this same formula, but with a chop-sockey movie backdrop. Likewise with *Prize Fighter*, using black and white boxing scenes to try to capture gamers' attention.



Slam City

CELEBRITIES APPEARING IN FMV GAMES

Corey Haim – Double Switch

Debbie Harry (Blondie) – Double Switch

Dana Plato (Diff'rent Strokes) – Night Trap

Mark Wahlberg – Make My Video: Marky Mark

C&C Music Factory – Power Factory

Kriss Kross – Make My Video: Kriss Kross

INXS – Make My Video: INXS

Scottie Pippen – Slam City

Michael Buffer – Prize Fighter

Ned Beatty – Loadstar: The Legend of Tully Bodine



Corey Haim



Ned Beatty

GREATEST GAME OF ALL TIME

By Ben Landrum

Every month one of Game Informer's readers picks his or her personal choice for Greatest Game Of All Time.



TERRANIGMA

■ **FORMAT** SUPER NINTENDO
 ■ **PUBLISHER** ENIX

Towards the end of Super Nintendo's life, when PlayStation was dominating the console game market, Enix denied American gamers an extremely innovative, entertaining, and visually appealing game.



Terranigma, the third game in Enix's action/RPG Soul Blazer series (including Illusion of Gaia), boasted some of the most jaw-dropping visuals and memorable music that video games have to offer.

Aside from the commendable technical aspects of Terranigma, its content immortalized the game. The protagonist of Terranigma is Ark, a mischievous young man whose goal is to recreate a post-apocalyptic world. He had to resurrect continents, help plants cover the naked Earth, populate the world with beasts, and restore the human race to bring the planet back to its former glory. The plot reflects our world's societal development through allusions to inventors like Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Edison and locations that mirror real-world places.

Terranigma's combat is fast-paced, and its secrets are many. Ark must use his trusty rod, his magical powers, and his wits to fulfill his grand quest. What are the consequences of Ark's seemingly benevolent actions? This is an adventure you will not want to miss.

FMV GETS AN F

Explaining why full-motion video games didn't succeed can easily escalate into a rant that would take more pages than this entire issue contains. First off, the video quality is, was, and always will be pathetically poor. The resolution is awful, compression further worsened matters, and the Genesis' onscreen colors limit is way too small (64, but increased through "cheats") to accommodate this medium. Ports on more advanced systems (3DO and Sega's 32X CD

combo and Saturn) give better video quality, but prove this wasn't the only problem. Once the novelty of FMV wears off, you're left with some of the least interactive "games" ever released. Nobody wanted to pay \$50 for low-budget movie footage coupled with gameplay that consisted of no more than a few button presses. These products will forever remain speed bumps on the highway of innovation.

THIS MONTH IN GAMING HISTORY

After three long years of limited announcements, the Nintendo 64 was released in Japan on June 23, 1996. Featuring a revolutionary controller, SGI technology, and the legendary Super Mario 64 game; the console sold nearly 300,000 units on the first day alone. While Nintendo had been resting on its laurels with the SNES, Sony's PlayStation was staking claim in America's living

rooms. The N64 (which debuted in the U.S. in September of '96) had nearly double the power of the PSone, but used cartridges instead of CD-ROM disks for software storage. Later, the N64 would be remembered as the last home console to feature cartridges and the happy home to one of the most influential games to date: Super Mario 64.



CLASSIC REVIEWS

ARCADE

DIG DUG



Going into battle, most people wouldn't choose an air pump as their sole means of defense, but Dig Dug manages it nicely. This is a true arcade classic, featuring loads of levels with increasing difficulty, clever enemies, and an intriguing way to attack. Dig Dug, an underground explorer, inflates his adversaries until they pop like balloons. Rocks are also placed around the levels for the purpose of dropping on victims' heads – just make sure you're not under one when it falls. This game has many distinct strategies, and everyone who plays it does so in a unique way. Some go for quick pops, while others aim to trick the Pookas (they look like Crunch Berries with goggles) and Fygars (fire-breathing dragons) to their deaths. It has an addictive quality that only the classic games of the early eighties can boast. Mr. and Ms. Pac-Man may be Namco's famous couple, but Dig Dug deserves many accolades, too. He's able to defend himself, he eats his vegetables, and he's rumored to be the father of current Namco superstar Mr. Driller!

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI ■ **DEVELOPER** NAMCO
 ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1982

ARCADE

CRYSTAL CASTLES

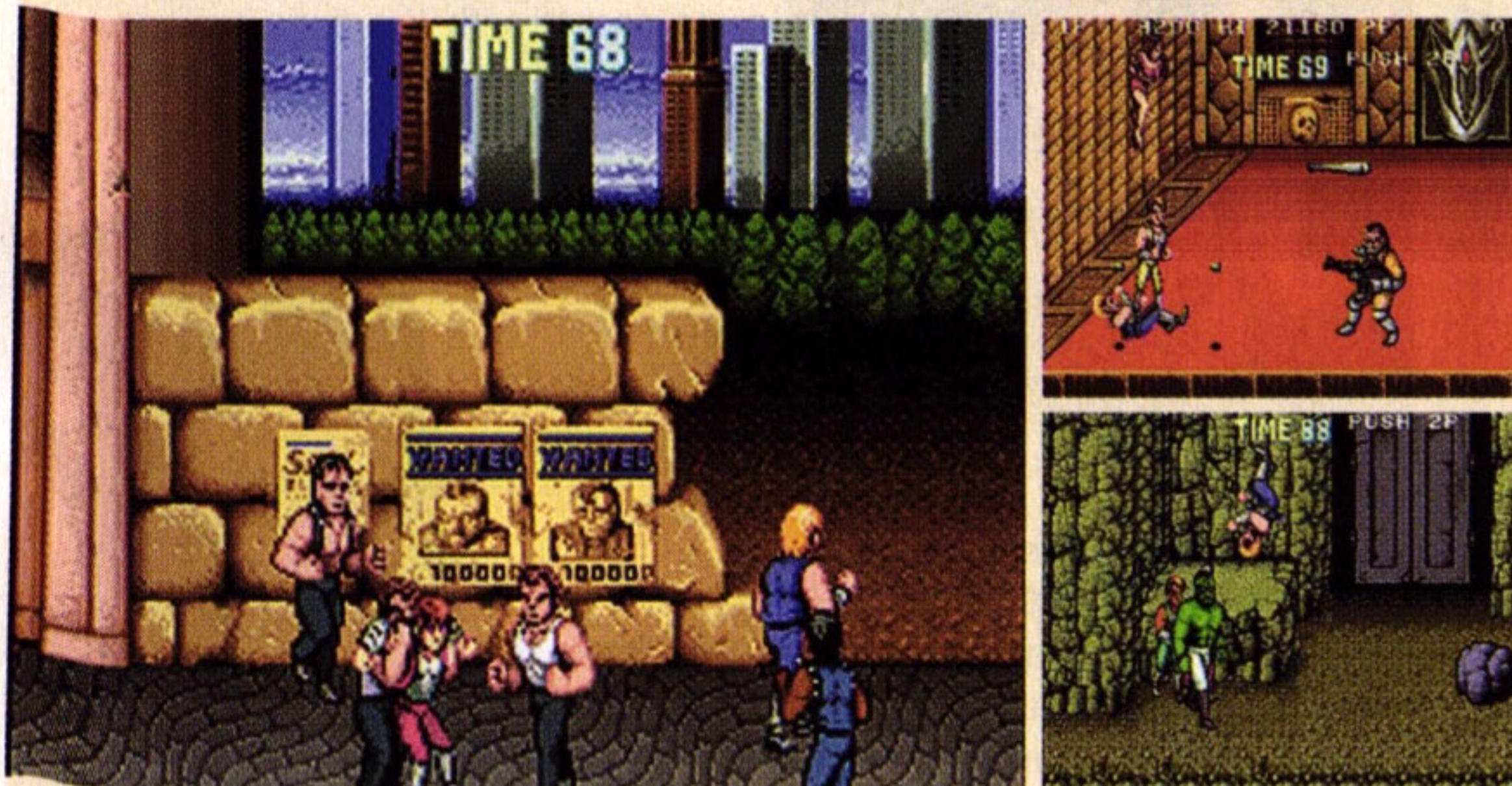


Overlooked despite its beauty and innovation, Crystal Castles is one of gaming's most under-appreciated titles. Sure, Centipede used the Trak-Ball first; but this game did so in a maze-like, character-based fashion – which resulted in some of the most accurate control around. Pilot your bear to gather all the gems on the multi-layered stages wrought with elevators, secret passages, and shortcuts. The enemies are among the strangest of the era, and they too are going after the level's booty. You have to decide which gems to leave for them, and which to snap up. Some baddies will seek you out if they're not chomping jewels; the same goes for the swarm of bees, who don't want you touching their honey. Of course, an evil witch is behind this conspiracy, and she does her share of tormenting you. The only problem with Crystal Castles is that it isn't the same if you aren't playing it with a Trak-Ball – which is hard to come by for console ports of this great game.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER ACTION ■ **PUBLISHER** ATARI ■ **DEVELOPER** ATARI
 ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1983

ARCADE

DOUBLE DRAGON

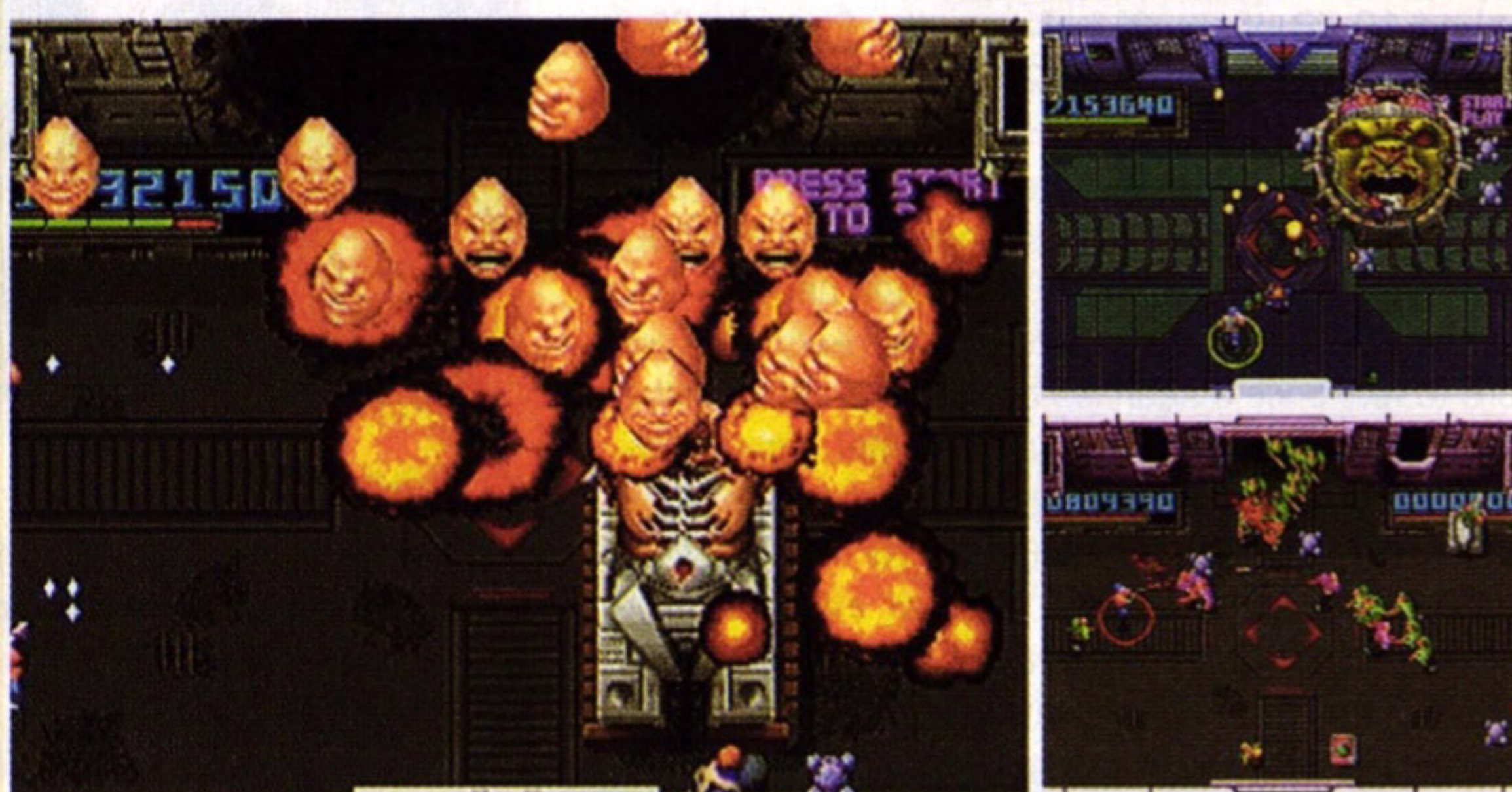


Eight years ahead of its time, Double Dragon set the standard for the side-scrolling beat 'em up. Picking either Spike or Hammer, it's a race to get your girlfriend back (or your brother's girlfriend, which doesn't make a whole lot of sense – but whatever). Deviously clever thugs and gangsters wait at every turn – armed with bats, knives, whips, and even boulders. These include ogre-like Abobos, a 'fro-sporting dominatrix, and a machine-gun wielding end boss. The environment can be your worst enemy, as pitfalls and broken bridges could spell quick doom. Thankfully, the protagonists have more moves than the entire cast of *Breakin' 2: Electric Boogaloo*. These include having some of the first combos and special moves in video games. Who can forget the almighty power of the back elbow (executed by pressing jump and punch simultaneously while facing away from an adversary)? Console ports have been entertaining, but they can't match the sharp graphics and sweet action of the original arcade Double Dragon.

■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER FIGHTING ■ **PUBLISHER** TAITO ■ **DEVELOPER** TECHNOS
 ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1987

ARCADE

SMASH TV



Despite technology's constant strides, shooters seem more impervious to time's unavoidable effects than other genres – simply because their attraction mainly depends on their ability to elicit nonstop excitement. Smash TV remains a shooting extravaganza nearly on par with classics such as Robotron and Asteroids. The objective is simple: Destroy floods of enemies, avoid various traps, and meet challenges as you pass through a series of tiny rooms – all while collecting as many prizes and cash bonuses as possible. Although the formula is addictive, the ensuing chaos often overwhelms the player. This translates into cheap, unavoidable deaths, ultimately removing the player from the highly desired Zen-like state. If Midway mellowed out the gameplay by roughly 25 percent, we would've easily elevated this rating by a point. Nevertheless, whether you're a collector or a gamer searching out quality action titles, Smash TV is every bit as good as it was 13 years ago.

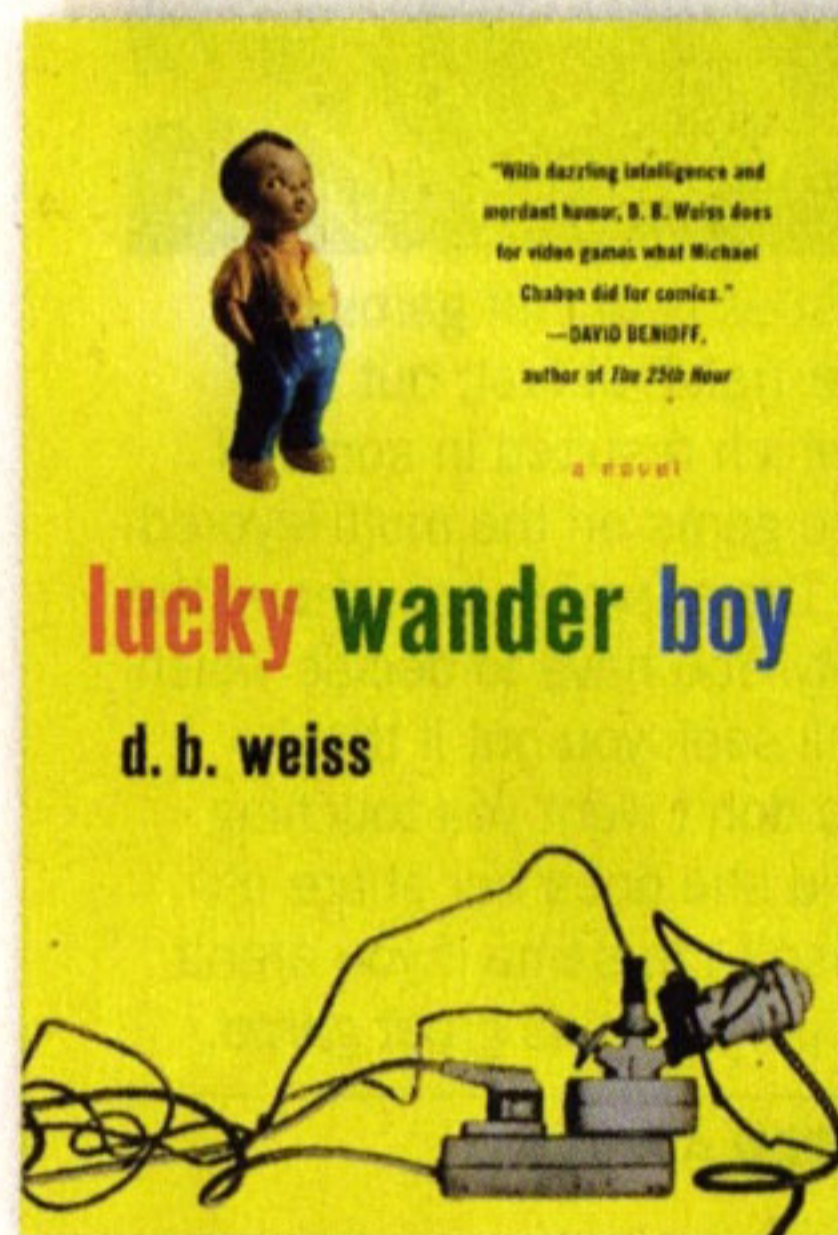
■ **STYLE** 1 OR 2-PLAYER SHOOTER ■ **PUBLISHER** WILLIAMS ■ **DEVELOPER** WILLIAMS
 ■ **YEAR RELEASED** 1990

LUCKY WANDER BOY

Manufacturer: Plume Books
Website: luckywanderboy.com
List Price: \$13.00

Will Wright said, "I really enjoyed this book. D.B. Weiss uses classic video games as a form of modern mythology, a template to understand life." *Playboy* even went so far as to compare the novel to *High Fidelity*; perhaps the most pop-culture-reference laden book to come out in a decade. What *Lucky Wander Boy* does in novel form is describe the world of a Hollywood drone that harbors an extraordinary fascination with Lucky Wander Boy, the title character of a fictitious 80's game that no one seems to have ever beaten. Mixed into the plot

is a plethora of video game references and observations that have earned D.B. Weiss an impressive number of positive reviews. Come on, you guys need to read *something* once in a while; it might as well be about games.



ER-6 ISOLATOR EARPHONES

Manufacturer: Etymotic Research
Website: etymotic.com • **List Price:** \$139.00

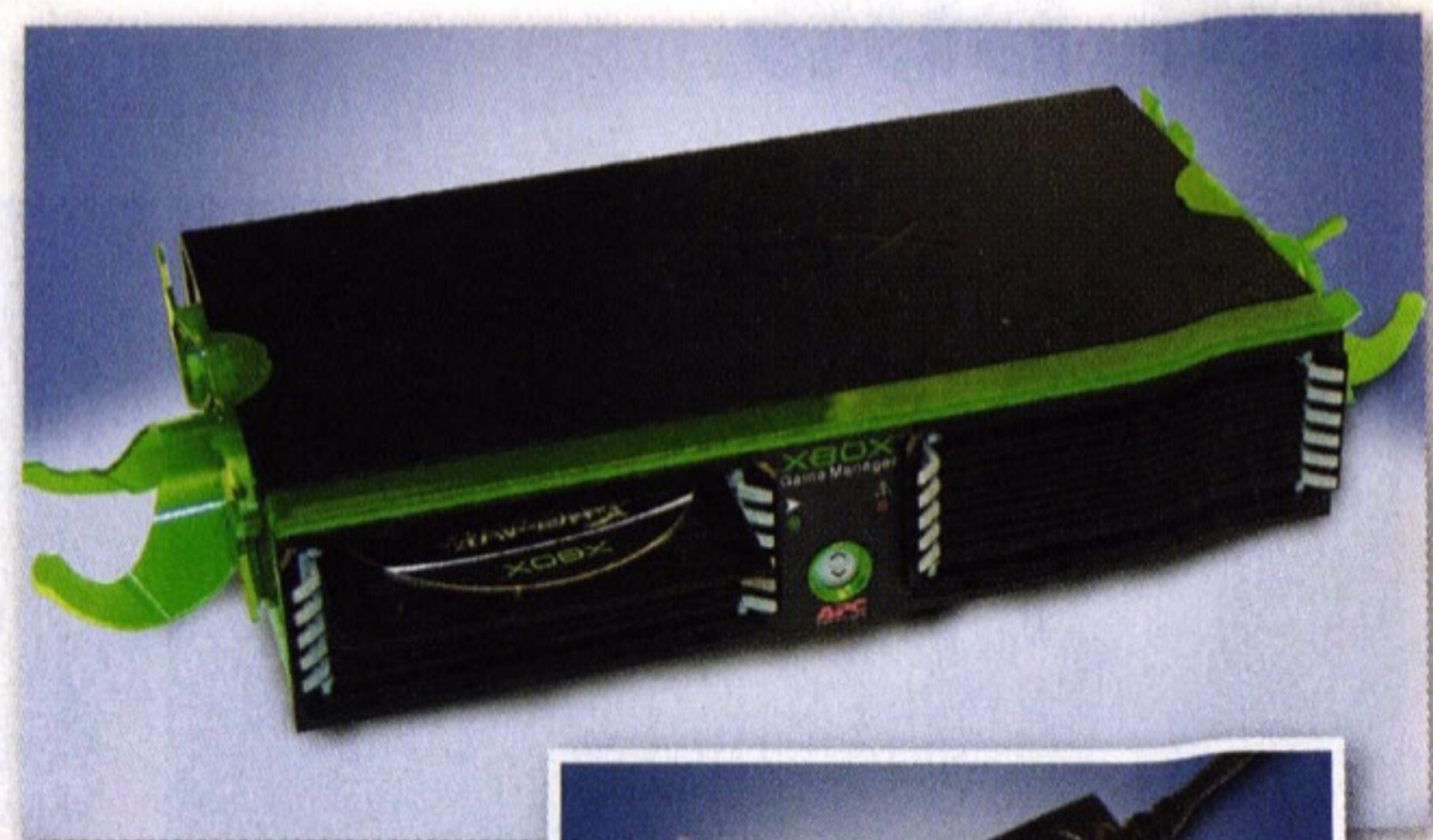
While most noise-canceling headphones promise around 10 dB of sound isolation, the Etymotic ER-6 Isolator Earphones offer 15-20 dB without the added weight of batteries required by other models. These earphones are more like earbuds that form a seal inside your ear canal. While the design sounds about as comfortable as sticking long, hot needles into your eye sockets, the included silicone earpieces are hard to feel once a seal has been made. Other noise-canceling headphones use an external microphone to detect outside noise and generate an opposite frequency to cancel out the sound; these little buggers, on the other hand, literally seal out external noise – thus eliminating the chatter of cubical neighbors or babies on planes. Technology is cool, man.



XBOX GAME MANAGER AND SURGE PROTECTORS

Manufacturer: APC • **Website:** apcc.com
List Price: \$14.99 (Seven outlet Surge Protector), \$29.99 (Eight outlet Surge Protector), \$39.99-\$49.99 (Xbox Game Manager)

APC (American Power Conversion) is mostly known for high-end surge protectors and battery backup units geared to corporate fileservers and those of us that live in old apartments with questionable wiring. Now APC wants to crack into the plump, video game pie with a line of Xbox accessories. While each sport a coordinating color scheme inspired by their Xbox muse, the features vary between models and price points. The \$14.99 model features seven outlets, one of which is spaced out to accommodate brick-like power supplies. Double the price and you get eight outlets and modem/cable TV/ethernet jacks. The Xbox Game Manager sports six outlets, two disc-storage units, as well as storage for four memory cards and two controllers.



SCOURGE OF WORLDS

Manufacturer: Rhino Home Video • **Website:** scourgeofworlds.com
List Price: \$24.95

Remember the *Choose Your Own Adventure* books from the '80s? You know, the ones where you read a few pages and then have to make a choice: "To steal the Mona Lisa from the fleeing thief, turn to Page 87. To hide behind the display case like a cowering monkey, turn to page 122." Rhino Home Video and DKP Effects (Canada's largest 3D animation and effects studio) are joining forces to bring the same premise to DVD with a Dungeons & Dragons theme. Available June 10, the DVD boasts more than 20 decision points, four different endings, and just over 900 possible story combinations. In addition, a special edition of the adventure (available this fall) will come packed with two extra endings, 15 minutes of additional footage, a "Making Of" featurette, and an exclusive pre-painted plastic miniature.



GAMEPAK

Manufacturer: Lasr Accessories • **Website:** lasraccessories.com
List Price: \$34.99 (PlayStation 2 and GameCube), \$39.99 (Xbox)

Wow, a console-toting backpack that is actually functional! Each system gets its own customized layout, to ensure a beautiful working relationship between you and your traveling machine. The backpacks proudly feature a design scheme that lets you play without unpacking the bag. A zippered panel on the bottom allows for cord connections, and the "padded for your protection" storage area has ventilation holes to prevent overheating. In addition, two memory card cubbies, eight non-scratch disc slots, a game manual pouch, and a handful of pockets for controllers and cables round out the package. Admittedly, the Xbox bag is proportioned for Andre the Giant, but the GameCube and PS2 models look enough like normal backpacks to not call extra attention to themselves.





YOU ARE TEX.

YOU ARE HAWK.

YOU ARE BRUTUS.

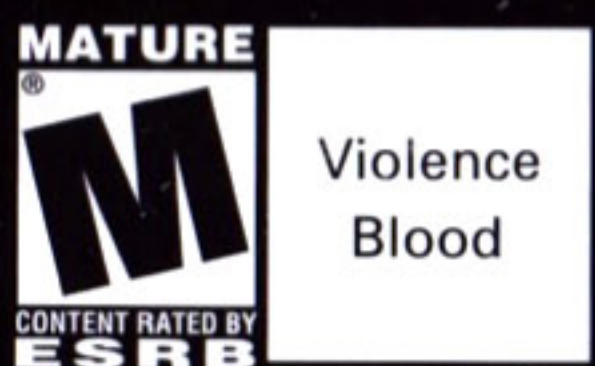
YOU ARE FLINT.



YOU ARE BRUTE FORCE.

www.bruteforcegame.com

The year is 2340 and more than fifty star systems are populated with colonies. But when an alien invasion threatens to put every living organism on the endangered species list, the Confederation of worlds must dispatch its elite special forces unit, code-named Brute Force. That's you. As Brute Force, you command four separate intergalactic mercenaries. The trigger-happy assault trooper, cyborg sniper, stealthy assassin and feral alien are all played by you. As you guide these shooters through 20+ missions and 6 exotic worlds, your knowledge of squad based combat will be severely tested. Depending on the danger at hand, you'll need to utilize the right Brute Force member for the job. Whether you play alone or in co-op mode, the battles escalate, the plot thickens and the violence gets addictive. It's an experience of such epic proportion that it could only exist on Xbox. Good luck. To all four of you.



BRUTE FORCE
DANGEROUS ALONE DEADLY TOGETHER



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Savage by nature.

*Play as young knight, Seig Wahrheit, who must face off
against an old friend in this gothic action adventure.*

*To fight, summon and command seven different warrior legions
each with their own signature weaponry.*

*Chaos Legion...a graphic masterpiece and savage gothic opera
played out over 13 levels of real time, cut-throat action!*

*"If you loved Devil May Cry,
you'll love Chaos Legion!" - PSM*

CHAOS LEGION



PlayStation 2

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Blood
Violence