2007 YEARBOOK SPECIAL ISSUE - The Year in Gaming

HYPER

101 Games You Must Own!

TOP 10 ANIME
The best animation of 2007!

BUYER'S GUIDE
Build the best PC for your budget

Inside World of WARCRAFT
How Blizzard changed the face of massively multiplayer gaming!

GAME OF THE YEAR NOMINEES
Vote for your favourites!

REVIEWED
MARIO GALAXY
The greatest game on the Wii is here!

REVIEWED
MASS EFFECT
Bioware redefines the console RPG!

A next MAGAZINE

72

9 771320 745025

172 FEBRUARY 2008
$8.90 INC GST NZ$9.90 INC GST

Unleash the Elements
Fight the Dark

Dark Messiah™ Might and Magic® Elements

Groundbreaking multiplayer warfare with up to 10 players and 4 different modes.

Use the environment as your best weapon with Valve's revolutionary source engine.

www.darkmessiahelements.com

MA 15+ RESTRICTED — Strong violence

XBOX 360™

ARKANE STUDIOS

UBISOFT®

© 2008 Ubisoft Entertainment. All Rights Reserved. Dark Messiah Might and Magic, Might and Magic, Ubisoft, Ubi.com, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Developed by Ubisoft Entertainment and Arkane Studios. Valve and Source are trademarks or registered trademarks of Valve Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. Dark Messiah Might and Magic Elements uses Havok®. © Copyright 1999 –2008 Havok.com Inc. (and its Licensors). All Rights Reserved. See www.havok.com for details. Uses Bink Video. ©1997–2008 by RAD Game Tools, Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies.

Contents

HYPER YEARBOOK 2007

05 Editorial

07 101 Games You Must Own
Everyone loves talking about their games collections, using their past purchases to pump up their geek cred. For the first time ever, Hyper delves into its archives, memories and past loves to run down the 101 games we think belong in every gamer's collection.

30 2007 Score List
Every score for every game reviewed in Hyper in 2007, listed from highest to lowest for your convenience and pleasure.

34 2007 A Year In Review
Eleanor Eiffe looks back through the year just passed to examine the highs and lows, important news stories and strange goings on from the world of gaming.

48 Game of the Year Nominations
The time has come for you to vote for your games of the year – Nominees for the various categories within!

54 Inside World of Warcraft
With over 9 million active players, World of Warcraft is the benchmark not only for MMOs but also success. We talk to Blizzard to see how their game's unmitigated success has changed the way they make games.

60 Subscriptions

62 Reviews

74 PC Buyer's Guide
Building a PC can be a bit of a daunting task so we've taken a look at what you can do when your budget is restrictive, reasonable or Rockefeller.

80 The History of Mario
To commemorate the release of the brilliant Super Mario Galaxy, Matthew Williams takes a look back at the most successful franchise in the history of gaming.

86 Top 10 Anime and Film/ DVD Releases of 2007

90 Mail

92 War Games
Michael Bay blows his mouth off about Blu-Ray and HD-DVD...again

93 Bad Cop No Doughnut
Tragically, 2007 was the year we forgot to love games

94 Land of the Rising Fun
Some of the best games of the year never saw the light outside of Japan

95 Collections
Meet John Passfield, Creative Director of Pandemic

96 The Passion of the Gamer
Upon time and of its acting like a real bastard

97 Development Hell
Total Bastard: The Game

98 Charts

Reviews

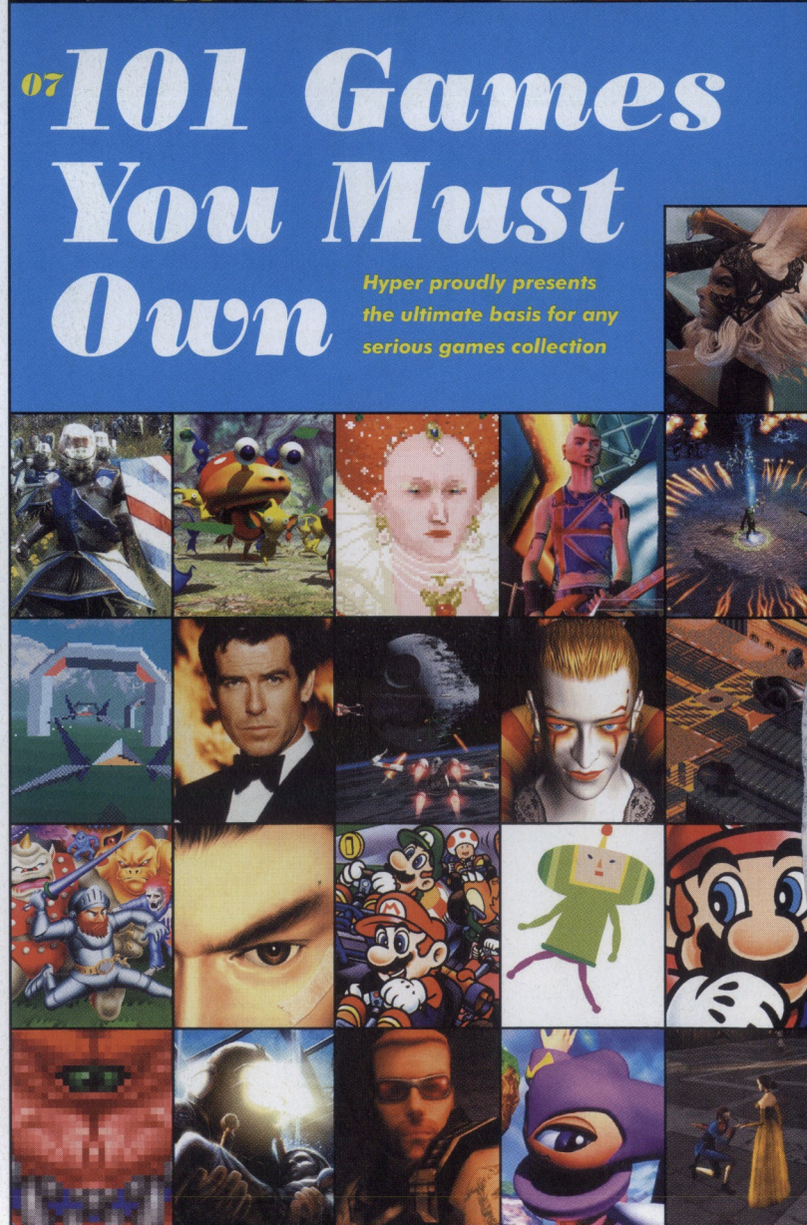
62 Super Mario Galaxy
66 Mass Effect
68 Unreal Tournament 3
70 Crysis
72 Mario Party DS
72 Geometry Wars: Galaxies
72 Resident Evil Umbrella Chronicles

62 SUPER MARIO GALAXY

66 MASS EFFECT

07 101 Games You Must Own

Hyper proudly presents the ultimate basis for any serious games collection



HYPER»

FEBRUARY 2008 ISSUE 172

WRITE TO HYPER!
78 Renwick St, Redfern
NSW 2016, Australia
Ph: (02) 9699 0333
Fax: (02) 9310 1315
E-mail: *freakscene@next.com.au*

EDITORIAL
Editor: **Daniel Wilks**
Deputy Editor: **Maurice Branscombe**
Sub Editor: **Daniel Findlay**
Art Director: **Malcolm Campbell**
Designer: **Richard Hull**

CONTRIBUTORS
Jonti Davies, Dominic Bayley, Van Hammersley, Dirk Watch, Christian Read, Christopher Taylor, Dylan Burns, Rico Suavez, Eleanor Eiffe, Erin Marcon, Matthew Williams.

ADVERTISING
Advertising Managers:
Gavin Hazelwood
E-mail: *gavinh@next.com.au*
Ph: (02) 9699 0349
Jeremy Wood
E-mail: *jeremyw@next.com.au*
Ph: (02) 9699 0340

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Subscription Co-ordinator:
Digby Naude
Customer Service: **Justine Lynch**
For all Subscription enquiries phone:
(02) 9699 0320
(02) 9699 0327
Email: subs@next.com.au

MANAGEMENT
Publisher: **Phillip Keir**
Operations Director: **Melissa James**

PRODUCTION
Production Co-ordinator:
Leiani Reardon
E-mail: *leianir@next.com.au*
Ph: (02) 9699 0356
Fax: (02) 9310 2012
Ad Production: **Dylan Fryer**
E-mail: *dylanf@next.com.au*
Pre-Press Manager: **Jonathon Bishop**
Pre-Press Operator: **Jason Dreggs**
IT Support: **Fahri Cantas**

Printed CTP by: **WEBSTAR**
Distribution by: **Gordon & Gotch**
Customer Service Ph: 1300 65 0666
Fax: 1300 65 0777

All copyrights reserved by
Next Publishing Pty Ltd
ACN 002 647 645

ISSN 1320-7458

Editorial

» 2007 is gone now and it's time we take a look back at the year that was. It has been a hell of a year not only for gaming but for all of us here at the Hyper bunker as well, with Moe and I trying to find our feet and, much to our chagrin, sometimes failing. We like to think, however, that Hyper, the rampaging beast it is, is still a kick arse piece of arse kicking goodness.

So what have we learned this year? We've learned that it is a damn good time to be a gamer, with the release of such brilliant games as The Darkness, BioShock, Puzzle Quest, Okami, Super Mario Galaxy, Mass Effect, Crysis, Team Fortress 2, Portal, Uncharted, God of War II, Ratchet & Clank Future, Skate and a whole craptonne of others. We've learned that tired eyes don't make good proofreaders (sorry). We've learned that a flash flood in the office is the fastest way to prompt us to pack up a LAN. We've learned that Moe is a demon when it comes to GH3, that I have little fingers I can barely control and that rocking out in an office environment is simultaneously the best way to make new friends and piss off the boss. We've also learned that whilst 2007 was a kick arse year, 2008 looks as though it may be able to top it in terms of AAA offerings.

So see you in 2008, the year when everything will *fanally* come together. That will be truly *thilling*.

Daniel Wilks
EDITOR

Hyper Crew

MONTHLY TOP 5 GAMES

DANIEL – Editor
1. **Mass Effect** – *Xbox 360*
   "ZOMG! Hot Aliam sexOrz"
2. **The Witcher** – *PC*
3. **Unreal Tournament 3** – *PC*
4. **FInal Fantasy XII** – *PS2*
5. **Peggle** – *PC*

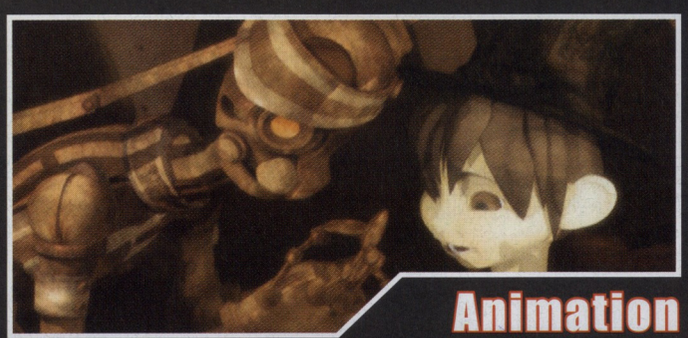
MOE – Deputy Editor
1. **Super Mario Galaxy** – *Wii*
   "I am in ur galaxies, collectin' ur stars."
2. **Crysis** – *PC*
3. **Team Fortress 2** – *PC*
4. **Guitar Hero III** – *Xbox 360*
5. **Unreal Tournament III** – *PC*

MALCOLM – Art Director
1. **Team Fortress 2** – *PC*
   "I love toasting spies on an open fire."
2. **Mario Galaxy** – *Wii*
3. **Portal** – *PC*
4. **Half-Life 2** – *PC*
5. **Warhammer 40K** – *PSP*

GAME ON

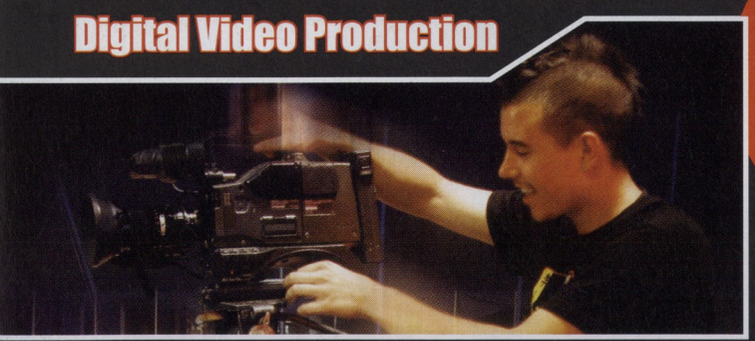
Don't risk your New Media Career - Qantm College is Australia's leading provider of education for the global games industry having developed Australia's first Bachelor Degree in Interactive Entertainment in 2003

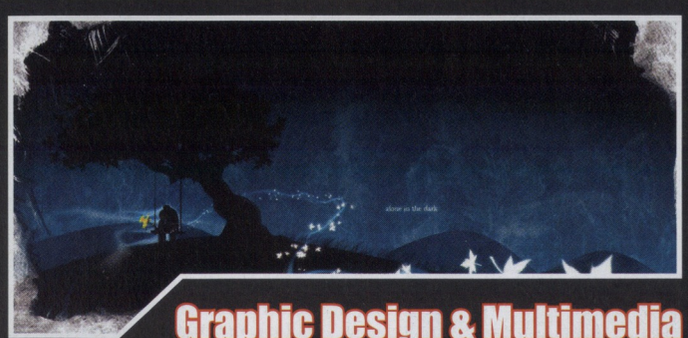
Games Programming



Animation

Digital Video Production





Graphic Design & Multimedia

Qantm College offers Degrees, Diplomas, Certificates and Short Courses in:

• Animation • Games Programming • Games Design • Graphic Design • Multimedia • Digital Video Production

INTAKES IN FEBRUARY, MAY AND SEPTEMBER

With campuses in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, Qantm College is Australia's most successful and innovative creative media educator. With Qantm, you'll get more than just a qualification - you'll get the best possible chance to make your Creative Industries career soar! Our small classes, enthusiastic teachers and state-of-the-art equipment make sure you get the chance to shine. You'll even get your qualification faster too with our fast-track trimester program! Give us a call today and we'll get the ball rolling. What are you waiting for?

tel: 1300 136 933 | www.qantm.com

BRISBANE - SYDNEY - MELBOURNE

qantm COLLEGE

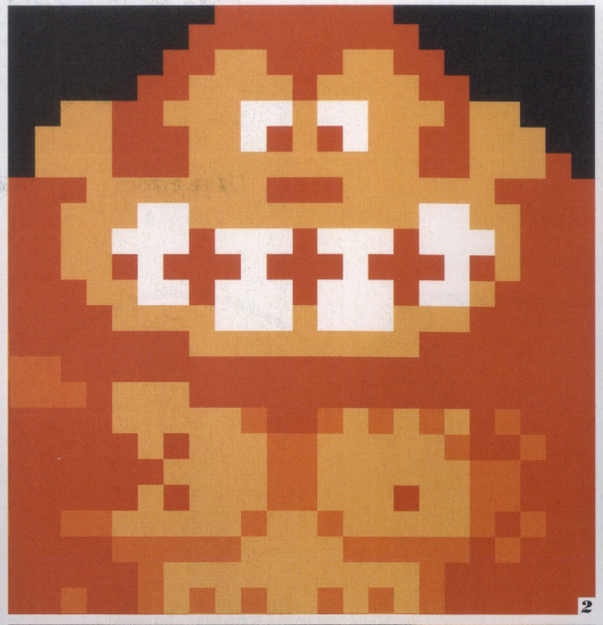
CRICOS Provider Number: QLD: 02689A , NSW: 02852F, VIC: 02837E

101 GAMES

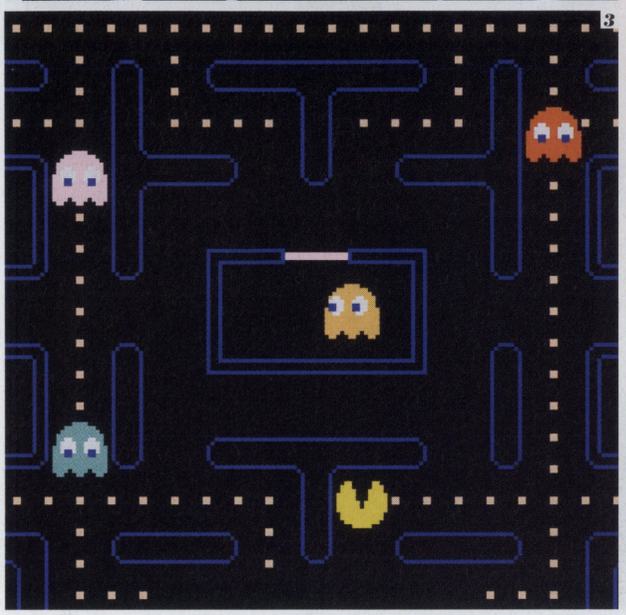
You Must Own!

We've wracked our brains, as well as those of our contributors to come up with what we think are the 101 games that should make up the basis of any great PC/Console collection. And no, we haven't forgotten handhelds – they are a whole separate feature in 2008.

5


2

4


3

1

Shenmue

1 Shenmue was veteran game designer Yu Suzuki's dream project – and it shows. The creator of classics such as Space Harrier and Virtua Fighter, Suzuki pumped years of his life into the game, and millions of Sega's dollars into its development, and what we got was one the greatest works of interactive storytelling the world has ever seen.

The adventure of Ryo Hazuki, travelling Japan and Hong Kong to find his father's murderer, and take his revenge was epic, the combat was like a customisable Virtua Fighter. Fingers crossed that we get the third and final instalment sometime soon.

DREAMCAST. SEGA AM2. 1999
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Donkey Kong

2 The importance of Donkey Kong really can't be underestimated. Not only was it the first ever game to be designed by Shigeru Miyamoto, but it was also the debut appearance of three of his characters that would later evolve into some of the world's best-known game characters, Mario, Peach, and of course, Donkey Kong himself.

However, the game doesn't just belong on this list because of its history – it's genuinely fun, even almost three decades later. From running across girders, climbing ladders, leaping barrels and saving damsels in distress, if you don't at least check this out on the Wii's Virtual Console, you're missing out.

ARCADE. NINTENDO. 1981
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, eBay*

Pac-Man

3 Over the years, Pac-Man has been endlessly reworked, sometimes for good, and sometimes for evil. The most recent game in the series, Pac-Man: Championship Edition is right now gobbling up a lot of our gaming time with its simple yet addictive gameplay. However, the original is still the one we remember most fondly. Hunting down (or being hunted by) ghosts, whilst eating pills and snagging the elusive bonus fruits has lost little of its charm over the years. It's still the greatest maze-based game of all time, and not only that, but more than a quarter-century on, Pac-Man still has us itching for just one more go.

ARCADE. NAMCO. 1980
AVAILABILITY: *Xbox Live Arcade, Wii Virtual Console*

Ikaruga

4 While the debate still rages as to which is better, Ikaruga or Radiant Silvergun, we think Treasure's quasi-sequel wins the day. Ikaruga is a unique shooter in that you don't get the most points by just shooting everything. Instead, you must get combos by shooting enemies of the same colour three at a time. Each set of three counts as one combo, and although there are only two colours, black and white, getting the highest combo chain is something hardcore players are still working on. With gorgeous visuals, intense shmupping action and endless replay value (if you want to get good) Ikaruga is a must play.

ARCADE, DREAMCAST. TREASURE. 1999
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Deus Ex

5 Combining several genres including first-person shooting and role-playing, Deus Ex refined and reinvented concepts pioneered by the likes of the System Shock series, although this time, things were even better.

The shooting action combined perfectly with a twisting cyberpunk story, a lot of interaction, both with the environment and with other characters, inventory management, puzzle solving and more, making JC Denton's mission to stop the Illuminati from ruling the world an absolutely essential game.

PC, PS2. ION STORM. 2000
AVAILABILITY: *Bargain Bin*

one the greatest works of interactive storytelling the world has ever seen

Dune II

1 Dune II: The Battle For Arrakis was the defining moment for the real-time strategy genre.

The game was of course based on Frank Herbert's novel, and David Lynch's filmic adaptation, of the same name and saw you taking control of one of three houses, with the aim of destroying the other two houses and taking the planet Arrakis for all its spice.

The game established much of what would become the generic conventions of RTS games, from resource hoarding, to rush attacks – it was all here – and although its visuals have aged, its gameplay is still better than most of today's RTS efforts!

PC, MEGADRIVE. WESTWOOD. 1992
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Command & Conquer

2 After they established the real-time strategy genre with Dune II, Westwood perfected it with Command & Conquer. The popularity of the game made C&C a mainstream hit, and quickly made the game synonymous with the entire RTS genre. Featuring small and large unit tactics, C&C followed the conflict between the Global Defense Initiative and the evil Brotherhood of Nod, establishing an enduring rivalry. Best of all, franchise owners Electronic Arts have made C&C a free download! You can get the game at any good C&C fansite these days, and if you haven't done so already, we recommend you do.

PC, MULTI. WESTWOOD. 1995
AVAILABILITY: *Free Download*

Metal Slug

3 Very few games can boast the intensity and fun of SNK/Nazca Corporation's Metal Slug series. This game was one of the games (along with the like of King of Fighters, Garou, and Last Blade) that put SNK's Multi Video System arcade hardware on the map, and its subsequent home console ports only helped to grow its legend. With some amazing pixel art and animation, explosive shooting action and bizarre slapstick humour is one of the reasons people are still playing Metal Slug 6... despite it being almost identical to the original!

ARCADE, MULTI. NAZCA CORPORATION. 1996
AVAILABILITY: *Classics compilation, eBay*

Metal Gear Solid

4 As good as the other instalments in the MGS series are, there's just no competition – the original Metal Gear Solid is by far the best. Director Hideo Kojima revisited the series after a break of eight years (after finishing Metal Gear 2 in 1990, for the MSX2), but the wait was worth it, because Metal Gear Solid is one of best, if not the best, games of the PlayStation era. The game saw Solid Snake come out of retirement to track down his generically-engineered twin on Shadow Moses island, and using all his sneaking smarts, he had to avoid detection and take down a massive robotic war machine – all in a days work for a super spy...

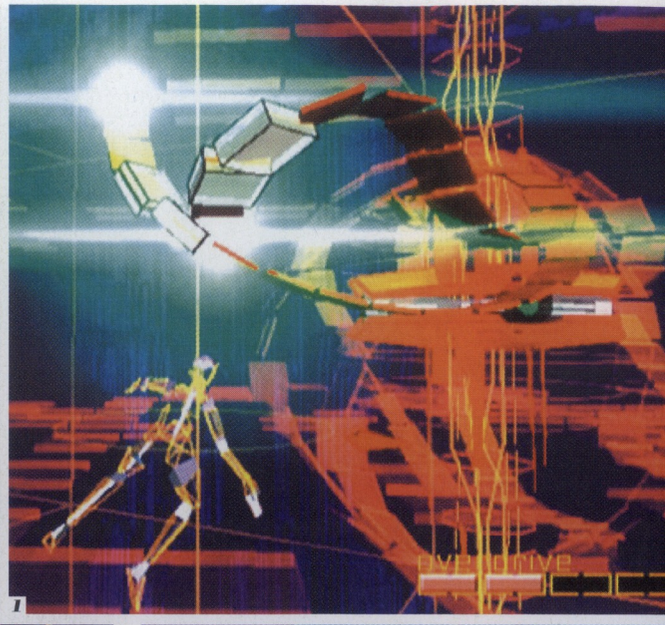
PSONE. KONAMI. 1998
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Garou: Mark of the Wolves

5 Garou: Mark of the Wolves is one of those games that may have slipped under a lot of people's radars. While it is a hardcore favourite, it never really got the exposure it deserved, a tragedy, since it really is one of the best 2D fighters of all time. Although it continues the story of the Fatal Fury series, Terry Bogard is the only returning character. Garou features an entire new generation, and thankfully all of the new characters add something special to the game. The actual gameplay plays more like a refined King of Fighters rather than a traditional Fatal Fury game, but that only makes Garou all the better for it. Play it!

ARCADE, DREAMCAST. SNK. 1999
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

2


1

5

4

3

Rez

1 Rez is a cult classic that cannot be ignored. Created by Tetsuya Mizuguchi (the man behind Sega Rally, Space Channel 5 and more recently, Lumines), Rez is a synaesthetic trip through a dark world lit up by neon-bright wire-framed structures and psychedelic blobs that pulsate with the music that you help to create by shooting enemies. It's weird, but once you settle into the groove (and that's exactly what this game is all about), Rez becomes a sensory experience rivalled by few other games. If you can find a copy with the "Rez Trace Vibrator", then you can have even more fun...

DREAMCAST, PS2. SEGA. 2001
AVAILABILITY: *eBay, soon on Xbox Live Arcade*

Metroid Prime

2 Many thought it couldn't be done – the transporting one of the most loved games series of all time into three dimensions. Metroid, you see, really thrived in two dimensions, much more than most other games. The task was given to American developer, Retro Studios, who promptly proceeded to prove everyone wrong. Metroid Prime not only took the series into 3D, it also turned it into a first-person shooter, but still maintained that same feeling of exploration, isolation and survivalism that previous games had. It's the best of the Metroid Prime trilogy, and deservedly earns its place on this list.

GAMECUBE. RETRO STUDIOS. 2002
AVAILABILITY: *Retail, eBay*

find a copy with the "Rez Trace Vibrator", then you can have even more fun...

Day of the Tentacle

3 Tim Schafer is awesome, and if you look closely at this list, you'll see no less than three games that he worked on. For our money, Day of the Tentacle is one of his best, and is one of the highlights of the entire adventure genre. A sequel to Ron Gilbert's Maniac Mansion, DOTT followed Bernard, a stereotypical nerd, Laverne, a slightly unbalanced headcase, and Hoagie, a roadie for a metal band. Together they have to stop the evil Purple Tentacle from taking over the world using time-travel and their puzzle-solving smarts. With a full voiceover cast, hilarious dialogue and great-looking 2D graphics, DOTT is one must-play point-and-click adventure.

PC. LUCASARTS. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *Bargain Bin, eBay*

NiGHTS into Dreams

4 The Sega Saturn may not have had as many killer apps as its competition, the PlayStation, but those it did have were well worth owning the console for. NiGHTS into Dreams was one of those games. Taking control of NiGHTS, a jester with the power to fly, you had to glide around the world of Nightopia on a 2D path, collecting luminous balls, called "Ideya." The game featured colourful, beautifully designed worlds and enemies, and the bosses in particular were stunning for their time, and indeed, are still fun to battle against today.

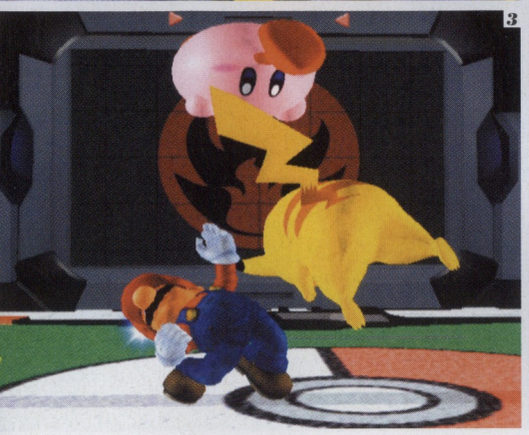
SEGA SATURN. SONIC TEAM. 1996
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

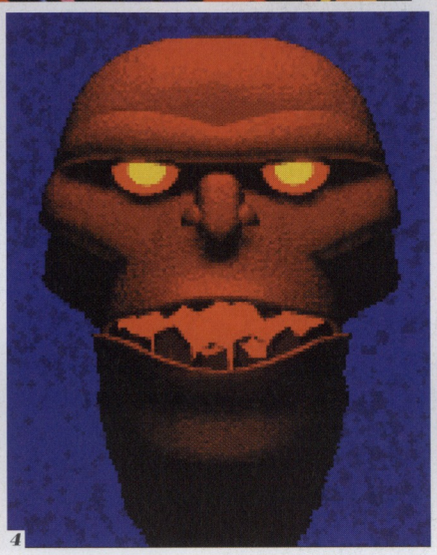
Super Metroid

5 We really can't say enough about Super Metroid. It is without reservation the best game in the entire Metroid legacy, and it set such a high benchmark for future instalments in the series, that while the Metroid Prime games are brilliant, they still can't touch it.

With a huge 2D planet to explore, countless memorable bosses, all of the genius gadgets you could think of, and more, all combined into one super-atmospheric package, Samus never was, and has never been, better than this. If you haven't played it already, take a moment to feel embarrassed – and then go and get yourself a copy.

SUPER NES. NINTENDO. 1994
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, eBay*





Space Quest III

1 Of all the SQ games, and indeed, any of Sierra's other "Quest" games, Space Quest III: The Pirates of Pestulon is our favourite. This threequel saw bumbling space janitor Roger Wilco crash-land on a garbage freighter, forcing him to jump start a space ship called the "Aluminium Mallard", while being hunted down by "Arnoid the Annihilator", and finally, he had to rescue the Two Guys From Andromeda, the alter egos of the game's real-world designers Mark Crowe and Scott Murphy. One of the funniest, and most fun, adventure games ever, and still worth playing.

PC. SIERRA. 1989
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Super Mario Kart

2 The original Super Mario Kart is, by a very wide margin, the best in the series. While technically dated by today's standards, the racing is still exciting, the tracks so inspired in their design and the music instantly recognisable – bringing back many fond memories of a youth spent in front of a SNES. The series still hasn't managed to better this game, and perhaps they never will.

SUPER NES. NINTENDO. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, eBay*

Super Smash Bros Melee

3 Super Smash Bros Brawl will inevitably be on this list when it finally comes out, but until then, we'll have to go with its predecessor. Like all the Super Smash Bros games, Melee is a big thankyou from Nintendo, aimed directly at their long-time fans. Including a huge roster of Nintendo's best-known characters, familiar environments and music, as well as nearly 300 Nintendo-related collector's trophies, this game is a Ninty fanboy's (and girl's) dream come true. Not only that, but it played brilliantly even if your weren't a Nintendo fan from way back!

GAMECUBE. NINTENDO. 2001
AVAILABILITY: *Retail, eBay*

Ultima VII

4 Technically, Ultima VII is actually two games, having been released in two parts, Ultima VII: The Black Gate and Ultima VII: Serpent Isle – but with part one and two combined, this is one of the best role-playing games ever made. Once again following the quest of Avatar, throughout the land of Britania, Ultima VII brought many new features to the series, including real-time combat that made it our favourite in Richard Garriot's trailblazing series. Worth a look, even all these years later.

PC. ORIGIN SYSTEMS. 1992
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Team Fortress 2

5 We are crazy about Team Fortress 2 right now. It consumes at least a few minutes, if not a few hours, of every office day and no matter how often we stealthily backstab someone as a Spy, build a turret as a Engineer, or annihilate someone as a Heavy Weapons Guy, we just can't get sick of it. Given, at the moment it does only have only 3 game modes and six official maps, but even that's enough to earn it a spot on our list of must-have games.

PC, XBOX 360, PS3. VALVE. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail, Steam*

Like all the Super Smash Bros games, Melee is a big thankyou from Nintendo

Daytona USA

1 "DAYTOOOONNNNAAAA." That sound, sung by a particularly painful male vocalist, pretty much typifies what you would hear if you walked into any arcade after 1994. Even today, the game has proved so enduring that you can still see Daytona USA cabinets in most arcades. With only three tracks, it was a little light on choice, but what it did have was a killer multiplayer mode, with up to eight side-by-side cabinets racing off against each other. It's still worth dropping a few dollars in today, and easily earns its place on our must-play list.

ARCADE, SATURN, DREAMCAST. SEGA. 1994
AVAILABILITY: *Your local arcade, eBay*

Super Mario World

2 The last proper Mario game to release before he went into 64 bits (or second last, if you include Yoshi's Island), Super Mario World is arguably the best 2D Mario ever, and by extension, the best 2D platformer ever. With almost a hundred levels, all of them a blast to play, spread across a sprawling island world, with new power-ups like the flying cape and the introduction of Yoshi, Mario World was the must-play game for every SNES owner, and we still consider it an essential in any gamer's collection.

SUPER NES. NINTENDO. 1992
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, eBay*

"sleeping-bag" power suits, Bowser's children as boss characters, and more.

Castlevania: Symphony of the Night

3 Still the best game in the Castlevania series (although some elitists will tell you that Dracula X: Rondo of Blood is the best, don't believe them), Symphony of the Night is a masterpiece. Symphony was the first Calstevania game to take hefty amounts of inspiration from Nintendo's Metroid series, and style that is often referred to as "Metroidvania". The game took place in a massive Dracula's castle, with hundreds of back passages and secret doors, hidden upgrades and other power-ups, combine that with Castlevania's traditional gothic atmosphere, an intriguing plot, and an endless supply of monsters to kill, and it's a bona-fide cult favourite.

PSONE. KONAMI. 1997
AVAILABILITY: *Xbox Live Arcade, eBay*

Ghosts 'n Goblins

4 One of the toughest platform games of all time, Ghosts 'n Goblins may have frustrated you senseless with its difficulty, but it kept you coming back with it's great level design and exciting action. You took Arthur, a brave knight in shining armour (and polka-dot underpants) through a world of ghosts, ghouls, zombies and demons. The gameplay is still excellent today, as are the character designs and music. It's still the only game I can think of where you had to finish the game twice in a row just to finish it once... but both times are well worth it.

ARCADE, MULTI. CAPCOM. 1985
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Super Mario Bros 3

5 Almost certainly the best 8-bit console game ever devised, Super Mario Bros 3 was a phenomenon of its time. For many years it was the highest-selling game of all time, with more than 18 million copies being sold worldwide. It was the first Mario game to introduce a map screen as a hub between levels, as well as many unforgettable new gameplay elements like the raccoon, frog and "sleeping-bag" power suits, mini-games, Bowser's children as boss characters, and more. There have been plenty of remakes, on both the SNES and the GBA – so you should have no problems finding a copy.

NES. NINTENDO. 1990
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, eBay*

KOEI®
www.koei.co.uk

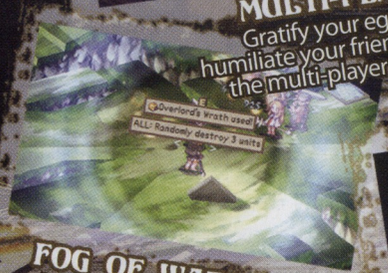
THQ®
WWW.THQ.COM.AU

DISGAEA®
Afternoon of Darkness

Disgaea®: Afternoon of Darkness tells the story of Prince Laharl and his outlandish group of misfits as he battles for ultimate rule over the Netherworld.

MULTI-PLAYER MODE
Gratify your ego and humiliate your friends on the multi-player mode!

JOIN THE DISGAEA WAR TO GET YOUR LIFE BACK!

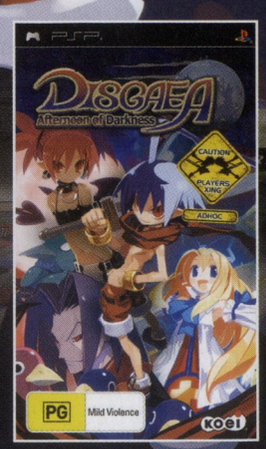


FOG OF WAR OPTION
Less visibilty, more strategy!

GEO CUBE
Outwit your friends with the Geo Cube!

NEW STORY MODE
Discover what would happen if Etna killed Laharl!

AVAILABLE NOW
WWW.DISGAEAPSP.COM



PG Mild violence

PSP PlayStation Portable

NIS America

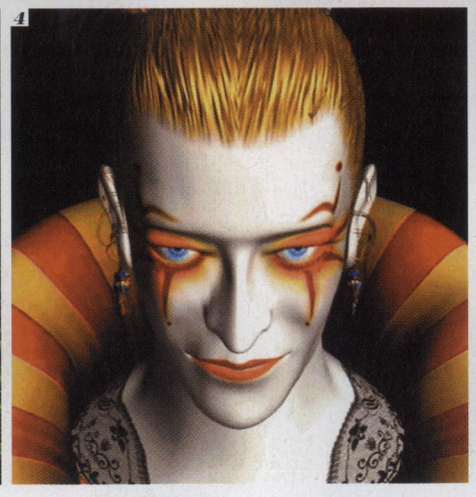
日本一 SOFTWARE

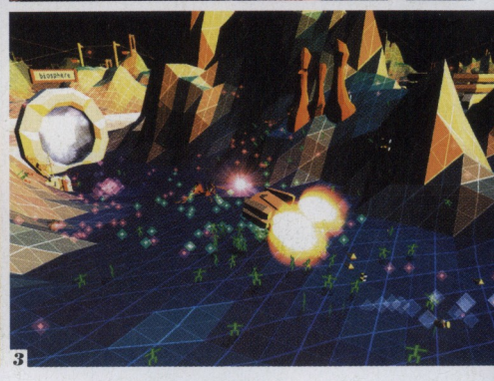
©2007 NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE INC. / NIS America, Inc. All rights reserved. Disgaea is a registered trademark of NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE INC. "PlayStation", "PS" Family logo and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). The KOEI logo is a registered trademark or trademark of KOEI Co., Ltd. All Rights Reserved. THQ and its logo are registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All rights reserved.

5

1

2


4


3

Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike

1 When it was originally released in arcades, at least in our part of the world, Street Fighter III wasn't particularly well received. The game's radically different roster of characters, in which only Ryu and Ken reappeared, stunned some fight fans away from the machine, and as a result, the game slowly disappeared from public view... until the home versions were released. Pretty quickly it can be seen that SFIII: 3rd Strike is one of Capcom's best ever fighters, and when given a chance is infinitely more tactical and competitive than the equally great Street Fighter II. This release even saw the return of both Chun-Li and Akuma, which should satisfy even the hardest SF2 fans.

ARCADE, DREAMCAST, XBOX. CAPCOM. 1999
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

The Secret of Mana

2 Squaresoft were one of the most prolific developers of the 16-bit era, although unfortunately many of their greatest games (like Chrono Trigger and Final Fantasy VI) were never released in Australia. One game that was release – thankfully – was The Secret of Mana, a fantastic action/RPG that took the best elements of a Final Fantasy game and a Zelda game and mixed them together. With an epic quest that included riding a feathered dragon, and fighting alongside three friends in co-op multiplayer, Mana is a must-play.

SUPER NES. SQUARSOFT. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Darwinia

3 Darwinia came as a complete shock to pretty much everyone except developers Introversion Software. Made on a thinner-than-shoestring budget, and without a massive corporate hype machine behind it, it wasn't expected to amount to much – but it did – becoming one of our favourite games of 2005. You took the role of a computer hacker, who inadvertently hacks into a virtual world created by the enigmatic Dr. Sepulveda. The world is filled with Darwinians, a digital race of people. Unfortunately it is also plagued by malicious viruses you must destroy using a mix of shooter and RTS gameplay. As far as independent games go, they don't come much better than this.

PC, MAC. INTROVERSION SOFTWARE. 2005
AVAILABILITY: *www.darwinia.co.uk, Steam, eBay*

Final Fantasy VI

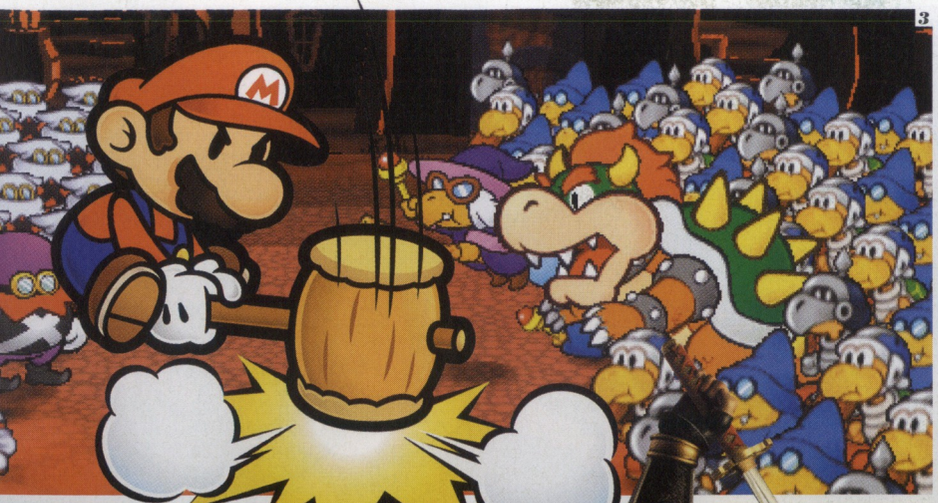
4 Often considered the very best of the entire series (yes, even better than your beloved Final Fantasy VII), Final Fantasy VI is yet another SNES-era Squaresoft game to make our must-play list. FFVI was the first game in the series to depart from a medieval setting, instead taking place in a steampunk world, with you taking control of a party of heroes including Locke (a treasure hunter), Terra (an esper) and Edgar (a king) up against the psychopathic mage, Kefka. Is it the best Final Fantasy ever? Play it for yourself, and find out...

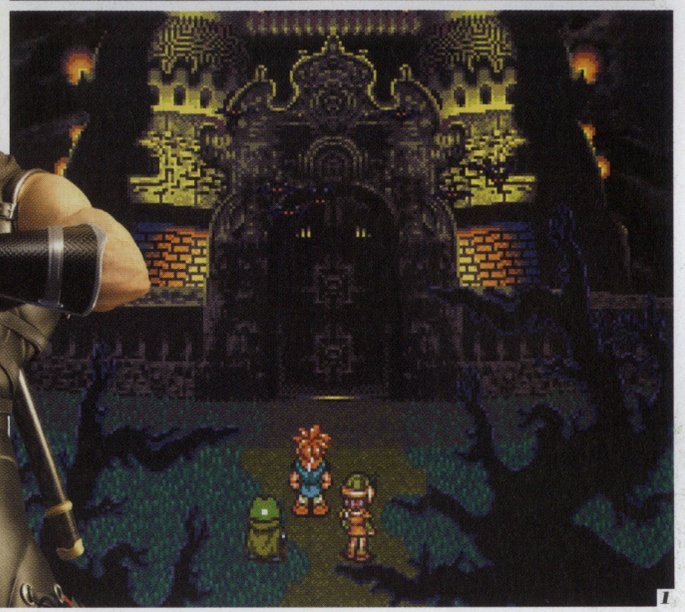
SUPER NES, GBA SQUARESOFT. 1994
AVAILABILITY: *eBay, Retail*

Animal Crossing

5 It's an unassuming little game, but Animal Crossing is one of the most addictive and absorbing gaming experiences available – and not just for those that like really cute anthropomorphic animals. Animal Crossing is a game about everyday life in a small town, you have to get jobs, make money, buy furnishings and clothes, and most importantly of all, make friends. The game ran off the GCN's internal clock, so if it was night time in the real world, it was night time in the game, and certain calendar days would trigger special events, meaning you had to play it every day – and we're betting some of you still are...

GAMECUBE. NINTENDO. 2003
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*





Chrono Trigger

1 Created by Hironubu Sakaguchi (Final Fantasy) with characters designed by Akira Toriyama (Dragon Ball), Chrono Trigger is another of Squaresoft's most brilliant games from the SNES era. The game begins with a young man named Chrono and two friends, Lucca and Marle, falling into a time portal, sending them thousands of years back in time. In a quest to get back home, Chrono travels to the future to the past through all different time periods, encountering some friends, foes and plenty of plot twists along the way. One of Square's best, easily.

SUPER NES. SQUARSOFT. 1995
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Star Wars: Rogue Leader

2 Forget about Lair on the PS3 – Factor 5 really is a good developer – and Rogue Squadron II: Rogue Leader is proof enough of that. Not only is it our favourite Star Wars game, ever, but it also come damn close to being our favourite space-flight action game as well. Taking control of the Rogue Squadron, helmed by Luke Skywalker and Wedge Antilles, the greatest aerial battles of the original movie trilogy could be replayed here, as well as an all-new Star Wars adventure. Rogue Squadron III would of course include a co-op version of RSII, but since the third game did include some awful on-foot sections, part two is still our favourite.

GAMECUBE. FACTOR 5. 2005
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Paper Mario 2

3 Consisting of flat cardboard cut-out style characters and highly stylised environments, Paper Mario 2: The Thousand Year Door was one of the most charming games you're ever likely to see. Not only that, but it also plays great as well, with a fresh take on traditional turn-based RPG combat, and plenty of referential gags that show no fear when it comes to taking the piss out of the entire Mario universe. This Papery RPG is a must play.

GAMECUBE. NINTENDO. 2004
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Ninja Gaiden

4 Ninja Gaiden is so awesome that it's already been remade twice since its release three years ago, and although we're not keen on endless remakes (especially so soon after the original release), Ninja Gaiden is one of those games that probably deserves it. As master ninja Ryu Hayabusa, you had to carve your way through rival ninjas, mutant freaks and evil demons, and this game was hard! Getting to the end was a gruelling, yet extremely satisfying experience, and one we'd recommend to anyone – you in particular.

XBOX. TEAM NINJA. 2004
AVAILABILITY: *Retail, eBay*

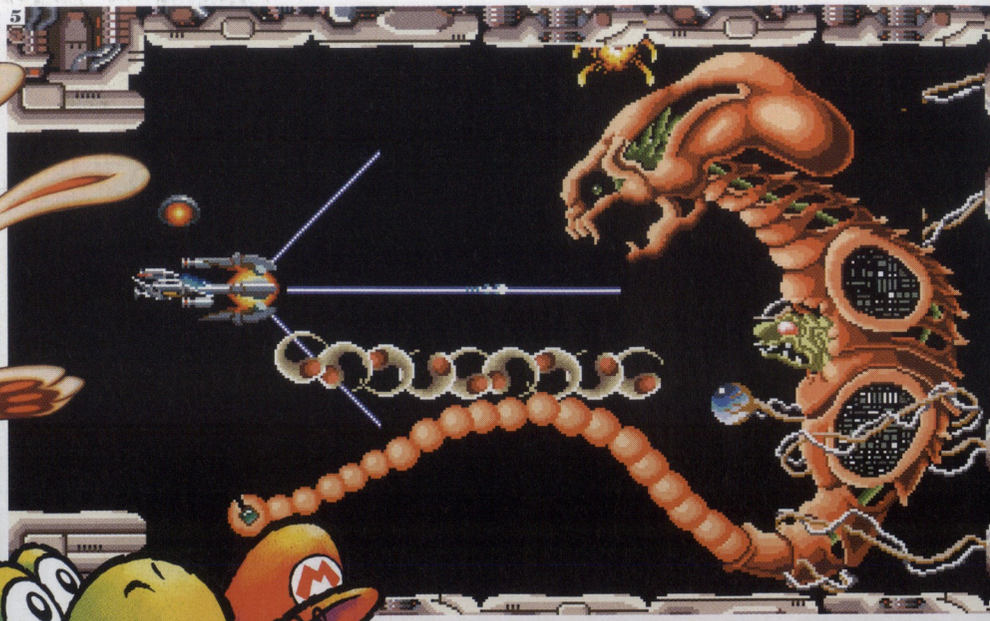
Pikmin

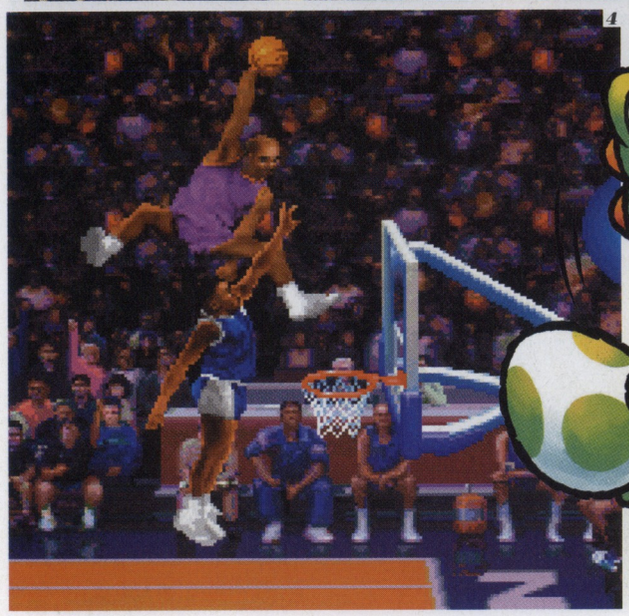
5 As far as real-time strategy games go, Pikmin may just be the most original game in the genre. Yes, you do still have an army, although this time they are made up of multi-coloured carrots, each with a distinct purpose, including swimming, fire-resistance and bomb throwing. Instead of controlling your army from above, like a god, you take the role of Captain Olimar, a crashed spaceman who needs the help of the Pikmin to fix his ship, so he can go home. From the ground you direct your tasty vegetable army, attacking enemies, collecting ship parts and many other tasks – making Pikmin yet more genius from Shigeru Miyamoto.

GAMECUBE. NINTENDO. 2001
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Ninja Gaiden is so awesome that it's already been remade twice since release

3


5


4

1

2

Yoshi's Island

1 Although we're hesitant to call Yoshi's Island a legitimate Mario sequel, despite it being labelled Super Mario World 2 (surely it's a Yoshi game not a Mario game!), Yoshi's first starring adventure did have all the qualities of Nintendo's greatest platform series. Yoshi could shoot eggs to defeat enemies and solve puzzle, all in a quest to return a baby Mario and Luigi to their parents. The art direction in particular made Yoshi's Island like no other game, with the world looking like a child's crayon drawing. It looked amazing, and it played amazing – and it still does.

SUPER NES. NINTENDO. 1995
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

WaveRace 64

2 At a time when videogames usually represented the ocean as an unending stretch of flat, featureless blue, WaveRace 64 was a revolution. Not only did that game's ocean look real enough, but it also behaved realistically, so much so that only its sequel, WaveRace: Blue Storm, could match it, but not better it. With some amazing water physics, fast circuit racing on some sweet Kawasaki JetSkis, plenty of stunts and a completely unique premise in the racing genre, WaveRace 64 is still worth taking for a splash.

NINTNEDO 64. NINTENDO. 1997
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, eBay*

Sam & Max: Hit the Road

3 The duo of Sam and Max, a wisecracking dog and an ultra-violent rabbit, respectively, is one of the most memorable partnerships in videogame history. As freelance police Sam and Max have to hit the road in search of a missing Sasquatch, with all the point-and-click adventure magic that LucasArts could muster in the early nineties in tow. With some hilarious dialogue, full voice acting, gorgeous hand-painted backgrounds and plenty more reasons to play besides, Sam & Max: Hit the Road is a classic.

PC. LUCASARTS. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *Bargain Bin, eBay*

NBA Jam

4 Practically all of our memories of arcade gaming in the mid-nineties involve NBA Jam in some way. The spectacular dunks, the flaming basketballs, the shattering backboards – everything about this over-the-top sports game literally screamed at you from across a packed arcade, beckoning you to drop your dollars in to buy four quarters worth of play time. Of course, if the match went into overtime (which it usually did) you'd have to cough up some more coins, but its extortionate design only added to its charm. The home versions on the SNES and Megadrive were great too – but the arcade version is still king of the court.

ARCADE. MIDWAY. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

R-Type

5 One of the all-time greatest sideways-scrolling shoot 'em ups, R-Type, debuted in arcades, but soon proved so popular that it received many home ports, including a PC Engine/Turbografx 16 port currently available on the Wii Virtual Console. It combined heavy firepower, relentless enemies, imaginative level designs, screen-filling bosses and a few more unique features to make it memorable. Not least of which is "The Force" a huge levitating ball that can be blasted at enemies and attached to either the front or rear of your ship. R-Type certainly had bigger balls than the competition back then, and it still does.

ARCADE. IREM. 1987
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, eBay*

all of our memories of arcade gaming in the mid-nineties involve NBA Jam

Space Harrier

1 Yu Suzuki's first ever game, Space Harrier is worth playing for more than just its illustrious creator, it's genuinely fun, even today. The strange, checkerboard-like worlds rushed at you in pseudo 3D, as dragons, robots, space aliens, and flying rocks flew towards you at pace, with the intent to kill. You of course had to kill them first, with your ride-on rocket/laser gun – which is just all kinds of awesome. It's still available in plenty of places, namely the Sega Classics Collection, and as an unlockable bonus in Shenmue 1 and 2, so getting hold of a copy shouldn't be a problem. So do it already.

ARCADE, MULTI. SEGA. 1985
AVAILABILITY: *Classics compilation, eBay*

Super Mario Galaxy

2 How many Mario games are on this list already? I've lost count. Admittedly though, every one of them earns their place amongst the very best "must have" games. The latest, Super Mario Galaxy, is no exception. If you haven't read our three-page review of it already (found in this very issue), then just know this – it's the best Mario game since Super Mario 64, and the best game on the Wii by a considerable margin. With an entire galaxy of perception-twisting levels, and new power-ups like the Bumblebee and Boo suits, Mario's leap into space is one you really shouldn't miss.

PC, MULTI. BULLFROG. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Sonic the Hedgehog

3 If you're a little younger than us (or perhaps a lot younger), perhaps you don't remember a time when Sonic the Hedgehog actually featured in good games. Rest assured though, there was such a time, and the original Sonic the Hedgehog is a record of that. Everything about Sonic's debut was awesome – the super fast levels, the catchy soundtrack (that wasn't awful butt rock!) the ring-collecting, the robot-destroying, the Doctor Robotnik-bashing action was all here, instantly elevating Sonic to near-Mario status. His latest games haven't panned out so well... so just play this instead.

MEGADRIVE. SONIC TEAM. 1991
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, Xbox Live Arcade, eBay*

Space Giraffe

4 We had a hard time deciding whether to include Jeff Minter's Tempest 2000 rather than Space Giraffe, but since they're both similar in so many ways, we'll stick with the latest and greatest. Space Giraffe's bonkers concept, even crazier presentation, and very Tempest-esque gameplay makes it pretty much our favourite Xbox Live Arcade game to date. If you like intense shoot 'em ups with a dash of weird humour and insanity, this is your game.

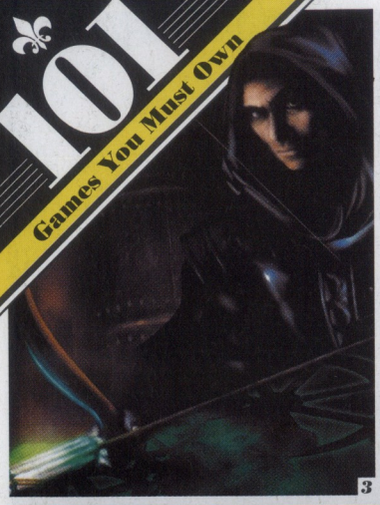
XBOX 360. LLAMASOFT. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Xbox Live Arcade*

Syndicate

5 Syndicate had some of the best tactical action gameplay of any game of its type, and its compelling cyberpunk atmosphere and setting didn't exactly hurt it either. Taking control of a squad of four cybernetically-enhanced mercenaries, you had to eliminate rival crime syndicates from a futuristic metropolis, represented in isometric 2D. You could research new weapons and upgrades, brainwash, capture and recruit rival characters and of course use unreasonable force on your enemies – all this nastiness in the name of fun – and it was!

PC, MULTI. BULLFROG. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

perhaps you don't remember a time when Sonic featured in good games



Elite

1 23 years on and Elite is still the benchmark against which all other space exploration/trading/combat games are judged. Containing eight procedurally generated galaxies, each with 256 planets to explore and trade with, Elite is a huge game, and, whilst it may not have created the space trading genre it definitely kick-started it. If you can find an original boxed copy so much the better – in a time when games were most often sold in plain cassette cases, Elite shipped in a paperback sized box and cam complete with a novella, a manual and a star-chart.

C64. FIREBIRD SOFTWARE. 1985
AVAILABILITY: *Download*

Mass Effect

2 Don't let the fact that the game has some serious framerate issues deter you, Mass Effect is proof positive that BioWare are still at the top of the game when it comes to making amazing RPGs. Although not an epic in terms of length, Mass Effect is a real epic in terms of story, with an amazing plot that casts the player in the role of saviour of the galaxy. The innovative conversation system has already been licensed by other companies for use in their games. Fingers crossed we see the sequel soon. Fingers crossed that one runs smoother too.

XBOX 360. BIOWARE. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Thief II: The Metal Age

3 Thief was a great game but we, like many others felt that Garrett, the titular Thief spent way too much time in the first game robbing tombs and running away from monsters instead of doing thiefy things like, for instance, actually stealing stuff. Thief II turns that around with more focus on stealth and robbery, better designed levels and a kickarse plot. A few years ago some Thief fanatics and amateur coders released a full length mod called Thief 2X: Shadow of the Metal Age which is not only nearly as good as the game itself but is also absolutely free!

PC. LOOKING GLASS STUDIOS. 2000
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

StarCraft

4 Even if you're not a fan of RTS games, everyone should own a copy of StarCraft if only to understand the origins of such popular gamer clichés and sayings such as "Zerg rush", "KeKeKeKeKe" and "Need More Pylons". Seriously, StarCraft is a hugely entertaining RTS game that, thanks to some rather liberal borrowing of ideas and designs, was the closest thing to playing a Warhammer 40k RTS until recent years. The balance between the three races is amazingly good, making for a challenging and compelling game no matter which side you take.

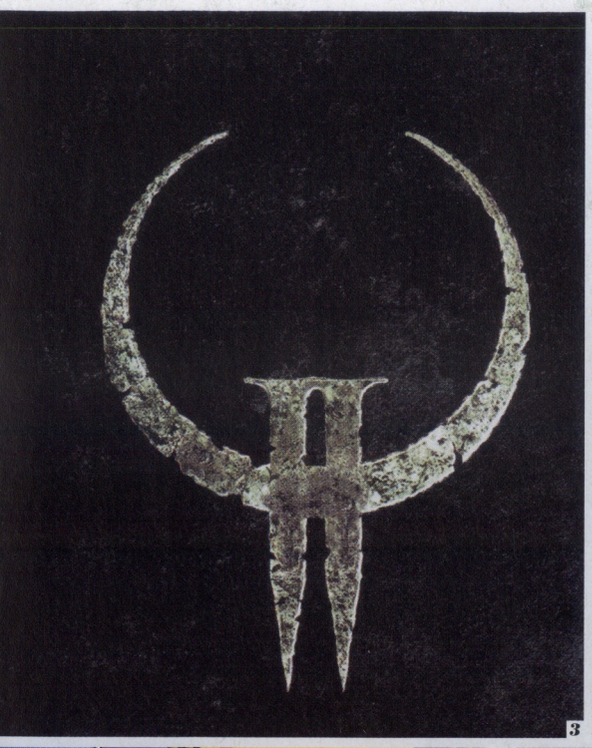
PC. BLIZZARD. 1998
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Gothic 2

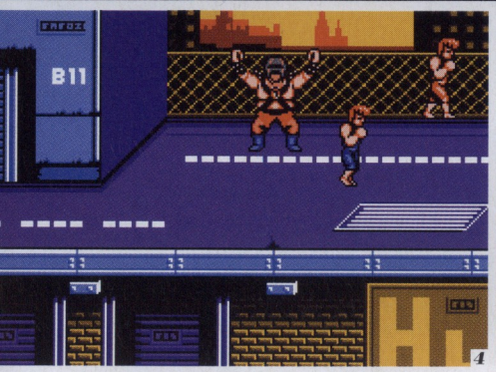
5 Gothic 2 is the very definition of a sleeper hit, only really taking off months after release when word of mouth spread. Set on the mythical isle of Khorinis, Gothic 2 casts the player as an amnesiac (sigh) hero with a destiny. Although many of the old tropes of fantasy RPGs dominate the proceedings, the aforementioned amnesia being chief amongst them, Gothic II switched things up with interesting political machinations, backstabbing and an excellent combat system that relied on using the WASD keys to string together combos rather than button mashing.

PC. PLUTO 13 GMBH. 2003
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

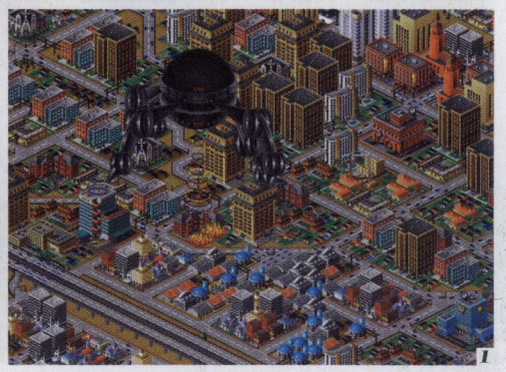
Gothic 2 casts the player as an amnesiac (sigh) hero with a destiny


3

2


4

5


1

Sim City 2000

1 The sequel to the unexpectedly successful SimCity, SimCity 2000 took the city building formula of the original and extended upon it with multiple new buildings, amenities and power-plants, allowed for underground tiles (for building water-pipes and the like) and allowed for greater economic control of the city, such as being able to control tax rates for commercial, residential and industrial areas separately. Although the game was released on nearly every platform available (including, bizarrely, the PSOne and N64), the PC version is still the best.

PC. MAXIS . 2000
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Medieval II: Total War

2 Medieval II: Total War may not have been the revolutionary step that many people were expecting from the series. Instead the last iteration of the Total War franchise cherry-picked all the best parts from the franchise and delivered up the biggest and most feature rich Total War yet. Absolutely brilliant in both the single and multi-player, Medieval II has set a new standard for historical strategy.

PC. CREATIVE ASSEMBLY. 2006
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Quake II

3 Quake II took both the single player and multiplayer of the original Quake game and refined both, making them memorable experiences to this day. When Quake II first came out, for at least an hour everyday the office shut down for "Quake o'clock", a time of quiet reflection and bonding in which we could all blow each other to gibs and refer to each other as bitches. In addition to improving the network code, developer id also released the source code for the game making for some excellent mods and user made patches.

PC. ID. 1997
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Double Dragon 2: The Revenge

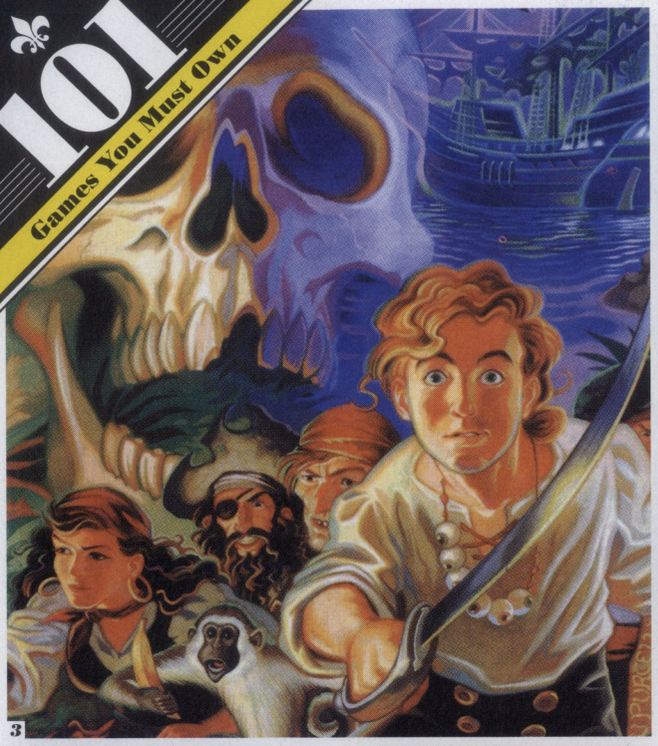
4 Essentially a reworking of the arcade original with the same graphic engine and graphics, The Revenge added new gameplay mechanics such as a two-direction attack system, allowing Billy and Jimmy to attack characters both in front of and behind them, and, most importantly, the Whirlwind kick, the special move that became synonymous with the franchise. Double Dragon II: The Revenge also carries with it a timeless plot – thugs kidnap your girl. You kill thugs and get girl back. It's like Shakespeare!

ARCADE/NES. TECHNOS. 1988
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Colin McRae: DiRT

5 PS3 loyalists may like to claim that Motorstorm is the best looking racing game around but we know that's not true – DiRT is far and away the best looking racing game available at the moment. Not just a pretty face, DiRT is also a hell of a lot of fun, combining many different forms of rally, offroad and niche racing, ranging from standard rallying through to truck races. Trying to climb Pike's Peak in a truck is nothing short of insane – and a hell of a lot of fun.

XBOX 360. CODEMASTERS. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*



Snake

1 Mobile phones may give you brain cancer – but at least they come packed with super-sweet games! Snake is one such game, and is without doubt the best of the bunch. Its' history is convoluted, having appeared on practically every early-generation console and home computer, developed by a variety of programmers too numerous and disparate to mention. The best-known contemporary version is Nokia's. Snake is more or less the perfect candidate to be played in short bursts, and yet, it is also ridiculously addictive – with you guiding a virtual serpent to collect power-ups, as your tail grows ever longer. Hit your tail, and you're dead – and it begins all over again... and again...

MULTI. VARIOUS. ETERNITY
AVAILABILITY: *Your phone*

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

2 Ocarina of Time is often considered to be far and away the best Zelda ever, but we think the competition is more evenly matched than that. A Link to the Past, for example can't be underestimated. This game was one of the shining lights of the 16-bit era, and although it didn't have any pretty 3D graphics, it had gameplay and charm in abundance. Ganon was of course threatening the land of Hyrule, although in this game, there were two worlds to conquer – the good light world and the evil dark world.

SUPER NES. NINTENDO. 1992
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, eBay*

The Secret of Monkey Island

3 Ron Gilbert is a genius. Creator of the original Maniac Mansion and the entire SCUMM scripting language, Gilbert's best work was almost certainly the first Monkey Island adventure. The tale of Guybrush Threepwood and his point-and-click quest to save a beautiful Caribbean island mayor from the clutches of the evil ghost pirate LeChuck instantly became a classic. Plus it was hilariously funny, and worth playing for the "swordsman insults" sequence alone. You will totally LOL.

PC. LUCASARTS. 1990
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Starwing

4 Gouraud-shaded polygons may not look like much today, but back when it first released StarFox was a massive shift for console visuals. Running in full 3D, thanks to one of Nintendo's secret weapons, the "Super FX" chip, StarFox portrayed space combat in a cinematic and exciting way, never seen before on a console. The visuals weren't the only good thing, as it played incredibly. Essentially an on-rails shooter, you controlled an ArWing spacecraft, shot down all manner of bogies, and screen-filling bosses, and the soundtrack was one of the best Nintendo has ever turned out.

SUPER NES. NINTENDO. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *Wii Virtual Console, eBay*

Blast Corps

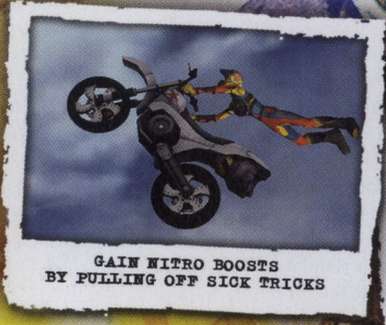
5 Rare are awesome, or at least they used to be. Blast Corps was one of their most interesting, and yet, most under appreciated games from the N64 era, and we think it deserves to be revisited and played again – by all of you! You take the role of a demolitions expert, and are given a whole warehouse full of destructive tools, including a bulldozer, dump truck, dune buggy, jet pack and even a giant robot suit. Using these tools you have to raze an entire city to the ground, in an effort to make a clear path for a nuclear missile to come through on the back of the truck. If the way isn't clear, the bomb goes off in a mushroom cloud.

NINTENDO 64. RARE. 1997
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

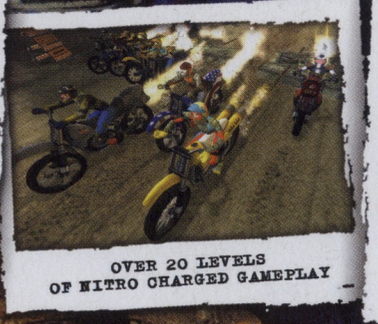
it was hilariously funny and worth playing for the "swordsman insults"

MOTOCROSS
AT THE SPEED OF FUN

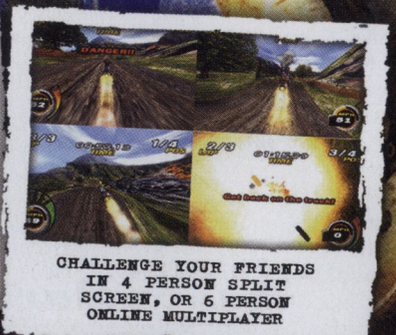
NITRO BIKE™



GAIN NITRO BOOSTS
BY PULLING OFF SICK TRICKS



OVER 20 LEVELS
OF NITRO CHARGED GAMEPLAY



CHALLENGE YOUR FRIENDS
IN 4 PERSON SPLIT
SCREEN, OR 6 PERSON
ONLINE MULTIPLAYER

Nitrobike™ is a nitro charged rocket on wheels ready to propel you to victory or send you flying through the air in a fiery wreck. Nitrobike is xtreme racing at it's fastest and funnest!

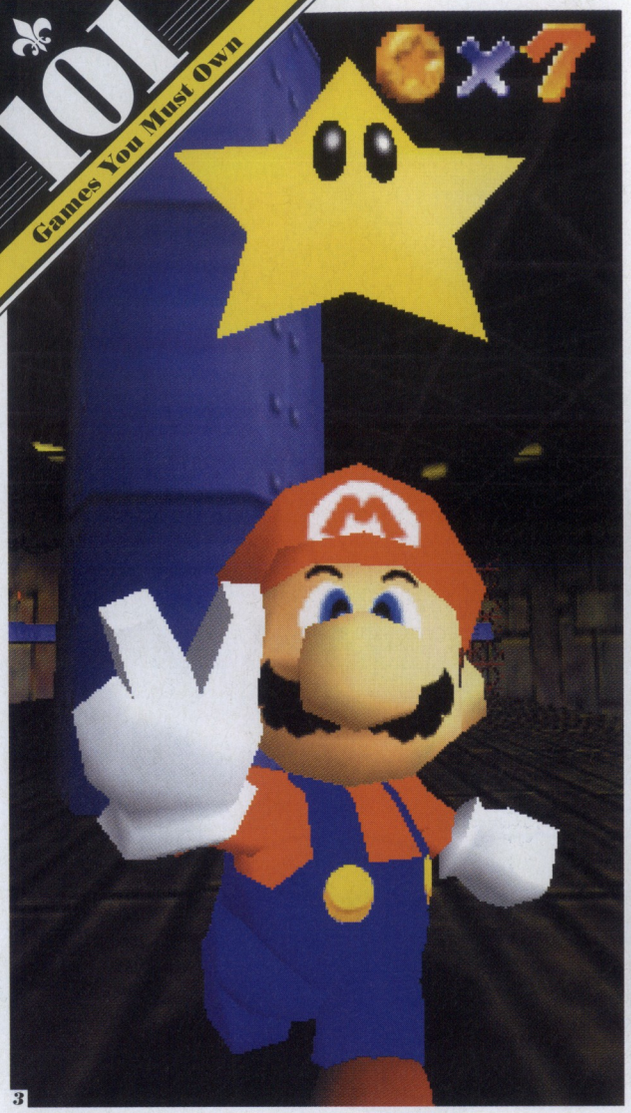
G

Wii

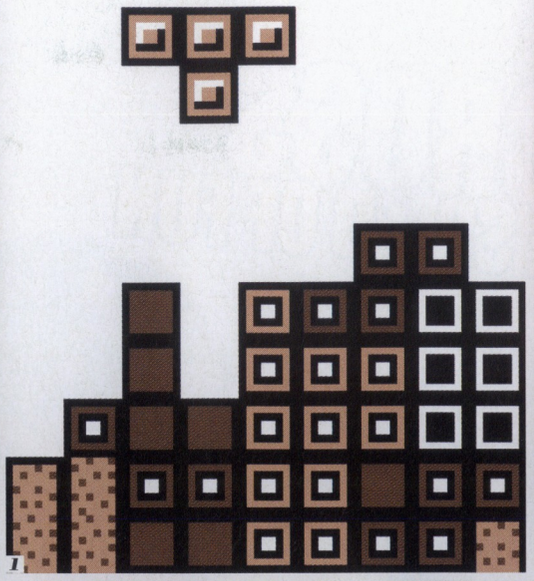
LICENSED BY Nintendo

© 2007 Left Field Productions Inc. All Rights Reserved. Published and distributed by Ubisoft Entertainment. Nitrobike is a trademark of Left Field Productions Inc. and is used under license. Ubisoft, Ubi.com, and the Ubisoft logo are trademarks of Ubisoft Entertainment in the U.S. and/or other countries. Nintendo, Wii and Nintendo 64 are trademarks of Nintendo. 2006 Nintendo.

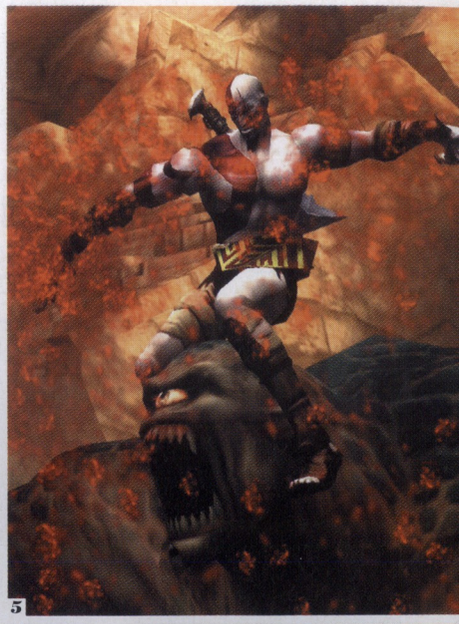
UBISOFT



3

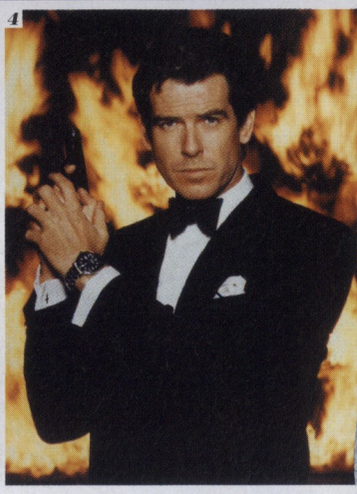


1



5

2



4

Tetris

1 There is a rather popular gaming urban myth that developer Alexei Pazhitnov didn't make a cent from Tetris, the single most copied game in the world but that is beside the point. Tetris is, for all intents and purposes a perfect game. It's endlessly replayable, hugely fun and brilliant in both design and execution. There are few, if any, games as popular and just downright good as Tetris or many of the numerous clones. Please though, for the love of all that's good, can we see to it that THQ doesn't release another Tetris Worlds game?

DOS/GAMEBOY. ACADEMYSOFT. 1986
AVAILABILITY: *Retail/Download*

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

2 Widely considered to be one of the greatest games of all time. Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time can still stand the test of...time, remaining a true and shining example of games transcending genre and just becoming pure bliss to play. Since its release in 1998, Ocarina of Time has retained the title of the highest reviewed game on reviews compilation websites Gamerankings and Metacritic. Nine years on the top – is there any more recommendation needed to make it part of your collection?

N64/GCN. NINTENDO EAD. 1998
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Super Mario 64

3 What really needs to be said about Mario 64? The game revolutionised platforming, bringing the archaic genre to life with 3D. Hell, Mario 64 pretty much redefined console gaming. It may not look so crash hot today but the game is still absolutely brilliant, with cleverly designed levels and mechanics. It's also pretty telling that Mario Galaxy, the most widely praised game on the Wii to date is most often described as "the first true successor to Mario 64". Games don't get used as a benchmark unless they're pretty damn special.

N64. NINTENDO EAD. 1996
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

GoldenEye

4 For the first few months of development GoldenEye was an on rails shooter in the vein of Virtua Cop. Thankfully things changed and the critically acclaimed FPS came into being. Without it it's doubtful we would have console shooters like Halo and Gears of War today – at least not in the forms we are used to. Brilliant in both single and multi-player, GoldenEye deserves a place in everyone's collection not only for it's important contribution to the development of the FPS but for the simple fact that it's still hugely fun.

N64. RARE. 1997
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

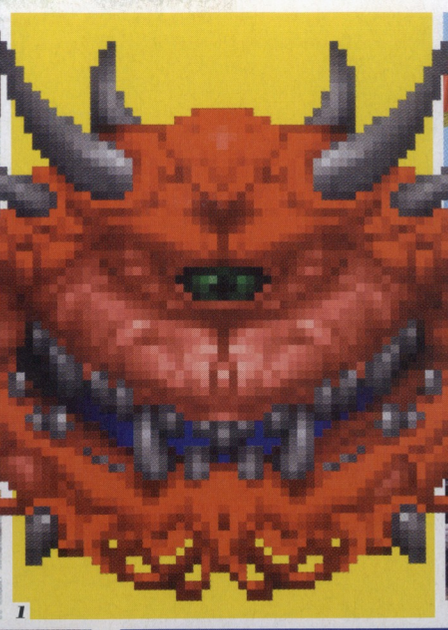
God of War

5 God of War has a hell of a lot to answer for, not the least of which is the current prevalence of button matching mini-games in modern console games. They are an abomination or at least they are when done wrong. God of War may not have done them first but it sure as hell did them right, taking the boss battles into a whole new dimension of hack and slash awesomeness. The rest of the game is an absolute cracker as well and Kratos is destined to remain on "best character" lists for years to come.

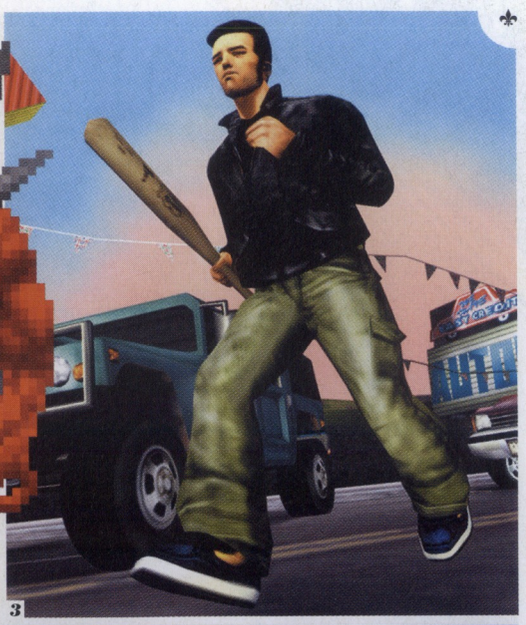
PS2. SCE SANTA MONICA. 2005
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

God of War has a hell of a lot to answer for

5



1



3

4

2

Doom

1 Originally Doom was meant to have a deep and complex story and numerous playable characters. Thank god those ideas got left by the wayside, leaving us with the adrenalin-fuelled run and gun fest that is the original Doom. Forget about clever AI and scripted sequences, Doom is all about throwing a ton of enemies at the player and simply trying to survive. Doom also introduced the world to the BFG. id should really be thanked for that.

PC. ID. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *Download*

Super Street Fighter II Turbo

2 The name's a bit of a mouthful but there are few arcade games with the ability to steal more time and money from gamers. The 5th iteration of Street Fighter II, Turbo, increased the speed of play (though not as fast as SFII: Hyper Fighting), allowed for air-juggles and, most importantly, introduced the super meter and super moves that have now become synonymous with the franchise. Don't worry if you can't shell out for the arcade machine – the game is being remixed for Xbox Live Arcade at the moment.

ARCADE. CAPCOM. 1991
AVAILABILITY: *eBay/Live Arcade*

Grand Theft Auto III

3 Forget Vice City and San Andreas – they were just variations on a theme. GTA III, the first GTA game to feature 3D sandbox gameplay is where it's at. Sure, there's not a lot in the way of plot and the nameless protagonist isn't exactly the most compelling in terms of personality but GTA III changed the face of gaming as we know it, leading not only to a bunch of copycats but to some real innovation as well, Assassin's Creed being a fine example. Important contributions to gaming aside, GTA III is still a hell of a lot of fun.

PS2. ROCKSTAR. 2001
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Half-Life

4 OK, so the climactic jumping puzzle/giant space baby battle sucks as does the ambiguous open ending that hasn't been clarified as yet but everything leading up to that point is gold plated genius. A brilliant combination of level design, objective design and scripted sequences makes Half-Life one of the very best FPS games ever made. And Gordon Freeman has a totally awesome beard. The game is also responsible for the rise of the crowbar as melee weapon of choice.

PC/MAC. VALVE. 1998
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Tekken

5 Tekken was the first PlayStation game to sell 1 million units and it's no wonder why. The technical fighting engine was (and still is) excellent and the controls – a button for each limb – made for some very clever and intuitive fighting. Believe it or not there's a planned live-action Tekken film that should be going into production around the time you will be reading this. Buy the game instead – it's bound to be better. If you can't find an original on eBay, Tekken 5 on PS2 features a full version of the original game.

ARCADE/PSONE. NAMCO. 1995
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

the climactic jumping puzzle/giant space baby battle sucks

Soul Calibur

1 When people first saw Soul Calibur running on the Dreamcast they were blown away and quite rightly so. It looked (and still does look) amazing, far beyond anything else available at the time. Taking a different approach to technical fighting, Soul Calibur featured fighters wielding a variety of melee weapons over numerous lovely looking stages. The quest mode also rocked the house, giving all of the fights special characteristics, such as time limits, constantly declining health, multiple enemies and the like.

DC. NAMCO. 1999
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Pro Evolution Soccer 2

2 Sure, there have been a few yearly iterations since Pro Evo 2 but for our money 2 is where it's at. Complex and wonderful ball control, fantastic animations, excellent player creation all combine to make for one incredibly time consuming experience. In 2003 no other game ate up more of our time in the Hyper bunker than Pro Evo 2, with daily lunchtime 3 on 3 comps and the office championship cup. Brilliant football.

PS2. KONAMI. 2003
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Final Fantasy XII to shows that we like games without random battles

Final Fantasy XII

3 People may hold up Final Fantasy VII as the be all and end all in the franchise but to our mind the best two FF games are the much-underrated VI and the series redefining XII. Epic in scope and full of great characters, Final Fantasy XII not only tells a cracking good story, it also totally changes the way Final Fantasy is played with a real time/turn based commands system and, most importantly, a total lack of random battles! If for no other reason, everyone should own a copy of Final Fantasy XII to show developers that we like games without random battles. We really like them.

PS2. SQUARE ENIX. 2006
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Halo: Combat Evolved

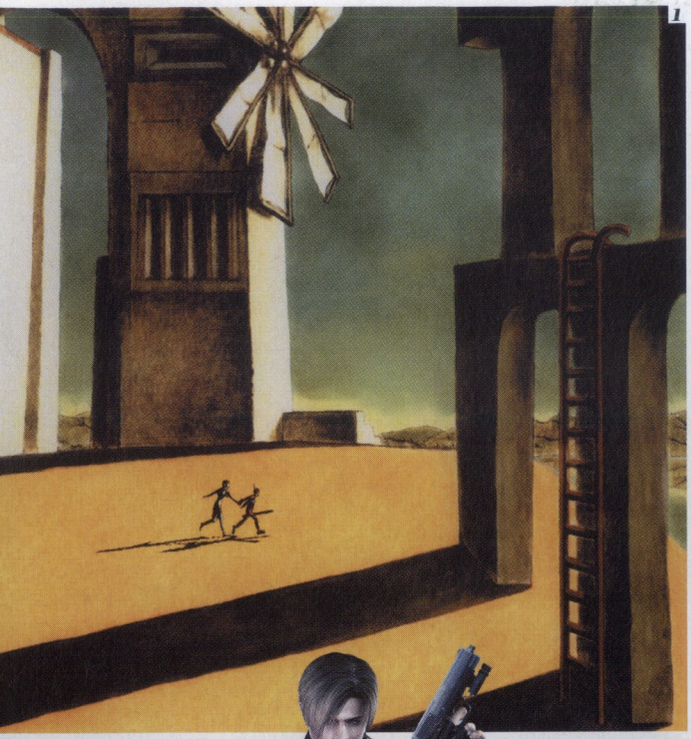
4 Before Halo, GoldenEye and Perfect Dark proved conclusively that the console FPS could work and work well. Halo: Combat Evolved went further and kicked off one of the most powerful franchises in gaming. We could be uncharitable and say that Bungie was so happy with Halo they made the game twice more but that would be petty. Instead we'll simply say that the original is still the best in terms of story, mechanics, levels and multiplayer.

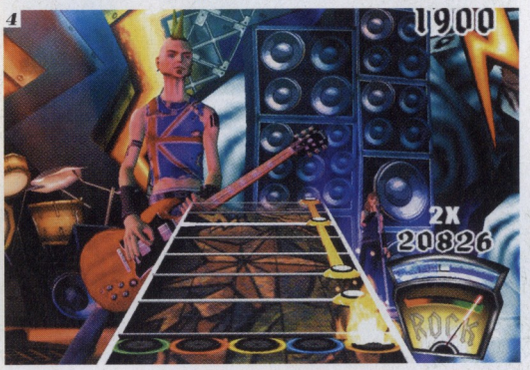
XBOX. BUNGIE. 2001
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Okami

5 The fact that Okami didn't sell well is a crime, as it is by far one of the best games new IPs in a long while. Players take the role of Amaterasu, goddess of the sun who has taken the form of a white wolf. Using a combination of platforming, traditional action/adventure combat, exploration and a clever mechanic, called the "Celestial Brush" that allows the player to draw in the screen (using a thumbstick) to perform miracles. Okami also features some of the best art direction around.

PS2. CLOVER STUDIOS. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*





Ico

1 A young boy with horns must rescue a princess who speaks in an alien tongue from a castle. It's not exactly the premise you think would lead to one of the most beautiful, touching and downright artistic games ever made. As the horned boy, Ico, players must create paths that Yorda, the princess, can follow, defending her at all times from shadowy attackers who try to take her away. It was a toss up between Ico and the sequel, Shadow of the Colossus as to which game made the list. Ico only made it by a short margin but really, you should just get both.

PS2. TEAM ICO. 2001
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Katamari Damacy

2 Sometimes the simplest ideas are the best. Katamari Damacy is a fine example of this. The idea of the game, rolling around a sticky ball picking up objects until you reach the size threshold to pick up larger objects is very simple. The execution is fantastic, with a totally charming main character and the greatest neglectful father in the history of games, the incredibly fruity King of All Cosmos. Although the graphics are simple the change in perspective that comes with a change in size threshold is an absolute treat.

PS2. NAMCO. 2004
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Psychonauts

3 The world needs more Tim Schafer, the genius behind many of the best games in the LucasArts back catalogue. Schafer's talent for creating amazing adventure games infused with a hilarious sense of humour has left us with an incredible legacy of hilarious LucasArts adventures, such as Grim Fandango and Escape from Monkey Island but his first solo game, Psychonauts is perhaps his best yet, featuring great characters, jokes and a plot about a young psychic who can enter other people's psyches. Sure, Meat Circus is one of the worst levels in recent memory but the rest of the game more than makes up for it – what's not to love about being a giant monster in a miniature city full of mutant lungfish?

XBOX. DOUBLE FINE. 2005
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Guitar Hero

4 Guitar Hero II and III may be good but neither of them are as good as the original in terms or song choice, gameplay balance and impact. Before Guitar Hero nobody thought a gimmicky game using a proprietary peripheral would take the world by storm (unless, of course, it was Singstar) but how wrong we were. Sure, the vast majority of the tracks are covers but it doesn't matter. The game is still fantastic.

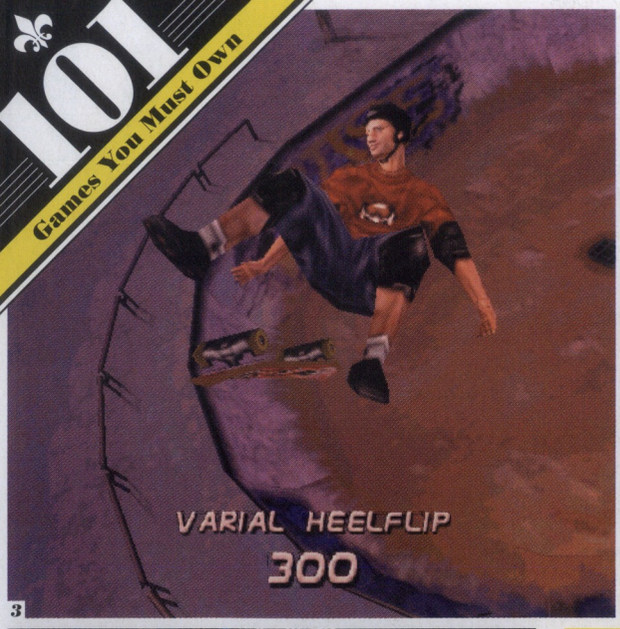
PS2. HARMONIX MUSIC SYSTEMS. 2006
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Resident Evil 4

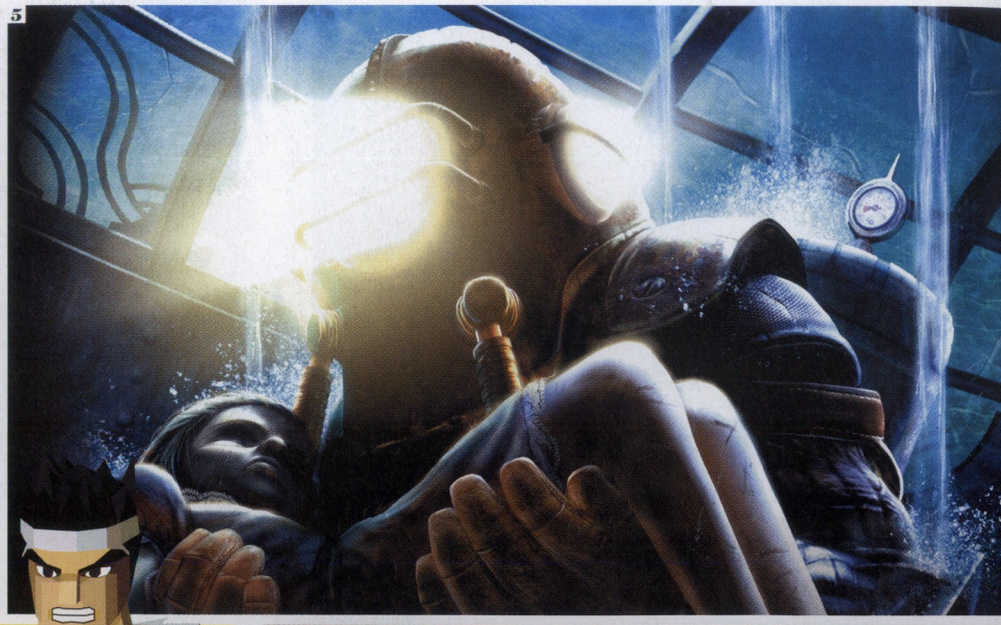
5 The fact that the enemies in Resident Evil 4 aren't zombies isn't the only major change present in the sixth iteration of the franchise. Aside from the lack of living dead, RE4, unlike the rest of the series is more concerned with action and scares than exploration and slow-burn creepiness, not to mention careful ammo and herb conservation. Although this is a significant departure from formula it's what makes RE4 such a great game, giving the proceedings a sense of urgency not found in the other Resident Evil titles. The motion control in the Wii version of the game further compounds this sense of urgency, making it our pick of the bunch.

Wii. CAPCOM. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Meat Circus is one of the worst levels in recent memory



3



5

2

1

4

Virtua Fighter

1 Not only was Virtua Fighter the very first 3D fighting game, it also revolutionised the genre with the introduction of technical fighting with a few buttons, a joystick and realistic fighting styles. While the original game may look seriously dated now, with low poly count characters and incredibly simple backgrounds the fighting engine is still brilliant, relying on only three buttons (punch, guard and kick) modified by joystick movements. Jeffrey McWild, the Australian character has an awesome name.

ARCADE, SEGA SATURN. SEGA AM2. 1993
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

World of WarCraft

2 With a reported 9.3 million active subscriptions there's a good chance that you already own a copy of World of Warcraft. If that's the case then go about your business. If not then you're missing out on a very enjoyable experience, with a simple but gorgeous design scheme and controls that have become the benchmark that other MMOs are judged by. The expansion due some time in 2008 is sure to push subscriptions even higher – as it stands the only thing that looks as though it can hurt WoW's numbers is the inevitable release of either World of Starcraft or World of Warcraft II.

PC. BLIZZARD. 2004
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Jeffrey McWild, the Australian character has an awesome name

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater II

3 There are two reasons why you should own Tony Hawk's Pro Skater II, the first being that it was the first game in the series to introduce manuals. Secondly, Tony Hawk 2 features probably the best level created so far in the series, the simply named but hugely fun "School II". Thirdly, Tony Hawk 2 didn't rely on the gimmickry that plagues the modern Tony Hawk games – it focussed on skating and having fun, not chasing around after Bam Margera or elbowing security guards. OK, so we said there were two reasons to own Tony Hawk's Pro Skater II and gave you three. Consider the third reason a freebie. How's that for value?

PSONE, DC. NEVERSOFT. 2000
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Civilization

4 The fact that the game is still played and supported by a loyal fan base 16 years on should tell you just how popular, and how damn good, Civilization is. Choose from one of sixteen races (the number originally chosen so the game could be played in EGA with each race having their own colour) and play from the bronze age (around 4000bc) the near future in an effort to build a thriving civilization and take over the world. Some people have bitched that the combat in Civ is unrealistic, citing the fact that veteran garrisoned phalanxes can destroy tanks but that shouldn't stop you from owning the granddaddy of turn based strategy.

PC. MICROPROSE. 1991
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

BioShock

5 Awesome story, awesome design, awesome characters. Some people may have been disappointed that BioShock didn't have more RPG leanings like its predecessor, System Shock 2 but not us. We think it's one of the games of the year and certainly a title everyone should play, if only to prove to the money men that incredible games should be made, rather than the same old retreads and yearly iterations that make up the bulk of games released each year.

XBOX 360. 2K BOSTON. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Portal

1 Sure you can finish the game in a little over two hours but that doesn't stop it from being one of the best games of the year. Based on a student project called Narbacular Drop, Portal is a fiendishly clever puzzle game in which the player, taking the role of a mysterious test subject named Chell can create "quantum tunnels" between two points. GLaDOS, the villain of the game also ranks up there as one of the best villains ever and the ending is mind-blowingly good.

PC. VALVE. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Diablo 2

2 Getting RSI in your mousing fingers has never been so much fun. Repetitive left clicking followed by the occasional right click may not sound like a formula for success but Blizzard knows their stuff. A combination of simple but great mechanics, good characters and tech trees and well-written mythology can serve to really suck a player in. We're not sure if this is a compliment or not but you know you've done something right when EB is still selling your game at a premium price range seven years after release.

PC. BLIZZARD. 2000
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Wing Commander

3 Ignore, for a moment that the crappy Wing Commander movie exists. Instead set your mind back 18 years. Then there were no epic space shooters that weren't either some form of R-Type clone or Elite wannabe. Wing Commander was something new, an epic space shooter with a lengthy plot, some pretty sweet graphics and a huge amount of fun. Later iterations of the game may have sported video cutscenes starring ex porn stars but the original game is where it's at.

AMIGA/PC. ORIGIN. 1990
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Planescape: Torment

4 Planescape: Torment is one of the very best CRPGs ever created, proving once and for all that Black Isle are the absolute masters of their craft. Following the story of The Nameless One, a horribly scarred and tattooed man suffering from amnesia, players must make their way through Sigil, the City of Doors and various planes of existence to find out what happened to The Nameless One and why he is being hunted by an unknown but strangely familiar assailant. The writing is some of the best ever to have graced a game and the characters will stay with you long after you finish playing.

PC. OBSIDIAN. 1999
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Fallout 2

5 Some hardcore fans of the original Fallout voiced disappointment at the number of pop-culture references and in-jokes present in the sequel but not us. We may have loved the original game (and Wasteland for that matter – the game that inspired Fallout) but for our money Fallout 2 is the greatest post-apocalyptic RPG of them all. Simultaneously funny and a little sad, Fallout 2 casts the player as the Chosen One, the distant relative of the Vault Dweller, the hero of the first game, charged with going out into the wasteland to recover the GECK (Garden of Eden Creation Kit), a device that can help his ailing tribe thrive in the post-apocalyptic future. Fallout 2 also features some of the very first voice acting work by RON PERLMAN!

PC. BLACK ISLE . 1998
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Fallout 2 features some of the very first voice acting work by RON PERLMAN!

1

5

3

2

4

The Darkness

1 Starbreeze have shown themselves to be the go-to guys when it comes to licensed games that are both faithful to the license and great games in their own right. Based on the comic book of the same name, The Darkness follows the exploits of mafia hitman Jackie Estacado and his relationship with an ancient and evil possessing entity, the titular Darkness. Not only is the game great, The Darkness also features some of the best loading screens ever as they feature short vignettes that help to flesh out Jackie's character.

XBOX 360. STARBREEZE. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

MASHED: Fully Loaded

2 Racing is rarely as fun as it is in Mashed, one of the great party/racing games around. Hooning round tracks in a top-down manner similar to Micro Machines whilst picking up weapons and trying to either frag or knock your opponents off the track is a great visceral thrill. Polar wharf, a simple oval track made of ice is also one of the very best tracks in any racing game. Ever.

PS2. SUPERSONIC SOFTWARE. 2005
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

3 Even though he's not nearly as attractive as Jade Raymond, Ubisoft should have trotted out Patrice Desilets more often when marketing Assassin's Creed. Although not a household name or face, Desilets is one of the great creators around at the moment, with the reinvented Prince of Persia marking his first real triumph. Although there had been stabs at moving the PoP franchise to 3D before the 2003 release, Sands of Time was the first time it really worked, thanks to a combination of excellent movement puzzles, beautiful animations and fantastic level design. Fingers crossed the film due out in 2009 won't be yet another game transposition stinker.

XBOX. UBISOFT MONTREAL. 2003
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell

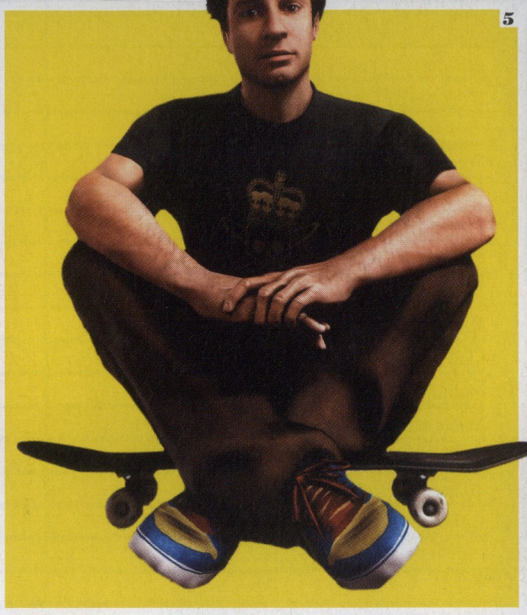
4 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell keeps a roof over Michael Ironside's head. You know you're on to a good thing when your supremely tough main character is voiced by supremely tough and awesomely named Ironside, and that's the case with Splinter Cell. Although there have been several iterations of the franchise now, for our money the first game, on Xbox is still the best, concentrating more on stealth and well designed levels than social interaction, morality and the like as have become more prevalent in later games.

XBOX. UBISOFT MONTREAL. 2002
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay Developer's Cut

5 Although the Xbox version of Escape from Butcher Bay may have been one of the best looking games on the system, for our money the PC version of the game is superior for one reason – the unlockable director's commentary accessible after you complete the game once. There's also one other reason you should get a copy of Riddick – it proves once and for all that it is possible to make a good licensed game. Every other developer of licensed titles should take note.

PC. STARBREEZE. 2004
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*



Unreal Tournament 2003

1 Tokara Forest. If for no other reason, UT 2003 should be owned for Tokara Forest, one of the two greatest deathmatch maps ever designed (the other, of course, being The Longest Yard from Quake 3). Of course, there's more to the game than one map with glowing mushrooms and jump pads. There's brilliant weapons, alt-fire, beautiful character design, a plethora of well-designed maps and enough built-in tweaks to keep all but the most demanding fragger happy.

PC. EPIC. 2002
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Grim Fandango

2 One of the funniest, cleverest and most touching adventure games ever made, Grim Fandango tells the story of Manny Calavera, a travel agent-cum-grim reaper in the land of the dead whose job it is to either send the dear departed to the ninth circle on a luxuriously appointed train or break the news to them that they must take the four year spiritual journey to their final rest. After an attractive client fails to receive her much deserved ticket, Manny uncovers a web of corruption and murder spanning the afterlife.

PC. LUCASARTS. 1998
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Assassin's Creed

3 A serious contender for Game of the Year, Assassin's Creed extends on the movement puzzles of Patrice Desilets previous franchise, Prince of Persia and brings sandbox gaming kicking and screaming into the next generation. Altair himself is a brilliant creation with some of the best, if not the best animations we've ever seen in a game. Get in on the ground floor – so far Assassin's Creed has been the fastest selling new IP in the last four years. We think the sequels will be even bigger.

XBOX 360. UBISOFT MONTREAL. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Wipeout 2097

4 WipEout 2097 made people drink Red Bull. In-game billboards proclaimed that "Red Bull Reduces Reaction Time" and prompted many players who were unused to the incredible speed of the racing game to chug the drinks in an effort to get to the next race. WipEout was also one of the first games to boast a truly impressive professional soundtrack, featuring the likes of The Prodigy, Future Sounds of London, Underworld and Chemical Brothers.

PSONE. PSYGNOSIS. 1996
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

Skate

5 Finally a game has come along to challenge the aging (and stagnating) Tony Hawk franchise. Taking a totally different route than Tony Hawk, Skate is all about real world skating and real world physics and combining them with an alarmingly good control scheme that uses two thumbsticks instead of button combinations. The franchise is destined to be big but having a copy of the first game on your shelf means that you knew about it before everyone else!

XBOX 360. EA BLACK BOX. 2007
AVAILABILITY: *Retail*

Casanova: The Duel of the Black Rose

The rest of the list is made up with good games but we thought that every collection deserves to have something so execrable that when someone talks to you about some game being "the worst game ever" you can point to it and know that whatever they've played can't possibly be as bad as it. Developed by the Arxel tribe, Casanova is meant to be a combination of action and adventure with swashbuckling swordplay and romance but in reality it's a combination of arse and cliche. Of course, chances are that the code will simply crash your PC when you try to install.

PC. ARXEL TRIBE. 2001
AVAILABILITY: *eBay*

HYPER 2007 Review Database

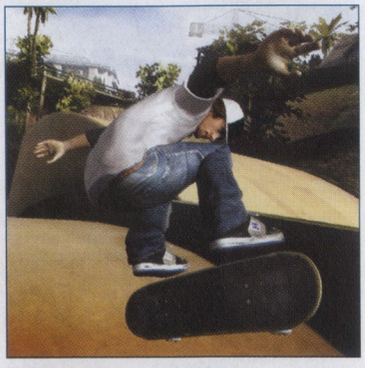
Although some cynical readers may look at this year's score list and proclaim that we have either sold out or have gone soft and scored everything high, the truth is that 2007 has been one of the best years for games in recent memory.

97 **ORANGE BOX**
If this isn't the best value for money of the year we don't know what is!

95 **ASSASSIN'S CREED**
The most promising new IP we've seen in ages.

2007 HIGHEST SCORE

97



90 **SKATE**
Although plagued by small flaws, Skate shows huge promise as a new franchise.

GAME	SYSTEM/S	SCORE	ISSUE
Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass	DS	97	167
BioShock	Xbox 360/PC	97	168
Orange Box	Xbox 360/PS3/PC	97	171
Final Fantasy XII	PS2	96	160
Virtua Fighter 5	PS3	96	162
Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	Wii	96	170
Colin McRae: DiRT	Xbox 360/PS3/PC	95	165
Assassin's Creed	Xbox 360/PS3	95	171
Civilization IV: Beyond the Sword	PC	94	167
Final Fantasy VI Advance	GBA	93	163
God of War II	PS2	93	163
Halo 3	Xbox 360	93	169
Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare	Xbox 360/PS3/PC	93	171
The Darkness	Xbox 360/PS3	92	166
Project Gotham Racing 4	Xbox 360	92	170
Ratchet & Clank Future: Tools of Destruction	PS3	92	170
Fight Night Round 3	PS3	91	161
Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops	PSP	91	162
Minna no Golf 5	PS3	91	169
Titan Quest: Immortal Throne	PC	90	162
Guitar Hero II	Xbox 360	90	163
Gundam Musou	PS3	90	164
Puzzle Quest: Challenge of the Warlords	DS/PSP	90	166
Skate	Xbox 360/PS3	90	169
Space Giraffe	Xbox 360	90	169
WipEout Pulse	PSP	90	170
Disgaea 2: Cursed Memories	PS2	89	160
Resistance: Fall of Man	PS3	89	161
Lunar Knights	DS	89	164
Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars	PC	89	164
Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan 2	DS	89	166
Mercury Meltdown Revolution	Wii	89	166
Crush	PSP	89	167
Stranglehold	Xbox 360/PS3/PC	89	168
World in Conflict	PC	89	169
Final Fantasy Tactics: The War of the Lions	PSP	89	169
Persona 3	PS2	89	171
God Hand	PS2	88	160
Lost Planet: Extreme Condition	Xbox 360	88	160
Motorstorm	PS3	88	161
Chili Con Carnage	PSP	88	161
Madden NFL	Wii	88	161
Blue Dragon	Xbox 360	88	168
TimeShift	Xbox 360/PS3/PC	88	170
Neverwinter Nights 2: Mask of the Betrayer	PC	88	171
Dragon Quest Heroes: Rocket Slime	DS	87	163
Sam & Max: Season 1 - Bright Side of the Moon	PC	87	165
Juiced 2: Hot Import Nights	Xbox 360/PS3/PS2/PSP/PC/DS	87	169
Supreme Commander	PC	86	161
Virtua Tennis 3	PS3	86	161
NHL 2K7	PS3	86	161
Capcom Puzzle World	PSP	86	161
Metal Slug Anthology	PSP	86	165
Guitar Hero 3: Legends of Rock	Xbox 360/PS3/Wii/PC/PS2	86	170
Naruto: Rise of a Ninja	Xbox 360	86	170

Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney - Justice for All	DS	86	170
Mario vs Donkey Kong 2: March of the Minis	DS	85	161
Il:2 Sturmovik: 1946	PC	85	161
Mr Robot	PC	85	161
Resident Evil 4: Wii Edition	Wii	85	166
Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	PS3	85	171
Crackdown	Xbox 360	84	161
S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Shadow of Chernobyl	PC	84	163
Valkyrie Profile Lenneth	PSP	84	164
Final Fantasy Fables: Chocobo Tales	DS	84	165
Monster Hunter Freedom 2	PSP	84	167
Drawn to Life	DS	84	169
The Witcher	PC	84	171
Yoshi's Island DS	DS	83	160
NBA 2K7	PS3	83	161
Excite Truck	Wii	83	162
DK: Bongo Blast	Wii	83	168
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground	Xbox 360/PS3/Wii/PC/PS2	83	170
Sega Mega Drive Collection	PS2	82	161
Gunpey	PSP/DS	82	162
Call of Juarez	Xbox 360	82	166
Scavenger	PC	82	166
Wildlife Tycoon: Ventrue Arctic	PC	82	167
Warioware: Smooth Moves	Wii	81	161
Wario the Seven	DS	81	162
Kororinpa	Wii	81	162
Chromadome 2	PC	81	170
Silent Hill Origins	PSP	81	171
Ridge Racer 7	PS3	80	161
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07	PS3	80	161
Chocolate Castles	PC	80	163
Rogue Galaxy	PS2	80	165
Forza Motorsport 2	Xbox 360	80	166
FlatOut: Ultimate Carnage	Xbox 360	80	167
Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/PS3/DS/Wii/PSP	80	167
Blazing Angels 2: Secret Missions of WWII	Xbox 360/PS3/PC	80	168
Pursuit Force 2: Extreme Justice	PSP/PS2	80	170
WWE Smackdown VS RAW 2008	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/PS3/DS/Wii/PSP	80	171
Blacksite: Area 51	Xbox 360/PS3/PC	80	171
Lego Star Wars: The Complete Saga	Wii	80	171
Alien Shooter 2	PC	79	161
Battlestations: Midwat	PC/Xbox 360	79	161
Castevania: Portrait of Ruin	DS	79	164
Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters	PSP	79	164
Ninja Gaiden Sigma	PS3	79	165
Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s	PS2	79	167
Custom Robo: Arena	DS	79	169
Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	Xbox 360/PS3/PC	79	171
Full Auto 2: Battlelines	PS2	78	162
TMNT	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/GCN	78	162
Heavenly Sword	PS3	78	168
Conan	Xbox 360/PS3	78	170
FIFA 08	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/PS3/DS/Wii/PSP	78	170
Snaky Jake	PC	77	164
Super Paper Mario	Wii	77	165
Wartech: Senko No Ronde	Xbox 360	77	166
Immortal Defense	PC	77	169
Table Tennis	Wii	77	170
Test Drive Unlimited	PS2	76	162
Impossible Mission	DS/PSP	76	165
Overlord	Xbox 360/PC	76	165
The Simpsons	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/PS3/DS/Wii/PSP	76	170
Capcom Classics Collection V2	PS2	75	161

86-75

86 **PHOENIX WRIGHT**
We have no objections to many more sequels.

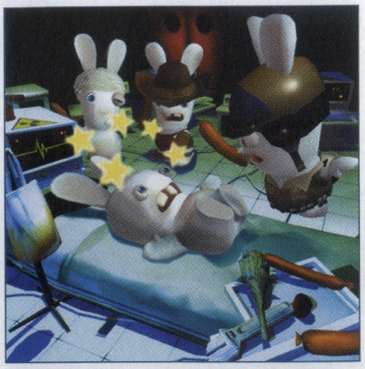
80 **FORZA MOTORSPORT 2**
Incredible artwork and amazingly realistic driving.

2007 AVERAGE SCORE

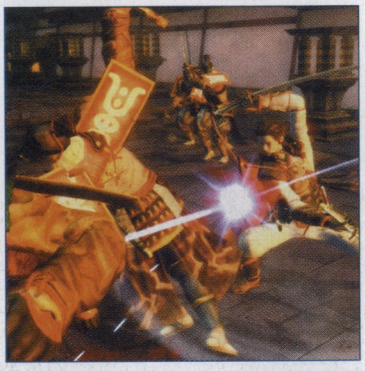
77

77 **SUPER PAPER MARIO**
Slightly awkward but utterly charming in every way.

75-19



64 **RAYMAN RAVING RABBIDS 2**
Please, no more party games for the Wii.



53 **GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE**
Insert giant crab boss joke here.

2007 LOWEST SCORE

19

36 **DOA XTREME 2**
Not so much a game as a sad masturbatory aide.

Sam & Max: The Mole, The Mob and the Meatball	PC	75	162
Silverfall	PC	75	163
Everybody's Tennis	PS2	75	164
F.E.A.R.	PS3	75	164
V8 Supercars 3: Create & Race	DS	75	168
Cooking Mama DS	DS	74	160
Tomb Raider: Anniversary	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/PS3	74	165
Pokemon Diamond & Pearl	DS	74	165
Armoured Core 4	PS3	73	161
Bullet Witch	Xbox 360	73	162
SSX: Blur	Wii	73	163
Sonic and the Secret Rings	Wii	73	163
Stuntman: Ignition	Xbox 360/PS3/PS2/PSP	73	168
Tales of the World: Radiant Mythology	PSP	73	168
Endless Ocean	Wii	73	169
Pangya! Golf With Style!	Wii	73	169
Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII	PS3	72	161
Formula 1	PS3	72	162
Final Fantasy III	DS	72	163
Cooking Mama: Cook Off	Wii	72	165
Mario Strikers: Charged Football	Wii	72	166
Eledees	Wii	71	165
Atelier Iris 3: Grand Phantasm	PS2	70	166
Shadowrun	Xbox 360/PC	70	166
Peace Maker	PC	70	168
Hellgate: London	PC	70	171
Need for Speed: Pro Street	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/PS3/DS/Wii/PSP	70	171
Hotel Dusk: Room 215	DS	69	162
Transformers: The Game	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/PS3/DS/Wii/PSP	69	167
The Bigs	Wii	69	171
Ghost Rider	PS2/Xbox	68	161
Mortal Kombat: Armageddon	Wii	68	166
King of Fighters: Maximum Impact 2	PS2	68	167
Folklore	PS3	68	169
300: March to Glory	PSP	67	162
Professional Baseball Spirits 4	PS3	67	164
Innocent Life: A futuristic Harvest Moon	PSP	67	164
Ricky Ponting Crisket 2007	Xbox 360/PC/PS2	65	162
Two Worlds	Xbox 360/PC	65	167
Mario Party 8	Wii	65	168
Crash of the Titans	Xbox 360/Wii/PS2/DS/PSP/GBA	65	169
Rayman Raving Rabbids 2	Wii	64	171
Runaway: The Dream of the Turtle	PC	63	163
Beowulf	Xbox 360/PS3/PC/PSP	60	171
Untold Legens: Dark Kingdom	PS3	58	161
Moster Madness: Battle for Suburbia	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/PS3	58	165
Spiderman 3	Xbox 360/OS3/Wii/PC/PS2	58	165
PaRappa the Rapper	PSP	58	167
Clive Barker's Jericho	Xbox 360/PS3/PC	58	170
Wing Island	Wii	55	162
Def Jam: Icon	PS3/Xbox 360	55	163
Monster 4x4 World Circuit	Wii	54	161
Genji: Days of the Blade	PS3	53	161
Spectrobes	DS	53	163
Grimm's Hatchery	PC	52	162
Infernal	PC	51	163
Fantastic 4: Rise of he Silver Surfer	Xbox 360/PS3/Wii/PS2/DS	50	166
D&D Tactics	PSP	50	169
Lair	PS3	45	170
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End	Xbox 360/PC/PS2/PS3/DS/Wii/PSP	40	165
Dead or Alive Xtreme 2	Xbox 360	36	160
Loki	PC	34	168
25 to Life	PS2	19	167

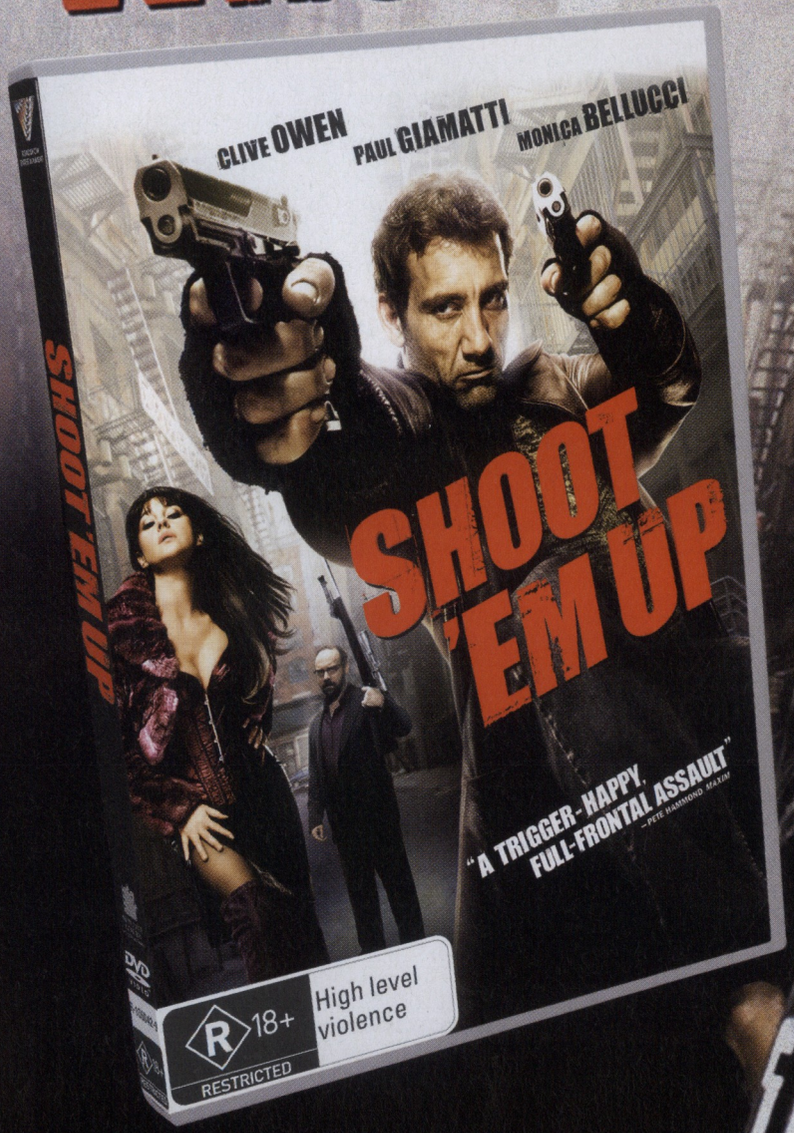
CLIVE OWEN
SIN CITY, CHILDREN OF MEN

PAUL GIAMATTI
THE ILLUSIONIST, LADY IN THE WATER

MONICA BELLUCCI
THE MATRIX FILMS

"WHOA BABY!"

–PETE HAMMOND, *MAXIM*



R 18+ RESTRICTED — High level violence

ONLY ON DVD

RENT OR BUY IT NOW

NEW LINE CINEMA
A Time Warner Company

ROADSHOW ENTERTAINMENT

2007 in review

THE OTHER KIND OF WII

It would be funny if it wasn't so tragic. In January of this year, a California radio station held a contest called "Hold your wee for a Wii", where the contestant who could drink the most water without going to the toilet would walk away with a Nintendo Wii as their prize. As it turns out, fighting your body's urge to eliminate fluids isn't all that good for you. One of the participants died of suspected water intoxication (yes, that's a real medical phenomenon) shortly after the contest. The dead woman's family sued, the local police launched a criminal investigation and ten radio station employees were told to clear out their desks.

96

SONY'S COMEDY OF ERRORS

2007 was never going to be Sony's year. SCEA President Jack Tretton started the year with the bold declaration that he would offer a bounty of $1,200 for every system that stayed "on shelves more than five minutes". When the guys from Penny Arcade tried to take him up on the offer (with $13,200 worth of photographic evidence) Mr Tretton was curiously silent. This incident follows a stunning display of incompetence on Sony's PSP video download site, where a preview trailer for Gran Turismo HD was promoted with an image from Project Gotham 3. On the Xbox 360. Ah, Sony – will you ever cease to entertain us?

94

OFLC SAYS NO TO DRUGS

Australia's OFLC has a reputation for being a little ban-happy when it comes to video games. They got started early in 2007, refusing classification to the American football game Blitz: The League. For once, it wasn't sex or violence that raised the censors' ire – it was that other member of the unholy trinity: drugs. Unlike an ordinary sports game, Blitz gives you the option of boosting your team's performance via a little chemical enhancement. You can even acquire fake urine samples so your players won't face any penalties. The OFLC concluded that the game was encouraging and rewarding drug use and was therefore unfit for release to the Australian public.

91

WII SPORTS WEIGHT LOSS

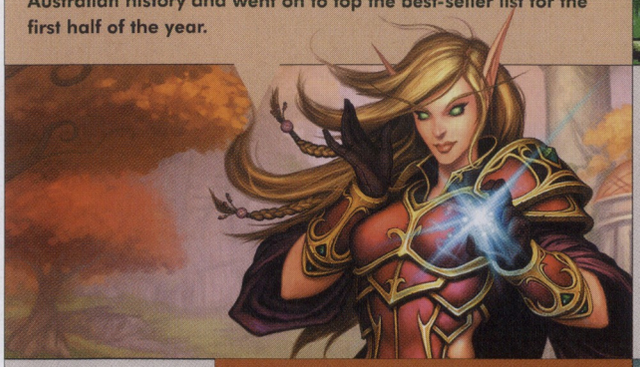
Video games got some good press in January, thanks to an American blogger who decided to show off the results of his Wii Sports fitness regime. Mickey DeLorenzo lost nine pounds (four kilos) in a month just by playing Wii Sports for half an hour a day. (As far as we can tell, he's managed to keep the weight off, too). The fitness benefits of enthusiastic waggling were later backed up by university studies in the US and UK. Just imagine how many more of these testimonials we're going to hear when Wii Fit comes out.

86

january

ANOTHER FIX FOR WOW ADDICTS

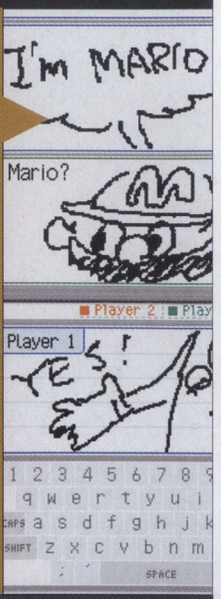
World of Warcraft players had a reason to leave the house this January, with the release of Burning Crusade expansion pack. The expansion introduced two new races, as well as new areas and new skills, and also raised the level cap to 70. In a testament to the mind-boggling popularity of WoW, the expansion pack provided the biggest PC game launch in Australian history and went on to top the best-seller list for the first half of the year.



83

PICTOCHAT PAEDOPHILE PANIC

Pictochat. It's a perfectly innocent application that lets DS owners send each short messages and assorted little scribblings, right? Not so, according to a local news broadcast in the US city of Milwaukee. In a story "no parent should miss", Fox News 6 demonstrated how Nintendo's top-selling handheld is putting your child at risk! Did you know that if a child is using Pictochat, ANYONE with a DS within 300 ft. can communicate with them? That "anyone" could be a paedophile! The team at Fox News 6 weren't overly clear as to how children could be abducted over a Wi-Fi connection, nor did they address the prevalence of DS ownership among the sexual predator demographic, but they sure were adamant that any good parent should be very, very afraid.



96

MOOGLES AND MYSTERY

If you weren't busy using your DS to lure unsuspecting kiddies into your van this February, you may have been following Kyle Hyde through the noir-tinted mystery game, Hotel Dusk. Some of the puzzles may have bordered on infuriating, but the game was widely praised for its high quality writing. Another high-profile release in February was the long-awaited Final Fantasy XII, which breathed new life into the series with the elimination of random battles and the introduction of the new Gambit system. Some people may have been a bit lukewarm on the new combat mechanics – but the gaming community was united in its love for Balthier. Balthier is irrestible.

PROFESSIONAL HELP

We're all pretty used to the fact that Japan gets all manner of weird and wonderful games that never see the light of day in the West (and some which eventually do –Brain Training and Elite Beat Agents being recent examples). One of the strongest so far is DS Therapy. The game bills itself as "mainichi kokorobics", loosely translated as "aerobics for the heart". Four young and hip-looking psychologists ask the player a series of questions and then make a diagnosis based on the latest psychological research. The game has some serious psych-cred, too, boasting a number of consulting psychologists on the development staff.

89

36

WORLD OF WHORECRAFT

...that's the title of a WoW-themed porn series featuring sexy chain-mailed elves fighting with swords and then... doing what they do in adult movies. Producer "Dez" has clearly found his calling in the geek-erotica genre. He followed up the Whorecraft series by exploring a different gaming theme, delivering Counter-Strike-inspired "FPS Porn Operation Sex: Cock and Load."

JACK THOMPSON IN HOT WATER

Everyone's favourite anti-videogame crusader, crackpot Florida lawyer Jack Thompson, got himself into a bit of trouble early this year. The Florida Bar had finally had enough of Thompson's unprofessional conduct and filed a forty page complaint with the state's Supreme Court. With his legal career seemingly hanging in the balance, Thompson's behaviour appeared to get even more unbalanced than usual – at one point he actually accused Take Two Interactive of racketeering and violating his constitutional rights (Thompson and Take Two later settled their differences out of court). The trial that could see old JT getting disbarred was scheduled for late 2007. We suspect that the crazy old lawyer-man might be uncharacteristically quiet in the near future.

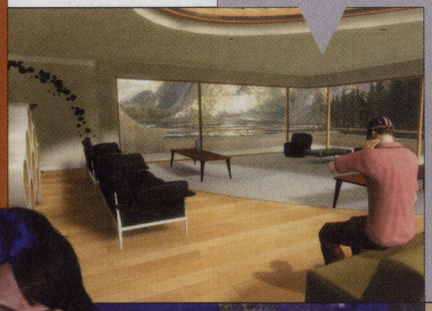
february

PS3 LAUNCHES IN AUSTRALIA

After four months on sale in Japan and the US, the PS3 finally arrived in Australia on March 23. There were the usual midnight launch events we've come to expect with the release of a new console, although observers noted that the crowds were a little on the pathetic side. The PS3's hefty price tag may have turned some prospective buyers away, but it did help Sony break the Australian record for post-launch revenue; approximately 27 million dollars worth of consoles and accessories left the shelves in the ten days after the PS3's market debut.

SONY SELF-SABOTAGE

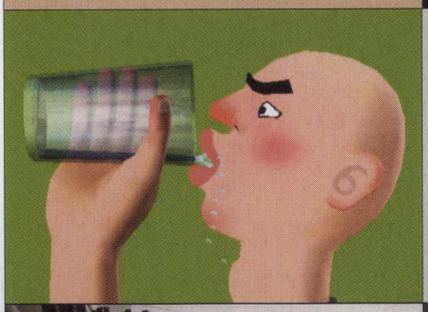
They may have been lounging on piles of money after the Australian and European PS3 launches, but Sony still had a less than fantastic month in March. The PS3 launch line-up was criticised for being somewhat anaemic (Resistance: Fall of Man, Motorstorm and Ridge Racer 7 were the only stand-outs in an otherwise mediocre selection) and the system was plagued by problems with backwards compatibility (the PAL territories copped it worse than our NTSC counterparts). Sony's online store was also a subject of ridicule for its rather convoluted transaction process. The company even managed to sabotage the one chance they had at some good press. When gaming website Kotaku tried to post a positive story about the PS3's Home application, Sony got mad at them for publishing the news too early.



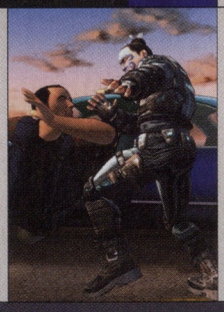
HEY, ISN'T THAT DR CAMERON?

The PS3 may have hogged the headlines, but there other reason to head out to your local games retailer in March. PC gamers were treated to the post-apocalyptic shooter S.T.A.L.K.E.R. and Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars. The latter features live-action cut scenes with actors who will be familiar to fans of Lost, Battlestar Galactica and House. On the console front, Mario's former arch rival made his Wii debut in Sonic and the Secret Rings, a landmark game with one of the worst soundtracks in recent memory.

86



81



84

GDC 2007

This year's Game Developers Conference saw the perpetually cheerful Shigeru Miyamoto deliver a keynote presentation which featured an animated "Wife-O-Meter" (Miyamoto determines a game's success based on whether his non-gaming wife is interested in it) and numerous pictures of his dog, Pick. Speaking of dogs, Peter Molyneux announced that a canine companion would feature very heavily in Fable 2 – and if dog ownership isn't quite fulfilling enough, there's the option to have in-game children. And yes, that means that if you're playing a female character, your avatar will get pregnant – apparently an historic first for the medium. Other GDC 2007 highlights include the unveiling of Sony's Home network and Maxis developer Chris Hecker calling the Wii "a piece of shit", only to renounce his comment the following day.

XBOX FIGHTS CRIME

It's always nice to hear a story about video games preventing violence rather than causing it. Police in Tepito, Mexico took a novel approach to getting illegal firearms off the streets. Not only did they give citizens the opportunity to surrender illegal firearms anonymously, they were offering Xboxes and PC as rewards. We don't know whether they were giving away the original Xbox or the 360, but it seems like a pretty good deal nonetheless.

march

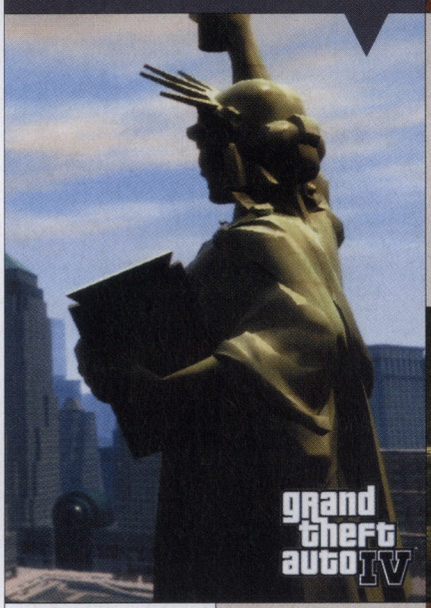
GTA IV DISPLEASES NYC MAYOR

The next instalment in the Grand Theft Auto series takes place in a Liberty City which bears more than a passing resemblance to the Big Apple. After the teaser trailer revealed the franchise's new look, New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg was quick to denounce the game, as if to suggest that the real New York could never be such a hotbed of violent crime as its virtual counterpart. As part of a broader crackdown against the GTA series and its ilk, the New York state government passed legislation that made it a felony to sell or rent to minors any game containing "depictions of depraved violence and indecent images." The law also required that home gaming consoles could only be sold if they incorporated a parental lockout mechanism.

83

GO3 2007

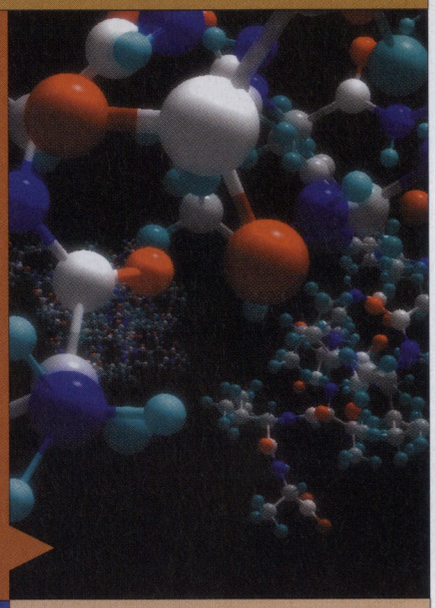
2007 saw the first GO3 Electronic Entertainment Expo held in Perth. The three day event (which, it is hoped will become an annual affair) functions as a showcase for the latest gaming and communication technology as well as a conference for developers to discuss the major issues facing the electronic entertainment industry. The inaugural GO3 attracted such luminaries as Metal Gear's Hideo Kojima, Lumines creator Tetsuya Mizuguchi and Harvey Smith, one of main players behind Deus Ex and Invisible War. Not bad for a first effort!



91

THE SERIOUS SIDE OF GAMING

Gaming got a bit of a bad rap in April, with UK newspaper The Daily Mail lamenting the fact that today's youngsters are more likely to develop RSI from excessive game playing than they are to break a limb falling out of a tree. In the same month, the Chinese Government ordered all online games to implement "anti-addiction measures" which limit each player to three hours of play time per day. It wasn't all bad news for our beloved pastime, however. PS3 owners were helping to cure cancer with the Folding@Home project and a UK researcher announced a "serious game" for mobile phones that can be used as part of missing persons investigations.

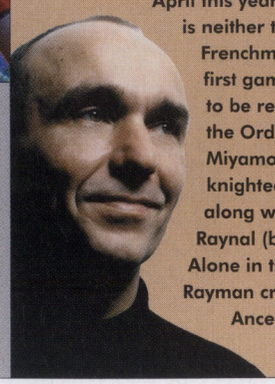


69

96

ARISE, SIR PETER

Peter Molyneux, the man responsible for Black & White, Fable and an awful lot of unfulfilled promises, was awarded a Knighthood in the Order of Arts of Letters by the French government in April this year. Molynuex is neither the first non-Frenchman nor the first game designer to be recognised by the Order. Shigeru Miyamoto was knighted last year, along with Frederick Raynal (best known for Alone in the Dark) and Rayman creator Michel Ancel.



GOAT CARCASS FIASCO

Sony's "Greek Orgy"-themed launch event for the European release of God of War II managed to offend just about everybody – not least the guests who were invited to scoop out the entrails of a freshly slaughtered goat. We can sort of see how the knife-throwing, live snakes and topless wenches might have seemed like a good idea at the time, but it's impossible to comprehend the reasoning behind the goat-carcass buffet. Sony issued a press release shortly after the event, indicating that the offal inside the goat was actually "a meat soup, made to a traditional Greek recipe" – because that makes the whole situation so much better. Ugh.

april

STARCRAFT 2 ANNOUNCED

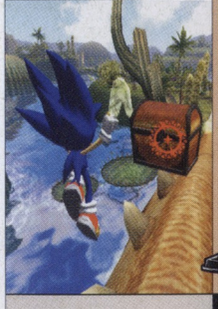
When Blizzard revealed that they were going to make a major announcement at the Blizzard World Wide Invitational event in Seoul, it wasn't a huge surprise that the news had something to do with Starcraft (which is practically the state religion of South Korea). The crowd at the Olympic Gymnastic Stadium were treated to an impressive video demonstration which marked the official unveiling of Starcraft 2. RTS nerds can expect to get their Zerg Rush on sometime in 2008.

93

STUDENT EXPELLED OVER COUNTER-STRIKE MAP

If you think that your school has great potential as an FPS level, this story might make you think twice before you show off your leet modding skills. A Texas high school student was transferred to an ominously named "alternative education centre" after it was discovered that he'd used his school as the basis for a map he made in Counter-Strike. The map, the boy's ornamental sword collection and a hammer found in his room all added up to what the School District classified as a "Level 3" situation, necessitating the student's transfer. A Level 3 situation is one where a student "engages in conduct relating to a false alarm or report (including a bomb threat) or a terroristic threat involving a public school." Some members of the School Board viewed the decision as an overreaction, while others argued that, after Columbine and Virginia Tech, any hint of a threat has to be taken seriously.

73



HANDHELD HEAVEN

May was a fruitful month for portable gaming. Ratchet & Clank made their way to the PSP with the cheekily titled "Size Matters", which provided a faithful translation of the series' action/platforming formula to a handheld device. Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops accomplished a similar feat, achieving critical acclaim for doing so. May also brought a bucket load of new releases for the DS, including a reworking of Final Fantasy III and the dangerously adorable Chocobo Tales. Another highlight was Elite Beat Agents, a reworking of the Japanese rhythm game/cheerleading sim Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan! (which literally translates to "Hey! Fight! Cheersquad!" – a far superior name than the one we ended up with).

90

84

55

WELCOME TO THE DOJO

Smash Bros Dojo, the official website for Super Smash Bros Brawl launched in May. In something of a marketing masterstroke, the Dojo is updated every weekday by the game's producer Masahiro Sakurai. The website has done a great job of keeping the fanboy excitement alive, by providing steady flow of information on new characters, stages and gameplay features. Some updates have been less exciting than others (a new item – whoop-dee-do!), but you can't help but be impressed with Nintendo's effort.

may

Get in the GAME...

...with AIE, Australia's best small training organisation!

AIE's award winning training in Game Development and Animation continues to provide outstanding opportunities for graduates to build their dream careers in the games, film and 3D industries.

Find out how you can get in the game. Visit us on the web at www.aie.edu.au or contact us for an information pack.!

WINNER!
Small Training Provider of the Year
2007 Australian Training Awards

AIE WARNING
May lead to great careers in games

AIE

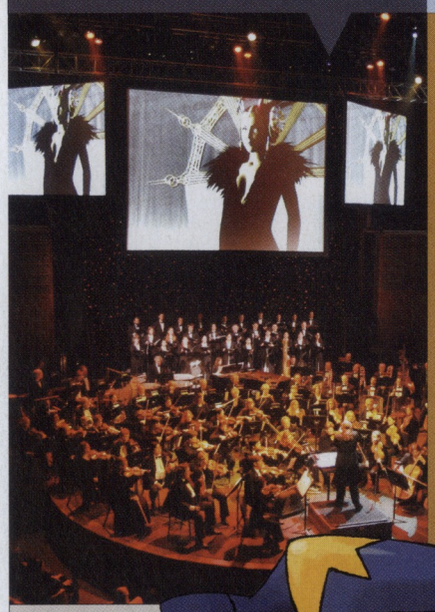
Canberra Campus:
02-6162 5131

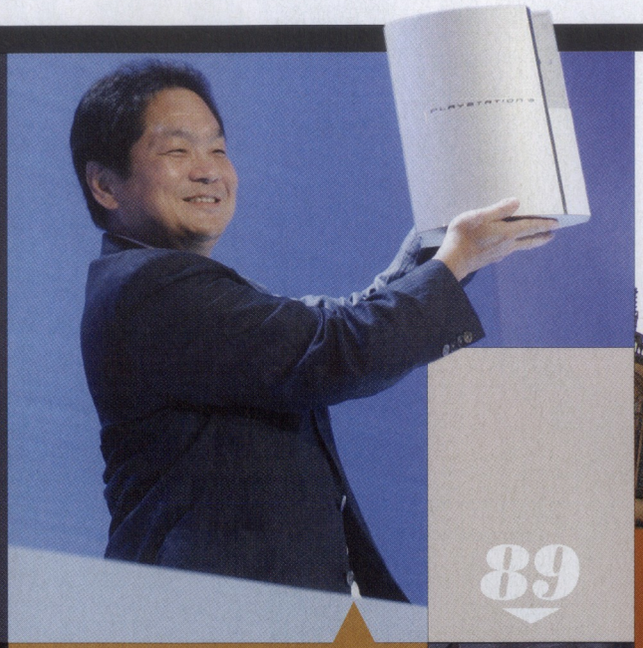
Melbourne Campus:
03-9820 8201

www.aie.edu.au

MARIO GOES TO THE OPERA HOUSE

Play! A Video Game Symphony, the world-wide concert tour featuring – as its name suggests – symphonic arrangements of videogame music, came to the Sydney Opera House for a run of five shows in June. The shows featured music from games as diverse as Metal Gear Solid, Shenmue, Oblivion and the obligatory Final Fantasies. It's really hard to pick a highlight. The Mario medley that opened the performance pushed all the right nostalgia buttons, as did the beautiful selections from Chrono Cross and Chrono Trigger. Snappily-dressed composer Akira Yamaoka joined the orchestra to perform the Silent Hill 2 theme on electric guitar and the Opera House pipe organ got a good workout in a thrilling rendition of the FFVI boss theme "Dancing Mad".

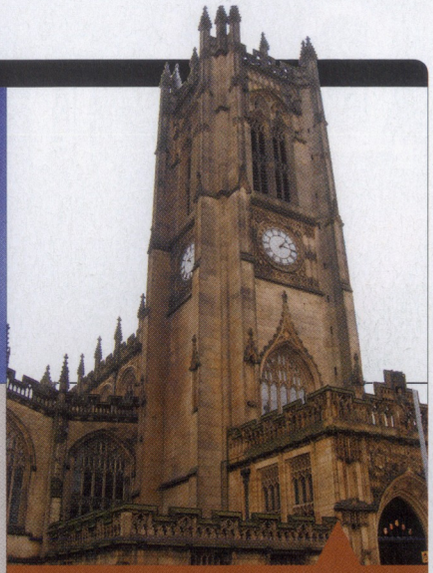




89

KEN KUTARAGI CALLS IT A DAY

June 19, 2007 marked the end of an era for Sony Computer Entertainment, when Ken Kutaragi, the "Father of the Playstation", officially stood down from his job position at the company. Kutaragi may have been instrumental in the success of the original Playstation, but he has borne the brunt of the criticism for the PS3 disappointing sales performance. Not entirely unfounded, given that this is the man who defended the PS3's high price with this statement: "We want for consumers to think to themselves, 'I will work more hours to buy one.' We want people to feel that they want it, irrespective of anything else."



SONY "DESECRATES" UK CATHEDRAL

The Church of England threatened to pursue legal action against Sony, in a dispute over the PS3 shooter Resistance: Fall of Man. A section of the game takes place in a very faithful recreation of Manchester Cathedral; the developers never asked permission to use images of the building in their game. The Bishop of Manchester likened the unauthorised use of the cathedral's likeness to trespassing and "desecration", arguing that the cathedral shootout was "irresponsible" in light of Manchester's ongoing issues with gun violence. Even Tony Blair weighed in on the controversy, claiming that Resistance's depiction of the cathedral was "in bad taste, and very insulting". However, in a characteristically Christian display of forgiveness, the Church decided to drop the matter in October, noting that Manchester cathedral had attracted an unusually high number of tourists since it was featured in the game.

POKEYMANS: THEY WILL NOT DIE

After nine months terrorising Japan and North America, the latest incarnation of the Pokémon scourge made its way down under in June. Pokémon Diamond and Pearl proved that taking the series to a new generation of handheld was no impediment to putting out the same goddamn game they've been releasing for the past ten years. However, if the sales figures are anything to go by, the tired old Pokémon formula is still more than capable of draining the wallets of the young and impressionable, like some kind of insatiable money-vampire. Keep the crosses and holy water handy, because the Pokeymans don't look like they're going to be leaving us anytime soon.

90

89

june

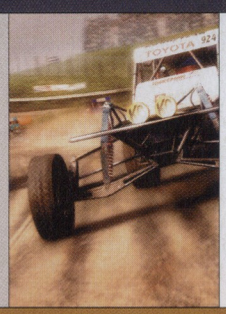
E3 2.0

Now officially known as the "E3 Media and Business Summit", 2007's E3 was a more subdued affair than those of years past. Costly and elaborate displays in crowded exhibition halls were cast aside in favour of smaller invitation-only gatherings where the industry could present their latest creations to the press. Nintendo used their E3 2007 press conference to launch three new peripherals for the Wii: the Wii Zapper, The Wii Balance Board and the Wii Wheel. Sony announced a PS3 price cut and showed off the new, slimmer model PSP. Microsoft decided to share the E3 experience with the common people, releasing a stack of their E3 demos and trailer for download over Xbox live.

THE SEASON OF THE REMAKE

Two of the biggest game releases in July were remakes of last generation titles, all fine-tuned and tarted up for the consoles of today. The Xbox's Ninja Gaiden (which had already been remade once as Ninja Gaiden Black) was released on PS3 in the form of Ninja Gaiden Sigma. The changes to game were mostly superficial, although some extra levels starring the axe-wielding, barely dressed Rachel took full advantage of the Cell processor's boob-rendering capabilities. Resident Evil 4 was given some more substantial re-engineering when it was ported to the Wii. An extremely well-executed Wii-mote aiming system helped make a game that was great on the GameCube and into something extra-special this time around. Not every game that came out in July was covering familiar territory – other notable releases for the month included The Darkness, Overlord and Puzzle Quest.

95›



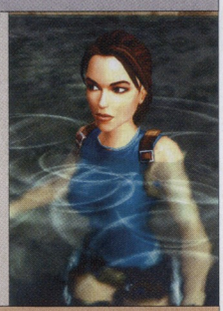
POWER-LEVELLING IN THE LAUNDRY

It's funny, repetitive tasks like vacuuming, ironing and washing the dishes are boring as hell, but fighting endless random encounters in an RPG can keep some people enthused for hours. Chore Wars is an online aims to help those of a nerdish disposition apply their love of the grind to something useful – like cleaning the house. The website lets you trade your domestic labour for XP and gold, working on the principle that cleaning the bathroom looks a lot more like fun if you get to level up at the end of it.

SILICON KNIGHTS IN EPIC LEGAL BATTLE

You may have heard of Too Human – the Xbox 360 game that seems forever trapped in development hell. Why is the final product taking so long to materialise? Developer Silicon Knights maintain that it's because the Unreal 3 engine can't do everything they were promised it could do when they licensed it from Epic. Silicon Knights told Epic as much, by filing a lawsuit in July. Epic counter-sued the following month, accusing Silicon Knights of trying to steal the Unreal 3 engine so they could use it for another game without paying licence fees. The warring developers have yet to resolve their differences. A trial is expected to take place next year.

74›



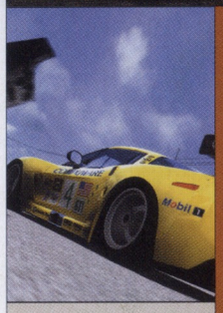
BAD TOUCHING

Yes, yes. We all know the Japanese make some strange games. LOL Japan and all that. However, this one is so bizarre it really should rate a mention here. Doki Doki Majo Shinpan (literally "Thump Thump Witch Judgement!") is a DS game where you hunt witches by... groping teenage girls to reveal the hidden "witch symbols" on their bodies. Yeah. Nothing to add to that, really.

july

72

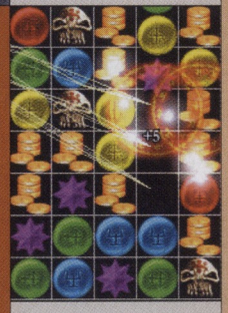
89



80

WELCOME TO RAPTURE

Bioshock, the much-hyped "spiritual successor to System Shock 2" was undoubtedly the biggest game released this August. Set in a crumbling underwater city populated by all manner of genetically enhanced freaks and weirdos, the game explores the downfall of a society founded on the philosophy of objectivism, espoused by the likes of Ayn Rand. Bioshock is by no means a perfect game – it attracted its fair share of petty griping about widescreen display issues in the 360 version, as well as more legitimate criticism about how the gameplay and narrative fell a bit flat towards the end. Still, Bioshock is expected to feature prominently in "Game of the Year" lists for 2007.



90

E3: THE NEXT GENERATION

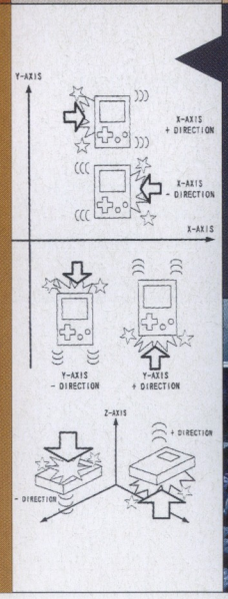
Now that E3 is no longer a public event, other annual games conventions are stepping in to fill the void. Two of the biggest take place in August: the Leipzig Games Convention in Germany and the Penny Arcade Expo (PAX)in the United States. This year's Leipzig event featured playable demos of yet-to-be-released games such as Devil May Cry 4, Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles, Little Big Planet and Spore. The event also premiered new trailers for Metal Gear Solid 4 and the upcoming Alone in the Dark game.

This year's PAX attracted over 37,000 attendees, more than ten times the number that attend the inaugural event in 2004. The event bills itself not just as a videogame expo, but as a weekend-long celebration of geek culture. PAX 2007 featured a keynote speech from Wil Wheaton, aka Wesley Crusher from Star Trek: The Next Generation. You can't get much geekier than that.

85

THE OTHER KIND OF Wii: PART 2

The delightfully named "Piss Screen" is a game that debuted in men's toilets across Germany this August. It's a racing game where players have to hit sensors in the urinal to dodge traffic. Basically, you drive with your wee. As well as providing a bit of target practice, the game has a serious public safety message. If you perform particularly badly, a message pops up on the screen letting you know that you may be a little too pissed (ha ha) to drive. It hasn't all been a steady stream of success for Piss Screen, however. The game ran into some opposition at Belgium's GamePower Expo. Piss Screen's anti-drink-driving message wasn't enough to stop it getting shut down by Belgian police, who claimed the game was "indecent". Spoilsports.



AN INTRIGUING DEVELOPMENT

Here's an interesting little story that may have slipped under the radar. In August this year, Nintendo filed a patent in the US for a portable gaming device incorporating motion sensitive technology. The handheld would be capable of reacting to tilt, impact and movement through space. Nintendo have played down the implications of the patent submission, adding that they file hundreds of them every year. Still, you can't help but wonder if the Wii might have a little brother or sister on the way.

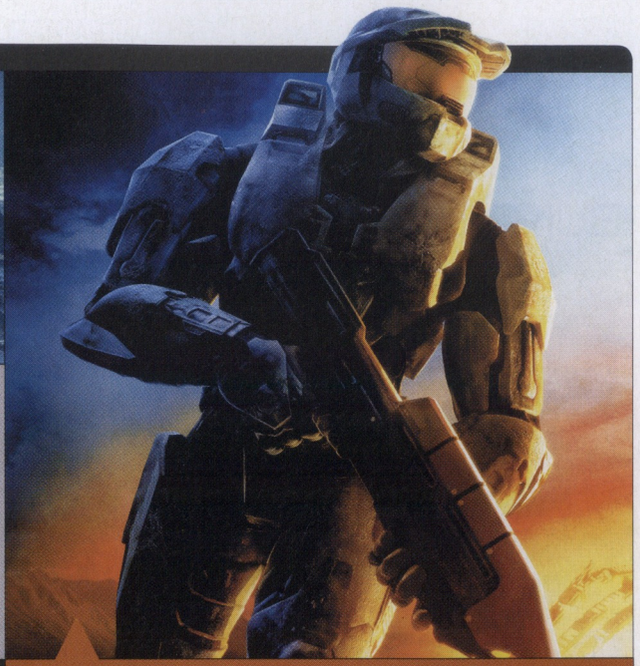
92

august

69

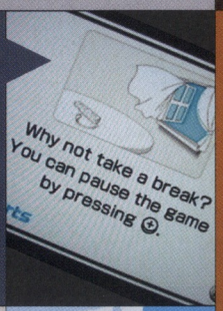
AND SO IT BEGINS...

After a relatively quiet year for new releases, the pre-Christmas flood began in earnest this September. There was Halo 3, of course, for the Xbox 360, as well as Medal of Honour: Airborne and Stranglehold, a videogame sequel to the John Woo film Hard Boiled. The Wii had Super Paper Mario and My Sims, while PS3 owners could finally get their hands on the long-awaited Heavenly Sword.



ONLINE GAMING CLAIMS ANOTHER LIFE

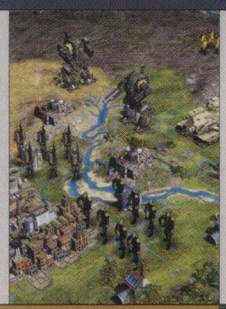
It's a story we hear every couple of years or so: someone sits down in an internet café somewhere in Asia, plays MMOs for a ridiculously long time and dies from exhaustion. This year's victim was a Chinese man who played for three days in an internet café in Guangzhou. It hasn't been reported what the unfortunate man was playing, so we're left in the dark as to what game inspired such fatal dedication.



WORLD GOES MAD FOR HALO 3

The release of Halo 3 was always going to be a big deal, but few could have predicted just how big it would be. The game broke Australian and international sales records on its first day, selling more than 50,000 copies in Australia alone. Mainstream news outlets were quite fond of mentioning that Halo 3's first day revenue of A$190 million surpassed the opening weekend takings for recent blockbuster movies (to be fair, an Xbox 360 game retails for significantly more than your average cinema tickets, so take any "Games bigger than Hollywood" declarations with a grain of salt). Halo 3 was breaking more than sales records - more than 1 million people were playing the game on Xbox Live in the 24 hours since its release, making for the biggest game day in history. To top if off, Master Chief became the first videogame character immortalised in wax by Madame Tussauds.

94



97

SONY BACKFLIPS ON RUMBLE

Sony used this year's Tokyo Game Show to unveil their latest PS3 accessory – the Dual Shock 3. It's the SixAxis with rumble. Yes, after more than a year of telling the world that making such a controller would be "too expensive", "too difficult" and "So last generation", Sony finally bit the bullet and put back the rumble feature that so many wished they had never taken out. Isn't it a coincidence that Sony's about-face on the rumble issues comes mere months after they settled the legal dispute with rumble creators Immersion?

80

TGS 2007

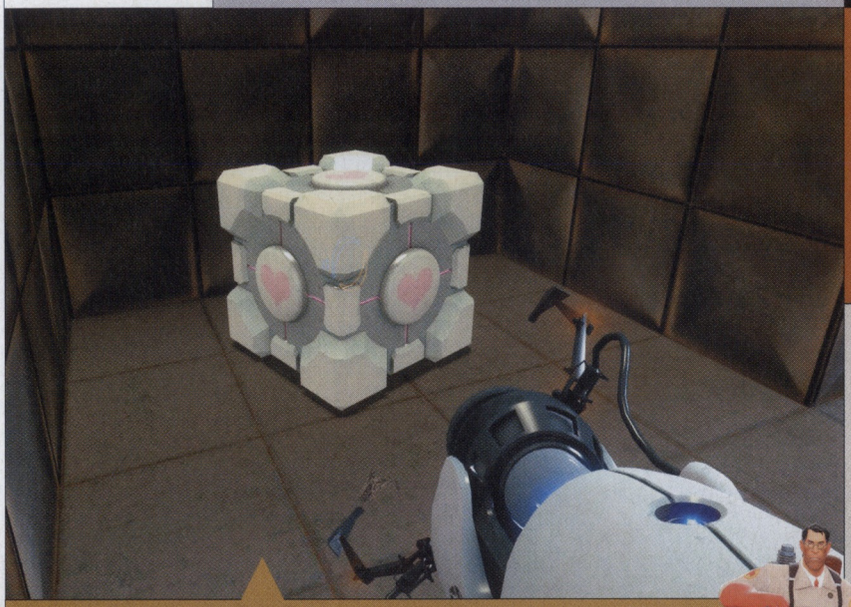
Those people lucky to attend this year's Tokyo Game Show were treated to playable demos of Metal Gear Solid 4, the Wii pseudo-light gun title Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles and the intriguing Little Big Planet. Other highlights of the show included Zack & Wiki, a Wii game that promises to revive the point and click adventure genre, curious Sony puzzler Echochrome and the long awaited Ninja Gaiden 2. Square-Enix had a big TGS this year, showcasing Final Fantasy XIII, FFVII: Crisis Core, Chocobo's Mysterious Dungeon and three new Kingdom Hearts titles (one each for DS, PSP and mobiles). Square Enix also unveiled a game not at all related to Final Fantasy: their upcoming Xbox 360 title, Infinite Undiscovery.

september

BUNGIE

SERIOUS BUSINESS THINGS

October was a big month for the movers and shakers of the games industry. The EA monster extended a long, slimy tentacle to ensnare VG Holding Corporation, absorbing developers Bioware and Pandemic into its enormous gelatinous body mass. In a reversal of that process, Bungie announced that they were parting ways with Microsoft. The Halo developers are looking to "return to their independent roots". Microsoft retains a minority share in the company.



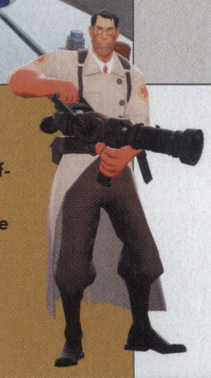
HADOKEN!

It's news so good we nearly can't bring ourselves to believe it. On October X this year, Capcom announced that they were working on Street Fighter IV. The game is still more than a year away from completion, but Capcom still managed to whip up a kickarse video to accompany their announcement. The trailer featured fully 3-D models of Ryu and Ken, so it's not clear whether Street Fighter IV will remain true to the series 2-D roots. But, hey – more Street Fighter! Can't complain.

97

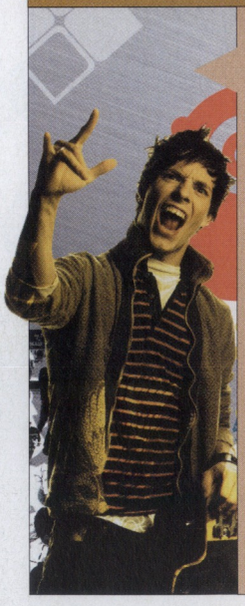
ORANGE BOX

October's gaming landscape was dominated by Valve's Orange Box, the game compilation that keeps on giving. The package includes the entire Half-Life 2 collection – the original game, Episode 1 and Episode 2 – as well as the refreshingly light-hearted Team Fortress 2. For many, though, the Orange Box's best offering was the sublime action/puzzler, Portal. Not content with being a clever experiment in Havok physics, Portal boasts some wickedly funny dialogue and a story that packs a surprising emotional punch. You'll laugh, you'll cry – you'll even fall in love with a crate.



A BATTLE FOR THE AGES

Nintendo set a precedent in May 2006 when they announced that Solid Snake would be a playable character in Super Smash Bros Brawl. After more than a year of speculation about other 3rd party characters, the Smash Bros Dojo website made the announcement we'd all been waiting for: Sonic the Hedgehog. That's right, Sonic is in Brawl - complete with a speedy, spin-heavy move set and the gallons of 'tude for which he's famous. Finally, we have a game where Mario and Sonic can beat the crap out of each other, settling a rivalry that dates back to the days of the Master System and the NES.

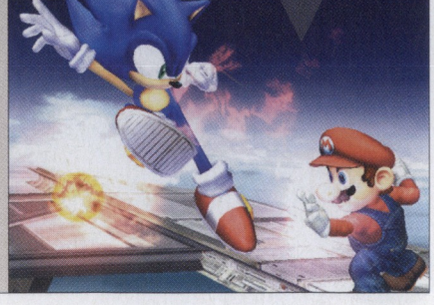


E FOR ALL

The Entertainment for All Expo, better known as E for All, endeavours to provide a more egalitarian videogame trade show experience than the invitation only E3 Business and Media Summit. The event is open to the public, essentially reviving the part of E3 that was cast aside in the restructure. E for All is held at the same venue as the old E3, even has the blessing of the Entertainment Software Association, the group responsible for E3 proper. This year's E for All featured playable demos of Metal Gear Solid 4 and Super Smash Brothers: Brawl, and was considered by the organisers to be a success. It could get interesting next year, when the expo is scheduled for the same weekend as the increasingly popular PAX.

88

78

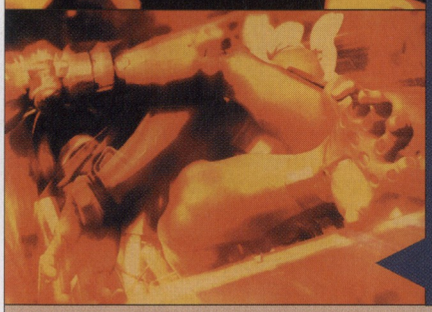


october

SPACE SMOOCHING SCANDAL!

Another serious Game of the Year contender hit us in November, in the form of Mass Effect, a futuristic action-RPG (in space, no less!) for the Xbox 360. The game attracted giant heapings of praise for its story and presentation. The characters' facial animations and voice acting (the game features the wonderful Jennifer Hale as the female player character) were particularly well-received. The release of Mass Effect was not entirely without controversy, however. In addition to a small number of retailers breaking the street date in Australia in the US, Mass Effect was briefly banned in Singapore on account of a romantic scene between two female characters. Although, strictly speaking, it was less girl-on-girl action and more girl-on-genderless alien of feminine appearance action. Perhaps that's why the Singaporean authorities reconsidered their decision and un-banned the game the following day.

93



RHETORIC. AND YOU BELIEVE IT!

It's true! The newly formed Eidos Montreal studio is hard at work on a new game, which they recently revealed as Deus Ex 3. After the lukewarm fan reaction to Invisible War (which was either a half decent game or a crime against humanity, depending on which part of the internet you listen to) and with neither Warren Spector or Harvey Smith on board, it will be interesting what direction the new Deus Ex will take. The game isn't likely to be finished before the end of 2009, so we've got at least two more years to start frothing with fanboy outrage or to remain cautiously optimistic.

A WII-LY BIG NOVEMBER

November was a big month for Wii owners. The delightfully whimsical Super Mario Galaxy won the heart of many a critic with its playful take on gravitational forces. Galaxy was so well received, in fact, that it briefly displaced Ocarina of Time from the top of Gamerankings.com's all time highest scorers list (at the time of writing, it was still a very close second). Another of November's Wii highlights was Metroid Prime: Corruption, a satisfying conclusion to the trilogy that began on the Gamecube. As well as looking gorgeous and neatly tying up some old narrative threads, Corruption featured one of the best implementations of the Wii's control interface to date. Other notable Wii-leases (forgive me) for November were Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games – the first game in which the titular mascots have appeared together – and Pokémon Battle Revolution, the Pocket Monster Army's first incursion into Wii-land.

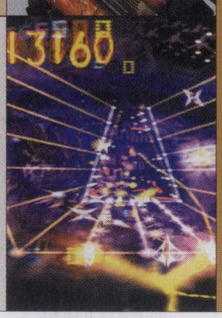
91

THE SEASON OF EMPTY WALLETS

With the Christmas shopping season starting to rear its ugly head for another year, there was a veritable avalanche of new releases this November. Here's a small sample of what may have been vying for you precious cash money: Assassin's Creed, Call of Duty 4, Crysis, Guitar Hero 3, Ratchet & Clank: Tools of Destruction, Sim City Societies, Timeshift, Unreal Tournament 3... And then there were games like Clive Barker's Jericho and the appalling Lair, which no right-minded gamer would contemplate spending money on.

90

TEA POT!



november

‹45

CONTROVERSY!

December got off to a scandalous start with the unexpected departure of long time Gamespot writer, Jeff Gerstmann. Shortly before his sacking (Gamespot eventually confirmed that Gerstmann was fired), Gerstmann wrote a somewhat unflattering review of Eidos' Kane & Lynch: Dead Men. At the time, the entire site was skinned with a Kane and Lynch theme, for which Eidos had presumably paid megabucks. The prominent Kane & Lynch advertising soon disappeared from Gamespot, as did Jeff Gerstmann. A spokesperson for CNET, Gamespot's parent company, insisted that the decision to fire Gerstmann "stemmed from issues unrelated to any publisher or advertiser" but the situation is still enough to make any good, honest game reviewer a teeny bit nervous. (On an unrelated note: see that product on the back cover? It's great! You should totally buy it.)

UNDER THE TREE

Japan didn't keep all the funky Wii- peripherals to themselves this Christmas season. Australians finally got the chance wrap their itchy trigger fingers around the Wii Zapper with the release of Link's Crossbow Training and Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles. Also out in December was the PS3 action-adventure Uncharted: Drake's Fortune and the game at the centre of Gerstmann-gate, Kane And Lynch: Dead Men.

A HAPPY NEW YEAR FOR SONY?

It took almost all year, but things were finally starting to look up for Sony's beleaguered PS3. The console actually managed to outsell the Wii in Japan, becoming the biggest selling home console for November. (Handhelds continue to dominate the Japanese sales charts: the DS is number one, with a sizeable lead over the second-place PSP.) There were a number of possible reasons floated for this sudden upswing in PS3 sales. The cut price 40GB model was released, as well as a stylish ceramic white version of the PS3. Of course, it's entirely possible that the Japanese are only buying PS3s now because everybody over there has a Wii already.

‹96

WII FIT INTO THESE JEANS NOW

One of Japan's biggest selling games at the end of 2007 was Wii Fit, a game which utilises the new Wii Balance Board peripheral. The pressure-sensitive board functions as a set of scales, as well as a controller for a variety of highly physical mini games. There's no word on when Wii Fit will be available in Australia, although the US and Europe are likely to see it sometime in the first half of 2008.

‹86

THE WACKY WORLD OF BUSINESS

Perhaps inspired by the Electronic Arts entity's ever-expanding girth, Activision and Vivendi (parent company of cash-cow Blizzard) announced their plan to join forces, becoming known as Activision Blizzard. Wild speculation and assorted crazy talk about the possibility of a console-based Starcraft or WoW was quickly squashed when Blizzard released an FAQ stating that it would be business as usual for them after the merge. That didn't stop wild speculation of another kind; with publishers apparently in a merging mood at the moment, some industry analysts pondered whether EA was in the market for a new acquisition: possibly Ubisoft or Take Two. Madness!

december

Careers at GAME

Ever dreamt of working in a game store? Enjoy a fun and fast paced environment?

We are a new and rapidly expanding retailer looking for enthustiastic staff!

The following positions are available:

- Store Managers
- Assistant Store Managers
- Full Time Staff Positions
- Casuals

How To Apply:

- Visit www.game.com.au for more information
- E-mail your resume directly to careers@game.com.au
- Visit one of our stores and drop off your resume to a friendly staff member

Into Games? Get into GAME!

New South Wales: **Bankstown Centro** *(02) 9708-1479* - **Blacktown Westpoint** *(02) 9679-9425* - **Bondi Junction Westfield** *(02) 9386-0578* - **Broadway Shopping Centre** *(02) 9212-5001* **Campbelltown Mall** *(02) 4626-6207* - **Chatswood Westfield** *(02) 9410-0322* - **Eastgardens Westfield** *(02) 9349-2566* - **Erina Fair** *(02) 4367-6266* - **Glendale** *(02) 4954-7327* - **Hornsby Westfield** *(02) 9987-4000* **Hornsby Kiosk** *(02) 9476-0511* - **Hurstville Westfield** *(02) 9586-4420* - **Kotara Westfield** *(02) 4965-5074* - **Lakehaven** *(02) 4393-6198* - **Lidcombe** *(02) 9748-3377* - **Liverpool Westfield** *(02) 9601-2774* **Liverpool Kiosk** *(02) 9602-9246* - **Macarthur Square** *(02) 4626-5960* - **Macquarie Centre** *(02) 9888-5477* - **Miranda Westfield** *(02) 9525-9630* - **Mt Druitt Westfield** *(02) 9677-1722* - **Narellan** *(02) 4647-0533* **Nepean Centro** *(02) 4732-5076* - **Parramatta Westfield** *(02) 9689-3966* - **Plumpton Market Place** *(02) 9625-6355* - **Rouse Hill** *(02) 9836-1933* - **St Mary's** *(02) 9623-3247* - **Tuggerah Westfield** *(02) 4353-9611* **Windsor** *COMING SOON* *Australian Capital Territory:* **Belconnen Westfield** *(02) 6251-8666* - **Canberra Centre** *(02) 6262-6802* - **Gungahlin** *(02) 6241-0328* - **Tuggeranong Westfield** *(02) 6293-2455* **Woden Westfield** *(02) 6260-3733* *Queensland:* **Cairns Central** *(07) 4041-4509* - **Logan Hyperdome** *(07) 3806-1513* - **Sunshine Plaza** *NOW OPEN* - **Stockland Cairns** *(07) 4033-6447* **Toombul Shopping Centre** *(07) 3256-6319* *South Australia:* **Colonnades Centro** *(08) 8186-0453* - **Marion Westfield** *(08) 8298-5625* *Tasmania:* **Eastlands** *(03) 6244-3756* - **Northgate** *(03) 6272-6304* *Victoria:* **Bayside Frankston** *(03) 9783-5110* - **Epping Plaze** *(03) 9408-6744* - **Knox City** *(03) 9800-3120* - **Shepparton** *COMING SOON* - **Watergardens** *(03) 8361-6322* *Western Australia:* **Innaloo Westfield** *(08) 9204-2166* - **Kingsway** *(08) 9409-7733* *Northern Territory:* **Casuarina Square** *(08) 8927-4378*

More Stores Opening Soon - Australia Wide!

Hyper Game of the Year Awards

2007 NOMINEES

2007 has been a huge year in gaming, seeing some of the best games to have been released in years and the emergence of new technologies and consoles. Well, now it's time to vote for the games you think have been the best of the best.

We've polled all of our staff here at Next as well as all of our contributors, both past and present to come up with nominees for our various awards but it's going to be up to you to vote for your favourite games.

Votes can be posted to us at:
Hyper Game of the Year Awards
78 Renwick St
Redfern 2016

Emailed to:
freakscene@next.com.au

or posted on the Hyperactive forums in the Hyper Game of the Year Awards thread located at:
www.hyperactive.com.au

Please only vote for one game per category.

Voting Form

Graphics .....

Gameplay .....

Sound .....

Innovation .....

Independent .....

Art Direction .....

Sports .....

Racing .....

Multiplayer .....

Peripheral .....

Xbox 360 .....

PS3 .....

Wii .....

PC .....

DS .....

PSP .....

PS2 .....

G.O.T.Y .....

Best Graphics

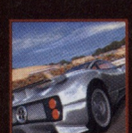
CRYSIS
Platform: PC
Developer: Crytek
Distributor: EA

ASSASSIN'S CREED
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Distributor: Ubisoft

TEAM FORTRESS 2
Platform: PC/Xbox 360 •
Developer: Valve • Distributor:
Steam • EA

COLIN MCRAE DIRT
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PC
Developer: Codemasters
Distributor: Atari

MASS EFFECT
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Bioware
Distributor: Microsoft

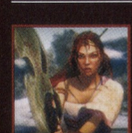


FORZA MOTORSPORT 2
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Microsoft
Distributor: Microsoft

CALL OF DUTY 4
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PC
Developer: Infinity Ward
Distributor: Activision

UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE
Platform: PS3
Developer: Naughty Dog
Distributor: Sony

BIOSHOCK
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: 2K Boston/Australia
Distributor: 2K



HEAVENLY SWORD
Platform: PS3
Developer: Ninja Theory
Distributor: Sony

Best Gameplay

LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS
Platform: DS
Developer/Distributor: Nintendo

PORTAL
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: Valve
Distributor: Steam/EA

METROID PRIME 3
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

MASS EFFECT
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Bioware
Distributor: Microsoft

SUPER MARIO GALAXY
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: Sega
Distributor: THQ/Sega

THE DARKNESS
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: Starbreeze
Distributor: 2K

CALL OF DUTY 4
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PC
Developer: Infinity Ward
Distributor: Activision

ASSASSIN'S CREED
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Distributor: Ubisoft

BIOSHOCK
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: 2K Boston/2K Australia
Distributor: 2K

Best Sound

BIOSHOCK
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: 2K Boston/2K Australia
Distributor: 2K

MASS EFFECT
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Bioware
Distributor: Microsoft

METROID PRIME 3
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

PORTAL
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: Valve
Distributor: Steam/EA

SUPER MARIO GALAXY
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

GUITAR HERO 3
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PS2/Wii/PC
Developer: Neversoft
Distributor: Activision

CALL OF DUTY 4
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PC
Developer: Infinity Ward
Distributor: Activision

THE DARKNESS
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: Starbreeze
Distributor: 2K

COLIN MCRAE DIRT
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PC
Developer: Codemasters
Distributor: Atari

HEAVENLY SWORD
Platform: PS3
Developer: Ninja Theory
Distributor: Sony

Best Innovation

PORTAL
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: Valve
Distributor: Steam/EA

SUPER MARIO GALAXY
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

METROID PRIME 3
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

COD 4 MULTIPLAYER
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PC
Developer: Infinity Ward
Distributor: Activision

Best Independent

PUZZLE QUEST
Platform: DS/PSP/PC/Xbox 360
Developer: Infinite Interactive
Distributor: D3 Publishing

PEGGLE
Platform: PC
Developer: PopCap
Distributor: PopCap/Steam/EA

MR ROBOT
Platform: PC
Developer: Moonpod
Distributor: Moonpod

FLOW
Platform: PS3
Developer: Nicholas Clark
Distributor: PlayStation Network

SAM & MAX: SEASON ONE
Platform: PC
Developer: Telltale Games
Distributor: Telltale Games

SPACE GIRAFFE
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Jeff Minter
Distributor: Xbox Live Arcade

Best Art Direction

BIOSHOCK
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: 2K Boston/2K Australia
Distributor: 2K

METROID PRIME 3
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

PORTAL
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: Valve
Distributor: Steam/EA

SUPER MARIO GALAXY
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

TEAM FORTRESS 2
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: Valve
Distributor: Steam/EA

HEAVENLY SWORD
Platform: PS3
Developer: Ninja Theory
Distributor: Sony

DEF JAM ICON
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: EA Black Box
Distributor: EA

OKAMI
Platform: PS2
Developer: Clover Studio
Distributor: Sony

Best Sports Game

SKATE
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: EA
Distributor: EA

FIGHT NIGHT: ROUND 3
Platform: PS3
Developer: EA
Distributor: EA

ROCKSTAR TABLE TENNIS WII
Platform: Wii
Developer: Rockstar
Distributor: Rockstar

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER '08
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PS2/PSP/Wii/DS/PC • Developer: Konami • Distributor: Atari

FIFA 08
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PS2/PSP/Wii/PC
Developer: EA
Distributor: EA

SMACKDOWN VS RAW 08
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PS2/PSP/Wii/DS • Developer: Yuke's Distributor: THQ

Best Racing Game

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 4
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Bizarre Creations
Distributor: Microsoft

FORZA MOTORSPORT 2
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Microsoft
Distributor: Microsoft

JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PS2/PSP/DS/PC • Developer: Juice Games • Distributor: THQ

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PC
Developer: Codemasters
Distributor: Atari

MOTORSTORM
Platform: PS3
Developer: Evolution Studios
Distributor: Sony

WIPEOUT PULSE
Platform: PSP
Developer: Sony Studio Liverpool
Distributor: Sony

Best Multiplayer

TEAM FORTRESS 2
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: Valve
Distributor: Steam/EA

HALO 3
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Bungie
Distributor: Microsoft

FORZA MOTORSPORT 2
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Microsoft
Distributor: Microsoft

CALL OF DUTY 4
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PC
Developer: Infinity Ward
Distributor: Activision

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3
Platform: PC/Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: Epic
Distributor: Red Ant

Best New Peripheral

SIXAXIS

360 MEDIA PAD

WIRELESS GHIII GUITAR

WII ZAPPER

360 RACING WHEEL

PLAYSTATION EYE

Best Xbox 360 Game

MASS EFFECT
Developer: Bioware
Distributor: Microsoft

PORTAL
Developer: Valve
Distributor: EA

BIOSHOCK
Developer: 2K Boston/2K Australia
Distributor: 2K

HALO 3
Developer: Bungie
Distributor: Microsoft

FORZA MOTORSPORT 2
Developer: Microsoft
Distributor: Microsoft

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5
Developer: Sega
Distributor: Sega/THQ

ACE COMBAT 6
Developer: Namco
Distributor: Atari

THE DARKNESS
Developer: Starbreeze
Distributor: 2K

ASSASSIN'S CREED
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Distributor: Ubisoft

COLIN MCRAE: DIRT
Developer: Codemasters
Distributor: Atari

Best PS3 Game

SEGA RALLY REVO
Developer: Sega Racing Studio
Distributor: Sega

UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE
Developer: Naughty Dog
Distributor: Sony

RATCHET & CLANK: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION
Developer: Insomniac
Distributor: Sony

RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN
Developer: Insomniac
Distributor: Sony

VIRTUA FIGHTER 5
Developer: Sega
Distributor: THQ/Sega

FIGHT NIGHT: ROUND 3
Developer: EA
Distributor: EA

MOTORSTORM
Developer: Evolution Studios
Distributor: Sony

FLOW
Developer: Nicholas Clark
Distributor: PlayStation Network

THE DARKNESS
Developer: Starbreeze
Distributor: 2K

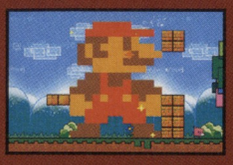
ASSASSIN'S CREED
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Distributor: Ubisoft

Best Wii Game

METROID PRIME 3
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

SUPER MARIO GALAXY
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

RESIDENT EVIL 4: WII EDITION
Developer: Capcom
Distributor: Nintendo



SUPER PAPER MARIO
Developer: Intelligent Systems
Distributor: Nintendo

LEGO STAR WARS COMPLETE SAGA
Developer: Traveller's Tales
Distributor: Activision

ROCKSTAR TABLE TENNIS WII
Developer: Rockstar
Distributor: Rockstar

GUITAR HERO III
Developer: Neversoft
Distributor: Activision

WARIOWARE SMOOTH MOVES
Developer: Intelligent Systems
Distributor: Nintendo

MADDEN
Developer: EA
Distributor: EA

MERCURY MELTDOWN REVOLUTION
Developer: Ignition
Distributor: QV

Best PC Game

BIOSHOCK
Developer: 2K Boston/2K Australia
Distributor: 2K

CRYSIS
Developer: Crytek
Distributor: EA

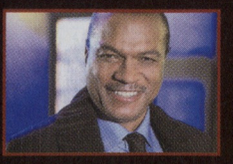
PORTAL
Developer: Valve
Distributor: Steam/EA

THE WITCHER
Developer: CD Projekt
Distributor: Atari

CALL OF DUTY 4
Developer: Infinity Ward
Distributor: Activision

WORLD OF WARCRAFT: BURNING CRUSADE
Developer: Blizzard
Distributor: Vivendi

CIV IV: BEYOND THE SWORD
Developer: Firaxis
Distributor: 2K



COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS
Developer: EA
Distributor: EA

WORLD IN CONFLICT
Developer: Massive
Distributor: Vivendi

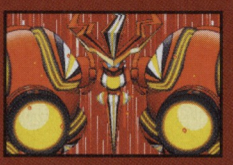
TEAM FORTRESS 2
Developer: Valve
Distributor: Steam/EA

Best DS Game

LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

PHOENIX WRIGHT: JUSTICE FOR ALL
Developer: Capcom
Distributor: Activision

PUZZLE QUEST
Developer: Infinite Interactive
Distributor: D3 Publishing



LUNAR KNIGHTS
Developer: Konami
Distributor: Atari

WARIO: MASTER OF DISGUISE
Developer: Suzak
Distributor: Nintendo

HOTEL DUSK: ROOM 215
Developer: Cing
Distributor: Nintendo

DRAGON QUEST HEROES: ROCKET SLIME
Developer: TOSE
Distributor: Ubisoft

DRAWN TO LIFE
Developer: 5th Cell
Distributor: THQ

FINAL FANTASY VI ADVANCE
Developer: Square Enix
Distributor: Ubisoft

MARIO VS DONKEY KONG 2: MARCH OF THE MINIS
Developer: NST
Distributor: Nintendo

Best PSP Game

METAL GEAR SOLID: PORTABLE OPS
Developer: Konami
Distributor: Atari

JEANNE D'ARC
Developer: Level 5
Distributor: Sony

FINAL FANTASY TACTICS: THE WAR OF THE LIONS
Developer: Square Enix
Distributor: Ubisoft

WIPEOUT PULSE
Developer: Sony
Distributor: Sony

PUZZLE QUEST
Developer: Infinite Interactive
Distributor: D3 Publishing

CHILI CON CARNAGE
Developer: Deadline Games
Distributor: Atari

VALKYRIE PROFILE LENNETH
Developer: Square Enix
Distributor: Ubisoft

CRUSH
Developer: Zoe Mode
Distributor: THQ/Sega

METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY
Developer: Terminal Reality
Distributor: QV

SILENT HILL ORIGINS
Developer: Konami
Distributor: Atari

Best PS2 Game

OKAMI
Developer: Clover Studio
Distributor: Sony

GOD OF WAR II
Developer: Sony
Distributor: Sony

FINAL FANTASY XII
Developer: Square Enix
Distributor: Ubisoft

GUITAR HERO III
Developer: Neversoft
Distributor: Activision

GOD HAND
Developer: Clover Studio
Distributor: Sony

DISGAEA 2: CURSED MEMORIES
Developer: Nippon Ichi
Distributor: Atari

ROGUE GALAXY
Developer: Level 5
Distributor: Sony

SHADOW HEARTS: FROM THE NEW WORLD
Developer: Nautilus
Distributor: THQ

Where's My Game?!

Favourite game not on the list? If you feel we've missed a nominee, write to us and let us know - who knows, your nominee may win!

Best (category & game).....

My G.O.T.Y.....

Game of the Year

BIOSHOCK
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: 2k Boston/2K Australia
Distributor: 2K

MASS EFFECT
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Bioware
Distributor: Microsoft

PORTAL
Platform: Xbox 360/PC
Developer: Valve
Distributor: Steam/EA

HALO 3
Platform: Xbox 360
Developer: Bungie
Distributor: Microsoft

CRYSIS
Platform: PC
Developer: Crytek
Distributor: EA

METROID PRIME 3
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

SUPER MARIO GALAXY
Platform: Wii
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

THE DARKNESS
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: Starbreeze
Distributor: 2K

CALL OF DUTY 4
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3/PC
Developer: Infinity Ward
Distributor: Activision

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS
Platform: DS
Developer: Nintendo
Distributor: Nintendo

GOD OF WAR 2
Platform: PS2
Developer: Sony
Distributor: Sony

ASSASSIN'S CREED
Platform: Xbox 360/PS3
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Distributor: Ubisoft

INSIDE

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

For three years, there's been one name that counts in the MMO market. World of Warcraft is the eight-hundred pound gorilla, the big man, the boss. It's Warcraft's yard. Since November 2004 it has raked in the players, the dollars, the mainstream attention, the South Park episode, the car ads, a live-action film coming and on and on it goes. I write these very words as Mr. T barks orders at me to buy the game from my television. It boasts a player base of over nine million, possibly more considering the itinerant player base in China. In the words of Eric Cartman himself, it seems everyone wants you to 'get with the online sensation that's sweeping the nation... or we will kill you.'

Some players have been there since beta, rich in epics, putting in terrifying numbers of hours per week. New players sign up every day and more still just enjoy a few hours a week. One of the great successes of WoW is that it supports all play styles, providing the hardcore raider the crunch they desire, the roleplaying aspects and lore for the story mad crew, a complex and robust player versus player league, the game is all things to all people.

Three years in, one major expansion, twenty or so patches, later, World of Warcraft is getting ready for its next big expansion, Wrath of the Lich King. We thought it was time to sit down and talk with Blizzard about what's gone on, what's to come, and the state of play in Azeroth.

City in a Bubble

Dalaran is a good example of how Blizzard works to develop content. In the original RTS games, it was a human city of mages that was destroyed by a demon lord. It has appeared in the MMO as a city in a force field, patrolled by overzealous wizards and elementals. In the new expansion, Dalaran will have teleported itself to the far north, becoming a neutral city intent on taking its revenge on the Lich King, once servant of the demons who destroyed their town. The Knights of the Silver Hand, an order of mighty paladins, will also be in the new expansion, inspired by quests taken by players. WoW has long since left the idea of static storytelling behind.

We had a chance to chat with Frank Pearce, the head boss-mob responsible for a little thing we call The Burning Crusade and ask him a few questions, first amongst them being that, although the Warcraft franchise was immensely popular, why was the decision made to base their first MMO around that game rather than the more action oriented Diablo franchise or StarCraft, their IP with the most fanatical following?

"Though all of our franchises have a great story foundation in their epic settings, characters, and lore, Warcraft was probably the most mature of the three as far as having an established background on which to base a massively multiplayer game. At the time we began development on the game, it just seemed most sensible to base it within an epic fantasy framework, which the Warcraft series provided after three different real-time strategy games, as well as a number of fantasy novels."

OVERNIGHT

Certainly that rich, existing setting is one of the reasons players enjoy the game but very little prepared the gaming community, or Blizzard itself, for how quickly that success arrived. To call World of Warcraft an overnight success wouldn't quite encapsulate the speed with which the game took off. We asked Frank whether the sudden massive popularity of the game changed the way in which Blizzard viewed the game and in turn did that change the way in which the game was supported in terms of patches, content updates and expansions?

"We were surprised and humbled at how quickly World of Warcraft gained popularity. The rate at which players took to the game exceeded even our most optimistic projections, catching us a little bit off guard. But we were able to quickly ramp up our level of support both on the customer side, as well as on the network and back-end support side. The experience was certainly an eye-opening one, which did cause us to plan more carefully in order to support future growth. These lessons carried over to the launch of The Burning Crusade, which went off quite smoothly even with the expansion pack setting new sales records.

We're also pleased with the immense amount of content we've been able to deliver via content patches and of course, with the release of The Burning Crusade expansion set. In fact, we recently shipped the Gods of Zul'Aman patch, which added a new 10-person dungeon, new daily quests, guild banks, and a host of new balance tweaks, profession recipes, and more. But we're also very mindful that providing a steady stream of new content is just one piece of the

When a man and a horse love each other very much...

> *We were surprised and humbled at how quickly World of Warcraft gained popularity*

Ease down Battlecat, she is a friend to Eternia

puzzle when it comes to operating an MMO game. We're committed to providing the best possible service to our more than 9 million players worldwide."

One of the ways that Blizzard has kept the game fresh is in-game events. The monthly Darkmoon Faire offers gifts, quests and prizes. Holidays such as Christmas and Halloween are celebrated in-game with special monster attacks and fun harmless items like snowballs and flying brooms. They also regularly patch, adjusting game balance and rules and introducing new dungeon content, often with great fanfare.

The addition of the 40-man raid zone Naxxaramas saw an invasion of the undead across Azeroth. A nigh-unstoppable demon lord, who ravaged across the world, opened the Dark Portal. To take the war to the Silithids, huge campaigns had to be undertaken server wide. Instances such as Mauradon, Dire Maul and others have been all been released by patch with Outlands having just received the hardest 5-man in the game with a new 25-man on the way, promising an end to the lengthy saga of the villainous Prince Kael'thas.

SMALL IS THE NEW BIG

The new instances in Burning Crusade have all show appreciable changes: Shorter, more intense, without the very, very lengthy grinds of the high level Azerothian instances. We asked Frank, nearly a year after The Burning Crusade how the identification of strengths and weaknesses in the design of Azeroth influenced Outland's design?

"The design of our outdoor zones in Outland is arguably the greatest success of The Burning Crusade. The quest design in the original World of Warcraft was great, but it's quite clear that the overall quest flow and exploration in Outland and the new Blood Elf and Draenei regions is much more tightly designed and polished, making leveling in the newly-designed regions even more fun than before.

We're also pleased at how successful the new winged-dungeon designs have been for us. With such a variety of five-person dungeon content divided into bite-sized chunks, players can experience instances and fun boss fights without having to devote a great deal of time in a single sitting."

How then, did instance-design and raid-design philosophy change and what factors led specifically to the cut down of numbers from the 40-person to 10-person raids?

"Actually, The Burning Crusade still features a lot of 25-person raid content, which is the direct replacement to the 40-person end-game raids of the original World of Warcraft. The 10-person raids available in the game are provided as an alternative. In any case, there are a number of reasons we decided to cut down from 40 to 25 player raids.

First of all, the 25-person raids allow each person to play a more important role in the outcome of the fight. Whereas 40-person content sometimes allowed "passengers" to just come along for the ride without contributing much, our 25-person raid content is designed in a way that each player must contribute and play a key role in the fight—this provides a more satisfying experience to everyone involved.

It's also much easier for guilds to organize 25 players instead of 40. With fewer players present, there's less time wasted waiting on certain players to show up, come back from breaks during the middle of the raid, or deal with other real-life distractions. Fewer players also means a greater chance for each player to pick up loot on any given run.

Of course we'd never have made the decision to cut down the number of players if we felt that the reduction would compromise the epic feel of the boss fights. But as the success and popularity of the new end-game raids in The Burning Crusade show, we're still able to deliver a fantastic and large-scale experience with the new 25-person raid size."

80 IS THE NEW 70

It's taken a year but many guilds have worked their way through a great deal of the first expansion and many players are seeing endgame content at a rate simply impossible for most in Azeroth. Simply put, endgame at seventy is a hell of a lot more fun than endgame at sixty. With the level cap being raised to eighty in the new expansion what failures and successes of The Burning Crusade will shape the design of Wrath of the Lich King?

"We're already incorporating a lot of the lessons we learned from The Burning Crusade into the design of Wrath of the Lich King. One example is in the design of the continent of Northrend itself. Instead of having one entry zone for new players to jump into the new continent, Northrend will offer a choice of two different entry zones to explore. This design choice will hopefully distribute the rush of new players that will inevitably happen during the first several days after the game launches, and alleviate overcrowding issues for that crucial time period. In the long term, having two entry points gives players additional choices for exploration when they level an alternate character, so they don't feel like they're treading down the exact same path again.

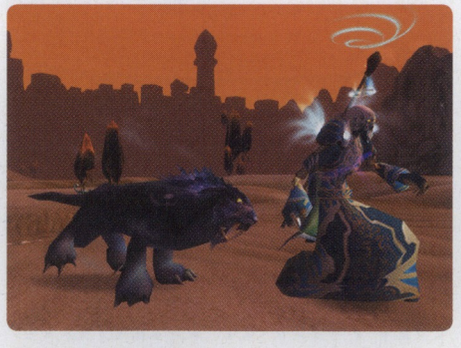
Another lesson we took from The Burning Crusade is that our players love the 10-person raid dungeons. That expansion shipped with Karazhan, which continues to be one of our most popular dungeons ever. Our most recent content patch also shipped with a new 10-person raid dungeon, Zul'Aman, which is also proving to be popular. With Wrath of the Lich King, we are planning on introducing more 10-person dungeon content for our players to explore, giving them more choices in raid content."

We're also pleased at how successful the new winged-dungeon designs have been for us

ACROSS THE UNIVERSE

The 'Warcraft Universe' is notably rich. With the rapid rate of death of lore characters, we asked Mr. Pearce if Blizzard has any plans to extend new lore past Wrath of the Lich King, or if instead we will we see new elements, such as Emerald Dream, Naga cities and the like? Furthermore, how would that lore be presented?

"The great thing about the Warcraft universe is that there's never a lack of ideas about where to take the game next. Even just after finishing the original World of Warcraft, we ended up with enough lore and content ideas to keep us busy for years and years to come. We're looking forward to showing off some of those ideas in the future, but can't get into any specifics yet."



PeeVeePee **For a game that has plenty of fluffy lore and RP options, WoW certainly has a lot of options for mucking into vicious PK territory. There are PvP servers with little or no intervention from GMs. Even regular servers have PvP zones and there are four battlegrounds and Wrath of the Lich King promises at least one more, including destructible buildings and big ass siege weapons. On top of that, a cross-faction, cross-server Arena league for, teams of 2-5 to compete for rich prizes and glory operates seasonally. If that's not enough, there's also a duelling function for friendly matches.**

Mr. Pearce isn't exactly lying when he talks about the Lore, the established back story of the world being far more elaborate than Diablo or Starcraft. Not only are there three RTS games with numerous expansions, all with differing faction stories, WoW now enjoys nine printed novels, with a tenth on the way, two comics with a new monthly just launched and the game itself has many, many quests that deal with elaborate histories. Azeroth enjoys ten thousand years of pretty elaborate history, dealing with ancient attacks by demons, dragons versus trolls, dragons versus bugs, dragons versus everyone and dragons versus their most hated foes... dragons. One instance, Uldaman, is famous for revealing epic storylines for just the Dwarven race.

WoW has so far expanded to other planets as places to visit but we've still to see the fabled, hellish undersea realms, the other-dimensional Nightmare, one of perhaps five Old Gods, the goblin stronghold of Undermine, the Legion worlds of Xoroth, Argus or any of the primordial Titans. It's a fair bet there'll be no shortage of places to expand to. While we know lore is mainly handled by one individual, we asked Frank about how the actual workflow and design decisions were arrived at and maintained?

"While Chris Metzen guides the direction of our games' lore, there's actually an entire department at Blizzard called creative development, devoted to managing and creating the lore in our games. Metzen heads up the department as the vice president of creative development.

As far as the gameplay and design decisions, those are handled primarily by the World of Warcraft development team, which splits the design tasks along a few different lines, including quest design, itemization, PvP, and dungeon encounter design, to name a few. However, the interconnected nature of the game ensures that no one can work in a vacuum."

LORELOL

These guys seem to know their job, regularly stepping up not only in quality of quests and monsters but also in the lore department. Undoubtedly someone reading this will fall back on the old "lorelol" meme, complaining about revisions to established lore to aid the development of a constantly evolving story but one of the most promising elements of the Wrath of the Lich King expansion is that Arthas, one of the most compelling protagonists in Warcraft, indeed gaming history, is the big boss. Blizzard have promised that, unlike Cthun or even Kel'Thuzad, the war against the Lich King will be an intimate war for the soul, rather than simply 'raid the dungeon, kill the boss, get the epix'.

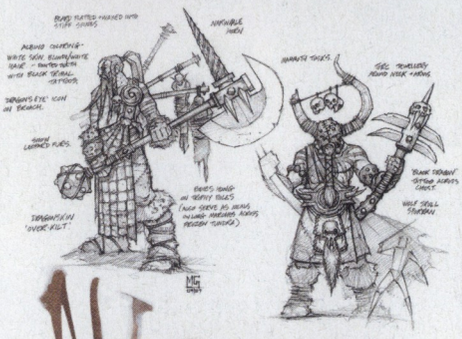
Frank agrees that creating a more dynamic world, a more fulfilling gaming experience, is a priority.

"As World of Warcraft matures and its players grow more experienced, it's natural for them to identify closely with certain aspects of the world, so allowing the world to evolve and grow as the players do can be fun for everyone, if done correctly. Any time there's a good opportunity for us to evolve characters and settings within the game, we're going to experiment with that and see how the players take to it. The opening of the Ahn'Qiraj dungeons is one example of a world event where players on both factions had to work together in order to gain access to the regions. Another great example will come in Wrath of the Lich King, where players can look forward to the magical city of Dalaran opening up for exploration as it moves from Azeroth into the skies of Northrend."

The Dark Side

Mind you, with all the love that Warcraft gets, the enormous popularity and mainstream attention, it isn't without a few slip-ups, publication relations gaffes and bonehead manoeuvres. The BBC reports the Chinese government wants to place curfews on online games. There was a nasty incident occurred when a Guild started advertising itself as gay, lesbian and trans friendly but was warned to stop all recruiting activities to 'protect' the Guild from harassment. The adult performer, Mia Rose, lead actress in a rather explicit 'homage' site, was recently banned for undisclosed reasons after being outed by a player, leading some to ponder the actual reasons for the ban. Other players worry at the presence of The Warden, a programme that monitors the information on a player using the Windows version of the game. Ostensibly there to look out for banned third party clients, Blizzard doesn't disclose what other information the Warden can find and transmit. Then there was the forcibly disbanded 'pedosexual' (read: child molester) friendly Guild Abhorrent Taboo and the ensuing minor kafuffle about free speech.

Then there's the variety of spam scams, the server lag, the barrens chat, the downtime and more besides. Make no mistake, World of Warcraft is the current pinnacle of the MMO but not without bugbears.



Blizzard keeps close tabs on player actions and statistics. Indeed, the constant patching and adjustments reflect fan concerns over how their characters and rule sets work. No matter what forums would have you believe, Blizzard pays close attention to their players. We enquired as to how that information is used to influence game design?

"We can use this type of information as a tool to identify what is and what isn't working in the game. There are lots of examples of this – if there's a certain talent that players aren't using, we'll know about that and consider improving it, or removing it in favour of something that might be much cooler and more attractive for our players. Similarly, if we find that players are not questing in a certain zone, or if certain dungeon wings are not being explored, we can take a look at those areas and try to determine why they're not as attractive to players. We can then use that information to improve those zones, inform our future design decisions, or both."

One of the downsides of this semi-experimental approach to content development and tweaking is that fans of Warcraft can be very... vocal and even offensive, especially concerning the dreaded nerf, a reduction of power levels. We can only assume that it can have an effect team morale? Ever the diplomat, Frank told us, "We recognize that our players are extremely passionate and we appreciate the feedback they provide to us about the game. Sure, the language can get heated at times, but as developers we recognize that level of emotion means that the players truly care, which is something we never take for granted. We're glad that our players are so vocal and passionate about the game."

With a much-anticipated expansion on the way, ads all over telly, a tenth million subscription surely on the horizon, we're sure Blizzard can be magnanimous with even their most vocal detractors. <<

the language can get heated at times, but we recognize that level of emotion means that the players truly care

Term & Conditions: 1) Offer is open to residents of Australia and New Zealand except employees and the immediate families of Next Publishing Pty Ltd and its agencies associated with the promotion. 2) Only entries completed with these Terms and Conditions will be eligible. 3) Entry is by subscribing to Hyper from issue 172 from within the magazine or online at www.next.com.au. 4) Offer begins at 9am January 1, 2008 and entries close at 6pm February 20, 2008. 5) The promoter is Next Publishing Pty Ltd ABN 88 002 647 645 of 78 Renwick Street, Redfern, NSW, 2016. 6) The promoter is not responsible for lost or misdirected mail.

Five Great Reasons To Subscribe To Hyper:

SAVE UP TO $80

- The best source of 100% Australian gaming commentary around
- Get each issue delivered straight to your door and never miss an issue
- Subscribe and you can save over 40% off the cover price
- Hyper is the proven gaming authority with over 14 years of history
- Every gaming platform covered, plus DVDs, anime, tech, retro and more!

SAVE TIME SUBSCRIBE ONLINE www.next.com.au

4 EASY WAYS TO ORDER

1. Call us tollfree on **1300 36 1146**
   Monday to Friday
   9am-5:30 pm EST
2. Fax a copy of the completed form, with credit card details, to: **02 9699 0334**
3. Cut or copy the form and post it with a cheque or money order, or your credit card details, to:
   Hyper Subscriptions
   Reply Paid 65828,
   78 Renwick St.
   Redfern, NSW 2016
4. Online at **www.next.com.au**

Please register a subscription for:

Me **Gift** (please tick one)

- ☐ ☐ **2 years (24 issues) $110 SAVE $80.80**
- ☐ ☐ **1 year (12 issues) $59 SAVE $36.40**
- ☐ ☐ **1 year New Zealand $A70**
- ☐ ☐ **1 year Overseas $A90**

Enclosed is a cheque/money order made payable to Next Publishing Pty. Ltd. for $ .....

Or charge my credit card for $ .....

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard

Name on Card .....

Card Number .....

Expiry Date .....

Signature .....

Please print

Mr/Mrs/etc..... First Name .....

Surname .....

My Address .....

Suburb..... Postcode.....

My Telephone Number .....

My Email Address .....

Please send a gift subscription to:

Mr/Mrs/etc..... First Name .....

Surname .....

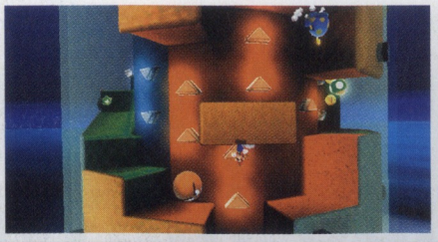
Address .....

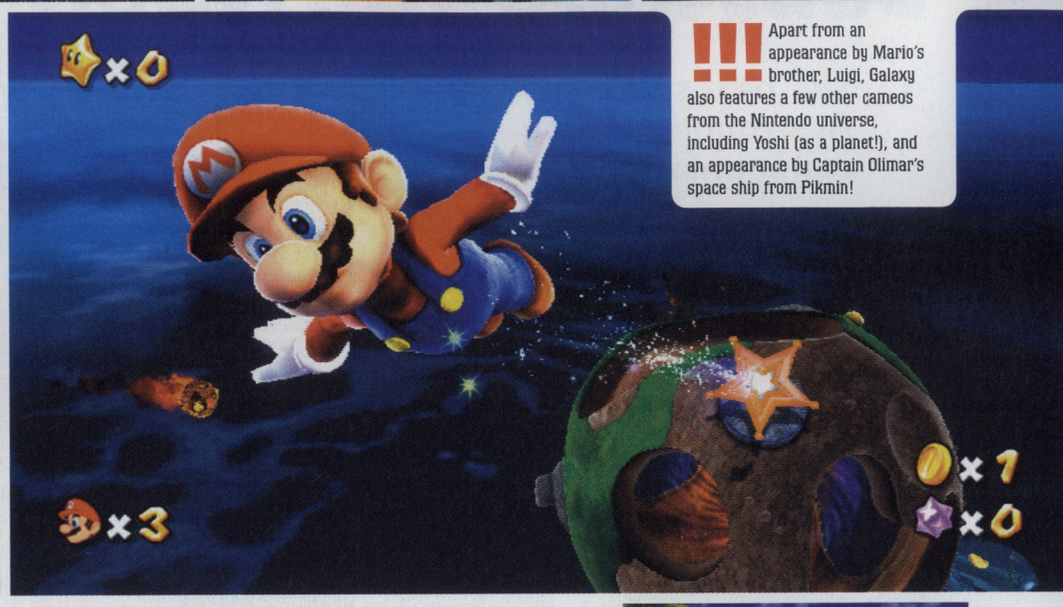
Suburb..... Postcode.....

Telephone .....

Please allow 4–6 weeks for delivery of first issue. Offer expires 20/02/2008. Please retain a copy if this form as a Tax Invoice. Next Publishing Pty Ltd. 78 Renwick St, Redfern, NSW 2016 ABN 88 002 647 645

HYPER HY0172





Apart from an appearance by Mario's brother, Luigi, Galaxy also features a few other cameos from the Nintendo universe, including Yoshi (as a planet!), and an appearance by Captain Olimar's space ship from Pikmin!

X360 / PS3 / **Wii** / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Super Mario Galaxy

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE wants to know when it will be Luigi's turn

category: **Platform**
players: **1-2**
developer: **Nintendo**
publisher: **Nintendo**
price: **$99.95** / rating: **G**
available: **November**

It's been no more than two months since we last declared that the Wii had a new best game, one that beats out all others to the top of everyone's must-have titles for Nintendo's tiny white wonder. The previous champ was of course The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess, and its usurper was Retro Studio's Metroid Prime 3: Corruption. It's a pity that Samus couldn't hang onto her trophy long enough to relish victory though, since with the release of Super Mario Galaxy, the princess rescuing plumber has well and truly dethroned her, ground-pounded her and then drop-punted her into the inky black of space. In other words, Super Mario Galaxy is good.

PLANETOID PANIC

So it's good. You knew that already. Nintendo have never put out a game in the official Mario series (in other words, the real Mario games, not all those sports and party game tie-ins) that wasn't incredible. Even the much-maligned Super Mario Sunshine, despite what some elitist snobs will tell you, was the greatest platform game of its era, so it comes as no surprise that Galaxy has lived up to those lofty expectations. What is a surprise, however, is that it not only matches the brilliance of the holy grail of 3D platform games, Super Mario 64, but in many ways it even manages to better it.

Before we get ahead of ourselves though, lets start at the beginning. Mario Galaxy is different from the others for pretty much one reason – this time Mario isn't conquering the Mushroom Kingdom, exploring Princess Peach's castle, or liberating Delfino Island, instead, he's taking off into outer space.

Peach has of course been kidnapped by Bowser (we would expect nothing less), and the terrible terrapin has taken her, along with Toadstool Castle, into the centre of the universe. To get there yourself and rescue the Princess you'll have to harness the power of the stars by travelling to nearby galaxies, each of which are made up of sparsely scattered planetoids, among many other bizarre and brilliant levels.

In this way, Galaxy is very similar to the previous two Mario games. There is a hub, a small city that floats in the middle of space, and from this hub all of the game's levels (or galaxies as they are now known) can be accessed. It's a tried and true formula, and it works again perfectly here.

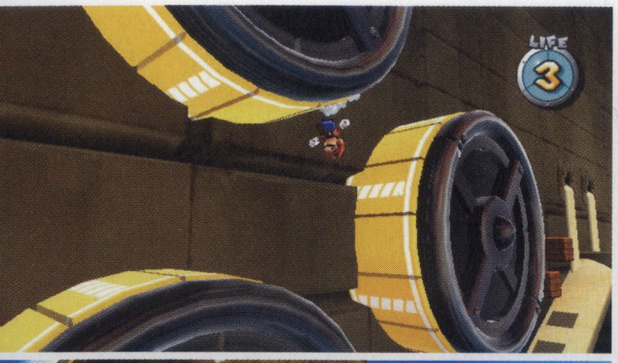
The real innovation is of course the levels themselves. Instead of a large continuous landscape, Galaxy's levels are disparate collections of planetoids, with the only way to travel between them being to fly there.

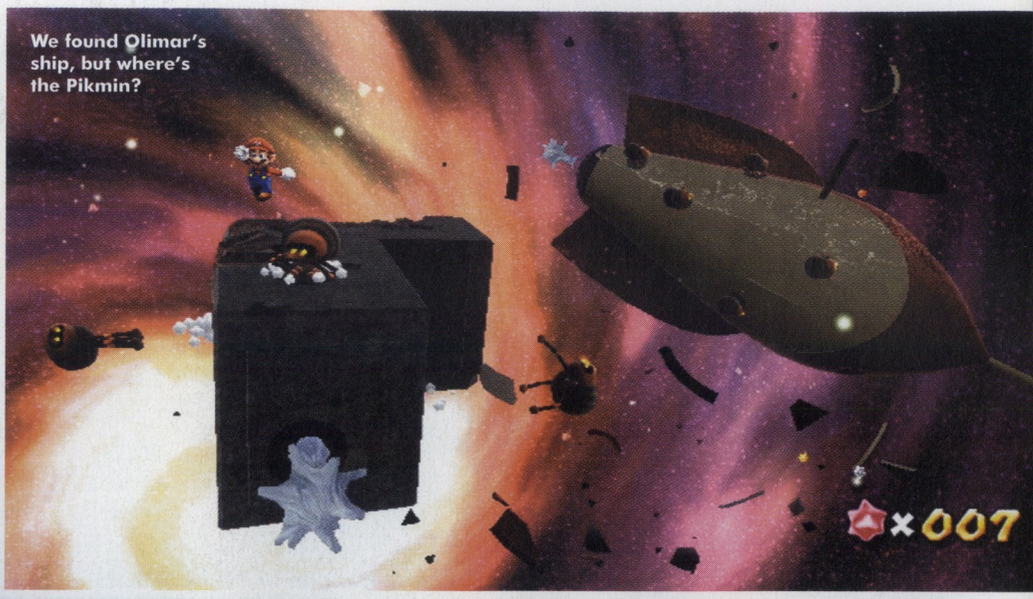
[above] The pengiuns from Super Mario 64 return.

The galaxies usually adhere to a theme, including all the usual suspects like fire, ice, water and desert, although there are a few pleasant surprises like the level themed around a beehive, or the one based entirely on toys.

The immense diversity of the environments that you encounter in each galaxy is also remarkable, since even if a galaxy seems to have an overarching theme, you'll often come to a planetoid that is radically different from anything you've seen before.

Within each galaxy there are numerous power stars to be collected, 121 in total, and each and every one of them has a unique, fun and challenging way of obtaining them – ranging from simple exploration quests to hardcore platform jumping, and from defeating minor enemies to battling against massive boss characters. It will take only 60 stars to finish the game the first time around, but if you want to collect all 121 stars, it will take a lot (a lot!) more time – and even then there is an far more exciting secret waiting





[above] Dragon breath? He needs the "Bathroom Buddy".

for you, which is so awesomely spoilerific that we dare not tell you about it here...

One thing is for sure; Super Mario Galaxy has variety – and plenty of it.

IT'S-A-HIM... MARIO!

Mario himself is about as stripped back as we've seen him for quite some time. Unlike Super Mario Sunshine, he doesn't have any new contraptions to toy with, and unlike Super Mario 64, he can no longer punch and kick enemies. Instead he's been returned to his bear essentials. Mario has a variety of jumps at his disposal (the long-jump, high-jump and triple-jump among them), and by shaking the Wiimote you can also make him do a spin, which can be used to stun enemies and to get a little extra height on your jumps, among quite a few other uses (ice skating, for example!).

Another key feature is the Star Bits. Around each level there are hundreds of multicoloured crystals scattered about, and it's Mario's job to collect as many of them as he can. Not only do the Star Bits give Mario an extra life for every 50 he collects, but they also function as the currency of the game and you can use them to buy your way into a number of secret levels.

That's not all though, since the Star Bits can also be used as ammunition. By aiming the Wiimote at the screen and pulling the B trigger, Mario can shoot out the Star Bits, and use them the stun enemies, among many other tasks.

This also gives rise to a new kind of multiplayer game for Mario Galaxy; a second player is now able top take control of another cursor on the screen. Player two is able to collect and shoot Star Bits, but can also immobilise enemies by grabbing hold of them with the cursor, and can even make Mario leap higher by pressing the A button at the same time as player one. The addition of the

» The return of power suits is nostalgic of Super Mario Bros 3, and instantly gives Mario Galaxy a classic feel.

co-op mode is certainly welcome, although it is a poor replacement for a real multiplayer mode. We were really hoping for some Luigi versus Mario action...

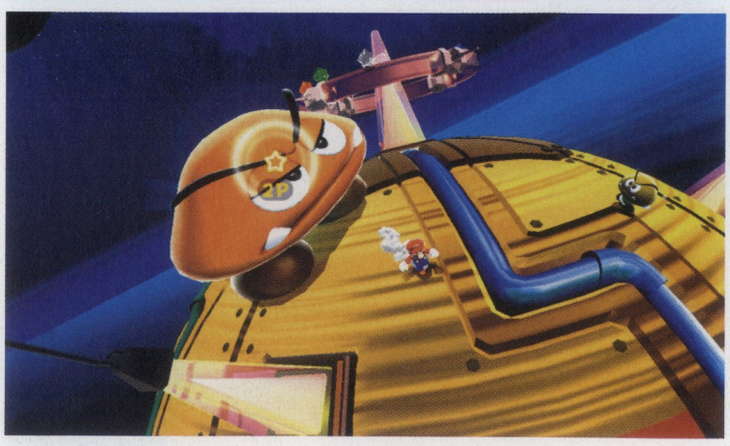
One last point to make about the Mario of Super Mario Galaxy is that his power suits have returned! Mario now has access to a Bumblebee suit, which allows him to buzz around on tiny wings, a Spring suit, which gives him a super-high jump, and an Ice Flower, which lets Mario run on water, creating a frozen walkway as he goes. For the first time in a long time the Fire Flower also makes a comeback, and when collected it clothes Mario in the classic white and red overalls, and allows him to shoot fireballs at will, and there are still more power-ups that we don't have room to talk about.

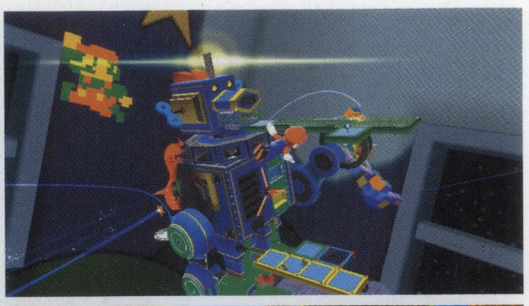
The return of a large variety of power suits is somewhat nostalgic of games like Super Mario Bros 3, and instantly gives Mario Galaxy a classic feel – as if it needed any more reasons to be called a classic.

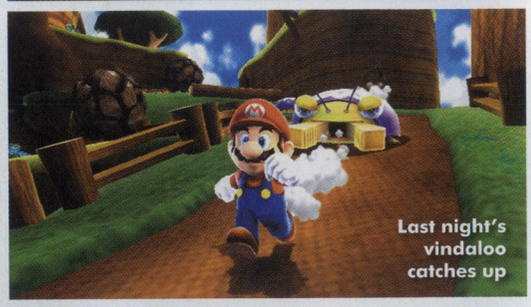
[below] The classic Goomba, Super Mario Galaxy style.

MARIO DOES IT FOR THE CAKE

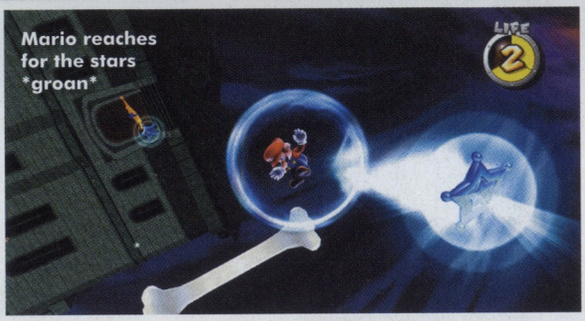
Mario Galaxy also looks fantastic, although the Wii's relatively meagre pixel-pushing power means that the game doesn't have as much technological impact as a game you may play on the Xbox 360 and PS3. The Wii's maximum resolution of 480p/480i, for example, looks good on a standard definition set, but if you're going to be playing Galaxy on your brand-







Last night's vindaloo catches up



GALAXY OF GAMEPLAY

There is just so much more to say about Super Mario Galaxy that we could easily fill up another three pages if we had the space. Just a few of the other game features that we didn't get to talk about in depth include racing on the back of a Manta Ray, on a track made out of water, floating in the vacuum of space, or riding a Koopa-shell underwater like a torpedo. There are even some bonus levels that are designed after the pixelated sprites from old Mario games... really, if we don't stop there, we'll never stop.

spanking HDTV, prepare yourself for more than a few jaggies.

Overall, the character models of Mario and the Toads, Goombas and Koopas that inhabit his world don't look too dissimilar to how they looked in Super Mario Sunshine. They are a little smoother, and their animation has a little more character, but overall they haven't changed too much. That's not to say that Nintendo have been sitting on their hands in the graphics department, since Galaxy does look significantly better than its predecessor.

The lighting in particular has probably received the most attention. Its has been greatly improved over Sunshine, with plenty of bloom, as well as varying shades and effects that denote what comets are flying over your galaxy.

However, where Galaxy really wins is in its classic art design. Mario himself is as charming as ever, his enemies are still just as cute as they are menacing, and his allies, like the bumbling Luigi (who makes several humorous appearances in the game), are as charismatic as you'll find in any game.

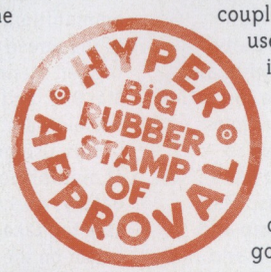
All together now! "Flip it over for massive damage!"

New race discovered living six inches underground!

Super Mario Galaxy is better than Super Mario 64, and for that matter it's better than anything else on the Wii to date.

The soundtrack is another highlight of Mario Galaxy, as it features not only new compositions, but also classic tracks from the entire Mario back catalogue. There's the underground theme from Super Mario Bros, the hammer bros theme from Mario Bros 3, the Bowser boss-fight theme from Super Mario 64, and more, all adding a degree of nostalgia and familiarity to the soundtrack. The newly composed songs have a bigger sound and are more orchestral in their arrangements, and as a result they're neither as catchy nor as memorable as the simple tunes that have been taken from older Mario games – but they are definitely easy on the ears.

It's a fairly bold call, but I'm willing to make it – Super Mario Galaxy is better than Super Mario 64, and for that matter it's better than anything else on the Wii to date. There are certainly a few things that I think could have been better – the Bowser boss battles, for example, aren't quite as epic as I would have liked, and there are a couple of levels that either re-use bosses, or use mirror-imaged planetoids from other galaxies. Like any game there is room for improvement, and while it may not be perfect, it certainly comes close. You get a gold star Nintendo.



Bloody amazing.	Some jaggies, not much else.	HYPER VERDICT

The best game on the Wii, and easily one of the best games of the year.

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
95	94	97	97

TOM DELONGE
E. RUCKER
MACBETH
WWW.MACBETHFOOTWEAR.COM
THE ELIOT
Dealer Inquires: 02 9905 3976 MACBETH

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

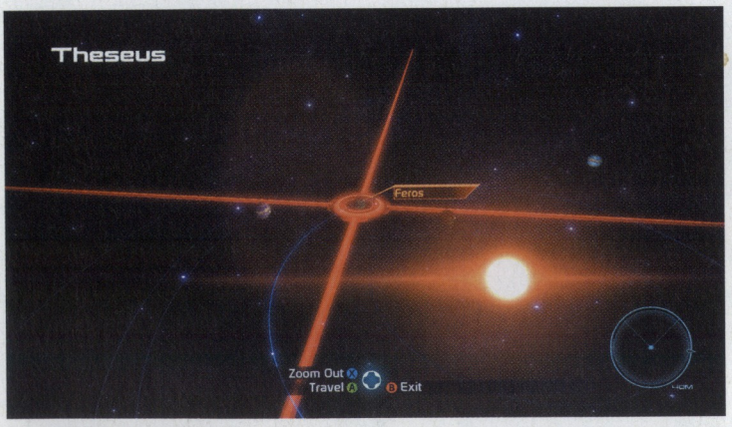
Mass Effect

The mass of DANIEL WILKS remains constant

Inevitably the mainstream media will remember Mass Effect due to the fact that you can have some hawt alien lesbian sex with a blue chick who looks pleasantly like Drew Barrymore than they will the fantastic storyline, stellar voice acting and interesting characters but them's the breaks. You'll probably also read more about the rather large number of technical flaws in the game, including, but not limited to, serious framerate issues, texture popups and intermittent crashing than you will the exciting and fun combat and epic scope of the plot.

Players take the role of Commander Shepard, a human officer tipped to be the first human Spectre; a kind of intergalactic James Bond, a special agent with a license to do whatever need be done to achieve peace. The creation of the Shepard character is the first indication in Mass Effect that you're playing something that is not only special but clever to boot. Although the player is free to choose the sex, appearance, class, background and first name of their character, the fact that the Commander Shepard part of the name is immutable really leads to a sense of immersion in the game, as the character is referred to by name in all the dialogue. This may seem like a minor detail but after slugging through countless RPGs in which my created character was referred to by some faceless moniker such as "lord" or "chosen one", having a name put to my character felt...well...special.

category: **RPG**
players: **1**
developer: **BioWare**
publisher: **Microsoft**
price: **$99.95** / rating: **MA 15+**
available: **Now**



ACROSS THE UNIVERSE

There are a lot of planets in the Mass Effect universe but not all of them can be visited. Each system that you can access on the Normandy will feature only one of two planets on which you can land. If there isn't a main story mission tied to the planet, players can explore the planet in the Mako, a six wheeled awesome-buggy that can climb nearly vertical walls. These uncharted planets usually contain a few mineral deposits that can be surveyed for cash, a pirate or Geth (evil robot aliens) base and maybe a few alien artefacts that can be salvaged for collection quests. Disappointingly, even though players can travel to the Sol system you can't actually land on Earth, only on the moon.

CHOOSE YOUR SHEPARD

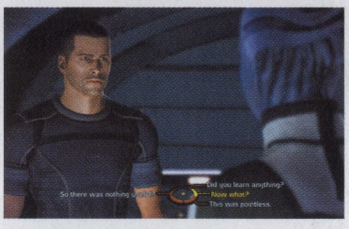
Whilst the character creation may not be on par with a wrestling game (still the ultimate genre for creating characters), players are given a decent range of faces, skin tones, hairdos and the like, enabling them to create their ideal Commander Shepard. After creating their look, players then go on to choosing both a career and a background for their character – whilst the background doesn't alter the mechanics of gameplay or character abilities in any way it does change how some characters respond to the player, as well as a few side quests. Although the careers have names such as Soldier, Engineer and Adept they basically fall within the warrior, thief and mage archetypes, the only major points of difference being that Soldiers use ranged weapons instead of melee, Engineers use technology rather than stealth and Adepts use "biotics" rather than magic. Three additional classes, the Infiltrator, Vanguard and Sentinel combine the skills of two of the core classes.

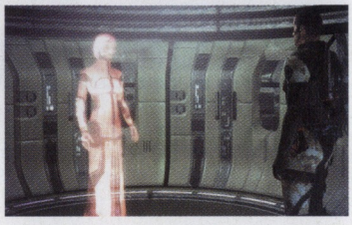
Enough of the character creation – how does the game actually play? Well, to be honest, Mass Effect does start in a rather odd way, taking the player from an intense introduction to the real-time third-person combat to a space station upon which there is little to do for a few hours but talk to NPCs and solve some basic conversational quests. Although the quests are fantastically written and the characters are engaging, the jump from all action to all talking is more than a little jarring, possibly even enough to turn some potential fans away. It would be a pity because after the first few hours Mass Effect achieves an almost perfect balance of action and story as Commander Shepard takes his beautifully designed ship, the Normandy across the galaxy to chase down a rogue Spectre and uncovers a threat that could wipe out all sentient life.

The Tron body suit, version 3.0.

"And they said having a flash-light for a head was useless!"

!!! Mass Effect uses a morality system that awards either Paragon (good) or Renegade (evil) points depending on your actions. As you progress as a paragon or renegade new abilities are unlocked, such as more charm or intimidate points, more damage or a faster cool down on abilities.





WALK THE WALK, TALK THE TALK

Being an RPG, Mass Effect is all about two things, talking and fighting – two things that BioWare do well. At least they do them well in games we mean. We're not making any guarantees that BioWare devs are all witty raconteurs capable of whooping more arse than the love child of Mr. T and Chuck Zito, even though we think it may be true. Anyway, all conversations in the game are controlled via an elegant branching structure that allows players to choose the way they wish to talk and have Shepard turn that into words.

» Being an RPG, Mass Effect is all about two things, talking and fighting – two things that BioWare do well.

Once again BioWare have changed up their combat mechanics for a game, this time using controls that will be familiar to anyone who has ever played a third person shooter. All combat is played out in real-time so player skill is required when it comes to aiming, but character skills leveled up throughout the game influence the weapons players can wield without penalty, the damage inflicted, the rate of cool down – weapons don't have ammunition but instead can overheat if fired too quickly – and the overall accuracy. Overall it is a fun and engaging approach to RPG combat but there are some problems.

To aid you in battle, throughout the game Shepard recruits six traveling companions, two of which can accompany Shepard on any mission. Each of the companions are fully realized with excellent voice acting and personal histories that are slowly gleaned through conversation, sometimes even offering side-quests tied in with their personal histories. Companion AI is, however, quite retarded, so it's not uncommon to see one of your party members shooting a wall in the middle of a firefight, walking in front of your gun when you're trying to shoot (and bitching about friendly fire if they get shot) or simply standing around dumbfounded. Players do have limited command over their companions but it is limited to telling them to find cover or attack, neither of which really work. Still despite the obvious shortcomings combat is a rather enjoyable experience.

WEAPON JELLY

Before I start sounding too gushy about the game there are a few other sore points that must be addressed. The inventory system is terrible, racking up items in an invisible list that you can only access when you enter the inventory screen, forcing you to go through and painstakingly convert individual items to "omni-gel", a catch all tech fuel, so you can fit your loot into your prohibitive 150 item limit. Weapon progression is a little lax as well, with each of the available weapon models – shotgun, pistol, assault rifle and sniper rifle – remaining constant throughout the game, the only differences with new loot sometimes being the colour of the weapon. Although not necessary it would have been nice to see some different weapon models and perhaps some special or rare weapons to really flesh out the rather uniform game world.

Even though the framerate can sometimes drop to the single digits, Mass Effect is a stunningly beautiful game. Character models are fantastically realized and the industrial design of places such as the Citadel space station and the Normandy is just brilliant. A film-look filter really brings warmth to the image and it smoothes out the rough edges.

If you're a fan of RPGs then you owe it to yourself to pick up a copy of Mass Effect and set about exploring and ultimately saving the universe. You will have moments where you will want to pull your hair out as the game turns into a slideshow in the middle of a hectic firefight, that much is inevitable, but the rest of the game is so good you'll soon forgive the cruddy framerate. <<

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

» Fantastic story, character and voice acting

» Poor framerate, texture pop, crappy AI

HYPER VERDICT

Probably the best Western console RPG available – bring on the sequel!

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
90	96	95	**90**

!!! We haven't had a chance to play the console versions of the game as yet but we'll update you when we do.

In the future, Today Tonight cameras still get abused

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Unreal Tournament 3

YURI SPADEFACE runs on the Unreal 3 engine

category: **Multiplayer FPS**
players: **1-Multi**
developer: **Epic**
publisher: **Midway**
price: **$99.95** rating: **MA 15+**
available: **Now**

Since the beginning of the century gamers have long fought over which multi-player FPS franchise was best — Quake III Arena or Unreal Tournament. Ultimately the choice comes down to feel — whilst both games approach the same content (blasting seven shades of shit out of other players or bots) the subtle differences are what make them such... different experiences. Quake III is a much more pared down game with a fairly straightforward (and brilliant) selection of weapons and maps. Unreal Tournament took a slightly more fanciful route with more outlandish weapons, each with an alternate fire mode and a wealth of game modes.

The fourth game in the franchise, Unreal Tournament 3 (Epic explains that UT 2003-2004 are part of the same generation and therefore are both UT2) takes a "back to basics" approach, cutting down on the gameplay modes and outlandishness in favour of fast paced combat and a stunningly beautiful game world and character models — well, stunningly beautiful in that slightly shiny action-figure way that all Epic games look. Although this approach is appreciated we can't help but feel a little disappointed with Unreal Tournament 3 as, overall, it feels like a pared down version of UT2004 rather than a new game in its own right. Worse, UT3 has the feeling of being something of a tech demo or obligation rather than a fully realised game.

Nobody can run fast enough to escape giant shoulder pads

NO TOKARA?

Controls remain excellent and responsive and the weapons are still a hoot to play with, but one of the major problems comes down to the maps. Although the new maps are well designed and very attractive, UT fans have been far too spoiled in the past with to settle for so few. Unreal Tournament 2004 shipped with over 100 maps. Unreal Tournament 3 has less than 20. Each of the new maps is very well designed for gameplay balance and you won't ever get lost looking for someone to kill but for all of the different architecture a number of them feel the same, focusing on a balance between indoor and outdoor areas on a rather flat plane. Sure many of the maps that shipped with UT2004 were remakes of UT and UT2003 maps but many of these were fan favourites. Would it have been too much to ask that these maps be remade once again for the newest iteration of the franchise?

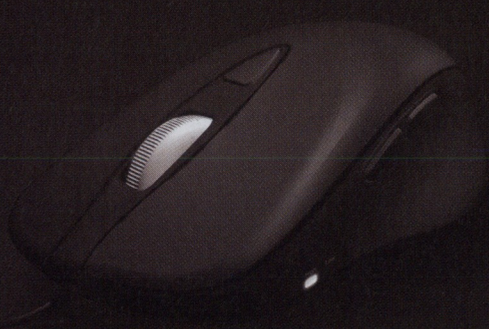
Bitching about the limited number of maps aside, Unreal Tournament 3 is still a lot of fun. All of the game modes have their pleasures with Vehicle Capture the Flag and Warfare (a combination of the Conquest and Assault modes of the previous games) standing out as truly great, with the new Necris vehicles, such as a War of the Worlds-esque walker lend the right level of outlandishness to Vehicle CTF and the combination of having to capture and hold key points and progressive objectives in Warfare ensures that players have to work as a team to get the job done. The obligatory single player mode does away with the cheesy but enjoyable sports entertainment trappings of the previous game in favour of a really cheesy revenge storyline in which game mechanics like respawn and capturing the flag are explained away with technical jargon. It's incredibly silly but great fun as the AI is top notch, whether you're working with an AI team to achieve an objective or simply blasting away in a deathmatch. <<

Looks great, fast paced action	Too pared back, feels like an obligation rather than a full game	HYPER VERDICT
Great fun but it feels more like Unreal 2004.5 minus features	VISUALS 94 / SOUND 90 / GAMEPLAY 89	84

WINNING IS EVERYTHING

steelseries
SIBERIA NECKBAND

- Developed for gaming and music
- Retractable microphone
- Full-size neckband design
- Xbox 360 compatible



steelseries
IKARI LASER MOUSE

- 40.000 SPS for unbeatable tracking
- 1,8 mm lift distance
- Driverless plug-and-play
- Fully adjustable 1-3200 CPI

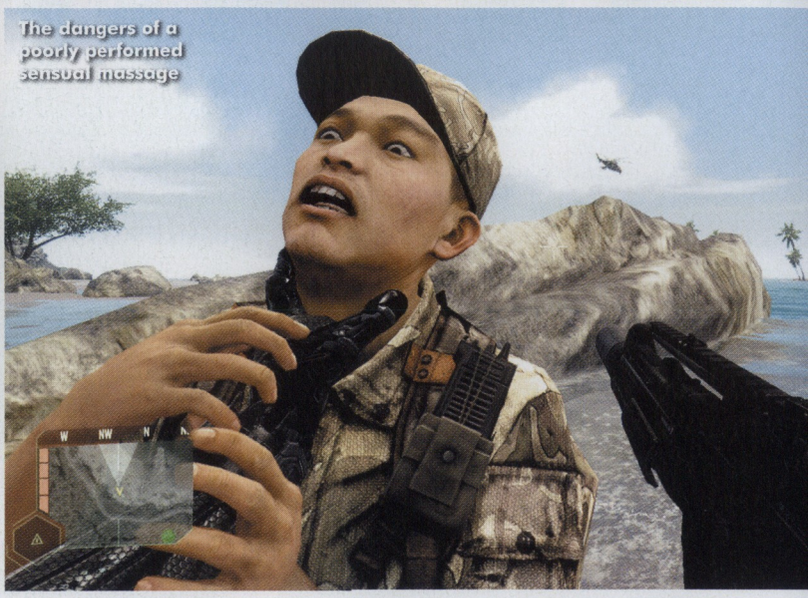
steelseries
5H V2

- Soundscape engineered for gaming
- Specifically optimized for FPS games
- Pull-out microphone system
- Can be dismantled into 3 pieces

Pro GAMING steelseries professional gaming gear

SteelSeries is a leading manufacturer of peripherals for gaming and electronic sports (eSports), including headsets, keyboards, mice, mouse pads and mouse accessories. SteelSeries has been on the forefront of professional gaming gear since its inception in 2001, thanks to continued innovation and product development in cooperation with leading professional gamers.

Available at JB Hi-Fi www.jbhifi.com.au - Clive Anthonys www.cliveanthonys.com.au - Harvey Norman www.harveynorman.com.au **Distributed by** ProGamer Australia www.progamer.com.au



X360 / PS3 / Wii / **PC** / PS2 / DS / PSP

Crysis

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE needs tomorrow's technology today.

category: **FPS**
players: **1-Multi**
developer: **Crytek**
publisher: **EA**
price: **$99.95** / rating: **MA 15+**
available: **Now**

Crysis looks amazing. That's probably the main thing you'll take away from any encounter with this visual tour de force — we certainly did — but as we've seen this month, there's more to the game than just a pretty render.

The spiritual successor to 2004's Far Cry, Crysis continues that game's legacy of juxtaposing jaw-dropping tropical vistas with cap-popping military combat, although this time the realism has been taken to a spectacular new high, in more ways than one.

COMPUTER NEEDS UPGRADE... BADLY

The game starts out with our protagonist, Lieutenant Jake Dunn, codenamed "Nomad", free falling into an idyllic island paradise from a ridiculously high paradrop. As the ground rushes up at you from bellow you get to see the full scale of Crysis' environments.

The world open to you is absolutely huge, and although there are some loading screens between areas, most individual sections of the environment are several kilometres across. These massive tracts of land are many and varied, ranging from beautiful sandy beaches to turquoise oceans, white-water rivers, waterfalls, mountains, valleys and everything in between — and what's more it all looks gorgeous.

The lighting in particular is a thing of beauty. As the game's scripted day/night cycle rolls around you get to see red sunsets, orange sunrises, white-hot middays and dark starlit nights. Each light phase imbues the scene with not only realism but with a real sense of atmosphere often unattainable in most modern games.

Of course, the game's stunning visuals do come at a cost. Crysis is the kind of game that isn't really meant to be played on today's technology. Rather, it is obvious that developer Crytek have peered into the not-to-distant future, seen the kind of grossly overpowered PCs we'll all have several years from now and designed Crysis to work properly on those machines.

What does all this mean, you ask? Well, it means that if you're running a computer that hasn't been upgraded in the last couple of weeks, you're probably going to have a tough time playing Crysis at its peak. For the graphics whores amongst you, this will no doubt be the inspiration you need to spend up big on some new internals for your PC, but for the more spendthrift it will more likely mean that you'll just have to put up with Crysis in its medium or *gasp* low settings.

Nevertheless, just seeing Crysis running in all its resource-hogging glory is enough for us to nominate it as the frontrunner to win the most gorgeous game of the year award.

You know that envelope that people are always talking about? Crytek has pushed it.

CHUCK NORRIS NOT INCLUDED

Once you get past the staggering beauty of the game's visuals, there is of course that other important feature — gameplay. Thankfully Crysis doesn't disappoint here either, as it plays essentially like a supercharged Far Cry.

For starters, the premise and story are far more intriguing. When an island in the South China Sea is invaded by North Korea and a group of American archaeologists on the brink of an exciting discovery are taken hostage, Delta Force (sans-Chuck Norris) are sent in to save the day — with extreme prejudice!

Jake "Nomad" Dunn is part of

CRY TOGETHER

Crysis does of course have the obligatory multiplayer mode, including deathmatch and capture the base modes. The maps are extremely large, and we often found that if you weren't playing with a full server of 32 players, it could be hard to find a single person. The massive environments and thick vegetation seems to encourage a lot of snipers to simply camp in the dense bush – never to be seen, until *boom* headshot.

It's quite fun but it won't be replacing Team Fortress 2 as our favourite multiplayer shooter anytime soon.

Yes, that is an exploding warship. Rad.

!!! If you encounter any wildlife while playing Crysis, like the gulls, chickens, fish or turtles that inhabit the island – be kind to them. Picking them up and hucking as hard as you can into the air, or using them as projectiles to kill enemies is SO not environmentally friendly (it is fun though...).

[above] Damn it - even guns feature annoying popups now

this crack military squad and is sent in to rescue the hostages and kill anything that looks vaguely Korean. Naturally things go awry when it turns out that the aforementioned archaeological discovery is in fact a nest of hibernating aliens who delight in killing anything that looks vaguely human, whether they're Korean or not.

To aid the fight, Nomad has assault rifles, a shotgun, sniper rifle, rocket launcher and even a gauss cannon at his disposal. All of the weapons have several different firing modes, ranging from single shot to full auto and can also be customised by attaching silencers, new sights, scopes, underslung grenade launchers and numerous other accessories.

Vehicles feature prominantly - you can take the wheel of jeeps, trucks, civilian utes, jet boats and hovercrafts on the menu. There's even helicopters!

Neither the North Koreans, nor the Aliens, will go down without a fight. The artificial intelligence is as solid as they come, with enemies ducking and weaving out firing range, and taking cover behind rocks, fences or whatever they can find. They'll call for backup when they're in trouble, and try to flank you if you're a holed up in one spot for too long.

Getting the better of enemies is a formidable challenge but Nomad does have a secret weapon up his sleeve – in fact, it IS his sleeve. Nomad is kitted out in the latest piece of US military technology, the "nanosuit"; a full-body outfit that endows him with superhuman powers of shield, speed, strength and stealth.

» Nomad does have a secret weapon up his sleeve. In fact, it IS his sleeve!

Shield is the obvious default power, as it protects you from enemy fire, but should you need to make a quick getaway, the speed power lets you run faster than most cars. The strength power comes in handy when you're jumping or throwing things, particularly people, while the stealth power makes you all but invisible, letting you get the drop on unsuspecting opponents.

Each power has limited usage that charges up when it's not active, but the juice always seems to run out far too quickly for you to do anything particularly impressive. The stealth cloaking, for example, only last five-to-ten seconds - not quite enough to do much sneaking at all.

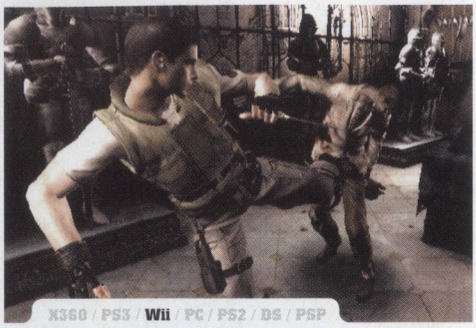
Having said that, they do become incredibly useful both in combat and in simply playing silly buggers in the massive environments. Ever wanted to take a superhumanly high leap off a waterfall and into a river?

Crysis is the kind of game that you can do nearly anything you want in. If you want to go in all guns blazing, you can. If you want to ride around in cars (or helicopters), running over enemies in between pulling doughies, you can. If you'd rather sneak around unseen, you can do that too. If you're slightly weird (like me) and want to go around beaning people on the head with a washing machine – you can even do that as well!

For the sheer scope of its military gameplay, the vastness of its environments, and its gorgeous visuals, Crysis deserves recommendation. If you've got the rig to do it justice, Crysis is definitely worth your time. <<

HYPER BIG RUBBER STAMP OF APPROVAL

Looks freakin' awesome. Great tactical shooting action.	Your PC probably won't be able to run it.	HYPER VERDICT
Well worth an upgrade.	VISUALS 97 / SOUND 89 / GAMEPLAY 93	93



X360 / PS3 / **Wii** / PC / PS2 / DS / PSP

Resident Evil: Umbrella Chronicles

category: **Light-Gun shooter**
players: **1-2**
developer: **Capcom**
publisher: **Capcom**
price: **$99.95**
rating: **MA 15+**
available: **Now**

If you've gone out and bought yourself a Wii Zapper you may be tempted to play Umbrella Chronicles with the slightly awkward gun setup. Don't – the controls for the RE based light-gun shooter don't work well with it. Why? Well, players need to use the B button to shoot, the A button to pick up objects, the D-pad to switch weapons and a combination of buttons for various other activities such as hacking away with the all-too-fast knife or throwing grenades. It just doesn't work. With the Wiimote and Nunchuck in two different hands, however, RE: Umbrella Chronicles is a bit of old-school zombie-blasting fun, running down, in action-packed and highly condensed form, the events of RE: Zero, RE and RE3 with a few side missions thrown in for good measure. While the complexity of the game is limited too how fast you can pull the trigger and hit the right button to dodge attacks, it does do a good job of fleshing out the RE universe, albeit in a rather un-scary way – you're usually too busy shooting to absorb any of the atmosphere. Like the recent Wii edition of RE 4, Umbrella Chronicles sports some impressive visuals, making it one of the better-looking games on the console. Ultimately though, while Umbrella Chronicles is inevitably going to be a hit with RE fans, the game really is too little too late – we played House of the Dead years ago.

DIRK WATCH

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
88	85	73	**71**

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / **DS** / PSP / GBA

Mario Party DS

category: **Party**
players: **1-4**
developer: **Hudson Soft**
publisher: **Nintendo**
price: **$69.95**
rating: **PG**
available: **December**

Predicably enough, the Mario Party franchise has made its way onto Nintendo's dual-screened console, and the only surprise you'll find here is that it didn't come out sooner.

This is Mario Party as you either love, or loathe. All the familiar faces are back – as is the well-established Mario party formula. As before you'll roll the dice and move around the board trying to earn enough stars to beat your opponents.

The mini-games have always been the backbone of the series, and Mario Party DS doesn't disappoint in this regard. There are more than 70 new mini-games, ranging from races, battles, card games, games of chance and games of skill and reflexes. Some of them are genuinely good, particularly the end-of-level boss battles, and fittingly there are plenty of touch-screen-based games, although the DS microphone, d-pad and buttons do get a thorough workout as well.

As always, the single-player mode is a bit of a drag. The CPU opponents you are pitted against are often unfairly balanced, and the A.I. is so elastic that a character in last place can easily go from having no stars or coins at all in the last five turns, to having everyone else's stars and most of the coins by the time the game is over.

As frustrating as playing alone can be, Mario Party is really meant to be played with friends – three of them if possible – and fortunately one of this game's strongest features is that you can set up a four-player party with only one copy of the game.

In brief, if you've got a few friends and four DS consoles on hand, Mario Party DS can be a blast. If you're a loner, Warioware is still better for mini-game thrills.

MAURICE BRANSCOMBE

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
83	79	67	**67**

X360 / PS3 / Wii / PC / PS2 / **DS** / PSP / GBA

Geometry Wars: Galaxies

category: **Shooter**
players: **1-2**
developer: **Kuju**
publisher: **Vivendi Games**
price: **$49.95**
rating: **G**
available: **February**

The question you'll have to ask yourself if you're thinking about buying Geometry Wars Galaxies, is not so much whether it is a good game – since it is – but whether or not it's worth its asking price. Considering that you can get half of the game for around five dollars on the Xbox Live Arcade (and it looks a hell of a lot prettier there too), it is a bit steep to have to pay roughly ten-times that to play it on your DS.

Nevertheless, for those of you with money to burn, the latest in Bizarre Creations' series (developed here by Kuju Entertainment) is just as addictive as ever in portable form.

As mentioned previously, Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved is included with this release in its entirety, with the new features being a new two-player mode, and the Galaxies mode – a career mode of sorts where you must travel from galaxy to galaxy, landing on different planets and annihilating their inhabitants. Each planet has a different shaped arena, different waves of enemies as well as "Geoms" to collect, a new currency for the game that can be used to buy more levels. In this sense there is more playability and replayability contained in Galaxies than the original, although the core mechanics remain unchanged.

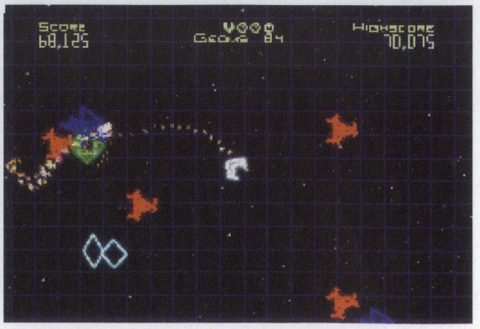
Visually, there is disappointment to be had. A lot of the game looks the same as before, as it is mostly very simple vector shapes, however, the background grid that usually waves and undulates with the action in the XBLA game is completely static here offering no feedback whatsoever.

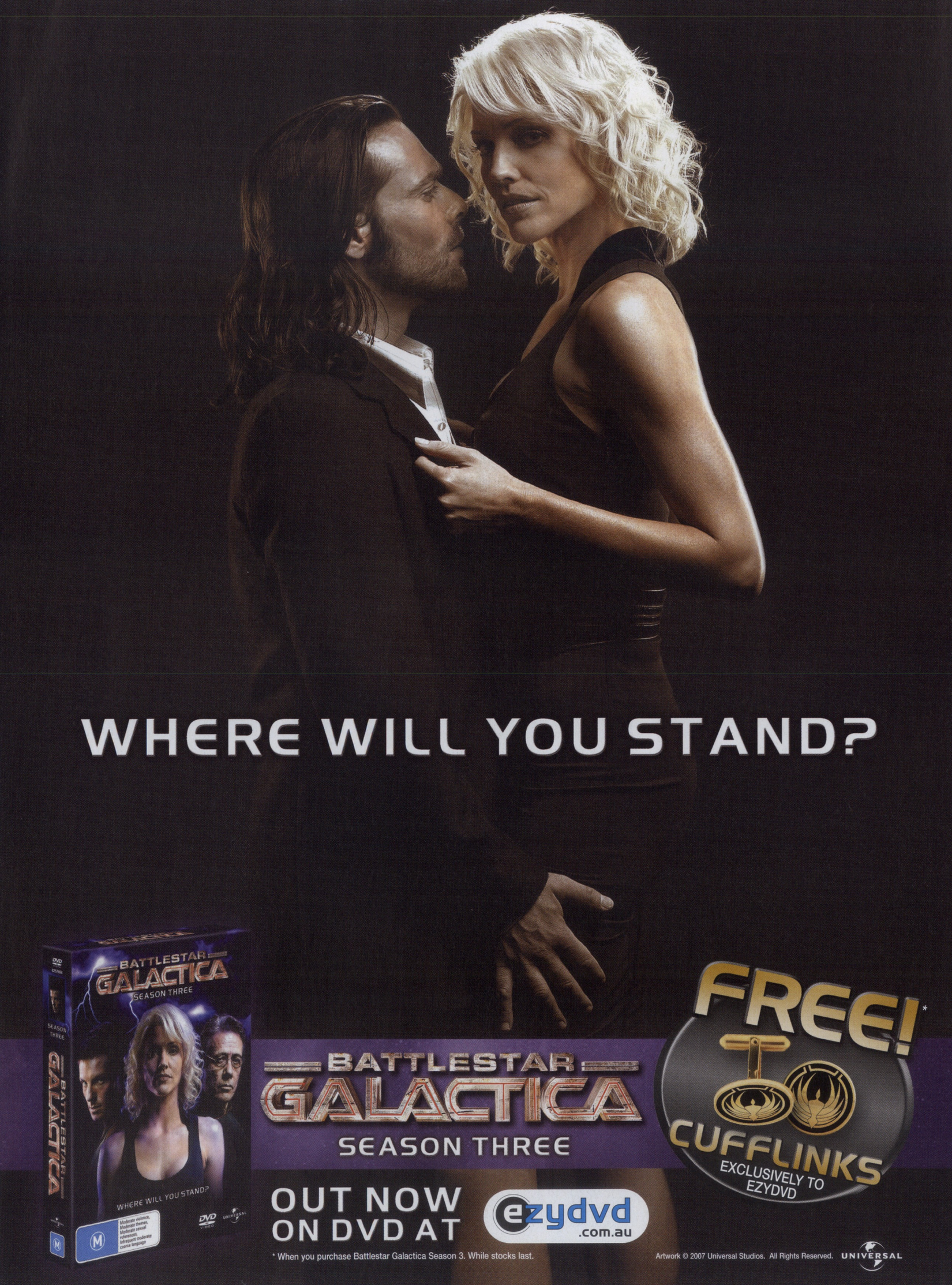
Despite some flaws, Geometry Wars: Galaxies does still have the essence of what made the original one of our all-time favourite XBLA games.

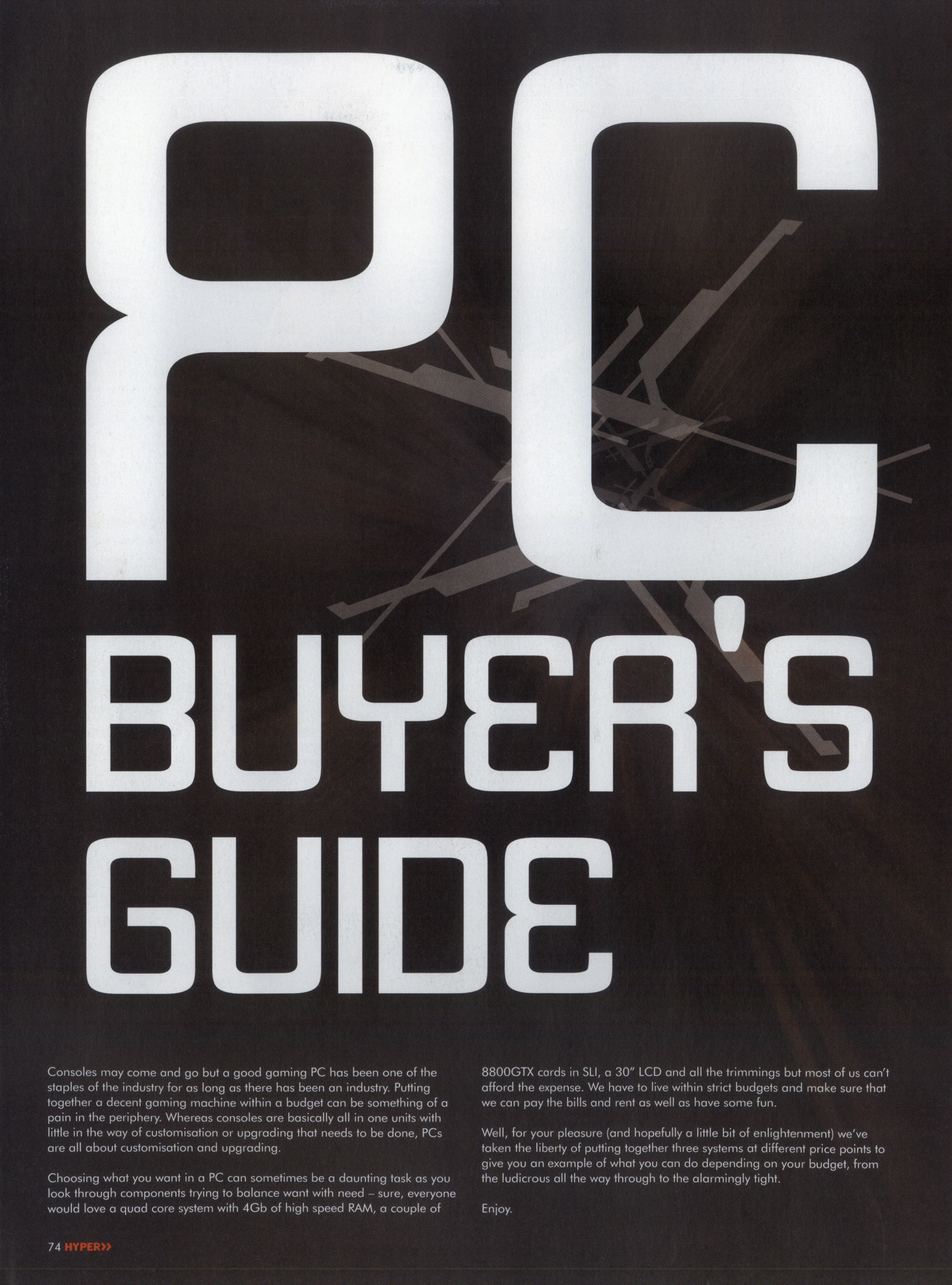
MAURICE BRANSCOMBE

HYPER VERDICT

VISUALS	SOUND	GAMEPLAY	
64	70	80	**78**




WHERE WILL YOU STAND?
BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
SEASON THREE
WHERE WILL YOU STAND?
BATTLESTAR GALACTICA
SEASON THREE
FREE!*
CUFFLINKS
EXCLUSIVELY TO EZYDVD
OUT NOW ON DVD AT
ezydvd .com.au
* When you purchase Battlestar Galactica Season 3. While stocks last.
Artwork © 2007 Universal Studios. All Rights Reserved.
UNIVERSAL



PC BUYER'S GUIDE

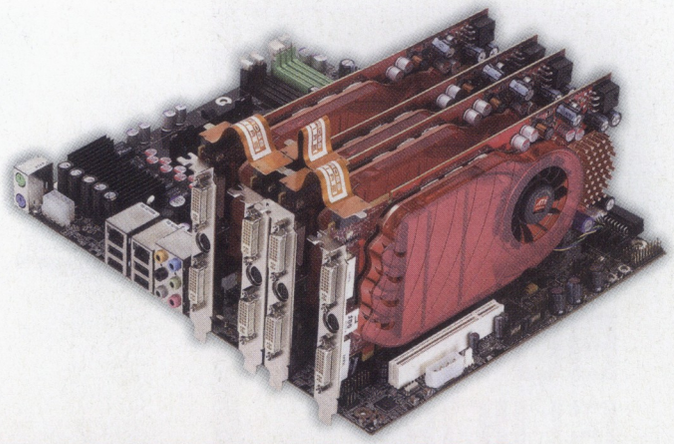
Consoles may come and go but a good gaming PC has been one of the staples of the industry for as long as there has been an industry. Putting together a decent gaming machine within a budget can be something of a pain in the periphery. Whereas consoles are basically all in one units with little in the way of customisation or upgrading that needs to be done, PCs are all about customisation and upgrading.

Choosing what you want in a PC can sometimes be a daunting task as you look through components trying to balance want with need – sure, everyone would love a quad core system with 4Gb of high speed RAM, a couple of 8800GTX cards in SLI, a 30" LCD and all the trimmings but most of us can't afford the expense. We have to live within strict budgets and make sure that we can pay the bills and rent as well as have some fun.

Well, for your pleasure (and hopefully a little bit of enlightenment) we've taken the liberty of putting together three systems at different price points to give you an example of what you can do depending on your budget, from the ludicrous all the way through to the alarmingly tight.

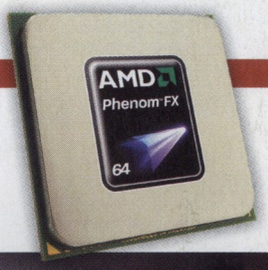
Enjoy.

HIGH END PC



DEADLY GAMING POWER: THE AMD SPIDER PLATFORM

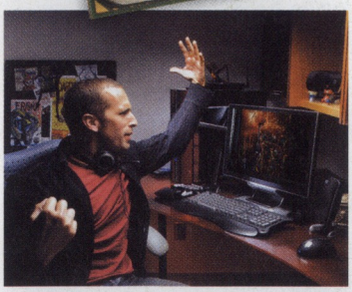
We can already hear the chanting, graphics, graphics, graphics! The spider platform is for gamers wanting the power of multi GPU at a competitive price and this is where its strength lies. In a nutshell the platform consists of the new AMD Phenom Quad-Core processor with the ATI Radeon HD 3800 series graphics processor, and AMD 7-Series chipset, and while you'd probably find higher spec components out there, the obvious strength of the Spider is the sum of its parts – which, we might add, are glued together with some pretty nifty technologies. Two of these technologies are Microsoft DirectX 10.1 support and ATI CrossFireX. CrossFireX provides graphics-hungry gamers with the option to increase their systems' performance by harnessing up to four ATI 3800 series graphics processors in the one PC. In case you were wondering, this essentially means supercomputer graphics power. What's more, the 3800 series are more energy-efficient than previous ATI graphics processors and produce less heat... Cool!

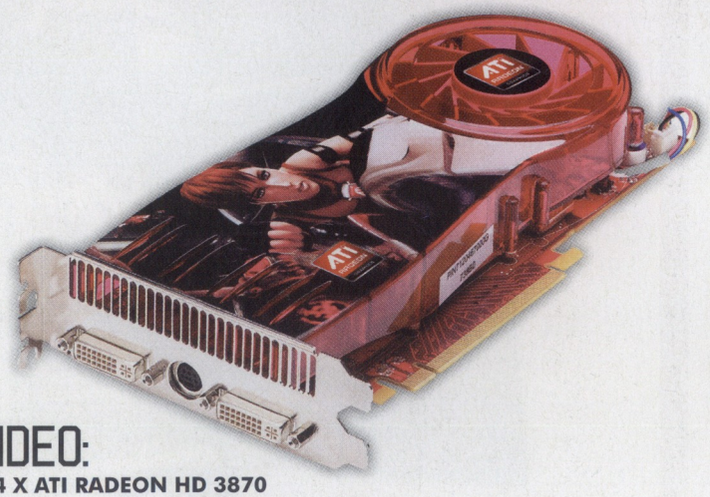


CPU + MOBO:

■ **AMD PHENOM QUAD-CORE 9600 (2.3 GHz)**
AMD 790 FX
www.amd.com **$US 283**

Intel's Penryn QX9650 processors have benchmarked well and set a high bar for the AMD Phenom processors (9500 and 9600) to reach. But while the recently released Phenoms may clock lower speeds (2.2 & 2.3 Ghz to Intel's 3 Ghz), when they are combined with the 790 FX chipset and ATI 3800 series they are a force to be reckoned with. New HyperTransport 3.0 technology means the AMD processors have expanded system bandwidth, which equates to 14.4 GB/second of high bandwidth I/O. When this is combined with the bandwidth of AMD PCI Express 2.0 chipsets and ATI graphics processors, the AMD Spider platform is gutsy enough to produce smooth HD playback, enhanced multi-GPU graphics and high-speed disk and network interfacing.





VIDEO:

■ **4 X ATI RADEON HD 3870**
www.amd.com **4 X US $219**

Power officiency has been a priority for AMD ever since the Radeon HD 2900 XT was claimed to use more power and produce more heat than the already established NVIDIA 8800GTS. The result is the ATI Radeon HD 3870 graphics processor with break-through power efficiency. These cards are capable of twice the processing performance per watt than previous generations of AMD GPUs, and, thanks to a smaller formfactor they are also cooler, meaning more overclocking fun for you!

PC BUYER'S GUIDE

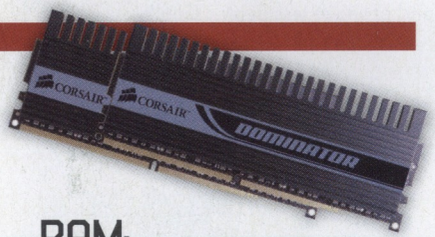
■ CONTINUED

SPEAKERS:

■ **CREATIVE GIGAWORKS S750 THX 7.1 CHANNEL SPEAKERS**
www.gardencitycomputers.com.au **$899**

POWER:

■ **COOLER MASTER REAL POWER PRO**
www.sltech.com.au **$450** (1250 W)

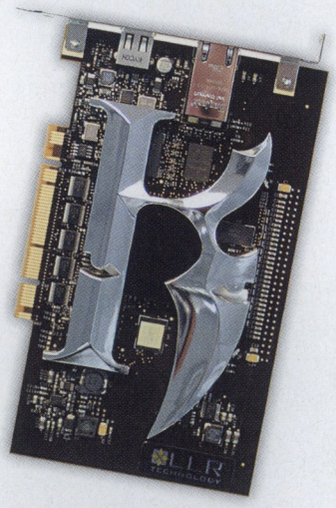


RAM:

■ **CORSAIR 4GB 1066 MHz DDR2 RAM**
www.mats-systems.com.au **$689**

SOUND:

■ **CREATIVE SOUNDBLASTER X-FI ELITE PRO**
au.creative.com **$600**



NETWORK CARD:

■ **BIGFOOT NETWORK CARD**
www.altech.com.au **$359**

STORAGE:

■ **2 X 150 GB WESTERN DIGITAL RAPTOR 10,000RPM**
www.techbuy.com **2 X $312**

CASE:

■ **THERMALTAKE SWORDM WITH LIQUID COOLER** www.trinix.com.au **$948**

MONITOR:

■ **2 X 30 SAMSUNG SYNCMASTER 305T**
www.samsung.com.au **$4998**

KEYBOARD:

■ **LOGITECH G15 GAMING KEYBOARD**
www.digitalstar.com.au **$97**

HEADPHONES:

■ **RAZER BARRACUDA HP-1 GAMING HEADPHONES**
www.altech.com.au **$179**

OPTICAL:

■ **PIONEER BLU-RAY BDR-202 WRITER**
www.megapc.com.au **$849**

MOUSE:

■ **LOGITECH: G 7 CORDLESS LASER MOUSE**
www.apus.com.au **$97**

CONTROLS:

■ **LOGITECH G25 RACING WHEEL**
www.kscomputer.com.au **$350**

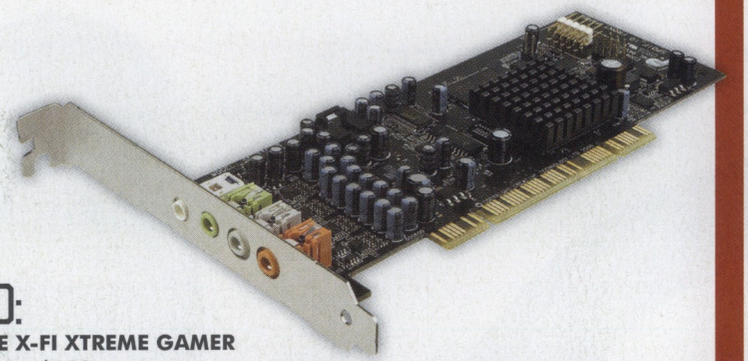
TOTAL $12447

The Spider provides the ultimate tool for gamers to turbo charge their graphics performance. We put our arachnid in the Thermaltake Sword MD, one of the most impressive water cooled towers in the marketplace and threw in some of the fastest Corsair DDR2 ram currently supported by the Spider platform, at 1066 MHz. Dual 30-inch Samsung 305T monitors were set up for HD visuals that have to be seen to be believed. To this visual feast we added the awesome bone rattling power of the 24bit audio produced by the Creative X-Fi Elite Pro sound blaster played by the awesome 7.1 channel surround sound Creative Gigaworks S750 speakers. We think the correct terminology is blau!

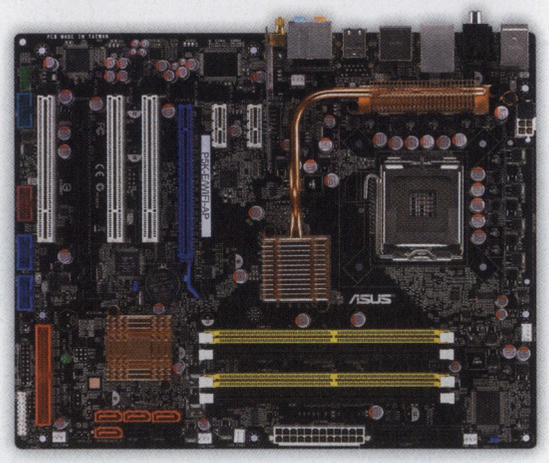
MID RANGE PC

CPU:
■ **INTEL QUAD CORE Q6600**
www.compustore.com.au **$405**

MONITOR: ■ 22" CHI MEI HDMI
www.protac.com.au **$499**

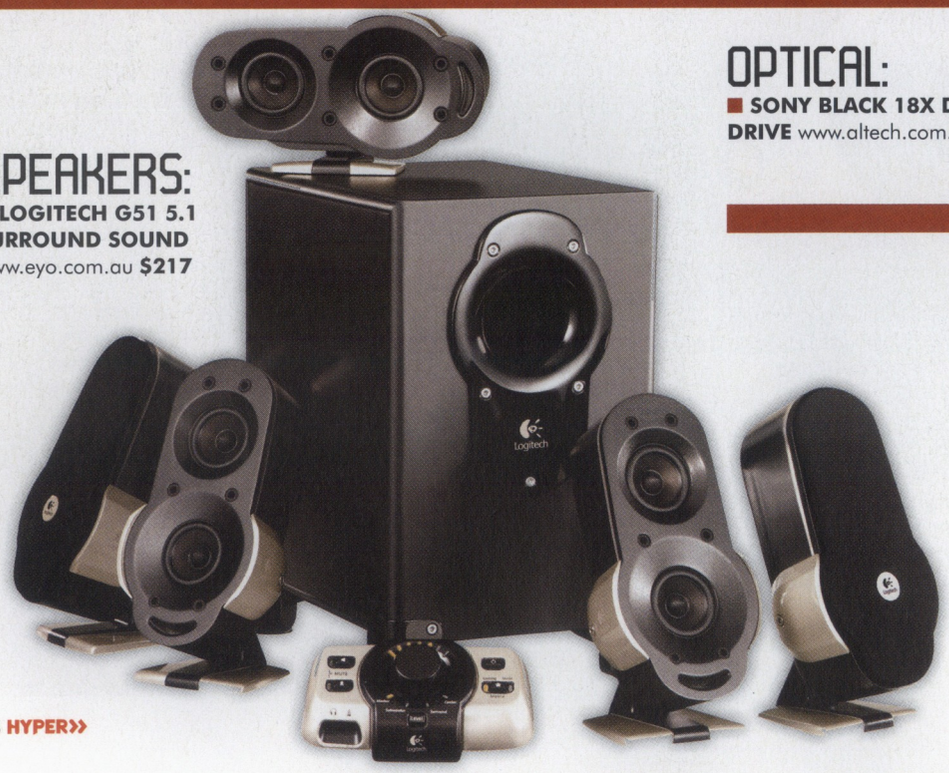


SOUND:
■ **CREATIVE X-FI XTREME GAMER**
au.creative.com **$199**
On board sound is pretty good these days but sometimes you need a little boost for your aural pleasure. The X-fi Xtreme Gamer is a soundcard specifically designed with gamers in mind, offering excellent 7.1, THX and Dolby Digital certified surround sound as well as an excellent headphone suite that produces 9 virtual speakers in a stereo headset to give excellent spatial awareness.



MOBO: ■ ASUS P5K-E/WiFi
www.scorptec.com.au **$229**

SPEAKERS:
■ **LOGITECH G51 5.1 SURROUND SOUND**
www.eyo.com.au **$217**



OPTICAL:
■ **SONY BLACK 18X DVD±RW DRIVE** www.altech.com.au **$ 44**

KEYBOARD:
■ **LOGITECH G15 GAMING**
www.digitalstar.com.au **$97**
An excellent, sturdy gaming keyboard, the G15's most obvious feature is the LCD display that can be used to show in-game details such as ammunition, hotkeys, health and the like. The recent addition of an orange backlight to the LCD makes this keyboard all the more attractive.

MOUSE:

■ **LOGITECH G9 GAMING**
www.apus.com.au **$99**

The G9 offers comfort, precision and adaptability in one decently priced package. The 3200 DPI laser makes it one of the most accurate gaming mice on the market and the ability to customise grips means that you should never have to complain that the mouse doesn't feel right in your hand.

RAM:

■ **CORSAIR 2GB DDR2 800MHz**
www.megabuy.com.au **$179**

VIDEO:

■ **INNOVISION GF 8800GT 512MB DDR3**
www.techbuy.com.au **$441**
Offers amazing performance for the price. Thanks to the die shrink to 65nm, this card outperforms it's bigger brother the 8800GTS whilst still being significantly cheaper. The cards have been in very hot demand since release, leading to shortages and inflated prices, so have a shop around for the best value.

CASE & POWER:

■ **ANTEC SONATA III** www.altech.com.au **$239**

TOTAL: $2648

As one gets older there are so many things that can potentially stand in the way of precious unadulterated gaming pleasure - the spouse, the mortgage, an obsession with penguins!? Then along comes a system like this one to reinvigorate your love life. Overclocked, the Q6600 can reach close to 4.0 Mhz and is a must have if you're looking for added grunt in a PC. For graphics we chose the Innovision GF 8800GT with 512 MB ram - not far off the benchmark in performance and at a competitive price point. A true workhorse in every respect the ASUS P5K-E/WiFi MOBO is one of the best mid-range chipsets on the market and the perfect partner to the Q6600. We liked the idea of being able to use our monitor for playing back other HD content, that's why we included the Chi Mei 22-inch monitor, now with HDMI.

LOW BUDGET PC

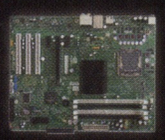
Components available from **www.altech.com.au**

CPU:

■ **INTEL QUAD CORE Q6600 (2.4 Ghz) $335**

MOBO:

■ **GALAXY IN65A 650i Ultra** $90



RAM:

■ **CORSAIR 2GB DDR2 (667 MHz) $54**

VIDEO:

■ **GALAXY GF8600GTS 256MB DDR3 + COOLER MASTER HEAT PIPE FAN $176**

OPTICAL:

■ **SONY BLACK 18X DVD±RW DRIVE $ 44**

SOUND:

■ **CREATIVE SBS580 5.1 CHANNEL SPEAKERS $110**

MONITOR:

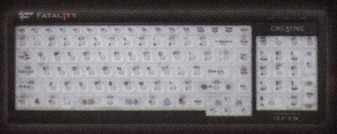
■ **19' VIEWSONIC WIDESCREEN $239**

CASE & POWER:

■ **ANTEC NSK400B MINI TOWER + BP350 W PSU $85**

STORAGE:

■ **SAMSUNG 500GB SATAII HDD $132**
Storage is becoming so cheap these days that you may as well get as much bang for your buck as you can. We can still remember the days when businessmen were umming and ahhing over whether to fork out the 10 odd grand to buy another 22mb HDD and then wondering what they'd do with all the extra space. These days 500GB is nothing – you're not a real geek until you're rocking a TB or two.



KEYBORD:

■ **CREATIVE FATALITY GAMING $77**
The Fatal1ty keyboard may not be the best looking bit of tech in the world but it's a pretty damn good keyboard nonetheless. The keyboard features backlit, low-profile keys that may take a little getting used to if you game on a standard keyboard but feel natural after a short time.The keyboard is flat enough and light enough to easily slip into a backpack if you're heading off to a LAN.

MOUSE:

■ **RAZER KRAIT GAMING $66**
Amazingly, this mouse has been optimised for RTS and MMO gaming, though this, of course, doesn't mean that it won't function brilliantly for other genres. At 1600 DPI the Krait is nice and precise and you can change the sensitivity of the mouse on the fly, tailoring the responsiveness as the situation demands.

TOTAL $1408

Since many buyers are now opting for Quad Core processors over Dual Core, we chose the Q6600 to ensure the system has plenty of bite for a while down the track. While the GF8600GTS with 256 MB is a bit below the spec of the highest 8800 graphics card on the market, it's still good for basic gaming. Likewise 5.1 channel sound, which incidentally is still the benchmark for home theatre systems today, is more than enough surround sound for any gamer. The 19-inch ViewSonic is a solid entry monitor with impressive visuals and 2m response time. We went with the Creative Fatality gaming keyboard and Razer gaming mouse, which are a big step above generic devices and bound to give the edge in the heat of battle.

■ **TIP:** If you're on a budget a pre-built system is a good buy. Choose one with vital components that are reasonably high spec for CPU and video card, to get bang for buck. You can always upgrade the least important components when you become a rich socialite rock star/ movie star/ Paris Hilton spank toy!

THE HISTORY OF MARIO

Mamma Mia! Who could believe it has been 26 years since we first saw Mario, the 155 cm tall, pudgy, Italian-accented, moustachioed man with a blue pair of overalls, red shirt, white gloves, and red cap. Mario is arguably the most popular video game character in the world, and was created by the genius of Nintendo's Shigeru "Shiggy" Miyamoto. Mario stars usually as the titular hero of numerous successful video games, many of the platforming genre. He is Nintendo's mascot and the typical protagonist of the company's best selling video game series. With over 193 million units sold worldwide, Mario is not only Nintendo's most successful franchise, but the most successful video game series of all time. Furthermore, Mario is considered the most well-known video game character in the world. However Mario did not start out like normal video game characters. Heck, in his first game he wasn't the main character, nor was he even called Mario! Let's take a journey back to yester year...

» MATTHEW WILLIAMS

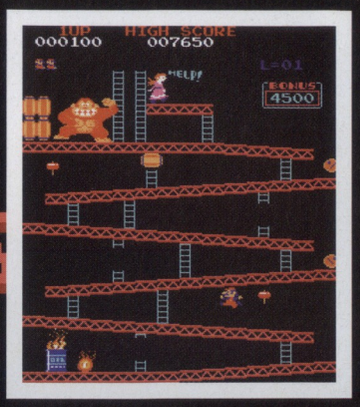
AN ITALIAN CARPENTER?

Mario started out originally as a carpenter named Jumpman in the arcade game Donkey Kong.

The DK franchise was developed further by constant extension of the freedom of movement for Mario, and exerted crucial influence on the platformer genre of video games. A largely popular series due to its easily accessible gameplay and exceptional level design, Mario's mascot image was cemented, and he quickly went on to appear in many forms of merchandise.

Nintendo of Japan tried to find success in the USA just as they did in Japan through the arcade game market. Their arcade game Radar Scope, while successful in Japan, did not help Nintendo of America, with only one-third of the shipped Radar Scope games sold when Nintendo was hoping for a breakthrough. Nintendo president at the time, Hiroshi Yamauchi, turned to the young game developer Shigeru Miyamoto and entrusted him with the development of a new game, which would be built from the remaining Radar Scope units. With a Popeye game, they hoped to find their desired success in America. However, Nintendo lost the rights to Popeye as a character before the planned publication of the finished game.

Thereupon, Miyamoto received



Donkey Kong
Arcade, 1980

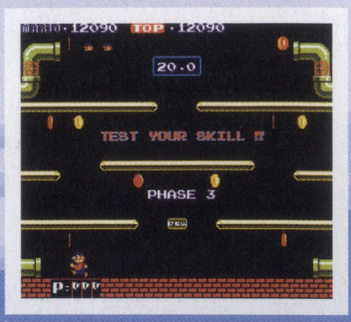
an order to sketch a game based on the failed Popeye. For the then-nameless carpenter, Miyamoto sketched a simple character, which players could identify with. The result was an early Mario, with a tubular nose, red pair of overalls, purple shirt, and red cap. Miyamoto then went on to develop the game Donkey Kong, which tells a story of a carpenter whose girlfriend is kidnapped by a gorilla. The task of the player was to steer the carpenter around barrels and other objects, while trying to catch up to the gorilla and save his girlfriend.

The design was strongly affected by the technical limitations of the hardware, which permitted only 16 by 16 pixels for the main character. The moustache was better representable as a mouth, and formed the image of a large nose. The multicoloured clothes formed a contrast with the black background, and the overalls served as a distinction between the body and the arms, so movement was recognised.

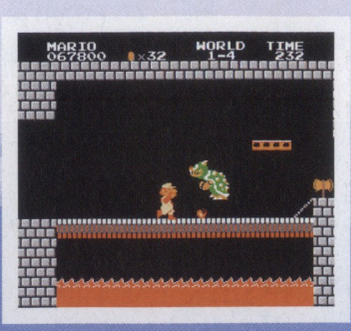
The game was finished in 1981, and sold over 65,000 units, making it the most successful arcade game since Pac-Man. The character named Jumpman by Miyamoto,

THE HISTORY OF MARIO

continued...



Mario Bros
Arcade



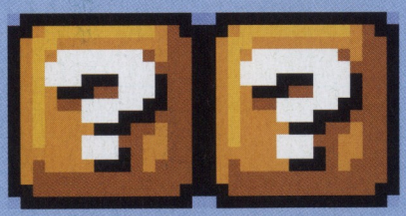
Super Mario Bros
NES

renamed by Hiroshi Yamauchi.

It's reported that the pixelated character held a striking physical resemblance to Nintendo of America's Mario Segale, and therefore Mario was identified as Italian. Along with the name-change came an occupational change, as it was determined that he looked more like a plumber than a carpenter. The colour combination of the shirt and overalls was modified in later games but finally arrived at a red shirt with blue overalls. Despite more efficient video game hardware and the improved possibilities of realistic graphics, Mario has kept this appearance even today.

After Yamauchi's decision, Mario became a plumber in Donkey Kong Junior. After his appearance in Donkey Kong Junior, Mario appeared again in 1983 in Mario Bros., Mario's first appearance as the titular hero. In this game, which was originally called Pipe Jump, Mario and his brother Luigi had to exterminate shellcreepers (the origin of Koopa Troopas) and other pests that entered from the underground pipes. Although well recieved, it didn't have as huge an impact as Donkey Kong, but it was not the Brothers' last appearance.

The Family Computer (Famicom) was released in 1983. Since only good software titles could ensure the success of the system, Hiroshi Yamauchi turned to Shigeru Miyamoto to develop a new game for the Nintendo console. Super Mario Bros. was published in Japan on September 13, 1985, and went on to mark a milestone in video game history.



ALICE IN STAR TREK

Mario and Luigi were now living in the Mushroom Kingdom where they had to rescue Princess Toadstool from the evil clutches of the Koopa Bowser. The player controlled Mario through laterally-scrolling levels the size of several screens, jumping over abysses and defeating enemies in order to reach the end of the level. The game could be either played alone or alternating with another, the second player playing as Luigi.

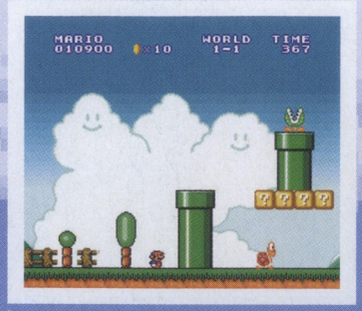
Super Mario Bros. was substantially more extensive than Miyamoto's earlier games. Like Donkey Kong, the game follows the "hero saves kidnapped girl" story, but the levels were expanded to enormous proportions. Miyamoto created an extensive game world with branched paths and underground caves, while in most past games, the individual levels were limited to the size of the screen.

DEPTH, COLOURFUL GRAPHICS AND GOOD GAMEPLAY HELPED MAKE SUPER MARIO BROS. A HIT.

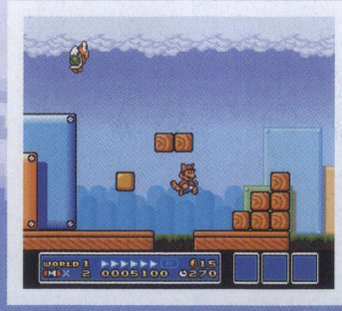
The game mechanics from Mario Bros. were extended by new elements. Miyamoto apparently took inspirations from many books and stories. The idea of mushrooms that make Mario larger and stronger is identical to Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and the warps and hidden exits used to move forward many levels ahead are reminiscent of Star Trek: The Original Series. Graphically, Super Mario Bros. pushed the boundaries of technology at its time. The concept of scrolling levels was not new, but no previous game used the technology so effectively, or had such even transitions.

Endless depth, colourful graphics, a memorable soundtrack, and good gameplay helped make Super Mario Bros. a hit. In Japan, a "Mario Boom" developed. A strategy guide, which contained exact maps of the game levels and all the hidden extras, quickly became a best-seller. Mario mangas and an anime film were published. In North America, the game helped the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), the American version of the Famicom, reach a breakthrough in 1986, and this resulted in Nintendo mania. The game was then bundled with the console, and went on to sell 40 million copies, and is now listed in the Guinness World Records as the best-selling game of all time.

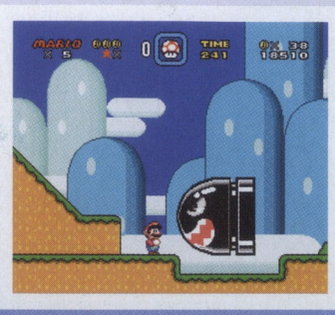
After this time, Nintendo had a sequel, Super Mario Bros. 2, and it was already released exclusively for the Famicom. The game was similar to its predecessor, with the addition of Poison Mushrooms that shrunk Mario, and gusts of wind.



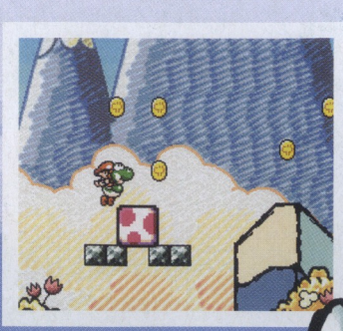
Super Mario Bros 2
SNES



Super Mario Bros 3
SNES



Super Mario World
SNES



Super Mario World 2
SNES

The game was successful in Japan, but was deemed too difficult for non-Japanese gamers, and was not published outside Japan during the NES's peak years. The Japanese Super Mario Bros. 2 was finally released in western markets in 1993 as The Lost Levels, released as part of the collection Super Mario All-Stars for the Super Nintendo Entertainment System (SNES).

NO LOVE FROM LINCOLN

Because the Japanese game Super Mario Bros. 2 was deemed too difficult for the western market, and the then president of American operations Howard Lincoln personally disliked the game, Nintendo acquired the rights to the Fuji Television game Yume Kojo: Doki Doki Panic. They then inserted Mario characters into the game, and brought the game outside of Japan in 1988 as Super Mario Bros. 2. For this reason, the gameplay differs clearly from its predecessor at certain points. For example, Mario's freedom of movement was increased, in contrast to the first game and the Japanese version, the screen not only scrolled from left to right, but could also turn around, and even scroll vertically. Super Mario Bros. 2 was a success, and was later released in Japan as Super Mario Bros. USA in 1992.

The third installment in the series was released in 1990, and was by far the most anticipated. So much so in fact that it appeared in the Fred Savage film The Wizard before even being officially released. Super Mario Bros. 3 was the most extensive installment in the series. The gameplay and story were similar to the first installment, but there were some innovations. The game world was now represented as a generic map, where Mario could choose where he would go. Various suits were also added, which lent Mario special abilities. For example, the frog suit improved Mario's jumping and swimming capabilities, and the Tanooki suit allowed Mario to turn into a statue and hide from enemies. The freedom of movement was again increased with improved scrolling and movement in all directions. There were also levels that automatically scrolled, in which the player had to keep moving to keep Mario on the screen. Over 18 million copies were sold worldwide, believably making Super Mario Bros. 3 the best-selling

THE HISTORY OF MARIO

continued...

Mario Sunshine
GameCube

Super Mario Galaxy
Wii

non-bundled video game of all time.

The series went on to publish Super Mario World and Super Mario World 2 respectively, and even though they were not as influential as the aforementioned games in the series, they contained major improvements that have remained in the series today. One of the largest innovations was the dinosaur Yoshi, which served as an animal for Mario and Luigi to ride on, and could use its long tongue to eat enemies. Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island starred Yoshi as the main character. You would control Yoshi with Baby Mario on its back and went to save Baby Luigi form the evil Baby Bowser. With the 3-D gaming revolution right around the corner, and the success of Donkey Kong Country as a 3-D game, Miyamoto did not convert the game to 3-D, nor did he scrap the side-scrolling approach. He did however change the pixel-riffic graphics into pastel drawings. And once again, like its predecessors, Super Mario World 2 was a success, and gamers consider it very highly.

A Mario game also accompanied the release of Nintendo's next home console, the Nintendo 64. Super Mario 64 advanced the plumber into the third dimension and defined the term "3-D platformer". The game was not as linear as the previous instalments, and the new analogue stick made an extensive repertoire of precise movements in all directions possible. Mario could now not only run, jump, swim, and carry certain objects, but he could also punch, perform a Triple Jump, don a Wing Cap, and more. It is also the first game in the main Super Mario series to feature the voice acting of Charles Martinet for Mario.

ALL FOR CAKE

Mario once again had to save Princess Peach from Bowser, and free up to 120 Power Stars from the paintings and return them to her castle. Each painting furnished a unique world, in which Mario had to fulfil several different tasks to free a Star. Nintendo did not bundle Super Mario 64 with the Nintendo 64 at first, but it was a large success nevertheless, contributing to the success of the system. Gamers considered Mario's 3-D debut one of the most influential games for the next generations due to its excellent camera modes and control. (Super Mario 64, for your dear writer was the sole reason at the time to buy a N64. That was the amount of hype it had surrounding it.)

IN 2005 MARIO WAS HONOURED WITH A STAR ON THE WALK OF GAME IN SAN FRANCISCO

The Nintendo Gamecube marked the first time a Mario game was not published as a launch title. Instead, Luigi appeared as the main role in Luigi's Mansion, where Mario only played a minor role. The long-expected successor to Super Mario 64 followed some months later. In Super Mario Sunshine, Mario and Peach travelled to Isle Delfino for a vacation. However, a Mario double appeared and vandalized the entire island. With the help of FLUDD (and because Mario was sentenced to an indefinite amount of hours of community service), it was up to Mario to clean up the entire island. This game proved to be nowhere near as successful as its many predecessors, probably in part due to the failure of the Gamecube in general, but also because of how much it strayed form the original Mario formula. Many gamers prefer to deny its very existence, showing the shame it brought upon the series.

SPINNING OFF

On top of all this, there of course where many handheld editions of the Mario franchise, like Super Mario Advance, Super Mario World: Super Mario Advance 2 and Mario vs. Donkey Kong, just to name a few, all for the GBA. For the DS so far there has been Super Mario 64 and New Super Mario Bros., with definitely more to come. Even though a minute amount have been named, even in their entirety they lay no comparison to the monstrous amount of Mario freakin' sports spin-off games there are. Some,

Super Mario 64
N64

Mario and Luigi have even featured in their own TV show and feature film. The DVDs can be found at your local Crazy Clark's/Reject Shop for $2. No, seriously. In the name of research I have bought two of the DVDs.Unsurprisingly they are pretty crap but simultaneously rather hypnotic. In a car crash kind of way. The cool thing about them though is they show how far Mario has progressed over the years. By no means a necessary purchase but still pretty cool.

dare I say, are slightly enjoyable, but man are some of them crap (excludes Mario Kart's). *clears throat* Moving on, the Super Smash Bros. series has gone extremely well, and also the Paper Mario series, both of which games have upcoming Wii sequels.

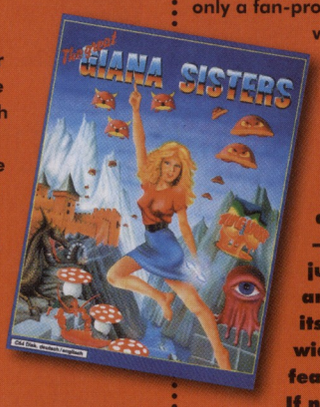
Mario is the greatest, most well known and most influential gaming character ever. In 2005, he was honoured with a star on the Walk of Game in San Francisco. Today, Mario is a household name in many countries worldwide. Who would have guessed a little moving pixel cluster in a purple shirt could become what it has today? However Mario has risen up the ranks, he has, and he can only be honoured for it. With a HUGE back catalogue of games and an undeniably bigger and better future ahead, Mario can only rise higher. Mario for PM, anyone? <<

THE GREAT GIANA SISTERS

The success of the Mario franchise has not been without price. Although the Mario games, as well as Miyamoto's other arcade successes such as Donkey Kong and Donkey Kong Jr. were only ever published for arcades and Nintendo consoles there have been many attempts over the years to bring the games, or facsimiles thereof, to different platforms. After all, what better way to make an easy buck than to ride on someone elses success? In 1987, the video game The Great Giana Sisters, developed in West Germany by Rainbow Arts, was released for the Commodore 64. Players and critics agree that it is one of the best games for the Commodore 64. However, a crucial reason for the quality and popularity of The Great Giana Sisters however was that it oriented itself very strongly around Super Mario Bros. Fairly well substantiated rumours insist that the game is nothing but a reskinned SMB. For this reason, Nintendo forced the withdrawal of all versions of the game. Even with this defeat, the game's creator, Armin Gessert, went on to successfully create his own company based in Germany, today known as Spellbound Entertainment. We have been able to interview Armin Gessert regarding his plans and expectations on the controversial Mario Bros. clone project.

Hyper: Hello Mr. Gessert!
Armin Gessert: Hello! I thought that "The Great Giana Sisters" was only a brand in Europe, and I'm very surprised to get a mail from Australia.

At the time there was a lot of controversy surrounding your game so everybody heard about it at some time or another. On to our first question:
Did you intend in creating The Great Giana Sisters as a Super Mario Bros. rival, or was the game developed to cash in on the popularity of Super Mario Bros., as the tagline for the game was "The brothers are history"?
To tell you the truth, we [hadn't] thought at all about marketing or probable success at that time. We just wanted to create a game with good gameplay following Super Mario Bros.' example. The tagline "The brothers are history" was a marketing strategy on which we as developers [had no] influence on.



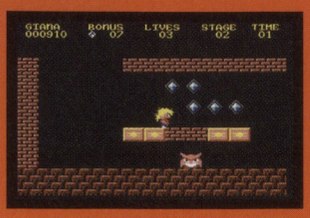
Can you confirm/deny The Great Giana Sisters' engine was Super Mario Bros. with different sprites?
Technically and graphically, The Great Giana Sisters was entirely developed "from scratch". Of course we were inspired [by] Super Mario Bros. Every good game designer and developer needs examples and tries to develop even better games by improving them. This evolution guarantees a better development of games.

How difficult was it to create a game with Nintendo running to shut your project down?
During the development it [wasn't] instantly clear that there would be problems with Nintendo. They drew their attention to The Great Giana Sisters after the publication. This procedure was profitable for TGGS to become a cult-game. Although the game wasn't available [to buy after the legal battle], it was copied more and more.

Looking back, do you think The Great Giana Sisters measured up to, or was even better than Super Mario Bros.? Did it exceed your expectations?
I have always been aware of the fact that TGGS [didn't have] the technical quality of Super Mario Bros., but that wasn't even our target at that time. The gameplay was the main component for us; the technical aspects were of secondary importance. We never thought that TGGS would be so successful. It really [did] exceed our expectations.

As of 2005, a new version titled simply Giana Sisters was made available for mobile phones. There is also a remake titled Giana's Return for the Sega DreamCast. Can you give us any details on a sequel or remake that will be released in Australia on the current/next generation consoles?
Yes, we published a version for mobile games and its success really surprised us.
The "Giana's Return" project is as far as I know only a fan-project. We do not have any problems with that as long as it doesn't turn into a commercial distribution.

TGGS has recieved a lot of praise over the years. One quote from Zzap said: "This is one of the most addictive arcade adventures I've ever played – it's amazing! The gameplay is just fabulous: the basic collect and shoot action is brilliant in itself, with great graphics and a wide range of weapons and extra features to collect..."
If not a sequel/remake, will any of Spellbound's future games be based on this formula?
Yes, we are thinking of it...



Top ten

Movie & DVD Releases 2007

1. Pan's Labyrinth

The best cinema/DVD release of 2007? For us it has to be Guillermo del Toro's historical fantasy, Pan's Labyrinth. Set in Spain, 1944, several years after the civil war, there are still small outposts where remnants of the fascist regime hold power. One such place is the mountain town of Navarra, where ten-year-old Ofelia finds herself. The oppressive rule and violent tendencies of her step-father make Ofelia's life unbearable, but when she discovers a cave at the centre of a nearby Labyrinth, and inside a faun, her life takes on a new purpose. Filled with beautiful cinematography, amazing performances and a mesmerising story, Pan's Labyrinth is the best the year had to offer.

Distributor: Hopscotch/Roadshow
Rating: MA15+
Director: Guillermo del Toro
Cast: Ivana Baquero, Doug Jones, Sergi López

2. The Host

The Host breaks nearly every rule of the giant monster movie – you see the beast within the first few minutes and in broad daylight no less, the action concerns the human characters more than it does the giant evil beastie and there isn't one small child psychically linked to the monster in sight – which is probably why it is without a doubt the best monster film since Gamera: Revenge of Iris (a film that actually did contain a child psychically linked with the monster). When a young girl is taken by a mutant river monster, her family groups together, defying the government track her down. Trust us, it's brilliant. Go and get yourself a copy.

Distributor: Madman
Rating: M
Director: Joon-ho Bong
Cast: Kang-ho Song, Hie-Bong Byeon, Hae-il Park

3. 300

It's a little ironic that the most testosterone filled movie of the year is also the most homoerotic-- not just because pretty much the entire cast gets about in a leather speedo and a cape but because, well, the villain, Xerxes is essentially Boy George with Michael Clarke Duncan's voice. There's also the fact that the dominant image of the film is sweaty guys being penetrated by all manner of objects in slow motion but we won't go into that. What we will go into is the beautiful combination of live action and CG using a technique pioneered in Sin City and Gerard Butlers fantastic performance, further helping to distance him from The Phantom of the Opera.

Distributor: Warner
Rating: MA15+
Director: Zack Snyder
Cast: Gerard Butler, Lena Headey, David Wenham

4. Knocked Up

Hands down, Knocked Up is the funniest movie of the year. Judd Apatow's directorial follow-up to The 40 Year Old Virgin, Knocked Up is about what happens after you get laid. Seth Rogan stars as Ben Stone, who spends all his time getting high while trying to start an internet pornography business. After a drunken night out, Ben ends up doing the mattress mambo with Alison Scott, played by the eyeball-scorchingly gorgeous Katherine Heigl. Of course, she gets knocked up. Knocked Up is not your usual pregnancy movie, with some hilarious, shocking and occasionally touching moments – its good watchin'.

Distributor: Universal
Rating: MA15+
Director: Judd Apatow
Cast: Seth Rogen, Katherine Heigl, Paul Rudd

5. Eastern Promises

David Cronenberg is probably the most consistently impressive Western director working at the moment. Not too long ago Cronenberg amazed us with his brilliant, and most accessible film yet, A History of Violence but now he's outdone himself with Eastern Promises, a chillingly brilliant film about a nurse, a baby and the Russian mob. When we first saw Viggo Mortensen many years ago in a fun little action film called American Yakuza we knew he was going to wind up a star. He may have been good in the Lord of the Rings trilogy and great in A History of Violence but in Eastern Promises he does his bet work yet as world-weary driver Nikolai.

Distributor: Roadshow
Rating: R18+
Director: David Cronenberg
Cast: Viggo Mortensen, Naomi Watts, Vincent Cassel

6. Grindhouse

Grindhouse may have been split up for its local release, but both halves of this trashy double feature deserve to be seen together, the way they were intended. Rodriguez's Planet Terror is a mix of 80's-style action and zombie flick, while Tarantino's effort is remains true to the style of 1970's exploitation cinema. Both are riveting for their own reasons, Tarantino's for its slasher-flick-cum-car-chase-movie style starring Kurt Russell in full Snake Plisken mode (only evil), and Rodriguez's for its over-the-top action and Rose McGowan with a gun for a leg. All we need now is for Rodriguez to actually make Danny Trejo's "Machete"...

Distributor: Dimension/Roadshow
Rating: MA15+
Director: Robert Rodriguez, Quentin Tarantino
Cast: Rose McGowan, Kurt Russel, Bruce Willis

7. Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

Over the pasts six or so years the Harry Potter films have proved themselves to be consistently entertaining, and the latest release, Order of the Phoenix, may just be the best yet. In Harry's fifth year at Hogwarts the atmosphere is more tense and suspenseful than ever, and the spectacular effects and action sequences are thrilling. Harry Potter isn't just for the youngsters anymore either, as his first M15+ rating clearly shows... at this rate, by the time they get to The Deathly Hallows we may have an R-rated Harry Potter film on our hands. We can only hope.

Distributor: Warner
Rating: M
Director: David Yates
Cast: Daniel Radcliff, Emma Watson, Rupert Grint

8. Hot Fuzz

Coming off of 2004's horror/comedy hit, Shaun of the Dead, Edgar Wright and Simon Pegg had a lot of expectations riding on their next project. Thankfully, Hot Fuzz, an action/comedy that can best be described as The Bill meets Lethal Weapon, only funny, ended up to being one of the best DVD releases of this year! Re-teaming Simon Pegg and Shaun of the Dead co-star, Nick Frost as an unlikely pair of cops, Hot Fuzz has an abundance of referential humour, explosive action and a piss take on practically every action film cliché there is. Hot Fuzz is well worth watching. Twice even.

Distributor: Universal
Rating: MA15+
Director: Edgar Wright
Cast: Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, Bill Nighy

9. Die Hard 4.0

John McClane is old enough to be all of our grandfathers, and for this reason we were initially worried that the forth Die Hard movie wouldn't live up to our high expectations. Thankfully, Bruce Willis and Mac Guy crashed enough cars, blew up enough buildings and kicked enough cyber-terrorist arse to make this one of our favourites for the year. Admittedly, it isn't nearly as good as the previous three films, but it was still action-packed enough to it make us want to stand up in the middle of the cinema a shout out "Yippee Ki Yay" something something... we forget what the last two words were.

Distributor: Fox
Rating: M
Director: Len Wiseman
Cast: Bruce Willis, Justin "Mac Guy" Long, Timothy OlyPHANT

10. Transformers

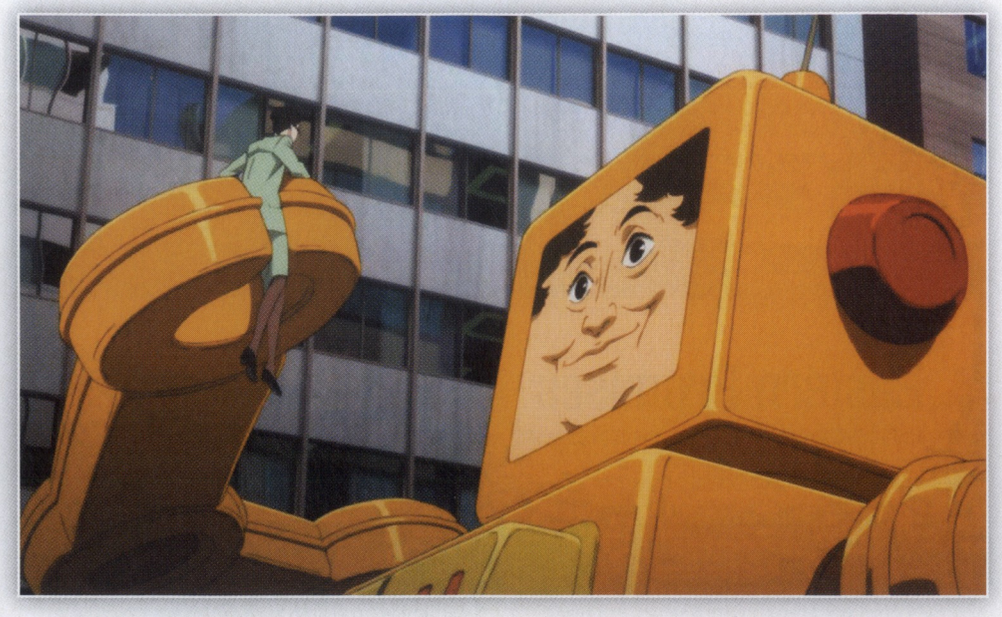
Yes, it was almost completely unrecognisable from the original Transformers series and it relied more on its ridiculously overblown special effects budget than it did any kind of coherent story or character development, but for a big dumb (and we mean dumb) spectacle, Transformers was surprisingly entertaining.

When it comes to giant robots, there are few things we'd rather see them do that beat the bejesus out of each other – and Michael Bay's Transformers had that in abundance!

It could have used Stan Bush's "You've got the Touch" on the soundtrack though...

Distributor: Paramount
Rating: M
Director: Michael Bay
Cast: Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox, Peter Cullen

Top ten Anime Releases 2007



1. Paprika

We've loved everything that Satoshi Kon has done. Perfect Blue is awe inspiring, Paranoia Agent is an absolute triumph and Tokyo Godfathers is brilliant but Paprika, his latest exploration of identity, memory and self is perhaps is best film yet. Some people may find the story about the heroic alter-ego of a researcher tracking down criminals who have stolen devices that allow them to enter the subconscious minds of victims to be a little daunting, not to mention confusing, but the film is never boring or anything less than a truly intriguing and challenging meditation on all of Kon's favourite themes, such as creativity, imagination, self, ego and super-ego.

Distributor: Sony Pictures
Rating: M
Director: Satoshi Kon
Also available on Blu-Ray

2. The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya

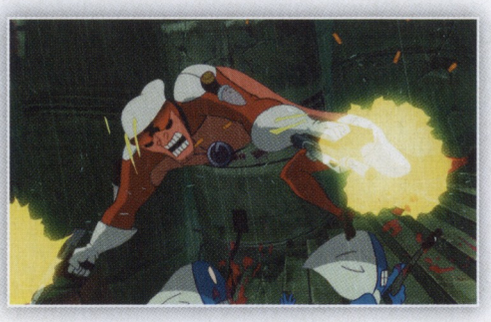
It was a hard choice for us to put Haruhi Suzumiya in second place, instead of first, but either way it well and truly earns its place on or best anime list this year. Mixing one part strange science-fiction, one part romantic comedy and one part bizarre weirdness, The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya is the story of the S.O.S. Brigade – or the "Spreading Excitement All over the World with the Haruhi Suzumiya Brigade". Together they set out to locate supernatural entities, like aliens, time-travellers and psychics, with the aim being to hang out with them. Packed with humour, charm, intrigue and fan-service, Haruhi is pure gold.

Distributor: Madman
Rating: MA15+
Director: Tatsuya Ishihara

3. Mushi-Shi

For a medium that is so often filled with giant fighting robots, demon-fighting teenagers and cute schoolgirls with superpowers, who fight things (there's at least some of those on this list), Mushi-Shi is a refreshing concept. In the world of Mushi-Shi there exists a force known as Mushi, ghost-like entities that although they aren't purposefully malicious, can harm humans. Ginko is a Mushi hunter of sorts, and he travels ancient Japan finding Mushi that are causing trouble, and exorcises them, ending their mischief. Mushi-Shi is slowly paced, and there are no action sequences to speak of, but the ways in which Ginko dispatches the Mushi are often fascinating, as is the rest of this anime.

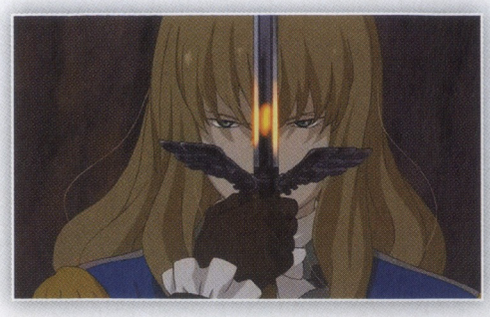
Distributor: Madman
Rating: PG
Director: Hiroshi Nagahama



4. Aachi & Ssipak

It's almost inconceivable that there could be a more bizarre premise for an anime than that of Korean film Aachi & Ssipak. In the future, all the Earth's power is drawn from possibly the most unpleasant substance imaginable – human excreta. In return for powering the nation the government rewards its pooping citizens with "Juicy Bars", an addictive drug-laced lollipop. That's where Aachi and Ssipak, come in. The two petty criminals discover a porn star named Beautiful who earns more Juicy Bars than anyone else, pound for pound, so to speak. But before they can get rich selling her Juicy Bars, Aachi and Ssipak get involved with the dangerous "Diaper Gang", a crew of freakish Juicy Bar addicts.

Distributor: Madman
Rating: MA15+
Director: Jo Beom-jin



5. Le Chevalier d'Eon

The true story of Chevalier d'Eon is one of those tales that is so wonderfully odd it can only be true – d'Eon, a spy for King Louis XV spent the later part of his life in society living and dressed as a woman. The nature of his gender was so ion question that there was even a betting pool at the London Stock Exchange as to his sex. The anime Le Chevalier d'Eon takes an even more fanciful bent, telling the story of a young Chevalier who joins a secret society to uncover the mystery surrounding the death of his sister and becomes involved with supernatural forces, not the least of which is the fact that his sister's spirit can possess him in times of trouble turning him into a beautiful and deadly swordswoman.

Distributor: Madman
Rating: M
Director: Kazuhiro Furuhashi

6. Tekkonkinkreet

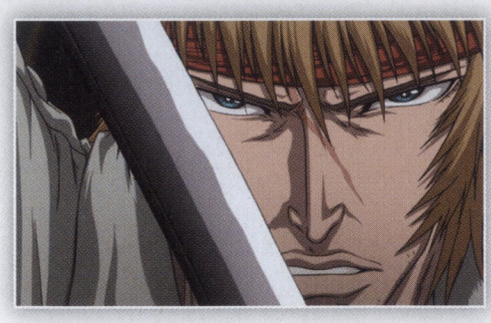
The first anime picture helmed entirely by a westerner, Tekkonkinkreet (a Japanese play on words to convey an urban landscape) is a triumph of style and substance, telling the story of two brothers, Black and White, battling to save their beloved Treasure Town from evil property developers, gangs, Yakuza and alien ninjas, as well as from the darkness that exists inside them. Black is a violent rebel who seems to enjoy dishing out the hurt whereas White is a near autistic, infantilised innocent prone to fits and visions. Although there is a lot of action in Tekkonkinkreet, the relationship between the two brothers is the true attraction of the film.

Distributor: Sony Pictures
Rating: MA15+
Director: Michael Arias
Also available on Blu-Ray

7. Afro Samurai

The character of Ninja Ninja may be an annoying, Ebonics spouting Samuel L Jackson self parody but the rest of the series is brilliant, combining stylish (and stylised) visuals, excellent action and an intriguing plot revolving around two headbands. The headbands, labelled 1 and 2, denote the two best swordsmen in the world, #1 being the best and #2 being the only swordsman allowed to challenge #1 for the right to wear the #1 band. Afro (Sam Jackson), the titular samurai and current holder of the #2 headband is obsessed with tracking down and killing the current #1, a gunman named Justice (RON PERLMAN!) responsible for decapitating Afro's father.

Distributor: Madman
Rating: MA15+
Director: Fuminori Kizaki



8. Highlander: Search for Vengeance

Although the Highlander anime is officially the seventh or eighth Highlander show (depending on whether or not you consider the 1994 cartoon to be an official Highlander offshoot) it is far and away more faithful to the original film in terms of theme and plot than any of the other films of television shows. Colin MacCleod (no relation to Connor), a Highlander and immortal spends hundreds of years tracking down the murderer of his beloved wife, forsaking friendship, love, honour and almost his humanity in his search for revenge.

Distributor: Madman
Rating: M
Director: Yoshiaki Kawajiri

9. Bleach

Bleach is actually rather old in comparison to the other anime on this list, releasing in its native Japan in 2004. However, since it only made it to our shores halfway through 2007, we've got no problems adding this cracking series to our top list for the year. Making the leap from the pages of Shonen Jump, Bleach follows the life of Ichigo Kurosaki, a 15-year-old high school student who gains the power to see demons – and to beat the crap out of them. With some solid demon-fighting action, and some genuine humour in the mix, not to mention a little bit of fan service, Bleach makes the cut this year. Lets just hope the coming Bleach games don't suck.

Distributor: Madman
Rating: PG
Director: Noriyuki Abe

10. Tsubasa Chronicles

When Sakura, princess of the Clow kingdom has her soul scattered across the planes it's up to her childhood friend, Syaoran, a young archaeologist and a group of travellers from different dimensions to track down the pieces of her soul and restore her to life. The premise may sound action packed but Tsubasa Chronicles is a far deeper show than it appears, exploring each of the character's personalities and quirks through the sacrifices they must make on their journey; Syaoran, secretly in love with the princess must give up her memories of him if he is to succeed.

Distributor: Madman
Rating: PG
Director: Koichi Mashimo

MAIL HYPER!

POSTAL:
78 Renwick St. Redfern, NSW
2016 Australia

EMAIL:
freakscene@next.com.au

Winners!

HYPER 171
ASSASSIN'S CREED

Who would you casts as Altair in a live-action Assassin's Creed movie?

"Robert Matthew Van Winkle, the Iceman himself, Vanilla Ice. Not only is he already "too cold" (as any self-respecting assassin should be), but he has also had experience precariously dangling over balconies and dropping from large heights (admittedly with an assist from Suge Knight)."
- Garrett Townsend, Ivanhoe, VIC.

"That's a trick question. Who wouldn't choose Chuck Norris."
- Darcy O'Loghlen, Merewether Heights, NSW.

- Trish Jacobs, Aberfoyle Park, SA.
- Daniel Lucas, Coomera, QLD.
- Ted Ward, Butler, WA.
- Jay Donohue, Kew, VIC.

BEOWULF

What other epic poems would make an awesome animated film?

"Rime of the Ancient Mariner, for the sole reason that it would have the awesome Iron Maiden version as its theme song."
- Nathan Weber, Lyneham, ACT.

- Julie Colvin, Whites Hill, QLD.
- Jenn Ward, Anstead, QLD.
- Mark Atino, Kedron, QLD.
- Anthony Dixon, Mansfield, QLD.
- Paul Masterson, Newmarket, QLD.
- Lawrence Joyce, Annerley, QLD
- Leanne Kemp, Doncaster East, VIC
- Carmen Mills, Carindale, QLD.
- Peter Felesina, Springwood, QLD.
- Talia Kann, Red Hill, QLD.
- Sarah Howard, Norman Park, QLD.
- Noel Kendall, Cannon Hill, QLD.
- Sally Ferguson, Carina, QLD.
- Tamara Aikman, Ryde, NSW.
- Tania Millson, Carrum Downs, VIC.
- Allen Buddle, Redcliffe, QLD.
- Matt Richards, Noosa, QLD.

TWO DEE

Long time reader, and very long time player. I was just writing in to talk about 2D games...and the lack of 2D games in recent years.

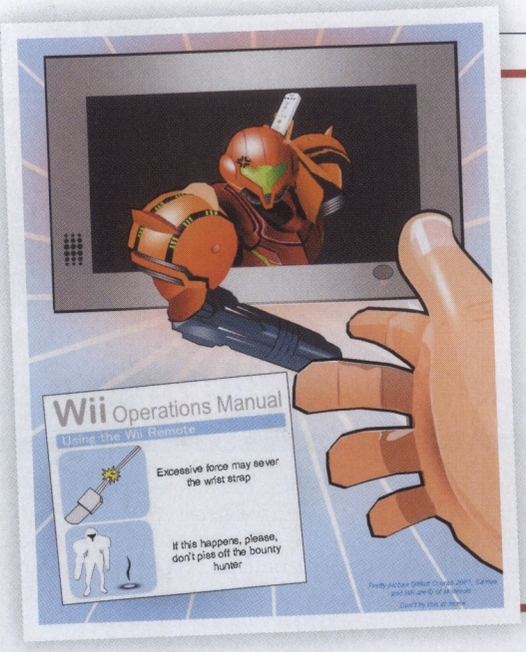
I grew up playing the C64, NES, SNES, Sega yada yada yada. To me these were my glory years (I sound so old but I'm only 25). Don't get me wrong here because I still love all the new games coming out as much as the next gamer. But my true passion is the Super NES era. These days I see more guns, crime and headshots, which is all good but sometimes I really wished they had a lot more "colourful" games. I know Nintendo has brought out New Super Mario Bros. and Super Paper Mario, however, one was on a handheld that looked 3D somewhat (Mario also felt heavy when jumping and you had to gain momentum instead of having instant speed) and the other was only half 2D and had RPG elements.

With Mario Galaxy around the corner I hope one day they will bring out a Super Mario World/ Super Mario Bros. 3 game for the Wii. They could make an awesome (and large) 2D platformer. Just because everything has gone 3D does that mean that 2D games have to dwindle into nothing because technology has improved? With the news of a new street fighter as well I just hope they keep it old school and make it in 2D.
Todd M.

We couldn't agree more Todd. The rise and rise of 3D gaming has come at the cost of traditional 2D games, and although the graphical wizardry and immersive three-dimensional worlds of today's games, we often get a hankering to get back to basics, and play something like Street Fighter III, Super Mario Bros 3 or Yoshi's island.

Of course, you can still get many of these games, and games like them, on the handheld consoles, or over the Wii Virtual Console – although it's not quite the same as having a new 2D masterpiece to play.

With the release of New Super Mario Bros, it looks doubtful that Ninty will go back and create a new 2D Mario game anytime soon (although Super Princess Peach was pretty good), and the news has already broken about Street Fighter IV – it will have full 3D visuals, although the gameplay will apparently remain true to the series 2D roots.



SAMUS WARNING

I'm sorry, what's that? Hyper brought back their fan art section? *Opens Microsoft Powerpoint*
Cheers,
Matt Scorah (scoz)

Thanks Matt, the Hyper reader art is really getting good – as illustrated by the two stellar pieces of graph on this very spread. If anyone else out there has some particularly sweet art, or some even awful art you did in MS Paint (as long as it's funny), then send it in!

We've actually heard many recent reports that suggest that the number of skilled 2D programmers and artists has dwindled to such a low figure that making a 2D game in today's industry can often be harder than developing a 3D one – a scary thought! Let's just hope that this isn't the end of 2D gaming...

AMAZING BIOSHOCK

I never thought my letters to you guys would become a trilogy (and no doubt some of your readers are sick of hearing from me) but I wanted to write in at least one last time, as my current tale has reached its end - and to my amazement, and perhaps yours, a happy one.

Through circumstance I ruled out trading in my 360 and instead opted to sell it to my friends. I still owned Gun, THAW, DOA4, Rockstar's Table Tennis and Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee (my best friend decided not to by those) and I offered to sell the lot from $450.

...with no takers. After a few weeks it was getting obvious no one wanted my little engine that could[n't] - guess they'd read my letters to Hyper - and so realising I was stuck with the thing I decided I'd trade in my existing games for something better to justify keeping it.

Now, remember I'd said my games before I sold most were worth $60 at GAME. In the words of Dickens (or at least Gonzo) - "that one thing you must remember, or nothing that follows will seem wondrous."

I took the games to EBs, expecting to possible get Dead Rising or Tomb Raider Legend. The sales clerk told me "the best deal we have is trade in three games and get the Halo 3 collector's edition for $30".

I traded in my games and left with Halo 3 without paying a cent! Even though I sucked at it, and still do, I was constantly blown away by the game, and everytime I watched my replays of it I could feel my faith being restored.

I bought more games, but despite their individual brilliance (I'm talking Oblivion Collector's Ed, Guitar Hero 2 and Conker: Live and Reloaded) I still wasn't totally won back - til one game changed everything, one whose instense gameplay, atmospheric sound, jaw-dropping graphics, and plot which twisted as much as my gut as it unravelled, will stay with me forever – Bioshock.

And with that came MY shock, because the best game I'd played in years was on the console I'd once so hated, and I'd almost denied myself the chance to experience it.

And so now, as "Amazing Grace" swells in the background, I hope you're smiling as my story's moral comes to light – consoles are like family. They can be a pain in the ass but you love them and wouldn't trade them for anything.
Fluffy Bunny

Third time lucky, hey Fluffy Bunny? We're glad you learned to love your Xbox 360 again, although remembering all of those red-ringed problems you had in your previous two letters we can see how your affection could wane.

Now that you two are back together, we hope it lasts forever...

DRAMATIC CHANGE

I have been one of your long-time readers, and have noticed a dramatic change in the content and style of the magazine today to what it was 12 years ago. Quite frankly, it appears as though this magazine has lost touch with its readers

IT'S ON – LIKE...

I've been reading the magazine a long time now... and it's not often I use the word chuffed in a sentence, but I was chuffed when I got this month's Hyper in my hands. High five!

Attached is a Donkey Kong picture I just did, I so suck at that game but I was inspired by "The King of Kong."

Cheers,

Ryan Barlin

We love it – and when we say we love – mean we really love it!

We take it that you were chuffed to see that we printed you're awesome Mario/Megaman/SNES mash-up artwork in issue 170? High five indeed!

That was one of our favourite artworks of the year, although this one may just beat it. Thanks again Ryan, if you feel like sending anything else in, we'd love to see it.

Oh, and speaking of being inspired by The King of Kong...

and has run out of ideas. It is now time for a new direction, with new 'leadership' to take this magazine into the 21st century. Magazines of the 21st century lie in encouraging new readers into the world of gaming. I am concerned that the magazine has been very slow to act on a basis. Mr Wilks has said some things last year and early this year which, to be frank, were pretty complacent. Countless times loyal readers have read about your claims of being unaffiliated with the major vendors. Contrary to the claims, past editor, Eliot Fish reviewed the game Halo 3, giving it an overwhelming score of 93%, when you state in the minus column 'same old Halo'. On numerous occasions your magazine has stated that a game that has developed very little in terms of game play should not achieve a score as great as the predecessor. I find this appalling and misleading to the magazines readers and feel it is time for change and fresh ideas.

Kevin

Fancy someone named Kevin wanting some "new leadership"... now where have I heard that before?

Anyway, on to your argument. For starters, we think you may be under the mistaken assumption that reviews (and previews for that matter) are something other than an opinion.

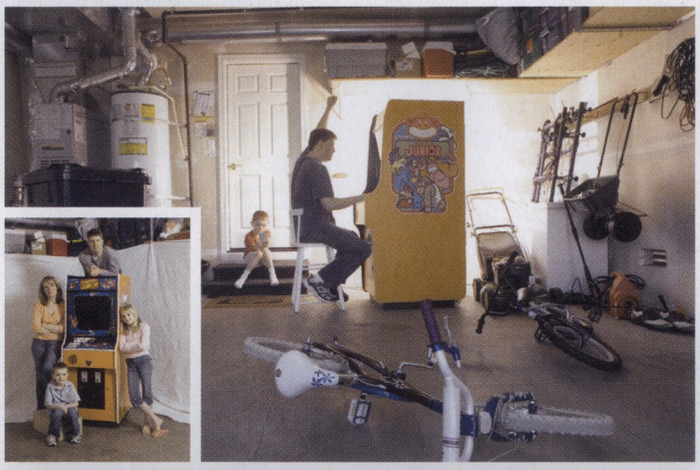
It is true that some members of the Hyper team didn't dig Halo 3 as much as others. If either Wilks or Moe had been presented with the opportunity to review the game, our scores would inevitably been quite different, reflecting our personal opinions that, while it was a solidly entertaining game, it brought practically nothing new to the series.

But we didn't review it, and Eliot Fish did – and he loved it.

Simply put, Eliot Fish is one of the most experienced videogame critics in this country. Not only did he rise up through the ranks of the fair publication you are holding, eventually taking the reigns and leading it through one of it's most fondly remembered eras, he also knows what he's talking about when he reviews a game – and we trust his opinion.

Of course, when you read the text that accompanies the big number, you can see his reasoning on why, in his personal view, the game is worth its score. Reviews are subjective, never forget that – because we never will.

As for the magazine changing with the times – the magazine cannot stay in a state of stasis amid an industry that moves so fast, and even if we could somehow stay exactly the same as we were when we first burst onto the scene fifteen years ago, we would never want to.



King of Kong: A Fist Full of Quarters

Distributor: **Dendy**
Rating: **TBA**
Director: **Seth Gordon**
Cast: **Donkey Kong, Billy Mitchell, Steve Wiebe**

■ Just before going to print this month we got to see an advance screening of what has become our pick for best documentary of the year – King of Kong: A Fistful of Quarters. In the world of competitive gaming, one high score is prized above all others – Donkey Kong. In 1982 Billy Mitchell, a chicken wing sauce magnate and self-proclaimed "world's best videogame player", set the world record of 864,000 a score that would go unbeaten for a quarter of a century. The film follows Steve Wiebe, an underdog who's had his fair share of disappointments, but is a real contender to Billy's title. The rivalry between the likable everyman, Steve, and the overzealous braggart, Billy, makes captivating viewing, and is often hilarious and touching in equal measure. Don't get chumpatized – see it!

INSERT TOPIC

(Run program: Hyper letter)
(Insert greeting)
(Insert compliment to Hyper staff for making such an awesome magazine)
(insert bitching about a relevant and problematic issue that involves video games)
(Insert solution thought up within 2 minutes)
(Insert bemusement as to how problem has yet to be solved despite solution being obvious)
(Insert question asking for an explanation)
(Insert gratitude in advance for response if given)
(Insert farewell)
(System error)
(Reboot)
(Become angry and leave the computer)
(Remember that letter requires signing)

Longfellow

(Insert snide remark about real name)

(Run program: Hyper response)
(Insert greeting)
(Insert congratulations for bizarre cleverness)
(Insert recommendation to see a good psychiatrist)
(Insert farewell)

BAD COP NO DOUGHNUT

Daniel Wilks

The Year We Forgot to Love Games

When I look back over 2007 the first things that spring to mind have not been the fantastic games that have been released this year, of which there have been a staggering number. No, when I look back it's with a metaphorical tear in my eye – metaphorical because I am far too manly to weep like a poor emo child (just thought I'd clarify that) – thinking about the fact that this year seems to be the year that we, as in everyone, especially the games press, forgot that games are, in fact, quite a bit of fun. It's been a year in which nit-picking and whining has overtaken criticism. Where petty attacks took the place of reasoned response.

Now I'm not going to name any specific names, even though that's a bit of a copout and one that many people have heard me rant about in the past. No, instead I just want to look at the general trend. We've had the apparent unplayability of BioShock due to the limited FOV, a bandwagon far too many vendor were happy to jump on, even though most of them were virtually fellating the game moments before. And the companion hating for the fact that it wasn't System Shock 3 even though Irrational (now 2K Boston/Australia) announced from the beginning the game was a FPS. There's Assassin's Creed, a game that has sold brilliantly, being lambasted for not being what people wanted it to be. Hell, the game even ended up on 1UPs list of the top 10 turkeys of the year for, one has to assume, not living up to the hype that they themselves were partially responsible for. Then there's hate for Crysis, a game that has proudly announced you need a bleeding edge machine to run with max visuals being marked down because the reviewer didn't have a good enough machine at home. Or Mass Effect being bashed because it's too wordy for a shooter that is apparently, according to one site, no more an RPG than Devil May Cry. Hell, I can go on for days listing examples.

I think what it comes down to (he writes as he gets to his point at last) is that it seems that in 2007, more-so that I've seen in the past, the games press, in what I can only assume has been some misguided attempt to legitimize our little corner of the journalism industry seem to have forgotten that what we are writing about is fun. It's enjoyable. I won't get into the whole games as art debate – that will have to be the subject of another rant - but not matter what side of the argument you stand on you have to admit that the games press isn't going to be breaking any world-changing stories any time soon. Is that why we seem to have turned on out own subject and attacked it so mercilessly, resorting to nitpicking to dig up some dirt and sound like what we do is anything other than writing about a form of entertainment? Low scores don't mean that you're legitimate do they? I don't know, though I wish I did. I just hope that in the New Year the industry can forget about trying to legitimize itself.

We need to stop worrying that people will view us as "lesser" journalists

Respect will come when the games industry as a whole gains some real respect in the mainstream, not by picking at it until it bleeds. The games press is, like it or not, something of a hype industry. We, by nature, need to be excited about upcoming games. They are not only our lifeblood but our passion. We need to stop worrying that people will view us as "lesser" journalists because of our medium of interest. To be perfectly honest, we are, at least when compared to the journos who go out and investigate cover-ups and scandals, political machinations and government cover-ups. We need to stop worrying about the constant assertions that all of us are in the pockets of PR if we give a game a high score. No matter what we do people are going to assume something if our opinion differs to theirs – hell, there's yet another accusation in the letters section in this very issue. We simply need to face facts. We are critics. We should be proud of the fact that we are critics in the fastest moving, most interesting and downright most progressive forms of entertainment on the planet. I know I am. Legitimacy and respect will come in time.

Press X to win

Michael Bay Wears Tin-Foil Hat

One of the defining videogame-related battles of 2007 was not just between rival consoles but between rival high-definition disc formats. The ongoing stoush between Sony's Blu-Ray and Toshiba/NEC's HD-DVD has escalated from a schoolyard scrap to a multi-million dollar heavyweight title fight, from which only one format will likely come out alive.

Earlier this year the story broke that the HD-DVD consortium had won over two of the world's biggest movie studios, Paramount and Dreamworks Pictures. The two industry juggernauts had previously released their films on Blu-Ray discs, but after some encouragement, and a reported US$150,000,000 sweetener, all of their releases for at least the next 18 months would now appear exclusively on HD-DVD – something that made filmmaker Michael Bay lose his cool.

After discovering that there would be no Blu-Ray release of his over-hyped blockbuster, Transformers, he launched an infuriated attack on Paramount via his personal blog, stating that "Paramount pisses me off!" before exclaiming that if there was no Blu-Ray edition of his film, there would be "no Transformers 2 for me!"

Bay's dissent didn't last long, however. Days later he recanted his statement, attributing his brain-fart to having drank the Blu-Ray kool aid.

This month Michael Bay let loose with another inflammatory forum rant.

"What you don't understand is corporate politics, Microsoft wants both formats to fail so they can be heroes and make the world move to digital downloads. That is the dirty secret no one is talking about. That is why Microsoft is handing out $100 million dollar checks to studios just embrace HD-DVD and not the leading, and superior Blu Ray. They want confusion in the market until they perfect the digital downloads. Time will tell and you will see the truth."

Not only is Bay's Internet outburst factually incorrect but it uncovers a rather bizarre paranoia in regards to Microsoft, and a clear bias against the HD-DVD format as a whole.

For starters it is ridiculous to say that Microsoft has no vested interest in the success of the high-definition disc formats. Not only does Microsoft manufacture their own HD-DVD drive for the Xbox 360, a significant commitment, but the mere fact that they are heavily invested in the videogame console industry means that sooner or later, when the third iteration of the Xbox hardware rolls around, they'll be looking into HD discs as a storage medium for games. Microsoft has even stated that they're not averse to using Blu-Ray if they do indeed come out on top.

> **"Microsoft wants both formats to fail so they can be heroes"**

Secondly, Microsoft isn't the one handing out millions to woo movie studios to HD-DVD. That is the work of the DVD Forum, which includes companies such as Hitachi, Sony (yes, Sony!) and Pioneer, among many others, as well as the HD-DVD Consortium headed by Toshiba. Microsoft may be a media partner of the consortium, but they certainly aren't signing the cheques.

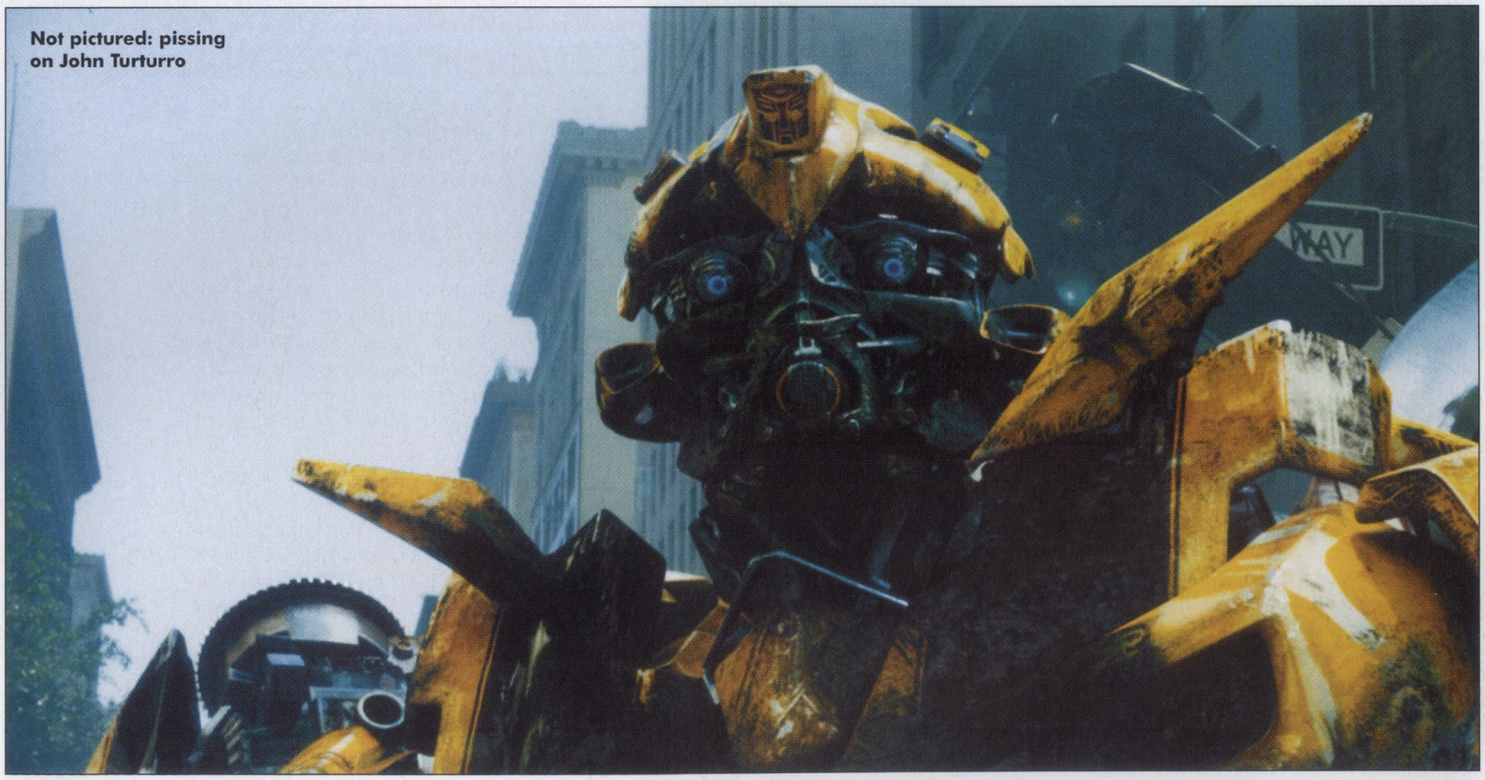
Thirdly, is it really such a blight on Michael Bay's career to have his film released on HD-DVD instead of the "superior" Blu-Ray disc format, and for that matter, is the Blu-Ray format inherently superior anyway?

We can attest that both Blu-Ray and HD-DVD are phenomenally good at what they do, and that is playing high-definition video and sound.

Besides the actual performance of either formats being indiscernibly close, HD-DVD is now a whole lot closer in capacity to Blu-Ray than ever before. This September Toshiba okayed its first batch of triple-layered (51Gb) HD-DVD discs for mass production.

Finally, the world moving exclusively to digital downloads any time soon? Not going to happen. While digital distribution is gaining popularity, today's generation of consumers are still addicted to tangible products, and no amount of secret conspiring will change that for the foreseeable future.

I'm a bit worried about what's going on underneath Michael Bay's tin-foil hat right now, but lets hope he can put his high-def format biases and crackpot conspiracy theories aside long enough to make Transformers 2 better than the first movie.



Not pictured: pissing on John Turturro

Land of the Rising Fun

JONTI DAVIES ON GAMES AND LIFE IN JAPAN.

(top) Virtual On Sega Ages 2500 (above, l to r) Railfan, Monster World and Ouendan 2

2007, eh? What a great year for gamers the world over: Super Mario Galaxy, Phantom Hourglass, Forza 2, Virtua Tennis 3... Wii Fit. (Yes, seriously.) And yet in the eye of this gamestorm, completely unbothered by the whirlwind of big names speeding around them, we find the forgotten gems of 2007 here in Japan – essential imports for the outside world, if your hardware can run them. Everyone loves a list, so let's get listing! Here are my biggest recommendations of titles that will probably never be released outside of Japan, but which made my 2007 a brighter place:

Virtual On Sega Ages 2500 *(Sega, PS2)*
The Sega Ages 2500 series of PS2 remakes and reissues continued to deliver the goods during 2007, with the makeover of Sega's original Virtual On mech battle game standing out as a highlight. It's an upgrade done in fine style, adding online and network play while improving the arcade/Saturn versions' visuals to run in progressive scan at 60fps. This disc is full of Easter Eggs, including unlockable characters, stages and modes, and the control system works perfectly well with the Dual Shock 2's analogue sticks. Oratorio Tangram on the Dreamcast is on a different level, but this is now the definitive home version of the original Virtual On experience.

Railfan: Taiwan High Speed Rail *(Ongakukan, PS3)*
The first Railfan train driving simulation was released in 2006, but 2007's Taiwan High Speed Rail edition shifts emphasis away from local lines and over to the newly operational Taiwanese version of Japan's Shinkansen bullet train. It's a much quicker game as a result, and you get to see a big chunk of Taiwan from the driver's window. It's cheap virtual tourism, really, presented in full 1080p hi-def. And the (literally) on-rails gameplay is still oddly therapeutic.

Monster World Complete Collection *(Sega, PS2)*
Until this collection of Monster World/Wonderboy games was released in April, I must admit that I couldn't have told you exactly which games were released on which platforms, never mind separating the duds from the greats, but Sega's Complete Collection makes everything crystal clear with its chronologically ordered compilation of every game in the series. Quite brilliantly, this collection even enables you to play multiple versions of the same game, flicking between various hardware emulations in an instant. Of everything that's here, though, the arcade rendition of Wonderboy III stands out as a peerless example of side-scrolling platform-shooting goodness, with huge sprites and screen-filling bosses trapped in a vividly colourful world. Pure retro joy.

Moero! Nekketsu Rhythm Damashii: Osu! Tatakae! Ouendan 2 *(iNiS, DS)*
We had to wait a long time for this, but it was worth it. Elite Beat Agents was the perfect Ouendan 1.5, but Ouendan 2 is – not surprisingly – more of a real sequel to the inspired original. It has more of a poppy flavour than the first Ouendan game, so it won't be to all tastes (and there are some moments of ponging cheese, such as Ken Hirai's dreadful 'Popstar' track), but the new competitive edge, with rival cheerleading squads competing throughout the whole game, is an excellent touch. It's just a lot more of the same rhythm-action madness, really, and that's fine by me. Ouendan 3 next year, pur-leeze!

COLLECTIONS

BY ERIN MARCON

Dogs and children are among the most destructive of God's creatures. Don't be deceived by their adorable countenance, these wet-nosed scoundrels regularly trample our gardens, mangle our furniture and damage our precious games. Pandemic Australia's John Passfield discovered this the hard way and has since taken precautions to safeguard his extensive collection. "I store my console games in a custom made TV cabinet," he says.

"We've got child locks on them to stop the kids (they're still toddlers) from pulling them out and feeding them to our dog (which has happened in the past)."

Passfield began collecting games in 1990. "Prior to that I was too poor," he says. Today the Collection has swelled to "a few hundred."

Though he stores his current favourites in the aforementioned cabinet, much of the collection has escaped. "I have a bunch of PSone, Dreamcast and Amiga games in storage in the garage. I also have dozens of Game Boy, GBA and DS games in my home office and some Game & Watch and WonderSwan games at my work office. Hmmm, this is starting to sound like a 'where to find 'em' plan for would-be burglars..."

The Legend of Zelda: The Minish Cap on GBA

"I store my current DS games in my special Nintendo DS case that I got at E3 2006 (the last of the good E3s)."

Asked to select his genre of choice, Passfield identifies a once dominant (though now increasingly rare) subset. "I've always had a love for platform games, which is reflected in the sort of games I enjoy making, starting way back with Halloween Harry. If adventure games had survived I probably would have nominated that genre. Monkey Island, Day of the Tentacle and Sam & Max are among my favourite games."

Passfield has also been an avid follower of Nintendo's marquee fantasy series "I have to say the Zelda series is pretty darn good," he says.

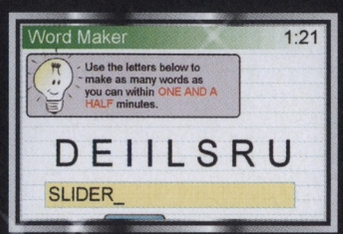
"I recently finished Minish Cap on the GBA and will be playing through Phantom Hourglass on the DS this Christmas."

Passfield readily agrees that his collection has had a significant impact on his development approach. "Monkey Island was a big influence on Flight of the Amazon Queen and Spyro the Dragon was a huge influence on the TY the Tasmanian Tiger series, right down to the way TY glides using his boomerangs."

"Never be afraid to borrow ideas from the best," Passfield says, grinning.

Meet John Passfield

A Creative Director with Pandemic Australia, John Passfield contributed to the Destroy All Humans series before commencing work on a new project for the studio. "I would love to tell you all about it," he says, "but at this stage its super top secret." Prior to joining Pandemic, Passfield co-founded Krome Studios and had a hand in the creation of Ty the Tasmanian Tiger.



Passfield is also a successful independent developer. Visit www.passfieldgames.com to download a free demo of Brainiversity.

Cataloguing the classics

We pluck a random assortment from Passfield's collection, revealing his appetite for family friendly adventures and point-and-click masterworks.

1. Animal Crossing: Wild World
Passfield played Nintendo's 2005 DS life sim "consistently for a whole year," setting it aside only when, "I couldn't upgrade my house any more."

2. Colossal Cave
William Crowther's trailblazing text adventure (initially released in 1976) convinced Passfield that his "destiny was to make games."

3. It Came From the Desert
This 1989 release from Cinemaware paid tribute to sci-fi films of the 50's. Were it not for the heroism of Amiga owners, giant ants would rule the world today.

4. The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening
"Although it was black and white and low-rez, I remember it as if it was in hi-def colour," he says of Nintendo's 1993 Game Boy adventure.

5. Maniac Mansion: Day of the Tentacle
LucasArts' 1993 point-and-click adventure is considered a giant of the genre, but demands for a sequel have fallen on deaf ears.

6. Pengo
SEGA's 1982 arcade outing is a major player in the penguin sub-genre. Other examples include Amazing Penguin and the improbably titled Penguin VS Yeti.

7. Resident Evil
This survival horror from Capcom "scared the bejesus" out of Passfield back in 1996 before spawning four direct sequels, a prequel and numerous spin-offs.

8. Sam & Max Hit the Road
In 1993, two obscure comic characters hit the mainstream thanks to an adventure from masters of the genre, LucasArts.

9. The Secret of Monkey Island
LucasArts' 1990 PC adventure certainly enjoys an ardent following. Passfield's devotion is such that he has a framed promotional poster in his office.

10. Spyro the Dragon
This 1998 PSone title was a surprise hit and the little guy remains popular today. "The original Insomniac games are the only ones worth playing," Passfield says.

The Passion of the Gamer

Winding Back the Clock

By Dylan Burns

Time is cruel. Time is a real bastard. No, I'm not talking about the ubiquitous use of time manipulation in games. I'm more concerned with the fact that as I type this there sits no less than twenty games that I simply have not had enough time with – and they keep on coming!

In my case, it's unfortunate that the full-on release schedule of this year has coincided with some temporary full time work. No, I haven't been headhunted by BioWare (yet), I have instead for the last few months undertaken the single most frightening role in my life: that of a primary school teacher. And yes, I have heard a million "Are you Mr. Burns from the Simpsons?" jokes.

What this period of forced absence from games has taught me is that this year, more than any other, has been absolutely packed. No sooner have you left your nearest gaming store before a new shipment arrives with another awesome, must-have release. Anxiety then builds because you've got multiple titles sitting on your shelf and time itself won't let you get to them all.

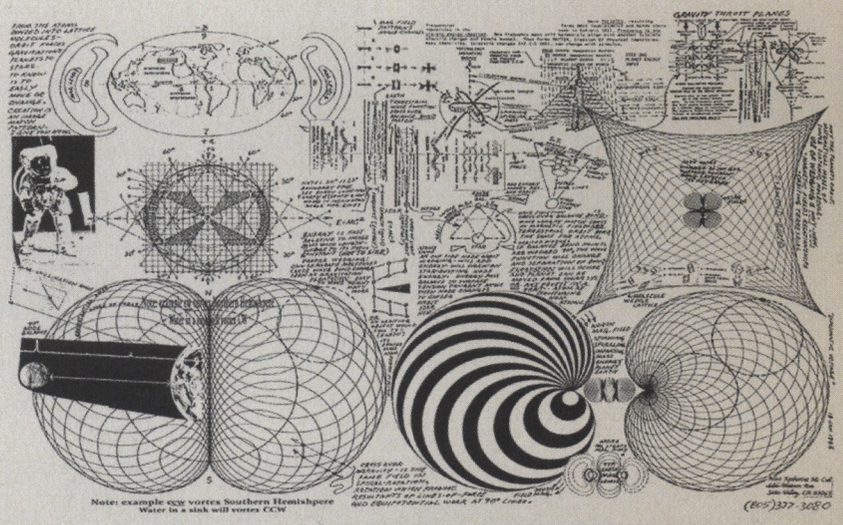


Fig.1 An explanation of gravity and portal technology for the layman

My personal experience has revealed a cruel catch-22: in order to be a professional gamer you need to devote many hours each day to your passion; however in order to be able to play all the games that get released you need to have some kind of income (a fairly good one actually, when you take into account multiple platforms). So you either have all the games and no time, or all the time and no money for games. It really does suck.

Personal misfortune aside, it has been an awesome year for gaming. If you'll permit, I'd like to stroll down memory lane and comment on a few recent stand-out titles...

The Darkness – Ah, the adventures of one Jackie Estacado. How could we not include The Darkness as one of the best games of the year? The multiplayer sucked, but who cares? I was much more interested in the main story of loss, betrayal and revenge. The Darkness was expertly delivered, with a pace that kept you hooked the whole time. Some people say it was short but it took me long enough to get through. And even after writing a game guide and a feature article on The Darkness, I can still sit down and be impressed with it.

BioShock – How fantastic is that moment when you first see Rapture? Or when you freeze a splicer and shatter it with a wrench attack? Or when you lead a Big Daddy through a series of electrical bolts, making it fall dead at your feet? Or when you set an enemy alight, follow that mofo to water and zap their sorry arse? Or when.....hell the whole game rocks! The only disappointment is the awful texture loading times (something that seems to affect all games using the Unreal 3 engine).

The Witcher – At last, here's a game that lets you sleep with women and collect cards. If only that happened in real life: the sleeping with women part. But in all seriousness The Witcher is a fantastic game. Here we have an RPG that does away with fantasy clichés and presents a world full of cynicism and distrust. A world where that dwarven tavern keeper is more likely to challenge you to a fist fight than regale you with fables of his time in the mines of Moria.

Skate – A skating game that actually feels like skating? Shit yes. Move over Tony Hawk, here's a series that actually makes exploration fun, rather than being force-fed some million-point line that can only be done by about 0.3% of the gaming population.

Portal – Mmmm, that's some tasty cake. Not only should Valve definitely include the portal gun in Episode 3, they darn well better write another credits song that is as catchy and hilarious as the one at the end of Portal (no, the crappy 'rap' at the end of COD4 does not even come close to this one).

Mass Effect – I'm only just getting into this massive game, but it's pretty bloody fantastic so far. Perhaps it's the insane amount of possible conversation, the feeling of real exploration, or even the fact that playing the game is like living out one huge Babylon 5 movie – whatever it is, this one's got quality written all over it. There's some epic story going on about entire civilisations being wiped out but I'm more interested in trying my smooth moves on the female crew members... Shepard you rascal!

Crysis – Again, I've only just started to play this one, but I am impressed with the game's design. Sometimes sandbox levels can go horribly wrong, but Crysis seems to be able to direct the player via objectives so that you experience some truly breathtaking moments. My favourite so far has been single-handedly slaughtering an entire village of soldiers through the liberal use of my cloak and maximum strength abilities.

Super Mario Galaxy – Talk about spoilt! Never in my esteemed gaming memory have I experienced such and intense period of quality game releases. Mario Galaxy really does round things off. Yes it's a Wii game, so get over any prejudice you may have against the system because this game can proudly sit beside any of the games listed above and still call itself next-gen. The biggest hurdle that gamers may need to overcome with Mario Galaxy is the fear of falling off. Gravity plays a role here that has seldom been experienced (see fig.1), allowing you to explore planetoids and jump between bodies with confidence. It's certainly better than Sunshine, but will it surpass Super Mario 64 as one of the best Mario games ever? Only time will tell.

So there you have it, a massive year for gaming, one that only sucks if you're like me and don't seem to have enough time to engage with it all. But never fear, where there is a passion there is a way and we passionate gamers can always squeeze in some time for games. We're a bit like crack addicts in that respect.

gameboffin@hotmail.com

Sir Gameboffin's current Gamerscore: 31, 179

DEVELOPMENT HELL

Now, if you made fun of Bioware, I'd sleep with your mother. And your sister. At the exact same time. After pleasuring them, I'd send you a link on youtube to the unholy act and laugh as you wept in horror and, sickly, arousal.

I, on the other hand, am a licensed, card-carrying professional writer and I can make fun of Bioware despite the fact that I love their games more than I love the gift of life itself. However, let's face it, despite the extravagance of their games, whenever they offer an evil story-path, it's a bit, well... it's about as subtle as beating a midget to death with a sack full of hammers. KOTOR was a prime candidate.

'Oh, thank you for rescuing my kitten, strange Jedi who has come to my house with your killer droid, shaved Wookie and freakishly limber Twilek bondage slave-girl. You take on dangerous adventures!'

Then you are given options:

1. Return Kitten, bake widow a pie then give her a foot massage.

2. Return Kitten but don't say 'you're welcome.'

3. Return Kitten but charge her as much as a new model Hatchback.

4. Put genitals in/onto Kitten then chop off widow's fingers for new necklace.

There's not exactly a great deal of actual complex morality in most RPGs. Sure, now again you come across something tricky, toothsome or interesting but generally speaking, you are a Goodie or a Baddie and the consequences of your game play is usually no more than a different end cutscene and some stubble on your character portrait, or your female character starts wearing sexy, yet incredibly uncomfortable looking, underwear.

So, pitching an RPG, I have decided to instead focus not on the complex moral interplay between good and evil.

My game is going to be about complete and utter bastards. The working title is, therefore, Total Bastard.

This has been tried before, of course. The first Legacy of Kain game, those of you who rode dinosaurs to school remember that, starred a bit of an evil c*(^ who did lots of evil things. Hitman tried something similar but really, it was just about whacking motherf*&kers in the goddamned thorax. I never played Evil Genius, though it seemed like an interesting take on it. Played for laughs, though.

Hell with them. I want to play the total badass. I want to play a guy who kills the princess and then goes drinking with the dragon. Before stabbing the dragon to death with a broken bottle while it sleeps. I want to go to the farmhouse where the prince of prophecy works, awaiting his destiny to save the word, and set him on fire. It won't be a comedy.

Because it really seems to me that the villains are who you remember. After all, what thrills you - Luke whining about power converters and Tashi Station or Darth Vader strangling the Bejezuz out of that poor Rebel bugger? Think for a moment about doing an action-RPG where you're controlling the Dark Lord of the Sith. Remember Kyle Katarn from Dark Forces, Shadow of the Empire and all that? They were kickass games with a genuinely great main character. Imagine playing the same game where you used Dark Force powers to just cause devastation. I have high hopes for Force Unleashed. You remember how great the Spiderman games were on PS? Well, what of instead of responding to police scanner reports, you were Venom, or Carnage, and you had to rob banks and eat the ssssssspider's brain!

"I really want to use the awesome destructive powers you are given in a game to BLOW SHIT UP and KILL PEOPLE!"

I really want to use the awesome destructive powers you are given in a game to BLOW SHIT UP and KILL PEOPLE!

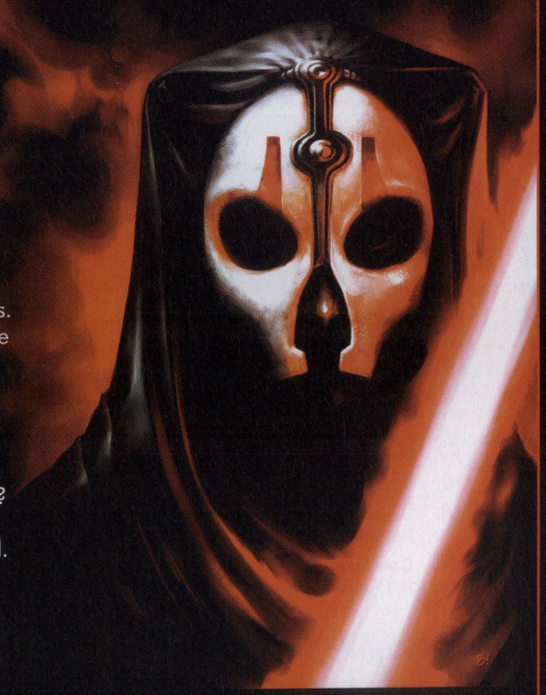
Perhaps we could even get a little bit ambitious. Evil is, after all, something that continues to keep us fascinated. Why do people do bad things? Is it human nature? Or is it the devil?

That's it! THE DEVIL! Why not do a game where you play the biggest mofo of all! How's that for an RPG. The Revolt in Heaven. The Founding of Hell. Civil wars where demon lords band against you. Resource managements built around tormenting sinners. Then again, try and sell that sucker in the Bible Belt... Are you still with me, dear reader?

Have you ever read Elric, by Michael Moorcock? The drug addicted albino lord with the murmuring, evil runesword, sworn to Gods of Chaos, riding dragons to wipe out his own depraved and decadent empire? Where's your damn boomerang now, Link?

I want to be bad. And I want it to feel good. You too really want to play a total bastard.

Next Month – Total Bastard: The Devil meets a nasty snag. A real game designer tells me why everything is doomed.



BY CHRISTIAN READ

THE OFFICIAL AUSTRALIAN GAMES CHART

Compiled by GfK in association with the IEAA

TOP 10 PlayStation 2 Games Over $30

W/E 9th December 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
2	◆	Smackdown V Raw 2008	Fighting
3	▼	Need For Speed Pro Street	Racing
4	◆	Guitar Hero 3 Bundle	Family
5	▲	High School Musical Bundle	Family
6	▲	Singstar Rnb (S/W)	Family
7	▲	Singstar Pop Hits Bundle	Family
8	▼	Crash Of The Titans	Action
9	▲	Buzz Hollywood Quiz (S/W)	Family
10	▼	High School Musical (S/W)	Family

TOP 10 Nintendo DS Games Over $30

W/E 9th December 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
2	▼	More Brain Training	Family
3	▲	Brain Training	Family
4	✪	Mario Party	Family
5	▲	High School Muscial	Family
6	◆	Pokémon Diamond	Role-Playing
7	◆	Cooking Mama	Family
8	▼	Drawn To Life	Adventure
9	✪	Zoo Tycoon	Strategy
10	▼	Big Brain Academy	Family

TOP 10 Nintendo Wii Games Over $50

W/E 9th December 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Super Mario Galaxy	Action
2	◆	Mario & Sonic At Olympics	Sports
3	◆	Big Brain Academy Value	Family
4	◆	Mario Party 8	Family
5	▲	Guitar Hero 3 Bundle	Family
6	◆	Pokémon Battle Revolution	Role-Playing
7	▼	Metroid Prime 3: Corruption	Shooter
8	▼	High School Musical	Family
9	◆	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
10	▲	Boogie	Family

TOP 10 Playstation 3 Games Over $60

W/E 9th December 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Need For Speed Pro Street	Racing
2	▼	Assasins Creed	Action
3	✪	Uncharted Drakes Fortune	Adventure
4	▼	Call Of Duty 4: Modern	Shooter
5	✪	Singstar Bundle	Family
6	✪	Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	Shooter
7	◆	Guitar Hero 3 Bundle	Family
8	▼	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
9	▼	Ratchet & Clank: Tools	Action
10	▼	Smackdown V Raw 2008	Fighting

TOP 10 PC Games Over $20

W/E 9th December 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Call Of Duty 4: Modern	Shooter
2	◆	Crysis	Shooter
3	◆	The Sims 2 Teen Style Stuff	Strategy
4	▲	Unreal Tournament III	Shooter
5	▼	The Sims 2: Bon Voyage	Strategy
6	▲	World Of Warcraft	Role-Playing
7	◆	WOW Burning Crusade	Role-Playing
8	▲	The Sims 2: Seasons	Strategy
9	▲	Half Life 2: Orange Box	Shooter
10	▼	The Sims 2: Pets	Strategy

TOP 10 Xbox 360 Games Over $50

W/E 9th December 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	▲	Call Of Duty 4: Modern	Shooter
2	▼	Assasins Creed	Action
3	▲	Halo 3	Shooter
4	▼	Need For Speed Pro Street	Racing
5	◆	Guitar Hero 3 Rock Bundle	Family
6	◆	Mass Effect	Role-Playing
7	▲	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
8	✪	Kane & Lynch: Dead Men	Shooter
9	▼	Smackdown V Raw 2008	Fighting
10	▼	Fifa 2008	Sports Games

TOP 10 All Format Games Over $50

W/E 9th December 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	Super Mario Galaxy	Nintendo Wii
2	▲	Mario & Sonic At Olympics	Nintendo Wii
3	▲	The Simpsons Game	PlayStation 2
4	▲	The Simpsons Game	Nintendo DS
5	▲	More Brain Training	Nintendo DS
6	▼	Smackdown V Raw 2008	PlayStation 2
7	▼	Need For Speed Pro Street	PlayStation 2
8	▲	Brain Training	Nintendo DS
9	▲	Call Of Duty 4: Modern	Xbox 360
10	▼	Guitar Hero 3 Bundle	PlayStation 2

TOP 10 PlayStation Portable Games Over $40

W/E 9th December 2007 RETAIL SALES

1	◆	The Simpsons Game	Adventure
2	◆	Smackdown V Raw 2008	Fighting
3	◆	Crash Of The Titans	Action
4	◆	Fifa 2008	Sports
5	◆	Ricky Ponting 2007:Pressure	Sports
6	◆	SW Battlefront Renegade	Shooter
7	◆	Ratchet & Clank Size	Action
8	▲	Transformers	Action
9	▼	Thrillville: Off The Rails	Strategy
10	▼	The Sims 2 Castaway	Strategy

✪ New Entry
◆ Non Mover
▲ Up from last week
▼ Down from last week

GfK

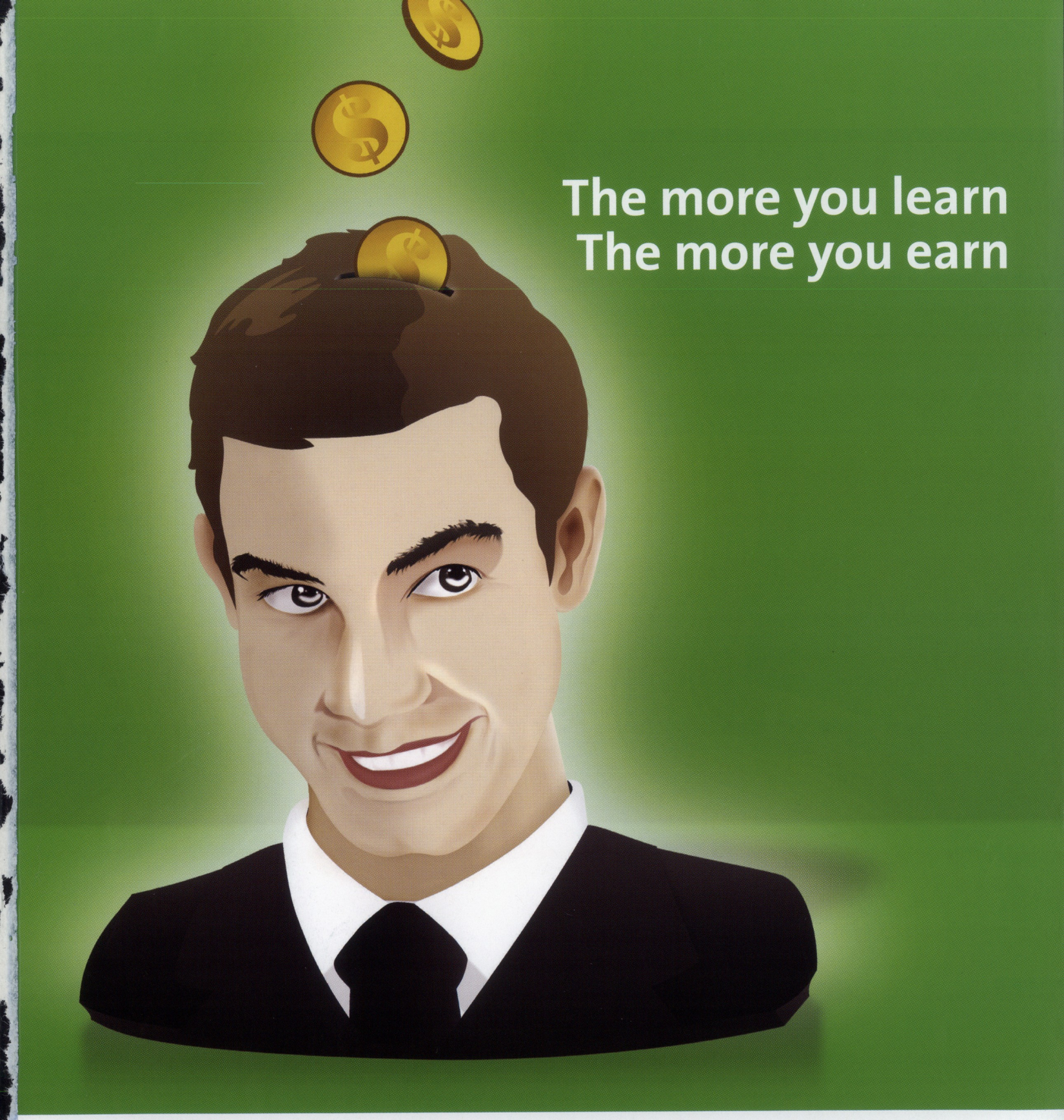
GfK's comprehensive database of online market intelligence, updated weekly

GfK tracks the weekly sales of business and leisure technology products, and provides detailed reports to subscribers and retail panel members. For subscription or panel membership details phone 02 9900 2888. Copyright © 2005 by GfK. All rights reserved.

NEXT ISSUE: THE GAMES OF 2008!

The biggest games of the coming year previewed!

HYPER 173 ON SALE FEBRUARY 6



It's a fact – the more you know the more attractive you are to an employer. Increase your marketability and potential earnings by ensuring your skills and qualifications are up to date.

SEEK Learning offers a wide variety of high quality and cost-effective courses from trusted providers that will give you the skills and knowledge to take the next step in your career.

If game creation and authoring is up your alley, then why not check out SEEK Learning's newest offering of a Diploma or Degree in Digital Animation. Alternatively, our IT Certification programs provide a simple and practical way in which to upgrade your skills across a range of vendors including Oracle, Microsoft, Linux and Sun Microsystems – all with a money-back certification guarantee.

To find out more about how SEEK Learning can increase your knowledge, and your earnings, go to www.seeklearning.com.au

seeklearning.com.au

In the cutthroat world of Donkey Kong, only one man can rule.

The KING of KONG
A FISTFUL of QUARTERS

"You will LOVE this movie"
Peter Hammond, Maxim

"Roaringly funny"
Peter Travers, Rolling Stone

www.billyvssteve.com

ONLY AT THE MOVIES FEB 08

PG Mild coarse language

GAMESPOT AU
www.gamespot.com.au

DENDY FILMS