

202P

MAGAZINE

VOLUME 3 - JUNE 2006

THE HISTORY OF GAMING

A LOOK INTO OUR PAST

FROM GAMERS THAT WITNESSED INNOVATION AND EVOLUTION

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WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE NAME 'WII'?
AND MORE...

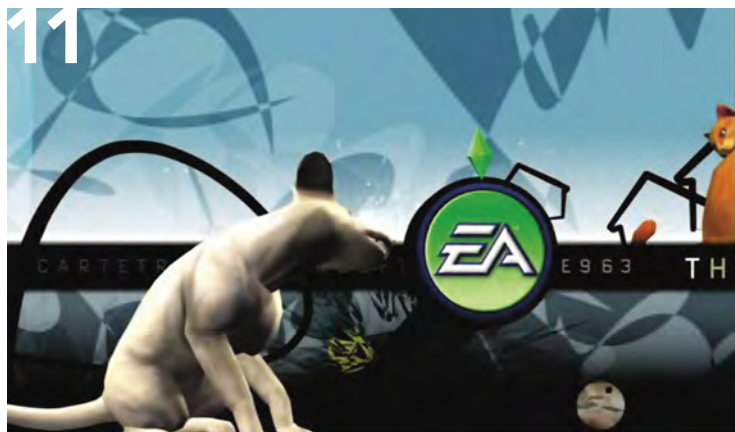


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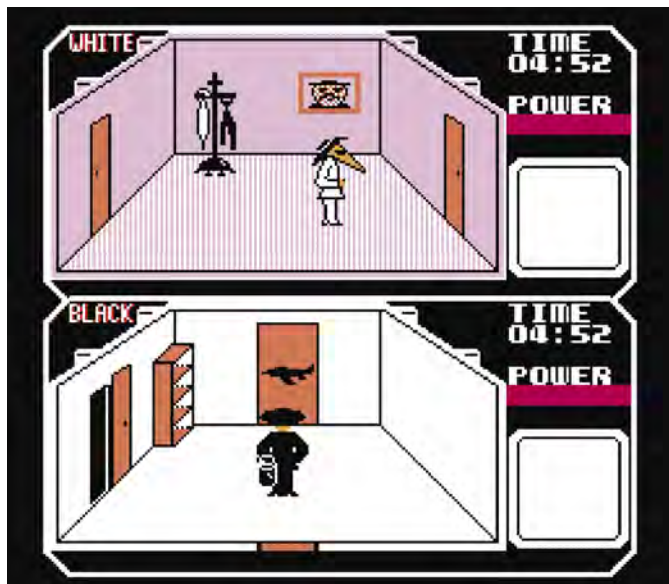
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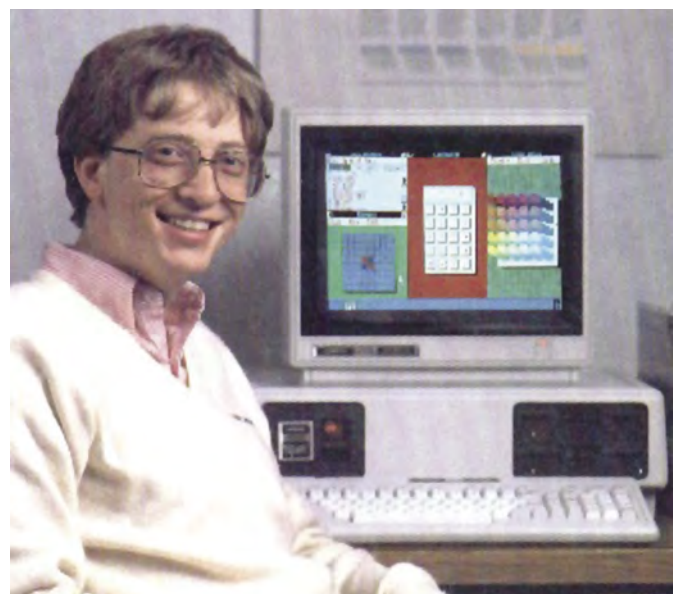
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PHOTO OF THE MONTH



In 1985, Bill Gates told of his newest software product, MS-Windows, which was "an integrated windowing environment." Twenty-one years later he has become one of the worlds largest billionaires.

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LIFE WITHOUT VIDEO GAMES

...would be a dry life indeed

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GameSide.org for submitting content for the magazine and keeping people informed.

Jeff Tunnell and GarageGames (www.garage-games.com) for giving us some insight into the industry and taking the time to answer some of our questions. We will continue to watch for new GarageGames to hit the market.

Wikipedia.org for providing some facts and figures for information. It is nice to find a group of great people that are driving to collect all the facts of the world.

A gamer is a special individual. A gamer is best described as a person that puts fun as their number one priority. An old gamer is a person that puts fun as their second priority following after family.

The best part of being a gamer is being hooked into technology and watching the future unfolding before your eyes. A select few of us are in the computer industry as quality assurance testers, programmers, IT infrastructure, consulting, tech support, and many other computer related fields. However, there are many other non-technical gamers in the world that get to touch new high performances systems and realize the power and graphic capabilities of today's modern equipment. It's a blessing in disguise.

Looking back at the dawn of console and computer gaming we can see just how far we have progressed in technology. Once upon a time we had to use cartridge based console gaming and our PC games required actual "floppy" disks and tape devices. Graphics were something you either could say you had, or did not have. A console generation was progressed by increasing your bit count from 8 to 16 to 32 and so on. Today's consoles have lots of bits. There are so many bits that nobody really cares because a system is defined by its games, its graphics, and its feature set.

This issue is dedicated to the foundation of gaming. The past thirty years have been a wild ride for gamers and for technology in general. In this issue I've taken the time to build a four-page timeline of historical events starting in 1940 and progressing to 2006. I used 1940 as the starting date because that was when Standard Games was founded, later to be known as Sega. I understand that Nintendo was founded first, in 1889 creating Japanese playing cards. However, Nintendo is still building consoles and making a name for itself where Sega's consoles are something of the past and I wanted to pay homage to them as the start of my timeline.

The timeline I've design hits upon a few of the milestones in gaming history. The purpose is to put in perspective just how much we have progressed through the years and to visually show you the huge roller coaster ride starting in the 1970s and pushing through the late 80s and 90s. The sheer number of advancements became too hard to document in detail. My timeline would have gone several more pages just to touch on half the innovation. So hopefully you will enjoy it because I spent many hours researching and working on the layout (yes, this is my first full fledged personal design using designers tools).

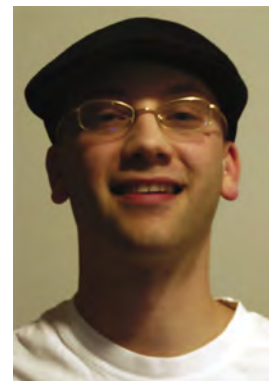
I received many comments from my writers this month stating how they could have written a full magazine on one technology itself. That would make for a great education but a fairly extensive (boring?) manuscript. So consider what you read as simply a glance into the life of some of our older gamers. I learned something reading through some of the text and I hope all the readers take something away that they did not know before.

Lastly, I wanted to express my thanks to *Sha*, one of our 2old2play members. He has taken it upon himself to search out interviews and contacts within the industry. Coming issues will feature Interviews with console modders/repair centers, perhaps something from Activision on Call of Duty, Rockstar might consider taking some time to talk with us, Red vs. Blue, as well as the developers of UNO. I want to extend my thanks to him and his efforts in working these relationships. I've contacted several of his findings and I am currently working interviews with them for the site and magazine.

Thanks,

Derrick Schommer (CodeMonkey)

editor@2old2play.com



G33K SP34K

Helping You Speak Like a Complete Dork

RJ45:

Registered Jack 45 is an interface standardized by United States Code of Federal Regulations. This is a fancy name for that network cable that looks like a phone line, but is used for connecting your PC to your cable/DSL modem or network device. The phone line connection is known as an RJ11.

RS-232:

Or RS232, or RS/232, is a standard for serial binary data interconnection between communication equipment. On a PC this is usually called the "serial port" and is the connection point for older mice, modems, and other equipment that needed to connect for communications before RJ45 networking was common.

LED:

Light-Emitting Diode is a semiconductor device that emits incoherent narrow-spectrum light when electrically biased in the forward direction. That's big words for really bright lights that blink quickly and work well for old school games, emergency vehicles, and status indicators. They are strong, durable, insensitive to vibration, last twice as long as fluorescent lights, and simply look cool.

Shaders:

A computer program used in 3D computer graphics to determine the final surface properties of an object or image. Often used for reflection, refraction, shadowing, surface displacement, and post-processing effects. Real-time shading (not rendered before hand) are the "in thing" in graphics cards today, and most contain small programming languages to design your own unique shaders for gaming. A well known shader, seen in *The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker*, is known as a cel-shader. This makes the game look like a cartoon. Some software shaders, for old video cards, can slow down the performance of a game drastically so having an up-to-date video card with shader support is helpful when taking advantage of all the neat effects of today's games.

MOOR:

Massively Open Online Racing. A concept introduced by *Test Drive Unlimited* which defines a massive multiplayer racing environment similar to an MMORPG but for racing games.

Assembler:

Assembly language, commonly called assembly, asm, or symbolic machine code, is a human-readable notation for the machine language that specific computer architectures use. This is a fairly low level language that was once used for game development (and software development). Many higher level languages like C, C++, and even Java make life easier for today's programmers but Assembler is not lost. It may be a lost art that programmers learn as a foundation, but many assembly programmers still exist to solve life's big problems and optimize software implementations.

ASCII:

American Standard Code for Information Interchange, or ASCII, is a character encoding based on the English alphabet. As you can imagine many Asian cultures are not so fond of our ASCII implementation. Old-time gaming was highly based on ASCII for both text interfaces and artwork. Today most developers used internationalized standards (known as Unicode) for game design. This assists in publishing games outside the United States a viable option, especially to Japan with its two popular game consoles developed by Sony and Nintendo.

TEH:

This originated as a corruption of "the," and often pops up spontaneously when typing fast. It has become so common place it occurs in many forums as a method to emphasize how much something is good or bad. For example, "Wow, that is teh sux" or "That's teh roxzors." Thanks to inventions like *Microsoft Word* the misspelling is automatically corrected as you type, however this does not help to train you out of the inaccurate typing.

ASL:

Age/Sex/Location. Used in chat forums to figure out some basic information about a person before interacting with them (or after you become interested in what they have to say). Unfortunately a remote user may say "asl?" to you before deciding if they want to hit on you and attempt to have "cyber sex" with your keyboard.

C|N>K:

"coffee through nose into keyboard" (a Unix-ism involving the command line pipe and redirect characters).

CTF:

Capture the flag, a scenario in many first person shooter games. The concept of CTF even exists in some RPG games such as *Guild Wars* and *World of Warcraft*.

Ding:

Term from MMORPG Everquest, where the game would make a "ding"-like sound each time you gained a character-level. Generically, the term "ding" can be used as a word for leveling up in most RPG's.

References:

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

WHY ATARI IS #1.

The most games, the best games are only from Atari. Atari makes more video game cartridges than anyone else. Adventure games, arcade games, educational games, our new RoadSports™ games. And they only work in the ATARI 2600 Video Computer System™.

No other system gives you nearly as much choice. Or nearly as much fun.

Atari brings the arcade classics home. Only Atari has home versions of Space Invaders, Pac-Man™, Missile Command™, Asteroids™, Frostbite™, Defender and Berzerk!! The greatest arcade hits of all time.

If you have an ATARI system, you can play them at home.

If you have some other system, you can't.

You don't need two people to play ball with an ATARI 2600. All the best ATARI games can be enjoyed by a single player.

Including our new RoadSports games. To play an other system's sports games, you need another person.

Simple, straightforward controllers. With action system controllers, learning a new game is about as much fun as learning to type.

That's why Atari gives you way-to-use joysticks and paddles.

Because it's the games you're out to master, not the controllers.

All for about \$100 less. For the price of other game-playing systems, you can try an ATARI 2600 and still have about \$100 left over.

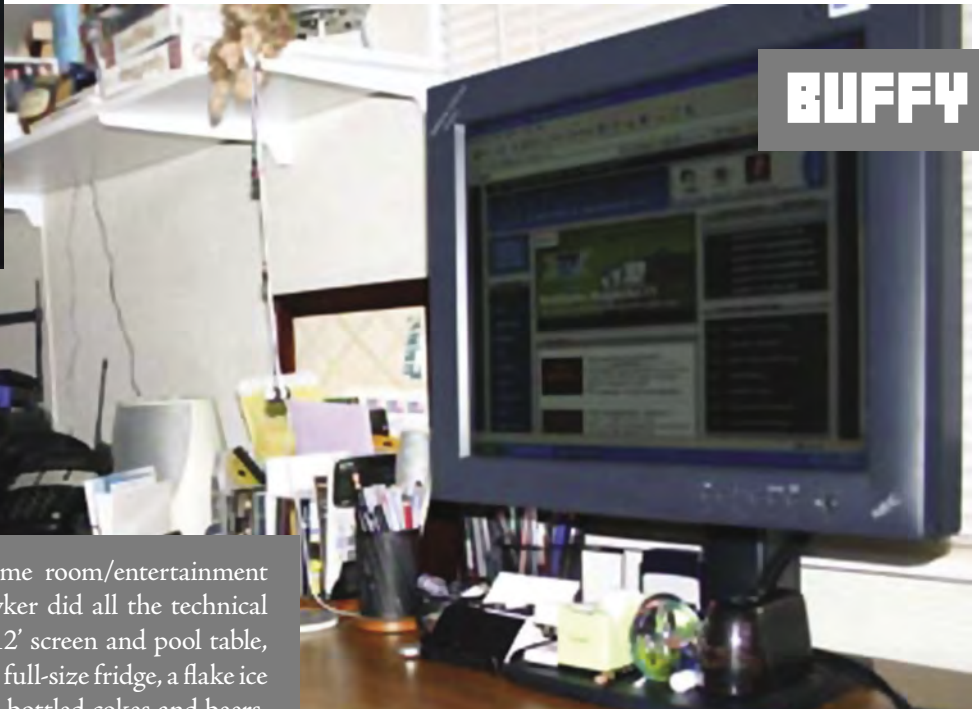
Enough to start your ATARI video game library with hits like Pac-Man, Asteroids, and Defender.

Which, by the way, you can't play on other systems at any price.

ATARI

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GAMING ROOMS AND RIGS



BUFFY



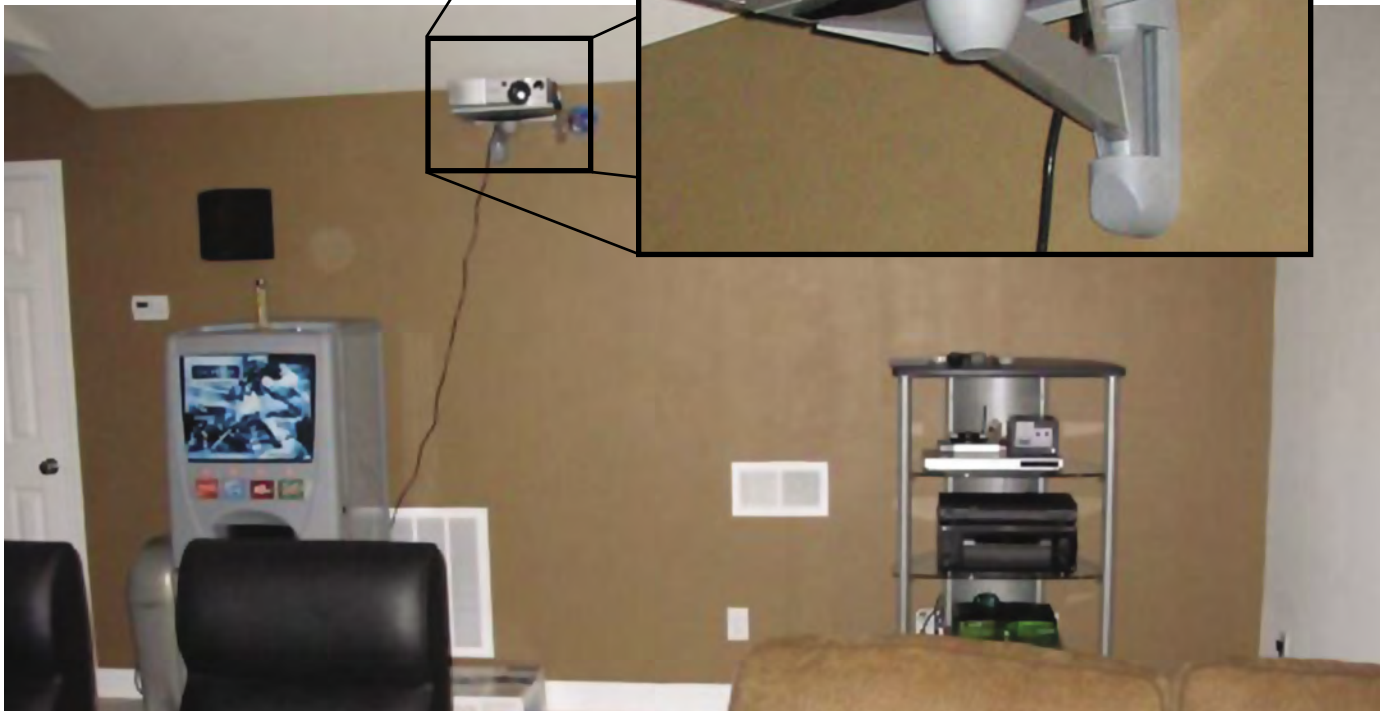
We converted our garage into a game room/entertainment room. I did the decorating, and Stryker did all the technical stuff. Along with the projector, 8' x 12' screen and pool table, our game room has a fully stocked bar, full-size fridge, a flake ice machine, a vintage coke machine with bottled cokes and beers, and a full-size Galaga/Ms. Pac Man arcade game. Stryker also hooked up another computer with a 15" flat-screen LCD monitor that can also be displayed on the big screen.

Buffy



MOTHERGOAT

80" widescreen HD
Halo for me.
Mothergoat



+ Sony ES 5.1 receiver + HD DirecTV TiVo + Upconverting DVD + Xbox (yeah, yeah, no 360 yet) + GameCube + Panasonic AE700 HD 720p-native projector + 112" homemade screen + Theater recliners + Reclining theater loveseat + Infinity towers, center channel + Fluance dipole surround speakers + DCM 15" powered subwoofer + Pub table & 4 chairs + Maytag Skybox drink vendor

WallyBR, Cornelius, NC

2OLD2TYPE

Audio Stimulation for gamers over 25



Episode 25

Covers the reactions from E3. The *2old2type* group made the long drive to the show from Chicago, and then back again. They were able to get a few exclusive video feeds that were posted on the site and were able to touch some of the reality that will hit the market in the next six months to a year.

The crew explains all the information they learned, what new games they were able to play, and how they feel about the press coverage and news about Sony's PlayStation 3, and the Nintendo Wii. You may also find out just how many audio books you can finish on a commute to California from Chicago.

What is this podcast you speak of?! For those of you new to the world of Podcasting or currently own an *ipod* but have never subscribed to a podcast you are missing a good deal of great information. A Podcast is a radio show, similar to what you would hear on the radio station in your home town, but typically more focused towards something you actually want to hear. Many podcasts contain zero commercials and can offer hours of entertainment.

Like a radio show on your way to work, you will learn the personalities of the show and begin to relate to their perspective (or argue against it). Podcasts such as *2old2type* focus on the genre of game entertainment, but you can find podcasts that cover all topics in all languages. It's simply amazing, and one of the best features of the Apple *ipod*.

You can obtain the *2old2type* podcasts on www.2old2play.com for free by clicking on the episodes directly on the homepage, or through iTunes. If you're new to podcasts, you can download episode 1 through episode 25 from iTunes and start filling up your iPod's disk capacity (episodes usually run about 50-60 minutes).

If you would like to ask the team a question about gaming you can leave them a message at (733) 527-2961.

The 2old2type podcasts consists of three personalities:

Doodirock: The man with the master plan to bring news and information to the twenty-five and older populous. His opinions can sometimes be extreme but his questions are on target with what a gamer is thinking.

Ebola2: A man with gaming views and opinions that align well with the typical gamer. He brings reality back after Doodi and Bliznot fall victim to off topics.

Bliznot: Often sarcastic attitude towards gaming and life in general (and anything doodirock says). Bliznot is there to break the seriousness with some off the wall topic of conversation that may make you say "wtf?" and spit your cola all over the keyboard.

TO BEAT OUR NEW HOME VIDEO GAME, YOU'VE GOT TO MOVE YOUR BUNS.



If you've been waiting for the home version of one of America's hottest arcade games, your order is ready. Introducing **BurgerTime™** from Mattel Electronics. For your Intellivision®, Atari® 2600, Apple® II,™ Aquarius™** or IBM® Personal Computer.



Shown on Intellivision. Game varies by system.

Your job is to climb up the ladders and assemble an order of giant hamburgers. But you've got to do it fast because you're being chased by killer hot dogs, sour pickles and a very nasty fried egg.

Good thing you've got your pepper shaker. One shake and they're stunned. But just make sure you don't run out of pepper. Because you know what happens then.

You stop making lunch. And you start becoming it.

BurgerTime™
FROM MATTEL ELECTRONICS®

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TANK REPORTS

All the latest news from the Front Lines

NEW XBOX360 SKU FOR THE HOLIDAY

In an effort to undercut Sony and its PlayStation 3 (PS3) launch, Microsoft will release an Xbox 360 with HD-DVD drive bundle for Christmas that will be priced less than the PS3. For those who already have a 360, the HD-DVD drive will be available on its own. The price is yet to be announced but industry experts say between \$150 and \$200. I'm speculating that we may see a price drop on the 360 for the holidays, as well. The holiday 360s should have the new cheaper/cooler processors, which will cut manufacturing costs. It would also further differentiate 360 from the PS3, possibly stealing some of Sony's holiday sales.



<http://www.pcw.co.uk/personal-computer-world/news/2156368/microsoft-definition-xbox-360>

XBOX 360 COULD GET A THIRD DVD DRIVE CHANGE

Lite-On has taken over for BenQ, which was providing Microsoft with the 360 DVD. Chances are we'll see a third DVD drive in 360s for the holidays. This may time well with the new cooler running processors, which are also to make an appearance in 360s by the holidays.

<http://www.digitimes.com/systems/a20060517PR216.html>

FOUR NEW FIRST-PARTY XBOX ACCESSORIES FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Microsoft officially announced three new accessories: the Xbox Live Vision Camera, Racing Wheel and a wireless headset. Details are still light but here's what I know:

The camera will be USB and is built for video conferencing, video emails and gamer picture customization. There are a host of developers – especially for Arcade – interested in using it. Poker and Uno have already announced support. The camera will also be able to track your movements. There are rumors of Halo 3 building in camera support. The camera will work with WindowsXP/Vista as well, but doesn't have a built-in microphone. Rumored price: \$40

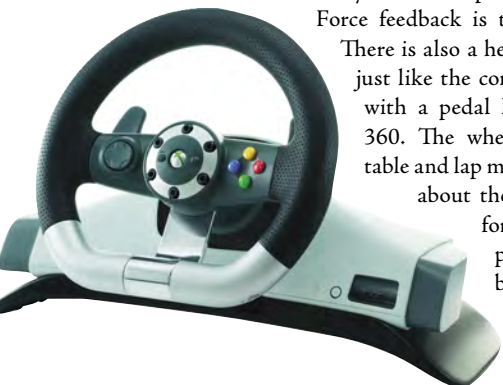


The racing wheel is a combination of wireless and wired. It will take two AA batteries or one Microsoft battery pack. Running on batteries, the wheel will work wirelessly with rumble. To get the force feedback feature, you need to plug in the power adapter.

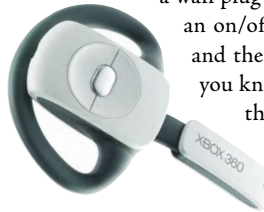
Force feedback is too tough on batteries.

There is also a headset jack on the wheel just like the controllers. It also comes with a pedal kit that plugs into the 360. The wheel accommodates both table and lap mounting. One downside about the force feedback is that

force feedback code support has to be supported by the game. The rumble feature will still work as normal. Rumored price: \$130



We know very little about the wireless headset. It looks similar to a wireless headset for your mobile phone. It has an internal battery with a wall plug adapter (it doesn't charge from USB). There's an on/off/mute button and a volume up/volume down and there will be some type of audio feedback letting you know you're muting. There is no wireless dongle; the headset 'talks' directly to your 360, no extra receivers/dongles required. The headset uses 360 wireless technologies just like the gamepad and the range should be comparable. Rumored price: \$60



Microsoft is also bringing out a 256MB memory cart, which is a 4x increase in storage capacity. This is most likely to help out CORE owners who haven't purchased a hard drive. There is no word on pricing, except that it won't be 4x the cost of the 64MB carts.

There's also a fifth accessory that's for PC's. It's a wireless receiver that allows you to use your Xbox 360 controller and accessories on your WinXP/Vista computer. Rumored price: \$20.

<http://www.engadget.com/2006/05/09/xbox-live-vision-camera-racing-wheel-wireless-headset-coming-t/>

XBOX 360 TO GET TRUE DIGITAL OUTPUT

This should quiet Sony's chest thumping about the 360 not being 'true' HD because it only has analog HD output. The online vendor Lik-Sang has added a first-party HDMI output cable to their catalog. Not many details are available yet, but it would seem the 360 probably has digital output capability built-in. Back at the 360 launch, Microsoft had said a digital cable would be released "when the time is right," which would probably be with the release of the HD-DVD drive. So far no word on a DVI-D cable for those of you with an older HDTV.



http://www.lik-sang.com/info.php?category=319&products_id=8540&

GRAND THEFT AUTO 4

Though GTA is no stranger to the Xbox console, we've typically been the games a year or more later than PlayStation and PC owners. That's all changed with GTA 4. It's not secret that GTA 3 sold PlayStation 2 (PS2) consoles.

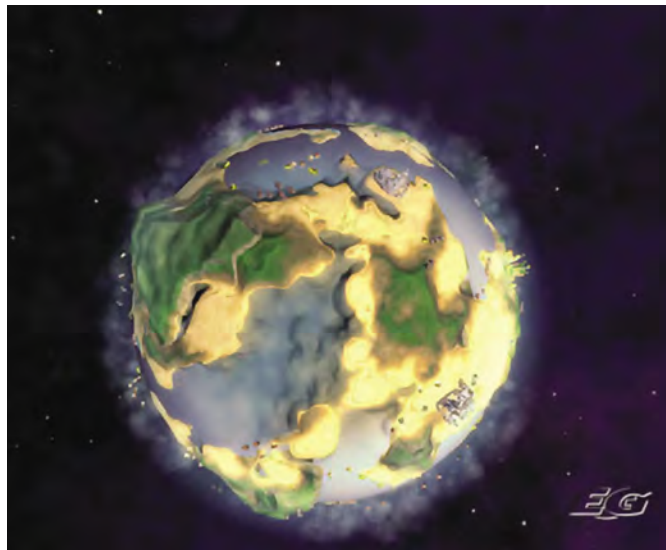
Peter Moore negotiated hard with Rockstar to neutralize that. In October 2006, GTA 4 will be released for next-generation consoles and PC. Rockstar will also be producing exclusive episodic content for the 360 including new maps, levels, vehicles and more all downloadable via Marketplace. You can read Peter Moore's interview here:

http://www.xboxcircle.com/news/peter_moore_e3_xbox_360_interview.html



SPORE IS EVOLVING ON 360

Spore is a new game from the man behind The Sims, Will Wright. The game simulates the history and future of life. The player guides species through evolutionary generations, growing them from single cells to animals. Once they become smart, the player molds society and civilization. They plan on bringing it to cell phones, too, so this game could potentially take full advantage of Live Anywhere.



http://xbox360news.com/Blogs/News/hqs/blr_4361.aspx

HAZE

This is a brand new FPS from Free Radical (*TimeSplitters*) and Ubisoft. The E3 demo showed a lush green forest map with futuristic-looking fun and limited ammo, similar to *Brothers in Arms*. It appeared you could switch your weapon from hand to hand and can blind shoot around corners. The game is still early in development and scheduled for a 2007 launch (probably Q3 or Q4). You can check out the E3 trailer here:

<http://xboxmovies.teamxbox.com/xbox-360/3202/HAZE-E3-2006-Trailer/>



RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS

RS: Vegas looks incredible. The graphics have been taken to the next level from *G.R.A.W.* With *RS: Vegas*, UBI is going back to the basics of what made the game a hit, focusing on tactics and realism. Every situation will have multiple angles of attack to consider, such as window entries and simultaneous multi-angle room entries. The AI for both terrorists and teammates has been stepped up. Your teammates have their own strengths and will recommend solutions based on those attributes.

RS: Vegas is making a return to being a 'thinking man's shooter'. Not only will you have multiple paths but you'll have the tools to evaluate your options. You'll have a small fiber optic camera to inspect a room prior to entering. With the camera you can also prioritize which terrorists to take out in what order. You'll also be able to repel so you can go in through the windows if you want. You can control your squad remotely so they can go in door #1 and you can go in door #2. Multiplayer will include both coop and adversarial modes.



You can read the developer interview here:

<http://interviews.teamxbox.com/xbox/1548/Tom-Clancys-Rainbow-Six-Vegas-Interview/p1/>

You can watch a 'First 10 minutes' video (which I highly recommend) here:

http://media.xbox360.ign.com/media/815/815419/vids_1.html

THE SIMS 2 PETS

The upcoming expansion to *The Sims 2*

By eddie9139

EA Games is working on another expansion pack for *The Sims 2*, no surprise. The most wanted, most anticipated (and most needed for some) expansion pack for *The Sims 2* is a PETS expansion pack, one which adds pets and animals to the game.

The *Unleashed* expansion pack saw pets come to the *The Sims 1*, and was undoubtedly the most popular expansion pack among fans. *The Sims 2* community has wanted pets in the game since the game was released without pets in late 2004. Numerous petitions later, and thousands of forums posts ranting about wanting (or needing) pets, EA Games has listened to the community. E3 (Electronic Entertainment Expo) was the unveiling of the new expansion pack for *The Sims 2*. The very short clip shows several

new aspects of the expansion pack, which are sure to be popular with the community, including the traditional cats and dogs.

It has been titled in the clip as '*The Sims 2 PETS*', although this title could change as the expansion pack progresses.

References:

http://thesims.ea.com/index_flash.php

<http://www.ea.com/>



CALL OF DUTY 2

Life after the Patch

By Angelito

So what makes *Call of Duty 2* (CoD2) stand out among other shooters? This game has the graphics, the realism, and without a doubt the best artificial intelligence (AI) in any FPS game today. Get yourself a Surround Sound system and you will feel like a true veteran of war. There are thousands of reviews that you can read on *Call of Duty 2*. Let's talk more about the patch.



Call of Duty 2, even as a new generation game, is going on its second life. Life before the patch: The best FPS campaign EVER. If you cannot beat it on Veteran then you are not a hardcore FPS gamer. Online play, however, sucked. CoD2 online was plagued by excessive lag, failures to connect to remotely hosted games, no private games (at least not officially), and no map preferences. The list can go on and on. Do a search on the Internet and you will find thousands of petitions asking Activision and Infinity Ward to correct the endless list of complaints about the online aspects of this game. With all those problems and a perceived laid back attitude from Infinity Ward and Activision, the Gamer Community had no choice but to explore other possible solutions.

While exploring other workarounds, someone discovered a "glitch" that allowed players to host games with up to 16 players online in the same game session. Even though it offered little control over the game variables it provided endless hours of fun. There were also "other" methods combined with the "glitch" that helped provide almost all the options gamers wanted: game type choices and up to 16 players per hosted game. It was happy times again. The official patch arrived and solved all the gamer's wishes.

What changed? The known "glitch" no longer works nor is it required. Everyone can host private games. Players can control game types, map selections, kill counts, time limits, reflected damage (my favorite), and more. The patch also provides customization over many aspects of the game that previously were not available.

Most players would say the patch fixed the lag issues. Some gamers feel the lag fix added a frame rate drop, but overall everyone seems happy with the lack of lag.

Players are able to customize a game and it is much more fun.. Unfortunately, the patch did not solve all of the complaints. Most people complain about weapon choices, vehicles, and new map requests.. No one will ever be happy.

The patch did ruin one major aspect of the game. We lost the great sixteen player matches. You could only host sixteen players if you had a good connection. The loss of sixteen player matches, for me, was the only disappointing thing about the patch. Other people were disappointed with lack of weapon selection restriction, but I don't give a crap if you are trying to host a game where people should only use pistols and they do not; stop the game and boot them out..



I don't see why Infinity Ward did not give the choice of up to twenty four player private games. Yes twenty four Players in a game. Let people complain if they lag because they were given the option to set fewer players.

Infinity Ward do you want to make this game the best FPS on the market for the Xbox 360? Then give us the option of twenty four players in private games, if not also vehicles and more maps. I will help you with the code. I am not a professional programmer but I will try:

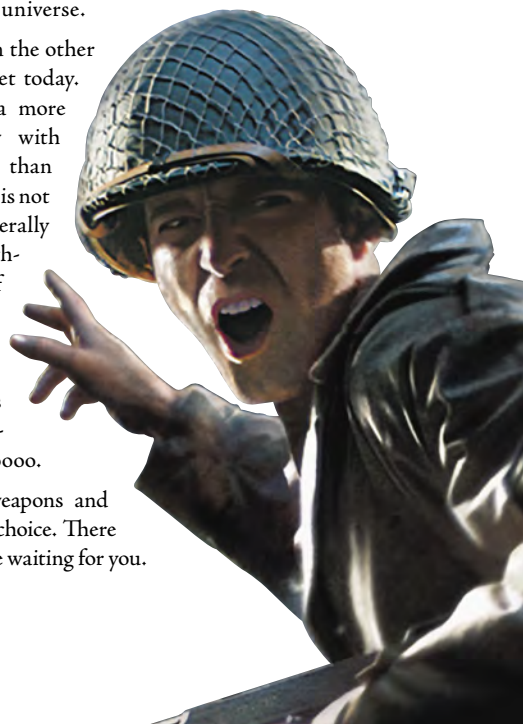
```
if( private_game_player_count > 8 ) { only friends allowed; }
```

That way no public players will suffer lag if the host abuses his or her connection. Activision please make my dreams come true. I have talked/typed too much, but this is my ten cents on what I think of a game that has the potential to kick *Halo 2* into the darkest regions of the universe.

I like CoD2 more than the other shooters on the market today.

I personally find it a more social game to play with your friends online than G.R.A.W. or *Halo 2*. It is not so serious and is generally fun at all times. Nothing like a good game of headquarters where you sit, after dying, and watch your last teammate fighting as hard as he can, to finally be taken out....noooooo.

Soldiers, load your weapons and pick up your drink of choice. There is a battle on Xbox Live waiting for you.



WHAT DO YOU THINK OF 'WII'?

The Revolution is now the Wii.

Personally I don't like the new name and preferred Revolution but it kind of grows on you a bit. I love all the jokes that have come out for it though. I think if it's getting everybody talking about it then Nintendo's marketing have done a good job.

Gazzara, UK

The name sparks discussion amongst the core gamer set -- I'm not sure how many conversations the Nintendo Wii is creating amongst the non-gamer crowd. Further, while I have posted that my wife and I will "probably" get one, I have to say that I'm currently changing that status to a "maybe". Because of the name? No, because they are making a concerted effort to market to non-gamers. Ok, good luck with that. I am a gamer. Their message (and by extension, their product) is not for me, apparently. Ergo, I'm starting to like the Wii less and less.

Novicius. Madison, WI

They should have stuck with Revolution. The new controller was 'revolutionary' enough to warrant the name. I really do believe that Nintendo has some creative geniuses mixed with administrative morons. How's an adult gonna buy this thing? I know I'd never get away with saying, "I'm gonna go play on my wii now."

Guapito

I go Pii-Pii with my Wii-Wii.

SoupNazzi, Wylie, TX

For whatever significance Wii has, I don't see something with a name that weird surviving in the American Market. Nintendo would be best advised to go the route of Sega and just make games, not consoles, at least in the US and maybe Europe.

MTK005, Alexandria, VA

Personally, it doesn't matter if the name of the thing is 'Up your a\$\$ With Kentucky Bluegrass' as long as it has good games, and it interests me. Do you think people agreed with the Xbox name? I bet if you looked back, you would see differently...

Rashanii

It's marketing genius. The name is so whacked that it's a word of mouth advertising success right out of the gate. Plus if you search Google for 'wii', you'll only find stuff on Nintendo's console. The term just doesn't exist which will also make it easy to trademark. Nintendo knows what they're doing and in the end, no one will care what it's called. Xbox 360 isn't a cool name either but i still got one.

TANK, Fremont, CA

With xbox at least you can make some sense of it... X for extreme, and box for console.

Wii just has absolutely no meaning. The closest thing I can think of is that it's a sound of excitement when you say it.

I can't envision myself saying, "I can't wait to go home and play my Wii." or "Let's go play some Wii."

There are plenty of things that make it sound unnatural and that just don't seem to fit with the product. The fact that it's one syllable doesn't help. The word makes it sound diminutive. I just think there are a million better names for it.

I probably would have stuck with the age old mantra of, "If it ain't broke don't fix it." Revolution was just fine, why rock the boat?

Darksage, Langley Air-force base

Nintendo needs to do what they did with their older systems, one name in Japan (famicom/wii) and one name in the states (nes/snes/revolution) the name is going to be a massive hurdle for marketing.

Ashersgcorps, Houston, TX



YOU BLOGGED THIS!

about nothing. Run your jaw off here.

What do you Think of 'wii'? (Continued)



I think the name Wii is a stroke (no pun intended) of genius. Everyone is talking about it. What more could you ask for? Most people are probably going to refer to the console just as the "Nintendo". Is anyone actually going to say, "Can I play with your Wii"? or "Do you want to have a Wii lan party"? I don't think so.

jtgjr007, Nebraska



I believe the screaming from my 10-year-old will force my hand for Xmas or birthday, whichever is the closest. All I can think of is him and three buddies beating the living daylights out of each other while playing some lightsaber/sword fighting game. Will the Wii come with a suture kit? Rolling Eyes

I can't wait for the question: "I finished my homework, can I play with my Wii?"

And the name, while goofy and unlikable, is pure genius....

UnwashedMass, Southern California

It's already been said. It's going to be called the Wii Wii. The fancy controller will be called the Willy or maybe even the term I coined, "Wiilly Wandabe". It is all too much for Anglophones. It's already a big joke. I predict the English name will return to Revolution. That has some bite.

Phooey on Wii.

DEEP_NNN, Nova Scotia

So I consider myself a polished gamer. I am one of Nintendo's former biggest supporters. I was the first kid in my neighborhood to get one in 1985 at launch. I have owned every one of their consoles since. I'm not even sure of the exact pronuncia-

tion of this console and have seen it posted a number of ways to pronounce. I have seen it as the "Whee" pronunciation as in, "Whee that game was fun. Let's beat it again in suicidal mode", or as "Michelle Wie can sure hit a long ball". I have seen it spelled phonetically as the "Wee Eee" on a popular gaming website. Sort of like a Weenie without the n. Overall, I think its lame. Nintendo markets itself to a younger crowd. Its available titles reinforce this. Maybe the kids will know this name backwards and forwards, but Nintendo is a console being purchased primarily by parents who might struggle with the name. Will that influence sales? Maybe, and maybe not. It has been historically shown that brands that sell well also are brands that are branded as having "household names". I just can't see this being a household name. My opinion.

FadeIntoBlack



YOU BLOGGED THIS!
Just feel like talking about nothing. Run your jaw off here.

Ask MikeJames

Dear Mike,

From your profile picture, you are obviously a "Chick Magnet". Please describe your perfect date so that I can glean from your obviously immense knowledge of the opposite sex.

Scotty

Dear Scotty,

I'm glad that you realize I'm such a 'chick magnet'. It's not often someone can freely admit that they don't have as superior looks as I.

My perfect date, wow, that's somewhat of a tough one to answer. I would have to say it would involve two women. Yup, definitely two women. We would have an extremely light dinner and go to the bar and get hammered. Following up at my place for some Twister, lots of oil and naked. Then we would have some good ole lovin! You can figure out the rest.

-MJ

Dear Mike,

I do have a 2 part question...

1. At what point do you think an office prank goes too far? I am not talking the bush league turn everything upside down or fill your cube with foam peanuts bs. I am talking like leaving old food in a hidden place, putting dandelions in someone's fan (that has allergies) and waiting for them to turn it on or even leaving candy on their desk that has previously fallen into a *cobra den on the floor and not saying anything when they eat it...and you know they will eat it.

2. Why am I so awesome? Seriously

*we lovingly refer to the short hairs that end up on the toilet seat (you all know what I mean) as cobras in my office...for some very odd and disturbing reason we see them from time to time on desks and floors in my office. Someone once said it as if they were being suddenly attacked by something as they saw it laying on their desk. i.e; "Oh shit, I nearly touched a cobra!" and it has been office lore ever since.

rabbmasterflash

Dear Rabbmasterflash,

Before I answer your first question, you are a SICK individual, funny, but SICK! I would say that an office prank goes too far when you've put someone in the hospital or gotten them fired. Everything else is far game. I hope that I stay on your good side.

And to answer your 2nd question, you are NOT awesome! How come everyone wants to know why they are so awesome? If you were so damn awesome, you wouldn't have to ask! I don't have to ask people why I'm so awesome. I just know it. Go back to eating your cobra candy you sick, sick individual.

-MJ

Dear Mike,

Hey Mike how does it feel being my bitch the other night.

goodolplumber

Dear Goodoleplumber,

Obviously you weren't that good because I don't even remember being your bitch. I think that you and Rabbmasterflash must be hanging out together or work in the same office. Or, you've eaten too many 'cobra pit candies'.

-MJ

Dear Mike,

What's up Mike? In Halo 2 what was your best teabag experience?

Thanks,

Armedzero

Dear Armedzero,

Great question, I've had so many teabags in my life and have given so many I don't remember my "Best" on per se. I would definitely have to say that on the receiving end, it's definitely got to be anytime a female gives me a teabag and they say something dirty. I know that syschaos and phreaksbitch are both good at talking dirty while dropping the ole meat curtains.

As far as giving, well, I have quite a few of them. It's usually when I own someone like Ken71 and Doodi or even Eksessiv. They may own me the most of a game, but, I definitely like dropping my squirrel nuts down onto their chin just that one time.

-MJ

Dear Mike,

I have a dilemma. I recently took a dump in a buddy's toilet and have decided not to flush. Should I leave the top up so the smell wafts throughout his house, or should I put the top down, much like wrapping a present so he'll get a nice surprise when he enters his throne room? Aid me in Asheville

Fetal

Dear Fetal,

If I were in your position, I'd DEFINITELY leave the top down. Why? Because that odor, especially coming from you, would make him have to vomit immediately. You would double do him in. He might even have to put his face closer to the 'dump.' Think about it. I don't want to have you come over to my house either.

-MJ

Hey Mike,

If a tree falls in the woods and Rashanii is there, could the sound be heard over him?

Grim Reaper BTB

Grim Reaper,

That is a dumb question. Everyone knows you can't hear SQUAT over Rashanii if you're anywhere close to him. I'm talking miles! That guy just doesn't shut the hell up! It's like me being drunk but 100 times worse. Shame on you for asking such a dumb question.

-MJ

Thank you everyone for your questions this month! Keep sending them on in! If you'd like to Ask Mike James a question, please send your emails onto mike@2old2play.com and put Ask MikeJames in the subject line!

Until next time! Bitches!!!

Mike James

WHIPLASH AKA CHAIN GANG, SPANX

Eidos Interactive



GENRON CORPORATION

Loading...

By XS Smoke

It was a bright sunny day...outside. Inside the high-rise walls of the massive Genron Corporation, however, it was quite a different story. For you see, Genron is a high-tech lab where innocent animals are used to test human products. Deep inside lies the dreaded "Genetic Recombinator," the final destination for test subjects who have outlived their usefulness.



Single Player Aspect

Ok, this game is a riot. It is full of slapstick comedy and moments that made me squirt Mountain Dew out of my nose. The first time I used the mouthy rabbit on the end of the chain to pummel an overweight security guard I couldn't believe that I was actually observing such madness in a platform game. You are trapped inside the diabolical corporation of "Genron", trying to escape the evil animal tortures that

await you. It's funny, I swear. You play a character named Spank, a weasel of all things, and you just happen to have this poor furry little fuzz ball rabbit by the name of Redmond that just so happens to be chained to your wrist. Well what would any tweaker weasel with a rabbit chained to his arm naturally do? Why, smash the property of his terrible oppressors and attempt to free as many of his furry companions along the way of course, as possible. You really shouldn't feel a bit bad about bashing Redmond all over this destructible world because he is one sarcastic piece of fur. Use the rabbit, young one. Use him wisely...

As you progress in the game you gain levels which add more powerful attacks and unlock 'hare' raising combos. What? Was that a bad joke?

Good thing you like bad jokes because this game is full of them, along with terrible clichés. It is hysterical and I really enjoyed bashing the heads of many scientists in this dramatic story of courage and survival.

Too much? Maybe that was a tad over the top but the game is really enjoyable and quite challenging in some areas. In addition to your normal ass-kicking via bunny pounding, you also will use Spank to insert Redmond into machinery to break the circuitry, freeze him, fill him with helium, coat him in chocolate, set him on fire, and do pretty much anything that will help you escape or destroy property.

The gameplay is somewhat basic which makes it rather easy to jump into, although it can get slightly repetitive. If you are not into platform games at all, then this will probably be a bore to you. But... if you enjoy a good comedy mixed with a fun platform and likeable characters, then this game is a for sure winner. The audio is one of the things that pushes the game from good



to cool. The voices and comments are nailed perfectly and when you think Redmond may have run out of snappy remarks he shoots another one out of his sharp bunny mouth that gets you laughing all over again.

Truth be told, if you haven't tried this game, go rent it just for the experience alone. It is a nice kick in the junk to animal testing and another jab at corporate America. If you have ever wanted to swat a scientist in the face with a flaming bunny, then this is the game for you.



Multi Player Aspect

There is no multi-player in *Whiplash*. It is a single player only experience, although it is pretty fun to enjoy with some friends. This game is not backwards compatible for the 360, and that can be a drawback to Xbox 360 owners that did not keep their original system.

Windup

This may be the perfect example of a true rental game. You have got to try this game. Humor alone makes this game totally worth the rental or purchase. I shall leave you with two words that may give an idea of why you should give this at least few hours of your time... Hamster Cannon.



Available on:	 
Score for purchase:	7/10
Score for rental:	8/10
Price to Play:	
eBay:	\$2.50 to \$4.99
Amazon:	\$7.25 to \$13.00

BREAKING OUT WITH BREAKQUEST

Developed by Nuriium Games, Published by Stardock Entertainment

By CodeMonkey

Nuriium Games, based in Barcelona Spain, has produced one of the best *Breakout* style games on the market. For those not familiar with *Breakout*, it was a game introduced in 1976, by Atari games, and can best be compared to *Pong* "with bricks." Your paddle sits on the bottom of the game screen and moves horizontally while you bounce the ball off bricks located at the top of the game screen. One might even consider this style of game "virtual racquetball."



BreakQuest utilizes the *DynaMo* physics engine, an engine that allows all objects in the gaming environment to react like you would expect from real physics. This expands the level capabilities to including rotating spindles, bouncing bricks, chains,

swinging chimes, and many other interactive environments. Imagine throwing a baseball at a long line of chimes. The chimes do not stand solid like a wall, but rather move around from the impact of the ball and smash off each other. *BreakQuest* follows this same model which requires the user to be "ready for anything" when your ball deflects off a moving object only to be shot back in your face.

Like other *Breakout* game designs, *BreakQuest* contains numerous unique power-ups. Some of the power-ups include GPS missiles, satellites, smart/dumb mines, rockets, machine guns, multi-ball, fireballs, and many more. To increase the challenge, *BreakQuest* includes many power-ups that hinder your performance. For example, Low-Octane slows down your paddles speed, and Freezer causes your paddle to slide as if on ice. As you become comfortable with the game, you will start to identify which power ups are good and which ones are best avoided. In many cases, you can avoid a bad power up as it falls, and attempt to fetch only the ones that will increase your chances to complete a given level.



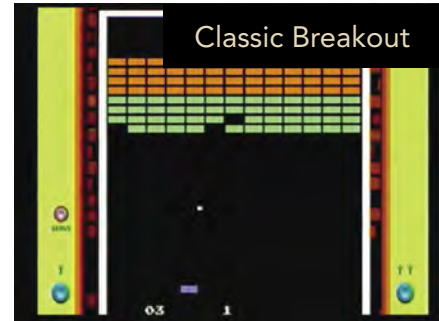
You can enjoy a total of one hundred levels. Every level contains a unique design, unique distractions, and an ever-increasing difficulty. The beginning levels are fairly straight forward, featuring stacked bricks similar to the original *Breakout* game. As the levels

progress, they start to utilize more creative methods for brick layout, such as a pinball level, a classic asteroids level, and a classic space invaders level. Bounce your ball around on the aliens and hit them each a few times to destroy them (the aliens act like "bricks"). One level is complete with a few dozen smiley faces that become saddened as you hit them until they eventually pop and fall towards the ground. Some levels are heavily populated with objects of all shapes and sizes that react with

explosions, shattering of pieces, rain drops, and other distractions. The distractions add a level of difficulty and excitement to the game.

Once you defeat a level and unlock it, you will be able to play the level in "arcade mode," which allows you to adjust the game environment. You will be able to adjust the frequency of power ups, limit certain power ups, change ball speed and paddle size, adjust the overall difficulty, and a host of other tweaks. Arcade mode is great if you want to play a few rounds before bed, or before your kids wake up from their nap.

The graphics are top notch for a fast paced arcade game, with a physics engine that is puzzling and entertaining to watch. The sound quality is great, and it contains various tracks to keep you moving in your seat, with a few tracks that may remind you of 70's porno (if you



were around to enjoy the art of porn in the 70's, of course). The game play is constantly entertaining and addictive. So addictive, in fact, that you may find yourself developing carpal tunnel, or other wrist strains, from sliding your mouse across your desk to try to save your hide. Each level will take roughly five to ten minutes to defeat, and with one-hundred levels, it should supply hours of entertainment for your dollar. The full version of *BreakQuest* will set you back \$19.99 and each dollar is well worth it. If you subscribe to the Total Gaming Network (www.totalgaming.net), you will pay roughly \$14.00 (or two tokens).

The greatest value *BreakQuest* offers is the amount of fun and entertainment you get for a very small amount of money. Good games are rare enough, but, when you find one, you usually have to shell out much more of your hard-earned dollars than you'd like to. But in this case, for less than you'd probably spend on a single dinner out, you get hours of entertainment from a game that is truly unique and enjoyable.



Head to <http://www.nuriium.com/> or <http://totalgaming.stardock.com/games/?id=BQ> and download the demo for free, or watch the flash video of the game in action on [nuriium.com](http://www.nuriium.com). You can try before you buy and see if this game is for you.

System Requirements:

Windows 9x/Me/XP/2003
500 MHz Processor
128 MB RAM
22 MB Hard Disk Space
24-bit or 32-bit Capable Video Card
Sound Card
DirectX 7 or Higher



GET SOME [REVENGE] TONIGHT

A Review of *Burnout Revenge* for the Xbox 360

Burnout: Revenge is not about winning. It's not about riding on dubs or gaudy neon lights. It's about being the fastest, most dangerous racer on the road. Fight dirty or go down in flames - the only rule is complete automotive anarchy.

Burnout *Revenge* lets gamers rip through rush hour traffic and lay waste to scores of rubbernecking roadhogs in an over-the-top scene of vehicular mayhem. In addition to tricked out new race, crash and road rage modes, *Burnout Revenge* takes the series' blistering speed and spectacular destruction to dizzying new heights with an all-new Revenge mode, challenging gamers to battle the clock and unleash their frustrations on rush hour traffic.

By Broken Design

GET SOME [REVENGE] TONIGHT (CONTINUED)

Burnout Revenge pushes the envelope past everything that made its predecessor, *Burnout 3: Takedown*, a runaway success. Developed by Criterion Games, *Burnout Revenge* expands upon the dynamic of the *Takedown* by introducing the Revenge Meter, a system that tracks underhanded tactics and further encourages aggressive and offensive driving.

Each opponent you take out becomes your Revenge Rival, which means they'll be gunning for some payback. In this game, revenge is a dish best served HOT at 100MPH, by which I mean right-the-hell now!

Traffic Checking

Traffic Checking is a new feature in this installment of *Burnout*. The technique is used to knock small to medium sized vehicles, moving in your direction, out of the way without wrecking your vehicle. This does not apply to large vehicles like buses or eighteen wheelers, nor does the technique work for oncoming automobiles. With this new dynamic comes a new mode of play, also called Traffic Checking, where the objective is to hit traffic from the rear as you drive down a track and rake up cash towards achieving a gold medal.



Ramps!

The ramps that were introduced in *Burnout 3* have returned in *Revenge*. The ramps have been enhanced so that your vehicle no longer will slow down when it clears the lip of a ramp. The vehicles now clear the ramp and hit the ground in one fluid motion, rather than with the penalty of a "crash." The ramps also allow your vehicle to climb above street level and onto overpasses.

Crashbreaker



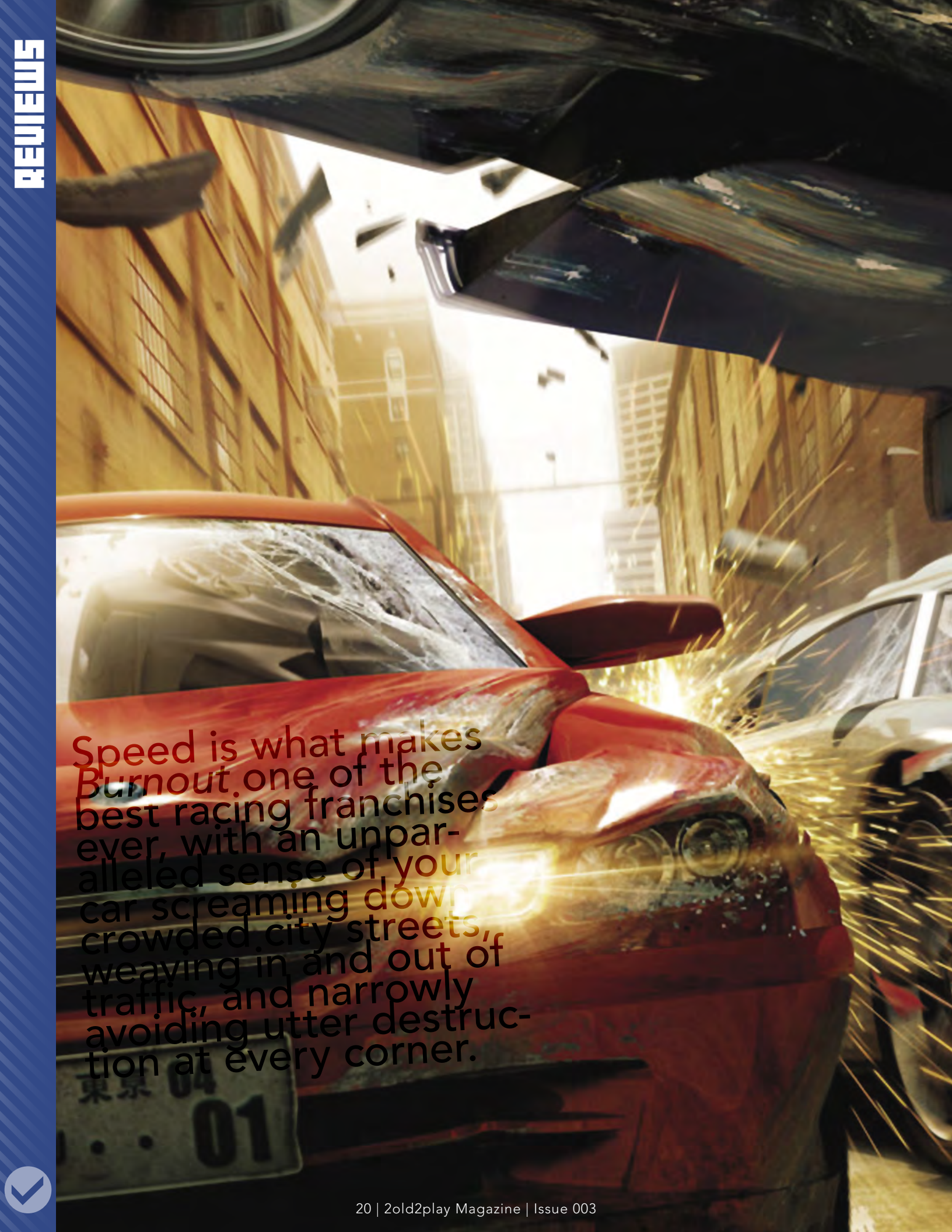
Burnout Revenge definitely increases the total amount of car crashes. *Burnout 3* had the special move known as the Crashbreaker. This occurred in crash mode events when you pressed a specific button to detonate your car in a big, fiery explosion. In *Burnout 3* you could perform one Crashbreaker per race. In *Revenge*, the number is based on a meter that rises from zero to one hundred percent. Once traffic begins to pile up, the meter begins to fill with the percentage value indicating its current capacity. Once that meter hits full capacity, a Crashbreaker is available and the meter will begin to deplete. At this point, the player needs to rapidly press the 'B' button to try and refill the meter before the countdown timer reaches zero. The percentage that the meter is at when time runs out determines the intensity of the explosion. The explosions can be so large that the Xbox 360 will suffer a fairly noticeable frame rate loss.

Crash mode

Crash mode has been ramped up and features more elaborate tracks, but lacks the power-up items from *Burnout 3*. Criterion felt that the power-ups were distracting, because players would continually try to figure out how to obtain as many power-ups as possible instead of causing the largest crash possible. Although power-ups have been removed, *Burnout Revenge* still requires that things be done in a very specific way, and often, with very specific cars, in order to get the biggest cash possible and beat your opponents.

The starting controls in crash mode have also been completely redesigned. On the original Xbox and Playstation 2, a meter has been added that is very reminiscent of the shot mechanics in a golfing video game. This meter, aptly referred to as the "golf start" or "swing start", is designed completely differently in the Xbox 360 release of the game. In the Xbox 360 version the car automatically revs up to a starting speed. The boost and accelerator buttons do not seem to make the vehicle start faster or slower when pressed.



A dynamic action scene from a racing game. A red sports car is shown in the foreground, having just crashed through a window of a brick building. The window is shattered, and a shower of sparks is flying from the impact point. In the background, a white car is visible, and the street is lined with tall buildings. The scene is captured with a low-angle, slightly tilted perspective, emphasizing the chaos and speed of the moment.

Speed is what makes *Burnout* one of the best racing franchises ever, with an unparalleled sense of your car screaming down crowded city streets, weaving in and out of traffic, and narrowly avoiding utter destruction at every corner.

GET SOME [REVENGE] TONIGHT (CONTINUED)

Payback

Crashbreakers can now be used in standard races, in addition to Crash mode, adding a very interesting race dynamic and also ushering in another feature: Instant Payback. If a rival takes you down, you can exact immediate revenge upon them by detonating your Crashbreaker while they are still within range. You receive a "Payback" if you are able to destroy another racer (or multiple racers) with your Crashbreaker.



Impact Time

Borrowing a technique from *The Matrix*, the returning "Impact Time" feature slows down time for as long as the boost/impact-time button is held down (think bullet time from *The Matrix* as every game is now incorporating). This feature makes it easier to guide your crashed vehicle into rival racers or into general traffic for the biggest wreck possible. In a Crash Mode situation, Impact Time no longer is limited to a few seconds. *Burnout Revenge* switches into Impact Time for the duration of time the button is pressed in all modes of play.

Vertical Takedowns

A Vertical Takedown is achieved when you land on the roof of a rival racer. They are difficult to accomplish but are all the more satisfying. The collision detection in the Vertical Takedowns feature could use a little work. A rival that takes air slightly higher than you off of a jump, and gets a little too close to your car, will instantly flatten you. The rival does not even have to literally be atop your car for this to occur.



360 Flavor

For all you Xbox 360 users out there, *Burnout Revenge* has a significant amount of extras and enhancements to make the potential repurchase very much worth the money. You will notice that the menus and load screens have been completely redesigned and are significantly better.



The graphics on the 360 port have been overhauled as well. It does not stop at just high resolution texturing, but the cars have all been completely remodeled from the ground up, and feature a much higher polygon count.

The Xbox 360 version does have its faults. With the enhanced lighting effects comes a very soft glow, use of Radiosity, shining through trees and gleaming off of other cars, making everything look very soft and hazy. Those of you who were looking forward to significantly better resolution for greater clarity to avoid those wrecks that you couldn't see until it was too late are not going to find it any different in the 360 release.



Speed!

Speed is what makes *Burnout* one of the best racing franchises ever, with an unparalleled sense of your car screaming down crowded city streets, weaving in and out of traffic, and narrowly avoiding utter destruction at every corner. This sense of speed gets pushed just a little bit further, on the 360, from the increase in horsepower under the console's hood. As a result of this, the cars are a little harder to control, especially the Extra Light weight class vehicles.

Not only does speed make the game incredibly fast-paced and fun, but it makes the game incredibly fast-paced and frustrating.

AI Advantage?

Getting takedowns on your rivals and saving your own skin has also become more difficult. The AI is noticeably more aggressive and skilled at taking you down. Catch-up is more rampant on the 360 as well. Your rivals slingshot past you despite the fact that you're barreling straight down a freeway at top speed with the boost button firmly pressed.



GET SOME [REVENGE] TONIGHT (CONTINUED)



Probably the biggest annoyance in *Burnout Revenge* on the 360, is the favoritism that seems to be granted to computer-controlled rivals. Whether it is intentionally coded, or simply a bug, it becomes downright infuriating when the computer becomes almost invincible. Your car may smash against the corner of a wall, but while in Impact Time a computer rival can nick the same wall and bounce right off without pause and continue on its way.

Bugs in the system

The Aftertouch Takedown system, in which you take out a rival with your wrecked car while in Impact Time, is a little buggy. Sometimes, if you are still sliding forward, the computer controlled vehicle will hit you and push you along and your car will slide up and over their car instead of actually taking them out. The Payback system seems to have a few design flaws too. On occasion, you are able to take out all cars within a fairly large radius, but you won't take out cars that are close to your position.

360 Achievements

There are a total of thirty six achievements worth one thousand points. Some of them are rather difficult to achieve, while others are insultingly easy. The "Server Surfer" achievement is one of the extremely easy achievements to receive. In order to get that beauty, you must participate in one online event. Another simplistic one is the "Check It Out!" achievement, which is awarded when you upload a video clip to the Electronic Arts (EA) servers. There is also the "Your Opinion Counts!", achievement which can be obtained by recommending a Burnout clip. These cannot even be mistaken for being challenging, nor do they enhance the experience of the game. I feel it would've been better to leave them out. The whole "recommend a clip to your friends" has caused a sore spot in the Xbox Live community as many are perceiving it as a type of spam.

Xbox Live!

Live play is where this game truly shines. This is where the *Revenge* mechanic comes to full fruition. If you are taken down online, then the person becomes your Revenge Rival. That player is your Revenge

Rival as long as they are one or more takedowns ahead of you in your rivalry. While online, you can take on your rivals from around the world in a standard race (without Crash breakers), Road Rage, or Crash mode, and on the 360 you are also able to take to the streets in a head to head Traffic Attack event where the highest score wins. With the Xbox Live True Skill match system races tend to be very equally balanced and play very well.

Overall, *Burnout* is in full force in *Revenge* and offers a fast, furious, and destructive experience that is unparalleled. It has a number of great features to keep you coming back for more. If you can look past the annoyances, bugs, and the advantage the computer holds over you in certain instances, you'll have an experience that will shake your world like a Force 10 Crashbreaker.



Verdict	
Graphics:	8
Sound:	7
Game Play:	8
Replay value:	9



AUTO ASSAULT (PC)

by NCSoft

By Lachelle "MadLion" Thomas
(madlion@gameside.org)

Welcome to a different kind of MMO. In this post-apocalypse game, *Auto Assault* features real-time vehicular combat and destructive environments combined with RPG elements.

With a futuristic war raging between three races, the Humans, Biomeks, and Mutants, you as a player must choose a side and join the fight to see which race will be dominant on what's left of the world. After choosing a race players are able to choose from different job classes that pertain to their race, such as Bounty Hunter, Lieutenant, and Shaman. The primary difference of *Auto Assault* in comparison to other MMORPGs is the fact that the majority of gameplay takes place in your vehicle, which will be given to you after you choose your job class. Each class has a different vehicle; Commandos have Hummer-like vehicles, while Lieutenants have smaller, quicker vehicles. Players can name and customize their vehicles throughout gameplay.

up and taken back to the closest repair station.

Players will be able to purchase, create or find new parts for their vehicles such as new tires, new weapons and more. This definitely adds to the gameplay since as your character levels up, your car can be upgraded as well. Timed, Passive and Factional Skills also are in play here, as you level up you gain skill points to spend on learning or upgrading skills to use in your vehicles. Some of these skills are also job class and race specific.



The fact that the vehicles are your transportation makes *Auto Assault* a blast to play, whether it's catapulting yourself from a ramp off of a cliff, bouncing around the different ranges and highways, or doing donuts around your enemies. The pace of the game is also faster since it won't take you literally a half hour to get from point A to point B as in other MMORPGs where you have to walk/run your character. Another great factor to *Auto Assault* is there is no death penalty, or any time away from the game penalty. If you die out in the range, your vehicle will be picked

The gaming community for *Auto Assault* so far seems pretty good and most that I've spoken with were impressed with the game. There were several who said that they did not seem to know what their overall objective is as a player in the game - as in do they only run around doing missions for different NPC's (non-playable characters) or what? The game can falter at that point in not showing how you or your character fits into the overall picture - in other MMORPGs like *World of Warcraft* for example, you knew that you were part something big and were proud to play as the race and class you were.

In this world the environments are bleak and dark, which fits this game well. There's decaying buildings and skyscrapers, old highways and more. The graphics are typical for an MMO, as they cannot have the same high-end graphics as say, a PC first-person-shooter game. This would cause complications since MMOs have huge amounts of people playing at once, and



AUTO ASSAULT (CONTINUED)



also the graphics consider those who may be on low DSL or 56k connections. During the first week of gameplay (which was during the game's release) there were some stuttering issues with the graphics that would cause the game to crash for some users. NCsoft has been excellent in issuing patches on an almost daily basis to correct issues and more. Players can also go to the PlayNC support forum for any graphical or technical issues.

For those who like to solo - that is play alone in an MMO, this game is for you. There are plenty of missions you can do on your own and thanks to lack of a death penalty; death isn't a means to an end. The game also allows for you to level at your own pace, making this game a great entry for those who have not yet played other MMO games. For the tougher missions where there are bosses or engaging in player versus player (PVP), players can join a convoy or become part of a clan with other players.

The missions can get somewhat repetitive, especially those that seem more like "favors" than missions. The go-here, get-this-object, bring-it-back objective is the staple of MMORPG games and it would've be great to see more unique missions for this unique game. However some enjoy those type of missions, or often find other things to do such as looting and farming (killing enemies to just to collect drops), or becoming a vendor and standing in the towns spamming the General chat line with "wtb" lines. PVP is also another thing to occupy your time, and there are gamers who will simply play just for that reason.

Auto Assault does donuts around other MMORPGs with its unique approach to vehicular combat infused with role playing goodness. The game overall is entertaining and while not perfect the game does not close itself off to non-MMO players. Anyone can buy the game and begin playing right away and will love the real-time combat the game has to offer. MMO veterans will also enjoy the being able to play something different for a change, that isn't pure fantasy



or medieval. So leave those other MMORPGs in the dust, and grab *Auto Assault* today.

Verdict	
Gameplay:	90%
Graphics:	80%
Sound:	80%
Playability/Value:	90%
Overall:	85%
Scores based on 50 – 100% range, 100% being excellent.	

References:

- <http://www.gameside.org>
- <http://www.gameside.org/reviews.php?do=view&id=17>

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BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT

Review (Xbox 360) By n3rf

During the last few months, a game has taken over my dreams, given me cravings for AAFES burgers (Army & Air Force Exchange Services, the US military version of Wal-Mart), and forced me to bust out my old alpha-numeric chart. But I'm not here to talk about that game. I'm here to talk about its "upgraded" 360 version: *Battlefield 2: Modern Combat* (BF2:MC) for the Xbox 360.

BF2:MC has already received its fair share of reviews on other game sites, but I haven't seen a review that addresses specifically our community's needs and expectations. This review will give you an idea of what you can expect from the game and not so much what the game is about. You only need to read the sections that pertain to your situation, so feel free to jump around.

through the use of a rock-scissor-paper system of balancing out the classes, the game is absent of any system that would prevent your team from being entirely made up of snipers in multiplayer. And being that you're forced to play on EA's servers, you'll find yourself stuck in situations that will baffle your mind.

The game's structure lacks regulation where you need it and cripples you where you don't. It amazes me the developers could come up with such amazing ideas on one hand and then completely drop the ball on features that will ultimately kill this title for most of us.

Soldier Classes

The Assault class is armed with an assault rifle, grenade launcher, smoke grenades, hand grenades and a pistol. They are the only class equipped with armor, so they can survive a little longer in a gun fight. This is the class I recommend people start off with so they can get their feet wet with the physics of the game.

The Spec Ops class is armed with a silenced SMG, flash bang grenades, C4, knife and a silenced pistol. The SMG is deadly accurate and is great for concealing your whereabouts when emptying a clip into a clueless victim. C4 can be stuck to any surface and detonated remotely. A common practice is to load a car with C4, aim it at a target and bail just before impact. Knife kills are typically only done by team-killers or by frustrated players who finally found the sniper who just went on a rampage from the same camper spot due to a team's lack of communication.

The Basics

Anyone can read the back of the box to see that BF2:MC is a FPS that uses different soldier classes armed with modern-day weaponry. With more than thirty vehicles at your disposal, online statistics tracking to develop and perfect your strategies, twenty single-player missions and twelve multiplayer maps ranging from desert urban sprawl to rolling hills of arctic chaos, this a pretty rich title. Unfortunately, it's not without fatal flaws that will keep it from being the next big thing within our community.

While the game tries to emulate the diversity found in real-life squads

The Engineer class comes armed with a shotgun, landmines, rocket launchers, blow torch and pistol. The shotgun is your typical close-quarters combat weapon and has the potential



BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT (CONTINUED)



for a one-shot kill. Landmines can be triggered by vehicles driving over them or they can be shot. Because I'm a hard guy, I typically aim for an enemy's mine when one of his teammates is near it. Besides causing its owner a loss of a point, it also causes teammates to yell at each other. It's one of life's little pleasures. Blow torches are used to repair vehicles, but they can also be used in a sadistic way to slowly cook and eventually kill the slowest and weakest of the herd.



The Support class is armed with a heavy machine gun, healing injector, mortar strike, hand grenades and pistol. The heavy machine gun carries a hundred rounds in a clip, so it's ideal for laying cover fire. You'll want to learn how to quickly drop prone because it's practically useless from a long distance if you're standing. You can use the health injector on yourself or, in a rare act of kindness, use it on a fellow soldier. Mortar strikes are pretty much only effective on infantry, although you can take out weakened vehicles.

The Sniper class is equipped with a sniper rifle, GPS, laser designator, smoke grenades and silenced pistol. Snipers don't need headshots for a successful one-shot kill. They can also take out chopper pilots by shooting through the cockpit glass. Again, because I'm a hard guy, it's a thing of beauty to take out a pilot while his helpless passengers are lowered to Earth at an increasing rate of speed. The GPS lights up the entire map with enemy positions for a couple of seconds. The laser designator can paint hard targets for a single missile deployment. A decent chopper pilot can out run the missile, so they're most effective against tanks.

Single-Player

If you're not completely familiar with the original Xbox version, the single player campaign has a few interesting things going for it. You actually play both sides of a propaganda-driven war that pits US/NATO forces against China in a race to occupy, or liberate, the people of Kazakhstan. The final mission forces you to fight on the side you think is right.

Besides your typical objective-based missions, there are also mini-games that grade your performance and reward you with points to rank up. It's

an obsessive-compulsive's nightmare. Take a patrol boat through checkpoints in a race against the clock, master the rocket launcher against tanks and choppers, and learn how to take out a squad with a single grenade in a game set up like a twisted bowling tournament complete with the opportunity to pick up a spare.

Another great aspect of single-player is the hot-swap. The best way I can describe the hot-swap feature (as well as the single-player gameplay, in general) is to imagine playing any team-based, online game with a bunch of teenagers on your team and actually having the power to punch each one of them in the face and temporarily take their controller from them. Yelling, "No, stupid, like *this*," is completely optional. It's the ultimate tool for any control freak. Need to switch to the tank to take out the hostile chopper? Wish you could trade places with your sniper to gain a better vantage point to eliminate the enemy target? Hot-swap allows you to do so in a very intense, sci-fi movie-inspired "flight scene." The 360 version actually dumbed-down this process by allowing you to swap players without being in direct line of sight of the player. Apparently, this was done to "answer" complaints received from the original Xbox version.



The friendlies in the single-player campaign are a little on the aggressive side and lack the will to survive, often abandoning any cover and conceal tactics. Seeing that you're a member here because of your online experiences with Timmies, you probably already understand how frustrating this can be when you're trying to accomplish a specific goal.

Unfortunately for anyone craving real-world military tactics, the single-player is too arcade style. Going "Rambo" will give you unrealistic temporary health, damage, and weapon upgrades. Act this way in multiplayer and you'll spend most of your time at the respawn screen. It is totally a different game from the multiplayer aspect. By comparison, the single player is a poor substitute for when you get the dreaded "Cannot connect to EA servers," which was happening too often the first few weeks of the game's release.



Multiplayer

The strength of *BF2:MC* – and the major source of fun – is the multiplayer aspect. There are only two options of gameplay: Capture the Flag and Conquest.

Capture the Flag, for the most part, seems to be a sniper game where you can quickly rack up points defending your flag. Otherwise, it's pretty useless and repetitive.

Conquest is a territories game where you start off with a set number of tickets and each respawn costs your team a ticket. If you control a majority of flags, your opponents start losing tickets automatically. Different maps have different strategies but they all have the same goal in mind.

Unfortunately, your only option is to join EA's servers along with the rest of the world. You can either play on a ranked or unranked server. You'll find the boosters on ranked servers. These are people huddled off into a corner trying to gain medals and bloat their scores in order to rank up. EA wouldn't comment on my suggestion of putting in a click-through TOS screen that states that girls don't actually care about your rank in a video game.

Besides having the self-worth of soup skin, boosters have destroyed the very system they feel the need to cheat their way through. Not only that, they also take up seats that could be filled by actual human beings. After their rank has far surpassed their actual skill, their only option for playing the game is to go into unranked servers where people are practicing how to fly the choppers because they just bought the game and team-killers who want to see how long it will take before they get kicked out of the game.



At the time of this writing, clan support still does not work. It's a pity too, because clan battles are the closest to private rooms as you can get with this game.

I just can't see *BF2:MC* doing very well in our community because it lumps us with the very people who forced us to find each other. It's a

shame, too. Anybody who has been in a game where everyone is communicating and choosing classes based on their team's needs knows how this game is addictive.

Once you get over the fact that you're right back where you started when you first signed up to *Xbox Live*, you'll quickly appreciate several elements of the game. The action is crazy and intense. Chaos and disorientation become routine as bullets cut through the air past your ears and explosions are as common as landscape brush. The cars are fast and the tanks aren't overpowered. The maps are huge and well-balanced with plenty of spaces and opportunities for each soldier class to exploit his or her talents.



Use car bombs, IEDs and other creative ways to take out the enemy. There are enough makeshift ramps scattered throughout the maps to relive any favorite "Duke Boys" moment while driving around.

And when all is said and done, you can go to EA's site to review your stats and relive your highlights with the game-viewer, which replays your game using icons to represent troop movement. You can also create and save new strategies to share with your clan members. It's frustrating because I truly believe this title would have been the *Halo*-killer if only we had the option to create our own private games.

Original Xbox Players:

If you played the original *Xbox* version, there isn't much to justify a \$60 "upgrade" fee, other than a couple of tweaks and prettier graphics (and trust me, this game is a gorgeous experience on a true HDTV/5.1 set-up).

There are a few tricks that will become standard in all 360 games that are represented here. Swing around quick enough and a slight motion blur will be applied to your screen, giving you the impression of very quick movement. Your focus will change to your gun during your reloading animation which will blur the rest of your screen, giving you the perception of depth and focal points.



BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT (CONTINUED)



When you go from one lighting environment to another, there is a period of “adjustment” as if the game is resizing its iris. It sucks to look directly into the sun during a firefight because it blinds you just as it should, but I still can’t help thinking the light rays dancing through the branches of a nearby bush are “kind of neat.”

The controls are completely different. Your thumb sticks are still the same, but that’s it. To switch weapons, you now use the right shoulder button. I’m not crazy about having to take my finger off the trigger to switch weapons, but they might have made the change to combat the sniper reload glitch. This was where players could quickly change to another weapon after firing a sniper round and switch back instantly to avoid the bolt-action animation. You could get several rounds off in a couple of seconds.



Also, there is no more double tapping the ‘X’ button to dive into a prone position. Now you sluggishly go through crouch and then prone. You can also control vehicles with the left trigger and shoulder button for the gas and brake, respectively. No more trying to coordinate the positioning of your left and right thumb sticks with expert precision in order to advance in a straight line while scanning your entire 360° of situational awareness.

Flash bang grenades actually work now! In the first version, you would throw a flash bang into a room and it would affect your abilities almost as much as your opponent’s despite the fact that a wall separated you and you dropped it at his feet. Now if you toss a flash bang into a room, only your hearing is slightly impaired while your enemy is left with a white screen for a few seconds. You might remember that you had to throw all three of them in order to white-out your opponent’s screen to effectively storm his position. Now, one grenade is enough to completely disrupt his senses.

Visually speaking, you can identify the different classes easier in this version. I know the question you’re going to ask. Yes, the Spec Ops are finally wearing berets! Seriously though, the visual improvements are a

welcomed change because now you can assess the threat of the enemy by quickly identifying his class and exploiting his weakness. Snipers are now equipped with Hillier suits. Of course, the giant red diamond over his head defeats its effectiveness, but it’s pretty cool looking if you’re really into Christmas trees.

The interface has improved. It’s more “army”-like and your HUD is customizable, although I can’t think of any screen items I would want to live without. At the time of writing, the slider that turns down the announcer’s voice doesn’t work. A patch is supposedly in the works.



They did add a cool feature that works. If you find yourself almost never playing the single-player (which I seem to only play when EA’s servers are unavailable), you can have it automatically log into the Xbox Live interface from the start screen. Another thing they added with the multiplayer games is a queue. Now if you join a full server, you can wait in line until a spot opens. I quickly went from spot three to spot one, but after five minutes of waiting, I cancelled and found another server, so I don’t know with 100 percent certainty that the queue works.

Despite those small tweaks, it’s still the same pig with a prettier bow. In fact, the developers seemed to have completely misunderstood the complaints we had because their fixes aren’t fixes at all. The community cried out for the ability to get rid of the “I’m thinking Army’s” enemy indicator to facilitate a stealthier approach, so DICE put in an option for you to turn it off. It doesn’t turn off your indicator; it turns off everyone else’s.

To make up for their mistake, they did manage to put in the most worthless option in the game: the open mic. The mic is on *all of the time*. Basically the channel is owned by the first guy sitting too close to his TV. To make matters worse, the default option is set to have the mic always on. So if you make the effort to shut it off, holding down the X button will let you talk. When you’re in the post-game lobby, however, X becomes the “view gamer card” option and you completely lose your ability to speak. The biggest letdown is still not being able to create our own rooms.

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT (CONTINUED)



GR:AW Players

If you're coming from GRAW, I've got some good news and some bad news. The good news is you can actually operate the cool vehicles. The bad news is you have to play with Timmies so you will often feel like the driver of the short bus during a field trip to the safety-helmet factory.



Both games are based on real-life U.S. military technology, but the similarities end there. *GR:AW* is about working as a group using patience and stealth. By comparison, *Battlefield* looks like *Halo* with helicopters. While it's not recommended, you can do okay in *BF2:MC* playing the lone wolf, running and gunning your way through the game.

Another thing that separates the two games is the features of the single-player that aren't in the multiplayer are not missed at all. *GR:AW* is consistent with the tactics used in its single and multiplayer games, and I missed certain single-player options that weren't there in multiplayer. I don't miss anything from *BF2:MC 360's* single-player when I'm playing multiplayer. In *BF2:MC 360's* defense, I've still never found any of my elite soldiers in a corner running in place against a wall.

As far as multiplayer goes, you'll have to be content with only two game variants: Capture the Flag and Conquest.

Battlefield PC Players

The console versions are vastly different from the PC version. First of all, the feel of the game is going to be a lot more arcade-like. You won't find too many people dropping prone to steady their aim. Instead, you'll encounter the same strafing you will find in any *Halo* game. By comparison, your success isn't so much based on the strength of the team, but rather, the strength of the individual. Squads don't exist, so there's no squad leader. If you die, spawn points are your only option for where you're going to spawn.

Most notably, there is no Commander role. There really is no need for a

Commander because there are repair stations, ammo boxes and health boxes at fixed locations on the map. Snipers GPS replace the need for the UAV and the PC's version of an artillery strike is closer to Support's mortar strike than the artillery strike found in the console.

Most maps have an artillery strike available. About every five minutes, an alert pops up saying it is available to the first team that can get to the satellite briefcase uplink, which is located in a fixed spot. Although it's been toned down from the *Xbox* version as far as the circumference of destruction, it's still a frightening sight to look up and see the sky falling as you're taking over a flag. It effectively destroys all vehicles in its circumference.

There are no jets. So, if you're a bird jockey, choppers are going to provide the best scenic views. Don't count on air superiority being done with your fancy flying either because every sniper is equipped with a laser painter that can launch a guided missile from their main base to hunt you down. Sure, there is a technique of flying low and flying fast to outrun those missiles, but fixed ground-to-air-missile stations and Bradley tanks missiles can't be evaded and you can't always be sure which one is chasing you.



The maps are pretty big, but a full room is limited to 24 players. Most people are equipped with mics, but as of this writing, they haven't developed a fix for why a lot of people can't be heard. Even if the mics did work, you'll consider yourself fortunate if you're in a room where people aren't abusing it by having political debates, playing their radio or just breathing on it.

The classes have been simplified, swapped and consolidated for the console. Each class is equipped with a pistol, but the similarity ends there. There is no Medic class raising soldiers from the dead and there is no Anti-tank class.

Little things separate the two games, like the option for Capture the Flag in multiplayer. You can't "spot" enemy soldiers for your comrades to see. There are no weapon upgrades for multiplayer, so everyone is using the same grade of weapon. Speaking of weapons, if you read the beginning of the article, you noticed there aren't as many weapons available to you.



BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT (CONTINUED)



BF2:MC for the 360 was designed for the mass market console crowd. It's a lot simpler, so you can just pick up a controller and start playing. It gave the console crowd a familiar style of gaming based loosely on a popular PC series. While *BF2:MC* is a success, comparing the two is apples and oranges. If you want to play the PC version, play the PC version.



Graphics: 9.5

My first encounter with this game was on a degraded signal across a 100" projector screen and I wasn't impressed. The maps were too dark and I found myself getting lost in small rooms. When I finally got to hook this up to a 28" HDTV, I was floored. The lighting seemed perfect. There were moments in the game where it looked photorealistic. It would have gotten a perfect 10, but the darkness is still an issue for a lot of players. From the motion blurs to the dynamic lighting, *BF2:MC* makes me excited for what games will look like in a year. Is it worth the \$60 upgrade fee? That is completely subjective. Would I buy it? Yes. Would I say it's worth it? No.

Sound: 8.5

Voiceovers are the same as the original, although the announcer voice sounded like a television at high volume. It will be better when they actually have the volume slider work to turn it down. I wish there was an option to have the announcer speak English with an accent. Otherwise, it's spoken in the native language or it's spoken as the American announcer, which can get really confusing.

It seems like the other sounds have been redone. For instance, the sidearm's that don't have silencers are beasts. Your audio (including the announcer) will bounce off or echo from nearby objects like if you were hiding in a storage car. The vehicles sound like they're a lot closer than they actually are, so it throws off your auditory awareness. A bullet cutting through the air is very intimidating and I've already gotten my money's worth of being startled by nearby explosions.



Controls: 8

I love the 360 controller, but I feel as though the controls are slightly lacking behind the original Xbox version. There is a slight easing of the controls when looking around. Perhaps this was done on purpose for realism, but I find it annoying comparatively speaking. It seems less responsive. If they changed the controls to keep people from exploiting parts of the game, then it makes sense. I prefer the original set-up.



They also lost points for only having one controller configuration (besides flipping your y-axis and helicopter controls). Sorry, Southpaws, but it looks like the shorter lifespan isn't the only way you're getting screwed. Driving vehicles with a trigger really made up for some of the other flaws, though.

Fun Factor: 10

The fact that I continue to play this game says a lot. This game rewards smarter players and gives you plenty of options to be creative in your killing. Even when I'm on the receiving end, there have been plenty of moments where I wished I had caught it on tape.

Replay Value: 8.5

With only two types of games to play in multiplayer (Conquest and CTF), there is a good chance you'll get tired of the game (or the people). The single-player has plenty of replay value (but you have to like it to begin with) because of the grading system. If you're the type of gamer who likes to go back and perfect his score, you'll get plenty out of this game. Even though I don't like the single-player that much, I'd actually give the multiplayer an 8 and the single-player a 9 as far as replay value goes.

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

Xbox 360 First Impressions

Official GameSide.org Preview

By Lachelle "MadLion" Thomas
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Test Drive Unlimited, the upcoming "Massively Open Online Racing" (MOOR), was released last week as a single-player demo on Xbox Live, and I decided to take it for a "test drive." Test Drive Unlimited embraces online gameplay by allowing players to meet up, race, or just pass each other by on the over 1,000 miles of beautiful Oahu, Hawaii roadway. Test Drive Unlimited goes deeper than racing, it allows for almost an RPG-like experience; you choose your own character and race to win your way into fortune. This fortune can buy you more vehicles (of course) and also a bigger house, clothing and items/parts for your rides.

The Xbox Live demo starts you off in your house and gives you three cars in your garage. In the garage you can get up close and personal, viewing your rides from all angles and sitting in the car with detailed interiors unlike anything you've seen before in a racing game. Once you're sitting in the car you can start it up and take off.

After leaving your garage the demo presents you with a demonstration of your global positioning (GPS) navigation system. The GPS provides you a view of the entire island, and colors mark roadways that contain single and/or multi-player features. Races and other objectives are pinpointed on the map as well.

The controls for driving are pretty much the Xbox racing standard, such as the left and right triggers for braking and acceleration, and some extra options such as up the directional pad to roll up your windows. You can choose from several camera choices, such as outside the car and inside with



the interior/dash view. Using the right directional stick allows you turn the camera as if you were looking around.

The cars feel pretty realistic when driving, not arcade-ish at all. Flipping a corner too hard can land in you into the dirt, or in the path of oncoming traffic. The traffic reacts pretty realistically, quickly swerving out of your way and honking at you if you're in the way. Those who think they're going to play and crash into every car they can will not be able to do so without consequence; crashing will raise your police alert rate, with shield markers on the screen indicating how much trouble you're in. If you're caught you can pay a hefty fee depending on how many shields you have. The demo only allows for 10-15 minutes of play, so the majority of my gameplay consisted of driving around the island, which is huge considering the demo only has 100mi of the 1,000 the game has total. Even in 15 minutes, you won't be able to cover that much. I also tried setting up races with some of the AI cars, but setting up the racing markers which determines where the race ends didn't seem to work (maybe turned off in the demo mode?)

The demo, while short but extra sweet, leaves you with taste of what this game can and will be when it is released before the Fall of this year. Test Drive Unlimited looks to be an exciting and revolutionary addition to the Xbox 360 library, and to gaming period.

To learn more about Test Drive Unlimited, see our original preview, and stop by our game page to see in-game videos as well as plenty of screenshots!

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<http://gameside.org/previews.php?do=view&id=11>



SKIN YOUR GAMING

Using MyTego to style your gaming desire

By CodeMonkey

In the last ten years we've seen many case modifications for PC's. This inspiration was most likely a result of Apple Computers ability to make "beautiful" equipment. The revolution of PC styling has migrated to the console, hand-held, and the mobile device market. Some phone manufacturers have exchangeable face-plates for their phones, and third party companies create containers, and leather like suites for your mobile devices to snug up against.

Not wanting to be left out of this fantastic fad I've decided to "skin" my Xbox 360 faceplate. I have two Xbox 360's (call it a "his and hers" pair) and one of my Xbox 360's wields the "generic" white faceplate, while the other has a custom faceplate from Best-Buy. The custom plate cost \$19.99 and the selection is limited to three or four unique designs. However, some special deals for certain games include "bonus" faceplates to match the game theme. Some game theme faceplates have, also, been seen on the Internet as "possibilities," however I've not seen a method to get them without winning a contest.

For \$16.00 you can head over to www.mytego.com and obtain a fully customized faceplate "skin" for the Xbox 360 along with a host of many other devices. I could have opted to skin a GameCube, GameBoy (all versions), Nintendo DS, original Xbox, all PlayStations, my mobile phone, and even my laptop. However, today my taste was in skinning that generic white Xbox 360 faceplate.

The MyTego site boasted:

"Your TEGO is made of a superior quality, extremely durable vinyl material, yet thin enough that will allow it to conform to the shape of your device. It's waterproof and won't rip, tear, or crack."

"NO RISK! Our 100% satisfaction guarantee ensures that you get exactly what you want."

A vinyl cover, in my mind, means less risk of "cheapness." I was not looking for a sticker quality like that of my daughter's Dora Sticker book. I wanted something of heavier weight, more similar to my daughters Dora color-forms. I wanted something strong, and well worth my money. Lastly, I wanted assurance that if the job was horribly done that I was not out \$16.00. The mytego seemed to be just what I was looking for.

The trick to building a custom Xbox 360 image is having a handle on the art of design. The other option is to know a designer that has a few free hours to build you something real special. I opted for solution number two because I knew just the person to do it and since that person is also working on this magazine design it seemed like the right move. Luke Leidal ("Broken Design") was slotted to work some magic and build me a *Space Invaders* theme for my Xbox 360 complete with the 202P logo.



Designing the skin is easiest if you have a template to work from, which MyTego is not able to supply due to some prior marketing projects with Microsoft. However, there are many areas on the Internet where you can obtain templates. The other option is to create a MyTego skin with no image and save it to disk so you have a base to work from. For those that simply want a generic design or something that does not require centered text or aligned images the template will not be necessary.

To get started on creating a skin, head over to www.mytego.com, click *create new tego* and select "Handheld Gaming Systems, Consoles, Laptops" to bring you to the console area. From the drop-down menu select *Microsoft* to fetch all the Microsoft skinnable hardware. Once there you can select "Xbox_360_front" to obtain the faceplate design toolbox. You will see that the "front" also includes the controller face. I was only interested in a console faceplate so I clicked the *design* button below the console image.

The interface is slick, easy to use, and worked with both *Internet Explorer* and *Firefox*. By clicking the *upload* button you will be presented with a dialog box that allows you to select an image on your local computer. I used my custom *Space Invaders* image that I had built for me and placed it on the outlined 360 template on the screen so that I could make final adjustments.

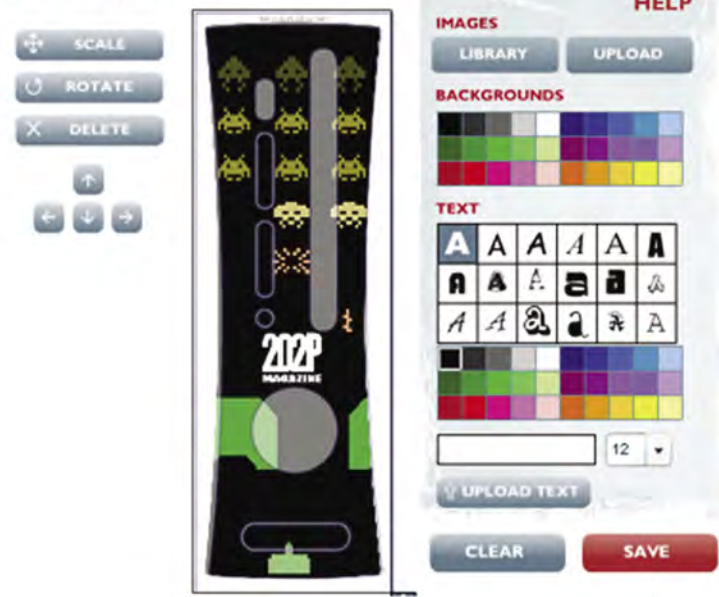


The *Space Invaders* photo appeared scaled down when it first loads, but you can use the *scale* and *rotate* options on the interface or simply drag the bottom right "handle" and hold down the SHIFT key to constrain proportions. I "bled" the edges over the template object on the screen so that I did not have any white space showing on the image.

Notice that position is important in my *Space Invaders* theme. I did not want the 202P logo to be part of the "ring of light" because I would lose most of the text, nor did I want my little invaders to be fully covered by the CDROM slot because they would be lost on the final skin. The Xbox 360 faceplate has a lot going on in terms of buttons and spaces so the goal was to lose as little art as possible. The memory slots and USB port cover would be pre-

SKIN YOUR GAMING (CONTINUED)

Microsoft Xbox_360_front



served because they are folding doors that display the art when the doors are in the closed position.

Any picture can be turned into a skin. Do you want to put an image of your kids on the console? Not a problem, just move the image around so that your children's faces are not covering the remote sensor, CDROM, or "ring of light." You can scale them up and down to fit to perfection. However, my kids fit best in a picture frame... *Space Invaders* is more my style.

Once the photo is perfect you can click *save* and then on *preview* to see what the final product will look like. It is here that you can decide if it's correct or not, without all the design tools distracting you. The photo opens in its own window so that you can close it, go back and make changes, and preview again. I was able to get the art to fit perfect on my second attempt.

Once I had it on the mark I clicked *Buy* and finished up the order as if I was purchasing anything else on the Internet.

The Process



The process of customizing the skin was easy. The most difficult part was getting the design I wanted because I can be picky. If I'm going to spend money on a custom design I want to feel a sense of perfection and completeness with the art and layout.

The designer tools on the MyTego website were easy to use and allowed for many features I did not need in my design. I could have overlaid text, and set background colors on the console face. I felt my *Space Invader* theme said it all so I left it as such.

There was a slight sense of fear clicking the buy button. I was thinking "what if the preview isn't really like the final product?"



and "is the art going to look the quality of the original jpeg I used?" When the product arrived I was relieved. The site lived up to the interface preview.

The package arrived slightly bent even though the package clearly states "WARNING: Do Not Bend." However the product was preserved without an issue. The product came with clear instructions on how to apply the new skin.



I had some difficulties getting the skin on the 360 faceplate due to the excessive spaces and the slight curve to the face. The process would definitely have been easier on a mobile phone, Sony PSP, or Nintendo Game-Cube, but that is not the fault of the skin itself.

The final product, skinned and ready to go, looked absolutely professional. No, it is not the wooden face-plate with that ugly red line through it... it is *Space Invaders*!



Prices

Designing the Xbox 360 faceplate and controller designs each cost \$16.00, however if you design two controllers **and** the faceplate it will run you \$30.00. Designing the entire theme is a cheaper solution and gives you a completely custom look and feel.

The cost of the product alone is only \$4.00 less than the full faceplates you can buy at the store (add shipping costs and it's about the same). The difference is the uniqueness factor and complete custom design. For home use you can show off your design creativity to others. For an established business you could design your box to fit the theme of your company or provide customers with designs that include your company logo so that they "remember" you when they're gaming.

If you are looking to simply rid yourself of the generic white face-plate you can go to BestBuy to buy the same art as the guy next door, but if you want something to call your own head over to <http://www.mytego.com>.

If you want to design your own *Space Invaders* theme send an e-mail request to editor@zold2play.com and I will send you the image I used for my design.



INTERVIEW WITH JEFF TUNNELL

GarageGames Co-Founder



Jeff Tunnell, a co-founder of Dynamix in 1984, helped found GarageGames in 2000. Jeff has an extensive background in game development including *A-10 Tank Killer*, *Red Baron*, *The Incredible Machine*, *Tribes*, *Trophy Bass*, *Marble Blast*, *Betrayal at Krondor*, and many more. Today you can find Jeff at GarageGames working new titles and building the *Torque Engine*, *Torque Shader Engine*, and the *Torque Game Builder*.

I was given the opportunity to talk with Jeff about some of his older games, newer games, and how he feels about the gaming market. If you find yourself stuck in a game developer bake-off this is the guy you want to be teamed with!

Your wikipedia entry shows that you are credited with some of the best games in the industry (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Tunnell), what game were you most proud of?

In a lot of ways, that is like asking which of my kids I like the best. But, if you are going to hold me to the fire, I would have to say:

The Incredible Machine: A simple idea (build machines that look like Rube Goldberg contraptions) that is still fun today.

Tribes: Brought a lot of innovation to FPS genre, i.e. teams, in-game server browser, etc. that *Unreal* is just now catching up to.

Trophy Bass: Invented a genre. Nobody believed in the game until it became a huge seller.

Marble Blast: Our first game at GarageGames. Bundled with all OSX machines, one of the first Indie titles on the XB360 to become the #1 seller.



Having co-founded Dynamix back in the day, and now continuing your experiences with GarageGames, what would you say has become the most challenging aspect of developing new games compared to the late 80's early 90's?

It is not harder to develop games now than in the past. In fact, it is much easier with tools and technologies like our Torque Game Builder. However, in some genres customer expectations have exceeded the ease of creation, so it still costs more to make games now.

It seems that more and more games are all eye candy and less game content. What are your thoughts on today's "graphic intense" gaming?



This is an extension of the above answer. I am not a fan of graphics or eye candy. I have to admit, I like what simple shaders can do to make a game look crisper or more fun, but I am absolutely not a fan of more and more characters with crappy voice acting and crappy story line. I am not a fan of having every nose hair and bead of sweat on my football players when that effort could be put into new types of game play. I am a fan of fun games. Especially fun games that don't require monthly payments and massive amounts of my life energy to play. In other words, I want my fun to be FUN!

The complexity of games has risen a great deal in the last twenty years, making it more difficult for a few independent programmers to make a full game release. Do you believe new outlets like Xbox Live Arcade will help grow the independent game development community? Or do you think Microsoft will be very restrictive on what games they "publish" on the marketplace?

Xbox Live is the future of game distribution. I am proud of the fact that we have *Marble Blast Ultra* in that channel and that it has been the number one grossing title for several months, and it is continuing to sell at a great pace. I don't think Indies will be locked out of this marketplace, but you will have to be a great developer to survive (check out my blog article on this very subject here: <http://makeitbigingames.com/blog/?p=15>).

INTERVIEW WITH JEFF TUNNELL (CONTINUED)

Microsoft seems very committed to allowing a lot of different kinds of games in this channel.

An independent game company can save a great deal of time using "off the shelf" programming interfaces and frameworks such as the Torque Engine. Do you find more indie companies using your product or is the demand higher from commercial companies?

Demand for our Torque products comes from Indies, education, and serious games/simulations. Now that we have our Torque Shader Engine for the Xbox 360, we are selling a lot more to commercial developers as well.

The Torque Engine has many development platform targets (Macintosh, Linux, Microsoft Windows), is it difficult to sustain support for so many operating systems?

We share a lot of core code and have dedicated teams for the different products. It is in our DNA to be cross platform, so we don't see it as a burden.

The Torque Engine is powerful and supplies a great groundwork for game companies. Is this your company's primary product or is GarageGames more focused on publishing titles of their own?

Currently, we make more money from our technology offerings than our games. We are expanding our game development efforts, and with new markets on consoles, hand-helds, and phones opening up, the percentage of revenue from games will increase.

Do you plan to bring other GarageGames' games - like Zap!, Gish, Rocket Bowl, Orbz, or ThinkTanks - to Xbox Live Arcade?

Yes to some of those. I can't discuss our future plans too much.

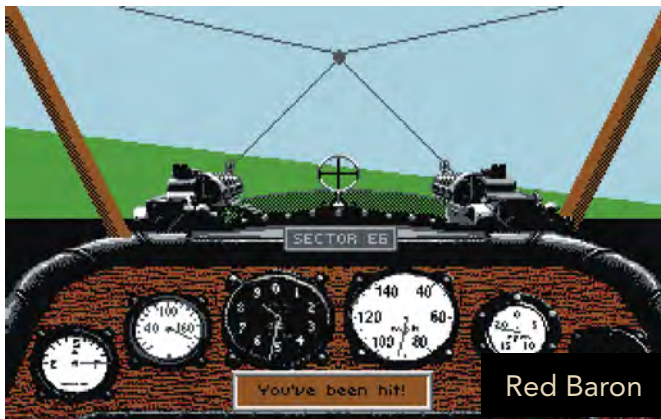
Does GarageGames have any support or initiative to help Indie game companies get published on the Xbox 360 (like your own Marble Ultra Blast)? For instance, does implementing the Torque engine make it easier to receive acceptance to Microsoft's Xbox marketplace?

Torque is very accessible at a price anybody can afford. Our suggestion for getting noticed is to prototype your idea on the Torque Shader Engine on a hot computer and graphics card with USB Xbox 360 controllers. You cannot get Microsoft's attention without a prototype. Without their attention, you cannot get a slot approved.

When Marble Blast Ultra hit the 360 Marketplace everyone I know was playing it. Did you expect such a simple game concept to be such a hit?

When we released Marble Blast on the PC, we knew it was a great game that could not find its audience. Yahoo, Real, and Shockwave players that were used to bubble poppers did not know what to do with a marble based FPS game. We persisted and sold a lot from our

own GarageGames Game Store, won an OEM bundle deal with Apple to have Marble Blast bundled with every OSX computer in 2005, brought it to Xbox Live on original Xbox, etc. By the time we were tapped by Microsoft to do a multi-player version for Xbox 360, we were very confident in the game. When we were playing the multi-player version in-house, we had quiet confidence that we would go to the top of the charts once it was released. Even with that confidence, we have been surprised by the sales of the game.



Are there any future plans to support the Torque Engine on Playstation 3 or Nintendo's Wii console?

Again, I can't comment on future or unannounced products.

Can we look forward to local multiplayer play for Marble Blast Ultra so the family can play together?

Not in the near future. This would require a new version, re-certification, etc.

Will more multiplayer maps be released for Marble Blast Ultra, as downloadable content for the Xbox 360?

Without making an announcement, I think this one has a high probability.

Has there been thought to adding more multiplayer modes like a downhill race or checkpoint point racing? Perhaps Black Diamond as a multiplayer level?

I can't really comment on anything specific.

Red Baron was one of my all-time favorite games; I would love to see a remake of this game with the Torque Engine. Are there any plans for a great historical flight game like 'Red Baron' on your development roadmap?

GarageGames is not working on a flight simulator, but Phil Carlisle, formerly of Team 17, is working on Air Ace using the Torque Shader Engine. More information here: <http://www.garage-games.com/blogs/1605/10538>



Besides GarageGames, what other development/publishing company do you believe to be a great addition to the video game market? Is there a development/publishing company that you look up to or highly respect?

Of course Blizzard makes great games, but, to be honest, I don't follow most of the AAA companies. It is a totally different world, and most of the games are of little interest to me. Will Wright still makes great

games, and I will play anything he comes out with.

Your business model is rather unorthodox compared to many of the big game companies out there, such as Electronic Arts. You seem to center your efforts on independent game developers and cater to that community. Do you find that the Indie developers have more passion and innovation for gaming or do you just like the challenge of being



INTERVIEW WITH JEFF TUNNELL (CONTINUED)

the underdog while big corporations spend millions on advertising and ship twenty titles a year?

It is none of those. I truly believe that innovation will come from the Indie market. As tools mature, and distribution mechanisms become clear, I absolutely believe that the games business will be a lot more like making music than making movies. Give me five great developers and 18 months, and we will blow you away on any platform. Great fun is not about more characters, or making movies out of our games, or adding rap songs, or sequels, or mainstream licenses. Fun is about great gameplay, innovation, and thinking about how to entertain your audience by using your own "voice." I can see seeds of this idea already starting to form. I see great Indie developers with passion in their hearts and a great vision of fun games. The big publishers will continue to make the big games that need to be made. An Indie cannot create *World of Warcraft*, but not all games need to be *WoW*.

Can you give us a little example of the GarageGames work environment? Are you all wearing geeky shirts, skateboarding down the hallways, and playing football at lunch or are you more business professional?

It's all shorts and laid back. Right now we are over 30 guys crammed into about 3,000 sq.ft. (do the math, it probably isn't even legal), but this week we are moving into some old warehouse space that will give us a little more breathing room.

As a small company, do you find yourself working long "start up" hours seven days a week or do you work a normal "nine to five" schedule?

I don't really feel a line between work and not-work. It is just what I do. Not all of the hours are at the office, but the brain never turns off when you are involved in a great company that is part of your life.

When you're not working what video games do you find yourself playing? Are you a PC or console fan?

I used to be PC, but *Xbox 360* is awesome. I look forward to *Wii*. I'm not a good gamer, and it feels like there are few games for me. I think that will change with sites like yours popping up. Not everybody is 16 years old with reflexes of lightning. I am working on some games that will show the kind of thing I want to play. No announcements, and you won't see them for over a year.



What was the first game that you played which made you say "hey, I'd love to do this as a career"?

It was so long ago that you would not even know. My first game for the *Apple II* was *Temple Of Apsbai*, a role playing game. All of the games blew me away, and everything was so fresh and new. It was exciting times. We had to make games that relied on fun and imagination, not bling, bling graphics.

Do you have any thoughts about the Massive Multiplayer Online (MMO) market? Is this an area that you would be interested in working in? Any thoughts on gaming which makes a person pay monthly? It seems to be a fairly profitable gaming market, but there are so few good independent MMO games.

I would be interested and actually have a couple of ideas on the drawing board that I am exploring. Of course, they would not look like MMO's to a standard gamer. An Indie cannot compete in this market. But, I have some ideas that could potentially have more people playing than most MMO's get. No more on this at this time though.

When you're not playing video games, what other hobbies do you enjoy?

Riding motorcycles (I own a motorcycle shop). Playing in a rock band. Olympic Weightlifting.

For those inspiring developers that want to build their own masterpiece Indie game, do you have any advice or motivational words for them?

Check out my blog at <http://www.makeitbiggames.com> for lots and lots of motivational words as well as practical advice on how to break into and survive in the games business. Other than that, keep it simple, get it done, and ship something. Focus on the fun, not the technology. People will find you and opportunities will open up.

For more on GarageGames, Jeff Tunnell, and making independent games please check out:

<http://www.garage-games.com>

<http://www.makeitbiggames.com> (Jeff's Blog)



A NEW HOPE

The Golden Age of Arcade Games

By CodeMonkey

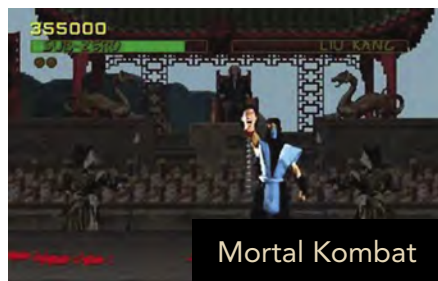
In 1971, an arcade game known as Computer Space was born, and it is considered the first ever coin-operated arcade video game. A year later, the developer of Computer Space, Nolan Bushnell, founded Atari, Inc. and the name *Pong* (1972) was heard around the world. Following this



event *Gun Fight* (1975), *Night Driver* (1976), and that well-known *Space Invaders* (1978) game issued in the "Golden Age of Arcade Games." *Space Invaders* inspired arcade game pioneers to create the classic *Pac-Man* (1980,) and this Japa-

nese development group, known as Namco, would begin to make its mark on society. Namco had its hand in an upgraded version of *Space Invaders*, titled *Galaxian* (1979), which would spring board them into the world of Nintendo's Famicom (NES) in Japan, and ultimately lead them to a merger with Bandai.

All this was possible, because a little video game publisher known to us as Midway published these newcomers in a growing game market. From that fire, would arise titles such as *Spy Hunter*, *NARC* (by Williams Electronics), and *Mortal Kombat*. All hugely popular arcade smashes, with *Mortal Kombat* clearing a path for the new Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) to step in and begin controlling the brutal action. FATALITY!



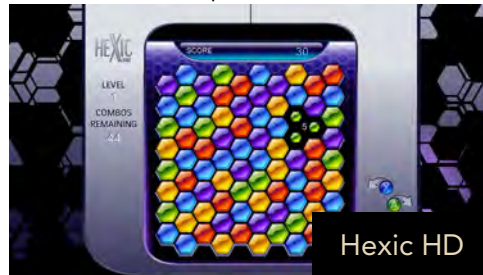
Years have come and gone and games have increased in complexity, graphic quality, story line, and sound. What happened to all those great arcade games by Service Games of Japan (SEGA)? The Golden

Age of Arcade Games has come and gone, and today we see most of the old arcade hang outs being boarded up and sold off. Some mall arcades are converted into restaurants, bathrooms, or yet another Taco Bell. Arcades cannot draw out the children, like they once could, in the days before beefy console systems landed under our Christmas trees.

Yet today, we're seeing the re-birth of the arcade in a new location: our homes. For many geeks and gamers, this is not a new concept, because they have been downloading game ROMS for their arcade/console emulators for years now. There are large varieties of console emulators, and of course MAME (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator), and people are filling their hard drives with bytes upon bytes of ROMS. It seems the success of these free solutions have gotten the big wigs at Microsoft and Nintendo seeking to squeeze a little more life out of old generation games. There is indeed money to be had in refreshing older arcade games or inventing new arcade games. *Geometry Wars* and *Hexic* on the Xbox

360 are highly addictive "arcade quality" games that are some of the top downloaded/played games on this newly released console!

The Nintendo Revolution is boasting an emulator to play classic games, from NES all the way to the Nintendo 64. What is unique about the



new generation of consoles that is driving the effort for classically remade games? What makes us want to play really old games on really powerful sys-

tems? Perhaps Nintendo and Microsoft hope to draw a different audience towards their consoles, or just breathe more life and enthusiasm into their current audience. Maybe the gamer demographic has sparked the realization that many gamers are getting older, and older gamers always stay faithful to that special game that got them hooked. Let us not forget that older gamers also tend to have more money than the younger ones!

The beauty of this arcade rebirth is that it allows independent game developers to get some face time. Arcade games are typically easy to understand, shorter in length, and contain simplified graphics with gradual increases in levels of difficulty. An arcade game is not a multi-million dollar project that requires full motion video, storyline designers, licensed musicians and musical scores. An arcade game is not guaranteed sixty hours of game play, nor does it require Dolby 5.1 Surround Sound. That means a small team of developers can work with a small pocket of cash to create some of the most addictive games on the planet, which you can download for minimal cost. It's a winning situation for all involved. For the price of a cup of coffee, you too could feed a starving developer in California.



Arcade games are obviously not a revolutionary idea, but as we all get older and begin to expand our families, we do not always have time to play a massive multiplayer RPG or sit down and run through four quarters of football. However, a game like *Gauntlet*, *Excite Bike* or *Joust* would fit better into many of our busy schedules, and with consoles allowing us to save progress at any moment in time, we can save our game to stop Liam from pulling Brianna's hair, or feed the newborn screaming in his cradle.

I look forward to the day when I do not have to play *Double Dragon* on my PDA, or *Ikari Warriors* on my cell phone. I've got a D-Pad and a dream, and I want my old arcade games back!

References:

Wikipedia
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Sega
MAME

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<http://www.nintendo.com>
<http://www.atari.com>
<http://www.sega.com>
<http://www.mame.net>

DSMOOTH

Gamer Profile

Name: Derek Nolan
GamerTag: DSmooth
Location: Natick, MA
Age: 32
Status: Married
Children: 3
Occupation: Software Engineer

Favorite drink:

(alcohol) Tito's Handmade Vodka, (soda) Coke Zero

Favorite food:

Prime Rib - there's no substitute. If you're a prime rib fan, I'd recommend the "Diamond Jim Brady" cut (about 3 inches thick) at Lawry's The Prime Rib is Las Vegas.

2old2play member because:

Well... Hmm... To keep it brief, look at our members list: user id 1 is unused, 2 is doodirock and 3 is DSmooth. At the time we launched 2old2play there was a void that we were looking to fill. We wanted to build an online community for gamers 25 and older. A community where we could meet one another, game with each other, and foster some real friendships. A little over a year, and 4600 members later, I think we're onto something.

Favorite music group:

Phish - From 1989 through their final performance in 2004 I managed to see 108 shows. Tenacious D comes in as my #2... :)

If you had a million dollars what would you do with it:

I'm going to assume it means a million dollars to blow on something frivolous, since a million dollars doesn't go as far as it used to (this question should probably be updated to "10 million dollars" to account for real estate prices in the 21st century). I'd probably buy my wife something nice, and pick up some cool things for the kids. I'd buy myself a few more cool toys, then head to Vegas with the rest.

Prediction on the Next Generation console winner:

First let me say that I'm not a "fanboy" of any one console, and have owned every major console since the Atari 2600 (and even have an old Odyssey machine in the attic). I think the XBox 360 is going to be the big winner. It's out of the gate 1st with powerful hardware, a killer online service, and a huge arsenal of great games. The Wii, with its attractive price-point and unique offerings will be a must have for most gamers, and pull in the #2 spot. The PS3 (although I'll be picking up one also) will certainly have the hardest time digging itself out of the hole it's in now. It has the disadvantages of hitting the market late, it has 2 completely different SKUs (not like the 360 where you can build a core into a premium), and it has a price tag that puts it out of reach for many gamers.

What is, in your opinion, the best old school game ever made (1970-1996):

I like how "old school" ends in 1996. :) Over the years there have been lots of games that I'd nominate for this, but I'd have to narrow it down to 1 PC game and 1 console game. For the PC it would have to be the

1990 Broderbund classic Stunts - a killer racing game with loops, jumps, twists, etc. For consoles, it would be the 1994 Rockstar SNES game Uniracers --- the high-paced unicycle stunt/racing game. Talk about amazingly addictive. Not to mention it could grind the skin off your thumbs in a matter of minutes... :)

What is the best game of all time on any platform at any date:

I've always been a huge FPS fan. Quake 2 was the best PC game of all time. Halo 2 was the best console game of all time.

If you had a motto for yourself, what would it be:

I don't really have a motto... I have a lot of catchphrases I've commandeered over the years. "I pwn n00bs" (Pure Pwnage), "Everybody be cool... YOU be cool." (From Dusk Till Dawn), and "Watch me for the changes, and try to keep up" (Back to the Future).

Do you believe video games today are completely revolutionary in design/story/technology or does history often repeat itself?

Very rarely do we see any real "innovation" in games. In recent years what's really been happening is that developers are just doing what they always wanted to do in the past with games, but the technology wouldn't let them. As technology improves, the same old genres just get better and better. Examples would be the A.I. in F.E.A.R. where enemies are jumping through windows and taking cover, or how Madden looks more and more like TV and less and less like a video game with each successive year.

If you had to give a younger kid advice about gaming what would it be:

Probably the same advice I give my own kids --- keep practicing, the more you play the better you'll get. I'm not one to just let them win, as that doesn't let them build any skills. For the first two years my kids played Mario Kart Double-Dash with me, they never beat me. Now we're to the point where they win about 20% of the time. It's not because I've gotten worse, but because by not "taking it easy" on them, they've gotten a whole lot better.

Mr. Plimpton, bless him, has been quick to point out to TV viewers just how wonderful Intellivision's graphics and gameplay are. But who better than baseball and football fans to compare Atari's sports games with ours?

As you can see from the independent research figures shown, baseball and football fans were well and truly on our side. It just goes to prove what we've said all along: Intellivision's NFL Football and Major League Baseball are the closest thing to the real thing.

While we're on the subject of the real thing, we'd like to tell you about an exciting new addition that will make playing your Intellivision even more lifelike: Lifelike voices. Provided by the new Intellivision module, Intellivision's, sold separately, adds a whole new dimension of reality to our games and will be available later in the year. But Intellivision is just one of many reasons to buy Intellivision. Already we offer a better designed system with greater attention to detail.

Our lifelike players make our sports games more realistic than Atari's.

Or as *Boying and Beating the Home Video Game* author Ken Utton says, "Intellivision graphics are unsurpassed."

Our sophistication makes the games more challenging. *Radio Electronic Magazine* echoes this: "Intellivision has placed more emphasis on strategy and realism than any other game system."

Our hand controller has 16 positions, so you're able to maneuver players and objects in more directions with greater precision and accuracy than with the Atari controller.

Our library of cartridges is growing fast, as is our popularity among video game experts.

With special introductions to come, like Intellivision's Deadly Discs from the Walt Disney movie.

All this attention to detail makes all the difference in the world to people who already own Intellivision.

If you visit your local dealer, you'll see the difference, too.

INTELLIVISION
Intelligent Television



Kirk Manley
KIRK MANLEY - STUDIOKM.COM



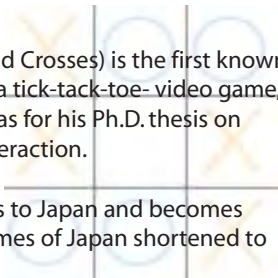
Teh Timeline

Standard Games (later Service Games), founded in East Palo Alto California by Martin Bromely, Irving Bromberg, and James Humpert provide coin-operated amusements for American service men



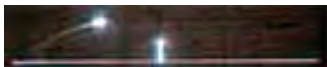
First vacuum tube "video game" designed by Thomas T. Goldsmith Jr. and Estle Ray Mann. The system used vacuum tubes to simulate missiles being fired at a target.

OXO (aka Noughts and Crosses) is the first known graphical game. It is a tick-tack-toe video game, written by A.S. Douglas for his Ph.D. thesis on human-computer interaction.



Service Games moves to Japan and becomes known as Service Games of Japan shortened to "Sega".

Nakamura Manufacturing Ltd. (later known as Namco) was founded in Tokyo. The company developed mechanical rocking-horses and other children's rides for department stores.



The video game Tennis for Two by William Higinbotham was invented on an oscilloscope to entertain visitors at his NY labratory.

A group of MIT students, including Steve Russell, programmed SpaceWar on the DEC PDP-1. The game pitted two human players against each other, each controlling a space ship capable of firing missiles.

Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney created a coin-operated arcade version of Spacewar and called it Computer Space.

Nakamura Manufacturing Ltd. renames itself to Namco.

Nolan Bushnell founds Atari and Pong would be released that same year.

Magnavox Odyssey is released and this begins the first-generation of console systems.



1940

1944

1947

1952

1955

1958

1961

1963

1971

1972

January 4, World War II: Axis powers - Hermann Goering assumes control of all war industries in Germany.

March 10, Chuck Norris was born.

June 6 - Battle of Normandy begins - Operation Overlord, code named D-Day, commences with the landing of 155,000 Allied troops on the beaches of Normandy in France.



World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE) Founded.

February 6 - In the United States, a mechanical heart is used for the first time in a human patient.

May 9, West Germany joins NATO.

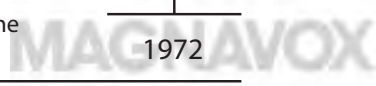
September 30 - Actor James Dean killed in car accident near Cholame, California.



John F. Kennedy becomes President of the United States.

The assassination of John F. Kennedy, the thirty-fifth President of the United States, took place on Friday, November 22.

Twenty-sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution lowers voting age to 18.



Teh Timeline



Namco acquires Atari's Japanese division bringing Namco to the coin-op market.



Dungeons & Dragons officially released.

The UPC label is used for the first time to ring up purchases at a supermarket.

May 9 - Public impeachment hearings against President Richard M. Nixon begin.

Coleco Telstar and APF TV Fun (a home Pong clone) consoles go on sale.

Punk rock group The Ramones release their first album.

North Vietnam and South Vietnam united to form the Socialist Republic of Vietnam - a Communist country.

Breakout is released this year for the Atari.

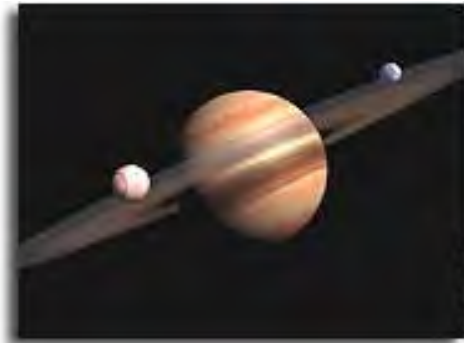
1976

Second-generation of console systems begins.

Atari Video Computer System (later known as the 2600) is released.

Apple II was released, and would continue to be successful and consistently the same up until the 1990's.

1977



SPACEREF

Golden Age of Arcade Games begins with Space Invaders.

U.S. Voyager I photo reveals Jupiter's rings.

Atari also releases Asteroids this year, and Magnavox releases Odyssey 2

1978

YMCA sues the Village People for libel because of their song of the same name.

Namco releases Galaxian.

On-Line Systems founded, later to be known as Sierra Entertainment.

Activision founded by some disgruntled Atari programmers.

1979

Namco releases Pac-Man. The main character now becomes Namco's mascot.

1980

At 10:50 p.m. on 8 December 1980, Mark David Chapman shot and fatally wounded John Lennon in front of Lennon's residence.

Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum consoles released.

Atari releases E.T, known as the worst video game every produced in history.

1982



Hulk Hogan defeats The Iron Sheik for the World Wrestling Federation Championship in Madison Square Garden. The cultural movement known as Hulkamania is born.

Video game market crashes.

The 8-bit Famicom is released in Japan.

1983

The full effect of 1983's crash is felt, and this year saw the largest lack of video games on the market with most hitting bargain bins all over the US. The rise of the personal computer takes over the need for console gaming.

1984

President Ronald Reagan calls for an international ban on chemical weapons.



Teh Timeline

The third-generation of video game consoles.

The Japanese Famicom system arrives in the US and is known as the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) (Deluxe Set: \$249.00, Action Set \$199.00).



The Space Shuttle Challenger disaster occurred on the morning of January 28, 1986, at 11:39 EST, when Space Shuttle Challenger was destroyed 73 seconds into its flight.

Atari ST and the Amiga are released.

1985

The Sega Master System arrives in the US from Japan and sold for \$200.00. This is the first official US console created by Sega since it was born in 1940.

1986

Maniac Mansion by Sierra released using a "point-and-click" interface. Japan would see the first installment of Final Fantasy.

1987



U.S. presidential election, 1988: George Herbert Walker Bush is elected over Michael Dukakis.

First issue of Nintendo Power published.

Ninja Gaiden released in the arcade.

1988

Fourth-generation of consoles begin with the release of the Sega Genesis in the United States. Original GameBoy is released.

1989

German reunification: An agreement is reached for a two-stage plan to reunite Germany.

Nintendo releases the Super Famicom in Japan. The Neo-Geo was released. Dynamix releases Red Baron.

1990

Exxon Valdez oil spill: Exxon and its shipping company are indicted on five criminal counts.

Super Nintendo (SNES) is released in the US. Sega releases Sonic The Hedge Hog. The arcade scene sees one last great gaming hit Street Fighter II before its great decline.

1991



Wolfenstein 3D released.

The Sega CD add-on is released for the Sega Genesis.

1992

Jeffrey Dahmer pleads guilty but insane to the murders of 15 young men and boys.

Panasonic tries the console battle with the 3DO. Atari Jaguar released. PC Gamers played DOOM for the first time.

1993



President Clinton delivers his first State of the Union address. Nelson Mandela is inaugurated as South Africa's first black president.

Fifth-generation of video game consoles begins with the Sony PlayStation.

Sega releases the 32X add-on for the Genesis.

1994

Sega Saturn is released in the US.

1995



Nintendo 64 is born. Quake and Duke Nukem 3D released.

1996

Opening statements in the O.J. Simpson civil trial begin.

Teh Timeline

Ultima Online goes live.

Square Co., Ltd. releases Final Fantasy VII for the PlayStation.

1997

Debut of two up-and-coming games: Grand Theft Auto, and Half-Life.

Grand Turismo is released for the PlayStation and Nintendo releases The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

1998

Sega starts the sixth-generation (128-bit) of consoles when the Dreamcast is released in the US.

Sony comes out the clear winner in the fifth-generation console wars leaving Nintendo behind.

1999

Y2K

Y2K preparation was a major event for companies and in over-reporting media.
January 1 - Euro currency introduced.



Sony PlayStation 2 is released in the US.

2000

Nintendo's GameCube is released in the US
Microsoft's Xbox released.

Halo ships on Microsoft's Xbox.

Sega leaves the console hardware scene like Atari before it.

2001



September 11 - Almost 3,000 killed in a Terrorist Attack on the World Trade Center in New York City, The Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, and rural Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

The Sims overtakes Myst as the all-time best-selling computer game.

2002

The Nintendo NES and SNES are officially removed from production.

Infogrames, Inc. officially renames itself "Atari."

2003



George W. Bush is inaugurated in Washington, D.C. for his second term as 43rd President of the United States.

Bungie Studios produces Halo 2.

2004



Microsoft starts the seventh-generation of consoles with its release of the Xbox 360.

2005

The New England Patriots win their third Super Bowl title in four years by winning 24-21 over the Philadelphia Eagles in Super Bowl XXXIX.

Gas prices are insane, will it ever stop rising?

2o2p Magazine publishes issue #3 on www.2old2play.com

2006

202P Magazine



Gaming:

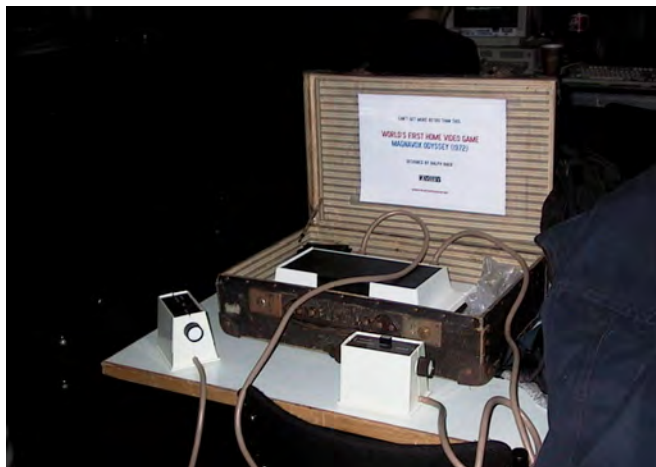
The Early Years

by WebMonkee

Introduction

There was not a perfect date to be born in order to grow up as a gamer, but I'd like to think I came awfully close. As I was born in 1967, I was old enough to be aware of, play and even own some of the games that are widely recognized as the founding fathers of gaming.

Let's begin with my one foray into the 60's. In 1968, Ralph Baer completed his prototype of the Odyssey. The Odyssey is generally accepted as the first true home video game system. It was not a pretty beast. It used circuit cards instead of cartridges, and if you saw one, your first thought would probably have been that the electric company accidentally left



some equipment behind. It was also analog versus digital and actually ran on batteries, if you can imagine. But, it worked.

The Early/Mid 70's

After tinkering with the prototype for three years, Magnavox released the Odyssey to the world in 1972. It did not exactly take the world by storm, but it sold pretty well. Magnavox did not really know how to market it – no one did – and salesmen, who were more interested in selling TVs than in selling a video game, would sometimes even tell potential customers that they could only use it if they owned a Magnavox TV as well. But, make no mistake, if you're looking for the granddaddy of home video game systems, this it is. The Odyssey invented the concept of changing the game by swapping out a cartridge (or circuit board in this case). They also later added the first video game peripheral, a light gun, and they even sort of created color games, by selling colored overlays you could put on your TV to get some groovy color effects. Not bad for a system that came out at a time when most people were still using rotary phones and listening to AM radio.

But perhaps one of the most interesting aspects of the Odyssey, and possibly it's most lasting impact, is that it was marketed in Japan by a little company called Nintendo. As you may know, Nintendo went on to have a bit of success in the video game industry itself. They got their first taste of it with the Odyssey though.

One of the Odyssey's circuit cards played a game that everyone would have called Pong if Pong had been released yet. Since it had not been, it was called tennis. But, as you may know, most people consider Pong (released by Atari) the first true "hit" home video game, and there were some litigious ties between Magnavox and Atari over Pong. This means that the Odyssey has ties to both Nintendo and Atari. If that doesn't scream, "THE ODYSSEY WAS IMPORTANT" to you, then I'm guessing that you only picked this magazine up to squash a bug or something and just happened to start reading it.

Since we've already mentioned Pong, we'll stop there next. In early 1972, Nolan Bushnell, who was already a fan of very early games, including the Odyssey system, formed his own company and called it Atari, which is a term from the ancient game of Go. The early history of Atari is worth several articles itself, especially the part where Magnavox sued them over Pong, so let's just say that Bushnell first created a coin-op version of Pong, which was reasonably successful. That led to the 1975 release of the home version of Pong, which was initially sold only at Sears.

Since my step-dad sold Major Appliances for Sears back then, and Pong was considered a Major Appliance, we had one the same month it was released. If you remember the frenzy surrounding the release of Pong, then you realize that getting one made me a very lucky boy indeed. As I was a lad of eight at the time, I was only allowed to play it under supervision, but I WAS allowed to play. And, play I did. I'm pretty sure my parents bought Pong thinking it would be a clever diversion for their



friends after a dinner party. I doubt they ever considered that it would forever change the life of their young son.

When it was later released, we also had Super Pong, which added some twists to the game, such as double on-screen paddles. In the mid-seventies, there were a ton of Pong clones and knock-offs, both arcade and home versions. Many of my friends had either Pong or a clone, and they were all fun. If you were alive back then, you probably either had one or had a friend who had one too.

Sadly for me, my parents kind of peaked with Super Pong and had little or no interest in the systems that came later on. Fortunately, I was quickly perfecting the art of begging and pleading, meaning that I was able to partake of most of the gaming milestones in the 70's.

Gaming: The Early Years

At this point, I'll step away from Atari for a moment (wow, I guess I DO have some willpower now), to talk about other developments in the early 70's. Specifically, we'll take a short look at what was going on in the mainframes at colleges all over the country. Those very early mainframe games from the 60's hadn't been forgotten, and the next batch of computer programmers were chomping at the bit (pardon the pun), to take that type of gaming forward. The early 70's saw the birth of a mainframe baseball game, a Star Trek game, a few maze games, and even one called Hunt the Wumpus.

But it was, once again, 1975 that saw the creation of two major developments. One was the game Adventure (or Advent, or Colossal Cave, as it was also known). This was one of the first "hit" games, and it had a long life, from its original programming in Fortran to a version in C, to, eventually, a Microsoft version for MS-DOS 1.0.

The other major development of 1975 was the creation of Dungeon, again for mainframes, which was a game loosely based on Dungeons & Dragons. This game is important because it was the first to use "line-of-sight" graphics, the latter being a map that showed the parts of the dungeon you had already traveled through (you may think of it as Fog of War). Can you think of any other games where line of sight maps have been used since then? Or, perhaps, any other games that owe a debt to Dungeons & Dragons?

So, 1975 was a pretty important year for gaming. But, we hadn't seen anything yet. Before I get to the amazing year of 1977, the year I turned 10, the year I truly became a "gamer," and the year my parents finally realized they had created a digital monster, we need to mention a few other notable events from the early 70's.

The first handheld game was Tic-Tac-Toe, and it was released by Waco in 1972. I did not have one of these, but one of my cousins did, and although I don't remember it at all, my older brother tells me we both played it at my cousin's house. I'm sure I was just randomly pressing buttons, inadvertently practicing my general strategy for any Xbox game today.

The Fairchild VES (Video Entertainment System) was the world's first cartridge-based console system, and it came out in 1976, although it was later renamed to the Fairchild Channel F, after another, slightly more popular cartridge-based system came out. I never played a Fairchild. I never even saw one. I didn't know anyone who had one. But, from what I hear and have read, there are some very good reasons it was trounced by a popular rival. The Fairchild just wasn't a very good system. But, it did perform one important task. It made Atari realize they better quit working on refinements and get their cartridge-based system to market quickly, which they did, in the magical year of 1977.

There was also a minor event in the world of home computing on April 1, 1976, when Apple computer was founded by the Two Steves, Jobs and Wozniak. 1977 would prove to be a good year for them as well, but I'm getting ahead of myself.



The late 70s'

Oh, so many developments in 1977, across all platforms and genres. It's difficult to know where to start, but, I suppose it makes the most sense to begin with the system that is synonymous with 70's Video Games: The Atari VCS.

The VCS was not an immediate hit, selling only 250,000 units in 1977. With a development cost of almost \$100 million dollars, Atari's investors were certainly looking for more robust sales, which they soon got in the form of multi-million unit sales for the next four years.

I wish I could say I had a VCS in 1977, but I didn't get one until 1978, for my 11th birthday. I opened it at my birthday party, and I can still recall the insanely jealous looks in the eyes of all my friends. But, having to wait until 1978 had one positive, I also got the Breakout cartridge, meaning I pretty much had the two best games that were available in 1978, Breakout and Combat.

The Atari VCS just did everything right. The equipment was sturdy, easy to use and responsive. The graphics, for the time, were impressive (especially compared to Pong), and the sound effects were unlike anything I had ever heard before. If you stop right now, I bet you can recall what Combat sounded like. I sure can.

One of the best things about the VCS was that many cartridges contained multiple versions of the game. Combat had 27 different versions, including playing as a tank, a bi-plane and a jet fighter. It also mixed things up within those variations. Did you used to like playing the three bi-planes or the single giant bomber? How about the bouncing munitions tank version where you could nail the other guy by using your Pong skills? Or, who could forget being invisible? When you think about it, Combat was absolutely brilliant, which is no doubt why it was the game that shipped with the VCS until 1982. Wow, remember when consoles came with a game?



The VCS lived a long life well into the 80's, and wasn't officially "retired" until the 90's. For those of us who grew up with it, it was just called an Atari, and it was the first game console most of us owned, giving it a certain mystical quality for anyone who never "grew out of" gaming. I still have mine from 1978, and it all still works, except for one joystick, which I replaced a long time ago. I set it up maybe once every year or so, and always play the best game when I do.

Now, I'm sure you're wondering, "What will he say was the best game?" I will tell you, in just a moment, but first, let me say that I know you won't agree with me. If two of you discuss it, you likely won't agree with each other either. I have had this debate for almost 30 years, and I've never heard any five people agree on the best game for the Atari. So, according to me, the best game for the Atari VCS was Kaboom!, by Activision. I know it was released in 1981, and this article is about 70's gaming, but just deal with it, 'cause there's no way I'm writing an article about the VCS and not talking about Kaboom!

Gaming: The Early Years

For those who haven't played it, the object of Kaboom!, was to catch bombs in buckets of water as they were dropped by the Mad Bomber. The Mad Bomber was decked out in classic prisoner striped garb, and his entire purpose was to make you miss a bomb. When you did, the three buckets you started with were reduced to two, then one, then it was game over. Whenever you missed a bomb, you were also treated to every other bomb on screen exploding, allowing you to wallow in your ineptitude. You could also crank up the difficulty by having smaller buckets, which is the only way "real" Kaboom! players played the game.

The best part of Kaboom! was the absolute control the paddles gave you. You truly were one with the buckets, which was a good thing, because the game got so fast after a while that if you were not one with the buckets, it was Game Over quickly. This "oneness" is what still hooks me on this game. When you reach the highest speed, you pretty much go into a trance and start ignoring the bombs and only watching the bomber. To this day, no other game, no matter how much I loved playing it, has ever put me into that kind of trance.



If you managed a score over 3000, you could take a picture of it and send it into Activision for membership in their elite Bucket Brigade. I did this and got my membership kit, which included a very cool patch. Sadly, in one of the more than 11 moves I've made as an adult, my patch was lost. But, when it comes to being a Kaboom! lover and expert player, I'll borrow a Mel Brooks-ism, "Patches? We don't need no stinkin' patches!" (Although that's not really true at all. I'd love to have my patch back)

The VCS was renamed as the Atari 2600 when the Atari 5200 went to market in the 80's. A huge library of games exists for the 2600. I personally own 58. There were even "X-rated" games made for the 2600, in lovely 8-bit detail. The only one I ever saw was at a game convention. It was called Custer's Revenge, and it had all the hard core action you could pack into about 50 pixels.

When all is said and done, you may love your Nintendo Entertainment System (NES), or your Sega Master System, or your Dreamcast, or any of the other systems out there, but, if you don't have a place in your gaming heart for the Atari VCS, then you're missing a great piece of gaming history.

While I could (obviously) wax rhapsodic about the 2600 for pages and pages, this isn't an article just about Atari (Really! Honestly! Go back and look!). 1977 through 1979 proved to be a time in gaming history that I'm not sure was ever repeated. From the arcades, to home systems, to handhelds, to computer games, it was all happening in those three years.

The late 70's also saw an interesting development in home consoles other than the Atari 2600, with the release of the Odyssey II in 1978. The console that started it all, tried really hard to take gaming to the next level. I did not have an Odyssey II, but, my best friend did, so I spent almost as much time on that system as I did on the 2600. Let me say, it was a damn fine system.

The Odyssey II came with a membrane keyboard, which was just frustrating enough to add to the overall challenge of the Odyssey II. One thing stands out for me when I think of the Odyssey II – the joysticks. The 2600's joysticks were real thumb numb-ers, meaning they were not exactly easy to push (although they were very responsive and sturdy).

The first time I used the Odyssey II joystick, I thought I had broken it. It went from side to side effortlessly. But, it was not as sturdy, and to my mind, not nearly as responsive as the 2600's joysticks. Still, it was far easier to game for hours with it than with the rock sticks of the 2600.

The best game my friend had, and therefore the best game I know of for the Odyssey II, was Quest for the Rings. This was a pretty cool game that decently combined both a board game and on-screen action.



However, the Odyssey II suffered from a lack of third party developers, and there simply were never enough new games for it to hold the interest of potential new buyers, especially when there were so many new games for the Atari 2600 every month.

The notion of third party developers takes us to an interesting footnote in the history of Atari. Tired of the management style of Atari, several designers broke away and formed their own company, which they called Activision. I don't think there's much to argue, if you say that Activision ultimately made the best games for the Atari 2600, including my personal favorite, Kaboom! There is also nothing to argue if you say that Activision clearly had a recipe for success, since they are still a gaming juggernaut today. Activision was the first true third-party developer, and just about every third-party game since then owes a debt to this group of innovators.

We'll look at arcades in the late 70's next. From 1977 to 1979, there were some truly excellent games that could be found in arcades, such as: Space Invaders, Asteroids, Galaxian, Breakout, and Night Driver. If I could have back the money I spent on just those five machines, well, I could probably buy those five machines and put them in my Family Room. (Oh man, give me a moment while I imagine that).

Although Video Arcades would be a staple throughout the 80's and beyond, it was really the latter 70's that got them rolling. At one time, there were entire arcades that only had Space Invaders in them, and you had to stand in line to play anyway. I remember well when my local bowling alley took out a bunch of tables and put in an arcade. Well, two machines anyway - Space Invaders and Asteroids. To hell with bowling!

I don't think arcades will ever have the same allure they had back then, because home systems today can do just about the same or better as their arcade counterparts. But, in the late 70's, arcade games were far superior to home versions, and arcades became a destination. You didn't go to the mall and stop at the arcade, you went to the arcade and walked

Gaming: The Early Years

through the mall to get to it. Our Putt-Putt course was completely taken over by its' huge arcade. We couldn't care less about Putt-Putt anymore. Later, in the 80's, I could take a date to an arcade, and she would want to go, and she'd have fun! Can you imagine?

Technologically, the late 70's were huge for arcade games. The Shooter was invented and refined with Space Invaders, Asteroids and Galaxian. The trackball was introduced with Atari's Football, and the simulator took the world by storm with 1979's Lunar Lander. For a 12 year old gamer, such as myself, arcades in the late 70's made life worth living, and the real value of a quarter far exceeded 25 cents.

Of course, why go the arcade when you can take the arcade with you? Our next stop is hand held games of the late 70's.



The first LED game was introduced in 1976 by Mattel, and it was called Mattel Auto Race. I did not have one, but I did have the next game Mattel brought out, Football. If you are over 35, I am almost sure you had one too, or, desperately wanted one if not. Because, despite its faults (like having a nine-yard field instead of a ten-yard one, having no pass function, and not allowing you to run backwards!), it was actually fun! And addicting! And annoying to your parents! The Holy Trinity of pre-teen gaming! If you don't remember LED gaming, your "players" were just red dashes on a screen, but, in your

mind, they were fully-rendered players that would put Madden 2006 to shame. Many other sports-related titles would follow, including Basketball and Football II, both of which I still own today.

1979 saw the release of the first handheld game system that used game cartridges: Milton Bradley's Microvision. The Microvision wasn't exactly a great system, with its' 16x16 pixel screen and just plain weird button set-up, but, someone had to be the first, and Microvision was the first. Perhaps the most interesting thing about the Microvision is that it was developed by Jay Smith, who would later go on to develop the Vectrex system, which was a very good, very unique system in the 80's.

Our final stop is with computers and computer gaming in the late 70's. We'll start with the hardware.

If you wanted a Personal Home Computer in the late 70's, there were three main companies to choose from, Apple, Commodore and Tandy. The Apple II is probably still the best known, since you may have had one at your school. The Apple II looked very much like a typewriter, and it was easy to get the case open and monkey around with the insides, which a whole lot of people did. It came with eight expansion slots, and enough RAM sockets to hold an amazing 48 kb of RAM. One thing that was great about the Apple II is that you could hook it up to an ordinary TV for display. It also came with BASIC built-in, meaning anyone could try their hand at programming. My older brother had an Apple II, and I think he let me actually touch it once. I had to wear gloves, as I recall.



The Commodore computer of the late 70's was the PET, or Personal Electronic Transactor (isn't THAT catchy? Good thing they had better marketing by the time the C64 came out!).

The PET was a one-piece computer, meaning the monitor was built in. I never used one, but it sold reasonably well. Its main place in history

is that it achieved enough success to allow Commodore to develop the Commodore 64.



The TRS-80 from Tandy was an odd mix of good and bad. The fact that it had a built-in tape drive was good. The fact that the keyboard was essentially a set of mechanical switches led to plenty of unintended repeat letters, was bad. The fact that you could buy it at Radio Shack was good or bad, depending on your personal impression of Radio Shack. Love it or hate it, the TRS line stayed around for a long time through many different versions and is second only to the Apple II line in terms of staying power.

Once you had a computer, the next question was "where are the games?" A lot of them were games you would program yourself, using code found in magazines like Creative Computing. Or, if you had a friend with a computer, as I did, you could order discs online and then sort through the often poorly written documentation to attempt to play it.

As you might expect, there were some early "hit" games as well, and games like Zork and Air Warrior were widely distributed, sometimes even legally. Yes, in the early days of computer gaming, you stood little chance of protecting your code in any meaningful way, so your best bet was to hope to gain some notoriety from the widespread use of your code.

Conclusion

That takes us through many of the most important developments of the 70's. Although there were many advances in gaming throughout the 70's, the 80's would really set the gaming world on fire. If there is any one thing to remember about gaming and games of the 70's, it's that most of the advances were made by ordinary people working with whatever tools were available. And, the emphasis was always on game play, because there wasn't a whole lot else to offer.

Although you could undoubtedly fit all of the code from every game I played in the 70's into less space than one map from a modern-day game takes, I don't think any game will ever match the wonder I felt the first time I played Pong at home. Had I been older, I might have felt a paradigm shifting. I might have realized I was at the dawn of something that would contribute to my generation's gap with that of my parents. I might have stopped to note the difference in the world. But, I was just a kid, playing a game, hoping I had time before bed for one more match. It's good to know some things have pretty much stayed the same.

WIKI FACTS

Devices to aid computation have evolved from simple recording and counting devices through the abacus, the slide rule, and more recent electronic computers. Even today, an experienced abacus user using a device designed hundreds of years ago can sometimes complete basic calculations more quickly than an unskilled person using an electronic calculator — though for more complex calculations, computers out-perform even the most skilled human.

-Wikipedia.org

The birth of PC gaming

A brief look into the past and present

By DeadDrPhibes

In the early days of the 1970s, computer games were little more than a fantasy to most of the world's population. Only the very few hardcore computer tech specialists had even the faintest inkling that computers could be used for more than calculating complex equations and filling huge rooms with noise, heat, and the faint stink of unwashed code math majors. While it would be nearly impossible to cover the history of the PC in a magazine-length article, I will try to cover the history of pc gaming, at least as far as I had contact with it, from the mid-70s to the mid-80s.



It's difficult to pin down what the first true PC game was. Broadly defined, early computer games date back to primitive missile simulators (circa 1947) and Tic-Tac-Toe games on very early computers with analog electronics. These computers were essentially glorified calculators with a bit of storage (in some cases, "storage" meant the position of a physical relay as big as your fist, or the on/off condition of a vacuum tube).

The first playable, reproducible and complex game that I could find was Spacewar. This was a 2-player game written by Steve Russell and assorted other programmers referring to themselves as the "Higham Institute." The game was developed at MIT for the PDP-1 mainframe. Initially it was written as a way to kill time in the mainframe room, but soon became part of the PDP-1 package, used by field technicians as a diagnostic aid. Once a new PDP-1 was set up, field techs would run Spacewar as a diagnostic to test the PDP-1s functionality. This game actually found its way into arcades some 10+ years later, but even the early versions strongly resembled the first Asteroids game: Two ships, swirling around a central gravity well, attempted to shoot each other. I actually played the arcade version of this at a Kansas City area amusement park as late as 1978 and found it fairly sophisticated: Players could choose ships and game settings such as black hole gravity on or off, shots could be set to respond to gravity or not, etc. Ships could be

partially damaged, with bits of debris following along for a short time, and degrading maneuverability as bits got knocked off.

Even as early as the 1960s, console games and PC games were beginning to diverge. The first versions of Pong were developed with analog TV equipment rather than complex and expensive computer electronics. While Pong began to move video gaming into the public consciousness, PC games were still the plaything of the elite computer science community.

Much like the early years of the auto industry, once electronics, computer, and game manufacturers got the idea that people would actually buy computers for their homes, more and more manufacturers started cranking out their version of a "home PC," with widely varied success. With every year, there were new machines from new computer makers on the market, until the initial crazed demand was satiated and buyers became more discerning. A handful of models gained popularity and many manufacturers either went out of business or focused their efforts in other areas. To the best of my limited investigative abilities, the first PC marketed to the home was the Honeywell H316 "Kitchen computer," sold in the 1969 Neiman-Marcus catalog for a paltry \$10,600. This thing was built into a pedestal base desk sort of thing, with the "Jetsons" design sensibilities of the late 60s. It even came with its own, permanently attached director style chair and a cutting board, what convenience! The H316 is mentioned here only to give an idea of where home computing started; this thing was only good for storing recipes and nothing else. No games (unless you enjoyed playing "Find the kielbasa recipe"), no graphics, no fun.

Into the early and mid-70s, we had the Altair and Apple-I and similar ventures. These were pre-built kits for consumers. You could get the Altair as a pre-built box for a couple of hundred more, but to have any sort of storage and a monitor, you were looking at \$2,000 and a room full of ugly metal boxes. While home-made text games could be written for anything with a language and a display, most PCs at this time were at best text-only display models (the Altair only came with binary display LEDs), and couldn't handle even text output without a lot of add-ons.

In 1977, the home PC market truly exploded. Complete PCs could be purchased with monitors and even -gasp! - software! 1977 saw the release of the AppleII, Commodore PET, and Radio Shack TRS-80 model 1 ("Trash-80"). Graphics were either ASCII (text) character based or low-resolution blocks, but at last there were graphics based games, some even had sound! Prices ranged from about \$600 for the TRS-80 to about \$2600 for the AppleII with the full 48k of RAM. While the PET was not really expandable, it did include a built-in monitor and storage system (cassette tape drive). The TRS80 included a monochrome monitor, the AppleII only included the CPU, but had eight internal expansion slots and could handle six color display output right out of the box.

My first experience with a PC-based game was on a Heathkit H89 around 1979. This was a monochrome all-in-one "PC", the monitor was built into the huge tan plastic case that also housed the disk drive, CPU and keyboard. Did I mention this was built from a kit? In the fine tradition of the Altair and the Apple-I, Heathkit offered this CP/M based machine as an electronics kit, bringing the price well down from a manufactured equivalent. The H89 sported anywhere from 16 to 64k of RAM, a 90K 5 1/4" floppy drive, a blazing 2 MHz Z80 processor and no hard drive, but at the time it was one of the most advanced PCs you could buy for your home (for a mere \$2,000). And what could one do

The birth of PC gaming

with all this amazing technology and the dazzlingly bright silk-covered amber monochrome display? Well, I have no idea; all I did with it was played Colossal Cave Adventure, later re-incarnated as Zork I. This was an all-text adventure that was essentially in the public domain at the time (how many of you remember “you are lost in a maze of twisty little passages all alike”?)

Like most games of the era, Colossal Cave Adventure was on a low-density 5.25” floppy disk. As it happens, the Heathkit’s operating system was also partially on a 5.25” floppy disk, as there were no hard drives at the time that were practical for home use. This of course led to the scourge of 70s and early 80s gaming: the Disk Swap. Basically it goes like this, put in your OS disk, startup the computer and after about 10, 15, or 20 minutes, when the PC is up and running, pop out the OS disk and put in the Game Disk and load that up. This may also require swapping back to the OS disk if the PC needs to look up some disk or memory commands while loading the game. While the game is running, you may need to swap to another disk to save. Of course, PC gamers who have played Riven or any other multi-CD game are familiar with the disk swap, but probably not with swapping out disks every time you save.

Around the time the Heathkit came out, several other home computers popped up on the market as well: The Apple II+, the TI 99/4a, and the Commodore Vic-20, for example. As illustrated in the chart, each of these computers had their advantages and disadvantages. The Apple had loads of expansion slots, a half-decent processor, and immense popularity. At this stage of PC gaming, most of the games available were cheap little amusements written by some deranged coder in his parent’s garage/basement/Rumpus Room and published at low cost on floppy disks with black and white labels in plastic bag packaging.



Games were getting more of an arcade feel, but most of the popular games were written by other gamers. Apple of course sported the first version of Castle Wolfenstein, a 2D low resolution monochrome Nazi-hunting game with a crude attempt at voice synthesis (“did that guy just say SS or wiener schnitzel?”) While the Apple II+ had ‘color’ graphics, the colors were all faded looking pastels, even on Apple’s own monitors. Apple probably had the lead on available games, as anyone who had an Apple II+ could write games for the Apple II+. The downside was that the II+ was pretty damned expensive for those of us who weren’t pulling in \$25 per hour in high school and didn’t have parents who gave money on a regular basis.

The Greatest Home Computer of all time (from 1979 until maybe 1980)

Thus was I relegated to the faithful but downtrodden ranks of TI 99/4a users. The TI had quite a lot going for it. Because of failures in Texas Instruments’ development section, a “dumbed-down” processor specifically designed for the 99/4 and 99/4a was not going to be ready

by the targeted production date. TI’s solution was to use the TMS9900 CPU. This was a 16-bit processor TI had used, in one incarnation or another, in their business computers since the early to mid-70s. My high school in fact had one of the original TI business machines, a TMS 990 mini computer. This was basically a huge, heavy metal desk with a computer built into it. It had two 8” floppy drives and a monochrome monitor built into the desk surface. This machine was fantastic for holding down buckled floor tiles and occupying about 18 sq. ft. of floor space. Because of the 16-bit processor, we wound up setting it up to figure prime numbers and let it go for two semesters. The 16-bit processor, at the time, was significant overkill for a home computer, particularly for a small, toy-like PC with a slightly substandard sized keyboard and a cartridge deck. However, it was fairly fast and durable, and with the editor/assembler cartridge that allowed users to write in assembly code and compile their own programs, allowed the average Joe to write some pretty decent games. This was damned lucky for the rest of us TI users, as TI kept a stranglehold on development of cartridges for this machine. Most of the games you could get in the early days of the TI were simple, unsophisticated games that quickly became repetitious. One exception was Tunnels of Doom, a very early RPG game that came on a cartridge and a cassette tape or 5.25” disk. Dungeon levels were generated randomly as the game progressed, and provided endless hours of distraction. Of course, about ¼ of that time was waiting for the next level to generate, but that wasn’t so bad at this stage of PC development.

While most home users couldn’t create their own cartridges, we could write some pretty nice arcade style games with the Extended Basic cartridge and a tape or disk drive. TI was the first home computer that let users define “Sprites,” icon-like graphics in blocks of 256 pixels with 16 available colors that could move smoothly across the screen. The TI also handled collision detection for Sprites. Collisions with other sprites or with set locations on the screen could be handled quite quickly, even if the program were written in TI extended basic. Any schmoe could sit down and write their own space invaders or asteroids style game in a short afternoon.

The downside to the TI, apart from the lack of outside game developers that lasted until the TI was shoved to the background by the C-64, was the difficulty in expanding the thing. Initially, you could buy individual peripherals, such as a pretty damned effective voice synthesizer, 48k memory expansion, floppy drive, RS/232 (serial) interface and a few others. The problem with this, apart from the \$150-\$250 price tag of each add-on was that they all plugged into a single port on the right side



of the console, or into the right side of another peripheral. This meant that if you wanted speech synthesis, an RS/232 interface, memory expansion and a disk drive, you needed a desk about 7 feet wide with a kneehole to sit at on the left end. Fortunately TI came out with the Peripheral Expansion Box, a \$450 35+ lb. 2ft. by 1ft. by about 10 inch steel box that accepted expansion cards and a floppy drive for all of the above listed functions, except the speech synthesis module. At the bottom end of this range came the Timex/Sinclair 1000. For a meager



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\$99 you got a notebook computer-sized black box with an astounding 2k of memory, low resolution black and white graphics and probably serious carpal tunnel syndrome from the tiny membrane keyboard. One characteristic that disappeared soon after the AppleII series, the TI and the Vic-20/C-64 was the ability to write or just type in your own games. Magazines like Byte and 99er would publish programs, written out in basic, every month or quarter. It's hard to relay the satisfaction of writing your own game, or even just typing one in from the pages of a magazine. Debugging the code was almost more enjoyable than some of these games. Now, of course, you can download infinitely more sophisticated, flashier games in a matter of seconds onto your cell phone, but we're talking about a time when cell phones were about half the size of a cinderblock and weighed about 4.5 kilograms.



Changing the market

In August of 1982, Commodore introduced the successor to the Vic-20, the Commodore C-64. With 64k of memory right off the bat, a \$595 price point, a \$100 rebate for buyers sending in their old computer, and a market strategy involving selling C-64s at department stores, toy stores, and discount stores and authorized dealers, the C-64 became the best selling home computer of all time. The C-64 lacked the expandability of the AppleII line, but blew it away in terms of graphics. The C-64s only competition at the time was the Atari 800, which required added memory to hit 64k and had a higher starting price point. Both the C-64 and the Atari 800 had separate video processors to handle more complicated graphics tasks without taxing the CPU. This design concept first showed up on home computers in 1979 in the original TI99/4 and two years later in the less costly TI 99/4a. The C-64 was conceived as a business machine as well as a gaming machine, but was thought to have led to the crash in console sales in the early 1980s. Why buy a game-only console when you can have a PC that does word processing, gaming, and spreadsheet balancing for just a little more green? Most of the PC's mentioned here fit somewhere between a business-oriented design and a home gaming console. There are several models and manufacturers not mentioned due to space restrictions, but there is one line that must be mentioned: the TRS-80.

Radio Shack introduced the first TRS-80 in 1971. For a reasonable, at the time, price of \$599, you received the computer, basically an undersized keyboard in a thick case that housed all the works, a monochrome monitor and a cassette tape recorder for storage. Initially without any external peripherals, crude level 1 basic and only 4k of memory, the first tras...er TRS-80 was fairly limited, as were most computers in this price range at that time. Radio Shack subsequently released an upgrade kit, where a hobbyist with some soldering and electronics know-how could up the memory to 16k and Level II basic. Radio Shack would do the upgrade to your new TRS-80 for no charge if you didn't feel up to the task of soldering bits onto your new \$599 computer. An expansion interface was subsequently released for \$299 that added an expansion port, printer port, serial port, expansion slots for up to 32k and two tape drive connectors. It also included a disk drive controller that could handle up to four drives, each of which would set you back another \$500!

The TRS-80 was unremarkable at the time in terms of graphics and processor speed (1.77 MHz), but in 1980 Radio Shack became a true contender in the home game-worthy PC market with the release of the TRS-80 Color Computer, affectionately known as the CoCo. With a whopping four colors and a mind-numbing processor speed of 0.87 MHz, the first CoCo didn't have much going for it beyond the \$399 price tag. While it set no records for performance or innovation, the CoCo spawned a fierce and fanatical following. User groups and Bulletin Board Systems sprang up rapidly across the country. Sadly, Radio Shack had no Killer Application for the CoCo or the TRS-80. Radio Shack continued to improve and released new TRS-80 models, but would take a serious shot in the balls in the early 80s, as would many home computer manufacturers.



The Birth of a Legend, and The End of an Era

In 1984, while still struggling with marketing its first shot at a "Graphical User Interface" based PC, Apple made other PC manufacturers annoyed just a little with the release of the Macintosh. The first Mac had an astounding 128k of RAM and a 32-bit processor, unheard of at the time for a home computer, well the 32-bit processor anyway.

Only the IBM PC jr and the Apple III had 128 k of memory stock at the time, and while the Mac costs about twice as much as the PC jr, it included a monitor, a revolutionary operating system, and astoundingly high resolution albeit monochrome graphics. Oh and it came bundled with the first WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) word processor anyone outside of the Xerox PARC facility had ever seen. Microsoft was to hop on the WYSIWIG rip-off bandwagon the following year with the release of Microsoft Windows. Now computers for the home were becoming not only fairly powerful, but also fairly easy to use. Any schmoe could operate a PC and play games until his fingers bled. This then is the beginning of the first golden age of PC games; home computers were no longer toys or curiosities, but potentially useful items. While you could do some word processing on the PCs of the mid-70s, most of them could only handle forty characters per line, and most printers were both crappy looking dot matrix and crappy looking unreadable thermal image printers.

About this time, competing manufacturers were dropping out of the game. TI had killed its 99/4a production around 1983, as even its cheaply made "beige" model couldn't keep up with the fast-moving advances in PC technology. Any manufacturer unable or unwilling to make a significant leap forward to a windows-capable architecture was squeezed out of the market. A few manufacturers tried to copy the Macintosh (cough, cough*franklin*cough), and soon found themselves attacked by Apple's formidable legal team.

Atari:

A brief look into the past and present

by edd9139

Nolan Bushnell was born February 5th, 1943, in Clearfield, Utah. Bushnell graduated from the University of Utah in 1968, with a degree in electrical engineering. He later went on to establish Atari.

The year 1970 was the start of something big for Nolan Bushnell. He soon saw the potential in video games, especially coin operated video games (arcade), after seeing the legendary game 'Spacewar' in action. In 1971, Bushnell and Ted Dabney created the game 'Computer Space' together and marketed it in a contained cabinet, through a partnership with 'Nutting Associates.' The game was largely a failure and did not sell well. Soon after this, Bushnell and Dabney were inspired to create the all time classic game 'Pong.' After developing the game, Nutting Associates and Bushnell could not agree on a deal to release it, so Bushnell and Dabney eventually created their own gaming company.

Their first idea for a company name was 'Syzygy', but that name was soon abandoned and the name 'Atari' was taken. The word Atari is a term from the ancient game of Go, and it literally means that a stone or group of stones is in danger from an opponent. In 1972, Atari was formed and their first game, 'Pong,' was released as a coin operated arcade game. Pong proved to be extremely popular, especially in bars. Bushnell bought out Dabney's portion of Atari in 1974, and went on to create a home version of Pong which was extremely popular, even more so than its coin-op predecessor.

As sales boomed, Atari added a new president, Joe Keegan. Keegan sat at the helm in the legendary year of 1975 as development began on the Atari VCS, which became one of the highest selling consoles in history. In 1977, Atari released the VCS with nine interchangeable games for the Christmas shopping season. Atari started working on a big brother for the Atari VCS soon after its initial release. In 1978 Warner Communications, now known as Time Warner, bought Atari for an estimated 28 million (USD), and in 1979 Bushnell left the company.

In 1980, Atari entered the home computer market with the release of the Atari 400 and the Atari 800. The 400 was designed for use by children, while the 800 was aimed at adults. Both systems could use cartridges, and the 800 could also accept up to four external floppy drives. By 1980, Atari had actually become the fastest growing company in the United States, a peak to which Atari would never return. 1981 saw even more success with the release of the classic game 'Asteroids', a game which would live on in the memories of fans for many years to come. By 1982 however, Atari was beginning to go downhill, and their games 'E.T.' and 'Pac Man', which both failed to sell well, were a sign of this. This period in time has been labeled, by some, as the start of a long downward spiral for the company. Atari optimistically launched a new console, the 'Atari 5200', in 1982. They renamed the Atari VCS to the Atari 2600, which is the name you may be more used to. The new console failed to sell as well as the

2600, which was not good news for Atari's prospects. The video game crash of 1983 hit Atari severely, with a loss estimated at 500 million (USD). This contributed greatly to Warner's stock price crash from \$60 to \$20 a share. In 1984, Warner sold the home gaming side of Atari to Jack Tramiel, and in 1985 Warner sold the arcade gaming side of Atari to Namco, but still released the Atari XE and Atari ST products. In 1986, Atari released the 2600j and the 2700 consoles. The XEGS system was released in 1987, and surprised few.

In 1990, Atari attempted to compete with the Nintendo Game Boy by releasing the 'Atari Lynx,' its first and only hand-held console. For the next two years, Atari did not release any major products and as a result, had little growth. In 1993, Atari released the 'Atari Jaguar 64' console, a console which will always have a special place in my heart, because it was the first console I ever purchased. In 1996, Atari merged with JTS Inc, for an undisclosed sum. 1998 saw JTS Inc sell its stake in Atari for 5 million (USD) to Hasbro Interactive. Sadly, the Lynx handheld and Jaguar 64 were not good investments for Atari, and did not sell well. After the Hasbro acquisition in 1999, Atari released a series of 'old' Atari games.

The year 2000 was Infogrames turn to make a name for itself with the Atari brand, as it took over Hasbro Interactive and their Atari shares. In 2002, Jakks Pacific (not affiliated with Atari) released a 10 in 1 plug and play system, which consisted of one joystick which connected to a television's AV ports. Then in 2004, Jakks Pacific released the Atari Paddles plug and play console. Atari released the 'Atari Flashback' console in 2004, a cheap console based loosely on the Atari 7200, which featured two joystick controllers and came prebuilt with twenty games. The 'Atari Flashback 2' was released in 2005, after popular demand and high sales.

Atari has had some great highlights in its history dating back to 1977, and some not so great highlights in 1983, but Atari and it's consoles still have a huge fan following. Gamers continue to remember Atari's good times 34 years later. The older gamer generation can remember the days when Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney first established Atari in 1972, and remember the good old days of having fun on their own Atari 7200 and Atari ST.



WIKI FACTS

Atari, Inc. (NASDAQ: ATAR) is a majority owned subsidiary of Infogrames Entertainment SA (IESA), encompassing its North American operations. Atari develops, publishes and distributes games for all major video game consoles, as well as for the personal computer, and is currently one of the largest third-party publishers of video games in the United States.

-Wikipedia.org



The Rise and Fall of Sega

A console remembered

by Derek "Corcki" Iversen

Techmo Bowl sucks, I got Joe Montana. You're still playing Mario, Dude! Ask your Mom if you can come over. I'll let you play on a real video game system. My Genesis has 16-bit graphics, what's yours again? 8-bit, that's funny. Oh the good old days of harassing Nintendo players. Being the first kid to own a Sega Genesis on my block was the biggest thrill of my adolescent life. Until Mark "My Parents are so Rich" Bradley brought in his Neo Geo instruction manual, everyone was my friend. But that's another story for another time. It was a time when wearing British Knights and Air Jordans was as important as having a Triple Fat Goose and a Starter hat to be in the upper echelon of public middle school society. It was the pinnacle of Sega's Pax Romana. Sadly, like a VH1 "Behind the Music" episode, the downward spiral soon began.

After being released in Japan back in 1985, the Sega Master System was brought to the United States with no great success. Almost every one I talk to fails to remember it at all. "What's this?" I remember asking when I opened a present from my Father. Being rather disappointed that all my friends had the NES with "Rob the Robot" and I got stuck with some crappy black brick, I barely played it. While everyone else was getting it on with Super Mario Brothers, Excite Bike, and Legend of Zelda, I was sulking in the shadows with the likes of Rambo and Alex Kidd. Let's just say, as a venture console here, it was a flop. Third party games were flocking to the NES while Sega was producing only their own games.

With mediocre sales in Japan and U.S. markets, Nintendo was looking down its nose at Sega. European sales of the Master System, strange as that sounds, brought Sega enough money to give birth to the greatest of its consoles, the Genesis. I literally shredded the box opening it when it released in 1989. My hands were shaking so bad I could barely open the packaging. In minutes I was punching and kicking my way through Altered Beast in search of those magic blue floating orb thingies filled with super steroids. After gaining 50 lbs of muscle and some mystical glow around my fists and feet with the first two juice injections, I found the third one and got taken to an awe-inspiring cut scene of my guy morphing into a werewolf (Hooowwwlll). That's when I knew Nintendo's days were numbered. Genesis games were averaging \$50 at Toys'R'Us.



I begged and pleaded to get Styrder, which was the most expensive game out at \$69.99, and finally got it and Streets of Rage for Christmas that year. Phantasy Star, Sonic the Hedgehog, Pat Riley's Basketball, Shinobi 3, Truxton, Shining Force, I could go on and on about all the awesome games that came out. Sega became number one here in the U.S with a battle cry of "Genesis does! Genesis does! You can't do this



on Nintendo," and the "Sega!" Yell. Come on, who doesn't remember those commercials? They were great. I was a little daunted about my Genesis' console supremacy when the Turbo Gfx16 came out, but laughed when I saw how rushed and full of bugs it was. I continued in my reverie until Nintendo struck back with the Super NES in 1994. It came with a six button controller and was the first system to bring Street Fighter 2 and Mortal Kombat to home gaming. Not to be outdone, Sega ported the games and made a redesigned controller housing six buttons, but this did little to bring back Sega's dominance.

While everyone was playing their new Super Nintendo, I was thinking of what Sega was going to unleash next. Boy was I disappointed in the end, but I'll get back to that ballyhoo later. I'm going to rewind, then fast-forward a little here. See, there was this thing called the "Gameboy," and Nintendo was making a killing with it. There was no such thing as mobile gaming on your cell phone back in the late 80's early 90's. Cell phones then were owned by rich people who wore power suits and rode around in limos. So, if you didn't have a "Gameboy," you had Tiger handheld games if you wanted mobile games. Well, that and thumb wrestling. Sega thought since they were dominating the home gaming industry, and 99% of people already have thumbs, then they should try and dominate mobile handheld games too. In 1991, Sega unveils its own hand held. Sound the trumpets; here comes the "Game Gear." Good idea, but if you weren't near a wall socket with the AC adapter or just happen to be carrying a pound of AA batteries with you, you were sucking. They said it had a three-hour power capacity with new batteries, but I think it was more like 20 minutes. Energizer must have had stock in that thing, I swear. There weren't many new or innovative games for it either. Most of them were just Genesis games formatted into 8-bit graphics. Basically, crappier looking games you've already played, on a battery-devouring black brick. I don't know who devised the design, but it seems the black brick thing is here to stay. I was not impressed when I got this, but it was in color. That's right color... oohh... ahhh. Next, we fast-forward four years to the Nomad. Of course Sega didn't learn their lesson with the Game Gear. Instead of crappy looking 8-bit versions of Genesis games, they made a hand held that you could play all your Genesis games on. All right sweet, I can play my Genesis games on

The Rise and Fall of Sega

the bus...what the...man this thing eats more batteries than the Game Gear. I guess Duracell found out about Energizer's stock in the Game Gear and wanted to get in on the action too. I didn't own one, but my friend Kevin did. I'll give you one guess on what it looked like. That's right a black brick. How'd you guess?

Now, I am going to bring up the dumbest, bass-ackward, WTF time period for Sega or any video game company for that matter. I'm sure at the time it must have sounded like a great idea, but why would any company make itself a competitor? I guess when you've been backed into a corner you'll do anything to fight your way out. They'd try one thing and when it didn't get results right away they brought out something new. After the huge loss of revenue at the hands of the SNES, Sega tried to return to its powerhouse sales - and failed horribly. Let's begin in 1992 shall we?

Genius idea #1: Sega CD. As the name implies, the games were on CD; hurray! Who's laughing now Turbo Grafix 16? It was an add-on, or should I say large black brick looking tray thing, that the Genesis sat on top of and slid over to connect them via a side port. It costs a wallet-raping \$299.99. The Sega CD had its own games. About the only one I liked was Lethal Enforcers, but it was really expensive too. You had to buy the gun(s) to really play the game. The Sega CD had a very limited run of games because Sega was really stingy with its development tools. With so few games and a huge price tag it flopped horribly, driving profit further into the red.

Genius idea #2: The 32X. It was another add-on that plugged into the cartridge slot of the Genesis, doubled the bit rate, and cost a measly \$159.99. It had its own games with their own special cartridges. It did have a few cool games like Afterburner, Doom, and my personal favorite Space Harrier. Initially the Sega CD and 32X were supposed to be compatible, but that fell through. So, those of us who picked tobacco, mowed lawns, and bucked hay in the middle of summer to earn money so our parents would buy us this got screwed. The result of such a poor idea and implementation was mass revenue loss.

Genius idea #3: Enter the Dragon of the Sega Saturn. For only \$399.99 you could own the newest installment of Sega consoles. If gamers and parents weren't already confused and unsure in 1995, they were after



Sega released the Saturn. "Which system does my kid own?" I heard in many game stores from parents not in the know. I never bought a Saturn because I was about to finish high school and go off to the Navy. Other than getting to play Panzer Dragoon at a friend's, I didn't get a lot of exposure with the system. The biggest problem besides all the different consoles Sega manufactured was an upstart in the gaming industry called Sony. That and the fact Sega still hadn't learned to make it easier for developers to make games. Sony's debut of the Playstation that year was the straw that broke the camel's back. Sony quickly grabbed Sega's reeling gamers who felt betrayed and used by the company. I was one of those gamers who cut my losses and turned my back on a franchise I had loved for years.

After almost four years of nothing, Sega announced the Dreamcast would go on sale on 9/9/99. A lot of gamers felt the same as I after the CD/ 32X/ Saturn fiasco: "Why should we show you any brand loyalty after everything you put us through?". Undaunted, with the backing of Microsoft and with their super-hyped "Next-Gen" system as a bayonet, Sega rallied for one last charge into the trenches of the console war. They had great first year release games like Soul Calibur, Sonic Adventure, Crazy Taxi, House of the Dead 2, Power Stone, and Sega Bass Fishing. With that, Sega seemed on the rebound sporting the best controller ever made to date (It is the best and I don't care what anyone else says on the matter), an innovative memory card which you could play mini games on, and online play forecasted in the "then" near future. My faith returned to the Sega name after a short stint with my



new Dreamcast. I brought my Dreamcast and game collection with me when my ship was being deployed to the adulation of the rest of the crew. Not since Golden Eye for the N64 had there been gaming marathons onboard. Young, old, enlisted, and officers alike waited their turn to take on the current champ of Soul Calibur or in some 4-way Power Stone. I remember getting woken up many times by people asking to borrow it so they could try their luck at fishing or owning some zombies. When the PS2 dropped in 2000, I laughed at the release games and left EB Games without one. I did eventually buy one, but I used it as a DVD player for the longest time. In 2001, good games did start coming out for the PS2 and Sega was once again cast from the forefront. After two years of production Sega pulled the plug on the Dreamcast and sold off many of its franchises.

Sega started as a small business from which spawned a gaming giant. As with all great Empires, they eventually rot, crumble, and fall from their own ever-grasping hand. After the Genesis they tried to go in too many directions at once and spread their resources too thin. They knew they would have major competition from other game developers, but I bet when they started, they never imagined they would be their own worst enemy. If Sega had used the CD unit as a springboard until perfecting the Saturn, things might have gone differently. Alas, you can't re-fight Sunday's battle on Monday, for which I'm sure the then CEOs are still kicking themselves. I still have fond memories of my childhood and younger adult life playing some of the greatest games ever made. Sega had numerous wonderful ideas, but none ever came to profitable fruition. but it seems the black brick thing is here to stay. I was not impressed when I got this, but it was in color. That's right color... oohh... ahhh. Next, we fast-forward four years to the Nomad. Of course Sega didn't learn their lesson with the Game Gear. Instead

The Rise and Fall of Sega

of crappy looking 8-bit versions of Genesis games, they made a hand held that you could play all your Genesis games on. All right sweet, I can play my Genesis games on the bus...what the...man this thing eats more batteries than the Game Gear. I guess Duracell found out about Energizer's stock in the Game Gear and wanted to get in on the action too. I didn't own one, but my friend Kevin did. I'll give you one guess on what it looked like. That's right a black brick. How'd you guess?

Now, I am going to bring up the dumbest, bass-ackward, WTF time period for Sega or any video game company for that matter. I'm sure at the time it must have sounded like a great idea, but why would any company make itself a competitor? I guess when you've been backed into a corner you'll do anything to fight your way out. They'd try one thing and when it didn't get results right away they brought out something new. After the huge loss of revenue at the hands of the SNES, Sega tried to return to its powerhouse sales - and failed horribly. Let's begin in 1992 shall we?

Genius idea #1: Sega CD. As the name implies, the games were on CD; hurrray! Who's laughing now Turbo Graftix 16? It was an add-on, or



should I say large black brick looking tray thing, that the Genesis sat on top of and slid over to connect them via a side port. It costs a wallet-raping \$299.99. The Sega CD had its own games. About the only one I liked was Lethal Enforcers, but it was really expensive too. You had to buy the gun(s) to really play the game. The Sega CD had a very limited run of games because Sega was really stingy with its development tools. With so few games and a huge price tag it flopped horribly, driving profit further into the red.

Genius idea #2: The 32X. It was another add-on that plugged into the cartridge slot of the Genesis, doubled the bit rate, and cost a measly \$159.99. It had its own games with their own special cartridges. It did have a few cool games like Afterburner, Doom, and my personal favorite Space Harrier. Initially the Sega CD and 32X were supposed to be compatible, but that fell through. So, those of us who picked tobacco, mowed lawns, and bucked hay in the middle of summer to earn money so our parents would buy us this got screwed. The result of such a poor idea and implementation was mass revenue loss.

Genius idea #3: Enter the Dragon of the Sega Saturn. For only \$399.99 you could own the newest installment of Sega consoles. If gamers and parents weren't already confused and unsure in 1995, they were after Sega released the Saturn. "Which system does my kid own?" I heard in many game stores from parents not in the know. I never bought a Saturn because I was about to finish high school and got off to the Navy. Other

than getting to play Panzer Dragoon at a friend's, I didn't get a lot of exposure with the system. The biggest problem besides all the different consoles Sega manufactured was an upstart in the gaming industry called Sony. That and the fact Sega still hadn't learned to make it easier for developers to make games. Sony's debut of the Playstation that year was the straw that broke the camel's back. Sony quickly grabbed Sega's reeling gamers who felt betrayed and used by the company. I was one of those gamers who cut my losses and turned my back on a franchise I had loved for years.

After almost four years of nothing, Sega announced the Dreamcast would go on sale on 9/9/99. A lot of gamers felt the same as I after the CD/ 32X/ Saturn fiasco: "Why should we show you any brand loyalty after everything you put us through?". Undaunted, with the backing of Microsoft and with their super-hyped "Next-Gen" system as a bayonet, Sega rallied for one last charge into the trenches of the console war. They had great first year release games like Soul Calibur, Sonic Adventure, Crazy Taxi, House of the Dead 2, Power Stone, and Sega Bass Fishing. With that, Sega seemed on the rebound sporting the best controller ever made to date (It is the best and I don't care what anyone else says on the matter), an innovative memory card which you could play mini games on, and online play forecasted in the "then" near future. My faith returned to the Sega name after a short stint with my new Dreamcast. I brought my Dreamcast and game collection with me when my ship was being deployed to the adulation of the rest of the crew. Not since Golden Eye for the N64 had there been gaming marathons onboard. Young, old, enlisted, and officers alike waited their turn to take on the current champ of Soul Calibur or in some 4-way Power Stone. I remember getting woken up many times by people asking to borrow it so they could try their luck at fishing or owning some zombies. When the PS2 dropped in 2000, I laughed at the release games and left EB Games without one. I did eventually buy one, but I used it as a DVD player for the longest time. In 2001, good games did start coming out for the PS2 and Sega was once again cast from the forefront. After two years of production Sega pulled the plug on the Dreamcast and sold off many of its franchises.

Sega started as a small business from which spawned a gaming giant. As with all great Empires, they eventually rot, crumble, and fall from their own ever-grasping hand. After the Genesis they tried to go in too many directions at once and spread their resources too thin. They knew they would have major competition from other game developers, but I bet when they started, they never imagined they would be their own worst enemy. If Sega had used the CD unit as a springboard until perfecting the Saturn, things might have gone differently. Alas, you can't re-fight Sunday's battle on Monday, for which I'm sure the then CEOs are still kicking themselves. I still have fond memories of my childhood and younger adult life playing some of the greatest games ever made. Sega had numerous wonderful ideas, but none ever came to profitable fruition.

WIKI FACTS

With the introduction of the Sega Mega Drive in 1989, Sega launched itself internationally as the second largest vendor of consumer video game products, behind their former main rival, Nintendo. 1990 marked a change in Sega's market focus, changing to an older audience (mainly men in their 20's). The 1st generation of games would mostly feature already successful arcade ports such as Golden Axe and Altered Beast.

-Wikipedia.org

Playstation: History in the making

by edd9139



Pre 1988 Sony was what one might call 'illiterate' in the gaming industry, having never produced a console, or anything significant in the gaming industry.

In 1991 the Super NES (Nintendo) was the first real step into the gaming industry by Sony, in which they aided Nintendo in making a CDROM drive for the existing Super NES. While developing this technology for Nintendo, Sony had their own ideas up their sleeve, to become dominant in the home console video games market, with a gaming machine, which could play both Super NES cartridges and Sony games in the form of CDROM. 1991 saw Sony announce their plans for the PlayStation, which would play both Super NES cartridges and Sony PlayStation CDROM games. 1992 was the year in which it was announced that Sony's and Nintendo's CDROMS would be compatible with each other. An extremely limited 200 consoles were only ever produced which could play both Sony CDROMS games and Super NES cartridges. These days those first 200 units are a collector's dream, but a nightmare to find. Finally in 1994, three years after Sony first announced their gaming console the PSX was launched in Japan (RRP 39,800 Yen), the PSX could only play CDROM games, and no longer supported the Super NES cartridges as Sony had originally planned. Over one million PSX units were sold in the six months after its launch. In 1999 a smaller, and cheaper version of the console was released, the PlayStation 1 (PS1). As of March, 1996 the PSX had sold over 3.5 million units worldwide, and was a huge success, with it being one of the most wanted (or needed) console. After eleven years of the PS1 being manufactured, production of new consoles ceased on March 23, 2006.



The Playstation 2 (PS2) had a big advantage over the PSX and PS1, being that Sony had already shown they could produce a decent console, and had a large fan base, which resulted in the PS2 being more successful than many anticipated. Sony announced that the PS2 was

in development in early 1999. At last, the PS2 was released in Japan on March 4th, 2000, more than five years after the Playstation one was first released. The PS2 sold over 900,000 units in its first week on sale in Japan alone, and units were soon in extreme demand, with some willing to pay double, or triple the retail price of the console, just to obtain one. One year after the initial launch of the PS2, ten million units had been sold worldwide, which some economic analysts thought was great while others thought it was 'meh', and nothing to get excited about. Sony released several popular games in the lead up of Christmas 2001, which helped retain its lead in the console war with the Microsoft Xbox and Nintendo Gamecube. In the fourth quarter of 2002, Sony releases the PS2 network adapter, a result of Microsoft Xbox launching a successful online service. The network adapter allowed for online play between other users in selected games, Socom US Navy Seals was one of the first and most successful online compatible PS2 games. In the 4th quarter of 2004, Sony unveiled the new Slim PS2, which was an improved slimmer and sleeker design of the PS2. Now with the PS3 to be released later this year, one can only wonder, 'Will it live up to the Playstation series?'

WIKI FACTS

The PlayStation is a video game console of the 32/64-bit era, first produced by Sony Computer Entertainment in the mid-1990s. The original PlayStation was the first of the PlayStation series of console and hand-held game devices, which has included successor machines including the Net Yaroze, PSOne (a smaller version of the original), Pocket-Station, PlayStation 2, PlayStation Portable, PSX (Japan only), and the forthcoming PlayStation 3.

By March 2005, the PlayStation/PSone had sold a total of over 100.49 million units, becoming the first home console to ever reach the 100 million mark. In 2001, Sony advertised in a press release that one in three houses in the US owned a PlayStation.

-Wikipedia.org

On the tenth anniversary of the PlayStation, Sony Italy released an ad which outraged the Vatican. An ad showed a man, who appeared to be Jesus, smiling towards the camera and wearing a Crown of Thorns made of the PlayStation button symbols (? , X , O , ?). At the bottom of the ad it said (in Italian): "Ten Years of Passion". After the incident, Sony decided to take back all the ads and discontinue the printing.

-Wikipedia.org



The Birth of the Xbox:

A look back at how the xbox came to be

By Tank 2old2play

Back in 1998, Sega was trying to leap ahead of the competition from Nintendo and Sony. They had been losing market share so they needed to come up with a really innovative console idea.

You may be asking how are Microsoft and the Xbox are connected to Sega? Microsoft was looking into the console gaming market and how to get their foot in the door. Peter Moore (then President and COO of Sega) and the Sega Dreamcast team needed an operating system to power their new 'next gen' console, the Sega Dreamcast. So in May 1998 Microsoft and Sega announced a collaboration agreement for work on the Dreamcast. Microsoft built an optimized version of Windows CE with DirectX for Sega and the Dreamcast was the first console to use CE as an operating system. Both Microsoft and Sega were excited about



the partnership and the future looked outstanding for the Dreamcast. As the partnership progressed however, Sega's and Microsoft's visions started to part ways. Microsoft wanted games written for Windows to be portable to the Dreamcast through the common DirectX interface. They also wanted Dreamcast games to be ported to Windows again through the common DirectX interface. Sega however decided they didn't share Microsoft's vision. Sega chose to abandon the DirectX architecture and instead have game developers make their games using exclusive Dreamcast technology.

Out of this divide came the 'Xbox Group' led by Mr. Blackley and consisting of Mr. Bachus, Mr. Berkes and Mr. Hase. This group, in May 1999, met with Bill Gates and the WebTV leaders to pitch the idea of a Microsoft console. The WebTV group thought a console should be spawned out of the WebTV appliance while the Xbox Group was pitching a specialized PC approach with a hard drive. Gates was sold on the idea of having a lasting foothold on the living room and told the two groups to continue researching. In a meeting later in May with Gates, Ballmer and industry heavyweights like Tim Sweeney of Epic Games, Mr. Blackley got support for his specialized PC approach and the Xbox Group was given the go-ahead.

In July 1999 Rick Thompson, the head of the hardware division was brought into the group. His division made mice, keyboards, joysticks etc. In August, J. Allard was put in charge of the Xbox Group. He had helped transition Microsoft into the Internet age. With these changes, many of the original Xbox Group left the group to other assignments while others took non-lead rolls. Mr. Blackley would end up assisting game developers and creating demos. The project was no longer his but he wanted to remain close and involved.

In September 1999, Gates signed off on spending 5-6 billion dollars on development, manufacturing and marketing of the Xbox console. In Jan 2000, Mr. Blackley did a month-long marketing trip in the US, Japan, idea of the Xbox.

During various dates late in 1999, Microsoft met with hardware component manufacturers to tell them what they have planned and requested proposals. For graphics ATI, Nvidia, 3Dfx and GigaPixel were brought in. For the processor, Intel and AMD were approached. For the sound, Creative Labs pitched an audio solution. In March 2000, thanks largely to Mr. Blackley's manipulation, Microsoft signed an agreement with Nvidia (who by December 2000 had bought 3Dfx and GigaPixel anyway). Mr. Thompson had wanted to go with GigaPixel's more economic solution but Mr. Blackley again appealed to the game developers and won support for the more costly Nvidia solution. Also in March, the Xbox Group selected Intel for the processor. It took until October for an agreement to be reached with Western Digital to provide the hard drive for the Xbox.

On January 6th 2001, Bill Gates demonstrated a fully working Xbox at the Consumer Electronics Show in Vegas. Mr. Blackley was on stage to demonstrate the system running Malice and Munch's Oddysee. Then on May 16th 2001 at E3, Microsoft announces the Xbox system will have 15-20 games at launch and the launch date will be November 8th 2001. The price is revealed to be \$299 and 27 online games are in development for their online gaming service.



XBOX 360™

The Xbox console launches November 8th 2001 as announced at E3. It's a sell out and Bill Gates gives the first system away at Toys R Us in NY at Times Square. At the 2002 CES, Microsoft announces the Xbox sold 1.5 million units and Mr. Blackley demos Jet Set Radio Future and shows off a bit of the Xbox Live service that's in the works.

Samus Blackley, the Godfather of the Xbox quits Microsoft on April 22, 2002. He had proposed to his girlfriend on November 8th in Times Square when the Xbox launched and most likely wanted to settle down and start a family.

Work on Trinity aka Xenon aka Xbox360 would start in 2002 with new processor designs and ATI starts work on Trinity's GPU.

Mike Tyson's Punch-Out to Fight Night

Influences from our past

By NoGame22

As the first sports game to be endorsed by a professional athlete, Mike Tyson's Punch-Out was ground breaking in many aspects of the game. A player started out as a young boxer, "Lil Mac," trying to break into the boxing world, and slowly move up the ranks, by fighting eleven comic book-style opponents along the way.

Mac's first fight was an easy one against an opponent by the name of "Glass Joe." The fights got increasingly difficult, as you clawed your way up the ranks fighting boxers like Great Tiger, King Hippo, Don Flamenco, Super Macho Man, and so on. The game's final level was a heavy weight fight against Mike Tyson himself, and let me tell you, it was not an easy battle.

Until this final battle, the game was quite easy due to the fact that all fighters had a sequence of moves that you had to time in order to be able to punch them and eventually knock them out. Mac had to punch King Hippo in the stomach to stun him, Great Tiger had to be punched in the ruby on his turban, and so on. Tyson, on the other hand, made things more difficult through his ability to knock you out with one or two punches.

To balance Tyson's devastating blows, Mac had some tricks up his sleeve, with a mind shattering haymaker achieved by blocking players punches. Punch-Out was one of the first games to incorporate this special move into the sports genre and the after affects have been seen ever since in games like Fight Night, NBA Streetball, NBA Jam, and many more.

Fight Night Round 3 (FNR3) has taken the building block established by Punch-Out and created a cathedral. No more do you have only a rearview stationary camera; you instead are treated to a 360° view of the ring at all times. A player can also change the camera angle to suit their particular character or playing style.

Instead of a single character, as you had in Punch-Out, you can create your own distinct character or relive the career of a great legend of boxing, such as Mohammed Ali. Everything in FNR3 is customizable, from your fighter's shoes, to the shape of his face, and you can also choose your own theme music.

Players begin as an amateur, fighting to gain access to the professional ranks, which they do by competing in multiple fights and training games. Throughout the game, your character becomes a stronger boxer by training and fighting in matches until, at the end of the game, if you have mastered the total control punching system™, you are basically unstoppable.

Total control punching has been incorporated in order to give the game a more realistic feel, and it works brilliantly. A player can land a light jab or a destructive haymaker, depending on what they are trying to achieve. The damage given to the other fighter is evident by their body language and the swelling of their face, and this is why they have done away with the energy bar.

The creators of fight night wanted to develop a game that immersed players into the ring with their opponent. They achieved this by creating a game with stunning graphics, a revolutionary controlscheme, and highly customizable/adaptable player styles. To top it all off, when you are done beating the single player portion of the game, you can put your skills to the ultimate test and fight opponents online.

In this gamers' personal opinion, Fight Night Round 3 is the best boxing game developed to date. Past development of games like Mike Tyson's Punch-Out, inspires developers in today's market to create boxing games just as addictive as they were in the 1980's. If you haven't tried Fight Night Round 3, and you are into the sports/fighting genre, I suggest you go out and give it a spin.



Friday the 13th to Condemned:

The evolution of the horror genre

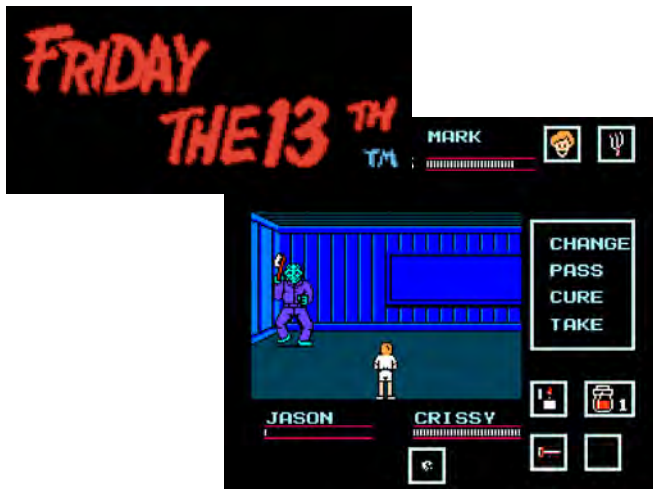
By NoGame22

The horror genre has come such a long way since its' meager beginning with the SNES and Friday the 13th. Don't get me wrong there were many things about Friday the 13th that were revolutionary.

Take for instance the scare factor. Friday was one of the first games that actually put you on the edge of your seat. Friday was also one of the first games to go from the big screen to video game infamy.

In the game you were stationed at Crystal Lake with five other camp counselors with the job of protecting the campers from Jason Voorhies and the rest of his family.

When you are out side the game is a side scroller, but when you go into a cabin the game enters a sort of 3D third person, and this is when the fun begins. Friday the 13th theme music from the movie is in the game and it still gives you chills. During your time in the cabin you don't know who will be lurking around corners or sneaking up on you and at any time you might just run into Jason himself.



In order to beat the game you must defeat members of Jason's family and also Jason himself. When you do this you get weapons upgrades and other achievements which make gameplay a little easier. This game could be quite difficult if you didn't understand what you were trying to achieve or where to go next.

This is where Condemned Criminal Origins steps in. As the newest addition to the horror genre Condemned takes this style of game to the next level. As a government agent who is being hunted for crimes he didn't commit you must search out and kill the serial killer who has framed and is running rampant across the city. Along the way you find crimes scenes which give you clues, which you must find using forensic tools. So on top of being a type of FPS you also have to go all Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) and carefully search each room/building. The biggest part of the game is the dark rooms and the cracked out maniacs jumping around corners. Flashbacks that would scare almost anybody also add to the scare factor, and last but not least the flashlight.

Just like Friday the 13th, in Condemned you are given a flashlight at

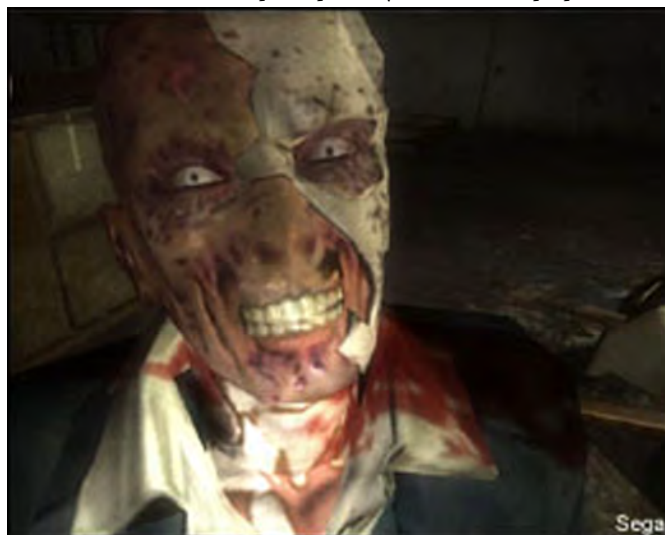


the beginning of the game which is good because without it you would be dead within minutes. Most of the game is played in areas where you couldn't see two feet in front of you without the help of your trusty torch.

During game play drug addict zombies can jump out at you around any corner, just like Jason would do in Friday the 13th, so you always have to be on your guard. This element of the game is what keeps a player on the edge of his or her seat. The crack heads grow increasingly more difficult as the game goes on and they start carrying deadlier weapons. Without warning you can get a two by four cracked upside your head, which is never good, and usually this action results in your death.

In order to beat this game a player must be patient and have nerves of steel. Play with the lights on and someone else to talk to, because I guarantee your nerves will be frayed by the end. Playing by your self at night only feeds fuel to the fire that is condemned. Be ready to jump in your seat, experience sharp tingles up and down your spine, and feel like someone is watching you from a dark corner.

So for an old school scare pick up Friday the 13th and prepared to be



Next Generation:

Hardware Shortages

By Tait

While games are the biggest seller of a console, no game can sell without the hardware to play it on. To sell 20 million copies of Halo, there must be at least 20 million consoles in the hands of the game-purchasing public. No one was prepared, in November of 2005, for the madness that ensued as Microsoft's next-generation console, the Xbox 360, came up in extremely short supply, fueled by phenomenal demand which continued through, and well beyond, the holiday season. So, how do hardware shortages occur, and how can we mitigate against them? Launch issues occur due to the manufacturing process, price decisions, launch games, marketing, and the pure launch day hardware numbers (how many consoles exist and where they are distributed).

First, let's look at the history of the Microsoft console hardware. In 2001, Microsoft launched the original Xbox. On paper, the Xbox should have easily outpaced the hardware sales of the PlayStation 2 (PS2) because of its superior graphics and inclusion of a hard disk drive. However, Microsoft was new on the console scene and received very little recognition as a major player. In addition, the game lineup lagged considerably behind PS2's (with one notable exception: Halo). Sony's marketing arm installed brilliant flat-screen demo stations, while Xbox's demo units paled in comparison (well, with one notable exception: Halo). Microsoft had approximately 1 million units on hand at launch in November 2001. The first week saw sales of about 500,000 units, a fairly impressive number for brand new hardware, yet still lagging far behind Sony as the pre-existing PS2 still sold more units in the same time. The Xbox launch was widely seen as lackluster. In fact, public perception played a part as PS2 fans claimed hardware superiority over the Xbox, despite inferior tech specs. The biggest issue, though? Game support. The Xbox simply didn't launch with enough good games. In addition, manufacturing issues led to overheating and other hardware problems. The price was in line with market guidelines, with value at a \$299 launch price point. Overall, the Xbox launch did not generate the enthusiasm hoped for by Microsoft, falling well short of expected sales.

For the Xbox 360 launch, Microsoft attempted to learn from their past mistakes. While wildly enthusiastic about their new product, they secretly feared a lackluster launch like the original Xbox. The expectation and hope was to sell a million units the first few weeks of launch. To do this, Microsoft ambitiously attempted a simultaneous three-territory launch in North America, Asia, and Europe. Fearing parental price-point turnoff (or what I affectionately call PPPT), Microsoft released two versions of the console: a core at \$299 and a premium at \$399. Game titles were hyped and pushed with releases of most titles about a week prior to the consoles release. Microsoft heavily promoted the 360 with press releases, viral marketing, and a severely lame console launch party aired on MTV.

What Microsoft actually did, though, was confuse and segment the market. The simultaneous launch meant fewer units in any one big market. While the lack of supply gave gigantic free press to Microsoft, the backlash hurt the 360's image. In fact, rumors flew that Microsoft purposefully engineered the shortage to build demand. This was a ridiculous claim as true profit is gained through software and accessory sales which were significantly hampered during holiday season by the hardware shortage.

Microsoft's attempt at creating a price break with the Core version of the console backfired as well. Gamers saw through the numbers and realized that the Premium version of the console more than made up the \$100 price difference in value. No one wanted the Core, instead

focusing on the Pro version. Because Microsoft pushed the Core, there were fewer Premium bundles available at launch. Ebay resales of the Premium version showed consistent prices of double and even triple the original sales price throughout the holiday season. Core versions typically only sold well once bundled with the items already included in the Premium version. Retailers took advantage (unfairly, by the way) of the shortage by creating their own marked up bundles. In the end, the separate versions of the console showed that with a hardware shortage, gamers don't care about price – they want the best. Hindsight shows Microsoft should've focused solely on the Premium version, at a price around \$500, and required retailers to only sell the Premium console as-is, without any exclusive bundling.

Microsoft's launch titles looked better than they've turned out to be, but the console's extreme leap in performance was enough of an attraction for most early adopters. After six months, we see that truly great games are only now coming out, but the launch titles offered enough to propel the 360 into the success column with a high attach rate, the rate at which support contracts are "attached" to a product, never before seen at launch. However, retailer bundling probably inflated this number to some degree. Some backwards compatibility helped, and even today, Halo 2 (an Xbox title) remains a highly played game on the new console. Overall, the 360 launch titles were more diverse and of better quality than the Xbox launch titles.

Inefficiencies in the manufacturing process of the Xbox 360 played a huge role in the early shipment shortages. Some gamer's griping centers around the shortage as something that was completely in Microsoft's control, with detractors complaining that Microsoft engineered the shortage purposely through careful short runs of hardware. However, this severely underestimates how complicated the manufacturing process.

Xbox 360 sold an estimated 330,000 units in the first week compared to the original Xbox which sold about 500,000 units in its first week. As of the beginning of May 2006, approximately six months after launch, an estimated 5 million Xbox 360s had made their way into the hands of consumers, primarily in North America. Believe me, Microsoft has a vested interest in getting as many consoles into gamer hands as possible prior to the oft-delayed launch of the PS3. If you believe in your product, you must increase the manufacturing process at a large up-front cost. Compromise costs you business. However, Microsoft will still emerge the winner with the extra year spotted by Sony's poor planning.

The shortage with the 360 occurred due to the difficulty in getting an advanced product to market (i.e., manufacturing), Microsoft's that the launch would be as lackluster as the original Xbox, and the poor decisions of separating the 360 into two price models and trying to launch simultaneously across the world. Now, we see that Sony will create its own issues through similar poor planning. First, Sony plans on offering two separate bundles as well. Also, Sony will attempt a close-to-worldwide launch. In fact, the only thing that will assist Sony over Microsoft's strategy is inferior equipment. They chose to stop development and design in order to begin manufacturing, at the cost of a poorer end result. The PS3 will launch "on time" (in quotes, due to the already existing delays) with at least a million consoles. But a year later, it will still be second-best to the Xbox 360.

Next Generation:

Who Cares?



By Tait

So, the real question for gamers (and especially gamer parents) is: are the next-generation consoles we're hearing so much about worth the huge bump in price? I mean, the Xbox 360 is \$400 (please don't even bring up the core version for \$100 less – its \$200 less in value, and I won't be fooled). The PS3? Oh, yeah, it's going to weigh in at a hefty \$500 - \$600, depending on which version you pick. That's a steep climb from the current generation prices that are sub \$200 with huge gaming libraries. Is it worth it?

Well, first, let's talk specs (or, "specifications") on the consoles, comparing them to their current generation cousins (or, more accurately – their great-uncle, twice-removed, adopted, step-sibling's dog):

	Xbox	XBox 360 Pro
		
Processor:	Intel Pentium III 733 MHz, single computer processor	3.2 GHz Core X3 Core Processors
RAM:	64 MB DDR SDRAM	512 MB GDDR3 SDRAM UMA 700MHz 10 MB Embedded DRAM
HDD:	10 GB	20 GB
Graphics:	256-bit 2D/3D graphics acceleration, 233 MHz	500 MHz Custom ATI
HDTV:	480i / 480p / 720p / 1080i Widescreen 16:9	480i / 480p / 720p (required) / 1080i Widescreen 16:9
Pipelines		48 pipelines Custom Unified Shader Architecture
USB	n/a	3x USB 2.0
Wireless:	n/a	2.4 GHz Built In Comes w/ 1 wireless controller
Drive:	2x – 5x DVD ROM	Dual-Layer DVD ROM (supports: DVD-Video, DVD-ROM, DVD-R/RW, DVD +R/RW, CD-DA, CD-ROM, CD-R, CD-RW, WMA CD, MP3 CD, JPEG Photo CD)
Online:	XBox Live	XBox Live Enhanced
Other:	Graphically superior to the PS2. In-game surround sound. Halo. 6.4 GB / sec Memory Bus Speed 100+ Million Polygon Draw Rate	Halo 2. Custom designed for gaming, the 3 core processors with direct memory access beat the PS3 (said to have 7 cores, but they are not designed for gaming) in design alone. 278.4 GB/s of memory system bandwidth

Next Generation : Who Cares?

	Gamecube	Wii
Picture:		
Processor:	485 MHz 3 MB Texture Buffer	PowerPC CPU (Broadway) – IBM - 729 MHz 3 MB Texture Buffer
RAM:	40 MBs of RAM	24 MB – “main” 1T-SRAM 64 MB – “external” 1T-SRAM
HDD:		n/a – has 512 MB Flash Memory
Graphics:	162 MHz	ATI – being developed – 243 MHz
HDTV:	480i / 480p	
Pipelines		
USB		2x USB 2.0
Wireless: Drive: Online:		
Other:	2.6 GB / sec Memory Bus 10.5 GFLOPS Floating Point Performance 33 Million / sec – Polygon Draw Rate	Innovative controller utilizing gyroscopes so that movements in real life control movements on screen.

OK, so purely on specs things look similar, but what about the rest? First of all, the Xbox 360 was built from the ground up completely custom with developer design in mind. This means that the 360 focuses itself for relative easy development, with all of its power unified towards gaming. The custom processor, unified memory architecture, GPU, and pipelines are streamlined with one thing in mind: awesome gaming power. The PS3, on the other hand, has changed considerably from the initial expectations and Sony’s promises. Sony’s new hardware appears to be a hodge-podge of incompleteness, with press-released fluff such as “floating point” that has no business in the gaming world. In fact, I’ve learned that the initial design idea called for a custom graphics card as well, but due to pressure from Microsoft and time constraints, the end result is really just an improved NVIDIA card rather than a custom design for the PS3. In fact, all the parts don’t work together at peak efficiency, which means that on paper you can make a case for equality, but in real life the Xbox 360 will easily outperform the PS3 (much like the original Xbox easily outperformed the PS2, however this time the 360 has a year head start).

The Wii does not even attempt to compete on power or graphics, rather taking a backseat with its innovative controller. The new Wii controller breaks from tradition and embraces gyroscopes and innovation over the normal standard, much in line with the ground-breaking dual-screen handheld DS. The new controller allows simple hand movement to control on-screen action. Imagine “casting” a virtual fishing rod or “driving” a virtual golf club to interact on-screen without having to hook-up a video camera or some weird laser system. No doubt the Wii will deliver games never seen before, but will lack any presence in the bulk of hardcore gaming.

WINNER

It is this author’s humble opinion that your dollars (and mine) are best spent on the Xbox 360 for most gamers. With the year-plus head start, the gamer gets games and developer familiarity with the system. Unfortunately for the PS3, the extra year does not appear to translate into an improved system. In fact, just comparing numbers, they look roughly even. But, with the custom architecture of the 360 compared to the pieced together PS3, Microsoft delivers a better future-proofed product. In addition, Sony has a history of over-promising and under-delivering (read: lying) and we’ve already seen this several times with the PS3 hype as slowly, the initial promises are thrown to the side.

The Xbox was technically superior to the PS2 but struggled with games (Halo / Halo 2 made the console). The 360 already has great games in the pipeline with additional publisher support after the success of the first 6 months of selling hardware. In fact, the current popularity of Elder Scrolls

Next Generation : Who Cares?

IV: Oblivion shows that even RPGs can find huge success on Microsoft consoles unlike the previous generation. Even Grand Theft Auto 4 was announced to be the first of the series to launch on Microsoft's hardware.

The Nintendo Wii offers innovation and cannot be ignored, but I believe that to be more of a niche market as games utilizing these innovations may target the Wii and ignore other consoles. Plus, your typical kid's market games will surely find a home on the Wii. The clincher on all 3 consoles, though? Online play and the newer Marketplace. Microsoft simply has the very best, through careful design and years of practice. As an original Xbox Live beta tester, I've seen Live grow phenomenally over the years through the proving grounds of actual gameplay. The newly launched Marketplace takes it to a new level with easily downloadable trailers, content and demos (demos!!!!).

Sony and Nintendo have yet to put forth their own centralized effort (Sony's piece-meal, developer-driven, game-specific, seldom-utilized online gaming for the PS2 is laughable in comparison). The Xbox 360 is the clear, all-around winner with an honorable mention given to the Wii for innovation in game play.

Rankings:

	XBOX 360	PS3	Wii
CPU Power	10	9	5
Graphic Power	10	8	4
Development Ease	9	7	5
Online Play	9	6	3
Innovation	6	6	10
Games	9	9	7
TOTAL	53	45	34

For the hundreds of dollars between an Xbox 360 and a PS3, buy an Xbox 360. For innovation and relative cheapness compared to the others, buy the Wii.

For more on the Xbox 360 vs PS3 in hardware specs, read IGN's article at <http://xbox360.ign.com/articles/617/617951p1.html>

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BAD NEWS FOR INTELLIVISION OWNERS.

THINK AGAIN.

NOW YOU CAN TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INTELLIVISION AND ATARI WITH YOUR EYES CLOSED.

Battle for hand-held champion:

Nintendo DS vs. Sony PSP

By Fred "Derf" Giombolini

At E3 in 2003, it was widely expected that Nintendo would release a "New Game Boy" in 2004, but the shocker came when Sony CEO Ken Kutaragi announced that Sony would be releasing its hand held the next year as well. In January of 2004 Nintendo made an official announcement about their new innovative double screen Game Boy. The fight is on! Cue up the Rocky music, this is going to be a war!



In the red corner we have the undisputed champion – Nintendo. The Game Boy and all of its incarnations are still the Apollo Creed of handhelds; undefeated and so far unchallenged. In the blue corner is a newcomer to the hand held scene – Sony. Like Rocky, has potential but is truly an unknown. These two opponents got to this championship fight by crushing their other opponents. Systems like N-Gage and the Zodiac were destroyed easily.

The bell rings, the fight starts in November of 2004. With a quick Jab - Nintendo tries a new tactic by releasing in the United States during the lucrative Thanksgiving season before the Japanese release. Also they tailor their launch games to the US audience by releasing games like Madden and Spiderman 2. In December each company releases their hand held within days of each other in Japan. Meanwhile Sony falls back to its corner and chooses to delay their US launch till March of 2005. Was this move strategy or simply the fact that they didn't have enough units in production to meet demand in both countries? I seems logical that if Sony had enough units that they would have released in the US sooner. The initial shipments to the US of The DS sold out quickly making it a scramble to find one for Christmas. Nintendo originally slated 300,000 units for the U.S. debut; 550,000 were shipped, and just over 500,000 of those sold through in the first week. Round one goes to Nintendo.

A drought starts for Nintendo after their spectacular launch. The games that followed the launch were boring, few in number and didn't take full advantage of the new stylus interface. Sony uses this time to plan and hype their March US Launch of the PSP. The extra time allows them to get more quality titles at launch. Mickey: "You're gonna eat lightning' and you're gonna crap thunder!" Sony starts to pound on Nintendo's body. Sony's more powerful hardware appeals to Americans and the US launch is a great success effectively evening the playing field. Round two goes to Sony.

Over the next several months, each system fails to establish itself as a clear leader. Neither has that one game that sells the system. The PSP introduces games with matchmaking via their wireless system. The appeal is there but the control schemes for FPS are lacking because of the missing second analog stick resulting in clunky control schemes. The DS fails to get anything that shows off the stylus interface. Round 3 is a tie.

Round 4, Sony is on the ropes.... "ADRIAN". With the release of Nintendogs on the DS, Nintendo finally has that one game that sells the machine. 1.5 million copies of the software sell in the United States alone. They follow that up with Advance Wars 2 and launch their WiFi service with Mario Cart DS and Animal Crossing Wild World. Wild World offers a unique way to communicate with other players over the WiFi. The PSP counters with some good titles like Grand Theft Auto and Socom. Socom includes internet matchmaking and voice communication through their optional headset. Although the PSP titles are good they are not innovative like the ones coming from Nintendo. Bam! Sony is knocked down! Round 4 Goes to Nintendo. "Comon Rock- go the distance".

Round 5, they are still fighting. Nintendo's new plan, by advertising in time magazine, targets a new demographic, the "Baby Boomer." Who wouldn't want to play a game for 10 minutes a day that might keep your brain sharp? In Brain Age the use of the stylus and the voice recognition is unique. Brain Age has already sold 5 million copies in Japan. If the older baby boomers start buying the Nintendo for themselves, there will be another sales surge. Sales figure show that the DS has outsold the PSP in Japan two-to-one. That figure should only go up, as the Japanese tend to mass buy items they like. In the US the DS and the PSP are neck and neck, but with the latest games from Nintendo and with the Brain Age marketing scheme perhaps Nintendo will move ahead. It appears that Nintendo has figured out what the DS appeal is and will continue to develop games that play into its strengths. At this point, it seems consumers aren't sure what the PSP is all about. Is it a video player, a game machine, a MP3 player? Although having a sleek portable do all these things is appealing to me, is the PSP a "Jack of all trades, master of none?" Now there are plans for a new PSP to be released with a hard drive. How will that make those feel that have already paid for the original version? Also, this summer more PSP enhancements are on the way; most notably a Global Positioning System (GPS).



How is the fight going? Right now the DS is in control and landing several combos (Nintendogs and Brain Age). The PSP is hanging in there with traditional PlayStation type titles and multimedia capabilities but is starting to lag behind. Many people see the PSP as a third console. Some releases come out on the PlayStation and the PSP simultaneously. Nintendo's smaller price tag is certainly a factor. One thing is clear - If the PSP doesn't get up and start pounding soon, Nintendo will win the fight.

Drost Presents...The Pulse

A Look at What the Members of 2old2play think of the Current State of the Gaming Industry

By Drost

Episode I: Next Gen Console War Sideline Report - Post 2006 E3

This time, it's war. Xbox 360 vs. Wii vs. PS3. War!

Or so they'd have us believe.

But they don't get to determine the victor. It's up to us. We decide who wins. We vote with our pocketbooks.

Is it the Xbox 360 with its not-quite year head start? Is it the Nintendo Wii with the cool controller, crappy graphics, and stupid name? Or is it the PlayStation 3, the proverbial 800-pound gorilla, with its Blu-ray drive and horde of features (not to mention mammoth price tag)?

If it was up to Microsoft, Nintendo, and Sony, marketing alone would determine the winner. Microsoft seems to think they've won simply by coming out first. Nintendo thinks they're being innovative, which apparently precludes them from having to compete at all. Sony, well, they're Sony. They're entitled.

The Xbox 360 has already hit the market. A lot of 2o2pers have one already. We're aware of the console's abilities and potential. We know what games are coming out (cough, Halo 3, cough). We've already made up our minds. To that end, we almost don't count. There are only 4,500 of us, after all.

So let's talk about the other two.
Got to Wii?

The Wii hangs its hopes on its "revolutionary" controller. It has to. It doesn't have the raw processing power of the 360 or PS3, and it can't output in HD. You won't be playing Wii games because of the way they look, which will be a wee bit like pretty Xbox games.

Maybe graphics don't matter. "Game play is more important, but graphics do help," says Sir Poonga. "With more detail you can see stuff in the distance better. In an FPS, the better the graphics, the better you can snipe and such. But good graphics do not mean good gameplay."

Or, as d0od says, "It's what's inside that counts (gameplay), but it's hard to say no to the hot chick."

Does good gameplay come from the controller? Imagine holding the Wii controller like the handle of a lightsaber and whacking through your enemies like Yoda on crack. No buttons. No sticks. Just your mad jedi ninja skills.

"It's not going to be good for your immersive, time-consuming FPS's because it's too physical for that," says Rhysode. "It could be good for a different type first-person game. Melee FP could be interesting and seems to be something people are expecting."

Something like a Star Wars lightsaber game, perhaps?

That brings us to the make-or-break point of the Wii: the games. That doesn't just apply to the Wii, mind you. That's any console. It always comes down to the games. But the Wii has the potential for some pretty interesting stuff.

For instance, there's the whole back catalogue thing and the backward compatibility with Gamecube games. Imagine getting to play the original Zelda on a new console. Or Metroid. Or RC Pro/Am. Or Mike Tyson's Punch Out. Excitebike. Oh, and Super Mario Brothers. Tecmobowl.

You guys expect to see a wide variety of gaming possibilities on the Wii. "(I hope to see) all sorts of stuff," says Irion. "Classics adopted for the Wii and new stuff that really breaks boundaries. I hope Nintendo also opens up to letting smaller/independent game companies develop games for download."

"I was telling one of my friends that I really hope they do a Dodgeball adaptation for the Wii," says Irion. "Back in the day that was the shit!"

Some of us are also hopeful there'll be games that so far haven't shown up on consoles. "I do think we will see genres that usually aren't good for a console," says SirPoonga. "I think we finally have a point-and-click interface for real time strategy (RTS) games's on a console."

Then there's the whole retarded name thing, Wii, as in, wee. How about that? Maybe that sounds great in focus groups in the land of the rising sun, but here in America that's a toilet joke waiting to happen. Over and over and over again. Either way, the name sure isn't something to draw in buyers.

Gamer 1: "Dude, I got my Wii yesterday."

Gamer 2: "Congratulations. Always wondered when you'd hit puberty."

The games, not the controller, are the selling point for the Wii at least in our demographic. And it would appear most of us are sort of buying into Wii-as-a-second-console thinking.

If the Wii is second, which console is first? PS3 or 360? From the looks of things in the 2o2p forums, it might not be the PS3. Here are some sample thread titles:

"Why is Sony ready to self destruct?"

"Sony's LIVE service is a 360 Live Silver rip-off"

"Cheap PS3 is more gimped than we thought"

"PS3 Freezing Video"

Doesn't sound good, does it?

PS3... 2... 1... Shark Jump

Out of the three next-gen consoles, the PS3 boasts the most features (USB, Bluetooth, Blu-ray, motion-sensing controllers, 1080p output, 20gb/60gb HDD, blah, blah, blah) and the most horsepower (something like 2 terabytes of raw computing power), but also the highest price. Even the low-end PS3 costs more than the high-end 360.

People don't like that price, or the difference in the two SKU's. The 20gb PS3 seems ... lacking. There are no memory card slots, though there are USB ports. There is no HDMI output (and that's not upgradeable). The HDD is smaller, but you can swap that out. At least it has an HDD, unlike the Core Xbox 360. For just \$100 more, you get 40gb more memory, the HDMI output, and peace of mind.

But that'll cost you. It's \$599.00 plus tax and game(s) at the store on

Drost present: The pulse

launch day, which if you do the math means you'll be paying about \$712 for your PS3. That's a large chunk of change for anyone.

PlayStation fans or not, 2old2play folk are not happy about the price. "If I had an extra \$600 laying around, I would rather take my family down to the Keys for the weekend or pay off my brother's bookie before he gets his other leg broken," says King Drewsky.

King is not alone. "Even if I have the cash, I won't. I do not see it as a viable system at all," says Faleorn. "It is really playing catch up on so many fronts. It will have to have some incredible games to compete for my dollar."

One of those fronts is the PS3's online platform. Imagine all the features of Xbox Live, only branded with the Sony logo and you have Sony's unconfirmed online services. Imitation is the highest form of flattery, after all. Sony plans to offer the service for free.

To say people are skeptical is putting it nicely. "Sony will play catch up and eventually have equal game play, but their online sounds like a joke. Free is not good, and a centralized server is needed," says Faleorn.

Perhaps more distressing seems to be Sony's ... overconfidence. The company appears to believe if they build it, people will come simply because it's the next iteration of the PlayStation. And there may be some truth to that. But brand loyalty only goes so far.

"They missed the boat," says SirPoonga. "I think they are trying to push their proprietary technology, Blu-ray. Great example of this is the low-cost version of the PS3. It has a Blu-ray drive but no HDMI output. What's the purpose of having a Blu-ray drive? HDMI isn't something you can upgrade to, either."

The PS3 may be more powerful than the 360, but most believe the difference is marginal. "They are resting on pure processing power instead of a decent system to handle textures, which is why the games are all looking very similar on the PS3 for textures (killzone 2, MGS4, Warhawk, etc, all have that off texture look, like all the Doom3 engine games have that plastic look)," says Faleorn.

Between the tech, the attitude, and the price, the mob seems to have turned against Sony. "I'll reserve a cemetery plot before I reserve that (console)," says Rhysode.

"Six hundred bucks for a console before I buy a game, extra controller ,and pay tax! W.T.F. are they thinking," says LBSutke. "Yes, you can justify it by saying it is a cheap Blu-Ray player, but I thought a gaming machine was to be for games first and watching DVD's as a nice bonus."

Whether or not the console is the greatest ever created is still irrelevant as it won't hit streets for another six months. A lot can happen in six months. With all that's already happened, people are understandably gun shy.

"With Playstation, I can only look at their history and some screenshots to come up with a verdict and it is this: Same old shit," says Cranefolder. "Their hardware will be in limited supply and be buggy as hell at launch. Games will have lots of glitches. It will be at least a year before they have a product that is stable and games that are really using their incredibly complex programming model correctly. The thing will certainly be the biggest graphical powerhouse of the next generation but who cares?"

360 Degrees of Separation

That leaves us with the Xbox 360. It's difficult to get an accurate impression of the 360 from the denizens of 2old2play.com. Many of us, admit it or not, are Xbox fanboys (this author included). There is no small amount of posts gushing over the many luminescent qualities of the Xbox 360.

Sure, there are holdouts. Halo 3 will probably take care of them. Or perhaps it'll be Grand Theft Auto 4, which won't open first on the PS3.

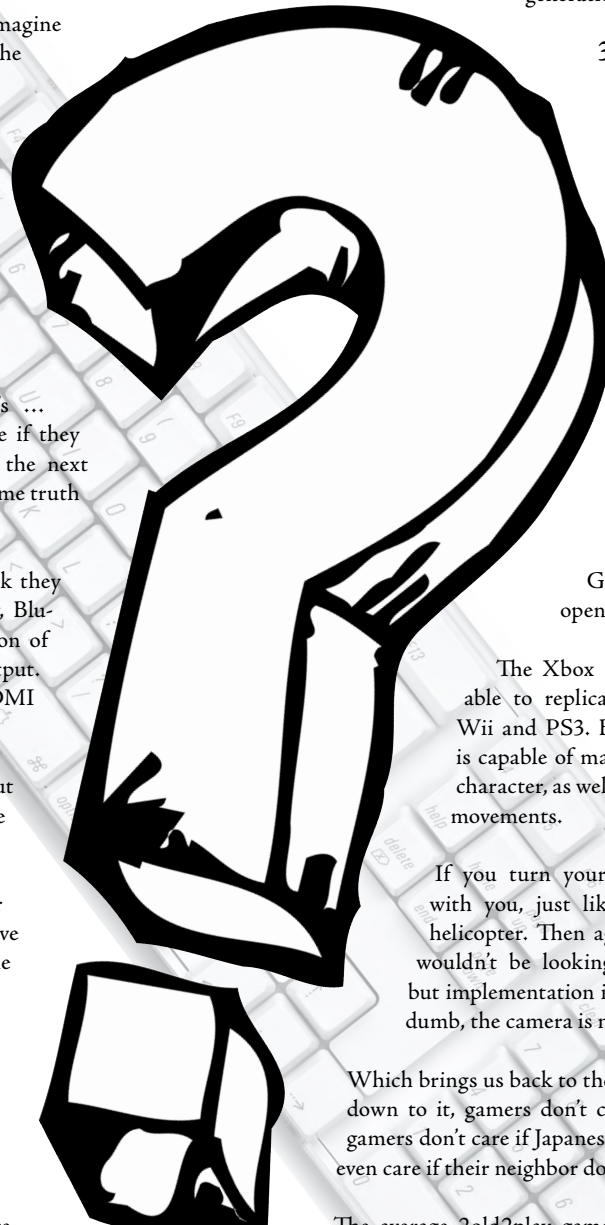
The Xbox 360's camera will apparently be able to replicate some of the abilities of the Wii and PS3. Built by GestureTek, the camera is capable of mapping your face to your in-game character, as well as locking on and following your movements.

If you turn your head, the game camera turns with you, just like the nose gun on an Apache helicopter. Then again, if you turn your head, you wouldn't be looking at the screen... Sounds cool, but implementation is key. If the games that use it are dumb, the camera is nothing but a gimmick.

Which brings us back to the point of all this. When it comes down to it, gamers don't care who makes what. American gamers don't care if Japanese gamers buy the 360. They don't even care if their neighbor does.

The average 2old2play gamer wants cool games and a cool gaming experience. And they want to play online with their friends. It doesn't even have to be a complicated game. Why else would people be playing Uno?

"It's all about the games," says Beldar. "If Sony picked up Halo 3, I'd buy one. It's that simple."



Rentals

The next generation

By Tank 2old2play

The next generation (next-generation) game era will be the era to put the video game rental businesses on the map. I think they will post record profits over the coming years. You may ask why I think this and the answer simply is this, too much garbage. Just like the movie industry, the price of video games are going higher and the quality is going down.

With the launch of the Xbox 360 came the new standard \$60 game price, a \$10 increase over the standard \$50 that had remained steady across multiple generations. The video game industry been complaining for years that it costs millions of dollars to generate the games with the eye candy we all want. Last generation (Xbox / Playstation 2) style games cost \$10-15 million for an A-list title. Xbox360/PlayStation 3 generation games will cost an estimated \$20-25 million for an A-list game. Their development costs have consistently increased while the cost of a new game had held steady at \$50. So I can side with them and agree that maybe it's time for a price increase to help reset the balance.

As a consumer however, paying \$ 10 more per game is a big deal. In March 2006 we had Burnout, Ghost Recon, The Outfit, Blazing Angels, Oblivion and FarCry. Battlefield 2 was pushed from March to April because Electronic Arts said the month had too much competition. If you were interested in all of these games then that's a whopping \$420 worth of games, pre-tax and shipping. What parent is going to give their kid that kind of money for video games in one month? As a gainfully employed adult, I'm not shelling out \$420 for video games either!

So as a consumer, I start a selection process to weed out the garbage titles from the truly great titles worth my hard earned \$60+. Here's a breakdown of how I thought the March line up rated:

Burnout – A truly uninspired eye candy upgrade of the previous burnout ported over to the 360. It's not that it was a bad game, but it was a port. They already paid their core development costs on the previous version. This game isn't worth \$60, so I rate it a RENT.

Outfit - Last generation graphics, audio problems, and vehicle control issues. I like real time strategy (RTS) games and have enjoyed various games attempting to bring RTS play to the console. But this game is totally unpolished and feels unfinished, and with last generation graphics, it's not worth the next generation price of \$60. RENT.

Blazing Angels - It's a unique style of game in the market so that's appealing. Also appealing is the co-op multiplayer squad based game play. The demo however shows last generation graphics and ugly graphical tearing and the controls were not that great. Missions are uninspired and repetitive. Again the graphics are what cost the money to make, so if it's not up to next-generation standards, why am I paying a next-generation price? RENT.

Ghost Recon - Now here's a game worth \$60. Next-generation graphics and game play. Full co-op mode, lots of different multiplayer options, and it looks like downloadable content is planned. This game has everything to go the distance and is well worth \$60. This game is every bit as next-generation a title as we're going to see in the 360's first year. This is a BUY.



Oblivion – As much as I'm enjoying Oblivion, this game is questionable. It's got the next-generation visuals, audio and game play. In general I believe if there's no multi-player, it's not a full next-generation title. But there are exceptions and Oblivion is one. With it's 100+ hours of open ended game play, it keeps from being classified as a disposable game (a game playable in 10-20 hours and then traded in, no replay value). The game play longevity makes up for the lack of multi-player options since multi-player games are probably played for ~100 hours before they're put aside (Halo2 being an exception). They've also embraced the Xbox Live Marketplace to expand the game (at a cost) which will further its longevity. So, I do consider this a BUY title.



Far Cry – This game has Rent written all over it. First of all it's a port of the Xbox version which is a port of a PC game. They've already made their money on the game many times over. Don't bring out a port at the full next-generation price. In their defense, it does include the port of the expansion pack that just came out for the original Xbox. However, there's nothing really different about this game other than upgraded graphics and artificial intelligence (AI). If you played the original Xbox version, there's no point in you buying this. Since this game is just a re-worked re-packaged product, it's a RENT and not worth the next-generation price tag.

Rentals: the next generation



Battlefield2 (BF2) – Since ports usually don't use the console to it's fullest and the core development costs have already been made back, I won't pay \$60 for a port. BF2:MC, however, was written from scratch for the 360 rather than just porting the original Xbox game. It's got the next-generation visuals, next-generation features, as well as the largest Live battles currently available on the 360, complete with vehicles. So, unless Electronic Arts has totally messed up the multi-player with bad servers and lag ridden games, I'd rate this game a conditional BUY.



Out of seven titles only two would I (and did) consider buying : Ghost Recon and Oblivion. The rest, with the possible exception of Battlefield2, are rentals. I rate them rentals because they're either not next-generation titles or they are rushed, unfinished, buggy titles, neither of which anyone should be spending the next-generation price of \$60 on. Rent them instead or pick them up used.



To get my \$60, a next-generation title needs to show me some next-generation gaming. Before you shell out that kind of money on a game, ask yourself if it's got these next-generation features:

- Next-generation visuals. Should be high resolution using dynamic lighting effects and other next-generation features. Cartoons and low resolution graphics do not cost \$20 million to develop.
- Full Dolby 5.1 digital Surround Sound.
- Longevity in the form of multi-player support or more than sixty hours of single player game play.
- The game should not be bug ridden. Would you pay \$60 for a two slice toaster that only toasted on one side? I don't think so!

Unless a game meets those requirements, they're not worth \$60 in my opinion. They are worth either \$40 or \$50 or perhaps a rental. I sold my original Xbox along with twenty seldom played games in order to buy my Xbox 360. I have no plans to accumulate so many games for my Xbox 360. I plan on renting probably 75% of the titles I play. And the ones that I do buy, I plan on trading them on pre-orders/credit to help bring the cost of a new game down. I may have two or three titles at any one time for my 360. For \$60 pre-tax/shipping we simply should not be willing to accept garbage titles.

The only way to tell the industry to shape up is to stop giving them your hard earn dollars for garbage. Don't accept the new higher prices for games that are not up to the quality they are using as the justification for the price hike. Rent games instead.

Blockbuster and Hollywood Video both rent games in-store. There are a number of online options too:

www.gamefly.com ships out of California, 1,2,3 disc services (lets you buy your rental)

www.gotaplay.com regional shipping 1,2,3 disc services

www.gamelender.com ships out of California 2,3,5 disc services

www.gameznflix.com has 4 distribution centers and 3,4,5,6,8 disc services (rents movies too!)

See you online (if you're not playing junk).



Sh*t Will Always Find a Fan.

Unfortunate Events in Online Forums

By DEEP NNN

Ever said something that backfired on you? Of course you have! What a stupid question I've posed. If you haven't said something that's gotten you into trouble, then you're probably either a Saint or not part of the human race. I've done it a few times in "the world". You know how it goes. You get this brilliant nugget of cerebral wisdom and then you decide to spew it before you forget what it was. All too late for retraction, the subject of your wisdom is sitting right beside you, just outside of your peripheral vision and just within earshot. BLAM! You're in deep trouble! You feel like shit, because all you really wanted to do is express your feelings to some sympathetic soul without the terrible consequences of saying it to the subject person. It wasn't meant to be a cowardly act of indiscretion; you just wanted to unload a bit.

Online Forums seem to be a magnet for similar types of unfortunate events. Somebody says something on their mind and, suddenly, someone else is affronted! The affronted react and now we have multitudes of persons' feelings or sensibilities hurt. Spiraling out of control, the involved parties look for support and recognition, hoping for reconciliation. With any luck, the explanations and apologies eventually sort things out. What an emotional roller coaster to go through! We seem to go for this ride from time to time, too often for my liking.

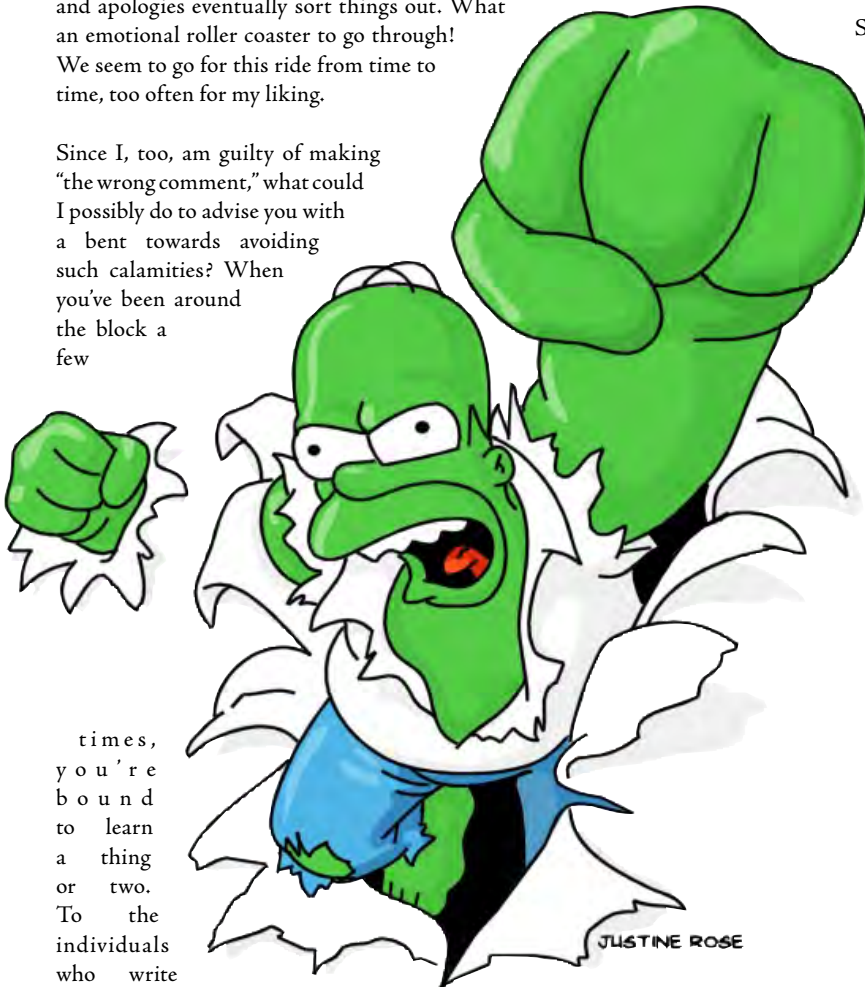
Since I, too, am guilty of making "the wrong comment," what could I possibly do to advise you with a bent towards avoiding such calamities? When you've been around the block a few

times, you're bound to learn a thing or two. To the individuals who write the offending material in the first place, avoid

the patronizing statements. Is everyone who does whatever, stupid? Is so-and-so completely in the wrong? Is that "thing" a total piece of crap? Is your way the only way? Not likely! Spend some time choosing your words. Is that really what you want to say? Think it through, write it out, and then proofread it before pressing that button. If you are trying to say something in a tongue in cheek manner, don't forget to add the obligatory smiley (:)) at the end of your post so that others will know you are kidding or being sarcastic.

I offer this advice to the offended. Comments in online forums are not in real time. They're not "the world". They're devoid of facial expression, vocal accentuation, and true emotion. Often, the author just isn't capable of proper rhetorical expression. Their words aren't always an accurate reflection of what is going on in their head. Think about what you have just read. Did the author really mean to attack you, your sensibilities and friends, or are they just shooting the breeze on a subject that interests them? Try to have a thick skin and wait twenty-four hours before responding. Maybe send a private-message (PM) to find out if the perception of aggression is real. Perhaps this could be sent through a third party if you're really pissed. My best advice is to wait and assume there was no intent to harm. Once shit has hit the fan, it's a lot harder to clean up.

Some of us are loud and others are quiet but we're all looking for friends.



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The TI-99/4A is a sophisticated computer designed not only for the beginner with its ease of operation, but also for the professional with its vast computing power through a 16 bit microprocessor. And it simply plugs into an ordinary household TV set.



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How to invest in your relationship

Buy her a computer

By Buffy

Until the past few years, I never thought of myself as a gamer. I loved games, but always thought of "gamers" as people who had all types of console and computer games and played them for days on end. True, people matching this description are gamers, but I realize now there are all levels of gaming and gamers. Gaming isn't just playing console games. Gaming is hopscotch, tic-tac-toe, puzzles, crosswords, dominoes, poker, Monopoly, Solitaire, Rummy and any other game you can think of. Gaming is not confined to computers and consoles.



Computers have just given games another level of enjoyment, but I've been a gamer from way back in the day before computers were readily available and common in homes. As a kid, I loved playing games. We'd play traveling games on long road trips, board games on bad weather days, and of course that jigsaw puzzle that stayed on the card table for weeks until it was done, and then maybe a week afterwards because I hated to take it apart. As I got older, the enjoyment I received from playing those games didn't change, just the way I played them.



Before I met my husband, I never had a computer, so I can thank him for showing me the light. He loved playing PC games, and smart boy that he is, he knew that if I had my own computer and games to play, I would happily let him play his. So anything he thought I might be interested in, or if I mentioned I thought a certain game looked neat, he'd go get it and load it on my computer. He started out with computer versions of the card and board games that he knew I loved to play and then moved to adventure games. Pretty soon, we were enjoying ourselves on the PC playing our own games both content to be in each others' company, even if we weren't playing the same game. While he played Neverwinter Nights or Command and Conquer, I'd play The Longest Journey or Rollercoaster Tycoon.

But then Halo came out and my husband got us an Xbox for Christmas. It didn't take long for my husband and brothers to get me hooked on Halo. We spent nearly all of our Christmas holiday playing and after that I was addicted. Once Halo2 came out, I was just as excited and eager to play on Live as my husband was. When we first got our Live memberships, I was a little scared to play by myself. I had never interacted with anyone over the computer and it was a bit intimidating for me. Eventually, I got the nerve up and began to play by myself. At that time, it wasn't as bad as it is now with the horrible children and cheaters. When I first started playing online, the game was still fun for me to play because it was new and the playing field was pretty level. The interaction with the other players wasn't a bad experience either. There was trash talk, but that was about it. I can't really comment on what it's like to be a "female gamer" because I've never really had an issue with it. I may get hit on every now and then, but other than that I haven't ever noticed any gender specific attacks or comments. However, I have only played with 2old2play members for the past year, so that has a lot to do with it.



I found the site through a classified ad Agonizing Gas posted on Bungie.net. I actually thought it might be a joke or he was some weirdo, but like a lot of older gamers I jumped at the possibility to find a group of gamers that I may have something in common with. After I joined the site, I encouraged my husband to do so as well. Neither one of us has ever done any interaction on the internet, so it was a new experience for us. Needless to say, we felt right at home, and were readily welcomed by the members at 2old2play.com. The site has truly enriched our gaming lives as well as allowed us to interact with people from all over the world that share similar interests. Thanks to codemonkey, who I met through the site, I found a game that I normally would not have tried. My husband and I both play Guild Wars, which is the first PC game we have played together and online. Of course I am now addicted, but that's all part of being a gamer.

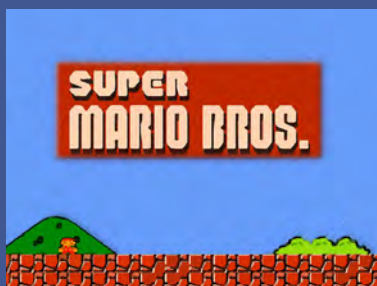
Not all people are gamers, so any of you out there wanting to convert a significant other should keep this in mind. It's not impossible to do, but going about it the right way helps. However, some folks just will never want to play and will want you to stop playing. Just like anything else in life you have to learn to compromise and use moderation to deal with it. I am fortunate that I have a spouse that shares a love of gaming with me. It's actually all to his credit that I play games at all. Because he took an active interest in finding something that I would enjoy, and he was patient with me until I found what I liked, we now both enjoy gaming together. I've always enjoyed playing games; he just helped me to broaden my gaming horizons.

A women's video game

By TwistedCaboose

What do women want from a video game? After reading many articles based on women gamers and visiting female based gaming websites, I am still no closer to answering this question.

The recurring complaint, in most of the articles, is that the gaming industry is ignoring the female gaming population as a whole. They seem to feel that games are not created with them in mind. What I have not seen in these articles or websites is an example of what female gamers want or need in a game. It would be interesting to see a coherent list of exactly what the majority of them want in games, but one does not exist. How can the industry make female based games when it seems that female gamers don't even know what they want? They can't. The complaint is too general and female gamers have not offered a solution.



The bigger question in my mind is, "Should video games be gender specific?" I would have to answer that with a resounding, NO. Video games should be created to appease personalities, not genders. The way female gamers were raised and the environment they were raised in play a big role in their choice of games, true; but the bigger factor is personality. I personally was raised around boys and labeled a "tomboy" because I enjoyed sports, physical activity, and jeans over dolls and dresses. My general personality is straight forward and on the aggressive side. My favorite games are Halo and Halo 2. This does not mean, however, that I have not enjoyed playing Myst, Mario Bros. or Zelda. These games entertained other parts of my personality. "Girlie Girls" may be naturally drawn to games like The Sims, Hexic, or World of Warcraft, but they may be drawn to the camaraderie and social aspect of settings like Xbox Live and may therefore play games like GRAW or Halo 2. When you view the creation of video games on personality, not gender, the gaming industry has succeeded in creating games for women. They have succeeded in making games for all genders.

Unfortunately, until the majority of female gamers can step back and actually see what the industry has to offer them, the complaints will continue. There seems to be a single mindset in many female gaming forums and articles: overreaction. Complaints of mistreatment and sexism take over like a disease. The gaming industry will never be able to appease the majority of female gamers, never. To do this they would have to basically retrain the female gamers thought process. For female gamers like me; we get it. We understand that the gaming industry is succeeding in providing a wide variety of game types for many personalities to enjoy. It's not about being a man or woman; it's about being a gamer.



Alpha Team Q&A:

Answers to your Halo 2 questions from the Pro's

Questions from Puzzled:

Q: Does ghandi hopping (hopping and repeatedly crouching in mid-air) really allow you to dodge the plasma burst? Does it work sometimes?

A: "Ghandi hopping" will not allow you to dodge the plasma burst in mid-air. The best way to dodge the plasma is to always stay near walls. This is a good practice even without plasma pistols. The reason why it might work sometimes is based on the person shooting the plasma and their connection. Depending on where you are and how far you fall in the jump, you might miss the plasma pistol locking on.



Q: Is there a trick to learning the locations on Warlock? I get turned around on that map more times than I want to admit.

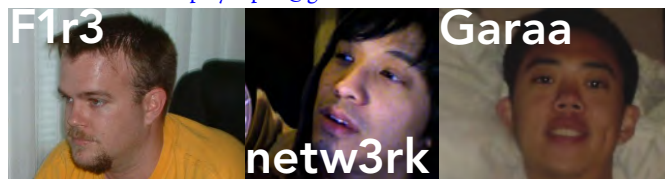
A: For most maps, the basis is that the light side is red and the dark side is blue. For warlock, this is no different. The lightest side of the map is red, while the opposite side being blue.

Q: Your team has just got control of the top floor on Ivory Tower (MLG Team Slayer), what is a possible set up for holding down the top floor? With rockets? Without Rockets?

A: The best place to hold for Ivory Tower is the over shield side. Since MLG no longer allows plasma pistols on the map, over shield is key on that map. The sniper respawns every two minutes so controlling sniper isn't as pertinent. Rockets are extremely important too. Also, the over shield and rocket ammo reloads are both 1 min 25 seconds. This helps because right when you get the over shield with rockets, you can use that guy and pickup the reloads, very effective. Our strategy on that map is as follows. One guy on top of the elevator near sniper, he has shotgun and battle rifle. Another guy with sniper and battle rifle on top of the airlift near over shield, this player takes care of the hallway and helps the guy up top near the sniper. Also, have another player with battle rifle and shotgun in this area to help the sniper. The fourth and last guy has rockets and battle rifle. He will hold the bottom of the over shield ramp and grab rockets/over shield when they spawn. Without rockets, I would suggest timing the rockets and using them as bait, then grabbing the rockets and doing a quick jump out of the rocket hole. If you can control rockets and over shield, you can control the map.

2old2play Alpha is currently offering Halo 2 lessons for individuals and teams. Please email 2old2playAlpha@gmail.com for more info.

If you have any questions regarding Halo 2 or the Alpha team, please send them to 2old2playAlpha@gmail.com



THE BIRTH OF A DRAGON

DOUBLE DRAGON: 1987 TO 1992



By CodeMonkey

The story starts with two twin brothers, Billy and Jimmy Lee. The Lee brothers have mastered the art of Sou-Setsu-Ken, a fictional martial arts style best suited for video game butt kicking. Billy Lee is the main character throughout the *Double Dragon* saga, because he wears the pants in the family - the blue pants. Jimmy Lee is usually stuck wearing red pants and being controlled by player-2.

The story of *Double Dragon* is a twisted web of love. Billy Lee's girlfriend, Marian Kelly, is often playing the "damsel in distress," forcing the Lee brothers to come to her rescue. Jimmy Lee was secretly in love with Marian, which causes some family disputes near the end of the game. The plot behind *Double Dragon* follows a similar line to that of an afternoon soap opera. The truth is, few gamers listen to storylines anyway.

Double Dragon was developed by Technos Japan Corporation as an arcade game in 1987. The now defunct development group was founded in 1981 by three former members of the once popular Data East. Data East eventually filed for Bankruptcy in Tokyo. Today, both companies have gone under and have sold their intellectual property to a number of other firms that still publish hand held games using the *Double Dragon* branding.



The *Double Dragon* series was comprised of side scroller, "beat 'em up," fighter games. It allowed for two player, simultaneous gaming and contained a rich world of side-scrolling fun. It contained a number of weapons including barrels, bats, knives, and a machine gun. The players could attempt to disarm the enemies, except for that damn machine gun, and use the weapons against the enemy. The knives were extremely deadly weapons, often leading to death in a single hit.

Many children spent hours of their time at the local pizzeria down the road playing *Double Dragon*. Among the sounds of the game was the sound of them popping in coins to continue their adventure before the "continue timer" ran out. Then in 1988, Technos Japan developed a home version of the game for the NES, and, two years later, a version for the Game Boy emerged. Technos used a publisher known as Tradewest to localize the languages and sell the games to a worldwide market. The NES release contained a number of platform "liberties" that affected game play and hurt the reputation of *Double Dragon*.

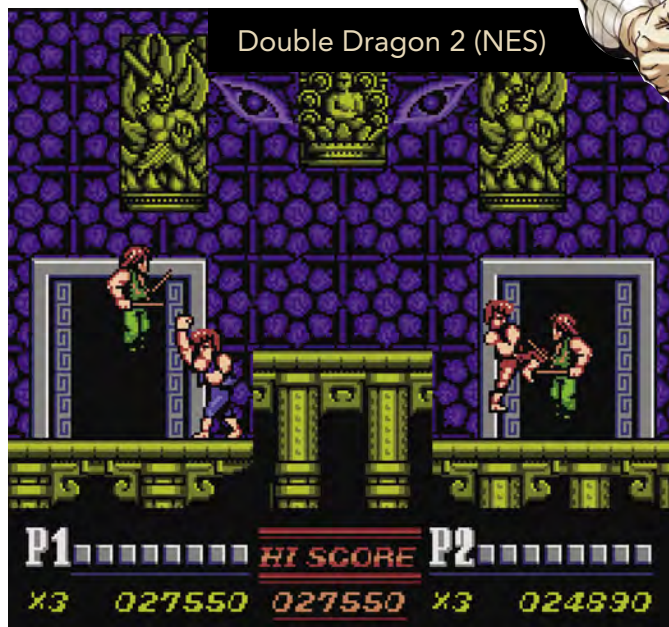


The NES game contained alternating turn based two player mode, which was much less fun than the arcade's simultaneous two player mode. This NES version included a "versus" mode, so that you could challenge player-vs-player or player-vs-AI, but it was limited to one screen, and contained none of the single player adventure. The developers changed how the two brothers fought. In the arcade classic, the

brothers had all their special martial arts moves at the start of the game, while the NES release used an experience system to build new skills over time. Those who wished to do a spin kick in the start of the game would have to find ways to “exploit” battles to build experience faster. Oddly enough, Marian’s dress was longer and it was impossible to see her underwear when the bad guys picked her up over their shoulder to carry her away. For some young boys, that was the main feature that made the arcade version a hit.



In 1988, *Double Dragon II: The Revenge*, was released by Technos Japan for the arcade, just as the original version was hitting the US console market. This time they used their experience with the video game *Renegade* in order to change the punching and kicking game play style. Acclaim published this game for Technos worldwide and it made it into our homes on the NES at the end of 1989. The arcade version was a continuation of the prior *Double Dragon* where the NES version simply ignored parts of the storyline that were “wrong” from the original home console port. This release included all that gamers wanted: two-player simultaneous action, great new graphics, and all the cool moves



at the start of the game, without experience gathering. The NES version offered almost two times the number of game stages as the arcade version, and it did not require quarters. I believe this was, by far, the best *Double Dragon* game released from Technos.

By 1990, it was time to release yet another *Double Dragon* game. *Double Dragon 3: The Rosetta Stone*, made its way to the arcade, but was not as successful as the other two releases. One reason for its downfall was the “shopping” system that was built so that players could purchase weapons, power-ups, and other enhancements by inserting more quarters (this feature did not make it to Japanese markets). *Double Dragon 3* was redesigned from the ground up by a development group known as East Technology. Although the game had been completely redesigned,







Super Double Dragon (SNES)

Technos of Japan opted to re-design it, again, for the NES in 1991. This release, known as *Double Dragon III: The Sacred Stones* had a completely altered storyline, and was extremely difficult, especially when compared to the original *Double Dragon 3* for the arcade, and all the prior *Double Dragon* game releases.

The final hit in the *Double Dragon* saga arrived in 1992 with *Super Double Dragon* for the next generation Nintendo console known as the SNES. This release was targeted strictly for home markets, and contained many new additional features that enhanced the *Double Dragon* franchise. Billy and Jimmy Lee each had a unique fighting style to differentiate them, as well as gauges that filled up over time and allowed the fighters to utilize special moves that could not be used constantly in battle. The graphics were, once again, amazing. The brothers learned how to block, fist grab, and use other martial arts related takedowns. Again, Tradewest published the game for

worldwide localizations, but was not given the final build of the Japanese version to convert. The result was partial storylines, unfinished final levels, and characters mentioned in the manual that never saw screen time. The end user must not have cared about these discrepancies because the game still managed to live up to its brand-name title.

The success of *Super Double Dragon* would be the final hit in the series. Many other games followed or cloned the features but never lived up to the name. This includes a 1995 release of *Double Dragon '95* for the Neo-Geo platform, a movie starring über babe Alyssa Milano, a cartoon, a comic book, and a bag full of hand-held games. The franchise even went as far as creating the title "Battletoads & Double Dragon: The Ultimate Team" which was a desperate plea to add two successful titles together, hoping for a hit. It hit the bargain bin instead, so perhaps this wasn't a complete failure after all.

Billy and Jimmy Lee can be considered the foundation for most of the great side scrolling fighters that followed. *Double Dragon* was no doubt inspiration for such games as *Renegade*, *River City Ransom*,

Final Fight, *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Streets of Rage*, and many others. When a developer designs a new 3D fighting game there must be some piece of them that recalls the beauty of *Double Dragon*. Although the founders of *Double Dragon* no longer produce games, the intellectual property still lives on, and everyone can hope that someday we will see a revised, refinished, and redesigned version of *Double Dragon*.

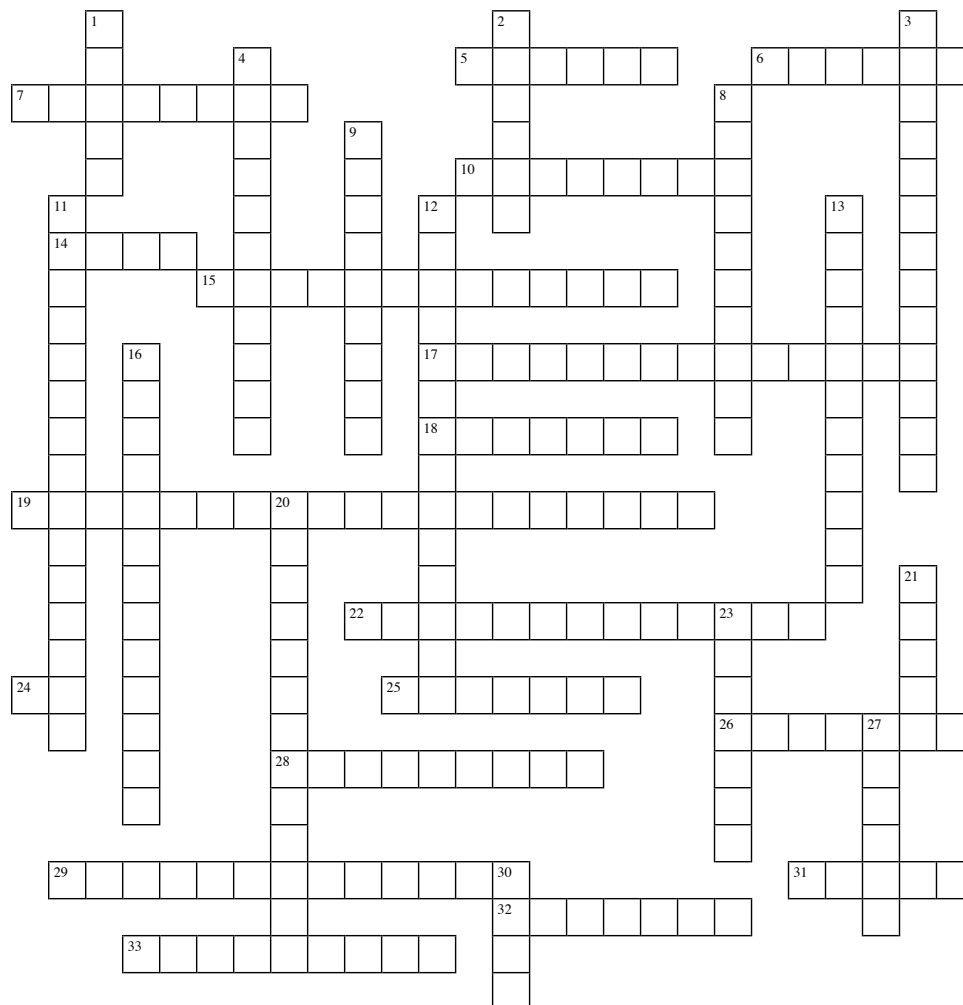


Renegade (Arcade)



CROSSWORD

It's History!



ACROSS

- 5 Arcade game developed by Namco and licensed for distribution by Midway that was first released in 1980.
- 6 In 1996, 3dfx released the magic chipset.
- 7 An undead, hell-spawned ninja spectre that walks the grounds of the Mortal Kombat world to seek revenge against those responsible for the death of his clan and family.
- 10 Pong-like arcade game.
- 14 Xbox flagship game.
- 15 BJ Blazkovicz was always attempting to escape.
- 17 Established in 1982 by Trip Hawkins.
- 18 City-building computer and video game.
- 19 In 1977, Atari released its cartridge-based console.
- 22 It was based on a simple hide-and-seek format, featuring a mysterious monster that lurked deep inside a network of rooms.
- 24 Widely regarded in the gaming community as one of the worst games ever produced, and is one of the biggest commercial failures in computer and video gaming.
- 25 I bet Phil Collins loved this console.
- 26 Nintendo Family Computer in Japan.
- 28 Vector-based video arcade game released in 1979 by Atari.
- 29 These dialup systems were popular in the 1980s, and sometimes used for online game playing.
- 31 Earth shaking.
- 32 1972 saw the release of the first video game console for the home market by Magnavox.
- 33 "It's time to kick ass and chew bubble gum, and I'm all outta gum."

DOWN

- 1 Billy or Jimmy Lee could easily take him down with a back-elbow attack.
- 2 This console didn't have any rings.
- 3 It was one of the powerful "visions."
- 4 In August 1982, became the best selling single computer model of all time, according to the Guinness Book of World Records
- 8 Disgruntled former Atari programmers acted out, and created this.
- 9 The general goal throughout the series is to complete the levels by strategically placing bombs to kill enemies and destroy obstacles.
- 11 Donkey Kong was his creation.
- 12 An adult-oriented video game made for the Atari 2600 by Mystique.
- 13 Possibly inspired by the contemporary 1986 movie, Top Gun. Sega had an arcade hit!
- 16 Arcade video game designed by Toshihiro Nishikado in 1978.
- 20 LucasArts released this action adventure game in 1987.
- 21 Sets out to free the realm's dragons, recover their treasure hoard from the invading Gnorks, and then confront and defeat Gnasty Gnorc himself.
- 23 Recover 32 treasures in a 20 minute period.
- 27 Tank vs. Tank fun.
- 30 Distributed as shareware, and was downloaded by an estimated 10 million people within two years. That is a WAD of people.

WORD FIND

Gotta Find 'Em All!

Z T U I M I C R O S O F T W M C B
L E J Q E T V N E R A W O I B L L
I E R V O T G B I M E R A R E K I
W F M O C P A C X N M V H Y Q T Z
R U B I S O F T J A T P R W B R Z
H L M M I A L C C A J E E A C O A
A D O O W T S E W V O L N E E C R
E S O R P O R C I M M U P D Y K D
V Y J X D W B V B K X A R K O S S
R T C F I N F O G R A M E S T T D
V J E F K M G U L V S I E R R A V
M A U N U U A W P G S M Q J R R R
D B H Y A L I N O S M A I L L I W
O Y N O S N X B Y X P N P S V E D
F T E C M O E Z F D U O O Y U C R
G Q T U K N N R Z L O K A G F J R
S P E K W O D X A B O O K S E G A

Acclaim
ArenaNet
BioWare
Blizzard
Capcom
Dynamix

Infogrames
Konami
Microprose
Microsoft
Nintendo
Rare
Rockstar

Sega
Sierra
Sony
Tecmo
UbiSoft
Westwo
Williams



AN ADMIN'S SITE CHAT HISTORY AND PRIMER

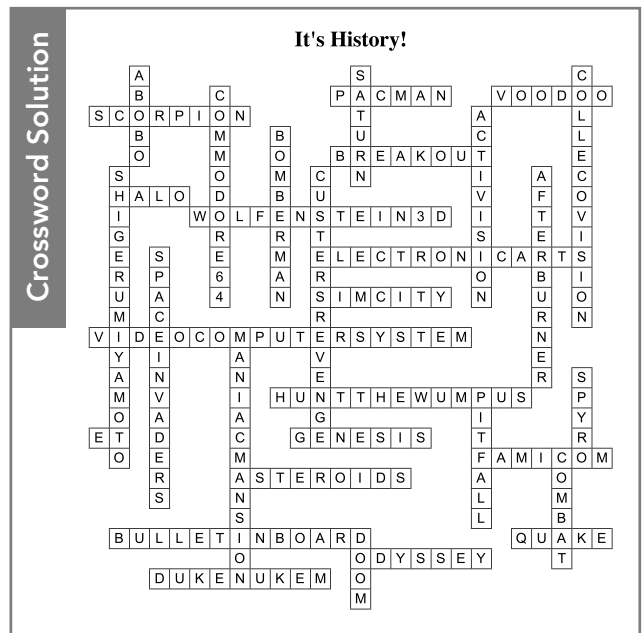
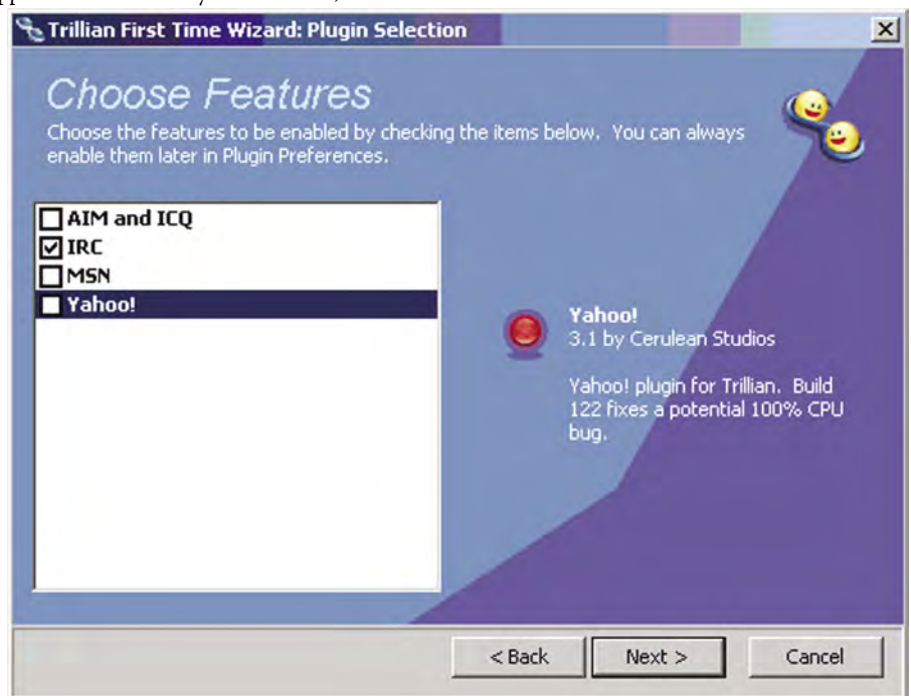
By DSmooth

A few months after 2old2play.com launched, it became obvious that people on the site wanted to participate in non-stop communication with other members of the site. Depending on the type of communication required, site members have always been able to communicate with one another via the forums, private messages, email, or various instant messaging platforms. Each has its own area of usefulness, but there was a need for instantaneous multi-user communication.

Internet Relay Chat (IRC) has been around since 1988, but is not the most intuitive system for non-technical users. The Site Chat applet on the website was a compromise that took the setup and command syntax out of IRC, and simply dropped users where they needed to be, at the expense of "traditional" IRC features. This quickly found groups of 10 or more folks from the site participating in the group chat almost every day. As the site has grown, the number of people chatting at any given time has risen as high as sixty. Site Chat is not meant to replace the functionality of the forums, but to complement it.

As time has passed, many people have inquired about switching from the rudimentary Site Chat applet, to a more full featured IRC client. As *Trillian* is easy to install and configure (not to mention many people already use it), I'm going to cover the basics required to get you into site chat using *Trillian*.

First and foremost, visit <http://www.trillian.cc/downloads>, then download and install *Trillian* on your PC. I'm not going to go into details of the installer, as it is not any different than any other Windows installer. Once *Trillian* first starts up it prompts you for the Basic or Pro version. Click Basic, which is also the free version. Initially we'll only be setting up IRC, so uncheck AIM and ICQ, MSN, and Yahoo and click next.



AN ADMIN'S SITE CHAT HISTORY AND PRIMER (CONTINUED)

Once *Trillian* has started open the *Trillian* menu, and select "Connections" and move to the "Manage my Connections..." fly-out. Once on that screen click "Add new connection" and select the "IRC" fly-out that appears. When the IRC properties screen comes up, it looks like this:

Fill in the 5 fields as follows:

2old2play.com
2old2play.com:31313
YourSiteUsername
YourSiteUsername
YourSiteUsername

Where *YourSiteUsername* is the username you log into 2old2play.com with (this is typically your site username to avoid confusion with other members).

Check the "Automatically connect to this account at startup" box.

Now click Change...

In the Connection tab, make sure Perform Buffer is checked, and in the box type:

```
/join #GeneralSiteChat
```

Now click the Miscellaneous tab and make sure both "Rejoin" options are checked:

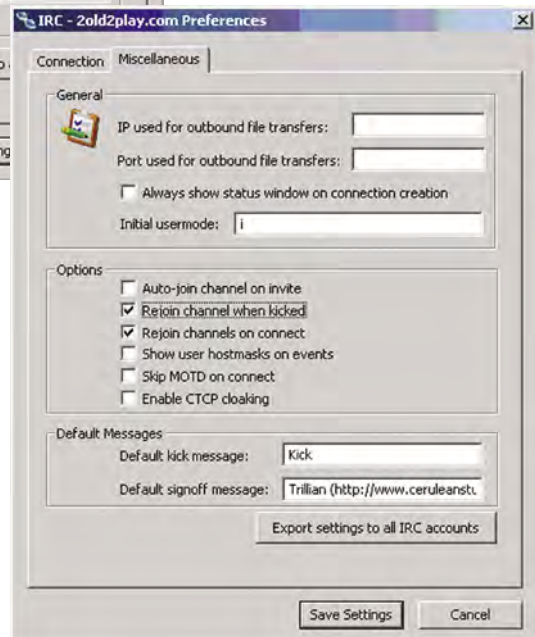
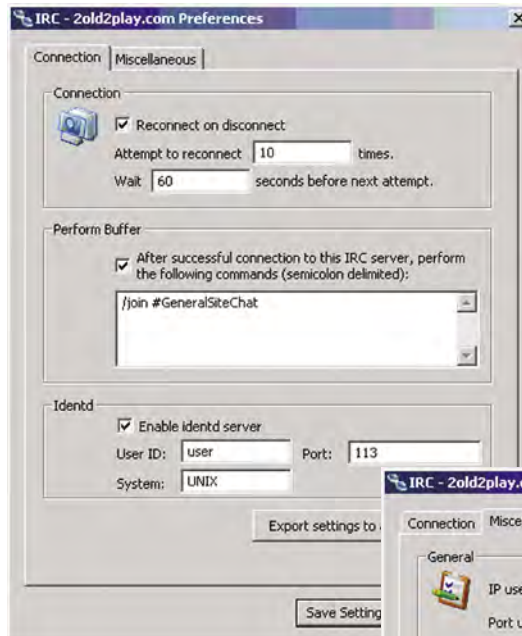
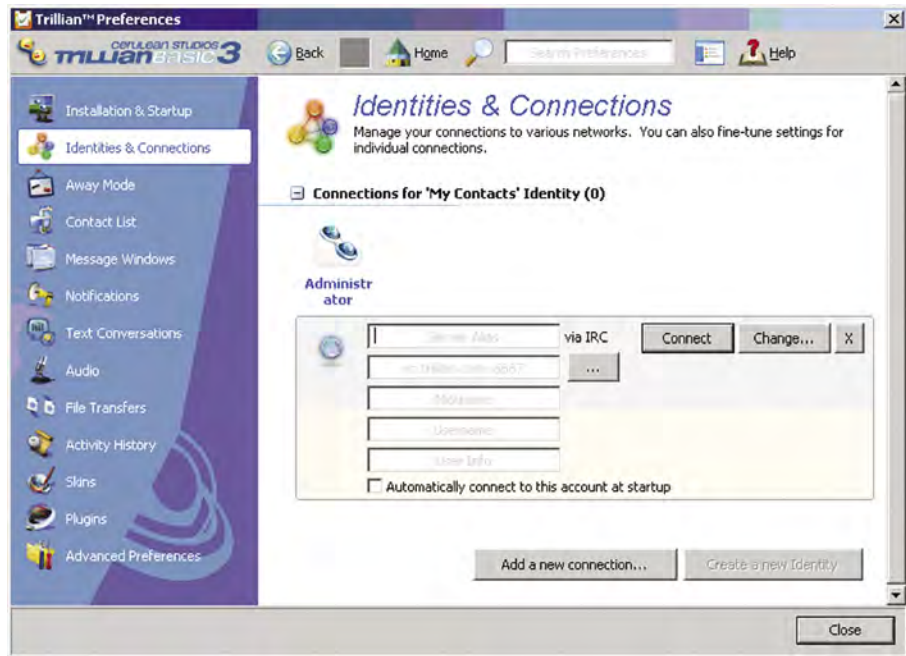
Now click Save Settings.

When you are brought back to the Identities & Connections screen, you can click Connect, and then Close.

You will now be presented with a window for General Site Chat. Enjoy. To connect and disconnect in the future, from the *Trillian* menu select Connections, then either Global Disconnect or Global Reconnect fly-out.

Hopefully this brief primer has you up and running in the site chat in minimal time. Once you're in, feel free to ask the rest of us any questions you might have. We look forward to seeing you there.

(Remember, you can also always get to site chat from any Java-enabled web browser by clicking the Site Chat button on the 2old2play.com left hand navigation panel.)





RELEASE WATCH

The Ultimate List of Gaming Goodness soon in stock

Title	Platform	Ships On
Xbox 360		
[eM] -eNCHANT arM-		6/1/06
Lord of the Rings: Battle for Middle Earth II		6/13/06
Moto GP 2006		6/12/06
Test Drive Unlimited		6/20/06

Game Cube		
Madden NFL 07		8/1/06
The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess		9/1/06
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Double Agent		9/1/06

Xbox		
Cars		6/6/06
Crusty Demons: Freestyle Moto-X		6/20/06
MLB Slugfest 2006		6/5/06
Painkiller: Hell Wars		7/11/06

Playstation 2		
Armored Core: Last Raven		6/13/06
Cars		6/6/06
Street Fighter Alpha Anthology		6/13/06
Urban Chaos Riot Response		6/13/06

Nintendo DS		
Cars		6/6/06
Hardcore Pool		6/13/06
Madden NFL Football 2007		8/1/06
Nintendo DS Lite		6/11/06
Scurge: Hive		6/9/06

Playstation Portable		
Astonishia Story		6/6/06
Cars		6/6/06
Glory Road		6/6/06
Madden NFL Football 2007		8/1/06

GBA		
Cars		6/6/06
Juka and the Monophonic Menace		6/1/06
Scurge: Hive		6/1/06

Title	Platform	Ships On
Windows		
Battlefield 2: Deluxe Edition		6/6/06
Cars		6/6/06
Deep Sea Tycoon: Diver's Paradise		6/7/06
Duke Nukem Forever		1/1/07
Flight Deck v4.0		6/6/06
IHRA Sportsman Edition		6/5/06
World War II Online: Battleground Europe		6/6/06

Macintosh		
Black & White 2		Q3 of '06
Call of Duty 2		Q1 of '06
Civilization IV		TBA
Fable: The Lost Chapters		Q1 of '06
Heroes of Might & Magic V		TBA
Quake 4		March
The Sims 2: Nightlife		March
Unreal Tournament 2007		TBA
World of Warcraft: The Burning Crusade		TBA

Which player is about to score with flying colors?

Better learn fast. Here comes Galaxian™ from Atari.

Pilot to co-pilot. Galaxian invaders are approaching your home. And they're only from Atari for use with the ATARI 2600®, Sears Video Arcade® systems, and the ATARI 5200™ SuperSystem.

These Galaxians look, sound, and act no different than the Galaxians you've battled in the arcade. They swoop, dodge, and fire with equal cunning. So you have to know your stuff.

Like the player on the left. He's about to hit a flying yellow Flugschip for 150 points. But his opponent, on the right, will score only 30 points for hitting the stationary blue Drone. Tough luck, rookie.

If you want to know even more about which Galaxians to hit, hit the stores for GALAXIAN.

ATARI
A Warner Communications Company