

HARDCORE

GAMER™

MAGAZINE

HARDCOREGAMER.COM

v2i7 . dodongo dislikes smoke

ROGUE GALAXY

Dodongo Likes Space Pirates!

ALSO INSIDE:



Devil May Cry 4



Metal Gear Solid 4



Super Smash Bros Brawl



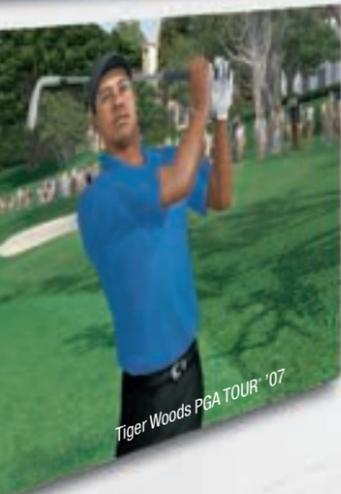
Plus, next-gen coverage up the yinger:
.the net effect: exploring the future of online console gaming,
.next-gen reviews and previews oozing out of every, um... page,
.new arcade games like the dickens (okay, really just one new game).

8 44.99 USA JAN 2007 \$6.99 Canada

2 8814 00007 4

0 1

PRODUCTS RANGE FROM
EVERYONE TO MATURE
E-M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB



PLAY BEYOND™

The future of gaming is now. With over 20 titles – spanning a wide range of genres – already available, the potential of the PlayStation 3 system is being realized. It all starts with the PlayStation 3 system's advanced microprocessor, the Cell Broadband Engine™. It's the very thing that game developers have always dreamt about. A microprocessor so advanced and so powerful, it allows the PlayStation 3 system to process a multitude of tasks all at once. Which means the A.I. acts less predictably, creating game play that is beyond challenging – and beyond believable. Now it's possible for every enemy to have individual A.I. and the laws of physics to determine how bullets spray and how explosions sound. Combine all this digital horsepower with the greater storage capacity and higher-definition image output of Blu-ray and you can see why this system, more than any other, will truly let you play beyond. **Learn more at playb3yond.com.**



Video output in HD requires cables and an HD-compatible display, both sold separately. Copy-protected Blu-ray video discs can only output at 1080p using an HDMI cable connected to a device that is compatible with the HDCP standard. HDMI cable not included. Additional equipment may be required to use the HDMI connector. Cell Broadband Engine™, "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Play B3yond is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. All names, brands and associated imagery featured are trademarks and/or copyrighted materials of their respective owners. The NBA and individual NBA member team identifications reproduced on this product are trademarks and copyrighted designs, and/or other forms of intellectual property, that are the exclusive property of NBA Properties, Inc., and the respective NBA member teams and may not be used, in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of NBA Properties, Inc. ©2006 NBA Properties, Inc. All rights reserved.

PLAYSTATION 3



LOST PLANET™

EXTREME CONDITION



JOIN THE BATTLE JANUARY 12TH
BLOOD. RUNS. COLD.

*Check out Lost Planet Mobile. Text "LOST" to 227266



Character Wayne by ©Lee Byung Hun/FANTOM CO., LTD. ©CAPCOM CO., LTD. 2006 ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. CAPCOM and the CAPCOM LOGO are registered trademarks of CAPCOM CO., LTD. LOST PLANET is a trademark of CAPCOM CO., LTD. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox Live, the Xbox logos, and the Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Entertainment Software Association. All other trademarks are owned by their respective owners. *Standard TXT Messaging and Content Charges apply.

Biographical Data

Publisher

Tim Lindquist
Editor in Chief
Greg Off
 greg@hardcoregamermag.com

Art Director

Terry Wolfinger
Senior Editor
Thomas Wilde

Managing Editor

Alicia Ashby

Editors

Anthony Mertz

Dave Hulegaard

Geson Hatchett

Jason Venter

Jeremy Peeples

Steven Kent

Elizabeth Ellis

Also Luvs Space Pirates

Amadeo Garcia III

Artists

Amadeo Garcia III

Dane Miner

Production Director

Brady Hartel

Production Artists

John McKechnie

Gary Harrod

Casey Yates

David Silveria

Translator

Elizabeth Ellis

Ad sales

Burr Hilsabeck

415-412-5685

burr@hardcoregamermag.com

Ad coordinator

Martin Gilbert

Customer Service

Judy Snow

706-369-3743

Hardcore Gamer® Magazine is published monthly by DoubleJump® Publishing, Inc. at 21407 NE Union Hill Rd, Redmond, WA 98053. Periodicals postage pending at Redmond WA and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: send address changes to Hardcore Gamer Magazine, PO Box 146, Redmond, WA 98073. "Hardcore Gamer" and "DoubleJump" are trademarks or registered trademarks of DoubleJump Publishing Incorporated. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system without written permission from DoubleJump Publishing. DoubleJump Books is a division of DoubleJump Publishing, Inc.

DoubleJump Publishing and the authors have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this magazine is accurate. However, the publisher makes no warranty, either expressed or implied, as to the accuracy, effectiveness, or completeness of the material in this magazine; nor does the publisher assume liability for damages, either incidental or consequential, that may result from using the information in this magazine. Questions regarding operation of the game software and hardware should be directed to the support numbers provided by the game and device manufacturers in their documentation.

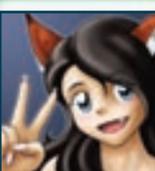
Printed in the United States of America



DJPubba **Tim Lindquist**
 Sadly, we had to go on press early because of Thanksgiving, so I'm writing my bio about 3 days before the first new console launch. That means I can't write all about the joys and sorrows I've been experiencing with the new consoles... or whether I even managed to score a new console. Rest assured, I'm currently either experiencing joy, sorrow or both.
 Now playing: *Gears of War*, *Tetris DS*, *Yoshi's Island DS*, *Portrait of Ruin*, *Bully*, *Zelda: TP* (OMG)!



Wanderer **Thomas Wilde**
 Between *Dead Rising*, *Gears of War*, and *Doom* on Xbox Live Arcade, I'm proposing that 2006 be known henceforth as the Year of the Chainsaw. Anyone?
 (On the comics tip, I'm digging Gail Simone's relaunch of *Gen-13*.)
 Now Playing: *Gears of War*, *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*, *Titan Quest*, *Touch Detective*



Lynxara **Alicia Ashby**
 This is a month of comics at HGM; I blame *Superman Returns* and *Marvel Ultimate Alliance*. For me, it's *NextWave*, 52, and *All-Star Superman*. Glorious single issue format! Thanks to Q4, I've got no time for trades.
 Now Playing: *Rogue Galaxy*, *Superman Returns* (360), *Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2*



Racewing **Geson Hatchett**
 I'm calling it now: *Elite Beat Agents* is Game of the Year. Anyone who disagrees... well, they probably gave the game a suspicious-looking sub-seven score or something. Good gosh, though, who'd be crazy enough to do *that*?
 Now Playing: *Guitar Hero II* (Hyper Speed Mode for life), *Sonic the Hedgehog* (360), *DBZ: Budokai Tenkaichi 2*, *Elite Beat Agents* (curse you for not giving me the Divas on a silver platter, Inis!)



Shoegazer **Dave Hulegaard**
 I got my Wii and couldn't be happier! *Excite Truck* was more fun than I had anticipated, and I refuse to stop playing until I complete all of the challenges. Now I just need to turn up the volume to drown out the sounds of Wolfie crying as he waits four painful months for new episodes of *Lost*.
 Now Playing: *WWE Smackdown vs. Raw 2007*, *Excite Truck*, *F.E.A.R.*



KouAidou **Elizabeth Ellis**
 I've worked two long days at my other job, I'm fighting the flu, I'm missing sleep, and now I'm proofing the magazine. So if you see any instances of text like "ow ow ow my head oh god kill me now please make the pain stop" randomly inserted anywhere, you now know why.
 Now Playing: *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past* (GBA)



Roger Danish **Greg Off**
 This fourth quarter has been another one of those dizzying deluge of great games and hardware that can't possibly all be played within the confines of a 'normal' life. If only I could somehow use the PS3's Cell processor to clone multiple copies of myself so I could simultaneously be playing through *Zelda*, *Gears of War*, *Bully*, *Resistance*, *GTA: VCS*, *Ultimate Alliance*, etc. Currently Playing: *Zelda: Twilight Princess*, *Gears of War*, *Resistance: Fall of Man*, *Bully*.



4thletter **David Brothers**
 I've found a new addiction: DC Comics's Absolute editions. I've got no interest in *Absolute Sandman*, but by the time you read this, I should have *Absolute New Frontier*, *Absolute Hush*, *Absolute Dark Knight*, and *Absolute Danger Girl* to go with my *Absolute Kingdom Come* and *Absolute Watchmen*. *Absolute Invisibles* next, please, and include the lettercols.
 Now Playing: *Gears of War*, *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance* (360), *Rayman: Raving Rabbids* (Wii)



James **James Cunningham**
 My brain is overwhelmed with gaming, and more are coming in all the time. At this rate I'm hoping for nothing to ship this spring so I can catch up on all the leftovers from this fall. When even a game of *Bully*'s quality ends up being left behind, you know there's too much going on, and the Wii isn't even out as I write this.
 Now Playing: *Final Fantasy XII*, *Viva Pinata*, *Every Extend Extra*, *Elite Beat Agents*, and very soon, *Zelda: Twilight Princess* and *Trauma Center*



HonestGamer **Jason Venter**
 I didn't get a PlayStation 3. I planned to, but I didn't. Thankfully, it's not bothering me. I've got my Wii pre-paid and six games and accessories, so I'll be busy well into the new year. With that in mind, I'll list those games I plan to be playing in the next week or so...
 Now playing: *The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*, *Rayman: Raving Rabbids*, *Excite Truck*



Hitoshura **Iaian Ross**
 I hope you enjoy our *Rogue Galaxy* feature. I'm a bit too busy working on DoubleJump's strategy guide for it to think of anything else to say because the game has melted my mind.
 Now Playing: *Rogue Galaxy*



Sarcus **Danny Cowan**
 After discovering that a certain someone had "accidentally" slipped a copy of *Smashing Drive* into my collection (DAMN YOU FRANK), I have taken it upon myself to collect awful GameCube games. This month's finds: *BMX XXX* and *Universal Studios Theme Park Adventure*. Is picking up trash for Woody Woodpecker more fun than making topless diaper-wearing grannies ride bicycles? You tell me.
 Now Playing: *Guitar Hero II*, *Elite Beat Agents*



Wolfie **Terry Wolfinger**
 Well, my *Undead Rogue* has hit 59, and the new *WoW* extension, *The Burning Crusade*, has been delayed to January, so by that time I should have earned all the rep in *Alterac Valley* to get my exalted gear and the hard hitting daggers before they change the whole ranking system all around. Woot.
 Now Playing: *World of Warcraft*, *Project Gotham Racing*



Metalbot **Anthony Mertz**
 I think that I've officially become a PC gamer. I can't fully enjoy a FPS on a console anymore, because the control is not precise enough. I also don't grasp spending \$600 for a system that does little more than play games. The biggest thing, though? PC games just last longer. Solid online play and mods can keep a game fresh for years. BEAT THAT YOU CONSOLE FANBOY PANSIES!!!
 Now playing: Not consoles



Arbeth **Thomas Shin**
 I'm too cheap and miserly to blow my hard-earned winnings from *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike* tournaments on a PS3. So instead, I scour the 'Net for free games to download. Maybe then, I can import that *Guilty Gear XX: Act Cadenza*-err, I mean, *Accent Core* cabinet for Christmas. (I EX Shielded your Vapor Thrust! HA!)
 Now Playing: *Gunster* (PC), *Gears of War* (360), *Melty Blood: Act Cadenza* (PS2)



Ashura **Brady Hartel**
 Ahh, the Wii. I plan to camp out at the local WalMart and get one this weekend, which will be in the past by the time you read this due to time travel, and, uh, evil space elephants. There is a single reason Nintendo named their its console the Wii, though, and it's the following sentence coming out of children's mouths in public: "Can I play with my Wii, mommy? Please, mommy, I want to play with my Wii!"
 Now Playing: *Elite Beat Agents*, My Wii, hopefully.



Jeremy **Jeremy Peeples**
 Between Wii's Virtual Console and the *Sega Genesis Collection*, I've felt like quite the Sega warlord over the past month. It'll continue into the new year with *Christmas Nights* and my annual playthrough of *Shenmue* if all goes well.
 Now Playing: *WWF No Mercy*, *Destroy All Humans! 2*, *Tetris DS*, *Mortal Kombat: Armageddon*, *Sega Genesis Collection*



Mads **Amadeo Garcia III**
 My new laptop has allowed me to color my comics, but at a terrible, terrible price: a solemn duty to revisit most every classic Blizzard game there is (with some *Command and Conquer* thrown in to boot). In these ways and more, my life is no longer mine. Tell my family I love them, and pass me that full rejuv potion, wouldja?
 Now Playing: *Starcraft: Brood War*, *Diablo*, *Diablo II: LoD*, *Warcraft III*, *Touch Detective*, *Cooking Mama* (for variety)

Previews

The PlayStation isn't the only gaming legacy with a new number at the end of it! Capcom and Konami try to out-sequel one another with next-generation installments of old favorites in our Previews section.

Metal Gear Solid 4: 14

Devil May Cry 4: 12



12

Feature

THE NET EFFECT:

EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF ONLINE CONSOLE GAMING



...and the next generation of trash talk!

28

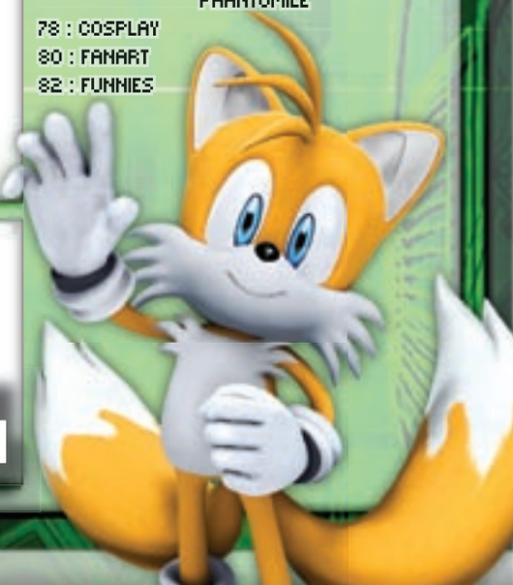
On the cover

ROGUE GALAXY

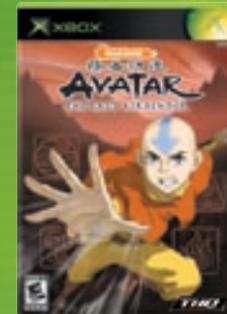
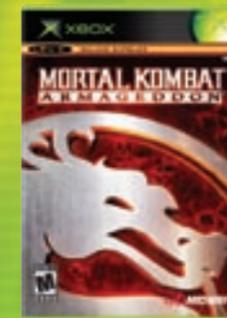
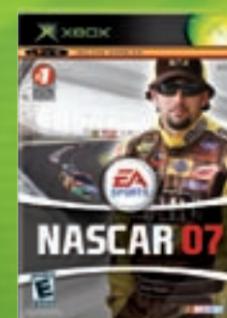
Why explore a single world, when you can explore the entire universe? Join us at the beginning of an epic journey; it all starts on page..

44

- 10 : NEWS
- 12 : PREVIEW: DEVIL MAY CRY 4
- 14 : PREVIEW: METAL GEAR SOLID 4
- 16 : PREVIEW: PERSONA 3
- 18 : PREVIEW: SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL
- 19 : PREVIEW: VANGUARD: SAGA OF HEROES
- 20 : PREVIEW: AQUARIA
- 22 : PREVIEW: SPECTROBES
- 24 : PREVIEW: METEOS: DISNEY MAGIC
- 26 : ARCADE: GUILTY GEAR XX: ACCENT CORE
- 28 : FEATURE: THE NET EFFECT
- 36 : MOBILE: BONK'S RETURN
- 36 : MOBILE: DEAD WATER
- 38 : MOBILE: MAGNETIC JOE
- 40 : MOBILE: OASIS
- 40 : MOBILE: HITMAN: BLOOD MONEY VEGAS
- 42 : MOBILE: TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL: DOUBLE AGENT
- 44 : COVER STORY: ROGUE GALAXY
- 54 : REVIEW: GEARS OF WAR
- 56 : REVIEW: PHOENIX WRIGHT 2
- 58 : REVIEW: TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8
- 59 : REVIEW: CALL OF DUTY 3
- 60 : REVIEW: PARAWORLD
- 61 : REVIEW: FULL METAL ALCHEMIST DS
- 62 : REVIEW: WWE SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2007
- 63 : REVIEW: GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE
- 64 : REVIEW: EXCITE TRUCK
- 65 : REVIEW: POCKET RACERS
- 66 : REVIEW: SUPER ROBOT TAISEN: ORIGINAL GENERATION 2
- 67 : REVIEW: NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2
- 68 : REVIEW: WARHAMMER: MARK OF CHAOS
- 69 : REVIEW: GENESIS COLLECTION
- 70 : REVIEW: SUPERMAN RETURNS
- 71 : REVIEW: RIDGE RACER 7
- 72 : REVIEW: RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN
- 73 : REVIEW: SONIC THE HEDGEHOG
- 74 : REVIEW: GTA: VICE CITY STORIES
- 75 : REVIEW: TOUCH DETECTIVE
- 76 : GRAVEYARD: KLONDA: DOOR TO PHANTOMILE
- 78 : COSPLAY
- 80 : FANART
- 82 : FUNNIES



NEW GAMES. ORIGINAL XBOX.



©2006 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Xbox, the Xbox logos, Xbox Live, and the Xbox Live logo are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the U.S. and/or other countries. The ratings icon is a trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.



www.xbox.com



WII GET DVD PLAYBACK IN 2007

In order to keep costs as low as possible, Nintendo initially announced that its Wii console would not feature DVD playback, citing that market penetration is saturated and most households already have multiple DVD players. Interestingly enough though, the current Wii has a DVD drive but lacks support for playing movies.



Sonic Solutions has revealed that Nintendo has chosen its CinePlayer CE DVD Navigator to bring high-quality DVD movie-viewing to a future version of the Wii, tentatively scheduled for the second half of 2007.

While Nintendo confirmed this statement, it did not divulge any further details on pricing or implementation. It remains to be seen whether Nintendo will offer an external peripheral, an all-new updated Wii, or a downloadable codec through its Wii shop which can be purchased for Wii points. Sonic Solutions is a software application developer known for its Roxio CD/DVD burning software and not a hardware manufacturer, so a downloadable or unlockable code seems to be the most likely scenario.

SANS LIK-SANG.COM



Anybody with an interest in importing video games has heard of Lik Sang, a Chinese online retailer that specializes in bringing Asia-specific titles to Western gamers, or facilitates the process of getting import consoles at competitive prices. If you go back a few years, however, Lik Sang had quite a few less-than-legal activities under its belt and was a thorn in many a publisher's side.

Back in 2003, Sony Inc., in cooperation with Microsoft and Nintendo, sued Lik Sang for selling so-called "circumvention devices," also known as mod chips, which allowed people to play legally imported games in addition to illegal "warez" which are freely downloadable off the Internet.

In the long run, the big three were victorious and Lik Sang settled, and a compensation payment of an undisclosed sum was made to Sony Inc., in June 2003.

Apparently that was not enough, as Sony Europe shortly thereafter commenced legal actions against Lik Sang.com in the High Court of Hong Kong for selling PSP consoles, alleging breaching Sony's trademark rights by offering the PSP for sale to customers in the UK and the European Economic Area in general.

As an unfortunate result, Lik Sang announced in August 2006 that it can no longer sustain itself under the multitude of lawsuits, and has been forced to terminate its operations and shut down. Putting the blame squarely on Sony, Lik Sang issued a statement saying, "The Empire finally 'won'... a few dominating retailers from the UK probably will rejoice [in] the news, but everybody else in the gaming world lost something today."

Sony, however, claims that it was just protecting "consumers from being sold hardware that does not conform to strict EU or UK consumer safety standards, due to voltage supply differences." Additionally, in the case of PS3s, hardware purchased from Lik Sang wouldn't be able to play European region-specific Blu-Ray movies, DVDs, and PS1 and PS2 software.



MERGERS, ACQUISITIONS, NEW TITLES, DELAYS

If you're the lucky owner of a spiffy new black PlayStation 3, you may have noticed that a few previously announced launch titles are missing from the repertoire. Vivendi's sci-fi FPS *F.E.A.R.* and Bethesda's highly anticipated RPG *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* have both been delayed until January and February of 2007, respectively. SEGA needed extra time to incorporate downloadable content for *Sonic The Hedgehog*, so that also didn't make the deadline to be a launch title, but it should still arrive before year's end. Word from EA Canada is that the PS3 edition of *NBA Live '07* has flat out been cancelled with no prior notice, but the poor reception on the other platforms has surely played some part in that decision.

EA released its Q2 2007 financial results, announcing it had reeled in a whopping \$784M in net revenue, up 16% over last year. Gross profit was up 14%, although its net income dropped 50% (\$51M to \$22M). More importantly, EA revealed that *Army of Two* and *Crysis* are, unfortunately, getting delayed until the next fiscal year (not before April 2007), and announced new titles, such as a Wii/PS3-specific *Sims* game, a new *Road Rash*, *The Simpsons* movie tie-in, a new *SimCity* game, *The Sims 3* (not before April 1, 2008), and a next-gen version of Criterion's FPS *Black*.

During its preliminary financial results conference call, THQ announced that its revenue had increased 68% (from \$143M to \$240M), driven by sales of *Saints Row*, *Company of Heroes*, and *Cars*. THQ execs revealed that the *Juiced* and *MX* franchises are getting new installments in the next year, while the *Titan Quest: Immortal Throne* expansion, scheduled for Jan-March 2007, will offer new quests, new monsters, an increased level cap of 75, a new "Dream" mastery, eight new classes, etc. While no specific details were revealed, THQ strongly hinted that both *Saints Row* and *Company of Heroes* will be seeing further installments or expansions.

Not usually a great source of information, Marvel's latest financial statement revealed some interesting facts. Earlier this year, Activision got rid of a few comic book licenses. It did not take long before other publishers snatched them up. SEGA took *Iron Man*, while Take-Two announced *Fantastic 4: Rise of the Silver Surfer* (June 2007). It seems that Marvel has even more game projects in the works; EA is preparing a sequel to its arena fighting game *Marvel Nemesis*, Konami has *Marvel Vs. Card Game* listed, and it seems that Activision is not only working on a title based on the third *Spider-Man* movie, but a mysterious *Spider-Man Trilogy* game is also tentatively scheduled for Q4 2007.

Because of the higher next-gen development costs, Capcom's President and CEO Kenzo Tsujimoto said the company intends to implement a multi-platform strategy, marketing a single title for different/multiple game consoles, thereby shying away from its long-running platform-exclusive practice in order to expand sales and optimize profits. Capcom believes that the next-generation game consoles market is declining, while online games, especially PC, are growing rapidly, so a new company will be established in Asia to explore that trend.

Pending shareholder approval, Austrian publisher JoWood has entered a preliminary agreement to acquire North American publisher/developer DreamCatcher and its affiliate The Adventure Company. Strategy First parent company Silverstar Holdings has submitted a definitive offer to acquire all shares of Empire Interactive, which should be finalized by the end of the year, pending shareholder approval. Krome Studios, known for *Ty the Tasmanian Tiger* and currently working on *Hellboy* for Konami, announced that it has acquired former Atari development studio Melbourne House, known for *Test Drive Unlimited* and *Transformers*. This bolsters Krome's size to almost 300 in-house and makes it one of the largest independent studios worldwide.

Eve Online developer CCP and tabletop RPG publisher White Wolf Publishing, announced that both companies have signed an agreement to merge. The new company will publish strategy guides, enhanced collectable card games, role-playing systems, and novels based on *Eve Online*. Development on a new MMORPG, *World of Darkness*, is already underway.

Join the **COMMUNITY!**

Objection!

AVAILABLE JANUARY 2007

Ace Phoenix Wright Attorney

Justice For All

Also check out Phoenix Wright Mobile
www.capcommobile.com



NINTENDO DS

www.ace-attorney.com



DEVIL MAY CRY

Devil May Cry 4 has a lot to live up to. It's only the second title to appear since *Devil May Cry 2*, which many view as the game where Dante stopped being an awesome badass. It closely follows *Devil May Cry 3*, as well, which saved face by jumping back in time to when Dante didn't seem like a well-bred Englishman with a sword. That's the sort of trick that can only work once, so what have the developers done this time around to up the ante? It's simple. They've given the starring role to someone new.

The new hero is a guy named Nero. He's a member of the Order of the Sword, a group of Holy Knights battling to rid the world of evil. They believe that Sparda is their savior and Dante their ally, until the day Nero watches in horror as Dante slaughters several of his fellows. The bewildering turn of events is just the start of the *Devil May Cry 4* mythos, and the narrative device that will allow players to do what they most love: kick a lot of demon tail. Intriguing plot changes aside, *Devil May Cry 4* doesn't look like it's concerned with altering the general formula that worked to such success in the past three games. The focus remains where it always has, on one lone figure battling against armies of demonic beings.

Nero has a few subtle differences that remind you that he's not Dante. Besides wielding swords and pistols, he has a special attack that makes use of an arm that's definitely not human. The possibility for incredible combos has perhaps never been better. In his way, Nero will be every bit the radical fighter that Dante has always been. Where he goes, action must follow, so you'll see a lot of jaw-dropping sequences like a Balrog bursting through a shimmering barrier or flames licking a night sky while you struggle to keep the hero alive against the unearthly horde.

Devil May Cry 4 is months away from release but already looking hot as hell. We'll report back as soon as we know more. That day simply can't come soon enough...

Preview by Honestgamer

Dante and his inferno

Publisher: Capcom
 Developer: Capcom
 Release Date: 2007
 Genre(s): Action
 Category: Demonic
 # of Players: 1

You never forget *your first* ...

Ar tonelico

MELODY OF ELEMIA



INTIMATE "DIVE SYSTEM"
 Interact with your team members in a private, digital world.



THE ART OF "GRATHMELDING"
 A massive item customization system that allows you to customize and create new items.



EXPANSIVE AND FUTURISTIC WORLD
 Explore the beauty and elegance of the Tower of Ar tonelico, a world unlike any other.



UNLEASH "SONG MAGIC"
 Use the Power of Songs to heal your friends and defeat your enemies.

After two great wars, the world has been reduced to a floating continent and the mysterious Tower of Ar tonelico. But, with the arrival of Viruses, the world is once again put in danger, and all mankind faces extinction!

Don't miss NIS America's first premium box!!

Go to www.NISAmerica.com now to find out more about the exclusive offers!



Available February 2007



PlayStation 2



Set after the events of *MGS 2*, the world of tactical espion-action is now in total chaos due to ceaseless military action. To stop the endless slayings, a grizzled Solid Snake has been called back into duty, but now appears 20 years older due to side effects caused by the cloning process. Gameplay changes due to the now-Old Snake's advanced age have been shrouded in mystery, but many others aren't.

A new camouflage system called OctoCamo will allow Snake to quickly blend in with whatever his surroundings are. So if he's playing dead amongst a pile of dead soldiers, his camo suit will take their appearance and mimic their texture. Unlike past entries, the emphasis here is on action and wide-open play. You'll be free to go wherever you want, and areas will now be littered with bio-mechanical Metal Gears. *MGS 3*'s close quarters combat is returning, and the old box hiding trick is back too. This has been enhanced with barrels – allowing you to use them as a shield, and then roll over enemies. All of these combat techniques will be available for online play, ensuring an even more exciting online game than *Subsistence*.

It seems like everything *MGS* fans love will definitely be overhauled for what is set to be Snake's last stand, and the final *MGS* game under Kojima's direction. No matter when it hits in 2007, people will talk about *Guns of the Patriots* for years to come. There will be no place to hide.

PUBLISHER: KONAMI
 DEVELOPER: KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
 RELEASE DATE: 07/07/2007 (?)

GENRE(S): ACTION/STEALTH
 CATEGORY: 1
 # OF PLAYERS: 1, MANY ONLINE

WHICH SNAKE IS THE TRUE SNAKE!?

METAL GEAR SOLID 4

GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION

Preview by Jeremy



SEE THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF AMERICA'S MOST ELITE TWO-MAN TEAM



You've just enlisted in the most elite two-man counterterrorism unit on the planet, Fireteam Bravo. Handpick your SEAL team to form your own stealth unit to infiltrate, acquire intel and neutralize enemies in diverse conditions—anytime, anywhere. Utilize 40 new weapons to combat an even more realistic and smarter enemy. Play in single-player campaign mode, or team up for some multiplayer SEAL action on the go. The eyes of the free world are upon you. Think you have what it takes to see the world through the eyes of Fireteam Bravo?



www.us.playstation.com/psp
 www.seal.navy.mil
 www.socomeseals.com



Drug Reference Violence

SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo 2 ©2006 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Developed by Zipper Interactive, Inc. "PlayStation," "PSP" and the "PS" Family Logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required. The U.S. Navy provided technical support, but does not officially endorse this product.

PREVIEW

PlayStation 2



Preview by Wanderer

There's no way around it. *Persona 3*, if absolutely nothing else, will be known for the rest of time as that one game where you summon monsters by shooting yourself in the head. It's not a gory shooting, and in fact, it's not even lethal. It is, nonetheless, a pistol applied directly to one's brainmeats.

This is the kind of idiosyncrasy you come to expect from the *Shin Megami Tensei* series, and the *Persona* series is an offshoot of such. *Persona 3* is a stand-alone game, connected to the previous titles by the presence of personae: mythological creatures that have bonded with hapless humans.

You begin *Persona 3* as a new student moving into the dorms at a Japanese boarding school. By day, you're an ordinary student, going to classes and interacting with others. By night, you're a member of a demon-hunting posse, exploring the halls of a bloody alternate dimension.

When combat starts, you're only in control of your main character, who can defend himself with weapons, items, or the aforementioned head-shooting. As in *Persona 2* on the PSOne, you can find extra personae by collecting tarot cards, and each personae has different costs and effects. Some attack your enemies; some heal your friends; and others are meant to partake in that time-honored *SMT* pastime, finding an enemy's weak spot and exploiting the hell out of it.

Persona 3 is scheduled to come out in February of 2006, right when this glut of A-list RPGs is finally fading away. If you thought you were going to get some free time once Q4 was over, forget it.

Publisher: Atlus
 Developer: Atlus
 Release Date: 2/1/2007

Genre(s): RPG
 Category: Recreational Suicide
 # of Players: 1

ANY MORE REALISTIC AND YOU'D BE GROUNDED FOR MAKING SUCH A MESS.



Elebits

When you hunt for Elebits you're bound to make a mess. The Wii Remote lets you throw stuff around like crazy while looking for them. So pick it up and go Elebits hunting. And don't worry. You won't get in trouble for trashing the place.



Exclusively for
Wii

KONAMI
www.konami.com

© 2006 Konami Digital Entertainment Co., Ltd. "Elebits" is a trademark of Konami Digital Entertainment Co., Ltd. "KONAMI" is a registered trademark of KONAMI CORPORATION.™ and the Wii logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2006 Nintendo. The rating icons are trademarks of the Entertainment Software Association.

SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL

Preview by Racewing

PUBLISHER: NINTENDO • DEVELOPER: SORR/NINTENDO • RELEASE DATE: TBA 2007 • GENRE: FIGHTING
CATEGORY: MY POKEMON CAN BEAT UP YOUR ESPIONAGE AGENT • # PLAYERS: 1-4 (IF NOT MORE!)

THE NEWCOMERS HAVE ARRIVED

Hey, there. Enjoying that Wii? Good, good. It is, after all, about to get even better. *Zelda* aside, most of Nintendo's heavy-hitter franchises haven't even been released for it yet. The next iteration of Nintendo's all-star fighting game is arguably the most eagerly awaited of them all.

True to form, and to the chagrin of some, Nintendo's been keeping its cards close to hand, and releasing *Brawl* trailers with sparse frequency while only letting small tidbits of information leak out here and there. As far as gameplay goes, little of the engine appears to be removed from *Melee*. If you're familiar with that game, expect many of the same moves and tactics to apply here, except that characters now have super attacks to liven things up. The stages' structure also has changed little thus far, keeping the old dependence on multi-tiered surfaces, or flat stages containing moving hazards. Stage surfaces are now, however, destructible.

StarFox's Fox McCloud has recently joined the already-revealed cast of Pikachu, Kirby, Samus (in her greatest outfit ever), Wario, Mario, Link, Pit, Meta Knight, and Solid Snake. It's also been revealed that Snake uses explosives (such as rocket launchers) in battle, and can crawl on the ground to make his hitbox smaller without restricting his movement. Old stages such as the Pokemon Stadium make a return, and join new ones lifted from *Mario Kart*, *Kid Icarus* and *Yoshi's Island*.

Of course, this being the Wii, everything is a whole lot prettier now, from the backgrounds to the character models. The worst case scenario, as it stands, is that *Brawl* is a shinier *Melee* with more/different characters and the same great *Smash Bros.* gameplay. Mind you, that really isn't bad at all, but we've still got a ways to go to see what surprises Nintendo has up their sleeves for this game. (Here's hoping for hedgehogs!)



VANGUARD SAGA OF HEROES



Publisher: Sony Online Genre(s): MMORPG
Developer: Sigil Category: Kiss Meatspace Goodbye
Release Date: Q1 2007 # of Players: Many

Preview by Wanderer

Everquest wasn't supposed to stay as popular as it did for as long as it did, and *World of Warcraft* was, for some time, too popular for its own good. *Vanguard: Saga of Heroes* is an attempt to learn from those games' missteps, and, in turn, create an enormous world for you to adventure within.

The key word, in fact, is "enormous." *Vanguard* is set on three continents, with nineteen races, fifteen character classes, and three jobs to choose from. Simply traveling throughout the world is meant to be an adventure in itself, with characters gaining various mounts and travel abilities as they level up; the highest-level players will get to fly around on the backs of dragons and terrorize the n00bs, and really, that's all anyone can ask for in life.

Vanguard is being designed from the ground up for massive numbers of players, with a world that can easily support them all. You'll be able to buy houses

for your character, and then, as you level up, leave that house behind for a better one in a higher-level district. To earn the money for that house, you can go on quests as a sword-swinging, spellcasting adventurer; negotiate peacefully with enemies as a diplomat; or build your own economic empire as a craftsman, harvesting raw materials and turning them into saleable items. You can even pursue all three career paths simultaneously, switching between your classes' equipment with the touch of a button.

I'm not going to say this is a *WoW* killer, but *Vanguard* is worth a look. If nothing else, it's working to innovate within its genre, and it provides some interesting options above and beyond the usual MMO monster-slaying.





Preview by Ashura

"Beautiful" is the only word you can use to describe Aquaria. Subtle hues of blue and aqua combine with detailed, hand-painted backgrounds to embody everything one would imagine in a game with that title.

Sorry. I didn't mean to go all art-geek there. Let me put away my color-wheel and make with the info.

Aquaria is an underwater fantasy game starring Naija, some kind of underwater being who apparently has a huge undersea world of puzzles and adventure to explore. We don't know much about the game's story, or even the gameplay, but watching the game in motion it seems a bit like Ecco the Dolphin meets a darker The Little Mermaid. (Hey, shut up, I liked that movie.) The developers, however, claim that the mouse-driven control system is far more fluid and intuitive than anything we've ever experienced before, and from the looks of the promo video, how can we argue?

It's inspiring to see such hard work put into a 2D game, especially when so many big companies have written 2D off. What we've seen so far out of BitBlot's two-person team (TIGSource's Derek Yu on art, and Alec Holowka on programming/music) has been as professional-looking as it has been promising. Hopefully, Aquaria plays as well as it looks. Check out the official website for more details: http://www.aquariagame.com.

Publisher: BitBlot Developer: BitBlot Release Date: Spring 2007 Genre: Action/Puzzle Category: Work of Art # Players: 1

IF THERE'S ONE THING YOU LEARN WHEN YOU ARE A KID... IT'S TO NEVER GO INTO THE FOREST...



PLAY THROUGH STORY MODE AS DJ AND PANDORA WITH 2 PLAYER CO-OPERATIVE PLAY



FIGHT THROUGH A WORLD OF SCIENCE PROJECTS GONE WRONG



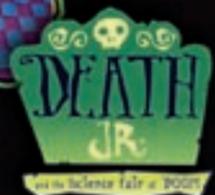
DEATH JR. II Root of Evil

BATTLE WITH UPGRADEABLE WEAPONS LIKE THE FLAMING TP THROWER AND ENHANCED C4 HAMSTERS

DEATH STRIKES TWICE!



CONTROL BOTH DJ AND PANDORA IN THEIR FIRST NINTENDO DS ADVENTURE



NOW AVAILABLE FOR THE PSP® SYSTEM

FIND OUT MORE AT: WWW.DEATHJR.COM

COMING SPRING '07 FOR NINTENDO DS



"KONAMI" is a registered trademark of KONAMI CORPORATION. © 2006 KONAMI CORPORATION. Developed by Backbone Entertainment, a division of Foundation 9 Entertainment. Death, Jr., the Death, Jr. logo and characters are trademarks of Foundation 9 Entertainment. © 2006 Foundation 9 Entertainment. All rights reserved.™, ® and Nintendo DS logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2004 Nintendo. "PlayStation", "PS", Family logo and "PSP" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment, Inc. Memory Stick Duo™ may be required (sold separately). The rating icons are trademarks of the Entertainment Software Association.



Preview by JPeebles

With its reputation damaged by years of shoddy releases, Buena Vista Games hopes to rebuild its public image with the release of their first original creation, *Spectrobes*. Featuring an anime-styled plot and characters, it could help dispel their reputation as a publisher of derivative games. They've also provided monthly two-minute-long CG webisodes as a way of giving players insight into the game's story and characters before it hit shelves. These follow the protagonists Rallen and Geena as they uncover the truth behind the mysterious Spectrobes (prehistoric creatures that you can battle with) and their connection to the Krawl, a group poised to destroy the galaxy.

During your battles with the Krawl, the top screen will show the vital stats of your team and its rivals. Outside of battle, it will show more of the landscape, allowing for easier navigation. The gameplay revolves around finding the Spectrobes and training them to do

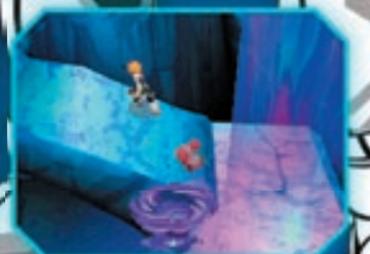
battle. The more Spectrobes you have under your command, the better your odds are against the Krawl. Buena Vista has stated that the game will be highly-customizable, and will allow you to tailor certain Spectrobes to your playing style. No details have been given about how the touch screen will be used. If it follows the trend for DS RPGs, using it to issue battle commands and to cycle through menus would be an expected feature.

While Buena Vista's track record is spotty at best, *Spectrobes* should provide a unique twist on DS RPGs if it fulfills its potential. The use of webisodes to drive the plot before release is quite clever, but could just be a smokescreen in case the end product is lackluster. Hopefully that isn't the case, and Buena Vista actually delivers on its promise of providing a thrilling sci-fi adventure.

During your battles with the Krawl, the top screen will show the vital stats of your team and its rivals. Outside of battle, it will show more of the landscape, allowing for easier navigation. The gameplay revolves around finding the Spectrobes and training them to do

Publisher: Buena Vista Games
 Developer: Jupiter Corporation
 Release Date: 3/15/2007

Genre(s): RPG
 Category: Sci-Fi
 # of Players: 1

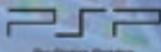
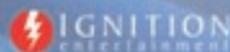


MERCURY MELTDOWN



- ★ OVER 160 ALL-NEW LEVELS
- ★ NEW WIRELESS MULTIPLAYER MODES
- ★ UNLOCK HIDDEN LABS & PARTY GAMES
- ★ TUTORIAL MODE AND PLAYGROUND
- ★ DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT
- ★ GAME SHARE

www.mercurymeltdown.com



Also available remixed on the PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system!

METEOS Disney MAGIC

ESRB Rating: Everyone
 Publisher: Buena Vista Games
 Developer: Q Entertainment
 Release Date: Q1 2007

Genre: Block Puzzle
 Category: Disney Fanservice
 # of Players: 1

After acquiring the successful *Meteos* series, it's only natural that BVG would want to combine it with an established license to broaden its appeal. Historically, as long as the core gameplay has remained intact, these types of licensed games have been received well by both fans and critics. BVG and Q Entertainment are hoping that happens with this follow-up to one of the DS's most beloved puzzle games, and thus far, it appears that'll be the case.

Q Entertainment has changed the *Meteos* gameplay from its usual top-to-bottom orientation to a book-like side-to-side style. This larger playing field allows you to employ new strategies, while giving every area the look of a Disney storybook.

Like *Tetris DS* before it, *Meteos: Disney Magic* places its block puzzle gameplay in settings bearing the trademark locales and characters of popular franchises, and changes the puzzle pieces to correspond with your backdrop. If you're on the *Pirates of the Caribbean* stage, you'll be seeing cannonball, anchor, and rope pieces, along with a late-night ship voyage in the background. Similarly, the *Lion King* area provides a bright African landscape for its backdrop, with Baku Baku-ish animal markings being used on its pieces. Unlike *Tetris DS*, though, this revamp won't feature Wi-Fi play. I'm sure that some dedicated *Meteos* fans will be disappointed by this and the dramatic gameplay changes. Still, it should be an intriguing release when it comes out this winter.

Review by Jeremy



INSTANTLY GO FROM
 ZERO TO
 HERO.

GET COIN, GEAR,
 AND MORE.

NOW GET 10% OFF*

*Use coupon code cgsvad. Expires 2/1/07

CHECK YOUR SERVER @ WWW.IGE.COM

LIVE CHAT & PHONE SUPPORT | BUY & SELL | HUGE SELECTION | INSTANT DELIVERY

Not your Daddy's Guilty Gear

Accent Core introduces several new game-play elements reminiscent of other modern fighting games: Force Break, Throw Break and Slash Back.

Force Break: An enhanced version of a special attack, similar to an EX in *Street Fighter III* or *Darkstalkers*, and consumes 25% Tension Gauge. Can be Bursted.

Throw Break: Also known as a "Tech Hit" or "Tech Throw" in *Street Fighter*, this is a Throw defense executed by performing a throw motion right after your character is caught in a throw.

Slash Back: A pre-emptive counter, similar to Melty Blood's Ex-Shield system, performed with Back + Slash + Hard Slash. Missing a Slash Back leaves you briefly vulnerable. Recovers instantly if connected.

Throw Breaks in particular have sparked a huge amount of controversy in discussion forums, namely because it lowers the barriers between the *Guilty Gear* series and others, such as *Street Fighter III: 3rd Strike*. All together, these new elements drastically affect the defensive capabilities of the entire cast, so much that many predict a revision to *Accent Core* in the near future.

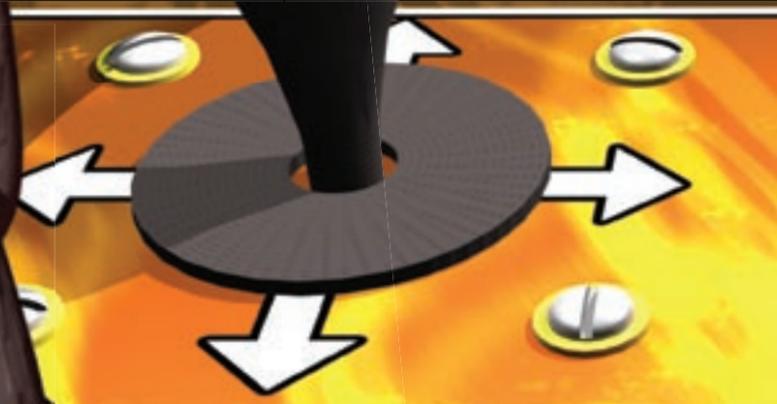
You'll also see some very surprising properties with the new Force Break attacks. For example, Anji-Mito's butterfly will hit multiple times on the way down, Sol Badguy's Fenrir (now a Force Break only) can follow up with Tyrant Rave for massive damage, and Jam Kuradoberi can now Force Break her charges to gain two cards! Expect more madness to come.

Publisher: Sammy
Developer: Arc System Works
ESRB: Teen
Release Date: December 2006
Genre: One-on-One Fighting
Category: Infinite Blood Transfusions
Players: 2
Platform: Arcade (NAOMI)



Guilty Gear XX: Accent Core, the latest installment of the series by Arc System Works, has finished beta-testing in Japan. Unlike *Guilty Gear XX Slash*, which was considered a 'cash-cow' installment initiated by Sammy, *Accent Core* features a major overhaul to its game engine as well as added attacks, altered hit effects, and the removal of certain combos such as Dust Loops. The game also features new artwork, layout screens, and voice acting. There will be no new characters added to the game. However, enough changes have been made to characters that they play very differently than their *Slash* counterparts.

The two arcades which are almost guaranteed to import *Guilty Gear XX: Accent Core* in the U.S.A. are Tokyo Game Action in Winchendon, MA and Arcade Infinity in Fullerton, CA. It may also appear at Family Fun Arcade in Granada Hills, CA and at Super Just Games in Chicago, Illinois. You can expect this game to be featured in next year's Super Battle Opera tournament in Tokyo, Japan. If you can convince your local arcade to import it, good luck!



So bad guys just really

This information is subject to change because it's derived from beta-test versions of the game. Here is a small sample of the new attacks and properties which will probably be included in the game's final release in December:

- Eddie:** He can now charge his 'Eddie Meter' through his Tension Gauge. His shadow also gains a new hold move.
- Sol Badguy:** His 'Bandit Bringer' causes a "Ground Slide" effect. The input timing on Volcanic Viper is tighter, so DP(6236) and QCF(236) motions won't be confused during a dash.
- Holy Order Sol:** H.O.Sol is now capable of Charge Cancelling from attacks to maintain an offensive tempo.
- Ky Kiske:** He gains a new move, 'Lightning Javelin,' performed after his Vapor Thrust. It causes a wall-bounce upon a hit.
- Potemkin:** He gains an aerial 'Potemkin Buster' command throw. (Imagine if Zangief had an aerial Spinning Pile Driver.)
- Jam Kuradoberi:** She can charge two cards with a Force Break and gains a new multi-hit special move.
- Baikens:** She gains a new Guard-Cancel option, 'Ouran,' using HS. It appears to be a jumping 'Youzansen' crossup, but is vulnerable on startup. Her Dust Loop combo is nerfed considerably.
- Anji-Mito:** His 'Fuujin'(QCF+S) -> 'Rin'(HS) option is now an overhead attack. He also gains a more persistent Butterfly when using its Force Break version.
- May:** She now has a Dust feint, "Just Kidding!," which appears to be an overhead Dust but hits low instead. Hold Dust to perform.
- Slayer:** He has a new normal attack with Down + Kick during jump. It's used extensively in air combos.
- Dizzy:** She has a homing 'Hitori ni Shite' bubble attack, and her Fish no longer disappear upon impact.
- Testament:** His 'EXE Beast' can now attack from the front as well as back, allowing it to block his opponent's advances.
- Johnny:** His new move, 'Return Jack,' adds an extra hit from 'Jackhound' and grants an extra Mist Level. He also has the new 'Killer Joker,' an aerial attack that hits at a 45 degree angle.
- Chipp Zanuff:** In mid-air, Chipp can perform 'Kakutobi,' a wall-jump maneuver with followup options. One of his Force Breaks is a one-hit version of the Zanseirouga (his teleporting Overdrive super).
- Millia Rage:** She has a new followup during the 'Lust Shaker'(Press Slash repeatedly) called 'Longinus.' It appears to be an 'Iron Sabre' attack. She can also cancel many jump attacks into air-dashes.
- Axl-Low:** His 'Axl Bomber' now hits as an overhead. Many of his attacks and pokes now hit twice, making them more difficult to parry with a Slash Back.
- Robo-Ky:** During high Heat mode, Robo-Ky gains strength and can ignite enemies with certain attacks. Also, his air missiles remain, even if he is attacked.
- Zappa:** The Triplets, Dog and Sword summons all gain new attacks. The Dog summon can now cancel attacks with much more flexibility.
- Venom:** He doesn't have much changed so far, save for some modified normal attacks and new Force Breaks.
- Bridget:** He gains increased Frame Advantage after throw for more offensive setups. His Roger Hug Force Break can also be performed in the air.
- A.B.A.:** She gains a new Guard Cancel evasion similar to Baiken's 'Mawarikomi,' slipping to the other side of her opponent. Her vulnerability bug on wakeup is now fixed.
- Faust:** His Flower option now causes 'floating' upon a hit. His bread-and-butter Gatling combo is different than before.
- I-No:** She gains added wall-bounces and floats for normal attacks, as well as a very masochistic K.O. scream. Cover your kid's ears.

BY DANIEL KAYSER OF GAMETRAILERS.COM

THE NET EFFECT

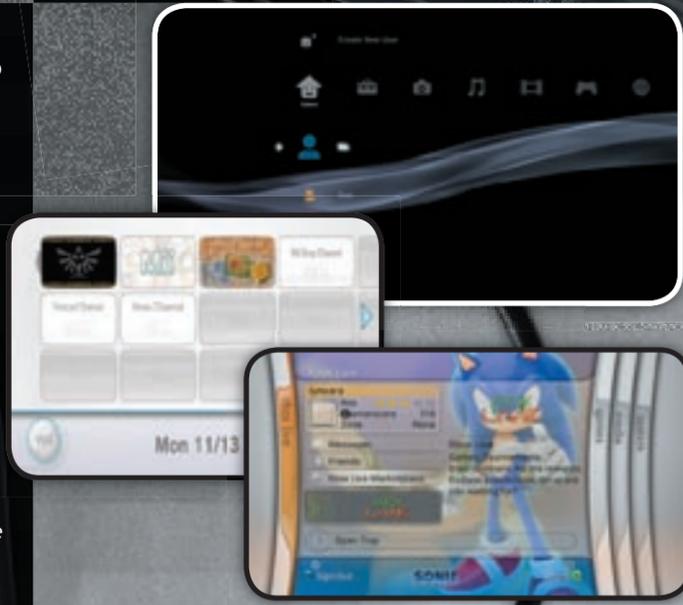
EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF ONLINE CONSOLE GAMING

A new year and a new generation of gaming are upon us. After all the hype and the hoopla, after all the dust has settled, Microsoft, Sony, and Nintendo have launched their next-generation efforts in the latest console war. Each has a distinctive feel and a primary target audience, so the consoles all offer something unique regardless of your gaming preference.

In the end, however, the ultimate winner of this generation's console war may be determined by a single factor: how they do online. As the internet becomes an ever-increasingly large part of the daily lifestyle for hardcore gamers and casual consumers, the most successful console may very well be the one that best harnesses the power of online functionality to master what I like to call "The Net Effect."

Before I go any further, I'll just be honest. I'm all about the online experience. As much as I love what online has to offer, though, there's no easy way to simply determine which console of the big three has the "best" online functionality. After all, each console is offering something a bit different, which may or may not be to your personal liking. What might be more important, however, is the online philosophy of each company, and how they seek to utilize its console within the online space to provide unique experiences to its users. This core philosophy tends to be the differentiating factor in the actual services that are offered in the end. In theory, the company that shares your personal vision for what you want in an online experience may very well offer up the most enjoyable service for you.

With that in mind, let's take a brief look at where each company stands by examining its online performance thus far, and by also taking a look at what we definitely know about the online portions of its latest consoles. Now, because of its distinct vision for the future and solid performance in the past, I'll deal with Microsoft separately. After all, the fact is that of the big three, Microsoft has the clearest vision for what it wants to accomplish with the Xbox 360 online in the coming months and years.



HGM Q&A

WITH CHRIS SATCHELL, GENERAL MANAGER OF MICROSOFT'S GAME DEVELOPER GROUP

HGM: How has online functionality proved useful in expanding the traditional gaming audience?

SATCHELL: Take *Viva Piñata* as a good example of a game that spans beyond the traditional gaming audience. A key part of the game is the ability to share personalized Piñatas online. This allows gamers to connect and share their experience in a way that is more collaborative than competitive, bringing a type of online community experience that appeals to people beyond the core gaming audience. Xbox Live Arcade is another area where our ground-breaking online service has enabled a new class of games to be viable on the gaming console. These digitally downloadable games offer causal entertainment with appeal to a very broad audience, many of whom would not naturally play the intense AAA experiences on Xbox 360.

HGM: How does having a persistent online presence impact the overall experience of the Xbox 360?

SATCHELL: Having a persistent online presence changes what people expect from their console. People expect to be able to connect to their friends anytime from any experience, to have Achievements and a permanent record of them no matter where they are, to be able to extend their experiences with new content and discover new games and rediscover classic games in Xbox Live Arcade. It's about extending the "virtual couch" to anywhere in the world. You don't have to be in the same room to have the magic if playing with your friends, and playing together is when the magic happens. With four million members it has become a defining point for next generation.

HGM: How important is it for a console to provide other unique online content apart from strictly gaming related content?

SATCHELL: We firmly believe that our success is tied to our consistency in making Xbox 360 a great gaming console, both online and offline. I believe we have the best gaming portfolio and the best set of online gaming titles. Gaming is the soul of what we do and will continue to be our #1 priority. Having said this, our customers, gamers, tell us they like access to other entertainment experiences online, including TV, movies and music. Our aim is to find media with appeal for gamers. We are not trying to make a console that is jack-of-all-trades, but a master of gaming that can extend the experience to other entertainment where appropriate.

HGM: What is the overall objective for Xbox Live in moving forward?

SATCHELL: Xbox Live will be the best place for gamers to connect, play, download and share their gaming and entertainment experiences. We will continue to innovate and drive online gaming, while continuing to enhance the experience for our rapidly growing community. We also want to continue to expand the rich catalog of downloadable media, game add-ons, arcade games and even community games (via XNA). We are a long way ahead of our competitors and we want to keep it that way by giving gamers what they want from their online service.

There are two sides to every ghost story.
It takes two to take back the castle.



Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin™

Leather meets magic in the follow-up to the best-selling Castlevania DS adventure, Dawn of Sorrow. Take control of Jonathan, a young vampire hunter and Charlotte, a powerful spellcaster and journey through magical portals created within Dracula's castle. Defeat twin vampire sisters, an ancient vampire lord and uncover the mysteries of a noble spirit trapped within the accursed walls.



© 1986 2006 Konami Digital Entertainment Co., Ltd. "CASTLEVANIA" is a registered trademark of Konami Digital Entertainment Co., Ltd. "CASTLEVANIA: Portrait of Ruin" is a trademark of Konami Digital Entertainment Co., Ltd. "KONAMI" is a registered trademark of KONAMI CORPORATION. Published by Konami Digital Entertainment, Inc. Developed by Konami Digital Entertainment Co., Ltd. All rights reserved.™, ® and Nintendo DS logo are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2004 Nintendo. The rating icons are trademarks of the Entertainment Software Association. UUP Network Best of E3 2006 Award Logo is a trademark of Ziff Davis Publishing Holdings Inc. Used under license. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

MICROSOFT

Let's face it. Microsoft pretty much pioneered the console online experience with Xbox Live in the previous generation. Having a wealth of experience in that sector is proving its worth in the current console war. Its recently announced online functionality, including Microsoft's partnerships with major television and film studios to provide downloadable versions of popular flicks and television series, help to diversify the overall capabilities of the Xbox 360 as a multimedia device. Xbox Live Anywhere, which would be impossible for any other company to pull off, is also a big factor.

Before we get too far in, though, let's take a look at how the whole thing got started for Microsoft. Up until the release of the Xbox in 2001, console gaming was pretty much a hit or miss experience. Sega's Dreamcast got the closest to providing a fully functional online experience, but a lack of support for the console pretty much left the effort dead in the water. What the Dreamcast did do, however, was prove that online console gaming could work, technically speaking if nothing else. When Microsoft decided to pioneer the first console-based online network in the form of Xbox Live, it seemed to be the next logical step in gaming.

It's pretty safe to say that Xbox Live has always been a pretty stable experience. Providing a unified network for users and developers, the platform was brought to life by amazing multiplayer titles such as *Ghost Recon*, *Rainbow Six*, the 2K Sports franchises and more. These titles and the later impact of blockbuster titles such as *Halo 2* helped solidify the Xbox as the premiere online gaming console. Slowly but surely, Xbox Live began to garner high praise from the industry and before long, games seemed to almost automatically ship with some sort of online component.

Now that Microsoft has had a generation to work out the bugs, the revamped, streamlined Xbox Live experience on the Xbox 360 is really second to none. Microsoft built the Xbox 360 with online in mind from the ground up, so the persistent online presence of each console is an integrated part of the Xbox 360 experience.

Through a critical dashboard update less than a year after launch, Microsoft enhanced the overall functionality of Xbox Live by allowing users to jump in and out of various tasks such as downloading demos, chatting with friends, watching movies and more. Of course, gaming has always been the central theme of Xbox Live, and, building upon the success of the past, the latest version of the experience allows for a level of depth and information barely imaginable several years ago. Add to that a high level of customization and tweaked out peripherals like the Xbox Live Vision camera and you can form a pretty good argument for the future of Xbox Live.

Of course, Microsoft usually thinks on a larger scale than most companies (Lord knows they have the funds to do so...), so the idea of linking the Xbox 360 with Windows PCs and handheld devices is apparently the next big step towards global domination for Microsoft (I'm only half kidding...).

Enter Xbox Live Anywhere. This unique, cross-platform service is designed to allow the transfer of information and in-game data from one device to another. Basically, Live Anywhere will finally allow console gamers to play with PC gamers while also giving users the ability to share stats, customize in-game assets, send cross-platform messages, and more.

It's an ambitious task, but one that allows you to see that Microsoft is taking online functionality very seriously. Of course, these intriguing concepts need to be embraced by the development community in order to support the platform, but Xbox Live Anywhere certainly has the potential (and I want to stress this, the *potential*) to revolutionize the gaming industry.

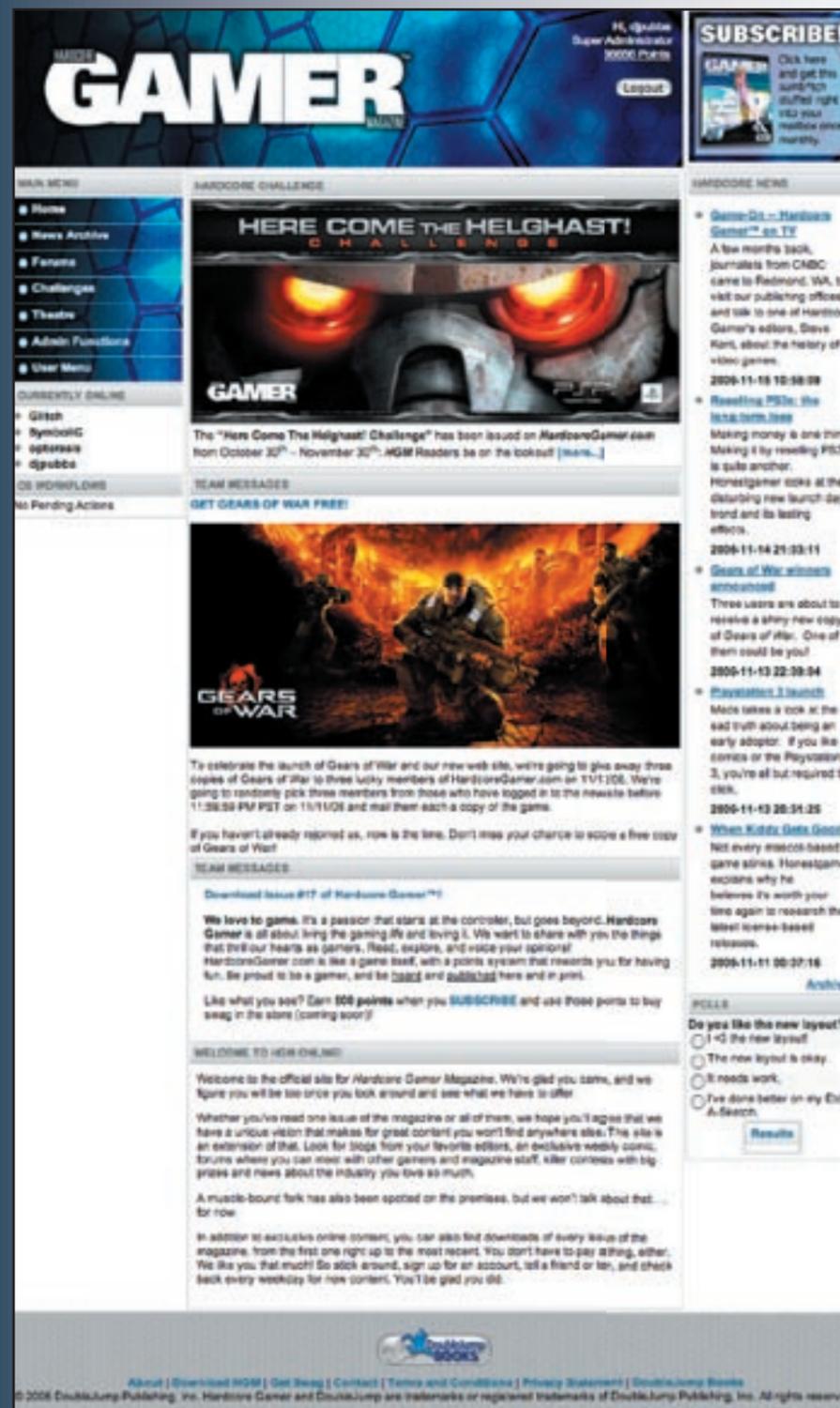
While Microsoft's game plan is pretty well defined, Sony and Nintendo's strategies are still a bit, well... unclear. That's not to say that the online experience with both consoles won't end up being rich and rewarding, but as of now, it's hard to see too far down the road. Yes, we know online functionality out of the box is a key selling point for both consoles, but how the core online experiences on the Wii and the PlayStation 3 will change over time and exactly what their individual online philosophies are is yet to be determined. As mentioned, knowing this philosophy is essential to understanding what each console will offer in the coming months and years.



Q. What makes a hardcore gamer?
A. An undying love for games.

Come join us Hardcore Gamers online at:

HARDCOREGAMER.COM



We love to game. It's a passion that starts at the controller, but goes beyond. Hardcore Gamer™ is all about living the gaming *life* and loving it. We want to share with you the things that thrill our hearts as gamers. Read, explore, and voice your opinions! HardcoreGamer.com is like a game itself, with a points system that rewards you for having fun. Be proud to be a gamer, and be heard and published online and in print.

Like what you see? Earn **500 points** when you **SUBSCRIBE** and use those points to buy swag in the store!

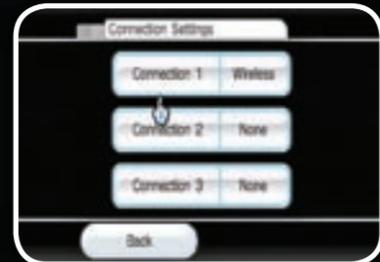
	4500 Points
	4500 Points
	4000 Points
	3000 Points
	3750 Points

NINTENDO

Nintendo's home consoles have never benefited from a good online service (or really any service for that matter...), so at least Nintendo is finally adapting to the times with the recent launch of the Wii. Nintendo of America's President and COO, Reggie Fils-Aime, outlined some of what Wii owners can expect when he spoke to journalists before the launch of the console. "We view online gaming as essentially an enhanced way to enjoy the gaming experience and drive more sales of hardware and software," said Fils-Aime.

Enhancing the online experience is no easy task, but one way Nintendo is looking to pull that off is by differentiating itself from the competition. For example, WiiConnect24 is the unique online service that delivers a persistent presence for each Wii on the market, allowing console-to-console interaction without one party having to be physically present at any given time.

Wireless technology is also a big part of Nintendo's vision for enhancing the online experience since the Wii contains built-in 802.11 b/g wireless capabilities (although it should be noted that the console supports hardwired connections through a USB-to-Ethernet connection, as does the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3). We also know that Nintendo envisions a strong future for "living room environment" web access and has supplied an Opera-based browser for the Wii, which is built into the console's 512MB internal Flash Memory, to support it. Nintendo is also implementing online functionality into its



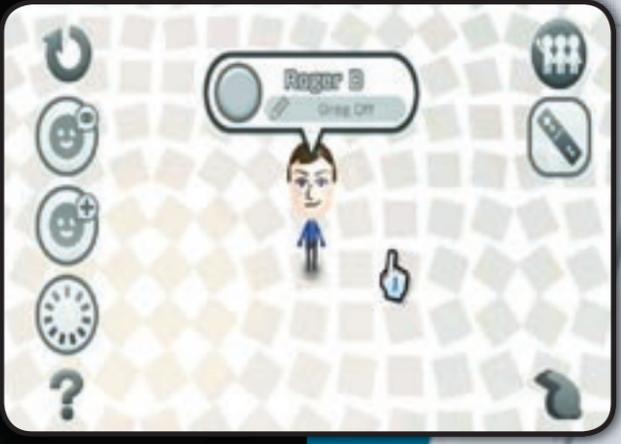
unique Wii Channels (the operating system interface designed around the concept of providing various television channels) with everyday appeal in the form of informational access to things such as local news and weather.

For many, however, the online-enabled Virtual Console is the best aspect of the Nintendo Wii's online capabilities. This video game download service is Nintendo's version of iTunes and allows nostalgic gamers to acquire

games from classic systems such as the NES, Super NES, N64, TurboGrafx 16 and even one time rival system, the Sega Genesis. The service will also see the inclusion of original content from independent developers, much like Microsoft's Xbox Live Arcade.

Of course, Nintendo isn't offering Virtual Console titles for free, which brings us to an important aspect of console gaming's online future: pricing. Nintendo's rather fair pricing system (the games range from \$5 to \$10 or the equivalent in Wii Points) for Virtual Console games helps to decipher Nintendo's long-term strategy for online transactions. "We will offer online-enabled games that the consumers will not have to pay a subscription fee for. They'll be able to enjoy that right out of the box. The Wii console is going to be Wi-Fi enabled, so essentially, you'll be able to plug it in and go. It won't have hidden fees or costs," said Fils-Aime.

Taking a step back and looking at these various features as a whole, you can begin to see how the online portion of the Wii fits in with the company's philosophy of reaching traditional "non-gamers" through approachable, intuitive design. It is yet to clearly define, however, why hardcore, frag-loving *SOCOM* or *Halo* fans would benefit from crossing over to the Wii. The uniqueness of the console as a whole, though, combined with the technical capabilities of the hardware, makes it pretty evident that Nintendo isn't out to compete in the hardcore sector of the online marketplace as much as it is looking to create a completely new experience both online and off.



FEEL THE INTENSE POWER OF

HAVING WAY TOO MANY OPTIONS TO CHOOSE FROM.

THE NEXT GENERATION IS OVER A HUNDRED HIGH-DEF GAMES AND COUNTING. Whether you want to shoot or strategize, race or roleplay, play sports or play with your kids, Xbox 360™ has the game to answer your every whim, rush, and glory-soaked desire. xbox.com



© 2006 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. All trademarks are property of their respective owners.

Jump in.



SONY

Sony, on the other hand, is looking to capture the hardcore gamer, but it also recognizes the basic functionality that will deliver mass-market appeal. A brief look at their history with the PlayStation 2 (which includes a separately sold network adapter and only the most basic of peer-to-peer connectivity) reveals that while it has dominated the home console market in the previous generation, the system's bare bones online functionality clearly indicated Sony's lack of support for online gaming.

Fortunately for gamers, the PlayStation 3 is changing all of that. With the launch of its latest console, Sony also launched its very own online service called the PlayStation Network. Connecting to the PlayStation Network via the PlayStation 3's built-in wi-fi capabilities is rather simple, and once they're online, Sony hopes gamers will enjoy a well rounded experience similar to that of Xbox Live. The same social networking aspects of friends lists, personal login accounts, avatars and matchmaking are all found within the service, which certainly helps broaden the appeal of the console in the minds of online gamers.

What is Sony's approach to the cost of online functionality on the PlayStation 3? A differentiating factor in Sony's favor is that the basic net access, including the ability to game online, will be offered for free on the PlayStation 3. Microsoft's Silver Xbox Live service does allow online access to such things as friends lists, downloadable content and gaming within MMO titles on the console, but if you want to game online with non-MMO titles, you've got to purchase the annual \$49.99 Xbox Live Gold subscription.

Gaming on the PlayStation 3 won't always be free, however, as Sony's Phil Harrison has gone on record stating that there will most likely be upcoming instances where gamers will pay for games that have "higher server infrastructure costs," but reiterated that Sony has "no plans to charge for the basic functionality of access to the internet through PlayStation 3."

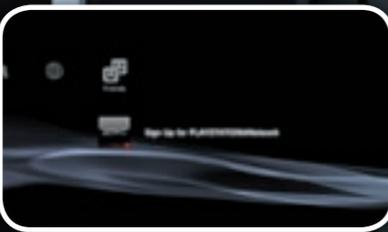
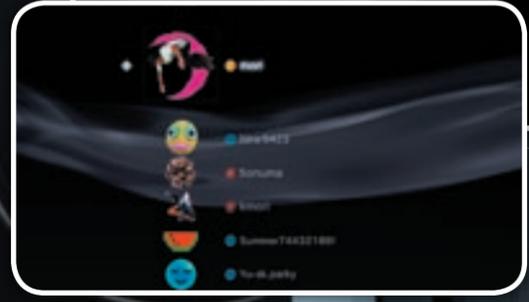
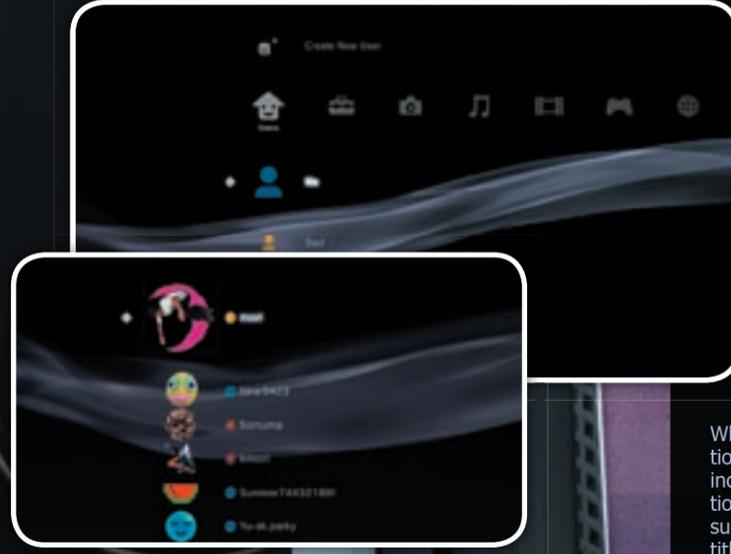
Much like Microsoft and Nintendo, Sony envisions mixed media and downloadable content to play a big role in the future of its latest console. In fact, it seems as though Sony is attempting to blend some of the better aspects of the Wii and Xbox 360's online aspects into its own online strategy. Gamers who have grown up on the PlayStation brand will have access to a plentiful lineup of PlayStation and PlayStation 2, via a download service that is similar to Nintendo's Virtual Console. While gamers are used to getting multimedia like movie trailers, original programming and downloadable content from Xbox Live, now they can enjoy a similar service brought to life by the power of the Cell processor. Web browsing is another key feature of its console, and Sony has provided the means for operating several simultaneous windows to surf the web from the system's crossbar menu system.

All of these add up to offer a pretty solid online service that only stands to be questioned by Sony's lack of experience in the sector. How often and how well Sony maintains their PlayStation Network Platform is yet to be determined, but their vision for online functionality is certainly exciting and has really begun to take shape over recent months.

THE "X" FACTOR

No matter which console you favor, however, all three of the major companies recognize that integrating online functionality is essential to winning the current console war. From the refined experience of Xbox Live to the exciting aspects of Live Anywhere, it appears to be Microsoft's race to lose. Both Sony and Nintendo will be right on their heels though, each offering a unique service that caters to a broad audience, as they attempt to capitalize on the huge install base each console is expected to achieve.

Despite all the efforts of Microsoft, Sony and Nintendo though, it will be the gamers, both casual and hardcore, who dictate what online strategies ultimately succeed. A lack of interest or participation in any particular online service will help define what makes console gaming great and eventually what type of functionality makes its way onto future consoles. So, in the end, even with tons of fresh ideas and billions of dollars floating around the gaming industry, it will be up to the consumers to decide who will win the current console war by being the ultimate "X" factor in determining who will master "The Net Effect."



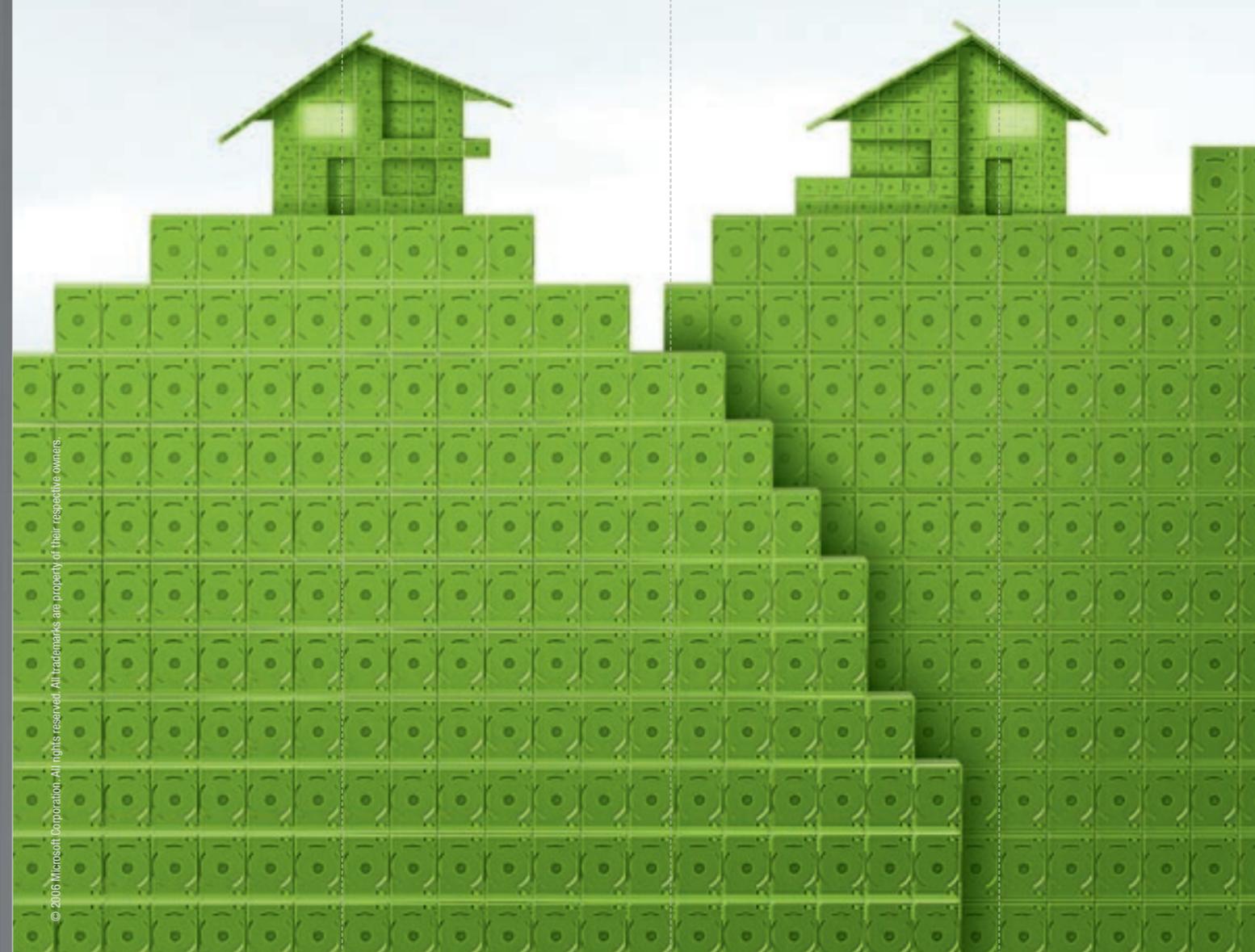
Fold so A meets B **A**

B

THE NEXT GENERATION IS PLAYING WITH FRIENDS ON XBOX LIVE™

No matter where your friends are, they're still only a corner kick away. Play what you want, with whom you want, on your terms and your couch. Video chat, play, compete, gossip, play, love, play. Enjoy. xbox.com

DISTANCE TEARS FRIENDS APART.
XBOX LIVE™ BRINGS THEM TOGETHER.



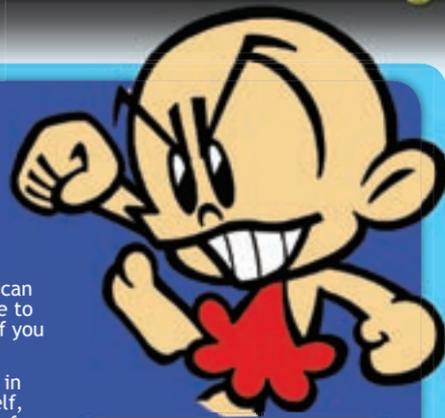
© 2006 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. All trademarks are property of their respective owners.

Jump in.



BONK'S RETURN

The caveman with the huge cranium is back in *Bonk's Return*, an adventure based on the TurboGrafx 16 classic. Featuring 19 levels of head-bashing action, Bonk must make his way through jungles, mountains and icy terrains fending off enemies at every turn, including a final battle against King Drool. As with most platform games, jumping and climbing come into play but Bonk's main form of attack is using his gigantic noggin to squash the baddies.



Initially, you are only given three lives to get through the entire game, but a few extra hidden ones can be picked up along the way. Heart containers to extend a life can also be found and food is available to fill them. Once all of the lives are gone you must start from the beginning all over again, however, if you need to stop the game at any point, a Save feature is implemented.

Aside from the story mode, *Bonk's Return* features a challenge mode where four different trials are in place and the object is to clear them as quickly as possible. These have no bearing on the game itself, and don't provide any type of reward, but suffice to add a break from the standard adventure and can be played over and over to better your time and score.



The game is easily one of the better-looking titles around. Bonk is infused with personality and charisma that brings him to life, especially after eating a piece of meat where he is rendered temporarily invincible. The audio is also quite strong in terms of setting the right atmosphere, but unfortunately it is then whittled down to standard sound effects during gameplay. It's a bit of a let down but it's one of those limitations that still must be dealt with on phones.

Bonk's Return is a fun platform game overall and bodes well for a genre that has seen both good and bad days on mobile. It won't be as complete as the original, if you so happen to remember playing it, but still, it's cute, it's inviting, and most important, it remains true to its roots and does a fine job on establishing the franchise once again. At least on mobile it does.



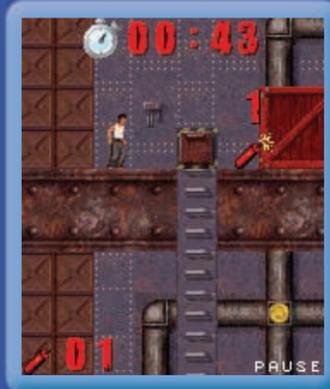
Publisher: Hudson Entertainment
Developer: Two Tribes
Release Date: November 2006

Genre: Platform
Category: Adventure
of Players: 1

FINAL SCORE :
4 of 5

DEAD WATER

Inspired by epic seafaring disaster movies like *The Poseidon Adventure*, *Dead Water* is a tension-filled race against time. Your aging cargo ship has struck an iceberg, giving you only minutes to escape certain doom. As the only apparent surviving crew member, you must make your way to the top and out of the ship before it sinks.



As the ship plunges deeper into the ocean depths, the water level continues to rise, forcing you to make quick decisions and find the exit. You must collect keys to open hatches, use dynamite to blow your way through obstacles, and swim through eel-infested sections. Always try to stay ahead of the rising water, for if it fills the area, you will have but a few seconds of oxygen to reach your goal.

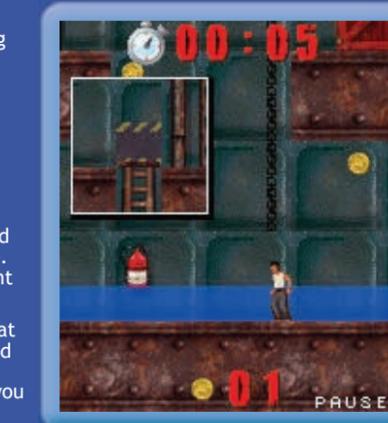
The levels are set up as puzzles that will have you running or swimming back and forth to find the necessary items to keep moving. While you can climb ladders and destroy objects, many times you'll also have to wait for the water to reach a certain height in order to gain access to an important section. By this time, the exit door might be completely underwater, forcing you to swim through dangerous conditions.

At the end of each level, the amount of time it took you to complete it will be tallied and if you picked up any gold coins along the way, they will also be added to your score. However, getting a higher score should not be as important as getting off the ship and staying alive.

Dead Water is a game that instills the tension and fear that come with the thought of drowning on a sinking ship. That tension is further heightened by its good use of music. While it does offer three difficulty levels, even in the easiest you'll have a wicked time trying to get through some of the stages. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately for some of you aquaphobes), the game is short, but it does manage to deliver a new and unique experience.

Publisher: Tag Games
Developer: Tag Games
Release Date: November 2006

Genre: Action
Category: Adventure
of Players: 1



FINAL SCORE :
3.5 of 5



FLY AWAY, WIRE.

FLY AWAY.

THE NEXT GENERATION IS A WIRELESS WORLD. Stand up for freedom and sit down wherever you want. With the Wireless Headset, Wireless Racing Wheel with Force Feedback, Wireless Controllers, and more, all optimized for the Xbox 360™ you can play around while you move around. xbox.com

© 2006 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. All trademarks are property of their respective owners.

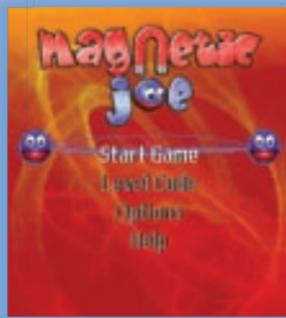
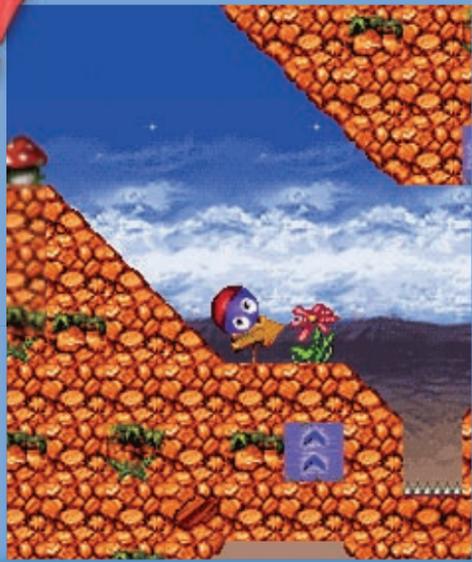


Jump in.

XBOX 360™

Magnetic Joe

joe



In *Magnetic Joe*, you control a little sphere through a maze of walls and spikes where the objective is to make it to the end station and on to the next level. To do this, Joe must be energized with the press of a button so that his magnetism attracts him to various metal objects along the way, thereby creating the inertia necessary to move.

The metal objects have directional arrows so that you can determine which way Joe will head, and as much as they can pull him forward, they can also push him back, raise him, or lower him. Hence, you must carefully figure out when to energize him so that he can pass through all the obstacles safely. Keep in mind that he is a sphere so any momentum built must be also counteracted if necessary. The game requires a good amount of precision, plus trial and error but you are never overwhelmed into giving up.

There are a total of 50 levels to get through and though they are short, they are pretty darn tricky at times. Some will have you perilously hovering him through spike-laden tunnels, others creating just the right momentum and bounce to overcome pillars, and still others where you must launch him towards the end station as you would a basketball to the net. The levels can get very challenging and even if you conquer them all, there's a special password feature where you can unlock new levels on an ongoing basis via the developer's website.

A mobile game with the name of *Magnetic Joe* doesn't sound like something that's going to set the world on fire but this is certainly one that many will enjoy. The game features one-touch game play and levels that are just the right length to keep you from putting it down. While a few more obstacles would have added to the challenge, there's more than enough already here. It's a surprisingly simple, fun, and challenging title that begs to be played on wireless handsets.



FINAL SCORE :
4.5 of 5

Publisher: Most Wanted Mobile
Developer: Most Wanted Mobile
Release Date: November 2006

Genre: Casual
Category: Puzzle
of Players: 1

ADD HD DVD TO YOUR XBOX 360™

THE NEXT GENERATION IS A MORE BEAUTIFUL MOVIE. Plug in and tune everything else out with the Xbox 360™ HD DVD Player. Experience six times the resolution of DVD at up to 1080p and up to six times the disbelief, for one clearly affordable price. xbox.com

THEN ADD SALT TO YOUR POPCORN.



King Kong on HD DVD and Universal Media Remote included for a limited time.

HD DVD
THE LOOK AND SOUND OF PERFECT™

Jump in.

XBOX 360™

© 2006 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. All trademarks are property of their respective owners. © 2006 Universal Studios. All Rights Reserved.

OASIS

Oasis is a game set in Ancient Egypt where the excitement of discovery and power are ever-present as you grow an empire and seek the 12 Glyphs of Power to claim the throne of the Scarab King. It's a simple point-and-click affair divided into levels that will go by in minutes, but will keep you hooked for hours.

Each level begins with a blank map of the area that you must uncover

one square at a time to find cities, dwellings, mines and the Oasis where one of the Glyphs will be hidden. Only adjacent squares can be selected, thereby causing you to carve an ever-changing path. The catch, however, is that you only have a select number of moves, and for each square uncovered or action taken, that number counts down. When it reaches zero, a marauding band of Barbarians will attack and destroy every city you have discovered, including the Glyph, unless your population has grown enough to fight back the horde.

For this reason, you need to strategize how to carve out your path. It is essential to find cities and dwellings in order to increase the population, but it is also necessary to man mines for weapons and technology, and also connect the cities with roads to help fight off the intruders. Of course, you must also still locate the Glyphs in all of this if you hope to finish the game.



Throughout some of the levels, special Advisors may appear, such as a Scout or an Alchemist, to help out in different ways, such as giving you a peek at nearby squares or increasing the population. If you get to the mines quickly enough, for each action you take, the workers move closer to obtaining the stronger weapons and technologies to help in the ensuing battle.

Oasis comes with four difficulty settings to make sure that any gamer at any level can find a challenge. With any of those levels, it strikes a great balance with what must be accomplished and really manages to suck you in, all the while maintaining a level of simplicity when it comes to building an empire and turning back the invaders. It's not a great looking game, but it is effective in keeping your attention.

Publisher: Konami
 Developer: Mind Control
 Release Date: November 2006

Genre: Casual
 Category: Puzzle
 # of Players: 1

FINAL SCORE :
4 of 5

HITMAN

BLOOD MONEY Vegas

In this initial mobile adventure for Agent 47, he has eight missions to accomplish that all take place within the same hotel/casino. These include dispatching arms dealers, uncovering double agents and confronting a rival assassin. He has access to the usual array of weaponry needed to carry out the objective such as fibrewire and handguns, but he can also employ disguises and walk amongst the shadows if needed.

A mission commences with a briefing and when let loose, the first order of business is to find the floor's surveillance room where the entire level is mapped out into

memory. This pinpoints the locations of all enemies and places of interest. Finding the room is helpful but not necessary because you soon find out that the game is very predictable.

Even though mission objectives change, the basic formula for clearing each one is to find the surveillance room, "clean" the problem, grab a keycard, and head to the exit. It's systematic and provides little variety, even when the floor is littered with enemies. This is because those said enemies are like robots. They walk around in patterns and all you have to do is wait for them to cross your path, or you can walk up to them, point blank from the side, and shoot, without them ever noticing you. Seriously, the lights are on, the room is crowded, you walk right up to them and boom. There's no stealth required and even after the gunshot, everything is business as usual. The crowd is still there and the other enemies continue to walk like drones.

As an enemy is eliminated, an awareness alarm level rises to show that they are on to you, though they never really seek you out. Either way, to be safe this might prompt you to seek a disguise. Unfortunately, that doesn't work either, because even though you are wearing a different outfit or mask, it won't fool the enemies. If you happen to walk right in front of them, they will shoot. So then what's the point? Might as well proceed and shoot them before they shoot you, without a disguise.

There are a number of nuances missing from *Hitman Blood Money: Vegas* that prevent it from reaching good levels of satisfaction. It's not that the game is a complete disappointment, because it does manage to kill about an hour or so, but just that the *Hitman* essence isn't here. It's too much just walk and shoot and hardly any planning or strategizing to your approach on the mission. Those players looking for a faithful reproduction will be disappointed.



Publisher: Eidos Mobile
 Developer: Morpheme Mobile
 Release Date: November 2006

Genre: Action
 Category: Adventure
 # of Players: 1

FINAL SCORE :
2.5 of 5

EXPRESS YOURSELF THE WAY NATURE INTENDED.

WITH YOUR FACE.

THE NEXT GENERATION IS SEEING FRIENDS FROM MILES AWAY. The future of gaming is here, and it looks like your buddy Keith. Video chat with family. Personalize your gamer picture. Practice your smirks. With the Xbox Live™ Vision Camera, those closest to you get even closer. xbox.com

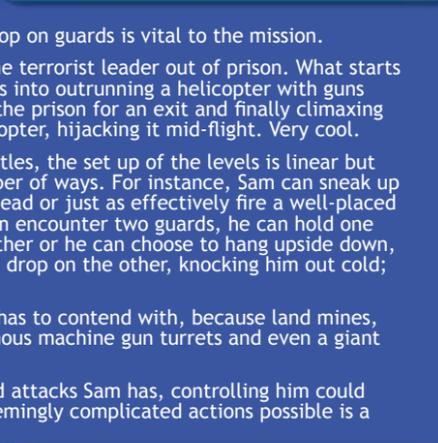


© 2006 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. All trademarks are property of their respective owners.

Jump in.



Tom Clancy's **SPLINTER CELL** **DOUBLE AGENT**



FINAL SCORE :
4.5 of 5



Splinter Cell Double Agent is divided into seven missions that can be tackled on easy or normal difficulty. The covert game play, a hallmark of the series, remains intact from the previous games, meaning that Sam's ability to remain hidden and get the drop on guards is vital to the mission.

The action begins with Sam breaking the terrorist leader out of prison. What starts out as quietly disabling the guards turns into outrunning a helicopter with guns blazing, then back to sneaking around the prison for an exit and finally climaxing with a jump off the roof onto the helicopter, hijacking it mid-flight. Very cool.

As with previous *Splinter Cell* mobile titles, the set up of the levels is linear but the obstacles can be handled in a number of ways. For instance, Sam can sneak up and deliver a debilitating blow to the head or just as effectively fire a well-placed stun shot from the shadows. Should Sam encounter two guards, he can hold one as a human shield while shooting the other or he can choose to hang upside down, snap one's neck, then shimmy over and drop on the other, knocking him out cold; there are a multitude of possibilities.

Humans are not the only enemies Sam has to contend with, because land mines, mounted cameras with lasers, autonomous machine gun turrets and even a giant shark all impede his way.

Even with the numerous maneuvers and attacks Sam has, controlling him could not be easier. What makes all these seemingly complicated actions possible is a context-sensitive key. If Sam is near a rope, pressing a button will have him rappelling down the building. Likewise, should Sam be near a computer terminal, he will start to hack it. This very simple yet effective set-up makes controlling Sam second nature.

Splinter Cell Double Agent combines great controls, solid gameplay and excellent graphics into a well-polished game, but for all it has going for it, *Splinter Cell Double Agent* is too short. Seven missions fly by in no time, and for a game that gets so many things right, extending the length would have really made it spectacular. Length aside, *Splinter Cell Double Agent* is a game that should not be missed, especially if you are a fan of the series. Yes, it's familiar and we've seen similar before, but it's still a good time out.

Publisher: Gameloft
 Developer: Gameloft
 Release Date: November 2006

Genre: Action
 Category: Adventure
 # of Players: 1

CHEAT CODES IN SECONDS!

ALWAYS HAVE THE BEST CHEAT CODES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS,
 WHEN YOU WANT THEM, NO MATTER WHERE YOU ARE!
TO GET STARTED TEXT MESSAGE "HGM" TO 91258
CHEATERS ALWAYS WIN!™ - CHEATSMOBILE.COM



**MONTHLY
 GIVEAWAYS!**
 MOVIE TICKETS
 EB GAMES
 \$10 GIFT CARDS
 LIMITED EDITION
 BLACK DS LITES

Supported Carriers:
 Cingular, T-Mobile,
 Verizon, Sprint, Nextel,
 Dobson, and Alltel

** Cheats Mobile is \$4.99 a month for the first ten games and 30 cents for each additional game. Plans continue until cancelled. Prepaid phones not supported. Text "CANCEL" at any time to stop service. For help, visit www.cheatsmobile.com, call 800-509-8125, or text "HELP" to 91258. * Giveaway Details: No purchase necessary. Offer void where prohibited by law. Prizes include: 1 x European Limited Edition DS Lite, 10 x pairs of Regal Cinema/U.A. movie passes, 10 x EB Games \$10 USD gift cards

- Qcode Xbox 360**
- 32859 AMPED 3
 - 30062 BATTLEFIELD 2 MODERN COMBAT
 - 30078 BLAZING ANGELS SQUADRONS OF WWII
 - 32986 CALL OF DUTY 2
 - 33094 DEAD OR ALIVE 4
 - 33105 ELDER SCROLLS 4 OBLIVION
 - 33111 FAR CRY INSTINCTS PREDATOR
 - 32820 FULL AUTO
 - 33112 MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL 2K6
 - 32985 NEED FOR SPEED MOST WANTED
 - 32984 QUAKE 4
 - 30903 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06
 - 30920 GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER
 - 30928 TOMB RAIDER LEGEND
 - 30929 TONY HAWKS AMERICAN WASTELAND

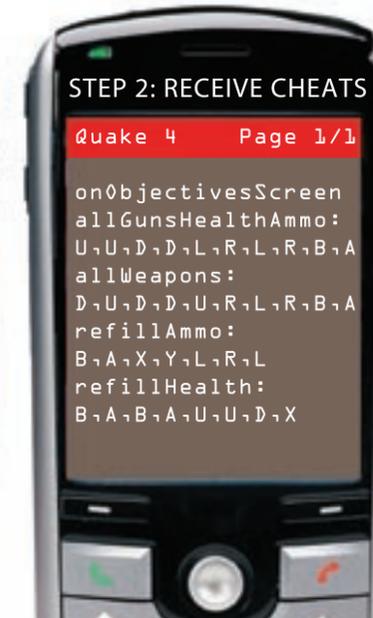
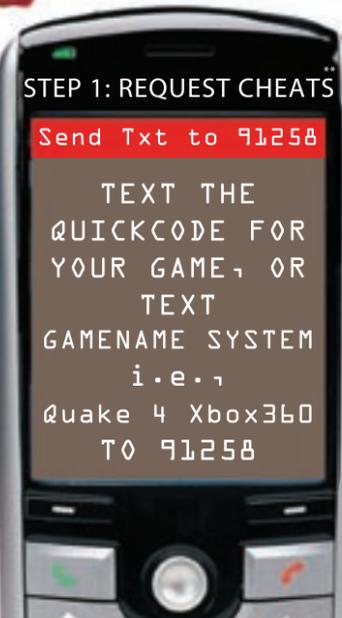
- Qcode Playstation 2**
- 10007 50 CENT BULLETPROOF
 - 10062 BATTLEFIELD 2 MODERN COMBAT
 - 10085 BLOODRAYNE 2
 - 10115 CALL OF DUTY 2 BIG RED ONE
 - 11244 CHAMPIONS OF NORRATH
 - 10502 CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE
 - 10171 CRASH TAG TEAM RACING
 - 10210 DESTROY ALL HUMANS
 - 11343 DEF JAM VENDETTA
 - 11355 DEVIL MAY CRY 3 DANTES AWAKENING
 - 10226 DRAGON BALL Z SAGAS
 - 10261 ESPN NFL 2K5
 - 10349 GRAND THEFT AUTO SAN ANDREAS
 - 11651 GUITAR HERO
 - 10384 HITMAN CONTRACTS
 - 11695 HOT SHOTS GOLF FORE
 - 10399 INCREDIBLE HULK ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION
 - 11792 KILLZONE
 - 13114 KINGDOM HEARTS 2
 - 10469 LEGO STAR WARS
 - 10490 MADDEN NFL 06
 - 10501 MANHUNT
 - 10520 MERCENARIES
 - 11918 METAL GEAR SOLID 3 SUBSISTENCE
 - 11952 MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM FEDERATION VS ZEON
 - 10590 NBA LIVE 2006
 - 10609 NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2
 - 12116 ONE PIECE GRAND BATTLE
 - 10698 PSIOPS THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY
 - 10699 PSYCHONAUTS
 - 12213 RATCHET CLANK UP YOUR ARSENAL
 - 12412 SLY 2 BAND OF THIEVES
 - 10810 SPARTAN TOTAL WARRIOR
 - 10832 SSX TRICKY
 - 10890 TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 3
 - 11882 THE MARK OF KRI
 - 10793 THE SIMS 2

- Qcode Nintendo DS**
- 53118 ANIMAL CROSSING WILD WORLD
 - 53121 BRAIN AGE
 - 53122 BUBBLE BOBBLE REVOLUTION
 - 53126 DRAGONBALL Z SUPERSONIC WARRIORS 2
 - 53127 FEEL THE MAGIC: XY/XX
 - 53130 KIRBY CANVAS CURSE
 - 53131 LOSTMAGIC
 - 53137 METROID PRIME HUNTERS
 - 53113 NEW SUPER MARIO BROS
 - 53145 SUPER PRINCESS PEACH

- Qcode Playstation Portable**
- 73001 ATV OFFROAD FURY BLAZIN TRAILS
 - 73009 DEATH JR
 - 70171 CRASH TAG TEAM RACING
 - 73018 GRAND THEFT AUTO LIBERTY CITY STORIES
 - 73157 METAL GEAR ACID 2
 - 70531 MIDNIGHT CLUB 3 DUB EDITION
 - 73032 MEDIEVAL RESURRECTION
 - 70658 PACMAN WORLD 3
 - 73023 HOT SHOTS GOLF OPEN TEE
 - 73153 EXIT

- Qcode Xbox**
- 20007 50 CENT BULLETPROOF
 - 20062 BATTLEFIELD 2 MODERN COMBAT
 - 20072 BLACK
 - 20078 BLAZING ANGELS SQUADRONS OF WWII
 - 20096 BROTHERS IN ARMS EARNED IN BLOOD
 - 20115 CALL OF DUTY 2 BIG RED ONE
 - 20135 CHICKEN LITTLE
 - 20502 CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE
 - 20178 CRIMSON SKIES HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE
 - 20220 DOOM 3
 - 20261 ESPN NFL 2K5
 - 20281 FAR CRY INSTINCTS
 - 20305 FORZA MOTORSPORT
 - 20316 FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR
 - 20343 GODZILLA SAVE THE EARTH
 - 20349 GRAND THEFT AUTO SAN ANDREAS
 - 20364 HALFLIFE 2
 - 20384 HITMAN CONTRACTS
 - 20399 INCREDIBLE HULK ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION
 - 20422 JEDI KNIGHT JEDI ACADEMY
 - 20469 LEGO STAR WARS
 - 20490 MADDEN NFL 06
 - 20520 MERCENARIES
 - 20568 MX VS ATV UNLEASHED
 - 20576 NASCAR 06 TOTAL TEAM CONTROL
 - 20597 NBA STREET VOL 2
 - 20609 NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2
 - 20640 NINJA GAIDEN
 - 20652 OUTLAW GOLF 2
 - 20699 PSYCHONAUTS

More games and QCodes at Cheatsmobile.com, or text us the GAME NAME and SYSTEM like so: brain age ds



ROGUE GALAXY™

by Lynxara

Most RPGs struggle to tell the story of a single world. *Rogue Galaxy* offers you the universe.

Scope is *Rogue Galaxy's* defining trait. Its dungeons are huge, its cast is unusually large, and the sheer number of options it offers is boggling. None of its features are radical departures by themselves, but the enormity of what it presents in the scope of a single adventure is staggering.

In *Rogue Galaxy's* cut-scenes, there's a recurring motif of a jet-black sky glittering with an impossible array of stars. Frequently the camera pans up to a view like this while characters discuss adventure or mystery. The feeling that view of space conjures up defines nearly every aspect of *Rogue Galaxy's* story and gameplay.



A Galaxy Far, Far Away

In *Rogue Galaxy*, the point of the game isn't where it goes but the journey itself. Each of its episodes is written with the same three-act structure traditionally used to develop television episodes, plays, and films, but which is rarely used effectively in video game stories. Each of *Rogue Galaxy's* "episodes" usually centers around the exploration of a given area and the achievement of a particular goal. Early on they primarily involve introducing new members to the party, but once you've recruited all eight playable characters the story quickly moves on to developing the game's core plot.

That plot revolves around Jaster Rogue, a young man from a bleak desert planet called Rosa. A series of strange coincidences lead to the Dorgengoa Space Pirates mistaking him for the famous bounty hunter Desert Claw. Jaster is desperate to get off of Rosa and explore the galaxy, which became illegal shortly after his planet was occupied by forces from the wealthy and powerful Longardian Federation. Jaster cheerfully allows the pirates to think he's Desert Claw, and makes his long-awaited escape into space.

From there, Jaster and the rest of the misfits that end up joining the Dorgengoa get caught up in a galaxy-spanning adventure that pits them against the Longardian Federation itself, and the nefarious Daytron Corporation that seems to be manipulating the Federation's every move. While much of the plot is driven by the Federation's long battle with a group called the Draxilians, this actual conflict isn't really dramatized in *Rogue Galaxy's* story. Instead the emphasis is firmly on the Daytron Corporation's greedy and destructive practices, ranging from cruel war profiteering to pure galactic conquest.

Based on the premise alone, *Rogue Galaxy* is often described as a "science fiction" game, but that's not quite accurate. Instead *Rogue Galaxy* is really more

of a Leiji (*Space Battleship Yamato*) Matsumoto-style "space opera," the sort of story where you stand on the deck of your pirate ship as it sails through space, clothing billowing in the cosmic wind. Much of the story and character design bears the influence of anime ranging from *Cowboy Bebop* to *One Piece*, blending together humor and drama with a startling array of other storytelling styles as the plot progresses. It's genuinely hard to predict what will happen next in *Rogue Galaxy*, or where your next mission is going to take you. You can easily go from trudging through the bogs of a barely-civilized jungle planet one moment to fighting zombies amid the urban sprawl of a gangster planet the next.

This wild sense of variety comes through most clearly when you consider the game's cast of playable characters. You begin with Jaster, a pretty average young protagonist with a lot of potential; and Kisala, the bright and cheerful young "pirate princess." Steve the robot and Simon, a squat creature in a spacesuit, bring Jaster into Dorgengoa. There you recruit Zegram, the pitiless and cold-hearted bounty hunter. As the plot develops you go through story lines that introduce Lilika the jungle tribeswoman, Jupis the insane alien hacker-terrorist caffeine addict, and Deego the grim cyborg dog-man soldier. This is a far cry from the sort of RPG where you can offhandedly refer to the characters as "the tank" or "the caster."



It ain't easy bein' a pirate. Ya gotta have heart, kid.

Neo Universe

Rogue Galaxy was initially released in Japan on December 8, 2005. It debuted to respectable scores in Japanese game mags like *Dengeki* (8.5) and *Famitsu* (36/40), and sold respectably. This aside, *Rogue Galaxy* managed to develop something of a mixed reputation among the kinds of RPG fans hardcore enough to import it. It was a slow-paced and meticulous game, with arduously long dungeons and a high random encounter rate. Complaints arose concerning excessively repetitive gameplay.

Part of the fans' disappointment was just how high expectations for *Rogue Galaxy* had gotten. It was the latest product of fan-favorite developer Level 5, which was acquiring a reputation for fashioning the best RPGs in the PS2's rather extensive game library. Even though *Rogue Galaxy* had done well by any ordinary standard, it seemed pale when compared to something like *Dragon Quest VIII*, which received rapturous reviews (such as 5 out of 5 in *HGM*).

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LEVEL 5



Level 5 was founded in 1998, spinning off from a now-defunct company called Riverhillsoft. The company's President and CEO is Akihiro Hino, the chief planner, producer, and designer on all of Level 5's titles. Level 5's first releases were *Dark Cloud* and *Dark Cloud 2*, a pair of dungeon-crawling RPGs that are fondly remembered for their intricate item customization and town creation systems. They also introduced Level 5's signature cel-shaded visual style. Both games were critical and financial successes.



Its next major project was a never-to-be-released MMORPG called *True Fantasy Online*, intended for Microsoft's Xbox system. At time of the project's cancellation, the game was said to be 80% finished and completely playable. Level 5 usually cites creative differences with publisher Microsoft and technical problems as the reasons for the highly anticipated title's cancellation.



Next came Level 5's first smash hit, *Dragon Quest VIII: Journey of the Cursed King*. While much of the core gameplay was inspired by previous *Dragon Quest* games, it was still full of distinct Level 5 touches like an alchemy pot for mixing items, a skill point system for weapons, and a huge world populated with intricately cel-shaded characters.

Level 5's president, CEO, and lead *Rogue Galaxy* designer Akihiro Hino admits that it was difficult to create a totally new game in the shadow of their past successes. "I'm not sure if this is positive or negative, but since we created *Dragon Quest VIII*, which was a tremendous success in Japan, selling 3.6 million copies, we felt that we couldn't do the same thing again. We had to come up with ways to change our approach, whether it was for the better or not. We had to make it different, so people wouldn't say 'Oh, it's just *Dragon Quest* again.' That made it a challenge."

A lesser developer might have pronounced the original version of *Rogue Galaxy* "good enough," and moved to dump a localization on the American market as quickly as possible. Level 5 instead opted to do something amazing and revolutionary, if also more time-consuming. According to Hino, "We listened to the feedback we got from the Japanese version, and made changes that would essentially grant all requests for the game, so even people who've played the Japanese version can play the English version and find it completely different in certain dungeons, because we wanted to make sure that everyone would be happy."

The new *Rogue Galaxy* wasn't simply about making sure the players got what they wanted. It was also about Level 5 satisfying their own creative impulses. "Not only did we listen to the Japanese feedback, but all during the course of the Japanese development, all the issues the staff felt and found by themselves, we wanted to go back and fix them," says Hino.

Changes in the American version of *Rogue Galaxy* range from the expected, like a new world to explore called Alistia, to completely unprecedented amounts of new content. The game is stuffed with new weapons, character costumes, and items. "Everything has been increased in volume," says Hino.

Rogue Galaxy even looks noticeably different now. "To improve the gameplay, because *Rogue Galaxy* is a very expansive setting, we wanted to make sure people wouldn't get tired of seeing the same things over and over while traveling. We made improvements so that when players are exploring through the stages, things will look fresh and new all the time." Several dungeons have been completely redesigned, and virtually every dungeon has at least gotten new graphical touches. Improvements in compression technology even allow the cel-shaded graphics to be noticeably brighter and sharper.

The most telling and dramatic change, though, is the absolute overhaul that's been given to the combat and item growth systems. "One of the biggest changes, although it's subtle, is the game balance," says Hino. "We've completely re-tuned the game for the US version, from the level design to all of the monsters. We wanted to make sure that it's a seamless experience, where you don't feel frustrated or that any sequence is too long. This is something driven by the story, that compels you to keep going."

To say combat has been "re-tuned" is a bit of an understatement. Many monsters and bosses have had their AI, stats, and attack patterns completely altered, which makes for more interesting, less tedious fights. Battles proceed more quickly, with damage being taken and dealt according to completely new formulas. Your own characters develop more quickly, eliminating any need for obnoxious grinding. The stat caps that limited item growth in the Japanese version of the game have been outright eliminated. "In the Japanese version," says Hino, "when a weapon reached a certain level you couldn't grow it any further. In the US version, you can actually take that weapon and keep growing it as much as you want."

Playing the two different versions of the game is like night and day. The American version is superior in every way, from look to gameplay. Combat is still challenging, but it feels more like it's about strategy than stat boosting or hoarding items, and dungeon crawling is more fun thanks to the brighter graphics and improved maps. Advanced gameplay offers more for a seasoned RPG vet to do. Before approaching the American version of *Rogue Galaxy*, you should forget everything you've seen or heard about the Japanese version. They really are two different games.



EVEN MORE CHANCES

So much is different in the US version of *Rogue Galaxy* that it's hard to know how to talk about it all. Here's some more neat changes you can expect to see in the US version of the game.

- To hold the US version's extra data, the game format has moved to dual layer DVD. This has also allowed Level 5 to increase the frame rate and image quality for all in-game graphics.
- The brand new planet, Alistia, becomes accessible in Chapter 8. Upon landing on the water planet, Jaster quickly becomes involved in a kidnapping case plotted by Daytron. The planet includes all-new enemies and a new boss monster. Completing the side quest unlocks one of Jaster's optional outfits.
- To gain optimal weapon synth recipes, you need to talk to Toady, the magic frog that fuses your weapons by eating them. (Yes, you really just read that.) Toady can analyze a given weapon and tell you what can be synthesized with it to create a more powerful result. In the original *Rogue Galaxy*, you had to cull tips on weapon synthesizing from chatter with NPCs.
- All party members other than Jaster have two new ranks of main and sub-weapons, increasing their number of possible weapons by 140. The total weapon count in *Rogue Galaxy* is now nearly 750.
- Two new Insector species have been added for use in the Insector mini-game. Once you conquer the in-game tournaments, an indirect PvP mode is unlocked. It allows you to generate a password for your Insector team, which can be exchanged with other players so that you can pit your teams against each other. When you generate the password, a victory code can be created that will only be displayed to the other player if they are able to defeat your team, thus proving that their team is stronger.

A sea of stars

The new *Rogue Galaxy* is a joy to play, offering the thrill of real-time combat without sacrificing any of the hands-on experience of controlling and customizing your characters. You control one character at any time, with the others being directed by the AI when you aren't giving them commands. Characters have an unprecedented freedom of movement. You can juggle between projectile attacks from long range and melee attacks at close range, while leaping, blocking, and dashing as necessary. Each character's actions are regulated by an action bar that slowly regenerates over time, and regenerates more quickly while blocking attacks. If you exhaust yourself, you have to pause for a moment to let the action bar fill back up.

Tapping the Triangle button pauses the flow of battle and brings up a contextual menu that lets you take a variety of actions. You can change a character's weapon or sub-weapon in order to better exploit an enemy weakness, or swap to controlling another character completely. If you have enough meter on your action bar, you can use healing items or try to use an Ability, one of a character's super-powerful moves that consumes "Action Points." Abilities usually involve adding elemental attributes to an attack, doing wide Area-of-Effect damage to every enemy in a combat, or buffing up the party's stats.

Probably the single most important Ability is the Burning Strike, which allows you do huge amounts of damage to a single enemy in combat once it's initiated. The amount of damage done depends on how powerful your Burning Strike Ability is, and whether or not you can tap the correct attack buttons with the proper timing in sequence. The more powerful a Burning Strike, the more buttons you have to chain together correctly. Burning Strikes don't consume Action Points, but instead require that a meter called the "Burning Strike Gauge" be full before you can use them.

You fill up the meter by grabbing "Burning Chips" that enemies drop over the course of your beating the crap out of them. You can't use Burning Strikes against boss enemies, but should use them to eliminate especially tough enemies in random encounters. The entire gauge is an invention for the US version, as in the Japanese version, Burning Strike sequences were random events. Hino explains the change by pointing out that "when Burning Strikes were random, it just happened, it didn't mean anything, but if players can incorporate it into their battle systems, they can use it to turn the tide of battle instantly."

Tapping the Square button while at the in-battle Triangle button menu brings up the "strategy" menu that lets you edit the AI that controls your allies. There are four options, each useful in a particular situation: for everyone to focus on a separate enemy, for everyone to focus on a single enemy, for characters to go "all-out" and use Items and Abilities without asking for your confirmation, and for characters to "stand back" and take no actions aside from moving or blocking. You'll most often shift your strategy when fighting particular enemies or trying to succeed at certain in-battle challenges.

You don't have to pause the action and go to a menu to give your characters commands, though. Instead, you can communicate quickly with your allies via something Hino calls the "Live Talk" system. "For *Rogue Galaxy*, what we wanted to do was provide an experience as if the player was playing with other people, as if you were online, so your allies will talk to you during battle and exploration scenes. They'll offer comments. We wanted to offer an experience as if you were playing with friends. For the US version we increased the number of lines for the Live Talk system significantly."

During exploration, the Live Talk system means that your characters will simply talk about whatever you're doing. If you're taking a roundabout route through a dungeon or getting pasted constantly by enemies, they'll complain. If something interesting just happened in the plot, they'll wonder aloud about it. With over 2,000 new lines of spoken dialogue added to the US version, there's too much variety for any of the voice clips to become tiresome.

In combat, Live Talk means that your allies occasionally suggest using certain moves. If someone is wounded, dead, or suffering from a bad stat, they may suggest using the proper healing item. If the party isn't winning quickly, they may suggest using an Ability to speed things up, or their Burning Strike if their meter is full. You usually have at most two options to choose from, and can tap one of the left shoulder buttons to confirm the action you'd like your ally to take.

This allows for quick, on-the-fly decision making that rewards quick reactions and an ability to judge the overall flow of a battle.

Encounters in *Rogue Galaxy* are random, but take place in real time and involve little to no loading, so making decisions quickly is essential. When a battle begins, enemies appear in the area where you were traveling previously. This lets you use the unique landscape features of wherever you happen to be to your advantage. You can climb up to an unapproachable high point and snipe, or try

to herd enemies into narrow corridors so you can strike them all at once. To escape from a battle, simply move away from enemies until you reach the perimeter of the battlefield. This is useful when you're simply not interested in fighting.

Winning battles, as in all RPGs, allows your characters to acquire valuable experience and loot. In *Rogue Galaxy*, loot takes the form of money and items. Drop items often do little by themselves, unless you happen to get healing items, but can be refined to unlock better items in your Factory or used to unlock new Abilities for characters at the Revelation Flow screen. Both of these options are accessed from your main menu. Healing items are dropped frequently enough that you shouldn't have to spend too much money on purchasing them, despite the fact that items are your only source of healing during combat in *Rogue Galaxy*.

In addition to your characters, their equipment grows whenever you win a battle. Initially equipment gains experience, but once its exp is at "Max" level, it begins gaining points in its elemental attributes, which can boost the damage dealt by corresponding Abilities. Once all of a weapon's elemental attribute bars are filled, the weapon is "Mastered" and it begins gaining stats slowly at the end of each battle. You can choose to continue letting a particular weapon grow for as long as you like, or choose to create better equipment by fusing together two or more Maxed pieces of equipment of the same type. Fusing equipment regularly allows you to start with a handful of cheap, low-level items, and before long have better equipment than you could possibly purchase for a character, provided that you synth wisely.



Galactic Heroes

Combat is the heart of any RPG, but a good game offers more things to do than simply wail on monsters.

Rogue Galaxy emphasizes exploration, challenging you to map out every area in the game. Levels are interspersed with save points, and while on a planet, you may freely teleport from any save point to any other save point you've visited before. You can also use save points to store excess items, and to claim "Hunter Points" earned by killing particular monsters. Increasing your number of Hunter Points increases Jaster's "Hunter Rank," a standing on a sort of virtual leader board populated with ninety-nine AI opponents that you need to outscore.

Optional kills comprise the bulk of *Rogue Galaxy's* side quests, whether it's participating in random "challenge battles" that require winning a fight with special victory requirements or hunting down optional bosses for huge Hunter Point scores. Challenge battles usually push you to do things like win battles in less than thirty seconds, win battles without using Abilities or items, or win battles using only a particular character. There are also optional dungeons to explore, which can be only accessed by completing certain special requirements and beating fiendishly tricky minigames.

Progressing through most of the game's advanced content is easiest if you learn how to manufacture everything available to you at the Factory. This is sort of a minigame in itself, since manufacturing new types of items isn't simply a matter of finding the components and smacking them together. You have to build the correct manufacturing apparatus for the item, which means correctly placing and connecting the various types of machines required to process your base ingredients. You have limited space to work with, and you also have to

consider running power cables to your machines from the edges of the room.

As an example, if you want to make a new item that involves a metal component, then you need to make sure a smelter and form press are attached to your main assembler, along with a cooling fan. All of the pieces have to be arranged in the correct order, and the assembly line has to be timed so that the formed metal reaches the assembler at exactly the same time as the other parts of the new item. Setting up proper factories is challenging and can take well over an hour, but you only ever have to run your assembly line successfully once. After that, you can simply travel to designated worlds and buy the new item you just prototyped from shops. A lot of the items you make this way are key to completing side quests and bonus dungeons.



New Frontier

Completing *Rogue Galaxy's* main adventure takes about 40 hours. Clearing all of the bonus content and the Insectron mini-game essentially doubles that. A particularly slow or meticulous gamer could spend much longer on it.

The trend, over the years, has been for RPGs to become easier, shorter, and more focused on storytelling than gameplay. Some publishers can describe their products with ludicrous terms like 'interactive cinematic experience' and somehow keep a straight face. The process has in some ways diminished the games themselves. Titles often feel small and easily digestible when they should feel expansive and challenging.

Rogue Galaxy, by contrast, feels like one of the biggest and most vibrant games ever for the PS2. Although the storyline never tries to feel epic, playing *Rogue Galaxy* still conveys an enormous sense of scale and broad dramatic sweep. It makes you remember what going on an RPG adventure is supposed to feel like.



5 FOR THE FUTURE

So what's next for Level 5? Three projects on three different systems are on the horizon, and each of them is worth being excited about.



• Its latest title is *Jeanne d'Arc* for the PSP, released in Japan on November 22nd. It represents a departure from Level 5's usual dungeon-crawling fare. *Jeanne d'Arc* is instead a turn-based tactical RPG, with a grid-based map system. It loosely retells the life of Joan of Arc in a new fantasy setting that incorporates non-historical elements like magic bracelets and an ancient war against evil gods.



• *Layton*, or *Professor Layton and the Mysterious Village*, isn't an RPG. It's described as a "puzzle/adventure" game and set to be released sometime in 2007 for the Nintendo DS. It makes heavy use of stylus interactions during the gameplay, and features brief 2D animated clips and lots of voice-acting as part of its story. Essentially it's a game where you solve puzzles to earn clues that help you unravel a larger mystery.

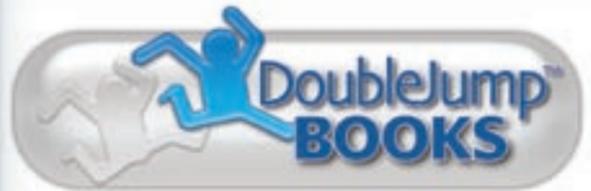


• *White Knight Story* for the PS3 debuted at the last Tokyo Game Show. The trailers and assets released so far indicate that it's an RPG that uses a real-time battle system based on *Rogue Galaxy's*, but with the addition of enhanced AI that lets both allies and enemies synchronize their maneuvers. The game is still in its early development stages, and there's no release date on the horizon yet, but its stunning graphics are already generating positive buzz even among the PS3's most ardent skeptics.

Our guides aren't for everyone.



(Some people don't play video games.)



Rogue Galaxy™
Miss nothing. Learn everything. This comprehensive guide is packed full of extreme detail about every inch of the game.

- Complete maps of every planet
- Every weapon identified
- Lists of every enemy's stats
- Every secret revealed
- Too much to list here!



SMT: Devil Summoner™
Learn the terrible secrets of the Soulless Army!

- Crush every opponent
- Find every secret
- Collect every demon

Beat them at their own game, in their own world.



Disgaea™2: Cursed Memories
640 pages jam-packed with extreme detail. If you've ever seen our Monster Size™ guides, you know they're fat. This one is our fattest ever. We went a little nuts.



Genji: Dawn of the Samurai™
Whether you're a novice or an expert player, there's something for everyone in the official strategy guide for *Genji: Dawn of the Samurai*.



Castlevania®: Dawn of Sorrow™
Set one year after the events of 2003's *Castlevania®: Aria of Sorrow™*, this sequel follows the protagonist Soma Cruz into a new castle, and a new adventure.



Disgaea: Hour of Darkness™
Secrets, techniques for capturing monsters, all the item ranks, job evolutions, class prerequisites and much, much more.

www.DoubleJumpBooks.com

Rogue Galaxy is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Created and developed by Level 5. © 2006 Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. SMT, Shin Megami Tensei and Devil Summoner are registered trademarks of Atlus USA. Disgaea © NIPPON ICHI SOFTWARE INC. ©NIS America, Inc. Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow © 1986-2005 KONAMI. "KONAMI" and "CASTLEVANIA" are registered trademarks of KONAMI CORPORATION. "CASTLEVANIA Dawn of Sorrow" is a trademark of KONAMI CORPORATION. Genji: Dawn of the Samurai is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. Developed by Game Republic. © 2005 Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. DoubleJump and Monster Size are trademarks or registered trademarks of DoubleJump Publishing, Inc.



REVIEWS

- 54 **Gears of War**
- 56 **Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney - Justice for All**
- 58 **Tony Hawk's Project 8**
- 59 **Call of Duty 3**
- 60 **ParaWorld**
- 61 **Full Metal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy**
- 62 **WWE Smackdown vs RAW 2007**
- 63 **Genji: Days of the Blade**
- 64 **Excite Truck**
- 65 **Pocket Racers**
- 66 **Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2**
- 67 **Neverwinter Nights 2**
- 68 **Warhammer: Mark of Chaos**
- 69 **Sega Genesis Collection**
- 70 **Superman Returns: The Videogame**
- 71 **Ridge Racer 7**
- 72 **Resistance: Fall of Man**
- 73 **Sonic the Hedgehog**
- 74 **Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories**
- 75 **Touch Detective**

HGM REVIEW GAUGE

5 = Really Good	
4 = Good	
3 = Average	
2 = Bad	
1 = Really Bad	

GEARS OF WAR

GEARS OF WAR



Review by Athletter

Gears of War is short. I'll be perfectly honest with you on that front. It'll take you somewhere between ten to twelve hours to make it through the game on Casual, the easiest of the two difficulties available at the beginning. A third difficulty level is unlockable after completing the game. At sixty bucks, ten hours might seem like a waste, especially with the hype juggernaut backing it up. This is *the* Xbox 360 game to get for Christmas, according to the hype.

The hype is true. One way to describe *Gears of War* is "focused." There is very little wasted space here. It is fairly linear, so you spend very little time running around looking for red keys to open blue doors. The main benefit to this linearity is that it gives the developers the ability to tightly control the pacing. If you aren't shooting Locusts full of itty-bitty (or sometimes very large) holes, you're traversing a booby-trapped corridor, driving a tremendous, though extremely limited, vehicle, or trying to reconnect with your teammates. You have none of those dead-air moments when you're trying to figure out where to go. You're constantly being pushed forward into the next conflict.

A good 90% of the game will involve holding down the right trigger and putting as many bullets as possible into an enemy before it drops. This is good, since *Gears* is very good at

ESRB Rating: Mature (Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Strong Language)
 Publisher: Microsoft
 Developer: Epic Games
 Release Date: 11/12/06
 Genre: Third-Person Shooter
 Categories: Kicksplode
 # of Players: 1-8 (2 co-op)



making that fun. Taking cover, moving to and from cover, and firing from cover are all very natural and easy to get used to. The bullet impacts and grenade explosions are all properly impressive. The red health indicator is particularly inspired and gives the player an easy way to tell how close he is to death with a glance. *Gears* is intense.

The other 10% of the game is made up of tricky inversions on the expectations that most people have for third-person shooters. A large part of the focus in *Gears* is on the guns. Whether they are Locust guns, COG guns, or whatever, they are all large, loud, and impressive. The sniper rifle is practically a death ray. In order to keep you from getting too comfortable, you're going to face a number of enemies that can only be hurt by a special satellite-based laser known as the Hammer of Dawn that has limited operational time. You're going to understand just how limited that time is when you realize that you have to not only survive against a gigantic beast called a "Berserker," but you have to lure it outside, into the open, and then get it to hold still long enough so that the Hammer can focus on it and fire the laser.

That's not all. You're going to be stuck in what amounts to an on-rails shooter at one point while explosive enemies swarm over your cart and other enemies lurk on platforms with shotguns. Your mission is to take them out before they drop into your cart, explode, and kill you. There is a brief driving portion, as well. The vehicle you're running can run either the engine or the weapon, and clouds of flying enemies are going to be divebombing your ride. You have to stop the truck, take aim, and then take them out before they cause too much damage. Did I mention that the enemies are super fast, while your turreted weapon is woefully slow?

Gears of War is pretty impressive. I've found it to be a stellar experience from top to bottom, though the main character's voice is a little *too* stereotypically gruff. *Gears* is a focused experience, and one I'll go through several times. The gameplay is incredibly strong, and an even greater multiplayer experience rounds out the game nicely. The short single player should work against it, but *Gears* feels like a dose of the good stuff. It is there and then it is gone, leaving you with a good feeling in your stomach. Also, they say the F word. How can you hate a game with blood and cuss words?

Rating: 5 of 5



Gears features a host of multiplayer options. Foremost among these is the cooperative campaign mode. The entire game can be played through by two people on one Xbox 360 or over Xbox Live. If one player decides to drop out while playing, the other continues on in the usual manner. Co-op play is always fun, and *Gears of War's* teamwork-flavored gameplay keeps it fresh. Either you watch your buddy's back or he dies, and then you die.

Online multiplayer of the non-cooperative variety is in full effect, as well. Eight players a match seems kind of low (especially in light of the achievement that you get after 10,000 kills), but this is another bit of focus on the part of the developers. Four on four makes for a very intimate and fast-moving match. The much-hyped chainsaw melee attack never stops being (psychopathically) satisfying, either.

2nd Opinion:
 by Wanderer:
 Nothing on Earth could live up to *Gears of War's* hype. Strip that away, and you have a solid, challenging shooter. The learning curve, idiotic final boss, and patchy story are all relatively minor strikes against it.
 Rating: 4.5 of 5

FINAL SCORE:
4.75 of 5

Ace Phoenix Wright Attorney Justice For All

Publisher : Capcom
Developer : Capcom
Release Date : 01/16/2007
Rating : Teen

Genre(s) : Law & Order
Category : Special DS Unit
of players : 1

Review by Sardius

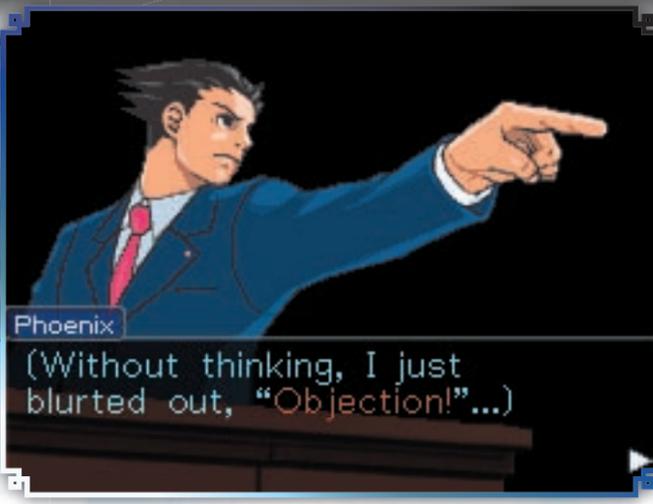
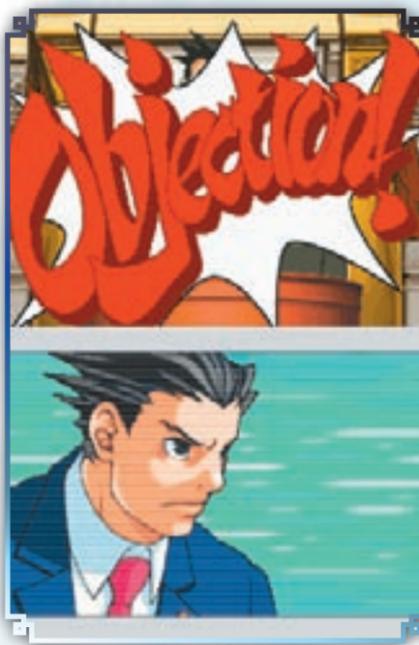
Few people expected *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney* to become a breakout success. After selling through its low initial print run almost instantly, it became nearly impossible to find a copy in stores, and eBay prices skyrocketed. Three sold-out reprintings later, Capcom must surely realize by now that it has something special on its hands with the *Phoenix Wright* series.

You can't really blame Capcom for having such low initial expectations, as the text-based adventure genre isn't exactly popular in the United States. Japan may enjoy *Phoenix Wright*-style games in plenty (many of them feature naked ladies!), but elsewhere, few gamers have the patience for gameplay that basically boils down to making menu selections in order to advance to more menu selections.

Phoenix Wright, however, manages to make this thin premise compelling, moreso than many other entries in the genre. In *Phoenix Wright*, making a well-reasoned decision and presenting the right piece of contradicting

evidence at the right time is very satisfying, and the game does a sufficient job of making you feel smart when you present plausible theories and decode lies. It's not quite as compelling a reason to read novel-length text scrolls as the promise of naked ladies, but it works well enough.

Justice for All shares many elements with its predecessor, even going so far as to feature many of the same sound effects and animations. The game brings a few new additions to the formula, however. Most notably, a life bar is now present during courtroom sequences, and will drain accordingly depending on the severity of the mistakes you make. This bar also plays into the new "Psyche-Lock" feature, which allows you to grill witnesses for information that they are withholding or lying about during investigation phases. Essentially, this works like a cross-examination outside of the courtroom; present the right evidence, and your witness cracks and confesses. Otherwise, your life bar takes a hit.



The presence of Psyche-Locks can make progress difficult, however, as they often lull you into thinking that you have the proper contradicting evidence on hand when you don't. It's frustrating to spend several minutes at a time trying to break these locks, only to find out later that your time was wasted because you had not found a needed item or seen a certain cutscene beforehand.

Unfortunately, these plot bottlenecks are made even more difficult by *Justice for All's* reliance on supernatural elements. It's ridiculous for a game to expect you to make logical, reasoned arguments based on what is realistically and physically possible in a given situation when a long-dead character is standing next to you in the courtroom and giving you advice, for instance. This is especially bad in the second case, which revolves around the accepted fact that certain people in the game's universe are able to change their physical shape at will. Unbelievably, this is never once called into question by the judge or anyone else in the courtroom. The game contains several rather large leaps of logic as it is, and things are made all the more difficult by the fostering of a constant desire to explain away every mystery by saying "Ghosts did it!"

Despite its frustrating moments and questionable leaps of logic, however, *Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney - Justice for All* remains just as solid and engrossing as its predecessor. The dialogue is well-written, the plot is entertaining, and best of all, *Justice for All* does not feature a tacked-on and boring finale, as was the case with the original game. Adventure fans: you'll totally dig this. Everyone else: buy it anyway, if only so you can sell it later on eBay for mad cash.

Rating: 4 of 5



2nd opinion by Jeremy • Alternate Rating : 4.5 of 5

Justice For All provides more of the same for series fans, but despite its steep learning curve, it isn't confusing at all for new players.

FINAL SCORE : 4.25 of 5

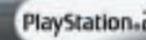
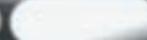


Want to know what you'll be getting yourself into with *Phoenix Wright's* sequel? Here's a rundown of *Justice for All's* first three cases.

Case 1: The Lost Turnabout
Trouble brews as Phoenix gets conked over the head during a courtroom recess, and subsequently develops a case of amnesia at a critical junction of a trial in progress. This presents an interesting challenge, as players must both acquit an innocent woman accused of murder while simultaneously trying to figure out who didn't want Phoenix to win this case and why.

Case 2: Reunion, and Turnabout
Players are re-introduced to Phoenix's assistant Maya Fey, who is accused of accidentally killing a man during a psychic channeling session. Phoenix and several witnesses are present at the scene at the time of the murder, and the odds are stacked against Maya in what seems like an open and shut case. Or is it? Convoluted logic and a shocking twist ending await!

Case 3: Turnabout Big Top
The ringmaster of a local circus ends up dead, and all signs point to resident magician Max Galactica as being the culprit. Despite the fact that Max is almost universally loathed by his co-workers, he swears that he didn't do it, and there's a distinct possibility that someone has framed him. Was it the clown? Or perhaps it was the lion tamer? What role did the monkey play? It's your job to crack the case!



TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

Review by **Lynxara**

Publisher : Activision
Developer : Neversoft Entertainment
Release Date : 11/7/2006
Rating : Teen
Genre(s) : Skating
Category : Whoop That Trick
of players : 1



Some games are nearly impossible to review effectively, regardless of whether or not they're good. This is particularly true of games that are produced primarily according to a particular formula, like EA's sports titles and anything that was published by Koei and developed by Omega Force. Often these series develop devoted fanbases who may not even play many other video games, and who eventually become the primary group that the developers are interested in catering to. No negative review could keep the fans from picking up a new installment, and a positive review isn't likely to convince anyone who didn't like the formula in its first or second iteration.

If there was ever a game that fit its criteria, it's *Tony Hawk's Project 8*. It's the eighth game in a long and popular series, it only introduces one really significant new gameplay mechanic, and everything else it does is more or less exactly like older *Tony Hawk* games. You will like it if you enjoy those titles, but new players are probably going to find it inaccessible. The tutorial mode omits a lot of information, and you almost have to be a vet just to pass it. On the technical side, *Project 8* also has widely-reported issues with inconsistent frame rate, so caveat emptor. It doesn't impact the gameplay much, but it does ugly up otherwise sharp and amazingly detailed graphics. It's kind of depressing, actually, since the visual improvements should be this title's selling point.

This aside, *Project 8* is bigger and better-looking than any previous *Tony Hawk* title. Skater animations were created with the aid of mocap data for the very first time, making for a unique set of animations for every skater. This combines nicely with the graphical overhaul that *Project 8* brings to the series, with more polys per character making for more lifelike and subtle movements. Your environment is an enormous (relative to previous *Tony Hawk* games) streaming city based on classic *Tony Hawk* areas. This time, though, they're all part

of one city, and the ability to move freely between them legitimately makes the game feel larger and more immersive. The action is surprisingly, almost painfully, realistic at points. Watching your skater wipe out and break bones is really wince-inducing.

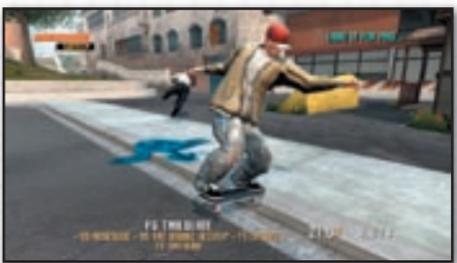
The new feature for *Project 8* is rather interesting. It's called "Nail a Trick," and it's basically a mode designed to make doing complex stunts feel more realistic. When doing a stunt, the camera zooms in on your skater's feet, time slows, and you can use the analog sticks to control the motion of the board with incredible precision. Like all *Tony Hawk* mechanics, it's difficult to master and extremely rewarding if you do. It does a good job of showing off the possibilities of the new, based on mo-cap game engine.

All the other basic features you expect of a *Tony Hawk* game are there: cool licensed soundtrack, a roster of real-life skaters to interact with, tons of missions, a decent create-a-skater option, a variety of multiplayer online modes, and stuff to unlock. If there's a *Tony Hawk*-shaped hole in your 360 collection, then this game is about the only thing that will fill it. If you've already gotten tired of the *Tony Hawk* formula or simply don't like it, though, there's nothing about this game that'll change your mind. If you've never played a *Tony Hawk* game, then give up now, because this entry in the series is just not interested in inviting you to the party.

Rating : 3.5 of 5

2nd opinion by **Shoegazer** • Alternate Rating : 3 of 5

Although the new Nail the Trick feature finally adds some much needed innovation to the series, these games are becoming as generic as Stormtroopers.



CALL OF DUTY 3

Review by **Shoegazer**

Publisher : Activision
Developer : Treyarch
Release Date : 11/7/2006
Rating : Teen (Blood, Language, Violence)
Genre(s) : Action
Category : 1st Person Shooter
of players : 1-4 (Up to 24 online)

Since I didn't think that studying history would ever help me later in life, I didn't pay much attention in class. Luckily for me, however, video games based on World War II would one day become a phenomenon, filled to the brim with historical facts. Thanks to all the WWII games that have been released, I now know that the war lasted over thirty years, Normandy was the location of at least ten major battles, and medics always took a bullet to the head immediately after reviving the strongest soldier in the fight. Who says games can't be both fun and educational?

Treyarch has done an incredible job with the *Call of Duty* license since taking over. WWII shooters have practically become an independent, albeit crowded, genre, and with this latest installment there is no question as to which console series is the most authentic. No other existing WWII game, nor any on the horizon, capture the sheer sense of chaos and intensity of the battlefield quite like this. *CoD3* lures you in with a very brief set of training missions before you're shipped off to the first bat-AMBUSH!! Suddenly that "safe" feeling you just had is gone, and stays gone for the entirety of the game.

I say with all sincerity that, short of *Gears of War*, this is the best-looking game on the Xbox 360. The character models alone are worth taking a few moments away from the game to scope out the detail, and the environments are just unbelievable. You will feel the serenity of a small open field outside of town, and then quickly feel the destruction of a city crushed to rubble. The current-gen versions hold up well graphically against other recent titles on their respective platforms, but we're finally seeing just how large the gap between current-gen and next-gen capabilities really is.

You probably won't be surprised to find that *Call of Duty 3* isn't a big stretch from last year's version. It's a better all-around game, but the improvements are mostly cosmetic. Some new gameplay functions such as picking up live grenades and tossing them back at the enemy, and the ability to open a tank hatch to drop in a grenade have been added, but the multiplayer upgrade is the best reason to get excited for series vets. Now up to twenty-four players can hook up over Xbox Live and take part in fan favorite modes like Capture the Flag, Team Battle and Deathmatch, just to name a few.

Some will gripe about the inability to skip cutscenes, but I didn't find them unnecessary or bothersome. The only thing that stops *CoD3* from scoring a solid 5 is simply its lack of innovation. What's here is great and any fan of the series, or FPS games in general, would be well-served, but déjà vu is starting to set in.

Rating : 4 of 5

2nd opinion by **Lynxara** • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

Multiplayer aside, you'd have to be a really hardcore FPS player to differentiate *CoD3's* gameplay from *CoD2's*. I'm sure there'll be no lack of love for *CoD3's* shinier graphics and subtle enhancements, though.



FINAL SCORE : **4** of 5



PARAWORLD



Publisher : Aspyr/Sunflowers Genre(s) : RTS
 Developer : SEK Ost Category : Two-Fisted Tales of Science!
 Release Date : 9/26/2006 # of players : 1-8
 Rating : Teen



I've been following the development of *ParaWorld* for a couple of years now, ever since an interview with Sunflowers at E3 2004. It's finally made it to the North American market, and while it's a solid RTS, it's a little late to this particular party.

The problem with *ParaWorld* is that, to some extent, it's coming out at the wrong time. At a time when the RTS is moving towards becoming faster and faster, with minimal resource collection and an emphasis on immediate action, *ParaWorld* is a throwback. It asks you to gather materials, recruit soldiers, send out sorties, and settle in for a long haul. As a result, most of the seriously hardcore RTS gamers out there are going to feel like it's a step backwards.

I'm not a seriously hardcore RTS gamer, but in a way, that's why I like *ParaWorld*. Its big innovations aren't in the speed of its gameplay, but in how elegantly and effortlessly it allows you to manage your troops. It makes the micromanagement of your forces easier than any other RTS I've played, and it has an RPG-esque experience system to boot, allowing you to power up and heal your troops more or less at a whim.

Even better, it has dinosaurs. *ParaWorld* begins when three action scientists (an archeologist, biologist, and astronomer, all of whom apparently studied under Professor Indiana Jones) go to an organization called the SEAS for funding. They've discovered certain irregularities about the Earth that must be explored. The SEAS reacts by dropping them onto an isolated island for "training," which leads to all three scientists being teleported to an alternate dimension. Here, dinosaurs still walk the Earth, barbarian tribes are at constant war, and the scientists must battle all comers if they want to get back home.

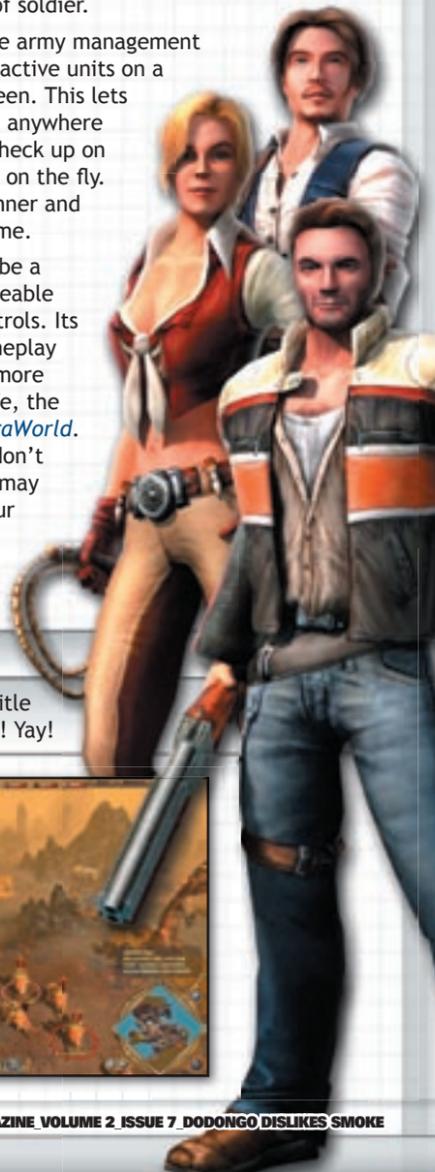
ParaWorld is, in short, a pulp-adventure RTS, complete with dinosaurs bred as siege weaponry. A player has a certain set number

of slots he can fill in his army, and each slot corresponds to a certain experience level. The focus in *ParaWorld* is less on zerg-rushing with a flood tide of smaller units, and more on developing and leveling up an elite squad of powerful warriors, with the three protagonists set up as specialized hero units, empowering and enhancing a certain type of soldier.

All of this is made easier by the army management system, which puts all of your active units on a grid on the left side of the screen. This lets you select all your troops from anywhere on the battlefield, as well as check up on their health and level them up on the fly. It's extremely helpful for beginner and intermediate RTS players like me.

ParaWorld, in short, seems to be a sort of starter RTS, with serviceable graphics and user-friendly controls. Its biggest problem is that its gameplay feels old by this point, so the more RTSes you've played in your life, the less likely you are to enjoy *ParaWorld*. If you're new to the genre or don't actually enjoy it, though, this may be the game that'll change your mind on the subject.

Rating : 4 of 5



2nd opinion by [Metalbolt](#) • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

An interesting mix of RTS and RPG, *Paraworld* is a throwback title done right, plus it has dinosaurs and really, really bright colors! Yay!



FULL METAL ALCHEMIST DUAL SYMPATHY



Publisher : Destineer Genre(s) : Licensed
 Developer : Namco Bandai Category : Gimmicky
 Release Date : 12/15/06 # of players : 1
 Rating : Teen



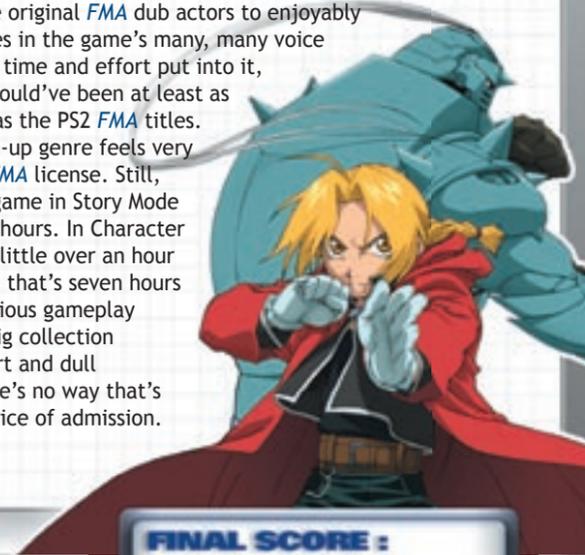
Full Metal Alchemist: Dual Sympathy is, for the most part, not actually a game. Most of the cart's memory seems devoted to "Bonus Mode," which is stuffed full of anime-related media files: screen caps, character designs and voice clips. Then there's the largely useless "character clock," and the fantastically bizarre "fortune-telling" function. In fortune-telling, you tap the touch screen to make *FMA* creator Hiromu Arakawa's cartoon cow avatar shake around a container of bamboo sticks. Then one of the *FMA* characters reads the virtual bamboo sticks for you and tells you, among other things, what your chances are of getting a scholarship. There's nothing like realizing that your favorite anime was originally just a merchandise shill for Japanese teenyboppers, huh?

The "game" part of *Dual Sympathy* is an incredibly primitive side-scrolling 2D beat-'em-up. "Incredibly primitive" specifically means "less sophisticated than *Double Dragon*." It's bad in an NES sort of way, right down to the terrible hit detection and infinite hitstun loops. In Story Mode, the game uses still art cut-scenes to roughly follow the plot of the TV series. You play as Ed in most levels, with Al as an Al sidekick you occasionally get to control directly. Mostly you flog the attack button until things die, but alchemy comes into the gameplay via the touch screen. Tap it to select the effect you want, and then once again to have Ed use it. You can generate rockblockers or character-specific effects like Ed's giant cannon or Roy's flame explosions. If you hold the stylus down, you can create a powered-up version of the effect. Simple touchscreen minigames break up the fighting levels, which usually end with fights against simple pattern bosses.

If you play the game in "Character Mode," you can use Izumi, Armstrong, Mustang, Scar, or Al as your main character instead of Ed. Izumi and Al get Ed as their "sidekick" and Scar gets Al, while Armstrong gets Hughes and Mustang gets Hawkeye. Character Mode may sound like a good source of replay value, but unfortunately, the only real differences between the various characters are their sidekicks and main attack combo animations. Every character can access every alchemy effect in the game, and can generate a rockblocker analogue. So, no matter who you're using, you progress through the levels and beat bosses using the same strategies you used as Ed.

The 2D sprites are attractive enough, and the basic level designs show some promise. Destineer really went all-out with the localization, getting all of the original *FMA* dub actors to enjoyably reprise their roles in the game's many, many voice clips. With more time and effort put into it, *Dual Sympathy* could've been at least as good of a game as the PS2 *FMA* titles. The 2D beat-'em-up genre feels very natural for the *FMA* license. Still, completing the game in Story Mode takes about two hours. In Character Mode, it takes a little over an hour at most. At best, that's seven hours of incredibly tedious gameplay appended to a big collection of low-res line art and dull minigames. There's no way that's worth the \$30 price of admission.

Rating : 2 of 5



2nd opinion by [Shoegazer](#) • Alternate Rating : 2 of 5

You already played this game sixteen years ago when it starred the Ninja Turtles, so only those with a predilection toward Edward and Alphonse need apply.



FINAL SCORE : 2 of 5

SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2007

Review by **4thletter**

Publisher : THQ
Developer : Yuke's Media Creations
Release Date : 11/14/2006
Rating : Teen (Blood, Language, Suggestive Themes, Violence)

Genre(s) : Wrestling
Category : World Wildlife Fund
of players : 1-6



The WWE Smackdown series has had entries across three console generations as of *WWE Smackdown vs RAW 2007*. You know how they say that certain things get better with age? Let's just say that *SvR 2007* is more orange juice than whiskey.

The fun begins as soon as you fire up a season. You are greeted with a shockingly ugly computer sitting on a desk. Next to it are a stack of lo-res magazines. What do you do? Where do you go from here? Who knows? Just guess! The game certainly gives you no hints. Here's a hint: you have to press a button to go back to the main season menu.

Things get somewhat better once you get into a match. The new right analog stick-based grappling system is an inventive and intuitive one. It can be a little confusing at first, but there are tutorial videos on the disc for you to watch. The Ultimate Control feature, where you can customize your attacks via a series of context-specific actions, is another good bit. You can slam or scrape your opponent's head against the cage until your character gets too tired to continue. You get big damage and bigger momentum for it, too. All of this is a welcome addition to gameplay that is otherwise completely stale.

Some of the combos have been in the series for ages, and non-headliners still tend to end up with generic movesets. The characters, many of whom have distinct or idiosyncratic styles, don't really reflect that variety in anything but their stances and finishers. A match with Rey Mysterio versus Shelton Benjamin should not be functionally identical to Big Show vs. Kane, and yet all the matches tend to boil down to the same kinds of grapples.

This isn't helped by the AI. On Normal, the AI can be a worthy challenge or a complete cheater, depending on your POV. On Easy, the AI's brain has been turned to "off." Characters will stand there and wait for you to hit them, and sometimes they'll even make it easy on you by turning their backs so that you can easily use a punishing attack.

SvR 2007 takes a couple steps forward, but lackluster presentation, iffy AI, and using the same basic gameplay system we've had since the beginning of the series really, really works against it. This feels like a *Smackdown* game. That used to be a great thing. Nowadays, it's more of a "Do you remember when...?"

Rating : 2.5 of 5

2nd opinion by **Lynxara** • Alternate Rating : 3.5 of 5

Everything 4L said about the stale gameplay and sloppy AI is still true on the 360, but its interface and graphics are so much better that it's not even funny.

FINAL SCORE : **3 of 5**



GENJI DAYS OF THE BLADE

Review by **Roger Danish**

Publisher : Sony
Developer : Game Republic
Release Date : 11/17/2006
Rating : Teen (Mild Language, Violence)

Genre(s) : Action
Category : Adventure
of players : 1



You may or may not remember the original PS2 *Genji: Dawn of the Samurai* (my bet is on the latter), which was met with lackluster sales at retail and garnered average reviews from the gaming press when it was released in September of 2005 (many of the complaints were due to its short gameplay experience — a paltry five-to-six hours, tops). Developed by Game Republic, a then new company led by Capcom executive Yoshiki Okamoto, the game was set in feudal Japan and loosely based on Japan's historic Genpei Wars of the 12th Century. Another possible reason the game did not do well was that it looked and played very similarly to Capcom's own *Onimusha* series, but lacked that something special which all top-tier Capcom games seem to possess. With Okamoto's track record (he's had his hand in many of Capcom's most popular franchises, including the *Street Fighter* and *Resident Evil* series), it was strange to see *Genji* as his first flagship title. Even stranger still is that there is a sequel and it's shipping for the launch of the PS3.

Genji: Days of the Blade chronicles the further adventures of young samurai Yoshitsune Minamoto and his efforts to stop the evil Heishi Clan from world domination. This time around, not only is he accompanied by his cudgel-wielding warrior-monk companion, Benkei Musashibo, two new playable characters join his side: the Tamayori Priestess Lady Shizuka, and God of War, Lord Buson — each possessing their own distinct weaponry and fighting styles.

In all reality, not much has changed from the PS2 original to the PS3 sequel. Obvious fixes, such as the game length (it's now double the original, clocking in around 15 hours) have been made, but the core engine remains the same. The combat is relatively untouched (although you can now swap weapons and characters

on the fly). You still enhance your weapons and characters using collected crystals. Combat is dominated by "Kamui," a mini-game of sorts where you follow onscreen, context-sensitive button presses to slow down time and attack multiple enemies. There are a few new features, which include large mass melee-style battles, riding on horseback, and much more detailed graphics, but at the end of the day, the gameplay still feels the same and doesn't equate to a true next gen experience. While there's really nothing wrong with this, *Genji* just feels like first-party filler until the next wave of PS3 titles begin to ship next year.

I'll sum up this review with the old stand-by: If you liked the original or are a fan of the genre, you won't necessarily be disappointed with *Genji: Days of the Blade*. It's got nice visuals and a decent amount of hack n' slash gameplay. However, if you're looking for a meaty PS3 showcase title, you'll need to look elsewhere.

Rating : 3 of 5

2nd opinion by **Zippy** • Alternate Rating : 2.5 of 5

While *Genji: Days of the Blade* looks good (even the giant crabs are chock full o' polys), the gameplay is average and derivative of the first. Hold out for *Heavenly Sword*.

FINAL SCORE : **2.75 of 5**



Excite Truck



Review by Shoegazer

Publisher : Nintendo
Developer : Monster Games, Inc.
Release Date : 11/19/2006
Rating : Everyone (Mild Violence)

Genre(s) : Racing
Category : Off Road
of players : 1-2



I have to admit that when Nintendo first proclaimed that it could bring the fun back to video gaming despite having a system only slightly more powerful than the GameCube, I was a bit skeptical. However, following its debut at E3, there would be no more doubt. Now that the Wii is finally here, games like *Excite Truck* will prove that you don't need \$600 to enjoy the future of gaming.

The beauty of *Excite Truck* is that it's as old-fashioned as they come. It's a straight-forward arcade racer in the spirit of *Super Off-Road*, except it's completely re-envisioned thanks to the innovative Wii remote. It's refreshing, actually, to play a game with this level of simplicity that relies on an old gameplay design, which makes the fun factor the most important ingredient.

Excite Truck is all about the gameplay and is a great introduction to the Wii remote's "classic mode," which means you'll hold the remote horizontally with both hands in front of you and tilt the remote back and forth to turn left and right. Your only other controls consist of an accelerator, brakes, and turbo, making it an instantly accessible pick-up-and-play game for anyone.

While it's true that the visual capabilities of the Wii are far behind those of the PS3 and Xbox 360, you'll be far too busy enjoying yourself for it to matter. *Excite Truck* is definitely not a game built with the most photorealistic car models ever designed, but they fit the style of the game perfectly. The track designs are



very interesting and there are multiple paths available to clear each race. By hitting environmental triggers scattered throughout the levels, parts of the track transform right before your eyes and provide a variety of benefits such as shortcuts, big air jumps, and booby traps to catch the other racers off guard. By completing special feats during a race such as big air, super drifting, and collisions, you are awarded stars. These stars determine the winner of the race, so finishing first doesn't necessarily guarantee a checkered flag. You'll have to be extreme to ensure victory.

There is quite a bit to do here in single-player mode such as unlocking new tracks and vehicles, but there is also fun to be had with the multiplayer option. It's not especially deep, and is limited to just two players, but is incredibly competitive, which will keep this game fresh long after you've completed the single-player mode. If only the multiplayer had featured a few more modes and options, this game would've scored a perfect 5 rating. I guess they had to leave something for next time, right?

If *Excite Truck* is just a taste of things to come for the Nintendo Wii, then I am a believer, and you will be too. It supports other Wii functions such as the remote's built-in speaker and the ability to use custom soundtracks via MP3s saved on a SD card, and this is just a launch title. Imagine where we'll be a year from now.

Rating : 4 of 5

2nd opinion by Roger Danish • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

It's fast, fun, and out of control – just the way I like my racing games. The Wii controller makes it a whole new experience and for that Nintendo, I applaud you.



Pocket Racers



Review by honestgamer

Publisher : Konami
Developer : Konami
Release Date : 11/14/2006
Rating : Everyone

Genre(s) : Racing
Category : Combat
of players : 1



Pocket Racers has a ridiculous premise that still should've made for some great gameplay. You are one of several partiers who were dancing the night away when a mysterious figure came in and shrunk you down to the size of a pea, then put you in a car only a little bit larger and told you to race for possession of your soul. Now you're racing against your fellow partiers for a chance to return things to normal. It should've worked and it should've been a great game. It just isn't.

The problems with *Pocket Racers* are as fundamental as its plot is weird. They boil down to horrible graphics, poorly designed courses and a control scheme that leaves you with sore thumbs. The three issues blend into a perfect mess, from the moment you start racing through bland environments that look like books, juice cans and random textures to the second you round a corner and realize you're completely out of line with the curve and go crashing into a dead end. You can return to the track with only a few seconds left if you simply press a button, but these situations arise more often than they should no matter how easily they are resolved. It's like the courses were intentionally designed to maximize frustration.

One might say the same about the controls, which leave you feeling like the vehicles have balloons for wheels. They float around corners and into obstacles or they drift toward the objects that will bring them to a dead halt. If you're not brushing up against invisible corners, you're often gliding right off the track. Even going over some of the ramps isn't the boost it should be, as your vehicle may start twisting in the air for reasons unknown and land in a crash.

In the unlikely event that you're running a good race, something that sometimes happens once you've played the same dull courses a few times, then you'll probably find yourself frozen from an opponent's attack, unable to steer clear as your truck glides into the very obstacle you worked so hard to avoid. This happens nearly every time you round the track.

To add insult to injury, part of your objective in the game is to collect the shards that will restore your soul. Once you have them, though, they can retroactively be taken from you if you finish last in a race (and you will). Sound fun? It isn't. Save your soul and skip this game.

Rating : 1 of 5



2nd opinion by Racewing • Alternate Rating : 2 of 5

Pocket Racers looks all right and seems robust... until you get to the actual driving, where it falls apart. Sad, really. I'd place this somewhere in between *Motor Kombatt* and *187: Ride or Die*.

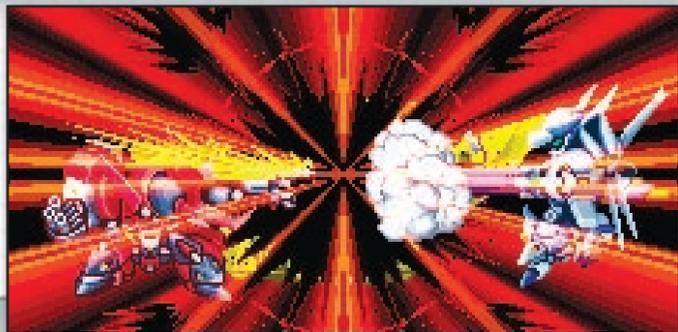
FINAL SCORE : 1.5 of 5





Review by Lynxara

Publisher : Atlus
Developer : Banpresto
Release Date : 11/24/06
Rating : Teen
Genre(s) : Strategy
Category : Insurgent Mecha Subculture
of players : 1



EXCELLEN: I'm doing it, aren't I?



Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation 2 is pretty much the same game as *Super Robot Taisen: Original Generation*, but massively upgraded and improved. The result is easily one of the ten best titles in the franchise, and definitely one of the best strategy games you can play on the Game Boy Advance. Where *SRTOG* suffered from being an older title, *SRTOG2* saw its Japanese release in early 2005. This results in immediately noticeable improvements in level design, interface design, and overall graphics.

The best improvements made in *OG2* are the enhanced combat engine changes and the addition of a more compelling post-game. There's an expanded selection of skills you can purchase for customizing your pilots, and the overpowered Support skill has been broken into separate Offense and Defense skills that must be acquired separately. The levels' designs are more robust and force you to make full use of the abilities at your disposal much earlier in the game. *OG2*'s difficulty curve is a smooth progression, which makes it very easy to play and enjoy the game at your own level of skill. Expert players will find gathering all of the Battle Mastery points on a first pass through the game an absorbing challenge, while beginners will find completing the game at all perfectly feasible.

As in *OG*, there's a bevy of secret units, weapons, and items to unlock by making sure certain events happen as you play, like getting so many kills for a given pilot or clearing a level in a certain way. Gathering them all is more interesting and challenging in *OG2*, and may require more than two complete passes of the game. You can also unlock extra difficulty modes after beating *OG2*, in addition to the option to simply play through again with extra money. While you

don't need to replay the game twice simply to follow the story as in *OG*, there are several points in the game where you have to choose between playing one of two different routes. This alters which pilots, units, and missions are available, and that in turn influences which secrets you can obtain. Between this and the new extra play modes, there's a lot more replay value in *OG2* than in the first *OG*.

OG2's major weakness is its storyline. *OG*'s plot was fairly genre-generic, but it provided a convenient way to let players get acquainted with the setting and characters. *OG2* doesn't bother with introductions, and instead settles for breathlessly hurling new characters, mechs, and villains into the aftermath of the first game's events. This isn't too bad, since a lot of the new characters and mechs are really enjoyable, and the localization is as sharp and witty as ever. Unfortunately, you still end up sitting through a lot of dull exposition as the plot slowly works at getting somewhere entertaining. *OG2* can seem needlessly dense and confusing even to a veteran of the first *OG*.

Weak story aside, *OG2* is still a superior strategy game experience. If you haven't played the first game, run out and grab it if you can. There's really no point to trying to play *OG2* if you haven't played *OG* yet. If you've already played and liked *OG*, you'll really regret it if you don't pick up *OG2*.

Rating : 4.5 of 5

2nd opinion by [honestgamer](#) • Alternate Rating : 4.5 of 5

If you can stand the walls of text between battles, the combat and customization options will make *SRTOG2* worth your while. It's slow-paced, deep and fun.

FINAL SCORE :
4.5 of 5



Review by KouAidou

Publisher : Atari
Developer : Obsidian Entertainment
Release Date : 10/31/06
Rating : Teen
Genre(s) : RPG
Category : Dungeons & Dragons
of players : 1

The computerized *Dungeons & Dragons* experience has come a long way since the era ofSSI's "Gold Box" games. Nevertheless, what people want from *D&D* hasn't changed, and *Neverwinter Nights 2* seeks to exploit that. The basics are the same as ever: create a character, then take him through a fantasy world.

Your characters are pretty customizable, with dozens of races and classes to choose from, and a number of different faces and hairstyles available by race (though height and build customization are mysteriously absent). If you don't know a whole lot about 3rd Edition rules, the game kindly includes a "Recommend" feature, which will choose your skills for you, while simple, comprehensive explanations of each ability's role are provided at all times for the more adventurous newbie.

Once you've made your character, it's time to enter the Forgotten Realms. Sadly, the single-player campaign that comes with the game is hopelessly generic; you're an adopted youth in a village, about to come of age (which is weird, since the 'youth' I made for the campaign was twenty-six), who ends up having to save the world when the village is attacked by monsters. The most interesting facets of the single-player game deal with the alignment system. As you go through the game, you'll pick up NPCs to join your party, and how cooperative they are depends on whether they're in sync with your alignment, which will change based on the in-game actions you take. The gameplay is a fairly complex point-and-click affair, but the pop-up window interface is very convenient (much moreso than it was in the original *NWN*), and the game thankfully allows you to pause during combat to think out your tactics.

Fortunately, the emphasis on *NWN2* is on creating your own campaigns with the built-in toolset and playing with friends, not the mediocre single-player game, but the most bothersome aspect of *NWN2*, both on- and off-line, is its almost ludicrous running requirements. Do not trust the minimums listed on the box: you'll want to make sure you have at very least a gig of memory and a powerful graphics card to back it up. Even with all the game's graphics settings at their lowest, mid-range computers will lag *NWN2* so badly as to be unplayable, while even top-of-the-line computers will suffer random screen lock-ups and slowdown during large battle scenes.

Maybe it's understandable that *NWN2* would be so glitchy, though. After all, it's simply enormous in its depth. *NWN2* offers the purest possible translation of the *Dungeons & Dragons 3.5* experience, with all the hugeness that implies. Assuming you have a powerful enough system to run it, *NWN2* opens up massive worlds of potential. Still, it's worth noting that while *NWN2* does its best to be accessible to casual gamers, the people who will get the most enjoyment out of it are those who will get into the insanely complex toolset and all the stat-munching goodness it provides. If all you're looking for is some fast role-playing fun with your buddies, there are many games out there that offer a much more immediately satisfying experience.

Rating : 3.5 of 5

2nd opinion by [Metalbolt](#) • Alternate Rating : 3.5 of 5

If you're into *D&D*, you'll surely enjoy *NWN2*. If you're not, and don't care for number crunching or what "Chaotic Neutral" means, you may want to look elsewhere.

FINAL SCORE :
3.5 of 5



WARHAMMER MARK OF CHAOS



Publisher : Namco Bandai
 Developer : Black Hole Games
 Release Date : 11/14/06
 Rating : Mature

Genre(s) : RTS
 Category : Tactical
 # of players : 1-6



I'm not sure I can remember the last time I played a strategy game as good as this. To put it bluntly, *Warhammer: Mark of Chaos* is freaking awesome!

Focusing solely on the tactics of war, base building is nonexistent, and because of this you are forced to succeed with a finite amount of troops. Terrain as well as unit formation and hero placement all play a major part in deciding whether you win or lose. There are many times when it is much safer to coax your enemy into battle, rather than charging uphill only to get decimated by long range troops who have taken good cover.



In between battles you are given the opportunity to manage your army because quite often, even when you conquer your enemy, you'll whimper out of battle with far too many dead and be forced to use precious resources to refresh your units. If you didn't lose too many units, you can use the gold you earned to upgrade their combat abilities by purchasing heavier armor, banners (to keep morale up) and even horse mounts for your hero units.

Speaking of hero units, they play an important part in *MoC*. As your army succeeds, they level up. Each level allows you to spend skill points, giving them better spells, passive troop enhancements, and duel abilities. Duel abilities come into play when the hero

from another army challenges your hero to a one-on-one fight on the battlefield. During this battle, no one can harm the two engaging heroes. The defeat of an enemy hero in a duel will cause enemy morale to take a severe drop.

When a unit type's numbers get low enough, or a hero's HP gets low enough, their morale will break. When this happens, they retreat and there is nothing you can do to stop them. They'll stop running when their morale returns, but this can take some time. This feature alone will force you to take heed when planning your attack. With hero units being so instrumental towards victory, if one of them runs away from the battle, you may have already lost.

Battles aren't just limited to conquering land masses. Many times you will have to defend or siege a castle. These are some of the toughest battles to be fought and if you are not careful the enemy's siege cannons alone will tear your army to pieces.

MoC is one of those games that never lets you feel like you've got one up on it. Every time you think you have the game licked, your overconfidence is likely to destroy you. With a hard focus on tactical warfare, and such tight AI, if you love strategy games you cannot pass this one up!

Rating : 5 of 5

2nd opinion by [KouAidou](#) • Alternate Rating : 4.5 of 5

Mark of Chaos is not only a shockingly accurate adaptation of the tabletop *Warhammer* game, but an extremely well-designed RTS in its own right. If you're a fan of either, give it a try.



Publisher : Sega
 Developer : Digital Eclipse
 Release Date : 11/7/2006
 Rating : Teen

Genre(s) : Retro Compilation
 Category : 68000 HEART ON FIRE
 # of players : 1-2

I was a Genesis kid. Back in 1989, I decided that I had enough of Nintendo's kiddie crap, and that it was time to graduate to the 16-bit manliness of *Altered Beast*. After finding a Genesis under the Christmas tree that year, I spent many months afterward convincing my friends that there would never be a better console than the Sega Genesis, and that they all needed to own one.



It's my deeply rooted love of all things Genesis that's to blame for my inability to enjoy *Sega Genesis Collection* as much as I should.

There's no denying that *Sega Genesis Collection* features a fantastic lineup. First-gen classics like *Golden Axe* and *Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle* coexist in harmony with forgotten gems like *Ristar* and *Shadow Dancer*. The first two *Sonic the Hedgehog* games (the best ones) are here as well, along with *Phantasy Star II, III, and IV*. There's even a whole load of unlockable extras to sweeten the deal, ranging from developer interviews to recreations of classic Sega arcade games like *Zaxxon* and *Future Spy*.

On the surface, this is an amazing compilation that holds both significant and sentimental value for gamers who spent their formative years playing Sega's 16-bit console. The thing is, *Sega*

Genesis Collection doesn't present these games as I remember them. Sure, they look and play fine, for the most part – the control setup of each game even comes pre-configured to make up for the difference in button layout – but the sound emulation comes up way short. *Altered Beast* sounds tinny and weak. *Sonic the Hedgehog* is missing several sound cues, and the ones that remain are scratchy and distorted. Some games fare better than others, but in many cases, *Sega Genesis Collection* features a variety of very noticeable problems related to sound emulation.

This is in sharp contrast to the collection's near-perfect simulation of background music, which appears to be streamed from the disc, rather than emulated. While this saves the music from being butchered like the sound effects, streaming results in the loss of subtle touches like fadeouts and tempo changes. Here's hoping you aren't expecting the music to speed up when Sonic collects a pair of speed shoes.

Griping on inaccuracies in sound emulation may seem like nitpicking, but providing accurate emulation in the first place should have been equally trivial. Considering that a number of freeware PC Genesis emulators have managed to emulate the Genesis's sound hardware perfectly, there's no reason why the paid team of programmers at Digital Eclipse shouldn't be able to do the same.

Regardless, *Sega Genesis Collection* remains an excellent compilation, thanks to the strength of its included games. The *Phantasy Star* series alone is worth twenty dollars, and if you can look past the glaring sound emulation issues, you'll likely have a lot of fun here. After outstanding efforts like *Sonic Mega Collection*, however, I've come to expect more from these compilations in terms of emulation accuracy.

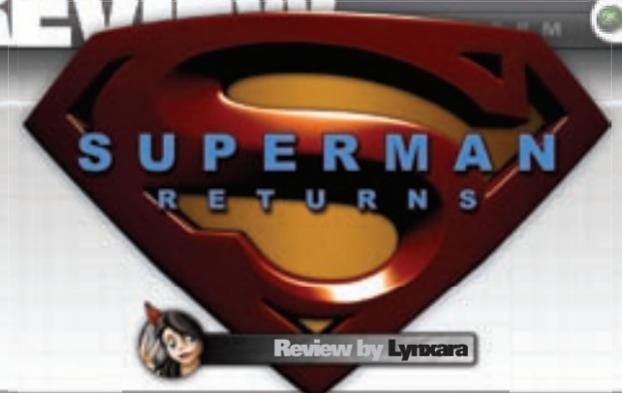
Rating : 3.5 of 5

2nd opinion by [Shoegazer](#) • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

Now *this* is what I expect from a \$20 collection of treasures! If only *Revenge of Shinobi* had been included, this trip down memory lane would've been perfect.



FINAL SCORE : **3.75** of 5



Publisher : Electronic Arts
 Developer : EA Tiburon
 Release Date : 11/24/2006
 Rating : Teen

Genre(s) : Open World
 Category : Truth, Justice, and All That Good Stuff
 # of players : 1



he's not punching bad guys, and enemies will rampage all over the huge Metropolis city map if left unchecked.

Superman Returns is not without its flaws, of course. The *GTA*-style camera system isn't quite up to handling Superman's high-speed movement, and interferes with the action more often than it should. Clipping errors are also frequent, especially when Superman picks up large objects, and you can't throw anything while clipping. The missions can be repetitive, as can the enemy types, and the main storyline is remarkably short. You can easily clear it in less than ten hours, and could possibly do it in less than five. This won't grant you all of the unlockables and bonus content, of course, but even at that you probably won't be playing this title much longer than a couple weeks at best.

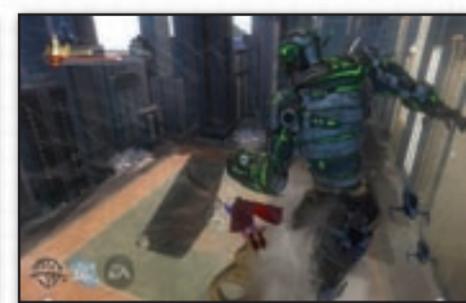
Normally a game with these flaws would get a lower score, but *Superman Returns* is still an amazing game and an amazing use of the license despite them. *Superman* video games have always been crappy because they never captured any of the feelings the character evokes; instead they were bad rip-offs of other games with the license awkwardly slapped on. *Superman Returns* not only captures the feeling of a Superman story, but it actually offers players the ability to identify with the character that only the very best takes on Superman have ever managed. Playing this game is like seeing the Christopher Reeve *Superman*, or reading Byrne's *Man of Steel* or a new issue of *All-Star Superman* for the first time. If you like any version of Superman at all, you must play this game.

Rating: 4 of 5

FINAL SCORE :
3.75 of 5

2nd opinion by [Shoegazer](#) • Alternate Rating : 3.5 of 5

Finally, someone gives Superman a game worthy of the license, thanks to some "inspiration" from the *Spider-Man* series. Best of all: no flying through rings missions!



RIDGE RACER 7

Review by Roger Danish

Publisher : Namco Bandai
 Developer : Namco
 Release Date : 11/17/2006
 Rating : Everyone (Mild Language, Mild Suggestive Themes)

Genre(s) : Racing
 Category : Arcade
 # of players : 1-2 (17 Online)

Ridge Racer, Namco's venerable arcade racing series, has been synonymous with the launch of every new PlayStation hardware since the very beginning, even the PSP. It's back now for the PS3 with *Ridge Racer 7*. Unless you're new to the whole gaming scene or have a severe distaste for racing games, you've most likely played a *RR* title and know what to expect. Most of the franchise's latest features have carried over from the last few incarnations (drift for nitrous boosts, unlocking manufacturers' cars as you progress, etc.), and Namco has thrown in a host of new features, which include heavy customization, a slipstream game mechanic, and a high-definition 1080p display mode to sweeten the racing pot.

I'm going to skip over *RR7*'s racing gameplay, as it really hasn't changed all that much since the series was introduced back in 1995. Learning how to successfully drift through tight curves and corners is still the key to coming in first place, and now you can also earn nitrous boosts via drifting (introduced with *Ridge Racers* for the PSP), which can give you a fighting chance or keep you in the pole position.

To borrow a few overused and clichéd car phrases, let's take a look at what's "under the hood" and see what's new with "this year's model" (go ahead and groan, it still won't stop me). The game now has a new career-style game mode called "Ridge State Grand Prix" where you choose a manufacturer and progress through the ranks by winning races to increase your fame. As you build yourself up, you earn credits, fame points, and manufacturer points that you can use to purchase, upgrade, and customize your vehicles. The customization is actually pretty deep, which gives you the power to make up to 375,000 visual changes to your vehicles, with an additional 7,000+ performance/tuning tweaks. These range from decals, body kits, spoilers, wheels, etc., to suspension, engine, nitrous, and more. Additionally, Namco has

packed in the highest number of cars and tracks in a *RR* title to date, with 40 different vehicles and 22 tracks. Finally, *Ridge Racer 7* has a decent online mode, which allows you to race against up to 13 other racers simultaneously. Unfortunately, we couldn't get up and running online before going to press, so we can only speak to what we've been told about online play. There are both single player and team-based racing modes, and gameplay is fast and lag-free.



Visually, *RR 7* looks clean and crisp, especially at 1080p. However, it seems a bit on the sterile side, with not much going on in the way of graphical touches or details that would make it stand out from *Ridge Racer 6* on the Xbox 360. The same goes for the audio, as you get the familiar techno beats and rearranged *RR* music that we've been hearing for the last umpteen years.

Is *Ridge Racer 7* worth a purchase? The quick answer is "yes," especially if you enjoy the series and don't mind a bit of familiarity with your racing. However, if you're looking for something even mildly different or a next generational breakout, you might want to wait for Sony's *Motorstorm* or look elsewhere, such as EA's *Need for Speed Carbon*.

Rating : 3.5 of 5

2nd opinion by [Zippy](#) • Alternate Rating : 3 of 5

Ridge Racer 7 is a solid launch title that doesn't tarnish the series, but isn't necessarily a next-generation leap either. Just know you'll be getting it for the traditional *RR* racing and you won't be disappointed.

FINAL SCORE :
3.25 of 5



RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN

Review by Roger Danish



Publisher : Sony
Developer : Insomniac Games
Release Date : 11/17/2006
Rating : Mature (Blood and Gore, Strong Language, Intense Violence)
Genre(s) : Action
Category : First Person Shooter
of players : 1-2 (up to 40 online)

I've heard some people erroneously say Insomniac's debut PS3 launch title is just *Medal of Honor* or *Call of Duty* with aliens. Sure, it's a first-person shooter with a military theme that happens to have aliens in it, but to discount it as just another average military-themed FPS would be doing it a huge disservice. To start, the fact that it's an original launch title (i.e. not a port or a sequel of an existing franchise) already gives it some serious clout in my book. Insomniac has done the impossible task of creating a next-generation title in a short amount of time that doesn't sacrifice much, if anything, in terms of features, quality, or gameplay. To this end, they've delivered both a solid single player experience with plenty of unique weapons, a wide variety of enemies, high production values, a fleshed out and intriguing storyline, and a robust, competitive multiplayer experience that features up to forty simultaneous players online.

For the uninitiated, *Resistance: Fall of Man* takes place in an alternate reality where World War II never happened. Instead, a dark and sinister alien race called the Chimera secretly invaded Russia and spread throughout Europe, eventually taking over the United Kingdom. You play as Sergeant Nathan Hale, a U.S. Army officer deployed to Britain to pick up a mysterious package from the British military. Things take a turn for the worse when your squad is wiped out, leaving you as the sole survivor. As Hale, you must band together with the Resistance and defeat the Chimera.

Insomniac, known for its *Ratchet & Clank* series, has always gone the extra mile to create unique and memorable gaming experiences. With *Resistance*, the team has once again hit its target dead on, delivering the "must-have" PS3 title for the holiday season. The list of features is quite long, and it includes real-time physics, environmental activity, fluid animation, superior AI, and,

of course, awesome weaponry. Fans of *R&C* know that it's all about the weapons, and Insomniac does not disappoint. Each of the weapons in the game's impressive arsenal (sixteen weapons in total) has some unique function that separates it from almost any other FPS around. Assault rifles, like the Bullseye, allow you to "tag" an enemy with a marker, then duck behind cover and fire homing bullets. The LAARK, a rocket launcher that shoots huge projectiles, allows you to freeze them the air and then use the barrel of the weapon to aim them at your targets off in the distance or even around corners. Even the sniper rifle has a cool secondary function that lets you temporarily slow down time for precision head shots. When you're finished the singleplayer game (which is twelve to fifteen hours' worth of gameplay), there are a handful of new weapons to unlock, Insomniac's trademark Skill Points to find, and plenty of online gaming to be had.

There is a lot more to the game than I have space to write about, but as you can probably tell, I thoroughly enjoyed my time with *Resistance: Fall of Man*. It's a solid FPS, it's a top-notch launch title, and it does not disappoint. Now bring me my PS3 *Ratchet & Clank!*

Rating: 5 of 5



FINAL SCORE : 4.75 of 5

2nd opinion by Zippy • Alternate Rating : 4.5 of 5

Impressive! Insomniac has created a solid and surprisingly detailed FPS launch title with few corners cut. Make this one of your top choice PS3 titles!



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Review by Wanderer

Publisher : Sega
Developer : Sonic Team
Release Date : 11/14/2006
Rating : Everyone
Genre(s) : Platformer
Category : Jane, Stop this Crazy Thiiiiiiiing—
of players : 1-2

Sonic Team has not traditionally had an easy time translating the Sonic games to the 3D realm. Fortunately for them, however, Sonic comes factory-standard with a manic fanbase. A new Sonic game could documentably cause bowel cancer in lab rats and the character's fans would still buy it.

That's good, because it's hard for me to see how any but the most maniacal Sonic fan (i.e. one Geson "Racewing" Hatchett, Esq., whose second opinion can be seen below) would have the patience to play the new *Sonic the Hedgehog*. It's genuinely entertaining and lacks some of the problems that plagued the last few 3D Sonic games, but it's also got serious camera issues, frequent glitches, and a steep learning curve.

The new *Sonic* is set in the country of Soleanna, where its Princess Elise is offering a humble prayer for the continuation of peace when Dr. Eggman shows up. He abducts Elise, despite the newly-arrived Sonic's best efforts, and Sonic sets out to rescue the princess. He'll be aided in this by his usual gang of suspects, such as Tails, Knuckles, and Amy; opposed in this by Shadow the Hedgehog and his posse; and occasionally attacked by the mysterious telekinetic hedgehog Silver, who has come from the future to stop Sonic, who he refers to as the Iblis Trigger.

You can play *Sonic* as Sonic, Shadow, or Silver, with occasional guest spots in each character's levels by their various sidekicks, and each character has different moves. Sonic plays as he always has; Shadow can use his more destructive moveset as well as a bunch of vehicles; and Silver is slower, but can use telekinesis to fly and throw objects and enemies around.

If you've played any of the past 3D *Sonic* games, you'll have a pretty good idea as to what to expect here. Sonic and company hurtle over vast chasms, run faster than the eye can follow, and

engage in some of the most visually stunning platforming action that any series at any time on any system has ever offered. *Sonic* kicks it up a notch with amazing graphics, making this more than ever before a game that you do not so much play, as hang onto for dear life.

The problem with *Sonic*, though, is that it may be a little too next-gen for its own good. Glitches abound, such as the camera veering off at weird times, characters simply disappearing, or a given action not having a reliable result; for example, Sonic's Light Dash special move may bring you safely to shore, or may throw you off in a random direction. There's no way of knowing what'll happen until you try it.

More to the point, Sonic has gotten even faster than before. He controls under ordinary circumstances like most game heroes do when they've gotten a speed power-up, which makes what should be simple tasks much more complicated than they have to be. Moving over to pick up a ring that's ten scale feet away usually takes a few tries, it's really easy to overshoot even the simplest jumps, and you're often moving faster than the camera is equipped to handle.

When *Sonic the Hedgehog* is good, it's really good, but when it's bad, it's incredibly annoying to play. Die-hard Sonic fans should be happy with this, but the more casual gamer should probably stay far away.

Rating: 3 of 5



2nd opinion by Geson "Racewing" Hatchett, Esq. • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

It's by far the glitchiest 3D Sonic... yet it's also the best? Sonic Team, you so crazy. More, please!

FINAL SCORE : 3.5 of 5



Grand Theft Auto Vice City Stories

Review by Racewing

Publisher : Rockstar Games
Developer : Rockstar Leeds
Release Date : 10/31/2006
Rating : Mature (Blood and Gore, Intense Violence, Strong Language, Strong Sexual Content, Use of Drugs)
Genre(s) : Action
Category : Let's Do The Time Warp Again!
of players : 1-6 (ad hoc only)



Last year, *Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories* received praise on its technical merits. It was a testament to the power of the PSP: a full-fledged *GTA* on a portable console! Sure, the camera was wonky, the targeting system wasn't up to snuff, and the PSP's control system did its best to suck all of the fun out of the game, but hey! It was a new *GTA*, and you could take it wherever you went!

Vice City Stories tries to repeat history; unfortunately, in the face of the better-playing PS2 port of *LCS*, this second *GTA* on the PSP fails to be all that impressive.

Almost every single gripe people had with the PSP version of *LCS* returns, despite some small attempts at smoothing things over. You'll find yourself continually forcing yourself to get used to the game's hiccups, and every time you're introduced to a new one, you'll want to toss your PSP across the room.

For every piece of witty, amusing writing, there was a stretch of tedium where I had to drive someone from one part of the city to another with the PSP's horribly imprecise analog nub. For every minute where I got to take part in a bullet-filled car chase with "Rock You Like A Hurricane" blaring on my radio, I underwent another minute of getting stuck on environment and scenery textures as I attempted to maneuver a slow, unwieldy forklift amongst a maze of a warehouse. Don't even ask me about what happens when trying to engage in a close-quarters brawl or firefight.

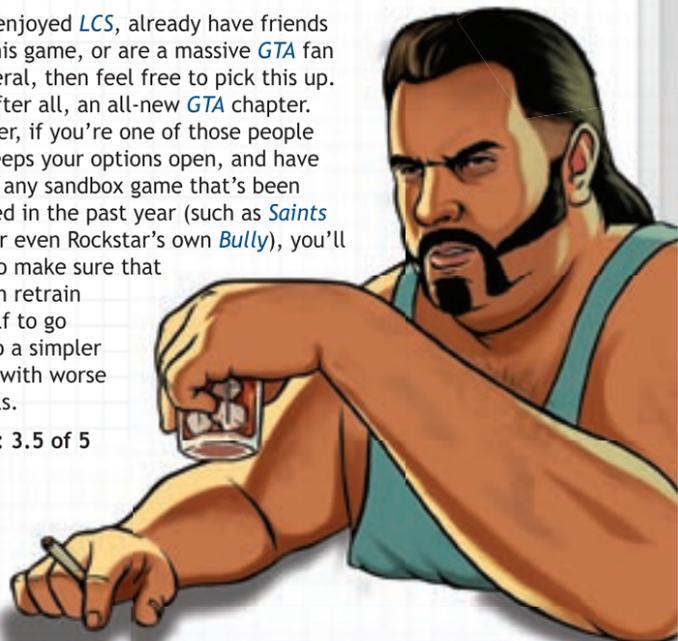
At this point, *GTA IV* can't come fast enough. Rockstar's been using the same engine for far too long. It's like watching an old man trying to do trapeze. The control mishaps brought about by the PSP hardware have not been diminished in any way. It doesn't help that if you've been playing *GTA* for a while, you pretty much know how it "goes" by now. Sure, there are a few "new" features added

(swimming, aerial and water vehicles, a tank, etc.), but on the whole, there's little surprise to be had.

On the plus side, *VCS* comes with ten multiplayer minigames (ad-hoc only, sadly) which can prove to be more fun than the actual game, since their gameplay is concentrated into a single objective and a limited set of tactics. Still, get ready to fuss with the PSP here as well. There's no getting around the system's limitations at this point.

If you enjoyed *LCS*, already have friends with this game, or are a massive *GTA* fan in general, then feel free to pick this up. It is, after all, an all-new *GTA* chapter. However, if you're one of those people who keeps your options open, and have played any sandbox game that's been released in the past year (such as *Saints Row*, or even Rockstar's own *Bully*), you'll want to make sure that you can retrain yourself to go back to a simpler time... with worse controls.

Rating: 3.5 of 5



2nd opinion by 4thletter • Alternate Rating : 3 of 5

Racewing is right. The *GTA* series is showing its age. *VCS* is good, but it could use a little spice. It's got an awesome soundtrack, however, as usual.



Touch Detective is not only a kind of game that I thought was dead, but is something I'd never thought I'd see on the DS. It's a point-and-click adventure game, with a little bit of the modern adventure sensibility (which is to say, *talking a lot*) thrown in for spice. (Lynxara informs me that point-and-click is alive and well in Japan, but DOA here. You are now informed.)

It's a G-rated Jhonen Vasquez comic as filtered through Roberta Williams, and while it's both apocalyptically short and contains more than one puzzle that requires you to have a cheat sheet or a telepathic link with the game's developers, it's a solid adventure game nonetheless. It is, however, also meant for younger children, so you may want to have a child – preferably a girl – to hand the game off to in the event you don't like it.

Following the tragic death of her father, Mackenzie has inherited a detective agency. Fortunately, she happens to be friends with a ditzy but otherwise pleasant rich girl named Penelope, whose travails form the basis for all four of the cases that *Touch Detective* revolves around.



Solving Penelope's problems involves going out into the world – a surreal 2D environment populated by animal-people, the occasional zombie, and all manner of other strange creatures – and doing a lot of interviewing. Unlike other



2nd opinion by Jeremy • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

I found *Touch Detective* to be a witty, if incredibly slow-paced adventure. Only play it if you know you'll have at least an hour to devote to it at a time, and then prepare to embrace the bizarre characters and plots.

TOUCH DETECTIVE



Review by Wanderer

Publisher : Atlas
Developer : Beeworks
Release Date : 10/24/2006
Rating : Everyone
Genre(s) : Adventure
Category : Crack-Fueled Whodunit
of players : 1

adventure games in the recent Talky McTalksalot incarnation of the genre – and here, I cast a vaguely disapproving eye in the direction of *Dreamfall* and *Syberia* – it combines its vast amount of dialogue with some solid puzzling, asking you to figure out what on Earth you can do with the strange contents of your inventory to further Mackenzie's investigation.

As noted above, this occasionally leads to insane puzzles that boil down to just using everything you have on everything and everyone you can find until some kind of solid goal is reached. Most adventure games err by leading you by the hand through their puzzles, or having NPCs feed you all the answers; *Touch Detective* arguably goes too far in the other direction, forcing you to experiment at length or go searching for a FAQ. This would appear to be an attempt to add length to the game, as if you were forced to play it without any sort of hint guide, *Touch Detective* would last twenty hours or more. With a hint guide, you could be done with the game in two hours.

With these caveats, and the additional point that the localization is not quite up to Atlas's usual standards, I can recommend *Touch Detective* to certain people. Adventure gamers will love it for its retro-ish gameplay, and it's a completely safe game to buy for any young, literate child. It may be too slow-paced or unintuitive for older players, though.

Rating : 4 of 5

FINAL SCORE :

4 of 5





KLONOA

Door To Phantomile

HALF GHOST, HALF TONGUE.
100% INFLATABLE.



BULBOUS AND HOLY



EVEN ON RAILS, 3D ENVIRONMENTS ARE SKILLFULLY
APPLIED IN LEVEL DESIGN



WOAH, CALM DOWN THERE, TUFFY!

In the land of Phantomile, in the village of Breezegale, dwelt a young boy named Klonoa. He was a large-eared dog/cat thing, but seeing as Phantomile was one of those worlds where no two intelligent races look the same, nobody really noticed. He lived with his grandfather and played the days away with his friend Huepow, a ball-shaped spirit who lived in a large ring that Klonoa found in the forest. One day Klonoa dreamed of an explosion on the hill outside of town, and the darkness that spread across the land because of it. And the next morning, things started to go wrong.

but they twist around to connect in unexpected ways in the 3D space. The possibilities of the 2.5D platformer were never fully explored before the genre was forgotten, but *Klonoa* is a good indicator of where things might have gone. Up mountains with paths curving around to end up on top of each other, through towers on both the out- and inside, and of course into multiple cave systems. Although the settings have been seen more than a few times in other platformers, the level design makes even the most cliché areas worth exploring.



KLONOA CAN FLOAT USING HIS BIG,
FLOPPY EARS

Each level has a story segment attached to it, and Klonoa is usually given good reason to traipse through the areas beyond a transparent "need more levels to make the game bigger" rationale. Ghadius and his henchman Joker have kidnapped the diva Lephise, and plan to imprison her in the darkness so her song of rebirth can't revive the world. While not to be confused with Shakespeare,

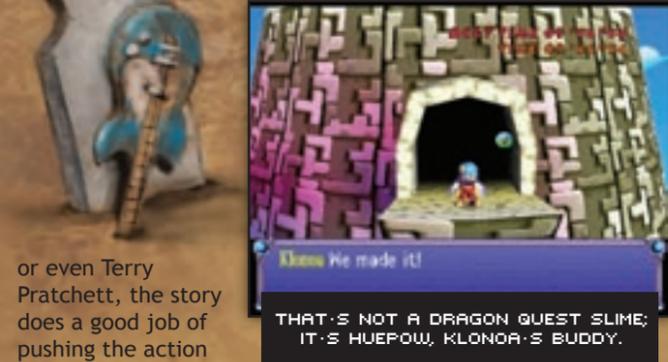


THE CUTEST CAT... RABBIT... DOG... THING YOU'RE
LIKELY TO MEET!

Only one thing for it, then. It's time to run, jump, grab, and throw things across a dozen levels' worth of 2.5D platforming heaven. *Klonoa: Door to Phantomile* is one of the most creative games in the small sub-genre of platformers that have their feet in the realms of both 2D and 3D design. Movement is confined to set paths,

Platform: PlayStation
Publisher: Namco
Developer: Namco
Release Date: 1997
Genre: Platformer/adventure
of Players: 1

Exhumed by James



THAT'S NOT A DRAGON QUEST SLIME;
IT'S HUEPOW, KLONOA'S BUDDY.

or even Terry Pratchett, the story does a good job of pushing the action along and keeping Klonoa motivated. Comedy and tragedy are there in equal measure, and the ending will stay with you long after any of the tricky jumping puzzles have been forgotten.

Another thing that sets *Klonoa* apart from the platforming herd is the Wind Bullet attack. The ring Huepow lives in shoots out a force that inflates enemies, then brings them back so



PUZZLE ELEMENTS MAKE THIS PLAT-
FORMER UNIQUELY SATISFYING

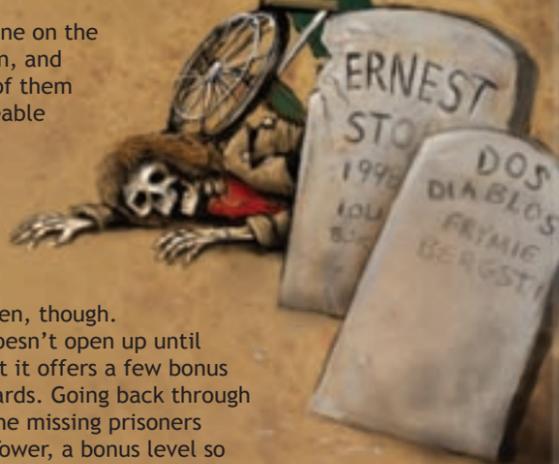
Klonoa can grab hold. The helpless ballooned-up creatures can then be tossed around for various effects such as activating switches, killing other enemies, or gaining extra height in a jump. It's all very simple until a cliff needs to be scaled by grabbing and throwing four enemies in a row, with a single miss meaning a plummet back to the base. The Wind Bullet only shoots out a few feet, and its vertical area of effect is tiny, so without careful aim it's easy to shoot the gap between two hovering critters rather than nailing either of them. The reload time on the shot is only a second, but that's still plenty of time to screw up a tricky section. Fortunately, the really brutal parts are saved for the post-game bonus area.

Getting there won't be easy, though. While twelve side-scrolling levels doesn't sound like much, they're fairly intricate affairs. Each level has the usual switches to throw, puzzles to solve, loads of enemies, and even six prisoners to rescue. One of the many nice touches that make up the game is that freed

prisoners play a tune on the end-of-level screen, and missing even one of them makes for a noticeable difference in the music. Clearing up the missing guys will have to wait until the main game is beaten, though. The level select doesn't open up until the post-game, but it offers a few bonus goals to work towards. Going back through the levels to get the missing prisoners opens up Balue's Tower, a bonus level so evil that certain sections have ten extra lives in front of them and it still doesn't end up being enough. There's also a score challenge for the truly masochistic, with the goal being to get all 150 gems in each level. It's a nice addition for the perfectionists, but little more than a curiosity to anyone else. Snagging all 150 gems is much tougher than it looks, and doing it on more than a few levels would take a scary level of obsession.

While *Klonoa* is one of the great platform games, it's not totally faultless. *Klonoa's* controls are pretty good, but the little skid he does when he stops running makes it too easy to slide into enemies or off ledges, leading to cheap hits or instant death depending on circumstance. The sprite graphics are also a bit chunky, even by PS1 standards, with Klonoa, his enemies, and his allies turning into a Lego block affair when the camera pans in. It can be jarring to see the well-textured 3D part of the game looking sharp while a low-res sprite stands on top, exposing its giant pixels to the world. On the plus side, most of the 2D creatures have a decent amount of animation and move relatively smoothly. It's usually only in the cut-scenes, with their fancy close-ups and camerawork, where sprites end up being so much brickwork.

Still, the perfect game has yet to be made and these are forgivable (if slightly aggravating) sins. What makes *Klonoa* special is the way story, level design, and a classic fairy tale theme come together to make a game that's more than just another excuse to run and jump for a few hours. While it's gotten scarce over the years, and commands a slightly hefty price tag when it appears, *Klonoa* is absolutely worth tracking down for anyone who's ever enjoyed a good round of platforming.



COSPLAY FROM TGS



by Metalbolt

Here's some Cosplay from the **Tokyo Game Show**, brought to you by Mr. Danish. We love it when we get to bring you something from Japan. The problem is, though, that we can't seem to figure out who half of these fine people are cosplaying! So we call out to you, our Hardcore readers. Help us out and nab yourself some points towards our swag at HardcoreGamer.com. You've got three weeks from the time this issue hits stands. The first person to identify everyone gets **250 points**. If no one can do that, whoever is the first to name the most gets the points! Happy hunting!



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

Cos-play (kos-plä)
v. A combination of the words costume and play. People known as "cosplayers" dress up as their favorite characters from anime, movies, and video games.

Photos by: **Roger Danish**

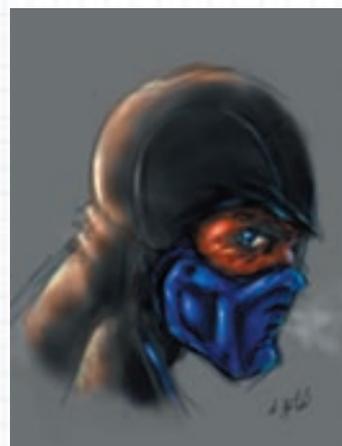


POLITICIANS CONSIDER VIDEO GAMES TO BE AS DANGEROUS AS GUNS AND NARCOTICS. AND THEY'RE SPENDING \$90 MILLION TO PROVE IT.

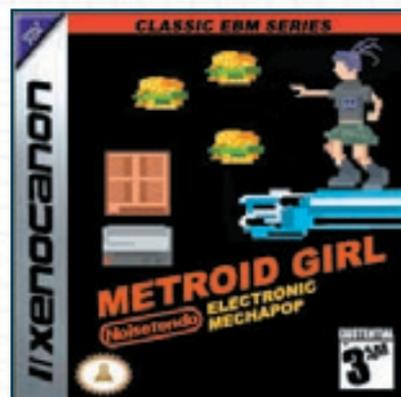


Fan art is all about giving exposure to aspiring artists who might not otherwise have a way to get their artsie parts seen. If you are one such artist, point your web browser toward www.hardcoregamer.com and check out the Fan Art section of our message boards. That is where you can post your arts to get them considered for this section. You may also email submissions to fart@hardcoregamer.com.

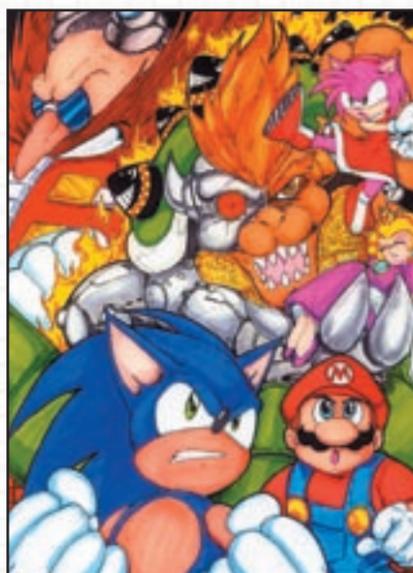
A few things to keep in mind: There is no deadline for submissions because we'll be doing this every issue. Keep it video game related, please. Only post drawings which you drew yourself. Don't expect drawings of nekkid people or any adults-only type stuff to make the cut. Keep it rated "Teen" or below. You are the copyright owner of your artwork as soon as your draw it whether you make note of that fact or not. However, in submitting your artwork to us, you give us permission to reprint your art and make fun of it if necessary.



Title : Mr. Sub I kick ass like no one's buisness Zero
Artist : Edward J. Chua
Age : 23
Location : Cerritos, CA



Title : Xenocanon: Metroid Girl
Artist : Cory You
Age : 28
Location : Sacramento, CA



Title : S&M Team-Up
Artist : Adrian Gutierrez
Age : 33
Location : Lubbock, TX



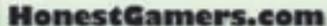
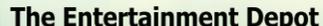
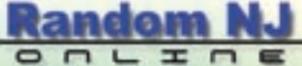
Title : My DQ Hero
Artist : Javier Bravo
Age : ??
Location : Fontana, CA



Title : Samurai Kirby
Artist : Leroy Kosaka
Age : 20
Location : Hagatna, Guam

Join us!

Support us and our affiliates with your patronage.

 WorthPlaying www.WorthPlaying.com	 PRIMA GAMES www.PrimaGames.com	 VG PUB www.VGPub.com	 Gamephiles www.Gamephiles.com
 GOOD DEAL GAMES www.GoodDealGames.com	 CGNO www.cgno.com	 HonestGamers.com www.HonestGamers.com	 The Entertainment Depot www.EntDepot.com
 RONHACK www.jeffsromhack.com	 GOTNEXT www.Got-Next.com	 GameSegment.com Cheat Sheets for Gamers www.GameSegment.com	 Fighting Fanatic www.FightingFanatic.com
 studioSFO www.studioSFO.com	 PLAY-ASIA www.Play-Asia.com	 HARDCORE GAMING 101 hg101.classicgaming.gamespy.com	 UDGL UNIVERSITY GAMING LEAGUE www.udgl.org
 www.armoredcoreonline.com	 WG WORLD www.wgworld.com	 GAMINGBITS www.gamingbits.com	 Defunct games www.defunctgames.com
 Random NJ ONLINE www.randomnj.com	 MARVEL-OUS www.marvel-ous.com	 AGZ Adrenaline Gaming Zone www.agzonline.com	 VIDEO GAME VAULT www.videogamevault.com

Want your logo here? Join the Hardcore Gamer Magazine affiliation program today! It's simple! All you have to do is host the online version of Hardcore Gamer Magazine on your web site and you're in. It's that easy! Send an email to affiliates@hardcoregamer.com to sign up today.



©Wolfie



©Mads



Every pack of Magic: The Gathering®
Comes With 15 Cards.
And Endless Possibilities.

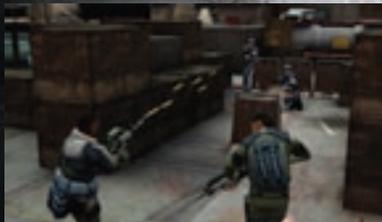
When you open a pack of Magic, you're opening a world of options that go far beyond a mere game. You hold the keys to a community of players just like you. The ticket to play in tournaments in town and around the world. And the chance to grab your share of over \$3 million in cash and prizes, handed out every year. Find out what over 6 million Magic players already know: It's one game with many opportunities.

Download a demo at
playmagic.com

MAGIC
 The Gathering®
 TRADING CARD GAME

EVIL KNOWS NO BOUNDARIES

THE HELGHAST ARE BACK



And they're taking hostages. Set out on an impossible mission to save them. Use the terrain to your advantage, as you navigate the battlefield from a new third-person perspective. The Killzone war rages on. Exclusively for the PlayStation® Portable.

KILLZONE™
LIBERATION
KILLZONE.COM



Killzone™: Liberation ©2006 Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. Developed by Guerrilla. Killzone is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment Europe. All rights reserved. Internet connection and Memory Stick Duo™ may be required. Player responsible for Wi-Fi fees. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc.

Love games?



HARDCORE
GAMER
MAGAZINE

Us too! In fact, we were going to call the magazine "We really like games allot, monthly," but that was kinda dumb. Plus, it's supposed to be "a lot," not allot. Anyway, if you love games like us, then you should subscribe and get this thing stuffed into your mailbox every so often. You can fill out this card and drop it in a mailbox and we'll start sending your issues and bill you later or just get on the horn and order at **800-478-1132**. You could also do it online at **www.sub2hgm.com**.

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

for only
\$24.95
12 issues

new games • old games • console games • arcade games • pc games • portable games • game stuff