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P3Zine

Issue 9 | December 2007

Free Magazine For PlayStation 3 Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...

CONDEMNED 2
THE EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW



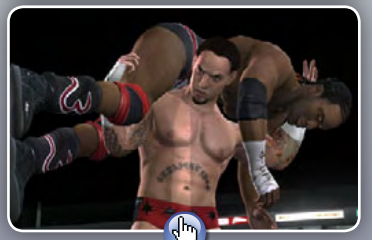
MASSIVE REVIEW
CALL OF DUTY 4 MODERN WARFARE
It's the best game of 2007 bar none



REVIEW
Ratchet & Clank
Graphical greatness

FIRST REVIEW
Assassin's Creed
Stealthy goodness

PLUS...



WWE SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2008
Spandex at the ready



TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND
Ollie ollie ollie



GUITAR HERO 3
Axe grinding good fun

Welcome to P3Zine



As you'd expect in the run up to Christmas new titles aren't exactly thin on the ground this month, but thankfully it's not all about quantity. The sheer quality of the games gunning for your attention this issue is beyond doubt: Call of Duty 4 Modern Warfare leads the ensemble with staggering aplomb. It's a rare accolade for any game to score so highly - read the review and then buy the game.

We also have old favourites Ratchet & Clank back in action, the much anticipated Assassin's Creed, WWE SmackDown vs RAW 2008, Guitar Hero 3, and Tony Hawk's Proving Ground.

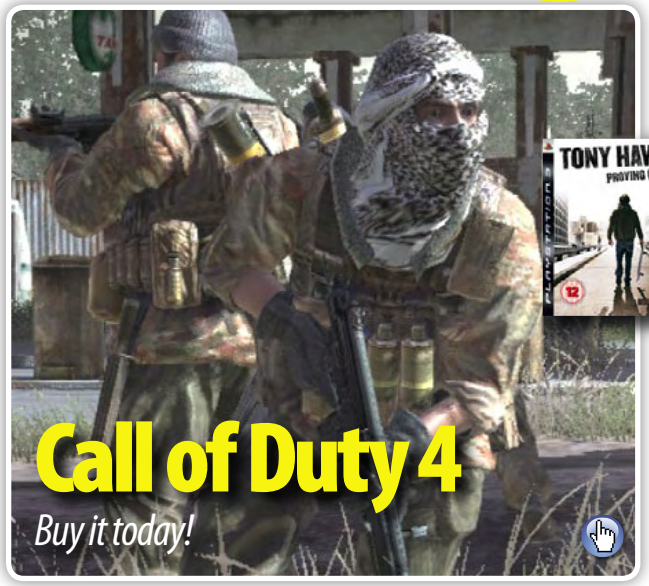
Looking ahead slightly we have the latest lowdown on Gran Turismo 5, Rock Band and Soldier of Fortune, along with an interview with Condemned 2's Monolith Productions. Enjoy the issue...

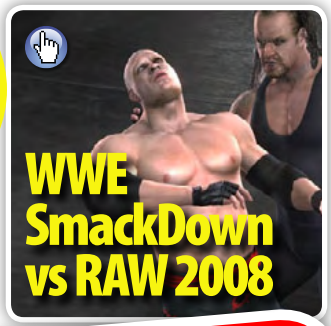
Dan Hutchinson, Editor
p3zine@gamerzines.com

MAGAZINE FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of the magazine.

DON'T MISS!
This month's highlights...

The latest & greatest titles on PS3





WIN! *Tony Hawk's Proving Ground up for grabs*



QUICK FINDER
Every game's just a click away

Soldier of Fortune
Lost Planet
Sega Superstars Tennis
Battle Field Valkyrie
Railfan Taiwan
Bionic Commando
Street Fighter IV
Dark Void
Rock Band
Gran Turismo 5
Condemned 2
Call of Duty 4
Ratchet & Clank
Assassin's Creed
WWE SmackDown vs
RAW 2008
Tony Hawk's Proving Ground
Guitar Hero 3



PLUS! *The latest blu-ray flicks reviewed...*





DON'T MISS ISSUE 10 SUBSCRIBE FOR FREE!

WARNING! MULTIMEDIA DISABLED!

If you are reading this, then you didn't choose "Play" when Adobe Reader asked you about multimedia when you opened the magazine.

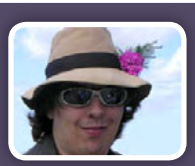
Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.

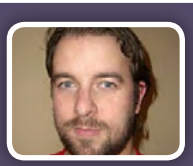
MEET THE TEAM
There's nowt they don't know about PlayStation



Richard Melville
Mr Melville has been catching up with PlayStation Network



Ian Morris
Ian sat down with Condemned 2's Monolith Productions



Chris Schilling
Busy, busy, busy, Chris has checked Assassin's Creed



Lee Hart
Call of Duty 4. 'Nuff said.

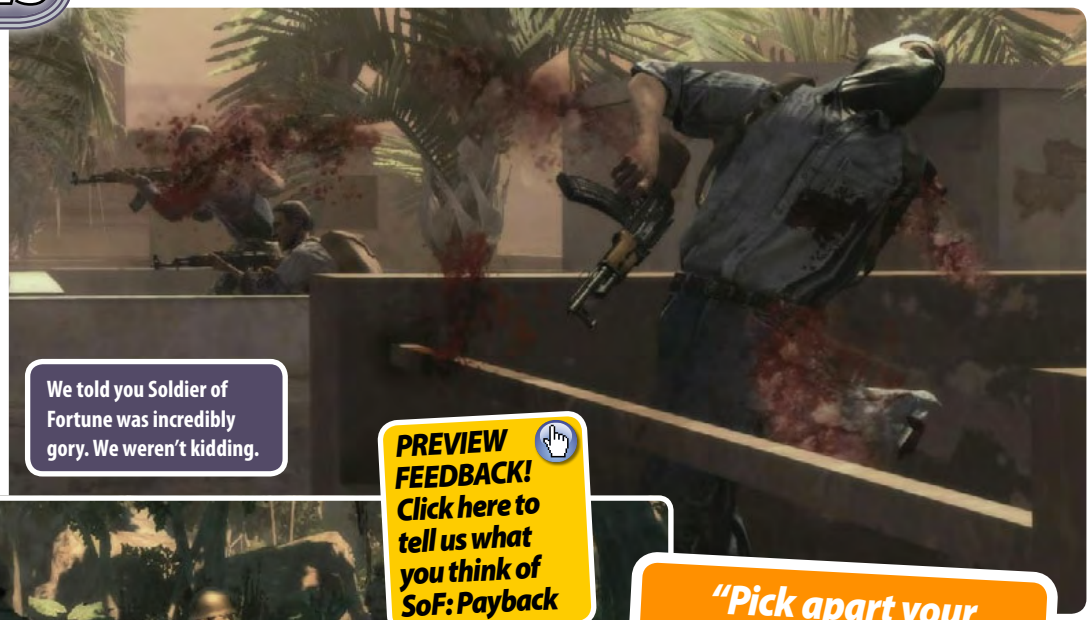
SOLDIER OF FORTUNE PAYBACK

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Cauldron HQ
Heritage: Conan : The Dark Axe, The History Channel : Civil War
Link: http://www.sofpayback.com/
ETA: December

Soldier of Fortune: Payback

FIRST LOOK

Blood and guts a-go-go



We told you Soldier of Fortune was incredibly gory. We weren't kidding.

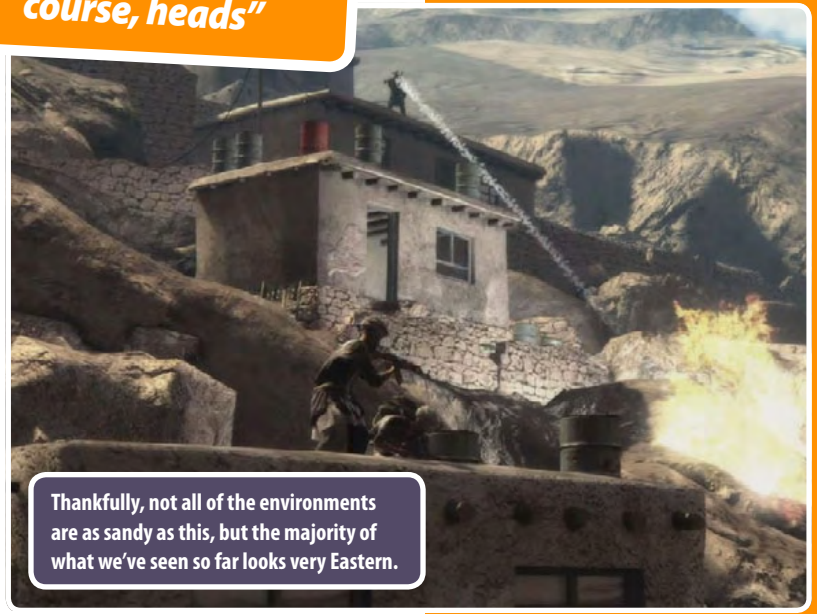
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of SoF: Payback



Graphically, the game looks luscious. At least, until the blood starts flowing.

"Pick apart your enemies like rag dolls, shooting off their arms, legs, feet, or, of course, heads"





Thankfully, not all of the environments are as sandy as this, but the majority of what we've seen so far looks very Eastern.

What is it?

The sequel to the game of the same name from seven years ago, Soldier of Fortune: Payback promises to continue the super-gory heritage of its predecessor. That means more over the top decapitations, more blood spurting from your enemies' wounds, and more visceral dismembering of human beings than you can shake an "outraged" Daily Mail at.

What's the story?

You play as a mercenary-for-hire, working for a mysterious organisation known only as "The Shop". Sent into a number of real-world locations, where only the baddest, nastiest and grittiest criminals live, it's up to you to battle a mysterious enemy that knows no limits, and show them the error of their ways in the only way that'll make them listen - by making them stare down the barrel of your sawn-off shotgun.

Anything else to declare?

The most impressive thing about Soldier of Fortune: Payback is its damage engine. Letting you pick apart your enemies like rag dolls, shooting off their arms, legs, feet, or, of course, heads as you see please, it's exactly the sort of game you don't want your Gran to see you playing, and is guaranteed a shiny red 18 certificate when it's released towards the end of this year. You thought Manhunt 2 was bad? You ain't seen nothing yet.

TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND

Coming November 2nd

Every skater has a story. Create yours.

In Tony Hawk's Proving Ground you choose the skills to learn, the skate style you'll show, and how your story unfolds. Go effortlessly from single player to online multiplayer as you turn the whole world into your own personal skatepark. With the full-feature editor, you can record and edit videos of your greatest, most amazing moves in all their epic glory.









Will you try to invent a new trick or make your rep as a skatepark designer

Use the full-feature video editor to truly tell your story

Pick the skate moves you want to master to show your own style



12

PLAYSTATION 3 XBOX 360 LIVE NINTENDO DS Wii

ACTIVISION.

activision.com

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NEVERSOFT

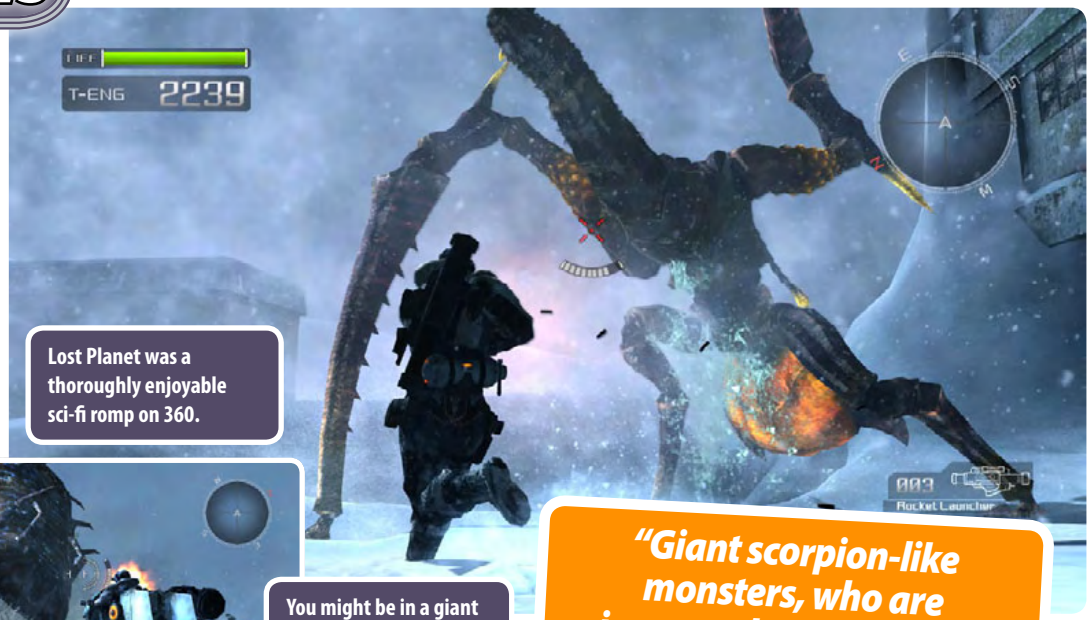
SEARCH P3Zine PRINT THIS PAGE ZOOM IN ZOOM OUT TOGGLE FULL SCREEN VIEW PREVIOUS PAGE NEXT PAGE

FIRST LOOK

Lost Planet : Extreme Condition

Baby, it's cold outside.

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Heritage: Devil May Cry, Resident Evil
Link: http://www.lostplanet-thegame.com/
ETA: Spring 2008



Lost Planet was a thoroughly enjoyable sci-fi romp on 360.



You might be in a giant mech, but we wouldn't fancy your chances against this thing.

"Giant scorpion-like monsters, who are immensely satisfying to melt with a chaingun"





This is Wayne, the inventively named hero of Lost Planet. Here, we think his Dad's just been eaten by an Akrid. Wayne needs a hug.

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Lost Planet

What is it?

Despite getting the cold shoulder from a few journalists upon its initial release, Lost Planet wasn't given quite as frosty a reception by the public, as the 360 edition went on to sell over a million copies. With numerous dollar signs rolling round in their eyes, Capcom executives announced at a recent Gamers' Day event that Lost Planet will be making its way to PS3, after seeing release on 360 and PC.

What's the story?

Lost Planet, as you may have guessed by the screens surrounding this page, is set on an icy planet in an alternative universe. The plot revolves around a war between humans, and an alien race called the Akrid, which are giant scorpion-like monsters, who are immensely satisfying to melt with a chaingun. Good job for you then, that there are plenty of chainguns lying around - none moreso than in your VS, or Vital Suit, a giant mechanised robot thingy that you can drive around the planet.

Do we get anything new?

You betcha. To start with, all the extra downloadable maps that 360 gamers have had to pay extra for, we'll get bundled in for free. In addition, there are also three new playable characters - Mega Man, Frank (Dead Rising's affluent photojournalist), and Jo, who's from Lost Planet. Whether the PS3 will get additional downloadable content on top of the 360 stuff remains to be seen.

When anyone can play, everyone can play.







Spend quality time together with friends and family through fun and social games. And with over 300 games available by this Christmas, there's something for everyone.

Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE

SEARCH P3Zine PRINT THIS PAGE ZOOM IN ZOOM OUT TOGGLE FULL SCREEN VIEW PREVIOUS PAGE NEXT PAGE

INCOMING

More PlayStation loveliness coming our way...

New PS2

Publisher: SCEE
ETA: February



Not content with having sold an enormous 120 million units worldwide, Sony have seen fit to announce a brand new, slimmer PS2, with all the same features as its bigger brother for the equivalent of £67. Whether it'll be called the PS2 "super-slim", or PS2 "Keira Knightley Edition" remains to be seen, but the anorexic new unit should be on our shelves in early 2008.

SEGA Superstars Tennis

Publisher: SEGA | **ETA:** February

It seems anything Mario can do, Sonic can do better this month, as SEGA announce SEGA Superstars Tennis - a cartoony tennis game, featuring all your favourite SEGA characters. Letting you play as a range of mascots, from the spiny hedgehog himself, to Space Channel 5's Ulala, you'll be duking it out over a variety of SEGA themed courts next spring.





Battle Field Valkyrie: Gallian Chronicles

Publisher: SEGA | **ETA:** Spring 2008 (Japan)

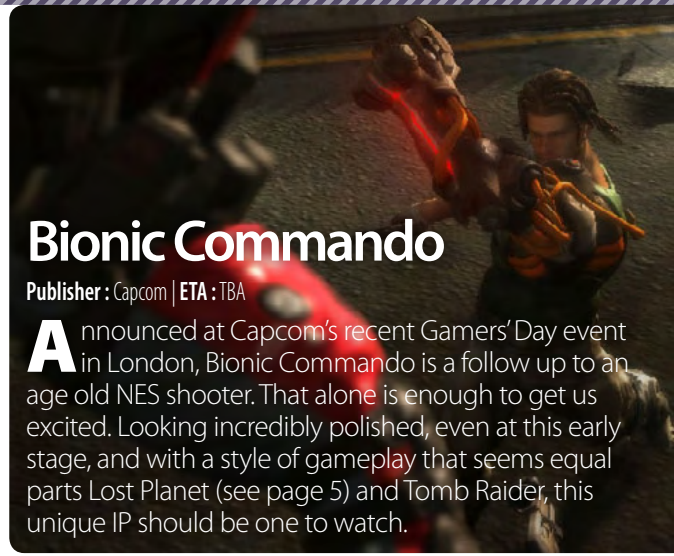
Battle Field Valkyrie is looking to be a lot more innovative than its name. The game is set in an alternate WW2, with fictional countries doing battle, and offers an enticing combination of steampunk artwork, watercolour style graphics, and gameplay that mixes the best parts of RPG, RTS and adventure.

Railfan Taiwan Koutetsu

Publisher: Ongakukan | **ETA:** Probably Never

And people complain about a lack of exclusives. Railfan (a PS3 exclusive) is our favourite PS3 railway sim, and this sequel, due out in Japan by the end of the year lets you drive your train down Taiwan's newest high-speed railway. All together now - Watashi wa Shinkansen ga suki desu!





Bionic Commando

Publisher : Capcom | **ETA :** TBA

Announced at Capcom's recent Gamers' Day event in London, Bionic Commando is a follow up to an age old NES shooter. That alone is enough to get us excited. Looking incredibly polished, even at this early stage, and with a style of gameplay that seems equal parts Lost Planet (see page 5) and Tomb Raider, this unique IP should be one to watch.

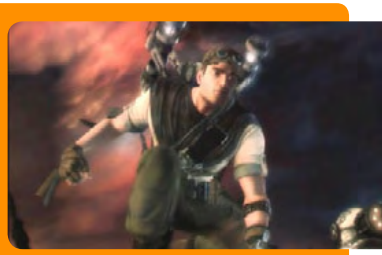
Street Fighter IV



Publisher: Capcom | **ETA:** TBA

We don't even know if it's coming to PS3 (but it'd be ludicrous not to), but we do know that now, what's been rumoured for months is a reality - Street Fighter IV is official. All we've seen so far is a brief trailer, which showed an intricately styled Ryu battling with his arch-nemesis, Ken. Hopefully we'll have official platform conformation for this soon.

Dark Void



Publisher: Capcom | **ETA:** TBA

Developed by a team comprised of people who worked on Crimson Skies, Dark Void combines the developer's trademark flying action with on foot segments, during which you'll be able to use the hero's personal jetpack.

IN THE PIPELINE

WINTER	SPRING	SUMMER	AUTUMN
HALF-LIFE 2 : THE ORANGE BOX ETA: November 23rd	**DEVIL MAY CRY 4** ETA: February	**MGS4** ETA: July	**FALLOUT 3** ETA: October
ARMY OF TWO ETA: Jan 2008	**TUROK** ETA: March	**GTA IV** ETA: June	**GT 5** ETA: October



REPLAY THIS VIDEO

"NOTHING CURRENTLY SET IN MODERN WARFARE COMES CLOSE TO THE HIGH QUALITY FOUND WITHIN CALL OF DUTY" - 360 MAGAZINE

"ASTONISHINGLY BRUTAL"
- OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

"THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE IT OUT THERE"
-PC GAMER

CALL OF DUTY 4
MODERN WARFARE

AVAILABLE NOVEMBER 9TH

WWW.CHARLIEOSCARDELTA.COM

PLAYSTATION 3

XBOX 360 LIVE

16+ www.pegi.info

PC DVD ROM

NINTENDO DS

Infinity Ward

ACTIVISION

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Publisher: EA
Developer: Harmonix
Heritage: Guitar Hero, Amplitude
Link: www.rockband.com
ETA: Spring '08

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Rock Band

Rock Band

The closest thing to gaming Nirvana. Or gaming Black Sabbath, for that matter.

Every now and then, a game comes along that really challenges what gaming is all about. Are we really all in an obsessive race for photo-realistic graphics? Does having an epic storyline make for a more involving game? Or, could you strip away everything else, use a simple, if innovative mechanic, and end up with one of most enjoyable games of all time.

Leaning with a drunken swagger and a flick of the V towards the latter, Guitar Hero was one of the most addictive games of all time, and yet, the idea was so simple. After all, who hasn't sat at home picking their air guitar to one of the world's greatest guitar solos? Taking that concept, adding in a plastic guitar, and challenging gamers to rock out to their favourite tunes was a stroke of genius, and Guitar Hero mastered it, first time. Turning the amp way past 11, Rock Band is the latest game from Guitar Hero creators, Red Octane, and the guys are ready to begin the series' evolution.



We've noticed the characters taking more of an anime stance for this one, but we're undecided as to whether it's a good thing or not.



If it weren't for the long trousers, this would be a spitting image of Axl Rose.

"Turning the amp way past 11, Rock Band is the latest game from Red Octane"

Ready to rock?

Thankfully, the basic concept of the game remains the same, requiring you to hit certain notes in time with icons coming down the screen towards you (think Dancing Stage, but with your fingers), only now, there's a lot more variety. Performing either lead or bass guitar, drums or vocals, you and three of your friends can now really get together, and make your own band. With a funky peripheral for each player, Rock Band has already bested Guitar Hero as the perfect after-pub entertainment - though we're not sure what the neighbours will say about the singing...

And the peripherals, in fact, are one of the most interesting parts of Rock Band. While nothing's been confirmed for the UK yet, in America, for $169, you'll get your hands on a full digital drum set, a wireless guitar, mic, and, of course a copy of the game. While it may cost almost as much as a Wii, everything we've seen of the game so far suggests it'll be well worth it.

However, while it may be a fantastic concept, Rock Band isn't actually doing anything that's really all that new. Taking the tried and tested formulae from Guitar Hero, SingStar and Drum Mania, mixing them all together in a cauldron and making a sacrifice to the Gods of Rock, Rock Band is simply an amalgam of all the best music games we've come to know and >

>Rock Band continued

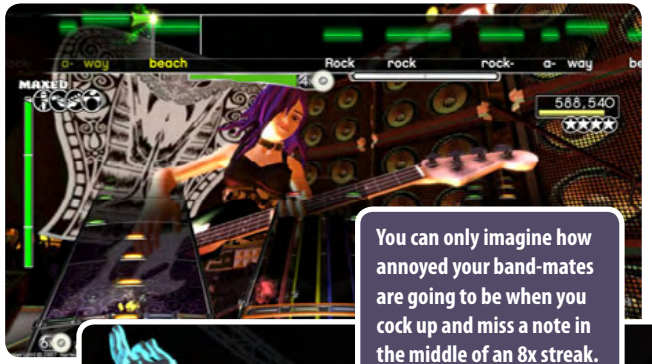
love. The only thing missing is a dance mat, but we're not sure it would fit in with the game anyway. After all, Metallica aren't exactly known for tripping the light fantastic.

Dial up

Online is also going to play a large part in the Rock Band experience, though not to the same extent as in SingStar. You'll be able to download new songs, as well as whole albums to add to your collection, and this is sure to ensure Rock Band has a healthy life span, if they're priced correctly. Beyond downloadables, there's even a full online mode, that'll let you form a band with people from all corners of the globe. The person in charge of net code at Red Octane deserves a medal if they can get that spot on.

While the price may be a downer for some, and the sheer amount of space it'll take to hold all four peripherals could put some people off, you really shouldn't let anything come inbetween you and this game. If there were ever a package that had "potential" etched into its virgin flesh, this is it. Price point aside, with the right group of friends in tow, and a decent selection of songs, this could well be one of the greatest games of all time. ●

"Rock Band is simply an amalgam of all the best music games we've come to know and love"



You can only imagine how annoyed your band-mates are going to be when you cock up and miss a note in the middle of an 8x streak.



The graphics are much improved over last year's, but, seriously, who cares about graphics in a game like this?



This is going to be the ultimate party game, if you've got a selection of musical friends.

THIS IS NOT THE GREATEST SONG IN THE WORLD

This is just a tribute

Of course, games like Rock Band are only as good as their song list, so it's a good job Rock Band has got a huge selection of tunes to choose from (although, if pushed, we'd probably prefer GHIII's selection at the moment). With extra songs, and full albums scheduled for download post-launch (with The Who's "Who's Next" being the first album to be confirmed), there's bound to be something for everyone's taste in the final game, and a lot more master tracks to choose from.

1960s

- ROLLING STONES "Gimme Shelter"

1970s

- THE WHO "Won't Get Fooled Again"
- MOUNTAIN "Mississippi Queen"
- DAVID BOWIE "Suffragette City"
- BLACK SABBATH "Paranoid"
- BLUE OYSTER CULT "Don't Fear the Reaper"
- THE RAMONES "Blitzkrieg Bop"
- KISS "Detroit Rock City"
- DEEP PURPLE "Highway Star"

1980s

- RUSH "Tom Sawyer"
- BON JOVI "Wanted Dead or Alive"
- THE CLASH "Should I Stay or Should I Go"
- FAITH NO MORE "Epic"
- THE PIXIES "Wave of Mutilation"

1990s

- GARBAGE "I Think I'm Paranoid"
- FOO FIGHTERS "Learn to Fly"
- METALLICA "Enter Sandman"
- NIRVANA "In Bloom"
- STONE TEMPLE PILOTS "Vasoline"
- WEEZER "Say It Ain't So"
- SMASHING PUMPKINS "Cherub Rock"
- HOLE "Celebrity Skin"
- RADIOHEAD "Creep"
- SOUNDGARDEN "Black Hole Sun"
- BEASTIE BOYS "Sabotage"

2000s

- THE HIVES "Main Offender"
- QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE "Go With the Flow"
- THE STROKES "Reptilia"
- JET "Are You Going To Be My Girl"
- OK GO! "Here It Goes Again"
- RED HOT CHILLI PEPPERS "Dani California"
- NINE INCH NAILS "The Hand That Feeds"
- YEAH YEAH YEAHS "Maps"

P3Zine Rock Band

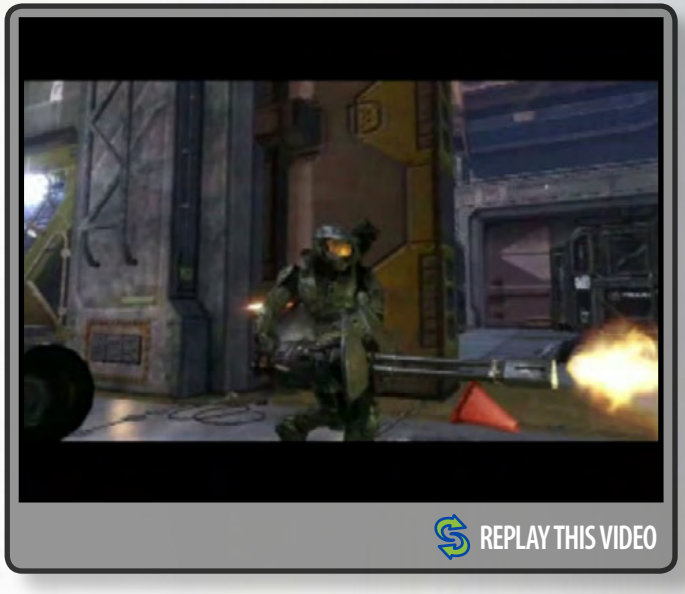
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 95%

Headbanging gaming bliss is on its way

Everyone's here.







The only place to play all these great blockbuster titles is Xbox 360.
And with over 300 games available by Christmas, the real question is:
what do you and your friends want to play first?

Jump in.

XBOX 360 LIVE

SEARCH P3Zine PRINT THIS PAGE ZOOM IN ZOOM OUT TOGGLE FULL SCREEN VIEW PREVIOUS PAGE NEXT PAGE

HANDS ON

Gran Turismo 5

Gentlemen, start your engines

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Polyphony Digital
Heritage: Gran Turismo
Link: http://www.granturismoworld.com/
ETA: December (Prologue), Summer (GT 5)

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of GT 5

After selling a mildly impressive 47 million copies over the length of the series, and being the most downloaded title on the PlayStation Network for many weeks, you'd have thought Kazunori Yamauchi, the godfather of the Gran Turismo series, would be satisfied. After seeing the leaps and bounds Gran Turismo 5's taken over the past few months, it seems that that couldn't be further from the truth.

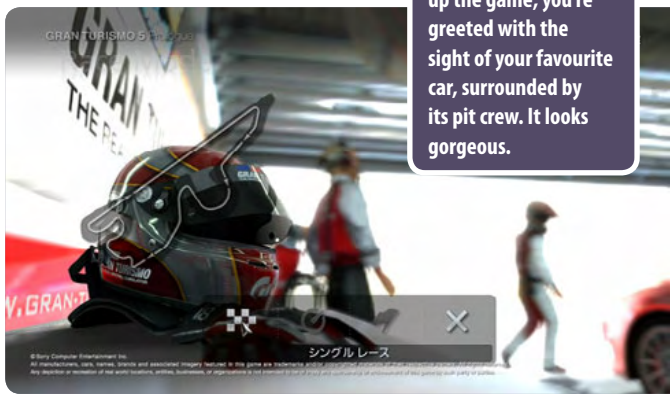
If you could fall in love at first sight, we're sure GT 5 would be engaged. Looking so good, it's often been mistaken for a genuine TV show, the game runs at a solid 60 FPS in each race, and 30 FPS in a replay, making the driving as smooth as a freshly polished DB9's bonnet. To give you some idea of the detail that's gone into each car, it's said that one headlight on a car in GT 5 is made up of around 4,000 polygons - roughly the same amount as went into an entire car on GT 4. As if that wasn't enough, the car itself totals a whopping 200,000 polygons, making it over fifty times more detailed than before. You can almost see your virtual drool dribbling down the Ferraris.

Quite possibly the single biggest change for this instalment comes with the addition of online features, allowing for online gameplay for up to 15 players, and much, much >

"One headlight on a car in GT 5 is made up of around 4,000 polygons"



Your "My Page" holds information about everything to do with your racing career, even telling you if your friends are online, and where they're based.



When you first boot up the game, you're greeted with the sight of your favourite car, surrounded by its pit crew. It looks gorgeous.



This is how the new Nissan GT-R appeared in game before its official unveiling. Note the funky black tape covering its front.

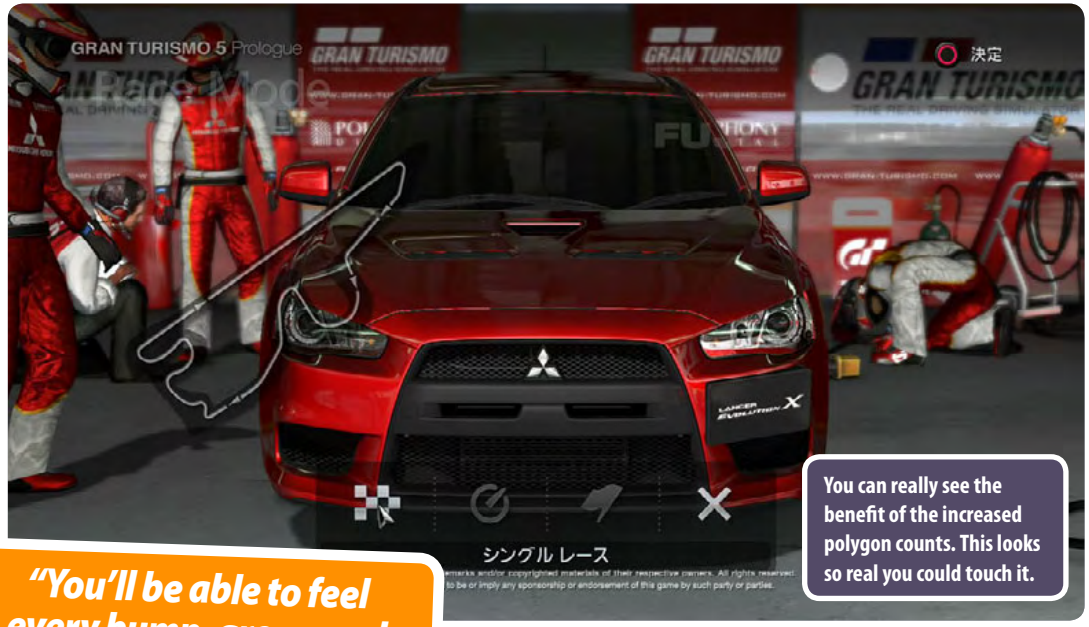
Replays take a frame rate hit to just 30 FPS, but they look phenomenal.

>GT 5 continued

more. Even GT 5's menu, otherwise known as "My Page", will utilise your connection in some way. At the top of the screen, you'll have a map, showing any of your friends who are online, and their physical location, as well as the time, and weather where you are. From this screen, you can jump into a race, share your pictures and replays with your friends, edit your profile, or step into Home. It's not known what affect - if any - the delay of Home will have on GT 5, but we're hoping it's going to be minimal.

However, one of the least talked about features of GT 5 is GT TV, a virtual TV station that will let you select car related programs from around the world, and download them to your PS3. Yamauchi-san hopes that this will help showcase less-known breeds of racing, such as Formula D, and Super GT. While it's not known how much these shows will cost, the idea of such a channel is certainly an interesting one, and if there's a game with a fanatical enough user base to support it, it'll be GT.

On track, the racing feels even smoother than before, and, thanks to integration with the upcoming Dual Shock 3, and an all new force-feedback steering wheel, you'll be able to feel every bump, groan and nudge as you drive. There are now 16 cars to race against on track, up from 6 in previous GT games, and each driver has incredibly enhanced AI, which enables them to block passing manoeuvres aggressively, and know when to overtake, rather than just ramming you off the road.



You can really see the benefit of the increased polygon counts. This looks so real you could touch it.

"You'll be able to feel every bump, groan and nudge as you drive"

However, while GT 5 certainly seems to be making many great steps in the right direction - the online play and interior view are welcome additions to say the least - there is still one thing missing that GT has never had. Damage modelling. While Yamauchi-san puts it down to a case of realism, we argue that it isn't very realistic to have your cars not take damage, so having lights knocked out, and dents appear would give the game a much more real-world feel.

But either way, there's just one month left now before petrol heads from around the globe get their hands on GT 5 Prologue with its 40 cars, five tracks, and hours of gameplay. We'll be bringing you the review as soon as it's out, but in the meantime, get your engines revving, as this is, quite simply, a car fanatic's wet dream.



Even the dealer screen looks as slick and polished as... a very shiny thing.

GT HITS TOP GEAR

In a move that seems more obvious the more you think about it, the BBC and Polyphony Digital have come to an agreement that means GT TV will offer 40 episodes of Top Gear to petrol heads around the world. While this means you'll be able to download all your favourite episodes straight to your PS3, there's no word yet on whether or not these will be in HD, or how much they'll cost, if indeed they cost at all. However, the most interesting part of the deal comes with the news that the Top Gear Test Track will be featured as a circuit in Gran Turismo. Now you can live out your Stig-related fantasies for real.



P3Zine GRAN TURISMO THE REAL DRIVING SIMULATOR

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 80%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 90%

Gran Turismo takes its place at the starting line

CONDEMNED 2

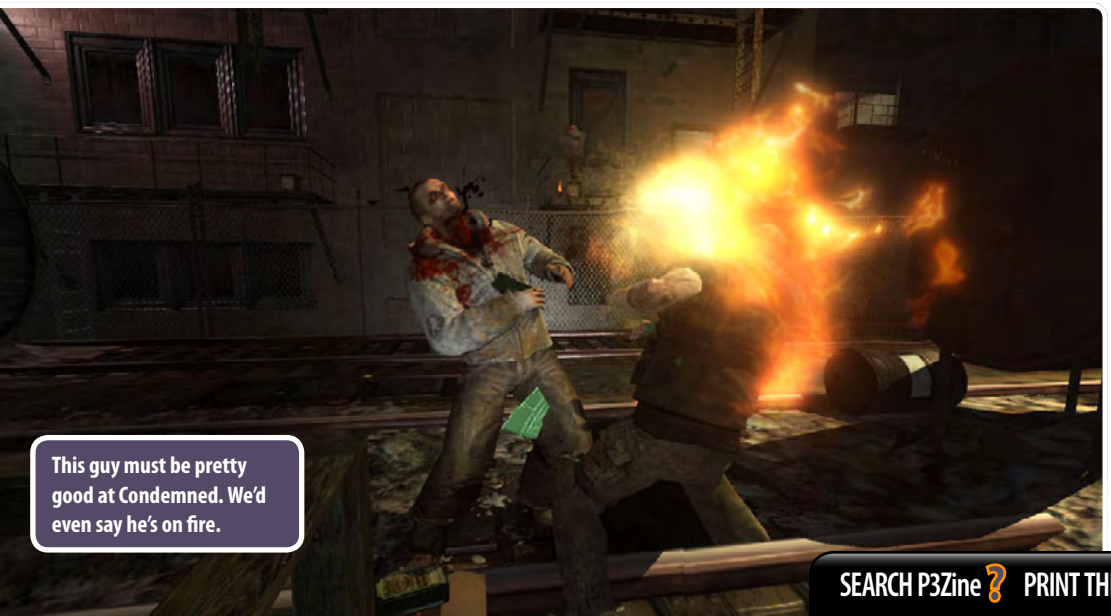
"We're not just turning the Condemned knob up to eleven but more like fifty"



Condemned 2 sports a much more supernatural look. This is bound to be haunting our dreams.

For PS3 users who are discovering Condemned for the first time, could you tell us a little bit about what the first game was all about?

Frank Rooke, Lead Game Designer
The first game was about losing oneself in a world of incredibly brutal violence, where every dark corner and dim hallway offered some deranged killer eager to crush your skull. As Ethan Thomas, you entered this world on an assignment to investigate a serial killer known as SKX. What you uncovered turned out to a bit more then you imagine, and what you experienced had a profound effect on you that basically left you a shell of a your former self.



This guy must be pretty good at Condemned. We'd even say he's on fire.

The storyline in Condemned was one of the scariest things - how does Condemned 2 pick up the plot from the first game?

Condemned 2 begins about a year later after the first game and we find Ethan Thomas on the outer fringes of society. He has nothing left to lose when he decides to take on the very element that has destroyed his life. In the first game, things happened to him but now anger and resentment drive him forward and it's a sorry (bloody) day for the unlucky soul that gets in his way.

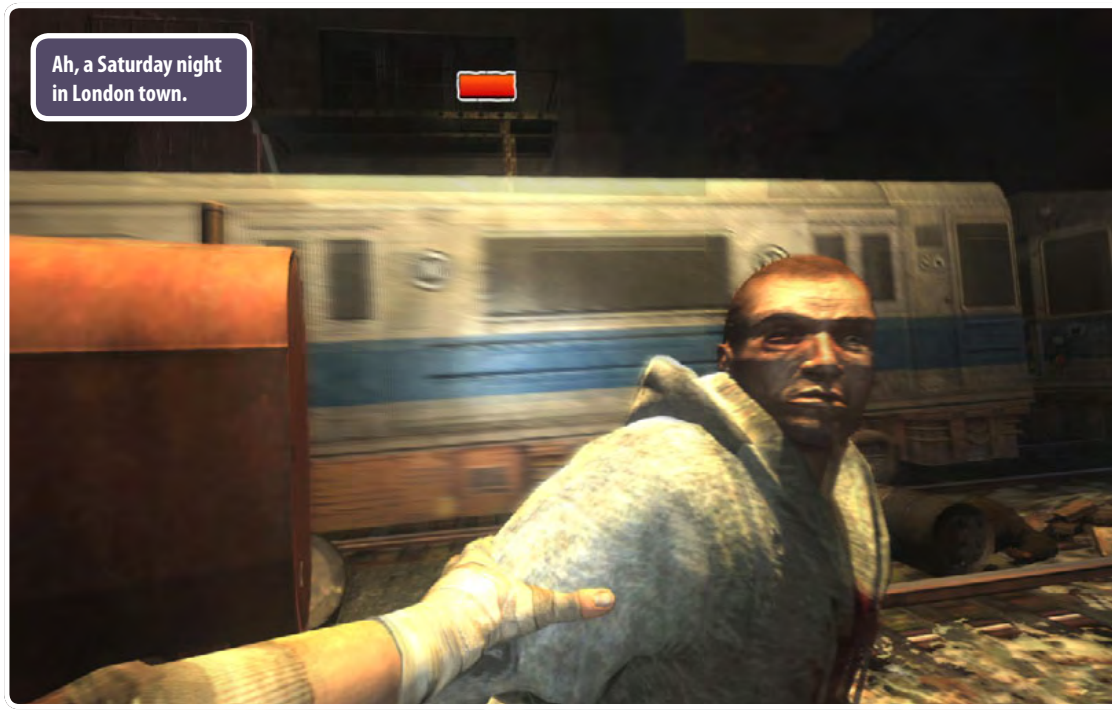
When Condemned was released as a launch title alongside the 360, it instantly turned heads with its brand of gritty, up-close and personal combat. For Condemned 2, the combat has received quite an overhaul, but what exactly has changed?

The difference is depth. The in-your-face combat is still very raw and visceral but there's now more ways for the player to deliver damage. >

"The AI has been greatly enhanced to challenge the player in extremely intense and frightening ways"



We're hoping this is just a mask, and not a sign that Condemned 2 may take a more... beastiality route.



Ah, a Saturday night in London town.



Can a man not get a moment's privacy?

> Interview continued

Specifically, this means two to three times the weapons, left and right handed attacks, deadly combos that can be chained together and many disturbingly satisfying finishing kills. In turn, the AI has also been greatly enhanced to challenge the player in extremely intense and frightening ways. In other words we're not just turning the Condemned knob up to eleven but more like fifty.

One way the original Condemned set itself apart from other horror games was with the forensics system, which allowed you to inspect crime scenes for clues. How has this system been expanded upon?

Fans of the first game voiced strong opinions regarding the forensics and basically made it clear that they would have liked the gameplay to be more challenging and more open-ended. We listened, and started Condemned 2 by first scrapping the forensics used in Condemned and then built something new from the ground up. The system is very intuitive but in a way that requires the player to use their powers of observation and forensic tools to unravel the many layers of mystery in the game. However, if forensics is not your bag, it is possible to stick to your guns (and your weapons...) to get you through the game.

We've also heard that Condemned 2 is set to feature >

"The in-your-face combat is still very raw and visceral"

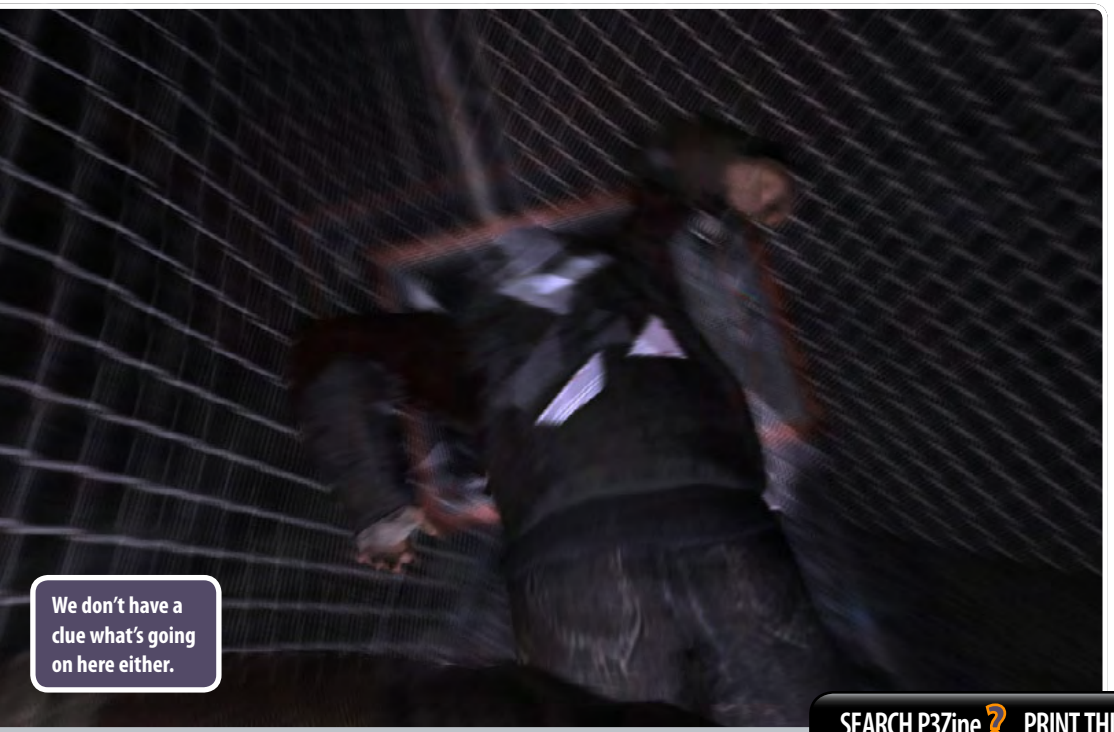
> Interview continued

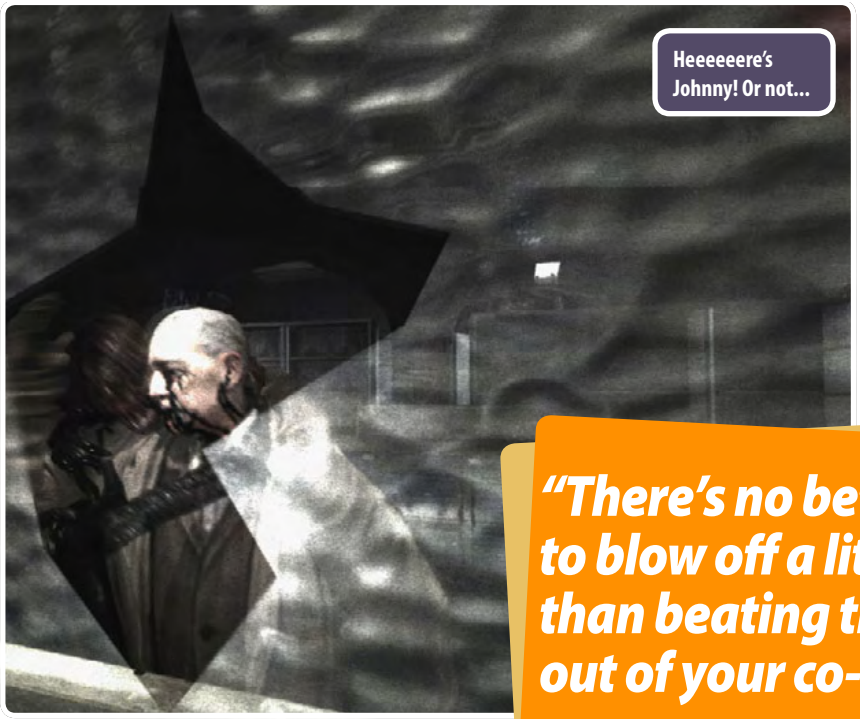
an intriguing multiplayer mode. As the original Condemned was a strictly solo experience, it's quite hard for us to get our head around how this will work - could you tell us a little bit about what you have planned?

Tarl Raney, AP & MP Lead
Our main goal was to bring some of the trademark single player elements to the multiplayer modes. We're working on a mode that pits the SCU against the Influenced and gives players an opportunity to use forensic tools in a team play atmosphere. We're going through a lot of playtesting right now to find the ideal mechanics and balance to this so we can't say much more than that, but it's already a lot of fun to play. There really is no better way to blow off a little steam than beating the crap out of your co-workers with a lead pipe.

And, finally - what's the one image from Condemned 2 that's going to be stuck in the player's mind?
Frank Rooke
The image of their own shaking hands gripping the controller after playing the first ten minutes of the game.


You wouldn't want to meet this chap after a night on the town.


We don't have a clue what's going on here either.


Heeeeeere's Johnny! Or not...

CONDEMNED 2

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Monolith Productions
Heritage: Condemned
Link: http://condemned2.sega-europe.com/en/index.html
ETA: Early 2008

"There's no better way to blow off a little steam than beating the crap out of your co-workers"



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Publisher: Activision
Developer: Infinity Ward
Heritage: The original Call of Duty and CoD 2
Link: www.callofduty.com
OUT NOW

Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

P3Zine GOLD

Take cover, the best shooter on PS3 is about to lock and load…



Unfriendly locals, air thick with gunfire, it's not the most appealing city break you'll ever go on.

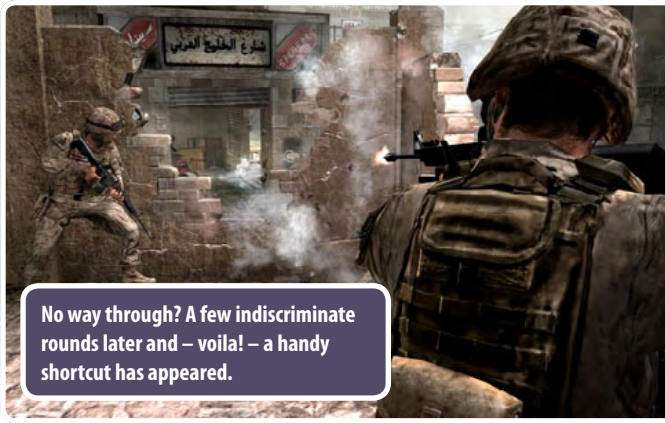
Maybe it's a reflection of our troubled times but the next gen is absolutely crawling with war games. WWII, 'Nam, Middle East, covert ops, futuristic – you name the conflict and PS3 has it covered. All of which means it's going to take one helluva game to stand out from the camouflaged crowd. Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare is that game. Not only the best war sim on PS3 but arguably the console's finest release full stop. Pacifists beware: 20 minutes with this baby and even Gandhi would be strapping on his 'Born To Kill' helmet.

In the wake of the decent but flawed PS3 launch title Call of Duty 3, original CoD developers Infinity Ward are back in control and they've rebuilt the series from scratch to bring us a totally immersive, state of the art war hero. Out goes the usual WWII setting in favour of a modern-day take on terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Two very



The most important lesson you can learn is finding decent cover. You won't last five minutes without it.

"Arguably the console's finest release full stop"



No way through? A few indiscriminate rounds later and – voila! – a handy shortcut has appeared.

CREW EXPENDABLE

Minute-by-minute with the astonishing opening level.



Waves crashing, lightning flashing, you abseil onto a tanker charged with locating its deadly nuclear cargo.



As the mission title suggests, the ship's crew are expendable. Never mind that the sailors are pretty much defenceless.



Making your way inside the vessel, it's clear that stealth tactics will be at the fore. Where's Sam Fisher when you need him?



The cargo hold – home to the bomb and lots of terrorists. Flush them out with grenades and then get blasting.



With the weapon secured the boat is then scuppered, leaving you with a race against time to get the hell off that ship.

>CoD 4 continued

naughty men are at the centre of the world's troubles: beardy Russian arms dealer Imran Zakhaev, aiming to seize a nuclear stockpile and force a return to communism; and Kahled Al-Assad, the crazed would-be dictator of an unnamed Middle-Eastern country (<cough> Iraq <cough>) who is in cahoots with Zakhaev. Your mission? To eliminate with extreme prejudice the threat posed by these men.

Playing as SAS rookie Sergeant John 'Soap' MacTavish, under the moustachioed command of veteran Captain Price, your first task is to infiltrate a tanker and neutralise the nuke it's carrying onboard. Abseiling down from a chopper in high winds and driving rain, the stunning visuals and emotive music combine to create an incredibly cinematic atmosphere, ensuring the goosebumps are there before you even enter the first-person view and start picking off the hapless crew members.

Once you've cleared a cargo hold packed with terrorists and secured the missile, the operation is turned on its head as the tanker starts to sink. Suddenly you're in a race against time to get back up to the deck, sloshing through corridors with the boat teetering, your allies yelling instructions over the roar of the incoming sea water, and the tension going absolutely haywire. This is only the first mission and already Modern Warfare is planted firmly in classic territory.

While the SAS missions lean more towards stealth gameplay, when you take control of US Marine Sergeant Paul Jackson for the more traditional conflict sections the carnage level goes through the roof. Battling to suppress the uprising in a war torn Middle Eastern city, it's reminiscent of Ridley Scott's Black Hawk Down as the bullets fly and you desperately dash from cover to cover. Initially the noise and the chaos are so visceral it's almost overwhelming and it's all you can do to just concentrate on staying alive. But as you get >



If you run out of ammo there's always the trusty SAS knife to fall back on.

"The noise and the chaos are so visceral it's almost overwhelming"



WAR IS HELL

Gaming doesn't get any more nerve-



Summer in the City | Marine life | Blown away

Summer in the City

With the sun obscured by clouds of dust, aircraft passing overhead and tanks rumbling in the vicinity, the scene is set for an absolutely terrifying, yet thrilling, mission to secure the city. Whatever you do, stay in close contact with your unit.

>CoD 4 continued

a handle on the experience and respond to the support of your unit – displaying just about the best AI we've seen in a game of this type – the thrill of being bang in the middle of a firefight really hits home. If it's sick to say you enjoyed unloading an M16 into a parked car and splattering the terrorist lurking on the other side, then we're guilty as charged.

Coming in at around eight hours, the single-player campaign could be accused of being a little short. But it certainly feels substantial when you're in amongst it – hitting you with such a relentless barrage of action and such a dramatic story arc that you're left exhausted when you finally put down your weapon. And besides, if the main story mode leaves you gagging for more there's still the small matter of the multiplayer action to consider, which is so damn impressive it's almost reason enough to buy the game.

"You're left exhausted when you finally put down your weapon"

There are 13 different game types to keep you at it online for the whole of the foreseeable future. A big favourite is Old School mode which lets you jump twice as high as normal and survive an inordinate amount of damage, harking back to the realism-phobic days of 8-bit shoot-'em-ups. There's also a genius levelling-up system featuring RPG-style XP points that can be used to improve your character and unlock new equipment and skills, such as increased bullet damage and rapid reloads.

With online multiplayer options galore and just about the most exhilarating single-player tour of duty we've ever taken, it's impossible to argue with CoD 4's credentials. The kind of game that will be remembered as a true generational leap in quality, do yourself a favour and sign up today. ●

Lee Hart

Next Gen?

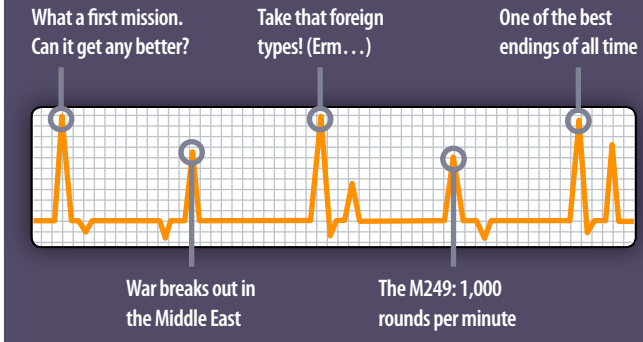
While every single aspect of CoD 4 reeks of next gen magic, the online multiplayer is guaranteed to knock you sideways. 13 different game types, 16 brilliantly-designed maps, loads of customisation options and – best of all – totally breathtaking action. We've been playing it online non-stop and in our experience there's no loss of detail and barely any problems with lagging or crashing. Expect Ghost Recon and the rest to become yesterday's news pretty sharpish.





Meet your SAS commander Captain Price. He has a nice line in put-downs and a magnificent 'tache.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*





With the ultra-realistic visuals and booming surround sound, explosions are sure to leave you rattled.

P3Zine Verdict

Stunning on every level and dripping with atmosphere

- \+ Obliterates every other war shooter
- \+ Fantastic online combat
- − Single-player could be a bit more substantial

97%

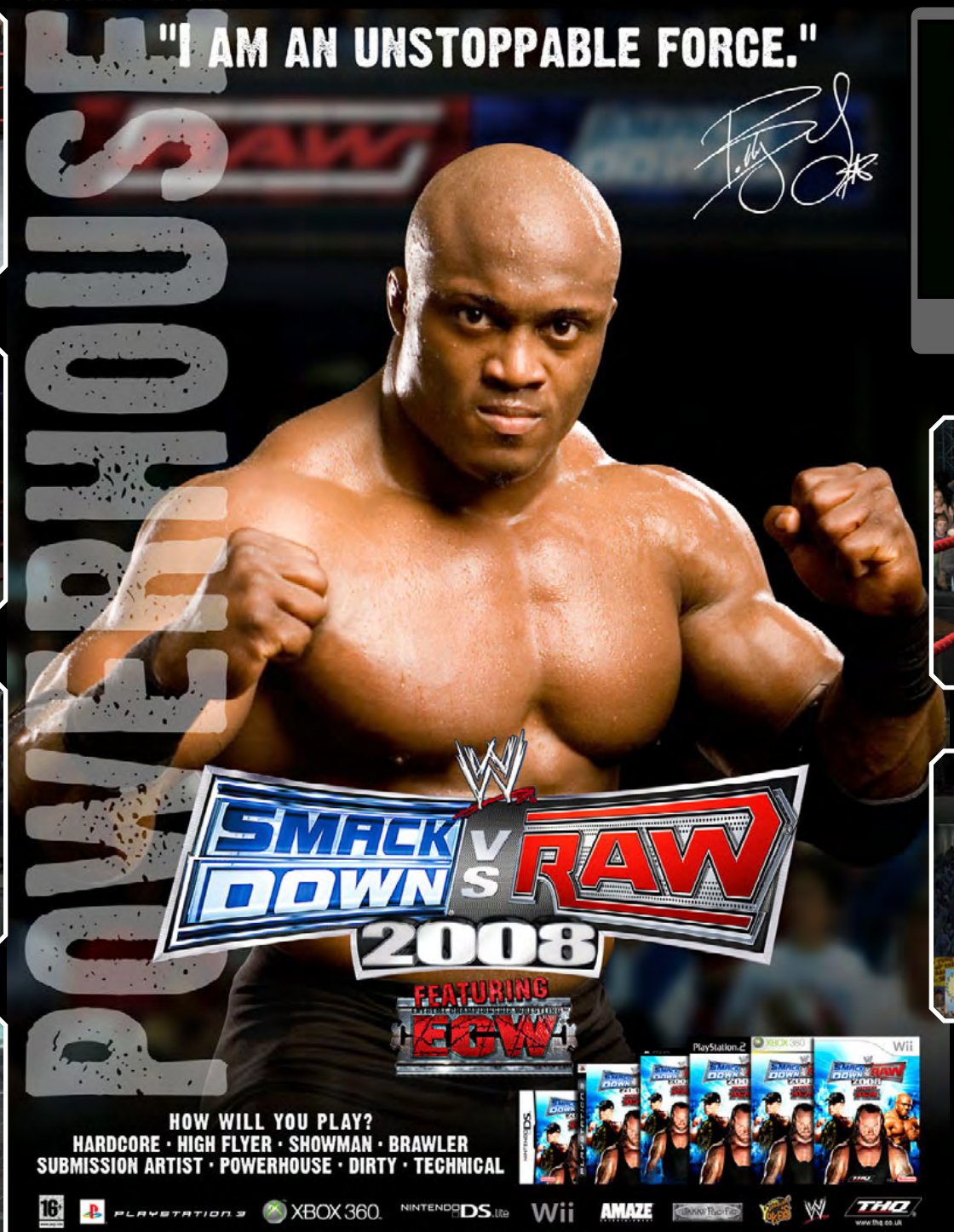








"I AM AN UNSTOPPABLE FORCE."





REPLAY THIS VIDEO





THQ



Ratchet and Clank Future: Tools of Destruction

Weapons of mass distraction

Publisher: Sony
Developer: Insomniac
Heritage: Ratchet and Clank series, Resistance: Fall of Man
Link: http://www.us.playstation.com/PS3/Games/Ratchet_and_Clank_Future_Tools_of_Destruction
OUT NOW

There's probably never been a more appropriate subtitle for a game. The latest in Insomniac's platform-shooter series has crates, robots...hell, even *buildings* exploding into hundreds and thousands of tiny pieces. If you've ever wanted to see destruction on a mass scale, this is your game. Incredibly, the game manages to throw around an entire screen's worth of debris around with nary a pause to its buttery smooth, sixty-frames-per-second action.

Even more impressively, take the flying fragments out of the equation, and the game's visuals will have you yanking your chin up from the carpet at regular intervals. The graphics have already been described as the closest thing yet to playing a Pixar cartoon, and we find it hard to disagree with that. From the cartoon Coruscant look of the opening planet Kerwan (featuring a daring escape at the outset that's one of the best showcases for PS3 so far) to the swampy, dinosaur planet of Sargasso, the vibrancy, detail and colour are absolutely second to none on the console. It's a shame it doesn't run in full 1080p to make it even more pin sharp, but we'll sacrifice that for the consistent frame rate.

The story begins with Ratchet >

I GET AROUND

Out and about in the Lombax universe



The Daily Grind | Spaced out | Hover bovver

The Daily Grind

Leap onto these spiralling rails and Ratchet will automatically grind along them, Tony Hawk style. Careful, though - you'll often have to leap gaps, move onto a parallel rail with a somersault, or jump to dodge enemy fire. You'll also get to slide down a few ziplines throughout your adventure, which is always good fun.

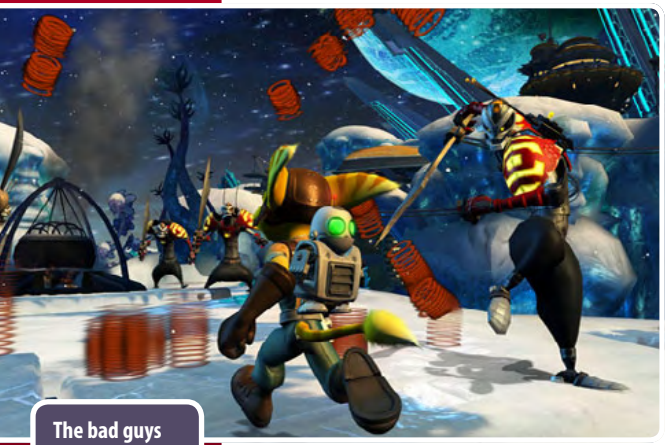
Take a tour of the most gorgeous cartoon game to date.



"The graphics are the closest thing yet to playing a Pixar cartoon"



There's one or two slightly laborious fetch-quests, but the worlds are such a delight to look at that you don't mind too much.



The bad guys come in three main flavours - pirates, robots and pirate robots. All looking to slice and dice you into submission.

>Ratchet & Clank continued

attempting to escape the clutches of Emperor Tachyon, an extraterrestrial despot who's trying to rid the galaxy of Ratchet and the rest of the Lombax species. As it transpires, he has a reason to fear the race, and it's up to Ratchet and his robotic chum to find out about the mysterious Lombax secret Tachyon is so concerned about, while remaining one step ahead of the villain and his cohorts. This takes the duo through a great variety of planets, taking stops at places like rain planet Mukow where you can engage in gladatorial combat in the Imperial Fight Festival (complete with hilarious commentary from series regular Captain Qwark) to the lava filled spaceport on Rykan V. You're never in one area for too long to get bored of it, and the level design is fairly linear, so you won't ever get lost. It's brisk, breezy and fun throughout, with a fairly easy difficulty level meaning you'll sail through much of the game. Not a problem as far as we're concerned - the series has never been known for overwhelming difficulty, and it doesn't affect the intensity of the combat.

From a gameplay standpoint, very little has changed in Ratchet and Clank's world. It's still a platformer-cum-shooter with much more of the latter required than any precision jumping. For the most part, this isn't a problem, and the game certainly tries to vary things by giving the player creative freedom on how to deal with the majority of foes. To a degree, certain enemies have particular weaknesses, but for the most part you can stick to one or two of your favourite weapons to blast patrolling enemies into piles of bolts and Raritarium. The former - as always - are the game's main currency, and there's still that compulsive joy in hearing the light tinkling sound as you collect a bunch of them from the floor. >

Next Gen?

Look at it. Just look at it. If there's one thing that Tools of Destruction has to make every other console owner weep, it's the stunningly beautiful graphics. But not only is it gorgeous, it's incredibly slick - the frame rate holds steady throughout, even when you're blasting an entire army of robots to smithereens. Some parts will leave you speechless.



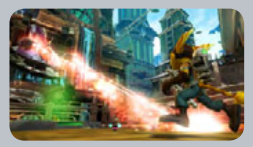
"Brisk, breezy and fun throughout"



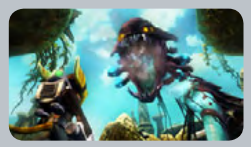
Larger foes always go down with a satisfying KABOOM, and a shower of bolts. The resultant sound effect as you pick them up is music to the ears.

DESTRUCTATHON!

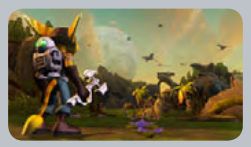
All the Planet hopping, robot-smashing action you could ever want



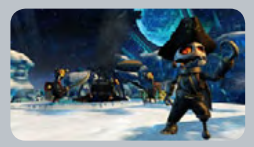
30 MINUTES - Escaping from Tachyon in the nick of time, to start another epic adventure.



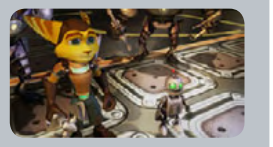
3 HOURS - Taking on a fierce Leviathan in the beautiful world of Cobalia. Not as tough as it looks.



6 HOURS - The mesmerising dinosaur planet Sargasso. We could spend all day just gawping at the graphics.



9 HOURS - You'll encounter some cold-hearted pirates on the icy Kreeli comet. Yarrr!



15 HOURS - Adventure over - now start again on Challenge mode, and unlock the ultimate weapon, Ryno 4Ever.



There's a fearsome arsenal of inventive (and sometimes hilarious) weaponry.



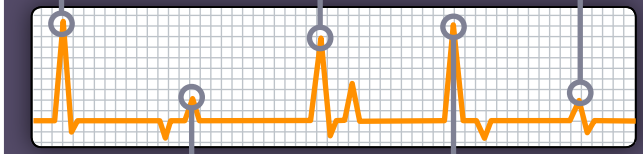
Melting icicles with a flamethrower-esque weapon - Ratchet has a gun for every occasion.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

So, so beautiful. We're not sure our eyes deserve this goodness.

Sixaxis innovation is genuinely impressive

Lacklustre ending - what a shame



Early stages are a little dull

Sargasso, Rykan V, Mukow - much more interesting levels

>Ratchet & Clank continued

They're used to buy new weapons and ammo, while the Raritanium is required for the weapon enhancements - a maxed-out Raptor Launcher might just be the only gun you ever need, with its homing missiles taking care of nearly all foes. The Buzz Blades are another favourite, their buzzsaw bullets ricocheting off walls and ceilings, while Nano-Swarmers release wasps on any foe stupid enough to wander within range.

One of the new weapons, the Tornado Launcher, uses the Sixaxis motion controls - fire one out, and guide it to your hapless pursuers by tilting your controller towards them. It's not the only example - Robo-Wings see you swooping and banking through rings with gentle movements, while the Decryptor allows you to hack security doors by engaging in a minigame where you roll a ball to join circuits together. Finally, the Geo-Laser cuts through rocks in areas where the walls are weak - aim and tilt to slice through and create a new entrance. Overall, it's the best use of the Sixaxis' features to date, and we'd like to see more developers following Insomniac's lead.

Yet despite these new features, Tools of Destruction does feel jarringly familiar at times. It's not ruinous, especially if you're a big fan of the series, but some might have hoped for more from the duo's PS3 debut. The charming humour, enjoyable cutscenes, and superb pacing of the game carry it through, but the lack of progression stops it from being a classic. It's so close to greatness that it hurts, but - Sixaxis innovations aside - Insomniac have played it too safe with this one. ●

Chris Schilling









REPLAY THIS VIDEO

STARRING
SOON IN A LIVING
ROOM NEAR YOU.

The blockbuster movie trivia game comes to Xbox 360™ featuring four easy-to-use, Big Button Controllers. And with 1,800 all-new questions, including movie clips in HD, you'll rarely see the same one twice. All of which can turn your next party into an epic premiere.

xbox.com/sceneit

12

Microsoft game studios

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Jump in.

XBOX 360™



Assassin's Creed

Frustratingly close to greatness

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Heritage: Splinter Cell series, Far Cry Instincts
Link: http://assassinscreed.uk.ubi.com/experience/
ETA: 16 November

The three tenets of the Assassin's Creed:

1. Never hurt an innocent person.
2. Always be discreet.
3. Do not compromise the clan.

Within half an hour we've broken all three, as our hero Altair flees through the streets of Acre, tailed by some surprisingly agile guards. The innocent person? Just some poor schlub who we barged out of our path. Discretion? Nah. Our mark was assassinated in full view of at least thirty people. Clan compromised? Absolutely. Now everyone knows there's an assassin about, and they're all on their toes. Excellent work, Altair.

For a game that purports to herald a new generation of stealth, there's plenty of audience-attracting action in Assassin's Creed. You can spend hours obtaining information about your target, plan an entrance route in meticulous detail, and yet when you've done the dirty deed, you're always chased across rooftops and through busy streets by a set of angry enemies out for your blood. Agent 47 never had this trouble.

But to compare Creed with the Hitman series would be unfair - it's a very different beast. Rather than the incredibly freeform approach of IO Interactive's smash hit series, you follow a prescribed route to each assassination. First of all, Altair must successfully complete at least two brief missions to gain enough intel about his mark - these range from sneakily pickpocketing information-carrying characters as they mill around the busy streets, >

"There's a set of angry enemies out for your blood"



Fighting can feel a little clumsy, but it improves as you go on, with more moves available.



The environments are so consistent that any tiny glitches are that much more noticeable.



One major annoyance is the random beggars and aggressors who'll push you about, attracting the attention of guards.



There's a heightened sense of tension as you wait for the perfect moment to take down your quarry.



I don't think anyone saw me.



>Assassin's Creed continued

or eavesdropping on conversations which provide handy hints about your chosen target. You can also gain further knowledge by, for example, helping innocent people unfairly bullied by a group of guards. But as that involves getting into a fight where you're usually outnumbered at least four-to-one, it's a bit of a waste of time.

It's in these combat sequences that the first of the game's big problems arises. While Ubisoft has chosen a system that eschews button-mashing for a more tactical approach, it's still disconcertingly repetitive. Generally, it involves holding the trigger to block, and pressing square to counter-attack - thanks to the clunky targeting system though, you often end up with your back to at least one assailant. At least the bad guys are stupid enough to only attack you one at a time, like a straight-to-video Eighties action flick. Extra moves are available as you progress, with a dodge manoeuvre and a grab reverse, but by then you'll have tired of the encounters already.

Actually getting around the three >

Next Gen?

For all its failings, Assassin's Creed is very much a new generation experience. Altair's animation is probably the best we've seen on a lead character, and the cities are filled with people - all of whom behave fairly realistically. The ability to climb pretty much every building in the game, leaping from rooftop to rooftop adds an unparalleled level of interaction with the gameworld. It's an incredibly impressive game engine - kudos to Ubisoft for that, at least.



"Ubisoft has chosen a system that eschews button-mashing"

LICENSE TO KILL

Find your foe, and take them down



1 HOUR - Has there ever been a game set in the Crusades before? With a modern-day twist? Creed's certainly got originality on its side.



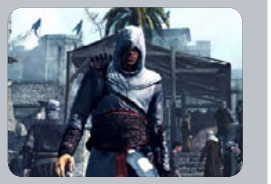
2 HOURS - Your first proper kill, and a thrilling escape. All feels good with the world.



4 HOURS - A slaver somehow justifies his actions. Is your mission a just one?



7 HOURS - More twists, more questions to be answered - but it's getting a little stale now.

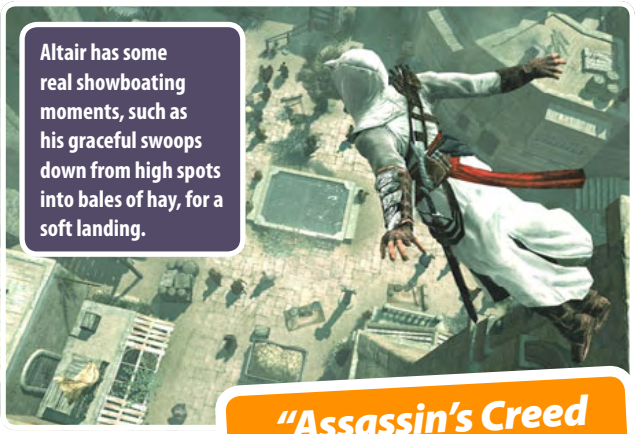


14 HOURS - You've finished the quest, but there's plenty to go back for. Replay value: high.



It's remarkable how much effort has gone into even the unimportant non-player characters - nearly everyone looks different.





Altair has some real showboating moments, such as his graceful swoops down from high spots into bales of hay, for a soft landing.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



SOCIAL CLIMBER
Scaling the cities in style



Hop

Step

Jump

Hop
Altair's normal stance is considered Low Profile - he moves at walking pace and his actions are unlikely to raise suspicion. Hold R1 and you move into High Profile, where you're more likely to attract the attention of passers-by and guards. Run up to a building with A held also, and Altair will plant his leading foot against the wall.

>Assassin's Creed continued

main cities of Jerusalem, Acre and Damascus - and away from any potential assailants - is simplicity itself, thanks to the streamlined parkour controls. Holding down R1 puts Altair into High Profile mode, where he goes from walking pace to sprinting - simply holding A at the same time allows him to leap across gaps, while tilting the analogue stick at the same time guides him from building to building, or from handhold to ledge if he's climbing. It's certainly a boon in the chases, though it makes scaling the tallest structures less satisfying - and that's one of the prescribed tasks set out for each kill.

Considering Ubisoft made grand claims of being able to go *anywhere* - and it's true, you really can - it's massively frustrating that the assassinations are so regimented. Once you enter the city, you need to scale a viewpoint which allows you to mark various helpful locations - the whereabouts of informants, or people you need to interrogate for example. Complete the requisite number of investigations, and you need to visit the assassin's bureau to get clearance to carry out your mission. Then it's a case of reaching your target and killing them. Far from being able to adopt several different approaches, it's either go in all guns (or rather swords) blazing, or sneak up to your target and off them that way. That usually takes significantly less time than the long-winded escapes, as you're chased by some irritatingly nippy guards. The idea is to get out of their line of sight, but naturally, they're able to spot you just as you're about to enter a hiding place (a rooftop garden, a seat between two innocents on a bench, or a stack of hay) so you have to start the process over again.

"Assassin's Creed has an incredible gameworld"

Like Bioshock on the Xbox 360, Assassin's Creed has an incredible gameworld and intoxicating atmosphere which paper over most of its gameplay cracks. But where Bioshock allowed the player huge flexibility to vary its otherwise repetitive mechanics, Ubisoft's game gets samey very quickly - and its story isn't as impressive as Irrational's, despite a few interesting twists, and a hugely effective modern-day framework. Despite our misgivings, it'd be really nice to see a sequel that refines the formula - Ubisoft has created an astoundingly immersive universe, it just needs to give us more interesting stuff to do in it next time.

Chris Schilling



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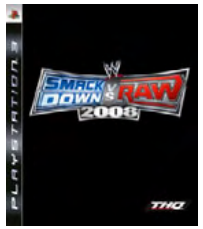
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Publisher: THQ
Developer: Yuke's
Heritage: SmackDown vs Raw 2007
Link: www.SmackDownvsraw.com
ETA: November 16th

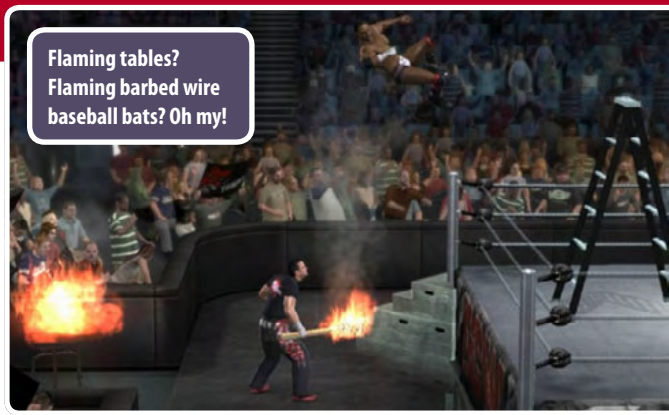
SmackDown vs Raw 2008

Are you ready?

Heading into the latest instalment of the grappling game, we'll admit we were beginning to lose faith in the SmackDown brand. Losing momentum faster than the Great Khali, the world's premier wrestling game seemed to be sinking into a worrying trend of simply releasing yearly upgrades with minimal changes, in what can only be called a shocking display of FIFA-itis. So has the game been given the huge, back-to-basics overhaul it needs for this year's instalment? In all honesty, not quite, but the tweaks, upgrades, and huge overhaul of the career mode are enough to take SmackDown back to being a wrestling fan's wrestling game.

If you'll forgive us for a moment, we'd like to ignore the in-ring action for now, and move straight to the bit we're most impressed with - WWE 24/7. It seems each and every year the SmackDown series changes its career mode, sometimes with more success than others, but WWE 24/7 seems to have got the format almost spot on.

The killer concept is that instead of simply following a WWE superstar, you /are/ a WWE superstar, and as such, you can do whatever a WWE superstar would do. Presenting you with a locker room, and a calendar of events, you're free to do whatever you want to do on your days off, whether that be getting in some >


Flaming tables? Flaming barbed wire baseball bats? Oh my!


Flamin' Sandman, always getting in the way of my guitar swinging.

Did you know - it takes an entire PS3 SPU to simulate Carlito's hair? (Note, this may not be true.)



"Instead of simply following a WWE superstar, you /are/ a WWE superstar"





The ability to play as a selection of ECW "extremists" makes this year's SmackDown a more interesting prospect

>WWE continued

extra training, taking some much needed R&R, or even starring in a movie! Of course, each of these options will have an effect on many of your wrestler's attributes, affecting your popularity, statistics, and, ultimately, your fatigue. As you may expect, working out each and every day is going to leave your wrestler feeling battered and broken, so taking regular breaks, and not just training your guy to be a killer machine in each and every second you get, is the way forwards here.

However, this is just a nice addition - what's really important is that this year, they've got the storylines just right. Seeing you working your way up from the bottom of the pile, with the goal of being one day inducted into the Hall of Fame, you'll have to play the political game, try not to get on anybody's nerves, and get the attention of the people in power in order to gain your title shots, and immortality. Throughout the week, you'll have wrestlers leaving you messages on your phone, and the way you handle these calls will have a great effect on your overall career. While this could have been handled better (after all - if you interfere in the WWE champion's match, and destroy him, why do you not enter into a >

"The entire game's graphical overhaul looks spectacular"

Next Gen?

To be honest - this is our problem with SmackDown vs Raw 2008 - bar the graphics, there's nothing to it that really feels all that next-gen. It's the same wrestling engine, with the same problems as before, as if nothing's been looked at. You can't even use custom songs for your create-a-wrestler's entrance - unlike on Xbox 360. Hopefully the developers will finally close the lid on PS2 development next year, and pour the extra time into making the PS3 version something special.

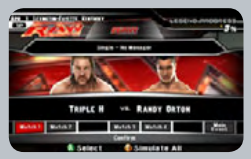


TO BE THE MAN, YOU'VE GOT TO BEAT THE MAN

A champions route is not always an easy one



Starting out in your locker room, you'll be asked by one of the GMs to try out for their show.



These will challenge you to beat your opponent either in a certain way, or in a number of minutes.



After the match, it's time to check out your guy's health, and give him a chance to heal any injuries.



Then, you simply work your way to the top, beating people up, and achieving certain goals on your road to greatness.



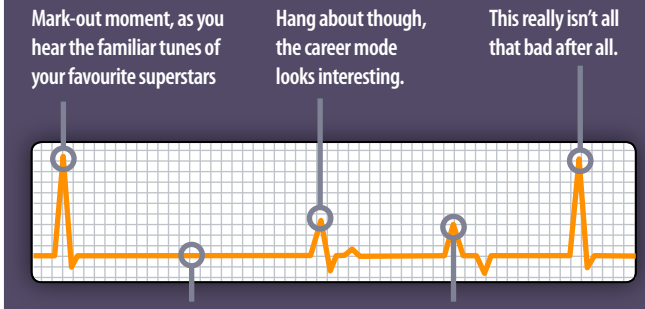
This is your goal - the Hall of Fame. It's also a special mode, which sets you challenges like beating Bret Hart with Stone Cold in a submission match.

Green and white T-Shirts are popular this season.





PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



24/7
Say your prayers, eat your vitamins, and become a true champion



Dating | **Training** | **Managing**

Dating

In between matches and shows, you can do whatever you want as a WWE superstar. From training to autograph sessions, from brushing up on your microphone skills, to starring in a film, you can do pretty much anything you can imagine, and yes, that includes going on a hot date with the Divas, although it will cost you $500. Hey, we thought that kind of thing was illegal...

>WWE *continued*

feud with the WWE champion?), it's a visible, and appreciated step up from last year's game.

Speaking of which, the entire game's graphical overhaul looks spectacular. If you've jumped straight from the PS2 to the PS3, bypassing the 360 version, you'll be amazed at the sheer definition of each of the grapplers. Flaming tables in HD have never looked so good.

The create-a-wrestler mode, too, has made a return to its former glory, and offers a damn sight more customisation options than the previous year's instalment. The create-an-entrance mode especially has been given (yet another) overhaul, bringing it close to, but not quite on a par with Day of Reckoning's.

Unfortunately, however, it's when you step into the ring that SmackDown begins to trip up, even if it doesn't tumble entirely. The grappling engine is still good, and wrestling against your opponents

The WWE Hall of Fame - HBK, Bret Hart, Stone Cold, Sandman, Mi... Wait a minute? Sandman?!

is fun, but for all the changes and buzz-words that have been bandied about, it's still the same game underneath, and as such, it's plagued by the same problems. You still can't break up your opponents finishing moves by punching them; the struggle submission system is ultimately useless against the CPU, which instantly manages to break your hold, and the fighting styles, while they make matches between cruiserweights and heavyweights more interesting, add much less variety when you're a technical wrestler facing, say, a powerhouse.

And this is really SmackDown's problem - while it's certainly not a bad game, it all just feels too familiar to give you that "wow" factor, especially when you see the game's still plagued by the same problems as every year. There are still far too many loading times, including the one in-between each entrance. In fact, there's now even a new loading time in-between transitions from camera to camera during wrestler's entrances too.

For 2008, the passion that made Here Comes The Pain so fantastic is beginning to come back, but it's not quite there yet. With an all too familiar wrestling engine, SmackDown could really do with taking a year off, and coming back a more re-invigorated, meaner wrestling machine.

It's good, but it's not as good as it could, and perhaps, should really be, and ultimately, that makes the Hulkamaniac in each of us a little bit sad.

P3Zine Verdict

A powerhouse of a game, but it's oh so familiar

+ Create-a-wrestler is back on top
+ Great career mode
- Let down by an old wrestling engine

82%

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Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Heritage: Tony Hawk series, Guitar Hero III
Link: http://www.thpg.co.uk/
OUT NOW

Tony Hawk's Proving Ground

Has the Birdman fallen from his perch?

Tony Hawk has been top dog (or bird) in the skateboarding genre for so long, that it was a complete shock when EA's Skate came along a couple of months ago and shook things up a bit. And it seems like Neversoft has been caught with its pants down this year - last time round, Project 8 was the reboot the series badly needed, but Proving Ground doesn't really take things any further. The developer has dominated for so long that it probably expected to just have to turn up this year, but it's been given the runaround by an unknown quantity. Believe it - the underdog is comfortably the better game, leaving Hawk looking as tired as his baggy-eyed in-game avatar.

That's not to say that Proving Ground doesn't hold some appeal for series veterans. Those who struggled with Skate's revelatory controls will find Hawk's tried-and-tested system fits like a warm, familiar glove. And Neversoft has a few tricks (and flips and grinds) up its sleeve, with slo-mo add-ons Nail The Grab and Nail The Manual joining last year's Nail The Trick to add a bit of variety to the button-based board-flipping.

Trouble is, Nail The Trick just reminds you of Skate all the more - as you use the analogue sticks to link tricks in close-up while time magically slows, the comparison to EA's game is noticeable, and sadly unfavourable. No, Hawk is at his best when stringing spectacular lines with seeming ease - so it's again a shame that the single-player missions fail to make the most of this, setting you rote tasks that make you long for the relative freedom of Skate. Outside the quests, you can take time out to work on your techniques with a number of places ripe for exploiting with your trickery. It's here that the control familiarity really shines, and you'll soon be >





You might not even unlock some of the better features until late on.



Three types of skating means that sticking points are much less problematic - a nice touch.

Next Gen?

Sadly, Proving Ground isn't making your PS3 sweat any. Sure, it's very smooth throughout, and the streets are busier than ever - though that's not necessarily a good thing - but textures are weak, and there's a lack of polish throughout. It looks very much like a last-gen game in high-definition - from the slightly sinister character models to the detail-lacking backgrounds - and once again pales into comparison with Skate.



PRO SKATER

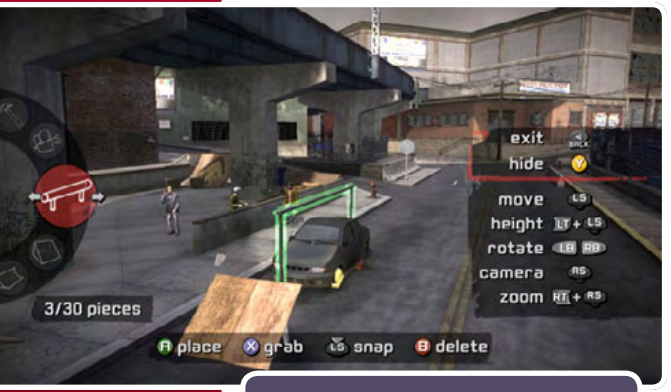
For those who know their Christ Air from their Benihana



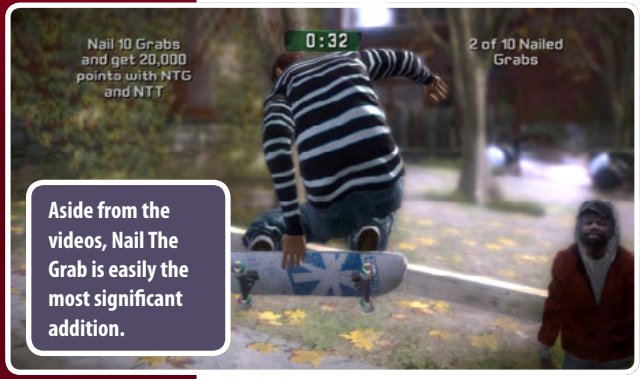
Rigger | Hardcore | Career

Rigger

There are three main types of skating in Proving Ground, each with different techniques to master, with real-life professional boarders to impress during the set tasks. Riggers are skaters who improvise - building their own ramps and rails to jump and grind. Sadly, it essentially boils down to a limited level editor for most of the story missions.



Creating your own lines is fun, albeit incredibly fiddly to accomplish successfully.



Aside from the videos, Nail The Grab is easily the most significant addition.

>Tony Hawk continued

ollie-ing into lengthy grinds, before kickflipping into a manual and using the new aggro kick (a nudge of R1) to build speed to get some serious air from the many jump ramps.

Proving Ground certainly isn't short of features - many people will love the creative aspect of 'rigging' (setting up home-made ramps for example to leap parked cars), or customising their own skate pad, and inviting people on their Friends list round. But given the ridiculously crowded Q4 schedules, its difficult to see too many people getting the most out of this feature. There's a few additional niggles, too - Proving Ground is visually unappealing compared to last year's game, with a greyish 'urban' look that's entirely at odds with the cartoonish leaps and superhuman tricks. And most of the characters you encounter are whiny and irritating - at least the new structure means you don't get stuck on one single task, so their bleating doesn't have the chance to get repetitive. The major saving grace is the fantastic video editing mode. This is the one area where Proving Ground is comfortably the victor over Skate, with a flexible yet intuitive system that provides a wealth of options and effects to create some cracking vids. Given that you'll be pulling off impressive moves more often here than in EA's game, the results are often sublime.

Despite being the most fully-featured Hawk yet, Proving Ground could wind up being the wake-up call that Neversoft needs to give the franchise a lick of paint. This year, the developer has phoned it in somewhat - next time, it's going to have to work hard to topple newly-crowned deck king Skate.

Chris Schilling

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



"There's a wealth of options and effects to create some cracking vids"

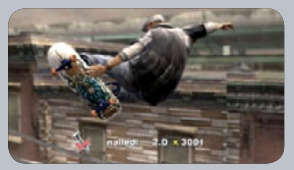


DECKED OUT

Fun and frolics with Bam, Bob and Rod



30 MINUTES - Learning the ropes and Nailing The Trick. Hawk veterans will breeze through the early stages.



2 HOURS - Trying (and failing) to set up the bloody camera in the bloody right place. Grr!



4 HOURS - Still moving the camera. This is getting slightly ridiculous now. Can't we just skate?



7 HOURS - Nearing the end of career mode - why does Bam Margera just want me to climb stuff?



12 HOURS - Taking your maxed-out skater online and impressing your mates with some sick vids.

P3Zine Verdict

A serious bail for the Birdman

\+ Video editing is terrific, and hugely addictive

\- Lacking the purity of the earlier games

\- Grimy look is depressing

79%

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Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Heritage: Tony Hawk series, Gun
Link: http://www.guitarherogame.com/gh3/
ETA: 23 November

Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock

P3Zine GOLD

Dying for a Slash?

You can tell the software silly season has arrived when high-profile titles like Guitar Hero III are riding somewhere near the back of the hype train. Perhaps it's partly down to the wealth of amazing games already around and coming soon, but it's probably more to do with original developer Harmonix jumping ship and leaving Neversoft in charge for this one. While the majority of the gaming press gets hot under the collar about the (admittedly hugely exciting) Rock Band, Guitar Hero III is well on its way to becoming one of the winter's hugest hits, having already clocked up well over a million sales Stateside. But does it deserve that success? Have Neversoft kept those lighters aloft, or allowed them to burn out?

Thankfully, it's the former. Legends of Rock contains everything that made the first two games great, and a whole lot more besides. And if some of the new additions add little to the formula, there's still enough new stuff to recommend it to anyone in the mood to rock out.

For a kick-off, the wireless Les Paul controller is easily the best Guitar Hero >





All the usual cast of caricatures returns, from punk chick Judy Nails to Hendrix-alike Xavier Stone.

"Have Neversoft kept those lighters aloft, or allowed them to burn out?"



Playing in front of a packed venue of fans chanting for more is a gaming high quite unlike any other rhythm-action title.

ALMOST FAMOUS

On tour with your band of buggers



Indie gig | Packing 'em in | Live! Tonight! Sold Out!

Indie gig

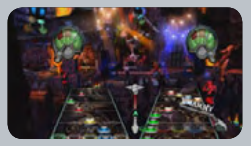
There's a few brief animated story sequences that help propel the career mode. To begin with, as in previous Guitar Hero games, you start off playing venues barely bigger than your average pub toilet, but you'll soon work your way up with some good gigs.

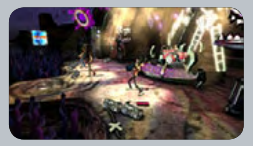
TABLATURE RASA
No need to fret

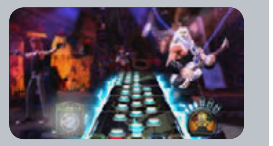
"The wireless Les Paul controller is easily the best Guitar Hero axe yet"


1 HOUR - Getting your first encore is a spine-tingling moment, and you're on the road to success

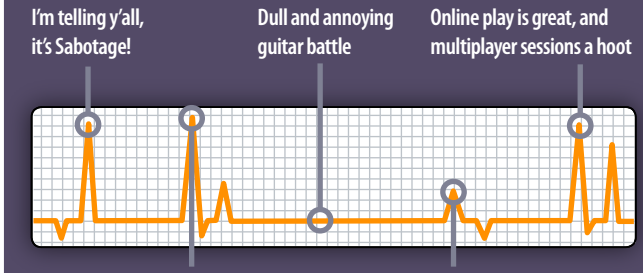

3 HOURS - Tracks are getting tougher now, and you're half-wondering whether to take the difficulty down a notch


5 HOURS - Career mode is down, and it's time to indulge in the multiplayer - on and offline


8 HOURS - Online battles are more fun than solo, and co-operative play is a delight


12 HOURS - Spending your cash on more unlockable songs, and upping the ante with Hard mode.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



>Guitar Hero III continued

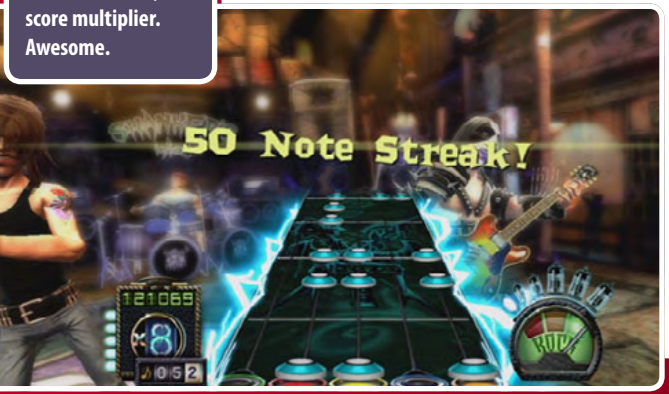
axe yet. It's comfortable to hold, pleasingly solid, and it looks much nicer than the previous peripherals. There's little change to the core gameplay - it's still about playing along to a series of tunes, using the coloured buttons on the neck in time with flicks of the strum bar with your right hand. Easy uses just the first three buttons (green, red and yellow), while Medium adds the blue and some more complicated picking rhythms. By the time you reach Hard you're faced with the dreaded orange button and some solos that experienced guitarists would struggle with. Try Expert, and you're playing more notes than there is in the actual song - and that's not an exaggeration.

Yep, in one or two cases you'll strum five times to hit three notes, which proves that Neversoft doesn't quite have the musical ear of the Harmonix guys, while one or two sections are artificially tough to add challenge for hardcore players. Then there's the new guitar battles, which use some godawful created-specially-for-the-game tracks, as you face off against the likes of Rage Against The Machine's Tom Morello, and eventually Slash. Sending special 'attacks' to affect your opponent's playing just seems jarringly abstract, and these sections are a blight on the game.

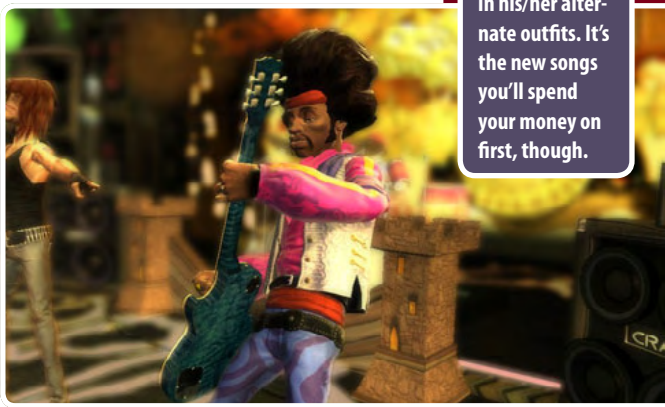
Fortunately, GHIII rocks in enough areas to make up for that. A near fully-licensed soundtrack helps, so instead of half-decent covers, you've got the original versions of Sabotage and Even Flow, to name but two. As ever, it's entirely down to your own personal taste whether you'll enjoy the soundtrack, but a more eclectic mix means there's something for everyone. And with plenty of downloadable content promised, you'll be able to pick and mix your own rocking soundtrack.

Most importantly, Legends of Rock retains that wish-fulfilment joy and sense of glorious absurdity of the first two games. Put simply, it's just a really fun game to play, and nothing's changed in that respect. With a partner by your side in co-op career mode, raising your Les Pauls to the sky in unison to set off Star Power is as triumphant as gaming gets. Forget Rock Band for now - if you're planning on a rock and roll Christmas, then make sure Guitar Hero's under the tree this Yuletide season. ●

Chris Schilling



As ever, tilt your guitar's neck towards the ceiling, and you'll activate Star Power to boost your score multiplier. Awesome.


Each guitarist really looks quite different in his/her alternate outfits. It's the new songs you'll spend your money on first, though.

P3Zine Verdict

You really will want to rock 'n' roll all night.

\+ Master recordings add authenticity
\+ Still as enjoyable as ever
\- Single-player battles are terrible; a little too 'safe'

90%

PlayStation Network

Roll up, roll up for the freak show, as it's gimmicks galore on the PSN

CTR - Crash Team Racing

Mari-who?

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Naughty Dog
Heritage: Crash Bandicoot
Price: £3.49

It looks like Mario Kart, it sounds like Mario Kart, it even drives like Mario Kart, but what you have to ask yourself is - for £3.49, is that really a bad thing? Although there's a bushy eared marsupial in the driver's seat, rather than a podgy Italian plumber, the two games do have a lot in common - starring characters from the Crash series, you get to race around a selection of sixteen tracks, collecting weapons and other assorted power-ups as you go. The track design tends to have a more 3D feel to it than Mario, with lots of sweeping hills and banked bends, which can really provide a challenge for even the seasoned driver. Good fun, and worth the £3.49.

> *"It's a challenge for even the seasoned driver"*



For an eight year old PS1 game, it doesn't actually look all that bad. Thankfully, it plays a lot better.

P3Zine Verdict
Money well spent
+ Great multiplayer
+ Nice track design
73%



The characters look a bit out of place, but the gameplay's still fine.

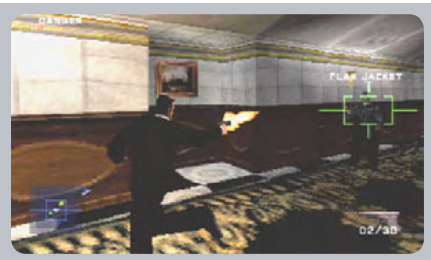
Everybody's Golf 2

Tee off in the PlayStation classic

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Clap Hanz
Heritage: Everybody's Golf
Price: £3.49

The Everybody's Golf series has always been famous for one thing - easily accessible golf gaming, that makes the sport enjoyable for "the rest of us", and Everybody's Golf 2 is no different. Bringing with it the same easy-to-use three click system that Everybody's Golf 1 made popular, there are seven new courses in this sequel, and a selection of less-anime styled characters to get to grips with, each of which can be customised with new gear you win in tournaments. Our only slight disappointment comes with how terribly the graphics have aged, but that's really not the game's fault.

P3Zine Verdict
Four!
+ Easy to pick up and play
+ Simple stroke system
75%



It looks a lot better than last month's game, but it all just feels too similar.

Syphon Filter 3

Time for some lethal Bond-age

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Eidetic
Heritage: Bubsy 3D, Syphon Filter
Price: £3.49

Picking up where the second game left off with a series of flashbacks, Syphon Filter 3 gets even more James Bond-y in this sequel, with 19 levels of international espionage action set in a variety of tropical locations. However, there is an overbearing feeling of similarity between this game and the previous two instalments, which does put a slight downer on events.

It's two games in two months for the Syphon Filter series, but for some reason we've missed out the second instalment of the story driven series, and instead skipped straight to the third. Good logic there, Sony.

P3Zine Verdict
We expect you to play
+ Cool new gadgets
− A bit too familiar
70%



Feel Ski

Feel annoyed

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Yuke's Media Creations
Heritage: SmackDown
Price: £4.99

Feel Ski costs $2.99 in the US. That's £1.50. Here, it's almost THREE TIMES as much. And maybe if it was a good game, we could forgive them, but Feel Ski is awful. Utilising Sixaxis controls entirely, the game sees you guiding your skier down a whopping selection of two slopes, while trying to not crash into anything or accidentally jump, because the controls are so horribly glitchy, they think the slightest tilt is you shaking the controller to pieces. Pricing itself against the likes of Super Stardust was its first mistake. Producing a rubbish game was its last.

P3Zine Verdict
It's no Amped.
+ It looks ok
- Hideously overpriced
30%



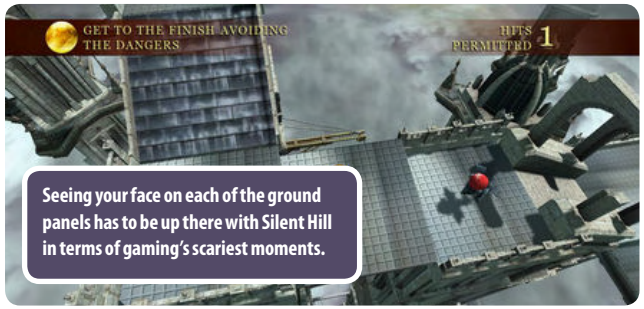
Pixel Junk Racers

Take away the "Pixel" and "Racers"

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Q Games
Heritage: Starfox Command
Price: £4.99

Taking place on a scalextric-type track, the concept of Pixel Junk Racers is almost too simple, as it requires a minimum of user input - simply hold the right trigger to accelerate, and push left or right on the d-pad to switch tracks. You have no control over where your car steers (which is something of a given, considering the setup), and this leads to a game that can feel incredibly unfair, especially when you find yourself surrounded by opposing cars and unable to move. It's not a complete car crash of a game, but equally not worthy of investment.

P3Zine Verdict
3, 2, 1, oh...
+ OK in multiplayer
- Not all that fun
54%



Trials of Topoq

No, it's not about a typo'd rapper.

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: SCEA
Heritage: None
Price: £3.49

The most graphically impressive PlayStation Eye game to date, Trials of Topoq has quite a lot in common with Super Monkey Ball, or Marble Blast Ultra, requiring you to guide a ball through a number of courses, which become infuriatingly hard in the later levels. However, the twist is that rather than controlling the ball directly, you must control the ball by making gestures towards it. Recognising where you're standing, the game will lower or raise tiles in the game around your shape, so through making a pushing action towards the ball, or simply walking into it, you can guide the ball through the courses.

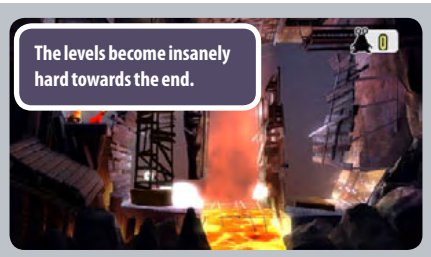
P3Zine Verdict
Roll along
+ Nice graphics
- Requires a camera
69%

Operation Creature Feature

One for the kids

Publisher: SCEA
Developer: Sony London Studios
Heritage: None
Price: £3.49

The second game this month to require the PlayStation Eye, Operation Creature Feature sees you guiding a group of small, furry blobby creatures around various levels, by letting them jump onto your hand. Thanks to the PlayStation Eye, you'll see your ugly mug in the background of the maps, and through sheer physical dexterity alone, you'll have to guide your hands - and the virtual creatures that are attached to them - through the levels to safety, kind of like those wire games you find at "wholesome" fairgrounds.



P3Zine Verdict
Slimy good fun
+ Sure to appeal to kids
- Tricky camera
67%

Blu-ray reviews

The latest and greatest new releases...



P3Zine GOLD

Spider-Man: The High Definition Trilogy

Sony Home Video | all three movies, including the extended cut of Spider-Man 2, and a second disc of extras for Spider-Man 3

Finally, Sony has released the first two Spider-Man movies with the debut of the third on home video, and as expected, the results are worth the wait. The first two movies still easily stand as some of the best cinematic comic book action out there, though Raimi's pacing sometimes slows a bit too much for action junkies. The Spider-Man 2 disc includes the extended cut, which is a nice bonus, but the picture and sound quality of the whole trilogy are excellent. There's a pitiful amount of extras on the first two movies though, but for fans, this series is a must-have.

P3Zine Verdict

Comic book fans rejoice!

+ Great movies
− Third movie isn't as great as the other two

90%



Meet the Robinsons

Disney Home Video | deleted scenes, games, music video, audio commentary, featurettes

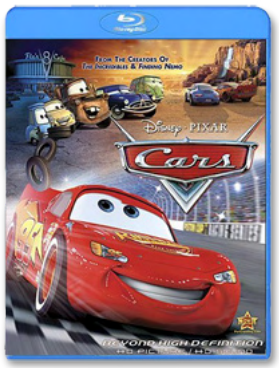
Painfully slow to start, Meet the Robinsons manages to pick up as soon as both the main character and audience actually, as the name suggests, meet the Robinson family. Possibly the most off-the-wall dysfunctional Disney family ever, they give the otherwise standard and clichéd fluff of a plot legs. The wonderful future-50s look helps a lot, and the absolutely flawless picture quality and great sound round out a decent CGI kid flick.

P3Zine Verdict

A decent Disney flick, but not their best

+ Great look and perfect picture
− The beginning is awfully slow

75%



Cars

Disney Home Video | carfinder game, behind the scenes features, deleted scenes, animated shorts

Disney's Cars is a strangely endearing addition to their ever-growing collection. At first glance, it seems like a quick attempt to cash in on the stereotypical, NASCAR-loving American culture. Yet, for all the bits of white trash humour, the movie works for both adults and kids with plenty of great gags and a sincere message about the love of driving. The blu-ray transfer is superb as usual, and Disney has packed the disc with all the old DVD version extras and new content as well.

P3Zine Verdict

Surprisingly entertaining

+ Looks and sounds fantastic
− Redneck, NASCAR

85%



From Hell

Fox Home Video | directors' commentary, 20 deleted scenes and alternate ending, trailer, trivia track

It's never easy to translate the overly verbose graphic novel ramblings of Alan Moore to the screen, and From Hell nearly buckles under the weight of its crowded narrative. Yet, the movie never falters overtly, despite its many red herrings, and proves to be an engagingly dark and interesting look at Jack the Ripper. The visuals are sharp and detailed, yet the beautifully dark, soft, almost dream-like focus of the cinematography is never compromised.

P3Zine Verdict

A solid Ripper thriller

+ Excellent presentation
− Plot almost too convoluted

85%



Scary Movie

Disney Home Video | behind the scenes featurette, deleted scenes, trailers

Scary Movie initially filled the need of parodying the endless slew of horror films from the late 90s, but after three sequels, watching the original makes the movie feel even less inspired than it did to begin with. As with the film after repeated viewings there's no great surprise there. Definitely amusing at times, though often painfully missing the mark, Disney's blu-ray transfer is excellent, with both the visuals and the audio coming up trumps, even if the extras are slim.

P3Zine Verdict

Funny, but mostly just stupid

+ Looks excellent
− Mostly just dumb

70%

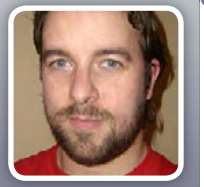
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EYE-O-SHOCK

Sony looks to the future as Sixaxis gets ready to rumble



The PlayStation Eye - not currently worth it, unless you're shy of a webcam.



Chris Schilling
Chris is the proud owner of all three 'next-gen' consoles. Every issue Chris will chart the progress of PS3 and commenting on Sony's latest and greatest initiatives.

Two main objects of interest I'd like to focus on this month. First of all is the PlayStation Eye, essentially the new EyeToy, and which is either available on its own for £24.99 or bundled with card-battling game The Eye of Judgement, which retails for a whopping £69.99. There's no contest which you should go for if you're planning on getting hold of the peripheral (clue: we gave The Eye of Judgement 35% last month), but it's whether you should bother at all at the moment that's the big issue. The Eye is undoubtedly a decent-looking bit of kit. It's a quality webcam, and someone's bound to use it for something good in the future - particularly if the later EyeToy games are anything to go by. Sadly, at the moment it's looking a little useless. The games available for the camera range from woeful to - at best - adequate. The Eye of Judgement obviously is the first and most significant title, and there's no doubt that its an impressive showcase for the technology, at least initially. Once the novelty of seeing your real-life cards transform into monsters on your telly has worn off, you're left with perhaps the most expensive and unwieldy card game ever made. Aqua Vita is worse. At £1.99, you're not shelling out much for this virtual fishtank, but it's so incredibly limited (and frankly boring as hell), you'll still feel robbed. The remaining titles on the PSN are marginally superior - Trials of Topoq has you guiding a ball with body movements, but as was the case with many EyeToy games, the precision required for the later stages is near impossible to achieve. Operation Creature Feature is about the best of a bad bunch - you use your hands to guide a series of - yes, you guessed it - creatures around different landscapes, with environmental hazards to avoid and features to trigger. It's an entertaining ten minute diversion but again, not worth the cost. Easily the most impressive use of the hardware is in the only free software EyeCreate - you can capture and edit clips, and use a wealth of effects to create your own short films. It's still fairly limited, but those with a creative imagination should get a fair few hours of fun.

"With Dual Shock 3 Weapons should feel suitably meaty"



Operation: Creature Feature is one of the more interesting PSEye titles.



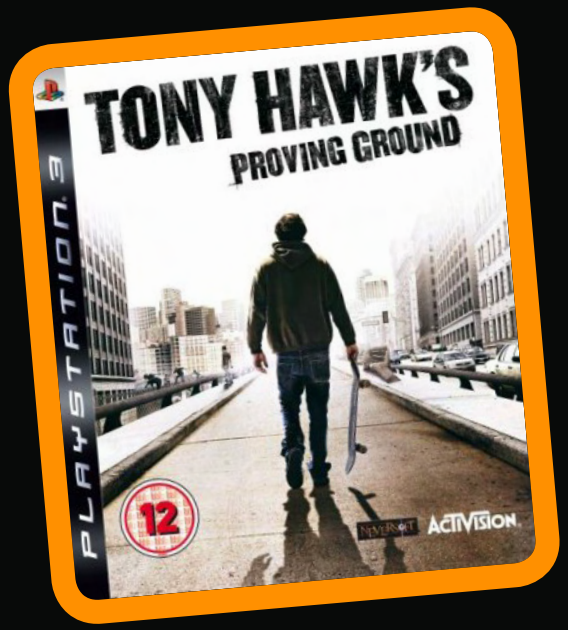
Insomniac's Resistance arguably stands the most to gain from rumble.

Dual Shock

The other big news this month is that Sony has revealed their new Dual Shock 3 controller, which should be on sale now in Japan, but us Europeans have to wait until next year. Ho hum. Anyway, while early reports suggest that MotorStorm hasn't benefited quite as expected from the change - of all PS3 exclusives so far, that was the one which seemed to miss rumble the most - there are a host of forthcoming titles all now rumble-compatible, including racers like Burnout Paradise and actioners Kane & Lynch and Assassin's Creed. Existing titles like Folklore and Resistance: Fall of Man will need a patch downloading before you feel that satisfying buzz in your palms. The weapons in the latter should hopefully feel suitably meaty with the feedback, and we'll let you know whether it's up to scratch in the coming months.

WIN! Tony Hawk's Proving Ground





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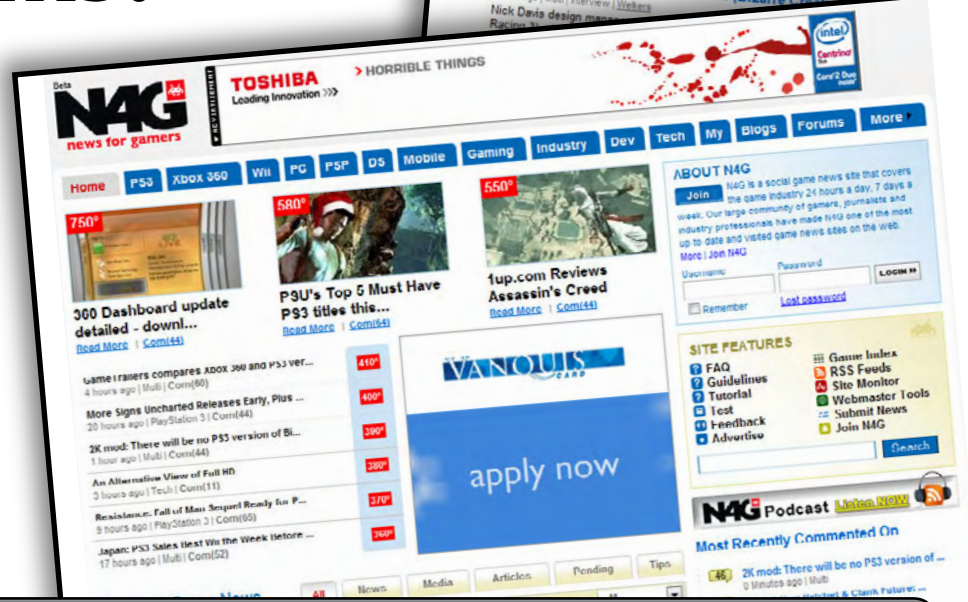
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