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P3Zine

Issue 19 | October 2008

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



WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2009

Exclusive hands-on preview

3 EXCLUSIVE VIDEOS

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

FALLOUT 3

"Violence and sheer destruction, with dark humour"

REVIEWED!

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

REVIEWED!

Ratchet & Clank Future: Quest for Booty

REVIEWED!

Mercenaries 2

PREVIEWED!

Guitar Hero World Tour

Welcome to P3Zine



This month we've been hands-on with WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2009, and the good news is that there's a stack of new talking points and features to get you back into the ring. We have all the latest videos and the inside track on what you can expect when it ships this November. We also have an exclusive interview with Pete Hines from the Fallout 3 development team, and a cracking First Look for the up-coming Guitar Hero World Tour.

On the reviews side of the coin we have the fun-packed Mercenaries 2 , the long awaited Star Wars: The Force Unleashed and the newly downloadable Ratchet & Clank: Quest For Booty. Enjoy the issue...

Dan Hutchinson, Editor
p3zine@gamerzines.com

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

MEET THE TEAM

There's nowt they don't know about PlayStation



Richard Melville
Climbing into the ring with SmackDown vs RAW 2009



Steve Hill
Falling in with the Fallout 3 development team



Chris Schilling
Blowing up anything and everything in Mercenaries 2

DON'T MISS!

This month's highlights...

The latest & greatest titles on PS3



WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2009

Massive hands-on grapple



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

Game of the month it may be...



Mercenaries 2

Full-on frenetic fire-rasing fun



Guitar Hero World Tour

First look preview

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

Bioshock
Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway
Guitar Hero 4
Skate 2
Eternal Sonata
NBA 09: The Inside
Alone in the Dark
GTi Club+
F.E.A.R. 2
WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2009
Fallout 3
Mercenaries 2
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed
Ratchet and Clank: Quest for Booty

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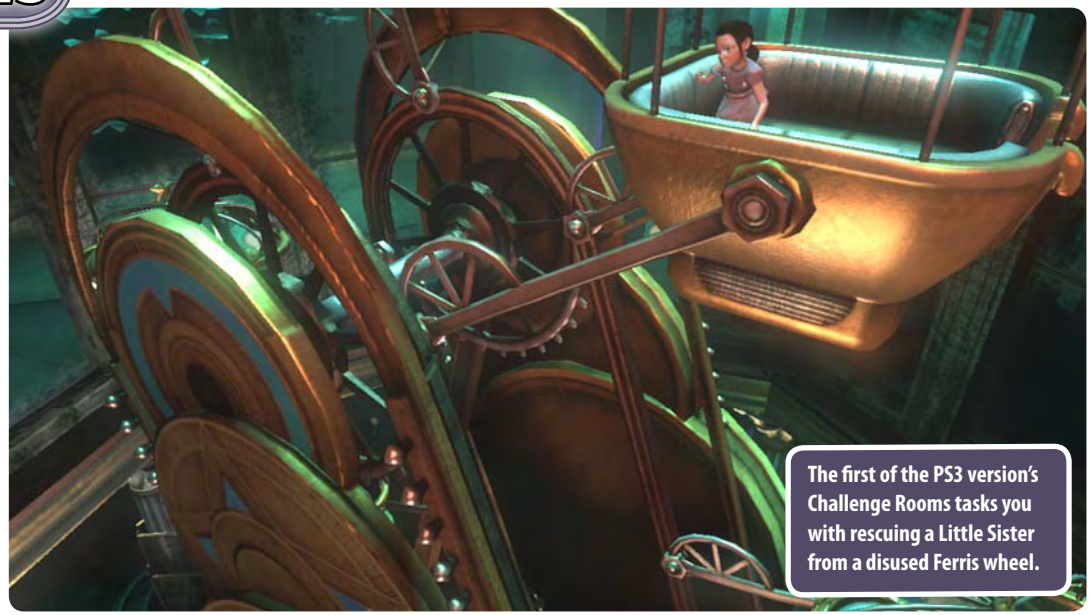
Bioshock

FIRST LOOK

The celebrated FPS is better on PS3

Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: 2K Games
Heritage: Dark Sector, Pariah
Link: www.2kgames.com/bioshock
ETA: 24th October

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



The first of the PS3 version's Challenge Rooms tasks you with rescuing a Little Sister from a disused Ferris wheel.



The variety in genetic powers allows players to mix up their approach to combat.

"One of the most critically acclaimed videogames of the past decade"



The imposing Big Daddies look just as powerful on PS3, and will make for even more fearsome opponents on the new Survivor difficulty.

What is it?

Ken Levine's inspirational art-deco styled first-person shooter is one of the most critically acclaimed videogames of the past decade, bolting on solid FPS mechanics to an amazing story and a unique, hugely atmospheric setting. The failed utopia that is the underwater city of Rapture is home to a number of bizarre, half-human residents, and you'll have to use your own genetically enhanced powers to make your way through the world, uncovering its secrets and the mystery surrounding your character's unknown past.

Why should we be excited?

It's been over a year since the 360 and PC versions, and the PS3 game offers some additional content to compensate for the wait. As well as Trophy support and an additional difficulty mode named Survivor – which really is aptly named, as even standard splicers take several hefty whacks or shots to down – the game will feature a series of Challenge Rooms, which offer further tough tests as well as puzzle-solving elements based on your knowledge of the dystopian environment and the genetic abilities of your avatar. These will be released as add-on content, with the first being made available for download shortly after the game's launch.

When can we expect to see more?

It's out the week before Hallowe'en, so it'll be battling with EA's Dead Space for the Scariest Game of the Month award.

Anything else to declare?

Worried about a shoddy port? Don't be. Early word suggests the framerate is rock solid and Rapture looks as gloriously decayed as ever.

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Gearbox
Heritage: Brothers in Arms series, Samba de Amigo
Link: http://brothersinarmsgame.uk.ubi.com
ETA: 26th September

Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway

HANDS ON

It's finally (almost) here…

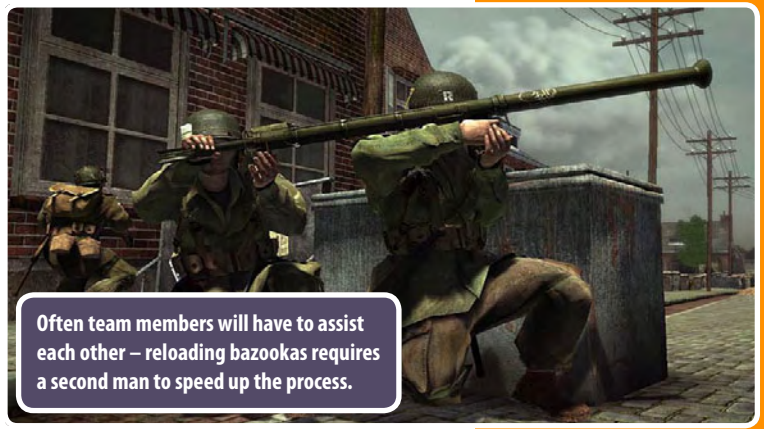


Missions require you to adjust your team's approach – some offer vicious, fast-paced firefights, others require slower, more stealthy movement.



The game can be played as a pretty straight FPS or something more akin to a realtime strategy.





Often team members will have to assist each other – reloading bazookas requires a second man to speed up the process.

What's the story?

Hell's Highway is based on the daring but ultimately unsuccessful WWII operation Market Garden – a strategy that attempted to deposit Allied troops into the Netherlands and move into Germany via the river Rhine. You control a group of soldiers at the heart of this bloody battle.

What do we know?

Creator Gearbox has been working with military historian Colonel John Antal to ensure this is true to life, and while the environments look a little different from your average WWII shooter – all idyllic Dutch hamlets – there's no incongruity. There's a consistency to the locales that puts most other shooters to shame – there aren't any magical indestructible fences to hide behind. Instead you'll be showered by chunks of masonry and wood as machine guns chew through your cover, your men cowering behind walls and sprinting away from danger as their protection is shredded by enemy fire. The squad controls are intuitive and flexible, allowing you to command your team to lay down suppressing fire as you flank your foes. Indeed, it's possible to get through much of the game without firing a shot in anger, should you choose to play the game that way.

"Hell's Highway is based on the daring but ultimately unsuccessful WWII operation Market Garden"

When can we see more?

Gearbox is still debating whether or not to provide a demo before the game's release, but either way, the finished game is out at the end of the month.

Anything else to declare?

The Brothers in Arms games have always had emotional storylines, and this one's no different. At its heart it's a compellingly human story.



Fallout 3

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Games for Windows XBOX 360 LIVE PLAYSTATION 3 Bethesda SOFTWORKS a ZeniMax Media company

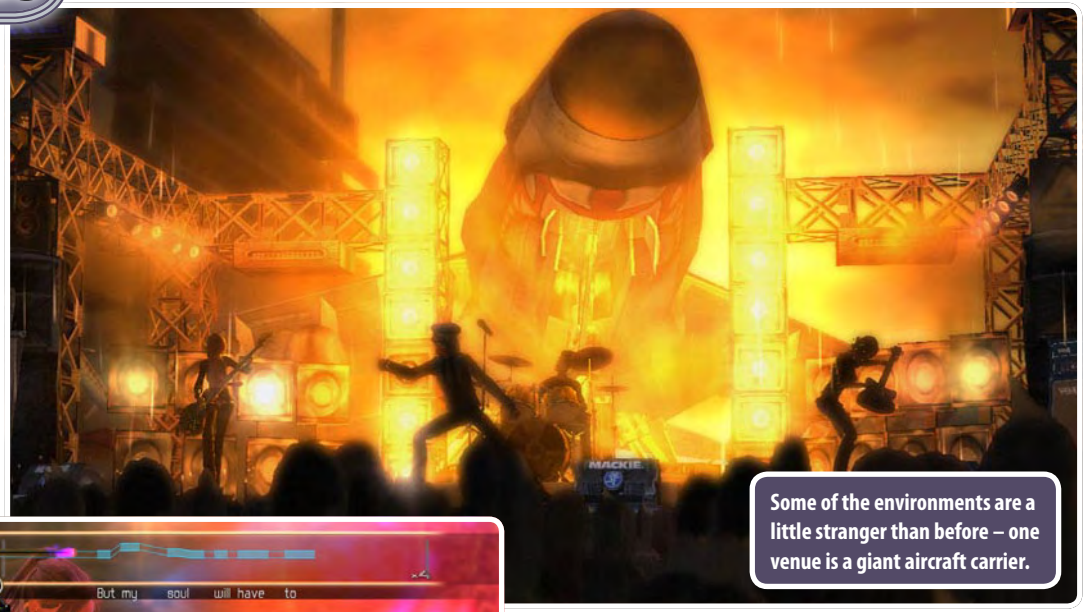
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Guitar Hero World Tour

FIRST LOOK

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Heritage: Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock, Tony Hawk series
Link: www.guitarhero.com
ETA: 7th November

Rockin' all over the world



Some of the environments are a little stranger than before – one venue is a giant aircraft carrier.



The screen furniture for band performances will be familiar to those who've played Rock Band, but with subtle differences throughout.



"The music creation package is something else, allowing several players to jam together"



You can set all your band members to the same scale, or have a different one for each.

What is it?

The music game genre can be as fickle a business as the pop charts. Guitar Hero has ruled the roost since its inception, but last year Rock Band well and truly stole its thunder. Well, Guitar Hero now wants its thunder back, and Activision and developer Neversoft have pulled out all the stops to ensure that the Guitar Hero series can once again regain its throne as the king of rhythm-action games. With a host of celebrity endorsements, a microphone and a drumkit (the latter clearly superior to its Rock Band counterpart) and a quite astounding song creation studio thrown in, World Tour really means business.

Why should we be excited?

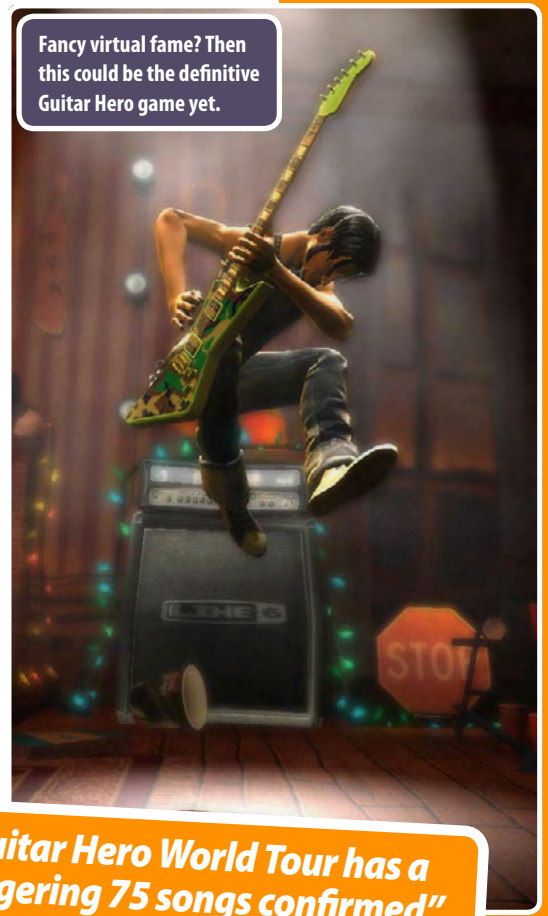
Peripheral master Red Octane has outdone itself with the quality of the equipment, with the guitar a massive improvement on last year's (still impressive) model. It's got a gorgeous sunburst finish, a quieter and more ergonomic strum-bar and a touch sensitive part of the neck which allows players to tap out those tricky solos on the section of the neck more often used for such fretsmithery. The drumkit is equally successful, offering five pads to Rock Band's four, with two cymbals, raised slightly above three rubbery pads – mimicking the layout of a real kit far better than Harmonix's effort. It's not nearly as noisy, either – the bouncy rubber surfaces provide excellent feedback, while also returning the sticks that much quicker, making faster drumming for fills and rolls easier.

The music creation package is something else though, allowing several players to jam together and lay down their own tracks. Select your key (which can be tweaked if you're after something a little more complicated >

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Guitar Hero World Tour



Can't beat a bit of Survivor! The soundtrack is fairly eclectic, ranging from poppier songs like Michael Jackson's Beat It to art-rock like One Armed Scissor by At The Drive-In.



Fancy virtual fame? Then this could be the definitive Guitar Hero game yet.



You'll even be able to customise your instruments in vivid detail.

"Guitar Hero World Tour has a staggering 75 songs confirmed"



A slightly flattering portrait it may be – he looks twenty years younger! – but you can play as Sting in the game if you so choose.



The amp setup makes a big difference to your band's sound.

> Guitar Hero World Tour continued

than major chords) and the five buttons on the guitar will each affect the notes that are played, while drum controls are self-explanatory.

Though you might not even need the drums to create a beat, as the guitar can be used to add beats in manually, or to create a backing track from several available rhythms. Button presses change these mid-song, enabling you to make intricate patterns with just a few taps on the guitar neck. And you can even tilt the controller to change the pitch. Fancy something which sounds a little more Eighties? Well, your guitar can also act as a virtual synth, too.

At the time of writing, the game has a staggering 75 songs confirmed, with more rumoured to be included. The animation on your band's musicians should be much better, with motion-capture used to make performances more realistic, while a host of stars are available as player characters, ranging from Jimi Hendrix to Billy Corgan and Sting.

It remains to be seen whether the note maps can match the perfect positioning of those in Rock Band, but there's no doubting that World Tour is an unbelievably complete package for budding rock stars.

When can we expect to see more?

We'll bring you our definitive verdict in next month's issue of P3Zine.

Anything else to declare?

If all that wasn't embarrassingly comprehensive enough, you'll be able to upload your tunes to the new GHTunes service – five are allowed at first, but if your compositions are good enough (ie, highly rated by other users) you'll be able to upload more. And Neversoft will include a Showcase feature for the very best creations.

INCOMING

Another magnificent seven…



Skate 2

Publisher: EA | **ETA:** Q1 2009

Having snatched Tony Hawk's crown last year, EA is looking to stomp all over it with the sequel to its innovative boarding sim. Set five years after the original, you're tasked with rebuilding the skating scene in San Venalona, with more off-board actions and double the number of tricks at your disposal to do it.

Eternal Sonata

Publisher: Atari | **ETA:** Winter

Tri-Crescendo's lush, musical-themed RPG – which chronicles the final days of Frederick Chopin – is hitting PS3 in a new-and-improved form later this year. Additional playable characters will be available, as well as new outfits, music, dungeons and endings, making this a worthy buy, even if you happen to have played the 360 version.





Soldner-X: Himmelssturmer

Publisher: eastasiasoft | **ETA:** October

Hitting the PSN next month is this stunning side-scrolling 2D shooter, with some terrific 1080p visuals. Already available on PC, the PSN version contains new enemies and boss fights, a host of additional music tracks, tweaked difficulty settings and Trophy support.

NBA 09: The Inside

Publisher: EA Sports | **ETA:** November

Probably the best-looking basketball game we've ever seen, NBA 09: The Inside's matches run at a solid 60 frames-per-second, using TV-style presentation to tell the story of your baller's rise to the top. With three different characters facing new storylines and challenges, there's plenty of replay value, too.



Alone In The Dark

Publisher: Atari | **ETA:** November

Eden's brave, experimental but flawed adventure hits PS3, with almost all its creases ironed out, making this the definitive version. The inventory system has been simplified, the car handling has been tweaked, the earthquake escape has had its difficulty adjusted, and we get one brand new action sequence. Worth the wait, we think.



GTi Club+

Publisher: Konami | **ETA:** November

OutRun 2 developer Sumo Digital are behind this remake of Konami's seminal arcade racer. You'll once again be driving around the Cote D'Azur, this time with up to eight players online. A host of game modes and some gorgeous graphics should make this an essential PSN download.



F.E.A.R. 2 – Project Origin

Publisher: Warner Bros | **ETA:** 13th February 2009

Activision's merger with Blizzard indirectly led to F.E.A.R being sold back to its original developers, meaning the sequel to its action-horror shooter can have a more appropriate title. Expect more of the same slow-motion, gore-packed blasting, but with better graphics and more advanced AI.



IN THE PIPELINE

OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JAN/FEB
NBA 2K9	VALKYRIA CHRONICLES	SHAUN WHITE SNOWBOARDING	RED FACTION: GUERILLA
QUANTUM OF SOLACE	MORTAL KOMBAT VS DC	SINGSTAR ABBA	THE GODFATHER II



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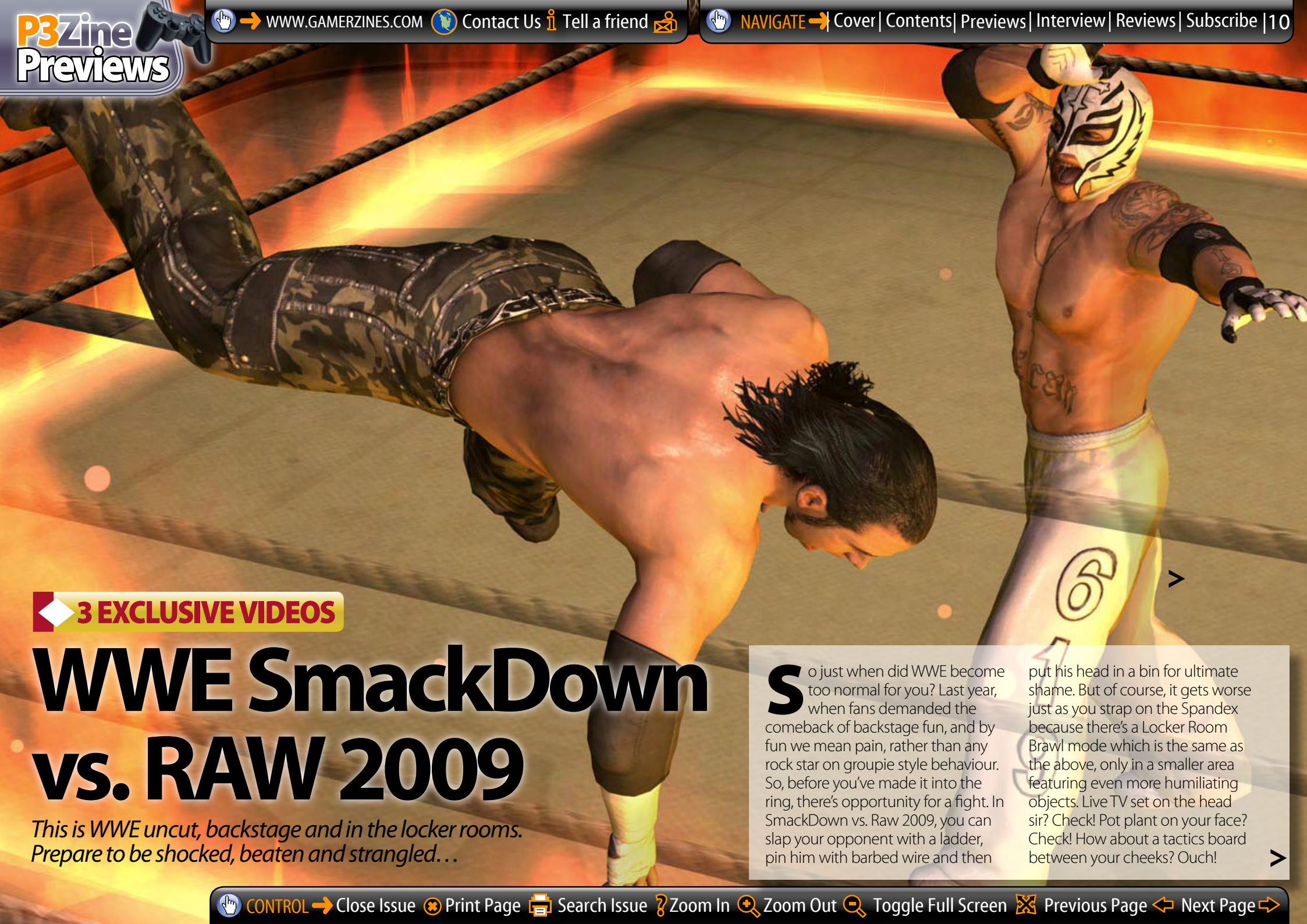
PLAYSTATION 3

XBOX 360 LIVE

DAY 1 STUDIOS™

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3 EXCLUSIVE VIDEOS

WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2009

This is WWE uncut, backstage and in the locker rooms. Prepare to be shocked, beaten and strangled…

So just when did WWE become too normal for you? Last year, when fans demanded the comeback of backstage fun, and by fun we mean pain, rather than any rock star on groupie style behaviour. So, before you've made it into the ring, there's opportunity for a fight. In SmackDown vs. Raw 2009, you can slap your opponent with a ladder, pin him with barbed wire and then put his head in a bin for ultimate shame. But of course, it gets worse just as you strap on the Spandex because there's a Locker Room Brawl mode which is the same as the above, only in a smaller area featuring even more humiliating objects. Live TV set on the head sir? Check! Pot plant on your face? Check! How about a tactics board between your cheeks? Ouch!

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Yuke's
Heritage: The SmackDown series
Link: www.smackdownvsraw.com
ETA: 7th November

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of WWE SmackDown vs. RAW 2009

> SmackDown 2009 cont.

Next up on the new list is the tag team matches, which have been expanded and enhanced because you wanted it. And six-man tag events, just to add to the carnage. The first thing you'll notice when playing is that when you're out of the ring taking a break while your team-mate fights, you can do much more than before. You'll have ample chance to strike your rival if he comes near your restricted area, and even grab him by his head like a rag doll. Hilariously, you can also distract the ref and pull the ropes back as your rival stumbles, leaving him to fall out of the ring like a tub of drunk, shiny lard. It's the kind if forward thinking gameplay that's not only gleefully satisfying but funny for everyone apart from the recipient. The camera pans more intelligently >

"You'll have ample chance to strike your rival if he comes near your restricted area, and even grab him by his head like a rag doll"



The cage always brings out the worst in each opponent – nowhere to hide and nothing to do but fight.

TAG TEAM

Get in the ring with a friend for new moves, modes and ringside happy slapping



Build it up | **Bring the pain** | **Tag combos**

Build it up

Build your skills and attributes with a friend in the hugely satisfying tag matches. Use timing to pull off new double team manoeuvres like this one. Prepare to fall!



Ah, the smell of victory.

> SmackDown 2009 cont.

this time around too, and you won't be distracted by close-ups of the things you don't want to see close-up – like ropes…

Guts of the game

So, you know all about the new tag and backstage action but what about the guts of the game – is it more of the same, only shinier with better animations and moves? Well yes and no because the core game has also been expanded to include the Road to Wrestlemania mode, which is essentially a story mode with new plots and scenarios you won't have seen on TV before. And we're not just talking cut-scenes either, although there's over two hours of them featuring the real voices of the superstars. Expect plot twists and surprises that actually change the way you play – enemies can unexpectedly gatecrash the party and your friend can turn into a foe in a matter of seconds. There's several different stories to play, featuring either Cena, Mysterio, Batista, Undertaker or Triple H. >

"The core game has also been expanded to include the Road to Wrestlemania mode"



While the Superstars look better than ever, so does the stadium, with new lights and camera angles.



Feel free to argue with the ref if you disagree with him.

EXCLUSIVE VIDEO #1 Click the Play icon on the video below to play now!





You still have a range of objects you can use to batter your opponent.

WRESTLEMANIA

This story mode is the closest you'll get to WWE: The Movie



Co-op | Horror story | Hippity hop

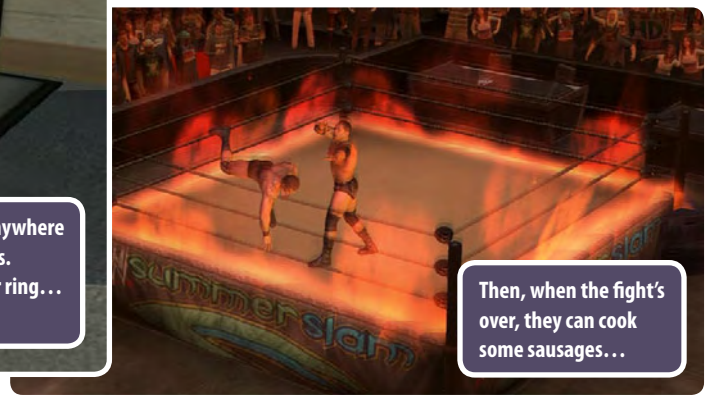
Co-op

Batista and Mysterio have a co-op mode available in the Road to Wrestlemania mode, but you'll need to watch how the story unfolds…



Fights can now break out anywhere you see a couple of wrestlers. Locker room or backstage or ring… these people aren't fussy.


Now, that's really going to hurt.



Then, when the fight's over, they can cook some sausages…

> SmackDown 2009 cont.

Mysterio and Batista's story can be played as a co-op game too, cranking up the time you'll spend playing the game by yourself or with a friend. If you needed any more incentive, the Road to Wrestlemania mode unlocks new matches and modes too. It's no exaggeration to say it's the biggest WWE game yet and it's now looking stunning on PlayStation 3, proof that games on Blu-ray are not only better but, increasingly, bigger thanks to their giant storage space. Teasingly, THQ have also confirmed to us extra, downloadable goodies but haven't told us what to expect just yet. As a neat extra, loading screens now display achievements and stats too.

Next up: Create a Finisher mode, back to prove that custom combos are the best thing ever. You can change the speed of the animations, the name of the finisher (either make your own or pick from a list) and you can preview them all too. It's the science of wrestling, laid bare in step-by-step option screens. >

"It's no exaggeration to say that it's the biggest WWE game yet and it's now looking stunning on PS3"

EXCLUSIVE VIDEO #2 Click the Play icon on the video below to play now!

> SmackDown 2009 cont.

When in preview mode, you can pick the camera angles you like and start to dribble about the possibility of using the finisher against live bait. Talking of which, it's time to unveil the Inferno match which is based on the first time flames ever made it to WWE a decade ago. This time, however, the flames around the ring get bigger the more you slap your opponent, turning the screen crimson. As the flames rise to ridiculous heights, you can finish your opponent by lobbing him into the fire. Yes, you will see men on fire before security comes in and calms the flames. Of course, all this extra pain means you can expect a higher rating for the game, not that it makes a bit of difference, apart from the fact it let's the developers do exactly what you asked for in the first place. That's the key to WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2009 – simple supply and demand. You asked for it and THQ have given you everything you ever wanted in a wrestling game. Where it goes from here is anybody's guess, but you'll never be anything less than fully satisfied with the new WWE on PS3.


Decision time: face, chest or nuts? The choice is yours.

INFERNO

Step into the ring or become a flame-grilled whopper!



Tiny flames | **Burn baby burn** | **Final move**

Tiny flames

Start the game and you'll see some tiny flames. As the action gets towards critical point, the flames become walls which you can throw your opponent into.


If all else fails, you can just punch them!

"You asked for it and THQ have given you everything you could want in a wrestling game"

EXCLUSIVE VIDEO #3 Click the Play icon on the video below to play now!

P3Zine SmackDown vs Raw 2009

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 90%

This update could be one of the best yet





THE OFFICIAL VIDEOGAME

SBK08

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APOCALYPSE SOON

Could this be the RPG for people who don't like RPGs?

"Our goal with the new perspective is to better immerse the player in the Fallout 3 world"



Pete Hines: Vice president of PR and marketing

With the final touches being put to the post-apocalyptic epic Fallout 3, we thought that now would be the ideal time to grill Bethesda mouthpiece Pete Hines…

RPGs are traditionally associated with wizards and goblins. Could Fallout 3 be the RPG for people who don't like RPGs?

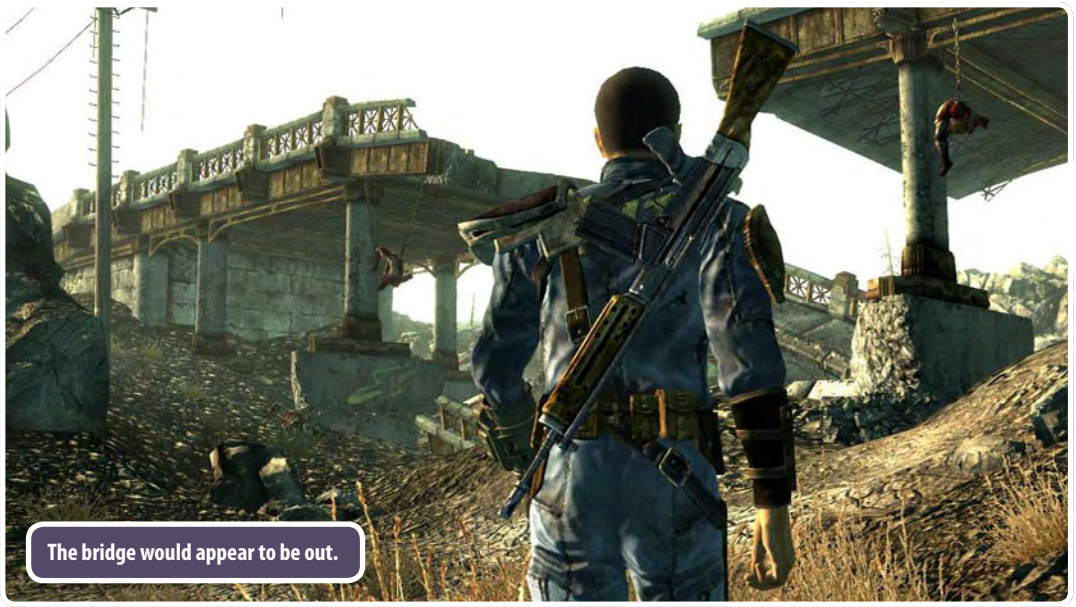
It's a good question. I think Oblivion actually did a lot of that, even though it is orcs, goblins and elves. But we heard from a lot of folks who said 'I've never played an RPG in my life. I don't like RPGs but I really liked Oblivion.' I think there's probably more to that in Fallout because of the fact that it is first-person with guns, and it's post-apocalyptic. At the same time it feels like something else you would have played; it's a bit more familiar, it feels less RPG just visually but then it's also very different because of all of the choices you get to make and the way you get to play your character.

You seemed to have covered all the possible bases with the character's viewpoint…

Well, Oblivion had a first and third person view, but the third-person one was a bit rubbish – I think we can all agree on that. Honestly, we mostly put it in there for a vanity mode, like if you want to look at >



That'll learn him.



The bridge would appear to be out.

> Interview continued

your character and the kind of stuff you're wearing. We didn't realise how many people would play the game that way. So when we did Fallout, one of the first things was that you've got to be able to change the perspective; you've got to be able to target a gun on somebody. So we went to that over-the-shoulder camera in recognition of the fact that if you're carrying a gun you have to be able to hit where your crosshair's aiming at.

The scenery isn't quite as lush as Oblivion…
It's a different type of beauty, I think. It's fascinating. You walk around and see these destroyed overpasses and all these locations that you uncover. You still get that very cool sense of place, as you come over a hill and there's a destroyed Washington DC down in the distance.

How do you justify the extreme violence in the game?
It's violent but it's not horrifically realistic. I think we have tried to combine the violence and the sheer destruction, with dark humour. It's almost Quentin Tarantino tongue-in-cheek violence where it's so over the top that it's a bit humorous. Seeing somebody's leg get blown off… it's not disturbing, it's funny. That was the goal anyway. These guys are nuts. Society has fallen into complete anarchy and these nut jobs are roaming the wasteland, and stringing any unsuspecting victims up, putting their heads on the counter-top to look at when you walk into the grisly diner. So it's definitely done for an effect, which is the world you are in is not okay, and society is not making a comeback. It's the harsh reality of the world set against some of that humour that is a part of what makes Fallout the game it is.


The over-the-shoulder shooting angle clearly makes targeting easier.


The Tourist Board had its work cut out…







FALLOUT 3

Publisher: Bethesda
Developer: Bethesda
Heritage: Oblivion
Link: http://fallout.bethsoft.com
ETA: 31st October

"It's Quentin Tarantino tongue-in-cheek violence where it's so over the top that it's a bit humorous"

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

PETER MOLYNEUX "WE'RE WORKING ON DLC"

WORLD EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW

FABLE II

Massive hands-on preview and exclusive screenshots inside...

PREVIEW! GUITAR HERO 4

PREVIEW! HAIL TO THE CHIMP

PREVIEW! FALLOUT 3

REVIEW! WARHAMMER

360Zine

Fable 2 is the RPG game of the year, and we have played it. Read on...

- 11 PAGE FABLE 2 SPECIAL
- EXCLUSIVE HANDS-ON PREVIEW WITH THE RELEASE CANDIDATE VERSION
- EXCLUSIVE VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH DEVELOPER PETER MOLYNEUX
- EXCLUSIVE SCREENS
- FABLE 2 PUB GAMES REVIEWED

360Zine FREE! For Xbox 360



Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Pandemic
Heritage: Full Spectrum Warrior, Mercenaries
Link: www.pandemicstudios.com/mercenaries/index.php
OUT NOW

Mercenaries 2: World in Flames

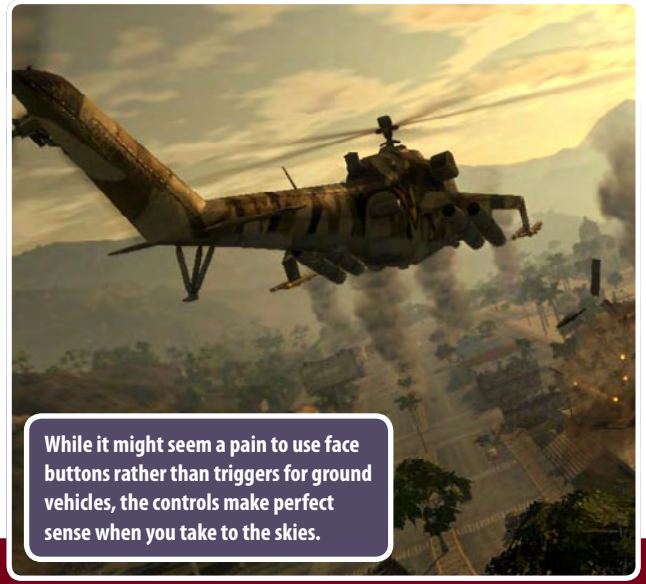
Blowing the hell out of it some more

As a subtitle, 'World in Flames' doesn't quite cut it. The original Mercenaries had 'Playground of Destruction', which is a little nearer to the mark. Replace the last word with 'annihilation' and you've finally got something which gets close to the level of devastation you'll witness during Mercenaries 2. In Mercs 2, everything explodes. You'll see trees collapsing to the floor from misplaced heli-drops, buildings reduced to rubble from missile blitzes and burning foliage throwing huge flames into the air. If games are all about bang-per-buck, then Mercenaries 2 has to be the best-value game ever created – or at least since the equally-underrated Earth Defence Force 2017.

Like EDF, Mercenaries 2 is certainly no technical showcase for the power of current-gen consoles. Indeed at times, it's an absolute mess, with some of the worst water effects you'll see this generation, some areas which are laughably texture-free, and bags of glitches, some of which you'll be astonished managed to get past quality testing. >

Roll over screen for annotations




While it might seem a pain to use face buttons rather than triggers for ground vehicles, the controls make perfect sense when you take to the skies.

DIRTY DEEDS

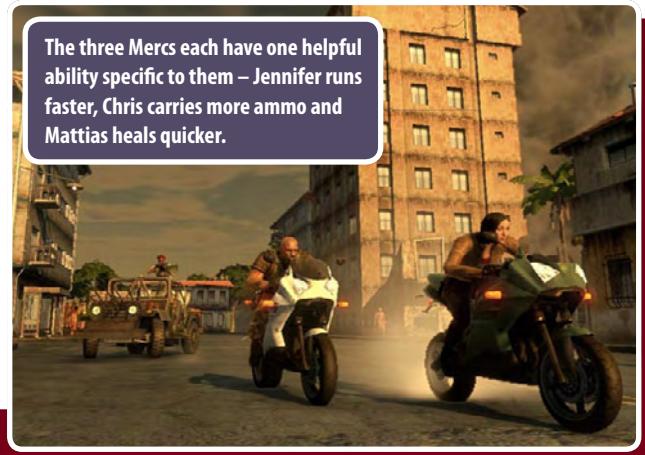
Done dirt cheap? Not quite



Steal | Swap | Subjugate

Steal

You'll often be asked by one faction to rescue one of their members from an enemy stronghold, or to subdue or kill a rival leader. But you'll need supplies and money to get about, so tagging piles of cash and petrol tanks for your pilot chum to pick up is an essential part of the game.


The three Mercs each have one helpful ability specific to them – Jennifer runs faster, Chris carries more ammo and Mattias heals quicker.



The car handling is extremely forgiving, allowing you to corner on a sixpence.



Enemies do occasionally have a habit of standing right next to explosive barrels. Capture this gun turret for even more awesome firepower.

"Mercs 2 might be easy at times, but makes up for that by providing boatloads of FUN"

> Mercenaries 2 continued

While we're talking about the game's downsides, it's impossible to ignore the enemy AI, which is often ludicrously bad or simply non-existent. These guys are the kind of idiots who will happily stand out in the open with a perfectly serviceable bit of cover next to them, as you casually take aim with an RPG and blow them to kingdom come. Often, they won't even react when you pull out the big guns, or set an air strike to take out a large group. And should you accidentally wander very close to an enemy – easily done, considering most of the time you'll feel near-invincible thanks to their general ineptitude – they'll kindly allow you a few seconds to react before firing on you. But should you find yourself in a situation where you're outnumbered and outgunned, then you really don't have to worry. Simply jog away a hundred yards, and you'll regenerate your health while your pursuers give up the ghost within seconds.

Sound awful? It's really, really not. Mercenaries 2 might offer a bit of an easy ride. It might be a buggy, glitchy, silly game with a weak plot, some entirely pointless sidequests and a too-short Story mode, but it makes up for all that and more by providing boatloads of FUN. And yes, those capital letters are warranted. It's a game that's not bothered >

FREEZE FRAME

If in doubt, blow it up! Your guide to your first few days with Mercs 2



20 MINUTES
Getting your first big pay packet, and spending it on some brand new toys.



2 HOURS
Realising one assault rifle is no way to take down a tank. Call in some support!



5 HOURS
The awesome Panzercycle – a bike with treads and twin miniguns. Amazing.



10 HOURS
Story's just about over, though the final missions are trickier than usual.



15 HOURS
Annihilating the rest of the city with a friend in tow – just because you *can*.




Rocket-launchers are cumbersome, but they're the only way to take choppers out from the ground.


There's a very neat joke near the start involving a bike which we won't spoil.

> Mercenaries 2 continued

about being high art, it doesn't hold any delusions of grandeur or pretend to be anything it's not. You might think its story setup – with various Venezuelan factions and PMCs fighting oil wars for cash – has the potential to offer scabrous political satire, but then you'll see a cutscene where your character's shot in the arse before falling into the sea and realise this isn't a game which is going to take anything seriously.

The beauty of Mercs 2 is its unpredictability, and the genuinely go-there, do-anything mentality. You're constantly expecting to bump into invisible walls which never come. You think you might have found a building which can't be destroyed, but within seconds it's a smouldering shell thanks to a well-placed nuke. It's gloriously unrestrictive, and while that's partly responsible for the game's technical issues, in truth, they all add to the fun. You've not lived until you've seen your pursuer plough straight into a tree, or see a soldier floating in mid-air, or had to punch a wall to execute a member of your target's 'entourage' because he's somehow become stuck in the masonry.

Magic moments

It's also about moments – wonderful things of wonky beauty and explosive insanity that you'll be telling your friends or Internet buddies all about the next day. Leaping off a building and hijacking a helicopter on the way down with a grappling hook. Swooping down and delivering a bunker buster into an oil rig, and watching the kind of explosion that would give Michael Bay a hernia. Even smaller pleasures like launching a rocket into a pile of crates, and seeing one of the flying boxes take out an unsuspecting guard well away from the scene – they all add up to make Mercenaries 2 a must-not-miss experience. And in the jump-in, jump-out co-operative mode, it's considerably better.

Breeze through the Story mode stages in the quickest possible time, using the most sensible methods of engagement, and you'll likely wonder how on earth we reached this conclusion. Mercenaries 2 is about getting creative with your destruction, doing pretty much literally whatever you want, playing the fool and loving every minute of it. To be totally honest here, it's not for everyone. But for us this is hands-down the most "against expectations, surprisingly good" game of 2008 so far. ●

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



"For us this is the most surprisingly fantastic game of 2008 so far"


A sneaky co-op tactic – distract the tank driver while your mate shoots him in the head from the side.

P3Zine Verdict

Ignore the haters – this is explosively brilliant stuff

\+ Massive amounts of fun
\+ Unparalleled freedom
\- Technically all over the place

87%



Publisher: Activision
Developer: LucasArts
Heritage: Star Wars series
Link: www.lucasarts.com
OUT NOW

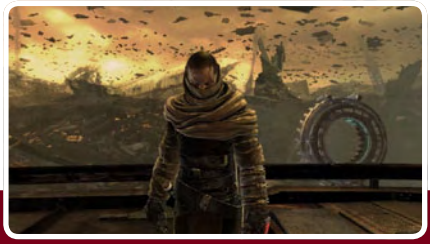
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed

P3Zine GOLD

Forget lifting logs and talking to Yoda in a swamp, this is where it's at…

All Star Wars games begin with the Star Wars theme music and that 'In a galaxy far, far away…' text disappearing into the middle of the screen. It's a classic, rousing intro but what follows is usually a huge disappointment. It's been years since a proper Star Wars game has impressed us. LEGO Star Wars is great, but it doesn't really make the hairs on the back of your neck stand up, or give fanboys the knee-trembling game that all Star Wars fetishists secretly dream of.

So, let's dispense with the suspense and cut to the chase – Force Unleashed is the best proper Star Wars game in years, the best since Rogue Squadron on the GameCube, in fact. The game is a third-person adventure with the Force pulsating at the very core of it.



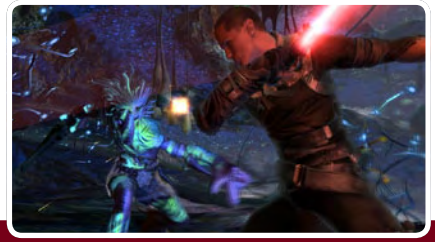
"A third-person adventure with the Force pulsating at the very core"

You begin as Darth Vadar, walking through a forest, executing Wookies with a lightsaber or simply pushing them off bridges by using the Force. While TIE fighters buzz overhead, a simple Force push can topple a building, and it looks incredible. Darth Vader is every bit the fearsome Dark Lord you expect him to be but, 20 minutes in, you'll take control of his young apprentice and help him take over the world.

Feeling the Force

Simply push the right trigger and you can grip anything (people, boxes, robots) and fling them. You've also got a lightsaber and a range of upgradable Force abilities. In gameplay terms, Force Unleashed is great and a breath of fresh air – it's out with button bashing and in with strategy – every move needs to be considered. Special mention should be given to the cutscenes and production too. George Lucas has been talking up Force Unleashed for the last couple of years, and it's clear that his involvement has genuinely stretched to the story, new characters and direction. The cutscenes could happily sit in a real Star Wars film, and everything from the voices, music and scenarios seem familiar. You even have a love interest and robot tutor.

Force Unleashed plays like the original Star Wars in reverse, only you're a Force-enabled Vadar-aid with issues and woman problems. The love interest is Juno Eclipse, a blond pilot with an English accent >



MEET THE NEW CREW

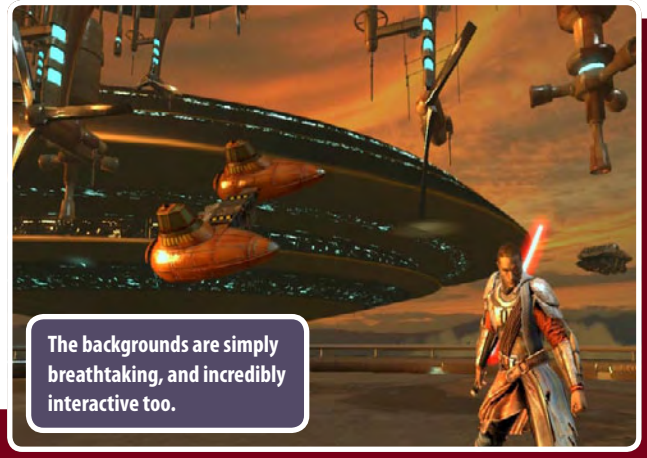
Boy meets sexy girl and camp robot…



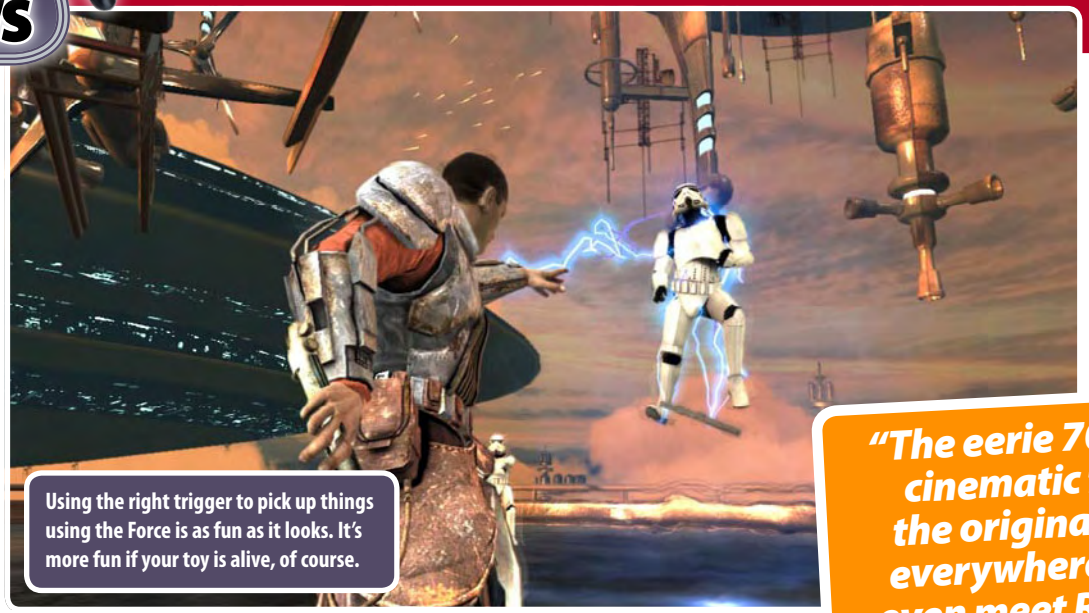
The Apprentice | **Juno Edipse** | **Robot**

The Apprentice

This is you, apprentice of the Vader. You'll need to use the Force to get new moves and upgrade your weapon skills but it's worth it. Especially after playing the first level as Darth Vader, as it makes you even more determined to master the Force.



The backgrounds are simply breathtaking, and incredibly interactive too.



Using the right trigger to pick up things using the Force is as fun as it looks. It's more fun if your toy is alive, of course.



With such awesome powers, it's only fair that you'll meet some terrifying bosses.

"The eerie 70's-style cinematic feel of the original film is everywhere. You'll even meet R2 units"

> Force Unleashed continued

and the robot is, predictably, a bit camp. His ability to mimic the appearance of other characters is amusing – especially as he magically turns into Ewan Macgregor's Obi-Wan in an early scene.

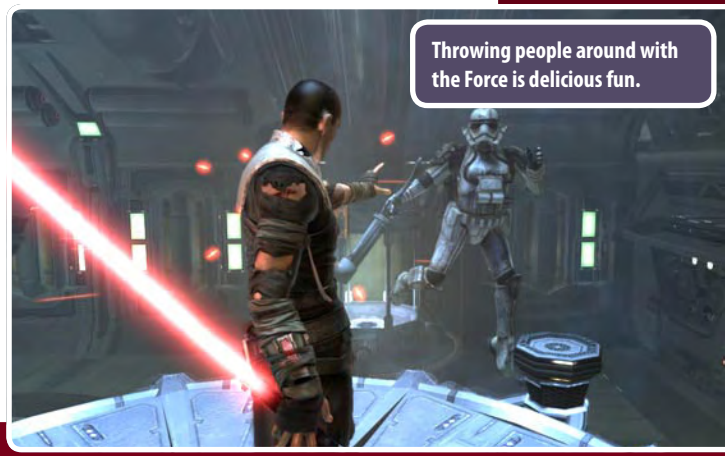
The game is set in the third person but when the dramatic end-of-level bosses appear, the game pans to a side-on scrap-fest, with brutal lightsaber action and screen-spasming Force explosions. The sheer amount of action can be confusing at first, although it soon becomes familiar. In other games, background battles are usually eye candy – a film running in the background which doesn't effect the action of the game. In Force Unleashed, space ships career from the background into the foreground, creating chaos. The fact that Force Unleashed features an original plot rather than being tied to a film means LucasArts have had time to make the game shine. Whether it's forest or indoor scenes, the eerie 70's-style cinematic feel of the original film is everywhere. You'll even meet R2 units – and they make really great projectiles.

The only negative within the stunning cinematics (other than some occasionally clunky in-game animation) and clever gameplay is that, while it's rushing to amaze you, the game isn't immediately intuitive. It's a good 30 minutes >





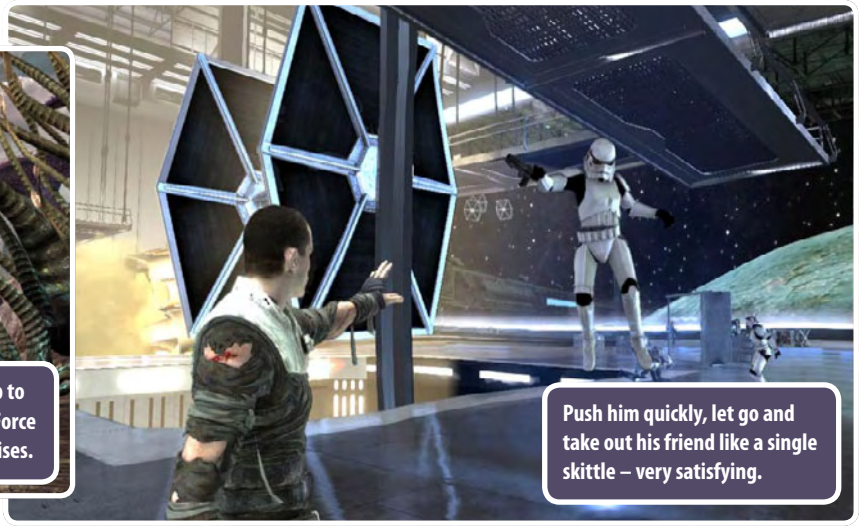
Remember, no game where you get to use a lightsaber can be all bad.



Throwing people around with the Force is delicious fun.

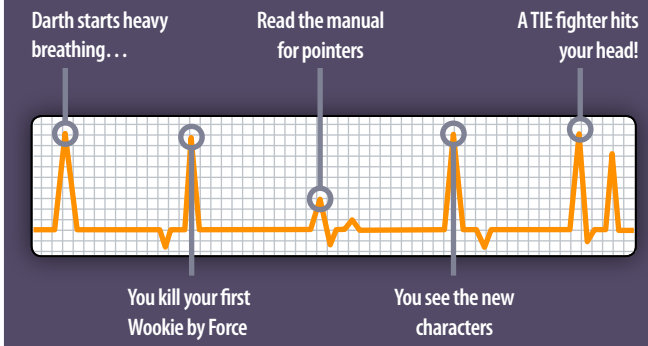


From forest to spaceship to weird mushroom land, Force Unleashed always surprises.



Push him quickly, let go and take out his friend like a single skittle – very satisfying.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



> **Force Unleashed** continued

before you can access the useful training mode and there are few on-screen hints to help guide you. Purists would argue that it destroys the jaw-dropping opener, and they may well have a point, but it would've been nice to have a couple of pointers before the game begins. The throwing of objects has been done in games before but it's perfected in The Force Unleashed. That said, it feels a bit non-mystical to have the lock-on target necessary to show you what you can pick up with the Force. A better gameplay mechanic, like some form of glow, would have felt less, ahem, forced. Once mastered, throwing enemies into each other is sadistically addictive, as is plunging lightsabers into screaming soldiers.

Basing a game almost entirely around Force moves is a brave step but as a result, Force Unleashed feel like a new chapter in the Star Wars series. Forgive the glitches. Simply watching the cutscenes is vital for fans as the new story feels like an essential piece of the Star Wars puzzle. Add in the polished gameplay and authentic 'made by George' feel and you've got a classic addition to the Star Wars series. ●

Richard Melville

"Once mastered, throwing enemies into each other is sadistically addictive"



The Force can be used for extra speed and attacks.



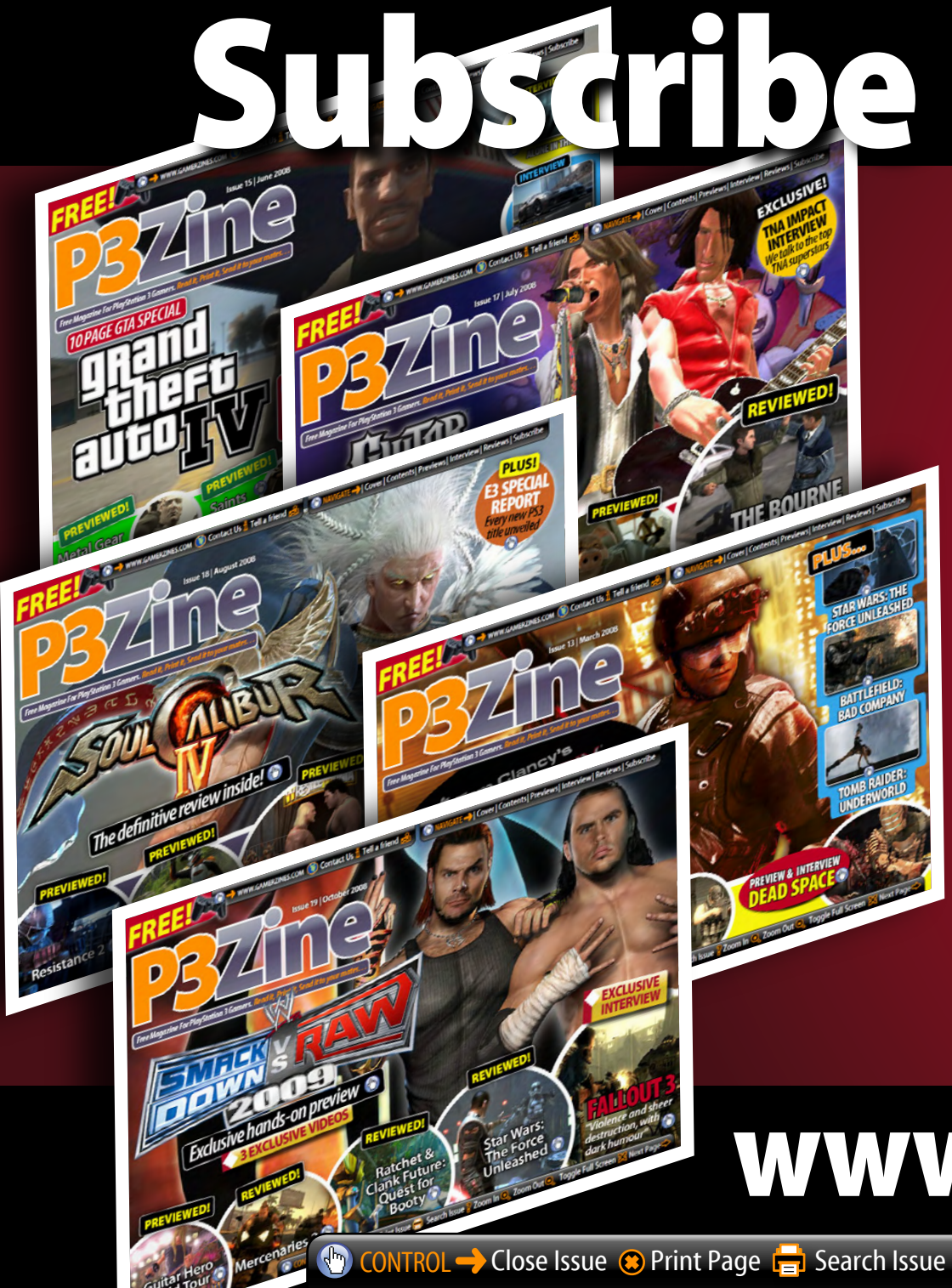
P3Zine Verdict

A classic new chapter – and the real New Hope

+ Stunning visuals
+ Engaging and polished plot
+ Clever Force move system

90%

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Ratchet and Clank: Quest For Booty

Is Ratchet's download debut worth your pieces of eight?

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Insomniac Games
Heritage: Resistance: Fall of Man, Ratchet series
Link: www.us.playstation.com/PS3/Games/Ratchet_and_Clank_Future_Quest_for_Booty
OUT NOW

Siren: Blood Curse might have been an excellent game, but it wasn't the best advert for downloadable titles on PSN, requiring several lengthy downloads before it was ready to play. Quest For Booty requires just one – admittedly still a pretty hefty one, but you'll be able to start adventuring before too long. And, if this four-hour episode represents the future of the series, then sign us up for a few more.

While Tools of Destruction offered amazing graphics and fun platform-shooting antics, it occasionally felt padded out. Not so here – given such little time to impress, Insomniac has streamlined everything, so the pacing feels absolutely spot on. You'll visit a number of different areas in Ratchet's quest to locate his robotic buddy Clank (who you may recall was kidnapped by the mysterious Zoni at the end of the last game) and you'll never feel like anywhere overstays its welcome.

Opening on a rain-lashed pirate skiff hovering above the Azorean Sea on planet Merdegraw, Ratchet and pointy-eared female >

TOOL OF DISRUPTION

Introducing the Omniwrench Millennium 12



Attack | High Jump | You've pulled

Attack

Naturally, you can use your wrench to lay the smackdown on enemies before you get your guns back. You'll also be able to use it to smash crates, and hear that oh-so-satisfying tinkle sound as you collect lots of lovely bolts.



An example of one of the simple but entertaining puzzles – you need to mix three drinks for this robot bartender according to his clues.



The journey is extremely linear, but is all the better for it.



It's almost certainly the best-looking title on PSN.



The sense of scale is once again pretty stunning – and the background details offer plenty of eye candy, too.



Storybook presentation is another highlight.

> Ratchet and Clank cont.

assistant Talwyn are forced to tackle a host of the salty sea dogs before being captured and blasted through a cannon onto Hoolefar Island, at the behest of the returning Rusty Pete. It turns out the islanders have a powerful telescope called the Obsidian Eye, which is used to contact the Zoni – though its power source, the Fulcrum Star, is missing.

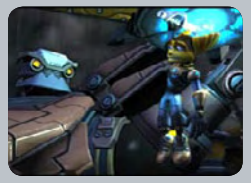
The rest of the adventure follows our heroes' attempts to locate the device. With Ratchet's weapons having fallen into the sea during his impromptu cannon journey, he's left with just his Omniwrench. Fortunately, it now has an upgrade – the Kinetic Tether – which is used to electrify and move certain metallic objects, such as springs, catapults and even platforms. So after the brief intro, the first main area offers more platforming and puzzling than action, with some clever wrench-based riddles as Ratchet attempts to repair the island's wind turbines – nothing too taxing, but there's plenty of fun to be had. The wrench can also be used to pick up objects, like fiery rocks to smash obstacles, and there are a couple of brief but exhilarating rail-grinding sections.

> "The second area, Morrow Caverns, offers more puzzle-based shenanigans"

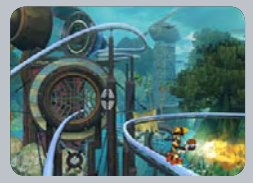
The second area, Morrow Caverns, offers more puzzle-based shenanigans, this time requiring Ratchet to pick up glowing grubs to illuminate darkened areas, >

FREEZE FRAME

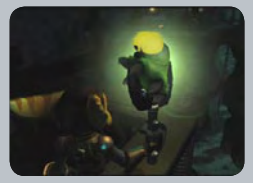
Taking you through Ratchet's short, but very sweet adventure



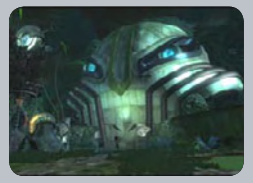
5 MINS
An action-packed opening has you battling against a host of pirates.



1 HOUR
Zipping around and hurling flaming rocks at doors blocking your way.



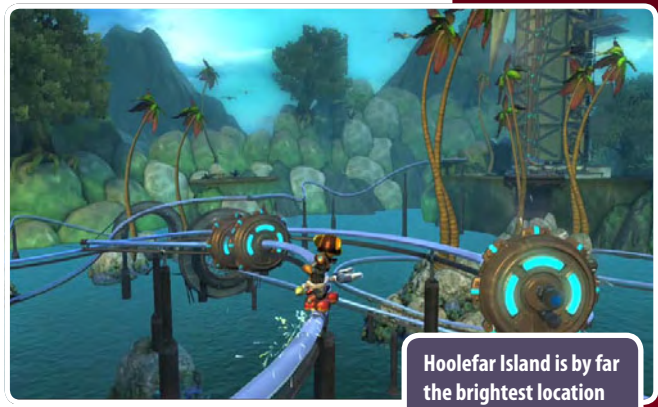
2 HOURS
Creeping around Morrow Caverns, with a Heliobug to light your path.



3 HOURS
Onto Darkwater Cove, where the Captain keeps his treasure well hidden.



4 HOURS
A couple of action set-pieces later, and (sadly) it's all over.



Hoolefar Island is by far the brightest location in the game.



The character models are once again hugely expressive, which is particularly noticeable in the brief cutscenes.



Squeezing L1 brings the camera close to Ratchet, but it's never required, and rarely particularly useful.

> Ratchet and Clank cont.

and to scare off the red-eyed bats which swarm the lombax should he get too close. And then, after a (fairly predictable) twist which we won't spoil here, the game becomes more action-oriented, with Ratchet gradually getting his original arsenal back, and visiting a couple more locations before the game ends with a final boss fight and another cliffhanger. And that's your lot.

Our playthrough clocked in at around three and a half hours, which isn't bad for a tenner, though a year's wait for the next instalment seems a little too long after a fairly unsatisfactory resolution. While the game's paced extremely well, zipping from place to place in a delightfully breezy way, the story doesn't really go anywhere, and the status quo is almost exactly the same as it was when Tools of Destruction finished.

Yet it's tough to quibble about such a polished production – Quest For Booty looks every bit as good as its full-price predecessor, offering beautifully realised and vibrant worlds, sterling animation and terrific level design. The puzzles are well thought-out, and there are rewards for those who go exploring, like weapon upgrades and a couple of nice easter eggs for the fans.

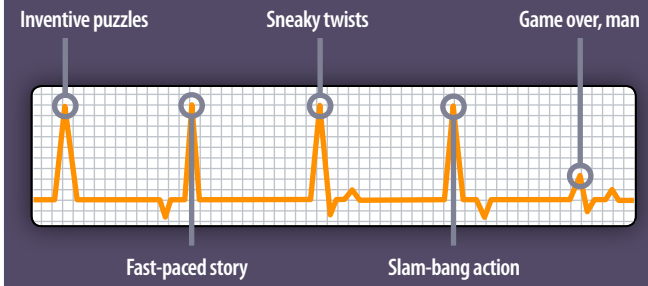
The book of Nintendo

Insomniac seems to have taken a leaf out of Nintendo's book on more than one occasion. While Tools of Destruction suffered from being released so close to the majestic Super Mario Galaxy, there are echoes of that game here, with some pseudo-2D sections that offer some old-school platforming thrills. The only control niggle we have is with the tether, which for some bizarre reason has been mapped to the right analogue stick when the left would, we feel, have felt much more natural to use.

Everything which has made the previous games so enjoyable is in here in abundance, and thanks to its episodic nature, the game's humour seems more prominent than ever before. Rusty Pete's narration between stages, as he gives his own personal take on proceedings, is a hoot, and the game's dialogue is as sharp and witty as ever. Couple that with the brilliantly streamlined gameplay and reliably fantastic presentation, and you've got yet another must-buy on PSN – if Sony keeps this quality up, then we're going to need to invest in a bigger hard drive soon.

Chris Schilling

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



"Insomniac seems to have taken a leaf out of Nintendo's book on more than one occasion"



P3Zine Verdict

A short, sweet downloadable treat. Check it out

\+ Cracking presentation

\+ Fat-free action adventuring

\- Only four hours long

85%

PlayStation Network

Download 'em today!

The Last Guy

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Sony Japan Studio
Price: £4.99

A comet has hit Earth, with everyone unfortunate enough to be outside either vapourised or turned into a zombie. With thousands of citizens in the world's major cities trapped indoors, fearing for their lives should they venture outside, it's up to a mutant from the Himalayas – the fabled Last Guy – to rescue the stragglers by leading them to the Escape Zone.

Bizarre premise, equally odd game. Your ever-growing chain of evacuees brings to mind old games like Snake and Flicky, given a modern-day spin by way of highly detailed satellite maps that make up the levels. You can zoom in and out to get a better look at the action, while thermal imaging reveals hidden survivors and secret passages. Power-ups increase your energy (consumed every time you gather your followers into a tight group, or zip ahead at high speed) and offer brief respite from the patrolling enemies by making you invisible or warping you to the pickup point. There are 15 tough levels in all, with special VIPs to pick up on each stage, and points targets which award extra stars should you complete the level with time left.

Throw in some truly strange but memorable presentation and bags of replayability, and for less than a fiver you've got a title that's up there with PSN's best.

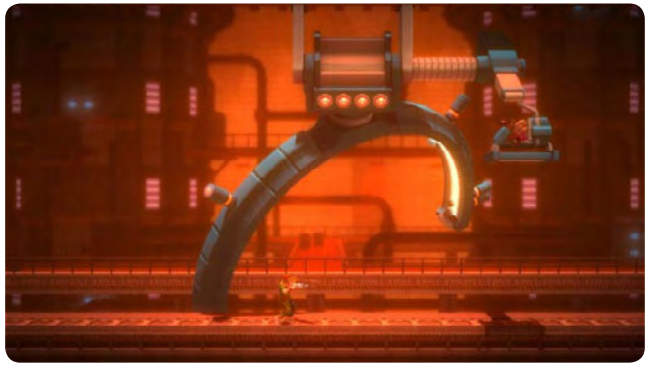


P3Zine Verdict
Inspired neo-retro madness
+ Wonderfully odd
− Too weird for some?
88%

Bionic Commando Rearmed

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: GRIN
Price: £6.99

For a retro remake, Rearmed is astoundingly polished, with graphics that put some full-price releases to shame. But it's the tough gameplay you'll remember, as you use your extendable arm to swing around the levels, taking out enemies as you go. Or attempt to. A platformer without jumping? You'd better believe it – and prepare to swear a fair bit as you get to grips with the controls, which start out feeling alien, but become second nature. As tributes go, this is a cracker, with only the extreme difficulty stopping us from scoring it higher.



P3Zine Verdict
Sing when you're swinging
+ Gorgeous and fun
− Initially really hard
84%

Warhawk: Operation Fallen Star

Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Incognito
Price: £3.49

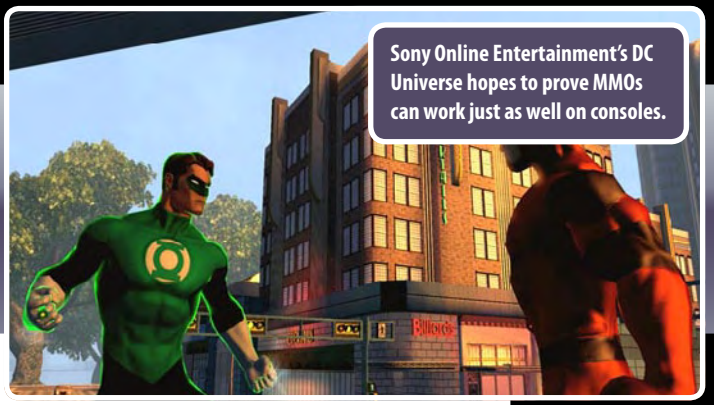
The sizeable Tau Crater map (complete with huge ruined ship at its epicentre) is a very good reason to purchase Operation Fallen Star. But it pales into comparison with the other new feature this DLC brings – jetpacks. Completely transforming the game for those who prefer to play as the previously underpowered infantry, these offer some amazing sights in online matchups. Lobbing mines at planes? Flaming vehicles as you swoop from the skies? Amazing scenes. The PS3's best multiplayer game suddenly got even better.



P3Zine Verdict
Another generous pack
+ JETPACKS!
− Vapourfield's better
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Sony impresses with Leipzig line-up



Sony Online Entertainment's DC Universe hopes to prove MMOs can work just as well on consoles.



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.

Admittedly, Sony was the only one of the 'big three' with a conference at Games Convention in Leipzig, but even so, it provided an array of convincing reasons why PS3's star is on the rise. With plenty of software and hardware announcements, a bullish Sony revealed a line-up to be envied.

The biggest hit of the show was undoubtedly Quantic Dream's PS3 exclusive Heavy Rain. Creator David Cage's last adventure, the inventive but weakly scripted Fahrenheit, offered an evolution of the adventure game genre, but this seemed like a genuine revolution. Cage himself stated that the game focused on emotions, moral choices and contextual actions rather than 'guns, cars, puzzles or enemies', and it certainly looked a break away from the norm. While some of its gameplay segments are simple scripted quick-time events, the game offers a remarkable branching narrative, with scenes playing out completely differently according to player decisions.

During the demonstration of Heavy Rain (of a stage which apparently won't be featured in the finished game, but may be released as a playable demo on PSN), female protagonist Madison found herself in the house of a serial killer, just before his arrival home. While Madison was discovered in the footage shown – leading to the aforementioned quick-time skirmish – another possibility sees her calling the police, with the killer being arrested. Similarly, a different choice could see her successfully escape without being spotted, while the simple act of opening a cupboard potentially becomes a giveaway to her presence.

While player control is restricted to a certain degree – offering forward movement via the right trigger, and head movement with the analogue stick – the level of choice is unparalleled in any other game. Perhaps it's best described as an interactive experience more than a traditional videogame, but either way it looked fascinating – and the stunning visuals certainly helped its impact. Heavy Rain is set to appear at some point in 2009 – we'd bet on it being later in the year, with the potential to slip into 2010 – but the wait will almost certainly be worth it.

> **"GC seemed like a genuine statement of intent from Sony"**



The graphics wowed, but it was the intriguing structure that made Heavy Rain so fascinating.

Planet Worth

Of course, Sony has its own great white hope for this year, too – LittleBigPlanet was once again shown off, and is looking better and better each time it's demoed. Sony is betting big on this remarkable title to propel PS3 through the Christmas period and well into 2009, and the evidence so far suggests it's backing the right horse. But if it doesn't work, it has the likes of Resistance 2 and Killzone 2 to fall back on. The latter's multiplayer side featured at GC, with most players coming away impressed with the array of online options. And talking of online, DC Universe showed Sony is taking massively multiplayer gaming very seriously indeed.

It's a cliché, but there really was something for everyone, particularly if you consider the announcement of a third volume of SingStar, the feature-packed PVR PlayTV (which should be available as you read this) and inventive virtual pet sim EyePet (Sony's Nintendogs?). GC seemed like a genuine statement of intent from Sony, which should go some way to ensuring a more than healthy holiday period, as PS3 gears up for what already looks like a pretty amazing third year on the market.



It won't be here until February, but Killzone 2 is still one of Sony's biggest hitters.



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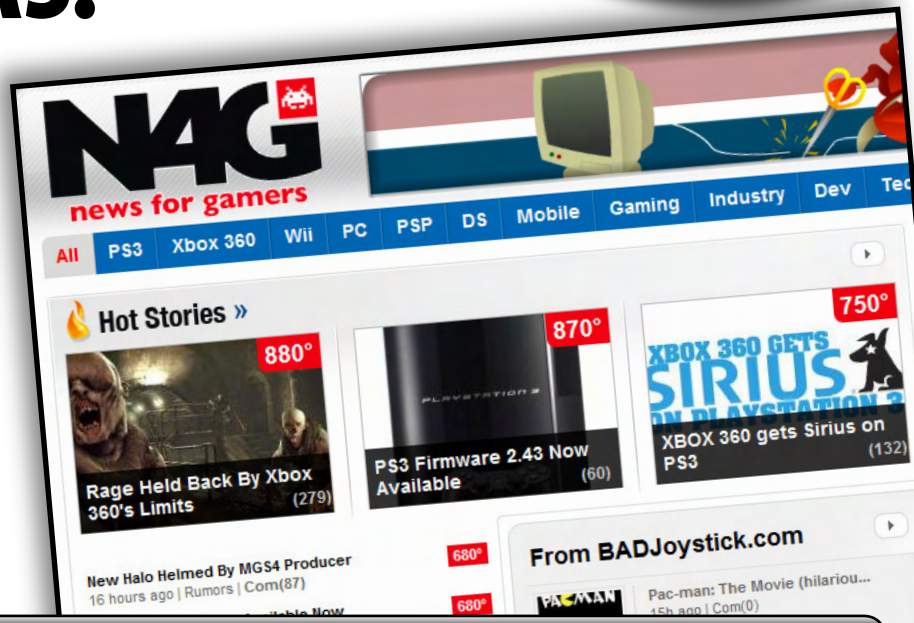
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