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P3Zine

Issue 28 | July 2009

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

EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK!

GUITAR HERO 5

The legend continues inside...

E3 SPECIAL REPORT!

E3 expo

BEST OF SHOW REVEALED INSIDE...

PREVIEWED!

Singularity

REVIEWED!

Infamous

REVIEWED!

FUEL

REVIEWED!

UFC

Welcome to P3Zine



After a couple of years in the doldrums the world's premiere videogame fest that is E3 has come back with a vengeance. You can check out the highlights of the show for all things Sony with our countdown of the biggest and best titles coming to PlayStation 3 in the coming months and years.

We also have in-depth coverage of Guitar Hero 5 along with a first-look and interview of its dancefloor stablemate DJ Hero.

If you're looking to splash your cash in the here and now then check out our reviews of inFamous, FUEL and UFC.

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



Chris Schilling
Heroic coverage throughout



Steve Hill
California dreaming at E3

DON'T MISS!

This month's highlights...

The latest & greatest titles on PS3







E3 expo

Best in Show
SPECIAL REPORT

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

DJ Hero
Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2
Blur
Guitar Hero 5
Transformers 2
Singularity
Tony Hawk: RIDE
inFamous
FUEL
UFC 2009 Undisputed

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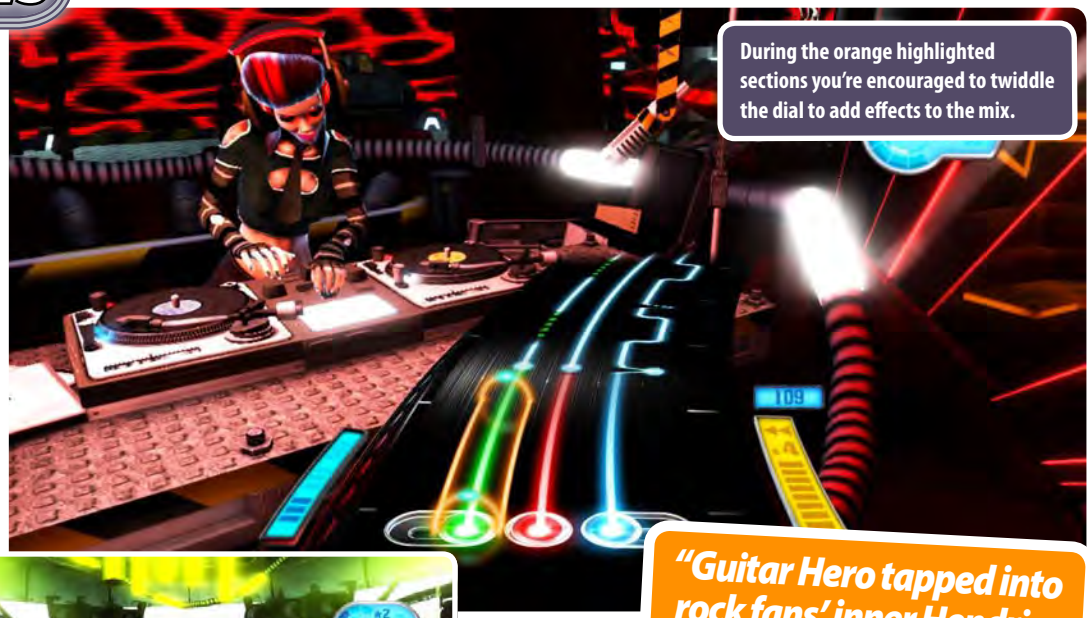
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DJ Hero

FIRST LOOK

Put a donk on it

Publisher: Activision
Developer: FreestyleGames
Heritage: B-Boy, Buzz! Junior: Robo-Jam
Link: www.djhero.com
ETA: Autumn



During the orange highlighted sections you're encouraged to twiddle the dial to add effects to the mix.



Keep hitting the notes and switching at the right time and you'll enter Euphoria mode – this game's Star Power equivalent.

"Guitar Hero tapped into rock fans' inner Hendrix, but are dance music fans too cool to be playing with a virtual platter?"



Though it does sound a bit jarring as the record spins back, it can allow you to amass an even bigger score.



What's the story?

Activision reckons this is its 'most innovative title of the year'. But being old and import-savvy, we remember Konami's Beatmania doing a very similar thing in arcades and on PS2s across Japan for the last 12 years. But while the series is still doing well in the East, it's never made it over here. Can Activision do for dance music what Guitar Hero did for rock?

Why should we be excited?

The game's success hinges on whether there's an audience for DJ mimicry – Guitar Hero tapped into rock fans' inner Hendrix, but are dance music fans too cool to be playing with a virtual platter? Either way, we like what we've seen so far. The scrolling display now resembles a never-ending piece of vinyl, with coloured gems popping up to represent the two records your virtual Oakenfold is spinning simultaneously. You'll need to press the buttons on the platter of your controller, flicking the crossfader at the right time to switch between the two songs, or to bring both into play. The larger red button plays one of your bank of eight samples, while Up and Down arrows ask you to push the platter forwards or backwards.

When do we get more?

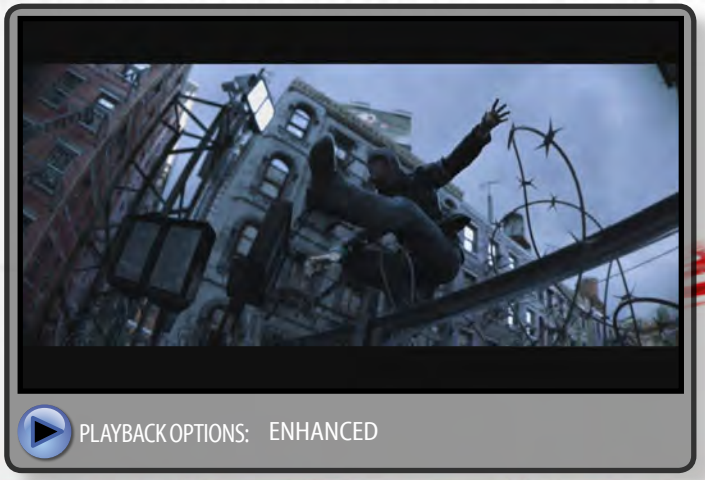
It's out this autumn, and we'll have an in-depth preview nearer the game's release date.

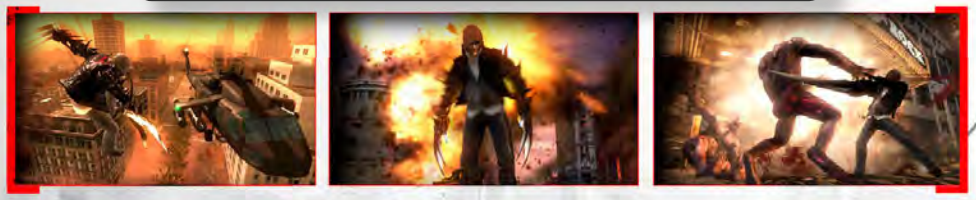
Anything else to declare?

100 individual songs feature in 80 unique mixes, showcasing an eclectic selection of music – two examples we saw were Benny Benassi vs. Black-Eyed Peas and Gwen Stefani's Hollaback Girl blended with Rick James' Give it to Me.

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Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2

FIRST LOOK

Whose side are you on?

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Vicarious Visions
Heritage: Marvel Ultimate Alliance, Spider-Man 2
Link: http://marvelultimatealliance.marvel.com
ETA: Autumn

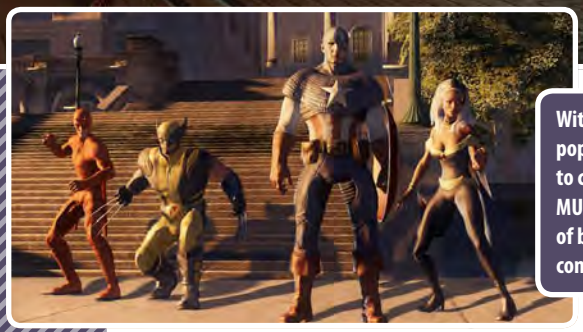
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2



Fusion Attacks are the key to defeating the larger enemies.



Teamwork is essential if you want to rack up those points.



With a wealth of popular characters to choose from, MUA2 offers plenty of brawling fun for comicbook fans.

"For our money, the sequel looks a little nicer than the original co-operative brawler"



What's the story?

Security versus liberty is the key conflict in Marvel Ultimate Alliance 2. Yep, our favourite superheroes find themselves juggling a political hot potato as they decide whether it's best to keep everyone safe or to offer the populace the freedom they crave. Whichever of the two you choose will affect your path through the game, though invariably that path will involve a lot of hitting baddies very hard.

Why should we be excited?

When one of the key new features is 'outdoor daytime locations', you know we're not talking anything revolutionary. For our money, the sequel looks a little nicer than the original co-operative brawler, with improved lighting effects and a bit more spit-and-polish. And we're informed that 24 characters are immediately available 'out of the box', with more to follow via DLC. A brand-new hero and two fresh villains have been introduced in the form of Deadpool, Venom and Juggernaut, while special co-operative Fusion attacks allow your five-man team to execute some devastating moves. The Fastball manoeuvre we saw had Hulk swinging Wolverine around and lobbing him claws-first into a helicopter. Nice.

When do we get more?

Again, it's due out this 'fall'. Expect a pre-release demo and further impressions from us as soon as we get chance to play it.

Anything else to declare?

We spotted something interesting during Storm and Captain America's Fusion attack – it seems there's some kind of bonus if you can kill 20 enemies with one attack.



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Metallica.guitarhero.com

12 PlayStation.2 PLAYSTATION 3 XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE Wii NEVERSOFT BUDCAT redoctane ACTIVISION

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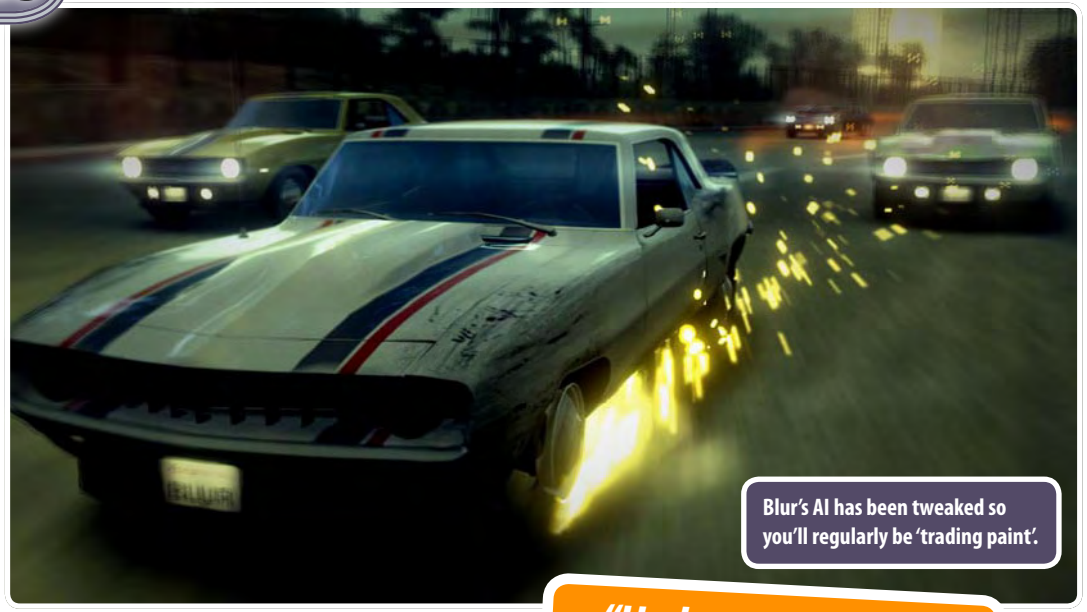
Blur

FIRST LOOK

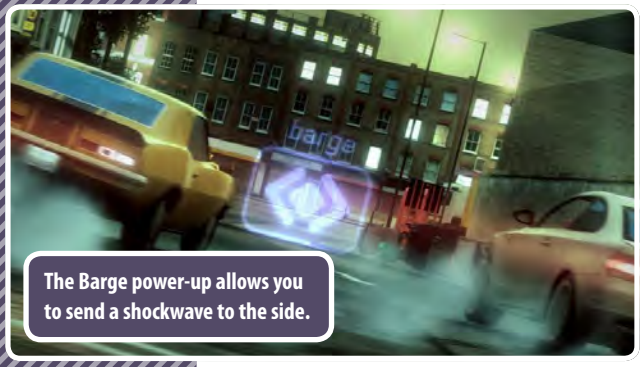
There's no other way to drive

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Bizarre Creations
Heritage: PGR series, Metropolis Street Racer
Link: www.blurgame.com
ETA: Autumn

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



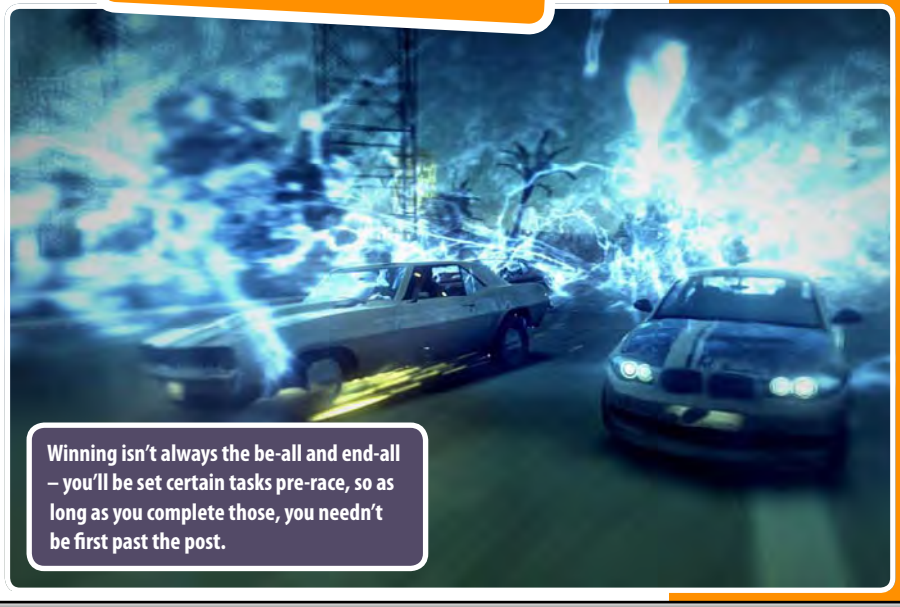
Blur's AI has been tweaked so you'll regularly be 'trading paint'.



The Barge power-up allows you to send a shockwave to the side.



"Underneath it all it's the PGR4 engine, but Bizarre wants something a little friendlier"



Winning isn't always the be-all and end-all – you'll be set certain tasks pre-race, so as long as you complete those, you needn't be first past the post.

What's the story?

PGR4 plus neon plus Facebook plus Mario Kart equals Blur. An odd combo? Perhaps, but (rather appropriately) it makes a Bizarre kind of sense. The neon is all over the UI – from menus to speedometers to the lights projected on the side of the buildings as you zip by – and it looks great. Facebook? That'll be the social network side of things, which sees fellow racers messaging you, inviting you to races or mocking a poor performance. It's a story mode without a story, keeping things streamlined so you can concentrate on the racing, but involved enough so there's a reason for everything. And Mario Kart? That'll be the power-ups.

What do we know?

We're told that underneath it all it's the PGR4 engine, but that Bizarre wants something a little friendlier. It's a game which rewards players rather than punishing them – fast finishes, aggressive driving, using power-ups regularly and impressive drifting will net you new fans to increase your fame. Accessibility is the key: "It's for those who don't know about hitting apexes or tweaking cars," says the developer. Yet there's still depth, and with 20 cars on track – that are constantly jostling for a decent position – it's a plenty intense game, too.

When do we get more?

'Fall' 2009, once more, but we'll be talking a lot more about this in the run-up to its release.

Anything else to declare?

Because the neon lights play such a key role, all races will take place at night, dawn or in the evening. Blue skies are out, we're afraid. Still, you can race around Hackney, which is a rarity in racing games. And four-player split-screen play is in.

FALLEN ANGEL

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FIRST LOOK

Guitar Hero 5

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Heritage: Guitar Hero World Tour, Guitar Hero: Metallica
Link: www.gh5.guitarhero.com
ETA: 1st September

A franchise on fire?

Mainstream popularity eluded Tennessee's Kings of Leon for a long time, until unlikely hit Sex on Fire – which the Followill brothers confess isn't even a favourite track of theirs – topped the UK charts late last year. We'd wondered when the band – seemingly such a perfect fit for the franchise – were going to make their first Guitar Hero appearance, and as members of Neversoft took to the stage at Activision's pre-E3 event to perform the song, a bit of mental arithmetic made us realise that we're on our ninth iteration of Guitar Hero in just four years. And people think the Kings have been prolific…

No more Heroes?

Is there such thing as too much Guitar Hero? Perhaps. Yet while there might be a few too many games with 'Hero' in the title appearing later this year (not to mention further iterations of rival Rock Band, too), it's clear that developer Neversoft isn't resting on its laurels. A host of new features and a hefty selection of new tracks could well help this become the best Guitar Hero so far.

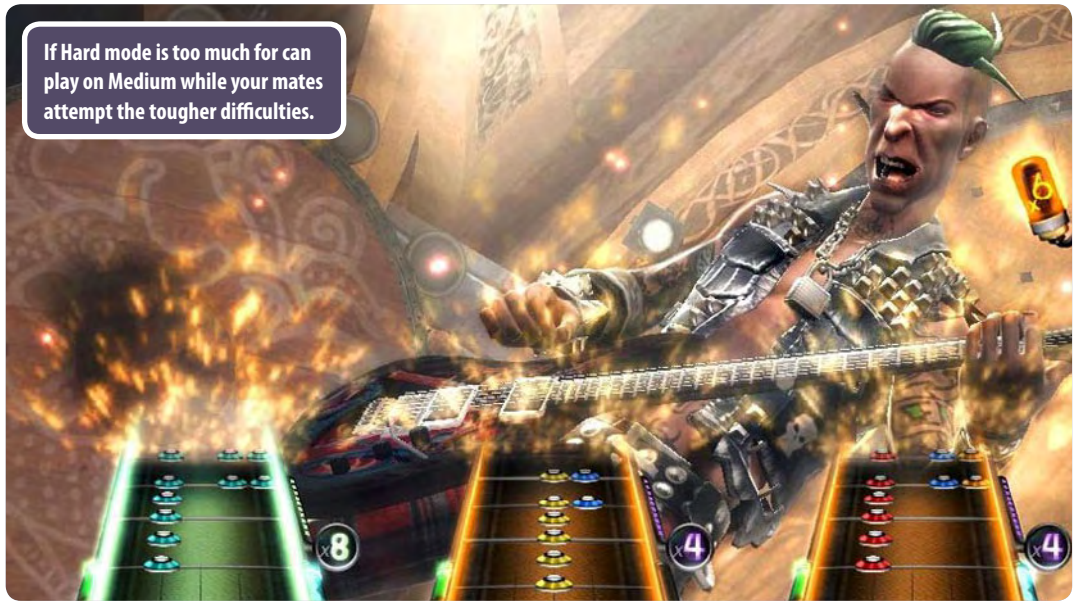
Before being serenaded, we hear that the series has been 'reinvented around social and interactive play'. What that basically means is jump-in, jump-out co-operative gameplay, with the new Party Play mode allowing players to contribute to a performance at any time. To demonstrate this, Neversoft gradually builds up from one single player to a full band without the song pausing at any time – the music keeps playing until the instrument is synced up and the player has started strumming, drumming or singing. Thereafter, the only missed notes or beats are down to poor player performance.

Moreover, you're no longer restricted to the traditional line-up of singer, guitarist, bassist and drummer. If you've got the right equipment, you can have any combination of the four. If you really want to annoy the neighbours, and your living room is big enough, then four drummers can play simultaneously. It might sound a little silly, but it's bound to stop a few potential arguments over who gets to try out the bass lick on Stevie Wonder's Superstition.



There's something a little Spinal Tap about three drummers thrashing away at the same time.

Which brings us onto the soundtrack, which is set to be the most eclectic mix in a Guitar Hero game to date. While World Tour had a tracklist which ventured a little too often into obscure territory, Guitar Hero 5's tracklisting promises >


If Hard mode is too much for can play on Medium while your mates attempt the tougher difficulties.



> Guitar Hero 5 continued

a few more instantly recognisable surprises. That's not to say that there aren't a few esoteric efforts – as the appearance of The Bronx and Attack! Attack! proves – but more tunes will provoke nods of recognition rather than frowns of bafflement. A quarter of the songs are less than two years old, while half are said to be from the past decade. But these rub shoulders with well-known oldies like Johnny Cash's Ring of Fire, and Wild Cherry's Play That Funky Music. It's another sign that Guitar Hero is determined to be inclusive, even as it retains a contemporary edge.

A festival of rock

Yet although the focus is clearly on social, co-operative play, the other ace in Neversoft's pack is the new RockFest mode, where things get seriously competitive. A suite of variations are available – Momentum mode switches the difficulty of the track periodically, based on player performance. Expert mode yields the most points, but just three missed notes in a row will drop you back to Hard, and it takes a streak of 20 to push you up once more. Elimination mode is a last-man-standing competition where the worst player is kicked out until just one remains, while Perfectionist requires a note-perfect performance on certain sections of a song to pick up points. Finally, Do Or Die forces players to wait when notes are missed, preventing them from scoring until they're allowed back in, while Streakers offers big rewards to those who can get the longest run of unbroken notes. They're all variations on a similar theme, and all are best experienced with more than two >



> Guitar Hero 5 continued

players, but it's nice to have more options for competitive gaming.

The Career mode has benefited from a bit of tinkering, too. No longer will progression be just about completing a song, with new challenges introduced to keep bands and solo players alike on their toes. You might, for example, have to hold a 4x multiplier for a certain number of notes, or to activate Star Power for a given amount of time during a song. And you won't have to unlock songs any more, with all the game's music available to play from the outset.

With 'forwards compatibility' promised for all World Tour DLC – downloaded tracks will be automatically upgraded to include 5's extra features – and a wealth of brand new songs available online on launch day, not to mention a few adjustments to the Music Studio, Guitar Hero 5 more than justifies its existence. Whether Activision can continue to convince us of the necessity of so many updates is another thing, but for now at least, we're happy to carry on rocking for the time being.



One drummer good, three drummers better.

"No longer will progression be just about completing a song"



Special Band Moments require great performances from all players, and result in handsome rewards.



Expect a light sprinkling of celebrity guest musicians to feature in GH5.

P3Zine

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80%	90%

A Hero among Heroes, and probably the best GH to date



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BEST IN SHOW

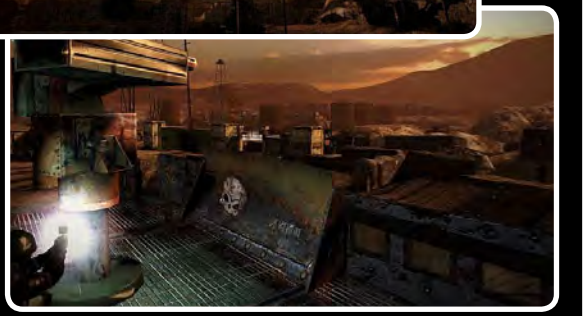
Sony had an extremely solid showing at E3 – an impressive conference backed up with plenty of playable content on the show floor. With the amiable Jack Tretton hosting, its two-hour press briefing flew by, with a blitzkrieg of games ranging from hugely improved sequels to brand new games, with hot exclusives and cracking multi-format titles. We've listed our favourites here – ten titles coming out soon that you simply have to own.

10 MAG

While the whooping for Sony's massive online shooter from the conference attendees might have been more muted than for Uncharted 2, we're optimistic that this ambitious FPS has the chops to be one of Sony's best exclusives of the year. The objectives are familiar – direct your squads and capture enemy installations for spawn points – but the scale isn't. With huge battlefields capable of supporting 256 players, this is team-based battling on a new level. And for a game processing a hell of a lot of information, it showcased some surprisingly decent visuals, too.



MAG should dwarf most other games with its sheer scope.



9 Gran Turismo 5

Again, no concrete release date for Polyphony Digital's long-awaited sim, but a brand new trailer did more than enough to whet our appetites for what is perhaps the most eagerly awaited PS3 title to date. A mix of dazzling CG and staggeringly impressive in-game footage, the trailer made GT5 look exciting and vibrant again. What seems to have excited racing fans most, however, was the appearance of two simple logos – proof that the game will have both WRC and NASCAR licences, helping to provide a broader range of racing experiences. So whether you prefer skidding around dirt tracks, racing around in circles, or bombing around the Top Gear test track (yes, really), it looks like GT5 will ignite the petrolhead in all of us.



8 ModNation Racers



This cross between Mario Kart, TrackMania and LittleBigPlanet came out of nowhere to become one of the stars of Sony's show. From the initial footage, it looked like a fun, knockabout racer, much like Nintendo's ever-popular series, but then things started to look more interesting as creators United Front Games quickly knocked up a custom-built track in less than five minutes.

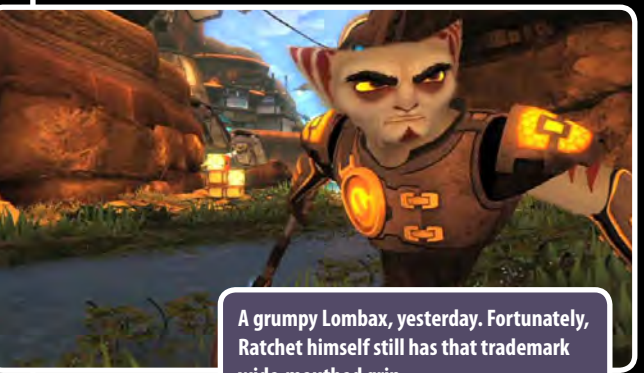
Taking inspiration from the track designer in TrackMania, it looked both simple and intuitive, allowing players to raise and lower the track, add trackside detail quickly and easily, and even set the time of day. You'll also be able to modify the game's characters and the karts you race in, before sharing your created content over PSN.

ModNation Racers might not be quite as flexible as Media Molecule's level-crafter but it's potentially a lot more accessible, and bolted onto a game which looks very entertaining in its own right.

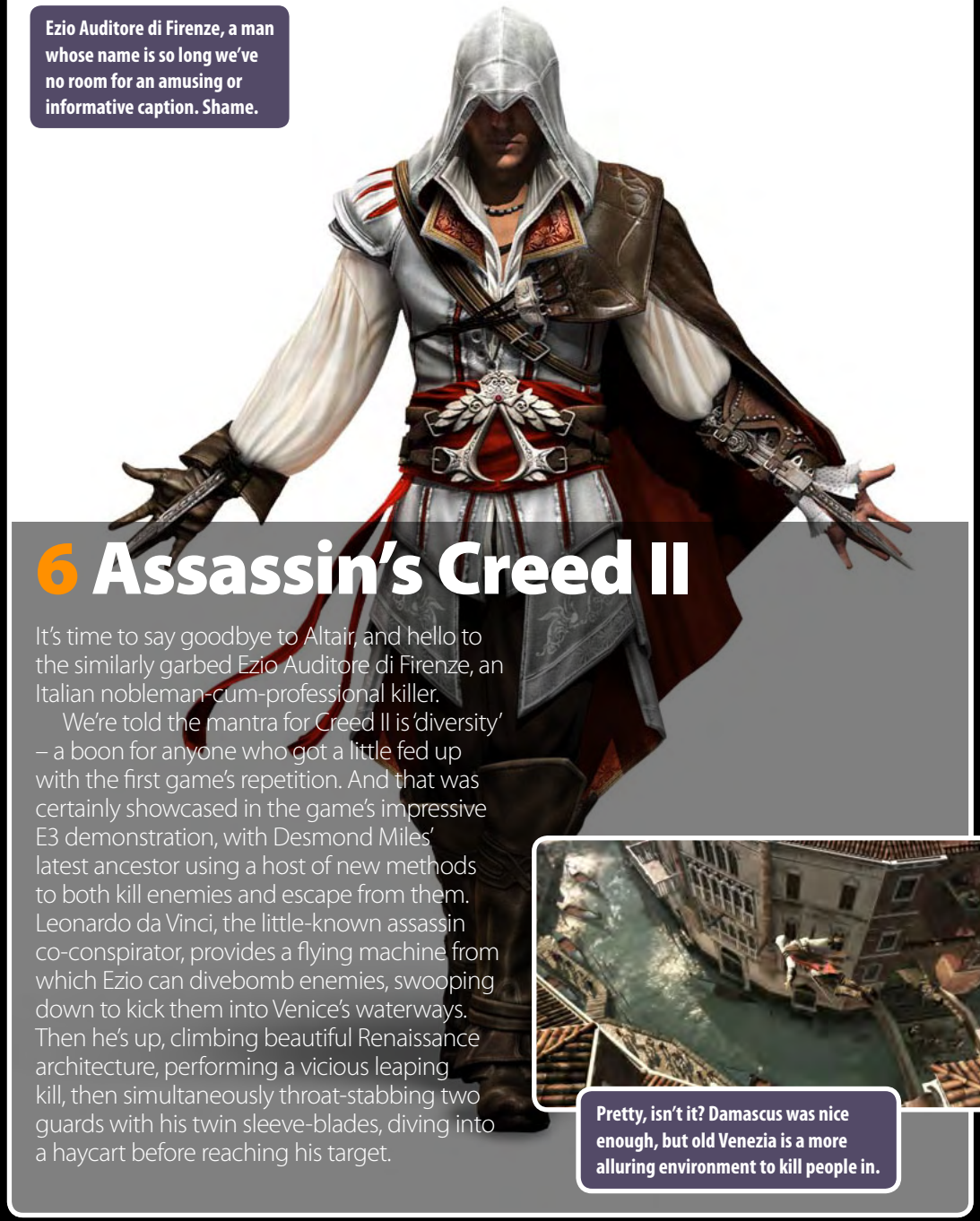
7 Ratchet and Clank Future: A Crack in Time

The all-important weapon set has been enhanced, with a few brand-new additions. Our favourite has to be the Sonic Eruptor – it has what looks like a furry creature attached to the front, emitting powerful belches to send beasts and robots tumbling backwards. There's also the water-fuelled OmniSoaker, which can be used to water plants, allowing Ratchet to leap to higher areas or to distract termite swarms by pumping out nectar to lure them out of your path.

It's a retail release, too, which is likely to please those disappointed with the short length of otherwise-excellent PSN adventure Quest for Booty.



A grumpy Lombax, yesterday. Fortunately, Ratchet himself still has that trademark wide-mouthed grin.



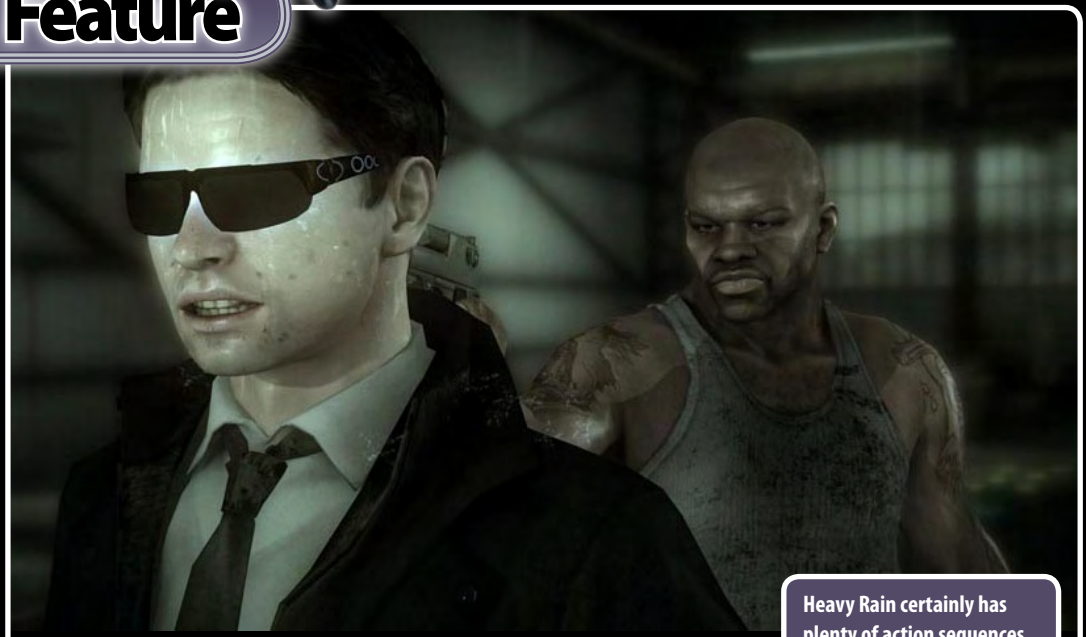
Ezio Auditore di Firenze, a man whose name is so long we've no room for an amusing or informative caption. Shame.

6 Assassin's Creed II

It's time to say goodbye to Altair, and hello to the similarly garbed Ezio Auditore di Firenze, an Italian nobleman-cum-professional killer.

We're told the mantra for Creed II is 'diversity' – a boon for anyone who got a little fed up with the first game's repetition. And that was certainly showcased in the game's impressive E3 demonstration, with Desmond Miles' latest ancestor using a host of new methods to both kill enemies and escape from them. Leonardo da Vinci, the little-known assassin co-conspirator, provides a flying machine from which Ezio can divebomb enemies, swooping down to kick them into Venice's waterways. Then he's up, climbing beautiful Renaissance architecture, performing a vicious leaping kill, then simultaneously throat-stabbing two guards with his twin sleeve-blades, diving into a haycart before reaching his target.

Pretty, isn't it? Damascus was nice enough, but old Venezia is a more alluring environment to kill people in.

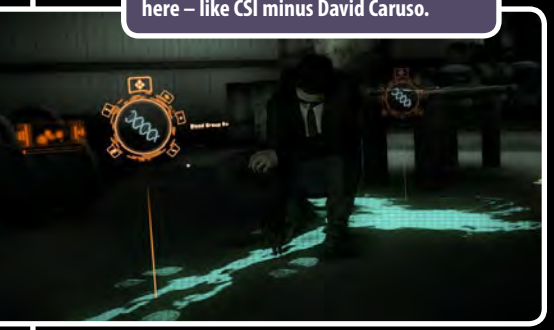


Heavy Rain certainly has plenty of action sequences from what we've seen so far.

5 Heavy Rain

David Cage's interactive thriller is still looking as glorious ever, though featured much less prominently at E3 than we expected, hence its relatively low position here. But we're still hugely excited at the storytelling possibilities, the quite remarkable graphics, the rich atmosphere and the mind-blowing attention to detail. It's been directed by a man with a cinematographer's eye – there's a reason why this looks as dynamic as it does, and while some might claim it's too ambitious for its own good, or it's nothing more than a collection of quicktime events, the evidence we've seen blows both those accusations away. The end result might have something of a more straightforward plot than some are hoping – the E3 trailer used that old revenge-thriller chestnut 'how far would you go to save someone you love') but the possibilities inherent in Cage's brave new world of storytelling don't deserve to be given such short shrift.

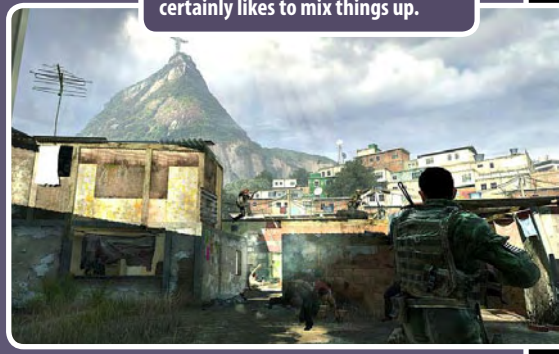
It seems some detective work is involved here – like CSI minus David Caruso.



4 Modern Warfare 2

Played more of a key role in Microsoft's show than Sony's but, well, we couldn't not include this, could we? It's the sequel to one of the most popular and critically acclaimed games of recent years, and it's already looking very exciting indeed. The E3 level was all snow and shooting, as you join Captain MacTavish in escaping an aircraft hangar, taking out enemies whizzing past on snowmobiles, before hopping aboard one each and blasting your pursuers with a pistol as you steer your vehicle down tree-lined slopes. This sequence is blisteringly quick and packed with the kind of rollercoaster cinematic excitement that's become the series stock-in-trade – all bellowed orders, pulse-quickening soundtrack bombast and silky smooth, highly detailed graphics. Oh, and the best you've-been-hit blood spatter effect we've ever seen. And the online could finally be the game to knock COD4 from its perch.

From Arctic climes to hot, sweaty favela shootouts, Modern Warfare 2 certainly likes to mix things up.



"The online could finally be the game to knock COD4 from its perch"



This snowy pursuit is one hell of an action sequence. If the rest of the game is this thrilling, then we could have another Game of the Year on our hands.

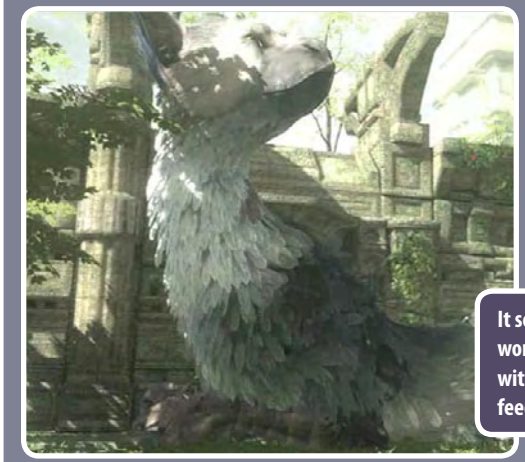


The boy is recognisably from the ICO universe and seems to have been rendered in an almost cartoon-like manner, similar to Yorda. Intriguing…

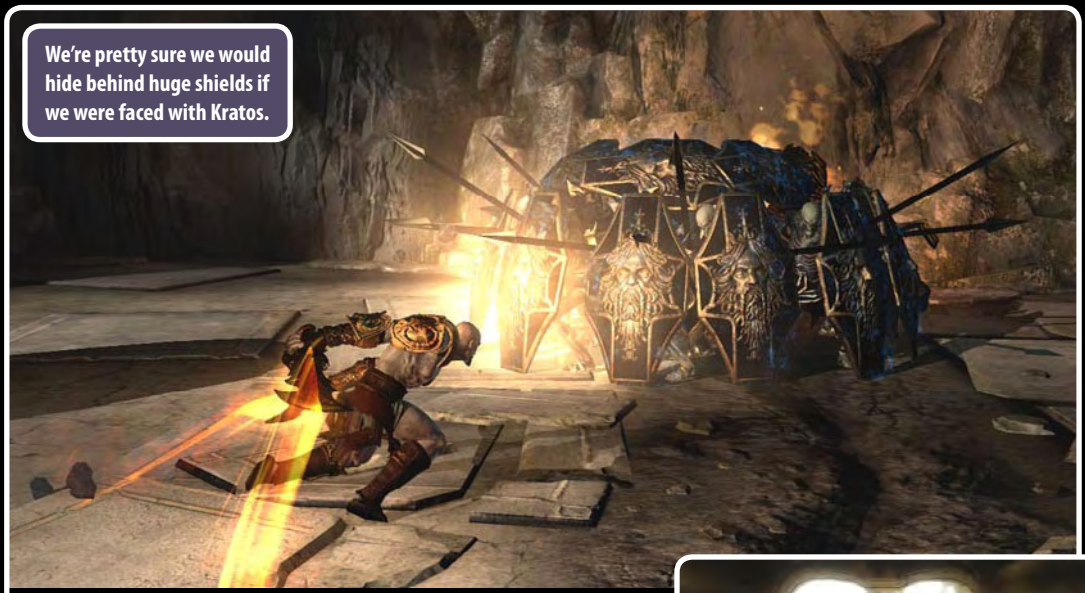
3 The Last Guardian

Team ICO's game next would likely be number one were it not for the lack of information on a) when it's going to be released and b) what exactly the gameplay entails. That, and the fact that we'd seen a much rougher cut of the same trailer which leaked a couple of weeks earlier. The new version looked terrific, with a more canine-like appearance to the (presumably titular) monster and a sharper, more obviously stylised look for who we presume is the game's young hero.

It looks like an intriguing kind of halfway house between ICO and Colossus – using the large beast to get around a ruined environment suspiciously like ICO's castle. The Miller's Crossing music was the perfect soundtrack – this is clearly going to be an emotional experience, albeit hopefully one that's more uplifting than upsetting. We're getting a Neverending Story vibe from this, and that can only be a good thing. Now all we need is an idea of where the team are going with this, and when we're likely to see it. Then we can start getting excited.



It seems the pair have to work together to progress, with the boy regularly feeding his colossal ally.

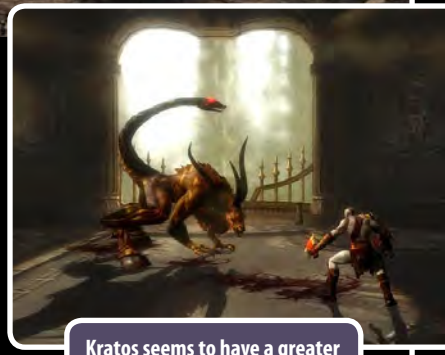


We're pretty sure we would hide behind huge shields if we were faced with Kratos.

2 God of War III

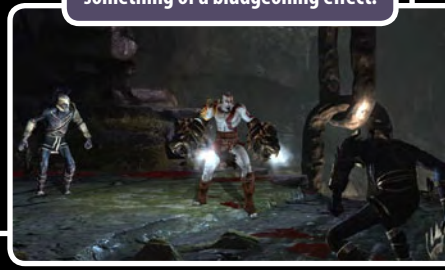
The third in Sony's spectacular hack-and-slash series promises to explore Kratos' mind a little better than the first two. But it doesn't look like everyone's favourite Greek nutcase is about to unload on the psychiatrist's couch, so much as take out his mental anguish on his enemies. The footage we've seen so far is phenomenal – the background to everything you do is a huge battle between the gods and the Titans, and so there's a full-scale war going on around Kratos at all times. Fire, brimstone, gigantic golems periodically thrusting their fists into the foreground… God of War III is even more action-packed than its predecessors. And it might be just us, but there seems to be more showboating than before, with Kratos able to dispatch his enemies with a fluidity that Devil May Cry's Dante would be proud of.

The move to HD has made it even gorier, with finishers including eviscerating a minotaur, letting its pink-red guts flop out of the gaping hole in its stomach. It's just a shame we have to hold on until March 2010, but it looks like the wait will be worth it.



Kratos seems to have a greater range of weapons to slice his opponents to bits with.

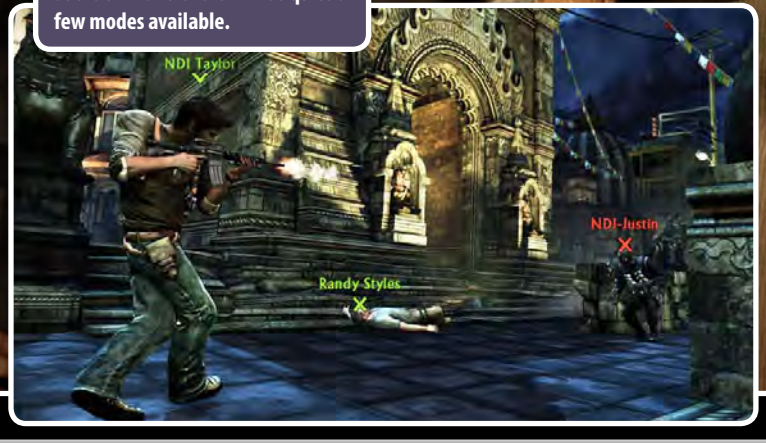
These huge gauntlets have something of a bludgeoning effect.



1 Uncharted 2: Among Thieves

Game of the show? Quite possibly. Naughty Dog's sequel had the E3 audience whooping and hollering in a manner that no other game quite managed. A stunning showcase for the power of PS3, its ultra-detailed visuals looked a cut above the original, with a sense of scale typified by a dizzying, vertiginous shot which saw returning hero Nathan Drake shimmying across a high beam between buildings before being attacked by a helicopter. It seems there's more freedom of movement in the clambering, though we're not given much time to see that given the chopper's sudden arrival, and Nate is forced to take cover as a host of enemies appear from nowhere and start shooting at him.

The cover system looks similar if more refined, with Nate able to upend tables to hide behind. We're feeling slightly bloated from gorging on third-person shooters of late, and this does look very Gears, but it's arguably even more thrillingly chaotic, particularly in a sequence where the chopper shoots rockets into the building and it starts to crumble. With furniture, enemies and Nate himself sliding towards the huge hole punched in the building's wall, he leaps through a window into the next building, seemingly to relative safety – though the pause in the action is likely to be very brief. With an exciting online beta currently being played by those with special editions of inFamous, this could offer the best solo and multiplayer experience on PS3 this year. And that's the reason why it's our number one.



Multiplayer is a more than welcome addition – and there will be quite a few modes available.


From what we've seen, cut-scenes will be seamlessly integrated with gameplay.

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HANDS-ON

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Luxoflux Redwood Shores
Heritage: True Crime: Streets of LA, Kung Fu Panda
Link: www.transformersgame.com
ETA: June

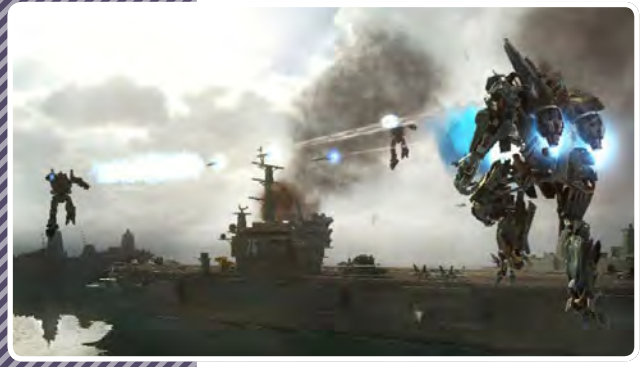
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen

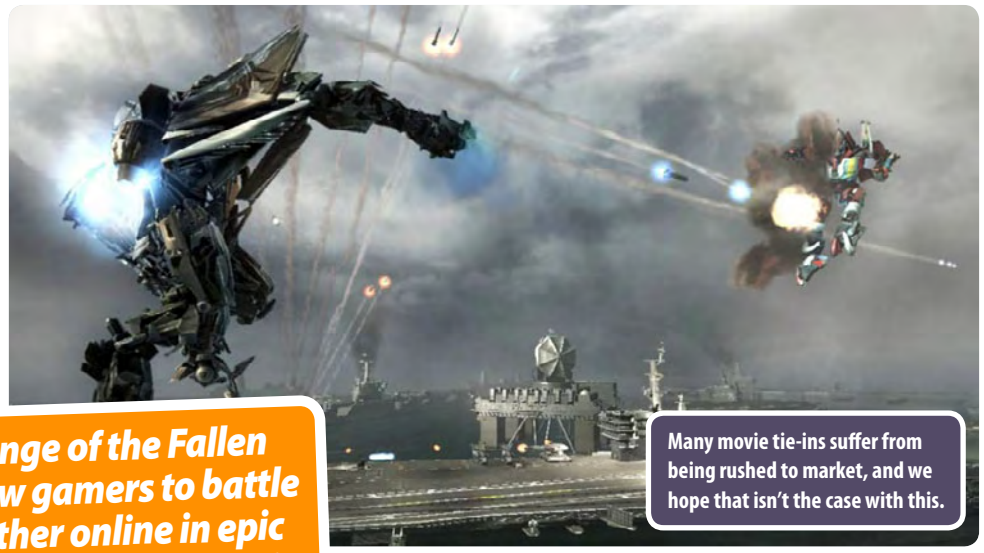
Rise of the machines?

It's fair to say that new developer Luxoflux doesn't have far to go to improve on 2007's Transformers: The Game. Licensed games are rarely classics, but even by the low standards expected of most movie tie-ins, the previous game was abysmal, utterly failing to capitalise on the potential inherent in tackling such a franchise. Huge fighting robots that transform? What could go wrong? Quite a lot, apparently.

Kudos then to Activision for realising that and attempting to wipe the slate clean by employing the Santa Monica-based developers behind solid genre titles like True Crime: Escape from LA. The team working on the game are all self-confessed Transformers fans, and when we saw the game at the Activision pre-E3 press briefing, that enthusiasm seemed very genuine.

Will it feed into the game, though? Well, what we've seen so far certainly shows potential. We're promised the largest assembly of playable Transformers to date – all of which will be available in both single-player and online multiplayer modes. Yes, you read that correctly, Revenge of the Fallen will allow gamers to battle each other online in epic bot-smashing combat.





Many movie tie-ins suffer from being rushed to market, and we hope that isn't the case with this.

"Revenge of the Fallen will allow gamers to battle each other online in epic bot-smashing combat"

"It's faster-paced than other multiplayer games," Luxoflux's Creative Director Chris Tremmel proudly informs us, showing us a clip of several Autobots and Decepticons stomping around, firing at each other at point-blank range, metal clashing against metal in shuddering >



Battles often take place in front of dark, dramatic backdrops.

> Transformers continued

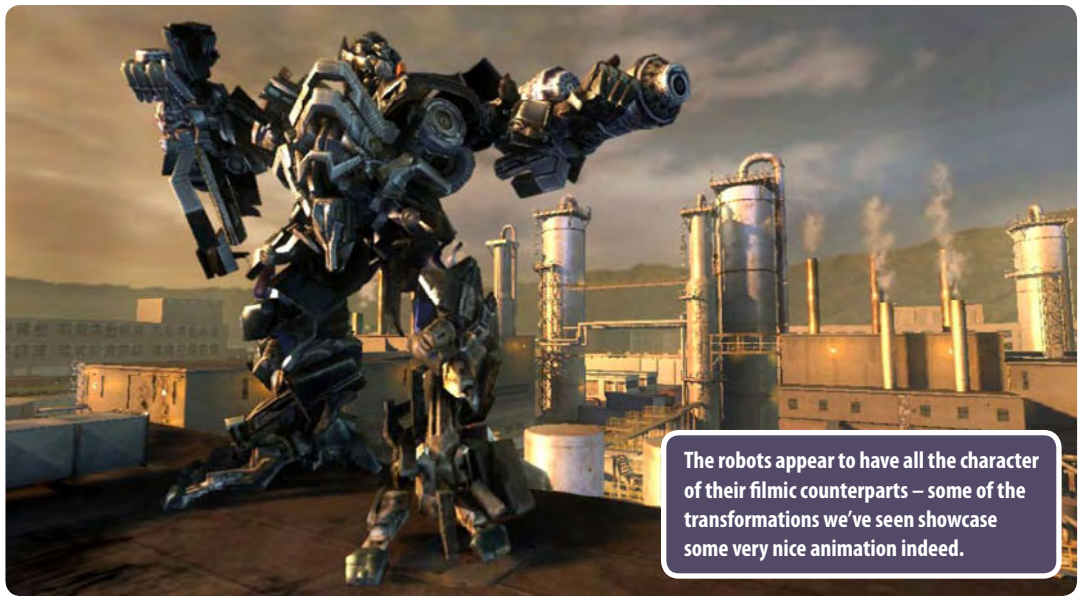
melée combat. Battle for the Shards is the nominal Capture the Flag mode, while Team Deathmatch pits Autobots against Decepticons in a battle to either save or destroy mankind. There will be exclusive multiplayer characters and post-release downloadable content, too. Activision clearly expects this to be a success, which hopefully bodes well for the game's quality.

As for the transforming part, 'ultra-fluid and meaningful transformations' are possible, and you can string together some impressive manoeuvres, too – players can switch between different forms almost instantaneously. So as Starscream, you can fly between buildings, then swoop down and land in robot form, ready to kick some Autobot ass. Handling of these vehicles is intended to be semi-realistic without ever impacting upon accessibility or fun – a tricky balancing act, and we'd put money on airborne and on-road movement of the vehicular forms to err on the side of arcade-like rather than anything that could be remotely approaching simulation.

It certainly looks the part – the machines are huge and highly detailed, and the environments look a little more interesting than the boxy, featureless cityscapes of the original. That said, don't expect Liberty City levels of detail – the focus is very much on the robots rather than the locations. With crunching sound effects, Luxoflux has certainly raised the presentational bar – now we're just hoping that the controls and the gameplay can match the very decent audiovisuals.

"Revenge of the Fallen stands every chance of being a vastly superior sequel"

Caveats? Well, there's every chance the multiplayer could turn into a bit of a chaotic mess, and the pressure to get the game out for the film's release could well lead to problems, but we're playing devil's advocate here . Revenge of the Fallen stands every chance of being a vastly superior sequel, and we're looking forward to finding out whether it can finally be the great Transformers videogame we just know the medium is capable of.



The robots appear to have all the character of their filmic counterparts – some of the transformations we've seen showcase some very nice animation indeed.



Projectile combat is suitably explosive.



P3Zine Transformers

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 75%

The comeback starts here

SINGULARITY

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Raven Software
Heritage: X-Men Origins: Wolverine, Wolfenstein
Link: www.singularity-game.com
ETA: 2009

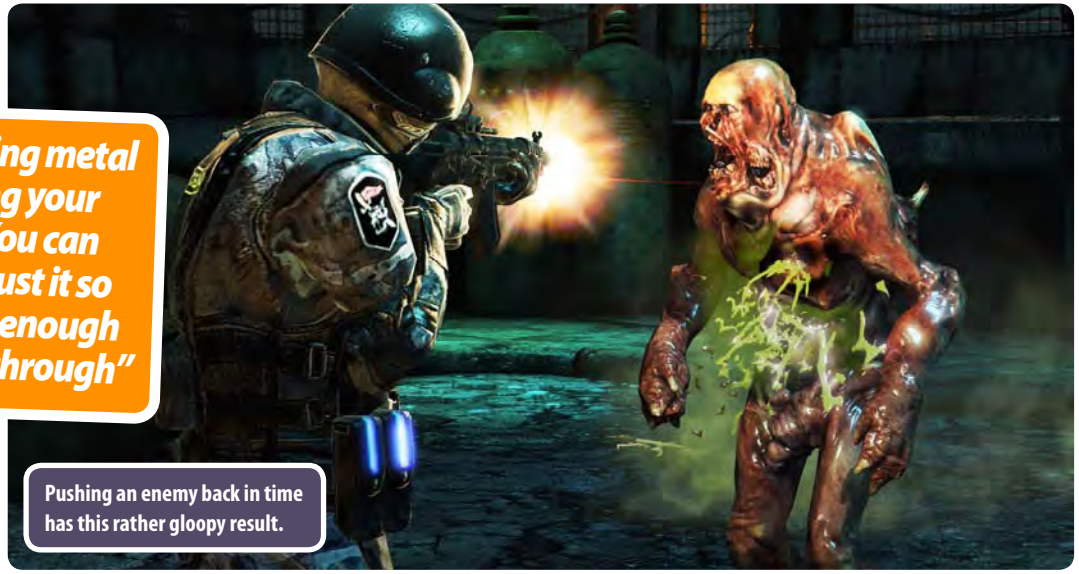
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Singularity

FIRST LOOK

Singularity

Cold War kicks

"Something metal blocking your path? You can always rust it so it's weak enough to smash through"



Pushing an enemy back in time has this rather gloopy result.

We're told that Singularity has been influenced by its creators' childhood – a time when the Cold war was ongoing and abandoned buildings became dens and clandestine hiding places. Yet the two most immediately obvious inspirations for Raven's sci-fi-flavoured shooter are a little more recent – there's definitely a hint of both Bioshock and Timeshift here.

Singularity's time-manipulation offers something a little different, though – hero Nate Renko's TMD – you can surely guess what the acronym stands for – affects the age of single objects, so rather than the device's Revert power rewinding time, it can rebuild what is broken and transform enemies into a placental form. Rather than foes simply turning into mewling babies however, they adopt something of a sub-human state. They're still around the same height and weight, but turn into a kind of gloopy Neanderthal – attacking anyone in the vicinity, whether it be Renko himself or, ideally, his enemies.

Of course, just as you can move things backwards, your TMD can artificially age objects. As we witness an enemy rapidly decaying in front of our eyes before crumbling into dust, we resist the temptation to say "he chose… poorly". You can use it to disintegrate cover, should your enemies be hiding behind wooden crates. But the TMD isn't just about having fun with your foes, but solving puzzles. Something metal blocking your path? You can always rust it so it's weak enough to smash through. Saplings can suddenly turn into huge trees, offering a walkway to higher ground. All manipulable objects are conveniently highlighted so you can instantly see what will be affected by your time-tinkering. You can even make crumpled crates whole again, before destroying them anew to grab their original contents.

Then there's Chronostasis, which allows Renko to pull objects through time, or to freeze them. An example of the former would be to pull a working fuse and place it into a fuse >





You can't control the time waves which send you back and forth between 1950 and 2010.

SINGULARITY

> Singularity continued

box to open a door, or to make a bridge from a fallen beam. It's also handy in battle – grenades can be held in mid-air and hurled back to the original thrower, while a special pistol – available in the later stages of the game – shoots bullets which can be guided in mid-air, rather like the Glaive in Dark Sector.

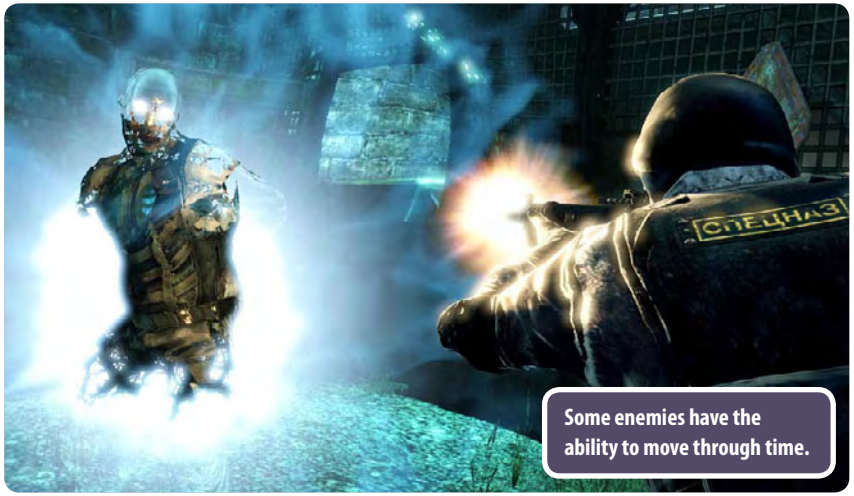
There's a degree of 'been there done that' about most of the mechanics – and that's before we get to the audio logs which fill in the backstory in a very Bioshock-esque manner – but the story of the Singularity event itself and the regular flip-flopping between timelines certainly has us intrigued.

The Russian-owned island of Katorga-12 is an unstable setting, constantly shifting between 1950 and 2010, with one of the regularly occurring time waves forcing down the plane containing US airforce hero Nate Renko and his co-pilot. The objective is simply for Renko to find his friend and escape, but he finds himself dragged into trying to prevent the mysterious Singularity event which caused the island's instability.

The mystery deepens when you discover what's known as the 'null zone' – an area where a professor resides, trapped by a rift in the space-time continuum. It seems he was involved in the experiments with E99 around the time of the Singularity, and your regular encounters with him throughout the adventure will gradually fill in the gaps about the nature of this catastrophic event. Curiously, the professor is the only person in the null zone able to communicate with Renko >



Storytelling is split between third-person cut-scenes and scripted first-person events.



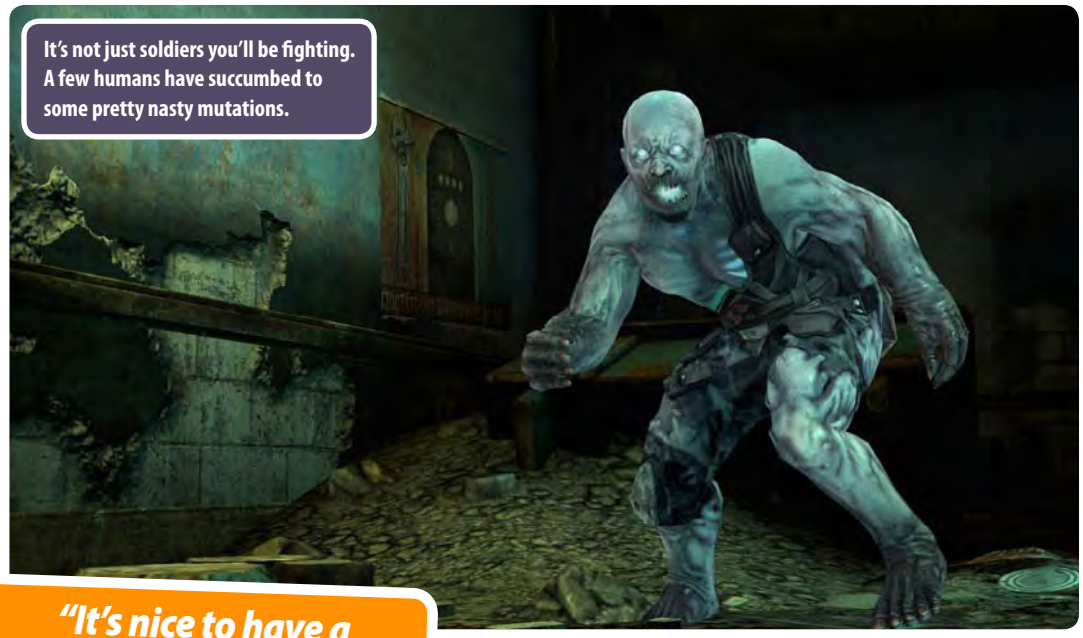
Some enemies have the ability to move through time.



> Singularity continued

– elsewhere there are scientists and soldiers doomed to relive the same events over and over. And then you're blasted unceremoniously back to the present day by another wave – these all appear at scripted intervals, and become more frequent as you progress, eventually leading to further rifts which see you walking back and forth between rooms in different eras. The later game's puzzles will toy with this idea more, asking you to retrieve older objects for present day use, or to bring modern equipment back to the past.

Raven is reluctant to reveal any more about the plot for fear of spoiling what's clearly one of Singularity's trump cards, though with some unusual palette choices – there's an otherworldly green-and-orange tinge to the modern-day sections – its graphics are certainly another strong point. And it's nice to have a shooter that takes a bit of time out for something a little more cerebral. Although the puzzles we saw weren't particularly taxing, they occur regularly enough to break up the combat, allowing players to take a bit of a breather before blasting away with a fairly traditional weaponset backed up with the more unusual functions of the TMD. If the story can eventually satisfy as much as its early stages intrigue, then perhaps those Bioshock comparisons won't do Singularity any harm.



It's not just soldiers you'll be fighting. A few humans have succumbed to some pretty nasty mutations.

"It's nice to have a shooter that takes a bit of time out for something a little more cerebral"



Handily, objects you can manipulate with the TMD will glow.



The art design is certainly quite arresting.

P3Zine SINGULARITY

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 85%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 85%

Something old, something new – but our interest's been piqued

SINGULAR VISION

A game to make time for?



Singularity Producer Kekoa Lee-Creel

Activision's time-bending shooter is an intriguing prospect, with its story promises twists and thrills with an intriguing sci-fi spin. We spoke to producer Kekoa Lee-Creel to ask what makes Singularity tick.

Can you tell us a little more about the game's protagonist?
He's called Nate Renko, and is in the back seat of a plane when it crashes over this Russian island. He tries to find the pilot and that's how the story begins. He's an everyman, not a badass, so he's not your traditional action hero.

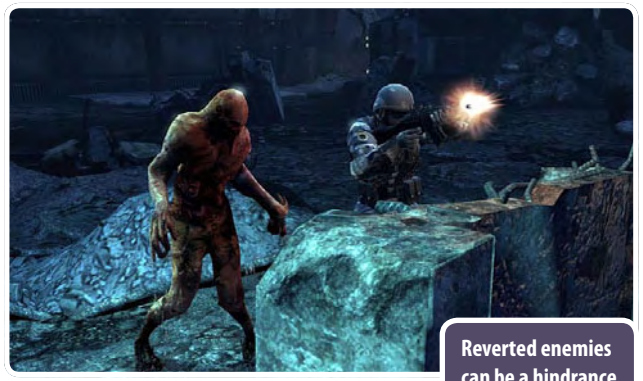
"Nate is an everyman not a badass, so he's not your traditional action hero"

We've seen the benefits of ageing your opponents, but what about sending them backwards? How does that help you in combat?
If you have an enemy approach you, you can pull him backwards into what we call a 'revert' state, and you'll gain an ally in one sense as in this primitive form he'll attack enemies – but he'll also attack you.

Can you tell us some more about the mysterious Element 99?
Element 99 is an ore discovered on the island when the singularity occurred. Everything highlighted has been affected by Element 99 and also has a function – so you'll instantly be able to see what objects can be manipulated.

And what about the strange 'null zone' you can visit?
In the null zone you're out of the natural time-space area. The professor is trapped in there, and over the years he's been there, he's been forced to think through all that he did.

What about the time waves that regularly occur?
You're pulled back to the present against your will – it's beyond the player's control. There are also time rifts, which have you walking back and forth between different eras, and the puzzles in the later stages of the game are based on that.



Reverted enemies can be a hindrance or a help.

How much is Singularity focused on action? We've seen quite a few puzzles so far…
I'd say, if I had to give a percentage, it's about 60% combat, 40% puzzles. It's first and foremost a shooter, but we wanted to expand the parameters of the FPS. We wanted it to be a little more rich, and we think the puzzles also help with the game's pacing. They pull the player down into a thinking space, so he can catch a breath, and then break back into the intense combat when he's done.



Though there are plenty of puzzles, Singularity remains an intense action-focused game at heart.

FIRST LOOK

Tony Hawk: RIDE

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Robomodo
Heritage: N/A
Link: http://thride.com
ETA: October

Step on for 'the future of videogaming'



Spins are executed by waggling the board from side to side while your skater is airborne.

"RIDE could be the most succesful Hawk in years"

It was always the logical next step, really – made more likely by the success of Nintendo's Balance Board. That Activision wants to clutter our lounges further with peripherals shouldn't be a surprise to anyone. In fact, it's a wonder it's taken this long.

After a short career hiatus (partly brought about by the success of EA's Skate), the Birdman returns to consoles with a full-size wireless board in tow. It's motion sensitive, reacting to subtle movements as you shift your weight from back to front to increase speed, side-to-side to turn, or press down with your back foot to ollie.

Tricks are a little more difficult to pin down. From the demonstration we're given, it seems that wiggling the front of the board while pressing down at the back pulls off the more elaborate manoeuvres, with stalls and grabs handled by moving your hand over sensors at the nose and the side of the board. These sensors also detect foot movements should you need to increase speed.

Difficulty levels

There are three stages of difficulty. The first, Casual mode, displays a thick yellow guideline, which shows you where you should be headed, and is the best way to learn the ropes. Then Confident mode has reflectors and other visual cues which nudge players in the right direction, though greater freedom of movement is allowed. Finally, Hardcore mode lets more experienced boarders navigate freely throughout the environments. It's fair to say that the areas we saw seemed a little less intricately designed than the line-filled locales of earlier Hawk games, but that's obviously to ease players into the new control scheme. We wouldn't bet against much more complex arenas to appear later, testing the mettle of more confident players with tricky grinds and dauntingly large ramps.

For those who prefer the half-pipes, Vert mode allows players to align the board east to west for a side-on viewpoint of their sickest tricks, while Pro Challenges are a throwback to Hawks of old, tasking players with following the instructions and the moves of some real-life skaters.

Assuming the technology is as responsive as the demonstration suggests, and – perhaps more importantly – that the price is right, RIDE could well be the most successful Hawk in years. Skate should keep an eye on this one.


The board peripheral in all its glory. Looks like a potentially expensive bit of kit to us…

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Tony Hawk: RIDE

P3Zine — TONY HAWK RIDE

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE: 80%
FIRST IMPRESSIONS: 80%

The Birdman gets another tilt at regaining his crown

MIX MASTERS

Get ready to take to the dance floor with DJ Hero

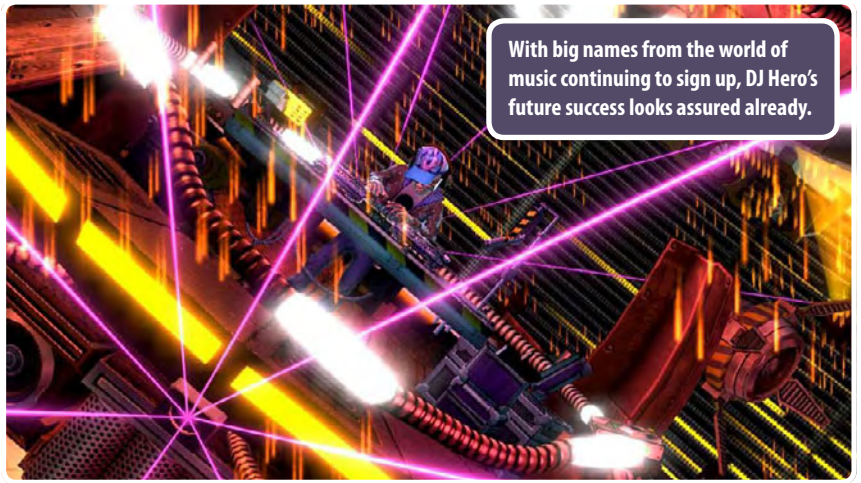


Chris Lee, formerly of Criterion, helped set up developer FreeStyle Games and is the Director of DJ Hero

As Activision details its latest peripheral-dependent music game, we ask Chris Lee of Freestyle Games and Sony London Studio head Kevin McSherry whether DJ Hero can do for turntabling what Guitar Hero did for the humble six-string.

How did you determine which tracks to use in the game?
The DJs drive the content in terms of which records we use. All the tracks should be recognisable or familiar to most people. There are a lot of interesting mixes – old versus new, rock versus hip-hop, etc – for example, we've got Tears for Fears vs. Erik Prydz on one mix.

Can you tell us exactly how the Rewind mechanic works?
Rewinds are enabled by successfully reaching a 4x multiplier. You use it for one of a few reasons – for example, if there's a bit of a song and you just want to hear it again.



With big names from the world of music continuing to sign up, DJ Hero's future success looks assured already.

What were the major challenges during development?
It was a challenge working on the peripheral and the highway at the same time. We realised early on that mounting buttons on the platter was important, so players had the sensation of having their hand on the turntable at all times – and the rest then started dropping into place.

We went through many iterations – about 12 to 14 types of controller. We had the traditional development process of trying it, testing it out, trying it again… and we tested it with DJs – and, by contrast, those who'd not played rhythm games before – until we got it right.

You say that some tracks are compatible with the guitar controllers. How does that work?
We've got 10 special mixes for that mode, and it's player vs player – the guitarist can be playing All Apologies, and the DJ then mixes into that. Both play at the same time.

How exactly do you get people to lend their music to the game? Have you found some artists reluctant to contribute?
Inevitably, there's a bit of a domino effect after a while. We have to first get the game in a form where we can show people what we're doing. We showed artists and record labels, put a video together… and people really started to get into it. A lot of people recognise that videogames can be an effective platform for music these days. We've got five unique DJ Shadow tracks that he mixed just for us.



The peripheral looks extremely solid in the flesh.

Can you give us a ballpark figure for how much DJ Hero will cost?
The price is still under discussion – it'll be broadly similar to most music peripheral videogames, though.

Are you planning to release any downloadable content?
We have strong plans for DLC, but we're thinking beyond single tracks or track packs. We could, for example, have sample packs which players can preload in and drop them in during the mixes.

"A lot of people recognise that videogames can be an effect platform for music these days"

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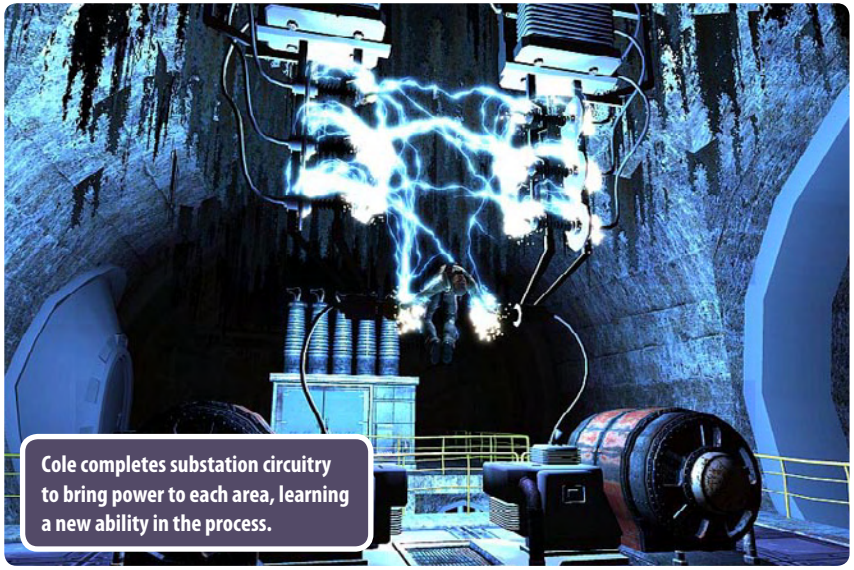


Publisher: Sony
Developer: Sucker Punch
Heritage: Sly Cooper series
Link: www.infamousthegame.com
OUT NOW

inFamous

Here's a bright idea…

As another superhero is more than aware, 'with great power comes great responsibility'. inFamous certainly gets the latter bit right, scattering a series of key moral decisions throughout its story, each of which helps guide your path towards hero or villain. Yet Sucker Punch fumbles the ball slightly with the former. Cole might have the power of electricity, but he's lacking a little spark in combat situations, often forced into cowering behind cover by turret guns and rocket launchers. It's not until the story reaches its highly charged climax that Cole really gets to turn the tables on the gun-toting gangs that have taken over Empire City.



Cole completes substation circuitry to bring power to each area, learning a new ability in the process.

A few gripes

We've a few gripes with the repetition, too. The sewer sections where Cole reactivates the substations to light up each area offer some engaging platform challenges, but each one merely feels like a slightly rejigged retread of the previous sojourn underground. The city itself doesn't have the personality of a Gotham or a Metropolis, either – its grey and brown exteriors conveying post-apocalyptic gloom a little too effectively – while Cole himself belongs to that peculiarly gravel-throated new breed of videogame 'everymen' – gruff and unnecessarily bad-tempered, he's hardly the most likeable lead.

It's fortunate, then, that inFamous gets just about everything else right. Cole is, quite simply, a delight to control. He's a lithe, bouncy protagonist, sprinting without pause through city streets, grinding thrillingly along cables between



If Cole is doing very bad things, his appearance will change to reflect his evil status.

STRIKE A LIGHT

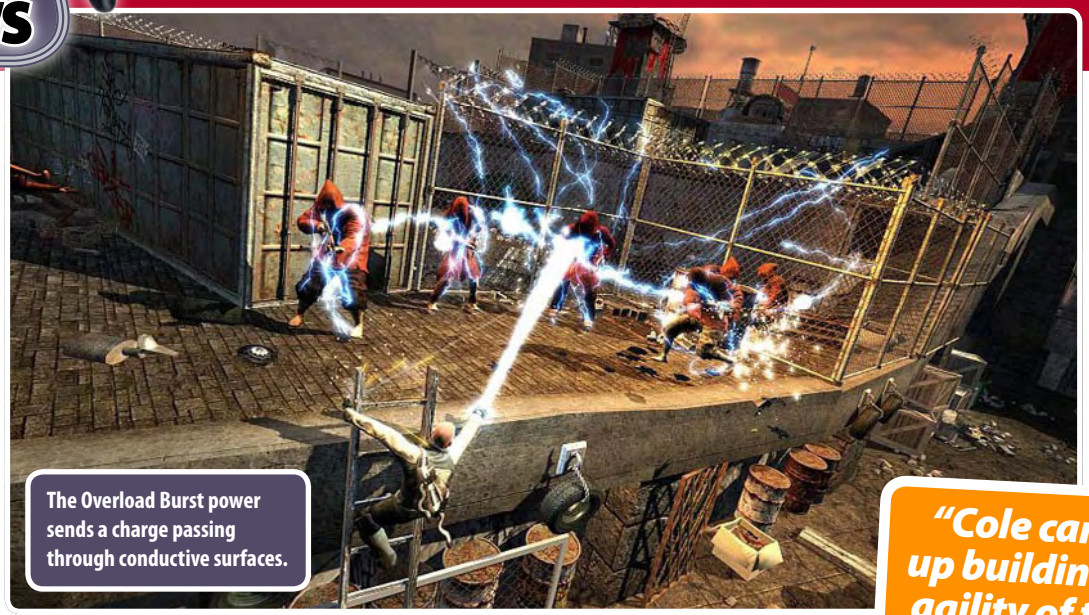
Watt's hot about Cole power



Glide and seek | Cole train | Power struggle

Glide and seek

Cole's 'static thrust' power allows him to temporarily glide through the air, which makes for even more swift progress through the city.



The Overload Burst power sends a charge passing through conductive surfaces.



>inFamous continued

rooftops, leaping from heights that would kill a mere mortal and landing with barely a flinch. He can also scamper up buildings with the agility of the world's finest cat burglar, hitching himself up several storeys in seconds. It doesn't matter that his power renders him unable to drive – who needs cars when you can get about this fast on foot?

Simply belting through the city at a rate of knots is fun in itself, though you'll frequently be interrupted by the peck-peck-peck of machine gun fire from the three main gangs who've each claimed a portion of the city as their own. Initially, you might be tempted to take out a few of the more troublesome enemies, or to simply leap out of range, but as the myriad sidequests remove all baddies from a single tiny district, you'll often find yourself tackling these diversions to make life easier.

"Cole can scamper up buildings with the agility of the world's finest cat burglar"

They also help mix up the action a little better than the story missions manage on their own – all of them are heavy on the shooting, while these standalone tasks offer greater variety. One minute you can be racing between satellite dishes helping to secure an uplink, the next you'll be exploring a building's exterior to deactivate security cameras. Yet that's not to say the main quests don't have their moments – one or two difficulty spikes aside, there's a strong sense of progression as you >

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game, one step at a time



1 HOUR
Cole starts off weakly, but isn't leaching power from reapers a bit naughty?



3 HOURS
Underground, overground. By now inFamous is settling into a comforting rhythm.



6 HOURS
Bridge over troubled water – just make sure you don't fall in…



10 HOURS
An attempted prison break turns into an epic shootout.



15 HOURS
Fed up of being a goody two shoes? Time to try playing the bad guy.

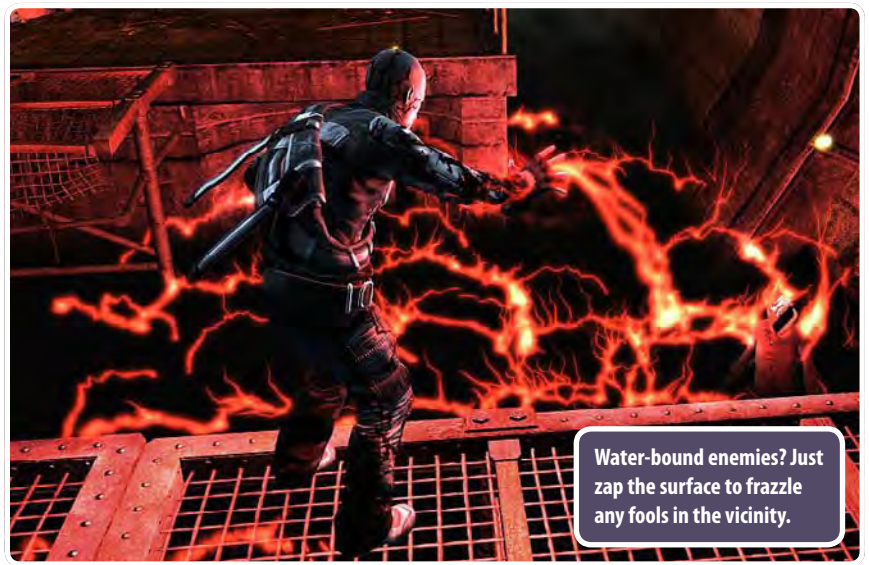


Precision mode acts as a sniper scope.

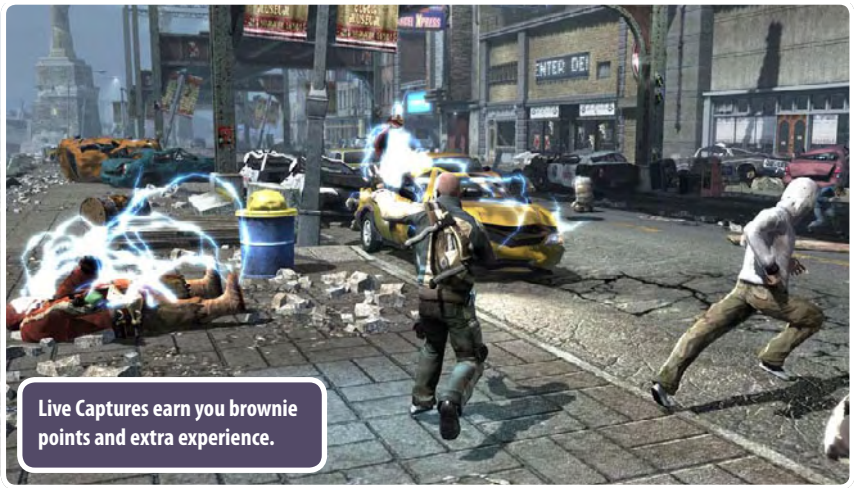
> inFamous continued

battle enemies in increasing number and toughness, while the final stretch offers several highlights, including a final boss battle that's pitched just about perfectly, a mission involving poison gas balloons which tests just about all the skills you've learned so far, and a couple of gasp-worthy revelations. Better still are the comic-book story sequences – hand-crafted art combines with dramatic music and Cole's noir-tinged narration to add a strong dash of colour and personality to this tasty concoction.

And by that time, it's likely the combat will have clicked, too. Cole's powers will be vastly upgraded, and – assuming you've been collecting the battery shards that afford our hero more electrical energy – he'll have enough juice to loose off a fair few energy grenades or precision attacks (essentially like having a sniper rifle with slo-mo zoom) before having to recharge. And all of a sudden you feel empowered again. Sure, we could still do without those bloody turret guns, but they're much less of a problem when you're summoning huge, raking lightning bolts from the sky, not just destroying them but the seven enemies in the immediate vicinity.



Water-bound enemies? Just zap the surface to frazzle any fools in the vicinity.

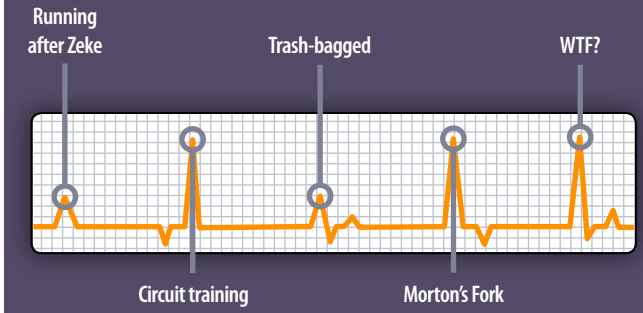


Live Captures earn you brownie points and extra experience.

Upon completion of the game's story, we immediately started another playthrough, this time opting to turn to the Dark Side – which says a lot about how much we think of inFamous. Yet it's not quite the classic it had the potential to be. The lack of variety in enemies, the repetition in missions, and the over-reliance on destructive powers makes for a game that, on occasion, plays like any other third-person shooter – merely replacing a small arsenal of weapons with a series of electrical powers. Yet if a game at its worst is still a competent actioner, it's clear Sucker Punch is doing something very right, and this is a very promising start for what will hopefully become one of the PS3's landmark franchises.

Chris Schilling

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



"This is a promising start for what will hopefully become one of the PS3's landmark franchises"

P3Zine Verdict

inFamous is another electric exclusive on PS3

\+ Brilliant presentation
\+ Enjoyable platforming
\- Irritating difficulty spikes

86%



Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Asobo
Heritage: Ratatouille
Link: www.fuel-game.com
ETA: 12th June

FUEL

Burning bright or a flaming mess?

Approach FUEL with the mindset that it's an open-world Motorstorm – a mentality that's entirely understandable if you've not been closely following Asobo's ambitious off-roader – and you could well be left a little nonplussed, certainly by the treacle-slow early vehicles, the loose design of the races and the free-ride mode where it seemingly takes ages to get anywhere. Go in realising that it's much closer to Test Drive Unlimited with quad bikes and you'll likely get a lot more out of those opening few hours. And if you thought wandering about the Capital Wasteland discovering new stuff by happy accident was the best part of Fallout 3, then it's fair to say FUEL might well be right up your street.

Exploration in a racing game? Don't knock it, as a lot of the fun in FUEL comes in simply pootling gently around its 5,560 square miles of terrain. Vista points offer the most spectacular views – race to a lake's edge or worm your way up a gravel track to one of many peaks and take in the scenery. Then you might fancy tackling one of the race challenges – venture within range and you can simply press X when you reach the line to start competing. Or you might locate a Doppler truck, which you can crash into to reveal the locations of further vistas, challenges or new liveries for your rider and his garage of vehicles. Find a powerful Maverick vehicle and ram it off the road, and you've got something a little meatier to add to your collection. >


Tornado! Just weave left and right a bit as stuff falls across the track.

Roll over screen for annotations



PETROL HEADS

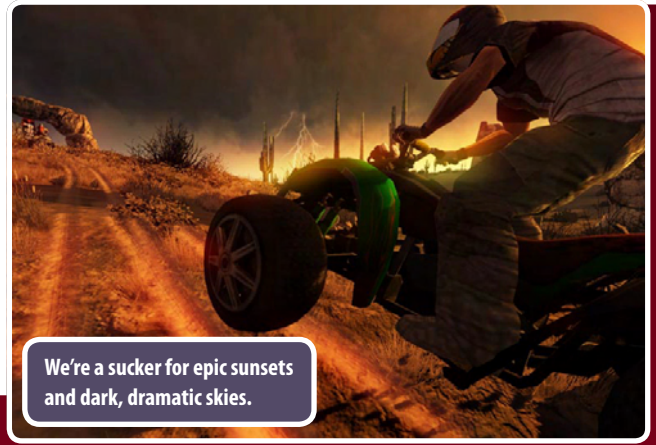
A fuel and his money are soon parted



Barrelling about | Riders on the storm | Vertically challenged

Barrelling about

Fuel is the game's currency, used to purchase new vehicles to add to your garage. White barrels can be a nice little earner if you're more about the exploring than the racing, though you can often find them on the longer raid races. Simply crash into them to collect more fuel.


We're a sucker for epic sunsets and dark, dramatic skies.



You'll occasionally automatically pull off a trick as you grab some air off a ramp, but there aren't any stunts as such.



> FUEL continued

There's a career structure here which has a chopper plop you into races whenever you like. And even if you're more of a nomadic racer you'll have to dip into these events to get the best from the game. Though you can travel anywhere on the map from the outset, the various zones will remain 'locked', with events, heliports, challenges and anything else to streamline the experience conspicuous by their absence.

Races in single-player are a mixed bag. Handling is fairly arcadey, though you'll have to factor in surface and incline more than you might think.

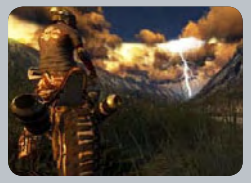
"Speed (or lack thereof) is initially a problem"

Speed (or lack thereof) is initially a problem – at least until you've progressed past the first couple of zones – and while some tasks are great fun, like the more freeform raid races and chopper chases, the design of the courses isn't particularly memorable. Couple this with the rather tinny engine noises – appropriately whiney, perhaps, but it's still not a pleasant sound – and atrocious 'music' and you could be forgiven for writing off FUEL before it's really revved its engines.

But then you'll start to unlock the better, more exciting vehicles, and more zones open up with the stars you've earned. The environments >

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game, one step at a time



10 MINUTES
The world can be pretty daunting, but there's plenty to do in there.



2 HOURS
Early races aren't the most exciting, though chopper chasing is great fun.



5 HOURS
The map starts to open up now, and the vehicles are getting faster, too.



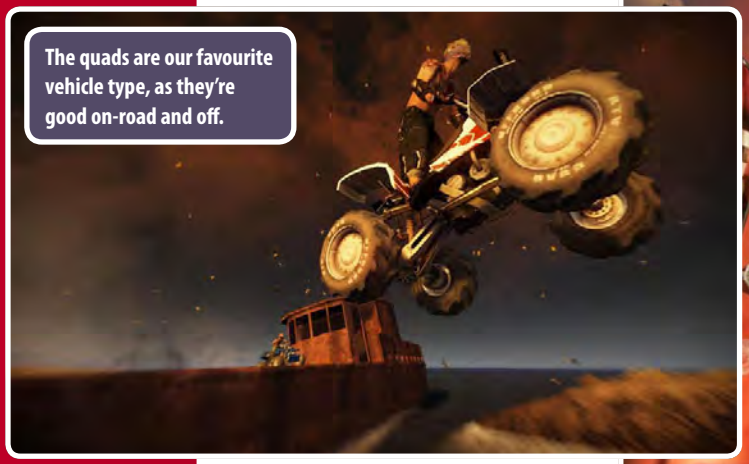
10 HOURS
Accessed all areas? Not yet – Mount Rainier remains tantalisingly out of reach.



30 HOURS+
Assuming the netcode holds, you could be playing this online for months.



Weirdly, we found the more industrialised areas among the most interesting environments.


The quads are our favourite vehicle type, as they're good on-road and off.


Checkpoints are very well marked, so there's little chance of you hitting the wrong one first.

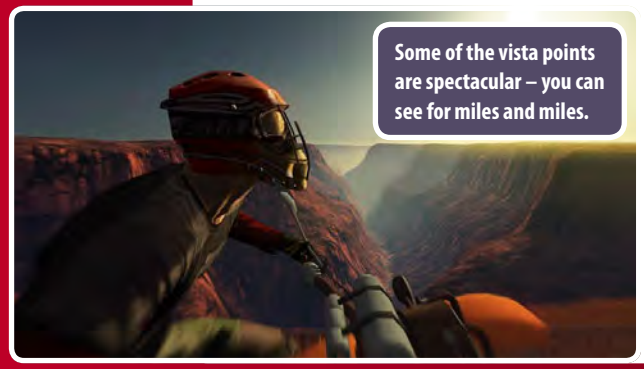
> FUEL continued

get a lot more interesting, particularly around the map's extremities. The Grand Canyon is represented by Redrock Bluffs, while challenging snowy terrain arrives in the form of The White Flats. Or if you prefer your wastelands a little more industrial, then weaving around the chimneys of Smokesters' Crater should be more up your dirt track. And any race where there's a hint of some adverse weather conditions in the name (clue: the word 'thunder' isn't just for dramatic effect) is a highlight, even if the destruction of pylons as they collapse onto the track in front of you is all scripted.

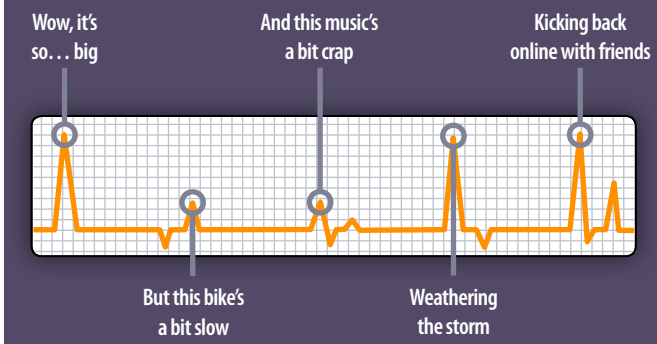
Even with all that, the single-player game is not really FUEL's forte – take it online and it becomes something else entirely. The sprawling world becomes a playground for you and your mates, and you'll start getting a little more creative when you've had your fill of the standard races, setting checkpoints way off in the distance and then racing pals towards them. You might well spend plenty of time simply riding around together, finding secrets you've not yet uncovered in your solo career. We've not had the opportunity to spend much time online with our review copy, so it's unfair of us to truly judge its effectiveness until the game's out and the servers start filling up. But if the netcode holds firm, we're predicting a decent cult success story at the very least for what looks like it'll turn into an enjoyably relaxed online experience.

With the online key to FUEL's success, it's a difficult game to score fairly, given the vast majority of our time has been spent with the side even Codemasters readily accepts isn't its strongest – we'll endeavour to discuss our experiences with the online game post-release. FUEL's world can occasionally feel lonely and unforgiving, and for all the challenges scattered around, it's still a bit too empty. But as the environment sprawls out in front of you, just begging to be explored, it's a temptation that's difficult to resist.

Chris Schilling


Some of the vista points are spectacular – you can see for miles and miles.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



"Any race where there's a hint of some adverse weather conditions in the name is a highlight"

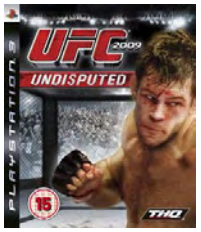

FUEL is bound to come into its own when its players congregate online.

P3Zine Verdict

A slow burner, but the online mode could be stunning

\+ Immense, immersive world
\+ Plenty to do
\- Not the quickest

84%



Publisher: THQ
Developer: Yuke's
Heritage: WWE SmackDown vs. Raw series
Link: www.ufcundisputed.com
OUT NOW

UFC 2009: Undisputed

Unquestionably a top-tier fighter


Attacking the legs is a good way to gradually sap your opponent's energy.

It starts with the first of many tutorials. Before the game's started, and before you've even had chance to look at the main menu, Undisputed is suggesting you learn the ropes. And you'll need to. By the time you've finished the extensive training, you'll likely have forgotten how you do half of the moves. Undisputed's fighting mechanics might be deep and complex, but they ain't half convoluted.

Roll over screen for annotations



But it's necessary. As the sport – and there's some controversy over whether it should be termed as such – of Mixed Martial Arts uses several disciplines. You'll need to master kickboxing and grappling controls, learning how to mix your approach depending on who you're facing off against. In general, your face buttons are used for punches and kicks, with the shoulders and triggers used for modifiers and blocks. The right stick is your friend when you're up close and personal, used to grab hold of your opponent, manoeuvre around him when you're both grounded, and to wriggle free when you're in trouble. Initially, it seems easier to >

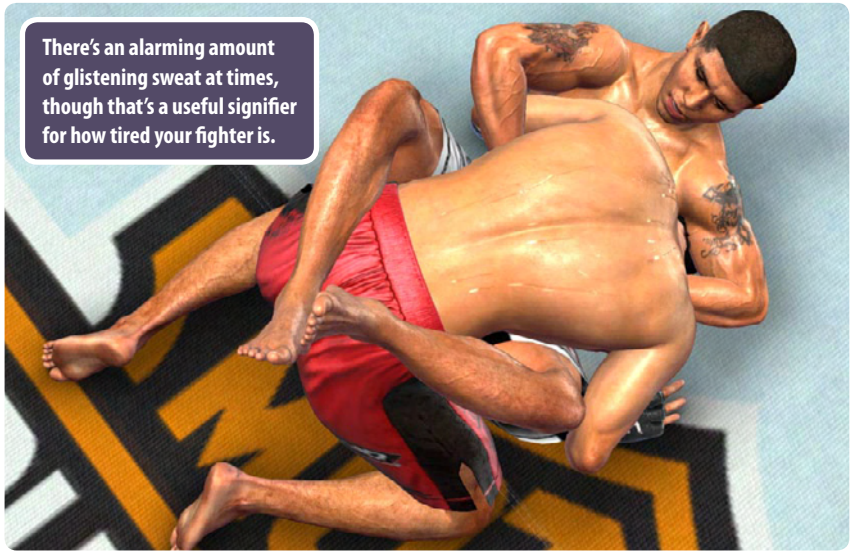


When an opponent is grounded, it's time to pound on them.

> UFC Undisputed cont.

play it safe, keep your distance and just use fists and feet to win. But come up against an opponent who likes to go into the clinch and you'll be tapping out before you know it.

Thankfully, it gets easier. You'll start to read your opponents' moves and work out how to counter them. Throwing punches just as they're about to launch an attack themselves can have devastating effects, while you can just as easily wear a nippy rival down over time by regularly whacking his legs until he slows down. And then you'll really get into it, trying risky superman punches, hammering at the buttons to stay in a full mount, backing away when gassed and going on the offensive when your opponent is rocking.



There's an alarming amount of glistening sweat at times, though that's a useful signifier for how tired your fighter is.

The audiovisuals make it easy to get hooked – the graphics are outstanding, with large and well-animated character models, an audience that's not merely made up of cardboard cutouts, and perhaps the best commentary you'll ever hear in a sports game. We're not kidding – it's hugely varied, reacts wonderfully to events as they happen (as opposed to five seconds too late, like most footy games), and adds an additional layer of excitement to each bout. When you really connect with a kick and you hear "he's rocking!" and the crowd roars, you need no further impetus to stay on the offensive.

It's not perfect, though. Menus – particularly in Career mode – are needlessly slow and ugly, often requiring too many different button presses before you get anywhere. Indeed, the Career mode itself is a bit of a mess – building up your fighter's stats could have been handled in real depth, or conversely automated for those who prefer to get on with the scrapping, but you're left with an awkward halfway house that doesn't really let you feel involved. Yet there's real potential in what is a quite remarkable fighting engine, meaning that UFC 2010 could be the brawling masterpiece this so very nearly is.

Chris Schilling



THREE WAYS TO WIN

How to triumph in Undisputed



KO | **TKO** | **Submission**

KO

The knock-out is probably the most satisfying way to end a battle. For the most part, you'll need to work at it to wear an opponent down enough to make this possible, but there's a thrillingly random element to fights which means you can win within 30 seconds. Connect at exactly the right time with a powerful counter-punch or head-kick and the fight can be over.

P3Zine Verdict

Great stuff, but next year's game will top it

+ Amazing presentation
+ Brutal brawling
- Repetitive and occasionally uninspired

84%

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The Dark Knight returns

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The heritage of Wolfenstein

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen

Bioshock 2

King of Fighters XII

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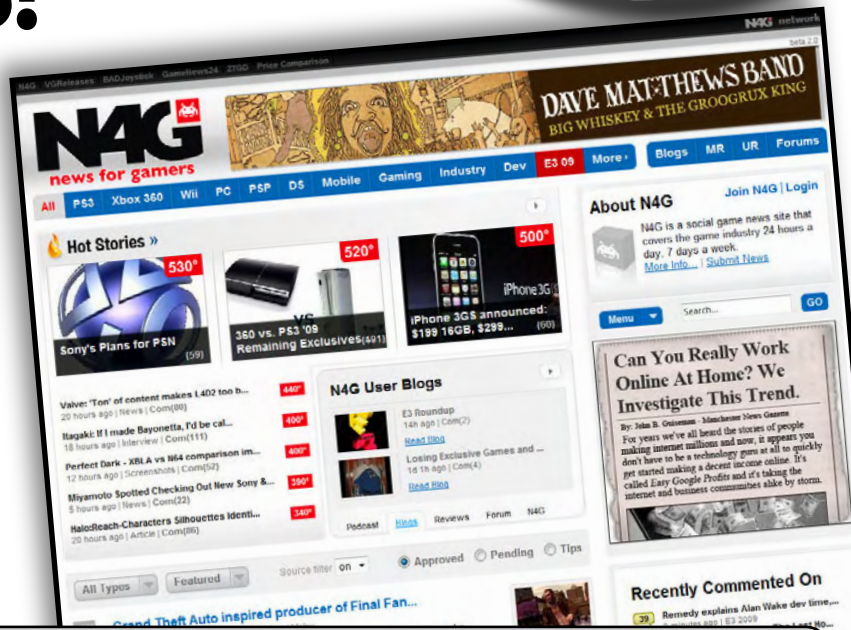
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