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Official Magazine - Australia



METAL GEAR SOLID 4®

HANDS-ON WITH THE PS3 EXCLUSIVE OF THE YEAR! THE FULL SCOOP ON SOLID SNAKE'S FINAL MISSION!

ISSUE 16 MAY 2008
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PLAYSTATION 3

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MA 15+
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Strong violence, strong coarse language, drug and sexual references

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Niko Bellic
grand theft auto IV
TM
April 29th 2008
www.rockstargames.com/iv

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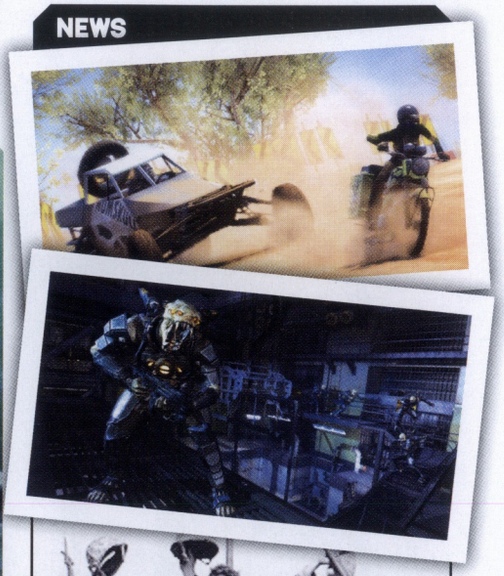



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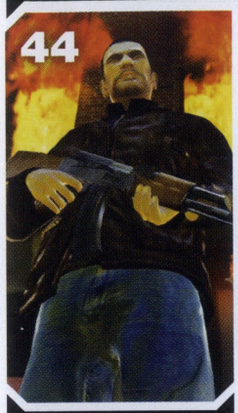

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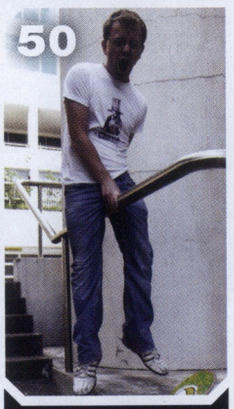

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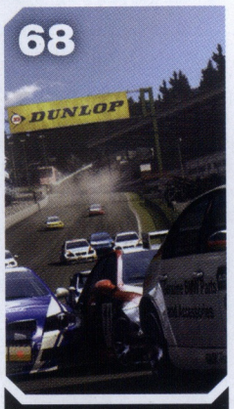

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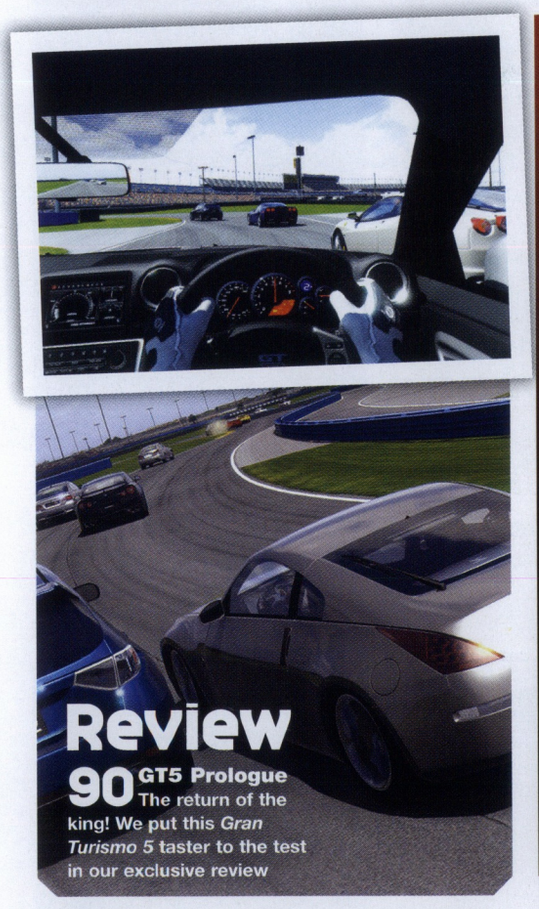



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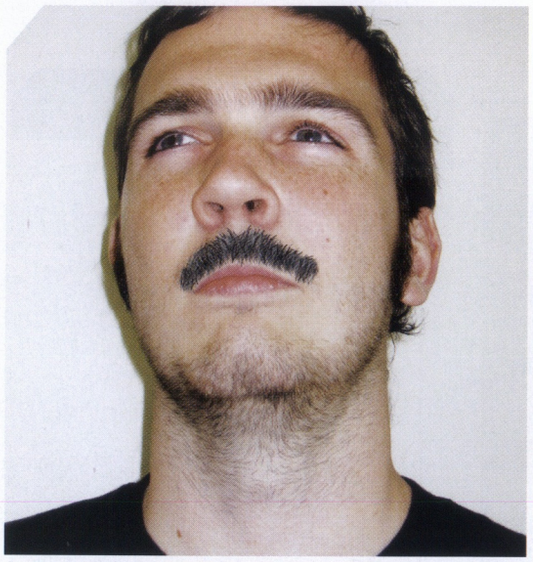
EDITOR'S LETTER



"Kojima isn't content with just one grizzled soup-strainer – he wants two."

How many videogame characters have moustaches? We're struggling here. You may find the odd what-ho Brit sporting a 'tache in a WWII shooter, but as for leads – who is there beyond, well... Mario? No one. That's who.

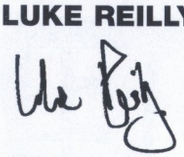
Metal Gear Solid 4's Old Snake, however, went to town in Movember and never looked back – that push-broom of his is here to stay.

The moustache *should* make him look like a maths teacher, but it doesn't. It's a symbol of strength. Snake's defiant nose-neighbour is a middle finger to everything un-manly in our increasingly metrosexual world. Snake's muzzy is a constant reminder of the testosterone flowing through his genetic-engineered veins.

Better yet, Kojima isn't content with just one grizzled soup-strainer – he wants two. Snake's arch-nemesis, Liquid Ocelot also has a hairy caterpillar resting upon his upper lip. *MGS4* is a battle of the beards, so to speak. Moustaches and beards are different, but the alliteration seemed a fraction more important to me there than that distinction.

What does this have to do with anything? Good question. I'll get back to you.

LUKE REILLY, Acting Editor



PS3 online: Capt_Flashheart

"When the going gets weird, the weird turn pro."
– Hunter S. Thompson

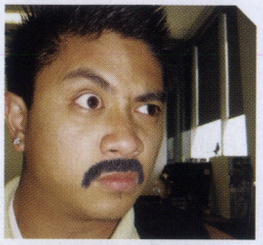
On Old Snake's face fuzz...

MARK SERRELS



I've always kinda wanted to be Snake, so this is a positive step. Sporting a stylin' grey mo puts me in the same league as guys like... Paul Newman and George Clooney. If they had them, they'd be grey for sure.
Online: Serrels

PHILLIP JORGE



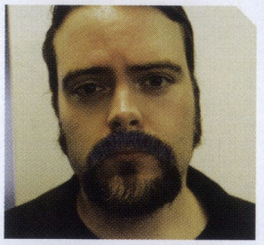
I'd most probably look a little like a catfish with a real moustache, so pinching Snake's is the way to go for me. Actually, I look incredibly like my dad with a moustache – it's kind of freaking me out.
Online: PhiLLipO

ADAM MATHEW



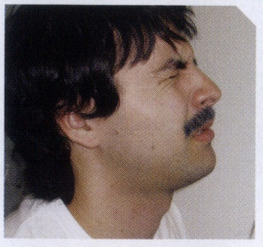
Ginger beards are a tough sell, but look at Chuck Norris. Or... Captain Redbeard. Snake's distinguished grey face fuzz is a little different for me, but I'm prepared to go with it.
Online: YourmumsAWESOME

ANTHONY O'CONNOR



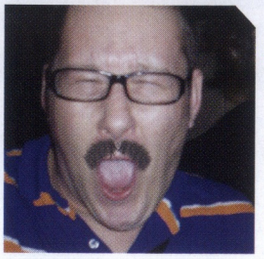
A wise man (probably) once said: "A man without a beard is not a man, rather a dull-witted mule who smells of devon." And check out Snake's old man beard. Now there are some chin pubes you could use to pick locks.
Online: stoxy242

JAMES ELLIS



Every post-pubescent man knows that a bearded snake is the way to go. It's natural and gives you something to braid while channel surfing. Try walking into a change room with a shaven snake – see what happens to you.
Online: gtfaster49

DAVE KOZICKI



Not really being able to grow any proper facial hair myself (except for a goatee, and I use the term loosely), I can only speculate as to its worth. Err... good for hiding a nest of birds, Peter Griffin style? *crickets*
Online: ko-zee-ii

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SHOUT OUTS: Naz :: Happy 26th birthday Nicole! :: Simon 'hands-on' Ramsey :: Dave 'hands-off' Kozicki :: Congratulations Jono & Laura on your wedding :: Trish's brownies :: Elissa 'birthday muffin' Lawrence

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MARVEL

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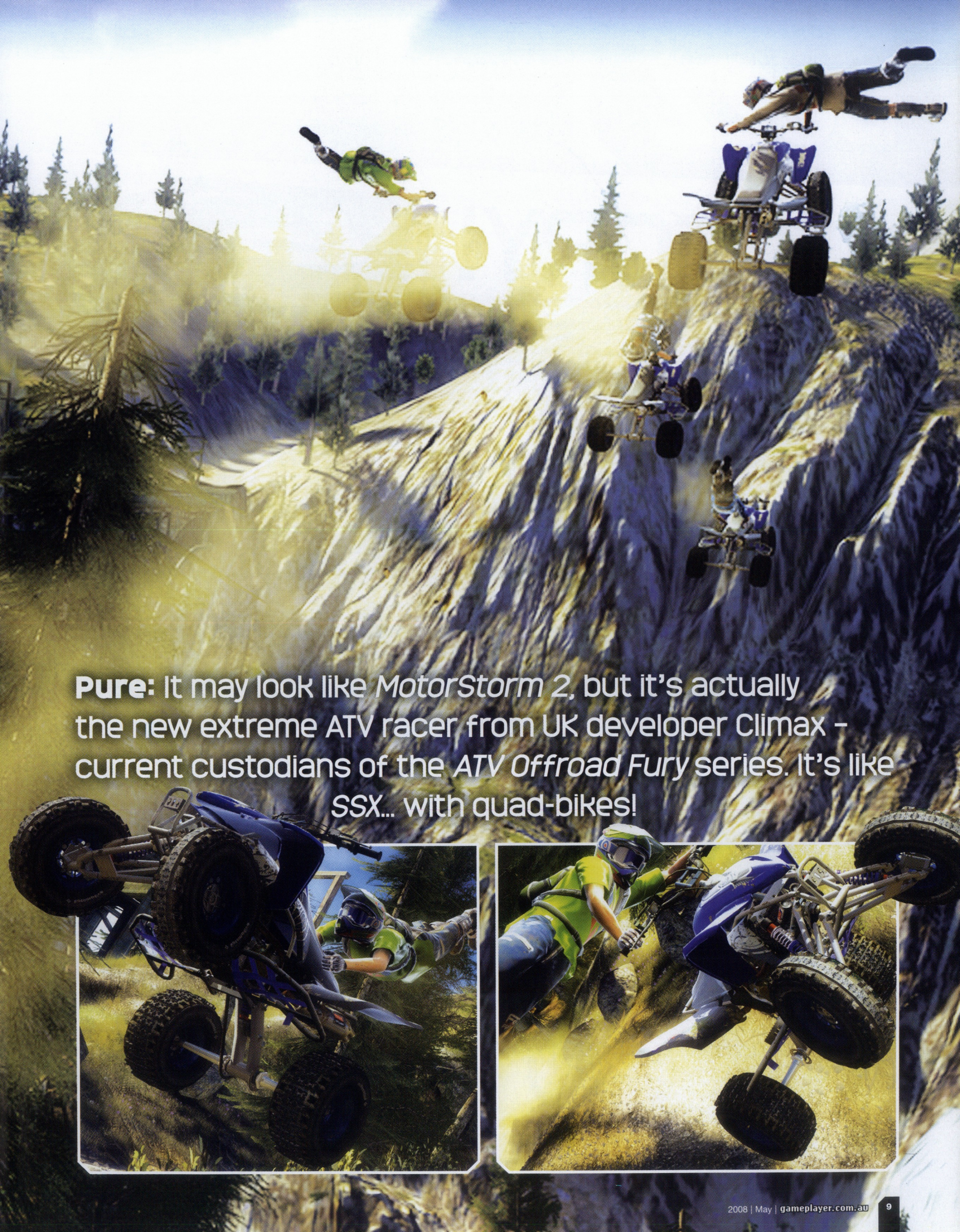
SCREENSHOT OF THE MONTH



Pure: It may look like *MotorStorm 2*, but it's actually the new extreme ATV racer from UK developer Climax – current custodians of the *ATV Offroad Fury* series. It's like *SSX*... with quad-bikes!



Gaming's latest and greatest...

BUZZ

Blu-ray announces victory, Phil Harrison steps down, R18+ rating still unlikely, Portal 2 on the way, and much, much more...

VICTORY!

After a year of dilly dallying around the obvious, and after spending the last few months reeling from the constant blows of defection after defection, Toshiba finally did the inevitable, honourable thing and announced that it would no longer be producing HD-DVD players, which essentially means that Blu-ray is finally the undisputed winner of the format war.

It also means the PS3 will reap the benefits as one of the cheapest and most effective Blu-ray players on the market.

And now, as companies worldwide abandon the sinking ship of HD DVD (including Microsoft who will no longer be producing the HD DVD add-on for the 360), expect production of both Blu-ray discs and players to move into overdrive. Now that the confusion surrounding the two formats is null and void, and with the adoption rate of HDTVs firing through the roof, 2008 is looking set to be a good year for Sony and the PlayStation brand.



■ Photographic evidence Blu-ray actually won the format war over 60 years ago, on Iwo Jima.

WHERE DID IT ALL GO WRONG?



THE PS3?

The PS3 was basically the launching pad that shot Blu-ray as a format into the stratosphere. Early adopters of high def tech got the most powerful games console coupled with the cheapest Blu-ray player on the market.



CAPACITY?

Straight from the word go HD DVDs had less storage capacity than Blu-ray. This meant that, despite having the same resolution as Blu-ray, there were certain points where more compression was required to make a 1080p movie fit on a disc – often resulting in a lower picture quality.



THE STUDIOS?

This one's a bit of a no brainer. From the beginning HD DVD had a problem getting support from the major studios, with Blu-ray garnering a sweeping response from the outset with almost all studios committing to Sony's new format.



RETAIL?

In Australia especially, stores like JB Hi Fi, Blockbuster, and the rest were very slow and reluctant to commit to HD DVD. To be fair, retail was slow to commit to either format, due to a format war that confused consumers, but were definitely more receptive to Blu-ray.

THE FUTURE?

Blu-ray's victory will undoubtedly help the PS3, both in the short term and the long term. Even for non-gamers the PS3 is a solid proposition as a Blu-ray player, reasonably priced at under $700. This combined with the ever-increasing number of HDTVs hitting homes could result in many choosing the PS3 as high definition media center. We would certainly recommend it.



■ *No Reservations?* No thanks

WELCOME TO... MOTORSTORM 2
*AND OTHER STUFF

So yes, we were already aware that a sequel to *MotorStorm* was in the works, but to be perfectly honest we knew little more beyond that... until now.

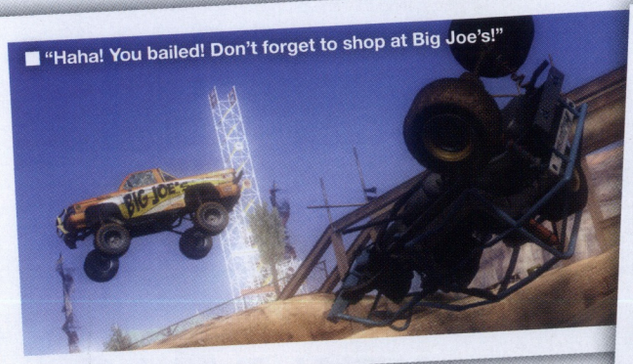
BBC blogger Darren Waters, from the UK, was apparently given access to *MotorStorm 2*, *Resistance 2*, and a super new Sony exclusive.

The big surprise is that *MotorStorm* has apparently stretched away from it's mud laden, desert roots onto what Waters described as a "lush island environment, full of interactive vegetation." A new *Resistance 2* trailer was described as "enticing", but even more intriguing was the secret exclusive that Waters was sworn to secrecy about...

Apparently this game left him "speechless" claiming that "we could be on the brink of a step change in what games consoles are capable of in terms of story-telling and immersion." Interesting stuff indeed, providing it's true.


■ *MotorStorm 2?*


■ Black and white pics: they make you look 'dead sexay'!



■ "Haha! You bailed! Don't forget to shop at Big Joe's!"


■ "Got a mint?"

RATED R

At *OPS* we've been advocating an R18+ rating for video games for years. Interestingly it seems that the new Labor government may prove more receptive to it in the near future. The issue will be discussed on March 28.

Dark Sector is just the latest game to be refused classification, but it's merely the latest in an ever-increasing list.

Unfortunately, South Australian Attorney-General Michael Atkinson has more or less confirmed he'll maintain his long-standing opposition to the plan and veto the proposal. Any changes to censorship laws must be agreed on by the Commonwealth and ALL attorneys-general.

Atkinson believes the rating would allow kids access to harmful material, although it's likely an R18+ rating would make it easier for parents to make the right choices.

Bond University research has found 88 per cent of Australians support an R18+ classification for games.



PHIL HARRISON STEPS DOWN

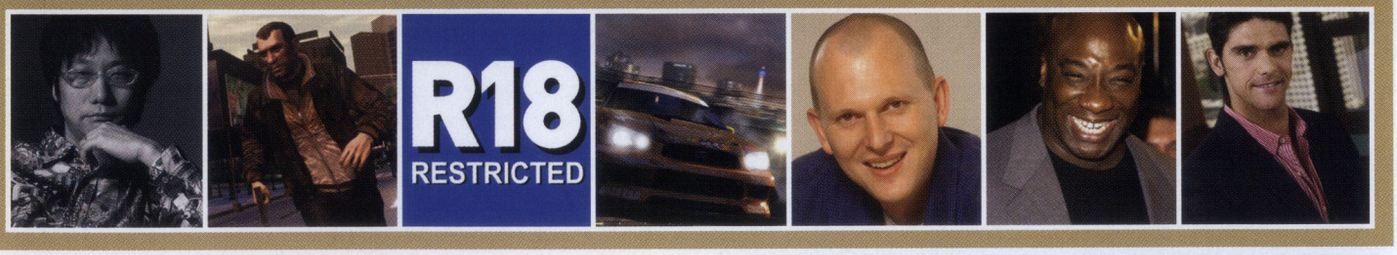
Phil Harrison, aka, the bald executive guy from Sony, has announced that he will be stepping down from his position as President of Sony Computer Entertainment Worldwide Studios from February 29.

No explicit reasons were given for the departure, but despite his leaving Harrison had nothing bad to say about Sony, claiming that he was "grateful to all the PlayStation family for their incredible support, guidance and friendship".

Harrison is rumoured to be moving onto Atari to help with its move away from big budget productions to casual gaming. Best of luck, baldy!

WHAT'S HOT AND WHAT'S NOT...

Hideo Kojima	GTAIV	New Rating?	Race Driver: GRID	Phil Harrison	Street Fighter movie	Top Spin 3
We're not worthy! We're not worthy!	This is shaping up to be *legendary*...	At least it's being discussed again...	No V8s, but still looks pretty snazzy...	May that bald dome of yours shine on...	Can this movie please *not* suck balls?	Does this guy still even *play* tennis?



HOT! NOT!

INFO NUDGE

Prodding you in the ribs with all the latest newsbites...



CRYSIS

Unless you have a computer that would make NASA salivate, chances are you haven't played *Crysis* on PC. But that may change as rumours flying around at the moment EA are currently looking into a PS3, console exclusive, port of *Crysis* in the near future. Aparrently the PS3 (but not the 360) has enough juice to handle a port of the game.



PLEASE, GOD NO...

Whilst rumours of a new *Street Fighter* movie have been rampant for some time, we hoped that the whole project would simply curl up into a foetal ball and die. Sadly it seems that will not be the case, as many of the major roles have been cast. Michael Clarke Ducan will star as Balrog, Chris Klein will play Nash, and Kristen Kreuk will apparently be taking on the role of Chun Li.



IN THE DARK

Starbreeze, the crack team behind *The Darkness* has claimed that, in addition to working on the latest *Chronicles of Riddick* game, it is currently in the process of reinventing a classic EA franchise for next gen consoles. Whilst it has yet to announce which title this is, it has dropped a clue in the game's code name: 'Project RedLime'. Whatever that means...



READY?

While EA projected that 2008 is the year that the PS3 will catch up to, and overtake, the 360, LucasArts has recently announced that they will be now begin focusing on the PS3 as their lead console for development this year. As the PS3 begins to gather sales momentum, aided by Blu-ray's victory and an outstanding line-up of exclusive games, it seems like developers are all set to hop on the gravy train. Hopefully this will put an end to the shoddy Xbox 360-to-PS3 ports.



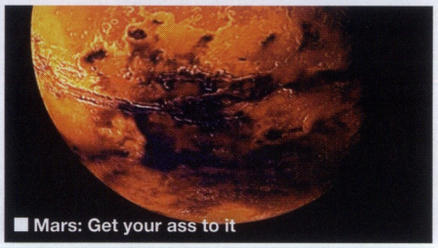
STILL ALIVE...

***Portal*, for many** the greatest part of Valve's big box o' fun *The Orange Box*, is about to receive the sequel treatment, according to lead designer Kimberley Swift.

While we knew that new content would appear in some shape or form, possibly via downloadable content, this is the first we've heard of a full blown sequel being announced for development.

We have no idea regarding the specific release dates, but have a nagging suspicion that *Portal 2* may make it as part of a new *The Orange Box*-esque package of some kind when Valve decides to release the *Half Life: Episode 3*.





■ Mars: Get your ass to it

GUERRILLA IN THE MIDST

Fans of rocket launching stuff into oblivion rejoice, that pioneer of real world destruction Red Faction is back – in the shape of *Red Faction: Guerilla*.

Many aspects of previous games in the franchise remain: the game is set on Mars, and you can still blow shit up with extreme prejudice and such. However... the story is set fifty years after the events in the first two games, and the game has moved from it's FPS comfort zone to become a third-person shooter. Ooh, controversial! Half of *OPS* just choked on their Sultana Bran...

We have next to no idea how this will affect the game itself, but regardless of our reservations on the perspective shift, but we're very keen to see the next step in GeoMod tech. It's due for release in fiscal year 2009 – could mean it'll be out for Christmas 2008.

T2 TAKE TWO INTERACTIVE

EA

TAKE-TWO – CUT!

Following the news of the Activision/Vivendi merger, news has recently broken that Take Two recently fought off the corporate claws of EA, as it attempted to buy the publishers of *GTA* with an enormous $2 billion bid.

Take Two responded publicly to the EA bid by stating that the proposal "substantially undervalues Take Two's robust and enviable stable of game franchises, exceptional creative talent and strong consumer loyalty" and claimed that it was an opportunistic attempt to take advantage of the impending release of *GTAIV*. All fair points.

While EA has made a solid step towards quality over quantity in the last year, let's hope that Take Two's refusal to bow to corporate pressure will delay gaming's move towards a future where two or three mega publishers have control over the entire third party gaming industry.

NEW BALLS PLEASE

The *Top Spin* franchise is, along with *Virtua Tennis*, perhaps the best match of tennis in gaming. And now, with *Top Spin 3* shaping up for release, 2K has announced an astonishing line-up of players featuring not only the stars of todays tennis scene, but the legends of yesteryear.

Which means that duking it out with Federer, Nadal and co. comes the 'Iceman' Bjorn Borg, Boris 'I'm Ginger' Becker, and Monica 'Stabbed in the back' Seles.

Also, for some bizarre reason 2K also saw fit to include 'the scud' Mark Philippoussis, who couldn't even beat geriatric John McEnroe in the senior's tour. Then he started fondling geriatrics in that hideous *Age of Love* TV show instead...



■ "What should I have for dinner tonight... Sauerkraut or Bratwurst?"

BIRD'S EYE VIEW

I'm worried about *Guitar Hero*.

Somebody has really dropped the ball with the DLC. It's doing well, mind you. Although *Rock Band* is the better game, *Guitar Hero* is the still the biggest music game worldwide. The post-release support, however, is shonky.

Put simply, there aren't enough songs, and the ones we have now just aren't good enough. Sure there are blips on the radar – the initial Foo Fighters pack was dynamite and so was the free Dropkick Murphys pack that should be available now (just in time for St. Patrick's Day). But No Doubt? There are hundreds of bands, surely, that are better suited to *Guitar Hero*. It seems to me that Activision is reluctant to release any truly stellar tracks as DLC (perhaps opting to save them for *GHIV*).

Jessica Greene, Games Writer

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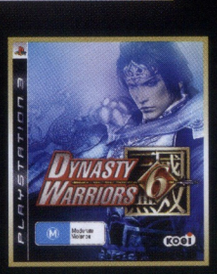
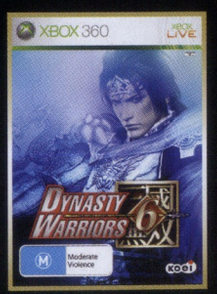
PLAYSTATION 3 XBOX 360 Produced by Omega Force





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TOP 10 GAMES CHART



Rank	Title	Category	Distributor
4	Unreal Tournament III	FPS	Red Ant
5	Uncharted: Drake's Fortune	Action	Sony
6	Assassin's Creed	Action	Ubisoft
7	Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock	Rhythm	Activision
8	Turok	FPS	Funtastic
9	Ratchet & Clank Future: TOD	Action	Sony
10	NBA 08	Sports	EA

COMING SOON



Format	Title	Category	Distributor
MARCH			
PS3	Army of Two	Action	EA
PS3	Condemned 2	FPS	Sega
PS3	Dynasty Warriors 6	Action	THQ
PSP	God of War: Chains of Olympus	Action	Sony
PS3	Gran Turismo 5 Prologue	Racing	Sony
PS3	MX vs. ATV Untamed	Racing	THQ
PS3	Sega Superstars Tennis	Sports	Sega
PS3	Soldier of Fortune Payback	FPS	Activision
PS3	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas 2	Tactical FPS	Ubisoft
PS3	Viking: Battle for Asgard	Action	Sega
APRIL			
PS3	Ferrari Challenge	Racing	Red Ant
PS3	Grand Theft Auto IV	Action	Rockstar
PS3	HEI$T	Action	Atari
PS3	Turning Point: Fall of Liberty	FPS	Atari
MAY			
PS3	Haze	FPS	Ubisoft
PS3	Iron Man	Action	Sega
JUNE			
PS3	LEGO Indiana Jones	Adventure	Activision
PS3	Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots	Action	Atari
PS3	Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution	Strategy	2K
EARLY 2008 TBC			
PS3	Battlefield: Bad Company	FPS	EA
PS3	Brothers in Arms Hell's Highway	Tactical FPS	Ubisoft
PS3	Midnight Club: Los Angeles	Racing	Rockstar

TOP TEN: LOADING TIMES





1 Devil May Cry 4
30 minutes. Were they drinking? Granted, it's a one-off install time but seriously, we could do our tax return in that amount of time – assuming we ever paid tax…



2 Stuntman
Fail a stunt run in this game and you'll have to wait a minute to retry. Multiply this by the insane difficulty of each run and you're getting lambasted in load hell.



3 Heavenly Sword
Empires have risen and fallen in the time it takes this bloody game to do its thing. If you're determined to finish this game, nominate a successor beforehand.



4 WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2006
The time it takes to play the first season match: 6 minutes 28 seconds. It takes 15 seconds to load the 'now loading' screen.

5 Driver 2
Those punishing 'chasing missions' were ridiculously hard to beat and easy to cock up. Good news: retries – bad news: you cop a 25 second shafting every attempt.



6 MotorStorm
Changing vehicles in the select screen shouldn't take anywhere near this long. We could design and build a car in the amount of time it takes to choose a ride in this otherwise awesome game.

7 Resident Evil 1,2,3
These early *Resident Evil* games were chock full of scary moments. But nothing was more scary, and frequent, as the dreaded loading door. This sucked arse because those games were basically a door-a-thon. Mormons and Jehovahs's Witnesses worldwide reportedly couldn't get enough of this door-to-door action. Er, allegedly…

8 Mortal Kombat Trilogy
Morphing as Shang Tsung or switching characters in two-on-two kombat grinds the proceedings to a halt as it loads that fighter up from scratch. We're sure you agree – that's komplete krap.

9 Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07
Some of the worst load times ever seen on the PlayStation Portable – and that's saying something. It takes an enitre minute to load rounds and 25 seconds between each hole. As if golf wasn't boring enough. That's a double bogie right there.

10 Crash Twinsanity
Minute-long loads between levels are just cruel. What's worse is they originally had a wumpa fruit minigame to play during load times, but got canned due to a copyright infringement. Bah!

WINNERS

From the competitions in *OPS* #14

DMC4: A Smith, G Barnabas, K Brooks, S Peterson, S Blewitt, S Kovacevic, J Hintz, M Scurlock, T Riley, E Howe **The Sopranos:** N Dunnwoodie, C Osborn, M King, L Martino, M Castrillon, L Gorton **Lost:** S Annin, P Tzannes, A Hoffman, N Dang, C Anderson, A Christidis, E McKnight, G Daley, S Steel, H Carnwale **Blue Harvest:** J Dekuyer, I Obieglo, J Elliott, M Taylor, G Tibbles, L Blackie, G Avison. Remaining winners notified by email.

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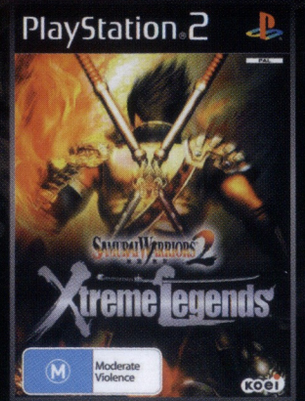


REMIX

Play Samurai Warriors® 2 Xtreme Legends® (SW2XL) by itself or with Samurai Warriors 2 (SW2). Use characters from SW2 in SW2XL game modes.

- Play SW2's Story mode, Survival mode and Sugoroku with SW2XL's new characters.
- Increase growth level maximums
- New Charge attacks and 5th weapon

M Moderate violence

PlayStation 2 XBOX 360

Remix feature requires Samurai Warriors 2 and Samurai Warriors 2 Xtreme Legends. This feature is compatible with Samurai Warriors 2 only, and is not compatible with Samurai Warriors 2 Empires. Each game sold separately.

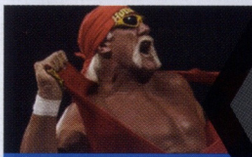
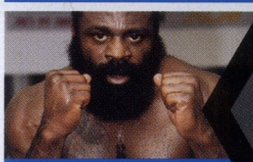
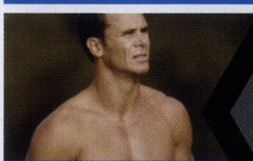
PlayStation®2 computer entertainment system screens shown. Samurai Warriors, Xtreme Legends and the KOEI logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of KOEI Co., Ltd. ©2007-2008 KOEI Co., Ltd. All rights reserved. "PlayStation" and the "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360, Xbox LIVE, and the Xbox logos are trademarks of Microsoft group of companies. All other trademarks are properties of their respective owners. THQ and its logo are registered trademarks of THQ Inc. All rights reserved.

What's next for our favourite games?

WHERE TO NOW?



With *Soul Calibur IV* inducting a brand-new guest character in the guise of none other than Darth Vader, we think it's about time *Tekken* found its own celebrity slugger. Here are our suggestions...

WHO?	AND WHO IS HE EXACTLY?	HMMM... OKAY, SO WHAT ARE HIS CREDENTIALS?	CHANCE OF BEATING THESE TEKKEN PANSIES?	BEARD?	LINE?
 SCHWARZENEGGER	You're kidding, right? Arnie is the Governor of California and the ultimate Hollywood tough guy. There won't ever be another star like the Austrian Oak.	Er, he was the youngest-ever Mr. Universe at the age of 20 and the youngest-ever Mr. Olympia (which he won seven times, the last just out of retirement with only seven weeks of preparation). Plus, he's the freakin' Terminator.	High. We're not talking current-day Arnie here – we're talking prime-time Arnie. These pussies wouldn't have a chance.	Sadly, no.	"You know what I said about killing you last? I lied!"
 HULK HOGAN	He's the prayer makin', vitamin takin', eye rakin' Hulkster baby! The pro-wrestler with the golden 'tache and balding mullet combo.	He beat the crap out of Stallone as 'Thunderlips: the Ultimate Male' in *Rocky III*, and body slammed Andre the Giant into oblivion... brother.	Low. Hulk Hogan is actually 104 years old, and is only being kept alive by injecting the raw hormones of small African children directly into his 28-inch pythons. That and the 'roids.	Well, when playing a bad guy he sports some stylin' black stubble.	"Watcha gonna do, brother, when Hulkamania runs wild on you?"
 KIMBO SLICE	A Florida-based street fighter turned mixed martial arts fighter. He will fight anyone who challenges him. Has two sons named Kevin... and one called Kevlar.	Apparently he only ever 'lost' one street fight, and that was because the other guy broke the 'rules'. His longest fight since he turned pro was one minute 12 seconds. The shortest was 19 seconds, and he's won them all.	Guaranteed.	Up there with the best. Perfect for cushioning blows to the jaw.	"I'm gonna bang it out – he wants to bang, we are gonna bang."
 STEVEN SEAGAL	Action star, writer, martial artist, director, spiritualist, environmental activist and, um, singer-songwriter/blues guitarist.	He's a 7th-dan black belt in aikido and began his adult life as an aikido instructor in Japan, becoming the first foreigner to ever own and operate an aikido dojo in Japan in Osaka.	These days? Hard to say. He has about 18 chins, generally covered up with skivvies and clever photoshopping. Maybe 1992 Seagal could pull it off.	Nah.	"Do you hate being dead?"
 WAYNE CAREY	AFL star with a 'chequered' history.	Most recently it was revealed he had been arrested and charged with assaulting a police officer and his then girlfriend Kate Neilson in Miami, Florida in 2007, after he allegedly glassed Neilsen and kicked a cop in the face. Pretty low.	Not good. Plus, apparently one of his legs is longer than the other. Would that help or hinder?	Pffft, no dice.	"I have the right to remain silent?"
 CHUCK NORRIS	The star of classics like *Missing in Action*, *The Delta Force*, *Invasion U.S.A.* and, er, *Sidekicks* and internet folk-hero, revered for his god-like power.	Chuck Norris retired with a karate record of 65–6, having avenged all of his defeats. He can also divide by zero.	100%, despite the fact every button would be a roundhouse kick.	Ginger, but righteous.	"When I want your opinion, I'll beat it out of you!"
 THIS GUY...	We don't know really. He definitely looks like a special-forces operator of some description – those guys tend to get away without shaving while they're 'in-country'.	Again, we're naturally sketchy on these too, but we're sure this guy is a finely-honed super-soldier with the best close-quarters combat training money can buy. He's also probably the only guy on this page who has *actually* killed people.	High. We'd say he'd know how to kill any one of them by just using his thumb.	Are you blind?	Err, "Oorah", maybe?

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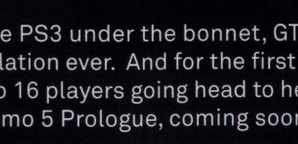

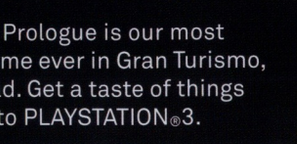



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KEEPING IT (UN)REAL...

Unreal Tournament 3 is one of the best pure first-person shooters ever created. By tripping the FPS experience down to an instinctive run and gun experience Epic has created one of the best online shooters to date on the PS3.

Add to this some of the most inventive weapons ever devised, not to mention an extensive range of bizarre, yet insanely-powerful, vehicles and you have yourself a hefty package that is pretty much impossible to resist...

But then again, you won't have to if you enter our competition, which gives you the chance to win one of 10 copies of *Unreal Tournament 3*, along with some pretty snazzy T-shirts.

What must I do, we hear you cry, to enter such a stellar competition? Well, it's simple: answer the question below and send the answer to us marked '*UT3* giveaway' following the instructions on this very page. The question itself? Look below and you shall find...



Question: Which of these upstanding fellas is Epic's VP?

A Mark Rein
B Mark Wahlberg
C Santa Claus

GREAT BALLS OF FIRE



No smartarse, this is not in reference to the clap, or any sexually transmitted disease for that matter (STDs really are no laughing matter) this is all about *Balls of Fury*, a riotous new comedy focusing on the 'high pressure' sport of extreme table tennis.

After losing in the finals of the '88 Olympics as a young boy, Randy Daytona (Dan Fogel) must use his ping pong skills to take down the master criminal Feng (Christopher Walken). A comedy in the vein of *Dodgeball* and *Old School*, *Balls of Fury* takes all the camp of table tennis and leaves no gag ungagged. It's well worth checking out.

We have twelve copies of the DVD to give away, but that's not all. Copies of the movie will be supplied as part of a pack featuring *Wedding Crashers* and *Zoolander*. For fans of comedy this is an unmissable swag, and all you have to do to get in the running is answer one simple question, sending the answer to us marked '*Balls of Fury* giveaway' following the instructions above.

Question: Star of classics classics like *King of New York*, *The Deer Hunter*, *Last Man Standing* and *Sleepy Hollow*, Christopher Walken made his screen debut opposite which Hollywood legend?

A Sean Connery
B Robert De Niro
C Marlon Brando

GREAT ODIN'S RAVEN!



Odin Sphere could quite possibly be one of the very last great games for the faithful old PS2. Taking Sony's ageing hardware and imbuing it with a striking, creative art design, *Odin Sphere* manages to create a beautiful game that can stand proudly next to newer titles fuelled by next gen tech.

So, technically it's a huge achievement, but amazingly enough the gameplay matches the visuals, by taking the traditional Japanese RPG out of it's 3D comfort zone, into a two dimensional space.

And not a 'top down' 2D space either – *Odin Sphere* is a throwback to the über-old school side-scrolling RPG that somehow works brilliantly on all levels. It's a refreshing gameplay experience that we can thoroughly recommend to anyone.

We have 10 copies of the game to giveaway thanks to Ubisoft, and as always all that's required is a simple answer to a simple question. Send the answer to us marked '*Odin Sphere* giveaway' following the instructions on page 21. Come on, do it for your PS2! You know she deserves it!

Question: A round, three dimensional object is more commonly know as a...

A Sphere
B Beer
C Deer

BREAKIN' HEARTS...



When the Farrelly Brothers and Ben Stiller get together you're pretty much guaranteed hilarity, and *The Heartbreak Kid* is no exception.

The Heartbreak Kid is available on DVD from March 20, and is well worth checking out. Stiller stars as Eddy, who thinks he's found the woman of his dreams in Lila, that is until the honeymoon, when things begin to go drastically wrong. It is during his honeymoon that he meets Miranda, the true woman of his dreams and, of course, japes ensue.

We have ten copies of the DVD to give away, and all that's required is the answer to one question. Send the answer to us following the instructions on page 20 marked '*The Heartbreak Kid* giveaway'.

Question: In which movie did the Farrelly brothers and Stiller previously team up?

A There's Something about Mary
B You're a Big Fairy
C Stuck on You



CRY WULF

Who could've known that a movie based on a centuries-old poem could be interesting? Not us. But we were completely proven wrong by *Beowulf*, a movie that takes the most up to date CGI techniques and applies them to one of the oldest poems in existence.

Amazingly the whole thing works a treat, and *Beowulf* turned out to be one of the cinematic highlights of 2007.

The movie has now made it to DVD, and we have some copies to giveaway. But that's not all – we have five Beowulf packs to giveaway that include: a copy of *Beowulf* on DVD, a *Beowulf* T-shirt, a *Beowulf* messenger bag, a *Beowulf* cap, and a *Beowulf* leather cuff. All in all, a prize pack of epic proportions.

As always, all we need is an answer to a question. Send that answer to us marked '*Beowulf* giveaway' following the instructions on page 20 and you'll be in with a shot!

Question: *Beowulf*'s mother is played by which scorching female?

A Scarlett Johansson
B Angelina Jolie
C Germaine Greer

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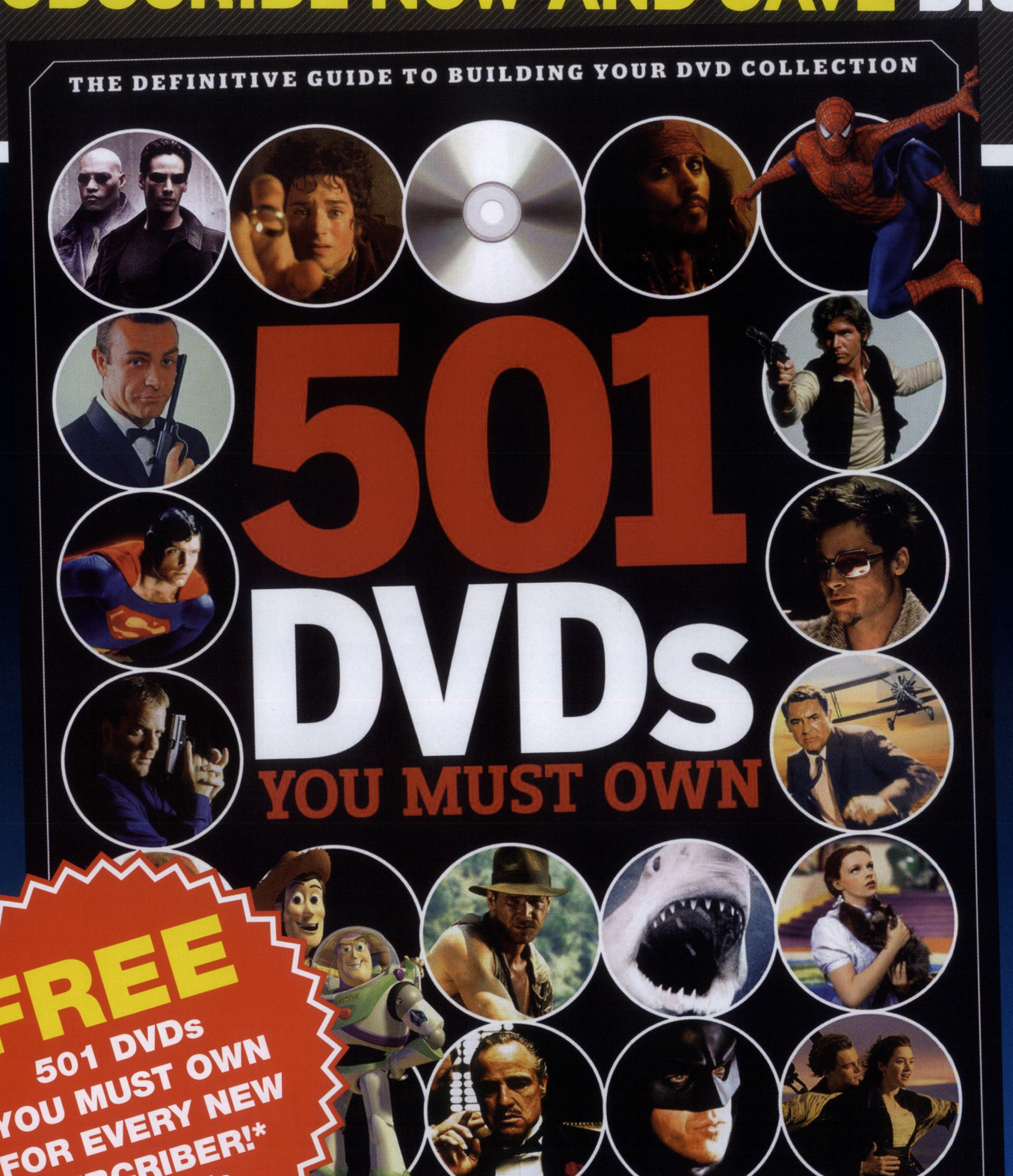

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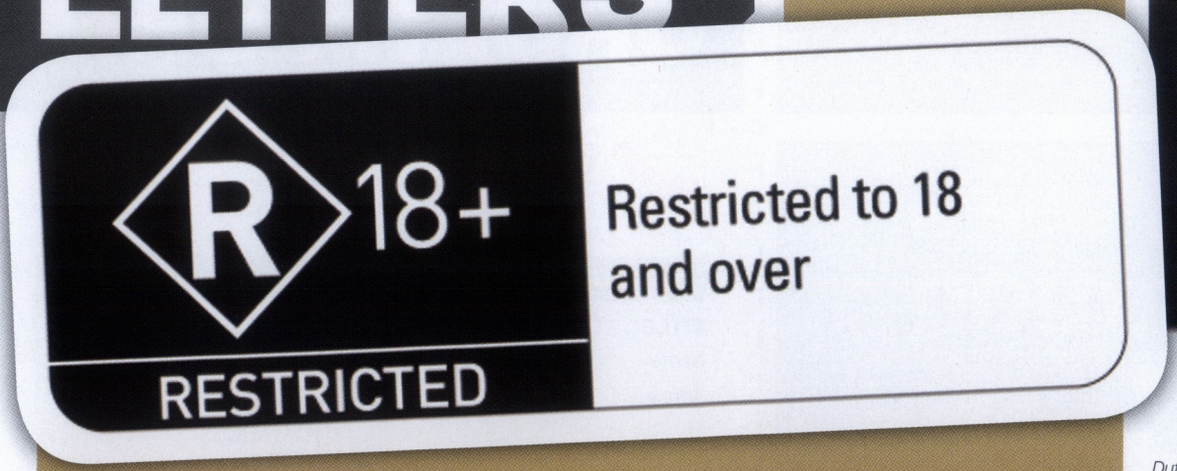
LETTERS





■ When fashion and nerds collide...

LETTER OF THE MONTH

ADULTS ONLY

Hello there all at the *OPS* team. On writing this e-mail to you, this will be my fourth one. I thoroughly enjoy reading the magazine each and every month and appreciate what you have to say on matters regarding all things PlayStation. I have a PS3, which I have enjoyed immensely ever since I first got it. I definitely look forward to reading up on the latest titles and info on upcoming games, and hope to add many more stellar titles to my small, but ever-growing collection.

I figured with a lot of things abuzz regarding the lack of an R18+ classification I'd like to put in my two cents worth.

Manhunt 2 getting the chop was something that I saw coming, as much as I hated to admit it. I was fortunate enough to get *Manhunt* when it was available in Australia before it was removed from the shelves and looking back I don't feel any resentment towards the powers that be making the decision to ban it from being sold. The game was without a doubt one of the most violent, if not THE most violent, games ever developed.

I agree with your reply to Alexander Brown's 'Letter of the Month' in the December 2007 issue. The fact that New Zealand has an R18+ rating for videogames that warrant the classification is reason enough for the same to apply here in Australia. If the same regulatory system can be applied to the sale of alcohol, cigarettes and pornographic material to people over 18, why can't the same be applicable to videogames? You must be over 18 to see an R-rated movie in the cinemas, should this not be the case for the purchase of an R-rated game if we were to introduce it?

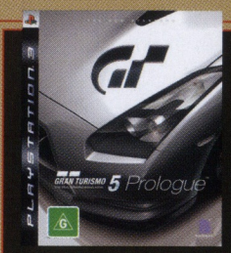
Some would argue it shouldn't matter. We don't have *Manhunt 2*, but we still have *Call of Duty 4*, *Uncharted: Drake's Fortune*, *Assassin's Creed*, *SKATE*, etc. Eventually we'll probably all forget about the issue until another highly anticipated game is brought to the chopping block.

As adults, we're more than entitled to adult games, especially since the majority of gamers are indeed over 18. But I'm definitely not going to lose any sleep over the decisions being made. After all, this issue is all about maturity and if we can be mature about it then I have no doubt that we will see an R18+ rating in the years ahead.

Thanks again,

Daryl Noack, via email

It's a timely point, no doubt, and one that warrants reasoned discussion. On the day this magazine hit newsstands the March 28 meeting of Attorneys-General (and the discussion regarding introducing an R18+ rating) will have already occurred. Unfortunately, we are not warlocks and thus cannot glimpse into the future – but we have severe reservations. South Australian Attorney-General Michael Atkinson, the single reason we don't currently have an R18+ rating, has already stated he'll once again oppose any changes (as he has consistently done in the past). Mr Atkinson is obviously a man of conviction and his intentions, to him at least, probably seem gallant enough. We at OPS *would even agree, at least fundamentally, with part of his argument – he's concerned about the harm of high-impact, violent computer games to children and so are we – but no more than we'd be concerned about our own kids getting drunk at six and stealing porn at eight. Mr. Atkinson's argument is deeply flawed in a number of ways, but none more so than the fact it's the lack of an R18+ that puts kids at risk and not the opposite way around.* Manhunt *is the perfect example. Here, a game so violent it was refused classification months after release (and even banned in countries that HAVE an R18+, like NZ) was on sale for nearly a year with an MA15+ rating. People under 15 are not permitted to purchase or rent videogames classified MA15+ UNLESS THEY ARE ACCOMPANIED BY A PARENT OR ADULT GUARDIAN. In other words, the law permitted children to play* Manhunt *in Australia providing their parents were around. This isn't good enough. An R18+ makes it abundantly clear to parents that a product is absolutely unsuitable for children – the current system does not, and THAT is why it needs amending (and 88% of the population agree this needs to be fixed).*



WINNER!

Letter of the month wins a copy of *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue*! Quench your need for speed!

GOT LAG?

Dear *OPS*,

Let me start off by saying that I love, and I mean LOVE, *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*. The online play in particular has kept me playing *COD4* every night since I brought it. However, as awesome as this game is, there is one huge problem that I'm sure every single Australian gamer experiences; one simple word that we all dread – LAGGING!!!

Why is it that I can play a match and empty an entire clip into the head of an enemy at point blank range then watch, as if in slow motion, as he turns around (with a seemingly WTF look) and stabs me before running off into the sunset? This is not acceptable, damn it!

Of course, you can always quit a match with bad connection, but at the cost of adding a loss to your stats! I ask, why?

I know that many Aus gamers will be nodding their heads in agreement. I've seen many people talking in discussion boards on fansites asking for something to be done.

Please *OPS*! With your awesome power, help save us! We, the Australian gamers, are at your mercy! Don't let the ANZACS be forgotten!!!

Brad, via email

We guess it's not uncommon for quitters to earn a loss for jumping ship – not doing so would allow sore losers to punch out whenever the going got tough. That said, it would be nice for games to either offer a grace period, or detect poor connections, to allow users with massive lag issues to leave without penalty. You've asked the question, now we'll wait for the answer.

CURE MY DISEASE

Hello,

I would like to express my disappointment in the fact that you suggest that no one is overly caring in the fact that a new release of Folding@home has come out. I actually purchased the November 2007 issue of the magazine to see if you reviewed it as PS3 software or encouraged people to use it. What I found was the only mention it got in that particular issue was that it bordered being both hot-or-not with the caption 'Folding@home – Was recently updated: Who Cares?'.

Personally I think anyone with a PS3 and an active internet connection to compliment the machine should have this program installed and running. Is there a reason you are not encouraging this?

OPS HACKS INTO SNAKE'S CODEC FOR A QUICK BRIEFING



OPS: Hi Snake, *OPS* here. Thanks for taking time out to chat with us.
Snake: OP... *S*? What are you talking about?

OPS: Er, it's *Official PlayStation Magazine*. You agreed to give us a quick interview.
Snake: A quick... *interview*? About what exactly?

OPS: Um, Metal Gear, we guess.
Snake: Metal... *Gear*? What about it?

OPS: Aren't we supposed to asking the questions?
Snake: *Questions*?

OPS: Do you always answer a question with a question?
Snake: I don't know... *do I*?

OPS: Do you have anything to tell our readers? Anything at all?
Snake: You can tell the people about having *faith*. What *we* had faith in. What we found important enough to *fight for*. It's not whether you were right or wrong, but how much *faith* you were willing to have, *that* decides the future.

OPS: (silence)
Snake: Are you still... *there*?

OPS: Um, yeah. We just don't really know what you're talking about.
Snake: You don't know what I'm *talking* about?

OPS: Oooookay, let's wrap it up. Cheers Snake.
Snake: That's the shortest Codec conversation I've ever had. Bye.

OPS: Wait, Snake? Snake? SNAAAAKEE!
Snake: What? What?

OPS: Nothing, we just wanted to say that.

Now I won't be so ignorant to suggest that you've never promoted it because I can't say that knowing I haven't read all the magazines since the Folding@home software was released for the PS3 but I would really like to hear that you have, or that you'll include it in an upcoming edition. I have a website I've recently created which is http://www.geocities.com/hope_priority_limited/index.html. I'm trying to get as many people to join Folding@home under my team to scale the success of my enlistments.
You could do the same (again if you haven't already) and have a *OPS* team. Anyhow I didn't write this to win a prize, or even to get it published, it's just my proposal put to you.
Thanking you for your time.
Austin Dewey, via email

We asked, "Who cares?" and we found out. Austin does. Quite a bit, apparently. Folding@home is certainly a worthy project and something we briefed readers on at the PS3 launch. Folding@home isn't unique to PS3 (it's on PC also) but according to Guinness it's the most powerful distributed computing cluster in the world. Accurate simulations of protein folding and misfolding enable the scientific community to better understand the development of many diseases, including cancers, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's disease, cystic fibrosis and many others. The Folding@home supercomputer currently operates at above 1 petaFLOPs at all times, a large majority of the performance coming from PlayStation 3 clients. Still, either everything is okay to make light of, or nothing is.

NEW IDEA

Hi guys,
Just writing to say excellent magazine and that I have been a reader from day dot and have kept your mags in pristine condition and have an idea that will blow your sister magazine out of the water. Have you guys ever thought of having a limited edition magazine cover that is a 3D cover look at it one way and you can see a picture of say *Assassin's Creed* and then tilt it again and you can see *Metal Gear Solid 4*? I know I would pay the extra amount for the magazine because it would be worth it and plus it would stop your sister mag dead in its tracks. Anyway guys, excellent mag once again – just thought I would throw that out there, food for thought.
Cheers.
Matt Smythe, via email

Lenticular, you mean? We agree it would be extremely cool. Phill thought about it about a year ago to make the Ridge Racer *babe wink. It ain't cheap though, and you guys need all your spare cash to buy games!*



■ Jessica Alba: worse than *Bladestorm*?

KICKING UP A STORM

Hi there!
I don't normally do this but I'm in desperate need of help. Two months ago, my PS3 died while I was playing my favourite game, *Bladestorm: The Hundred Years' War*. I sent the system away and one month later it came back without the game, which had been stuck inside the console. I was extremely upset about this but I took it like a man and said, "Soon. Soon I will have the funds to get a brand new copy of the game I love so dearly..." So I worked and worked and made the money for the game and immediately went to buy back that which should never have left, but when I asked the guy at the shop about the game he said things like, "Deleted production line" and, "We don't have it and no, we can't get it. Go away". So, now you should see my problem. No, you say? *Bladestorm* was not that good? Let me tell you what this game is to me. How do I put it? Okay, if Jessica Alba came up to me with a copy of *Bladestorm* and gave me a choice between it and her, I would kiss her on the cheek and thank her for her kindness, then hurry home with my game. I would rather pay $100 for *Bladestorm* than get *Call of Duty 4* AND $100 for free. Do you understand!? HELP ME!!! PLEASE!!! ANY HELP WILL DO!!!
Chezza, via email

But couldn't you just use the $100 to buy Bladestorm again – if no longer available in stores, then from ebay or the like? Then you'd have Call of Duty 4 *as well, which is tops. You're crazy, Chezza.* Bladestorm *over Jessica Alba? Wow...*



■ Folding@home: Comes straight after Ironing@home

CUTTINGS

Delicious bite-sized letter morsels that are easy to swallow

WHAT DO YOU MEAN *GTAIV*'S MAP WILL BE SMALLER THAN SAN ANDREAS!? YOU'D THINK THEY LEARN HOW TO IMPROVE A GAME AFTER KNOWING WHAT THEY DID RIGHT IN THE FIRST ONE! Sorry.
Angry kid, via email

You don't need to make the map bigger to improve a game. Trust us, we've played it.

Just a small question, but one that requires deep thought and considerable consideration. Who would win in a blue between Snake and John McClane?
Jon Barrett, via email

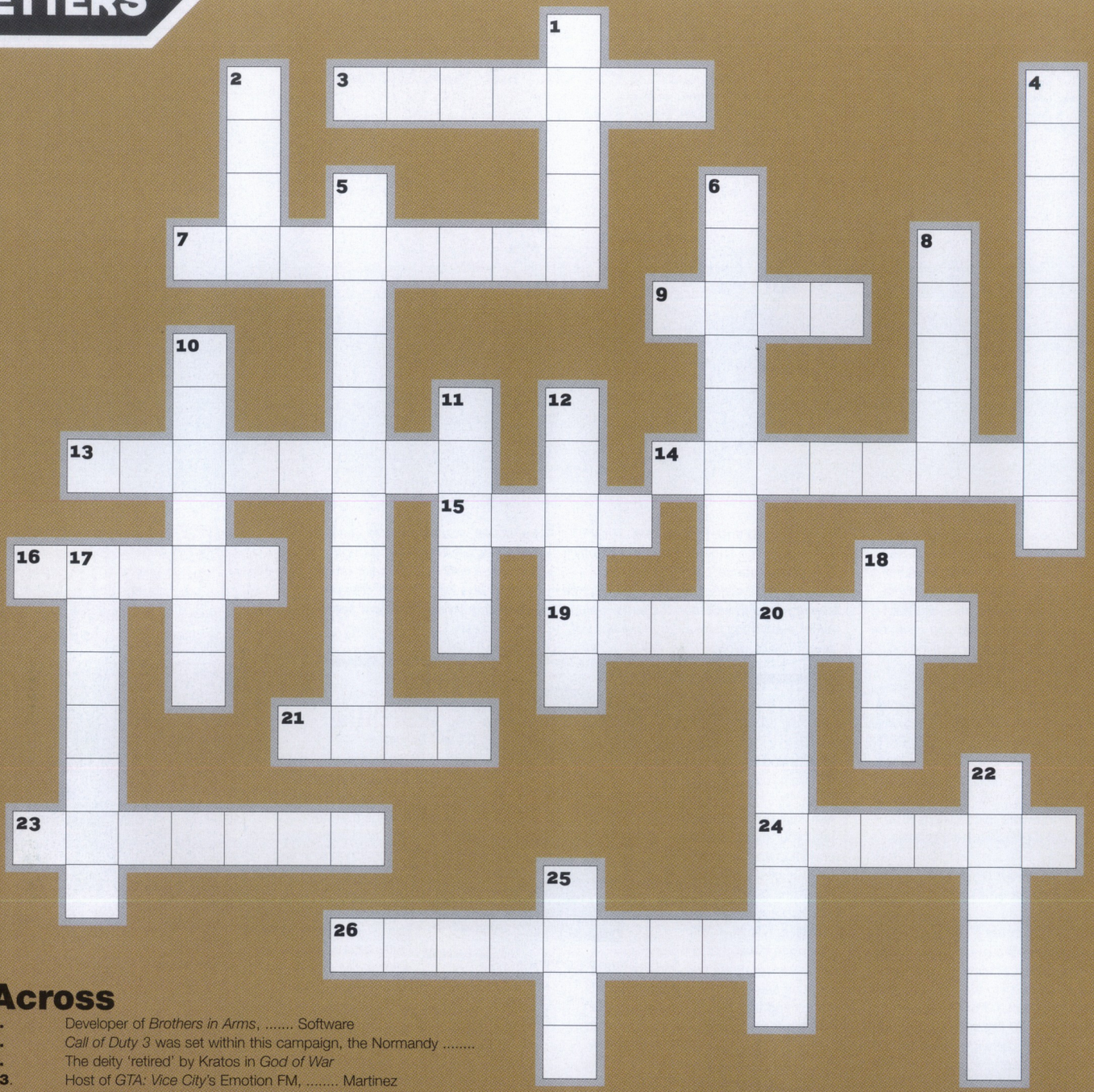
Mark says Snake. Luke says John McClane. That's as far as that will ever go, trust us. There will be no consensus.

Love the mag. Just a quick one. Apparently, Studio Liverpools' contract to produce F1 games expired at the end of 2006. Any word on who might pick it up and when we could expect an updated addition?
James, via email

Sony's exclusive F1 license has expired, but we don't think it'll be long until F1 reappears.

What happened to (one of) the best parts of your magazine - the awesome section otherwise known as 'It Should Be A Game'?
Jeremy Hayes, via email

'It Should Be A Game' was one of those on-again/off-again sections that has been around for years. Over the coming months you'll see a lot of new changes. That might be one.



Across

3. Developer of *Brothers in Arms*, ... Software
7. *Call of Duty 3* was set within this campaign, the Normandy .....
9. The deity 'retired' by Kratos in *God of War*
13. Host of *GTA: Vice City*'s Emotion FM, ... Martinez
14. The name of the city in the most recent *Burnout*
15. The last Colin McRae rally game
16. Duke Nukem's second PSone adventure, *Planet of the* .....
19. Developer of *Rock Band*
21. Setting for the original *Red Faction*
23. The multi-national counterterrorist organisation in many a game
24. The most puzzling portion of *The Orange Box*
26. Downloadalbe Foo Fighters track for *GHIII*, The .....

Down

1. The type of vessel Nathan Drake finds stranded in the jungle in *Uncharted*
2. Crap-tacular SIXAXIS wobbling dragon game
4. Star of *Just Cause*, and the upcoming sequel, Rico .....
5. Name of the city in *SKATE*, ...
6. One of three cities in *Assassin's Creed*
8. The city where the action started in the original *Driver*
10. The terrorist scumbags in *Urban Chaos: Riot Response*
11. Solid Snake's communication device
12. Le Mans track featured in *GT4*, Circuit de la .....
17. Ratchet & Clank adventure, *Up Your* .....
18. *Syphon Filter*'s Gabe Logan's female sidekick, ... Xing
20. *V8 Supercars 3* circuit, closing in 2009, ...
22. Star of *The Darkness*, ... Estacado
25. Indiana Jones and Batman are both getting this treatment in 2008

SPEAK TO US

Love the new mag? Hate the new mag? We want your opinions and questions on *OPS*, on games – on *anything* that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

FACE YOUR FRIENDS ON THE FAIRWAY!



Easy to play but tough to master, Everybody's Golf on the PS3 is a fun, interactive game that everybody can enjoy, whether it's instant four player mode or using the incredible online tournament where you compete against up to 50 other players!
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playstation.com.au

G

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This is living

PLAYSTATION 3



GEARING UP FOR GREATNESS...

PART 1

WORDS: MARK SERRELS

Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots – game of the year candidate... potential game of the decade candidate. From the office of Hideo Kojima himself we've played it... all of it – start to damn-as-near-end, the entire 95%-finished product and ooooh baby, it feels *so* good...

Unfortunately, the sheer amount of what we've been shown was so epic in scope, so gargantuan, that we felt that one feature simply wasn't enough. It couldn't convey the sheer scale of what Konami has achieved with *Metal Gear Solid 4* – so, in short, we've had to split our coverage of *MGS4* into two parts.

That, and because much of what we've seen is super hush hush – and as much as we'd like to just scream and vomit every single secret out at the top of our lungs, we can't...

Our exclusive *MGS4* access comes a price – a fully loaded tranquiliser gun pressed against our temple, cocked and ready to fire should we reveal something we shouldn't. Kojima and Konami want certain aspects of the game to remain under wraps until a specific time, and if we spill... well, just trust us – our lives wouldn't be worth living!

So in short, you get half now and half later, in part two of this feature next issue – but, for now, buckle up, comb your 'tache and trim your *Metal Gear* mullet, because its time to reveal (almost) all about Kojima's masterpiece...

METAL... GEAR?!

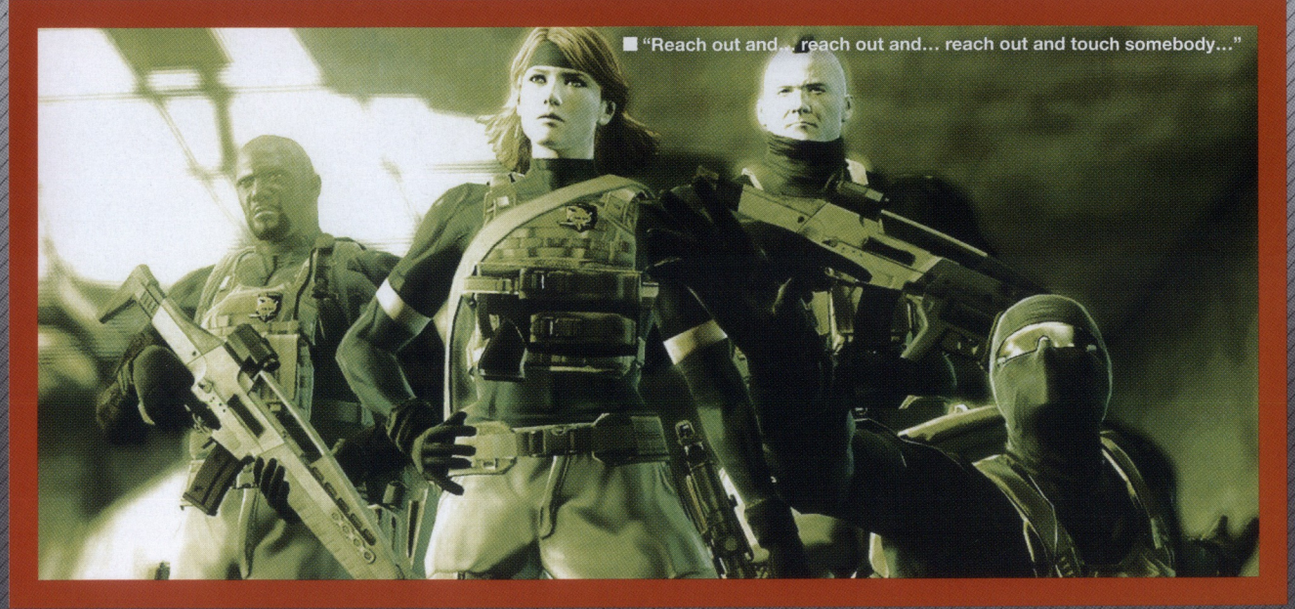
First: the facts. If you didn't already know *MGS4* now has a (ahem) solid release date. The game will hit stores on June 12 worldwide, meaning that fans across the globe can collectively wet themselves, and trust us – we'll be amongst those with soiled underpants.

A special edition pack has also been announced – for the US only at the time of writing, but we can all but guarantee that Aussies will also get a slice of this action.

The controversy and flip flopping over the *Metal Gear Online* aspect of *MGS4* has also been tentatively resolved, whereas before we were unsure whether or not the online segment would be released, now we know for certain that a *Metal Gear Online* 'starter pack' will come as part of the *MGS4* package, presumably with downloadable content coming in the future to fill out the gaps.

MGS4 has pretty much been confirmed as the biggest game of the year... literally, as the game's director Hideo Kojima made some typically wild statements claiming that the dual layer Blu-ray disc still wasn't enough to contain everything ol' Hideo wanted to put in the game.

So yeah, while your average game weighs in at roughly five to six GB – Kojima is struggling



"Reach out and... reach out and... reach out and touch somebody..."

to fit *MGS4* into 50GB. We're talking here about a project of epic proportions here. Let's put it another way – if *MGS4* was to be ported to the Xbox 360 (which it most certainly won't) it would just about fit on seven dual layer DVD discs. Rest assured, *MGS4* is a game that could only exist on the PS3.

AND WHAT A GAME...

Of course the first thing you notice, when seeing *MGS4* in motion for the first time, is how good it looks. When *MGS4* was shown for the first time you would be forgiven for spontaneously combusting on the spot. Now, post *COD4* and *Uncharted*, that feeling of wonderment still exists, but is tempered to an extent by the high quality of other titles, almost on the same level as the mighty *MGS4*.

But when it comes to main character models, *MGS4* destroys the competition. Snake especially, grizzled to the max with his aging mo and mullet, has a real Charles Bronson vibe – minus the death wish. The trademark bandana seems to have its own independent physics, and his greying hair reacts to the wind in a scarily realistic manner. Solid Snake truly is an achievement to rival, and to be honest, top Nathan Drake.

But, as always, *Metal Gear Solid*'s true achievement, and the reason it remains leaps and bounds beyond any console series ever conceived, is in the tangible depth that exists within every single aspect of the *MGS* universe. While most designers are content to mask simple game mechanics with smoke and mirrors, Kojima's games are recognisable by their commitment to the little things – creating a world where your every single one of your reactions will have logical consequences.

This has always been the case with games in the *MGS* franchise, but this time round the scope and scale has been magnified. Previous games have focused on you using your surroundings to evade guards looking out for Snake specifically – in *MGS4* you have been placed smack bang in the middle of an epic urban war, and players must find new ways to exploit this situation.

AND... ACTION

As a result the game has become a little more action packed. Of course the stealth game mechanic remains, but players have far more weapons at their disposal, allowing players to get more imaginative in their attempts at manoeuvring past the enemies. And often, this means getting involved in full-scale skirmishes.

This changes the *MGS* sneak mechanic to an extent; you're no longer a one-man-army evading an all powerful force, you're now merely part of wide scale conflict – and you have to choose a side on the fly. While this may worry fans who feel that *MGS4* is moving into generic action-shooter territory, it's far more cerebral than that. As opposed to merely blasting the holy hell out of the enemy, players must analyse situations and choose the right course of action. This may include blasting away until everyone is pushing up daisies, but it may also include sneaking past the entire conflict the way only Snake can.

"But, as always, *Metal Gear Solid*'s true achievement... is in the tangible depth that exists within every single aspect of the MGS universe."

WAR IS HELL (BUT IN A GOOD WAY, NATURALLY)

While *COD4* succeeded in creating a spectacular vision of modern warfare, most of the memorable moments were dependent upon (admittedly well



"Get him men. Squat down in the open! Do it!"



The wind beneath her winds? It's filled with missiles



RETURN OF THE OLD GUYS

MGS4 is packed full of returning characters you may be familiar with...

VAMP

Just when you thought that Raiden had retired this tricky bastard by leaving him to drown in *MGS2*, he has returned in spectacular style (as evidenced by his jaw dropping fight with Raiden...

RAIDEN

Thankfully transformed from his Owen 'Hansel' Wilson persona into something altogether more badass, Raiden seems to be playing a similar role to Frank Jaeger did in the first *MGS*.

EVA

Not exactly the seductive cleavage-bearing vixen from *MGS3* (her cleavage probably resides roughly alongside her belly button these days), Eva looks a bit more like you gran now.

orchestrated) set pieces that ultimately play out the exact same way each time you play through it.

As expected, this is not the case with *MGS4*. Lending itself to repeated play, the enemy AI reacts intelligently and consistently to every move you make, so every approach you take will play to its logical conclusion.

Regardless of this, *MGS4*'s war scenes have a huge visual impact that will legitimately amaze. Bullets will throw up dust clouds, explosions will cause the entire screen to shake. It's almost cliché to say that the game evokes the feeling of a real war situation, but it does. And this time, as opposed to being reliant on shallow set pieces, there's a sense that the AI of every NPC is actively working, helping to shape this feeling of taking part in something bigger than you as an individual – quite an achievement.

MAGIC MOMENTS

The *Metal Gear Solid* series has always been one of those rare franchises that can provide the most memorable moments on the fly, from the most pedestrian of settings.

One of our favourites manifested itself via one of Snake's newest manoeuvres: rolling from a prone position. After years of trying to pull off this patented 'Mel Gibson roll and shoot in *Lethal Weapon*' move, finally *MGS4* gives us the opportunity to use it to good effect. Nothing is more satisfying than rolling effortlessly from a barrage of bullets into cover, before blowing him to smithereens.

It's yet another *Metal Gear Solid* moment – one of a virtually infinite number that you'll be pulling off come June. After playing the game for over seven hours we've already had oh, say, a thousand? Some where reported upon after *MGS4* was shown behind closed doors at last year's Tokyo Game Show, like Snake's ability to fake death. Hold the △ button and you can make Snake play possum. Assuming no bad guys saw you curl up on the ground, they'll most likely ignore you and you'll be able to take them by surprise. For now, however, we can't talk about too much else upon fear of death, and it's killing us inside...

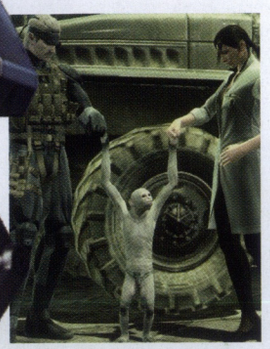
If it seems like we're being vague regarding the specifics of the game, it has been out of sheer necessity. This game is Konami and Kojima's baby, and both have been extremely strict regarding when and how we can discuss the ins and outs of the rest of the game.

As of right now we're sitting in our chair, rocking back and forth, our lips firmly sealed, desperately trying to stop ourselves from doing what we've wanted to do all along: spill. Spill every last detail about the superlative gaming experience we've just had. But, sadly the rest will have to wait until next month, with the second part of this feature. Stay tuned: you won't regret it.

Come back next month for more of our exclusive two day hands-on with *Metal Gear Solid 4*, featuring both the single player campaign and online play, direct from Kojima HQ in Tokyo.

A MONKEY IN HIS UNDERPANTS

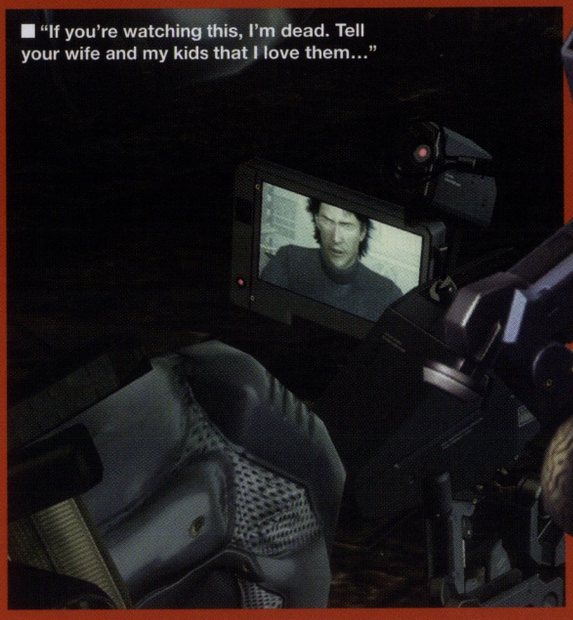
Yeah, so we neglected to mention the huge number of batshit insane, could-only-happen-in-Japan moments. Here's one of them: Snake holding hands with a monkey... who just happens to be wearing what looks like a pair of Y-fronts. Seriously – a monkey wearing a pair of budgie smugglers. What the hell? We can handle the pretending to be a statue, and the knocking people unconscious by grabbing their testicles, but a monkey in underpants? That's taking it to a whole new level.



"Shoot it here?! Won't that just make her mad?"



The enemy design is spectacular



"If you're watching this, I'm dead. Tell your wife and my kids that I love them..."

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **RELEASE:** TBA 2008
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** VIVENDI
- **DEVELOPER:** HIGH MOON
- **WEB:** www.highmoonstudios.com

INFO BYTE
Jeff Imada, Matt Damon's martial arts trainer for the Bourne movies has helped design all the fight scenes for *The Bourne Conspiracy*, and was actually mo-capped for the game itself.



■ "ARRRGGGH! My arm! I'm not supossed to get pens in it!

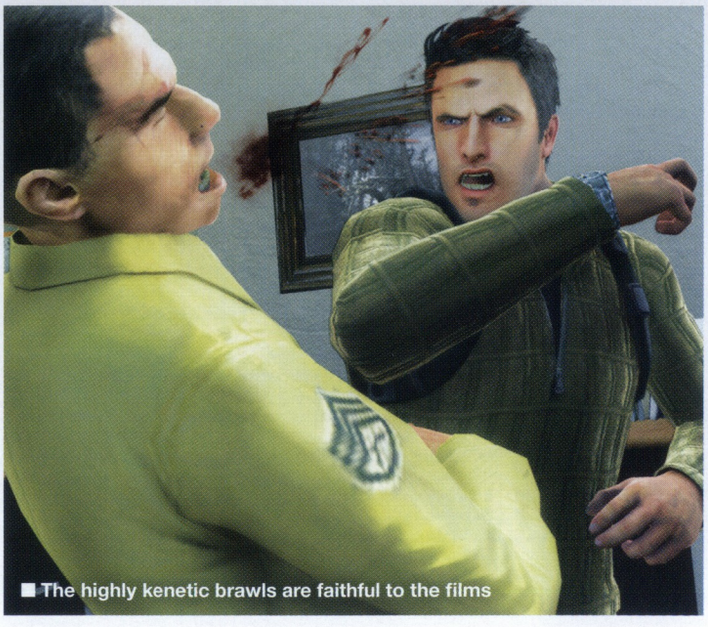
THE BOURNE CONSPIRACY

Bourne to try...

Who amongst you has thought about grabbing a dusty tome from the shelf of your nearest library and jamming it into your neighour's larynx? Or wanted to jab your brother in his left paw with a biro? How about rolling up your copy of the *Sydney Morning Herald* and monkey spanking your mate in the testisatchel with said rag?

Assuming the answer to that question is everyone, we can assure you at this juncture that you are not alone. We too would like to deal out some random brutality. If you've seen even one of the now legendary Bourne movies you'll probably find yourself lusting after the opportunity to deal out some of the old ultra violence... sexy ultraviolence. The kind of violence that makes you look cooler than the other side of the pillow – the kind that makes the fellas salute, and the ladies sigh wistfully...

And that's where *The Bourne Conspiracy* comes in. Here is a game that takes all that's cool about Bourne – the punching of people in a fast precise manner, the driving, the usage of everyday objects as lethal weapons – and injects



■ The highly kenetic brawls are faithful to the films



them into the kind of fast-paced gaming experience that leaves you breathless.

THE BOURNE... CONSPIRACY?

So yeah... while the game itself isn't based on one *specific* Bourne movie, it has been made in the spirit of the series. It has also followed the tradition of adding a cool, mysterious word to the end of the title to help describe the vibe: Identity... Supremacy... Ultimatum, and now one of the coolest and most mysterious words in the English language: conspiracy...

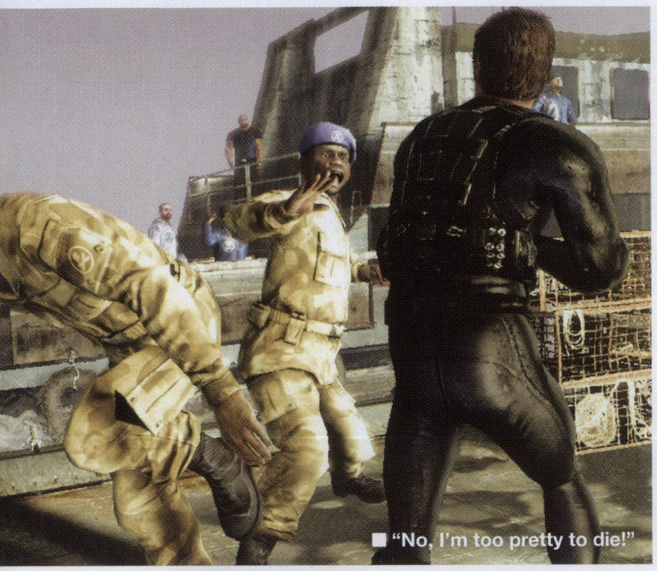
While we don't really know what the conspiracy in question is, we had the opportunity to play through some of the scenes in the game... one of which was lifted directly from *The Bourne Identity*.

The scene we're referring to is from Identity, when Bourne has to escape from the US Embassy in Switzerland, a scene that sets the pace early in the movie, and show us from the outset what Bourne is really capable of. The same scene, replicated here, had the exact same effect on the game, instantly giving us an impression of what High Moon is shooting for.

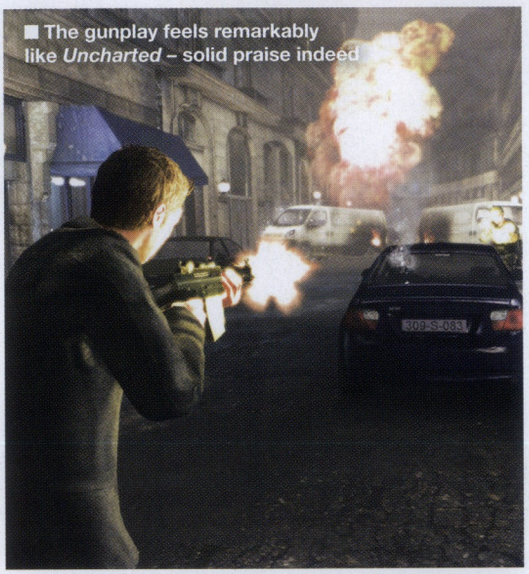
MINI TO THE MAX



During our demo we managed to somehow sneak a quick peek at some driving sections of the game (before a High Moon killjoy put an end to our shenanigans!) and rest assured, we liked what we saw. Lifted directly from the Paris car chase from *The Bourne Identity*, we got to high tail it in a Mini for about two or three glorious minutes. The handling needs tightening but it's well-paced.



■ "No, I'm too pretty to die!"

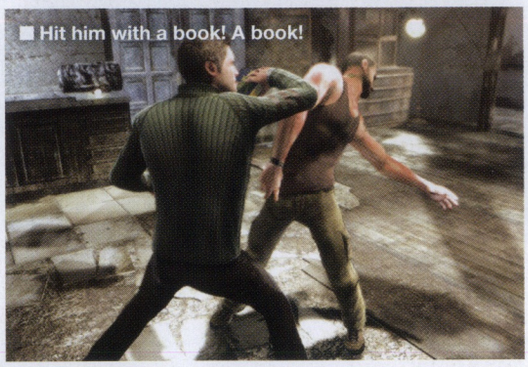


■ The gunplay feels remarkably like *Uncharted* – solid praise indeed

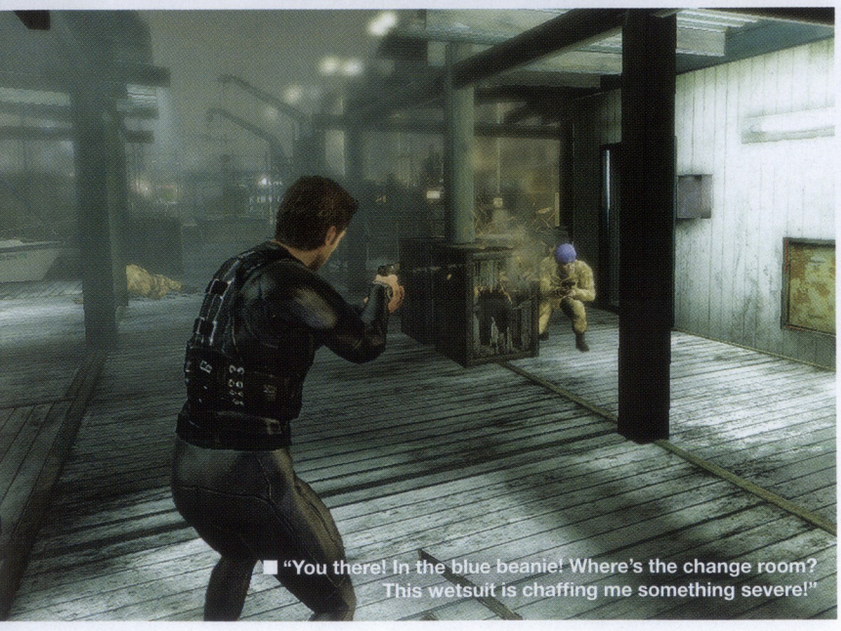




■ Why the new Mini? BMW demanded it over the old one



■ Hit him with a book! A book!



■ "You there! In the blue beanie! Where's the change room? This wetsuit is chaffing me something severe!"

Example: in the embassy some security guards stupidly try and accost you (in much the same matter as the movie). This is, of course, a one-way ticket on the pain-train – fist-class. Bourne unleashes in the same sharply edited manner as the movies, dropping the guards in one swift movement.

NOW IT'S ON

Charging up the stairs, it's time to get into the real meat of the game, and get to grips with the slick combat system. If you get close enough to an armed guard Bourne will automatically disarm him as only Bourne can and get straight into the fisticuffs. It's neat because it illustrates how Bourne is ALWAYS on the front foot. This aspect of the game is simple but highly effective: ▢ and △ are used to attack, and can be combined for combo-tastic thrashings, whilst ○ is used for take-downs.

Take-downs are, essentially, the dog's bollocks. Players build up 'adrenalin' in the course of a fight and when it hits a certain level you can partake in a take-down. Take-downs are contextual, and can be as simple as merely throwing an opponent to the ground, but if you happen to be near an object that can be used as a weapon – best believe that Bourne will take advantage of it.

Slamming heads into fire extinguishers, fuseboxes, attacking opponents with pens, books and various other everyday objects, High Moon has put a lot of effort into creating the instinctive, dynamic feel of Bourne's combat style – the pace is electric. Presentation here is key – the camera flinches when blows are thrown and received, and frames have been deliberately cut (like in the movies themselves) to create a feeling of urgency in the fight scenes.

AND... ACTION!

This commitment to recreating the searing pace of the Bourne movies also applies to the gunplay segments of The Bourne Conspiracy. High Moon has cleverly used the in game camera to mimic the shaky hand cam used to such great effect in *Supremacy* and *Ultimatum*. Unlike most third-person action games, the camera never really seems fixed, and almost reacts as if an actual human being was holding the cam – when running at speed the camera shakes, and when bullets are fired not only does Bourne flinch realistically, the camera does too.

Despite the fact that High Moon couldn't secure Matt Damon's likeness or voice for the *The Bourne Conspiracy*, the team has done an outstanding job thus far in recreating the feel and pace of the Bourne movies – to the extent that you neither notice or miss his presence.

Instead, the fact that the game exists as a separate entity from both the Bourne books and movies has been a boon for the game – simultaneously removing the strict deadlines movie to game adaptions are regularly saddled with, and freeing up the team to create their own unique vision. So far we're impressed. We'll keep up the surveillance. **Mark Serrels**

BOTTOM LINE

- Hand to hand combat
- Sweet set pieces
- Slightly linear

OPS is...

Losing our memory



PS3 PS2 PSP

PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** ADVENTURE
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **RELEASE:** TBC
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** SEGA
- **WEB:** http://ryu-ga-gotoku.com



"Wait a minute... there used to be a KFC right here. Where am I?

YAKUZA 3

Going back in time...

You may remember a PS2 game by Sega called *Yakuza* – it was released in Australia back in September 2006, and was a hard-hitting trip through the modern 'business' of Japan's most famous crime syndicate. A sequel followed in Japan but has so far stayed at home, and now the English-speaking world has fallen even further behind – Sega has only gone and released *Yakuza 3* in Japan. On the PS3! We put aside our jealousy to play through the Japanese version of this beautiful game, slightly miffed that we might not see an Anglicised version this year. Or at all. Who knows?

Of course, the *Yakuza* series has a different title in its native Japan. It's called *Ryu Ga Gotoku*, and this latest entry has the *Kenzan!* subtitle. In fact, *Yakuza 3* is a significant departure from the setting of the previous two games in the series: it has nothing to do with the Yakuza (thus, we doubt it'll be called *Yakuza 3*) and it's set in 17th century Kyoto, which gives Amusement Vision a fine excuse to take the framework of its previous Gotoku games in a flashy new direction.

Looking at this game through Japanese eyes, its most obviously impressive feature is the casting of famous Japanese actors and actresses (see 'Famous Faces') in believable roles, bringing character and personality to the usually hammy world of videogame 'acting'. On the flipside of this, it arguably has too many cutscenes, often relegating the game part of the process to a secondary concern. Having said that, so far we haven't once been tempted to skip a cutscene, as they are very well done.

Another of *Yakuza 3*'s outstanding qualities is the strength of its storytelling. We wouldn't recommend importing this title, because you'd miss out on a fine old yarn (unless you can understand Japanese, of course – then you're exempted). There are time jumps, with the game's opening chapter taking place after the second chapter; we only get back to the 'present' after completing chapter five. And the plot has everything: intrigue, war, romance, murder, betrayal... and a collapsing bridge.

> "...*Yakuza 3* looks absolutely gorgeous. There's no major drop in quality between cutscenes and in-game action..."

Our initial evaluation is also helped by the fact that it looks absolutely gorgeous. There's no major drop in quality between cutscenes and in-game action, so the game world feels consistent. Much of the game takes place in Gion, Kyoto's 'entertainment' district. It's where the whores were. Everything is accurately depicted with lush colours – the streets and buildings, the parks and temples, and the beautiful kimonos worn by its people – capturing the magic of olde worlde Gion superbly well. There are some stunning natural scenes once you venture out into the countryside, as well. There's really never a dull moment.

As for what you do in *Yakuza 3*, well, there are multiple answers. You play as Kiryuu, an ex-soldier doing odd jobs in Gion. Those odd jobs include debt collection and ejecting undesirables from the town. Kiryuu also has time for mini-games, such as playing shogi (Japanese chess) with the locals, cutting watermelons against a time limit, and playing for high scores in horseback archery challenges. You also get to spend time with some first-class hookers. No, really.

Naturally, there are some fighting scenes. A lot, in fact. Depending on the situation, these fights are either random brawls with street gangs and other









■ In the days before air-conditioning, fans ruled the land



■ Horseback archery challenges: Does *GTAIV* have any of these? Pffft, we think *not!*



■ Er, you've got a little something in your hair lady...



■ "Well, since you asked... her, her, her, not her, her, her, not her and not her"



ruffians, or purposeful assassination missions in the fog of war. You either have a katana (or two), or you fight with punches/kicks/items, but the rules are generally the same: you're free to run around (think of it as a genuine, 3D beat 'em up, with full freedom of movement) and attack multiple enemies.

Kiryuu's range of moves is pretty comprehensive. Aside from standard punches and kicks, he can also grab and throw opponents (wrestling style), and by holding R2 while attacking Kiryuu can enter 'Heat Up' mode, which is a sort of frenzied frame of mind that enables special combo attacks. There are also finishing moves, where you need to respond immediately to an on-screen button symbol by pressing that button. This button symbol technique is used elsewhere in the game for a variety of quick actions – hit ⊗ to stop a cat from eating a mouse, for example, or don't hit ⊗ and watch the cat eat dinner. It's clearly inspired by the quick time events in Sega's Dreamcast classic *Shenmue*.

From the time we've spent with it, *Yakuza 3*, or more accurately, *Ryu Ga Gotoku Kenzan!* has real potential. Fans of Japanese history will approve; fans of Japanese cinema will be blown away; and fans of Japanese games will... have to wait. If you need help with the translation work, Sega, drop us a line.

Jonti Davies

BOTTOM LINE

- Stunning visuals
- Sweeping scope
- May not release here

OPS is...

Staying sharp

FAMOUS FACES

Ryu Ga Gotoku Kenzan! is as close to a Japanese film as you can get while still holding a joypad. It features famous Japanese actors who look like their real-life counterparts, and are voiced by their real-life counterparts. There is a game in here somewhere, but it's surrounded by first-rate cutscenes.



- **GENRE:** REAL-TIME STRATEGY
- **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA
- **RELEASE:** TBA 2008
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** VIVENDI
- **DEVELOPER:** SWORDFISH STUDIOS
- **WEB:** www.sierra.com



■ "Damn it George! Why did you have to carpet bomb the ketchup factory?"

WORLD IN CONFLICT

"Give peace a chance"? Pfft. Obviously John Lennon hadn't played THIS!

The world is – indeed – in conflict. From Iraq, to Afghanistan, from the rough lands of Sudan to the 'burbs of Mount Druitt, there's enough negative energy floating about to keep Happy Gilmore from forever sending that ball home. How salient that we should celebrate this fact with an up-and-coming bunker buster of a hit – a left-field mortar from the land of the hunchbacked keyboarders – a PC conversion!

The reason we're excited is two fold. Firstly, so far consoles have struggled to tame the real-time strategy genre. There are just too many damn buttons to map, squash, slip and assign to a streamlined controller. Even with the better setups over the years, it has all felt a bit incestual. But with the PS3 openly embracing USB keyboard and mouse support that issue has been dealt one defiant kung fu boot to the teeth. Throw in the fact that console gamers no longer have to deal with the muted low-res graphics of the last generation, and there's no reason the PS3 shouldn't be able to pump out hearty barrack-booming lovin' en masse.

Secondly, if we had to assign *World in Conflict* onto the body of recent RTS releases, it'd be a golden pair of testicles. *World in Conflict* rocks. Forget *Warcraft III*, *Age of Empires*, even *Command & Conquer – World in Conflict* is an RTS pioneer. Why? There are a host of reasons, but for one it takes out all the boring, nerdy crud that attracts bifocal wearers to the genre and amps up the destruction and mayhem. Forget having to spend 20 minutes setting up your base, creating non-military drones and harvesting resources. That's not part of the game here. Nope, it's all about strategically positioning your killing machines and knowing how to replace them when they catch a bullet in their eye sockets. It's big, it's fast, and it's stunning.

STORY OF WAR

Why all the hate? The story of *World in Conflict* takes place in a hypothetical universe where the Cold War culminated in a Hot as Hell War. The Berlin wall never fell and Russia are still a pack of commie dogs with nothing to offer the world but busty mail order brides. So we've got the bad half of 'Ze Germans' and Mother Russia (hereafter known as 'The Commie Bastards') slinging their crud throughout Europe and invading burger joints in the US. It's pretty much the storyline espoused in the old *Red Alert* games on PC, but we won't hold that against it. Especially when it looks as good as it does.



■ The stuff Tom Clancy dreams about







■ "Santa Claus... we've got you surrounded. Come out with your hands UP!"





■ "This one's for everyone who didn't like *Top Gun*! It's a story about friendship, and the bond that exists between two men!"





INFO BYTE

Don't worry about this being a straight rehash. Sierra has promised that the console version of *WIC* will feature a bunch of new single and multiplayer maps, units and modes. Nice one.

Put it this way: if *World of Conflict* were a contestant in the Miss Universe pageant she'd be an explosive knockout of a pant expander that'd leave the rest of the contestants crying into their one-pieces. Typically RTS games are all about scale and less about Va-Va-Voom, but *World of Conflict* looks so damn good its in-game cut scenes take place using the battlefield's character models. Combine that with enough crazy smoke, explosions and flying debris effects to make most PCs choke on their own melted motherboard, and you've got quite the looker.

ART OF WAR

Despite the pearly visuals it's still the addictive gameplay that'll win this title its Medals of Honour. As mentioned earlier, there's no base building. At the start of each mission you'll find yourself hovering ethereally over a war scarred area without any visible troops under your control. From here you set a drop point, call in your infantry and assault craft, and then charge into battle. You've only got a set number of points to spend on these units, but when they're killed you get the points added back to your pool so you can summon replacements.

Occasionally you'll find yourself on the receiving end of a red backhander. Packs of tanks, mortar fire, and enemy ground troops often attack in massive numbers. It's here that you can call upon Tactical Aids. You know in war flicks how the Allied soldiers are always getting their rumps spanked and are forever yelling out, "We need air support!!!" into a radio. Tactical Aid is your air support. It's limited, but it's deadly. You can call in napalm strikes, laser-guided bombs, artillery fire and more to quickly change the face of the battle.

OBLITERATE YOUR MATES

The final slick selling point for this one is its dedication to multiplayer tomfoolery. In fact, *World in Conflict* feels designed to be played by groups of sweaty fans at the same time. Maps often have different allied factions working away on slightly different objectives – backing each other when the action gets too hot. We're surmising that come release you and your buddies will be able to engage in such co-op mayhem as well as go at it in competitive melees. In any case, expect some robust online support.

World of Conflict should hopefully reach the PS3 some time this year to joust with *Tom Clancy's EndWar*. Judging by the popularity of the PC game, you'll definitely hear it coming. **James Ellis**

BOTTOM LINE

- Current PC RTS champion
- Looks like a centrefold
- Sweet, sweet multiplayer

OPS is...

Blown away



NICE TO NUKE YOU

What World War game would be complete without a bit of nuclear nudgy nudge? None, we answer! Rightly so, *World in Conflict* packs in some serious city-clearing muscle. Apart from your more standard Tactical Aids, at certain times you'll be able to call in a no-holds-barred nuclear strike to send the enemy down into the gob of Beelzebub. It's not something you can pull out willy nilly, but rather it's for special occasions. How sweet.



PS3 PS2 PSP

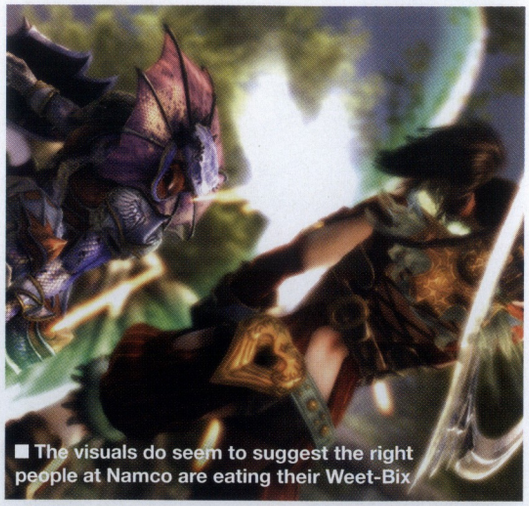
PREVIEW

- **GENRE:** FIGHTING
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **RELEASE:** TBA 2008
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER:** NAMCO
- **WEB:** http://soulcalibur.com



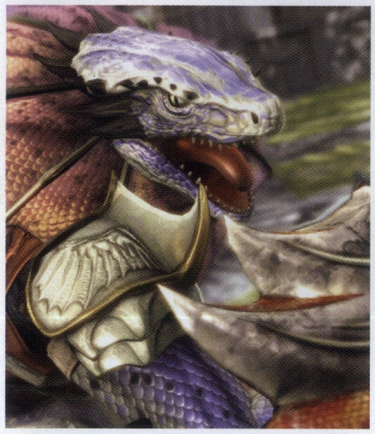
INFO BYTE

Back when the original *Soul Calibur* came out, some countries were still banning the depiction of Samurai in pop culture. In such areas Namco reinvented series staple Mitsurugi as a one-eyed pirate named Arthur.



■ The visuals do seem to suggest the right people at Namco are eating their Weet-Bix







■ Swinging his pole around. Pffft... *typical*

SOUL CALIBUR IV

Ninja vs. Samurai vs. Demon Knights vs. top-heavy damsels

We've played *Soul Calibur IV*. Kind souls that they are, the folk at Ubisoft recently allowed us into their top secret den to dispatch some pointy-edged lovin' with a raw build of Namco's blade master. While the game has several months of refining left before release, just being able to toss the sword around while they hyped up some of the game's new features left us as hungry as ever for the final product.

Fact: *Soul Calibur* has always been a series that has bridged the divide between fighting punters and brawler veterans. Like photography and poker machines, you don't have to be an expert to get something out of the experience. Casual fans who prefer to abstain from reading instruction manuals, move lists, or online FAQS can still kick arse with some creative button massaging. Meanwhile dedicated and moon-tanned addicts can dig below the surface to unearth a fighting game as deep as anything outside the cultish *Virtua Fighter* series.

From what we've seen there'll be plenty of excavating to be done. Notably the character selection screen is packed out with space for the largest roster ever in the series. So far the most interesting new recruit is Hilde. An armoured female knight who touts a spear-like weapon, she's a welcome change from the wealth of fantasy flange in the game.

In fact, during our hands-on we witnessed a couple of these bonerific character models in full bounce. There was Cassandra, a nimble sword-and-shield prom queen who might as well have been dressed in glad wrap, and Taki the babe ninja whose pendulous jiggling mega udders silenced the room like a gunshot. It's fan service we can live with.

Soul Calibur IV is also shaping up to stun fans in more conventional ways. Namco is particularly keen to perfect some of the new modes it introduced in *Soul Calibur III*, including the create-a-fighter option that showed a lot of promise but failed to deliver. Imagine being able to recreate yourself as a butt-stomping ninja bad arse before jumping online and bleeding the world! It's dorkier than a Dungeons & Dragons pyjama party, but why fight the feeling?

Lastly, *SCIV* will now feature instant-kill attacks! We're not sure how these will be worked into the game or if they'll encroach on Namco's policy of zero gore, but we're guessing they'll be spectacular.

While the wait for *SCIV* seems daunting, *OPS* suggest y'all grab a copy of *Soul Calibur II* or *III* and start brushing up on your skills. There'll be plenty of competition when the game is released in the coming months. **James Ellis**

WELCOME TO THE DARK SIDE

You've no doubt heard. Darth Vader is going to be a playable S.O.B. in *Soul Calibur IV*. No, a cybernetic mystic lord from a mythical intergalactic time line doesn't quite fit with warriors from the medieval era, but he's no more out of place than series mascot, Voldo, the blind spleen-splintering gimp. While the Xbox 360 version is getting Yoda over Darth, Namco has hinted at the possibility of downloading further characters in the future. Fingers crossed that means the PS3 will also bag the small green one at some point.



BOTTOM LINE

- The best 3D fighting game...
- ...gets better
- Create your own warrior!

OPS is...

Counting sleeps



SLIM & LITE

PSP
PlayStation Portable

playstation.com.au

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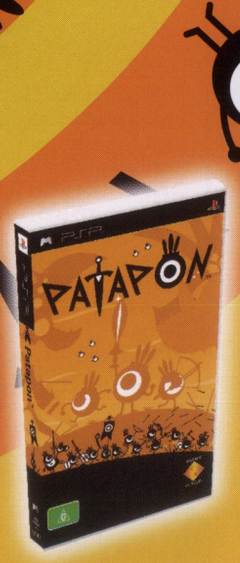
Give in to the beat

As if you have a choice. Using nothing but your rhythm to control an army of Patapons, a life of Patapon induced chanting and foot tapping is just around the corner.

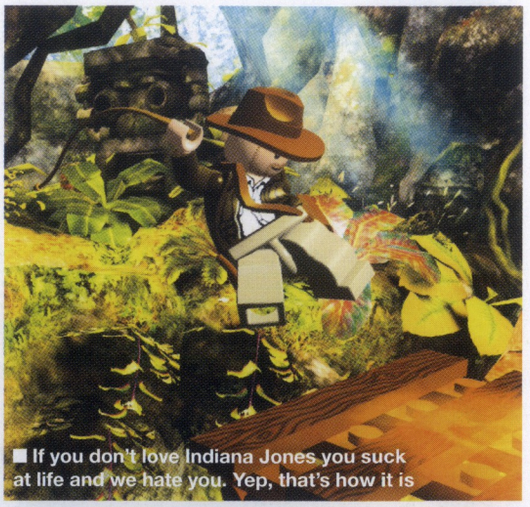


G

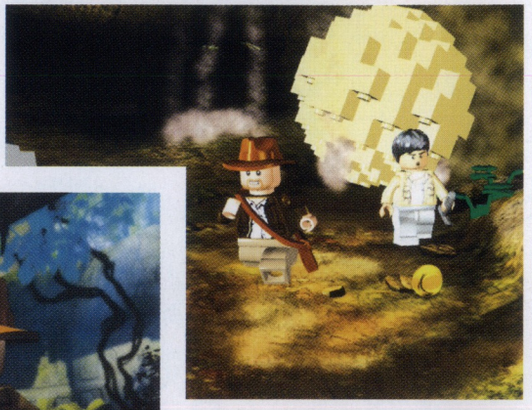
- **GENRE:** ACTION ADVENTURE
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **RELEASE:** LATE 2008
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER:** TRAVELLER'S TALES
- **WEB:** www.lucasarts.com



INFO BYTE
Indy's full name is Dr. Henry 'Indiana' Walton Jones, Jr. The character was originally named Indiana Smith, after an Alaskan malamute.

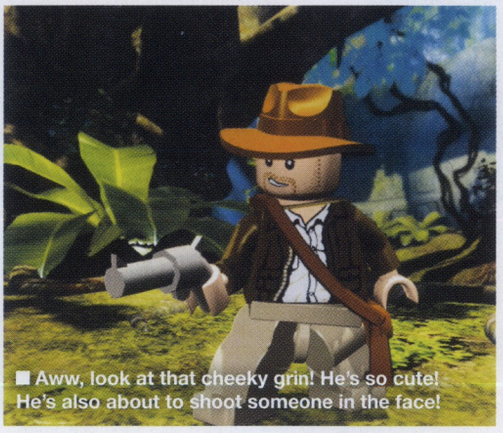


■ If you don't love Indiana Jones you suck at life and we hate you. Yep, that's how it is





■ Whip it. Whip it *real* good



■ Aww, look at that cheeky grin! He's so cute! He's also about to shoot someone in the face!

LEGO INDIANA JONES

Fortune and glory, kid – fortune and glory...

It's true what the prophecies say, when it comes to scoring treasure, outrunning huge plastic boulders, and circumventing lethal traps – only the penitent LEGO man will pass. Truly Indiana Jones is the quintessential action hero who takes crap off of no one, and regularly gets himself caught in situations that would make most ordinary LEGO men shit bricks (see what we did there?).

Under development by the creative geniuses at Traveller's Tales, *LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures* continues the offbeat hilarity that was a huge part of the two previous *LEGO Star Wars* games. In fact, we were all given a bit of a forewarning of Indy's imminent plans to explore the brick kingdom due to his being available as a secret character in the awesome *LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga*.

Indiana Jones is the perfect fit for this style of game; he travels to exotic locales, he beats the hell out of any Nazi stupid enough to cross him, and he collects more exotic items than Winona Ryder in a mall without cameras.

Speaking of Nazis, apparently Lucasarts has chosen to remove any reference to them by replacing them with an 'anonymous genocidal, occultist, trench coat-wearing master-race' – which is pretty redundant because we've been kraut-killing connoisseurs for years. Geez Lucasarts, how are you gonna kid-ify the heart rip scene from *Temple of Doom* – a ceremonial nipple cripple?

Obviously Indy has no Force abilities to rely upon so new moves have been added to the gameplay mix such as launching vine to vine during jumps, gunplay with the Webley, and, of course, having a lash with Indy's signature whip to solve puzzles and to disarm any Naz... uh... trench-coat baddies.

There's a greater focus on environmental interaction this time around too, because you'll solve most of the puzzles and traps by grabbing nearby objects, starting fires, or detonating explosive gunpowder barrels. In addition to this, and because you have bugger all Force abilities to rely upon this time, the characters are much more physical in the way they tackle the levels – almost *Tomb Raider*-ish with a heavier focus on ledge shimmying, vine swinging, and swimming about – which is actually a first for the *LEGO* series.

Traveller's Tales has already shown us that it knows how to create very decent games, and at the risk of building *LEGO* up we're predicting that this will be a very entertaining extravaganza. From what we've managed to deduce so far it continues to deliver on the crazy offbeat humour of the previous games and, more importantly, the addictive drop-in-drop-out cooperative multilayer that made the series such a blast.

From the looks of things *LEGO Indiana Jones: The Original Adventures* is looking like a solid gold title that may very well belong in your museum.

Adam Mathew

HATS OFF TO INDY

The Indy fedora and leather jacket that was used in *The Last Crusade* are on display at the Smithsonian's American History Museum in Washington D.C. Rabid Indiana fans go mental for the props and clothing from the films, and Jones's whip was the third most popular film weapon. We couldn't agree more, we'd put it up there with the lightsaber, Jessie Ventura's minigun from *Predator*, *MIB*'s noisy cricket, *Dirty Harry*'s .44 Magnum, the Texas chainsaw, and from *GoldenEye*, Xenia Onatopp's thighs.



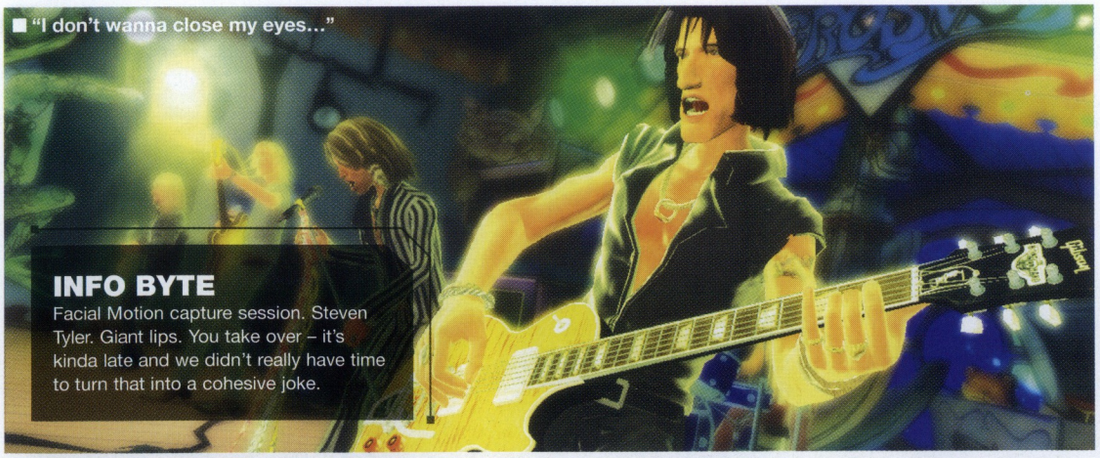
BOTTOM LINE

- We love whip action
- Still piss funny
- No Nazis = No ticket

OPS is...
Rather amped

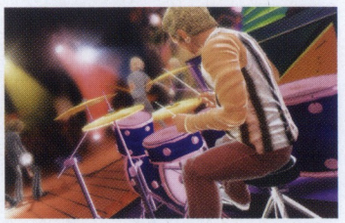


- **GENRE:** ROCK GOD SIMULATOR
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **RELEASE:** MID 2008
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER:** NEVERSOFT
- **WEB:** www.guitarherogame.com



"I don't wanna close my eyes..."

INFO BYTE
Facial Motion capture session. Steven Tyler. Giant lips. You take over – it's kinda late and we didn't really have time to turn that into a cohesive joke.



GUITAR HERO: AEROSMITH

Swwwweeeeeeeeeeet Emooooooootiiiooooon...

Guitar Hero: Aerosmith is precisely what it sounds like. It's an Aerosmith-themed *Guitar Hero*. From what we gathered, everything functions basically the same. Key features remain – a career mode plus the usual multiplayer game modes – although there's no co-op career this time around.

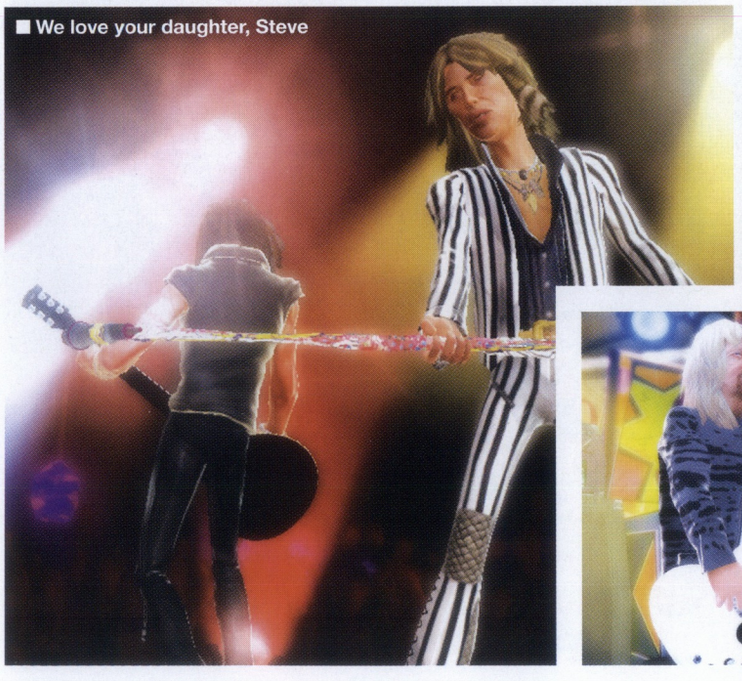
The Aerosmith songs we can announce at this time include 'Sweet Emotion', 'Livin' on the Edge' and 'Love in an Elevator'. There were a bunch of others that aren't exactly greatest hits material, but we were only privy to the first few tiers. As the game reflects Aerosmith's rise to... upper mediocrity(?) we imagine there'll be a few more well known tracks to come.

We were, however, treated to a few of the game's non-Aerosmith songs too. The ones we can report so far are 'All the Young Dudes' from Mott the Hoople, 'All Day and All of the Night' from The Kinks, 'Personality Crisis' from New York Dolls, 'Dream Police' by Cheap Trick, 'I Hate Myself for Loving You' by Joan Jett and 'Complete Control' by The Clash. The first three are covers, although 'All the Young Dudes' in particular is an especially good one. The non-Aerosmith tracks are reportedly by bands that have either toured with Aerosmith or inspired Aerosmith in some fashion.

From what we observed the game itself looks not unlike *Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock*. The arenas are new (inspired by venues from Aerosmith's admittedly long career), but when you're not playing as Aerosmith all the usual characters make a return. Aerosmith themselves have been completely digitised and implanted into the game, although they're more like caricatures of their real selves – exaggerated chins (and lips – we estimate around 4 million polygons have gone into Steve Tyler's mouth alone) abound, and we're pretty sure more than one cucumber suffered a trip down a pair of leather trousers.

It does appear, at least for the time being, that *Guitar Hero* is content to keep on keeping on. We do wonder just how relevant an Aerosmith-themed *Guitar Hero* game will be in Australia – the game certainly contains many non-Aerosmith tracks but it does seem to have a real *Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s* vibe about it. Our chief concern is that, like *Rocks the 80s*, it'll be a fraction light on the truly great tracks we'd naturally expect to be held in reserve for the inevitable *Guitar Hero IV*.

We'll see shortly, no doubt. Stay tuned rockers. **Luke Reilly**



We love your daughter, Steve

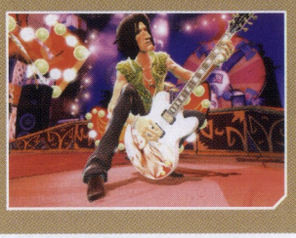


He's all mouth and tight trousers



DON'T WANNA MISS A THING

Upper mediocrity is probably a fraction unfair when referring to where Aerosmith peaked. Statistically speaking it's claimed they are the bestselling American hard rock band of all time, having sold 150 million albums worldwide (including 66.5 million albums in the US alone). The band has scored 21 Top 40 hits on the Billboard Hot 100, nine number one Mainstream Rock hits, four Grammy awards, and ten Video Music Awards. They also hold the record for the most gold and multi-platinum albums by a US band, and were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2001. Still, they're just... well, Aerosmith, right? And we're not 40.



BOTTOM LINE

- Still rockin'
- Not just Aerosmith
- It's no *Rock Band*...

OPS is...
Slightly skeptical



- **GENRE:** FIGHTING
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **RELEASE:** TBA 2008
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
- **WEB:** www.streetfighterworld.com/





"Here comes the aeroplane" "Argh! I don't want to eat fist!"

INFO BYTE
Rumours stirring online that *Street Fighter* bad boy Akuma will be making an appearance in the *Street Fighter IV* roster.

STREET FIGHTER IV

The King of Fighters returns

Back in the '90s every kid worth his school blazer knew about *Street Fighter II*. A revolutionary game for its time, it turned humble milk bars and video shops into small coliseums. Juvenile journeymen with nothing but a pocket full of change and the desire to compete would stop by after school like packs of pilgrims. Unlike so many other things back then, and so many other things since, success lay not in your size, nor in your popularity. It didn't matter who your folks were or from what suburb you were from. *Street Fighter II*, despite its critics, was for everyone. A level playing field, it was the first lesson to teach many of us that the key to victory in life was practise, perseverance, and a willingness to push yourself past the boundary of spectator and to compete. We learnt all that from a crumby old videogame for a dollar a hit. *Street Fighter* mattered.

It still matters now. Capcom has seemingly all but completed *Street Fighter IV*. An old game rebirthed in a new way, it sees the joystick patriarchs of old return to battle it out with at least two new bruisers.

The new kids on the block consist of Abel, a chunky chopper with a tough strain of amnesia, and a fashionable vixen who goes by the crap name of Crimson Viper. We're not Kung Fu masters here at *OPS* so we're not going to try and get our Foos and Choos mixed up by trying to explain their specific fighting styles. Needless to say, Able is a meat axe who punches and smashes, and Crimson Viper is yet another untenable female pain factory with deadly legs.

The thing about having most of the roster packed with familiar faces is that it makes it easier to spot what's old and new. There was some concern that *SFIV* might try to follow the path of *Tekken* or *Virtua Fighter* and grasp for realism, but thankfully this fear has been debunked. For one, all the iconic moves have remained, from Guile's Sonic Boom to Zangief's Spinning Pile Driver. Furthermore the super-combo-death-moves that see your animated minion dish out more pain than a Mike Tyson-Ike Turner love child have also returned. And Chun-Li still has impossibly lickable thighs. Make no mistake – this is a *Street Fighter* game.

In fact the major deviations from Capcom's old cash printing formulae seem largely confined to the game's coat o' paint. Capcom has claimed the game is a 2.5D title of sorts, an unsurprising number when you recall the difficulty Capcom had in counting to three with the series back in the '90s. Flaunting curvaceously cartoon-like chunks of character and buttery animation, *Street Fighter IV*, so far, looks more fruity than menacing. An acquired taste, but what does look undisputedly mesmerising is when the game crash zooms onto the seared faces of the fighters as they unleash megawatt combos that would kick the balls out of a gorilla's scrotum.

Street Fighter IV is set for a release some time this year. Let us all gather hands, shave our heads, and chant inexplicable balderdash in the hope that it lives up to our goliath expectations.

James Ellis



"WATER FIGHT!" "Haha, you really got me with that water balloon!"







Chest hair: it grants you strange powers

STREET FIGHTER: THE LEGEND OF CHUN-LI

There's going to be another *Street Fighter* movie. Apparently the film's producers are trying to distance this speculator from the abomination that starred Jean-Biff Van Dumb. They've so far cast Kristin Kreuk, the hot piece o' pastry from *Smallville*, as Chun-Li, *American Pie*'s Chris Klein as Nash, and Michael Clarke Duncan, the human protein shake from *The Green Mile*, as Balrog. It's also set to be directed by Andrzej Bartkowiak, responsible for armpit classics like *Exit Wounds* and *Romeo Must Die*. *Street Fighter* isn't scheduled to start shooting until March.



BOTTOM LINE

- It's *Street Fighter*!
- The original roster!
- Visual style? Will it work?

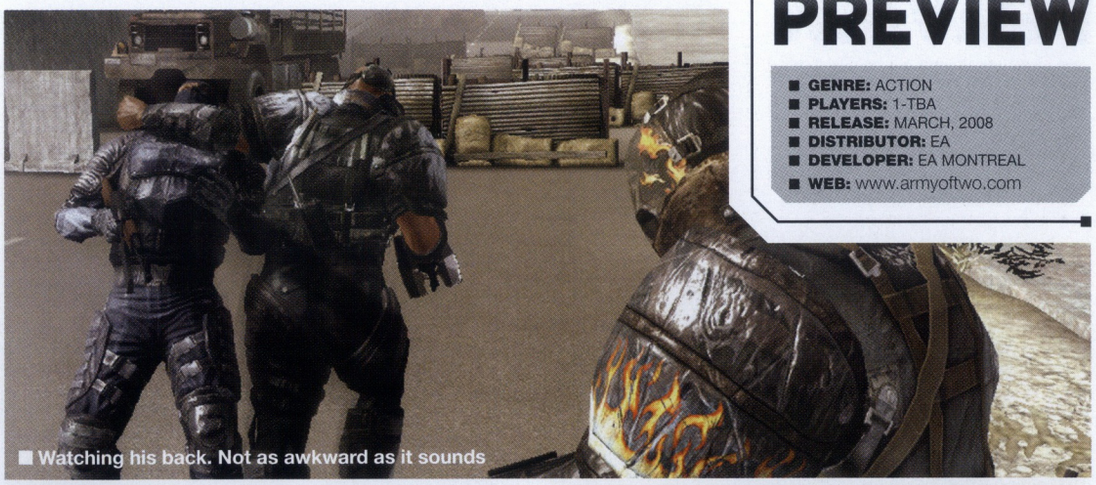
OPS is...
Very confident



- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **PLAYERS:** 1-TBA
- **RELEASE:** MARCH, 2008
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
- **DEVELOPER:** EA MONTREAL
- **WEB:** www.armyoftwo.com

INFO BYTE
The game may draw inspiration from Blackwater Worldwide, a private military contractor (the largest in the world) that was subject to a major ongoing controversy in 2007.





■ Watching his back. Not as awkward as it sounds



■ Swapping pieces. Not as awkward as it sounds



■ Blind-fire. Not as awkward as it sounds

ARMY OF TWO

"Just. The. Two of us – you and I..."

At its most basic level *Army of Two* is the embodiment of two very old Australian sayings. The first one is a popular mainland expression: 'Stand by your mate', whereas the second is a more Tasmanian phrase: 'Two heads are better than one'. We're just kidding of course; we have nothing but love for our Tasmania. How can you not give mucho props to a land mass that when viewed from a map is immediately reminiscent of far ruder things – just like Florida is America's wang.

Getting away from the puerile topic of genitalia, *Army of Two* is looking like the balls. Working off the design motto 'co-operative gameplay as the main course rather than a side-dish' the game centres around two black op mercenaries Tyson Rios and Elliot Salem, the titular army of two. Basically, these two bad arses get dropped into nasty situations that the US Army won't touch with a ten-foot cruise missile, and as such they can only rely on each other for support. To make life easier (or... liveable) in these tense firefights the game features a variety of co-operative maneuvers. There's kudos; which builds up morale by high fivin' each other and busting out some double air guitar, back-to-back; which has you pair up to protect the other guy's unarmored pancreas, and riot shield; which has one dude working the D with an enormous shield while the other pops off shots. This is just a tiny glimpse of the co-op actions available, you can also drag your wounded teammate to safety, assist each other when scaling walls, and engage in super romantic – uh... we mean, dangerous and non-sensual – tandem parachuting. In addition to all this you'll both commandeer jeeps, tanks, and hovercrafts in which someone gets to drive and the other guy calls shotgun – twelve gauge shotgun that is.

One of the most impressive features of *Army of Two* is the inclusion of some situational humour elements throughout the game. Salem and Rios aren't your usual disciplined, by-the-book soldiers, and as such they revel in mercilessly taking the piss out of one another at any available opportunity. Some shining examples are when Rios applies medical assistance and Salem quips "Holy crap dude, did you get your medical degree in butchery school?", or when Salem resourcefully tears off a car door off a wreck to use as a shield and Rios asks him, "What are you, f--king MacGuyver?" Gold, Jerry. It's moments like these that makes us think that *Army of Two* will offer us something out of the ordinary and may very well shape up into a winning mix of witty expletive-filled banter, co-operative high jinks, and stupidly large explosions. Our fingers are most definitely crossed...

Adam Mathew

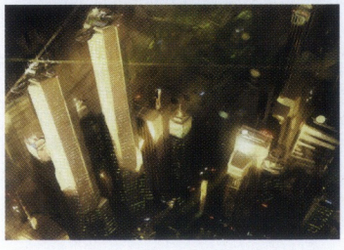
BOTTOM LINE

- Swearing is funny
- Mantastic co-op action
- Fighting cheek to cheek

OPS is...

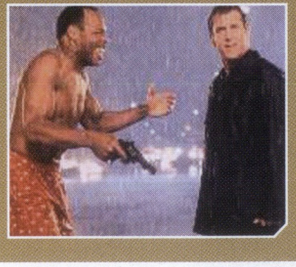
Bi-laterally curious





THE GREATEST TWO MAN ACTION TEAMS

Tango and Cash, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance kid, Turner and Hooch, Master and Blaster, Bill and Ted, Riggs and Murtagh, The Lone Ranger and Tonto, Elliot and E.T., Smokey and The Bandit, Han and Chewie, Seinfeld and Costanza, Starsky and Hutch, Wallace and Gromit, Kirk and Spock, Maverick and Goose, Pooh and Tigger, Batman and Robin – they all have one major thing in common: they defied the odds and worked together as a manly, manly team.



- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** SUMO DIGITAL
- **WEB:** www.sega.co.uk



INFO BYTE
Apparently Gillius Thunderhead from *Golden Axe* is taking time off from booting midgets in the face to play tennis!



■ "Wind..." thought tails, looking at his partners skirt. "Do your duty"





■ That's the second weirdest tennis court we've ever seen. The first? The one in dracula's back yard in *Everybody's Tennis*

SEGA SUPERSTAR TENNIS

Sonic's *other* furry balls...

If you're as maladjusted as we seem to be, you've already wasted an unhealthy amount of time fantasising about what videogame characters get up to in their spare time. Which of them dominates in a game of 'goon of fortune', who cops a meaty backhand when the cameras aren't watching, and can they handle themselves ball-wise – *Sega Superstar Tennis* will dare to answer all of these questions. Tradition states that every once in a while there's an annual platformer parlay and all iconic characters quit the fussin' an a-feudin' to swap their mortal clashes for overhand smashes, break out the porno eighties sweatbands, and pretend not to notice that Sonic still isn't actually wearing any pants.

On the surface *Superstar* looks like *Virtua Tennis* except they've swapped Mark 'the Poo' Philippoussis and Carlos Moya for Amy Rose and Knuckles. Initially there are eight selectable characters across a broad range of classic Sega franchises like; AiAi from *Super Monkey Ball*, Beat off *Jet Set Radio*, Ulala from *Space Channel 5*, Amigo from *Samba de Amigo*, plus Nights, Dr. Robotnik, Sonic and the biggest hanger-on ever – Tails. In addition to these characters we spied an additional eight slots available for unlockable characters – fingers are very much crossed for the Daytona car or some Virtua Kids.

When the gameplay starts the *Virtua Tennis* similarities end, because the action is basically ⊗ for fast shot, ◎ is a slow hit, and you can roll your press between these two buttons to bust out lobs and sneaky drop shots. This system works pretty well but we can't understand why they didn't just map these additional shots to the other unused face buttons. Whatever the thinking behind it, fierce rallying does ensue and can be made fiercer still by character-centric super maneuvers – some examples are Sonic morphing into super form and psychically controlling the ball, and Robotnik launches electrocuting mines across the net.

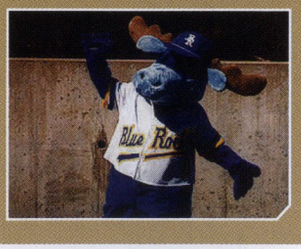
Sega is definitely bringing out the nostalgia big guns this time as there are a plethora of minigames that have you killing *House of the Dead* zombies, collecting rings, and guiding Chu Chu mice into rockets. In addition to this, there are also tonnes of themed courts jam packed with Sega paraphernalia, the music is patented Sega cock rock guitar, and you can select a male, female or 'crazy' umpire ("Let's go make some ke-raaazy matches").

We're a fraction concerned that the whole thing might be tad too trivial to really bother too much with (what's next – Sega Superstar Curling? Sega Superstar Elephant Polo?), but couple all this Sega forty love with a smashing four player party mode and *Sega Superstar Tennis* admittedly *is* looking like a deuce and a half of the good stuff.

We'll bring you our final verdict next issue. **Adam Mathew**

MASCOTS?

Being Aussies the sacred importance of the mascot is largely lost on us – we eat the two national ones printed on our coat of arms. Uncle internet defines a mascot as – a term for any person, animal, or object thought to bring luck. If luck is indeed the primary function of all mascots then Sonic should have hung up his sneakers years ago, because despite our continued love and support ol' Sega hasn't exactly gone from strength to strength.

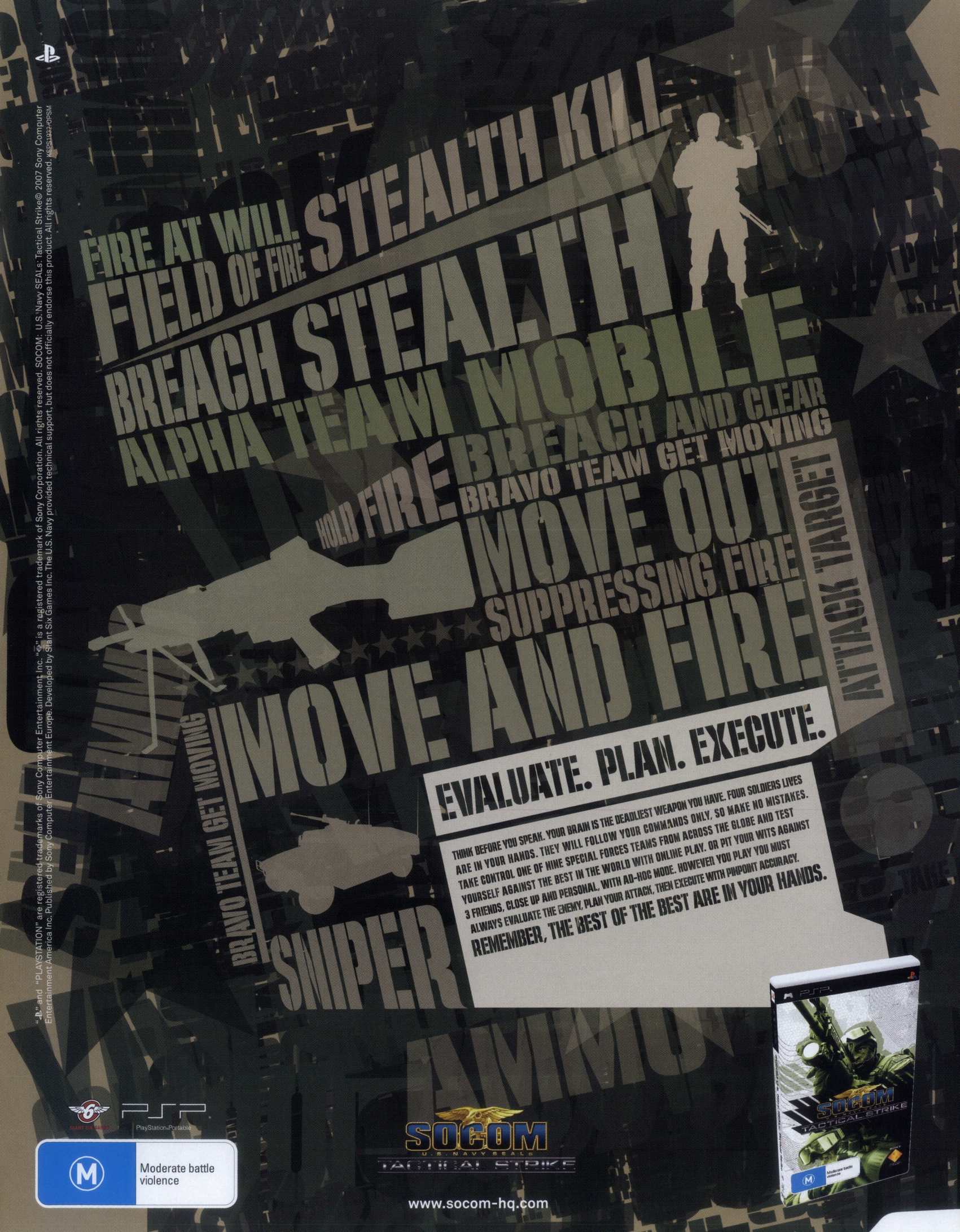


BOTTOM LINE

- A nostalgiaholics dream
- Shadow the Hedgehog
- We miss 'the Poo'

OPS is...
Still deciding...





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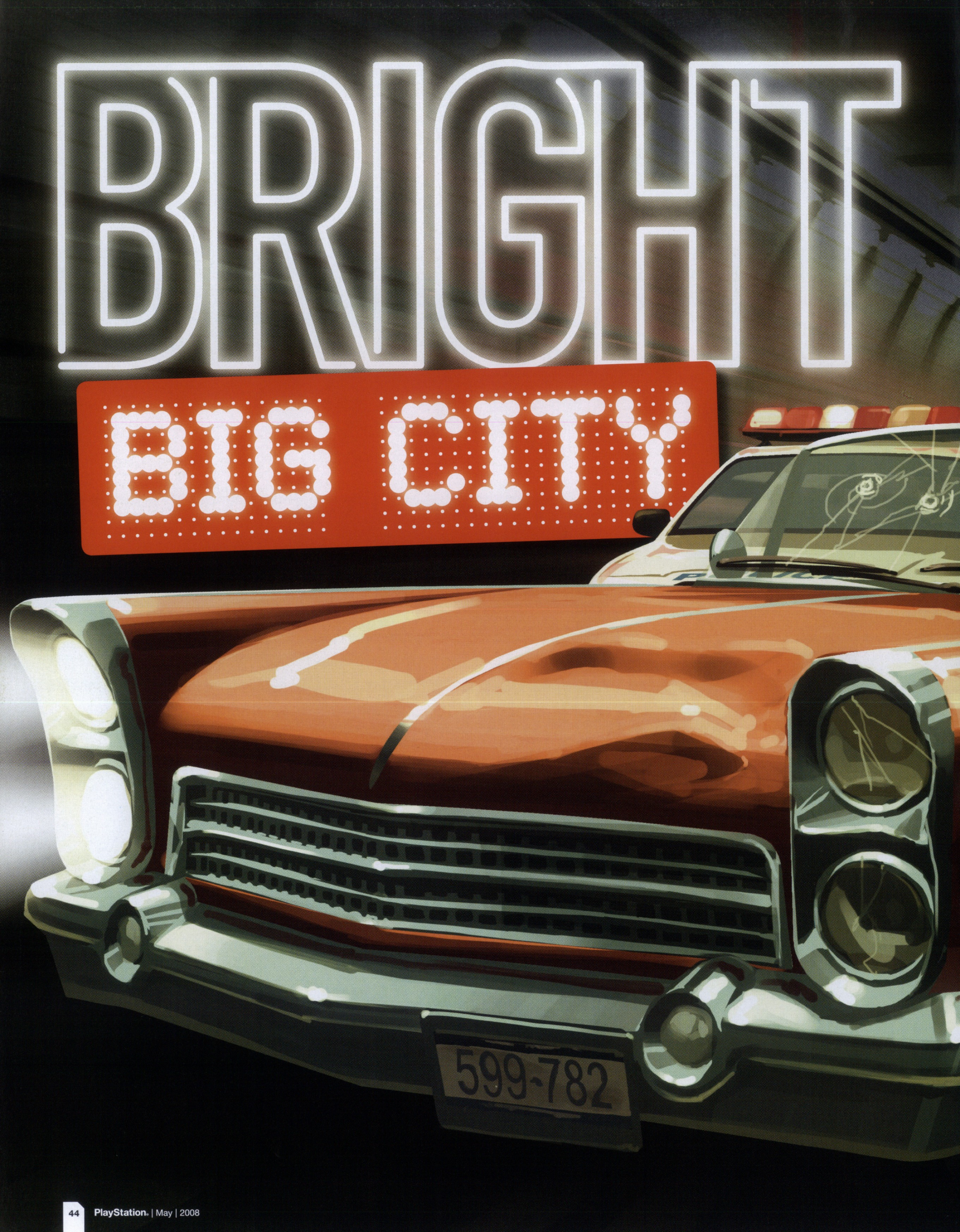
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LIGHTS,

WORDS: LUKE REILLY



HANDS-ON WITH GRAND THEFT AUTO IV!

We've spent a vast amount of time and a great deal of page space waxing intellectually with you lot over the virtues of *GTAIV* and the *GTA* series in general.

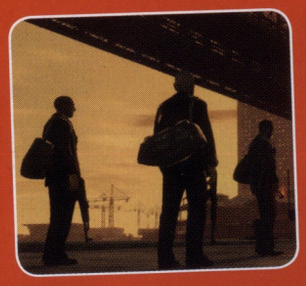
We've got all clever and pointed out how years ago a unique, revolutionary and highly controversial piece of entertainment found itself in front of the eyes of an unsuspecting Australian public. While many accused it of glorifying criminals and glamourising violence, particularly against police officers, it survived a brief ban and audiences lapped it up. We weren't talking about *Grand Theft Auto III* either; we were talking about *The Story of the Kelly Gang*, the 1906 Australian silent movie widely regarded as the world's first feature-length film. We spoke of how the arguments against entertainment that pushes the boundaries haven't changed in 100 years.

We've discussed the Rockstar mantra – high production values, gameplay over graphics, innovative design and exactly what that means for Rockstar head-honcho Dan Houser and *GTAIV* itself.

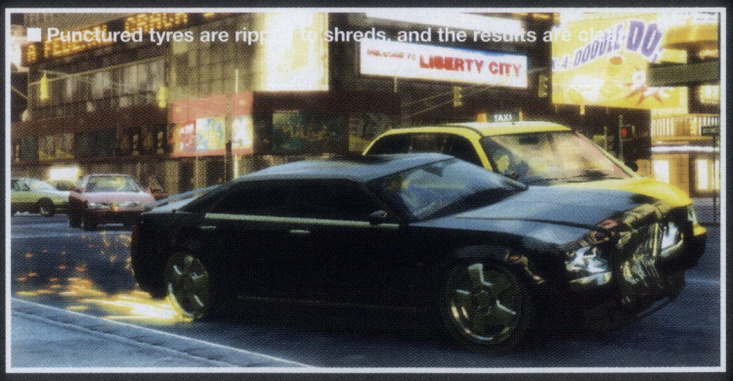
We've crunched the numbers. Rockstar has sold more than 60 million

DIE, ALL RIGHT!

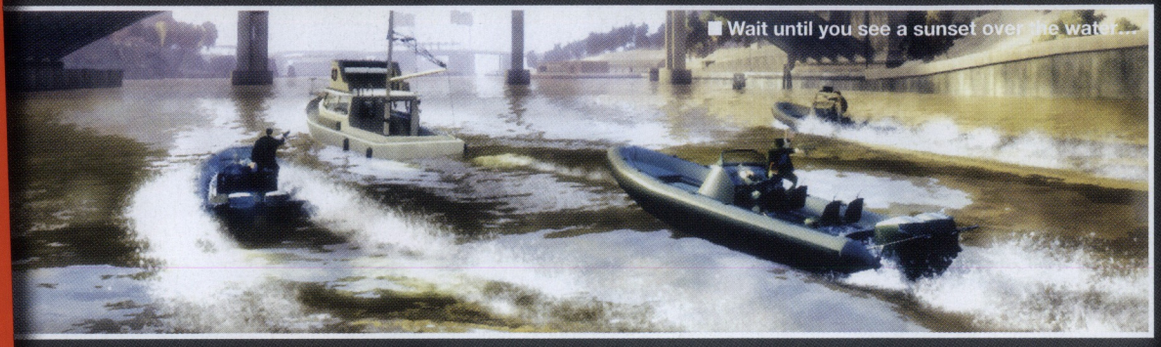
There was a fourth mission on show for us, but it was a strictly eyes-only affair. Set immediately after a mission we saw back in *OPS* #14 (it was called Truck Hustle, for the record). This mission, To Live and Die in Alderney, saw Niko and a few of his mafia pals on a mission to move the H sitting in the back of a recently hijacked truck only to find out the place is being cased by the feds. After a brief but violent shootout the escape attempt disintegrates into a hectic car chase and a *Heat*-style running gun battle, replete with duffle bag toting, assault rifle-sporting gangsters. Finding what we presume is a back-up van (with a handy rocket launcher in the back cabin) Niko takes down the pursuing police chopper with it, the RPG leaving a twisting trail of smoke as it thuds into the low-flying heli with an almighty crunch, and bolts in the van with his posse.



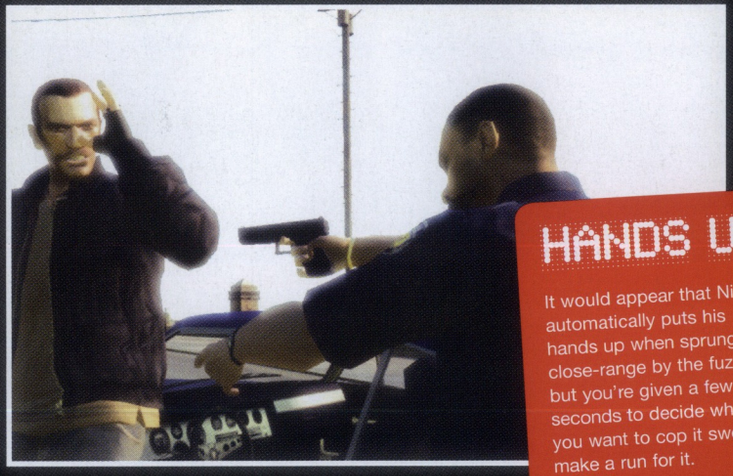




■ Punctured tyres are ripped to shreds, and the results are cl[illegible]



■ Wait until you see a sunset over the wat[illegible]



HANDS UP

It would appear that Niko automatically puts his hands up when sprung at close-range by the fuzz, but you're given a few seconds to decide whether you want to cop it sweet or make a run for it.

GTA titles, and we've explained just how large a shadow that casts over the likes of the *Halo* series – a franchise that, if you believe most of the gaming media, is apparently the biggest thing to happen to games since those pesky Space Invaders dropped down, increased speed and reversed direction.

We've watched on intently as Rockstar reps from Sydney to New York walked us through tiny fractions of *GTAIV*'s colossal girth. We've scrutinised every detail yet were never able to take the controller into our own hands.

In fact, we've done an awful lot except play the game ourselves.

Until now, that is.

NEAR PERFECT

The very first thing you'll notice is how remarkably familiar the whole thing feels, followed immediately by genuine anticipation regarding the many, many layers of additional depth it's clear there are. Niko moves about not unlike the protagonists in the PS2 iterations – he still has those typical Rockstar nuances – but there's so much more to him. The way he swaggers, the way he leans into corners, the way he slides into cover (adjusting his stance automatically based on the height of the object) – he's a far more complex character. This phenomenon extends to the vehicle handling too. *GTA* fans will instantly feel at home behind the wheel, but there's a brand-new and very tangible sense of weight to the vehicles. Rockstar has added a new dimension to the vehicle handling – it's still very accessible but there are a variety of interesting new facets to it once you push a car past its limit. We dumped the throttle in a black convertible Stallion and peeled away for the curb with one tyre spinning furiously – older cars without locking, or limited-slip, differentials will do this, so Rockstar hasn't missed a trick. The cars feel heavy (there's nothing light or floaty about punching through roadblocks and barging your way around the city), but they don't feel slow. We were blasting through intersections with the background blurring, on the very edge of the envelope – the difference between threading ourselves through two oncoming cars a fraction of a degree – and we loved every second. Wrestling a car in *GTAIV* around the city feels near perfect – a dash of handbrake here and a touch of understeer there, it feels like the best parts of the *GTA* games of yore combined with the Hollywood-infused drifting of the likes of *Driver*, and it's a very good thing.

Everything also feels tenser on account of innumerable tweaks to the experience. On the run from the fuzz we scrambled into the back of a taxi, but the cabbie was having none of it and did a runner. Left in the back seat with a gaggle of cops charging towards us we had to clamber into the driver's seat and hot wire the cab. We jammed it into reverse (as a volley of slugs began to thud into the bonnet and shattered the windscreen) whipped the taxi into a hasty J-turn, tyres squealing in protest as the pockmarked cab spun 180 degrees, mashed the throttle and scarpered. A stray round pierced a rear tyre, which shredded itself and left us driving on the rim, leaving a shower of sparks in our wake. Our time with *GTAIV* was a series of events just like this.

SECOND-HAND SMOKE

After we became accustomed to the controls we launched into the first of the three missions we were set to tackle. The first, Jamaican Heat, gave us our first taste of *GTAIV*'s vastly improved gunplay. The shooting mechanics of *GTA* titles in the past have always been relatively robust, but also quite workmanlike – simple lock-on and shoot affairs that were generally eclipsed by standalone third-person shooters. Things have changed significantly. *GTAIV* boasts a new targeting system, quite similar to the one put to good use in *Scarface* and a smattering of other games in the past few years. You can lock onto a target, retain the capacity to move using the left stick but have the ability to make fine adjustments to your aim using the right stick. This way you can have a general bead on an enemy and target specific parts of their unfortunate anatomy. Flicking the right stick side-to-side locks on to new targets. It works great. At any rate, our objective this mission was to escort the virtually unintelligible Rasta



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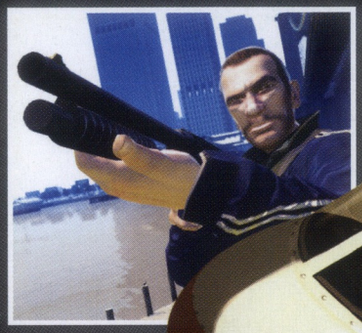
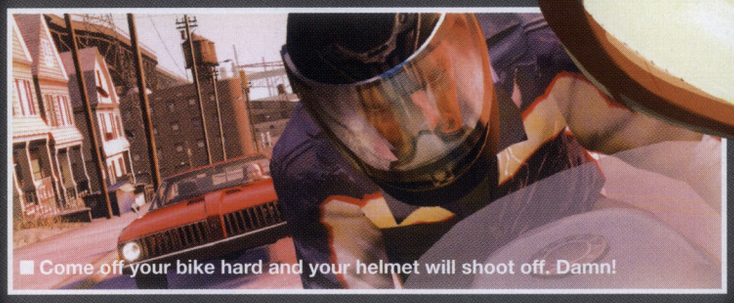
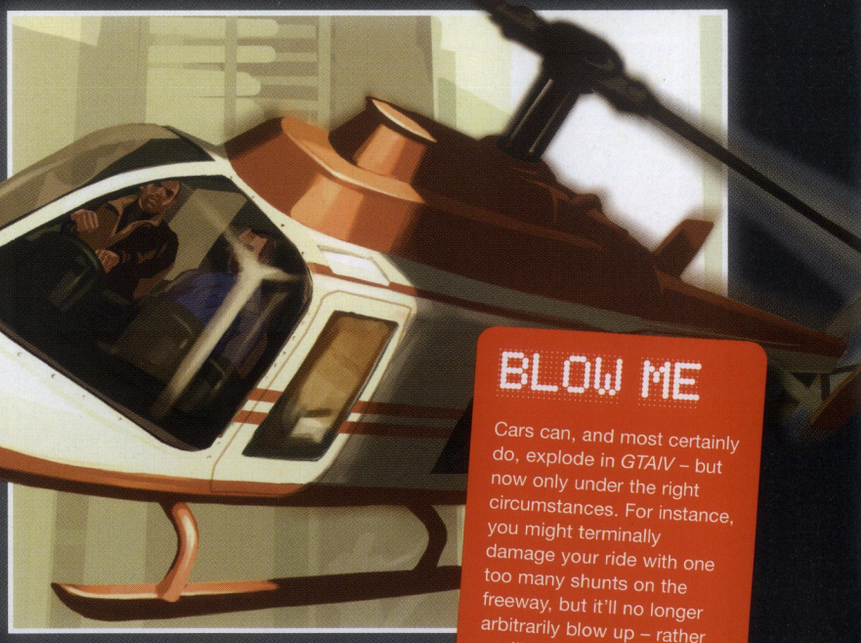


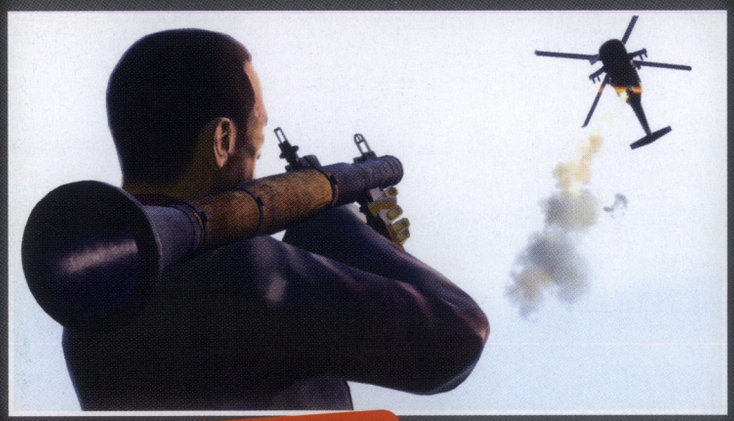


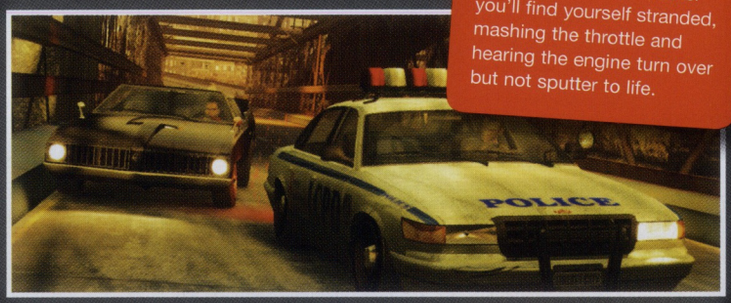
■ Come off your bike hard and your helmet will shoot off. Damn!

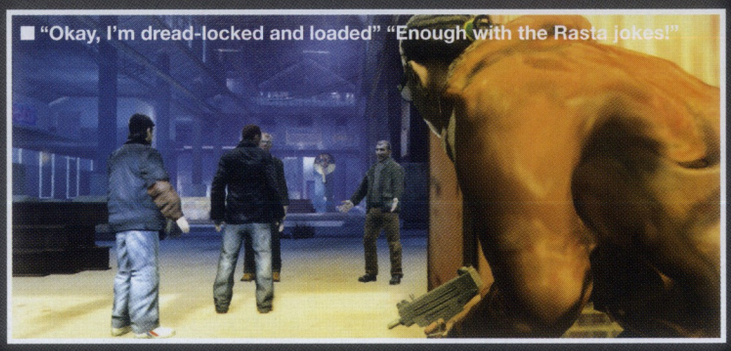


BLOW ME

Cars can, and most certainly do, explode in *GTAIV* – but now only under the right circumstances. For instance, you might terminally damage your ride with one too many shunts on the freeway, but it'll no longer arbitrarily blow up – rather you'll find yourself stranded, mashing the throttle and hearing the engine turn over but not sputter to life.



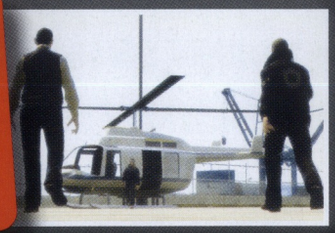




■ "Okay, I'm dread-locked and loaded" "Enough with the Rasta jokes!"

ROCKET MAN

With equal parts skill and luck you'll find you're able to fire an RPG through cars, through two open doors. We imagine threading one through two busted windows probably isn't out of the question either.



Little Jacob to a meet with some shady cats he doesn't trust. After a brief car trip (complete with copious amounts of 'second-hand smoke' wafting from the windows) we arrive at the meet in a dank, deserted alley where Little Jacob is promptly double-crossed. Picking off the attackers from an elevated position we're treated to our first hands-on display of NaturalMotion's euphoria engine at work in *GTAIV*. Cap a thug in the skull and their heads will violently snap back. Plug one in the leg and they'll stumble and fall. A health meter centred inside the targeting reticule indicates how much fight your foes have left in them, and their behaviour changes to suit. A goon with a few bullets in his belly will struggle to get up to continue blasting at you, and some will choose to crawl away rather than continue the battle.

HIGH-SPEED NUDGE

The second mission we tried our hand at, Concrete Jungle, once again had us escorting the perpetually high Little Jacob to another meet. This one also ended poorly – we had to liquidate the dealers as they escaped into a back alley. We choose to stay in the car and run them down, elbowing the side window out and firing at them as we did so. Steering with the left stick and aiming with the right, one fell with a lucky headshot and another spilled onto the bonnet with a fleshy thud before we filled him with lead. The third and last made it out onto the street where a high-speed nudge sent him flailing wildly through the air and into a wall. He didn't get up. Once again the euphoria engine was hard at work – no bad guy checks out the same way. A brief visit to a nearby drug den (where we made prodigious use of Niko's new snap-to-cover abilities and saw some of the destructible environments we can expect) finished up this task.

THAT WAS THAT

The third playable mission, Harbouring a Grudge, was a considerably tougher and lengthier affair. After being introduced to the belligerent Packie McGreary we headed down to the docks to liberate a shipment of prescription drugs from two-dozen heavily armed thugs. We got a feel for Niko's climbing abilities here as he clambered up the side of a large warehouse and shimmied across a billboard. We're not talking *Assassin's Creed* levels of finesse, but it definitely opens up a new dimension of exploration. After manoeuvring our way behind some shipping containers we popped out from behind cover and let loose with a shotgun. The resulting fusillade of bullets suddenly directed our way aptly illustrate the work Rockstar has done in the sound department – the ringing of the barrage of bullets peppering the metal container was nearly deafening. We picked our way through the henchmen, scooping up their dropped SMGs as we went, and climbed into a truck in the loading bay and bashed our way out. It was during the ensuing chase we were instructed how to drop grenades from moving cars. Using L1 we were able to toss grenades behind us (and experimenting with holding the button longer to 'cook' the grenades will improve the effectiveness of this attack). Glancing backwards we saw one car disappear in a fiery flash, thick fingers of smoke reaching skyward and panels hurtling in every direction. After a short but explosive chase we stashed the rig in a garage and that was that.

EVERYTHING CHANGES

And then it was over. Our Rockstar rep indicated to us with his thumb and forefinger exactly how much we'd just seen of *GTAIV* in the last hour. There wasn't any space between them – they were pressed together. In just a few weeks we'll be set completely free inside Liberty City to review Rockstar's opus, and on April 29 everything changes. Don't miss next month's verdict.


Jumpi'rat: boing boing!
Surf_kid: I'm leading!!!!
Bscout: 1, 2, 1, 2
Zebra: 3, 5, 8, 33
Zebra: 45, 2, 6, 18
Tieumax: 123 437 870
Taran_timo: Take 138: ACTION!
Agent007: that was the lat thing u did!
PamPam: What did I do?
AbFab: CUT!
AbFab: we have 2 do it again
CollapsXX: Ooooooops!!!
Bboyzz: To the pool party?
SnowFlakes: Noooo!!! Its all about SnOW War!
BBking: Hey!!!
BBking: we r on tha same side!!
Ziggy: Sorry!"!
2pid: I need more balls
Dreama7: PEACE!!!
NoFear: Lets go and jump!
Pinguy: 2 high for me man!
EasyChilly: I'm getting hot in here!
Flygirl01: Put your hand in da air!
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DON'T TRY THIS AT HOME...

FREE RUNNING

We know the feeling, you've just played *Assassin's Creed*, suddenly you walk around the streets, and you look at everything in a different way. You could *totally* climb up that wall there, that ledge is jutting out more than two centimetres! You could *easily* grab hold onto it, and pull yourself up to the roof. STOP! Stop thinking like that. You can't. You suck, you're possibly overweight, and you can't free run like Altair.

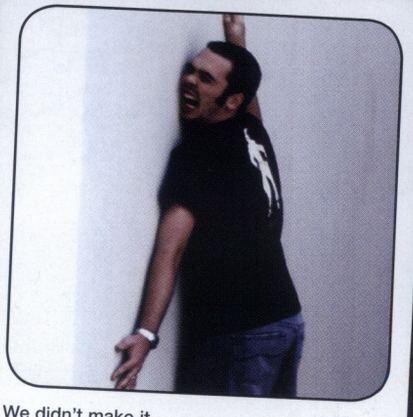




All right, so far so good... we've climbed up the wall, now for the leap of faith...



Aw man! Look at us go, baby! We're going to make it! We're gonna MAKE IT!



We didn't make it.

Remember as a youngster how influenced you were by movies and television? We all wanted to have a car like Kitt, roundhouse kick like Van Damme, box like Rocky, and grow a beard like B.A. Barracus.

But those days are gone aren't they? We're too grown up to mindlessly copy things we watch on TV, right...? Well, we thought so – but there's nothing like a videogame to resurrect that feeling, that belief that you can totally do what you just watched/did in a videogame.

But people, let's face facts: you can't, and here's the proof – an example of what not to do. Ladies and gentlemen, don't try this at home...

SKATEBOARDING

SKATE is awesome; the new flick-it controls really give you the feeling that you are performing the trick on screen. Word to the wise: you're not. Unless you've practised for years, you'd be lucky if you could ollie higher than a bee's dick. You certainly *cannot* pull off a 360 hardflip into a crooked grind. Yeah. We tried that. It didn't end well.



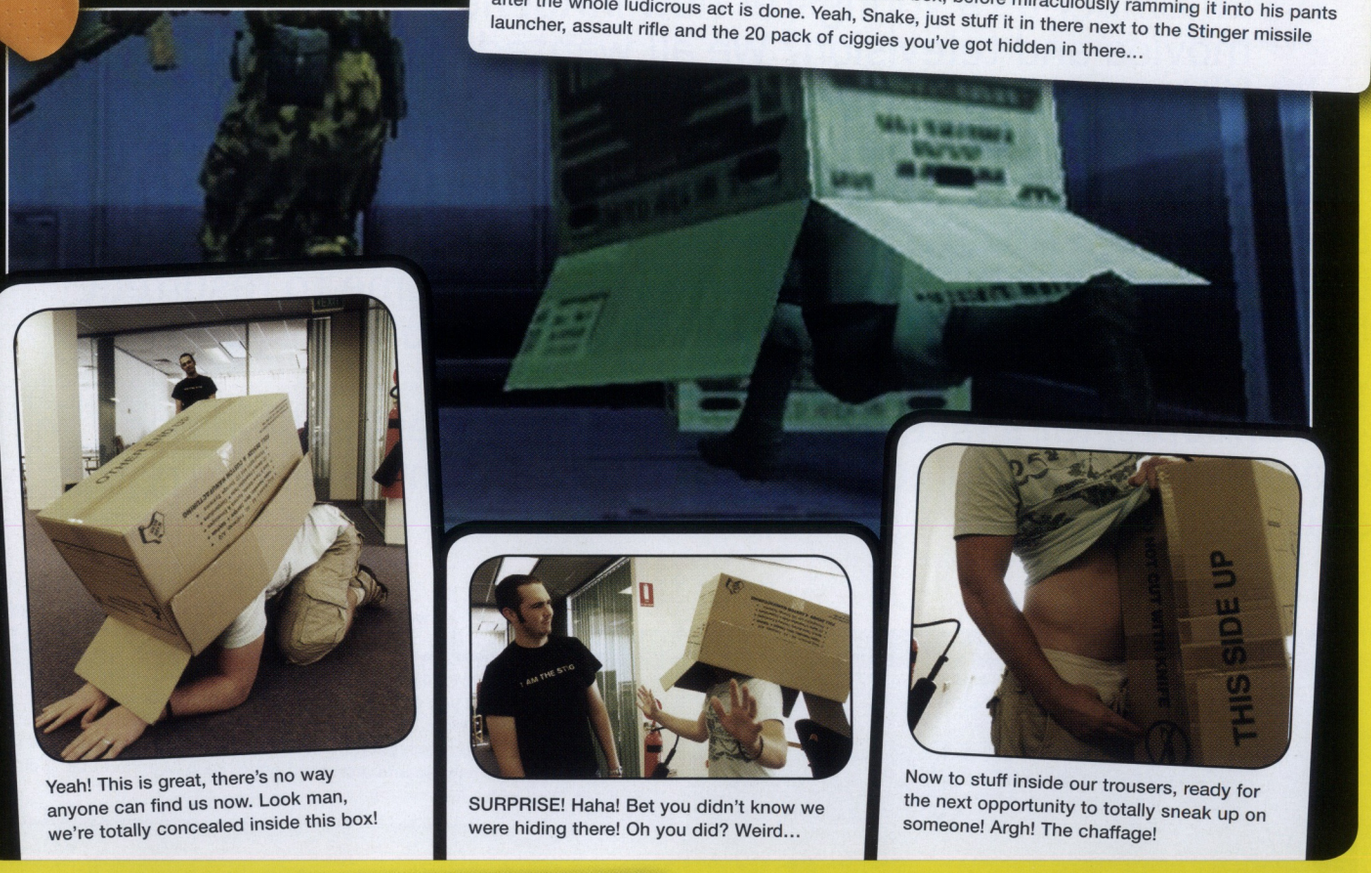
Okay, set the feet... crouch down for the pop... NOW!

Yeah baby, look at the grind action on this bad boy! We're KING OF THE (skating) WORLD!

Yep. Now we'll have to get at least one testicle removed...

HOLDING LOADS OF CRAP!

For literally years Solid Snake has been making use of the infamous cardboard box – hiding from his clearly brain-dead enemies in a flimsy cardboard box, before miraculously ramming it into his pants after the whole ludicrous act is done. Yeah, Snake, just stuff it in there next to the Stinger missile launcher, assault rifle and the 20 pack of ciggies you've got hidden in there...



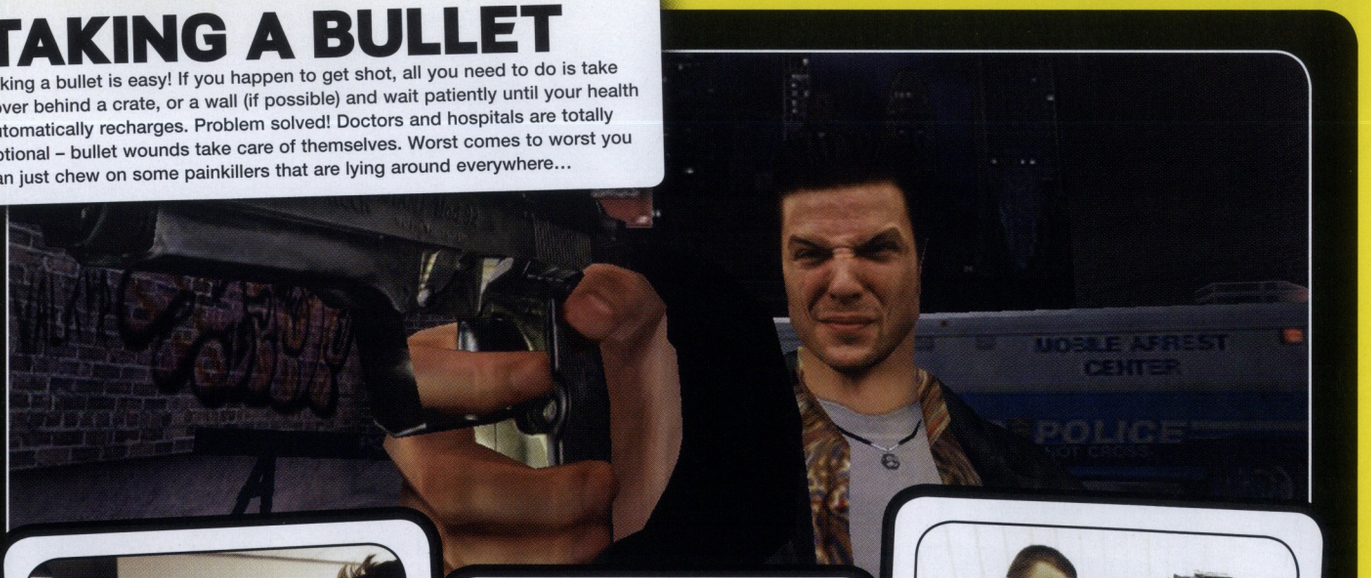
Yeah! This is great, there's no way anyone can find us now. Look man, we're totally concealed inside this box!

SURPRISE! Haha! Bet you didn't know we were hiding there! Oh you did? Weird...

Now to stuff inside our trousers, ready for the next opportunity to totally sneak up on someone! Argh! The chaffage!

TAKING A BULLET

Taking a bullet is easy! If you happen to get shot, all you need to do is take cover behind a crate, or a wall (if possible) and wait patiently until your health automatically recharges. Problem solved! Doctors and hospitals are totally optional – bullet wounds take care of themselves. Worst comes to worst you can just chew on some painkillers that are lying around everywhere...





Just pull the trigger man! We can take it! Come on you big pussy – DO IT!



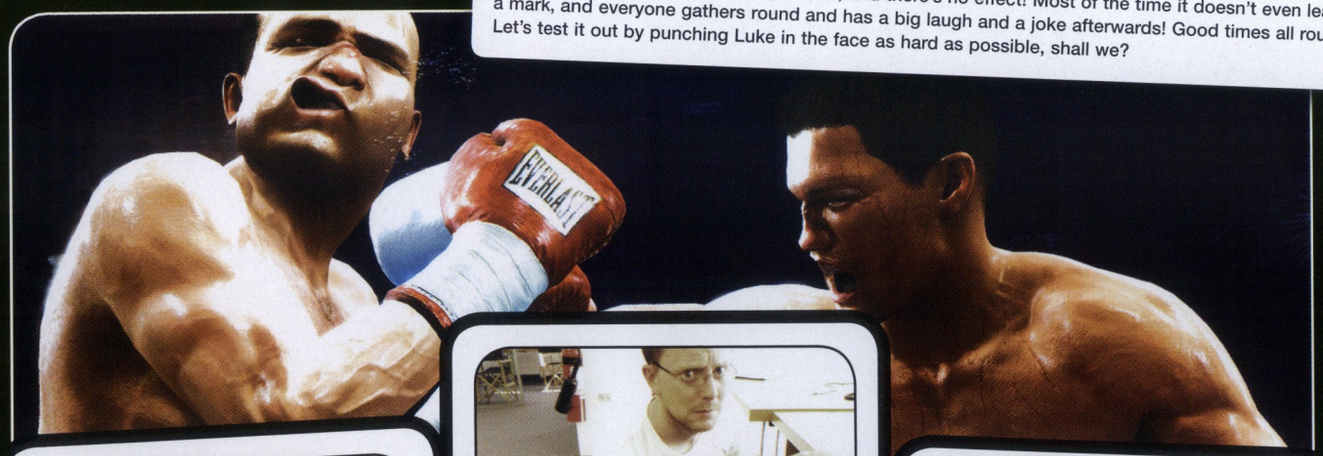
"Argh! My internal organs. I told you not to shoot me in the internal organs!"

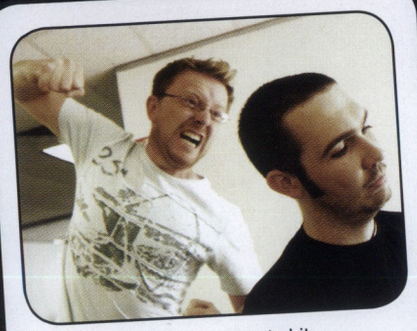


Yep. He's totally dead right now.

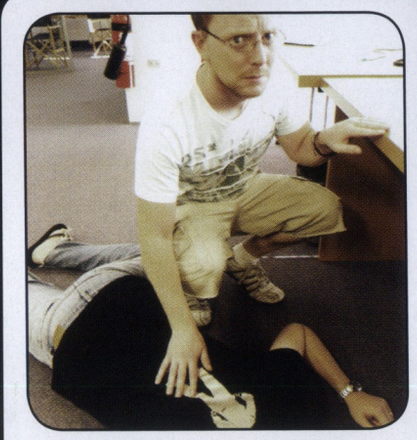
TAKING A PUNCH

Again, like taking a bullet, this is the proverbial candy from a baby thing – it's easy! You punch someone in the face, as hard as you can, and there's no effect! Most of the time it doesn't even leave a mark, and everyone gathers round and has a big laugh and a joke afterwards! Good times all round! Let's test it out by punching Luke in the face as hard as possible, shall we?

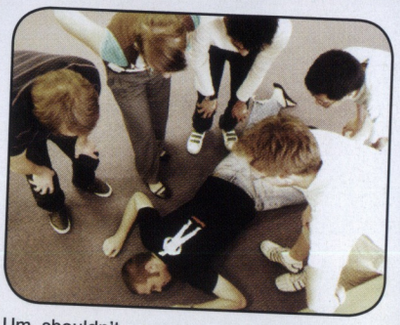




"Pfft, Gerald Butler ain't got shit on my war-face! Luke ain't gonna know what hit him!"



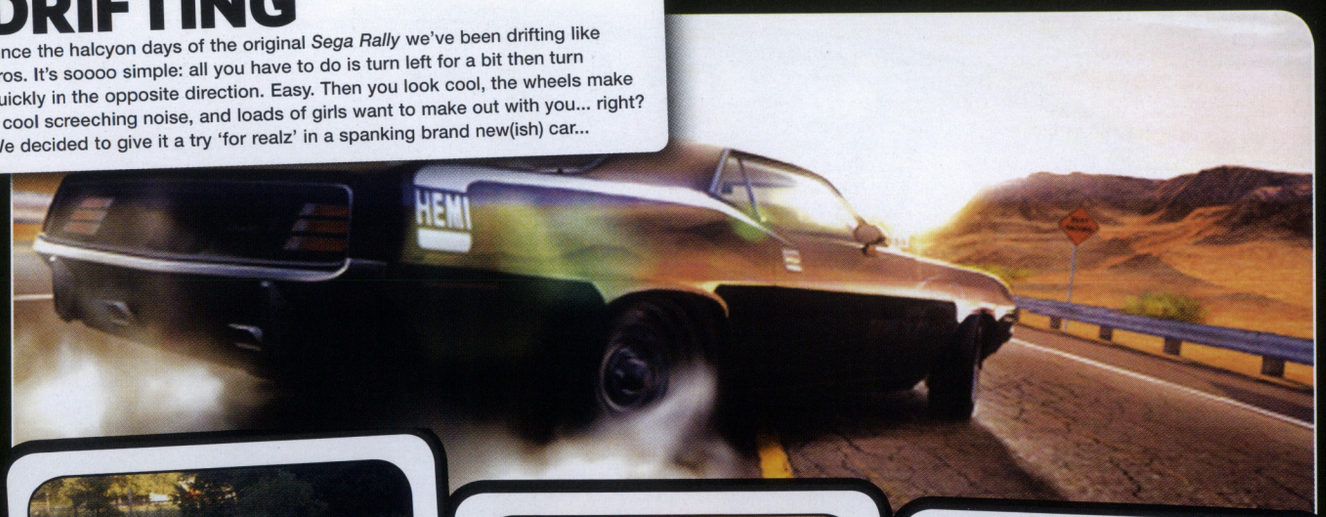
"Er, Luke? Wake up buddy! It was just a friendly jab in the face, no real world consequences or anything."

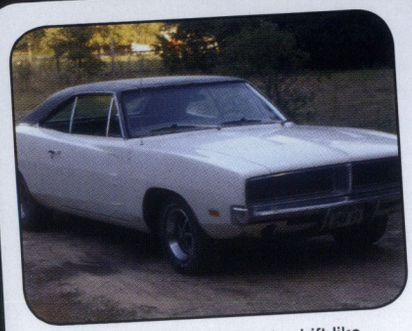


Um, shouldn't someone call an ambulance or something?

DRIFTING

Since the halcyon days of the original *Sega Rally* we've been drifting like pros. It's soooo simple: all you have to do is turn left for a bit then turn quickly in the opposite direction. Easy. Then you look cool, the wheels make a cool screeching noise, and loads of girls want to make out with you... right? We decided to give it a try 'for realz' in a spanking brand new(ish) car...



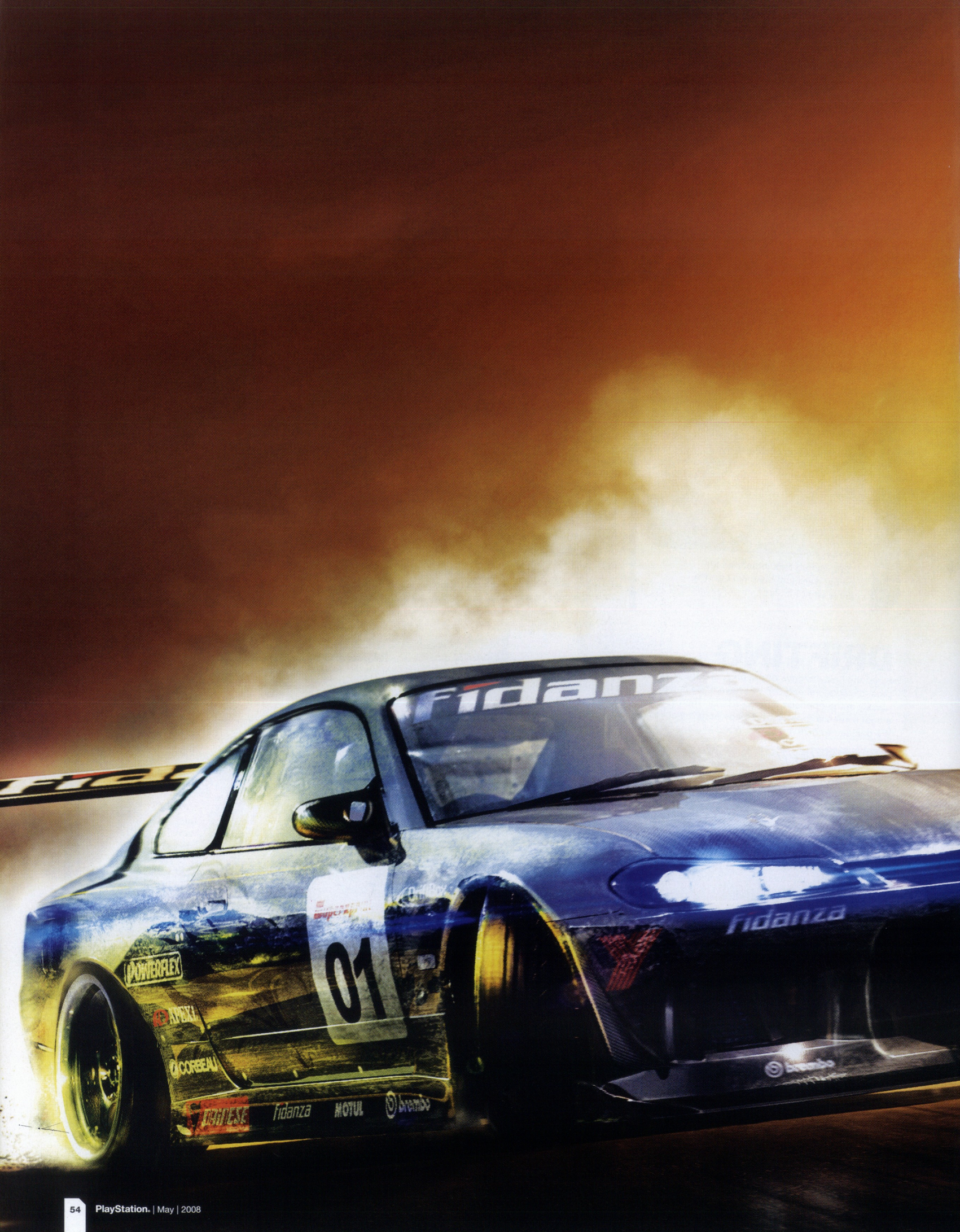


Let's go baby! We're going to drift like we've never drifted before. Then we're going to make out with girls *so bad*...



"This doesn't make ANY SENSE! I turned left then right quickly! WHY AM I NOT DRIFTING?!"

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BY JAMES ELLIS

FAST LANE

We've known for some time that Codemasters, famed developer of the *V8 Supercars* series, has benched the V8 content in its next racing game – but does that mean all Aussies should shun its next offering? *OPS* has assembled all the info available on their upcoming racing fiasco, *Race Driver: GRID*, to canvass the potential of this four-wheeled upstart.



We admit it. For weeks we tossed and turned at the prospect that the Hindu cow of Australian macho culture – the V8 – was to be reduced to a pattie at a roadside petrol station. *V8 Supercars* was the crowning franchise for irresponsible louts everywhere, particularly in our lonely country. For UK developer Codemasters to reinvent the game without V8s seems as offensive as a series of *The Great Outdoors* without Ernie Dingo. But after a bit of research it became clear why the team decided to go that route.

A UK company, Codemasters has struggled for some time to crack the big American market with their Euro-centric racing titles. That all changed when they released *Colin McRae: DiRT* to a software-starved US market last year and found themselves attacked by waves of American cash. *DiRT* was so profitable the company opted to follow it up with a more accessible, less stoic racing experience to sucker in American punters. However to fit in a bunch of new Apple Pie tracks, they had to jiggle their budget and cut out a bunch of 'fat'. It turns out the leftovers on the side of the plate were the V8s, Australian tracks, and DTM. We guess that's business.

Thing is, V8 cars or not, there's every chance Codemasters is again on its way to producing another racing benchmark. Perhaps then we should



■ Best smoke since *ProStreet*?

PETITION FOR V8!

While there'll be no V8 Supercars or Aussie tracks present in *Race Driver: GRID* out of the box, Codemasters have not ruled out adding them as downloadable content post release. It's clear that there's huge demand – both here and in Europe – for both the V8s and DTM so let's try and tip Codemasters over the line by way of petition. Head on over to www.gopetition.com.au and search for Codemasters V8. Sign up and keep your fingers crossed!

■ Could be big in Japan...

let bygones be bygones? From what we've seen so far, there are a lot of reasons why we should all care about *Race Driver: GRID*.

We're the first to admit this forgiving sentiment didn't arrive because we're such sweet lads. Instead it came via our own Road to Damascus moment as we were receiving our first bunch of *GRID* screenshots and making comments like, "Darn Codemasters bastards! Why couldn't they just leave the formulae alone? That glorious formu..."

We were halted mid sentence. The screenshots, now open on our screens, shone up at us like a pointblank titty flash. All things were illuminated.

Race Driver: GRID looks divine. Well, as divine as a videogame can actually get without actually turning water into wine, but you get the picture. A four-wheeled spunk-a-thon set to induce storms of man saliva, it's powered by Codemasters' EGO engine, a beefed up version of the Neon wunderkind that powered *Colin McRae: DiRT*. According to Codemasters' Chief Games Designer, Ralph Fulton, who recently chatted to us about *GRID*, "The fact that EGO is our proprietary technology means that every single line of code written in the studio enhances all our games... you should see real improvements in the look of *GRID*."

He means it when he says real improvements too. If we were to be hyper critical of *DiRT*'s paintjob and whinge about something, it'd be the tumbleweed tracks. While the car models looked sensational they only accounted for about 30% or less of the screen. The rest of what we saw often made us feel like we were racing through a ghost town.

GRID isn't shaping up to merely improve on this, but to create a hands-in-the-air party atmosphere that'll have you opening your gob like a hungry baby bird. "One of our big things has been to get away from the traditionally static environments that you see in racing games, so we've concentrated a lot on making things move around the track – whether it's the 40,000 or so spectators who attend each event... or marshals who wave yellow flags at accidents and patrol the off-track area," Fulton adds.



"REAL AGGRESSIVE RACING IN REAL RACING CARS... IT'S ACTUALLY MORE OF A FOCUS ON PACKED-FIELD RACING THAN BEFORE."

Codemasters' intent is clear. It wants you to feel part of a spectacle.

A new coat o' grease isn't the only new thing on *GRID*'s block. Unlike the V8 titles that were all about pandering to anal racing worshippers, *GRID* has decided to dilute their formula with a smattering of arcade pop. But just a smattering. Fulton puts it like this: "It's a change of focus that moves us on from our simulation roots. We're not making an arcade game, but we believe there's a gap between those two extremes in which we can create a more accessible, immediate experience. We're still serious about building a realistically-simulated world, but we want it to be a world seen through the lens of a Hollywood director."

What does that mean exactly? While the laws of the road will still be grounded in realism, *GRID* is out to come half way with players so they can pick up the game and start racing competitively straightaway. Hardcore motorists shouldn't feel too left out as there'll be a host of driving assists they can deactivate, like traction control and anti-lock braking, so they can get back to the business of pulling the hairs out after they spin off into the sand on a final lap.

Shifting to Car-Punterville has also led to a refocusing of the game. There's no longer any mechanical tuning or tinkering in the game at all, and if you're after the sort of livery and decal customization found in games like *Juiced 2: HIN* this is not the game for you. *GRID* has its eyes set on one thing.

"We're absolutely, 100% 'all about the race' – not collecting, not modding, not sports cars, not street cars – just real aggressive racing in real racing cars; so it's actually more of a focus on packed-field racing than before," Fulton says. So while the experience of getting your car on to the track is a lot different this time around, racing fiends can expect the same packed-out grids (thus the name) and car-on-car-on-car jostling. Each race will feature 12-20 cars screeching about too, and with Codemasters out to appeal to a broad market, each race will be rife with desperate sprints to the finish line and spectacular collisions.

Speaking of which, damage modeling is back, baby. For all the changes to the mix, it's good to see that Codemasters didn't drop the ball on this no-brainer. Fulton has even publicly suggested that the reason other developers haven't implemented a damage system as slick as Codemasters' is because they're flat out lazy. The UK developer is so confident in the accuracy of their damage model that viewing each collision in slow-motion will be

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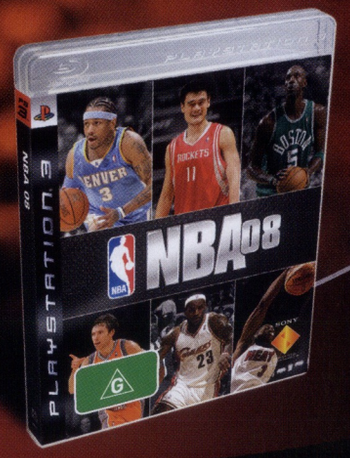

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This is living

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possible in addition to their extreme Flashback feature (see 'The Sands of Smash Repairers').

So what will racers be totaling on release? Surprisingly, *GRID* will feature a meager roster of around 45-50 cars. Unlike *Gran Turismo 5*, it seems *GRID* is only interested in peacocking pimping rides. If you've got a bony hankering to race Honda Civics, in other words, *GRID* is not your game. Fulton claims "if you or I could buy a car and drive it to work then that car has no place in *GRID*.

"We have the likes of the Aston Martin DBR9, Porsche 911 GT3-RSR, Ferrari F430 GT, Dodge Viper SRT-10, GTR Mustang Concept, Mazda 787B, Nissan Silvia S15, Nissan Skyline R34 GTR Z-Tune and many more... every car in the game will be a fully-licensed racing car."

Such an elite list is in stark contrast with the broad range of racing shenanigans *GRID* is set to get down and dirty with. Fulton and his crew are basically dividing the racing world into three chunky zones. There's Europe, home of a bunch of prestigious GT-type racing events, America, which is set to feature muscle cars muscling their way around a swathe of American tracks, and Japan, which will feature both legal and illegal street racing and drift events, plus touge racing on treacherous mountain passes.

Gamers sweating over the omission of the V8s will likely warm to the European events faster than those in the US or Japan. Most of the tracks will be modelled off real venues and include speed zones such as Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps, Spain's Jarama, Castle Donington, and even the 24-hour Le Mans circuit. Rather than be based around 24 hours, the latter will reduce the race time to 24 minutes as the game shows off its real-time weather and day-to-night transitions.

Perhaps more compelling is that Codemasters is out to package this all up in what they call a persistent world of racing. What that means is that while the player is competing, say, in Japan, there are parallel events still running in the other two racing hives, both which amass their own sets of competition data. This means that by choosing to compete in one event somewhere, the player may lose their opportunity to compete in another meet scheduled at the same time. This is all in the name of compelling players to create a macro strategy for taking on various competing racing teams.

All these early indicators suggest there'll be a lot of stuff to knock over in *GRID* for the lone player, but thankfully Codemasters is again making multiplayer a top priority. Currently it's aiming to support 12-player online racing as part of a suite of features out to improve the quality and quantity of internet competition. These include reduced time in lobbies, a new host migration system that can switch the host mid-race if the original drops out, and faster connection times to get players into races pronto.

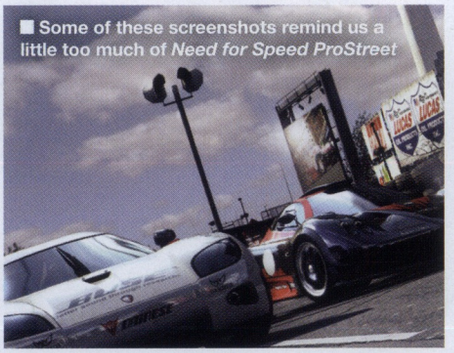
There's no question that *Race Driver: GRID* has the potential to be the sort of racing game players will dump their lady friends for. Currently it's shaping up to be a visual French kiss that'll potentially outshine even *Gran Turismo 5*, and its emphasis on rattling racing is sure to rope in new fans and provide a nice change of pace from both *Burnout Paradise* and *Gran Turismo 5*. The main issue it'll have is letting the punters out there know it exists. Without the V8 name and with a bunch of other similar racers out already, *GRID* needs to power off from the starting line with a neck-snapping boom.



One drift track will be set in a Tokyo dock



The European content will probably keep ex-*V8* fans mildly happy

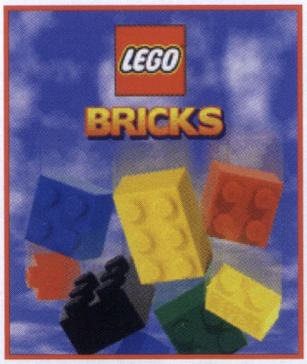


Some of these screenshots remind us a little too much of *Need for Speed ProStreet*

THE SANDS OF SMASH REPAIRERS

Remember when you misjudged a leap in *Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time* and gave yourself a fatal colonoscopy before rewinding time to reform your rump? Well, *Race Driver: GRID* is ripping that fantasy off. *GRID*'s Flashback feature will allow players to rewind time after they've pummeled their car in a pile up. According to Chief Game Designer, Ralph Fulton, this is Codies' way of keeping in the goodnight collisions without peeving off punters. It hasn't been decided how often racers will be able to resurrect their vehicle per race, but Codemasters is out to make it work. This we have to see.





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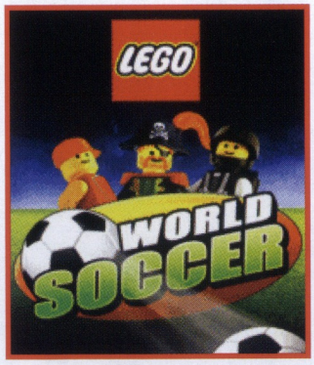



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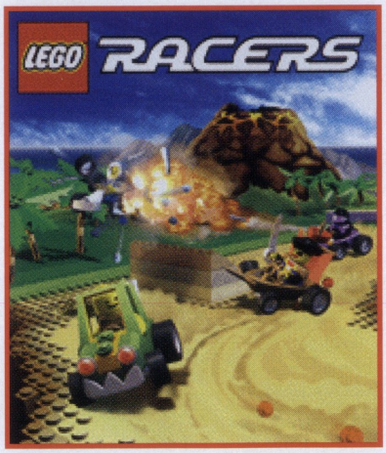



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ONLINE

The latest PS3 Network news, online reviews, reader online section and more!

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...all this juicy online goodness



PixelJunk Monsters

An absolute no-brainer. We loved this game when we initially reviewed it last issue but now we simply adore it. An absolute must purchase, in every sense of the word. Buy. it. now.



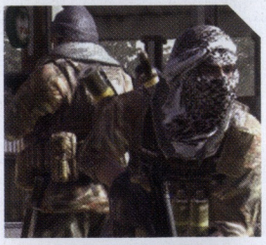
Borderlands

After checking out the awesome *Aliens* and *Brothers in Arms* last month, Gearbox is fast becoming one of our favourite developers. *Borderlands* is yet another game from that stable. Check it out.



Everybody's Golf

Fun and accessible, *Everybody's Golf* looks and plays exactly as you'd expect it to. Not that that's necessarily a bad thing – in fact it's not. Try and not enjoy this demo!



Call of Duty Theme

The addition of themes to the PS3 has been a pretty cool way of jazzing up the interface, but so far most of the designs have been pretty lacklustre: so far the *COD4* one seems to be the pick of the bunch.



Guitar Hero III

The Classic Rock Track Pack is probably the best of a weak bunch, with the almighty Boston and Foreigner – together at last – this pack may just internally implode with sheer awesome.



CJ7

Fans of Stephen Chow movies rejoice, the director of cult classics *Shaolin Soccer* and *Kung Fu Hustle* is back with *CJ4*, a movie about... well, it's a sci fi comedy of sorts – we think.

NEWS

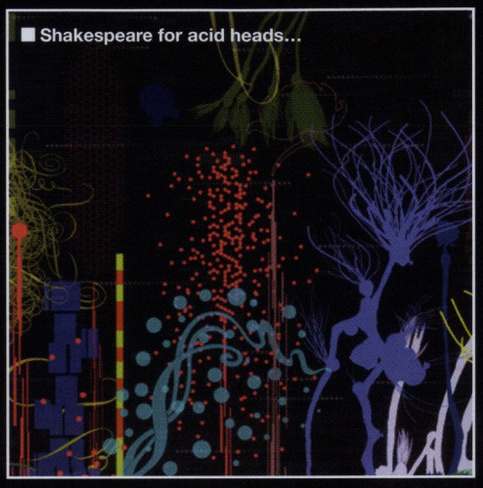
MORE JUNK

We've become massive fans of the Q games' *PixelJunk* series of PSN games as of late. *PixelJunk Racers* was one of our early favourites, but *Monsters* is one of our games of 2008, on any format.

So we were pretty stoked when Q-Games announced that it was currently working on an expansion pack for *PixelJunk Monsters*. No solid details as of yet, but the team is set to release some info in the coming weeks.

In addition, the next *PixelJunk* project, *PixelJunk Eden*, has been unveiled and looks set to be one one of the most mindblowingly abstract games seen thus far on the PSN.

You control what can only be described as a 'dot', navigating a constantly evolving environment that we think is supposed to represent some kind of neon-garden of some kind, but it really could be anything. The 'plants' within this world react to your presence, bending as you interact in what is essentially an avant-garde platforming game.



■ Shakespeare for acid heads...



ARMED AND DANGEROUS

While gamers in the states went bananas at the announcement of the upcoming *Bionic Commando* remake, the reaction in Australia was a little more subdued – mostly due to the fact that the NES original (and the NES in general) wasn't quite the juggernaut it was in the US of A.

But that is all about to change as Capcom has recently announced that a revamped version of the NES classic is on its way to the PlayStation network, featuring updated high resolution visuals and effects, rebuilt from the ground up.

Chuck in some all-new gameplay features and we ought to have a suitably glossy old school gaming experience that'll be well worth checking out, especially in advance of it's newer, bigger brother later in the year.

There is no release date as of yet, but we would suspect it'll appear in advance of the full blown *Bionic Commando*, slated to hit shelves later this year.



■ Pink jumpsuits: problematic

DARK MIST

A hazy shade of above average

The PlayStation Network has been on a roll as of late, but recently one trend has seemingly been established: the bigger they are the harder they fall. And by that we mean the larger, higher budget games, with larger and lengthier downloads, inevitably seem to be less fun than the smaller, cheaper PSN games.

So it was with trepidation that we loaded up *Dark Mist* which, at over 400MB, definitely fell into the high budget category.

But our fears proved unfounded after spending some time with the game. *Dark Mist* follows in the awesome footsteps of *PixelJunk Monsters* and *Everyday Shooter* as a compulsive play on nostalgia vs. progress, by fast-tracking old school game design into the next gen, complete with all the HD trimmings you'd expect.

Reminding us of the old school classic *Gauntlet*, *Dark Mist* propels you into a world of dark and light. You must navigate maze after maze by destroying every dark monster in that room via the numerous weapons at your disposal. Switching between three power weapons, a standard bow and arrow, and the oldest of old school 'bomb that kills everyone in the vicinity', taking out the bad guys is a tough gig – as *Dark Mist* cranks up the difficulty from the word go.



This, however, can make the game relatively frustrating – especially as the difficulty level seems to go through valleys and peaks. At times it's almost too easy, then it can frustrate endlessly.

Ultimately however, it's one of the better recent offerings on the PSN. While not quite straddling the heights of *PixelJunk Monsters* or *Everyday Shooter*, it manages to play smoothly and will satisfy your old school urges with gusto.

★★★

ROCKETMEN: AXIS OF EVIL

Elton John thankfully not included

We've said it before, and we'll say it again, wading through the garbage of the PSN can be a tedious task. Every now and then you'll find a gem, a brilliantly executed idea that works perfectly within the scope of downloadable games, but sadly, *Rocketmen: Axis of Evil* is not one of those games.

With the quality of PSN games increasing rapidly over the past few months, *Rocketman* is a bit of a disappointment. The package looks great on paper: cel-shaded graphics (always a plus as far as we're concerned), a *Smash TV*-esque game dynamic featuring the added precision shooting that a second analogue stick can provide, and a cute storyline that is actually mildly amusing on occasion.





So where does it all go wrong?

Well, firstly the basic game mechanics are – how can we put this – a bit broken. A game like *Rocketmen* lives and dies by its instinctive twitch shooting, giving players the chance to react to enemy fire with skill and gusto, but with *Rocketman* avoiding fire is pretty much impossible. The main character is much too slow, meaning that player can't pull off the kind of skilful manoeuvres that make simpler games with similar mechanics (such as *Everyday Shooter* and *Super Stardust HD*) so satisfying. Ultimately it becomes a case of merely ploughing through enemies like the proverbial bull in a china shop.

It's a shame, because with four-player multiplayer, and some excellent writing, *Rocketman* has a lot going for it, but its failure to succeed in the basics renders all these positives mute.

★★

LOLGASM



Hadouken!

We have no earthly idea where in the hell this came from, but this is gold of the solid variety. It starts off slow, but by the time you see Blanka and Zangief you'll be begging for mercy. A testament to the absolute crap that passes for entertainment in some parts of the world…

Check it out at: http://www.gamevideos.com/video/id/10271
Or Google: SF2 Asian TV show



Thriller

Cause dis' is thriller! Thriller night! Coming straight out of the WTF files of random insanity, the entire cast of the ill-fated *Final Fantasy* movie take it down to 'funky town' by restaging the famous dance routine from Michael Jackson's *Thriller*. It kinda dances on that line of great and lame, but give it a watch.

Check it out at: http://www.spike.com/video/2799818
Or Google: Final Fantasy thriller



Game Over MAN!

Re-enacting numerous old school game over sequences with everyday objects may not sound funny in theory, but it's entertaining in practice. *Space Invaders*, *Asteroids*, and *Frogger* all get the game over treatment by means of marbles, salt-shakers, and a whole lot of plasticine. Good times.

Check it out at: http://www.gamevideos.com/video/id/4256
Or Google: Game over retro animation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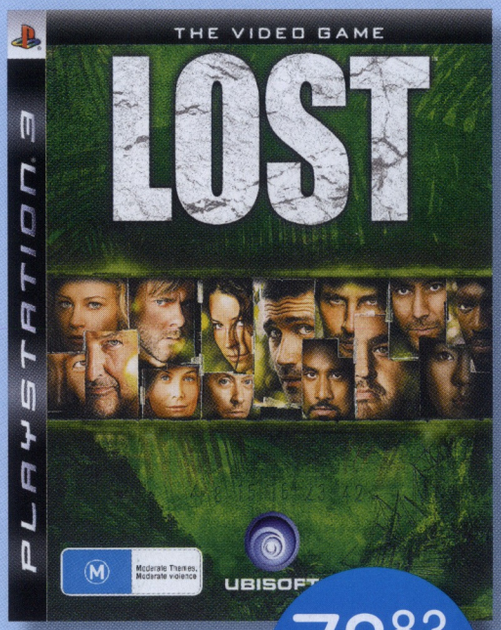
LATEST PLAYSTATION RELEASES AVAILABLE AT: BIG W



78.83
EVERYDAY LOW PRICE



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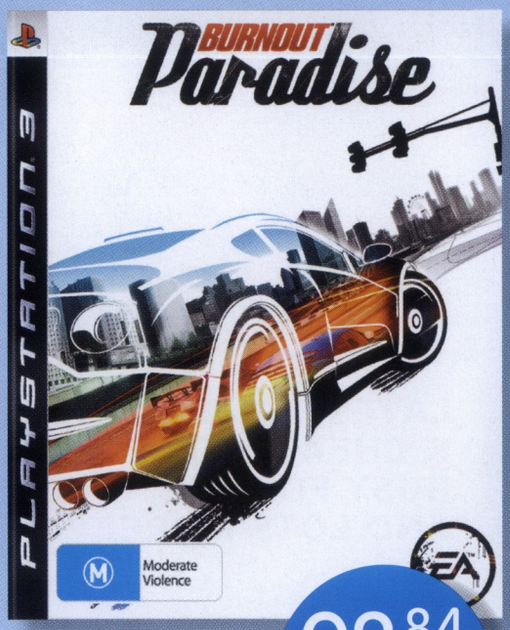

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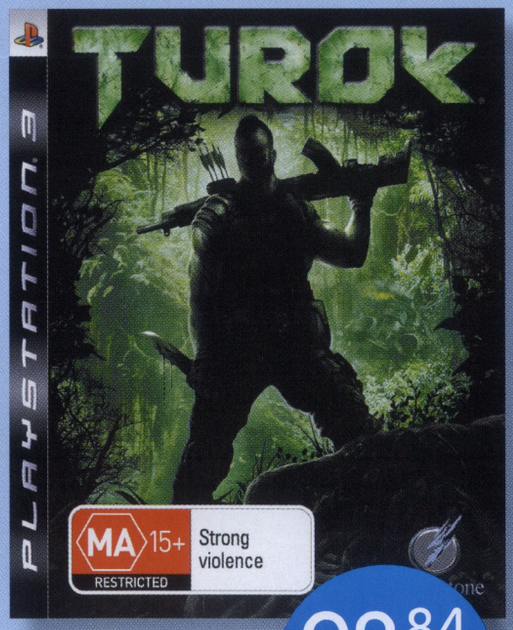

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THIS MONTH'S RELEASES PUT TO THE TEST

REVIEWS

in association with BIG W

REVIEW RATINGS

01 Reserved for the very worst that developers have to offer. Essentially, anything that receives this score has no redeeming qualities whatsoever. A game receiving this score could not possibly be any worse, unless it was broken from the outset (or gave you cancer, or killed your dog). A game that should never have even survived its first pitch – as bad as it gets.

02 A terrible, terrible game. There may be one or two things about this game that work, or aren't actually broken, but they are so hopelessly outnumbered by the sheer quantity of badness that they basically cease to exist. Maybe it has a clever name, maybe the concept was sound – but virtually every single thing about it is bad beyond belief. Not worth the effort.

03 Very disappointing. A game with this score is fundamentally flawed in a number of extremely vital ways. There may be one or two things that could've been done somewhat worse than they have been, but for most part it's totally uninspired, boring and unappealing in every way. There are games that are worse, but there's not that many.

04 Poor. There may be parts of this game that are vaguely fun, and it may be robust enough in a few departments, but the overall package is lacking any significant reason to stick it out. Games receiving this score may show initial promise, or sound good at first, but will be unrefined, undercooked and let down by shoddy execution and poor attention to detail.

05 Mediocre. In the strictest terms, 50% is a pass – just. Unfortunately, a game receiving this score will have had just as many things go wrong with it as go right, and that really isn't enough to succeed. A game receiving this score will probably be entertaining in parts without excelling anywhere, yet equally sub-par in others without being outright awful.

06 Decent enough, although still lacking a certain something. A game receiving this score will be sound, but will have some fairly glaring faults and your interest will probably wane pretty quickly. It will have a number of limitations that will probably turn off more than a few gamers, but will get just enough right to keep dedicated fans of the genre ploughing through.

07 Good. A robust, fun game that's well worth a look, although will only rarely amaze. A game receiving this score will have more or less accomplished nearly all it set out to do in a decent fashion, but it will have some noticeable problems that prevent it from being as good as it could be. Nevertheless, they generally won't ruin the overall gaming experience.

08 Great. A game receiving this score comes highly recommended. A combination of some odd issues, minor problems or a lack of innovation may hamper it somewhat, but the overall impression it leaves it very positive. Very entertaining, very satisfying and you woudln't hesitate to recommend it to others. Well ahead of the pack in most departments.

09 Excellent. Outstanding in almost every way. Some negligible blemishes will just keep it from being held aloft as a true masterpiece, but it is very likely the best in its field. Most elements of this game will be truly remarkable and you'll be hard-pressed to find too many other games of greater quality. An astonishing game that leaves all but the very best behind.

10 Incredible. Everything went right during the creation of this game. A game receiving a perfect 10 does not necessarily mean it is perfect, likely just teasingly close, but to reserve 10s for THE perfect game is pointless. Instead, a 10 represents a game of gobsmacking brilliance, a game that stands high above the rest and a game that you cannot afford to ignore. A masterpiece.

THE OPS AWARDS



The Gold Award is a rare gem and only to be given to games that score that magic 10/10. This score indicates gaming of simply incredible quality!



The Silver Award is for games that receive 9/10. If you see this, it's a sign of star quality, indicating that you should buy this game now!



The Bronze Award is for games that score 8/10. These games are highly recommended and are 100% guaranteed to satisfy.

OPS REVIEW SETUP



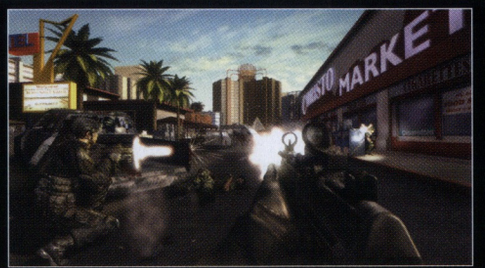
We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs...

INSIDE...



GRAN TURISMO 5 PROLOGUE

The new standard? – page 66



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS 2

Why are there so many games about rainbows? – page 70



SOLDIER OF FORTUNE PAYBACK

He's just in it for the money... – page 90

- **GENRE:** RACING
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2008
- **DEVELOPER:** POLYPHONY DIGITAL
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **PLAYERS:** 1-16
- **PRICE:** $59.95
- **HD:** 1080p
- **WEB:** www.gran-turismo.com

BACK STORY: The *Gran Turismo* series began life in Japan in 1997, and since then Polyphony Digital has created PSone shmup *Omega Boost* and bike racer *Tourist Trophy* outside of its celebrated *GT* lineage.



We want to say something funny here, but we're too busy drooling over this screenshot...

GRAN TURISMO 5 PROLOGUE

Back to the future of *Gran Turismo*



PlayStation. Official Magazine - Australia
BRONZE AWARD
8/10

How long have we been waiting for *Gran Turismo 5*? Too long! And *Gran Turismo Portable*? Even longer! So, obviously we'll take any morsel that falls from Kazunori Yamauchi's desk and treat it as we would the work of a Michelin-starred chef, because they certainly know how to cook good driving games at Polyphony Digital.

Happily, *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* is proof not only that Polyphony still has its *GT* production skills, but that – if anything – the abilities of Kazunori Yamauchi and his crew have never been greater, and their star is rising. Last year's single-track *Gran Turismo HD* demo was encouraging, but *GT5 Prologue* more or less guarantees that the full *GT5* experience (whenever it finally arrives) will be the definition of 'awesomeness' and lots of other silly words. How can we be so sure? Well, let's take a look at this prologue to future events...

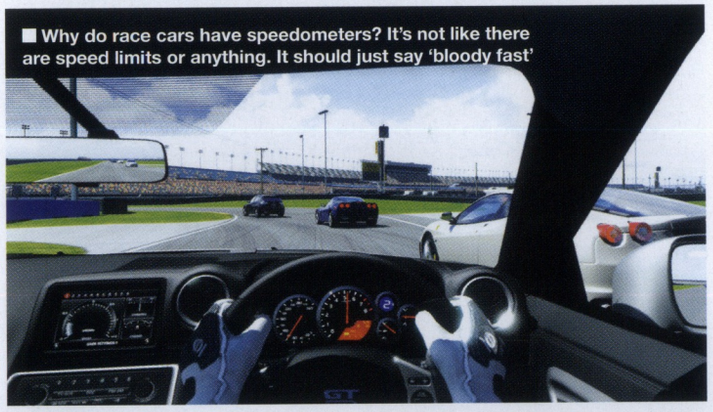
FULL-FAT

This is much more of a 'proper game' than a demo, although *Prologue* still falls some way short of what we'd expect from a full-fat *GT* game. There are five circuits here – Suzuka, Fuji, London, Eiger Nordwand and Daytona – and they've clearly been handpicked to give a variety of styles of driving challenge. Suzuka and Fuji are the pure racing tracks, where you need to think like an F1 driver; London is a frighteningly narrow trip through Soho, where you really have to put your foot on the brake; Eiger Nordwand is the gorgeous, fresh-air setting of last year's *GTHD*, and provides a quasi-rally challenge; and finally there's the Daytona Speedway, which marks *Gran Turismo*'s foray into the endurance world of NASCAR, and really tests concentration more than anything else.

There are also a few dozen cars to play with. Wisely, these are drip-fed to you via the traditional *Gran Turismo* system of







■ Why do race cars have speedometers? It's not like there are speed limits or anything. It should just say 'bloody fast'

only giving you sufficient pocket money for lower-level motors at the outset. Your initial choice of car is limited to just half a dozen motors (the Alfa Romeo 147 '06, Daihatsu Copen '02, Honda Integra Type R '04, Suzuki's Cappuccino '95 and SWIFT Sport '07, and a 2001 VW Golf GTi) and it takes a lot of driving, and winning of races, to get to the Ferraris.

Aside from merely appealing to our innate desire for fast cars, *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* encourages diligent work on the track as many of its race events can only be entered if you own a particular car, so you need to think about how you spend your winnings if you want to 'complete' the game by getting golds on all of the events here. It never really feels like a chore, though, because the driving in *Prologue* is a joy to experience (apart from when you're in a Daihatsu, of course) and the scenery is beautiful.

The whole *GT* recipe has been pepped up by Polyphony Digital's excellent decision to increase the field of cars racing simultaneously – there are now 16 motors out there on most tracks, and the result is a far more tense and challenging race style than we've seen in previous *Gran Turismo* games. You might think it's a small step, but it's one giant leap for this series.

NETWORKING

Another major advancement is found in *Prologue's* online play. The whole thing is tied in to the PlayStation Network, so even when you're not racing against *GT* players from around the world, you can still see what's happening in the motor world thanks to a news ticker, and the main menu screen also keeps you informed of current track conditions at famous locations around the world. *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* feels very much like a gateway between the virtual and real worlds of motor racing; there are even downloadable car-themed TV shows, with regular additions fuelling the novelty of it all.

Online racing, which is inevitably where most of your time will be spent once you've played through everything in single-player mode, is for the most part flawless. We've experienced a few glitches on occasion, with cars ghosting, but such things are quite rare. Most of the time, it plays virtually identically to the single-player action – only with improved opponent intelligence, thanks to the incredible power of human brains. Online time trial challenges are arguably even more satisfying than random online multiplayer races, mind, as you get to see your name in lights should you drive fast and well enough.

Just going back to AI talk for a moment, it's worth noting that computer-controlled opponents are a bit more clever than they were in previous *Gran Turismo* titles, but we're still hopeful that more work will be put into making them drive aggressively by the time *GT5* proper takes its place on the starting grid. The AI does make mistakes now – you'll see other drivers take corners badly and spin out of control. You just don't get Schumacher levels of competition, which is a little disappointing.

On the other hand, the car physics and handling models have been improved significantly. It's perhaps partly down to the increased resolution of HD gaming, as well, but you can almost feel the



GT'S ONLINE DEBUT

Online racing in *Gran Turismo*, then. Who'd have thunk it? It works marvellously for the most part, with little in the way of lag or glitches – although whenever a dozen cars pile into a hairpin bend, the action does tend to crawl for a few seconds. Which we can forgive, because the whole thing is so magnificently ambitious. You can see the names of other drivers as you race, so it's easy to keep track of who shunted you into the gravel at that last bend.

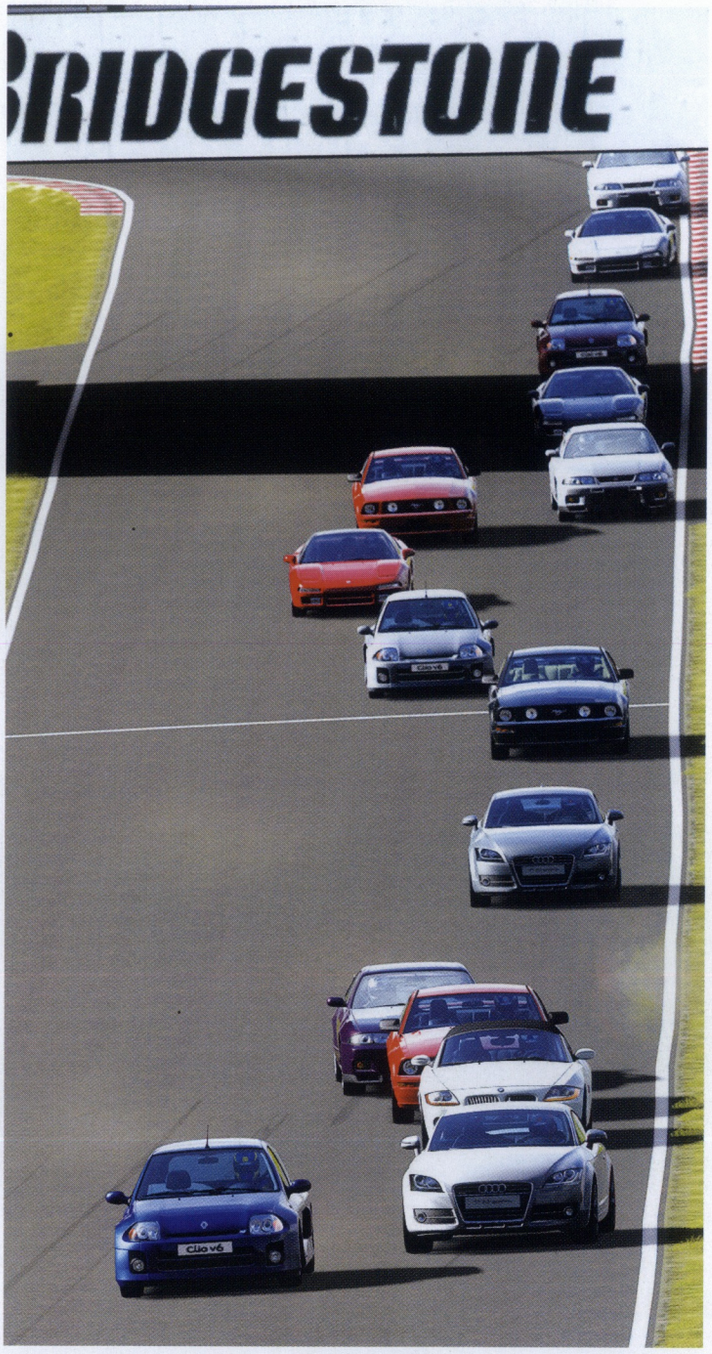




■ Why are those guys wearing helmets? Are they going to be skateboarding or something, because they sure as hell won't be driving *our* car...



■ This screenshot was taken on August 8 2007. How do we know that? We just do, is all...



■ contact between tyres and tarmac now. Of course, you won't get quite the same sensation without splashing out on a DualShock 3, which is pretty much essential for *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* unless you have a Logitech wheel.

The rumbling isn't as pronounced as it was in the past, but Polyphony Digital has used the new controller expertly to convey little things such as the tremor of wheels on rumble strips and the car reacting to undulations in the track.

YOU WANTED THE BEST...

Anyway, we've saved our best praise for last: *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* looks so good that it renders our words utterly useless. Particularly in 1080p, but even in 720p or 1080i, the whole thing moves with majesty and there are elements of the visual design that border on photorealism (and about time too)!

It's not perfect – there are occasional instances of screen tearing and there is some slowdown on corners when the traffic is heavy – but it's pretty damn close to perfection. It's clear that an astonishing level of care has gone into the production of *Prologue*'s car models, and even their interiors and dashboards look scarily real when seen from the superb new in-car camera viewpoint. The visual gulf between *Prologue* and competitors like the Xbox 360's *Forza Motorsports 2* is mind-boggling. *Prologue* trounces it.

The looks are obviously what will attract many people to Polyphony Digital's latest output, but the improved gameplay and online options will keep you glued to your seat. In fact, the only real problem with *Prologue* is that it's just a teaser, and yet it makes us want the full *GT5* experience more than ever – a curiously happy kind of frustration. **Jonti Davies**

"... *Gran Turismo 5 Prologue* looks so good that it renders our words totally useless..."



PROS:
- Technically ambitious
- Refined car physics

CONS:
- Questionable value
- Still no structural damage

VERDICT: An appetising taster with rad online options – but obviously not quite the full course.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08



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- **GENRE:** TACICAL FPS
- **RELEASE:** MARCH 2008
- **DEVELOPER:** UBISOFT MONTREAL
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT
- **PLAYERS:** 1-16
- **PRICE:** $109.95
- **HD:** 720p
- **WEB:** www.rainbowsixgame.com

■ **BACK STORY:** *Rainbow Six Vegas* finished with a controller hurling cliff-hanger ending. The bad guy's helicopter crashes into a lake, but only the pilot's body, and not the bad guy, is retrieved... dun, dun!



■ **"What are you shooting at man!" "A door! A frickin' DOOR, MAN, and it's *moving* for some reason!"**

RAINBOW SIX VEGAS 2

Always bet on rainbow – we mean red. No, wait – black...

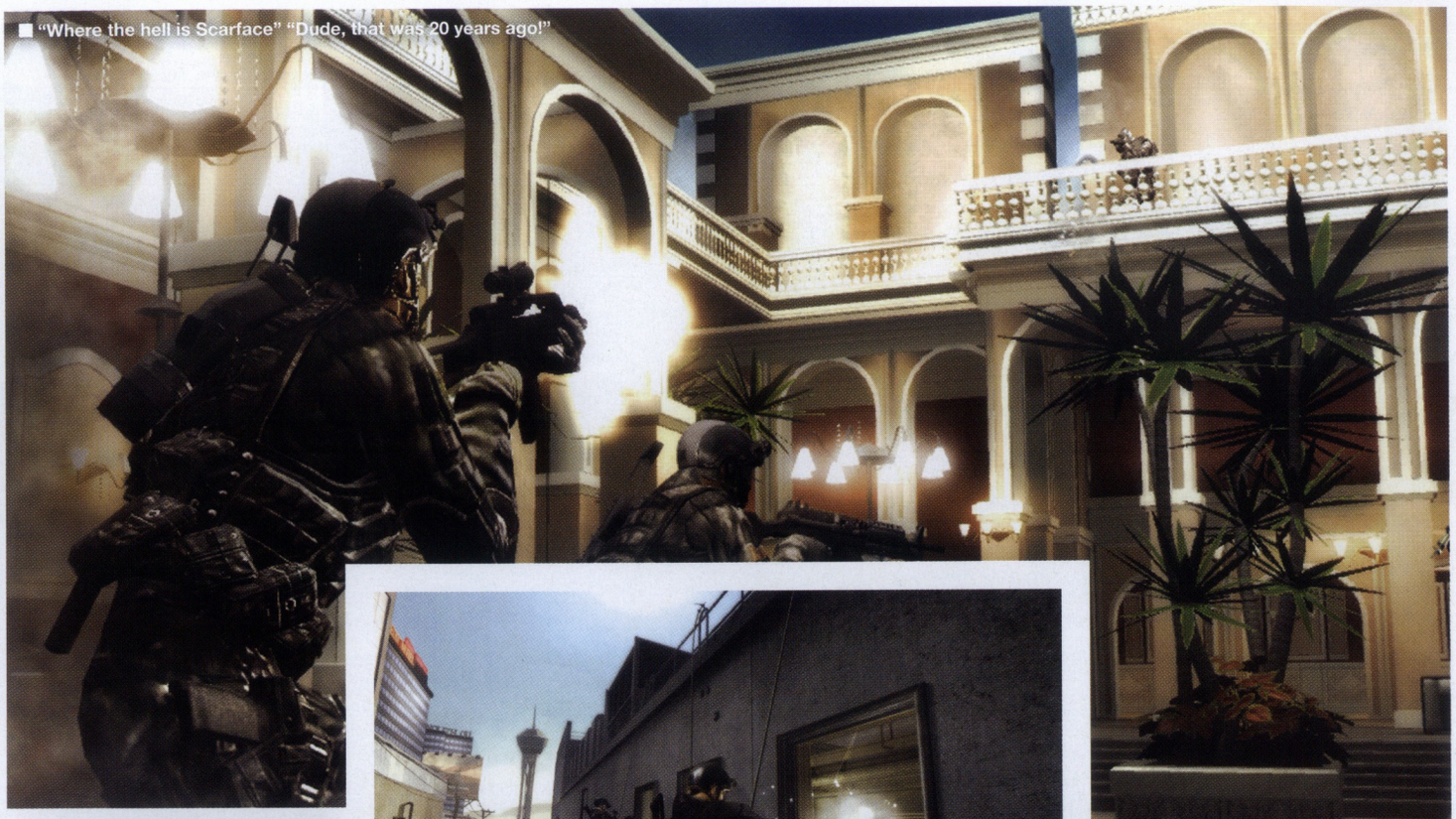
Whenever playing a *Rainbow Six* game we're immediately reminded of the very first time we heard the phrase spoken. It was 1998, we were browsing through a videogame store in Christchurch, New Zealand, and a salesperson casually walked over and asked us in a loud, enthusiastic voice, "Are you interested in Rainbow Sex?". Now don't get us wrong, we're massive fans of Mother Nature's work, but speaking from experience, she just leaves you bitter, unfulfilled, and possibly arrested while you hop across the countryside with your pants around your ankles. They're really hard to catch, let alone pick up with.

Something we found way, way easier to catch was the addictive gameplay fever that got introduced in the fifth game in the *Rainbow Six* series *Rainbow Six Vegas*. It piqued our interest by colourfully appealing to a broad spectrum of FPS sensibilities by being a tuned mix of sneaky strategy and gung ho action. Ubisoft upped the visuals by using the Unreal 3 engine and increased the accessibility of the action by featuring a third person cover system which allowed blind firing, regenerative health, smarter enemies, and an intuitive context-sensitive command system for directing your squad mates. It was a thoughtfully-paced, thinking-man's shooter tainted by only one extremely serious technical flaw – it was set in Las Vegas but none of the hostages were strippers.

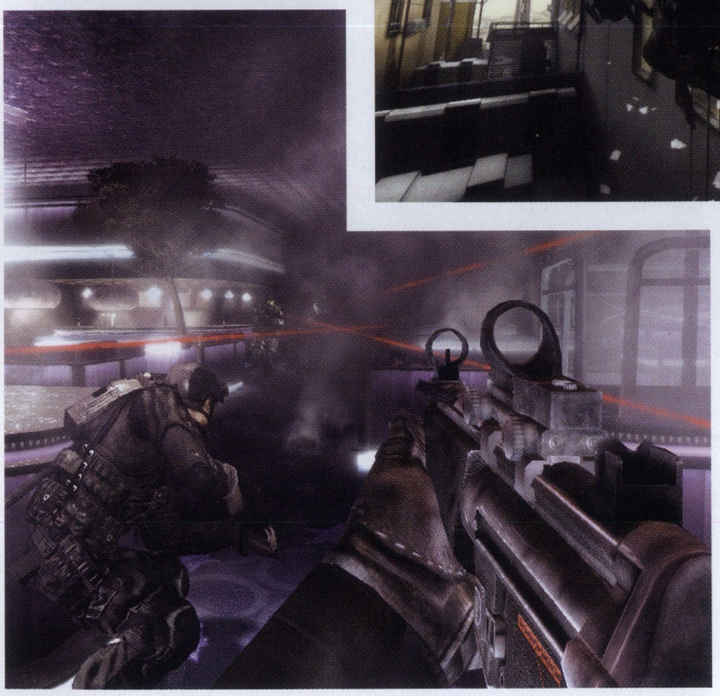
THE RAINBOW CONNECTION: SOMEDAY WE'LL FIND IT

Vegas 2 opens with a prequel level set five years before the Nevada terrorist attack in the first game. You're put in the customisable military boots of a character named Bishop, and the mission includes a brash young Gabriel Nowak – the enemy mole who shafts you in Vegas – royally cocking up on his first mission. Once this mission wraps itself up, and you get a further inkling as to why this Gabe guy is such a backstabbing tosser, the next mission continues along a parallel time line to the events of the first game. Things haven't changed much visually in Las Vegas,





"Where the hell is Scarface" "Dude, that was 20 years ago!"



the game still features those impressive zooming-over-the-strip Blackhawk insertion clips and, for the most part, the streets of sin city still look as exciting and seductive as Gamblor's neon claws are in real life. This works out well because most of the firefights occur outside this time around and take full advantage of the new realtime day/night cycle system.

While the visuals have only seen slight graphical tweaks the gameplay itself is buoyed by some very significant improvements. The biggest change for us is the inclusion of a sprint button, which is something that would have been extremely handy the first time around and we're glad to have it. The next shake up is the inclusion of the 'Advanced Combat Enhancement and Specialisation' system or 'ACES' which is a ridiculously long-winded name/cheesy acronym for 'experience points'. Every time you perforate a terrorist, and depending on how you did it, it'll get organized into one of three categories: Assault, Marksmanship, and Close-Quarter battle. Capping someone through destructible cover counts toward Assault, a well-placed shot to the melon is Marksmanship, and blinding someone with a flashbang and feeding them a lead salad sandwhich is CQB. If you max out XP in a particular category you'll score a specific item beneficial for that skill which is quite similar to the PEC equipment system seen in the multiplayer mode of the original *Rainbow Six Vegas*. This 'be awesome to earn awesome stuff' idea does make the game far more enjoyable. Unfortunately you aren't awarded massive points for skillfully shotgunning people in the mommy-daddy button – which is how we usually roll.

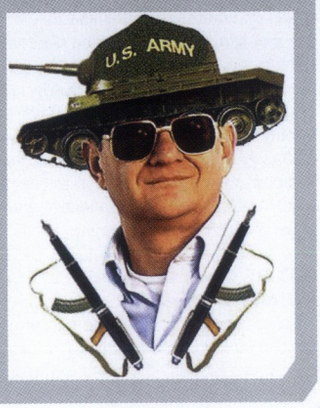
RAINBOW WARRIORS UNITE AND FIGHT!

Multiplayer-wise the formula has been witness to some welcome enhancements, but also some annoying setbacks. The downside comes mostly from the co-operative story mode which now only supports two players instead of the previous four. Apparently, the reason this happened was to allow *Vegas 2* to show the plot goings-on instead of cutting them out completely. Free priorities lesson for budding game designers: epic four player co-op without cruddy plot developments is infinitely more important than only two player co-op with cruddy plot development. But beyond that minor annoyance, you can still engage in four player terrorist hunts online, plus there are some solid new adversarial modes entitled team leader, team demolition, and total conquest.

Team leader revolves around escorting a designated leader to an extraction point, or you can just opt to annihilate the other team to win. Things get hairy here because opposing leaders can see one another on their HUD, team mates can respawn if they're killed, but if an enemy

TOM CLANCY'S: THE SUM OF ALL FRANCHISES

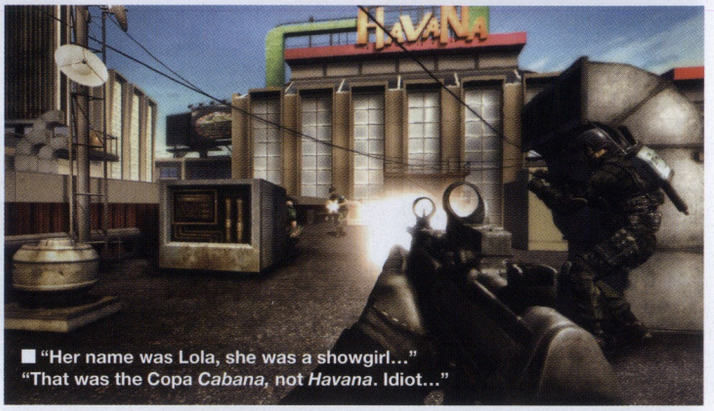
Just so you know, Tom Clancy has zero say in the content of these recent videogames. Since Ubisoft Entertainment purchased the Clancy-owned developer Red Storm Entertainment it has continued to use his name on all former Clancy-owned franchises *(Rainbow Six, Splinter Cell and Ghost Recon)*. Ubisoft also slap his name on projects that he has never been involved in at all, like the forthcoming air combat title and *EndWar*. Some of Tom's recent books are based on his ideas but written by other writers too, apparently. Weird...





■ "Oh man, nothing gets red wine out. I can't take you guys anywhere, can I?"





■ "Her name was Lola, she was a showgirl..."
"That was the Copa *Cabana*, not *Havana*. Idiot..."

■ leader nails somebody they're well and truly out. Team demolition takes another page out of *Counter-Strike*'s mode book by having one team dropping a dirty bomb while the other team has to quickly remove it. This janitor-esque task is made much more difficult by having two different target locations for each explosive to be placed. Finally, total conquest involves two teams activating and controlling three satellite dishes until a 30-second countdown has finished. Every player can see where these objectives are and if they're controlled, and failure to be in command of all of these satellite dishes resets the timer, and results in some very poor Foxtel reception, presumably.

No matter which multiplayer mode you're playing in *Vegas 2*, the familiar strategies of the first game have been mixed up considerably thanks to the sprinting mechanic and the new penetration factor of certain types of cover. In this regard, being overly anal about your hardware selection is paramount, and the game embraces this idea by giving you access to eleven new weapons, some notable inclusions being machine pistols and more effective and faster firing shotguns.

POT OF GOLD OR CRUEL LEPRECHAUN HOAX?

Quicker shooting shotties and resulting groin destruction aside, *Vegas 2* doesn't exactly revolutionise the same-old *Vegas* formula as much as we hoped it would.

> "*Vegas 2* isn't the next stage in FPS evolution, but there's plenty of fun here to warrant reaching for the rainbow. Returning veterans should definitely take a look at it, newcomers should consider a purchase... "

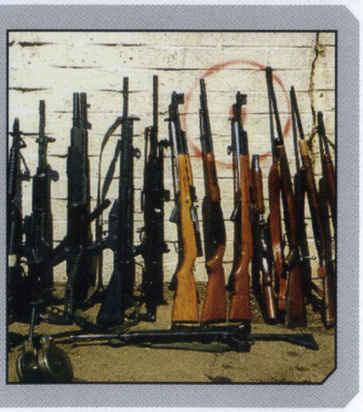
The graphics won't wow you like they did last time, there is still some 'artificial stupidity' present in the terrorists, and even though the plot wraps things up nicely the storyline still isn't terribly engaging to be honest.

Comparisons between *COD4* and this game are pretty much inevitable, and if you're deciding between the two it really comes down to this; do you want a gorgeous shooter that takes the teamwork out of your hands and has an engaging plot – or do you want a decent looking shooter that offers immense satisfaction from handing out tactical orders to an elite Rainbow team, but has a pretty 'meh' storyline. *Vegas 2* isn't the next stage in FPS evolution, but there's plenty of fun here to warrant reaching for this rainbow. Returning veterans should definitely take a look at it, newcomers should consider a purchase, and both parties should hook up online for some top notch adversarial multiplayer. And remember people; whatever tea-bagging happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas.

Adam Mathew

PRY THEM FROM OUR COLD DEAD HANDS

Sure, *Rainbow Six Vegas* features interesting characters embroiled in epic plot twists that parallel our own existences – but honestly, the real stars here are the guns. With eleven new 'attitude adjusters' on offer *Vegas 2* has something for everybody, whether it's the M468 assault rifle for defeating armoured targets, the Tactical 500 shottie for shredding people's cover, or the sneaky SR25 silenced sniper rifle. Oh yeah, and if you haven't tried taking on fifteen guys using a bullet proof shield and a hand cannon – you simply haven't lived.

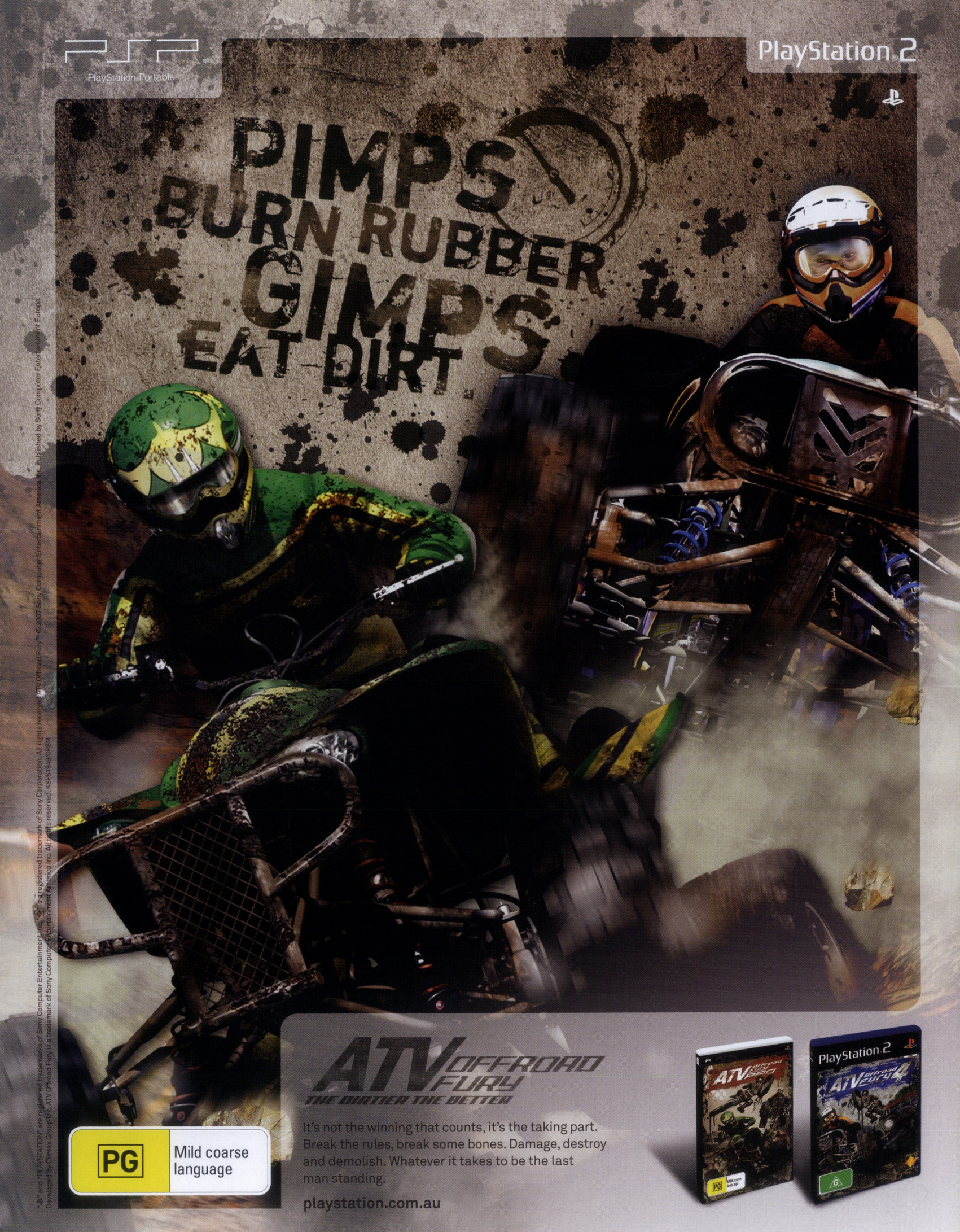


PROS:
- XP system adds to the fun
- Features a seedier Vegas

CONS:
- Visuals haven't evolved
- Enemy AI is el stupido

VERDICT: It's a déjà vu *Rainbow Six* sequel. Not amazing, but certainly robust.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07


PSP
PlayStation Portable
PlayStation 2
PIMPS
BURN RUBBER
GIMPS
EAT DIRT
ATV OFFROAD FURY
THE DIRTIER THE BETTER
PG
Mild coarse language
It's not the winning that counts, it's the taking part. Break the rules, break some bones. Damage, destroy and demolish. Whatever it takes to be the last man standing.
playstation.com.au
PlayStation 2
PG
G
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Developed by Climax Group Inc. ATV Offroad Fury is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. All rights reserved. KSPS1949OPSM

- **GENRE:** FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** CAULDRON
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION
- **PLAYERS:** 1-12
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **HD:** 720p
- **WEB:** www.mercenarieswanted.com

- **BACK STORY:** This is *Cauldron's* first leap into the *Soldier of Fortune* franchise, after tackling a Conan title and a few tales of crusading knights. It has several History Channel inspired properties to be released in the near future. Hmmmm...







INFO BYTE
You can personalise your weapons at the start of each mission. You can pick from shotguns, light and heavy machine guns, grenade launchers and bazookas, you can even choose scopes and suppressors for pistols. Kinda cool.

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE PAYBACK

Lock and load and make a grab for some cash

Right off the bat, Soldier of Fortune Payback throws you right into the thick of it. Instant, immediate, balls-to-the-wall action. We dig that. Within seconds of pressing start you'll experience shrieking rockets whizzing past you, exploding in a shower of dirt and shrapnel, enemy fire from several directions and the immense satisfaction of dusting off a few terrorists. Oh, we're sorry. What's the back-story you ask? You're Thomas Mason, a mercenary battling an enemy that a conventional army could not contain. You kill people for cash, or protect people for cash. Badda-bing, badda-bang, badda-boom. It's just that simple. Can we go on now? Cheers.

Now this is no simple run and gun shooter. You'll need to take cover, choose your shots wisely and not rush in headfirst, or you'll find yourself on the backend of a loading screen. On the plus side, Soldier of Fortune Payback boasts some freakin' sweet explosions, fire and smoke effects. It's hard to resist the urge to continuously lob grenades at cars and turrets, wait a few seconds and get a front row seat to what we like to call The Bruckheimer Effect, where everything that can explode, will explode. Huge plumes of billowing smoke, following a brief fireworks display provide some immediate landscaping... with gusto. Garbage can lids and spare tyres even ricochet off walls and slowly come to a spinning stop, which was a really nice touch. We also dug that ammo pick-ups for the same weapon are immediate, without the need to press a button. Just walk right over it and sha-pow! A couple more clips for the cause. It's a simple idea (and one that always used to be the case). It maintains the flow without a pesky button pressing interruption.

The AI is decent enough too, most of the time. Enemies, in general, flank you, charge at you, fang it around corners in jeeps with fire teams blasting in all directions. Unfortunately, at other times they'll turn their backs to you giving you a prime shot – but it's not the norm, so let's move on, shall we?

Your own guys ain't too shabby either. As fellow guns-for-hire they'll provide cover support and even suppressive fire to maintain a corridor for you to successfully weave your way through tricky situations in some of the more bullet intensive missions.

The hand-to-hand combat also deserves a mention. Push R3 and you'll make a quick thrust or slash with a knife which will more often than not, get you out of a tight spot. You'll need some nimble fingers as there's generally little warning before some crazy jihadist comes piss bolting at you screaming "Allah!" attempting to smash your face in with the butt of his AK-47.

It's certainly not perfect, however, and we're well aware the gaming press hasn't exactly looked too favourably upon it. Payback most definitely pales in comparison to Call of Duty 4. The checkpoints are too far apart, it's all a bit dumb and loud and the hallmark of the series (the ultra-violence, the exploding heads, the human damage models) has been cut to limbo under our classification system. The other down side is the frame rate. Most of the time it's quite smooth and looks a treat, but chain together a few explosions, and it gets the jitters and, for lack of a better word, shits itself.

Also, some players may find the hundreds of evil ethnic people you're required to liquidate a fraction unnerving. This is, after all, a game designed primarily for readers of Soldier of Fortune magazine, republicans and gun-owners. It makes no attempt whatsoever to hide its unhinged xenophobia, thus, anyone with a towel on his head is evil (and probably packing an Uzi).

That said, we still kinda like it. Derivative, silly and short? Yes. Guilty fun though. **Dave Kozicki**

WHAT UP, BLOOD?

Thanks to the joys of our antiquated, no R18+ rating classification scheme, there's one aspect we missed out on in *Soldier of Fortune Payback*, and that's buckets of gore. We had bit of a looksee at the American version of the game and watched numerous enemies spraying gloriously arcing claret in bursts of vibrant colour, corpses riddled with exit wounds and limbs flinging off everywhere. Hey, maybe we're a little desensitised to violence, but seriously, what's a bit of arterial spray between friends?



PROS:
- Great physics and explosions
- Dumb fun

CONS:
- Load times are a bitch...
- Main selling point trimmed

VERDICT: A serviceable shooter that lacks that certain something. Arms flying off mainly...

OFFICIAL SCORE: 06

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PS3 **PS2** PSP

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** BRASH
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** ATARI
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **PRICE:** $49.95
- **HD:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.jumpermoviegame.com

BACK STORY: Brash Entertainment's first release was *Alvin and the Chipmunks* a few months back. *Jumper: Griffin's Story* is its second. Unfortunately, things don't sound like they're going to get any better – its third title will be *Saw: The Videogame*. Sigh.

JUMPER: GRIFFIN'S STORY

Jump around a true house of pain...

Jumper is not a very good movie. We're confused why, because it's about teleporters and it was directed by Doug Liman (*Swingers*, *The Bourne Identity* and the slightly underrated *Mr. & Mrs. Smith*). Nonetheless, it was a bit rubbish. We don't really have the space to explore that further; suffice to say we just wanted to point it out. Why? Because we suppose the game is at least faithful to the film in one way. It's crap too.

The game focuses on the jumper Griffin, who is a supporting character in the movie. We guess the developers presume you've seen it, hence the complete lack of any real explanation about the story in the game (or even the manual). We never really knew what was going on, although it could have been a side effect of our complete disinterest in the product. Griffin was played by Jamie 'Billy Elliot' Bell in the film, and he reprises his role in the game, but aside from a cool accent, he doesn't actually add anything to *Jumper: Griffin's Story*.

The basic idea is you're a Jumper – an otherwise-ordinary person blessed with the ability to teleport where and when you like. The problem? A bunch of villains called Paladins (who have something against people who can teleport for some inane reason) want to rub you out. As a result, the aim of *Jumper: Griffin's Story* is run around and beat them all up. That is, at least, what it seems like to us.

This game is well and truly rife with problems. The one neat concept regarding the combat system (which lets you use the face buttons to choose where to attack an enemy from, exploiting your skills as a teleporter) is completely destroyed by the fact the whole thing is so ridiculously mind-numbing and unrewarding. As you land blows Griffin will charge his jump meter. When that's full you can activate a jump attack (where Griffin might 'jump' an enemy to a dangerous spot and finish the sap off) but they're hugely lacking in variety.

Married to some prehistoric visuals, woeful animation and even frame-rate issues, *Jumper: Griffin's Story* is positively riddled with issues. In fact, it's actually worse than your average movie-to-game rubbish. It's the worst kind of game, basically – cheap shite designed purely to leap into the shopping baskets of the uninformed and easily led.

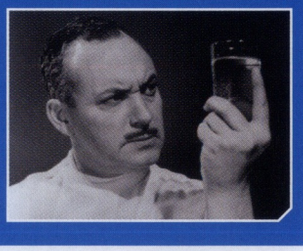
Might as well jump? No thanks. We'll walk. **Clint McCredie**

INFO BYTE

Jumper is one of the worst received films of the year. Just putting that out there before you think about trying this game.

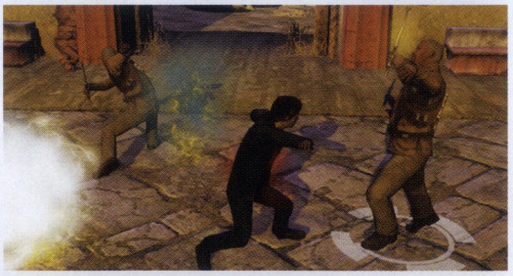
QUANTUM LEAP

Scientists have been able to transport light, or single atoms, over very short distances – millimetres – in the past. However, in October 2006 it was reported in the science magazine *Nature* that Professor Eugene Polzik and his team at the Niels Bohr Institute at Copenhagen University had made a breakthrough in teleportation. The experiment involved the transportation of information from a light beam to a macroscopic atomic object (containing thousands of billions of atoms), located 50 centimetres away using quantum entanglement, quantum measurement and quantum feedback. We don't know what that means, but we don't think we're that much closer to being able to teleport to the shops.



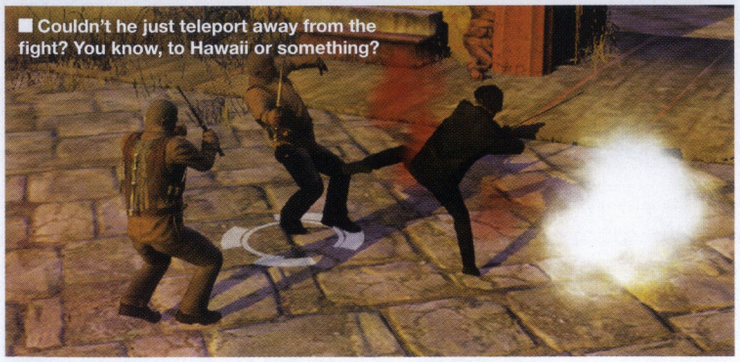


■ Not even Samuel L. Jackson is cool enough to save *Jumper*





■ Invisible, upside-down bike?



■ Couldn't he just teleport away from the fight? You know, to Hawaii or something?

PROS:
- It doesn't give you cancer, as far as we know

CONS:
- Bad movie, bad game
- Shoddy in every department

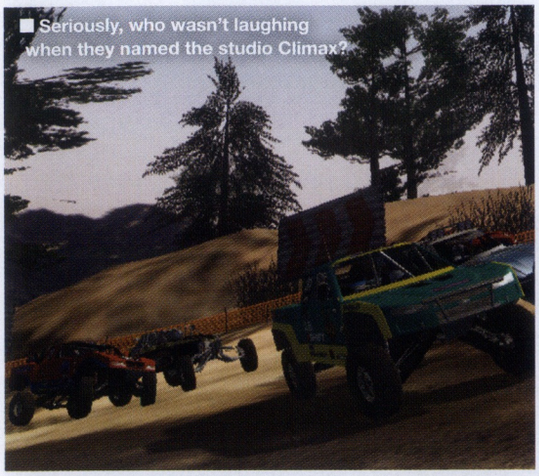
VERDICT: Just about everything went remarkably wrong here. Shonky, shameless stuff.

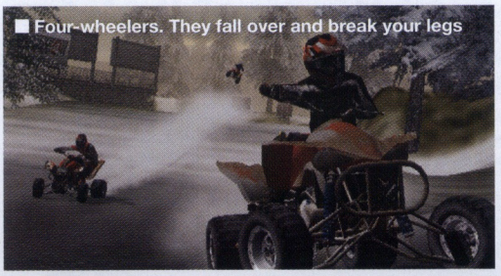
OFFICIAL SCORE: 02

- **GENRE:** RACING
- **RELEASE:** MARCH
- **DEVELOPER:** CLIMAX
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **PLAYERS:** 1-8
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **HD:** 480p
- **WEB:** www.au.playstation.com

BACK STORY: Unless it's a penny farthing, it's a pretty safe bet that Climax has given it a run in the racing stakes. It's tackled *The Italian Job*, Hot Wheels and the Gumball Rally, and obviously the *ATV Offroad* series.

PS3 **PS2** PSP
REVIEW


Seriously, who wasn't laughing when they named the studio Climax?


Four-wheelers. They fall over and break your legs







INFO BYTE
One of Climax's next titles, *Avalon*, is a futuristic shooting/racing romp where your driving skills and itchy trigger finger could decide humanity's fate.

ATV OFFROAD FURY 4

Not for the fast or the furious...

The *ATV Offroad* series has been a stable and dependable title for the PS2 for a number of years now. As the industry evolves, however, what was once the groundbreaking or revolutionary, is now the norm. Many struggle under the weight of trying to create the next big thing without alienating their dedicated fan-base. So, does *ATV Offroad Fury 4* still cut the mustard?

Our initial reaction was quite mundane after blitzing our first race. Surveying our surroundings, we found the colour palate a bit bland for our tastes. We know that it's meant to be about tearing up dirt and gravel tracks, which leads to a lot of sand and desert environments, but we felt awash in a sea of brown and it left very little impact. That changed drastically when we started to hit stride a tournament or so in. Once you race in wet, overcast or night conditions you'll notice the subtle lighting tones and hues used to bring the backgrounds to life. Sunset races were quite atmospheric, with the sun gently peeking through the mountaintops. Wet weather was handled particularly well.

New to the series is the ability to upgrade vehicles with cash earned during your world domination tour. We're talking about pimping your exhaust, suspension, brakes, engine, gears and clutch, body, wheels and tyres, the whole shebang. There are also a tonne of events to choose from outside story mode, and 112 sponsors to unlock with specific challenges to complete once available.

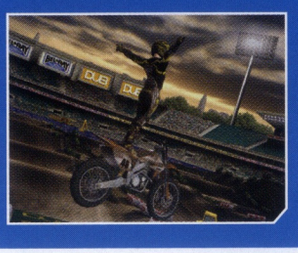
On the flipside, braking is virtually irrelevant, unless you royally screw the pooch, and it takes a little finesse out of the experience. The other vehicles didn't seem to have any apparent weight either, so you mostly bump and grind, eventually spinning out of control, out of contention for a place.

The offroad time limit was also a bit hokey. When veering off the track the amount of occasions we made it back on track in time, only to see ourselves gypped, restarting in close to last position, was far too many.

ATV Offroad Fury 4 is a mixed bag. At times, it has a real quiet cool about it, but there are other times when you feel like you're just going through the motions. It's actually quite an old game (it came out in the US well over a year ago) but with a bit more polish and it could have really stood out. **Dave Kozicki**

WHERE'S MY PEEPS?

One aspect we found a little peculiar was the crowd in the arenas we raced at. Now, we're not expecting a throng of individually rendered revellers, but the place looked half deserted most of the time. You'd think it would be a given to display a packed stadium, filled to the rafters with an ear shattering crowd, to provide a more electrifying atmosphere and really suck you in. Just imagine whipping the crowd into a frenzy as you pull off a killer stunt?





"Straight? No, wait, left! Arrrgghh!"



PROS:
- Interesting track design
- Sweet customisation features

CONS:
- Iffy physics
- Very unforgiving off track

VERDICT: Fairly deep, but lacks the intensity to rival, say, a *Burnout* or *Need for Speed*.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07

PS3 **PS2** PSP

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** PAPAYA
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** QVS
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **PRICE:** $39.95
- **HD:** 480p
- **WEB:** www.qvsoftware.com.au

GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE AND THE SEARCH FOR THE SECRET

...watch out for that tree!



■ "Okay, I'm in the jungle. Where are the fun and games?"

The cartoon, the poor man's Tarzan, has burst back into the limelight on Cartoon Network, so it was only a matter of time before the video game tie-in was launched. Here it is, in all its glory.

For what it is, this isn't actually a bad game, although it's not a great game either. The graphics are solid, though very simple, with each character looking the part, coupled with the extremely basic controls and story premise. A monkey has stolen some vital research and it's up to our hero, George, to track them down and open up a can of whoop-ass on those damn dirty apes. Here it reverts to standard 2D scrolling affair with all the bells and whistles. You've got double jumps, vine swinging and climbing, dash attacks, boss battles – the whole kit and caboodle. Standard attacks gave us a giggle as George throws punches mixed in with the odd judo chop – which is somewhat amusing when it's being delivered by a dude in a loincloth.

A few things niggled at us though. You often need to crash through planks to go down a level, and instead of the usual double jump/belly flop crash straight down to break through (ala *Crash Bandicoot/Jak & Daxter*), the developer has opted for a diagonal finish which, though useful during boss battles, is a little annoying in it's more standard applications. Also, the whole speed of play seems to be set in slow motion, which breaks any momentum and really pigeonholes it to the younger end of the market. Pity. **Dave Kozicki**





■ Lioncloths. They're back

PROS:
- Cool cartoon feel
- Great for young-uns

CONS:
- Slow-motion controls
- Strictly for kids

VERDICT: Adults may get bored quickly, but it's perfect for kids, especially at this price

OFFICIAL SCORE: 05

PS3 **PS2** PSP

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** HIGH IMPACT
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **HD:** 480p
- **WEB:** www.au.playstation.com







■ It's a bit steep for a PSP port, but it could be a lot worse

RATCHET & CLANK SIZE MATTERS

Does PSP gold ensure PS2 success?



We've been pretty lucky with PSP ports coming over and sharing the love with its PS2 older brother. Some games are just too darn good to confine to one console alone. Both *Grand Theft Auto* ports were a rousing success but now it's time for a bit of frantic gunplay and platforming action. The PSP has had a stellar run and now *Ratchet & Clank Size Matters* is getting the star treatment. How well does it fare on the bigger screen? Does size really matter? Well yes… and no.

As far as looks go it holds up quite well. Though a little simplistic, it still manages to retain the series' humour and charm. It does, however, have a few niggling problems that would have been forgivable with the PSP's single thumb stick, yet we were hoping they'd tweak it on the PS2 version. The camera gets a little wonky at times (an easy solution would have be a L3 click to centre the camera).

Another area, which could have used attention, was the racing element. Excessively difficult to control and slow to respond, a control overhaul could have made it a real hoot. Instead, it still feels more like a chore.

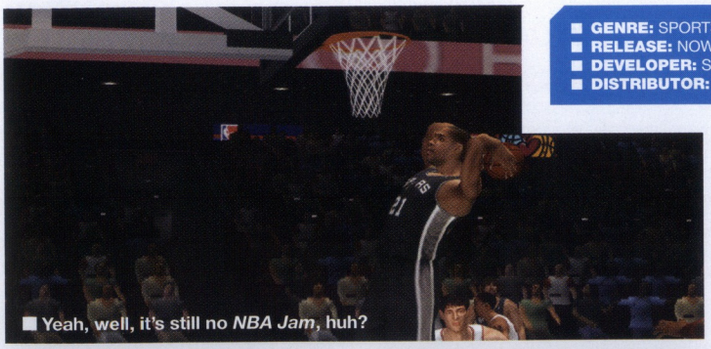
Don't get us wrong, this is still a quality purchase on any platform, but we'd like to see a bit more tinkering under the hood when a port moves over to a more powerful format. **Dave Kozicki**

PROS:
- The usual *R&C* goodness
- Fun and colourful

CONS:
- The racing, not so good
- Award camera at times

VERDICT: A bit of a hit to the hip pocket for a PSP port, but worth it for first-timers.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07



■ Yeah, well, it's still no *NBA Jam*, huh?

- **GENRE:** SPORTS
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** SONY
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4
- **PRICE:** $79.95
- **HD:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.au.playstation.com

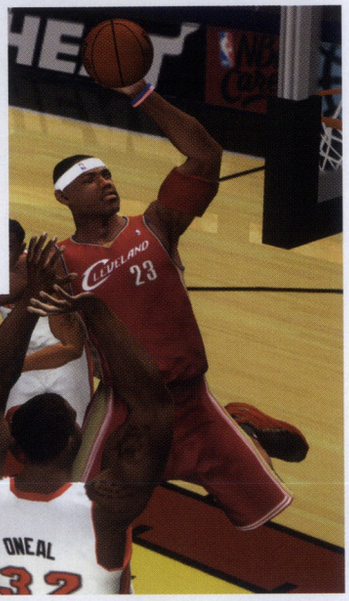
PS3 **PS2** PSP

REVIEW

NBA 08

...technical foul!





■ "Hello Cleveland!" "Hi. What?"

Usually when we're talking about dribbling and taking it to the hole, well, things gets shady. In this case, of course, we're talking about *NBA 08*, the latest (and last) addition to 'The Life' basketball franchise. So how does it stock up against its counterparts? Is it a backboard breaking slam-dunk, or an embarrassing air ball?

We're seeing nothing but air here. Sony's series has tried to set itself apart with 'The Life' aspect, taking you through the final season of your team, and focusing on your coach's retirement. You play rookie Youngblood, and at other times, the focus switches to your team-mates as you try to set up a winning franchise and send your coach off with a championship ring. It's a plot point used to try to emotionally invest you in the story that doesn't quite work, nor does it distract you from average state of play. Sure, there's plenty of action on the court with exhibition games, All-Star games, and whole seasons to knock out. There are also a stack of team and showboating goals to complete in story mode, but the play just doesn't cut it. Moves don't flow, nor do your other players, the frame rate is inconsistent and all-in-all it's a pretty lacklustre performance. Considering this is the third bite of the apple, they should've got it right by now.

We're still waiting for a definitive b-ball experience. Who knows – maybe they'll take *NBA Jam* or *Arch Rivals* off the bench and give them a run. One can only hope, right? **Dave Kozicki**

PROS:
- Cool mix of backing tracks
- Neat story concept

CONS:
- Lost AI
- Jaggies and unfinished look

VERDICT: Flawed clunky controls gives NBA 08 a sad swansong.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 05

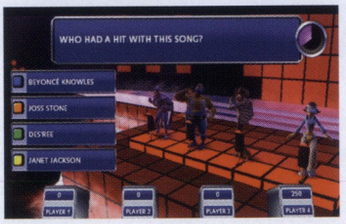


■ Superheroes. They know everything

- **GENRE:** PARTY
- **RELEASE:** MAY 2008
- **DEVELOPER:** RELENTLESS
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **PLAYERS:** 1-8
- **PRICE:** $59.95
- **HD:** 576i
- **WEB:** www.au.playstation.com

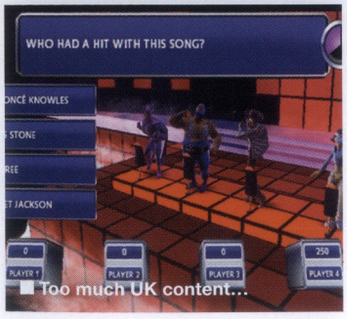
PS3 **PS2** PSP

REVIEW









■ Too much UK content...

BUZZ!: THE POP QUIZ

The Buzz! bubble goes pop...

To be perfectly honest, judging *Buzz!* as a regular video game doesn't really cut the mustard, so to speak. Giving the game a score based on the normal criteria we usually use to critique games is kinda arbitrary – it occupies an altogether different type of space; a space where the family can gather around, controller in hand, to out-trivia one another in an epic buzz-a-thon to the death.

That being said, we can judge *Buzz!: The Pop Quiz* alongside other iterations of the Buzz franchise – and on that count, this new version falls a little flat.

First off, the whole music thing was already covered in *Buzz! The Music Quiz*, so why retread old ground? Secondly, the half-arsed, cover versions featured in the game are often so terribly reproduced it can be difficult to recognise which song or artist it's supposed to represent.

The apparent lack of localisation grates also: this game was blatantly developed in the UK with a huge focus on UK acts, meaning that question difficulty swings wildly between, "I've no idea who this artist is because I didn't grow up in a woody suburb of Cheshire" and, "This question is so criminally simple a retarded man-monkey could answer it".

Grab some friends and *Buzz!* is still as fun as putting a squirrel down your underpants – just be sure to pick up *The Mega Quiz* instead. **Mark Serrels**

PROS:
- Generally fun
- Eight-player is possible

CONS:
- Poor localisation
- Crappy cover versions

VERDICT: Weakest *Buzz!* yet: pick up *Buzz!: The Mega Quiz* instead.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 05

PS3 PS2 **PSP**

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** READY AT DAWN
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **PRICE:** $59.95
- **GAMESHARE:** NO
- **WEB:** www.au.playstation.com

BACK STORY: *God of War* has raised the bar for action games. Its combination of combat, exploration and general awesomeness has gamers drooling for the third entry. To help the impatient masses; a PSP prequel has been made.

INFO BYTE
In Greek mythology a character called 'Cratos' is 'the personification of power.' See, it's not *all* dick and fart jokes with us!



Kratos' dentistry techniques were questionable at best

PlayStation. Official Magazine - Australia
GOLD AWARD
10/10

GOD OF WAR: CHAINS OF OLYMPUS

Even on the small screen Kratos kicks your monkey arse!

When we first heard *God of War* was making its way to the PSP we were flabbergasted. Yes, readers, our gasts were flabbered good and proper. How could they make a *God of War* game on the PSP? The graphics alone on the PS2 version pushed the black box to the limit. Also, from a narrative standpoint, it would seem a little stupid to make *God of War III* and release it on the PSP! That honour will go to the PS3 – and we can't wait.

Then we heard the news. This *God of War* entry would be… a prequel.

A prequel?!

Oh man! Prequels suck! And we're not just talking about the *Star Wars* prequels – although it has to be said they would each win Golden Turds (or 'Turdies') at the 'Things that Suck Awards' – but any time you watch a movie, or play a game or do anything prequel-related it kind of kills the potential joy.

Take George Lucas' *Star Wars* prequels as an example. Even if the *Star Wars* prequels had been an awesome trilogy, rife with pathos and layered characters, brimming with intrigue and tension (and let's face it – they weren't), even if *all* that happened… you'd still know the ending. The kid becomes a petulant teenager, grows up to be an awful actor and finally gets dismembered and whacked into a scary black suit with James Earl Jones' voice. Cue: Darth Vader. See prequels depend on your interest in not so much what happens – you already know that – but rather *how* it happens.

"AND SO, WHAT OF KRATOS?" - THE GODS ASKED

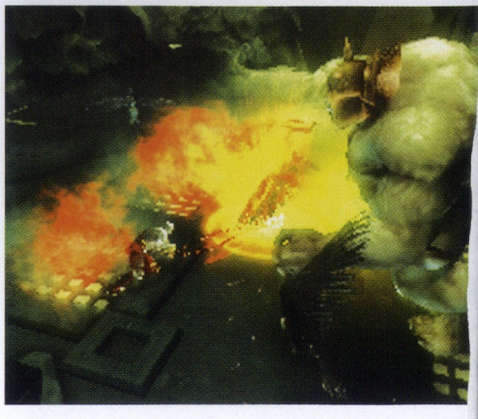
Ahhh, Kratos. The hardest hard man of the game world – and that's no small claim. After all, he's up against the likes of Snake, Dante, Ryu Hayabusa and Sam Fisher. Even as a mortal with no funky special powers he kicked a lot of arse. His sword cleft many an enemy in twain and the juice from severed limbs provided a red mist of squirting blood to mark his wake. Then, one day, as the Barbarian hordes slew his men, Kratos knew his end was nigh. Very bloody nigh! So he made a somewhat Faustian deal with the Gods – the ancient Greek ones – not the invisible Christian fellow with the beard. Specifically Ares – the god of war.

"AND VERILY WE DID TAKE THE SPARTAN PISS!" - ARES SNIGGERED

This deal, like most deals with deities, consisted of Kratos – or the 'Ghost of Sparta' as he would become known – having his enemies taken down. But the price was high. He had to serve the gods for 10 years. Now, admittedly he got these kick arse chains and special powers



"I'm gonna break my rusty chains... of Olympus"





■ "Kahleema! Shut-de-day! KALEEMAA!" Kratos just loved *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*...



■ "I'm not *that* horny..."

but he really just wanted to get back to his family... which happened. But he accidentally slaughtered them.

Oops!

What you should focus on in the paragraph above is "10 years". When *God of War* started, Kratos just wanted the memories of his evil-doings erased. But before all that he had a lot of killin' to do. A decade's worth in fact. Cue: *Chains of Olympus*.

"A PREQUEL?" SNAPPED ZEUS, "AM I IN THIS ONE?"

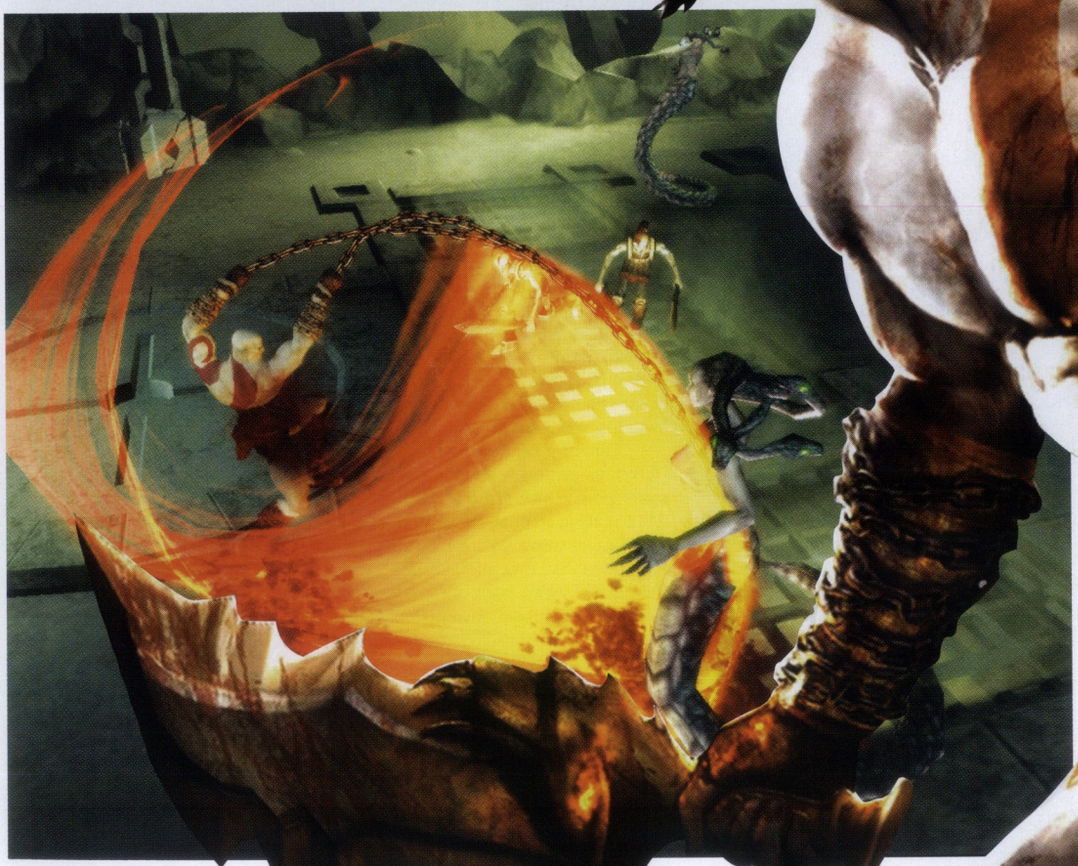
Okay, let's end the suspense. *God of War: Chains of Olympus* is, hands down, the best PSP game ever. *Patapon* and *LocoRoco* were cute and great, *Metal Gear Solid: Portable Ops* and the *GTA* PSP titles ruled. But *GoW* tops them all. The graphics are just as good as they are on the PS2. A little smaller, certainly, but those huge arenas of death and puzzle solving are in the game. The combat is similar: you kill a monster, you collect the red orbs and you power up your weapons or magic. One thing that really impresses about this PSP title is the magic. Past entries have given you some

IT'S A KIND OF MAGIC!

In *GOW* and *GOWII* magic was useful but it didn't feel completely integral to the story. Skilled gamers could simply upgrade their chain blades. This is not the case with *Chains of Olympus*. The magical powers are far more effective. You can summon the aforementioned flaming dude to pound the ground, you can shoot balls of electricity and green orbs that stick to your opponent and do mucho damage. You can get a shield that hurls arrows/energy back to your enemy and you can charge up with blue lightning and clear a room. Kratos just got harder!













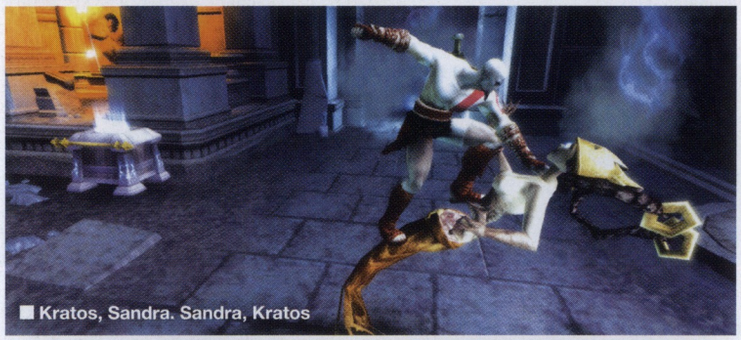


■ Behind you. The last place you want a one-eyed monster...

THE USUAL, SIR?

Yes, the threesome mini-game has returned, although like an *actual* threesome it's kind of hard to er... pull off. Press these buttons, turn the thingy, press L1 and R1, quickly tickle the ◎ button. Yes. Yes. YES! "Phew, that was a lot like hard work. So anyway, I'll call you girls, I've got some uh... work to do. Yeah, work. See ya!" Additional Information: *Chains of Olympus* has the most naked breasts in a PSP game. Go team!





■ Kratos, Sandra. Sandra, Kratos



"It delves into *GoW* history without besmirching the good name of the PS2 *God of War* titles..."

interesting magical powers but *Chains of Olympus* gets the best of the lot. There's the Efreet magic – where you summon a huge, muscular beast burning with flames – who, once activated, pounds the shite out of anything within its radius. This is a good power to upgrade as the beast's radius gets bigger and bigger. Check out the previous page for details about other types of magic, because right now we have to describe just how jaw-droppingly bad arse this title is.

"BLOODY HELL, HE BANGS ON A BIT, DOESN'T HE?" THE GODS LAMENTED

Imagine the scene: Kratos in a castle. There's a war going on with the Persians. And this time the Persians have brought with them... something! So you roll, jump, slice and combo the soldiers – satisfying death animations and solid combat from the outset. But you know, you just bloody know, there's going to be a big monster soon. And indeed, as you enter another room, a huge hairy beastie tries to smash you with his log of doom. Okay, so the boss isn't on par with the big creatures of the PS2 iterations but we'll forg- ARGH! HOLY *SHIT*! The big beastie is suddenly *swallowed* by an ENORMOUS beastie that you'll fight throughout the first level! As well as showing off a sense of gallows humour this feels like the developers are telling the player: "Don't worry, gentle gamer, we're bringing the goods."

From the first level onwards this game never lets up. You'll be shooting fiery darts at ships, wiping out slews of enemies, battling with huge bosses and becoming more and more powerful as you tear your way through this ancient land.

There are so many spectacular moments in this game it's hard to remember them all. Suffice to say this is *not* a cobbled together piece of crap. In fact, the graphics are the best we've seen on PSP – like a pretty canvas daubed with blood. And new monsters! They actually created a whole range of new antagonists to prevent, 'Oh I've fought that thing before!'-itis. The sound is magnificently orchestral, with the now familiar theme song blaring, plus incidental tunes all giving the game a feeling of epic adventure and gravitas.

"DOES IT HAVE A STORY?" ATHENA INQUIRED

Yep. A good one too. Without giving too many things away the god of dreams has put his slumbery sleep smoke all over the shop. As if he's trying to put the whole world to sleep. But why? The reasons are compelling and full of twists and lead to a conspiracy of god-like proportions that takes you from hell to heaven and back again. That's all we're saying. But rest assured, once you finish this game you will understand all and have a big smile on your face.

"IS ANYTHING WRONG WITH IT, HAIRY MORTAL?" THE GODS DEMANDED

Unfortunately, there is something wrong with it. It's too short. That's not to say it's a short game per se, it's around the same length as part one – and the fact they crammed as much of the game into the PSP is nothing short of a miracle. But we'd have played a two UMD set. Hell, a game this good – we'd play fifty UMDs.

Sadly *God of War: Chains of Olympus* only has one disc. Veteran players might want to put it on Spartan setting.

"WRAP IT UP, BEARDO!" THE GODS EXCLAIMED

God of War: Chains of Olympus is amazing. It delves into *GoW* history without besmirching the good name of the PS2 *God of War* titles. It even hints at things to occur in *God of War III*! The action is fast, the puzzles fiendish, the combat utterly slick and the 'press the right button at the right time' mini-games actually serve the story and don't stick out like a tumescent dog scrotum. For instance, you come across a cyclops, beat him into submission, press ◎ and launch into a sequence where you run up the beast's body, stabbing all the way, until you finally reach his eye. Then you stick one of your blades in said eye and stamp on the knife, driving the razor sharp weapon into the creature's brain.

That's just one example of the button pressy action. There are a lot more and they all rock the house.

Yes, *Chains of Olympus* is a rather brief adventure, but would you prefer the graphics look shitty, the level design claustrophobic and it get rejigged as a turn-based card game?!

Hell, no! This is the kind of game you'll play again and again – you'll unlock docos, costumes, and challenges that further the gory goings-on. *Chains of Olympus* has us hooked – and is a genuinely brilliant game. Buy it now.

End of story. **Anthony O'Connor**

PROS:
- Amazing graphics
- It is an absolute joy to play

CONS:
- The story is a tad short
- Um... it's not *God of War III*?

VERDICT: If you own a PSP buy this now. If you don't... buy a PSP and *then* buy this game.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 10

godofwargame.com

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PS3 PS2 **PSP**

REVIEW

- **GENRE:** RHYTHM
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** PYRAMID
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **PRICE:** $59.95
- **GAMESHARE:** NO
- **WEB:** www.patapon-game.com

BACK STORY: Patapon versus Zigoton – the ancient enmity! The Patapons are a tribe of brave and resourceful warriors and you, their all-powerful deity, must guide them to victory over their dreadful Zigoton foes.

PATAPON

Pata Pata Pata Pon... Pon Pon Pata Pon... Chaka Chaka Pata Pon... What more do we need to say? Once more, in English, perhaps?

Patapon is that most rare of videogames – a title that's innovative, well-executed and a bundle of fun to play. It's not perfect (few games are) but it has more than enough charm, depth and surprises to warm even the most cynical gamer's heart.

The game's central conceit is that you are 'Almighty', the Patapon tribe's god. They're odd little critters and they only respond to the beating of a drum. So, to lead them to victory in their struggle against the wicked Zigoton, you'll be drumming your heart (actually, fingers) out.

The core mechanic is a simple rhythm-action game. Each of the face buttons is a drum (Pata, Pon, Chaka and Don) and you have to continuously play a variety of four-beat songs to control your troops.

Play your song on the beat a few times and your Patapon will enter 'Fever Mode', where they gain bonuses to movement, attack range and strength. Drop a beat and your warriors return to their normal state. The trick is to use the right songs at the right time, or in the right sequence, to defeat your enemies.

Defeating enemies yields several kinds of loot, from 'Ka-Ching' (the game's currency) to various types of wood, stone, weapons and armour. You combine raw materials at the 'Tree of Life' to create new units, and assign new equipment at the Obelisk, where each mission begins.

You'll also play various rhythm-based minigames that yield extra raw materials for making new types of units. These can get repetitive if you're trying to build up a supply of a particular resource but there's a wide variety of them, from playing your trumpet to a tree to hitting a baby mountain's toes.

You start off with a Hatapon (your standard bearer) and three Yaripon (spear-carriers) but soon enough you'll be creating Yumipon (archers), Tatepon (hand-to-hand fighters), Kibapon (cavalry), Dekapon (giant infantry units) and Megapon (with sonic blast powers).

Balancing your army and keeping it upgraded is vital, and provides a nice counterpoint to the actual missions, which rely on both a good sense of rhythm (when things get going there's a lot of different noises going on, which can make it hard to hear the beat) and good tactical sense (anticipating your enemy's actions, knowing what song to use and so on).

Speaking of enemies, these range from the Zigoton – more-or-less the same as the Patapon, with a variety of troop types up to and including some pretty weird-looking monsters – to fierce bosses you have to defeat in special (replayable) levels. Each is best defeated using certain patterns and learning these is an important part of the game.

So too, unfortunately, is a staple of many strategy games – grinding. You'll find yourself playing the mini-games, hunting levels and boss levels over and over to gather up enough resources to build or upgrade your units, and the unit construction system isn't as intuitive as perhaps it should be. Annoyingly, you can't buy or make weapons and armour, only scavenge them from the battlefield.

But these gripes don't significantly distract from what is, in essence, an outstanding game. Once you've played your songs correctly a couple of times and your Patapons are chanting them back, cheering as they wipe out their enemies and collecting loot from their fallen foes, you'll have a grin from ear to ear – and the sore thumbs to match. Do yourself a favour and give it a try.

Michael Butler

GAME OR ART?

As soon as game director/designer Hiroyuki Kotani encountered French graphic designer Rolito's Patapons, he knew he had to build a game around them. Drawing together a team that included members of the *LocoRoco* crew, he quickly decided a drum-based game would best suit the cute-but-savage looking critters. Rolito is responsible for the game's unique look, from the Patapons themselves to all the creatures, environments, items and locations. Visit his website at www.rolitoland.com if you want to see more of Rolito's work, and some truly trippy animations.



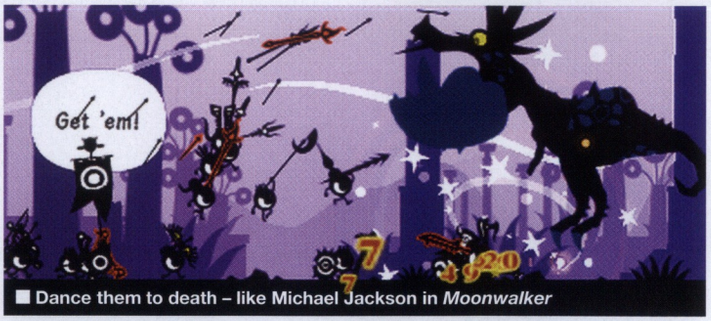
PlayStation. Official Magazine - Australia

BRONZE AWARD 8/10

INFO BYTE

Try before you buy! The downloadable *Patapon* demo has a special item that's unlocked if you get the full game – so make sure you get them both!





■ Dance them to death – like Michael Jackson in *Moonwalker*



■ "This is madness!" "Madness? This is – where are we again? Oh, right – PATAPON!"

PROS:
- Genre-mashing that works
- Deep and absorbing

CONS:
- Grinding rears its ugly head
- Aural 'clutter' can be tough

VERDICT: A familiar game in an ear-catching wrapper, *Patapon* has depth, charm and character.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 08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BEYOND

- **GENRE:** REAL-TIME STRATEGY
- **RELEASE:** NOW
- **DEVELOPER:** SLANT SIX GAMES
- **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
- **PLAYERS:** 1-4
- **PRICE:** $59.95
- **GAMESHARE:** YES
- **WEB:** www.au.playstation.com

BACK STORY: The original *SOCOM* on the PS2 didn't exactly push the envelope in terms of graphics, sound or animation. In fact it looked a little drab. Where it did excel was in multiplayer. Now *SOCOM* is getting all strategic on us…

SOCOM: US NAVY SEALs TACTICAL STRIKE

Will kill people for buckets of fish…

It's always slightly disorienting when an established title veers off from the genre that made it famous and tries something else. Sometimes the result is a bit crap. *Metal Gear Ac!d* – compared to *Portable Ops* it's a bag of pants!

Sometimes it works. Daxter, the furry fellow all by himself with no sign of Jak, gave us a cracking PSP adventure.

So where does *Tactical Strike* fit into this? Well it takes a very established title – *SOCOM* – and turns it into a real-time strategy (RTS) game. In essence, this means you tell your four soldiers what to do, where to do it, when they should do it and how they should do it.

For instance, we were on a ledge that overlooked a camp full of bastard terrorists. Our objective was to destroy the large helicopter and then rescue the hostages, preferably without getting shot along the way.

The team of four can split off into two-man groups and you can cut between each of the four soldiers, getting a point of view from all combatants.

Setting up the command to fire on our signal we sent one team stealthily walking down the hill and taking cover behind a conveniently placed set of barrels. Meanwhile, our other two men silently crept behind a sniper and gave him a good stabbing. As the sniper silently sank to the ground, deader than acid wash jeans, we gave the order to attack.

Both troop duos unleashed leaden death on the terrorists below. After the dust had settled we sauntered over to the helicopter and planted some C4. Then we stepped back and watched the fireworks.

Tactical Strike is fun. Placing your troops wherever you want is easy, changing soldiers is intuitive and the controls – though a bit obtuse – really start to sing once you get used to them.

And there's the rub. *Tactical Strike* is a game that requires time and patience. You need to think before you act. It lacks that feeling of kinetic reality other *SOCOM*s had. The level and detail of commands is impressive, the graphics are really solid and the sound very sweet indeed. But before you fork out the cash for this game, you should ask yourself: do I like *SOCOM* for the action or the strategy? This will probably prove divisive amongst fans and, it has to be said, after hours of moving our men around like well-armed chess pieces we yearned for a little more action. **Anthony O'Connor**

GHOST SOLDIERS!

You know how in most RTS games you put the cursor where you want your character or characters to move? And they go to the cursor but seem blithely unaware of the fact people are shooting at them and cop a few rounds to the head!? Does that piss you off? Yeah, thought so. *Tactical Strike* actually shows you a ghost image of the formation the soldiers will take at the selected position. This proved immensely valuable and reduces death by stupid AI.



INFO BYTE

Despite the 'US Navy SEALs' tag you can pick which country your team is from. The Aussies have broad accents and sound like deadset bogans. Still, points for the effort.





"Okay, we're gonna need a sitrep and four cold beers!"





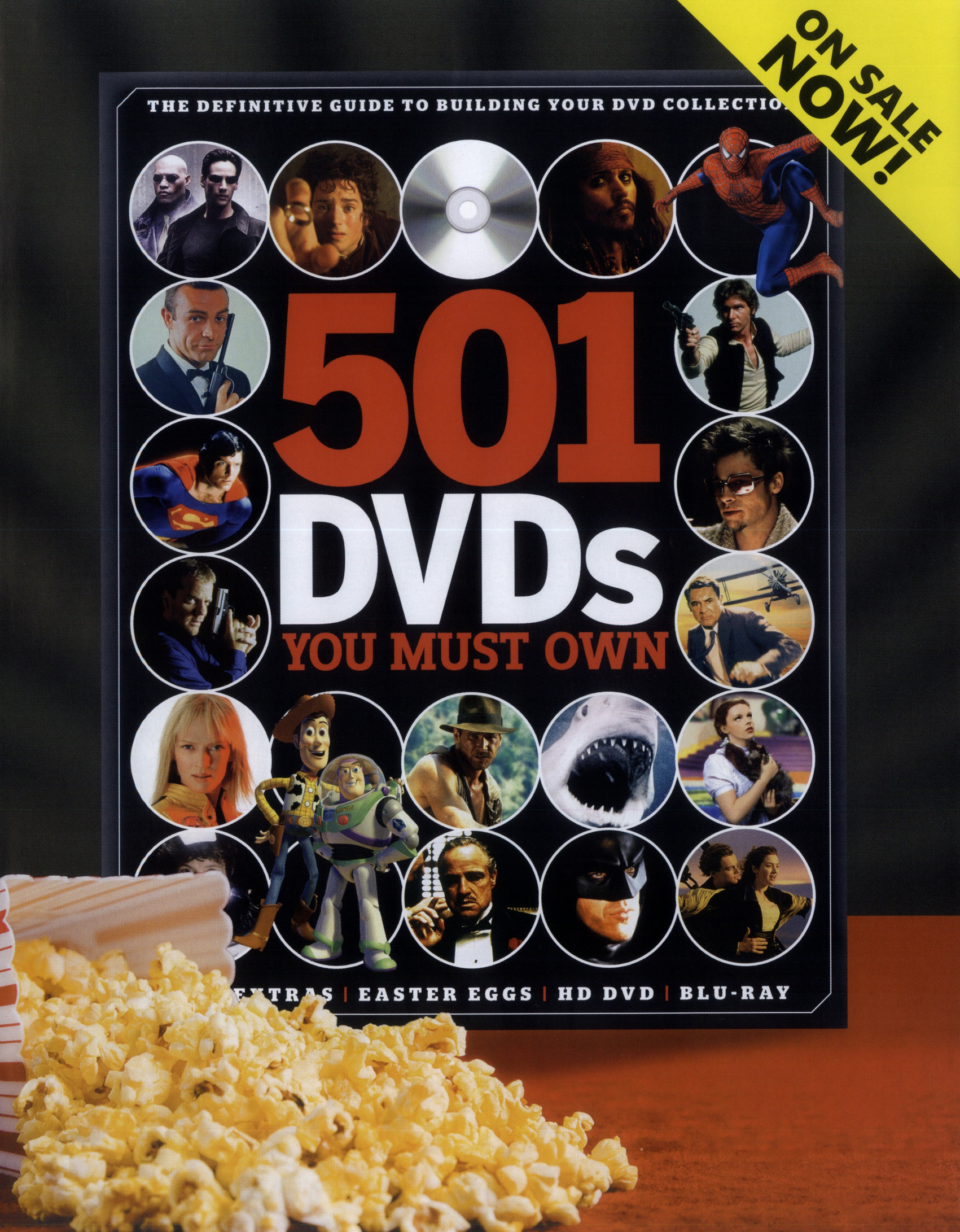
South Koreans. We know they've got Seoul

PROS:
- Intelligent and thoughtful
- Big visual improvement

CONS:
- Shooting stuff is better than telling people to shoot stuff

VERDICT: An impressive RTS game. Tense and engaging, but can become a trifle alienating.

OFFICIAL SCORE: 07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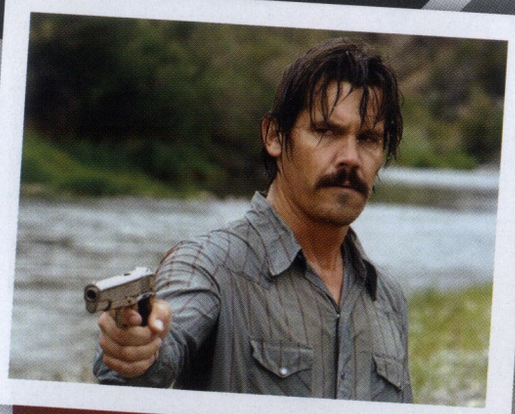
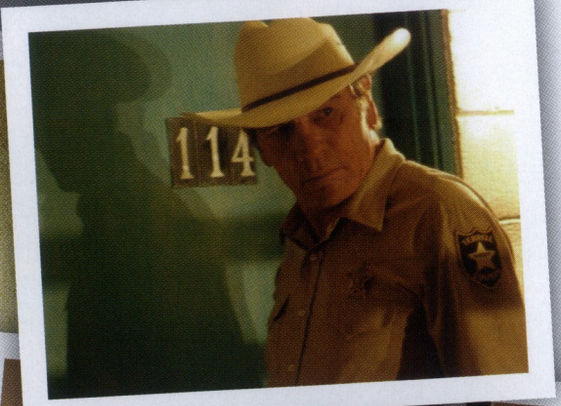
FILM

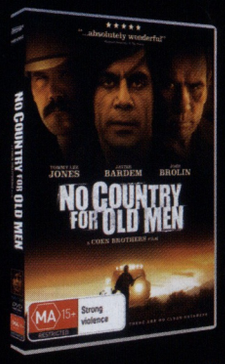
The Coen Brothers win big with *No Country for Old Men*, Christopher Walken plays with his balls in *Balls of Fury*, The Rock throws down in *Southland Tales*, Eddie Vedder croons in *Into the Wild* and more!











DVD OF THE MONTH

NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN (MA15+)

- **STARRING:** Tommy Lee Jones, Josh Brolin, Javier Bardem, Woody Harrelson, Kelly Macdonald
- **DIRECTOR:** Ethan Coen & Joel Coen

The Coen Brothers' twelfth film, *No Country for Old Men* is a tense, unflinching thriller faithfully adapted from the Cormac McCarthy novel of the same name. Obviously we can't go into a great deal of detail or we'll run of the risk of ruining something, but it's a twisted drama that tells the story of a drug deal gone sour and the ensuing cat-and-mouse chase through 1980 West Texas as three men cross each other's paths in a hunt involving $2 million in cash.

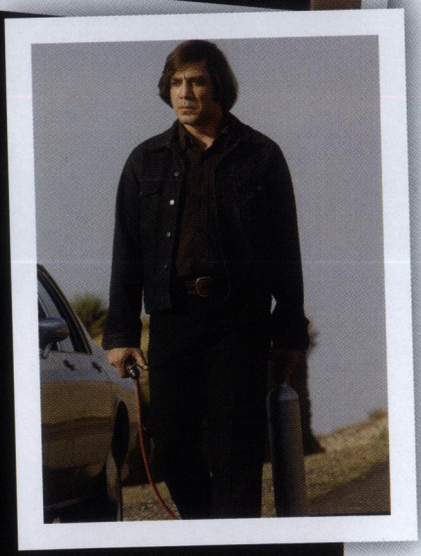
Nominated for eight Academy Awards and winning four (including Best Picture, Best Performance by an Actor in a Supporting Role for Javier Bardem, Best Director for the Coen Brothers and Best Adapted Screenplay), praise for *No Country for Old Men* has been almost universal. It's not hard to see why.

The Coen Brothers expertly fuse unmediated violence with jet-black humour, and the performances from the entire ensemble of actors are nothing short of brilliant. Josh Brolin is superb and Tommy Lee Jones is spot on as the grizzled old sheriff. We were also mightily impressed with *Trainspotting*'s Kelly Macdonald, her Glasgow heritage completely hidden beneath her pitch-perfect Texan drawl. It's Oscar-winner Javier Bardem's turn as arguably the creepiest Hollywood villain since Hannibal Lector, however, that will haunt you well afterwards.

You'll also notice an almost total lack of any musical score, which only adds to the film's eeriness.

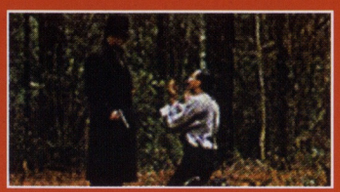
VERDICT: Its staunch refusal to obey normal genre conventions may leave some wanting but there's no doubt *No Country for Old Men* is a masterfully assembled film. It makes so few concessions for the audience yet you can't look away.

★★★★★



O' BROTHER!

The Coen Brothers have had a pretty busy two decades and maintain a solid strike rate. Here are their biggest and best.



MILLER'S CROSSING (1990)
A prohibition era gangster film concerning a power struggle between two rival Irish and Italian gangs. Caught in the middle is Tom Reagan – an ambivalent, enigmatic protagonist who plays each side against the other.



FARGO (1996)
A crime thriller set in the Upper Midwest US; *Fargo* is the tale of a car salesman who has hired two men to kidnap his wife. The crime sets off a chain of murders, which are investigated by pregnant policewoman Marge Gunderson.



THE BIG LEBOWSKI (1998)
A comedy that chronicles a few days in the life of Jeffrey 'The Dude' Lebowski, a burned-out, unemployed California slacker, and his Vietnam veteran bowling buddy after The Dude is mistaken for a millionaire with the same name.



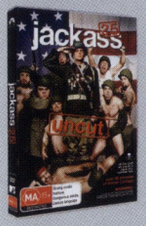
O' BROTHER WHERE ART THOU? (2000)
Loosely based on Homer's *Odyssey*, it's the story of a trio of escaped convicts in a race to retrieve over a million dollars in loot Ulysses Everett McGill claims to have stolen and buried before his incarceration.

COMEDY

JACKASS 2.5 - UNCUT (MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Johnny Knoxville, Bam Margera, Chris Pontius, Steve-O, Dave England, Ryan Dunn, Jason 'Wee-Man' Acuña, Wee Man, Preston Lacy, Ehren McGhehey

■ **DIRECTOR:** Jeff Tremaine



More *Jackass* insanity and male nudity from the world's wildest stuntmen. *Jackass 2.5*, a 60-minute compilation of interviews and extra skits cut from *Jackass 2*, originally debuted free on the internet and is now available on DVD. Watch Preston Lacy painted as a gorilla swat RC planes from the top of a porta-loo, a life-raft inflating inside Bam Margera's Lamborghini and more. It's definitely not as entertaining as the TV series or the 'proper' films, but fans will find plenty to like.

■ **VERDICT:** At one hour long the feature itself feels a lot more like a DVD bonus than a legitimate flick, but an hour of bonus stuff helps pad it out.

★★★

SCI-FI

SOUTHLAND TALES (MA15+)

■ **STARRING:** Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson, Seann William Scott, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Justin Timberlake

■ **DIRECTOR:** Richard Kelly



Southland Tales didn't actually hit Australian cinemas - it premiered at the Cannes Film Festival way back in 2006 to an overwhelming negative response, and the theatrical cut went on to gross less than $400,000 worldwide. *Southland Tales* (from *Donnie Darko* director Richard Kelly), set in an alternate future, weaves the stories of an action film hero with amnesia, an ex-porn star, and twin brothers Roland and Ronald Taverner together as their destinies become intertwined in the midst of an approaching apocalypse.

■ **VERDICT:** An odd, virtually incoherent mess. An ambitious, yet somewhat fascinating, David Lynch meets Philip K. Dick car accident.

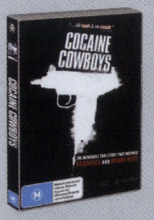
★★

DOCUMENTARY

COCAINE COWBOYS (M)

■ **STARRING:** Jon Roberts, Mickey Munday, Jorge 'Rivi' Ayala

■ **DIRECTOR:** Billy Corben



Cocaine Cowboys chronicles the development of the illegal drug trade in Miami during the 1970s and 1980s, a $20 billion a year industry it not only sheltered the city from a nationwide recession – it made Miami the home of more homicides per capita, and more banks per square mile, than any other city in the US. Featuring interviews with both law enforcement personnel and organised crime leaders, in addition to news footage from the era, the documentary examines the sheer complexity of these operations and the economic effects of the coke business.

■ **VERDICT:** A fraction too fast-paced for its own good, *Cocaine Cowboys* is a nonetheless slick and absorbing look at the real stories behind *Miami Vice* and *Scarface*.

★★★



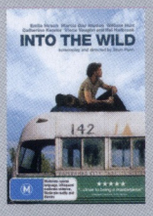
THE CREDITED EDITOR FOR *NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN*, RODERICK JAYNES, IS A PSEUDONYM FOR JOEL AND ETHAN COEN, WHO CO-EDIT THEIR MOVIES. DESPITE HIS NON-EXISTENCE, JAYNES WAS NOMINATED FOR AN OSCAR THIS YEAR.

DRAMA

INTO THE WILD (M)

■ **STARRING:** Emile Hirsch, Marcia Gay Harden, William Hurt, Jena Malone, Catherine Keener, Brian Dierker, Vince Vaughn

■ **DIRECTOR:** Sean Penn



The Golden-Globe winning, and Academy Award-nominated film, *Into the Wild* is the sad but true story of Christopher McCandless, a top student and athlete at Emory University. After graduating, McCandless decided to give the $24,000 in his savings account to OXFAM, burn all the money in his wallet and hitchhike to Alaska to live in the wild. The relatively unknown Emile Hirsch (*Lords of Dogtown*) delivers an outstanding performance as McCandless, and Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder provides the film's fantastic soundtrack.

■ **VERDICT:** Masterfully shot and very personal, *Into the Wild* is a sad but compelling look into the life of a romantic, but over-confident, wanderer.

★★★★

COMEDY

BALLS OF FURY (PG)

■ **STARRING:** Dan Fogler, Christopher Walken, George Lopez, Maggie Q

■ **DIRECTOR:** Robert Ben Garant



Set against the deadly world of extreme ping-pong, a former pro ping-pong phenomenon, Randy Daytona, is recruited by the FBI for a secret mission – to track down and flush out his father's killer, Feng (Christopher Walken). Calling upon the guidance of a blind Ping-Pong sage and his sexy niece (*Die Hard 4.0*'s Maggie Q), he sets about getting into Feng's ping-pong tournament. Imagine a cross between *Dodgeball* and *Enter the Dragon*, but not a great one.

■ **VERDICT:** Ultimately a movie that sounds far funnier than it actually is. Imagine *Blades of Glory* without Will Ferrel, *Happy Gilmore* without Adam Sandler or *Dodgeball* without Ben Stiller and you'll understand the issue.

★★

TV

THE ADVENTURES OF YOUNG INDIANA JONES - VOLUME 2 (M)

■ **Starring:** Sean Patrick Flanery, Corey Carrier, George Hall, Ronny Coutteure

■ **Creator:** George Lucas



Volume 2 of *The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones* contains all 18 episodes from the second season of the ultimately ill-fated show. Harrison Ford even makes guest appearance in one episode. In case you've forgotten, each episode is a flashback to Indy's adventures as a child and a young man – although many of this season's episodes occur during the WWI era. Essential for true Indy fans, who we imagine are probably going quietly mad with cautious optimism with the impending release of *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*.

■ **VERDICT:** This show won 10 Emmy Awards during its relatively short run. Have a look.

★★★★

BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID (PG)

■ **DIRECTOR:** George Roy Hill

■ **STARRING:** Paul Newman, Robert Redford, Katharine Ross



Very loosely based on the exploits of the real-life outlaws, *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* chronicles the pair's criminal careers.

VERDICT: One of the best westerns ever, and the ending is all-time.

★★★★

THE ROOKIE (G)

■ **DIRECTOR:** John Lee Hancock

■ **STARRING:** Dennis Quaid, Rachel Griffiths



To be honest, we thought this was the Charlie Sheen/Clint Eastwood cop movie before we actually watched it. Some old guy plays baseball in this one.

VERDICT: Feel-good sports fluff.

★★★

ALMOST FAMOUS (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Cameron Crowe

■ **STARRING:** Billy Crudup, Frances McDormand, Kate Hudson, Jason Lee, Patrick Fugit, Zooey Deschanel



A 15-year-old writer gets an opportunity to travel with a rock band, Stillwater, on their 1973 tour – learning about life and love on the way.

VERDICT: One of the best rock 'n roll movies ever made.

★★★★

RUN LOLA RUN (M)

■ **DIRECTOR:** Tom Tykwer

■ **STARRING:** Franka Potente, Moritz Bleibtreu, Herbert Knaup



Lola has just received a frantic phone call from her boyfriend Manni, who's lost a small fortune. Lola must replace the money in twenty minutes.

VERDICT: Its time limit and multiple lives concept set it apart.



"You're my boy, Blue!"

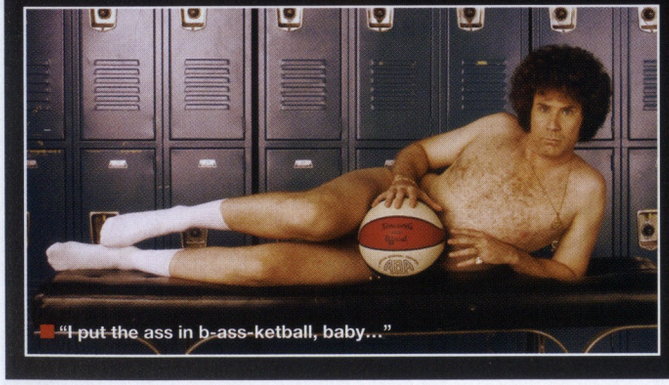
CINEMA

SEMI PRO (RATING TBC)

DIRECTOR: Kent Alterman
STARRING: Will Ferrell, Woody Harrelson, Andre Benjamin, Will Arnett

Having tackled wrestling, soccer, figure-skating and NASCAR, you'd think that Will Ferrell would have had his fill of sports movies. Not so! Get ready for another bite of the apple as 1970s basketball gets a serve. The NBA is planning to absorb the top four teams from the floundering ABA before it dissolves. The last-placed Flint Michigan Tropics, led by their owner, promoter, coach and star player, Jackie Moon (Ferrell), who acquired the team with cashola made off his hit song 'Love Me Sexy', has one problem – neither he, nor his team, are anywhere near as good as they think they are. After trading a washing machine for an ex-NBA benchwarmer (Harrelson), will they have the missing ingredient to take them to the top? With a top-notch cast, and ridiculous premise, it's looking like another slam-dunk for Ferrell.
Opens April 3





"I put the ass in b-ass-ketball, baby..."

COMING SOON

SUPERHERO MOVIE (M)
STARRING: Drake Bell
A piss-take movie that actually looks good. After being bitten by a genetically altered dragonfly, geek Rick Riker develops powers and abilities beyond those of an ordinary man. Nothing is sacred as *Batman Begins*, *Fantastic Four* and many others get spoofed.
Opens April 10

IRON MAN (RATING TBC)
STARRING: Robert Downey, Jr.
After a horrific accident, playboy philanthropist Tony Stark is forced to create a suit of armour to keep himself alive, and in turn, uses his newly forged technology to fight crime.
Opens May 1

INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL (RATING TBC)
STARRING: Harrison Ford
After nearly twenty years Indy's back! What else do you need to know? Get ready for one-liners, sexy dames and over-the-top villains, supported by a rousing score and non-stop action. Welcome back!
Opens May 22

BUZZ

The latest movie murmurs from home and abroad



DAMN HOT!
Perennial babe and tractor beam of hotness, Mila Kunis (*That '70s Show* and *Family Guy*), has confirmed she will star in the Max Payne movie adaptation. She joins Mark Wahlberg in the big screen version of the classic Rockstar videogame. He plays a cop who loses his family as he investigates a series of murders shrouded in conspiracy. Kunis will play a sexy assassin who joins Max to avenge the death of her sister.



SNOOCHIE BOOCHIES
After the less than overwhelming response to *Clerks II*, Kevin Smith is back with a vengeance with *Zack and Miri Make a Porno*. Out towards the end of this year, it tells the story of two lifelong friends in desperate need of cash, who decide to solve their problems by making a porno. Through the course of the film, they discover their friendship may not be as plutonic as they thought. A great ensemble cast, including Seth Rogen, Elizabeth Banks, Jason Mewes and ex-porn star Traci Lords, should mark a return to form for Smith.



GIVE 'EM HELL... AGAIN
After messing with our heads in *Pan's Labyrinth* Guillermo Del Toro is bringing that, smart-arse, kick-arse, monster-bashing behemoth, Hellboy, back for another round. *Hellboy II: The Golden Army* tells of a spill over of beasties from the spiritual world to our realm, and it's up to our horny devil to lay the smack down. This bad boy is looking like a visual masterpiece with some crazy kung fu antics provided by chief villain, Prince Nuada (Luke Goss from *Blade II*) and the usual wisecracking shenanigans by our hero Hellboy (Ron Perlman). Expect it to hit cinemas late August.



SWEEP THE LEG!
In news we could barely believe ourselves, we heard that Will Smith is producing a remake of *The Karate Kid*. Whilst details are scant at the moment it's alleged that his son, Jaden, is slated for the lead role and the same production team that made the original three films will return.

WIN A TRIP FOR 2 TO ENGLAND!

Death at a Funeral is the latest addition to the rich heritage of British comedy, and it doesn't disappoint! What better way to celebrate the release of such a great British comedy than by giving away a trip for two to historical England. Flying into London, you will get the chance to discover one of the most famous cities in the world before taking some time out and heading out of town into the sprawling picturesque English countryside. No matter which direction you go, you will be sure to come across some of Britain's finest 'chocolate box' towns, full of timber houses and cobbled streets.



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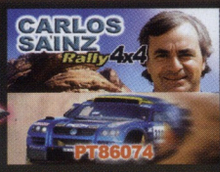

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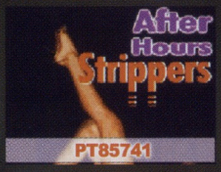

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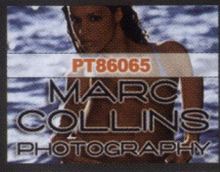

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Codes, hints, tips, unlockables and more!

TIPS & CHEATS

SKATE

SKATE rocks the spot – with gusto, my friend. You know it. We know it. And if you don't know it, well… we're going to beat you over the head with a blunt object of our choosing until you do know it.

One of our favourite things about *SKATE* is the freedom: the loose game structure, combined with an incredibly detailed open world, enables players to shape their own gaming experience by simply skating throughout the environment, looking for the best 'spots' to 'chill' and bust out some 'phat' moves

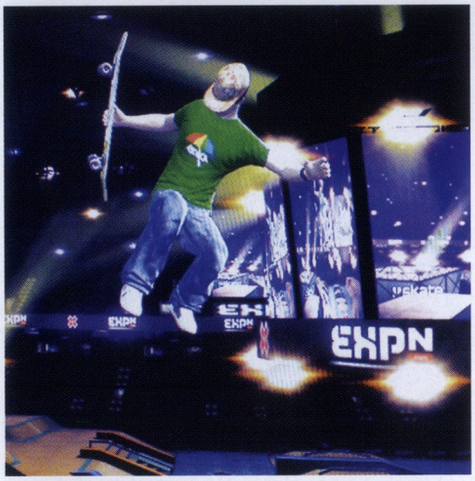
Yeah boyee! Get funky fresh on the board with this, our guide to the best spots to go 'downtown' and just 'max out' on a ragga tip. Cowabunga dude! Bust out your most radical tricks, homie, and chill out in the place be! Good grief, that sounds terrible…

Anyway, by all that we mean here are our favourite secret-ish areas in *SKATE*. Enjoy!













MEGA RAMP

The Place: The X Games (derr…)

The Deal: Well, the X Games ramp, for many, is the highlight of the game, giving you the opportunity to bust out moves you previously only dreamed of. You rarely get the chance to catch the kind of air possible on the Mega Ramp, so it's important to take advatage!

The Challenge: Winning the X Games themselves is bit of a challenge, but essentially you only need to get one decent score – which any chump could do if they played long enough. The real challenge is consistency: can you get three or even four scores over 80 in the competition? It's not easy!

DROP OUT

The Place: East of the Art Gallery

The Deal: This was probably the defining moment of our early *SKATE*age. After randomly tricking our way throughout the streets of San Vanelona we came across what looked like a semi-decent spot to leap from. So we shaped up for the ollie, kicked off and then… WTF! Huge canyon-esque drop of megaton proportions. Our bowels emptied as we fell and somehow managed to land, before finding a huge maze-like underground tunnel area leading all the way down to old town. Epic.

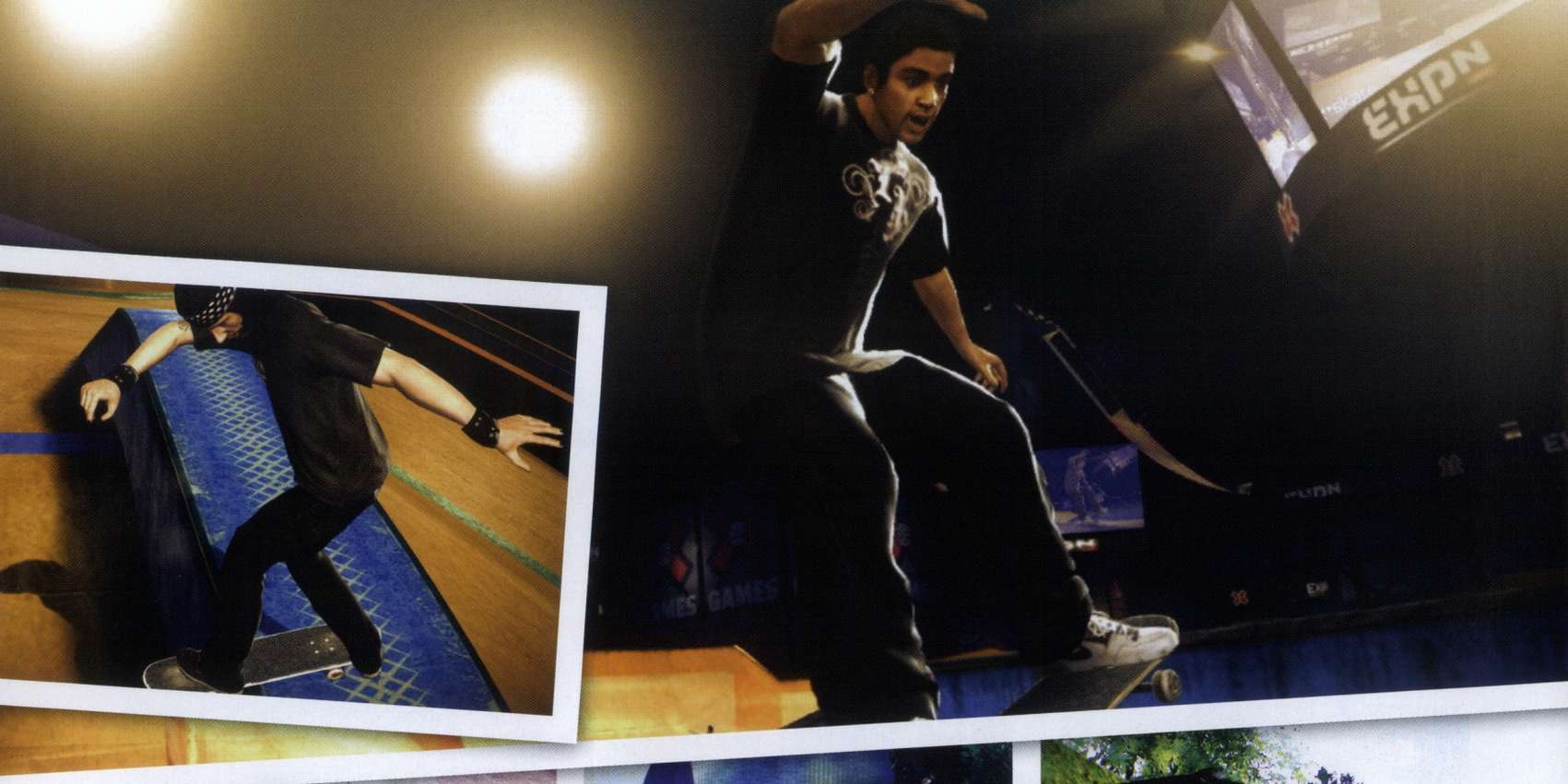
The Challenge: Well, the possibilities are endless here. We spent hours trying to flip into a reverse coffin grab, or trying two loop the loops in a row inside the tunnels.

BONE BREAKER

The Place: Next to the crazy dude with the hat

The Deal: This is truly the place where skaters go to die. Doing the actual challenge with the crazy hat guy is easy enough, but if you never return to this spot after said challenge you're missing out – big time.

The Challenge: Truly, landing successfully from this insane leap is a challenge in itself. In fact, unless you land on the slope to the right (as instructed in the pro challenge) it's pretty much impossible to land successfully (prove us wrong readers). This is also a great spot to try and break as many bones as possible (if your into that sort of thing!). Break every bone three times and you'll unlock a secret skeleton character!















BALANCING ACT

The Place: West of Downtown

The Deal: While this area won't cause you to loose bodily fluids in the same way as other spots on this list, it's still a hell of a cool place to 'chillax' with your skating chums. Of special note is the cool bridge type thing that spirals around the edge of the area – you can get up there if you approach from the correct angle, which leads us onto…

The Challenge: We managed to while away an hour or two trying to ollie our way around all the 'bridgey' things spanning this area. It's a whole lot harder than it looks. Momentum and the timing of ollies is key here, you have to keep the speed going and get the height to succeed.

THE SUPER MEGA RAMP

The Place: Southwest of the Elementary School

The Deal: The Mega Ramp is for pussies. After completing the *Thrasher* magazine section of the game, you get access to this beast, and pound-for-pound it's easily the most fun area in the game. After careering through a huge drop onto a Mega Ramp-esque leap you can head right to a loop-the-loop ramp, then skate on to the many vert ramps.

The Challenge: The mandate is fun baby – but if you want to get more specific try and land a full coffin flip, or maybe even go for the full 1080 if you think you're up to it. Another good thing to try is going straight from the ramp into the loop and staying on your board the whole time.

A LIL' BUMP AND GRIND...

The Place: Far east of Old Town

The Deal: We actually came across this by mistake, while looking for another spot, and it's testament to the scope of this game that after 20-30 hours play we had never come across this spot once. Featuring a steep incline, split by a number of grind rails, this spot is perfect for those who want to practise grinds at a speedy pace.

The Challenge: We spent a good hour trying to out-do each others scores in this spot, but what we found hardest of all was the timing of the grinds – more specifically trying to ollie between the rails. Timing is key here, but if you do half decent flip tricks onto different rails, then you're going to score pretty high…

DATABASE

All the games that matter on **PS3!**

FUTURE WATCH

The PS3 games to grab in the coming months



STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED

Release: Late 2008

You're kidding, right? You get to be Vader's badass apprentice, crush heads with the Force, fricassee Stormtroopers with a lightsaber... what the hell else do you need? (Maybe The Emperor whispering "Good...goood...let the hate flow through you" with each kill) We're chomping at the bit for this one. We may even turn to the Dark Side for it...



PROTOTYPE

Release: Late 2008

So, you're an escaped, genetically engineered shape shifter with Wolverine-style claws, and no memory, tearing up the streets of New York. Cool premise, huh? Taking on the army? No problem, just keep killing and absorbing your victims' memories to unlock abilities and uncover the truth. This one has mega hit stamped all over it.



DEAD SPACE

Release: 2008

In space no one can hear you scream, or cry, or poop your pants – and it's a fair chance you'll be doing all of the above when *Dead Space* hits shelves. Feeling like *Event Horizon*, you are the last surviving member of a deep space mining ship whose entire crew has been overcome by an alien infestation. Creepy, dark, and atmospheric, it's looking to put a weightless twist on the survival horror genre. Scared? You will be...



MIRROR'S EDGE

Release: 2008

Remember the opening sequence to *Casino Royale*? All those crazy, leapfrogging, death-defying antics executed by Bond's nimble adversary? Call it parkour or free running, it's piss-bolting over seemingly impossible obstacles with flair and style. It's also the basis for *Mirror's Edge*, an FPS with a difference that promises realistic motion, intriguing combat and the most fluid-moving heroine you've ever seen. Bring it on!!

PS3 TOP 20



1 ASSASSIN'S CREED — 10

A landmark in gaming history. Nothing short of awe-inspiring. The missions are samey, but navigating open-worlds will never be the same. The biggest leap since *GTAIII*.



2 UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE — 10

The best PlayStation exclusive on the market and the best looking console game to date. Frankly, *Uncharted* rocks up to the party and just plain owns everything...



3 CALL OF DUTY 4 — 10

Relentlessly exciting. Includes a dizzying variety of combat scenarios and stacks of bleeding-edge military hardware. You'd have to be insane, or a girly-man, to miss it.



4 ROCK BAND — 10

The best party game ever and a triumph in every department, with a killer set list and rad instruments. You wanted the best; you got the best – *Rock Band* rocks.



5 MOTORSTORM — 10

Fast, hard, dirty and utterly exhilarating, *MotorStorm* is essential for everyone's PS3. Not even the lack of split-screen can detract from this fantastic racer.



6 RESISTANCE: FALL OF MAN — 10

The perfect launch title for PS3, and possibly the best console FPS ever made. The massive 40-player online deathmatches are more fun than you can imagine.



7 THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION — 10

One of the deepest adventures we've ever laid eyes on. Simply put – awesome. This is arguably the only RPG you'll need for some time to come.



8 SKATE — 09

A groundbreaking title that resets the bar for sports games in general. It kickflips *Tony Hawk's* to the curb with its simple approach. Irresistibly addictive and downright essential.



9 WARHAWK — 09

There is no better multiplayer game on PS3 right now. Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness, it's a superior piece of software.



10 BURNOUT PARADISE — 09

Despite the lack of the old Crash Mode, the overwhelming majority of *Burnout Paradise* rocks harder than Slash during an epic guitar solo. So fast, so wild.



11 HEAVENLY SWORD — 09

Heavenly Sword is one of the best games we've seen in ages. A beautiful, yet deep, masterpiece and an awesomely enjoyable ride, albeit a rather short one.



12 GUITAR HERO III — 09

Captures everything perfect about *Guitar Hero* with the best tracklist yet, but very nearly spoiled it all with the ridiculous new Battle Mode.



13 COLIN McRAE DIRT — 09

Colin McRae DIRT is an ambitious, accessible racer with a surprising amount of depth. The best rally sim ever? You better believe it. Rest in peace big guy.



14 THE DARKNESS — 09

Tentacles and guns – the perfect combination. Stunning, original and gory as hell. You'd have to be dim to miss *The Darkness*.



15 STUNTMAN: IGNITION — 09

The vehicular equivalent of a 10-hour-long orgasm. Gentlemen, start your boners. *Stuntman: Ignition* suceeds in upending the original in every way.



16 RATCHET & CLANK FUTURE: TOOLS OF DESTRUCTION — 09

The biggest, wildest, most interesting, varied and downright gool ol' fashioned fun adventure these two have been part of.



17 THE ORANGE BOX — 09

A stellar package; ripe, in season and packed full of vitamin value. If there isn't one title here that does it for you your gaming license is null and void.



18 TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX VEGAS — 08

This Vegas adventure is definitely worth a look. A slick, gorgeous, accessible and utterly entertaining tactical shooter.



19 CONDEMNED 2 — 09

Takes everything that's good about an FPS and drags it, kicking and screaming, into a survival horror paradigm. Gripping stuff and well worth the price of admission.



20 SINGSTAR — 08

SingStar will rule Friday nights for the foreseeable future. Should last as long as the PS3 does providing Sony pulls its finger out with more downloadable tracks.

PS3

ARMORED CORE 4 7
A far better alternative to *Mobile Suit Gundam*.

BEOWULF 6
Has the dubious honour of ticking every game cliché.

BLADESTORM: THE HUNDRED YEARS' WAR 6
A solid mix of genres wrapped in an intriguing tale.

BLAZING ANGELS II: SECRET MISSIONS OF WWII 6
Not quite the ace of aces at this stage.

CALL OF DUTY 3 7
A solid but surprisingly unspectacular shooter.

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO 6
Sick and twisted but not enough variety.

THE CLUB 8
Compulsive and fun – one club you should join.

CONAN 7
A bulldog of bloodletting, savage adventure and boobies.

DEVIL MAY CRY 4 7
A worthy entry into the series but the backtracking spoils it.

DEF JAM: ICON 8
Somehow it's won its way into our hearts. Stupid fun.

THE EYE OF JUDGEMENT 5
Impressive tech, but it's still a $160 card game.

F.E.A.R. 8
A chilling ride but the graphics are a bit of a shocker.

FIFA 08 8
Finally puts *FIFA* on level terms with *Pro Evolution*.

FIFA STREET 3 7
The saviour for your multiplayer soul. Simple but fun.

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3 8
Boasts visuals that will knock the teeth out of you.

FOLKLORE 8
Great graphics, memorable characters. A sweet surprise.

FULL AUTO 2: BATTLELINES 7
Brims with potential but fails to live up to it.

GENJI: DAYS OF THE BLADE 5
Plodding gameplay that belongs on the Atari 2600.

THE GODFATHER: THE DON'S EDITION 6
Fine, but do yourself a favour and get the PS2 version.

THE GOLDEN COMPASS 4
Uninspired level design and dull quests make this a chore.

HARRY POTTER & THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX 6
Decent, but its chore-like structure will bore most.

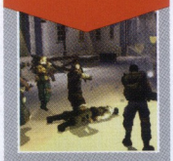
JUICED 2: HOT IMPORT NIGHTS 7
A top bit of racing fluff, although it's all a tad generic.

KANE & LYNCH: DEAD MEN 6
One part *Hitman*, one part Michael Mann; mostly a let down.

LAIR 5
A massive let-down. It feels rushed and unfinished.

LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION 6
Solid enough, but a lazy port and a visual let-down.

5 GAMES THAT SHOULD GET SEQUELS, BUT WON'T...



FREEDOM FIGHTERS
Still one of the best third-person squad shooters ever. We've wished and hoped, back us up readers. Petition for *FF2*!



BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL
One of the best games never played. As close to a *Zelda* on the PS2 as you could get, with colourful characters.



ROGUE GALAXY
Brilliant cel-shaded RPG that had bucket-loads of style and a killer combat system. This one deserves a second chance.



URBAN CHAOS: RIOT RESPONSE
This never gained the recognition it deserved. Pity, as it featured a wieldable riot shield and some great slo-mo violence.



ODIN SPHERE
We know it's just come out, but the look and style of this 2D RPG doesn't seem to fare well for next generation – a damn shame.

MADDEN NFL 08 7
Some great improvements and plenty of modes.

MARVEL: ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 9
Great co-op and an exhaustive list of Marvel's greatest.

MEDAL OF HONOR AIRBORNE 6
A dinosaur of an FPS – wait for *Brothers in Arms* instead.

MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM: TARGET IN SIGHT 3
A rubber godzilla of a title. What a pipe blocker!

MX VS. ATV UNTAMED 6
Feels like a PS2 port, looks like a PS2 port. Disappointing.

NBA 08 5
Fails to pick a side (sim or arcade) and so fails at both.

NBA 2K8 8
Not as pretty as *LIVE* but has more depth.

NBA LIVE 08 8
Best of its kind. B-ball devotees will adore it, guaranteed.

NBA STREET HOMECOURT 8
The brashest, most addictive arcade basketball game yet.

NEED FOR SPEED CARBON 8
The last *NFS* street racer before the series went legit.

NEED FOR SPEED PROSTREET 8
Great smoke, but more depth would've been nice.

NINJA GAIDEN SIGMA 8
A treasure trove of gaming goodness, super tough.

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: AT WORLD'S END 6
A very shallow slash 'em up. Ye be warned.

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008 8
Still the best soccer in the biz, but the graphics are dire.

SEGA RALLY 7
Not so much a revolution as one hell of a renovation.

SONIC THE HEDGEHOG 4
Mostly terrible. Avoid at all costs.

STRANGLEHOLD 7
Max Payne inspired action, plenty of frantic fun.

TIMESHIFT 6
A solid time-bender that doesn't quite reach 88mph.

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: AW2 8
A tense, realistic shooter, but *Rainbow Six Vegas* is better.

TONY HAWK'S PROVING GROUND 6
Struggles to escape the shadow of *SKATE*.

TUROK 7
Packs plenty of bite but it's missing a few teeth.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 3 8
Gorgeous and gory, but the lack of split-screen blows.

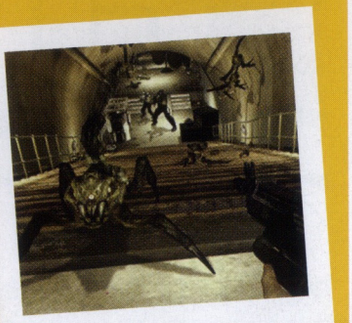
VIRTUA FIGHTER 5 8
As hardcore as fighting games get.

VIRTUA TENNIS 3 8
Some of the best fun four people can have on one PS3.

WWE SMACKDOWN VS. RAW 2008 7
A solid entry. A few new additions but still plays the same.

MAGIC MOMENTS

Great moments in PlayStation history remembered!



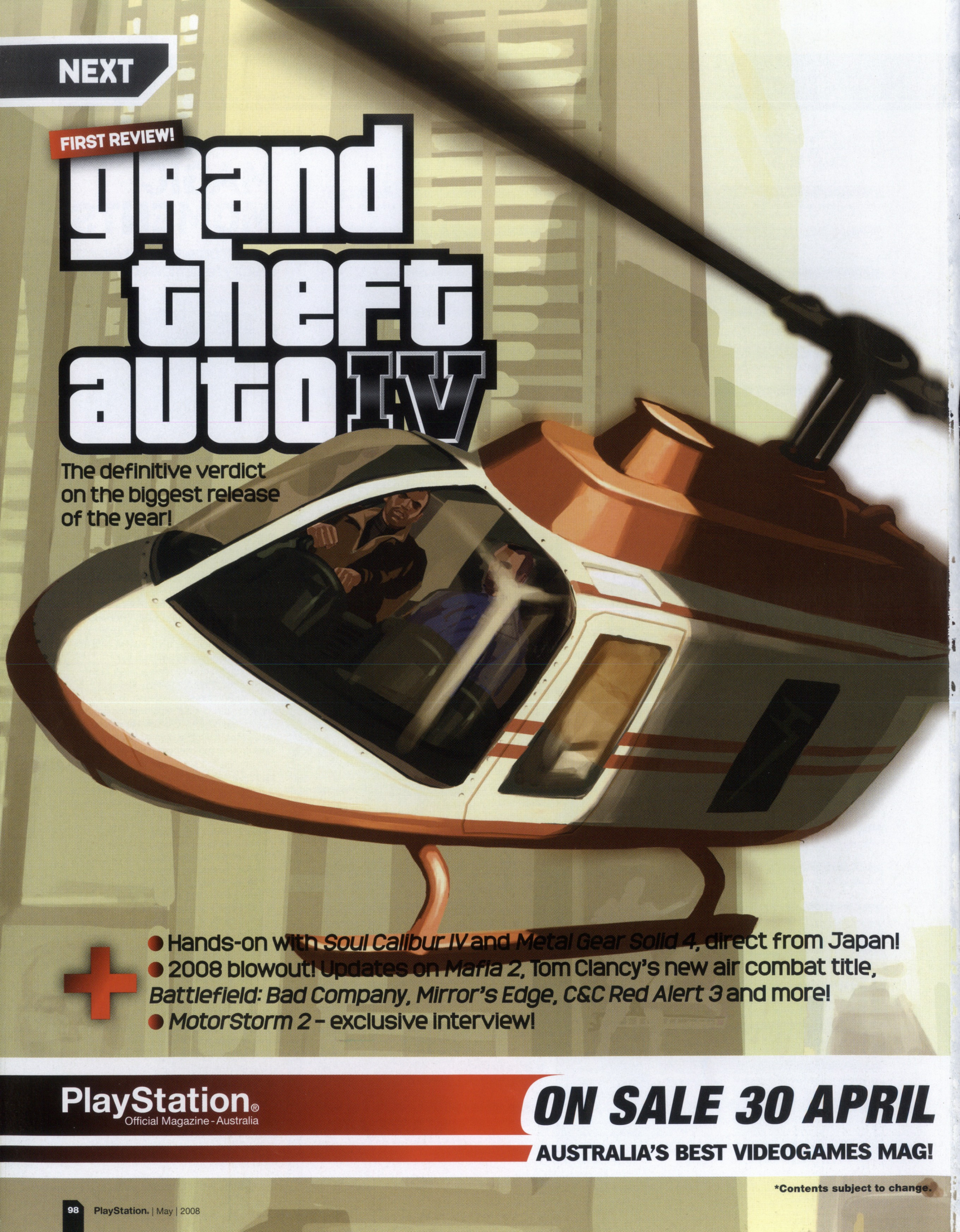
THE GAME: Resistance: Fall of Man
THE CONSOLE: PlayStation 3
THE YEAR: 2007
THE MOMENT: If you haven't seen Luc Besson's sci-fi classic *The Fifth Element* then you're missing out on a hell of a lot of great things – namely the ridiculously good-looking Milla Jovovich, Bruce Willis at his wise-cracking, take-no-shit-from-anyone best and the greatest gun in cinema history.

The gun in question fires a tracer bullet into a target, then sends every following bullet back to the same location. This capability is shown off expertly in the film by a psychopathic Gary Oldman. He shoots the tracer bullet into a dummy target, then turns around and opens fire on a crowd of mercenaries he's selling the gun to. But here's the kicker – as the mercenaries are flinching and pulling out their own guns, we see that all of the bullets he fires spin around 180 degree arcs before they can hit the crowd, then hammer into the target behind Oldman.

Yes, we realise that this column is about Magic Moments in PlayStation history but the impact of *Resistance*'s debut owes a lot to this movie. Clearly the guys at Insomniac are big fans of *The Fifth Element** because they recreated the film's famous gun in the game's Bullseye weapon. Picking up this weapon for the first time, then discovering that even if a tagged enemy hides behind cover you can still blast him to pieces by aiming into the sky and arcing the bullets over his cover, is a moment of pure gaming bliss.

While the Bullseye gun may be *Resistance*'s crowning glory, it sure doesn't hurt that the game also has stacks of other creative yet vicious weapons like the 'explode-into-50-knife-blades' Hedgehog grenades, the 'pause-the-rockets-in-mid-air-and-re-aim-them-with-laser-guidance' LAARK and the 'throw-up-forcefields-that-stop-all-weapons-*except*-the-plasma-rounds-from-your-own-gun' Auger. All we can say is bring on *Resistance 2*. Now!

*Trivia – Insomniac's other famous franchise (*Ratchet & Clank*) also uses cityscapes that are heavily inspired by *The Fifth Element*.



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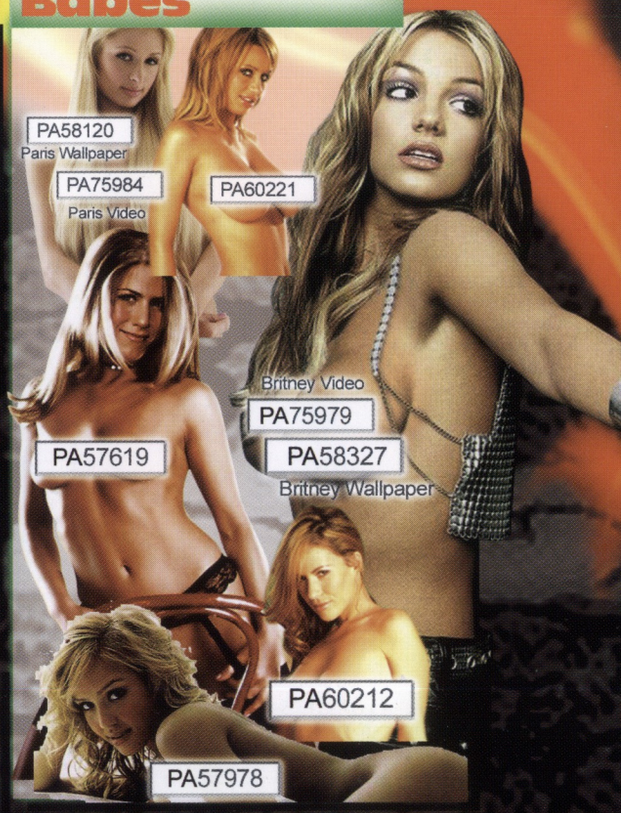

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PA 43996	PA 47102	Alicia Keys - No One
PA 44084	PA 47100	Santana Feat. Chad Kroeger - Into The Night
PA 44226	---	The Potbelleez - Dont Hold Back
PA 43539	PA 46994	Timbaland Feat. Keri Hilson - The Way I Are
PA 44116	PA 47146	Maroon 5 - Wont Go Home Without You
PA 43988	PA 47095	Mika - Happy Ending
PA 44111	PA 47151	Fergie - Clumsy
PA 44118	PA 47107	Sean Kingston - Me Love
PA 43960	PA 47088	Matchbox Twenty - How Far Weve Come
PA 44122	PA 47111	Avril Lavigne - Hot
PA 44055	PA 47109	Rihanna feat NeYo - Hate That I Love You
PA 44053	PA 47087	Chris Brown - Kiss Kiss
---	PA 46981	Plain White T's - Hey There Delilah
PA 44124	---	Linkin Park - Shadow Of The Day
PA 44062	---	The Veronicas - Hook Me Up
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