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Issue 25 | February 2008

PLAYzine

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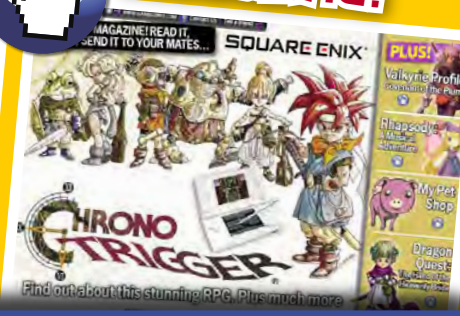
The comic classic is coming to Wii!

FIRST LOOK! DYNASTY WARRIORS

New and improved!



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WIN LOADS OF GAMES UP FOR GRABS!

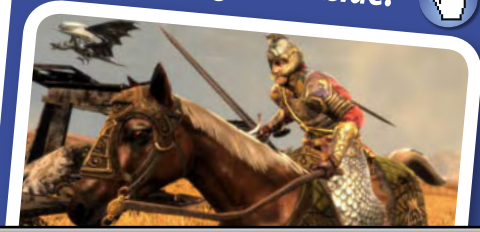
PREVIEWED! THE MAGIC ROUNDABOUT

We take it for a spin!



REVIEWED! LORD OF THE RINGS: CONQUEST

Review and guide inside!



PREVIEWED! POPULOUS DS

In-depth look and interview



FIT FEATURE! WII FIT EXPLAINED!

How to fight the flab this spring



REVIEWED! SIMANIMALS

Is it animal attraction?



PLAYZINE

Welcome



We're very excitable here at PlayZine. It's a state we've become used to, but this month we're especially giddy with the news that the Wii is getting a very grown-up shooter in the shape of Rogue Trooper. Not only that, but Grand Theft Auto is coming to DS, and it looks amazing! Enjoy the mag.

Dean Mortlock, Editor
HGZine@gamerzines.com

Damien McFerran
Apart from his usual mag duties, Damien also wrote our excellent Square-Enix mag, too!



CHECK THIS!



Lord of the Rings: Conquest

PLUS LOADS MORE REVIEWS!
SimAnimals
Age of Empires Mythologies
Tomb Raider Underworld

DON'T MISS THIS!



Rogue Trooper

There's a very classy action-packed shooter on its way to the Wii, and we've got all the info!



Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars

Trust us, this is gonna be huge!



Be Wii Fit

Sculpt those guns!



Chris Schilling
Proved his love of all things feathered and furry this month.

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

PREVIEWS

NINTENDO WII
NASCAR Kart Racing
The Magic Roundabout
Rogue Trooper: Quartz Zone Massacre

NINTENDO DS
Mini Ninjas
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars
Populous DS

SONY PSP
Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce
Mytran Wars

REVIEWS

NINTENDO WII
SimAnimals
Gravity

NINTENDO DS
Lord of the Rings: Conquest
Age of Empires Mythologies

Sony PlayStation 2
Tomb Raider Underworld



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

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

Latest News

NASCAR KART RACING

Could it steal pole position from Mario?

info

FROM: EA
A BIT LIKE... Mario Kart
WEB: http://kartracing.easports.com
OUT: March

Wii



WHAT'S THE STORY?

Well, it's the American NASCAR racing in the Wii, but rather than play it straight, EA are giving us something far more interesting – a Mario Kart-style cartoon racer, complete with power-ups, track obstacles and larger-than-life characters to control.

WHAT DO WE KNOW SO FAR?

We do know that those larger-than-life characters we just mentioned are in fact all based on real NASCAR drivers – see the 'Best Bit' just over to the right. The game will have 24 'fun' tracks to get around, plus four based on actual NASCAR courses – which, basically, are just ovals.

WHEN DO WE GET MORE?

The game is out very soon indeed, so we'll be able to get a review to you next month for sure.

ANYTHING ELSE THAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

Like Mario Kart, NASCAR Kart Racing will also have a four-player split-screen multiplayer option. So, finally, you've got another game you can use with all those steering wheels that you splashed out on.



Best Bit

Despite the fact that this is obviously a driving game aimed at younger gamers, EA are still making the most of the NASCAR license. This means that you'll be able to race as one of 14 cartoon versions of real NASCAR drivers – like young Joey Logano here.







Mini Ninjas

Latest News

Small but perfectly formed?

info

mini ninjas

FROM: Eidos
A BIT LIKE... Ninja Gaiden
WEB: www.minininjas.com
OUT: 2009

DS

WHAT'S THE STORY?

It's ninjas versus samurai, as you take control of the smallest martial arts hero since Mr Miyagi.

WHAT DO WE KNOW SO FAR?

We know the plot. You play a ninja called Hiro who, and we're quoting here, is 'the smallest hero on the biggest adventure'. As usual, the world is in the brink of chaos and it all falls down to you and your ninja friends to save it. The chaos the world is on the brink of is caused by an evil samurai warlord, and the game leads you through multiple battles with his minions, leading you on eventually to a final battle in his Fortress of Doom – which you can find between the Bungalow of Fear and the Maisonette of Mild Peril.

WHEN DO WE GET MORE?

It's early days yet, as Mini Ninjas only has a vague release date of autumn 2009, but we think this could be a remarkably entertaining little game, so we'll be nosing around to bring you more shots and information soon.

ANYTHING ELSE THAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

As you can see from the shots, it's definitely a looker. Taking a leaf out of the Prince of Persia book, your ninja-powered character mixes beauty with brains though, so you'll get a good range of moves and weapons-based attacks to work with, and also neat little touches like wall running, too.

Most interestingly, Mini Ninjas is being developed by a European company called Io Interactive, that's better known for creating the best-selling Hitman series of games. So would it be fair to expect a dollop of stealth alongside the fighting and general mayhem? Oh, we think so.



Graphically, this is looking very impressive indeed.



You may be a mini ninja, but you've definitely got big talents.

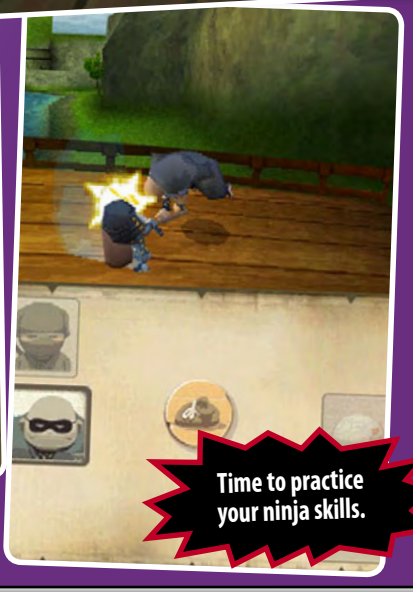
Best Bit

Mini Ninjas is being created as we speak by the boffins at Io Interactive. And that's the best bit. Why? Because Io are the team behind the stunning Hitman series of games, so they're masters of the sneaky genre. With that in mind, we think it's fair to expect big things from them.





You'll be able to do wall running, just like Prince of Persia!



Time to practice your ninja skills.

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DYNASTY WARRIORS: STRIKEFORCE

Latest News

info

FROM: Koei
A BIT LIKE... All the other Dynasty Warriors games!
WEB: http://dynastywarriorsstrikeforce.co.uk
OUT: 24th March

PSP

This Dynasty now includes three mates!

WHAT'S THE STORY?

The Dynasty Warriors series has been around for over 10 years now (it was launched on the PlayStation in 1997) and while its button-bashing kill-'em-up gameplay isn't without its fans, it's clear that the series needed some work to keep it fresh. The hope is that this might be the game that does just that.



WHAT DO WE KNOW SO FAR?

New features include an impressive-looking multiplayer mode where you can add three other players to join in the action, which could be just the shot in the arm that the gameplay needs.

There are also new supernatural abilities that mean, for the first time, that you can take to the skies for an airborne attack combo.

WHEN DO WE GET MORE?

Not long to go now, as the game is out next month. It looks great and plays smooth as silk, so we recommend you keep an eye out for this one.

ANYTHING ELSE THAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

There's also talk of downloadable content too, which means the game's lifespan could be increased further.



Trust us, it's easier to kill than it looks.

Best Bit

If there was a problem with previous Dynasty Warriors games, it was that the single-player experience could get a little dull and repetitive after a short time. Thankfully, Strikeforce lets up to four of you fight as a team, and we're happy to report that it works like a dream.





Expect carnage and spectacular effects on a massive scale.

PLAYZINE on its way

incoming

We've seen the future of gaming, and it's good!

Guilty Gear XX Accent Core Plus



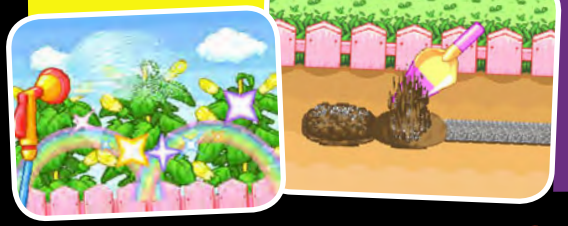
FROM: TBC **OUT:** Spring

The long-running Guilty Gear franchise has seen more updates than most of us have had hot dinners, and this upcoming release shows that this trend has no sign of letting up. True to form, this is a slight update of Accent Core, which was released on the PS2 and Wii not so long ago. The PSP version has us the most excited, as hopefully wireless multiplayer will come as standard.

Gardening Mama

FROM: 505 Games **OUT:** June

Following hot on the heels of Cooking Mama, Taito's next game takes the wide-eyed chef out of the kitchen and into the garden. On paper this hardly seems like the ideal videogame concept, but then we'll admit that we thought that about Cooking Mama, too. The same stylus-driven gameplay appears to be all present and correct, so Mama fans should be right at home with this.



Wii Sports Resort



FROM: Nintendo **OUT:** 2009

Wii Sports is effectively the game that's responsible for selling the Wii to the general public, so there's naturally a lot of expectation surrounding this summer-tinged sequel. Around 10 events are promised, including Frisbee, Jet Skiing and Kendo. The game will also come bundled with the new Motion Plus add-on, which improves the Wii Remote's sensitivity, as well as a slightly larger rubber Wii Remote jacket.

New Advance Wars



FROM: Nintendo **OUT:** 2009

Recently confirmed as part of Nintendo's 2009 release schedule, little to nothing is known about this latest instalment in the hugely popular Nintendo Wars series (better known as Advance Wars here in the West). After the excellent Advance Wars: Dual Strike and Advance Wars: Days of Ruin, we honestly can't see Intelligent Systems screwing this one up. No solid date has been set but expect this to be one of the best DS games this year.

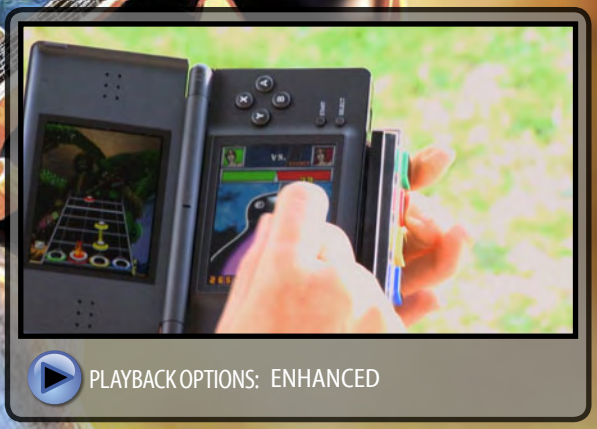


Future releases

Best start saving! Here are the top games coming soon…

- Dynasty Warriors: Strikeforce — PSP — March
- Tenchu 4 — Wii — March
- Valkyrie Profile — DS — Spring
- Puffins: Island Adventure — DS — Spring
- Ready 2 Rumble: Revolution — Wii — Spring
- Sin & Punishment — Wii — 2009
- Endless Ocean 2 — Wii — 2009

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PREVIEWS

THE HO TO A CONSOLE NEAR YOU!



GRAND THEFT AUTO: CHINATOWN WARS

DS

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA? FIND OUT IN OUR INFO-PACKED PREVIEW

THE MAGIC ROUNDABOUT



Wii

MYTRAN WARS



PSP

POPULOUS DS



DS

Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars

Gonna take you down. All the way down to Chinatown…

info

FROM: Rockstar
A BIT LIKE: Driver
WEB: www.rockstargames.com/chinatownwars
OUT: March

DS



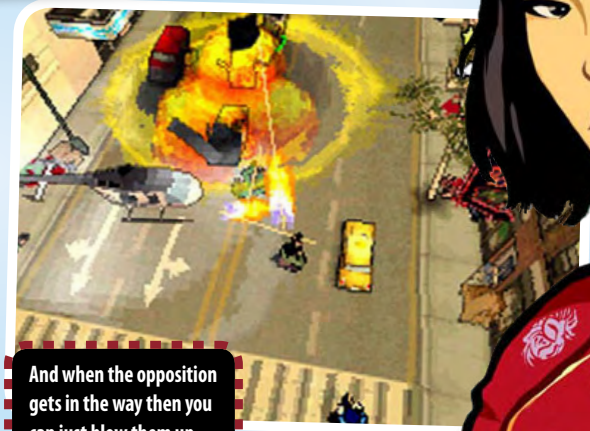
Here you're escorting someone called Chan.

"THIS IS NO DUMBED-DOWN PORT TO HUMOUR DS OWNERS. THIS IS A FULLY FUNCTIONING GAME OF GTA"

Any new Grand Theft Auto game is going to be big news, but somehow the fact that GTA is (finally) coming to DS is the biggest news we've heard for quite some time. Best of all though, Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars is a wholly original title, created from the ground up to take advantage of the DS's unique capabilities.

FULLY FUNCTIONING

Make not mistake, this is no dumbed-down port to humour DS owners. This is a pure, fully functional game of GTA, with all the bells and whistles that comes with it. That means you get glorious graphics running at a steady 30 frames-per-second, with the only concession being a change of camera angle, raising it up to reduce the draw distance and, therefore, making sure that everything runs smooth as silk. You can also expect to see gang warfare on a massive scale, all the side-missions and bonuses you'd expect (including the familiar taxi, fire engine and ambulance ones) and a whopping amount of missions to play through. Just to get through the main game should take you about 20-30 hours. And trust us here, we can guarantee that it'll take you considerably longer to get that elusive 100 per cent completion score.



And when the opposition gets in the way then you can just blow them up.

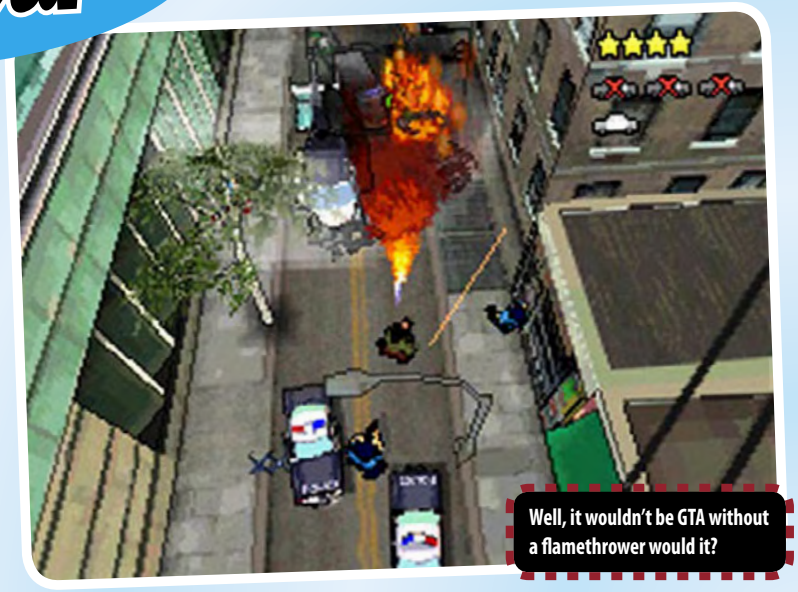


PLAYZINE preview

info



DS



Well, it wouldn't be GTA without a flamethrower would it?



"The touchscreen of the DS is going to get plenty of use in the game"

Rockstar's attitude to game design has always been to release fewer games to ensure that their high standards never drop. It's reassuring to find out that Chinatown Wars is a game that was actually completed several months ago, but the development team (which, fact fans, is twice the size of the one that produced the PSP 'Stories' games) has used the remaining time to tweak and polish the game to perfection.

Rockstar are also wise enough to know the limitations of the hardware they're programming for, so the only compromises are a simpler graphical style throughout, a trimmed down choice of music for the radio stations and the previously mentioned camera angle – making it higher means you don't have to draw so much detail of the city in one go, but it is still a totally 3D game in a bustling city.

Time for a Story

The game's cut-scenes tell a fantastic tale, and are perfectly in the style of previous Grand Theft Auto games.







The DS's touchscreen is also going to get plenty of use in the game, too. A GPS system can be accessed on the bottom screen (with links to all your contacts and favourite locations), plus there's also the promise of a range of mini-games using the stylus – including safe opening, hotwiring a car with a screwdriver and even using a Lottery Scratchcard.

Finding a fault with Chinatown Wars at this stage seems very difficult, but perhaps the only stumbling block is that this will be one of the few 18-certificate games to be released on the DS, so a lot of you are going to be too young to play it. Sorry guys, but for the rest of us, Chinatown Wars is shaping up to be a genuine DS classic.

Sweet and Sour

Going a little deeper into Chinatown



WHAT'S GOING ON | DIRTY OLD TOWN | ANYTHING ELSE?

WHAT'S GOING ON

The plot is, on paper, remarkably straightforward. You play a character called Huang Lee, who heads to Liberty City to solve the mystery surrounding his father's death and also retrieve a sword for his uncle.

DS

HOW READY ●●●●●●●●●○ HOW GOOD ●●●●●●●●●●

GTA on the DS could well be pocket perfection

PLAYZINE Preview



The Magic Roundabout is looking pretty fresh for a game based on a series that originally aired in 1963.



It's not every day you see a dog talking to a snail. Mind you, that's probably the most sensible thing about The Magic Roundabout.



The Magic Roundabout

How magic will this roundabout be?

info

FROM: Deep Silver
A BIT LIKE... Ratatouille
WEB: www.deepsilver.co.uk
OUT: Spring

Wii

The original Magic Roundabout children's series was, and we mean this in the nicest possible way, utterly bonkers. Making marginally less sense than The Clangers and painting the screen in brighter colours than Jamie and his Magic Torch, this was a show conceived in France then dubbed into English without even looking at the original script!



Sadly, this game is based on the recent computer animated revival, but you can't keep a children's TV character down, and The Magic Roundabout remains chock full of 'em. Happily, Deep Silver has seen fit to put Zebedee (the mustachioed magician), Dougal (the shaggy hound), Ermintrude (the cow) and friends centre stage, in a game that wisely opts for an off-the-wall party game experience. And while the storyline itself is original, there are enough nods to the show and even scenes from the TV series to amp up the loveability of it all.

The Magic Roundabout looks to have captured the easy-going charm and surreal touch of the show surprisingly well. Any game that features a super-mellow rabbit can't be all bad.

IN A SPIN

Heading back to the playground



BLOW UP | Mini Dressed | CAST OFFS

BLOW UP

The DS version of The Magic Roundabout has been developed independently of the PC and Wii ones, enabling the team to fully the tailor the quirky gameplay to the DS. Split-screen gaming might not be anything new, but where else can you sketch your own flower designs or blow into the microphone to control the flight of a paper plane?

Wii

HOW READY ●●●●●●●●●○ HOW GOOD ●●●●●●●●●○

So yes, it's magic, in a roundabout sort of way

PLAYZINE Preview



While some turn-based wargames can be meandering affairs, Mytran Wars packs everything up with a twist-laden plot and a diverse range of missions.

Roll over screen for annotations



Mytran Wars

Strategy gaming gets a stunning makeover



You can play as the native Mytrans or the invading human Kondor Corporation.



A simple but effective base management system enables players to craft visually stunning, highly powerful HQs.

info

MYTRAN WARS

FROM: Deep Silver
A BIT LIKE... Final Fantasy Tactics
WEB: www.deepsilver.co.uk
OUT: Spring

PSP

Once the preserve of the nerd herd, strategy gaming deservedly had a reputation as a genre that was big on brains but low on beauty. Now look how far we've come. Mytran Wars isn't just moderately enticing, it's jam-packed with visual goodness, all seemingly added without sacrificing any depth or playability. It's a bit like finding out your favourite supermodel has a PhD.

Key to the game's initial appeal is undoubtedly its cool graphic novel style of presentation. Cartoon panels aren't exactly innovative, but here they paint the story with such style, and prepare the way for the sci-fi themed turn-based gameplay so well that even the most hardened fire button junkie will find themselves lured in.

Mytran Wars is no slouch when it comes to in-game gloss either, with developer Stormregion (creators of the Codename: Panzers series) building a pretty nifty world of alien landscapes, Mecha vehicles, and heavy artillery. And thanks to its roots in a genre rife with opportunities for exploration, empire building, and technology tree climbing, it also promises to deliver on the longevity front, too. Best of all, we'll have a review for you next month.

"THE KEY TO THE APPEAL OF MYTRAN WARS IS ITS COOL GRAPHIC NOVEL STYLE OF PRESENTATION"

PSP

HOW READY ●●●●●●●●●○
HOW GOOD ●●●●●●●●●○

This is strategy gaming at its most beautiful

PLAYZINE preview

info

POPULOUS DS

FROM: Rising Star Games
A BIT LIKE: Age of Empires Mythologies
WEB: www.populousds.com
OUT: February



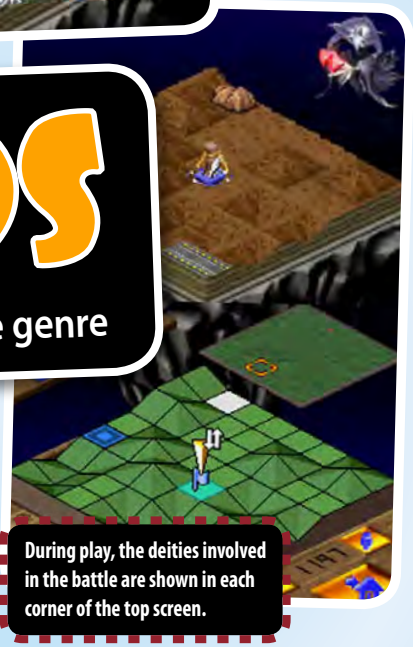
The four gods on the top screen show that this is a four-way multiplayer skirmish.



Christmas comes early for the denizens of this Populous world.

POPULOUS DS

It's time to revisit the game that spawned an entire genre



During play, the deities involved in the battle are shown in each corner of the top screen.



Futuristic levels are also included, like this moon-base world.

"THE AIM OF POPULOUS IS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR FOLLOWERS, WHILE RAINING FIRE AND BRIMSTONE ON YOUR ENEMY"

Chances are you won't have heard of Populous before, but you almost definitely will be familiar with its creator Peter Molyneux. He's the brains behind the recent Xbox 360 smash-hit Fable 2, and long before he was crafting worlds for would-be adventurers to explore, he was inventing genres – the first Populous (released in 1989) is generally regarded as the very first 'God sim'.

After appearing on a wide range of formats and enjoying several sequels, Populous has been absent from the gaming world for a few years. Thankfully that is all set to change, as the game is being resurrected on the DS by Japanese developer Genki with a new lick of paint but the same old brutally addictive gameplay.

The aim of Populous is to encourage your followers to grow in strength while raining fire and brimstone on your enemy. Although you don't have direct control over your people, you can aid their development by rearranging the landscape so they can build impressive settlements and thus increase in power. You can also cast spells which have various effects of a both defensive and offensive nature. Your spell-casting depends on how much 'Mana' your subjects

Populous DS interview

Divine intervention

So we've played the game and we like the game, but we still wanted to know more. With that in mind then where else could we go to but the developers themselves?

Why was Populous chosen for a DS upgrade?
The decision to develop Populous for the DS really came down to two factors: The Populous brand name and the DS as a viable format. Populous was responsible for starting the god-sim genre 20 years ago, and it's been almost a decade since the last console version was released. It's time to bring a title that holds a lot of nostalgia and reverence back to into the public domain, and for a new generation to experience its groundbreaking gameplay.

How many playable 'Gods' will feature in the game and will they differ from each other in terms of power and followers?
There are five playable gods as well as their respective demon counterparts, adding up to 10 playable deities. Each god or demon represents one of the five elements of earth, wind, fire, water and harvest (that's life to me and you) and will possess powers related to these elements.

How does the 'miracles' system work, and how can these powers be used to aid your quest?
The 'miracles' system is basically special powers that are unique to that particular god/demon, and are based on their affiliated element. For example, the Earth God will be able to cause earthquakes that shake the land and form rocks, create swamps

PLAYZINE preview

info

POPULOUS DS



Roll over screen for annotations



Best Bit

Although the developer has done an excellent job of updating the original concept for a new generation of gamers, we're pleased that they've shown a lighter side, too. Warrior Hunt is a fun little diversion that seems almost inconsequential on paper, but we predict it will swallow up an awful lot of our play time when the game finally hits the shelves. You have to locate (and tag) several different characters on the game map, and are then graded accordingly on your performance. Sounds basic, but then most highly addictive game modes are.



create, so the more prosperous that they are, the more currency you will have for dishing out magical justice on your foe.

Of course, simply porting the original game to Nintendo's handheld wouldn't be enough to ensure success in today's marketplace, so the developer has introduced various improvements to make the game seem a little more fresh and new. Stylus control is a big plus, as the original game relied heavily on mouse input. You can also select from five different mythical deities this time around, each with their own unique magical powers. Also, there's wireless multiplayer, which could prove to be an utterly essential addition when you have like-minded mates around.

If you've never played Populous before then this could be the ideal introduction to a classic videogame franchise, and if you count yourself as a fan already, then we certainly don't need to explain the appeal any further – chances are, you've already got your copy pre-ordered.

HOW READY	HOW GOOD
●●●●●●●●●○	●●●●●●●●●○

God-like genius on the Nintendo DS

interview continued...

that swallow up any enemy worshipper or drop a giant meteorite that does massive damage. These powers do a significant amount of damage to the opposing worshippers but come at a price – they can only be cast once you have a specified amount of influence among your worshippers.

Can you tell us how the touchscreen interface is used in Populous DS?

The touchscreen allows the player to use the stylus like you would a mouse – much like the original on the PC. You can flatten or raise land by just touching on the appropriate points on the map, and also pick up and move meeting points and worshippers.

What new features will Populous DS introduce that will be new to fans of the series?

The most obvious new feature is the option to play any of the 10 deities, which effectively means you can play through the game 10 times with a different experience each time. The multiplayer games are also new – Populous is no longer solely a single-player game. However, it's not just about 'new' options, as Populous DS also has a selection of the best-loved maps from the original game.

Can you tell us a bit more about the 'Warrior Hunt' mini-game and how it works?

The Warrior Hunt mini-game plays very much like an interactive hide and seek – you are assigned a specified target to locate on one of the maps.

The score for the game will be calculated in real time. Points are added for every target found, and the remaining time after task completion will also be converted to points. Conversely, points are deducted for each non-specified target touched. Based on the total points earned, a platinum, gold, silver or bronze medal is awarded to the player.

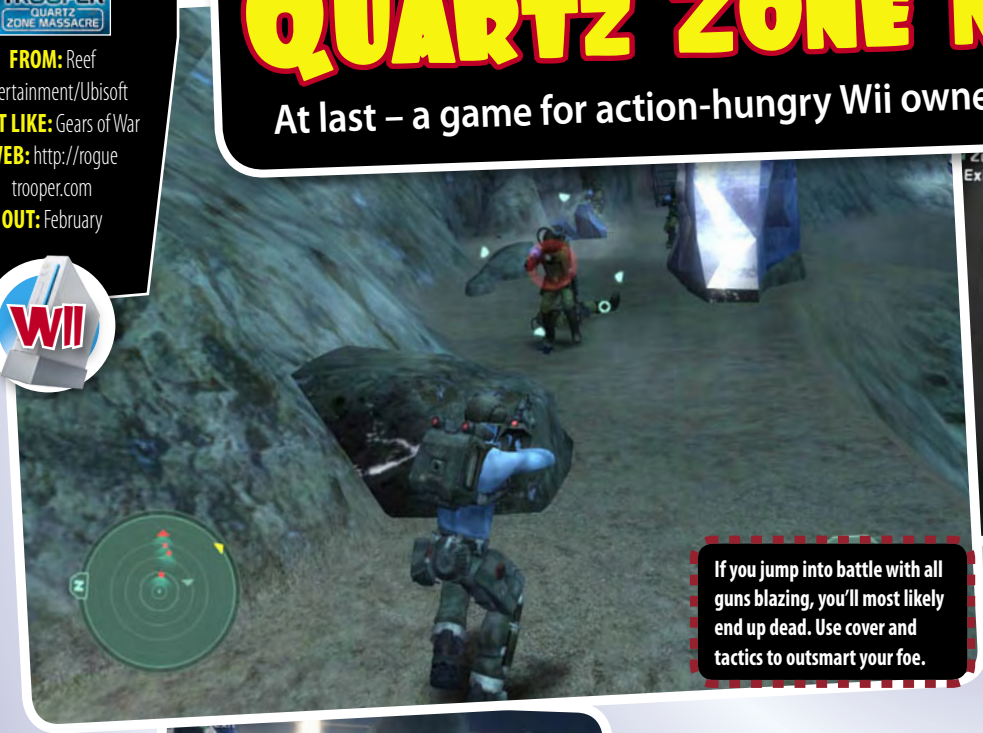
PLAYZINE Feature

Rogue Trooper: Quartz Zone Massacre

At last – a game for action-hungry Wii owners to get stuck into!

info

FROM: Reef Entertainment/Ubisoft
A BIT LIKE: Gears of War
WEB: http://rogue trooper.com
OUT: February



If you jump into battle with all guns blazing, you'll most likely end up dead. Use cover and tactics to outsmart your foe.



Gunnar's sniper scope is excellent for taking out distant enemies. Bolt on the silencer for that added element of surprise.



This tank is blocking your army's progress. Take out the turrets with the rocket launcher.

Rogue Trooper: Quartz Zone Massacre is a game all about second chances. Not only do Rogue's comrades get resurrected by having their disembodied personalities fused with his weapons and equipment, but the game itself is being given a second chance to impress. It was originally released on the PlayStation 2 and Xbox in 2006, and despite some positive reviews, it was largely ignored. However, it's now been given the opportunity to find a more receptive audience on Nintendo's Wii, which has arguably been starved of this type of game during its lifespan.

WORLD AT WAR

Based on a regular story from the highly influential British comic 2000 AD, Rogue Trooper is set in your typical post-apocalyptic world where two hostile factions – the Norts and the Southers – are constantly at war. Nu-earth has been turned into a toxic wasteland with air so polluted it's no longer able to sustain human life, driving the two factions into enclosed cities, only to emerge when equipped with high-tech breathing apparatus.

In an effort to defeat the Norts and reclaim Nu-earth, the

SUPER TROOPER

The tricks of mutant warfare



It's A GAS | **Silent But Deadly** | **Cover Me**

It's A GAS

Because of the deadly atmosphere on Nu-earth, the Norts have to carry around air canisters on their backs. You can use this to your advantage – shoot the canister and air spews forth. It eventually explodes, sending the helpless enemy skywards and killing them instantly. You have to time your shots though, so watch for the special 'air tank' symbol when aiming.

PLAYZINE Feature

info

ROGUE TROOPER QUARTZ ZONE MASSACRE

Wii



It's possible to sneak up on enemies and take them down for a quick kill.

Roll over screen for annotations



Southers develop the 'GI' (Genetic Infantry), a super soldier capable of incredibly feats of endurance and (most importantly) able to breathe Nu-earth's deadly atmosphere. The game begins with a GI assault taking place, but it doesn't take long to realise that the new troopers have been thrust into a trap thanks to the betrayal of one of their senior commanders.

You assume control of Rogue as his drop-pod touches down on Nu-earth, and the first few missions form something of an extended tutorial. Although it looks like a fairly typical third-person shooter, Rogue Trooper is actually packed with neat touches that make it stand out. For example, the cover system is particularly effective, with Rogue effortlessly sticking to scenery and adopting defensive stances just when you need him to.

"ROGUE TROOPER IS ACTUALLY PACKED WITH NEAT TOUCHES THAT MAKE IT STAND OUT"

BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Within the first few minutes of play you locate a fellow trooper who is promptly taken out by the enemy. Thankfully you're able to extract his bio-chip – which holds his personality – and install it into your gun. Later on you'll encounter two other fallen warriors, who are fused to Rogue's backpack and helmet. While this seems rather bizarre to begin with, it grants the game some pretty distinctive gameplay features.

ENHANCED VIEW



SEE ROGUE IN ACTION!
Check out this exclusive Rogue Trooper gameplay video and then tell us that you're not excited!

ROGUE TROOPER interview

The comic strip presents...

So we've played the game and we like the game, but we still wanted to know more. With that in mind then where else could we go to but the developers themselves?

What new gameplay features have been included to set the Wii version apart from the PS2/Xbox versions?

We redesigned the core gameplay mechanics to suit the Wii's unique control system, along with rebalancing a number of attributes of the game, so fans of the original game will find they have to play the game in a whole new way in order to succeed.

On top of this, we've also doubled the number of players in split-screen multiplayer, so you and your friends can play as the full team of Rogue, Gunnar, Helm and Bagman.

Can we expect any graphical embellishments?

As well as increasing the resolution of all the textures and remodelling the characters, we have introduced some great new special effects. Bump-mapped reflective water, inverse kinematic animation, high-quality bloom, per-pixel lighting, specular materials, and soft shadows all make Rogue Trooper: The Quartz Zone Massacre the best-looking version yet.

How will the Wii's unique Nunchuk controllers be used in the game?

The Wii Remote can be used for incredibly precise aiming, and our new sniping system makes full use of this precision for satisfying headshots and tankshots. The Nunchuk, on the other hand, is used for

PLAYZINE Feature

info

ROGUE TROOPER QUARTZ ZONE MASSACRE

Wii



Best Bit

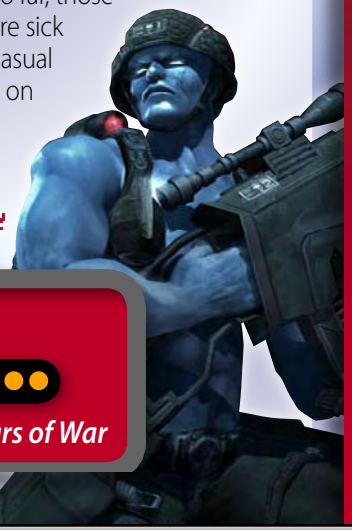
Your three fallen friends – fused via their bio-chips to your gun, backpack and helmet – have their own unique uses. Gunnar boosts your aiming accuracy and can be placed as an automatically-firing sentry gun, Bagman can manufacturer items and upgrades, and Helm has the ability to create holographic decoys and unlock security-coded doors. Using these special powers is one of the things that makes Rogue Trooper so refreshingly original, and we can't wait to exploit them fully during the course of the game.



The game makes excellent use of the Wii's unique control setup – if you've played Metroid Prime 3 then you'll know what to expect. Movement is handled by the Nunchuk's analogue stick and aiming by the Wii Remote. You can adjust the level of sensitivity to suit your own personal preference, but we found the default setting to be ideal. Within minutes of tackling the opening level, we were comfortably popping shots off at Nort hostiles with no trouble at all.

A BIT OF A ROGUE

Rogue Trooper is certainly shaping up to be quite an experience, and while some might be initially sceptical of a game that is technically three years old, we're glad that Rebellion is getting a second chance to give its game the audience it rightly deserves. While the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 are packed with quality third-person shooting titles, the Wii is crying out for decent games from this genre. And from what we've seen so far, those of you that are sick to death of casual party games on the Wii may soon have your prayers answered.



HOW READY? ●●●●●●●●●

ANY GOOD? ●●●●●●●●●●

Shaping up to be the Wii's answer to Gears of War

interview continued...

throwing grenades, either quickly lobbing forward, or steadily throwing to an exact location.

Will the game directly reference existing storylines or are you attempting to give fans something new in terms of plot?
The game starts with a retelling of the titular Quartz Zone Massacre, and then follows Rogue's attempts to track down the Traitor General responsible for the death of his comrades.

Can you describe the appeal of Rogue Trooper to gamers that might not be old enough to have experienced the comic strip before?
The main appeal comes from Rogue and the biochips capabilities in regards to their combat abilities. In both the comics and the game, Rogue Trooper is effectively four soldiers in one, which makes engaging the enemy across a large area a great deal of fun – Gunnar as a sentry gun can be stationed in one area, Bagman can lay micromines in another and Helm can provide a holographic impression of Rogue in-between so that Rogue can engage from a fourth position.

It's the motivation of Rogue which is key. Every one of his comrades dies in the massacre, and so his mission is one of vengeance which everyone can understand. It's how he wreaks this revenge that is what gamers will definitely enjoy.

Did any of the artists and writers involved with the Rogue Trooper comic have any input into the game itself?
Gordon Rennie, one of 2000 AD's top writers, drafted the storyline for the game. He is also the lead writer on the comicstrip, and as such brought a huge amount of insight and depth which both the fans and gamers alike will enjoy.

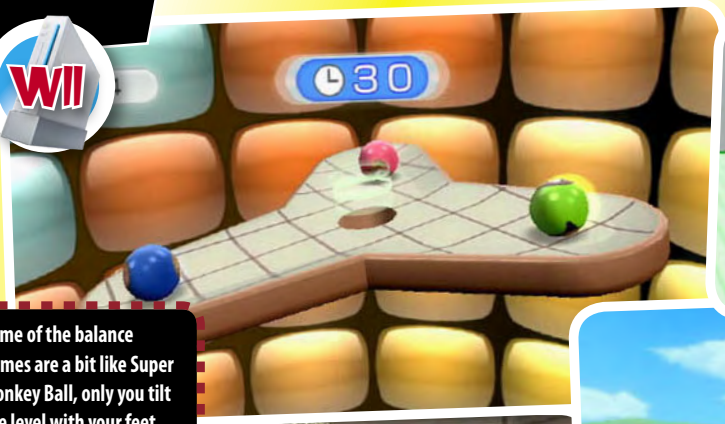
PLAYZINE Feature

BE WII FIT



Discard the dumbbells and fight flab the fun way with Wii Fit!

info
Wii Fit
FROM: Nintendo
WEB: www.nintendo.co.uk
OUT NOW



Some of the balance games are a bit like Super Monkey Ball, only you tilt the level with your feet.



It doesn't matter if you do press ups on the board or on bricks – they're still gonna hurt!



Stepping is much more fun when you're actually running through a Nintendo park.



The boxing classes work both your arms and your legs. You've gotta dance!

Roll over screen for annotations



At the turn of New Year, almost everyone thinks: "New year, new me", before embarking on a keep fit routine. And it's always around now that the vast majority of you decide to quit after realising it's too cold to run outside and gyms are mind-crushingly dull places.

Nintendo came to the rescue last year with Wii Fit. A package of two parts, it comes with the exercise software and a revolutionary new balance board that looks a bit like a set of bathroom scales.

Its very first job is to weigh you, during which you enter your height and age and it'll calculate your BMI (Body Mass Index – how much of your body is fat) before telling you what your ideal BMI is. It then throws some simple stand-on-one-leg balancing tests at you, lets you create a new Mii and, at the end you're given a new Wii Age.

PLAYZINE Feature



The slalom is huge fun, but you'll find the most fun games to be the ones that work you the least.



Some of the balance games, like Tightrope Walk, are great fun.

"THE OTHER ADDED BENEFIT IS HOW Wii Fit TRACKS YOUR PROGRESS"

It's structured into four training modules, each dedicated to working different elements of fitness – muscle conditioning, balance games, yoga and aerobic capacity – so depending on what you want, you can tailor the program to suit. Want big biceps and pectorals to flex down the beach? Stick to muscle conditioning. Want to be a lean, mean marathon-munching machine? Aerobic capacity is what you'll want to focus on.

FIT TO DROP

Muscle exercises are simple enough, doing push ups and lunges, but they aren't much more fun than just doing the same exercise on a regular stepping board. The really impressive elements in Wii Fit are the balance games and aerobic capacity bits, because these are proper, fun videogames. The stepping class, for example, sees your Mii character running around a virtual park, with all your Mii friends placed around happily cheering you on or even running up alongside you. Balance games are pure Nintendo fun, and see you skiing down slaloms, swaying left and right, jumping up and down, heading footballs and shaking your booty doing hoola hoops.

A BALANCED OPINION

It's this balance training that makes Wii Fit so special. The only way to develop good balance is with expensive Yoga or Pilates classes, but even they don't measure if you're doing the exercises correctly like the balance board does (admittedly, it's not 100 per cent accurate, but much closer than your own guesswork).

The other added benefit over a regular fitness program is how Wii Fit tracks your progress. Every little detail, from how many press ups you managed to how many calories you burnt during a jog, is all logged so you can see if you're on track to hit your goals. And being able to compare stats with fellow Wii Fitters is another added bonus, giving it a social element, in that it can then turn competitive.

Top trimming tips

Five hints to help hone yourself hard...

1. Get your friends to get themselves Wii Fit too, and then have competitions with mates – like who can do the longest or fastest runs.
2. Whenever you're stood at a bus stop – or even in a queue – check yourself to see if you've put all your body weight on one leg. If you have, this is lazy balance. Lock both legs!
3. Go for a road run once a week. If you did just that on its own then you'd never get fitter, but using Wii Fit on the other days will see your distance improve.
4. Don't jump into the fast exercises like Headers without warming up first. Just a few minutes doing gentle stepping will get you warm and prevent you pulling a muscle.
5. If you're not seeing the results you were hoping for, then swap the Mars Bars for mangos!

FiGHt tHe FLAB

Three more games that use the balance board



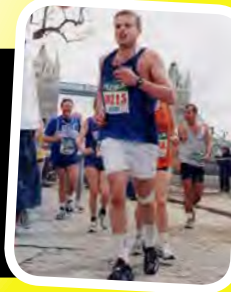
RAYMAN | SHAUN WHITE | Wii MUSIC

RAYMAN: RAVING RABBIDS TV PARTY

One of the best party games on Wii, there are a few noticeable mini-games that make use of the balance board. You can 'butt board' by sitting on the board like a sled as you ride a bull down a mountain. And in another game you get to play as Godzilla, blasting out streams of fire down at the military by leaning in the direction you want the fire to go.

Fighting fit!

We asked Dan Curley to write our Wii Fit feature. A games champ and journalist, he's also a keep fit nut and probably the only person with both a Gamesmaster Golden Joystick and a London marathon medal. Probably.



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Reviews

THE BEST VERDICT ON THE BIGGEST GAMES AROUND!



LORD OF THE RINGS: CONQUEST

DS

READ OUR REVIEW, THEN CHECK OUT OUR GUIDE



AGE OF EMPIRES MYTHOLOGIES

DS



TOMB RAIDER: UNDERWORLD

PS2



SIMANIMALS

Wii



GRAVITY

Wii

THE PLAYZINE FOUR-POINT REVIEWERS PLEDGE

1. If a game's rubbish then we're not afraid to say so
2. Our reviewers are hand-picked from the very best
3. We always play a game long enough to form an opinion
4. We love our games more than life. Well, almost

info



FROM: EA
A BIT LIKE... Gauntlet
WEB: www.pandemicstudios.com/conquest
PRICE: £24.99
PEGI AGE RATING: 12+

DS



Conquest is almost like a whistle-stop tour of Middle-earth's most famous locations.



Occasionally you'll be given mission-specific units to control – these usually have enhanced powers and strength.

Lord of the Rings: conquest

Will you choose to defend Middle-earth, or destroy it totally?

Have you watched The Lord of the Rings trilogy and wondered what it would be like to see Sauron's forces crush the goody-goody Alliance of Middle-earth? Of course you have. Everyone knows the bad guys have the most fun, and given the choice we'd much rather be a marauding cave troll than a stumpy Hobbit with hairy feet.

Thanks to EA's latest title, it's now possible to explore your darker side. Lord of the Rings: Conquest is divided into two parts – good and evil. Both factions have different missions to tackle, with the good guys aiming to lay siege to Sauron's fortress in Mordor, while the baddies attempt to strike at locations such as Gondor, Rivendell and The Shire.

The action is viewed from a top-down 3D viewpoint, and you control one unit at time. Three main types of soldier are available to you – the Warrior excels in close combat, the Archer is excellent with ranged attacks and the Mage is capable of hurling deadly spells in the enemy's direction. All three unit types must work together to succeed.

On paper the concept is water-tight. After all. what could be more fun than a blood-soaked romp through the lush environments of Middle-earth? For the most part, the game lives up to its promise, too. Hacking your way

LORDING IT UP

Taking your band of misfits into battle...



CAPTURE POINTS | MAGICAL ORBS | WANT A MEDAL?

CAPTURE POINTS

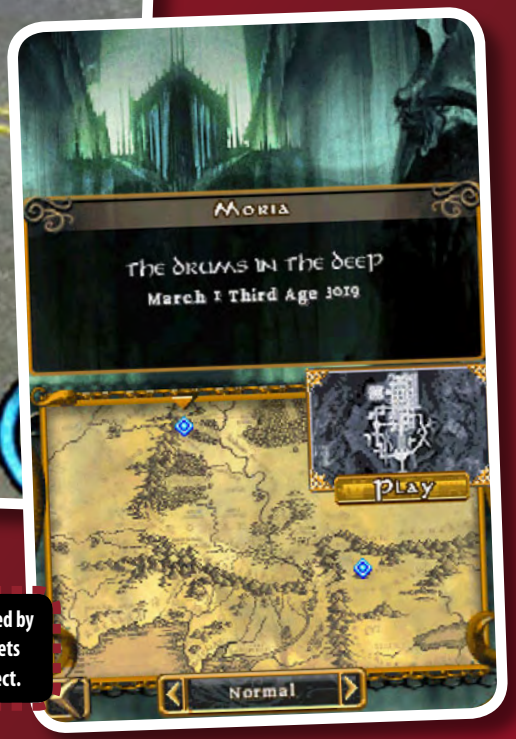
To complete each level you have to take (and hold) various strategic command points on the battlefield. Once you've successfully captured one of these points, you can use it to switch troop type or respawn should the character you're controlling bite the dust. Capture all the points and you've on the way to victory.



Later in the game the Allies can call upon the massive, tree-like Ents.



This Mage is either incredibly brave to stand up to that cave troll, or incredibly stupid.



Each mission is preceded by a briefing screen that lets you know what to expect.

through hordes of hostile soldiers in order to reach a vital point on the map is tremendously satisfying and challenging. Sadly, there are a few niggles that sully the experience.

Firstly, your fellow soldiers display a level of intelligence that's about as deep as a particularly shallow puddle. Often you will find yourself locked in deadly combat and taking a massive beating, yet your Mages will steadfastly refuse to come to your aid with healing spells. Likewise, if you're one of the more fragile units, don't expect much in the way of support from your battle-hardened, burly warriors.

Also, while the 3D characters animate well, they're a tad drab, and the basic locations fail to effectively represent the gorgeous scenery witnessed in the films. When there are more than two or three soldiers on screen things degenerate into an unsightly mess, making it hard to pinpoint exactly which unit you're controlling. This is made worse by the fact that the viewpoint is zoomed in and enemies are often on top of you before you have chance to react accordingly.

For all its failings, Lord of the Rings: Conquest will unquestionably appeal to hardcore fans of Tolkien's world, but the disappointing AI, lackluster graphics and generally repetitive action result in a game that should be filed under 'huge missed opportunity'.

Damien McFerran

"LORD OF THE RINGS: CONQUEST WILL APPEAL TO HARDCORE FANS OF TOLKEIN'S WORLD"

Briefly Speaking

This is a fairly bog-standard 'hack and slash' adventure with a smattering of strategy thrown in, and while it's enjoyable for a short time, it's too rough around the edges to be considered a truly essential purchase.

Top Tip



When tackling the larger enemies, going in with your warrior is close to suicide. You need to use ranged attacks, so select an archer or wizard, but be ready to run when the troll gets too close. Other enemies – like the Balrog – should just be avoided.



Quick Quiz!

PLAY TIME
HOURS | DAYS | WEEKS

DIFFICULTY
EASY | MEDIUM | ARRGH!

FUN FACTOR
DULL | COOL | YIPPEE!

VERDICT
Bored of the rings?

6

Age of Empires: Mythologies

The Empire strikes back!

"BUILDING UP A SUITABLY LARGE FORCE TAKES TIME. AND EFFORT"

info



FROM: THQ
A BIT LIKE... Advance Wars
WEB: www.thq-games.com/uk
PRICE: £29.99
PEGI AGE RATING: 12+



Mythical creatures – like Medusa here – are well-animated and great fun to take into battle.

One game genre that's flourished on the Nintendo DS is the turn-based strategy one. There are obvious examples (like Advance Wars), but also slightly lesser-known but almost as impressive games like 2006's Age of Empires: Age of Kings. The developer may have changed for the sequel, but there's a lot that remains the same, too.

In Age of Empires: Mythologies you control one of three races (Greek, Egyptian or Norse) and the object of the game is simple: Build up your armies to go into combat against an opponent and (preferably!) win. Like the best strategy games though, there's a lot more to it than that.

Building up a suitably large and powerful force takes time. And effort. Buildings have to be built, soldiers have to be trained and all that takes a supreme amount of effort and hours on the clock. Thankfully though, you won't mind, as the satisfaction of winning a war after you've put the effort in makes it all worthwhile.

Mythologies isn't an 'instant hit' game, but fans of strategy games or Age of Empires will find this to be an excellent addition to the series.

Dean Mortlock

Top Tip



Use the terrain to your advantage, as hills and forests defend your units. Alternatively, if you use roads and bridges wisely, then you'll find that you can move your forces around much quicker. It's all down to common sense, really.





The dual screens and simple control system means that it's very easy to keep track of your forces.



Briefly Speaking

Mythologies' 12 rating is more to do with the fact that it's a serious strategy game than excessively violent. Those with the patience to get the most out of it will find Mythologies to be a strategy game that's up there with the best.

PLAY TIME HOURS DAYS WEEKS

DIFFICULTY EASY MEDIUM ARRGH!

FUN FACTOR DULL COOL YIPPEE!

VERDICT
A strategic hit!

8

SimAnimals

Giving Mother Nature a helping hand



Initially, animals are just visiting. You need to raise their happiness meter up to three hearts before they'll move in.

info



FROM: EA
A BIT LIKE... Viva Pinata
WEB: www.simanimals.com/uk
PRICE: £39.99
PEGI AGE RATING: 3+



At first glance, SimAnimals doesn't seem to have a lot in common with the brand name it's been given – there aren't any people for starters – but after a few hours it soon becomes clear that this is a Sims game through and through. You're still trying to keep residents happy, build them a nice place to live and to separate them when they fall out. And, impressively, the animals arguably have even more character than their human counterparts.

Starting out in a backyard, your omnipotent powers represented by a white floating hand, you suck up streams to water plants, shake acorns loose from trees to feed squirrels, and generally try to keep flora and fauna happy. Green smiley faces will emerge if you're doing well, red sad faces if you're not. Examining each creature under your magnifying glass informs you of their needs, and progress is dependent on fulfilling certain tasks – grow two patches of radishes for a raccoon visitor, get a male and female deer to mate, give a beaver sticks to build a dam… – before you can move further into the forest. Or you can stay and beautify each area further, collecting special plants which can alter the appearance of your animal chums. Recommended.

Chris Schilling

HAPPY FEAT

How to put smiles on those animal faces



MR TICKLE | NATIONAL TRUST | PARK LIFE

MR TICKLE

Initially, animals will be fearful of your presence, so you'll have to soften them up with their favourite food so as not to scare them off. Give squirrels a couple of acorns and soon they'll be literally eating out of your hand. Reach that stage and they like you – a couple more and they'll roll over, ready to be stroked and tickled.



Keeping every animal and plant happy is quite a juggling act. Breaking up fights becomes increasingly commonplace.



Animals get larger and more exotic as you progress.

Briefly Speaking

Ugly, and a little awkward in places, SimAnimals is nevertheless an engaging and amusing jaunt around the natural world. There's plenty to see and do once you've finished all the tasks, so it'll keep younger audiences busy for a while, and the multiplayer options make it ideal for parents to play with their kids.

PLAY TIME
HOURS | DAYS | WEEKS

DIFFICULTY
EASY | MEDIUM | ARRGH!

FUN FACTOR
DULL | COOL | YIPPEE!

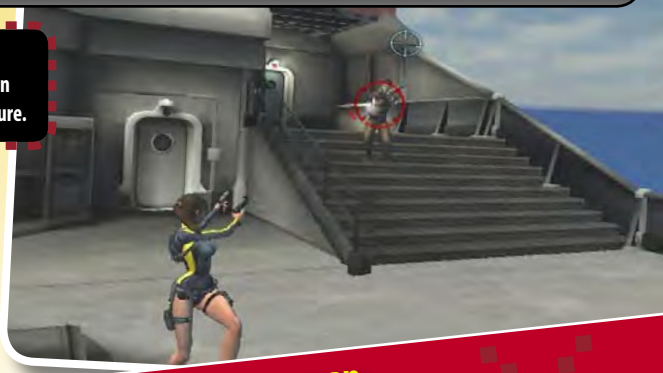
VERDICT
Animal magic

8

PLAYZINE Review

Tomb Raider: Underworld

Gaming's first lady is back for more grave-robbing escapades



You'll find yourself facing off against both animal and human opponents during your adventure.

"LARA HAS ALWAYS BEEN ENERGETIC, BUT IN UNDERWORLD SHE HAS SOME NEW TRICKS UP HER SLEEVE"

info



FROM: Eidos
A BIT LIKE... Guitar Hero
WEB: www.tombraider.com
PRICE: £19.99
PEGI AGE RATING: 16+

PS2

Tomb Raider: Underworld marks Lara's eighth excursion on the home consoles. The PS3, 360 and Wii versions have been available for a while, but now it's time for PS2 owners to get up close and personal with the delectable Miss Croft.

If you've seen the Wii version in action then you'll know what to expect here – both games are coded by developer Buzz Monkey Software, and both share almost identical graphics and level design. The motion-sensitive features of the Nintendo instalment are obviously missing, but in all honesty, Lara controls so well with the traditional analogue sticks that it's hard to grumble too much. In fact, we found ourselves preferring the 'old fashioned' interface.

Lara has always been an energetic lass, but in Underworld she's got a whole host of new tricks up her sleeve, and you'll need all of the moves in her repertoire to negotiate the varied levels that make up this adventure.

Sadly, there are a few niggles – the level design sometimes fails to impress, the controls lack the refinement of those seen in the next-gen versions and it's hardly a massive deviation from her previous outings – but there's nothing hugely wrong with this game, and loyal Croft fans will lap it up.

Damien McFerran



Vertigo suffers need not apply...

Top Tip



Each level in is made up of different obstacles which *almost* form a giant puzzle. Getting from point A to point B usually requires a lot more than fast reflexes, so assess each room to find potential routes and traps.



Briefly Speaking

The latest in the successful Tomb Raider franchise, Underworld showcases a new and improved Lara and will please both devotees and newcomers to the series, despite its unfortunate selection of less-desirable aspects.

PLAY TIME
HOURS | DAYS | WEEKS

DIFFICULTY
EASY | MEDIUM | ARRGH!

FUN FACTOR
DULL | COOL | YIPPEE!

VERDICT
Lara, lara laughs

8

Heinz Wolff's Gravity

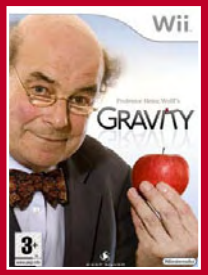




"There's a definite enjoyment to be had when you finally solve a difficult puzzle"

Will you fall for Gravity?

info



FROM: Deep Silver
A BIT LIKE... The Incredible Machine
WEB: www.deepsilver.co.uk
PRICE: £24.99
PEGI AGE RATING: 3+

Wii

While it's true to say that there's no shortage of puzzle games on the Wii to confuse and astound you, we're of the opinion that there's always room for one more. Especially one with the legendary Heinz Wolff behind it – Wolff used to TV's rent-a-boffin in the Eighties.

Gravity, as you'd expect, deals with falling things. You have to adapt a series of levels, ramps and slopes so that when you release a ball or cart, it results in a button being pushed at the end – which can be done by either the item itself hitting it or by setting up an obstacle so that it topples into it.

So far, so good, and there's a definite enjoyment to be had when you finally solve a difficult stage, but it's surprisingly difficult – we had to use the limited help facility on the second of the game's 100 stages. Having said that, it's possible that some of you will get your head around the logic quicker than others, and will therefore enjoy it more, but we were scratching our heads of some of the trickier puzzles for ages.

Gravity is fun, just not quite fun enough. There's a range of party games on offer, and while they're fun for a while, they don't quite do enough.

Dean Mortlock



There's a logic to all the levels, even if you can't immediately see it.

Top Tip



You'll find that it can be a bit confusing when you first start a new level, so one idea is to simply release the ball and see where it rolls. That way you should get a clearer indication of the hazards and where you need to place items.



Briefly Speaking

Egghead boffin puts his name to a gravity-based puzzle game. There are plenty of levels and 'party' modes, but it is quite a tricky game so would probably be unsuitable for younger gamers – unless they're boffins, obviously!

PLAY TIME
HOURS | DAYS | WEEKS

DIFFICULTY
EASY | MEDIUM | ARRGH!

FUN FACTOR
DULL | COOL | YIPPEE!

VERDICT
One for boffins

6

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PLAYZINE game guide

Lord of the Rings: conquest

A bit Sauron around the Balrogs? Not any more...

While previous Lord of the Rings titles have been focused on role-playing elements and arcade-style recreations of scenes that have been lifted straight from the Hollywood trilogy, Conquest takes a slightly different (and more strategic) approach. The objective in each mission is to gain complete control of the battlefield by capturing all of the available command points – which are represented by flags.

Roll over screen for annotations



CONTROLLING POINTS

Wrestling control of these points from your enemy is vital in three ways. Once you gain one, you also get additional troops which naturally helps tip the balance of supremacy in your side's favour. Secondly, when the character you are controlling dies, you can respawn at one of your held command points, which saves you having to traipse the entire length of the level to get back into the action. Thirdly, when you capture an enemy command point, your foe loses the ability to place troops in that area.

CUNNING COMBO

Success in Lord of the Rings: Conquest relies on a combination of brute strength and tactics, but if you aim to hold more command points than your opponent then you can't go far wrong. This mini-guide will attempt to highlight a few sure-fire strategies that should enable you to bring peace and justice to the people of Middle-earth, or, if you so choose, hold them in slavery forever...

WORLD DOMINATION

Taking control of Middle-earth



Unit Picking | Weapon of Choice | Orbs of Joy

Unit Picking

Warriors, Archers and Mages make up the core of Middle-earth's armies and deciding which unit to select is of vital importance. If you know you're going into a region that's teaming with enemies, you'll need the warrior, but should your opponent's position be less well-manned, it might be better to pick them off from a distance with your archers.

your say!

Got something to say? Write and tell us!

A Sim too far?

What are EA playing at with the Sims license? I mean, look at what we're getting now… MySims Racing? SimAnimals? Why don't they concentrate on making a proper new Sims game and stop doing all these silly spin-offs! Sorry, rant over. I'm only angry because I love the Sims games and I hate the fact that all these stupid games are now coming out.
Robert French, Chester



Dean says: There's something in what you're saying Robert, but you have to remember that the Sims series is both hugely popular and also quite limiting. We're quite happy for EA to keep on producing as many games linked into the Sims as they want to, just so long as they're good, that is.



There's no love between these two hares in SimAnimals.

Another new PSP?

A friend of mine told me that he'd heard that Sony are working on another new redesign for the PSP. Have you heard anything about this or is he talking rubbish? And do you think that Sony will bother doing a PSP2, or will they forget about handheld gaming and just concentrate on the PS3?
George Palmer, Birmingham



Chris says: We've heard the same thing too, George. The word on the gaming street is that Sony are working on another redesign of the PSP to be released towards the end of the year. While this sounds interesting, it's likely to be a redesign that packages the console as cheaply as possible, so that Sony can sell a load more before the PSP eventually dies off – it's a tactic they used with both the PlayStation and PlayStation 2.

As for your other question, we haven't heard anything but the odd whisper that Sony is working on another PSP. We're sure they will be though, and we're also sure that they'll have learnt from their mistakes with the PSP and will release something that's both highly sophisticated and also more user-friendly.



Guitar Hero Metallica should be good, but we're praying for Guitar Hero AC/DC!

Heavy metal

My current favourite game for my Wii is Guitar Hero World Tour. I've played it to death though, and so I'm looking for another Guitar Hero game to play. Should I save up for the next one in the series (I'm a massive Metallica fan, see) or look out for one of the older games second-hand?
Ben Watson, London



Damien says: You'll probably want to save up for Guitar Hero Metallica if you're a fan Ben, but if you've got any spare cash, then you should be able to pick up Legends of Rock quite cheaply.

Game bytes

GRAND OR THEFT?

Everybody seems to want to know about Grand Theft Auto on the DS this month…

I'm really hoping that GTA: Chinatown Wars on the DS is going to be good. Please tell me that it is!
Lee Singleton, Brighton

We're happy to say that Chinatown Wars is looking stunning, and is sure to be one of the highlights of the DS's library so far. Everything about it seems to have a very strong whiff of quality.

I've seen some previous of GTA on the DS that say it's proper 3D and some that says it's isometric 3D. Which is it?
Steveo, Manchester

Oh, it'll definitely be proper 3D. The action is viewed from above (which may give it the impression of being in the isometric view) but it's a proper 3D world. Promise.

Will Grand Theft Auto on the DS use the touchscreen in any way?
Rich Weaver, Cardiff

Yep. You'll be glad to hear that there's a whole range of mini-games that will take advantage of the DS's touchscreen.

PLAYZINE

Win goodies!

Compo corner

Want something for nothing? Then enter our fab competitions!

Prince of Persia

Win!

The Prince has been around for years, but his recent incarnation on the DS is one of the most enjoyable gaming experiences you'll find. Perfectly realised for Nintendo's handheld console, Prince of Persia feels fresh and interesting and yet is also a fine homage to the original game. And if you're yet to buy the game for yourself, then it's your lucky day, as the game's publishers, Ubisoft, have kindly given us five copies of the game for you lot. Winning couldn't be easier, too. Over to the right is an easy question to answer, so try your luck. You never know…



Age of Empires: Mythologies

Win!



Strategy fans rejoice! Not only is there a new update of the classic series Age of Empires about to hit the DS, but it's also superb, and reviewed in this very magazine – where it scored a respectable 8 out of 10. Best of all, if you take the time out to enter the competition on this page then you'll be in with a chance of winning one of the five copies we have to give away. Well what are you waiting for?

Big Bang Mini

Win!

If you're looking for a fun and colourful shoot-'em-up, then Big Bang Mini is the perfect game for you. We reviewed it two issues ago and we're still playing it now! If you fancy winning a copy of this great DS game then you're in the right place, as we've got three copies to give away. Just answer the simple question below, and that's it!

For more information on Big Bang Mini, head to www.southpeakgames.com.



Enter your details once, then select a competition, answer it and click on the Enter button. You can enter all 3 competitions here!

Competitions close 12/03/2009. See website for full T&Cs.

next month



Who you gonna call...?

PREVIEWS

GUITAR HERO METALLICA
CASTLEVANIA JUDGMENT
X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE

REVIEWS

READY 2 RUMBLE: REVOLUTION
GTA: CHINATOWN WARS
ROGUE TROOPER

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SQUARE ENIX®



CHRONO TRIGGER®

Find out about this stunning RPG. Plus much more

PLUS!



VALKYRIE PROFILE®: Covenant of the Plume™

Rhapsody™: A Musical Adventure





My Pet Shop™



DRAGON QUEST®: The Hand of the Heavenly Bride™

AND MORE...

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SQUARE ENIX®

Welcome

If you're a fan of videogames (and, if you're reading this magazine, then there's a pretty good chance that you are) then you've surely heard of Square Enix. They're the company responsible for some of the most breathtakingly beautiful games of the last 15 years, and no other game producer seems able to create such amazingly stylised worlds, packed as they are with imagery that wouldn't look out of place in a high budget Hollywood blockbuster.

Don't believe us? Take the Final Fantasy series as an example. The first Final Fantasy game was released 22 years ago on the original Nintendo NES console, and since then the series has sold a staggering 85 million units worldwide. Each one creates a world that draws you in immediately from the first frames of the intro movie to the final boss battle. Playing a Final Fantasy game is allowing yourself to step into an alternate reality that'll keep you gripped for weeks.

But Square Enix are anything but a one-trick pony. Their Dragon Quest series, although not so well-known in Blighty, has still managed to sell over 45 million copies. And then there's Kingdom Hearts (which mixes Disney characters with popular ones from Square games) and the superb Chrono Trigger, among many, many others.

So this magazine is a celebration of one of the most original and constantly innovative games developers you'll find. And with a whole range of original and playable titles on the way from them for the DS, there's never been a better time to celebrate.

Enjoy the issue,

Dean Mortlock



CHRONO TRIGGER®

Your chance to play one of the most revered RPGs of all time on your DS.

VALKYRIE PROFILE®: Covenant of the Plume™

Another classic Japanese RPG is heading your way.





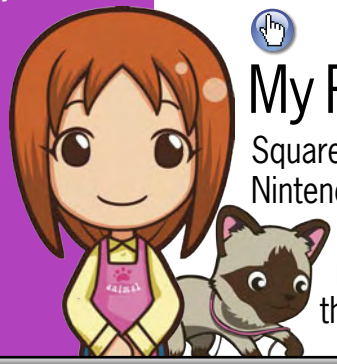
DRAGON QUEST®: The Hand of the Heavenly Bride™

The best-selling 'other' Square series comes to DS.



FINAL FANTASY® CRYSTAL CHRONICLES®: Echoes of Time™

The Crystal Chronicles series continues.



My Pet Shop™

Square does Nintendogs? Yes, but it's much more than that.



Rhapsody™: A Musical Adventure

Music to our ears!

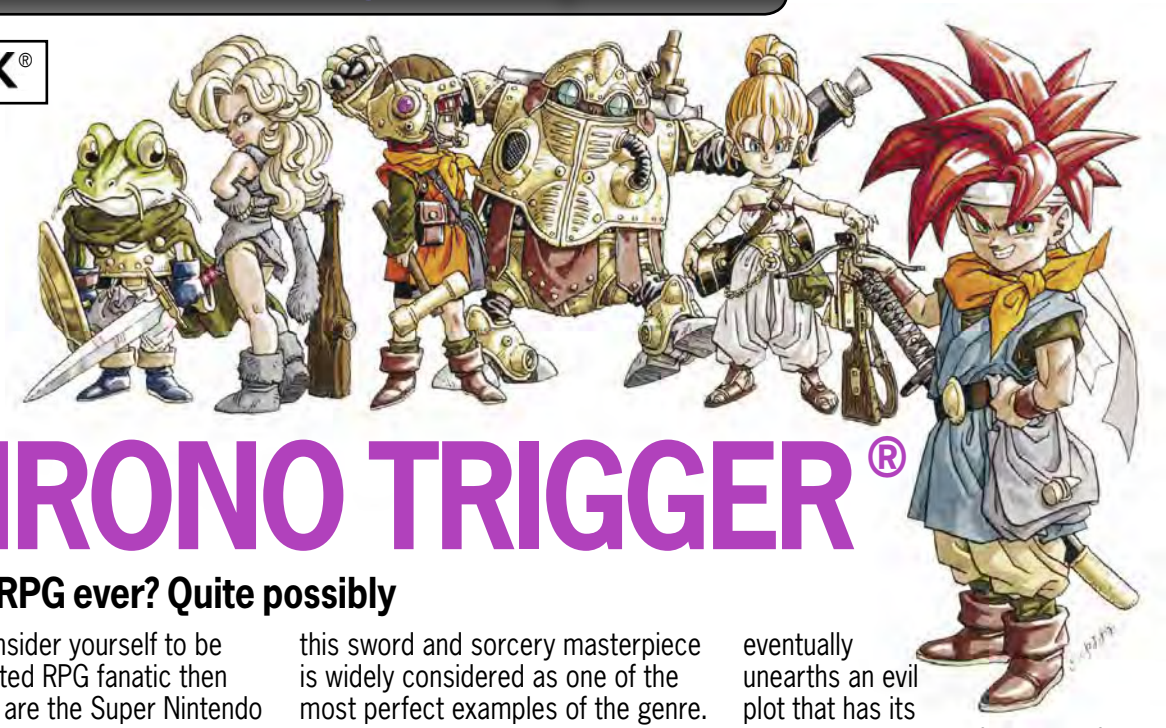


DISGAEA® DS

Find out all about this stunning remake of the PSP title, Disgaea: Hour of Darkness



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"The game shifted 2.5 million copies in the US and Japan"

CHRONO TRIGGER®

From: SQUARE ENIX

A bit like: Final Fantasy III

Link: www.chronotriggergame.com

OUT NOW

The best RPG ever? Quite possibly

If you consider yourself to be a dedicated RPG fanatic then chances are the Super Nintendo classic Chrono Trigger will require no introduction. Shifting 2.5 million copies in the US and Japan following its debut way back in 1995, this sword and sorcery masterpiece is widely considered as one of the most perfect examples of the genre.



The bottom DS display helpfully showcases all of your available options during combat.

However, although the reputation of this near-legendary game is impressive, many European gamers won't have actually played it before because it cruelly never saw the light of day in this part of the world. Thankfully, that oversight is in the process of being rectified, as Square Enix has skilfully updated the original 16-bit version and is preparing to unleash it on our soil for the first time ever, and on the DS.

The story centres on the time-travelling exploits of a young boy called Crono. After stepping into a malfunctioning teleportation device he finds himself on an heroic adventure that crosses the boundaries of both time and space. Along the way he befriends invaluable companions hailing from several different time zones, and eventually unearths an evil plot that has its origins at the dawn of time itself. As you can see, it's hardly the most conventional RPG plotline ever – it's sort of like Back to the Future fused with The Legend of Zelda – but you can take our word for it, this is one voyage you simply won't want to miss.

The time-travel system is literally bursting with potential. We've yet to experience the myriad of mind-bending possibilities that are contained within the game, but here's an example of what to expect: Early on we encountered a character who was selfishly barring our progress. The solution? We travelled back in time and hooked up with one of his ancestors, and by winning their trust we discovered that the previously stubborn descendant was now more than happy to

Trigger happy

Why this is an RPG to get very excited about

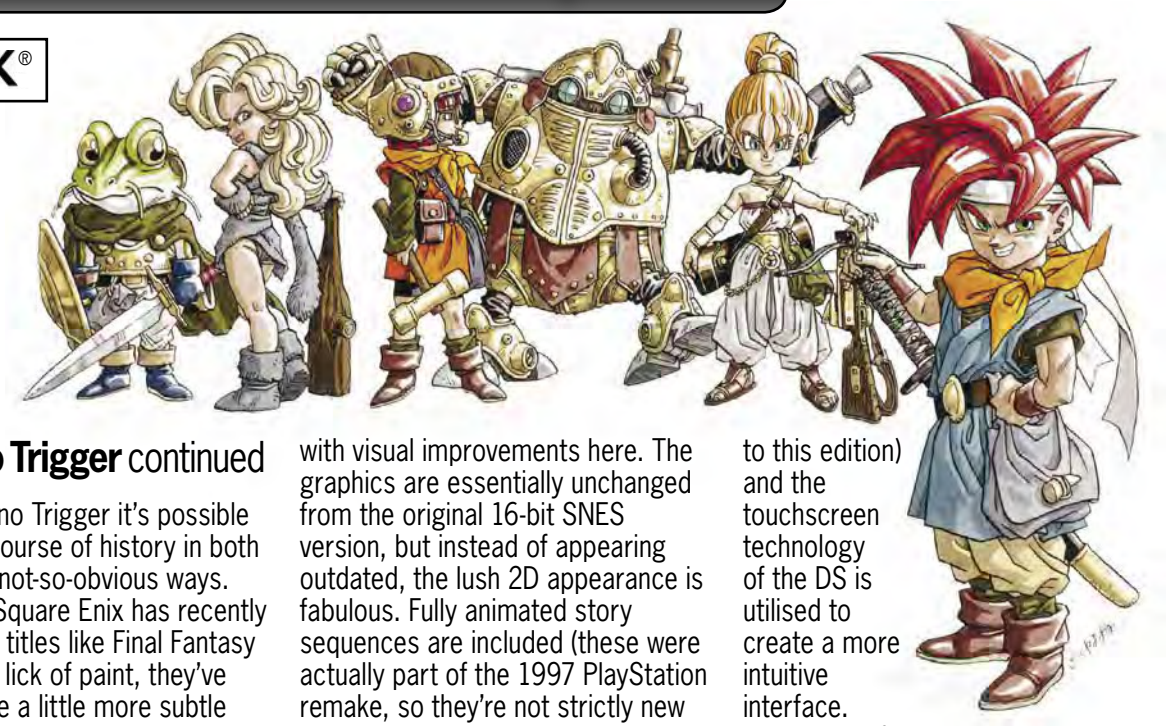


Time warp | Innovation | Replay value

Time warp

The events of Chrono Trigger span several time zones. The 'present day' is a world where steam punk technology and magical folklore rub shoulders with one another. The Middle Ages is a more primitive version of the modern age and Ancient time is populated by hairy cavemen. There's also 2300 AD – an unpleasant future world where mankind is virtually extinct. It's this bleak future than Crono and his companions are trying to prevent from coming to pass.

SQUARE ENIX®



> Chrono Trigger continued

help. In Chrono Trigger it's possible to alter the course of history in both obvious and not-so-obvious ways.

Although Square Enix has recently given classic titles like Final Fantasy III a fresh 3D lick of paint, they've decided to be a little more subtle with visual improvements here. The graphics are essentially unchanged from the original 16-bit SNES version, but instead of appearing outdated, the lush 2D appearance is fabulous. Fully animated story sequences are included (these were actually part of the 1997 PlayStation remake, so they're not strictly new to this edition) and the touchscreen technology of the DS is utilised to create a more intuitive interface. Established fans will have exclusive new content to look forward to, including an all-new dungeon and a wireless-play mode.



SLIGHTLY ANNOYED

European gamers may have had valid reason to be slightly annoyed about missing out on such a brilliance RPG for the past 15 years, but patience is a virtue, as the saying goes. This remastered edition is shaping up to be the definitive version of Chrono Trigger and should ensure that DS gamers will be glued to their consoles for weeks on end.

VERDICT

How ready?

How good?

A future RPG classic? Very possibly

"The time-travel system is bursting with potential"



The map on the bottom display helps you navigate your way around the various dungeons that litter the landscape.



Surely brave warriors don't need to gang up on a mushroom?

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DRAGON QUEST:®

The Hand of the Heavenly Bride™

From: SQUARE ENIX

A bit like: The Legend of Zelda: Phantom Hourglass

Link: www.dragonquest-game.com

Out: 20th February

This is one bride that's taken some time to reach the altar

Although Western gamers might usually associate Square Enix with the near-legendary Final Fantasy series, in Japan the company is arguably more famous for publishing the insanely popular Dragon Quest franchise. The Japanese are simply potty for this long-running range of RPG titles Dragon Quest: The Hand of the Heavenly Bride is actually a retooled version of the fifth game in the lineage, first released on Nintendo's 16-bit Super NES way back in the mists of time (well, 1992 to be exact). The rather sparse 2D visuals of the original game have been replaced by impressively bold 3D graphics, and the screen can be rotated at will using the L and R shoulder buttons (this is more than just a neat visual trick however, as it's often essential if you want to discover well-hidden passageways and treasure chests).

In terms of gameplay, there's little here that dedicated RPG fans won't have witnessed before (this is a game from the early 90s, after all) but it's the storyline that truly astounds. It takes place over a period of 20 years, during which the main character matures into an adult and even starts his own family.

Don't let the colourful graphics and light-hearted presentation fool you – this game packs an emotional punch, and is widely celebrated in Japan for possessing one of the most riveting RPG plotlines ever written. Dragon Quest: THotHB may have taken almost two decades to reach European shores, but early impressions suggest that the wait has most definitely been worth it. ●

"This is a retooled version of the fifth game in the lineage"

VERDICT

How ready?

How good?

Epic RPG storytelling at its finest

The new 3D visuals are truly breathtaking in places.



Your quest will feature both epic and not-so-epic encounters – guess which one this is classed as...





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My Pet Shop™

From: SQUARE ENIX

A bit like: Nintendogs meets Cooking Mama

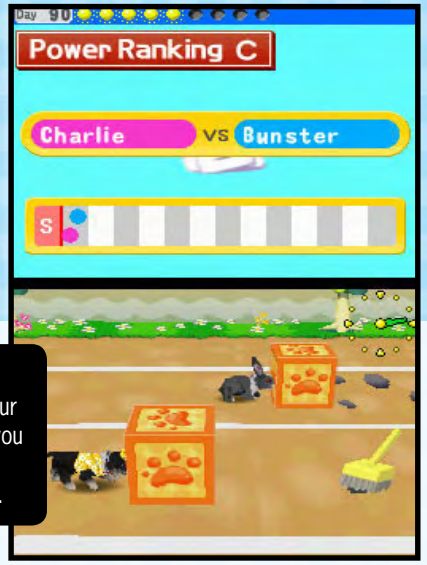
Link: www.mypetshopgame.com

Out: 27th February

Square Enix does Nintendogs?

To say that My Pet Shop marks a deviation from Square Enix's usual output is a bit like saying that poking yourself in the eye with a sharp stick might hurt a little. In the company's long and proud history, it's hard to recall a game that has broken so significantly from the norm.

However, compared to the glut of similarly themed titles currently available on the DS, My Pet Shop could be perceived as being nothing new, but it would be foolish to write it off as just another 'me too' animal-rearing simulator. The veteran publisher has invested key talent in making sure this game has the potential to take on Nintendo's own Nintendogs series, and win.



Once you're confident that your pet is a winner, you can enter it into various contests.



The game uses a mixture of 2D and 3D visuals, and looks strikingly attractive.



Set in the idyllic hamlet of Green Town, My Pet Shop sees you stepping into the shoes of the daughter of the local pet store's owner. It's your job to care for the various animals that pass through the doors of your family boutique, so expect to be tending to the likes of cats, dogs and rabbits, as well as slightly less-conventional species such as pandas and bears.

Visually, the game seems to take a fairly large dollop of inspiration from the massively successful Cooking Mama series, with its eye-catching, bold graphics. The core gameplay revolves around keeping your animals as happy as possible via a program of grooming, feeding, cleaning and training. Those of you with a flair for fashion will no doubt be overjoyed to hear that there are over a hundred different items of clothing to deck your pets in.

"My Pet Shop has the potential to appeal to everyone"

Although it's obviously aiming for a particular section of the market – namely young girls – we are totally convinced that My Pet Shop definitely has the potential to appeal to everyone, just as so many so-called 'casual' titles have done so convincingly on the DS. ●



VERDICT

How ready?

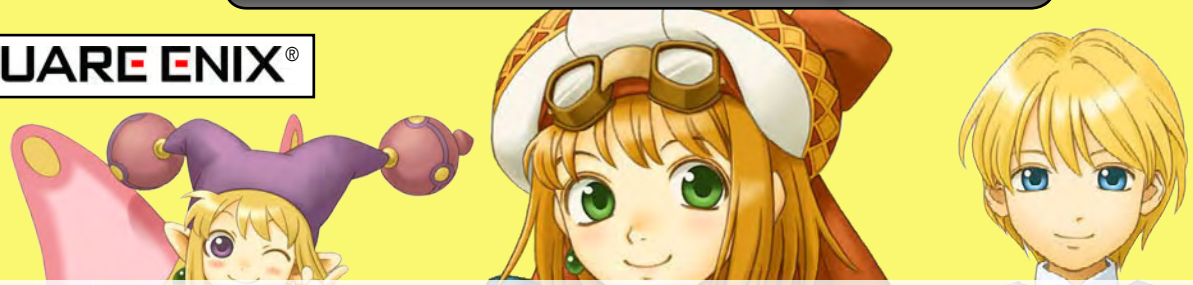
How good?

This should be a great fun pet sim



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Rhapsody™: A Musical Adventure

From: Nippon Ichi Software

A bit like: Mario and Luigi: Partners in Time

Link: www.rhapsodygame.com

Out: Spring

"Rhapsody is the very definition of 'light-hearted'"

Brooding teen heroes need not apply...

If you're sick to death of the atypical stern teenage male leads that seem to populate practically every Japanese RPG these days then Rhapsody: A Musical Adventure could be just the game you're after. With colourful visuals, up-beat music and a loveable cast of fairytale princes and princesses, this is the very definition of 'light-hearted', and about as far away from the dystopian, post-apocalyptic world of Final Fantasy VII as you could possibly get.

However, before the cynical gamers among you dismiss this as an overly effeminate escapade more suited to girlie types, it might be worth pointing out that Rhapsody is a role-player with pedigree – it was originally released on the PlayStation in 1998 and has gone on to become a cult classic, generating several other similar titles that are highly regarded by fans of the genre.

As the title suggests, music plays a massive role in the game, and although some of the tunes border on the 'sickly-sweet' side, they certainly add to the irresistible allure of the title. Gameplay-wise, Rhapsody sticks firmly to the Japanese RPG blueprint, but it's worth noting that this is aimed as younger and more 'casual' players rather than battle-scarred veterans. Whereas other titles might have you tearing your hair out in frustration, Rhapsody is set to offer a much gentler ride – which most definitely isn't a bad thing.

As with the rest of Square Enix's recent DS remakes, Rhapsody boasts a series of enhancements over the original title. You can expect touchscreen capability, as well as an improved battle engine, a map for easy navigation and new characters to control. Whatever your opinion of the cute visual style, there's no denying that the DS is set to receive yet another quality adventure to add to its ever-growing RPG library. ●

VERDICT

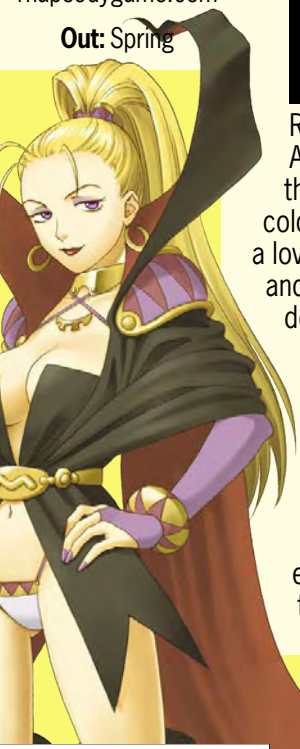
How ready?

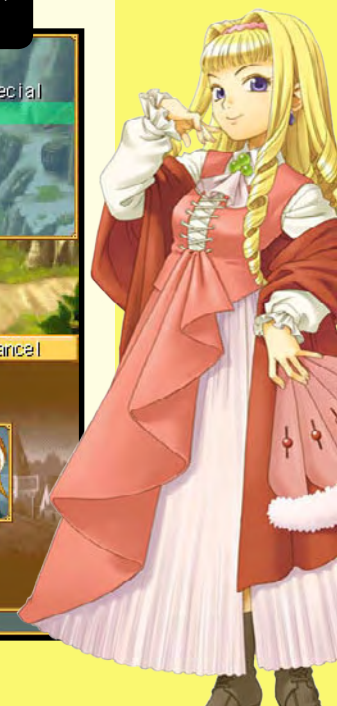
How good?

Give in to your cute side!

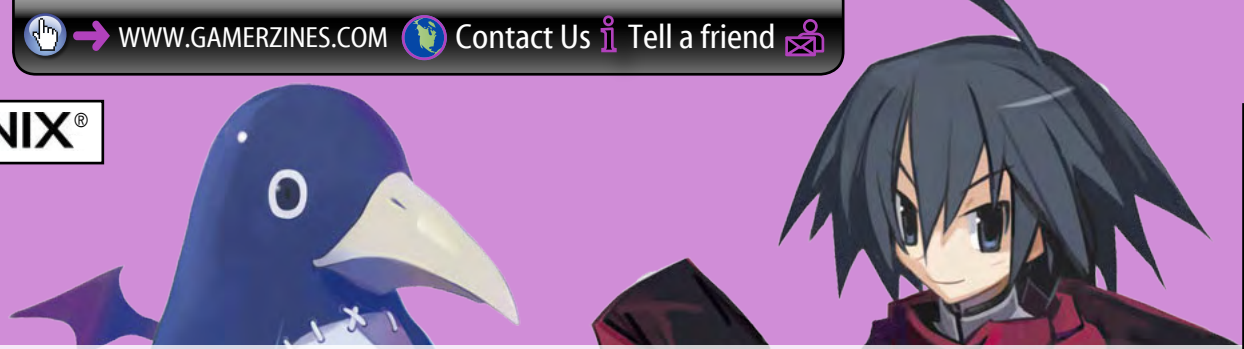
With a list of options like that, this could only be an RPG.







SQUARE ENIX®



DISGAEA® DS

From: Nippon Ichi Software

A bit like: Front Mission

Link: www.disgaea-ds.com

Out: Spring

Unleash your demonic side

If you like your RPG titles to be blissfully straightforward, with simple combat routines and a generic plotline with twists so obvious you can see them coming a mile off, then Disgaea® DS probably isn't going to be the game for you. A remake of the PlayStation 2 original that kick-started the franchise, this game is astonishingly deep and intricate, with a battle system that is so crammed full of possibilities that it'll make your head ache – but in a good way.



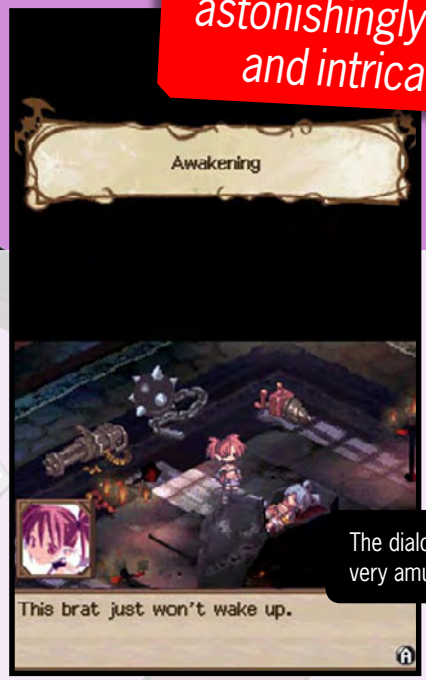
However, all this complexity results in a game that promises to be massively rewarding for those willing to put the effort in. First impressions indicate a standard-looking strategy RPG, but closer inspection reveals that there's much more to Disgaea® DS than meets the eye. Not only is the plot refreshingly original (you assume the role of the demon prince Laharl, whose aim is to reclaim the netherworld from those who covet his dead father's crown) but the gameplay is also intent on bucking trends.

DISTANT ECHOES

For example, the game features a unique 'Geo Symbol' system, where panels on the grid-like playing surface are granted special powers when tagged with the same colour Geo Symbol. Using this feature, it's possible for the player to grant status bonuses to friendly units (and even eliminate enemies) if they happen to be standing on effected panels, making the game even more taxing on the old brain power. Attempting to link together as many panels as possible in one move becomes a total obsession, but it's also incredibly satisfying when you manage to pull it off.

Developer Nippon Ichi Software is promising to make this the ultimate version of Disgaea, so expect a raft of improvements, as well as content lifted directly from the (brilliant) PSP update we saw a year ago. ●

"Disgaea is astonishingly deep and intricate"



The dialogue is often very amusing indeed.



VERDICT

How ready?

How good?

Should be another Square classic



TIME TO MAKE HISTORY

CHRONO TRIGGER®









10/10

"...ONE OF THE BEST CONSOLE RPG GAMES EVER PRODUCED!"

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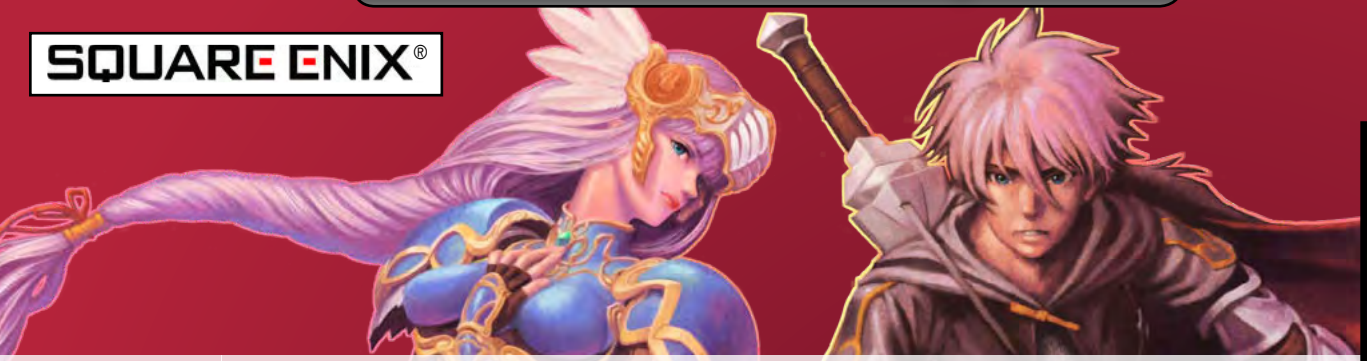


NINTENDO DS™ SQUARE ENIX®

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WWW.CHRONOTRIGGERGAME.COM

SQUARE ENIX®



VALKYRIE PROFILE®: Covenant of the Plume™

From: SQUARE ENIX

A bit like: Final Fantasy Tactics A2

Link: www.valkyrieprofile game.com

ETA: Spring

Norse code

Although it's far from being a household name in the West, the Valkyrie Profile series (which made its debut on the 32-bit PlayStation a decade ago) is incredibly popular in Japan – so popular in fact that the original title has spawned a highly successful franchise. Valkyrie Profile: Covenant of the Plume is the latest instalment in this often underrated series and is shaping up to be yet another excellent format exclusive for DS role-playing fans to get their teeth into.

The game borrows heavily from Norse mythology and the concept of warriors being 'claimed' by spiritual beings known as 'Valkyries' when they die in battle. The central character is a young man called Wylfred, whose father fell in combat and consequently had his soul spirited away by a Valkyrie named Lenneth (who was the lead character from the first game in the series, fact fans). His father's untimely demise leaves his family to starve, so Wylfred swears revenge and forges a pact with the shadowy goddess Hel – and his part of the bargain is to destroy Lenneth once and for all.

The gameplay differs from previous games – the side-scrolling 2D world is replaced with a 3D isometric play area – and the structure of the title owes a massive debt to the likes of fellow Square Enix stablemates Final Fantasy Tactics and Disgaea.

Covenant of the Plume is expected to hit Western shores in the spring, and from what we've seen so far, this will certainly be one to watch. An innovative battle system coupled with great visuals and a surprisingly decent English script should make for a particularly entertaining strategy RPG. ●

"Valkyrie Profile borrows heavily from Norse mythology"

VERDICT

How ready?

How good?

Another top DS RPG to look out for

During combat, each of the DS fascia buttons corresponds to a different character, and attacks can be 'chained' in real time.



Each character also possesses a special move that fills the screen with all manner of zany effects.



Roll over screen for annotations



SQUARE ENIX®

"Echoes of Time takes cooperative role-playing to the next level"

FINAL FANTASY®

CRYSTAL CHRONICLES®: Echoes of Time™

From: SQUARE ENIX

A bit like: Final Fantasy Crystal Chronicles: Rings of Fate

Link: www.square-enix.com/eu/en/index_f2.html

Out: Spring



It's better when we play together



During combat you can utter pre-determined comments, which are shown on the bottom screen.

Square's Crystal Chronicles series has been with us since the days of the GameCube, and its unique multiplayer-focused gameplay has allowed the franchise to flourish, despite the fact that it's a whole world away from the more recent (and more mature) entries in the Final Fantasy stable.

The story involves the discovery of young girl who is struck down with a worryingly illness that is seemingly connected to a mysterious crystal hidden deep within a forest. As a young warrior who has recently come of age, it's your task to take your first steps outside the village that has been your home for 16 years and unravel the story behind an unexplained disease that threatens not only the life of this strange girl, but possibly the fate of your entire world, too.

DISTANT ECHOES

First impressions would suggest that Echoes of Time hasn't strayed too far from the remit of the early Crystal Chronicle titles; the same team-based exploration is present, and the visuals retain the gloriously appealing nature of their forebears. However, this time the much-hyped connectivity between separate consoles is now a much more significant affair; Echoes of Time allows up to four players to participate on both Wii and DS consoles simultaneously.

Using the Nintendo WiFi Internet connection or a local wireless setup, Echoes of Time is attempting to take cooperative role-playing to the next level. The fact that it shaping up to be one of the most accessible games of its type is also a bonus, and means that typical RPG traits (such as endless statistics and rambling storylines) aren't going to be a barrier to entry when it comes to enticing casual players to the fold. Keep this one firmly on your radar – we reckon it's going to be massive.

VERDICT

How ready?

How good?

Co-op RPG action like no other

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