OXM 40

REVIEWS: UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2: TLC, DOOM 3, STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO, PROJECT: SNOWBLIND, TIMESPLITTERS: FP & MORE! GUIDE: STAR WARS KOTOR II: THE SITH LORDS

XBOX

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- MotoGP: Ultimate Racing Technology 3
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Title Fight!

TWO OF THE biggest Xbox-only shooters arrive in our exclusive reviews this month - the old rivals *Doom* and *Unreal*. Luckily for us, these franchises are now totally different experiences. While *Doom 3* is a dark, claustrophobic nightmare feeding on creeping tension and isolation, *Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict* is a bright and frantic multiplayer fragathon. Both are exclusive to Xbox, and both bolster the attractions of Xbox Live with *Unreal Championship 2*'s superb tournament options and *Doom 3*'s enlightening co-operative mode, which teams you up with a Live friend to battle the undead hordes through the full single-player plot, sharing shotgun and flashlight duties.

But don't hang up your holsters just yet - there's plenty more first-person shooter ammo in this magazine! This month we've also got reviews of the hilarious *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect*, the darkly futuristic *Project: Snowblind* and the squadtastic *Star Wars: Republic Commando*. You'll also find trial versions of *Republic Commando*, *Future Perfect* and *Unreal Championship 2* among the eight playable demos on your disc. You can even try out *Unreal Championship 2* over Xbox Live against real opponents once you've had enough offline practice.

Another playable demo that makes this disc one of the best we've ever offered is the trial version of *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory*. Choose multiple paths through the stunningly beautiful Lighthouse level, and replay it again and again to use an amazing variety of new moves, weapons and gadgets. If ever a game has shown just how gorgeous Xbox graphics can look, then this is it. Combine that with brilliant gameplay and it's an absolute killer!

See you next month,

STEVE BROWN
EDITOR, *OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE*

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XBOX
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MOTOGP: URT 3

We spin the wheels of justice in our exclusive roadtest of the thrashing new racer that's belting its way towards the finish line at full throttle. 048



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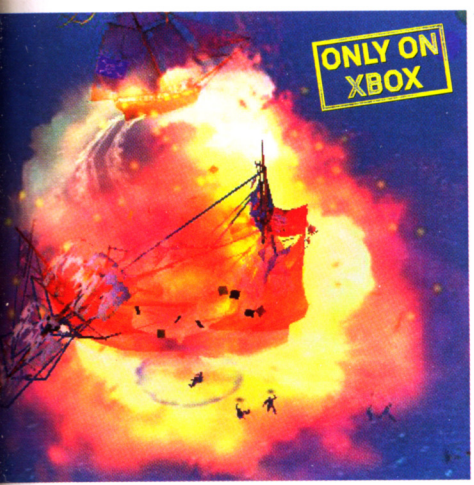

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TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT

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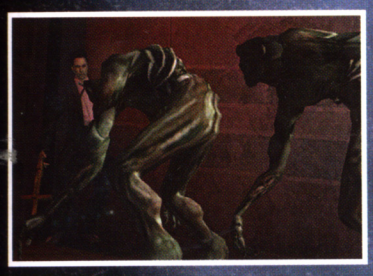

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XBOX

PC CD-ROM

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First Look

World-exclusive scoops of the newest Xbox games in development

FANTASTIC FOUR P008
Free Jessica Alba with every game. You wish...

THE GODFATHER P010
Welcome to the Family. You'll never leave



↑ Combine powers and the Fantastic Four will be invincible.

Fantastic Four

Bendy, see-thru, flaming, clobbering madness heading here

Dev: Seven Studios | Pub: Activision
Release: Summer 2005 | Live: None
Players: 1-2

MARVEL'S ONGOING mission to bring to life its full range of comic characters has yet to reach the likes of Matter-Eater Lad or The Walrus, but on the way, via the likes of Spidey and X-Men, nestle the Fantastic Four. Due for release in the summer, and timed neatly to coincide with the film's release, *Fantastic Four* will let us explore the strange world of our daring foursome after they're zapped in a cosmic accident out there in the ether.

All four characters will be playable throughout the game, and be completely interchangeable, which will make for a bizarre, nay 'fantastic', slice of gaming. We can combine the likes of Mr Fantastic's super-stretchy limbs with The Thing's clobberin' power to effectively create a human slingshot, just as we can use Invisible Girl's telekinetic powers to freeze an enemy, and allow the Human Torch (who the hell thought up these names?!) to then frazzle them. This - even more so than perhaps *Spider-Man* or *X-Men* - is going to be the game with the most 'kerpow' for our pound.

Our main nemesis will be the metal-headed Doctor Doom, who, as you can see from these exclusive screens, will be unleashing more than just chaos on the world. Giant enemies, scenery-chewing monsters and psychotic robots will all be part of the deal when it comes to our world-saving duties. But don't worry about playing the game and ruining the movie; apparently the game will be set over a greater time span than the film, stretching it (Mr Fantastic style) into a whole new plot.

With all these destructive powers, it's good to hear that the environment has been designed to be fully destructible. Walls can be clobbered down if a door is locked; huge chunks of masonry can be fashioned into weapons by The Thing; and the Human Torch can set areas alight and flush out enemies. *Fantastic Four* will encourage us to play with a mate because, like the Four themselves, we'll be more successful in a team. There's no word on whether the game will be Live yet, but a two-player co-op has been announced at least.

Other features that have come creeping out of Activision's HQ also suggest we'll be able to turn enemies against each other. Using Mr Fantastic's swollen brain power, we'll confuse our foes and make them turn on each other. We'll also be able to stretch our arms into the shape of weapons, *T2* style, such as hammers and clubs. There'll be plenty of stealth to sit alongside the smashing too, as Invisible Girl will have to sneak into highly guarded areas to hack Doom's computer and security systems. Just as the Human Torch will be able to shield players in a curtain of flame. Whatever the Fantastic Four can do in the comic series, it seems developer Seven Studios is eager to implement in the game. Only the summer will tell whether we get to see Mr Fantastic bend himself into the shape of a balloon poodle, though.



↑ The Thing can rip up the scenery and fashion it into weaponry.



↑ Giant spiders will be no match for a man made of rock.



↑ Turn your arms into a set of handy mallets, ideal for smashing the brains out of whatever the hell that is climbing out of the ground over there.

Bonus info

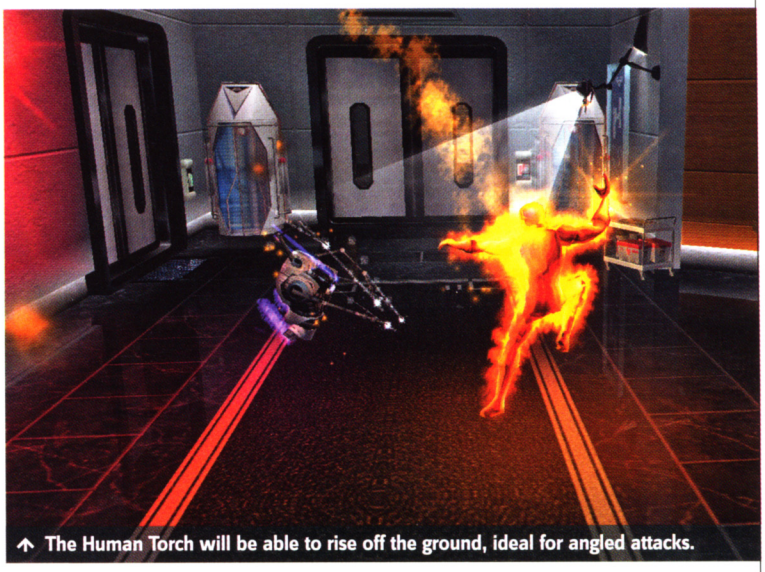
WORM EATER
In the very first *Fantastic Four* comic, the team fought their first nemesis, Mole Man. We don't know whether that's him crawling out of the ground in the screens but the smart money says he's not going to appear.

TOO MUCH VODKA
The Russian equivalent of the *Fantastic Four* are a strange bunch. Led by a guy called the Red Ghost, his three super-human friends aren't human at all. They're highly trained super-apes. No wonder Communism collapsed.

HANDBAG SMASH!
For a short while during the comics, The Thing went off and starred in his own storylines. This meant the Four were Three, until they were joined by the big green shopper known as She-Hulk. Shame we won't see *her* in the game!



↑ Invisible Girl can project her powers outwards and knock enemies away.



↑ The Human Torch will be able to rise off the ground, ideal for angled attacks.

Anatomy of Attack



Who's this guy? On the shoulders of a monster? Mmm... intriguing.

We've no idea what the hell this is but we guess some of that 'teamwork' is the only way to bring it down.

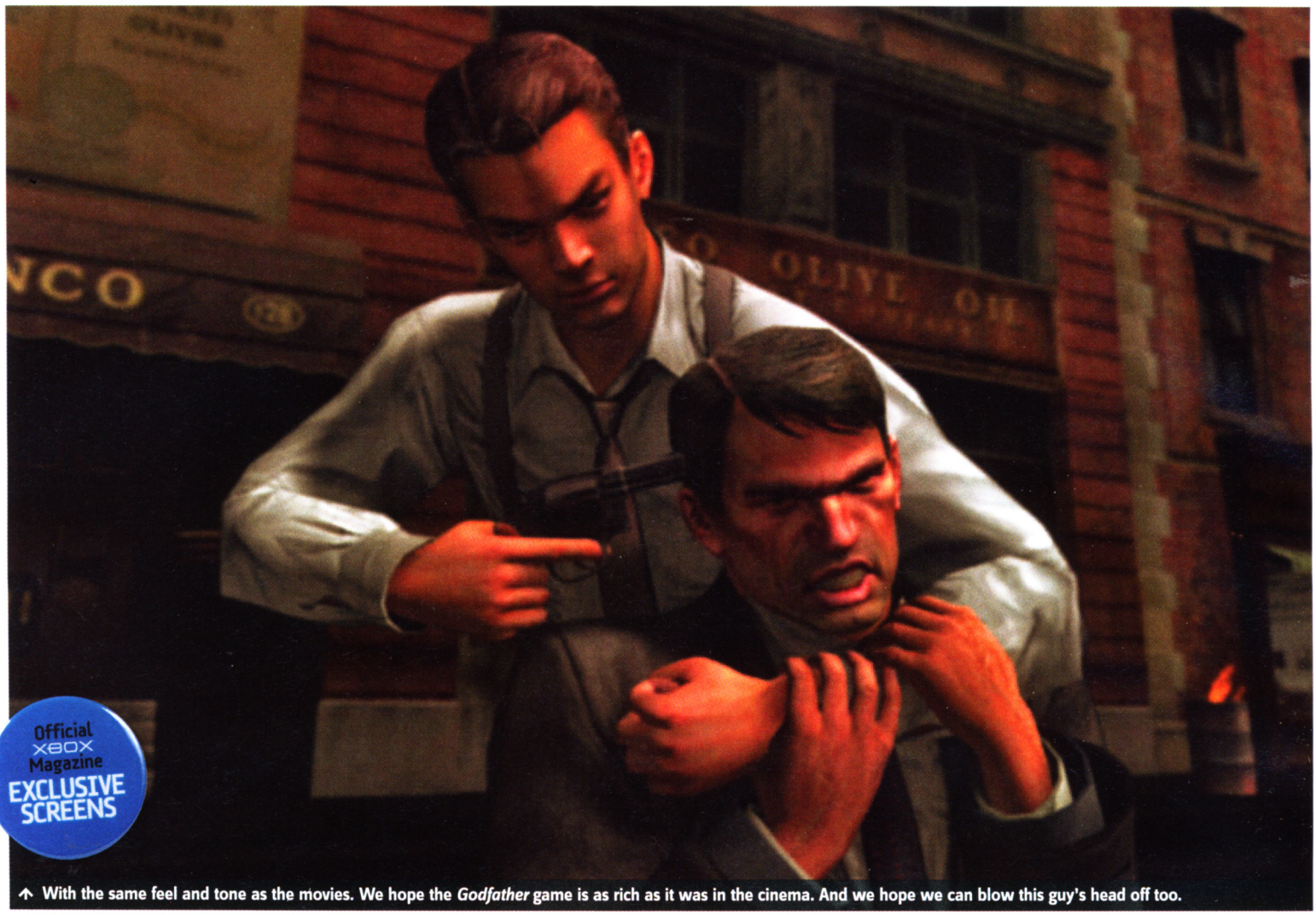
While one team member distracts the beast, the Human Torch goes in for the kill.

We'll be able to protect our team-mates with our own powers. Here The Torch has given Invisible Girl a flame wall.

Even The Thing will get clobbered from time to time to keep us on our toes.

Invisible Girl will generate force fields for herself and team-mates to ward off attacks.

IT'S ALL WELSH: IF ANYONE KNOWS HOW THE HELL TO PRONOUNCE IOAN GRUFFUDD PLEASE LET US KNOW. EVEN RESIDENT WELSHMAN BEN T DOESN'T KNOW.



Official Xbox Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

↑ With the same feel and tone as the movies. We hope the *Godfather* game is as rich as it was in the cinema. And we hope we can blow this guy's head off too.

The Godfather

And we're not talking silver Christening spoons...

Dev: EA	Pub: EA
Release: Autumn '05	Live: None
Players: 1	

NO, WE'RE not travelling down the oft-trodden path of 'EA is going to make us an offer we can't refuse' punnage. For this is not so much about EA, but about being able to live out the most iconic gangster film the world has ever seen. *Godfather* is coming to Xbox, so if you see oranges anywhere nearby, dive under a table right now and stay there for a good half hour.

Set in New York during the '40s and '50s, we'll be playing one of Don Corleone's distant relatives who, under the orders of Cottonwool-Mouth himself, must take control of Little Italy. He's a little cocksure, a little too ambitious, and a little bit 'Tommy Vercetti' as well.

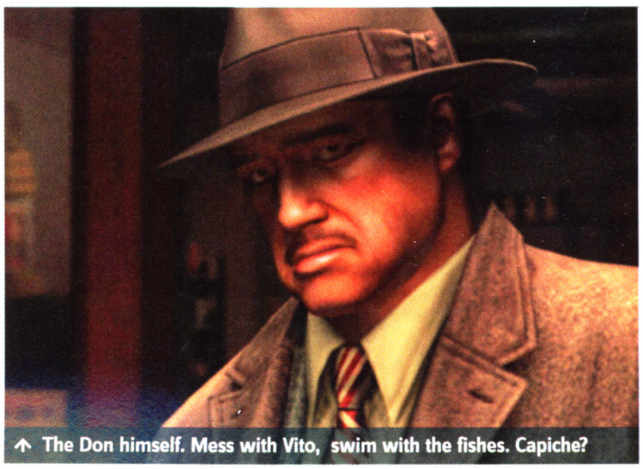
Played very much as a *GTA*-style free-roamer, *Godfather* won't be quite so forgiving of our mistakes. You annoy the Don, there are going to be serious repercussions. People we'll encounter won't just be your usual dumb NPCs. If you're going to kick an innocent bystander to death *à la Vice City*, this time people will know who you are, and remember your actions. Bad hits could result in revenge attacks, which could lead to Little Italy becoming the battleground of a fierce turf war. No, we're going to have to think like a gangster and enter into a little 'forced persuasion' on those we deem 'dispensable'. And just remember, the Family comes before everything else. Do a Fredo and we'll soon know about it.

Simple threats are all well and good to scare the Family's enemies, but how about getting the butcher on the payroll? The cleaver certainly has the right persuasive personality we'll need. And what about the local barber? Not only will he supply gossip and provide a dapper slick-back job to impress the molls, but with a cut-throat razor pressed to his windpipe, the average customer might well be willing to help us in our needs too. With local people on our side, we could be looking at eventual immunity from the police and, hopefully, complete control over Little Italy. How we actually go about getting people on-side has yet to be revealed but we suspect the main screenshot (above) might be a hint.

Interestingly, this will only be EA's second step into the more mature-rated game (*Def Jam Fight For New York* - Issue 35, 8.9 - before that), and with similar titles such as the afore mentioned *GTA* having already courted mature ratings, it will be interesting to see in which area EA chooses to push the title. Rather than 'doing a *Godfather III*', we hope it sticks to the source material that made the first two films such iconic movies. We need epic storytelling, compelling characterisation, and a game that's a lot more than a *GTA* done with a film licence. All on a thin and crispy overbaked base, of course.



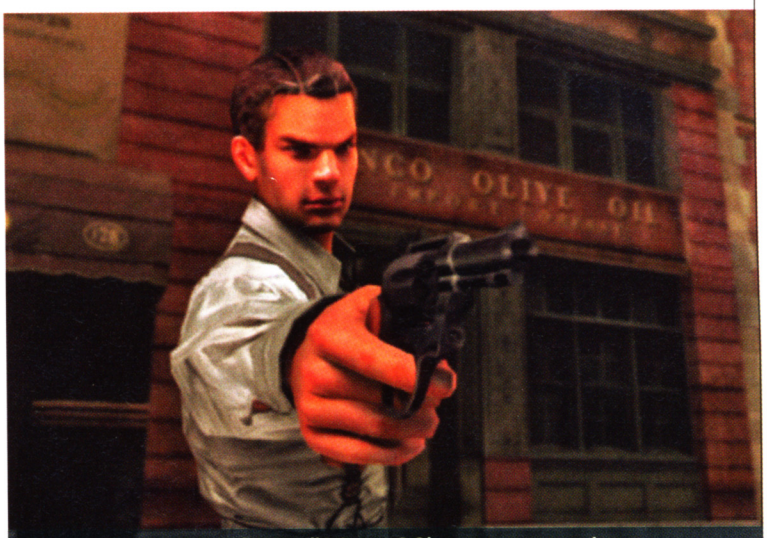
↑ Hijack olive oil trucks. Okay, so it's not a Ferrari but this is the '40s.



↑ The Don himself. Mess with Vito, swim with the fishes. Capiche?



↑ New York will be faithfully reproduced, complete with burning oil drums.



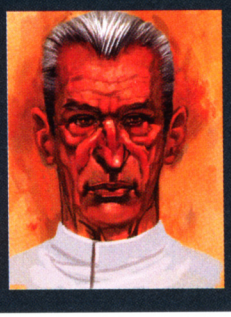
↑ You talkin' to me? I said, you talkin' to me? Oh sorry, wrong movie.

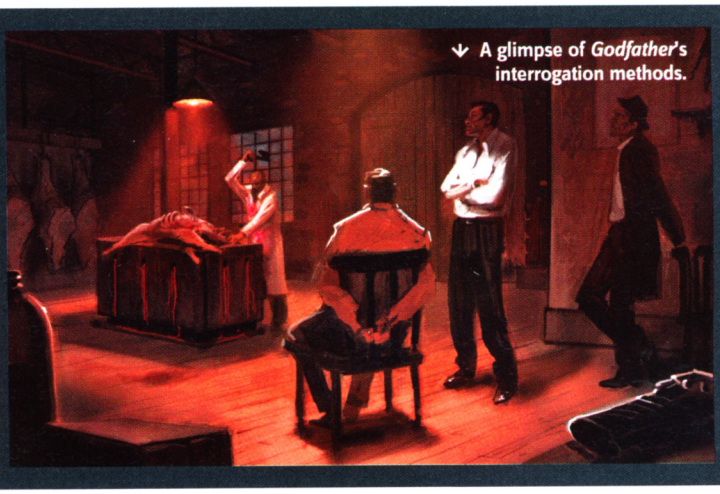
Short Back And Sides?

Getting the Corleones nailed

THESE EXCLUSIVE pieces of artwork show the lengths we'll be able to go to in order to intimidate our enemies. Not only are the barber and butcher nasty-looking characters, but check out the way the butcher will happily go about his work as a victim sits strapped to a chair. Failing that, there's always a trusty gun in the foreground. We've got a funny feeling we're going to like this game...







↓ A glimpse of *Godfather*'s interrogation methods.

Bonus info

DOING THE DON

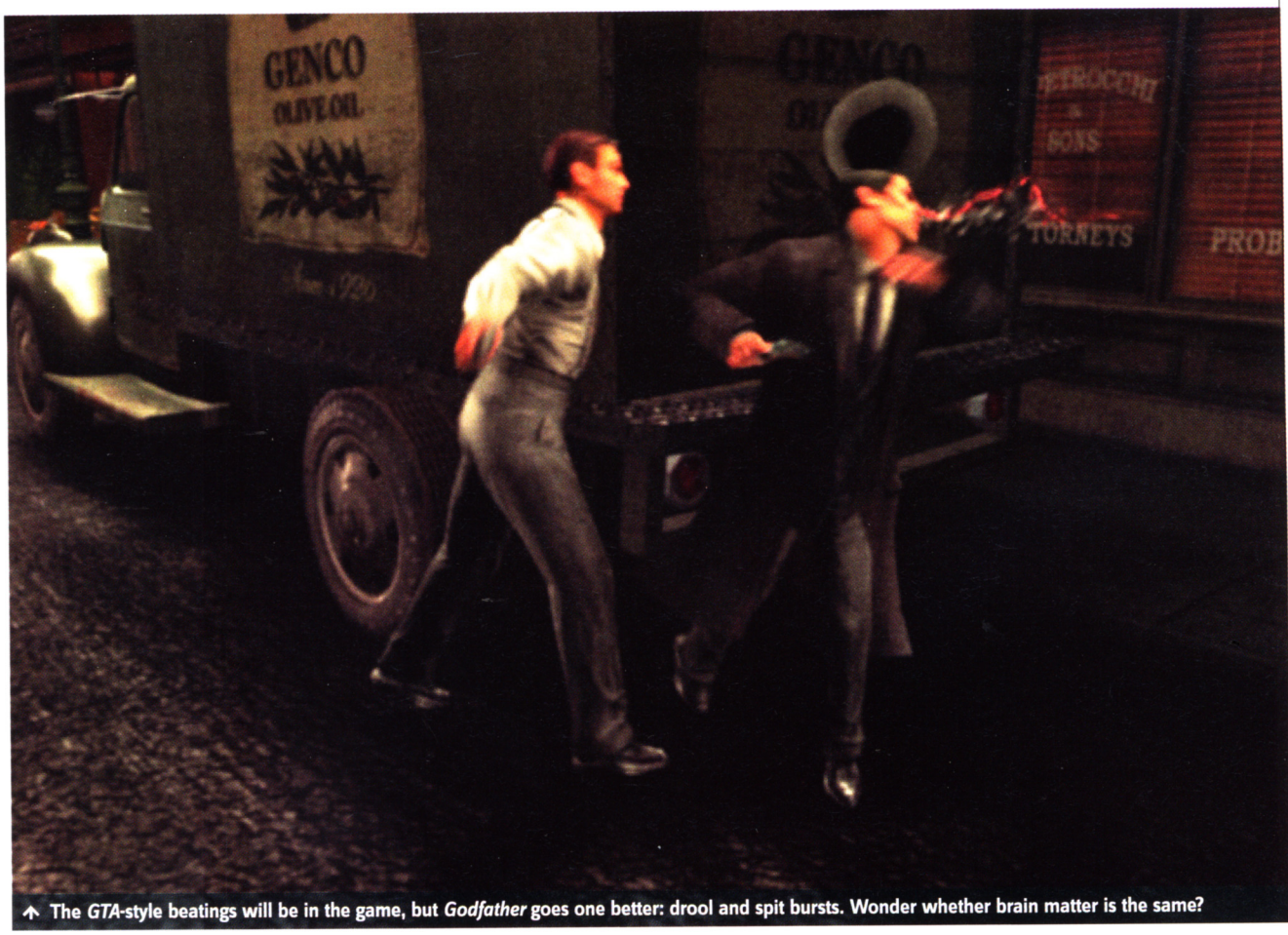
In Mafia society there are eight levels a mafioso needs to climb through in order to become The Don. We're not sure whether this game will have us threatening Don Vito's rule yet though.

GENCO GOODNESS

A lot of the game will revolve around the Genco Olive Oil business. This is the front Vito set up in *Godfather Part II* to run his illegal shenanigans.

MEAN STREETS

No news just yet on the vehicles we'll get to drive during the game. As well as these pictures of delivery trucks, we hope to get a bit of action from the Don's cars, limos, and, perhaps, pushbikes. Actually, scratch that, the pushbikes idea sucks.



↑ The *GTA*-style beatings will be in the game, but *Godfather* goes one better: drool and spit bursts. Wonder whether brain matter is the same?

NOT THE ONLY FRUIT: EVERY TIME SOMEONE IS ABOUT TO DIE OR SUFFER IN THE GODFATHER FILMS, THERE ARE ORANGES ON SCREEN. WATCH IT, IT'S TRUE.

Incoming

All the essential news, exclusive previews and latest screenshots from the wonderful world of Xbox

P014 WHERE DID THIS COME FROM?
Capcom displays its shooter with 'tude, *Without Warning*.

P015 HOT-WHEELED HOMICIDE
Mashed Fully Reloaded – the fantastic original just got better.

P015 KINGDOM COME... AGAIN
KUF: Heroes pops its head into view. Then has it lopped off.

P016 TRUCKING MARVELLOUS
Rude name, *Burnout 3* aspirations – it's *Big Mutha Truckers 2*.

P016 LARA COMES TO XBOX!
So it's the cricketer Brian Lara, but hey, it's still good news.

P019 JAFFA CAKES
Stargate SG-1: The Alliance crosses our event horizon.



Modern Arts

Electronic Arts is in overdrive and hopes to change the very nature of videogames...

ELECTRONIC ARTS has been on a spending spree in the games market. It has also declared its intention of going beyond its role as a leading developer and publisher to become a serious contender in the wider realm of media entertainment. As Gerhard Florin, EA's MD for European publishing said in a recent BBC interview, his company wants to be "bigger than Disney"!

EA has effectively trounced both Take-Two and Sega on the sports field recently by purchasing the rights to publish games based on the NFL and ESPN licences. It's also secured a massive 20 per cent share in Ubisoft, to the consternation of the publisher of *Splinter Cell*, *Prince of Persia* and *Rainbow Six* (see The Inside View, right). The fact that all this acquisition came so suddenly has set gamers' tongues wagging, but how much will we actually be affected? Nearly half of last year's best-selling games were EA titles anyway.

"You can't ignore an industry where people queue to buy a game at midnight because they are so desperate to play it," states Gerhard Florin. "We will be able to bring more people into gaming because games will be more emotional." With the next generation of Xbox perhaps less than a year away, Florin is referring to the greater level of interaction next-gen titles will give us, but also seems to be anticipating a crossover into mainstream culture. Because although games aren't niche anymore, they still don't get much prime time television coverage. Perhaps this is why EA has shown renewed interest in television with a concept for a *Sims*-based reality TV show.

With ESPN and the NFL under its belt, the move to further blur the boundaries between games and other media including television serves a dual purpose. Firstly, to steal an even greater lead on rival games publishers with a new initiative, and secondly to create new gamers. EA will soon have expanded about as far as it can in the current market and its future lies in actually expanding the market by generating even wider interest in games. An even bigger gaming community would obviously be good news for all of us. Just look at how Xbox Live was knocked by sceptics on launch, but has now driven the worldwide gaming community to new heights. So much so that EA finally embraced Xbox Live support for many of its franchises last year, running its own servers in a deal with Microsoft.

And whilst some still argue that the resulting games will only be sanitised family affairs, they should take a look at *Def Jam Fight For New York* (Issue 35, 8.9) published by EA last year and new titles like *The Godfather* (see page 010). Even those who fear a monopolising blandness cannot deny that EA has made many excellent games in the last few years and while certainly hungry for the mass market, has not ignored the demands of the more dedicated gamer.

Ultimately the games will speak for themselves and EA is very aware that it needs to retain the interest of the hardcore while attracting a fresh audience (see The Inside View, right). This is a juggling trick they may not always perform perfectly but which recent titles give us confidence that they are capable of. And remember there is always a bigger fish in the pond, in this case Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation group that has EA on its wish-list as a potential gateway for its first venture into games! And of course we should never rule out Mr Gates's deep pockets...

P020 THEM'S A LOT O' NUMBERS
Halo 2 fans clock up a staggering 91 million hours online.

P021 FRESH RAINBOW SIX CONTENT
Four new levels for a fiver - get 'em while they're hot!

P024 TIME AFTER TIME
TimeShift goes back to the future in our Gallery.

P027 MYSTY MOURNING?
Don't fret, it looks like we're going to see *Myst IV: Revelation*.

P027 BOARD OF DOOM 3?
Too young to play, or just too chicken? Go here now...

P030 WHISKEY BUSINESS
The team behind *Commandos Strike Force* show us around.

P033 SNOOKER LOOPY
Rip up the felt - it's *World Championship Snooker 2005*.

P033 THE ULTIMATE MOT
Xbox-exclusive racer *Forza* undergoes last-minute checks.

P034 BAD ANAKIN, DOWN BOY!
Star Wars comes full circle in *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith*.





THE INSIDE VIEW

GERHARD FLORIN
EA'S MANAGING DIRECTOR FOR EUROPEAN PUBLISHING

WE TRACKED down Gerhard Florin, EA's managing director for European publishing, who told us that while expanding its market, EA would still strive to bring us quality titles. "EA is committed to making the best games and providing the greatest gaming experience for consumers," he said. He also went on to acknowledge that upcoming releases will have to include content that will satisfy our demand for more than just by-the-numbers licences and updates. "We need to make games that are compelling, and consumers will continue to get the same commitment to innovation and quality that they've come to expect from EA." This is an important awareness to recognise and is backed up by the number of AAA titles that we have seen in increasing numbers from the publishing giant in recent years.



THE EXPERT VIEW

YVES GUILLEMOT
UBISOFT CEO

DURING A RECENT interview regarding the takeover, Ubisoft's founder had this to say: "All players in the industry compete for market share, shelf space and talent, but as the past few months have shown, the market is growing. And the more outstanding titles hit the shelves, the more the market grows. So getting great games out there is a common goal that all publishers share." Guillemot did go on to suggest that Ubisoft, just as every other company in its position would do, is seeking to strengthen its stand against further share losses.

"All the strategies have been studied and we have a plan, which I cannot reveal, that will allow us to win in this matter. That is to say to keep the creativity that constitutes Ubisoft's value today." Which has to be the thing gamers care about most.

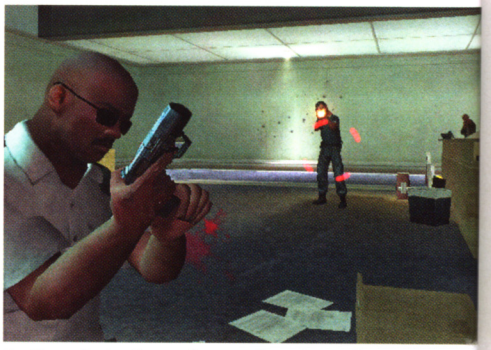
OUR VIEW

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE
TO CUT TO THE CHASE AND TELL IT LIKE IT IS

AS GAMERS, we know the importance of variety and originality within the games market. Without a wide range of publishers and developers producing titles, videogames would inevitably suffer. But, to label EA as responsible for this is an unfounded knee-jerk response. Last year saw the end of several publishing and development houses which, in various ways, simply could not keep up with our demand for bigger, better, and more involving titles. Which also equates to soaring development costs. EA is seeking to expand what it means to be a gamer, and what we as gamers can experience. A new generation of Xbox is looming, and if EA can help break down the barriers between gaming and every other form of interactive entertainment to allow us to make the most of this exciting new platform, it should be a good thing.

TOTAL BONDAGE: EA COULD WELL BE RELEASING CASINO ROYALE. THE TITLE OF THE NEXT BOND MOVIE CURRENTLY IN PRODUCTION. NO PIERCE BROSNAN THIS TIME AROUND THOUGH.




↑ Our reluctant security guard must save hostages.


↑ Welcome to the party, pal! *Die Hard* fans rejoice!

Citizens On Patrol

Without Warning rewrites time and adventure gaming

YOU KNOW A game is striving for that special something when, within the first five minutes, an entire squad of special ops gets blown to bits, leaving the task of saving the world in the hands of a secretary and a doughnut-scoffing security guard.

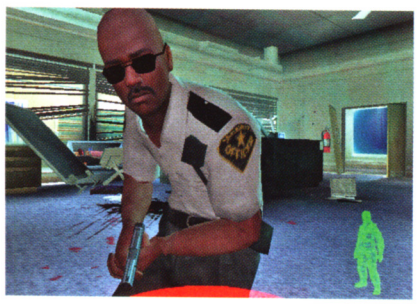
The debut title from Circle Studio, an impassioned band of ex-Lara Croft programmers, *Without Warning* is at first glance a blend of *Metal Gear Solid*, *Splinter Cell* and *Die Hard*, but that's where the similarities end. If you're a fan of *24* then prick up your ears because you're going to like this.

There are six characters, three of which are the remnants of a shattered special ops team sent into a chemical factory to stop terrorist skulduggery; the remaining three are civilians caught up in the mess. Set over a 12-hour period, the characters' storylines interweave, with the actions of each affecting the fate of the rest, giving the game a unique dynamic.

Under the bonnet we caught a glimpse of some serious mastery of the Renderware engine, plus unique touches that bring the chemical plant to life such as dynamic lighting, chemical gas clouds and spills, plus the all important fully-shatterable glass.

Thanks to the team's *Tomb Raider* experience, the level design's been kept as cerebral as possible, but Circle's keen to emphasise this is not a 'Lara-does-S*plinter-Cell*'. The *24*-inspired timeline-shifting is about as puzzle-oriented as it gets. The rest of the time *Without Warning* seems to be a blend of genres and adventure styles so fiendishly conceived and full of potential, it knocks Sam Fisher's linear narrative into a cocked hat. A real hot potato.


↑ Cause havoc and later another character will see the carnage.


↑ He's a little too 'Shaft' to be convincing.


↑ Hide and the enemy won't know what's hit it.

SIX SHOOTER Trapped and frightened, our six heroes fighting for survival



The security guard. Our very own hostage rescuer. John McClane and his doughnut-loving cop pal rolled into one. Portly but important!

The secretary. Inadvertently opening pathways for the special ops team with her keycard, she spends the entire game unarmed, and trying to escape the chemical plant.

The camera man. In his quest for the best story he, like the secretary, is inadvertently helping the team by exposing terrorist positions. Will he reveal too much though?

Our bomb disposal man. It's always good to take the time to defuse anything we see when it's his turn to be used. If we don't, everyone else is strawberry jam.

Our all-round special-ops hero. Great for clearing large areas but a specialist in nothing particular. Keeps terrorist numbers down so he's important!

The sniper. Clear corridors and high areas of enemy snipers with this guy. Without him the others will be picked off even before they start.

CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect

Not much to look at, but it's packing more than a mean punch

CT SPECIAL FORCES has already had a fairly long run on GBA and PlayStation. While there's nothing particularly innovative about this action shooter, the gameplay moves like lightning, the weapons fire with great reliability and pinpoint accuracy and the whole thing just shouts 'fun'. We had loads of laughs with the preview version, trying out the weapons and messing about with the exaggerated ragdoll physics. Here are just some of the things we like in the first three missions.



↑ The special agent known as Owl has a magnetic grenade that sucks metal crates and barrels towards it.



↑ Raptor's evaluation missions take place in the Arctic, so what better way to get around than on a skidoo?



↑ Raptor is a strong guy, so packing both a Nical heat-seeking rocket launcher and a Frag RPG is easy.



↑ Not every situation demands direct combat. Owl's stealth shield lets you slip past enemies unnoticed.



↑ Raptor's fog grenades do a pretty good job of blinding the enemy but their range and duration is limited.



↑ Owl's sonar beam allows you to scan and spot invisible doors, and see what's on the other side of thin walls.

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? Is it a Superman-shaped videogame currently in production at EA to tie in with the film release? Ah yes, that's what it is



↑ Nothing is more satisfying than wiping out the entire field.



↑ 'Barrels of Justice', as they're known at *OXM*.



↑ We'll be getting out of his slipstream then.

Button Mashing

The top-down redline racer returns – Mashed is now loaded with max power

IF YOU'VE SEEN *Apocalypse Now*, you'll appreciate what a bit of spit and polish can do to a previously released classic. There wasn't a lot wrong with the original *Mashed* (Issue 31, 8.6) in our eyes, but Empire has seen fit to re-release this mental slice of multiplayer madness with new additional features.

Mashed Fully Loaded boasts a new total of 15 different vehicles, which, unlike its predecessor, actually feature varied handling. New course variations are obviously included (Turbo, Night and Ice being the distinct standouts), taking advantage of the title's significant graphical polish. All the familiar weapons return (as do the friendship-shattering airstrikes), though the camera is a bit more user-friendly.

Speaking of which, collectable weapons are now easier to understand for novices, thanks to the handy text that accompanies each one. New single-player modes mean the Campaign side of the game now consists of 60 levels, and the additional Training mode beefs up what was lacking first time round. Not entirely original we know, but at £20 it's a snip. Full review next month.

Official Xbox Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

News Wire.....

Easily digestible nuggets of key Xbox information

Another Whirlwind Adventure!

Activision announced this month that it will be bringing us the next instalment of the *Shrek* games, *Shrek 3*, some time this year. The game will not be based on the third film which is currently in production, but will act as a standalone title. Donkey, Fiona, Puss In Boots and Shrek will all return in a format that is rumoured to be similar to *Shrek 2* (Issue 32, 6.0).

Maniac Baby

Some have said *Family Guy* is superior to *The Simpsons* (and... discuss!), so fans will be chuffed to their cherry that a game based on the oddball cartoon is winging its way over. Brought to us by Take-Two, the game will be a third-person arcade affair in which we control each member of the family. Not a patch on driving Homer around in a giant hotdog though, we bet!

Phoenix Quashed

An exclusive bit of unfortunate news now, we're afraid. Looks like *Iron Phoenix* won't be seeing a UK release after all. We spoke to a Sega spokesperson this month and they confirmed our worst fears. The online multiplayer brawler will still see a Stateside release, but the PAL conversion is on hold. Cue 'phoenix from the ashes' puns as we hold out for a future release.

Back Under Fire

OXM's Unsung Hero of 2004 gets a sequel

JUST AS WE were going to press, news came our way regarding the Xbox *Kingdom Under Fire* sequel. The working title is *Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes* and will centre around the continuing struggle between elves and men for domination of the globe. A total of seven new characters will be available, plus a wealth of brand new online game modes. New Live fight styles will be included, as will new character sets such as troops and heroes, and the option for co-op battles. It's great to see that a title overlooked by so many has proved itself worthy of a sequel. More next month.

→ Sexy or just damned scary? You decide.



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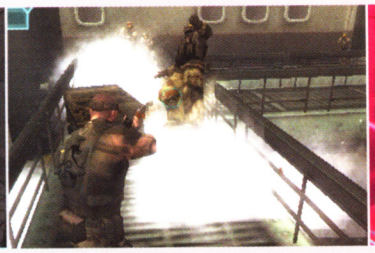

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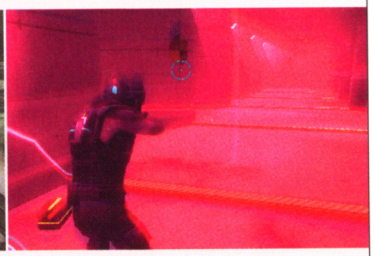

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News Wire

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Wherefore Art Thou, Romeo?

A strange licence to snap up perhaps, but we'll soon be getting a taster of what it means to be an Alfa Romeo driver. Developer Black Bean told us this month that it's signed a deal with the Italian car manufacturer to bring us a title based exclusively around the Romeo series. Due from release some time towards the end of 2005/beginning 2006, the game will feature the entire back catalogue of Alfa Romeo vehicles. Hey, if Ford can do it, what's to stop these guys?

Xbox, Xbox, Everywhere

Microsoft gave us another wet dollop of good news to devour this month, with the announcement of its five millionth birth. Yes, Xbox number 5,000,000 was bought somewhere out there in Europe this month, marking an important milestone for the future of Xbox. Since it first went on sale in March 2002, Xbox has steadily grown in both stature and status, and with five million of us on board for the ride now, things just keep getting better.

Pill Popper

There's a gruesome game in the 'pipe'line headed to Xbox soon. Called *Overdose*, the game will be another one of those delicious *GTA*-style free-roamers we've learned to love. As a narcotics officer we'll have to infiltrate a drugs ring by posing as a dealer, then crack it from the inside out. Published by SCi in the US, we've had the official 'nothing to say at present' from SCi regarding a UK release, but watch this space.

Cyber Men

World Cyber Games welcomes the Chief

THE ANNUAL World Cyber Games announced its line-up for this year's contest this month, and of the eight featured game, four were Xbox titles. *FIFA Football 2005; Need for Speed Underground 2, Dead or Alive Ultimate* and *Halo 2* were all unveiled as games we'll need to work our way through if we stand a chance of being named the ultimate World Cyber Game Champion 2005. For more details about the competition and for an entry form, log on to http://uk.worldcybergames.com. Don't forget to let us know how you get on!



Googly Box

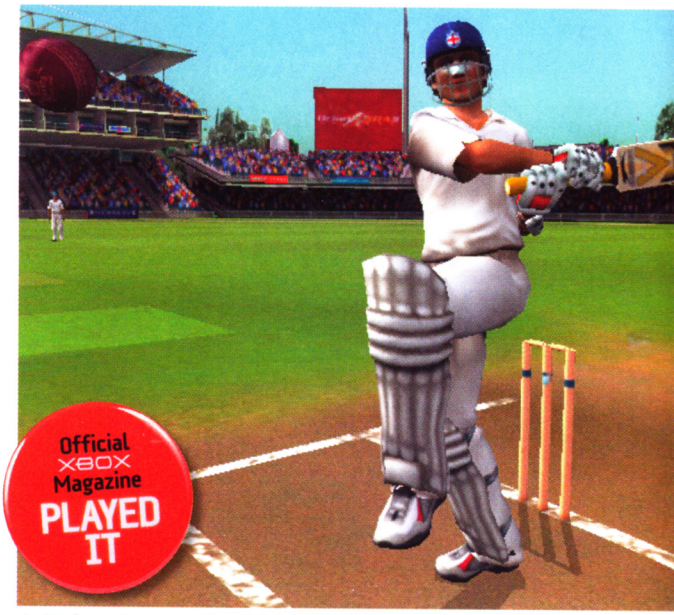
Brian Lara's Cricket to hit Xbox

"I'M OFTEN asked when a new one is coming," Brian Lara tells us in the warm-up to 2005's *Brain Lara's International Cricket*, but it seems hard to believe it's been five years since we saw Lara on any console, let alone on Xbox (this'll be its debut). It's even harder to imagine that it's been a full decade since its original outing, but Codies is bringing it back with a bang rather than the gentle crack of leather on willow.

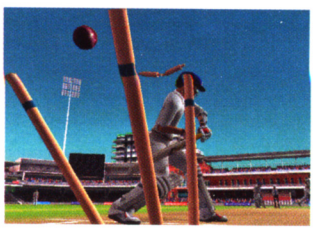
One-day internationals, test matches, famous historical clashes, and even the 1882 match that saw the creation of the Ashes will be at our fingertips, allowing us to sample just about every aspect of cricket possible. Codies also tells us it's done a deal with the ICC to offer up fully authentic real name players, venues and authentic strips with word that WC Grace himself will be playable.

Unfortunately it doesn't look as though *Brian Lara's International Cricket* will be supporting any Xbox Live features, but four players - two per team - will be able to play on a single screen. Players can join the team at any time during a match, providing perfect drop in or drop out play (we all know what those five-day tests are like).

Featuring all the official ICC One-Day International teams, with 16 players per squad, and grounds including The Oval, Newlands and Edgbaston, *Brian Lara International Cricket* looks like it's going to be in for a good innings. Watch this space for more details soon.



↑ It's been five years, but Brian Lara still hopes to hit a six.



↑ Dynamic new cameras a go-go.



↑ Famous grounds get an innings.

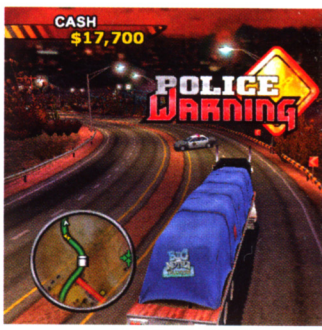
Vampire hunters might be interested to hear about Sega's mysterious new game it's currently calling 'Blood Will Tell'. More news as we get it



↑ Bigger rigs and crazier courses could make *Truckers 2* into a diesel-powered *Burnout*!



↑ Shunt coppers if they're in the way!



↑ Taking a leaf from *Burnout 3*?

Trucked Right Up

Big Mutha Truckers 2 bites Burnout's bumper

BIG MUTHA Truckers 2: Truck Me Harder, now there's a name. The sequel to the strangely compelling matriarchal road burner, *Trucker Me Harder* is heading our way in a month and once again sees Ma Jackson causing all manner of automotive mayhem. Having been banged up in jail for tax evasion, we'll once again have to climb into our rigs to raise enough cash to bribe the jury in her impending case.

The trading system will be implemented again (only this time we're raising bribe money rather than outdoing our siblings), but publisher Empire Interactive has told us it'll be far more streamlined.

Perhaps taking a few hints from the hugely successful *Burnout 3* (Issue 34, 9.4), *Truckers 2* will now pack in enough carnage to draw comparisons between the two. Routes through the game will be multi-stranded as they were the first time around, only this time we're going to be given the chance to explore just about every highway and backwater possible thanks to the new free-roaming game design. The violence quota has gone through the roof, and we'll be rewarded vast sums of money for performing ludicrous stunts and knocking cop cars off the road. Is this just going to be *Burnout 3* with big rigs? It seems like it, and that's no bad thing.





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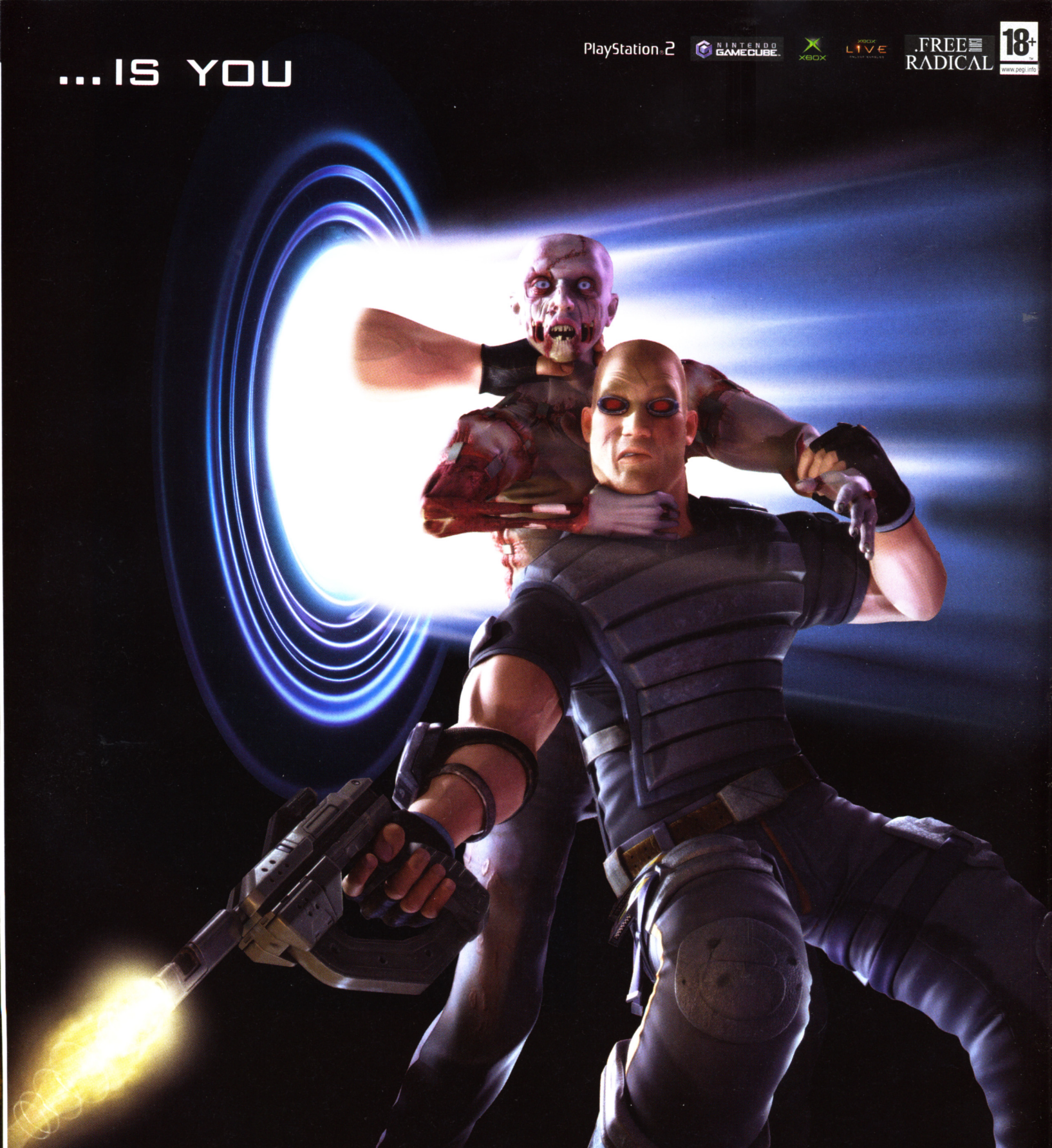
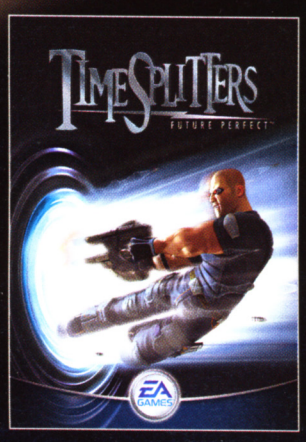




Five hundred years isn't a lot of time when you've got so many vicious, blood-thirsty enemies to take on. And all you've got is your massive arsenal of weapons and vehicles spanning five centuries. Thank heavens for that handy time portal that allows your future and past selves to lend a hand. Don't know how we lived without it.

TIME IS FINALLY ON YOUR SIDE.







EA GAMES
Challenge Everything

Don't Slam The Stargate!

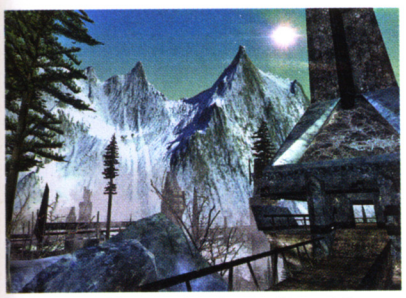
Anubis kit shows you can have your Jaffa cake and eat it!

LAST MONTH we brought you news on the forthcoming *Stargate SG-1: The Alliance*, JoWood's new shooter based on the hit show. Well, the team have been busy for all *Stargate* fans and have produced this fresh crop of screens which show in great detail the level design we can expect.

Pesky 'event horizon face, supreme being of evil, and he who looks like a CG puddle wearing a cloak', Anubis, has gone crazy. He's zipping across the galaxy in search of an ancient weapon capable of giving him power over all Goa'uld and the Stargates. As these screens show, we'll be tracking him through various other-worldly environments, in a plot JoWood is describing as "more than just a continuation" of the series. Gameplay news is still hush hush, other than that we can expect some sizeable multiplayer action, plus a single-player campaign capable of rivalling the likes of *Riddick* and the forthcoming *Pariah*. As soon as we hear more about both plot and gameplay, we'll have the news sent over by express Stargate delivery.



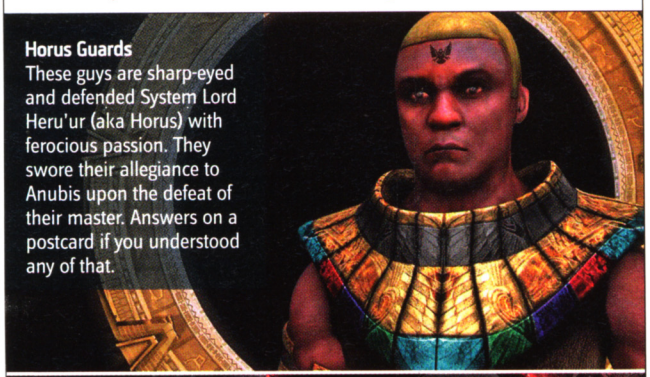
↑ A Goa'uld mothership looms on the horizon.



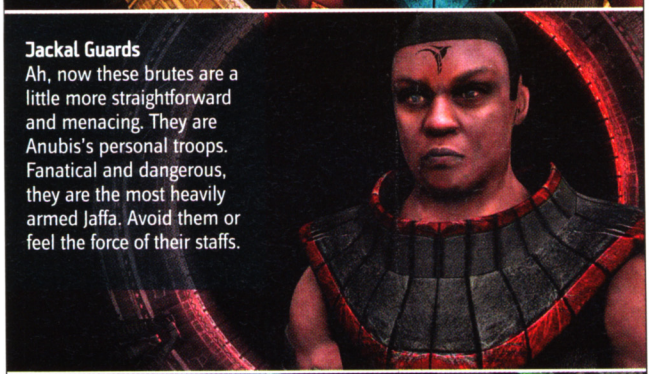
↑ A new world opened up by the Stargate?

Horus Goes Killing

Three styles of Jaffa we'll be firing our Zat'ni'katels at



Horus Guards
These guys are sharp-eyed and defended System Lord Heru'ur (aka Horus) with ferocious passion. They swore their allegiance to Anubis upon the defeat of their master. Answers on a postcard if you understood any of that.



Jackal Guards
Ah, now these brutes are a little more straightforward and menacing. They are Anubis's personal troops. Fanatical and dangerous, they are the most heavily armed Jaffa. Avoid them or feel the force of their staffs.



Serpent Guards
The weakest Jaffa, they rely on numbers to overwhelm enemies. Before fighting for Anubis, they were liegemen for Apophis. Again, what we've just said sounds like gibberish to the uninitiated. Our apologies.

The Outlaw series continues to grow, with the recent announcement of Outlaw Tennis. More news soon!

BIZARRE Weird goings-on from the world of Xbox

First-person Scooter

Here's a novel way of keeping trim - the Game Cycle. Plugged directly into our TV, we must maintain a constant pedal speed in order for the TV to remain on. Begin to flag or stop pedalling altogether and the TV goes off. It's a great idea in principle, but come on, really...



↓ Keep fit the embarrassing way!

The Beach author to pen Halo movie!

This month Hollywood burped out this interesting nugget of information regarding the much-rumoured *Halo* movie adaptation. *The Beach* scribe Alex Garland is on script duties. Expect to see the majority of the movie set in Zanzibar where Master Chief spends the entire film getting off his conker in a cloud of funny-smelling blue smoke.



← The Chief. He's no angel. (Geddit?)

Halo's Bite Of The Apple

Head to Bungie.net this month and you'll encounter a strange story of love, luggage and lasagna courtesy of *Halo* fans, halobabies. They took their own Master Chief on a tour of New York where they treated him to five-star hotel accommodation and snow-angel making in Central Park. He even ended up proposing to a honey in the street. His holiday is illustrated too. Odd? Yes. Funny? You decide, but Bungie seems to love it!

ON XBOX 2...

The web is running wild with Xbox 2 speculation

THERE ARE some very interesting developments this month. Until confirmed by Microsoft, everything should be taken as speculation, but that doesn't stop the third-party developers getting excited. First up, Rory Armes, MD of EA's UK Studio was quoted speaking about the graphical capability of Xbox recently. "It's the subtleties," he said. "The eyes, the mouth - 5,000 polygons doesn't really sell the emotion. With Xbox 2, we can go on the main character with 30-50,000 polygons. With that increased firepower, the *Finding Nemo* videogame looks just like the movie, but in real time."

U-235 Studios is waving a flag for Xbox 2 by announcing *Retribution*. It describes the game as "closer to being in a movie than any game has come before. Negotiate your way through photorealistic scenes fighting intelligent enemies [with] a physics engine superior to *Half-Life 2* [and] more interaction than ever before."

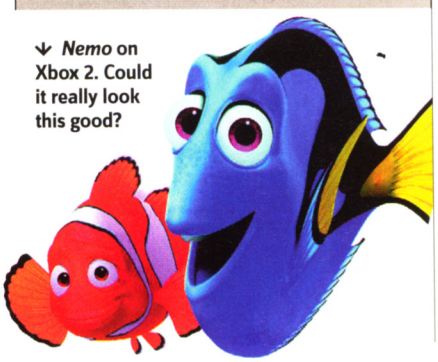
Meanwhile, a supposed EA leak has revealed the line-up of Xbox 2 titles the company plans to bring out to coincide with the console's launch. These must be taken as rumour for now, especially as EA is giving us a 'no comment', but here goes: *Battlefield: Modern Combat, The Godfather*, a "Secret Marvel Project", *Black, FIFA Soccer 2006, Tiger Woods PGA TOUR 2006, Need for Speed: Most Wanted, SSX 4, Urbz 2, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, Burnout 4, James Bond: From Russia with Love* and *FIFA Street 2*.



↑ ***Retribution:*** **photorealism at last?**

Interestingly, the supposed release date for *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* is Christmas, which of course, suggests Xbox 2 will be on sale for the holiday season. Again, EA is tight-lipped.

With the release date creeping ever closer, and May's E3 now the focal point for the much-anticipated Xbox 2 unveiling, it's great to see such a huge range of titles potentially headed our way.



↓ *Nemo* on Xbox 2. Could it really look this good?

CLOWNING AROUND: SINCE FINDING NEMO'S RELEASE, THE NATURAL POPULATION OF CLOWN FISH HAS PLUMMETED THANKS TO UNSCRUPULOUS FISHERMEN CASHING IN ON HIS FAME.



↑ If you're a secret lemonade drinker, you know the consequences, okay?

Close Combat: First to Fight

Is this the game clans have been crying out for?

WE HAD A TRIP to Take-Two for a hands-on of *Close Combat: First to Fight* this month, and missed our train back to the office. It was a real case of 'just one more go' and before we knew it the sun had set. A good sign if ever there was one.

First to Fight is already an incredible title on Live. The team experience, where two squads of four go head to head over urban environments is both chaotic and horribly frightening. One player gets assigned as the leader of the squad, then gives orders to the rest via the headset. Things then progress into serious, surgical territory. It should work a treat, providing there are no power struggles over who should be the leader. It'll be ideal for clans.

One-on-one deathmatches will be excellent; every one we played gave us shivers. Like *Halo*, there are few, if any, camping spots, so we were always on the move through a rat run of tunnels, debris and empty buildings. With up to eight players on screen, the game never feels over-run. It seems there's a concerted effort to make every move count and to actively discourage the temptation to run around blasting. Team work is key, and when we had that nailed we were trouncing the opposition. If there are clans out there eager for a game that will seriously challenge their reputation (as well as their leader's abilities), *Close Combat* is calling. We'll have a full review next issue, on sale 24 March.



↑ Using cover won't help – maps are fiendish.



↑ Ah, that lovely four-player split-screen option.



↑ Group deathmatches are ferociously good.



↑ Using the team in Live is the only way to win.



↑ Communicate and stay alive, that's the key.



↑ Work in packs or pairs to create the most impact in Live. We did!

Tools of War

A QUICK briefing of the weapons we can expect during online deathmatches.



» M-16A4
Mounted with a 4x scope, the M-16 fires a high-velocity 5.56mm round in either single shot or three-burst.

» M-203 Grenade Launcher

» M1911A1 Semi-Automatic Pistol



» M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon (SAW)
The M-249 fires 5.56mm rounds as the M-16 sp ammo can be shared. A critical gun in the Marine team.

» AN-M8 HC Smoke Grenade

» M-67 Fragmentation Hand Grenade

» RPK-74

» Dragunov SVD Sniper System



» M-40A3 Sniper System
Fires 7.62mm rounds. It has been a proven weapon in the Marine Corps inventory since the Vietnam War.

Let's hear it for Dancing Stage! The second edition, Dancing Stage Unleashed Part 2, is coming to Xbox soon. Ben T's giddy as a lamb

LIVE WIRED Juicy numbers for you

MICROSOFT HAS been busy crunching numbers lately to tell us all just how much we've been online. The numbers may frighten us and give us a kick up the arse to get a social life, but here they are.

Xbox Live now has more than 1.4 million members online around the world, with the majority owning *Halo 2*. Between us, we've cranked up more than 91 million hours playing Bungie's baby, more than any other game since Live came into existence. There have been 61 million logged sessions of *Halo 2*, the average session lasting 92 minutes. That's the length of a feature-length movie, and if we were to string all those minutes together it would reach to the moon and back three times, or go around the equator twice. So there you go.

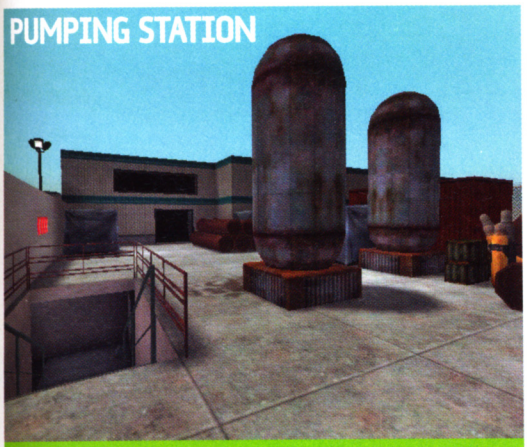


Not Yet Over The Rainbow?

Four new Rainbow Six 3 levels ready to rip on Live

UBISOFT ANNOUNCED the arrival of four new Live maps this month, for its acclaimed FPS *Rainbow Six 3* (Issue 23, 9.4). Tempted to splash out a few quid for them? Here's the lowdown...

PUMPING STATION



HAMIM, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
A small warehouse level. Lots of cover and many paths. Good for medium-ranged gameplay. Watch out for opponents throwing grenades from one yard to the next!

WINTER BASE



MURMANSK REGION, RUSSIA
A mountain canyon in which survival depends on stealth and patience. It is a sniper's paradise. If you are a small group of players looking for a different experience, this is it.

HARBOUR



UDDEVALLA, SWEDEN
A large maze of cargo containers. Teamwork is key to success in this map. Keep your eye on all the hiding spots scattered throughout the map.

PRISON



SAN FRANCISCO, CA, USA
A port of the original *R63* map Prison, only smaller. The map now consists of the cellblock, yard, northern and western buildings; the infirmary has been closed off to create tighter gameplay.

Surfing fan? Penguin enthusiast? What finer combination could there be? Ubisoft's Surf's Up combines the two and is released later this year

Patch Had 'Em

Konami fixes Pro Evo's cheaters once and for all

GOOD NEWS FOR *Pro Evolution Soccer 4* (Issue 35, 9.4) fans who may have been put off playing online because of the cheaters - Konami has nailed the problem. Previously, if someone was losing a match they could quit out without a forfeit, but now if someone ends a match prematurely Konami has made sure they pay for their 'Argentinian ways'.

Now, whenever we log into *PES4* on Live, the mandatory update not only deals with the quitters by giving them an instant defeat, but a few other issues have been dealt with at the same time. Konami has fixed the lag issues that affected some games, plus we're now given the chance to skip some celebration sequences and replays. So, has the argument finally been settled about which footy game is the superior experience? Download the patch and find out for yourselves.



↑ **Fouled? Don't quit out in a paddy, get back up and fight until the end.**

Quotes of the month...

"Those who continue to portray the game population as single-minded loafers are living in a fantasy world"

Peter D. Hart Research Associates' not too surprising findings published in the Entertainment Software Association survey. We could've told them that...

"In the early 1940s, Japan learned an important lesson: "Let the sleeping giant lie." We may not react swiftly, but when we do it's with unstoppable force"

The US Army's official warning to people who were cheating on its free multiplayer game *America's Army*. Lord help us all.

"We are struggling with the gap between companies like Electronic Arts, which come with a high price tag, and the next tier of companies"

News Corps' Peter Chernin explains that Rupert Murdoch's company wants to buy its way into videogaming.

"Nothing to report right now. All I can tell you is that a lot of excited screaming and yelling is coming from the multiplayer test lab. And let me leave you with a single word that you may in future come to use: 'Trench'"

Bungie enigmatically hints at new downloadable content.

"Joining the Activision family seemed like the logical next step and we look forward to continuing to build great games and a great company together"

Karthik Bala, CEO of Vicarious Visions, after Activision snaffled up the *Doom 3* co-developer.

"Our Xbox business fired on all cylinders and provided a strong ending to what was a great year for the platform and our partners"

Microsoft's Robbie Bach announces that Xbox has started making a big profit for the company. Beers are on Robbie!

"Interactive entertainment is now the most potent platform for reaching today's youth. It's great to see many of the characters and storylines that I've created over the years being featured today in the videogame world, and best of all, that's just the beginning"

Spidey creator Stan Lee backs video-games and hints at greater comic book conversions for the future.

"If companies are hiring bigger and bigger teams, at some point the talent is going to run out"

Gary Dunn, development director at Codemasters, paints a startling picture of the future of game development.

SILLY BIRD: WHEN PENGUINS FIRST SAW AIRCRAFT THEY STRAINED THEIR NECKS BACK SO FAR AS IT FLEW OVER THAT IT'S REPORTED WHOLE FLOCKS WERE FALLING OVER. AND UBISOFT EXPECTS US TO MAKE THEM SURF?!



"Based on a true story"









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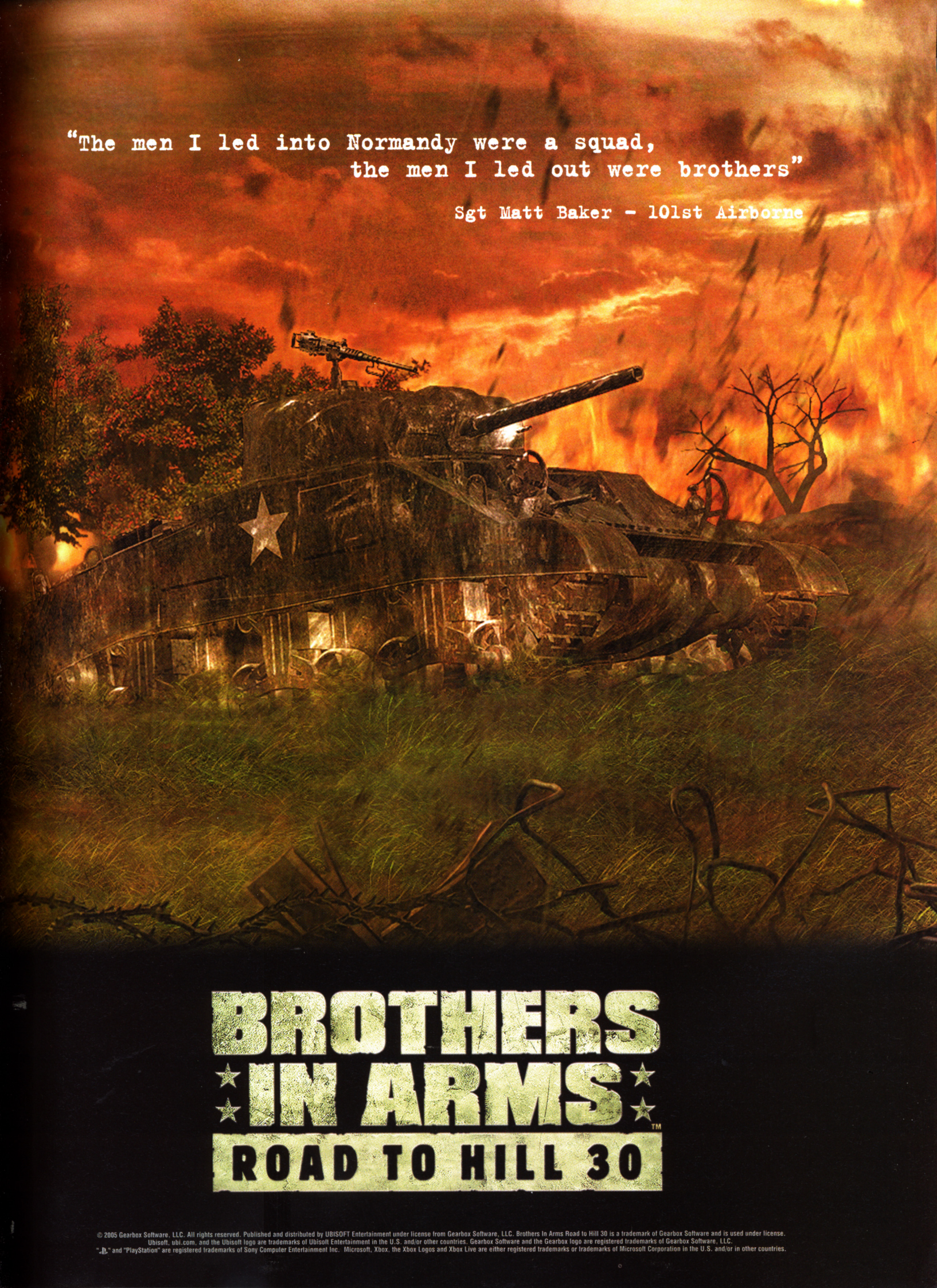

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Jade Empire

DEVELOPER: **BIOWARE** PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT** RELEASE DATE: **APRIL 2005**



↑ These screens show off our elemental alignments. With each alignment comes specific powers, such as these beauties.



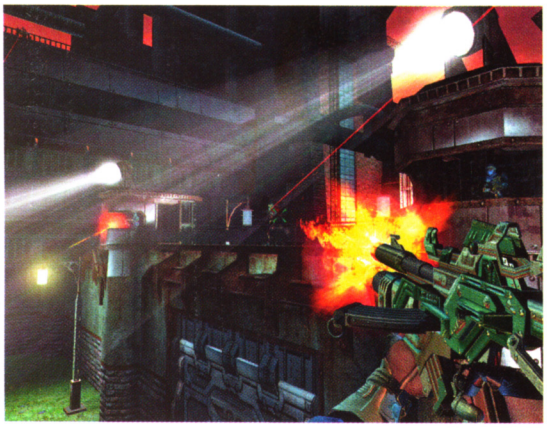
↑ The greater the study of each elemental power, the greater the spells we can cast. Easy.



↑ Our elemental choices will also affect our god alignments. Here we've been aligned with... Wolverine.

TimeShift

DEVELOPER: **SABER INTERACTIVE** PUBLISHER: **ATARI** RELEASE DATE: **AUTUMN 2005**



↑ If we're spotted, we can either fight our way out or, if we're in control of time at this point, simply reverse our way to safety.



↑ As with snipers, we may want to learn the pattern of a search light before approaching it. Slow time will help avoid detection.



↑ Snipers will be particularly hard to spot, which means using the timeshifting will be vital to the success of a mission.

WWE Wrestlemania XXI

DEVELOPER: **THQ** PUBLISHER: **THQ** RELEASE DATE: **FEBRUARY 2005**



↑ Realistic facial animations, body tone and character models will bring us wrestling like we've never seen on Xbox.



↑ Fully customisable characters will come as standard. Just be sure to train them up before entering a fight.



↑ Dynamic camera angles will certainly add to the experience, as will a little man-on-lady action.

Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks

DEVELOPER: **MIDWAY** PUBLISHER: **MIDWAY** RELEASE: **WINTER 05**



↑ A training school for the monks? We think not, and we don't particularly want to step foot inside either.



↑ *Shaolin Monks* will span the entire series and bring us more back story to every character.



↑ New *Prince of Persia*-style killer moves will make for a more story-driven game than before.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AGENT X

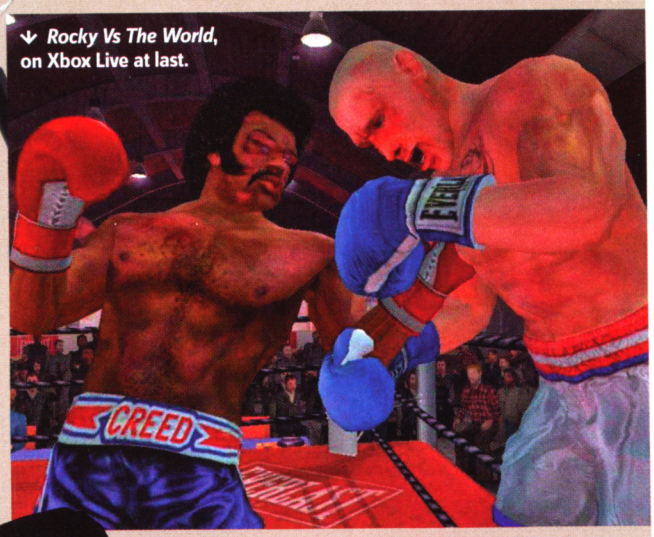
Delving into enemy territory to bring you all the gossip from the world of games

MYST CLEARING

While on reconnaissance around Paris, I discovered some interesting information regarding the *Myst* franchise. Having already been confirmed as a US Xbox release, *Myst IV: Revelation* is almost certainly coming to the UK as well. I managed to speak to an Ubisoft bod, and after a lot of being put on hold and chatter in the background, I was brushed off the scent - the scent of an award-winning puzzle game methinks!

GOING PSYCHO

Long in development it might have been, and slated only for a US release as well, but I hear word on the interactive grapevine that bizarre actioner *Psychonauts* could finally be coming to Xbox. Although no UK publisher has officially signed on to bring us the game, there is a buzz in the air all of a sudden regarding the game's future. Odds on for a 2005 release.



↓ *Rocky Vs The World*, on Xbox Live at last.

ROCKY VS THE WORLD?

Good news, *Rocky* fans! While suffering the indignity of posing as a punch bag in some seedy downtown Brooklyn gym, I dug up news on *Rocky*'s future. A Live-enabled follow-up to *Rocky Legends* could well be on its way, entitled *Rocky Vs The World*. Although this version isn't markedly different from the previous game it will feature more characters, stages, upgraded visuals and Live!

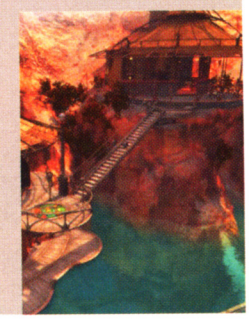


TOO GOOD

Beyond Good & Evil fans will be glad to hear what I've find out from Ubisoft's development vaults. It look like a sequel *will* be going ahead, and the first game might actually have been part of a trilogy, the third part forming a possible next-gen launch title.

← ***BG&E*: sequel-tastic!**

↓ **More *Myst* rolling in?**



Fans of Headhunter will be pleased to know that a sequel, Headhunter 2, is rumoured to be in the works. More news soon!

AND FINALLY...

Board As Hell

Doom 3 becomes a family boardgame!

THERE'S NOTHING worse than trying to play *Doom 3* through the back of a sofa. There is little joy to be found when dripping Martian jaws clamping down on your skull have you diving from cover (or the toilet). So what better, and presumably cleaner way to experience Doom, than the *Doom* boardgame. It's decaf-*Doom*, *Doom*-Lite if you will. Available from www.fantasyflightgames.com/doom, the board game features all the hideous brain munchers of the videogame, but in miniaturised mould-injected plastic form. Terrifying!

There are over 60 finely detailed characters in the game, plus every weapon, level and upgrade we know from the console version. It's one of those multi-sided dice rolling affairs, so we'll have to make up for our cowardice with calculations, but that's the price you pay for being a yellow belly. How cool would this look on the coffee table?





← Can the whole family fit behind the sofa?

Freeze Frame

Jade Empire's trailer secrets exposed

AS BIOWARE'S epic oriental RPG rolls ever closer, we take a look at some of the juicy goodness we can expect upon release. To watch the full trailer in full, log on at www.bioware.com



↑ Like *KOTOR*, dual wielding is included. These double sabre attacks are both poetic and devastating.



↑ Elemental powers, like this Freeze attack, affect the environment. It starts snowing indoors when spells are cast.



↑ Changing into a demon form sucks chi energy away but the lighting and particle effects are superb.



↑ Nasty. Blood spatter and gushing arteries are new. Expect a lot of these when attacking using chi energy.



↑ Improvised weapons, such as these hams, will appear throughout levels. Pick them up or else they'll vanish.

FORCE PUSH: KOTOR DEVELOPER BIOWARE HAS DROPPED HINTS THAT IT'S WORKING ON A NEXT-GEN FIRST-PERSON SHOOTER/RPG.

"Expect this to be one of the biggest, most impressive games of 2005."
Official XBOX Magazine

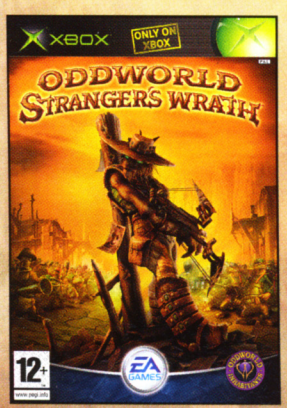




This here's a diff'rent kinda shooter. Switch back 'n forth 'tween first n' third person dependin' on if yer gunnin' or brawlin'.



Shoot livin' ammo like Fuzzles, Boombats and Sting Bees at yer enemies, each with a pow'rful world of hurt.



XBOX

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Welcome, friend. Heard yer that bounty hunter with the mysterious past. Ya hit town ta collect bounties, make moolah and free the land from tyranny. Better keep that double-barrel'd creature crossbow loaded 'cuz ya gotta blast yer way through a pack of outlaws 'n filthy minions if yer gonna clean up around here. Hitch up yer boots, Stranger, it's time ta make a name fer yer'self.

Yer hunt begins at: eagames.co.uk/oddworld

EA GAMES™

Challenge Everything™



↑ We'll have to use the environment to our advantage.

Official XBOX Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS



↑ Levels will be sumptuously realised.



↑ He's in the crate, he's in the crate!



↑ Gag and strangle Nazis - that's what we like.

Q&A Commandos Strike Force

Your country needs you! José Manuel Garcìa, project leader of Commandos does too

Dev: Pyro	Pub: Eidos
Release: Summer 2005	Live: TBA players
Players: 1-2	

0 Percentage Complete 70 100

TELL US HOW *Commandos Strike Force* came about then - we are all massive fans of the original game.
I'm really glad you liked the PC game. From our point of view the *Commandos* saga was a nice challenge to many players, and we could easily talk for long hours about the different missions and the ways of solving them.

Going back to your question, I think it was the logical step after *Commandos 3: Destination Berlin* [on PC], which as you know, was the end of the saga. We could have added a few more things to the game in order to develop a *Commandos 4*, but on one hand we were not sure if that would justify a *Commandos 4*, and on the other hand we didn't want to be out of the console world with another strategy game. So we are very happy working on a development that will allow us to take a different perspective and also to bring the Commandos to the console world.

We found with *Commandos 2* that huge amounts of patience and forward thinking were required. Will we still have to be just as patient or is the game now much more of a shooter?
Commandos 2 was a huge game, and there were parts of the game where players got frustrated because of the time that was needed to fulfil certain objectives, that is true. We have learned a lot from the previous *Commandos* thanks to the fans. In this case, *Commandos Strike Force* is a different type of game; it is a shooter, and although it is not the type of shooter where you just need to care about shooting anything that moves on the screen, it will not be as hard and as difficult as the previous *Commandos* were.

Here, on many occasions the player will choose the pace of the game, and if he decides to do some planning, he will be rewarded. Our aim is to develop a game with many challenges, and is therefore fun to play. Also we want to reward the players that take some additional efforts or challenges. To give you an easy example of this, it will not be the same taking care of an enemy with a heavy machine-gun as with a knife, and we will acknowledge that.

What has turning the series into a first-person game allowed you to accomplish with regards to gameplay? For example, new features, new modes of play etc.
Changing to a first-person perspective has a lot of implications, but we have also changed the genre of the game. From strategy we have moved to a first-person shooter, so now we are playing in a different world. We are also using a third-person camera to show some special moments. The different modes of play will come with the different abilities of each of the Commandos.

Has the gameplay changed dramatically now the series has gone three dimensional?
Yes it has, especially because we have moved from a top-down strategy game to a first-person shooter. So now you will not be giving orders to your Commandos, but executing the actions with each one of them. That is going to be a big change.



↑ José Manuel Garcìa.

The levels of the previous title were huge - will these new ones be just as sprawling and difficult to move through?
Well, *Strike Force* is a console-oriented game, and that means that the approach will be completely different to a PC game. In some missions we will have urban scenarios while others will be wide open. We will try to avoid frustrating players with immense maps, but that does not mean that it will be an easy game.

How many levels will there be, and over what time period? Are they going to be based on real-world events?
Commandos Strike Force will feature three different campaigns, located in France, Stalingrad and Norway, with a different number of levels in each campaign. The action takes place during the Second World War, and although we are using some real scenarios, the actions are not based on historical missions.

Will we have to use decoys, plant bombs, and wear disguises as before?
Yes, people who have played any *Commandos* games before will find several elements from the previous releases, like the possibility of using cigarettes or the ability of the spy to change uniforms in order to talk to the enemies and distract them. Obviously *Strike Force* will feature some brand new elements too.

Tell us a little about the characters. A lot of us warmed to the previous bunch - will these lot be just as engaging?
We hope they will. We will be playing with a spy, a Green Beret and a sniper. There will be time to »»



↑ Even the Commandos won't be a match for these giant beasts. Not unless we're given a sapper, of course.



↑ Sniping will be invaluable when taking out foes.



↑ Remember not to leave footprints in the snow!



↑ One well-placed Molotov and a tank's gunner will be frying in his seat.



↑ You'll have to place men in the right areas to bring about victory.

» find out how these guys got involved in the Commandos team and what the abilities are for each one of them.

I think that one of the big differences will be that we will be solving different parts of the game with all of them, sometimes playing with two commandos at the same time. This means that we will be using the potential of the three, and we will not be trying to solve all the missions with the same one.

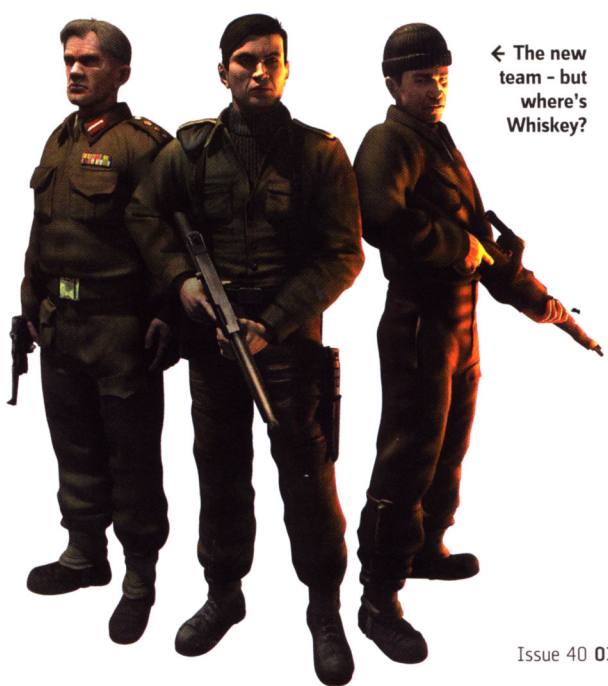
Any cameos from the original? Will Whiskey the dog be in there, for example?
Well, we are not final on this yet, but there could be a surprise.

Will *Strike Force* be as unforgiving as the previous title? A lot of us like a really big challenge, it'd be great to have that element back again.
Our intention is to propose many challenges but with three different levels of difficulty in the game, it will be more for the player to decide the level of challenge he is going to go for. If you asked me to synthesise the concept of the game in just one word, I would use 'choice', so hopefully we will not disappoint you.

Will we be getting Xbox Live play this time around, and if so, what kind of features can we expect to see?
Yes, there is going to be an important online part in *Commandos Strike Force*. Up to eight players will be able to play four different multiplayer modes. We will, of course, have the classic deathmatch and team deathmatch modes, but also two additional multiplayer modes completely different to anything that has been done before. I'm sure you will understand that at this point we cannot go into many more details.

What is your favourite aspect of the new game?
The possibility of playing with characters that have different and interesting abilities.

Tell us something you haven't told anyone else about *Commandos Strike Force*.
Hmmm, nice question. Okay, *Commandos Strike Force* will not be an isolated game, but part of something else.



← The new team – but where's Whiskey?

TOO, TOO HARD: COMMANDOS 2 (ISSUE 05, 79) ON XBOX IS PROBABLY THE HARDEST GAME EVER. IT ACTUALLY HAD US STUMPED FOR MONTHS!

Rainbow Six Lockdown

Official Xbox Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

Official Xbox Magazine PLAYED IT

Could this be a glimpse of the end of the Rainbow?

Dev: Ubisoft	Pub: Ubisoft
Release: 25 March	Live: 2-8 players
Players: 2-4 Split	

0 Percentage Complete 80 100



↑ The squad will intelligently move into shadow then spring out on unsuspecting enemies and attack.

"THE THEME we've been going for is Rainbow Six under attack," game designer Jean-Pascal Cambiotti tells us. "You'll be in situations where Rainbow isn't exactly in charge, in pinned-down situations – situations where members of Rainbow are taken hostage and you have to go in and rescue them."

It's clear even at this stage, that there are fistfuls of modifications in *Lockdown*, some of which clearly add to the experience. The HUD has been drastically changed to incorporate a new goggle view system (these can get steamed up, cracked, or wet depending on the abuse you suffer), but the team control HUD has altered too.

"We've really streamlined how you interact with doors and approach the next room," Cambiotti says. "It's a two-step approach, telling the team what to do to the door and what to do once they're past it. For example, you can use a Shotgun command followed by a Clear order, using a Go code. They'll then blast in and intelligently clear the room." It cuts down on complex commands, but let's hope *Lockdown* doesn't shift too far in the direction of an arcade shooter. An indication that it might be doing just that is the visible parabola now used when throwing a grenade. It's there to help a novice player but crucially, Cambiotti tells us, "It's not an option to turn that off."

Importantly perhaps, environments will now be far more involving than before, with our team actively seeking shadows to fire from, and windows of cars and buildings shattering on impact. Havok physics will mean plenty of falling debris too, although much of what we saw tended to be scripted rather than real-time.

In total, *Lockdown* will feature 14 maps divided into chunks, and each of these sections will test the mettle of the Rainbow squad, itself having expanded beyond the usual Ding Chavez crew. "There are a lot more Rainbow operatives and they are a lot more quirky to get the player more attached," Cambiotti says. "They are assigned to your team per mission, and eventually you'll work with them all."

With new sniper missions, a multiplayer mode that allows us to play as bad guys, plus character information saved on Microsoft servers that will enable characters to grow and develop online, it seems the face of *Rainbow Six* will be drastically altered by the release of *Lockdown*. The big question is, will hardcore fans appreciate the change? Look out for our full review soon.



↑ The muzzle flash dies and so does the enemy.

Official Xbox Magazine ON THE DISC



↑ All weapons have improved sniper scopes for added accuracy.

RAINBOW FRIGHT Six new colours of the Rainbow...

Jamal Murad



Nationality: Egyptian. Joined the Egyptian army and Task Force 777, Egypt's counter-terrorism force. Also SAS trained before joining the Rainbow Six squad.

Renee Raymond



Nationality: American. Born in Missouri, Renee studied at the University of Oklahoma before enlisting with the American Marine Corps. Served in Kuwait.

Ayana Yacoby



Nationality: Israeli. Conscripted into the Israeli army, she was transferred to Sayeret Mat'kal (the Israeli army's hostage release unit) before joining the squad.

Pak Suo-wo



Nationality: South Korean. Enlisted into the 707th Special Mission Battalion, he quickly became squad leader. Great leadership and fighting skills.

Roger McAllen



Nationality: Canadian. A field engineer charged with the care of heavy explosives. Joined the Special Emergency Response unit for Canada before becoming a Rainbow.

Annika Lofquist



Nationality: Swedish. An expert in electronic surveillance, Annika worked exclusively for the Stockholm police force before joining the Rainbow Six team.

World Championship Snooker 2005

A new publisher plus a bevy of new features

Dev: Blade Interactive | Pub: Sega
Release: April 2005 | Live: 2-4 players
Players: 1-4
0 Percentage Complete 80 100

JUST AS THE new snooker season is gaining momentum, Sega has announced that it's seized the popular *World Championship Snooker* franchise away from Codemasters. Not only that, but developer Blade Interactive has some major enhancements in store.

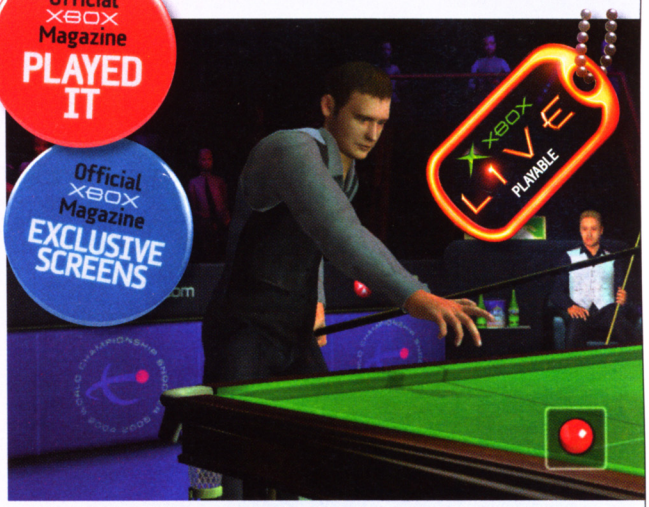
Last year's roster of 32 players has been boosted to an immense 103! With that many players, we'd hate to think that they all look the same, but Blade has also created six player models for different heights, weights and builds. Impressively, there's double the amount of animation, and the players even add their own spoken comments after a great shot or when the balls are running badly for them.

There's also a new, more tactile control system. The distance the analogue stick is moved back determines the force of the shot, while the smooth movement of the stick forward dictates the follow-through. Plus, Xbox Live features include Joe Davis's modified billiards game, Snooker Plus, and the ability to play doubles with three friends.

Next month, we'll put *WCS2005*'s new control system to the test and have a full rundown of the game's Career mode in our review.

Official Xbox Magazine PLAYED IT

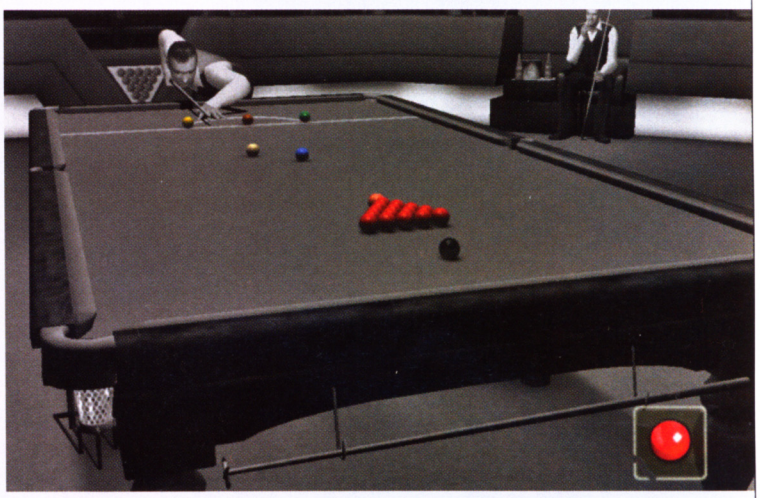
Official Xbox Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS



↑ The Whirlwind Jimmy White finally makes the move to *WCS*!



↑ Expect to see increased realism thanks to double the amount of animation.



↑ Some of the very early classic matches appear in black and white.

Forza Motorsport

Drive every car you've ever dreamed of

ONLY ON XBOX

XBOX LIVE PLAYABLE

Dev: Microsoft | Pub: Microsoft
Release: April 2005 | Live: 2-8 players
Players: 1; 2-4 Split
0 Percentage Complete 80 100

MORE THAN 230 cars are appearing in *Forza Motorsport*, and we've seen the complete list - not to mention been lucky enough to have a crack at the vastly improved build that Microsoft has been showing off. A few unsure words went around regarding the first *Forza* demo we saw. It was too hard, gave too much fun over for realism, and so on, but these factors have been massively overhauled for a code which is looking to be close to final.

As well as a far greater sense of speed (which of course means the handling has had to be improved), there's now a real sense that these cars are actually 'on the track'. There's a weight to them, and gear shifts can be felt, just as inertia pulls on us when cornering. None of this really had an impact before, but now it's been fuel injected into the code.

On a less subtle note, new racing-line guide arrows have been included (optional) to help us learn the curve of a course whereas before we were often sat arse-end in a sand trap watching the field disappear before us. It appears Microsoft has thoroughly listened to feedback from racing fans, and is about to deliver something of a doozy. Is it a *GT*-beater then? Well, comparisons are being discouraged in the Xbox camp, and with *Gran Turismo 4* receiving a glowing reception it's understandable. We get the feeling the *Forza* team is more than aware of the situation, though, and *Forza* has the online advantage.



↑ Bombing along an oval isn't as easy as it looks.

Official Xbox Magazine PLAYED IT

Official Xbox Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS



↑ Get shunted and the race can still be won.

So much choice it Hertz

OUR RESIDENT car nut Owen offers his pick of the best cars from the 230-plus vehicles. Disagree? Log onto xbox.com, follow the *Forza* link, then email us and let us know what car you're most looking forward to driving.

1967 AC Shelby Cobra
1986 Porsche 959
1999 Dodge Viper GTS ACR
1999 Pagani Zonda C12
2003 BMW Motorsport M3-GTR
2003 Ferrari Racing 550 Maranello
2003 Nissan 350Z Track
2003 TVR Tuscan S
2004 Bentley Continental GT
2004 Subaru Impreza WRX Sti Special
2005 Aston Martin DB9 Coupe
2005 Ford Mustang GT

CHEQUERED FLAG: SPECIAL CARS WILL BE UNLOCKED THAT WILL BE DRIVEN BY FAMOUS RACING DRIVERS, SO BE SURE TO KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN FOR THEM!



↑ Stumbling into the wrong set, Obi-Wan angers two T-800s during a *Terminator 4* robot love scene.



↑ Force powers are just as vital as being a 'saber d



↑ As Anakin turns to the dark side, he must defeat... Saruman?

Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith

What a Wookieed game you play, to make us feel this way...

Dev: LucasArts	Pub: LucasArts
Release: May 2005	Live: None
Players: 1	

0 Percentage Complete 80 100

THIS IS THE moment all *Star Wars* fans have been waiting for, and we can exclusively reveal not only new glimpses of the *Episode III: Revenge of the Sith* game, but also some of the inhabitants and locations of movie as well.

Revenge of the Sith will heavily feature both Wookiees and the Wookiee planet Kashyyyk (plus Coruscant and two other as-yet-unveiled movie planets), and we managed to get our mitts on some truly impressive concept art of the new Wookiees, and these exclusive new screens as well.

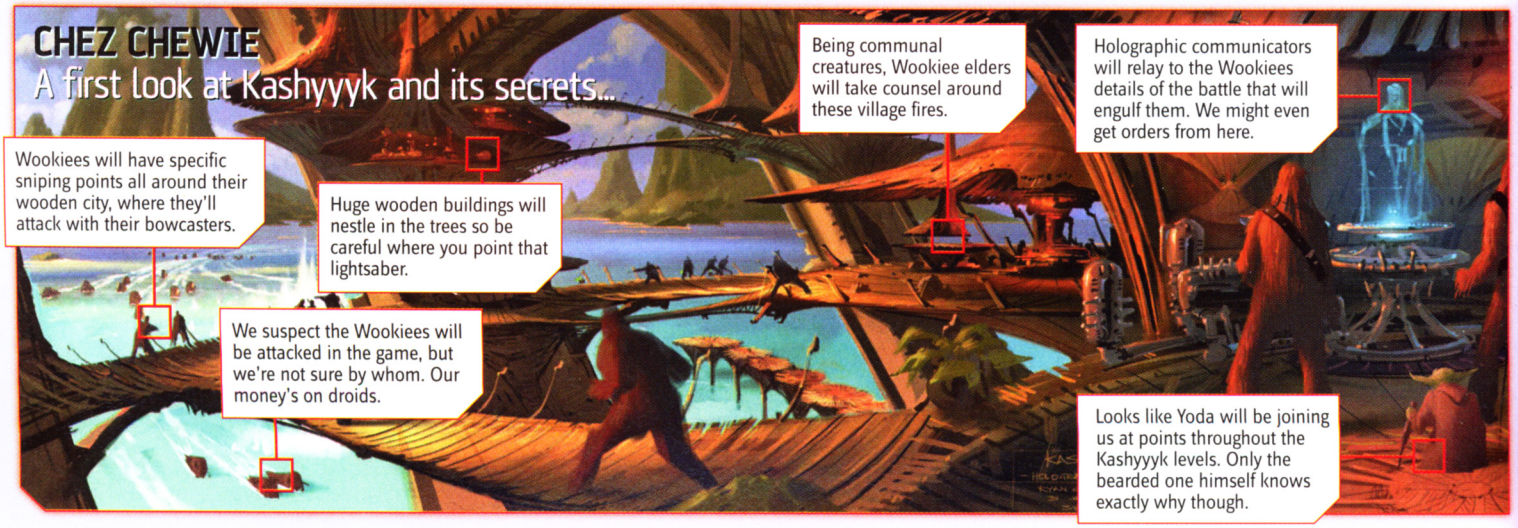
Playing as both Anakin (boo, hiss!) and Obi-Wan (yay!), the game will span the new movie, but also expand on the universe with especially written stunt sections created by film stunt co-ordinator Nick Gillard. LucasArts is also keen to announce the vast range of powers at our fingertips, including those that come by wielding the lightsabers. We'll be able to cleave droids in two, fight various Jedi from the movie, and cut through scenery with the 'sabers as well. Doors, walls and blast shields will all fall thanks to a well-inserted 'saber, just as they'll fall through the sheer impact of the Force.

We'll be throwing scenery around and hauling droids into the air over 16 levels. Look out for General Grievous's mechanical henchmen and the way we can pin them to the floor and slice them in two like we're working on the Asda deli counter. There's obviously going to be a big slab of *Episode III* plot involved (duh), and while this may give away a few previously hinted-at clashes (Anakin batters Mace Windu) and plenty of Wookiee action, we're still promised a unique experience that not only builds on the movie, but has us sitting in a pool of drool gagging for the May release.

Official Xbox Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

CHEZ CHEWIE

A first look at Kashyyyk and its secrets...



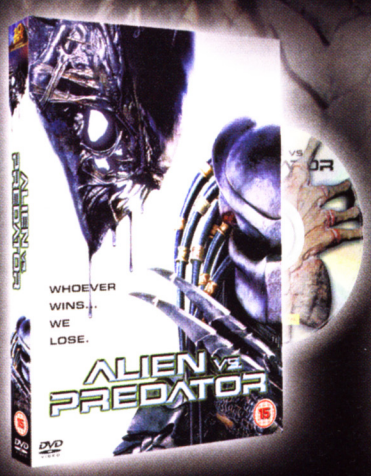
ALIEN VS. PREDATOR

6'6" 350lbs, ACID BLOOD, ARMOURED SKIN, MERCILESS

7'6" 440lbs, HEAT SEEKER, INVISIBLE CLOAK, BRUTAL



TAKE HOME THE ULTIMATE FACE-OFF DVD!





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Charts

The ten best-selling games in the UK



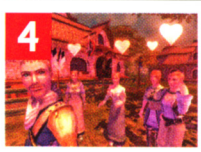
1 HALO 2
Dev: **Bungie**
Pub: **Microsoft**
MC stands solid at the top of the chart for the fourth month in a row. The enduring appeal of *Halo 2*'s Xbox Live play makes it an essential purchase, even after the hype about Campaign mode has died down.



2 NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2
Dev: **EA** Pub: **EA**
NFSU2 has been number one in the all-formats chart since Christmas, but in the Xbox-only chart it hasn't quite crept up on the mighty *Halo 2*.



3 PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
Dev: **Konami** Pub: **Konami**
Pro Evo has faced some criticism for its Live play, but the minor problems have been corrected (see page 021). Now it's excellent both on or offline!



4 FABLE
Dev: **Lionhead** Pub: **Microsoft**
One of the fastest-selling Xbox games of 2004 is still going strong in 2005. We predicted its time in the chart was ending but we were wrong. D'oh!



5 POP: WARRIOR WITHIN
Dev: **Ubisoft Montreal** Pub: **Ubisoft**
Despite lacklustre sales of the original *Prince of Persia*, Ubisoft's faith in the franchise has finally paid off. Another month midway up the chart.



6 TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2
Dev: **Ubisoft** Pub: **Ubisoft**
Another monster hit for Ubisoft. We weren't that impressed with the sequel's Campaign mode, but online it absolutely rocks!



7 FIFA FOOTBALL 2005
Dev: **EA** Pub: **EA**
In the all-formats chart, *FIFA* is giving *Pro Evo* a beating. However, the more discerning Xbox fans have given *FIFA* second place.



8 CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR
Dev: **Spark Iron** Pub: **Activision**
Why this is in the chart at all is a mystery. It seems that World War II games haven't lost their appeal - even when they're as bland as this one.



9 THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN (CLASSICS)
Dev: **Radical** Pub: **Vivendi Universal**
One of the truly great kids' games on Xbox and easily the best Simpsons game in years.

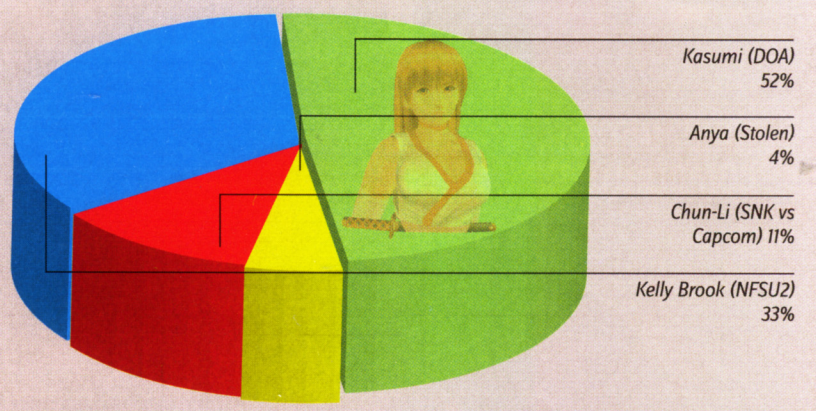


10 XIII (CLASSICS)
Dev: **Ubisoft** Pub: **Ubisoft**
It comes as a pleasant surprise that *XIII* has finally made it into the chart. It's in the Classics range now and well worth the asking price.

Virgin megastores Virgin Megastores sponsors the charts.

The hot topic You answer the burning question...

Who is the hottest female character on Xbox?



It comes as no surprise that your favourite videogame babe is Kasumi from *DOA*. Anya from *Stolen* and Chun-Li performed badly, but the lovely Kelly Brook was right in contention. Don't forget to check out our exciting Xbox Live update of *Dead or Alive Ultimate* on page 112.

TO VOTE ON the hot topic, visit the *OXM* forum at www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk and post in the 'Hot Topic' polls you'll find in the threads there.

Your most wanted

THIS CHART IS composed entirely from the entries you send in and shows the upcoming games you're most excited by. We can then fill the mag with the news, previews and features you most want to see!

↑ TO VOTE FOR your favourite upcoming game, text 'MW: Game Name' to 0778 148 2669 (standard network rates apply), or email us at staff@fxmi.com with subject line 'MW'.



← You don't need a crystal ball to tell that *San Andreas* is going to be your Most Wanted until the day it comes out. That is unless *Halo 3* is announced between now and then (and that's very unlikely).

1 GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS
Dev: Rockstar North **Pub:** Rockstar **Release:** June 2005

2 DOOM 3
Dev: Vicarious Visions/id **Pub:** Activision **Release:** March 2005

3 TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY
Dev: Ubisoft Montreal **Pub:** Ubisoft **Release:** March 2005

4 HALF-LIFE 2
Dev: Valve Software **Pub:** Vivendi Universal **Release:** TBA 2005

5 FORZA MOTORSPORT
Dev: Microsoft **Pub:** Microsoft **Release:** April 2005

6 UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP 2: THE LIANDRI CONFLICT
Dev: Epic Games **Pub:** Midway **Release:** March 2005

7 DELTA FORCE: BLACK HAWK DOWN
Dev: Novalogic **Pub:** Climax **Release:** March 2005

8 PARIAH
Dev: Digital Extremes **Pub:** Hip Games **Release:** May 2005

9 BROTHERS IN ARMS ROAD TO HILL 30
Dev: Gearbox Software **Pub:** Ubisoft **Release:** March 2005

10 JADE EMPIRE
Dev: BioWare **Pub:** Microsoft **Release:** February 2005

OUR SHOUT



Make sure you try this month's unbelievable trial version on the Game Disc. The graphics are to die for! Full review coming next month.

Xbox Game Releases

The forthcoming games you need to know about

DATE	GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
Spring 05	25 To Life	Avalanche	Eidos	N/A
	Advent Rising	Majesco	Vivendi Univ.	20
	Area 51	Midway	Midway	29
	Championship Manager 5	Gusto Games	Eidos	N/A
	Close Combat: First to Fight	Destineer	Take-Two	31
	Commandos Strike Force	Pyro	Eidos	36
	Conspiracy: Weapons of Mass Destruction	Kuju	Oxygen Int.	N/A
	CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect	Light & Shadow Pr.	Hip Interactive	N/A
	Delta Force: Black Hawk Down	Novalogic	Climax	30
	Destroy All Humans	Pandemic	THQ	33
	Forza Motorsport	Microsoft	Microsoft	31
	Get On Da Mic	Eidos	Eidos	N/A
	Gungriffon	Kama	Tecmo	N/A
	Jade Empire	BioWare	Microsoft	31
	Kao The Kangaroo: Round 2	JoWooD	JoWooD	N/A
	King of Fighters 2003/2004	SNK	TBA	N/A
	Lego Star Wars	Giant	Eidos	38
	Mashed Fully Loaded	Supersonic	Empire	39
	Medal of Honor: Dogs of War	EA	EA	39
	Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition	Rockstar	Rockstar	39
	NARC	Midway	Midway	28
	Notorious: Die to Drive	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	N/A
	Pariah	Digital Extremes	Hip Interactive	39
	Pure Pinball	Iridon	Iridon	33
	Red Ninja: End of Honour	Tranji	Vivendi Univ.	33
	SCAR - Squadra Corse Alfa Romeo	Milestone	Black Bean	N/A
	Scarface	Radical Games	Vivendi Univ.	34
	Starcraft: Ghost	Blizzard	Vivendi Univ.	23
	Super Monkey Ball Deluxe	Sega	Sega	38
	Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams	Avalanche Software	THQ	N/A
	Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	39
	Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Lockdown	Ubisoft Montreal	Ubisoft	37
	Torque	Garage Games	JoWooD	N/A
	World Championship Snooker 2005	Blade Interactive	Sega	N/A
Summer 05	100 Bullets	TBA	TBA	32
	Alien Hominid	The Behemoth	Zoo Digital	39
	ATV Quad Power Racing 3	Climax	TBA	N/A
	Aquanox	TBA	JoWooD	N/A
	Batman Begins	Eurocom	EA	37
	Battlefield: Modern Conflict	EA	EA	N/A
	Battlestations: Midway	Mithis	SCi	34
	Brian Lara International Cricket	Codemasters	Codemasters	40
	Call of Cthulhu	TBA	Headfirst	32
	Cold Winter	Swordfish Stu.	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	Conker: Live & Reloaded	Rare	Microsoft	37
	Dancing Stage Fusion	Konami	Konami	N/A
	Darkwatch	Sammy	Sammy	N/A
	Dead to Rights 2: Hell to Pay	Namco	Namco	36
	Dragonball Z: Sagas	Atari	Atari	N/A
	Emergency Mayhem	TBA	TBA	30
	Fahrenheit	Quantic Dream	Vivendi Univ.	18
	Freedom Fighters 2	IO Interactive	EA	N/A
	Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	Rockstar North	Rockstar	39
	Half-Life 2	Valve	Vivendi Univ.	32
	Hitman: Blood Money	IO Interactive	Eidos	37
	Iron Phoenix	Sammy	Sammy	N/A
	Juiced	Juiced Games	THQ	35
	Justice League	Trav. Tales	Midway	N/A
	Madagascar	Toys for Bob	Activision	39
	Metal Slug 4 & 5	SNK	SNK	N/A
	Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	Midway	Midway	37
	MotoGP: Ultimate Racing Technology 3	Climax	THQ	40
	MX Vs ATV Unleashed	THQ	THQ	36
	Painkiller	Dreamcatcher	Mindscape	N/A
	Predator: Concrete Jungle	Eurocom	Vivendi Univ.	32
	Psychonauts	Double Fine	Microsoft	6
	Raze's Hell	Artech	Majesco	N/A
	Rogue Trooper	SCi	SCi	34
	Robots	Eurocom	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	Sid Meier's Pirates!	Firaxis	Atari	40

THE WISH LIST

DESPITE US providing the most comprehensive release schedule around, we all know game release dates change quicker than Andy's hairstyle. Tell us what you're really waiting for - send your top five to staff@fxmi.com.



WE'RE MORE than intrigued by *TimeShift*, Atari's upcoming FPS. Its last few shooters have used a really nice engine, and the thought of combining this with some innovative time-travel powers has got us winding our watches forward in anticipation.



WITH IMPROVED handling, stunning visuals and more bikes than you could shake a throttle stick at, we can't wait to pull on our biking leathers and take out *MotoGP: URT3*. For a definitive first look at this roaring racer, check out our Exclusive Access on page 048.

DATE	GAME	DEVELOPER	PUBLISHER	ISSUE
	Sniper Elite	Rebellion	TBA	12
	Spikeout: Battle Street	Sega	Sega	36
	Stacked with Daniel Negreanu	5000ft, Inc	Myelin Media	N/A
	Star Wars Episode III	LucasArts	LucasArts	40
	Stolen	Hip Interactive	TBA	33
	The Incredible Hulk	Radical	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	The Movies	Lionhead	Activision	16
	The Roots	Cenega	Cenega	29
	Tork	Tiwak	Ubisoft	4
	Trivial Pursuit: Unhinged	Artech	Atari	25
	Worms 4: Mayhem	Codemasters	Codemasters	39
	WWE Wrestlemania 21	THQ	TBA	N/A
Autumn 05	Beat Down: Fists of Vengeance	Capcom	Capcom	N/A
	Fear & Respect	Midway	Midway	38
	Scooby-Doo! Unmasked	Warner Bros	THQ	N/A
	Stargate SG-1: The Alliance	Perception	JoWooD	38
	The Godfather	EA	EA	40
	TimeShift	Saber Interactive	Atari	39
	Without Warning	Circle Studios	Capcom	40
Winter 05	American McGee's Oz	Carbon6	TBA	27
	Armada 2	TBA	Metro	4
	Big Mutha Truckers 2	Empire	Empire	40
	BloodRayne 2	Majesco	TBA	36
	Breed	Brat Designs	CDV	N/A
	Chronos	Saber 3D	TBA	N/A
	Dead or Alive 4: Code Cronus	Tecmo	Microsoft	N/A
	Dealer	Nagual	TBA	N/A
	Duality	Trilobyte Gr.	Phantagram	4
	Fuel	Firetoad Software	Dreamcatcher	N/A
	FX Racing	Milestone	TBA	23
	Johnny Whatever	Warthog	TBA	N/A
	Kameo: Elements of Power	Rare	Microsoft	33
	Karaoke Revolution 3	Konami	Harmonix	N/A
	King Kong	Ubisoft Montreal	Ubisoft	36
	Loose Cannon	Digital Anvil	Ubisoft	4
	Magatama	Microsoft	Microsoft	23
	Masters of the Universe	Savage	TDK	N/A
	Neverend	Mayhem	TBA	N/A
	Nightmare Creatures 3	Ubisoft	Ubisoft	N/A
	Perfect Dark Zero	Rare	Microsoft	10
	Phantom Dust	Microsoft	Microsoft	23
	Pilot Down	Wide Games	Wanadoo	N/A
	Phoenix	Bungie	Microsoft	37
	Resident Evil 4	Capcom	Capcom	37
	Roll Call	TBA	SCi	35
	Quake IV	Raven Soft.	Activision	N/A
	Serious Sam 2	Croteam	Take-Two	21
	Starship Troopers	Empire	Empire	27
	Starsky & Hutch 2	Empire	Empire	N/A
	Star Wars Battlefront 2	Pandemic	LucasArts	36
	State of Emergency 2	VIS	BAM!	38
	Street Racing Syndicate	Eutechnyx	Namco	N/A
	Stubbs the Zombie Rebel Without a Pulse	Wideload Games	Microsoft	37
	Survivor	Replay Studios	TBA	36
	The Fast and the Furious	Genki	Vivendi Univ.	N/A
	The Last Job	TBA	TBA	N/A
	The Red Star	Chris. Gossetti	TBA	32
	True Crime 2	Luxoflux	Activision	N/A
	War Devil	Sammy	TBA	N/A
	X2: The Return	Egosoft	Deep Silver	37
TBA 05	BC	Intrepid Ent.	Microsoft	31
	Burnout 4	Criterion	EA	36
	Fantastic Four	TBA	Activision	40
	Ford Mustang 40th Anniversary Edition	Take-Two	Take-Two	N/A
	Just Cause	Avalanche Software	Eidos	N/A
	London Taxi	Data Design	TBA	38
	Spider-Man Ultimate	TBA	Activision	N/A
	The Mummy: The Animated Series	Hip	Hip	N/A
	World Racing 2	TDK	TDK	N/A
	X-Men Legends 2	TBA	Activision	N/A

XBOX CLASSICS

The latest and best of the £19.99 value range

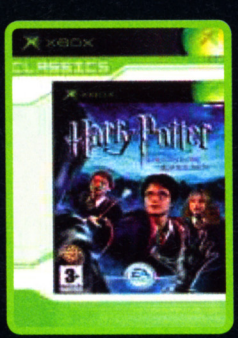


Official Xbox Magazine ELITE

Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon
Issue 11
Score 8.9



Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance
Issue 13
Score 7.8



Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban
Issue 31
Score 7.4



Official Xbox Magazine ELITE

TimeSplitters 2
Issue 09
Score9.3

AN OFFER YOU CAN'T REFUSE: THE OXM TEAM WERE LIVID AFTER A 'STRATEGY DAY' SCUPPERED THEIR CHANCES TO GO TO NEW YORK ON THE GODFATHER PRESS TRIP. ONE OF OUR LUCKY FREELANCERS WENT INSTEAD.


THE GATEWAY
TO HELL IS OPEN
JOIN FORCES AGAINST
THE HORRORS OF HELL
PULSE POUNDING ACTION AND REVOLUTIONARY
TECHNOLOGY COMBINE TO DRAW YOU INTO THE MOST
FRIGHTENING AND VISUALLY STUNNING GAME EVER CREATED.
FIGHT FOR YOUR LIFE IN SINGLE PLAYER, ONLINE MULTIPLAYER
OR THE XBOX LIVE™ EXCLUSIVE CO-OP MODE.
DOOM 3™



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Inbox



Letters 40 Editor

BEN LAWRENCE
GAME OF CHOICE: **SW: REPUBLIC COMMANDO**

Another bumper crop of interesting thoughts (gaming tramps), strange inventions (Mooster Chief), and general rants have once again kept the *OXM* post bag overflowing. Keep 'em coming!

YOUR OPINIONS COUNT! Your input here has a direct effect on the content of your *Official Xbox Magazine*, so let us know which games you like or don't like, what you want to see more of or less of in the mag, or just rant by text, mail, forum or email!

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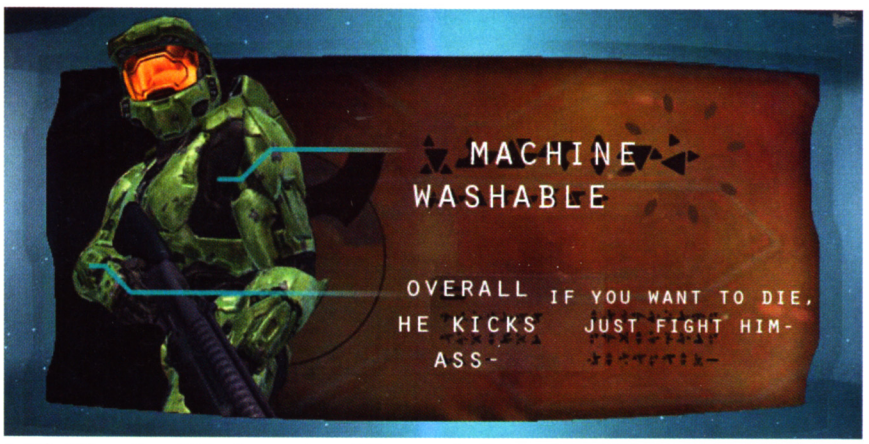
EMAIL US WITH your rants, hopes and opinions at staff@fxmi.com



↑ Who'd have thought the Covenant would be so particular about domestic chores?

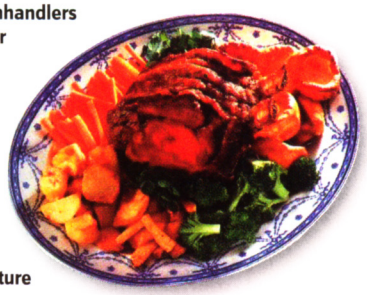
BUM FIGHT!

I have spent most of my 16-year existence enjoying the luxury of computer games, but even they can't help me forget those less fortunate than ourselves who cannot afford consoles, televisions or even homes. I can bet there are a few amongst the homeless with an itchy trigger finger begging to show the Covenant that even the tramps can be a force to be reckoned with. So remember, next time you see a beggar, don't give him your spare change, instead invite him home with you and let him unleash his homeless rage on the Covenant forces as he splatters their purple paste all over the walls. It would bring him more satisfaction than a 99p hamburger from McDonalds, admit it. Admit it!

Laithe Selman, via email

That age old argument of essential sustenance versus leisure activity, eh?! Many a time we've been set upon by urine-soaked panhandlers harassing us for a spare multiplayer deathmatch. Many a time we've pushed them away, only later to reflect on the error of our ways. Maybe we could have offered them a joypad instead of a few coppers and invited them home to sit cross-legged on the living room floor to bark at the anaglypta and insult the dog. Tell you what Laithe, you send us a picture of a tramp at your house ignoring a slap-up roast dinner in favour of a three-hour session of *Bad Boys: Miami Takedown* and we'll follow your lead. [Perhaps Ben L needs some work experience on *The Big Issue* to improve his sensitivity - ed.]

↓ This or a *Halo 2* match? What a choice!



BOIL WASHED

Following your article in *OXM* 38 (re: the Covenant Alphabet revelation), I quit my job, stripped myself of all the trappings of civilisation (took the phone of the hook) and set off on a voyage of discovery through the worlds of *Halo/Halo 2* seeking to discover and decipher Covenant messages. After 16 hours of playing through *Halo*, searching every nook and cranny but not finding one word, I was a little disappointed. At the very least there would be some wall with 'We are the Grunty boyz' written on it? Over 20 hours later I was more than a little suicidal and concluded that either I'm a fool who didn't look hard enough or I'm a fool for spending over 36 hours on *Halo 2* looking for Covenant messages which don't exist. Please could confirm which of the above it is. At least I can console myself with the fact I'm the biggest *Halo* fanboy (a fact I shall proudly declare to the Job Centre staff when they ask me why I quit my previous employment).

Steve Smith, email

Hmm... Steve, we're equally concerned and impressed by your efforts to track down the Covenant codes, but alas, it seems you're right. The codes only seem to appear on the *Halo 2* website, so head over there if you want to try your hand at deciphering them. One plucky reader already has, and sent us the above juicy example of the Covenant thought process. Who'd have thought they'd be so domesticated?

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LIVE ALIVE-O!

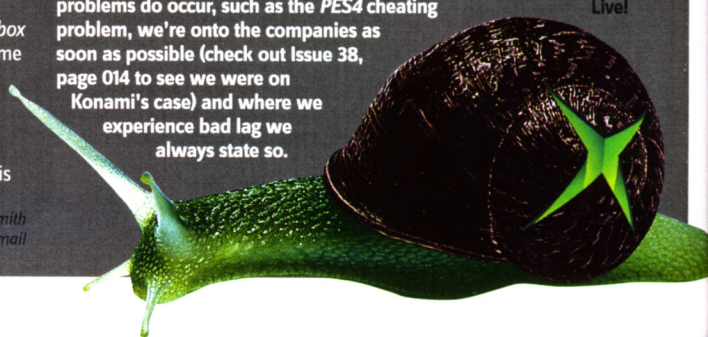
We're writing due to your apparent lack of research when it comes to Live games. We were overjoyed with your review which confirmed our suspicions that *PES4* would be the greatest football game on Earth! But this review convinced us that you have *not* tested it online as it is plagued with appalling lag! Konami is now releasing a patch but it shouldn't have released it in the first place with these problems and you should have been lobbying them on our behalf! Why create the best game if the online engine cannot support the best?

Another example is *Star Wars: Battlefront* - the lag is awful and you can't even have a clear conversation with a friend due to the distortion. I know it's quiet in space but this is ridiculous! Do you not realise the role you play as the *Official Xbox Magazine*? We need you to tell it like it is! If a game suffers a poor Live review then maybe game companies will sort out patches quicker. The truth also reminds us that you are on our side and not just paying lip service to powerful companies. Sort it out because your Live section is spoiling a good and useful read.

Jasen Warner (Optimus Jay) and Nick Smith (maximus nick), via email

We always give honest, impartial advice with our Live reviews (the fantastic *Burnout 3* sucks online for instance), but this is a case of not being able to please all of the people all of the time. We test Live games using retail copies against real gamers over a standard Xbox Live setup, just as you would play the game online. We can't test the game over every variety of broadband option and can only comment on our own Live experience. If a game runs without lag on our setup then it means that the Live aspect is working well (at the time of review) and if your experience varies it's probably due to your broadband provider or network setup. When Live problems do occur, such as the *PES4* cheating problem, we're onto the companies as soon as possible (check out Issue 38, page 014 to see we were on Konami's case) and where we experience bad lag we always state so.

↓ If your game is slow, don't blame Live!



NEXT-GEN NO-NO?

Shut up talking about next-gen consoles or forever be damned as some foolish consumer who falls for all the latest marketing tag lines the big companies use! The next batch of consoles are not 'next generation'. Nope. They aren't going to give us anything remarkably new, just more polished versions of what we have now. The last true next-generation leap in gaming was the leap into 3D. If I was to say I was going to release a next-generation car, what would you expect? A revolutionary new fuel system? The ability to fly?

Er... no. It'll go faster and be a bit cooler. Not really next gen is it? So, please, shut up about the next-gen consoles. You are only making yourselves look like the consumer idiots some marketing bloke in a suit has hoped to snare.

Sabotage, via email

So, in effect, you're saying your parents were a whole rung further down the evolutionary ladder, is that right? I mean, you're not so radically different from them are you? Just ever so slightly, almost indistinguishably more evolved, yet you are the next generation. Just as Xbox 2 will be the next generation. There will be no doubting it. When Xbox 2 arrives it truly will be a next-gen console. Trust us.

ANGRY FROM HARTLEPOOL

Why isn't there a National Xbox Week? I mean, who cares about National How To Put On A Condom Week? They should devote a week to something that does actually matter!

Michael Willgress, Hartlepool

How about How To Put A Condom On Your Xbox Week? The best of both worlds, and a handy way to stop it getting wet in the rain.

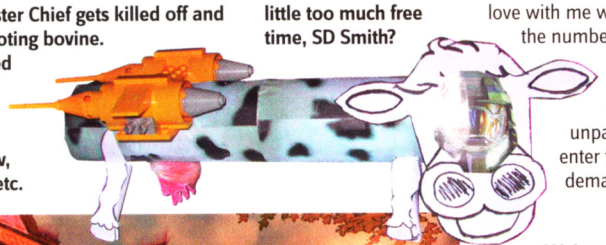
UDDERLY RIDICULOUS

Want to know what Bungie was really going to reveal to the world on 09 February? Look no further my friends, the answer is right here. My sources deep inside the gaming giant have leaked me the info that Master Chief was supposed to die on his way back to Earth and get replaced in *Halo 3* by the Mooster Chief. Mooster Chief's secret weapons were her lovely udders on which the Covenant are forced to suckle on until they asphyxiate. So there you are.

SD Smith, Wilts

Thank goodness for that! Here's us getting into a pickle about the future of the *Halo* franchise and, as we suspected, Master Chief gets killed off and replaced by a udder-toting bovine. We know you supplied your address but we thought it best to withhold it from publication. You know, 'men in white coats' etc.

↓ **Mooster Chief. A little too much free time, SD Smith?**





↑ **Luke Borwell has three wives, but where the hell did they come from?**

The Church of Xbox

Join the Xbox evangelists!

↓ **Don't make Him come down there! Buy Xbox!**

Rev Green has a divine reward for those who preach the Xbox gospel. Convert a non-believer, get them to buy an Xbox, send us a pic and copy of the receipt (dated after 02 Dec) and you'll be blessed with a new game. This month's convert is 'Pez'. You can visit www.skrimshank.com to join clans and hear his (warning: adult-themed - ed) tunes.



↑ **Been watching *Platoon* then, Pez?**

ALL HAIL THE QUEEN OF DARKNESS

I nearly lost faith in your mag a few months ago. You had an letter from Steven Bell (Issue 34) asking if Xbox was black or green, and the outcome said that it's black (according to your misinformed goth). Yet you yourselves stated that Xbox was a very dark green (a dark olive I think) in one of your very first issues. This was enough to rock my once-steady faith in *OXM*. How could you change your minds? If it starts with a 'little' issue about what colour my beloved 'box is, then where will it end? Could we in the not too distant future find games like *GoldenEye:Rogue Agent* going from an average 7.2 to an Elite?

Neil Lynds, email

We all secretly suspected it was olive, but she who must be obeyed (and offered occasional blood sacrifices) was insistent it was black. Vanessa's in control. She actually possesses the powers to change what we write (as well as chek hour spellling). Besides, Steven Bell's letter asked if Xbox was black or green under *natural sunlight* - this must've been our dark-dweller's downfall.

RED LETTER DAY

As I was playing *Fable*, I noticed that I had three wives. This was odd, because I thought I had only had one wedding. I checked my stats; it said my number of spouses was three, the number of weddings was one, the number of people fallen in love with me was seven (three of which male), and the number of divorces was zero. I can't make any sense of it. Oh, and I have killed 50 guards, been thrown out of town eight times, and have a total of 16 unpaid fines. So it is impossible for me to enter town without being run at by guards demanding a 30,000 gold fine.

Luke Borwell, email

We're not sure why we liked your letter Luke, other than the fact it reflects the everyday things that annoy us. Not many of us wake up to find we've got three wives, but the little things such as unpaid fines, dubious 'drunk love', being banned from public places, and homicide that we all encounter from day to day just proves that *Fable* is more of a life sim than we could have possibly imagined. Our advice? Hit the bottle.

MONEY BAGS

I queue up on 11 November, I buy two copies of *Halo 2* (one standard edition and one limited edition) which cost £84.98. Then I buy two copies of the strategy guide so I can keep one in its shrink rap. Next I pay £50 so I can get a *Halo 2* headset imported from the US so I can get it on the *Halo 2* release date. Two days later I get the *Halo 2* Xbox Live Starter Pack for £59.98 and I buy the »

The OXM team

What we've been up to this month

PHOTOS: JAMES WILSON



STEVE BROWN // EDITOR

STEVE'S now a proud dad to a little girl, Millie. He keeps her in the kitchen where she sleeps in a basket.

NOW PLAYING: *Fable, Burnout 3, Doom 3*
HOW YOU SPENT VALENTINE'S? Opening cards from Ben T's mum.



OWEN NORRIS // ART EDITOR

DENIED a holiday by work, our grumble-monkey Owen has been taking his anger out on the *Halo 2* community. *Very* scary.

NOW PLAYING: *Halo 2, Super Monkey Ball 2*
HOW YOU SPENT VALENTINE'S? A meal with Ben T's mum.



GAVIN OGDEN // DEPUTY EDITOR

GAV nabbed himself a lady-love just in time for Val's Day. We've not met her, but he insists she's not made from polyurethane.

NOW PLAYING: *PES4*
HOW YOU SPENT VALENTINE'S? Showing my girlfriend (Ben T's mum) London.



BEN LAWRENCE // SENIOR STAFF WRITER

BEN went to Vegas and planned to spend an evening watching his idol, Celine Dion. She was sold out! Arse!

NOW PLAYING: *Doom 3, Republic Commando*
HOW YOU SPENT VALENTINE'S? Face down... with Ben T's mum, obviously.



VANESSA HARDS // OPERATIONS EDITOR

VANESSA got in at 2am after a Velvet Revolver gig, then got up at 3am to queue for Nine Inch Nails tickets. Nutjob.

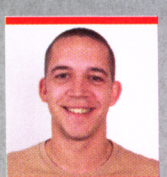
NOW PLAYING: *Super Monkey Ball 2, Psi-Ops*
HOW YOU SPENT VALENTINE'S? A meal out with my hubby. Not Ben T's mum.



BEN TALBOT // PRODUCER

A NEW year, a new diet. Out goes McD's, in comes Soreen for brekky, lunch and tea. Ben T smells of figs and malted butter.

NOW PLAYING: *Halo 2, SpongeBob, Doom 3*
HOW YOU SPENT VALENTINE'S? Looking for my mum.



PHIL MADGE // DEPUTY ART EDITOR

BILL Oddie has been called in to Madge's place. Our winter-hating crayon-chewer has been hibernating in a bed of shredded mags and sawdust.

NOW PLAYING: *PES4*
HOW YOU SPENT VALENTINE'S? Cheap date with Ben T's mum.



ANDY IRVING // STAFF WRITER

ANDY went to *Mary Poppins* - a late Xmas gift from his beloved. Still, saves her buying him a Valentine's gift as well, doesn't it?

NOW PLAYING: *UC2*
HOW YOU SPENT VALENTINE'S? Driving Ben T's mum between dates.

DON'T PANIC! IN CASE YOU'RE WONDERING, STEVE'S NEW 'BABY' IS A GOLDEN RETRIEVER PUPPY. SHE'S GORGEOUS.

Shorts

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www POST ON THE FORUM You can find it at www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk

@ EMAIL US WITH your rants, hopes and opinions at staff@fxmi.com

www When I'm bored at work I use the molten wax off a Babybell (I warm it up in my hand), then fashion human figures. I pose them in sex positions.
Sabotage, Forum

sms I heard people preordered the limited edition halo2 months in advance and i just went into woolies and got mine 4 50 quid no hassle early december! SUKERZ!
Anon, via sms

sms Just read the Doom3 news in issue 38, u say the only serious deviation from the original is having a torch! What about the ability 2 look up & down?
Dan J, via sms

That's hardly what we'd call a deviation, more of an evolution, otherwise the game would be exactly the same, wouldn't it?

BEN TALBOT looks like the drumer from the best heavy rock band of the world METALLICA. Ps- ur mag rocks.
Mike, London

Ah, Lars Ulrich. He's probably a distant genetic relative of Ben's; one that evolved.



↑ Tairrie prepares to jump Max.

sms DO U LOT HAUE ANY PETS NAMED AFTER GAME CHARACTORS? I HAVE 2 CATS, 1 CALLED SHADOW, & THE OTHER IS CALLED BURNOUT!
Anon, via sms

Vanessa has two cats, Max and Tairrie, named after metal vocalists. Ben L has a dog called Molly, and Ben T has a poodle named *Steel Battalion 2: Line Of Contact*.

sms How many how many irregular oreos can u eat in one minute? I manage 14!
Fae sooty117!

Irregular Oreos? What's an irregular Oreo, and if it's irregular why the hell would we want to put it in our mouth?

Come to think of it, why the hell are you asking, irregular or not? The only irregular Oreos we've encountered are beneath Ben T's tight T-shirts on a cold wintry day.

sms Hey guys! Jus wanted 2say that, Vanessa, u ROCK! U better giv that kitten of urs lots of cuddles! Hehe!
Kym, Devon

Woah there you lot, enough with the Vanessa worship, okay? Shall we just rename the magazine *OVM* and be done with it?

sms You should include some game saves of various skull combinations for *Halo 2*. innit boyo.
Super Saiyan Stoner

No chance we're afraid.

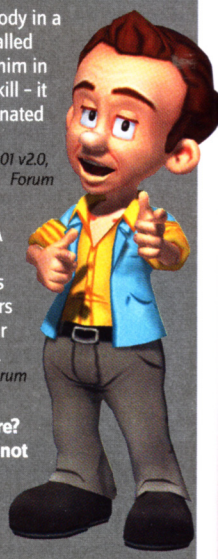
sms Please print tips on how to talk to Tilly on *LEISURE SUIT LARRY*.
Anon, via sms

And why would you want those, you dirty monkey? Well, it's all about confidence. The best way to do this is to play Penis Pong in Larry's room. It's easy to win, you can play it as much as you like, and you'll get 20 confidence points every time you win.

www I played somebody in a head-to-head called aRareSpeeceez. I hit him in the back for my first kill - it came up: You assassinated aRareSpeeceez.
masterchief001 v2.0, Forum

www Why does NASA keep wasting time exploring moons when they know theirs a new planet out their that they can explore.
Sh0cker, Forum

A new planet? Where? You mean Halo? It's not actually a planet, is it? Oh, you mean Peragus? No? Yavin? No? Erm... Korriban? Nurse, fetch the syringe.



↑ Want to talk to Tilly? Swap outfits!

» soundtrack which is £19.99, plus three figures (Master Chief, Warthog and the Brute Minor) which cost me £72.97. I also bought a limited-edition Hog which cost me £48.99. Then I buy the novel boxset which cost me £14.99 and the *Halo* art book which cost me £14.99 plus broadband which will cost me £299.88 (just so I can play online). When you add it all up, it comes to £966.65! All that because of one game! Yes, nearly a thousand British pounds because of one man's love for another man's game.
Kevin Collins, via email

We've done our maths and although it only actually comes to a snip under £700, we're still impressed, so can we be your friend? Andy was talking about clearing his credit card recently after Valentine's day, Steve's still lusting after a plasma television, Ben T needs 'a few minor adjustments in the trouser department', Gav needs to impress his new lady-love, and Ben L wants to go back to New York.

RETRO

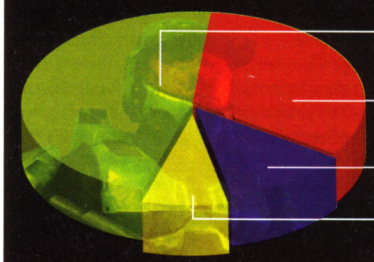
I've played videogames for most of my life, and have gone from cursing my wobbly ZX81 RAM pack to cursing my curious inability to perform death moves on *Mortal Kombat* ("Left, right, black, yellow... Arrrrggghhhh!"). Like many of my generation I have a great fondness for some old games, but let's be honest, games are better now. Sure, *Manic Miner* was fun, and still is, but you're not going to sit down and play it for 15 hours straight like most of us did with *Halo 2*.
Anon, via email

Well, we don't know. The whole 'retro' thing is pretty big lately, what with *Midway Arcade Treasures 2* and the *Atari Anthology* doing the rounds. We'd be interested to hear what everyone thinks. With remakes of *Ninja Gaiden* and *Prince of Persia* harking back to their roots, should we be playing the original games more than we actually do?

YOU DECIDE

Find more online polls on our forum at www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk

Is *Halo 2* the best game, not only on Xbox, but ever made?



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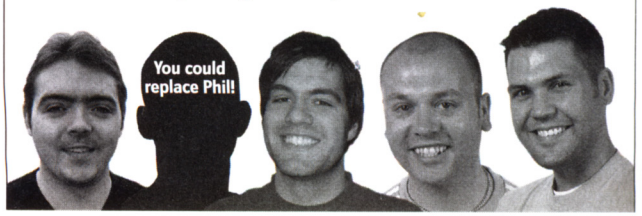
↑ It's not a remake but *Mortal Kombat* has always evolved. Should other games have done the same?

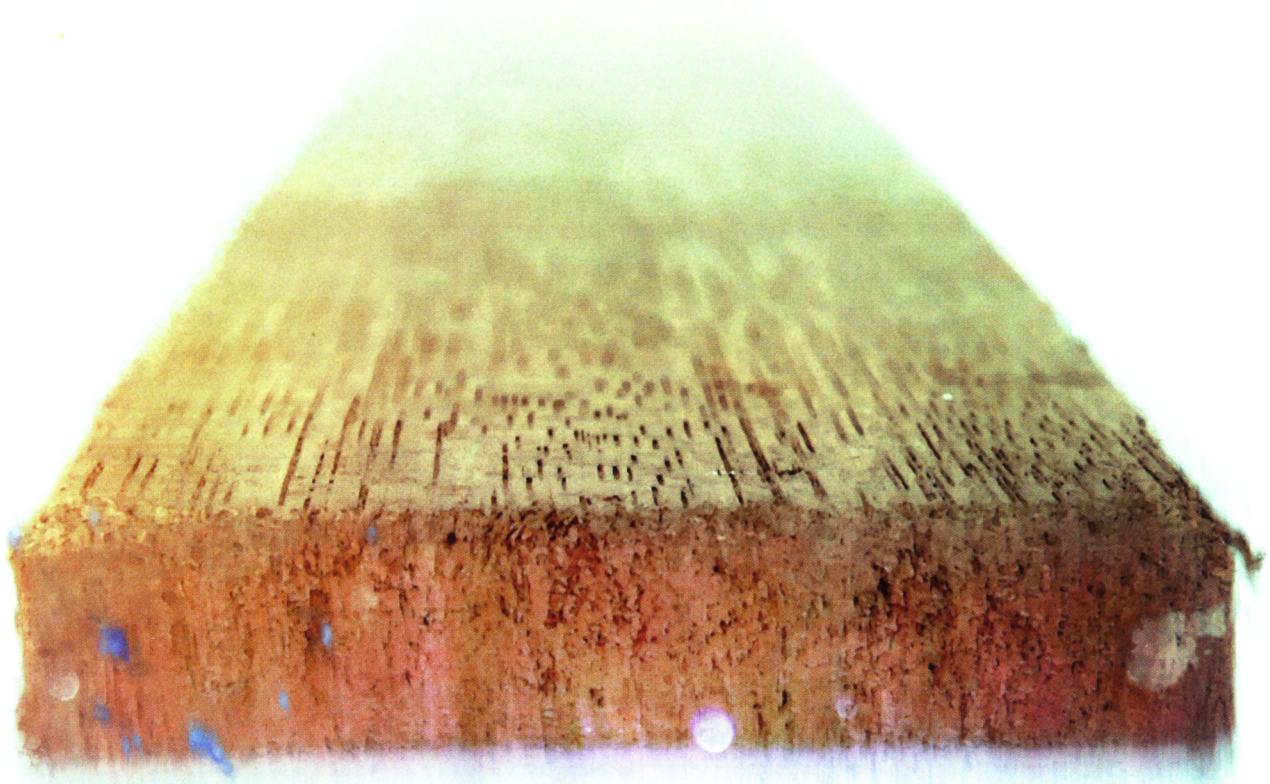
Box Office

Work a week at OXM and see yourself in print!

COULD YOU SURVIVE our office for a week, playing and writing about Xbox games? We're offering a placement - you must be 17 or older and available 11-15 April 2004 to work 09.30 to 18.00 at 99 Baker St, London. You will be required to provide your own transport, food and lodgings. The closing date for applications is 25 March. Write to us at Box Office, *OXM*, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP and include:

Your name and age on 11 April 2005, your current or desired career, a short introduction explaining why you want the placement, and a 200-word review of any Xbox game that you own.





Make for port

Sid Meier's Pirates! abandons PC ship and heads for console dock with a treasure chest of Xbox exclusive booty...

Words: Ben Lawrence

"OUR GAME has been called *GTA* with pirates," Jeff Briggs, CEO of Firaxis Games, tells us as we sit watching fleets of galleons blast the brass monkeys out of one another. "I think it's an apt comparison. Of course though...," he pauses and gives us a wry »

» smile, "...we did it first." A game described by many as 'one of those rare games that managed to give something to everyone', *Sid Meier's Pirates!* was out free-roam adventuring the sevens seas long before *Grand Theft Auto* was even in training wings. And now it's back.

Our first question to Meier, as we catch up with him high up in a snow-covered Baltimore office where the current game is in development, is why the hell it took so long. His answer is simple...

"I've heard that question from fans of *Pirates!* for so many years," says Meier, "but it's simply a matter of technology. 3D technology simply allows us to now put on screen what we imagined back in the day, and make it a far more cinematic experience than before. That, of course, and the fact Firaxis has been working on so many other titles." Of these, pretty much all have gone on to be some kind of 'editor's pick' and they've certainly cemented themselves in the consciousness of gamers. Would it not just be kinder to leave us with our memories rather than upsetting the fanboy applecart?

"No, not at all," smiles Meier, "we've had fans contacting us every month since the original *Pirates!* first came out [back in 1987], and we've listened. This team has done a really good job of walking the line between keeping the essence of what *Pirates!* is about while introducing new elements for a new generation of gamers. The old game's charm is still there. When we first designed *Pirates!* 17 years ago we really didn't think of games in distinct genres. But today there are shooters, real-time strategies, role-playing games, first-person shooters, platformers... and people start to think of games having to be limited to one particular genre. *Pirates!* breaks the mould - it's all mixed up together. It's one of the game's strengths. In fact, we've encompassed a greater number of genres this time around."

They certainly have. One of which is the rhythm dancing genre (an odd choice perhaps, but one Meier quickly explains is integral to the new direction *Pirates!* is heading); and another being a new stealth element. These are perhaps the two genres that have defined the past few years in consoles, so including them is a sensible step for extending the *Pirates!* world when you think about it.

"Obviously we had to get [rhythm dancing] in there," explains Meier. "You'll now be able to impress the governor's daughter by taking her to the ball. Keep in time with the music and not only will you impress her, but she in turn might impress upon you the whereabouts of a treasure map. Stumble around out of time and you'll put her to shame among her peers."



"Not every game has to be about destroying things... dancing brings life to the character" Sid Meier

At first glance the dancing may seem like an odd choice, but the new element of timed sequence dancing is indicative of what Firaxis is actually aiming for.

"There was a lot of controversy concerning the dancing," says Meier, "but romancing the governor's daughter made the game unique. Not every game has to be about destroying things. It's an entire lifetime you're living and the dancing is a way of bringing life to the character."

"You could spend your entire life doing nothing," says Briggs. "The freedom to choose is entirely up to the player. But, we've given them a hell of a lot to think about and do if they choose. Again though, it's utterly free-roaming." And, picking up where *GTA* seems to have left off, there's a shipload of roaming to be done.

Meier's team has gone to extraordinary lengths to recreate the entire West Indies. Every island, islet, and land mass has been reproduced, from tiny Nevis to Barbados. "Compared to *Vice City*, we're big. Very big," Briggs tells us. "We've got the entire Caribbean, after all." It's a good job we've got an entire lifetime to explore it in then.

Just about every pirate of notoriety features in the game, and we can go about systematically destroying their reputations through double deals, sea fights and accepting contracts from disgruntled island governors. Naturally we can seek out hidden treasure too, which, we're told, will be atrociously difficult to find. "The locations of treasures change for every game," one developer tells us. "You'll have to find pieces of maps by talking to a man who knows a man who knows a man, and even then you've still got to know where you're looking."

We'll be able to marry, make a career in the Royal Navy, spend our days in taverns, then sneak into enemy ports for a quick rendezvous with a mistress or two (there's the stealth), and discover ancient lost cities rich with jewels and treasures. We'll also be able to indulge in a little multiplayer ship-to-ship combat, a concept so simple yet so utterly addictive the only comparison we can draw is with *Mashed* (Issue 31, 8.6).

The game won't be playable over Xbox Live though, which is understandable. "This is a story about a single player," explains Meier. "To have Live play would have diluted that experience. It's such a rich world spanning so many genres and meaning so much to so many fans, we thought it best to tell the story of this pirate and do that to the best of our ability. This is our first console title, the Xbox is the best console for the job, and we want to nail it."

"The only way we could do *Pirates!* Live is to make it an MMORPG," Briggs says, which begs the question of whether we could be seeing *Pirates! 2* on what the Firaxis team keeps referring to as Xenon (aka Xbox 2). "It's speculation, but yes," says Briggs, "it's certainly a possibility."

And other famous *Sid Meier's* games such as *Civilization*? Will they be coming to Xbox if *Pirates!* is a success? A lot of nervous laughter and still we don't get a response. We dig a little deeper. "We'll put you on the pre-order list," laughs Meier.

Until then, we'll have plenty to chew over. With more than 20 hours of gameplay promised if we were to simply rush through the game, plus a stupidly wide range of genres to tackle, this generation of *Pirates!* could once again lay claim to the title of 'one of those rare games that manages to give something to everyone'.



↑ Impress her by strutting your funky stuff.



↑ Ship battles are intense, and amazing.



↑ Stealth aspects add more to *Pirates!*



↑ Visit every Caribbean island out there!



↑ To win a ship and booty we'll have to fight the captain. Beat him and the ship's ours.



↑ Get too cocky with the enemy and kiss your cutlass goodbye.



← Pirates won't give up their fearsome reputations easily. We'll have to fight for glory.



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XBOX

Official XBOX Magazine EXCLUSIVE SCREENS

Official XBOX Magazine PLAYED IT

XBOX LIVE PLAYABLE

Extreme mode races will range from the narrow streets of Tokyo to the dusty roads of Qatar.

ONLY ON XBOX

MotoGP Ultimate Racing Technology 3

Climax wheels its third MotoGP game out of the pits

Words: Martin Korda

- Dev: Climax
- Pub: THQ
- Players: 1; Split TBA
- Live: players TBA
- Release: Summer
- Players: S.Link TBA
- www.climaxgroup.com

IT'S NOT EASY making a great motorbike game, you know. See, the main stumbling block is that age-old problem of finding the right balance between realism and fun, something that's made all the harder by the fact that, unlike in a four-wheeled racing game, there's the chance that you can actually fall off your vehicle... regularly. And let's face it, for most of us, that's about as much fun as exfoliating with a cheese grater. While bathing in vinegar. After you've been flayed.

So just how do you find a middle ground - one that will sate the petrol-head biker with skin-free knees who demands extreme realism, as well the uncoordinated masses who just want to stick to the road like glue while holding down the accelerator button, and everyone in-between? Well, Nottingham-based developer Climax believes it has the answer with the third game in its excellent *MotoGP* series. So, eager to find out for ourselves whether the team had found the magic formula, we pootled up to Nottingham to speak with Climax and get our leathery hands on the latest version of the game.

Perhaps the most striking thing about Climax's approach to developing *MotoGP 3* is its determination to make this previously hardcore series more accessible to the average gamer, while staying true to its roots. "There've been two big schools of thought on what the fans want for *MotoGP 3*," explains Rik Alexander, the game director. "One side wants it to be more arcadey with less real-world physics, the other wants more of a simulation. Our feeling was to take it down the simulation route, but make sure we made it more accessible to newcomers. So we decided to go down a similar route to *Gran Turismo* that has the depth of a hardcore simulation, but is forgiving enough on the track to still be fun and accessible."

Climax's most major innovation has been to introduce a far wider and more balanced range of crotch rockets than before, each of which will be upgradable and fully customisable in *MotoGP 3*'s all-new Extreme gaming mode. Extreme mode will task you with winning money by competing against fictional riders over 16 imaginary courses - based in a variety of countries ranging from Japan to Qatar - »



↑ The better you perform in the Extreme races, the more money you'll get to upgrade.

MESSING AROUND WITH BIKES
It's not just honeymooners who can get upgrades

IN *MOTOGP 3*'s Extreme racing mode, you'll be able to customise your bike both technically and visually. There'll be five areas that you'll be able to upgrade: traction, stability, braking, weight reduction and brake horsepower. You'll also have a wide variety of liveries to choose from – which will themselves be fully customisable – including a very swanky-looking Spider-Man one.



↑ You'll be able to play around with both the look and feel of your bike.



↑ So *that's* why they call you Skid Mark.

"It could be the most rewarding two-wheeled racer on Xbox"



↑ The Idiot Bikers' Brigade tried hard, but just couldn't get their bikes to take off.



↑ Your rider's outfit will be customisable. Just as well looking at this guy...



↑ That photographer had better get out of the way sharpish.

» then using your winnings to upgrade your bike or buy bigger, badder, sparklingly new two-wheeled racers.

"We've broken it up into three bike classes," says Greg Bryant, the game's lead designer. "You start off with the 600cc bikes, which are slower but take corners better, and you'll then be able to upgrade various components and blueprint your engine to make sure it's all running smoothly. You can also tune your bike and tweak the gear ratios. As you progress through the races, you can then use the currency you earn to upgrade your bike and buy more powerful ones. As well as the 600cc bikes, we also have 1000cc and 1200cc ones, which are really fast but heavy to manoeuvre. The 1000cc bikes are a mixture of the best of the other two groups, as they handle smoothly and feel nice and weighty."

And you know what? Each bike really does feel unique. We took a 600cc bike for a spin around one of the 16 Extreme circuits, Tokyo – a claustrophobic night-time level riddled with tight bends and bottlenecks. Using the Left analogue stick to control the rider's lean – forward and back as well as left and right – the Right analogue stick to accelerate and turn, and the two trigger buttons to control the front and rear brakes, we glided around the circuit, hugging the corners and sticking to the tarmac like dried-out week-old Frosties to a cereal bowl. Admittedly, the seemingly complex controls took a few laps to get the hang of, but it wasn't too long before we were burning more rubber than an arsonist in a Durex factory.

After this we hopped onto a 1200cc bike for a spin around a far more open, rural track that was light on bends and heavy on straights. Using the extensive wrist-twisting skills we've accrued from »

XBOX

↓ Controlling your bike is tricky at first, but soon becomes second nature.

LIKING THE SOUND OF THAT

Moto GP 3 set to give us aural pleasure

ONE OF THE criticisms of *MotoGP 2* was that the bikes sounded like bumblebees in a jam jar. So Climax sent a chap to record real bikes on a MotoGP Championship racetrack. The result? Bikes that roar like a T-Rex returning home from work to find that Mrs T-Rex hasn't put the spuds on yet. You'll also be able to customise your in-game soundtrack with an extensive playlist of rock, hip-hop and drum and bass tunes.



↑ Custom soundtracks, or listen to your own MP3s, plus meaty bikes.



↑ It's already looking and sounding ace.



↑ You'll soon be pulling off daring, high-speed turns like this.

» years of administering Chinese burns to each other, we bit down hard on the throttle and watched in awe as our surroundings began blurring and shaking as the power-packed engine powered us forward with a genuinely throaty growl. Then with the bend approaching we violently tugged the brakes, forcing our mechanised beast's rear wheel to skid out as we heroically overtook the racing line-hugging AI opponent in front of us.

"We've made the bikes much faster and we've put much more emphasis on throttle control," clarifies Bryant. "We also want to iron out the parts of the game that made *MotoGP 2* [Issue 17, 9.4] very difficult, like over-sensitive handling at high speeds, so we've tightened up the leaning." The team seem to be doing a good job so far, creating what could well be the most rewarding two-wheeled racer on Xbox to date.

"We've added a new Seeding System, which is our key driver for the game," adds Alexander. "Essentially, how you perform against the AI riders in the Moto GP Championship will determine your seed. As your seed increases, it'll unlock new rider abilities such as confidence, which will see the rider opening up the throttle more aggressively and leaning harder into corners. Also, the higher your seed, the harder the game will become, as your bike will start handling more like a real-world bike and less like a watered-down motorcycle."

While the new Extreme racing mode will no doubt prove most popular with those amongst us who like to play around with »



↑ Thanks to an innovative seeding system, the better you get, the harder the game gets.



↑ Bikes range from 600cc to 1200cc.



↑ Get up, you lazy git.



↑ *MotoGP 3*'s multiplayer options are still under wraps.

» the bikes' looks and feel, hardcore *MotoGP* enthusiasts need not feel left out. Lying in wait is a 16-race MotoGP Championship season containing all of the riders and liveries from its real-life counterpart, so expect to be tussling with the likes of Valentino Rossi and tweaking your gear ratios - if you're into that kind of thing - as you endeavour to become world champion with the team of your choice.

Climax isn't just concentrating on revamping the single-player game though, as the team is placing every bit as much emphasis on creating an enjoyable and accessible multiplayer experience too. "We wanted to keep it persistent between the single-player game and the multiplayer game, so we're providing every feature from the single-player game in the multiplayer game too," explains Bryant.

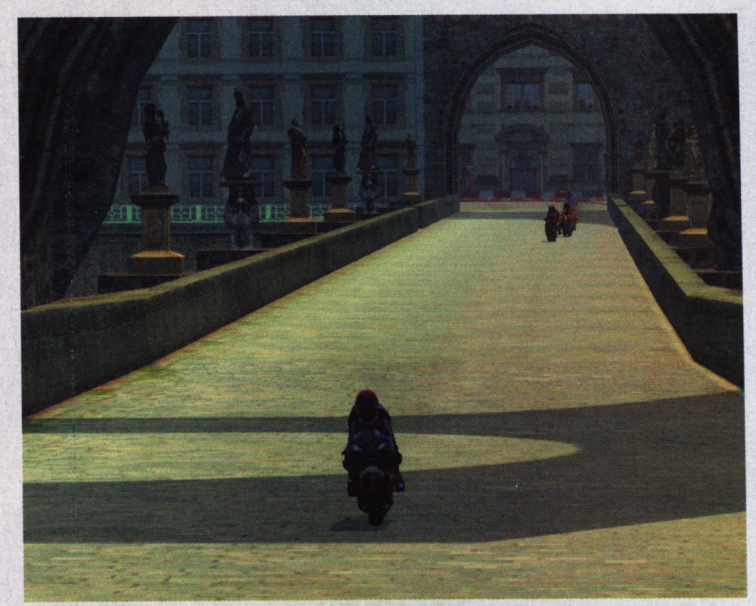
But that's all the information Climax is revealing regarding the multiplayer modes. Alexander and Bryant are very reluctant to reveal any more concrete details at this time, simply stating that you'll be able to play over Xbox Live and via System Link and promising to reveal more juicy info in the coming months.

To finish off, we took part in an exhilarating 16-bike Moto GP Championship race in which we became embroiled in a titanic battle against a full contingent of AI opponents, the forgiving physics allowing us just enough leeway to stay in contention, but proving realistic enough to have us struggling for control around every bend while our faces contorted with sheer concentration.

As we left Climax, mopping ourselves down with a complementary *MotoGP 3* towel, it was hard not to feel that the team has potentially crafted a real gem. Accessible yet intuitive, challenging yet fun and realistic without ever being intimidating, it's a two-wheeled racer that could finally find the middle ground between realism and entertainment that we've all been waiting for. And with more information and hands-on time promised soon, you can rest assured that an update will be hurtling its way to these pages within the next couple of months. Don't blink though, or you might just miss it.

EXTRA, EXTRA, DON'T READ ALL ABOUT IT!
Good things come to those who wait

AS IT'S STILL fairly early days, the boys at Climax were reluctant to give too much away in regards to what unlockable extras and mini-games *MotoGP 3* will be shipping with. However, they did promise us that there'd be plenty of both, including various bonus liveries. As soon as we know more though, so will you.



↑ The time when Climax reveals all about *MotoGP 3*'s unlockable extras is still some way off. Guess we'll just have to be patient. Humph. (More next issue - ed.)



↑ Controlling your rider's lean will impact on how the bike reacts when you accelerate.

"Accessible yet intuitive; realistic without ever being intimidating""

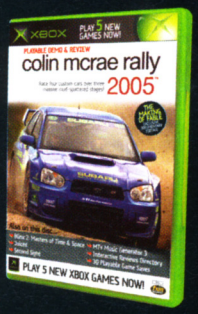
Back Issues

Missed a copy of your favourite mag? Trying to track down an essential demo? Don't fret - you can order back issues of *OXM* by calling 0870 837 4773 (UK only) or 0185 843 8795 (overseas). But hurry - stocks are limited!



ISSUE 34 OCT 2004

Demos: Colin McRae Rally 2005, Blinx 2, Juiced, Second Sight, MTV Music Generator 3
Content Download: TimeSplitters 2 (five new maps), THUG (two new courses), Full Spectrum Warrior (final mission), MTV Music Generator 3, music downloads...
Game Saves: 15 games!





ISSUE 35 NOV 2004

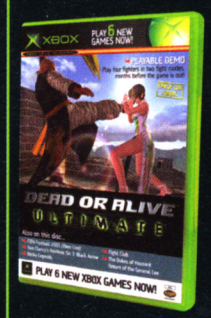
Demos: OutRun 2, Silent Hill 4, Leisure Suit Larry: MCL, Def Jam Fight For New York, Men of Valor: The Vietnam War, Conflict: Vietnam, Kingdom Under Fire: TC
Game Saves: Beyond Good & Evil, Hitman: Contracts, Showdown: Legends of Wrestling, Colin McRae Rally 04





ISSUE 36 DEC 2004

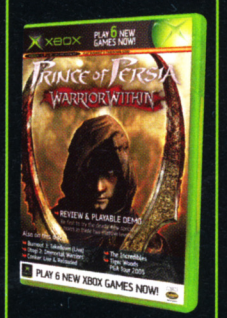
Demos: DOA Ultimate, FIFA 2005 (Live), Rocky Legends, Rainbow Six 3: Black Arrow, Fight Club, The Dukes of Hazzard
Game Saves: The Chronicles of Riddick: EFBB, RS3: Black Arrow, TLOTR: The Third Age
Movies: Close Combat, Oddworld Stranger, Tron 2.0, Outlaw Golf 2...

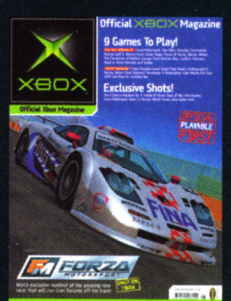




ISSUE 37 XMAS 2004

Demos: Prince of Persia: Warrior Within, Otogi 2, Burnout 3: Takedown (Live), Conker: Live and Reloaded, Tiger Woods 2005, The Incredibles
Game Saves: Psi-Ops, NFSU, Sims: Bustin' Out, Driv3r, Spider-Man 2
Movies: Ghost Recon 2, Unreal C'ship 2, Area 51, Project: Snowblind...





ISSUE 38 JAN 2005

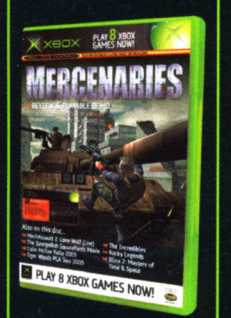
Demos: Forza M'sport, Worms Forts: US, SW: Republic Commando, Outlaw Golf 2, POP: Warrior Within, Riddick, DOA Ulitmate, Conflict: Vietnam, Sudeki
Game Saves: THUG2, Tenchu: Return From Darkness, Terminator 3: Redemption, Tiger Woods 2005, Deus Ex





ISSUE 39 FEB 2005

Demos: MechAssault 2 (Live), Mercenaries, The Incredibles, Blinx 2, The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie, Tiger Woods 2005, Rocky Legends, Colin McRae 2005
Game Saves: Conflict: Vietnam, Leisure Suit Larry: MCL, Samurai Warriors, Def Jam FFNY, Men of Valor: TVW



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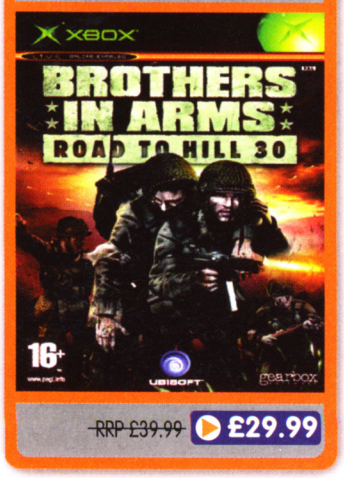

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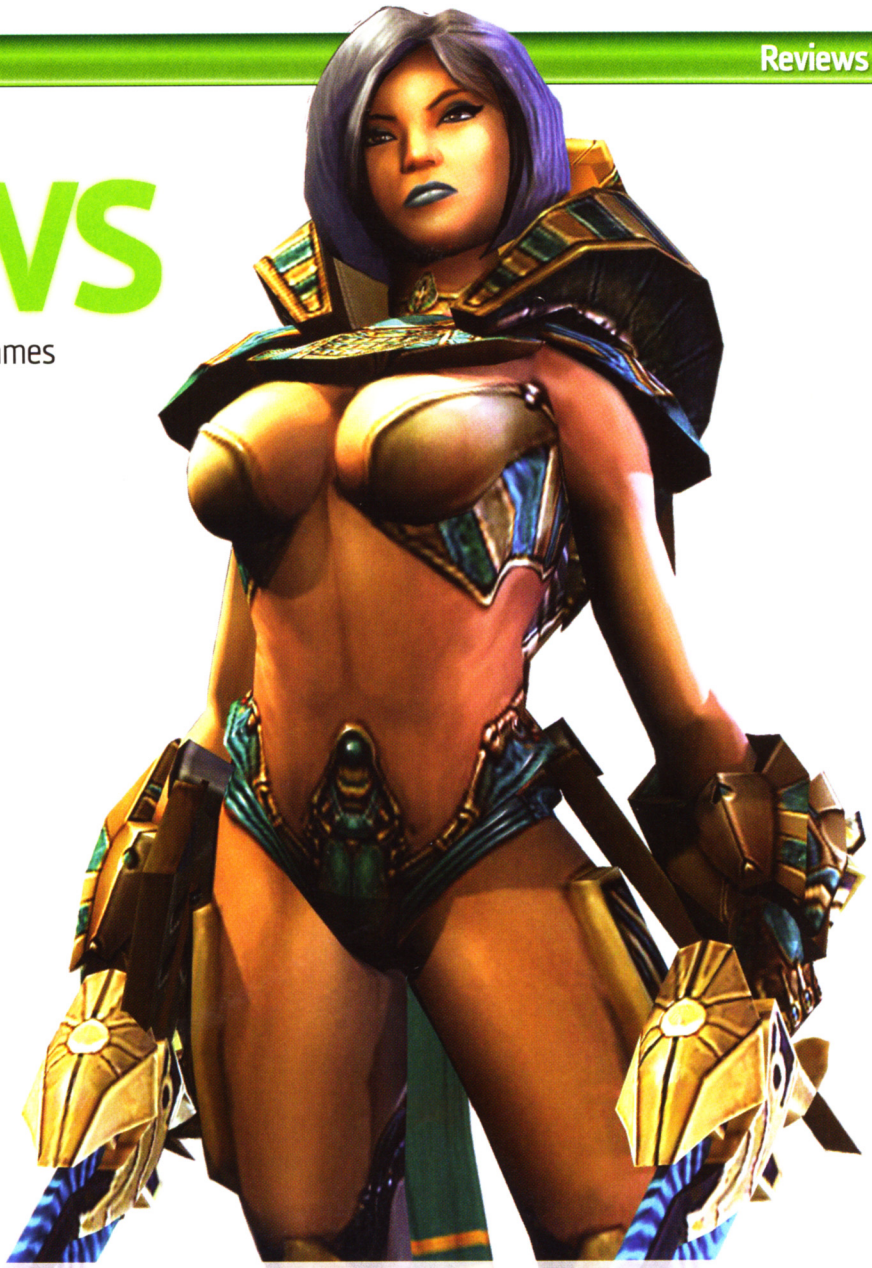



Andy Says...

STUFF the Ides of March, it's the fearsome quintet of awesome shooters we've got here that you (and your wallet) should really be fearful of this month.

Cover star *UC2* takes the traditional FPS genre in a refreshing new direction, while the terrifying *Doom 3* makes its long-awaited appearance on Xbox. For a true demonstration of your console's power, take a peek through your trembling fingers at this stunning game. *Project: Snowblind*, *Star Wars: Republic Commando* and EA's continuation of the *TimeSplitters* franchise all wield impressive results, and the publisher pulls no punches with the brilliant *Fight Night Round 2* either. That'll be to make up for *FIFA Street* then...

Our Badges explained

XBOX ELITE
Any game scoring a whopping 8.5 or more.

GAME OF THE MONTH
Our favourite of the Elite games reviewed this month.

XBOX LIVE
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A playable trial or movie of the game is on our disc.

Score Key

8.5-10.0
THE XBOX ELITE - ONE OF THE VERY BEST AVAILABLE

7.5-8.4
A TOP-QUALITY RELEASE THAT'S WELL WORTH HAVING

6.5-7.4
STILL WELL WORTH CONSIDERING, BUT HAS SOME FLAWS

5.0-6.4
AN AVERAGE TITLE WITH NOTHING OUTSTANDING TO OFFER

2.5-4.9
A BAD GAME, AND ONE YOU SHOULDN'T BOTHER WITH

0.0-2.4
CALLING SUCH A RANCID STINKER A 'GAME' IS LIBELLOUS

Unreal Championship 2: TLC P056
A shift in perspective doesn't deter this behemoth blaster.

Rugby 2005 P062
EA goes egg-chasing with another licenced sports sim.

Cold Fear P064
Ahoy me hearties. And anything else mutants eat in this chilling tale.

NBA Street V3 P066
Ace arcade sports sim that takes b-ball back to its roots.

SNK vs Capcom: SVC Chaos P066
Yet another 2D fighter tries to entice us back into the ring... yawn.

The Punisher P067
Sadistic, brutal and bloody. Top actioner sure to enrage the tabloids.

Fight Night Round 2 P068
It's seconds out for this surprisingly fun boxer. Get ready to rumble.

Ski Racing 2005 P069
No amount of cowbells can stop this schussshing into mediocrity.

Spy vs Spy P069
The old-skool puzzler sneaks onto Xbox. Fun, but no Aston Martin.

Project: Snowblind P072
The innovative shooter comes in from the cold to a warm welcome.

Playboy The Mansion P076
Hef shows us it's much more fun reading the mag than making it.

Doom 3 P078
Exclusive review of the terrifying, pant-wettingly beautiful blaster.

Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone P084
Respectable hack 'n' slash that's not entirely forgettable.

SpongeBob SquarePants Movie P086
The amiable absorber soaks up deserved platforming praise.

Neighbours From Hell P086
An ASBO's needed to quell this resurgance of 2D puzzlers.

Star Wars: Republic Commando P088
Special Forces in space make for a stellar addition to the *SW* series.

FIFA Street P090
Embarassingly bad street soccer sim for 'da yoof of today'.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2 P090
No stinker here - the Turtles head back to Xbox in a 4-way fighter.

TimeSplitters: Future Perfect P092
The future's bright indeed with this comical time-twisting blaster.

Constantine P096
Keanu knows more than just kung-fu in this sinister movie tie-in.

The Bard's Tale P097
Hilariously self-deprecating RPG that has nothing to do with poetry.

Hardware P099
The latest shiny new kit to satisfy your peripheral pangs.

CRAM THEM IN: WE HAD A STAGGERING 21 GAMES IN THIS ISSUE. MORE OF THE SAME NEXT MONTH, HEADED UP BY THE EXCLUSIVE JADE EMPIRE REVIEW!


Official Xbox Magazine GAME OF THE MONTH
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Xbox LIVE PLAYABLE
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Unreal CHAMPIONSHIP 2
THE LIANDRI CONFLICT

We take a reality check on Midway's first-person, no third, no, wait... awesome shooter

Words: Andy Irving

- Dev: Epic Games
- Pub: Midway
- Players: 1-2 Split
- Live: 2-8 players
- Players: 2-8 S.Link
- Release: 15 April
- www.liandriconflict.com

WE FEAR CHANGE. Especially when powerhouse franchises like the *Unreal* series are involved. And especially when a game moves away from its established roots and dares to be different. Take *Ghost Recon 2* (Issue 36, 7.4) for example. A firm favourite amongst FPS fans, the shift in perspective from first- to third-person alienated the majority of sniping spectres and lost some of the comfortingly familiar characteristics we knew and loved. So we were wary of *UC2*. As in, lock your doors, stay off the moors, we-don't-like-your-sort-round-here wary. The original was a local game for local people, and we liked it that way.

It came as nice surprise then (read: bloody massive shock), when we got to grapple with *Liandri Conflict*. At first glance it seemed like any other *Unreal* title; a slick, smooth game engine, meaty weapons that feel immensely satisfyingly to wield, and the return of all our favourite characters. Yep, *UC2* ticks more boxes than pubic lice. Dig a little deeper however, and you'll discover this sequel has evolved far beyond its now seemingly encumbering predecessors... »



» We kicked off the impressive single-player campaign with Tournament mode. Seven *Unreal* characters are immediately available, and players follow their individual career ladders through the bloodthirsty, Liandri Corporation-sponsored conflict. The default difficulty setting informs us we're 'Experienced' at the game, though with later settings confidently described as Expert, Masterful and Godlike, you can tell, as is characteristic of the series, that *UC2* isn't going to be an easy ride. This sets a precedent for the majority of the game; sneaky camping and sniping gets you nowhere, as frighteningly astute AI will suss your tactics and overwhelm your position in no time. *UC2* makes no bones (apart from yours) about its punishingly hard difficulty. Skilful dodging, nerves of steel and faster twitching than an electrified ornithologist are the only way to make progress. Your head's pounding, sweat's dripping down your face and the taunts of your last slaughterer are ringing in your ears. This is brutal, in your face blasting, and we love it.

All our favourite *Unreal* weapons return, complete with primary and secondary modes of fire (see Weapons of Mass De-Rezztion, below). Before each match there's the handy option of assigning your character weapons from the familiar arsenal – one Explosive (rocket launchers, ripjacks, flak cannon and all-new grenade launcher) and one Energy weapon (shock and sniper rifles, bio rifle and stinger gun). This option allows players to really learn each weapon's combos and strengths; the downside is you may ignore the less-appealing (though just as powerful in the right hands) weapons, like the bio rifle.

Each Tournament rung features different game modes for all the characters involved. It's great fun to experiment and master the ton of different



↑ **The bio rifle is no mere snot-thrower.**

Adrenaline powers on offer (see I Have The Power!, right). Deathmatch and Capture The Flag are obviously present, but also on the roster is the brilliant Overdose. A bastard child of Bomb Run, different coloured orbs will sporadically spawn »

Keep on your toes, and your finger on the trigger.



Bonus info



ANTI-FREEZE
It's great fun stunning an opponent with your Nakhti pistols, but it's not so funny when it happens to you. To get rid of your temporary paralysis before an enemy bears down on you, frantically waggle the Left thumbstick and tap the A button.

RED VS BLUE
A great improvement when playing team-based games is the way players from each side will glow red or blue. This really helps players identify enemies from a distance, and should save a few red faces on Xbox Live after you mistakenly blow away a team-mate about to grab the flag.

DEAD FAMILIAR
Completing each *Unreal* personality's Tournament mode unlocks their alternate versions, that in turn become playable characters. We loved the undead version of the recently resurrected Lauren.

WEAPONS OF MASS DE-REZZTION Get on the end of one of these and you'll be sore in the morning...

THE WEAPONS all come with primary and secondary fire modes. The latter often has a *further* secondary use, by holding down the Left trigger for a few seconds. If you live that long.



STINGER: A powerful mini-gun in its own right, the stinger alternately fires homing shells. As long as you keep the target within your reticule, they'll hit home.



BIO RIFLE: Neglected by many, when this baby's charged up it releases a huge cloud of damaging toxic gas. More potent than Owen's farts after a night on the sauce.



ROCKET LAUNCHER: This bad boy fires off three rockets at once. Hold down the Left trigger for several seconds to unleash a homing salvo that's near impossible to dodge.



RIPJACK: The boomeranging blade may not seem like much, but charge it up to lay down several highly explosive mines. Great for making a hasty retreat.

I HAVE THE POWER! The Unreal champs prove the drugs do indeed work...

ADRENALINE meters can be filled as before, but now a menu can be brought up at any time by tapping X. One full bar enables three different powers to be used; two full bars unleash the second series of three, more powerful abilities. Intuitive controls means activating each is a cinch. Each character has unique powers, though several generic types are consistent.



Use the Blade Shield to protect yourself from attackers, and to gain a distinct advantage during melee combat.



Warrior Spirit increases your killing ability by isolating targets against the scenery and making your character stronger.



Speed does exactly what it says on the tin. Great for getting out of a tight spot or making the final dash during Overdose.



Lightning Burst is best suited to close-quarters combat against multiple enemies to weaken or kill them instantly.



Cannibalize is limited to the mechanical contestants, and although it depletes health, it's very effective.



EMP blast not only weakens foes in the nearby vicinity, but is deadly against robot characters and nullifies their powers.

» on a map. Players fight opponents to collect them, then endeavour to leg it to the corresponding reception points. Deposit orbs at the distant, corresponding-coloured gates, and you'll earn six points, or wuss out and go for the nearer, opposing-coloured gate for three. Equally, the longer the player holds onto an orb the more their radiation levels build up and, when they reach the relevant coloured gate, result in a huge 'overdose'.

Adrenaline powers are instantly assigned, and you'll temporarily become an unstoppable killing machine - great for barging your way back to the next orb spawn point. Brilliant fun, this game mode sits particularly well with players not inclined to the strategic co-ordination of CTF, and should be an absolute blast online.

Just when you think it can't get any better... hit the B button. You'll instantly be yanked out of the immersive, enveloping first-person view and seamlessly transported into third-person mode - it's quite an out of body experience. And this is when the hammer hits home. Epic, in a masterstroke, has created not only a worthy successor to *Unreal Championship* (Issue 10, 9.2), but also an innovative new direction to take the series in. And it's absolutely feckin' brilliant.

The great Training mode soon puts any uncertainties to rights. Following the tale of *Unreal* fave Anubis's pre-match nerves, close buddy Sobek educates players in the ways of moving, jumping, and taking advantage of your new-found liberation. Increased spatial awareness means players can now vault around like never before. Wall jumps are an essential part of getting out of a tight spot, yet would never have worked in first-person mode. They're great for evading enemy fire, too, so hone that 'wall-sprung dodge technique' [groan - ed]. One of the biggest things we noticed was the amount of time we actually spent playing the game in third-person - about 95 per cent of it! *Unreal Championship* die-hards may baulk at the thought of neglecting the familiar first-person view, but as sacrilegious as this may seem, it's actually more enjoyable than the now-oppressive normal view. Sure, it's great to go all FPS when charging up the sparking ripjack or to get a better view with the sniper rifle, but the lure of our new-found freedom was just too much to pass up.

The other reason for the switch in point of view is the introduction of the fantastic melee »



↓ Szalor: just like Edward Scissorhands. Only not quite as shy.

Devastation wades in fists first.



POP GUNS: EVERY CHARACTER COMES EQUIPPED WITH TWIN NAHFTI PISTOLS, THOUGH THESE ARE ONLY OF ANY REAL USE TO FREEZE AN OPPONENT. AMMO FOR YOUR TWO CHOSEN WEAPONS IS PLENTIFUL HOWEVER, SO MAKE IT A PRIORITY TO GRAB SOME QUICK.

It's brilliant scoring a tricky headshot from range – just watch they don't bounce it back.





↑ Every single match is truly electrifying.



↑ Just dropping in for a flying visit. (Fired! – ed.)

"Players can tailor games to their exact specs, from health and weapons to bots and rules"

Bonus info

TIME TO KILL
Certain levels and Challenges encompass the barbaric, but rather fun Nali Slaughter. Players must slay as many of these meditating teleporters as possible within the time limit, whilst evading their enemy who's trying to do the same. Aside from being sadistic fun, this gives you a great chance to hone your melee technique.

MADE IN HEAVEN
Tailoring your perfect match is easy with the comprehensive multiplayer options. Increasing your stats on Xbox Live is a bit trickier however, because only quality kills (i.e. those performed on a player with a level equal or higher than yours) count towards your overall ranking.

» combat. Each character has the ability to unleash a close-up attack using their character's weapon of choice (be it staffs, swords or good old-fashioned fists). Faster, weaker attacks complement slower, more powerful moves, though mis-time a lunge from a distance (jump + attack) and a rival player will punish you. Melee combat opens up a huge amount of brilliantly bone-crunching gameplay variants. Holding both triggers creates a shield to protect from range attacks, whilst tapping the Left trigger reflects back an opponent's projectile. It's immensely satisfying to precisely deflect a sniper shot right back at a camping foe, though you'll need nerves of steel to continually bounce back a barrage of rockets raining down. These defensive options really balance the gameplay, and as a result there's no discernable advantage between the safety of ranged weapons and getting up close and personal with your claws. A lock-on function (click down on the Right thumbstick) is available, and though useful for range attacks, is vital when you're going toe to toe with a hyperactive vampire like Janus.

For the ultimate in stylish slaughtering, *UC2* takes a leaf out of Midway stablemate *Mortal Kombat*'s book, and introduces incredible finishing moves. Nimble fingers are definitely needed to pull off the tricky combos required to execute them though (see Finish Him!, top right). Another improvement is the fantastic level design. Whereas *UC* offered relatively flat and two-dimensional arenas, the killing fields of *UC2* boast verticality in spades. Sumptuous cinematics pave the way for some seriously gorgeous visuals, and don't be surprised if you find yourself continually de-rezzed because you're gawping at the beauty of your surroundings. Getting around involves some *Prince of Persia*-style wall jumping to reach the upper echelons, and every individual character animation is impressive, from the sprightly springing of Selket to the heavier-footed, ungainly gait of Szalor. Power-ups are generously distributed throughout, though due to the frantic pace of the game you'll need to make like Michael Johnson to snap them up, particularly the brutally powerful Unreal Damage icons. Although single-player mode doesn't involve strict missions per se, each stage is elevated above the 'yet another Deathmatch' monotony thanks in part to the unrelentingly good enemy AI, and to the abundance of intelligently designed maps to learn. And even though Anubis is the only character with a complex back story, there's still enough variation in each match to keep the ADD divas happy.

The assorted Challenges are awesome as well. Described by the developer as "near-impossible", they *are* achievable but will definitely separate the Gorges from the boys. Variants of all the regular modes, they throw players into viciously difficult situations. You could find yourself overcoming the deficit of being 15-nil down in the middle of a Nali Slaughter match, or ten kills down in a team Deathmatch against three mean robot snipers, with the clock almost up. Though significantly tougher than the main game, players are handsomely rewarded for sweating blood and tears with the wealth of unlockable extras. Game modes, multiplayer maps, alternate versions of each character and even the great Raiden himself are all available once you've mastered these ball-breaking tasks.

But for all its lone gunmen attributes, the heart of the *Unreal* series has always been its multiplayer capabilities, and *UC2* delivers like a rocket to the face. Up to eight players can frag it out over System Link or Xbox Live, in more than 40 stunning arenas. We would've liked to have seen provision for up to 16 players, but then again the frenetic pace of the game means you're never more than a lunge attack away from another opponent. Overdose, though an individual (i.e. not team-based) game only, provides some spectacular edge-of-the-seat moments, and there's nothing like co-ordinating a well-timed flag snatch with double Adrenaline powers in CTF.

There are enough customisation options to fill a Juggernaut's battle armour thanks to the brilliant Mutator game options. Featuring an almost incomprehensible amount of game-changing variants, players can tailor each game to their exact specs, from health and weapon restrictions, to the type of bots and specific match rules. For the die-hard there's even the chance to play as the original *UC* intended – no third-person view, no melee attacks and old-skool Adrenaline powers only.

You'd think all this bouncing around and blistering pace would cause some slowdown, but not at all. The engine runs super smoothly, and displays some seriously impressive visuals, »



↑ Gorge goes gardening with the bio rifle.



↑ You'll frequently see the red mist during *UC2*.

FINISH HIM! Putting the blood into bloodsport, Unreal Championship style

JUST LIKE *Mortal Kombat*, *UC2* features some unbelievable finishing moves, or coup de grâces. Equip the default Nakhti pistols and hold down the Left trigger to charge them up. Unleash a stun shot and your opponent will be temporarily frozen, giving you a precious few seconds to get up close and personal to a foe and pull off the given combo. The relevant button sequence will briefly appear on screen, though you'll need to play with a character for a fair old while to really get au fait with each move. Pull it off though, and you will be rewarded with a stunning, panoramic view of a brutally violent finishing move. We're not condoning wanton bloodlust, but this feels seriously great.



↑ Freeze a foe, then toss the pistols and go to third-person.



↑ Now hit the tricky sequence to perform an elaborate kill.

Unreal Damage power-ups = ultimate carnage.



↑ Raiden comes complete with Lightning and Teleport powers.

» particularly when you combine several Adrenaline powers like Speed (a blurry screen akin to playing with a bottle of vodka in your veins) and Energy Burst (like throwing a box of Swan Vestas into a fireworks factory) at once.

We feel really guilty about loving *UC2*. Dirty, almost. We have been so faithful to the traditional FPS over the last few years, never questioning or wanting more. Other first-person floozies striving for our attention also started wearing the alluring guise of innovative powers (see *Project: Snowblind*, page 072), but couldn't sway us. Then *UC2* sauntered into the room and our jaws dropped. This new shooter in town didn't just impress us, it blew us away with its gorgeous looks, balanced weaponry and unbelievably fun gameplay. We're now scarred by this illicit encounter, and no FPS experience will ever be the same again. For a reality check on the future of shooters, look no further.

The Summary

UC2: THE LIANDRI CONFLICT THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. It's still classic *Unreal*; tons of brutal weapons, a break-neck pace and enough blood and gore to amply splatter the expansive arenas.
2. The third-person perspective is fantastic and allows unprecedented freedom; the melee attacks add a fresh new dimension to the series.
3. A very intuitive interface makes executing the wealth of new Adrenaline powers pleasingly simple during firefights.
4. A huge amount of variation, be it different game modes, countless Mutator options or the numerous unique playable characters.
5. Over 40 stunning, intelligently designed maps plus a fast, fluid engine makes multiplayer a riot. *Halo 2* had better watch its back on Live.

The Verdict

Seamlessly blends traditional first-person blasting with frantic third-person action. A shooter of *Unreal* proportions. Superb.

9.2//10

PREVIOUSLY: First Look - Issue 29, Excl. Access - Issue 35, Preview - Issue 39
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 41

WEATHER WITH YOU: ANDY HAD AN EVENTFUL TRIP TO NORTH CAROLINA TO REVIEW UC2. AFTER BEING INTERVIEWED BY FOX NEWS IN NEW YORK, A FREAK COLD SNAP MEANT OVER A FOOT OF SNOW FELL IN THE NORMALLY BALMY STATE, DELAYING HIS JOURNEY BACK. THE DAY HE LEFT, THE TEMPERATURE SHOT BACK UP TO 75 DEGREES. WEIRD.

Rugby 2005

Thirty angry men? One ball? Must be time for an EA rugby game then

Words: Martin Korda

Dev: EA/HB Studios	Pub: EA
Players: 1-4	Live: None
Release: 04 March	
www.easports.com/articles/05/rugby2005pr.jsp	

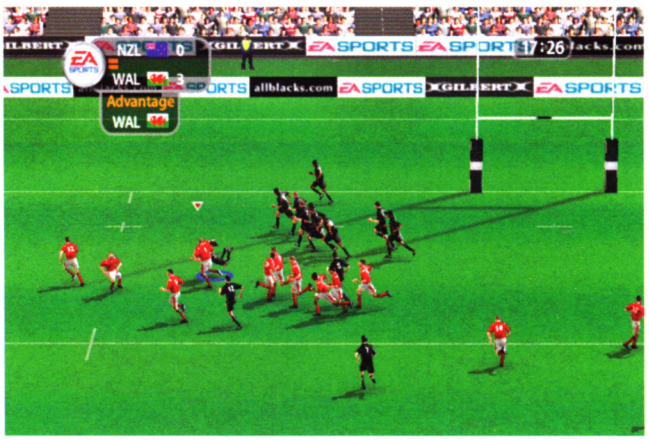
AH RUGBY, the game of toothless oafs, Cambridge undergraduates called Toxteth and men who love cupping oval balls. A game of grit, determination, and chronic sports injuries. Of course, it doesn't have to be this painful, thanks to EA's yearly update of its official Rugby Union-licensed game, imaginatively called *Rugby 2005*, now sprinting onto Xbox for the first time. Who could have seen that coming, eh?

So what's new? Well, for starters, this Xbox offering sports all-new player models and animations, which help create a far greater sense of authenticity than before, with bone-bending tackles, fearsome mauls and balletic dives for the try line now replicated in realism-packed glory. The atmosphere has also been ramped up, with accurate crowd chants and improved stadium effects that further add to the immersion.

But what's it like as a simulation of legal GBH? Well, you know what? It's pretty damn good. Games genuinely feel like the real thing, with countless punts arcing into touch, smooth passing moves flowing across the back line and brutal rucks savagely contested by hulking cauliflower-eared forwards. Best of all though, is the game's intelligent use of the play on rule, meaning that matches flow more smoothly than beer at a victory party.

The AI is also impressive, reading the game with lifelike intelligence, while each carefully recreated international team displays the kind of ability you'd associate with their real-life counterparts. The green-as-grass Italians and Americans are easy to steamroller, but the savvy New Zealanders and English prove a far harder proposition, fizzing the ball around the park while forming formidable defensive lines.

The game simply spills over with tournaments, and you can try your hand at anything from the Six Nations to the World Cup. It won't be long before you've mastered the art of combining your backs and forwards to devastating effect, though sadly, kicking during open play and line-outs is clumsy and unclear, and stealing possession can often be frustratingly difficult. Overall though, *Rugby 2005* is a triumph, and had it not been for these few clumsy fumbles, it could have been a world-beater. As close to the real thing as you're likely to get without strapping on a groin guard.



↑ Some tackles are so brutal they almost lift you out of your underpants.

Bonus info

JUST LIKE ME

If you fancy adding yourself and your mates to a team's roster, then you'll be pleased to know that an easy-to-use and powerful player creation tool allows you to fashion lumbering boors of all shapes and sizes, and put them into any team or position you want.



↑ All of the international teams and tournaments are present and correct.



↑ New player models add to the game's realism.



↑ And that's how Maradona invented rugby.



↑ Where would we be without the trusty scrum?



↑ That looks more like a game of netball.

The Summary

RUGBY 2005 THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. Excellent new animations and improved stadium and crowd effects make for a brutally immersive experience.
2. A host of tournaments to play in, and an abundance of teams to play as or against keep things varied and fresh.
3. Impressively lifelike AI plays the game realistically, yet the free-flowing play ensures it's always fun.
4. A lack of clear control during rucks and mauls means that turning over play is a rarity.
5. Kicking during open play is clumsy and unclear, while line-outs are unresponsive and overly hard to master.

The Verdict

A generally excellent recreation of the game of rugby, topped off with lashings of EA veneer.

8.2//10

PREVIOUSLY: News - Issue 39
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 41

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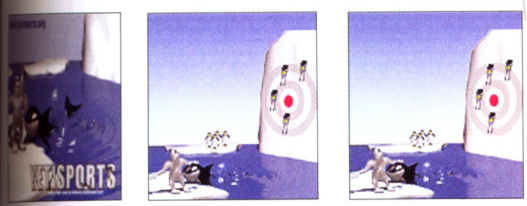

Yeti Sports 2 - Code 170*

Compatibility: Nokia 3100 / 3120 / 3200 / 3330 / 3620 / 3650 / 5100 / 5140 / 6100 / 6200 / 6220 / 6230 / 6600 / 6610 / 6610i / 6620 / 6800 / 6810 / 6820 / 7210 / 7250 / 7250i / 7610 / N-Gage / N-Gage QD / Samsung E700 / Siemens M55 / MC60 / SL55 / Sony Ericsson P900 / Z600

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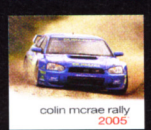
Free Games



Prince Of Persia
Warrior Within
Code: 215*
Compatibility Nokia 3100 / 3300 / 3510i 3650 / 5100 / 6100 / 6610 / 6800 / 7210 7250 / 7650 / N-Gage / Sharp GX10 / GX20



Marcel Desailly
Pro Soccer
Code: 205*
Compatibility Nokia 3410 / 3510i / 3650 / 5100 / 6100 / 6610 / 6800 / 7210 / 7250 / 7650



Colin Mcrae Rally 2005
Code: 193*
Compatibility Nokia 3100 / 3200 / 3220 / 3300 / 3510i / 3650 / 5100 / 6100 / 6220 / 6230 / 6600 / 6610 / 6800 / 6820 / 7210 / 7250 / 7250i / 7610 / 7650 / N-Gage / Motorola E1000 / V300 / V400 / V500 / V525 / V600 / Sharp GX10 / GX15 / GX20 / GX30 / Sony Ericsson K700i / S700i / Sagem My V65 / MyV-55 / MyV-75 /



Call Of Duty
Code: 269*
Compatibility Nokia 3100 / 3200 / 3300 / 3510 / 3650 / 3660 / 5100 / 6100 / 6200 / 6220 / 6230 / 6600 / 6610 / 6800 /6820 / 7200 / 7210 / 7250 / 7250i / 7650 / N-Gage / Samsung E700 / X600 / Z100 / Sagem My V65 / Panasonic X60 / Sony Ericsson Z1010 /



Mortal Tower
Code: 119
Compatibility Nokia 3100 / 3200 / 3300 / 3510i / 3650 / 5100 / 6100 / 6230 / 6600 / 6610 / 6800 / 6820 / 7200 / 7210 / 7250 / 7250i / 7650 / 8910i / N-Gage



KO Kickboxing
Code: 113
Compatibility Nokia 3100 / 3200 / 3300 / 3510i / 3650 / 5100 / 6100 / 6600 / 6610 / 6800 / 7210 / 7250 / 7250i / 7650 / 8910i / N-Gage / Siemens A60 / C60 / M55 / MC60 / S55 / SL55 / Motorola T720 / V300 / V500 / V525 / V600



Ambi Stacks
Code: 400
Compatibility: Nokia 3300 / 3410 / 3510i / 3650 / 5100 / 6100 / 6310i / 6610 / 6800 / 7210 / 7250 / 7250i / 7650 / 8910i / Sharp GX10 / Motorola T720



Bomber Mine
Code: 340
Compatibility Nokia 3100 / 3200 / 3300 / 3510i / 3650 / 5100 / 6100 / 6610 / 6800 / 6820 / 7210 / 7250 / 7650 / N-Gage / Siemens C55 / M50 / MT50 / Sharp / GX10 / Motorola T720 /

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Cold Fear

When the ship goes down, you'd better be ready

Words: Jermaine Mann

- Dev: Darkworks
- Pub: Ubisoft
- Players 1
- Live: None
- Release: 04 March
- www.coldfear.com

THERE HAVE been plenty of horror films set on boats, but not many videogames. For that reason, *Cold Fear* is incredibly original. It's got a rocking Russian whaler, a cursed oil rig, plenty of mutated sea life and the kind of stormy, shit-house weather not experienced since last summer's jaunt to Weston-Super-Mare. Dive below the surface though, and what you get is generic survival horror fare. Just one that requires you to stock up on the travel sickness pills before you go wading in.

The whole game smacks of John Carpenter – disturbingly quiet locales conspiring with clichéd shocks that still make you jump, no matter how hard you try to resist. Plus acting dodgy enough to know the perpetrators are destined for a life of C-movie stardom. You play a coastguard with a military background, sent to investigate a deserted Russian vessel in mysterious, shadowy waters. What you become embroiled in is something more sinister – a kind of Dr Moreau plot concerning a dodgy scientist and immoral experimentation on amphibious sea-life. Subsequently, you find yourself taunted by crab-like Exocels, who turn lifeless corpses into sprinter zombies of the *28 Days Later* variety, and other weird oddities, such as the giant leech-like monsters who plop off ceilings and scuttle around rooms like Olympic floor gymnasts on steroids.

In between the taut exploration is quite a bit of combat, and this is perhaps where it differs most from the likes of *Silent Hill 4* (Issue 34, 7.0) and *The Suffering* (Issue 29, 8.0). It's got a separate, combat-oriented viewpoint (for more intense fighting), no auto-aim, and requires you to use cover and inflammable barrels to your strategic advantage. Sadly, it would be especially good if it weren't marred by such dodgy implementation. Killing zombie infectants involves destroying their brain, so the fact that the same button is used to stamp on heads as open doors can invariably result in frustration. The camera is also more annoying than it should be. There is no manual control during standard third-person, and the excellent 'over-the-shoulder' perspective (used specifically for the shoot-outs) can be disorienting during the change-over, causing you to end up looking in completely the opposite direction. Not the ideal scenario when you've got a zombie tearing chunks out of your abdomen with objects pointier than Leatherface's very own chainsaw collection.

Cold Fear is a decent, polished survival horror-fest with an effective use of atmosphere and excellent weather effects (it never stops raining – fitting, but how much water do you need in a game?). It's just a bit too flawed in its execution and weak in the storytelling department to make it anything truly terrifying. A reasonable effort, just don't expect it to give you really horrible nightmares. Only very bad sea sickness, and for that we recommend ReliefBand.

Bonus info



LOST AGAIN

Another interesting thing about *Cold Fear* is the level design. Rather than being guided down a traditionally linear route, the game's ship and oil rig settings feature a large-ish playing area, full of door puzzles and secret codes. There's a lot of retracing of steps, which can be a burden on your directional skills. And with new enemies appearing when you least expect them, it crams in a few unexpected shocks along the way too...



↑ Oh dear, somebody's got the beer goggles on.



↑ Shotgun shoot-outs can be damn messy.



↑ Not an ideal time to practise chin-ups.



↑ Shoot barrels to roast enemies quickly.



↑ The influence of *28 Days Later* means this zombie moves faster than a haemorrhoids victim on the way to the chemist.

The Summary

COLD FEAR THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. Third-person survival horror set out at sea, featuring atmospheric, creaking whalers and derelict old oil rigs.
2. John Carpenter-style chills, with tense exploration broken by sudden, gory frights. Clichéd but effective.
3. Intense tactical combat, with an over-the-shoulder perspective. Marred by slightly iffy controls and aiming, though.
4. No manual camera in standard third-person. Can become quite disorientating when navigating through levels.
5. Solid horror-fest, but the story is relatively weak and the gameplay is still largely generic despite the strategic fighting.

The Verdict

Very solid if predictable survival horror, marred by slightly awkward combat. *Resident Evil* fans may get a chill.

7.4//10

PREVIOUSLY: News - Issues 36 & 38
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 41

lever turn your back on the enemy
– unless the man behind you is a Marine



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NBA Street V3

You're about to witness the strength of street knowledge...

Dev: EA Big	Pub: EA
Players 1-4	Live: None
Release: Out Now	
www.easportsbig.com/games/nbastreetv3	

Words: Andy Irving

HOW DO YOU make a game that originated on the streets that bit more, well, street? We don't know, but EA Big has made a damn good effort. Action is a refreshingly simple scaled down version of the game proper, with teams of three 'ballers facing off against each other. The arcade-style gameplay is focused solely on scoring points, and lots of them. Showboating is a necessity rather than an ego-fulfilling aside and individual players can perform simple feints and finger rolls by rotating the Right thumbstick.

Passing is just as important as shooting, as amassing point totals fills the Gamebreaker bar. Hold the Right trigger as you pop a pass or dance into the D for a dunk, and your player will perform an *NBA Jam*-style spectacle. The downside of this is that any skill associated with shooting is removed; simply fire one off from anywhere near the basket and it's guaranteed to go in. Larger points totals are awarded for stringing moves together, though when paired with trying to pull off enhanced turbo moves with the L and R triggers, this is tricky.

Tackling is easier than other NBA titles around, with your player ungainly lunging in to an opponent and as a result the game favours fast, flowing, attacking gameplay, where keeping possession means passing almost as soon as you receive it.

There's also a character creation feature and a massively detailed court editor. Street Points are the key to earning all the best hoops, amassed through the sometimes tough Career mode. Dunk Contests are fun side games, where players can use courtside props to get extra height and score points during their stylish slams. *Street V3* doesn't innovate the sport the way MJ's first Air sneaks did back in 1979, but for a fun trip downtown, che-che-check it out, as the (playable characters) Beastie Boys would say.



↑ Take it to the hole or turn on the style for some showboating combos.



↑ 'Non-contact sport' is not a term these players are familiar with.



↑ Spot a leaping team-mate for the alley oop.

The Verdict

Fun and deceptively deep. Lace up your freshest sneaks for an impressive career mode and rollicking multiplayer.

8.0//10

SNK vs Capcom: SVC Chaos

Third dimension? What third dimension?

Dev: SNK	Pub: Ignition
Players 1-2	Live: 2 players
Release: 25 February	
www.snkplaymore.jp	

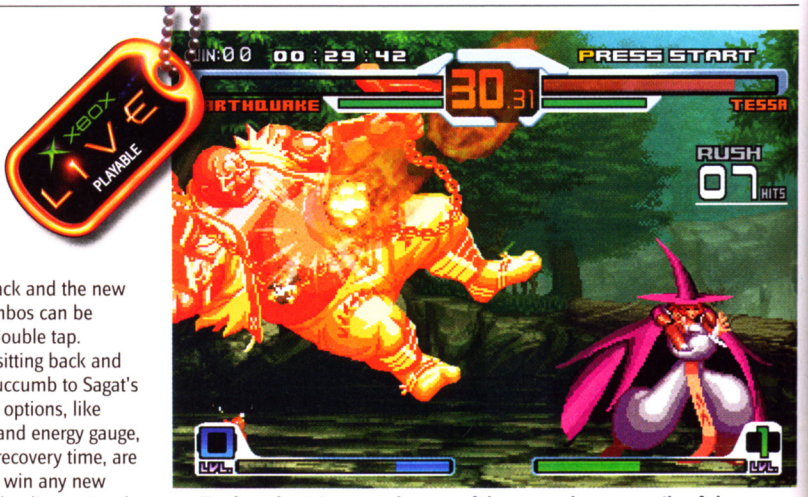
Words: Andy Irving

Apparently not happy with the way their characters were portrayed in *Capcom Vs SNK* (Issue 14, 7.7), the chaps at SNK have deemed it necessary to put the world to rights with their very own version.

The 36 characters read like a who's who of beat 'em ups from the early '90s; *Streetfighter, King of Fighters* and *Fatal Fury* all have representatives slugging it out in earnest. And unfortunately, earnest is all these 2D duellers can muster. We're all for revamped retro classics when done well, like the unbelievable transformation *DOA2* underwent to triumph in *DOA Ultimate* (Issue 39, 8.8), and equally 2D fighters when executed with the panache of *Guilty Gear X2: Reload* (Issue 37, 8.4). However, *SVC* looks painfully dated. Super-pixellated characters and flat, uninteresting environments should be left back in 1993. Purists need only apply.

Yet this is where SVC does draw some strength. Ardent beat 'em fans will be wetting their karate suits at all the great touches on offer, with exclusive characters like Mega-Man, Shiki and Athena present. Combat is as deep as you want it to be, including the familiar SNK Guard Cancel attack and the new Forward Ground move, where combos can be interrupted with a quick forward double tap.

Enemy AI is top notch, so no sitting back and firing off range attacks. If you do succumb to Sagat's awesome power, several Continue options, like reducing the CPU's difficulty level and energy gauge, and increasing your Power gauge recovery time, are a great addition. SVC isn't going to win any new followers, but die-hard fans won't be disappointed.



↑ Earthquake is immensely powerful, yet not the most agile of characters.



↑ Dhalsim loves taking girls out on the town for a good old knees-up.



↑ Counters are effective against jump attacks.

The Verdict

For completists, a top technical addition to a collection. For the rest of us, it may be a bit too much to stomach.

6.0//10



↑ Burn, baby, burn! The Punisher invites one of his mates round for a *real* disco inferno...

The Punisher

Marvel's vigilante picks up a few tips from Jason Voorhees

Words: Jermaine Mann

- Dev: Volition
- Pub: THQ
- Players: 1
- Live: Content
- Release: 04 March
- http://thq.com/punisher

IF YOU'RE the kind of person who's unlikely to look past a name, you should already know what to expect here. The Punisher? Hmm, let's think... Driving over terrorists' necks in forklift trucks? Check. Dunking mobsters' heads in piranha pools? Check. Feeding henchmen into sausage machines? Check. In fact, the only 'punishment' concept avoided here is the one of the six-foot, latex-clad, thigh-booted, whip-wielding variety, but then we never did manage to unlock that secret mode...

The Punisher, as you'll already know, is quite violent. But tongue-in-cheekedly so. It's basically *Max Payne 2* (Issue 25, 9.2) with all the brutally imaginative interrogations from the Bond films. And then some. You get explosive, frenetic third-person shooter action featuring gun battles so majestic John Woo would feel a tingle in the naughties. You get up-close, melee executions featuring machetes, rifle butts and swords. You get body counts higher than pouring boiling water into an ants' nest. It's one of the most fun, juvenile, intense action experiences since, well, *Max Payne 2*.

The gameplay isn't new, but it's programmed very well. Even occasional AI quibbles only intensify the comic book sensation. You essentially kick down a door, engage in relentless firefights, grab aggressors and then look for unique ways to extract information. Stealth, inevitably, is largely redundant. Using enemies as human shields and rolling behind cover, however, is imperative. There are numerous firearms to employ and, keeping the action flowing super-smooth, loading time is at a minimum.

Of course, at *The Punisher*'s core are the infamous 'interrogations'. Designated areas allow you to question foes in return for health, information and guidance, resorting to a simple Right analogue balancing game. Car compactors, shark-infested waters, furnaces, funeral-home incinerators and laser-cutters all become viable administrators of pain, culminating in an (optional) gratuitous death sequence that, thanks to the ratings board, unfolds in distorted black and white. Alternatively, there are the environmental killings, like pressing X to mount a screaming adversary on an elephant tusk. Ouch.

With plenty of unlockables, several difficulty levels and downloadable goodies, *The Punisher*'s repeat-play potential is surprisingly high. Each level is varied, looks fantastic, and features cameos from the likes of DareDevil, Nick Fury and Black Widow. As a pretentious-free, rollercoaster ride through arcade mayhem, *The Punisher* is one of the finest uses of a licence to date. And it isn't directly based on last year's shoddy movie either.

Bonus info

SGT. SLAUGHTER

The Punisher has no superhuman abilities, but Volition has kindly given him a special slaughter mode, that lets him run amok, Hulk-style, for a limited amount of time. Perfect for steaming through congested areas while your health is low.





↑ Looks like this Russian soldier is up 'ship' creek...



↑ TV time! Expect a large number of boss fights.



↑ Punisher pops round for a cuppa and a chat.



↑ The council's new speedbumps were popular.



↑ The St. Valentine's Day Funeral Massacre?

The Summary

THE PUNISHER THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. Relentless third-person shooter action, featuring some of the most stylised, intense firefights yet seen in videogame form.
2. Not much onus on stealth, but using cover and human shields adds strategy to the gun battles.
3. Brutally imaginative interrogations add strategy and variety, as well as throwing in a laugh or too. And if you hadn't guessed, it's rated 18.
4. Large number of varied levels, including jungles, meat factories and mansions, and extra skins to download with Xbox Live.
5. Occasional levels link you up with fellow Marvel stalwarts adding further fun to the action.

The Verdict

Not a great deal of depth, but as a full-on, in-yer-face blaster, it's very good. A tip-top celebration of an under-appreciated licence.

8.4//10

PREVIOUSLY: First Look - Issue 29, Preview - Issue 32, Q&A - Issue 36
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 41

MISSED OPPORTUNITY: DESPITE CRAMMING IN A VERY LARGE NUMBER OF IMAGINATIVE INTERROGATIVE SCENES, VOLITION OBVIOUSLY FORGOT TO INCLUDE THE MOST PAINFUL POSSIBILITY AROUND - BEING FORCED TO SMELL ONE OF PHIL'S FARTS. MY GOD, IT DOESN'T BEAR THINKING ABOUT...



↓ Haymakers hit with extra force but leave your defences open.

Fight Night Round 2

Seconds out... it's round two for the boxing game with more bite than Tyson

Words: Graeme Boyd

Dev: EA Sports	Pub: EA
Players: 1-2	Live: None
Release: 18 March	
www.easports.com/games/fightnightround2/home	

HAVE YOU EVER been properly punched? Ever felt a full-on, cheekbone-shattering, nose-bending wallop straight to the boat race? If not, you'll discover how it feels when you suck up one of *Fight Night Round 2*'s new Haymaker punches. These brutal blows rock the camera like a car crash, land with a 'CRUNCH' sound so gruesome it'd give a pathologist the dry heaves, and usually introduce your boxer's arse to the mat. Good night.

Fight Night Round 2's sweet presentation jams the block-rocking power of these punches into your eye sockets, but it's the truly awesome Total Punch Control that makes them hurt so much. Controlled pops and twists of the Right analogue stick unleash stinging jabs, neck-snapping hooks and chin-disintegrating uppercuts, while holding the triggers let you block, bob and weave with ease.



↑ Loads of licensed boxers pull on their gloves.

Haymakers are powered-up punches. Adding rotation to your stick twist puts extra hot sauce on your glove, sending the crowd wild and rebooting your opponent's brainframe instantly. It's brutal, it's vicious, and we love it.

Unfortunately, the Haymaker system is *Fight Night Round 2*'s only important new addition. Being able to control your Cutman (the poor bloke who has to clean up flesh that's been reduced to rotten mince) is a nice extra, but it's really just a simple mini-game between rounds.

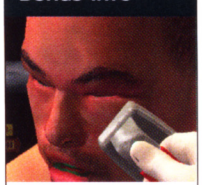
The Career mode in particular could have done with an overhaul. True, you now have to fight your way through the amateur ranks wearing one of those padded nugget-nappies, but since you can't upgrade your stats until you turn pro it's really just a glorified tutorial.

Once you're slugging it out as a pro you can start spending cash on new equipment, entrance effects, and bikini-clad girls. But that's all just show - to really make it to the top you have to train. Funnily enough *Round 2*'s training mini-games aren't as good as last year's. Weightlifting is cool - you have to use the analogue sticks to drag up heavy stacks - but the Combo Dummy and Heavy Bag are just dull.

Progressing up the rankings until you're sporting a fancy new belt is fun and there are plenty of unlockables, but ultimately it's just a procession of similar fights. Xbox Live support would have been a great way to give the career mode some real punch... ah well, maybe next year.

Still, the boxing action hits like a heavyweight while also offering deep, strategic gameplay for the true ringmaster. Things really rumble in two-player mode, where bouts evolve into ridiculously tense face-offs more like chess than a messy scrap outside the pub. *Fight Night 2004* (Issue 29, 8.5) was the jab that opened our defences and *Round 2* is the sucker punch follow-up. Hopefully next year's edition will be the knockout blow.

Bonus info



ALL'S SWELL

Thanks to *Fight Night Round 2*'s stunning facial damage, your boxer's mush will soon look like a butcher's slab. Luckily you can now repair the damage by, um, moving the analogue sticks. Essential, but not exactly riveting.



↑ Knockout replays are especially brutal.



↑ From weedy streak of pee to fisticuffs master.



↑ The control system is amazing. Sweet dodges!



↑ The facial damage model is still superb. Bosh!

The Summary

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 2 THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1	Solid gold EA Sports presentation with sweet tunes, superb visuals, crunching sound effects and top commentary.
2	Total Punch Control rules - like *Tiger Woods*' analogue swing rules golf games, this is the only way to box.
3	Haymaker punches and bloody facial damage effects add even more brutality to the hard-hitting bouts.
4	Plenty to unlock in Career mode but training is dull and some new features would have added variety.
5	Great in two-player, but Xbox Live play would make up for a short list of game modes.

The Verdict

Succumbs to the EA Sports curse of not adding enough improvements, but *Round 2* is still a worthy king of the ring.

8.4//10

PREVIOUSLY: News - Issue 39
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 41

Ski Racing 2005

Put ice cubes in your pockets for added realism

ONLY ON XBOX

XBOX LIVE CONTENT

- Dev: Coldwood Int.
- Pub: JoWood
- Players 1
- Live: Content Download
- Release: 25 March
- Live: Scoreboards
- www.skiracing2005.com

Words: Ben Talbot

THERE'S SOMETHING manly about skiing. Maybe it's the thought you could shatter every bone in an instant. *Ski Racing 2005* manages to get that feeling across; you bomb down the slopes at such velocity that you'd be hard pressed to play the game half-heartedly. All four events types - Slalom, Giant Slalom, Downhill and Super-G - demand your full concentration.

Controls are simple but there's still a massive margin for error. Carving between the flags at the right angle can shave seconds off your time, while a single slip-up can cost you the entire run. The Left trigger makes you lean backwards and slow down; the Right puts you in full pelt. When a marker looks out of reach, a press of X executes some last-ditch edging, but this can really damage your race time.

Graphically, the skier animation is competent enough, but the slopes lack the sexy bump-mapped textures of *Amped 2* (Issue 23, 8.9) and the sparse background details add nothing to the realism. Thankfully, the sensation of speed does much to distract from the game's bland presentation. But unfortunately it can't hide the fact that there's only a few hours of gaming here. If you're an expert and win every event first time (which is unlikely), you'll move through all 18 slopes without much repetition. Fail to be a perfectionist and it'll take ages to work through the season, forcing you to replay the same events over and over until you have enough points.

Live scoreboards add a little incentive to stick with it, but not for too long. Ultimately the thing that kept us playing was the savage but comical crashes. The ragdoll effects are crazy! *Ski Racing 2005* is fun for a while but is ultimately too simple to hold the attention for long. It doesn't come close to capturing the variety or the unpredictability of the real sport.



↑ The snow effects aren't much to shout about.

Bonus info

MOUNTAINEER

A course editor is available once you've completed the opening stage of Career mode. Downloadable content has been promised too, so expect a few new slopes in the future.



↑ All the sponsors must have covered dev costs.

"Too simple to hold the attention for long"



↑ You'll find the controls easy to grasp.

The Verdict

A bit too much of a novelty title without the replay value of other extreme sports games. Still cheap thrills at £20 though.

5.0//10

Spy vs Spy

Is there a Commie (64) under your bed?

XBOX LIVE PLAYABLE

- Dev: Vicious Cycle
- Pub: Take-Two
- Players 1, 2-4 S.Link
- Live: 2-4 players
- Release: 01 April
- www.take2games.com

Words: Andy Irving

ANY SELF-RESPECTING gamer over 25 will have fond memories of the classic *Spy vs Spy* titles. Pioneering the way multiplayer games were played, their legacy lasted over ten years, until the public grew tired of 2D puzzlers. Now Take-Two has decided to breathe new life into the bullet-riddled lungs of the sleuthing series.

We use the word 'sleuthing', but the real espionage flavour of the originals has been lost in the translation from 2D puzzler to 3D platformer/actioner. That's not to say the grey matter doesn't get put to use, because every mission/environment in the single-player Story mode involves players being intuitively lead through a series of simple (very tame) scenarios. Occasionally the environment allows you to set a trap for your nemesis, though this is merely a case of walking into a specific area, with the resulting comedy caper played out in a disappointingly pre-rendered cutscene.

What's much more satisfying is the option to play the Classic or Modern version of the game. Classic involves negotiating the familiar apartment setting, trying to acquire five hidden items before your foe. Stealth is much more paramount here, and the emphasis is on placing snidey traps to scupper your opponent. Context-sensitive controls allow your Spy to sneak around (though not quite up to Sam Fisher's standards), but this placid padding does prevent your character leaving footprints. The Modern mode plays much the same, only over the same maps from the single-player campaign.

This new direction allows for a revamped and rollicking multiplayer mode. Up to four players can try to command an arena in one of the many game modes like Last Spy Standing and Deathmatch variants. The maps aren't huge, but due to the random nature of available weapons, are a real laugh. *Spy vs Spy* is quite a detraction from its roots, but a refreshing update nonetheless.



↑ Not everyone likes a joker. Retaliate with a laser to the face.



↑ The terrible twosome are constantly at odds during Story mode.



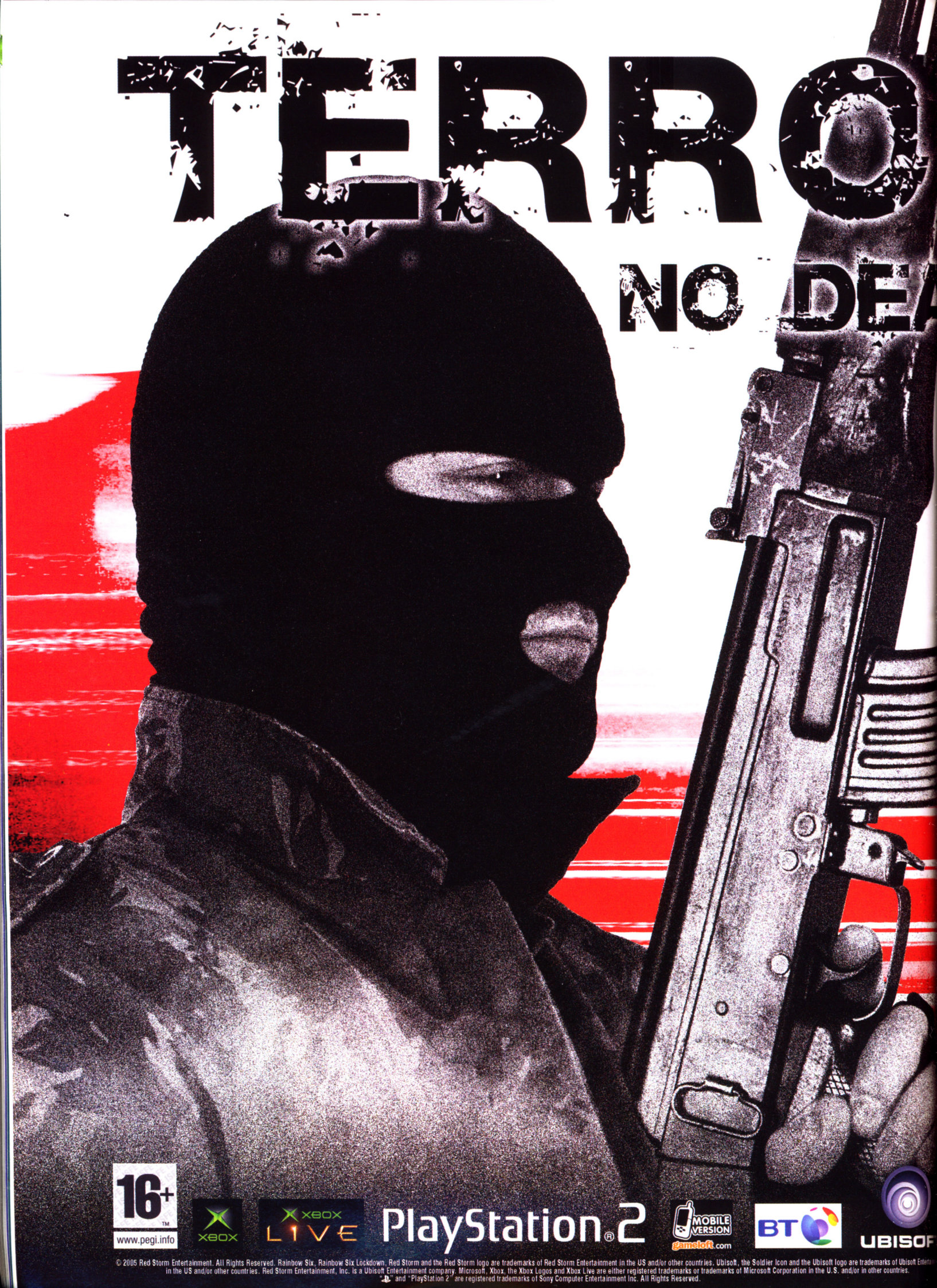
↑ Make clockwork mice to do your bidding.

The Verdict

Don't remember the original? Don't worry, this is nothing like it. A bit of platforming fun, and a right giggle in multiplayer.

6.8//10

HISTORY ON ICE: THE SPORT OF SKIING WAS INVENTED IN THE MID-1800S. BACK THEN IT LITERALLY WAS JUST TWO PLANKS OF WOOD FOR SKIS AND A SINGLE POLE FOR STEERING.



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LOCKDOWN STARTS MARCH 2005



TOM CLANCY'S

RAINBOW SIX LOCKDOWN





↑ Stand up and run and you'll be shot to bits before you can say 'ouch.'

Project: Snowblind

Super-soldier goes nuts in the first credible rival to Halo 2

Words: Jon Brown

Dev: Crystal Dynamic	Pub: Eidos
Players: 1	Live: 2-16 players
Players: 2-16 S.Link	Release: February 2005
www.projectsnowblind.com	

PROJECT: SNOWBLIND, so the story goes, started out life as member of the *Deus Ex* family, only to be ripped from its mother's bosom at an obscenely young age, then tossed into the street, mewing and puking, to fend for itself. *Project: Snowblind* finally having reached puberty, it now bears little or no resemblance to its parent title, the action-heavy meat-headedness a sharp contrast to ma's more considered role-playing-based blend of highbrow stealth action.

Project: Snowblind's storyline, a gumbo of sub-Channel 5 space cobblers, is the second major difference between the two. Where *Deus Ex* titles pride themselves on their engaging plots, *Project: Snowblind*'s narrative comes over like a *Universal Soldier* film that Dolph Lundgren refused to make. It runs something like this: Nathan Frost (you) awakens from surgical procedure to discover that the government has fitted him with $500m of high-tech nanotechnology. He's then rolled into combat by his superiors like a human bowling ball, his intended target being an evil-minded general with one eye on (wait for it) global domination. Thankfully, the plot knows its place in all this and refrains from ever impinging on the action. Our only serious complaint is that the cutscenes, though artfully directed, are a touch on the clunky side. In places you'll swear your Xbox has been transformed into a PlayStation 2 emulator. Spit.

Thankfully the game itself is far prettier than the cutscenes. Or at least it is in places. *Project: Snowblind*'s environments span the full breadth of the imagination spectrum, from cardigan-grey corridors to a brilliantly oppressive prison block, complete with a bizarro indoor forest. If nothing else, *Project: Snowblind*'s location schizophrenia serves as the perfect incentive to play on: you never know what's waiting for you around the next corner... quite literally.

The other significant factor in persuading you to see *Project: Snowblind* through to its suitably overblown conclusion is the aforementioned nanotechnology, which is beautifully integrated into the gameplay. $500m apparently goes a long way as far as military hardware goes, your equipment allowing four distinct advantages over your enemy (see Anatomy of a Super-Soldier, top right). And the best part is, you actually need to use all of this stuff if you're going to get by. It's up to you exactly which ability you use and where – pencil-armed weedlings will prefer to activate the cloaking device and crawl through missions unseen, while gun-happy fat-necks will flip the Bullet Time switch and take part in elaborately staged death-ballets – just be aware than you'll always need to use something.

It's the sheer scale of the battles that makes nanotechnology such an essential piece of your arsenal. *Project: Snowblind* deals almost exclusively in large-scale shoot-outs, the number of combatants frequently reaching way, way, way into double figures. Occasionally you'll be squired into battle by half a dozen or so allied troops; more often than not you'll be left all on your Jack Jones, the shotgun in your paw your only companion.

All of which leads us by the sawn-off barrel to our second minor gripe: that on certain levels there isn't enough ammunition to go around. We've lost count of the number of times we've had to put our current objective on hold while we sniffed around, head down, looking for more bullets. Granted, it isn't a major problem, it just strikes us as something of an oversight that a game with the mentality of »»

XBOX LIVE PLAYABLE

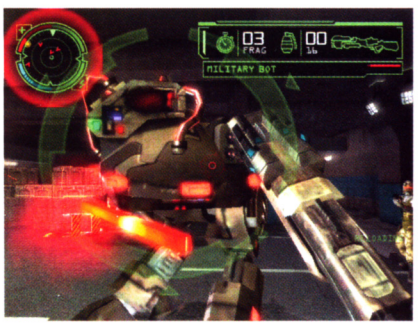
Bonus info

WHITE NOISE

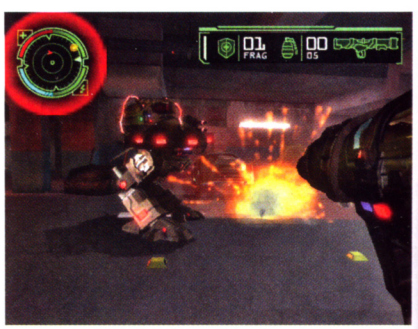
Due to the fact that you're half-man, half-machine, the enemy can interfere with your instruments at any time. The screen will fill with eye-grating static and, at times like this, your only option is to run and hide.



↑ What are you waiting for? Shoot the barrel.



↑ It is possible to hack into enemy bots...



↑ ...but firing rockets at them is much more fun.



↑ Deploy Spider-Bots and distract your enemy.



↑ If in doubt, toss a flashbang around the corner and leave 'em all squinting.

ANATOMY OF A SUPER-SOLDIER An idiot's guide to nanotechnology



Vision Boost

What does it do? The Vision Boost uses thermal imagining technology to highlight your enemies. It also allows you to see your foe through walls.
When should I use it? Either, a) during large gun battles, or b) before opening doors. Needless to say, Vision Boost is the best friend of the stealthy player.



Reflex Boost

What does it do? The rather useful Reflex Boost slows down time for a limited period, allowing you to run rings around your sloth-like enemy.
When should I use it? Whenever you're seriously outnumbered. Equip yourself with a shotgun, flip on the Reflex Boost and you're as good as invincible.



Ballistic Shield

What does it do? Provide you with a near-impenetrable shield against enemy attack. Unfortunately, the more flak you take, the faster it runs out.
When should I use it? When you're up against large vehicles such as this surprisingly argumentative helicopter. Remember: you still have to dodge missiles.



Invisibility

What does it do? Take a guess. Yup. Got it in one. Just because you're invisible, however, doesn't mean they won't be able to hear you. So move slowly.
When should I use it? When you're all out of ammo. Which, we hasten to add, is a predicament you'll find yourself in fairly regularly, more's the pity.



↑ Out of ammunition? Then head on over to your local gun emplacement.



↑ Only heavy explosives and EMP grenades can stop this military tank.



↑ For every dazzling location there's a corridor.



↑ Do what you can to avoid injuring your allies.



↑ When shielded, these guards are rock solid.

Bonus info

THE EX-FACTOR
Deus Ex: Clan Wars was to be the full title, presumably by way of reference to *Project: Snowblind*'s Live modes. Check back with *OXM* next month for the full rundown on its hugely impressive online capabilities.

CAN'T HACK IT?
Hacking into the surveillance equipment is a key part of *Project: Snowblind*. Players who don't take the time to disable security cameras will find it significantly more difficult than those who do, so always keep an eye out for vacated computer terminals.

Bonus info

SAVING GRACE
The absence of a quick-save function means you have to treat each combat situation with a great deal of care. That said, if you do run out of health, you're sometimes given the opportunity to revive yourself by activating a nano-boost device.

» Schwarzenegger's rottweiler should contain fewer bullets than your average Cornish pasty.

At this juncture it's worth pointing out that when *Project: Snowblind* isn't impressing you with its fancy lighting effects or futuristic weapons, it's actually a very old-fashioned title indeed. In terms of mission objectives, it very rarely ventures out of pull-switch-find-door territory, while the inclusion of an on-screen radar that helpfully points out your next waypoint only serves to lessen the level of engagement required. The tragic thing is that when the game does try to do something different, like during the spectacular prison-break mission, it achieves the near-impossible by casting a small shadow over *Halo 2* (Issue 36, 10.0). Sadly, no sooner have the stakes been raised than the following mission, a typically run-of-the-mill affair, has lowered them again.

That *Project: Snowblind* remains a near-essential purchase for card-carrying action fans in spite of this innovation shortfall is a testament to just how strong it is in other areas. The artificial intelligence is impressive throughout, while the single-player campaign, which hardens faster than a pervert sculpted from quick-drying cement, represents a very serious challenge indeed. The standard caveat applies - only go here once you've fully exhausted *Halo 2* - but so long as you go into it fully aware that it's unlikely to change your life beyond the next weekend, *Project: Snowblind* will gently rock your world.



↑ The Vision Boost is ideal when visibility is low.

The Summary

PROJECT: SNOWBLIND THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. Nanotechnology is brilliantly integrated into the gameplay; you must constantly adapt your playing style to match the challenge at hand.
2. Brilliant level design occasionally let down by the odd expanse of colourless industrial nothingness. More colour wouldn't have hurt.
3. A perfectly naff storyline keeps the whole thing ticking over nicely without ever interfering with the gameplay.
4. The combination of large-scale shoot-outs and intimate gun-battles helps to sustain your interest during the middle third of the campaign.
5. Take away the nanotechnology and you're left with a very old-fashioned game. Mission objectives lack sufficient level of variety.

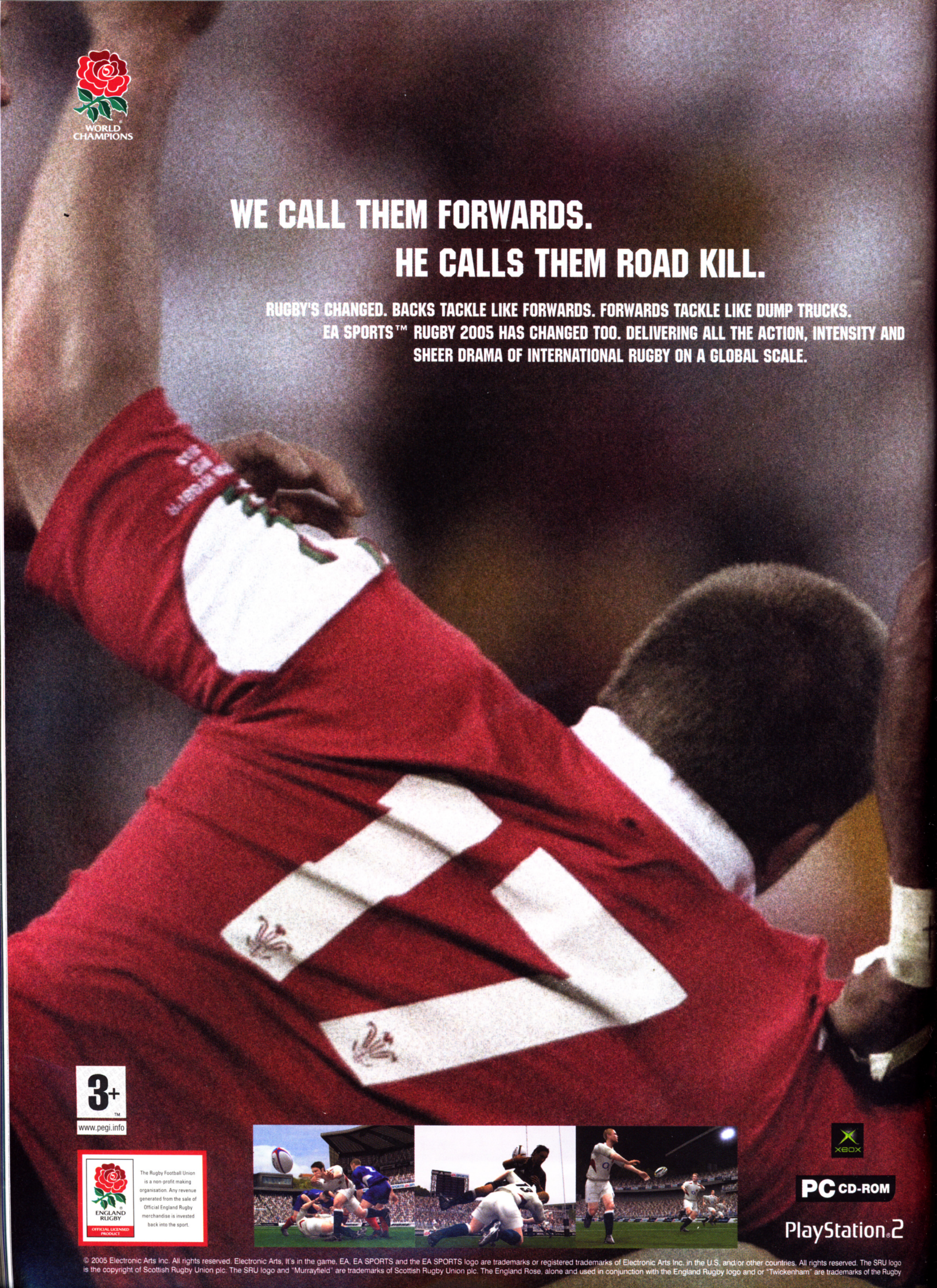
The Verdict

Manages to establish itself as the next best thing to you-know-what without ever looking like a serious rival.

8.4//10

PREVIOUSLY: First Look - Issue 31, Excl. Access - Issue 36, Preview - Issue 38
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 41

EXPENSIVE READ: SNOWBLIND IS ALSO THE TITLE OF A BIOGRAPHY OF ZACHARY SWAN, THE LEGENDARY '70S COKE DEALER. DAMIEN HURST ONCE DESIGNED A SPECIAL EDITION OF THE BOOK, COMPLETE WITH A MIRRORED FRONT COVER AND A ROLLED UP $100 BILL. THE PRICE? $2000.



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↑ Sun lotion applicant at the Playboy Mansion – what a terrible job!

Playboy The Mansion

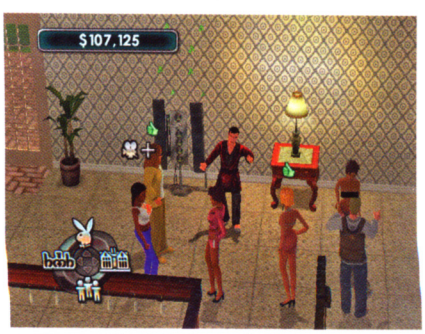
Step into the slippers of the most envied man in the world

Words: Andy Irving

Dev: Cyberlore Studios	Pub: Ubisoft
Players 1	Live: None
Release: Out now	
www.unleashyourbunny.com	

AT THE RISK of sounding like sexist pigs, we were very excited at the thought of *Playboy The Mansion*. What other game lets you control the world's most iconic, well, playboy, and entice naked girls to writhe on a bed before copping off with them by the pool? And this isn't the throwaway, consequence-free sex of *GTA: Vice City*; this is meticulously planned, time-intensive nookie. The *Daily Mail* must be having a field day.

But the aim of the game isn't to simply plough your way through a seemingly endless supply of willing Playmates. Building up and running your publishing empire takes precedence, though this does obviously come with assorted perks. Mission objectives are handily displayed prompting players what to do, though they're buried somewhere deep within the complex menu system.



↑ The parable of the house built on silicone.

Hef is a busy boy, and as such the four main components of his life (mag, mansion, people and his personal details) are accessed via the D-pad. Each category leads to numerous branching menus, but a clunky interface makes accomplishing even a simple task a chore. The key to building an empire is first building contacts, so throw one of the Hef's legendary parties and invite every celeb you know. Schmooze your guests by talking to them along Friendship, Business or Personal lines. Players decide on a tack to take, and Hef tries to strengthen ties in all three, though conversation is limited to an indecipherable mumble. Talking to women is ridiculously easy; befriend a girl with a joke to earn her trust, and then flirt like mad and she'll be putty. Work the business angle, offer her a contract and strike a deal, and she'll be stripping for peanuts in no time. It's a shame the rest of the characters don't offer much variation; conversations end up following the same monotonous path, despite apparent individual character preferences.

Once you've got a longer contact list than Christine Keeler, it's time to put filth in the mag. Hire photographers and writers and you can commission the content. Photoshoots are mildly entertaining – you can decide the location and what (if anything) the model wears. The better the pics, the more the mag will sell. Similarly, the better-known celebs that feature in the mag, the better its quality, which increases your fame and bank balance. More money means more staff and more lavish accessories for the house and on your arm.

But the party has to end sometime. The game's an odd hybrid between god and management sim – think a 'XXX' version of *The Sims*. Unique gameplay means it's fun to industriously build up your empire, but this novelty wears off after a disappointingly short time. Playing *Playboy* is much how we'd imagine hooking up with the latest airheaded Playmate of the Month to be: loads of fun at first but ultimately a vacant and boring experience.

Bonus info



INTERIOR DESIGN
After amassing a small fortune with the launch of your mag, splash the cash on some designer furniture for your pad. It'll attract higher-profile celebrities to your parties, and considerably raise your social profile.



↑ We're not sure if Dick is a name or suggestion.



↑ Snap nudie ladies without fear of arrest!



↑ Position no. 53, the 'lazy lucky bastard'.



↑ It's not just sex, it's about feelings too. Honest.

The Summary

PLAYBOY THE MANSION THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. *The Sims* meets *Leisure Suit Larry* with unique, smut-filled gameplay aimed at the more mature gamer. Unsurprisingly, it's rated 18.
2. Be the Hef and 'befriend' hordes of eager-eyed ladies all hungry for fame, though conversation options are limited and repetitive.
3. A huge number of characters to employ and interact with are on offer, all valuable contributors to your burgeoning empire.
4. A clunky and unfriendly user interface lessens the impact of the impressively deep array of options.
5. Several missions in, gameplay becomes a monotonous 'talk to girl, shoot photo, publish mag' cycle with very little variation.

The Verdict

Great premise. A giggle for the first hour, but *Playboy* goes down in our estimations faster than a Bunny eager for her first cover.

6.0//10

PREVIOUSLY: News – Issue 36, Preview – Issue 38
COMING SOON: Hints – Issue 41

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"Graphically astounding" XBM



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XBOX

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Xbox LIVE PLAYABLE

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DOOM 3

Resurrected at last! Xbox has spawned another monster

Official Xbox Magazine ELITE

- Dev: id Software / Vicarious Visions
- Pub: Activision
- Players: 2-4 S.Link
- Players: 1; 2 Co-op
- Live: 2-4, 2 Co-op
- Players: 2-4 Split (Special Edition classic *Doom*s only)
- Release: March 2005
- www.doom3.com

Words: Ben Talbot

A DISTANT FLICKERING light is your only company through the void of darkness. Through squinting eyes you can barely make out the walls and floors, a prison of stainless steel. It's been just seconds since you called for the elevator, but it seems more like hours as you count through your last remaining shotgun shells in the hallway.

Suddenly, a torch beam cuts through the darkness with the brutal efficiency of a plasma rifle, and the elevator hums into action like the buzzing of a chainsaw in your ears. Your fellow space marine rushes up, puffing and panting into his Xbox communicator. He's trying to warn you but it's too late. As the elevator doors open, a zombie pounces out and smashes a monkey wrench into your skull.

Back in the real world, if you could pause time at that exact moment, you'd actually be able to reach down and feel a few centimetres of air between your backside and the chair you were sitting on. There's no shame in admitting that you will jump out of your seat when playing *Doom 3*, it's simply unavoidable.

A franchise as legendary as *Doom* carries a huge but burgeoning legacy. Millions of fans would have been outraged if *Doom 3* didn't continue several important traits. Firstly and most »



POLISH YOUR HELMET: THE MARINES YOU SEE HERE WERE FORMERLY THE CO-OPERATIVE MODE CHARACTERS. HOWEVER, THEY'VE NOW BEEN REPLACED WITH MORE NONDESCRIPT HELMET-WEARING SPACE MARINES.

ICONS OF SIN

BECAUSE OF THE *Doom* series' legendary status and id Software's massive cult following, there are loads of bits of arcane knowledge and in-jokes surrounding these games. If you want to know more, we highly recommend David Kushner's book *Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture*. We only managed to find a few of the more obvious Easter eggs in *Doom 3*, but there are loads more for aficionados to discover.



↑ Look familiar? This broken tablet found in the Artefact Research Centre is a copy of the original *Doom*'s box art. They've even added the soul cube to bring it up to date!



↑ Super Turbo Turkey Puncher is a mini-game in the first mission of Co-op (and hidden in Campaign). Punch the screen to make the classic *Doom* marine beat a turkey!



↑ Ever come across *Booty* magazine? Neither have we, but it's everywhere in *Doom 3*. This fine publication has one of *Quake 3*'s hunters on the cover.





↑ There's nothing more exciting (or gory) than watching a chainsaw duel.

"An atmosphere this draining doesn't come cheap or every shooter would have it"

» importantly, it needed to be scary as hell. Second, it needed cool monsters and weapons. Third, it must have a compelling deathmatch and co-operative mode, and finally, simple, balls-to-the-wall gameplay.

Everything the fans wanted, *Doom 3* offers in spades. It's a big silver lining with a small grey cloud on the side though, because id Software and Vicarious Visions' faithfulness to the traditions of the series occasionally leaves the game feeling a little behind the times.

For the first few hours of Campaign mode, you'll be absolutely bricking it. You'll be tenser than Vanessa on deadline day, and take it from me, that's no small achievement. The nervous anticipation as you wander through Mars's creepiest corridors is cruelly unrelenting. There's simply no let-up as you expect a demonic fiend to pounce from every shadow, nook and cranny. You won't find any light relief or even a proper story to take away the strain!

An atmosphere this draining doesn't come cheap or every shooter would have it. *Doom 3* is a cut above everything else in this respect, built confidently upon a stupidly impressive custom-built game engine.

id Software doesn't use other companies' game engines and neither does it ever turn its back on quality. Before *Doom 3* started development, there was a huge internal debate about whether current technology could deliver Hollywood-quality graphics and sound in a game. John Carmack's programming genius was, in our eyes, the balance that tipped the scales. His wizardry has produced a bespoke FPS engine with striking real-time lighting, per-pixel shading, animated wall textures, ragdoll physics and a totally unique user interface. You often see these individual qualities in other FPS games, but rarely ever working together with such efficiency and cohesion.

But what does this mean for the actual gameplay? The most obvious quality is realism. Exploring Mars's UAC base in *Doom 3* seems only a fraction away from walking around an actual movie set (it's particularly reminiscent of *Aliens*). The maintenance tunnels, medical stations and control stations are saturated in detail. If you thought *The Chronicles of Riddick* (Issue 33, 9.0) looked amazing, this is going to kill you! Pipes hiss with startling releases of steam, lights cut out just when you're reaching boiling point and the walls and floors glisten with startling metallic realism. The wall textures are even rendered in 3D so that they all cast individual shadows in real time. It's incredible, for a while at least.

However, about four hours into Campaign mode, you start to wonder if there's a little over-reliance on the same type of environment. Yes it looks great, but as predictability slowly starts to sap away the initial excitement, that inevitable trip to hell seems all the more desirable. Sadly, it doesn't come nearly as soon as you think. When you finally get to hell it comes as a welcome relief, and the graphics here are even more nerve-shattering. But after only three levels in the infernal pits, you're straight back to Mars for another two hours of corridor shooting!

There's certainly no lack of spontaneity in the monster stakes, though. Hell's finest have been tactfully re-imagined so they're still recognisable »

Bonus info



SMASH AND GRAB
Punching an enemy in multiplayer steals the weapon they're currently using. Try using the invisibility to get the drop on foes and snatch their rocket launcher away!

GIBS
Just like classic *Doom*, it's possible to squish dead monsters beneath closing doors. You can also still gib zombies and imps by shooting the explosive barrels.

COLOUR ME BAD
There are six cheery colours to choose for your space marine in Deathmatch mode: red, blue, green, yellow, pink and grey.

TRIALS AND RETRO-BUTION

DOOM 3 ISN'T AS groundbreaking as the original games, but there's a lot more competition these days. If you opt for the special edition version of *Doom 3*, you'll also be able to play the two classic prequels in emulated form. Excitingly, these two retro games also support one- to four-player split-screen for both Deathmatch and Co-operative modes. Unfortunately they don't support System Link or Xbox Live, but maybe that's asking a little too much. We tried them out to see how *Doom 3* compares.

CAMPAIGN

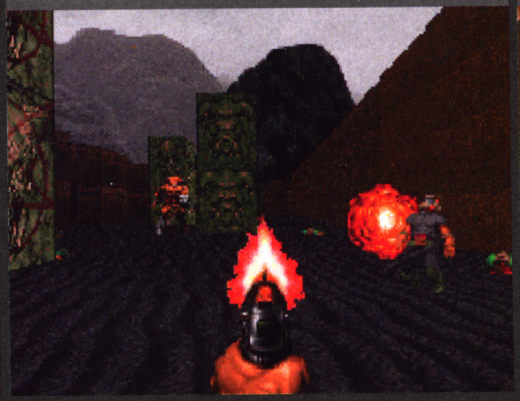


ULTIMATE DOOM: Only had 32 levels but they took an age to complete. The pixellated zombies don't pack the same oomph these days.



DOOM 3: These zombies have serious bite. *Doom 3*'s Campaign mode has more levels but doesn't take as long to finish. Nightmare difficulty is just as tough!

CO-OPERATIVE



ULTIMATE DOOM: Officially one of the funniest things ever. You could jump into any of the 32 levels and save at any point. Hundreds of monsters to kill!



DOOM 3: Not quite as many fiends to slay but they are much fiercer. It's very short in comparison with only 16 missions, but you can jump in at any point.

DEATHMATCH



ULTIMATE DOOM: Any of the 32 campaign levels can be played in Deathmatch. There's still something very satisfying about blasting your mates with the BFG.



DOOM 3: Only five paltry levels to play! Unlike *Ultimate Doom*, they're especially tailored for multiplayer though. No BFG 9000 either. Boo!



↑ Don't spend too long admiring the scenery!

» from the original *Doom* games, but are now way more hideous than ever.

Let's face it, being scared of the pixellated hellions in classic *Doom* doesn't come naturally anymore. Back in those days, you had to make up for basic graphics by using your own imagination and relying on instinct to know just how much damage an imp or cacodemon could cause.

In *Doom 3* you're treated to the 'worst' of both worlds. A bull demon can still tear you to shreds, but now it moves, runs and leaps with matching savage intent. Zombies have been revamped brilliantly too. They're the staple enemy but still come in six or seven different varieties, each with the look of frenzied horror in their eyes. A lot of flair has gone into redesigning the classic creatures and even the few new ones are shockingly gruesome.

They even sound more horrible than ever. Remember the formidable roar of the Hell Knights in classic *Doom*? Imagine a noise twice as vehement blasting into your eardrums in surround sound! *Doom 3*'s brilliant sound effects are another way that the game builds tension. Sometimes, the only clue that a monster lurks around the next corner is the tapping of its many-limbed (or tentacled) movements.



↑ Imps take a lot of damage, even when there are two of you blasting them.

Doom 3's trick of keeping you permanently scared slightly backfires when it comes to combat though, which doesn't quite live up to expectations. There's no denying the satisfaction of blowing a zombie to pieces »

Bonus info

TRICKS AND TRAPS

Our favourite Deathmatch level is entitled Frag Chamber. It sounds simple enough – get into the central room to collect an invisibility orb – but it's highly dangerous. If someone presses the control panel, everyone caught inside the room is instantly turned into mushy lumps. It's enough to make you want to be shot.

RESURRECTION OF EVIL? AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS, ACTIVISION CAN'T CONFIRM WHETHER DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT IS SUPPORTED OR WHETHER THE PC EXPANSION PACK WILL EVER COME OUT ON XBOX.

FRAG THY NEIGHBOUR

DEATHMATCH MODE is playable on Xbox Live and System Link. You might remember that it was the original *Doom* that made the term 'deathmatch' famous, so this sequel has a lot to live up to. Thankfully, its frantic simplicity really sets *Doom 3* DM apart from other Xbox shooters. There are only five maps to play, but each is beautifully designed and a suitable size for the maximum four players. *Halo 2* (Issue 36, 10.0) addicts might initially snub the lack of game modes and weapons, but after a few minutes' play you're addicted.

Whether it's slicing up your mates with a chainsaw or punching them to death after collecting a Berserk pack, there are plenty of unrefined thrills. Like Campaign mode, the combat lacks finesse but is much more challenging against human foes. The four game modes, Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, Last Man and Tourney are enough to keep you hooked for hours on end. We only wish there'd been a few more maps to try out.



Four players doesn't sound like much but it's still a lot of smack-talking fun.



Seize the Berserk pack for the ultimate humiliation. One punch kills all enemies!



You can steal weapons like the chainsaw just by punching your foes.



A word of warning: never, ever let a Hell Knight get this close – especially when you have your torch out.

"After years of waiting, Doom 3 stays true to all the qualities that made the original great"

» with a shotgun, or even blasting a Hell Knight in the face using your BFG 9000. However, the over-reliance on strafing, returning fire and then repeating the process over and over again becomes a little too old-skool at times.

With the exception of those damned Revenants and their pesky homing rockets, almost every enemy attacks with fireballs that travel in a straight line and are fairly easy to avoid. Unless you're caught completely by surprise, you'll usually be able to stop an enemy before it gets in your face.

Doom 3's combat is also very traditional because of the weapons. There's nothing particularly inventive, just no-nonsense hardware like the shotgun, mini-gun and rocket launcher. Inevitably, not having a gun like the sniper rifle or needler limits the way you can take on enemies, and combat is invariably head-to-head.

There's a slight auto-aim that can be switched off, and a smart-looking crosshair that flashes red when an enemy is in view. This is extremely helpful because some levels are so dark that you'll often lose enemies as they rush into the shadows. Occasionally, there's no option but to holster your weapon completely and bring out the hand-held flashlight. This requires just one button press and is extremely quick to switch, but not holding a gun for a few seconds can be extremely unnerving.

There's one thing you can be sure of. Shoot any monster enough times and it'll burn up spectacularly like a vampire from the *Blade* movies. Before that though, you'll get to see some really impressive ragdoll effects that look much more convincing than the average FPS.

Over the course of the 40 Campaign missions, you'll vanquish literally hundreds of demons – possibly even more if you choose a higher difficulty setting. We completed the game in around 12 hours on the medium Marine setting, although it would take much longer on Veteran or if you manage to unlock Nightmare.

Another way *Doom 3* increases replay value is by hiding hundreds of PDA systems around the game. Most of these contain lengthy text files that offer background information about the strange happenings on Mars, and these can take quite a while to read through. While only the most patient gamer will read them all, more people are likely to watch the occasional PDA video file or audio recordings. The audio logs are particularly creepy, and you can have them playing in the background while you continue exploring.

As an extra incentive to collect PDA files, many of them contain key codes to weapons lockers and hidden areas. Some even contain Easter eggs that only the most hardcore id fans will appreciate.

The PDA concept is important because it gives you the only real glimpse of storyline in the game. Not much actually happens in the few in-game cutscenes, although they're still damn impressive to look at. In fact, just watching these animated sequences gives you a full appreciation of just how much has been squeezed into the Xbox. Vicarious Visions has pulled more va-va-voom out of our favourite console than any other developer. It's an achievement bordering on the miraculous and arguably the most authentic FPS console port we've ever played.

For the first time we can remember, the console version is actually better than the PC original. That's mainly thanks to the Xbox-exclusive Co-operative mode that works over System Link »

Bonus info



SOUL SPHERE
Three of the original power-ups – Berserk, Soul Sphere and invisibility orb – can be found in *Doom 3*. There's no longer an Immortality power-up though. Shame.

MONSTER MASH
No matter how hard we tried, we couldn't get the monsters to fight each other. In classic *Doom*, a demon caught in the crossfire would often turn against its allies.

SHOWTIME!
The special edition of *Doom 3* features loads of interviews with the id Software team – great for fanboys!



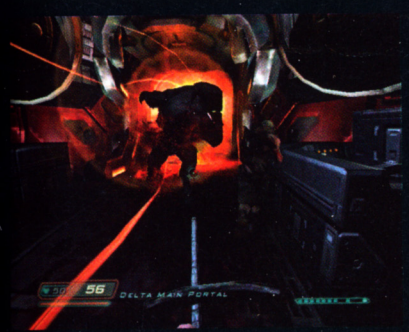
↑ Commandos attack with a deadly tentacle.



↑ Rocket-launching a Mancubus is really tough.



↑ Every squishy limb has unique ragdoll effects.



↑ Your buddy needs help against a Hell Knight.



↑ We're not overly fond of the new-look Cacodemon. The old one-eyed version was much better.



↑ Zombies are the ultimate chainsaw fodder. They can't react quickly enough to fight back!



» and Xbox Live. It's a spine-jingling treat! Two players can join forces and play through 16 missions taken from the best of Campaign mode. The missions have been tweaked slightly, and every monster is twice as tough to put down. Teamwork really is essential and you'll often find yourself with your backs turned to each other, laying down covering fire as monsters rush in from all angles. Levels that work particularly well are the darkest ones. Here, you'll have to use your torch to sweep for enemies while your friend carries a big gun to pick them off. Even if you're playing with a particularly selfish companion, Vicarious Visions has cleverly divided all the ammo so that players can only pick up what they're entitled to. There is always specific ammo and health for each player.

Despite only taking two to three hours to complete, Co-operative mode is easily the most satisfying way to play *Doom 3*. Thoughtfully, a level select option has also been included so you can hop in at any point, something that's great for Xbox Live play. Deathmatch is also included (see Frag Thy Neighbour, left). Despite being fun for a few hours, it lacks overall depth and winds up feeling like a bit of an afterthought.

After years of waiting, *Doom 3* undeniably stays true to all the qualities that made the original great; cutting-edge technology, entertaining multiplayer modes, genuinely frightening monsters and a great story (just kidding about that last bit). Ironically, in staying so faithful to what the fans wanted, id has somehow got caught in a strange timewarp. That's certainly not from a technological point of view – *Doom 3* is groundbreaking in graphical and audio terms. It's just that the combat and the mission pacing come across as slightly dated and they're two very important factors.

This by no means spoils the experience – *Doom 3* is still an awesome shooter that you'll enjoy playing. Certainly very few games have ever come close to the emotional intensity of this one. As technically brilliant as it is terrifying, *Doom 3* takes both the FPS and survival horror genres into new levels of realism. You won't be disappointed.

The Summary

DOOM 3 THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1	*Doom 3*'s graphics break new ground, especially on the Xbox. Frankly we're amazed with what Vicarious Visions has achieved.
2	Mercilessly tense from beginning to end. It leaves you stressed but extremely satisfied at the end.
3	Co-operative play is a superb addition and proves to be more fun than Campaign mode. Should be brilliant when played on Live.
4	Deathmatch could have been more substantial but still plays very well. Adds longevity to the whole package.
5	Brilliant graphics and sound can't camouflage the fact that the gameplay is still a little dated.

The Verdict

Perhaps not the genre-defining FPS that many people were expecting, but still extremely polished and entertaining.

8.5//10

PREVIOUSLY: News – Issues 35, 38, E. Access – Issue 28, Interview – Issue 30
COMING SOON: Hints – Issue 41

DEAD PLANET: DON'T FORGET THAT THE LONG-AWAITED DOOM MOVIE COMES OUT IN AUGUST 2005. IT STARS BOTH THE ROCK AND THE BOURNE SUPREMACY'S KARL URBAN. WE'LL BE VISITING THE FILM SET FOR A FEATURE IN THE SUMMER.

Forgotten Realms: Demon Stone

Wizard's hat of Patronising +10... it's a Dungeons & Dragons game!

Words: Ben Talbot

Dev: Stormfront Studios	Pub: Atari
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: 25 February	
www.atari.com/demonstone	

FORGOTTEN REALMS: *Demon Stone* is a game that can boast a pretty rich fantasy pedigree. Developer Stormfront has taken the relentless hack 'n' slash action of its previous adventure, *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (Issue 23, 8.5), and plunged it into the D&D universe. It's a move that makes perfect sense, especially when spiced up with R.A. Salvatore's popular drow ranger Drizzt amongst other well-known characters.

It comes as no surprise that the control system is identical to *ROTK*'s. There are two attack buttons, one for specials and another to block - refreshingly uncomplicated. Also, the levels follow the same linear pattern with invisible walls keeping you hemmed in on the path to glory.

Being able to switch between three controllable heroes on the fly is a major enhancement, though. Rannek the fighter carves up enemies first and asks questions later, while Illus the sorcerer uses ranged spells because he's so weak and frail. The real badass of the group though is the half-drow vixen, Zhai. Her stealth ability means that passing through a veil of shadows makes you temporarily invisible and able to perform stealth kills.

Although the characters' abilities are obviously specifically tailored for certain setpieces, the great thing about *Demon Stone* is that it rarely forces you to do things the 'right' way. If you want to make things tougher and batter an orc to death with your spindly spell caster, you can. Likewise, Zhai's stealth can get you through entire sections unnoticed but you can still scrap instead if you've got a bit of a thirst for blood.

Perhaps just because of the fantasy setting, the usual range of RPG-style character upgrades have been included. The armour enchantments, new attacks and abilities are all fairly self-explanatory and the menus are nice and simple to run through. If you hate stats though, and once shaved off your beard to prove it, you will be pleased to hear that an auto-upgrade option is there to let you skip it.

Hack 'n' slash games have a deserved reputation for being repetitive but *Demon Stone* escapes this trap for two reasons. Firstly, there's plenty of variety in the mission objectives, from rescuing trembling villagers to defending a Helm's Deep-style battlement from ice trolls. The second and more obvious reason is that the game is only around six hours long, barely giving you time to grow bored.

When all three characters are jammed onto the same screen it defies logic that there's no multiplayer co-operative mode. This could have added some serious replay value to *Demon Stone* and is sorely missed.

Bonus info



SPEAK YOUR PIECE

Amongst the jobbing Hollywood actors doing *Demon Stone*'s voices are at least two big names. Patrick Stewart gets top billing as Khelban 'Blackstaff' Arunsun (a character who dies after two minutes!), and Michael Clarke Duncan (*The Green Mile*) has a bigger role as evil Slaad Lord Ygorl. Robin Atkin Downes, who also plays the eponymous hero in *Prince of Persia*, is way down the list.



↑ Once all three heroes' special bars are full, you can unleash a devastating team attack.



↑ The orc king becomes invulnerable at times.



↑ This wyvern isn't as tough as he looks.



↑ Drizzt is a fave amongst *FR* fans.



↑ Beware the great red dragon.

The Summary

FORGOTTEN REALMS: DEMON STONE THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. The controls are simple but work a treat. Changing between heroes on the fly is extremely intuitive.
2. Despite having likeable characters, the plot is rather lacklustre considering D&D veteran Salvatore helped write it.
3. A decent variety of different mission objectives although there are no rewards for doing them faster or better and therefore no replay value.
4. Graphically, this has a lot of bite. The backgrounds are beautifully detailed although the heroes look a little scrappy at times.
5. Too short by a long way and missing that all-important multiplayer mode for replay value. No unlockables either.

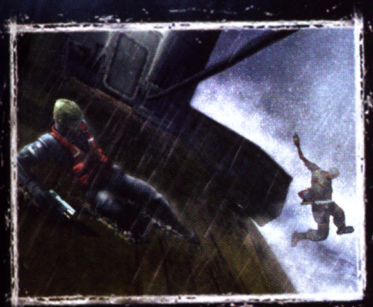
The Verdict

A mini-adventure. Just as the combat starts to get tough and involving, the game ends. Very enjoyable while it lasts. **7.3//10**

PREVIOUSLY: Getting on the wrong fairground ride
COMING SOON: Disappearing behind a rock like Dungeon Master

MAYDAY. MAYDAY..

IN THE THROES OF AN ARCTIC STORM, DISTRESS SIGNALS ARE SENT FROM A MYSTERIOUS RUSSIAN WHALER. AS COAST GUARD VETERAN TOM HANSEN, YOU BOARD TO INVESTIGATE AND DISCOVER UNTHINKABLE HORRORS LURKING BELOW THE SHIP'S BLOODSTAINED DECKS.



HURRICANE FORCE WINDS



LETHAL WEAPONS



HEAD SHOTS !



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18

XBOX

DARKWORKS

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Neighbours From Hell

A residential ruckus without Joe Mangel in sight...

Dev: JoWood Vienna	Pub: JoWood
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: 04 March	
www.neighbours-from-hell.com	

Words: Andy Irving

YOU'VE SEEN the reality TV show, now play the game. Sounds like the perfect tagline, doesn't it? Well, it would be, if only either were more stimulating than they like to think they are, and worthy of your time. We're treated to a great claymation-style opener, it's all looking good... then bam! We're back to 1988, sat in front of a C64 with 2D environments consisting of four rooms apiece.

But that's not to say *Neighbours From Hell* doesn't contain the odd nice little touch. Yes, at heart it's a 2D puzzler (though 'puzzler' is a bit generous; it hardly taxes the grey matter), but it's a quirky and unique one nonetheless. Players take control of central character, Woody, and must guide him through his repulsive neighbour's house, laying all manner of practical jokes along the way. Stealth is a case of learning your enemy's repetitive routine around the house, then moving from room to room undetected. Players are encouraged to explore and investigate the entire house, and are continually prompted as to what they should pick up, and where to place each household object to create the joke. While this does make the game accessible and easy on the brain, it would've been nice to figure these puzzles out for ourselves, thus significantly increasing the game's disappointingly short lifespan.

Because each level consists of just the one house, gameplay can get a bit boring, though later levels do open up different rooms. There's a distinct sense of mischief running throughout the game, and coupled with comical character animation and some crude toilet humour (literally, look out for the Poo in the Loo gag), *Neighbours From Hell* endears itself to us that little bit more. Not a lot, mind you, but enough to forget about that missing fence panel for a while...



↑ Carry out a crank call for points - heavy breathing not required.



↑ Clog the bog with paper and watch the devilishly dirty aftermath.



↑ Whoopee-do. Are the old ones really the best?

The Verdict

This PC port doesn't fare well on Xbox. Fun and entertaining for the short term, the lack of depth is painfully apparent.

5.5//10

The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie

He lives in a pineapple under the sea. Wouldn't it float?

Dev: Heavy Iron Studios	Pub: THQ
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: Out Now	
http://spongebobmoviegame.com	

Words: Andy Irving

SPONGEBOB SquarePants has become a cult hit on both sides of the pond (and with a name like that, why the hell not?) over the last few years. His big screen debut comes complete with assorted Hollywood cameos and the obligatory game tie-in, and it's a damn funny one.

Players take control of both the short-trousered soaker-upper and his dozy mate Patrick, as, true to the film, they head to Shell City to retrieve Neptune's crown and stop evil Plankton brainwashing the sea's inhabitants with his mind control hats. Quite. As per the show, the game features tons of comical dialogue and asides. Double entendres abound, and are sure to go over the heads of most kids, but enable older players to appreciate the skewed sense of humour characteristic of the series.

The graphics, although faithful to the film, are nothing special to look at, and the story is advanced disappointingly through a series of narrated stills. SpongeBob and Patrick have several different attack moves each, but their attributes can be handily increased at the end of each level with upgrade points. Gameplay is a fairly tame blend of jumping, bashing and collecting numerous dumbbells (don't ask). However, the few driving levels are a real blast and a welcome interruption from the platforming shenanigans, though your faithful Patty Wagon isn't the best-handling vehicle to ever grace a videogame.

We've all got a soft spot for SpongeBob here at *OXM* towers (Ben T in particular), but our osmotic obsession can't mask the fact that this is a by-the-numbers platformer, albeit a charming one. No damp squib, yet not quite a supersoaker either.



↑ Look at the size of those hands! Mrs SpongeBob is a very lucky lady.



↑ Patrick is slower than 'Bob but has a fetching Cartwheel attack.



↑ SpongeBob Sagat likes his Tiger Uppercuts.

The Verdict

Leaking charm from every pore, 'Bob looks and sounds fantastic, but isn't absorbing enough to retain our interest.

6.5//10

"THIS GAME'S NO CLONE, IT'S IN A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN!"

– XBM magazine



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www.lucasarts.com



↑ Trandosian slavers are everywhere in the abandoned starship and they pack... 'shotguns'. Hmm...

Star Wars: Republic Commando

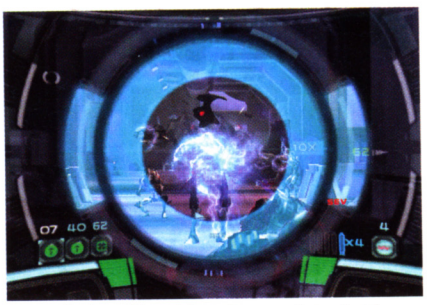
Saviours of the galaxy wanted, Jedi need not apply

Words: Ben Lawrence

- Dev: LucasArts
- Pub: LucasArts
- Players: 1; 2-4 Split
- Live: 2-16 players
- Players: 2-4 S.Link
- Release: Out now
- www.lucasarts.com

IT IS A time of great celebration in Lucas Valley. The games unleashed from the bearded one's empire used to be of variable quality, but they've recently crept into 'outstanding' territory. First we had a double helping of that 4,000-year-old RPG stuff to wrap our grey matter around, and now we get this little beauty. It's the polar opposite of all that dialogue-based soul-searching and Jedi hocus-pocus, but boy oh boy, is it good. And there's not a single lightsaber in sight.

Republic Commando is no normal FPS, despite its fairly run 'n' blast appearance. It borrows heavily from *Full Spectrum Warrior*'s (Issue 30, 9.2) breathless tactical forward-thinking gameplay, just as it happily picks over *Halo 2*'s (Issue 36, 10.0) sense of epic storytelling (although never matches it, naturally). There are claustrophobic *Doom 3* (see page 076) moments stuck in conduits and corridors creeping with death, and there are elements of *Aliens* thrown in for that extra zesty 'soldiers in shit' touch. In fact, *Republic Commando* is as much about the survival and comradeship of your four-man squad as it is about killing aliens. The brothers – Boss, Scorch, Fixer and Sev – act as individuals when required, but work best as a cohesive unit. *They* are the most vital weapon in the game and are



↑ Well-placed headshots incapacitate droids.

devastatingly intelligent. And the AI? God knows where LucasArts got it from, but it's flawless. Not once did the characters get in our line of fire or act in any way to suggest AI oversights or corner cutting. Their swift, surgical approach to combat has to be seen to be believed. And, better still, whenever you want to take control of them, they obey.

With a simple order system controlled solely through looking at something on screen and pressing 'A', the right person for the job instinctively goes and does whatever it was you'd hope they'd do. If you want a door breached, a mine laid, or a droid dispenser 'dealt with', the AI reads your mind and goes off to do its job. Not once did the AI fail us, and that's fantastic.

Levels also make damned sure we make good use of the squad, throwing us into what would surely be no-win situations if guns and blasters were our sole dependence. By a quick assessment of the situation and a few barked orders to the men, we were mounting turrets, holding back seas of »

Bad Boys A quick introduction to your squad



DELTA 38 'BOSS'
Even among clones, Three-Eight is leader of the Deltas. Three-Eight has earned the respect and loyalty of his squad, and he repays that dedication in strong leadership. A jack of all trades, he can turn his hand to any task. This is the guy we play as.



DELTA 40 'FIXER'
The 'second-in-command' of the Deltas is a gruff, by-the-book type of clone. He insists on calling his squad-mates by their batch designations, rather than by their nicknames. Known to the others as 'Fixer', Delta Four-Oh is the resident technology expert, and often handles computer slicing and code-breaking duties.



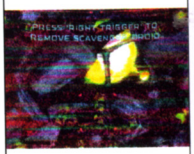
DELTA 07 'SEV'
Some soldiers fight because they have to; others, like Oh-Seven, fight because they like it. Most of the time he's a coldly efficient killer with a grim sense of humour. But when things get hairy, he gets scary.



DELTA 62 'SCORCH'
Delta's resident wiseass, regularly dropping one-liners and quips during the stew of violence and destruction that serves as the Deltas' steady diet. An excellent explosives technician, Six-Two has an overdeveloped sense of irony that could be mistaken for fatalism.

Bonus info

GET 'EM OFF!
Don't let scavenger droids latch onto your helmet. They'll send your visuals crazy (as you can see from this intentionally awful screenshot), and they'll try drilling into your head too.



STAND AROUND
Spend too long in one place and your squad soon get bored of hanging around. They'll complain of itchy trigger fingers and ask you why they're not moving out. Try shooting them and they either duck or run for cover. Clever lads.

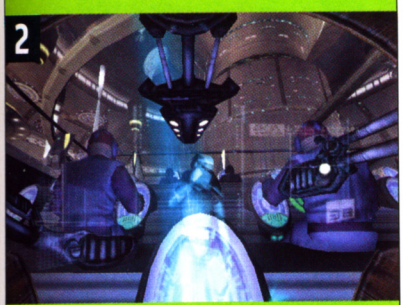
GEO GUNS
The best way to kill Geonosians is with their own dropped weaponry. Try picking up the Geonosian plasma gun which fires *Ghostbusters*-style beams into the air. It has crab legs attached to the side which click when fully powered up, but don't let them put you off.

Birth of a Clone

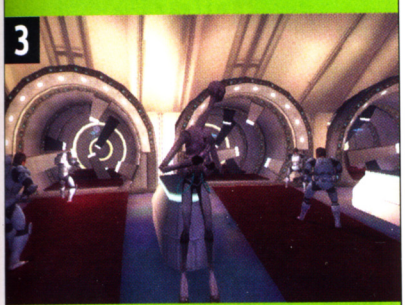
AND THEY even change your nappies as well.



↑ Our first glimpse of life is inside a Kamino birthing tank, being cared for by our long-necked alien mother. Like Celine Dion's first delivery.



↑ Next we're at school learning our wares. Look either side to see our classmates are in fact, identical to us. It's spooky, but a nice touch.



↑ Then it's onto a shooting range when we'll learn to blast targets. Stormtroopers in later generations obviously forego this area of training.



↑ This is it: helmet time. Like Master Chief, we never find out the exact identity of the clones. We reckon they all look like Bob Carolgees.



↑ With simple commands your squad will be able to attack enemies from all sides and render onslaughts redundant.



↑ Bleurgh... a Geonosian blaster – with legs!



↑ Droids combust when given a good blasting.



↑ A briefing occurs before every mission thanks to your hologram PDA.

"It borrows the juicy bits from just about everything else we've played"

» droids that would seek to flank us, and, by the skin of our clone teeth, managing to somehow secure success. It's bastard hard in parts, but thinking on your feet will get you through where blasting will only get you fried.

Aesthetically the levels could have done with a little more invention and quantity. Geonosia, an abandoned Separatist ghost ship, and Wookiee planet Kashyyyk are our lot, and despite the epic scale of each, *Star Wars* is so rich with worlds and cultures, it's a shame more wasn't made of it. What we do get through, is attention paid to the smallest aspects which are, like the AI, flawless. Lighting, particle and character physics are all exemplary.

Seemingly trivial squad banter manages not only to add exposition and explanation to situations, but fleshes out the team beyond the obvious two dimensions, and the score is movie standard.

Some might piss and whinge that LucasArts has effectively recreated a simplified *Full Spectrum Warrior* in space (only with the ability to actually shoot) then felt compelled to label it *Star Wars*. There are very few indications that this is actually a galaxy 'far, far away' save for a few Wookiees and stray R2 units, but none of this matters. The experience treads that fine balance between shooter and strategy so well, that any non-*Star Wars* moments (shotguns and pistols in space, *purlease*!) are easily forgiven. It may not even be that original in the big scheme of things, especially as it borrows the juicy bits from just about everything else we've played, but it does so with such relish and panache that that too is completely forgivable. A clone it may be, but a clone of merit nonetheless. Take a bow George, you've done it again.

Bonus info

FUR BALLS

Get to Kashyyyk and head to the detention areas. You'll find a few imprisoned Wookiees willing to help you smash droids if you break them out. They tend to either get killed or bound away after a while, but during a fight they're indispensable.



The Summary

STAR WARS: REPUBLIC COMMANDO THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. Some of the smartest AI we've ever experienced. You'll love these lads by the time you come out the other end of the war.
2. It looks good enough to lick from top to toe. The strength is in the tiny details and there are enough to fill a Bantha's pouch. Probably.
3. That score! Did John Williams specifically request to write it? It's epic, sweeping, timely and speckles the skin with goosebumps it's so good.
4. Hmm... the locations aren't what we'd call inspiring, but at least they're made good use of. More in the sequel please.
5. It lacks any kind of originality. But hey, it's a 'clone' which, in a funny way, kinda excuses it. That and the great AI, of course.

The Verdict

An amalgamation of every quality shooter but one that works so well and is so much fun to play it's forgivable.

9.0//10

PREVIOUSLY: News – Issues 29, 36 & 39, Gallery – Issue 34, Demo – Issue 38
COMING SOON: Hints – Issue 41

STAY AWAY! IF YOU DON'T WANT EPISODE III SPOILERS, DON'T PLAY THIS GAME JUST YET. GENERAL GREVIOUS'S HENCHMEN MAKE A DEVASTATING APPEARANCE LATER IN THE GAME.

FIFA Street

Take a wicked walk through the streets of inflated wage

- Dev: EA Big
- Pub: EA
- Players: 1-4
- Live: None
- Release: 11 March
- www.easportbig.com/games/fifastreet

Words: Andy Irving

IF YOU'VE EVEN a passing interest in the beautiful game, stop reading now. Seriously. EA's latest 'sport goes street' title is about as far removed from the real thing as it's possible to be without setting it underwater. Sure, other games under the same *Street* moniker adapt surprisingly well (see *NBA Street V3*, page 066). However, basketball is a pastime that was born in the ghettos, not on a muddy field in ye olde England, and as such is infinitely better suited to these new urban settings. But why all this prejudice against what looks like a reasonably fun arcade title? Well, in the style of MC Harvey (who provides the laughably bad, cringe-inducing voiceover that manages to be both condescending to footy fans and alienating to just about everybody else)...

"Eh yo this is Harvey on a review tip; I'm gonna wax bout how this game is shit. For a start, yeah, da ball physics are all wack, the ball's glued to players feet and the dribbling's cack. The idea is keep the ball in da air, but random passing means it goes anywhere. Playas build up combos to bust a badass shot, but piss easy 'beat' moves instantly make your combo bar hot. Shootin's dead easy if you get the time, but your sluggish strikers can't even turn on a dime. Yo' slide tackles are meant to be ruff and heavy, but pussy-ass playas just collapse like jelly. When the opposition tricks you'll freeze like a fool, this is annoying and stupid and is way so not cool.

All the FIFA faces have got their mugs on screen - though if they'd played this first they wouldn't want to be seen. The single-player game is called Rule The Street, and makes playas pick a squad and other teams beat. Earn Skill Bills and points for nuff respeck, and you can buy new playas with which to flex. Multiplayer's not really much cop at all, and jus' like *FIFA Street* can't stand tall. Word."



↑ Build up your combo bar and it'll helpfully tell you to S-H-O-O-T. Thanks.



↑ Rooney unleashes one from distance straight into the top corner. Again.



↑ A lack of a ref (and rules) lets you hack away.

The Verdict

FIFA Street is a tragic attempt to sell us an Americanised version of the sport. This is car crash gaming at its best.

3.5//10

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles 2: BattleNexus

What's that smell? The turtles head out once again

- Dev: Mirage Studios
- Pub: Konami
- Players: 1-4
- Live: None
- Release: March 2005
- www.ninjaturtles.com

Words: Andy Irving

FLUSHING TURTLES down the toilet, just like producing average beat 'em up adaptations, doesn't get rid of heroes in a half shell; they come back stronger. This is good news for flippered fans, because *BattleNexus* fills in what was missing from the last Xbox *Turtles* title (Issue 28, 6.3).

The same excitable cutscenes that advance the storyline return, along with the cel-shaded graphics, albeit with a nifty polish. The biggest improvement is the ability to now play with all four characters simultaneously as opposed to the first game's two-player monotony. Four-way co-op is infinitely more enjoyable and harks back to the fun of the arcade original. Which is, brilliantly, an unlockable extra.

Another top touch is the ability to cycle through each turtle at any point. Players must use each character during certain situations to solve puzzles or defeat specific enemies. While not massively expanding gameplay, this does offer limited variation through the otherwise tepid and railed environments. Limited we say, because unfortunately the similar enemies make for some very repetitive hacking 'n' slashing. Replayability is another factor, with players able to pick their way through the branching story and retry any unlocked area with a different turtle to get maximum point ratings and unlock the goodies. However, monotony may soon set in after the third time through the same finger-burning level.

Controls are pleasingly simple, but the camera will often confusingly zoom in and out of the action at random, and can't be rotated either. Factor in the beat 'em up style BattleNexus and *Turtles 2* makes for a slight improvement on the original game.



↑ Why hide their faces but not their modesty? That never made sense...



↑ Donatello's special attack is great against multiple enemies.



↑ Every turtle has a ranged attack ability.

The Verdict

Four-way co-op and branching story make this marginally more than just a sequel, but it's still repetitive button-bashing.

6.4//10

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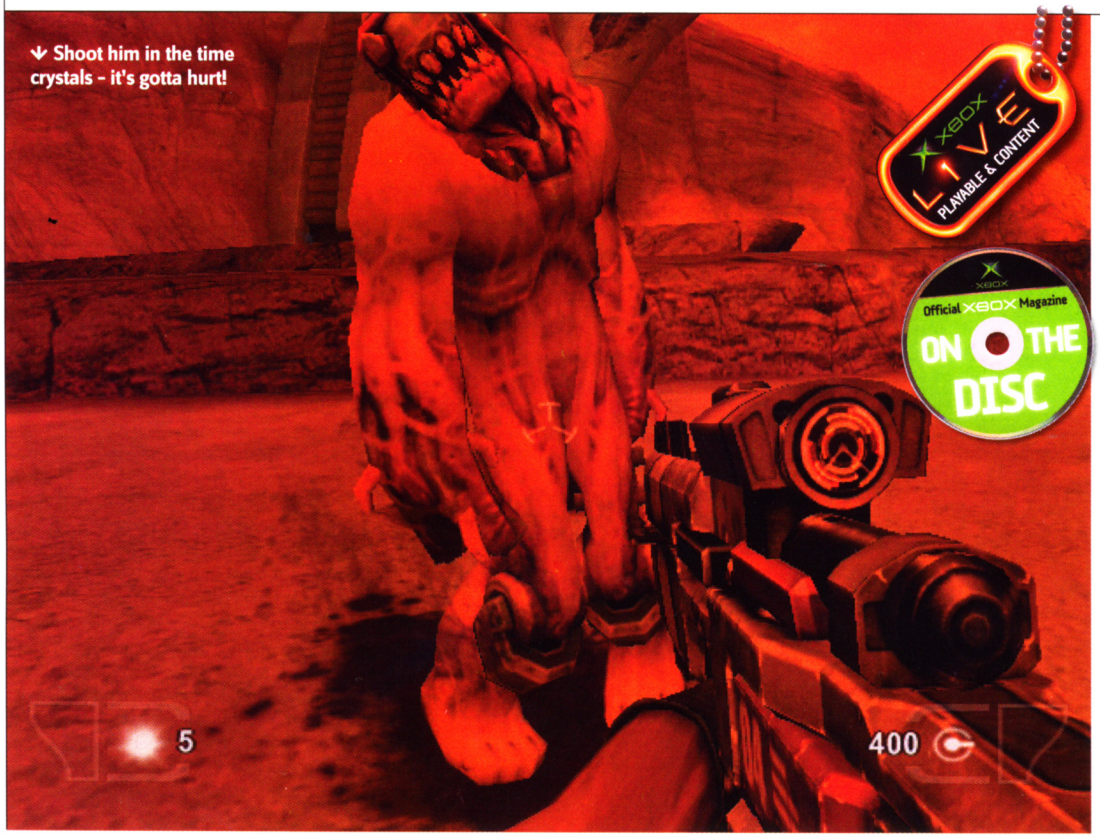


↓ Shoot him in the time crystals – it's gotta hurt!

TimeSplitters: Future Perfect

Time gentlemen, please! Drink up your shooters...

Words: Steve Brown

- Dev: Free Radical Design
- Pub: EA
- Players: 4 Split, 2 Co-op
- Live: 2-16 players
- Players: 2-16 S.Link
- Release: 25 March
- http://eagames.co.uk/timesplitters

FUTURE PERFECT is still a phrase that injects a cold concentrate of pure school directly into my spine. Whenever I hear it I'm back in French class on a Monday morning having totally forgotten to revise verb declension over the wistfully departed weekend. If only I'd had access to *TimeSplitters'* wormholes then, my homework worries would have quit with even greater alacrity than my teary supply teacher.

But Riddick-style hardman Cortez in *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect* has greater worries and a more noble purpose for these rents in the fabric of the universe and must flit through temporal anomalies to foil the Earth-threatening advance of a new and even more ferocious wave of gruesome TimeSplitters. Try to imagine the original cast of *Star Trek* as they would look now. Imagine them in the transporter room when Scotty's false teeth get coughed out into the beam, recombining in an unholy act of dentistry with the Away Team who are also turned inside out and bounced like learner drivers about the surface of an inhospitable planet, screaming in fear and deadly rage as they materialise and disappear again. This is how TimeSplitters look and act. Oh, they also fire nasty bolts of rebounding electricity, definitely not set to stun. We really don't want to give them our planet for a litter tray.

But TimeSplitters are just the sharp end of the adversarial iceberg. Cortez, and various companions from the advancing eras through which he chases elusive time crystals, must also take on zombies, ghosts, giant worms, bad boffins, uniformed henchmen, killer droids, helicopter gunships and genetically modified hybrids. *Future Perfect* really is the variety pack of shooters, although more Sainsbury's own than a unique brand, being perhaps the most derivative game ever made. Somehow though, this *TimeSplitters* sequel turns derivation into inspiration without breaking its fast gait. It's like a day trip to a fantastic amusement park. You know exactly which thrilling rides are going to be there and you've ridden most of them a few times before, but this doesn't stop you from running between their themed delights (ghost, medieval, space, runaway train, waterworld, etc) with childish anticipation and afterwards stepping off into a solid cutscene with the pleasant afterglow of adrenaline well spent.

Unfortunately there are more than just temporal anomalies in *Future Perfect* and it's a shame the developers themselves don't have the benefit of time travel to iron out a few niggling »»

Bonus info



PICK-ME-UP

One of the items in your weapon inventory is a handy wrist-mounted gravity gun that can be used to pull remote levers and grab health, armour and weapons from inaccesable areas. You're only forced to use it a few times in the whole game though.



↑ Don't let this guy get close enough to tenderise your meat!



↑ Stop zombies by taking their heads off.



↑ Jacob Crow undergoes much biomodification.

NOW SHOWING... Future Perfect is full of classic film references

THESE ARE just a few of the movie moments we spotted while playing – loads more await!

The Terminator



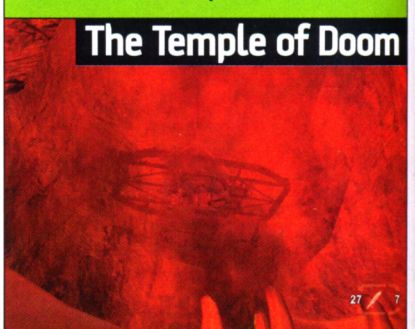
↑ In the Machine Wars level you have to help human resistance defeat the Ultranet robots.

The Matrix



↑ Help your sexy futuristic kung fu companion to hack into the evil corporation's mainframe.

The Temple of Doom



↑ Save your sidekick from being lowered into a flaming pit, chained to this dangling rack.



↑ Cortez goes third-person for ladder climbing.



↑ "Hi, have you seen a little fish called Nemo?"



↑ Man fixed guns during mini-game sections.



↑ Take down choppers easily with heatseekers.



↑ Throw Time Grenades to send enemies flying in a Bullet Time slow motion that affects everything but yourself.



↑ At many points you have to aid your future or past self in a retake of a section played earlier.

» gameplay wrinkles. It's more than a little galling to lose most of your weapons without explanation as you move between areas of the same level in a lift, this obvious conceit dragging you heavily out of the game world. The big boss fights are too basic and it's far too easy to exploit level design and defeat them from behind cover. Where this is impossible it's still just a question of pounding them with all you have until they drop, and a few target overlays, or weak spot areas, do not make these battles tactical enough.

This future isn't perfect and occasional technical glitches such as harpoons embedding their arrowheads in surface textures of deep water and significant slowdown during busy fights leave the game with an unpolished finish. The decision not to include a jump button, a terrible reverse camera when driving vehicles and the erratic positioning of some guards adds to the sense that this sequel needed to feel just a little more love.

There are even one or two level-breaking bugs where forcefields that should power down sometimes remain stubbornly alert, barring progress or retreat and necessitating a reload from the last automatic save point. These auto-saves are not always best positioned and in one or two places where the difficulty curve suddenly points as heavenward as a monk on Viagra (sniping invisible

Bonus info



GEARSHIFTERS
There are a number of vehicles to drive through *Future Perfect* including jeeps, tanks, flatbed lorries and, best of all, a giant robot that fires rockets. Driving sequences are generally quite short and steering controls are tricky due to the difficult camera, particularly when reversing.

A FRIEND IN NEED
There are numerous different companions who accompany you through significantly large sections of many levels. These include a '70s playboy, a teenage punk, a sentient robot,



a sexy assassin and your own future and past self. Sometimes you must protect them in mini-games.

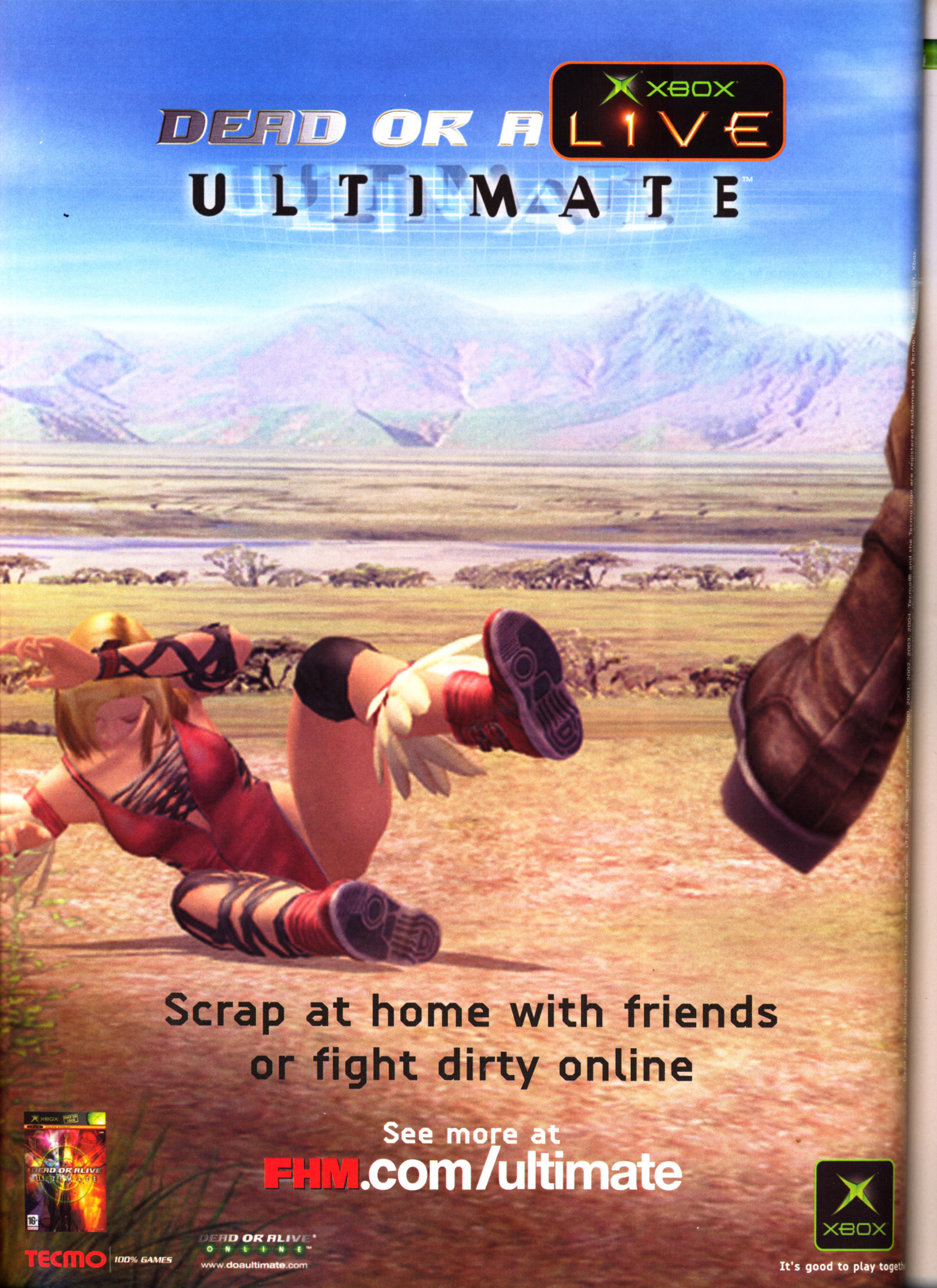
"Few games have embraced Xbox Live in such an enthusiastic clinch"

» TimeSplitters for example), you're punished further by having to try and try again from way back down the road. These are the tiny stones in the new trainers that aren't painful enough to stop you running, but are irksome annoyances that should really have been shaken out before you started. And they are enough to keep *Future Perfect* from joining *TimeSplitters 2* (Issue 09, 9.3) in the ranks of the *OXM* Elite.

Nevertheless, this is still a game well worth owning and the diversity of the single-player settings, beauty of the gently cartoon graphics and relentless "you have got to see this!" humour, cannot be praised enough. And *Future Perfect* goes aeons beyond the single-player Story game, with a wealth of online and offline modes, including 15 great maps and 13 fun modes for Xbox Live play, plus a brilliant mapmaker to make it genuinely timeless. With a potentially unlimited number of user-designed maps that can be shared over Xbox Live and even user-generated stories with scripted AI events, this game has the longevity of Rasputin and should spawn one of the liveliest online communities yet. Few videogames have embraced Xbox Live in such an extraordinarily enthusiastic clinch and we're sure the attraction will be mutual.

Offline, *Future Perfect* is more than generous. Arcade mode features one of the biggest bundles of bot battles we've ever seen, with 13 modes that range from vanilla Deathmatch to the multi-scoop knickerbocker delights of Vampire (kill others to »

TIME TEAM: IF THE OXM TEAM COULD TIME TRAVEL, ANDY WOULD GO BACK AND PURPOSELY FAIL HIS OXM JOB INTERVIEW, BEN TALBOT WOULD MARRY PHIL'S MUM AND BECOME PHIL'S DADDY AND STEVE WOULD RETURN TO LET HIS PUPPY INTO THE GARDEN BEFORE IT HAD DIARRHOEA THROUGH THE CRACK IN THE FLOORBOARDS. EWW!


DEAD OR A LIVE
XBOX
ULTIMATE
Scrap at home with friends
or fight dirty online
See more at
FHM.com/ultimate
DEAD OR ALIVE ULTIMATE
16+
TECMO
100% GAMES
DEAD OR ALIVE ONLINE
www.doaultimate.com
XBOX
It's good to play toget

Bonus info

TALBOT TALENT
Our very own Ben Talbot can be found in the credits of *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect* under the heading Additional Voice Talent. Ben had his screams recorded during a visit to the developers last year and his cries of simulated torment can be heard when enemies are set on fire. He refuses to recreate his screams for us in the office, but we're sure we can give him the right 'motivation'.

GO FLUX YOURSELF
Poor old Cortez doesn't have much luck with paradoxes and singularities, or whatever you call those moments in time travel where you alter the future for the worse. Ironically he keeps letting slip info to his enemies that give them the ideas for time travel and global domination in the first place. He should really learn to keep his wisecracks to himself.

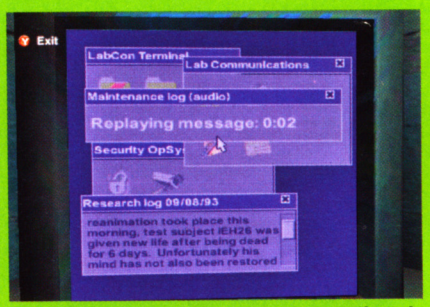
CHARACTER ASSASSINATION
In the Arcade mode, the unlockable characters all introduce themselves with quirky statements. We particularly like the scientist who warbles in a very English accent, "it's time to unleash the arsekickulator" and then begins gibbering and rolling around on the floor.

GAME FOR A LAUGH Future Perfect spoofs its rivals

ONE OF THE ways in which this cheeky sequel gets away with being so derivative is to parody, or obviously mimic many other games in the shooter genre. We're sure you'll spot loads more and bring them to our attention, but here are a handful that stood out for us...



↑ *Halo 2*'s Flood are very similar to these disgusting hybrids, who also explode on you.



↑ *Doom 3*'s method of trawling PDA emails and audio logs for locker codes gets ribbed!



↑ Adopting a *Half-Life*-style scientist identity in the test lab, you're told "Your name is Gordon."



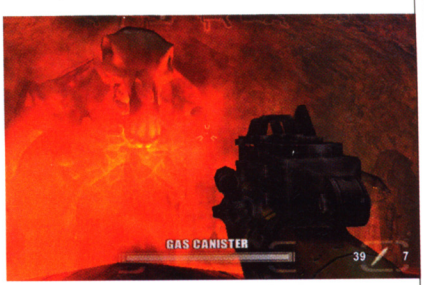
↑ In the zombie mansion, expect enemies to literally come out of the walls.



↑ Yes, the 'SLUT' T-shirt speaks for itself really.



↑ We just wish its tail didn't stand up!



↑ Aim for the gas bottle lodged in her jaws.

"Anyone who can claim boredom would probably yawn if fired at the moon on a great white shark"

>> extend your lifespan), Shrink (your size is based on ranking) and Virus (stay alive for as long as you can once set on fire). The bots display decent intelligence and put up a fair and very challenging fight that's certainly a distracting alternative to Xbox Live matches. More offline mayhem is offered in split-screen Co-op mode where you can play through the single-player game with a mate. And you will need help, because the enemies become significantly tougher when double-teaming. Challenges represent one of the most eclectic collections of offline mini-games ever devised and include the increasingly hilarious bottle-shoot, monkey disco and stuffed cat race, which really has to be seen to be believed.

While *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect* does little new in the main single-player game and has definitely been stitched up absent-mindedly, leaving a few unwanted artefacts beneath the skin, it remains enormous fun, spoofing its own genre wonderfully, changing locations and gameplay so frequently that anyone who can claim boredom at any point would probably yawn if fired at the moon on the back of a great white shark.

The longevity offered by the mapmaker and extensive unlockable offline and Live options make it great value and months down the line you'll still get funny looks on the bus as you remember parts of the game and chuckle to yourself. Just don't explain to a stranger that you were thinking of the mewl that a stuffed cat makes when you corner it too hard. And don't forget the 15-rated playable demo can be found on this month's disc!



↑ Dance your monkeys too hard and they will unfortunately ignite.

The Summary

TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. Slick cartoon graphics look great, but there is slowdown during the busier battle scenes.
2. The joker of the shooter pack, *Future Perfect* is stacked with brilliant film and game spoofs.
3. Extensive offline modes mean that you'll be unlocking extras and completing challenges for a long time.
4. The brilliant mapmaker can be used in simple or advanced modes to generate new levels and plots to share.
5. It does feel slightly unfinished, with a smattering of bugs and some lazy gameplay decisions.

The Verdict

A derivative shooter with a few niggles, but fun and diverse with great longevity and excellent Live content.

8.2//10

PREVIOUSLY: Exclusive Access - Issue 36, Previews - Issues 33 & 39
COMING SOON: Maps on the disc when you send them in!

BACK TO THE FUTURE PERFECT ONE OF ONLY SIX DELOREANS THAT ARE FULLY KITTED OUT WITH THE FLUX CAPACITOR FROM THE FILM RECENTLY WENT FOR SALE ON EBAY FROM AN OWNER IN BATH. BUT DOES IT REALLY WORK?

Constantine

In the Countdown to Armageddon, we'll have a Constantine please, Carol

Words: Andy Irving

Dev: Bits Studios	Pub: SCi
Players 1	Live: None
Release: March 05	
www.sci.co.uk/games	

GOD WORKS IN pretty mysterious ways, doesn't He? Far be it from us to question the all-knowing One, but choosing Keanu Reeves to save humanity from the imminent arrival of the son of Satan? Well, not Reeves personally, but his on-screen persona John Constantine (himself an original DC comics demi-god), in this tie-in of the upcoming blockbuster movie. Like, *whoooaah*, God dude.

It seems every movie tie-in these days has a strict mandate: be an accessible, third-person actioner, with a simple lock-on aim function for firing. Throw in some locations from the movie, add a bit of artistic licence with the weapons and script (something about demons walking the Earth during the eternal battle of good and evil), and job done. Oh, and the original actor's vocal talent. If you can afford it. Which *Constantine* unfortunately couldn't. But for all its vocal shortcomings, *Constantine* easily fulfils the rest of this mandate with ease and panache, and still manages to squeeze a fair few neat little touches up its ruffled sleeve.

Hell isn't our preferred destination after this life but we have to admit, according to *Constantine* it looks pretty damned cool. In an alternate version of downtown LA, fiery winds provide the driving force for a very impressive physics engine that tosses derelict cars around like tin cans. Fireballs rain from the sky, decimating your surroundings, and there's a gleeful sense of chaos about the place. It's a shame then, that the environments of the other half of the game, set in present day Los Angeles, though gritty and noirish, seem drab and uninteresting in comparison.

What these contrasting conditions do provide however, is a fantastic sense of atmosphere. Although not on par with the stylish *Max Payne 2* (Issue 25, 9.2), the real world is full of creepy shadows and includes more than a few genuinely jumpy moments. Constantine has the ability to flick back and forth between dimensions, and alter either world to benefit his tasks in the other. Your True Sight ability acts like a twisted thermal vision which, complete with brilliantly disturbing audio, allows players to see demons masquerading as humans and hidden magical items too.

Aside from all the weapon-based combat (which is fun despite a slightly unpredictable camera), Constantine has the ability to cast spells. These are learnt through exploration of the fairly free-roaming environment, along with numerous other health and magic upgrades. These are fun to execute and are varied in nature - our favourite was Hunger, which caused the flesh to be stripped from a possessed human by a swarm of vicious flies. Although ridiculously easy to perform (players must complete a simple button sequence within a time limit), they'll leave your character annoyingly exposed to counter attack during the time it takes to cast. Because of this, they can only be used when enemies are at a safe distance - not ideal when you're in the middle of white-of-the-eyes combat.

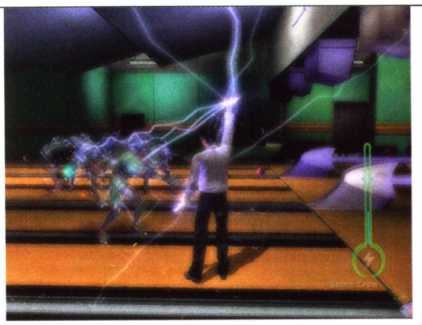
However, factor in a healthy helping of puzzles (which again are fun, but hampered by an erratic camera), and *Constantine* is a fairly tidy little movie tie-in. Not as hallowed-groundbreaking or biblical in goodness that it maybe thinks it is, but 'constantly' enjoyable all the same.

Official Xbox Magazine ON THE DISC

Bonus info



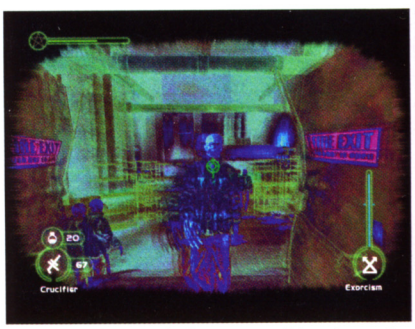
WHO'S THE BOSS?
Constantine frequently encounters boss demons along his travels. They're normally harder than Satan's horn, so instead of blasting away, take a moment (or check your notes) to find their weak spots.



↑ Cast powerful spells for the perfect strike.



↑ JC gets hot under the collar with huge snakes.



↑ True Sight reveals demons walking the earth.



↑ Watch as impressive physics trash hell.



↑ "Oh what a fee-ling, when there's demons on the ceiling..." Constantine puts the world to rights with his trusty Crucifier gun.

The Summary

CONSTANTINE THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. Stylish and atmospheric, the game provides both action packed and eerily sparse environments that look faithful to the upcoming movie.
2. Weapon-based combat is fun and accessible with a handy lock-on, though slow character movement makes the action seem sluggish.
3. True Sight adds another dimension to the gameplay and, as well as looking pretty, is essential to completing tasks.
4. More puzzles than an OAP home's coffee table and sporadic boss battles mix up the relentless run and gun action.
5. For the most part, the camera is well behaved, though it can sometimes dance around demonically in the most annoying manner.

The Verdict

Accomplished movie adaptation which won't exactly set the world alight, but is amiable fun to work through.

7.5//10

PREVIOUSLY: Issue 36 - Preview, Issue 38 - Preview
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 41

↓ I'm a celebrity game character. Get me out of here!



The Bard's Tale

Beard becomes Bard by dropping an 'e'

Words: Andy Irving

Dev: inXile	Pub: Ubisoft
Players: 1	Live: None
Release: 25 March	
www.thebardstale.com	

WHEN WAS the last time you laughed out loud at a game? Ours was during the opening tutorial of *The Bard's Tale*. We stumbled into a typically drunk group of NPCs in a typically clichéd inn after learning the central character's typically clichéd past. You see where we're going here? But for all its referential attributes, the resulting drunken ballad (which players can sing along to with bouncing ball) allayed any fears of fairytale familiarity. This is one of the most self-deprecating games we've ever seen. And you thought *The Princess Bride* was a pisstake.

Everyone loves the class joker, but *Bard's Tale* packs a decent enough punch to keep the bullies away as well. It uses *Baldur's Gate*'s Snowblind engine and, like a penny-slot peep show, the action's strictly top down. The Bard must travel the land, conversing with a host of colourful characters and completing quests, though, as he points out, coin and cleavage are his driving motives. The game is very dialogue heavy, though players' conversations aren't quite as branching as we'd like. The Bard occasionally has the option of choosing friendly or hostile responses, though these are denoted by happy and sad faces; we'd like to see what we're actually going to say before choosing. Also, more often than not, the conversation ends the same way, regardless of your responses. However, they impact brilliantly on the gameplay, as a previously irked character may reappear several hours into the game and deny you a quest or opportunity. There's no clear-cut right or wrong either, so players have a refreshing amount of freedom in their choices.

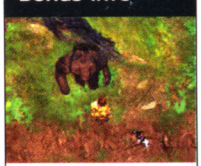
Speaking of which, quests are your standard RPG fare. Go here, talk to them, go and collect this, learn this spell etc, though *Bard's Tale* isn't afraid to mock even its own predictability. The Bard often turns to the camera to comment on the cheesiness of his situation, lamenting "All these tales are all the same." The narrator, with his home counties diction, is continually at odds with the Bard's swaggering cockney slang, and the constant bickering between the two provides many of the game's laughs.

Combat is obviously determined by a hit points system, though is thankfully in real time rather than being turn based. Players can buy tons of weapons and armour upgrades from the store, or use the Bard's magical capabilities in battle. Levelling up allows players to upgrade the Bard's physical capabilities, and you're also given a chance to hone specific skills, like dual wielding. As you progress you'll learn new spells, executed via the Bard's lute. These can be aggressive or protective in nature, though we found ourselves continually summoning a spiritual ally to fight alongside us, thus doubling our chances in combat. Cheap maybe, but with an endless supply of magical power, an easy option.

However, while the emphasis has been put into the game's comical touches, the graphics have been left to suffer. We monkeys may hear no evil but we certainly see a fair bit here. Okay, the game was developed a while ago (it's been in publishing limbo for the last couple of years) but it still looks inexcusably rough, in both character animation and environment design. The camera is slow to rotate, and has a disappointingly small zoom ability, though at least at that distance the characters still look acceptable.

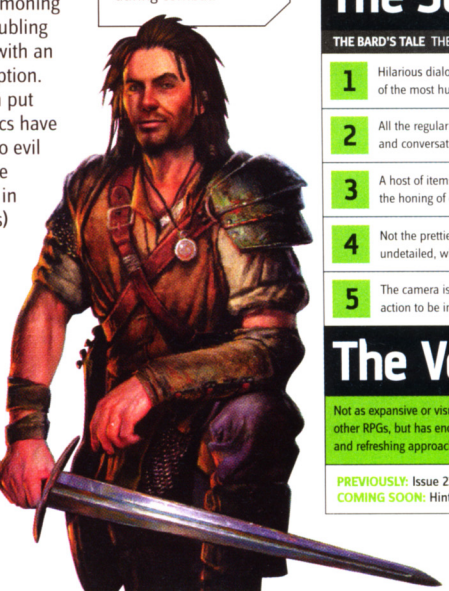
If you can ignore this, you'll really enjoy *The Bard's Tale*. Not afraid to poke fun at itself or the genre, the game still has enough depth and replayability to please the most ardent RPG fans. When it's not mocking them...

Bonus info



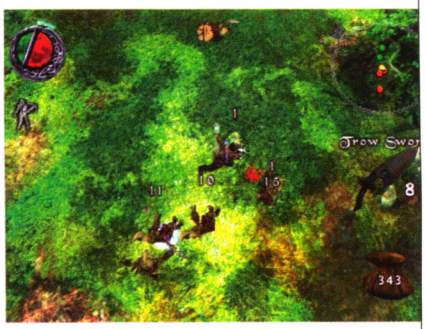
A MAN'S BEST FRIEND

Early on in the game you'll meet a yappy little dog. Befriend him, and he'll stay by your side for the entire game. Although not very strong, the little tyke does a good job of distracting opponents during combat.





↑ "What, you want to level up? Cliché, cliché!"



↑ Combat is based around real-time hit points.



↑ Call down Healing magic to cure your party.



↑ Conjure up an ally for the tough boss battles.

The Summary

THE BARD'S TALE THE FACTS YOU NEED TO KNOW!

1. Hilarious dialogue and a fine sense of self-deprecation make this one of the most humorous games we've played in a long time.
2. All the regular staples of an RPG are here: tons of quests, characters and conversations to get stuck into. A fair bit of replayability too.
3. A host of items and weapons to collect, loads of magic to learn, and the honing of different skills make for tons of gameplay options.
4. Not the prettiest game in the world; the characters are rough and undetailed, while the environments are bland and uninteresting.
5. The camera is a bit of an issue - it's too far enough away from the action to be involving. Annoyingly long load times between areas too.

The Verdict

Not as expansive or visually impressive as other RPGs, but has enough of a unique and refreshing approach to be absorbing.

7.5//10

PREVIOUSLY: Issue 23 - News
COMING SOON: Hints - Issue 41

INCONCEIVABLE! THE VOICE OF THE BARD IS PROVIDED IN THE US VERSION BY THE FANTASTIC CARY ELWES, WHOM YOU SHOULD REMEMBER FROM THE OUTSTANDING FAIRYTALE SPOOF THE PRINCESS BRIDE.

ONE MAN. MANY WEAPONS. INFINITE DESTRUCTION.

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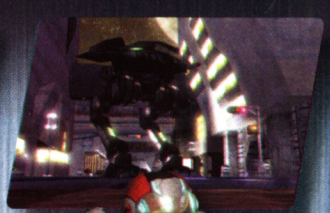




In MechAssault 2 you are one of the last members of the Wolf Dragoons and you are no longer confined to a BattleMech®. Scale a wall or jack a BattleMech with the BattleArmor, jump into a tank or fly the VTOL to carry supplies into battle. Galactic supremacy is the reward in Conquest mode on Xbox Live, as you enter a persistent online world; join one of five houses on 45 planets and, with your clan attempt to conquer the solar system. With new enemies, new weapons and new environments, the choice is yours. MechAssault 2. The biggest battle just got bigger.

Microsoft game studios

DAY 1 STUDIOS

fasa studio

MECHASSAULT 2 LONE WOLF

XBOX

it's good to play together

xbox.com/mechassault2

XBOX LIVE

Hardware Reviews

If you can plug it into your Xbox we'll feature it here



Logic 3 Assault Rifle

Company: Logic 3 | Cost: £40
Release: March 2005 | Tel: 020 8902 2211
www.spectravideo.com

IT'S SURPRISING the amount of lightguns that have been released on Xbox, when there's a lack of decent compatible games. That hasn't stopped third-party manufacturers having a shot at it though, and Logic 3 has scored a hit with this beauty.

Modelled on a Heckler & Koch MP5K, the *Guns and Ammo* crew should be satisfied with the accuracy of the stylish design. Although it obviously doesn't pack the same weight as the real thing, the battery pack at the front adds a bit of meat to the gun. There's a great removable stock that can be whacked on for authenticity, or taken off if you want to go all SAS and give both arms a rest. We recommend leaving it on however, as even with the batteries removed your arm will be aching like Ben T in front of Channel Five on a Friday night.

There are loads of firing options, including Auto Reload and Machine Gun, though these will obviously only be suited to certain games. The optional laser sight seemed a bit skew-whiff, and the vibration was more weak clacking than shoulder-popping recoil, but this still shoots to the top of our list of recently released lightguns. Lock and load.

The Verdict 4//5



Logic 3 Super VGA Box

Company: Logic 3 | Cost: £60
Release: March 2005 | Tel: 020 8902 2211
www.spectravideo.com

WE'RE ALL LAZY buggers here at *OXM*, always reluctant to move from the comfort of our padded leather desk chairs. We long for a magical little box that brings all our required apparatus together in one simple package.

Luckily for us, those thoughtful people at Logic 3 have come through with this ace device. Simply plug all your entertainment devices (PC, Xbox, TV, inflatable friend) into the Super VGA box, and then whack that into your monitor or TFT display. The box houses a built-in TV tuner, so attach your regular aerial cable and you're away - your TV, PC or Xbox will all run on the same screen and all you need to do is flick between them. The handy remote means you can switch sources from the comfort of your own chair - especially handy when you're playing a lone bit of late-night Rumble Pit. If you know what we mean.

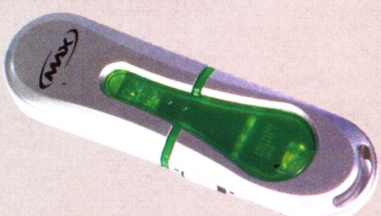
There are loads of programmable channel memories, and the TV picture output features either 60 or 75Hz and supports up to 1280 x 1024 resolution. Quite a tidy little package you'll agree, and not bad at all for 60 notes. Roll on obesity...

The Verdict 4//5

Recommended Kit Essential pieces of kit to get more out of your games



Logic 3 TopDrive GTX £40
Feels lovely this one with its rubber finish 4//5



Datel Max Drive £20
Transfer saves to PC and email your mates 5//5



Wireless Neo S Controller £30
Quality small pad with no wires to trip over 5//5



Arcade Rifle & Shotgun £50
Ace gun, comes with *Silent Scope Complete* 4//5

I'M IN THE MOOD: LOOK OUT NEXT MONTH FOR THE REVIEW OF THE NEW JOYTECH DANCE MAT, TIMED TO COINCIDE WITH THE RELEASE OF DANCING STAGE UNLEASHED 2.

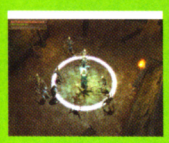
Official Xbox Magazine ELITE

Elite Directory

The best of Xbox games that scored 8.5 and more!



AMPED 2
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Stunning graphics. Dead easy to pick up and play but furiously addictive"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★



BALDUR'S GATE: DARK ALLIANCE
REVIEWED: Issue 08
TYPE: Action RPG
"Absorbing RPG with a healthy dose of hack 'n' slashing"
SCORE 8.5



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL
REVIEWED: Issue 26
TYPE: Adventure
"Diverse and delicious. This isn't about violence, but about story, subterfuge and character"
SCORE 8.9



BROKEN SWORD: THE SLEEPING DRAGON
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Adventure
"A detective game that will stick with you after you've finished"
SCORE 9.0



BRUTE FORCE
REVIEWED: Issue 18
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Multiplayer elevates *Brute Force* from a good to a potentially great game"
SCORE 8.5



BURNOUT 2: POINT OF IMPACT
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Driving
"A classic arcade racer that makes you sweat and grin"
SCORE 9.0



BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Driving
"Essential arcade racer, brimming with deliciousness"
SCORE 9.4 XBL: ★★



CHAMP MANAGER: SEASON 01/02
REVIEWED: Issue 02
TYPE: Sports
"Easily the best game of its kind... indefinite lifespan"
SCORE 8.8



COLIN McRAE RALLY 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Driving
"Every bit as good as *04* with the added extra of online play"
SCORE 8.5 XBL: ★★★



CONFLICT: VIETNAM
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Bigger and tougher than its *Desert Storm* siblings. It'll suck you in and love you long time"
SCORE 8.5



CRIMSON SKIES
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Action
"A great package that's been playtested to death – and it looks gorgeous"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★★



DEAD OR ALIVE ULTIMATE
REVIEWED: Issue 39
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"A beautiful, balanced fighter; a wealth of multiplayer options"
SCORE 8.8



DEF JAM FIGHT FOR NEW YORK
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Thoughtful, well-constructed. As fun as it is violent. Rated 18"
SCORE 8.5



DEUS EX: INVISIBLE WAR
REVIEWED: Issue 26
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Mind-blowing, expertly crafted experience. Don't miss it"
SCORE 9.0



ESPN NBA 2K5
REVIEWED: Issue 38
TYPE: US sports
"All the teams, players, flashy presentation and gameplay of EA's titles for half the price"
SCORE 8.9



ESPN NFL 2K5
REVIEWED: Issue 38
TYPE: US Sports
"Loads of features. It hits with the intensity of a 20-stone linebacker. Look out, *Madden*"
SCORE 8.6



FABLE
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Action adventure/RPG
"Confident, flashy and polished beyond belief. There's no way you won't love it"
SCORE 9.4



FIFA FOOTBALL 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Sports
"Significantly improved gameplay, massively deep career modes and Live play"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★



FIGHT NIGHT 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: Sports
"Absorbing, sweat-drenched title. Dazzling graphics and a groundbreaking control system"
SCORE 8.5



FULL SPECTRUM WARRIOR
REVIEWED: Issue 30
TYPE: Strategy
"Fantastic strategy. Captures the visceral atmosphere of war"
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★



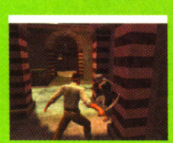
GRABBED BY THE GHOULIES
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Action adventure
"Very polished. Top animation. A sure-fire crowd-pleaser"
SCORE 8.9



GRAND THEFT AUTO DOUBLE PACK
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Driving
"PS2 port, but a benchmark of crime titles yet to be beaten"
SCORE 8.9



HALO 2
REVIEWED: Issue 36
TYPE: FPS
"You won't find a better single-player and multiplayer game on this generation of consoles"
SCORE 10.0 XBL: ★★★★★



INDIANA JONES AND THE EMPEROR'S TOMB
REVIEWED: Issue 14
TYPE: Action adventure
"One of the best single-player adventures on Xbox. Brilliant"
SCORE 9.0



INDYCAR SERIES
REVIEWED: Issue 18
TYPE: Driving
"You won't find a better racing sim on Xbox. Very technically demanding"
SCORE 8.6



JET SET RADIO FUTURE
REVIEWED: Issue 02
TYPE: Platformer/ Extreme sports
"Supremely playable and very stylish. Huge, intricate levels"
SCORE 8.9



KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: THE CRUSADERS
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Strategy
"Very atmospheric strategy with exhilarating combat"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★



KUNG FU CHAOS
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: Party/Beat 'em up
"Highly playable. Very funny and looks great. Very intuitive with excellent multiplayer too"
SCORE 8.6



LMA MANAGER 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Sports
"The biggest *LMA* yet. Will slowly but surely take over your life. Prepare to lose sleep"
SCORE 8.5



MADDEN 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: US sports
"Incredible visuals, great commentary, brilliant play. You'll be busy for months"
SCORE 8.5



MASHED
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: Racing
"Without doubt one of the finest multiplayer games ever, but single-player is a bit weak"
SCORE 8.6



MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE
REVIEWED: Issue 25
TYPE: Action/Shooter
"Definitive blockbuster action title bursting with new ideas"
SCORE 9.2



MERCENARIES
REVIEWED: Issue 39
TYPE: Third-person shooter
"Amazing effort. More plot and fewer explosions would have shaken *GTA*'s grip considerably"
SCORE 8.5



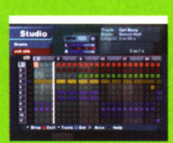
METAL ARMS: GLITCH IN THE SYSTEM
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: Action/Shooter
"Gorgeous graphics, engaging characters, stacks of variety"
SCORE 9.0



MORTAL KOMBAT: DECEPTION
REVIEWED: Issue 36
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Brilliantly brutal. Xbox's most complete fighting game"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★



MOTOGP 2: URT
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Bike racing
"Stupendous visuals. Brilliant bike customisation. So thrilling it'll make your knees bleed"
SCORE 9.4 XBL: ★★★★★



MTV MUSIC GEN. 3
REVIEWED: Issue 30
TYPE: Music
"Essential for anyone with aspirations of headlining at Ministry. Playable and friendly"
SCORE 8.5



NFL FEVER 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 22
TYPE: US sports
"Easy to get into, with an emphasis on action rather than stats. Xbox Live play too!"
SCORE 8.7



NHL 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: US sports
"The standard annual update, but with an improved roster of dummy shots and tricks"
SCORE 8.9



NINJA GAIDEN
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: Action
"Groundbreaking beat 'em up of the highest calibre. A must for anyone who can hold a pad"
SCORE 9.2

OTOGI 2: IMMORTAL WARRIORS
REVIEWED: Issue 39
TYPE: Adventure
"An absolutely stunning, deceptively deep actioner"
SCORE 8.6

OUTRUN 2
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Driving
"Top presentation and brilliant controls. Fast and furious racer that'll please old and new fans"
SCORE 8.5 XBL: ★★★★

PANZER DRAGOON ORTA
REVIEWED: Issue 15
TYPE: Action/Shooter
"Cutting-edge looks and classic blasting. Gorgeous"
SCORE 8.8

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE EP. I & II
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: MMORPG
"This should be the most addictive online game ever"
SCORE N/A XBL: ★★★★★

PHANTOM CRASH
REVIEWED: Issue 10
TYPE: Mech shooter
"Extremely enjoyable. Frantic action backed up with an impressive career mode"
SCORE 8.5

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
REVIEWED: Issue 26
TYPE: Adventure
"The Prince is the new King of platformers. Truly outstanding"
SCORE 9.0

PRINCE OF PERSIA: WARRIOR WITHIN
REVIEWED: Issue 37
TYPE: Adventure
"Grittier, enhanced combat. Ass-kicking adventuring at its best"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★

PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Sports
"The most accurate and fun footy sim on a console. Superb"
SCORE 9.4 XBL: ★★★★

PSI-OPS: TMC
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: Third-person shooter
"Inventive powers offer hours of fun. Outstanding AI compensates for poor story"
SCORE 8.6

RALLISPORT CHALL. 2
REVIEWED: Issue 30
TYPE: Driving
"Edge-of-your-seat racer. Looks and plays great, with brilliant Xbox Live multiplayer"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★

RED DEAD REVOLVER
REVIEWED: Issue 30
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Frantic, fun and reasonably demanding. Highly polished arcade entertainment"
SCORE 8.5

RED FACTION II
REVIEWED: Issue 18
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Plenty of missions and a ludicrous 60 multiplayer maps. Excellent fun"
SCORE 8.6



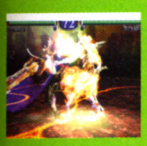
ROCKY
REVIEWED: Issue 09
TYPE: Sports
"Brilliantly evocative, this is dramatic multiplayer scrapping at its finest"
SCORE 9.0



ROCKY LEGENDS
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Sports
"Excellent visuals and gameplay. Controlling Creed, Lang and Drago is a big plus"
SCORE 8.6



SEGA GT ONLINE
REVIEWED: Issue 24
TYPE: Driving
"Live-enabled update. Huge single-player career mode and virtually limitless on Live"
SCORE 8.7 XBL: ★★★



SOUL CALIBUR II
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"The most fluid fighter ever. Easy to pick up, tough to master, graphically superb"
SCORE 9.1



SPIDER-MAN 2
REVIEWED: Issue 32
TYPE: Action
Huge environment to explore - you'll be smashing and swinging in no time"
SCORE 8.6



SPLINTER CELL: PANDORA TOMORROW
REVIEWED: Issue 27
TYPE: Action adventure
"Enhances everything that was good about the original"
SCORE 9.3



STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE OLD REPUBLIC
REVIEWED: Issue 20
TYPE: RPG
"One of the most compelling games on any console ever"
SCORE 9.5



STAR WARS KOTOR II: THE SITH LORDS
REVIEWED: Issue 37
TYPE: RPG
"All that was good from *KOTOR*, in a far more oppressive place"
SCORE 9.3



STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Action shooter
"Breathtaking. A joy to play from start to finish, every time"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★



STEEL BATTALION: LINE OF CONTACT
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: Mech action
"The best robot game ever. Evil learning curve but worth it"
SCORE 9.0



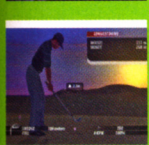
SUDEKI
REVIEWED: Issue 32
TYPE: RPG
"One of the best-looking games on Xbox. A brilliant, vibrant adventure romp with great AI"
SCORE 8.7



THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: EFBB
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Intuitive controls. Stylish, atmospheric and violent"
SCORE 9.0



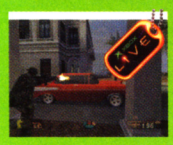
THIEF: DEADLY SHADOWS
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: Stealth
"Captivating, atmospheric, with massive replayability"
SCORE 8.9



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 34
TYPE: Sports
"Drives the perfect line between simulation and arcade action"
SCORE 8.7



TOCA RACE DRIVER 2
REVIEWED: Issue 29
TYPE: Racing
"The most realistic, detailed racer ever. Gorgeous graphics, incredible variety and handling"
SCORE 9.1 XBL: ★★★★



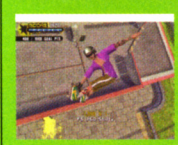
TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON: ISLAND THUNDER
REVIEWED: Issue 21
TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Atmospheric with online play"
SCORE 8.5 XBL: ★★★★



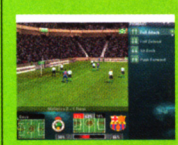
TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: First-person shooter
"The ultimate package for fans of realism-based FPSs"
SCORE 9.4 XBL: ★★★★★



TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX 3: BLACK ARROW
REVIEWED: Issue 33
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Looks ace and only £20!"
SCORE 9.0



TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND 2
REVIEWED: Issue 36
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Not much progression in gameplay, but still excellent"
SCORE 8.5



TOTAL CLUB MANAGER 2005
REVIEWED: Issue 35
TYPE: Sports
"The guvnor of Xbox managerial titles. Works with *FIFA 2005*"
SCORE 8.7



WAKEBOARDING UNLEASHED FEAT. SHAUN MURRAY
REVIEWED: Issue 17
TYPE: Extreme sports
"Outrageous arcade action"
SCORE 8.6



WORLD CHAMP. SNOOKER 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 31
TYPE: Sports
"Tension-filled fun for anyone remotely interested in snooker"
SCORE 8.8 XBL: ★★★



XIII
REVIEWED: Issue 23
TYPE: First-person shooter
"Unique, stylish and captivating. You can't afford to miss this superb FPS"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★



X-MEN: LEGENDS
REVIEWED: Issue 36
TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Great mix of beat 'em up and character customisation. Fantastically addictive caper"
SCORE 8.5

ELITE CLASSICS

All of these Elite-scoring games are now available for the incredible price of £19.99 in the Xbox Classics range...

AMPED: FREESTYLE SNOWBOARDING
REVIEWED: Issue 01 TYPE: Extreme sports
"Addictive, impressive and deep. Expansive environments means there's tons to do. Career mode will last you ages, but beware: it gets *really* hard at the hardest level"
SCORE 8.7

BLINX: THE TIME SWEEPER
REVIEWED: Issue 09 TYPE: Platformer
"Inventive and intriguing with a unique feel. Takes platform gaming into uncharted territory. Essential"
SCORE 9.3

COLIN McRAE RALLY 3
REVIEWED: Issue 10 TYPE: Driving
"Sublime handling, excellent variety of courses and realistic, exciting game structure. Could have looked a bit better though, and loading times are quite long"
SCORE 9.1

COLIN McRAE RALLY 04
REVIEWED: Issue 21 TYPE: Driving
"Rallying at its grandest, prettiest and most absorbing. The rock-hard Expert mode and Xbox Live leaderboards make for a long lifespan. Handles brilliantly"
SCORE 9.1

DEAD OR ALIVE 3
REVIEWED: Issue 01 TYPE: Beat 'em up
"Accessible, slick and as satisfying as any beat 'em up. Simple to pick up; instantly enjoyable. A visual benchmark"
SCORE 8.5

ENTER THE MATRIX
REVIEWED: Issue 17 TYPE: Action
"A slick action romp that genuinely adds something new to the licence. Authentic and compelling. A must for fans"
SCORE 8.5

FIFA FOOTBALL 2004
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: Sports
"Incredible player models, fluid animation, ridiculously pretty. Top career mode but lenient difficulty settings"
SCORE 8.7

HALO: COMBAT EVOLVED
REVIEWED: Issue 01 TYPE: First-person shooter
"Quite simply, a masterpiece and without question one of the best games ever made. Sublime tactical depth"
SCORE 9.7

MOTOGP: ULTIMATE RACING TECHNOLOGY
REVIEWED: Issue 04 TYPE: Bike racing
"Hotly contested bike racing combined with a perfect control method make this a real winner. Sumptuous visuals, too, and excellent, friendly presentation"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★★

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING
REVIEWED: Issue 01 TYPE: Driving
"Epic racer blending accuracy with entertainment. Daunting at first, but rewards with masses of enjoyment. Even if you play all day, every day, it'll take you months to complete"
SCORE 8.9

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: Driving
"The most complete and best-looking street racer. The consummate and definitive driving experience. Hefty single-player mode and virtually limitless enjoyment on Live"
SCORE 9.3 XBL: ★★★★★

RALLISPORT CHALLENGE
REVIEWED: Issue 01 TYPE: Driving
"An excellent, searingly fast rally game. Big variety of gameplay and a tough career mode means there's plenty to keep you occupied. Handsome as hell, too"
SCORE 8.5

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN: TIDES OF WAR
REVIEWED: Issue 16 TYPE: First-person shooter
"A cracking action shooter that is superb in single-player and provides outstanding team play experiences on Live"
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★★

TIMESPLITTERS 2
REVIEWED: Issue 09 TYPE: First-person shooter
"The most complete FPS package on Xbox. A frantic actioner rife with detail, features and... ah, just buy it"
SCORE 9.3

THE LORD OF THE RINGS: THE RETURN OF THE KING
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: Action
"Recreates the film beautifully. You'll be ripped out of your chair and launched into Middle-Earth. You won't look back. A blockbuster action game"
SCORE 8.5

TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON
REVIEWED: Issue 11 TYPE: Squad-based shooter
"Confident and addictive. Tons of suspense and excitement by the bucketload. The strategy/action benchmark"
SCORE 8.9 XBL: ★★★★

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: Action adventure
"An amazingly good-looking, exciting adventure that's so addictive it should carry a Government Stealth Warning. Superbly tense with lots of cool gadgets to play with"
SCORE 9.0

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3
REVIEWED: Issue 02 TYPE: Extreme sports
"The graphics aren't awesome but the rewarding, intricate gameplay and excellent game structure make up for it"
SCORE 8.8

TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4
REVIEWED: Issue 11 TYPE: Extreme sports
"Silky trick system. Absolutely tons to do, and then some. User-friendly structure and loads of new ideas and options"
SCORE 8.6

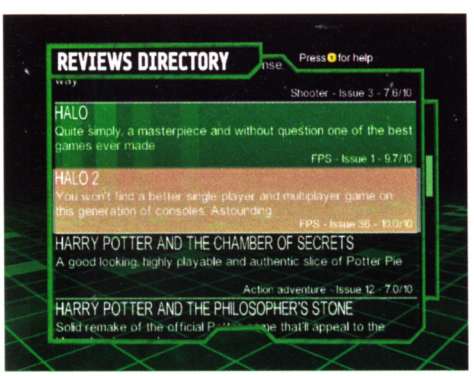
TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND
REVIEWED: Issue 24 TYPE: Extreme sports
"A slight change in direction for the series results in a refreshingly different and diverse title. Hop off and explore!"
SCORE 8.6

TOP SPIN
REVIEWED: Issue 23 TYPE: Sports
"Incredible. Hands down this is the best tennis game in the world. Even if you don't like tennis you'll soon be hooked. Massive single-player game and awesome with friends"
SCORE 9.0 XBL: ★★★★

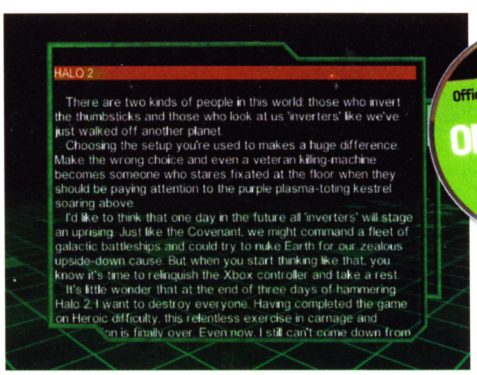
UNREAL CHAMPIONSHIP
REVIEWED: Issue 10 TYPE: First-person shooter
"This sets a new standard for multiplayer shooters. Fast yet easily controllable and limitless fun on Xbox Live"
SCORE 9.2 XBL: ★★★★

Full interactive Reviews Directory

The ultimate buyer's guide... read full reviews of every Xbox game! Scroll through over 500 Xbox games and press the A button on your controller to read the full reviews!



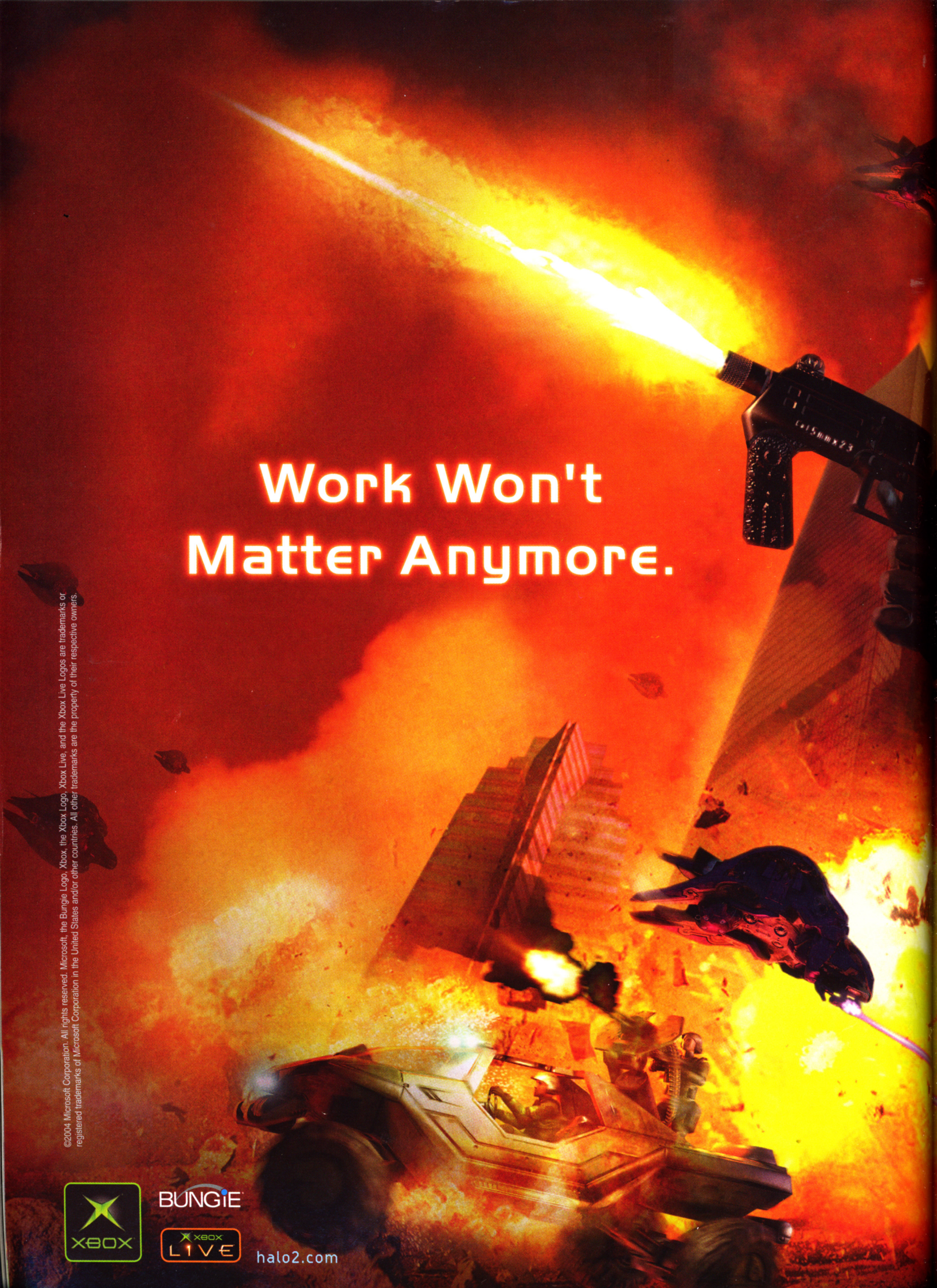
↑ Scroll down the list until your game is highlighted...



↑ ...then press the A button to read the full review!

Official Xbox Magazine ON THE DISC

GAV WHO?: GAV HAS BEEN WORKING ON OUR SISTER MAG THIS MONTH, AND IS DEVASTATED THAT WE HAVEN'T MISSED HIM. OR NEEDED HIM. HAH!


Work Won't
Matter Anymore.
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HALO 2
Earth Will Never Be The Same

Play:More

PLAY:MORE is about getting more from your games. From tips and cheats to in-depth Masterclasses, you'll find everything, explore everywhere and beat everyone.

It's about playing games until the disc wears out. It's about demonstrating your expertise, proving you're the best and taking your place among our elite community of Xbox gamers. It's about winning stuff, beating the challenges and earning respect from your fellow gamers.

Play:More is where you make *Official Xbox Magazine* your magazine.



DEMO: SNK VS CAPCOM: SVC CHAOS



LIVE REVIEW: DOA ULTIMATE



GUIDE: KOTOR II: SITH LORDS PT.2

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BT

Unlock the true potential of Xbox Live with Broadband from BT and challenge gamers worldwide with the latest Xbox Live games



New to Xbox Live this month comes the much-anticipated *Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict*, amplifying the explosive action of a first-person shooter with the new challenge of hand-to-hand third-person melee fighting, allowing you to bring a sword to the gunfight – with lethal results.

Battle for frag points in large arenas over a diverse set of customisable modes, including old favourites such as Deathmatch, Capture the Flag and Onslaught. With 14 characters to choose from, *UC2* is sure to bring you the ultimate Xbox Live experience.

To find out more about Broadband from BT and its latest prices and offers, check out www.bt.com/xboxlive



On Your Disc...

THIS MONTH'S Game Disc is one of our best ever, with not one but three upcoming AAA games for you to try. Leading the pack is our game of the month, *Unreal Championship 2*! This superb trial version can be played alone or with up to four players on Live and System Link. *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory* is also a very tasty demo - you'll be able to play through the entire first level of the game and it's gorgeous! Likewise, there's also a *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect* trial version with the game's opening mission. Way in advance of the game's release, *Area 51* gives you an exclusive chance to blow away some extraterrestrial zombies. Last but by no means least, you can also have a go at trial versions of *SNK Vs. Capcom: SVC Chaos*, *Constantine*, *Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams* and another chance to play *Star Wars: Republic Commando*. Go for it!

Splinter Cell Chaos Theory

ON THE DISC

Reviewed: Next month | Score: TBA
Players: 1

SO YOU THOUGHT it all ended with the death of Phillip Masse? Unfortunately, the programmer's villainous legacy continues as long as Bruce Morgenholt carries the knowledge of Masse's deadly computer algorithms.

And it gets worse. A Peruvian separatist group known as The People's Voice has kidnapped Morgenholt. After a bit of torture, Bruce will be singing like a pop idol, so you have to get there first.

Sneak into the enemy's coastal fortress and find out where Morgenholt is located. You might not be able to save him but at least you'll be able to find out just how much The People's Voice knows. This infiltration is also a good opportunity to scan the group's weapons crates to find out who supplied them.

Sam has plenty of new skills to use in this mission. Firstly, your knife can be used to slice through some 'walls'. Try using it on the tent canvas to make an unexpected entrance. The knife can also be used to break open locks and pierce the mobile power generators you find lying around.

Prize Challenge

We want you to finish the level on Hard difficulty with all bonus objectives completed in the fastest time. The quickest three each win a copy of the game. Closing date is Thursday 24 March 2005.

- MOVE
- LOOK
- TOGGLE VISION MODES
- A: INTERACT
- B: CROUCH / STAND
- X: EQUIP ITEM
- Y: JUMP
- L: KO ATTACK
- R: USE EQUIPPED / LETHAL ATTACK
- QUICK INVENTORY
- WHISTLE / COOP ACTION

Area 51

ON THE DISC

Reviewed: Coming soon | Score: TBA
Players: 1

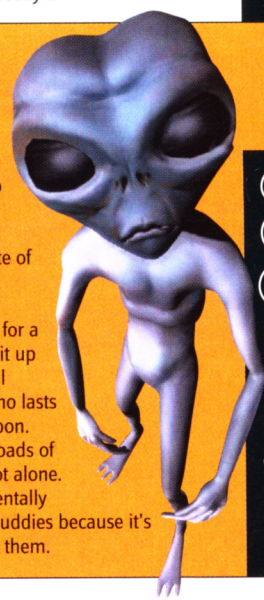
AS SPECIAL FORCES units go, you could have a tougher-sounding name than HAZMAT (hazardous materials division). Never mind. Playing as squad leader Ethan Cole, you've been called to investigate a viral outbreak inside Area 51.

Although things are quiet at first, you soon find yourself outnumbered by a horde of rampaging aliens. If these guys look familiar, that's because they were once your fellow HAZMAT agents, now infected with an alien microbe.

Fortunately, you're armed to the teeth. The shotgun is great for close-range slaughter while the assault rifle has a much better rate of fire and reload. Try using your sniper rifle in the large open areas to hold back the tide of enemies. The magnum is powerful but the poor rate of fire makes it a last resort.

Make sure you root around the opening area for a second assault rifle. Pick it up and you'll be able to dual wield as long as the ammo lasts or until you change weapon.

Although there are loads of enemies to kill, you're not alone. Don't worry about accidentally shooting your HAZMAT buddies because it's impossible for you to kill them.



- MOVE
- LOOK / (CLICK) MELEE
- NOT USED
- A: JUMP
- B: NOT USED
- X: RELOAD
- Y: ZOOM
- L: CROUCH
- R: FIRE
- TOGGLE WEAPON
- TOGGLE WEAPON

TimeSplitters: Future Perfect

ON THE DISC

Reviewed: Page 092 | Score: 8.2
Players: 1

SGT. CORTEZ'S seemingly eternal battle against the dreaded TimeSplitters is about to begin all over again. It's the year 2401 and humankind is on the brink of extinction. Following his successful campaign to recover the time crystals, Cortez is returning to Earth to put the finishing touches on Earth's last hope, a time machine.

Unfortunately, war-ravaged Earth is a bit short of runways. While looking for a place to land, your ship is blasted out of the skies, forcing you to complete your treacherous journey on foot.

Somehow, the TimeSplitters have mutated into an even more terrifyingly durable form. If that wasn't bad enough, they're incredibly agile and can turn invisible at will! They've also recruited a band of vile mercenaries to boost their numbers, but at least those guys are more cannon fodder than serious threat.

Kill as many of your foes as possible and don't forget to pick up their dropped weapons. There's a very tasty assault rifle to collect and you can also recover several crates of plasma grenades. Later on in the mission, one of your buddies will also provide you with a handy sniper rifle. It only takes one headshot with this little baby to kill even the toughest enemy.

- MOVE / (CLICK) CROUCH
- LOOK
- ZOOM / TOGGLE WEAPON
- A: ACTIVATE
- B: MELEE
- X: MANUAL RELOAD
- Y: NOT USED
- L: GRENADE
- R: FIRE
- NOT USED
- TOGGLE GRENADES

Replay

YOU MIGHT have seen this trick in the *Chaos Theory* trailer - now it's your turn! Press A when lurking below an enemy to chuck him off the lighthouse tower!



Challenges

THINK YOU'RE hot stuff when it comes to Xbox? Challenges gives you the chance to become a gaming celebrity! There are several ways to make your mark: in the demo challenges, Xbox Live competitions and clan leagues. Some are for prizes, others just for glory. Check it out!

FORZA MOTORSPORT
Game Disc 38
THE CHALLENGE: Fastest time for a three-lap race at Laguna Seca in a Ferrari #12 Risi Competizione F33SP.



NAME	LOCATION	TIME
GLYN HORSLEY	NOTTS	03.38.731
SHAUN ANDERSON	CO. DURHAM	03.40.937
PETE ROSE	GRIMSBY	03.46.092
LEIGHANNE NORMAN	HASTINGS	03.60.000
JAMES VICKERS	LINCONSHIRE	04.07.174
MARC FORT	LANARKSHIRE	04.22.336
MATT SMITH	CARDIFF	04.23.411
DANIEL DEIGHTON	ST ALBANS	04.29.600
ROBERT BURTON	LEICESTER	04.31.572
FRANCIS EATON	GLOUCESTER	04.33.444

We knew that Glyn Horsley was going to be tough to beat in a racing challenge. He's cemented his reputation once again and will be joining Shaun Anderson and Pete Rose in our System Link semi-final.

Issue 40 Challenges

Dear *Official Xbox Magazine*
Here is my Demo Challenge score for you to admire:

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY
My time to complete the mission with all bonus objectives on Hard difficulty.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Telephone number .....

Either cut out or photocopy this coupon, fill it in, and send it to Game Disc 40 Demo Challenge, *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP.

TOP SECRET: THE SPLINTER CELL CHAOS THEORY DEMO ALSO CONTAINS A TUTORIAL VIDEO SHOWING YOU THE BEST OF VERSUS MODE FROM THE FULL GAME.

Challenges

HALO 2

Xbox Live full game challenge

THE CHALLENGE: Achieve the highest rank in Rumble Pit mode (at the time of going to press). Losses are factored in.

RANK	LEVEL	GAMERTAG	WINS
1	27	AYB Fonzi	175
2	27	BlAcKjAk	164
3	27	SlimCANCER MAN	221
4	27	K 2the ArmA	145
5	26	Warrior204	152
6	26	SadPanda Eh	198
7	26	Castlekeep	252
8	26	cAPPy204	310
9	25	PaCMaYNE	140
10	25	VillageIdiot	249

AYB Fonzi earns the accolade of being the first person to last more than a month at the top of the Rumble Pit leaderboard. Congratulations are also due to BlAcKjAk and SadPanda Eh, who both maintain their positions from last issue.

Game Saves

PLAY:MORE is determined to crack open every Xbox title and bring you the hottest downloadable saves. This issue...

Crash Twinsanity

Four saves at various points throughout the game. Skip right ahead to the final boss if you think you're tough enough.

Ford Racing 3

Drive all 55 cars without having to unlock any of them! All 11 race types are also unlocked and ready to be torn apart.

Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders

Eight massive saves for all four characters. This allows you to skip to the final mission for Gerald and Lucretia and the second missions for Kendal and Reginer.

Shark Tale

All 25 chapters are open and completed with some Bonus and Elite missions completed too.

Spyro: A Hero's Tale

Start on the final realm with all breaths unlocked. We've also collected stacks of eggs, dark gems and light gems!

How To...

Download your Game Saves

SAVES CAN BE found in the Game Saves and Extra Content menus. Highlight one and press the A button to download it. If the save is greyed out and can't be selected, you already have a save of this type on your Xbox hard disk. Simply go into the memory screen on your Xbox Dashboard, delete the save and, the next time you load the game disc, the option will reappear in white.

Constantine

Reviewed: Page 096 **Score:** 7.5
Players: 1

Supernatural detective John Constantine lives a very gloomy existence. It was bad enough having to sell his soul to the devil to cure his lung cancer, but now he's stuck in a dead-end job working for Beeman, an expert in religious relics.

In this demo, you're taking a brief trip to hell to locate one of Beeman's precious artefacts.

At the start of the mission, you must step into the puddle of water and follow the button combination to cast the transportation spell. There won't be much time to breathe once you've made it to hell, so press the Right trigger immediately to draw your primary weapon, the Witch's Curse.

The demons you encounter are sneaky little creeps. If you hear one approaching from behind, click the Left thumbstick for a quick 180° turn. You might also want to switch to True Sight mode occasionally so you can spot enemies from a distance.

If a creature does get close enough to pounce, quickly tap the A button to shake it off. Later on in the mission, you'll recover the crucifier. This nasty little weapon fires the nails used in crucifixions and is just the device for some instant exorcisms. These nails are hard to come by, so make sure you take the time to retrieve any missed shots from the walls and floors.



SNK Vs Capcom: SVC Chaos

Reviewed: Page 066 **Score:** 5.8
Players: 1-2

Whether you're a Ryo Sakazaki (martial arts master) or a Dan Hibki (kung-fu flunkey), this is the most advanced, and scariest, game to come out of the SNK/Capcom stable for some time.

This demo includes four playable fighters - Terry Bogard, Mai Shiranui, Ryu and Chun-Li. Each has a unique set of moves and a few super-specials that can be executed once your groove bar is high enough. The bar increases when you land a hit on your opponent and is depleted when you perform a special.

As usual for SNK fighters, it's possible to buffer normal and special attacks into a combo. For example, Ryu can perform a low sweep straight into a fireball with no pause in between.

SVC Chaos's way of mixing up the basic flow of attack and defence is the Guard Cancel. After an opponent has performed a move, he'll have to pause for a fraction of a second to recover. If you blocked him, tap towards twice or press R to attack while he's vulnerable. It's an easy way to avoid being stunned while you block and regain the initiative.

Try Arcade mode, too. You'll face new CPU opponents like Choi Bounge. See page 109 for a chance to win amazing artwork!



Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams

Reviewed: Coming soon
Score: TBA **Players:** 1

When you're a voodoo priest, there's noting more important than JuJu! It makes the world turn, the beetles crawl and the rivers flow. Tak is still a novice, but he's learning new JuJu spells all the time and this trial mission is no exception.

Having been sent on a quest to recover the Staff of Dreams, you've run into an obstacle that only a Tiki demon can remove. To summon him, you'll need to recover the Tiki totem and place it in the JuJu shrine.

You're not alone on this quest, though. The half-human flea called Jibola is here to help, offering lots of useful advice. Jibola can also be thrown like a projectile at some of the animals in Tak's world. Chuck him onto a squirrel and you can either bite it or send it to sleep.

It's possible to throw your mighty staff like a boomerang, too. This is useful for dealing with venus flytraps, but will only temporarily stun the wood imps.

Later on in the level, you'll learn the JuJu run spell. Simply hold the Left trigger while running or swimming and your speed will be doubled.



Star Wars: Republic Commando

Reviewed: Page 088 **Score:** 9.0
Players: 1

Having a lightsaber held to your throat is a good incentive to try anything. Fortunately though, this trial version of *Star Wars: Republic Commando* is so cool that you won't need any such kind of 'persuasion'.

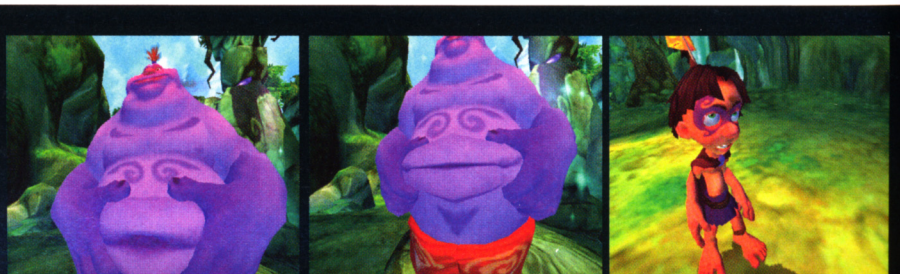
You take on the role of Delta Lead, a clone trooper fighting for the Republic. In this mission, entitled Waking the Giant, Delta Squad managed to infiltrate a Trade Federation Capital Ship. This is no small accomplishment considering the scale of its defences, but the real fight has only just begun. With the droid force fully alerted (not to mention a few Geonosians), you must rendezvous with the rest of Delta Squad and blast a path through to the bridge.

Don't forget that you're in charge of this situation! It's possible to command Delta Squad to perform actions like breaching doors, setting up sniper positions and healing themselves at medical stations. Point your crosshair over key areas until a context-sensitive icon appears in blue. Now press A to issue the command or press A again to cancel it.



Replay

TAK doesn't look impressed with the demon he worked so hard to summon in *Staff of Dreams*. He hardly expected someone who talks with his belly flab!



Unreal Championship 2: The Liandri Conflict

Reviewed: Page 056 | Score: 9.2
Players: 1 | Live: 2-4 players
Players: 2-4 S.Link

XBOX LIVE PLAYABLE

ON THE DISC | Official XBOX Magazine ELITE

BEHOLD, FPS FANS! *Unreal Championship 2* is a chance to leap off the treadmill of 'aim and fire' shooters and make fragging an artform. This demo includes three playable characters (Anubis, Szalon and Lauren) and three awesome battlegrounds. But the ultimate knockout blow is the chance to play with up to four players via System Link or Xbox Live!

The most important evolution is that you're no longer bound to a first-person perspective. Pressing the White button or bringing out a melee weapon switches you into the third-person view. Wielding your melee weapon offers several advantages. Holding both triggers activates an energy shield to counter weapons fire. Tapping the Left trigger just as a foe's rocket is about to hit you will also deflect it back into their faces, which is extremely satisfying!

Clicking the Right stick while an enemy is in view activates the auto lock-on. This makes it easier to hack and slash away without worrying about the camera. It'll also lock-on your charge attacks, performed mid-jump. Either hold the Right trigger for a few seconds or press B (if you have three bars of adrenaline) to execute a deadly pouncing attack.

Adrenaline is vital because it lets you perform special moves. Access these by pressing X, once for the basic moves and twice for extra-special ones. Each character has unique adrenaline moves but you'll need two full blue meters to execute some of them. We love Anubis's Warrior Spirit (see Replay below), Lauren's Wraith state (making her tough to hit), and Szalon's Predator vision (just like the film!) It really is a fresh take on the FPS. Can you feel it?



↑ Get the U-damage power-up for easier kills.



Play:More On The Disc

EARN A PLACE in Xbox history and appear in your section of the Game Disc. Play:More brings you the maddest tricks, and we love to show Xbox Live clans causing mayhem.

Complete and cut out this coupon and attach it to the front of your VHS tape before sending. Entries must be less than ten minutes long and rewound to the correct starting position. Please don't have custom soundtracks playing.



Ather Mubarik sent in this dazzling *Jet Set Radio Future* graffiti. Vanessa gets the full urban treatment in true goth colours! She's not a big fan of pink, but purple is cool!



Secret Elite clan have the great honour of providing our first ever *Halo 2* Play:More video. Here, the guys demonstrate the flying Master Chief glitch.



Some people aren't content to stay inside the level! It seems Matthew Mitchell can climb out of almost any *Halo 2* map. Please don't use these tricks to cheat on Xbox Live!



The *Halo 2* plasma sword is so useful! Josh Richards and co use it as a mountaineering tool to scale the tall buildings in Headlong! Also see a Banshee-surfing MC!



They're trying hard, but Rhys Dawe and Steven Clark can't quite execute the perfect Warthog Jump. The *Halo 2* buggies aren't as durable and fall to pieces almost instantly!

Play:More On The Disc

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Postcode _____

Description of my Top Play _____

❑ I have made sure that custom soundtracks are turned off.

Replay

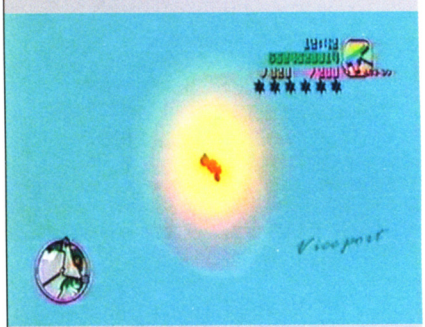
ANUBIS'S Warrior Spirit is one of *UC2*'s must-try adrenaline moves. Combine it with the U-Damage power-up to make you almost unstoppable!





Challenges

ANOTHER TOP challenge league for you. If you want to suggest a new challenge or have some results from an event you've organised, send them into the usual address. We're also going to be running regular leagues based on your entries for Play:More On The Disc.



↑ Fly too close to the sun and get burned!

GRAND THEFT AUTO: DOUBLE PACK

Full game challenge

THE CHALLENGE: Longest distance leap using any vehicle.

NAME	VEHICLE	HEIGHT	DISTANCE
Glyn Horsley	PCJ 2000	60m	516m
Ben Talbot	PCJ 2000	54m	501m
Andy Irving	Cheetah	13m	74m
Ben Lawrence	Ice Cream Van	7m	15m
Your name here	your vehicle	your height	your distance
Your name here	your vehicle	your height	your distance
Your name here	your vehicle	your height	your distance
Your name here	your vehicle	your height	your distance
Your name here	your vehicle	your height	your distance
Your name here	your vehicle	your height	your distance

This month we're starting off the *Grand Theft Auto* long-distance leap challenge. All you have to do is achieve the longest jump possible using any vehicle in either *Grand Theft Auto III* or *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. You don't even have to land it properly, just as long as you don't end up in the sea.

BURNOUT 3: TAKEDOWN

Full game challenge

THE CHALLENGE: Highest Crash Score in 'Cool for Crash' (Europe Crash Junctions, Fifth Set)

NAME	VEHICLE	CRASH DOLLARS
Ben Talbot	Fire Truck	1,996,984
Steve Brown	Fire Truck	1,993,545
Andy Irving	Trash Truck	1,546,600
Ben Lawrence	Delivery Truck	1,000,550
Your name here	your vehicle	your takedowns
Your name here	your vehicle	your takedowns
Your name here	your vehicle	your takedowns
Your name here	your vehicle	your takedowns
Your name here	your vehicle	your takedowns
Your name here	your vehicle	your takedowns

For the best results in Cool for Crash, do a wide curve at the start to collect the pick-ups. Aim for the big rig and try to force it to spill its cargo all over the place. Email your best scores to ben.talbot@futurenet.co.uk – more next month.

CRASH MASTERS: KEEP UP TO DATE WITH THE LATEST CRASH SCORES IN BURNOUT 3 BY VISITING WWW.EAGAMES.COM/OFFICIAL/BURNOUT/BURNOUT3/UK/ONLINE - WE CAN EVEN USE THIS TO VERIFY YOUR CHALLENGE LEAGUE SCORE IF YOU'RE IN THE TOP 100.

The Ultimate Driving Game

Fiat teams up with Xbox to design a limited edition, seriously playful motor...

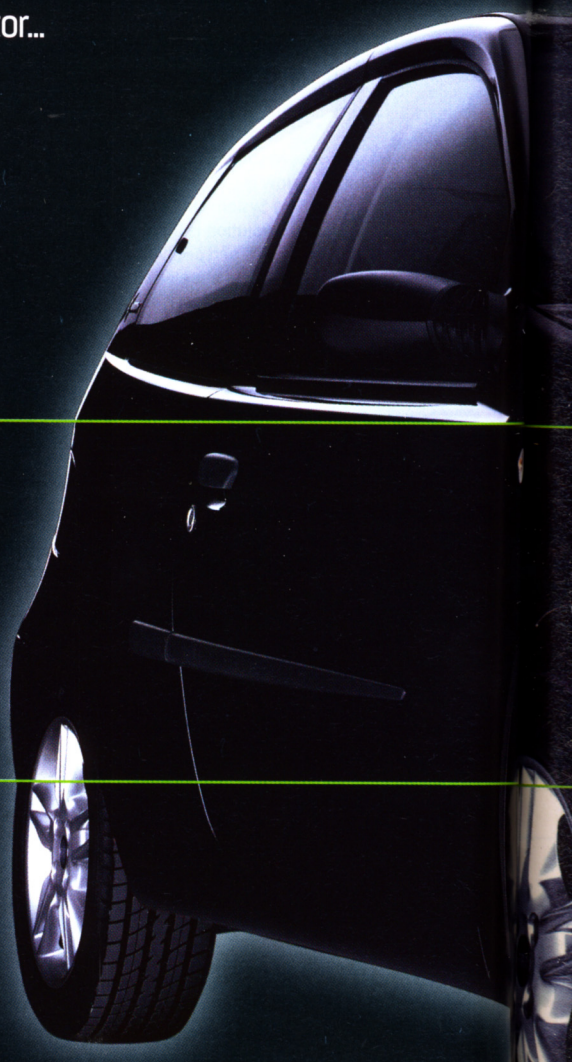
WHAT COULD BE even more desirable than owning a sexy new Fiat – the most stylishly individual and attitude-packed make of car in the world today? Well, Fiat has teamed up with Xbox to offer this incredible limited edition Punto that incorporates cutting-edge features set off with exclusive Xbox magic in the detail. The Punto Xbox is the ultimate driving experience for all Xbox gamers!

With this limited edition Fiat Punto Xbox, £8,995 OTR, Fiat really have thought of everything, combining luxury with performance, convenience with awesome style. From the moment your fingers wrap around the leather grip steering wheel and your feet touch the crafted Xbox car mats, you'll feel in complete control of this powerful motor. This ride is so sweet that your only problem will be keeping your mates from drooling on it. You could always distract them by using your fingertips to turn up the kicking Blaupunkt stereo from the steering-wheel mounted audio controls, or showing off the amazing on-board trip computer!

Fiat is also including an Xbox and a copy of *Forza Motorsport* in this stylish package, so when you do have to leave your cool new Punto Xbox on the drive you can continue your high performance driving experience in the living room! Look out next month when we'll bring you details of the limited edition Fiat Stilo Xbox.

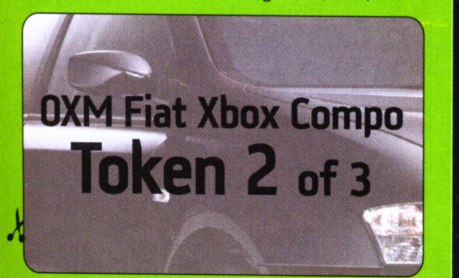


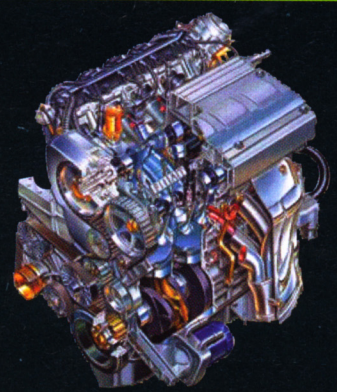
SOUNDS
A motor this stylish wouldn't be complete without a thumping soundtrack. So, right where you want them, you'll find the steering-wheel mounted audio controls for the monstrous six-speaker, 100W subwoofer radio, CD and MP3 player.



WIN £2,000 CASH!

WE ARE offering a £2,000 cash prize to one lucky *OXM* reader! To be in with a chance of claiming this reward, collect three tokens from this Fiat Xbox section – one from last month's February issue, one here and one more in the April *OXM*. Cut them out, stick them on a postcard, and send them to the 'Fiat Xbox Compo', *OXM*, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP before 25 April 2005. Include your name and address and tell us the maximum torque the Fiat Stilo Xbox develops by visiting the site www.fiat.co.uk/xbox. Finally, as a tiebreaker, invent a name for a new Fiat model (eg Punto, Stilo, etc).





PERFORMANCE
Under the bonnet of this limited edition Fiat Punto Xbox purrs a performance 80bhp FIRE 1.2 16v engine. And sitting behind the stylish leather grip steering wheel of the Punto Xbox you'll really feel the difference that the incredible MacPherson suspension, smooth DualDrive™ power steering and on-board trip computer make to your ultimate driving experience!



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT www.fiat.co.uk/xbox OR CALL FREE 0800 71 7000

TERMS AND CONDITIONS PURCHASE-RELATED INCENTIVE
1. This promotional purchase incentive is open to any person resident in the UK who is 18 years of age or older. Employees of Fiat Auto UK and Microsoft or their affiliates, subsidiaries, advertising or promotion agencies are not eligible, nor are members of these employees' families (defined as parents, children, siblings, spouse and life partners). 2. Upon purchase of either the Punto Xbox 1.2 16v Active Sport £8,995 OTR or the Fiat Stilo Xbox 1.6 16v Active Sport £11,995 OTR, customers will receive a FREE Xbox console (retailing at £99.99) and a FREE playable preview of *Forza Motorsport* plus a voucher to claim the full version of *Forza Motorsport* on the game's release (retail price £39.99) in April 2005. This release date may be subject to change. 3. This promotional incentive will not be available on any other Fiat models apart from the vehicles printed in these terms and conditions. 4. Offer commences 22/01/2005 and closes 30/05/2005. No cash or other alternatives available. No other offers may be used in conjunction with this offer. 5. Customers will receive the Xbox consoles within 28 days of purchase. 6. The *Forza Motorsport* game will not be released until 15 April 2005, however this is subject to change. If purchases of either limited edition vehicle are made prior to this date, customers will receive a voucher as confirmation, and be sent the *Forza Motorsport* game upon release. Promoter: Fiat Auto UK, 240 Bath Road, Slough, Berkshire, SL1 4DX.

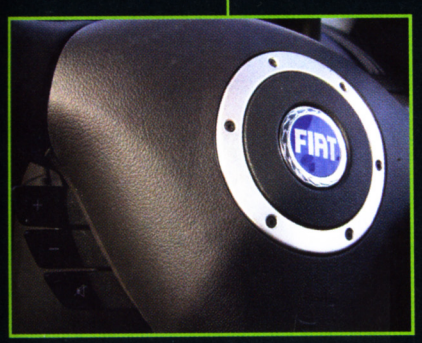




STYLE
The Fiat Punto Xbox's cool metallic black paint is set off by the ultra-desirable 15" silver alloy wheels and fog lights, stylish bodywork with subtle Xbox branding, sports-moulded bumpers and spoiler. The inside is just as swish, with crafted Xbox car mats lining the floor and a soft, comfortable leather grip sports wheel.



Fuel consumption figures mpg (l/100km) and CO_2 emissions (g/km)
Punto 1.2 16v: Urban 37.2 (7.6), Extra Urban 56.5 (5.0), Combined 47.1(6.0), 142 CO_2 g/km



SAFETY
While the Punto Xbox 80bhp FIRE engine delivers an intense driving experience, the ABS, EBD and driver and passenger airbags will ensure that the experience is also a very safe one. And in the unlikely event of you ever wanting to get out of this ultra-desirable car, a plip of the remote central locking system will make your Punto Xbox just as safe when parked up.



NEXT MONTH - STILO

FIAT

STYLISH STILO: DON'T FORGET TO CHECK BACK NEXT MONTH FOR THE THIRD COMPO VOUCHER AND DETAILS ON THE FIAT STILO XBOX!

LiveCalendar

Your official guide to the hot game releases, events and Xbox Live gaming sessions for the next month

FRI 25 FEBRUARY 2005

Brothers in Arms Road to Hill 30 out today in standard and limited-edition tin versions! http://brothersinarms game.com/uk

SAT 26 FEBRUARY 2005

Friends night - the night to meet new people and bolster your Friends list! www.xbox.com/en-GB/live/calendar/default.htm

SUN 27 FEBRUARY 2005

New Releases Day - the night to play *Dead or Alive Ultimate*! Read the Xbox Live update on page 112. www.xbox.com/en-GB

MON 28 FEBRUARY 2005

Race Night - put on your smartest alloys for *Need for Speed Underground 2*. http://nfsu2.eagames.co.uk

TUES 01 MARCH 2005

Just for Fun Night - a night dedicated to laid back gaming. Try a relaxing game of *Tetris Worlds*. www.thq.com/tetrisworlds/main.html

WEDS 02 MARCH 2005

Sports Night - have a kick about with the best in Europe. *UEFA Champions League 2004-2005*. http://easports.co.uk

THURS 03 MARCH 2005

Classics Night - *SNK Vs Capcom: SVC Chaos*. Don't forget to try this month's trial version (see page 106). www.ignitionent.com

FRI 04 MARCH 2005

Star Wars: Republic Commando is released today. www.lucasarts.com/games/swrepubliccommando

SAT 05 MARCH 2005

Don't forget to check your progress on the *Halo 2* leader boards. Where do you rank? www.bungie.net

SUN 06 MARCH 2005

New Releases Day - the night to go online with *Brothers in Arms Road to Hill 30*. http://brothersinarms game.com/uk

MON 07 MARCH 2005

Race Night - show no mercy when it comes to *Burnout 3*. Take them down. http://burnout3.eagames.co.uk/flash_mx/player.asp

TUES 08 MARCH 2005

Feeling left out? Find out where you can get the best deal on *Halo 2*! www.xbox.com/en-GB/halo2/halo2offers.htm

WEDS 09 MARCH 2005

The Games Developers Conference '05 Expo begins today in San Francisco! www.gdconf.com

GameDevelopers Conference

THURS 10 MARCH 2005

Classics Night - see how the original *DOA* shapes up in *Dead or Alive Ultimate*. www.xbox.com/en-GB/deadoraliveultimate/default.htm

FRI 11 MARCH 2005

More than 300 pieces of downloadable content are now available. Check out the full list at www.xbox.com/en-GB/live/downloads/default.htm

SAT 12 MARCH 2005

Play Xbox Live at the Bay Sixty6 skate park in Ladbroke Grove, West London. www.xbox.com/en-GB/community/baysixty6.htm

SUN 13 MARCH 2005

New Releases Day - *Star Wars: Republic Commando* is today's hot new game. www.lucasarts.com/games/swrepubliccommando

MON 14 MARCH 2005

Race Night - one last go at *PGR2* before you start on *Forza*. www.xbox.com/en-gb/projectgotham2

TUES 15 MARCH 2005

Just for Fun Night - go back to the glory days with *Steel Battalion: Line of Contact*. www.capcom.com/xpml/game.xpml?gameid=750071

WEDS 16 MARCH 2005

Sports Night - improve your handicap in *Outlaw Golf 2*. www.globalstar software.com/games/outlawgolf2

THURS 17 MARCH 2005

Classics Night - dust off your copy of *Midtown Madness 3*. www.xbox.com/en-gb/midtownmadness3

FRI 18 MARCH 2005

No time to waste! Rush to the shops for *TimeSplitters: Future Perfect*. www.eagames.com/redesign/games/ps2/timesplitters/home.jsp

SAT 19 MARCH 2005

Shooting and fighting night is back! A monster session on *Halo 2* is the order of the day. www.halo2.com

SUN 20 MARCH 2005

New Releases Day - the night to try *Project Snowblind*. www.projectsnowblind.com

MON 21 MARCH 2005

Race Night - put the pedal to the metal in *OutRun 2*. http://outrun2.sega-europe.com

TUES 22 MARCH 2005

Just for Fun Night - wriggle to victory in *Worms Forts: Under Siege*. www.wormsforts.com

WEDS 23 MARCH 2005

The closing date for all of this month's challenges and competitions (see page 105).

THURS 24 MARCH 2005

OXM41 hits the shops today! Subscribe to get your copy delivered direct and save loads of cash! www.officialxboxmagazine.co.uk (see page 052).

Dates subject to change due to reasons beyond our control

Coming Soon

Better start saving for these...

GAME	GAME TYPE	RELEASED
25 to Life	Shooter	Spring 05
Area 51	Shooter	2005
Battlestations: Midway	Strategy	Summer 05
Black	FPS	Summer 05
Black 9	Action	TBA
Close Combat: First to Fight	FPS	Spring 05
Commandos Strike Force	FPS	Summer 05
Conflict: Global Terror	Action	September 05
Conker: Live and Reloaded	Action	Spring 05
CT Special Forces	FPS	Spring 05
DarkWatch	FPS	03/05
Dead to Rights 2	Shooter	TBA
Delta Force: BHD	FPS	2005
Destroy All Humans!	Action	Summer 05
Doom 3	FPS	03/05
ESPN NCAA	Sports	TBA
Far Cry Instincts	Shooter	Summer 05
FIFA Street	Sports	11 March
Forza Motorsport	Driving	04/05
Jade Empire	RPG	Spring 05
Juiced	Driving	May 05
King of Fighters 02/03	Beat 'em up	TBA
LA Rush	Racing	Summer 05
Medal of Honor: Dogs of War	FPS	Summer 05
Mortal Kombat: S'lin Monks	Action	Summer 05
MotoGP: URT 3	Racing	2005
MX Vs ATV Unleashed	Racing	02/05
NASCAR 2005	Sports	Spring 05
NFL 2K5	Sports	Spring 05
Painkiller	FPS	2005
Phantom Dust	Action shooter	2005
Project: Snowblind	FPS	TBA
Rainbow Six: Lockdown	Shooter	03/05
Raze's Hell	Action	Spring 05
Serious Sam 2	Shooter	TBA
Sid Meier's Pirates!	Action	Spring 05
Spikeout: Battle Street	Beat 'em up	03/05
Splinter Cell Chaos Theory	Action	03/05
StarCraft: Ghost	Action	Winter 04
Star Wars: Rep. Commando	FPS	04 March
Stubbs: Rebel Without a Pulse	Action	Summer 05
TimeShift	FPS	Autumn 05
Unreal Championship 2: TLC	Shooter	15 April
World Champ Snooker 2005	Sports	Summer 05
Worms 4: Mayhem	Party	Summer 05
Wrestlemania 21	Sports	Spring 05



↑ Commandos Strike Force



↑ Worms 4: Mayhem

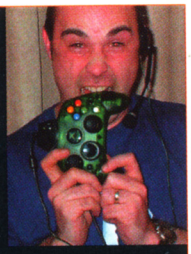
BT

www.bt.com/xboxlive

XBOX COMPATIBLE

BT www.bt.com/xboxlive XBOX COMPATIBLE

Game Star of the Month



Name: Paul Sunter
Age: Not telling!
GamerTag: Looney N
Home town: Darwen, Lancashire

PAUL IS the brains behind Vagusnet.com's first live televised gaming event. This *Halo 2* tourney saw some of the best players in the UK compete for the Livewire TV Championship. "*Halo 2* is my favourite game, especially on Live," he says. "My wife Gem's accused me of having an affair with my Xbox! Everything's been neglected due to the planning of the Vagusnet.com tournament."

Paul worked for several weeks putting the event together. "We had a massive response and entry list for the first rounds, which were fiercely fought." Paul reveals. "The players were ranked from level 4 right the way up to level 23! There were some very competitive games."

Congratulations to Lethal for winning the tourney, and B1ot who was the runner-up. Special thanks to Father Fil, Boidster and Floydd, without whom the tournament would never have happened. Paul is looking into what games to use for his next tournament and he'd like to hear from you. Visit www.vagusnet.com for info.

The Birdman Cometh!

UK FIFA Champion in goal-scoring rampage!

HAVING WON the UK FIFA Championship, Paul 'The Birdman' Gordon is determined to make his year at the top a great one. We invited him to *OXM* to give us, and some of you, the chance to play him on Live. Paul and Ben T joined forces at the start of the day with a *Halo 2* battle. Plenty of readers wanted a piece of the action, including several forumites like BBIAJ.

FIFA 2005 was always going to be Paul's trump card, and it wasn't long before the first kick-off. After taking a 3-0 lead against his first opponent in the opening half, the other player quit, obviously running scared. Paul's ace stats (he's always been in the top ten players in the world) were enough to frighten a lot of players away before the matches even started! Paul won a succession of games with extreme confidence and skill. The score lines were tremendous. 4-1, 6-0, 5-1, were just a few of the great full-time results.



↑ No matter how hard Ben concentrates, he'll never win.

The X-Word



With Xbox Live Community Manager Gareth Morris

THE XBOX Live community is about to get a treat. From 01 March we begin the new Xbox Live Calendar and it's going to be big and very, very good. Each month we'll be giving away some very sumptuous consumer electronics to Live gamers everywhere as well as hundreds of pieces of merchandise from Xbox titles - and no, you can't buy this in the shops!

We also have some rather special grass-roots stuff going down. You can get on Xbox.com and challenge our Calendar Clan of the Month through the Calendar Forums, or see who's up for a Game With Fame. Or check out our special Game Mode Night where you can join in some unofficial fun that the Live Community have made up themselves - check out the custom mode guide for *Halo 2* if you're confused! And the Calendar will still have the Live faves such as Mystery Gamer, and no, we still aren't revealing his identity!

View the Live calendar at xbox.com from 01 March. If you have any questions you can find me online - my Gamertag is Fluxian and I'm currently level 6 on *Halo 2*.

The Chaos Continues! Win SNK Vs Capcom art!

SNK HAS A long-running reputation for striking character design and artwork. One of its best known illustrators is the Japanese artist Falcoon, who also created the stunning box art for *SNK Vs Capcom: SVC Chaos*. Don't forget to try out our exclusive trial version on this month's Game Disc.

We've been fortunate enough to get hold of two incredible prints of Falcoon's *SNK* art, signed by the man himself!

All you have to do to be in with a chance of winning them is to dress up as one of the characters from *SNK Vs Capcom: SVC Chaos*, *Street Fighter* or *King of Fighters*. Photograph yourself, send it in and remember to tell us which character you're meant to be.

Send your entries via email to ben.talbot@futurenet.co.uk or via post to Fight in Real Earnest! *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, London, W1U 6FP. The closing date is Thursday 24 March 2005, so get snapping!



Challenges

HALO 2
Xbox Live Challenge
The Challenge: Win a battle of swords on Midship in the vagusnet.com televised *Halo 2* tournament.

RANK	GAMERTAG	BEST SPREE	SCORE
1.	o0 Lethal 0o	7	54
2.	NuKeD 2k4	6	37
2.	Rowb0t	6	37
4.	Rowns	5	36
5.	B1ot	4	28
6.	La1	3	26
7.	zz NoobNoob	4	26
8.	I Dreadn00b I	4	18

Some of you right remember Lethal, aka Harry Thomas, from Issue 35 where he appeared as our Game Star of the Month. He totally dominated vagusnet.com's live *Halo 2* tournament broadcast on Games Network's LiveWire.

BT www.bt.com/xboxlive XBOX COMPATIBLE

LEGENDS OF ROCK: THIS MONTH: ROCK BAND INCUBUS, WHO CREATED SOME TOP TUNES FOR *HALO 2*'S SOUNDTRACK. TOOK PART IN A GAME WITH FAME EVENT ON XBOX LIVE IN THE US.

LiveReviews

We take a look at recently reviewed Xbox Live-enabled games and rate their online performance



↑ Sinister makes an impression in the sand using MC Monobrow's face. Ouch!

Dead or Alive Ultimate

Beautiful girls love to fight. Fact!

- Reviewed: Issue 39
- Score: 8.8
- Players: 1-4
- Live: 2-4 players

IT'S NOT ALL about tits and ass, you know. Okay, so it's probably a safe bet that supporting female empowerment wasn't the first thing on Tomonobu Itagaki's mind. However, *Dead or Alive Ultimate* gives you three good excuses to dive into Tecmo's legendary fighting series.

First, only six of the 15 fighters are scantily clad females. Second, these women are angrier than a suffragette watching a *Carry On* movie. Finally, and most importantly, this is a deep, sophisticated beat 'em up that you can be proud to own and master.

Both games in this two-disc set are a joy online, although the original *DOA* seems a little redundant in comparison to its superior sequel. Matches start with a lobby with space for up to eight players. Two players fight; the others spectate and wait their turn.

How long you have to wait mostly depends on the mode. The most popular is Winner Stays On, where the host is usually a player with mad skills. They tend to stay connected until either someone beats them or they're nearing starvation. Newbies will be better off jumping into Loser Stays On. If you don't mind being used as a punching bag, this is a much better way to gain fighting experience.

Team battle games present both players with a team of five characters. Even with the option to spectate, move the camera and add commentary, they tend to go on for ages and can be a little boring to watch. This mode is best kept for private games.

You never have to wait for opponents in Kumite mode. Each defeated foe is instantly replaced with another, with no breathing space. You can't even pause it! You can tell who's been playing Kumite the most. Not just because they're as hard as Vanessa's homemade fairy cakes but because they have a high combat grade. This appears above your energy bar and is calculated by the number of games you've won figured into the strength of your opponents.

There's a laudable selection of stats and figures, including a reliability rating for opponents, giving you a good idea if they're going to quit out at the first hint of a hiding. In any case, you'll hardly ever be able to use lag as an excuse for losing. The only seriously laggy games we played were against a minority of Japanese and American players. In all other cases, the punches were flowing without hindrance. Thanks in part to the cleverly devised lobby and spectator system, there's no shortage of games to join either. Optimatch works flawlessly too.

Throw away any doubts about the *DOA* series. This is the complete Live package and the first game to pull off online 3D fighting successfully.



↑ The fries indicate a massive winning streak.



QUEEN OF FIGHTERS

Of all the stats and figures, one of the most unusual is a rating for the most popular characters in America, Asia and the rest of the world. At the moment, Ayane is the most popular character to use by a long way. She's closely followed by Kasumi and Jan-Lee. It seems the faster characters tend to suit more people's playing styles. We prefer Tina because of her violent wrestling moves.



↑ Watching the experienced players scrap is just as exciting as participating.



↑ The camera is adjustable in real time.

The Verdict

A nearly flawless Xbox Live experience. Must rate as the second biggest killer app for Xbox Live after *Halo 2*.

5//5

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MechAssault 2: Lone Wolf

Lone gunmen are rare in this fabulous friend-making shooter

Reviewed: Issue 38 | Score: 8.3
Players: 1; 2-12 S.Link | Live: 2-12 players

LONE WOLF was developed with online play firmly in mind, and the result is a brilliant Live experience. On the surface, it looks like any other online mech shooter. All the regular modes are here, like Destruction and Team Destruction, CTF, Check It (King of the Hill) and the monster mash-up of Base War. We were blown away by the smooth transition the single-player game makes to Live; it's great fun to talk to team-mates and hop into complementing vehicles before co-ordinating an attack. And there's *nothing* like the feeling of foiling an enemy's Neural Jacking attempt, then crushing them underfoot.

Enter the Conquest mode however, and a dynamic MMO strategy game-cum-shooter is at your fingertips. Players join one of five warring houses and attempt to take over the galaxy through a series of battles. Your house must forge attack routes to valuable planets, and due to the number of games going on, possession of territory is in perpetual fluidity. With constantly updated stats and a dead easy interface, this really helps build an absorbing online community. Matches between houses have to be pre-arranged and involve various game types dependent on the planet/teams involved, but this only helps to promote inter-clan communication.

We played the Limited Edition *Lone Wolf*. It's the same as the regular version, save for a making-of feature and the option to download two additional multiplayer maps. You'd do well to save the extra pennies though - we couldn't find a single game online featuring these two exclusive maps.



↑ Tear it up in a tank and use its stealth mode.



↑ *Lone Wolf* is a complete and rewarding online experience. Buy it!

The Verdict

Delivers both accessible short-term blasting and a fantastic 'career' mode of sorts that'll keep you coming back.

5//5

Outlaw Golf 2

Scandalously swinging its way online

Reviewed: Issue 38 | Score: 7.0
Players: 1-4 | Live: 2-4 players

WE'VE BEEN crying out for a decent Live golf title. Sure, *Links 2004* (Issue 24, 8.4) was okay while MSN lasted, and playing with Live Tigers is something only the Yanks (and Siegfried and Roy, well, just Siegfried now) get to enjoy. As a result, *Outlaw Golf 2* has chipped decisively into view.

Like the offline game, the modes are typically left field, and it's great to see all are present and correct. Pick Up Sticks lets players steal clubs from an opponent's bag, and while the Vegas and Casino modes are fun if money makes your world go round, the mad Bingo Bango has to be seen to be believed. Every mode has its corresponding Leaderboard, though some of the more obscure games only require a few straight wins to drive to the top.

The four-way multiplayer option is a great touch, and you have the option to create as many different custom Tournaments as you like, provided you've got that many friends. *Oulaw Golf 2* still uses the now seemingly redundant power bar swing system, and there are only eight courses in total on offer, though there is the future prospect of further DLC with new courses and characters. It's not the deepest golf sim around, but certainly the most fun one to grace the online greens.



↑ Play three different opponents online. Bagsy the one with the cute butt.



↑ Sink your putts first time or face ridicule.

The Verdict

Fun in short blasts. Limited courses hamper career longevity, but the riotous game modes will entertain for ages.

3//5

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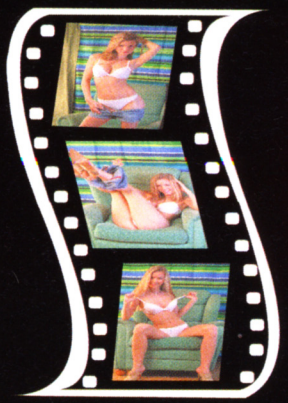

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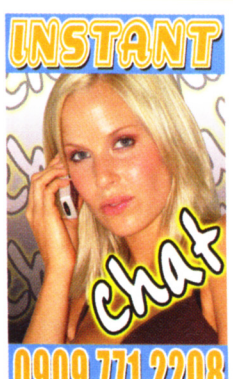









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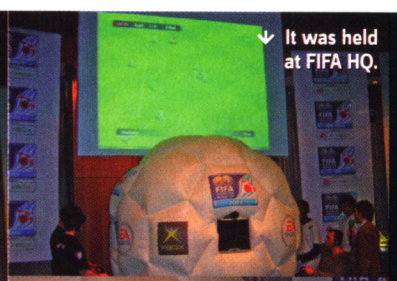
YourShout

Reader events
This month, we attend the FIFA Interactive World Cup Final!



↓ The giant football pod, made especially for the event .



↓ It was held at FIFA HQ.



↓ Thiago was unstoppable!

IT'S NOT just elite athletes that pick up the top sports awards. The first ever Interactive World Cup took place recently in Zurich, with Brazil cleaning up once again...

RONALDINHO, THIERRY Henry, Andriy Shevchenko, Thiago... spot the odd one out. Yes, he's Brazilian, 21 years old and a FIFA World Cup winner, but Thiago Carico de Azevedo weaves his samba magic not with his feet, but his Controller S.

December saw the grand final of the 2004 FIFA Interactive World Cup, the climax of a global competition played with EA's *FIFA Football 2005* (Issue 35, 8.9), exclusively on Xbox and Xbox Live. Regional heats played at locations around the globe gave all-comers an opportunity to win the title of FIFA Interactive Player of the Year, and be presented their award alongside the finalists for the FIFA World Player of the Year. For Thiago, the win was made sweeter still as fellow Brazilian Ronaldinho picked up the top honour to make it a one-two for the South Americans.

No expense was spared for the eight finalists - Shimane Morekure from South Africa, Matija Biljeskovic of the USA, Yoon Seo Park of South Korea, Shane Magee of Australia, Paul Gordon of Great Britain, Massimiliano Lucchese of Italy, Kai Kretschmann of Germany and Thiago Carico de Azevedo of Brazil were all flown to FIFA's HQ in Zurich for the final. As a fresh blanket of snow sent temperatures plunging outside, things began hotting up in the packed auditorium as the preliminary group stages swung into action.

But there was disaster in store for Paul Gordon, the British representative. Despite being cool and quietly confident beforehand, a few lapses of concentration and the unfortunate intervention of the woodwork on a number of occasions saw Gordon crash out of the competition without a win. That left two clear favourites with the crowd: straight-talking Aussie Shane (host: "Do you play a kick and rush style, like in Australian rugby?" Shane, perplexed: "No mate, this is football, it's nothing like rugby.") and South Africa's Shimane, whose entire family turned up to cheer him on, helping him to an impressive three wins out of three in the opening stages.

The first semi-final saw Thiago pitted against professional gamer Yoon Seo Park. Despite being paid to play games for a living in his native South Korea, Yoon was unable to match Thierry Henry's virtual hat trick under Thiago's control, going down 3-2. That left American Matija Beljeskovic's AC Milan to square up to Shimane's Manchester United, in what turned out to be a slightly bizarre display of crosses and headed goals, finally ending 6-3 in extra time as the ninth close-range header of the game found the back of Shimane's net.

On that form, who could possibly stop Matija's flying forward line? Turns out that Thiago had got wise to that trick, defending stubbornly whilst finding time to bang in two goals of his own. A brave fight back from Matija took it to 2-1 in the final moments, but it was too little too late, as the final whistle blew and put the name of Thiago Carico de Azevedo into the history books as the winner of the inaugural FIFA Interactive World Cup.



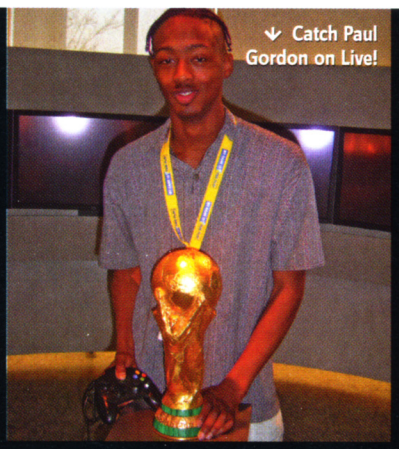
← The only chance we will ever get to touch it!

IF YOU ARE running a major Xbox event or competition, let us know about it! Write to Your Shout, *Official Xbox Magazine*, 99 Baker Street, London W1U 6FP.

↓ 8 CONTENDERS



Shane Aus | Thiago Brazil | Kai Germany | Massimo Italy | Yoon S Korea | Shimane SA | Paul UK | Matija USA



↓ Catch Paul Gordon on Live!

Are you the best in Britain?

JUST HOW good are you at *FIFA Football 2005*? Do you fancy going up against the UK Champion? Well here he is, Paul Gordon, Gamertag BIRDMANSNR. Keep an eye out for him on Xbox Live if you fancy your chances. Word has it that he's giving EA advice about how to improve next year's game, and wants to be in it! True champions never rest on their laurels, you know.



↑ World Champione!

And the Winner is...

WITH HANDS literally a blur, it was no wonder Thiago walked off with the ultimate accolade. "I was expecting to be in the top three players, but not to win," said Thiago at the post-match press conference. So what's the secret of his success?

"I chose to play as France basically because of Thierry Henry. In previous *FIFA* games I used to play as Brazil, but in this game, I think Henry is head and shoulders above all the other players. So I either play as France or Arsenal." With Henry's prolific goal scoring a major factor in Thiago's success, who can argue with that?

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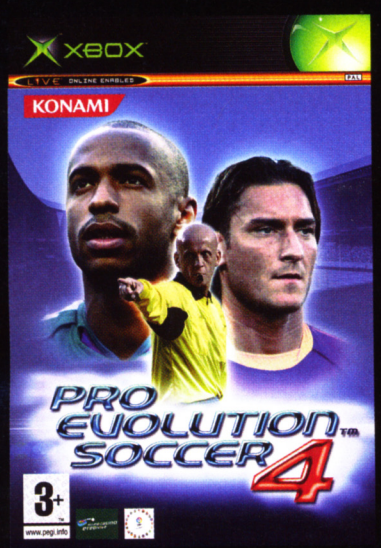

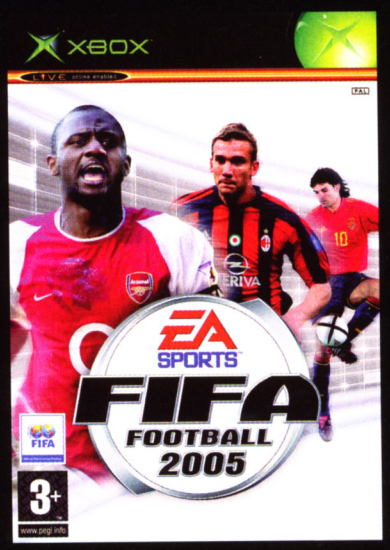

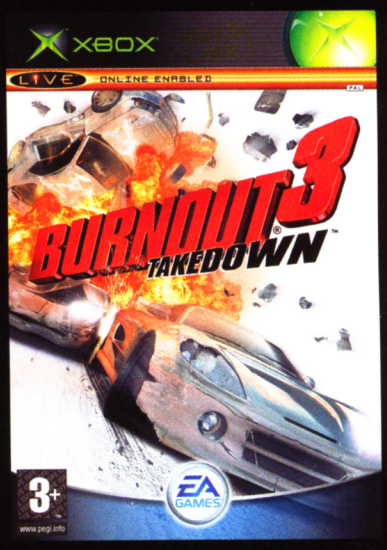





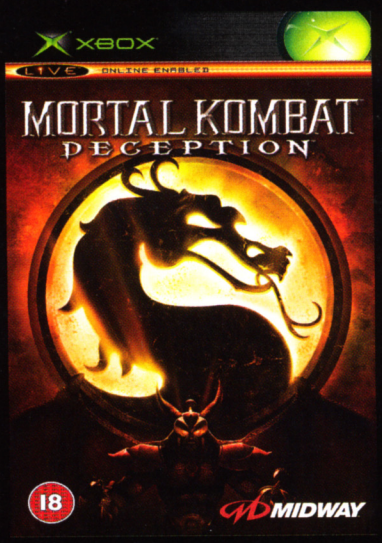

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10-minute Masterclass

How to play ten of the most popular custom Halo 2 games

NEW CUSTOM game types for *Halo 2* are popping up all the time. Are you confused when someone suggests a game of Zombies or Ghostbusters? To avoid looking like a *Halo 2* dunce, read our guide to the most popular game modes, created by some of the best players at www.bungie.net's forum.

Some of these games have been around for months, some are newer, and we've thrown in a few that the *OXM* team have created and played to death. If you've created an awesome custom game, email a description to ben.talbot@futurenet.co.uk - you could see it in a future 10-minute masterclass!



CHILLI TAG This is a Juggernaut game type where each player has only three lives. It's a last man standing affair, so turn the time limit off and switch the primary and secondary weapons to magnum and shotgun. Motion sensor should also be switched off.



TRUE SNIPERS Vicious and cruel; only for Slayer sharphooters. Turn off the time limit, shields, motion sensor and power-ups. Ensure the vehicles are gone and the weapons set is switched to snipers. Sniper rifle, beam rifle and carbine only.



TEXAS HOLD 'EM A King of the Hill variant. Three-minute time limit with motion sensor and active camo on. Switch on Uncontested Hill as well as the team time multiplier. Shotguns as both the starting weapon and map weapons set.



SILENT HILL Scary King of the Hill game type. Everyone has active camo and no motion sensor. Sword and sniper rifle as primary and secondary weapon. Weapon respawn set to double. Best in one of the bigger maps with 16 players.



DEMOLITION DERBY Being a skilful driver is key to winning this King of the Hill variant. Primary and secondary vehicles set to warthog and gauss warthog. Three-minute time limit and a 30-second betrayal penalty to stop you killing your pals.



BRUTEBALL Shields off, toughness with ball on. Respawn set to three seconds; time limit two minutes. Primary and secondary weapons are brute shot and brute plasma. Map weapons turned off so you have to kill a foe to get more ammo.



GHOSTBUSTERS Another Juggernaut variant. Motion sensor and active camo both on. Grenades and vehicles both off. Juggernaut damage resistance also on. Sentinel beam as primary weapon with no other weapons on the map.



PISTOLS AT DAWN This is a Blood Gulch Slayer with 16 players. No shields, no motion sensor, active camo or overshield. First to 100 kills wins - simple! No time limit, no weapons on map. Grenades and vehicles are allowed.



ZOMBIES A Team Slayer game. One player (the 'zombie') is alone on the red team and can only use a plasma sword. The blue team can only use shotguns. Blue players who die must switch teams to be a zombie. Last blue player alive wins.



FIGHT CLUB A King of the Hill game. Two players at a time enter the hill and must kill each other with melee attacks. Winner stays in the hill and another player enters. Shields off, weapons set to plasma pistol. No shooting or grenades.

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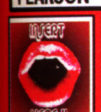
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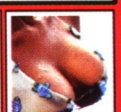
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1965	Eric Prydz	Call on Me	3915	JoJo	Baby It's You
1722	Jo Jo	Leave	6603	Anastacia	Left Outside Alone
7775	The Streets	Dry Your Eyes	5872	Scooter	The Logical Song
9469	Natasha Bedingfield	These..	7165	50 Cent	In Da Club
9596	Usher	Burn	3981	Eminem	Just Lose It
4435	Usher	Yeah	7687	Avril Lavigne	My Happy Ending
2954	Robbie Williams	Radio	3394	Khia	My Neck, My Back
5533	Maroon 5	This Love	0397	Michael Jackson	Billie Jean
2302	Girls Aloud	Love Machine	8587	P.I.M.P.	50 Cent
6663	Eamon	Don't Want You Back	9119	Britney Spears	Toxic
1627	Nelly	My Place	2726	Usher	Confessions Part II
1178	Maroon 5	She Will Be Loved	2956	Danzel	Pump It Up
8400	Ultrabeat	Pretty Green Eyes	4253	McFly	Obviously
6718	D12	My Band	9603	O Zone	Dragostea Din Tei
8098	XTM	Fly on the Wings of Love	3300	Britney Spears	My Prerogative
9109	D-12	How Come	2317	Green Day	American Idiot
9006	DJ Casper	Cha Cha Slide	2977	The Streets	Blinded By The Light
8809	Busted	Thunderbirds Are Go	3979	Usher and Alicia Keys	My Boo

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2391	Steve Brookstein	Against All Od..	5816	Jamie Scott	Searching★
2253	Band Aid 20	Do They Know It's..	3984	Kanye West	Workout Plan
4001	Kylie	I Believe In You★	3755	Kells & Andre 3000	Millionaire
3133	Ronan Keating	Father & Son	4001	Kylie	I Believe In You
5401	Ice Cube	You Can Do It	3144	Lil Jon	What You Can Do
2053	Green Day	Boulevard of Broke..	5808	Lucie Silvas	Breathe In★
2043	Unlling Nations	Out of Touch	9563	Mario Winans	I Don't Wanna..
3998	Lemar	If There's Any Justice	2039	Maroon 5	Sunday Morning
4022	Nelly & Christina	Tilt Ya Head..	4041	Marques Houston	Because Of You
4724	Natasha Bedingfield	Unwritten	4021	McFly	Room on the Third Floor
4033	Gwen Stefani	What You Waiting..	4619	Mousse T	Right About Now
4603	Girls Aloud	I'll Stand By You	5208	Nadia	A Little Bit Action
4024	Snoop Dogg	Drop It Like It's Hot	4724	Natasha Bedingfield	Unwritten
2396	Lethal Bizzle	Pow	3131	Nelly	Na NaNa Na★
5281	Merrion	Soda Pop	4022	Nelly & Christina	Tilt Ya Head Back
5381	Destiny's Child	Lose my Breath	6379	Outkast	Hey Ya
2040	Jay Z ft Linkin Park	Numb	5209	Outkast	Ghetto Musick
3981	Christina & Missy	Car Wash	3147	Paul Holt	50 Grand for Xma★
1965	Eminem	Just Lose It	9408	Peter Andre	Mysterious Girl
3911	Eric Prydz	Call on Me	5226	Pop	Serious
1625	Mousse T	Is It Cause I'm..	5809	Rachel McFarlane	Lover
5208	Nadia	A Little Bit Action	2656	Rachel Stevens	More More More
3131	Nelly	Na NaNa Na	4725	Robbie Williams	Misunderstood
4022	Nelly & Christina	Tilt Ya	5401	Ice Cube	You Can Do It★
3147	Paul Holt	50 Grand for Xmas	3653	The Killers	Somebody Told Me
5226	Pop	Serious	5217	The Streets	Could Well Be In
4118	Sugarcult	She's The Blade	3135	Westlife	Smile★
3653	The Killers	Somebody Told..	4728	Westlife	Fly Me to the Moon

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8559	Tv & Film Kill Bill	3393	Deep Dish Flashdance
8561	Tv & Film Lord Of The Rings	1243	Dj Otzi Hey Baby
1486	Tv & Film Knight Rider	7874	Dj Sammy Heaven
8488	Tv & Film Starsky and Hutch	1965	Eric Prydz Call on Me
0076	Tv & Film The Muppets	0421	Faithless I Want More
0091	Tv & Film The Simpsons	3925	Michael Gray The Weekend
9476	Tv & Film Alias	9255	Nina Sky Move Ya Body
6823	Tv & Film The OC	5872	Scooter The Logical Song
3839	Tv & Film One Tree Hill	2733	Stonebridge Put Em High

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2448	BRITNEY SPEARS Everytime	1601	MCFLY Obviously
2414	D 12 How Come	3622	MCFLY Room On Third Floor
2093	DELTA GOODREM Out Of The..	3896	NELLY My Place
3616	GIRLS ALOUD I'll Stand By You	2472	O ZONE Dragostea Din Tei
3893	GIRLS ALOUD Love Machine	5082	R KELLY Happy People
3619	GWEN STEFANI What You..	5088	RACHEL STEVENS More More..
2458	J KWON Tipsy	5086	ROBBIE WILLIAMS Radio
3620	JO JO Baby's Its You	2090	U2 Vertigo
3895	JO JO Leave	2477	USHER Burn

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Masterclass: KOTOR II Episode Two!

Fed up of being a goody two-shoes Jedi? Want to rule the galaxy as a tyrant? Then this is the guide for you. Complete Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords on the Dark Side

LAST MONTH in OXM, we helped you save the galaxy and beat back the Sith as the very model of a valiant Jedi Knight. This month, we're sick of being nice guys. Read on for *OXM*'s guide to building better bastards, as we take you through the Dark Side path of *Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II*.

AS YOU might remember from the original *KOTOR*, being a Dark Jedi means fighting a lot. You'll run headlong into at least three potentially difficult fights that a Light Side character doesn't have to deal with. Therefore, it's a very good idea to make at least one of your classes a warrior type, such as the Sith Marauder.

Being a Sith's easy enough. When presented with conversational options, you simply choose the most vile one on the list. Threaten civilians. Chop people in half for trivial offences. Kill anyone who looks mildly offensive. Corrupt others. You know the drill by now.

Your stats are a matter of personal preference. You'll want to have some facility with the violent arts, but you can often be just as evil by simply using Persuade. A high Charisma also helps if you want to use Light Side powers like, oh, say, Heal.

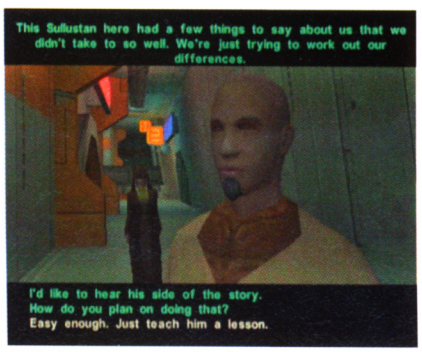
This walkthrough, unlike last month's, assumes your character's male.

WALKTHROUGH
PERAGUS

Use the medical computer to open the morgue door. Inside, you'll find Kreia and a plasma torch; be rude to the former for your first DSP, and use the latter to open the stuck door.



↑ "If I've got to be evil, everyone's got to be evil!"



↑ Incite wanton slaughter! It's fun!



↑ You'll need some parts before you can go any further.

Now head over to the communications blister, and use its console to unlock the detention centre. Free Atton, and use the console to contact the hangar bay.

You're now T3. Head west for parts, which you'll need to fix the hangar computer. Overload the droid in the cargo room, thus opening the door and letting you grab the computer spikes inside. Slice the hangar console and open the fuel depot and emergency hatch.

As the exile, head through the mining tunnels. Your goal is the central control chamber, where you will be able to alter the droids' programming and disable the containment fields. Go up the turbolift to the southeast.

Open the cylinder near the workbench for the Sonic Imprint Sensor. With a bit of Persuasion, you can trick the HK into reciting the voiceprint code. Use it to open the airlock door.

In the dormitories, use a blaster to destroy the fire suppression units. There's a breath mask in a room off the mess hall; use it to safely enter the dorms and ransack them. To get out of here, you'll have to slice or blast the turbolift's terminal.

Deal with the HK unit - hint: violence - and head southwest off the blister to reach the Harbinger. Get the drift charts off their navcomputer, then go through the crew quarters and its Sith Assassin residents to reach the turbolift.



↑ Unarmed combat actually works pretty well.



HANHARR - SUPER GENIUS

Learn the Lesson of Strength from Kreia and tell Hanharr about it. If you've got enough Influence, you can convince him to give up his people's traditions and break his will. He'll gain two points of Strength, but lose two points of Intelligence. You can repeat this as often as you want, but after his Strength hits 32 or so, his Intelligence will skyrocket. Since Security is Intelligence-based, this means Hanharr can now pick any lock in the game.



↑ Watch out for the HK's self-destruct device.

Go straight and use the terminal to open the maintenance doors. Via the fuel depot, run back through Peragus to the hangar, stopping en route to disable the containment fields. If you need spikes for the decontamination chamber, talk to T3. Once you're in the Ebon Hawk, you'll need to blast some Sith before you can escape.

CITADEL STATION

There's no fighting the TSF, sadly. Take out your aggression on Batu Rem, and take the job from the Czerka Corporation.

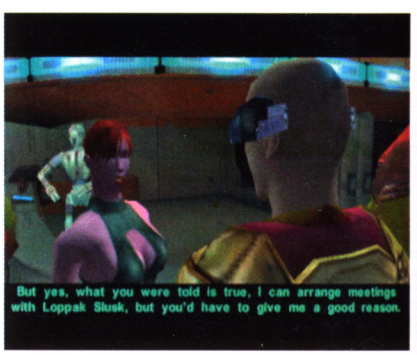
Meet with Jana Lorso and go to the Docks. In the Ithorian hangar bay, you'll encounter a quintet of thugs. Dispatch them, then take the droid straight to Lorso. She will then give you another job: kill Loppak Slusk.

To do that, you'll need to talk to Luxa in the cantina. Her first job involves meeting a pair of stupid bounty hunters in B3. This will turn bloody. The second job is easier; kill Chano in B2. Shop first, though; he's got nice stuff.

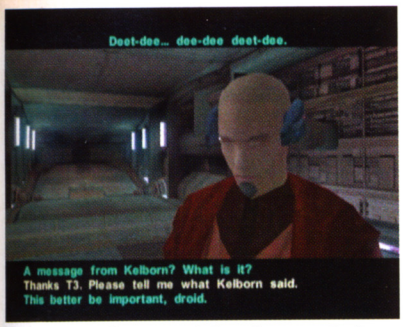
Now you can run into the Exchange offices with Luxa's permission and kill everyone you find, including Luxa herself. It's a good idea to side with her at first to minimise the number of people you have to fight at once.

TELOS

With Slusk dead, Lorso will happily transport you to the planet's surface. Hook up with Bao-Dur, and cautiously fight your way through the mercenaries to the excavation site. Use the computer on the helipad, then enter the military base. This part's simple; stay off mesh floors, abuse



↑ Luxa carries a pair of forty-fours. And a gun.



↑ Bao-Dur or Atton can defuse the mercs' mines.

powers like Destroy Droid, and turn the reactor back on. Once the Tank Droid's reactivated, sneak across the hangar to the Lab Station, make a bunch of ion grenades, and blow it up.

Destroy the trio of HK units atop Atris's facility, then talk to the ice queen herself. Feel free to threaten her; she won't fight you at this point. As you leave, you'll acquire the lovely Handmaiden.

DANTOOINE

Bring Bao-Dur or T3 with you to explore the Jedi Enclave's sublevel. Despite what everyone says, there's a lot of loot down here, but once you find the dead mercenaries in the western room, you're done. You will have to deal with Gerevin on your way out.

Your next stop is the Crystal Caves, which are crawling with kinrath and mercenaries. The former can be partially neutralised by talking to the Twi'lek near the entrance and stealing his gland, dooming him and allowing you to walk right on by. Kill everything you see, including Vrook; he, unfortunately, will promptly escape.

As you leave, you'll run into Azkul and his mercenaries. Unless you've taken in another planet between Telos and now, the mercenaries will feed you your lunch. Therefore, take him up on his offer. You can weaken Khoonda by sabotaging the gun turrets, giving a crappy pep talk to the militia, and screwing with the medical droid.

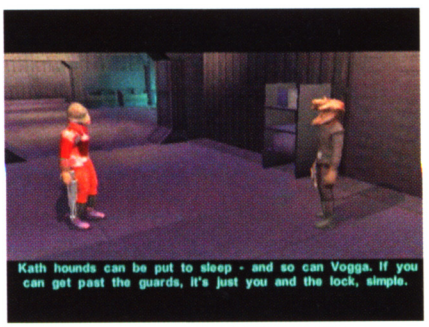
Unfortunately, even after Azkul's victory, you've got one serious problem: Vrook. This is one of the toughest fights in the game, since after a certain point, Vrook will start using Death Field almost exclusively. Tank up on stimulants, improve your Fortitude save and, if possible, learn Force Immunity before this point.

COMBAT Dark Jedis get plenty of fisticuffs!



LEVEL UP

You don't have to 'spend' a new level immediately. Instead, feel free to let them stack up on characters who can become Jedi, so you can earn a bunch of Jedi levels all at once.



↑ You can overhear great stuff on Nar Shaddaa.



↑ To beat Mira, take the fight to melee asap.



↑ Vrook represents the fiercest challenge so far.

NAR SHADDAA

Every sidequest on Nar Shaddaa involves the Exchange somehow. Your goal is to get their attention, so go cause some trouble until Visquis contacts you. The odds are good that the Red Eclipse will try to take over the Ebon Hawk before that point. Spare their leader and put them to work for you.

When you go to meet Visquis, things will get tricky. Atton will wind up in a solo bout against the deadly Twin Suns, but they are quite stupid. Arm him with a couple of disruptor pistols and run behind the bar. They won't chase him back there.

Now you get to enter the Jekk'Jekk Tarr. Keep Breath Control renewed as you kill off its clientele. You need to reach the private lounge and the mazelike tunnels beyond it. If you assume that you're pointed north when you enter, keep heading west to reach their exit.

In a brawl for it all, Hanharr must defeat Mira. Since Mira's a little stick girl and you're not, this is easy. Visquis's kath hounds are a bit tougher, but Hanharr can shred them with minimal effort. Grab the keycard from the hounds' trainer's corpse and leave via the handy escape tunnel. As the exile, punch through the Ubese's reinforcements and enter the Pit.

As T3, speak to C6, C7, C6 again, and finally C7. The solution to the puzzle on the secret door is to rotate the centre and left blocks anti-clockwise and the right block clockwise. Grab the signatures from the communication droid, and on your way out, take out another trio of HKs.

Finally, you must rescue the exile from Goto's yacht. Send Atton and Hanharr. Get the Shut Down program from the utility droid and slice the console for Overload. Destroy the mines and Commander Droid in the hallway; the latter is carrying the Containment Cell codes. Upload Shutdown to the command console and deactivate the cellblock.

Send a cloaked Atton in that direction and grab the Turret Defense codes off the imprisoned droid. Switch back to Hanharr. Overload and Shut Down the turrets to turn them against Goto's droids. Now sneak into the audience chamber to free the exile.

» DEFUSING MINES: WAIT FOR YOUR CHARACTER TO STAND BACK UP BEFORE MOVING AGAIN, OR YOU'LL HAVE TO START OVER.



↑ Hanharr's speciality? Taking things on the chin.

» In the room with the exile, get the Power Supply code from the console and switch all systems to the secondary power supply. Work your way west, and when Goto activates the minefield, destroy the nearby Heavy Guardian Droids to get the minefield code. If you Overload the mines, they'll lose their ability to tell friend from foe.

On the bridge, use the command console to take the secondary power offline, then head back to the docking hatch. You'll need to take on a number of bounty hunters on your way out.

Back in Nar Shaddaa, G0-T0 will join your group. You don't have to fight Ell right now, but you might as well get it over with. He's a bit of a wimp.

DXUN

You'll run into the Mandalorians eventually. Go to their camp and talk to Mandalore. The best ways to prove yourself are to fix the power cables, kill the zakkeg in the jungle's southwest clearing, win at the Battle Circle, and set off the charges. Once you've done enough dirty work, Mandalore will take you to Iziz.

ONDERON

If anyone asks, you support General Vaklu. Dhagon Ghent's office is near the cantina in the Western Square. Talk to Captain Riiken in the Merchant Quarter, then visit the cantina and speak with Xaart, Kiph, Bahima, and Nikko. When Mandalore suggests looking at the crime scene, go there and inspect the broken droid. Return to the cantina and talk to Nikko, Bahima, Kiph, and Panar, in roughly that order. Now you can buy the droid remains from 1B-8D. Give them to Kiph and show the transmission to Nikko.

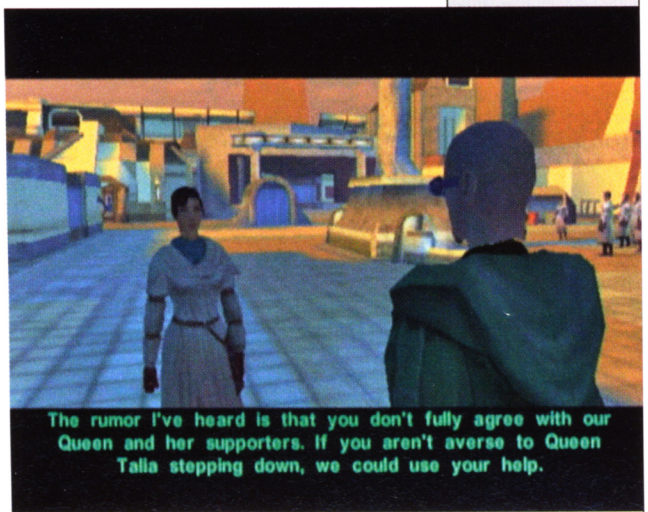
To retrieve Dhagon's holodiscs, go to the beastriders' room in the cantina and kill Bakkel.



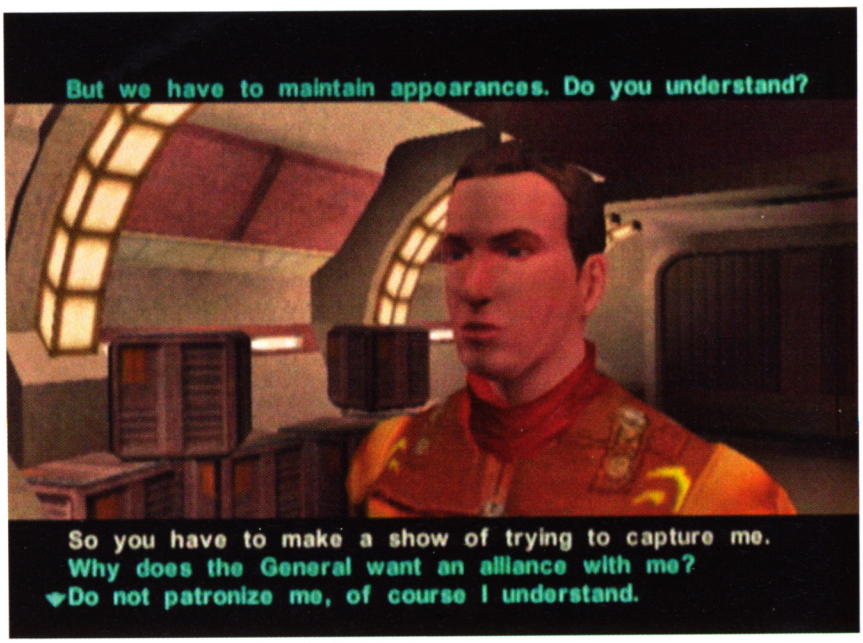
↑ Hunt cannoks to find the phase-pulse converter.

FEATS FOR YOU

Gun-wielding characters should max out Precise Shot and Rapid Shot. Swordsmen should go with Flurry. Unless a character is designed otherwise, i.e. Mandalore or Kreia, everyone should be using Two-Weapon Fighting.



↑ If you like the General, Anda has some work for you.



↑ Tobin's plans really do kinda suck, don't they?

Dhagon will arrange a meeting with Kavar and, in so doing, get Tobin on your case. Agree to Tobin's plan, then fight your way out of the city.

KORRIBAN

Initially, you can only enter the Sith Academy. From the main area, head west and take the first left. Slice the computer and take the Sith's test: accurate answers include twenty, gizka, Freedon Nadd, and passion - strength - power - victory.

Open the Training Room and start the sequence. Now defeat the tu'kata and use the console to open the Detention Room's door. You will find Vash inside.

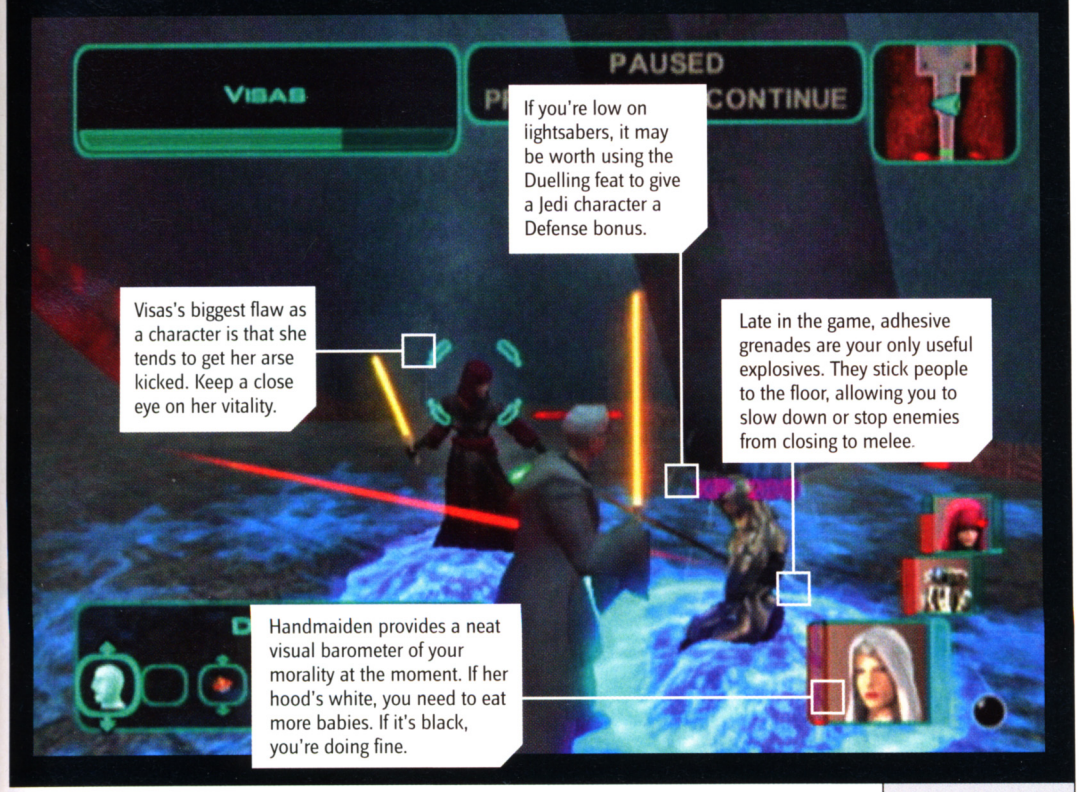
As you leave, you'll fight Darth Sion. He's a tough customer, but at this point, you should be able to stay alive. He's really just a brawler.

DXUN REVISITED

The tomb group should include at least one Jedi and someone with both Demolitions and Stealth. Atton and Visas suggest themselves.

First of all, you need to sneak through the minefield, disable the motion sensor, and turn off

COMBAT 2 Getting the most out of your team





↑ Watch out for Kiph's exploding military droids.

the Sith's generators. This will cut their available forces by about a third.

Now there will be violence. Storm the tomb, open the antechamber door using the terminal to the west, and dispatch the Dark Jedi Masters inside the burial chamber. Energy Shields and Force Immunity will blunt the force of their attacks.

ONDERON REVISITED

Carve up the royalists en route to the palace. The force fields are slightly tricky, but they'll go down eventually. Just keep fighting.

To open the throne room door, go south to the security office. Shut down the security terminal, then head north and repeat the process. Be sure to kill Kiph while you're at it, and loot the museum for the potent Ossus Keeper Robes.

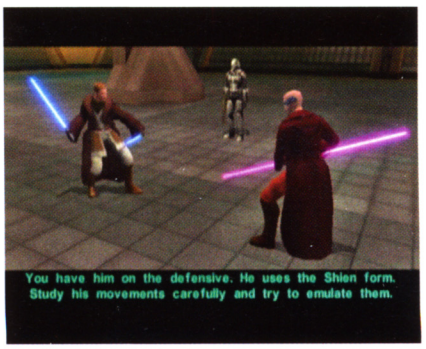
In the throne room proper, you get to kill the Drexl Larva, a big, dumb speed bump on your way to the main event: Master Kavar. As befits his reputation, he's mostly concerned with hitting you really hard in the face. He doesn't typically resort to Force powers. Once Talia's dead, you're done here. Accept a reward and leave.

TSF BOUNTY - ESCAPED CRIMINALS

This sidequest on Telos is hard to complete. Take Lorso's contract on Slusk, then complete Luxa's first errand. You'll find the criminals in Lorso's office the next time you visit. If you've killed the bounty hunters from Luxa's job, Grenn will believe you if you say you killed the criminals and will pay you the bounty.



↑ The Drexl Larva: big build-up, short show.



↑ Learn Force forms from the Masters you kill.



↑ Remember, Master Flurry attacks are brutal.



↑ For the 'last Jedi' Atris uses a lot of DS powers.

DANTOOINE REVISITED

Go back to the Enclave. After the fireworks, you'll learn the devastating Force Crush.

TELOS REVISITED

Here you will have to take out Atris. Unfortunately, she cheats big time, using powers like Kill and Stun; even worse, Handmaiden's initially on her own. You will need to teach her Force Immunity before this fight, or she's boned. The same applies for the exile. When you win, opt to kill Atris. »

X PAUSE AND HEAL: ONCE EVERY COMBAT ROUND, ONCE PER CHARACTER, YOU CAN USE CONSUMABLE ITEMS FROM THE INVENTORY SCREEN WITHOUT HAVING TO BURN A COMBAT ACTION TO DO SO.



↑ Joint lightsabers are always better than one but they are harder to master.



↑ For enemies far away, blaster fire is advised if you're not yet Master level.



↑ A combination attack is always better than simply hitting your enemy with the same pattern.

CITADEL STATION REVISITED

Fight through the Sith to reach the Dock entrance. Bring Visas with you.

THE RAVAGER

It's you, Visas, and Mandalore versus the finest the Sith have to offer. The four bomb sites are on your map. You'll have to improvise for the fourth proton core. Fortunately, one's available in the missile bay. On the bridge, activate Force Immunity and slug it out with Nihilus. Convincing Visas to sacrifice herself is a very Sith thing to do.

MALACHOR V

Force Crush is like bug spray against Storm Beasts. Track them all down and wipe them out. Even the Greater Storm Beast shouldn't take more than one or two Crushes to fall.

As Bao-Dur's Remote, run to the wrecked ships and use their computers. On the Surface, one is to the north-northeast and another to the southwest; in the Depths, there's one directly north of your entry point and a fourth to, again, the southwest.

TRAYUS ACADEMY

Make sure you're immune to stun before you enter. You've got a few dozen elite Sith and Dark Jedi minions to kill before the main bout: you versus Darth Sion. The trick is that you don't actually kill him; rather, you have to reduce his HP to zero and Persuade him to give up the ghost. You'll have to do this about four times to get rid of him.

PRESTIGE CLASSES

To take a prestige class, reach the 15th level and get 75 per cent of the way towards Dark Mastery, then speak to Kreia. Sith Marauders do extra damage, can further specialise in Two-Weapon Fighting, and can Rage like Hanharr; Sith Lords can demoralise opponents and get influence bonuses; and Sith Assassins can use Force Camouflage and Sneak Attack.

LIGHTSABERS: ONE VS. TWO

With a lightsaber in either hand, you can double up on bonuses like stat gains. A double-bladed 'saber may look cool, but you will lose out on potential tactical advantages. Use one 'saber for defensive options and the other for full-on offence.



↑ You'll have to tell it to the Hand because the Maiden just ain't listening!

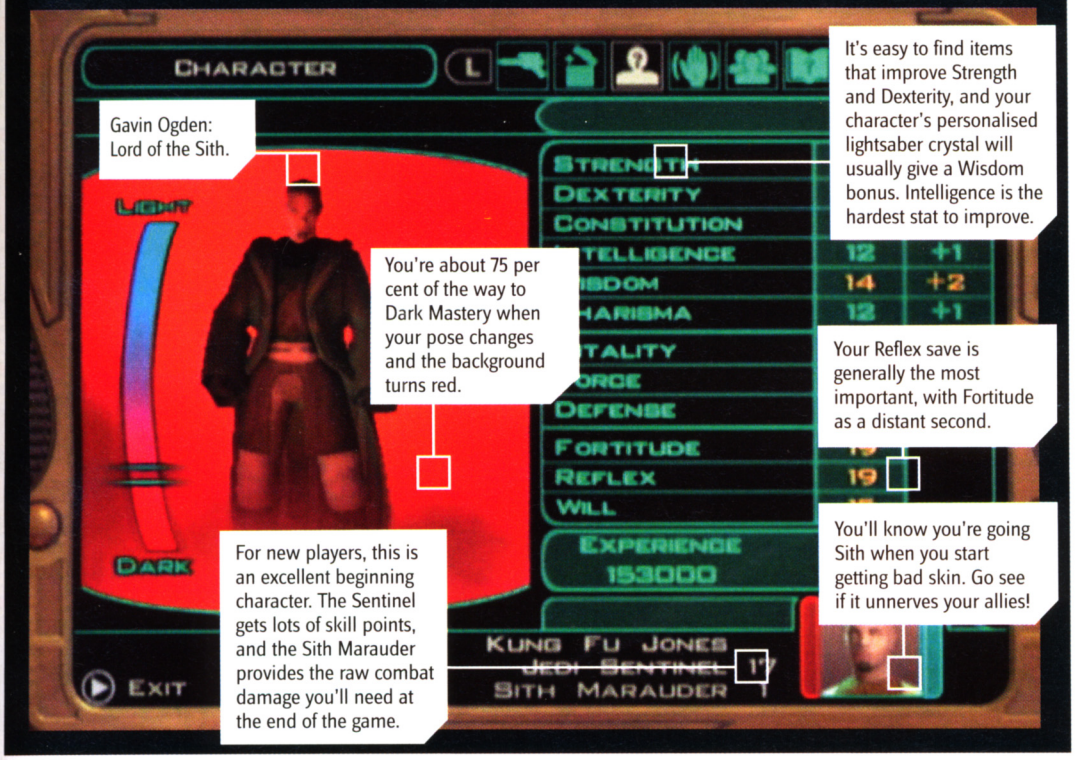
Finally, you must defeat Darth Traya. She'll only use Force powers if you retreat; stay on her and gradually whittle away at her HP. When she falls, she will conjure a trio of deadly floating lightsabers. You can't win if you take them on directly, so run away and take them out one at a time, or pop off shots at Traya from cover. When she or they fall, it's game over.

MAKING FRIENDS AND INFLUENCING PEOPLE

Want to raise your Influence with your crewmembers so you can learn their secrets and turn them into Jedi? Here are some tips.

ATTON: he wants to believe that Jedi are good people, and that he can trust you.
BAO-DUR: allow him to help you with technical details. Go out of your way to help people.
DISCIPLE: act like a good Jedi ought to. He's easy to win over if you're Light Side.
GO-TO: he appreciates a good scam, or a casual display of ruthlessness.
HANDMAIDEN: spar with her on the Ebon Hawk and win. Display compassion.
HANHARR: he hates himself. Remind him why.
HK-47: randomly murder innocent people.
T3-M4: praise him. Treat him like he's human.
KREIA: avoid doing the right thing whenever possible. Let her know you don't trust her.

CH-CH-CHANGES Heading over to the Dark Side





↑ **Shielded droids are obviously harder so try and lure them towards you and into the path of a well-placed minefield.**

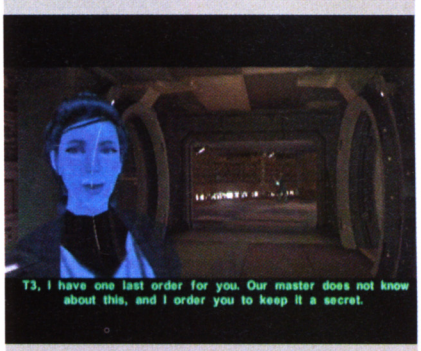
MANDALORE: think tactically and shrewdly. Mandy likes it when you wage war in clever ways.
MIRA: try to be her friend. If she gets angry, you're home free.
VISAS: she likes subtle manipulators, but dislikes open displays of human warmth. You seem to start with a lot of Influence if you give 'good' reasons for sparing her after the duel.

CHARACTER BREAKDOWNS

HANHARR

Since Wookiees are not able to wear armour, you will need to concentrate on raising Hanharr's damage resistance with equipment like Immunity Belts or Numbness Implants. He's a walking melee tank, especially when equipped with customised vibroswords.

Weapons



FIXING T3-M4
With high enough Influence, Repair, and Computer Use, you can fix T3-M4 and unearth a secret message from Bastila Shan.



FORCE SIGHT
Switch to Visas and use first-person view to look around. With her Force Sight, you can see characters' alignments.

HANDMAIDEN

She beats Disciple at a slow walk. The most dangerous unarmed combatant in the game (the only melee weapon that does more damage is a customised lightsaber), Handmaiden can and should be taught the ways of the Jedi Guardian. She won't be good for much besides combat, but at least she'll be very good at it.

HK-47

A powerful asset for Dark Jedi, HK's lethal with rifles and pistols. He can use powerful droid weaponry like plasma throwers too. He's great to have along if you anticipate running into enemy Jedi, as half the offensive Force powers don't work on droids.

MANDALORE

HK-47 sort of makes him irrelevant, unfortunately. Mandalore is a rifle specialist, so when he's around, he should spend most of his time firing large guns at people. Customise a Mandalorian assault rifle for him and let him get to work.

G0-T0

There are two parts of *KOTOR II* where G0-T0 would be useful, and he won't be around for either of them. G0-T0's only real assets over T3-M4 are his Droid Scramble ability, which works like Force Confusion for robots, and his immunity to mines. Neither of them are worth putting up with his snark factor.

ENHANCEMENTS TO LOOK OUT FOR: IF IT ALLOWS A SAVING THROW TO NEGATE AN EFFECT, YOU DON'T WANT IT. KEEN EVERYTHING, ESPECIALLY EARLY ON. IT'S CHEAP AND EFFECTIVE.

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Guide the ball into the bricks to set Ms. Anderson free, then she'll give you some special pictures of herself.

JORDAN UNCOVERED

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You'll have to work hard to see all of Jordan. Uncover the screen whilst avoiding the evil energy.

VIJAY SINGH PRO GOLF 2005

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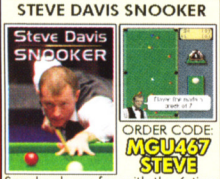
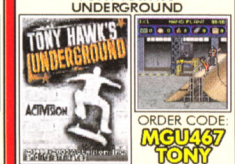
Be the 2004 no.1 golfer and play one of the most spectacular courses in the US, Seapines Resort.

STEVE DAVIS SNOOKER

Order Code: MGU467 STEVE
Snooker loopy fun with the 6-time world champ. Try to get the No.1 rank or just play Steve's trick shots.

TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

Order Code: MGU467 TONY
Test out your skills with Tony's game, with plenty of obstacles to trick from, so get button bashing!

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Drive around Peckham picking up some cushtie gear and avoid the Police who are bent on nicking you!

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Playing as Buffy, you must go deep into Drusilla's castle, find Oz, and kick demon-butt along the way!

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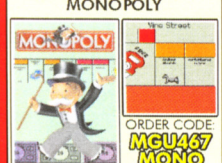
You'll have to work hard to see all of the lovely ladies. Uncover the screen whilst avoiding the evil energy.

MONOPOLY

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The most famous board game in the world is now available on mobile phones.

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Trivial Pursuit™ Mobile Edition – The world's most popular trivia game comes to mobile.

PUB FRUITY

Order Code: MGU467 FRUITY
Have a go at hitting the jackpot without the risk of losing all your beer money.

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The Prince is back but Empress of Time is hunting him down, sending an evil army on his trail.

TOM CLANCY'S® SPLINTER CELL PANDORA TOMORROW

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A terrorist threat is looming over the world, so once again Sam Fisher is sent to do what no one else can!

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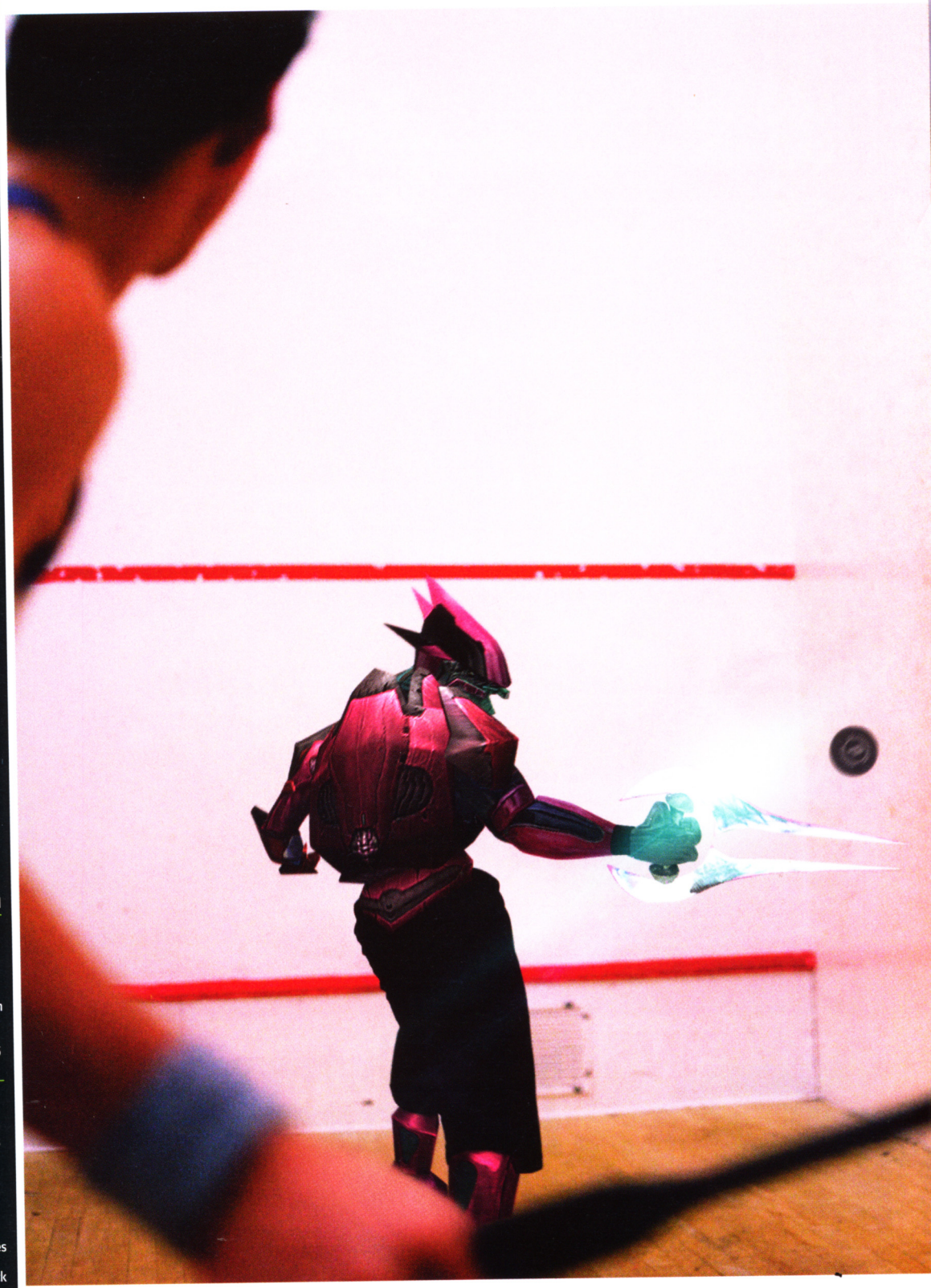

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Reviews Bringing you the biggest Xbox reviews first!



Brothers in Arms Road to Hill 30

Brutally realistic in gameplay and in its lush graphics, this shooter's innovative team commands demand respect.



Splinter Cell Chaos Theory

It could be the best-looking game we've ever seen on Xbox and this time Xbox Live gets even better use with co-op!



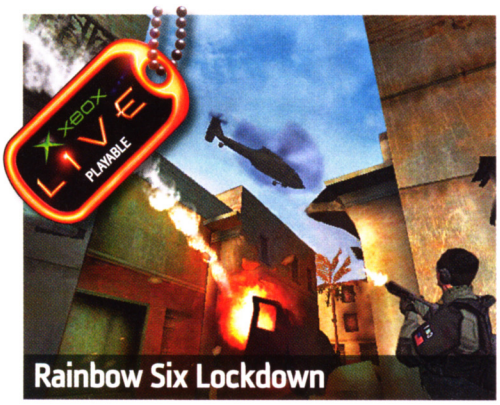
CT Special Forces: Fire For Effect

Its outrageous ragdoll physics and full-on modern combat make this shooter a great *Rainbow Six* alternative.



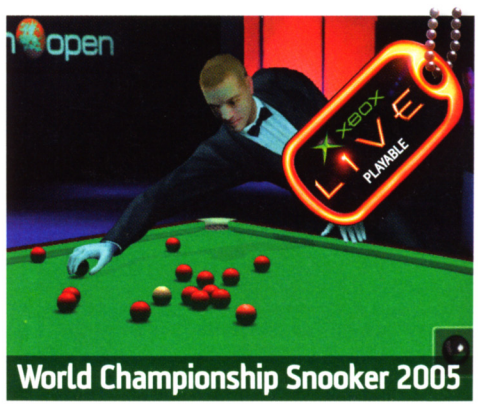
Close Combat: First to Fight

Think *Full Spectrum Warrior* quality graphics and gameplay but with direct first-person team control. Hoo-yah!



Rainbow Six Lockdown

Ding's squad want an even wider audience now as team Rainbow expands its ranks and Live features.



World Championship Snooker 2005

Yes, we want even rounder balls this time and the option to blow the chalk dust off your cue with your Live headset.

Previews The hottest new games before anyone else!



Delta Force: Black Hawk Down

This groundbreaking shooter is going to redefine Xbox Live with the awesome number of players supported on Live!



Battlestations: Midway

We visit the developers to bring you the first in-depth (charge) report of this WWII naval battler that's pinging our radar.

Destroy All Humans
We land at THQ headquarters and demand to be taken to see their leader for the first playtest of this alien invasion comedy.

TimeShift
It looks like the serious version of *TimeSplitters* and our exclusive new shots will have you clockwatching for its release.

Batman Begins
We meet the developers to discover what we'll find in our utility belts on the upcoming caped crusade.

JADE EMPIRE

The world-exclusive review & playable demo!

Play the massive new action adventure from the makers of Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

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JADE EMPIRE

The stunning action adventure from the makers of *KOTOR* is yours to try! Take on the evil Red Hand using Wu, Tiger Shen or Furious Ming. One brutal encounter to overcome with a huge range of martial arts moves to master.



TRON 2.0: KILLER APP

Step inside the mainframe as virtual hero Jet and cut a path through the viral infection that threatens your world. This demo features two massive levels to conquer using your deadly electro-frisbee.



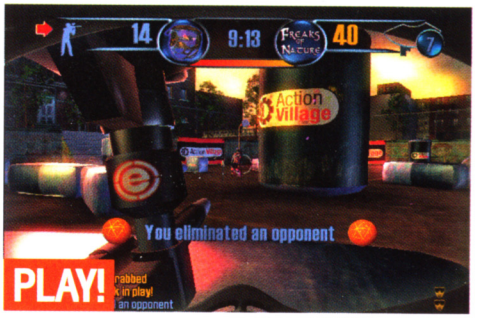
AREA 51 (NEW DEMO!)

An all-new trial version of Midway's extraterrestrial shooter. This time you can wield more powerful weapons, face tougher foes and transform yourself into a blood-sucking alien hybrid!



FORD RACING 3

Essex boys rejoice! Sit behind the wheel of a Ford Capri and race two laps of a gorgeous coastal circuit (no, not Southend). There are five tough opponents to beat in this contest of the ultimate Classic Fords.



GREG HASTINGS' PRO PAINTBALL

Enter the Urban Open paintball championship in Chicago and take on a team of deadeye paintballers using one of four selectable characters. Play through four brackets of this tricky tournament.



TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2

Play one complete mission, either with the help of the Ghost Recon team or in the brand new Lone Wolf mode. There's also a chance to complete the mission co-operatively with up to four players.



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2: BATTLE NEXUS

Another helping of shell-splitting action, pitting the Ninja Turtles against a legion of Shredder's Foot Clan ninjas. This time you can fight the Foot with up to four players! One mission to complete with a deadly boss at the end.

GAME SAVES

Backyard Wrestling 2
Career mode completed with over $1,000,000 in the bank to spend on unlockable items. We've also unlocked the entire roster of hardcore wrestlers.

Call of Duty: Finest Hour
Don't want to slog through Stalingrad? We've taken the struggle out of defeating the evil Axis with all levels and cheats unlocked.

Def Jam Fight For New York
Listen to any track in the game, fight in any venue and play with 69 unlocked fighters. We've also created a special custom grappler for you.

Need For Speed Underground 2
We've completed the entire game and unlocked every single tuning part. Now you'll be able to build the ultimate motor and race it online!

Thief: Deadly Shadows
An immense 22 saves spanning the entire course of the game. Jump straight to the final mission to defeat the evil witch and save the world.



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Goldeneye: Rogue Agent
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Mega Man X: Comm. Miss.
Metroid Prime
Metroid Prime 2: Echoes
Minority Report
Need for Speed: Undergr.
Need for Speed: Undergr. 2
NFL Street 2
Paper Mario: 1000 Yr Door
Pokemon Colosseum
Prince of Persia: War.Within
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Resident Evil
Resident Evil 3: Nemesis
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Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
H.Potter & Pris. of Azkaban
Headhunter: Redemption
Hitman 3: Contracts
Incredibles
Jak 2: Renegade
Jurassic Park: Op. Genesis
Killzone
Legacy of Kain: Defiance
LMA Manager 2004
LMA Manager 2005
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Lord of the Rings: F. of Ring
Lord of the Rings: T. Towers
Mafia
Manhunt
Mercenaries: P. of Destr.
Mortal Kombat: Deadly All.
Mortal Kombat: Deception
Need for Speed: Undergr.
Need for Speed: Under. 2
NFL Street 2
Primal
Prince of Persia: S. of Time
Prince of Persia: War.Within
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Age of Empires 2
Age of Empires: R. of Rome
Champ. Manager '03/'04
Com. & Conq.: Generals
Com. & Conq.: Red Alert
Com. & Conq.: R. Alert 2
Com. & Conq.: Renegade
Com. & Conq.: Tiberian Sun
Com. & Conq.: Yuri's Rev.
Commandos 2
CSI: Crime Sc. Investigation
CSI: Dark Motives
Far Cry
Grand Theft Auto 3
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
Jedi Knight 2: Jedi Outcast
Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter
Medieval: Total War
Men of Valor: Vietnam War
Need for Speed: Undergr. 2
Patrician 2
Rome: Total War
Sim City 3000
Sims 2
Sims: Makin' Magic
Star Trek: Bridge Command.
Star Wars: Jedi Knight 2
Star Wars: Knights Old Rep.
Sudden Strike 2
Sudden Strike Forever
The Curse of Monkey Island
The Great Escape
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
Zoo Tycoon
Plus Many More...

X-BOX

A = 01
A Fistful of Boomstick
Agent Under Fire
Aggressive Inline
Air Force Delta Storm
Aliens vs Predator:Extinction
Amped 2
Amped Snowboarding
Armageddon - Spawn
Armed and Dangerous
Army Men: Sarge's War
Arx Fatalis
Auto Modellista
Azurik: Rise of Perthia

B = 02
Backyard Wrestling
Backyard Wrestling 2
Bad Boys 2
Baldur's Gate: D. Alliance 2
Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance
Batman: Dark Tomorrow
Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu
Battlecry, Robotech
Battlefront, Star Wars
Battlegrounds, M.Gathering
Beyond Good and Evil
Black Arrow - Rainbow Six 3
Blackstone: Magic & Steel
Blade 2
Blinx: The Time Sweeper
Blood Omen 2
Blood Wake
BloodRayne
BMX XXX
Bond 007: E. or Nothing
Breakdown
Broken Sword 3: S. Dragon
Bruce Lee: Quest Dragon
Brute Force
Buffy 2: Chaos Bleeds
Buffy The Vampire Slayer
Burnout 2 Point of Impact
Burnout 3: Takedown

C = 03
Cabela's Dangerous Hunts
Call of Duty: Finest Hour
Castle Wolfenstein, Ret. to
Cat in the Hat
Catwoman
Celebrity Deathmatch
Champ. Manager '01/'02
Championship Manager '02
Chris Edwards' Aggressive I.
Chronicles of Riddick
Club Football 2005
Colin McRae Rally 3
Colin McRae Rally 4
Commandos 2
Conflict: Desert Storm
Conflict: Desert Storm 2
Conflict: Vietnam
Corvette
Counterstrike
Crash B'coot: Wr. of Cortex
Crash Nitro Kart
Crash Twinsanity
Crimson Sea
Crimson Skies
Crouching Tiger, H. Dragon

D = 04
Dark Alliance, Baldur's G. 2
Dark Angel, J. Cameron's
Dave Mirra Freestyle BMX 2
David Beckham Soccer
Dawn of Destiny, Yu-Gi-Oh!
Dead Man's Hand
Dead or Alive 3
Dead or Alive Ultimate
Dead or Alive Volleyball
Dead to Rights
Deadly Skies
Deception - Mortal Kombat
Def Jam: Fight for New York
Defender
Desert Storm
Deus Ex: Invisible War
Die Hard: Vendetta
Digimon Rumble Arena 2
Dino Crisis 3
Disney's Extreme Skate Adv.
Dredd vs Death
DRIV3R
Dungeon & Dragons:Heroes
Dynasty Warriors 3
Dynasty Warriors 4

E = 05
Elder Scrolls: Morrowind
Enclave
Enter the Matrix
Euro 2004
Everything or Nothing: 007
Evil Dead: Fist. of Boomstick
Extinction, AvP

F = 06
Fable
Fallout:Brotherhood of Steel
FIFA 2004
FIFA Football 2005
Fight Night 2004
Finding Nemo
Fire Blade
FlatOut
Freedom Fighters
Freestyle Metal X
Full Spectrum Warrior
Futurama

G = 07
Galleon
Genma Onimusha
Ghost Master
Ghost Recon
Ghost Recon 2
Ghost Recon:Island Thunder
Gladius
Glitch in the System
Goblin Commander
Godzilla: Save the Earth
Goldeneye: Rogue Agent
Grabbed by the Ghoulies
Grand Theft Auto 3
Grand Theft Auto: V. City
Great Escape
Group S Challenge
Gun Metal

H = 08
H.Potter & Philosopher's St.
H.Potter & Pris. of Azkaban
H.Potter: Quidditch W. Cup
Halo
Halo 2
Haunted Mansion
Headhunter: Redemption
Hit & Run, The Simpsons
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
Hitman 3: Contracts
Hobbit
Hot Pursuit 2
House of the Dead 3
Hunter: Redeemer
Hunter: The Reckoning

I = 09
Incredibles
Indiana Jones: Emp.'s Tomb
Infernal Crusade
Invisible War, Deus Ex

J = 10
James Bond 007: Nightfire
James Bond: Agent Under F.
James Bond: E. or Nothing
Jedi Knight 2: Jedi Outcast
Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy
Jedi Star Fighter
Jet Set Radio Future
Judge Dredd:Dredd v Death
Juiced
Jurassic Park: Op. Genesis

K = 11
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer
Kingdom U. Fire, Crusaders
Knight of the Temple
Knight's Apprentice M's Adv.
Knights of the Old Republic
Kung Fu Chaos

L = 12
L.A. Heist, The Italian Job
Legacy of Kain: Defiance
Legends of Wrestling
Legends of Wrestling 3
Leisure Suit Larry: M.C.L.
LMA Manager 2003
LMA Manager 2004
LMA Manager 2005
Lord of the Rings: 3rd Age
Lord of the Rings: 3rd Age

M = 13
Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter
Madden NFL 2004
Madden NFL 2005
Mafia
Magna Cum Laude
Man.United Manager 2005
Manhunt
Marvel vs Capcom 2
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2
Matrix, Enter the
Max Payne
Max Payne 2
Medal of Honor Frontline
Medal of Honor: R. Sun
Men of Valor
Mercenaries: P. of Destr.*
Metal Arms:Glitch in System
Metal Gear Solid 2: Subst.
Metal Slug 3
Midnight Club 2
Midtown Madness 3
Mission Impossible:O.Surma
Morrowind
Mortal Kombat: Deadly All.
Mortal Kombat: Deception
Mortifilia
Moto GP
Moto GP2: U.R.T.
Munch's Oddysee
MX Superfly
MX Unleashed

N = 14
NBA 2K2
NBA Jam
NBA Live 2004
Need for Speed: Undergr.
Need for Speed: Under. 2
New Legends
NFL Street 2
NHL 2002
Night Caster
Ninja Gaiden

O = 15
Obscure
Oddworld Munch's Oddysee
007: Everything or Nothing
Op. Genesis, Jurassic Park
Otogi: Myth of Demons
Outlaw Golf
Outlaw Golf 2
OutRun 2

P = 16
Pandora Tomorrow
Panzer Dragoon Orta
Phantom Crash
Pirates of the Caribbean
Prince of Persia: S. of Time
Prince of Persia: W.Within
Prisoner of War
Pro Evolution Soccer 4
Project Gotham Racing
Project Gotham Racing 2
Project Zero

Q = 17
Quantum Redshift

R = 18
Rainbow Six 3
Rainbow Six 3 - Black Arrow
Rallisport Challenge
Rallisport Challenge 2
Raw 2, WWE
Raw, WWF
Rayman 3
Reckoning, Hunter
Red Dead Revolver
Red Faction 2
Reign Of Fire
Return to Castle Wolfenstein
Road Rage
Robotech: Invasion
Rocky
Rocky Legends
Rogue Agent -= GoldenEye
Rogue Ops
Rollercoaster Tycoon
Rolling
Run Like Hell

S = 19
Samurai Warriors
Sea Blade
Second Sight
Secret W. Over Normandy
Sega GT 2002
Serious Sam
Shadow Ops: Red Mercury
Shellshock Nam '67
Shenmue 2
Shrek 2
Silent Hill 2: Inner Fears
Silent Hill 4: The Room
Simpsons: Hit & Run
Simpsons: Road Rage
Sims
Sims: Bustin' Out
Soldier of Fortune 2
Sonic Heroes
Sonic Mega Collection Plus
Soul Calibur 2
Spawn: Armageddon
Sphinx & Cursed Mummy
Spider-Man: The Movie 2
Splinter Cell
Splinter Cell 2: Pandora T.
Spongebob Squarepants
Spy Hunter
Spy Hunter 2
Spyro: A Hero's Tail
SSX 3
SSX Tricky
Star Trek: Shattered Gal.
Star Wars: Battlefront
Star Wars: Clone Wars
Star Wars: Jedi Academy
Star Wars: Jedi Knight 2
Star Wars: Knights Old Rep.
Star Wars: KOTOR2 Sith L.
Star Wars: Obi Wan
Star Wars: Star Fighter
Starsky & Hutch
State of Emergency
Steel Battalion
Sudeki
Suffering
SWAT: Global Strike Team
Syberia

T = 20
T.Clancy R.Six 3 Black Arrow
Tak 2: The Staff of Dreams
Tenchu: Ret. from Darkness
Terminator 3 R.of Machines
Terminator 3: Redemption
Terminator: Dawn of Fate
The Chronicles of Riddick
The Fellowship of the Ring
The Great Escape
The Incredibles
The Return of the King
The Sims: Bustin Out
The Suffering
The Thing
The Two Towers
The Urbz
Thief: Deadly Shadows
Thirteen
Tiger Woods Golf 2003
Tiger Woods Golf 2004
Tiger Woods Golf 2005
Time Splitters 2
TOCA Race Driver
TOCA Race Driver 2
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4
Tony Hawk's Underground
Tony Hawk's Underground 2
Top Spin
Total Club Manager 2004
Total Club Manager 2005
Total Immersion Racing
True Crime: Streets of LA
Turok, Evolution
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger

U = 21
Underground, N. for Speed
Unreal 2: The Awakening
Unreal: Championship Ed.

V = 22
Van Helsing
Vexx
Vice City, Grand Theft Auto
Voodoo Vince

W = 23
Wakeboarding Unleashed
Wolfenstein,Return to Castle
Wolverine's Revenge
World Racing, Merc. Benz
Worms 3D
WWE Raw 2: Ruthless Aggr.

X = 24
XIII (Thirteen)
X-Men 2: Wolverine's Rev.
X-Men Legends
Xtreme Beach Volleyball

Y = 25
Yager
Yu-Gi-Oh! Dawn of Des

0-9 = 27
007 Nightfire
4x4 Evolution 2
Plus Many More...

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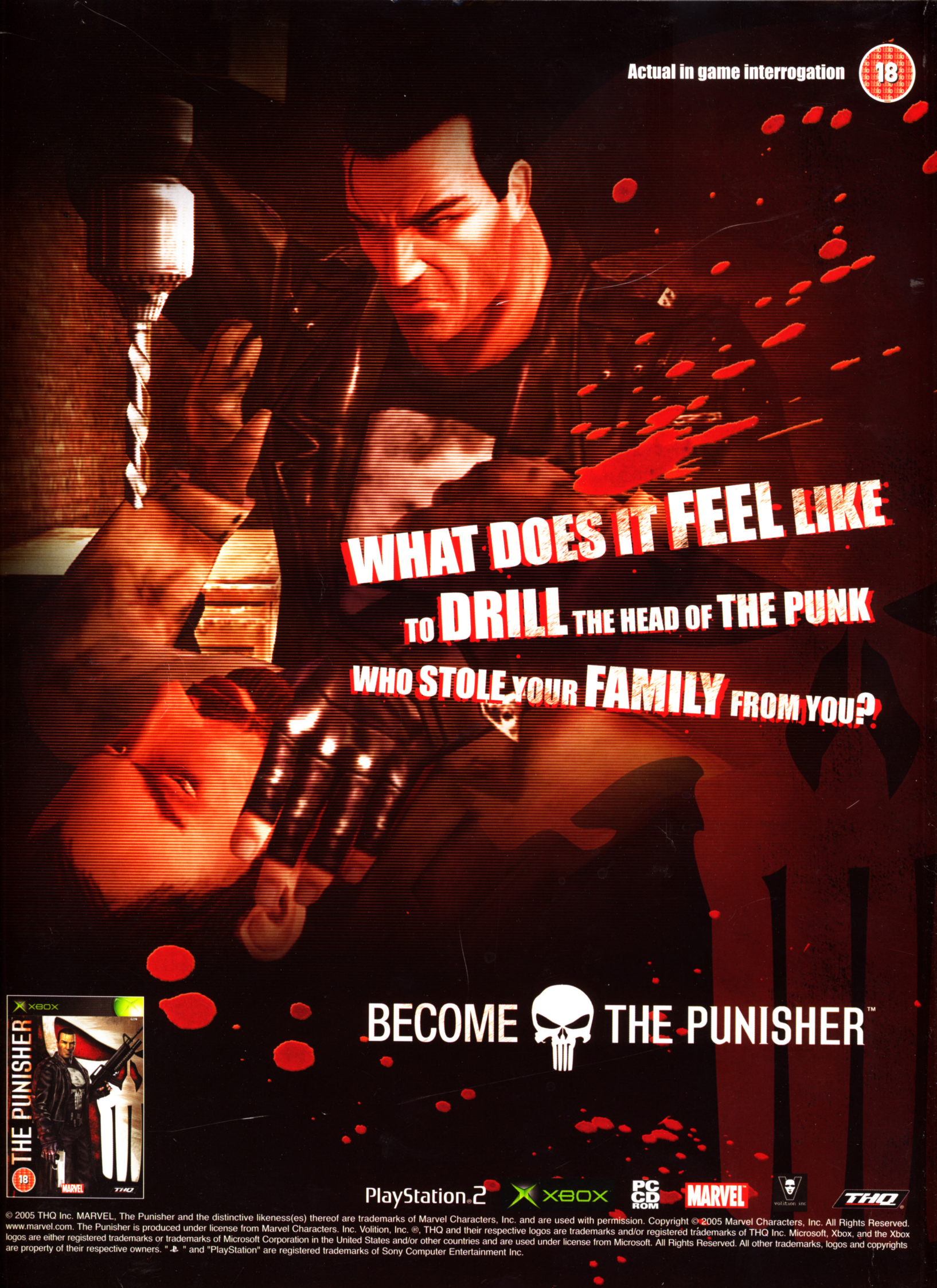

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