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# HARDCORE GAMER<sup>®</sup>

MAGAZINE

LUV2GAME.COM

v1112 . go kicky fast okay!

## DEADRISING

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**ZOMBIE MADNESS**  
at the mall!

**E3**  
We get all  
nutty with  
the big E3  
preview  
blowout



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**Plus:**

come check out some wacky fun Doujinsoft games,  
see the coolest arcade coin-ops the world overlooked  
get schooled by Prima and their Heroes of Might and Magic V tips



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**EVE**  
ONLINE

The logo for EVE Online is displayed in a dark rectangular box with a white border. The word "EVE" is written in a large, stylized, white font with horizontal lines through the letters. Below it, the word "ONLINE" is written in a smaller, white, sans-serif font.

SHOCKINGLY EXECUTED

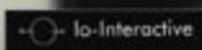


COMING SOON  
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BLOOD MONEY

[www.HitmanBloodMoney.com](http://www.HitmanBloodMoney.com)



PlayStation 2



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BRANDISH YOUR BLADE AND  
DANCE ON THE EDGE OF DESTINY!

The terrible Dread Knight, he who destroyed the Blade Dancer a thousand years ago, has reappeared once again. His arrival heralds the second coming of the Demon Empire, which threatens the very existence of mankind. Lance and his fellow comrades must now rise up against the Dread Knight and prevent the destruction of their world.



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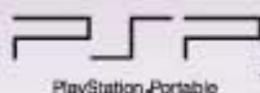


A revolutionary real-time battle system that adds depth and excitement to every encounter.

**Real-Time RPG!**

The logo for "Blade Dancer Lineage of Light" is prominently displayed in the center. It features the title in a stylized, metallic font with a sword-like underline. Above the title are silhouettes of a knight and a character. To the right, a map of the game world is visible, with regions labeled: "Luzon Empire", "Tamar", "Mei-lung", and "Zen".

Available in July 2006



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Printed in the United States of America



**DJPubba Tim Lindquist**

It's been one of those months. First, the water heater broke, then a water line under ground broke. Then my dog's plumbing went wonky and had to go to the vet (Okar, the german shepherd). They asked for a stool sample. It tested negative. Negative for what? They didn't say on the message. I need to call them because he's still not regular. Also, an evil bird has decided to desecrate the porch whenever nobody's looking.  
Now playing: *Tetris DS*, *Kingdom Hearts 2*, *Disgaea 1&2*



**Wanderer Thomas Wilde**

All of this "magazine" nonsense is really cutting into my *Oblivion* time.

Now Playing: *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, *Tetris DS*, *Me & My Katamari*



**Mogis Tim Kinneen**

I'm about to make a cross-country move in my car, but there's only so much space for games in the trunk. I've been paring down my collection to the essentials, but I've had to make a lot of tough calls. How can I decide between my Dreamcast and my NES? How?!

Now Playing: *Tetris DS*, all day long.



**Racewing Geson Hatchett**

By the time you read this, I'll either be at my second E3, or just coming back from it. I wonder how long it takes before I become all jaded about this event like so many other journalists seem to be. Perhaps after another ten... thousand years...

Now Playing: *Outrun 2006 C2C* (all), *Mega Man: Powered Up*, *Trying to Pull a Locke Cole on Yuffie Kisaragi* (*Kingdom Hearts II*)



**Shoegazer Dave Hulegaard**

I've been thinking a lot lately about games that are overdue for a sequel, and I keep coming back to *Parasite Eve*. It's not like they were genre-defining or anything, but they've always seemed to resonate with me. Now, I just wanna blast some mitochondria on a next-gen console. Is that so much to ask?

Now Playing: *Tomb Raider Legend*, *Kingdom Hearts II*, *WWE Smackdown Vs. Raw 2006*



**KouAidou Elizabeth Ellis**

I've been a busy little bee lately, getting in shape both mentally and physically. Plans are in the works, my friends. Big, big plans. Plans...which I am not yet at liberty to share, for risk of total embarrassment should they not come to fruition. But they are big! And plan-shaped. This I swear.

Now Playing: *Grandia*, *Hearts of Iron II: Doomsday*



**Roger Danish Greg Off**

It's already been a whirlwind few weeks leading up to the Big Show, with so many of the game publishers holding their pre-E3 unveilings before the main event. Of course, they torture and tease with the promise of next gen wares, but instead give us the second tier stuff so we'll still "drop by the booth." It's evil I tell you! Pure Evil!

Now Playing: *Dead Rising*, *Oblivion*, *Brain Age*, *Bust a Move 4*



**Lynxara Alicia Ashby**

So, I've been watching a lot of *The Black Adder* lately as I play all of these PSP titles I'm getting sent for review. I'm pretty sure the third series is the funniest. It'd be the fourth series, but good God, that *ending*. I've seen tragedies that weren't half so depressing.

Now Playing: *Kingdom Hearts II*, *Lemmings* (PSP), *Disgaea 2*



**4thletter David Brothers**

Is anybody else out there down with Paul Pope the Pulp Hope? He's one of the greatest artists of our time for certain. His *Batman: Year 100* is simply incredible and refreshing, and every bit of art I've seen from him has been excellent. Also recommended: *100%*, *Solo*, and *One-Trick Ripoff*.

Now Playing: *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* (360), *Tetris DS*



**James James Cunningham**

*Oblivion* ate my brain and almost killed my PC. It took a game needing that much oomph to show that the power supply wasn't cutting it, nearly burning out the CPU in the meantime thanks to not enough juice making it to the cooling fan. Even dealing with issues like this, I'd still rather play this game on PC than 360 thanks to the very productive mod community.

Now Playing: *Oblivion* (PC), *Odama*, *XII Stag*



**HonestGamer Jason Venter**

Ever miss the days when all you had to do to save the world was gun down eight robot masters and use their weapons to blow a mad scientist's spacepod to smithereens? Those were simpler, more peaceful times. Sometimes I really wish we could all go back.

Now Playing: *Harvest Moon: Magical Melody*, *Keepsake*, *Suikoden V*



**Hitosura Iaian Ross**

In between completing my plans to get to E3 and hashing out strategies for DoubleJump's next book, I've noticed something rather odd in the world of TV shows on DVD. There are no full season sets of *Top Gear* available. How can the best show on TV ever made not have full season box sets?

Now Playing: *Disgaea 2*



**FragHag Julie Stoffer**

About me: Me is one of the more common pronouns. It is a good way to refer to one's self without going into the third person. Similar words such as I, myself, and "it's not you it's me", can effectively be used in its place. Recent studies show that people who use the word Me at least 65 times a day are less likely to develop Heart Disease or friends. Webster's dictionary defines Me as "Why the heck are you looking this word up? You moron, go back to Wisconsin!"



**Wollie Terry Wolfinger**

So, as if *World of Warcraft* didn't already take time away from my work at the mag, I had to go and start two new characters! Still rockin' the Undead Rogue (level45 and climbing), but now its like he's got two kids to feed. "Dad! Can I have some gold for that cool new two-handed axe? Pleeeeease!!!"

Now Playing: *World of Warcraft*



**Metabot Anthony Mertz**

Witnessing someone eat a hamburger that contains cinnamon, lemon extract, honey, turmeric, basil, garlic powder, rosemary herb, onion powder, dried onions, and barbecue powder, will make you sad, and disgusted, but mostly sad.

Now Playing: *Black* (Xbox), *Bagel Man XX: Puddin' Machine Mayhem*



**Arfeth Thomas Shin**

After attending Super Battle Opera in Japan, I'll be arriving back in the States just in time for E3. Oh Jet Lag, how I hate thee. Maybe I'll resort to "heroic doses" of caffeine and modafinil-laced cupcakes.

Now Playing: *SF3: 3rd Strike*, *Melty Blood: Act Cadenza*



**Ashura Brady Hartel**

In *Voltron*, have you ever wondered why they changed "FORM ARMS AND BODY!" to "FORM ARMS AND TORSO!?" Did the other guys on the Voltron Force complain to Keith? The Princess must've been pissed. "You're hogging Voltron, and it's my dead father who talks to us every episode, dammit! And he's voiced by Optimus Prime!!" So Lance and Pidge were cut back. They probably tried to change up the rest, too, but I figure "FORM LEGS AND LEG STUMPS! FORM ARMS AND TORSO! AND I'LL FORM THE HEAD!" wouldn't fly.



**Jeremy Jeremy Peeples**

Thanks to having a light writing month, I was able to soak up a lot of wrestling. Between old ECW, WCW, NWA, World Class, UWF, Memphis, and even WWF stuff, I think I'm adequately prepared for *WWE Smackdown vs. Raw '07* and the TNA Wrestling game. If those end up bombing, at least I'll have WWF *No Mercy* to fall back on for Samoa Joe-Kenta Kobashi matches.

Now Playing: *WWE No Mercy*, *Tetris DS*, *Jak X*, *MGS 3: Subsistence Online*



**Sardius Danny Cowan**

By the time you read this, I will have (hopefully) graduated from UT at Austin with a degree in communication studies. This means that I no longer have to worry about exams and essays, and that I can now fully devote my time to stressing over deadlines and wordcounts. Hello rest of my life!

Now Playing: *Freelance Writer for Hire*, *Please Give Me a Job*, *eBaying Games for Rent Money 4th Mix Plus*

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## Preview E3

Another year, another locustlike convergence on the Staples Center for a sneak peek at the next twelve months' worth of gaming fun. We're on the scene to show you the best-looking booth babes, testdrive the new hardware, snicker at the fanboys who somehow snuck in, stand in line for a total of ten thousand hours, bicker with each other in the ongoing pursuit for the perfect bag of swag, gape slackjawed at the latest trailers, drink all the tastiest-looking free alcohol, shamelessly kiss up to PR people so we can go to the best parties, and show you all the games and games that we get to see but you don't. You're welcome.

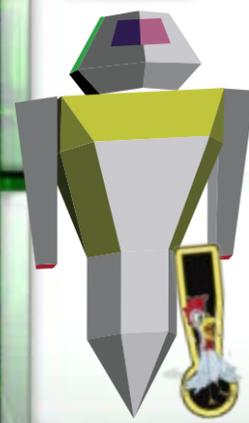


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Sneak back in time with us and discover the lost treasures of the arcades — overlooked by the entire world. Then see what happens when the common man dares to distribute his own games.



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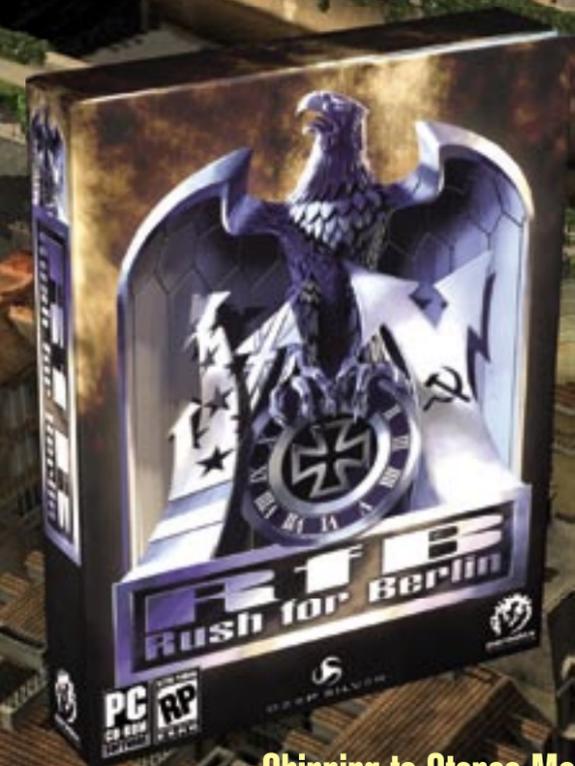
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# You've watched it, you've played it. Now it's time to change it Welcome to the Next Generation in WWII RTS GAMES

PARIS INGAME



- Hero-skill officer system introducing RPG elements.
- Explore the alternative historical outcome.
- Discover secret weapons like the Maus, the Goliath, the Fliegerfaust ...
- Action-packed multiplayer where you can choose any side in the battle.
- Use time, weather and time of day to gain tactical advantages as you Rush for Berlin.

Shipping to Stores May 30



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## VIRTUALLY IMMERSE YOURSELF IN FPS

VR has arrived to home gaming. The Trimerision Head Mounted Display (HMD) promises to "turn your favorite First Person Shooter (FPS) games into stunning immersive experiences." Included in the VR kit is a head mount, a gun controller and a base station. The head mount has a high resolution display with adjustable brightness & contrast controls as well as headphones with volume control. The head strap adjusts to fit any gamer's head. The gun controller sends and receives data to the VR head mount and houses batteries that supply the power. The base station, a wireless receiver, receives the data from the gun controller and transmits the data to your console (via included adapters).

Two versions of the HMD are available. For the die-hard gamer, there is the HMD with motion tracking capability to detect your orientation. Those gamers who want to stick to their controller fingers can get the non-motion HMD. The Trimerision retails for \$595 and will be available May 2006 for the Xbox, Playstation 2 and PC. Indulge yourself in your favorite FPS, if you're a luxury gamer. Read more about the Trimerision HMD at [www.trimersion.com](http://www.trimersion.com)

news bits by **GAMINGBITS**  
www.gamingbits.com

## BODYPAD

What happened to the promises of VR? Looks like its trying to make another comeback. Besides the upcoming Nintendo Revolution motion sensitive control and the previously mentioned Trimerision headset, another new immersive peripheral is ready to kick in. "The 'Bodypad' project was born several years ago from a passion for virtual reality and martial arts". Why wave a controller around when you can immerse your whole body in a fight? Bodypad is a "game controller actuated by the body" for the Xbox, PS 1 and PS 2. Jack in with two arm sensors, two leg sensors, two handles and a belt, and you'll be set to virtually fight it out. A radio-frequency link (2.4 Ghz) between the player and the console registers the movement without any time lag. The Bodypad kit (retailing for about \$65 USD) includes:

- Two Arm Sensors
- Two Legs Sensors
- Two Handles
- One Belt Module
- One Receiver Module connectable to the console
- Three 1.5 Volt batteries + 1 screwdriver
- An Instruction Manual

Now imagine you can hook the Trimerision to your Bodypad. Read more about the bodypad and watch a sample video of it in action at [www.bodypad.com](http://www.bodypad.com).

That's a wrap of this month's news for your itchy gaming finger. For more news bits, check out [gamingbits.com](http://gamingbits.com).

Have some news you'd like to share? Email [alexis@gamingbits.com](mailto:alexis@gamingbits.com).



## COOLING FANS ARE THE NEXT BIG THING

At every console generation leap, an innovative peripheral is around the corner to introduce something new to the gaming experience. The Nintendo brought us the Light Gun Accessory, The Playstation 2 brought us the Eye Toy Accessory, The Xbox 360 brought us the... Fan Accessory? With all the processing power heating up next-gen hardware, a cooling fan add-on gives gamers some assurance that their console won't melt down after eight hours of gaming. Two fans introduced for the Xbox 360 include the Pelican Xbox 360 Fan Stand ([pelicanperformance.com](http://pelicanperformance.com)) and The Nyko Xbox 360 Intercooler ([nyko.com](http://nyko.com)). A bit fancier and more stable than the 'ol suspend the 360 by the string trick. The trend has not stopped at the Xbox 360 console. Uxcell ([uxcell.com](http://uxcell.com)) has released a PSP cooling fan. A fan meant to "mount to cool battery", it mounts to the top of the PSP. The PSP Cooling Fan runs for about \$9. Not sure if my PSP even runs long enough to justify the fan, but the Pelican Power Brick Battery Charger sure could have used one (the battery charger's circuit board caused it to overheat and caused its plastic cover to melt). We'll see if the hot PS3 get its own fan soon enough!



## BLUE OVER BRAIN AGE

*Brain Age* is an innovative Nintendo DS game that determines your "Brain Age" through a series of interactive tests. Using handwriting recognition and voice recognition, the DS interprets your answers. The game has taken Japan by storm, but there is something that was lost in translation. A little "glitch" is giving *Brain Age* gamers problems with voice recognition of the word "blue". Its a critical part in evaluating your "Brain Age" during the "stroop test", where you say the color of a word, not the word itself (for example: if the word "red" appears in the color blue, you must say "blue"). Various forums online, including Nintendo's *Brain Age* Forum, report the issue. The current workaround is to pronounce "blue" as "lue" (do not enunciate the "b"). If you still can't get that down, there's always the option to let the in-game Dr. Ryuta Kawashima know that you are in an area where "I Can't Speak" and you'll take the "calculations x 20" test instead. This glitch has left me blue, and with a Brain Age of 73!

## NEWS BITS

The *Metal Gear Solid 3: Subsistence* Limited Edition (which includes a third disc that features cutscenes placed together as a single *Metal Gear* movie) is going for prices of up to \$200 on Ebay. - *Dungeon Explorer*, the classic TurboGrafx-16 *Gauntlet*-esque RPG game, is coming to Xbox 360 and Sony PSP. - *Oblivion* becomes the fastest selling game on the Xbox 360 and reaches 1.7 million units sold (Xbox 360 and PC) in its launch window. - *Silent Hill* screenwriter Roger Avary will write and direct an upcoming movie based on Atari's *Driver*. - The first energy crisis FPS war is coming to the Xbox 360, PS3 and PC with THQ's *Fuel Of War*. - Marc Ecko virtually tags Air Force One in a viral campaign for *Getting Up*. Watch the video at [stillfree.com](http://stillfree.com). - Ridge Racer continues the console debut trend, drifting in at *Ridge Racer 7* for the upcoming Sony Playstation 3 console. - *Battlestar Galactica* series creator Ronald D. Moore is considering an MMO *Battlestar* game. - Xblocks, not to be confused with Xbox, is a 3d interactive gaming experience on exhibition at "Fabbrica del Vapore" See at: [milano.interaction-ivrea.it/?p=49](http://milano.interaction-ivrea.it/?p=49) - Konami's Castlevania saga continues with *Portrait of Ruin* on the Nintendo DS.

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The month of May means a lot of things for a lot of people. In Mexico, May 5th (or "El Cinco de Mayo") commemorates the victory of Mexican forces over the French. In the UK, May 1st is "May Day" (or Labor Day). And what good son or daughter can forget "Mother's Day," the second Sunday in May? May also sees such nonsense as "No Pants Day" (we kid you not) on the first Friday in May, and "Towel Day," in tribute to Douglas Adam's, the author of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. While May means a lot of things to a lot of people, for us Hardcore Gamers it means one thing and only one thing, the biblical event that is the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in Los Angeles, California.

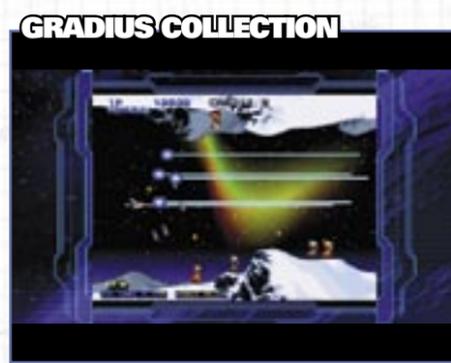
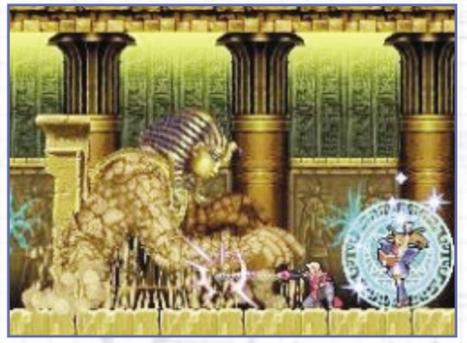
E3 is an exciting time to be a gamer, as it always holds the promise of amazing new games and technologies to see release in the coming year. This year's E3 could prove to be the best yet, with both Sony and Nintendo finally unveiling their next gen hardware in touchable, playable form. Microsoft could also come out swinging with some truly jaw dropping second-gen 360 titles, as well a few other potential surprises hidden up its corporate sleeve. To say we're excited about what we will be seeing in a few short weeks is an understatement. Of course, we'll be bringing back all of this glorious information in high-res living color in next month's issue.

As a treat and sneak peek, we've been able to get our hands on a few of the major companies' E3 offerings before the show. While what you're seeing here is a small cross section of titles that will be on display, you can expect that a lot more will be revealed on the first day. Sit back and enjoy, ogle the pretty screens across these 13 pages, and know that our crack team of HGM reporters will be working hard with you in mind to get every scoop, announcement and impression from the show floor.

PUBLISHER NAME  
**KONAMI**

STAND NO. 800 LOCATION SOUTH HALL

It's a sure bet Konami has a killer slate of new titles for current and next gen to unveil at E3, but they're not prepared to give anyone the full scoop on exactly what will be there just yet. What they are willing to talk about is titles such as *Xiaolin Showdown* for the PS2, Xbox, PSP and NDS. In this action/adventure based on the WB animated series, you lead a kung fu monk and his three martial arts warriors on an epic quest to search and protect a mystical object that gives its possessor super powers. The first of their Marvel licensed products, *Marvel Trading Card Game* is an all new PSP, DS and PC game that combines Upper Deck's best-selling Vs. Trading Card Game and the Marvel Universe. A nod toward old-schoolers and hardcore gamers, *Gradius Collection* for the PSP is a compilation of five *Gradius* titles -- *Gradius II*, *Gradius III*, *Gradius IV* and *Gradius Gaiden* -- in one portable package. Look for the full review next issue. There's also... a pair of portable *Winx Club* titles, *Winx Club: The Quest for the Codex* and *Winx Club: Shadow of the Phoenix*. Girl gamers rejoice? Finally, saving the best for last, the one bright light in this slew of announcements is *Castlevania: Portrait of Ruin* for the NDS. In this latest addition to the series, players take on the role of vampire hunter Jonathan and also a young girl named Charlotte Orlean, who possesses tremendous magical abilities. Evolving the traditional *Castlevania* gameplay, *Portrait of Ruin* allows players to switch freely between the two characters on the fly as they proceed through the game. Stay tuned next issue for much more.



PUBLISHER NAME  
**SONY**

STAND NO. 246 LOCATION WEST HALL

Sony's already promised to have a slate of PlayStation 3 titles on display and behind closed doors at the show, but they've also already spilled the beans on all of their current gen PS2 and PSP titles for the rest of '06 and early '07. While pickings are slim, there are still a few great titles on the way for the PS2, including *ATV Offroad Fury 4*, which adds MX bikes, buggies and trophy trucks to the mix. On the RPG side, Sony has picked up Level 5's cel-shaded epic *Rogue Galaxy*, which offers deep gameplay, streaming graphics and a huge adventure. Last but not least, *God of War II* will be making an appearance in early 2007. Taking off from where the original left off, you once again get the opportunity to play as anti-hero Kratos, who is on a new epic quest of revenge against the gods. Prepare for more non-stop action, over-the-top graphics, and plenty of puzzle solving the Greek way. On the portable side, Sony has some amazing PSP titles on the way. Look for *ATV Offroad Fury Pro*, *World Tour Soccer '06*, *LocoRoco* (a roly-poly action/puzzle game in the spirit of *Katamari Damacy*), *Killzone: Liberation* (an isometric single and multiplayer shooter based on the 1st-person PS2 shooter), *Gangs of London* (think *The Getaway* for PSP), and *Ratchet & Clank* (based on the original *R&C*, this last one is a truly amazing sight to behold on the small screen).

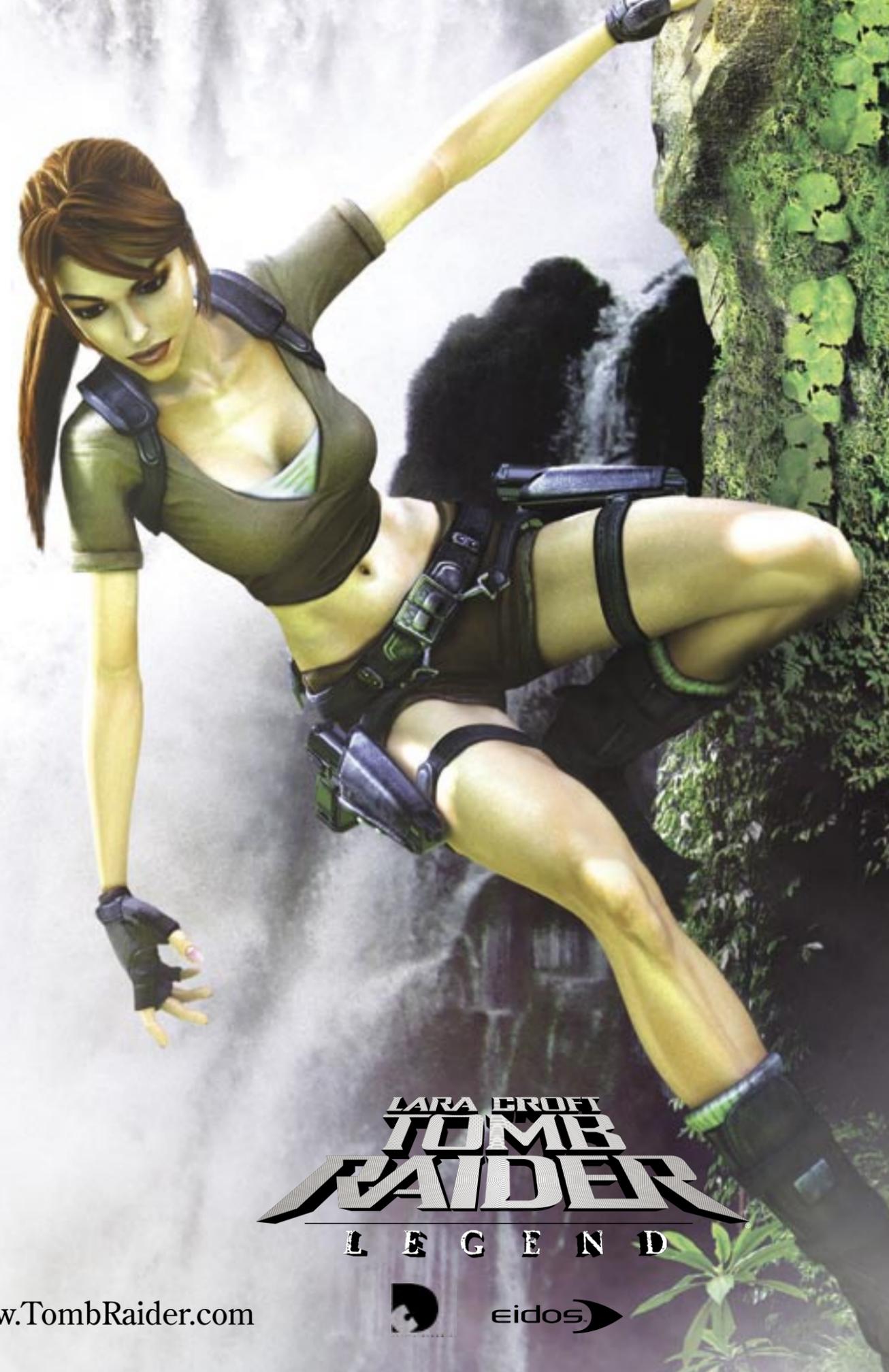
# SEEING IS BELIEVING

"IT'S AMAZING!"  
PSM BUY OR DIE AWARD  
PSM

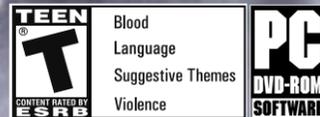
"4.5 OUT OF 5!"  
OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE

"AWESOME GAME OF THE MONTH,  
5 OUT OF 5 STARS"  
STUFF MAGAZINE

"THIS IS THE BEST LOOKING VERSION  
OF LARA CROFT YOU'VE EVER SEEN."  
IGN



# LARA CROFT TOMB RAIDER LEGEND



PlayStation.2



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eidos

**MOTO GP 06**



**COMPANY OF HEROES**



**FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR**



**DESTROY ALL HUMANS 2**



**WWE SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2007**



**TITAN QUEST**



**DAWN OF WAR: DARK CRUSADER**



**SAINTS ROW**



PUBLISHER NAME  
**THQ**

STAND NO. **B324** LOCATION **SOUTH HALL**

Licenses run wild with most of THQ's '06 lineup, but there are some original IP titles on tap. The first is *Destroy All Humans 2*, which features Crypto terrorizing the 1960's across all major platforms. We're expecting *Dragnet*, *Get Smart*, moon landing, and Woodstock mockery to dominate the game. *Juiced Eliminator* sees the street racer dash from major consoles to the PSP with wireless net play and pink slips intact. New cars and tracks give vets an incentive to pick up the portable installment. This year also saw them launch *Slingdot*, a free PC online gaming service allowing for gamers with simpler tastes to be satisfied. Everyone's favorite porous cleaning tool returns in *Spongebob Squarepants: Creature From the Krusty Krab*. Rather than platforming gameplay, a racing and stunt-heavy approach of hot rod racing, flying, and skydiving was taken here, and the Revolution version will take full advantage of Nintendo's magical nunchaku controller. In stark contrast to Bikini Bottom lies *Frontlines: Fuel of War*. Set in a futuristic fictional world based on our modern-day one, *Fuel of War* is set to deliver FPS action that allows you to customize your soldier while using many different strategies to succeed. Finally, *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2007* is coming out, which sees crowd fighting return to the series, and ECW-esque balcony dives make their debut. There's something for nearly everyone in this lineup, hopefully the games live up to their potential.



TRAPPED IN A MALL SWARMING WITH ZOMBIES,  
DO WHAT YOU MUST TO SURVIVE!  
ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING IS A WEAPON!

# DEAD RISING

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**M** Blood and Gore  
Intense Violence  
Language  
Use of Alcohol

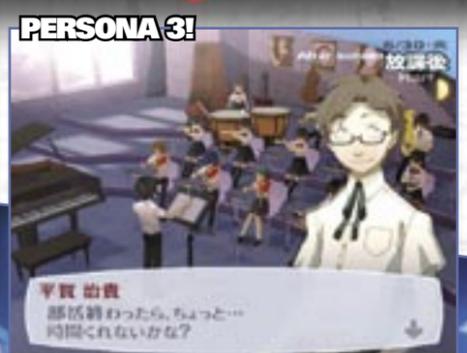
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PUBLISHER NAME  
**ATLUS**  
STAND NO. 2408 LOCATION WEST HALL

Atlus has been on a roll with a solid fanbase in cornering the niche games market, and they look to be increasing that with a lengthy list of games in an RPG-heavy lineup this year. Megaten fans will not be left out in the cold as they'll be summoning demons during Japan's Taishou era (1912-1926) in *Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Summoner* (PS2). Players will have to think carefully about what cards they'll need in the unique SRPG *Yggdra Union* (GBA). Speaking of SRPGs, the super long running Super Robot Taisen series from Japan makes its giant mechanized North American debut in not one, but two games that will feature exclusive mecha designs by Banpresto in *Original Generation* (GBA) and *Original Generation 2* (GBA). Not one to shy away from releasing two games in quick succession, Atlus will be showing their first games based on an anime with the marble shooting action of *Battle B-Daman* (GBA) and *Battle B-Daman 2* (GBA). And there'll be more double helpings on the GBA with a pair of real-time side-view combat RPGs titled *Summon Night: Swordcraft Story* and *Summon Night: Swordcraft Story 2* where you'll uncover the city of Wystem's secret. Don't think that Atlus has ignored the DS with all of that GBA lovin'. You'll be solving bizarre and puzzling cases in the too cute for words *Touch Detective*. Also on display at E3 will be the strange and quirky action RPG *Contact* (DS), which will be making use of the DS's Wi-Fi capabilities. For those wondering what some of Squaresoft's former staffers have been up to, *Chrono Trigger* alums Masato Kato and Yasunori Mitsuda have collaborated on the RPG *Deep Labyrinth* (DS). And last but not least, Atlus will have some troubled and angsty school-kids on hand to unleash their true selves in the devilishly twisted RPG *Persona 3!* (PS2).



### CAPCOM PUZZLE WORLD



### POWER STONE COLLECTION



### LOST PLANET



### GOD HAND



PUBLISHER NAME  
**CAPCOM**

STAND NO. 624 LOCATION SOUTH HALL

If you like collections, Capcom has you covered. *Capcom Puzzle World* (PSP) delivers *Super Puzzle Fighter II*, *Block Block*, and *Buster Bros. Collection*, complete with customizable gaming sessions and wi-fi multiplayer. *Capcom Classics Collection Reloaded* (PSP) brings 15 classic arcade games to the PSP, from *Street Fighter II to Ghouls 'n Ghosts*. If you need a little more of that, go for *Ultimate Ghouls 'n Goblins*, also on the PSP. It's the fourth entry in the series and it sports a new 3D graphics engine. *Power Stone Collection* (PSP) rounds out the collections releases with both of the *Power Stone* games from the Sega Dreamcast, again with wireless multiplayer. Two new versions of *Mega Man Battle Network 6* (GBA) are coming, code-named *Cybeast Gregar* and *Cybeast Falzar*. *Monster Hunter Freedom* (PSP) lets you gather monsters on the go. It builds on the previous *Monster Hunter* and *Monster Hunter G* for PS2. On the other hand, *Lost Planet* (360) pits you against a hostile, ice-cold planet and hordes of enemies in a quest for your memories. Frank West is an eager photojournalist on the hunt for a scoop, but stumbles into a mall full of zombies in *Dead Rising* (360) For more info on *Dead Rising*, hit our cover feature in this issue. Last but certainly not least is *God Hand*, an action title that brings together the creators of *Devil May Cry* and *Viewtiful Joe* to create a symphony of beautiful violence.

### MONSTER HUNTER FREEDOM



### ULTIMATE GHOULS 'N GHOSTS



### MEGA MAN BATTLE NETWORK 6



### DEAD RISING



### ALONE IN THE DARK



### NEVERWINTER NIGHTS 2



### ARTHUR AND THE MINIMOYS



### TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED



### HOT PXL



PUBLISHER NAME  
**ATARI**

STAND NO. 4003 LOCATION PETREE

Atari comes to the table this year with a diverse lineup of adaptations, sequels, and original games. The massive multiplayer racing game, *Test Drive Unlimited* (Xbox 360) is finally ready for unveiling, after a brief preview at last year's E3. *Alone in the Dark* (Xbox 360) aims to create an experience evocative of gritty TV dramas like *24* and *Alias*. With gameplay divided up into 30-minute "episodes" complete with cliffhangers and next-ep previews, this survival horror game should keep players at the edge of their seats. *Arthur and the Minimoys*, based on the upcoming 3D animated adaptation of the immortal French comic book, lets players control the movie's three main characters and use their unique abilities to solve puzzles and fight. Meanwhile, *DBZ* fans get their fix with not one but two entries from their favorite franchise: *Dragon Ball Z Budokai: Tenkaichi 2* features the time-tested gameplay of the original, and covers the entire *Dragon Ball* canon, while *Super Dragon Ball Z* promises strategic terrain interaction and super-fast combinations developed by the original creators of *Street Fighter 2*. *HOT PXL* (PSP) throws some variety into the mix with a *Wario Ware*-like collection of minigames aimed at a more "mature" audience. *D&D Tactics* (PSP) will offer players some portable tactical dungeon crawling through an all-new setting in classic D&D style. Over in the *Forgotten Realms* part of the D&D universe, we'll finally get a glimpse of *Neverwinter Nights 2* (PC). The long-awaited sequel features all-new prestige classes and full integration of D&D 3.5 rules, and an upgraded version of that sweet little campaign maker we all know and love.

### SUPER DRAGON BALL Z



### DRAGON BALL Z BUDOKAI: TENKAICHI 2



**NBA BALLERS: REBOUND**



**SPY HUNTER**



**MORTAL KOMBAT: UNCHAINED**



**JOHN WOO PRESENTS: STRANGLEHOLD**



**MORTAL KOMBAT: ARMAGEDDON**

PUBLISHER NAME  
**MIDWAY**

STAND NO. 4001 LOCATION PETREE

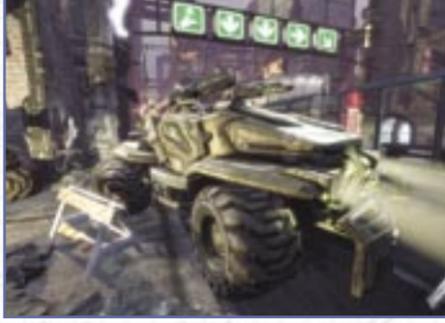
Midway's showing off their latest franchise entries this year, which means a booth full of games with colons in their titles. Starting things off, we have two new entries in the *Mortal Kombat* series. *Mortal Kombat: Armageddon* (PS2, Xbox) features characters from every previous *MK* game, and allows players to customize not just their fighters, but their fatalities. *Mortal Kombat: Unchained* takes the good ol' blood-and-guts action to the PSP, with minigames aplenty. Also moving to the PSP is *NBA Ballers* with *Rebound*. This entry in Midway's basketball franchise comes with system-exclusive features, like brand new "luxury" courts, unique modes, and updated roster lists. *Rise & Fall: Empires at War* is an original RTS that lets players step into the shoes of some of history's most famous generals in the mightiest empires of the ancient world. *Spy Hunter: Nowhere to Run* (PS2, Xbox) takes the *Spy Hunter* series on foot for the first time as a third-person action shooter featuring Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson. The Rock isn't the only celebrity in Midway's booth this year, though; he'll have to share the spotlight with Chow Yun Fat, who appears in *John Woo Presents: Stranglehold* (Xbox 360, PS3, PC). A "spiritual sequel" to John Woo's *Hard Boiled*, *Stranglehold* promises an experience that mirrors the famous director's style in every way, from slow-motion gun-fu action to running on rails and swinging from chandeliers.



**RISE & FALL: EMPIRES AT WAR**



**UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2007**



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## MMORPG

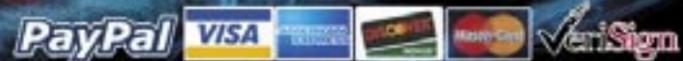
**Accounts and Currency**

- World of Warcraft - EverQuest - Everquest 2 - Final Fantasy XI
- RF Online - Star Wars Galaxies - Lineage 2 - Guild Wars - City of Heroes
- Dark Age of Camelot - City of Villans - Eve Online - The Matrix Online

**Live Chat - Open 24 Hours**



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**Account Rental Services**

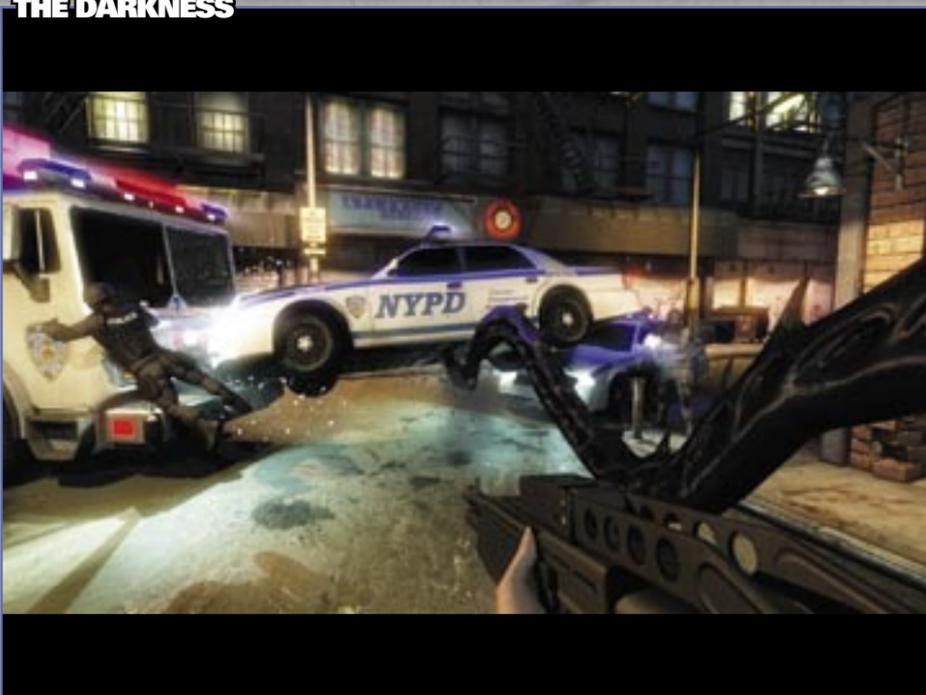




PREY



THE DARKNESS



BIOSHOCK



DUNGEON SIEGE II: BROKEN WORLD



THE DA VINCI CODE



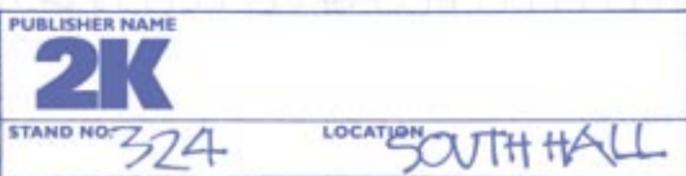
CIVILIZATION IV: WARLORDS



CIVCITY: ROME



STRONGHOLD LEGENDS



2K Games has a thriving sports imprint, but that's far from the only genre of games they make. High on their upcoming list is *BioShock* (Xbox 360, PS3). It's described as a role-playing shooter for the next-gen systems, and it's already turning heads. Also coming down the pipe is *The Darkness* (Xbox 360, PS3), which is based on the Top Cow Productions property of the same name. You play hitman Jackie Estacado as he faces off against a rival family with the aid of "The Darkness," which grants him demonic, otherworldly powers. Long-awaited FPS *Prey* (PC, Xbox 360) is on its way, as well, and it's powered by an enhanced version of the *Doom 3* engine. The *Dungeon Siege* series is getting two new entries: an expansion for the original PC game called *Dungeon Siege II: Broken World* and a PSP title known as *Dungeon Siege: Throne of Agony* (PSP). *Broken World* releases this summer, while *Throne of Agony* hits in fall. 2K Games also has the hook-up for sim fans, with *CivCity: Rome* (PC), *Stronghold Legends*, *Civilization IV: Warlords*, and *Railroads*. It's a good time to be a fan of Sid Meier's work, but don't knock *Stronghold*: you get to play as Vlad Dracul. Rounding out their titles is *The DaVinci Code*, which is tailor-made for you conspiracy theorists.

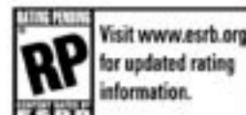
## Villainy! Carnage! Exploding penguins!?

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# DISGAEA 2

Cursed Memories



Visit [www.esrb.org](http://www.esrb.org) for updated rating information.



PlayStation 2



## CHROMEHOUNDS



## YAKUZA



## SUPER MONKEY BALL ADVENTURE



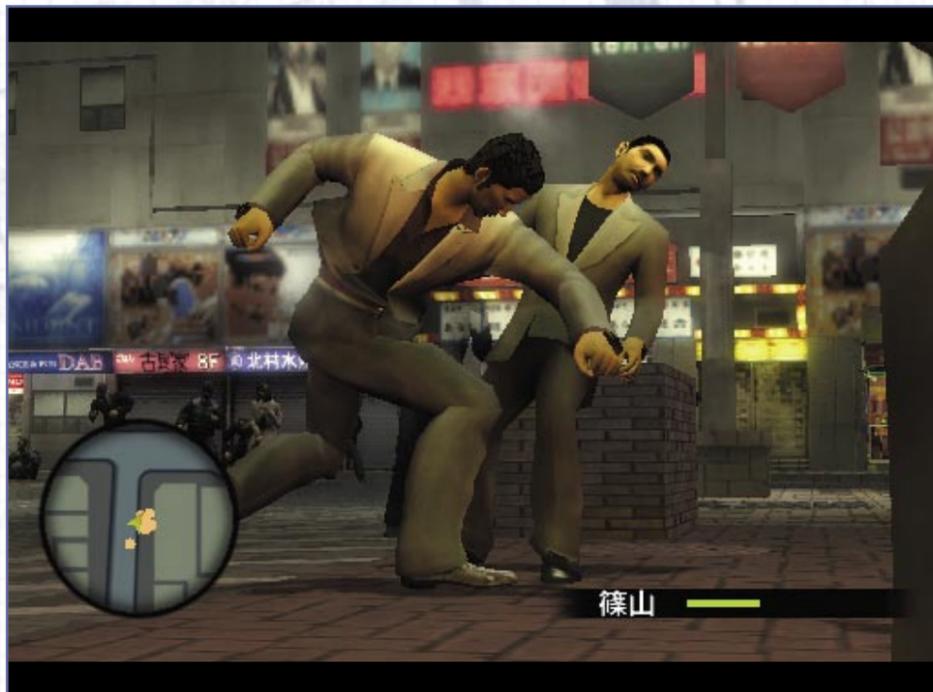
PUBLISHER NAME  
**SEGA**

STAND NO. **946** LOCATION **SOUTH HALL**

The House That Sonic Built is gearing up for yet another year of quality titles. First on the list is *Super Monkey Ball Adventure* (PS2, PSP, GCN). The new "Adventure" aspect adds an expansive narrative and special magical ball powers to its hit puzzle franchise, taking replayability to new heights. Gamers who want a new spin on the urban sandbox genre will be able to take on the mob on the other side of the Pacific in *Yakuza* (PS2). The city of Tokyo will be yours to explore as you attempt to unravel the conspiracies surrounding yourself and the Japanese mafia. The reigning king of tennis video games will be back for another round in *Virtua Tennis 3* (PS2, PSP, PS3, Xbox 360, PC). Look for a refined player creation system, and tons of tennis minigames. *Full Auto 2: Battlegrounds*, a PS3 exclusive, will be making a showing as well. This sequel will allow you to blow open holes in your urban racetracks, allowing you to make your own shortcuts. Finally, over on the Xbox 360, Sega will be allowing mech-heads to command their own squads of hulking battle machines in *Chrome Hounds*. Developed by From Software, best known for the *Armored Core* games, *Chrome Hounds* will feature teams comprised of mechs with differing abilities. Think *SOCOM* or *Ghost Recon* with giant robots. (Then, wipe up your drool.)



## VIRTUA TENNIS 3



## EUREKA SEVEN



## HELLGATE: LONDON



## MAGE KNIGHT APOCALYPSE



## TEKKEN: DARK RESURRECTION



## XENOSAGA III



## ZATCH BELL! MOMODO FURY



PUBLISHER NAME  
**NAMCO**

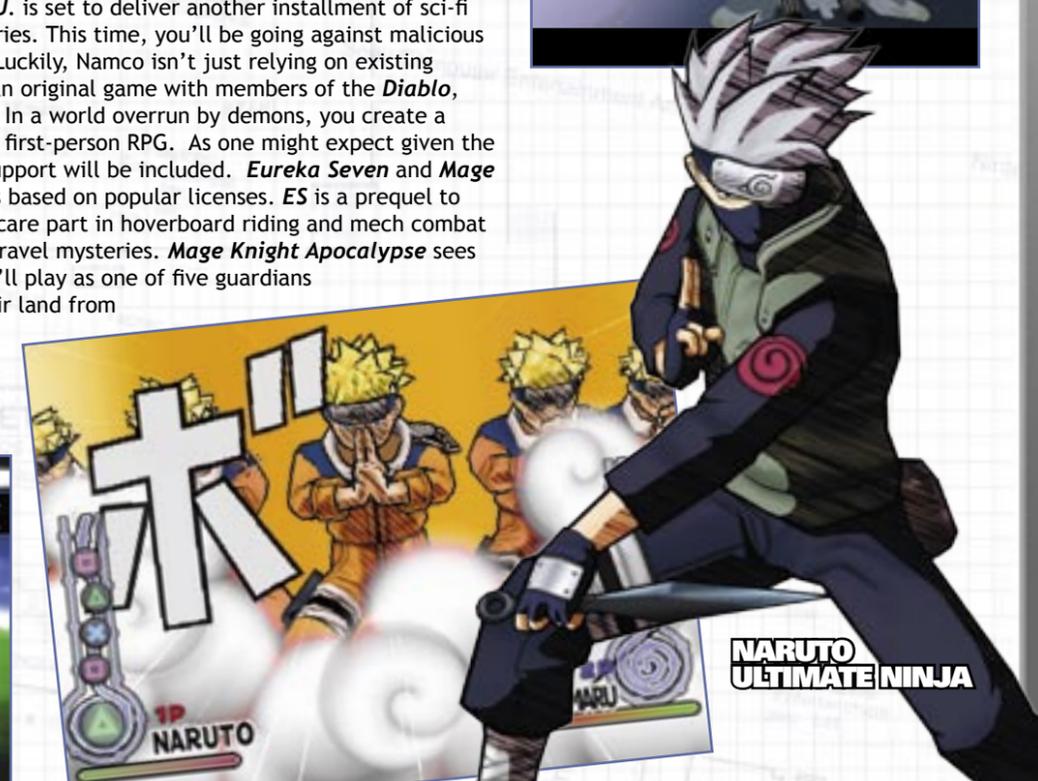
STAND NO. **600** LOCATION **SOUTH HALL**

Namco may be done rolling out the katamari, but they've got plenty of other follow-ups to keep gamers occupied. You can fly high anywhere you want with *Ace Combat X* (PSP). The first portable installment of the long-standing series adds new aircraft, revamped AI, and Wi-Fi play. For PS2 RPG fans, *.hack G.U.* is set to deliver another installment of sci-fi action set years after the original *.hack* series. This time, you'll be going against malicious PKs (player killers) in an all-new "World." Luckily, Namco isn't just relying on existing properties this year. *Hellgate: London* is an original game with members of the *Diablo*, *StarCraft*, and *Warcraft* teams behind it. In a world overrun by demons, you create a character and then ravage your foes in this first-person RPG. As one might expect given the developer's pedigree, online multiplayer support will be included. *Eureka Seven* and *Mage Knight Apocalypse* are two new properties based on popular licenses. *ES* is a prequel to the new TV series for the PS2. You'll take care part in hoverboard riding and mech combat while working as a government agent to unravel mysteries. *Mage Knight Apocalypse* sees the popular license make its PC debut. You'll play as one of five guardians whose sole purpose in life is to protect their land from an evil group led by the Apocalypse Dragon. Your goal is to prevent the end of the world at their hands. Hundreds of skills, items, and weapons will aid you.

## .HACK G.U.



## ACE COMBAT X



## NARUTO ULTIMATE NINJA

## SCARFACE: THE WORLD IS YOURS



## MIAMI VICE: THE GAME



PUBLISHER NAME  
**VIVENDI**

STAND NO. 1224 LOCATION SOUTH HALL

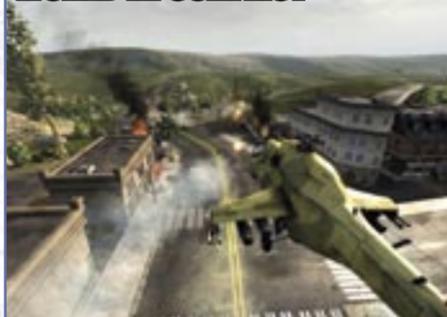
TV and movie adaptations are well-represented at Vivendi-Universal's booth this year, with *Eragon*, based on the upcoming novel-turned-film about a boy and his dragon, *Scarface: The World is Yours* (PS2, Xbox, PC), and the aptly named *Miami Vice: The Game* (PSP). On other franchise fronts, *The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning* (PS2, Xbox, NGC, DS, AGB) tells us the origin of the wisecracking little dragon, while *Caesar IV* (PC) resurrects a classic strategy series after almost a 10-year lapse. Crash Bandicoot and his wacky friends come to the DS for some multiplayer minigame fun in *Crash Boom Bang*, featuring the all-new DS accessory, the Motion Panel Communicator. *FreeStyle* offers players a unique MMORPG community experience centered around street basketball, with plenty of personal customization and team-play options and an RPG experience system for acquiring new moves. A sequel to last year's popular destruction racer, *FlatOut 2* (PS2, Xbox, PC) promises more tracks, more cars, more environments, and multiplayer options aplenty. The strategy game *World in Conflict* (PC) brings the Cold War to the modern era, with fully destructible environments and 360 camera control on the battlefields. On top of all this, Vivendi will also debut a host of mobile games this year: *Black Hawk Down*, the comical *Flying Toaster*, strat-sim *Empire Earth*, the *Battleship*-inspired *Navy Challenge*, classic shmup adaptation *Red Baron*, and *SWAT Force*.



## FREESTYLE



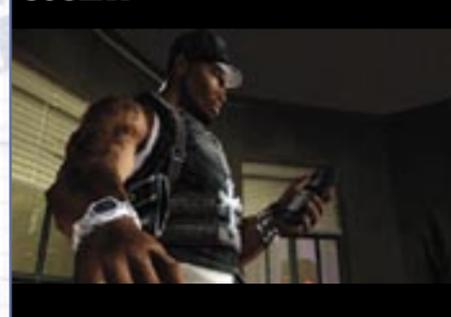
## WORLD IN CONFLICT



## JTF



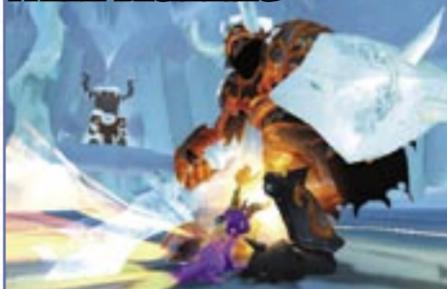
## 50CENT



## FLATOUT 2



## THE LEGEND OF SPYRO: A NEW BEGINNING



## CRASH BOOM BANG



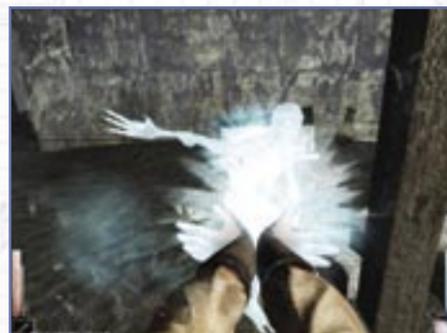
## RAVING RABIDDS



## ENCHANTED ARMS



## HEROES OF MIGHT AND MAGIC: DARK MESSIAH



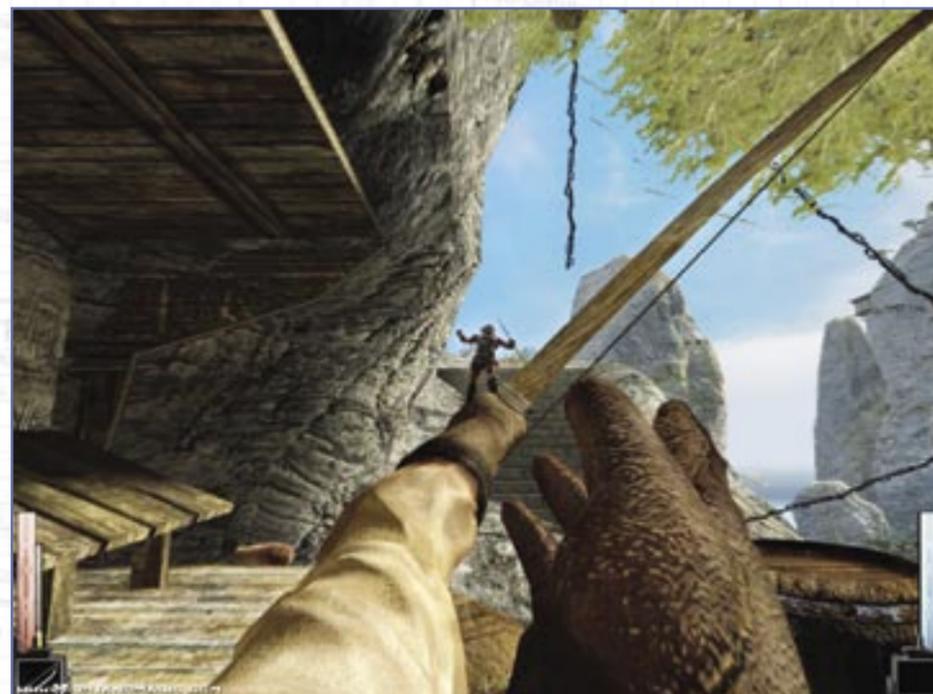
## HELL'S HIGHWAY



PUBLISHER NAME  
**UBISOFT**

STAND NO. 924 LOCATION SOUTH HALL

The coming year is going to see Ubisoft releasing a more diverse line of titles than ever before, from new entries in proven series to some wild new gambles in both story and gameplay. Sam Fisher returns for another stealthy mission in *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*, this time infiltrating a terrorist cell. The *Brothers in Arms* series returns with *Hell's Highway*, which lets you follow American forces through the ambitious but ill-fated Operation Market Garden. The largest air invasion in history, American troops tried to blitz their way into Berlin through a single road leading from Holland, only to face overwhelming resistance from elite German paratrooper and panzer divisions that you'll surely have to deal with in the game. *Heroes of Might and Magic: Dark Messiah* picks up where the fifth title in the series left off, letting the player make their own way through the world by building a character that blends warrior, wizard, and assassin skills. *Call of Juarez* brings FPS to the Old West with two intertwining storylines, while *Enchanted Arms* brings the first Japanese console RPG to the Xbox 360. *Red Steel* will take full advantage of the unique Revolution controller to present a blend of FPS and swordplay in a way never before experienced. We don't know much about *Assassin's Creed* other than it looks really good, but we sure would like to learn more at E3. Finally, the long-rumored fourth *Rayman* game now has a title, *Raving Rabids*, and some enigmatic production art. We still have no idea what this game is going to be about, but anything that involves giving Rayman a giant afro almost by definition *has* to be good.



Now that the arcades are dead and hardly anybody makes money from the machines anymore, collecting coin-op arcade games has become a popular hobby for some. The cabs have become affordable and relatively easy to find (especially with the advent of eBay and the internet). Some of the greatest and most collectible arcade games are ones that failed in arcades. What makes a game really fun to play at home isn't what people were looking for in the heyday of these games, so many of them got overlooked and ended up disappearing into obscurity... until now. Take my hand as we rediscover these lost treasures together in:

## the greatest arcade games the world overlooked

### snacks 'n jaxson [1984]

a feature by djpubba

Oh. My. Lord. Whoever designed this game was a mad genius. Actually, I once met the programmer at an arcade game convention in San Jose and he seemed quite normal, so the game must have been the product of some wild, um... experimentation of the sort that commonly went on in the 80's. Released as a kit for Bally/Sente's ill-fated cartridge-based SAC arcade cabinet, the game never saw wide distribution into arcades — probably because 1984 was the year of the "crash." It's a damn shame, too, because it's the best game ever.

You control a clown. Specifically, you control a clown's head with a trackball. The clown's neck is stretchy like a rubber band. This is a good thing, because it makes it easier for you to maneuver the clown's head to the food that is floating around the room so he can eat it.

But, wait! That's not weird enough. No, it turns out that your nose has come loose and is bouncing all over the place, so you have to keep it from flying through the window behind you. The best way to do that is, of course, by blocking it with the clown's face. This wouldn't be such a hard thing except for the part where you're supposed to be helping Mr. Jaxson de Box gobble down all the zero-G snacks at the same time.

Just as this behavior would upset any sane person, the little green chef-goblin-things who live in the walls have become upset. You can tell because they will release evil peppers and soap bars into the air to foil your attempts at having a nice meal. If your clown head eats one of those, he will be stunned (just as you or I would be) and therefore risk missing a bounce of the nose. The solution? Sneeze. Hitting the Sneeze button will blast the peppers and soap out of the way leaving only food, glorious food, to consume.

This is what hardcore gaming is all about, friends.

As you progress through breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a midnight snack, you must eat more and more food while your nose bounces faster and faster and you contend with more pepper and soap. In between meals, you get a chance to practice nose bouncing, block baseballs with your face, or try your hand — er, face — at juggling three noses for bonus points.

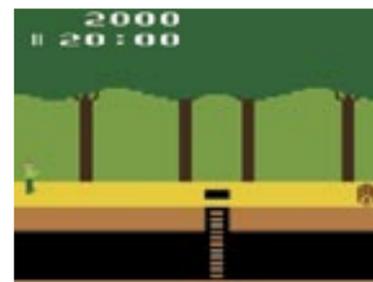
This is all incredibly fun and the trackball controls are smooth. If you have the means, I highly recommend picking up the original arcade cabinet. It's made of metal, fiberglass and wood (and weighs a metric funk-ton). However, being incredibly rare, it's extremely unlikely you'll ever find one. Hopefully, some day, somebody will be able to nab the rights to this game. If you happen to be one of those somebodies reading this, then while you're at it, be sure to get the rights to some of the other classic Bally/Sente titles that run on the same SAC system hardware, including: *Chicken Shift*, *Stocker*, *Snake Pit* and *Stompin'*. Please release them somewhere for the world to enjoy legally. Gametap? Live Arcade? Hello? Bueller?



## What are you waiting for?



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the greatest arcade games the world overlooked

## dark planet in 3d [1982]

If this reads a lot like the KLOV entry for this game, know I also wrote that. Nobody else seems to know about *Dark Planet in 3D*.

This isn't really a very fun game to play. It's just really neat to behold in person. Everyone involved with the game, except the designer of the actual game, were creative geniuses. The '50s sci-fi artwork on the cabinet, the cabinet shape itself and the special effects achieved with mirrors to create the play field are sheer perfection. The image from the monitor is reflected, filtered and merged with an actual modeled miniature terrain to create a 3D landscape which the video graphics are floating within. The graphics are very



primitive compared to other games of the same year. Even though it has a color monitor, only two colors are used — blue and red. The effect is still quite good. The game, unfortunately, pretty much sucks.

The object is to shoot enemies. A spinner controls your direction. You move around the play field with the thrust button and shoot, but you can also "laser" the enemies on the level below you (more like bombing). There's a cannon-type thing on tracks on the "ground" that shoots up at you. There's also a "volcano" in the lower right quarter that occasionally "erupts" into the upper level. You can get your ship down to the lower level by entering a tube in the upper right quarter. I put all those terms in quotes because the graphics are so crappy you can hardly tell that's what they're supposed to be. Too bad, so sad. Next game.

## strike force [1991]



Yes, sir. Not many people know there was a third game in *Defender/Stargate* series. That's because Midway (aka Williams) royally effed it up by trying to "fix" the controls. So this is one game that *could* have been great if not for that one messed up thing.

The first two *Defender* games had a huge jumble of controls that most non-gamer types would declare impossible to use. We knew the case was quite the opposite and *Defender* sucked in quarters like a whale feeding on plankton. When *Stargate* came out, it had even *more* buttons on the control panel, but it didn't do as well. So, when *Strike Force* was made, they went in the opposite direction with the controls and opted for a standard eight-way joystick and three-button set-up. This totally drained the fun out for folks who were already familiar with *Defender*-style controls. In 1991, those folks were pretty much the only market left for a horizontal scrolling shooter, and *Strike Force* tanked. Hard.

The game play is pretty much everything a *Defender*-lover would want from a sequel — more of the same style of play with thoughtful new

elements and pretty graphics added for good measure. If only some talented hacker would rewrite the control portion of the game, this could be one heck of a great sequel. My fingers are crossed that some day I can play this game with a *Defender* control panel.



A photo of the playfield doesn't do the layered 3D effect justice. It really needs to be seen in person.

## i, robot [1983]

*I, Robot* was way ahead of its time. It was the first game to generate 3D filled polygons in real-time — in laymen's terms, the first true 3D game. There was nothing else like it in 1983 when it hit arcades. It was visually mind-blowing. In fact, it was so mind blowing that people couldn't wrap their minds around it — and it flopped. Even now, when 3D games are as common as weeds, this is a game that you either really like or you really hate. For the lucky few who "get it," it's quite a treat to play.

The game play is actually rather simplistic once you figure out what's going on. It's basically a glorified *Pac-Man*. The object of the game is to run your robot over all the red colored parts of the play field, which is constructed like a 3D maze. Once you've cleared all the red areas, you get to go to the next level.

You can jump gaps in the level (if there's a place to land) and shoot at the flying enemies. The difficult thing for new players to grasp is figuring out how to get to where you want to go and what exactly keeps killing you for no apparent reason. The trick is to keep an eye on the giant "eye" that appears and watches your every move through the level. If you try to jump a gap while the eye is red, it will zap you — instant death. Once you've got that part nailed, the rest of the way to success is pure skill.



## honorable mentions

If I had more space, I'd go on and on and on. Here are some other fun games that never got the attention they deserved.

*Robotron* lovers, check out:

*Space Dungeon*, *Cloak & Dagger*, *Black Widow*

*Crazy Climber* fans, check out:

*Crazy Climber 2*, *Fire Trap*

*Track & Field* nuts, check out:

*Numan Athletics*, *Mach Breakers*, *Herbie at the Olympics* (no, don't! It's teh worst!)

*Arkanoid* aficionados, check out:

*Ghox*, *Block Block*, *Gigas*, *Free Kick*

For weirdos like me who like odd yet strangely fun games, check out:

*Mutant Knight*, *Pu-Li-Ru-La*, *Victor Banana*, *Zwackery*, *Avenging Spirit* (\*cough\* It's *Messiah* \*cough\*), *Camel Try*

Visit the author's personal arcade collecting hobby web site at:

[www.arcadecollecting.com](http://www.arcadecollecting.com)

Once you've mastered the game play, you'll find that the maze levels are broken up with "space" levels where you clear obstacles and collect bonus letters. Clear enough levels and you'll face a boss — a giant rotating head, floating in space. Your job is to keep his mouth from pointing directly at you. You do that by shooting his head at strategic times. Each time you hit it, it will change directions. If you let his mouth point directly at you, he will spout forth a constant stream of spikes which you must shoot while trying to rotate him the other way to shut off the spike barrage. Miss shooting a spike and it's over. He's brutally difficult, but once mastered, insanely rewarding to be able to beat.

The game play isn't the only thing neat about this game. The cabinet features an unusual design with a narrow waist and a plastic molded control panel. It has a tasteful futuristic look that has withstood the test of time, unlike some of the other fiberglass monstrosities of the era that tried to look futuristic and ended up looking like low-budget movie props. It also features an analog-type joystick which is based on the "hall effect" principle. It moves magnets through a "hall" sensor (or something like that — don't expect me to 'splain the technical side of it further). Basically, it behaves like the analog thumbstick we're all familiar with on modern console controllers instead of the typical 8-way arcade joystick.

WE HAVE DOUJINSOFT SIGN. PROCEED WITH EXTREME CAUTION. PROCEED WITH EXTREME CAUTION. THESE GAMES ARE NOT YOUR AVERAGE GAMES THEY ARE OTHER GAMES WITH OTHER RULES NOT THE SAME AS OTHER GAMES THAT ARE DIFFERENT.

# WARNING

## DOUJINSOFT APPROACHING

A FEATURE BY ASHURA

Doujinsoft is the classic story of two things being smashed together to make something even better. Sort of like chocolate and peanut butter, or rock and awesome, Doujinsoft takes Doujinshi and Software and combines it into a single creamy center of goodness. Doujinshi refers to self-published Japanese projects, fannish or otherwise. The term comes from the words doujin (common man) and shi (distribution). Most doujinshi are comics, with content that ranges from the extremely tame to the x-rated, created by groups that call themselves circles. Apply this principle to software and you get doujinsoft: self-published, fan-made games. Doujinsoft circles usually release their new games at the Comiket (Comic Market) doujinshi-selling event, held twice yearly. A new doujinsoft title sells for the rough equivalent of \$20 US. The releases are more for fun than profit, but a lot of them rival professional releases when it comes to graphics and gameplay. Some doujinsoft circles have even become professional game developers after releasing a fan-game that hit it big. Most of the gems from these game-makers are overlooked, so we decided to cover some of the best. Please take a look!

## MELTY BLOOD Re.ACT: FINAL TUNED

Circle: Watanabe Seisakujo (now France Pan)  
 Website: [http://www.2s.biglobe.ne.jp/~k\\_wata/react.htm](http://www.2s.biglobe.ne.jp/~k_wata/react.htm)  
 Requirements: Pentium II Celeron 400MHz, 128MB RAM, 2GB install  
 Japanese Knowledge Required: Medium – English Menus, Heavy Japanese Story Mode.



*Melty Blood* is a superb 2D fighter very much in the style of Arc System Works' *Guilty Gear* series. Featuring the trippy demon world of Type-Moon's *Tsukihime*, well-animated sprites and solid gameplay are the thing which sets *Melty Blood* apart from other more craptastic doujinsoft fighters. All of the characters in this game are memorable (if strange), from Arcueid the vampire in a white sweater, Ciel the knife flinging nun, to Kohaku and Hisui the twin maids of happy death. Plus broomie death. The mechanics of the game are probably familiar (if a bit simplified)—you have three punch buttons (weak, medium, strong), and a 4th button (parry). You chain these together for combos, and each character has special moves, throws, supers, projectiles, stakes attached to jackhammers, spinning death shrubberies, and so on. You know, the average fighting game stuff.



*Melty Blood* was originally released in 2002, and what started as a slightly weak game quickly became more and more polished with each free patch and update. *Melty Blood* finally received a full blown (for pay) expansion in 2004, garnering the new title of *Melty Blood: Re.ACT* to mirror the then recent release of *Guilty Gear XX: #Reload*. Aside from more gameplay tweaks and additions, this version of the game also included two completely new characters (Satsuki and Rin), both of which were well received (and rabidly demanded) by fans. *Melty Blood Re.ACT* was so well received, in fact, that in 2005 Ecole licensed the game and released it for the arcade on Naomi hardware (as *Act Cadenza*), and it looks to be coming to the PS2 in 2006! But why wait? The creators released a patch for Re.ACT to help it match the arcade version (*Final Tuned*, like a creepy vampire car), and the play mechanics are only hard to pick up for those who don't know how to press buttons while looking at a screen. Just remember: if you plan on purchasing Re.ACT make sure you buy the original *Melty Blood* as well. You need the original to install the Re.ACT upgrade.



## KAMUI

Siter Skain's phenomenal vertical scrolling shooter borrows heavily from Taito's *Ray Force* (aka *GunLock*, *Layer Section* and/or *Galactic Attack*). It uses similar play mechanics and overall presentation, with a lot of scaling through atmospheres and trenches combined with high velocity multi-tiered parallax scroll. It's the unique modifications to execution and design that elevate *Kamui* to a higher level. First, the lock-on targeting system instantly seeks out all enemies in the plane below. The more time spent charging the lock-on system the higher the multiplier (up to 16x). Second, when pressing Lock-On and Shot simultaneously, a thick blue energy beam is emitted. This Kamui Beam decimates both enemies and all manner of projectiles but will overheat quickly. Third, the *Kamui* is no one-hit-wonder. The designers of the craft added a shield, allowing the ship to take several hits before being destroyed (additional shield icons can be picked up during play).



To balance out *Kamui*'s fire-power, the game features greater enemy volume, higher bullet counts and more frenzied attack patterns/waves than its inspiration. Combine all of this with a high-energy soundtrack (available in both MIDI and CD-DA flavors), and you have one of the most polished doujinsoft titles ever coded. The only problem is locating a copy. Even after two individual print runs (the first came in a purple DVD case, the second in a standard CD case), this game has become stupidly difficult to source.



Circle: Siter Skain  
 Website: <http://www.siterskain.com>  
 Requirements: Pentium 233MHz, 64MB RAM, 42MB Install  
 Japanese Knowledge Required: Medium – Kanji Menus (translations of the Options screen are available online)



Available Now

# SAMURAI WARRIORS

## State of War



Violence

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swpsp.com

## DRILL MILKY PUNCH

Circle: France Pan / French Bread  
 Website: <http://www13.plala.or.jp/french/>  
 Requirements: Pentium III 600MHz, 128MB RAM, 176MB install  
 Japanese Knowledge Required: None – English Menus

*Drill Milky Punch* is a "High Blow – High Sense – No Manners – Train & Bowling Bash Recommendation Game."

Yeah. That description explained everything to me, too.

Playing it, though, you realize that the above is eerily (and engrishily. That's a word!) one of the few ways the creators could try to explain the game that they ended up unleashing from deep within the evil nooks and crannies of their devious minds. Mmmn, evil nooks and crannies. You see, in *dMp* you control one of several Japanese schoolgirls (all teenage and short skirtified) who seem to attract everything in the world in mass droves, from rockin' out peanut men to evil fireball-shooting plants. Your job in this game is simple – you have to punch these things before they get too close. This knocks them over into other things, which in *turn* get knocked back and crash into even more things to form a big combo of, uh, knocked over stuff. If the enemies manage to invade your personal space bubble (or hitboxie domain if you will), that's bad. As then, you, yourself, are the one who gets ass knocked.



well, until they come back again. As you beat the bosses (usually repeatedly, it takes a few times), they become unlocked on the character select screen.

This, of course, gives you more choices for getting your bull in a china shop on.

The game pulls all of these characters from the popular romance-game franchises *Muv Luv* and *Kimi ga Nozomu Eien*, but to be honest, they have little to do with what makes this game cool. It's the gameplay that's fun, and the characters might as well be original. Seeing how many people you can chain-knock onto their asses is addicting in ways which can't be described in the primitive letter and punctuation combinations we have available to us right now. It'd probably take meat-loaf and punctuation combinations, or something.

The modes available to you are sadly on the light side. You're given the choices of Time Attack, Normal, and Battle Mode, with the option of up to 6 players battling simultaneously— well, theoretically. You can't remap the buttons, and even with gamepads a lot of your players will be huddled around the keyboard fighting over the good 'ole WASD keys. All of the menus are in English, however, and there's very little Japanese text in-game to up the learning curve beyond that. At its heart *dMp* is a very simple game with no real story, but the addictingly genius gameplay and cheap price (~10 bucks and shipping if you look the right places) almost ensure that it's foolish not to buy. Honestly, though, who in the world *doesn't* like to run around and randomly knock over shiz? Especially with milky punches. Punching things milkily is a national pastime, y'know.



Uh, take that in the best way possible.

Aside from the millions of normal (that's a loose term here in this game, folks.) enemies, eventually boss characters (that are as schoolgirly as your player character) appear as well. These bosses, unlike the other enemies, possess mastery of a secret technique known only to a few. A technique so deadly, in fact, that it was honed after many years of training and dedicated study of the ancient arts.

You see, when they get knocked over, they know how to stand back up.

Since these bosses know the secret technique of 'Back Up Standing', you must knock them over repeatedly until their defense is waned and they are gone forever. Or, well, until they come back again.



## IMPERISHABLE NIGHT

(Touhou Eiyashou)

ZUN, the main creator of the Touhou shooting games, calls his particular breed of bullet-hell "curtain-fire." A veritable pastel maelstrom of arrows, stars, circles and rays awaits the pairs of magically-gifted young girls you use in these games. Each girl is endowed with a unique subweapon that is activated by holding down a second button whilst firing. Aside from doing more damage, this function slows down the character to afford more precision during intense bullet weaving (this mode also displays your tiny hitbox). Learning how to balance the two attack formats is the key to success.

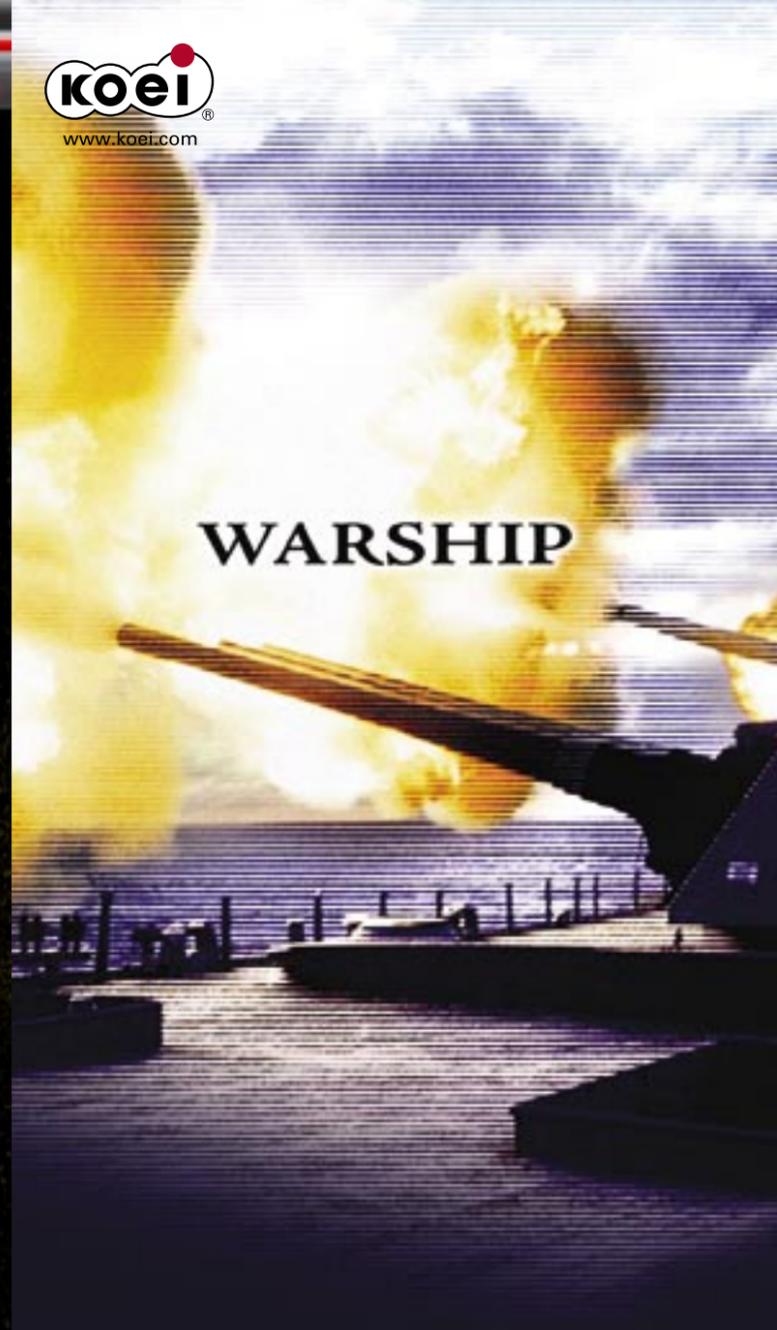


A third button is designated as spell-card, or screen-clearing-bomb. However, the game rewards the player with lengthier boss battles (read: additional scoring opportunity) should they be able to successfully navigate the deluge of ordnance without bombing. A branching-stage system (coupled with unlockable special modes) increases variety and replay value. To round out this girl-shoot-girl world, haunting piano melodies accompany a series of lavish floral backgrounds as you fight. Every aspect of this game shines with fine tuning and professional production values (and all for US \$20). Any shooting fans owe it to themselves to try out *Imperishable Night*, or any of the other titles in the long Touhou series. *Imperishable Night* is actually the eighth, with the sixth and seventh titles in the series (*The Embodiment of Scarlet Devil* and *Perfect Cherry Blossom*, the other two games in the "curtain fire" trilogy) also very popular with shooter fans.



Circle: Shanghai Alice  
 Website: <http://www16.big.or.jp/~zun/>  
 Requirements: Pentium 500MHz, 128MB RAM, 500MB Install  
 Japanese Knowledge Required: None – English Menus

IF YOU'D LIKE TO PURCHASE ANY OF THESE GAMES, CHECK OUT [HTTP://WWW.HIMEYASHOP.COM](http://WWW.HIMEYASHOP.COM). TO SEE IF THEY'RE IN STOCK. SPECIAL THANKS TO CHARLES "KIKEN" MUGG FOR THE SHMUPPY WRITUPS. THIS ARTICLE COULD NOT EXIST WITHOUT YOUR HELP AND MAD SHMUP KNOWLEDGE!



## WARSHIP

Available Now

# WARSHIP GUNNER 2



PlayStation 2



Mild Language  
 Violence

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Publisher: Hudson Ent.  
 Developer: Hudson Ent.  
 Release Date: 4/2006

Genre: Racing  
 Category: Kart  
 # of Players: 1

*Bomberman Kart* has you zooming down the speedway, avoiding obstacles, jumping over traps, and collecting power-ups and weapons to use against your rivals. Unlike other mobile phone kart games, your rivals will be looking to do the same to you. Power-ups include Turbo and invincibility while weapons include rockets, oil spills, mines and more.

There are six different-colored Bombermen to choose from as your racer and each will be rated with a variety of qualities to suit your driving style. Furthermore, three types of karts are available that are also rated differently so that there are a total of 18 possible driving combinations.

Racing takes place in three GP Circuits, each more difficult than the other. The first two Circuits will have three tracks each and the final Circuit will include all six. As is common, winning each race in the Circuit will give you points. Whichever Bomberman has more points at the end, wins that Circuit. Be aware, however, that you must win the first Circuit before the next one is unlocked. (A Time Attack mode will also be unlocked.)

The competition is pretty fierce as drivers battle for position and use whatever means necessary to come out on top. We had a hard time keeping up early on until we became used to the steering, the blazing speeds of the karts on a small screen, and remembered to watch out for obstacles. These dangers are just about everywhere, but it also helped that we found the right combination of Bomberman and Kart to help us win in the end.

*Bomberman Kart* isn't the perfect Kart game for mobile, we doubt there will be, but it's certainly the best up to now. This isn't just because there are a variety of tracks, drivers and cars, but mainly because it finally felt like the game was intelligent enough to have us worry about other things besides just taking the turns at the right speed. Like a true Kart game, the opponents, the weapons and the obstacles were the challenge. Kart racing fans finally have a genuine experience to play with on their phones.

**FINAL SCORE :**  
**3.5 of 5**



## RESIDENT EVIL THE MISSIONS



Publisher: Capcom  
 Developer: Capcom  
 Release Date: 4/2006

Genre: Survival Horror  
 Category: Action/Adventure  
 # of Players: 1

It took a while, but the franchise that unleashed the Survival Horror genre has finally landed on mobile phones with *Resident Evil: The Missions*. As the name implies, it's not a full-blown adventure but more a collection of entirely new objectives to clear.

*Resident Evil's* missions range from simply blowing away enemies to reaching locations in a certain amount of time. And though they aren't very long, there's still plenty of horrific action to be seen. A branching pyramid showing 100 possible missions will give you a solid selection to choose from. As objectives are cleared, new ones will open. Completing them successfully will not only give you a grade to determine your score, but whether other missions are opened. In addition, by collecting certain items throughout, special missions can be unlocked. Given that all of the missions are branching and unlocked at different times, there will always be a different path to complete them all.

Players will have to navigate *RE's* trademark crumbling mansion through zombie-infested hallways and rooms using S.T.A.R.S officer Jill Valentine. She can run and walk, but to shoot at enemies you'll have to enact the Attack Stance using a soft key. When in Attack Stance, the aim will auto-target enemies, and since ammo will be in short supply, the decision to fight or flee will always be a critical concern. Thankfully, the controls have been re-tooled for mobile handsets and therefore the game will not suffer when moving Jill around. Just press the direction you want her to go and she will move instead of having to rotate her body and then pressing forward.

The game uses fixed camera angles to show the action and the backgrounds recreate the original mansion in creepy detail. The characters are large and move well, but more impressive is the fact that they look very good considering it's a mobile phone screen. A lot of detail is captured here and even the sound is on target to create a grimly fiendish atmosphere. By no means is it as scary as console versions, yet it feels right for mobile.

*Resident Evil: The Missions* unfortunately doesn't have a storyline to tie everything together, nor does it have a map feature that would be helpful to those who are unfamiliar with the mansion. Nevertheless, it does a bang up job of delivering the franchise to wireless phones with good controls, tons of missions and solid game play. Fans of the series will enjoy this supplemental title and mobile gamers in general should definitely consider this download.

**FINAL SCORE :**  
**3.5 of 5**



## Available Now

# DYNASTY WARRIORS 5 Empires

PlayStation 2

**TEEN**  
 T  
 MILD LANGUAGE  
 VIOLENCE

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## JAMDAT SPORTS MLB 2006

This year, *Jamdat Sports MLB 2006* hits the diamond with its usual fare of first-rate baseball action and adds ever-so-subtle changes that only enrich the experience. It's still officially licensed, has three modes of play, and smoothly blends arcade with plenty of simulation features. The pitcher/batter duel is still prominent and one-thumb controls are as accessible as ever. But within the norm of roster, team and player rating updates, there are a number of others that should be mentioned.

The most important improvements are found in the game play and these fine-tune the baseball playing experience. These aren't major overhauls mind you, but with better AI across the board for a more strategic game, new ball physics that can affect the outcome, and the ability for pitchers to throw like their real counterparts, while getting fatigued, the game seems more like the real deal.

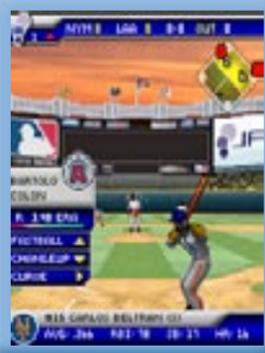


The one major change to this year's entry is that the Series mode from last year has been replaced with a Playoff mode. Instead of a 3, 5, or 7 game set against another team, you can experience the entire playoff bracket from Divisional Series to the MLB World Series. It may not be a full season yet, but there are plenty of games to be had along with the Quick Play and Exhibition modes.

*Jamdat Sports MLB* has always been a true performer when it comes to playing baseball on your phone and it still delivers the right balance between simulation and arcade styles while adding some refinements over and under the hood that make it exceptionally sound. We're sure there will be other mobile baseball games out before season's end but with this one being the first out of the gates and playing so well, we just can't imagine passing this one up.

Publisher: Jamdat  
Developer: Jamdat  
Release Date: 4/2006  
Genre: Sports  
Category: Baseball  
# of Players: 1

FINAL SCORE :  
**4.5 of 5**



## MUHAMMAD

# ALI BOXING

In *Muhammad Ali Boxing*, players strive to work their way up the ranks in hopes of challenging Muhammad Ali for the crown. Choosing from three boxers, you will take on seven progressively tougher opponents and learn what it takes to become a champion and later, hold on to the belt. This means training hard, reacting quickly, and keeping your head from being knocked off. Boxing is quite basic since your best recourse is to only counterattack. If you think of anything else, the opponent will block everything and stick it to you. Your own fighter will also block, weave and swing three types of punches plus perform combinations. By working these in tandem, you can drain the energy of the opponent. Still, it won't be uncommon to finish a bout within three rounds because of a KO or TKO.

In between matches, you'll have the opportunity to raise your skill in speed, strength, and stamina, plus learn new combos if you elect to train. The training will take the form of three mini-games that just require you to tap the correct direction signaled by an arrow. They are slow, non-challenging and time consuming and unfortunately, very necessary if you want to be crowned champion. The game would have been better if it just let you earn the skills by beating the opponents. In any case, because of this training, you can tailor your fighter to your liking, whether he be fast, strong, hold up to punishment, or well-balanced.

As mentioned, there are only five actions you can perform while boxing and these are all handled by either the D-pad or the keypad. They are mapped out well but don't react quick enough. This is annoying because the game is all about stick-and-move and if you can't do that in a timely manner, what's the point? At least the game does a good job with the sound effects and a decent job in the looks department though the boxers could have used better animations. They were too stiff and looked scary. *Muhammad Ali Boxing* isn't the great game we were hoping for because the controls were slow to react and it was just too basic. The opponents, while escalating in toughness, were still easy to defeat, including Ali, and the mini-games were unnecessary. If more technique were required, instead of block then punch, and a real strategy for each fighter implemented, this game could have been a whole lot better. We still won't fault it too much because after all, there's nothing better out there, but keep your eye out for Super K.O. Boxing from Glu.



FINAL SCORE :  
**3.5 of 5**

Publisher: Superscape  
Developer: GWE  
Release Date: 4/2006  
Genre: Sports  
Category: Boxing  
# of Players: 1

FINAL SCORE :  
**3.5 of 5**



*Trickshot Pool For Prizes* is the newest in the line of *For Prizes* games powered by Infospace in which players get to compete for actual prizes, including iPods, digital cameras, gift certificates and much more.

Like most pool games, you'll control shots by adjusting angle, spin on the cue ball, and strength of the shot. The precise controls give you full control over each shot, just remember to make your choices quickly since the clock is running. A full-blown view of the table is given, which limits the size of the balls so it's difficult to distinguish what numbers they are, but a special key will highlight them to make it somewhat easier, though not much.

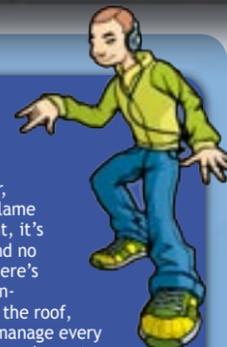
*Trickshot Pool For Prizes* wouldn't usually stand out from the crowd in any other instance given the usual gameplay but the fact that you can win actual prizes, well, we're sure that will certainly appeal to some of you out there.

Publisher: Infospace  
Developer: Infospace  
Release Date: 4/2006  
Genre: Sports  
Category: Billiard  
# of Players: 1

FINAL SCORE :  
**3.5 of 5**

## TRICKSHOT POOL

## NIGHTCLUB EMPIRE

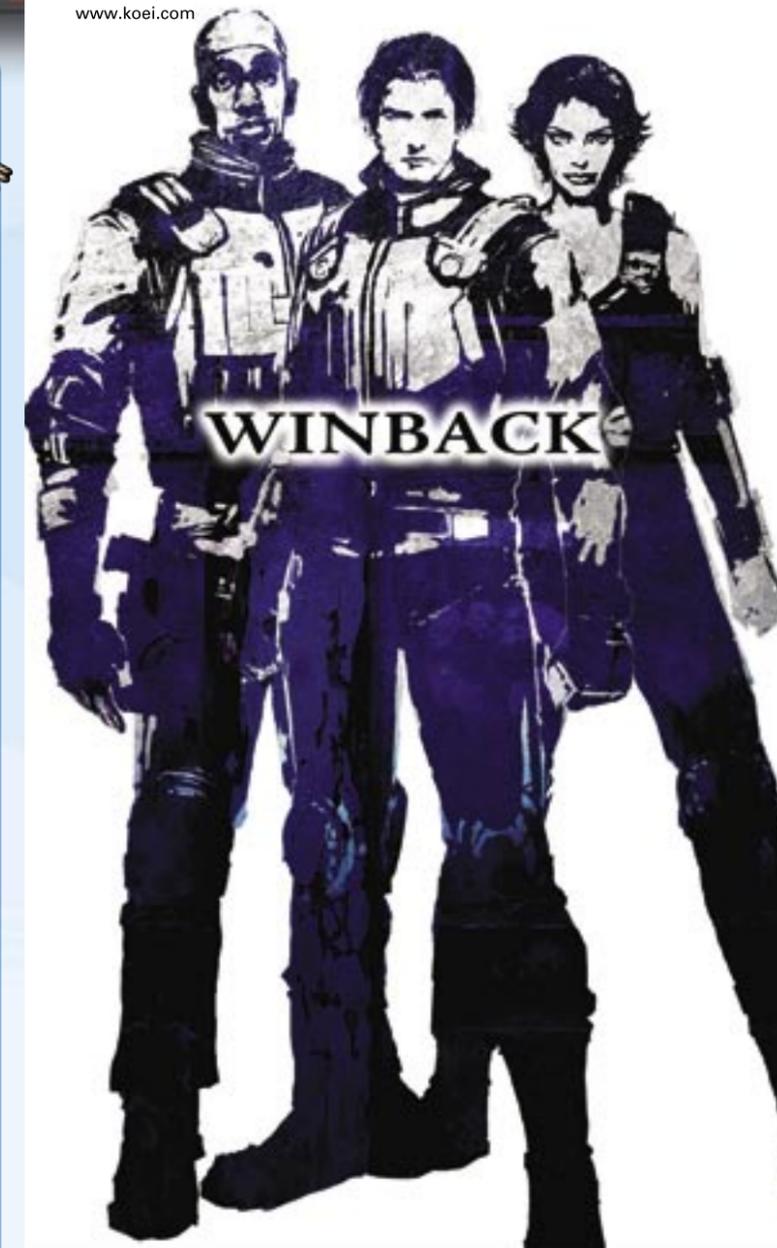


Did your favorite club night just get switched over to cowboy karaoke? Are you tired of finding out, after paying 20 bucks at the door, that just about every club is playing the same lame music? Whatever your reason for nightlife discontent, it's safe to say that YOU'RE the authority in clubbing and no one can run the show like YOU, right? OK hotshot, here's your chance to prove it. *Nightclub Empire* is a tycoon-style game that puts you behind the scenes to raise the roof, literally, on the three hottest clubs in town. You'll manage every aspect of the club including hiring staff, purchasing equipment and selecting musical genres, all in the name of becoming the Donald Trump of the dance scene. You begin by purchasing a location and personalizing it in your own way. Objects at your disposal are lighting, dance floors, speaker sets and lavish decorations. Each can be upgraded to better, more crowd-pleasing items along the way. Employees can also be hired, including dancers to provide ambiance and bouncers to keep order. The bigger the dance floor and the swankier the environment, the more patrons will visit to help generate cash and popularity for your club. After you've perfected and upgraded the club as far as possible, it will be time to move along and secure your second establishment and do the same. Once all three locations are thumping to an endless beat of patrons and cash flow, you will be crowned the nightlife king for sure.

It seems fun and fancy free until you realize that running a *Nightclub Empire* isn't all it's cracked up to be. Employees will quit on you, patrons will change their musical tastes, and just about any disaster can happen. You'll have to rehire new employees and constantly turn over DJs to ensure the crowd's happiness and approval. Also, you're subjecting yourself to problems such as power outages, broken equipment and even earthquakes, so you'll need to have the necessary funds for rebuilding. Money is accrued not only from the clientele visiting, but also through the help of the Scratch mini-game that can be played at any time as long as the indicator gauge that makes it available is full. In the mini-game, a turntable appears with a laser rotating around it, almost like a radar screen. Musical notes will show and if you press the button at the time the laser is over them, you'll gain money. Multipliers can also be picked up but beware the bombs that will explode and clear your money count. Each time something is collected, except for a bomb, the laser moves faster, making it more difficult to press accurately. The mini-game serves a great purpose in the game and also happens to be quite fun. *Nightclub Empire*, though a tycoon game, tends to be shorter than most in that style. We finished it rather quickly and were also slightly disappointed in the fact that after all three clubs and their popularity were at their max, nothing else happened. We just kept making money and increasing in popularity with nothing to do. It just felt strange because we didn't feel rewarded in anyway, except for maybe a high score that can be placed on the online leader boards. (That high score is calculated by your popularity from each club.) In the end, we did enjoy the game while working to set up each club and figuring out what and when to purchase. We really liked the interaction with watching the patrons and choosing the right DJs to pump them up while also having the ability to advertise in many different ways and throwing Ibiza-style foam parties. This is an entry-level tycoon game with a fun premise that should please the casual crowd.



Publisher: Digital Chocolate  
Developer: Digital Chocolate  
Release Date: 4/2006  
Genre: Sim  
Category: Tycoon  
# of Players: 1



4. 19. 2006

# WINBACK 2 PROJECT POSEIDON



PlayStation 2



Language  
Violence

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winback2.koei.com



## A New Breed of Survival Horror

There's no question that Capcom has consistently been able to develop successful intellectual properties into even more successful franchises. *Mega Man*, *Street Fighter*, *Ghouls n' Ghosts*, *Devil May Cry*, *Onimusha* and, of course, *Resident Evil* — all examples of mega-hits that continue to thrive year after year in sequels and spinoffs. While some have accused this Japanese publishing giant of going to the well one too many times with their big franchises, squeezing every drop out of a series until it becomes a running joke, it's hard to deny that Capcom's methods ultimately benefit gamers everywhere. For every *Resident Evil: Gun Survivor* and *Final Fight: Streetwise*, there's always a *Resident Evil 4* or *Devil May Cry 3* not far behind. Capcom's strong line of franchises is ultimately the result of a laudable willingness to take risks on new ideas and genres, like Clover Studio's upcoming *Okami* for the PS2.

Still, for the past ten or so years, Capcom's bread and butter (or flesh and bones, you might say) has been straight-up zombies. The *Resident Evil* franchise is still going strong with *RE5* set to hit the PS3 in 2007, and this year could see the birth of a whole new zombie-centric franchise with Capcom's new *Dead Rising* for the Xbox 360. More *Shaun of the Dead* than *Dawn of the Dead*, this viscerally entertaining action game delivers gore by the bucketful without ever taking itself too seriously. Expect darkly humorous zombie shenanigans instead of the sober, suspenseful tone of the *RE* series.



## Retail Hell (or "Three Days in the Mall")

In the small town of Willamette, Colorado, something very strange is going on. Under lockdown and sealed off from the rest of the world by the National Guard, overzealous (and unfortunate) photojournalist Frank West knows he's on to something big. Convincing a helicopter pilot to take him on a sweep over the city, Frank's camera captures countless photos of grisly zombie carnage. This introduction to the game is interactive and lets you get used to taking photos through Frank's camera, so you'll be snapping your own pictures of zombies flipping over a bus full of schoolchildren and corner a woman on the roof of a building, who has nowhere to go but down.

After this tour, it seems to Frank as if most of Willamette has turned into living dead. Like all Midwestern zombies (dead and otherwise), they're heading to the mall en masse. Frank convinces the pilot to drop him on a landing pad on top of this retail megalopolis, and plans to spend the next seventy-two hours getting his scoop before making rendezvous with the helicopter on the roof. How you choose to have Frank spend these seventy-two in-game hours is up to you. Do you attempt to pursue your scoops and chip away at the story behind this mysterious outbreak? Do you tour the mall at your leisure, fighting off the hordes of zombies while exploring its many shops and looting retail outlets for weapons, food, and clothing? Do you help out the hapless civilians stuck inside, leading them to safety and earning their trust; or do you just murder these needy NPCs with a golf club? How you go about getting through the next three days and what you end up doing is completely your choice. How you play the game determines which of the many multiple endings you earn in your game, and you'll have to beat it several different times in different ways to experience everything *Dead Rising* has to offer.



## Guns, Sledgehammers, and Teddy Bears

As a self-proclaimed sandbox game, *Dead Rising* gives you plenty of tools to get the zombie-killing job done. Sure, there's an intriguing storyline and compelling human drama, but half the game's fun is just finding new weapons and items Frank can use to fight off the zombie horde. The developers claim there are up to 300 useable items (including food items, which are eaten to restore Frank's health) at his disposal, ranging from the logical to the ridiculous.



# DEAD RISING



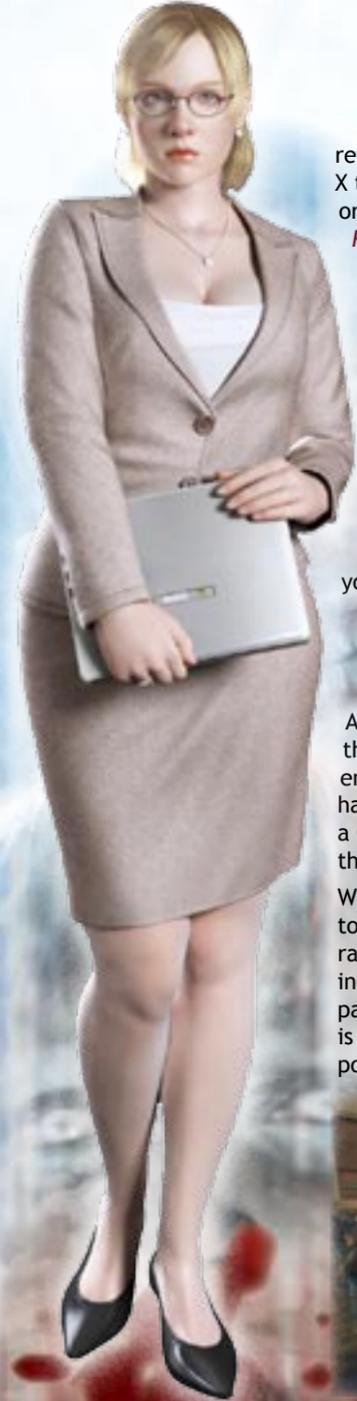
The complete roster of weapons is too great to list here, and from the time I got to spend with a near-final version of the game while visiting Capcom's development studios in Osaka, I probably only saw and used a quarter of them. The highlights include shovels, bowling balls, golf clubs, benches, trees, houseplants, standees, plastic light swords, shotguns, pistols, sledgehammers, chainsaws, shovels, pipes, baseball bats, CDs, plates, masks, cash registers, shelving, boxes, soccer balls, traffic cones, sniper rifles, axes, snowblowers, skateboards and yes, teddy bears. If you can find it in a mall, you can pretty much expect to find it in *Dead Rising* as a weapon.

Best of all, most of the weapons have their own unique animations. While attacking with the soccer ball makes Frank kick it at his opponent, using a bowling ball results in zombies getting knocked around like tenpins. There are even at least ten vehicles that Frank can drive and use to mow down the undead and/or commandeer to quickly get from place-to-place (including a motorcycle and jeep). If there's any justice in the world, one of them is going to be an ambulance.

## Death at Your Fingertips

Adding any of the game's weapons to Frank's arsenal is a simple matter of picking it up and placing it in your inventory. While the final number is not confirmed, the near-final version Capcom had on display allowed Frank to hold a total of up to seven weapons and items. Each appears in an Item Window when picked up, and can be cycled through and equipped by pressing the left or right shoulder buttons.

Once a weapon or item is equipped, pressing the X button causes Frank to attack with the weapon. Some weapons can perform a special secondary function by holding down and releasing the X button, but Capcom wasn't ready to reveal them to us. In addition to attacking in the traditional behind-the back third-person view, Frank can enter a first-person view by holding down the right trigger. When in first-person view, a targeting



reticule will appear and you can press X to throw whatever you're carrying, or aim and shoot in a similar style to *Resident Evil 4* while carrying a firearm.

Once a survivor has been rescued from their particular dilemma, Frank can use the survivor to perform a few different functions. Not only can he give the civilian a weapon by approaching him or her and pressing the B button, he can also enter into the first-person perspective, aim the reticule and press the Y button to set a goal marker, in essence telling that person where to go. This is good when you want to help someone find a loved one or move them out of harm's way.

## Shop 'til You Drop

A big part of what's really cool about *Dead Rising* is having free reign over this huge, sprawling mall. At the start Frank only is able to access a small portion of its 120-plus retail shops, but you can eventually enter all of its many storefronts. This massive list of stores to loot includes sporting goods, toys, guns, hardware, music, automotive goods, food courts, men and women's clothing, a super market, and even a Cineplex. Each store is unique, and the developers have taken great pains to create the over two thousand different mall furnishings and bits of merchandise that are on display.

When you enter a clothing store, Frank can play dress-up by trying on any of the huge variety of apparel to be found in the mall. And by "huge variety," we mean "50,000 total possible outfit variations," each ranging from pretty typical menswear to the uncomfortably bizarre (think "birthday suit"). Your options include some hilarious Capcom in-jokes like Servbot masks, Megaman's armor, and Arthur's heart-patterned boxers from *Ghosts n' Goblins*. To say that *Dead Rising* has an unprecedented level of detail is an understatement. It's one of the first 360 games to truly begin pushing the boundaries of what's possible with next-gen hardware.



INTERVIEW

Keiji Inafune

To get our own scoop, we flew out to Osaka, Japan and sat down with Keiji Inafune, Senior Corporate Officer and head of Capcom Production Studio 2, the studio creating *Dead Rising*. The list of titles Inafune-san has worked on is impressive: creator of *Mega Man* and *Onimusha*, he's also had his hand in *Street Fighter II* and the *Resident Evil* series. His current projects are *Dead Rising* and *Lost Planet*. What follows are some excerpts from the interview we were granted.



## Getting the Scoop, Earning the Prestige

So what if you're the sort of player who wants to actually follow the *Dead Rising* storyline, and understand the mystery surrounding the game's horrific and tragic events? You need to earn Prestige Points and solve Cases. While fulfilling these objectives won't exactly win Frank a Pulitzer, he'll at least earn a little recognition... that is, if he survives his ordeal.

Prestige Points are basically experience points that Frank earns by fulfilling a variety of objectives, like zombie-killing, snapping high-quality photos, completing missions, and escorting survivors to safety. As Frank earns these Prestige Points, his "PP Gauge" will slowly fill. When it maxes out, he levels up. In *Dead Rising*, this means boosted attributes like Attack (attack power), Speed (how fast he moves), Toughness (health bar increase), Weapons Stock (how many weapons he can carry at once), and Throw Distance (throwing items farther). In addition, certain skills can be learned as he levels up, which include new combat abilities (including wrestling moves and combos).

Cases are the series of strange events that lead Frank to the truth behind the zombie outbreak. When he stumbles onto a Case, a Case Screen appears. Inside the Case Screen are a series of Case Panels. These panels can help lead Frank to his next clue or let him know if he's completed or failed a Case. Whether Cases are completed (or even engaged) is completely up to you; it's entirely possible to go through the whole game without completing one case, and entirely impossible to solve them all in your first few runs through the game. Cases typically help further the main story arc.



For this interview, we invited our members at [Luv2game.com](http://Luv2game.com) to ask some of the questions.

**Killer\_Gamer:** What are the main differences between *Dead Rising* and the *Resident Evil* games?

**Keiji Inafune:** Even though both games contain zombies, they are really different genres. *Resident Evil* is a very serious, dramatic, dark horror sort of game. *Dead Rising* has something that *RE* doesn't: comedy. When viewed by Japanese people the American culture is one that seems that you have a good sense of humor, you are able to laugh about different dark comedy styles that we might not necessarily have in Japan. It's that comedy combined with one other key American culture aspect, the shopping mall, that defines America in a major way. Go to places like London and you've got Big Ben, Paris — the Eiffel Tower, but when it comes to America there are malls everywhere. So by that rationale, I wanted to make a game that, yes, did have zombies in it, but was emphasizing the comedic aspect as well as the landmark shopping mall. A lot of people may compare *Dead Rising* to *Dawn of the Dead*, but I personally think it's very different from that. *Dawn of the Dead* is more serious and dark than *Return of the Living Dead*, which is more of a comedic zombie movie. I wanted to focus more on the comedic side of horror and get people to laugh while having fun in this action-based world.

**HGM:** What happens when the sun goes down?

**KI:** When it becomes night, the zombies' numbers grow exponentially. They are faster, they do more damage, and they are scarier than ever before. The reason we did this is because we wanted to create a game in which there are times in the day in which it is more beneficial for you to try and do things, and other times when it's a lot more risky to get things done. Maybe you will reap better rewards this way, but you're basically not going to want to venture out that much at night. We wanted to put this level of strategy in the game so you will have to decide is it really worth it to go against these packs of much stronger zombies now to get this mission done, or should you just try and conserve your health and stay in a safe spot. We wanted to make the choices more difficult and risky by adding this new layer on top.

**Glitch:** Can you reveal a weapon to us that hasn't been shown before?

**KI:** I'm not sure if I should be telling you this, but since it's in one of the screen shots you are getting I will go ahead. There is an industrial drill. You don't get it until much later in the game and it's one of the most visually rewarding weapons you'll find. You stick it into the zombie and turn it on, and as it starts to turn the zombie will spin around and body parts will fly off until you are just left with a torso, which you can throw at other zombies.

**CStarFlare:** Which is your favorite horror director and horror film?

**KI:** A lot of people would say Romero. And while I do respect Romero, probably my choice would be Sam Raimi. This is because his initial horror movies, the *Evil Dead* series, are my favorite. His horror movies just had a great sense of humor and horror. Romero is great at making serious zombie movies, but if you're going to have to go with comedy as well, then it's definitely Sam Raimi.

Frank can follow Scoop Cues to help lead him to new information about a Case he is currently attempting to solve. Scoop Cues are lists of information about events and the whereabouts of stranded survivors in need of help and attention. Fairly early in the game, Frank is given a walkie-talkie, which he can use to communicate with other living survivors inside the mall. Pressing right on the D-pad will activate the walkie-talkie, which typically provides Frank with a new location to search or head to. The color of the cue, which can be viewed by activating the Wristwatch Screen (by pressing left on the D-pad), denotes how much time Frank has left to investigate it. Blue means over six hours left, yellow means under six hours left, red means under three hours left, and no color means no time limit. Activating the Wristwatch Screen also allows you to see how much time Frank has left during his bloody and brutal 72 hour tour of duty, as well as gives you the ability to set a guide arrow toward the location of the selected Scoop.



## Say "Head Cheese!"

The main purpose of finding a Scoop is to take a picture of it for Prestige Points. With his trusty digital camera at his side at all times, Frank can take pictures of anything in the game by holding down the left trigger to look through the viewfinder and pressing X to snap the photo. While looking through the viewfinder, the right analog stick is used to aim the camera, while the Y and A buttons are used to zoom in and out (respectively). Frank can still move while he is looking through the camera, but his vision is severely limited and his pace is super slow, leaving him vulnerable to surprise zombie attacks.

Frank's digital camera also suffers from limited functionality. For one, it can only take and hold 60 pictures in total (which can be viewed from the Picture Viewer in the Pause Menu). If Frank goes over the 60 allotted pix, the oldest one is automatically deleted with each new frame taken. The game includes a feature to lock up to 59 pictures via the Picture Viewer, however, allowing you to make sure the best ones don't get erased. The second disability is that the camera also runs on batteries, which means Frank has to find replacements when they run out (usually from the camera shop, of course). Finally, the camera must recharge for a few seconds after every picture. This means that Frank won't be able to snap a quick 20 frames in a row. You can potentially lose the Scoop if you snap too soon or too late.

Helpful indicators are there to help Frank know when and if to take a picture in his quest for the ultimate Scoop. Sometimes they appear in situations or locations that will reward Frank with a hefty sum of PP. Perfect Chance Icons are rare, appear instantly, and indicate a chance to get an absolutely perfect shot if your reflexes are fast enough. PP Markers appear in the camera's viewfinder, color-coded, to indicate that there's a good PP opportunity nearby. If the marker is green, this means it's immediately visible. If the marker is red, this means it's somewhere off in the distance and you'll need to search it out.





## Afraid of the Dark? You Should Be

As *Dead Rising* takes place over a 72-hour period of game time (as mentioned before, the game runs on an accelerated clock; Capcom has yet to reveal how much real time this works out to be), Frank will basically have to survive through at least three days and two night cycles. This not only affects the appearance of the environment, but also the actions that take place therein. When darkness falls, the shambling, lumbering zombies increase in number and their behavior changes; they become much more aggressive, dangerous and truly frightening. Without a doubt, *Dead Rising* ratchets up the action when the sun goes down and the lights go out, delivering a fearsome atmosphere that will have you counting the minutes until daybreak.



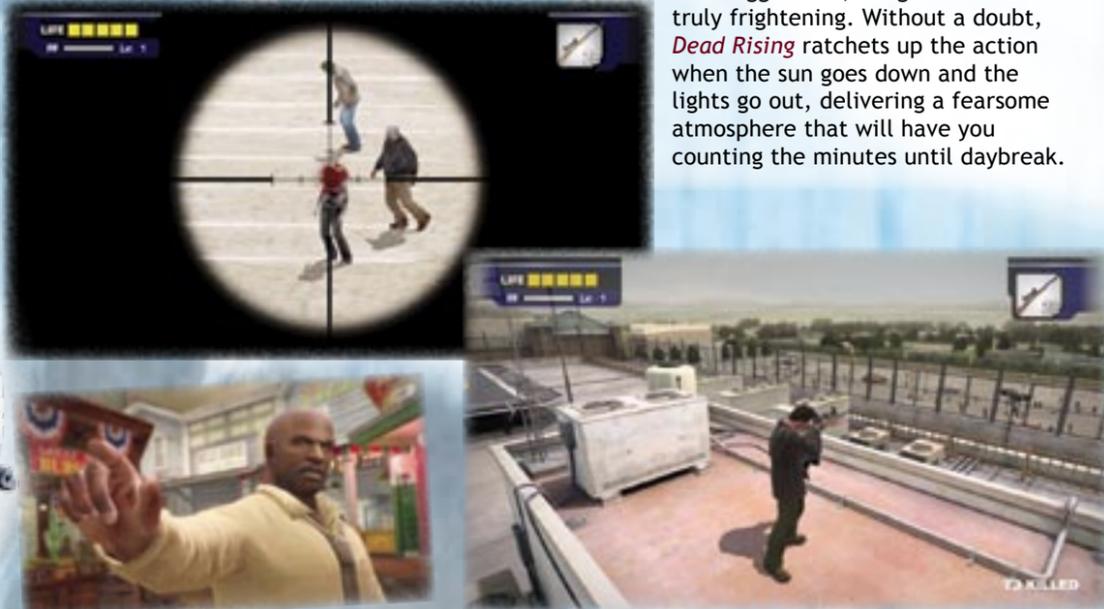
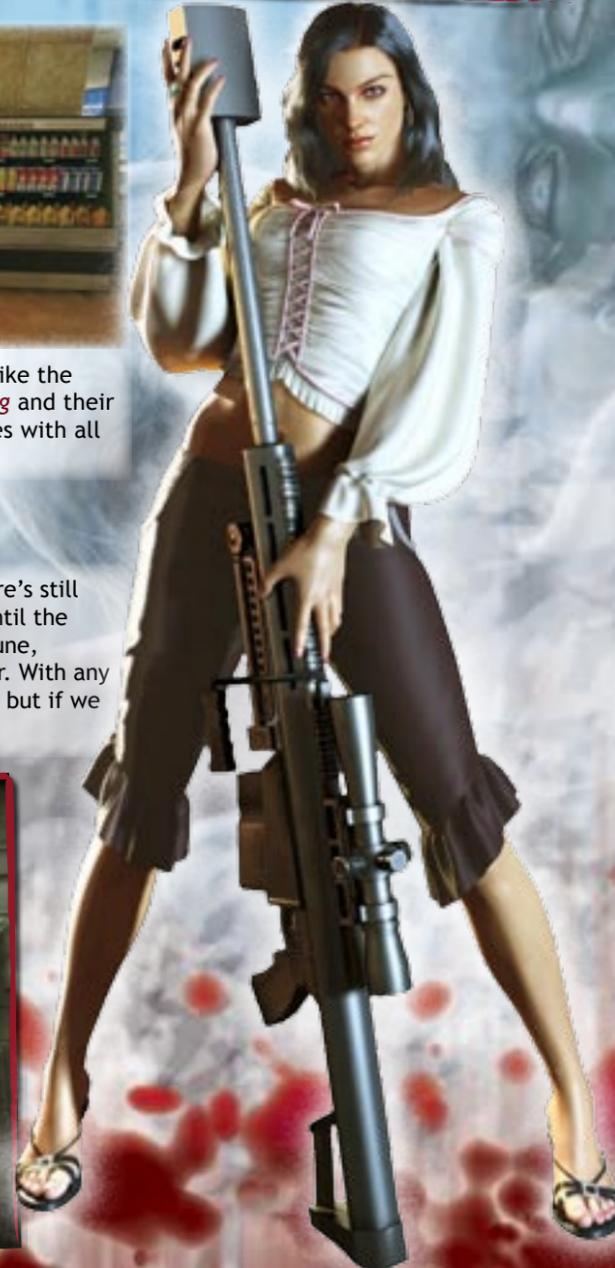
## Zombies Never Looked (and Sounded) so Good

As you can most likely tell from the screen shots, *Dead Rising* looks fantastic and really takes advantage of Microsoft's yet-to-be-tapped powerhouse console. Over five hundred zombies can be on screen at any given time without a hint of slowdown or stutter, and the level of detail is just plain astounding. Aurally, the game sounds every bit as good as it looks. The voice acting is still being recorded, but what's there is solid and convincing, nothing at all like the infamously campy dialogue from *Resident Evil* back in the day. With *Dead Rising* and their upcoming *Lost Planet*, Capcom is striving to use the 360 to embellish their titles with all of the visual and audio bells and whistles they can and it shows.



## Don't Fear the Reaper

The *Dead Rising* team is on the home stretch with the game's development. There's still some polishing left to be done, and they'll most likely be working on this title until the last very last minute. Look for *Dead Rising* to most likely release at the end of June, making it the first big, straight up, non-port, blockbuster 360 title of the summer. With any luck, we'll get our sweaty mitts on a review copy in time for next month's issue, but if we don't, it'll be more than worth the wait.



## Keep Your Friends Close and Your Enemies Closer

Frank's enemies don't stop at just zombies. A motley crew of twisted human enemies can be found in the game as well, including a group of recently escaped prisoners looking to cause trouble, paranoid shop owners desperately defending their wares, police who have abandoned their duty to the citizenry in favor of saving their own hides, and foolish civilians who ultimately cause more trouble than they're worth. Oftentimes, defeating these characters yields great benefits, such as opening up new areas, access to powerful weaponry, and information on Scoops. According to Keiji Inafune, *Dead Rising*'s producer (see the sidebar for more information and his impressive bio), the hundreds of thousands of zombies in the game aren't what players should be really afraid of. The zombies, after all, are mostly obstacles to be overcome. Far more frightening are the survivors, driven mad by the circumstances, who will stop at nothing to save themselves.

In all, there are over a hundred characters that Frank can aid and rescue, and each has his or her unique story to help give you perspective on the horrific events unfolding before your eyes. While many of these NPCs are disposable, there are some main characters that have essential roles in the main thread of the game. Unfortunately, Capcom is being extremely tight-lipped about their histories and involvement, but we were still able to get some basics on a few like Jessica, the mysterious government agent who knows much more than she's willing to reveal, and Brad, the burly mall security guard who is trying to keep the chaos under control.



**Q.** What makes a hardcore gamer?  
**A.** An undying love for games.

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# LUV2GAME.COM

We love to game. It's a passion that starts at the controller, but goes beyond into our lives, forming a video game mindset that we're all a part of. It's not just about being hardcore. Hardcore Gamer Magazine and Luv2Game are all about living a gaming *life* and loving it. Reviews, previews, and strategies are just the start! We want to share with you the kind of gaming content that thrills our hearts as gamers. Feel free to read, explore, connect, and voice your opinions. We've designed this community to be like a game itself, with a point system that rewards you for having fun. Be proud to be a gamer, and be heard and even published here on L2G and in print in HGM. We're gamers. You're gamers. We all love to game and that's why we're here.

HARDCORE  
**REVIEWS**

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Publisher: Sega  
 Developer: Sumo Digital  
 Release Date: 4/25/06  
 Rating: "E" for Everyone

Genre(s): Racing  
 Category: Blue, Blue Skies  
 # of players: 1, Up to 6 via LAN or online

Review by Racewing

## OutRun 2006 Coast 2 Coast



When was the last time you saw daylight in a car racing game?

No, car racing game. Karts and gimmick vehicles don't count. Don't mention that game with all the crashes in it, either; you spend more time there looking out for walls than you do enjoying the scenery or the driving.

No, you haven't seen daylight. Simulations aside, the market's lately been flooded with hip-hop urban "street racing" games where everything's illegal (and thus "cool"); where you race in blinged-out rides at night and avoid the cops, all to win the "respect" of some fictional figurehead who's usually on the wrong side of the law.



Some of these have been done quite well. Still, sometimes, you just want to go back to a simpler time. A time when all you did was just get in your car, set your radio, and... drive. To go where the road took you, without a care. To never worry about pimping your ride or tuning every part, because if you wanted a faster car, you just bought a new one and were *done* with it.

Sega accomplished this to great accolades in 1986 with the original *OutRun* arcade game. They did it again in 2004, fashioning a sequel which stayed true to the original in every way, while updating looks and features to current-gen standards. Sadly, this time around, too few people noticed, content instead with their nighttime underground street races and massive crash-a-thons.

It's 2006. Sega's giving you one last chance to experience nigh-perfectly-executed old-school rule-bending arcade racing. For the love of all that's holy, take it.

*OutRun* is fairly simple. You pick a car and race through highways, aiming to get through the course before time runs out. During this time, you go for the high score, trying not to up-end your car in a collision. *C2C* tweaks the *OutRun2* formula a bit; it's more forgiving with crashes, and implements slipstream mechanics which allow for a speed boost when driving behind another car. This is to say nothing of the power slide system (see sidebar) or being able to combo your score by passing cars and performing tricks. The game also sports a mission mode where you impress your girlfriend by performing tasks, a bevy of unlockable cars and courses, and the full *OutRun2SP* arcade game.

You also race your friends through a LAN or online, which is just as well. Split-screen would hurt the experience. This way, each person gets to listen to their own music while they have tons of fun trying using their powerslides for offense and defense. Few things are better than using a powerslide to blockade nearly an entire section of road, rendering others unable to pass without a hard time.

The soundtrack seems sparse at first; then you realize that you can unlock three remixes of most songs, including the classic '80s soundchip versions. In addition, you can use custom soundtracks and race to any tunes you want. The sound effects are all well-done, capturing the feel of racing at high speeds against other drivers, and the voices are amusing old-style videogame stilted English.

## Slide, Slide!

The powerslide is more than the latest dance craze sweeping Timbuktu. It's also the main tactic and key to winning in the *OutRun2* family of games. Sure, the power slide has been around forever in racing games... but not like this.

Powersliding is done in the same way as in most racing games. As you lean your car into a turn, let go of the gas, apply the brake for about a full second, then let go of that. As soon as you do so, hit the gas one more time. Before you know it, your car will be skidding away, almost perpendicular to the road.

What makes powersliding so special in *OutRun*, then? Here, your car acts as if it's ice-skating, in an exaggeratedly graceful fashion. In a powerslide, you experience only a minimal speed loss, which makes this a crucial tactic for getting through sharp turns without braking too hard, or bumping into the side of the road. Bumping against the side of the road can be near-fatal in this game if you do it more than once in a race.

The other "special" aspect of *OutRun* powersliding is that you can sustain it for as long as you want. Adding or easing off on the gas and brake will control the intensity of the powerslide, and the angle of the car as you are sliding. The analog stick or D-Pad (in other words, your normal steering) will let you adjust the positioning of your car on the road to a small extent.

With practice, you can make your car do near-360-degree spins through multiple turns, or chain one powerslide into another. Either way, in this game, if you get your skills up to par, any curves in this game can be reduced to a non-issue. Are you up to the challenge?

As great as the sound is, however, it's matched, if not surpassed, by the game's visual beauty. Every track featured in *C2C* is a high-resolution landscape that is a joy to witness as well as drive through. The Ferrari cars are somewhat simply rendered in comparison, but they're not the main stars of this show. The road is.

All of these factors—its look, its simplicity, its laid-back nature even in the face of true challenge—come together to create the video game equivalent of a stress ball. In fact, it's how *C2C* has earned its score. It is the only current-generation game at the moment

that actually is able to fully relax me after I come home from a hard day's work. Most video games in the racing genre garner their fun and excitement factor by tapping into personal and emotional adrenaline. This does the exact opposite, and by doing so, on some levels, proves to be more addictive. While the game can intimidate, it never, ever seeks to humiliate.

Buy this game. Buy it because, ironically, in this day and age, there's nothing like it on the market. Buy it so we won't end up in a world where the only non-sim car racing choice is *Xtreme Hotwired Underground Mega-Crash StreetRacer 200X: Drive or Perish*. Heck, buy it so Sega can update *Daytona USA* like I've wanted for years.

In the end, though, just buy it because it's fun from the first time you press the gas pedal.

Rating : 4.5 of 5

FINAL SCORE :  
**4.75** of 5

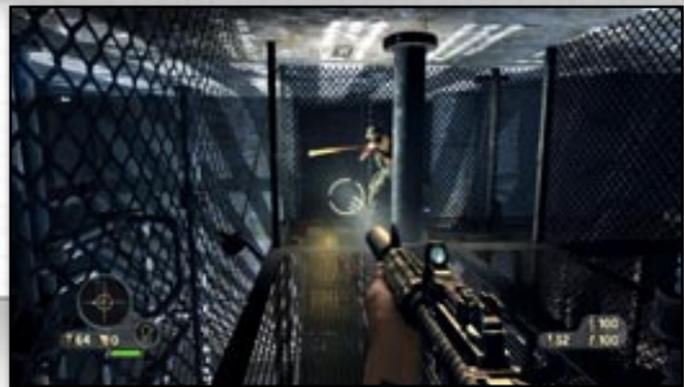
2nd opinion by Sardius • Alternate Rating : 5 of 5

*C2C* isn't just the best game I've played so far this year, it's my new favorite racing game of all time. You *will* buy this.

# 2ND OPINION

# REVIEW FAR CRY INSTINCTS: PREDATOR

XBOX 360



Review by Athletter

Publisher : Ubisoft  
 Developer : Crytek Studios  
 Release Date : 3/28/2006  
 Rating : "M" for Mature

Genre(s) : First Person Shooter  
 Category : Rambo with Rabies  
 # of players : 1-16

From beginning to end, *Far Cry Instincts Predator* is an action movie. You've got your foul-mouthed lead, a damsel-in-distress, completely improbable gunplay, huge explosions, and then even more explosions.

*Predator* manages to rise above the generic FPS muck that we've been getting lately. You're going to constantly be put into situations where you have to take on too many bad guys in a row, but you'll also be able to make it out alive more times than you would think. In fact, thinking isn't exactly a high priority in *Predator*. If you're taking time to stop and think, you're wasting time that could've been better spent killing the hordes of mercenaries and beasts that are coming after you.

*Predator* is extremely fast-paced, with the constant action broken up only by brief lulls while the game imparts story details to you or leads you to a cache of weapons and health. The checkpoints are placed so that if you die just after getting into

a large and brutal firefight, you'll most likely be able to respawn at a relatively close location with no trouble at all. Reduced to its most basic, *Predator* plans to move you from one impressive killzone to another.

This isn't to say that *Predator* is that simple of a game. You can sneak up on enemies and dispatch them with a quick stealth kill if you like. If you want a stealth kill, you have to stay quiet, so going prone or crouching is your best bet. You have the ability to turn over and face up while you're prone, so that you can shoot through the floorboards of a wooden hut. Is a roving guard or two giving you some trouble? Duck off into the underbrush, creep up to a tree, and rig it to snap into him and kill him the next time he gets close to it. If that's out, set a claymore mine in his path and watch the fireworks. You've got plenty of options beyond shooting and stabbing.

The fighting is fun, frantic... and frustrating when the AI randomly decides that it has eagle eyes and picks you out of the jungle when you're trying to creep past him. The vehicle controls leave a little to be desired, as trying to shoot and drive at the same time is usually a recipe for "falling off a freaking cliff." It does descend into FPS monotony on occasion, mainly because shooting hundreds of faceless goons is the kind of thing that can get really old, really quick. A little more enemy variety would be nice.

When *Predator* is good, though, it's really good. The Feral abilities that you can gain are the proverbial bee's knees and add much-needed depth to the game. Overall, *Predator* is worth at least a moment of your time, particularly if you're looking for something new in an FPS. Just be prepared to keep your trigger finger tightly pressed against your controller. "Spray and Pray" is the name of the game.

Rating : 4 of 5



FINAL SCORE : **3.75** of 5

2nd opinion by Shoegazer • Alternate Rating : 3.5 of 5

This is the same great experience it's always been, just more visually stimulating. *Far Cry* vets will be irritated that they have to play through the original again to unlock the new missions.



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# WINBACK 2

## PROJECT POSEIDON



Review by **Sardius**

**Publisher :** Koei  
**Developer :** Cavia  
**Release Date :** 4/25/2006  
**Rating :** "T" for Teen

**Genre(s) :** Action  
**Category :** Stealth/Squad  
**# of players :** 1-4



Man, this one came out of nowhere. The original *Winback* went practically unnoticed when it debuted on the Nintendo 64 in 1999, and the 2001 PlayStation 2 port didn't fare much better. Despite the lack of hype, however, *Winback* was praised for delivering solid gameplay in a genre that the Nintendo 64 sorely lacked. In an era where the stealth action genre has been perfected by *Metal Gear Solid* and its sequels, however, *Winback's* tired gameplay doesn't have nearly as much impact.

Like the original *Winback*, a good portion of *Project Poseidon's* gameplay focuses on hiding behind objects and finding the right moment to pop out and kill people. The hide-and-shoot mechanic is fun for the most part, and the gunplay is decent as well. *Winback 2's* big gimmick is its "route" system, which forces you to play through each level twice: once as a supporting character, then in a lead role. The actions you perform during support stages have an effect on what unfolds during each level's second half, but unfortunately, the required tasks often seem tacked-on and unnecessary, and in the end the "route" system only promotes a sense of constant déjà vu.

*Winback 2's* biggest flaw, however, is that almost all enemy activity is scripted, meaning that many of your targets are programmed to always dodge your attacks, no matter the context. It's especially ridiculous when you're approaching such an enemy from behind; even if you're at point-blank range and the guy has no clue of your presence, he'll somehow be able to roll out of harm's way at the precise moment you squeeze the trigger, then spin around



and fill you full of holes for your trouble. This happens way too often, and it makes the game feel more like a test of enemy AI pattern memorization than anything that would require stealth or strategy.

Gameplay mechanics aside, nearly everything else about *Winback 2* is lacking in some way. The graphics are serviceable, but there's no detail to be found in anything; few surrounding objects can be shot or otherwise interacted with (even windows are bulletproof), and key retrieval items ranging from computer data to stolen chemical weapons are all represented as small floating squares.

The level design is pretty bad, too, and levels often amount to nothing more than a series of rectangular grey rooms. To top it all off, the voice acting is some of the worst to ever emerge from the depths of Canada. Maybe it's just me, but I find it hard to take my commanding officer seriously when he pronounces the word "out" as "oat".

*Winback 2* is only slightly more frustrating than it is fun, but it has its moments. There are numerous other titles out there that offer much better execution of the stealth and squad-based action genres, however. Playing *Winback 2* will only make you want to play something better.

**Rating :** 2.5 of 5

**FINAL SCORE :**  
**2.5 of 5**

2nd opinion by **Racewing** • Alternate Rating : 2.5 of 5

*Winback 2* brings some nice ideas to the table, but tired gameplay and a lack of polish cancel them out.



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PlayStation 2



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# REVIEW FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE 007

Review by James  
 SEAN CONNERY as JAMES BOND

Publisher : Electronic Arts  
 Developer : Electronic Arts  
 Release Date : 4/5/2006  
 Rating : TEEN

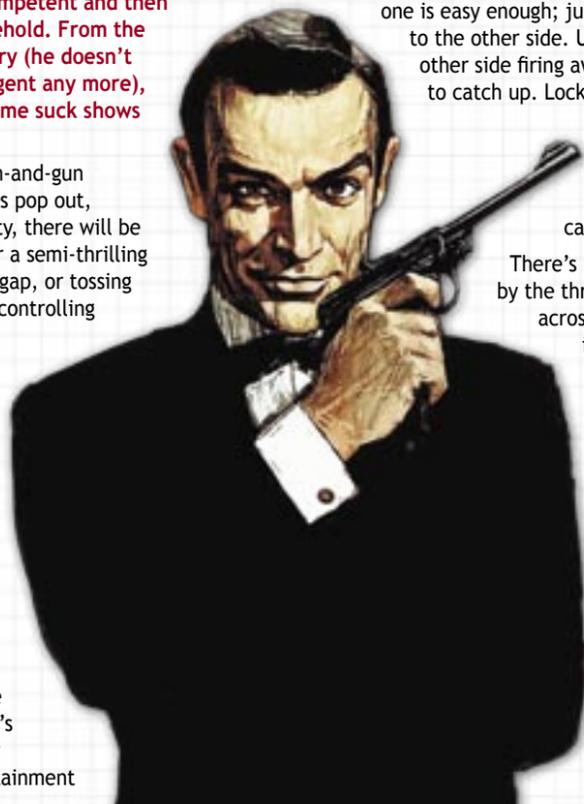
Genre(s) : Action adventure  
 Category : Run and Gun  
 # of players : 1-6



Let's be clear from the start: *From Russia With Love* is an incredibly bad game, and it's hard to know where to begin describing this train wreck. The way awful leads to incompetent and then on to aggravating is simply stunning to behold. From the broken action to the miscast Sean Connery (he doesn't sound like a thirty-five-year-old secret agent any more), just about everything that can make a game suck shows up somewhere.

*From Russia With Love* is, at its core, a run-and-gun shooter. Bond runs along corridors, enemies pop out, Bond shoots, repeat. Sometimes, for variety, there will be a blue dot that can be clicked on to trigger a semi-thrilling action such as picking up a key, jumping a gap, or tossing and then climbing a grapple line. Actually controlling these actions is right out, however.

Of course, if combat is anything to go by then the less control the better. A useless camera combines with the broken aiming system to ensure death far more often than necessary. Basically, when an enemy appears, hitting L locks on to him. Assuming the lock-on doesn't break because the enemy did something clever like just stand there, you then have the choice of either firing madly or using Bond Focus to pinpoint and shoot a weak spot. Mostly this will involve blasting the gun out of the enemy's hand, but every once in a while it's possible to target a grenade on his belt for explosive fun. It's a rare moment of entertainment



in a game seemingly designed to cause suffering to all who play.

For an example of that suffering, let's look at doors. Walking through one is easy enough; just press X and Bond opens it, stepping through to the other side. Unfortunately, there's often an enemy on the other side firing away, and in the meantime the camera is trying to catch up. Lock-on is disabled while this happens, so the only option is to soak up the damage while hammering on the L button, hoping that just maybe you'll be allowed to actually do something in the second it takes for the camera to catch up.

There's more, of course. There are cut-scenes linked by the thrilling gameplay experience of walking across the room. Weapons mysteriously appear in inventory without any explanation. A camera that delights in being at just the wrong angle renders hand-to-hand combat against multiple enemies almost impossible. Just when you thought it couldn't get worse, along come some escort missions to add their own special brand of suck to the proceedings.

*From Russia With Love* doesn't seem totally unaware of its shortcomings, though. When you die, the automatically highlighted item is Quit. This is just plain good advice, and should be taken by anyone unfortunate enough to find themselves playing the game.

Rating : 1.5 of 5

2nd opinion by [Honestgamer](#) • Alternate Rating : 3 of 5

*From Russia with Love* works best when it's being simple. There's simple pleasure in racking up head shots while avoiding the airborne sequences as long as possible. The formula needs some spice, but rocket fuel isn't it.



This is the easiest review I've ever written. I'm not even sure why I'm writing it.

If you're reading this magazine, you know what *Street Fighter* is. You've either grown up with it, researched it to get a taste of fighting game roots, or heard people ironically denying its greatness due to its two-dimensional play. You already know that despite myriad upgrades and the countless amount of times you've allowed Capcom to talk you into buying yet another copy of the same game for a new system, it's always worth it. Why? It's frickin' *Street Fighter*. No other reason is needed.

The recent *Alpha* ports are the first home releases of the series since the Dreamcast era. In video game industry time, that was an eternity ago. Even so, the Dreamcast only got *Alpha 3*. If you wanted to get the other two games, you had to turn to the 32-bit systems, or to emulation, since those older ports were fraught with technical mishaps such as missing animation sprites, memory limitations, and load times.

At last, those days are over. Capcom's decided to pack all of its *Alpha* games on one disc for your playing pleasure, and oh, how sweet it is. There's no load time for any of the games. Furthermore, the animations and nuances of each game engine are intact for all titles. There's no slowdown.

2nd opinion by [Ashura](#) • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

C'mon, this is the *Street Fighter Alpha* series! It has fighting, and streets, and, uh, alphas. Yeah. Even with the simpler presentation, you honestly can't beat having all the games in one package.



# REVIEW STREET FIGHTER ALPHA ANTHOLOGY

Publisher : Capcom  
 Developer : Capcom  
 Release Date : 6/2006  
 Rating : "T" for Teen

Genre(s) : Retro Fighter Compilation  
 Category : Better Late Than Never  
 # of players : 1-2



All the games play, look and sound just like you remember them. It's like a time capsule on a disc, and this time, it's the real deal. There's no "mishmash of characters and engines in a single game" business this time around.

Included within are the original *Street Fighter Alpha*, *Alpha 2*, *Alpha 2 Gold* and *Pocket Fighter*. Finishing the disc is the straight-up arcade port of *Street Fighter Alpha 3*, devoid of extra characters and gimmicks, that hardcore players have been clamoring for. Personally, I liked the extra gimmicks, but that's just me.

Still, though all of these games lack bells and whistles, they are otherwise in pristine form, with adjustable game speeds intact, and all of the hidden characters from arcade versions already unlocked. Just for fun, Capcom threw in the gift of being able to play Dramatic Battle (two-on-one fights) in any of the games (*Pocket Fighter* excluded, sadly).

People who overanalyze move frames and sprite particulars will probably still find some reason to keep their Sega Saturn copies of these games around, but for the rest of us, we finally have the entire *Street Fighter* library (the installments that mattered, at any rate) at our fingertips, and then some. The lack of extra single-player modes and characters is something to lament, yes, but otherwise, this is a must-buy for competitive fighting fans, and people who just like to pop in a game and have fun beating things up.

Now, could you get these games over to Xbox Live, please, Capcom? Thank you so much.

Rating : 4 of 5

FINAL SCORE : 4



# REVIEW ROGUE TROOPER

PlayStation 2

XBOX

PC



Review by 4thletter

**Publisher :** Eidos  
**Developer :** Rebellion  
**Release Date :** 5/23/2006  
**Rating :** TEEN; Blood, Use of Alcohol, Violence

**Genre(s) :** Third-Person Action  
**Category :** Nu Shooter  
**# of players :** 1-4

Based on the 2000 AD comic series of the same name, *Rogue Trooper* has made a surprisingly good transition to your video entertainment console. You play a member of the specially grown Genetic Infantrymen known as Rogue (get it?) who goes from being one member of a squad to the last man standing and thirsty for revenge. Nu Earth is a pit, but you're going to avenge your betrayed and murdered brothers, even if it kills you.

*Rogue Trooper* takes a different route than some of the more recent third-person shooters by giving you varying degrees of combat freedom as you progress through the game. You can take out enemies through either out and out full frontal action, or creep about stealth-killing your foes. If you want to pop someone long range, simply pull your scope up and take him out. You've got a full complement of destructive and loud weapons, just as you would expect, and there are a number of weapon emplacements as well for proper explosions.

Your fallen comrades live on in the form of little chips that snap into your equipment, allowing them to comment on your actions and give you a number of ability upgrades. Bagman, for example, can refill your ammo on the fly or upgrade your skills, depending on how much salvage material you have. You can gather salvage by walking near a fallen enemy and gather salvage from their corpse. It's not graphic at all (the enemies simply disappear), but it does make you wonder: how do you make bullets out of a dead body? Either way, each of your bio-chipped comrades will keep you apprised of your status and crack wise in proper situations.

**FINAL SCORE :**  
**3.75 of 5**

2nd opinion by Shoegazer • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

Undeniably a little rough around the edges and somewhat easy, but flippin' sweet overall. If you can forgive the "been-there-done-that" feeling, then there is great fun to be had here.



*Rogue Trooper* is fun, but not quite trailblazing. It's a comfortable game, where you have a few new features to keep you interested, but the core is familiar enough that you aren't totally bewildered. A few of the usual third-person problems crop up, including the dreaded camera angle problems we all know and love. You can run up to a corner and turn just in time to get a faceful of a Lazooka from a previously unseen enemy. The camera isn't terrible, but it could be a little more responsive.

The enemies are pretty much pushovers, too. You don't even really need the backup from your remaining buddies. You can stick and move and take out eight or nine enemies all by your lonesome. It would've been nice if the AI had been a little smarter and used tactics beyond "Stand in one spot and fire until you die."

*Rogue Trooper* is a just above average game that is comfortable exactly with that fact, which makes for a fun, if forgettable time. It's fun for a while, but it's nothing groundbreaking. The blindfire and other features are nice, but you've seen variants of them before. The story is simply nothing special, but there is an in-game database called the Nu-Earth Encyclopedia. It fills in the blanks that the story leaves unfilled, while giving you detailed info on each creature and villain in the game. *Rogue Trooper* feels like a half-step forward, half-step back. It'll be nice to see a sequel to it that is willing to go the distance. As is, it almost, but not quite, makes for a great time.

Rating : 3.5 of 5



PLATFORM

PlayStation 2

GAMECUBE

# REVIEW RAMPAGE TOTAL DESTRUCTION



Review by Sardius

**Publisher :** Midway Games  
**Developer :** Pipeworks Software  
**Release Date :** 4/24/2006  
**Rating :** "E" for Everyone 10+

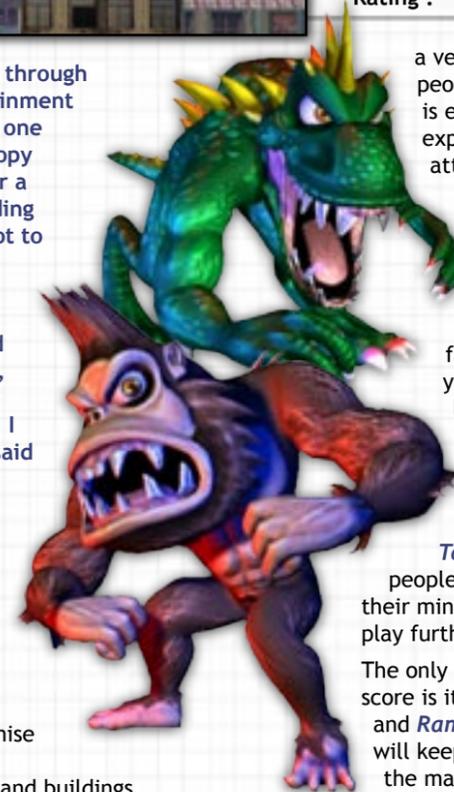
**Genre(s) :** Action  
**Category :** Monsters Busting Up Stuff  
**# of players :** 1-2 (1-4 on GameCube)



As a kid, I once played all the way through *Rampage* on the Nintendo Entertainment System, from beginning to end, in one sitting. A guy I knew brought his copy over, and we played it together for a couple of hours. Soon, the unyielding monotony of smashing buildings got to be too much for my friend, who fell asleep on the floor next to me. I continued playing, however. Afternoon turned to sunset turned to night, and I soldiered on, alone, through *Rampage's* 128 levels. Finally, when I beat the last stage, I was rewarded with a screen that said "CONGRATULATIONS!!" and nothing more.

Playing *Rampage: Total Destruction* brings back all the feelings of boredom and emptiness I had associated with the original *Rampage*, and then some. The basic gameplay remains intact; the only difference is that everything is rendered in polygons now. The premise remains the same as well: you're a monster, and you're mad at people and buildings. Smash the buildings to move on to the next level. There are approximately a million levels in all. Have fun, jerk.

As with most *Rampage* games, *Total Destruction* is fun only for



a very short while. There are plenty of items to collect and people to eat, though doing so with any sort of accuracy is extremely difficult thanks to imprecise controls. The experience is made even more aggravating by the game's attempted humor, which consists of sight gags and one-liners that you will hear dozens of times in every single level. What makes *Rampage: Total Destruction* really intolerable, however, is the length of its levels. Cities in previous *Rampage* releases could be demolished in a couple of minutes each, but *Total Destruction's* stages drag on for what seems like forever. Add in the fact that every city looks almost exactly the same and you have a game that you won't want to play for any length of time.

But what of the multiplayer aspect? This is probably where I'm supposed to say something to the effect of "Well, it sucks in single player but multiplayer is always fun!", but that would be a filthy lie. I tested *Total Destruction's* multiplayer with two different people, and within minutes, both of them were bored out of their minds and asking to play something else. When I wanted to play further for the sake of this review, they made fun of me.

The only thing that saves *Total Destruction* from an even lower score is its inclusion of the original arcade versions of *Rampage* and *Rampage World Tour*. Both are emulated well, and both will keep your interest for at least a few minutes longer than the main game. *Rampage: Total Destruction* may be budget priced, but you'd be much better off spending your cash on Midway's *Arcade Treasures* compilations for your *Rampage* fix.

Rating : 1.5 of 5

2nd opinion by honestgamer • Alternate Rating : 3 of 5

As a remake of a remake, this still plays remarkably well. The third dimension is more cumbersome than cool, but it's still fun to trash cities with friends at your side. Eat a hearty meal and drink some soda before you play.

**FINAL SCORE :**  
**2.25 of 5**



# REVIEW

## HEARTS OF IRON II DOOMSDAY

PC

Review by KouAidou

Publisher : Paradox Interactive  
 Developer : Paradox Interactive  
 Release Date : 04/07/06  
 Rating : "E" for Everyone

Genre(s) : Strategy  
 Category : World War II  
 # of players : 1

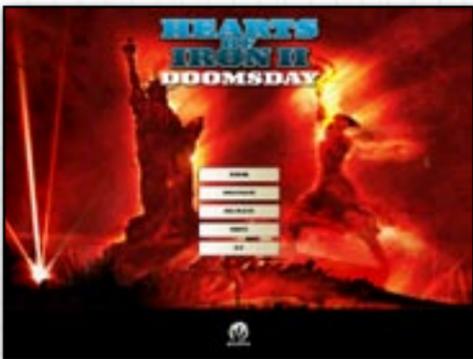
*Hearts of Iron II: Doomsday* is a strategy game set during World War II, and a stand-alone expansion to Paradox Interactive's *Hearts of Iron II*. It allows you to continue on as far as 1953 in a possible "Doomsday" scenario, during which the major world powers go at each other after the war in Europe is resolved.

It is also the most complicated computer game I have ever seen. Had it been released in the '80s, it would have been a board game, come in an Avalon Hill box with a five-star complexity rating and used some kind of arcane formula for combat damage probably involving the square root of pi.

It was so intimidating to me at first glance that it made me absolutely not ever want to try to play it. Not only does it contain the usual *Hearts of Iron* standbys — an entire world at your command, geographically accurate and divided into thousands of provinces; the ability to play as literally any nation or significant faction that existed during 40s and 50s; the appointment of war staff from historical

figures — it also throws on Cold War-era technology, which means that on top of everything else, you have nuclear weapons and spies to keep track of.

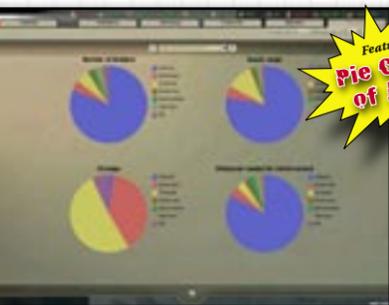
The sheer amount of knowledge that has gone into the game is stunning, as is the feeling it



FINAL SCORE :  
**4.25** of 5

2nd opinion by Metalbolt • Alternate Rating : 4.5 of 5

With WWII shooters saturating the PC market, it's nice to play from a different angle. Think long, think hard, think about checking this one out!



Featuring  
**Pie Charts of DOOM**



gives you of really being in command of an army that spans the globe. What's even more stunning, though, is how easy the game is to play once you get the hang of it. Yes, it contains roughly fifty different factors that you must balance at all times, from staff makeup to national policy to resource production to diplomacy to research teams, and yes, the in-game tutorial only covers the most basic of the game's points. The nice thing is, you don't have to worry about this all at once. With a number of customizable difficulty options and time periods available, you can start on the easiest of easy modes, and just gradually absorb more and more about the finer points of the system as you go.

If there's anything the game could've used to make it more beginner-friendly, it's a better tutorial, and maybe some in-game guides on the easier modes. It could also benefit from better organization of its onscreen information, as finding what you want to know about a unit or technology often takes a lot more clicking than is really convenient. This isn't crippling since the game can be paused as you evaluate the situation and give orders, but it can be very frustrating.

Many reviewers will say that *Doomsday* will only appeal to serious number-crunchers and WWII fanatics, but I think that anyone with a little patience and a passing interest in the time period will be able to discover the appeal after just a few minutes. The game's amazing depth becomes more appealing the longer you play, and the detail present in the available countries and time periods represents many years' worth of replay value.

Rating : 4 of 5

PC

XBOX 360

PC

# REVIEW

## THE LORD OF THE RINGS THE BATTLE FOR MIDDLE-EARTH II

Review by KouAidou

Publisher : Electronic Arts  
 Developer : Electronic Arts  
 Release Date : 3/2/2006  
 Rating : TEEN; Fantasy Violence

Genre(s) : Real-Time Strategy  
 Category : Lord of the Rings  
 # of players : 1-8



The forces of Tolkien cannot be stopped! That's right, it's another *Lord of the Rings* game. This one's a sequel to last year's successful *Lord of the Rings: the Battle for Middle Earth*, and this time, the focus is on the conflict that went on behind the scenes. The forces of Sauron are marching on the elf and dwarf strongholds of the north, and it's your choice to help conquer or defend them.

Though a standard RTS in most respects, *BfME2* brings some cool new toys to the table. One unique mechanic lets you branch huge networks of walls from your basic fortress, while another lets you easily customize the formations you want your troops to stand in. One particularly intriguing addition is "War of the Ring" mode, a *Risk*-like game that lets you strategically move your armies around the whole of Middle Earth. When troops come into conflict, you can resolve the battle automatically based on the odds, or, if you have faith in your tactical abilities, RTS it out in the standard engine. These and other touches, against the breathtaking Middle Earth backdrop with eight unique playable armies, would have added up to a truly grand experience, if only it were built on a solid foundation.

Unfortunately, the game's interface seems to have been designed more for visual slickness than functionality, and small annoyances add up quickly in



the world of RTS. To name a few, there's no distinction on the mini-map for areas obscured by the fog of war, and no indication of where your units' cries of "we're being attacked!" are coming from. There's also no single, comprehensive display of name, health, and function for units or buildings you've clicked on, and no easy way to know how many and what types of units you've selected when selecting multiple units.

Even more devastating is the friendly AI. You would expect that units that find themselves the target of a surprise attack would automatically move out of range, but unfortunately, your troops here have no such instincts of self-preservation. You'll quickly find that you can never give your full attention to a gate siege because you need to keep moving your defenders out of ballista range. It's never good when waging mass war on fortified strongholds starts to feel like babysitting.

If I'm hard on the game, it's only because it could have been so very, very good, if a little more effort had been put into a few small fundamentals of the engine. The flow of the story and the level design are both solid, and the battles themselves really look amazing, with such color and variety as to entirely capture the feel of an epic Peter Jackson sequence.

In the end, your feelings toward *BfME2* will probably depend on your affection for the *LotR* series. If you want to wage huge epic battles in the environment of Middle Earth (and who doesn't?), you'll find that experience here like nowhere else, but the weakness of the interface keep it from becoming the truly universal addiction that it should have been.

Rating : 3.5 of 5

2nd opinion by Metalbolt • Alternate Rating : 3.5 of 5

The amount of enjoyment this game brings is massive. Unfortunately, so is the amount of RAM you need to run it properly.

FINAL SCORE :  
**3.5** of 5



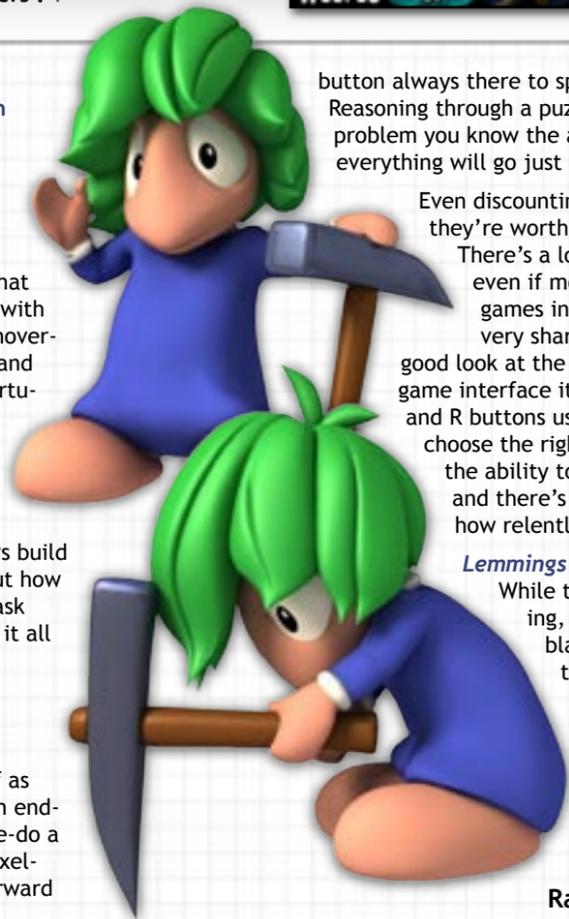
# Lemmings



Review by James

Publisher : SCEA  
Developer : Team 17  
Release Date : 5/24/2006  
Rating : "E" for Everyone

Genre(s) : Puzzle  
Category : Unique  
# of players : 1



For sixteen years now, the blue-shirted green-haired lemming morons have been happily marching to their doom on almost every console known to mankind. They've been dropped, chopped, smushed, beaten, exploded, shredded, and devoured, and they still keep going.

The PSP version of *Lemmings* is exactly what you'd expect if you've got any familiarity with the series at all. They drop out of a door hovering in space, one at a time at a set pace, and march until they can't march no more. Fortunately, lemmings aren't totally helpless, and have several different jobs that will get them past even the trickiest area. Climbers can scale walls, blockers won't let anyone past, three different kinds of diggers plow through obstacles, bricklayers build stairways into the air, and more. Figure out how and when to apply these abilities to the task at hand and it's on to the next level to do it all over again.

The "how and when" ends up being *Lemmings*'s biggest problem, though. While figuring out the best way to get as many Lemmings as possible to the exit starts off as good puzzle-y fun, later levels turn into an endless barrage of trial and error. Having to re-do a level because a staircase wasn't placed pixel-perfect is annoying, even with the fast-forward

button always there to speed along the otherwise-tedious bits. Reasoning through a puzzle is fun; endlessly poking away at a problem you know the answer to in the hopes that, this time, everything will go just right is less so.

Even discounting the later levels as more trouble than they're worth, there's still good fun to be had here. There's a lot of puzzling in a hundred fifty levels, even if most of them are reruns from older games in the series. The graphic upgrade looks very sharp, and the zoom button lets you get a good look at the terrain and any traps it may hide. The game interface itself also comes off clean, with the L and R buttons used to select abilities and a cursor to choose the right lemming to use them on. Throw in the ability to assign tasks while the game is paused and there's no reason to feel rushed no matter how relentless the lemming march may be.

*Lemmings* ends up being a mixed bag overall. While the game is never anything but charming, with its cuteness balanced out by a black sense of humor, the puzzles get to be more annoying than tricky the farther in you go. It does have the advantage of being a perfect game for handhelds thanks to its bite-sized levels, though, so if you're a long-time fan give it a go. Anyone else may want to approach it with cautious optimism.

Rating : 3.5 of 5

2nd opinion by Lynxara • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

An excellent *Lemmings* port with great controls and sharp graphics. The ability to download and play user-made levels gives it nice replay value, too.



# FIELD COMMANDER



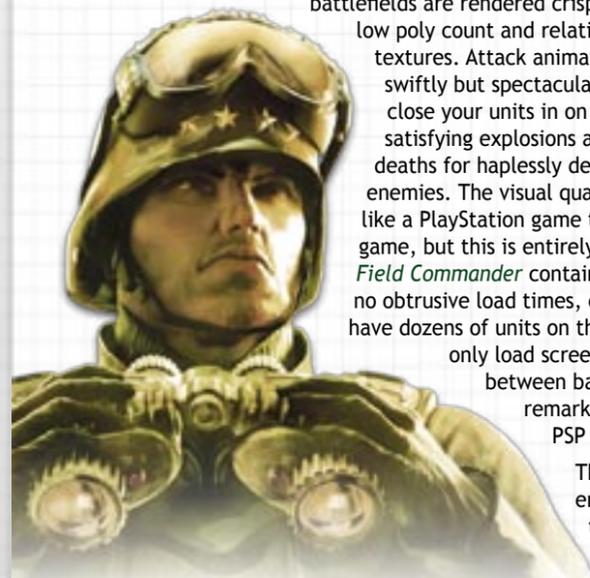
Review by Lynxara

Publisher : Sony Online  
Developer : Sony Online  
Release Date : 4/24/2006  
Rating : TEEN

Genre(s) : Strategy  
Category : Military  
# of players : 1-2; online

Let's be honest: there's no way to play *Field Commander* without noticing its many similarities to Nintendo's *Advance Wars* series. It's pretty obvious what SOE wanted an answer to when they started developing this title. This being said, *Field Commander* happens to be a really good answer to *Advance Wars*. It replaces the anime flair with the harder-edged feel of a PC game, and introduces a host of intriguing multiplayer and interactive options. *Field Commander* is, in fact, one of the first games for the PSP that makes full and efficient use of the many features the hardware has to offer.

*Field Commander*'s 3D graphics are truly striking. The units and battlefields are rendered crisply despite the low poly count and relatively simplistic textures. Attack animations play out swiftly but spectacularly as you close your units in on enemies, with satisfying explosions and bloody deaths for haplessly destroyed enemies. The visual quality is more like a PlayStation game than a PS2 game, but this is entirely a good thing. *Field Commander* contains absolutely no obtrusive load times, even if you have dozens of units on the field. The low load screens appear between battles, and are remarkably brief as PSP titles go.



The game engine is turn-based, each player

moving their units around a traditional map grid. Each type of unit is specialized to a particular task, such as capturing cities or eliminating a particular type of enemy unit, so the trick of gameplay is to position your units so you can take advantage of their abilities. The units in your armies are satisfyingly varied, including everything from simple soldiers to attack helicopters to submarines. Victory is achieved when one army seizes the other's Headquarters, or simply demolishes their units. You can choose from a range of divisions and commanding officers to use as you head into battle, which gives you access to some special meter-driven abilities on top of your army's usual skills. How useful they'll be depends on the particular type of mission you happen to be in.

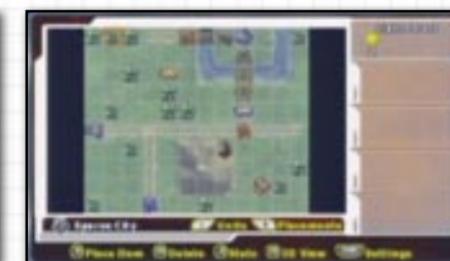
The single-player campaign consists of about thirty missions, which you play mostly to unlock all of the divisions and commanding officers. The real replay value of *Field Commander* lays in the multi-player and online components. Players can design missions, upload or download them from SOE's servers, and play online against other *Field Commander* owners in ad-hoc, infrastructure, or a new mode called "transmission." Perhaps the pure embodiment of strategy head-to-head, transmission mode lets players take turns in a game whenever they log online, which can allow intense battles to last for months. There's even a How Swap mode that allows two different players to play head-to-head while using the same PSP.

*Field Commander* is exactly the kind of title that the PSP needs, and does an excellent job of showing what the hardware is capable of when programmers use its capabilities wisely. It's definitely the strategy title that PSP owners have been waiting and hoping for ever since the system was released. Keep the games like this coming, and the PSP's battle for market share is going to get a whole lot easier.

Rating : 4.5 of 5

2nd opinion by James • Alternate Rating : 4.5 of 5

Sure, it's *Advance Wars* with a sleeker style, but it's not like there isn't room for more in this undercrowded genre.



FINAL SCORE : 4.5 of 5



Review by Shoegazer

Publisher : Electronic Arts Genre(s) : Sports  
 Developer : EA Canada Category : Futbol  
 Release Date : 04/24/06 # of players : 1-8; Online Enabled (PS2,Xbox)  
 Rating : "E" for Everyone



Haven't had your fill of soccer quite yet this season? If the recent releases of *FIFA Soccer 06*, *FIFA Street 2* and *Winning Eleven Soccer 9* have left you craving for more sweet soccer satisfaction, then you're in luck because 2006 is a FIFA World Cup year, and you know what that means: EA has got you covered.

Soccer games are never amongst the prettiest sports games out there, and *World Cup* is no exception. The in-game character models are rough, and the crowd just looks like static from a broken TV. Through the magic of the Xbox 360, some of the rougher edges have been fine-tuned, but ultimately all the high-definition visuals add to the experience are some spectacular lighting effects, gorgeous stadiums and more detailed instant replays. The commentary is spot-on in all versions, even providing some unexpected humor at times.

The default camera is so far away from the action that you'll



feel like you're watching from the Goodyear blimp cam. Luckily this situation is rectified through the implementation of several different camera options, though I highly recommend the dynamic camera setting at full zoom for best results.

All gripes aside, these are not the elements that make a *FIFA* game enjoyable anyway, and EA Canada has once again crafted a game in the only fashion they know how. Which is to say that it's chock-full of solid features and game modes. The player creation tool is well done again this year, and it's easy to get your created player quickly assigned to a team and into a line-up.

Of the game modes, the main standouts are the World Cup, Global Challenge and The Lounge. Where as some sports games don't pack enough game modes to keep you entertained all season long, *World Cup* has three sure to please. World Cup mode allows you to play all the way from the qualifiers to the finals, Global Challenge places you in classic moments of history to see if you can uphold the past, or change it, and The Lounge Mode allows up to eight players to compete against each other through a series of different options, rules, and even rewards. To say that *World Cup* has high replay value would be like calling Pele "good."

Out of all the real-life sports currently being made into video games, soccer has got to be the most difficult to port over. What you can appreciate about real soccer, such as a low-scoring defensive game, or a carefully placed, well-executed slide tackle, do not necessarily carry that same appeal into a video game. You're not going to score a lot of goals, period, and aggressive defensive play will net you at least a yellow card every time. This is definitely a must-have for soccer purists, but I really can't recommend it to anyone other than that.

Rating : 3.5 of 5

2nd opinion by 4thletter • Alternate Rating : 3 of 5

Great soccer games are hard to come by... and this isn't quite it. It's decent, the commentary is good, and the graphics leave a good bit to be desired. If you're desperate, try it out.



## Tourist Trophy™

THE REAL RIDING SIMULATOR



Review by Shoegazer



Over the last few months, I have done a handful of write-ups on motorcycle racing simulations all claiming to be the "*Gran Turismo*" of the genre, but here is game that has more right to that title than any of them: *Tourist Trophy*. Why? Well, because it's from Polyphony Digital for starters, the powerhouse development team responsible for *Gran Turismo*. Sadly, you will find no comparisons to *Omega Boost* in this review.

As you might anticipate, the presentation and interface haven't been changed at all since *Turismo*, so you won't have any trouble finding your way around the menus. In fact, if there is one knock against this game, it's that Polyphony didn't go out of their way to distinguish *Tourist Trophy* as a new franchise. It looks and feels as if all that has been changed is that there is no longer the option to select cars. While that is a minor complaint, it does make your initial experience feel stale before you've even had your first race.

Aside from its dated presentation, *Tourist Trophy* delivers the goods on just about all other counts. It features the traditional option to choose between Arcade Mode, and Challenge Mode, with the meat of the game residing in the Challenge Mode. For motorcycle racing enthusiasts looking for a time commitment, this is sure to be your nirvana. To access all of

the bikes and courses contained within will certainly keep you coming back, although earning money to purchase bike upgrades isn't all that difficult, and you may find your dream bike early enough to coast through the rest of the game without much challenge. Still, if you want to invest the time, there are over 100 licensed bikes to try out on the game's 30+ courses.

Graphically, *Tourist Trophy* is solid. The developers knew that your eyes were going to be peeled on to the boring gray roads most of the time, so they took special care in creating some gorgeous backgrounds to serve as a temporary distraction during straightaways. The character and bike models are also well done, though you don't get much opportunity to notice outside of your garage. The crash animations are a bit weak, but flipping over backward after riding a wheelie too long has a certain morbid satisfaction to it.

In addition to all the pure racing simulation that you could possibly want, there are some pretty cool features included as well. The customization options are leaps and bounds ahead of the pack, including a rider edit mode that even lets you edit your riding position.

As mentioned before, there really isn't much that *Tourist Trophy* doesn't offer. More two-player options would've been appreciated. It's also not a game for a beginner, that's for certain, but the racing veteran will feel right at home. Beginners should stick to THQ's *MX vs. ATV* series for a more forgiving experience.

Rating : 4 of 5

2nd opinion by 4thletter • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

It feels like *Gran Turismo 4.5*, but the gameplay is good. Only sim-enthusiasts need apply, because this is just as technical and realistic as *GT*.



FINAL SCORE :

4 of 5



# TETRIS DS



Review by Wanderer

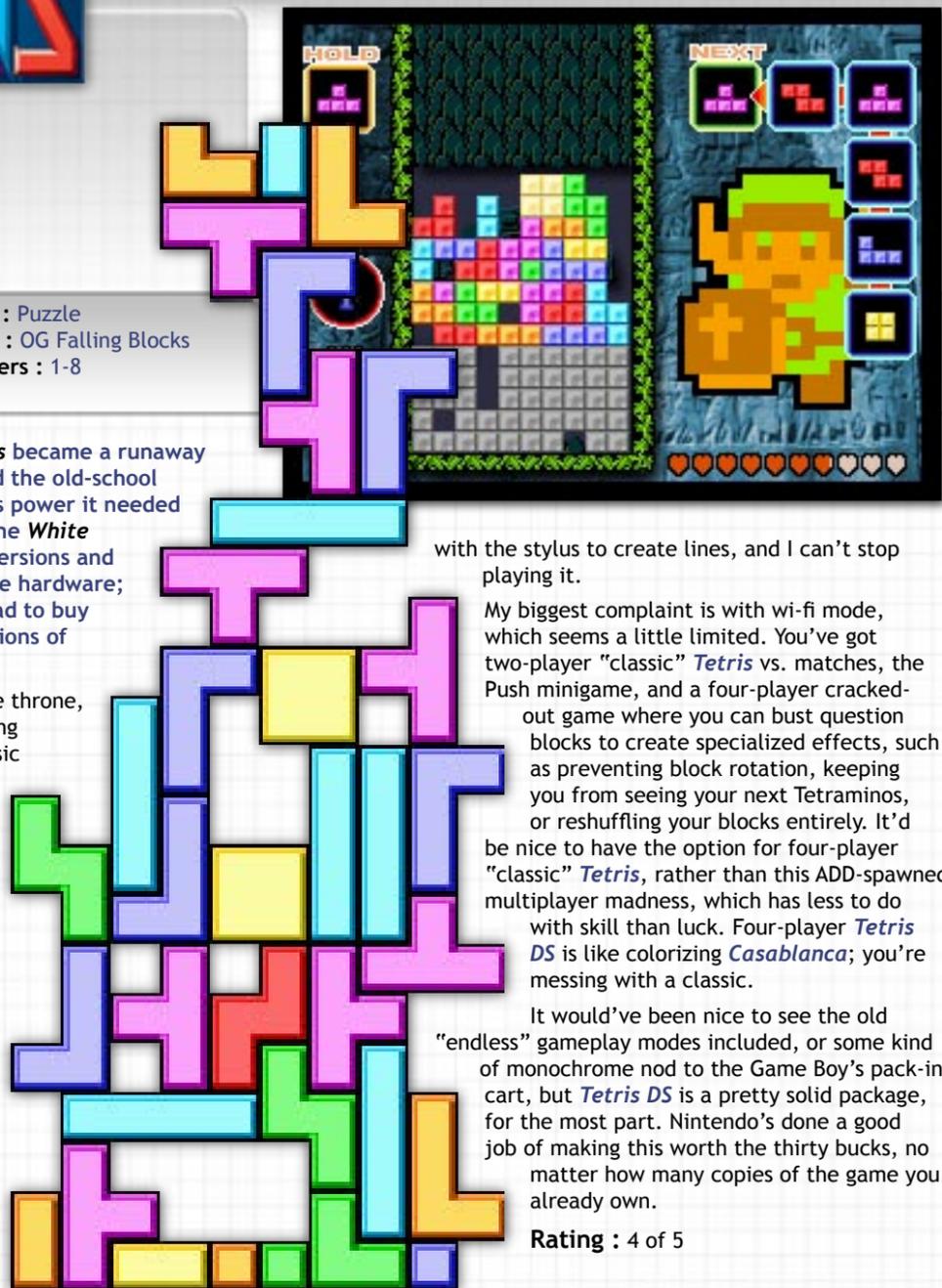
Publisher : Nintendo  
Developer : Nintendo  
Release Date : 3/20/2006  
Rating : "E" for Everyone (Tetriminos)

Genre(s) : Puzzle  
Category : OG Falling Blocks  
# of players : 1-8

It's been nearly two decades since *Tetris* became a runaway sensation on the Nintendo, and provided the old-school gray brick Game Boy with the extra sales power it needed to survive. Since then, it's turned into the *White Album* of Nintendo consoles, with new versions and editions released on each iteration of the hardware; if you're a Nintendo fan at all, you've had to buy *Tetris* more than once. (I've got six versions of it, myself.)

There've been countless pretenders to the throne, but this is *Tetris* as nature intended: falling blocks, arranged to make lines. It's a classic for a host of very addictive reasons, and *Tetris DS* offers a few well-done variations on the theme just to make sure it's worth your \$30. At the same time, each of its gameplay modes is a complete nostalgia trip, with remixed music and backgrounds from a half-dozen of Nintendo's 8-bit classics.

Standard mode adds a couple of bells and whistles, like a *Super Mario Brothers* theme, to the time-honored *Tetris* gameplay. Puzzle mode challenges the player to clear a given stage with the pieces given, Mission mode is a time trial that makes you create lines in a specific way or number, and Touch mode is a touchscreen game that is made out of pure heroin. You slide blocks around



with the stylus to create lines, and I can't stop playing it.

My biggest complaint is with wi-fi mode, which seems a little limited. You've got two-player "classic" *Tetris* vs. matches, the Push minigame, and a four-player cracked-out game where you can bust question blocks to create specialized effects, such as preventing block rotation, keeping you from seeing your next Tetraminos, or reshuffling your blocks entirely. It'd be nice to have the option for four-player "classic" *Tetris*, rather than this ADD-spawned multiplayer madness, which has less to do with skill than luck. Four-player *Tetris DS* is like colorizing *Casablanca*; you're messing with a classic.

It would've been nice to see the old "endless" gameplay modes included, or some kind of monochrome nod to the Game Boy's pack-in cart, but *Tetris DS* is a pretty solid package, for the most part. Nintendo's done a good job of making this worth the thirty bucks, no matter how many copies of the game you already own.

Rating : 4 of 5

2nd opinion by Sardius • Alternate Rating : 4.5 of 5

More single-player objectives and unlockables would've been nice, but online play is amazing. I totally dig the pixel art and remixed NES music, too.

FINAL SCORE :  
**4.25** of 5



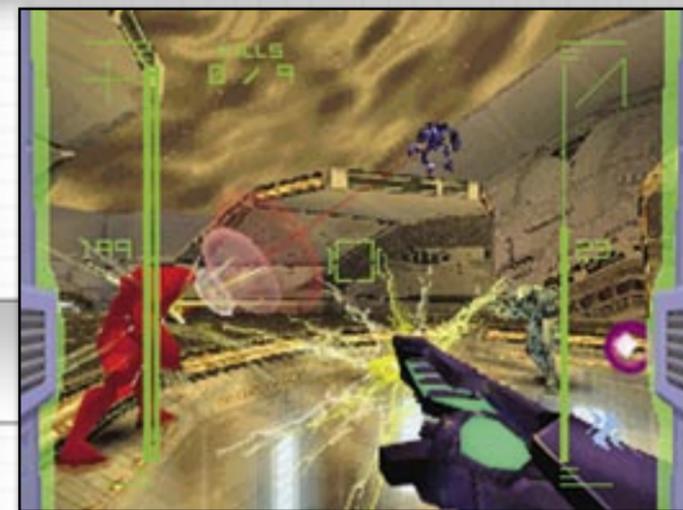
# METROID PRIME HUNTERS



Review by Honestgamer

Publisher : Nintendo  
Developer : Nintendo Software Technology Corp.  
Release Date : 3/20/2006  
Rating : TEEN

Genre(s) : First-Person Shooter  
Category : Adventure  
# of players : 1-4



The thing that keeps coming to mind when you play *Metroid Prime: Hunters*, the one burning fact that peers back at you from every blazing pixel as you sit hunched in your seat clutching the DS, is that the game shouldn't even be possible. It's a technical marvel, a great way to show off just how much depth this handheld system has, and that's what you won't be able to forget no matter how hard you try. That's odd because otherwise, the game isn't particularly memorable. It's good, yeah, but it's not perfect.

You might not believe it now, but this game places you right in the middle of alien environments with all of the grace you'd expect from a full-blown console entry. Metallic rooms alight with advanced technology and eerie panels stretch into the stratosphere. Molten lava beds make leaps dangerous, and that's just for starters. You'll strafe, roll, dodge and weave just like always. It feels natural within an hour of play.

That first hour is important, because initially you may find the controls disappointing. Actions are relegated to the standard D-pad. The face buttons let you jump, too. When you want to aim your gun (courtesy of a shoulder button), that's where the stylus comes into play. It allows for good speed and accuracy even in cramped corridors, but you're probably asking yourself how you can possibly jump, shoot and aim without it feeling like torture. Until you get around that question, the game feels rough. Then you realize you can double tap the screen to leap. Suddenly, everything is silky smooth. You can enjoy those impressive environments because movement is natural. When you're sprinting for the exit ahead of an explosive blast, the controls never enter your mind. Your fingers and hand are gliding back and forth like you've been playing this game your whole life.

In some ways, you have. There's not any real attempt at innovation here. Instead, *Metroid Prime: Hunters* was apparently designed to show that polish isn't out of place on the DS. Monster showdowns prove that point while feeling like numerous others you've experienced in the past. Lengthy corridors and simple leaps from one platform to another won't strike you as abnormal, nor will the expected missile upgrades and visor scans you perform. Even tedious backtracking is unsurprising in a game crammed full of everything we've come to expect from the genre but nothing else. This was clearly modeled after its GameCube predecessors, despite the different developer.

That's what everything comes back to. Whether you're playing this online or by yourself, on a comfortable couch or in the passenger seat of a car, *Metroid Prime: Hunters* feels like just another great entry in a series you probably already love. That's enough to make it a winner in my book.

Rating : 4 of 5

2nd opinion by Sardius • Alternate Rating : 4 of 5

While not the fraggiest fragfest that ever fragged, *Hunters* is a solid title that's well worth your time. Beware: online play is full of jerks.

FINAL SCORE :  
**4** of 5



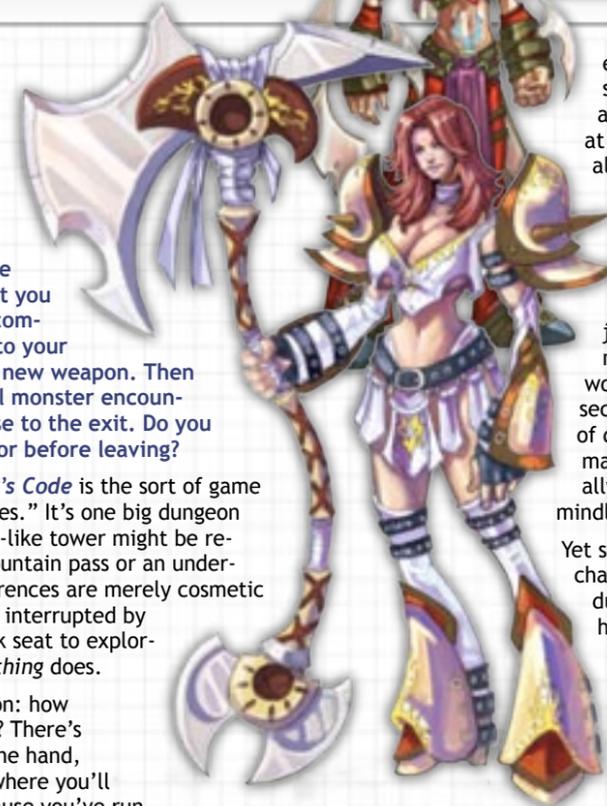
# REVIEW

## UNTOLD LEGENDS THE WARRIOR'S CODE



Review by **honestgamer**

Publisher : Sony Online Ent. Genre(s) : Adventure  
 Developer : Sony Online Ent. Category : Dungeon Crawling  
 Release Date : 3/28/2006 # of players : 1-4  
 Rating : "T" for Teen



You've been wandering through the same dungeon for two hours, stabbing monsters and opening treasure chests while your life meter and potion supply dwindle. Then you see it: the exit you've been searching for. You pause. The on-screen map indicates that you haven't explored the ruins completely. A hallway branches to your left and it *might* hide a cool new weapon. Then again, it could lead to a fatal monster encounter, just when you're so close to the exit. Do you check out that lonely corridor before leaving?

*Untold Legends: The Warrior's Code* is the sort of game you'll like if you answered "yes." It's one big dungeon right after another. The tomb-like tower might be replaced by a snow-covered mountain pass or an underground maze, but these differences are merely cosmetic and they won't frequently be interrupted by safe havens. Plot takes a back seat to exploring each new location. *Everything* does.

That begs the obvious question: how good is the dungeon crawling? There's good news and bad. On the one hand, there're plenty of moments where you'll be scrambling to survive because you've run out of health potions but you're just sure you can make it. On the other, backtracking is common thanks to a system that slowly refills your health if you can stay out of harm's way long enough. Because

enemies show on your radar as red crosses, you can soon settle on a routine that involves moving into a room, holding back so only a few foes approach at once, slaughtering them and repeating. You might also make frequent runs to that last checkpoint, just so your progress is saved.

The game doesn't penalize you for taking the easy route. If you clear an area of adversaries, only the extremely infrequent scripted event will ever bring them back. Progression usually just amounts to mashing the 'X' button a lot in each new room. In the rare instance where that doesn't work, you can just morph into a beast for a few seconds and mop the floor with any available denizens of darkness. Even escort missions are just a simple matter of pressing the appropriate button when your ally needs a health boost, then going back to your mindless sword strokes or arrow barrages.

Yet somehow, it's all fun. When you get caught up in character and weapon upgrades, when you clear a few dungeons and the game's characters are telling you how good you're doing, there're suddenly reasons to keep slaying all those monsters. Each new bend in the path is a new thrill, even though your victory is a foregone conclusion. It's then you realize that you're addicted. One more dungeon, you tell yourself, and then you'll stop playing and go to bed.

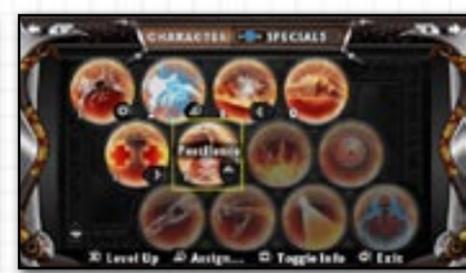
There's always one more dungeon.

Rating : 3.5 of 5

2nd opinion by **Lynxara** • Alternate Rating : 3.5 of 5

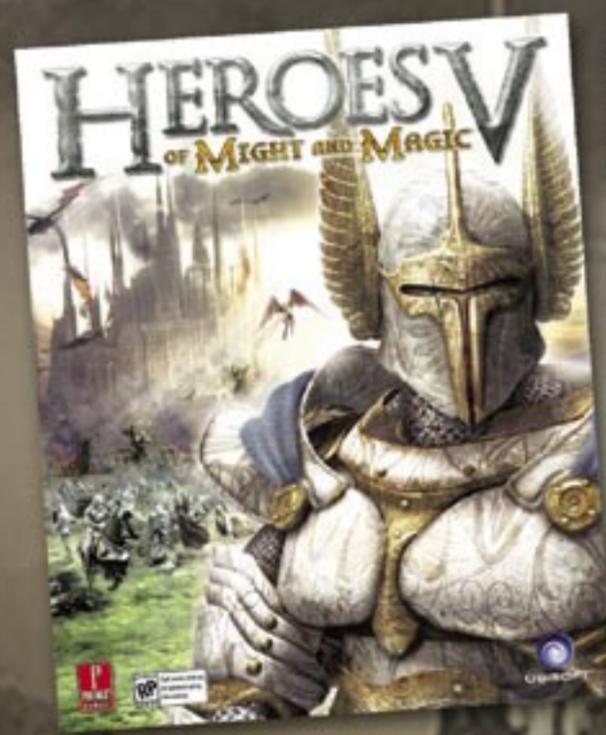
It's much better in some ways than the original *Untold Legends*, but in a lot of ways, it's exactly the same game. Fun if you like dungeon-crawlers, though.

FINAL SCORE : **3.5** of 5



# HEROES V OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

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# HEROES V

OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

## Tips from the Game Guide Author

### Money Management

Gold always seems to be the most plentiful resource until it's gone. In order to guarantee you have enough funds to recruit an unbeatable army by the time you need to fight the toughest battles in a mission, invest in your cities rather than recruiting every turn. Be sure to upgrade the civic centers in your cities whenever possible. It seems expensive to upgrade a town hall to a city hall (cost: 5,000 gold). But even if it takes you to the brink of bankruptcy, consider that a city hall generates 2,000 gold per day. Within three turns, you have already generated a profit.



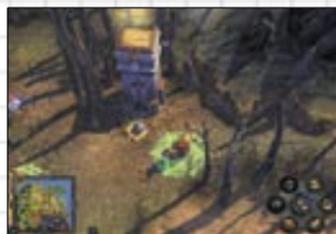
However, if you have an enemy hero bearing down on your position or beating on the front gates of one of your cities, you may need to hold on to your money just in case you must do some creature recruiting to replenish your forces. Check how far away enemy heroes are from your holdings before making large purchases—but as soon as the coast is clear, invest in that city infrastructure.

### Army Recruiting

It is tempting to build a colorful army with creatures from all six factions -- mixing up minotaurs with angels, hydras with devils. However, you will soon discover that unless the majority of your troops are from the same faction as your current hero, your

battle performance slowly begins to suffer due to a lack of morale. The less morale in your hero's army, the fewer bracing, critical hits you score on the battlefield.

Every mission provides adequate resources for building up an army of like-faction creatures. Sometimes you will need to seek out troop-generating buildings on the main overworld map, sometimes you will have to scavenge some of the rare



raw material—such as crystals and gems—to build the needed town improvements to recruit creatures in your home city.

In a pinch, though, dissimilar creatures are better than no creatures at all. If you are several turns away from your capitol city, where you can recruit your faction creatures from a burgeoning garrison, spend the extra gold to buy an army to protect you during passage. Just don't splurge to the point you cannot afford your best creatures once you make it back home.

### Pick Your Battles (and Attacks)

When going up against an enemy hero with a spread of creatures in his army, prioritize your targets. Check which of the enemy creatures have ranged capabilities and can needle your troops from a safe distance. If you immediately start focusing your attacks on the strongest creatures—which seems like a sound move on the surface—you may take unnecessary losses from enemies that can attack from afar.



Many of the strongest creatures, such as hydras or titans, cannot move very far per turn. It may take them as many as three or four turns to reach your side of the battlefield. You have a turn or two to spare before zeroing in on these targets, especially if you find yourself getting peppered with shots from gremlins or succubus mistresses over and over. You may whittle that group of titans down to half of the original size, but by the time they are on your doorstep, the enemy support troops have damaged your army to the point that they cannot hold off those direct titan attacks.

### Town Improvement

Always seek out resources. Some of the best town improvements—such as those that let you recruit upper-tier creatures like angels or dragons—use rarer materials like gems. However, before you can even start building the generators that provide these powerful creatures, you have to build other improvements that use the same materials. Magic Guilds, for example, require more and more crystals and gems as you build each successive upgrade.

You don't want to skimp on Magic Guilds, though, because they are the best and easiest way to unlock magic spells for your hero to use in combat. Strike out to claim not only the piles of resources you see in the wild, but also the mills and mines that prove daily shipments of raw materials. Certain resource generators, like gem mines and sulfur dunes, are guarded by sets of creatures. If you want to recruit the most powerful creatures for the final battles of a long mission, take the hit to your army and capture those mines and mills early on.

### Heroes for Hire

Used hired help whenever possible. You can build a tavern in all of your cities that allow you to hire additional heroes to support the main character in your current campaign. Every hired hero comes with a few

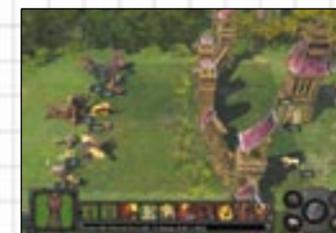
special talents (sometimes ones that your main hero doesn't even have yet) and small personal army.



You can cover twice the amount of distance with two heroes in play. Many missions have secondary objectives that are not required to complete the map, but often have special benefits that greatly help you with the primary objectives. Use hired help to run basic tasks, like protecting a home city or scarfing up resources, freeing up your main hero to take on those secondary objectives without drawing out the mission too long.

### Get Moving

Time is of the essence. Most missions are not timed, but you need to always consider how long it takes you to reach your goals—especially if that goal is to defeat an enemy hero. You may think you are going to be better prepared for the confrontation if you hang back, build out your city to the max, and recruit a major army before striking out. However, enemy heroes will be doing the exact same thing. The longer you take to attack enemy heroes, the more time you give them to build up their own army or supply a contested town with a heavy garrison.



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Reviews by Mogis



**Features**  
Large LCD Display with Back Light  
Includes Remote Control  
HDTV Support  
6 Inputs Total  
Broadband Ethernet Support

## Score System Selector Pro 2.0

• System Selector • System: Multi-Platform • Price: \$99.99

Home theater shelves are becoming a pretty crowded place these days, stacked sky high with audio hardware, DVD players, and a constantly revolving cast of game systems. Most TV sets only offer one or two A/V inputs, which can leave technophiles with a whole lot of dangling cords.

This is where the System Selector Pro 2.0 comes in. It's fitted with a whopping six inputs, each of which offer outlets for A/V, component, S-video, and coaxial cables. It even contains Ethernet hookups that can split an internet connection for convenient online gaming. Lesser selectors can cause a TV's picture come out grainy, but the Selector Pro keeps everything looking crystal clear. It even offers HDTV support for those of us with high-end rigs.

The Selector Pro 2.0 is a great piece of hardware, but it's also more expensive than some of the other options on the market. Still, for people who are serious about home theater and demand top quality, it's a worthy investment to make.

## Mad Catz Game Pad Pro Series

• Wired Controller • System: Xbox 360 • Price: \$34.99

Buying a third-party controller can be risky business if you aren't careful, considering how many clunkers there are on the market just waiting to snare unsuspecting gamers. Luckily, Mad Catz Game Pad Pro isn't one of them. No, it's an example of how to do things right, and is able to go toe to toe with Microsoft's controller in terms of both quality and design.

The most striking thing about the Game Pad is its sleekness. While its handles give you plenty to grab onto, the center of the controller is less than an inch thick. Analog sticks are responsive, and the shoulder buttons feel especially comfortable. There's even a switch on the back that inverts the control sticks if you're so inclined.

The Game Pad Pro succeeds because it does its own thing, and isn't trying to ape Microsoft's version like many others out there. If you find yourself wishing for a new controller experience, then this should be high on your 'to buy' list.

**Features**  
Vibration Feedback Technology  
Turbo Feature  
Analog Trigger Buttons and Joysticks  
Joystick Invert Switch  
Injected Rubber Grips



**Features**  
Customized Graphics  
Officially Licensed by Tecmo and  
Endorsed by Team Ninja

## Hori Dead or Alive 4 Stick

• Controller • System: Xbox 360 • Price: \$59.99

In Japan, Hori has a long history of making quality arcade sticks for home consoles. They've built up a reputation that a lot of gamers swear by, though many of their products never get a proper U.S. release. So when the company announced they were going to put out a special edition arcade stick alongside *Dead or Alive 4*, fighting game junkies started getting riled up.

The stick doesn't disappoint. It looks awesome, and features brightly colored buttons that feel great when mashing out combos. The joystick itself is clicky—in a good way—and responsive to *DoA4*'s lightning-fast gameplay.

With a thick plastic top and a metal bottom that adds girth, the stick is a solid beast. Its designers hit a sweet spot as far as size goes, considering it's small enough to fit in your lap but large enough to provide a genuine arcade feel. This is another classic Hori stick, so fight fans looking to give their Xbox 360s a workout should snag one while they're still on shelves.



## Hori Dragon Quest Slime Controller

• Controller • System: PS2 • Price: \$39.99

**Features**  
Removable Controller Cord  
Includes a Display Stand

When you're playing *Dragon Quest VIII*, are you bowled over by how adorable the slimes are? Do you find yourself wishing you could take one home with you? If you answered "yes" to either of these questions, then Hori has just the controller for you.

The Slime pad is a real-life rendering of the most renowned monster in the *Dragon Quest* canon. Its button layout is a little cramped, and has analog sticks that are so close together they're practically touching. This isn't a problem in a menu-scrolling, fantasy-world-strolling game like *Dragon Quest*, but using it to play an action title is an exercise in frustration.

Because the controller is shaped so differently from anything else on the market, holding it comfortably will take some getting used to. But if you stick with it, the slime's sharp curves and nicely-textured rubber coating will no doubt win you over.

In the grand scheme of things the Slime Controller is a gimmick, but at least it's an interesting one. *DQ* fanatics will eat it up, but it certainly isn't a must-have for casual fans.



## Hori Privacy Filter Portable

• Screen Protector • System: PSP • Price: \$8.99

**Features**  
Easy to Apply  
Protects the LCD  
Viewing Radius of 90 Degrees  
Includes Cleaning Cloth

Whenever a PSP gets pulled out in a busy public place, it becomes a magnet for attention. Gamers might stop to ask about it, while old people do double takes at this strange new device. In a cramped train or bus, it's almost impossible to watch a movie without attracting the eyes of other bored passengers.

If you want to keep your PSP all to yourself, Hori has come up with an innovative solution: the Privacy Filter Portable. It's a thin, tinted sheet of plastic that attaches to the PSP's screen and keeps nosy onlookers at bay. The filter offers a clear view from the player's perspective, but makes the screen appear black to anyone trying to sneak a peek from a wider angle.

When looked at head on, a Filter-equipped screen is a shade darker than it normally would be, though the visuals still manage to shine through vibrantly. It also works to prevent scratches from gouging your PSP's sensitive screen. If you're the kind of person who's overly conscious about people honing in on your PSP experience, then this product does the trick. If not, look for a normal screen protector instead.



## Mad Catz MC2 Racing Wheel

• Racing Wheel • System: Xbox 360 • Price: \$69.99

Mad Catz is a longtime game industry veteran, and have been designing racing wheels for about as long as they've existed. All their years of experience and revision seem to be coming to a head, because the MC2 is the finest wheel they've put together yet.

The bottom of the unit is fitted with suction cups that firmly anchor the wheel to just about any flat surface, while its contoured bottom is designed to rest on your legs comfortably. Steering is tight and responsive, and there's even a vibration function to pull you even further into the game.

The product's biggest downside is the fact that it's mildly expensive, and is only compatible with a few games at the moment. But if you're a car fanatic who snatches any racing game you can get your hands on, then the MC2 is well worth the price.



**Features**  
Vibration Feedback Technology  
Retractable Leg Supports  
10 High-Performance Action Buttons

Fan art is all about giving exposure to aspiring artists who might not otherwise have a way to get their artsie parts seen. If you are one such artist, point your web browser toward [www.luv2game.com](http://www.luv2game.com) and check out the Fan Art section of our message boards. That is where you can post your arts to get them considered for this section. You may also email submissions to [fart@hardcoregamer.com](mailto:fart@hardcoregamer.com).



A few things to keep in mind: There is no deadline for submissions because we'll be doing this every issue. Keep it video game related, please. Only post drawings which you drew yourself. Don't expect drawings of nekkid people or any adults-only type stuff to make the cut. Keep it rated "Teen" or below. You are the copyright owner of your artwork as soon as you draw it whether you make note of that fact or not. However, in submitting your artwork to us, you give us permission to reprint your art and make fun of it if necessary.



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**Age :** 18  
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**Title :** SnowWilde  
**Artist :** Elizabeth Ellis  
**Age :** 23  
**Location :** Sykesville, MD



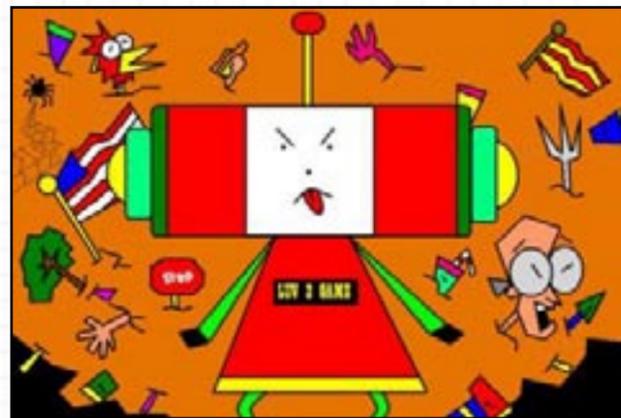
**Title :** Castlevania Royal Chapel of Immoral Passions  
**Artist :** Freddy Velazquez  
**Age :** 33  
**Location :** Orlando, Fl



**Title :** the scarecrow-looking fellow  
**Artist :** Joe Hoskins  
**Age :** 29  
**Location :** London, KY



**Title :** Ross from Fire Emblem  
**Artist :** Rebecca Lashock  
**Age :** 22  
**Location :** Milwaukee, WI



**Title :** Evil Prince  
**Artist :** Javier Bravo  
**Age :** 21  
**Location :** Fontana, CA



## TAPPED OUT?

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**Oddly, we feel Sorrow and Joy!**  
 (Big Boss, The Sorrow, The Boss, Solid Snake, and Revolver Ocelot from Metal Gear Solid 3)

by **Metalbolt**

MegaCon was off the hook this year, or so we're told. We weren't there, but Maboroshi of risingsun.net was, and he takes some sexy pictures! So, we figure that we'll all be at MegaCon in spirit, experiencing life through his pictures. If you think that's creepy you should meet DJPubba in real life. He's not really a giant fork; no kidding.



**"Megaman, you make terrible chilli."**

(Doc Light and Mega Man)



**"...then, I snapped his neck like this!"**

(Dalshim from Street Fighter II)



**Summon me a dream.**

(Young Rydia from FF4)



**Kingdom Damacy III: Disney's Snowball Effect**

(Katamari Prince and Sora from Kingdom Hearts)



**Fire arrows would be nice.**

(Rosa from FF4)



**Cut off his beard and he loses his power.**

(Bitores Mendez from RE4)

Cos-play (kos-plä) v. A combination of the words costume and play. People known as "cosplayers" dress up as their favorite characters from anime, movies, and video games.



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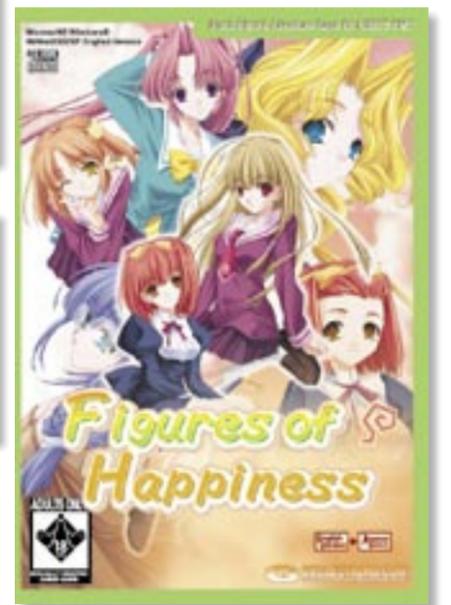
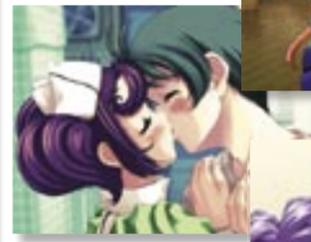
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