Official Xbox Magazine

XBOX NEXT

THE BEST GAMES OF 2004

EXCLUSIVE NEW INFO ON 19 CAN’T-MISS HITS

INCLUDING

- Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow
- StarCraft: Ghost
- Halo 2
- Star Wars: Battlefront
- Fable
- Half-Life 2
- BC
- Doom 3
- Jade Empire
- AND MORE!

FABLE
Amazing! The scoop on this role-playing epic

Project Gotham Racing 2
You can be #1 with these killer tips!

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time
The best game this year? Check out our massive review!

IS THIS XBOX 2?
See pg.10
The epic RPG *Fable* and a slew of other surefire classics lead the charge into the Xbox’s best year yet.

**All Access**
- GENERATION NEXT
  - Tech talk to flow from Microsoft on the next Xbox. Start today!
- THE HUMOR RODE
  - Manliness: as it should be shaped.
- JANUARY CALENDAR
  - A new year brings some hot new Xbox releases.

**Features**
- XBOX NEXT 2004
  - Why are we saying you should consider all of these great Xbox releases?

**Previews**
- Auto Mode
- The Suffering
- Tenchu: Return from Darkness

**Reviews**
- Tenchu
- Battalion Galactica
- Youmak
- Brothers in Arms: The Sleeping Dragon
- The Cat Is in the Red
- Giana Sisters: Radical Rodents
- Counter-Strike
- Dance Dance Revolution: Ultrasonic
- Drake
- Flashpoint 2
- Freestyle Street Soccer
- Giga Kommando
- SpongeBob SquarePants in Battle for Bikini Bottom
- Tony Hawk’s Underground
- True Crime: Streets of LA
- Ultimate Beach Soccer
- Whiplash
- World Championship Pool 2004

**Extended Play**
- PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2 TOP TIPS
  - Our very own Gotham dynamo Mike Salmon shares his sacred secrets.
- BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL GUIDE
  - The philosophical adventure role-playing game is so much more than a walkthrough in to help answer your questions through it.
- THE DISC AND CHALLENGES
  - The official *Xbox* game disc comes with a host of challenges for you to tackle on your gaming pleasure.
- READER INTERACTION
  - No new rules.

**On the Disc**
The Xbox launched November 15, 2001, with 13 games, a hard drive, a mysterious Ethernet port, Heli, and some crazy promises. Now here we are more than two years later with more than 300 games, the best online gaming service in the world, and the impending release of Halo 2.

In pretty much every regard the Xbox has delivered on the promises of creating great games and new experiences, but this year looks to be the year it really comes together. As you can see from our Xbox Next feature (check it out on page 22), 2004 is loaded with anticipated, hyped, and amazing games. From Halo 2 to Fallo to StarCraft: Ghost, this is the true second generation of Xbox games, and I couldn’t be more excited. Developers have had time to exploit the technology inside the box and create games that fully utilize the hard drive, Xbox Live, and everything our mighty system has to offer.

The last two years have seen a host of great games, but in my opinion 2004 is the year that Xbox gaming goes to a new level. And the best thing of all is that the great games aren’t all releasing in December. Games like StarCraft: Ghost, Full Spectrum Warrior, Splinter Cell Pandemic, Tomorrow, Fable, and even Halo 2 should be finished and ready for playing before the summer is over. Less waiting means more gaming!

Go ahead: read the magazine, play the games on the disc, and prepare for another awesome year of Xbox gaming.
**Xbox Next**  The latest on your next Xbox!

It doesn’t have a name, it doesn’t have a release date, but it does have hardware on the horizon.

The next Xbox, which has been called Xaron and Xbox Next in rumorland, is going to be an even bigger deal for Microsoft than the first. Now that the company has experience, success, and a ton of innovative ideas under its belt, it’s time to go head to head against PlayStation2 and Nintendo’s “N5” next-generation console.

In this next-gen struggle we can guarantee a winner, even two years before the first launch. IBM.

**International Business Machines, ‘Big Blue,’ whatever you want to call it, is amazingly supplying CPU technology to all three console manufacturers. This unprecedented step stems from the distinctly different ways Nintendo, Microsoft and Sony source and make chips. Rest assured that IBM will not be making the same chip for each company.**

Microsoft’s official statement simply says that Microsoft has licensed “leading edge semiconductors” from IBM, to be used in the next-generation Xbox. The tech community has assumed this means two things. One, that the chip is based on the absurdly powerful GS featured in the newest Macs and a bunch of those power the third-fastest supercomputer on Earth, according to a recent report and two, that this custom variant of the GS will be manufactured and supplied by a third party.

There’s even a confirmation that this chip will in fact be the heart of the new system, as Scott Sykes, a spokesperson for IBM Microelectronics, confirmed that an IBM CPU would power the next Xbox. “It is the main CPU,” said Sykes. Microsoft, on the other hand, is revealing only what it needs to for public filing and disclosure reasons.

Sony, on the other hand, is very publicly designing a chip in conjunction with Toshiba and IBM and will take care of manufacturing itself — an expensive but also risky proposition — as chip shortages initially hobble PS2 supply when that system launched. Nintendo will be using its second IBM chip (“Gekko”) in the GameCube was its first. and is playing its cards close to its chest. But while processors are all fine and dandy, it’s graphics that really show what a system can do, and here we know that Microsoft is pulling out all the stops, and switching from the current nVidia chip, to a new, unidentified ATI GPU.

Graphics mavens are happily convinced that the chip will be a new, top-end variant of ATI’s award-winning Radeon series, and will likely take care of graphics, DVD, and other video functionality.

The hard drive has been a blazing success too — so we’re hoping for a bigger one – and ATI’s Radeon is perfectly capable of TiVo-style digital video recording.

Other, smaller deals have also been signed, including a contract with Taiwanese chip designer/manufacturer SiS to produce “media I/O technologies” for future-Xbox products and services.” That careful phrasing could cover a multitude of abilities, from video processing to networking to media management.

Wishful thinking aside, the race for the next generation is well and truly on. Companies are already working on software for the new systems based on secretly disclosed specs, as well as basic assumptions about hardware. One very well-known developer told us, “We’re building a new game on the assumption that Xbox Next will be dramatically more powerful than this current system.”

**BIG(GER) IN JAPAN**

The outlook for the Xbox in Japan is on the up. A series of recent announcements and statistics has shed a rosier glow on the system’s (so far) weakest territory. While enjoying second place worldwide overall and a very distant lead over Nintendo in Europe and the US, the system has languished in the doldrums in Japan, until now.

Not one, not two, but three Xbox products placed in the recent Japanese top 20, including Project Gotham Racing 2 at No.7, closely followed by Microsoft’s own Magatama at No.8. Add to that confirmation that True Fantasy Live Online would ship in June of 2004, and a recent survey indicating that 17% of Japanese gamers polled wanted an Xbox, and the picture looks far from grim.

One other neat statistic is Sega’s announcement that Phantasy Star Online is now the number one online RPG for consoles with an epic 500,000 registered users... though that figure represents all formats and not just the Xbox version. And perhaps more compellingly, Yoshinori Maruyama, the general manager of Microsoft’s Xbox division in Japan, recently sat down with our editor in Tokyo when he stated that Microsoft was interested in “making an environment where they will want to do, business on our platform” when pointed on the possibility of a Square/Enix RPG for Xbox. Yes, Maruyama, we should note was previously a vice president at the US division of Square/Enix. So he probably has a good idea what Square/Enix wants.

**THE SPECS**

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<tr>
<th>CURRENT SPECS</th>
<th>POSSIBLE FUTURE SPECS*</th>
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<tr>
<td>Intel Pentium III 733MHz</td>
<td>IBM Power PC GS variant</td>
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<td>nVidia GPU</td>
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**THE POLL**

The Readers Say

Which Xbox Game Will Rock Your 2004?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>StarCraft Ghost</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phantasy Star Online</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Fantasy</td>
<td>57%</td>
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<td>Batman: Arkham Asylum</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<td>DDO Online</td>
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IBM

They’re making all the chips for everything. No matter who wins the next console war, IBM will emerge as a winner, since an IBM CPU of some kind will be found at the heart of the next Xbox, the PlayStation3, and whatever shape the new Nintendo system is.

Xbox Live

Subscriptions continue to grow, games continue to build on it and Xbox Live goes from strength to strength. A recent roundtable of editors voted 12 out of 15 to recommend the service over PS2 online. And now, even third parties are tracking Live stats on their websites, beginning with Ubi’s Rainbow Six 3.

Yahooligans

Yahoo’s kidz website, recently voted Xbox “most wanted” in its holiday wishlist. Why is that an even and not an upper? Because they voted it most wanted “toy” ahead of Game Boy Advance SP and PlayStation2. It’s not a toy! It’s not! Wah!

Holiday Budget

Seriously, how many AAA games came out this holiday season that you simply can’t afford. PGR2? Rainbow Six? Prince of Persia? Far Cry? Tiger Woods? Lord of the Rings? If you buy even a fraction of the games that we gave Editor’s Choice awards, you’ll be flat broke.

overheard

With the huge success of Eye Toy for the PS2 many of my sources are telling me that the folks at Microsoft HQ have a similar idea up their sleeves. …Fable will definitely release before June 31 – no, really! …Game Arts is working on a version of Grandia and Lunar for Xbox. …This season was just the beginning for XSN Sports, look for huge advances in organization, variety, and stat-tracking in next years games.

Rumor Mole

Games for Xbox Next

In trips to developers around the world the Mole has picked up some early development news on titles for the next Xbox. According to a couple of sources the early specs for the system have it being approximately hellza more powerful than the current Xbox. One unreal new game is coming from a well-known developer who is planning on showing the game for the first time at E3 (May 2004) behind closed doors. None of them would comment on exactly when they expect the system to launch, but most industry folk seem to think that 2006 is the best bet with a slight chance of 2005.

EA Online

Recent reports suggested that EA and Microsoft are talking and hopefully resolving any issues, with hopes of EA games being online by early next year. We even heard that EA’s massively PC hit Battlefield 1942 is back in development for Xbox. Not only that, but our sources say that people are actually playing it on partner net like early development versions of Xbox Live. Judging from what I’ve heard, the announcement of EA being online with Xbox would go hand-in-hand with the announcement of Battlefield 1942 and the entire line of next year’s sports games. Let’s hope so at least.

Overheard

Uppers and Downers

How this month’s news affects the world of videogames

IAM

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Hard Stuff

Pelican System Selector Pro

Pros
- Components, optical, and Ethernet connections for online gaming
- Eight inputs is plenty
- Includes a component and composite cable

Cons
- Another $100 to spend on your multi-billion-dollar setup
- Even more to spend on extra optical and Ethernet cables
- No remote control

Nyko Wireless Net extender

Pros
- Super easy install
- Reliable, cheap
- No wires!

Cons
- Relatively cheap
- Simple, fast, cheap... but simple

Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers (Extended Edition)

Released in a suitably mythical leather-esque binder, this huge compendium of The Lord of the Rings series includes the original film, extended editions of all three films, a companion documentary, a ton of documentaries and bonusaries, and bonusy stuff we hardly don’t have room to list here. Even at the relatively hefty $49.99 price point, this represents astounding value.

Strongbad Sings and Other Type Hits

A number of songs from Strongbad. Some are Absolutely Astronomical, some are Space Ballads, and others are Other Familiar Strings. On the Homestar Runner website, you’ll find angry and amusing Strongbad, furiously powerful Strongmad, and the somewhat dreary Strongsad.

News

Finally, the answer to every power gamer’s question

Nyko Wireless Net extender

Most of you likely have an Xbox and a PC. And if you’re playing Xbox Live that means you have a broadband connection. Perfect. The problem is often how do you get your Ethernet cable from your Xbox to your PC.

Solution number one: Run a huge length of cable from your Xbox to your PC and pray that no nosy types trip over it and crack their skull (price: depends on lawsuit). Option number two: Buy a wireless router and wireless adapter to connect your Xbox to a network with your PC (price $250-$500). Option number three: The Nyko Wireless Net Extender, which wirelessly connects your Xbox to the same Ethernet port as your PC.

For only 100 bucks you can get your Xbox and PC onto your broadband connection without any messy wires, plus it’s probably the easiest installation ever. The only difficult part was trying the product from the deadly lethal pack, after a few cuts and a few more cuts I had bit off the product from the package. Literally 10 minutes later (most of it spent trying to find an open outlet behind my TV) it was connected and running.

Of course, the lower price does have some disadvantages. The Nyko Wireless Net Extender doesn’t allow your Xbox and PC to be online at the same time and it doesn’t connect your Xbox to your PC in any way. But it works, and it’s cheap!

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WHAT TO DO IN JANUARY

*Note: These dates are subject (and likely) to change, but were correct at press time.

1/1 New Year’s Day
A night ago you partied like it was 2003. Now enjoy your first hangover of 2004.

1/1 National Hobby Month
For us, that means a government-approved reason to play Xbox games.

1/5 He-Man: Defender of Greykull
Like the Ninja Turtles, He-Man is back from the '80s with a new show and a new game.

1/5 Universal Letter Writing Week begins
So send us some cool letters already!

1/14 National Pizza Week begins
There are 52 of those in a Ryan McCaffrey year.

1/13 Star Trek: Shattered Universe
Atari/TGD
Here’s your chance to take the con and shatter the Prime Directive.

1/15 Mafia
Action/Adventure/Strategy
We’re starting to get impatient waiting for this 3D-era GTA style game. Bring it on!

1/6 NFL Street
Sports/EA
Football done NBA Street style, just in time for the Super Bowl. No pads? No problem.

1/17 Fire the Boss Week begins
Are you sweating yet, Mike?

1/27 Sonic Heroes
Platformer/Sega
The Big Blue Guy debuts in hyper speed on Xbox. We’re ready.

1/27 Daredevil: The Man Without Fear
Action/Encore
Um, guys, the movie came out last year.

1/5 Baldur’s Gate: Dark Alliance II
Publisher: Vivendi
Developer: Black Isle
Unique Baldur’s Gate universe comes to Xbox.

PICK of the MONTH

WHAT’S THE DEAL: This shouldn’t be out already, but miscellaneous legal/business issues kept it off the store shelves until now. We’re told that it’s finally here, with the same intense action/RPG goodness that the first game helped make popular.

THE FINAL WORD: We should have a full review next issue, but until then we can say that from what we’ve seen, the sequel is bigger and better in every way than its outstanding predecessor (which earned an 8.8 in our December 2002 issue). Plus, we don’t have to wait for the game to be ported from the PS2 this time! Bravo!

FACT: Amici’s Pizza here in the Bay Area is the best pizza you can get outside of the northeastern seaboard. It’s great, but even it doesn’t compare to the real thing on the East Coast.
The Hottest Games of 2004

2004 is going to be a banner year for Xbox games. And that’s no mean feat, following in the footsteps of a year that included Rainbow Six 3, Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic, Project Gotham Racing 2, and an almost obscene number of standard-setting games from Microsoft and third parties alike.

Last year, our predictions were almost 100% solid – and only standard delays and one less-than-perfect brawler kept us from hitting it out of the park. This year, we’re going to do better – we reckon that every single one of the games you’re about to preview here, from Halo 2 to True Fantasy Live Online, will set new standards for gaming excellence in 2004, and continue the awesome track record of exceptional and original games on Xbox.

We’re going to lead you in with our pick for the most exciting adventure of 2004, a little game that started life as “Project Ego,” but quickly grew to legendary, mythical status as Fable... and it will definitely be out this year!
**Fable**

**Developer:** Big Blue Box  
**Publisher:** Microsoft  
**Release Date:** June 2004  
**Xbox Live:** TBA

**FACTS**

*How you look, fight, and even love.*

*How you live in Fable will affect how you look, fight, and even love.*

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**WHAT'S THE DEAL?**

When we claimed on a past cover that the Peter Molyneux and Big Blue Box's incredibly ambitious Fable was "the greatest RPG ever made," we were technically incorrect. With a June release date still a ways off, truthfully, it's still in the making, an ever-evolving beast of an RPG with so many features, genre innovations, and tantalizing nuances inside of it that you have to sit back and wonder if it'll ever be done.

And when it is — how amazing will it be? We're betting it'll be pretty freakin' astounding.

By now, as an Xbox owner and old enough to have played classic RPGs on a console, you generally know what your parents (or has he?) and has, over time and with diligence in playing, the potential to become a great hero. But what kind of hero will you be? An evil hero who performs dastardly deeds, has a shockingly crude potty mouth, and heckles helpless beggars? Or will you be a stealthy ninja-esque arrow-slinger looking to make his name from the spoils of merchant life? Or perhaps you choose the righteous path, defending the weak, giving to the poor, and fighting back the sinister forces at work in the land? Fable gives you this choice to make — you have the ability to create and shape your own destiny. But, if you're like us, you're wondering how it all pan out while adhering to the fundamentals of Persia.

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**FABLE FUNDAMENTALS**

The way Fable actually plays through it may change is streamlined to avoid forcing players to constantly reference an inventory screen. In combat, your colored face buttons work almost like Prince of Persia: one button is for blocking, another slashes (or shoots, depending on your weapon), and another is to furnish your weapon. And while there aren't any particular fighting combos, per se, you can string together your actions to create your own. From the initial combat commands, you’ll also be able to page once, with the R-trigger, to access magic spells that you have chosen from your inventory which you’ve mapped yourself to hotkeys.

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**To get around the massive world of Fable, there is a system of unsinkable teleportarts that will warp you from point to point.**

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**You are not the only hero — or are you?**

You are not the only hero – or are you? Civilians will cower in fear if you’re reputed to be a brute. Alternately, if you’re a hero, they’ll treat you like a celebrity.

---

**You can also assist the hero in combat or be able to earn experience that can then be carried over to your main game. Therefore, you can level up loads with friends then resume your main game with all of the spoils in tow. Nice.**

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**YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY HERO — OR ARE YOU?**

Multiplayer is one of the last great frontiers that hasn’t been completely conquered on console RPG-dom. Sure there was Phantasy Star Online and the upcoming True Fantasy Live Online, but Fable isn’t about to be left out of the loop.

**YOU ARE NOT THE ONLY HERO — OR ARE YOU?**

Featuring a four-player cooperative mode, you’ll be able to bring a memory card over to a friend’s house, plug it in and play along with them in an actual game of Fable. But there are some limitations. One player will assume the role of the actual hero, while the others will play as Guardians (represented in glowing orb form). As Guardian, you’re capable of a limited set of combat skills and all the same expressions as the main hero – but the roll draw will be that every time you assist the hero in combat or otherwise, you’ll receive a score. As the score tallies up, you may be able to achieve a specific score requirement and (by pressing the White button) push the hero out of his role and take it on for yourself.

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**HEAVY HITTER:** It’s possible to equip a weapon that’s too heavy for you to wield in combat. If you haven’t built up certain attributes enough, some weapons will be unattainable for you until later.
Fable handles them with a similar hotkey type of approach wherein they are assigned to your D-pad like a tree of options.

You'll begin with four options: actions (stuff like fishing, digging, etc.), expressions (phrases and words learned ingame that can be used to communicate with other characters), Guild seal (way to learn of new quests, access the leaderboard, etc.), and your item inventory (health potions, food, etc.). When you choose one by pressing up, down, left, or right, you'll access an expanded menu of your choice. Want to go fishing, for example? Then press the direction on the D-pad with the small icon for “action” and a new set of selections will pop up that includes fishing. Select it and you're set.

The same thing works for expressions to talk to for more appropriately “at” people. Select the D-pad direction with the icon for “expressions” and you’ll call up a tree of basic sayings (Chiefs, “how are you?”), Gold Purse to offer money, etc. or you can flip to a set of phrases you’ve learned and hotkeyed that runs the gamut from standard niceties to nasty slurs. What you choose will, of course, affect the reactions you receive and, cumulatively, what opportunities you’ll have down the Fable gameplay road.

The magic system in the game is actually referred to as “Will.” Therefore, you’re focusing your will to cast magic.

LEVEL UP
Another interesting innovation in game is how you earn experience points and, in turn, how it will affect your character. Like any good RPG, you’re rewarded with experience by defeating enemies, but the way you collect the points is presented very differently.

When an enemy is defeated, it will leave behind a green glowing orb. When collected you’ll receive a certain amount of points, depending on the strength and type of enemy. But how you battle changes exactly how many points you’ll receive. If you string together enough attacks on an enemy or enemy group, a meter will build up a sort of multiplier. Basically, if you string together 10 attacks without getting hit, then collect the dropped experience, the total amount will be multiplied by 10. This serves as a nice incentive to work on your combat skills, since there’s really no limit to how high the attack meter can go. Just imagine multiplying your points by 100! When you earn experience, you’re free to assign points to level up your various abilities in a way that’s somewhat similar to Knights of the Old Republic, but not quite. This though your character ages throughout Fable, you don’t need to worry that you’ll end up playing as an old geezer, a la Nightcaster. Instead, you’ll simply evolve and mature.

Taking Care of Business
There are a whole host of features in Fable – too many to cover in one mere four-page article. Here’s a peek at some of them.

Earning money
You’ll get the bulk of your cash from completing quests chosen at the Heroes Guild. But you can also partake in Fable’s world-wide trading, which works a bit like Suikoden III’s, but you’ll be able to take a more active role in it if you please by listening to rumors, traveling with traders, or even influencing the trade winds with a more hands-on approach – sabotaging traders, taking over shops as a merchant, and more.

Boosting
At the Heroes Guild you’re able to test your own horn, so to speak, in front of civilians and other rival heroes. You can profess your ability to take on more difficult tasks and quests, thus bumping up the monetary value of completing them or encouraging betting on your success or failure.

Inventory map
By checking your map, you’ll be able to keep track of who’s where and what’s what. If you need to keep tabs on what other heroes are doing or where some of your NPC friends are, the map will give you this information. This is important if you’re trying to build up your fame and renown. If another hero looks like he’ll beat you to the punch at completing a quest, you can find out where he is and what he’s up to by simply looking at your map.

Fable: the hottest games of 2004 © Xbox Next
AUGMENTATION: You’re able to enhance your weapons with elemental magic in Fable, which can help or hinder you. But if you leave it on one too long, it’ll “lock” into it.
you will have to share the spoils of battle. The only drawback is that, on certain quests from the Heroes Guild, you may join up with other toughs who’ll follow you into battle. If you level up Combat, you’ll become brawner and stronger, both physically and visually (imagine a giant muscle-bound hero). But if you rely more on Pure magic, your appearance will adjust to accommodate the direction your choice. You’ll also be able to assign points to stuff like stealth, which may open up a whole new dynamic in the game, altogether.

**Birds of a Feather**

Though you may think of Fable as a lonely, solo affair, with you as the only hero – like with most everything in the game, you can affect your own likelihood for gathering friends and peers. If you’re a helpful hand in battle.

In some instances, if you work hard on building a solid reputation and become a renowned hero by performing good deeds and completing tough quests, you’ll attract a number of like-minded toughs who’ll follow you into battle. This is a good thing, mind you: Every bit of help in combat helps.

In other situations, you may make a few friends in town by being a good citizen or lending a hand when it’s needed. If your newfound friends are loyal enough, they will often tag along on quests. This may or may not be a good thing. The buddies you make can sometimes be more of a liability in combat than a benefit. If they can’t fight, you’ll waste too much time trying to protect them from anything, which may lead to your own demise.

And at other times, if you take on certain quests from the Heroes Guild, you may join up with other heroes who are often your equal in battle. The only drawback is that you will have to share the spoils of completing the quest by sacrificing some of the renown and riches. Any way you slice it, you won’t necessarily always be alone – unless that’s what you want.

**What Risks Does It Face?**

Well, if you think of how ambitious the game is and what its grand designs are – well, it could possibly either. As it implores under the weight of its own ambitions, or it may turn out to be an entirely ho-hum, underwhelming mish-mash of too many styles and not enough actual substance. After checking out the latest build and learning about the mechanics and facts behind the hype, we can safely say that it most definitely won’t fall victim to either.

**What Makes It Hot?**

In the end, Fable promises to be what you make of it. Sure you can probably zip through the main adventure in, like, 20+ hours, but then you wouldn’t be able to really delve into the richness of the game’s universe. There’s a living, breathing world full of people, sub-quests, jobs and intrigue just waiting for the right hero to come by and either exploit them or participate in them. The choice is up to you.

Want to get married and have children? Want to become an entrepreneur and own a small chain of supply stores? Are you itching to get involved with Fable’s world economy by trading goods? Or do you want to simply find out what happened to your parents and finish the game? It’s entirely up to you and it’s this flexibility and interaction with the flow of the game that promises to make Fable a unique, wholly individual experience to all the gamers willing to put the time into it. We’ve already bloated out the month of June for its arrival.

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**FAIR-WEATHER WORDS AND FOUR-LETTER FRIENDS**

A good example of Fable’s “morality” system is a situation in which you stumble upon a beggar being hassled by a brutish bully on the outskirts of a town. You have lots of choices: siding with the bully by hunting a couple of swear words to help him taunt the beggar with; protecting the beggar by shooing away the bully, while throwing him some gold for his troubles; or ignoring the scene altogether.

What choice you make can and will affect your reputation, your opportunities later in the game, and how you’ll develop as a hero or anti-hero. Some quests are path-specific and won’t be available to all types of players.
Pandora Tomorrow

Official Magazine January 2004

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Shanghai
Release Date: March 2004
Xbox Live: Yes, downloadable content, online play

WHAT’S THE DEAL?
With an arrival almost as stealthy as its subject matter, Splinter Cell sneaked onto the scene, took the lightning, and broke the neck of every rival stealth action title, including the mighty but now hopelessly bald Metal Gear Solid series. This sequel hopes to build on the voluminous arsenal of special moves, weapons, gadgets, and scenarios unfurled in the series’ sensational debut. The new game takes place a few years after the original – the Georgian Information Crisis is a distant memory, but other troubles loom for Sam Fisher. An increasingly isolated America is straining to provide adequate domestic security against terrorists, and the Third Eichen organization finds itself in an uncomfortable spotlight. Less violent means are called for, and this is being rolled into the new multiplayer gameplay. That means discreet, discrete groups called ShadowNet teams. What’s the deal? The new game has invaded Earth, you have to save it. We’ll have more on this soon...

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
It’s the vastly enhanced sequel to one of the prettiest, most innovative games ever released on any system. It changed the way graphics look on Xbox and catapulted Ubisoft into the console spotlight. The sequel fully embraces multiplayer, live features and downloadable content, and arrives with an eager audience of over a million satisfied Xbox owners. It’s a no-brainer if ever there was one.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Everything.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Real time lighting (shown here in a cinematic) will make Halo 2 a moodier, meatier experience.

HALO HELPER:
■ SHANGHAI SURPRISE: Ubisoft has recently opened a new development studio in talent-rich but exotically unusual Shanghai, China.

HALO 2

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
It’s the vastly enhanced sequel to one of the prettiest, most innovative games ever released on any system.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Real time lighting (shown here in a cinematic) will make Halo 2 a moodier, meatier experience.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
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WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Real time lighting (shown here in a cinematic) will make Halo 2 a moodier, meatier experience.
**STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT**

**FACTS**
- Publisher: LucasArts
- Developer: Pandemic Studios
- Release Date: Q1 2004
- Xbox Live: Yes, downloadable content, online play

**WHAT'S THE DEBATE?**
Ever heard of Star Wars? What about *Battlefield 1942*? The most amazing online PC game ever? Mix them together and you have Star Wars: Battlefront. LucasArts is betting big on Xbox. With huge successes already, including Knights of the Old Republic and Indiana Jones, it’s about time more effort was spent taking advantage of Xbox Live, and that’s exactly what Star Wars: Battlefront does. Set in the Han Solo/Luke Skywalker era, but featuring 10 diverse planets from those events as well as those from the Episode I series, you’ll battle through Hoth, Tatooine, Geonosis, Naboo, and more. And you’ll battle in any perspective you choose. Third person, first person… OK, we admit there are only two perspectives. But there are variations in these.

**WHAT MAKES IT HOT?**
All those Star Wars air and ground vehicles, the chance to play on foot or in the air. If it sounds like *Battlefield 1942* in space, that’s because it basically is. No word yet on how many players the Xbox version will support, but LucasArts is shooting for 32 simultaneously. *Battlefront* is going to rule the galaxy very soon. Having Full Spectrum Warrior developer Pandemic is a big plus too.

**WHAT RISKS DOES IT FACE?**
Although Clone Wars was kind of disappointing for Star Wars fans expecting a more ambitious freshen-up effort on Live. Lots of players who would otherwise be ecstatic about *Battlefront* may now be a little wary. That said, *Battlefront* is a very different proposition.

**DEAD OR ALIVE ONLINE**

**FACTS**
- Publisher: Tecmo
- Developer: Team Ninja
- Release Date: Q1 2004
- Xbox Live: Yes, downloadable content, online play

**WHAT'S THE DEAL?**
Dead or Alive Online is a collection of elements from the various Dead or Alive games, including characters, levels, and naturally, fighting moves from DOA One, Two, Three, and Hardcore. The game will be playable online head to head, and will also feature downloadable content – so expect costumes at least, and possibly even levels and characters.

**WHAT MAKES IT HOT?**
This will be the first 3D fighting game available for Xbox Live, and it features Tomonobu Itagaki’s bouncing perspective on the female form. The fighting engine has been tweaked and tuned to perfection, and Tecmo is working with Microsoft to make sure servers are tweaked and tuned to perfection, and Tecmo is working with Microsoft to maintain a brand-new graphics engine said to surpass that of Xbox *Dead or Alive 2*, there will also be some amusingly bland polygon builds from the original *Dead or Alive* PlayStation, Saturn, and arcade incarnations. In motion, it’s incredible with new lighting, reflection, and blooming effects. Is it the alreadly prodigious graphic effects?

**WHAT RISKS DOES IT FACE?**
Well, many people would say that fighting games have had their day, although online fighters have never reached this level of sophistication. Poor performance on Capcom’s online fighting games may have soured some on the idea. "Bong" as well as multi-tiered level designs.
REAL DINOSAURS: To this day, on the Indonesian island of Komodo, giant reptiles called Komodo Dragons hunt goats and could easily kill an adult human. And their saliva is toxic too.

**Psychonauts**

**FACTS**

Publisher: Microsoft Game Studios

Developer: Double Fine

Release Date: Fall 2004

Xbox Live: Yes, details TBD

**WHAT'S THE DEAL?**

Although it’s been delayed, Tim Schafer’s epic-looking Xbox platform/puzzler is still one of the hottest games in development for the system. Every twisted detail of this amazing-looking game comes from the minds that brought you the legendary Grim Fandango, only this time the emphasis is on action rather than adventure.

You’ll pilot the hero, a kind of psychic boyscout, through the minds of some badly afflicted mental patients. Inside their insanity, he’ll find a range of challenges to utilize his own prodigious psychic powers. And the reward for risking your own insanity in the mind of a madman? A merit badge for your skill.

**WHAT RISKS DOES IT FACE?**

Delays, delays, delays. Although it’s only officially slipped once, the game is super late. The inside track suggests that all the delays will be more than worth it, but there’s the risk that players will simply forget about it in the meantime. But hey, that’s what we’re here for.

**WHAT MAKES IT HOT?**

Absolutely droolworthy conceptual designs have been brilliantly and perfectly translated into a smooth 3D engine with gameplay to match. Fans of Grim Fandango and Full Throttle have been waiting for this ostensible successor’s arrival for what seems like an eternity. The wait will probably be worth it.

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**BC**

**FACTS**

Publisher: Microsoft Game Studios

Developer: Intrepid Entertainment

Release Date: Fall 2004

Xbox Live: Yes, details TBD

**WHAT'S THE DEAL?**

Take control of a tribe of Neanderthals in a fictional ancient Earth where man and dinosaurs shared the planet. Explore your environment and interact with it as you try to reach your ultimate goal — a long-lost paradise safe from marauding Velociraptors. The game plays kind of like a cross between Super Mario 64 and Gostito, with lots of exploration, puzzling, and the occasional battle.

The game immerses you in a world built to be played with. You can climb a tree, or set fire to it (as soon as you “discover” fire). You can lure rampaging dinosaurs to their death by having them chase you over a precipice. You can lead your band of would-be cave dwellers around the world, switching between party members to take advantage of their individual strengths. Or you can simply marvel at the graphics.

Players can use weapons, including spears and bows and arrows, and action includes swimming, jumping, climbing and even the odd spot of brawling. Many of the skills you’ll need have to be learned along the way, and you can pass those traits on to other tribe members.

**WHAT RISKS DOES IT FACE?**

We’ve played it briefly, and to be honest, the only risks it faces are overreaching ambition and timing. The game looks pretty complete, so we were surprised to hear it would release later in 2004, but it ought to be worth the wait.

**WHAT MAKES IT HOT?**

Simply put, BC is worth buying for the graphics alone. If they maintain frame rates, and the animation and effects look half as good as they do now, you’ll get a buzz from simply wandering around, checking stuff out. The gameplay is smooth, action-packed, and nowhere near as unwieldy as Peter Molyneux’s descriptions make it sound.

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Although this chat with a camp janitor is enlightening, you can’t help but stare at his bunny slippers.
HALF-LIFE 2

Facts
Publisher: TBA
Developer: Valve Software
Release Date: TBA
Xbox Live: Presumably

What's the Deal?
An Xbox version of the delayed PC monster is coming, and that's about all we know. The inside scoop is that it will look pretty freaking good on Xbox and feature some sort of Live connectivity.

What Risks Does it Face?
Plenty. It's late (we're guessing, since no release date was actually announced) and the PC delays will mean further Xbox delays. And (GASP!) it's finally going to test the limits of the Xbox chipset. This is designed for PCs ten times faster than our baby.

What Makes It Hot?
Everything. Sequel to a classically lauded shooter, with some startlingly realistic graphics, lighting, and a cool-looking physics system. And it ain't coming to PS2 or GameCube. Ever.

HALF-LIFE: The original Half-Life was based on a bastardized version of the first Quake graphics engine; this sequel uses the proprietary "Source" engine.

A better variety of weight divisions means more fluid types and styles of play.

FIGHT NIGHT

Facts
Publisher: EA
Developer: EA Sports
Release Date: Q2 2004
Xbox Live: TBA (don't count on it)

What's the Deal?
EA's last jab at boxing (tee-hee) was Knockout Kings, and while deep, involving, and challenging, it was criticized for relatively slothful fighting and, of course, reliance on heavyweights. This time around, EA will feature more real boxers from different weight classes and an enhanced fighting engine.

What Risks Does it Face?
Do kids love the boxing? Hard to say. Knockout Kings did OK, but had nothing like the impact of ancient boxing titles like Mike Tyson's Punch Out and Midway's Ready 2 Rumble.

What Makes it Hot?
Fifteen venues to fight in, ranging from Vegas arenas to dusty backstreet gyms. A new blood-splatter engine that accurately (and horribly) builds gore, swelling, and spatter as your fighter comes under increasing pressure to drop dead. A create-a-boxer mode that lets you fight as your mom, or create a legend like Peter "Cocoon of Horrors" McNeeley. It's got EA Sports' attention to detail, excellent licensing, and tons of options, which should ensure legendary status.

* An alien invasion from another dimension means that Earth is a playground for killer freaks (PC screenshot).
RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
Although the original PC code was developed by Crytek, the Xbox version is being put in the more than capable hands of Ubisoft’s Montreal studio. That means it will be handled by the guys that done brought you Rainbow 6: Siege. So, of course, Splinter Cell, Rainbow Six 3 brought you Rainbox Six 3. Ubisoft Montreal. That means it will be handled by the guys that done brought you Rainbow 6: Siege. So, of course, Splinter Cell, Rainbow Six 3.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Vehicular combat, tremendous visuals and a host of gameplay modes mean this is going to be an epic multiplayer experience. And Ubisoft won’t forget the importance of a solid single player game either. Far Cry is gonna be huge.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Look at it. Droid. Wipe your chin. Now look at it some more.

WHAT MAKES IT UNHOT?

WHAT MAKES IT UGH?

WHAT MAKES IT SLOW?

WHAT MAKES IT RUT?

WHAT MAKES IT REPETITIVE?

WHAT MAKES IT ANNOYING?

WHAT MAKES IT BORING?

WHAT MAKES IT BLOODY?

WHAT MAKES IT UNLUCKY?

WHAT MAKES IT BAD?

WHAT MAKES IT TERRIBLE?

WHAT MAKES IT DISAPPOINT?

WHAT MAKES IT WASTE?

WHAT MAKES IT PUKE?

WHAT MAKES IT POISON?

WHAT MAKES IT SICK?

WHAT MAKES IT STINK?

WHAT MAKES IT STINK?

WHAT MAKES IT STINK?

WHAT MAKES IT STINK?

WHAT MAKES IT STINK?

WHAT MAKES IT STINK?

WHAT MAKES IT STINK?

WHAT MAKES IT STINK?

WHAT MAKES IT STINK?
THIEF 3

FACTS
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: Ion Storm
Release Date: 2004
Xbox Live: TBD

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
The original Thief is widely considered to be the inventor of the stealth genre. Plenty of Metal Gear fans will take issue with that assertion and the dates involved, but there's no doubt the original PC Thief was something of a pioneer in gameplay terms. This long-awaited sequel uses the power of modern graphics to take the gameplay several soft steps further. Using shadow and light to hide your movements, you can creep around robbing, killing, and stealing to your heart's content.

There are also some new pseudo-RPG elements in the game, including a hub area where you can accept assignments, and then carry them out using your own judgment and skills rather than following direct instructions. In that regard it shares some flexibility with Deus Ex. And in fact, the only location featured in both Xbox and PC versions of the game is Stalingrad. More emphasis, too, has been placed on vehicle combat. Like Halo, it's possible to get in and out of jeeps and tanks, and take the battle on the road. More vehicles will be revealed later.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
A wide range of gameplay challenges, a beautifully atmospheric graphic environment, and an engrossing medieval scenario make this one to watch. If Thief 3 is half as good as Deus Ex, we keep going on about that then things are looking good for stealth fans next year.

WHAT RISKS DOES IT FACE?
Thief 3 faces the same risk as any new franchise on the Xbox — exposure. Although the series is famous in its own right, it's a new contender on console, a similar proposition in some ways to Deus Ex. It has more in common with Deus Ex: Invisible War — they share the same graphics engine and therefore potentially the same framerate issues. Players used to making their own path through a game may be disturbed to find that stealth is the only option in Thief 3. Try anything else and you'll come to a swift and brutal finale.

CALL OF DUTY

FACTS
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Spark
Release Date: 2004
Xbox Live: Yes, details TBD

WHAT'S THE DEAL?
First off, this game, developed by Spark, is completely different from the PC version, although it has a few themes in common. Spark, as you may or may not be aware, is a developer consisting of many of the former EA Medal of Honor console developers, so they're really got their war on, so to speak.

The Xbox version of the game takes place in different European theaters, and in fact, the only location featured in both Xbox and PC versions of the game is Stalingrad. More emphasis, too, has been placed on vehicle combat. Like Halo, it's possible to get in and out of jeeps and tanks, and take the battle on the road. More vehicles will be revealed later.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Looks fantastic, features incredibly intense gameplay, and best of all — tons of vehicles and weapons for you to commandeer. If, as it's starting to look, this turns out to be a 1940s version of Halo, Call of Duty could be the leading WWII franchise on the system. If it supports Live, that is…
WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Shooting monsters, creeping through creepily lit space stations, filling your pants with horror every time you hear a creak. Mmmm, taking care of business. The Hottest Games of Last Year.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
A sci-fi action-adventure shoot-'em-up with realistic physics, vehicular combat, and a super-powered hero. Sound familiar? It’s not Halo, and it’s not Halo 2 – it’s Advort Rising. And yes, it might just be one of those under-the-radar hits. The story (rapped by sci-fi god Orson Scott Card) is a tale of a distant planet, a legendary race of heroes, and an evil empire bent on their destruction. The surprise is that these heroes are us, humans, and that they possess powerful psychic abilities.

Combining your telekinetic powers with weapons gives the shooter recipe a little added zest, and the vehicles are as imaginative as the landscapes. The huge alien vistas and tech architecture are reminiscent of Halo, but the game definitely has its own graphical style, and a vibrant, rich color palette that really pops.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Stellar graphics and a brilliantly implemented control scheme mean you can firedate a bad guy, smash him onto some vertex shaded grass, and whip out a gun to finish him off, all before popping into a house-sized proto-Hummer and driving over the distant horizon. If the gameplay lives up to its promise, this will be a surefire hit.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
The game is a tactical shooter that employs strategic thinking rather than lillyfinger triggers to guide a squad of soldiers through a huge number of increasingly grueling missions. Smart planning and careful movement must be damned, though – Full Spectrum Warrior is a definite looker. Until you see a jeep coming around a corner,坐下, fastened with enemy gunners, trailing dust behind it, you won’t understand how cool this game looks. And the unique gameplay is very intriguing.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
As long as the game lives up to the premise and these early exclusive Xbox screenshots, we should be in for a pretty major new addition to the Star Wars game universe.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
Filled with the (technically) excellent desired. Let’s hope this is more like Star Wars: Republic Commando. Star Wars: Republic Commando is a first-person shooter with squad combat elements built from the ground up exclusively for Xbox, and specifically for Xbox Live. You play the part of an elite Republic Commando, part of the Republic’s galactic special ops unit. Kind of a cross between a Jedi and Delta Force (if you ask us!)

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
DOOM 3 was still secret. But is the developer? Vicarious Visions has made a lot of not-so-spectacular games (GenoStrife and not a lot of not-first-person shooters. The recent conversion of Jedi Knight: And Academy left a lot to be desired. Let’s hope this is more like the technically excellent Crash Nitro Kart.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
We miss you.

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
DOOM 3 Release Date: Fall 2004
Xbox Live: Yes, details to be confirmed

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
DOOM 3
Developer: Activision
Publisher: Activision
Release Date: Q3 2004
Xbox Live: Yes

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
DOOM 3
Developer: LucasArts
Publisher: LucasArts
Release Date: Fall 2004
Xbox Live: Yes

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
DOOM 3
Developer: Glyphx Games
Publisher: Majesco
Release Date: Summer 2004
Xbox Live: Yes, downloadable content, online play

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
DOOM 3
Developer: Pandles Studios
Publisher: THQ
Release Date: Q2 2004
Xbox Live: Yes, downloadable content, online play

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
DOOM 3
Developer: Pandles Studios
Publisher: THQ
Release Date: Fall 2004
Xbox Live: Yes

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
DOOM 3
Developer: Pandles Studios
Publisher: THQ
Release Date: Q2 2004
Xbox Live: Yes

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
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Release Date: Fall 2004
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Release Date: Q2 2004
Xbox Live: Yes

WHAT MAKES IT HOT?
DOOM 3
Developer: Pandles Studios
Publisher: THQ
Release Date: Fall 2004
Xbox Live: Yes
Tenchu: Return from Darkness

The roots of stealth revisited

Before stealth gaming became its own genre, back in 1998, the first installment of the Tenchu series took to the shadows on PSOne, alongside Metal Gear Solid. Both games broke new ground in their own ways, but Tenchu’s brand of feudal-style ninja stealth won over a batch of fans that continue to gobble up each successive sequel, and as a sort of “director’s cut” version of the most recent incantation on PS2, Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven, the upcoming Return from Darkness on Xbox promises to be the best, most refined, of the bunch.

In actual gameplay, enemy AI has been improved to provide a greater level of challenge. If you keep an eye on your “alert” meter in the lower left hand corner of the screen, you’ll be able to tell whether or not your enemies can hear or see you. Enemy guards will call for help if you’re spotted and will be overwhelmed. So be careful.

But the real draw of the game will be your opportunity to play through the game’s six different multiplayer levels in either cooperative mode or “Hunter- Hunted” deathmatches. Both are available online via Xbox Live, which means that you’ll be able to play co-op with a friend online, with the Communicator in tow. For gamers ready to take their sneaking action online, Tenchu: Return from Darkness should give you an excellent taste when it arrives this spring.

You’ll be able to play co-op with a friend online with the Xbox Communicator in tow...

The publisher says:

Full Xbox Live support with online games, matchmaking, and download/rental.

The developer says:

Two new levels in addition to various tweaks on the existing gameplay and structure.

Will the game’s graphics be substantially enhanced from its PS2 origins? We hope so.

Will the camera behave?

What’s a stealth game without the whole wall-hanging, head-peeking, access corners bit?

You’ll now be able to restart missions from the pause menu, as well as continue from where you died instead having to restart from the beginning of a stage.

You can play co-op with a friend online, with the Communicator in tow. Tenchu: Return from Darkness should give you an excellent taste when it arrives this spring.

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**Preview: The Suffering**

Previews

**BIG IN JAPAN, CHINA AND DELAWARE**

The suffering

An earlier issue with a Halloween release. Midway decided to hold back on the game's launch to make sure it was ready for primetime, and the delay has made a difference. With highly improved graphics and action that's markedly more fast-paced, gory, and brutal than before, the gameplay has evolved a bit since the last time we've seen it.

Torque is controlled much like a first-person shooter. Move him around with the left stick and control where he looks with the right. The result is a little tricky, but there's a bit of customizability in the control setup to find just the right scheme. And you need to be very comfortable with Torque to fend off the ghastly hordes the game throws at you.

During a recent demo of The Suffering, the game's lead designer made one point clear to us – The Suffering isn't a survival horror game, it's an action horror game. And he couldn't be more right. With its emphasis on shooting, slashing, and general mayhem, there isn't a single herb-combining, master-of-unlocking moment to be had.

Instead, The Suffering favors a darker, more violent take on the supernatural as you attempt to escape your jail-bound fate as Torque, a man sentenced to death for the murder of his family.

Some of our readers may remember that we already previewed The Suffering back in an earlier issue with a Halloween release. Midway decided to hold back on the game's launch to make sure it was ready for primetime, and the delay has made a difference. With highly improved graphics and action that's markedly more fast-paced, gory, and brutal than before, the gameplay has evolved a bit since the last time we've seen it.

Torque is controlled much like a first-person shooter. Move him around with the left stick and control where he looks with the right. The result is a little tricky, but there's a bit of customizability in the control setup to find just the right scheme.

You'll also be able to carve out your own ending. With three, your actions throughout the game will dictate the ending. Kill enough humans or fail to help an inmate in need, and you'll be surprised how involved you were in your family's deaths. The Suffering is intriguing from the concept to the gameplay. But is the execution up to par? Expect a review in our next issue as The Suffering releases in February.

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**GAME POTENTIAL**

**LOOKS GOOD**
- Great concept and setting for extra-gory supernatural shenanigans
- Imaginative creatures and multiple path choices

**NEEDS WORK**
- The control scheme may not be for all
- Will the graphics be more refined for the Xbox version?

**FINISH THOUGHTS**
Much more action than adventure. The Suffering offers up an interesting take on the horror game genre and promises to give it a much more adrenaline-filled shot in the arm.
When the PS2 version of Capcom’s cel-shaded racing game, Auto Modellista, was released, it met with lukewarm reviews from publications that had been hyping it up since its inception. But everyone who played it agreed that the online play was where the action was at — and with a stable, out-of-the-box-ready broadband option in Xbox Live, Auto Modellista is reared and ready for a new start on the mighty Xbox.

With its intensely sharp cel-shaded look, those who’ve never heard or played the game on PS2 will find the game deceptively detailed. With a large stock of actual licensed cars ranging from Mazdas to Hondas to Subarus (there’s a handful of domestic makes, as well), you’re even able to customize your vehicle with a huge array of aftermarket add-ons and upgrades. Want to change your car’s muffler or transmission? Can do. Want to trick it out with new wheels or decals? It’s possible.

And don’t be fooled by the game’s cartoonish look — the detail and depth are all there. The way the cars handle, though, is altogether another issue. A sort of halfway meeting point between the Gran Turismo series’ simulation handling and Ridge Racer or Project Gotham Racing’s arcade steering, Auto Modellista may be a bit of an acquired taste for its unique style. And those who balked at the way the cars slipped and skated over asphalt, while bouncing hard off of track boundaries during turns probably won’t find that much has changed between the PS2 version and the new Xbox incarnation. The game’s car handling is probably not for everyone — but it has its own flair and style that demands careful attention and dedication to master.

There are four different modes to choose from including the standard Arcade Mode, a career-type mode called Garage Life where you take your customized car through a series of courses, tournament-style, VJ mode, which works like a replay theater of sorts, and most importantly, the Xbox Live mode. With races allowing up to seven other players as your competition, this is most likely where you’ll be able to really get the most out of the game.

It’s difficult to say how Auto Modellista will fare on Xbox, but for those looking for something markedly different in their racing library, it may just be the ticket.

— Francesca Reyes
Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

Developer: Ubisoft
Publisher: Ubisoft Montreal/Pop Team
Website: www.princenbspersia.com

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It’s just so beautiful, isn’t it?

Finding places for Farah to shimmy through is key.

Refilling sand tanks is important for increasing your capacity for them.

During adventure segments, you’ll spend the bulk of your time figuring out how to get from Point A to Point B with a handful of spikes, spinning blades, treacherous drops, and other obstacles in between the two. But, of course, it’s nothing that a little wall-running (holding down the R-trigger), tumbling to avoid floor blades), and pole-swinging (you’d be surprised how many puzzles can be solved if you use poles to your advantage) won’t solve. And this is the beauty of PoP. The solutions to most of the action puzzles are quite simple in retrospect, but it’s guaranteed that when you enter a puzzle...

Both combat and adventure segments flow together in seamlessly throughout.

A prince among games

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Official **Xbox Magazine**  January 2004

### Review

**His name is Prince**

You think you’re all with the codecs being the Prince and all? Well think again. Farah, the lovely princess, will assist you in battle by throwing arrows at enemies from a distance. She’s great against flying sand beastsies. And she’s especially great at being skinny and slipping through cracks to reach inaccessible areas to the Prince. But watch out if you find a certain wall and ability to enter cheats. If you find a certain wall and ability to enter cheats. If you find a certain wall and ability to enter cheats. If you find a certain wall and ability to enter cheats. If you find a certain wall and ability to enter cheats.

### Combat tactics

- **Sand freeze**: press Y to stab and freeze enemy
- **Frozen slice**: press A three times consecutively to slice and dice a sand frozen enemy
- **Vault special**: move towards enemy and press A

### Are you down with OPoP?

- **Wall-rebound**: press A + B
- **Block**: R-Trigger

### The bath puzzle… Listen for the sound of water to pass through the right doorway.

### Wall-run across a switch and wall-jumping to swing on a pole… All in a day’s work.

### Review

**When’s the sequel?**

**The Verdict**

**Graphics**  Amazing. Sure there’s some slowdown in action and occasional lockup and crash, but you’ll be too immersed in the game to notice.

**Sound**  Expertly executed soundtrack with solid voice acting. If you can buy the title soundrack and some very convincing sound effects.

**Immersion**  From start to end. The storyline really makes it feel like part of the game world – and, after all, you have to stick it out to get something invested in Farah’s and the Prince’s relationship.

**Camerawork**  Expertly made and designed, you can just notice the level of care and detail that went into every aspect of this game. Does. Blows.

**Story**  Expertly crafted, you can just notice the level of care and detail that went into every aspect of this game. Does. Blows.

**Fighting style**  Love the way the story is presented with rich, moving music and visuals.

**VR compatibility**  Can’t say enough about the visuals.

**Depths**  Love the way the story is presented with rich, moving music and visuals.

**Miscellaneous**  Love the way the story is presented with rich, moving music and visuals.

**Bottom Line**  Love the way the story is presented with rich, moving music and visuals.

**Final Word**  Love the way the story is presented with rich, moving music and visuals.
R: Racing Evolution

Racing Evolution is promising to take the world of Ridge Racing by storm, was hailed as all things to everyone: RPG-style story mode, full rally racing and the traditional drift racing we’ve come to expect from Namco. But it’s not really surprising to discover that R: Racing doesn’t really hit the bull’s-eye on any of these scores. It gets close, but never perfect.

The much-vaunted “Racing Life” story mode is very short, representing in fact, only about 30% of the game’s total experience. But it is cute. You play a former paramedic, drafted into the racing life by a series of unfortunate events, and pitted against a dastardly yet equally sexy rival. The promising premise soon fizzles, however, and the rivalry fades into the background fairly quickly.

The driving model is reminiscent of the classic Ridge Racer series, only this time around you drive real licensed vehicles. It’s actually sad to see the end of the imaginative and charismatic Ridge Racer “fake” cars, but the new selection, including rally cars, Le Mans-style racers, and the more typical Skyline types is pretty huge.

And the selection of cars marries nicely with the three driving types on offer: rally, road, and track racing. Mastering the vagaries and nuances of each is actually more important than picking the right car. An irritating “brake assist” feature must be turned off immediately – it’s a game-ruining device for the skill-challenged.

What’s slightly sad though is that in order to make sure the game is identical on Xbox, PlayStation2, and GameCube, it ends up featuring the worst aspects of each and the result is a mixed graphical bag. Run it on your HDTV and prepare for some of the most hideous aliasing problems ever seen.

REVIEWER: Frank O’Connor
**Being a hero ain’t easy...**

**The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King**

DEVELOPER EA GAMES, PUBLISHER EA GAMES, MULTIPLAYER 2-PLAYER SAME SCREEN CO-OP, EXTRA THX-CERTIFIED AUDIO

**Review**

Rev-LOTRreturnofkings_FIN.qxd 11/25/03 12:09 PM Page 2

There are a few things that differentiate this game from its predecessor... The camera is again an Achilles heel and will often put you in a precarious position. But for the most part there’s a lot to love here: nice graphics, Oscar-winning music, missions that pit you against hundreds of enemies at a time, destructive environments, and nicely integrated clips from one of the best movies ever. Just remember to notch the difficulty level down for maximum enjoyment.

[1] Good
[2] Bad
[3] Disappointing
   - Really pack you into the movies
   - Plastic art
   - Postmodernist
   - The camera hates you.
   - How can a hobble dwarf hundreds of pound Ghorn?

[1+] Good
[2] Bad
[3] Disappointing

**Not quite preciousssssssssssss**

**The Hobbit: The Prelude to The Lord of the Rings**

DEVELOPER INEVITABLE ENTERTAINMENT, PUBLISHER VIVENDI UNIVERSAL

**Review**

Rev_Bion_Hobbit_Ford.se3 11/25/03 2:10 PM Page 1

Funny thing happened on the way to the Crack of Doom. In my quest to rid Middle Earth of the One Ring, I was almost torn apart. From the beginning, the game looks surprisingly structured, and despite claims to the contrary on the box, it supports 480p. The cars also look solid, contrary on the box, it supports 480p. The cars also look solid, and an acceptable means of retro gaming, regardless of what you ordered fans need apply.

**Retro gaming, regardless of what you ordered**

**Bionicle**

DEVELOPER EA, PUBLISHER EA, WEBSITE WWW.EA.COM

MULTIPLAYER NONE

Puzzles and quests invariably involve getting from one side of the level to the other, and even the arrival of new characters can’t stem the flow of boredom as the dreary music, redundant gameplay, and overall sense of drudgery take hold. It’s not all bad news – Bionicle fans are a faithful lot and the game follows the biologically motivated plot to a tee. Only serious Bionicle fans need apply.

**Have you seen Ford lately?**

**Ford Racing 2**

DEVELOPER GOTHAM GAMES, PUBLISHER EMPIRE INTERACTIVE

MULTIPLAYER 1-2 VIA SPLASH-SCREEN WEBSITE WWW.EMPIREINTERACTIVE.COM

EXTRAS XBOX LIVE SCOREBOARDS, CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS

The Prelude to The Lord of the Rings is a combo-oriented action-RPG where kills lead to experience and thus to new combos. Everything is bigger and better this time around. Graphics and animation are improved, two player co-op play’s been added, there is ItemShop even more enemies thrown at you, and there are even more player characters, too. You’ll take one of three paths: the Aragon/Gimli/Legolas road, the Gandalf quest, or the Sam/Frodo trail. All lead to the same finale, but they add welcome variety to the combat, as each character plays differently and if your hands aren’t completely torn up you can play through again choosing different paths to the end story. Events in the pick-up right where the Two Towers game left off, but take you all the way to the end of the tale. Still, you’re only looking at around a dozen hours of gameplay, and a larger-than-desired portion of those will come from replaying the seemingly impossible tasks. The camera is again an Achilles heel and will often put you in a precarious position, but for the most part there’s a lot to love here: nice graphics, Oscar-winning music, missions that pit you against hundreds of enemies at a time, destructive environments, and nicely integrated clips from one of the best movies ever. Just remember to notch the difficulty level down for maximum enjoyment.

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WWW.THEHOBBIT.SIERRA.COM/FLASH.HTML MULTIPURPOSE NONE

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MULTIPLAYER 1-2 VIA SPLASH-SCREEN WEBSITE WWW.EMPIREINTERACTIVE.COM

EXTRAS XBOX LIVE SCOREBOARDS, CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS

The game looks surprisingly good and despite claims to the contrary on the box, it supports 480p. The cars also look solid, but no matter how hard you smash ‘em you can’t get a dent anywhere. The real problem with this game is in the control, structure, and depth. The control feels like driving a boat down a channel and never manages to have the powerful feeling that every great racer has. The structure isn’t terrible. It’s just not very good… same goes for depth and the game as a whole.

**The xBox difference... See it!**

EXTRAS XBOX LIVE SCOREBOARDS, CUSTOM SOUNDTRACKS
True Crime: Streets of L.A.

As Grand Theft Auto’s biggest challenger, True Crime promised to be bigger and better. Well...

You’re Nick Kang, the son of a murdered L.A. cop searching for answers. The story integration is one of the strong points, as there are multiple endings (for good, bad, and neutral cop), and there are frequent cutscenes that play the whole thing out. You can also fail tough missions and still continue. Cool.

Sadly, it goes horribly awry.

On the standard path, the story suddenly takes a mind-boggling, awful turn to the supernatural. We kid you not when we tell you that zombies, demon heads, and dragons show up to battle you.

Tapping the R-Trigger shoots with auto-aim, and holding it down zooms in for a slo-mo shot. However, it’s very easy to hold down the trigger a bit too long and accidentally zoom in. Why are these bound to the same button? As for the on foot stuff, you’ll constantly find yourself battling the atrocious camera, and the fighting engine is weak. Learning new combos is fun, but everyone you meet – bums and hookers alike – knows kung fu, and everyone can block all of your moves. Not fun.

Unfortunately, you’ll spend more time in L.A. frustrated than having fun. Stick to Liberty City and Vice City instead.

– Ryan McCaffrey

RIPOFF: Nick borrows one-liners from several movies/shows, including but not limited to Army of Darkness, Monty Python, and Xena: Warrior Princess.

The driving stuff is pretty fun, but there isn’t enough variety to keep your interest.

Graphics
Pretty good for a multiplatform title of this scope. Cars and characters look good.

Immersion
Reach free to drive all around L.A. but there isn’t much to do outside of your missions. L.A. models will be closeup.

Sound
Stars: real in-film and in-locale gangsta rap is on the soundtrack. That working alone, Nick’s dialogue is poorly written. Chris Walken’s talent is wasted.

Design
High ambition, bad execution due to numerous control issues. This little to do in such a huge, finely-crafted city, and what’s up with the supernatural stuff?

+ Awesome re-creation of Los Angeles
+ Branching storyline gives players some freedom to be good or bad
— Awful camera and shooting interface
— Bad guy route is super short
— The only demons that should be in L.A. are film producers

THE VERDICT
6.8

The driving stuff is pretty fun, but there isn’t enough variety to keep your interest.

Good cops will arrest perps, while bad ones will just shoot them all.

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DEVELOPER LUXOFLUX, PUBLISHER ACTIVISION, MULTIPLAYER NONE

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– Ryan McCaffrey
Tony's got a brand-new bag

Tony Hawk's Underground

Does this grind make my butt look big?

Tony Hawk has dominated skateboarding his entire life. He started crushing the competition while still in high school, and he bought his first house with prize money when he was only seventeen. The Tony Hawk line of videogames has been much the same.

Tony Hawk’s Underground, the fourth in the series, adds an RPG element to the classic gameplay. After choosing a character (or creating your own) players start off in New Jersey learning how to skate. There’s a detailed quest for sponsorship, competition, and even a brand of clothing. But it doesn’t come easily. Some of the people you meet are only interested in themselves, and will double-cross you faster than you can bail.

A long with new animations, new tricks, new skateparks and new challenges comes the much anticipated “Get Off Your Board” mode, which literally lets players hop on and off their wheels with a single touch of a button. It’s possible to dismount, climb a ladder to the roof of a building, then take a flying leap of faith. While in midair you can whip your board back under your feet and land grinding a telephone line. There are rather odd tasks to perform while on foot – like driving a leaf blower – but you can ignore them if you want.

Where the game really shines is in the creativity it gives the player. It’s possible to create goals to challenge a buddy like collecting letters, crossing gaps, or pulling off insane high scores. The “Create a Trick” mode works like an audio file editor, letting players create their own moves (like combining an Indy with a 360 Backflip). New moves can be used during the game, and THUG calculates the appropriate score based on the trick’s difficulty. It’s a cinch to use, too.

We didn’t get the “face in the game” feature that the PS2 has, which admittedly sucks, but this is still the best out there and it keeps getting better.

– Doug Tруeman

Tony Hawk’s Underground

DEVELOPER NEVERSOFТ PUBLISHER ACTIVISION MULTPLAYER 1-2 SPLITSCREEN
WEBSITE WWW.THUGONLINE.COM

Magazine verdict

Official Magazine January 2004

Good, (—) Bad, (?) Perplexing

+ A huge, dynamic world to skate. If you can imagine it, you can do it.
+ The Create a Trick mode will have players messing around for hours.
— The last task in the RPG mode is practically impossible.
— At times the game moves a tad too quickly. Sharpen your skills.

9.0

Tony Hawk has a brand new bag that is sure to impress skaters and gamers alike.

Are you ready for a new challenge?
Max Payne 2: The Fall of Max Payne

DEVELOPER REMEDY, PUBLISHER ROCKSTAR
MULTIPLAYER NONE, WEBSITE WWW.MAXPAYNE2.COM

Bullet-time returns and so does everybody’s favorite morose cop, Max Payne. Both the storyline and action in The Fall of Max Payne assume you’ve played the first game, and as such this John Woo-style, balls-to-the-wall third-person shooter comes out swinging and never lets up in one of the most adrenaline-charged shooters of the year.

This time around, Max is a detective on the NYPD force, still an emotional wreck from his family’s murder and his frame-up in the original title. Now, he’s mixed up – in every way – with Mona Sax, a contract killer you’ll remember from last time (you’ll even briefly take control of the tight-jeans-wearing bombshell).

Although there’s really nothing new in the gameplay department, everything is better looking and better playing. The sweeter graphics come from beautiful textures, a much more realistic-looking Max (i.e. no more Mr. Poopy Face), and more excellent comic-book-style cutscenes.

MP 2 plays better than its predecessor for a few reasons:
1. The original’s problematic areas are re-tuned in this iteration. There are more hazy dream sequences, but they don’t involve frustrating mazes. A burning building level also returns, but thankfully it’s not nearly as painful to navigate here.
2. The addition of the Shootdodge button (L-Trigger) complements the standard Bullet-time, making management of the feature much easier.
3. Finally, the physics. They’re every bit as good as those in Deus Ex. Everything reacts appropriately, meaning that Bullet-time grenade explosions and gunfire will yield brilliant, slo-mo looks at enemies’ bodies as they twist, turn, and tumble around the room. Very cinematic and very, very cool.

In all, MP 2 is a prettier, better-playing sequel that fails to make any new gameplay strides but is an incredible thrill ride for the all-too-short time it lasts.

- Ryan McCaffrey

The comic book cutscenes used in the original are back and looking great.

The Funhouse area is one of the most original and beautifully designed game levels in a long time.

THE VERDICT

Graphics
Quite nice. Impressive texture work, cool cutscenes, great animation, and a solid framerate throughout.

Immersion
There are quite a few, “THAT WAS AWESOME!” moments. Indeed, you’ll find yourself pretty hooked.

Design
It’s short, you’ll visit the same areas multiple times, and there aren’t any major additions to the formula. Still, it’s so well done that you’ll look past it all.

Sound
Good job by Max actor James McCaffrey (no relation), an appropriately dreary soundtrack, and nice use of 5.1.

Rated
+ Straight-up, hardcore action with constant flair
+ Killer physics + Bullet-time = great getting moments
+ Excellent story
+ The fun ends all too soon (~6 hours)
+ No major gameplay improvements
+ How does Max get shot directly in the head and live?

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**Killing without thrilling**

**Drake**

*Developer: IDOL FX, Publisher: MAJESCO*

Ver since Pac-Man spawned mutant children like Ladybug and Piranha, we've gotten used to our favorite games being aped by subordinates... and badly. Drake continues the tradition with a mediocre action game that sorta resembles the games we love, only without the fun.

- As in Max Payne, you can slow down time to focus on shooting the baddies.

**The RTS that’s not...**

**Goblin Commander**

*Developer: JALECO, Publisher: JALECO, Website: WWW.JALECO.COM*

Just as the Zelda games introduced players to the action-RPG, Goblin Commander creates the “action” RTS genre. Although it shares some basic concepts with computer-based RTS games, the overall design is decidedly console-centric and all the better for it. Instead of drowning the player in resource gathering, the game does away with any sort of supply line, instead awarding gold and souls (the two resources used) every time the player destroys something or kills an opponent. Troop numbers are kept low – ten per clan – but build times are instant, allowing for a steady flow of attackers.

- Split-screen? Live, please!

**Review**

**Official Xbox Magazine January 2004**

**Double Shot:** Shooting two machine guns at the same time is impossible – unless you’re the possessed undead. Then you just need to stretch out your triceps first.

**Screen is prettier than anything in the game, then you know you’ve got problems.**

- Vincent Lopez

**The Verdict**

**Official Xbox Magazine January 2004**

**Verdict:**

- **8.0**
- **10.0**

**As in Max Payne, you can slow down time to focus on shooting the baddies.**

**Drake**

- **MULTIPLAYER:** NONE

- **Web Site:** WWW.DRAKEGAME.COM

- **Developer:** IDOL FX

- **Publisher:** MAJESCO

- **Website:** WWW.DRAKEGAME.COM

**Goblin Commander**

- **MULTIPLAYER:** 2 PLAYERS, SPLIT-SCREEN

- **Website:** WWW.JALECO.COM

- **Developer:** JALECO

- **Publisher:** JALECO

- **Website:** WWW.JALECO.COM

**Screen is prettier than anything in the game, then you know you’ve got problems.**

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**The Verdict**

**Official Xbox Magazine January 2004**

**Verdict:**

- **8.0**
- **10.0**

**As in Max Payne, you can slow down time to focus on shooting the baddies.**

- Vincent Lopez
They’ve mastered cloning!


DEVELOPER: PARADIGM | PUBLISHER: ATARI
MULTIPLAYER: NONE | WEBSITE: WWW.ATARI.COM

Enough! It’s a blatant rip-off of Splinter Cell. Mission: Impossible shouldn’t be written off. It may be an obvious clone, but it’s incredibly well done.

Like the movie franchise of the same name, you play bad-ass/daredevil extraordinar Ethan Hunt, a.k.a. Tom Cruise. Naturally, a nutty badass/daredevil extraordinaire Ethan Hunt, for licensing reasons, bears no resemblance to Tom Cruise. Naturally, a nutty terrorist has his sights set on unleashing a deadly chemical on the world, and it’s up to Hunt and his crack team to stop him. Of course, a beautiful woman gets mixed up in it, too. You know how it ends, but it’s all about the fun in getting there.

Sneaking around and using gadgets are your primary gameplay tools, and though the stealth can’t top Splinter Cell’s OMJ’s lighting is decent but nowhere near as good as IQ. Hunt’s toys are arguably every bit as cool as Sam Fisher’s. Sure, Ethan’s got guns and night vision, but it’s the Micro Cord that’s most fun. It not only lets him launch to new heights, a la most fun. It not only lets him but it’s the Micro Cord that’s as cool as Sam Fisher’s. Sure, stealth can’t top gadgets are your primary enjoyment a bit.

Top gangland pastimes: 1. Peddling crack 2. Footy

The Cat in the Hat

DEVELOPER: MAGENTA SOFTWARE | PUBLISHER: VIVENDI
WEBSITE: WWW.CATINTHEHATGAMES.COM | MULTIPLAYER: NONE

Dr. Seuss made movies? Yes you get to do it, and it’s incredibly well done.

Unfortunately, things still get a bit frustrating toward the end, particularly in an otherwise exciting skydiving sequence.

Additional puzzles, such as an occasionally finicky camera, are an inconsistent framerate, and missions that go too long. There are only five total and it’s about a 15-hour game also hinder enjoyment a bit. All that being said, MI is a terrific addition to the stealth-action genre and is guaranteed fun for anyone who liked Splinter Cell.

The Imaginative world of Dr. Seuss… minus the imagination

Top gangland pastimes: 1. Peddling crack 2. Footy

Freestyle Street Soccer

DEVELOPER: SILICON DREAMS | PUBLISHER: ACCLAIM
WEBSITE: WWW.ACLAIM.COM | MULTIPLAYER: 1-4

THE VERDICT

Graphics... Not bad at all, but in here quite good. 3D: Lighting engine should be better for a stealth-action game, though.

Immersion... You still really get into it at times, using the Micro Cord and knowing Everett is in the back where you sneak up behind from really makes you feel like a larger-than-life hero.

Design... Some great puzzles, great gadgets, and great missions, but each mission takes a long time and there’s still a bit of failing on too long. There are only five total and it’s about a 15-hour game also hinder enjoyment a bit. All that being said, MI is a terrific addition to the stealth-action genre and is guaranteed fun for anyone who liked Splinter Cell.

Sound... Pretty good music track and use of surround sound. And surprisingly, the voice, MI theme never gets old.

480p. Lighting engine should be better for a stealth-action game, though.

The biggest problem is the speed of the game. Soccer purists call it "the beautiful game" and consistently comment on how the game never stops. Well, in USB, the game stops... all of the time. You spend most of the game waiting for your players to line up so your goalkicker can throw them the ball, then you wait for the opponent to do the same. The result is a brutally slow pace and a game that doesn’t pack much of anything for anybody. The AI is horrendous, the control is abysmal, and the announcing... The biggest problem is the speed of the game. Soccer purists call it "the beautiful game" and consistently comment on how the game never stops. Well, in USB, the game stops... all of the time. You spend most of the game waiting for your players to line up so your goalkicker can throw them the ball, then you wait for the opponent to do the same. The result is a brutally slow pace and a game that doesn’t pack much of anything for anybody. The AI is horrendous, the control is abysmal, and the announcing...

Soccer makes for a great game. Even those that don’t understand the nuances of soccer can enjoy FIFA or Winning Eleven. And the idea of making a 5-on-5 game on the beach certainly seemed good. Sadly, Ultimate Beach Soccer is poor in nearly every regard.

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On a beach, it is. Ultimate, it is not...

Ultimate Beach Soccer

DEVELOPER: PAM | PUBLISHER: DREAMCATCHER
WEBSITE: WWW.DREAMCATCHERGAMES.COM | MULTIPLAYER: 1-4

EXTRAS: 5.1 SURROUND

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**Review: Bikini Whiplash**

**Funny idea, but too much of a ball and chain**

**Whiplash**

**Developer:** CRYSTAL DYNAMICS, PUBLISHER EIDOS  
**Multiplayer:** NONE  
**Website:** WWW.EIDOS.COM

Whiplash is more than a fairly generic platformer with some light punchlines—it’s also an opportunity to travel down an endless stream of dull office hallways, repetitious electrical shafts, and laser-strewn security entrances. Somewhere behind the hallways is also the story of a weasel and a rabbit on a mission to free themselves from an evil mega-corporation big on animal testing. Redmond the bunny and Spanx the weasel are chained together, so the gimmick of the game is using them in tandem. Redmond is basically a furry mace that can pummel enemies and trash corporate office furniture. He can also get shoved into special stations to get set on fire, inflated like a weather balloon, or even electrified for an extra kick.

Where the game shines is with its dark, oddball sense of humor—especially given the touchy subject. Fans of Oddworld will love references to home-surgery machines and hamster testing. Even Redmond’s random chatter totally delivers, though it ultimately suffers from gaming’s greatest villain—repetition. The joke that sounded funny the first time rarely does on the thirtieth.

The slick humor can’t help you forget that you spend most of this game smashing more office equipment than actual enemies. The concept grabs you at first, but by the time you get to the Power Center—basically, a torture chamber of repeated tasks—you’ll wonder if it’s really so wrong to test eyeliner on mammals. Bunny + Weasel is a whip-smart idea. Too bad the joke gets old fast.

— Vincent Lopez

**Quit laughing – Bikini Bottom is a place, not a thing**

**SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom**

**Developer:** HEAVY IRON, PUBLISHER THQ, MULTIPLAYER NONE  
**Website:** WWW.THQ.COM

Although SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom is destined to have a limited younger audience/fans-of-the-show-only appeal, the facts remain: it’s nicely crafted, fittingly visualized, and undeniably entertaining at times. While its level design and play mechanics are clearly derivative, this game’s far-out psychedelic style and bubbly humor keep it original. Whether SpongeBob is sliding on his own tongue or performing record-breaking “underwear bungee jumps” from dizzying heights, there’s plenty of laugh-out-loud moments.

But you won’t be laughing all the time. Bikini Bottom is simple to pick up, but the levels are often sprawling, and simple objectives, like finding all of Patrick’s socks, can take a long time and become a bit tedious. Thankfully, the gameplay is open-ended. Once you’ve opened more than one area you can explore at will and work towards whatever quest you want. Also, being able to switch between three playable characters (SpongeBob, Patrick, and Sandy), each with his or her own abilities, helps to keep the tedium at bay.

Clearly, fans from kids to adults will be enamored by the genuine settings, fitting plot and authentic voice acting, but anyone can find this game good enough for a few thrills and even more laughs. If you just finished Voodoo Vince and need another solid platforming fix, this one should do the trick.

— David Rees

**THE VERDICT**

**SpongeBob SquarePants: Battle for Bikini Bottom**

8.0

10.0

**THE VERDICT**

6.8

10.0

— CRUELTY-FREE: PETA continues the fight against animal abuse and testing by holding protests, putting together petitions, and bravely showing naked models in its advertising.
It’s Latin for “Decent game, bad port”

**Arx Fatalis**

DEVELOPER ARKANE STUDIOS | PUBLISHER DREAMCATCHER | MULTIPLAYER NONE

The premise for Arx Fatalis sounds great: a first-person RPG that lets you develop your character how you like, approach each situation in multiple ways, and create spells and “cast” them using D-pad combos. Unfortunately, Arx is flawed in a number of ways – most of them technical – and the result is a title that falls far short of its potential.

As a hero sent to rid the world of an evil god, you begin by creating your character – thief, warrior, or mage. Once you get started, the gameplay is strong enough if you can stay in it for the long haul. Unfortunately, it’s rather boring for the first several hours. There’s little NPC interaction, no music to soothe your ears, and the fact that the whole game takes place underground (mostly in bland tunnels) means you’ll spend a lot of time admiring the color brown.

No epic Morrowind-esque cities and countrysides here. What absolutely kills Arx, though, is that it’s an awful port. Originally a PC game, it doesn’t take advantage of the Xbox at all. A poor framerate, bland textures, awful character models, clipping bugs, and a messy interface all suck the fun out of what should’ve been a solid RPG.

Finished Morrowind, though, you might want to check this out.

— Ryan McCaffrey

Have a spare 200 hours?

The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind GotY Edition

DEVELOPER BETHESDA | PUBLISHER BETHESDA | MULTIPLAYER NONE | WEBSITE WWW.MORROWIND.COM

Sure, the original Morrowind was released on Xbox way back in June of 2002 and it feels a bit dated now, but it also remains the most comprehensive and detailed role-playing experience you will find on any console. Period. And now it’s bigger, more detailed, and, at $29.99, a serious bargain.

For Xbox role playing fans new to the Morrowind universe (if there are any left), this is a dream come true. The deep storyline and character development system, seemingly endless quests, and miles and miles of detailed, highly interactive locations to explore all amount to more than 200 hours of gameplay for those attempting to see it all.

But veterans who want more have reason to play again as well. Morrowind GotY allows you to continue from a previous Morrowind save with the entire original quest intact, plus the addition of all-new areas and quests from the Tribunal and Bloodmoon expansions (previously released for PC).

There’s simply much, much more to experience.

The new expansions include new people to interact with, new areas to explore, new weapons and armor types, new beasts to eradicate, and plenty of new quests. But the coolest is the added snow-laden island of Solstheim, where your character can become a werewolf. When the moon comes out, you morph into a beast from hell that can lunge across huge distances and slash at enemies with massive claws…then you’ll change back to your innocent old self in the morning. Good stuff.

— David Rees

The verdict

**Official Xbox Magazine**

**Morrowind GotY Edition**

**VERDICT**

8.5/10

— Welcome to Solstheim, where icy terrain nips at your toes and big brown grizzlies eat you for a midnight snack.
Counter-Strike

Counter-Strike allows for smooth flicks of the controller is all it of the weapons and items to purchasing screen, which maps impressive with the new noticeable lag. Online play is just as rock-solid as control and precision aiming. The best part of the game. An adaptation of the Halo layout, Counter-Strike allows for smooth control and precision aiming. Online play is just as rock-solid as the offline experience, with no noticeable lag. Longtime fans will be impressed with the new purchasing screen, which maps all of the weapons and items to the analog stick. A few quick flicks of the controller is all it takes to outfit yourself with your desired artillery. Visual improvements have been made throughout, though the main improvement is new, high-resolution texture maps adding detail to the environment. Lighting effects now mimic the human eye, so flashbangs are more effective and opponents hiding indoors are more difficult to see. Unfortunately, other limitations of the Half-Life engine, such as a nearly indiscernible environment, are still present. Live play does suffer from a few annoying restrictions – you can’t use bots to fill out uneven teams, though you can run a human vs. bot match – but for the most part all of the options you would expect are here. Where the game really stumbles, though, is in the single player. It’s virtually non-existent. For a free mod, the lack of a single player game is no big deal, but when you are expecting players to shell out full price for a game, there needs to be some sort of solo component. All Counter-Strike offers is the ability to play against bots. No mission mode. No story Nothing. The bots are finely tuned and very impressive, but it is more of a tech demo than a game. As a multiplayer experience, Counter-Strike is one of the best options available, on either the PC or the Xbox. Valve has done an admirable job of not only porting the game, but also enhancing it specifically for the console. That said, what’s here is only half a game. Live play may be brilliant, but the single player experience is sorely lacking.

— Adam Pavlacky

The PC hit jumps to the ‘box

Counter-Strike

Developer: Valve
Publisher: Microsoft Game Studios
Website: xbo.com/counterstrike 
Extra downloadable content
Multiplayer system link, Xbox Live

Score kills and win matches to earn cash, then buy better weapons at the start of each new round.

Graphics
Immersive
Adaptation
Sound
Design

Graphics
Immersive
Adaptation
Sound
Design

A mod, mod, mod, mod world

It’s a mod, mod, mod, mod world

WEBSITE: xbo.com/couterstrike

MTV’s Celebrity Deathmatch

Developer: Big Ape Productions
Publisher: Gotham Games

The show isn’t bad, so maybe the game will be okay, I thought optimistically to myself while loading up Celebrity Deathmatch. Then Dave came over, punched me in the face, and I quickly came to my senses. After playing through it, I can safely say that there’s nothing redeeming about this dump. In an attempt to re-create the show, CD pours a handful of celebrities against each other in one of several arenas, dueling to the death. And while the show has specific celebrity-padding humor, the game has generic gags and a dumb fighting engine that features random attacks with the control pad’s face buttons and hardly a combo to speak of. Ringside commentators Johnny Gomez and Nick Diamond might elicit a few chuckles, but after you’ve heard their whole chick once, that’s it for the humor. There’s a decent Celebrity Creator Too, but the whole point of this is seeing “real” celeb duke it out. Even at $20, pass on this one.

— Ryan McCaffrey

Rehashing Potter’s origins

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone

Developer: Warthog Games
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Multiplayer: No
Website: www.vea.com

Sing what looks like an improved version of the engine behind last year’s Chamber of Secrets, the new game has cut the loading times, while keeping the visual style high. Control is smooth and simple, with actions like jumping handled automatically. A hokky system allows you to assign three actions to the controller ensuring that favorite spells are right at hand. Unfortunately, the game is very slow to start thanks to an overview of exposition. Games are meant to be played, not watched, and the one hour that has more classics than Metal Gear Solid. Once you get into the action, the game picks up a bit, however its basic stall will restrict the audience to fans as the overall challenge level is quite low. If you are dying for another chance to explore Hogwarts’, then check it out, but if you’ve never ventured into the land of Potter, there are better places to start. This is a kid-sized adventure, based on a kid-sized wizard from a kid-sized movie.

— Adam Pavlacky

Twice the pool hall atmosphere, half the dank

World Championship Pool 2004

Developer: Blizzard Interactive Studios
Publisher: Jaleco Entertainment
Website: jaleco.com
Multiplayer: 1 to 2 via XBox Live

Pool’s never been the Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone

WEBSITE: jaleco.com

Xbox Live play certainly keeps things fresh for pool fans.

$20 better spent on three cases of Pepsi Blue

MTV’s Celebrity Deathmatch

Developer: Big Ape Productions
Publisher: Gotham Games

You’ll want to rip your eyes out after playing this.

— Dan Esquar

THE VERDICT

THE VERDICT

THE VERDICT

You are dead and

You are dead and

You are dead and

WEBSITE: www.vea.com

WEBSITE: jaleco.com

WEBSITE: xbo.com/counterstrike

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THE VERDICT

THE VERDICT

THE VERDICT

THE VERDICT

THE VERDICT
Kain and Raziel’s destinies finally come to an end (maybe)

Legacy of Kain: Defiance

DEVELOPER: CRYSTAL DYNAMICS  PUBLISHER: EIDOS  MULTIPLAYER: NONE
WEBSITE: WWW.LEGACOFKAIN.COM  EXTRA VIDEOS AND ARTWORK COLLECTIONS

If you’ve been following the Kain series since it began, this is the moment you’ve been waiting for: Kain and Raziel meet again, and this time only one will remain standing.

Other than its exceptional visuals and unwavering silky framerate, the coolest thing about Defiance is how you get to control both characters. Each chapter alternates between controlling Kain and Raziel – their accounts are initially separated by centuries, but their experiences are uniquely intertwined until they finally meet. But while these qualities will certainly keep you smiling, others will make you hiss.

Defiance employs a fixed-path camera that does a great job of injecting a cinematic feel, but it comes at a price. Many awkward moments occur when the camera angle unexpectedly shifts, forcing you to quickly adjust your actions.

But despite these flaws, Defiance’s story and visuals really shine through. The combat may be repetitive, but it’s solid and fun and the well-paced plot does a great job of tying the knot with the long paths of Kain and Raziel.

– David Rees

Mummies finally get their day

Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy

DEVELOPER: EUROCOM  PUBLISHER: THQ  MULTIPLAYER: NONE
WEBSITE: WWW.THQ.COM/SPHINX

Don’t call Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy a platformer. With two playable characters with two distinct modes of play, plenty of mission objectives and sub-quests, and some very wide-open areas with plenty of people to talk to and interact with – Sphinx is anything but. As the cat-like Sphinx, you’ll combat enemies, collect new objects to unlock new skills, and try to restore peace to a world that’s crumbling beneath the vice of a sinister power. As the Pharoah Tut, you’ll start out as an Egyptian prince with worldly concerns who’s suddenly mummified by the game’s villains – from that point on, he serves as both the stealth component of the game, as well as comic relief. Being undead, it’s the mummified Tut’s portion of the game that really zips. You can’t really die, per se, so you’ll sneak around a giant temple solving puzzles by aiming your telekinesis at various switches and breakable objects is often a chore. And although the combat is initially fun, it slowly declines into shallow and repetitive.

But despite these flaws, Defiance’s story and visuals really shine through. The combat may be repetitive, but it’s solid and fun and the well-paced plot does a great job of tying the knot with the long paths of Kain and Raziel.

– Francesca Reyes

REVISE EGYPTIAN HISTORY: While the Sphinx isn’t a real person, King Tut was; making Sphinx a goofy treat in that you get to interact with a piece of history that never really existed. Or did it?

With slick presentation and a rather sprawling adventure, there’s enough to entertain adventure fans. You may quibble over the game’s weirdly bouncy camera at times, stumble over the game’s sometimes generic-ness, or shake a fist at the archaic save feature (can’t I continue from a checkpoint?), but what lies beyond is satisfying, challenging, and more importantly, fun.

– Francesca Reyes

REVISE EGYPTIAN HISTORY: While the Sphinx isn’t a real person, King Tut was; making Sphinx a goofy treat in that you get to interact with a piece of history that never really existed. Or did it?
It’s a cold day in hell

Spawn: Armageddon

Here’s a layin’ in the creative community that goes something like, “Good artists borrow. Great artists steal.” If that’s true, then the developers of Spawn: Armageddon are pure masterminds. For those with a PS2, Spawn is an absolute carbon copy in many ways of Capcom’s Devil May Cry. The game’s interface, moves, powerup system, and even the sound effects take bits from Capcom’s action shooter, but fail to supersede it in any way.

You control Spawn on his quest for vengeance. You can double jump, glide with his cape, switch between a giant axe and various sidearms on the fly, use Necroplasm to blast baddies, slip through time, and literally tear enemies apart with Spawn’s chains (hey do they sound like compressed air?).

The main problem with Spawn is that it simply dult. Whereas other games give players unlimited ammo and a demonic army to slaughter, Spawn limits its anti-hero’s actions to strictly run-of-the-mill environments, excessive handholding tutorials, and booses easy enough to be defeated by a small child. Despite Spawn’s incredible mythology, the main goal of the game is apparently to find a control console, smash it, defeat enemies, and then move to the next level. Given the abilities Spawn has with his Necroplasm, his cape, his chains, and his serious attitude problem, Namco could have made an absolutely killer title. Instead the entire game feels as though it was just phoned in.

- Doug Yuan

An airborne history lesson

Secret Weapons Over Normandy

Secret Weapons Over Normandy could not have picked a worse time to release – after Microsoft’s Xbox Live-enabled wonder, Crimson Skies. On its own SWON is an incredibly average combat flight shooter with an average presentation, but with the bar that Crimson Skies set – SWON has to be much more than merely average.

In the war game pack, SWON earns points for drifting away from the norm by taking to the skies. With WWII as your backdrop, you’ll jump into the cockpit as a Royal Air Force member fighting the Third Reich. At your disposal are 23 actual planes from WWII. History buffs will appreciate the accuracy of SWON, which is actually the best aspect of the game. In a way, gamers with a penchant for all things WWII may be the ones to get the most out of the game.

Graphically, the game doesn’t measure up to its competitors on Xbox with mission environments that are bland and lack any visual depth. Effects-wise, there’s not much in the way of war factor – lens flare is about as technically advanced as it gets. Despite this, the planes sport a good amount of detail with visually accurate representations of their real-life counterparts.

- Chris Thompson

Life before Starbuck

Battlestar Galactica

Battlestar Galactica is an airborne history lesson that is actually good. With WWII as your backdrop, you’ll jump into the cockpit as a Royal Air Force member fighting the Third Reich. At your disposal are 23 actual planes from WWII. History buffs will appreciate the accuracy of SWON, which is actually the best aspect of the game. In a way, gamers with a penchant for all things WWII may be the ones to get the most out of the game.

Graphically, the game’s weak spot becomes apparent as soon as you are tasked with anything aside from “blow up the Cylons.” Defense missions have razor-thin margins for error, and it becomes plenty frustrating after your first few failures. Getting a “Game Over” screen because an idiot AI pilot couldn’t evade enemy missiles isn’t cool.

Ultimately, Battlestar Galactica is a fun, if slightly flawed, space shooter that expands on the mythos with a decent story. It’s not going to win any awards, but should satisfy fans of the show.

- Adam Pavlacka

We got the beat

Dance Dance Revolution Ultramix

Finally, Xbox owners can join in on the previously available but not available until now Dance Dance Revolution. DDR first exploded onto arcade screens in 1998 and later came home to PS2, but the Xbox version brilliantly offers the best of both worlds. It’s not going to win any awards, but should satisfy fans of the show.

- Aisam Paviaclack

You can use two pads to play head to head, or you can double up and do crazy moves across both of them!

- Sarah Ellerman
One stage forward, two stages back

I-Ninja

**DEVELOPER:** NAMCO  **PUBLISHER:** ARGONAUT

The super-deformed hero in Namco’s platform actioner I-Ninja can chop up enemies with an upgradable sword, chain swing to get across gaps, and wall run across short distances with the best of the big boys (Prince of Persia, Ninja Gaiden). He can even pull off one of four different super ninja rage abilities. Basically, he’s a platform hero for the new generation of gaming – but it’s unfortunate that his starring vehicle isn’t more compelling or unique. Instead, you’ll trundle through the usual stock stages that do offer a bit of variety, but not enough to encourage you to continuously return to them in order to level up your Ninja belt ranking – which is required to progress.

Basically, you have two main stats to “manage” when completing stages: your sword meter and your belt ranking. Destroy enough enemies and you’ll upgrade your sword. Finish enough stages and you’ll increase your belt rank. The sword thing is fine, but there aren’t enough stages to upgrade your belt when playing straight through. Instead, you’ll have to revisit all the stages you’ve already completed to meet goals of the time-limit and the enemy kill requirement, and to collect all the Red Coinage variety. It gets tedious and feels like a false way to extend the length of the game.

But that’s not to say that I-Ninja isn’t fun, fast, and solid. The game plays well, handles easily, and provides plenty of slapstick humor. It’s just too bad that its flaws restrict it to a merely enjoyable distraction.

– Francesca Reyes

Return of the click

Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon

**DEVELOPER:** REVOLUTION SOFTWARE  **PUBLISHER:** THE ADVENTURE COMPANY

I must be tough to be a dodo nowadays, like Broken Sword. A fine adventure game, and a great addition to the series, it’s got one big thing working against it – adventure. It’s an extinct genre, and almost unheard of on consoles. Thank goodness Broken Sword’s got so much going for it. The latest game in the adventure series is back with the fun intact, and wearing a fashionable new 3D engine. George, the thrill-seeking patent lawyer, and Nico, the tireless French reporter, have returned with the same quips from previous games in the series, not to mention the same great voice talent to back them. As you guide them on their separate – and ultimately unified – quests to discover the secret behind recent weird weather patterns, you’ll take them around the world to South America, Scotland, Paris, the Congo, and beyond. You’ll get odd objects like bottle openers and underwear, and you’ll have ten-minute conversations with every passing pedestrian. The design has managed to capture the essence of the genre while making everything contextual to your controller, an impressive feat.

Of course, then you remember everything you hated about adventure games – loooong conversations, and the eternal “how do I open a door using a can opener and a feather?” dilemma. Visually the series has evolved, but everything else has pretty much stayed the same.

While this sort of gameplay might not fare too well with Halo fanatics, it’s great news for those with a hankering for the days of the old point-and-click and people who like a good, relaxing brainteaser. There’s plenty to love in Broken Sword for the right type of gamer.

– Vincent Lopez
Let the Xbox score-tastic goodness flow.
Over 342 games rated... that's a lot of scoring!

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Project Gotham Racing 2
BE NUMBER ONE IN PGR 2

GETTING STARTED
With 448 individual ranked challenges awaiting you in Project Gotham Racing 2, it’s kinda hard to figure out where to start. Well, starting in the right place is actually the key to mastering this game quickly. Before beginning the Kudos World Series, you have to purchase the faster cars with tokens; you need to get some tokens. If you are more skilled at cone challenges then start there or, if you prefer street races, start there. You can easily rack up tokens since all of these challenges give you a standard car. That way when it’s time to take on the Kudos World Series you’ll have enough tokens to get the best car in each class right from the beginning. This is crucial for timed runs and races.

CODE CHALLENGES
Just getting through the cones cleanly will usually score you a silver medal on almost any run, but if you want any chance of getting the Platinum for being number one on that track... remember Xbox Live keeps your score on every single track and you are constantly ranked against the world, you have to absolutely master the course. The key to scoring the most Kudos in the cone challenges is to string together a combo from start to finish. Spending unnecessary seconds trying to spin for an extra 20 or 30 Kudos points isn’t going to help you at all. Ideally you want to race through single track and you are constantly ranked against the world (on the narrow courses, especially), you have to absolutely master the course. The key to chance of getting the Platinum (or being number one on that track... remember Xbox Live keeps your score on every single track and you are constantly ranked against the world). You have to absolutely master the course.

STREET RACES
It’s pretty simple getting silver or lower on all of the street races but if you want Platinum it is going to require a great deal of accuracy, speed, and some dirty tricks. Since you always start out in last place and the rest of the cars don’t tend to make many racing line mistakes (at least not on the hardest difficulty), it is crucial to come out of the first turn in the lead. Your first strategy is to gun it and block your way through the first turn at full speed and with much greater speed than your opponents. This doesn’t always work, but it is a good time for a restart since it’s early in the race. If done right you can lead the entire race and emerge in first place. After that the key is keeping an eye on your rear view mirror and continually block anyone trying to pass. The AI is wild but it is pretty easy to block out the pack once you get in the lead, especially on the narrow courses. The key is the turns, you can take them as low as you like but make sure you take the outside line followed so no one can return the favor and blow you out of the immediate field.

KUDOS WORLD SERIES
Once you’ve collected enough tokens on the cone challenges and street runs then it’s off to the Kudos World Series where you combine your skills (and your talent) to go all the way to the end. At the beginning of each class buy yourself the fastest acceleration and top speed car available and the oldest car available. Use the last car for the races, hot laps, and simulations and use the dinky car for the cone challenges. The same rules apply here for winning races versus dominating in the cone challenges. And you won’t believe how much water this is to complete once you have the proper car and the practice time on the arcade racing aspect.

Picking the right vehicle and having the tokens for it are key to getting through the Kudos World Series.

HEAD TO HEAD ON LIVE
The key to winning head to head races is to get all of the cars at your disposal. So no matter what class your opponent chooses you can have the best vehicle in that class. Once again, the physics of PGR 2 is the key to victory. Just ramming a fast, clean line will get you some extra Kudos, but learning how to use your bank of speeding metal will get you some easy Kudos. All the takes we need improved by the opponent and you got a victory. We’ve pictured a few of the neat ways to send your opponent to the curb...

DIRTY CHEATS
During gameplay, press the following:

Every Cheat!
Foggy weather L, R, , , A, , Y, X, , , Y, , Y, , ,
Clear weather L, R, , , , R, , Y, ,
Invisible cars L, L, X, , Y, L, Y,
Grand Theft Auto III
Cars float on water F

During gameplay, press the following:

Every Cheat!
Foggy weather L, R, , , A, , Y, X, , , Y, , Y, , ,
Clear weather L, R, , , , R, , Y, ,
Invisible cars L, L, X, , Y, L, Y,

F

Pink cars B, L,

H

Police get revived B, L,

Change clothes , , , , A

Pedestrians riot R, Y, A, , L,

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Pedestrians riot R, Y, A, , L,
Beyond Good and Evil
WALKTHROUGH HINTS

LIGHTHOUSE ISLAND

The first few hours of the game exist primarily to setup the story and get the player familiar with the control system. After the initial battle, your first priority should be turning the power back on. You will need to photograph three different animals in order to get the necessary credits. Don’t forget to take pictures of your dog, the kids in the house and Pey’J, as well as the animals on the island. Once you collect eight picture you will earn the zoom lens upgrade — a necessary item.

BLACK ICE

Repair your hovercraft at the garage and then make your way to Black Ice. Here you will encounter your first real puzzle – that of the chain link fence. A quick trip to a storage room for a set of wire cutters is all it takes to move on to the latter half. When you get to the boss fight, just keep your distance and then close in for a hit when he pops up.

PEDESTRIAN DISTRICT/AKUDA BAR/IRIS HIDEOUT

Next stop is the bar where you’ll meet the IRIS operatives for the first time. Before heading upstairs, play a round of the custom air hockey game to win another pearl. The best strategy is simply to aim for the center and fire as quickly as possible. Get the room code from the attendant upstairs and then move on to get your first mission.

OPTIONAL MISSIONS

Now is a good time to tackle some of the optional sections, such as the first two races (accessible from the main waterway) as well as one of the pearl caverns on the edge of the first lagoon. Once finished, go to the garage and get the cannon upgrade. You’ll need it to take the robot guards in the factory.

UPGRADING YOUR SPACESHIP

Inside the garage, you will see a big series of doors. Open the door for the vehicle upgrade. Get the Cannonnady item and then use it on the door to the vehicle workshop. From here, use the Cannonnady to upgrade your spaceship. You will now be able to fly faster and the cannon will be able to destroy more enemies.

THE HUNTED MAN

Everyone knows that this game can be quite tough, but the going should be a bit easier now that you’ve completed the first few hours of the game. Get familiar with the game’s systems and story. The next few missions will set up the story, so it’s important to get as much information as possible. This will help you know where to go next. It’s also a good idea to make notes of important events and conversations. You may not think it’s necessary now, but later, you may find that everything is unlocked.

CRIMSON SKIES: HIGH ROAD TO REVENGE

It’s time to get back into the action. This section of the game is set up to be quite tough, but you can make it easier by using the following strategies:

- Use the jetpack to reach the factory boss.
- Use the hovercraft to reach the second lagoon.
- Use the space shuttle to reach the second lagoon.
- Use the cannon to destroy the factory boss.

UPGRADING YOUR SPACESHIP

Inside the garage, you will see a big series of doors. Open the door for the vehicle upgrade. Get the Cannonnady item and then use it on the door to the vehicle workshop. From here, use the Cannonnady to upgrade your spaceship. You will now be able to fly faster and the cannon will be able to destroy more enemies.

THEMEN

The screenshot shows a player in the game Beyond Good and Evil. The player is inside a factory and is using a cannon to destroy enemy robots. The factory is dark and industrial, with various machinery and equipment visible in the background. The player is holding a cannon and using it to target the robots.

If you are detected in stealth areas, fighting may alert lethal enemy turrets.

Breaking into a run isn’t always the best way to get around enemy areas.
Playable Demos

Deus Ex: Invisible War

This month we had a chance to try playing some of the best and brightest from this year’s line-up. We're giving you a chance to find out why it’s one of the top Xbox exclusives of the year.

DEMO Tip: Simple tip – play this demo multiple times in different ways. There are plenty of cool things to do with the 盟军, plenty of different weapons, and plenty of paths to your goal.

DEMO STANDING: 4,000

Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy

LucasArts

THE SKINNY: More lightsaber-wielding goodness in the Jedi Knight series. This time, however, Kyle Katarn takes a back seat and you – a young Jedi apprentice – take center stage. Dig two books in the demos that each alter different playstyles.

DEMO Tip: You already started with a point in Force Heal on your stats screen. Add a second point and you'll be able to use the skill enough that you'll probably never die.

DEMO STANDING: 5,000

Project Gotham Racing 2

Microsoft

THE SKINNY: On the tenth month deadline we had a demo of Project Gotham Racing 2. This month we're giving you another chance to play it. Check out Mike Salmon's perfect run video on this month's disc and then go back in time and beat his score on last month's disc.

CHALLENGE: Beat Mike's gassy score of 3,376 on the cone challenge on last month's disc.

CHALLENGE POINTS: 5,000

NBA Inside Drive 2004

Microsoft

THE SKINNY: This is a hoops franchise that just keeps getting better and better. This year the awesome XSN franchise has one more addition, but the on-the-court gameplay has been refined as well. In this game, work one period as either the Lakers or the Spurs. 

DEMO Tip: Go to Shaq (if you're the Lakers) or Tim Duncan (Spurs) in the post-seats.

DEMO STANDING: 11,000

SpongeBob SquarePants in Battle for Bikini Bottom

THQ

THE SKINNY: Nickelodeon’s coolest and probably weirdest character comes to life in this game. This is a chance and you have it. Maintain. And don't worry, even though you can jump around and gravity seems to be in effect, you are indeed underwater. We, no, we don't understand either.

DEMO Tip: Dying intentionally may cost you a life, but everything will reset... except your rank.

CHALLENGE: Collect at least 500 flowers. Don't worry, it's not as hard as it sounds.

DEMO STANDING: 4,000

PROOF: Get to the Player Stats screen, and take a shot of your achievement.

Next Month

Our next disc has the first ever Live-enabled demos that this time it was set in the world of Castle Wolfenstein, Crimson Skies, and maybe more. Demo for James Bond 007: Everything or Nothing, Links, Amped 2, and North Unleashed. Plus a new video for Halo 2 and an all-new level for Splinter Cell.

DEMO Tip: Simple tip – play this demo multiple times in different ways. There are plenty of cool things to do with the 盟军, plenty of different weapons, and plenty of paths to your goal.

FEATURES

Magatama

Phantom Dust

The Sims: Dustin' Out

Mike Salmon’s Project Gotham 2 “Perfect Run”

IMPORTANT: This feature includes subscriptions to Microsoft’s online service Xbox Live. Please be aware that subscriptions do not provide access to purchased or downloadable content. For more information, please call 1-800-447-0839 and an operator will take care of everything.

Mystery: SpongeBob always seem to have a smile on his face. What's his secret? Would you really be smiling all the time if you were a walking sponge?
They’ve got the Thief

Hopefully you guys will dig this. Xbox Magazine absolutely not true. OK? there aren’t two unlockable in, yes, we’re joking, and no, you get if you beat what Skot isn’t telling you is For those about to rock…

We say: Unfortunately, the Atari Hunt Valley studio responsible for creating D&D Heroes was recently shut down due to a “lack of work” for the group. There are folks in Atari who do want to see a sequel made, however, so we hope that those out at work will quickly ask new jobs and that we get a new sequel soon. However, two other sweet-looking co-op action-RPGs. Fallout: Brotherhood of Steel and Rovio’s Game, Dark Alliance II, should be available about the time you read this. Full reviews of each new title.

There may indeed be a crime here

I was in Bed Bath & Beyond the other day looking at movies when I found a weird resemblance between True Crime and the movie Replacement Killers.

We say: While that pose is certainly nothing uncommon (see our own September issue Deuce Es cover), the striking resemblance between True Crime’s Nick Kang and The Replacement Killers’ Chor/Yan-Fai (right) combined with the exactly matched year a pretty good. That being said, there have been about 208 million other crime/action games and shows on the covers of magazines, movie, videogames, and rap albums.

Quasar explained

A couple of issues ago you guys ran a list of the most requested Xbox Live Gamertags, and you were baffled as to why “Quasar” was in the top ten. I have the answer. Laser Tag’s the name of one of the world’s most popular Laser Tag game types. Don’t Paul Dallas

We say: We can accept that explanation. We’ve just learned that yet another new dog dished through our fingertips. Kinda like hopscotch. And hockey ask.

I have a problem. When I first docked my Xbox controller on the floor, my RealD shows through the table. Could you please ask Microsoft to fix it? Now all new controllers they produce in a sour apple Microsoft to flavor all cords for gamers to eat. When I leave my I have a problem.

We say: Whenever I leave my I have a problem. You Your

We can accept that explanation. Kinda like hopscotch. And hockey ask.

For those about to rock...

New Xbox controller New Official Xbox Magazine readers. Hopefully you guys will dig this. I made to celebrate the occasion and the beginning of another great Xbox year.

Scoot

We say: Nice work, Scoot. But what if not we feel that you are part of one of the two super-secret weapons you get if you purchase D&D Heroes on Legendary in under three hours. And before you write in, yes, we’re joking, and no, there aren’t any untraceable weapons. That’s just a rumor some list started and it’s absolutely not true.

Nutty Bunny

I have a problem. When I first docked my Xbox controller on the floor, my RealD shows through the table. Could you please ask Microsoft to fix it? Now all new controllers they produce in a sour apple Microsoft to flavor all cords for gamers to eat. When I leave my I have a problem.

We say: I don’t know, you may be onto something. But do want bounce moving Xbox cover, but what about the sound of an humans? Or want coated odometer cards for gamers to concentrate on making their loading screens and while you were in your Phantom Star: Commando Stash? Quick, off to the patent office!

They’ll be a hero again

When Dungeons & Dragons Heroes review (Editor’s Choice, 9.5) November enough was just right on the nose. My girlfriend and I have had a blast playing cooperatively through the game. I can get more cooperative action-RPG goodness?

Dave

We say: I wanna be a hero again

Wiz Fargus & Dragon Heroes review (Editor’s Choice, 9.5) November enough was just right on the nose. My girlfriend and I have had a blast playing cooperatively through the game. I can get more cooperative action-RPG goodness?

Dave