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## SCORING

- 10 **CLASSIC**  
A rare gem; Our highest recommendation
- 9 **OUTSTANDING**  
One of the better games this year
- 8 **VERY GOOD**  
You can't go wrong
- 7 **GOOD**  
A solid game
- 6 **OKAY**  
Kind of fun, but no big deal
- 5 **SO-SO**  
You've got to love the subject matter
- 4 **LACKING**  
Big flaws really hurt this game
- 3 **BAD**  
Not fun at all
- 2 **AWFUL**  
This game is an insult
- 1 **WHY?**  
Why would anyone do this to us?

**W**e take our reviews very seriously. We spend hours upon hours playtesting each title so that we can give you the absolute best information to help you buy.

Games that score an 8, 9 or 10 earn a Bronze, Silver or Gold **PSM Must-Buy Award**. We don't hand these beauties out easily, so if you see one on a review, a game box or advertising, you'll want to be sure to check that game out.

Finally, when looking up past scores, keep in mind that older games usually wouldn't fare as well if they were reviewed today.

# SOUL CALIBUR II

*The ultimate weapons fighter makes a dazzling PS2 debut*

**N**amco's *Soul Calibur*, the heir apparent to the *Soul Blade*, took the Dreamcast by storm when it was released in 1999. Players clamored for a sequel, and four years later, it's finally here... well, almost. The North American version wasn't available when we went to press, so to be timely, we snagged a copy of the Japanese game.



▲ Flowing hair, flowing costumes, and incredible motion capture add up for the smoothest-moving fighter ever.

### BACK TO THE STAGE OF HISTORY

The PlayStation 2 version features twenty characters, some new—including Heihachi from *Tekken*—but most have returned. The roster is rounded out between quick, nimble females, slow but massive behemoths, well-balanced characters, and a warrior with psionic weapons created by Todd McFarlane. Weapons range from tiny daggers to gigantic axes, and everyone's favorite, the nunchaku. Though some fighters are inherently stronger than others, a player who masters any of them will have no trouble annihilating his friends.

### SHARP VISUALS

Graphically, the game is jaw-dropping. The character models are among the best the PlayStation 2 has ever seen, and the athletes who provided the motion capture for their animations belong in the Olympics. The backgrounds are



<< BUYING EVERYTHING THE GAME HAS TO OFFER WILL BLISTER MORE THAN A FEW THUMBS >>

## MY GAME CAN BEAT UP YOUR GAME!

There are going to be fans who will take one look at our rating and instantly cry "foul!" But make no mistake: the home version of *Soul Calibur II* is a game every PS2 owner should own. And, had *Soul Calibur II* been released before *Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution*, it would likely have gotten a 10. But Sega has raised the standard for the fighting genre. *Soul Calibur*'s Weapon Master mode can be beaten in a day, while *Evolution*'s Quest Mode will keep players sweating for months. *Soul Calibur*'s training mode is very detailed, but *VF4*'s is far and away the most comprehensive the industry has ever seen. Both belong on your shelf. Now if only we could arrange *Sega vs. Namco: Extreme Fighting Challenge*...



▲ *Soul Calibur II*'s Weapon Master mode is nothing to laugh at—it's tough and provides a lot of replay value.



▲ However, *VF4: Evo*'s Quest Mode is the standard by which fighting game adventure modes should be judged.



▲ Many of the moves, especially Ivy's, look downright devastating.



▲ There's a tremendous sense of height on the elevated stages.



▲ An Elvis look-alike with nunchaku versus a leather-clad freak with blades for hands. Only in *Soul Calibur II*...

## PSM BREAKDOWN

An up-close look at the game in action

► Each character can charge their weapon for attack, but they also have special attacks that are difficult to perform, but don't require "charge time."

► There are a few moves in the game that actually take advantage of arenas with walls.

► The character models are the best we've seen in a fighter.

◀ Each character has multiple costumes. We prefer Ivy's default for obvious reasons.





so stunning you'll want to drop your weapons, pack a lunch and go exploring. There's a minute amount of slowdown during some of the more spectacular moves, but it doesn't affect gameplay. The audio effects come from straight from the original *Soul Calibur*, and the music sounds as though it's been ripped from a Steven Spielberg blockbuster.

## KILLING TIME

There are a bevy of modes to play: Arcade, Time Attack, Weapon Master, Versus, Survival, Team Battle and Training, as well as scores of extras to unlock. Hidden characters, weapons, artwork, martial arts demonstrations and costumes all can be purchased in Weapon Master mode, although the price is a tad high for some of them. Buying everything the game has to offer will blister more than a few thumbs.

What makes *Soul Calibur II* such a must-have title is that the game can be played on multiple levels. Players who want to just mash on the buttons can have just as good a time as hardcore fanatics who memorize the move lists for every character. The multiple AI settings range from punching bags to skilled warriors who will only take damage if players can catch them in a mistake, making each round a veritable game of chess where only total mastery will lead to victory.

DOUG TRUEMAN



▲ From the special effects (such as fire) to the ornate details on each character's outfit, the game looks stunning.

## HOW IT STACKS UP

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Virtua Fighter 4: Evolution    | 10 |
| Soul Calibur II                | 9  |
| Virtua fighter 4               | 9  |
| Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance | 9  |
| Dynasty Warriors 4             | 8  |

<< THE BACKGROUNDS ARE SO STUNNING YOU'LL WANT TO DROP YOUR WEAPONS, PACK A LUNCH, AND GO EXPLORING >>

## WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

Namco has included a rather nifty touch in every mode of *Soul Calibur II*. These additional modes are unlocked as players work their way through Weapon Master mode and purchase new blades with the gold they have earned. The new weapons, each of which can be equipped before any battle begins, have varying effects: better attack damage, better defense, longer reach, shorter reach, health regeneration or depletion, guard damage, or simply a screwball visual. Collecting all of them will take some doing, however, as the game actually increases the price of each weapon depending on how often a particular character is used.



▲ Looks like a curtain rod...



▲ Admire the elaborate—ah, it just looks silly.



▲ Ah, the old palette-swap trick.



▲ Like the first game, *Soul Calibur II* features plenty of devastating throws.

PSM  
FINAL SCORE

9

## OUTSTANDING

One of the best fighting games ever made—if you're *Tekken'd* and *VF'd* out, this is a frantic and fresh experience. You won't regret owning it.



## STRATEGY

82 Soul Calibur II

84 Splashdown:  
Rides Gone Wild



## CODES



86 Ape Escape 2

88 Arc The Lad: TOTS



85 Armored Core: SL

86 Big Mutha Truckers

86 Freestyle MetalX

Arc The Lad: TOTS, p. 88



Freestyle MetalX, p. 86



▲ The PlayStation 2-exclusive Heihachi might lack some of Ivy's range (and fashion sense), but he makes up for it with power.

# SOUL CALIBUR II

*Blow Inferno out with our expert hints and tips*

**NOTE:** Like our review, these hints and tips are based upon the Japanese import version of the game. However, they should all still apply to the U.S. version.

### Know the throw

Make it a point to learn which throws your character will do from any given angle, and take special notice of where your opponent lands after each of those throws (off to your right side, knocked back, etc.). Once you have this info down, Ring Outs will become much easier to manage. To take this a step further, learn which of your moves will stun your target or knock them backward. Then, you should be able to toss your enemy anywhere you want them.

### Avoid the chain gang

The AI is tuned to chain fairly effectively, especially at higher difficulty settings, and it's absolutely brutal at wake-up attacks. Many matches can hinge upon which opponent gets in the first hit—see that it's you, especially if you haven't mastered the Guard Impact.

### Wake 'em up

Learn which moves for each character will strike an opponent when down (they're called "Wake ups" or "Okizeme" by *Soul Calibur* elite). They provide an excellent opportunity to inflict extra damage at virtually zero risk. However, if playing against a human, be aware that Okizeme attacks may infuriate your opponent, for better or worse.







# << MANY MATCHES CAN HINGE UPON WHICH OPPONENT GETS IN THE FIRST HIT >>



▲ Cervantes and Nightmare are two characters with wonderful Okizeme options. Do NOT hit the ground when fighting against the pirate.

## Roll with it, baby

Never underestimate the value of rolling when you're down to avoid the enemy's follow-up attack. Similarly, there's no shame in back-dashing, and if you're standing up and blocking, you can move backwards very slowly. It's only a little movement, but it may be enough to get you out of trouble.

## Toss the torch

Inferno is quite tolerant of all normal attacks, but throws seem to do closer to their regular amount of damage than strikes.

## Secret stuff

There are actually three different title screens for the game, which will differ depending upon how much of the game you've unlocked or purchased. Also, the voices who say "Soul Calibur II" at the beginning of the game may change over time.

## Dungeon Demolition

Each dungeon in *Soul Calibur II* has a unique theme, and it's often a great idea to learn the ins and outs of each one. For instance, The Court of the Dead is dominated by male opponents and your health is replenished in full after every match. Underground Juno has a dungeon-wide time limit, and the opponents in Charon's Pass are all female, and they regain health as the match wears on.

Finally, in Schara's Stone Temple, watch the enemy's starting health bar closely. If they start with full health, you'll get full health after winning. However, if they begin with only half health, you'll only regain one quarter of your health by defeating them. And if your head starts spewing green plasma, you'll heal steadily during the match, but won't get any health bonus at all when it's over.

## Control the controller

Not all of the commands are as easily input on the Dual Shock 2 as they

are in the arcade. Unless you're one of those players who likes to set your controller in your lap and tap the buttons with your fingers, you'll probably never use your character's second grapple because you have to hit  $\Delta + \otimes$  simultaneously to do it. Open up the options menu, go into controller settings, choose the "Free" type of control and switch  $\Delta$  over to "B+G". This will enable you to execute that second grapple with ease.

## The joke is in your hand

There are actually eleven different weapons for each character, and the eleventh are "joke" weapons. They're tough to unlock, they cost a mint, and they tend not to be very powerful, but if you've ever wanted to beat someone with a rubber chicken, here's your chance.

## Hop to it

Learn to jump  $\uparrow + \otimes$ . It's surprisingly useful, especially if you're playing against Ivy, Astaroth, or another opponent whose arsenal includes low, sweeping attacks.

## The fine art of tubthumping

Like the song says, when you get knocked down, get up again. To make sure they ain't never gonna keep you down (or even take you to grammar class), execute a Tech Landing by pressing  $\otimes$  at the exact moment you hit the ground. Your character will jump right back up.

## Stun undone

You can actually escape a stun by holding  $\otimes$  and inputting five directional commands (a quick swirl of the control stick should do it).

## Bad moves vs.

### Mad skillz

Some of the most difficult matches turn out to be very easy if you familiarize yourself with your character's move set. For instance, matches in which you must knock your enemy into a wall, defeat them with an air combo, or use only low attacks

## The shopping Charade

Each square of the map will have a different selection of weapons, extras, and costumes for sale, and a given item will be the same price at any location at which it is available. But prices do change with time—the more you use a character (in all the modes together), the more expensive his or her weapons and costumes will become in Weapon Master Mode.

The best solution for keeping things cheap is to make



▲ Charade changes move sets constantly, so it's not the easiest character to use. However, it'll keep your prices low.

Charade your main character as soon as it is unlocked and use it exclusively until you've bought everything you could possibly want. Because it emulates a different character every round, Charade causes no price increases.



are usually much, much easier if you know which specific attacks in your arsenal are designed to do exactly that.

## Grab the gold

The City of Nashira is a great place to make money... if you can handle it.

## Talk is cheap

The four different taunts that most characters can utter before each match are simply that... taunts. They do not have any effect upon the following match.

## Patience is a virtue

Certain subchapters and extra

missions require some serious time investment to unlock. For example, Subchapter 2 shows up only after you've attained level 71. Playing through

Arcade mode with every character and beating Weapon Master mode once won't quite cut it. Play through all the extra missions and keep rounding out your skills, and you'll eventually unlock everything.

## Wait on the weaponry

We'd advise you not to purchase too many weapons and costumes until you've completed all of Weapon Master Mode, including the extra missions.

Many items will be given to you free of charge, enabling you to save your gold for other things.



▲ You can get many of the game's weapons for free if you wait for them.

## Calibrating the code

With over 20 characters, *Soul Calibur II* is way too detailed and intricate for us to dissect here. The best place to find extra info is online, particularly in the *Soul Calibur II* forums at [www.soulcalibur.com/forums/index.php](http://www.soulcalibur.com/forums/index.php). These guys are hardcore, and they use notation very similar to that of the in-game move lists, with at least one big exception: instead of arrows, they use numbers to indicate directions. Here's a quick translation:

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| ← = 4 | ↖ = 7 |
| → = 6 | ↗ = 9 |
| ↓ = 2 | ↘ = 3 |
| ↑ = 8 | ↙ = 1 |

Good luck!



▲ If you really want to dissect this game, learn the notation and dive into the forums. But you'd better be ready for some seriously technical discussion.

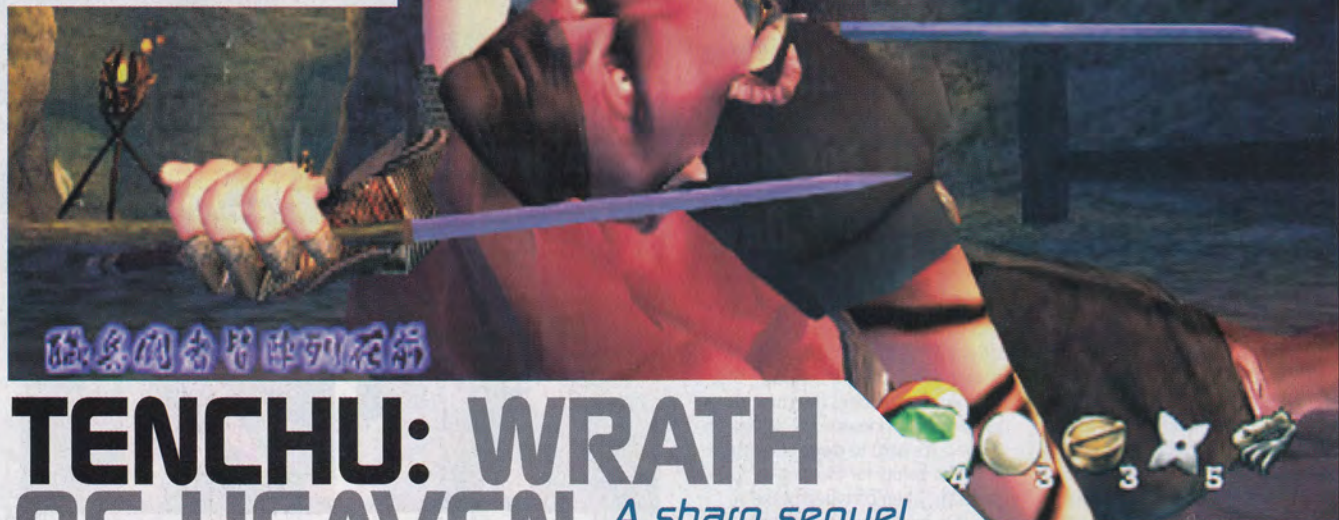




GAME INFO PUB ACTIVISION | DEV K2 LTD. | TYPE FIGHTING | MAX PLAYERS TWO | ESRB RATING MATURE



▲ Some of the enemy designs, such as these "robo-samurai," are pretty far-out—the game's art direction is anything but unimaginative.



◀ *Tenchu: Wrath of Heaven* doesn't pull any punches when it comes to depicting the lethal stealth kills employed by its ninja assassins. They're frequent and always very gory.

# TENCHU: WRATH OF HEAVEN

*A sharp sequel with a few nicks in its blade*

**W**hen *Tenchu* was first released back in 1998 for the PSone, it promised something the world

hadn't seen before: stealth ninja action. The game sold over a million copies and the sequel, drawing on its unique "live by honor, kill by stealth" gameplay was just as successful. *Tenchu 3* has now grappled its way onto the PS2, bringing in its utility belt a graphical overhaul, a two-player mode, and a new character.

Set a year after the events in the first *Tenchu*, *Wrath of Heaven* tells the tale of Rikimaru, Ayame, and new-



▲ The character models, especially the main characters and bosses, are excellent.

comer Tesshu, three shadows who live and die in darkness. There's not much of a story to speak of; but the story doesn't matter. What players want is to sneak up behind unsuspecting enemies and slash their throats.

Gameplay has changed little: hide in shadows and sneak up on enemies for the brutal stealth kill. To further reward cunning gamers, Activision has added a Kuji meter. Players who kill nine enemies undetected will receive a new technique, like Ninja Mind Control or the ability to spear enemies with the grappling hook. *Wrath of Heaven* also offers three geographical layouts for each mission to elongate replayability. Activision has also added two multiplayer modes. Had the co-op mode employed the story campaign with one player distracting guards and the other slashing juglars, *Tenchu: WOH* would have been spectacular. Instead multiplayer levels are small and short: players retrieve scrolls, protect Lord Gohda, and gain points for stealth kills. The competitive mode also lacks depth.

Unfortunately, what's also noticeable about *Wrath of Heaven* is the amount of missed potential that keep this from being a killer app. For each moment of brilliance, there are moments of nonsense. And, sadly, the camera—critically important in stealth games—can often be the player's worst enemy. These problems keep the game shy of must-have status, but it's still a solid game that provides a lot of fun. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

## HOW IT STACKS UP

|                         |    |
|-------------------------|----|
| Metal Gear Solid 2      | 10 |
| Tenchu: Wrath Of Heaven | 7  |
| Way Of The Samurai      | 7  |
| The Mark Of Kri         | 6  |
| Shinobi                 | 6  |



▲ The bosses are well designed, requiring very different strategies to defeat.



▲ Co-operative play is a nice addition, but not as fully realized as it could have been.

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

**7**

**GOOD**

While it's a solid action title, greatness is just out of reach. An uninspired co-operative mode, frustrating camera, and incompetent AI prevent it from achieving videogame Zen.





▲ Ninja magic can't always protect you from fire-breathing enemies, but a patient, careful strategy usually can.

# TENCHU: WRATH OF HEAVEN

*Here's how to bring down the evil Tenrai and restore honor to feudal Japan.*



▲▲ Three different characters means three different styles of play!

## The Heroic Trio

Though Rikimaru, Ayame and Tesshu have all been trained in the art of ninjitsu, there are a few subtle differences between them.

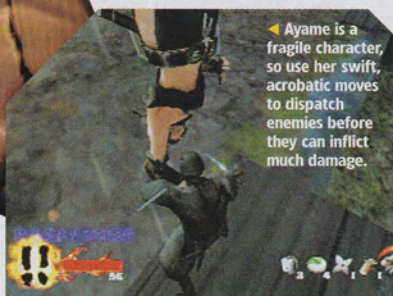
Rikimaru is your standard fighter: well balanced, and good with a sword.

Ayame is fast, but weak. Her combative strikes inflict less damage than Rikimaru's, so try to employ her speed to remain undetected and avoid open conflict.

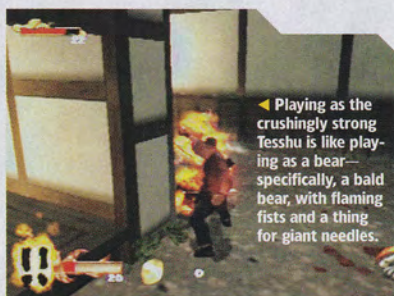
Then there's the hidden character Tesshu, who's simply a juggernaut.

He's slow, but so unstoppable he doesn't even carry a

sword. Unlike Rikimaru and Ayame, Tesshu has no Kuji Meter that must be filled by stealth kills to earn him special techniques. Instead, he has a variety of weapons that Rikimaru and Ayame do not (like throwing needles), and collects money for stealth kills that he can spend on items. Tesshu's levels also feature more enemies, particularly archers. Be warned: Tesshu lacks certain special abilities (like hanging from ceilings), but makes up for it with many powerful punching combos. He can also temporarily enchant his fists (press  $\otimes$  +  $\odot$ ) to burn opponents by punching them. A bouncer's ninja, Tesshu is for experienced players only. To unlock him, beat story mode with both Rikimaru and Ayame



▲ Ayame is a fragile character, so use her swift, acrobatic moves to dispatch enemies before they can inflict much damage.



▲ Playing as the crushingly strong Tesshu is like playing as a bear—specifically, a bald bear, with flaming fists and a thing for giant needles.



## Smooth Moves

### SWEEP 'EM OFF THEIR FEET

All three ninja have a throw attack (press **○**) to harass turtlish enemies who do nothing but block. Rikimaru's throw inflicts moderate damage, and leaves room for a poke with his sword once his victim is on the ground. Ayame's throw attack is more devastating. The concussion from driving her knee into the back of her opponent's head guarantees her enough time to easily flee or race forward (hold **△**) for a ground attack. As for Tesshu, not only does his headbutt throw attack inflict massive damage, it also sends enemies flying straight backward, making it easy to throw them off cliffs or into bottomless pits.



### NOT ALL JUGGLERS ARE CLOWNS



▲ Your juggle combo can inflict mortal damage on even the most formidable of your enemies.

The easiest way to kill enemies in combat (other than a stealth kill) is to launch them up in the air by holding **△** and pressing **○**. Once your enemy is airborne, release **△**, then press **○** **○** **○** **↑** + **○** (the command is the same for every character). If you've done this correctly (and they didn't block your initial strike), your opponent will be knocked high in the air, defenseless, and your next four strikes will be unblockable. This one

▲ Moves like your throw attacks can even out the odds in a hurry when you're outnumbered by the enemy.

## WAKING THE DEAD

Being a ninja means taking on all enemies: including those who are already dead. When you're in the cemetery as Rikimaru, there's going to be one hell of a fight. You need to jump down the well to return to Ressa with the steel. Unfortunately, there's an enchanted door in the well that only opens when all the enemies in the graveyard are again six feet under.

Be sure to take as many potions with you as you can and a Ninja Resurrection. You'll need to sate the Muramasa sword with blood as you make your way to the cemetery, preferably from your enemies instead of Rikimaru. Killing an enemy by stealth rewards you with the most blood, so try not to engage in an actual battle.

Once you get to the cemetery, there are a number of special tactics you can employ.

- ▶ Never, ever jump under any circumstance. You can't block while you're in the air, and it's highly likely that you'll be struck multiple times.
- ▶ Put your back to a wall so that all your enemies are on one side. You can't block when struck from behind, and fighting a battle on two fronts is impossible.
- ▶ Kill the archers and the flame-breathing demons first. Their weapons are unblockable, and they can knock you out of a combo with a single hit. It's also flat out annoying to be locked in a swordfight and have an archer using you as a pincushion.

▶ It's possible to exploit the lack of intelligence in the undead by hiding behind a torch. When they realize they can't reach you, they'll try to jump over it. Instead, they'll light themselves on fire. It doesn't cause much damage, but it can get a pesky demon off your back temporarily. It's also a great party game.

▲ The cemetery torches can provide hours of fiery fun for you and the undead ghoulies who can't quite jump over them.



takes practice, but it will often kill your enemy outright.

### COUNTING KUJI

Aside from them looking extremely cool, there's another reason to try for stealth kills. Once you've racked up nine kills on a level, you'll fill your Kuji Meter. Your ninja will then learn a secret technique that can be used for the rest of the game. Each level except the very last one has a different technique to learn, so if you're about to win a level, but haven't filled your Kuji Meter, be sure to do so by seeking out some more guards to stealth kill (it takes nine to fill the meter) or you'll have to return and start from zero. You should also be aware that killing a civilian will instantly drain your Kuji Meter to zero, so be sure you know whose neck you're slicing (hint: civilians don't carry weapons). The unlockable skills are both quite useful and very cool, ranging from a Scorpion-like ability to pull hapless guards towards you with a grappling hook to the option to lure unsuspecting sentries toward you by faking death by Seppuku, so it's worth putting forth the extra effort to earn them.



▲ When you see a symbol like this appear, it means you've done something very bad to an enemy. Good work!

▶ Using the **△** button is critical. It helps you land quietly, and enables you to roll away from attacks like this much more effectively.

## Gear To Fear

### BLOW 'EM AWAY

The blowpipe is especially useful later on in the game. As long you haven't been detected, the dart will instantly kill a sentry and you will gain a point on your Kuji Meter. If you have been detected, it will inflict moderate damage, but will also poison your foe. Darts that miss cannot be recovered like missed shuriken, so be sure to aim carefully. Also, unlike the shuriken, the darts do not have near limitless range. They will fly straight and true for a good distance, but will eventually run out of momentum and plummet to the ground. Missed blowpipe darts also won't attract the attention of guards, which is both good and bad. While this lets you carry out your



▲ Special moves can come in very handy when you're facing off against bosses like Kimaira and his giant, mechanical doll-back-packing thing.

### A PERFECT 10

Surprisingly, the manual makes no mention of the incredible power of the **△** button. You should play the entire game (with the exception of running and combat) with the **△** button held down. Crouching and rolling makes it much more difficult for enemies to spot you, and you can roll through all types of terrain (even water... somehow) in complete silence. More importantly, if you hold **△** while landing a jump, your ninja will land crouching and won't stick in position like an Olympic vaulter. The extra split-second you gain from not having to "stick" your jump will let your ninja instantly attack and can make or break a stealth kill. This can be used when dropping from the ceiling, or falling from a substantial height. It even allows you to land in water without a single splash.



assault with little fear of being discovered, you can't use them to distract sentries



▲ Blowpipe darts can knock this fool down in a hurry.

### DROP DA BOMB

Smoke bombs don't inflict damage, but they do temporarily blind all enemies in the vicinity, as well as destroying their ability to block. If you



find yourself in trouble, drop a bomb and either start slashing or run like hell. They won't be able to chase you, and you're guaranteed at least one strike of damage per foe. Quick, easy, and effective.



▲ Smoke bombs are the perfect way to retreat when you're outnumbered.

## THE WAY TO MAN'S HEART...

Believe it or not, the most powerful item in the entire game is the poisoned riceball. It's low in calories, great for the digestive system, and high in arsenic. Not only will the sight of a riceball disrupt guard patterns, it induces temporarily paralysis when eaten, allowing for a guaranteed stealth kill. Best of all, during the second or so while a guard is picking up the riceball, but hasn't yet started to eat it, he's completely defenseless. You can rush him head-on and get an instant stealth kill. The kicker is that it's even recyclable—as long as you get to the guard before he starts to eat. He'll drop the riceball and go down in a geyser of blood. You can then pick it back up and head to the next guard. It's a good thing Tenrai doesn't feed his ronin.



▲ This guard is eating minute rice. He'll be dead in a minute...

## No, You're Not The Boss Of Me...

The staff-wielding giant Ganda (Infiltrate the Buddha Temple) and Onikage (Assassinate the Evil Tenrai) aren't as difficult to defeat as you might expect. Sure, one can kick you into oblivion and the other picks his teeth with a log, but there are a few secrets you're probably not aware of.

### JUKE THE GIANT

To kill Ganda, ignore him completely (well, dodge when he swings that gigantic stick at you, but other than that...) and instead focus intently upon attacking Kagura, the sorceress who accompanies him. The giant has been animated by Kagura's magic, and when you kill his mistress, he topples over lifeless.



▲ Ganda the giant's tough, but he goes down like a ton of bricks when you ice his boss lady, the sexy sorceress Kagura.



► Snake style is best... no you are weak and impulsive! Drunk Monkey is best...

### GET ONIKAGE BOMBED

To kill Onikage, equip yourself with a few Sticky Bombs at the beginning of the level. As soon as the fight with Onikage begins, nail him with a Sticky Bomb, but don't detonate it. Fight him as you would normally, then press R3 to send him sky-high when he tries to recover his life by drinking a healing potion. If you time it right, two things will happen: he'll lose life instead of gaining it, and you'll blow the potion right out of his hand. You can then pick it up and use it for yourself.



▲ Onikage is a tough boss, but he's a sucker for those exploding pinwheels.

### TACKLING TENRAI

Tenrai is most powerful when he is far away from you, and being hit by one of his many spells will create a gap you'll have to close. But don't just charge him. Instead, wait until he throws shards of ice and rock at you. Jump over them and land with a vicious slash while he's still recovering from his spell, then hack away. If he knocks you away with a spell, repeat the above steps to again close the distance between you. You'll have to fight him three different times, so be sure to pace your potions. As long as you stay in close so you can sidestep his magical attacks, you shouldn't have much difficulty with him.



► If you time your approach to Tenrai properly, you can get in close and carve him like a Thanksgiving turkey.

## NINJA NAVIGATION

Ninja may be able to move in silence like a deadly shadow, but there are at least a couple places where you may feel a bit uncertain about exactly where you need to go.

### Temple Tribulations

The maze of the Buddha Temple may have you wanting to commit seppuku. Instead, make your way over the traps and bottomless pits until you come to a wooden fence. If you jump up on the fence and look in the distance you'll see two treasure boxes on a ledge way in the distance. They're a trick—you can't

actually reach them. Instead of leaping to your death while trying, simply jump on top of the fence and walk off. The minute your ninja's feet hit air, pull down on the left analog stick. You'll fall and land on a tiny wooden outcropping. From there, you can head for the end of the level.



▲ Using our tips for navigating carefully can save you from a long fall!

### Cavern Crazy

When you're racing through the Limestone Cavern, it's easy to get swallowed up by one of the many bottomless pits. As in the Buddha Temple, there is also one jump that requires a substantial leap of faith. You'll come to an area that has a burning torch, a set of wooden posts, a demon guard, and what appears to be a broken bridge. Once you reach this area, look down (to the right of where Rikimaru is facing). There is ground far, far beneath you. To proceed, you must walk off the ledge to the right as pictured below. Hold **△** so

you don't make a huge noise when you land, because a demon is patrolling the ledge beneath you.



▲ Sometimes, the only way to proceed is to step over the edge of a cliff and see if your feet hit solid ground.





▲ Each of the game's boss characters is ridiculously strong in one psi-power or another. This guy, the TK boss, can throw gas tankers and railroad cars at you.



▲ Nick recharges his psi-powers by using mind drain. It's actually a stealthy kill, but it tends to make a real mess when the victim's head explodes.



▲ Co-Op mode is fairly bizarre: one person controls Nick's aiming and movement, the other controls Nick's gun and mind powers.

**M**idway's *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* is a wonderfully dark shooter with a twist: players

control Nick Stryer, a spec-ops soldier and all-around badass who wields not just machine guns, but also some serious mind bullets. When his former unit goes rogue, the amnesiac Stryer is drafted to stop the madness. Incidentally, in sci-fi terms, a "stryer" is someone who uses one's mind to perceive events beyond the range of one's physical senses — great name, Midway!

Nick's psi-powers are weak at first, but as he progresses through



► Enemies can be thrown into the wall, set aflame, or possessed and forced to jump off a cliff — it's all up to you.

## PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

*A mind is a terrible weapon to waste*

the game and defeats the psychically charged bosses, he regains his powers. Eventually, his mental utility belt holds telekinesis, pyrokinesis, remote viewing (clairvoyance), mind control, psychic energy draining and "aura view," a sort of psychic super-vision. *Psi-Ops* rewards the player for using these powers creatively in disposing of enemies or solving puzzles, and there's almost no tactic that players can conceive of that can't be executed. *Psi-Ops* uses the Havok physics engine, and almost every object in the game can be thrown, burned, or used for cover. This is the real meat of the game, and what separates it from the flood of third- and first-person military shooters out there.

For example: if you see a group of enemies, you have choices. You can repeatedly bash them against a wall, throw an explosive barrel into them, set some wooden crates on fire, then

◀ Off with their heads! In this realm created out of illusion, decapitation is the only way to advance.

throw the soldiers into the crates, or use mind control to possess a foe and mow down his buddies with friendly fire, then send him happily strolling off of a cliff or into an industrial oven. It's like a giant, gory sandbox.

This logic applies to the puzzles, too. When you reach a hallway with an electrified floor, you might choose to stand on a crate and then use telekinesis to levitate both the crate and yourself over the floor. Or you may choose to possess an enemy soldier and have him make a suicide run onto the floor, shorting it out. Fans who prefer stealth combat can use Nick's mind drain technique to pop the heads of enemies like champagne bottles, clearly an homage to David Cronenberg's cult classic, *Scanners*.

► Now you see it, now you don't: aura view lets players view a reality invisible to regular sight.



Problems are minor: Nick has trouble jumping, his silenced pistol is almost useless, and the last level is much more difficult than the rest of the game. But gamers who enjoy an action-filled gore fest will love this title. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

### HOW IT STACKS UP

|                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| James Bond in EON                   | 8 |
| <i>Psi-Ops: Mindgate Conspiracy</i> | 8 |
| Hiltman: <i>Contracts</i>           | 8 |
| Max Payne 2                         | 8 |
| Syphon Filter: <i>Omega Strain</i>  | 6 |

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

**8**

**VERY GOOD**

The Havok physics engine lets players defeat enemies in ways only limited by their imaginations.



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## STRATEGY

**88** NCAA Football 2005



▼ **Whew** — using your brain to unleash seven shades of ass kicking on the enemy is tiring. Better explode some heads to recharge.

**84** Psi-Ops: TMC

## CODES

90 Corvette  
90 Hitman: Contracts



90 MLB Slugfest Loaded  
90 MTX Mototrax  
90 Pitfall: The Last Expedition  
90 Samurai Jak: TSOA



90 Shrek 2  
90 The Suffering  
90 Transformers

Transformers, p. 90



The Suffering, p. 90



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# PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

*Blow their minds (literally) with our expert boss guide*

## BASIC GAMEPLAY — USING YOUR HEAD

### Telekinesis

TK is your most basic psionic technique, but it has a huge range of uses: pushing and pulling crates, throwing enemies around, and acquiring objects are just a start. You can also "TK surf" by standing on an object and then moving it with telekinesis, carry a metal crate in front of you as a shield, or simply throw things to distract enemies.

### Pyrokinesis

The ability to create fires with one's mind... yeah, that could be

useful. You absolutely need it in the final stage, first to burn down an oddly shaped, growing structure, and again during the battle with the General, but it comes in handy throughout the game — especially versus groups of enemies.

### Mind Drain

Mind Drain refills your head's gas tank, but only enemies who have a physical brain in their cranium can be drained, and living targets yield four times the juice of dead ones — so avoid head shots, okay, Annie Oakley? Finally, while Mindgate trained you to believe that only unaware enemies can be drained, this isn't true. It's possible to grab someone with TK, throw him into a wall (or otherwise knock him down), then rush the body and drain it as



<< THE ABILITY TO CREATE FIRES WITH ONE'S MIND... YEAH, THAT COULD BE USEFUL >>

he gets back up for head-exploding goodness.

#### Mind Control

A wonderfully subversive power, Mind Control only works on enemies that haven't been alerted to your presence, so be sneaky. Also, to get the most bang for your buck, use your victim's hand-to-hand tech-

niques to quietly dispose of as many foes as possible before his comrades realize he's turned traitor and cut him down. Nick's also helpless while possessing someone, so hide yourself and don't waste time. Oh — and remember to kill your host when you're done, so he doesn't turn on you when you give him back the keys to his fine motor skills.

#### Remote Viewing

This is one of the most useful, yet overlooked, techniques that psionics learn. While it helps agents ascertain previously inaccessible information like passcodes, many forget that it can be used extensively to scout ahead, learning the locations of troops, terrain, weaponry, and other useful things.

#### Aura View

Aura view lets operatives view things not visible in the real world — such as a small crack in a wall, the awareness of an enemy sentry, or the aptly named "aura beasts" which live among us... creepy, but cool.

## The Opposition

### Jov Leonov, Master of Mind Control

The secret to defeating Leonov is to destroy the cryo-storage facilities by telekinetically hurling his suicide bombers into the cases. Once they have been destroyed, Leonov will attack you personally. Stay away from him and throw any objects you can find — especially the liquid nitro tanks — in his direction. Note: When he's gone, TK surf up to the catwalk where he was standing and look around for a garden gnome. It unlocks a secret level.

### Edgar Barret, Master of Telekinesis

Your second opponent is Edgar Barret, a huge man whose passion for food is overshadowed only by his skill with telekinesis. He will grab objects — very large, heavy, sometimes explosive objects — and hurl them at you. Either run out of the way or, if it's a small enough item for you to handle, grab them in midair with your own telekinesis and throw them back. Don't get too close, or he'll punish you with a wall of telekinetic energy.

▶ "No, I'm not related to the Barret from *Final Fantasy VII*. Now, go get me some pie."

### Wei Lu, Mistress of Illusion

The mistress of illusion appears in an ornate garden filled with statues of Japanese samurai.

She will bring these to life if threatened, but they can be weakened with fire and then shattered with thrown objects. Once Wei Lu herself gets involved, open fire with whatever sidearms you possess until you are out of ammunition, then use telekinesis to throw nearby objects at her heads — that's right, it's plural. Avoid her acid spit and beam attacks. Once all three heads are defeated, she'll go down.

▲ Remember, kids: summer school may suck, but at least you aren't John Lennon's reanimated corpse.

▶ This is Wei Lu in a good mood. Don't make Wei Lu angry. You wouldn't like her when she's angry. And you certainly wouldn't take her to the prom.



## TAKE THE PSM CHALLENGE!

**RULES** You can't send an entry for each challenge. If you cheat or use codes, you'll be disqualified. The final letter for the contest will be accepted on September 1st. If there are multiple winners, the final winner will be decided by the best paragraph that explains why you're the winner. Send a picture or a videotape (non-returnable) and a short paragraph explaining why you're the winner. Sorry, no e-mail entries! This contest is open only to readers living in the United States, age 18 years or older. PSM reserves the right to substitute prizes of equal or greater monetary value, if necessary.

**SEND YOUR ENTRIES TO:**  
PSM August Challenge #  
(the challenge you're entering)  
c/o Future Network USA, 150  
North Hill Drive,  
Brisbane, CA 94005.

## THE CHALLENGES

### Challenge #1: Bujingai: the Forsaken City

Play through and unlock Gackt's alternate costume, which makes us wonder if he's ever covered Corey Hart's "Sunglasses at Night."

### Challenge #2: Mega Man Anniversary Collection

Play the game until you unlock the two bonus games. Then, show us the game selection screen showing them as unlocked.

### Challenge #3: Smash Court Pro Tennis 2

Win the U.S. Open, Australian Open, Wimbledon, and Roland Garros.

## THIS MONTH'S PRIZE PACKAGE

La Pucelle game  
Psi-Ops game  
NCAA Football 2005 game



## APRIL WINNERS

### Seven Samurai 20XX

Jason Myers, Aloha, OR

### Lifeline

Christa Bennett, Medford, OR

### Nightshade

Carlos Alejandro, York, PA

### Van Helsing contest winner:

Charles Warren, Orange Park, FL



### Marlena Kessler, Mistress of Pyrokinesis

This battle begins near a fusion reactor, so slow this fiery redhead down by TK'ing the nearby tanks of pure hydrogen into the reactor's beam over her head to destroy it. As you do this, she will use various energy beams to attack you. Dodge them, and when she charges the reactor to the point of overload, run to the pair of radiation shields that rise from the floor when the overload warning sounds.

If you are not behind them when radiation tears through the room, you will die. Once the reactor's down, it gets personal. Keep your distance and throw the tanks at her instead. She'll be toast soon.

◀ Ms. Kessler will light you up if you focus on attacking her directly — destroy the reactor first, or she'll turn you into a pile of radioactive ash.



▲ The non-corporeal Wrightson is one of the creepiest enemies we've seen. If your bod looked like this, you'd move out, too.

### Nicholas Wrightson, Master of Remote Viewing

Wrightson not only lost his lease on his mind, but his body isn't his home address anymore, either. He now lives as a non-corporeal entity, traveling from host to host — weird. He lives in a series of monitors that fire energy bolts at you, so fighting is as simple as returning fire to the appropriate monitor with the biggest gun you have. Be sure to avoid the Aura Beasts in the area and fight them only with telekinesis. Save your ammunition for the monitors.



◀ We tried really, really hard to think of a caption that wasn't a constipation joke, but we just couldn't get anything to come out.

### The General

Finally, you get to face the General himself. Fighting him will be no small task, as he has rigged up a device to give him incredible psychic powers. To destroy the device, attack its spinning arms with Pyrokinesis. Avoid touching the arms of his machine — they hurt badly. Once destroyed, the arms will vaporize and a Psi-Orb will appear. You will then be able to shoot these Psi-Orbs at the General.

Note that if you do not collect the orbs before the General reaches maximum strength in his device, he will acquire all six orbs himself and your only way to defeat him will be by telekinetically throwing objects at him, which is almost impossible. If you deplete your psionic energy, run across the center of the device and steal the General's. This will enable you to shoot your orbs repeatedly. Good luck!



# PSM HOW TO no. 80

GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR GAMES ▶ JANUARY 2004

## STRATEGY

84 Tony Hawk's Underground

## CODES



- 88 Backyard Wrestling
- 88 Batman: Rise of Sin Tzu
- 89 Castlevania: Loli
- 88 Conflict: Desert Storm II
- 89 Frogger's Adventures
- 89 GameShark Codes

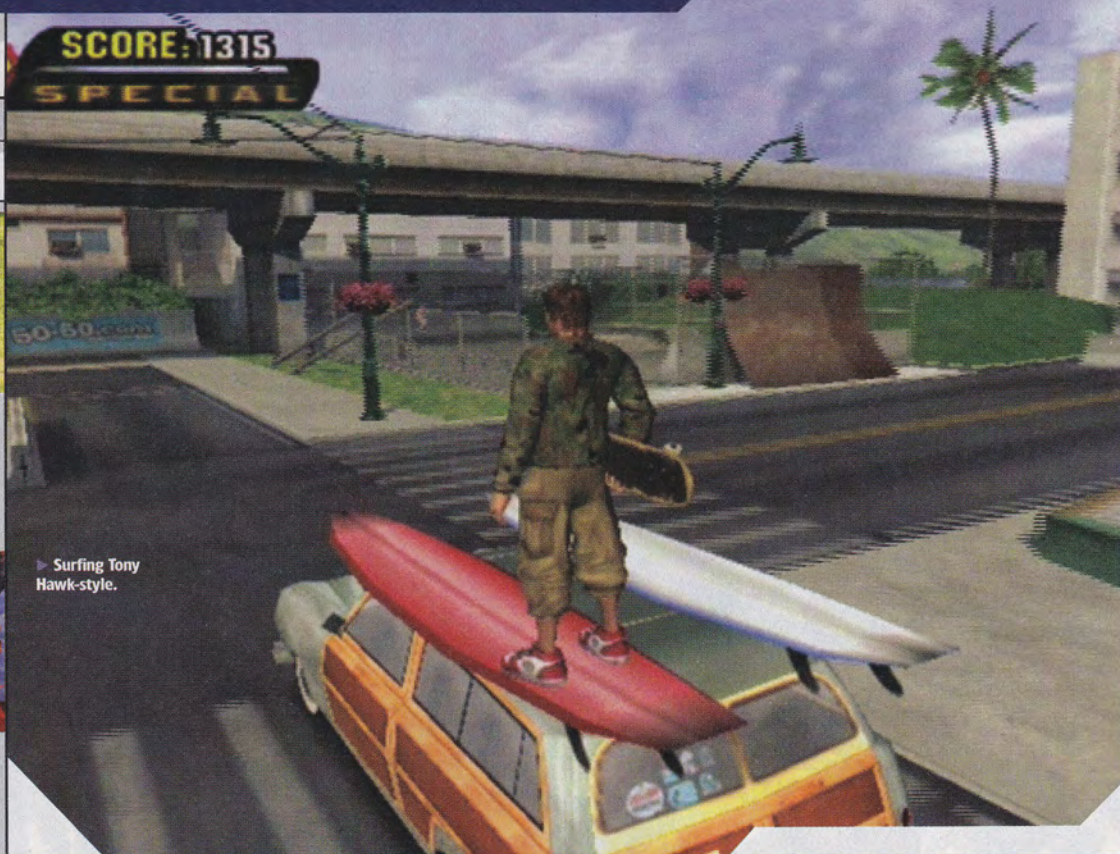


- 88 Kya: Dark Lineage
- 88 Legacy of Kain: Defiance
- 89 Megaman X7
- 89 NBA Jam
- 89 Rogue Ops
- 88 Spawn: Armageddon
- 88 SSX 3
- 88 SWAT: Global Strike Team
- 89 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

Castlevania: Loli, p. 89



SSX 3, p. 88



▶ Surfing Tony Hawk-style.

ONLY IN  
**PSM**  
INSIDER TIPS

# TONY HAWK'S UNDERGROUND

*Secrets for shredding the underground*

## GENERAL TIPS

### UNDERGROUND TRANSPORTATION

*T.H.U.G.* sports more unconventional methods of traveling than any of its predecessors. In addition to running on foot and commandeering vehicles, you can jump on top of moving cars or inside freight trucks on courses like Manhattan or Tampa to get around the metropolis very quickly.

### ILL SCORING

Bust out sick Flatland moves to beat any combo or point specific Story Mode goal with ease (yep, even Vert Challenges!). Just hit ↑+↓ quickly to enter a Manual, then start tapping ◎◎◎ in quick succession to mix it up. You'll be busting six

and seven figure combo scores in no time!

### ROCK AND ROLL ALL NIGHT

After beating the game in any mode, you'll unlock "Hotter Than Hell" — a KISS themed concert venue course. Air out of the quarter pipes in front of the stage to grab the floating letters that spell "KISS." Do it once to score the "God of Thunder" music video. Do it twice to bring Gene Simmons and gang on stage for an in game, pyrotechnic performance of "Rock and Roll All Nite."

### AD HAWK

The *Tony Hawk* series has always sported cool unlockable characters and *T.H.U.G.* is no exception. Beat Story Mode on any difficulty setting to unlock Marvel's red and yellow behemoth Iron Man.



▲ "You wanted the best, so you got the best."

Unlock KISS front man Gene Simmons by finishing Story Mode on "Normal" or "Sick" difficulty settings. Probably the weirdest character in *T.H.U.G.* is unlocked by beating the game on the "Sick" difficulty setting: T.H.U.D., the creature from the Neversoft intro FMV. Tony Hawk's Underground Dweller, no doubt?



<< You'll be busting six and seven figure combo scores in no time! >>



▲ Iron Man totally sold out when he went pro. Way to go, Stark...

## Video Killed The Skateboard Star

Some joker has hidden 9 videotapes chock full of bonus footage throughout the courses in *TH.U.G.*! Don't worry, we've got the goods. Knowing where to look is half the battle.

### NEW JERSEY TAPE

The first tape in *TH.U.G.* is hidden underneath the bridge leading from the suburbs to the train station. Head down the grass embankment on foot (⬆ + ⬆), and traverse the concrete path at the water's edge to snag the tape.

### MANHATTAN TAPE

No skating necessary to grab the New York tape — it floats atop the electronic Metro Center welcome sign. Just climb the ladder, jump and grab the top of the sign (⬆). Pull yourself up to snake Tape #2.

### TAMPA TAPE

This one's a little tricky. Air off the quarter pipe on the parking garage next to the Kumon Inn at a slight right angle, then grind the pipe at the top of the jump (⬆). You should have enough momentum to carry you off the building and onto a telephone wire extending to the building across the street. Once you start to lose momentum and begin heading backwards, jump (⬆), hit ⬆ + ⬆ in the air, and then hit ⬆ again to grab the wire. Shimmy to the building across the street and pull yourself up onto the roof bowl. Double jump (⬆ + ⬆) over the ledge to the right and drop down in the tight gap between the two buildings. Watch out for pigeon droppings and grab the Third Secret Tape to unlock the Bails II Video footage!



▲ Tampa's Tape is one of the more difficult to attain.

### SAN DIEGO TAPE

San Diego's Secret Tape is hidden on the roof of the large stage located in the pavilion area. Air up the quarter pipe located behind the main stage (near the blue Security building and chain link fence). Hit ⬆ + ⬆ in the air to land on your feet atop the second level walkway. Sky up the quarter pipe in front of the blue window to your right and grab the secret tape.

### HAWAII TAPE

The Hawaiian Secret Tape floats high atop a wire extending between the two waterfront hotels. Air up to the second floor of the white hotel from the street (⬆) off the quarter pipe across from Tasty Burger, then ⬆ + ⬆ to land on the second story edge. Climb the ladder to the wire hanging over the hotel entrance. Jump, grab the wire (⬆), then shimmy to the hotel roof and pull yourself up. Once on the roof, skate towards the pink hotel in the distance, and veer right just as you approach the ramp at the edge. Ollie and grind (⬆), then ⬆ the wire stretching between the two hotels to grab the secret tape.



▲ Grind the wire on the other side of the ramp to grab Tape #5.

### VANCOUVER TAPE

It'll take an epic Spine Transfer to grab Vancouver's Tape. Head towards the glass dome located above the hockey rink (Don't mistake it for the other glass dome on this level!). Notice the glass pagoda over the walkway leading down to the rink. Skitch a car on the adjacent road to build up



enough speed to air up the pagoda quarter pipe, spine transfer the glass roof (⬆ in the air) and leap off the roof ledge (⬆) towards the circle of flags around the dome. If you time it just right, you'll snatch Secret Tape #6 from the air above the dome and unlock the Bails II Video footage.

### SLAM CITY JAM TAPE

Time to shatter some records... literally. The Slam City Jam Secret Tape is hidden inside the electronic scoreboard atop the massive arena. Sky out of the large half pipe near the entrance (at a slight angle), then grind (⬆) the circular catwalk above the street course. Ride out the rail until you smash through the scoreboard and grab the secret tape.

### MOSCOW TAPE

Moscow's Secret Tape can be reached completely on foot. Head to the red Kremlin-looking cathedral near the army tanks. Climb the cathedral by double jumping (⬆ twice) and grabbing (⬆). Once you're atop the cathedral walkway, head behind one of the towers to grab Secret Tape #8.

### HOTTER THAN HELL TAPE

Snaking Hotter Than Hell's Secret Tape will take all of your skills as it floats high above the KISS stage and is uber difficult to attain. Boneless (⬆ + ⬆) out of the quarter pipe behind the left side of the stage, hit ⬆ + ⬆ in the air, and then ⬆ again to grab the side of the black ledge. Pull yourself onto the ledge and square yourself up with the raised step to your left. Jump on your board (⬆ + ⬆), then ollie (⬆), grind the step (⬆) and air out of the step ramp (⬆) to snag the final Secret Tape and unlock "Always Hard," a painful behind-the-scenes video by Neversoft.



▲ Grind the raised step to snag Tape #9.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE



CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

## "Old Skool"-ing The Competition

There are three *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2* courses to unlock in *T.H.U.G.* Here's the 411 on how to snag them.

### OLD SKOOL COURSE: School II

**WHERE IS IT?** A precarious ledge in the Jersey Train Station.

**HOW DO I GET IT?** After dealing with the security guard, air onto the hospital entrance overhang with the quarter pipe located behind the center road divider (⊗), then (⬆+⬆). Jump to the next ledge and follow it to the left into the train station. Grab the Old-Skool Icon then Acid Drop (hold ⬆ and walk off the ledge) into the lower quarter pipe for some extra style. Look out below!

### OLD SKOOL COURSE: Venice Beach

**WHERE IS IT?** Inside an evil tiki statue in Hawaii.

**HOW DO I GET IT?** Head away from the beach, towards the closed movie theater near the back of the map. Once you find the wooden tiki with the glowing eyes, ollie (⊗) through his mouth. If you hit the tiki's piehole just right, you'll be transported to a flaming tunnel. Ollie off the end of the tunnel (before the drop off) to snag the Old Skool Icon.

### OLD SKOOL COURSE: Hangar

**WHERE IS IT?** A secret room in Moscow.

**HOW DO I GET IT?** Skate towards Lenin's Tomb (the square, tan building near the army tanks marked with Cyrillic letters). Climb on top of the building (⬆+⬆), then ⬆ to pull yourself up. Once on the roof, skate towards the adjacent red building and leap (⊗) through the large second story window to the right of the entrance. Head upstairs to snag the Old Skool Icon floating next to the painting of Lenin hanging loose. Shaka' comrade!

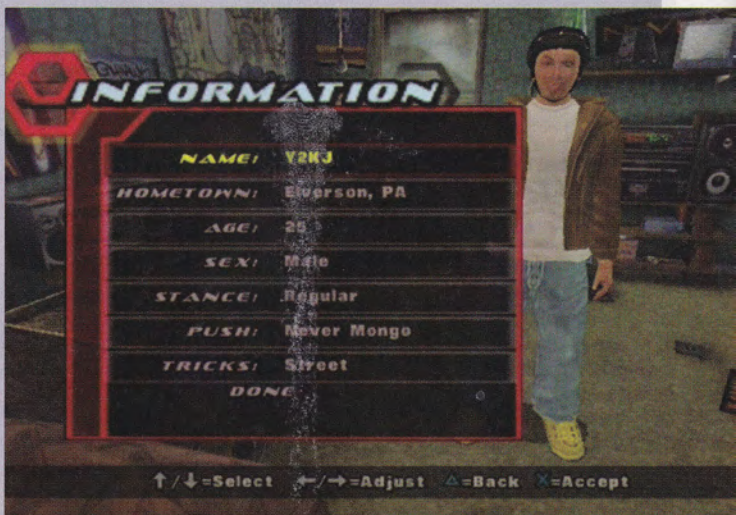


▲ "Hmmm... I wonder if that's the large second story window PSM was talking about?"

## Play As Neversoft

The twisted guys at Neversoft programmed their development team into playable characters! Unlock these nine Neversoft *T.H.U.G.s* by entering their code name into the Skater Information Screen in "Create-A-Skater."

| CODE NAME       | WHO IS THIS?                 |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| Skillzombie     | Aaron Skillman - Development |
| leedsleedsleeds | Chris Ward - Development     |
| TOPBLOKE        | Dave Cowling - Development   |
| sik             | Kurt Gutierrez - Development |
| deadendroad     | Ralph D'Amato - Development  |
| The Kraken      | Steve Ganem - Development    |
| Hammer          | Ted Barber - Development     |
| WOODCHUCK       | Michelle Deyo - Tester       |
| Y2KJ            | Jesse Shannon - Tester       |



▲ Play as Jesse, the diehard tester who loses his front teeth in the credits!

### SICK CHEATS

Enter these codes into the Cheats screen in the *T.H.U.G.* Options menu, and then select them in-game if you need a little help. A thunder clap will sound if you enter the codes correctly.

| CODE         | CHEAT                    |
|--------------|--------------------------|
| letitslide   | Flawless rails           |
| keepitsteady | flawless manuals         |
| getitup      | Play with Moon gravity   |
| digivid      | Unlock all FMV sequences |

► Will you be able to give Tony Hawk a run for the money?





▲ Sometimes, the road to justice leads right through some scumbag's bloated gutsack.

## All The Right Moves

Nick actually has three distinct move sets: a guns-drawn shooting set, a sneaking and neck-snapping stealth set, and a martial arts set.



▲ Nick has tons of moves, although he always has his guns handy, whether on foot or chasing down perps from behind the wheel.



# TRUE CRIME: *Another chance to make crime pay... big time!*

## STREETS OF L.A.

**T**o fans of *Grand Theft Auto 3* who've been from one side of Liberty City to the other, or to players who have all but declared

martial law on everyone in *Vice City*: listen up and listen good—there's a new game in town, and it's bad to the bone. Activision's Luxoflux development studio will soon release its new title *True Crime: Streets of L.A.*, and it's less-than-legal, anti-hero cop, Nick Kang, is going to give Tommy Vercetti a run for his money.

*True Crime* is a variation on the *Grand Theft Auto* style of gameplay. It mixes three different genres—gunplay, fighting, and racing—into one

enormous title that spans over four hundred digitally recreated miles of urban Los Angeles. While this might seem like nothing more than a rip off of *GTA*, *True Crime* has taken the best aspects of Rockstar's title and tweaked them. Nick Kang can lock on to multiple targets at once with twin Baretts, grapple with opponents, and throw tornado kicks. While the action scenes in *Vice City* are nothing to complain about, the ones in *True Crime* look like they come from a

Hollywood blockbuster: fighters move in bullet time, luckless villains smash through tables, and cars screech through LA as if driven by Vin Diesel.

As Nick battles various crime syndicates, he'll weave his way through over one hundred missions. The

storyline changes according to Nick's actions—fail on a hit and run and your intended victims might come for you later. Can *True Crime* out-vice *Vice City*? We'll let you know when Luxoflux's game arrives in early 2003.

DOUG TRUEMAN

## THE BUZZ

With more stylish cinemas and a huge game map, can this title whack *Vice City*?



▲ If you can't beat 'em up, try breakdancing with 'em. Anything to keep those big boys' towels on, right?



▲ A huge chunk of the game is actually spent not on foot, but tearing around L.A. in your hot rod.



▲ The game will feature dozens, if not hundreds, of real, live, L.A.-area landmarks, so those who've been there will know their way around.





▲ A huge portion of L.A. is recreated, complete with landmarks and gorgeous cars.



▲ Nick can precision shoot while still driving.

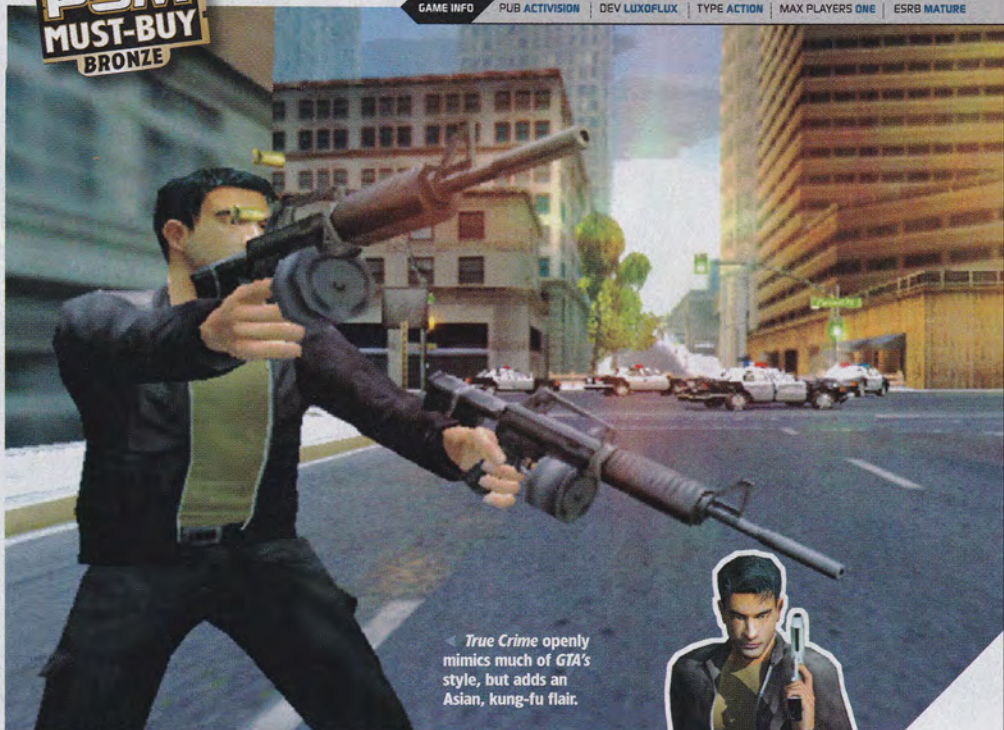
**T** rue Crime revolves around Nick Kang, a shoot-first-and-forget-about-the-questions kind of cop. He's trained in kung-fu,

packs a pair of twin pistols, and has a way with motorists just like that other famous PS2 carjacker. When things require a delicate touch, he walks on tiptoe, ices people with instant takedown moves and even carries a tranquilizer gun. The developers digitized over two hundred square miles of the City of Angels, cooked up a plot involving a suspended cop, and merged racing, fighting, shooting and stealth styles of gameplay.

Ethics play a major role in *True Crime*: Nick's officially a cop, so he should play nice, but he's also no cream puff. If you run around killing people for no reason, you'll find your path is violent, but short. Use more acceptable methods and you'll be swept up in a plot that's one of the best to hit the PS2 in a long time. Players are awarded points for how they deal with a situation, and those points can be cashed in to upgrade Nick's fighting, shooting and driving skills. Learned abilities include enhanced target accuracy, precision collision tactics and even Ryu's Dragon Punch from *Street Fighter*.

The problem with *True Crime* is that the developers bit off more than they could chew. In seeking to combine four of the most successful genres into one title, they watered each of them down. Whereas *Grand Theft Auto* has a single theme of "go anywhere, do anything," *True Crime* feels as though the game mechanics — while they serve the story — are

PSM  
MUST-BUY  
BRONZE



▲ *True Crime* openly mimics much of *GTA*'s style, but adds an Asian, kung-fu flair.

## TRUE CRIME: STREETS OF L.A.

*Ambitious as GTA, but as good?*

somewhat arbitrary and repetitive. Nick races through the streets of L.A., then either gets in a fight, gets in a shootout, or sneaks past security and then gets into a fight or a shootout. Instead of creating a living, breathing city, the game comes off as a succession of levels joined together by interactive driving segments filled with redundant, side-quest arrests you can make if you drive by a lesser crime on your way to the next mission.

*True Crime* may lack the sheer depth that made *Vice City* a household word, but there is still much to be admired. Nick's auto-targeting system blows away Tommy Vercetti's like a headshot, and his combat style is remarkably deep for a game that doesn't have "Fighter" in its title. There are also a few tweaks that would have earned it a higher score. Nick desperately needs to be able to strafe during gunplay, finishing moves in fight sequences overlap, and his car has an odd habit of sticking to buildings. Little things, but they detract from the whole. DOUG TRUEMAN



▲ Nick's move set is pretty deep, ranging from stealth sneaking to high kicking.



▲ Nice and easy. An itchy trigger finger will land you in a mess of paperwork.



▲ "Go ahead ... tell me I look like Keanu Reeves again. I need an excuse to shoot somebody."

▲ Players can tackle obstacle courses for extra firepower.

### HOW IT STACKS UP

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Grand Theft Auto: Vice City | 9 |
| Grand Theft Auto 3          | 9 |
| True Crime: Streets Of L.A. | 8 |
| Dead to Rights              | 8 |
| Roadkill                    | 7 |

PSM **8** VERY GOOD

*True Crime: Streets Of L.A.* falls short of being the *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City* of Los Angeles, but it's damn entertaining.



## Tactical Is More Practical

Fewer deathmatchers are hitting PS2, while lost of first- and third-person stealth or tactical ops games are getting more popular: *MGS*, *Deus Ex*, *007*, *Splinter Cell* and *Ghost Recon* fit the bill.



▲ Here we see potential for close-quarters battle, which requires smart use of weapons and surroundings. It almost looks like *Metal Gear Solid 2*...



▲ Your enemies sport advanced AI, making your choices of when, where and how to engage the enemy more critical.

# ICE NINE

*An FPS based more on stealth than action*

**F**rom Bam! Entertainment comes another first-person shooter for the PlayStation 2, although this one is more along the lines of *Metal*

*Gear Solid* than *TimeSplitters*. The title of the game comes from a deadly new computer virus, capable of paralyzing an entire city. Naturally, it's up to CIA agent James Clayton to stop the virus from turning the New Yorks of the world into smoldering traffic jams.

*Ice Nine* focuses more on stealth gameplay than the traditional "spray and pray" approach. Covert operations are the key to success, so players who want to drop in on a roomful of terrorists with a grenade launcher should look elsewhere. Clayton will have to infiltrate various strongholds while impersonating guards or officers, and

it's possible to knock out a guard, drag him off, then suddenly reappear in his clothes, all smiles. But, not surprisingly, the game features a substantial amount of action as well. Bam! has confirmed an arsenal ranging from assault rifles to remotely-detonated anti-personnel mines, and the bevy of weapons will come in handy when the going gets rough. The developers have promised cunning AI enemies: foes work co-operatively, dive for cover when their guns run out of ammo, and radio for help if the player starts picking them off.

Though *Ice Nine* has the usual one-



▲ The enemy is cleverly taking cover and using squad-based tactics. Whatever will you do? Spray and pray, or run and gun?

man-versus-an-army gameplay, don't expect a simple "good vs. evil" storyline. The story features a branching plot, one that will have players questioning whether to follow orders or join forces with terrorists, and rumors have it that an early draft

of the script was based on the new Colin Farrell/Al Pacino movie *The Recruit*. Where do we sign up?

DOUG TRUEMAN

▼ There are times when it may be safer to sneak around the enemy than take them on. This is one of those times...



## THE BUZZ

This title could be just the ticket for gamers who prefer more stealth in their FPS games.



GAME INFO | PUB SEGA | DEV OVERWORKS | TYPE ACTION | REL DATE FEBRUARY | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB PENDING

▼ Magical attacks are best used to knock incoming opponents away. Just keep in mind that you only have a limited amount of it at any given time.



## AN ASSASSIN WITH CLASS

One of the more memorable aspects of *Shinobi* was Hotsuma's famous red scarf and the way it followed him as he tore through his opponents. Sega has accordingly given Hibana a translucent pink one – just to let her victims know they were killed by a girl.



◀ We definitely prefer a female ninja over a male one, even if they are trying to kill us.

# NIGHTSHADE

*The classic ninja series gets a bit more sex appeal*

Sega's *Shinobi* was released late last year to millions of fans who remembered the series' glorious arcade days. While it was a

decent platformer, there were a few flaws: the gameplay was repetitive, there were no in-game checkpoints, and the cameraman occasionally consumed a little too much sake. Unwilling to disappoint its fans, Sega is back with a vengeance – and a kunochi, a female ninja.

*Nightshade* is essentially *Shinobi*'s sister game. It turns out that after Hotsuma's victory at the end of the first title, another interdimensional rift opened and a group of demons invaded Tokyo. Not too keen on the idea of their beautiful city being overrun with rejects from hell, the government summoned Hibana, a femme fatale with looks as sharp as her swords.

*Nightshade* will certainly draw comparisons to the original, but Sega has promised a substantial list of improvements. Hibana can move faster, fly higher and dish out more damage than Hotsuma [Never send a man to do a woman's job – Ed.], and she's packing an improved

combat system with new techniques that lets her string together attacks almost endlessly. Hibana also knows Hotsuma's famous "stealth dash" ability, and can run rings around opponents, slipping in and out of reach with the touch of a button. No ninja title would be complete without a healthy dose of mystical energy, and Hibana can perform attacks to fill up a new Chakra Gauge that will unleash gorgeous, screen-clearing magic.

As to be expected, surviving environmental hazards is half the challenge and half the fun of the *Shinobi* titles, and *Nightshade* is no different: battles will take place atop industrial cranes, moving trains, and even fighter jets. Look for this one soon. DOUG TRUEMAN



▲ In classical fashion, the story will unfold through a number of in-game and CG sequences.



▲ Doesn't Hibana look all stunning as she stands atop the wing of a plane?

► It's much easier to see who you're locked on to, thanks to the large icon that appears around the enemies.

## THE BUZZ

Let's hope the camera and texture variety have gotten a bit of an upgrade, as well.



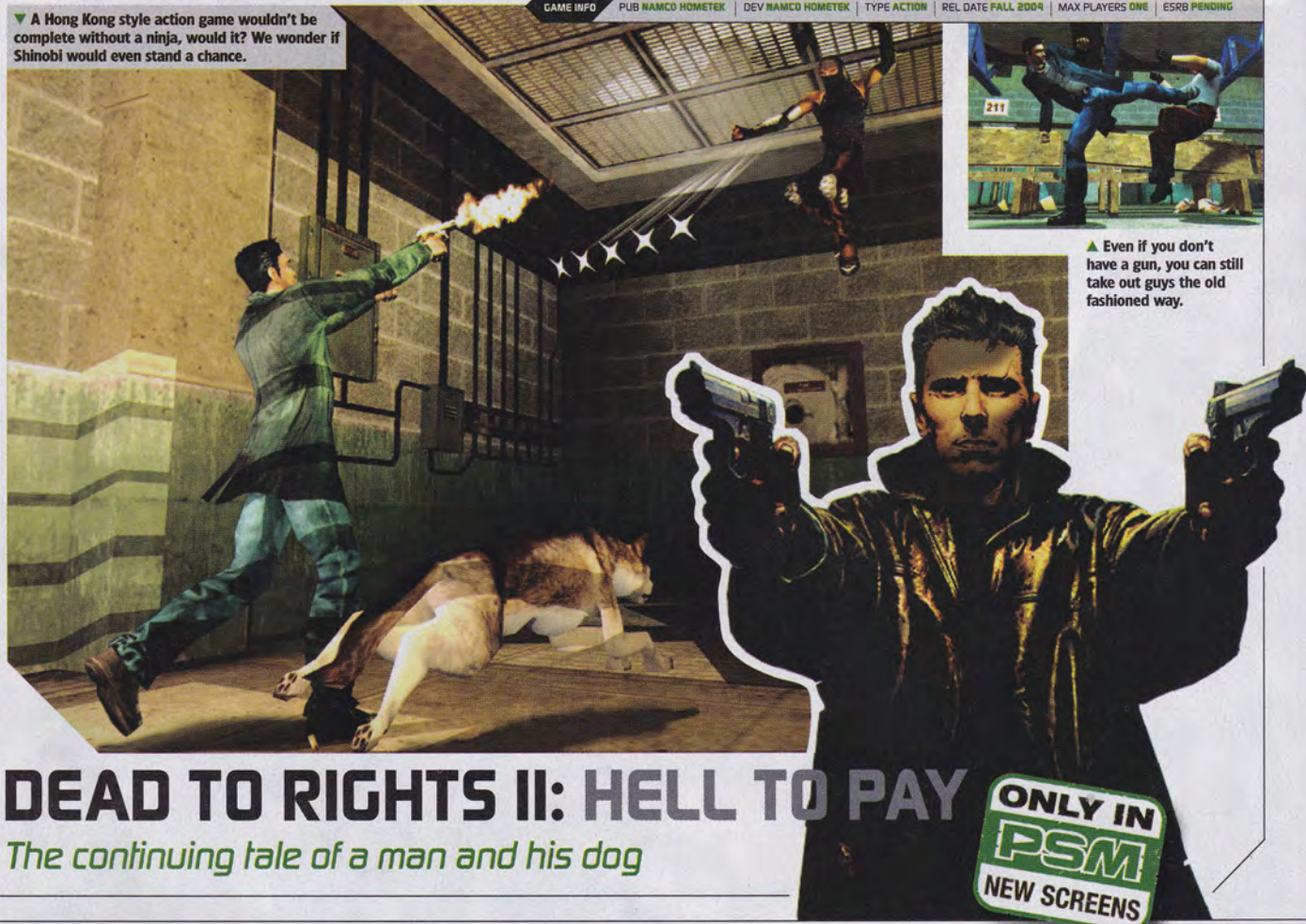
▼ It wouldn't be much of a *Shinobi*-inspired game if wall running wasn't possible, would it?





GAME INFO | PUB NAMCO HOMETEK | DEV NAMCO HOMETEK | TYPE ACTION | REL DATE FALL 2004 | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB PENDING

▼ A Hong Kong style action game wouldn't be complete without a ninja, would it? We wonder if Shinobi would even stand a chance.



▲ Even if you don't have a gun, you can still take out guys the old fashioned way.

## DEAD TO RIGHTS II: HELL TO PAY

*The continuing tale of a man and his dog*

### Not Quite Semaphore

*Hell to Pay* is already more spectacular than the original, mainly due to the way that both Jack and NPCs can interact with objects in the environment.



▲ Note the Confederate Flag and swimsuit calendar on the back wall... just part of the scenery, right?



▲ Wrong. Once the flag becomes ablaze it becomes a lethal weapon for whoever reaches it first.

**T**he original *Dead to Rights* scored fairly well given PSM's strict criteria for a good action game, and it's looking as though Namco

is out for a better grade the second time around. *Dead to Rights: Hell to Pay* again puts players in the role of lethal cop Jack Slate. Much like the first title, *Hell to Pay* focuses on shooting first and not even bothering with questions. Namco is describing the sequel as a Hong Kong style "action noir" title, so we can expect acrobatic gunplay, realistic martial arts and K-9 sidekick Shadow chowing down on enemies when the going gets rough.

New to the game is a 360-degree fighting system, which lets Jack destroy incoming opponents from every direction. Namco has apparently taken a few classes from the *Soul Calibur* design team and included running and ground attacks, moves that can be charged for additional damage, and a dynamic blocking system. There's even a new dynamic diving system that lets Jack adjust his positioning in midair to target any opponent on-screen.

To further immerse Jack in a world where victory comes from offensive innovation as much as technique, players can now grab a huge array of melee weaponry: bats, pipes, floor lamps, microphone stands, two-by-fours, and even chainsaws. Making matters even more interesting is a new environmental interaction system that lets him roll over tables and other obstacles without breaking stride. Jack can even climb certain objects just to gain added height for slow-motion gun dives.

Namco has just under a year to polish up their bad boy for the autumn, so check back for an updated preview as the release date approaches. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

▼ Like in the first *DTR*, Jack can temporarily replace his own lifebar by grabbing a human shield. They don't normally last that long, though.



▲ *Hell to Pay* elaborates on the first game's brutal execution style kills, but they come at a price and need to be unlocked by displaying finesse instead of mere button mashing.

### THE BUZZ

This game looks hot. We can't wait to see Jack's new moves and attacks.



▲ The Beer Barn goes up in smoke as Jack roasts a few Hogs for dinner. Flamethrower... there is no substitute.





▲ This screen seems to show a hint of influence by EA Sports BIG's *Freekstyle*.

## Fists And Arms

In addition to throwing *Road Rash*-inspired punches and kicks, you'll have access to brutt melee and projectile weapons. Open fire!



▲ The method of targeting your rifle (or rocket launcher) is still a bit of a mystery, though...



# JACKED

3DO injects motocross-style racing with combat

**1**994 saw the release of *Road Rash* for the 3DO, and though the system died almost instantly, Electronic Arts' lay-rubber-on-your-opponent's-face title was an instant hit. 3DO is releasing a new racer in the spring called *Jacked*, which seems to draw largely from the *Road Rash* school of thought. 3DO is remaining tight-lipped about its upcoming racer/fighter, but the company issued

a press release saying, "With its bone-shattering melee combat and breakneck motorcycle racing, *Jacked* will be the roughest, toughest game on the market next summer." Players will be able to beat their opponents senseless with punches and kicks, as well as weapons like chains, golf clubs and rocket launchers. The idea is to cross the finish line first, all the while hammering on your opponents and trying to send them into hazards like fire pits and car crushers.

But instead of being a mere button/friend masher, *Jacked* will apparently carry a complex development system over the course of the game, letting characters gain points in offense, defense, and speed. As 3DO says, "We have also added great details like character evolution. As the

player wins more races, the character looks and gets tougher, with bigger muscles, tattoos and more." In addition, it appears as though the developers are going to include a grudge system, similar to the one found in EA's *SSX* titles.

Though the game is still in its early stages, screenshots show spike-wearing warriors jumping tire pits, busting tricks like nac-nacs, and using fellow racers as speed bumps. We'll have more information on this title as it becomes available. **DOUG TRUEMAN**



▲ Be careful who you mess with. As in *SSX*, the rivalries you bring about may come back to haunt you through a grudge system.

**THE BUZZ**  
A great old game gets a spiritual remake and 3DO may have another hit on its hands.



► Hopefully, the crash animations will be as brutal as this suggests they will be.





▲ Not even lasers are a match for a master thief like Lupin.



▲ Lupin wields a few non-lethal weapons, from gas to frying pan.



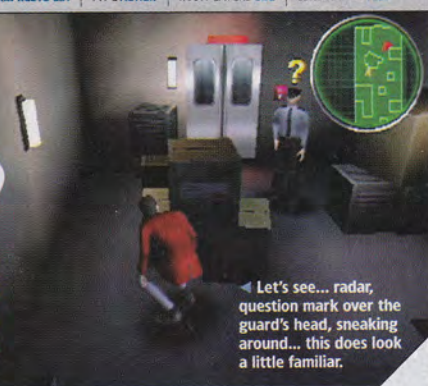
▲ Lupin is a true master of disguise. In this pic, he's actually the statue.

GAME INFO PUB BANDAI DEV BANPRESTO EIA TYPE ACTION MAX PLAYERS ONE ESRB RATING TEEN

## LUPIN THE 3RD: TREASURE OF THE SORCERER KING

True fans might like it...

► Fujiko's name means "twin peaks."



▲ Let's see... radar, question mark over the guard's head, sneaking around... this does look a little familiar.

**B**ased upon a classic anime, *Lupin the 3rd: Treasure of the Sorcerer King* stars the one and only Lupin, a globetrotting master-of-disguise and master thief who's forever chased by Inspector Zenigata

as he pulls off daring heists. His comrades come along for the ride, but it's Lupin who gets the glory and notoriety.

It's clear that the developers were trying for a *Metal Gear Solid* clone, as shown by the title's stealth

gameplay, *MGS*-type radar and punctuation marks that indicate levels of enemy awareness. Like *Metal Gear*, *Lupin* has a killer soundtrack, though it features jazz saxophones instead of synthetic keyboards. Unfortunately, that's just about all the titles have in common.

The problem with *Lupin* is that the game is incredibly rudimentary: the control is slippery, the camera is frustrating and the AI leaves a great deal to be desired. For example, it's possible to be chased into a compart-

ment on a train in full view of three sentries, only to have them wonder where you've gone. Likewise, merely zipping around a corner is also enough to make them scratch their heads. The sense of logic the game employs for its puzzles is also highly dubious: locked doors open magically if Lupin merely switches disguises, and one particular keycode is the expiration date on a bag of Ichiban. Fans only, we're afraid. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

**5**

**SO-SO**  
Devotees of the anime might enjoy the title, but others should buy the *Lupin* DVD or save up for *Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater*.



▲ The Governor and the T-X debate the hated California car tax.



▲ It's a gray, dark world — unless you use your infrared to help find enemies.



▲ An enemy goes boom on the way to the Time Displacement Chamber.

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

**5**

**SO-SO**  
It's a short action shooter with more than a few missteps, but enough action to keep fans of the films happy.

GAME INFO PUB ATARI DEV BLACK OPS TYPE FPS/ACTION MAX PLAYERS ONE ESRB RATING TEEN

## TERMINATOR 3: RISE OF THE MACHINES

Sometimes he shouldn't come back

**M**an, the *Terminator* license rocks. The first time you hear Arnold say "lock and load" when he grabs a gun in this game, you'll get shivers.

Unfortunately, the rest of the game, 80% of which takes place in a future, post-apocalyptic Los Angeles, is a mess. The basic concept is straightforward enough: kill tons of enemies on your way to the Time Displacement Chamber, return to 2003, kill some more to protect John Conner.

The problem is, the novelty of the license wears off and the gameplay really has trouble holding up. Yes, forcing the player to fight wave after wave of identical terminators, hunter-killers, drones, and modern-day policemen technically remains in theme with the franchise, but it's also too repetitive. Controls need tightening, graphics and sound are shrug-worthy, reload times are long, and switching between certain weapons can leave players defenseless for

well over two seconds — an eternity during a firefight.

Continuing on, the post-apocalyptic maps are exceedingly gray and bland, making it difficult to spot the opposition, and hand-to-hand combat is unbalanced: Arnie's shoulder ram takes priority over almost every other move and can be used exclusively to smash the T-X to bits. To top it all off, the game's too short. On the plus side, the included demo for next year's *Terminator 3: Redemption* shows true promise.

**DOUG TRUEMAN**



▲ Arnie's not allowed to kill the police in 2003, but their cars are freakin' doomed.



# MEGA MAN X7

*Mega Man makes his next-generation debut in a big way*

**M**ega Man X7 marks the Blue Bomber's fifteen-year anniversary, and after having sold over seventeen million

Mega Man titles over a decade and a half, Capcom has decided it's time for his debut on the PlayStation 2. Mega Man, Zero, Dr. Wily and a newcomer referred to only as "a mysterious character" will be

► Mega Man is back, with some old friends!



rendered in a completely three-dimensional environment. To avoid problems that have plagued other side-scrolling platformers that jumped to 3D, Capcom has declared that Mega Man will possess a target lock on, as well as the ability to aim at specific weak spots within the title's screen-filling bosses.

To keep the title true to the classic series on the Nintendo Entertainment System that made Mega Man a star, X7 will combine two-dimensional and three-dimensional gameplay, a sort of cross between Mega Man and

Maximo. But Capcom is hard at work to evade accusations of a mere cosmetic overhaul into the world of cel-shading, and has promised a new feature called Scramble Change which allows players to instantly switch between Mega Man and his

GAME INFO PUB/DEV CAPCOM | TYPE PLATFORM | MAX PLAYERS ONE | ESRB RATING PENDING



▲ While the game is very much 3D, a lot of the play mechanics still feel like old-school 2D, which should make old-school fans happy.



▲ Like the past few titles, you'll be able to switch between characters. In this game, though, you can do it on the fly.



▲ Some of the old favorites return along with some new bad guys. However, all of the game characters get that unique cel-shaded treatment.

► Thanks to an improved targeting system, Mega Man won't have any problems taking down multiple opponents.



robotic pals. The Scramble Change can be used to avoid danger, employ new weapons and tactics, and even perform a multi-character combo attack. DOUG TRUEMAN/STEPHEN FROST

## THE BUZZ

Some believe Mega Man ran out of steam years ago. Can the PS2 give it new life?

GAME INFO PUB/DEV KONAMI | REL DATE SUMMER | TYPE FIGHTING | MAX PLAYERS TWO | ESRB RATING PENDING

# K-1 WORLD GRAND PRIX

*Let's get it on!*

**D**on't confuse Konami's latest fighter with a racing title. *K-1 World Grand Prix* is based on a mixed martial arts

competition that's sweeping through Japan like a roundhouse kick. Fans of fighting games have been able to import the *K-1* series for the past few years, but as Pay Per View events like the Ultimate Fighting Championship have gained in popularity, Konami has decided there's a strong enough fan base in North America for a realistic depiction of reality combat. *K-1* features fighters from Karate, Kickboxing, Tae Kwon Do and Kung Fu, but not Jiu-Jitsu or Wrestling, so fans of submission grappling should look elsewhere.

*K-1* features over twenty fighters from the mixed martial arts world, all of whom were individually motion captured to lend authenticity to their PS2 counterparts. Cut kicks, uppercuts, and spinning backfists are

eerily real, and landing a devastating combo on an opponent will have players cringing. A unique damage system separates players' health from energy, resulting in longer and more strategic fights than previous games of this genre. DOUG TRUEMAN



▲ Just like in wrestling, all of the combatants get their own intro sequences and music. The fighting isn't scripted, though...

## THE BUZZ

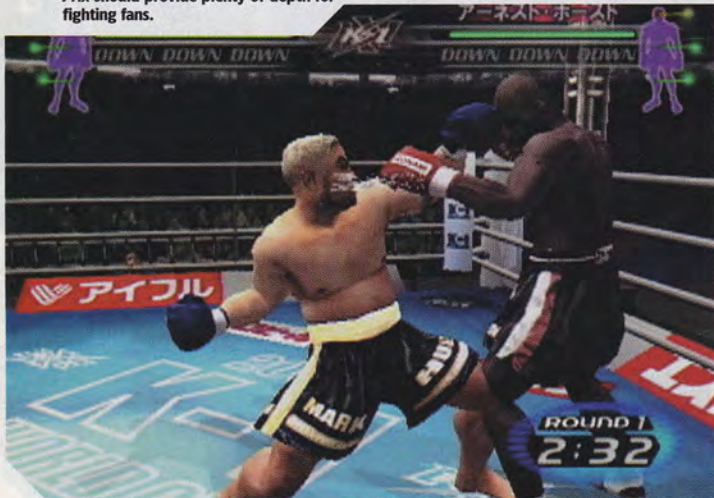
No fancy fireballs or tornado kicks here... just clean, brutal brawling.



▲ With such a mixture of martial arts forms to choose from, *K-1 World Grand Prix* should provide plenty of depth for fighting fans.



▲ Looking at the body icon, next to the power bars, reveals where your opponent is most damaged and vulnerable.



▲ Not only do the rings and fighters look extremely accurate, you can notice the little details, like flying sweat and saliva.



**PSM**  
**MUST-BUY**  
**BRONZE**

GAME INFO

PUB TECMO

DEV PROJECT ZERO/TECMO

TYPE HORROR

MAX PLAYERS ONE

ESRB TEEN

► Note to self: if tailing a freakin' ghost sounds like a good idea, you need to live less dangerously.

▲ This cute little ghost died a horrid death. Better hope she doesn't want to take it out on you...

## FATAL FRAME 2: CRIMSON BUTTERFLY *A Kodak moment... from Hell*

**T**ecmo's original *Fatal Frame* is rightfully considered by many to be the scariest game yet created.

Casting the player as a young girl facing vengeful ghosts while armed with only a camera, it featured chilling imagery and an imposing sense of dread. Now, the sequel is here, with two new main characters and the same nerve-frazzling, nightmare-inducing gameplay.

The new leads are twin sisters Mio and Mayu, who come across an abandoned village and, out of teenage curiosity, go exploring. They quickly get separated, and Very Bad Things (yep — intentional capitals there) start to happen. A compelling story ensues, sucking the player into the world and endearing you to the characters, making the dastardly deeds that befall them

more moving. Unfortunately, the nearly five-minute demo trailer gives away most of the plot's crucial twists and turns, so avoid watching it if possible.

As in the first title, there is only one weapon in *Crimson Butterfly*: the famous Camera Obscura, a magical lens that exorcises demons, ghosts, and other creatures that go bump in the night. The better the shot, the more damage inflicted. The camera can be upgraded as the player progresses to include a light indicating when an enemy is at its weakest, thus allowing the player to snap a devastating "fatal frame". Pictures can

also be taken in combination for maximum damage. Health is restored through healing potions, and extra film for the camera is abundant.

Playing *Fatal Frame 2* is like a midnight walk through a cemetery. Your pulse will race, your imagination will run wild, and you'll jump out of your chair. When it's over, you'll realize it wasn't as bad as you feared, but there's no denying that Tecmo has created a title with such a sense of dread that it's both physically and emotionally draining to play. Which is exactly what we expect from a horror game.

DOUG TRUEMAN



▲ The ghosts come in all sorts of twisted shapes and sizes...



▲ ...just look at this one!

### HOW IT STACKS UP

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| RE: Code Veronica X | 9 |
| Fatal Frame 2       | 8 |
| Silent Hill 3       | 7 |
| Clock Tower 3       | 7 |
| Fatal Frame         | 6 |

**PSM**  
**FINAL SCORE**

**8**

**VERY GOOD**

*Crimson Butterfly* proves that skillful camera work, music and sound effects can creep the hell out of us more than a gore fest.





▲ The particle system of the PS2 will add sensational effects to every battle.



▲ A dynamic camera will circle the action to provide cinematography that accentuates the battle. You can almost feel the kick...



▲ Not since Ken and Ryu burst on the scene has an uppercut had so much pizzazz.

# DRAGONBALL Z: BUDOKAI 2

*Kamehameha!*

ONLY IN  
PSM  
NEW SCREENS



**W**ith games like *Auto Modellista* and Ubisoft's upcoming *XIII* all the rage, a prediction we made

some time ago is coming to pass. Cel-shaded graphics are sweeping the industry, and the latest genre to get the cosmetic makeover is the dying fighting game.

Atari has taken the *Dragonball Z* license and turned it into a brawler that fans of the show and fans of the genre will clamor for this Christmas. The title features an extensive story mode—a rarity in the fighting genre—where players will unite with CPU controlled characters as they scour the globe for the seven Dragon Balls. Thirty-four characters from the show will be featured in the game, as well as highly destructible environments.

Hardcore anime lovers and players who love to duke it out with

mind-blowing fireballs will rejoice to learn the cartoon's trademark Fusion technique has been included in the game. Players can merge two characters and even absorb enemies to create stronger fighters. Ooh... so exciting!

DOUG TRUENAM



▲ There's nothing like devastating shockwave to keep enemies at bay.

## THE BUZZ

With its addictive gameplay and Tiburon as developer, this game has serious street cred.



Adama races to the rescue of his beloved mommyship.



**T**imed to correspond with the Sci-Fi channel's prequel to a cult-favorite, late '70s TV series, *Battlestar Galactica* is

clearly an undercooked rush job. There's almost no depth to the gameplay: hordes of Cylon Raiders (read: bad guys) are attacking your mothership, and it's up to you, as Commander Adama, to protect the space fleet.

This takes the form of lots of interstellar dogfighting in various spacecraft and occasionally manning the laser turrets of the Galactica. The graphics are admirable, all the ships



▲ The Cylon ships handle pretty well — just don't break formation or you're doomed.

control very nicely, and the chatter between the pilots and the Cylons give the game an impressive sense



▲ The Galactica's gun turret offers a great view of the special effects.



▲ Apollo prepares to blow the hell out of Cloud City. Hey! Wait a minute...

# BATTLESTAR GALACTICA

*Let the annihilation of Man begin!*

of immersion. The sound effects and visuals will make fans of the series feel instantly at home.

Unfortunately, *Battlestar Galactica* is just dull. You can use two different types of laser fire and customize your missiles' speed, maneuverability, blast radius and

firepower, but endlessly blasting waves of Raiders with the same weaponry gets boring very quickly. Moreover, mission difficulty is very erratic — some are easily whipped on the first try, but others, particularly escort missions, will have players tearing their hair out. The coolest level has players infiltrating a Cylon outpost in a stolen ship, but even the tiniest slip results in instant death and the entire Cylon fleet descending upon you. Dust off *Jedi Starfighter* and leave this one on the shelf.

DOUG TRUEMAN

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

**5**

**SO-SO**

Hardcore fans of the series will enjoy it, but those looking for an engaging space battle — or a decent game — won't.





▲ Notice how you can't really see where you're jumping? That happens a lot in *Catwoman*.



▲ Miss Kitty isn't really into fatalities. Instead, she tends to kick bad guys clear off-screen to assumedly non-fatal ends.



▲ The environments tend to be dark, which is only a problem when something crucial like a whip anchor-point blends into the background.

GAME INFO

PUB EA

DEV EA

TYPE ACTION/ADVENTURE

MAX PLAYERS ONE

ESRB RATING TEEN

# CATWOMAN

*EA coughs up a hairball*



▲ We can't fault the graphics — the virtual Halle is nearly as captivating as the real one.

**B**ased upon Halle Berry's latest vehicle, *Catwoman* touches on the basic points of the film's plot: **Patience Philips is killed**, but brought back to life by a mystical Egyptian feline. Catwoman has the abilities of her animal half: she can scurry up walls, see in the dark, perform incredible acrobatics and claw her way out of tough situations. She even has a bullwhip that she can use to swing from lamps and yank weaponry out of her enemies' hands.

*Catwoman* alternates between fighting and acrobatic exploration. Brawling is handled with the two analog sticks: one moves Catwoman and the other directs her attacks. Unfortunately, Catwoman's move sets are too thin — though we were amused by her ability to strike a seductive pose that dazes guards. Enemies have no lifebars, but are defeated when they are removed from a scene, typically by being thrown through a window or into a garbage dumpster — which appear every-

where, from the inside of a dance club to the foyer of a mansion.

Graphics and animation are top-notch, and Catwoman slinks about like an exotic dancer. Control is tight, but counterintuitive, and the developers' desire to use cinematic camera work

results in frustratingly frequent blind jumps. The game's dark color palette makes matters worse, mixing key locations and rappel anchors with the background. There's just not enough gameplay polish here. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

**6**

**OKAY**

*Catwoman* is definitely a pretty face, but little more. If you really love the subject matter and absolutely have to play this game, you should probably rent it.





▲ The levels are both well detailed and designed... if only there were more of them!



▲ You spend a lot of time jumping, fighting, and who knows what else — save points are welcome.



▲ Sure, a Toyota would get better gas mileage, but they don't come with tail lasers.

GAME INFO

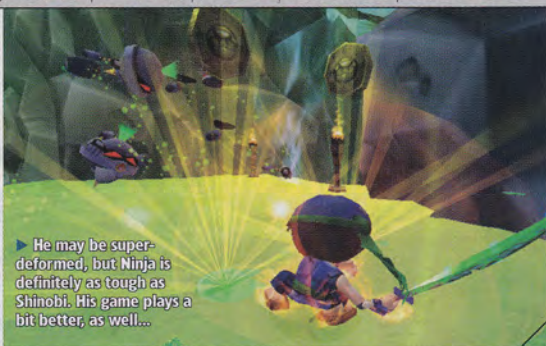
PUB NAMCO

DEV ARGONAUT

TYPE ACTION

MAX PLAYERS ONE

ESRB RATING TEEN



▶ He may be super-deformed, but Ninja is definitely as tough as Shinobi. His game plays a bit better, as well...

# I-NINJA

*He's kind of like Shinobi, but... cuter?*

**T**his colorful platformer stars a guy named “Ninja” who becomes his namesake for all the wrong reasons. He accidentally decapitates his master, grins manically every time he's awarded a new belt, and flatly has no respect for anyone he fights. In short, he's awesome.

Gameplay is simple, and seemingly inspired by every game ever made: Ninja runs, double jumps, grinds rails like Sonic, runs along

walls like *Shinobi's* Hotsuma, straps himself to giant spheres à la *Monkey Ball*, spins his ninja-to like a Tails-style propeller, uses a grappling chain like Samus from *Metroid*, throws explosive darts and shuriken, controls various giant mechs, fights mini-bosses (including a Z.O.E. style space battle) and, of course, waylays everything in his path with his sword. Of course, there are also coins to be collected, enemies to slice and dice, and new swords or magic spells (increased damage, heal,

shuriken blitz attack, and invulnerability) to earn.

Overall, *I-Ninja* is a fun title. Ninja has a nice amount of personality and plenty of moves, and despite drawing from so many sources, nothing feels out of place. However, there's not

a lot of longevity here, and playing the same level repeatedly with only a minor twist in gameplay — like beating the clock — isn't quite the same as having entirely new levels to play. **DOUG TRUEMAN**

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

**7**

**GOOD**

It's a cute, but endearing game that's definitely fun for a few hours. It lacks the depth of titles like *Jak II*.



# PITFALL: THE LOST EXPEDITION

*The classic gets a modern-day makeover*

GAME INFO

PUB ACTIVISION

DEV EDGE OF REALITY

TYPE ACTION

REL DATE FEB.

MAX PLAYERS ONE

ESRB RATING EVERYONE

**W**e covered *The Lost Expedition* a while back, but for those of you who missed it, we're pleased

to report that this is one title that's coming along swimmingly. Based on the classic Activision title, *Pitfall* takes the vine-swinging, crocodile-jumping, scorpion-dodging action and breathes new life into it.



▲ A lot of the creature designs are pretty cool. Check out this fire-beast, which seems to look worse than he actually is.

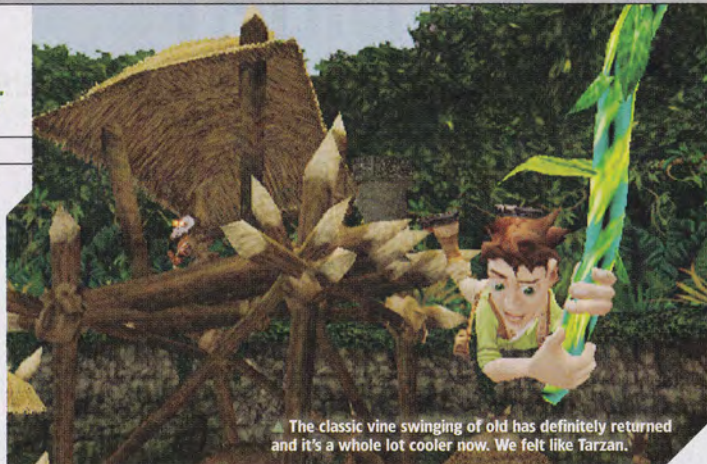
Pitfall Harry must race through jungles, hop across ice drifts and explore the corners of the Earth as he tries to outrace a rival explorer intent on uncovering ancient artifacts and creating a doomsday weapon (perhaps the developers watched *Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* one too many times).

Activision promises that the game will avoid the tired style of play so prevalent in current adventure titles and instead feature branching pathways, scores of gadgets and the ability to turn minor techniques into heroic feats. The developers have even included the Havok physics engine for unprecedented realism.

DOUG TRUEMAN



This is one game that's come a long way and looks to make the series proud.



▲ The classic vine swinging of old has definitely returned and it's a whole lot cooler now. We felt like Tarzan.



▲ Those crocodiles aren't that dangerous if they're frozen, but they certainly do make nice rafts.



▲ The bug-looking things continuously drop snowballs on you, so you'll have to keep moving around to avoid them.



▼ When Kya defeats an enemy, she can often transform it into a more docile form, that will then sell her things.



**K**ya: *Dark Lineage* is a story about a young girl trapped in a mystical world. In no particular order, Kya jumps, climbs, sneaks, rolls, snowboards, skydives, throws switches, collects artifacts and monsters, plays soccer with bombs, hangs from ceilings, kicks off walls, throws a boomerang and rides animals. When she takes a break to fight evil, she has more kicking techniques than the entire cast of *Final Fight*.

Simply put, *Dark Lineage* is a brilliant title. The visuals are on par with *Rayman 3*, the control almost as



▲ There's some interesting use of wind current to travel from place to place.

tight as *Mario*, and the quests and puzzles both epic and innovative. One stellar sequence has Kya riding a



▲ The Jambuk is like a cross between Dino and a Tauntaun, only less smelly.



▲ There's also a lot of hoverboarding in the game, though it's not always easy.

## KYA: DARK LINEAGE

*Platform fans get a good one!*



Tauntaun-like creature while chasing a train. Players must dodge falling rocks while riding alongside the train, hit a switch with the boomerang to open a freight door, jump off their animal into the train, throw a switch to open the engine door, jump (and

land) on their steed, then race to the engine, leap through the new opening and K.O. the driver. Not even *Mario Sunshine* has anything like this.

There are a few problems: Kya's arsenal of attacks sporadically conflicts with her inventory interface, and creatures that must be defeated have an unfortunate habit of being knocked into pits while fighting, which then do not count. The cameraman also takes the occasional leave of absence, but these flaws are easily overlooked. **DOUG TRUENAM**

**PSM 9**  
FINAL SCORE

**OUTSTANDING**

What else can we say? This is a must-have game for platform lovers or anyone with a sense of adventure.



▼ While Sphinx may get lead billing, the real joy of this game is playing as the mummy.



**S**phinx and the Cursed Mummy could almost be called *Sphinx and the Legend of Zelda*, given how many gameplay

mechanics it borrows. The story is set around two main characters: Sphinx, a strangely feline, fairly generic action hero, and Tutankhamen, the famous boy pharaoh and puzzle-solving comic relief.

The game starts off slowly, but really takes off once Tut is mummified (which happens quite early). Having already died, Tut is no longer subject to mortality, a rather pesky problem that most adventure heroes face.



▲ Sphinx does most of the sword-slinging dirty work.

Thus, because Tut can't die, his levels are all about coming up with creative ways to cause him pain while simultaneously solving puzzles. You can set him ablaze to light torches,



▲ Tut is smashed flat, electrified, set aflame... it's a tough day at the office.



▲ The special effects tend to be bright and colorful, but never tiring.

# SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY

*Platform fans get a good one!*



electrocute him to activate ancient Egyptian devices, crush him between massive blocks so that he's flat as a pancake and can slip through prison bars, and even throw him into a dicing machine for three mummies on the go.

*Sphinx* could really use an automatic save game feature, especially because the distribution and strength of health power-ups is also unbalanced: the cat-beast is almost always either at full strength while exploring or on the brink of death during combat.

Players looking for an adventure should try this title. Don't judge *Sphinx* before Tutankhamen is transformed into a mummy, however, as the game simply doesn't catch fire until then. DOUG TRUEMAN

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

**8**

**VERY GOOD**

It's a very enjoyable adventure title that's marred by the odd misstep and the occasional lack of direction. We have high hopes for the sequel.





▲ It's possible to use machines to "power-up" Redmond into cool new forms.



▲ At the end of his rope: Spanx throws a bunny wrench into the machinery.



▲ Despite the poor gameplay, we can't knock Whiplash's animations. Here Spanx runs for his life.

GAME INFO

PUB EIDOS

DEV CRYSTAL DYNAMICS

TYPE ACTION

MAX PLAYERS ONE

ESRB RATING TEEN



▲ Redmond can take all sorts of punishment. Fire? Easy. Electrocutation? No problem.

# WHIPLASH

*The PETA empire strikes back*

**T**he story of two lab animals gone righteously AWOL, *Whiplash* has a decent story to tell, but falls down during the actual telling of the tale. Players control a weasel named Spanx, who's connected by a chain to Redmond, a bunny who's undergone a few too many experiments. The two creatures progress through the Genron factory — a facility whose sole purpose is apparently to torture helpless animals — by

smashing Redmond into everything in sight: enemies, inanimate objects, switches, and scientists. There are the usual game mechanics for this genre: double jumps, gliding, zip lines and bizarre power-ups that turn Redmond into everything from a burning "hareball" to a heap of fur covered with toxic goo. The game has a decidedly black sense of humor: using the chicken cannon or watching a hamster fake his way out of electroshock experiments will bring a wry smile, or possibly a

wince, to your face.

Unfortunately, the problem with *Whiplash* is that there simply isn't enough to do. Rooms where experiments actually take place are linked by vast, repetitive corridors, and navigating the factory is the game's

most difficult puzzle. While it's fun to destroy everything from computers to cafeteria trays, the action gets old, fast. Compared to deeper offerings like *Jak II*, *Kya*, & *Ratchet and Clank*, *Whiplash* gets... well... whipped.

DOUG TRUEMAN

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

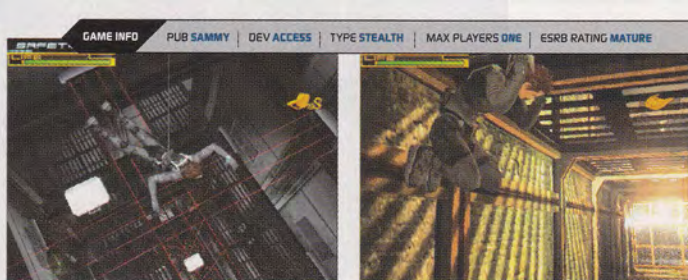
**6** OKAY

*Whiplash* might have been a smash five years ago, but today's action platformers have evolved past this.





▲ Billy Bishop's cloaking device lets him melt into any background, Predator style.



▲ *Spy Fiction* borrows elements from some of the most memorable action movies.

▲ The Spider Grips enable you to hang from the ceiling, though you rarely really need to do so.

## SPY FICTION

*Slightly out of focus picture of stealth action*

**S**py Fiction casts the player as a covert agent trying to infiltrate a terrorist organization to prevent the release of a weapon of mass destruction. You wield a fairly typical arsenal of cool moves and spy gadgets, including mini-cameras, silenced pistols and the cool, but sadly underutilized, Spider Grips. What sets *Spy Fiction* apart, however, is the ability to mask oneself as almost any NPC in the game. In fact, knowing where and when to transform into a particular NPC is the only way to gain access to top secret areas.

What *Spy Fiction* is notably missing

is the anxiety that should come from being alone, deep in enemy territory. This mostly comes from too many cut corners, which impact its immersiveness. Enemy soldiers all sound like and respond to the player in exactly the same manner regardless of how they're disguised, be it as a grunt, a scientist, or an insane general who recently killed two of his

comrades for sport. Players will often find themselves frisked by the same sentry three times in less than thirty seconds without once leaving the guard's line of sight. Touching any of the buttons or either of the joysticks while being searched instantly blows a player's cover. Surely a more interactive way of defeating an inspection could have been created.

Finally, despite some creative gadgets, a tendency to lift shamelessly from other sources, especially *Mission: Impossible*, make it too derivative. *Spy Fiction* has potential; it just doesn't quite realize it. DOUG TRUEMAN



▲ Billy isn't the only playable character in *Spy Fiction*: there's also the lovely Shelia, who brings a tender, lady-like touch to the covert ass-kicking.

**PSM**  
FINAL SCORE

**6**

OKAY

It tries hard, and there are some clever ideas, but too many design shortcuts ensure that *Spy Fiction* is still Roger Moore to *Metal Gear Solid*'s Sean Connery.



# TIME CRISIS 3

*The arcade shooter comes home with a few additions*

**N**amco is releasing the third act in its trilogy of gun-toting carnage later this year when *Time Crisis 3* hits store

shelves. Available for sale both with and without the GUNCON peripheral, *TC3* tells of an international conflict off the Mediterranean coast. With residents taken hostage and others about to be wiped out by a missile strike, world renowned VSSE diplomacy experts Alan Dunaway and Wesley Lambert are sent in to resolve matters peacefully—by

killing, killing, and killing.

To that end, the developers have added a new Weapon Select System that lets players choose between a handgun, machine gun, shotgun and grenades. They've also included sniper combat to test gamers' nerves.

Included on the disc are a pixel-perfect conversion of the original arcade mode, a complex story line, multiple game modes and a new playable character. Fans can even bring a friend and enjoy two-player gunning action.

DOUG TRUEMAN/  
STEPHEN FROST



## THE BUZZ

We had so much fun with *TC2*. *TC3* looks to include even more features and extras.

GAME INFO | PUB/DEV **NAMCO** | TYPE **SHOOTER** | REL DATE **OCTOBER** | MAX PLAYERS **TWO** | ESRB RATING **PENDING**



▲ Vehicular combat takes on new meaning in *Time Crisis 3*. You'll have to avoid a large number of them.

▶ Blast away at the enemy vehicles to be rewarded with a nice, big explosion.

▼ You'll notice that a lot more enemies appear on-screen in this sequel. Your reflexes will have to be fast.



▲ Why these guys bring knives to gunfights we'll never know. Just one shot to the head should bring them down.

TIME



## Creatures Of The Night

The cast of enemies will be varied and definitely persistent. From demons to skeletons, you'll come across pretty much anything you can think of.



▲ These reptilian monsters will try to group up on you. Don't let them surround you.



▲ Skeleton Knights are a bit tough, as they have shields to protect them.



▲ This rock monster is the first boss you'll encounter in the game. He's pretty easy if you can find his weak spot.

# CASTLEVANIA: LAMENT OF INNOCENCE

*The classic finally gets the quality 3D treatment*



One of the industry's most beloved games will finally appear on the PlayStation 2 this fall when Konami releases the latest chapter

of Castlevania lore. *Lament of Innocence* continues the series' dedication to addictive gameplay, outstanding graphics, beautiful soundtracks and a monstrous world to explore. Although it appeared that Capcom had stolen the bragging rights to gothic adventure with *Devil May Cry*, the sequel proved less than overwhelming, and Konami is poised to strike.

Developed from the ground up by Koji Igarashi, *Lament of Innocence* tells

the story of legendary family ancestor Leon Belmont as he battles the forces of darkness while trying to find his kidnapped fiancée. While the story is somewhat cliché, the gameplay is tried and true. Though Leon begins with only a dagger and his trusty whip, he'll gain access to classic items like holy water, a cross, an axe and a crystal. Konami is also including seven magical orbs that can be combined

with ten ancient relics to unleash devastating attacks on over 35 different enemies.

Shown at this year's E3, *Lament of Innocence* features a rich, three-dimensional environment with intuitive controls and a camera that accentuates the action instead of obscuring it. Skillful players will be able to link consecutive strikes together to form massive combos as

they explore hundreds of rooms and countless foes.

Though there are scores of older gamers who are eagerly awaiting *Lament of Innocence*, there are just as many who have never played any of the previous titles. Nevertheless, we at PSM are confident that Konami's upcoming action adventure will rope in new fans as quick as a whip.

DOUG TRUEMAN/STEPHEN FROST



▲ It's good to see that classic combo and damage info still appears on the screen.



▼ Platform-based challenges will play an important role in the game, but won't be the main focus. Action is.



▲ Along with the action-packed gameplay, there will be a good number of puzzles to challenge you.

## THE BUZZ

It's *Castlevania* in 3D, and it's not like the Nintendo 64 games!



## Sonic Team (Work)

Along with the main team, which includes Sonic, Tails and Knuckles, there will be several other groups that players can also take control of. Here are two of them:



▲ Team Rose



▲ Team Dark



# SONIC HEROES

*For the first time, the lovable hedgehog appears on a Sony console*

**S**onic dashes onto the PlayStation 2 this winter with the classic platform action that made him a smash on the Sega

Genesis—but with a cool wrinkle in gameplay that could set a new standard in the genre. Game characters travel in teams of three and players can switch between their members simply by tapping a button. There are four groups of teams, each

of which is named after its captain. Team Sonic, for instance, is composed of Sonic, Knuckles and Tails. The selected character races through the level while the others follow behind, much like Diddy did (sorry) in *Donkey Kong Country*. Naturally, each character has his or her own special abilities. Sonic can tear through levels at warp speed, Knuckles can smash blocks, and Tails can fly to areas otherwise unattainable.



▲ Here's a screenshot that shows what one of the more elaborate levels looks like.



▲ Knuckles can throw Tails and Sonic into enemies, destroying them rather easily.

▼ When Tails takes the lead, he can carry Sonic and Knuckles to higher platforms.



Though Sega is being rather quiet on much of the gameplay, we know that in addition to Team Sonic, there's Team Dark, Team Rose, and Team Chaotix, resulting in a whopping twelve different characters to choose from in a single platform game. Sega has declared that each team will have its own storyline, including character specific levels. Each level will be comprised of multiple routes, so players who explore the path less traveled will be rewarded with various secrets.

Graphically, the game looks to be on par with the previous *Sonic Adventure* titles. Footage at this year's

E3 showed a much better camera than the previous games, effortlessly following Sonic as he wall-jumped his way through a treacherous floating maze. Though the last two games in the series did little to win over the hearts of fans who hadn't grown up with the hedgehog, his high-speed antics may soon inspire a new generation.

DOUG TRUUMAN/STEPHEN FROST

## THE BUZZ

Classic gameplay and clever level designs could make this the best Sonic yet.





▲ Putting the wrong object on the pedestal could be disastrous.



◀ There's going to be a big focus on puzzles and traps, so that spinning blade you see behind Duran is nothing out of the ordinary.

# THE PLAGUE OF DARKNESS

*Namco takes a swing at a dark, new franchise*

**A** new action adventure title from Namco, *Plague of Darkness* puts players into the helm of Duran, a Knight of the Order. Duran is called upon to save civilization when the Black Plague runs riot, and he'll have to surmount traps, obstacles, and monsters to do so. Duran is armed with your classic weaponry, including swords, daggers and crossbows, and his adventure will take him across eight settings with over fifty locations.

The title is a sort of *Resident Evil*, as Duran is forced to fight everything from infected people to animals driven mad by the disease.



Zombies, giant spiders, and your typical hounds from hell will all make an appearance, but this time you don't have to worry about running out of ammunition. Unfortunately for Duran, not even the sharpest sword can cut down a swarm of bacteria that invades his bloodstream, and this will be reflected in gameplay. Duran's abilities are directly tied to his lifebar: the sicker he becomes, the worse he fares in combat.

Fortunately, Duran has a Namco-based fighting system to back him up, letting him attack, block, counter and even grapple with the infected. In what seems to be inspired from Konami's *Castlevania* series, he can also collect twenty-two actual Tarot cards, which will invoke magic spells and alter his special abilities. But will Duran go down in videogame history or be just the Belmont's whipping boy? We'll keep you updated as development on this title progresses.

DOUG TRUEMAN/STEPHEN FROST

◀ The architectural designs of the game world are quite elaborate and feature a lot of variety.

## THE BUZZ

Swords, traps and an infected populace should provide one action-packed adventure.



▲ Here's another classic example of a blade-based challenge. Better get your timing right or you'll end up over the edge, split into little pieces.



▲ Just like mindless zombies, these plague-infected creatures persistently attack without reason.

## Using The Deck

By collecting various Tarot cards, our hero can perform additional spells and abilities. It's definitely a great way to increase the overall depth and challenge of the game.



▲ Cards like this Empress one will endow Duran with abilities that go beyond his normal attacks.



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## HOT GAMES

Don't waste a second; turn on over to these big games NOW!



▲ MGS2: Substance pg. 94



▲ War of the Monsters pg. 100



▲ Rayman 3 pg. 118

GAME INFO PUBLISHER CAPCOM | DEVELOPER CAPCOM | RELEASE DATE SPRING | TYPE RACING | MAX PLAYERS FOUR | ESRB RATING EVERYONE

▼ Powersliding using the emergency brake is crucial to proper cornering. Just don't apply too much brake, or your car will spin out!



ONLINE  
COMPATIBLE

# AUTO MODELLISTA

Capcom's unique racer has hit Japan—first test drive!

Capcom, long known for *Street Fighter*, *Resident Evil*, *Mega Man*, and hit titles like *Onimusha* and *Devil May Cry* is changing gears. The

company recently released a cel-shaded racer in Japan called *Auto Modellista*, and we've taken it for a thorough test drive. (In case



you're wondering, *Auto Modellista* roughly translates to "Car Designer.")

### THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS?

The simplest way to describe *Auto Modellista* is that Capcom has taken the gameplay of *Gran Turismo*, the graphics of *Sly Cooper*, and thrown in online support for up to four players. Most of the time racers spend playing the game will be in "garage life," tuning up their collection of cars for the next race. Garage life supports

▼ Real world courses, such as Suzuka, have been recreated with cel-shaded visuals.



▲ Nudging other cars doesn't always cause wrecks, but it does produce lots of sparks.



<< EVERYTHING HAS BEEN CEL-SHADED—EVEN THE WIND >>

## Customize Your Ride

The garage is a big focus in this game, enabling performance tune-ups and cosmetic changes.



▲ You'll be able to choose from three different garage "themes."



▲ You can see the changes you're making to your car in real time.



▲ Choose from premade decals, or design your own using this editor.

tinkering of everything a car nut could want. The engine, tires, acceleration, braking, suspension and the like can be fine tuned, and even custom decals applied. Vehicles can be taken out for a test drive to check performance, then returned to the shop for further modification.

For those of us who don't know the difference between spoilers and suspension, *Auto Modellista* offers advice through an e-mail system on how to make modifications, handle certain courses, or apply real-life driving techniques to race tracks. After obtaining a new car or defeating a course, players will find their inbox jammed with suggestions.

Though Capcom's garage is nowhere near the size of the one in *Gran Turismo 3*, the developers have rounded up a significant chunk of car licenses. Toyota, Nissan, Honda, Mazda, Mitsubishi, Suzuki and several others—as well as a few secret companies—all contributed their schematics to be remade in cel-shaded glory.

## PRECISION DETAILING

Even Mother Nature didn't escape Capcom's art team: the very world has been cel-shaded, including asphalt, lens flare, and even the wind. Though some might call the cel-shading in *Auto Modellista* a cheap gimmick, the fact remains that, underneath it all, is a racer requiring substantial technique. Players who get in their car and gun it will find themselves smashing into walls and skidding across sand; proper driving skills are needed to win even the most basic courses.

*Auto Modellista* looks like an arcade racer, but plays like a simulation. Will North American gamers embrace this title? We'll let you know in the upcoming future, as the game is slated for a Spring release.

DOUG TRUEMAN/RANDY NELSON



▲ Not all the courses are lap-based—this downhill run has lots of white-knuckle curves.

## WRECKS 'N' EFFECTS

Pulled off some snazzy moves on the track? You can save your replay and use the VJ Edit mode to splice together a slick music video from the footage!



▲ The VJ Edit interface is easy to use, and the end product can be quite elaborate. Feel like a Hollywood producer!

## PSM BREAKDOWN

An up-close look at the game in action



► It may all be a bit much, but all the advertising does add a bit more realism to the game. It sort of gives it a bit of credibility... not that Capcom needs it or anything.

► *Gran Turismo 3* made it cool to drive your own car, but *Auto Modellista* took it to a whole new level. Now, you can completely customize your car with parts that you wouldn't normally be able to afford.

▼ The on-screen meters vary, but accurately reflect the car that you happen to be driving. Shifting is handled by two of the shoulder buttons.

## THE BUZZ

It might look like a cartoon, but there are some serious tuning options under the hood.





▲ Returning VF4 character Vanessa shows Brad that it's not easy being the new fighter on the block. He'll definitely have to pay his dues.

## VIRTUA FIGHTER 4: EVOLUTION

*The VF series takes an evolutionary leap*

The latest title in Yu Suzuki's acclaimed fighting series, *Virtua Fighter 4 Evolution* may have had its roots in the arcades, but it looks like it's going to take its release on the PlayStation 2 to truly show fans how much of an upgrade it really is. It's only been recently that we've received word of the game's U.S. release, but that doesn't mean we haven't been eagerly anticipating it.

Our Japanese version of the game reveals that *Evolution* is superior to the original *VF4* in every conceivable way. Loading times between matches are all but gone. Visually, the game features deeper shading and enhanced anti-aliasing. The jagged

edges that irked some fans of the series are history, and touches that were apparently beyond the power of the PS2—like a hologram logo on the back of Jacky's jacket—are everywhere.

In addition to one of the deepest fighting systems ever, gamers now have several extra modes of play to choose from, many of which must be unlocked. Knockdown Clash and Wall Death Match inflict damage if players hit the floor or the walls, a Survival Tournament pits players against a course of unrelenting attackers, See-Saw mode has players sharing a single lifebar, Iron Fight gives players 1,000 points of health and infinite time, Counter Challenge inflicts counter attack damage on every

strike, and Hyper Action Battle is a button-masher's dream, as attacks have no recovery time.

Unfortunately, *Evolution* doesn't support the use of the PS2's second memory card slot, meaning that fighting die-hards can't customize their characters and use them against their friends. However, this may be corrected in the localized release. Other than that minor complaint, though, it seems to us that Sega has done a bang-up job on this upgrade. We're not sure what other changes, if any, there will be in the U.S. version, but we'll definitely keep fighting fans updated over the next few months.

DOUG TRUEMAN/STEPHEN FROST

### AT A GLANCE

- Characters: 16
- Modes: 14
- Unlockable Items: 1500+
- Progressive Scan: No

### The New Guys

*Evolution* adds two new characters to the *Virtua Fighter* pantheon. Brad Burns is a Muay Thai kickboxing expert, and Goh Hinogami has a black belt in Judo.

► Gou Hinogami



▲ Brad Burns

### Virtua Fighter Quest?

*VF4's* Kumite Mode, a virtual arcade which sent a stream of endless CPU opponents against players, has been replaced with *Evolution's* Quest Mode. There are now well over 1,500 articles to unlock to customize fighters with, including bracelets, hairpieces, shaved heads, axes, panda bears, designer jackets, dozens of high-resolution wallpaper images, as well as the original *Virtua Fighter 1* character models. Some items are awarded after winning a random challenge match, while others can be purchased after earning gold pieces in a fight.



▲ You'll get to travel all around Japan, taking on the best *Virtua Fighter* players in the world.



▲ Goh shows Shun that he's not going to take it easy on anyone. He's out to take Akira out of the top spot.



▲ Being a kickboxer, Brad has no problems with kneeling Lion right in the crotch.

### THE BUZZ

Improved visuals, more hidden items, and two new characters make this a better *VF4*.



Press START button

Bilbo

to ski



I will give you a name, and I shall call you Sting.

▲ It's certainly pretty enough, but the gameplay is a friggin' sedative. Yawn!

## THE HOBBIT

**M**any a fan has drifted off to sleep while reading about the adventures of Bilbo Baggins, the One Ring, Gollum and Smaug the Dragon. Unfortunately, the same can be said about the latest video game based on Tolkien's masterpiece, and that ain't good.

The game loosely follows the plot of the novel. Bilbo is just a quiet hobbit who despises adventure — not the typical adventure hero. Nonetheless, he one day gets a visit from that famous wizard, Gandalf the Grey. A pack of dwarves soon arrive for tea, and his world is turned upside-down.

The technical aspects of the game are competent. Middle-earth looks colorful and lively, the characters all speak intelligibly with British accents, and the medieval soundtrack is arguably the best part of the game. The frame rate drops a tad when the screen gets busy, but for the most part, it's not an issue.

Gameplay, however, is definitely an issue. Bilbo picks up courage gems, fights off creatures with his walking stick (or "Sting", his sword), crawls on tiptoe, and performs tasks for his fellow Hobbits and Dwarves. This all sounds fine, but it really isn't. This is because Bilbo's tasks tend to be incredibly mundane: knocking down apples from trees, finding a needle in a haystack, stealing the wallet from a Troll, healing an elf, and the like. For lack of a better word, *The Hobbit* is simply *boring*. Swordplay is incredibly basic, and few of the tasks induce any sense of adventure — they're just dull. There is no tension even during Bilbo's stealth mode, as one wrong step just means you're starting over.

Frankly, the game plays more like a three-dimensional version of Sierra's famous *King's Quest* series on the PC than a contemporary action game, but without the wit, charm, or creative genius. Experienced gamers will find themselves falling asleep with controller in hand, and kids who have been raised expecting a synaptic overload will ditch it almost immediately for EA's *Lord of the Rings* series. If you have a (very) small child and want to ease him or her gently into interactive entertainment, this is a good way to start, but it's just too dull for seasoned players. **DOUG TRUEMAN**