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360

November 2006
Issue 2

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This month James Francis reminds us why we bought a PlayStation 2 in the first place, and then calls us fanboys



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Jump in.

 XBOX 360™

EDITOR SPEAK

AND HE SAID, "LET THERE BE RING OF LIGHT"



It was nothing short of incredible to see so much enthusiasm and support for the Xbox 360, as was seen at both rAge and at the BT Games Xbox 360 launch party.

At rAge itself, the show-floor 360s were permanently engaged, with thousands of gamers having a go and more often than not, standing there with their mouths open. Nobody was afraid to just jump in. In the hours leading up to the midnight launch of the 360 at BT Games (Northgate), hundreds of gamers competed to win coveted Premium units. The *Dead or Alive 4* competition was an especially high-octane battle of wits and reflexes. With such sheer exuberance and sterling local support, there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the Xbox 360 has made its mark on the local gaming scene and is geared to stay.

Now the real rollercoaster ride truly begins as we follow just how well the Xbox 360 does locally as well as in the international market. From here, the wind can blow in any direction, though the forecast definitely speaks favourably of the 360's future in both regards. In consideration to South Africa's past, when it comes to the release of new consoles, the Xbox 360 has received rather unprecedented retail support, a crucial factor in any product launch.

But now with the launch out of the way, it's time to start looking ahead to the games - the reason we bought our Xbox 360s.

Thankfully, in this area nobody could say that the Xbox 360 is lacking. Titles such as *Assassin's Creed*, *Tony Hawk's Project 8* and *Gears of War* (to name but a paltry few) lead a gallant charge. In this issue of *360 Insider*, we take an in-depth look at another star on the 360 horizon, the self-professed spiritual successor to the critically acclaimed *System Shock*. So don your bathysphere and follow us down to Rapture, the creepy crumbling underwater city of *Bioshock*.

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MOD MY BOX

A 360 LAPTOP?

For the six-year anniversary of his Website, case-modder Benjamin J Heckendorn decided to build an Xbox 360 laptop. An entire 360 was taken apart and reassembled, complete with an LCD screen, into a laptop case.

"A friend of mine asked back in May 'Can you build an Xbox 360 laptop?' and I responded 'Sure, can you pay for it?' He agreed, and thus I set forth on what was surely to be my most complex and insanely ridiculous videogame project yet. I say videogame project as I highly doubt I'll ever manage anything as complex as Port Washington again, though at times this project sucked my will to live about as much."

The water-cooled construction uses a 17-inch LCD display with a 1,280 x 720-resolution panel. A built-in keyboard is included, along with Wi-Fi and a USB hub. You can find out more about this incredible feat of modification at the Website www.benheck.com/Games/Xbox360/x360_page_1.htm.



SNEAK PEEK

GAMETRAILERS ON LIVE

Fans watching game trailers, previews and reviews online no doubt know of www.gametrailers.com, a Website dedicated to high-quality and current game videos. Recently, GameTrailers (a division of MTV Networks) announced a strategic alignment with Xbox Live. Once a month, GameTrailers will create new high-definition game segments for Xbox Live Marketplace featuring exclusive free first-looks at the hottest upcoming titles to be released on Xbox 360.

"Xbox Live Marketplace is the perfect outlet for the type of broadcast quality content that we produce," said Jon Slusser, VP of GameTrailers. "Having the ability to see the features of the game in high-definition on your television is as close to playing the actual game as you can get."

One such recent segment involved comprehensive previews of popular 360 titles such as *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter* as well as *Ninty Nine Nights* and *Far Cry Instincts: Predator*.

"We are always seeking new ways to enhance the Xbox 360 gaming and entertainment experience with premium high-definition content that consumers can't get on any other gaming console," said Aaron Greenberg, Group Marketing Manager, Xbox Live. "With GameTrailers' expertise and skill, we can deliver exclusive HD videogame segments that will excite Xbox 360 gamers all over the world."



UPCOMING DASHBOARD UPDATES

The previous Dashboard update for the 360 added much-needed download management along with a few tweaks and fixes, and while the details are still sketchy about the next update, things are looking interesting. From the looks of early screenshots, from the most recent development build sent out to developers, the November update sports a few aesthetic changes as well as a new 'Launchpad' entry for launching games and demos created using the recently released XNA Game Studio Express development kit. Xbox Live Arcade, Marketplace, and Memory Management have all been tweaked for navigation. For example, people with copious Live Arcade titles can now expand genre groups to pick from a range of recognisable icons.



PEUGEOT'S LITTLE SLIP

Perhaps letting the cat out of the bag early, it seems (according to Peugeot) that *Project Gotham Racing 4* will be released either at the end of 2007 or at the beginning of 2008. The Peugeot Design Contest 2007 (4th Edition) announcement invites people aged 14 and over to design a concept for a new car. In the announcement was the following:

"In addition, the winning concept car will be included by Microsoft in the *Project Gotham Racing 4* game, exclusively on Xbox 360, that will be released towards the end of 2007 or first half of 2008. The future winner is hereby informed that he/she will not receive any remuneration for this."

Microsoft and Bizzare Creations have yet to announce *PGR4*, but considering that *PGR3* was finished for the 360 launch last November, the timing seems right.



THE PRICE IS RIGHT



FREE PREY CONTENT

A short while back, 3D Realms announced that there would be additional content for *Prey* (both 360 and PC). That content is still being worked on, but 3D Realms has announced that the content will now be free.

"Just to remind folks, we're working on some new multiplayer skins (play as Jen, Elhuit, etc.), and some new multiplayer maps. Both are coming along nicely, but the exact number of both is not yet finalized, so I can't tell you exactly what will be in the content pack."

"As usual, there's no date for this. The materials will be out 'when they're done' (although sooner than later, I'd imagine). Given that we received the 'official' word this afternoon, we didn't want to wait to bring you this update, which many people have been asking us about."

RETRO GAMER

MICROSOFT'S UPDATED COMPATIBILITY LIST

Microsoft is slowly adding more and more of the original Xbox games to its 360 Backward Compatibility list, which now features over 250 games. To play these original Xbox games on your 360, you will need a Live account, since each game will download an emulator to make it run on your 360. Alternatively, you can download the entire group of emulators from www.xbox.com/en-US/games/backwardscompatibility.htm#disc, which you then burn to a DVD or CD, and which will then update your 360.

- 4x4 EVO 2
- AirForce Delta Storm
- Aggressive Inline
- Alias
- Aliens versus Predator Extinction
- All-Star Baseball 2003
- All-Star Baseball 2005
- Amped: Freestyle Snowboarding
- Amped 2
- Aquaman: Battle of Atlantis
- Army Men: Sarge's War
- Atari Anthology
- ATV: Quad Power Racing 2
- Bad Boys 2
- Big Mutha Truckers
- Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance II
- Barbarian
- Barbie Horse Adventures Wild Horse Rescue
- Batman Begins
- Battle Engine Aquila
- Battlestar Galactica
- BLACK
- BMX XXX
- Brute Force
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds
- Burnout 3: Takedown
- Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2005 Adventures
- Cabela's Dangerous Hunts
- Cabela's Outdoor Adventures 06
- Cabela's Deer Hunt 2005 Season
- Cabela's Deer Hunt 2004 Season
- Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth
- Call of Duty: Finest Hour
- Casino
- Catwoman
- Chicago Enforcer
- Circus Maximus
- Close Combat: First to Fight
- Colin McRae Rally 4
- Combat Elite: WWII Paratroopers
- Commandos 2: Men of Courage
- Conflict: Desert Storm
- Constantine
- Counter-Strike
- Crash Twinsanity
- Crash Nitro Kart 2
- Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge
- Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
- Dark Angel
- Darkwatch
- Dead or Alive 3
- Dead to Rights
- Deathrow
- Digimon Rumble Arena 2
- Dinotopia 2
- Doom 3
- Drake
- Dreamfall: The Longest Journey
- Egg Mania: Eggstreme Madness
- ESPN Major League Baseball
- ESPN MLS ExtraTime 2002
- Euro 2004
- F1 2001
- Fable
- Fable: The Lost Chapters
- Fairly Odd Parents: Breakin' da Rules
- Fatal Frame
- Fatal Frame II: Crimson Butterfly DIRECTOR'S CUT
- FIFA Soccer 2003
- FIFA Soccer 2004
- FIFA STREET
- Fight Night 2004
- FlatOut
- Ford Mustang
- Ford vs. Chevy
- Forza Motorsport
- Freaky Flyers
- Frogger Beyond
- Futurama
- Fuzion Frenzy
- Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows
- Genma Onimusha
- Goblin Commander: Unleash the Horde
- Grabbed by the Ghouls
- Grand Theft Auto: The Trilogy
- Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
- Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas
- Gravity Games Bike: Street. Vert. Dirt.
- Grooverider: Slot Car Thunder
- Half-Life 2
- Halo
- Halo 2
- Halo 2 Multiplayer Map Pack
- Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire
- Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
- He-Man: Defender of Grayskull
- Hitman: Contracts
- House of the Dead 3
- IHRA Drag Racing Sportsman Edition
- IHRA Professional Drag Racing 2005
- IndyCar Series 2005
- Intelligence Lives
- Jade Empire 3
- James Bond 007: NightFire
- Judge Dredd: Dredd vs. Death
- Jurassic Park: Operation Genesis
- Kabuki Warriors
- Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer
- kill switch
- LEGO Star Wars
- LEGO Star Wars II: The Original Trilogy
- Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events
- Links 2004
- LOONS—The Fight for Fame
- Magatama
- Manhunt
- Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2
- Max Payne
- Max Payne 2
- Maximum Chase
- Medal of Honor European Assault
- Medal of Honor Frontline
- Medal of Honor Rising Sun
- Mega Man Anniversary Collection
- Metal Arms: Glitch in the System
- MicroMachines
- Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing
- Minority Report
- MLB SlugFest 20-04
- Monster Garage
- Mortal Kombat Deception
- MTV Music Generator 3
- MX: Mototrax
- Murakumo: Renegade Mech Pursuit
- MX vs. ATV Unleashed
- MX World Tour: Featuring Jamie Little
- Namco Museum
- Namco Museum 50th Anniversary Arcade Collection
- NBA LIVE 2004
- Need For Speed Underground 2
- NFL Blitz 2002
- NFL Blitz 2003
- NFL Blitz 2004
- NHL 2004
- NHL Hitz 2003
- Ninja Gaiden
- Ninja Gaiden Black
- Outlaw Golf 2
- Outlaw Tennis
- Outlaw Volleyball
- Over the Hedge
- Phantom Crash
- Pinball Hall of Fame
- Pitfall: The Lost Expedition
- Predator Concrete Jungle
- Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time
- Pro Evolution Soccer 5
- Pro Race Driver
- Pump It Up: Exceed
- Pure Pinball
- Puyo Pop Fever 2
- Quantum Redshift
- RalliSport Challenge
- Rayman Arena
- Raze's Hell
- Red Dead Revolver
- Red Faction II
- RedCard 2003
- Richard Burns Rally
- Robotech: Battlecry
- Rocky Legends
- Rogue Ops
- Rogue Trooper
- Samurai Jack
- Samurai Warriors
- Scooby Doo! Night of 100 Frights
- Scrapland
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- Serious Sam
- Shadow The Hedgehog
- Shamu's Deep Sea Adventures
- ShellShock: Nam '67
- Shincho Mahjong
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- Silent Hill 4: The Room
- Smashing Drive
- Sneakers 5
- Sniper Elite
- Soccer Slam
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- Star Wars: Episode III Revenge of the Sith
- Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy
- Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic
- Star Wars Knights of the Old Republic II: The Sith Lords
- State of Emergency
- Street Racing Syndicate
- Stubbs the Zombie in Rebel without a Pulse
- Super Bubble Pop
- Super Monkey Ball Deluxe
- SX Superstar
- Taz Wanted
- Tecmo Classic Arcade
- Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
- Test Drive: Eve of Destruction
- Tetris Worlds 4
- The Great Escape
- The Hulk
- The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction
- The Incredibles: Rise of the Underminer
- The Legend of Spyro: A New Beginning
- The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King
- The Punisher
- The Simpsons Hit and Run
- The Simpsons Road Rage
- The Suffering
- The Terminator Dawn of Fate
- The Thing
- Thief: Deadly Shadows
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Island Thunder
- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon 2 Summit Strike
- Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3
- Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3 Black Arrow
- Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
- Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Chaos Theory
- Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow
- Tom Clancy's American Wasteland
- Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4
- Tony Hawk's Underground 2
- Torino 2006 Winter Olympics
- Tok: Prehistoric Punk
- Toxic Grind
- Trigger Man
- True Crime: Streets of LA
- Ty The Tasmanian Tiger
- Ty The Tasmanian Tiger 2: Bush Rescue
- Ty The Tasmanian Tiger 3: Night of the Quinkan
- Urban Freestyle Soccer
- Vexx
- Vietcong: Purple Haze
- Volvo: Drive for Life
- World Soccer Winning Eleven 9
- World Series Baseball 2K3
- Worms 4 Mayhem
- Worms Forts: Under Siege
- Wrath Unleashed
- WWE Raw 2
- X2 Wolverine's Revenge
- XIII
- Yourself Fitness
- Zapper



XBOX 360



360 LAUNCHES IN ZA

The local launch of the Xbox 360 had two key defining moments, if you had to ask anyone who attended both the official Microsoft launch party and the BT Games midnight launch. The first of these moments was when women started flipping down from strips of material attached to the roof of the Coca-Cola Dome, accompanied by a green laser lightshow and rocking tunes. What aerially acrobatic women doing sensual suspended manoeuvres has to do with the Xbox 360 is anyone's

guess, though nobody complained. The second of these two moments, was when midnight finally hit and BT Games announced that the Xbox 360 is now officially on sale in South Africa.

It is not these moments by themselves that make them key, but rather what they represent in the grander scheme of things. The women doing acrobatics represent the time, effort, coordination and money that went into launching the 360 locally and making damn well sure that everyone knows it's here. It's proof

Now, 360 titles can be bought at all good retail outlets!

that the higher-ups, those who sign the cheques that make things happen, are treating the 360 with the professionalism and monetary support it needs to succeed locally. One only had to listen to radio or open one's eyes to the signs, to see and hear 360 advertising everywhere. Hopefully, this level of marketing will continue even now after the launch, to keep the 360 in the public eye.

The midnight launch at BT Games (Northgate) represented the local enthusiast support for the 360, both



from the retailer side and from the consumer side. Gamers from all around Johannesburg arrived at the launch, causing it to bubble with excitement and anticipation. The launch party provided ample entertainment and festive electricity, and not without irony, there was even a small group of gamers having a Nintendo DS network battle while waiting for the 360s to go on sale at midnight. Almost two hundred Xbox 360s were pre-ordered and sold that night, from the Northgate branch

of BT Games alone. Several Premium units were won in competitions during the course of the night leading up to midnight, with gamers cheering the contestants on. When midnight finally hit, the launch was broadcast live to the official Microsoft launch party at the Coca-Cola Dome; bringing the two key points together and clearly showing the cooperation and support from both sides.

It was galvanising to see two such events not only happen on the same

Booth babes, a must-have for any product launch

night, but work together towards a common goal - to launch and support the Xbox 360 in South Africa. If this type of energy and enthusiasm continues, then this may well be the start of South Africa's ascent into the true global gaming market.

360 Insider would like to extend its congratulations and thanks to Microsoft, BT Games, MiDigital and the many others who put the time, effort and financial support into the South African launch of Xbox 360.



THE N



NEW ERA

We live in a rapidly evolving society. For better or for worse, things are never how they were just a few years ago. Technology, fashion, what constitutes a PG certificate and so on, all change virtually daily. The videogame industry is no different, and while the games have certainly been getting prettier, so have many of the players...

BY **WILLIAM HALEY**
AKA FALL3N ANGELZ
WHO HAS A STUPENDOUS GAMERSCORE OF 33,333



THE NEW ERA

THE HISTORY OF FEMALES IN GAMING

Female game characters originated most notably as the cliché princess-in-peril that is now synonymous with Nintendo. Every game from *Donkey Kong* to *Zelda* to *Mario* had a helpless maiden that needed rescuing. Here's a look at a few digital ladies who decided to go against the trend and do a little butt kicking of their own...

SAMUS (METROID)

Of course, one of the biggest shockers in gaming history was the fact that the little cluster of pixels that just spent the last few days blasting metroids and rolling up into a ball was actually a girl. While the concept of an ultra-tough, ultra-cool female main character was definitely original, the fact that you could play as Samus in her underwear didn't do much to help the cause of taking women in videogames more seriously...



CHUN-LI (STREET FIGHTER)

Chun-Li is the kick-ass-now-take-names-later Chinese brawler that started it all. In a male-dominated game, Chun-Li stood out not only because she was still beautiful even after she had been busted up a little, but because she could hold her own against massive sumo wrestlers and Russian combatants nearly four times her size. Her outfit may be purposely revealing, which might normally be considered exploitative, but since nearly every other male character in *Street Fighter II* might as well have not even been wearing clothes, she fit right in.



LARA CROFT (TOMB RAIDER)

Lara Croft was a girl for one simple reason: the developer thought if you're going to have to stare at a character for hours on end, it might as well be a beautiful woman (something the team behind *Oblivion* might want to think about for the next *Elder Scrolls*). Turns out that was the best decision Core could have made, because almost overnight a star was born. It's safe to say that had the first *Tomb Raider* not featured the great gameplay experience and visuals that it did, it still would have sold tons of copies.

Lara was the stripper version of Indiana Jones, only with a cocky attitude and sexy accent that had prepubescent boys all over the world going nuts, and apparently quite a few ladies as well. Ms Croft is hands-down the winner for the most 'I wish I could be her' votes from all the interviewees...



RAIDEN (MGS2)

Oops, how did he get in here?



As any number of Xbox Live subscribers will attest, female gamers are invading the digital playing fields that were once only filled by you, a few embarrassingly stereotypical male gamers, and Comic Book Guy from *The Simpsons*.

While some of said female gamers may have more in common with the 'Don't you own a mirror?' staff at Gamespot than they should, it's not the face that's attached to the headset on the other side of the line, it's the fact that they're even there at all.

Not so long ago, videogames were considered an exclusive hobby 'for nerds only'. While we were shedding a tear for *Aerith*, and blasting Nazis in *Wolfenstein*, girls were painting their nails and buying shoes. Stereotypes to be sure, but neither is unfounded in truth. Boys were brought up to play with balls and girls with dolls, and the same was generally true of videogames. It wasn't until movie stars, musicians, and Hollywood embraced the hobby that it truly became mainstream. Mainstream meant it was finally acceptable to play games and not be called names, no matter who you were. Society certainly helped nudge girls and say, "It's okay, videogames are cool now," but even more so, it was the new and unique titles coming out that appealed to our better halves.

Games like *The Sims*, *Dance Dance Revolution*, the countless iterations of puzzle games and MMORPGs like *EverQuest* and *World Of Warcraft* all offer up an experience that many girls can more easily embrace over the violent, gun-happy or sports-related titles obviously aimed at males. Those series have a broad appeal that doesn't necessarily cater to one specific audience. "I think companies are starting to understand that women



don't want games like *Barbie* and *My Little Pony* targeted at them," says PMS Batgirl (25-year-old ER secretary Kristin Reilly). "Females don't always want pink systems, but some do. Not shoving the 'girl' thing down women's throats helps broaden their appeal to female gamers."

While men have been trying to get their female friends and significant others into gaming since the days of *Pong*, not everyone is happy that it is finally happening. "Since I became the first female programmer, there were threads about me on South Korean forums where they started to talk about me more than about male gamers. It's like they think I took another male programmer's position," says 21-year-old Seo Ji Soo, better known as South Korea's reigning *StarCraft* champion, Tossgirl. "Just by what I wear, people say bad things about me. When I see people cussing about me on forums, I feel very disappointed and bad."

She is definitely not alone. "There's a lot of trash-talking slung our way. I usually just say 'good game' and exit the post-game lobby as fast as I can because I don't want to hear it," says PMS Batgirl. While all girl gamers interviewed mentioned that they receive several insults a day (most of them unrepeatable), it was actually another female who cut the deepest. "I was sitting





FRAG DOLLS/
The original line-up that kick-started this whole controversy. Damn them!

“Hiding behind a microphone gives people the feeling that they can act however they want”

on a table with my laptop and gear next to me,” Batgirl explains, “wearing a PMS shirt, playing *Lumines* on my PSP, and this mom walked up and asked me if she could set her son’s rig by me. I told her yeah, I didn’t care where she set his stuff – I wasn’t running the tournament. She looked at me and said, ‘Oh, you’re functional not just decorative?’ I couldn’t speak, pause my game, or even move. Her son got her out of there before I could recover.”

Besides the fact that hiding behind a microphone gives many people the feeling that they can act however they want, there’s also a bit of a grudge for some old-school male gamers. “It’s like we’ve been saying videogames are not just for dorks for all these years,” argues one Xbox.com poster, “yet everyone else was making fun of us and generalising the kind of people we were. Now girls are trying to slide in under the radar unscathed, and want to cry foul for all the flak they’re taking. However, that’s just the way the world works. We paid our dues, now it’s their turn.” That is definitely one way to approach the situation, but wouldn’t it be better all round if you used your experiences as motivation for welcoming others into the gaming world rather than punishing them?

True Gamers or attention seekers?

A lot of men and even women look upon girl clans with a suspicious eye. The most common point brought to light is whether these girls deserve the special attention they receive simply for being girls. PMS Clan and the Frag Dolls may be better than many gamers, female and male alike, but as far as tournaments go, their performance continues to underwhelm. Moreover, while even qualifying for many pro tournaments is a feat in itself, it’s somewhat questionable when all the spotlights are on the Frag Dolls

and no one even remembers the name of whoever took first place.

Morgon of MyGamerCard.net says: “On one side, I’m sure most female gamers don’t want to be patronised or singled out exclusively just because they’re female. On the flip side of that, I do think there needs to be a certain degree of visibility for them so that they can show not only men, but other women, that they can enjoy games, make the games fun, and even provide a different degree or ‘level’ of play from what you might be used to.” Therefore, whether it’s your friend’s mom, PMS Clan, the Frag Dolls, or even the not-so-subtle girls of WatchUsGame.com, regardless of why they get all the attention and whether it is deserved or not, the bottom line is that anyone with a controller in their hand is a gamer.

Last, and probably least, are the infamous booth babes. “I think booth babes are a slap in the face,” says PMS Batgirl. “I know several models who do booth babe work because it pays well, but I really wish that companies would go for less skin and more skill. Yes, sex sells, but if anything, you’re degrading women, which gives me a sour taste in my mouth toward your company, and alienates myself and a lot of my fellow gamers, male and female. I’ve also heard media complain about how they wish the booth babes knew what product they were pushing.” In an industry that is so heavy on eye candy in the first place, if companies need to rely on scantily clad models to draw attention to their product, it’s very likely they are doing something wrong.

Drama QUEENS

One of the many emerging gamer girl groups is Xbox.com’s ‘GamerchiX’. Started by Xbox.com Community Developer Christa Phillips (aka Trixi), this group has

SEXIST GAMES

Dead Or Alive

Over the years, the made-for-males-by-males industry has produced a few blatantly sexist and exploitative games. The *Dead Or Alive* series introduced the now-universal ‘jiggle’ physics, as well as creating the *DOAX* spin-off series where the female characters go to an island for some soft-core exercises and what appears to be ‘volleyball’. After the latest iteration in the series, it’s clear Team Ninja now expects the sex appeal to sell the same game year after year.



Leisure Suit Larry

Like James Bond films, *The Wedding Crashers* and *Revenge Of The Nerds*, *Leisure Suit Larry* is ridiculous for one reason: this guy would never be able to get the beautiful women who throw themselves at his feet without some sort of illegal substance. It’s obvious that Larry is and always has been just a sexually frustrated designer living out his anger toward women and unrealistic fantasies through a videogame. Seeing the popularity of the series, it’s safe to say that he is not alone... The same could be said for *Rumble Roses* or *DOA*, as one look at Tomonobu Itagaki (the game’s creator) and it’s safe to say the man has got to be paying for it (imagine a face being mistaken for a piece of cheese and getting grated accordingly). However, it’s only a matter of time until the women in the industry strike back, so don’t be surprised when *Thunder Down Under: The Game* is announced in the next year or so.

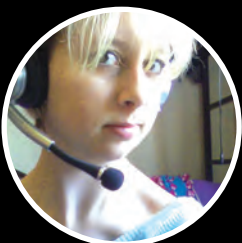




THE NEW ERA

SO WHAT IS A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A PMS MEMBER LIKE?

PMS Fedaykin sheds some light: "Crazy, fun, and full of giggles. It's an indescribable feeling to be surrounded by other girls who share one passion... gaming. In practice, we're encouraging each other to get better, giving out tips and strategies, all the while laughing about random jokes and funny stories." No matter how hard we tried, Fedaykin wasn't willing to offer any pillow fight stories, but we are quite sure they happen...



CRAZYFUN/OMGbunkbeds! We're on t... um, never mind.

POWERHOUSES

TOSSGIRL, UNDEFEATED CHAMP

Meet Tossgirl, the biggest thing to hit Asia since bird flu. At first, you might think she's another K-pop singer or cosplay model, but she is the undefeated *StarCraft* women's champion. "My parents wanted me to be successful by studying. I especially regret that I disappointed my mother by becoming a programmer. However, after seeing me on TV and seeing other people watch me on TV, I think they finally understood why I wanted to be a programmer. Sometimes when there is an article in the newspaper about me, they will call me and discuss the article with me. Now they are proud of me." Although her physical beauty undoubtedly gets her quite a bit of attention, seeing her in action will silence any naysayers and possibly bring a tear to the eye. Her APM (actions per minute) is up to 360. Coincidence? We're going to go with 'yes'...

JADE RAYMOND, PRODUCER FOR UBISOFT'S ASSASSIN'S CREED


Appearing at this year's E3 to publicise future Game Of The Year candidate *Assassin's Creed*, Jade Raymond surprised a few people as the 'booth babe who actually knew what she was talking about'. In reality, Jade is the producer of *Assassin's Creed* and besides having an extremely cool name and ridiculously infectious smile, she represents what is sure to be a growing trend in the industry: female game developers. Jade has been in the industry for many years, graduating from college with a degree in computer science and going on to program and produce a number of titles for Sony and EA, most notably *The Sims Online*. In 2003, she landed a co-hosting spot on G4's Electric Playground (boosting the show's initial fan base of zero considerably), then returned to her native Canada to produce games for Ubisoft. When asked what it's like being the 'girl' in the group, she said that she's never been a man so a comparison is tough, but the staff at Ubisoft is very nice.

CHERIE ROBERTS, IGN


Cherie is a queen of all trades: model, journalist, and photographer. She freelances for both IGN.com and SuicideGirls, and dreams of developing her own game someday. "I'm a huge pervert, so it'd probably be some weird sex-simulator. If I had it my way, it would be the dirtiest, raunchiest sim-game you could find - even nastier than the Japanese ones. That is my dream, one huge videogame orgy-fest. Don't tell me that it doesn't make any sense. It's my dream, not yours." Actually, we're pretty sure that's the same game we've been wanting since we were kids. However, we're not so sure about Cherie's other fantasy. "I don't like talking about it, but Tommy Vercetti from *GTA: Vice City* might've been my biggest crush. I mean, the way he steals cars, and beats hookers... My kind of man." When not drinking sailors under the table, Cherie finds that videogames find their way into every aspect of her life: "One model I shot wanted to do a shoot and have tip-offs for *World Of Warcraft*, so we did it. It's pretty awesome. I love that I get to talk to hot chicks about nothing in particular and get paid to do it!"

STEPHANIE CHAN, PULPARCADE.COM

Colourist for Marvel Comics and Web mistress of the videogame-inspired Website Pulp Arcade, Stephanie hopes to spread a little knowledge. "Pulp Arcade is dedicated to news and information about videogame-related comics. There are many great (and not so great) comics published based on videogame properties, which not a lot of people seem to know about. I found there are a lot more comics published than I thought. I created the site to keep track of all the videogame-related comic news that comes out. I haven't found another site like it yet, so hopefully I can stay unique." As far as videogames go, Stephanie would like to see a little originality. "I never had kids, but I thought this was the best idea for a game ever. I want to develop a pregnancy simulator. What you do to your body through mini-games will affect the baby's health. The final level would be a first-person POV of you lying on the hospital bed with your legs split wide and up in the air. And this is why nobody will ever hire me to design games." We sense a pattern here.



FANCY A CHERIE? Cherie can be seen at IGN.com, SuicideGirls.com, and of course, Myspace.com/cherieroberts



IF ANYONE CAN/ To get your read, make your way to PulpArcade.com for all the latest on game-related comics



“GamerchiX has an emphasis on companionship, it's not just about being female.”

an emphasis on 'companionship, not competition'. Trixie explains: "GamerchiX is not just about being female. It's also about the commitment to being a good member of the community, and a good role model for young gamer girls. GamerchiX is not about competing with the boys or with anyone. There are tons of clans and other groups where girls can 'prove themselves'."

The genesis of GamerchiX came in the form of an Xbox.com thread that met with mixed reactions. In response to the idea of a 'GamerdudeZ', a gamer by the name of HSK Avant Garde replied that it would never happen because "... guys don't attract publicity like girls do." He then said that female clans are famous solely due to their gender. Trixie responded by lowering his Community User Level by two whole levels (anyone who has been on the Xbox forums knows it takes quite a while to improve your CUL), deleting his post, and then saying: "Golly, what happened to your Community User Level? That's a shame," and followed that up with, "This is MY thread. If you want to spout venom about female gamers and your pet theories about why we do or do not get attention, go start your own thread. But don't bring up that nonsense in my thread. And yeah... look out or you are next. Consider yourself warned."

With that, the floodgates opened and it was like blood in the water. Many male posters struck back, but it was a gamer by the name of Luckiee who put it best: "Since when is stating your opinion (or the truth) 'spouting venom'? There is no way that any sane person could honestly say that the PMS Clan is never given attention just because they are girls. All girl clans and the attention that is given to them almost make me ashamed to be a female gamer."

When asked about his opinion on the matter, HSK had this to say: "It was a 'This is my thread, and unless you post something that I agree with, I'm going to delete your post and make you pay' kind of thing. I view the forums as a place to openly debate and discuss things. Apparently Trixie doesn't." But he insists he doesn't have anything against female gamers: "A gamer is a gamer in my book. Special attention should be given to people who have accomplished something... I don't think being born a male or female is a major accomplishment." HSK doesn't see the need for gender-specific groups: "It's not just females that the jerks on Live make fun of, it's everyone. So why not segregate even further then? Let's do it by race, gender, religion and so on. That way nobody can make fun of anyone. The truth

is that someone will always find something wrong with someone else, even if they're exactly the same. Jerks are jerks, period."

Aside from the drama regarding its beginnings, and the questionable action taken by an Xbox representative in response to someone simply stating their opinion in a public forum, the idea of a group of women all getting together and helping each other becomes more comfortable with the Live experience, and gaming in general is definitely a step in the right direction. As long as the man-hating is kept to a minimum, groups like GamerchiX and a few more supportive, respectful male gamers will go a long way to strengthening the gaming community as a whole.

Inspired by the Xbox.com group, one of the latest features of the newly revised MyGamerCard.net is a 'GamerchiX Leaderboard', which produced nearly 250 GamerCards in the first day. The number one girl goes by the handle of TGC Sirius389 (formerly XSiriusGamr389X) with just over 25,000 GamerPoints, and proves that girl gamers are similar to male gamers in many different ways, not only the skill and the ability to sit on their arse for long periods of time, but also the willingness to use gamesaves. The second-place card belongs to 'tripodcat' with only 13,000 GamerPoints, and the majority of the girls on the board have a GamerScore of 9,000 or less. In fact, almost 200 of the cards don't even break the 4,000 mark.

Out of the 200+ cards that belong to girl gamers, the total GamerScore rests at approximately 550,000, whereas the main leaderboard's Top 20 alone makes up more than twice that. That doesn't necessarily point towards a lack of skill on the girls' parts, but rather a lack of competitiveness

- that and the fact that most of the girls on your Friends List are either still playing *Zuma* or *Final Fantasy XI*... "I think I could make the [leaderboards] if they had 'most time wasted on one game without benefit'," says Trixie who spends the majority of her online time spitting rainbow-coloured balls out of a frog.

The Future

The gaming industry is going to continue to grow in many ways, and an increasing number of female gamers will inevitably be a natural part of that. Girls are the last horse to cross the finish line, and most of them have a sort of innocent 'Hey, I'm new here' attitude. However, when guys start slamming them with sexist remarks or hateful messages, they understandably begin to get jaded or turned off all together. It's common knowledge that a little common courtesy and respect for your fellow gamer, male and female alike, will go a long way towards making Live a much friendlier and diverse place.

PMS Batgirl says: "My ex used to LAN with me occasionally. But he wasn't as good as I was and whined about how much I gamed and that I spent more time with my XBL friends than him." To many readers, that may sound off all too familiar, albeit with the roles usually reversed. Nowadays it is not unlikely that the mother picking out baby food in the grocery store or the attractive girl serving you your morning coffee is also the same person that handed you your arse in *GRAW* last night... "I'm a gamer. I just happen to be female," says PMS Fedaykin. "Last time I checked, gaming had no gender."



VERSUS/Voodoo has left the *Frag Dolls* to start her own gamer group: 'Versus'





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Release date/ Q2 2007

NEED TO KNOW

Publisher/
Take 2 Interactive
Developer/
Irrational Games
Genre/FPS
Players/TBA
Xbox Live/No

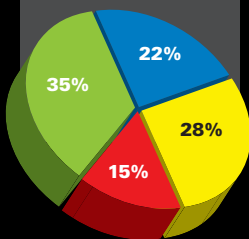
Briefly

Supposedly, the 'deepest FPS game ever made', *Bioshock* looks to put the power of choice in the hands of the player.

IN THE PIE

Out to shock you...

- Watery graves
- Big Daddies
- Little Sisters
- Super powers



BIOSHOCK

Don't do anything we wouldn't

Ken Levine is a fan boy. He's the kind of developer we love to meet. The kind who bounds into the room with the energy of an overenthusiastic six year old loaded with sugar. The kind who shakes every hand in the room, then sits down and immediately starts talking passionately about all manner of geeky topics (comics, movies, gaming... you name it) to people he has only just met. He's the kind who's almost too eager to get on with talking one-to-one about his creation, before going off on tangents you never even thought of. He's a gamer, a writer, a geek and a fan boy... and we love him for it.

Why? Probably because when the creators of a game are as enthusiastic about it as the gamers waiting to play it, you know that only good things can happen. Well, most of the time. Thankfully, Irrational Games is one of those rare places where it's not about the money, the prestige, or the need to push products out the door. Instead, publisher Take 2 (who bought Irrational back in January) has given the developer a huge amount of creative freedom to develop the games it wants to develop. The result? Right now, it's *Bioshock* – Ken's prodigal son of whom he's so proud, and the reason why he made our recent visit to see the game at Irrational's offices in Boston such a joy.

Of course, it's very easy to dismiss *Bioshock* just from glancing at the various screenshots scattered around these pages. After all, the Xbox 360 isn't exactly short of first-person shooters (*Quake 4*, *Prey* and *Call Of Duty 2* and up-and-coming FPSs such as *TimeShift*, *F.E.A.R.* and *Half-Life 2*), so adding yet another one to the

increasingly growing pile isn't exactly the most stimulating news ever. However, wait! Don't get bored and run off. The thing that makes *Bioshock* stand out isn't so much its functionality as an FPS, but rather everything else going on around the shooting. In fact, the actual blasting almost takes a backseat to all the other facets of the game, just because there are so damn many of them.

Take control

Put simply, *Bioshock* is less of an FPS and more a sandbox-style game (much as we loathe the term ourselves) where progress and decisions are made entirely by the player. It has elements of an RPG to it, much in the same way that *Deus Ex* had, that allow you to develop your character in all manner of different ways. It uses the concept of crafting – something once restricted to only the most hardcore of MMO adventure games – to give players the opportunity to construct their own weapons, items and armour. Most importantly of all, it really tries to make you think about your actions rather than just putting you against a horde of faceless enemies and letting you pull the trigger. It's a game that tries to think 'outside the box' (again, another term we loathe) as much as possible, without taking things so far that you haven't got a clue what you're doing. As Levine so aptly puts it, *Bioshock* is "... the same, but different."

As is the case with most great games, it all starts with an idea. In *Bioshock's* case, that idea is one of capitalist freedom and the desire to do what you want (which is somewhat ironic, as that's both the focus of the plot and the emphasis of how you can create your own playing style as you

“**Bioshock is all about choices... choices that ask the biggest question of them all: 'Would you?'**”



go). In terms of plot, things kick off with a bang... literally. One minute you're on a plane, the next you're flailing about the water after a horrendous crash with no idea of where you are or what's going on. Luckily, there's a lighthouse in the distance, and a short swim later, you're standing inside the entrance to Rapture, the underwater city that plays host to *Bioshock's* rather tragic narrative. And by tragic, we don't mean the usual FPS fare like invading aliens, gates to hell being opened or generic 'It's war!' storytelling. Instead, *Bioshock* tells a tale of humankind's aspirations, one man's attempts to manifest them, and how greed and avarice can lead to their destruction.

Survival of the fittest

Sounds pretty grim, doesn't it? Well, not surprisingly. As settings for a videogame go, the world of Rapture couldn't be more atmospheric: a failed utopia set in 1940's America, built for the world's best and brightest to live with no restrictions on technology or morality. The fact that you come in some 20 years later when the place is on the verge of being reclaimed by the sea makes things worse, because you're entering a world where wealth and prosperity have given way to a desperate struggle to survive for those who remain.

Thankfully, you're not totally screwed. In fact, you're somewhat better off than the miserable excuses for humans left wandering the decks of Rapture. How you go about surviving and finding out exactly what it was that brought about the downfall of the city, is what makes up the crux of the game. Ultimately, *Bioshock* is all about choices. Not just ones that revolve around mundane decisions such as which way to go next,

or how you approach a problem and eventually solve it, but also choices that ask the biggest question of them all: "Would you?"

Take the most important issue that you'll have to address while working your way around Rapture: the collection of Adam that you'll need in order to 'upgrade' your abilities. Whereas before, Adam was commonplace before Rapture's downfall, now the only source of it lies within the corpses of the dead. Even worse, the only creatures capable of recycling it from this raw form into something more useable are Little Sisters: small girl-like beings that, despite looking, sounding, and acting like children, can inject dead matter into themselves and then excrete it as pure Adam. Yuck. And it's here that your dilemma lies: to get your hands on the Adam within, you need to interact in some way with the Little Sisters... but how? Although there are numerous other solutions that involve plenty of clever thinking and planning, the obvious answer would be to kill them, but that has consequences of its own aside from the destruction of a vital resource and the potential wrath of the relevant Big Daddy (the protectors of the Little Sisters). The question is: can you bring yourself to kill something so obviously innocent? Those of you nodding yes are either psychopaths or clearly don't get what *Bioshock* is trying to do. Rather than just being a game, Irrational is attempting to absorb you into its world and make you think about your actions.

Naturally, this absorption spills over into other areas of the game too. *Bioshock's* complete lack of menus and other more conventional game systems, for instance, means that everything is

NO CONTEST

Would you Adam and Eve it?

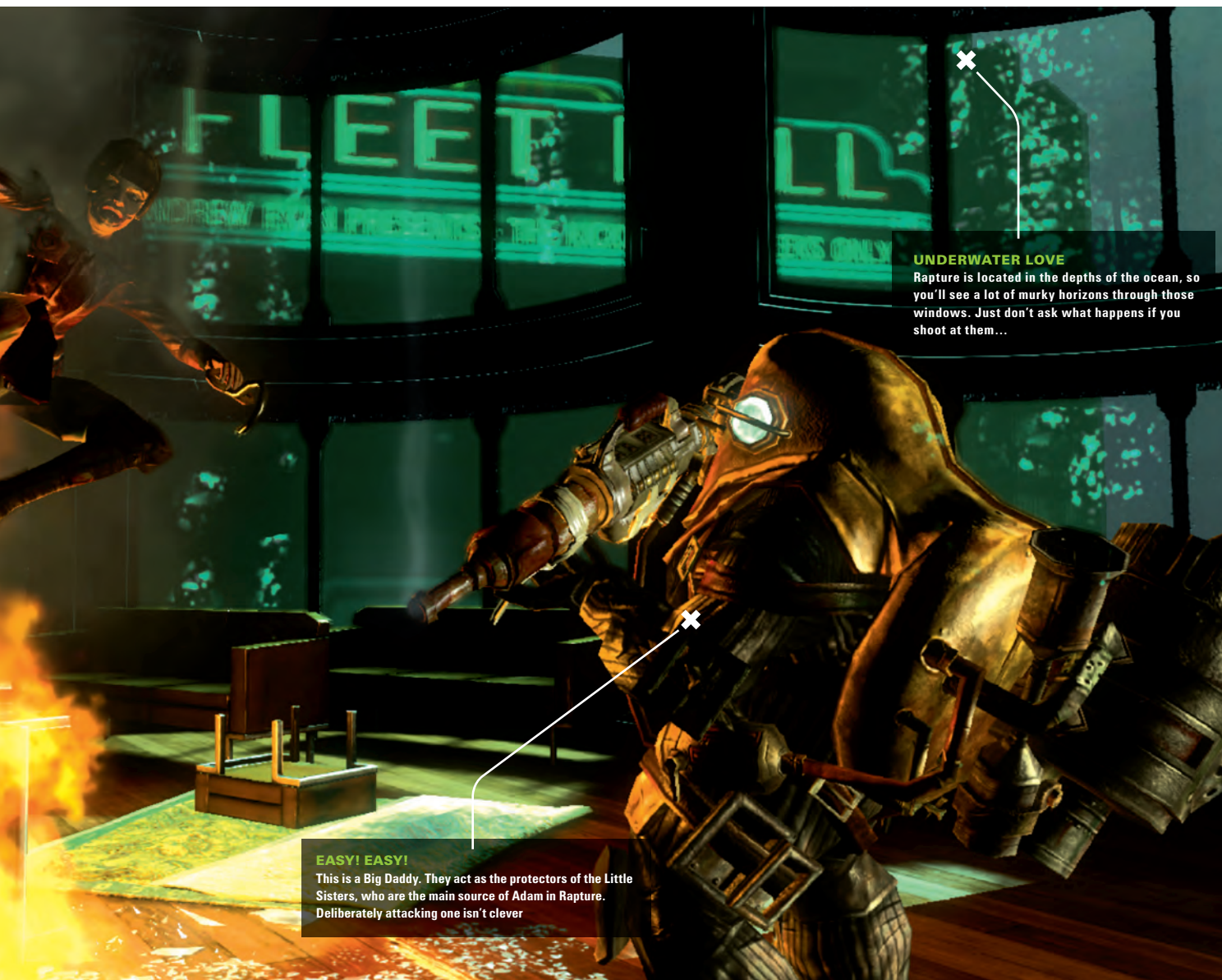
As with all good utopian societies, it's the discovery of a rare and valuable resource that has caused the downfall of Rapture. Originally manifesting as a type of sea slug (really) that had the ability to digest human tissue and turn it into pure stem-cells (yes, really), the material known only as Adam can be absorbed into the human body to heal illness and enhance yourself both physically and mentally. Unfortunately, a battle between two factions for control of Adam eventually tore Rapture apart, and it's this conflict that you have to investigate... among other things. Oh, and did we mention that you can use Adam yourself? Don't get yourself addicted now...



VERSION TESTED
40%
COMPLETE



CALM DOWN, GIRL! Not surprisingly, constant genetic mutation has made the Splicers somewhat angry

**EASY! EASY!**

This is a Big Daddy. They act as the protectors of the Little Sisters, who are the main source of Adam in Rapture. Deliberately attacking one isn't clever

UNDERWATER LOVE

Rapture is located in the depths of the ocean, so you'll see a lot of murky horizons through those windows. Just don't ask what happens if you shoot at them...

TALKING POLITICS**Viva la capitalism**

Behind every great story, there's great inspiration...

Ever heard of Ayn Rand? Unless you're into obscure political and philosophical debate, probably not, but Rand's writings have proven to be a constant source of inspiration for Levine during the creation of *Bioshock*. As a supporter of capitalism and free will, Rand loathed countries like the United States and argued that the only way for humankind to survive was to throw off the shackles of government oppression. The only difference is how far Rand's concepts are being taken in the game. Whereas she expressed her opinions through literature, Andrew Ryan (the creator of Rapture) founded a society on them instead. We all know how that turned out...

Ayn Rand's book, *Atlas Shrugged*, is available from all good bookshops and is incredibly hard going.



1



LOOK, MR BUBBLES... ADAM!

Little girls – should you kill one or not?

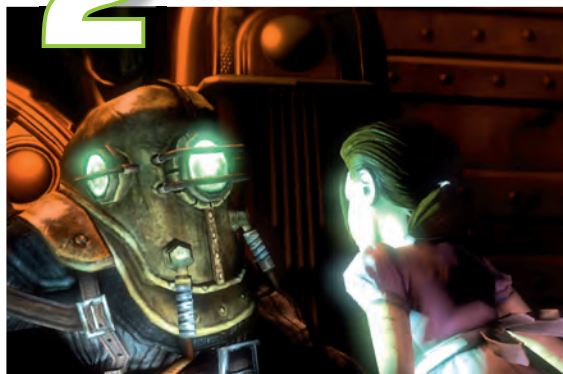
1 Gatherers, or Little Sisters as they're more commonly known, are the only creatures capable of recycling Adam, Rapture's most precious resource. If you want some, then you've got a moral dilemma on your hands: can you kill a little girl in order to get it?

2 Of course, you might not have much of an option there, because for every Little Sister in

Bioshock there's a Big Daddy, essentially the armoured car keeping you from the Little Sister's cash prize. They're ferociously protective beasts and if you mess with one...

3 ... then this will happen. The Big Daddy will warn you off at first, but keep on annoying it and the chances of the Big Daddy tearing you to pieces are pretty high.

2



handled by 'real world' accessibility. Weapon and ability upgrades are dealt with through function-specific machines that have to be accessed before you can perform the relevant action, while the Dynamic Training System lets players prove their skills and advising accordingly, rather than forcing you through a series of tutorials just for the sake of it. It's a system that works really well too. Players who show a natural instinct for picking up the game's various mechanics, such as avoiding security cameras and fighting enemies, will be left to get on with it, while those lacking the necessary skills will gently be coerced with hints until eventually a full tutorial becomes available to those who really need it.

Freedom of choice

To add to your absorption into the world, there's the freedom that the game grants you over how you advance around Rapture. Deciding which areas of expertise to specialise in when enhancing yourself with Adam ultimately changes the approach you need to



THINK!

Use your noodle...

You don't have to rush into every situation guns blazing. There's a logical solution to everything too. Say, there's a Big Daddy wandering around and a couple of Splicers scavenging the area. By spraying the Big Daddy with Splicer Irritant, the Splicers would attack it and leave the way clear for you to nip past unharmed while the battle ensues.



use when solving other problems. For example, an enhancement of your weapon skills obviously improves your firepower and ability to adapt your guns, while bolstering hacking skills gives you more of a chance when trying to overcome the various security systems you'll encounter. That these various categories stretch off into lengthy skill trees makes for some tough decisions, as you won't have enough Adam to take advantage of them all. Elsewhere, weapon upgrades and item creation introduce a huge element of crafting into the game, which will no doubt please the hoarder in all of us as we scour the depths of Rapture in order to find those rarities that can be used to give that little bit of extra oomph to our firepower. There are also the Plasmids: special physical skills that the player can take advantage of in order to solve certain problems. Again though, which ones you use and how you use them allow you to completely customise your game experience. Some, like Pyrokinesis and Telekinesis, speak for themselves, while others like Splicer Irritant (anything

STAY ON TARGET!
When tagged with Security Beacons, Splicers become perfect targets for the local security drones...

covered in it immediately becomes a target for nearby Splicer enemies), Security Beacon (similar to Splicer Irritant, except making use of Rapture's security systems) or Springboard Trap (launch anything touching it into the air) have their own uses depending on the situation. There are even Plasmids that give you power over Little Sisters or even Big Daddies, but because you can only equip a limited number of Plasmids at any time (and changing them out requires a visit to a Plasmid Load-Out machine and costs Adam), there's yet another difficult set of choices to be made.

It certainly all sounds rather complex, but then it's to Irrational's credit just how smoothly the game manages to integrate all these concepts into what otherwise appears to be a straightforward FPS. And it is straightforward. There's nothing stopping you from ignoring all the additional depth that *Bioshock* has and approaching it like any other regular FPS. Then, why would you want to do that when there are so many 'vanilla' shooters out there? We honestly don't

know. Personally, we'd take *Bioshock's* hugely absorbing world and almost endless promise of freedom any day of the week. Providing that Levine and his team can make good on their promises and deliver a game that's a true breath of fresh air to a genre that's becoming increasingly flaccid on the 360, we might just have to go back to Boston and plant a big wet kiss right on him. Not that we're into men with beards.

Martin Mathers

FACT: The team at Irrational is huge fans of Harmonix's PS2 game, *Guitar Hero*. During our visit, however, a girl thrashed *Bioshock's* Associate Producer Joe Faulstick at it. Ha!

HOW'S IT LOOKING?

Rather gorgeous and a refreshing change from Cookie-Cutter FPS #42. It's like Irrational took our thoughts and then made them real... thanks, Irrational!

Thriller?



BIOG

NAME/ Ken Levine
COMPANY / Irrational Games
JOB TITLE/ Creative Director
WORKING ON/ Bioshock

So, you have half an hour with one of the most passionate developers around. Where do you begin? At the beginning, of course...

360 Insider: Why Bioshock? Why did you decide to create this world?

Ken Levine: We'd just done *SWAT 4* and that was a pretty straightforward game to develop for us. We looked at *SWAT 3* and realised that it wasn't that broken as a model, plus the publisher wanted a straightforward game, but that's not why people come to Irrational. They don't come to develop somebody else's games or solve problems that have already been solved, and I think for the industry that's a big thing. We want to be solving new problems, breaking down new barriers. We've had a lot of freedom to do what we've wanted to do and pursue our own interests. However, the benefit for us is that we get to hire great people. Especially after E3, the range of people who want to come here is amazing, and the better people you have, the better games you can develop.

360 Insider: But aren't you worried that many developers have to take an idea and adapt it, rather than saying, "I've got a great idea!" and hoping someone bites?

KL: There's a saying in Hollywood, coined by a writer named William Goldman, which is "In Hollywood, people want

Goldman, which is "In Hollywood, people want the same but different," and that's really true for our industry too. You want something where you can hold onto it and say, "I understand the core of this," but then also be excited about the new stuff as well. When you have the same but same, you have people thinking that they've played this before. What we're doing with *Bioshock* is that it's the same, it's a shooter, but the depth of the shooter is unlike anything anyone has ever seen before. It follows in the tradition of things like *Half-Life* where people got the interface right away, but they had never seen that kind of in-game cinematics or the AI. You have many games, like *Sacrifice*, which I loved, but it had the problem of being different but different. The game was unique and the aesthetic was also unique, so the audience was wondering what on earth they were looking at. The original *System Shock* had the same problem. I remember picking it up back in the day and even though I loved it, I picked up the box and wondered "What is this thing?". Therefore, *Bioshock's* first job is to make people understand that it's a shooter, but a deeper shooter than you've ever seen before.

360 Insider: What is it

about Bioshock that makes it deep?

KL: Just from a very practical standpoint, there's the stuff you can do in the game: the weapon modification, the Plasmid system, the crafting, the hacking into security systems, the ways you can interact with the AI by manipulating them to fight your battles for you or make them act in ways you'd never seen before. There's so much you can do, and these things aren't like one-off things like mini-games. These are things that combine together in incredibly powerful ways. We've shown you three of the Plasmids today, just three, and how those interact with each other in so many ways, so you can imagine how much further you can go with all the others. The challenge for us though, and I think we're succeeding, is to make it all work through a very straightforward interface, with a game that feels and plays like a shooter, but is so much more. If you want to play this game just as a first-person shooter then you can, but then there's all the depth it gives you too. I think that's the key to the future, giving a point of entry for the gamer where they can get straight into it, but then get deeper and deeper.

360 Insider: How do you know when to say, "We have to stop coming up with ideas and just finish this?"


KL: How do you know when to make that first move on that girl you really like? I mean, you just have to listen to your gut, use your brain. In our case, you have to look around you, play a lot of games, think a lot, talk to your colleagues and people you trust, show it to people as you're playing along. If you think about it, it's very rare that

a truly great game comes out. I remember back when we were doing *System Shock 2*, someone asked me "So, Ken, is this game going to be scary?", which kind of threw me. I was doing all the things in my gut that told me how to make it scary, but was it actually going to scare people? I had no idea! The only person who had been scared by it was me because I was writing all the stuff! However, that's what game developers do. I think the best developers are smart enough to realise they don't know everything and rely on their colleagues, testing and journalists to say "Are you crazy?", because there has to be sometimes where you say "Yes, I am crazy but I'm going to do it anyway." Like the Big Daddy/Little Sister thing. Many people said it should have been something else, but I stood by it as an emotional and ethical part of the game. I knew it had to be in there and I had to say no to a lot of people, and I think the final result vindicates my decision.

360 Insider: But where does an idea like that come from?

KL: It evolved. For a long time, we had very traditional monsters and I wasn't happy with that. It's always scary to have something you can identify with like zombies and vampires, because deep down you can see that they're people. In terms of the Little Sisters, we wanted to do the next thing with AI and the notion of relationships, not just between you and the AI, but between AI and AI, and the idea of a protector and the protected came about. At first, we had the protected as little insect creatures and when I wondered why I hated them, I realised it was because you don't empathise with them – when you hurt them, you just don't care. Then one of

“The shooter genre has really stagnated. It hasn't advanced since *Half-Life*, so we're looking to push beyond that.”



“ I think the best developers are smart enough to realise they don't know everything ”

our artists drew something resembling a little girl and I knew that's what we needed, because then the player can see the exploitation of the relationship in this world that says it's okay to make these little kids do this.

360 Insider: Is it harder developing for the 360 than for the PC, from an interface point of view? The PC has an entire keyboard, so you can be more technical...

KL: I don't think you want to use that as a crutch though. *Bioshock* is all about offering depth without compromising itself, but not weighing the player down with things, so we've got ideas like the Dynamic Training System. It's going to be a hell of a lot more work for us, but it'll be worthwhile in the end because the shooter genre has really stagnated as of late. It hasn't really advanced since *Half-Life*, so we're

looking to push beyond that.

360 Insider: Do you move from deck to deck and progress, or will you be able to return to past areas once you have progressed?

KL: There are going to be things that are too hard for you to do the first time, but will be possible the second or third time you come past. There's obviously a repopulation system, so new monsters and other things will be present when you return. You won't just be able to clear a deck out and then come back to an empty place. In addition, there will be things like security stations where you can either do a hard hack the first time or find a code later on, so there'll be value in going back to places.

360 Insider: Is crafting essential to the game's structure?

KL: It's critical in one place, which obviously introduces the player to the art of crafting, but then it's up to the player

what he/she does with it beyond that. There are people who'll specialise and spend a lot of time and resources on it, and there are people who won't care about it at all, so it's another way for the player to make the game he/she wants to make. That's really what we want to do. By supporting a number of different play styles, people like you and me will go out and search for obscure items to build that skill up, and others will just want to shoot stuff.

360 Insider: Why did you set the game in the forties and fifties?

KL: I love the idea of taking a period of technology that everybody knows and then branching off from that point. The people in our game started from the same point we did, but then went off on a different path. I think it's just a great period that's sorely underused in videogames. Again, it's the same but different. People are familiar

with that look, but they've never really seen it in a videogame before, and once our artists got that look, they just ran with it.

360 Insider: How are you handling the Achievements?

KL: I honestly think that Achievements based on you finishing levels are pointless – there's nothing unique about them, so why bother? I reckon our Achievements will be more focused on play style than completion. I liked *Battlefield 2* where you would get medals for doing particular things, and I'm a big fan of little micro-rewards. I'll play *Diablo* just to get the tiny little gems and so forth, so the more you recognise that, the better. It encourages replay value, which is what we're aiming for. This is a new thing for the industry, so you have some people who haven't really thought it through and are shipping a game with that element lacking. Where's the fun in that?



Liveaware

The 360 version will have full online multiplayer with a variety of modes

TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8



STYLE/ You gotta look good, to be this good.

NEED TO KNOW

Publisher/ Activision
Developer/ Neversoft Interactive
Genre/ Action
Players/ TBA
Xbox Live/ Yes

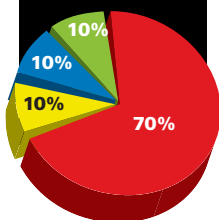
Briefly

It's the Tony Hawk franchise, back doing impressive tricks instead of trying to save the world.

IN THE PIE

It's all about...

- Hurting yourself
- Hurting others
- Making trouble
- Being cool



The Tony Hawk franchise will always retain its prestigious accolade of having taught an entire generation of gamers the tricky lingo of the skateboarder, from A to Z through kick-flip right up to bio-misty-natas-spin. The last few additions to the franchise, however have been less than stellar. *THUG* and *American Wasteland* certainly did give couch-skateboarders more terrain to explore and more tricks to pull off, but they deviated so far from the original *Tony Hawk's Pro Skateboarder* ideal that one could consider them entirely separate games.

It is very clear that *Project 8* aims to course-correct this and steer the franchise back into the realm of pure, unadulterated skateboarding pleasure without the unsightly skinned knees or fractured pelvic bones. Built on entirely new technology, *Project 8* required 63 days of motion-capture. Each of the key skateboarders featured in *Project 8* had their signature moves captured and digitised.

According to Neversoft, *Project 8* will focus less on story than the previous few titles. There are various challenge types, which include spot challenges where you must meet various requirements to pass, such as grinding a rail for a certain time or reaching huge air. There will also be puzzle challenges that involve getting from point A to B, but here's the catch: you can move certain objects around the world to help you reach point B. Bail challenges involve getting some air

and then literally leaping off the board, flinging yourself into as much damage as possible.

The most exciting news surrounding *Project 8*, however involves the new custom trick system. When doing a kick into the air, the game slows down into bullet-time and the camera moves to the side of the skateboard. From there, the left and right analogue sticks control the left and right feet respectively, letting you create your own tricks by kicking the board exactly how you want to. During air, tapping the left stick down will kick the board into a counter-clockwise spin, which you can either spin in another direction by tapping left or right on the analogues for a lateral spin, or you can stop the spin by kicking it with the opposite foot.

With any luck, *Project 8* should take the franchise back to its roots, thus forward again.

Miktar Dracon

FACT: Tony Hawk is the first skateboarder to do 'The 900' skateboarding trick, which requires two and a half turns in the air on a vert ramp. He has done 'The 900' over 15 times.

HOW'S IT LOOKING?

The Tony Hawk series seems to be heading in the right direction again, back to its establishing roots.

Thriller?

HARDWARE

PERIPHERALS AND OTHER COOL STUFF



MADCATZ GAMEPAD

SUPPLIER: Greenstone Marketing

RRP: R299

TEL: (021) 557-6248

For a wired controller, the Madcatz Gamepad isn't bad. It has all the buttons you'd need to use it on your 360, and due to the USB nature of the gamepad, it works just as well plugged into a PC. If used on a PC, however, the standard driver has a problem with the shoulder triggers and the Guide Button, but that's not the fault of the gamepad - it was designed for the 360 after all. The fact that you can plug it into a PC is just a bonus, and with some fiddling, you can get all the functionality working on a PC, including vibration.

Hidden behind the gamepad itself is a tiny little on/off switch, which really should have received much more mention on the packaging. The switch will invert the right analogue stick, so you can swap between inverted or regular 'look' at the flick of a switch, instead of fiddling inside game options. For games that don't support inverted (rare, but they exist), this is a wonderful addition, one that should come standard on all gamepads in a perfect world.

The only criticism against the gamepad is that of construction. It doesn't seem up to the quality that Madcatz is known for. In fact, the plastic gamepad feels quite flimsy, but that is just the feel. Practically, the entire unit is rock solid. The D-pad gets special mention for improving much on the standard Xbox gamepad design, using a traditional cross instead of the new (and hated) 'rocking' D-pad.

MADCATZ HD VGA CABLE

SUPPLIER: Greenstone Marketing

RRP: R239.99

TEL: (021) 557-6248

When it comes to HD VGA cables, your choices are quite varied, but the result really is the same no matter if you go for the Madcatz one or the official Microsoft one. Both let you plug your 360 straight into a standard PC monitor, quite nice if you have a quality LCD screen and can't afford an HDTV. There is no difference between the official VGA cable and this one, other than length. In fact, the Madcatz cable is double the length of the official cable - perfect for people who like to keep their 360 in a separate room. They're rare, but they're out there. Regardless, longer cables aren't always a bad thing, but be sure to tuck it away before someone trips over it. The Madcatz HD VGA Cable supports the full range of HD resolutions, from 640 x 480 all the way up to 1,360 x 768, and has a port for optical audio just like the bundled AV cable or the official HD VGA cable.



XBOX THE 360 STORMS EUROPE

“Microsoft has not been complacent,” explained Chris Lewis from Microsoft Europe, saying that Live has always been close to the company’s heart. Perhaps Live’s prolific support on the 360 had more to do with Steve Ballmer hitting his desk with enthusiasm, proclaiming it the strongest lesson that Microsoft has learned from the Xbox. Later during an interview MS entertainment chief Peter Moore also downplayed the idea that the Xbox was an expensive and almost impromptu experiment for Microsoft. But it’s hard to buy this line of thinking, since everything about the 360 screams of lessons learned the hard way. In other words, they make sense and are likely to work. That couldn’t have been more clear at the X06 opening conference. Packing the Theatre National Catalunya in Barcelona, a thousand journalists and other invitees watched Moore and Lewis walk around the stage, licking the cream from their lips. In roughly an hour Microsoft staked its full intentions for the 360 – and in a nutshell it’s Exclusivity, Exclusivity and more Exclusivity.

There was the usual fluff – first the numbers were quoted. Microsoft has sold 1.3 million 360s in Europe and plans to move 10 million units world-wide by December (currently 6 million have been sold). Live is going from strength to strength with over 57 million downloads, but here it would be nice if Microsoft thought a bit harder and gave 360 owners a means to copy demos and free downloads from console to console. A mention was given for the new territories where the console launched, South Africa sitting at the top of the list, and Moore took a few minutes talking about the then-recent India launch. Then there were the new game announcements, which fell a bit short in terms of new actual announcements. The first was *Banjo Kazooie*, an old Rare franchise, but unfortunately no new Rare IP





was announced. *PGR 4* was also announced, but hardly revealed with a pretty nondescript pre-rendered promo video. A slew of Live games were also revealed – if you don't know yet, *Doom* and *Mortal Kombat 3* are waiting for you online, alongside *Lumines* and *World of Sensible Soccer* in 2007.

Two games were given the real-time treatment. *Lost Odyssey* was a typical Japanese RPG and, frankly, showing an awesome intro movie that then turns into two characters taking turns to hit each other is the pinnacle of an anti-climax (unless, of course, you simply love turn-based 'action' RPGs like *Final Fantasy*). On the other hand the audience got blown away with the first real-time public game footage of *Assassin's Creed*, an absolutely stunning game. If done right, it will do for action/platform games what *Sands of Time* did in 2003.

But Microsoft's haymaker into Sony's chin was the slew of exclusives. *Kane & Lynch*, *Crossfire*, the MMO *Marvel Heroes Online* and *Bioshock* all took exclusive positions on the console (with the exception of the PC), while *GTA* fans are in for an additional treat. Though *GTA IV* won't be a 360 exclusive, two additional chapters will be released on Live for the game – and these are exclusive. Peter Moore stressed that this doesn't mean "more cars and more clothes", but proper extra pieces of the full *GTA* experience.

The conference ended with a 'special' announcement – apparently Peter Jackson is joining forces with Redmond to make "story-driven games". It was a bit farcical – Jackson couldn't say exactly what he wanted to make and ended up coming across not unlike a ten-year old telling you about the awesome game idea he has. You know, the one that is like *GTA*, but with more cars and axes and orcs and MMO and stuff! Seriously, though, maybe Jackson has a great idea and he was just appearing very vague and confused intentionally. Just as long as he remembers that it wasn't him but Michel Ancel who made the *King Kong* game.

The show ended and soon the party was on at a local exclusive club. The next day attendees filled the rooms at the Hesperia Tower to look at the new games clamored onto 180 consoles, chat to executives and gorge on the tables of free food and drink. Game journalism truly is a trying job.





SUPERMAN RETURNS

The man of steel is back and not only in an action-lacking movie. In the game, which was supposed to have launched with the film, things are a bit more hands on as Superman has to protect his favourite city in all of comicdom. In a twist, Superman has no health bar. Instead he has to stop things happening to Metropolis. At X06 the section we played involved giant rocks falling from the sky. Using Superman's array of ray and breath powers, these meteorites need to be taken out before they hit the city or the fires started by collisions need to be put out. Using his super speed, we jetted Superman between the target rocks with ease, culminating it all by ramming Clark into the largest meteor of them all. One big explosion and Metropolis is saved. It looks like *Superman Returns* will be a lot of fun.



X06

THE 360 STORMS EUROPE



HALF-LIFE 2

Valve has been hard at work perfecting the looming port of *Half-Life 2* for the 360. But unlike far too many of these PC-to-console ports, HL2 looks really impressive, plus the developers took the time to add HDR to the original maps as well. On top of that the game will ship with both episodes 1 and 2, as well as *Portal* and *Team Fortress 2*. Yes, that's right, 360 owners will be able to play TF2 online. The entire package looks very solid, but sadly we weren't allowed to play the game ourselves. Nor could Valve confirm if episodic releases of *Episode 3* and onwards will be available through Live, but we expect that as a given. As a cherry on top for 360 owners, the Source engine is now completely compatible with the 360, so expect more Valve-powered goodies in the near future.



GEARS OF WAR

The most complete and featured game on the floor was definitely *Gears of War*. Despite Mark Rein's speeches about the PS3, Epic didn't step back in the visual look of this 360 exclusive and it is, as Peter Moore stated, the best-looking next-gen game this year. If it isn't, we'd really like to own whatever beats it. The game looks and feels more action-packed than the picture original expectations painted and *GOW* loves using pre-scripted events to give the world a really intense feeling. At the conference one of the developers also demoed a portion of the game, culminating with the main character utilising his on-gun chainsaw. But the majority of game time went to multi-player matches as players fragged each other over the network. Our verdict? See you on Live!



DOOM

Doom makes us happy, because it might mean that *Quake* isn't far off from appearing on Live Arcade soon. The port at the show is solid and true to the original, though Microsoft explained that textures have been upscaled to look normal on large displays. Achievements have also been added and the game supports four-player death-match and co-op over Live and split-screen. The package is a reworked version of *Ultimate Doom*, so all three the original chapters as well as the one expansion are included. So is it any good? Considering the original game wasn't played with a mouse either, the console controls couldn't translate better. It's a pity, though, that Microsoft didn't up the amount of players in death-match, plus we need *Doom 2* as well. Super Shotgun, y'all!



MUTANT STORM EMPIRE

It's one of the biggest indie hits on Live Arcade, maybe because it's not wholly unfamiliar to how *Geometry Wars* plays. Still, instead of resting on its laurels, developer Oberon Games are taking the concept a little further. The biggest change to how the series plays is player ships move through a large level, which opens section-by-section to progress. It's still *Mutant Storm*, but instead of warping from level to level players now move from room to room. Another new feature is co-op play over Live. That alone makes this new release in the *Mutant Storm* series worth it.



FORZA MOTORSPORT 2

We spent only a few minutes with this game, the answer to *Gran Turismo* that Microsoft is still formulating. Such a small time is by no means enough to say if the game is moving closer to the GT crown (not likely, considering GT's rabid hardcore fan base), but driving around a track with a Ferrari did prove technically challenging and very responsive. Visually *Forza Motorsport 2* looks great and the car physics appear to be just as polished. Still, with *Test Drive Unlimited*, *GTR* and *PGR3* as competition, it'll take more time to determine if *Forza 2* has something special up its sleeve for 360 owners.

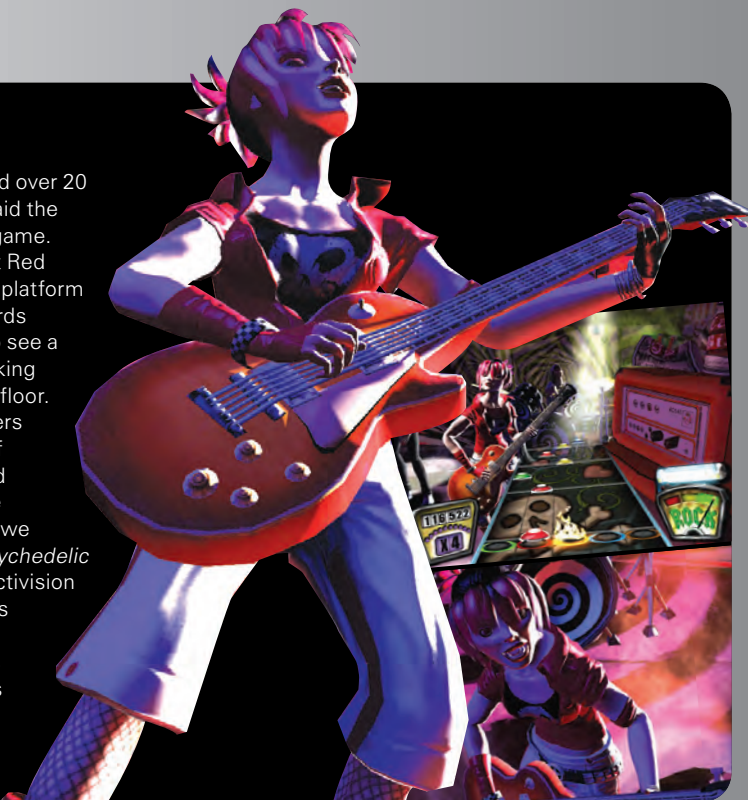




THE 360 STORMS EUROPE X06

GUITAR HERO 2

Over 40 licensed songs and over 20 unlicensed songs so far, said the Activision rep playing the game. Since the publisher bought Red Octane it's been clear that platform exclusivity is not on the cards and we were very happy to see a very complete and fun-looking *Guitar Hero 2* on the show floor. Alas, because the controllers were prototypes, only staff could play, but we watched as they joined forces in the game's co-op mode. Then we convinced them to play *Psychedelic Breakdown* a few times. Activision wouldn't confirm a wireless guitar controller, but the expression the rep gave us confirmed that a bear does indeed crap in the woods.



TONY HAWK'S PROJECT 8

Neversoft employees never looked like startled animals in the middle of a crazed safari hunt full of anxious and wanting gamers pretending to be journalists. Maybe it's because you never see a Neversoft developer who doesn't sport an interesting hairstyle, colourful tattoo or faces that suggest they know much more about all-nighters in metal clubs than you do. Maybe it's because the games they make, stale or not, are always cool. *Project 8* definitely is, plus it's not stale. In fact, Neversoft has reworked the game a lot and you can't help but dig the slo-mo dual-analog system to perform some really awesome tricks. On top of that, you can also go and have a look at the mo-capped moves from pro skaters that feature as extra content in *Project 8*.

CALL OF DUTY 3

We hate to say it, being big fans and all, but *Call of Duty 3* doesn't look nearly as good as we think it should. If you are expecting anything near the leap between the first and second games, you'll be disappointed. COD 3 looks more like a heavily updated COD 2, with a few novel tweaks thrown in. One is a new mode where a Nazi can get into a fight with the player, prompting various button clicks to wrestle your opponent to the ground. Gimmick? Yes, indeed. It's a pity, but *Call of Duty* appears to be heading into the same rehash ethos that has done so much damage to *Medal of Honor*. Alas, the new *Brothers in Arms* was nowhere to be seen.



ASSASSIN'S CREED

Assassin's Creed wasn't on the show floor, but attendees were treated to a section of real-time gameplay at the conference the night before. In a nutshell, it looks like Ubisoft is delivering exactly what it said would be in the game – detailed crowds and crowd-interaction, the ability to climb nearly anything and jump everywhere, not to mention some really cool stealth kills and pretty major environmental interaction. Sadly our assassin couldn't make the grade and eventually fell under the blow of a soldier's sword, but not before he clambered around, killed his mark and left an entire theater's audience breathless.

CRACKDOWN

To be honest, *Crackdown* didn't manage to make us swoon as much as it should. The game definitely packs a lot of action and the main character can definitely jump, but the city looks a bit too similar and toying around in the game felt more like a disjointed arcade shooter than a free-form action title. The big annoyance was that the targeting appears to be completely manual – even if there is a lock-on system, something more automatic would suit the fast-paced action *Crackdown* hopes to deliver. But at this stage the game still looks a bit bland and uninteresting.



NEVER FORGET!

By James Francis

This being a publication dedicated to the 360, it's likely that its writers will be accused of bias. Then again, you should really debate if there is such a thing as objectivity anyway. Sometimes it just takes a perception. For example, *Insider* editor Miktar is still being labeled a Nintendo fanboy. This is mostly because people confuse 'fan boy' with 'people who grew up with it'. There are plenty of people who grew up with a gaming brand and remained fan boys, but they hardly qualify as gamers in my opinion. Real gamers play games, not platforms. So, to put my money where my mouth is and do something out of context for this publication, let's talk about the PlayStation 2.

Actually there's a deeper message, but we should start with the console that is probably the most successful ever. The PlayStation 2 still ambles along quite happily and is a *tour de force* in gaming. I was reminded of this fact playing *Timesplitters*, *Rez*, *Jak & Daxter*, *Amplitude*, *God of War*, *Burnout 3* and a lot of other games that sets benchmarks in the console's performance. The most recent was *Just Cause* – a game that looks and reacts differently to the 360 version, but matches it regardless. This is from a console that was only more powerful than the Dreamcast. So one message is that power, by no means, means success.

But the PS2, now entering its final years and really taking a close retirement in its stride, reminds me of something I think about a lot. With every generation, we leave behind hundreds, sometimes even thousands of games. A lot were rubbish, but a lot were great. And most are just great to play. But the push for better hardware and publishers sticking to a popular IP like a Siamese twin leave a lot of them in the dust. Even franchises that continue leave behind their legacy instead of carrying it. The hardware ends up in a closet to gather dust and eventually becomes quaint.

Live Arcade and the Wii's Virtual Console are both great for bringing back the old classics to be enjoyed again anew. But many, many of them lie somewhere, trapped in a copyright dungeon (the Lucasarts, Westwood and Microprose adventure games). Others are just left out to dry (I still haven't been able to track the owner behind *Flashback*).

The PlayStation 2 taught me that even if you have the latest and greatest in gaming hardware, that's never an excuse to forget that the older platforms still have a lot in them. You don't need to own the hardware – just go hunt down the ROM for Mame. Then help me petition Microsoft so we can get it on Live.

Okay, maybe I am biased. I still made this about the 360. It's a living.



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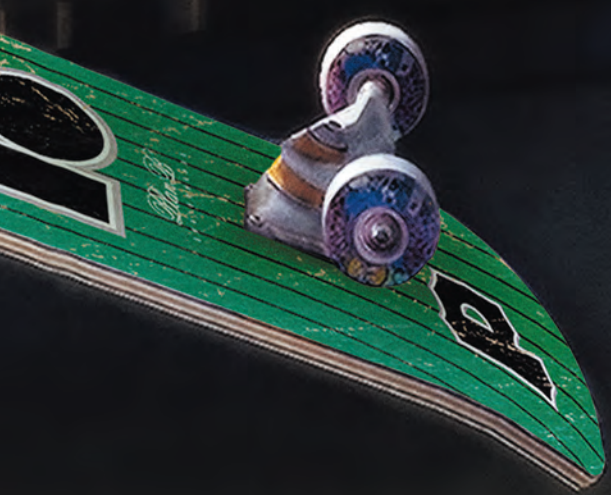


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