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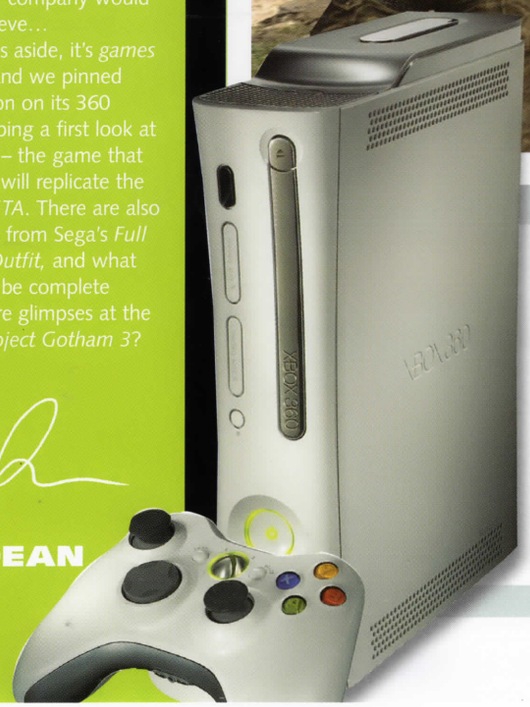
EDITORIAL



It's been a little quiet since the blow-out from E3. Nearly every publisher has shut up and decided to concentrate on developing the games rather than blustering on about the 'power of next-gen'. Only Sony, it seems (the company without any real games to speak of) is keeping up the empty showboating.

Speaking of Sony, we give a little attention to the facts and figures behind both the 360 and the PS3. And you know what? Things aren't as cut and dry as either company would have us believe...

Tech specs aside, it's *games* that count and we pinned down Volition on its 360 debut, scooping a first look at *Saint's Row* – the game that THQ hopes will replicate the success of *GTA*. There are also new screens from Sega's *Full Auto*, *The Outfit*, and what issue would be complete without more glimpses at the stunning *Project Gotham 3*?



IAN DEAN
EDITOR

XBOX 360 ANALYSIS

FACTS VS FICTION

Microsoft taunted, Sony blustered, they both snipped and sniped at each other and everyone got bored very quickly. Well, worry not – we've rummaged through Bill's garbage and intercepted Ken's emails to bring you the full specs and facts on both next-gen machines.

POW





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SAINT'S ROW

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Just what makes this game a standout X360 title?

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Could be amazing, could be another shot of *Max Payne*. Find out what we think!

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Who would've thought that we'd ever be asking whether a Microsoft console had room for another Japanese RPG?

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Best. Looking. Game. Ever. Seriously – this blows absolutely *everything* away.

Sony opened its (very amateur-looking) PSP Factory showroom in Paris last month. In turn, Microsoft paid for banners to be placed in the windows of the laundry across the street saying "Save your strength for winter" (when 360 is released). Owndizzled.



WARNING: TECHNICAL JARGON AHEAD – PLEASE WEAR YOUR HARD HAT

BATTLE OF THE SPECS

With no games to try out or any genuine footage for comparison from the Sony camp, judging the Xbox 360 against the PS3 comes down to examining the stats.

Both company's E3 product launches that ushered in the next generation of the console wars were packed with glitz, glamour and stacks of pre-rendered video. With Sony's PS3 technology totally untried and Xbox 360 slowly emerging from a fact black hole, figuring out which is the best console depends on a lot of digging around and rummaging through the specification sheets...

WHO HAS THE POWER?

In the first round, Xbox versus PS2, Microsoft pitted an Intel Celeron 733Mhz CPU and 64Mb RAM packing 6.4Gbps bandwidth against Sony's Emotion Engine armed with 32Mb RAM and 3.2Gbps bandwidth. It's amazing that these specs – ageing and feeble in comparison to their successors – can still produce such stunning and engrossing games.

Now, though, we're looking at two all-new systems, custom-designed and precision-built for the best graphics ever, aimed at high-definition television sets and firmly gunning for your wallet.

PROCESS THIS!

This all looks roughly like-for-like, but things get complicated very quickly. Sony's Cell has the main chip linked to seven sub-processing units that can handle much of the processing, while Xbox 360's chip actually has three cores on it, each running two hardware threads, making it capable of processing six threads (streams of code) at a time. So, 8-6 to PS3 then? Well, not quite. The Cell's processing

XBOX 360 VERSUS PS3

PROCESSOR:	PowerPC CPU 3.2Ghz	**VS**	Cell PowerPC CPU 3.2Ghz
GRAPHICS:	ATI 500Mhz	**VS**	NVIDIA RSX 550Mhz
MEMORY:	512Mb DDR3 700Mhz	**VS**	512Mb*
OVERALL PERFORMANCE:	1 Terraflop**	**VS**	2 Terraflops
SYSTEM BANDWIDTH:	22.4Gbps	**VS**	25.6Gbps

*(PS3 RAM = 256Mb XDR 3.2Ghz RAM + 256Mb DDR3 700Mhz **Terraflop = One trillion floating point operations per second



Competition – Despite grabbing headlines at this year's E3 with its *Killzone 2* trailer, in the cold light of day things aren't looking so good over at Sony. IBM has revealed the PS3 chip isn't actually finished yet and



HEEDING THE CALL: Ultra-realistic scenarios such as the landings from *Call Of Duty 2* only scratch the surface of next-gen power.

"PS3'S MASSIVE THEORETICAL POWER WILL LAG BEHIND 360"

units reputedly aren't that good at the kind of code that games use, leading many to claim that its massive theoretical power will actually lag behind the blazing Xbox 360 multi-core PowerPC.

GRAPHICS GRAPPLERS

NVIDIA and ATI have been going at it on the PC graphics front for years, trading the speed crown repeatedly, and the edge currently lies with ATI's Radeon GPU. Both are putting brand new technologies to test in the new consoles that PC gamers won't see until well into 2006.

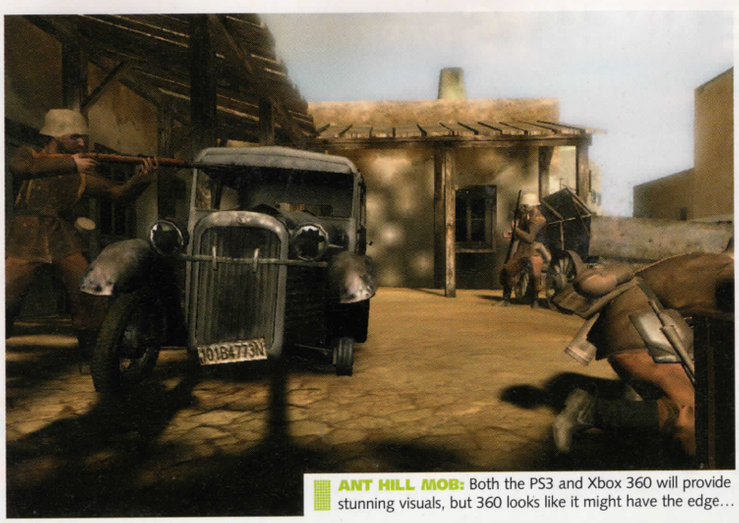
With ATI's brand new shader technology and an extra 10Mb eDRAM of super fast memory on the chip, plus regular DDR3 RAM, we think that the Xbox will run faster no matter how cunningly Sony links the Cell, its 256Mb of graphics RAM and the GPU together.

The key to this battle is ATI's unified shader architecture that combines pixel and vertex shaders from the current generations of GPU in one blinding, 48 pipe-fast process. We don't think that NVIDIA has anything that can match it – in fact, it has stated that the RSX chip has little more than twice the power of its current GeForce 6800 Ultra GPU for the PC. Only twice as fast doesn't sound like much of a quantum leap to us!

AND FINALLY...

Thinking about what developers can do with a system as technically ancient as the current Xbox reminds us that it is not the technology itself, but what coders do with it that makes the difference. The top game programmers are cunning fiends, capable of squeezing immeasurable performance out of even an electronic calculator, so what theyíll be able to do with either the power of a six-core processor or this Cell malarkey is something we await with baited breath.

For now there is no doubt that the Xbox 360 has the power advantage, largely thanks to ATI's stunning graphics processor; the rest is up to the code monkeys working away for their ten per cent at the coal faces of our gaming future. ■

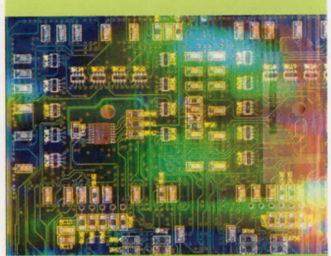


ANT HILL MOB: Both the PS3 and Xbox 360 will provide stunning visuals, but 360 looks like it might have the edge...

TAKING ON THE PC

NO MATTER A CONSOLE'S SPECS, PCS ALWAYS WIN

The modern PC has a lot of components in common with both PS3 and Xbox 360, but even a modern Dual Core 64bit PC processor is limited to two threads at the most. Current graphics card technology like the ATI X800 will soon lag behind Xbox 360, and its replacement isn't due out until next year. On the plus side, PC users will soon be able to link two top-range graphics cards together for a near doubling of performance. Memory-wise the PC will always win, with most machines featuring at least 1Gb of memory, but with Windows eating away at it, there is never enough!



SOMETHING UNREAL

To really show off next-generation systems you need a next-gen game, and Epic has been developing the *Unreal* Engine 3 (as seen in *Unreal Tournament* 2007 on page 03) with these systems in mind. Improvements will include everything from high-range dynamic lighting to real bump offset mapping, where every surface will have 3D texture and all-new physics.



THE REALLY REAL WORLD: The *Unreal* Engine has always been home to great technological showcases, and the latest incarnation is no exception.

that Sony's 'game demos' were, in fact, lavish pre-rendered movies. **Innards –** The 360's operating system is a mishmash of the original Xbox OS (Windows 2002) and the forthcoming Windows Longhorn. Joy.

ガクオ ピポセポミオトオ ヲルリオミトニヒオ

THE JAPANESE

When the Xbox was released, Microsoft knew that it would have a hard time cracking the Japanese market. As the months passed by the challenge grew and, quite frankly, Microsoft dug itself a really deep hole... but the Xbox 360 looks set to change all of that. Why should you care? Well, because Microsoft is committed to breaking the Japanese market, which means we get to reap these games over here...

FINAL FANTASY XI IS THIS THE WORLD'S BIGGEST RPG?

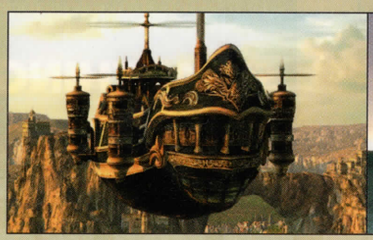
Developer: Square Enix | **Publisher:** Microsoft | **Release:** November 2005

The whole point of *Final Fantasy XI* is its online potential. The game is designed as a massively multiplayer online title. It's been out on the PC for over a year now and has already reached a worldwide subscription of over 500,000 players. In other words, it's a bit good.

The game is going to be essentially the same as the PC version, only with HDTV support and, fingers crossed, the Promathia pack included on the disc. When you start playing *FFXI* you pick one of three kingdoms to be your home, which then sets the basic story and quests. Don't worry, though; some missions require you to visit the other kingdoms, and you may even find yourself having to join together with players from different kingdoms on some quests.

Co-operation and teamwork is a big theme for *FFXI*, especially since the game is compatible across all formats. You can, of course, try to battle through on your own and beat other players to quests, but it's generally better to join *together* with other adventurers – mess up and with each death you lose both level experience and items.

It's no mean feat to max out your character; if you do set your heart on it you're basically committing






NINETY-NINE NIGHTS DARKNESS IS COMING TO THIS LAND

Developer: Phantagram | **Publisher:** Microsoft | **Release:** Q3 2005

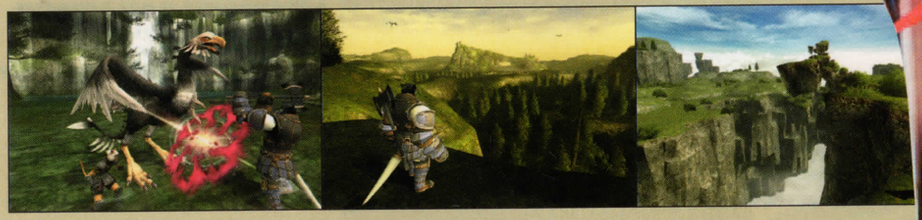
The first time we saw this game we had to check the spelling – we initially thought it was going to be some kind of medieval epic revolving around 99 *knights*. This couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, the game is capable of hosting 2,000 soldiers on-screen at once.

The name of the game is taken from the 99-day period of darkness that is cursed onto the game's kingdom by an unknown evil. If you think this is some kind of cop-out to make draw distance easier, think again; the game has some very moody red skylines on show and there are absolutely no problems as far as draw distance is concerned – something that could've been a worry, since the game is very much in the vein of *Kingdom Under Fire* and *Dynasty Warriors*. Rest assured, there's no fog of war here.

What you see is what you get: big, epic battles that are nothing short of intimidating to take part in. That figure of 2,000 is no exaggeration – the screen remains full of combatants pretty much the entire time and, from what we've seen so far, there are no frame rate issues. This is feudal fighting at its very finest and most furious – the first time you see handfuls of ragdoll bodies flying your jaw will drop.

It has also been confirmed that this game will, like pretty much every other Xbox 360 title, be playable online. However, quite how this will work hasn't yet been revealed. There are several playable characters in the game, though, and depending on which one you pick you will see the various battles from different perspectives, so there's no reason why a Co-op mode couldn't be on the cards. We'd love to be fighting side-by-side in that hundredth-day rumble as the sun rises over the battlefield... ■

OFFENSIVE



yourself to months and months of play, during which time the game shouldn't get boring as new quests are consistently added for players to tackle. The big question is whether there will be a monthly fee in addition to the Live cost.

At the moment this hasn't been talked about, but it's likely that there is going to be a small charge, which is paid in a similar way to premium content downloads. Annoying to a point, but then you must expect some kind of charge for what is an amazing service. Besides, you just know that the first time you find yourself riding a Chocobo, all thoughts of cash and costs will fade away. ■

JAPANESE TALENT

YOICHI WADA



Square Enix President Yoichi Wada has worked with many big titles. This includes games from the *Final Fantasy*, *Kingdom Hearts* and *Dragon Quest* series, as well as titles like *Star Ocean*. Wada-san has in the past said that he wanted to work on the Xbox, but the online connectivity didn't meet development needs. All of that has changed now with the Xbox 360. Watch out for more Square Enix games soon.

COMPANY WATCH

SQUARE ENIX

When Square Enix announced *Final Fantasy XI* for the Xbox 360 at E3 it was to a very happy crowd. However, the company then continued to wow onlookers with a technical demo of what could be possible on the console for a future title. Does this signal an exclusive RPG in the works?

SQUARE ENIX

BIG IN JAPAN



JAPANESE TALENT

TETSUYA MIZUGUCHI

This game is being developed in-house by Phantagram, but is being overseen by the President of Q Entertainment, Tetsuya Mizuguchi. Between them that's a lot of talent. Phantagram has worked on *Kingdom Under Fire* while Mizuguchi-san has reached videogame fame through the creation of *Space Channel Five*, *Rez* and *Lumines*. With all this talent there's no reason why this shouldn't be amazing.

COMPANY WATCH

PHANTAGRAM

At the moment Phantagram is busy with *Ninety-Nine Nights*, but the company has confirmed that it is working on another project for the Xbox 360. Since this is Phantagram, we'd put very good money on that game being a *Kingdom Under Fire* title – expect an announcement later in the year.

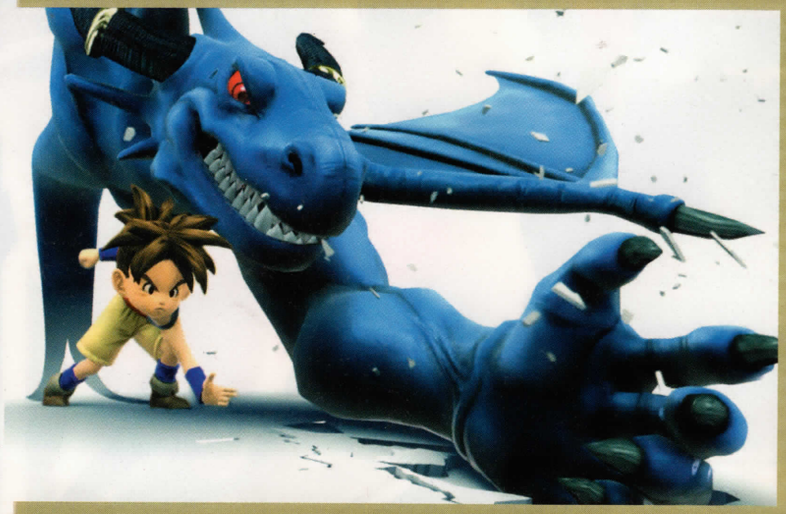
—PHANTAGRAM—

BLUE DRAGON SHADOWBOXING IS FOR GIRLS

Developer: Mistwalker/Artoon | **Publisher:** Microsoft | **Release:** Q2 2005

The title may be *Blue Dragon*, but in reality this game revolves around shadows. More precisely, shadows cast by the characters you play.

There are several characters in the game and each one has different special powers that are generated from the shadow that follows them around. This isn't limited from character to character, though, as there are over 200 shadows in the game split into a variety of groups. These include Bat, Dragon, Minotaur, Phoenix and Tiger. Between the lead character (Shu) and his mates there should be loads of different combinations and playing styles that are possible from the 'shadow' selection alone in *Blue Dragon*. We can't wait to see some of the graphical effects that come out of this shadow/summon-based combat – there's tonnes of potential here for plnty of next-generation wows.



Of course the game also has a strong monster-collecting theme, which is perfectly suited to the Japanese market. And, since all first-party titles are Live compatible, you can guarantee that plenty of shadow download packs will be available after release. Something that could easily be classed as a copout, if it weren't for the fact that the characters are being created by the *Dragon Ball* designer Akira Toriyama. As a result, the game has a visual appeal that many will appreciate.

Like all of the other games here there are plenty of other names to drop with *Blue Dragon* – most notably you've got Manabu Kusonki who is designing the actual game world. In the past, Kusonki-san has worked on numerous titles at Sega, including the *Panzer Dragoon* series. Perhaps the most interesting name being attached to this game, however, is Artoon, a company that you might remember was responsible for *Blinx*. It's this company that is handling primary development in conjunction with Mistwalker. Just how many people can you get working on one game? ■

JAPANESE TALENT

HIRONOBU SAKAGUCHI



One of the most respected figures within the Japanese gaming community, Hironobu Sakaguchi is the man who created the *Final Fantasy* series and was heavily involved with the *Final Fantasy* film. Basically, if you see anything with the name *Final Fantasy* on it then Sakaguchi-san probably had something to do with it. He's currently overseeing both *Lost Odyssey* and *Blue Dragon* at Mistwalker Studios.

COMPANY WATCH

SEGA

At this year's E3 Sega showed a series of movies that allowed us a sneak peek at the company's X360 line-up. This included *Virtua Fighter*, *After Burner* and a new *Sonic* game. On top of this, Sega will also be publishing From Software titles like *Chrome Hounds* and *Enchant Arm*. Plus, a sneak peak at *House Of The Dead 4* revealed Sega's plans for a lightgun game on X360.

SEGA

LOST ODYSSEY LIFE, DEATH AND EVERYTHING IN-BETWEEN

Developer: Mistwalker/Feel Plus | **Publisher:** Microsoft | **Release:** Q2 2005

This RPG developed by Mistwalker follows the life of a man, Kaim, who has been sentenced to live for a thousand years, and essentially gives you the chance to play through his entire life.

This is a concept similar to *Fable*'s, but where *Odyssey* differs is in the way the story is approached; this isn't a grand adventure pitting you against a tangible enemy, it's a story of the world through the eyes of one man. You'll witness technological revolutions, see friends and family live and die and so on. How much choice you have remains to be seen, but you can bet that there will be plenty of ways to play the game. There may even be a second playable character, Seth, who also lives for the full kilo of years.



However, by far the most interesting feature about the game comes from the suggestion in the E3 trailer that your character cannot die. There is a fantastic opportunity here to work the negative side-effects of immortality into the gameplay. Perhaps the lives of others around you will become more important than your own life for game success? We've already heard that you need to 'suck' the life from mortals in the game to gain new skills.

This may seem like a massively ambitious project, but we believe that the Mistwalker/Feel Plus team has the skill to pull it off. For starters there are several ex-Square Enix employees on board, but the developer is also bringing in talent from outside the games industry; the creator of the *Slam Dunk* anime series, Takehiko Inoue is handling character design, while the story is being written by renowned Japanese author Kiyoshi Shigematsu.

Of all of the games you see here, this is certainly the largest in development terms alone. *Lost Odyssey* is exactly the kind of game that Microsoft needs to break Japan. Both this and *Blue Dragon* are due out within a year of launch. ■

JAPANESE TALENT

NOBUO UEMATSU



The name Nobuo Uematsu may not mean much to many of you, but to some gamers it's like music to the ears. Really, Uematsu-san is responsible for pretty much every single piece of music in the *Final Fantasy* series to date. For this game he's apparently working on a 'pop' theme as well as some jazz-style music. The musical genius is also providing the scores for the other Mistwalker title, *Blue Dragon*.

COMPANY WATCH

TECMO

If any company can be considered a sure thing, regardless of territory, it's Tecmo. The first-party developer has already gone on record to say that *Dead Or Alive 4*, *Dead Or Alive: Chronos*, *Dead Or Alive Extreme Beach Volleyball 2* and *Ninja Gaiden 2* will appear on Xbox 360.

TECMO

TAKING THE SQUARE ROUTE


TANAKA


TOSHIO

In order to dig a little deeper into Japan's shift towards Xbox, we spoke with Square Enix's Hiromichi Tanaka, creator of the *Final Fantasy* series, and Toshio "Foxclon" Murouchi, European Producer on *Final Fantasy XI*.

XBM: Why did you decide to support the Xbox 360, after not releasing anything for the Xbox?

TANAKA: Actually, we were developing a version of *Final Fantasy XI* (*FFXI*) for the current Xbox. However, we could not release it due to differences of policy between PlayOnline and Xbox Live. We have kept discussing with Microsoft since that time and now we are able to release *FFXI* on Xbox 360, as the issue on network policy was resolved as well as the policy for connecting USB keyboards.

XBM: Will the Xbox 360 sell well in Japan, despite the fact that the Xbox failed to gain a large foothold in the Japanese market?

TANAKA: We can't really comment on this, but we're hopeful a lot of people will play and enjoy our products on Xbox 360.

XBM: Do you feel that the games industry in Japan is declining, and becoming more global?

TANAKA: During the fiscal year, which ended last March, Square Enix made the highest profits in its history. I don't feel that the games market is declining so badly in Japan at all. I, myself, have been dedicating my time to online projects for the past five years – this is presupposing a worldwide service. I think that globalisation is a necessity and we will keep growing in that direction.

XBM: Will you be adding or modifying *Final Fantasy XI* much, or is it just a straight port?

TANAKA: *FFXI* will support up to 1280 x 720p resolution, which is the typical resolution with Xbox 360's HDTV output. There will be various settings to choose from in order to match the user's configurations to the best graphic environment possible.

Users will be able to experience powerful gameplay on big and high-resolution screens, like they've never seen on any existing platform before. There will be various settings to choose from in order to match the user's configurations to the best graphical environment possible.

Currently, we do not have plans to change the graphics further than what can be done to match the high-resolution features of Xbox 360 and Windows. *FFXI* is fundamentally based on our cross-platform strategy and we will carry on supporting existing platforms, and we will keep all versions of *FFXI* updated simultaneously. Actually, the graphic quality of *FFXI* is richer and higher than even existing high-end PCs allow (even when all graphic features are enabled), and users may need to cut off some functions through various options to make it work with their environment.

XBM: The tech-demo was impressive. What aspect of the 360 do you think will help to evolve *Final Fantasy* beyond what we've seen in the current generation?

TANAKA: Generally speaking, next-generation consoles will make it possible to play games in bigger and higher-resolution screens than PCs in living rooms, by switching current TV to HDTV. Once you have experienced this, you really will not want to go back to old environments to play games.

The technical demonstration shown at Microsoft's Conference was created to research future MMORPG on next-generation consoles and Longhorn, which will be the next Windows OS. Normal mapping, procedural textures and every kind of physics calculations – most of these technologies are usually used to produce more realistic images. These will be effective for MMORPG, to help create virtual, persistent worlds.

XBM: Do you expect your games to be received well by the Xbox-owning audience in the West?

FOXCLON: Currently *FFXI* has more than 500,000 active users worldwide, and lots of players from North America and Europe are enjoying the world of *FFXI*. With the Xbox 360 version, we hope more people would join and enjoy *FFXI*, especially in European territories.

XBM: 360 Live is going to feature plenty of innovative new features, so which ones will you be supporting with *FFXI*?

TANAKA: The features of 360 Live, such as its HUD or friends list, are not implemented by the contents side, but the Xbox 360 itself has them running as a background. So, it seems that those features can be used whenever you want, regardless of the game you are playing. On the other hand, we are also considering similar features, but as managed by the game contents' side.

XBM: Is it tough producing an MMORPG for an online service that has yet to prove it is capable of supporting the genre?

TANAKA: This will be one of the most important points for beta testing. Basically we don't need to have testing for game functions, as FFXI is already working on PS2 and Windows. The primary purpose of this beta test will be to test the connection to PlayOnline through Microsoft's Xbox Live, as it will be the first time Microsoft has allowed connection to an outside network beyond the Xbox Live network.

XBM: Are there any plans to bring any other Square Enix franchises over to 360?



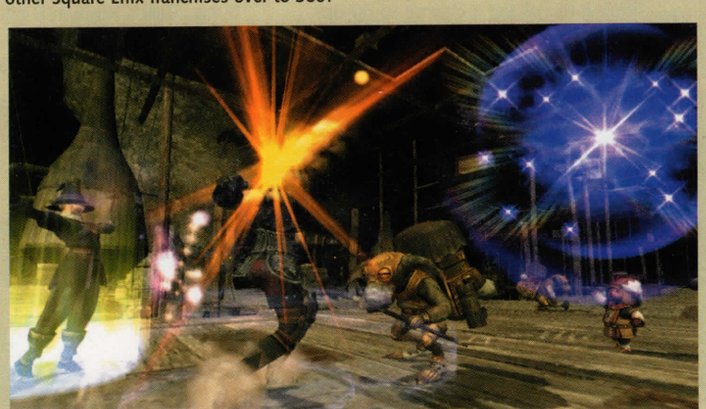
TANAKA: At the moment, we have not made any announcements other than *FFXI*. However, there's nothing to prevent releasing our various titles for Xbox 360, once it becomes major hardware.

XBM: When can we expect to see *FFXI* on the shelves in the UK?

FOXCLON: We're aiming to start the beta test at the same time as Xbox 360 is launched. The plan is to have the beta test take place in every region covered – Japan, Europe and North America – simultaneously, based on the launch schedule of the Xbox 360. More detailed information like date, duration, the timing of official service or number of testers will be determined in the coming months.

XBM: The current *FFXI* (Windows) service only accepts credit card payments made in US dollars. Any plans to accept more options?

FOXCLON: Yes, we're now working on improving our billing system as to accept more payment options like Debit Cards. Accepting more suitable currencies to European territories is planned as well.



PUBLISHER: THQ | DEVELOPER: Relic | GENRE: Action/Adventure | PLAYERS: 1-8 | RELEASE: Winter 2005

Destroy anything on the map. *Anything.*

NEXT FACTOR



THE OUTFIT

TRY THIS ONE ON FOR SIZE

Although rabid Xbox fans will insist that the 360 is all about customisation and creation, others won't be able to shake the feeling that it's as much about tearing things down as it is building them up. Take *The Outfit*, for example: a WWII title that takes destruction to the next level, offering the player a chance to rip up everything in the game world in a bid for victory against gaming's most hated enemies, the Germans.

Whatever your views on the moral justifications of picking on our efficient, toilet-humour loving European cousins 60 years after the conflict, there's no denying that WWII still makes an entertaining backdrop for a third-person action game. Choosing to throw realism out of the window for the time being, Relic's Xbox 360 title is more about mixing strategy, weaponry and an old-fashioned itchy trigger finger to create a game that is more of a school trip than a history lesson. Despite the fact that players will be required to use skill and squad commands to keep themselves and their buddies alive, the action in *The Outfit* is more arcade-weighted than more recent efforts such as *Brothers In Arms* or *Full Spectrum Warrior*. A quick glance at the massive number of explosions and plumes of smoke in these screens should be enough to convey the feeling that the game's pace is more hare than tortoise. The fact that gunning down Nazis will earn players Action Points, which they can then spend mid-combat to upgrade weapons, call in fresh equipment, or ask for vehicle support, makes for a seamlessly action packed game.

How the warfare is carried out is entirely up to your individual preference, as *The Outfit* offers gamers the chance to choose from three different

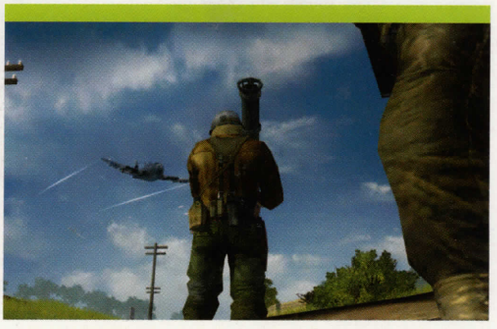
THREE OF A KIND



Climb into a tank and annihilate the enemy. Just watch out for those anti-tank placements, or the fun will come to a rather abrupt halt.



Once you've cleared out a blockade, sit one of your buddies on the machine gun and instruct him to mow down anything wearing a swastika.



If the combat gets hairy, save up your Action Points and call in an airstrike. Just make sure your boys aren't stood around when the bombs fall.

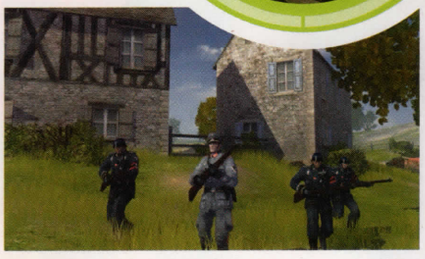


BEHIND THE GAME

It's always great to see fresh games appearing on a new console instead of the inevitable updates and sequels, so *The Outfit* is more than welcome on the 360. Add to that the fact that it's a Relic game set around WWII, and it seems that THQ could well be onto a winner with this one.









ROCKET MAN: Even though killing enemies with a Rocket Launcher requires no skill, it's still an amusing way to pick them off.

"THIS TAKES DESTRUCTION TO THE NEXT LEVEL"

squad leaders, each with their own specific skills and strengths. It's likely that players will be forced to switch between the commanders to complete some of the trickier missions but, for the most part, Relic's game really is offering freedom of choice when it comes to gameplay. In addition to this, each mission will offer the chance to control two squads of troopers at once, meaning that players will be given the choice either to undertake multiple objectives at once, or the option to tactically combine the units in an assault on some of the more challenging sections of each stage.

Learning to multitask between the groups will be an essential skill for survival in *The Outfit*, as all of the maps are fairly epic in terms of both size and the content that has been crammed into each one. However, to compensate for the fact that players simply can't be in two different places at once, the friendly AI is being worked on tirelessly by the good folks at Relic. Even at this early stage squads will take the appropriate action effectively, regroup, provide covering fire for each other and intelligently assault enemy positions depending on how they have been ordered to behave.

Despite all this, there is still no substitute for human interaction, and thankfully *The Outfit* will support multiple modes of play over Xbox Live. This includes both split-screen and online split-screen gaming, with a choice between adversarial and co-operative combat. As the game only supports a maximum of eight players on Live, it's probably safe to assume that each player will have a whole squad under their command during multiplayer sessions. The possibilities for online carnage should be enough to convince most gamers that *The Outfit* is worth watching and, for everyone else, the chance to take a few more pot-shots at Hitler's digital armies will be enough to whet appetites and make trigger fingers begin to itch. ■

THE LAST WORD

DEVELOPER HISTORY



HOME WORLD II



WARHAMMER 40K

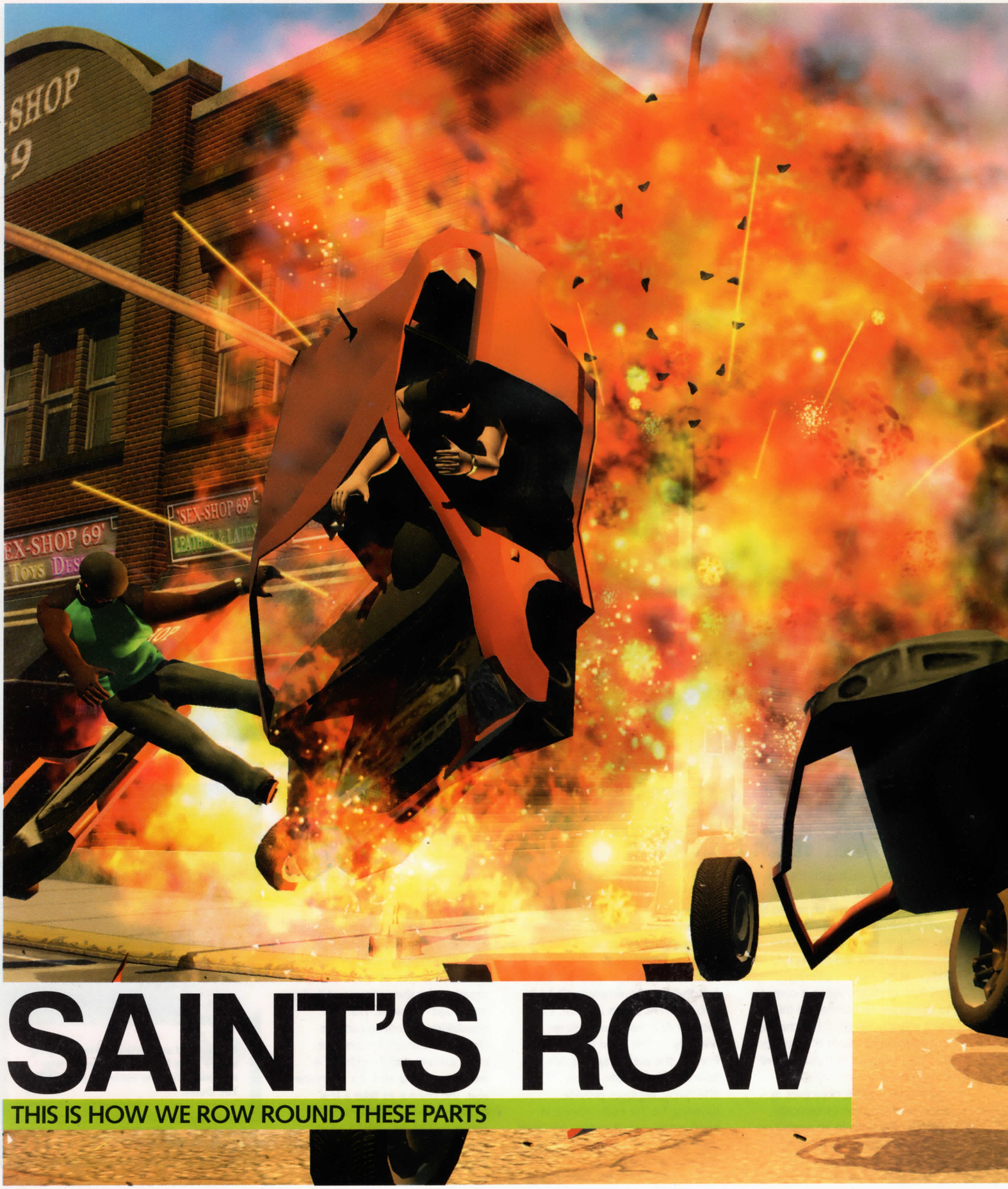
HOW NEXT-GEN IS IT?
- ⊕ Blow everything up
- ⊕ Multiple squads
- ⊕ Plenty of action

Its big, bold and certainly worth keeping an eye on in the coming months. War nuts will relish the explosive potential of The Outfit.

FINAL COMMENT

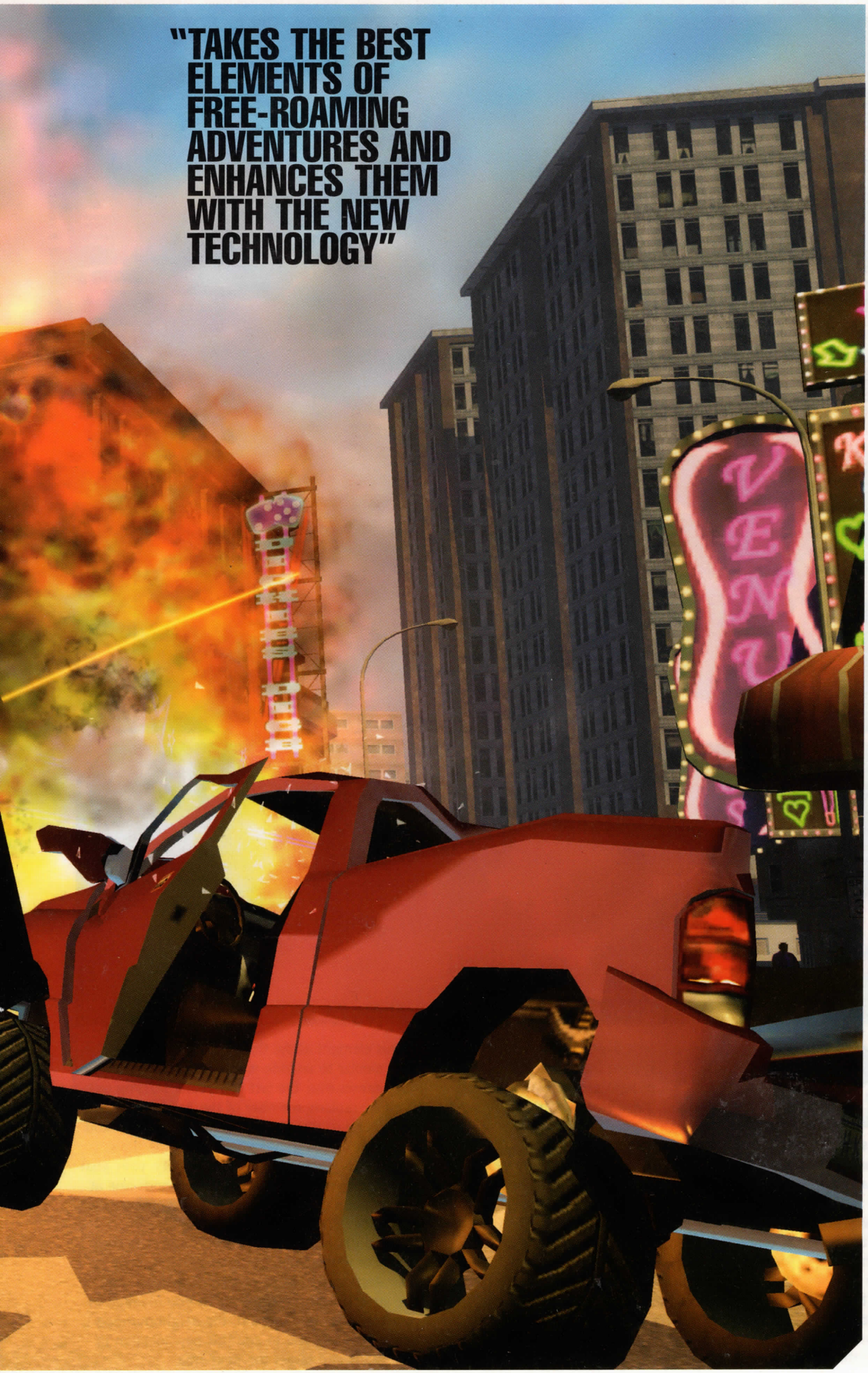
HYPED

PUBLISHER: THQ | DEVELOPER: Volition | GENRE: Action/Adventure | PLAYERS: 1 (TBC online) | RELEASE: TBC



SAINT'S ROW

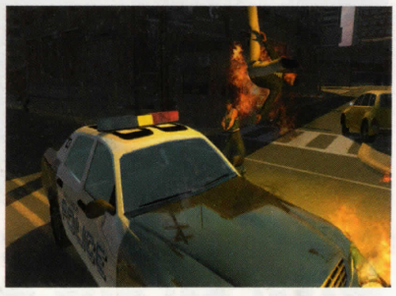
THIS IS HOW WE ROW ROUND THESE PARTS



There are many pressures involved in being one of the development teams selected by Microsoft to work on a launch title for the company's new console. Yours is to be among the first work that's viewed on this much-awaited machine, the first to show exactly what this new format is capable of achieving and the first to get a go at setting the bar that others behind you will have to reach – it's unnerving stuff. Now imagine that these next-gen pressures aren't all that you have on your mind. Imagine that, as well as having the huge responsibility of pleasing Mr Gates in the early months of his newest project, you have also picked one hell of a sparring partner by pitting yourself against one of the most popular and respected franchises that the videogames industry has to offer. Now *that* would be tough...

As it goes, with the 360 launch title *Saint's Row*, this is exactly the situation that Volition has landed itself in. A game involving rival gangs, stealing cars and earning respect is certainly going to attract the attentions of the *GTA* audience and chances being laughed away by many who are far too blinkered by their dedication to the series to even consider a rival.

This said, from what we've seen of the title so far, there are certainly going to be a selection of noticeable differences between Volition's first next-gen title and Rockstar's monster. Although a quick glance over the screenshots and artwork smattered over these pages will convince you of a similar style and theme, Volition has been very keen to point out that it has actually taken the best elements from many free-roaming adventure titles and,



WASN'T ME: Blowing a guy up when you're right next to a cop car. How very subtle.



A LITTLE HELP?: It's always nice to know that you can count on your friends when you really need them.



ME MYSELF AND I



01 What could be cooler than cruising around with a character that looks just like you do? It'll all be possible in *Saint's Row*.

RIDE OF YOUR LIFE



02 Sure, you may not have access to a host of licensed vehicles, but that just means that you get to make more of a mess of them.

IT'S A STEAL



03 You could just bust in there now with a few homies or you could wait till it's dark and sneak in to rob them – the choice is yours.

"FOCUSES MORE ON ACTION THAN ON THE TRAVELLING"

while removing any irritations that have caused complaints in the past, has improved upon and enhanced them with the new technology that the company now has access to.

One of these key differences will be the way in which you travel around the environment. For starters, it's been admitted that the size of the *Saint's Row* world will not be as large as the one we've all seen in *San Andreas*. Sure, it's still big, but Volition has opted to concentrate more on the action side of things rather than the travelling from A to B. As if to make their intentions in this area even clearer, a teleport system (not a musical pillar of light as the image that these words conjure up may suggest, but a mildly more expectable train) has been implemented. This will allow you to travel to any hood that you've previously visited and should aid in making short work of those pesky walks/drives between areas. This is actually a bold move on the studio's part, as there were many out there that were fond of the need to make your way between missions in the *GTA* games and thought that it provided the immersion needed to create the atmosphere that sent the masses wild. Still, if the action is as spectacular as we've been led to believe, then it will more than make up for it.

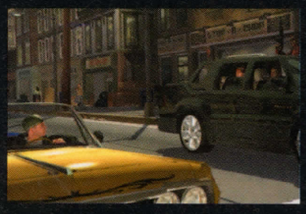
This element aside, things are going to feel fairly similar to anyone who's dabbled in videogames over the last few years. Starting out as a low-ranking member of the 3rd Street Saints, one of the weakest gangs in the area and in danger of being overwhelmed by the three other major gangs that control the city, your goal is to take over the other neighbourhoods one at a time and gain absolute power for you and your pals. Whenever you spend time in a neighbourhood you earn Respect in it – as long as you're representing, of course – and, once your Respect reaches a certain level new, areas and story missions will unlock. If you manage to complete the story mission, the neighbourhood is yours, allowing you to add this new location to your plans and target the next area.

A SAINT SPEAKS

WITH ALL THE SPECULATION THAT WE'VE HEARD FLYING AROUND, WE THOUGHT WE'D GO STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE TO SEE WHAT JACQUES HENNEQUET, SENIOR PRODUCER ON SAINT'S ROW, HAD TO SAY...

XBM: What are you doing with *Saint's Row* to ensure this game is different or better than the *GTA* franchise?
JH: Our entire world is open from the very beginning of the game and is also streaming. All parts of the city – exteriors and interiors – are always available. In *Saint's Row*, you never have to wait while a certain part of town or a certain building is loading.

But in addition to next-gen technology, we also strived to deliver next-gen gameplay. We took a long, hard look at open-world games and what made them fun; we concluded that what people enjoyed most was freeform gameplay, roaming around and trying things. So we designed *Saint's Row* in such a way that the freeform gameplay actually *matters* and helps you complete the game. There is also a long list of things we tried to improve over existing open-world games: controls, combat, cameras and so on. These may not be perceived as big ticket items at first glance, but we think that gamers will notice and appreciate our efforts in these areas.



XBM: Some of our readers are wowed by technical specs; can you give one detail that will send him/her catatonic?
JH: I think *Saint's Row* is about an accumulation of technological accomplishments rather than just one particular element. Think for a moment about a full city: hundreds of buildings, exteriors and interiors, hundreds of vehicles and characters, all streaming, in a world where every light source, sun, street lights and also car headlights, neon signs and even muzzle flashes cast light and shadows over every part of the world in real-time, in addition to all the AI calculations that are needed to keep our city alive. This is probably the most amazing thing to me.

XBM: How have you used the 360 technology to improve on the genre?
JH: Both from the visual and gameplay standpoint, Xbox 360 allows us to do things that open worlds could not previously achieve: an entirely streaming world, entirely dynamically lit, with the full range of next-gen shaders are some examples. We have also developed a full "persona system", with over 20,000 lines of dialogue dedicated to NPC's reactions alone, to make our city feel more alive.

XBM: Will players get the opportunity to upgrade and develop their character and their cars?
JH: Absolutely. This is actually an important part of the game, and the world expects you to do so. You will earn more respect if you perform an activity wearing your gang colours, blinged up and driving a sweet-looking car than if you don't. And if you forget to upgrade your wardrobe or car for too long, the world will remind you of that fact. Women will also react to you differently based on this.

XBM: How hard is it to create a believable world that exists on its own rules and conventions?
JH: The world of *Saint's Row* is made up mostly of invented components, with some additions from the real world. We will use both licensed and original music. We do not plan on using licensed cars or weapons at this stage. The biggest challenge in creating a mythical world such as *Saint's Row* is coherence: defining what the world's characteristics are and remaining consistent.

XBM: Is there a female character that gamers can play as?
JH: No. There are several special homies that are female and we have a number of important female characters in the game, but your own character can only be male. We thought of including female characters in the character creation module, but had to give this idea up for a number of reasons. Maybe in the sequel...

XBM: There's been a bit of controversy since E3 with regards next-gen visuals and violence, do you have any fear that *Saint's Row* will become caught up in tabloid scandal?
JH: We certainly hope that this will not be the case. *Saint's Row* has a deliberately humorous, over-the-top tone in part to remind people that this is only a game. We are not trying to create a gang simulator, we're just trying to create a fun experience for gamers. We also expect the product to receive a Mature rating.



"XBOX 360 ALLOWS US TO DO THINGS THAT OPEN WORLDS COULD NOT PREVIOUSLY ACHIEVE"



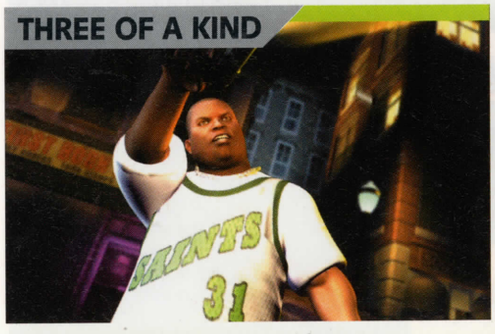
"VOLITION IS ESPECIALLY PROUD OF THE WORLD'S ABILITY TO 'PUSH BACK'"

When summed up in a short paragraph it manages to sound like a very linear formula, but the elements planned for the title are far from it. The entire area will be your playground; any neighbourhood can be attempted in any order and how you go about the process is completely up to you. Building an army of homies is a good way to go, but this will require you to lure them to your side and will see you blinging yourself and your vehicle up to impress the locals. You'll also need weapons for this approach, which will lead to more options – such as how you actually *get* the guns. You could just wander into a store in broad daylight and hold the place up; alternatively, you could wait until nightfall and sneak in through a window and take what you want without raising your notoriety with the police – it'll be up to you. Of course, there's always the option of earning so much Respect that the top gang member in a your chosen target neighbourhood will just drop at your feet in admiration and hand over his turf. At this point the options seem very impressive.

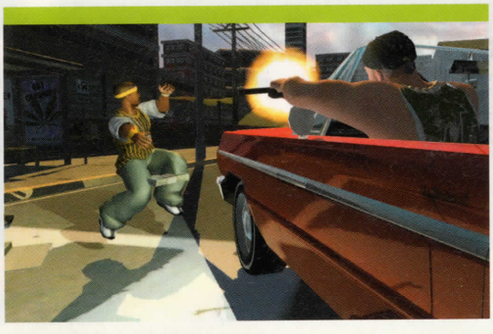
Keeping you busy while you attempt the feat of claiming an entire city for yourself will be a number of "activities". This will take many forms and will see you trafficking drugs and killing rivals right through to a bit of drag racing. The rewards for completing these missions are many and you'll be able to score yourself cash, weapons or a heap of Respect by polishing them off as they appear. You won't be allowed to just take these goodies, though. An area that Volition is especially proud of is the world's ability to "push back"; if you start to strut around, letting bodies lay where they fall and generally being a bit silly, you'll attract unwanted attention from all angles – police, the public and rival gangs – and you'll start getting chased, shot at and even run down as you try to cross the road. It's a world in which you have to be pretty wary.

One of the most interesting elements, as is sure to be the case with many 360 titles, is the online content. It's been said that the character that you create in the single-player campaign can be used as your character online, meaning that all those hours you spend playing on your lonesome won't go to waste. You'll also be able to create your own online gang; your own posse, gang colours and all, made up from people on

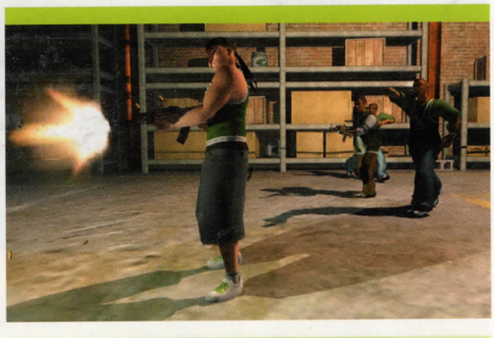
THREE OF A KIND



Your character in the game is fully customisable and there will be faders for pretty much every body part you can think of (well, almost).



You want homies then you gotta be respected. Wear the right clothes and rock the right tat or you'll end up a very lonely person.

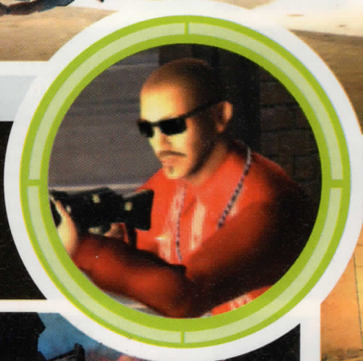


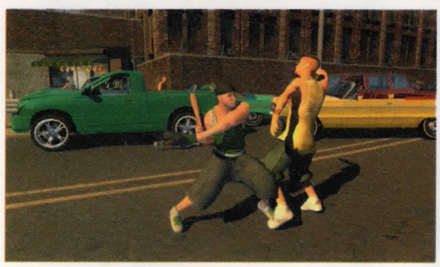
If you don't want your boys hanging around you all the time, you can leave them in one of your neighbourhoods and put them on protection duty.



BEHIND THE GAME

Having already been responsible for titles such as *The Punisher*, *Red Faction* and the *Summoner* series, Volition has certainly proved that it's a studio that can create popular titles. It'll be interesting to see what it can achieve with the next-gen hardware at its disposal.









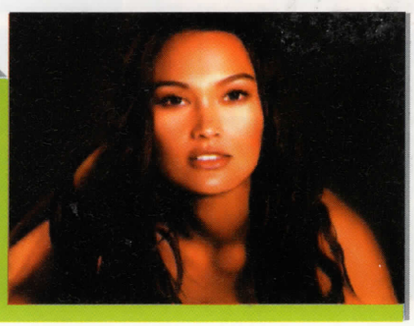
QUIET TIME: Don't be fooled, it'll never stay this quiet for long – it's all going to go down soon enough...

your Friends List is a very appealing thought, and you can be sure that once things kick off the gang rivalry online will become almost as fierce as the real thing. Although exactly what they'll involve isn't yet known, six different modes will be available for online play, so we think it's safe to expect a fair few tournament-style affairs as well as ranking tables to point out exactly which gang is the most respected at any time. Add this to the extra content that is bound to be whizzing down our cables to help us look that little more dapper and we could potentially be looking at one of the early key 360 online games.

We still have a couple of months to wait until we get to see exactly what *Saint's Row* has to offer. Whether it can actually realistically create its own base of fans when it's sailing so close to occupied waters is certainly anyone's guess, but *Saint's Row* is definitely worth keeping an eye on. Aiight one. ■

LISTEN TO THE VOICES

There's little doubt that the next generation of consoles is going to move videogames even closer to being as popular as the movie industry. As if to prove this fact, it looks like we'll have a fine selection of Hollywood stars tripping over themselves to get involved with next-gen projects and to start talking all over them. Already on board to lend their voices to *Saint's Row* are *Wayne's World* star (we won't mention *Relic Hunter*) Tia Carrere, big, big man Michael Clarke Duncan (who's most recently been seen in *Sin City*) and *Kill Bill*'s David Carradine – and this is just a small selection of the names involved.



THE LAST WORD

DEVELOPER HISTORY



THE PUNISHER



RED FACTION II

HOW NEXT-GEN IS IT?

- No loading – not a sausage
- Create a character in your own image
- Promising online content

Exactly how well Saint's Row *will stand up to the* GTA *rival that it's set itself up against remains to be seen, but it looks as if it's going to have a damn good try.*

FINAL COMMENT

HYPED

INCOMING! THE LATEST SHOTS FROM THE HOTTEST GAMES





GHOST RECON ADVANCED WARFIGHTER

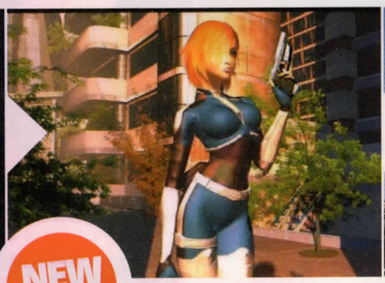
PUBLISHER: UBISOFT
RELEASE: LAUNCH

Yes, the title has now changed to *Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter*, which is ridiculous. Still, it looks like heaven for shooter fans. The new screens not only showcase the glorious environments but also demonstrate how the digital monocle can be used during combat to scout and track enemy movement.

PERFECT DARK ZERO

PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT
RELEASE: LAUNCH WINDOW

It's an obvious choice to release alongside the 360 in November, but Microsoft is offering up a hazy "launch window" release date, which could see 360 owners waiting until March 2006 for Rare's grand entrance. However, with screens improving day by day and support for at least 50 players online, this looks like it will be well worth the wait. Again.





NEW SHOTS





ALAN WAKE

PUBLISHER: TBC
RELEASE: 2006

It'll be interesting to see if Remedy can cut it outside the dark, tortured world of *Max Payne*, but the signs are pointing to a solid 360 debut. *Alan Wake* is still shrouded in mystery, but being a thriller title relying heavily on plot devices this isn't too surprising. What we *do* know is that the game is already one of the most stunning 360 titles, boasting spectacular lighting and shadow effects within a frighteningly detailed setting. Could be a big surprise in 2006...

FULL AUTO

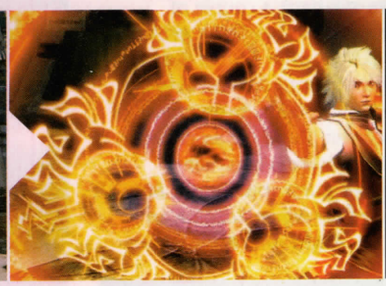
PUBLISHER: SEGA
RELEASE: Q1 2006

Burnout may have made smashing and crashing a gaming treat, but it looks like *Full Auto* will take this to the next level on Xbox 360. Developed by Pseudo Interactive and helmed by Sega, this one is shaping up to be all thrills and no frills, with high-speed carnage being the main focus. There will probably be modding and the odd time trial here and there, but for the most part the game will be desperate to show off its unparalleled damage engine and car physics.









ENCHANT ARM

PUBLISHER: FROM SOFTWARE
RELEASE: TBC

Got Japanese RPGs? *Enchant Arm* is From Software's contribution, who promises a thoughtful and serious game that raises concerns about the future of society and the erosion of moral boundaries. Whether or not it succeeds is still in the balance and all we really know at the moment is that the game looks incredibly attractive and overwhelmingly Japanese. Does this mean that the game will be deemed unsuitable for a European audience? Only time will tell.

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 3

PUBLISHER: MICROSOFT
RELEASE: LAUNCH WINDOW

No disrespect to current-gen racers, but when *Gotham* hits the streets things are going to change – the difference between *PGR2* and *PGR3* will be reason enough to part with the cash for a 360. The environments are already insanely detailed, with New York being the first city that Bizarre Creations has unveiled. *This* is what next-gen gaming is all about.





RELEASE LIST

Alan Wake	TBC
Amped 3	Take 2
APB	TBC
Avalon	TBC
Battlefield: Next Generation	EA
Blue Dragon	Microsoft
Call Of Duty 2	Activision
Chrome Hounds	Sega
Citizen Siege	TBC
Condemned	Sega
Dark Sector	TBC
Dead Or Alive 4	Microsoft
Dead Or Alive: Code Chronos	Microsoft
Dead Or Alive: XBV 2	Microsoft
Dead Rising	Capcom
Demonik	Majesco
Dirty Harry	TBC
Dogtag	Digital Jesters
Elder Scrolls 4: Oblivion	Take 2
Enchant Arm	From Software
Ferrago	TBC
FIFA 2006	EA
Final Fantasy XI	Microsoft
Football Manager 2006	Sega
Frame City Killer	Namco
Full Auto	Sega
Gears Of War	Microsoft
Ghost Recon 3	Ubisoft
Gun	Activision
Halo 3	Microsoft
Huxley	TBC
Infraworld	TBC
Kameo	Microsoft
Killing Day	Ubisoft
King Kong	Ubisoft
Lost Odyssey	Microsoft
Madden NFL 2006	EA
NBA 2K6	Take 2
Need For Speed Most Wanted	EA
NHL 2K6	Take 2
NHL 2006	EA
Ninety-Nine Nights	Microsoft
Ninja Gaiden 2	Microsoft
Omikron 2	TBC
Perfect Dark Zero	Microsoft
Possessed	TBC
Prey	Take 2
Project Gotham Racing 3	Microsoft
Psychopath	TBC
Quake IV	Activision
Retribution	TBC
Saint's Row	THQ
Scarface	VU Games
Splinter Cell 4	Ubisoft
Stranglehold	Midway
Test Drive: Unlimited	Atari
Tiger Woods 2006	EA
The Darkness	Majesco
The Godfather	EA
The Outfit	THQ
Thesis	TBC
Tony Hawk's American Wasteland	Activision
Too Human	Microsoft
Top Spin 2	Take 2
Turok Next Gen	Buena Vista
Unreal Tournament 2007	Midway
WarDevil	TBC

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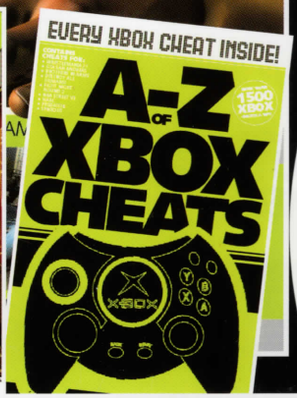
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