

MADNESS BREWING

WEEKLY VIDEO GAME NEWSLETTER

JUNE 28, 2010 — VOL . 3

Rockstar's Cowboy No Match for Nintendo's Plumber

If there is anyone who is shocked that Red Dead Redemption dominated the charts for the week of May 22nd, they must be living under a rock. Sure, when you break the game down to its core, it's nothing more than a Grand Theft Auto clone set in the Wild West. However, it's a Grand Theft Auto clone made by the company that makes the GTA franchise. While the original game in the Red Dead series (Red Dead Revolver) was met with a lukewarm reception, the amount of advertising that Rockstar paid for the game to be shoved in all our faces virtually guaranteed the game to be a success. In fact, its first week sales are more than half of Revolver's lifetime 1.5 million units moved worldwide.

According to VGChartz.com, the Xbox 360 of Red Dead Redemption moved 549k units in its first week. The PS3 version also sold incredibly well with 297k. This means that Red Dead Redemption is guaranteed to have the best opening week of any game on the Xbox 360 or the PS3 in the month of May. Chances are though that Super Mario Galaxy 2 will still end up having the best single SKU debut for the month (and possibly even beat the combined total of the PS3 and 360 versions of Redemption). Also, while Red Dead Redemption had solid sales and outperformed other major titles like Splinter Cell: Conviction and Bioshock 2, the best selling Redemption SKU (the Xbox 360 version), didn't even come close to touching Pokemon HeartGold/SoulSilver, God of War III, Battlefield: Bad Company 2, and Mass Effect 2.

Still, there is a good chance that Red Dead Redemption will have a strong shelf life most other high-profile games on the shelf (with the exception of Pokemon and Mario Galaxy 2). The game is very good and keeps players hooked. I've also heard that the online multiplayer component is highly addictive. My experiences with the single-player campaign left me craving more. I put a solid 12 hours into the game and had trouble finding the will-power to stop playing and do something productive. In fact, there are shortages at many places that have not been able to keep the game in stock. It seems kind of silly that Rockstar can sell a million copies of the game in North America in a two week period and not produced enough copies yet Capcom produces one million copies of Super Street Fighter IV for the worldwide market and plenty of copies languish on the shelf collecting dust. Both companies seem to have real goobers in charge since they're both horribly off on how many copies they expect to ship.

PS2/Xbox/Gamecube days. It also hurt greatly that the title was release against Red Dead Redemption. Most people don't have money to spend on multiple games in a week (or even a month). Rockstar Games tends to have one of the most solid reputations right now for releasing quality titles. Ubisoft has lost grasp of being seen in high regard between too many lacklustre releases and the DRM fiasco. Comparing the two companies with their recent histories made the decision between

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Red Dead Revolver and Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands very easy.

Speaking of platforming titles that have a strong pedigree; Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands was a major disappointment. Combined across the 360 and the PS3, it fell short of 60k units sold. It was a horrible time to release a Prince of Persia game. Sure, the movie is coming out around the same time but right now people are a bit down on the Prince of Persia franchise. The last game in the series (simply titled Prince of Persia) was a dud considering the popularity of the series during the And for those buying more than one video game, they were either picking Alan Wake, Split/Second, or saving their pennies for Super Mario Galaxy 2. Alan Wake was the second best title on the Xbox 360 for the week selling 159k in its debut week. With there being a high-profile 360 title for the week, it's no surprise that Prince of Persia performed better on the PS3 than on the 360. However, the difference was less than 1.5k between the two SKUs. Surprisingly, Split/Second performed just as good as Prince of Persia. Despite the fact that Disney Interactive isn't known for making racing games (or good games for that matter), it managed to sell 60k on the 360 and PS3 in its first week and moved 801 units than Prince of Persia. Also, Split/Second actually had a SKU to crack the top ten (the 360 version) while Prince of Persia was shut out of the top ten.

However, the congratulating and high-fiving lasted exactly one week. Super Mario Galaxy 2 released on Sunday, May 23rd and sold extremely well for its first week. Not only were the 879k units sold the first week one of the best openings for a Mario title but it beat out Red Dead Redemption's first week sales by a few thousand; although Mario Galaxy 2 still fell short of Pokemon HeartGold/SoulSilver's debut week of over a million copies (which is so far the best debut of 2010). Still, Red Dead Redemption held its own against the plumber as it still

managed to sell almost another 430k units in its second week.

Top Ten Games (and New Releases) Chart for May 22nd

(All data is from VGChartz.com)

Rank	Title	System	Weekly Sales	Weeks in Release
1	Red Dead Redemption	Xbox 360	549k	new
2	Red Dead Redemption	PS3	297k	new
3	Alan Wake	Xbox 360	159k	7
4	New Super Mario Bros. Wii	Wii	79k	27
5	Wii Fit Plus	Wii	51k	33
6	God of War III	PS3	46k	10
7	Halo 3: ODST	Xbox 360	45k	35
8	Pokemon HeartGold/SoulSilver	DS	44k	10
9	Just Dance	Wii	44k	27
10	Split/Second	Xbox 360	35k	new
12	Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	PS3	31k	new
16	Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	Xbox 360	29k	new
17	Split/Second	PS3	25k	new
39	Trauma Team	Wii	12k	new
51	Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	Wii	9k	new
72	Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	DS	7k	new
100	Shrek: Forever After	DS	6k	new
128	Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	DS	5k	new
129	Shrek: Forever After	Xbox 360	4k	new
143	Shrek: Forever After	Wii	4k	new
145	Attack of the Movies 3D	Wii	4k	new
153	Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	DS	4k	new
189	Attack of the Movies 3D	Xbox 360	3k	new

Yet many still have overlooked Nintendo's premiere mascot's incredible week. Maybe it's because many people expected the title to do well (with the exception of

EB Games/Gamestop frontline employees) or perhaps it's because nobody had expected Red Dead Redemption to sell as well as it did. I'm still going to go out on a limb here and say that Super Mario Galaxy 2 will end up being the best selling title of the year; although that's mainly due to the fact that it has a six month head start against Call of Duty: Black Ops. My prediction of 850k-1 million sold in its first week was dead-on and it wouldn't surprise me if Super Mario Galaxy 2 sells over two million copies by the end of June. Despite it looking likely that the next Zelda game will be Nintendo's big title this holiday season, expect Super Mario Galaxy 2 to be featured prominently in Nintendo's holiday 2010 plans as it will be the biggest family game they release all year.

Funny enough, there were other games released the same week as Super Mario Galaxy 2. THQ released UFC Undisputed 2010 in time for the big fan expo in Las Vegas in conjunction with the UFC 114 event. There was plenty of cross-promotion as it was expected that this UFC event would do as well or exceed the pay-per-view sales for UFC 100 since the main event featured the two coaches from the very popular Spike TV show, The Ultimate Fighter. As well, Quinton Jackson, one of the participants, is also one of the stars of The A-Team movie. THQ has paid for quite a bit of advertising on mainstream media to get people into the game.

The problem though is that that the game is basically the same game as last year with a few extra bells and whistles. This shouldn't surprise anyone since it's a formula THQ has beaten into the ground with the WWE wrestling games for quite some time. So it's shouldn't be a shock to anyone that the numbers are down sharply for the game. The Xbox 360 version sold only 265k copies (compared to 413k for the 2009 version) and the PS3 version sold only 182k copies (compared to 228k for the 2009 version). While the two SKUs still managed to place 3rd and 4th for the weekly sales, it still seems bizarre considering that MMA is even more popular than it was last year

and there are more next-gen console owners than there were last year. This is extremely problematic for THQ which was relying heavily on this game to help them out of the red. Even though they're probably still going to make a decent amount of money off of this game (they may even make the same amount as last year even with lower sales since the production costs are considerably cheaper), they're still bleeding cash and have few games on tap that could help stop the bleeding.

Two racing games also saw their release for the week of June 5th. ModNation Racers was released for the PS3 and PSP platforms. I had originally said on the very first podcast I did for the site that ModNation Racers will become a breakthrough hit for the system and that it will bridge the gap and entice casual gamers to make the jump from the Wii to the PS3. I couldn't have been more wrong. There are two major problems with the game: it's not all that good and they're marketing it to the wrong crowd. My playtime with the game's demo made me feel like I was playing South Park Rally from the Nintendo 64 days. The controls were too loose and the multiple paths make it feel less like a casual game than it should be. The great thing about Mario Kart has been that anyone can pick up and play it and have a good time. While it's kind of fun to customize your character and design your own courses, the meat of the gameplay feels a bit lean. If the racing doesn't feel fun and more complicated than it should be, then it's not going to gain any access to the casual market.

Sony also has flubbed the marketing of this game. Instead of advertising it like they did with LittleBigPlanet towards families and younger gamers, they've been trying to tap into their pre-existing mature audience. That doesn't make a lot of sense since most of the PS3's audience tends to be hardcore gamers and chances are they're not going to rush out to buy ModNation Racers; especially in a month when you've got games like Red Dead Redemption and UFC Undisputed

2010 coming to the system. Had Sony marketed this title properly, it would have made its way into more homes. While 68k sold in its first week (good for 7th position on the chart) is not all that bad, it could have been a lot better. The PSP version only sold a few thousand copies but that's par for the course when it comes to PSP games nowadays.

The other game to throw stones at Mario Kart Wii was Blur. Activision and/or the marketing team involved with the game decided that they would challenge Mario Kart by making it fun of it with television advertisements. Big mistake. Anybody that has gone after Mario Kart in the past has fallen flat on their face. Sega tried to bash the game during the Genesis days but in the end, Super Mario Kart outsold most of the games on the Genesis. Another problem with the marketing of the game is it's tagline "race like a big boy". I don't know how many grown men, or even teenagers, like being called big boys. Maybe a six-year-old might feel proud to be called one but most of the guys that this game is aimed for probably would cringe if someone called them that.

Blur didn't even crack the top ten in sales in its first week. Across the Xbox 360 and the PS3, the game only managed to sell 55k copies. That's less than ModNation Racers did even though the game is exclusive only to the PS3. In fact, Mario Kart Wii sold more copies for the week (23k) than the PS3 version of Blur did (20k) despite the fact that Mario Kart Wii has been out for over two years. In fact, early data from the week of June 5th show that Mario Kart Wii's sales are larger than Blur's week two sales for both the Xbox 360 and the PS3 combined.

The most surprising thing about the sales for the week of May 29th is that New Super Mario Bros. Wii is still in the top ten. In fact, it sold 87k units in its 28th week which puts it 6th overall for the last week of May. One would think that with a new Mario game on the market that people would be flocking towards the new game and forgetting about the old one but, surprisingly, sales were

up over last week for New Super Mario Bros. Wii. As well, early data for the week of June 5th show that while sales did fall for the title, it's still has a solid and stable place within the top ten. In fact, it's the best selling title of 2010 so far despite it being released last November.

Top Ten Games (and New Releases) Chart for May 29th

(All data is from VGChartz.com)

Rank	Title	System	Weekly Sales	Weeks in Release
1	Super Mario Galaxy 2	Wii	879k	new
2	Red Dead Redemption	Xbox 360	279k	2
3	UFC Undisputed 2010	Xbox 360	265k	new
4	UFC Undisputed 2010	PS3	182k	new
5	Red Dead Redemption	PS3	152k	2
6	New Super Mario Bros. Wii	Wii	87k	28
7	ModNation Racers	PS3	68k	new
8	Wii Fit Plus	Wii	52k	34
9	Alan Wake	Xbox 360	51k	2
10	Just Dance	Wii	45k	28
14	Blur	Xbox 360	36k	new
22	Blur	PS3	20k	new
35	Club Penguin: Elite Penguin Force - Herbert's Revenge	DS	14k	new
51	Hexyz Force	PSP	10k	new
93	ModNation Racers	PSP	7k	new
182	Backyard Sports: Sandlot Sluggers	Xbox 360	4k	new

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Microsoft and Sony Go Casual But Nintendo Steals the Show

There was a lot of hype going into the 2010 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3). For the first time in a while it felt like all three major console manufacturers were destined to shine at the event. What transpired last week in Los Angeles was a bit bizarre. Microsoft, Nintendo, and Sony did not hold back and did their best to win over the confidence of both the media and consumers. The reactions between media outlets and gamers may differ but this E3 really showed that the industry is moving into two separate directions.

Microsoft started the event early with a Kinect event on Sunday night with Cirque de Soleil. While this no doubt impressed those in attendance, a presentation of that level may have put Kinect into the red permanently. Just the circus act alone will need to ensure that Microsoft will sell several hundred thousand units of Kinect. Throw in the planned huge marketing blitz that Microsoft will unleash upon the world during the holidays and Microsoft will no doubt have to sell at least a million, if not several million units this holiday to not be buried.

If Kinect wasn't already behind the eight-ball, many hardcore gamers who use E3 to prepare their holiday wish list were incredibly disappointed with Microsoft's show on Monday. While the show started off strong with many hardcore titles, not much new stuff was shown. Even the highly anticipated titles didn't come off strong. Gameplay video for *Halo: Reach* and *Gears of War 3* were disappointing in the fact that they didn't really show off anything new. It felt like we were seeing more of the same as we have seen with previous instalments of the franchises. It wasn't all like that as *Call of Duty: Black Ops* sort of felt like a mix between *Call of Duty* and *Far Cry* gameplay. While they only showed a trailer and it looks to still be at least another year away, *Metal*

Gear Solid Rising looked to be an interesting reboot for the series with it resembling a mix between established *Metal Gear Solid* gameplay and *Devil May Cry* or *Ninja Gaiden*. However, it seemed like Microsoft wanted to rush through the traditional Xbox 360 games as quickly as possible as their keynote was dominated with Kinect stuff.

While the hardcore crowd may not like it, this is what Microsoft needed to do. Microsoft has never been profitable in the home console business. Even though they had plenty of momentum at the beginning of this generation of consoles, they're almost out of gas. Sony has made great strides to make the Playstation 3 competitive against the Xbox 360. In fact, it's getting to the point where there are some major releases that are selling more copies on the PS3 than on the Xbox 360 (which opens up the question as to how many more Xbox 360 owners there are than PS3 owners considering that many 360 owners have bought more than one console to replace defective ones).

They need to go after Nintendo because, at the moment, the Big N is running unopposed. Nintendo is the only console manufacturer making money this generation. They've done that catering to an untapped market. Now Nintendo has a monopoly on this large group. Microsoft and Sony can cater to the hardcore market all they want but, considering that they're not making any money doing so, they need to go after a market that Nintendo virtually owns in entirety...aggressively.

So, most of the Microsoft presentation was an attempt to curry favour with the mainstream media. In fact, most gaming media reporters were relegated to the back of the auditorium for the Microsoft presentation. For the most part, the first few rows were dominated by reporters for major newspapers, television networks, and major news websites.

Kinect was a major part of this casual strategy as Microsoft showed off six games in detail for the new piece of hardware. However,

many of them were glitchy and seemed to have problems in some way or another. In fact, it suspiciously looked like the game footage for some of the games were prerecorded and people acted along with the game (*Kinectimals* was one of the games that looked guilty of this with the girl's hands not moving in conjunction properly with the on-screen hands and her talking while pretending to hide yet the in-game microphone not picking up on her speaking). They also showed off a very lame on-rails Star Wars lightsaber game that might have been neat in the arcades back in the mid-90s but looks very outdated in 2010.

However, Microsoft did a very smart thing by giving away the new Xbox 360 Slim (which they revealed at the end of their show) to all of the reporters at the show. Yes, some reporters can easily be bribed and Microsoft definitely earned some positive press by giving away all those systems. Even if gamers felt shafted by Microsoft's press conference, it was very successful for the company. Kinect was the talk of the show for many. In fact, many members of the mainstream press were given private time with Kinect under ideal and highly supervised conditions to ensure that reporters would only get a positive experience with Kinect.

Electronic Arts had their press event later that day. Like Microsoft, there weren't many surprises. Most of the content they showed had already been revealed and there weren't that many games talked about that we didn't already know about. In fact, they only talked about two new games and an expansion pack for *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*. Unfortunately, one of the games revealed was a new *Need for Speed* game. Considering that *Need for Speed* games are no longer as important as they once were and don't sell all that well, it was a big letdown. It would have been better had they announced a new *Burnout*, considering it has been several years since the last iteration of the franchise. It almost feels insulting considering that *Criterion Games*, the makers of the *Burnout* series, are

developing the new *Need for Speed* game.

Another retreaded franchise of EA, *Medal of Honor*, was front and center for their presentation. They showed off a 24-player multiplayer event that was unimpressive. Graphically, it didn't look that great and this was despite the fact that they reduced the screen size of the gameplay footage to show off multiple screens. In fact, on the live Internet feed, they seemed to show more footage of people's hands manipulating a game controller than the game itself.

Electronic Arts was quick to mention that they were using an early alpha edition of the game so it might be a bit buggy but then immediately after the game demo they announced that the multiplayer beta was going to be online June 21st. That's an incredibly quick development cycle for a game to go from early alpha to playable beta for regular consumers (although they announced that those who owned *Battlefield: Bad Company 2* and preordered *Medal of Honor* would gain access to the beta on Jun 17th). That's just plain dishonest. If Microsoft or Sony had done something like that for Kinect or Move, there would have been a backlash. Luckily for EA, nobody really cared considering that nothing big is expected for *Medal of Honor*. There's a chance that *Medal of Honor* will only be the 3rd or 4th best-selling FPS of the year. It will do well but it won't be a breakout hit like *Modern Warfare* was a few years ago.

The last event of the day was Ubisoft. The biggest mistake I made throughout E3 was to watch that piece of garbage. Joel McHale was the host of the event and he did such a horrible job that even though I thought Ubisoft had some really interesting games, he almost had me ignoring them. He wouldn't shut up for a minute and felt the need to interrupt the people who were introducing their projects with horrible jokes that sometimes were very insulting. He undermined Ubisoft's entire show and set them backwards despite them having a solid lineup of software.

In fact, we saw a lot of content from Ubisoft that we hadn't heard of before. Sure, there may be some who were disappointed by the fact that they didn't get a chance to see anything regarding *Beyond Good and Evil 2*, but there were plenty of interesting titles that look to be on tap for the next year. *Shawn White Skateboarding*, *Raving Rabbids: Travel Through Time*, and *Rayman Origins* look like fantastic games and have the potential to make end-of-year top ten lists. They finally showed footage of the previously announced *Tom Clancy: Ghost Recon Future Soldier* and *Driver: San Francisco*. While both games still left plenty of questions unanswered, they looked like they were taking their respective franchises in the right direction. Overall, when it came to software, Ubisoft did an incredible job.

The only trainwreck that wasn't McHale's fault was the *Your Shape* presentation. Ubisoft had shown off *Your Shape* during the Kinect portion of Microsoft's event and, for the most part, things went well. However, the Ubisoft presentation exposed the bugs of Kinect. The big problem was that they did virtually the exact same thing for both the Microsoft and Ubisoft events. The woman who did the Microsoft show also did the Ubisoft show. However, it appeared as though she lost two inches in the few hours between the two events. The Kinect sensor had indicated two different heights for her. Also, while it was a bit apparent during the Microsoft event, the Ubisoft demonstration kind of looked like there was tons of 'waggle' involved. Definitely not a good sign for a major part of Microsoft's strategy moving forward.

However, they also took the time to show off new hardware...sort of. They beat Nintendo to the punch by announcing they will be releasing their own Vitality Sensor apparently before Nintendo. *Innery* will be a relaxation game but it won't be released for a particular system. It will be a USB device for the computer. They also decided to take the time to show off *Battle Tag* which is

essentially a laser tag knockoff. It's not new technology at all. In fact, I remember the stuff being around when I was a kid fifteen years ago. The hook here is that it communicates with the computer to keep track of the score and to issue new challenges. Why Ubisoft would want to move in this direction is beyond me considering that most of their software is intended to keep their consumers in front of the television. If kids realize that they can have fun away from a video game system, the company is finished.

All joking aside, Ubisoft could have had a really good show. McHale was so bad that he almost killed it. The quirky products didn't help either as they felt like diversions away from the good stuff. Ubisoft is one of the few game publishers that are making money year over year and their lineup is solid enough that I don't foresee any change to their financial status. However, even if they were to get McHale's appearance fee back, I doubt that it was enough to make up for the potential loss of sales that McHale caused by preventing the press from enjoying the products presented. There has been virtually no mention of Ubisoft products in the mainstream media outside of *Your Shape: Fitness Evolved* (but that's basically due to the fact that it was a big part of Microsoft's event). Even though *Shaun White Skateboarding* has my vote as one of the best games to come out of E3 (and this is coming from someone who can't stand skateboarding/snowboarding games), I read and saw very little about the game reported in the press. Unless Ubisoft throws plenty of marketing money behind these smaller titles, I don't see there being much hype behind these products. Here's hoping for Ubisoft that McHale doesn't have an unsackable mutli-year deal.

Nintendo kicked things off on Tuesday with a thud. Even though most people felt Nintendo stole the show, it almost never happened. Shigeru Miyamoto was trotted out to present the new *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword* at the beginning of Nintendo's event and then things went horribly wrong. The Wii remote

that Miyamoto used was not being all that agreeable and made the game look hardly playable. In fact, Bill Trinen, who was translating for Miyamoto, looked very stressed out as Miyamoto muttered stuff angrily in Japanese. Trinen looked as if he didn't know what to say but he managed to keep his cool and blamed the problem on interference.

It's mostly Nintendo's fault as they didn't learn their lesson from last year with the problems that arose during the *Wii Sports Resort* demonstration. From what I can gather, the issue is that the Wii Remote's pointer interacts with the screen via infrared. The setup wasn't intended to be played in an environment with tons of people and plenty of bright lights. All that interacts with the infrared and can cause quite a bit of interference. Most of the reporters who got hands-on time with the new *Zelda* game said that it worked beautifully.

Nintendo continued their tradition of past E3s by showing off a bunch of casual titles that keep the hardcore market sedated. While *Mario Sports Mix* looked somewhat interesting, nobody in the audience was asking for *Wii Party* or *Just Dance 2*. At least the push with *Just Dance 2* is understandable considering that the Xbox 360's Kinect will be encroaching on Nintendo's territory and one of their big titles is *Dance Central*. *Just Dance* has been a major success for Nintendo and Ubisoft and they need to show that they won't allow Microsoft to steal some of their turf without a fight.

Things changed quickly though when Nintendo showed off the trailer for *Goldeneye*. The new game exclusive to the Wii sent the crowd into the first big frenzy of the week. Thankfully, Nintendo was just getting started as they announced a brand new game starring Kirby and another one with Donkey Kong (and it doesn't involve bongos!!!). Then they showed off the biggest item of all of E3 with the Nintendo 3DS. While they didn't show off much in terms of game footage from the system, they did announce one new title for the system; *Kid Icarus Uprising*. The game

looks great and puts the system on par between a Playstation 2 and a Gamecube (although some of the stuff seen on the E3 floor where slightly better than Nintendo 64 visuals, so it'll take some time before we see some decent video footage of games). Since the 3D effect can't be seen through giant screen videos, the conference ended by Nintendo sending out a large army of women with Nintendo 3DS systems tethered to their hips for the audience members to try out.

If Sony felt like they were going to have it easy after the Microsoft conference, they probably were sweating bullets after Nintendo's show. It was the first time since the revealing of the Wii that Nintendo had a strong E3. Actually, it almost felt like E3 should have ended with Nintendo's show because it was so great. Sony came into this E3 playing catch-up and Nintendo nearly lapped them after a mind-blowing 80 minute presentation.

Sony still had some big guns of their own to wow the crowd; although in the end it felt like a mixed bag. They tried to push the importance of 3D gaming and how the Playstation 3 will be the only system this holiday to have games available that can be played in an additional dimension. The problem with this though is that, while it wowed the crowd of glasses wearing journalists (and the people watching the Internet stream of the show if they were overworking their imaginations or on some sort of hallucogenic), Sony seemed to completely ignore the mass public's current apathy towards 3D televisions.

While 3D movies are all the rage right now in cinemas, nobody is buying 3D televisions. The reason for this is because, for the most part, the financial investment to see 3D movies in theatres is on the theatre operator (while the ticket payer only has to pay a very small surcharge compared to the total cost of the equipment upgrade). However, when it comes to 3D televisions for home use, the entire financial burden is saddled with the consumer. If 3D televisions were

cheap it would be one thing but they tend to start at the asking price of over \$2000 and go up steadily from there. Combine that with the poor economy and the fact that many people have already shelled out for new TVs in the last couple of years and you've got a recipe for a very cold market.

Yet Sony is telling us that 3D gaming for the Playstation 3 will be immediately adopted and, if we're not on the boat, we're about to sink. Then again, this is the same Sony that told us rumble wasn't important in a game system's controllers (and later changed their mind). It's also the same Sony that told us that Blu-Ray was the wave of the future. In four years, Blu-Ray has still only captured 11% of the home video market (DVD pretty much has a stranglehold on the rest) and is only gaining around 2% market share per year (and it's growing at a constant, not exponentially). By the time Blu-Ray overtakes DVD in market share, it will have been overtaken by another format like solid-state media.

But back to the games, because Sony talked about a few of them. *Killzone 3* looked really gray, which is what I hear the kids like in their first-person shooters nowadays. They they talked about the Playstation Move controller. In a nutshell, it's a Wii Remote knockoff (down to the Nunchuk-type controller extension). However, the pointer functionality is sensed by the Playstation Eye camera instead of by an infrared sensor bar. Sony is playing it off like the whole thing will cost consumers \$50 (which is the cost of one Move controller) but, considering that the Navigation sub-controller is pretty much required (at a cost of \$30) and that most Playstation 3 owners don't have a Playstation Eye, it becomes a really expensive setup. If you don't have a Playstation 3 and you're interested in the Playstation Eye, you might as well start saving your pennies now as its going to cost well over \$400 dollars to be set up properly. Remember when Playstation 3's weren't moving all that well at \$400 when the economy was better? Apparently Sony doesn't

because there doesn't appear to be a price drop happening before next year.

Unlike Kinect which looked drastically different from what we've seen with the Wii, there wasn't much to say about what the Move can bring to the table. In fact, most of it is almost identical to what we've seen with the Wii. They showed off *Sorcery* which looks like a very elaborate tech demo. It basically resembles a Harry Potter-type platformer and could have some potential but there wasn't enough shown off to make it seem like a must-buy title (although to be fair, it's coming out in 2011 so there's still plenty we don't know about it and plenty for time to redefine the controls and the graphics). They also showed off the Move-enhanced *Tiger Woods 11* which plays exactly like the Wii version (including the Wii-version of *Tiger Woods 10*). In fact, *Tiger Woods 11* look so similar to a Wii title that they had motion-control issues while it was being demoed. Another title they showed off was *Sports Champions* which looks a lot like a realistic version of *Wii Sports Resort*.

One quick thing about the similarities between *Wii Sports Resort* and *Sports Champions*: one of the neat things about *Wii Sports Resort* is that it looks incredibly cartoony. It looks fun to play with a group of friends. *Sports Champions*'s realism kind of takes away that goofiness that makes *Wii Sports Resort* appealing. Even Microsoft gets it with their Avatar characters which are just knock-offs of Miis.

Then, it became very clear that Sony doesn't have a clue. They basically acknowledged that they're having problems with the PSP sales. However, instead of promising a boatload of new titles (outside of a new *God of War* and the camera-enabled *Invizimals*) or coming out with new hardware that fixes some of the issues that are currently plaguing the PSP like the lack of real analog control or incredibly long load times, they basically blame the PSP's problems on poor marketing. That couldn't be the furthest thing from the truth. The PSP has been marketed very well in North America (aside

from that fake blog fiasco from a couple of years ago).

I had been worried before E3 last year that my PSP would collect dust after major developers announced they were abandoning the platform. However, at E3, they showed off a strong library of games and throughout the holidays they practically bombarded the airwaves with interesting PSP commercials for the hardware. I was not too concerned about the system's prospects last November because it looked like Sony was doing a good job marketing the system.

The games, on the other hand, were very poorly marketed. Not much was mentioned about many of the first-party PSP titles and the third-party PSP titles could have been vapourware for all it matters. In fact, Sony decided to forgo advertising the PSP version of *LittleBigPlanet* (which had been released as Sony's big holiday PSP title) and decided that pushing the year-old PS3 version of *LittleBigPlanet* was a safer bet (in hindsight, it wasn't a horrible play since *LittleBigPlanet* had a very strong 2009 holiday season).

So a summer marketing campaign with an annoying kid is not going to matter any. If there's no content worth buying and the games control horribly due to a poor interface, then gamers are not going to invest money in the system. Just look at the Nintendo 64 or the Gamecube. Both great systems at the time if you didn't mind waiting every three months for a good game to come out (ok, maybe two months for the Gamecube).

Speaking of *LittleBigPlanet*, they showed off the sequel to the PS3 game although none of the demoed part of the game involved the single-player game. They were showing off mini-games created using the level editor within the game. The problem here is that while *LittleBigPlanet* eventually sold two million copies, it took two heavily promoted holiday campaigns to do so. The chance to play someone's creation of *Bumper Balls* (stolen from *Mario Party*) does not make me want to spend \$60 on a game. The only question I had about

this title was whether the controls were tightened up to make it feel less like *Sackboy* meanders around on screen like a drunk. I still have no idea because they didn't mention anything about the single-player stuff.

They showed off more *Medal of Honor 2* and *Dead Space 2* which wasn't all that interesting considering we had already seen these games earlier in E3. However, it's interesting to note that PS3 will be getting exclusive special editions of each game (which probably explains all the Sony references during EA's conference on Monday). It almost feels very bizarre considering that EA was one of the first publishers to be visually disgruntled over the launch of the PS3, it's high price point, and it's complex hardware architecture that made developing games for it a nightmare early on. Now the two companies are in bed with each other. Is there a developer backlash against Microsoft?

Since we're on the subject of bitter enemies who became hot-and-heavy lovers, Gabe Newell came out and announced *Portal 2* would be coming to the Playstation 3. This is kind of hilarious considering that Valve was probably the biggest voice against the Playstation 3 (probably even bigger than Microsoft) and that EA's port of *The Orange Box* to the PS3 a few years ago was considered so horrible that some reviewers deemed the game unplayable. However, it appears that Valve and Sony have made up to the point where Newell said that the PS3 version of the game would be the best console version (although the best version overall will still be the PC version but he failed to mention that to the audience).

They showed another trailer for *Final Fantasy XIV Online* but still no gameplay footage. They finally dated *Gran Turismo 5* for November 2nd, 2010 (as long as they don't push it back to 2011). Then the show ended with a new *Twisted Metal* game.

Some people are really excited about this but I still can't see why. There has only been one *Twisted Metal* game that sold over two million copies in North America (the second

game in the series on the original Playstation). *Twisted Metal* is not a strong Playstation-branded franchise. It felt like they ended the show with no promise. If they had ended it with the Move or 3D gaming, it would have felt like the show ended with a bigger bang. Instead it just ended.

There is one thing of importance to mention about Sony's event: Kevin Butler. They had him come out and do his funny shtick but it didn't help sell a single console. He can bash (or his writers can have him bash) Microsoft's Kinect or anything the Nintendo 3DS all he wants but at least there's substance to what they have. It felt like Sony was chasing after their competition throughout their entire event. It wasn't that their show was bad but it didn't feel like there was any substance. It didn't make me excited to be a PSP owner (unlike last year) and it didn't make me feel like I needed to become a PS3 owner (unlike last year). Kevin Butler is funny and all but I would have rather the time wasted on him devoted to highlighting more games instead of cramming a bunch of titles within a few trailers that offered about five seconds worth of gameplay.

It's hard to compare the three console E3 events because they were all trying to do different things. Microsoft was trying to captivate the casual market. I think that they did a decent job and do have quite a bit of momentum going forward (some retailers are saying that Kinect presales are doing very well and are actually surpassing Wii sales). The problem is that many of the hardcore fans feel like they've been abandoned by Microsoft. The thing though is that there really isn't much of an alternative. Sure, the Microsoft core audience can all go out and buy PS3s but that's probably not going to happen. Maybe they'll see something more exciting at July Gamescon but for now they'll have to contend with having to look forward to an "absolutely horrible" lineup of games on deck, including; *Halo: Reach*, *Gears of War 3*, *Call of Duty: Black Ops*, *Medal Gear Solid: Rising*, and *Fable 3* (not to mention all the games

announced at the EA and Ubisoft conferences as well).

Nintendo was lucky in that they didn't have to waste time introducing a new method of input into a pre-existing device. Basically, Sony and Microsoft had to announce that they recreated the wheel while Nintendo was able to use the wheels they created four years ago to highlight an explosive lineup of games. For the last couple of years, Nintendo left people who watched their E3 presentations with a feeling of emptiness because they were busy wasting their time on gimmick products (remember *Wii Music*?). This year it was all about games and Nintendo delivered. It also helped that they were introducing a brand new system that would show off things that haven't been done before. Nintendo didn't have to waste time trying to copy or compete with the other companies. They just brought the goods to the show and left everyone watching the show feeling fulfilled.

Sony couldn't do any right, it seems. Their 3D gaming is going to be a bust in the short term. If they can keep it going for the next five years, they'll have something to work with because people will eventually adopt 3D technology when the prices go down and the glasses aren't part of the equation. The Move feels like another thing that Sony has ripped off from Nintendo (whatever happened to Sixaxis?). They didn't reveal any big titles (*Twisted Metal* is not a big title) and showed off plenty of stuff that we've already seen before. That being said, it's not like Sony didn't have decent content to show off. However, their stuff didn't stand out. There's a reason why Sony is getting very little mainstream press from this event. It's because it feels like we've already seen Sony's event before.

All in all, E3 was enjoyable. There were plenty of interesting titles shown off and there really was something for everyone. Usually, after watching all the presentations during the expo, I only see a couple of games that I get really excited about (usually a Mario game and one other title). This year though I got excited by

a bunch of games and I might be making quite a number of preorders in the next couple of weeks. If you're a casual or a hardcore gamer, it really doesn't matter; E3 had plenty to offer for anyone who's interested in gaming entertainment.

Games Featured During the E3 Press Conferences

My picks of the show are highlighted in grey

Microsoft	
Title	Release Date
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Nov. 9, 2010
Metal Gear Solid: Rising	Jun. 3, 2011
Gears of War 3	Apr. 5, 2010
Fable 3	Oct. 26, 2010
Codename: Kingdoms	TBA
Halo: Reach	Sep. 14, 2010
Kinectimals	Nov. 4, 2010
Kinect Sports	Nov. 4, 2010
Kinect Joy Ride	Nov. 4, 2010
Kinect Adventures	Nov. 4, 2010
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved	Nov. 4, 2010
Dance Central	Nov. 4, 2010
Star Wars Kinect	TBA
Forza Kinect	2011

Electronic Arts	
Title	Release Date
Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit	Nov. 16, 2010
Dead Space 2	Jan. 25, 2011
Medal of Honor	Oct. 12, 2010
Battlefield:Bad Company Vietnam (Expansion)	Winter 2010
EA Sports MMA	Oct. 19, 2010
EA Sports Active 2.0	Nov. 16, 2010
Madden 11	Aug. 10, 2010
The Sims 3	Oct. 26, 2010
Crysis 2	Holiday 2010
Bulletstorm	Feb 22, 2010
Star Wars: The Old Republic	Spring 2011

Ubisoft	
Title	Release Date
Child of Eden	TBA
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	Nov. 16, 2010
Shaun White Skateboarding	Holiday 2010
Motionsports	Nov. 5, 2010
Your Shape: Fitness Evolved	Nov. 4, 2010
Raving Rabbids: Travel in Time	Nov. 9, 2010
Tom Clancy: Ghost Recon Future Soldier	Q1 2011
Driver: San Francisco	Fall 2011
Project Dust	TBA
Rayman Origins	2010
Trackmania 2	Holiday 2010
Shootmania	2011
Questmania	TBA
Michael Jackson's This Is It	Holiday 2010

Nintendo	
Title	Release Date
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	2011
Mario Sports Mix	2011
Wii Party	Fall 2010
Just Dance 2	Fall 2010
Golden Sun: Dark Dawn	Holiday 2010
GoldenEye 007	Nov. 2, 2010
Disney Epic Mickey	Nov. 1, 2010
Kirby's Epic Yarn	Fall 2010
Dragon Quest IX	Jul. 11, 2010
Metroid: Other M	Aug. 31, 2010
Donkey Kong Country Returns	Holiday 2010
Kid Icarus Uprising	TBA

Sony	
Title	Release Date
Killzone 3	Feb 2011
Sorcery	Spring 2011
Tiger Woods 11	Available now
Heroes on the Move	2010
EyePet	Sep. 2010
God of War: Ghost of Sparta	Holiday 2010
Invizimals	Fall 2010
LittleBigPlanet 2	Nov. 2010
Medal of Honor	Oct. 12, 2010

Sony Continued	
Title	Release Date
Dead Space 2	Jan. 25, 2011
Portal 2	2011
Final Fantasy XIV	2010
Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood	Nov. 16, 2010
Gran Turismo 5	Nov. 2, 2010
Twisted Metal	2011

Video Game Review

Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved 2
 Microsoft Xbox 360 (Xbox Live)
 2008
 Developer: Bizarre Creations
 Publisher: Activision

It's hard to imagine what Bizarre Creations and Activision could do to the Geometry Wars formula to make a sequel worth buying but Retro Evolved 2 is probably as interesting an evolution to the formula as we're going to get short of the fantastic Geometry Wars: Galaxies. The game that basically defined the twin-stick shooter genre is at its downloadable best here although it does suffer from a few shortcomings.

For the most part, all game modes control the same; the left stick moves the ship and the right stick fires in the direction the player is pointing the stick at. The only other button used is the trigger buttons for when the need arises to unleash a screen-clearing bomb. There are some modifications to the controls depending on the game category (such as the Pacifist mode which does not allow the player to shoot). The controls are incredibly simple which is good considering the game is deceptively hard.

The game has six modes: Deadline (score as many points as possible within three minutes), King (with only one life, the player can only shoot their weapons while within disappearing safe zones), Evolved (score as many points as possible without a time limit), Pacifism (the player, without the ability to fire, must fly through gates and survive as long as possible while avoiding enemies), Waves (the player must destroy increasing waves of enemies

that either move across the screen horizontally or vertically), and Sequence (which is essentially 20 levels that the player must clear; although players can be defeated in a level and still move on as long as they still have any of their three lives left that they were given at the start of the mode). While there are a few stand-out modes like Deadline, Evolved, and Sequence, none of the modes feel weak. Sure, Pacifism may not be as fun as Evolved but playing through the mode doesn't feel like a drag.

Vector graphics were once thought to go the way of the dodo bird but Retro Evolved 2 (like all the other Geometry Wars games) employ a modified look borrowed from the vector graphics of yesteryear. There are plenty of colours on screen despite the large black void of a background. Once the action heats up, there can be over 100 independently moving enemy sprites on the screen without the slightest hiccup or drop in frame rate. While the graphics look simple in nature, between the number of independently moving characters on screen at the same time, all the visual effects, and the variety of colours, this is a game that could not be reproduced on more primitive hardware.

One of the shortcomings of the game is its sound. It's not that it's bad but it sounds pretty uninspired. The soundtrack essentially remains unchanged which wouldn't be a problem if it was any good to begin with. It sounds mildly better than a half-assed midi music sequence, but not much more. However, the major issue is that it doesn't add anything to the intensity of the situation. The sound effects are acceptable but they too don't help build up an epic atmosphere. Essentially they feel like glorified bleeps and bloops.

Despite the limited gameplay modes, the game is surprisingly addictive. It's difficulty curve is so perfect that, even though it gets pretty insane fairly quickly, you still feel like you can perform even better the next time you play it. Perhaps breaking onto some of the online

leaderboards may seem impossible but the in-game achievements don't feel like they're hard to get with a little practice. However, like many arcade games, there will get to be a point where you will eventually hit a wall and get bored with the title. The replayability is very limited once you realize you're as good as your possibly going to get with this game. Even though the multiplayer is fun, it doesn't feel as strong as the single player modes. The multiplayer might add a few more hours of gameplay but its not the selling point of the game.

All in all, Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved 2 is one of the best downloadable titles out there. Had it been made for the arcade during their height of popularity, this game would have caused a quarter shortage. It's fun, easy to get into, and highly addictive. There are a few problems that could have easily been fixed had Bizarre Creations or Activision put more thought into it but for the cheap price its easy to overlook them. Even if the game cost more, it would still be well worth it as this title can keep you occupied for many hours.

☆☆☆☆

Video Game Review

Project Gotham Racing 4
Microsoft Xbox 360
2007

Developed by: Bizarre Creations

Published by: Microsoft Game Studios

Racing games are a dime a dozen on the Xbox 360. Microsoft has published almost as many racing games on the system than any other genre combined. Bizarre Creations and Microsoft Game Studios's *Project Gotham Racing 4* is a solid addition to anybody's 360 racing library. It's fast, fun, and gorgeous. It's not perfect and has some serious issues but still stands as one of the superior racing games of the HD generation.

The game is played like a semi-realistic racer. While the controls are not as sensitive as the *Gran Turismo* games, they're not as forgiving as the *Ridge Racer* games.

There's a fair amount of drifting in the game but those who can corner around tight turns without having to drift much or brake too hard will tend to leave the competition in the dust.

That's not to say that the game doesn't want you to drift. Not at all. The game employs the Kudos system which rewards the player for long drifts, good cornering, and passing competitors. Kudos can be spent on new tracks, cars, and game modes. Kudos are also earned by winning races and competitions.

The single player mode has two main categories: arcade and season. The arcade mode is split into several chapters consisting of ten races each. Medals are awarded based on the difficulty level the player chooses. Completing a challenge on the highest difficulty level earns the player a platinum medal. It's nothing new as the arcade mode has been a staple of the Project Gotham Racing franchise since the beginning. It's fun stuff but not as in-depth as the season mode. Still enjoyable nonetheless.

The season mode puts the player into a racing career where winning tournaments will cause the player to rise through the ranks and gain access to more challenging races. The more challenging the tournament, the more Kudos that can be earned. Once a player has achieved a certain ranking, they are moved up to the next skill level. The higher the skill level, the greater the access to racing events that have more kudos to earn.

The multiplayer aspect of the game is fun. For the most part, it's online although you can partake in two-player offline split-screen races. The real neat online mode is the tournaments feature that requires players to qualify and then compete in races at the end of the day. It's entertaining even though new players to the game will find themselves having trouble coming close to winning their first online race.

There are seven classes of cars. They range from A (the fastest and most powerful) through to G (whoa, slow down there grandma). Earlier races in the career mode will only allow for the weaker classes of

cars to be used while the more skill-testing tournaments will demand for only the best cars in the game. However, each race has a restriction as to what class of car can be used; you can't use a higher or lower classed car. This might be a problem for some as there are some great cars that one might grow fond of in the middle levels (like B or C class) but

unable to use them in A class tournaments. True, the A class cars might be faster but some of those lower classes have cars that handle so well that it makes up for the loss of speed.

Bikes are also present. They handle differently than cars. Using them strategically during the career mode will be of great benefit since completing a season event with a bike or a car makes no difference. Sometimes the tight handling of a bike is of great advantage. However, very few bikes have high top speeds. So in longer, straighter races they become a problem. To complete the arcade mode, players will have to complete most courses with both a bike and a car which takes away all the strategy.

The game controls very well. The triggers make the controls feel perfect as some of the courses need some finesse with the gas pedal. However, I found myself relying on using the handbrake more than the regular brake. Still, I never found myself once having a problem remembering what button to press and never felt confused by the controls. Even though racing games shouldn't have complicated controls, some companies can't get the layout done properly. There should be no complaints by anyone about how this game is configured or handles.

The graphics look great. The cars look highly detailed and look almost like the real thing. The place where the game scores major points is its attention to detail. All nine cities (Well, technically eight cities and a race course) have been perfectly replicated down to the tiniest features. Even though it's getting a bit annoying to see tons of product placement in video games, it's still

pretty cool to see the actual fast food restaurants line a particular street from a city like they do in real life.

It's not all pretty. There are some areas where there's slowdown. It's a problem on rainy courses in some tight corners. It's a major issue when you're trying to perform a tight corner during a cone race only for the game to freeze up and your timing to

be thrown off. It's unnecessary and problematic and prevents this game from being one of the best in its class.

The sounds are great. The roaring of the engines really make you feel like you're part of a real life race. The soundtrack of the game is excellent too as there's plenty of options available that will please everyone. From the latest sounds to classical music, this game has it all. It's one of the few games on the system where you won't be thinking all that much about putting in your own custom soundtrack (although that option is available).

There were some issues I noticed during the career mode while racing. There were times where it told me incorrect information on the HUD that influenced how I handled my car while racing. It would sometimes tell me during a timed lap or during a cone race that I was either well ahead or way behind in a particular race. Then when I'd finish the race, it would tell me the exact opposite. I can understand if I make a mistake while racing and lose a few seconds but there were a few races where I was supposedly sitting in first with an eight second lead and then I would finish the race only to be sitting dead last twelve seconds behind the leader. It was frustrating in having to deal with this bug since it caused me to react to my position. I shouldn't have to make a decision on whether to drive more aggressively or cautiously because of poorly written computer code.

Even with the issues, the game is a lot of fun. The season mode is a blast to play through and will keep any racing fan occupied for many hours. On top of that you have the arcade mode and the online play. Add it all up and you can see there's a ton

of content available. The racing in the game is very well done and grabbing the checkered flag feels very satisfying. A great thing about the game is the class system of cars that allow for some of the fast cars to be available right away so that players aren't stuck with only slow cars at the beginning. It assumes that this is most likely not the first racing game that

the player has ever touched so there's no need to throw in a crawl-before-walking mechanic.

Project Gotham Racing 4 is a very fun game. It feels like a more complete racing experience than the previous three instalments in the series. Bizarre Creations and Microsoft did an admirable job with this title. However, it felt like they still should have delayed its release by a couple of months to iron out the wrinkles (like the graphical slowdowns and the HUD glitches). This could have been one of the best racing games ever but it's problems do knock it down a few pegs. It's a great racing game; just not the greatest racing game.

☆☆☆☆

Video Game Review

Victory Run
Turbografx-16
1989
Developed by: Hudson
Published by: Hudson

With there being so many great racing titles on the various 8 and 16-bit systems, its easy to see why Hudson's Victory Run is often overlooked. However, this oversight is mainly do to its control issues because thanks to it's solid gameplay and nice looking graphics, this game can otherwise stand toe-to-toe with other similar games in its genre. However, the controls are a deal breaker here; which is unfortunate since it basically sinks what otherwise had the potential to be a great game.

Like many racing games of the time, the player is racing against the clock. Other cars on the track serve merely as obstacles that the

player must avoid. Crashing into too many obstacles or driving off the track repeatedly will most certainly guarantee losing. The idea is to go as fast as possible with one's reflexes at 100%. It's not a formula unique to this game but it's implemented well. This game does things a bit differently than most by requiring players to buy repair upgrades for their cars between races. If a player drives poorly, they'll be required to make repairs to ensure standing a chance in later courses.

The controls are the biggest letdown of the game. It features the standard control scheme for most games of the genre: d-pad steers while one face button acts as the gas while the other is used as the brake. However, the game has all the cars using manual transmission. This wouldn't be so bad if the control scheme was mapped out well so it wouldn't be so awkward. The problem is that to shift, one needs to press up or down on the d-pad. This hardly works as intended during turns (which can be disastrous in later levels). It's a major issue when swerving around obstacles because tapping the top or the bottom of the d-pad by accident in a frenzied moment hashes out an unexpected cut in forward momentum and can derail the entire race. If there had been a face button dedicated to using a clutch to switch gears or if the Turbograft-16 had more buttons, or, more appropriately, had they just made the game where the cars had an automatic transmission option, this game would have been one of the best in the genre.

While the controls stink, the graphics shine. The game is presented from a behind-the-car third-person perspective with the screen scrolling from the in-game horizon. Considering the hardware, the game looks great. The colours are well-selected and, while everything looks pixelated, everything is drawn well enough that one doesn't need to strain their imagination in trying to pretend what the on-screen images are supposed to look like. However, like most Turbograft-16 games, the graphics of this game will not blow

away anything seen on the NES. Rad Racer is a much better looking game despite being on less powerful technology. The transition of the sky from a day-to-night setting during a race is neat even though the transitions are more sudden than gradual. On thing that needs to be kept in mind though is that Victory Run was a launch title for the system so it's not like the designers of the game had figured out how to maximize the power of the system yet.

The sounds of the game are good but nothing to write home about. The soundtrack isn't that impressive but it won't torture the ears. However, the soundtrack seems more appropriate for a platformer or a puzzle game. It's too soft and slow-paced for a racing game. The effects are decent but even with one's imagination on overdrive, they'll never be confused for something overheard at a real-life race.

The controls are a real sticking point and are a damper on what would otherwise have been a solid racing game. Unless you're six-years-old or have super-tiny thumbs, the d-pad just wasn't made for this control scheme. It makes the game more difficult than it has to be. If you practice enough, the game can become manageable but the faulty design results in an unnecessarily steep learning curve.

Maybe Hudson was being too ambitious in their attempts to make an arcade racer with realistic elements. There are some really cool things in Victory Run like the repair system but the faulty controls hampered by the lack of automatic transmission may make this game unplayable for some. There aren't many racers on the TurboGrafx-16 so if it's your retro system of choice, you don't have much of a selection to choose from and are stuck. It could be better. Actually, it should be better and outside of playing everything else in the genre, there's no need to play this game.

☆☆

MB Hall of Fame Inductee

1942

Original Release: 1984 (Arcade)

Designed by: Yoshiki Okamoto

Developed by: Capcom

Published by: Capcom

The fact that 1942 was the first successful shoot-em-up for the start-up Capcom back in 1984 is something that could not have been predicted by most. 1942 was not Capcom's first game in the genre. Nor was it its best-looking or complex at the time. However, 1942 still managed to be a huge success for the company and took away many quarters from much more impressive looking games. Its simple charm was seen by most as a good thing. Even today, with the game looking like an antique even compared to other 2D shoot-em-ups, it still can entice gamers to lose hours in trying to fight off enemy ships while flying loop-de-loops.

Capcom had released their first video game in 1984 titled Vulgus. It was an above average shoot-em-up which helped give the newly-minted Capcom some respectability in the video game world. However, Vulgus wasn't really all that popular in arcades. Even though it holds a special place in the heart of those who developed the game, it has become one of Capcom's forgotten gems. Perhaps the problem with Vulgus is that it was too ambitious a project. Considering that the most popular shooting games at the time were Space Invaders and Galaga, Vulgus was much more complex. The most popular arcade games at the time were those that were simple to get into yet hard to master.

Capcom went backwards with 1942. While some purists may grumble that Capcom devolved by making something rather rudimentary, 1942 quickly became a popular hit. It may have not been as graphically dynamic as Vulgus, but the game could certainly hold its own. It was graphically comparable to Galaga and blew Space Invaders out of the sky. They kept the concept simple and

made it so that the difficulty curve was perfect (very easy to get into but quickly got more difficult to ensure gamers were constantly putting quarters into the machine).

It's kind of weird though that the game was as popular in Japan as it was. The game is based on the Japanese theatre of World War II with the player controlling a single plane for the American side. The goal is to beat all 32 levels to make it to the centre of the Japanese aerial fleet and destroy them in Japan before they can launch their assault against the United States. It's especially bizarre because Japan has had national controversies over scholars and government officials trying to downplay Japan's role in World War II. However, this game puts them front-and-centre as the evil antagonist. Yet it did incredibly well in Japan where the arcades had been dominated by Space Invaders and Galaga.

Perhaps it was the right time for 1942 to come along. People were beginning to have their fill with some of the mainstays in the arcade. There's only so many times you can play the same game over and over again. At least with 1942, not only was it differently, but it didn't feel like you were playing the same level over and over again. The game changed the level layout as the player progressed. It helped keep players hooked.

This is all despite the fact that there really weren't any special gimmicks to the game. Still, the game offered quite a number of power-ups that the player could get to help them out of a thorny situation. One of the more notable things this game provided was the ability to perform an emergency loop-de-loop. This allowed players to quickly maneuver out of the way of an incoming enemy. However, players only could perform this maneuver a few times throughout the game. It was a neat feature (almost cute in a way) but only felt beneficial when employed properly. Contrast that against a power-up like a screen clearing bomb which some would argue doesn't involve any sort of strategy (although

that power-up is available as well). Players also had the ability to obtain extra wingmen, increase their firepower, and stop enemies from shooting for a brief period of time.

As stated before, the game performed very well for Capcom and it eventually became their first full-fledged franchise. The game was later ported to a variety of consoles such as the NES, Commodore 64, Game Boy Color, and Windows Mobile. The game was also made part of compilation discs for the Sega Saturn, Playstation 1, Playstation 2, and the original Xbox. The original game also received a face-lift (titled 1942: Joint Strike) and was published for the Playstation 3 and Xbox 360 downloadable services with additional features such as online leaderboards and updated graphics.

The first sequel was released a year later. 1943, while not as successful as the original, still had a decent following. Other releases followed such as 1943 Kai: The Battle of Midway, 1941: Counter Attack, 19XX, The War Against Destiny, and 1944: The Loop Master. None of these games came close to the popularity that 1942 had, although 1943 did manage to become a staple in the more established arcades.

Sometimes simpler is better. That's what the public said about 1942. While most who played *Vulgus* enjoyed what the game had to offer, it was just easier and more enjoyable to play 1942. It was simple fun that became incredibly addictive.

MB Hall of Fame Inductee

Marble Madness

Original Release: 1984 (Arcade)

Designed by: Mark Cerny

Developed by: Atari

Published by: Atari

As video games were getting more complex during the 80s, it was still the games with the most simple ideas and gimmicks that made the most money. *Marble Madness* is one of those games that took money away from games that may have offered a more visual bang but didn't have a lot of substance to them. However,

despite its simple looking display (even compared to other games released at the time), *Marble Madness* employed some of the most sophisticated graphical, sound, and input devices available when it was released.

The concept of getting from point-A to point-B has been done so many times in video games that it wasn't even considered innovative at the time of *Marble Madness's* release in 1984. However, what this game did differently is how it made players get from A to B. The idea of the game is to roll a marble on an isometric game field from the start to the finish before the time runs out. There are plenty of obstacles in the way and while players have unlimited lives at their disposal. There's no penalty when the player's ball gets destroyed; like if a ball gets destroyed by acid or if it falls off the playing field. The only thing is that as the ball is being reset, the timer is still ticking on the countdown clock. Once the timer runs out, it's game over. Even though the game only boasts six levels, it's tough to make it through all the levels before seeing the game over screen.

The game was an ambitious project for Atari although the company did not fully accommodate the full design that designer Mark Cerny would have hoped for. The game was designed with simultaneous two-player gameplay in mind. The game had briefly been similar to what you'd expect from a mini-golf game and then shifted towards looking like a racing game until the final design was ultimately settled on (which incorporates elements of the two original working ideas of getting a ball to the goal and a race against time).

The game had been designed with the idea that it would be supported with super-powered hardware but it wasn't made available for the game. While Atari did make the Atari System 1 board available for the game, even that had limitations to Cerny's anticipated design. Improvisations were made to work with the hardware as well as presenting a visual style that would make the game unique from others

on the market. The mixture of an isometric perspective interlaced with a visual design influenced by M. C. Escher was used to enhance the visuals of the game and to also hide Cerny's lack of artistic ability (although many would argue that *Marble Madness* is a visual work of art as it is).

The sounds used for the game aren't spectacular but the game was the first one from Atari to use an FM sound chip which would allow for perfect synchronization of the sound produced with the gameplay. Unfortunately, there were limitations to this technology as it did cause some sound distortion. However, this issue affected *Marble Madness* less than other games that employed the same sound hardware setup.

The game was controlled by a trackball which, while not new, was still considerably unique. There was a plan to use a motorized trackball but due to hardware issues, the plan was scrapped for a much simpler model. It's hard to imagine what the game would have been like had it been controlled by a joystick as the trackball feels more natural.

While the game became very popular in the arcades extremely quickly, it also suffered from a steep drop-off soon after its release. The biggest factor for this is the limited amount of gameplay available since the game was only six levels long. There was only so much one could do with the game before it would begin to feel old and tired.

Much like many of the popular arcade titles of the time, *Marble Madness* was ported over to the home market quite a bit throughout the 80s. However, unlike most of the games of its era, the most popular versions of *Marble Madness* were produced as handheld and tabletop LCD games made by Tiger Electronics. The game was ported over to many home consoles and computer systems. There were several computer versions of the game produced in 1986 including versions for the Apple II and the Commodore 64. A NES version was made in 1989 followed by one for the Nintendo Game Boy in 1991. 1991

also saw the release of a version for the Sega Genesis. In 1999, a port was published for the Nintendo Game Boy Color. The arcade version was released as part of the Midway Arcade Treasures compilation for the Microsoft Xbox, Nintendo Gamecube, Sony Playstation, and Windows PCs.

There had been plans for a sequel titled *Marble Man: Marble Madness 2* but it never left the prototype stage. Although the game had included much expanded gameplay, it had failed to capture the hearts of test audiences as it had bombed out of the testing trials.

However, the legacy of the game has lived on in spirit as there have been plenty of games that have taken the core concept and evolved upon *Marble Madness's* gameplay. *Super Monkey Ball* might be the most famous example as it uses much of the elements of *Marble Madness* but with a true 3D perspective.

Marble Madness is a game that has done very well considering that it was considered small potatoes against the arcade giants like *Pac-Man* as well as it never had a proper sequel. Yet, despite this, *Marble Madness* is one of the most famous games to come out of the golden age of arcades and is even recognized by non-gamers due to its imaginative design and unique presentation.

MB Hall of Fame Inductee

Metroid

Original Release: 1987 (NES)

Designed by: Hiroji Kiyotake and Yoshio Sakamoto

Produced by: Gunpei Yokoi

Developed by: Nintendo

Published by: Nintendo

If *Super Mario Bros.* was the first platform game that felt like an adventure, *Metroid* was the first platform game that felt like an epic event. Never before had a game's environment felt so real as well it was also one of the first games to give the player a choice in how they wanted to explore the game. While *The Legend*

of Zelda predates *Metroid* in Japan, for American gamers, this was their first window into seeing the future of gaming.

The player controls bounty hunter Samus Aran. The instruction telling the player to press start is the only in-game help the player will receive during the entire playing experience. It's up to the player to decide whether to explore the planet Zebes by going left, right, up, or down in the side-scrolling quest. It feels like most places are accessible from the beginning. Sometimes there are barriers that prevent players from moving into a particular area unless they've found the right weapon to blast the barrier. Sometimes players stumble into open areas that are extremely difficult without the right type of weapon to combat the enemies. But most interesting of all is that some areas are accessible by exploring the terrain with all the available tools. A well-placed bomb in a inconspicuous place might get Samus access to an area that will help her progress on her journey.

Many people consider *Metroid* to be the child of the best characteristics of the first *Super Mario Bros.* and the original *The Legend of Zelda*. However, while the platforming elements of *Metroid* were directly inspired by *Super Mario Bros.*, *The Legend of Zelda* was not something the game developers turned to often while developing the game. Many of the innovations made famous by *Zelda* were actually in development for *Metroid* before *Zelda's* release like open-world exploration and a weapons system. While there was communication between the two teams working on the individual projects internally at Nintendo, the two games were developed separately. As well, there was no way for the developers of *Metroid* to anticipate or predict *The Legend of Zelda's* eventual success.

Metroid was a sign that more people would be required to develop console games due to their complexity. Most arcade games at the time were still being developed and

designed by a few people. *Metroid* had fourteen people working on it. *Super Mario Bros.* only had seven and *Zelda* had ten. But even then, many of the people working on the game did not stay confined within their roles in the development process. It was common for people working on one subject of the game to suggest ideas to the people working on other parts of the game. An example of this is that Hirozaku "Hip" Tanaka helped out with graphics and writing the game even though his only credit for the game is for sound composition.

The sound and graphics of *Metroid* were great. Even though the soundtrack for *Metroid* was limited, the main theme of the game made the player feel like they were embarking on a great saga. However, it was the game's opening music that set the tone for everything. The few tones heard prior to the game's start were eerie in that it made one feel like they were isolated in a lonely place. This was complemented well by the graphics as the visual presentation made it feel like that Samus was a long way from home and stuck on a planet filled with unfriendly creatures. The black background kept the dark and desolate mood going as the detailed sprites made the game come to life. Even though it was still an 8-bit game, the attention paid to detail for the monster design was incredibly well done. The evil creatures looked genuinely frightening due to intelligent design rather than being a pixelated mess and looking disgustingly gruesome for no proper reason.

Another title that's tied to *Metroid* is *Kid Icarus*. They're often referred to as sister titles because many gameplay elements and most of the team from *Metroid* were employed with the *Kid Icarus* game. *Kid Icarus* was released four months after *Metroid* in Japan and was actually released a month earlier than *Metroid* in North America. The reason why the *Metroid*, *Kid Icarus*, and *The Legend of Zelda* time releases are so backwards is because all three games were developed for the Nintendo Disk

System in Japan. The Disk System was a add-on for the Famicom (the Japanese NES) that would allow players to save their game progress. However, the attachment was never released stateside and adjustments needed to be made that would allow for users to keep track of their progress without having to start the game over from the beginning every time the game was powered on. *The Legend of Zelda*, despite it releasing only a week later in North America after *Metroid*, was the first game to feature a battery backup to save the game progress. A password system was implemented with *Kid Icarus* and then *Metroid*. In fact, the Justin Balley code for *Metroid* is one of the most popular codes on the NES and ranks right up there with the Konami code. That code exposed Samus for what she truly was.

That's right, Samus Aran was a woman. However, most people who played the game when it was just released didn't know it. Only once the game was completed did people find out the truth. In fact, the faster one beat the game, the more people would see of Samus...literally. While it wasn't the first time that the main character of a popular video game was a female (*Ms. Pac-Man* was a more popular game than the original *Pac-Man*), it was the first time where a female character in a starring role was running around with guns a-blazing. While the strip down to the bikini for fast completion times didn't do anything for the feminist movement within video games, the game itself proved that people had no issue accepting a female as the main character in an action-adventure game. One could argue that many people didn't know that Samus was a woman when the game first came out.

However, *Metroid* remained popular during the lifespan of the NES and is one of Nintendo's biggest franchises. The first batch of people didn't know but the millions that would later get interested in the franchise definitely knew and really didn't take any issue with her gender.

The legacy of the game is a bit weird in that even though Nintendo acknowledged it as one of

their major franchises during the mid-90s, it was largely ignored for a while. *Metroid II: The Return of Samus* was released for the Game Boy in 1991. It featured the same style of gameplay as the original and was portable. *Super Metroid* came out in 1994 for the Super Nintendo and is widely regarded as one of the best video games of all time. However, despite the critical acclaim for *Super Metroid*, there wasn't a *Metroid* game for Nintendo's next home console, the Nintendo 64. One of the frequently offered explanations for this by Nintendo executives is because they wanted to make sure *Metroid's* transition to 3D would be worthwhile rather than offering a poor experience. Many companies rushed the transition of their franchises from 2D gameplay towards 3D too quickly and disappeared from the gaming landscape as a result. Even though fans of the series were routinely disappointed by the lack of *Metroid* appearing during major gaming events like E3, they would be rewarded greatly after both Nintendo learned the ins-and-outs of 3D gaming and the technology for 3D gaming improved greatly.

It was the Gamecube in 2002 that saw the next instalment of the franchise. However, the game was played as a 3D first person shooter. *Metroid Prime* sparked a trilogy on both the Gamecube and the Wii. The Gamecube received *Metroid Prime 2: Echoes* in 2004 while the Wii received *Metroid Prime 3: Corruption* in 2007 (as well as a collector's edition package containing all three games in the series optimized for the Wii's motion controls). *Metroid: Other M* is a return to the series 2D platforming roots. To be released in 2010 for the Wii, it will be a convergence of the old style of *Metroid* games from the NES and SNES as well as some action from the 3D perspective similar to the Gamecube and Wii games.

There were also several *Metroid* games released for Nintendo handhelds. *Metroid II* was the only one released for the Game Boy but several *Metroid* games came out for the Game Boy

Advance. *Metroid Fusion* was released in 2002 and featured gameplay very similar to that of *Super Metroid*. Using the Game Boy Advance-Gamecube link cable, players who completed the game and connected their system to the Gamecube (with a *Metroid Prime* game inside of the console) were able to unlock the original *Metroid* game. *Metroid: Zero Mission* was released in 2004 and is a quasi-remake of the original game. While the game borrows many of the same areas, characters, and scenarios from the original, *Zero Mission* also includes new areas and enemies to fight on top of enhanced graphics and music. The Nintendo DS also received a *Metroid* game with the release of *Metroid Prime: Hunters* in 2006. The game is played exactly like the other *Prime* games on the Gamecube and Wii although players use the system's touchscreen to aim Samus's weapons by tapping the area where they want to shoot.

Aside from the unlockable feature in *Metroid: Zero Mission* for the Game Boy Advance, the original game has been made available for purchase on a few other occasions. The game was released as part of the NES collection for the Game Boy Advance in 2004. It was also released on Nintendo's Virtual Console service for the Wii in 2007.

The only thing that's unfortunate about *Metroid* is that it does seem to be a title that hasn't been able to age well. It's open-world gameplay is rudimentary compared to the games today and passwords, which were annoying to deal with back in the 80s, are very beyond annoying to deal with considering that all modern systems are now equipped with internal memory for game saves. Still, *Metroid* set gaming standards when it was released and, with a bit of imagination and forgiveness, is still a great game to play today. If *Metroid* hadn't come along, gaming wouldn't have progressed as quickly as it did entering the 90s.

MB Hall of Fame Inductee

Missile Command

Original Release: 1980 (Arcade)

Designer: Dave Theurer

Developed by: Atari

Published by: Atari

Games that deal with doomsday scenarios tend to do well. It's kind of freakish that the stuff we're most fascinated with are the things that basically spell out a narrative of our impending doom. Atari's Missile Command played on the fears of many during the Cold War of the 1980s: nuclear annihilation. The game was epic even with its simple gameplay because it played on the nightmares created by the tensions between the east and the west.

Despite the fact that the graphics were primitive (this game was created in 1980, after all), there was much thought put into the design of the game. The point of the atmosphere within the game was that the United States was in the midst of being bombarded with nuclear weapons. Even though the display is just a bunch of basic pixelated objects, there was so much attention paid to detail that designer Dave Theurer suffered from nightmares in which the world was in being blown up by nuclear weapons. To put it simply, the game was so intense that it messed with the mind of the person who created it.

Missile Command has the player sending out missiles to intercept incoming nuclear missiles about to land and destroy the U.S. cities. Players can fire from three different missile silos by hitting the corresponding button on the console board. Players aimed their missiles by positioning a reticule that could be moved by rolling the game's trackball in the desired direction. Players had to compensate their aim for the time it took the missile to fire from the silo to where the reticule was. If a missile hit a nuke, there would be an explosion. Any other falling nuke that hit the resulting explosion would be also destroyed and cause another explosion (allowing players to chain-link explosions and take out many

nukes with only one shot). Players had a limited amount of ammo: ten per silo. Ammo was replenished after every level. If a silo was hit by a nuke, it would no longer be operational. If a city is destroyed by a nuke, it's gone for good or until the player scores enough points to earn a new one (usually around 10 thousand). Once all the buildings in the city have been levelled by nuclear weapons, it's game over.

People enjoyed this game for two reasons: it felt like one was genuinely saving the world from nuclear destruction, and that there was a deceptively large amount of strategy involved in the game. The game may have been made during the dying days of the Cold War but people were still concerned about the Soviet Army and its intentions. Tensions were high between the East and West so this game made people feel like they were saving the Western world from the end of days. On the other side of the coin, the game drew people in by its interesting design and hooked gamers as it required cunning strategy to master the machine and receive a high score. The only thing that changed level to level was the speed (it increased as the game progressed). This meant players had to be smarter in chaining explosions and deciding which silo to use to shoot weapons. Quick fingers and a sound strategy would result in a high score while those who couldn't do better than shoot each nuke one at a time didn't get very far.

Missile Command made quite a bit of money for Atari for decades. It continued to be one of the top earning games for many arcades up until the arcades themselves stopped being popular. The game was also ported over to home consoles. The Atari 2600 received the only port that closely resembles the original game. Most of the later issues received a graphical upgrade at the very least and, at most, multiple play modes and other special features. The Atari Jaguar, the Sony Playstation, the Microsoft Xbox 360 (through Xbox Live Arcade) received ports. Windows PCs also received a version for the home computer market. The Jaguar

version is notable since it features an option for the game to be played with a virtual reality helmet. However, the helmet is very obscure and chances are you or anyone you know doesn't have one. Missile Command also was made available for several handhelds including Atari Lynx and the Nintendo Game Boy.

Even though the game brought in a lot of money for Atari, nothing much happened with the Missile Command franchise. Although there had been sequels thought about and worked on throughout the years, very few ideas made it far past the drawing board. Liberator was released by Atari in 1984 which saw a role-reversal (in that the player is the one destroying the buildings while trying to avoid the intercepting missiles). However, this was never an official sequel and remains—in Atari's mind—a separate game. The only game that came close to actually being released in arcades was Missile Command 2. However, it ultimately was cancelled in 1992.

It's not everyone's cup of tea but Atari did well with Missile Command. It was the first game to play on people's fears and make tons of money out of it. Some would argue it's a pioneer for future games to exploit the fears of others. However, many of the people who played the game will say they did so because it was fun; not because they said they were scared...or so they would say without feeling embarrassed.

May and June Critics Picks

Multiplatform

- Blur (PS3, Xbox 360)
- Red Dead Redemption (PS3, Xbox 360)
- Skate 3 (PS3, Xbox 360)
- Split/Second (PS3, Xbox 360)
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 (PS3, Xbox 360)
- Toy Story 3: The Video Game (PS3, Wii, Xbox 360)
- UFC Undisputed 2010 (PS3, Xbox 360)

Microsoft Xbox 360

- Alan Wake
- Snoopy Flying Ace
(Xbox Live Arcade)

Nintendo Wii

- Bit.Trip Runner (WiiWare)
- Sin and Punishment: Star Successor
- Super Mario Galaxy 2
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11
(Wii Version)
- Trauma Team

Sony Playstation 3

- Joe Danger (PSN)
- ModNation Racers
- Sam & Max: The Devil's Playhouse
Episode 2: The Tomb of Sammun-
Mak (PSN)
- Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype (PSN)

Nintendo DS

- Picross 3D

Sony Playstation Portable (PSP)

- Lunar: Silver Star Harmony

May's Retail Game Releases

Microsoft Xbox 360

- Alan Wake
- Attack of the Movies 3D
- Backyard Sports: Sandlot Sluggers
- Blur
- Iron Man 2
- Lost Planet 2
- Prince of Persia: The Forgotten
Sands
- Red Dead Redemption
- Shrek: Forever After
- Skate 3
- Split/Second
- UFC Undisputed 2010

Nintendo Wii

- Attack of the Movies 3D
- Backyard Sports: Sandlot Sluggers
- Boot Camp Academy
- Dance Sensation!
- Family GameShow

Nintendo Wii (Continued)

- Iron Man 2
- Kid Adventures: Sky Captain
- Let`s Paint
- Let`s Play Ballerina
- Let`s Play Garden
- Pirates Plund-Arrr
- Prince of Persia: The Forgotten
Sands
- Reader Rabbit 1st Grade
- Reader Rabbit Kindergarten
- Shrek: Forever After
- Super Mario Galaxy
- Tetris Party Deluxe
- Thomas and Friends: Hero of the
Rails
- Trauma Team

Sony Playstation 3

- 3D Dot Game Heroes
- Blur
- Iron Man 2
- Lost Planet 2
- ModNation Racers
- Prince of Persia: The Forgotten
Sands
- Red Dead Redemption
- Shrek: Forever After
- Skate 3
- Split/Second
- UFC Undisputed 2010

Nintendo DS

- Backyard Sports: Sandlot Sluggers
- Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow
- Club Penguin: Elite Penguin Force –
Herbert`s Revenge
- Dawn of Heroes
- Dementium II
- Picross 3D
- Game Hits!
- Iron Man 2
- Jane`s Hotel
- Let`s Play Ballerina
- Let`s Play Garden
- Little Bears
- Monster Racers
- Prince of Persia: The Forgotten
Sands
- Satisfashion
- Shrek: Forever After
- Tetris Party Deluxe
- Thomas and Friends: Hero of the
Rails
- Yard Sale Hidden Treasures:
Sunnyville

Sony Playstation Portable (PSP)

- Fat Princess: Fistful of Cake
- Hexyz Force
- Iron Man 2
- ModNation Racers
- Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja
Heroes 3
- Prince of Persia: The Forgotten
Sands
- What Did I Do to Deserve This, My
Lord!? 2

May's Downloadable Game Releases

Microsoft Xbox 360

- Aqua
- Ben 10: The Rise of Hex
- Doom II
- Metal Slug XX
- RayStorm HD
- Rocket Knight
- Things on Wheels
- Voodoo Dice
- Zeno Clash: Ultimate Edition

Microsoft Xbox 360 Game Room

- Asteroids
- Basketball
- Battlezone
- Boxing
- Buzz Bombers
- Canyon Bomber
- Demonds to Diamonds
- Grand Prix
- Haunted House
- Keystone Kapers
- Mega Zone
- Megamania
- Millipede
- Night Driver
- Night Stalker
- Oink!
- Pitfall!
- Rack `Em Up
- RealSports Volleyball
- River Raid
- Shark! Shark!
- Soccer
- Space Duel
- Spider Fighter
- Stampede
- Strategy X
- Super Breakout
- Time Pilot

Nintendo Wii

- Art Style: Light Trax
- Bit.Trip Runner
- Blood Beach
- Chess Challenge
- Kirby Super Star (VC-SNES)
- Kung Fu Funk
- Manic Monkey Mayhem
- Phoenix Wright: Ace Attorney – Trials and Tribulations
- Viral Survival
- Zombie Panic in Wonderland

Sony Playstation 3

- Bomberman Fantasy Race (PS1)
- Delta Force Urban Warfare (PS1)
- Lead and Gold: Gangs Of The Wild West
- Manic Monkey Mayhem (Mini)
- The Price is Right
- Robin Hood: The Return of Richard (Mini)
- Sam & Max Episode 2: The Tomb of Sammun-Mak
- Sneezies (Mini)
- Soldner-X 2: Final Prototype
- Super Stacker
- Supermarket Mania (Mini)
- VT Tennis (Mini)
- World of Outlaws Sprint Cars

Nintendo DS

- 1001 Crystal Mazes Collection
- Advanced Circutes
- Bloons
- Bounce and Break
- Chess Challenge!
- Crazy Golf
- Earthworm Jim
- Flips: The Enchanted Wood
- Flips: More Blood Horowitz
- Frogger Returns
- Looksley's Line Up
- Metal Torrent
- Photo Dojo
- Real Crimes: Jack the Ripper
- Sokomania
- Topsy Turvy Life: Turvy Drops
- World Poker Tour: Texas Hold 'Em

Sony Playstation Portable (PSP)

- Armored Core Last Raven
- Busy Sweets Factory (Mini)
- Finger Connection (Mini)
- Harvest Moon: Hero of Leaf Valley

Sony Playstation Portable (PSP) (Cont.)

- Love Cupid (Mini)
- Manic Monkey Mayhem (Mini)
- One Two Boat Racing (Mini)
- Ramen Heaven (Mini)
- Sneezies (Mini)
- Quiz Animaniam (Mini)
- Robin Hood: The Return of Richard (Mini)
- Sneezies (Mini)
- Supermarket Mania (Mini)
- VT Tennis (Mini)
- Worms: Battle Islands

June's Retail Game Releases

Microsoft Xbox 360

- Alpha Protocol
- Backbreaker
- Bass Pro Shops: The Hunt
- Call of Duty: The War Collection
- Field & Stream: Total Outdoorsman Challenge
- Green Day: Rock Band
- Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4
- Naughty Bear
- Naval Assault: The Killing Tide
- Pure Futbol
- SBK X: Superbike World Championship
- Singularity
- Sniper: Ghost Warrior
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11
- Toy Story 3: The Video Game
- Transformers: War for Cybertron

Nintendo Wii

- America's Next top Model
- Arc Rise Fantasia
- Bass Pro Shops: The Hunt
- The Cages: Pro Style Batting Practice
- Combat Wings: The Great Battles of WWII
- Chuck E. Cheese's Party Games
- Dance on Broadway
- Green Day: Rock Band
- Harley Davidson: Road Trip
- The Last Airbender
- Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4
- Let's Play Ballerina
- Let's Play Garden
- PDC World Championship Darts 2010
- Samantha Swift and the Secret Scroll
- Sin and Punishment: Star Successor

Nintendo Wii (Cont.)

- Tetris Party Deluxe
- thinkSMART Family!
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11
- Toy Story 3: The Video Game
- Transformers: Cybertron Adventures
- Vacation Isle: Beach Party
- Wipeout: The Game
- Zany Golf

Sony Playstation 3

- Alpha Protocol
- Backbreaker
- Green Day: Rock Band
- Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4
- Naughty Bear
- Pure Futbol
- SBK X: Superbike World Championship
- Singularity
- Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11
- Toy Story 3: The Video Game
- Transformers: War for Cybertron
- Trinity Universe

Sony Playstation 2

- Syphon Filter: Logan's Shadow

Nintendo DS

- 100 Classic Books
- America's Next Top Model
- Art of Murder: FBI Top Secret
- Chuck E. Cheese's Party Games
- Diamond Trust of London
- Discovery Kids: Snake Safari
- Dragon Ball: Origins 2
- Jewels of the Tropical Lost Island
- Just Sing!
- The Last Airbender
- Legend of Kay
- Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4
- Let's Play Ballerina
- Let's Play Garden
- Mean Girls
- Mega Man Zero Collection
- Mind over Matter
- My First Dollhouse
- Puzzle Quest 2
- River City Soccer Hooligans
- Samantha Swift and the Hidden Roses of Athena
- Tetris Party Deluxe
- thinkSMART
- thinkSMART: Advanced
- TNA Impact: Cross the Line
- Toy Story 3: The Video Game

Nintendo DS (Continued)

- Transformers: War for Cybertron – Autobots
- Transformers: War for Cybertron – Decepticons
- Vampire Legends: Power of Three

Sony Playstation Portable (PSP)

- Disgaea Infinite
- Hot Shots Tennis: Get a Grip
- Lego Harry Potter: Years 1-4
- Metal Gear Solid: Peace Walker
- Toy Story 3: The Video Game
- TNA Impact: Cross the Line

June's Downloadable Game Releases

Microsoft Xbox 360

- Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project
- Earthworm Jim HD
- NeoGeo Battle Coliseum
- Risk: Factions
- Snoopy Flying Ace
- Space Ark

Microsoft Xbox 360 Game Room

- Air-Sea Battle
- Baseball
- Black Widow
- Casino
- Chopper Command
- Circus Atari
- Crackpots
- Frog Bog
- H.E.R.O.
- Juno First
- Kaboom!
- Konami's Ping Pong
- Laser Blast
- Liberator
- Missile Command
- Motocross
- Mr. Goemon
- River Raid II
- Skiing
- Sky Jinks
- Star Strike
- Triple Action
- Video Hustler
- Video Pinball
- Warlords

Nintendo Wii

- Arcade Sports
- Art Style: Rotozoa
- Bejeweled 2
- Jett Rocket
- Lead the Meerkats
- Mario Tennis (VC-N64)
- Pong Toss Pro – Frat Party Games
- Reel Fishing Challenge II
- Robin Hood: The Return of Richard
- Shadow of the Ninja (VC-NES)
- The Tales of Bearsworth Manor: Chaotic Conflicts
- The Tales of Bearsworth Manor: Puzzling Pages
- Yard Sale Hidden Treasures: Sunnyville
- Zoo Disc Golf

Sony Playstation 3

- Beat Em Up (Mini)
- Bloody Roar (PSN-PSX)
- Catan
- Cubixx (Mini)
- Express Raider (Mini)
- Final Fantasy IX (PSN-PSX)
- Gold Fever (Mini)
- GundeadliGne
- Gundemonium Recollection
- History Ice Road Truckers (Mini)
- Hitogata Happa
- Joe Danger
- Lock 'N Chase (Mini)
- Mahjongg Artifacts (Mini)
- N2O Nitrous Oxide (PSN-PSX)
- Pallurikio (Mini)
- Planet Minigolf
- Red Bull X-Fighters (Mini)
- Rocks N' Rockets (Mini)
- Sam & Max Episode 3: They Stole Max's Brain
- Tales of Monkey Island
- Tecmo Bowl Throwback
- Tehra: Dark Warrior (Mini)
- Telegraph Crosswords (Mini)
- Vibes (Mini)
- Voodoo Dice
- Yetisports (Mini)

Nintendo DS

- 16 Shot! Shooting Watch
- Ancient Tribe
- Animal Color Cross
- Brain Drain

Nintendo DS (Cont.)

- Combat of Giants: Mutant Insects – Revenge
- Date or Ditch
- Don't Cross the Line
- Fire Panic
- Flametail
- Flips: The Magic Faraway Tree
- Flips: Silent But Deadly
- A Kappa's Tale
- Legendary Wars: T-Rex Rumble
- Maestro! Green Groove
- Mega Words
- Music On: Electronic Keyboard
- Puffins: Let's Fish!
- Spin Six
- Super Swap

Sony Playstation Portable (PSP)

- Beam Em Up (Mini)
- Bloody Roar 2 (PSN-PSX)
- Burnin' Rubber (Mini)
- Cubixx (Mini)
- Express Raider (Mini)
- Gold Fever (Mini)
- History Ice Road Truckers (Mini)
- Influence (Mini)
- Lock 'N Chase (Mini)
- Mahjongg Artifacts (Mini)
- Metal Slug XX
- Pallurikio (Mini)
- Red Bull X-Fighters (Mini)
- Rocks N' Rockets (Mini)
- Tehra: Dark Warrior (Mini)
- Telegraph Crosswords (Mini)
- Vibes (Mini)
- Yetisports (Mini)

Next Issue

Publication Date: June 5th, 2010

- Video Game Sales for June 2010
- Infinity Ward-Activision-Bungie Love Triangle
- Top Games From February 2010
- Official NES Accessories
- Game Reviews
- Hall of Fame Inductees
- Other assorted junk

**WEEKLY VIDEO GAME
PODCAST**

**NEW PODCAST
EVERY MONDAY**

The Final Madness

It's easy to forget about Rockstar's misses when they've had some of the biggest hits in the industry. The *Grand Theft Auto* games alone have sold over 25 million copies in North America since 2004 (and that's not including *GTA III* or *GTA: Vice City*). However, not everything Rockstar does ends up smelling like roses. They do produce the occasional bomb here and there. Unfortunately, the sales figures for VGchartz.com only goes as far back as 2004; so I can't show the fantastic sales of *GTA III* and *GTA Vice City* or the horrible sales that *State of*

Emergency produced.

With *Red Dead Redemption* selling like crazy and looking like it will end up being on the list for the top ten selling titles of the year, I thought it would be interesting to look at Rockstar's track record for the last little while. Even though they do have a couple of successes outside of the *GTA* franchise, those successes are very modest compared to the games from the crime-spreing series. Maybe it was a good thing that they sort of made everyone think that *Red Dead Redemption* was a western-type of *GTA* game. For the most part, it fits

the bill. However, I found myself being more engaged with *Red Dead Redemption* than I have with any *GTA* game.

It's going to be several months before the sales of *Red Dead Redemption* slow down to the point where we can ultimately call a final number on lifetime sales. However, there's a good chance that it could surpass *GTA IV* for total sales. I would wager to guess that mostly no one would have predicted that the best-selling title from Rockstar of the HD generation would have nothing to do with *Grand Theft Auto*.

Title	Release Date	System	First Week Sales	Lifetime Sales
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	March 2010	PSP	12k*	200k*
Beaterator	October 2009	PSP	2k*	10k*
Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars	March 2009	Nintendo DS	65k	480k
Midnight Club: L.A. Remix	October 2008	PSP	18k	551k
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	October 2008	Playstation 3	70k	760k
Midnight Club: Los Angeles	October 2008	Xbox 360	85k	940k
Grand Theft Auto IV	April 2008	Playstation 3	1.22m	2.85m
Grand Theft Auto IV	April 2008	Xbox 360	2.32m	4.85m
Bully: Scholarship Edition	March 2008	Wii	20k	150k
Bully: Scholarship Edition	March 2008	Xbox 360	79k	470k
Manhunt 2	October 2007	Wii	51k	250k
Manhunt 2	October 2007	Playstation 2	58k	280k
Manhunt 2	October 2007	PSP	7841	40k
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	October 2007	Wii	8591	410k
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories	March 2007	Playstation 2	61k	800k
The Warriors	February 2007	PSP	12k	230k
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City Stories	October 2006	PSP	51k	1.64m
Bully	October 2006	Playstation 2	96k	750k
Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories	June 2006	Playstation 2	159k	1.58m
Rockstar Games Presents Table Tennis	May 2006	Xbox 360	45k	320k
Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition Remix	March 2006	Playstation 2	23k	96k
Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition Remix	March 2006	Xbox	n/a	n/a
Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories	October 2005	PSP	162k	2.83m
The Warriors	October 2005	Playstation 2	84k	430k
Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition	June 2005	PSP	51k	1.65m
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	June 2005	Xbox	n/a	1.29m
Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition	April 2005	Playstation 2	124k	1.27m
Midnight Club 3: Dub Edition	April 2005	Xbox	n/a	580k
Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas	October 2004	Playstation 2	2.25m	9.14m
Grand Theft Auto	October 2004	Game Boy Adv.	n/a	70k
Red Dead Revolver	May 2004	Playstation 2	n/a	n/a
Red Dead Revolver	May 2004	Xbox	n/a	360k
Manhunt	March 2004	Xbox	n/a	n/a