

The Free Show

Issue One

May 2009

By David Rasmussen

Special Thanks to Huxley and the rest of the
gang over at Anime Boredom slash
Homemademech for any images from them.

Table of Contents

Page 01	Table of Contents	
Page 02	Copyright Information	
Page 02	Opening Comments	
	DEMO Land	
Page 03	Red Faction : Guerrilla	XBox360
Page 06	WANTED : Weapons of Fate	XBox360
Page 09	Pro Rally	XBox360
	Manga Land	
Page 10	The Ring Series	DH
Page 13	Magic Knight Ray Earth	TP
	DEMO Land Arcade	
Page 15	Hexic & Zuma	XBox360
	It Came From The Bargain Bin...	
Page 16	Xbox Live Arcade Disc	XBox360
Page 18	We Love Katamari	PS2
Page 21	Beautiful Katamari	XBox360

Page 24	Trailer Talk Dante's Inferno	XBox360
Page 30	Closing Scores Recap	
Page 31	The Free Show Issue Two	Article

Copyright Information

All review items belong to their specific copyright holders, be it DEMO or Bargain Bin full reviews or Trailer Talk content. All rights reserved and all that.

Opening Words

The launch of a new second FREE Epublication. It took awhile, mostly because the last format for the second FREE title wasn't motivating enough... well, this is. This time out we're focusing on things for the prudent cost saving gamer. Be it free DEMOs (because who doesn't like free samples be it food or games) or Bargain Bin picks to make your gaming dollar stretch out farther. Things we can do to help you save a dollar is the goal of The Free Show, and I hope it does help you out here or there. Later on I'm going to add reviews off the Playstation Store in both cheap affordable Downloads as well as DEMOs. For now we'll focus on the newest addition to our console reviews, the XBox360 and move from there forward. Once again I am still asking that you also check out the pay per download titles, because we could use all the sales we can get. I am hoping this turns things around and begin to see some change in the present status quo as it is right now, because the more sales we make the more we can deliver to you on a monthly basis. Well let's get to it then and start the issue.

DEMO Land
Red Faction : Guerrilla
For the Microsoft XBox360
DEMO Score : Most Likely To Review



Coming out this month (right about now I think) it's the first Red Faction game for the next gen, Red Faction : Guerrilla. So far I only played the first one on the PS2 and it's not that bad of a series, though it wasn't my favorite shooter either.

This game, however, may answer that age old paraphrased question from Jeff Foxworthy at long last... you know, You Might Be A Terminator If...

Well you might be a Terminator if the game provides you with a large sledgehammer like thing which makes the logo of the game look like this whole Red Faction thing was inspired by the rise of Communism (which might be ironic 'cause I think I heard the bad guys in this game might at one point used to be the good guys from the last gen games), then allows you to break things.

People (careful, this game doesn't have a "Friendly Fire" safety which means you can kill innocent as well as bad guy), electronics, crates, boxes, walls, whole

buildings... yeah, I killed a building during the DEMO (also mauled a few civvys in the DEMO too but I was getting out of hand breaking everything in sight). Yeah what again made them give you the power to break EVERYTHING in the game I'm not sure, could you do that before? Or is this new? I think it's new... anyway no more having to go around for the most part looking for an entrance or exit, you can seemingly make your own on those counts on simple things you used to have to circumnavigate. Building blocking your path? Break it down. Gates? You fear no gates. Mason Smash (you play a guy named Mason in this game, can't remember if he's from the first two games or not).



Of course since you can break buildings odds are you won't have problems breaking armed guards. In fact you should be able to mop them up quickly, which is a good thing since they have guns and if they shoot you enough you perish. So you should handle them quickly... that leads me to the "radar" of the game. Yeah. It is... a bit vague. Maybe I'm not watching it close enough but it doesn't seem like something I can rely on to point me at the bad guys or warn me if civvies are too close for comfort before I start swinging my hammer like a crazed Mario hopped up on shrooms. Of course hopefully when I review the full game there's more on the radar and interpreting it and so forth.

The DEMO is straight forward, you are given a task (steal back a walker taken by the oppressive government in order to win the support of the Miners of a sector called "Dust") and sent out to deal with it. You are discouraged from harming civvies since that lowers your trust with them (and they won't help you save the world if they don't trust you). Problem is that the game seems to crawl with civvies from the DEMO's perspective, and that means you have to practice some sense of kid's gloves on the landscape since at any time you might crush or bash in a civvie behind a wall or something (and that'd be bad). Of course it means you can't go crazy unless on multiplayer mode but a little restraint never hurt.

The game looks pretty (of course) for a next gen, and the mix of strategy and restraint (kill not the civvies, don't let the guards kill you, reach the objective and don't accidentally destroy the wrong things with your large sledgehammer) should make for a most interesting third person shooter/button masher... of course only a full review will reveal that but I am up with this and would like to see more... oh, yeah, according to Wikipedia all that efforts to "Free Mars" in the first game? Pissed away since the guys who were good once are now evil in Guerrilla and you have to go and "Free Mars"... again... for the second time. Dammit Mars, stay free this time already!!

So I'm going to mark this DEMO as "Most Likely To Review" and look forward to reviewing it in the near future.



WANTED : Weapons of Fate
For the Microsoft XBox360
Rating : Possibly Interested In Reviewing



Oh, not joy, another game based on a movie (which happens to be out now if I remember right). Yeah. These DEMOs are a little close to release or slow, but then again we're talking a magazine I got from the local supermarket and everything that goes there is a month behind... I so need to get a subscription for faster DEMO looks. But enough said about that, let's look...

Follow up to the movie Wanted with Angelina Jolie and Morgan Freeman, you are still that guy who has been recruited by a fraternity of assassins, who can make bullets curve (kinda like the arching throwing mechanics of those whirly grenades in Gears of War only it's bullets), and whose character your playing can talk and talk and talk about killing people for a living... get over yourself dude.

The game mechanics is, what, the second game I've seen so far which borrows off of Gears of War (a rarity since most action games likes to take off of the God of War or standard shooter playbook). The only other game to date with the duck and cover system like Gears of War? That'd be the second game based on the

Daniel Craig James Bond movies (Quantum of Solace). In this game, however, they take the duck and cover mechanics and improve it in two steps (something I'd like to actually see adapted back to Gears of War for it's third outing if possible).

1-One button movement between barriers.

Push the left analog stick towards a nearby barrier and tap the A button, and quick as that you're moving from cover to cover (this means you can quickly flank enemies and get behind them for the kill shot).

2-One button over the barrier kills.

End up on the other side of a barrier with an enemy? One button kill. Just duck behind the opposite side of a barrier with a bad guy and hit the B button (if I remember right) to quickly lean over and do a quick kill.



I mean, come on, if a wiry guy like this can do it why can't a big brawny dude like Marcus! And he'd be able to do so much more. Anyway it's nice to see sometimes (when game companies copy other successful games' mechanics) the game makers take something we know and do something to just tweak it a little making it that much better... too bad the whole game doesn't have that many promises.

Why? Well it's still a game based on a movie, and unlike Chronicles of Riddick (which is also out now with a new game) I am not glowing with excitement over this game... heck, I didn't even see the movie so why am I excitable over the game... not, I'm so not. But still the game does offer up ease to get into the character (and the DEMO featured both a DEMO level AND a full set of Tutorial

levels which gave you the chance to get to know the game mechanics before you know the game itself... didn't like the endless banter with the guy you're playing trying to sound all mysterious and cool but -- well -- whatever).

If the game turns out to be a gem even I'd be surprised.

If the game turns out average or below then I won't be surprised.

It's just that it has more of a chance to fail than succeed because of it's lineage (a game based on a movie). Sure, we do have the occasional gems but more often than not it's not so much a gem as a dud. Still I am cautious but interested in seeing more... at a lower price than what it's selling at now.

So in the end this DEMO gets a middle of the ground maybe or maybe not commitment out of me. Maybe I will review it, maybe I won't... we'll see.



Pro Rally

For the Microsoft XBox360

DEMO Score : Not Interested In Reviewing

Unless you are a total fan of the genre of racing then you might as well skip this completely. Games like this these days are not for the beginner, and this one doesn't seem to even offer up enough incentive for a beginner to jump in. Unlike, say, Gran Turismo which packs a ton of reason for fresh blood to come in this game just doesn't seem to offer much... or it does and I didn't see that because the print used on the game DEMO was so damn small!! Sheesh!! Eye strain!!

Visually the game looks great, but it doesn't seem to be newbie friendly. The DEMO was simple enough but I just couldn't get into it and did a lot of what I usually do whenever I ride a vehicle in any game... lots of wall grinding, crashing and so forth... nothing to make the car explode, but then again while I did take window damage and seemed to maybe be causing some damage to the chassis of the vehicle? Well this might be one of those games which don't really care as much about physical damage to your vehicle as it is in just racing.

So... what. It's a pretty picture, but it seems to only offer a few options (DEMO wise at least) and doesn't seem deep. Of course all true depth of the game is probably in the final release, but I am by no means a racing reviewer (racing games leave me cold for the most part), so even if this game could possibly be a rival to grander gamers like Gran Turismo (and I'm not saying it is) I would never play it to find out... not a genre I'm a fan of in any way, means, shape or form. No way.

So I do look forward to whoever reviews this (or reviewed it if this is already in release), just it won't be me. Final verdict? It might be all that as the game boasts in what I could read from the micro fine print, but I don't care cause racing isn't in my blood (heck I can't even make my rover in Mass Effect drive straight and I'm constantly running over the enemy as I drive willy nilly).

So not interested in reviewing this. So not (but for this review it's more from lack of interest than true flaw with the game... though I might be right and this could be another pretender racing game, so buyer beware and all that.)

Manga Land
The Ring Volume 2, Spiral & Birthday
Publisher : Dark Horse
3 Ring Mangas out of 5

All three are in the bargain bin over at Barnes & Noble, who I used to do business with quite abit before the local Foodland stopped carrying their gift card... bring that back people.

Ack. I see disgruntled home movie making cursed dead people... don't tell anyone.

To date, even after three reviews? I still have zero experience with the whole Ring trilogy so don't expect me to know much about this at all. Sorry.

Volume 2

For one Mai Takano life just isn't going very well for her. If it isn't for the fact that her beloved husband was killed by Sadako, that aforementioned disgruntled home movie making cursed dead person, she has a child that is downright creepy.

Of course the rest is psychological horror and suspense, death, madness, and interesting twists. Looks like Mai might end up being the first person ever to escape the "Ring" and Sadako's so far perfect killing record, but why? And what happens when her son sees that video and is marked for death?

Of course not. Couldn't have watched "Girls Gone Wild", he HAD to watch something called the "cursed" video! And when I say "cursed" I don't mean copy of Michael Jackson's Moonwalker cursed.

It's pretty straightforward yet interesting so I shouldn't say more because I might say too much. In anycase I have no experience with the series so I have nothing to compare this experience to... even if it's been done and parodied like so many times... except for you, Weird Al... didn't you do a Ring parody song yet? If not then do one! Come on... it's the Dead Wet Girl genre according to National Public Radio, isn't that worth at least one song?

Oh well, as I said a great many times in the past? Horror is so NOT my thing, but sometimes I run into series that is worth checking out. This happens to be one of those series. Huh? Don't like The Ring movies? I don't like those either, yet somehow I gave the manga a chance and wasn't disappointed by that decision.

You might be surprised by the manga, and it's bargain bin material so it's not that expensive to check out.

Spiral

Ok. So far you know quite a bit about The Ring, the video tape that kills after you watch it (one week later), and the person at the center of the deaths... Sadako. Now learn it all over again from a different looking glass... through the looking glass of... CSI?!? Believe it or not there may be a totally scientific explanation for the whole thing, and all this death! Explanation? How about a virus? A "Ring Virus" if you will?

So is that it? Is all this death nothing more than the works of a virus and nothing more? Yeah, if you believe that then Rush Limbaugh is going to change and not be the usual retarded jerk he usually is... fat chance (litterly).

Uh... right. Now if this wasn't based on the novel from the person who wrote all The Ring novels I'd have thought there was something off about it, and have written this whole series off from my reading list, but there is more to it and that's a good thing. Despite the fact they seem to have a scientific slant on the whole video tape "curse" there's more depth to it and in the end... well, I can't tell you. But let's just say for now that science can't solve everything, and in the end the Scully side of things just can't hold a candle to the Mulder side.

Oh, and if you haven't gotten your 4-1-1 on Sadako and the curse yet (if you are a fan of the series then you know more than I do)? Here's your chance!

Overall here's a far better explanation of the whole origin of The Ring that I didn't get from The Ring GN 2! Now I know a bit more, and knowing is half the problem.

Birthday (The Ring GN 4)

Here's when National Public Radio (about the time this was reviewed by me the first time) began to refer to movies like The Ring as the Horror/Dead Wet Girl genre... no I'm not making that up...

Apparently in an act that doesn't entirely seem all too bright and/or intelligent, a discussion at the time of movies like Ringu coming to America (being remade by Hollywood) prompted an NPR reporter to coin the phrase "Dead wet girl" genre to describe these movies' "niche"... yeah, thanks NPR for dumbing down one of horror's biggest draws, thank you very much. Thankfully NPR doesn't do the morning traffic report on their own since that'll probably consist of reporters

playing in traffic while making observations. "Dead wet girl" sub-genre. Yeah. Almost makes me want to run out and petition CAPCOM for that soon to be popular Resident Evil Beach Volleyball game since, well, "Dead wet girl" stuff is popular now -- no wonder I don't listen t NPR anymore.

This time out it's not one story but an anthology of three stories, each focusing around or connected to Sadako, of course. So buy the party candles and pick up a cake, cause we're celebrating a birthday of sorts.... You'll see.

In "The Casket Floating In The Sky", we watch as one who seemingly survived the curse, Mai Takano, is slowly consumed by it to give "birth" to the next Sadako. Loss of self, loss of her individuality as she is "rewritten" from the inside out to become Sadako. Yeah, like the back of the book says Sadako's EVIL! But wait! What drove Sadako to do this in the first place? Maybe the next two stories will shed some light on that as we look back at a living breathing Sadako, and see that maybe she wasn't entirely evil... until she died, and then went over the edge and was consumed by the dark side.

In "Lemon Heart" we find that she had a young love once, as this concerns a man falling in love with her. Of course it's not all about the past, as we'll also see what happens at present to this man who has never forgotten Sadako, even though he didn't know her well enough.

Then in the aptly named "Sadako" we see Sadako's life right up to her final days, and her death when the truth about her condition is known, especially that she's a -- yes I know it's a really rude word but she IS -- uh, you know what? I won't say it... go watch Stainless Nights and you'll figure out what Sadako is (if I remember my crossreference titles correctly).

Ok. That's that. Three stories, each revolving about the one and only Sadako, and sometimes looking back at times when she wasn't a homicidal othersider planning her rebirth from the great beyond. Anyway it shows you a Sadako you never knew, the one that was still alive and had her own dreams. That Sadako. Ok. Nuff said. Score time.

Overall I'm going to give all three an even 3 out of 5. Something interesting to check out and give a spin, but not unless you have at least some interest in the horror genre (these won't make you a convert to the genre anytime soon.)

Magic Knight Ray Earth (manga)
By CLAMP
Publisher : TOKYOPOP
A Solid 4 out of 5

NOTE - Though these are no longer on the Bargain Bin at Barnes & Noble right now you should be able to find it somewhere at a lower price if you look hard enough.

This is, without a doubt, one of the cornerstones of CLAMP's series. Along with Cardcaptor Sakura and Chobits for starters this is one of their big titles. Quite a few CLAMP fans got into CLAMP thanks to this title, and quite a few TOKYOPOP fans got into TOKYOPOP's works because of this title... it was one of the titles that first came out from the TOKYOPOP line (and one of the first titles to come out in their first anthology book, Mixx Zine, which later became TOKYOPOP).

It all starts in Tokyo Tower (which seems to appear in different CLAMP titles from time to time) as three high school girls (Hikaru, Umi and Fuu) who don't know each other and are the perfect strangers are thrust together and shuffled off to a mysterious world called "Cephireo".

Here they are recruited to battle an "evil" force and save the world from destruction. To do this they must save a Princess named Emeraude from her formerly loyal priest Zagato. Part of the way they'll do this is by reviving three "spirits" (giant mecha like creatures) which will aid them in their quest. Along the way these three wayward girls will learn more about each other, and become close friends. They will also grow, become stronger, and gain the wisdom and strength needed to carry through this quest to its end.

That's when the world is flipped upside down and everything changes. Apparently things are NOT what they were lead to believe! In fact it couldn't be more different! Emeraude's role as "savior" of her world, the world's "Pillar", turns out to be more of a curse than a blessing -- and her "captivity" turns out to be voluntary. Seems she's in love with Zagato and their inability to be together started this whole mess off.

In the end the girls have to make some painful decisions, and things turn out to end in anything but the way you might have thought it would have ended... in

other words it ends badly. The three girls are returned to the Earth and expected to live their lives as if nothing happened.

Things only get worse when, as the three reunite at Tokyo Tower and Hikaru wishes to return to Cephire, the girls return to Cephire only to find it breaking up.

Yeah. Apparently that whole pillar thing went to the world's head and now it's coming undone because it's such a fragile thing. Sheesh. Get over yourself, world! So things are even more frantic now than before, and it gets worse as neighboring kingdoms are encroaching on the slowly dying Cephire for their own selfish reasons. Somehow things look bleak and you can't imagine it ending well. And, in a sense, it won't.

I heard this series has TWO endings. Apparently, from what I heard (though I haven't seen it myself since I haven't seen the whole Anime series) the Anime is supposed to end with the girls dying... but then in the manga that doesn't happen (they don't all die)... okay, I DON'T have Graphic Novel 6 so I didn't see the ending of the manga either... Yeah. I missed both endings. Sorry.

But regardless of that this series stands as one of the "pillars" of CLAMPs library of successes. It's a fan favorite, and a title well worth having in your collection without question! One of the Essentials of the CLAMP library you must own. Seek it out if you can and get it. 4 out of 5.

DEMO Land (Arcade Version)

Hexic & Zuma

For the Microsoft XBox360

Hexic : 3 out of 5 / Zuma : 1 out of 5

Puzzlers are not always bred the same despite the fact they share a common lineage. For instance the second Puzzle Quest is a completely different beast than the original despite the fact they're from the same lineage (at least the same series). Thus these two games are their own beasts despite similarities they share with better known games, in one case this is good while the other... not so good.

Hexic

When I first saw this simple puzzler, then got and started reviewing Puzzle Quest Galactrix, I noted the visual similarity between the two. Both use the same style puzzle board... and that's it on comparisons because once you start playing then you realize what a completely different beast Hexic is. Instead of the Bejeweled style of gameplay (lining up and matching three or more pieces of the same type) you spin pieces in order to make a match (in the form of a triforme like triangle instead of a straight line(s)). This offers more gameplay options (which is added when bombs and star points are thrown into the mix) but without a story mode like Puzzle Quest the game is only so good. It needed that extra oomph Puzzle Quest gives you for longer playability.

Zuma

Takes it's cue, in turn, off of Luxor even with the same kind of "story mode" (only set in South America instead of Ancient Egypt). And it would be the same experience except the boards don't look as pretty, aren't as detailed in path traveled by the spheres, don't offer up bonuses or power ups... and the controls suck. Unlike the ease of flow of the controls of Luxor these controls just stink (because you're a stationary "frog" in the center of the screen with rather awkward swivel controls which makes it hard to accurately aim most of the time). Lame Luxor clone, might have been better if it packed more extras... not to mention better controls... but it isn't.

Hexic gets 3 matches out of 5 while Zuma gets a dismal 1 frog shooter out of 5.

It Came From The Bargain Bin...
Xbox Live Arcade Compilation Disc
Publisher : Microsoft
For the Microsoft XBox360
4 Ancient Egyptian Puzzlers out of 5

Something I got off the bargain bin out of GameStop (one of the places I frequent next to Blockbusters in terms of stuff I pick up for review in terms of bargain games) (now if I got the XBox360 Arcade version I would have reviewed this back in FTW Issue Nine instead of here, but I didn't... so here it is). There's 5 titles and 5 trial games but we'll focus on the five main games since ONE of those games is enough for me to recommend this with a high score. Which one? We'll see, but first let's see what we have... though I do think the score above was a dead giveaway as to which game I'm leaning towards.

Boom Boom Rockets

A rhythm game where you have to time button taps (either the D pad or the four letter buttons depending on your preference) to match fireworks launched during a light show over the big city. Now the game says you can download more music to extend the life of this game but I wonder if that is still applicable now, and if I can download the music I WANT instead of a list of games Microsoft is offering in exchange for Xbox Live points... I mean if I am going to keep playing this game I have to have some choice as to what I can download into it.

No Weird AI downloads, no more playing for me.

Otherwise the game is only good for helping you with your memorization of your button tapping without looking (helps for games that requires split second button tapping to get through it), and it's good if you have total control over what music you can put into the game to play with. Otherwise in this one instance I really didn't prefer innovation because it took classic old (really old) school music and tried to make it "hip" by making it "techno"... there's something to be said about hearing the classics on a full symphony orchestra, like how these songs should have been presented. Sure it's not "hip" but it would have sounded nicer. Not everything has to be made "hip" for the youth crowd, you know.

Uno

Yeah, I wouldn't even play this in real life if it was Strip Uno and something of an Adults Only (AO) Rating nature happened after so many hands, so why would I

want to play this in video game format... no thanks.

Pac-Man Championship Edition

It's Pac-Man, Championship Edition or not, so it's a classic coin-op muncher. If you are a tried and true fan of the classics it's your reason to buy in... if not? I have a better pick for you.

Feeding Frenzy

Darwin's Survival of the Fittest law in full swing as you walk through many levels helping small fish become big fish, and eat everything in sight until you are capable of eating mega sized ocean dwellers in later levels. Take that, circle of life!!

Luxor 2

This is the game I was talking about.

Puzzlers of high quality are always most fun and give that brain of yours a workout. Who needs gimmicky stuff like Brain Age when you have a good solid puzzler like Puzzle Quest, Professor Layton (sequel coming soon as well as an Anime movie), or this game to work that brain of yours. A Defense style puzzler you protect your pyramid from colored sphere rolling scarabs by launching your own colored spheres at the incoming lines, making matches and setting up combos (a chain of matches that makes batches of colored spheres vanish at once) for higher scores. Catching treasure and power up as you make matches provide you with more ways to rake up a higher score as well as new ways to clear the board in quick, innovative and fun ways. Addictive and really fun, if there's any good reason to drop a few dollars on a game like this it's this game.

So while most of the games here are not worth it? At least 3 games (not counting the trial games of course) are worth it, especially (in this reviewer's estimate) Luxor 2 which was the selling point for me on this one. Of course if you have an Xbox Arcade then you don't need this copy since the game is already in your collection, but if not... well... here you go. Enjoy. 4 arcade games with some merit (not you, Uno, not you) out of 5.

We Love Katamari
Publisher - Namco
For the PlayStation 2
4 Rolling Katamaris out of 5



In 2004 the world was introduced to a brand new addiction. A gaming addiction that got people hooked, made fans left and right... and was promptly ignored by the media at large... oh, I better not get started... I'm going to get all vingery again about that Hillary freak and her sexless crusade against adult games and I'm going to so hate her and wish horrible things on her and... let's forget it.

You know the drill. Continuing where the last game left off (the original Katamari Damancy, which can also be found in any good bargain bin), you are once again on the job as the Dashing Prince (Dashing not so much as you're handsome as hell, but Dashing as in your blood is 100% Starbucks approved Mocha Cappuccino, aka you've got energy to spare and then some Dashing). It seems the

guitar strumming' King of the Cosmos (aka your "dad") has seemingly... ahh... "misplaced" the stars in the sky once again (well actually the "job" you did in the first game didn't nearly cover all the damage he did and you have more work to do), and once again (yes) it is your job to roll up the contents of the world onto your Katamari (which is a sphere that seemingly has lots of static cling power to it) so that it can be burned up to remake the stars in the sky... again.

This time, however, you find your quest joined as your many cousins and nephews from around the world join you in the quest to remake the stars of the galaxy (who remain in this new XBox360 version we're going to talk up shortly)! The one downer about this is that your relatives don't have any special traits that make them unique, other than their differently shaped heads... oh, and they seem to have a different way to greet new people... however useful that "talent" is... and I'm pretty certain that's their same talent in the new game, AKA no talent.

But don't let that get you down, because this isn't just the same game in a new package! It's changed! First off you have new environments to explore, with changed game physics from the last time, including an "under the sea" mission which has you building your Katamari while dodging fish hooks (for instance). You'll also have "side missions" to complete, like the rolling of a sumo wrestler to make him fat. Fat as he absorbs food through his... body... his... uh... oh god what the... Yeah. Now at long last I can join the rest of you who have already played the first game, and stare blissfully at my TV screen wondering what the heck am I doing anyway! For joy!

You also have a few new mini games to try your hands at. If you feel the need for speed you can take your Katamari down to the race track and burn up the track. If you feel like practicing your snowman building skills for wintertime in Animal Crossing you can try out the snowman building mini game (where instead of people, buildings and stuff you stick snow and rocks. If you feel like playing with someone else you can either play as friends (in co-op mode where two players have to coordinate their actions to build up a single Katamari) or as enemies (in versus mode where two players go all out to make their Katamari the biggest while messing the competition up at the same time).

And that is all I know. Oh, and at long last you're exposed to the origins of the King of the Cosmos and his trials and tribulations with bullies... did they make the stars vanish out of the sky? Hmm... probably not, but still you'll see the struggles of a young King of the Cosmos as he grows up to become the gigantic king dude he is today.

It's actually fun but a bit light on gaming... about maybe 20 or so hours to get to the end of the game (maybe less if you're quicker or don't go back to try and get better scores). And once you're done... well... replay value plummets drastically once you're done. Still it's a good game, and since it's now a bargain bin game you can have it at a good low price. So for this little innovative quirk of gaming that is fresh and new... but got stale quick once they stopped innovating... I give We Love Katamari a good 4 burning balls of people (oh the smell of burning people) out of 5. Burn people, burn.



Dante's Inferno Coverage continues next issue!

Beautiful Katamari
Publisher - BANDAI Namco
For the Microsoft XBox360
3 Similarly Rolling Balls of Katamari out of 5



Where did this franchise begin to go so wrong. It must have been when it was ported to the PSP for Me And My Katamari. It must have been then. Besides having broken controls (the PSPs one analog pad and the d-pad on the opposite end are no replacement for two good analog sticks, though I think they later on tried to make a peripheral control overlay attachment for the game on the PSP to compensate for the lack of two good analog sticks) it was not very inspired as far as game ports go. Of course later on we would find better ports with Ratchet & Clank : Size Matters and Secret Agent Clank, as well as the 5 out of 5 wonder that is God of War : Chains of Olympus... but we're talking Katamari here aren't we.

Of course the problem with the 360 version isn't the controls (oh no, those are fine even if the two analog sticks are not aligned like the PS2 controller), it's the lack of innovation. I've only played so long (and maybe I have to dig in deeper to find the innovation) but this Katamari doesn't leap off the disc as being any step above We Love Katamari. In fact it looks like Beautiful Katamari is just phoning it in and copying We Love Katamari -- only with different music (I do love the new tracks of music on this game) and better graphics (but better graphics doesn't make for a better game if it can't excel past what the last game did).



Story? Continuing where the last game left off (and yes that would be Me and My Katamari), you are still on vacation with the family when daddy (while playing tennis with his lovely wife, who I take is the beloved Queen of All Cosmos) accidentally hits a line drive tennis ball into the cosmos... where it punches a hole into the universe causing a black hole that destroys many stars and planets which means... oh, great, he did it AGAIN!!

Once again it seems the guitar strumming' King of the Cosmos (aka your "dad") has seemingly... ahh... "misplaced" the stars in the sky once again (this is so becoming an ultra bad habit with the guy isn't it!!), and once again (yes) it is your job to roll up the contents of the world onto your Katamari (which is a sphere that seemingly has lots of static cling power to it) so that it can be burned up to remake the stars in the sky... again... for like the third time... since Me And My Katamari I heard was more about making animal sanctuaries over rebuilding the

galaxy.

The cousins and nephews are back, and once again the King of All Cosmos is rolling out the marching orders as he sends you on missions... however, and this is my major gripe, the missions don't seem to have the same spark or innovative spice of We Love Katamari. In fact these missions just seem... the same. I'm sure as I go along I'll get bigger jobs, but no matter how big I'm worried that the game is not going to live up to the same energy I felt when I played We Love Katamari. Sure I do love the new musical score (must get me the soundtracks) and I do love playing the game again and once again getting my marching orders from the King of All Cosmos... but it just seems less. Oh, and did I mention you can roll an inferior Katamari and the King only gets kinda miffed (not like before when he went thermonuclear on you for rolling an inferior ball)? Yeah... one less thing to motivate me in this game.

It could just be me but if the franchise keeps this up it's not going to have much of a future past Beautiful Katamari... in fact since I haven't heard nothing of the franchise since this game came out sometime ago I guess two duds is all this game was good for before people abandoned all hope. Sad, I did love this game but unless Katamari V can be something that brings back the innovation of We Love Katamari (and our love for the franchise blooms once again) then this may be the last hoorah... and it's not a very good last hoorah at that.

3 failing Katamaris out of 5 for a game that could have been better, but only time may tell if it is... tell you what, I'll finish this up and if the game suddenly rallies and I unlock levels that really sing to me and make me excited to play then I'll change my ruling and give the game a better score... we'll see. Stay tuned.

Trailer Talk
First Look at Dante's Inferno Part I
Coming to the XBox360 & PS3 and PSP
Release Date : ?



This year there are two things out (now and coming soon in 2010 -- or July 2009 if you believe other sources) that tell you to go to hell... other than Rush Limbaugh if you're a liberal, then that's three things that want you to go to hell.

The first non Limbaughian thing is the Sam Raimi movie "Drag Me To Hell"... Drag Raimi to hell for pissing away a great chance to make Evil Dead 4 as his return to horror and instead working on this. Stupid.

The second non Limbaughian thing is the upcoming 2010 XBox360/PS3 slash... PSP?!?... game Dante's Inferno (more on the PSP slant in a minute). Now I saw the trailer (was on the free disc that came with Xbox the Official Magazine, disc Number 97 if I remember right) but since there's so much info on the game itself let's go and talk about that instead! We start off with what Wikipedia knows about the game...

Wikipedia info...

Dante's Inferno is based on the classic piece of literature Inferno (which is supposed to be Italian for "Hell"), the first part of the classic known as "Dante's Divine Comedy"... though I fail to see the humor in a trip to hell.

The poem (wow, rather long poem) itself was written in the early 14th century, and is basically an allegory telling of the journey of the main character, one Dante, as he takes a living person's guided tour through what is largely the medieval concept of Hell (since such modern things like Televangelist Hell, Homophobic Hell, Wall Street Big Shot Hell and my personal favorite FIXED NOISE TV Talking Head Hell (you so going right there Billo, Sean-o, the gang of FIXED AND FIEND, etc etc etc) does not exist in this version).

Guided by the Roman poet Virgil, because apparently poets must go to hell, Dante takes the nickel and dime tour of the Nine Circles of suffering located deep within the Earth itself. According to Wikipedia "Allegorically, the Divine Comedy represents the journey of the soul towards God, with the Inferno describing the recognition and rejection of sin"... well, I better stop now or I'm going to start religiofascist bashing... again.

Anyway I quickly compare the poem to the game introwise.



Poem - The poem begins on the night before Good Friday in the year 1300, and

Dante (a 35 year old middle ager) is off walking in the dark woods in a lost state which is supposed to be some allegory for him contemplating going off and doing himself in, when he could just be walking in a dark woods lost like all heck... sheesh, can't a guy get lost in a dark woods without having to want to go kill himself?!? Dang! Does this mean every time somebody gets lost on a camping trip in the dark woods they're secretly contemplating suicide?!?

Game - The game begins with a much beefier and heavily armed Dante, who is portrayed as a Knight of the Crusades (a soldier of god), instead of some poor schmuck who got lost on a walk and is wandering the dark woods. Of course his world (the Knight Dante) is dark in it's own right since, it seems, the game is apparently not too keen on his whole killing in the name of god thing and all his holy crusading cutting up the infidels has tainted him something fierce. Oh, and he's probably a 35 year old middle ager too.

Poem - Virgil pops in when Dante is "close" to doing himself in and cashing in his mortality paycheck at the bank of suicide. Assailed by beasts (a lion, a leopard and a she-wolf) that he cannot evade, unable to find the straight way... which isn't a gay reference if you're wondering, it's just he can't find salvation. Anyway he's near suicide, Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom is out to get him, and he's having major problems with salvation issues. Yeah, this is so the right time to take the free Drag Me To Hell tour of Hell to promote the movie coming to theaters about... 600 or so years in the future.



Game - Apparently Dante's wife or girlfriend or significant other appears to him as a spirit, and he watches as hell reaches out and drags her down (with the

faithful husband right behind her). So hell? Lock thy large metal doors and gates because a very driven husband slash Crusader is coming to kick the doors down and extract his wife from hell itself (hmm... the action packed sequel to Not Without My Daughter, Not Without My Dragged To Hell Dead Wife).

Poem - Virgil saves Dante, and then takes him on a trip to Hell (kinda like the spiritual equivalent of "Scared Straight" for the nearly damned. In Hell each sin (to be listed started next issue in our Circle Tour of Hell) is punished in a symbolic mannerism aka the spiritual version of "poetic justice". For example when Rush goes to hell he'll have to sit in front of his TV and watch MSNBC for all eternity... or something more poetic than that, it's late so I'm not firing on all cylinders as I wrap this up for publication.

Game - No Virgil (at least not in the demo though I guess you might see Virgil in Hell as a companion/guide for the player), and from the demo you're taking yourself to Hell in order to save your wife.



And while I'm sure Hell is the same in the game as the literature I'm also sure there's a bit of poetic license going on (the rather non-dangerous parts of Hell being amped up to provide actual danger for instance, since this game is supposed to be a game that actually tries to one up God of War instead of just borrow from it... which would make it a God of War Killer if not for the fact it's not an Xbox360 exclusive game, and the game has more representation on Sony's side than Microsoft's with both the PS3 & PSP (later the PS2 is it's ported like other high end PSP titles).

Poem - According to Wikipedia? “Allegorically, the Inferno represents the Christian soul seeing sin for what it really is, and the three beasts represent three types of sin: the self-indulgent, the violent, and the malicious.[3] These three types of sin also provide the three main divisions of Dante's Hell: Upper Hell (the first 5 Circles) for the self-indulgent sins; Circles 6 and 7 for the violent sins; and Circles 8 and 9 for the malicious sins.”

Game - Hell is supposed to make God of War blush with envy.

Preview of the Circle Tour of Hell

"Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate"

"Abandon all hope, ye who enter here"

Inscribed on the gates of Hell (Inferno, Dante's Divine Comedy)

The Entrance Way to Hell

Since you jump in on your own you won't be guided here, so let's see if we can't delve into possible levels you'll face when entering Hell on your rescue mission. Starting with the top layer and the entrance.



Entrance Area

AKA Cannon Fodder Shores

On the limbo between the living world and Hell, in the poem, there's a place for the Uncommitted. Souls of people who in life were neutral (siding with neither Heaven nor Hell) are here. Amongst them Dante apparently sees either Pope Celestine V or Pontius Pilate, the guy who sentenced Jesus to death if I remember right... which is kinda vague since you'd think he'd get the whammy for what he did didn't you. Oh, and that pope who had that thing with the Nazis in WWII? Yeah... definitely Hell, none of this for you jerk hole.

Mixed with them are "outcasts who took no side in the Rebellion of Angels"... so why are they here again? Anyway these people are neither hellbound or non hellbound, they're just stuck in purgatory here punished to eternally pursue a banner while being tortured with insects and maggots... hmm... that should be weird when you first see that at the start of the game.

Name That Ferryman!

Charon is just happy to have work again. After all we haven't seen him since King's Quest so he's kinda not been employed for awhile... well, he is the Ferryman of the Dead... kinda limited work options and all.

Apparently he might give you grief about entering Hell for being all living and all... funny, he used to just turn his back on the whole formality of being living and all for the drop of a few coins... didn't he get his clock waxed by Kratos in Chains of Olympus?

Next Issue

The Circle Guide to Hell.

Wikipedia "Virgil guides Dante through the nine circles of Hell. The circles are concentric, representing a gradual increase in wickedness, and culminating at the center of the earth, where Satan is held in bondage. Each circle's sinners are punished in a fashion fitting their crimes: each sinner is afflicted for all of eternity by the chief sin he committed. People who sinned but prayed for forgiveness before their deaths are found not in Hell but in Purgatory, where they labor to be free of their sins. Those in Hell are people who tried to justify their sins and are unrepentant. Furthermore, those in Hell have knowledge of the past and future, but not of the present. This is a joke on them in Dante's mind because after the Last Judgment, time ends; those in Hell would then know nothing."

Part one of a Nine Circle of Hell Game Spoiler 3 parter with the first three levels (aka the warm up for the harder trials ahead).

As for the game itself? Well it's like 2010 when it's going to come out so only the

pre E3 trailer exists on info... and this little tidbit I got from Wikipedia... for staters.

Wikipedia

Dante's Inferno is an upcoming third-person action adventure video game to be published by Electronic Arts and developed by Visceral Games (formerly EA Redwood Shores). The game is loosely based on the canticle of the same name from Dante Aligheri's epic poem Divine Comedy

Dante's Inferno is based on the first part of Dante's Divine Comedy. The player controls Dante, a veteran of the Crusades who must chase his beloved Beatrice and try to free her soul from Lucifer's grasp. As his pursuit takes him deeper into the pits of Hell, he must battle ever more fierce and hideous monsters, while also facing his own sins, a dark family past, and his unforgivable war crimes.

OK. So maybe they're not married... yet. But what's this about a PSP version? Are you serious?... well I guess so cause' here's the info!

PSP Version?

Apparently the PSP version is supposed to release in conjunction with the next gen console versions next year, with the PSP iteration is being developed by EA Redwood Shores in collaboration with Artificial Mind and Movement (A2M)... wait, isn't EA Redwood Shores now known as Visceral Games?!? Make up your mind people!!

According to news on this event? "Executive Producer Jonathan Knight was on-hand to celebrate the news, saying "Our team and the team at A2M are taking the vision for Dante's Inferno and translating it directly to the PSP. PSP owners can expect to get the same level of fast, responsive gameplay through all nine detailed and unique circles of hell we are aiming to achieve on the consoles.""

Of course it has to be exclusive to the PSP since, obviously, the PSP isn't powerful enough to carry a true translation of a game like this. At best the PSP is about to the level of the PS2, or the Wii, definitely not the PS3 by any stretch. Not even the rumored PSP Go should be that powerful (if it is then that's a major leap in power for a handheld to carry that depth of processing power... doubt it though).

Next time we'll look at first word on the Next Gen console version, which is supposed to be "an interesting alternative to God of War"... for XBox360 players of course since PS3 players can play God of War if they want to. We'll see.

So let's recap Issue Two's content shall we?

1-We start the three part Circle Tour of Hell by over viewing from the poem the first three levels of Hell, and speculate how the game might change them to make them more God of War like.

2-We look at the first word on the Console version of the game, and why people are already excited about it at this early stage of development (or late stage since games, like movies, have a long simmering time between completion and release for courting the press... court me, Visceral, court me! Send me a XBox360 version for review! Come on! Court me!!

So that's next issue! See you then!



Closing Scores

Preview Ratings

No Follow Up Review

Pro Rally

Possibly Interested in Reviewing

WANTED : Weapons of Fate

Most Likely to Review

Red Faction : Guerrila

Review Coming Soon

Dante's Inferno

Review Scores

1 to 2 out of 5

Zuma

3 out of 5

Beautiful Katamari, Hexic, The Ring Series

4 out of 5

Magic Knight RayEarth, We Love Katamari, Xbox Live Arcade

5 out of 5

N/A.

Coming Distractions

The Free Show Issue Two

July 19th 2009

Summer is in full swing and we're back with more FREE content reviews and bargain bin stuff to trick you out with (or warn you about)... so with that said let's jump into it...

DEMO-Land

The latest DEMOs from the free disc on Xbox's Official Magazine.

Manga & Anime Land

New bargain bin picks from both (TBA)

It Came From The Bargain Bin...

Yes you can find Gears of War 2 on the bargain bin these days... but you may no longer be able to get ahold of the free promo comic that came out with its release that they were giving away at certain places selling Gears of War... like Blockbusters. I got a copy though and I'll tell you about it here if you didn't get your copy or buy a copy or something.

Article

What's the most cost effective way to carry your DS around on the cheap? I got a good notion for you on that and it involves a trip down to your local Supermarket... no, it's a good trick, really.

Dante's Inferno coverage Part 2 including the start of the Circle Tour of Hell, post E3 reflection on the game and what we learned, and IGN's look at the Next Gen Console versions (and whether or not their excitement over the game will translate into excitement you can take to the game store on opening day release of the game!) And hopefully by July there's far better (bigger) screenshots available!!

That's in July so see you then!