

PlayStation2

Deus Ex: The Conspiracy Eidos

While I have yet to play an FPS as good as *Goldeneye*, I'd prefer companies to try come up with something new instead of bettering a classic. That's exactly what *Deus Ex* does. While it borrows a lot of the elements that made *Goldeneye* good, it's definitely its own game.

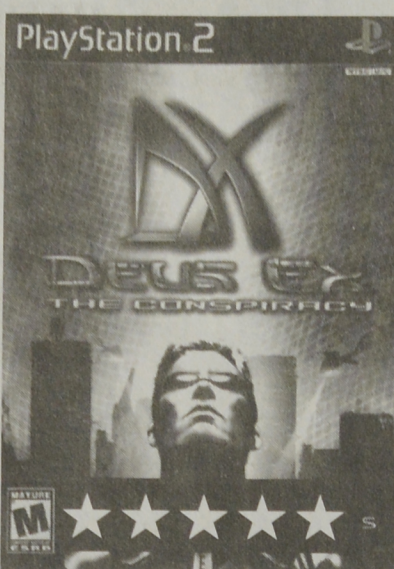
You play J.C. Denton, agent for the government's defense force UNATCO. J.C., like his brother, is augmented with nano-technology to make him stronger, faster, and has powers and gadgets he'll need to survive. While J.C. has to do battle with impossible foes, the real challenge may prove to be a moral dilemma.

One of the cool things about this game is its story elements. Rarely has a game forced you to take a moral stand on how the world should be "saved," (but I'm not going to spoil it for you). The line between ally and enemy becomes blurred as you find there are few you can trust - and those you can still may not believe in what you do. Also, a decision may effect how the game turns out and you may not be able to get everything you want, but decision making is half the fun as well as the challenge.

The other great elements are the constant upgrades players receive as they complete tasks and finding secret areas. Some upgrades are simply canisters but others come from the experience points in succeeding in locating areas and completing tasks. Players can upgrade J.C.'s mind, body and gadgets as the game progresses, making many tasks easier, however, you may want to think carefully about how you upgrade yourself, so you won't be caught off guard in a prickly situation. The weapons found in the game each has their own properties that sometimes prove to be not just a weapon, but also a tool.

Deus Ex is definitely one of the best FPS games to come out in a long while and with a sequel on the way, it could prove to be a franchise that's much more impressive than the *Tomb Raider* series. With clever stories elements and a surprising mix of morality, ethics and philosophy, the sequel will have much to do to live up to the original. I just wonder: which ending will the next game follow?

- Stefan Robak



Xbox

Burnout Acclaim

It takes every new game system a while to get up to speed. For the first few months, there are so few games to choose from, people will play anything just to for the sake of playing.

These days, however, there is enough choice in every genre that Xbox players can pick and choose between the good and the mediocre and when it comes to racing games, Acclaim's *Burnout* is a great, great game.

At the core of *Burnout* is a straightforward race to be first over the finish line, and that in itself makes it no different from many other driving games on the market. What does put it head and shoulders above most of the other games is the intensity of the gameplay. Simply put, I can't remember any other driving game that had me on the edge of my seat in the way *Burnout* did.

While other games might have you driving through roads filled with other vehicles, *Burnout* rewards you for driving with as little regard as possible for everyone else. You earn points for near-misses, power-slides and driving through oncoming traffic, the more reckless the better. If you are unfortunate enough to crash, you are treated to slow motion replays of the crash and the damage caused is assigned a dollar amount so you can see just how destructive you are.

The speed of the game is just incredible - even at its normal pace. You will definitely be challenged to avoid the inevitable collisions but when you earn a Burn, the game's equivalent to Turbo, things fly by at a really frightening speed - crash then and the results can be very entertaining.

The problems with the difficulty level that plagued the PS2 version have been corrected and the graphics have been made just a little shinier and smoother so you won't feel like the power of the Xbox hasn't been completely ignored. If you are looking for a racing game that puts the emphasis on speed rather than realism, *Burnout* is the perfect choice.



PlayStation2

Smash Court Tennis Namco

Say what you like about the Sega Dreamcast, it did have some very wonderful games that are now showing up on the other consoles which are still around. One of the Dreamcast's top games was *Virtua Tennis* - it was quite simply the best tennis game ever so it was no surprise other companies decided to jump on the bandwagon with their own efforts.

Namco's *Smash Court Tennis* is the only real alternative on the PlayStation2 to Sega's game, and it tries to lure people with some big name players and the ability to take part in some of the world's top tournaments. In addition to it being the only tennis game where you get to play as Anna Kournikova (which is apparently really important to some people), it also has a more arcade-oriented style than Sega's *Tennis 2K2*. Although it does feature a Challenge Mode, it lacks the addictive qualities Sega's mini-games have. Instead, there isn't much above and beyond the basic game, so unless you like to play a lot of tennis and unlock things like photos of the pro players, lasting appeal might be lacking.

The learning curve for the game is a bit steeper than its competition, because it is hard to make the ball go exactly where you want. That does get easier with practice, but you will never fully have the level of control one would like in such a game. Fortunately, it's hard to put the ball out of play but that becomes an annoyance at times too, because rallies can go on forever.

Smash Court Tennis isn't a bad game, but because there is a better tennis game on the PS2, there's no real reason to pick it up unless you really want to help Anna win her first tournament.



Xbox

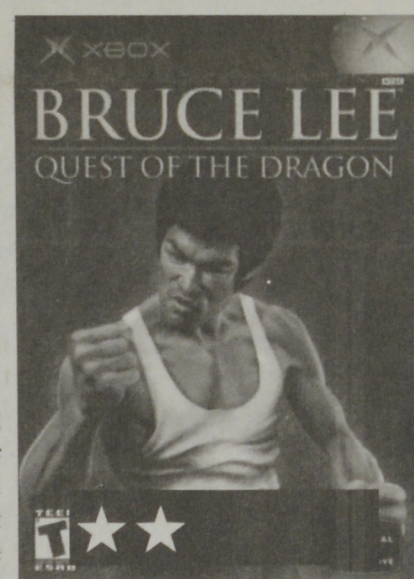
Bruce Lee - Quest Of The Dragon Universal

There was a time that *Bruce Lee - Quest Of The Dragon* was a highly anticipated title. Microsoft was featuring it front and center on their Xbox promotional brochures and there was enough buzz that features were showing up in magazines months before its release. Then it went frighteningly quiet and nobody talked about it any more - the game appeared with next to no fanfare and even after one game you'll understand why.

Something went horribly wrong along the way, and *Bruce Lee - Quest Of The Dragon*, ended up being not very good at all. It doesn't look terribly bad at first glance because it is genuinely hard to make a game look bad on the Xbox, but it does lack the impressive little details so many other games have.

In theory at least, the controls aren't too bad because there are lots of different moves at your disposal, however, trying to actually use these moves at will is almost impossible so randomly pushing buttons is a lot more successful.

A few things do work though, such as the motion-captured moves which could have been convincing if the frame rate had been increased dramatically. Or the way Bruce can attack people to the side or behind him with a simple flick of the right stick. But at the end of the day, *Quest Of The Dragon* falls short in just about every area and really can't be recommended, even for the biggest Bruce Lee fans. A huge disappointment.



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