

GAME REVIEWS

by Chad Sapieha

HALO 3: ODST

>> Some folks would like to see what talented West coast game studio Bungie can do besides make really good shooting games starring brutish men in hulking power armour. Others are just as happy to see Bungie continue on with games like Halo 3: ODST, a semi-sequel to the third game in the original Halo trilogy and the first in the Xbox-exclusive franchise not to star the illustrious Master Chief. And there's even better news for those who just can't get enough of this sci-fi series: ODST comes with a playable demo of the recently announced Halo: Reach.



THE BEATLES ROCK BAND

>> Music game fans have been pining for Beatles tracks since Guitar Hero landed on the scene a few years ago, but few held much hope. After all, the Fab Four have been terribly slow to embrace the digital age (they still haven't released their music on iTunes). That's why it's such a coup for MTV and Harmonix to have lined up the world's greatest pop band to do an exclusive gig for their blockbuster Rock Band franchise. The best feature? A new mode that allows up to three friends to sing together and recreate the Liverpudlians' harmonies in their living rooms.



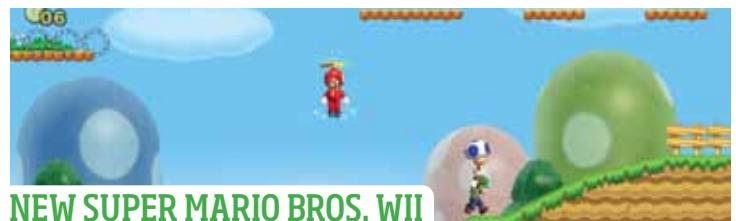
GRAN TURISMO

>> It's not quite the long-awaited Gran Turismo 5 for PlayStation 3, but the first game in the popular racing series to appear on Sony's handheld system might be the next best thing. Launching at the beginning of October on the same day as the PSP Go (a revamped version of the existing PSP that scraps UMD discs for hard drives in order to facilitate downloadable game delivery), this small-scale version of the world's best-selling racing franchise looks to be perhaps the most visually stunning handheld game of all time. Bonus: it's bursting with cars, tracks, and play modes.



FORZA MOTORSPORT 3

>> Sony's Gran Turismo was once the king of console racers, but in the space between GT4, released back at the beginning of 2005, and GT5 (which, at press time, still didn't have an official release date), Microsoft launched its own killer racing franchise in Forza Motorsport and subsequently delivered not one but two sequels, giving it a firm foothold in the ultra-realistic racing simulator market. The third entry in the series features more than 400 cars from 50 licensed manufacturers and some of the prettiest high-definition automobiles you'll see anywhere.



NEW SUPER MARIO BROS. WII

>> For old-school gamers, Nintendo's latest Mario game for the Wii will be pure bliss. It delivers a classic side-scrolling 2-D platform experience, complete with lots of hidden areas and special powers, then ups the ante with four player multiplayer (the camera pulls back Super Smash Bros. Brawl-style to keep all four avatars on screen at the same time). It's not quite as exciting as a brand new 3-D Mario game—we'll have to wait until next year's Super Mario Galaxy 2 for that—but it's a close second.



SPLINTER CELL: CONVICTION

>> Set for release this holiday on the Xbox 360 and Windows PC, the latest Splinter Cell is extremely dark. Sam Fisher, everyone's favourite video game super spy, has become an angry, disillusioned, morally grey independent operative. Realizing that he's spent the last several years being played by his government bosses, he begins to look into the death of his daughter, who was killed in the series' first game. Expect some Jack Bauer-ish moments as he does whatever it takes to discover the truth and get some payback.



ASSASSIN'S CREED 2

>> This sequel to Ubisoft's popular open world action game released is set in 15th century Venice and stars a new figure within the assassin order: Ezio. Despite the change in locale and protagonist, you can expect more of the same stealthy, murderous action. Players will blend into busy city streets, slink along rooftops like human-sized cats, and stalk and kill their targets with a variety of cool melee weapons. It's set to release for PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and Windows PC on November 17th.