

# R:RACING EVOLUTION

**Publisher:** EA **Developer:** Namco **Release:** March

## WHILE THE RIDGE RACER GAMES KEPT US ALL GLEEFULLY

entertained on PSone, the PS2 incarnation was a bit of a shambles. Thanks mainly to *Gran Turismo*, things had moved on and unfortunately *Ridge Racer 5* hadn't. The guys behind the *RR* series have taken their time with this next offering. Every year we've been expecting the new *Ridge Racer*, in a glorious return to form for the series, but nothing has materialised ... until now.

With a new name, a new look and a new feel, *Ridge Racer* is back ... sort of. Sounding like more of a revolution, *R: Racing Evolution* has completely ditched the purely arcade, huge powersliding

handling of the previous games and opted for something far more GT-ish. Gone are the sexily styled fantasy cars to be replaced by real world Nissan Skylines, Dodge Vipers and even the hallowed McLaren F1. In a bout of V8 Supercars *Race Driver* thievery they've even included a full story mode where you get to play as a sexy driving minx.

With a number of unique innovations including a very clever tailgating meter that gradually rises as you pressure the car in front until the driver is far more prone to making a mistake and letting you past, *R:Racing Evolution* is looking very tasty indeed. A GT4 beater? We'll let you know in the next few months.



Say goodbye to the overly colourful, cartoony visuals

## ALSO ON THE RADAR

### GTA: SAN ANDREAS

**Publisher:** Take 2 **Developer:** Rockstar North **Release:** Late 2004

#### IN TYPICAL TIGHT-LIPPED ROCKSTAR FASHION

there is absolutely zero information, screens or promotional plush toys available for the hotly anticipated sequel in the blockbuster franchise. All we know is the name (see page 11) and that it's coming before the end of 2004. Joy!

But what of new features? We can only hope that the gunplay is improved, as it's been the only substantial weakness of the previous two *GTA* games. Perhaps the clunky lock-on targeting could be replaced by a much simpler auto-aim system, along the same lines as EA's *Freedom Fighters*. And while we're on the subject of that team-based shooter, why not have a similar system where you commit crimes and add to your 'criminal notoriety' metre, enabling you to hire more goons to fight alongside you?

Obviously the biggest enhancement they could make to the series would be online play; imagine facing off against other gangs, creating carnage in an online city. Of course, this is probably a bit too optimistic for this generation, and most likely won't be a feature of the series until the PS3, but why not give us some bonus split-screen check point races or city-wide deathmatches?

It's guaranteed to be big, bad and controversial, and we can't wait!

### TOMB RAIDER 7

**Publisher:** Atari **Developer:** Crystal Dynamics **Release:** TBC 2004

**CORE DESIGN**, UK based developer of the first six instalments of the popular series, was dumped last year from future *Tomb Raider* projects in favour of the US based Crystal Dynamics, of *Legacy of Kain* fame. *Angel of Darkness* was supposed to be the first chapter in a three part series, so we can only assume that the next game will take up where *AOD* left off. Here's hoping that Crystal Dynamics will bring some of the high-speed exuberance of its blood-sucking series to the ageing Lara Croft franchise.

### HITMAN CONTRACTS

**Publisher:** Atari **Developer:** Io Interactive **Release:** Autumn 2004

**YES, THAT SLAP-HEADED KILLING MACHINE AGENT 47** is coming back to slip some piano wire around your wrist and pull them tight onto the controller. *Hitman: Contracts*, will be the most disturbing episode in the series yet, according to developer Io Interactive. A brand new graphics engine is in place to add extra realism to the unsavoury acts, along with more weapons, more death animations and a more gradual learning curve to make it more accessible to newbies.

### RAINBOW SIX 3

**Publisher:** Ubisoft **Developer:** Red Storm Entertainment **Release:** March

#### PROVIDING A HAPPY MEDIUM

between an action FPS and a stealth-based simulation game, *RS3* pits you against unforgiving terrorist AI in a variety of scenarios such as hostage liberation and bomb disposal. In preparation for your mission, you can arm yourself with an assortment of real world firearms, as well as a selection of other equipment, such as flash bang grenades, gas masks and breaching charges. To make it significantly easier to spot the enemy hiding amongst the ultra-realistic shadowing effects, each team member is equipped as standard with Sam Fisher-style goggles capable of lowlight and thermal vision.

With an extensive single player campaign and diverse multiplayer options, *RS3* will be a strong candidate for your FPS dollar in 2004.

### TRANSFORMERS ARMADA

**Publisher:** Atari **Developer:** Melbourne House **Release:** TBC 2004

**FOR THE VERY LATEST ON THE GAME** that looks set to be the first Australian made, worldwide mega-hit, read our exclusive in-depth feature in this very issue!

This man's name is Ding Chavez. No, we're not joking

