

FAN THE FIRE

#16
January 2009

formerly L O A D Magazine

REVIEW OF THE YEAR 2008

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MILK. THE WRESTLER. SILVER SCREEN BUTTON BASHING.
SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE. ROLE MODELS. TWILIGHT.
2009 GAME PREVIEW. FLOWER, SUN AND RAIN.

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First of all, a big thank you to everyone who made it out to Mirror Kisses, our debut club night, at Proud in London, on the 11th December. The night was a huge success and we're currently in talks with a few venues about making it a weekly thing. More on that in our 'best of the blog' feature.

On with the rest of the issue and with the new year almost upon us, welcome to our second annual review of the year. Celebrating a great year in all areas of popular culture, we cast our eyes and ears over the best of 2008's entertainment. Placing the best albums, films, TV shows and games, in case you missed any of the fantastic releases, and further previewing the most exciting projects set for 2009.

Elsewhere we look forward to Milk and The Wrestler as the Oscar season sets upon us and review the latest film releases including Slumdog Millionaire, Role Models, Twilight and The Tale of Despereaux.

For gamers, this month we rule over four DS titles hoping to make it into your Christmas stocking.

As for the year ahead for the magazine, and the year that has just passed, under our new name we are expecting the best year in Fan the Fire's history yet. With a regular club night in planning, new and more exciting collaborations and our own fashion shoots already under way, the future is looking very bright. With more writers on board and a slew of wonderful contributors, the quality of the magazine has grown greatly in 2008, celebrated in our recent 'win the issue' competition. We just want to thank everyone who comes back to read every issue.

And finally, Fan the Fire favourites Delta Spirit will at last be touring the UK and Europe in late January, so if they drop by your town, don't miss the chance to see the future of music while they're still in small, intimate venues. Enjoy the issue.

Sam Bathe



CONTRIBUTOR OF THE MONTH



Celebrating his new book, Fancy Dress, English illustrator **Robert Hunter** has such a wealth to his work, he was recently selected to design the cover for reprint of H.G. Wells' classic novel 'The Invisible Man'.

Further adding to his CV with regular artwork for publications including TimeOut and the Guardian, Robert's profile is set to boom in the art circle as he continues to rise in the ranks, despite countless talented adversaries.

www.rob-hunter.co.uk

FAN THE FIRE IS...

Sam Bathe
Editor

sam.bathe@fanthefiremagazine.com

Martin Roberts
Features Writer

martin.roberts@fanthefiremagazine.com

Eva Liu
Features Writer

eva.liu@fanthefiremagazine.com

Art and design
Sam Bathe

Contributors

Rachel Blunstone, BRiC, Perry Chan, Michael Evans, Jonathan Green, The Halogens, Robert Hunter, We Barbarians

For advertising enquiries, please email us on advertising@fanthefiremagazine.com

WEB: www.fanthefiremagazine.com

BACK ISSUES: www.fanthefiremagazine.com/backissues

FAN THE FIRE MAGAZINE IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

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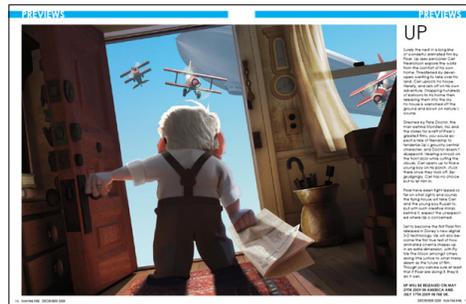
CAROL SINGERS

Thank you for your feature on Golden Silvers. Not only am I now an avid listener but my NYE plans are sorted. After mentioning the trio organise their own London club night I decided to head down early December and will be going back to bring in the new year. Let's hope their album will end up just as good as early demos, singles and live performances.
Davey Moss, via email

There's every chance we'll be at Bronze Club too, so see you there.

and we're left with almost nothing of any real quality.
Sophie Millbrook, via email

We pinned our hopes on The Killers' 'Day & Age', but that was a letdown.



PIXAR MAGIC

If it were by any other animation studio, I wouldn't be at all excited about the story of an old man who straps hundreds of balloons to his house and travels the world, but given that we're talking about Pixar, I can't wait for Up.
Claire Sedgwick, via email

wrap up warm. In a climate confused by global warming, you can't tell one day from the next whether we'll be in for a freezing cold morning or warming winter afternoon.

Whatever the weather though, your style spread has given me the push to stick to my guns, and as always, make the effort for style over substance. You only live once, so you might as well look good doing it, and just throw on some gloves and a scarf to keep away the shivers.
Chloe Lipton, via email

Style over substance is always the way forward when it comes to fashion, though we do still like the warm.



OSCAR SEASON

With the Oscars approaching, the end of the year always brings some of cinema's best releases in a packed winter schedule, but whatever happened to music. After a great spring and somewhat drab summer, the releases have completely dried up come the autumn

Up is going to be excellent we're sure. The teaser trailer looks fantastic, filled with the magic of any Pixar release, and then there's the funny young adventurer who tags along for the ride.



COLD HEARTED STYLE

Who said winter meant you have to



WEB GAINS

While it wasn't the classic some had hoped, I was glad to see Spider-Man: Web of Shadows at least attempt to make it off its own back, not the reputation of a film, and the story and characters benefited at least. Movie tie-ins will always sell, but the affiliated games that don't follow the exact paths of their cinematic cousins are always far far better. If only all developers could realise it.
Greg Corner, via email

Web of Shadows was much better than the film tie-ins, but a lot of developers just see the money.

OUR OTHER SITES...





CAVE SESSIONS

After your favourite band breaks up there's little that will soothe the pain, but hearing about an unreleased studio session certainly helps. Tracking The Colour's Cave Sessions down for the best part of two years, countless internet searches brought nothing,

After meeting some of the former members this summer in LA, my quest came one step closer to completion, but further details of the 5 track EP could only wet my appetite, not fulfil it.

Then one day, I receive a message from lead singer Wyatt Hull, we get chatting and a day later the Cave Sessions are waiting in my inbox.

Reworking tracks from their LP 'Between Earth And Sky', including a wonderful version of 'Black Summer' and album stand-outs 'Save Yourself' and 'Kill The Lights', the Cave Sessions recordings are everything fans of The Colour could have ever hoped for, but with release rights still in the hand of EMI off-shoot label Rethink, the



EP is unlikely to make it into the public domain.

For fellow fans, the Cave Sessions have always been the Holy Grail, and trust me, they're worth the hunt. You can probably catch the former five-piece at shows of friends Delta Spirit or The Shys, or of course gigs for their new outfits We Barbarians, The Romany Rye and Cheatahsaurus. And while you're at it listen to their new materials a listen too, the soul of The Colour lives on.

PDF-MAGS.COM

While the next generation of publications on e-ink is some way off completion, the digital age is fully upon us. For those wanting the full magazine experience, as opposed to throwaway websites, PDF-Mags.com offers a wealth of, you guessed it, fully formed PDF magazines.

With publications from across the world spanning fashion, culture, photography and design, some brand new and some running for several years, PDF-Mags.com helps you to reach out into the next step of magazine journalism.



MIRROR KISSES



The London indie club scene has been struggling for some time now. While there are a handful of stand-out nights, with little or no competition, select organisers are guaranteed a full club without ever really pushing the boundaries.

On December 11th, we launched Mirror Kisses, a new club night hoping the shake up London's club scene. The launch night was a great success, with Good Books and Sirens playing live, and ourselves and Chloe Little on the decks until close. While Proud Galleries was the perfect venue for our launch, we will, however, be taking the club night elsewhere for its permanent home.

Soon to launch as a weekly club, Mirror Kisses will be moving into central London as we are currently in the final stages of securing the perfect venue for our needs.

Keep your eyes peeled for more information, as Mirror Kisses will hit London weekly from very early Spring.



1

MYSTERY JETS 'TWENTY ONE'



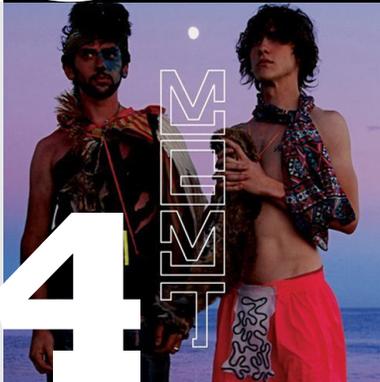
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DELTA SPIRIT 'ODE TO SUNSHINE'



3

TOKYO POLICE CLUB 'ELEPHANT SHELL'



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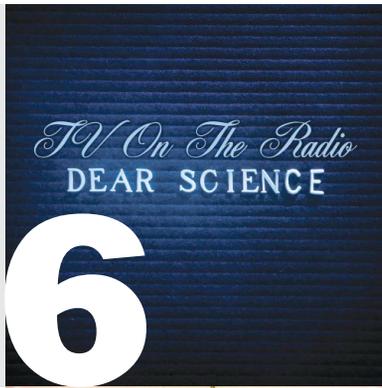
MGMT 'ORACULAR SPECTACULAR'



5

LATE OF THE PIER 'FANTASY BLACK CHANNEL'

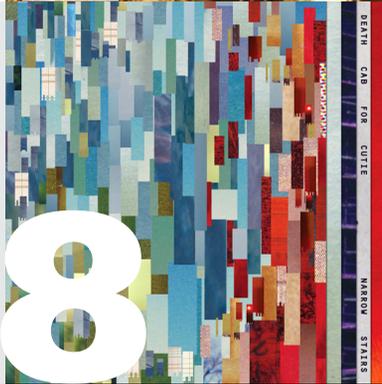
ALBUM OF THE YEAR



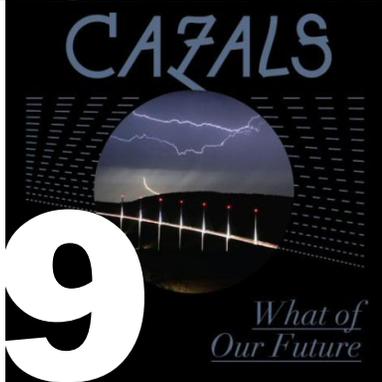
TV ON THE RADIO 'DEAR SCIENCE'



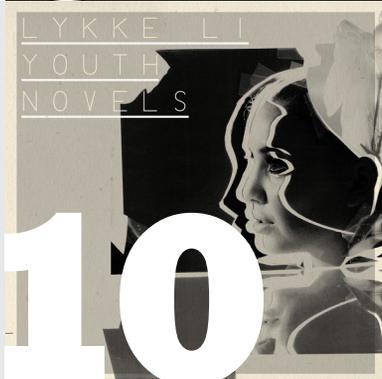
VAMPIRE WEEK- END 'VAMPIRE WEEKEND'



DEATH CAB FOR CUTIE 'NARROW STAIRS'



CAZALS 'WHAT OF OUR FUTURE'



LYKKE LI 'YOUTH NOVELS'



WHITE RABBITS



WHITE LIES



WE BARBARIANS



**FLORENCE AND
THE MACHINE**



**QUEENS OF THE
STONE AGE**



GALLOWS



WE HAVE BAND



EMPIRE OF THE SUN



GOLDEN SILVERS



GRIZZLY BEAR

WE'RE DJING AT...

fiction

8th Jan

7-11

flash lovin

the halogens

jess n kinky

Party games

dead other

face painting
+ henna

mad hatter +
white rabbit

music quiz

giant
twister

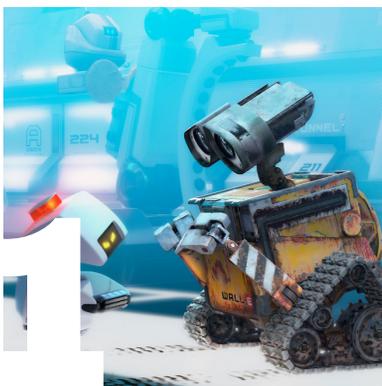
FREE!

FREE!

FREE!



NINETY THREE FEET EAST



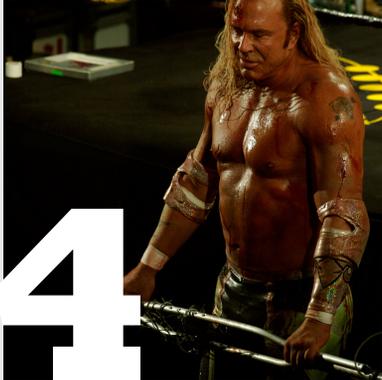
WALL•E



THE DIVING BELL AND THE BUTTERFLY



SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE



THE WRESTLER



GOMORRAH



THE ORPHANAGE



NICK & NORAH'S INFINITE PLAYLIST



THE DARK KNIGHT



COVERFIELD



IRON MAN



AVATAR



STAR TREK



WATCHMEN



SHUTTER ISLAND

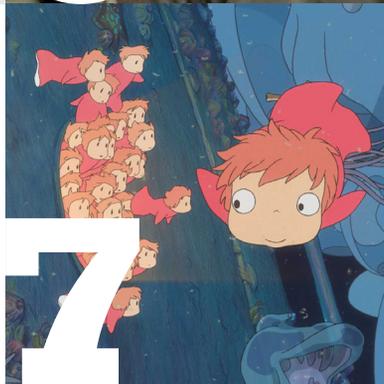


UP



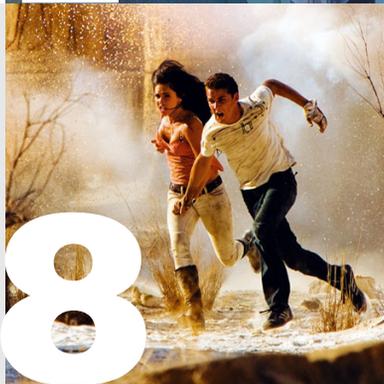
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**INGLOURIOUS
BASTERDS**



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**PONYO ON THE
CLIFF BY THE SEA**



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**TRANSFORMERS:
REVENGE OF THE
FALLEN**



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**TERMINATOR
SALVATION**



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JENNIFER'S BODY

MILK

Gus Van Sant's latest tells the tragic real-life story of gay rights activist Harvey Milk (Sean Penn), the first openly gay man to be elected to public office in San Francisco, and who was later assassinated after less than a year in office. Van Sant, openly gay himself, clearly feels a duty to tell the story of Milk, a modern martyr for gay rights and equality.

The film focuses on events leading up to the assassination over eight years of Milk's life, promising to explore the politics and personality of the man as well as his untimely death, which should hopefully give the film significant weight and depth and ensure that the inevitable conclusion is reached with the right sentiment. James Franco provides acting support as Milk's lover Scott Smith and man of the moment Josh Brolin, last seen portraying a politician of his own in *W.*, pops up again as Dan White, Milk's killer.

Reviews already circulating in the States suggest that Van Sant has a resounding success on his hands, which will please those concerned that the legacy of such an important, iconic figure might be mishandled. Biopics have enjoyed a resurgence in popularity in recent years thanks to memorable performances and empathetic writing, and *Milk* looks to be continuing that trend.

**MILK WILL BE RELEASED
ACROSS THE UK ON JANU-
ARY 23RD 2009 AND IS OUT
NOW IN AMERICA.**





THE WRESTLER

"Isn't this just Rocky in spandex?" I hear you ask. Well, maybe, but critical appraisal across the world mean it should be counted as one of the title contenders in 2009.

UK audiences will have to wait until January to see Darren Aronofsky's latest, which is already causing considerable excitement the world over.

If you listen carefully, you can practically hear the Oscar buzz. If rumours are to be believed Aronofsky, who was already very much a talent to be followed, has finally fulfilled his potential. From the short-cut montages and rapid editing of the love-it-or-hate-it (or both) *Requiem for a Dream* to the epoch-spanning ambiguity of existential romance *The Fountain*, Aronofsky films could hardly be called mainstream. *The Wrestler* though is the most widely appealing of his directorial efforts, and the available footage certainly appears to back up the hype.

Randy 'Ram' Robinson (Mickey Rourke) is a fading star of the wrestling ring, forced to retire as his ageing body begins to let him down. After retiring, Randy attempts to rebuild his relationship with estranged daughter Stephanie whilst dealing with the realities of life outside the glamour of his previous existence. The setup is nothing new of course, but here's hoping the plaudits are right in their claims that Aronofsky has brought something original to the table.

Given that the thematic drive in these films usually comes from the protagonist's unwilling realisation – told through a fall from grace – that life, and success, is fleeting, much will be decided upon Rourke's performance. Either he brings humanity and credibility to the role, and the film succeeds, or he doesn't, and it fails. As with *Rocky*, the audience must like the inept hero in order for him to be worthy of our empathy. Considering most of the early Oscar chatter is directed squarely at Rourke himself, we shouldn't have too much to worry about.

THE WRESTLER WILL BE RELEASED ACROSS THE UK ON JANUARY 16TH 2009 AND IS OUT NOW IN AMERICA.





SILVER SCREEN BUTTON BASHING

After countless failed video game adaptations, is cinema at last awaiting a half decent offering or are gamers set for disappointment once more?

WORDS MARTIN ROBERTS



Let's face it, computer game films are almost unanimously rubbish. It's practically a given these days. Join hands and raise a shout to Hollywood; "it's not good enough!"

Resident Evil, ruined, Tomb Raider,

ruined, Doom, ruined, Hitman, ruined, Max Payne, ruined. I could continue, but it hurts. As soon as filmmakers start to realise that gamers genuinely care about the treatment of their favourite franchises, a realisation which, for comic book fans, has recently brought huge rewards, we might start to see some

worthy big-screen productions.

Luckily, up to this point, Hollywood has largely chosen to destroy franchises that were never really film-worthy in the first place, however good their game counterparts are, for example Doom, or series that quite frankly are often deemed



overrated in the gaming scene, see Hitman and Tomb Raider, but Max Payne holds such a place in many gamers' hearts that disappointment has gotten them riled up. Stop giving Uwe Boll money to ruin adaptations and stop rushing development with poor scripting and lousy acting would both help. 2009 is set to play

host to two computer game films thus far, Tekken and Street Fighter. In *Street Fighter: The Legend of Chun-Li*, Kristin Kreuk (Lana from *Smallville*) plays the titular fighter in an upcoming feature I can only describe as worrying. Will it be any good? The past suggests not, but we won't give up hope yet, after

all, there have been brief lights in the darkness, though ironically the most recent has come in the form of Christophe Gans' decent adaptation of *Silent Hill*. No, it wasn't perfect, and yes, it did ruin *Pyramid Head*, but in general it was leagues ahead of pedestrian tripe such as *Hitman* and *Resident Evil*. *Tekken* fits into pretty much the same category as *Street Fighter*. One can't help but predict its downfall. *King of Iron Fist* it will likely be not.

Is it all doom and gloom for the long term future? Not necessarily. For a start, producers need to stop picking up projects from franchises like *Street Fighter*, which, for all its gaming history, is not really suited to the screen. It's not exactly a story-driven affair, studios simply hear the name 'Street Fighter' and give the go ahead, wasting money on an inevitable flop, though to be fair, the obscurity of some genuinely interesting projects, such as the rumoured *Bioshock* and *Mass Effect* pictures, doesn't lend them well to the mass-market. But if this is the case, either wait until they are widely known, drum up some hype yourselves or simply leave well enough alone. Fans would by and large rather not have a film at all than have a light-weight, low-quality imitation, masquerading as a film version of such a well-received game.

There is still a glimmer of hope on the horizon. Jake Gyllenhaal's portrayal of the Prince of Persia in the first of what Disney hope will be a new trilogy, is hovering dangerously close to looking good. Admittedly it has been delayed until 2010 but it's hard to resist mustering a little interest. Hopefully we won't be proven wrong, but it just could be the film that finally makes people stand up and take notice of computer game franchises being transferred to the cinema. In the meantime, let's try to have a happy 2009.

STREET FIGHTER: THE LEGEND OF CHUN-LI WILL BE RELEASED ON FEBRUARY 27TH 2009 AND TEKKEN IS CURRENTLY SCHEDULED FOR A MID-2009 RELEASE.

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

Directed by: Danny Boyle Starring: Dev Patel, Freida Pinto, Anil Kapoor, Irrfan Khan, Sanchita Couhday, Sunil Kumar Agrawal & Mahesh Manjrekar
Studio: Celador Films Distributor: Pathé
Release: Out now (USA) 9 January 2009 (UK)

You wouldn't expect the slums of Mumbai to be the setting for one of the year's most uplifting films, but place British director Danny Boyle behind the camera and anything is possible. Fresh from space thriller *Sunshine*, Boyle originally greeted the project with scepticism after he was approached with a film centred around the gameshow *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*, but in reality, the movie's titular base only plays a small part in the narration.

Somehow making his way to the final question on the Hindi edition of the show, young street orphan Malik (Patel), now working as a call centre assistant, is detained on suspicion of fraud and cheating, as the police feel it necessary to pull the contestant in for questioning. With no formal education, the officers deem it highly unlikely Malik could have gotten anywhere near the jackpot without foul play but as he starts to relive his amazing, and more often than not, harrowing, childhood, a lifetime of adventure in such few years has somehow led him to know the all the answers.

Filmed on the streets of Mumbai, in homes across the slums of Juhu and with the help of a half crew of local filmmakers, *Slumdog Millionaire* feels wholly authentic and, despite the incredible twists and turns Malik's life takes, very believable, without such, the film

wouldn't be half as effective.

Built on a wonderfully crafted script, the multiple storylines and flashbacks are woven effortlessly into the main narrative, though at the film's core is a deep-rooted love story. After Malik and his brother Salim (Mittal) escape a raid on their slum home, they pick up fellow lost child Latika (Pinto), destined to meander into and out of Malik's life until one of the film's only downsides, the sickly sweet cliché ending.

Dev Patel's performance in the lead role will soon make him a shining star out of nowhere. With his only previous role as the awkward Anwar in teen drama *Skins*, Patel is a revelation showing maturity far beyond his years and experience.

It's no surprise to find *Slumdog Millionaire*'s release in the middle of the widely considered Oscar season, and already garnering mass critical appeal, after little pre-release buzz, expect Danny Boyle's latest production to be at the heart of next year's awards. *Slumdog Millionaire* is an unrivalled upbeat story about how you can still enjoy your life despite all its hardships, and when other of 2008's best dabble in murky waters, is a must-see over the Christmas and January period when competition runs so high for your viewing time.

★★★★★



REVIEWS



TRANSPORTER 3

Directed by: Olivier Megaton Starring: Jason Statham, Natalya Rudakova, Robert Knepper, François Berléand, Jeroen Krabbé & Alex Kobold
 Studio: Europa Corp. Distributor: Icon Film Distribution
 Release: Out now

If ever there is a film that proves Jason Statham's remarkably quick ascent up the actor's ladder has been a little faster than his talents would oblige, it would be *Transporter 3*. The one-time world competitive level diver, has used his well toned torso to perfection where his untrained acting abilities fall through, but there was only ever going to be so far he could make it before at last the cracks started to appear.

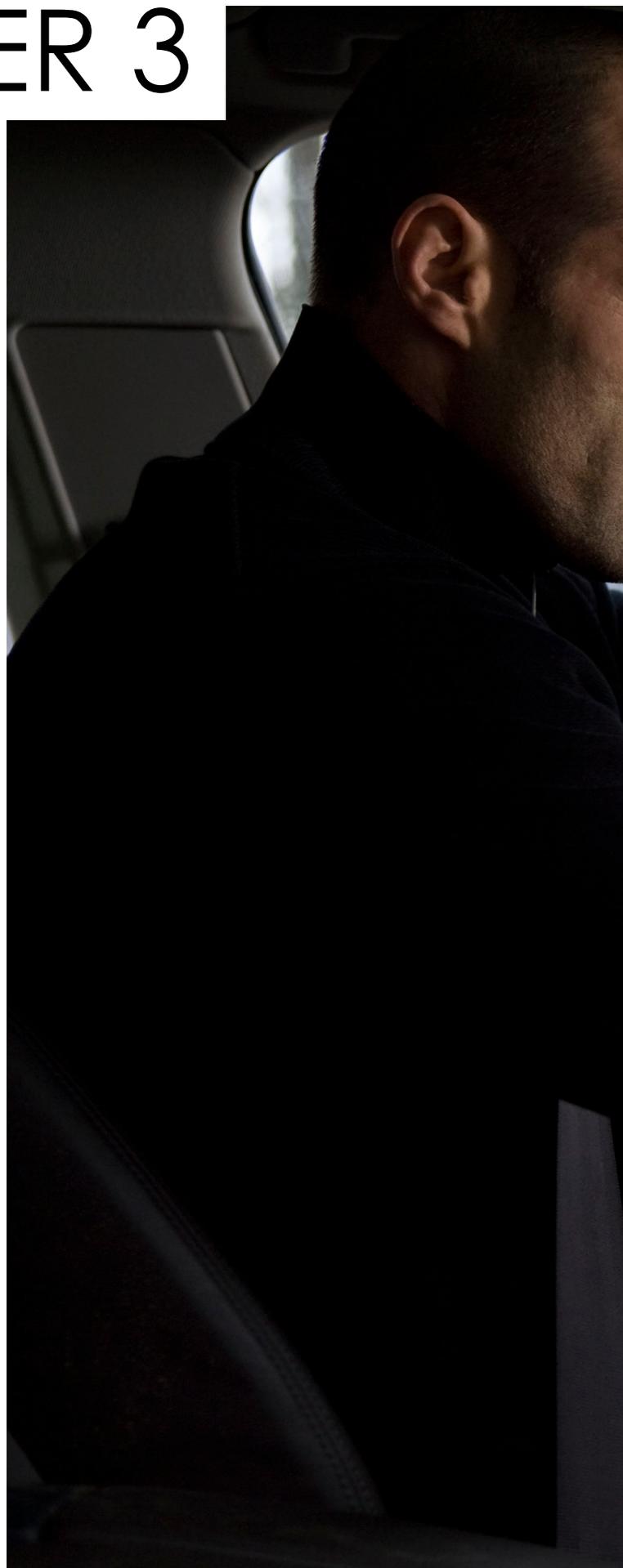
Returning again as ex-special forces, now no-questions-asked wheels-for-hire Frank Martin, Statham's character offers package drop services with that added extra security. This time around it's more of the same. After turning down an offer of work, he is coerced into a new job after being kidnapped by the evil Johnson (Knepper), and advised that if he leaves the contract unfulfilled he'll be killed.

Where *Transporter 3* starts to go wrong is by adding another person into the equation. *Transporter* would normally involve Martin, package-in-hand and his car, trouncing enemies en-route to the final destination. In *Transporter 3*, aside the obligatory unknown case is Valentina, a scantily clad Ukrainian on board for the ride.

After years of hard work in the film industry, Luc Besson is now seemingly doing his best to ruin what was once a perfect reputation. His script for *Transporter 3* is sloppy, incoherent and unfulfilling while the story is ridden with plot holes and inconsistencies. The main problem, however, is in the new direction of the film.

Half the time, *Transporter 3* is happy to be the no-nonsense action film it was always born to be but for the rest it masquerades as an emotional piece about two lost souls, hoping to find redemption against all the odds. Let it be said, the latter doesn't come off. The accompanying sound track of heavy rock for the fight scenes and slow violin for the heartfelt sequences does little to back up the film's ambitions.

Statham is as wooden as ever, resorting to stripping down from his suit in one fight sequence to draw cheers from the crowd, and really struggles in the more 'emotional' scenes. Besson's creative input in the car chases is at least one single redeeming factor but really there is little to have cinema-goers coming back for their third in the series, or even debut seeing Frank Martin. *Transporter 3* is better than *Crank*, but that's saying very little about its qualities, hopefully there won't be a fourth, for the reputation of all involved.







THE TALE OF DESPEREAUX

Directed by: Sam Fell & Robert Stevenhagen Starring: Matthew Broderick, Dustin Hoffman, Emma Watson, Tracey Ullman & William H. Macy
Studio: Universal Animation Studios Distributor: Universal Studios Release: Out now

Based on the book of the same name, *The Tale of Despereaux* is an enchanting tale about a fearless young mouse. Born with a sense of adventure to match his humongous ears, Despereaux (Broderick) failed all his school lessons to instill the young mice with a sense of fear, and wants nothing more than to explore the land outside their confined little township, only the land outside has seen better days.

A few years previously, celebrating their annual soup day, the kingdom of Dor fell upon hard times.

After a rat found his way into the kitchen and then the Queen's soup, all rodents were banned from the surface and Dor fell into darkness and famine as the dark rain clouds would not release their water.

On a quest into the royal castle, Despereaux befriends Princess Pea (Watson), the pair reading fairy tales together, only fuelling the little mouse's sense of adventure yet further. When his community find out he has been speaking to humans, however, they're less than pleased, and Despereaux is banished to life in the basement with the rats, and to save the day alone when he uncovers their evil schemes.

Despite the cute characters, and believe us, the titular character boasts limitless charm and the lovable ferocity of a tiger, the would-be enchanting story falls a little flat. The narration and plot development lacks the magic of a Pixar release, though for young viewers there's still enough to keep eyes on screen. The voicing of the charac-

ters proves another sticking point. While there is no main problem with the actors for each role, and on a professional basis, the acting is solid enough, but in Matthew Broderick as Despereaux and Dustin Hoffman as rat Roscuro, neither quite fill the personality of each character.

The animation though is excellent, and one of the best looking films of the year. *The Tale of Despereaux* boasts the colouring and cinematography of a live-action release, which coupled with a pleasing message of redemption and forgiveness, and there's certainly enough to warrant a visit with the family in the holiday season, only make sure you have a couple of youngsters along, to really make it worth while.

★★★★★



TWILIGHT

Directed by: Catherine Hardwicke Starring: Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Billy Burke, Ashley Greene, Nikki Reed & Cam Gigandet
Studio: Maverick Films Distributor: Summit Distribution
Release: Out now

Billed as the next Harry Potter in terms of teen franchise success over both books and films, *Twilight* is not like any other vampire movie. Exploring the certain romance between the mortal and immortal, *Twilight* is, at its heart, a love story.

After moving to Arizona, Bella (Stewart) starts a new life in the small town of Forks, but after starting school, her existence becomes anything but ordinary. Sitting aside her in science, Edward Cullen (Pattinson) is a peculiar but handsome character, unlike any other boy she has ever met. This may be due to the fact that he can run faster than any living thing, stops a moving car with his bare hands or the mere fact that he is over 100 years old, most importantly, he's a vampire. As Bella and Edward's relationship develops, the pair soon fall in love, which brings untold and expected problems for the unusual couple, as the pair try to escape a legion of vampires after her.

Directed by Catherine Hardwicke, though much of the film's dark style must be accredited to director of photography Patrick Loungway, *Twilight* marks the beginning of a new trilogy set to rule over cinema in years to come. Rob Pattinson delivers a convincing debut lead performance, likewise for Kristen Stewart, though the character of Bella can tend to aggravate, reminiscent of the clichéd emo teenager.

Despite its teen reputation, *Twilight* makes for an attractive proposition far beyond the book's brooding young fanbase. The intense narrative and intriguing relationships come together to create a unique kind approach to supernatural cinema and a dose of humour at times too.



WORDS EVA LIU



ROLE MODELS

Directed by: David Wain Starring: Paul Rudd, Seann William Scott, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Bobb'e J. Thompson & Elizabeth Banks
Studio: New Regency Pictures Distributor: Universal Pictures
Release: Out now (USA) 9 January 2009 (UK)

The next out of the Frat Pack stable, and from the producers of *The Break-Up* and *You, Me & Dupree*, *Role Models* sees Paul Rudd and Seann William Scott paired together for the first time on screen.

While promoting the Minotaur energy drink to high school students, Danny (Rudd) and Wheeler (Scott) find themselves on the wrong side of the law, bad mouthing a parking inspector then mounting a fountain with their illegally parked vehicle. Faced with the choice between jail time or community service, they expectedly pick the latter.

Placed at Sturdy Wings, a big brother agency that gives struggling kids that extra bit of help with growing up, the pair are forced to mature themselves before they can pass on any wisdom as the troubled-some kids take a bigger place in Danny and Wheeler's hearts than they could have ever previously imagined.

Starring *Superbad*'s Christopher Mintz-Plasse as a young kid obsessed with live action *Dungeons and Dragons* and Bobb'e J. Thompson as a foul-mouthed problem child, the opportunities are there for comedy but *Role Models* struggles to sustain laughs throughout the whole film despite on occasions having you in tears. Paul Rudd, though, is particularly watchable, and while the humour is a little lacking, you don't lose out on any entertainment when he's on screen, similarly for Seann William Scott, who for most of the film at least, isn't playing his usual Stifler role.

The obligatory moral story concludes the film, but don't let that put you off an entertaining 99 minutes.

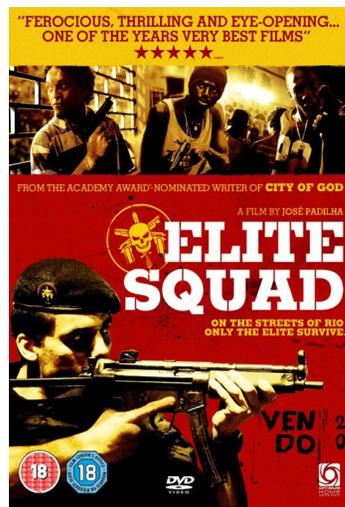




Somers Town

Mesmerising story of two teenagers who form an unlikely friendship on a north London council estate. Shot in black and white, Somers Town loses a little charm but in the end, quality wins out.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Elite Squad

Hard-hitting look at the men trying to provide a little authority on the lawless streets of Rio, let down by a mis-placed voiceover. Effective nonetheless with an alarming notion of realism throughout.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Angus, Thongs and Perfect Snogging

Paradise for its young target audience, Angus... is the perfect insight into a 13 year old girl's mind that sadly won't keep many other onlookers happy, brothers included.

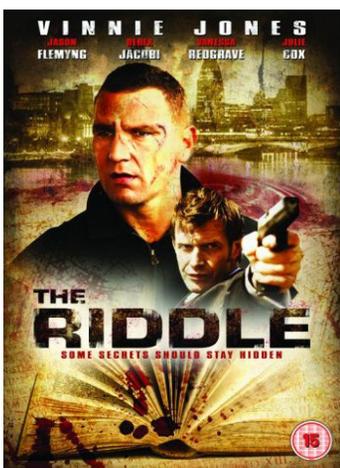
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



You, Me and Everyone We Know

Rambling story about not very much that somehow proves thoroughly entertaining until the last moment. Indie cinema done right making the most of a superb script.

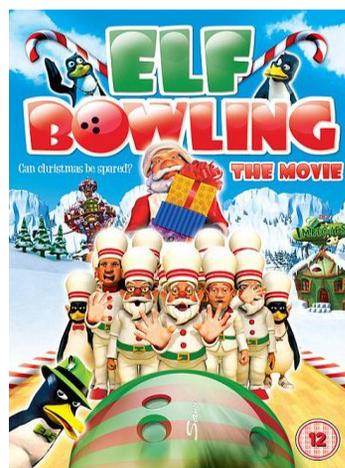
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



The Riddle

Promising crime drama that falls flat on its face as a strange plot twists undermines all before it. Written with quality to match a few good performances, The Riddle could have been much better.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Elf Bowling

Apparently Santa used to be a pirate, which about sums up Elf Bowling as a whole as cinema's strangest video game adaptation makes it into general release despite very questionable entertainment.

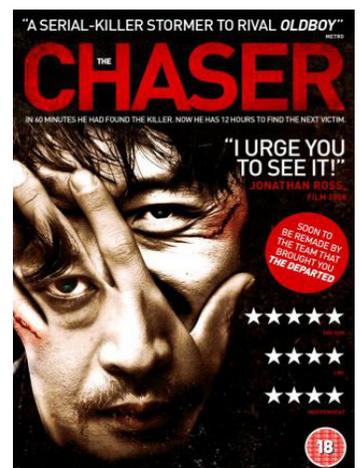
Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★



Eden Lake

High-paced, powerful thriller about a couple stranded in the forest, let down by the underlying social commentary. Well worth a watch, though non-Daily Mail readers will stumble at points.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★

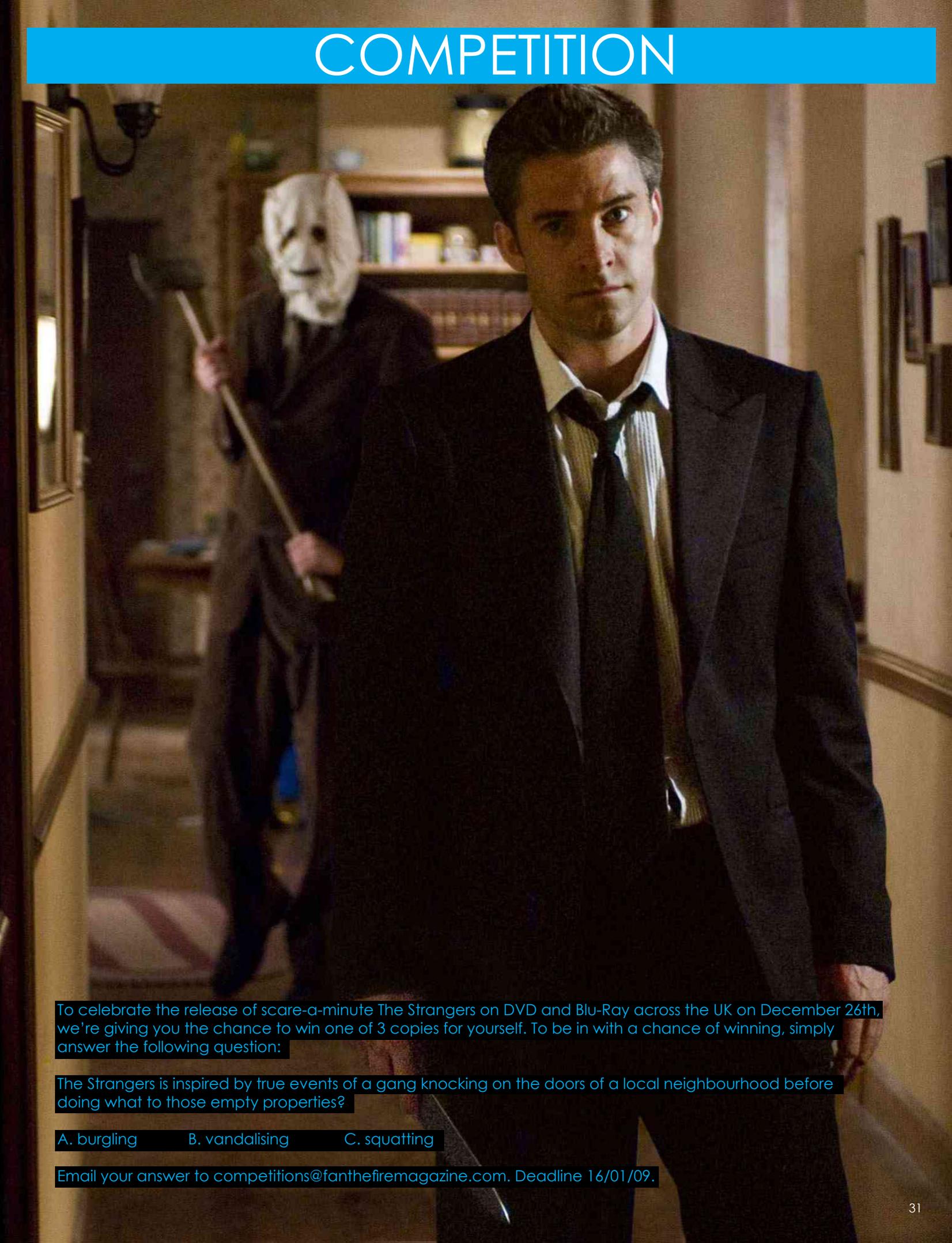


The Chaser

Complicated Korean thriller as a dirty detective goes on the hunt of a killer. Despite the overly complicated scripting that blights so many Korean releases, The Chaser is still one of the leading pack.

Film ★★★★★
Extras ★★★★★

COMPETITION



To celebrate the release of scare-a-minute *The Strangers* on DVD and Blu-Ray across the UK on December 26th, we're giving you the chance to win one of 3 copies for yourself. To be in with a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

The Strangers is inspired by true events of a gang knocking on the doors of a local neighbourhood before doing what to those empty properties?

A. burgling B. vandalising C. squatting

Email your answer to competitions@fanthefiremagazine.com. Deadline 16/01/09.



LOSE





YOURSELF



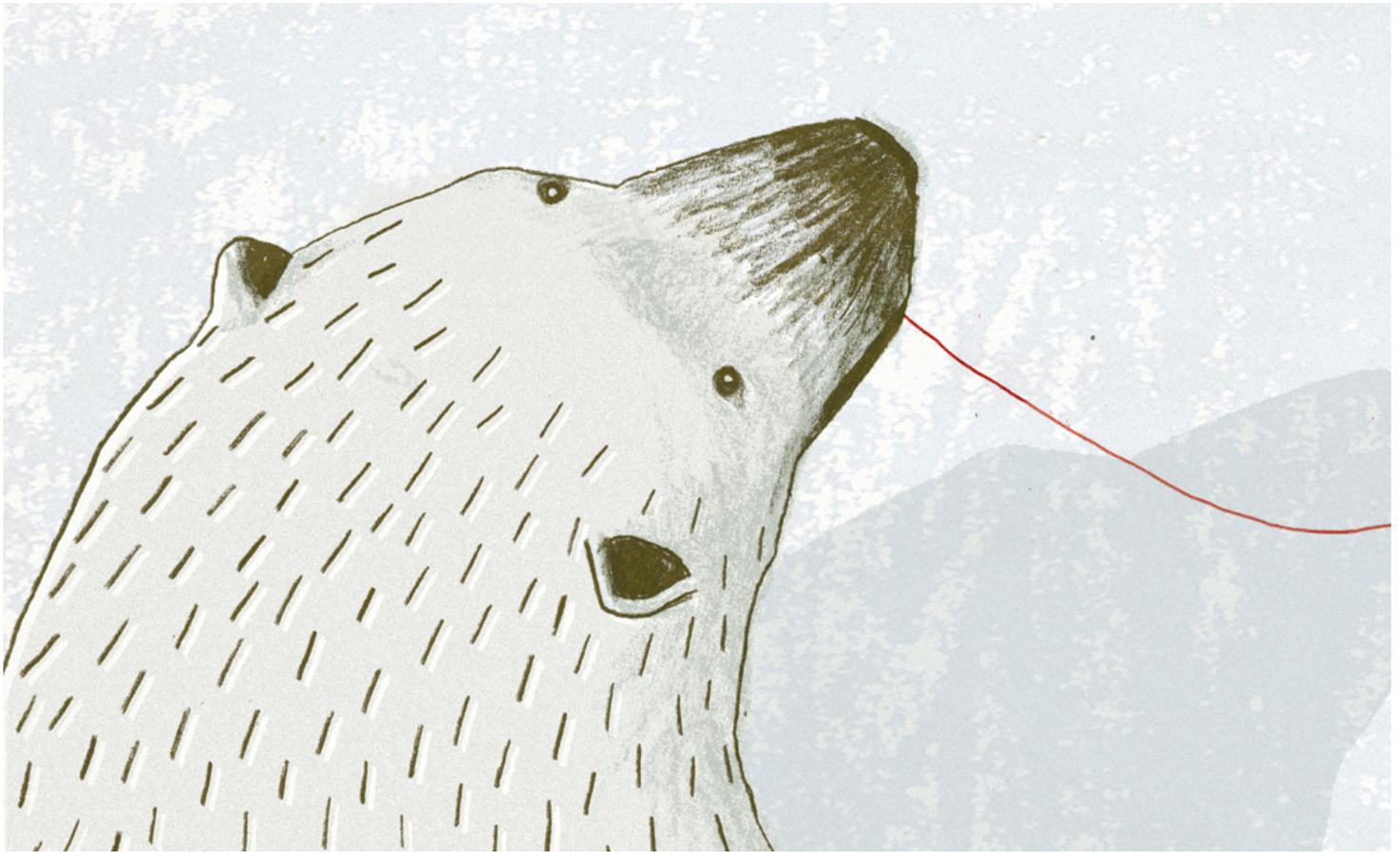


















GOSSIP GIRL



LOST



THE WIRE



PRISON BREAK



CHUCK

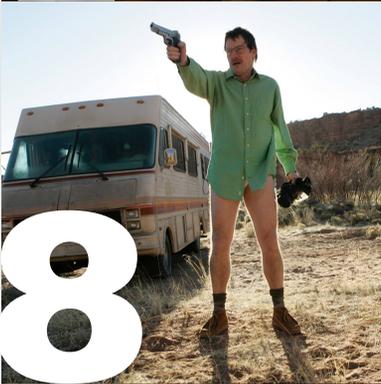
SHOW OF THE YEAR



FRINGE



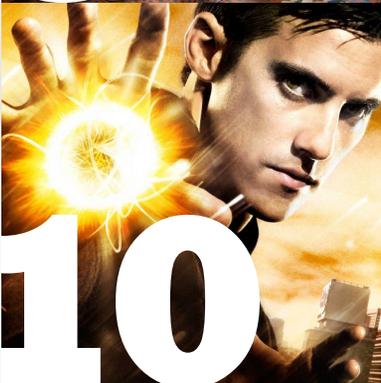
MAD MEN



BREAKING BAD



**THE BIG BANG
THEORY**



HEROES



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV



LITTLE BIG PLANET



BRAID



GEARS OF WAR 2



SUPER SMASH BROS. BRAWL



BURNOUT PARADISE



DEAD SPACE



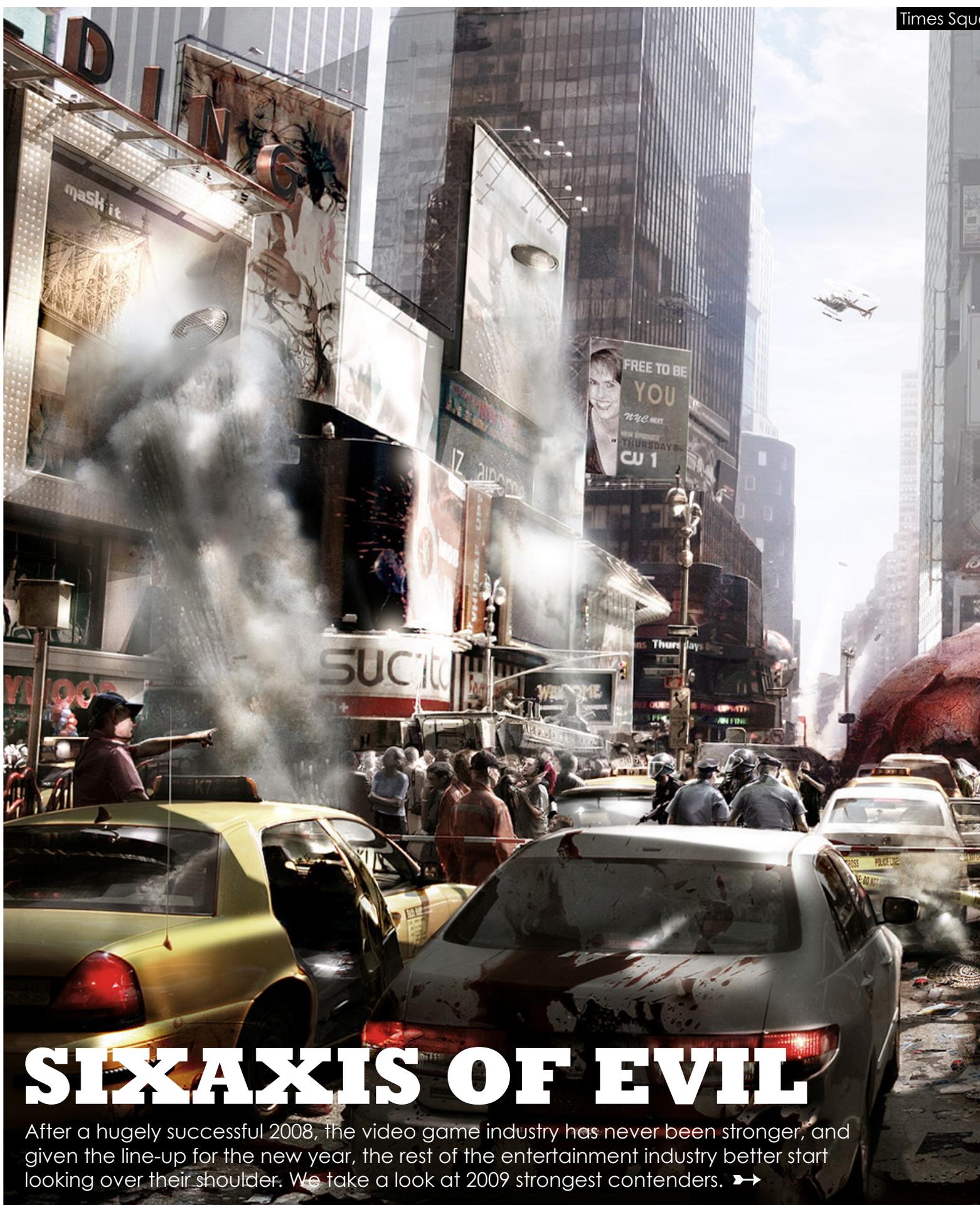
LEFT 4 DEAD



PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE CURIOUS VILLAGE



CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR



SIX AXIS OF EVIL

After a hugely successful 2008, the video game industry has never been stronger, and given the line-up for the new year, the rest of the entertainment industry better start looking over their shoulder. We take a look at 2009 strongest contenders. ➔

are has been in better shape in Prototype



EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR (PC)

Excluding expansions, Empire: Total War is the fifth title in Creative Assembly's genre-defining strategy series, still showing no signs of diminishing in quality. Most obviously, the game looks phenomenal. The series has always set the bar high graphically, and Empire looks set to repeat that tradition, particularly as it now allows players to take to the seas and fight in epic naval battles as large as 20 ships per side. The campaign map will be bigger than ever before, and the options players are presented with even more varied and tactical. Undoubtedly one of the titles to look out for in 2009's PC schedule, it is currently occupying a tentative release slot in February.

PROTOTYPE (PLAYSTATION 3, XBOX 360, PC) (left)

Due for release in early April, Prototype is an open-ended action title in which players assume the identity of Alex Mercer, who can pleasantly consume the bodies of defeated opponents and thereby take on various aspects of their forms, including physical shape shifting and even memory access. This one is not for children. The action brings new meaning to the word 'brutal' and features over-the-top moves combined with the additional skills and powers gained from 'consumption', allowing the player to take down tanks and helicopters in the war torn city streets. A slightly clichéd amnesiac storyline will hopefully be filled out to ensure it equals the quality of the action. Epic.

GOD OF WAR III (PLAYSTATION 3)

Not a huge amount is known about this one. Expected to be released exclusively for PS3, it is the third title in the series to feature on Sony's main console; Chains of Olympus and Betrayal having been released on PSP and mobiles respectively. The tagline for the game is currently "in the end, there will be only chaos" which seems to suit the series'

intentions thus far. After the thunderous conclusion to God of War II, only something bigger and better will suffice. This will undoubtedly include much more of the trademark puzzle and action elements that have defined the series, as well as more bursts of gore and brutality as pissed-off anti-hero Kratos continues his vendetta against the Greek gods. Announced at E3 this year, there is currently no definitive release date.

STREET FIGHTER IV (PLAYSTATION 3, XBOX 360, PC)

Here we go again. It's been a long time since the last full Street Fighter release, but make no mistake: the hype surrounding this is massive. It simply must be quality or there may be an uprising. Watching the trailers and seeing the game play thus far has been very promising; the roster is filled with classic faces as well as some interesting new additions, the soundtrack is back in all its retro glory. If everything goes to plan, this is the fighting game event of 2009. Closest rival Tekken 6 will have to be something special to displace this one.

STARCRRAFT II: WINGS OF LIBERTY (PC)

Blizzard recently caused minor shockwaves in the gaming community by announcing that 'Starcraft II' had altered its title and was now to be the first in a trilogy of RTS games spanning one gigantic storyline. Most of the controversy came from the fact that each game will cover the campaign of only one of the three playable races, a feature that RTS games usually collect within one title. However, all races will be available in skirmish mode in all three titles from the off, and Blizzard has claimed that these decisions have been made with the public's best interests at heart; i.e. that it will allow them the freedom needed to create three fantastic campaigns. Cynical onlookers might suggest that Blizzard has spied the oncoming money-tornado and is taking full advantage, but at present I am not →

one of them. Blizzard has become synonymous with putting out quality, enduring titles and here's hoping Starcraft II: Wings of Liberty will be just that.

DAWN OF WAR 2 (PC)

From one dark sci-fi strategy series to another, PC gamers who played Relic Entertainment's excellent first game must surely be excited about this. Sure, there are changes on the way; the campaign features no base-building, for example, allowing the focus to be shifted to RPG-like group management, but the overall quality and style seems to be fully intact. The Tyranids, a fan favourite new race, have now joined the rostrum to do battle with the likes of the Space Marines and the war-mongering Orks. Genuinely trying out something new in the genre, let's hope they pull it off.

MADWORLD (WII) (right)

One of the most exciting Wii prospects next year is also one of the weirdest. The appropriately titled 'MadWorld' is a uniquely stylised, visually arresting action game that takes place within a violent television show. The protagonist is a mechanic with a chainsaw on his arm, Evil Dead style, and the game has already turned heads with its violent content. Developer Platinum Games may not be a well-known name as yet, but the company is headed by former members of Clover Studio, responsible for critically acclaimed, and also visually unique, releases such as Okami and Viewtiful Joe. Promising.

RESIDENT EVIL 5 (PLAYSTATION 3, XBOX 360)

For a full preview of Resident Evil 5, cast your eyes back over Fan the Fire issue 14, but for those a little too impatient, here's the game in a nutshell. The sequel to Resident Evil 4's phenomenally successful reworking of the series, Resident Evil 5 switches locations and follows another cast of sinister characters through a virus-related storyline and plenty of blood

MadWorld is already shaping up to be a visual masterpiece



and scares. Chris Redfield returns as lead protagonist and is accompanied through much of the game by female sidekick Sheva Alomar. Graphically stunning and with a lot to live up to, you can count on this being well worth the money come March.

FINAL FANTASY XIII (PLAYSTATION 3, XBOX 360)

Thirteen. Unlucky for some, but Final Fantasy fans the world over will be hoping it won't be for Square Enix, whose long-running and ludicrously successful RPG series keeps on going and keeps on shining. Ignore side-stories like Infinite Undiscovery (candidate for worst title of 2008); this is where the action is in 2009. There are actually three games coming out under the wingspan of the tongue-twisting Fabula Nova

Crystallis Final Fantasy XIII collection, but XIII is undoubtedly the centre-piece. It may not actually make it out in 2009, but we can still hope, and with the announcement that it will be coming to Xbox 360 as well, even more people will have the chance to unravel a game which still remains a mystery.

THE OLD REPUBLIC (PC)

Make no mistake about it, BioWare's thunderously ambitious new role-player is potentially the biggest and most revolutionary prospect in online gaming next year, if not gaming in general. A few minor obstacles (like WoW's 11 million subscribers, for one) are standing in its way, but BioWare are promising something genuinely different in The Old Republic and, given their pedigree in the genre, who are we to



doubt them? For a start, BioWare are claiming that this game contains more content than all of their previous titles combined. Not just their Star Wars games, either, but all of them. That is some claim. They are also implementing new and intriguing ways to blend their stalwart genre traditions, engrossing storylines and fully-realised characters, with the daunting juggernaut of the MMORPG. Overly ambitious? Trying too hard to placate all audiences? Or could this just be as good as it sounds? If anyone can do it, it's surely BioWare.

Set 300 years after the fantastic Knights of the Old Republic and its only slightly underwhelming sequel, The Old Republic takes place during a time when Jedi and Sith roamed the galaxy in mighty numbers; so yes, fan-boys, you can all wield a

lightsabre, and you can all play with the Force. If you want to. Choices have always been BioWare's defining feature. Yes, we all remember Star Wars Galaxies; but whatever some people might say, that game was not a colossal failure. It had promise and ingenuity amongst its flaws, and it was, after all, Star Wars, which gets it bonus points in my book. The Old Republic will live and die by its ambition, no doubts there, and whilst it does have some pretty stiff competition in the form of already established and long-running MMOs, it could also be coming along at just the right time. People aren't going to be playing WoW forever, and they will need something new and innovative to turn to when Azeroth finally loses its appeal. This is going to be big. Very big.

So there you have it: ten of the best coming your way in 2009. But we couldn't simply leave it at that, so here's an honourable mention for some of the other projects currently in development; those that entice, mystify and, in some cases, bewilder their approaching audiences.

Will Alan Wake ever wake up and brighten our lives with his tantalising brand of psycho-thrills? Let's hope so. A lot of people have been excited for a long time, and surely it can't be delayed any further. Speaking of psycho-thrills, it's not long until F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin (now with its official name reinstated) shivers its way onto our screens and makes us all afraid of little girls all over again. In other horror-tinted action news, there's a new Wolfenstein game on the way. It's called simply 'Wolfenstein' and, to be honest, it will have to work hard to drum up my anticipation. There's the distant rumour of Doom IV, of course, though pigs will fly before that sees a 2009 release.

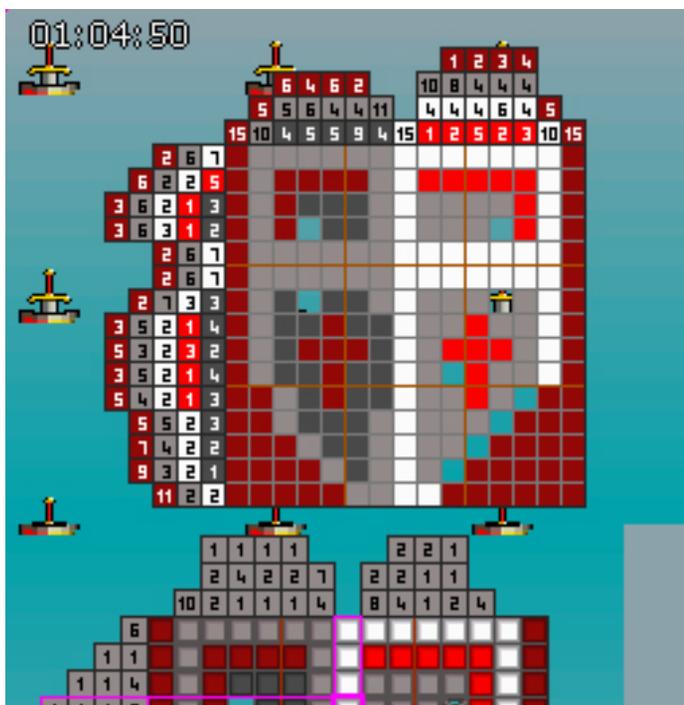
As far as other shooters go, there's Half Life 2: Episode 3 to look forward to, although we know almost nothing about it so far other than the title and there is no indication as yet

that it will be released next year at all. Here's hoping Valve bring us another terrific story and perhaps even another media-package to rival the awe-inspiring Orange Box. Then there's Duke Nukem Forever...but I can't say anything more than that without bursting into manic (and slightly despairing) laughter. "When it's done" now seems to be referring to the whole fiasco surrounding the game rather than the release date itself.

For sports fans there's the inevitable new instalments in their favourite series' that will surely make just enough of an improvement to warrant another forty pounds, as well as big race shenanigans to be had in the full release of Gran Turismo 5, Fuel and the sequel the Motorstorm.

RPG gamers in Europe will eventually be treated to the joys of Tales of Vesperia a mere six months later (sigh) than those lucky gamers in Japan, although the buzz is that it's worth the wait. The massively multiplayer market is set to invade the DC comic universe in the appropriately titled DC Universe Online, which has potential but I'm not putting any money on it yet. Not content with raking in the monthly fees of over 11 million World of Warcraft subscribers, Blizzard have not one but two massive sequels in the works. Starcraft II: Wings of Liberty is discussed above, but let us not forget Diablo III, which may or may not make an appearance in 2009. PSP owners have Resistance: Retribution to look forward to as well as Colin McRae: Dirt 2 (also on DS) whilst those with a DS can get themselves ready for Dragon Quest IX and Grand Theft Auto: Chinatown Wars.

Huxley, inFamous, a little game called Halo Wars...the list is seemingly endless. To answer our earlier question, 'Does 2009 stand a chance of beating 2008 at its own game?', the answer is a resounding: "possibly". It has all the potential, but as always we'll just have to wait and see. You never know, Resident Evil 5 and co. might be rubbish. (Hint: they won't.) ■



COLOUR CROSS

Format: Wii Developer: Little World Studios
 Publisher: Rising Star Games Release: Out now

Similar to Nintendo's own Picross, Colour Cross is the second colour-based play on puzzle game SuDoku to hit the DS. Colouring squares across a grid to create different shapes and patterns, players must follow guidelines as to the number of specific colours in each row and column, with the colour combination growing harder to find as you progress through the levels.

Making the most of the DS' reputation as a puzzle machine and brain trainer, Colour Cross perfectly fits the market as casual gamers look for an educational way to pass the train ride to work or bus back home. Colour Cross though, sadly isn't addictive enough to have you playing once back at home, and serious gamers won't find too much to keep them interested.

With a ton of puzzles available, for those who always wanting to test themselves, despite at times it forever appears that the only option is to guess, Colour Cross will make an excellent purchase, but for most, it lacks the thrill and demand to be played to make is an essential.

★★★★★



DUNGEON MAKER

Format: Wii Developer: Global A Entertainment
 Publisher: Rising Star Games Release: Out now

Reversing the normal RPG format, Dungeon Maker, a remake of the 2007 PSP title, tasks you to design dungeons to attract monsters away from a quaint medieval town before striking them down in the classic style.

The main area of the game lies in creating complex dungeons but the design process is left a little wanting, making no use of the DS' touch screen capabilities, instead opting for simple D-Pad controls in a slightly sloppy system.

With monsters trapped, your role is simple, and following the normal turn-based fighting, wander through your layer taking down each enemy.

The graphics are solid enough but without the great story any RPG needs, Dungeon Maker will never really have you enthralled.

★★★★★



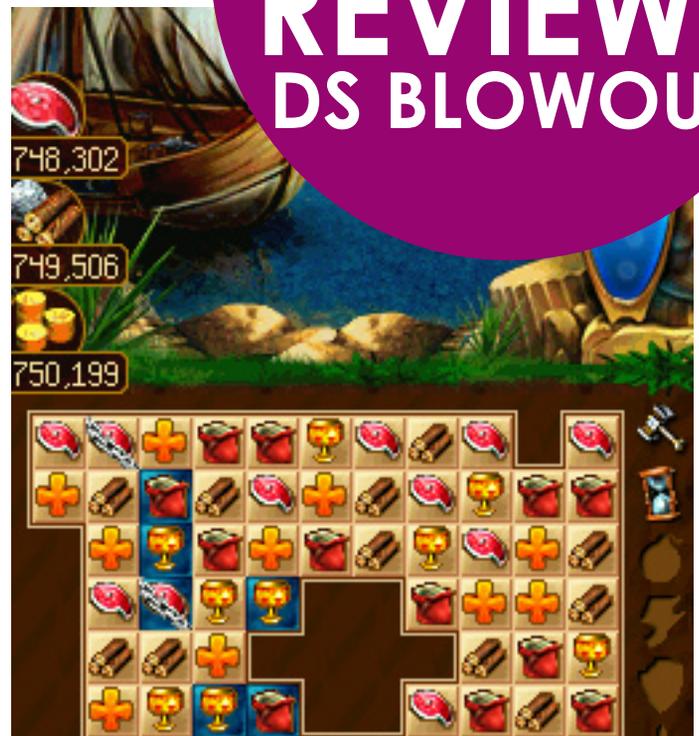
FLOWER, RAIN AND SUN

Format: Wii Developer: Grasshopper Manufacture
Publisher: Rising Star Games Release: Out now

First released on the PS2 over 7 years ago, Flower, Sun and Rain was always destined for a touch screen console. An advancement on the classic point and click genre, Flower, Sun and Rain takes more of an adventure route, similar to fellow DS release Hotel Dusk, and also takes its name from the centre point of the story. Playing as a 'searcher', you are tasked to find and defuse a time bomb planted on a plane soon to leave the nearby airport, with the opportunity to pick up numerous side-quests along the way and find lost objects for hotel Flower, Sun and Rain's guests.

Using the at times confusing 'Katherine' helper computer you will be required to crack codes and solve complex puzzles as the story slowly develops.

Adding little to the old graphics, if anything, texture detail and framerate have significantly dropped since the PS2 release, Flower, Sun and Rain also lacks an obvious warping feature meaning you will need to walk across all areas of the map, on endless occasions, and as a result, feels like a missed opportunity.



JEWEL MASTER: CRADLE OF ROME

Format: Wii Developer: Erasmus Media
Publisher: Rising Star Games Release: Out now

Essentially Bejewelled for the DS, frequent players will be greeted by the traditional format, with various jewels laid across the play area, requiring you to move them, move by move, into groups of 3 or larger to score points and remove them from the grid. To complete each level you'll need to wipe out the stones on several blue plaques.

Cumulating wealth for every jewel you match up, on the side to the puzzle play you can use your acquired gold to build Ancient Rome. Building all areas of the Empire, different buildings give extra abilities and bonuses during the main part of the game, although the side challenge in reality is non-essential.

Never quite as good as the free online game Bejewelled, for seasoned fans, Jewel Master will fill the portable void they may be demanding, for others; however, there are better puzzle options out there.



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