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Game Reviews

Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance
Playstation 2
Interplay



Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance is the first Playstation 2 game to be set in the *Dungeons & Dragons* game world. The game plays like a cross between *Diablo 2* and *Gauntlet: Dark Legacy*. The character has an inventory and skill selection screen, and the main play screen is a slanted, overhead view. The controls are easy to learn and give extensive control of the character. There is a button for attacking, jumping, drinking health potions and a button for casting the currently selected spell. Replay value is enhanced by a choice of three characters—a dwarf fighter, human archer or self sorceress. You also have many choices in how your character develops in terms of his or her skills and spells. The game has a linear format, completing the same quests each time. The amount of time needed to complete the game is short. Overall, *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance* is a must-play for true D&D fans, but not a must-own. (Grade: B-)

Final Fantasy X
Playstation 2
SquareSoft



Innovative and spectacular, the first *Final Fantasy* for Playstation 2 meets and exceeds all expectations. The visual and audio effects of *Final Fantasy* are stunning. With voice acting and realistic, changing facial expressions, the game feels more like a movie, completely immersing the player. *Final Fantasy* veterans will note a few changes. Combat has returned to the turn-based system of earlier *Final Fantasies*, and allows characters to switch in and out of combat. Character advancement is has no levels but uses a grid that gives players numerous options on how each individual grows. Players can specialize characters for combat role or focus on a more balanced mix of abilities. The story is as excellent as gamers have come to expect from the series, with several plot twists and countless cinematic scenes. The only complaint is the game is too short, 45 hours of game time being sufficient to beat the game. However, with numerous secrets and side-quests, there is always a reason to go back and play it again. (Grade: A+)

Reviews by Mike Whitlow

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

Aniston in good condition after accident



LOS ANGELES (AP) — Jennifer Aniston was slightly injured in a car crash Tuesday as she drove through a Hollywood residential area. The "Friends" co-star, and wife of actor Brad Pitt, was driving her Jaguar northbound near Sunset Boulevard when a vehicle backing out of a driveway broadsided her car, Officer Ed Funes said. Aniston apparently was alone in the car at the time of the 10:30 a.m. accident. There was only minor damage to the vehicles. Funes said the 32-year-old actress complained of pain, but had no details. An ambulance was called to the crash scene, but Aniston declined treatment. "It was her prerogative not to go (to the hospital)," the police officer said. "She was seeking her own medical attention." There was no information about the driver whose vehicle backed into Aniston's car. On Sunday, Aniston won the People's Choice Award for best television actress and NBC's "Friends" was chosen top comedy series. Aniston was at the Sundance Film Festival last week promoting her new movie, Miguel Arteta's *The Good Girl*.

Cage's stolen Porsche found lake



CAMDENTON, Mo. (AP)—Police believe they've located actor Nicolas Cage's stolen Porsche — and it's extremely wet. A 1989 Porsche Sportster was found Thursday submerged in the Lake of the Ozarks. An anonymous tip led police to the black convertible submerged in 12 feet of water. The \$100,000 car was in a transport trailer on its way from California to Pennsylvania when it was stolen Christmas Day from a parking lot in Arnold, south of St. Louis. Michael J. Grambling, 19, of Arnold, was charged with first-degree auto tampering in connection with the heist and was being held on \$10,000 bond in the Jefferson County jail. Arnold Police Detective Robert Streckfuss said authorities had not been able to reach Cage, who recently starred in the car-heist film *Gone in Sixty Seconds*. The car's serial number matches Cage's roadster, Camden County deputies said. Streckfuss said the company that was transporting the vehicle when it was stolen also verified the owner's identity. But Cage's publicist, Annett Wolf, could not verify Monday that the Porsche was Cage's. She said Cage had planned to

sell the collector's item at auction.

Conan's former sidekick Richter gets own sitcom

PASADENA, Calif. (AP) — Former Conan O'Brien sidekick Andy Richter could not believe some of the ideas he was pitched when he decided to come to Hollywood and get involved in a sitcom. At least two or three times, an idea sounded awfully familiar. "They say, 'OK, here's my idea. You're a guy who for a number of years was a kick on a late-night talk show. You decided to branch out. You leave the talk show and you move to Hollywood,'" he said. "It's like, what do I need you for?" Richter said. "I just need a camcorder." He finally accepted one pitch, a modestly titled "Andy Richter Comedian of the Universe," which is due to appear on Fox in a few months. He plays the title character, of course, in a series about an average guy with an extraordinary fantasy life. He joked to reporters about having his name in the title of a sitcom. "I don't know whether you know or not, but much like Xerox or Kleenex, Andy Richter equals hilarity," he said. "My name means comedy to people. When they're having a bad day, they're like, 'Man, I could use some Andy Richter'."

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