

by Joe Rybicki, 05.31.2007

It's summertime, and you know what that means: Baseball! Summer vacation! Shamelessly opportunistic, license-milking movie tie-ins! Yes, it's that time of year again, time for the summer blockbuster films and the games that are inevitable, unstoppable, often barely playable (but sometimes somewhat tolerable). We decided to take a look at the best and the worst the season has to offer...but mostly the worst, unfortunately. So heat up some popcorn and get ready to play along at home as we stomp our way through another summer of love. And by "love," we mean, "barely suppressed nausea."

Spider-Man 3

Platforms: DS, GBA, PC, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, Xbox, 360
Publisher: Activision
Release: 05/04/2007



The movie: Sure, it may be bloated and rambling, uneven and overwrought. But really, it's only a disappointment as compared to the previous *Spider-Man* flicks. Compared to most other superhero movies, it's still a pretty solid entry, and a fittingly dramatic (if perhaps overly bleak) entry in the series.

The game: While the movie dances with mediocrity, the game takes mediocrity home to meet the parents. It's certainly not terrible -- it's just terribly underwhelming, flaunting rehased gameplay and barely current-gen graphics that nevertheless somehow manage to beat these fancy new machines into glitchy submission. 1UP.com staff writer Scott Sharkey called it "an awful lot of the same with a new cast of guys to knock around." Penny Arcade was a bit less kind.

Shrek the Third

Platforms: DS, GBA, PC, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, 360
Publisher: Activision
Release: 05/15/2007

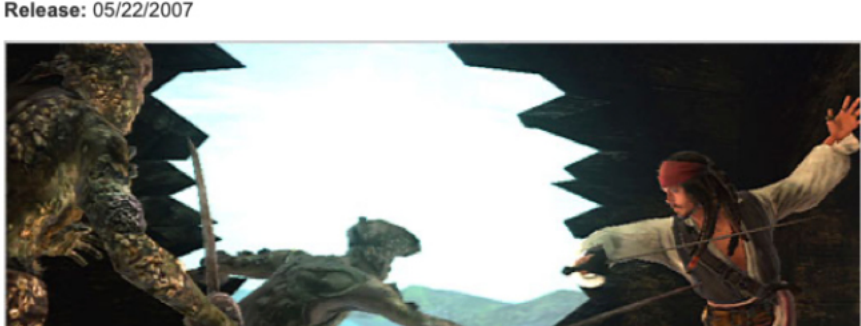


The movie: Were you expecting more than lowbrow humor, soon-to-be-dated pop-culture references, and snazzy CG? Then, buddy, you probably haven't seen either of the previous *Shrek* movies. Mike Myers once noted that something stops being funny once you repeat it a few times -- but if you keep repeating it, it starts getting funny again. Perhaps he's hoping for this to keep audiences coming back to the increasingly tired series.

The game: Exhibit A for why movie tie-in games get such a bad rap. The game doesn't seem to care about petty things like challenge, story, or *fun*. It appears to exist solely for the purpose of having *some* sort of game to capitalize on the movie's (so far rather staggering) success.

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End

Platforms: DS, PC, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, 360
Publisher: Disney Interactive
Release: 05/22/2007

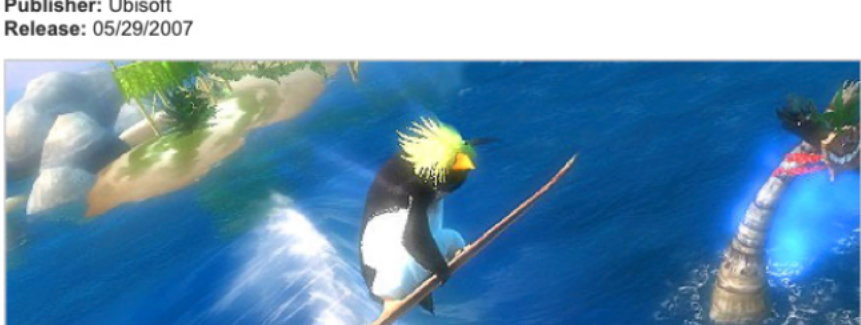


The movie: More Johnny Depp hamming it up as the fey Capt. Jack Sparrow, more ILM-tastic CG, more of the impossibly radiant Keira Knightley. Plus: Keith Richards! Sure, it may be as shallow and ultimately pointless as its predecessors, but it's a great popcorn flick -- and, really, what more do you want from summer fare?

The game: Here you have a prime example of what's wrong with film-to-game adaptations. The developers spent so damn much time painstakingly modeling the characters from the film that they apparently forgot to put much of a game in there. While this license should be prime for some sweet swashbuckling action, the game's sorely *lacking in swash*, and severely understocked in the buckling department.

Surf's Up

Platforms: DS, GBA, GC, PC, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, 360
Publisher: Ubisoft
Release: 05/29/2007



The movie: It's an interesting idea: a CG movie presented like a mockumentary, based on the idea that surfing was actually invented by penguins. The challenge: It's being produced by neither Pixar nor DreamWorks, but rather the relatively untested Sony Pictures Animation (of *Open Season* fame). But hey, with one of the writers of *Big Momma's House* on board, what could possibly go wrong?

The game: We've seen essentially nothing on this game. That should probably tell you something. We hear it's -- surprise! -- a surfing game, and visually, it looks pretty nice. But don't expect something on par with grown-up extreme-sports games. We certainly don't.

Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer

Platforms: DS, GC, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, Xbox, 360
Publisher: Take-Two Interactive
Release: 06/15/2007

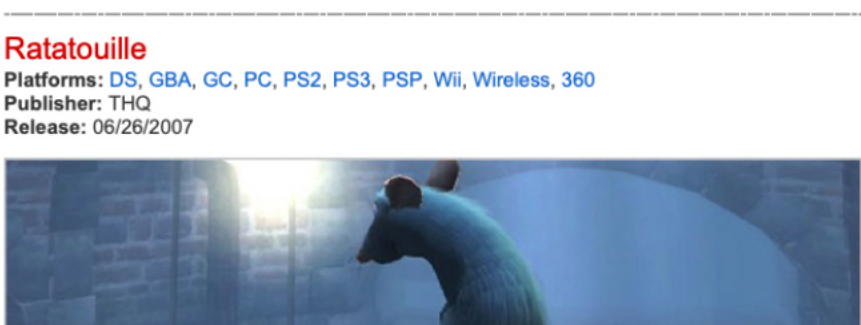


The movie: It's the sequel to the film that prompted reviewer Sean Burns of the *Philadelphia Weekly* to quip, "If I were to put the same amount of effort into my review that the folks behind *Fantastic Four* expended trying to entertain you, the rest of this page would be blank." And it has the same director, writer, and cast. How good do you think it'll be?

The game: It looks surprisingly solid. While it follows the plotline (such as it is) of the film, it appears to take some cues from *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance*, allowing players to control all (Fantastic!) Four, switching between characters to pull off special moves. Multiplayer is a no-brainer here, and we're guessing it'll turn out to be the big draw.

Ratatouille

Platforms: DS, GBA, GC, PC, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, Wireless, 360
Publisher: THQ
Release: 06/26/2007

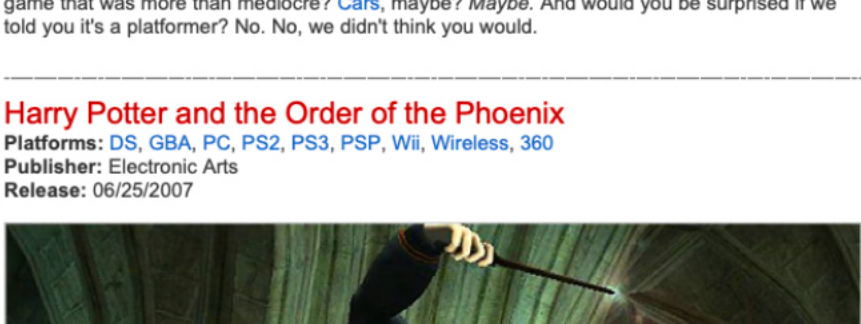


The movie: It's Pixar. Honestly, we're doubtful if even a ridiculous plot can seriously harm the film's chances of being awesome. Not even a plot involving a rodent who dreams of becoming a gourmet chef.

The game: Now, *this*, on the other hand.... Seriously, has there *ever* been a Pixar-licensed game that was more than mediocre? *Cars*, maybe? *Maybe*. And would you be surprised if we told you it's a platformer? No. No, we didn't think you would.

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix

Platforms: DS, GBA, PC, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, Wireless, 360
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Release: 06/25/2007

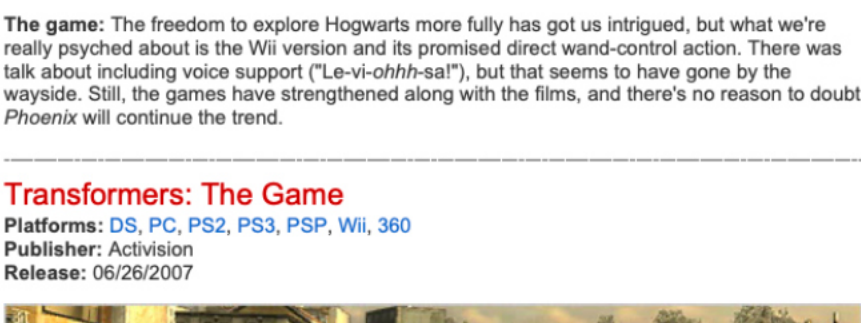


The movie: As the books get darker and more adult, so do the films. This one has Harry and pals sticking it to The Man by forming a resistance movement to combat the Ministry of Magic's increasingly authoritarian handling of the school. With everyone doubting Harry's account of the return of Voldemort -- and a confusing potion of hormones thrown into the mix -- expect the most teen-angsty *Potter* yet.

The game: The freedom to explore Hogwarts more fully has got us intrigued, but what we're really psyched about is the Wii version and its promised direct wand-control action. There was talk about including voice support ("Le-vi-ohhh-sa!"), but that seems to have gone by the wayside. Still, the games have strengthened along with the films, and there's no reason to doubt *Phoenix* will continue the trend.

Transformers: The Game

Platforms: DS, PC, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, 360
Publisher: Activision
Release: 06/26/2007

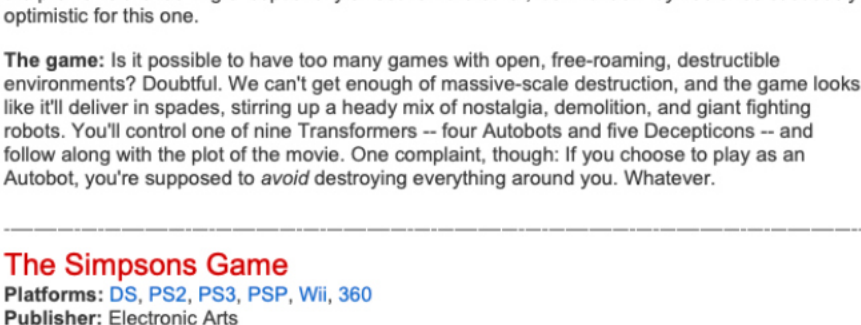


The movie: On one hand, it's the Transformers. On the other, it's Michael Bay. On one hand, the previews are looking exceptionally sweet. On the other, it's *Michael Bay*. Color us cautiously optimistic for this one.

The game: Is it possible to have too many games with open, free-roaming, destructible environments? Doubtful. We can't get enough of massive-scale destruction, and the game looks like it'll deliver in spades, stirring up a heady mix of nostalgia, demolition, and giant fighting robots. You'll control one of nine Transformers -- four Autobots and five Decepticons -- and follow along with the plot of the movie. One complaint, though: If you choose to play as an Autobot, you're supposed to *avoid* destroying everything around you. Whatever.

The Simpsons Game

Platforms: DS, PS2, PS3, PSP, Wii, 360
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Release: 10/30/07



The movie: Our fervent hope is that the movie is where all the show's funny has disappeared to. But with the increasingly stale humor of the series, it's hard to get too excited. We're not expecting *Phantom Menace* levels of disappointment, certainly, but there's definitely a chance that *The Simpsons Movie* could prove little more than tired fan service.

The game: Now *this* may be worth getting excited about: a videogame whose premise is that all its characters are stuck in a videogame, and fully aware of that fact. Sure, it's not a direct tie-in to the movie, but skewering pop culture is something the *Simpsons* writers have always been good at, and we're looking forward to being on the sharp end of that stick. ^{1P}

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Related Games

Spider-Man 3
Release Date: 05/04/2007
1UP Grade: C

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix
Release Date: 07/13/2007
1UP Grade: B+

Spider-Man 3
Release Date: 05/04/2007
1UP Grade: C