



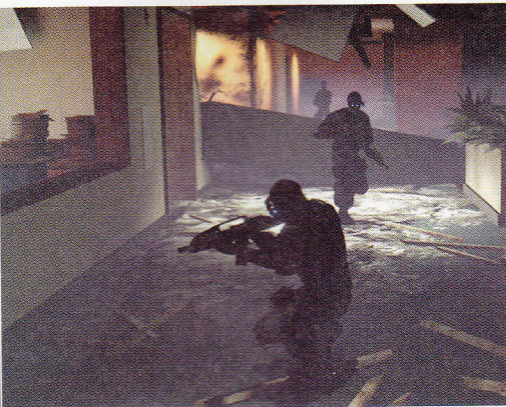
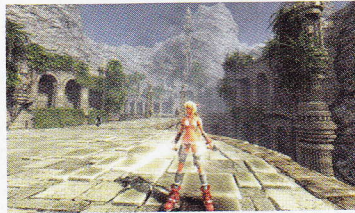
PlayStation Gallery

X-Blades

First Look

PS3 AVAILABLE: **Late 2008** GENRE: **Action** PUBLISHER: **Topware Interactive/ SouthPeak Games** DEVELOPER: **Gaijin Entertainment**

Sometimes—trust me on this—a little bit of utter, over-sexed personality conflict can be a good thing. Particularly when there's a dangerous, hot girl involved. With this in mind, consider *X-Blades*: An action game—clearly inspired by Japanese anime—headed for the North American market, created by (despite the name) a Russian developer starring a Caucasian, blonde-tressed warrior-chick with Matrix-style tendencies...named "Ayumi." If this doesn't already make you just a little bit dizzy, make no mistake, there is something wrong with you. Our scantily-clad heroine—whose wardrobe makes even Lara Croft's newest Underworld scuba-ensemble look a bit on the prudish side—hacks, slashes, and gun-blades her way through 40 indoor and outdoor levels, racking up XP to be converted into melee/gun combat chops as well as some twenty-odd magic/teleportation skills. It's not the deepest thing goin' but the combination of melee/ranged "Gun Kata" combat, bullet-time theatrics, alternate endings for "good" or "bad" actions, and the unapologetically perv-anime fan-service style make *X-Blades*—in spite of its awful name—worth watching out for. Chris



Alpha Protocol

First Look

PS3 AVAILABLE: **February 2009** GENRE: **Action/RPG** PUBLISHER: **Sega** DEVELOPER: **Obsidian**

Pegged as a modern espionage RPG, *Alpha Protocol's* gameplay is a compelling mix of action shooter and story-driven roleplaying. As agent Michael Thornton, you face split-second decisions and their short- and long-term ramifications: Do you calmly inquire for information, aggressively interrogate, or resort to gunplay? Skill points are acquired as objectives are achieved and can be applied to enhance personal abilities or weapons performance, but ultimately, it's your decisions that determine the type of hero or anti-hero Thornton becomes. Roger

Tomb Raider:

Underworld

Hands-On

PS3 AVAILABLE: **November** GENRE: **Action Adventure** PUBLISHER: **Eidos** DEVELOPER: **Crystal Dynamics**

"What could Lara do?" That was the question that informed every decision in the design and gameplay of *Underworld*. Note the word could—not would. Indeed, developer Crystal Dynamics wasn't overly worried about capturing reality as much as infusing a sense of believability into Lara's actions. So, for example, if Lara could pick up a large carved stick to insert into a hole to create a stepping point, she could also toss said stick at an angry tiger, since it only makes sense within the game's world. Embracing this philosophy opened up a slew of new moves and actions for our feisty heroine, including *Uncharted*-esque free-climbing up cliffs and across ancient tombs. Also noteworthy in our brief playtest: a dual-target system, allowing you to shoot at multiple enemies at once. You'll certainly need all these new skills and actions in order to find Thor's hammer in a newly discovered ruin at the bottom of the Mediterranean Sea. Gary

