



THE VIDEO GAME GENERATIONS NEWSLETTER

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Issue #44 – July 18, 2026

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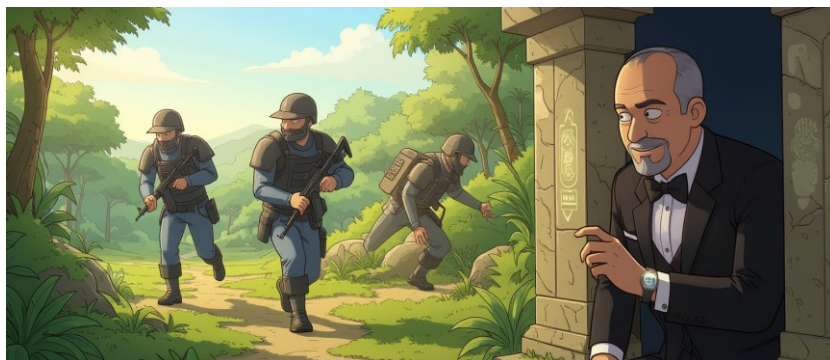
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Loading Screen

For those of you new to the VGGN, welcome, and apologies for not keeping up the weekly schedule I started with. I think I just got burnt out from doing so much writing and so little gaming.

Gaming industry news has just been bad after bad. In this issue, the *Recent Events* section will be an outlet for venting a bit about that; particularly the news that PlayStation will stop manufacturing game discs starting in 2028. Sorry for the name-calling.

I held off working on this issue until my *007 James Bond* gaming marathon was done. I had a blast playing through a whopping *twenty-two* games in the franchise. That's this issue's main topic, mini-reviews, and *Collection Inspection*. Enjoy!



I can't tell if the one guard is missing a foot, or if it's just hidden behind his leg because he's running. Hopefully, it's the latter.

Recent Events

Unhinged Rant Edition

Grand Theft Auto VI Will Be Digital Only

I'll have a lot to say about this shift away from physical game discs a bit later, but it all started with Rockstar announcing GTA6 would not get a physical release. In the last issue of VGGN, I had this to say:

"What I want to know is, what's in the physical release? The whole game? Part of it? Just a key?"

Never in a thousand years would I have guessed they wouldn't release a disk at all. Even "just a key" was meant as a reference for so-called "key discs" in which the game isn't there at all; just a small trigger for the full game to download from the internet.

Instead, it's even worse. The "physical" release (a cruel joke to even use that term, but they do) is an empty box with a single-use code to download the game. This ties it to a single person's PlayStation account. At least a "key disc" can be sold and traded. This can't, after the code is redeemed.

My most anticipated game this year fell off my radar entirely, just like that. It isn't that I'll *never* play it. Just, I'm not going to pay \$85 for a digital download. That's egregious, no matter what game it is. Yes, I'm counting \$5 for tax (it's actually a bit more) because it's still money out of my pocket, with a base game price of \$80 (above the \$70 AAA norm).

It gets worse. Some content is locked behind a \$100 version. To be honest, I lost interest as soon as I found out it was digital only, so I'm not sure what's missing. In-game stores?

Source:

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/rockstar-confirms-there-will-be-no-disc-version-of-gta6-at-launch/>

XBOX Goes on a Firing Spree

Layoffs are weird. How do companies think games are going to get made when *there's nobody left to make them?*

There are a plethora of news stories out there about this (aside: I can't say "plethora" without thinking of *The Three Amigos*), and I'll link to a few of them at VGC below.

I've been a big fan of Double Fine, the studio headed up by Tim Schafer, since their first games (*Psychonauts* and *Brütal Legend*). Tim was an industry veteran well before founding Double Fine, with credits working on point-and-click adventure games for LucasArts like *Grim Fandango*, *Day of the Tentacle*, *Full Throttle*, and the *Monkey Island* games.

That's why I was nervous when XBOX stepped in to buy their studio a few years ago.

At least they weren't axed entirely, and are being allowed to go independent again with (I think) their full catalog of games. That's also true of studios Ninja Theory and Undead Labs.

From studios *retained* by XBOX, though, the layoffs are massive. 3,200 human beings with families, bills, and the prospect of a horrible job market are being cut loose this year. VGC says this is estimated to be 20% of all XBOX employees.

Some specific studios are reportedly decimated by these cuts, in ways that may make it far tougher (or impossible) to meet Microsoft's outlandish expectations and sales goals.

Sources:

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/xbox-confirms-plans-to-cut-5-studios-and-thousands-of-jobs/>

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/xbox-layoffs-reportedly-gut-id-software-coding-team-and-cut-60-70-developers-from-obsidian/>

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/microsofts-layoffs-include-the-37-year-veteran-behind-xbox-backwards-compatibility/>

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/hundreds-of-layoffs-confirmed-at-elder-scrolls-online-studio-as-devastating-xbox-cuts-continue/>

PlayStation Kills the Future of Gaming

Okay, sure, that's hyperbolic, but their recent announcement to end the production of game discs *entirely* has killed the future of gaming on their platform for *me*.

It was a day like any other. I woke up. I brushed my teeth, got dressed, took my heart medicine, drank some water, fed the cat (her name is Morgana) and went down to my desk (I work from home) to start my day.

It wasn't a day like any other, as it turns out. News that PlayStation would be discontinuing disc production starting in 2028 started making the rounds on social media, and it was hard to stay focused on anything else.

It isn't just that first-party PlayStation is switching to all-digital before the PS5 generation is (presumably) over. It's that Sony makes the discs for *all* PS5 games, regardless of who publishes them. Indies who'd love to see their game in stores, preserved on disc, or even just *normal* publishers who recognize the value in supporting physical game buyers won't be able to when this takes effect.

The number of absolute imbeciles out there rationalizing this, even cheering for it, makes my blood boil. In what world is it a *good* thing for consumers to lose this choice? Every social media post in support of this either comes across as corporate boot-licking, or at best, straight-up ignorance based on wild assumptions and misinformation.

The biggest point of idiocy I saw over and over was people claiming (falsely) that no game has been fully on disc in over a decade, and none whatsoever during the PS5 generation.

There are two versions of this. First (and most idiotic) is the notion that no game data is on the disc at all. They think every game *requires* a download because the disc is blank. I call those "key discs", and there are a few, yes.

The second is from people who realize there's a game on the disc, but (again, falsely) think that every game is so broken and unplayable that it can't realistically function right *without* downloading patches (day-one or otherwise).

In truth, there are examples of both things: games so broken they do need the patch just to work right, and games that are incomplete or missing entirely, and don't even have a *broken* version to play without downloading some or all of the game from PlayStation.

It can be argued that games like *Cyberpunk 2077* and *MindsEye* both fall into the former category, and most everything from XBOX first-party, big Ubisoft and WB releases, and a few others (*Crimson Desert*, for example) fall into the latter. These are still the exception, though, not the norm, as proven week after week by the testing carried out at:

<https://www.doesitplay.org/>

Another frustrating defense of the all-digital future comes from people who just fundamentally don't understand how discs work now. I'd be rich if I had a quarter for every post I saw where somebody thought they'd ended the debate entirely by stating that PS5 Blu-ray discs can only hold 100GB, and most AAA games are bigger than that.

When forced to reckon with the reality that games can release on multiple discs – just as they've done for many console and PC generations in the past – these fools double-down by insisting that it would require disc-switching mid-game and they would perform way worse than their digital counterparts.

No. Just no. That's not how it works. This isn't the PS1/PS2 generation. The disc has the game files and you install from there. Whether it comes from one or more discs or digitally from a server, it installs to your HD now and works the same way. You don't swap discs after it's installed, except, of course, to play an entirely different game.

Case in point: Rockstar's own *Red Dead Redemption II* released on two discs; but now, they can't be bothered to include even one.

It's reported, too, that the *Baldur's Gate III* physical Deluxe Edition will have 2 discs on PS5 and a whopping 4 discs on Xbox:

<https://us.merch.larian.com/en/products/baldur-s-gate-3-deluxe-edition-ps5>

<https://us.merch.larian.com/en/products/baldur-s-gate-3-deluxe-edition-xbox>



Sometimes, though, even if a game isn't perfect at launch and can be made better with patches, it just helps to own a physical copy. Sometimes a patch can introduce an unpopular change, break trophies or achievements, removes content (maybe licensed music when the license expires), or censor random things. Having an earlier version is vital for preservation.

Not all patches are the same. Yes, some games release totally busted (they shouldn't, but gamers have come to accept it, sadly) but most don't. The patch could be as simple as a tweak to the lighting in a certain level, a better texture on some random tree, and fixing a slight audio glitch with a single line of dialogue from one NPC. These aren't things that make the disc build worthless.

Only slightly less frustrating than the people who jump to defend this entirely anti-consumer decision are the people who just shrug and say "I'm all digital already, so it won't affect me." Yes, my guy (or gal), it will.

Physical games *can* become pretty expensive, if they were a limited print/run and they're in high demand. It's more typical to see this after a console generation ends, though, and people start to build their collections after the fact. I mean, *Rule of Rose* for PS2 was pretty pricey when I picked it up a few years ago for almost \$100, but it's multiple times more expensive these days.

No, more often you find that physical games are way cheaper than the same game on the PS5 or XBOX digital stores. They do go on sale, sometimes to drum up more purchases, but sometimes simply to compete with the used game market.

There will be no used game market for future PS5 games and (presumably) all PS6 games. Unless PlayStation invents a convenient way to share, there will be no more going next door to your friend's house to borrow a game, no more browsing the selection at a pre-owned game store, no more ordering off eBay from somebody selling theirs after they're done; no ownership.

When I say it's anti-consumer, I'm not kidding. There is no benefit to consumers in taking away our option to buy discs. Digital games won't be cheaper; it's just more profit going directly to PlayStation. They'll be the only source, so there is no competition in pricing, except when games compete with each other. Every sale will be a *new game* sale, pricing out those who would typically wait for a good deal on a used copy.

XBOX is likely to follow suit next generation, and Nintendo is already iffy with their Key Cards. With next-gen consoles expected to be \$1000+, I just can't see any justification in getting one when digital games become the *only* option.

Source:

<https://www.videogameschronicle.com/news/playstation-announces-the-end-of-disc-games-starting-in-january-2028/>

My James Bond 007 Gaming Marathon

On May 30th, I posted to Threads [here](#) that I was embarking on a quest to play almost every 007 game released on consoles:

“I wish 007 First Light was fully on disc. It was one of my top 3 most anticipated games this year. While I wait for it to eventually get a price drop to justify purchasing a key disc, I’ve decided to burn myself out on Bond by playing through (most of) the entire series of games. The only ones I have that I plan to skip are the two on Nintendo DS (Goldeneye 007 remake port, and Blood Stone 007 - although it might still be worth playing the latter) and 007 Racing for PS1. How soon before I give up and end the run? Stay tuned to find out.”

Amazingly, I didn’t give up partway through. The only one I skipped was 007 Racing for PS1, just as I planned from the start. I ended up playing the DS version of *Blood Stone*, and a few other variations when the other version was completely different (ex: *Quantum of Solace* is an entirely different game on PS2), but I did skip variations where it made sense.

I even added a few more to the marathon by picking up several retro and handheld entries along the way, including a couple in the *James Bond Jr.* franchise, which I didn’t even know existed until then.



For the past few weeks, I played through 22 different 007 Bond games for my marathon.

I waited as long as possible to buy a copy of *007 First Light*, after cancelling my pre-order prior to launch when I learned the disc wasn’t complete and required a download.

I had hoped to buy it later in the year at a substantial discount, but the best I could do as I blazed through every game leading up to it was around \$15 off from a seller on eBay. It was, at least, an unopened copy, although that wouldn’t have been a factor anyway, since I wasn’t buying it purely to collect.

These “key discs” are worth nothing in a collection anyway, but I digress.



My marathon started with what I thought would be the earliest game, *Goldeneye* for the Nintendo 64. I planned to go in chronological release date order, and I did (mostly) except for the ones I added to my list later.

I had already played *Goldeneye* back when it was new. I loved it at the time. It doesn’t quite hold up now, but I did have the advantage of playing on the Analogue 3D with its recent save-state (memories) feature, and with a BlueRetro wireless adapter that I mapped to use a DualShock 4 with modern dual-stick controls.

That also helped with the N64 version (an entirely different version is on PS1, which I also played) of *The World is Not Enough*, which was perhaps better than *Goldeneye* (controversial, I know).

For this issue, I’m including every mini-review for every game I played during my marathon, but first, a *Collection Inspection* befitting the topic.

Collection Inspection

I grew up without much of an appreciation for the 007 film franchise. I'd seen bits and pieces of various pre-Brosnan movies over the years, but it wasn't until *Goldeneye* on N64 that I took a real interest. From there, I made sure to watch every Bond movie when it hit theaters, although I missed the last one or two until they came to streaming.

For my marathon, I had quite a few games in my collection already. I also have variations of the same game; *Everything or Nothing* for GameCube and Xbox both, *From Russia With Love* for GC, Xbox, and PS2, and the DS and Wii versions of *Goldeneye*, where they swap in Daniel Craig in place of Pierce Brosnan.

For this issue's collection feature, I'm not even going to try including every game and certainly not every platform version I have.

James Bond Jr

Platform: NES / **Edition:** Standard – Cart Only

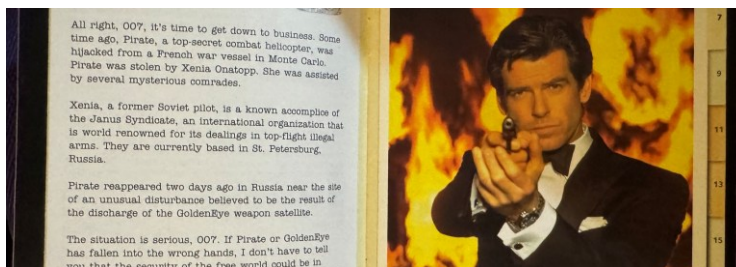
Comments: This was a recent acquisition. I didn't even know James Bond Jr. was a thing until recently.



Goldeneye – 007

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Standard

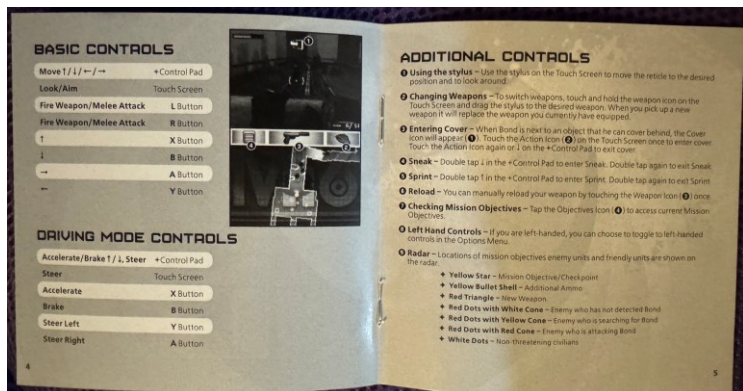
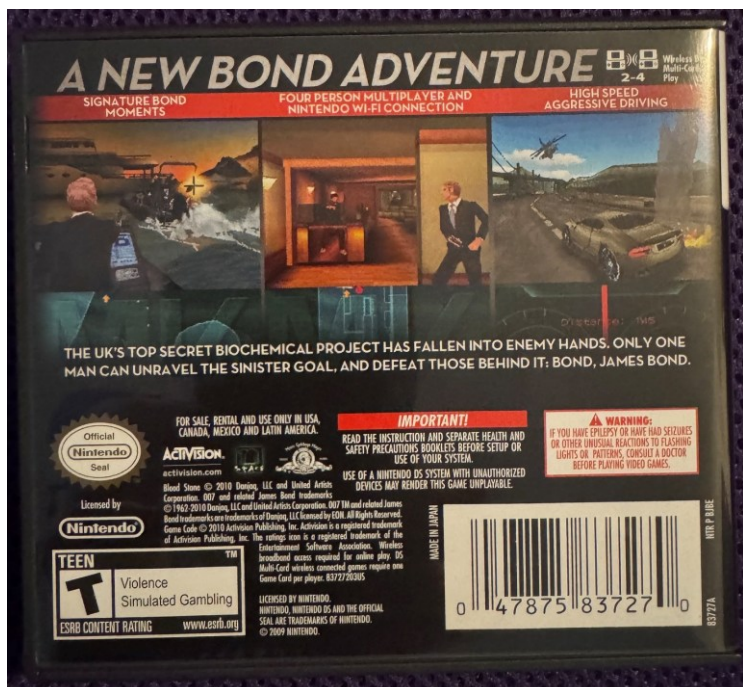
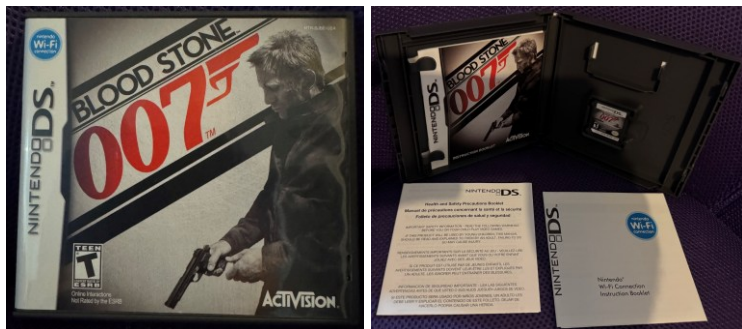
Comments: I originally played a girlfriend's copy back then. Picked this up for my collection a few years ago.



007 – Blood Stone

Platform: Nintendo DS / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: My original plan called for skipping this. It was still factory sealed, but I didn't realize it was an entirely different game than the Xbox 360 version.



James Bond Jr

Platform: Super Nintendo / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: Another recent acquisition, and an entirely different game than the NES version.



James Bond – 007

Platform: GameBoy / **Edition:** Standard – Cart Only

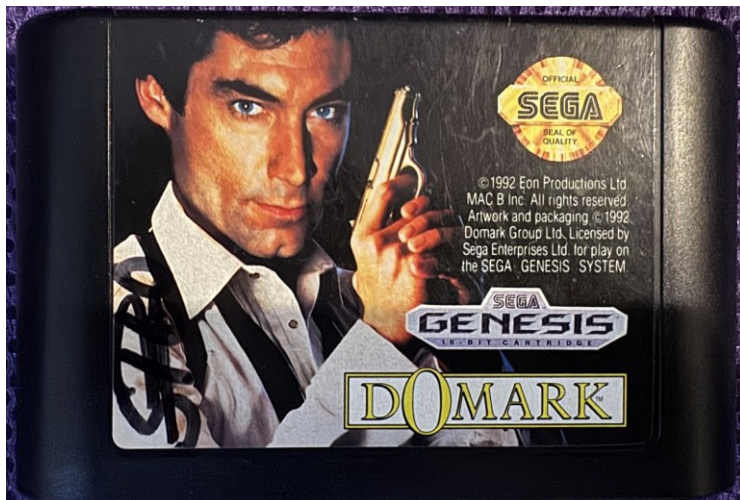
Comments: Here's yet another recent acquisition, as I added more games into my Bond marathon. It's the only original GameBoy game I own, after selling mine off (which I regret) years ago. it's actually quite good.



James Bond 007 – The Duel

Platform: Sega Genesis / **Edition:** Standard – Cart

Comments: It's not the only Sega Genesis game I own, but it's a recent pick-up for me, and the only one I've actually played. I wasn't a Genesis kid growing up.



007 – Nightfire

Platform: Gameboy Advance / **Edition:** Standard

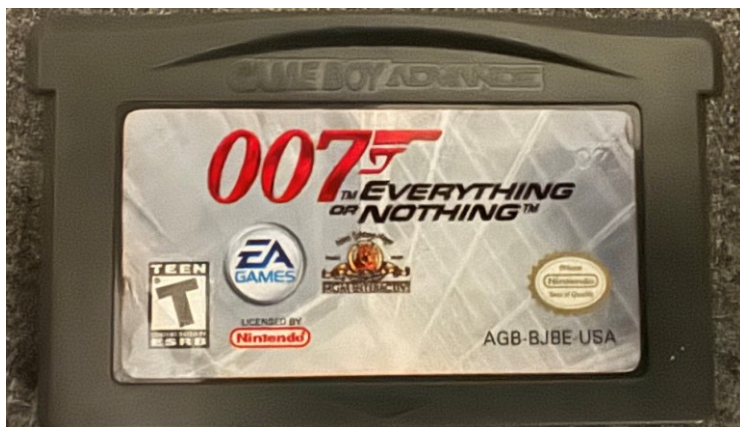
Comments: They fit a first-person shooter on the GBA; there are others, sure, but it's still impressive. Sadly, it's not very fun to play. See my mini-review.



007 – Everything or Nothing

Platform: Gameboy Advance / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: What they did with 007 EON makes it a much better fit for the GBA than *Nightfire* was.



007 – The World is Not Enough

Platform: Nintendo 64 / **Edition:** Standard – Cart Only

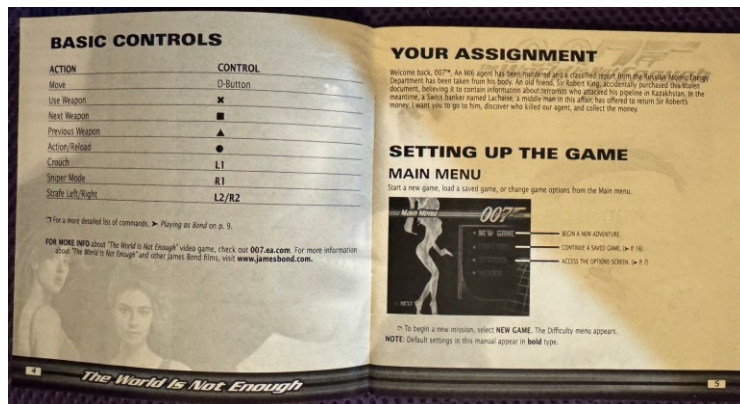
Comments: Not only did I enjoy this more than the PS1 version (which is a different game from a different developer), but I think I enjoyed it even more than *Goldeneye 64* (a controversial opinion, I know).



007 – The World is Not Enough

Platform: PlayStation 1 / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: As mentioned, a very different version.

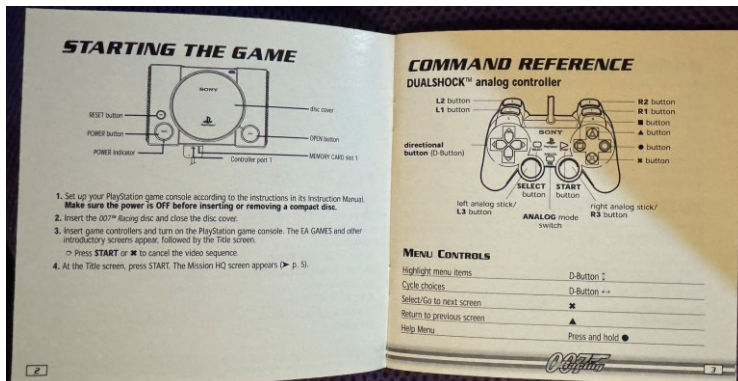
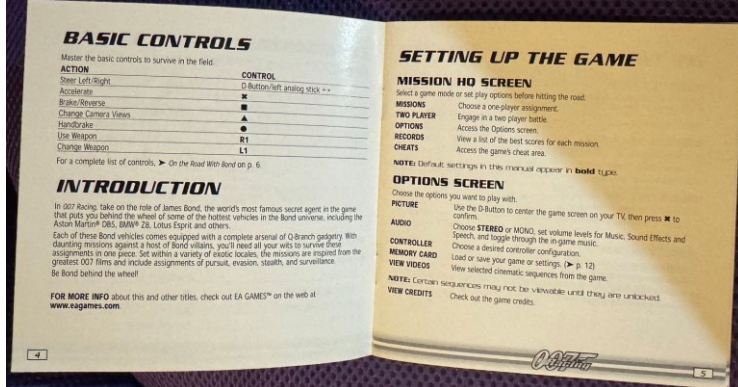
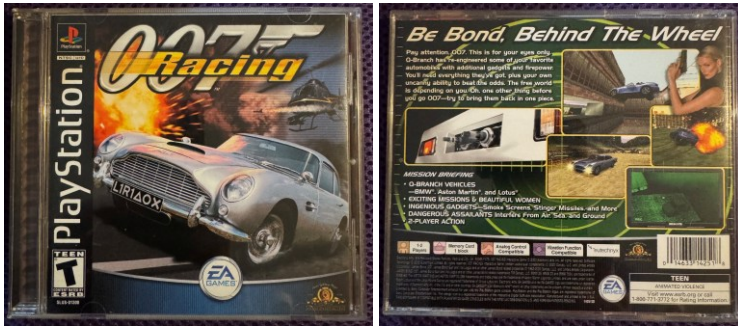


007 Racing

Platform: PlayStation 1 / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: Here's a twist. It's the only 007-themed game in my collection that I *didn't* play. Sure, I skipped the alternate versions of games that released on multiple consoles (except for the ones that were an entirely different game), but I just wasn't interested in a PS1-era racing game (or any racing game, for that matter; I'm never good at them).

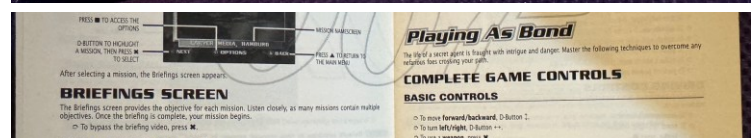
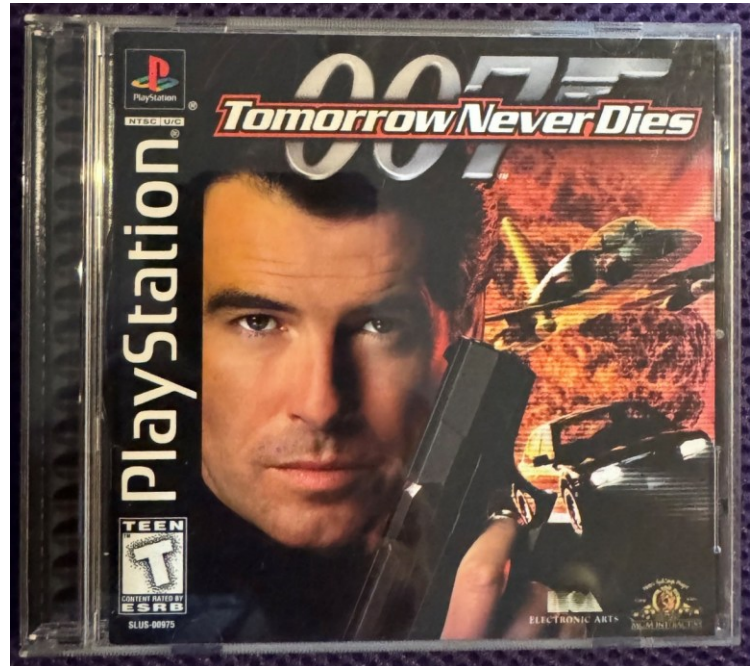
Now, I kind of regret not booting it up, at least. Without it, it's like my marathon isn't quite complete. I considered postponing this issue and doing a 007 marathon epilogue to include it, but nah. It's OK.



007 – Tomorrow Never Dies

Platform: PlayStation 1 / **Edition:** Standard

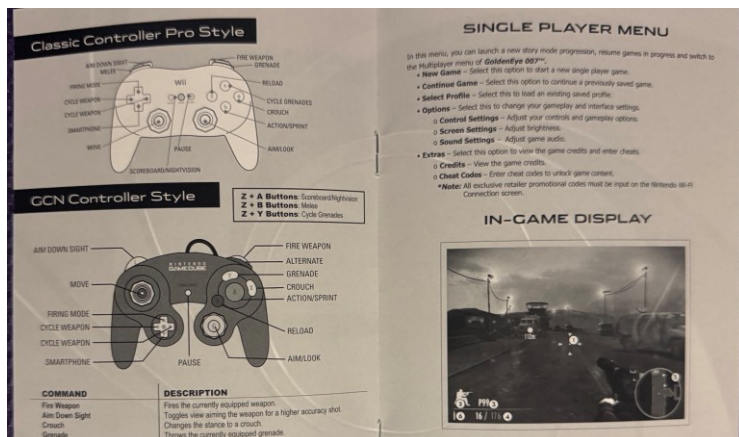
Comments: Thankfully, this one has cheat codes.



Goldeneye – 007

Platform: Nintendo Wii / **Edition:** Standard

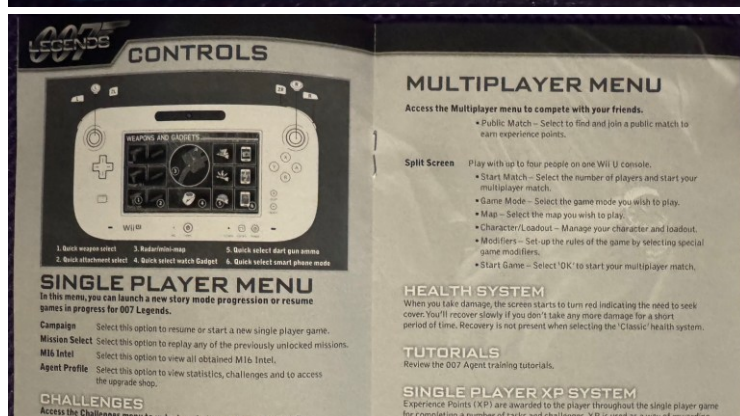
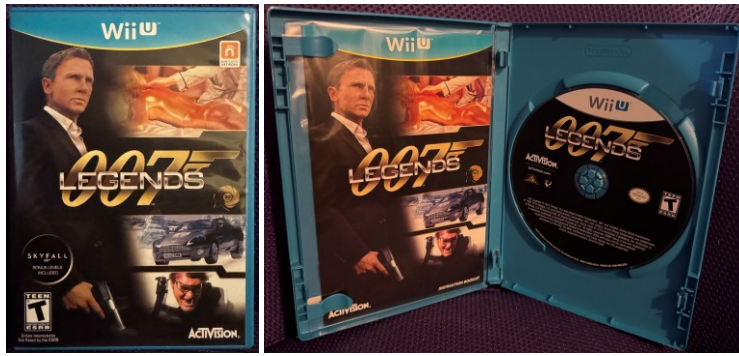
Comments: A reimagined version of the classic that puts Daniel Craig in the lead. I played the *Reloaded* version on Xbox 360 instead, and enjoyed it a lot.



007 Legends

Platform: WiiU / **Edition:** Standard

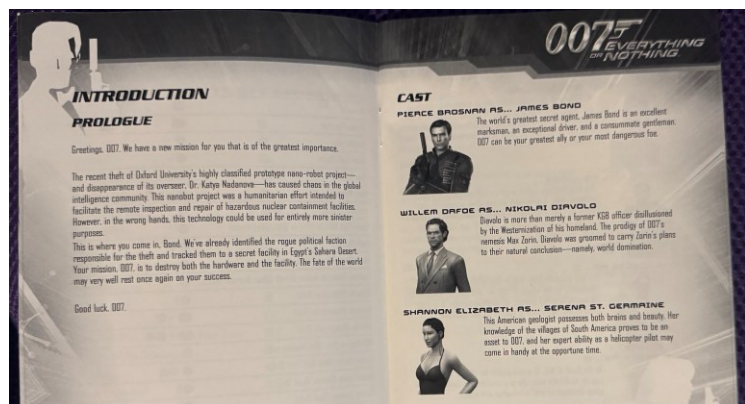
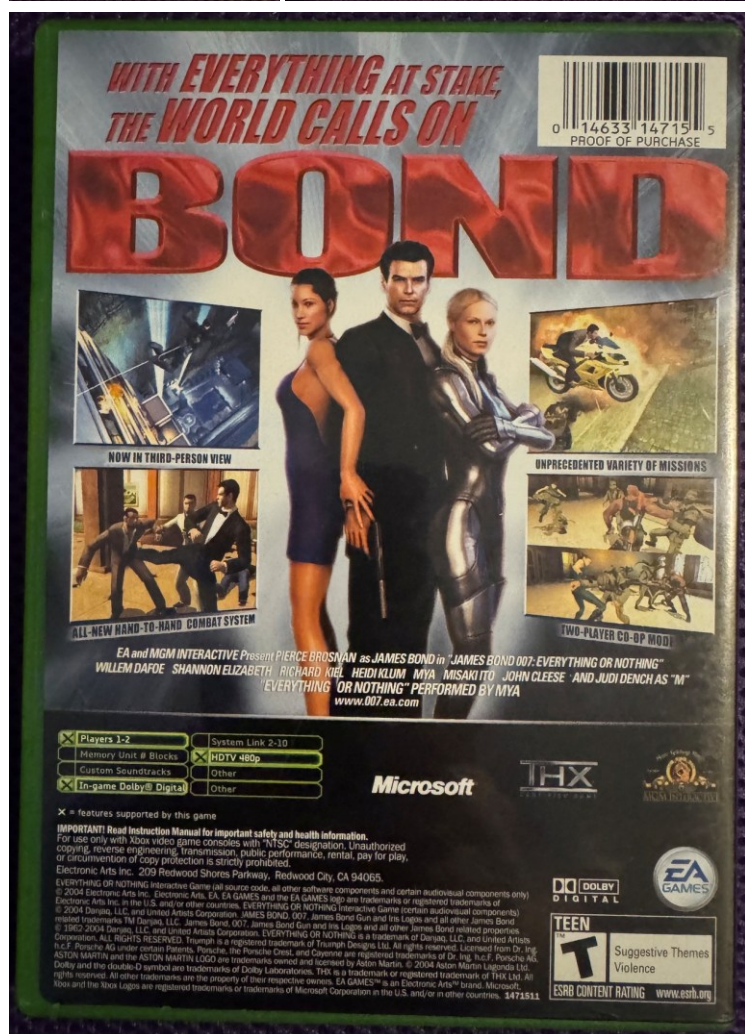
Comments: I played the Xbox 360 version of this one too, although it lacked the final mission (*Skyfall*) with no way to download it anymore. It's on the WiiU disc!



007 – Everything or Nothing

Platform: Xbox / **Edition:** Standard

Comments: This and *Nightfire* (console version) are among the best Bond games before *007 First Light*.



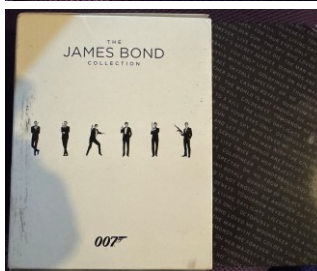
The James Bond Collection

Platform: Blu-ray Discs / **Edition:** Collection

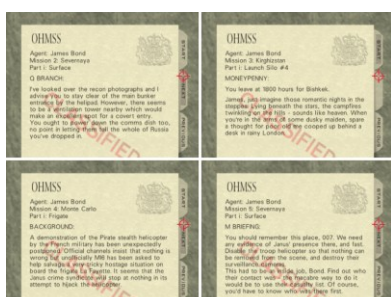
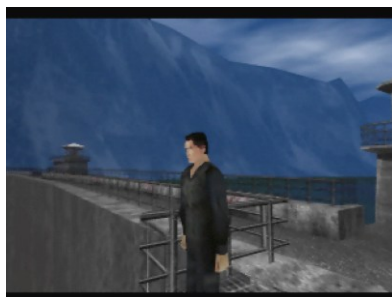
Comments: It's only missing *Never Say Never Again* (which wasn't an EON production) and *No Time to Die* (which is the 25th and latest official 007 film, released after this collection was put together, apparently).

No, these aren't games, but every once in a while I do include something a little different in this section: a strategy guide here, a mini-arcade game there.

I picked this up in 2024 for around \$51 on Amazon, but even now it's priced at a reasonable \$80 or so. I wouldn't have predicted at the time that I'd start a 007 gaming marathon and want to re-watch some of the Brosnan and Craig films, as well as watch for the first time some of the previous movies that tie into the games. I should really finish watching them all.



Mini-Review: Goldeneye - 007



It felt way more epic in the late 90s when I originally played it.

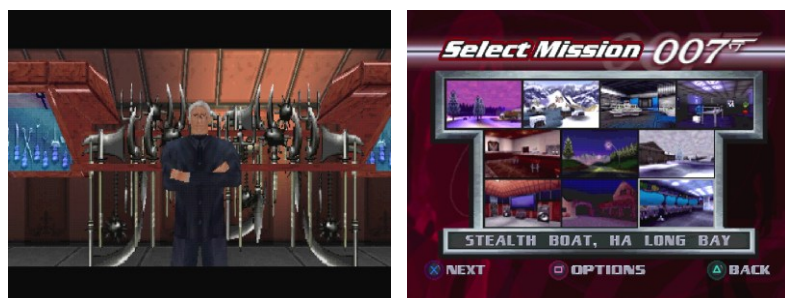
Still, there's plenty about it that holds up even today - enemy animations, music that riffs on *James Bond* themes, scanned faces (blurry, but still), condensing the *Goldeneye* story into an 18-mission game, the optional objectives in each mission - but it would be tough to play on original hardware.

I cheated in almost every way possible, without using actual cheats. Analogue 3D offers better performance and now has save-states, which trivializes most missions. I used a BlueRetro receiver to map modern FPS controls and used a DualShock 4. I played on Easy (Agent) mode.

It's also available on Switch's higher-tier subscription service, with save states, rewind, and a way to remap controls for those interested.

*Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D.
Originally posted to social media on: 05/30/2026.*

Mini-Review: 007 – Tomorrow Never Dies



Disclaimer: I'm playing these to see what they're like, take screenshots, and write a little about them. I've no desire to spend days mastering them, so read accordingly.

I made it through the first few chapters at a good pace after acclimating again to the legacy-style controls.

Chapter 6 leads to a lengthy car chase combat section which took a couple dozen attempts.

Chapter 7 has the game's second skiing section (the first one was short and easy) before ending up in an on-foot combat section. I'll probably have nightmares about that difficult skiing section for weeks.

It was then that I started looking up chapter playthrough videos, because no way was I going to fail the second half and have to ski down that enemy-infested slope again.

Watching gameplay got me through chapter 8, but for the last two, I turned on the invulnerability cheat. Life is too short to "get good" like TND wants you to. Also features a few very short movie clips.

*PlayStation 1 game played on PlayStation 3.
Originally posted to social media on: 05/31/2026.*

Mini-Rev: 007 - The World is Not Enough



I can't speak to the multiplayer, but the single-player campaign is a worthy successor to *Goldeneye*. Sure, it may not be as iconic as *Goldeneye*, but at the risk of giving a hot take that may be unpopular, I liked this *better* than *Goldeneye*.

It runs fast and smooth on Analogue 3D. It controls wonderfully using remapped controls with a BlueRetro adapter and a modern controller.

Failure, which can happen late in a level and for trial-and-error reasons, still means starting that level over from the start, but I'm starting to feel far less guilty about using save states.

Playing it with all these new niceties was great. I loved it.

There's digitized voices now, great graphics (for N64), and better draw distance.

Next up: the completely different PS1 version.



*Nintendo 64 game played on Analogue 3D.
Originally posted to social media on: 05/31/2026.*

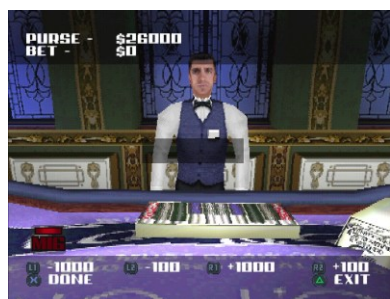
Mini-Rev: 007 - The World is Not Enough



The same basic story as the N64 version (of course - both are based on the movie) but it's a completely different game; different missions and objectives, from a different developer.



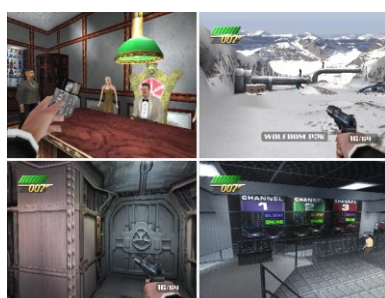
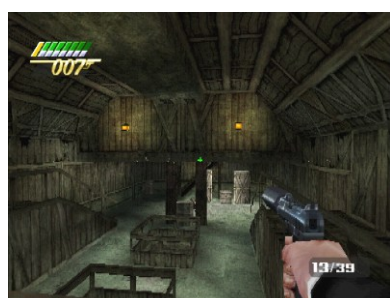
More (and lengthier) FMV movie clips than their prior PS1 Bond game, *Tomorrow Never Dies*.



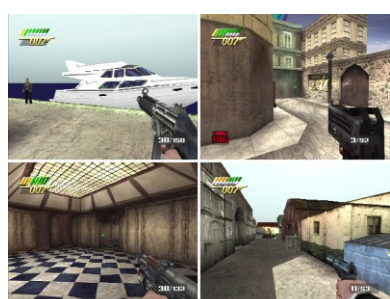
As with all of these so far, it takes plenty of liberties with the story, but follows the film plot for the most part.



Cheat codes were removed and I had no save-state safety net, but even the later missions aren't too difficult once I got better at strafing (L1/R1) and after watching a gameplay video to figure out the end-mission objectives, which often have a short time limit and can easily fail the whole run.



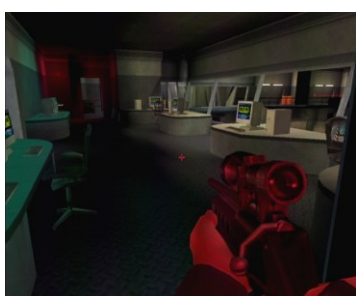
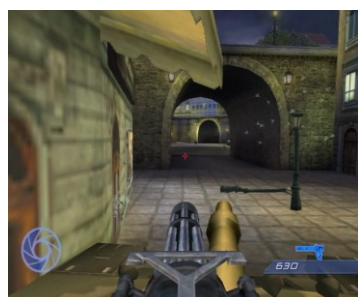
Aside from the obsolete control scheme, not bad.



Up next: the five *Bond* games on the original Xbox.

*PlayStation 1 game played on PlayStation 3.
Originally posted to social media on: 06/03/2026.*

Mini-Review: 007 - Agent Under Fire



It's the first *Bond* game in my ongoing marathon that isn't a movie tie-in.

In fact, it's a generic Bond that comes across less as a suave ladies' man and more as a creepy pervert with a smug smirk that bugs me way more than it probably should.

At this point, the games are starting to blur together, but this one goes further in terms of variety, with two city driving missions and on-rails sections as a change of pace.

The spy fantasy aspect is more prominent as well, with ever-present gadgets and alternate solutions to many situations.

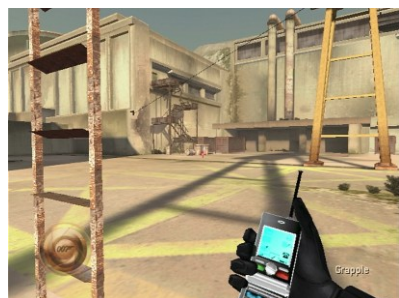
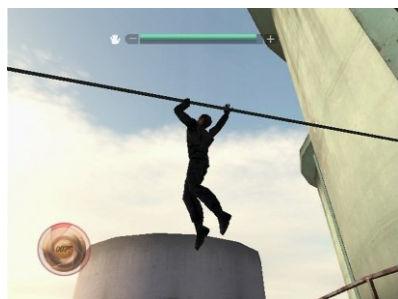
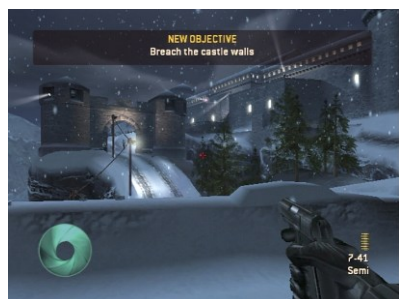
I went half-way on Agent (medium), then bumped it down to Operative (easy mode, but still a good challenge) and then watched a guide video to help out in the final two chapters.

I enjoyed this one, and I'm having a blast with my 007 game marathon.

Played on console: Xbox (original).

Originally posted to social media on: 06/06/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 - Nightfire



It's the follow-up to *Agent Under Fire*, apparently forming the middle of a spiritual 007 trilogy from EA. It features Pierce Brosnan's likeness in the role of Bond, but not his voice (apparently the next game does, though, and marks his last appearance as agent 007).

Most missions feature checkpoints (like in the prior game), but thankfully ditch the three-life limit. Some missions lack them (the car-sub level, for instance) and bring back a little of that "get it right in a single run" frustration, but for the most part, this allows for longer and more involved missions without feeling unfair or punishing.

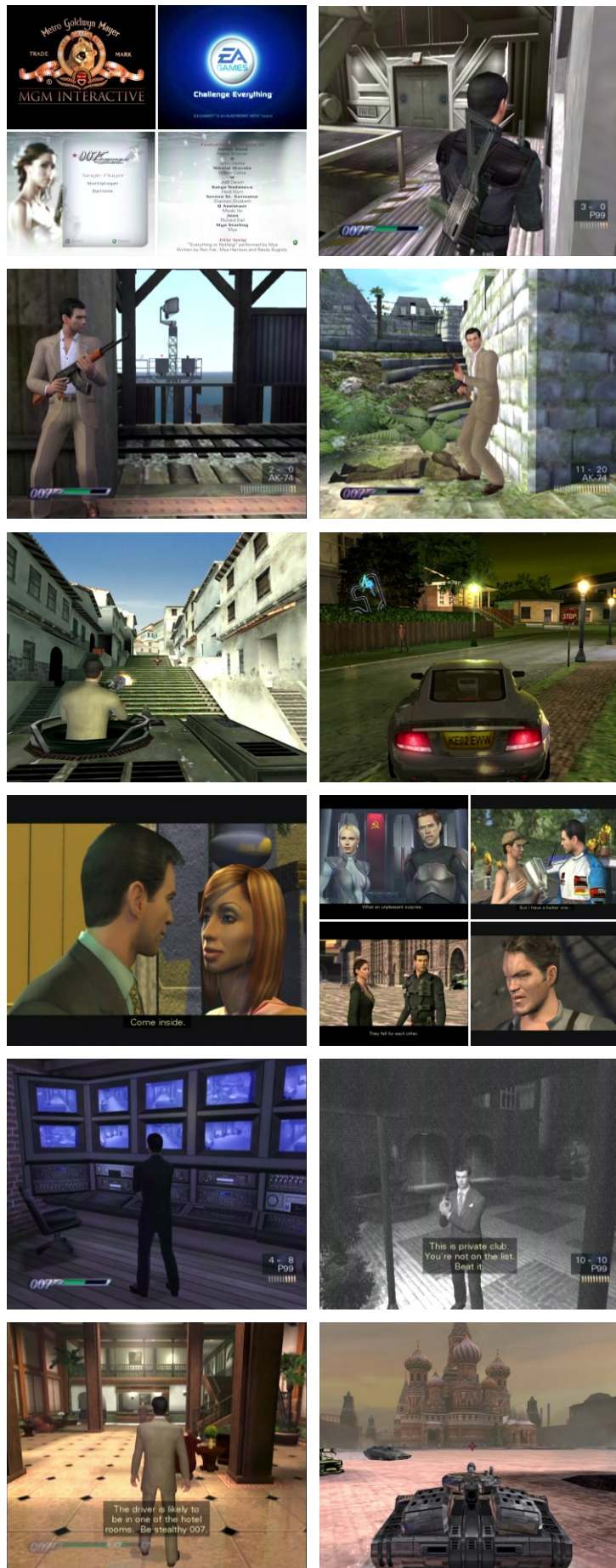
I played most of it on Operative (easy), which again is still pretty challenging; especially the final mission.

These 007 games just keep getting better. This is a really good one.

Played on console: Xbox (original).

Originally posted to social media on: 06/07/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 – Everything or Nothing



My *Bond* marathon continues with what's generally considered one of the best 007 games before the new IO Interactive one.

For me, I think I liked *007 Nightfire* a little more, but the devs at EA put plenty of effort into creating a game that more closely mimics the style and vibe of the movies.

We get a third-person adventure this time, featuring stealth, lots of mission variety, and a catchy theme song from Mya (also a minor character in the game), with a cast of actors that includes Pierce Brosnan returning as 007, Judi Dench as "M", John Cleese as "Q", Willem Dafoe and Heidi Klum as villains, and Shannon Elizabeth (of *American Pie* fame) as Bond girl Serena.

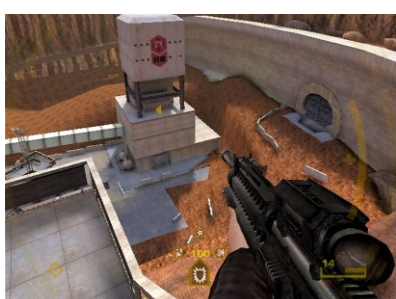
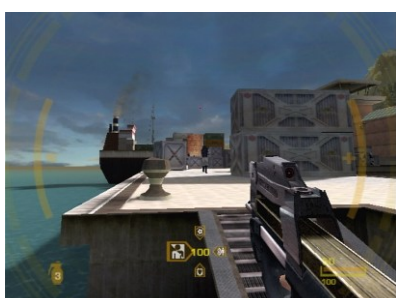
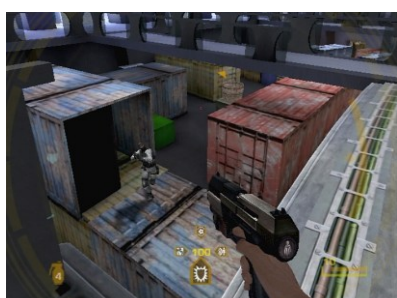
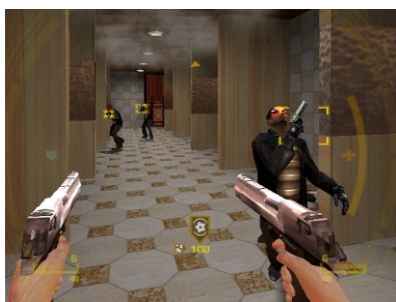
The missions are shorter but way more of them.

A bit of the experimental charm of the prior games is lost, but I enjoyed it.

Played on console: Xbox (original).

Originally posted to social media on: 06/12/2026.

Mini-Review: GoldenEye – Rogue Agent



After two (arguably three) excellent 007 adventures in a row, I can't imagine the conversation at EA that resulted in this oddity.

It has almost nothing to do with Pierce Brosnan's first outing as Bond in the *Goldeneye* movie, although Xenia Onatopp makes an appearance, along with equally deceased villains Dr. No and Goldfinger, the latter of which you join forces with to battle the former in a war for the criminal underworld.

You're not 007, either. You're an MI6 recruit who gets kicked out during training for what amounts to a no-win situation, and get this, you have a golden eye. Get it? It's not a satellite. They literally call you GoldenEye.

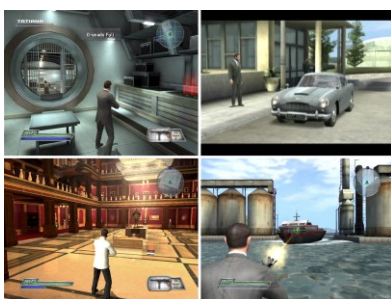
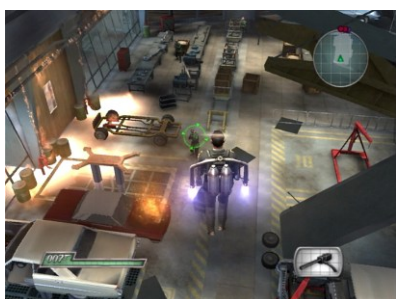
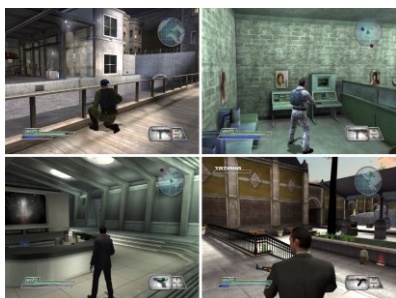
It's just a fast-paced *Halo*-like shooter. You're barely a spy.

It's fun, at least until the last level, which is brutal even on Easy mode.

Played on console: Xbox (original).

Originally posted to social media on: 06/14/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 - From Russia With Love



At some point when I do an issue of VGGN about my 007 gaming marathon, I might look more into the making of this game. It seems like an odd choice, given that it's based on the second 007 film, which is less action-packed and has very few big set piece moments.

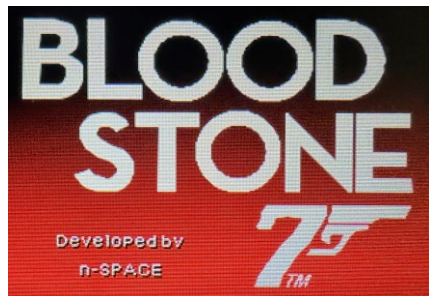
The game's story follows the movie's plot pretty well, including specific memorable moments and bits of dialogue, but to make it a fun *Bond* game, they expanded those scenes (ex: the movie's short boat ride to Kerim Bey's secret observation room becomes an on-rails shooter where you're assailed by gunmen and gunboats through the maze of waterways) and added completely new ones (characters and locations not in the movie, jetpack sections, and more).

It holds up super well, feels modern in many ways, and was a blast to play.

Played on console: Xbox (original).

Originally posted to social media on: 06/19/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 – Blood Stone (DS)



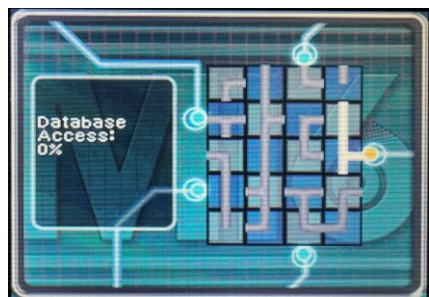
It's a game.

I played it.

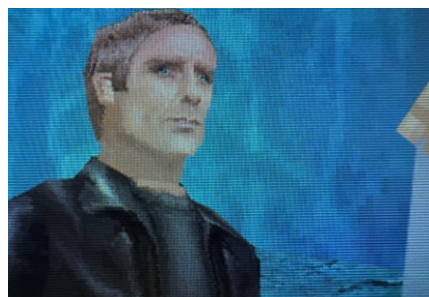
I can't tell you what happens in it because, for reasons I can't pin down, I just didn't follow the story at all.



I hadn't originally planned to play this version. The Xbox 360 version is on my list for later, and hopefully it'll make more sense. I decided to add a few of the handheld 007 entries to my marathon, despite advice to skip this one, but maybe I should have listened.



It's a third-person cover shooter with some driving and on-rails sections.



I made the mistake of playing on Easy. Prior entries had been tough even on the lowest setting, but this time around, that mode really is easy.



It's pretty impressive for the DS, though. These kinds of action games were more common with the 3DS.



It was fun. I just wish I knew what the heck happened.

Played on console: Nintendo DS.

Originally posted to social media: 06/23/2026.

Mini-Review: James Bond 007



This is actually quite good, looking at it through the proper lens as an original GameBoy game released almost 30 years ago.

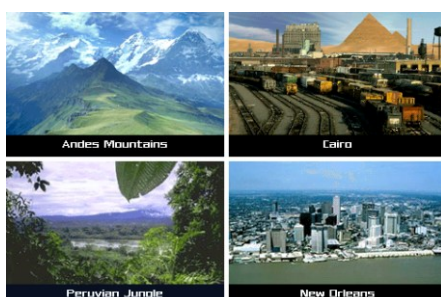
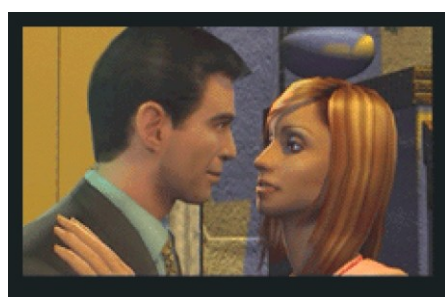
Until Tibet (pretty far into the game), I didn't even feel the urge to save scum using save-states, but the challenge ramps up enough that I didn't want to spend a crazy amount of time learning enemy patterns and cautiously making my way through dangerous areas.

You get gadgets, some missions where you're supposed to look at non-obvious things to find important items (some tool hidden in a bed, for example), a casino with card games, fetch quest chains, classic *Bond* villains Odd Job and Jaws, ladies, decent 8-bit music, maze-like level layouts, and a few surprises.

I hadn't originally planned to include this in my 007 marathon, but I'm glad I did.

GameBoy (original) game played on Retron5.
Originally posted to social media on: 06/26/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 - Everything or Nothing



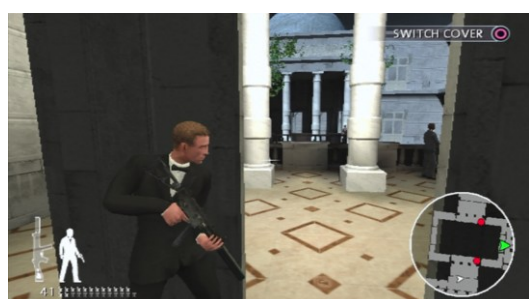
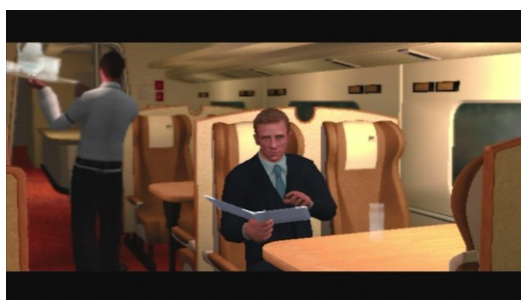
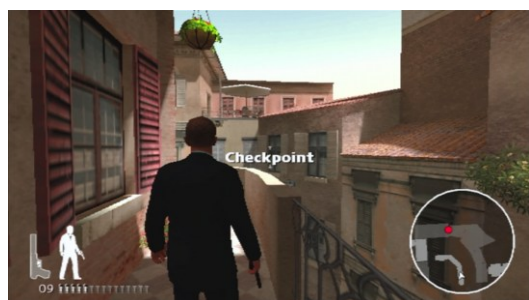
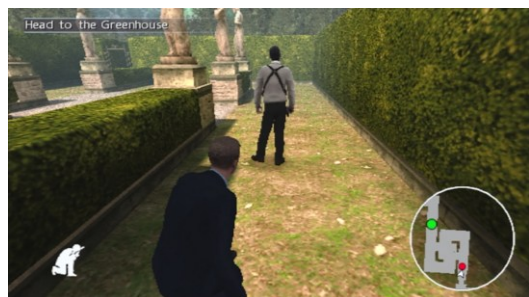
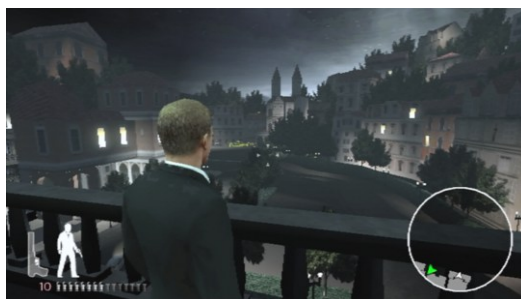
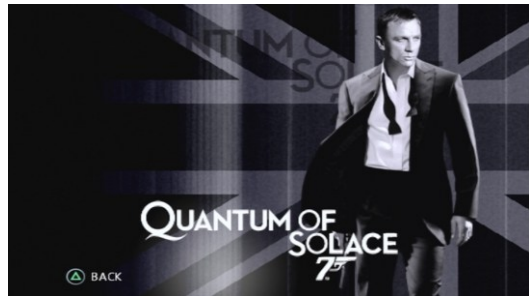
It's like the developers of this GBA version built it from a one-page synopsis of the console version. It's not just the isometric gameplay that's different. It's barely the same story and with completely different levels and locations. That does, though, make it so distinctly different that it's worth playing as the separate series entry it is.

There are some things about it I don't like: Bond's one-liners aren't clever or even funny, stealth is tricky when all you've got is a compass indicator and a small field of view, the driving sections weren't fun, Shannon Elizabeth's character (from the console version) is completely removed; but overall, I liked it.

There's a points-based upgrade system between missions, and Mya's EoT theme song at the end.

*GameBoy Advance game played on Retron5.
Original social media post: 06/27/2026.*

Mini-Review: 007 – Quantum of Solace



I re-watched the movie this is based on just prior to playing, and as usual, there are plenty of liberties taken with the story, to the point where stuff from *Casino Royale* was mixed in as well.

The controls take some getting used to, requiring you to hold L1 to stay snapped to cover.

I had some input lag (better after switching to an original wired DualShock 2), but the biggest issue for me was quick-time events. I can't think of any game I've played where QTE gave you barely a quarter of a second to react on Normal, chaining them together where one mess-up fails it all.

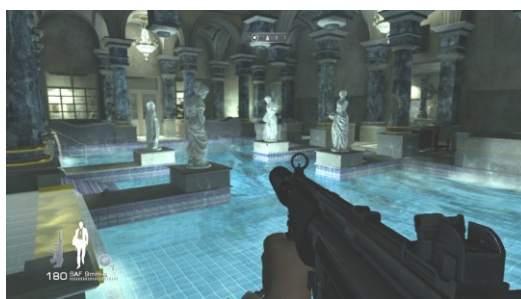
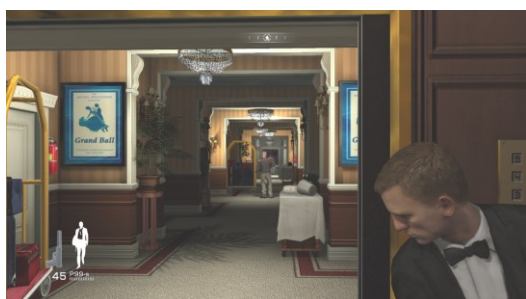
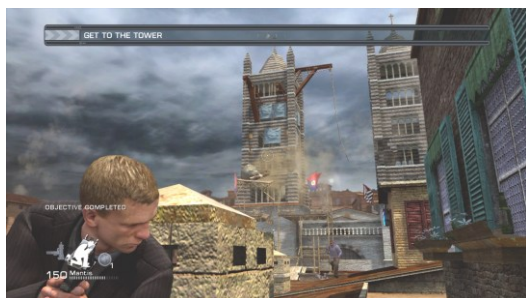
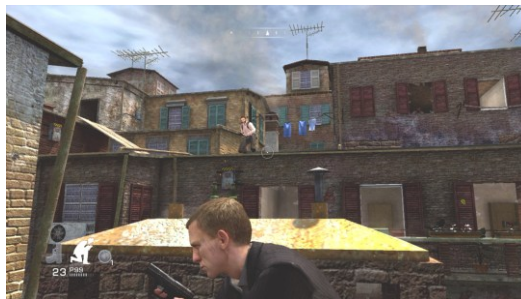
I gave up and had my son do two of them (he still has his reflexes, at 18).

Otherwise, this was a fun third-person shooter. It lacks spy gadgets, but adds environmental take-downs and lots of checkpoints.

Played on console: PS2.

Originally posted: 06/29/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 – Quantum of Solace



This (and for PS3) is probably the version most people remember. While the PS2 game was made by Eurocom and shares the same vision of blending *Casino Royale* and *Quantum of Solace* into a single intertwined narrative, they're different games with different missions and gameplay.

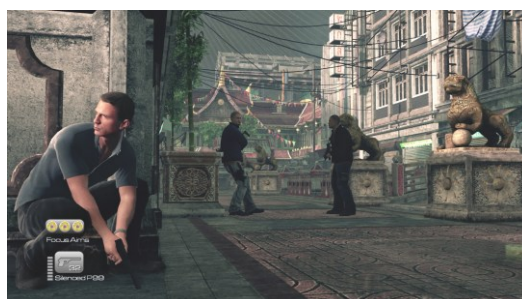
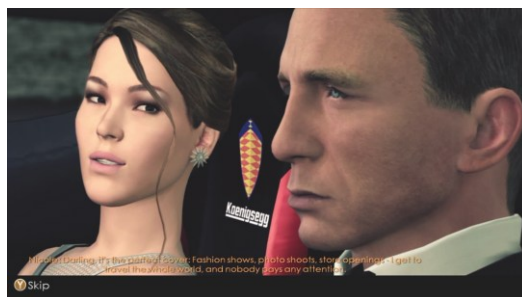
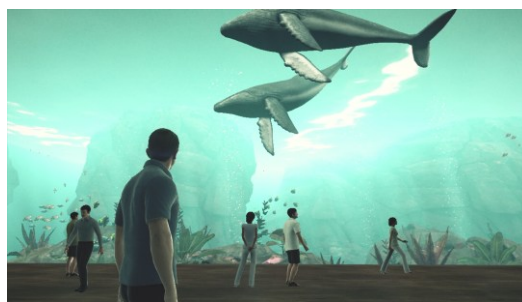
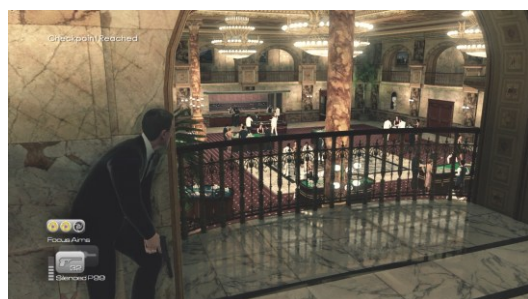
This version is purely a first-person shooter in the *Call of Duty* vein. In fact, it's made by Treyarch using the *CoD* engine contemporary to that generation.

As a pure FPS, it's a blast to play, with responsive modern controls that still hold up (snap to target, snap to cover, and reasonable QTEs).

I might rank older games (*Nightfire*, *Everything or Nothing*) higher, but mainly for their mission variety, innovation, and sense of being a spy with gadgets. For pure fun and playability, though, this is great.

Played on console: Xbox 360.
Originally posted: 07/01/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 – Blood Stone



Everybody's favorite British secret agent with a license to commit mass murder (at least in these games) returns for a second adventure on Xbox 360, this time in an original story that ends in a "who's the real mastermind" cliffhanger that won't ever be resolved.

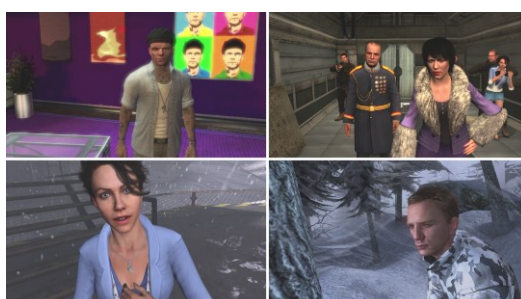
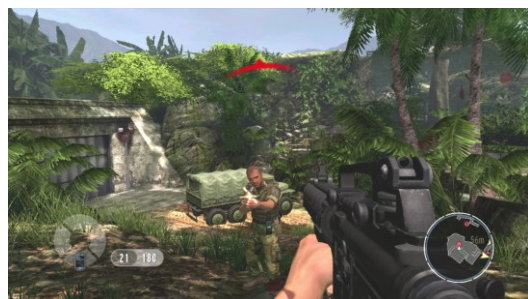
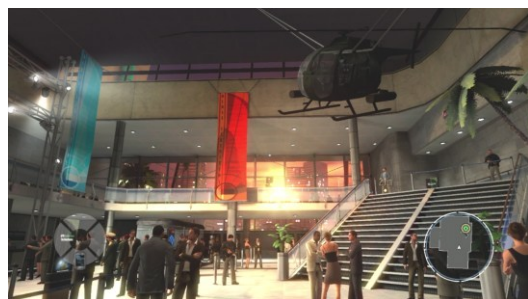
I followed the story far better than in the trimmed-down DS version I played recently, although it's a significantly different game either way.

Bizarre Creations (long-since shuttered by Activision, but known for their racing games) crafted a fun *James Bond* adventure that brings back driving missions (linear car chase sequences), more mission variety than Treyarch's *Quantum of Solace*, and a phone-scan feature that aids in stealth and helps 007 play like a spy again.

It's action-packed with big set pieces, and I loved it.

Played on console: Xbox 360.
Originally posted: 07/02/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 – Goldeneye Reloaded



I seem to remember this game being criticized a lot at the time, but I found very little about it to dislike. It doesn't seem to be a *Goldeneye 64* remake; rather, a re-imagining of the original movie with a few nods to the game, like dropping in on a guard in the bathroom at the start of the second stage.

Teaming up with 006 in the first mission seems like a smart change as well, allowing a little time to bond (no pun intended) before the (spoiler).

It isn't just 007 who was recast (Daniel Craig, not Pierce Brosnan now); it's the entire cast, including Xenia, Natalya, Alec, Zukovsky and the rest (but sadly, my man Boris the Invincible was nowhere to be seen).

There's a stupid difficulty spike in the last level, but otherwise a great adventure that holds up incredibly well.

*Played on console: Xbox 360.
Originally posted: 07/04/2026.*

Mini-Review: James Bond Jr (SNES)



Until recently, I didn't know this game existed, or that there's a game based on the same cartoon for the NES too (which I'll play and mini-review soon).

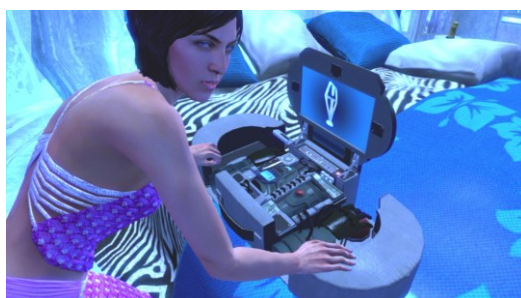
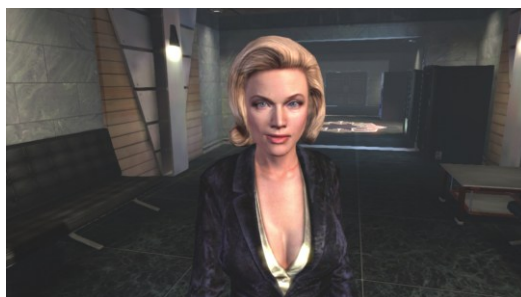
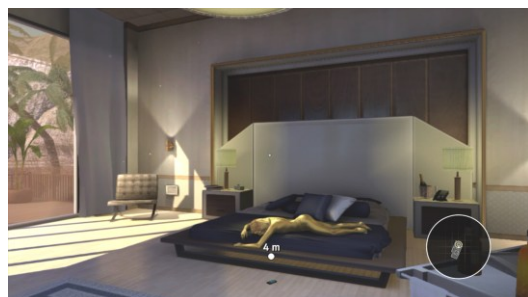
For that matter, I'd never heard of *James Bond Jr* at all unless I somehow just blocked it out of my mind. I was in college then, so maybe it makes sense that a cheesy Saturday morning cartoon take on the franchise wouldn't have been on my radar.

Anyway, this one alternates between side-scrolling platform/action levels and shoot-'em-up vehicle levels for a tough-as-nails adventure starring "young Bond" and various villains seemingly unique to the cartoon.

I used save-states obsessively to finish it, so maybe it's not so tough with lots of patience and practice. It just doesn't strike me as a game that's worth all that effort.

*Super Nintendo (SNES) game played on Retron5.
Originally posted to social media on: 07/05/2026.*

Mini-Review: 007 Legends



This one has a reputation as rushed and unpolished, with an abysmal 45 Metacritic score, and I can see it.

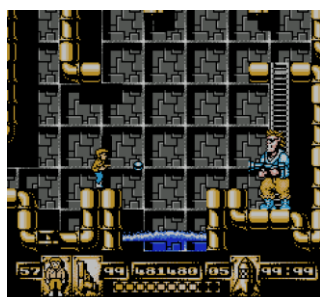
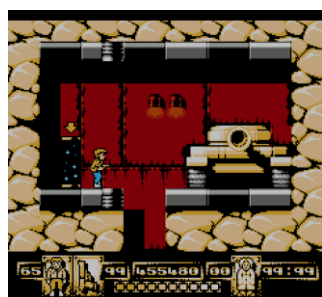
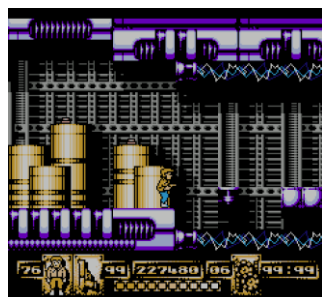
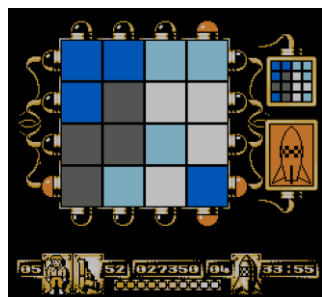
I liked it well enough to feel like my time with it wasn't wasted, but there's a lot wrong.

It may not all be the developer's fault (many of the original movie actors' likenesses are here, but I guess they couldn't get Halle Berry for the *Die Another Day* chapter), but a lot must come from the rush to market (Eurocom was shut down mere weeks later) - a visual downgrade from their prior 007 game, levels that follow a pattern (slow intro, then some stealth and spy stuff, then fight hordes of enemies, then a boss QTE fist-fight), and it ends unresolved because the entire final level (*Skyfall*) was DLC that's no longer available (except on WiiU).

As my kids like to say, it was just "mid".

Played on console: Xbox 360.
Originally posted: 07/06/2026.

Mini-Review: James Bond Jr (NES)



181287

That's the cheat/password to start the game with 99 lives, infinite ammo, and no time limit. Without it, I would have given up in the first stage when I realized that even with save states to undo mistakes, the 45-minute time limit really doesn't lend itself to exploring and slide-puzzle solving (and that's just in the first mission).

You're probably supposed to fail, maybe make a map, practice, get lucky on the puzzles, and eventually beat the stage to get the password for the next one. I'm sure people have done it, and back then I might have spent the weeks it would take myself, but that's not me anymore.

It ends with the boss escaping. You're supposed to play through it all again, but sorry, no.

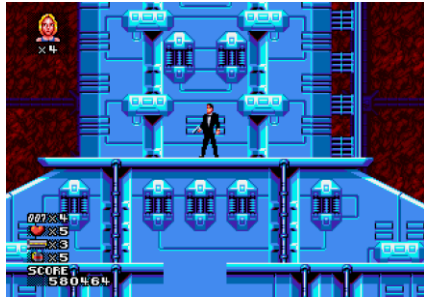
I found it fun and very playable with that cheat code and save states, but otherwise, it's hard.

*Nintendo (original NES) game played on Retron5.
Originally posted to social media on: 07/08/2026.*

Mini-Review: James Bond 007 – The Duel



I was an Atari/Nintendo kid growing up, so I never owned a Sega system (I had a GameGear for a while as an adult, but I digress).



I added a few Genesis games to my collection over the years (this one is a recent acquisition for my 007 marathon), but somehow never played through a single one of them until yesterday.



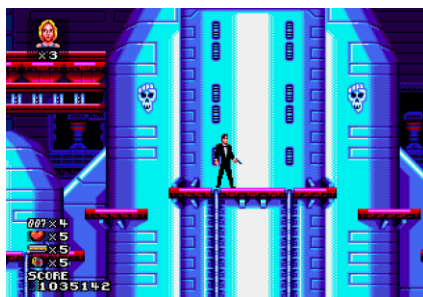
This one features a pixelized, distorted Timothy Dalton in a four-stage (plus a final boss battle) side-scrolling platformer/shooter where the goal is to rescue several blonde hostages, plant a bomb, and then find the exit to escape before the countdown.



It isn't a long game if you make heavy use of save states, but stiff platforming and cheap enemy shots would make it difficult otherwise.



It's a fun look at 007's gaming past, but that's all.



Sega Genesis game played on Retron5.
Originally posted to social media: 07/09/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 – Nightfire (GBA)



First, the good.

It's a technical marvel that this game is as substantial as it is and runs as well as it does as a first-person shooter for the GameBoy Advance. On a tiny screen, it looks pretty good. Kudos to the devs for a true feat of engineering.

Now, the bad.

I had to force myself not to give up. This may be the only game in my 007 marathon I can say that about.

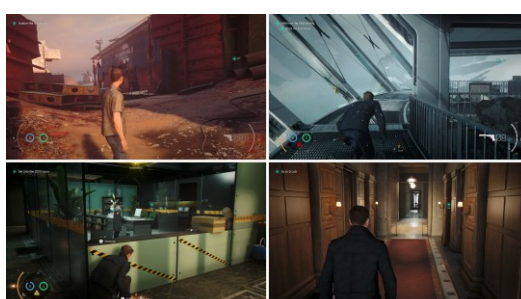
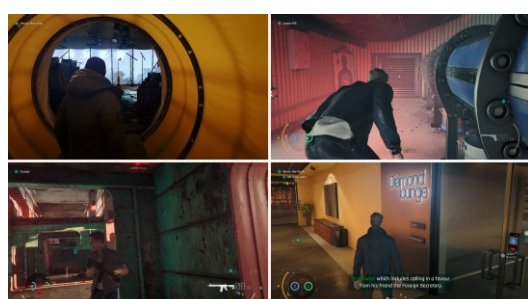
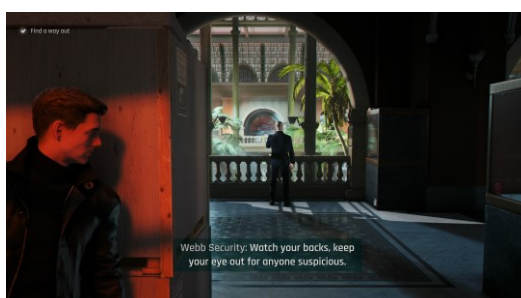
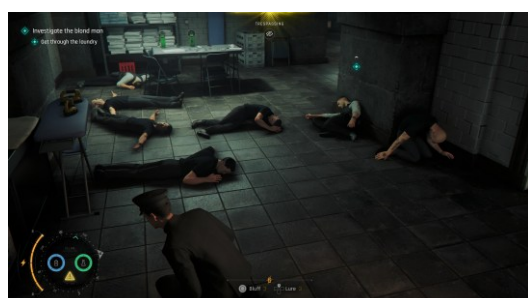
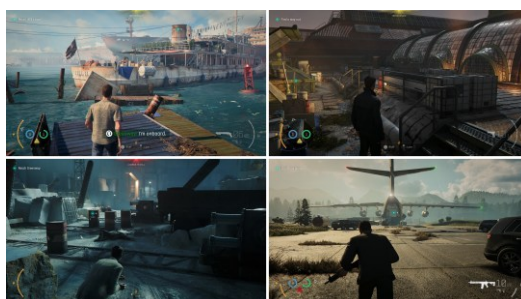
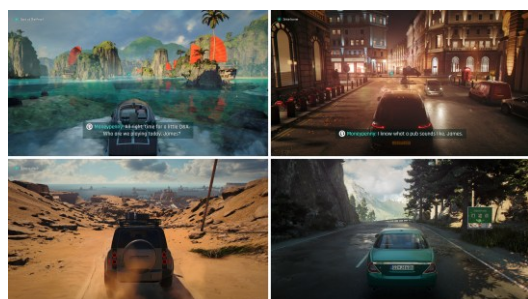
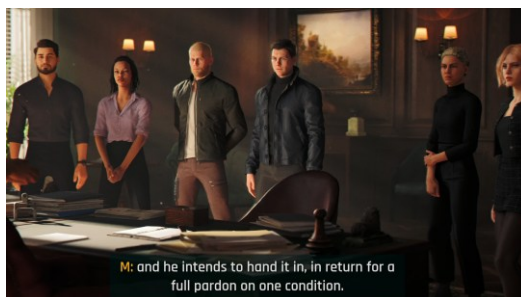
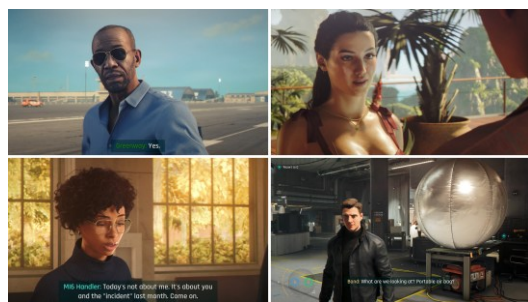
Blown up on a TV, it hurt my eyes, but I wouldn't have finished without save-states. For that matter, I needed the cheat code to unlock all levels, because you can only proceed with a Bronze score, which seems impossible without speed-running levels.

Enemies spawn from nowhere. The story is disjointed. Generic *Agent Under Fire* Bond gets swapped for pixelized Pierce Brosnan partway through.

I didn't enjoy it.

GameBoy Advance game played on Retron5.
Original social media post: 07/11/2026.

Mini-Review: 007 – First Light



My 007 marathon ends with the recently-crowned king of *Bond* games, *First Light*. It's every bit as good as I'd heard.

My biggest worry was that it would just be a re-skinned *Hitman* (both made by IO Interactive). I loved their *Hitman: World of Assassination* trilogy, but I hoped this would feel more like a continuous story instead of a sequence of missions you pick from a menu, and that it would showcase Bond as a spy, doing spy things (which, to be fair, is also a bit of what Agent 47 does in *Hitman*).

My worries were for nothing. It's crafted with immersive sim-like elements that do allow for "opportunities" (a la *Hitman*) but also provide multiple solutions to most objectives.

There are big all-out gunfights, but also melee, stealth and misdirection. It's a great 007 origin story with twists. I loved it.

Played on console: PS5 Pro.
Originally posted: 07/15/2026.

The 007 Wrap-Up

This was a blast. I've played through every game in a series before (*Shadow Hearts* + *Koudelka*, most recently the *Legacy of Kain* games although I skipped the recently-released side-scroller), but this is the first time a series play-through encompassed so many different games across several console generations and from so many developers.

As the all-digital future begins to leave me behind in the coming years, I may do a lot more of this. Finally getting to play so many of the games I already own will be a dream.

James Bond Jr

It's wild how there are still games for the NES and SNES I've never heard of. Like I said earlier, I didn't even know *James Bond Jr* was a thing, let alone that there were two classic games featuring that spin-off franchise.

I wouldn't mind owning these physically, but they don't seem to exist outside of YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVkNZ7mvcNc&list=PLzdlm1WDYuxaiFWxQLZp0hnpuBK4h6u74>

I watched just the first two episodes, and this is very much a cheesy, over-the-top, kid-ified cartoon befitting of a child's Saturday morning in the early 90s. I was in college when this aired, which is probably how I missed it.

Bond villain Jaws makes an appearance in the first episode, although he looks nothing like the character from the movies, with an entire jaw made of metal. Odd Job (appearing in the second episode) is even more off the rails, presented as a Flavor Flav knock-off.



Rather than SPECTRE, young Bond must thwart the evil plans of SCUM (Saboteurs and Criminals United in Mayhem) with the help of his boarding school friends. SCUM is headed up by a Blofeld analogue referred to simply as the SCUM-Lord. There's also a Dr. Derange.

Oh, and did I mention James Bond Jr is 007's nephew, not his son? I didn't think that's how "junior" works, but what do I know? He's voiced by Corey Burton (American), which is probably why the British accent just doesn't quite hit the mark.



The animation style has a *Real Ghostbusters* kind of look and vibe, although the VHS transfers available on YouTube are a bit blurry.

The series got an impressive 65 episodes. I don't know if I'd be able to make it through all of them, but there are probably worse ways to kill time while having lunch.

Highlights

The best in the series is undoubtedly *007 First Light*, although a younger, inexperienced Bond is something I had to get used to (plus he's played by Patrick Gibson, and it took a while before I stopped seeing young Dexter from *Original Sin*). The PS2/Xbox generation's *Nightfire* and *Everything or Nothing* are easily my runners-up, although I liked the Xbox 360 versions of *Quantum of Solace* and *Blood Stone* quite a bit. The handheld and retro games were a mixed bag, but overall, they're worth playing. An honorable mention goes to the N64 version of *TWINE*, too.

The Final Stage

My Future Without a Next-Gen Console

I wrote a lot earlier about my disdain for the decision PlayStation has made to stop releasing physical copies of games in 2028. I don't plan to buy a PS6, or the next XBOX for that matter, if they make the same mistake (and it stands to reason they will).

Where does this leave me, a life-long gamer who's only missed a few consoles (notably everything from Sega) and who loves playing the latest AAA games? How's that going to work if I won't have a new console to play them on? The dorks on social media sure seem to think we hold-outs are full of hot air, and we're going to be first in line for the next generation no matter what we say now.

This does leave me in a regrettable position. How can I get hyped for the games coming out in 2028 and beyond, if I refuse to buy them at full price digitally? I love that hype.

Buying at "full price" is the key there. Sure, I'm part of the problem by not supporting the developers when they need it most, but if the publishers can't or won't meet me on my terms (with a disc), that's not on me. As long as new games are released for PS5 in 2028 and beyond, even the ones not on disc or (almost as bad) on dreaded key discs, they'll eventually go on sale. At least, I hope they do.

My digital libraries across platforms total in the thousands. I'm not *against* digital games. I just don't value them as highly as physical games, and won't pay the same price. I'll buy indies, and even AA or AAA when they're deeply discounted. I do that all the time, and there's no reason to stop, even as the PS5 continues to age and gives way to the PS6. There's always that transitional period.

This means I'll have to wait months or years before playing many of the games I'm most excited for (*like GTA 6*), but at least it's not a *never at all* sort of situation.

The bigger issue is when that inevitable day comes that the PS5 (and Xbox Series X) no longer get those cross-generational releases.

At that point, I either have to give up my principles and accept this all-digital future, or... I can focus on my backlog and my existing physical and digital collections.

If my 007 marathon has shown me anything (and my *Legacy of Kain* series play-through just prior to that), it's that great games don't stop being great just because new games are released. I make no exaggeration in saying I already have more games than I can possibly play for the rest of my life (however long that will be, given the circumstances).

Next Issue

Honestly, I don't even know what's next. I like Bill's idea of games I'm embarrassed to admit I've never played, or even some hybrid of that where I look at the games I'm most anxious to play as I tackle my enormous backlog.

I've also not done a *concept* issue in a while; something like my ranking of sidekicks, food in games, or that back-to-school issue.

End Credits

The VGGN controller logo with multiple "X" buttons, the cover title text, the "cartoon me" on the cover page, and some occasional other artwork was made using <https://openart.ai>. You'll probably know it if you see it.

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Images of the physical games in the *Collection Inspection* feature are photos I took of games in my own collection and weren't sourced from the internet. Apologies for reflections and bad framing. I'm not a pro.

Screenshots used in my video game mini-reviews and some screenshots used in other articles or features that weren't already attributed to a different source were captured by me in-game and are used here in what I believe is "fair use".

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