

Video Game Reviews: 'World War II Online' blasts you with intensity of combat

by *Jeb_Haught*

Game: "World War II Online: Battleground Europe"

Publisher: Matrix Games

System: Windows

Cost: \$30 plus monthly fee

ESRB rating: M

Review rating: 3 stars

Many gamers groan every time a new World War II title is released, but not me.

Games with modern or futuristic settings are fun, but give me a good World War II-based shooter, wait a month, and I'll show you the very definition of pasty, sun-deprived skin.

Needless to say, when I found out the 2001 massively multiplayer online game "World War II Online" had received an overhaul large enough to justify a new name, I just had to experience it.

'WW II ONLINE: BATTLEGROUND EUROPE' - Earn sniper rifles, machine guns and tanks to fight across the battlefield in 'WW II Online: Battleground Europe.' CNS Photo courtesy of Matrix Game. 'ELITE BEAT AGENTS' - Snappily dressed Elite Beat Agents rush to the rescue and risk their lives to save victims by dancing in the streets in 'Elite Beat Agents.' CNS Photo courtesy of Nintendo. TO THE RESCUE - Save a damsel in distress and be a hero, but only if you have rhythm in 'Elite Beat Agents.' CNS Photo courtesy of Nintendo.

"World War II Online: Battleground Europe" features the armies, vehicles, weapons and equipment found on the battlefields of Western Europe from 1939 to 1942. However, players don't have access to all the best weapons and vehicles right away. Instead, they must earn promotions through skilled play to gain sniper rifles, machine guns, tanks, planes, ships, etc.

One of the great things about this title is that a lowly private, regardless of his rank, can kill a high-ranking general if the private has the skill. This creates a much fairer battle environment than other MMO games where low-level players have absolutely no chance of defeating higher-level characters.

Because of the massive scale of environments, the fighting is the most intense, realistic World War II combat found in any game. Virtual soldiers can fight it out in cities and towns, in the countryside, over bridges, in the air, on the water and much more. And since officers create all missions themselves, the ebb and flow of battle is completely controlled by the players.

"World War II Online: Battleground Europe" isn't perfect. It has mediocre graphics and plenty of bugs. But war junkies will be thrilled with the unparalleled, ultrarealistic combat experience.

Game: "Elite Beat Agents"

Publisher: Nintendo

System: Nintendo DS

Cost: \$20

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 3 stars

Just when you thought you had seen every unusual concept Nintendo has to offer, along comes the addictive, wacky title "Elite Beat Agents."

When it's time to save a damsel in distress, or even the world, from impending danger, better call in the Elite Beat Agents. These snappily dressed men in black will rush to the rescue and risk their lives to save victims - by dancing in the streets.

I know what you're thinking, but I'm completely serious.

This rhythm game involves tapping numbers with the DS stylus in consecutive order and sliding it along curving paths in order to keep the beat of each song. Nineteen songs, ranging from Madonna's "Material Girl" to The Village People's "YMCA," are available to rock out in elite secret agent fashion.

When the player busts the right moves to the music, the particular problem at hand will be averted. However, if the player makes too many mistakes, well, the results are even more painful than watching "American Idol" tryouts. Players also earn a rank for each scenario and can compete with friends using the DS's local Wi-Fi mode.

I would have liked for "Elite Beat Agents" to last longer, and its quirkiest may not suit everyone. However, the end result is one of the reasons that the DS outshines Sony's PSP despite the latter's superior technology.

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RATING KEY

4 stars - Must have

3 stars - Pretty good

2 stars - So-so

1 star - Don't waste your time

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Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

E: Everyone

T: Teen (13 and older)

E10-plus: (Everyone 10 and older)

M: Mature (17 and older)

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