

newsworthy trends

Video Games Get Real

(NAPSA)—If you walk into a room to find someone engrossed in what looks like a movie about attacking aliens or fighting soldiers, don't be surprised if it's not a movie at all—it could be a video game.

Today's games are designed to be as realistic as possible. They're often marketed to look like movies or television shows and new types of technology have led to games that help players feel more connected to characters, plot and action—and gamers have responded in a very realistic way. In 2004 alone, video game industry sales reached \$9.9 billion.

But just how real do today's games seem? Industry experts say a game's reality level has to do with more than just believable graphics and sound effects. It also depends on the entire gaming experience. For instance, "America's Army" has been a popular PC game for years, but was recently released for Xbox and PS2 by Ubisoft. To help make the gaming experience more realistic, the game's designers worked directly with the U.S. Army. The result is what many consider "the most realistic" game to date.

The game gives players what designers say is a "true-to-life" U.S. Army experience. Players create a soldier and take him through the high risk and excitement of an Army career. Intense single-player missions and high-adrenaline, multiplayer action build the skills of the soldier and advance him through his career—in short, the game character "learns" from his experience.



Real Fun—Video game designer Tim Ernst trained with Army Airborne Rangers to help make a new video game more realistic.

Special Forces operatives served as consultants for the game. It uses authentic weapons, equipment and combat situations. Also, just as in real combat situations, players need quick reflexes, smart tactics and teamwork to succeed.

To add to the realism, the game has no strict story line that players are forced to follow. Instead, they can choose their own career paths, just as they would in real life. Players can focus on certain roles—a sniper or grenadier, for example—or experience different roles as they work toward the ultimate goal of joining Special Forces.

Up to 16 gamers can play the game at once on Xbox Live or online with PS2. The game is rated T for Teen and is suitable for ages 13 and older. For more information, visit www.riseofasoldier.com.