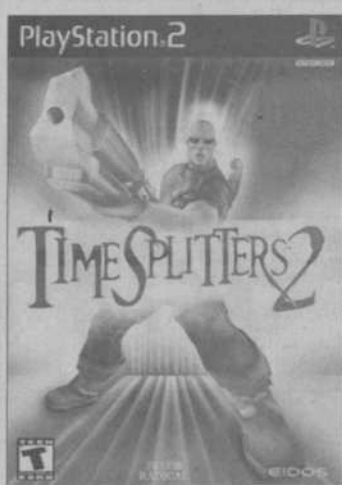


VIDEO GAME REVIEW

# Gameplay outshines story line in 'TimeSplitters 2'



**"TIMESPLITTERS 2"**  
Published by Eidos and developed by Free Radical  
★★★★ out of ☆☆☆☆

**BY MITCH FRYE**  
THE GAMECOCK

time machines to change the history of mankind. As a human soldier, it's up to you to also change the history of mankind. Sound confusing? Don't even try to absorb the incoherent, paradoxical story of "TimeSplitters 2"; game play is where this gem shines.

The time travel gimmick exists solely to give rise to a bevy of cool weapons and stages—and cool they are. Few other first person shooters boast arsenals that stock Tommy guns as well as plasma rifles, and none offer romps through Aztec temples and alien spaceports alike.

Similarly, the game's gallery of playable characters is as immense as it is eclectic. In all, there are about 120 mobsters, cowboys, clowns, robots and zombies to choose from.

The game's story mode consists of about ten large and varied levels that may be explored

alone or with a friend. Each stage is set during a specific time in history, and each is packed with weapons and enemies characteristic of the period. Players warp into a level and hijack the body of a random protagonist (à la "Quantum Leap"). From there, they proceed to shoot up bad guys and complete predetermined objectives until an escape portal opens up and jets them back to the future.

Although this might not sound entirely appetizing, the game plays far better than its script and conceit might suggest. Though it is hindered by a weak plot, the story mode succeeds thanks to its fast, brutal pace and its beautiful graphics, which are bright and cartoon-like.

Beyond that, the challenge mode tests the skills of veteran players in tricky mini-games and rewards them with access to se-

cret options, while the arcade mode allows as many as four friends to destroy one another in customizable death matches. "TS2" also lets players add upwards of ten additional computer-controlled contenders into the mix. Regardless of the difficulty level assigned to them, these computer characters don't really seem very competitive in combat.

They are nonetheless entertaining, though, as they spin in circles or run in fear. The arcade mode features a slew of new multi-player stages as well. Most of these are never even seen in the story mode, and all of them are designed to facilitate massive imaginary warfare.

"TS2" is certainly a great game. Electronic Gaming Monthly has even ventured to call it the "heir apparent to 'Goldeneye.'" However, this quote referencing the classic

Nintendo 64 game draws attention to one of the few flaws inherent in Free Radicals' latest masterpiece: it is sometimes too much like "Goldeneye." The control scheme, though effective, feels too familiar, and it still lacks a jump button. Also, the first level of the story mode is obviously a rip-off of the dam stage in "Goldeneye." Without a solid story to fall back upon, gamers might feel as though they are playing an unusual spin-off of the Bond franchise.

This is clearly a small complaint, though, and console shooter fans with lusts for blood to sate and hours to lose should pick "TS2" up immediately. And since it has been released on all three major systems, there is no excuse for missing it.

*Comments on this story? E-mail gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com*

SHOW REVIEW

# Kudos for Kerouacs' originality

**THE KEROUACS**  
New Brookland Tavern  
★★★★ out of ☆☆☆☆

**BY ASHLEY VAUGHN**  
THE GAMECOCK

Friday night, or Saturday morning, rather, at 1:04 a.m., The Kerouacs — guitarist and vocalist Pat Wall, lead guitarist Jeff Crews, bassist Jen Autrey, and drummer Rob Upfield — stepped onto New Brooklyn Tavern's stage. That's three hours after the show was supposed to begin, but the crowd didn't seem to mind.

Wall, the band's so-called leader, began the performance asking, "Are you ready to rock?" The crowd cheered, and Wall said jokingly, "Then you're in the wrong place."

When asked to describe their music, Wall remarked, "Czech folk music," and Autrey added, "Bulgarian Women's Choir." What characterizes "The Wacks," as Crews calls his fellow band members, is not only their tongue-in-cheek sense of humor, but also their charisma, originality and camaraderie.

This last characteristic stems from the fact that the band members are friends and that three of The Kerouacs' members have a solid history of playing together. Wall said, "Jeff, Rob and I used to be in a really, really crappy high school band."

"We all kind of, you know, got sick of that band. Jeff, Rob and I just continued screwing around," Wall said. "One day it's like 'Hey, why don't we get serious and actually write songs?'"

Crews added, "And stop doing Radiohead covers."

This banter illustrates the parallel phenomenon that occurs in their music; onstage it is apparent they have mastered the art of playing off one another. Even offstage, The Kerouacs work as one. During an interview with The Gamecock, they prompted each another, finished one another's sentences and even chimed in together, as if on cue, to answer questions.

The Kerouacs list a wide range of influences, but they all seem to agree on one thing: "As a band, we're all children of early '90s grunge rock," Upfield said.

Wall provides additional insight into the matter: "I kind of view it as a Venn Diagram. We all have our separate spheres of influence, if you will, and we all have these concentric artists that we all listen to in the middle, and then we all kind of tangent off into our own things." This common influence appears in the melancholic moods of some of The Kerouacs' Smashing Pumpkins-esque songs that supply a great deal of appealing angst.

One highlight of the show was the band's performance of "Saturday," a song that contains the provoking lyric: "Ugly girls use mascara. Pretty girls use anorexia." Found on WUSC's Compilation CD "Sex in the City," Friday night's live version of "Saturday" energized the crowd with Crews and Autrey joining in during parts of the song to add extra vocals.

Some of The Kerouacs' songs were admittedly works in progress. For example, before "Bigger and Better Things," Wall recited a disclaimer, saying, "It has lyrics this time, sort of."

While the band is still tweaking songs and writing new material, their infectious, energetic melodies along with Wall's songwriting, have secured the band a growing fan base.

Third-year student Katy Renfro said: "I thought the show was really great. They get better every time I see them. They are one of the better up-and-coming indie rock bands in Columbia."

Anyone who missed the show can visit The Kerouacs' Web site at [www.geocities.com/thekerouacs](http://www.geocities.com/thekerouacs) to download some free tracks. For people already plugged into The Kerouacs' sound, the site offers links to buy merchandise.

Fans should also keep a lookout for a CD. "We are actually working on recording. We have a lot of people asking us to get the record done, but I think that as long as we are at USC the point of it is to play shows and have a hell of a lot of fun," Upfield said. Wall suggested slightly bigger aspirations for the band.

When asked what their ultimate goal is, he said, "World domination."

*Comments on this story? E-mail gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com*

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