

▶ How hot would an Xbox-centric riff on Nintendo's *Super Smash Bros. Melee* be? Pretty hot.

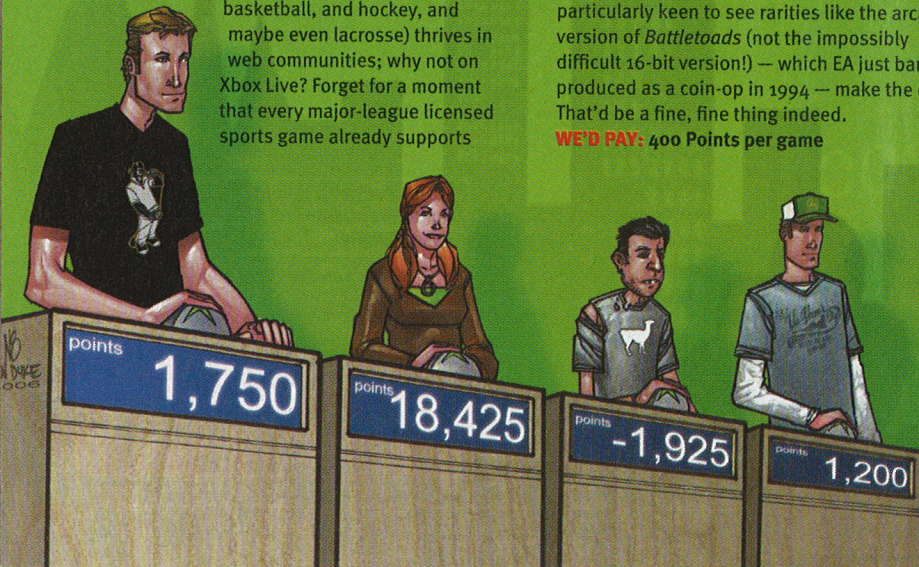
#3: Four for Fighting!

Take another cue from Nintendo and look at the gameplay dynamic of *Super Smash Bros. Melee*. It's wacky, it's cute, it's violent, and all four players share the screen at the same time. We don't really want Microsoft's stable of characters to step up to a similar smackdown (Conker vs. Blix, anyone?). Instead, let's see someone with a sadistic streak create a funny, more mature take on the same concept. Face it: If Nintendo had gotten its act together with GameCube online support, an Internet-enabled *SSBM* would make Live look foolish. Don't let it happen: get on it before the Revolution — er, sorry, the "Wii" — arrives.

WE'D PAY: 800 Points

#4: Fantasy Sports!

Fantasy baseball (and football, and basketball, and hockey, and maybe even lacrosse) thrives in web communities; why not on Xbox Live? Forget for a moment that every major-league licensed sports game already supports



multiplayer action and think instead about the power of the network. Live already connects a few million sports fans; give them an Arcade download that lets them set up leagues quickly and easily. The latest roster data and stats can easily be imported over the network, making it a hassle-free experience for the players. Put some Microsoft Points, team jerseys, and one-of-a-kind "season champ" gamer pictures up as prizes, and wham! — home run.

WE'D PAY: 1,600 Points to buy in for a whole season upfront

#5: The Rare Museum!

R.C. Pro-Am. Battletoads. Jetpak. Killer Instinct. There are some real gems in Rare's back-catalog, and since Microsoft now owns Rare, it'd be dreamy if these treasures were released in a special wing of Xbox Live Arcade. We'd be particularly keen to see rarities like the arcade version of *Battletoads* (not the impossibly difficult 16-bit version!) — which EA just barely produced as a coin-op in 1994 — make the cut. That'd be a fine, fine thing indeed.

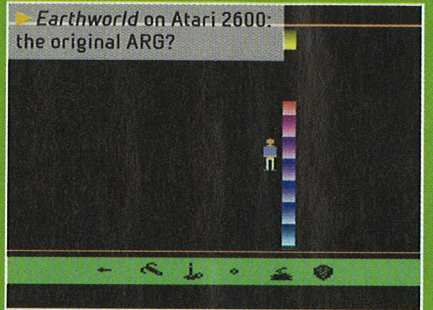
WE'D PAY: 400 Points per game



▶ A console *Battletoads* that you might be able to beat? Sweet!

#6: I Still Love Bees!

Remember *ilovebees*? During the promotion of *Halo 2*, players loved searching websites, going to real-world locations, getting cryptic emails, even picking up random payphones to get the next clue in a long, twisted mystery plot — all part of a new genre called alternate-reality games (ARGs). The current hot examples are *Perplex City*, which mixes Mensa-style mental puzzles



▶ *Earthworld* on Atari 2600: the original ARG?

with secret blogs and a real-world treasure hunt, and *Edoc Laundry*, a mystery told in T-shirts (yes, really) that was created by *ilovebees* alumni.

Arcade could be the perfect delivery medium for a similar game: A game programmer disappears under mysterious circumstances. Turns out he was trying to reveal a conspiracy by planting subtle hints in his games, which are slowly released as Arcade titles. Each one features not only enjoyable gameplay, but also hidden easter eggs that are pieces of a larger puzzle. (Atari did this 20 years ago with the *Swordquest* series of games [*Earthworld, Fireworld*, et al.] on the 2600.) Trouble is, the folks who have the most to lose if the truth gets out are aware of what you've found, because your growing list of Achievements is sending up warning flags. That leads to players getting cryptic, perhaps threatening, text and voice messages via Xbox Live. (And isn't that video camera coming out soon? Hmm.) Make Xbox.com's forums the official home of following the trail.

Of course, ARGs work best when they evolve naturally. Microsoft wouldn't be able to announce to the world, "Hey, we're launching an ARG, so, um, look here for the first clues!" Such a game would have to unfold at its own pace, with players noting the peculiarities and putting the pieces together for themselves, identifying the trail as they walk it. Then again, who's to say something like this hasn't already started...?

WE'D PAY: 400 Points per game, knowing that each one offers more than it seems