

Mortal Kombat 5 Pushes Up the Killing Quotient

'Fatality Friday' may feel legislators' wrath

By DAVID BLOOM

It packed enough punch to drive Congress crazy a decade ago, so there's no telling how loopy legislators will get when they take a gander at the fifth "Mortal Kombat" vidgame.

The "MK" games have long been blamed for a central role in what one pol called "a culture of carnage." For years, their violence has been cited in everything from legislative hearings to FTC reports to lawsuits.

And the onslaught isn't over. Midway Games recently showed off the fight game's new incarnation at a Las Vegas gathering, complete with a video promising the title's bow on "Fatality Friday" -- Nov. 22.

That's a reference to the eye-popping latest incarnation in a series whose bloody predecessors have horrified critics while generating \$1.5 billion in vidgame, movie, merchandising and other revenues.

"Mortal Kombat: Deadly Alliance" will show the blood and sweat rolling off realistically rendered 3-D fighters as they brawl, with blood not only blotching the floor but persisting as fighters leave bloody footprints.

And with certain kinds of moves, fighters can cause particularly grisly and detailed killings. In one of two brief screen shots shown in Vegas, a fighter pulls out his opponent's entire skeleton. In the other, the fighter stomps his opponent's head like Gallagher with a watermelon.

The game will be released on all three next-generation vidgame consoles and the handheld Game Boy Advance, loaded with extra features. But putting this sort of realistic mayhem directly in the home may have content-conscious legislators taking a few swings of their own.

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