



## ROCKSTAR TORONTO PRODUCTIONS CASHES IN ON GANG VIOLENCE

### ***“The Warriors” video game set for October release***

Toronto, Ontario, August 21, 2005: In late October 2005, Rockstar Games, notorious for their ultra-violent video games, will release *The Warriors*, a gang war video game. Incredibly, the game was created by Rockstar Toronto Productions<sup>1</sup> -- while the rest of the city searches for solutions to gang violence, Rockstar Toronto is cashing in on it.

Based on the 1979 Paramount Pictures movie of the same name, *The Warriors* features street gangs battling for survival using a number of fighting styles and weapons. As one review notes, “in true Rockstar fashion we’re talking baseball bats wrapped with barbed-wire, wooden planks with the nails still in...”<sup>2</sup>

More highlights from a Gaming Age Online review:

*There will also be multidimensional objects, such as bottles, which can be broken, then used as a stabbing weapon. Giving more freedom to the user than any other brawler before it, The Warriors can steal car stereos, mug pedestrians and loot stores to make money.*

*...beating opponents while pinning them on the ground, dragging and throwing enemies into fences and walls, finishing them off with a stomp while they're trying to crawl away, using grab attacks to cause serious damage, and much more.*

*Rage mode allows you the ability to do new massively powerful moves that will clear the area and cause tremendous damage. There will be varying degrees of progressive damage in the game, like facial lacerations and bloody clothing.*<sup>3</sup>

**Look to the past for a glimpse of the future:** In an unusual twist, we don’t even have to wonder whether *The Warriors* will increase violence. In 1979 when the film was released, it generated so many acts of copycat vandalism and violence, including homicide, that Paramount Pictures cancelled all of its advertising for the film, and distributed a telegram to theatre owners offering to release them from their contractual obligation to show the film. The telegram read:

*It has come to our attention through newspaper and television reports that acts of violence and vandalism have occurred in and around theatres exhibiting The Warriors... Please be advised that in the event you believe that the exhibition of this motion picture in your theater poses a risk to persons or property, then Paramount will relieve you of your obligation to exhibit the picture...*<sup>4</sup>

**Games validate gang lifestyle:** The release of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*, another Rockstar game that draws heavily upon gang culture and violence, sparked anger from American gang counselors and educators who said the game not only celebrates the gang lifestyle at a time when gang membership is rising nationwide, but makes a mockery of a tragedy that's all too real. While game players love the realism of *Grand Theft Auto*, that same realism is embraced by street gang members who see the game as a validation of their lifestyle.<sup>5</sup> Ignoring these very serious concerns, Rockstar Games commissioned another game that does exactly the same thing.

**American Psychological Association (APA) confirms harmful effects:** In an August 17 news release, the APA called for a reduction of violence in video games used by children and adolescents, based on research "indicating that exposure to violence in video games increases aggressive thoughts, aggressive behavior, and angry feelings among youth." In addition, studies on learning show that active participation may influence learning more than passive observation, making violent video games potentially more harmful than viewing violence on TV.<sup>6</sup>

**Federal government must act:** It is long past time for the federal government to address the horrendous levels of violence in entertainment products. They must act immediately on the many recommendations made over the past twenty years to amend the *Criminal Code* to prohibit products that unduly exploit violence. They have the power to protect the public from sociopathic game developers -- all they need now is the courage.

A trailer for *The Warriors* can be viewed at  
[http://www.fradical.com/The\\_Warriors\\_cashes\\_in\\_on\\_gang\\_violence.htm](http://www.fradical.com/The_Warriors_cashes_in_on_gang_violence.htm)

### **About the Free Radical (www.fradical.com)**

The Free Radical website is maintained by Toronto activist Valerie Smith to provide information and research on media violence. She is the author of the *Action Agenda: A Strategic Blueprint for Reducing Exposure to Media Violence in Canada*, published by Ontario's Office for Victims of Crime, available for download on the Free Radical site.

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For further information, please contact Valerie Smith at [valsmith@fradical.com](mailto:valsmith@fradical.com)

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<sup>1</sup> *Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc.'s Rockstar Games Announces The Formation of Rockstar Vancouver*, Business Wire, August 1, 2002 (as posted on xboxcorp.com)

<sup>2</sup> *The Warriors – First Look*, game preview by Chris Leyton for TotalVideoGames.com (undated)

<sup>3</sup> *The Warriors*, game preview by Jim Cordeira for Gaming Age Online, July 20, 2005

<sup>4</sup> *Natural Born Copycat Killers and the Law of Shock Torts*, John Charles Kunich, Washington University Law Quarterly, Winter 2000

<sup>5</sup> *Game mocks real tragedy, gang experts say*, MSNBC.com, November 6, 2004

<sup>6</sup> *APA calls for reduction of violence in interactive media used by children and adolescents*, APA press release, August 17, 2005