

Shaq of All Trades

Basketball star, rapper, actor—Shaquille O'Neal will give any vocation a shot. But as his first video game, 'Shaq-Fu,' proves, he's not a master of this one. **BY BOB STRAUSS**

BILL GATES, Bill Schmates. The real multimedia pioneer of the '90s, the individual whose capacity for cross-platform innovation is matched only by his height, is the Shaq himself, Shaquille O'Neal. Why do I say that? Well, besides being able to annihilate glass backboards in a single bound, the Orlando Magic's 7-foot-1-inch, 300-plus-pound center has recorded two rap albums, written an autobiography, made gobs of television and film appearances, and showed up in who knows how many TV commercials and print ads. Now he stars in his own video game, **SHAQ-FU** (Electronic Arts, for Super NES and Sega Genesis, \$69.95).

This latest product from the NBA's biggest star is the result of a convergence of two image-oriented, endorsement-heavy industries—team sports and sports video games. Up until now, Electronic Arts has thrived on its personality-driven sports simulations, such as the *John Madden Football* series. The company has been much less successful in the action genre, where—as every player knows—the *real* video-game money is. O'Neal, meanwhile, seems bent on expanding the perimeter of his activities to places lesser basketball luminaries could never hope to reach. You get the feeling that lending his formidable imprimatur to a basketball simulation would be too ordinary—something, say, David Robinson would do. In *Shaq-Fu*, O'Neal doesn't do anything so mundane as play basketball. No, no, he's a *kung fu warrior*. But he finds himself in the middle of one dreadfully ordinary war.

It says quite a bit about the lack of imagination in today's video-game industry that Electronic Arts has used so dy-

