Film

When video games go to Hollywood
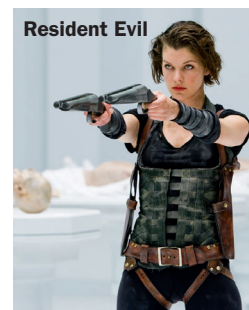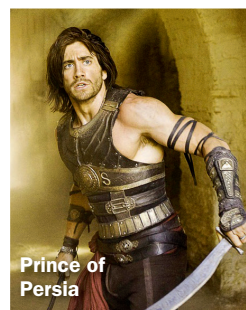

Silent Hill: Revelation

Mortal Kombat

Prince of Persia

Resident Evil

With video-game adaptation *Silent Hill: Revelation* poised for release in the UAE, *Rob Garratt* rates the success of other bids to bring games to the big screen

They were once seen as the pursuit of geeky teenagers, yet the sign that video games had truly embraced the mainstream came about a decade ago. Between summer 2001 and spring 2002, three of the best-known games of the day – all on the then-dominant PlayStation format – were transformed into cinematic hits. The appearance of spin-offs of *Tomb Raider*, *Final Fantasy* and *Resident Evil*, with their adult age certificates, cemented video gaming as a legitimate leisure activity for adults.

It also kick-started a burgeoning trend for transforming games into cinema and, much like adapted books, many of the films have gone on to become bigger than the games that inspired them. *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (2001) unleashed Angelina Jolie onto the mainstream movie-consuming public. A decade on, the *Resident Evil* film franchise is on its fifth movie, attracting millions of viewers who have never heard of the game.

A potent example comes this week with the release of 3D horror *Silent Hill: Revelation*. It's the sequel to 2006's *Silent Hill*, a film inspired by the game series of the same name. Set in an alternative universe of psychological horror, in game form at least, it's seen as the strongest rival to the *Resident Evil* franchise. Whether it can mount the same challenge on cinema screens remains to be seen, but in the meantime we round up some key moments in the evolution of game-to-cinema adaptations. *Silent Hill: Revelation is scheduled to be released on Thursday November 22. See next week's issue for our review.*

Super Mario Bros (1993)
It all began nearly two decades ago with an movie version of Nintendo's flagship platform caper about two Italian plumbers. Despite a reported budget of more than Dhs170 million, it received poor reviews, with a ludicrous plot about a parallel reptilian world that exists some 65 million years after a meteorite wiped out all the big lizards. It's worth watching, however, for the embarrassment of Bob Hoskins mugging in a romper suit, Dennis Hopper as a Lizard King villain, and Fiona Shaw ditching her cred as villainess Lena.

Mortal Kombat (1995)
Hot on the heels of *Street Fighter* a year earlier, *Mortal Kombat* was another hapless attempt to create a movie from a game in which the premise is for two players to pummel each other to a pulp by bashing buttons as fast as they can. However, this fared far better than its predecessor in the combat arena: despite the unfathomable attempt at a storyline, director Paul WS Anderson (also responsible for *Resident Evil*) directed the fights with bone-crunching precision. Yet a sequel two years later was perhaps wishful thinking.

Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (2001)
Still one of the top three game adaptations at the box office, *Tomb Raider* shamelessly exploited the adolescent male's fantasies about the ludicrously buxom protagonist of the game of the same name. The fact that star Angelina Jolie went on to direct last year's Bosnian war drama *In the Land of Blood and Honey* is, frankly, mind-boggling. To her credit, she's great in the role, throwing herself into the action with reckless abandon and pushing beyond the sexist silliness of Croft's non-existent character. She returned for a sequel in 2003.

Resident Evil (2002)
Based on Capcom's long-running action-horror franchise, this film launched the far better-known film franchise that has now spawned an impressive four sequels (*Apocalypse, Extinction, Afterlife* and, most recently this year, *Retribution*), and banked a more impressive Dhs3 billion. Taking place in its own ludicrous universe – where the omnipresent Umbrella organisation has infected the world with a zombie virus – the plot makes littlesense, but has established its heroine, Milla Jovovich, as a modern-day, high-kicking action hero.

Max Payne (2008)
This action flick features Mark Wahlberg as its eponymous star, a grizzled, trigger-happy cop whose family and partner are murdered. The film's maverick revenge mission – venturing into the underworld to find those responsible for a bit of payback – suits a film adaptation better than most games. But like *Sin City* was to the original graphic novel, *Max Payne* is a neo-noir revenge thriller whose flashy monochrome visuals can't disguise its black-and-white morality and obsession with skimpily dressed femmes fatale.

Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time (2010)
The top-grossing game adaptation ever, starring Jake Gyllenhaal, is a movie version of an old-school platformer developed for the Apple II in 1989. Director Mike Newell turned that premise into a fantasy adventure yarn about sands that have the power to turn back time. Incoherent action sequences, a listless romance and a big opening weekend helped it bring in Dhs1.2 billion at the box office. *All films available to order at www.amazon.co.uk.*

▶ **NEXT WEEK:** Clint Eastwood gives us the lowdown on new baseball drama *The Trouble with the Curve*