

# PSP HACKS™

*Tips & Tools for Your Mobile Gaming  
and Entertainment Handheld*



HACK  
#21

## Watch UMD Movies

Cut down on the glare without ruining the sharpness of the screen, navigate through your movie with ease, and keep track of where you were in *Spider-Man 2* before you took that break to play *Metal Gear Ac!d*.

Watching UMD movies on your PSP is very similar to watching DVDs on your home system in a lot of ways. However, there are drastic differences that make the experience a little more akin to watching a DVD on your laptop. Even this comparison falls short because you can take the PSP with you anywhere. Portability makes the pauseability of the PSP as a movie-watching medium more important than in other movie-viewing situations. Just as in “Quit a Game Quickly” [Hack #1], Sony did a good job of accounting for the on-the-go nature of PSP movie watching. You can simply put the PSP to sleep at any moment, and continue watching later with a few clicks of the X button.

This hack will cover the basics and some tips and tricks for making the most out of viewing UMD Movies.

### Setting up and Starting the Movie

When you first insert a UMD Movie into the PSP, you simply have to navigate to Video → UMD in the PSP’s main interface. Keep the UMD icon selected for a moment, and the background of the PSP will change into a graphic for the movie, and a small preview window featuring a repeated video clip from the movie, most likely with some accompanying music, will replace the generic UMD icon. See Figure 3-1.

Hitting the Start button or the X button on the PSP will take you to the menu screen for the movie, or it will immediately begin playing the movie. If after listening to some MP3s on your PSP or playing a game, you go back to a UMD movie, it will usually return you to the place where you left off.



This isn’t always the case. For the most part, the PSP is effective at keeping track of where you were in a UMD movie the next time you go to watch it, but not always.

Because of this, it is a good idea to make a note of where you are in a movie before switching away to another activity on the PSP.

If you’ve been watching a movie, but you’ve not really been able to give it the attention it deserves, there’s a quick trick here to start over from the beginning. Hitting the Triangle button on the PSP will bring up a small informational menu on the right-hand side of the screen with “Play,” “Play from Beginning,” and “Information” as options (see Figure 3-2). Choose



Figure 3-1. When you select the UMD icon for Hero, the background on the PSP changes and a small video clip begins to loop

“Play” if you want to try to skip past the UMD disks menu and immediately begin playing the movie from the last point you left off (assuming you haven’t removed the UMD disk), choose “Play from Beginning” to start over from the beginning of the film, and choose “Information” to see any meta-data connected to the movie, including the parental settings.



Figure 3-2. Select Triangle to pull up a menu for the UMD movie. Choose “Play from Beginning” to start the movie over

## Navigating the Movie

The title screen for the UMD contains many of the usual options that you are most likely familiar with from watching DVDs. Through this interface, you can set up the audio options and subtitles, view any included bonus materials (like trailers, cut scenes, and sometimes even little behind-the-scenes documentaries), make scene or chapter selections to start watching a movie from a specific scene, or simply play the movie.

By default, the title screen is usually where you are taken on a UMD movie the first time it is inserted into your PSP. If, while watching the film, you would like to return to the title screen, hit the Square button on the PSP.



If you hit the Square button by accident while watching a film, select Play Movie and hit X to return to the same spot you were before mistakenly hitting the Square button.

Sony did a good job of designing a portable interface that lets you quickly get out of a game or movie, but which is also very forgiving should you accidentally hit the wrong button.

One of the cool things about the PSP is that nearly all of these options are available from anywhere within the movie without returning to the title screen. If you hit the Triangle button while a movie is playing, a control panel in the form of an overlay graphic with a variety of options will pop up onscreen (see Figure 3-3). In this figure, I used the keypad to highlight the ? (or Help) option and am about to hit X to bring up the Help menu.



Figure 3-3. Hitting Triangle while a movie is playing brings up an in-movie control panel

The movie will continue playing in the background (unless you paused it before pulling up this menu). Use the keypad to navigate through the different menu options available. I'll go over some of these in a moment, but first I want to take a look at the Help menu. Highlight the ? icon and hit the X button. The movie will pause, and a quick guide to the PSP's basic movie navigation functions will be displayed (see Figure 3-4).



*Figure 3-4. The Video Help screen displays all the basic navigational features for watching a UMD movie*

The Video Help screen displays all the basic navigational features for viewing a UMD movie on the PSP. Take some time to familiarize yourself with these basics. To return to the movie, hit O.

The only information about these basic controls that isn't covered by this screen involves the Fastforward and Fast Reverse controls. If you pause the movie by hitting the Start button and then hit the Forward button on the keypad once, the movie will play in slow motion frame by frame. If you hit Forward/Reverse on the keypad during regular play, the movie will begin fastforwarding/rewinding with a 1 next to the arrows. If you tap the button again, the speed will increase and a 2 will be displayed. A third tap will display a 3 and the movie will fastforward/rewind at its quickest viewable speed.

To jump forward or back to another section of the movie, simply use the L and R triggers on the PSP.



Let me repeat that: the L and R triggers take you back a chapter and forward a chapter in the movie, respectively.

This is quite possibly the most annoying part of watching a UMD movie on the PSP, because you *will* accidentally hit these buttons and skip ahead or back in the movie from time to time.

Since you know this, consider holding the PSP differently while watching a movie than you normally would hold it while playing games. Also, be hyper-aware of these buttons whenever you are moving around. I've become pretty good at avoiding them, but every once in a while, I'll be shifting in my chair or in bed and *click!* I'm suddenly out of the dramatic love scene and into an intense battle sequence.

## Use the Control Panel

While you are watching a movie, hit the Triangle button to display the control panel. This control panel gives you immediate control over the movie you are watching without jumping back to the UMD's Menu. The control panel also allows you to change certain settings, such as UMD Video Volume that normally would only be accessible via the PSP's main control panel under Settings. Perhaps the best thing about the control panel is that it gives you access to extra features of your UMD movie that the movie's main menu doesn't provide.

I'm not going to go into every single feature of this control panel, as that would become tedious and is already covered in the manual to the PSP. However, I am going to cover a few bits of control panel goodness that I think can help you optimize your UMD movie-watching experience.

**Use subtitles.** If you are on a PSP running Version 1.0–1.52 of the firmware, the fourth icon in the top row of the control panel controls your subtitles; if you are on a PSP running Version 2.0 of the firmware, the fifth icon in the top row of the control panel controls your subtitles. Highlighting it and hitting X will switch the subtitles. Continuing to hit X will cycle you through all the available subtitles, as well as the Off setting.

What I've discovered in a few of the UMD movie titles that I own is that there are sometimes more subtitles available via this control panel pane than are offered through the main menu to the movie.

For example, the *House of Flying Daggers* UMD disk features two English subtitle tracks, although only one is readily available from the Menu screen (the Menu screen also fails to provide access to the French subtitle track, which is also available via this control panel). The first English subtitle track

is a basic track that provides you with a translation of the entire movie. The second English track, however, only provides subtitles for the songs in the movie, which remain untranslated when listening to the English audio track of the movie.



Since your PSP provides portable movie watching, you are often going to find yourself watching a movie in areas with different levels of noise.

I often keep the English subtitle track of any movie I am watching going, just in case the dialogue gets drowned out by the sound of the subway as a new train arrives or for watching in situations where I don't want to wear my headphones but can't hear everything clearly.

Knowing how to quickly access the subtitles is useful if you can't quite make out a bit of whispered dialogue. Simply rewind the movie a little bit by hitting the left arrow on the keypad, pause the movie by hitting the Start button, then pull up the control panel by hitting Triangle, navigate over to subtitles, hit X until you hit the track you need, and hit Start to resume play of the movie. Now you can quickly read the snippet of dialogue you missed, and then switch the subtitles back off and get rid of the control panel to continue viewing.

**Frame Advance.** In addition to the same controls that are available via the PSP's default controls, the control panel features a few more controls, including Frame Advance. This is the sixth icon in the second row and it simply does what it says, advancing frame by frame through the movie each time you hit X while it is highlighted.

**A-B Repeat, Repeat, and Clear.** The third row of icons in the control panel features the A-B Repeat (Version 2.0 firmware only), Repeat, and Clear controls. With A-B Repeat, you can mark the movie at point A and then again at point B, and the section between these two points will continually repeat until you either hit A-B Repeat again or hit Clear. With Repeat, you can select to repeat the entire movie or the current chapter. Clear simply clears whatever repeat setting you have selected and sets it back to normal play.

**Display.** The next to the last icon on the top row, immediately next to the Help panel, is the Display control panel. Highlighting this control panel and hitting X will bring up the name of the movie you are currently watching in the top-left corner of the screen and a thin blue and white strip at the bottom-right corner of the screen that indicates your progression through the movie and the time remaining (see Figure 3-5).



Figure 3-5. The Display control panel places the name of the movie in a bar across the top and a progress bar along the bottom

Most notably, the Display option is useful if you want to keep track of your progress through a movie and how much of a movie remains. Once you activate it, you can leave it running after closing out the control panel. This is very nonintrusive in movies that are letterboxed and leave black bars on the top and bottom of the screen, but if you are watching a movie that takes full advantage of the PSP's screen, you may find the Display distracting or even annoying.

Nevertheless, since the PSP doesn't always remember where you last were in a movie (it usually does, but sometimes it doesn't), I recommend activating this feature whenever you know you are going to stop watching a movie for a while, or if you intend to switch out the UMD disk for a while. If you can remember that the blue progress bar was up to about the middle of the S in the PSP logo, it'll be easier to find where you left off when you come back to it later. Consider jotting this information down on a piece of paper you keep with your PSP.



This information is even more useful with Version 2.0 of the firmware, which includes chapter and timestamp displays for the UMD that are much easier to mark down.

Firmware 2.0 also adds the Go To command (the second item on the top row of the control panel), whereby you can select the exact chapter or timestamp location where you want to go.

## Cutting Down on the Glare

The PlayStation Portable comes with a gorgeous screen, capable of displaying wonderful graphics while playing video games or DVD-quality video

while watching a UMD movie. Unfortunately, this beautiful, shiny screen can also be the PSP's Achilles' heel in certain lighting situations, as it is highly reflective.



One good thing about the highly reflective nature of the PSP's screen is that it can be used as a makeshift mirror whenever the console is switched off.

Here's a short list of things you can do to help keep the reflective glare from being too much of a distraction while watching your UMD movies:

- Hold the PSP at a slight angle, directed at something uniformly colored, such as the ceiling. If you are staring straight into your PSP's screen, you're going to see a reflection of your ugly mug every time a light hits your face or the movie features a particularly dark scene.
- Keep the back of the PSP to the light. The less light hitting the PSP's screen, the less of a reflection that you'll see. However, keep the previous suggestion in mind: if you are facing the blaring sun and looking straight on at the PSP, that light is going to ricochet off of your face and onto its screen.
- Try to watch movies in uniformly lit situations. If everything is lit equally in a room, there will be less distracting reflections on the PSP screen, should they occur. A bright lamp reflecting in a dark room can seriously impede your movie-watching fun.
- Try to watch in the dark. There's a reason that movie theaters turn out all the lights before a movie.
- Use the PSP's brightness control. There's a button with a slightly square icon immediately to the right of the PSP icon sitting under your gorgeous PSP screen. Hitting it a few times cycles through the different brightness settings for the screen. Switch as the occasion warrants.

This short list of five tips will get you started. For more advanced ways of avoiding the glare, you'll want to keep your PSP clean [Hack #7].

## Hacking the Hack

This hack discussed the basics of viewing UMD movies on the PSP. If you want to really trick out your movie-watching experience on the PSP, however, you're going to want to check out some of the more advanced hacks in this book, such as "Make an Articulating PSP Stand" [Hack #14] and "PSP Hands Free" [Hack #18].