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360zine

Issue 52 | March 2011

Free Magazine For Xbox 360 Gamers. *Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...*

HANDS-ON!

THE FIRST TEMPLAR

*World exclusive hands-on!
Could this be a knight
to remember?*



BULLETSTORM

The day the shooter changed forever!

PLUS!



**FIRST LOOK!
SBK 2011**



**REVIEWED!
FIGHT NIGHT
CHAMPION**



**PREVIEWED!
BATMAN:
ARKHAM CITY**

CONTROL →





Welcome to 360Zine



What an exciting time to be at EA at the moment. The Canadian publishing giant is assaulting 2011 with game after game, and in this very issue both Fight Night Champion and Bulletstorm get reviewed to within an inch of their lives.

And it doesn't stop there either, as next month sees Dragon Age II and Crysis 2 arriving from the company. That's not all though, as there's the interesting-looking The First Templar coming from Kalypso, which adorns our cover this issue, as well as the fascinating Anarchy Reigns from SEGA and Platinum, as well as the scintillating Batman Arkham City.

I've said it before and I'll say it again – now really is the best time ever to be involved with videogames. Enjoy the issue!

360Zine FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of the new issue

Dan Hutchinson, Editor
360zine@gamerzines.com

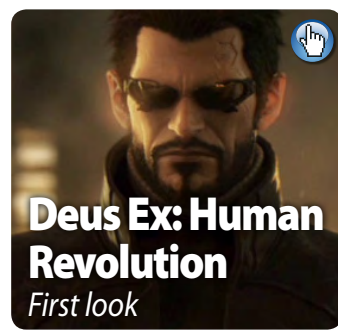
MEET THE TEAM
Probably the best games writers on the planet



Jon Denton
Jon's been cooking up a storm with bullets.



Tom Worthington
Is in love with his new 3DS, but also his 360, too.



Deus Ex: Human Revolution
First look

Don't miss! This month's top highlights



Bulletstorm
THE FPS GENRE GETS A WELL-DESERVED KICK UP THE ASS



Anarchy Reigns
Massive preview inside



Marvel Vs Capcom 3
Reviewed



The First Templar
Previewed inside

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| SBK 2011 | Marvel Vs |
| Deus Ex: Human Revolution | Capcom 3 |
| The First Templar | Fight Night Champion |
| Anarchy Reigns | Test Drive Unlimited 2 |
| Batman: Arkham City | Stacking |
| Bulletstorm | |

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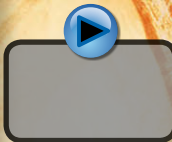
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ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS

L.A. NOIRE



20 MAY

ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/LANOIRE



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CONTROL →





SBK 2011 SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Publisher: Black Bean Games
Developer: Milestone
Heritage: SBK series
Link: www.sbkthegame.com
ETA: May



The handling model promises to be more accessible this year.



The bike models are a noticeable step up from last year's edition.



Racing shoulder-to-shoulder still has that dangerously epic feel, as competitors regularly drive into one another during the tighter corners.



"Legendary riders like Carl Fogerty who starred in DLC for last year's game also returns straight out of the box"

FIRST LOOK

SBK 2011

Leader of the pack

What's the story?

The best two-wheeled racing simulation on the planet returns for another year, but in 2011 it appears Milestone have learnt plenty of new tricks. There's a plethora of graphical improvements with all the thrills of the entire SBK license, and this time wannabe riders can take part in every race, utilising every class in the official series. If that doesn't float your yearning for horsepower there's plenty more to get excited about including a brand new engine and tweaked handling which facilitates better leaning.

Better leaning, really?

Look, if you'd be more comfortable with four wheels then just click the next page button, but if you want a good shoulder-to-shoulder racer take a knee. The game modes have been split back into three – beginner, medium and simulation. The Career mode returns, chronicling your team's rise from Superstock to the SBK championship proper, with a new impetus on testing, which the devs promise which be more interesting than the real thing.

When do we get more?

The May release date is approaching faster than a chicane at the end of a straight, but the build we sampled was surprisingly polished. The new menu interface (which attracted such loathing from reviewers last year) isn't quite ready to be revealed, but it should be ready for gamers' eyes shortly.

Anything else to declare?

As is the case with many modern racers, there will be a photo mode allowing players to take pictures of their bikes and upload them to a variety of social networks. Legendary riders like Carl Fogerty, who starred in DLC for last year's game, also returns straight out of the box. We're still unsure whether SBK 2011 will be the motorbike sim which can inspire the masses rather than a select few, but the latter party will definitely be happy with this year's edition.

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of SBK 2011

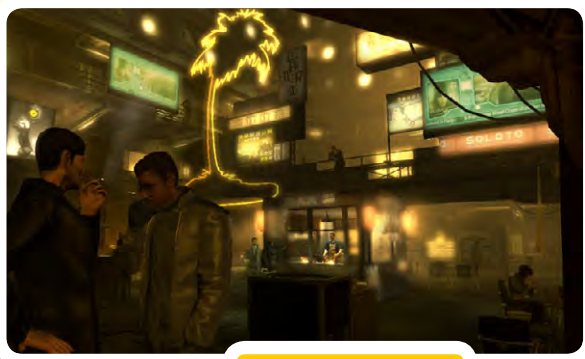
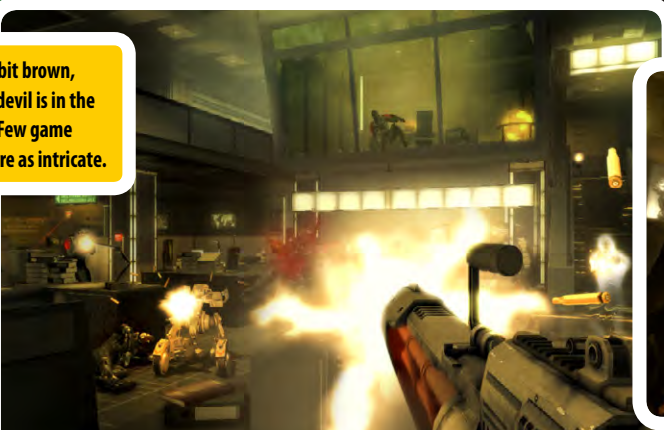




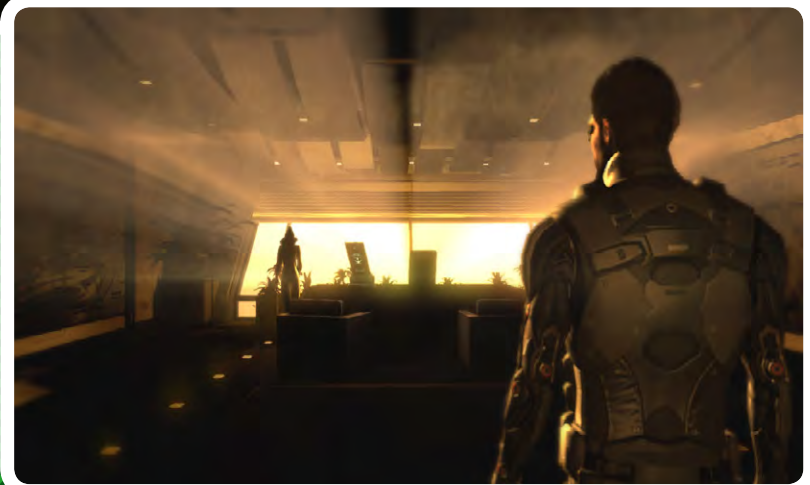
Publisher: Square-Enix
Developer: Eidos Montreal
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.deusex.com
ETA: August



It's all a bit brown, but the devil is in the details. Few game worlds are as intricate.



There are multiple branching paths, all sorts of dialogue options and many, many ways to encounter every fight. It's definitely a Deus Ex game.



"There are going to be so many ways to play the game that it's unreal"

FIRST LOOK

Deus Ex: Human Revolution

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Deus Ex: Human Revolution

Talkin' 'bout a revolution

What's the story?

The year is 2017, some 20 years prior to the original Deus Ex. You play as Adam Jensen, an agent who has been augmented without his consent, and is now seen as a Frankenstein by the world around him. Thankfully, he's also a complete badass, capable of changing his body in amazing ways and dealing out all sorts of damage. The story is underpinned by themes of conflict between human traditionalism and augmentation – God versus the machine, in a way. This is proper sci-fi; interesting, thought-provoking stuff that says something about the human condition as much as providing base-level thrills.

What do we know?

There are going to be so many ways to play the game that it's unreal. If you're unfamiliar with Deus Ex – which is totally understandable, as it's basically a decade old – then think about a shooter that has as much scope as something like BioShock and with the choice structure of a game like Mass Effect. There are huge skill trees to get stuck into, so one person's Adam will be wildly different from another. You can go fully stealth, concentrate on speed or just turn him into a man tank. Variety is the spice of life, after all.

When do we get more?

The release date is sketchy, but this is the type of game that really mustn't be rushed. When it comes, it comes, and it should be beautiful. Could be the most exciting thing in years, and we don't say that lightly.

Anything else to declare?

This has got Game of the Year written all over it.

the first TEMPLAR



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



COMING SPRING
2011

WWW.THEFIRSTTEMPLAR-GAME.COM

kalypso

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INCOMING

A fistful of top new titles coming to 360...



Duke Nukem Forever

Publisher: 2K | **ETA:** May

With Bulletstorm taking the first-person shooter in a new and wild direction, the Duke has his work cut out. Still, he's as swears and self-deprecating as ever, and his brand of balls-out action should be another excellent antidote to all the boring military shooters clogging up the charts. Hail to the king, baby.



Top Spin 4

Publisher: 2K Sports | **ETA:** March

The best tennis game enters its fourth iteration this month, and it's looking better than ever. There's so much depth to the shot selection that makes it stand out ahead of Virtua Tennis, and the online play is infinitely slicker. You can have some seriously epic matches against real-life competition, which should get us sufficiently pumped up for the Grand Slam season.

Hunted: The Demon Forge

Publisher: Bethesda | **ETA:** May

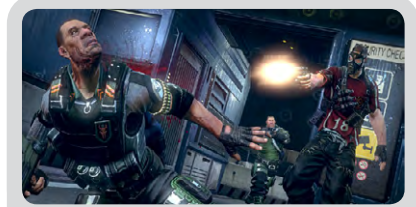
Some have called it Gears of Orc, but Hunted is a little more than that. It's an action RPG with Tolkeinist beasties and a 'pop and shoot' cover system... Okay, so it is pretty much Gears of War. Is that a bad thing though? Like Gears, it doesn't take itself too seriously, the characters have a good bit of banter in their questing and the action is fun. Good solid stuff for the quiet spring months.



Operation Flashpoint: Red River

Publisher: Codemasters | **ETA:** April

Like the true antithesis of Bulletstorm and Duke Nukem, Operation Flashpoint: Red River is a super hardcore military simulation. Learning from the successes and failures of its predecessor, Dragon Rising, Red River is a streamlined and more focused effort, but still requires incredible concentration if you don't want to catch a bullet and lose all the blood in your body. This game is definitely not for the faint-hearted, or those who want to spray and pray like Halo and Call of Duty.



Brink

Publisher: Bethesda | **ETA:** May

This heady mix of online blasting and videogame free-running looks absolutely spectacular. Splash Damage, the team behind Enemy Territory Quake Wars, is really betting the farm on Brink, and it could be onto a real winner. There's so much variety to how you can approach its objective-based mayhem, it's unreal. Full of potential.



Gears of War 3

Publisher: Microsoft | **ETA:** September

Get ready for April. The Gears of War 3 Beta is revving up in just over a month, featuring two game modes and a host of maps. It's going to be as visceral and chunky as ever, but even more beautiful and violent than before. Make sure you have your Epic Edition of Bulletstorm for access, of course.

UPCOMING

MARCH

- Crysis 2
- Homefront

APRIL

- WWE All Stars
- Mortal Kombat

MAY

- Red Faction Armageddon
- L.A. Noire

JUNE

- DiRT 3
- Transformers: Dark of the Moon



Publisher: Kalypso
Developer: Haemimont Games
Heritage: Tropico 4, Grand Ages: Rome
Link: www.haemimontgames.com
ETA: April

SPECIAL PREVIEW

The First Templar

Knight and day, you are the one...

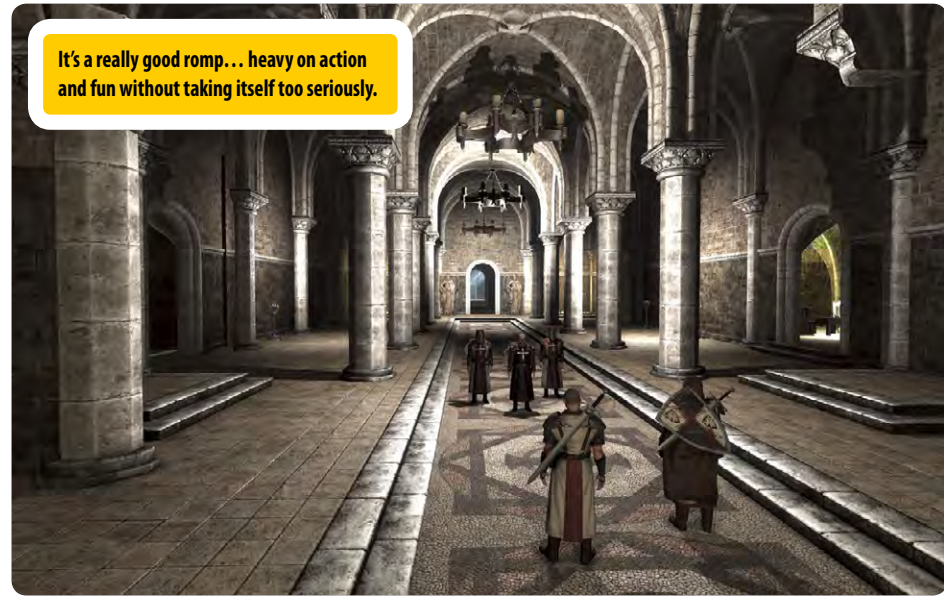
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! [Click here to tell us what you think of The First Templar](#)

Not every game can be Assassin's Creed. Not every game can have a \$50 million budget and a team so huge it could fill up a football stadium. Sometimes games are made for less money, but no less desire and aptitude. And sometimes that's where the best ideas and execution come from. Without lavish production values to fall back on, a team has to concentrate on really delivering on its promises. And that's exactly how The First Templar feels to play.

At its core, it's an action game. You play as Templar knight Celian, who is on a quest to find the Holy Grail. He's accompanied by Roland, another knight, and during the early stages the two battle side-by-side as they are attacked by all and sundry while investigating a Cypriate township.

Immediately, it's clear how The First Templar works. The developers have been paying attention to the best

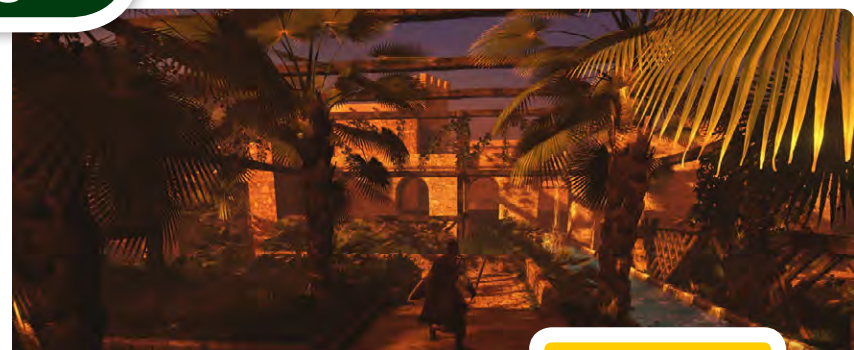
"Within minutes you'll be hacking enemies down in style and dodging incoming arrows"



It's a really good romp... heavy on action and fun without taking itself too seriously.



The combat borrows from God of War, Batman Arkham Asylum and Assassin's Creed, all to good effect.



It might look like a history lesson, but it's actually a really good laugh.



> **First Templar** continued

third-person action games out there, and have built a combat system around combos, dodges and counters. It sits somewhere between Batman Arkham Asylum and the PS3's God of War, and it's very easy to use. Within minutes, you'll be hacking down enemies in

style and dodging incoming attacks with plenty of style.

The counter system is fun, too. Much like Batman, an attacking enemy will have an icon flash above his head so you know when to dodge. Taking on large groups then becomes an exercise in concentration and space management, which after a while



becomes second nature. Throw in a hefty shield and you've got a robust combat system.

So far so good then, but where *The First Templar* makes a really good impression is in its setting. After years of Tolkien fantasy worlds and post-apocalyptic landscapes, it's nice to be part of history again. The team has crafted a nice-looking world that might not have the expanse of *Assassin's Creed*, but concentrates on beautiful blue skies and interesting areas in which to do battle.

Like the best game stories too, it has a clear and singular goal – think about *Half-Life* (escape Black Mesa) or *Heavy Rain* (find the Origami Killer). Here, it's all about one thing and one thing only – find the Holy Grail. It means you always know why you're doing

something or where you are, even as the game spans Medieval Europe on your quest.

Not there's not a lot of things to see and do on the way, of course. The second level sees you deep in a French forest, trying to gain access to an Abbey. In order to do so, you must hunt down a beast that has been troubling the locals. It's this sort of inventiveness and commitment to keeping things interesting that makes *The First Templar* stand out. As we've said, it's not a multi-million dollar Unreal 3-powered blockbuster, but that hasn't stopped the team from being clever and the player from being engaged.

The whole thing can be played in co-op mode too, either offline or on. It's the perfect type of game to hammer through with a buddy, nice





> First Templar continued

and simple and also consistently entertaining. Not that The First Templar lacks depth, particularly.

Yes, it's no Mass Effect or Dragon Age, but there's a highly customisable skill tree (or actually skill 'cross', befitting the game's theme) that you can attribute your XP to. It should mean that everyone's playthrough is slightly different as you concentrate on giving yourself more power, or defence. These things give a game a sense of character progression too. Hopefully the developers won't rely on an old trick like ramping up the later enemies' hit points to frustrating levels – this is a game that would benefit hugely from being a smooth ride from beginning to end.

You can play the whole game in 'couch co-op' so you can get your medieval fix with a buddy.

As you do progress though, you will begin to unlock more advanced combat moves which should give the battles a greater sense of tension and satisfaction. The counter – a parry, essentially – is a vital part of your arsenal early on, as you learn to bat away enemy attacks and catch them with their guard down. A final, brutal coup de grace on the floor is enough to finish them for good. They're a tough bunch, these Templars.

So what else is there to tell you about our trip into the Middle Ages? Well, The First Templar isn't a completely A-to-B romp. There are side quests dotted through the story that give you the opportunity to gain



the first TEMPLAR



> **First Templar** continued

some valuable extra XP. During the opening level, Celian and Roland noticed a burning house and chose to briefly detour from the main quest to see if they could rescue anyone. The forest level simply tasks you with looking out from its highest point. It all adds colour to the world and a sense that yes, you are actually on an exciting, country-hopping quest.

Talking of Roland, if you choose to play through the game on your own, he'll still be by your side. You can give him some basic strategy – ie hold still or follow me – and he'll happily get stuck in with little regard for his own safety when trouble come knocking.

Unfortunately, if he does go down under an enemy's blade, it's up to you to rescue you him or it's game over. Hopefully this won't prove too annoying during the later stages of the game. No one wants to fail continually because an AI partner can't keep up.

Ultimately then, *The First Templar* is shaping up to be a fun and solid first attempt in the action genre from strategy specialists Haemimont games. It's charming, easy-to-play and full of ideas, both borrowed and original. There may be games coming out in 2011 that grab bigger headlines and get more column inches, but it's important not to overlook the effort and determination of the smaller studios out there, too. ●



Publisher: SEGA
Developer: Platinum Games
Heritage: Bayonetta, Vanquish
Link: www.sega.co.uk/games/anarchy-reigns
ETA: Autumn

PREVIEW

Anarchy Reigns

Ready to rumble

We're starting to get a picture of what makes up a Platinum game. It has to be crazy. It has to be funny. There has to be some brazen sexuality. And most of all, they have to be extremely good fun to play. Just look at the list of usual suspects – it makes good reading. We've had Bayonetta and Vanquish on the next generation consoles, MadWorld on the Wii, Infinite Line on DS and now the bonkers Anarchy Reigns is here to continue the trend.

Fundamentally, it's a multiplayer brawler with a host of mental characters all baying for each others' blood. Remember the Dreamcast scrapper Powerstone? Well it's kind of like that, if it had been run through the Platinum Games patented mental machine. And Powerstone was pretty wacky to begin with.

It's all set in the type of post-apocalyptic wasteland that we've become so used to in gaming that it >



Jack from MadWorld. He loves it.

ANARCHY REIGNS

"Fundamentally, it's a multiplayer brawler with a host of mental characters all baying for each others' blood"



Sometimes you just need a game to be balls-out mental, and this is most definitely one of those. Do Platinum do anything else?



There are plenty of hideous aliens to fight.

"Expect a depth to the combat that most other scrappers can't match"



There's lots of posing before the battle.

> Anarchy Reigns cont.

might as well be our back garden. Quite why everyone has decided to get together and have this almighty scrap is unclear at the moment, but the consequences certainly aren't. It's

violent, dramatic, a little daft, and hopefully a lot of fun.

With Platinum Games at the helm, you should expect a depth to the combat that most other scrappers can't match. This is the team behind the endless combo lists of Bayonetta,

after all. However, head honcho Inaba-san has said that the fisticuffs will be more about straight-up hand-to-hand melee combat than any sort of hair-twirling gunplay.

In fact, the game itself has been labelled a massively multiplayer melee by Inaba. At the moment, the massively multiplayer part seems like a bit of a skewed description – there's no instancing or guilds here – but multiplayer is firmly in the developers' minds, with a specific focus on getting online for your kicks.

It's rare for a Japanese developer to want to get its hands dirty with the online battleground, but Platinum Games has always shown a talent for mixing the best of West and East. Bayonetta managed to capture the spectacle of the God of War games without ever losing sight of its combo-

heavy heritage, and Vanquish matched familiar shooter gameplay with the robot-fuelled madness of a Japanese anime. Anarchy Reigns promises the type of ultra-responsive combo-heavy action you'd expect from a Japanese brawler, with the user-friendly experience that American online games now offer as standard.





"MadWorld's Jack Cayman, Matilda and the controversial Big Baron all make an appearance"



➤ Anarchy Reigns cont.

Of course, the word 'friendly' isn't going to be bandied around that much when Anarchy Reigns gets going. There's also a heavy co-operative bent to go along with the competitive stuff, with the likes of MadWorld's Jack Cayman (now in glorious technicolour), Matilda (complete with Iron Maiden special move) and the controversial Big Baron all make an appearance, and you can team up together to battle through the game's single-player mode, too.

And if it is human competition you're after, SEGA and Platinum are already talking about two tasty modes to vent your anger with – Survival and Battle Royale. The former sees your team taking on waves on enemies in a bid to, well, survive. Co-operation is crucial; one player will have to take out stronger enemies (ones with guns, for example) while the other mops up the rest.

In Battle Royale, you'll ruck against each other in a test for supremacy. There's a 10-minute countdown and closely matched players will face off in a cage match. You can tell that Platinum Games are fans of professional wrestling, too. There are moves and techniques littered throughout the game.

The final piece of the puzzle (and Anarchy Reigns' most spectacular



inclusion) are what Platinum is called Action Trigger Events. Stupid name aside, imagine the scenery destroying Power Plays from Split Second mixed with something out of Saw and you'll be most of the way there. These events can see blades tearing through the ground or bridges collapsing around you. They're pretty impressive and integral to the gameplay. And you can smash up enough of the world around you on your own, too – Anarchy Reigns' environments are there to be ruined.

Ultimately then, we're looking at a very interesting prospect. If Anarchy Reigns' multiplayer ambitions are backed up, this could be one of the more interesting games to appear this year. And even if not, you've still got an arena to smack seven shades of sand out of your mates in. What more could you ask for? ●

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Anarchy Reigns



HOW COMPLETE?	FIRST IMPRESSIONS
80%	80%
Madness and violence – it's Platinum Games alright	



Publisher: Warner Bros.
Developer: Rocksteady
Heritage: Batman Arkham Asylum
Link: www.batmanarkhamcity.com
ETA: Autumn

PREVIEW

Batman Arkham City

The Dark Knight returns

Rocksteady's Arkham Asylum was a true breath of fresh air. It had everything stacked against it – an untested British studio working on a licensed superhero game – but through extraordinary skill and hard work, Rocksteady produced one of the games of 2009 and showed there's still life in third-person adventuring after all.

With Arkham City, though, the London-based outfit is feeling a new kind of pressure, that which comes from following up a supremely

successful debut. There's no sense of second album syndrome coming through here though.

Batman is back in Gotham City and hot on the trail of The Joker, who he's told has feline favourite Catwoman tied up and hovering precariously over a vat of bubbling acid. Sounds like an all-too familiar scenario, but Bats can't ignore it. It's his duty.

This time, instead of being trapped in the confines of Arkham Asylum, Batman is free to really show off. He can now glide across the rooftops of the city, checking out the madness below. Just seeing him perched on the corner of a skyscraper while the jet-black grime of Gotham sprawls out in front of him echoes Batman at his cinematic and literary finest.

Rocksteady has shown an innate understanding of what makes Batman unique both as a character and a universe before, and this commitment to the Dark Knight spreads to every

The Joker is back, Mark Hamill is back in the booth and all is right in the world again.



"There's no sense of second album syndrome coming through here"





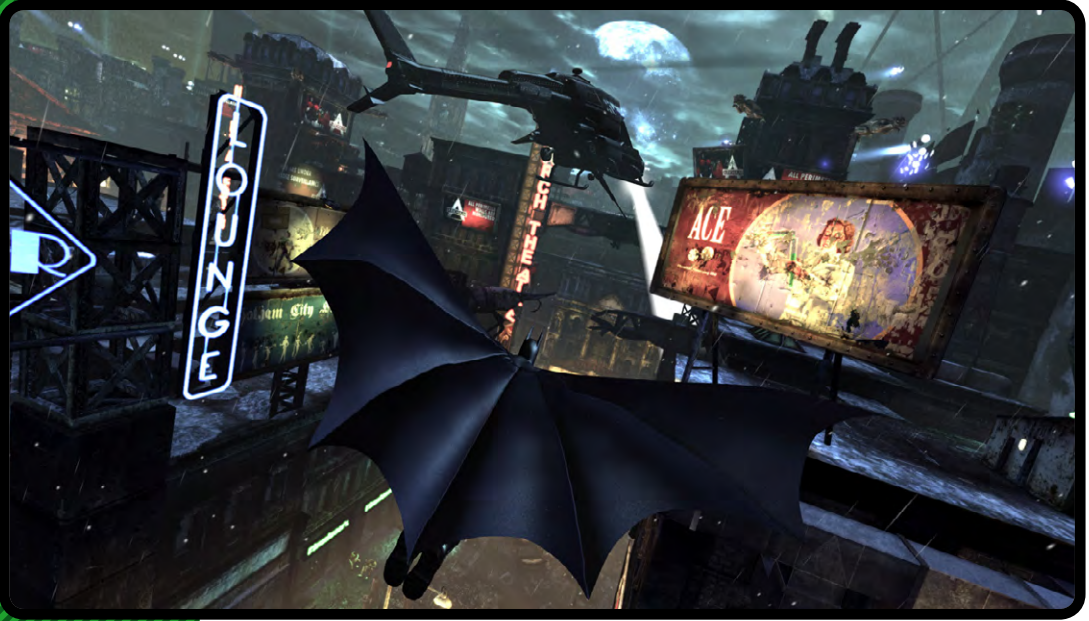
> Batman AC continued

facet of Arkham City's gameplay. Like the genre-redefining combat. As in Arkham Asylum, hand-to-hand fisticuffs are all about counters and combos. It's now possible, thanks to double the number of animations, for Bats to swoop into a huge crowd of goons, and through timing and concentration, dispatch the lot without taking a hit. You'll need to use your wits in the same way Batman would – identifying the most dangerous adversaries (gun toters, stick holders) and take them out before dealing with the rest. It's phenomenally satisfying. If you don't let a gravelly 'I'm Batman' out after doing it, you have no soul.

Arkham City is promising more scope than its predecessor. The environment is purportedly five times the size of the Asylum, and although not an open-world in the traditional sense, it will give Batman the freedom to travel large areas as he wishes. There are even overhead helicopters that Bats can grapple onto for a sky-borne taxi ride over the rooftops. As before too, Arkham City promises a harmonious marriage of story and gameplay. Writer Paul Dini returns after his stellar work on the original, and along with The Joker, Bats and Catwoman, we'll see Two Face and Hugo Strange join the ensemble cast. Dini didn't miss a beat last time, with memorable dialogue and a compelling



The hand-to-hand combat has been improved, despite already being best-in-class.



story that only let itself down towards the end. He captures the darkness and stoic melancholy of the character beautifully, so you would be wise to expect more of the same here. Batman Arkham City truly has the potential to lead where others follow. It's already shaping up to be a marked improvement in both scope and detail over Asylum, a game that garnered its fair share of Game of the Year awards itself. If only other superhero games could match the ambition and craft of Rocksteady's Caped Crusader, then the

world would be a better place. As it is, though, it's a dark, tortured and pestilent hole that can only be policed by one person. The god-damn Batman. ●



PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Batman Arkham City



HOW COMPLETE? 80% **FIRST IMPRESSIONS** 90%

Fast becoming one of gaming's hottest properties



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Publisher: EA
Developers: Epic Games/
 People Can Fly
Heritage: The Gears of
 War series
Link: www.bulletstorm.com
OUT NOW

Bulletstorm

Shooters will never be the same again



Bulletstorm is a game born out of opportunity. The opportunity to challenge the first-person shooter establishment. The opportunity for a Polish developer to leap up the ladder and sit among the American elite. The opportunity for Epic to launch a new franchise without having to take its eye off Gears of War. And most of all, the opportunity to have a hell of a lot of fun.

It's something that penetrates deep into the game's DNA, too. By now, you'll have probably seen Bulletstorm's 'kill with skill' framework – the double

entendre-laden captions that plaster the screen whenever you off a bad guy in an inventive way. Well, even this is about opportunity – every skirmish, every enemy encounter, even every environment in Bulletstorm is an opportunity for you to get creative, to strategise a brilliantly violent way of eliminating your opposition and racking up a score at the same time. This isn't a shooter to survive through, it's one to savour.

You'll probably also know that Bulletstorm is brash, crass and full to the brim with swearing. What you

might not know though, is that it's one of the sharpest, wittiest game scripts around. The story of drunken space pirate maniac Grayson Hunt and his semi-robotic pal Ishi is genuinely funny, exciting, subversive and parodical. It's a kick in the teeth to all the super-serious shooters out there trying to tell a story. And not because it mocks them, which it does (subtly), but because it's just so much more compelling. There's >



KILLING IN THE NAME OF

How Bulletstorm changes the FPS



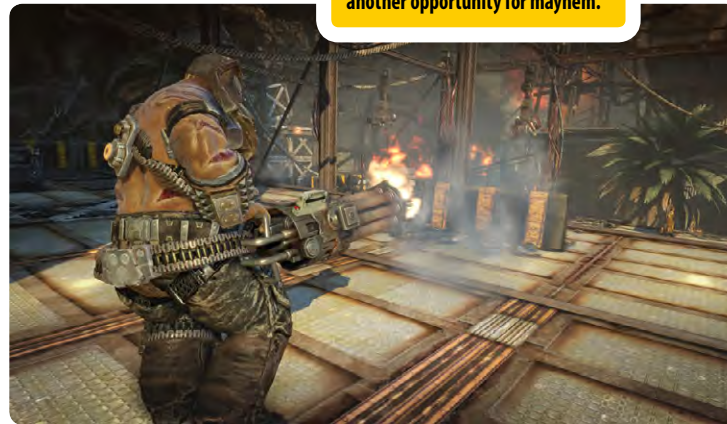
Skills for kills

Why so serious?

Anarchy reigns

Skills for kills

The more creative you are, the better your score will be. And it's fun to be creative. You don't have to worry about technically difficult combos, just inventiveness and a keen eye for murderous scenery.



Mini-bosses turn up regularly, but there are so many ways to kill them that it never gets boring. Just another opportunity for mayhem.

> Bulletstorm cont.

proper pacing, structure and also some fine character development. Who would have thunk it?

At its heart though, this is a love letter to the good old days of FPS blasting, where men were men and weapons blew up beasties into millions of chunks. Gray is armed with some meaty handcannons, his boot, a leash and an endless barrage of dick jokes. Early skillshots see you hooking bad guys in towards you with the leash, booting them back in the air and onto a spike or a cactus, or slide-tackling

them skywards and popping their heads off. The more creative you are, the more points you're likely to get. There's not a combo system to speak of though, as Bulletstorm wants you to go through its check list of skillshots and keep experimenting.

This is what makes every battle a chance for expression. There's almost always a slick, quick and comically violent way to off all the baddies in front of you, so you've got to quickly analyse what's available and hope you get your angles and your ideas in order

before you execute. More skill points means more currency in the dropkits scattered around, so more ammo and more guns. It's a very clever way of

"Bulletstorm is a most welcome surprise. It's a foul-mouthed middle finger of a first-person shooter"

ensuring players aren't just blasting through the game like a normal shooter.

Not that it's all about skillshots. People Can Fly has crafted a campaign of rare quality, and every one of its seven chapters has multiple memorable moments. It would be an absolute crime to spoil them here, but there's stuff here that out-awesomes anything seen in Gears of War or Call of Duty. Again and again, and again.

It helps that the world is so pretty, too. Unlike most sci-fi universes, Bulletstorm's Stygia is a former holiday resort that has been taken over by mutants, both animal and vegetable. Its piercing blue skies and searing sunsets are stunning, and every chapter has something that will have you just stop and stare, be it a staggering vista or a screen-filling monster.

All this cleverness doesn't get in the way of what Bulletstorm does best though, and that's violence. The Unreal Engine 3 has always been a dab hand at disintegrating body parts, and Bulletstorm is absolutely full of them. It's the type of thing that gaming's

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game one step at a time...



10 MINUTES
The story starts slowly, but well. The game hasn't really started properly yet, though.



1 HOUR
You've got your leash, you've got your boot and you've got your skillshots. Boom!



3 HOURS
Some of the best set-pieces in FPS history have already been and gone. So exciting.

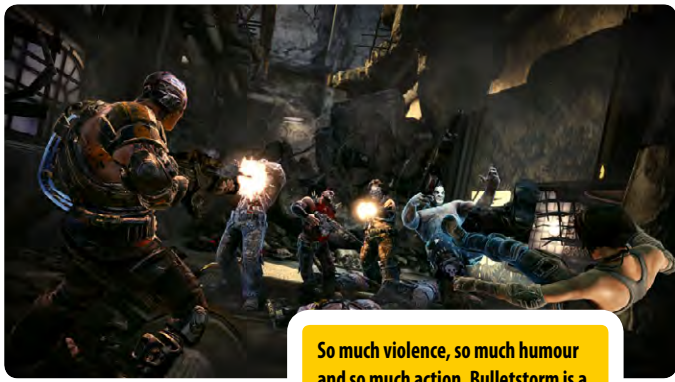


6 HOURS
The campaign's in the final stretch, and it has been relentless in its pace and inventiveness.



10 HOURS+
The story is over, but there's still Echo and Anarchy modes to lose yourself in. Get military!

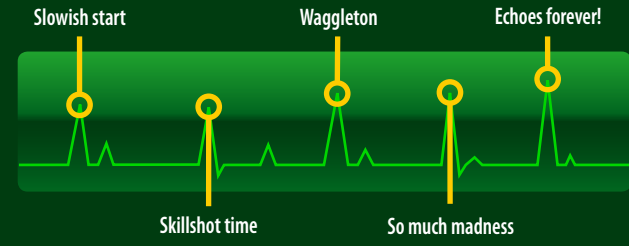




So much violence, so much humour and so much action. Bulletstorm is a true breath of fresh air for shooters.



PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



> **Bulletstorm** cont.

detractors could never understand, and why should they, but to the rest of us gib-happy maniacs, Bulletstorm is like brain food.

It helps, of course, that your greatest feats in combat are rewarded by those captions and nice juicy glowing scores. Much like Call of Duty's yellow numbers, this instant feedback cycle is dangerously moreish, especially when you lose yourself in Bulletstorm's score-attack minefield that is Echoes.

If you've ever played the criminally underrated The Club, then you'll know what to expect. Leg it through a specific section of a level, where bad guys run at you in the same way every time. Kill them. Do it in the way that maximises your score and climb the leaderboards. It was dangerously addictive in the The Club, and thankfully it's also the same here.

Experimenting with Bulletstorm's weaponry and skillshot library is utterly joyous for those with a penchant for artistic brutality, and when you find a

new way of scraping another few hundred points out of an Echo (a campaign section stripped down to the bare essentials), it's bloody hard to turn the thing off.

Finally, there's the four player co-operative madness of Anarchy, which requires dedicated teamwork to off hordes of enemies in high-scoring ways. You've got to hit a score as well as killing everything, and there are some hilariously nasty team deaths that require co-ordination and perfect timing. Not exactly anarchy, then.

As a package, Bulletstorm is a most welcome surprise. It's a foul-mouthed middle finger of an FPS that breaks all the rules and has a hell of a lot of fun doing it. Brilliant. ●

360Zine Verdict *A brilliant campaign with ingenious mechanics. So much fun*

- Incredible set pieces
- Hilarious and inventive
- Some might not like dick jokes

93%



Marvel Vs Capcom 3

Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-house
Heritage: Marvel Vs
 Capcom series, Street
 Fighter Series
Link: <http://marvelvscapcom3.com>
OUT NOW

What the hell is going on?

Want to feel old? Here's a test. Put Marvel Vs Capcom 3 in your Xbox 360, and play it. If you have any earthly idea what is going on, then you're either a robot, the people who made the game, or your mind is so young and unsullied that you can compute 3,000 kilowatts (pretty sure how it's measured) of information

per second. You're amazing. Put that skill to better use, immediately. For the rest of us, the first few bouts of Marvel Vs Capcom 3 are a stark and depressing reminder that everybody gets old. Its brand of 3-on-3 tag-team brawling insists on filling the screen with all manner of relentless crazy crap, and partaking in the madness feels like

stumbling into a dubstep gig in the middle of a migraine. Maddeningly, there's no real tutorial for all of this either, so even those schooled on Street Fighter and Marvel Vs Capcom 2 will struggle to figure out what's going on.

After an hour with your nose buried in the manual and a few playthroughs of the easier Arcade settings, the game's mechanics start to slowly reveal themselves, and it's actually quite simple. Basically, you want to hit your opponent, launch them into the air, then hit them again so the game tags in your teammate. Throw in a few fireballs and some easily activated 'hyper' combos (where the camera zooms in and they shout something daft) and you're basically there.

Once you've got that down, the real secret is finding three combatants that work well together. Or, if you're anything like us, finding three guys who look the coolest. There are tactics here and plenty of depth for those that want it. Endless combos, assist links, cancels... all sorts of stuff like that, which either



TAG TEAM

Making sense of the madness



Combo platter



Cap attack

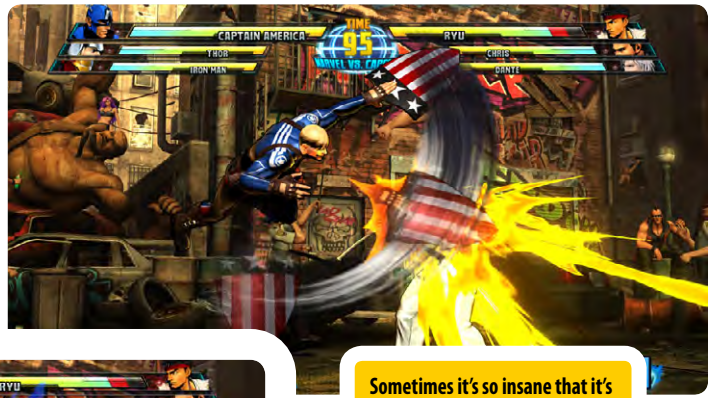


Power bar



Combo platter

The fundamental part of Marvel Vs Capcom 3's combat is one simple combo – light attack, medium, heavy then 'launcher'. Leap in the air after your enemy and try that again. It's all based around that, meaning relentless offense is key.



"You could get really good at Marvel Vs Capcom 3, but is it really worth it?"

someone of similar experience, chances are you'll enjoy it. The online modes are slick and well-incorporated (albeit lacking Super Street Fighter IV's replays and spectator lobbies) and the whole thing's doused in the kind of fanboy-pleasing charm that Capcom does better than anyone.

The real question is, then, do you have the time or the inclination to rewrite your brain in order to keep up with this madness? You already know the answer. For the rest of us, we'll grow old graciously. Maybe. Probably not. ●

Can you do a hadoken? That's a good place to start. Keep doing that, and read the instructions.

Sometimes it's so insane that it's actually infuriating. Especially if you're getting decimated by endless tag-team attacks.

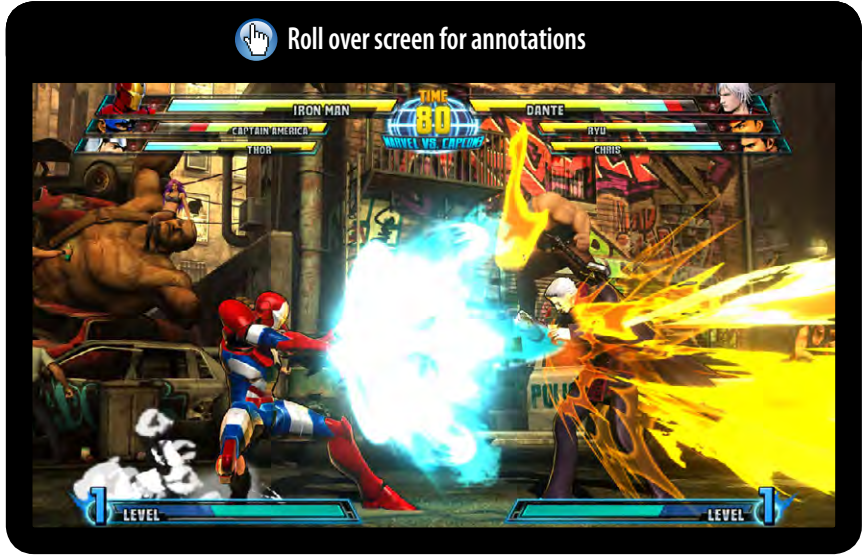


> MVC 3 continued

pricks up your ears or makes you say the word 'pricks'. In truth though, they're not really worth learning. You see, you *could* get really good at Marvel Vs Capcom 3, but is it really worth it?

In a scrapper like Street Fighter IV, you're given all sorts of options for how you play, both in the character selection and how you are as a person. You can play defensively and counter-punch, attack relentlessly, use missiles as keep-away tactics or just go for brute force. In Marvel Vs Capcom 3, it's just all-out attack. The first person who lets off that killer combo can do phenomenal damage with it, and it's literally a game of luck to see if you can stop it. When you're the one doing the murdering, it's pretty intoxicating. When you're on the receiving end, it's enough to make you retire from videogames.

The package is hard to fault, though. There is a well put-together fighting game here, and if you get together with



Roll over screen for annotations

360Zine Verdict *Insane, impossible to keep up with, but very well made*

- Looks fantastic, in its own way
- Depth for those who want it
- Too mental and inaccessible

82%





Fight Night Champion

Publisher: EA
Developer: EA Canada
Heritage: Fight Night Round 4
Link: www.fightnight.ea.com
OUT NOW

The drama and the ecstasy

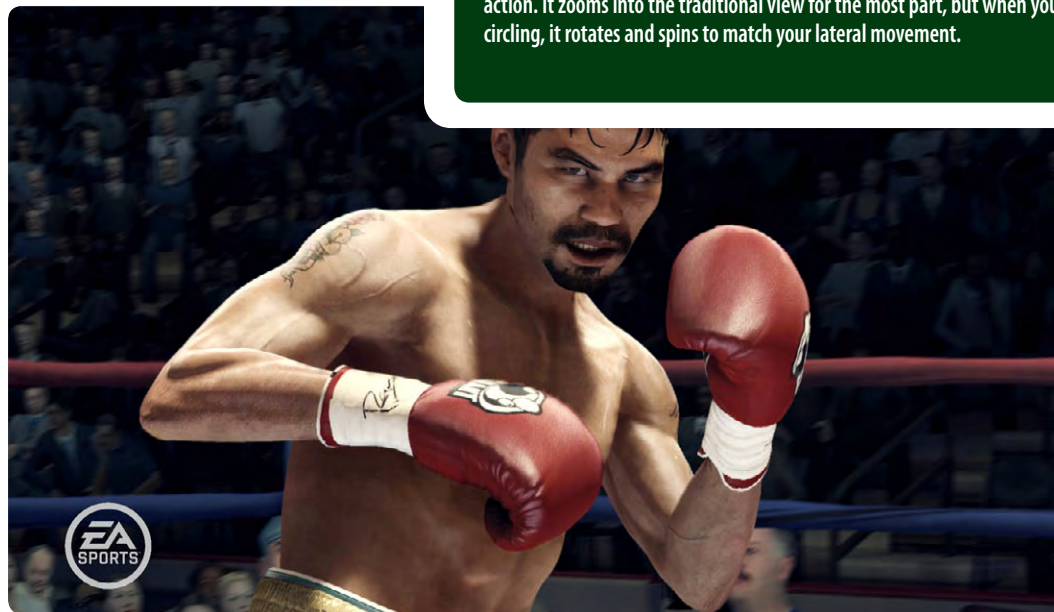
The cliches are so set in stone they're almost expected – the old trainer, the dominating champion, the feisty love interest and the crooked promoter. You can't really have a boxing movie without them. And now, it seems, you can't have a boxing game without them either.

Fight Night Champion's much publicised 'story' mode is a love letter to years of cheesy boxing flicks, hitting

every single one of those familiar tropes in its tale of redemption, revenge and right hooks. The real surprise then, is that it's actually oddly compelling, decently written and fist-pumpingly dramatic. You play as Andre Bishop, once a top middleweight prospect, now a criminal. The trajectory towards the finish line is predictable, but the way the story ties in with Fight Night Champion's mechanics probably isn't.

"Champion's much publicised 'story' mode is a love letter to years of cheesy boxing flicks"

Ultimately, Champion mode (as it's known) is an extended, in-depth and well-masked tutorial. It teaches you every single subtlety that you could ever want to know about the game engine through a series of in-ring scenarios. This fighter hates body punches; you have a cut, so protect



BEATDOWN

The sweetest of sciences



Show time

Spirit crushing

Stick and move

Show time

The new camera in Fight Night Champion does a fantastic job of framing the action. It zooms into the traditional view for the most part, but when you're circling, it rotates and spins to match your lateral movement.





Andre Bishop's tale takes him deep into a bare-knuckle fight league in the State Penitentiary. The controls are the same, but the damage is sickening.



> **Fight Night** cont.

yourself; the referee has been paid off so only punch to the head. Every fight tells its own story. There's moments of such pure glory, too. The music swells when you're in trouble or when you take control. Special camera tricks frame everything beautifully too, with a fantastic slow-motion super-saturated crash zoom for those final blows.

When that music does swell, it's like the Rocky theme being remixed by Trent Reznor, and it really gets the blood pumping. It helps, of course, that EA

Canada has built the sharpest Fight Night yet, and definitely the best boxing simulation that's out there.

For starters, it's faster. Much faster. Finally the punches snap and whip like they should do, and combos look believable. The Total Punch Control on the right stick has been simplified, so now only directional jabs throw out punches rather than sweeps of the stick. It loses a bit of tangible 'oomph' when you're throwing out a hook, but it does finally mean stick-players can go toe-to-toe with button bashers.

The bobbing, weaving and punch slipping is easier too, with swift flicks of the left stick seeing your boxer dart in and out. It's still wise to get in close and

"Total Punch Control on the right stick has been simplified so now only directional jabs throw out punches"

work the body with a shorter fighter and stay long and distant when you've got the reach advantage. It does help, of course, that the physics encourage this sort of tactical play.

It's not all perfect, though. Despite being faster, Fight Night Champion can still feel a little too heavy. Boxers struggle with speedy lateral movement, especially in close, and you can get stuck playing Rock 'em sock 'em robots in the middle of the ring when you'd rather shift your weight and move off to the side.

The fact that it's impossible to properly weave left and right is irritating too. Watch Pacquiao exit after a flurry in real life – he ducks his head and shifts out. You can do this in Fight Night, and often get caught circling into a hook with your head up.

After Champion mode has reached its rousing finale, it can feel a little flat to go into the game proper. There's Legacy mode, of course, but it's never as dramatic, and outside of online play there's nothing to get truly excited about. EA has done a great job in replicating some of the sweet

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game one step at a time...



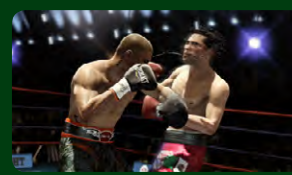
10 MINUTES
You'll start off throwing too many punches by using the old Total Punch Control. Frustrating.



1 HOUR
The controls are beginning to make sense again and you're putting together some combos.



3 HOURS
The Champion mode story has really picked up, and you're right in the thick of the action.

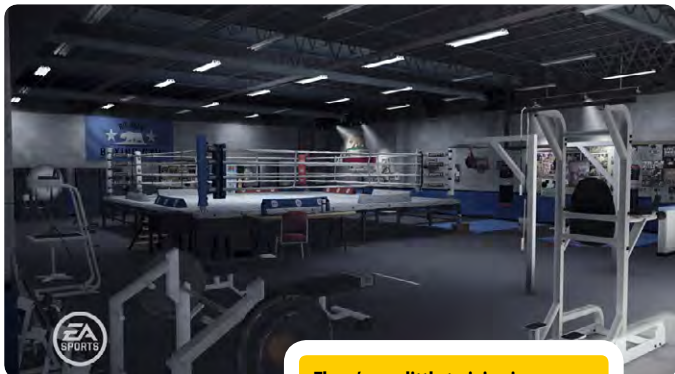


6 HOURS
You should be on the final fight by now. It's tough, it's epic, and you're going to love it.



10 HOURS+
The story is over, but there's still an entire sports game to get your fists into.

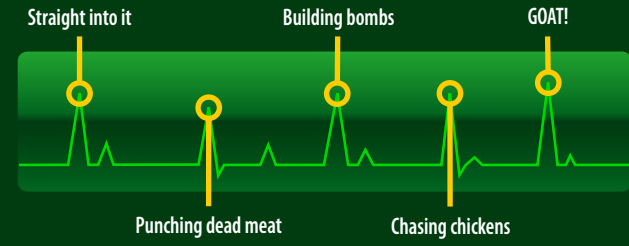




There's very little training in **Champion mode**, it's all about getting back into the action. **Thump!**



PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



something that traditional fighting games just can't mimic, and the one-punch knockouts, perfectly timed counter punches and benchmark visuals all combine to create something quite special. Ducking beneath a crushing haymaker and delivering a match-ending uppercut in the middle of the tenth round is pure gaming exhilaration on a massive scale.

Quite where *Fight Night* goes next, then, is anybody's guess. Gamers aren't fit enough to go 10 rounds on Kinect, that's for sure, and *Champion mode* covers every story base. It's tough to see how anyone could drag another tale out of the squared circle. For now, though, this is knockout stuff, and by far the best boxing game that's ever been made. ●

> **Fight Night** cont.

science's most famous sons, but within the confines of a sport as limited as boxing, there's only so much variety that's available to you.

Also, hopefully playing online won't be ruined by the illegal blows that the team has left in. Round 4 was ruined by players stunning you with a flurry then headbutting you. If *Champion* has such issues – online play was not available at the time of review – then it really will be a crying shame.

Still, there's a lot to love here. Everyone should play *Champion mode*, as it's just too slick, too dramatic and too enjoyable to miss out on. Hopefully more sports games will choose to take a narrative route. It's about time we stepped away from formulaic career modes and enjoyed something that is a little meatier.

And as always, *Fight Night Champion*, as with its predecessors, is a premier multiplayer scrapper. The drama that comes from a 30-minute war is

360Zine Verdict *A fun story with a great boxing game built around it. **Champion***

- Surprisingly fun story
- Beautifully framed boxing
- A bit too heavy

89%



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Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Eden Games
Heritage: Alone In The Dark, Test Drive Unlimited
Link: www.testdriveunlimited.com
OUT NOW

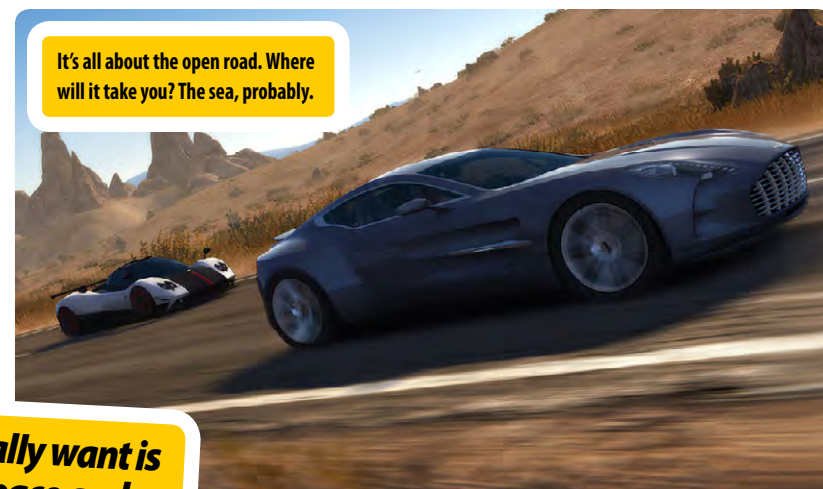
Test Drive Unlimited 2

On the road again

Ah, the allure of the open road. It's something that games have done well in the past few years, but perhaps not in the place you might think. Wanderlust has been better served by free-roaming 'sandbox' efforts rather than bespoke driving games. Bar Eden's own Test Drive Unlimited, the freedom to just shut up and drive, has always been eschewed in favour of challenges, races and time trials.

When Test Drive Unlimited 2 allows you just that – the freedom to do whatever you want – it's at its most successful by far. The thrill of turning the keys in some exotic supercar and cruising the coastal roads of a sun-kissed Ibiza is hard to resist.

Unfortunately though, Eden seeks to restrict that freedom a little too rigidly, especially during the early hours. You're forced to partake in patronising license



"All you really want is a bit of peace and quiet so you can suck in the sea air"

tests before you can compete in the various challenges around the island, and your cell phone is incessant in its you-bothering. All you really want is a bit of peace and quiet so you can suck in the sea air, but the game wants to yell at you every five seconds, reminding you that this is a videogame and not something a little more transcendental.

When you do eventually get left alone though, Test Drive Unlimited 2 is an unusually calming experience. The handling model does take time to get used to, especially if you're not familiar with the predecessor, but you do get to grips with the twitchy understeer, and realise that you're not playing Need for Speed and you can't just drive like a maniac because you fancy it.

Of course, the online connectivity is where the game really shines. It's still rough around the edges, but Eden's

ambition in creating a vehicular MMO is to be admired. Flashing your headlights at a real driver and initiating a one-on-one is exciting stuff, even if it often results in one player dropping out as soon as they slide headlong into a bus.

There are even Guild-lite options in Test Drive Unlimited 2's car clubs, and of course there are all sorts of bizarre customisation options for your avatar. If you're like us though, the real joy is behind the wheel, not sat in a pretend hairdressers. It's not perfect, not by a long shot, but at the same time there's nothing else like it. ●

360Zine Verdict *Ambitious, flawed and rough around the edges*

- Full of ideas
- Interesting online functionality
- Not all the ideas are good

80%



Stacking

Here's looking at you, doll

Publisher: THQ

Developer: Double Fine

Heritage: Costume Quest,
Brutal Legend

Link: www.doublefine.com

OUT NOW

If it wasn't for Xbox Live Arcade, Tim Schafer's Double Fine probably wouldn't exist any more. It's a sad state of affairs, but the full-price game market can't seem to sustain his company's ideas-driven output, especially when the likes of Brutal Legend and Psychonauts didn't quite have the mechanics behind them to back up their ingenuity.

If you really feel like being picky, then it's a criticism that could be levelled at Stacking too, but it's far easier to be forgiving to a game that's

shorter, cheaper and more focused than Double Fine's 'bigger' efforts. Its charming tale of immigrant Russian dolls who can literally stack into one another to solve puzzles is quite simply something to be admired.

As with all of Double Fine's games, there's a heady combination of wit and puzzle solving. You play as tiny Matryoshka Charlie Blackmore who, after his brothers and sisters are taken away to work off their family's debt, has to go out in the big wide world to get them back.



"Everyone should try Stacking. You owe it to yourself as a gamer"

To do so, you'll have to solve clearly defined puzzles by possessing bigger dolls and using their unique characteristics to succeed. Need to get a leery guard out of the way of a door? Simply 'stack' into the shell of a sexy lady and use her 'seduce' command to get him to follow you.

The whole game is built around this kind of verbage, and part of the fun of Stacking comes from simply finding all the characters in a level and seeing what they do (something Stacking amply rewards). Every puzzle has multiple solutions, and completists should enjoy wringing every ounce of enjoyment out of Stacking's beautifully crafted universe.

Therein lies Stacking's only real fault. Ignoring the occasionally choppy framerate and slightly wobbly controls, Stacking only lets itself down by being overly simple. Every puzzle has a very

immediate and obvious solution standing almost next to it, and it's possible to race through the game without ever really having to let the synapses fire. Some of the secondary solutions are ingenious, but it would have been a better game if we'd had to work a little harder to see it all.

Nevertheless though, this is the type of game we should be shouting about from the rooftops. It's game development from ideas rather than focus groups, and will hopefully do well enough to sustain equally inventive stuff from Tim Schafer's crew. Everyone should try Stacking. You owe it to yourself as a gamer. ●

**360Zine
Verdict**

*Beautifully inventive
and witty. This is
Double Fine at its best*



Brimming with ideas



Full of character



Sometimes overly simple

89%



In 360Zine
Issue 53

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