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360zine

Issue 53 | April 2011

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



CRISIS 2

Suit up! Reviewed and rated inside

HANDS-ON!

HUNTED

Gears of Orc? Huge hands-on and interview with the year's biggest surprise

PLUS!



**HANDS-ON!
L.A. NOIRE**



**REVIEWED!
HOMEFRONT**



**REVIEWED!
WWE ALL-STARS**





Welcome to 360Zine



Right, enough is enough. It's barely even April and I've already had enough first-person shooters pass through my Xbox that my bodycount must now be up there with a dictator. It's time for a break, definitely, but despite the overload of FPS action, it's hard to fault the quality.

This month sees both Homefront and Crisis 2 vying for attention down the end of their respective barrels. Check out the review section for our verdict on both.

Not before you get stuck into Hunted, though. The awesome-looking combo of fantasy and Gears of War action is shaping up to be one of the hits of the summer. And if that's not enough, there's the small matter of L.A. Noire. Excited? Thought so.

Jon Denton, Editor
360zine@gamerzines.com

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

MEET THE TEAM

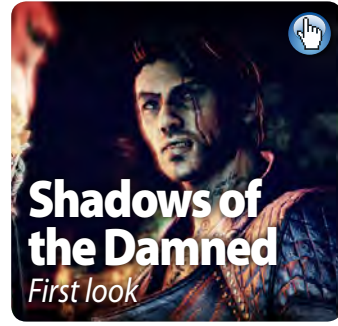
Probably the best games writers on the planet



Andy Griffiths
Hunting for action.



Thomas Worthington
A gaming beast.



Shadows of the Damned
First look

Don't miss! This month's top highlights



HUNTED
HANDS-ON PREVIEW



Crisis 2
Reviewed inside



L.A. Noire
First hands-on!



WWE All-Stars
Reviewed and rated

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

- Lord of the Rings: War in the North
- Shadows of the Damned
- Hunted
- L.A. Noire
- Crisis 2
- Homefront
- WWE All-Stars
- Top Spin 4
- Tiger Woods
- PGA Tour 12: The Masters

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ROCKSTAR GAMES PRESENTS

L.A. NOIRE

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20 MAY

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PS3



XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE



Publisher: Warner Bros.
Developer: Snowblind Studios
Heritage: Champions of Norrath
Link: www.snowblindstudios.com
ETA: 2012



Lord of the Rings games haven't exactly been the richest licensed fodder over the years, but Snowblind Studios is really looking to change that.

"The focus is firmly on co-operative play, with three-player co-op and strategic interplay"

FIRST LOOK

Lord of the Rings: War in the North

Is it still grim up North?

What's the story?

Remember in The Lord of the Rings when Gandalf mentions the War in the North? No? Well read/watch it again, or Wikipedia it. There's another whole war waging in Middle Earth that Tolkein only mentions fleetingly, and now you get your chance to actually see what happened up there. In fact, you get to shape the very destiny of the War. Well, as long as it's the way the developers have intended it to play out, anyway.

What do we know?

It's being made by Snowblind Studios, the team behind Champions of Norrath and other such action RPGs, so we can expect a lot of hacking, a lot of slashing, a hell of a lot of looting and some serious levelling up. You are part of a three-character Fellowship, one Dwarf, one Elf, one Warrior (sound familiar?) and have to battle your way through the Orc hordes in order to save the day. The focus is firmly on co-operative play, with three-player co-op and strategic interplay crucial to success. Imagine Too Human, only not terrible and set in the Lord of the Rings universe, and you'll be halfway there.

When do we get more?

A stylish new trailer just dropped out of GDC, so you can get an idea of how the game is taking shape stylistically. The next info bomb will probably drop at this year's E3, so keep your eyes and pointy ears peeled.

Anything else to declare?

There hasn't been a great Lord of the Rings game in a long time, but this has the pedigree to do the license justice and stand up as a great action role-playing game in its own right.



HUNTED[®]

THE DEMON'S FORGE

"A DUNGEON CRAWL
FOR THE GEARS AGE"
-KOTAKU



▶ **PLAYBACK OPTIONS:**

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03.06.2011

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FIRST LOOK

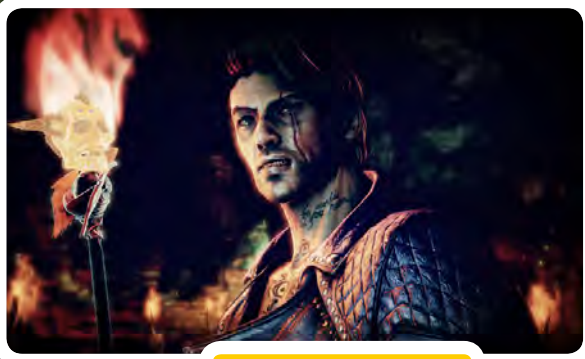
Shadows of the Damned

On the road... to Hell

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
 Click here to tell us what you think of Shadows of the Damned

Shadows of the DAMNED
 Publisher: EA
 Developer: Grasshopper
 Heritage: No More Heroes
 Link: www.ea.com/shadows-of-the-damned
 ETA: June

Expect relentless invention and tongue-in-cheek humour throughout.



The dream team of Suda 51 and Shinji Mikami is an exciting prospect. Expect the punk-rock madness of Suda combined with Mikami's tactile gameplay.

"A third-person blaster that's as grindhouse as Rose McGowan's amputated gun leg"

What's the story?

The fantastically named Garcia Hotspur has a good thing going. He's got a nice motorcycle, a sweet leather jacket and a hot girlfriend. Only problem is, his girlfriend is from Hell. So poor old Garcia has to go down to the underworld and make sure she doesn't end up in the bed of a dark overlord. Typical Wednesday fare, really...

What do we know?

Shadows of the Damned is the combination of crazy punk developer extraordinaire Suda 51 and the innovative, brilliant Shinji Mikami (he of Resident Evil, Devil May Cry and Vanquish fame). Not a bad team, then. It's a third-person blaster that's as grindhouse as Rose McGowan's amputated gun leg, sitting restlessly between comedy, horror and balls-out action.

Think Resi 4 filtered through the mind of a maniac, and you'll be halfway there. The trailer shows off weird organic guns with hands that wrap themselves around the barrel, all manner of weird creepy suicide women and some seriously crunching guitar riffs. Testosteroney.

When do we get more?

It's out surprisingly soon. We'll only have to wait until June to take our own ironically charged trip to Hell on a motorcycle.

Anything else to declare?

This could well be the surprise hit of the summer. It doesn't have the hype train behind it that some shooters gather, but perhaps it doesn't need it. We'll have more as soon as we get it.



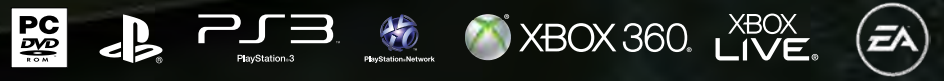
SHIFT 2 UNLEASHED

01.04.11
SHIFT2UNLEASHED.COM

THIS IS REAL RACING



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



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INCOMING

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



Child of Eden

Publisher: Ubisoft | **ETA:** June

The first 'core' Kinect game is almost here, and is looking even more spectacular than ever. Straight from the lucid mind of Tetsuya Mizuguchi, it's a glorious blast of colour and sound, disguised as a shooter in which you use sweeps of your hand to blast down enemies. Amazing-looking stuff.



Mortal Kombat

Publisher: Warner | **ETA:** April

Warner have taken Mortal Kombat back to its flat-planed roots, trying to capitalise on the ground Street Fighter IV and Marvel Vs Capcom 3 have gained in the fighter market. It's all about quick combos, special moves and, of course, absolutely brutal Fatalities. Will it do enough to reignite interest in the classic series? Quite possibly. Enough to be tournament worthy? It might just be...

Alice: Madness Returns

Publisher: EA | **ETA:** 2011

American McGee has been gone for quite a while, but this surreal sequel to 2001's Alice is shaping up to be one of the year's most interesting games. It's crucial that publishers like EA take risks like this in order for the gaming landscape to remain varied and interesting. Hopefully we'll see more developers using the limits of their imaginations to create bizarre, otherworldly spaces for us to play in.



Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim

Publisher: 2K | **ETA:** 2011

If you're a fan of giant openworld RPGs and you've got plans this Winter, then think again. Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim is coming to take over your world. You know what to expect – this is Bethesda doing what it does best, all swords, sorcery and sumptuous vistas. The good news is that it's being built on a new engine, so hopefully we won't have to put up with stupid face-zooms, identical characters and game-breaking bugs. In fact, the whole thing looks absolutely gorgeous. Time to get excited.



Dead Island

Publisher: Deep Silver | **ETA:** 2011

The trailer had everyone talking, rightly or wrongly, about this openworld zombie game. Unsurprisingly, the actual game is a little less impressive, but this melee-based undead basher still has potential to be a lot of fun. The juxtaposition of bright, airy environments and zombies is refreshing. Kinda.



Duke Nukem Forever

Publisher: 2K | **ETA:** June

Would you believe us if we told you it was being delayed again? Of course you would. Admittedly, it's only a month and it's probably because we've had so many shooters in the past few months, but you can't help but laugh. Still, it's not far off and it's looking great fun. Can it do enough to better Bulletstorm? We'll find out soon enough.

UPCOMING

MAY	JUNE	JUNE	AUGUST
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● L.A. Noire ○ Call of Juarez: Bound in Blood 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Shadows of the Damned ○ Duke Nukem Forever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dark Void ○ Vertigo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deus Ex: Human Revolution ○ Warhammer 40K: Space Marine

the first TEMPLAR



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



COMING SPRING
2011

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Publisher: Bethesda
Developer: inXile Entertainment
Heritage: The Bard's Tale
Link: www.huntedthegame.com
ETA: 3rd June

HANDS ON

Hunted: The Demon's Forge

A dark fantasy frolic for two

Do you remember that moment in Gears of War when Marcus and Dom, after slaying legions of the Locust horde, were close to a loving embrace? No? Oh sorry, we must be mixing it up with another equally enjoyable co-op cover-based experience which we recently got to sample – Hunted: The Demon's Forge. Like the aforementioned Epic release, Hunted is optimised for two players, with one controlling a sassy Ranger she-Elf named E'lara, whose dainty appearance misconveys her true combative nature and bloodlust, and the other embodying Caddoc, an experienced warrior who prefers melee combat, yet constantly protests his other half to not take so many risks. These two mercenaries aren't together, but the way they constantly egg each other on, you'd think they were an old married couple.

The plot kicks off with the duo bemoaning their poor existence, with Caddoc haunted by a nightmarish



HUNTED
 THE SERAPHINE FORCE



"inExile really are masters at tempting players to jump through extra hoops"



> **Hunted** continued

vision of a mysterious evil entity. Soon the duo stumble upon a spooky magical artefact which gets them noticed by a seductive ghostly mistress named Seraphine (voiced by the lovely Lucy Lawless) who becomes bound to E'lara after she touches a mysterious

magical macguffin sat atop a gothic plinth, leading them to all investigate the affects of their actions and attempt to set free the untrustworthy Seraphine from her ethereal prison.

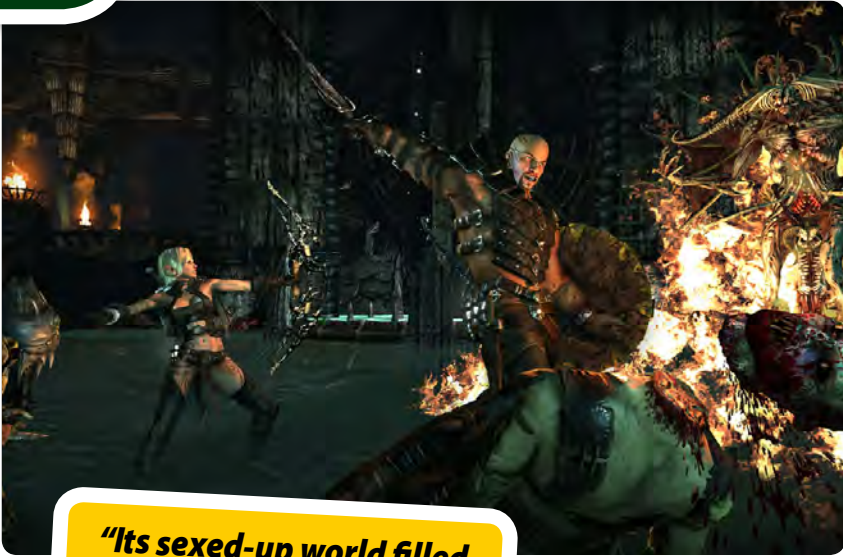
At its core, Hunted is very much a hack-and-slash RPG with dungeons to explore, loot to find and legions of grotesque mutant, magical and

insectoid enemies to slay and surprisingly cover to hide behind in true shooter fashion. Its tone is very dark and bloody, with both warriors able to send out arrows at will in an established shooter manner, and hit, slice and smash enemies to bits with an array of clubs, swords, hammers and axes. Progression is linear, with the critical mission path often laid out blatantly before the player, but there are opportunities to diverge from that path in order to get better loot, or just see more of the world.

We sampled an early portion of the campaign which required us and a co-op buddy to traverse an underground dungeon to get to a town on the other side, and mid-way through the level a side-quest popped up requesting us to find three magical runes which when activated would open up a giant sparkly chest inside the

middle of the room we'd just stumbled upon. As soon as we read the prompt a dungeon wall slide open, showing the way to an eerily dark corridor, tempting us to venture in. inExile really are masters at tempting players to jump through extra hoops and even though finding some hidden artefacts sounds unavoidably dull, it was surprisingly fun >





"Its sexed-up world filled with evil doers and Elves wearing surprisingly little will no doubt strike a chord with many a gamer"



PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
 Click here to tell us what you think of *Hunted: The Demon's Forge*



> **Hunted** continued

navigating the dank environment and seeing how the developers had highlighted key areas via cracks in the wall allowing moonlight to penetrate, or a statue with glowing eyes tempting attention to a nearby lever.

Once all the runes were found and brought to the chamber, the chest opened to let loose an eight-foot giant skeleton warrior armed with a shield and sword, looking to kill those that set him free – that's gratitude for you. After multiple revivals, embarrassing bouts of running away and what could be loosely described as teamwork, the entity was eventually slain, granting rare loot to the victors. To reiterate, this segment was entirely optional, yet was the highlight of the demo.

After our victorious kill we were shown the XP-based levelling mechanic that allows players to plough their skill points into new combat moves and spells which characters can dish out instantly, mana permitting.

Aside from the campaign, inExile weren't ready to talk about the potential for multiplayer, but they did reveal a Crucible mode which will feature randomised dungeons and loot drops,



as well as *Hunted* difficulty mode for those who've already completed the plot.

After reaching a town and fighting off some airborne demon attackers via a giant stationary ballista, with one person tackling the oncoming enemy horde while the other manned the turret, our time with *Hunted* was done and it left a good impression.

On the surface, this hack-and-slash feels like the sort of game the Xbox 360 has seen before, but its sexed-up world filled with evil doers and Elves wearing surprisingly little will no doubt strike a chord with many a gamer. Due to the nature of combat, over-the-shoulder camera and pacing, *Hunted* will always be compared to the cover shooter which shall not be named, but it should make a considerable impression of its own when it's released in June. ●

HOW COMPLETE?

80%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

85%

Shaping up to be a great fantasy romp



INTERVIEW

Hunted Interview: Matt Findley

Talking everything you need to know about InXile's biggest project yet

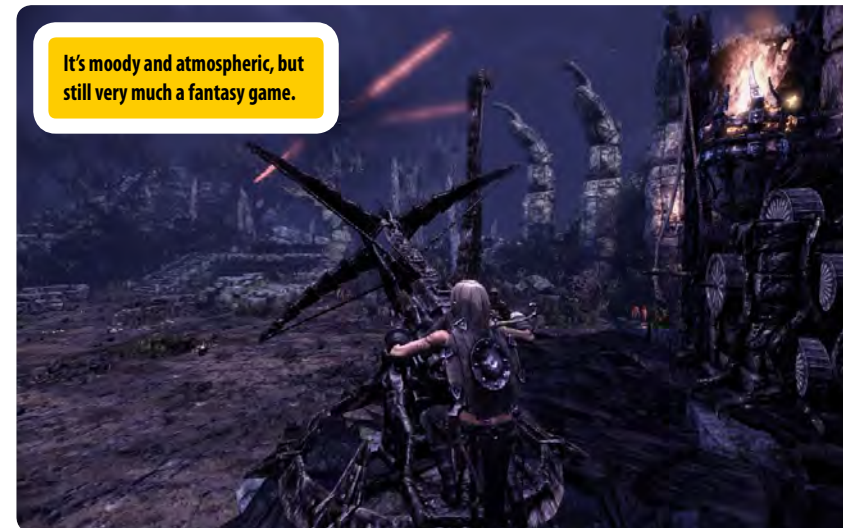
It's been about a year since we last saw Hunted. What's changed since then?

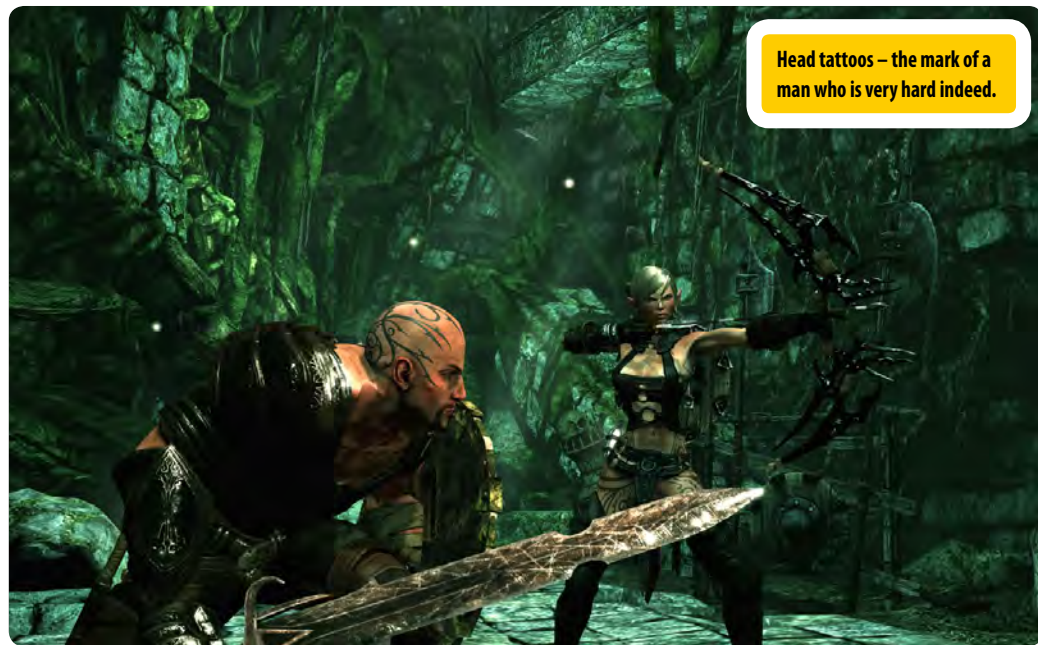
The first round of press that we did was good to get some reaction while there was still time to shape the game, and I think some of the elements that we saw the press latching onto we expanded upon.

I think the game that you play right now is really deeper in two different ways. One, we've added so much more exploration, and so much more content off the critical path. The amount of that stuff is almost double what it was originally going to be. And then with the way all the spell system, combat and co-op works; just the general combat ended up being significantly deeper. There's so much strategy, and that was always the plan, but it really has paid off.

If you just sprint across the map and try to press the X button a bunch of times then you're going to get >

It's moody and atmospheric, but still very much a fantasy game.





Head tattoos – the mark of a man who is very hard indeed.

“We really want the players to be free to use all of the area and to spread out. It’s co-op at a distance”

> **Hunted** continued

murdered. You really do have to think and use your skills, and figure out who should take the lead. There’s so much

strategy just with the combat, and we’re really pleased with where we’re at.

I remember co-op being the major focus when you first announced

Hunted. What is it about Hunted’s co-op mode that you think you do better than other developers?

There are two things. The simple one is our ‘co-op at a distance’. We really want the players to be free to use all of the area and to spread out. When someone goes down, you can bring them back by just throwing a regen vial from any where you have a line of sight. We’ve taken this co-op idea and woven it into all of the aspects of the game design.

The special skills and abilities are designed with the idea of co-op in

mind. The fun of co-op games is helping your partner and kicking butt, so when you think of the spells that Caddoc has (like levitation), and then E'lara can pick them off, you can really get some great teamwork going from anywhere.

The boss fight we’re showing here is a perfect example of what we’re talking about with the co-op because the characters are different from each other. That’s kind of a unique aspect for a co-op game. Playing as Caddoc is so different than playing as E'lara. The first wave of enemies in this boss fight are all ranged guys, so E'lara has to take the lead, and she can battle-charge Caddoc’s crossbow to make his weakness a strength for a while. But then you kill that wave and all of the melee guys start attacking, and suddenly Caddoc has to take the lead. >



Not holding out much hope for this guy's head.

> **Hunted** continued

In most co-op games, it's two of the same guys with the same gun and you don't get that whole dynamic of having to really work together. If you're not communicating it makes it really challenging. I think we're putting co-operation into co-op play, and I think it's kind of innovative.

You seem to be trying to appeal to two audiences with *Hunted* – fans of old-school dungeon crawling and *Gears of War*-style third-person action fans. Which type of gamer are you hoping *Hunted* will attract?

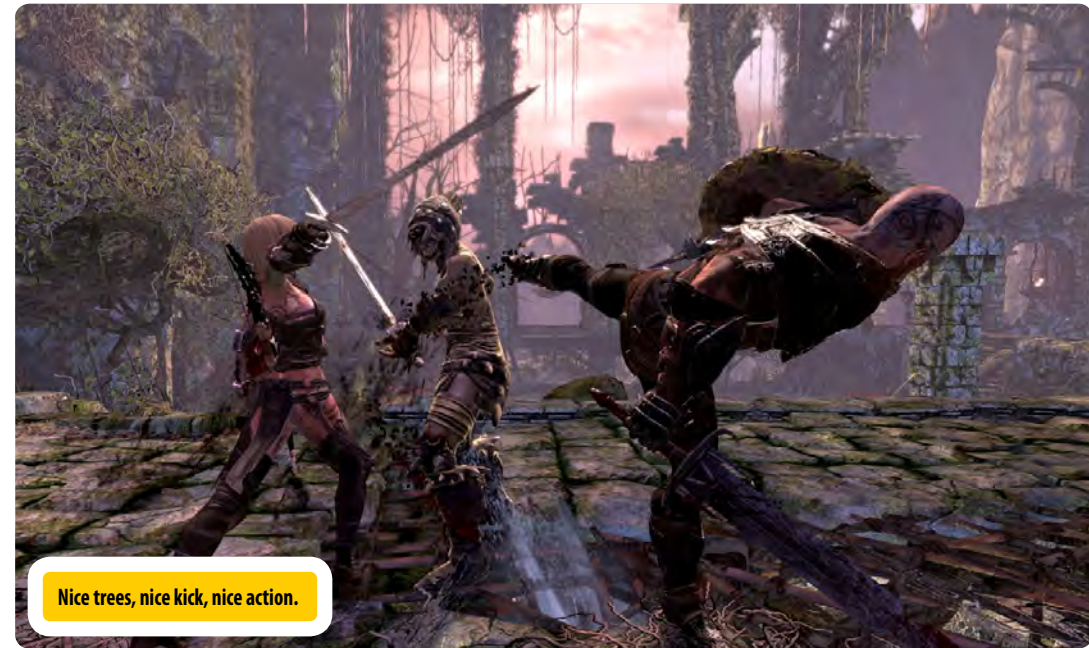
I think the idea is for us to cross both boundaries. There is an action audience out there that has never had a chance to play a fantasy game because there's just no really good fantasy games in that genre. With the spells and magic, there's so much depth and history to

those games that I think it's great to go and introduce a new audience to that style. If they want to play it like a normal action game and forget about the puzzles and exploration they're going to get that same kind of experience they would have had from another action game. And it's true the other way around, too. For people that are really into the fantasy stuff, their options have been pretty much the hardcore RPG. There haven't been too many products – there's been a few recently, but not a lot, especially not in the co-op cover category – they haven't seen the joy of the action. Running into a room and lighting up a guy with explosive arrows is pretty dramatic stuff, and I think we can introduce that audience to a style of gameplay that is fresh and new.

Talking of old-school, on the title screen, we noticed there was an 'Old-School' difficulty level on >



HUNTED
THE DEMONS FORTRESS



Nice trees, nice kick, nice action.

> Hunted continued

offer. What kind of challenge does that give the gamer?
Yeah, that's a nod back. We say that this game has the soul of a dungeon-

crawler and that it's a visualisation of the things that were in our imagination when we were playing those old-school dungeon crawls. As a nod to those old-school games we wanted to make something that was a very

old-school experience, which means significantly fewer checkpoints and save games. It means significantly fewer upgrades, and all of this optional content along the sides of the game becomes mandatory. You have to find all of the secrets, solve all of the puzzles and find all of the hidden things to advance in old-school mode.

The commercial failure of new IPs has been a talking point over the past few months, particularly the high profile failures of games like Vanquish and Enslaved. Do you think that it particularly difficult to launch a new IP this far into a console's life-cycle, and do you think the fact that you have a multiplayer element to the game – something both of those

examples lacked – will make a difference to Hunted's success?
Yeah, I agree with all of those things. It is really hard to launch a new IP; it's very hard. There aren't that many of them being launched compared to the way it used to be. The big publishers don't have that many slots for independent developers to come in with new IP. There's just not that many opportunities, which is partly why Bethesda was so good for us because they totally got the concept. I think they have the line-up and the strength and the power to make it happen.
There's something about the multiplayer co-op element and the viral nature of the joy of being able to play with someone else, that I think the co-op gives us an advantage. There aren't a lot of co-op games; co-op's



> **Hunted** continued

kind of in its infancy and I think we're going to see more and more products weaving co-op into the game at a deeper level like we're trying to do. So I think it does give you an advantage but that doesn't make it a slam dunk. It's still a really, really hard thing to do.

What does the future of *Hunted* look like? Does it rest purely on sales, or would you like to revisit the universe again?

Honestly, I'd like to be making *Hunted* games for the next 10 years. The first one is the real hard one. Once you've got that pipeline completely set up and you know all the pitfalls then it does become easier. We know exactly what works in our game and we know what we wished we could do if we had more time. I already know what *Hunted 2* would look like in my head completely

from beginning to end. I've already written the outline, I already have a story, and I've already given my story to my dialogue writer to flesh things out.

We would love to do more of these. I'd like to do one after that and one after that. You look at what *Gears* has done. *Gears 1* went out and was a really big success, and *Gears 2* was bigger and *Gears 3* is going to be even bigger than that. With a new IP you really hope your publisher is down with the program because it takes multiple incarnations to really realise the full potential of the franchise.

So has a sequel already been green-lit or does it come down to sales?

In today's world it just comes down to money. It's always going to. We like to pretend we're in the fine art business, but sometimes maybe we're just painting houses. ●

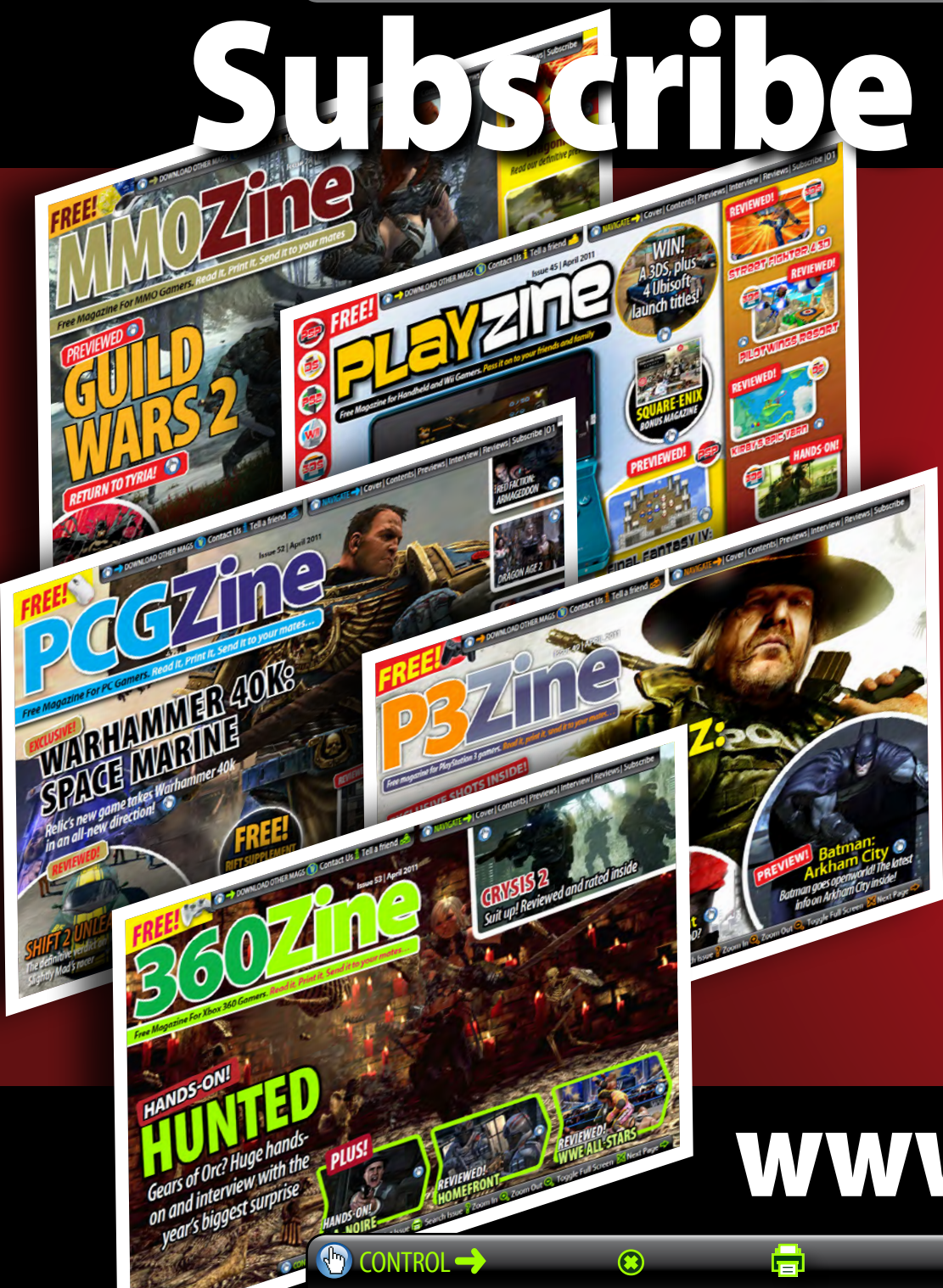


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L.A. NOIRE

Publisher: Rockstar
Developer: Team Bondi
Heritage: Red Dead Redemption, GTA
Link: www.rockstargames.com/lanoire
ETA: 20th May

HANDS ON

L.A. Noire

Once upon a time in America

Gumption. You don't hear that word very often these days, but a few hours in the company of Rockstar's latest opus makes it suddenly seem relevant. Perhaps it's L.A. Noire's spot-on period dialogue that has us flirting with half-century old vocabulary. More likely, though, it's the fact that L.A. Noire has it in spades. This isn't another GTA clone. Nope, it's a game with some serious, yep, gumption.

It's rare to be given freedom when you play a game at preview stage, but that's exactly what we were awarded with L.A. Noire. One case, taken from the Homicide desk (the game's equivalent of levels), called The Silk Stocking, was free to be solved however we see fit. Awesome.

The drama begins with a murder scene, and it's not one for the faint-hearted. A woman, stripped bare and face-up, with lacerations to the neck and arms and some cryptic writing lipsticked on her torso. This isn't a time for being squeamish, though – there's a killer on the loose in 1940's Los Angeles, and Cole Phelps and his partner Rusty Galloway need to find them. >

"There's a killer on the loose in 1940's Los Angeles, and you need to find them"



Don't knock off his hat. Ever.

L.A. NOIRE



"This particular scene felt staged, although not by the developers, but by the killer"



You can get your partner to drive if you're feeling lazy.



Rockstar does 'atmospheric' pretty well, huh?

> L.A. Noire continued

Searching the crime scene is first up. As you walk around, subtle music cues will let you know when there's something you need to look at. From there, you can pick things up, examine

them in detail and find clues and possible evidence. This particular scene felt staged, though not by the developers, but by the killer. A long trail of blood led us up to the rooftop and the home address of the victim. A little too convenient? Especially when Phelps

still believes there's some sort of connection between this murder and another from earlier in the game.

Anyway, the two follow up their only lead thus far and pay a visit to Ms. Lapenti, the landlady at the victim's (one Antonia Maldonado) home. After a brief scan of her room, the pair chat to Lapenti on the downstairs couch. This is where the interrogation – the core of L.A. Noire's detective 'simulation' kicks in. Using the evidence you've found, the game offers a series of questions you can fire at the witness. From there, you have to listen carefully to what they say, as well as watch their subtle facial inflections (made possible thanks to L.A. Noire's startling MotionScan tech).

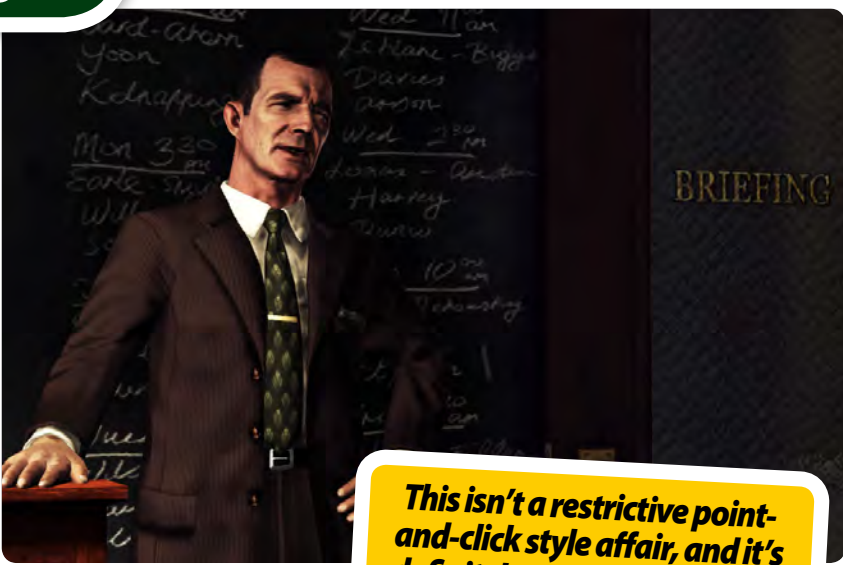
When they've finished their response, you've got three options. Do you think they're telling the truth, lying or simply don't think they're telling you

everything. Get it right, and you can gain vital evidence. Get it wrong, and they'll clam up. Make sure that if you're accusing someone of lying though, that you've got the evidence to back it up, or you'll look the fool.

There's no actual way of failing the case in L.A. Noire, even if you get the >



L.A. NOIRE



This isn't a restrictive point-and-click style affair, and it's definitely not just interactive cut-scenes. This is a new and fascinating game mechanic"



> L.A. Noire continued

questions wrong. However, this will cause the cases to branch and play out differently for every person. Our line of questioning took us to Maldonado's husband, but if we'd been more successful with Lapenti, we'd have been able to go straight to the bar where she had been drinking.

This isn't a restrictive point-and-click style affair, and it's definitely not just interactive cut-scenes. This is a new and fascinating game mechanic, one that's as driven by technology as it is ingenuity, and a final nail in the coffin to the idea that this is just another GTA. L.A. Noire isn't an openworld cop game. It's a detective game, and a supremely well-made one at that.

It would be unfair to spoil the rest of the case for you. It did contain a brief fist fight, handled much like Red Dead's scraps, and an even briefer car chase, but at no point did Phelps or Galloway have to reach for their firearms. There are epic shootouts in L.A. Noire, but it doesn't rely on them. And it's much the better for it.

Credit must go to the casting and voice-recording teams, too. Considering the size of the cast, L.A. Noire maintains a level of consistency in its acting that wouldn't seem out of place in a TV



**Is this a vital clue?
Yes, of course it is.**

serial, let alone a videogame. Good job too, as a major character with a suspect actor could bring the whole thing crashing down.

And what about those characters. Phelps himself is a stoic lead, slowly revealing a cynical side as the game progresses. Far more immediate, though, is the snarling Irishman Captain Donnelly, who's darting one liners and eyeless half-cut grizzle are instant hero-makers. Whenever he's on screen, you know business is about to pick up.

There should be plenty of him too, as L.A. Noire is a huge game. This isn't an open-ended free-roaming sandbox, it's a tightly scripted linear experience set in an open world. And it could just be the best game you'll play all year. Black is most definitely back. ●

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of L.A. Noire

360Zine

L.A. NOIRE

HOW COMPLETE?
90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS
95%

Startlingly ambitious and drowning in class

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Crysis 2

Hey good lookin'

The secret to a great first-person shooter? Making you 'feel'. More so than any other genre, developers are given the ability to connect us to their character and world seamlessly, perhaps even more so than in any other media. In great FPS, we become Master Chief, we are a soldier trapped in a World War II ditch. And in Crysis 2, we are a suit.

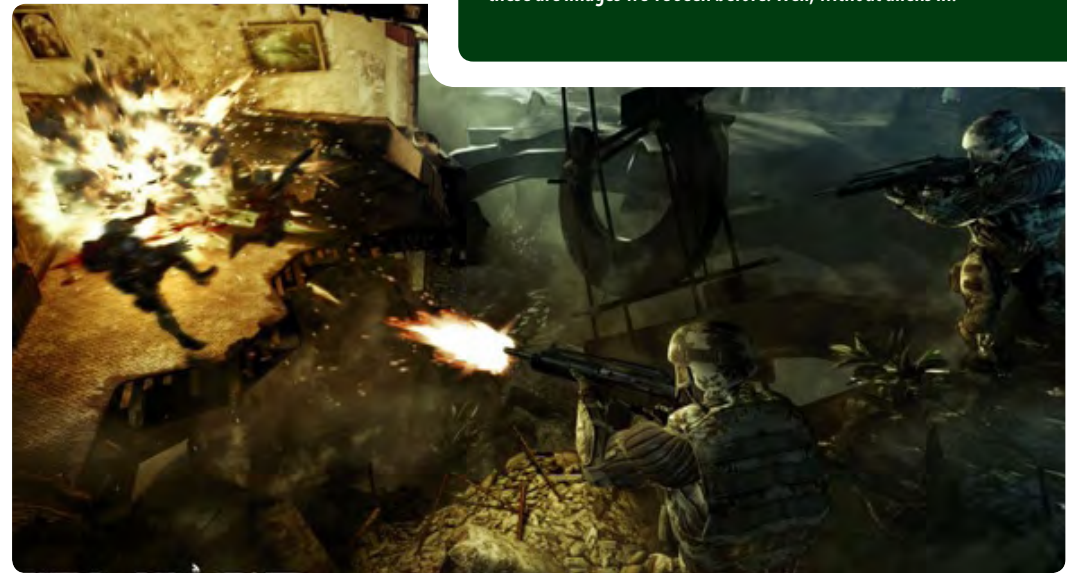
Wait, a suit? That sounds terrible, surely? Well, actually no. Crysis 2 might be telling a largely incomprehensible story about aliens invading New York, but the real narrative here is between

your clothes, and what they say about you. You see, after a hoorah-heavy jarhead opening, your character Alcatraz wakes up in a bioweapon suit that gives him, and therefore us, the power to cloak, to leap great distances, to vastly increase the amount of damage you can take and to perform superhuman feats of strength.

What's crucial to this though, is that it makes you feel like you're joining forces with this new skin. At first, the comically deep voice that belts out 'Cloak Engaged' or 'Tactical Options Available' feels jarring. Before long,

"The real narrative here is between your clothes, and what they say about you"

though, you start to trust that voice. Is it still coming from the suit, or is it something more personal? It's surprising how effectively Crysis 2 can get inside your head. As you continue, your evolution as super soldier improves – you start to see each area as a playground of opportunity – how you can best use your new powers to take out the patrolling enemies.



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

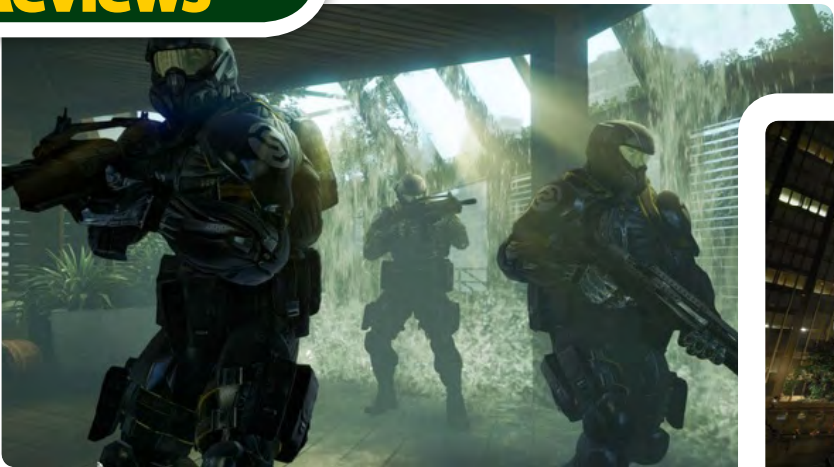
Does Crysis 2 back up its good looks?



Fahrenheit 911 **Dumb or dumber?** **Suited and booted**

Fahrenheit 911

Seeing New York City crumbling under alien attack is certainly evocative of September 11th. It would be a stretch to call it symbolism, but nonetheless these are images we've seen before. Well, without aliens in.



> **Crysis 2** continued

And just as you start to feel like you really are The Predator then the S well and truly hits the F. It only really takes something as insignificant as an entire skyscraper crashing down to the Manhattan concrete to wake you up from your suit-fuelled binge and make you realise there's a war out there, and you're in the middle of it.

Crysis 2's alien invasion is arresting in its execution, partly because the game looks absolutely stunning (underpinned not only with heavyweight visuals but also stylish art

design), and partly because it forces you to start relying on those old human instincts just as much as your suit. It's all very well cloaking in the shadows, but that's not going to do much good when a hulking goliath robo-alien is jumping on your head.

Through Crysis 2's lengthy campaign, there are moments of thunder and awe that no other shooter has ever managed. It is the best looking game on 360 so far, and those visuals genuinely improve the experience. It's not just window dressing. In truth,

there are more engaging, wittier and smarter shooters out there, but few can match Crysis 2's swagger.

When the alien invasion takes hold, it really is an incredible spectacle. It's not an original concept but it's never been done better in games.



"There are more engaging, wittier and smarter shooters out there, but few can match Crysis 2's swagger"

Unfortunately, for all its resounding positives, a few little niggles do get in the way. While the story is hard to follow, it's annoyingly omnipresent. Ropy acting and persistent exposition get in the way of you, the suit and the aliens. More damaging though, are the AI bugs which shatter the illusion. Seeing a guard running endlessly into a wall isn't going to halt your progress, but it certainly reminds you that you're only playing a videogame. And one that sometimes seems like it might be pushing the 360 a bit too far.

Also, as Crysis 2 is definitely more linear than its forebears, there are moments where it descends into all-out blasting, losing some of its subtlety and outright fun in the process. It's still magnificent to look at, but there really are plenty of duck-shoot FPS games out there. This doesn't need to be one of them.

Speaking of me-too FPSs, Crysis 2's extensive multiplayer options owe more than a little debt to Call of Duty, albeit with a few nice tweaks. There's XP, levels, perks and similar match

FREEZE FRAME

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



10 MINUTES

It eases you in by making you learn the suit's powers and taking out a few guards.



1 HOUR

You've got the hang of your powers and the smoothness of the combat takes hold.



3 HOURS

Aliens are here, they're pretty ruddy angry and they're really exciting to battle. Boom!



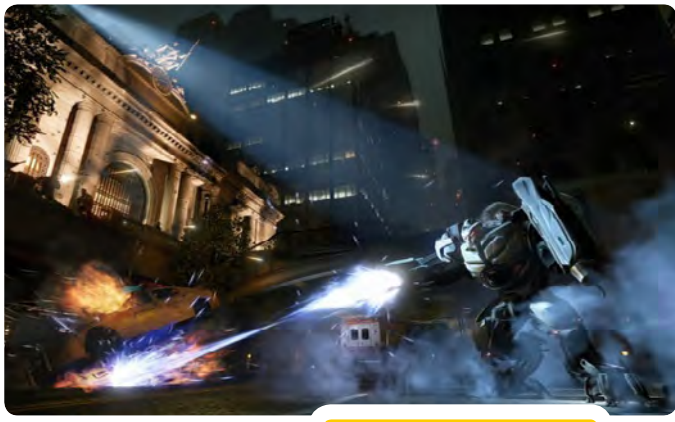
6 HOURS

Relentless action, incredible visuals and only a few minor AI bugs. Pretty good stuff.

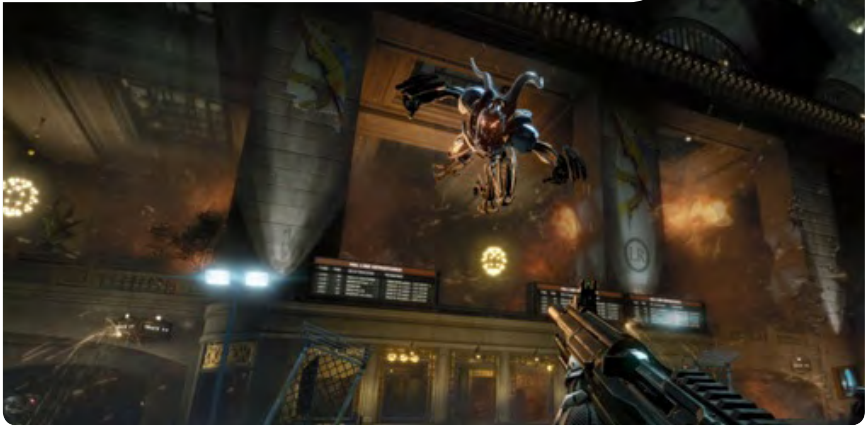


10 HOURS+

The story is finishing now but there's multiplayer to get involved with. If you want.



There are brains underneath all that beauty, but it's not quite as open as some might expect.



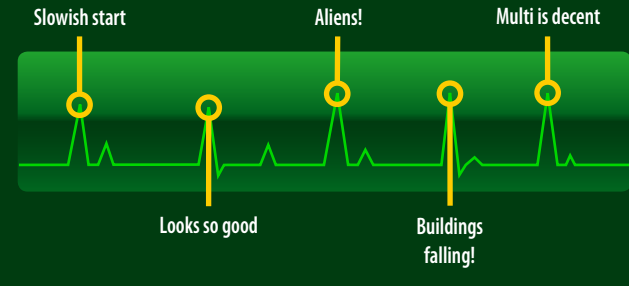
> **Crisis 2** continued

types, and even the pacing of the action seems to have been increased. Of course, the inclusion of suit powers makes it stand out from the crowd a little, but at the moment they're doing more harm than good.

It suffers with balance issues that the multiplayer demo highlighted a few months ago. Getting constantly killed by cloaked enemies is just not fun, even when the powers are very limited. It creates a disconnect because you're spending half of your brain power in CoD mode – rattling along at a hundred miles an hour – and the other half hiding in the corner.

It's really not a bad multiplayer shooter by any means. The maps are tightly designed and look spectacular at times, and there's plenty of satisfying kills to be had, but when the bar for this sort of this is so high, it's hard to see Crisis 2 competing.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



What's doubly disappointing is that the multiplayer has been built by Crytek UK, the old Free Radical guys who were responsible for Timesplitters (and, in part, GoldenEye on the N64). This shares almost nothing in common with those games though, preferring to toe the line rather than do anything of any real consequence. Back of the box ticked, then, and Call of Duty back in the drive.

Ultimately, it would seem this really is a tale of one man and his new get-up. Crisis 2's single-player campaign is breathless nonsense, in the best possible way. A lot may have changed since the openworld ambition of the first game, but this isn't the Emperor's new clothes. It's yours. Enjoy them, they look good on you. ●

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

- Amazing looking
- Open and creative
- Buggy in parts

88%



Homefront

Dawn of the red

The farm. That's what THQ has bet on its first 'big' release of the year, and its attempt to muscle in with the big boys of the FPS battlefield. If Homefront fails, then the company could be in for a bit of bother. A bit of pressure for Kaos Studios, then?

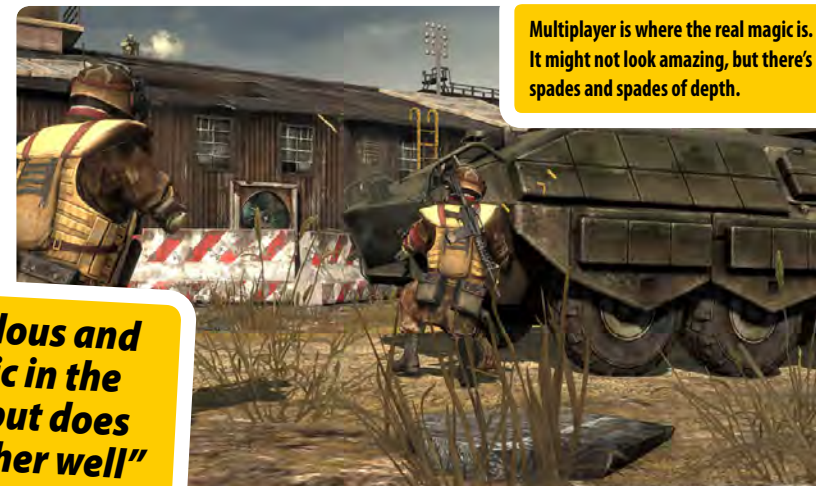
Thankfully for the boys and girls in Kaos' New York outfit, Homefront does what it needs to do to succeed. It's extremely reminiscent of Call of Duty and Battlefield, features a slick campaign to blast through, and crucially, a well thought out and

well-made multiplayer. THQ is bringing the fight, make no mistake.

First things first, then, the campaign. If it's an afterthought, it's a good one. The daft story – which you've probably heard all about by now – is that Korea has united and invaded the US. You're part of a band of freedom fighters trying to win it back. It's ridiculous and unrealistic in the extreme, but it does hang together well enough to support the action. There are story beats that are genuinely quite shocking, and for once, you actually know what you're



Publisher: THQ
Developer: Kaos Studios
Heritage: Frontlines: Fuel Of War
Link: www.homefront-game.com
OUT NOW



Multiplayer is where the real magic is. It might not look amazing, but there's spades and spades of depth.

"It's ridiculous and unrealistic in the extreme, but does hang together well"

doing and why you're doing it. As you'd expect, the campaign is little more than a point-to-point blast strung together with set-pieces. There's no room for experimentation or expression when you play through – just point, shoot and follow. When you're given the opportunity to try something else, like targeting the Goliath tank or riding in a chopper, Homefront is at its most interesting, and at just shy of four hours, it's not planning on hanging around for long.

Some will be disappointed at the lack of length, but there's something to be said for a game that never resorts to padding or throwing waves of enemies at you. In Homefront, you're in and out quickly, ready for the main event that is multiplayer. If, that is, you can get the bloody thing to work.

At the time of writing, there's a host of technical issues plaguing Homefront's multiplayer. Some are being locked out of the game completely, some can't find servers and others have had their XP reset. It's something that Kaos and

HOME AND AWAY

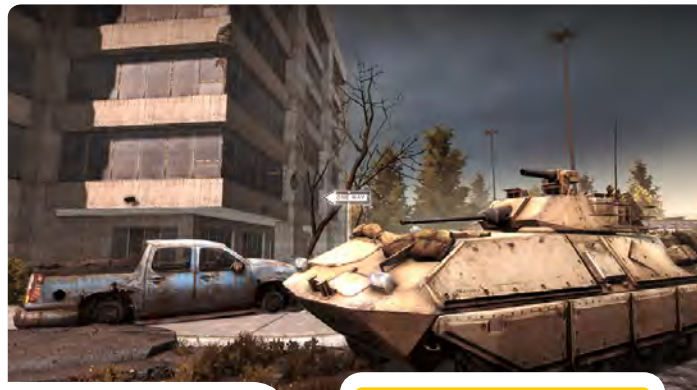
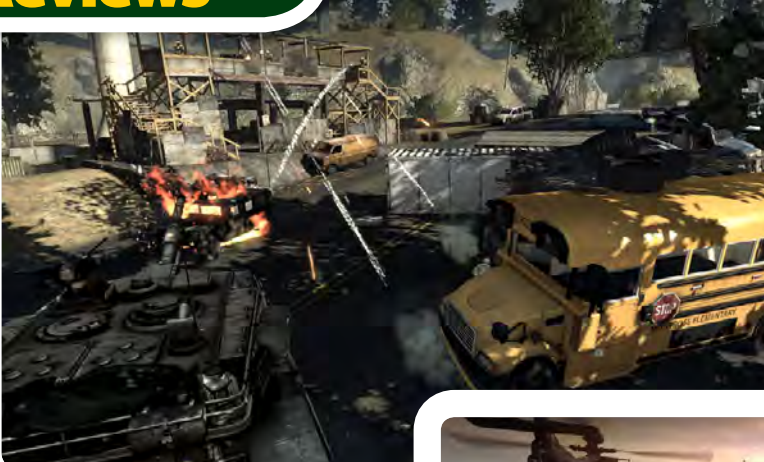
What makes Homefront stand out?



- Land, air and sea
- The drones
- Red dawn

Land, air and sea

In both single and multiplayer, Homefront doesn't restrict you to the ground. One memorable scene in a helicopter is probably the campaign's highlight.



"Homefront online is very good indeed. It's essentially Battlefield's Conquest mode, but with added elements"



Some missions in the single-player focus on dramatic set-pieces rather than just plain old shooting.

Visually, Homefront isn't going to set the world alight, but it's colourful and crammed with detail.

> Homefront continued

THQ needs to fix immediately though, as they're losing ground with every second it continues.

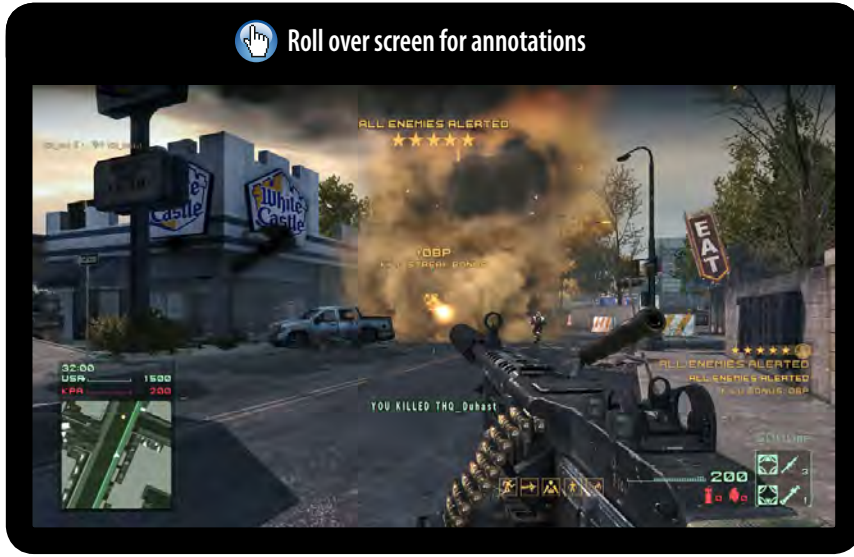
It's a shame too, as Homefront online is very good indeed. It's essentially Battlefield's Conquest mode, but with the added spice of remote-controlled drones and a very clever monetary system known as Battle Points.

Basically, every action you carry out earns you points which you can then spend on equipment or vehicles. Do you hold back and save up for a tank, or quickly zip up a flak jacked to try and hold on for one more kill? It places the emphasis on playing skilfully more than harbouring killstreaks, and helps the game stand out from its very obvious competitors we could mention.

After you reach level 7 (if the game doesn't reset your XP, naturally). then you unlock the Battle Commander playlists, where an AI 'commander' will assign you specific sub-missions during play, giving

players something else in the game to aim for other than just team victory. Clever stuff indeed.

THQ has done good work with Homefront. It feels like a product, one carefully aimed at the market it wants to exploit, but it has the quality to back it up. It's not as good as CoD or Battlefield, but for a first attempt, it's easily good enough to make a dent. If those damn servers ever get fixed... ●



Roll over screen for annotations

360Zine Verdict A strong entrant into the first-person shooter fray for THQ and Kaos

- Solid single-player
- Very good multiplayer
- Lacking in originality

82%



Publisher: THQ
Developer: In-house
Heritage: WWE SmackDown vs RAW
Link: www.wweallstars.com
OUT NOW

WWE All-Stars

It's a slam jam

It's been a long time since a wrestling game has really piqued our interest. We're really talking a couple of console generations, here. Not since WWE No Mercy rounded off the N64's hat-trick of memorable grapplers has the appeal of men in leotards been so tangible.

So it shouldn't come as a huge surprise that WWE All-Stars is heavily influenced by those once-great wrestling games. The team down at THQ San Diego has set about building a game that puts the fun and fantasy back into the world's most unusual

combo of sport and entertainment, and has done so by combining NBA Jam-style 10-foot leaping madness with a secretly deep and convincing engine. It's a great partnership.

Basically, it's all about pitting the modern-day group of WWE Superstars against the guys from back in the day. So, you can have Bret Hart taking on Rey Mysterio or Andre The Giant (RIP) battling it out with the Big Show. The characters, or should that be caricatures, are huge on screen, fantastically over-proportioned and move with real heft and purpose.



Wrestlers have never been known for their stunning hairstyles.

"It might not have SmackDown's 10 million modes, but it's a far better game"

There are specific differences between a big guy like Andre and an acrobat like Rey, for example, and part of the fun is working out how your character fights, and how's best to take down your opponent.

Even though WWE All-Stars can be played by just wading in and bashing buttons, there's real depth here. Technical wrestlers like Hart or Mr Perfect can chain together grapples, and some of the brawlers like HHH can do complex juggle attacks, which means that there's a lot to learn here. Sadly, the lack of a proper tutorial will see many players at a loss as to how to do all of this stuff. We were lucky enough to get a 60-minute demonstration from the developers. Most people, obviously, won't be.

Still, with a bit of effort (and maybe a glance through the instruction manual – perish the thought!) you can

really start to get the most out of WWE All-Stars. In multiplayer especially, its flowing ballet of violence, reversals, over-the-top special moves and laugh-out-loud daftness is a heady mix. It's pure fan service too, with a Story mode that features classic characters cutting realistic interviews and a roster that can spark a bit of nostalgia in almost any child of the 80s.

Ultimately, WWE All-Stars might not have SmackDown's 10 million modes, but it's a far better game for it. Sometimes less is more, even when you're spinning 40 foot in the air. ●

360Zine Verdict *The best wrestling game in many a year. Slammin'*

- Great presentation
- Surprisingly deep
- Can be tricky to figure out

80%



Publisher: 2K Sports
Developer: 2K Czech
Heritage: Top Spin 3
Link: www.2ksports.com/games/topspin4
OUT NOW

Top Spin 4

Another powerful return for tennis' top player

It's caught in a constant battle with Virtua Tennis, but for the connoisseur of all things racquet and ball, Top Spin is the only choice, and always has been. The depth, accessibility and presentation have been key in usurping SEGA's dominance, and in Top Spin 4, 2K Czech simply gives us plenty more of the same.

For those who've not played Top Spin before, it's a fairly simple premise: Tennis. Not the arcadey tennis you might have previously been used to, but a much more considered, well-

executed and ultimately more enjoyable way of hitting a ball back and forth over a net.

It's all in the shot selection and how you use it. Top Spin allows you to play a normal shot, use slice, lob or top spin, to really push the ball around the court. The better your timing, the more accurate the shot. Push it too hard and you'll crash the ball into the net or out of play. We know that it sounds obvious, but these are things Virtua Tennis doesn't really manage well.

In truth, there's not a huge amount here that wasn't present in Top Spin 3,



Makes a nice change from all the first-person shooters, doesn't it?

"Winning a point after an enduring rally is proper fist-pumping stuff"

bar a few tweaks to an already very competent control scheme, the ability to play in 3D and a much-improved online mode. It looks better too, although players have unusually dark complexions, and has that 2K sports sheen that has become synonymous with that brand.

As always, where Top Spin 4 comes into its own is in multiplayer – preferably with four of you huddled around a game of doubles. This is where the combination of high-speed action and intricate depth comes into its own. It becomes a battle of technical skill and mental strength, and winning a point after a particularly enduring rally is proper fist-pumping stuff. Just make sure you don't look like Tim Henman when you do it, though.

There may not be much new about Top Spin 4, but it's hard to fault (no pun intended) a game that sets out to

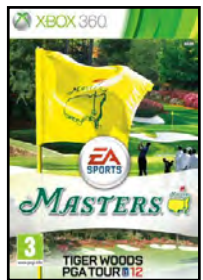


achieve something and does so with consummate class. If you're after digital tennis, then you should be after Top Spin 4. Ace. ●

360Zine Verdict You really won't find a better tennis game for your dollar

- The best tennis game
- Really deep
- Very similar to Top Spin 3

80%



Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters

Come and join our club

It only seems like five minutes since Tiger last darkened our doors with his latest swingathon, but the big man is back, and for once he's sporting some different clothes.

Yes, the release date has been brought forward to coincide with the Augusta Masters, one of golf's most prestigious tournaments. And it's The Masters that permeates every inch of

Tiger 12, from the opening pseudo-tutorial where you win the coveted green jacket as Tiger, to the ultimate goal in your career as a golfer.

Everything else has had a spruce up, too. It finally looks the part, still not as photorealistic as it could be, but comfortably 'of this generation'. More important changes come when you've got the club in your digital hand, though.

"This is the slickest, sharpest PGA game in many a year"

Integral to the modified gameplay is the caddy. This handy fellow is constantly behind you like a guardian angel of the links, recommending which club you should use, how to approach your shot and generally appearing like he knows a damn sight more about golf than you do. He must be bitter.

Anyway, when you've picked your shot, the swinging mechanic is largely the same, although you'll have to pay more attention to power than before, purely because the caddy will recommend some softer touches rather than just whacking it as hard as you can before putting.

When you do make it to the green, the new focus meter can be used in a trade off. Do you use some of the built-up focus (gained by playing well) to ensure your heart rate is lowered or your putting accuracy is increased?



Or save it for a more important hole? It's a layer of strategic depth that Tiger hasn't had for years.

All in all then, it's actually okay to be excited about Tiger Woods again. This is the slickest, sharpest PGA game in many a year, and well worth picking up if you've been out of the golf scene for a while. Tiger needed a lift, too. Tough year. ●



360Zine Verdict *Tiger Woods games needed a change. Here it is. Good stuff*

- 👍 Much better presentation
- 👍 Welcome tweaks to gameplay
- 👎 Don't expect a revolution

87%

In **360Zine**
Issue 54



L.A. NOIRE

THE FULL REVIEW!

PREVIEWED!
FIFA 12 GEARS OF WAR 3
ELDER SCROLLS V BATTLEFIELD 3

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