

FREE!

PCGzine

Issue 48 | December 2010

Free Magazine For PC Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...

REVIEWED!

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS

The definitive verdict on this year's premier FPS

REVIEWED!



THE SIMS MEDIEVAL
The most daring Sims yet?

PREVIEWED!

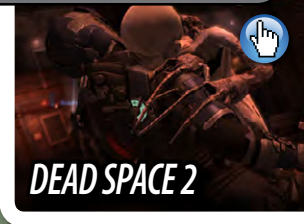


CRYSIS 2
Crytek's plans to rule the multiplayer scene

REVIEWED!



FOOTBALL MANAGER 2011
A league of its own?



DEAD SPACE 2



HAWX 2



STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED 2



JAMES BOND 007: BLOOD STONE



DARKSPORE

Welcome to PCGZine



Usually the November issue of PCGZine is bursting at the seams with reviews of the industry's biggest games, yet this year we've not only got the cream of the crop in the latest Call of Duty and Football Manager, but we also have a surprising number of previews for next year's biggest games.

Christmas is just around the corner, but publishers aren't throwing the kitchen sink at the holiday window any more, with The Sims Medieval, Dead Space 2 and Crysis 2 all releasing early 2011. Games are now being spread liberally throughout the calendar,

allowing every developer to have their day. A noble cause I'm sure you'll agree.

Andy Griffiths, Editor
pcgzine@gamerzines.com

READER FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of the magazine!

MEET THE TEAM

Probably the best games writers on the planet

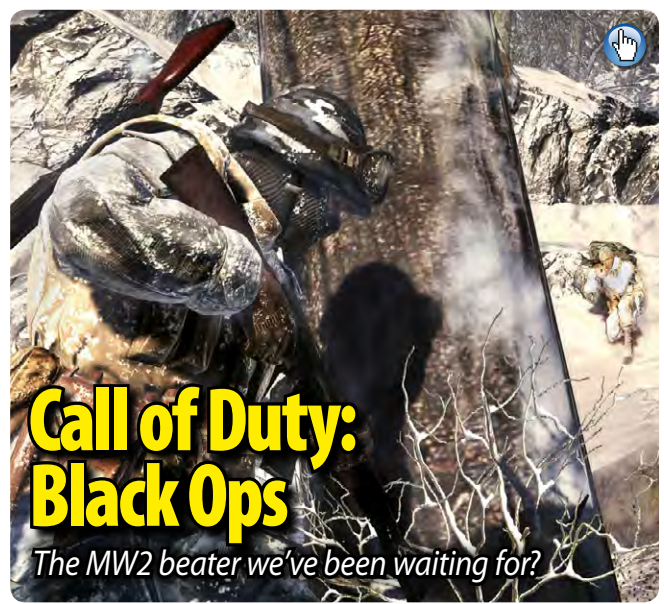


David Scammell
Enjoyed devouring his friends a lot in Dead Space 2.



Jon Denton
Made way too many lightsaber sounds on his own this month!

Don't miss! This month's highlights...



Call of Duty: Black Ops

The MW2 beater we've been waiting for?



Football Manager 2011

Back of the net!



Dead Space 2

Multiplayer hands-on



The Sims Medieval

EA take their life simulation in a brave new direction

QUICK FINDER

Almost every game's just a click away!

Darksport	Dragon Age II
Dead Space 2	The Sims Medieval
Bad Company: Vietnam	Crysis 2
Call of Duty: Black Ops	Football Manager 2011
James Bond 007: Blood Stone	SW: Force Unleashed 2
HAWX 2	The Ball

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Without the multimedia playing, the magazine will look correct, but you will be missing out on all of the extra content built into each issue, like videos, animated screenshots, annotations, quizzes, competitions and more.

We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.



Criterion Games

WARNING

FAST NEEDS NO FRIENDS

People with relationships are advised against the playing of this game. Connecting to **NEED FOR SPEED™ AUTOLOG** enables extreme competition through precise documentation of friends' records and stats. Hard feelings. Creative profanity. Grudge matches likely. Electronic Arts™ and Need for Speed accept no liability for the dissolution of friendships, families, intimate relationships and partnerships.

19TH NOVEMBER 2010

Go to uk.needforspeed.com to learn how fast turns friends to foes.



▶ **PLAYBACK OPTIONS:**

NEED FOR SPEED HOT PURSUIT



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DARKSPORE

Publisher: EA
 Developer: Maxis
 Heritage: Spore
 Link: www.darkspore.com
 ETA: February

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



Darkspore

FIRST LOOK

Diablo meets character creation

What's the story?

Only the brilliant minds at Maxis would take Spore and channel the same ideas of guiding a player's own created species into the darkness of space, into something else entirely. Darkspore is a hack-and-slash loot-driven RPG where all the functionality and power of Spore's most valuable commodity, the character creator, is supported with a single-player campaign, as well as multiplayer PvP for as many as eight players.

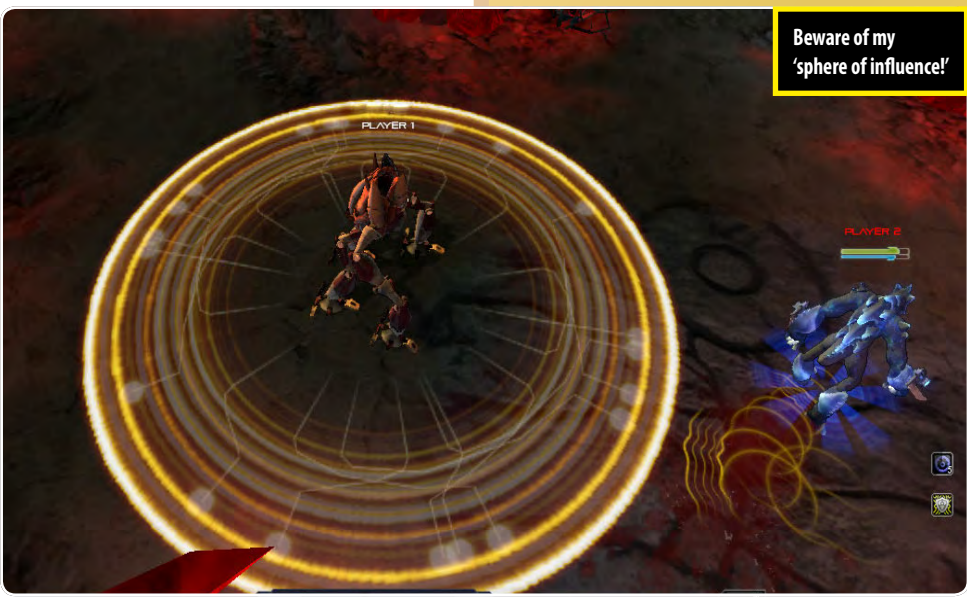
What do we know?

Maxis claim no two player creations will be alike, and the powerful character creator will allow untold strategic implications. The only limits are your imagination, which is definitely why they've only showed the multiplayer side of things thus far. The kicker is that players can switch between their creations on the fly, so 1v1 battles become a constant 'rock, paper and scissors'-based back and forth skirmish, with players able to bring multiple characters to the arena. 4v4 battles, on the other hand,

are more about maximising your team's combined attacks and reacting to any changes in the enemy ranks.

Anything else to declare?


Creations have the ability to emulate the established RPG archetypes, so expect Tanks, Healers, ranged attackers and minion-spewing creations. There will be a dedicated single-player mode too, with a plot penned by BioWare's Malcolm Azania, of Mass Effect 2 fame.



"...BLACK OPS, AS A MULTIPLAYER ENTITY,
IS ASTOUNDING" — 360 Magazine

CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS

09.11.10



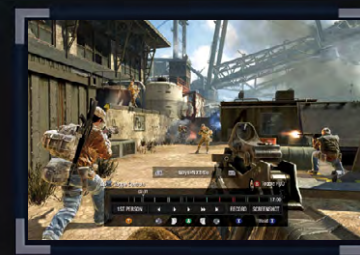
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DRAGON AGE II

Publisher: EA
Developer: BioWare
Heritage: Mass Effect series, Dragon Age: Origins
Link: www.dragonage.bioware.com
ETA: 11th March

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Dragon Age II



Hawke is a very identifiable character, and already appears as to be one of BioWare's most well-rounded creations.

Dragon Age II

FIRST LOOK

BioWare reinvents the fantasy wheel again

What's the story?

BioWare are taking the lessons learned from their space RPG series Mass Effect and applying them to Dragon Age II. The sequel to Origins centres on a Warrior hero named Hawke, who will progress from a refugee to the champion of fantasy kingdom Kirkwall over a 10-year spell – the longest timeframe BioWare has ever communicated in one game. The framed narrative will also feature sections where players play from different perspectives, resulting in a cohesive conclusion. The team even compared the structure to The Usual Suspects – very intriguing.

What do we know?

Gameplay has been largely streamlined, but still allows players to hotswap between party members. Quests are still spliced with lengthy dialogue scenes and fast-paced combat, with BioWare promising that something memorable happens with every button press. A lofty goal, and the fact that they didn't say click may speak volumes about which

platform the developer is focusing on. However, this still feels like an RPG from the makers of Baldur's Gate.

Anything else to declare?

Aside from the new look and refined combat system, this is the same Triple-A fantasy RPG experience you would expect from BioWare, but in a slightly new direction. Dragon Age Origins was an amazing accomplishment, and we hope this sequel makes the same impression.

The Rogue is fast, but can be stopped in their tracks fairly easily.

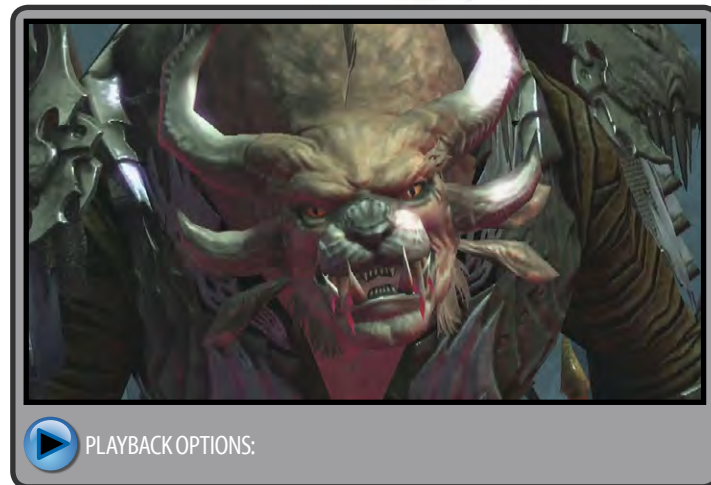


Combat is even faster-paced now, with managing each of your squad's abilities being even more key.



GUILD WARS

TM



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www.GuildWars2.com





7UP

More golden nuggets of gaming glory to come

The UnderGarden

Publisher: Atari | **ETA:** Winter
This physics-based puzzler is Atari's first foray into the world of bite-sized digital releases, and what a way to announce their intent. This unique-looking game features an underground cavern, where all manner of mysterious beasts dwell with a soundtrack which will soothe players minds. Keep an eye out for this.



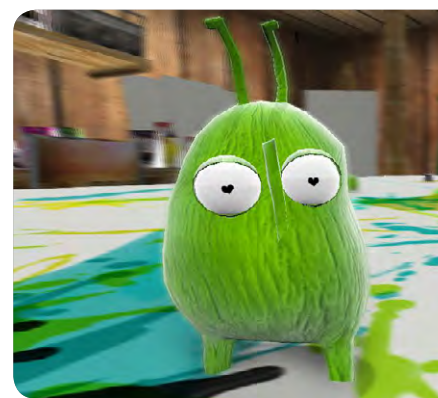
Tribes Universe

Publisher: TBA | **ETA:** TBA
Hi-Rez Studios, the makers of shooter MMO Global Agenda, has secured the rights to the Tribes franchise and are working on a new MMO set in Starsiege's iconic universe. Few details are known for the moment, but that doesn't stop us from being very excited indeed.



PRIVATES

Publisher: E4 | **ETA:** Out Now
Too raunchy for consoles, this edu-game funded by Channel 4 is surprisingly good fun and absolutely free. You are part of a ragtag shooting squad who's tasked with cleansing men and women's nether regions of disgusting infections and STDs. Much more fun that it sounds...

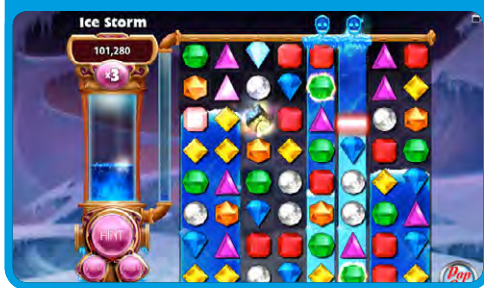


WHITE: The Game

Publisher: ENJMIN | **ETA:** Out Now
Student projects tend to be rougher than the North Sea, but this deathmatch-inspired paint-'em-up is the exception. Plonked onto a blank canvas, players must 'express' themselves by shooting coloured enemies who leave a paint trail in their wake. Devilishly good fun and absolutely free to play.

Bejeweled 3

Publisher: PopCap | **ETA:** 7th December
As puzzlers go, it doesn't get any bigger than this – well maybe Peggle, 2 but we'll settle for this. PopCap has confirmed the release date for the Internet's favourite match-'em-all game, and the third iteration will feature a new quest mode enhanced with 11 new minigames and an ambient Zen mode. How colourful.



Battlefield Play4Free

Publisher: EA | **ETA:** February
Never afraid to revisit gaming classics, EA and DICE are offering a refreshed version of Battlefield 2 which utilises the free-to-play revenue model. Think Battlefield Heroes but in the modern era, with all the maps and weapons you remember with new functionality and upgraded visuals.



Super Meat Boy

Publisher: Team Meat | **ETA:** November
There aren't enough ball-bustin' platformers on the PC, so allow us to introduce a new one. Super Meat Boy features a slippy-slidy red protagonist who needs to save his missus over 300 levels. A budget title bursting with character and a great soundtrack.



WINTER

DECEMBER

NOVEMBER

ON THE RADAR

- Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Future Soldier
- TRON: Evolution
- World of Warcraft: Cataclysm
- James Bond: Bloodstone
- Portal 2
- Fable III



FREE
TO PLAY
MMORPG

Runes of Magic



Runes of Magic

CHAPTER III

The Elder Kingdoms

PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

www.RunesofMagic.com



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DEAD SPACE 2

Publisher: EA
Developer: Visceral Games
Heritage: The Godfather 2, Dead Space
Link: www.deadspace.ea.com
ETA: 28th January

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Dead Space 2

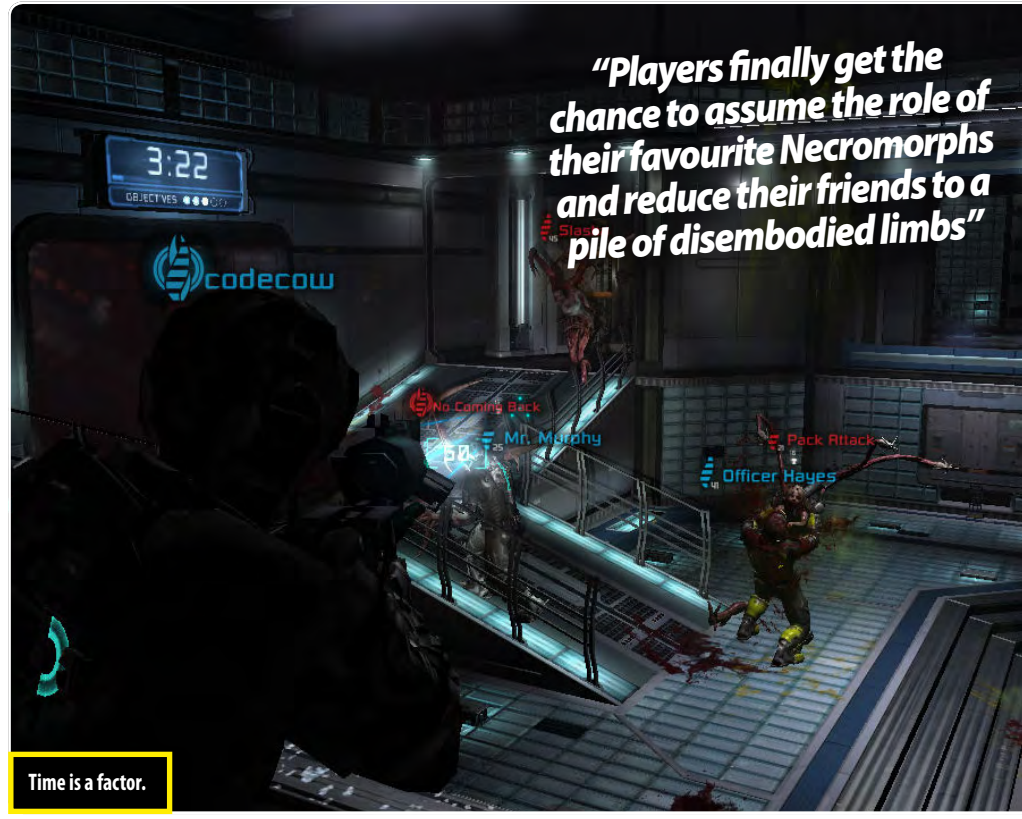
MULTIPLAYER HANDS-ON

DEAD SPACE 2

Isaac moves into uncharted territory

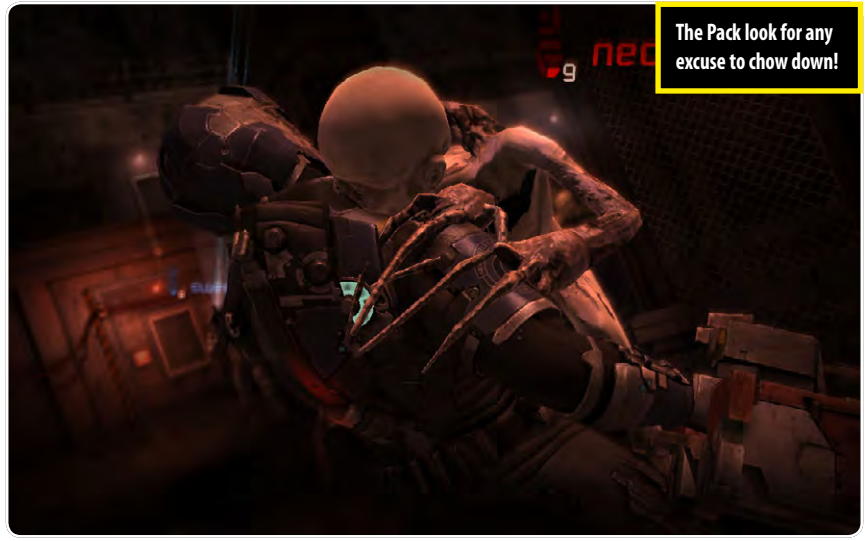
We know what you're thinking, 'Dead Space, the much-loved single-player third-person action game is getting a multiplayer mode... why on Earth would Visceral Studios want to do that?' Well, we weren't sure either until we finally got a chance to test the four-on-four mode ourselves, and soon the answer came crashing down onto us like a necromancer seeking to devour our vital organs from the shadows – it's ridiculously good fun.

The appeal is simple. Players finally get the chance to assume the role of their favourite Necromorph and reduce their friends to a pile of disembodied limbs, whereas that same friend is part of a team of Isaac wannabes who need to not only survive the onslaught, but also complete objectives across five different maps. Teams switch over after every round and the Necro teams get a choice of either a Spitter, Lurker, Pack or Puker. As their names suggest, the Spitter and Puker can fire projectile-



"Players finally get the chance to assume the role of their favourite Necromorphs and reduce their friends to a pile of disembodied limbs"

Time is a factor.



The Pack look for any excuse to chow down!



Don't just stand there! Shoot it!



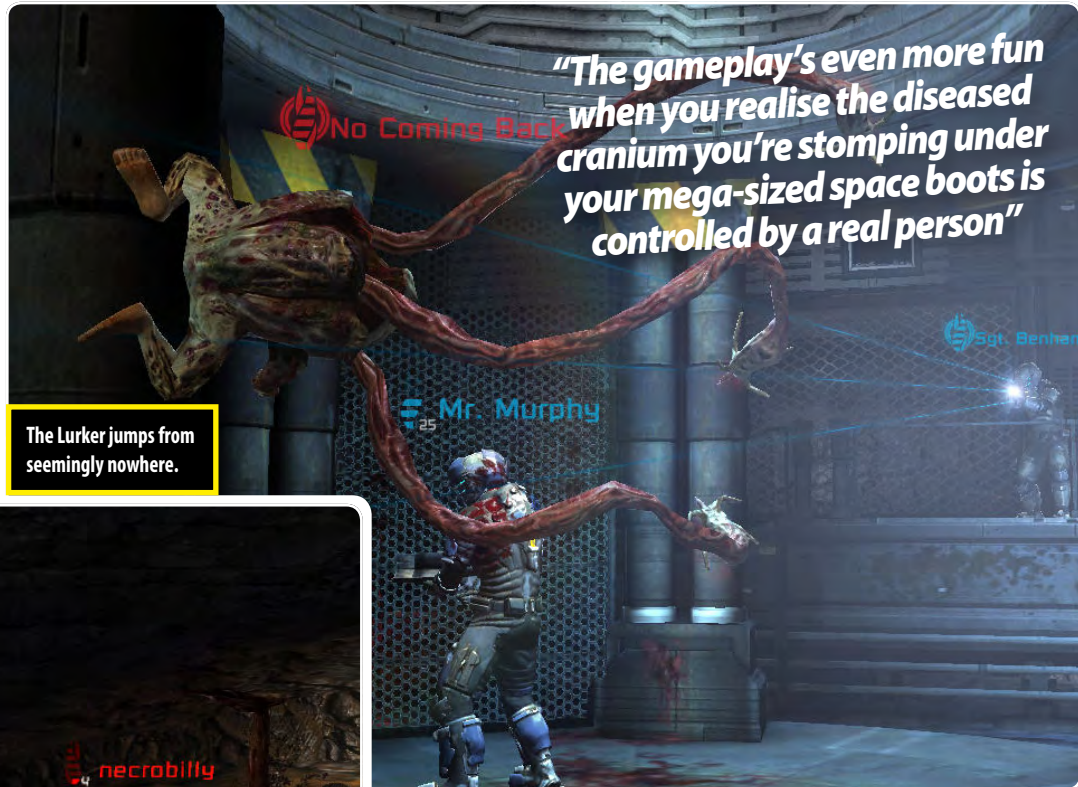
DEAD SPACE

> **Dead Space 2** cont.

based attacks at enemies from a distance. The Pack featured prominently in the trailers and are devil-like babies which are fast and able to leap directly onto enemies, disabling them and eventually killing them – if the button-mashing minigame is executed properly. The final Necro variant shares similar abilities, but the Lurker's speciality is climbing up walls and sending out piercing mandibles at a moment's notice.

With all the death-dealing force offered by the inhabitants of the Sprawl, you might think playing as the Humans would be dull, but thankfully it isn't. All of the stomping, aggressive mining tools and super-sleek interface return from the original Dead Space and the gameplay's even more fun when you realise the diseased cranium you're stomping under your mega-sized space boots is controlled by a real person.

When playing as the sane bipeds, there are specific objectives to



"The gameplay's even more fun when you realise the diseased cranium you're stomping under your mega-sized space boots is controlled by a real person"

The Lurker jumps from seemingly nowhere.



It's times like these where you really need a teammate or two.



The amount of gore on show is stupefying.



Mr. Murphy
25

When playing as a Necro, the Human's innards glow green and the screen has a yellowish hue.

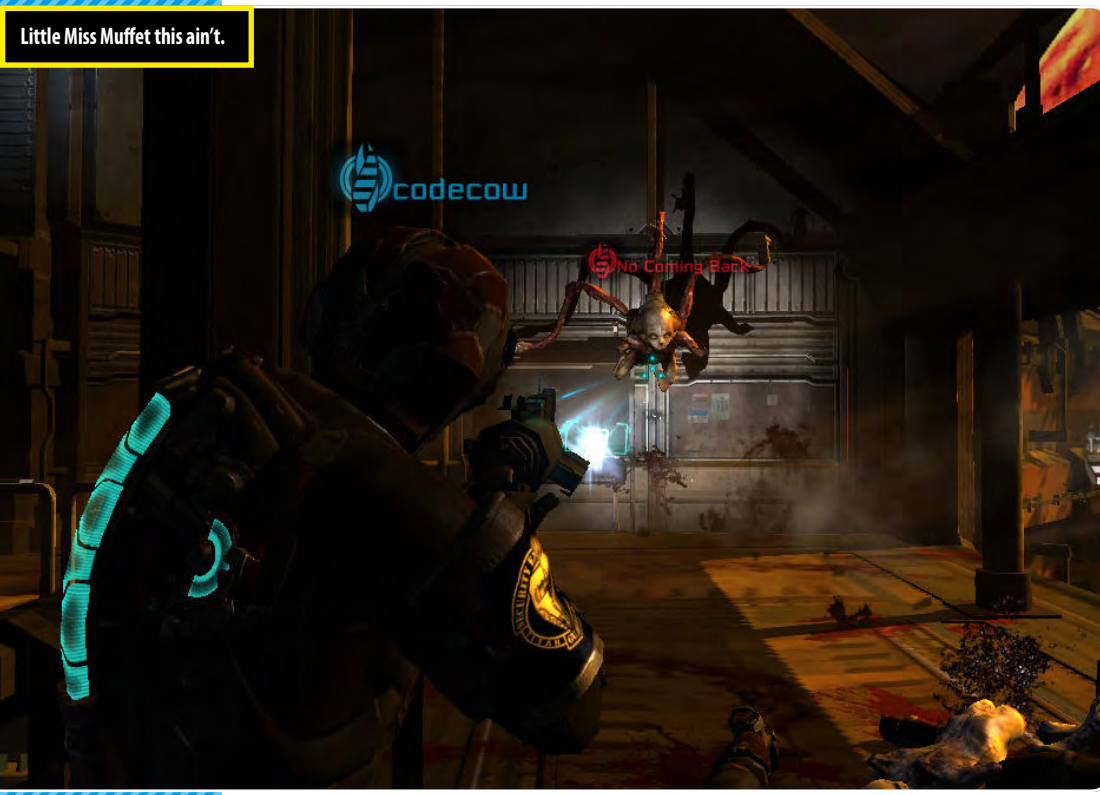


DEAD SPACE 2

Little Miss Muffet this ain't.

codecow

No Coming Back



> Dead Space 2 cont.

complete for each map which are always associated with the fiction. For instance, securing hardware for an escape pod or gather information from a console which is haphazardly placed near a choke spot.

Friendly fire is always on, and wayward shots are just as potent against allies as they are enemies, and during our play time, blue-on-blue incidents were common, although the quick respawn of both teams mean that it is nowhere near as frustrating as Left 4 Dead or Killing Floor.

Speaking of which, Dead Space 2's multiplayer mode reminded us of both zombie-killing power houses, only a much faster variant of both games. The spawn system only allows Necros to spawn inside vents scattered throughout the claustrophobic environments, which aren't anywhere near as large as Left 4 Dead's hour-long scenarios. It's this aspect which allows the experience to be much more carefree and fun, despite the ridiculous amount of gore on show. Having a headless baby running towards you not only inspires a high fright level, but also fits of laughter as the various frags hit the screen or rapidly fall off an enemy's body.

Moving a single-player franchise into the multiplayer realm tends to be a tactic

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Key tactics when playing as the Humans



Work together

Check your fire

Move swiftly

Work together

This mantra is true in most multiplayer survival games, and it's no different for Dead Space 2. Always make sure you aren't alone when pressing forward to objectives, as a team of individuals will regularly be devoured without any hope of winning the map. The Necro team will always try to separate you from your buddies, so don't let them!

which is doomed to fail, but from what we've played of Dead Space 2 thus far, this move kind of makes sense. It definitely won us over, and as long as the lengthy main attraction of the single-player campaign holds up its end of the bargain, this sequel is set to fulfil all of the fans' expectations and more. ●

PCGZine

HOW COMPLETE?



80%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS?



90%

DEAD SPACE 2

A new dimension of frag-tastic fun

ASSASSIN'S —CREED— BROTHERHOOD



▶ PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

"KILLER IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD"
- FHM



OUT ON
19TH NOVEMBER

www.assassinscreed.com



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◆ DEMOED

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of The Sims: Medieval

Publisher: EA
Developer: In-house
Heritage: The Sims 3
Link: www.thesimsmedieval.com
ETA: March

THE SIMS: MEDIEVAL

If you thought EA couldn't take this series anywhere new then think again

Say what you want about the PC's most successful life simulation franchise, but it's clear that the people at EA aren't afraid to take risks. Moving the setting from the modern day to the Middle Ages may feel like a simplistic way of adding a new setting, but in truth this move offers long-time fans something completely different from what they've seen before and the hardcore some new dynamics which will rejuvenate the series in their hard-to-

please hearts and minds. The essence is still the same: players create a character in ye olde times and expand from there. The game is built on three central pillars – kingdom, stories and quests. Any kingdom begins with a king which is controlled directly. From there, players can guide their unassuming kingdom to new heights of prosperity and popularity by ensuring four meters are filled – well being, security, knowledge and culture. These attributes fluctuate in

accordance with what buildings are added to your castle domain, which include the options to build a wizard tower, tavern, knights' quarters, a stadium for Kingball – Medieval's new sport – and other assorted buildings which automatically attach themselves to your castle. The size and scope is something to behold, with castles sharing a similar scope and size as towns. As more extensions are added, players can create or choose their own selection of heroes which are

also directly controllable. For instance, build a wizard tower and your very own bearded wise one (or not bearded, it is your choice!) will appear ready to complete and carry out quests. These stories will be freeform in design, allowing objectives to be met however one wishes. For instance, one task we witnessed involved saving a lost



The Middle Ages is all about the alcohol, with the tavern always proving popular.



Some of the nastier elements of medieval life are shown (like mugging), but it seems this is a very sanitary recreation of the Middle Ages.



The animations are still wonderfully over the top.





Castles do look majestic when fully built up.



Any sims' fatal flaw is always ready to catch out its owner.

> **The Sims** continued

child located somewhere in the village. Now players can either ignore this quest altogether, influence the NPC

villagers to look on your behalf or use magic to discover the location of the missing blighter.

Character creation has also been given a medieval twist, with a new

fatal flaw choice to go along with the trait system. Give your unfortunate Sim the Gluttony flaw and he'll always be hungry, a Workholic will be obsessed with his or her job and a Fool will lack common sense. There's an all-new wardrobe with all the appropriate ye olde accessories present, and the insides of your kingdom can be changed entirely on the fly with no delay or load times. In addition to all these features there's also a new combat system which hinges on a character's stance, moves and armour determining the outcomes of duels, as well as a deep crafting and spell system which allows players to combine energy, air and

light to twist nature to their whim via projectile or mood-altering magic. There's even a religious tug of war going on in the world, with two theologically opposed factions continually fighting for the minds of your kingdom.

Despite these game-changing new additions, The Sims formula many know and love is still here and fully accounted for, but layered on top is masses of potential which involves base building, exploration and much more potential to create your own historical adventures which is music to our fantasy-loving ears and easily warrants its standalone treatment. Definitely one to keep your eye on. ●



Fights are never predetermined and have a surprisingly organic feel.

	HOW COMPLETE? 	FIRST IMPRESSIONS?
	<i>A brave and encouraging new direction</i>	



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gPotato
WWW.GPOTATO.EU

ASTRUM NIVAL

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CONTROL →



HANDS ON



Publisher: EA
Developer: DICE
Heritage: Battlefield series, Mirror's Edge
Link: www.battlefield.ea.com
ETA: TBA

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Battlefield Bad Company 2: Vietnam

BATTLEFIELD BAD COMPANY 2: VIETNAM

SONGS OF WAR
When driving around in certain vehicles, players will be treated to an authentic Seventies soundtrack which includes the likes of Buffalo Springfield's *For What It's Worth*. To be honest, it is a bit strange blowing up strangers to an anti-war song but hey, this is war, and Vietnam always has had the best soundtrack...

Battlefield delivers another history lesson

DICE's multiplayer FPS is once again getting the Vietnam treatment. The Digital-only pack includes four new maps and 15 new weapons for American and Vietcong forces, including the excellent M60 and the destructive flamethrower.

Gameplay feels much more like Bad Company rather than the series' earlier efforts and as a result, matches are much faster paced and emphasise action over strategy. Each of the maps we sampled made the most of the setting: Vantage Point is a refreshed

version of DICE's previous creation (Cambodian Incursion), which is set near an American base and fishing village and quite large in size, whereas Hill 137 is much tighter, with capture points devilishly placed both underneath a bridge and also on top of it, in addition to a spot near the ebb of an incline. Skirmishes still felt fast-paced and teamwork was just as essential.

Some may dismiss this expansion as Bad Company 2 reskinned, but DICE are doing all they can to ensure not only a fantastic and varied experience but one which faithfully emulates the period authentically, with a soundtrack and grainy propaganda-like briefings to set the mood perfectly. No release date has been set as of yet, but the code that we sampled seemed very close



Perfect for ambushes – just don't frazzle yourself.

to completion and was an absolute blast to play. It's probably time to brush up on those Battlefield skills... ●



This is Vietnam, so of course there are choppers!

PCGZine **HOW COMPLETE?** **FIRST IMPRESSIONS?**

BATTLEFIELD BAD COMPANY 2 VIETNAM

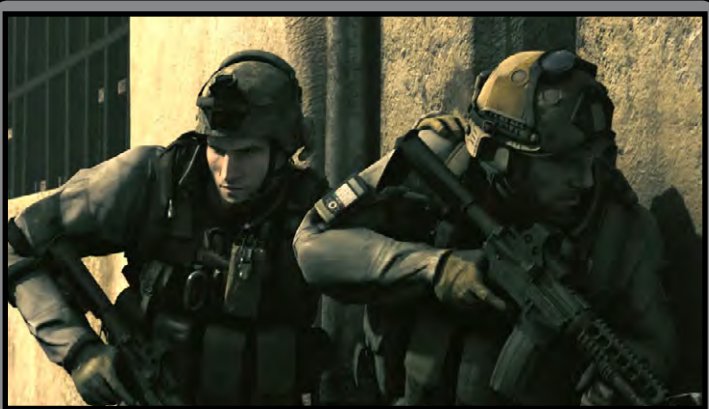
Set to be the coolest Battlefield around



THIS IS THE FACE THE ENEMY FEARS

THIS IS FORCE MULTIPLIED.
RELENTLESS. EXACTING. PRECISE.
THIS IS A NEW BREED OF WARRIOR.
FOR A NEW BREED OF WARFARE.

THIS IS TIER 1



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

15.10.10

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HANDS ON

CRYSIS 2

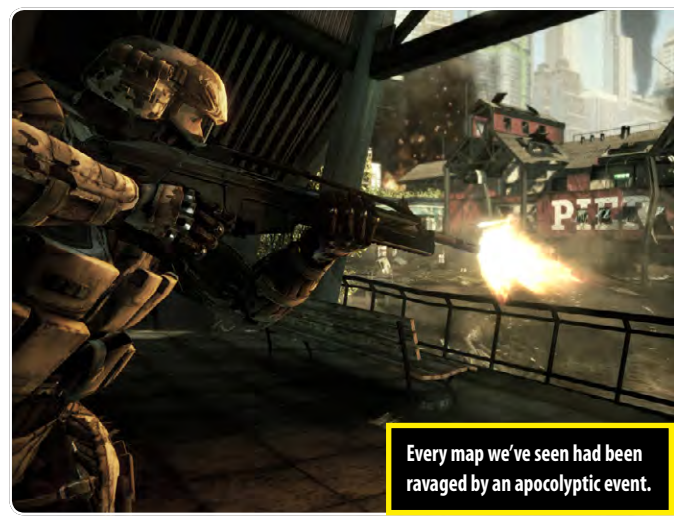
Crytek break out the big guns

How do you take the uber-powered nanosuits which made the first Crysis such a riot and successfully tune them to a multiplayer mode which is balanced and fair, yet can stand up against the first-person shooter genre's best, such as Call of Duty or Team Fortress 2. This question is bound to have obsessed Crytek UK, the developer formerly known as Free Radical Design of Timesplitters fame, but they've already managed to craft an experience which is absolutely unique in the bloated space.

Centre to the online play is the suit itself and the supernatural potential of being one with technology. With a press of a button, players can enter into various modes, such as Predator (which makes the player turn invisible for a short time), Armor (which makes the inhabitant slow but provides a shield boost), or a Hyper Agility (which enables players to sprint and jump 10 feet and engage in a little parkour to flank enemies in imaginative ways). The customisation potential is truly staggering, with over 20 different nodes

available across 80 different levels, which vary from the more standardised abilities we mentioned previously, to very specific ones such as silencing a player's footsteps or extra offensive abilities, such as the ground stomp which sends out a burst of energy to disable enemy suits in a short radius. Thankfully, this functionality is facilitated by a system that allows players to hotswap between their suit's different nodes instantaneously, which is key because the gunplay is so fast. We

"Centre to the online play is the suit itself and the supernatural potential of being one with technology"



Every map we've seen had been ravaged by an apocalyptic event.

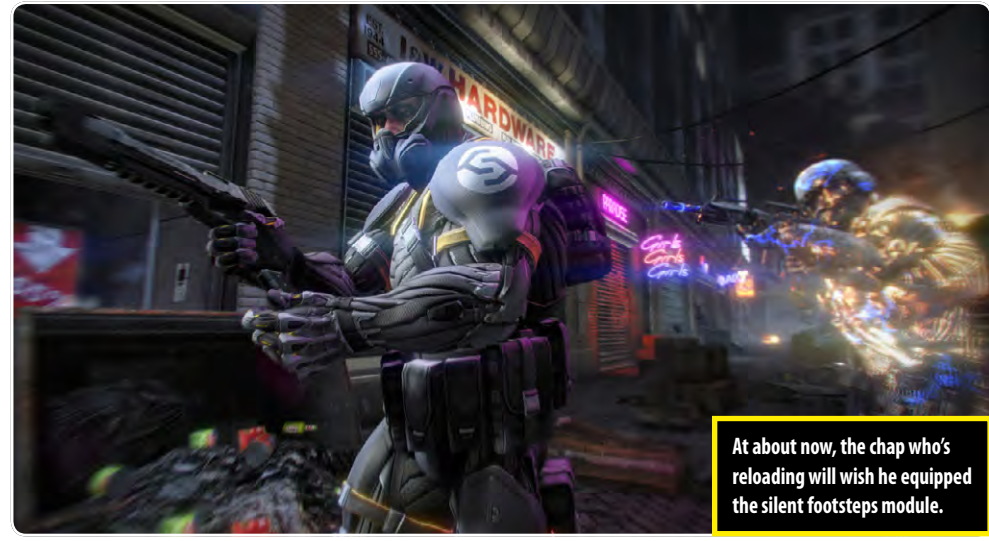
sampled Rooftop Gardens set atop a skyscraper, and even though the map was rather small and only had a handful of inside areas, it perfectly showcased the game's varied combative potential. During a round of the game's team deathmatch (Team Action mode) teammates and enemies were being stabbed from behind by



PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Crysis 2

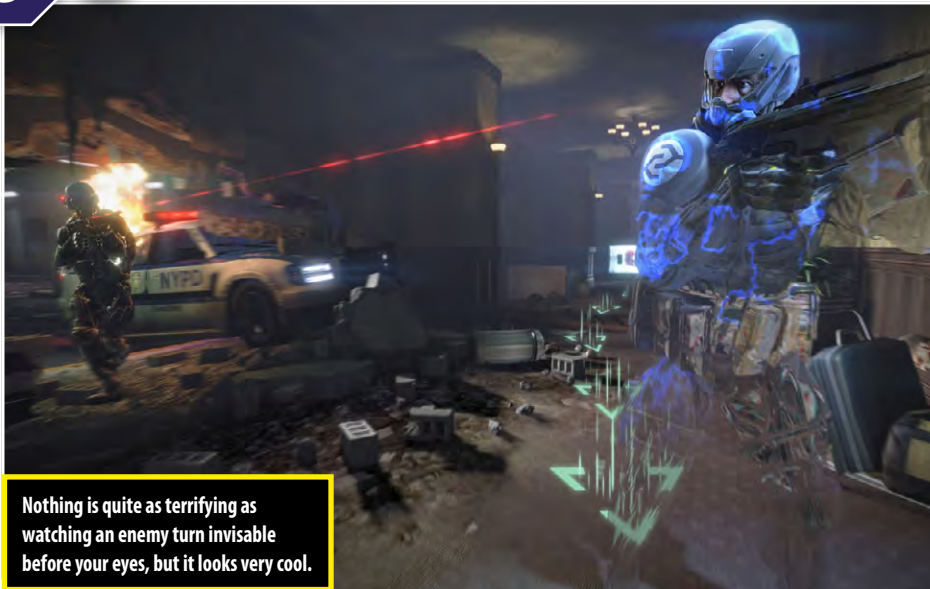


Needless to say, CryEngine 3 looks absolutely jaw-dropping when in motion.



At about now, the chap who's reloading will wish he equipped the silent footsteps module.





Nothing is quite as terrifying as watching an enemy turn invisible before your eyes, but it looks very cool.



Getting ambushed on the way to the toilet. Does it get any worse than that?

> **Crisis 2** continued

invisible enemies, sniped from seemingly impossible to traverse locations and

killed by enemies which managed to survive entire clips of fire due to the various suit abilities. After only minutes of play we found tactics changed as people

managed got to grips with the system, and every skirmish we haphazardly wandered into had a tangible feel of unpredictability to it. All these abilities are governed by energy usage, but we respawned so often that usually the cooldown element wasn't an issue.

The final game will have six different match types, but thus far only the former has been revealed, as well as a new Capture the Flag-inspired mode where teams race to a crashed enemy probe site and eliminate the alien hostiles, before defending the spot from the opposition.

Weapons seemed more of a standard affair, with shotgun, assault rifle and sniper rifle variants all offered,

none of which made a great impression. However, when you have the ability to stab a foe from behind while entirely cloaked, using a projectile weapon just seems like you're wasting your potential.

Buff-based combat is something all PC gamers know very well, yet Crisis 2 offers a thoroughly enjoyable amalgamation of the grittiness of Modern Warfare 2 with the balls-to-the-wall craziness Team Fortress 2 offers. The biggest test will be if these powerful abilities can be balanced to create a compelling multiplayer component, but rest assured, at the moment this is definitely shaping up to be an experience not to be missed. ●



Working as a team is always beneficial, but like the Spy in Team Fortress 2, you can equip your character to be mostly self-sufficient.

	HOW COMPLETE? 	FIRST IMPRESSIONS?
	<i>Unlike anything we've played before</i>	

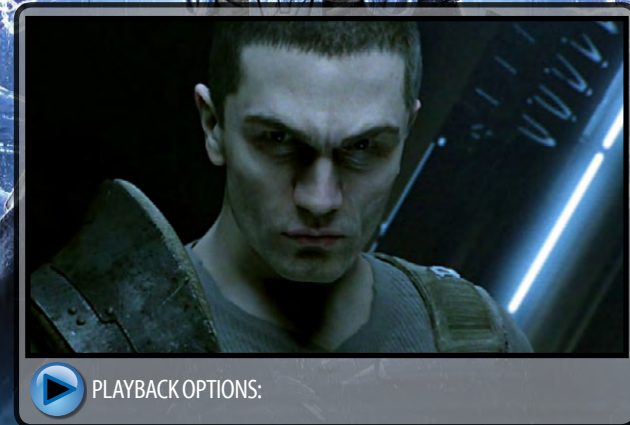
BETRAYED BY DARTH VADER FOR THE LAST TIME,
STARKILLER HAS ESCAPED AND FACES A
NEW JOURNEY TO FIND HIS TRUE IDENTITY.

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REVIEW

Call of Duty: Black Ops

The Cold War heats up

Last year's Modern Warfare 2 attracted critical and commercial success, becoming the fastest-selling game of all time. Shortly after, the core of the game's makers and Call of Duty's rebooters Infinity Ward commenced a mass exodus, transforming Treyarch from the developers who helmed the franchise intermittently into the singular hope of Activision's most successful franchise.

Admittedly, Black Ops was in development way before all that craziness between Vince Zampella, Jason West and the rest went down, but even so, a lot is riding on this year's Call of Duty and whether it can uphold the premier status of this beloved franchise. Will Treyarch's latest effort soar in the spotlight or shrink under heavy expectation? Let's find out by first looking at the campaign...





Publisher: Activision
Developer: Treyarch
Heritage: Call of Duty: World at War
Link: www.callofduty.com
OUT NOW

System Requirements:
 Dual Core CPU, 2Gb RAM,
 GeForce 8600GT/ATI
 Radeon X1950 Pro or better

> Black Ops continued

Black Ops takes places in the murky world of undercover operations during the Cold War, globetrotting between Russia, Cuba, Vietnam and beyond. It's a formula we've seen in Call of Duty before, but rather than sampling combat from multiple perspectives, the player is in the shoes of a captured operative being interrogated by some murky figures who are forcing him to re-tell stories of his past operations, prompted via flashbacks. This neat framing device allows levels to switch between different settings and periods of time in a flash, with a story that packs not only a great punch, but plenty of twists as well.

Despite the inherent blockbuster bravado that some scenarios are laden with, there are multiple moments which will stay with gamers for a very long time, such as escaping from a Russian Gulag, sabotaging a Soviet missile test and other set-pieces which genuinely gave us shivers. Throughout the short experience, the shooting comes thick

"There are multiple moments which will stay with gamers for a very long time"

and fast from every direction, often in place of real character development, but the objectives are so enjoyable and the experience is so varied with occasional vehicles and holdout sequences that you can't help but be swept up and become involved.

The core gameplay still feels as satisfying as before, with classic weaponry as well as more ludicrous options like exploding-dart packing crossbows. However, each weapon is always a joy to fire, and the damage caused to enemies is powerful and very satisfying.

Undoubtedly the biggest problem is the campaign's length, and the fact that it can be tackled in a few lengthy game sessions will frustrate some, as well as the lack of a co-op option. Again.

Other than those minor complaints, Black Ops' campaign is undoubtedly one of the best we've sampled all year, but the real longevity is provided by multiplayer. >



Undercover operations take you to some very seedy areas of the world.



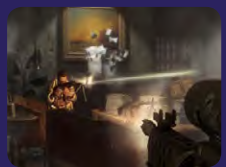
Entrances don't get much better than this.

FREEZE FRAME

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



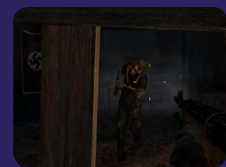
30 MINUTES
 The Bay of Pigs is not America's finest hour, but it is very good game fodder, though.



1 HOUR
 Slowly starting to find the Call of Duty skillset – see, shoot, ask questions later.



4 HOURS
 Say what you want about the Vietnam war, but it did have the best soundtrack.



8 HOURS
 Valve has nothing to fear from CoD's Zombie mode, but it's a fun inclusion.



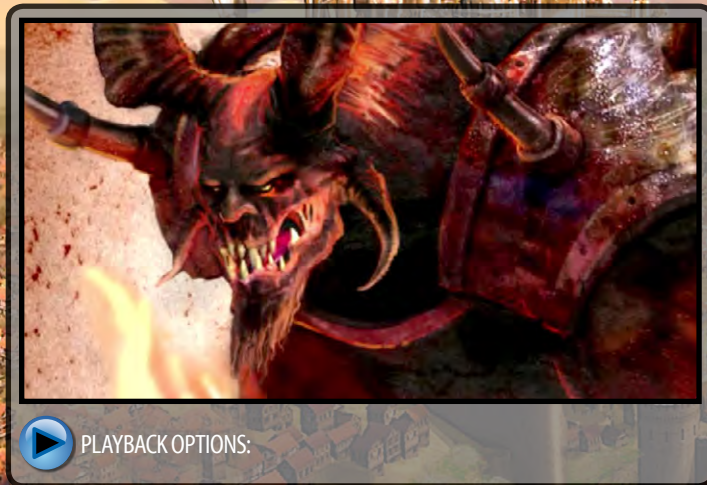
16 HOURS
 Nothing tests you like Gun Game. You need to be proficient with every weapon to win.



The Killcam is as useful and humiliating as ever.



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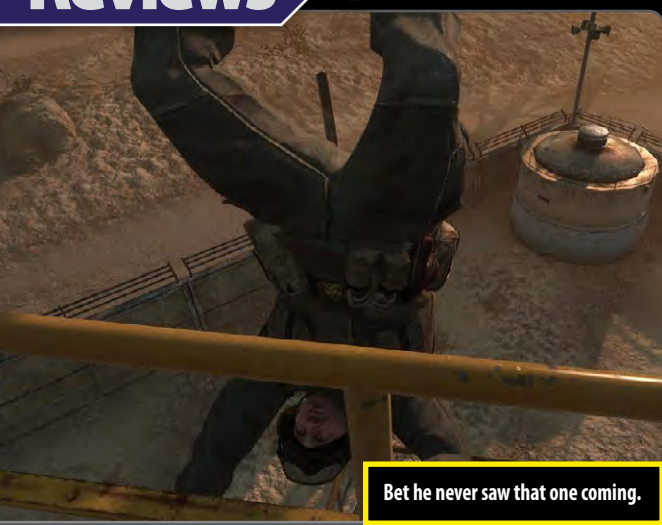
“.. A MUCH DEEPER, [MORE] ENGAGING STRATEGY BROWSER MMO THAN I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE. AND IT'S FREE-TO-PLAY TO BOOT”

PC GAMER

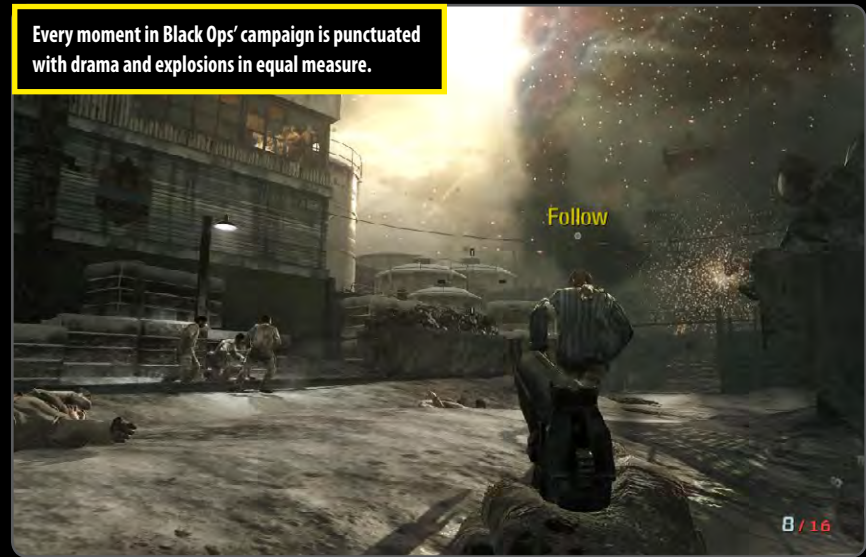


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Bet he never saw that one coming.



Every moment in Black Ops' campaign is punctuated with drama and explosions in equal measure.



The Vietnam sections are particular harrowing.

> **Black Ops** continued

Modern Warfare was always more of a hit on the consoles, but Black Ops tries to redeem itself with dedicated server support and tweaked competitive play. Just as before, a progressive unlock system is present,

with players earning XP for kills and objectives met, whether they be in team deathmatch, Headquarters, Search and Destroy or FFA. However, new this year is an in-depth currency system. Perks, killstreaks, weapons, equipment and attachments now have to be purchased with COD

points, earned much like XP, allowing players to choose their own path of progression. Would-be gamblers can even earn more cash by buying into

Wager matches with the top three winning everyone else's spoils in Gun Game, a mode inspired by the classic Counterstrike mod or One in the Chamber, where players only get one shot to get a kill and earn another bullet.

Treyarch has also added entirely new toys to play with, including



Using a scope is still very gamey, with no tweaking required.



Certain levels are quite hellish, but you have to look very hard to find any anti-war sentiment.





Watching a previous match in Theater mode is a surprising amount of fun.

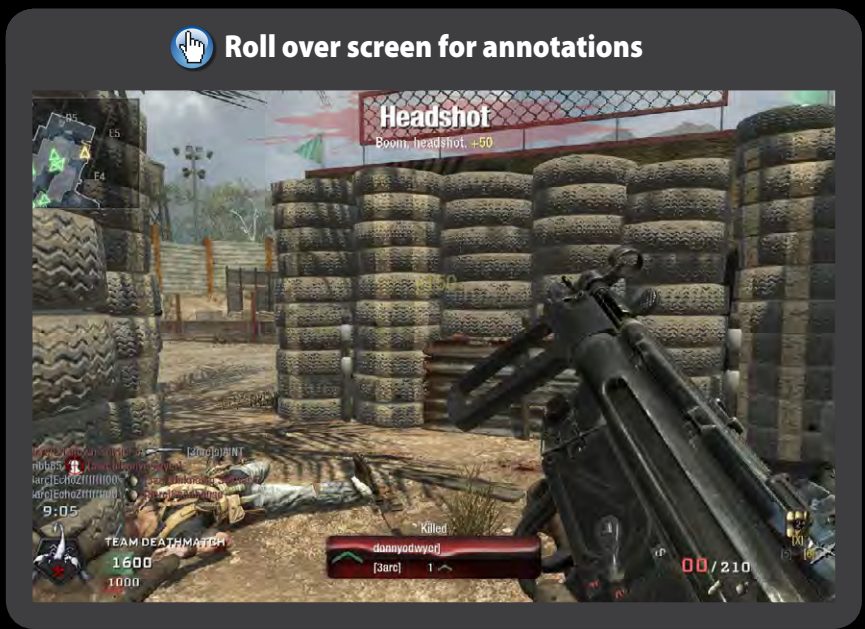
> **Black Ops** continued

surveillance cameras and exploding RC cars to further spice up skirmishes.

There are 14 new playgrounds in total to experiment with and record any memorable moments in Theater mode, which allows gamers to watch

and share their combat prowess online. It's a great addition, but the only problem is that the frequency of matches being captured is unpredictable. During some sessions not every match is recorded, whereas during others every second is captured. It's maddening.

Unfortunately, the headaches don't end there, as finding a server to join is also problematic, as the in-game browser constantly returns server full messages and takes an age to find suitable matches. These issues are minor, but when the rest of the multiplayer experience is so good, it's just a shame that not every feature in the game pulls its weight. During the first week of Black Ops' release, Treyarch released multiple patches to improve the optimisation issues the PC version was plagued with, so hopefully other issues will be addressed in time, too.



Roll over screen for annotations

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

Remind us never to get interrogated Using the flamethrower attachment! Earning killstreaks and winning it for the team

Fidel, is that you? Leaping seamlessly from one decade to the next

“The rest of the multiplayer experience is so good, it's just a shame that not every feature pulls its weight”

Black Ops, despite its few yet noteworthy annoyances, is still one of the most enjoyable releases of the year. It adds much to the already winning formula, yet wisely leaves the core elements alone not to upset the series' millions of fans. It certainly won't be to everyone's tastes, but naysayers should ignore this release at their peril, as they are the ones who are truly missing out. ●

PCGZine Verdict

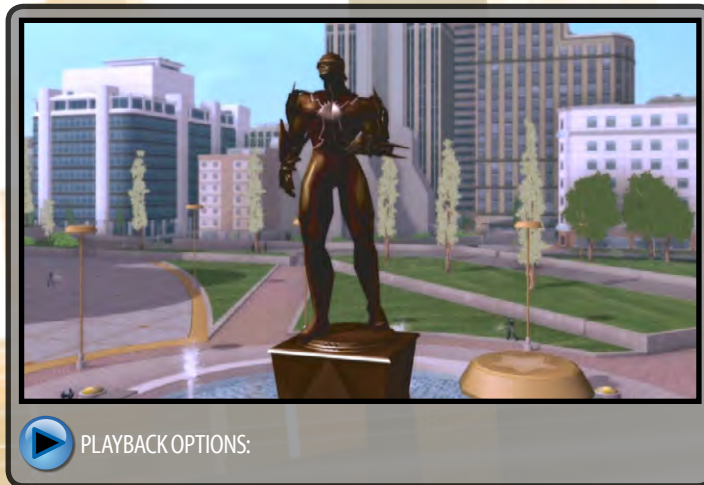
Surpasses Modern Warfare in every area that counts, but Black Ops isn't perfect

- Plenty of new additions
- Fast paced and enjoyable campaign
- Bugs tarnish certain features

92%

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Football Manager 2011

Publisher: SEGA
Developer: Sports Interactive
Heritage: Out of the Park Baseball, Eastside Hockey Manager
Link: www.footballmanager.com
OUT NOW

Love of the game

Guiding your favourite team to the pinnacle of footballing perfection is a dream every football fan can get behind, and Sports Interactive has successfully cornered that market for over a decade now, but each year fans complain that the series' latest iteration isn't as revolutionary as it should be, with less functionality seemingly being added to justify a purchase every 12 months.

It's evident that the developers have taken this to heart, because Football Manager 2011 is the most improved entry in the series we've played in a long time. Every important area has been improved, culminating

in the most accurate and importantly enjoyable recreation of managing the beautiful game we've played for years.

The improvements are numerous but the most crucial are those which grant the simulation a more human façade, with players discussions now involving the minutiae of the game, including advising an individual not to use his weaker foot or take long shots as well as the usual options, all of which is

in real-time, which allows feedback to take some interesting yet dramatic ways. This immediacy is also represented in contract negotiations so it is much more like the real game, with the introduction of agents offering that additional level of authenticity and unpredictability. Matches themselves also feel much more charismatic, with a zoomed-in TV camera mode which allows views to watch players celebrating goals,

System Requirements:
2.0GHz CPU, 1Gb RAM,
NVIDIA FX 5900 Ultra, ATI
Radeon 9800 or greater
GFX card

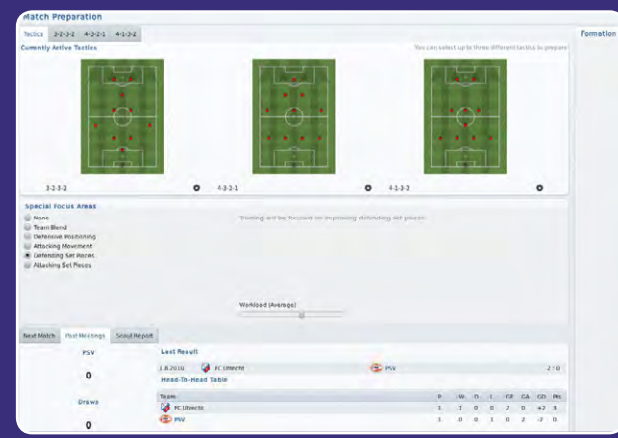


Discussions can get heated, and players rarely back down.



THE GAME CHANGERS

New tools to influence the on-pitch action



Match preparation

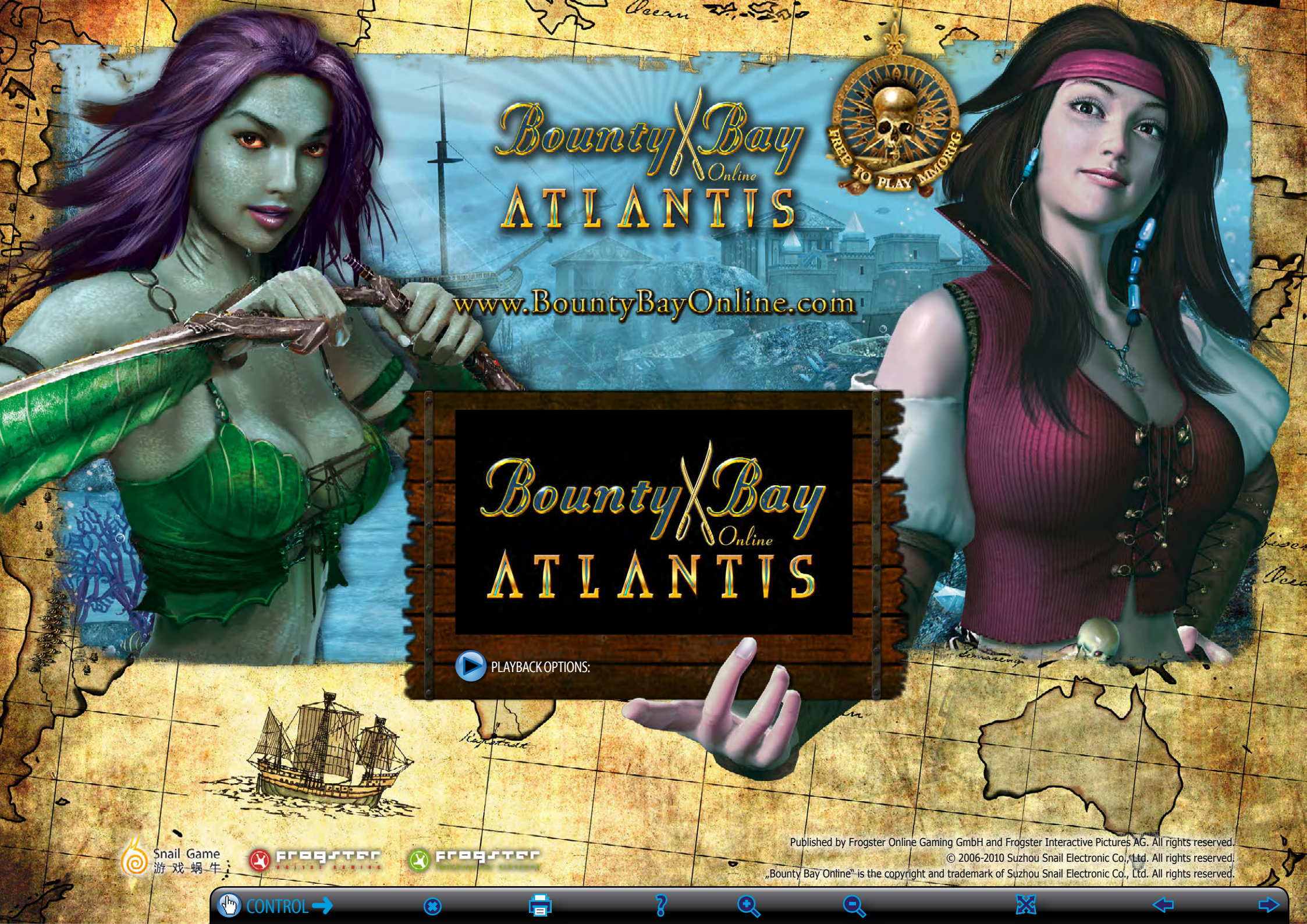
Player interaction

Set-piece creator

Match preparation

This all-new feature allows managers to prepare three different gameplans before the match to outfox the opposition. This isn't just for tactics though, bosses can also concentrate on attacking and defending options or team blend.





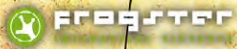
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▶ PLAYBACK OPTIONS:



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James Bond 007: Blood Stone

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Bizarre Creations
Heritage: The Club, BLUR
Link: www.bloodstonegame.com
OUT NOW

System Requirements:
Dual Core CPU, 2Gb RAM,
ATI Radeon X1650/NVIDIA
GeForce 7600 GT or better

Cinematic power house or licensed game without a movie?

Being a secret agent is harder than most people give credit for. A typical day for James Bond involves chasing criminals in his DB9, shooting terrorist lackeys, seducing attractive women and performing death-defying stunts until the world is saved. Sounds like a suitable formula for a Triple-A game, yet every developer who has tried over the previous decade has somehow screwed this license to thrill up. Step up Bizarre Creations, who have no cinematic plot to follow, so

instead they've crafted their own with writer Bruce Feirstein, singer Joss Stone and all the voice talent that matters.

The plot has Daniel Craig chasing a secret British formula for a potential WMD in the world's most glamorous locations, such as Monaco, Istanbul and

others. At its core, the game is a cover-based shooter, with tight dynamics which force Bond to occasionally blind-fire behind walls, shoot ideally placed gas cylinders, or take the fight closer with one button kill hand-to-hand combat. There is



There isn't just car chases you know, as you get to drive boats too.

Bond will have to infiltrate some very fancy properties.



A REBEL WITH A CAUSE

What you'll be doing in Blood Stone



Shooting

Driving

Multiplayer

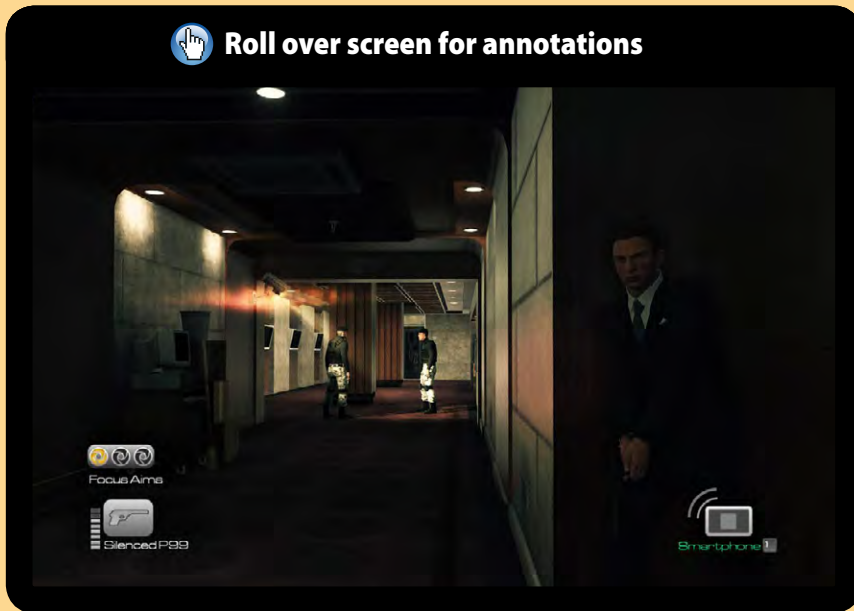
Shooting

Surprisingly for a covert secret agent, Bond spends most of his time shooting various villainous henchmen that get in his way. Usually it is best in a mission to stay covert to accumulate Focus Aims by finishing off foes via a melee finisher, but the game doesn't punish you for fighting loud and proud.





Joss Stone puts in a surprisingly great voiceacting performance.



Roll over screen for annotations

> Blood Stone continued

a standard array of weapons, including MP5s, silenced pistols, grenade launchers and rifles. The neatest dynamic is the Focus Aim system which, when earned by executing melee finishers, allows Bond to auto-target and kill one assailant, with the ability to kill three at a time. It adds a fantastic feeling of momentum to the combat. However, the gunplay sections which make up the majority of the game feel solid but uninspired.

Scanning items with Bond's omni-tool smartphone also breaks up the gameplay, but again this lacks substance, and only serves to prolong levels with an occasional scanning or unlocking mini-game.

Buckle up

Inevitably, the makers of Blur and console racer PGR have also incorporated a handful of car chases which are spread liberally throughout the six-hour experience. Chock full of pre-determined events, such as exploding cars, collapsing gas towers and poorly driven police cars, these sequences are high octane and offer massive amounts of fun. They only last a matter of minutes and can frustrate as the same obstacle foils repeated attempts at a mission, but chases definitely serve as the campaign's more exciting moments.

What Blood Stone gets right is the grandeur and excitement of Bond, which few games can boast, however the short campaign and the flash-in-the-pan multiplayer doesn't make this creation anything more than a well-executed but average licensed game. ●



PCGZine Verdict

Short and lacking in substance, but not without its fair share of thrills

- Chases never fail to entertain
- Excellent production values
- Shooting feels bland

75%

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Publisher: Activision
Developer: LucasArts
Heritage: Fracture, Star Wars: Republic Commando
Link: www.lucasarts.com/games/theforceunleashed2
OUT NOW

System Requirements:
Dual Core CPU, 2Gb RAM,
ATI Radeon HD 4800/
NVIDIA GeForce GTX 260
or higher

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed 2

An Empire Strikes Back or Attack of the Clones?

Sequels can be tricky, especially when you manage to kill off the protagonist in the opening chapter. Well, not to worry Star Wars fans, as LucasArts has engineered a return, thanks to Kamino's cloning technicians and Vader's inability to recognise any bad idea when it pops into his noggin. Starkiller has been revived and the main plot involves his former squeeze Juno Eclipse and figuring out what his place is in the universe. The central questions involving

morality and identity are actually rather neat, it's just the rest of the game which fails to live up to expectations.

Once again, Starkiller is endowed with enough Force potential to make Darth Maul look like a slacker with Grip, Lightning, Repulse and Throw at

his disposal, and his abilities increase over time as players earn experience for killing Stormtroopers, jet troopers, scout troopers and his fair share of mini-boss characters resembling modified AT-STs, which make the most of the story's setting between the first trilogy and



Quick time events pepper the experience.

STARKILLER'S NEW POWERS

A Force to be reckoned with...



Rage

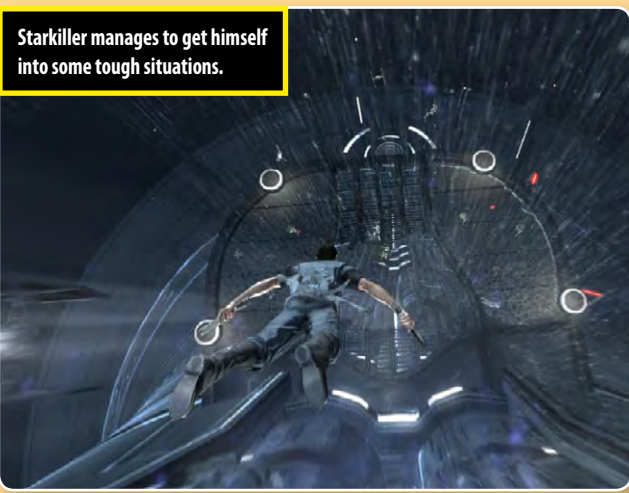
Mind Trick

Repulse

Rage

This ability is all about momentum. As Starkiller slays enemies, a metre at the bottom of the screen begins to fill and, when full, all his abilities are supercharged for a short time, allowing the powered-up protagonist to Push enemies further back, disintegrate foes and even pick up Imperial Walkers.

Starkiller manages to get himself into some tough situations.





There are only a few finishing moves and they get very repetitive, but still look awesome!

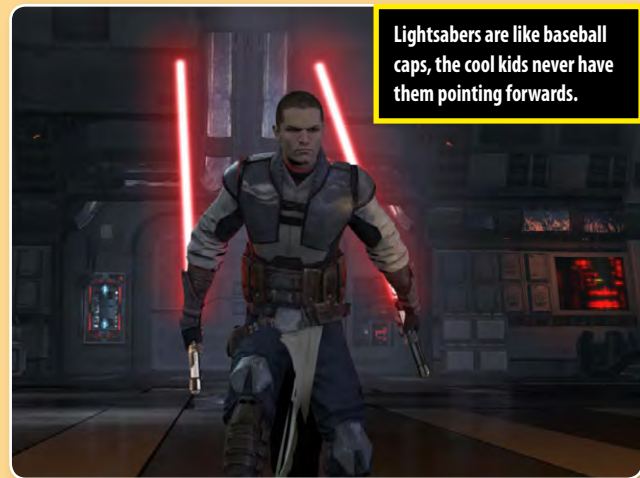
> Force Unleashed 2 cont.

the second. Combat feels just as enjoyable, but there's an inescapable feeling that nothing has really changed. Force powers are the mainstay once more, with some enemies only being able to be dispatched by the sabers.

Familiar territory

Gamers will rely on the same techniques and the repetitive finishers to get the job done. Gameplay is a mixture between dispatching guards, dealing with the occasional bosses and using your Force powers to manipulate platforms to carve out new ways to get from A to B. It's very linear, but the journey is densely packed and enjoyable. The campaign can be easily tackled in one or two sessions, which for a game of this price is a hard sell. This is a shame because Star Wars fans will get a massive kick out of the game's numerous well-produced cut-scenes that make the most of the license. Set pieces are particularly awe-inspiring too, no matter how much they stretch logic or belief.

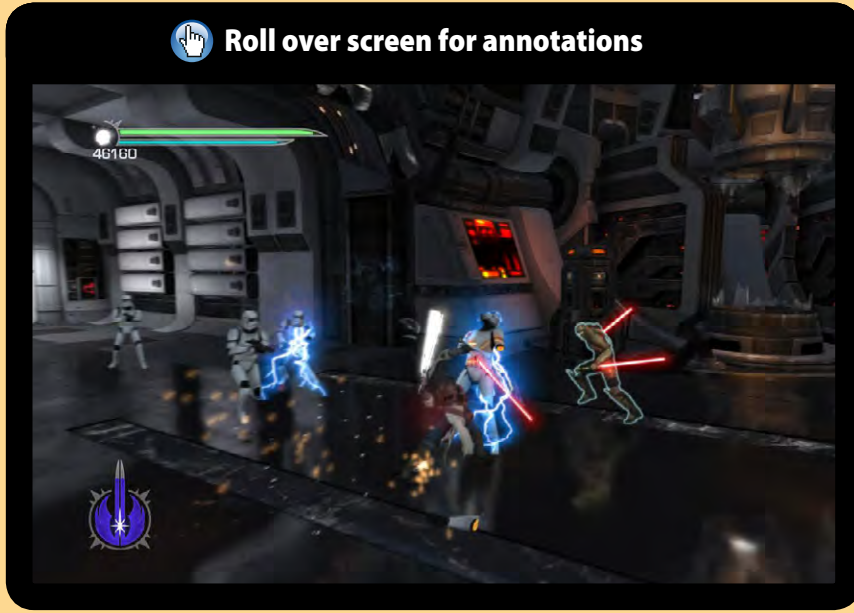
Overall, Force Unleashed 2 is a disappointing by-the-numbers sequel which is fun while it lasts, but you'll soon realise what a missed opportunity the game is. The Campaign mode is flanked by a Challenge mode which has numerous unlocks for players to earn, but in all honesty, LucasArts' latest seems like too little butter spread over too much bread, which makes this game strictly for the most die-hard of Star Wars fans only. Luckily for Activision there's a few of those around. ●



Lightsabers are like baseball caps, the cool kids never have them pointing forwards.



Some bosses really are larger than life.



Roll over screen for annotations

PCGZine Verdict

An enjoyable but short sequel which doesn't push any boundaries

- 👍 Fantastic cinematics
- 👍 Gameplay is enjoyable but repetitive
- 👎 Way too short for a full retail release

70%





Tom Clancy's HAWX 2

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Romania
Heritage: Blazing Angels, Silent Hunter 5
Link: www.hawxgame.uk.ubi.com
OUT NOW

System Requirements:
Dual Core CPU, 2Gb RAM, ATI Radeon HD 3800/ NVIDIA GeForce 8800GT or higher

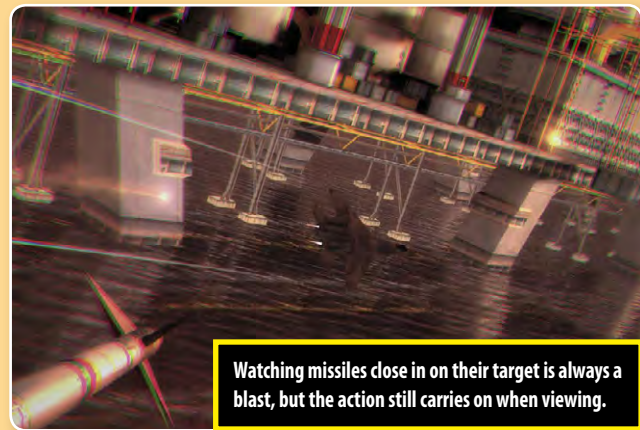
Time to kick the tyres and light the fires

Our platform used to be the haven for air combat enthusiasts. Whether you preferred simulations or more arcadey efforts, there was always something to satisfy any palette. Now that's no longer the case with none of the genre stalwarts still airborne. Even ACES Game Studio's Flight Simulator has bitten the dust and the future looks bleak for this niche genre. However it isn't all bad news, as occasionally publishers are willing to chuck us a bone, and even though we've

waited a long time for HAWX 2 to arrive, we're glad it made the flight. An arcade dogfighter with simulation sensibilities, Ubisoft Romania's effort offers gamers lots of aircraft to tame with some handy guidance and of course the opportunity

to shoot missiles, engage enemies and genuinely fulfil any ambition you have to master the skies. Everything is well introduced, with specific instructions for landing and take-off to see players through, as well as a strange outside-the-plane view, dubbed SEES, to help

"An arcade dogfighter with simulation sensibilities, Ubisoft Romania's effort offers gamers lots of aircraft to tame"



Watching missiles close in on their target is always a blast, but the action still carries on when viewing.



Missions can get predictable but objectives never stray into Ace Combat territory.



SHOOT TO KILL

What to do after HAWX 2's campaign



Admire the view

Play with others

Make some enemies

Admire the view
Getting shot from every angle can get tiresome, and so sometimes it's nice to kick back and take one of the game's 32 different aircraft and just tour the different environments on offer. Visuals are always look spectacular.





"Shooting down enemy planes and reducing ground targets to dust has never felt more thrilling"

Roll over screen for annotations



> **HAWX 2** continued

with aerial combat, although it only succeeds in providing a nicer view of combat and inspiring motion sickness. The campaign involves players taking the roles of several different pilots from around the world, and wraps the narrative together by a single event: a HAWX pilot getting kidnapped by insurgents. The plot's predictable and steeped in the stereotyped nationalism as Tom Clancy games tend to be, but the framing device allows dozens of planes to be included.

Mission structure is very linear and, for the most part, playing HAWX 2 is a very guided experience, but gamers do get to take part in varied missions and the AI is challenging without being cheap. Objectives involve tagging targets with drones, manning an AC-130 gunship and typically fast-paced jet-on-jet action. Missions are lengthy but involve multiple checkpoint saves, so failing an objective isn't punished too severely.

Where this sequel really improves is the core combat. Shooting down enemy planes and reducing ground targets to dust has never felt more thrilling, and meeting an objective with seconds to spare is always a treat.

This extends to the multiplayer mode too, where there's the typical FFA mode, Survival, four-player co-op and a serene tour mode – where jethheads can take a time out and just enjoy the jaw-droppingly gorgeous scenery.

For those who love aerial combat, HAWX 2 is a must buy and for everyone else it's still worth a look, just to look at the pretty models and to enjoy a thrill which is fairly hard to beat. ●



You'll have to share the skies with more than just fighter jets.



PCGZine
Verdict

A vastly improved sequel which gives fans exactly what they want, and more

- 👍 Dogfights are fun and unpredictable
- 👍 Planes have never looked this good
- 👎 Hammy and predictable plot

82%



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360Zine
FREE! For Xbox 360






The Ball

Publisher: Iceberg Interactive
Developer: Teotl Studios
Heritage: N/A
Link: www.teotlstudios.com
OUT NOW

System Requirements:
2GHz CPU, 2Gb RAM,
GF6800/GF8800 or
higher graphics
card recommended

Bags of fun

As the winner of last year's 'Make Something Unreal' competition, The Ball has attracted a fair amount of interest over the past months. Reminiscent of Valve's masterpiece Portal, the game takes place in a closed-off puzzle-based first-person shooter setting where the aim is to navigate eight different ingeniously designed underground levels, with only a large ball and gun-like hammer to set you on your way. With the skull-endowed weapon, you can not only fire the ball ahead of you, but also attract it magnetically back. This simple dynamic makes sure that the opening hours are enjoyable as they

come, as you toy around with a large six-foot sphere to activate switches, weigh down pulleys, navigate lava pits and even set off makeshift bombs. The only problem is when combat gets introduced, as it transforms the cerebral puzzle into a sub-par action game where mummies and insects can only be killed via flattening with your omni-purpose sphere, and even with a mouse and keyboard the controls aren't tight enough to make combat exciting. It's a real shame, as the puzzle design is often extremely enjoyable and the hint system is usually ready to dispense good advice when you're stuck, but the introduction of enemies just feels

needless. Obviously the underground ancient civilisation setting has to go somewhere, but overall it feels like an unnecessary addition. The campaign takes around six hours to complete, and there's a Survival mode to enjoy too, if you like smashing enemies with an oversized ball, obviously. Overall, The Ball is still definitely worth playing though, as the core dynamic is so refreshingly enjoyable that it really showcases why the 'indie' genre is so prolific on the PC. It isn't the Portal successor many gaming pundits were secretly hoping for, nevertheless it's an very impressive debut effort from a new studio. ●

"The opening hours are enjoyable as they come, as you toy around with a large six-foot sphere"

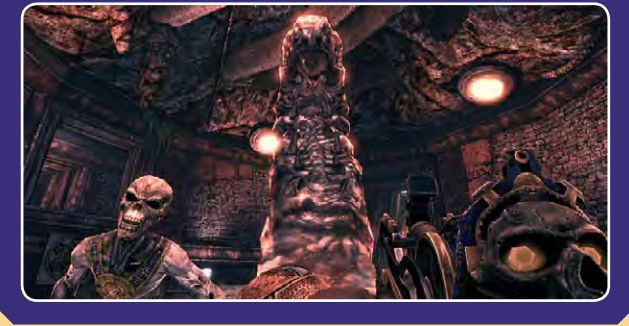


"It's behind you!"

BALLS OF STEEL

Can you survive?

Other than a lengthy campaign mode, The Ball also features a Survival mode which features four different maps each with nine waves of enemies flanked by a giant boss character to fight off. There are giant worms, flame-spewing turtles and many other well-designed archetypes, with a fair amount of traps to kill new waves. It's fun but there's no leaderboards for co-op functionality.



Occasionally, new elements get thrown into the mix during the campaign, but they are introduced well.



The ball can go to places you cannot.



PCGZine Verdict

A well-rounded experience which struggles to maintain its momentum

- Novel and unique gameplay
- Consistently excellent puzzle design
- Combat feels twitchy

80%





Publisher: Grendal Games
Developer: Grendal Games
Heritage: Diatomic, Equalized
Link: www.grendal-games.com
OUT NOW

System Requirements:
1.6GHz CPU, 1Gb RAM,
128Mb GFX card

Diamond Dan

A real diamond geezer

Every puzzler needs to hit a very specific sweet spot inside the psyche of every player. There's a very subtle science to enraging a gamer enough so that they keep playing, yet not so much that they feel compelled to launch their keyboard through the monitor. Games that master this are a rarity, and funnily enough this is exactly what Diamond Dan gets so right. The cutesy visuals conceal a real challenge for any gamer, but an enjoyable one which will burrow itself into your mind.

The core premise involves Dan or his partner Ann, navigating tower-like dungeons which possess traps, golds,

diamonds and blocks which move as time passes. Moving much like a Rubik's Cube, everything rotates on a central axis and involves getting your wannabe archeologist from top to the bottom. As you narrowly avoid traps, you'll gain more juice for your multiplayer meter and thus increase the value of the collectible spoils littered throughout the pillar. Playing the game feels very much like journeying down a massive Jenga Tower, only this construction is trying its best to kill you.

Death comes in the form of falling blocks, spikes or gargoyles coming out of the walls is frustrating but a retry is only a key press away, and the majority

of levels have quick save doors to store your descent progress.

Most players worthy of the name will get through the game's campaign in less than five hours but there are also leaderboards to add longevity, as well as Steam achievements to tempt you to experiment.

Diamond Dan takes a simple concept and makes it challenging without sacrificing any of the fun along the way. There isn't masses of content here, and after the campaign, the concept does wear a little thin to be honest, but most players will get more than enough enjoyment to warrant their paltry £8.99 investment. ●



We've always been suckers for a redhead.

THE DUNGEONING DUO

Which archeologist will you choose?

Despite the name, Diamond Dan actually gives you a choice of two characters to approach every level. There's Dan, who can only push blocks out of the way and double jump, and Ann, who can smash blocks to dust with her trusty pickaxe. Scenarios have been designed to make the most of their differences, but who you choose can make a significant impact on your chances.



This adorable hub allows players to access all scenarios they've unlocked and Dan's journal, which functions as the main delivery mechanism for the storyline.



As you move from one side of the tower to the other, the camera pans with your movement.

PCGZine Verdict

A diamond in the 'indie' rough and definitely worth a purchase

- Great visual style and soundtrack
- Enjoyable and challenging
- Not a lot of content to sift through

84%





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