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# 360zine

Issue 49 | December 2010

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



## L.A. NOIRE

Huge preview of Rockstar's stunning crime opus

**HANDS-ON!**

# KINECT

Everything you need to know about Microsoft's Wii beater!

**PLUS!**



**REVIEWED!**  
ASSASSIN'S CREED  
BROTHERHOOD



**REVIEWED!**  
CALL OF DUTY:  
BLACK OPS



**REVIEWED!**  
NEED FOR SPEED  
HOT PURSUIT

CONTROL →





# Welcome to 360Zine



It's been one of the healthiest issues in 360Zine history. The launch of Microsoft's Kinect has had us up out of our chairs and on our feet, moving around, getting a sweat on and burning a few calories. It's the biggest thing Microsoft has launched in half a decade, and you can check out our full buyer's guide in this very issue.

As if that wasn't enough to threaten your wallet, we've got November's big three games reviewed, too: Call of Duty: Black Ops, Need for Speed Hot Pursuit and Assassin's Creed Brotherhood. We can tell that it's going to be an expensive month!

So, as we wrap up 2010 for 360Zine, let us thank you for all your support and wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

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

**Dan Hutchinson, Editor**  
360zine@gamerzines.com

**MEET THE TEAM**  
Probably the best games writers on the planet



**Jon Denton**  
Jon finally has an excuse to leap around his sitting room.



**Tom Worthington**  
Games demon Tom is the master of all-things Xbox.



**Assassins Creed Brotherhood**  
Reviewed inside

## Don't miss! This month's top highlights



**KINECT**  
THE ULTIMATE BUYERS' GUIDE



**CoD: Black Ops**  
The Cold War hots up!



**LA Noire**  
The first big game of 2011!



**Need for Speed Hot Pursuit**  
Hands-on preview

### QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

- |                       |                              |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Shadows of the Damned | Kinect JoyRide               |
| LA Noire              | Kinect Adventures            |
| Kinect Sports         | Need for Speed Hot Pursuit   |
| Kinectimals           | CoD: Black Ops               |
| Dance Central         | Assassin's Creed Brotherhood |
| YourShape             |                              |
| Fitness Evolved       |                              |

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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.



PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

### 19TH NOVEMBER 2010

Go to [uk.needforspeed.com](http://uk.needforspeed.com) to learn how fast turns friends to foes.

### NEED FOR SPEED HOT PURSUIT



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**Publisher:** EA  
**Developer:** Grasshopper  
**Heritage:** No More Heroes, Killer 7  
**Link:** [www.ea.com/shadowsofthedamned](http://www.ea.com/shadowsofthedamned)  
**ETA:** Summer 2011



## FIRST LOOK

# Shadows of the Damned

*Let the blood bath begin*

### What's the story?

Collaborative efforts are all the rage these days but we can't help but get excited when we hear these two names are working together. Shadows of the Damned is the twisted creation of famed game directors Goichi Suda and Shinji Mikami.

These two individuals are responsible for the likes of Killer 7, No More Heroes, the original Resident Evil and the revolutionary Resident Evil 4. Each one of their accolades alone makes them a force to be reckoned with in the gaming world.

### What do we know?

Garcia Hotspur's the name, and hunting demons is his game. Shadows of the Damned throws its leather-clad, scar-faced hero right into the depths of Hell to fend off an worryingly large army of evils in order to save his true love, Paula.

Shadows of the Damned's vision of Hell takes place in the medieval-themed City of the Damned, that's more than prepared to deal with Garcia's arrival. Relentless numbers



**"Shadows of the Damned is the twisted creation of Goichi Suda and Shinji Mikami"**



**It's all quite Resident Evil 4.**



Quite how the action will play out is still unknown.

*"Shadows of the Damned has a lot working in its favour"*



### > Shadows of the Damned continued

of undead are clambering at his feet and gangly-legged demons tearing down walls in order to crush Mr. Hotspur where he stands. Third-person survival horror games aren't difficult to come by these days, but Shadows of the Damned has a lot working in its favour. Mikami's expertise working on titles like Resident Evil 4 and more recently Vanquish is bound to pay off, and Suda's bizarre 'Punk's not Dead' eye for design is bound to make this trip to hell unlike any previous visits.

But that's not all, folks. Joining these two heavyweights is Silent Hill's Sound Director Akira Yamaoka to provide a killer soundtrack for Garcia's wrath. Early impressions say it's a little heavy on the metal but we won't pass judgement until we've completed our return trip from the depths of Hell.

### When do we get more?

Publisher Grasshopper Studios is aiming to get Shadows of the Damned out for a summer 2011 release. Where exactly? We're not so sure, but with Suda 51 hard at work on multiple project (including Kinect title 'Project D') and Mikami settling into his new office as Bethesda, don't be surprised if Garcia Hotspur is doing the rounds next Halloween.

### Anything else to declare?

We finish our First Look of the game with a little bit of trivia for you: Shadows of the Damned has been in the works for around five years. When Suda and Mikami collaborated on the story to the 2005's obscure classic Killer 7, the seeds were planted for this future project. Suda would continue to work on ideas for a survival horror until 2008 when Mikami joined on the project and EA gave Shadows of the Damned the green light.

# DOCTOR WHO



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THEIR DEADLIEST ENEMIES - THE DALEKS AND CYBERMEN!**

## ACCESSORIES IN STORE FOR CHRISTMAS

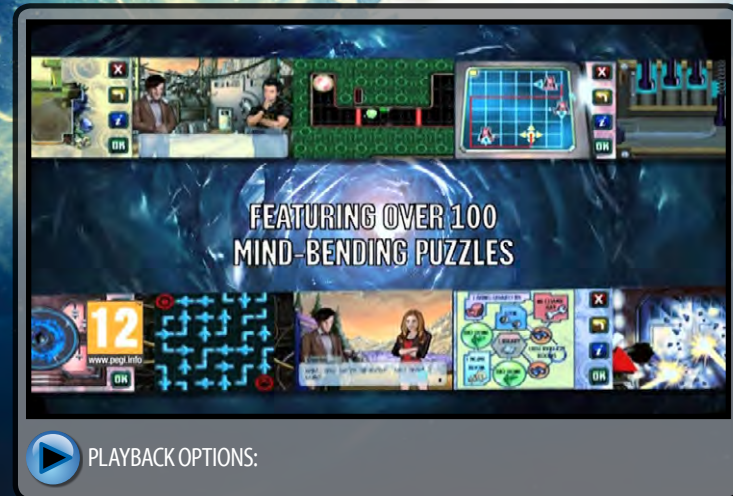


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BBC



## L.A. NOIRE

**Publisher:** Rockstar  
**Developer:** Team Bondi  
**Heritage:** Grand Theft Auto, Red Dead Redemption  
**Link:** [www.rockstargames.com/lanoire](http://www.rockstargames.com/lanoire)  
**ETA:** Spring 2011

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

### PREVIEW

# L.A. Noire

*Or, what Rockstar did next*

No one does period better than Rockstar. Games have always tried to replicate history, but before GTA Vice City, few managed to capture its essence. Since the sojourn to the 80s, we've been to 1990s gangland California, turn-of-the-century Mexico, and now a beautifully recreated Los Angeles plucked straight from the booming back end of the 40s.

Actually, credit where it's due, as L.A. Noire isn't a Rockstar game in the strictest sense. Team Bondi, the Aussie outfit behind this fascinating crime thriller, are an independent studio who have been working on the game, and with its extraordinary tech (more on this later), for close to a decade.

Still, it feels like a Rockstar epic. Our demo saw stiff-brimmed protagonist Cole Phelps taking an assignment from his Traffic desk (in L.A. Noire, you move up ranks of the police force through desks – Traffic, Arson, Homicide, etc), and onto a case called The Fallen Idol. As soon as we were taken out onto the city streets, it was clear L.A. Noire is every bit as expansive and impressive as Rockstar's recent output. The skyline stretches for miles – the detail is

incredible. If you're thinking this is going to be another openworld trudge, though, you'd be mistaken. While you can take to the LA streets as you

*"L.A. Noire has a beautifully recreated Los Angeles plucked straight from the booming back end of the 40s"*

Visually, the game looks very 'Rockstar' – tremendous views, moody lighting and smooth animation.



*Cole Phelps and Stefan Bekowsky, our hero and his partner. Pinstripe suits and fedoras are the only way to fly.*



## L.A. NOIRE



The game flits between interrogation, action and driving throughout each case.



Team Bondi has created L.A. Noire's host city in spectacular detail and period realism.

### > L.A. Noire continued

please, the action is largely driven by narrative, with each case starting from your desk, and there's never going to

be a point in the game when you're not 'on the case'.

In The Fallen Idol, Phelps and partner Bekowsky are alerted to a car that has driven off an escarpment not far from



**"If you're thinking this is going to be another openworld trudge then you'd be mistaken"**

the station, straight into a billboard. The driver, June Ballard, is being attended to by medics at the scene, while her passenger, a young girl called Jessica Hamilton, is in the hospital. Ballard claims both she and the passenger were drugged. Cue some detective work...

L.A. Noire isn't your typical openworlder. A large volume of its gameplay involves actual police procedure, and you'll have to

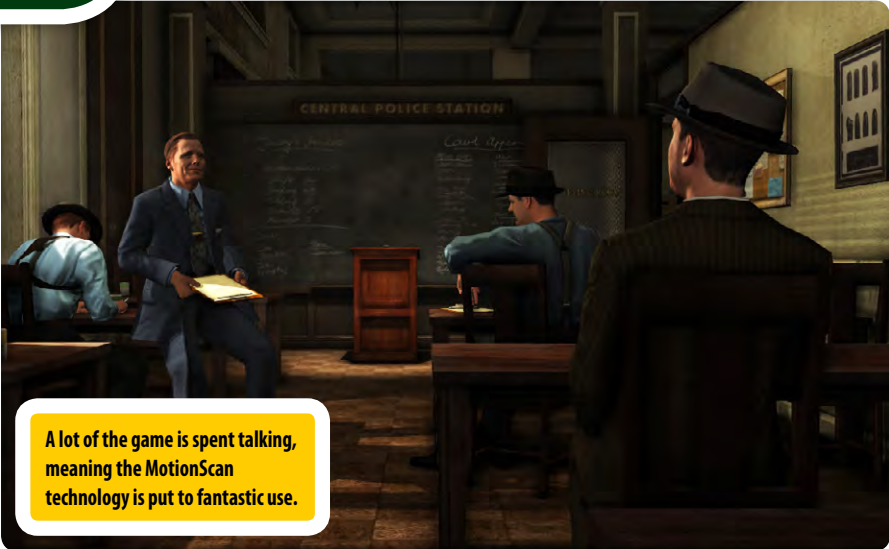
investigate crime scenes and interrogate suspects in order to get anywhere in the game.

First things first, then – a nose around the crime scene. L.A. Noire uses musical motifs to alert you to a scene worth investigating, and a familiar dual-piano hook when you're near a clue or a piece of evidence. Find something, and you can take a closer look, manipulating it in your hand, and if you do see something of interest it will automatically be entered into your notebook, which is as crucial as your sidearm and your wit.

Perhaps more interesting though, are the interrogations themselves. With your fedora firmly tipped, you can fire off questions at a suspect or witness from a list in your notebook, then



## L.A. NOIRE



A lot of the game is spent talking, meaning the MotionScan technology is put to fantastic use.



### > L.A. Noire continued

carefully analyse their response. The amazing facial animation on show in the game, created through the use of 100-or-so cameras just motion-capping the facial muscles, leads you to examine ticks, twitches and tells that might give away the truth.

After you've received your answer, you can choose to believe a suspect, accuse them of lying (which needs to be supported with evidence) or simply force them to elaborate. Get it wrong and the person you're questioning will clam up and possibly freeze you out. Get it right, and you'll open up more questions and eventually get to the truth. Each case will have multiple paths to get to the right answers, so it's not 'game over' if you don't get your questions right, but a skilful detective will have an easier time if they can read their suspect efficiently.

It makes for a very interesting and original take. We've obviously had games with branching dialogue before, but none where NPCs actively lie to you to throw you off the correct path. You'll really have to pay attention to the story and what people are saying in order to succeed, and it's fantastic to have a genuinely fresh game mechanic that doesn't involve hitting or shooting anyone.

Of course, there's a bit of that too in L.A. Noire. You are a cop, one with extensive army experience, and sometimes the time for talk is over. The final sequence of The Fallen Idol sees Phelps chasing down his prime suspect in an abandoned movie lot. We won't spoil how and why he got there, but when he finally catches the perpetrator, they both realise they'll have to shoot their way out of trouble after a group of gangsters roll up to interfere. From there, L.A. Noire turns >



## L.A. NOIRE



It's not all chatter, as there are plenty of action sections to get your teeth into.

### > L.A. Noire continued

into a fairly typical cover-shooter, employing a similar pop-and-shoot mechanic to both GTA IV and Red Dead Redemption. Rockstar is promising vehicle-to-vehicle combat and some hand-to-hand ruckus as well, but the ultimate goal is to keep L.A. Noire as varied and interesting as possible.

As you move from case to case and up through the police ranks, an over-arching story will begin to unfold, with plenty of Film Noir-tropes (think fedoras, femme-fatales and Freudian overtones) lavishly incorporated into a superbly acted and well-written script. And with the most advanced facial animation tech yet seen (by some distance), we're looking at something



It's a dark story. This is very much a game for adults, and things can get very grim.

genuinely unique – an absolute rarity in this day and age. L.A. Noire is still in need of a bit of spit and polish, but we're still a good six months away from the game's release, and the team at Bondi, with support from Rockstar's own internal studios, is hard at work smoothing off every rough edge and tightening up every bolt to ensure the game fulfils its enormous potential. It will be interesting to see just how flexible the dialogue systems are as you progress – we're assured that later cases will require an extremely keen

eye to solve without resorting to tapping up every witness in town. And even though it's not a typical Rockstar openworlder, there will still be plenty to see and do in 1940s LA, be it Hollywood sightseeing or just some standard police work. You can even call for some useful back up through one of the city's call boxes. It really does feel like you're a cop, not just another no-name protagonist. L.A. Noire is definitely the most interesting and promising game of 2011 so far, and most certainly not one of the usual suspects. Be excited. ●

**360Zine** **HOW COMPLETE?** **FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

**L.A. NOIRE** **80%** **90%**

*Fascinating, compelling and brimming with potential*

# ASSASSIN'S —CREED— BROTHERHOOD



▶ PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

**"KILLER** IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD"  
- FHM



OUT ON  
19<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER

[www.assassinscreed.com](http://www.assassinscreed.com)



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KINECT

Price: £129.99  
Out Now

# KINECT™

NEW KIT!



Controller-free gaming is here!

The first time that Kinect nods its head at you as it scans your room, it feels like the future. We've had camera technology sitting atop our TVs before, even on the Xbox 360, but Kinect is something very different indeed.

The sensor has three distinct parts – the infra-red camera, the RGB camera, and a multi-array microphone. It uses all three to work out just where you are in your room, where your joints are and then translates your movements into game controls in a way that's infinitely

more accurate than any gaming camera tech that has come before it.

There are a few things you need to remember, though... Kinect isn't cheap – it's best treated like a new hardware launch rather than just a nifty new add-on. Secondly, you'll need a lot of room. If you don't have at least eight feet between where you'll be standing and your TV, then don't even bother. This is for large living spaces, and the taller you are, the more room you'll need (as Kinect wants to read your whole body).



## Controller-free gaming? How does that work?

Kinect uses an infra-red camera to read your skeleton, then figures out where your joints are so it can translate them into the game. It also uses a digital camera to take photos of you as you play, and uses a mic so you can control the Xbox with your voice.





## INSIDE KINECT

### KINECT

#### > Kinect continued

Finally, at the moment, it's not going to provide the type of gaming experiences that have been synonymous with the 360. So, no shooters or RPGs, then. Instead, it's family-focused fun; games that anyone can play. And in that respect, Kinect is the most successful motion device out there.

It takes mere seconds to figure out how to move your hand around the screen and select menu options, and

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

**"It's fun to use the voice controls to make your Xbox play"**

the tutorials are quick and easy on both the Kinect Hub (the Kinect-specific dashboard) and on most of the launch games. Even without a game, it's fun to use the voice controls to make your Xbox play your games or wave your hands around to select options Minority Report style. There's definitely room for improvement – you can't navigate the marketplace with Kinect or dive into your video libraries just yet, but Microsoft will support the sensor through firmware updates.

Overall, it's a fantastic piece of kit. It looks and feels expensive, works surprisingly well and will make the whole family grin from ear to ear. ●



KINECT



**Publisher:** Microsoft  
**Developer:** Rare  
**Heritage:** Banjo Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts, Perfect Dark Zero  
**Link:** [www.rare.co.uk/games/sport](http://www.rare.co.uk/games/sport)  
**OUT NOW**

# KINECT SPORTS

*A motion-controlled sports game? Whatever next?*

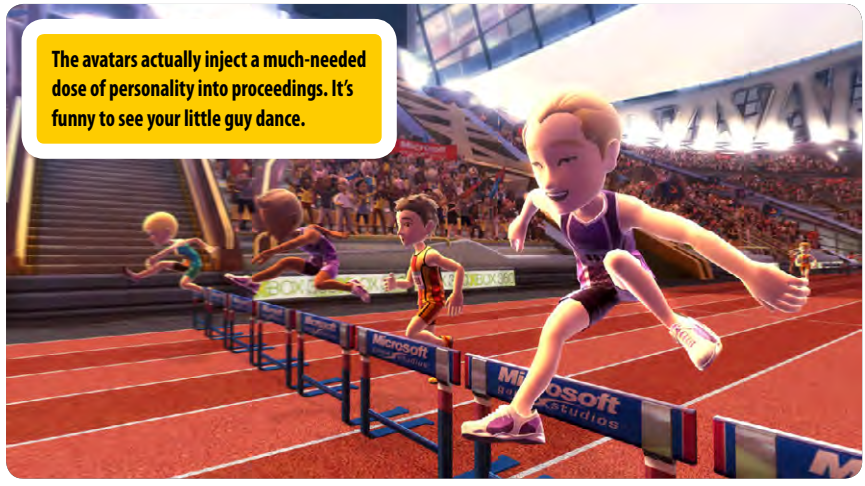
**E**very hardware launch needs its killer app, and every motion controller needs a sports minigame package. Turns out, Kinect Sports is both. This is the best piece of software available on Kinect so far, and quite possibly the best sports minigame package ever.

It's more than reminiscent of Wii Sports, but is even easier to get involved with. With no controller, you need absolutely no experience in

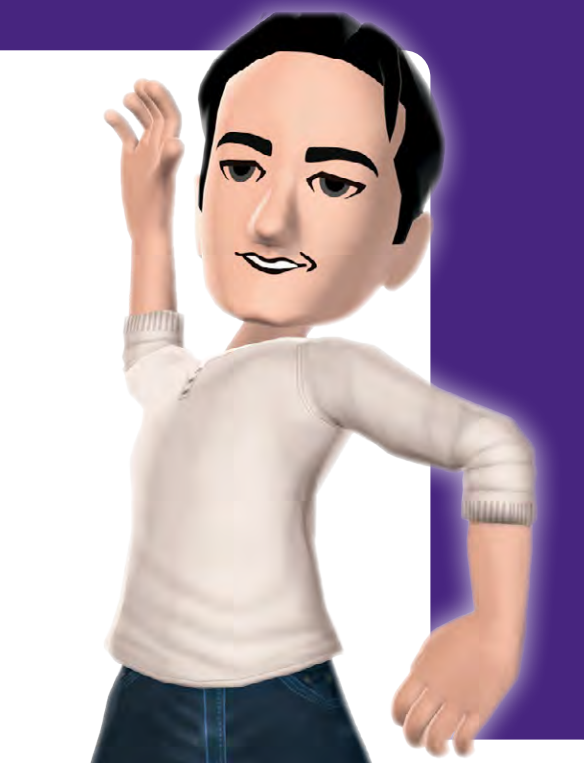
gaming whatsoever – perfect for the family. That doesn't mean that seasoned gamers won't have plenty to enjoy here, though. Just taking football as an example – it's a rare (no pun intended) treat to try something genuinely new in gaming, but playing a videogame with your feet is revelatory. While all you actually do is stand still and kick the ball left, right or down the centre, the combination of excellent motion tracking and well-built software makes

for a really enjoyable and oddly compelling game. Smashing the ball into the top corner of the net is incredibly satisfying.

Probably second best on the list is Track and Field, which gives you six simple events to burn through. Hurdles and the 100m sprint are a case of ➤

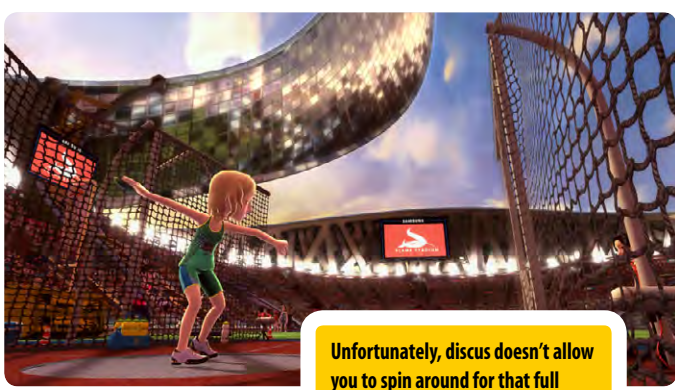


The avatars actually inject a much-needed dose of personality into proceedings. It's funny to see your little guy dance.



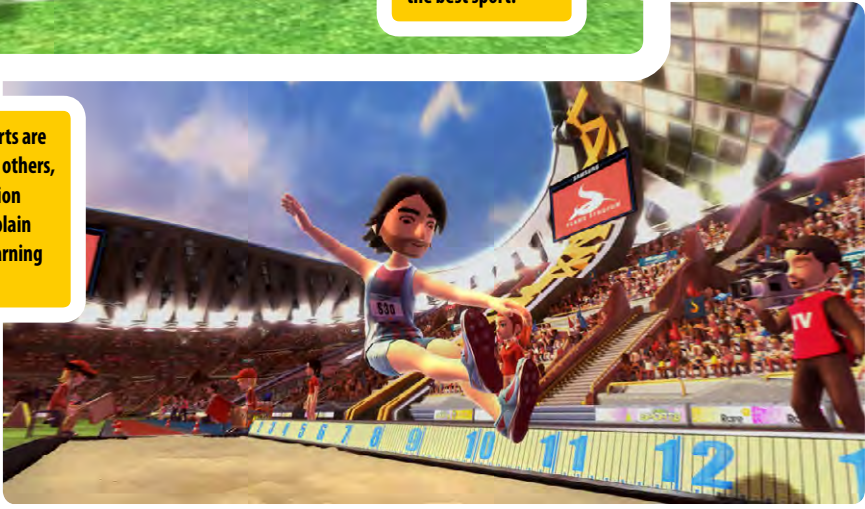


Football is probably the best sport.

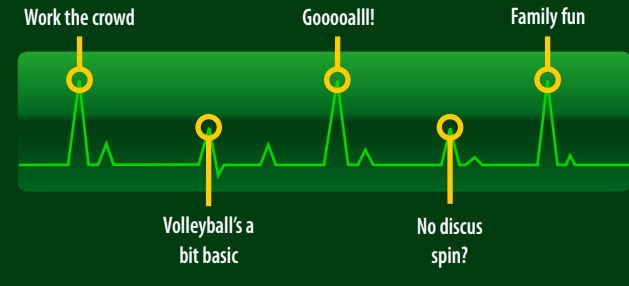


Unfortunately, discus doesn't allow you to spin around for that full Eastern-European grunt. Gutted.

Obviously, some sports are more engaging than others, but in a party situation there's little to complain about. There's no learning curve - it's all easy.



## PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



### > Kinect Sports cont.

running like an idiot on the spot, while javelin and discus challenge you to perfect leaping without smashing your head on the ceiling.

If you're keen on improving your fitness, then the boxing game could be for you. It's significantly more accurate than the Wii Sports equivalent, and much better than Kinect's own Fighters Uncaged. It can pick up hooks, uppercuts crosses and jabs, and will have you raising your heart rate and smacking up your opponents in no time.

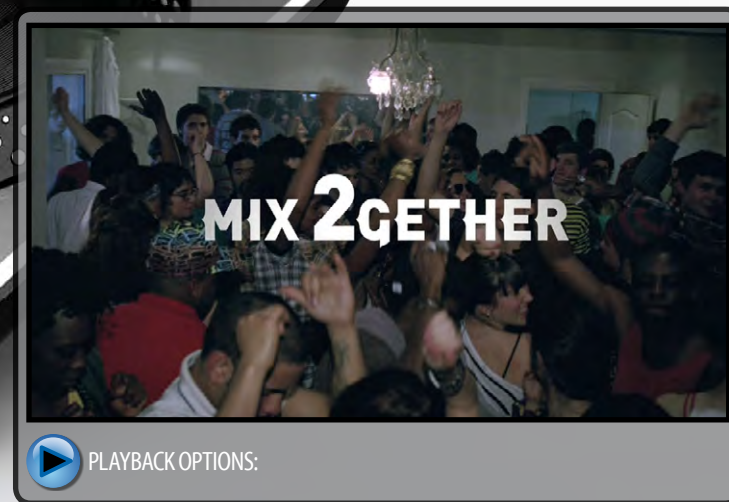
Rounding off the package are the slightly less impressive table tennis and beach volleyball games, which while enjoyable, actually don't require a huge amount of input from the player to succeed in. Volleyball will have you leaping around like a loon, but on closer inspection, it doesn't actually require that much effort. Just track the yellow circle on the screen and move your hands there, and you'll be well on your way to success.

Table tennis lacks the pure accuracy required to make it truly exceptional, but it's fun to see the avatars on-screen, mimicking your movements exactly. It can produce some epic rallies in two player, though, but bear in mind you need a serious amount of room to play Kinect Sports with another.

And that's the game's biggest problem. It maxes out with two players, but most living rooms won't be able to cope with that space. It's a credit to Rare that the game is enjoyable to be played on its own, and the amusing photos it takes during play are enough to make even the grumpiest old men chuckle.

Kinect Sports isn't a classic, but it's a great example of what the sensor is capable of, and an entertaining piece of software in its own right. Rare seems to have settled into this new role of Kinect kings with ease, and its next game will likely be even better. Until then though, we'll see you on the football pitch for some leg-swinging mania. ●

# 82%



# BRING THE PARTY HOME

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 \*Offer applies to DJ Hero® 2 bundle and party bundle, while stocks last.





## KINECT



**Publisher:** Microsoft  
**Developer:** Frontier Developments  
**Heritage:** Thrillville, Lost Winds  
**Link:** N/A  
**OUT NOW**

# KINECTIMALS™

*Seriously, how cute is this?*

In truth, a lot of 360Zine's readers aren't going to like Kinectimals. But it's not for us, as Microsoft are doing it for the kids. Kids who want to play with a gorgeous little lion or tiger cub, and to do so while experiencing the wonder of Kinect. And it has to be said that in that respect, Frontier's animal-em-up does very little wrong.

Call of Duty heads will get frustrated by the little flying imp who never shuts up, and by the aching slow way

Kinectimals explains everything. Parents, though, will probably see both those features as a blessing. It's simple enough for small children to enjoy, but expertly made. It doesn't condescend or over-simplify its fun just because it's for kids.

The basic premise is very simple: you pick a little cub, then go and play with it in a forest. The game will throw well-produced mini-tasks at you, like knocking down skittles or driving a car

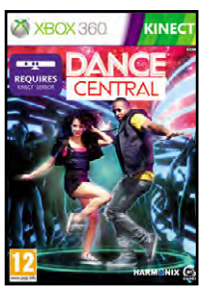
with your hands out, and every single one works well and is over quickly enough so kids don't get bored. And even a stoney-hearted dad can get a kick out of playing with those little kitties, too. Promise. ●

**82%**



The cats are actually too cute for words, and kids will love playing with them. As will most adults, to be fair.

KINECT



# DANCE CENTRAL™

## Crank dat, soulja boy

**Publisher:** Microsoft  
**Developer:** Harmonix  
**Heritage:** Rock Band series  
**Link:** [www.dancecentral.com](http://www.dancecentral.com)  
**OUT NOW**

If there's one thing that is consistent across all Kinect games, its exercise. Getting up off the sofa and moving your entire body to a game is a cracking workout, and Dance Central might just be the most intense of all. 30 minutes with Harmonix's latest makes those late-night CoD marathons all the more justifiable.

It's a devastatingly simple game, but the technology powering it is impressive. Basically, you pick a song – using the best menus currently in the Kinect catalogue – and copy the dancer on screen. A box on the right tells you which move is coming up next, and your dancer's limbs will glow red if (and when) you're out of step.

It's impressive just how accurate Dance Central is, though. You really needs to get your body moving if you want to hit the high scores, and the advanced moves will test your cardio as well as your flexibility. The Soulja Boy routine is simultaneously hilarious

and exhausting, and should be played at all times.

The game is only really let down by its presentation. While the menus are slick, the in-game visuals lack a bit of spark, with a fairly basic on-screen dancer (and two back-ups), and not a huge amount of special effects to make you feel like a superstar.

As with all the best Kinect software, the real action is happening off-screen, and watching your friends gyrate in front of the TV doesn't ever tire.

The lack of proper multiplayer support is a bit of a letdown, meaning Dance Central parties need some brave souls to flaunt themselves in front of a crowd, but if you've got the moves, then don't be afraid to show 'em off. ●

80%



KINECT



# YOUR SHAPE

## FITNESS EVOLVED

### Feel the burn

The rush to get the premiere Kinect fitness product on the shelves early has seen the likes of Mel B and David Beckham get involved, but for now, if you want something that makes you feel good and makes your Kinect seem like a classy piece of kit, then YourShape Fitness Evolved is it. You know what to expect: fitness minigames, some yoga and some cardio work, and that's exactly what YourShape delivers. So far, so Wii Fit.

Where YourShape differs, though, is in how it uses the technology. It can scan your body perfectly, so it knows how well you're doing in improving your shape, and by reading your limbs, it knows how and when you're performing the exercises correctly. It's a genuine step up from a workout DVD. Perhaps the only false step is the calorie counter which forms the central scoring mechanism. It's only ever going to be an estimate, and it's best ignoring

the counter and focusing on the amount of time you're exercising for the best results. YourShape is a positive piece of software that shows off the tech as well as improving your well-being. But if you really want to feel the burn, then get on Dance Central. ●



KINECT



Publisher: Microsoft  
Developer: BigPark Inc.  
Heritage: N/A  
Link: N/A  
OUT NOW

# KINECT JOY RIDE

*Driving without a wheel? Stranger things have happened*

This is the game that didn't really need to exist. We've been using steering wheels with our gaming for ever, so holding out your hands to turn corners isn't exactly revolutionary. It's actually just a little bit painful.

In all fairness though, Kinect Joy Ride does promote physicality by having you lean into drifts, spin around for stunts, and literally lurch forward to

activate a boost, and in short doses, it's fairly good fun.

Where the game falls down though, is that it looks like it would be more fun with a controller. It looks nice, the tracks are great and having your avatars on screen is great. But with the Kinect compatibility, you're stripped of your ability to accelerate or brake, and it feels like the game is largely playing itself.



Of course, that's not really the point, but Kinect shouldn't be something that dilutes gaming experiences, it should add to it. As a downloadable title, Joy Ride would have been great. As it is though, it's likely to drive you mad. ●

71%



KINECT

# KINECT™ ADVENTURES!



**Publisher:** Microsoft  
**Developer:** Good Science Studio  
**Heritage:** N/A  
**Link:** N/A  
**OUT NOW**

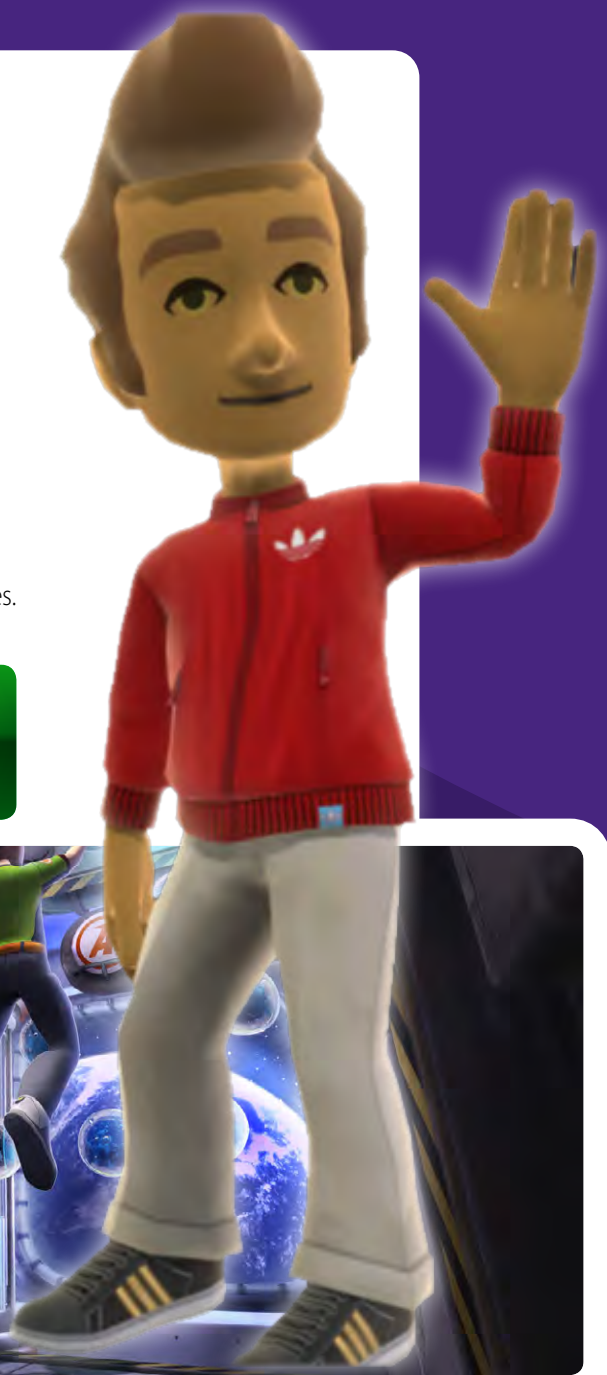
### Fancy a wild adventure?

**T**here's no real surprise that Kinect Adventures is bundled with your sensor. It's probably the most immediate game of the launch line-up, but also the most limited. You'll have seen much of it before in the lead up to Kinect's release, and now it's here, it's almost like you already know how to play. All the games are simple. There's the one where you hit the balls that are

coming at you by getting in the way. There's another where you dodge barriers and collect coins; you can steer a raft by leaning left and right in the room and jumping to make it hop up. They all work well, but are only as entertaining as the people you're playing with. Try playing Kinect Adventures on your own, and you'll probably get bored before you get tired.

Also included is a game where you plug leaks in a tank and one where you pop bubbles. See you on Kinect Sports, then. ●

**70%**



It really is a functional tech demo and very little else. Fun for half an hour.



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# Need for Speed Hot Pursuit

**Publisher:** EA

**Developer:** Criterion

**Heritage:** Burnout Paradise,  
Burnout Revenge, Black

**Link:** [http://needfor  
speed.com](http://needfor<br/>speed.com)

**OUT NOW**

## Criterion edition

If Criterion isn't the best racing studio in the world, then it's certainly in the top three. The Guildford-based team has been consistently making driving games that shatter the preconceptions of what arcade racing could and should be, so it's no wonder EA has put its premier team on its premier racing franchise. The result? Need for Speed is great again. In fact, it's better than ever.

The easy comparison is Burnout, but the more accurate one is Burnout 3. This is Criterion's purest arcade racer since that magnificent beast, a ridiculously exciting, lighting-fast and brutally powerful joyride through the fictional Seacrest County, behind the wheel of a supercar or souped-up cop cruiser.

Yes, Need for Speed Hot Pursuit lets you play as both sides of the law in its



segregated race events. You might be hurtling away from the cops as you try and cross the line ahead of your competition, chasing down a single perp across the county, or just testing one of the world's hottest sports cars in a special preview event. Regardless of what you're doing though, it's always spectacular action.

It's not often that a game has a reviewer's jaw left open in a combo of concentration and amazement, but Need for Speed Hot Pursuit achieved this state of abject human ugliness with alarming consistency. The first game to do so since Burnout 3, in fact. It's all about focusing on the vanishing point as you hurtle towards it an incredible speed, making sure you dodge traffic, outmanoeuvre your opponents and stay out of the way of the law. Or, if you are the law, taking down the racers that are trying to do just that.

In most of the game's events, both the cops and the racers have access to



Photo mode allows you to take snapshots on the fly when you're racing.

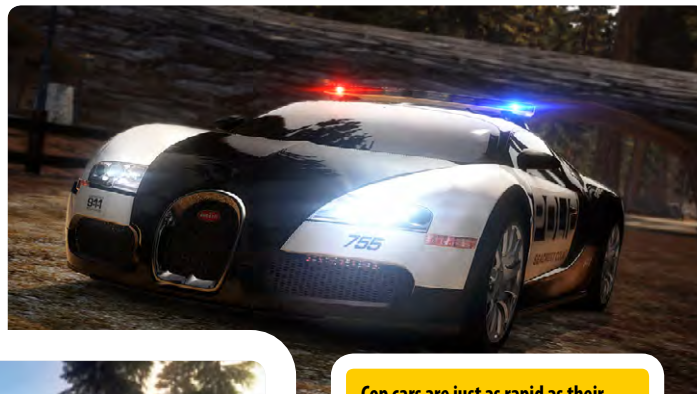
a selection of weapons designed to halt their opposition in extremely dangerous ways. It's not Mario Kart, so fear not, but the police can set road blocks, call in for choppers and fire off an engine-disabling EMP blast to help them rid Seacrest County of its rampant speed problem.

Of course, these drivers are savvy, and have equipped their cars with EMP, signal jammers and spike strips, making for a balanced battle. The weapons don't form the basis of the driving, but add to the drama.

Whatever you're doing in Need for Speed Hot Pursuit, you'll earn bounty (XP), giving the game a Call of Duty-like sense of reward whenever you do anything. You'll constantly be unlocking cars and new events in the Career mode, and it has that trademark Criterion 'one more go' relentlessness that can see the sun rise while you stare unblinking at the glow of the HDTV.

This isn't helped by Criterion's newest innovation, autolog. Carrying on from Burnout Paradise's





**"Hot Pursuit logs everything that your friends are doing and jams it right in your face"**

Even the early cars are absolute beasts. This isn't a game about going slow. Ever.



Cop cars are just as rapid as their opponents. And if the sirens are annoying, just hit Y to turn them off.

> NFS: HP continued

asynchronous road rules online leaderboards, NFS Hot Pursuit logs everything that your friends are doing and jams it right in your face. xXR0BoDuDeXx beat your time trial score? Autolog tells you. Actually, it doesn't just tell you, it tempts you into trying to beat him. If you do, you'll get more bounty and more prestige. Your life will be better. You'll be more handsome and more fulfilled.

It's a cruel temptress, though. Even if you spend an evening besting the times of everyone you've ever met, inevitably all those scores will be shattered by the following morning, creating a kind of automotive purgatory where paradise is always just one step away. But we'll keep trying; keep plugging away. And it's all because the game itself is that good.

After all, you wouldn't bother trying to beat anyone's high score if the game underneath wasn't actually worth

playing. Need for Speed Hot Pursuit most certainly is, though. The purity of its gut-wrenching racing is no finer than when you're playing online against real competition, too. The combination of teamwork and selfishness needed to eliminate the perps is dangerous.

In fact, dangerous is a pretty apt word to describe Hot Pursuit. Not only is hurtling along the road at 200mph not the safest thing in the world, nor is spending 10 straight hours in a coma of extreme concentration. Who's afraid of a little bit of danger though, eh? ●



Roll over screen for annotations

**360Zine Verdict** *The finest racer of 2010? Without doubt. Criterion are the masters*

- Phenomenally exciting
- Brilliant online integration
- Car tuning has been abandoned

**94%**







# Call of Duty: Black Ops

*Always bet on black*

In the confines of the Call of Duty: Black Ops review event, a little huddle of Treyarch employees gathered together as the press stared unblinkingly at their fifth straight hour of multiplayer. They'd been friendly all day, consummately professional too, but understandably nervous. As they grouped together though, one clearly

said: "We've done it," to which his colleague replied: "It really is that good."

Seeing that kind of reaction really hammers home just how much these developers put into their games. Treyarch has been slated in the past for its efforts on previous CoDs, but Black Ops is unquestionably the studio's finest work, and their realisation as 30 games

**"It's the multiplayer that proves to be Black Ops' high point"**

journals staid glued to their game was a real pleasure to watch.

And it is that multiplayer that proves Call of Duty: Black Ops' high-point – a refinement and extension of everything that has come before it. The perfection of the template Infinity Ward laid down. Treyarch might be borrowing from the greats, but they're doing it in style.

Joining the addictive Team Deathmatch, Domination and co is the new Wager Match mode, which allows you to bet your COD points (currency used to buy new weapons and equipment) in one of four fantastically inventive free-for-all game types.

There's One In The Chamber, which gives everyone a pistol with one bullet, three lives, and gives you another bullet for every kill you manage. Gun game gives you a new weapon every time you bag a kill, cycling through 20 in the process. Sticks and Stones is crossbows, ballistic knives and a tomahawk that

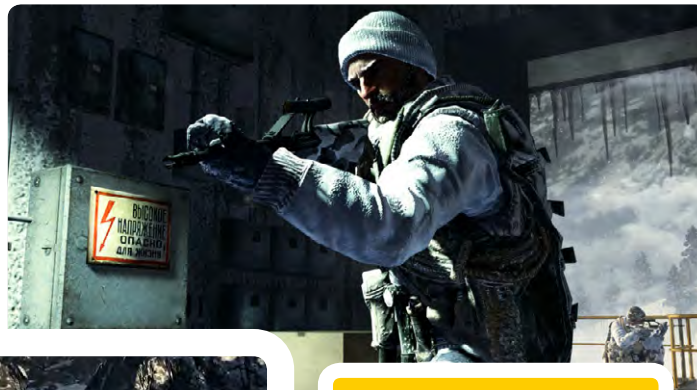
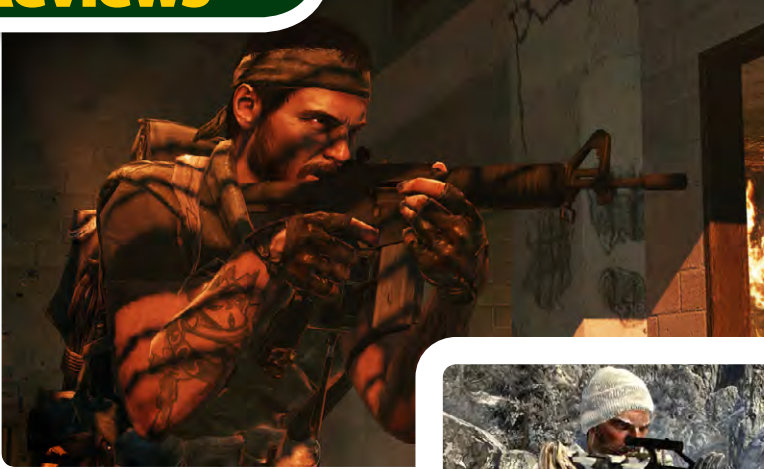
Safe houses provide refuge and a bed for you to advance time and recover.



takes away all your opponent's score if you hit them. And finally, there's the random weapon-chaining sharpshooter, which awards perks for killstreaks. All of them are excellent; all of them furiously addictive and capable of eliciting shrieks of joy or pad-throwing rage.

Outside of your Xbox Live connection, Black Ops does lose its way a little. The campaign, while clearly





**"This is a game that backs up its budget and hype with aplomb"**

The second half of the single-player game is markedly better than the first.

Visually, CoD is beginning to age a little bit. It's still a great-looking game, but the engine is finally reaching its limits.

**> Black Ops continued**

Treyarch's best, is still not as tight as either Modern Warfare game. You play, for the most part, as Alex Mason (voiced by Avatar's Sam Worthington), who has been strapped into a chair and is being interrogated by a mysterious deep-throated voice.

The story is told through interactive flashbacks to some of the Cold War's most infamous conflicts, and you'll be globetrotting from Vietnam to Cuba via Russia as the game speeds towards its dizzying conclusion. There are gaps in the story, some obvious cliches and a largely unsatisfying ending, but it tells a more consistent and interesting story than Modern Warfare 2.

Rounding up the package is Zombies mode, available from the start this time and a fun aside as it was in World At War. It replaces the co-operate Spec Ops from Modern Warfare 2, and isn't as good, but is still a fun way to burn through a couple of hours.

With the AI glitches and drops in pace in the single-player, though, it's hard not to wish Treyarch had focused less on minigames and more on tightening its campaign.

Still, this is a game that backs up its sizeable budget and phenomenal hype with aplomb. The multiplayer will keep people playing long into the new year, and with Treyarch's commitment to continued online support, expect a host of new maps in the not-too distant future. Black is back. ●



**360Zine Verdict** Fun campaign, supreme multiplayer. Good work, Treyarch

- Entertaining story
- Brilliantly refined multiplayer
- AI gaps in single-player

**91**

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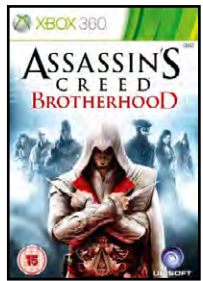
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# Assassin's Creed Brotherhood

**Publisher:** Ubisoft  
**Developer:** Ubisoft Montreal  
**Heritage:** Assassin's Creed  
**Link:** <http://assassinscreed.com>  
**OUT NOW**

*Third time's a charm*

**F**or all its undoubted commercial success, the Assassin's Creed series has not been without its issues. The first game was roundly criticised for being overly repetitive, while its much-improved sequel was baggy in parts, and forced players to complete a range of exhausting fetch quests to finish the story.

There's always been a masterpiece screaming to get out of Assassin's Creed though, and with Brotherhood, Ubisoft Montreal is nearly there. The story has been streamlined this time, with very little repetition and genuinely memorable assassination set-pieces, while the surrounding city of Rome is jam-packed with interesting side-quests,



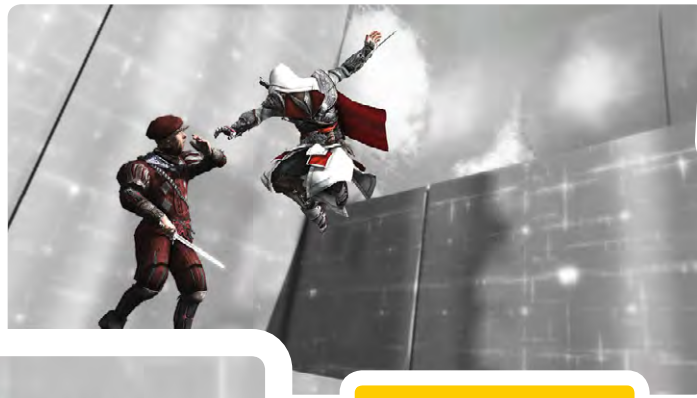
Multiplayer has the potential to introduce Creed to a whole new audience.



stuff to collect and opportunities to renovate the entire city. The story picks up right from the end of Assassin's Creed II, with Ezio discovering Minerva and battling the Pope for the Piece of Eden. Thankfully, after a brief detour as Desmond with the idiot crew back in the real world, you're back in the Animus and ploughing through the most grounded Assassin's Creed story yet. There's very little sci-fi in here, just a tale of Ezio's assassin fraternity trying to take down the Borgia family and take Rome back. It's easy to side with Ezio – he's a likeable chap, and he's the hero, but there's no denying it, you're playing as a terrorist. The whole game is about usurping the governmental hierarchy through murder, fear and intimidation. Occupied areas of Rome are recaptured by igniting huge towers, while 'corrupt' leaders are killed without remorse. It's a fascinating example of shades of grey –

just because you normally play as the good guy in videogames doesn't mean you're necessarily good. Regardless, the Assassin's Creed engine is as beautiful and richly enjoyable as ever. Bounding around Rome is a liberating experience, and Ubisoft has done away with many of the annoyances that blighted the previous game. Rooftop patrols are





**"By the time you acquire the ability to hire an assassin team, you'll actually feel like a leader"**

but Ubisoft has clearly been working on this for some time (it was once rumoured to be part of Assassin's Creed II), and there's a breadth of options and XP opportunities that could tempt even the hardest of hardcore CoD players away for a touch of blade-fondling.

Overall then, despite the short development time, Assassin's Creed Brotherhood is a triumph. It's creeping ever closer to true classic status, and is finally understanding its own identity. Killer stuff. ●

**Assassin's Creed Brotherhood is a strange game, but the high point for the series so far.**



**You recruit assassins along the way, and can send them around the world on contracts to gain XP.**

### > AC Brotherhood cont.

kept to a minimum so you can enjoy the free running, and your notoriety increases much slower, so you can focus on enjoying the game rather than running away from it.

There are niggles, still. Some overly fussy missions prove extremely frustrating at times, and the free-running system still isn't quite tight enough to ever feel like you're fully in control. However, there's very little waiting around, very little backtracking or mission-earning. It's all action.

By the time you acquire the ability to hire an assassin team, you'll actually feel like a leader. Strolling casually past a guard and clicking your fingers sees your 'brothers' pouncing on the enemy like lions on a gazelle. It's one of the coolest feelings in modern gaming.

Rounding up the surprisingly meaty package is multiplayer, for the first time in the series. As always, it's hard to properly judge until it's 'out in the wild',



**360Zine Verdict** *This is the best game in the series so far. Assassin's Creed refined*

- Streamlined story
- Intense multiplayer
- Still some ropey dialogue

# 90%





# James Bond 007: Blood Stone

*Do you think this is a game, Mr Bond?*

**B**izarre Creations didn't make bad games. It just didn't happen. Even as far back as F1 97 on the PSOne, the Liverpool-based crew consistently delivered innovation, quality and the kind of compulsive gameplay that others couldn't match. So Blood Stone, the latest licensed Bond game, seems like an odd fit for them. And here's why...

There's very little in the way of typical Bizarre tropes. There are no score-based leaderboards, no reward systems, no neon even. Blood Stone is a largely generic third-person shooter that's heavy on action and light on substance, with a few driving sections thrown in for good measure.

What the game does well though, is pace. It's completely relentless. Blood

*"What the game does well is its pace. It's completely relentless"*

Stone doesn't like to hang about. From the start, you're ducking into cover, shooting guys, running forward, jumping over a gap then doing it all again. It's actually reminiscent of Bizarre's underrated score-shooter The Club, with a perfunctory Bond story attached and a few driving sections spicing up the action.

As you'd expect from the makers of Project Gotham Racing and Blur, the vehicular levels are well-made. The cars handle like toys, but it's all in the service of the pace and the spectacle. Explosions go off everywhere, debris flies at the screen, and bar a few unnecessarily tricky moments, they're a lot of fun to play through.

Of course, such a focus on relentless action comes at a cost, and Blood Stone does eventually become too repetitive for its own good. Bizarre breaks up the shooting now and then by having Bond use his magical phone, which can somehow seek out enemies, useful intel and disable security cameras, but



Bond does mean and moody very well.

before long, you'll be back behind waist-high cover, popping bad dudes in the head or waiting for them to stroll up to you so you can nail them with a takedown. Close, but no GoldenEye. ●



360Zine  
Verdict

Quick action fare, with very little substance

- Looks good
- Simple and very fast
- Fairly repetitive

79%

In **360Zine**  
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