

GameOn MAG

The Official Gaming Magazine from GameOn.co.uk

Issue 8 February 2009

GameOn's 2008 Game Awards

Find out who won awards.



Necrovision

Supernatural forces:
Vampires, Demons, Zombies!
Read the review inside

Velvet Assassin

Exclusive interview
with Replay Studios about
the new upcoming game.

SIX

FIVE

FOUR

THREE

SECTION



ISSUE 8

WELCOME

M
Meet The Team

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In this month's issue we have put in the 2008 GameOn Awards. We intend to bring this to you every year now with what GameOn believe are the best selection of games from the previous year.

We have also added a new feature for trailers which have been selected by the staff. Each month we will pick videos we feel deserve your attention.

With listening to what the users want we have put more screenshots and videos trailers in the magazine.

We are also planning on bringing back some of the old features from earlier issues, they should be starting back up next month.

THE EDITOR

- 2 • GameOn Awards 2008**
- 4 • Preview: Elven Legacy**
- 6 • Article: Section 8**
- 8 • Interview: Velvet Assassin**
- 12 • Review: F.E.A.R. 2 - Project Origin**
- 16 • Review: Men of War**
- 20 • Review: Necrovision**
- 24 • Review: Hotel Giant 2**
- 28 • 10 Game trailers**
- 29 • Top trailers for January**



Disclaimer: The content featured throughout this magazine may contain links to your forum where there may be unsuitable language for children or those of a sensitive nature. We highly suggest that you are at least of the age 13 to visit the forums or click the links within the magazine.

GAMEON AWARDS

AWARDS FOR 2008



Biggest Surprise Saints Row 2

Was rude, crass and fun.
We loved it.



Longevity Award Fallout 3

Is a game we're all still
playing, new content
out now.



Best Free Game Trackmania

A game so good it feels
a crime to play it for
nothing.



Best Console XBox 360

In a rocky year the 360
comes out on top with a
great selection of titles.



Best Storyline Fable 2

A unique and captivating
story which sat alongside
great gameplay.



Biggest Let Down Far Cry 2

Tried hard, but failed
to go beyond a good
premise.



Biggest Flop Haze

A game which
managed to liquidate
its maker.



Best Handheld Game God of War: Chains of Olympus

Kratos + Weapons = Win.



Best Journalist/Reviewer Chris Wakefield

And in a surprise nomination, we have an award for 'Most Valuable Person' to the GameOn Magazine, this award took a lot of thought mostly because we have so many great members on the magazine team. So we'd like to take this opportunity to thank all of the staff for all of their hard work and contributions, whether it be behind the scenes, or shown off in full view centre spread of the magazine.

Without further ado, the winner of the MVP to GameOn Mag is...

Chris was chosen for his dedication to writing quality game reviews, and ensuring the quality of others reviews were of a high standard worthy of the GameOn logo. Not only did he manage to keep on top of his own reviews, as well as others, he's also managed to stay afloat with his increasingly difficult University work.

So on behalf of all of the GameOn magazine team, we hope to see many more reviews from yourself and we wish you all the best for the future.

**Best Journalist/Reviewer
Chris Wakefield** Chris Wakefield! (EvilGiraffeMan)

GAMEON AWARDS

AWARDS FOR 2008

The GameOn Awards are a chance to issue achievements to games we feel have excelled in the past 12 months



Best Multiplayer Game
Left 4 Dead
with friends? Can it get any better?



Best Gameplay
Left 4 Dead
was polished, refined and sophisticated. Simply outstanding.



Best Graphics
Crysis Warhead
delivered some astonishing visuals on high-end PCs.



Game of the Year
Left 4 Dead
Zombies, Valve, Co-Op and guns. Pure excellence.



Biggest Innovation
Little Big Planet
Tried something different and succeeded.

All awards here have been chosen and decided by our review team at GameOn.

PREVIEW

ELVEN LEGACY

I feel the need to apologise in advance for this preview. Some of you may find that the details in regards to storyline are somewhat...sketchy. This is due to the fact that the main story telling cut scene for this game was spoken in Russian with no English subtitles. But I will try and talk about it to the best of my abilities.

I would like to just point out that although my version of this game was in Russian, it is a press release preview so the finished product will be in English (unless you choose otherwise!)

Elven Legacy is a Tactical RPG from what I can gather; the story focuses on a race of people called the Elves. They are trying to guard a demon who they had banished into a kind of holding seal. The inevitable happens and that demon breaks free, but shortly afterwards a Human Mage appears from the place the demon was held and uses an ancient, long forgotten secret Elven magic.

The Elves are already at war with the Humans with no sign of a resolution so this adds fuel to the fire so to speak. Gylven, an Elven Mage, was watching the tomb when the Human walked out and reported her findings to the head of Elves. Gylven gathers an army, comprising of herself; Saggital (a hero in his homeland) and a few other units of your choice and sets after the mysterious man.

The gameplay is pretty standard tactical gaming stuff. At the beginning of a mission you are given a briefing telling you what objectives are to be achieved in this battle. It gives you a bit of the story and then lets you choose what units you want in the battle. There are plenty to choose from such as Archers, Warriors, Spear Elves (female Elves that kill things with spears), Warrior Monks and Mages. The individual unit character design is good and the armour they wear (or lack of, if it's a female) is interesting.

When you have selected your army you then are taken into battle. As with the vast majority of tactical fighting games, you tell your character where to go on a map and they will follow. You point them in the direction of the enemy and watch as they kill it, hopefully.

A nice touch in this game is when you're in battle, if you are lucky enough to score a critical hit, you get a nice little scene showing your unit annihilating the enemy. There is a good sense of achievement when you have plotted your moves and they all work out just the way you had planned. Another good feature of this game is the interface, it's very friendly and easy to use and help is easily accessible at any point during the game which helped me a huge amount.

SCREENSHOTS



PREVIEW

ELVEN LEGACY



The world itself, I found to be very nicely designed and the maps are huge with a lot to do. The graphics, whilst not being the best that I feel they could be, were certainly not terrible, but as this is a preview hopefully that shall change. Each location is very nice looking; being a preview all I seemed to see was green lands with fields and flowers, but these were very pretty and detailed and is a good sign of things to come when the full game is released. If taking over villages and killing every enemy on the map is your idea of fun then this is when you will get the most out of each location.

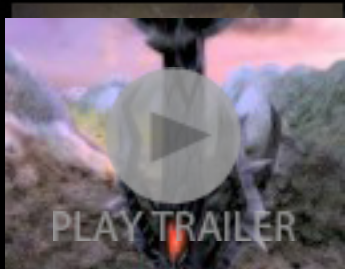
The sound effects are good and there is a nice musical score that accompanies you throughout your journey. The music definitely helps to set the mood of the game with epic battle music and nice music for cut scenes. The voice acting seemed to be done very well and the voices sounded like who they were representing. The only problem for me was the voices were all in Russian so I couldn't understand them!

This game has a lot of nice features and is very easy to use whilst all the while being a fun and challenging experience. Within no time you will find yourself plotting and scheming in order to gain victory against your opponents in the most timely and brutal fashion!

Elven Legacy is simple enough for newcomers to the genre while being complex and deep enough for veterans so in my opinion it has a lot to offer to everyone. I shall be interested to see how this turns out when it is released.

SARAH COLLINGS

TRAILERS



ARTICLE

SECTION 8

SECTION 8

TimeGate Studios, developers of the F.E.A.R. expansions Perseus Mandate and Extraction Point are currently working on a new first-person shooter: Section 8.

The game is set during a rebellion on a series of far flung frontier colonies owned by Earth. In order to combat the rebels the military are forced to deploy one of their most feared and infamous divisions. The 8th Armoured Infantry (or "Section 8") are a team of veteran soldiers who are viewed as insane due to the suicidal nature of their missions.



The Section 8 troopers are equipped with the best weaponry and most advanced technology at mankind's disposal and as such are formidable foes. The troopers possess power armour capable of shielding them from enemy fire and game gives you the ability to choose your weaponry depending on your play style. It will also be possible to customize and upgrade your armour during the game and if armour is damaged it will appear as such in game and will need to be repaired. A range of different weapons, explosives and vehicles are promised to help you in your fight. Perhaps the most exciting feature is the game's deployment mechanics which look set to add a tactical edge to the combat. Using "Burn-In" you can use a dropship to deploy you anywhere on the battlefield. This can be used to get behind enemy positions and to allow

SCREENSHOTS



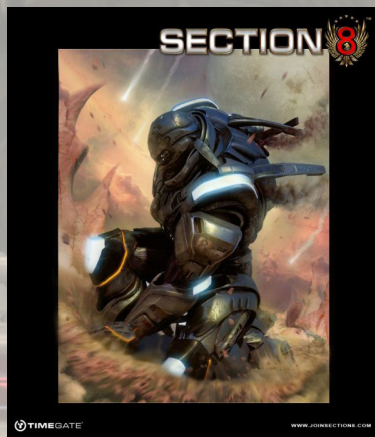
ARTICLE

SECTION 8

yourself to be delivered to the ground safely and away from immediate combat giving you time to prepare. Once there, you also have the ability to call in aid to be dropped nearby to be used against the enemy, chiefly vehicles and other strategic deployables.

Objectives look to play an important part as will working with a squad to succeed. Working in a team is important with up to 24 players on consoles and a maximum of 32 on the PC. Key to the gameplay is the "requisition" system, which is earned for completing tactical objectives and capturing key strategic positions. These points can then be spent to help give you an advantage in battle, such as providing you with a vehicle.

Platforms currently supported,
PC, PS3 & Xbox 360



Section 8 is looking to be a promising title with some interesting ideas and is currently scheduled for release towards the end of 2009.

You can follow the game on their official web site which can be found over here www.joinsection8.com

CHRIS WAKEFIELD



TRAILERS



INTERVIEW

VELVET ASSASSIN

GameOn managed to grab an interview with Replay Studios developers about the new upcoming game Velvet Assassin which about a female assassin Violette Summer who will be taking you on stealth missions based around World War II.

[GameOn]

Due to the graphic nature of the game, what ESRB rating are you aiming the game at?

[Replay Studios]

To be honest, we never really expected something else than an M. And this is what our game is made for: grown-up stealth-fans and all those who want to become stealth-fans.

[GameOn]

Will you be able to 'carve' your own route through the game, or is it linear?

[Replay Studios]

The path is indeed rather linear but not the way you can get through it. On every route you have very different options how to make your way through the level and decide whether you want to play it more action or stealthy.

[GameOn]

What about the environment, can that be interacted with as well? (Like breaking lights and destroying buildings)

[Replay Studios]

There are many things in the game that you can interact with in very different ways: on the one side you have objects that can be destroyed, like special lights, glasses, souvenirs that are lying around. In one level you will find white cabbages that a German soldier stored to survive in the lonesome bunker. You can take your knife and smash the cabbage, making some coleslaw. But there are far more interactive things you can do within the game: you can turn of fuse boxes, find mechanics that open secret rooms, shoot at barrels to make them explode, shoot at oil puddles and many more things...

[GameOn]

What type of weapons do you have to use against the enemy in this game?

[Replay Studios]

All the weapons within the game are historically accurate and were used during WW II. Besides your knife you can carry two guns: one rifle type and one pistol type. So, if you get detected by one of your enemies you can choose to use a Luger, a silencer-gun, a shotgun, a sniper-rifle or even a flame-thrower.

INTERVIEW

VELVET ASSASSIN

[GameOn]

Beyond the historical inspiration, what made you choose a female protagonist and how did you go about developing her character in an industry where a female lead is predominantly used as eye-candy?

[Replay Studios]

We did not want to have another standard shooter or stealth-game but wanted to do something creative and true to history. We found out about the existence of female secret agents during the time and liked the idea of having a female spy in the game because women act very differently in comparison to men. We felt this supported our genre and conception of the game a lot. So, in contrast to a male protagonist, Violette is more subtle and stealthy, more secret, mysterious and cautious – and that is perfect for us! Comparisons are inevitably going to be made with previous stealth games such as the Thief and Splinter Cell series; what do you feel sets Velvet Assassin apart from everything that has come before?

VA has several things that make it special in comparison to stealth games that already exist. If you ask our team, everybody will give you a different answer of what makes the game special: the art guys will tell you that it is the surreal atmosphere and the dynamic lighting, while the designers believe in the unique aspects of the character, the construction of the story itself and its historical approach. The QA team prefers the huge variety of 50 different silent-kills and I myself, love the funny and interesting dialogues and the disguise outfit with which you can sneak among the German enemies without being detected.



INTERVIEW

VELVET ASSASSIN

[GameOn]

How are you intending to pace the gameplay; will players need meticulous planning to navigate the levels or will it be more action oriented?

[Replay Studios]

The player will definitely need to take some time to think about the steps he is doing. There are situations when you need to observe a certain area to find out about the patrolling routes of your enemies and their timing. So, this tactical planning is an important element of the game! But moreover, there are also many moments when you can play this game in a more action-oriented way, especially when you have set off the alarm and the guards are hunting you.

[GameOn]

Some of the screenshots we've seen are very impressive whilst a lot of your press coverage focuses on the use of shadows and real-time lighting; has the engine been developed in-house or have you licensed a third-party engine?

[Replay Studios]

We decided to use our in-house technology because it has already been successfully used before and we think it's perfect for creating a game like Velvet Assassin.

[GameOn]

As a German-based developer, specifically one developing a World War II game, how often do you find yourself having to make sacrifices in terms of realism and authenticity in order to comply with the country's strict rules regarding both the use of Nazi imagery and violence?

[Replay Studios]

Except for the fact, that we were not allowed to show any swastikas, there were no real sacrifices we had to make. As we are on a political correct point of view, we look at the cruel happenings of war time with regret and the claim to let this never happen again. Once this gets clear for someone judging the game from the perspective of law, there are not many more things you need to obey.

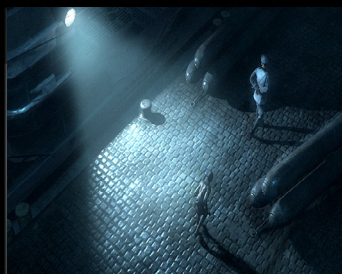
[GameOn]

How did the idea of Velvet Assassin come to be a live project? What inspired you?

[Replay Studios]

We have an impressive Creative Director – Sascha Jungnickel – who is bursting with a million creative and sometimes absurd ideas. This makes him actually very special and his contributions to the games industry are fantastic. One day he just had an idea about a game and the next minute he started scribbling down dialogue and descriptions of the soldiers. It all started from there...

SCREENSHOTS



INTERVIEW

VELVET ASSASSIN

[GameOn]

Slow down time has been used in a lot of games before, what makes this one different?

[Replay Studios]

It gets so different because the context is a completely different one and the morphine (which causes the slow down) is deeply related to the background story. When playing, you're actually playing as Violette as she recalls her violent past.

Whenever you get into a difficult situation that might threaten your life you can use a morphine phial and the injection slows down time for your enemies while you stay agile as normal.

To be exact though, although you're injecting the morphine in the game, in reality the morphine is being induced by a nurse in the hospital. The morphine helps you sneak past enemies or take out stronger foes. The border between reality, dream and fantasy vanishes again and again throughout the game. The hyper-surreal design of the game helps to underline this dream-atmosphere.

Thanks to Replay Studios!



TRAILERS



REVIEW

F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

I was overwhelmed with joy when I first heard that there was going to be a sequel to F.E.A.R., another chance to do battle with Alma and the replica soldiers with their impressive AI routines. Then being lucky enough to get to play the demo while at the GDC in Leipzig just made me salivate with anticipation even more, hungering for more Alma, counting the days till the release of F.E.A.R 2: Project Origin.

So to begin with I feel a little rundown of what's going down in funky town is in order, a snippet of the plot if you will.

You take the role of Michael Becket, humorously nicknamed 'Bucket' by one of your fellow teammates, part of a Delta Force squad assigned to arrest Genevieve Aristide. This takes place approximately 30 minutes before the finale to the original F.E.A.R at a penthouse complex where Aristide is currently residing. This isn't as simple as it may seem due to Armacham's board of directors holding Genevieve directly responsible for the massacre at the Armacham facility (insert the storyline of F.E.A.R here) and send their own black ops team of mercenaries, lead by a Colonel Vanek, to eliminate the cause of this mistake. Along the route to the penthouse apartment you uncover some information linking your squad and

yourself to a 'Project Harbinger', which seems to be some sort of screening program designed to create more psychic commanders capable of controlling the replica soldiers as seen with Paxton Fettel in the previous game. After swiftly dispatching the mercenaries and witnessing some Alma induced hallucinations you obtain contact with Aristide herself. She then hastily explains to Becket that his team along with himself are the only way of stopping Alma but unfortunately before she is able to explain how, the reactor at the Origin Facility is detonated courtesy of the F.E.A.R Point Man. Cue you being knocked on your bottom and fading to unconsciousness.



Don't expect to be gently eased into the pace of the game, altercations with Alma interspersed with whipping Vanek's soldiers are thrown at you very soon after disembarking from the APC. Again the impressive AI of the soldiers are evident with them flanking your position, using grenades to flush you out of that

little camping spot while overturning the fixtures and fittings to give themselves more cover, all of which makes you work that little bit harder to score the kills.

This however leads me to a little gripe I have with the game. Just what in the name of all things holy are these tables made out of? Seriously these bloody things are bullet proof, indestructible and quick to wipe clean. I'm not kidding; you can throw NATO's entire stockpile of ammunition

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

at the table and it will just remain stationary, mocking you, while keeping the person behind it free from harm. Is it too much to ask for some form of bullet penetration in games these days? Oh while I'm currently in gripe mode it does appear that the so called mercenaries and replica soldiers are nothing more than Premiership footballers. They can take a few bullets before shuffling off this mortal coil, but should you decide to sprint in and give them a sliding tackle then they fall faster than Klinsmann himself. Highly suspect indeed.

Monolith seem to have paced out the action, what I would term as "Alma Spam", and the eerie tension building silence moments very well indeed, it seems to be all set to keep you on your toes. Now some may say that F.E.A.R is a scary game to play, I have yet to come across a moment in F.E.A.R that genuinely scared me, yes I've been shocked and startled at moments involving Alma but nothing has really scared me enough to say "right, screw you game, I'm not playing anymore".

I had the same experience with Dead Space; the press hyped it with tag lines such as "terrifying nail biting experience" or "the world's scariest game". I beg to differ I wasn't at all scared, startled and shocked yes but again never scared, infact I would go as far to say that Dead Space became predictable and repetitive. The musical accompaniment of

the game always changed pace when an inevitable encounter was due, which removes that shock element from the overall atmosphere of the game.

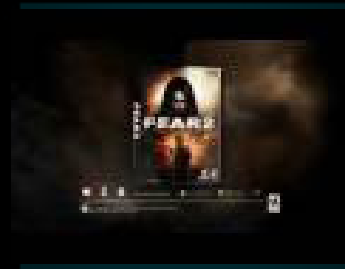
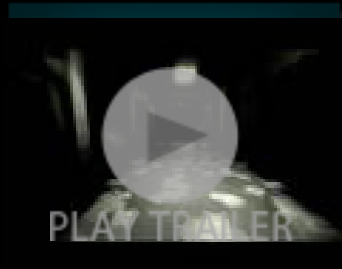
That being said, the developers have gone to some lengths to make sure that F.E.A.R does not fall at the same hurdle other horror games do. They know players are smart enough to know when things are going to happen, such as the music changing like I previously stated. So while playing you'll probably notice that you may have an encounter with Alma while there is no music playing and you're in relative silence thinking that you're reasonably safe, or it may just play with your mind by running a score of tension building melodies that climax to nothing at all. This ensures to keep the overall atmosphere of the game immersive and gripping throughout your play time.

The graphical content of the game delivers somewhat, it may not be groundbreaking but it certainly isn't system crippling like some other titles have been recently. It runs well even on my aging system even in the middle of fire fights so you shouldn't have to worry too much about the spec of

your PC for this title. Everything is rendered nicely from the locations of the game down to the weaponry you carry; it all fits into place, even down to the little things some players may not notice such as the menus at the coffee shop along with its suspect "Drink of the Month".



TRAILERS



F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

The audio tentatively spoons your ears with melted delight, especially through a surround headset or system. Muffled screams from different directions, the whizzing of bullets screaming past your head, the whispers of Alma infiltrating your very lobes. The voice acting however doesn't appeal to me as much. Don't get me wrong it's not Keanu Reeves wooden; it does actually fit the game adequately, it just really didn't grab me at all. It didn't hinder my enjoyment of the game but nor did it enhance the enjoyment either.

So did you think I was going to get through this review without mentioning the hugely satisfying mechs? Now roll back a number a years, some of you gamers may recall a certain mech based title crafted by the hands of Monolith which in my opinion was greatly underrated. That's right, Shogo: Mobile Armor Division, coincidentally it is also the first time we encounter the Armacham name. Could these two games be linked in the future? Or simply just using the name as it suited the F.E.A.R scenario? Who knows but I digress. The pilotable mechs in F.E.A.R 2, as I said, are hugely satisfying. Sitting in this behemoth of destruction wielding chain guns on either arm with an inexhaustible supply of ammunition, along with shoulder mounted missile launcher gives you the feeling of being indestructible. So your instincts of running amok in the area are justified and the game rewards your destructive cravings with that healthy dollop of carnage. It's just a shame that the mech sections of the game I found were a tad short.

Onto the multiplayer side of things and the first notable change from the original F.E.A.R is that the use of the bullet time mechanics has actually been removed, so I'm sorry F.E.A.R fans, your overpowered move no longer exists. There are six different game modes within MP; you get the obligatory DM and TDM which require no explanation so I shall briefly run through the remaining four modes.



Failsafe is essentially a bomb disposal scenario, akin to the tried and trusted DE maps of CounterStrike fame. 1 person on team A has the bomb, team A's objective is to plant and detonate the bomb at one of two possible locations while team B has to either eliminate team A or defuse the bomb. It's simple and it works well. Blitz is a strange one for me; it's like a CTF game but with a twist.

You see, one team must defend one of two possible canisters while the other team has the objective to capturing them. The score is determined by the number of successful captures within a set time limit, once this has expired, the respective teams swap roles. It takes a little getting used to an attack/defend style CTF but enjoyable nonetheless.

Finally we have 2 variations of the same game mode, a capture and hold style scenario. Firstly infantry only and 3 nodes in the map itself, hold the nodes to score points, the more nodes held the more points gained, quite simple. The other variation of this mode introduces 2 extra nodes to capture as well as the opportunity to pilot the fairly unstoppable mech as seen in the single player campaign. Now only one of these is available to each team so don't expect a server full of mechs stomping around the map, furthermore the mechs do rip players to shreds literally in a couple of seconds so either grab your sides mech to take down the opponents or gather up and strike from multiple directions with heavy weaponry to take the machine down, which is generally easier said than done.

F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN

Another feature of MP is the set point load out screen, essentially every player has a set number of points to use on armour and weapons. Go for heavy armour and you will find the selection of weapons/grenades available to you is quite limited while vice versa, looking to obtain a heavier weapon means sacrificing most or all your armour points to equip the gun in question. This adds a slight tactical element to what load out to choose in which scenario but it's really nothing taxing at all.

F.E.A.R 2: Project Origin is not without faults though, for instance the lack of aspect ratio adjustment is a huge blow to PC gamers forcing most to play in a letterbox format, also being able to kill enemies with a sliding tackle, Monolith what were you thinking with this one?

I've encountered limbs from rag dolls get stuck in walls making them shake more wildly than a plate of jelly in an earthquake, those bloody indestructible tables, I really didn't know IKEA were doing a titanium reinforced Kevlar range of furnishings. Also why the hell do I have to log into Gamespy to play online? Is there any particular benefit to this? Oh and where's the console screen Monolith, you should know by now us PC gamers love to tinker around with settings so give us a bloody console to do so.

Along side the above I do also have the following gripes with the game. So to keep it brief I shall just list them as bullet points.

The autosave feature. I don't want this in a PC game, I want to save where I wish, not have the bloody game dictate so. We've had this option since way back in the days of

Doom. Quick load, quick save and a handful of hard save slots, is it too much to ask?

Lack of support for more than 3 mouse buttons. Epic fail are the only words I feel I am able to use on this matter, especially in this day and age of FPS games. I should not have to remap 2 buttons on my mouse as keyboard functions for a game to utilise all 5 mouse buttons. Feels too much like a straight port from the console without any afterthought of the PC market. I don't want constant reminders of what button opens doors or picks up items or switches weapons, I bound the bloody keys for a start, informing me once is sufficient enough thank you!

Nevertheless the problems I faced could, and hopefully will, be fixed in a patch which would earn itself a higher score, yet they don't really deter from the fact that F.E.A.R 2 is a highly respectable game. Game of the year 2009? In all honesty probably not, it will give the other contenders a good run for the money but I don't see it taking the title, but it is worthy of your hard earned pennies and will offer many hours of enjoyment.



REVIEWER: **NEIL HETHERINGTON**
 GAME: **F.E.A.R. 2: PROJECT ORIGIN**
 PLATFORM: **PC**
 DEVELOPER: **MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS**
 PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS**
 RELEASED: **FEBRUARY 13, 2009**

PLAYABILITY: **7**
 REPLAYABILITY: **7**
 SOUND: **9**
 GRAPHICS: **8**

OVERALL: 7



REVIEW

MEN OF WAR

It is often said that history is written by the winners of wars; similarly, a blockbuster game can cause others to become lost and forgotten within its shadow, effectively rewriting the history of a particular genre. It's this effect which will cause most to assume at first glance that Men of War is trying to be Company of Heroes.

Men of War is in fact the second follow-up to Best Way's 2004 game Soldiers: Heroes of World War II and, like its predecessors, owes as much to the classic Commandos games as it does to the traditional RTS. Men of War continues the series' trend of WW2 strategy with 3 campaigns split between Russian, German and Allied missions along with a number of stand-alone levels.

The game shuns the traditional base-building gameplay, instead giving the player a limited number of units to complete the objectives; there are occasionally reinforcements provided during the course of a mission, but on the whole each unit is precious - the loss of a single unit can be enough to turn the tide of a battle.

Whilst there is no direct resource gathering to supervise, each unit has a finite supply of ammunition with replenishments available from looting the nearby corpses or the occasional supply crate. Likewise, vehicles must also be kept supplied with fuel - thankfully this can be siphoned from other vehicles rather than having to roam the countryside looking for a filling station.

Units themselves can be handled as squads or individual soldiers to allow greater control; the fidelity of movements can be increased further through the use of the 'direct control' mode, which gives full keyboard control of a single unit. In practice direct control is best used for manoeuvring vehicles in tight spaces when you want to avoid knocking down walls or complex tasks which can't be achieved through the user interface, such as 'cooking off' a grenade before throwing it into a crowded room.



SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

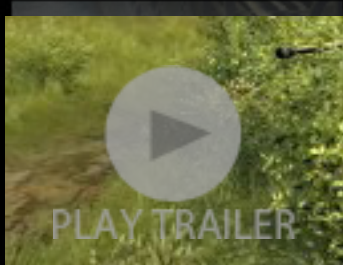
MEN OF WAR

It will not just be feeble walls crumbling beneath your tank tracks; pretty much every structure in the game can be knocked down or blown up and the subsequent wreckage used as makeshift cover. This is not without its issues however - in an interesting case of unstoppable force meeting an immovable object, I attempted to drive a tank through a building which had apparently been flagged as indestructible resulting in the tank being sent flying through the air and landing 30 feet away, on its roof! The pathfinding AI also has some inconsistencies with how it handles destructible structures - direct a tank to the other side of a wall and it will assume you want it to charge straight through, click the other side of a building and it will decide to drive around.

With debris quickly littering the landscape, leading to a battlefield looking very different at the end of a firefight to how it started, it is often necessary to keep troops on their toes and move around as new cover is created or existing cover destroyed - make no bones about it, soldiers left out in the open are as good as dead. Thankfully the game does make positioning troops in cover easier by showing silhouettes of where units will be facing when hovering the cursor over suitable cover.



TRAILERS



REVIEW

MEN OF WAR

The earlier games in the series were criticised in the gaming press for their difficulty and it would appear little has changed in this aspect. I wouldn't consider myself to be the best strategist in the world but I'm more than capable of holding my own against the AI in most other RTS games. That said, Men of War is challenging and frustrating at times. Largely the difficulty stems from the sheer weight of opposition forces and lack of friendly reinforcements, a state of affairs not helped by the frequent need to send a unit on a sacrificial run with an anti-tank grenade to take out approaching armour. The temporary nature of shelter also plays its part in adding to the challenge; many a time has a stray tank shell aimed at my first line of defence missed its intended target and inadvertently left units in my second line exposed or incapacitated.

For those looking for a break from the AI, there is a multitude of multiplayer options available, ranging from King-of-the-hill style gameplay to free for all battles. There is also the ability to play the campaign missions co-operatively, however the lack of options to add AI to the multiplayer scenarios may reduce the longevity for those not wishing to play online once the main campaigns have been completed.



REVIEW

MEN OF WAR

The realism of the gameplay is complemented perfectly by the graphics engine powering it all. The level of detail in both the models and the textures is impressive, and even with dynamic shadows and reflections enabled there was no noticeable slowdown. At the other end of the spectrum, the engine scales very well - my laptop was called upon to test some of the multiplayer aspects; it was able to handle the default settings and remained playable without any severe degradation in graphical quality.

All of this action is accompanied by a somewhat run-of-the-mill orchestral score which deserves little mention beyond the fact that it rather intermittent. Music is generally cued by scripted events throughout the missions, but the rest of the time the battlefield is eerily silent save for the sound of gunfire being exchanged and the occasional explosion. Ironically, the periods when there is no music seem more all the more poignant - whether it was a conscious decision by the developers to use music simply as punctuation, signifying the transition between phases of the battle, rather than playing constantly remains to be seen.

There are some occasional AI issues; turrets twitching rapidly, seemingly unable to decide which target to aim at next and units continuing to fire at corpses long after they've been killed. These minor niggles are unlikely to put anyone off this game, the difficulty level however may. It is unfortunate that an otherwise marvellous game is marred by such a restriction on accessibility.



REVIEWER: **MATT STUDD**
GAME: **MEN OF WAR**
PLATFORM: **PC**
DEVELOPER: **BEST WAY**
PUBLISHER: **1C/505 GAMES**
RELEASED: **FEBRUARY 20, 2009**

PLAYABILITY: **8**
REPLAYABILITY: **7**
SOUND: **7**
GRAPHICS: **9**

OVERALL: 8



REVIEW

NECROVISION



Necrovision, where do I begin with this little mixed bag of emotions? Well at the beginning would be the logical point, so for those who aren't aware I shall try to briefly enlighten you with some foundation details.

Ok so some bods from People Can Fly of Painkiller fame and a few other industry veterans decided it would be a good idea to start a farm together. Now I'm not talking about raising animals and producing dairy products for the local village, but offering game development services to the industry. This farm became known as The Farm 51.

Onto The Farm's first offering of Necrovision and the comparisons with Painkiller are glaringly obvious. The fight between "Good" and "Evil", the face in the crowd suddenly thrust into the battle between the two almighty powers, and other little touches like the compass which points you to the next objective or wave of enemies to which makes Painkiller veterans feel at home in this title. But sadly, in my own humble opinion anyway, the comparisons

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

NECROVISION

end here. Gone is the simplified bunny hopping and the traversing levels with gay abandon at high speed, whilst dispatching hordes of enemy forces through the French windows of the pavilion with consummate ease. Say hello to a slower pace of slightly over complicated combat with a grittier, more underlying sense of an evil presence within.

The story of Necrovision goes a little like this. You take the role of Simon, an American soldier serving in the British Army in the midst of the First World War at the Somme, nearing the Christmas of 1916. The action kicks off with you being sent on a mission through no man's land after a rallying speech from your CO, only for all hell to break loose via a suspiciously well timed ambush by the Germans.

Not everything is as it seems, as after some story filler and a highly questionable FMV sequence, you discover that Mr. Mephisto is up to no good again, so it falls down to you to save the human and vampire races from death and destruction, along with all the other bad things the Bible talks about. But help is at hand from the race of vampires via the ShadowHand

weapon - the tool of the necromancer - able to slice, dice, flambé and freeze your foes. Before you get your sweaty palms on such a weapon, you must first persevere with the wares of The Great War.

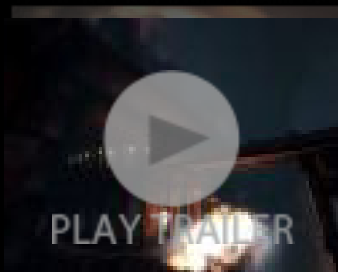
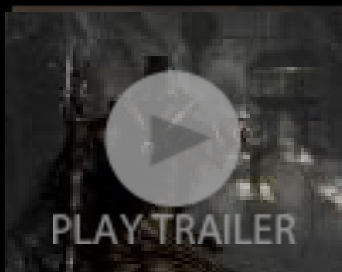
The standard FPS armoury is at your disposal, including bolt action rifles, a shotgun and the trusty sidearm. You may also melee with your weapons along with kicking your enemies and finally letting you combo weapons in either hands, be it dual pistols or a bayonet in one hand and a luger in the other, which ties in with the over complicated combat system I mentioned before.

Basically, you have an adrenaline bar which enables you to slow down time. To fill this bar you have to perform special kills which in turn unleashes your inner fury; for example a kick then a blast from the faithful shotgun awards you with a "Farmers Revenge" kill. Furthermore,

the more vampire relics you discover increases your fury level, allowing you to chain combo kills letting you fill your adrenaline quicker whilst also releasing some magical zappy magic which can knockback nearby enemies to the ground, or just simply burning them to death which can be a life saver when clustered in close combat.



TRAILERS



REVIEW

NECROVISION

This may sound rather fantastic, whereas in practice it feels cumbersome and monotonous to chain these combo moves, along with discovering what actually works as a combo, whilst requiring the appendage dexterity of a world class speed typist to press your attack buttons, when a simple headshot can put down the vast majority of opponents you will encounter during this game. Another reservation I have about Necrovision is the rather simplistic AI. Now I know it's not meant to be some ground breaking system where the AI feels like a human opponent, but some sort of self preservation would have been nice to see instead of just simply following the shortest route to the player. Also, in a few instances the mobs seemed to simply ignore the fact I was within their presence until I thwacked their jawbone with the butt of my rifle.

In terms of graphics, the engine used in Necrovision does the job with ease, from the gritty war torn battlefields of the trenches to the vampire inspired underground temples and looks rather good in both DX9 and DX10, though in all honesty I personally couldn't see a visible difference between the two DX modes other than a drop in frame rates in DX10 due to my now ageing system.

Along with a capable graphics engine is a soundtrack which caresses your ears with the bloody screams of war entwined with a backing track of military-esque music used to dramatic effect inside the trenches. Along with this you get a mixture of high beat rock like tracks during combat and boss encounters, spooky-ish ambient music composed to build tension I guess, then on the final encounter a nice piece which I'm struggling to describe.

It's like an orchestral-come-rock-come-choir-like track which fits extremely well in your battle with Mephisto, but sadly after that I was personally let down with its popular music track for the credit rolls. It didn't work well in Max Payne and it doesn't work well here; it's simply out of place for the game's theme. I mean you've just battled through the trenches of the worst conflict in human history then battled to the bowels of hell and rode on the back of a dragon to finally defeat the devil, only to be rewarded by something seemingly penned by the hands of Hanson or some other 90's teen loving pop band which left me feeling quite melancholic.



REVIEW

NECROVISION

Multiplayer, well the less said about this mode the better, as it definitely feels like it's been an afterthought in the games development cycle. You have the usual MP shenanigans of DM and TDM, along with a variation of CTF named Capture the Artefact, then finally a last man standing mode where players are given a set number of lives where obviously the last man standing wins the map.

Finally in terms of replayability you are given the option of a challenge mode allowing you to pit yourself in an arena situated in one of the many levels within the game with the objective to kill enemies in set manner within a time limit of usually 5 minutes, the goals of which unlock extra abilities or starting equipment if you wish to play through the single player campaign again. Or you may wish to revisit levels to try and discover the secret area's to obtain vampire artefacts previously missed in your first sitting.



Overall Necrovision isn't the visceral romp I was expecting it to be. This doesn't necessarily make it a bad game at all - it's a good few hours of mindless shooting, just I was hoping for that little bit extra 'oomph', a little extra surge that would have made this into a bloody good romp indeed. Nevertheless, if you are looking for something to fill the void before the fresh wave of titles hits our store shelves, then Necrovision could be that filler, but in all honesty that's all I see it being - a stopgap before the next wave of A-list games occupy our gaming hours.

REVIEWER: **NEIL HETHERINGTON**
GAME: **NECROVISION**
PLATFORM: **PC**
DEVELOPER: **THE FARM 51**
PUBLISHER: **1C/505 GAMES**
RELEASED: **FEBRUARY 27, 2009**

PLAYABILITY: **6**
REPLAYABILITY: **5**
SOUND: **7**
GRAPHICS: **7**

OVERALL: 6.5



REVIEW

HOTEL GIANT 2

When we received this game in the post, I took one glance at it and said "I'm going to review this game now," and before anyone said anything else there I was unwrapping the packaging and starting to install the game. As the computer screen said 'installing' I gazed, as the screenshots came on, in awe.

My first impression of the game was that it was very similar to 'The Sims' and 'Sim City', which, of course, I grew more and more wound up about, because as most of the people who me, know that I love 'The Sims'. This game is the sequel of the well-known and very successful game, 'Hotel Giant'. The gameplay of 'Hotel Giant 2' is very similar to its prequel, although modified, so it is still best to go through with the tutorial. Before I start I want to say that this is one of the first games which I have reviewed where I didn't have to use the manual as much. I only had to use it to check if there was any information I had missed or forgotten, therefore showing that the game tells you most of the information anyway, and has a very detailed, easy-to-follow tutorial.

Basically, the aim of the game is to create the best hotel there can be, and suit it to the satisfaction of your customers. Altogether there are twenty-six destinations at which the hotels can be located at, for example Paris, Los Angeles, Rome plus many more! Furthermore, there are more than fourteen-hundred items that can be used to decorate all the rooms in your hotel; moreover, there are specific items for each room. For example, in the guestrooms you can put in a bed, which you cannot put in the any of the other rooms, you can follow the customers throughout their stay and watch their every move.

On the main screen there are eight options to choose from, the most worthy of note are Campaign, Random Game and Sandbox Hotels. In the first option, Campaign, you have a further three options to choose from. One is the Learning Campaign, which is the tutorial. It is very helpful and basic which in turn, makes it easy to use through step by step instructions, and occasionally, if you need to know how do a certain action, then it waits until you have done that particular action until it carries on with the tutorial.

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

HOTEL GIANT 2

On a downside to the tutorial, I found it very hard to find it in the menu system as Campaign mode was the last place I looked, as that is normally where you start all the serious business. The second option is 'Hotel Giant' Campaign, which is for those players who have finished the tutorial and have gained experience with the gameplay, or want a more challenging task. There are fifteen different scenarios in the 'Hotel Giant' Campaign, which all increase in difficulty as the player gradually moves through the game.

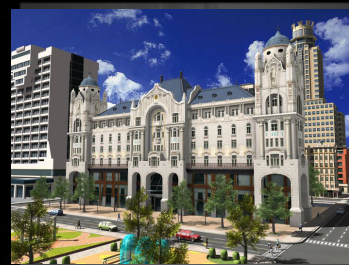
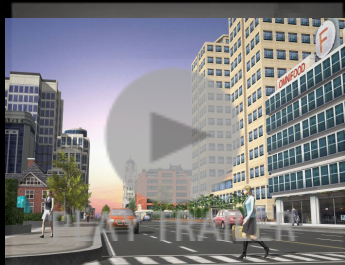
The third choice is the Random Campaign, where you have a series of scenarios based on the difficulty you choose. The second option (on the main menu), is 'Random Game', in which you play a hotel based on the difficulty and gameplay you have set it as. The different parameters that you can set are: the difficulty of the gameplay - how hard you set the game also changes the amount of starting money and the complexity of the goals; the number cities you have got a hotel in at any onetime; the choice of cities to have hotel in; the time limit given to reach your goals; whether your hotel is pre-built or not; and there is also a button which can randomise all the settings.



The third option on the main menu is Sandbox Hotels, where you can choose between three different fully-furnished hotels to investigate, merely exploring them to see what a fully-furnished hotel would look like. You cannot modify the objects in the rooms, or the rooms in the hotel themselves.

When you are making, editing and deleting your hotel, you can view one floor in three different perspectives: isometric view, perspective view and bird's eye view. You can also take photos and videos of the inside and outside of your hotel, and view them in a gallery. When you are on Random Game, you can buy spare land and therefore you can buy a new hotel to create.

TRAILERS



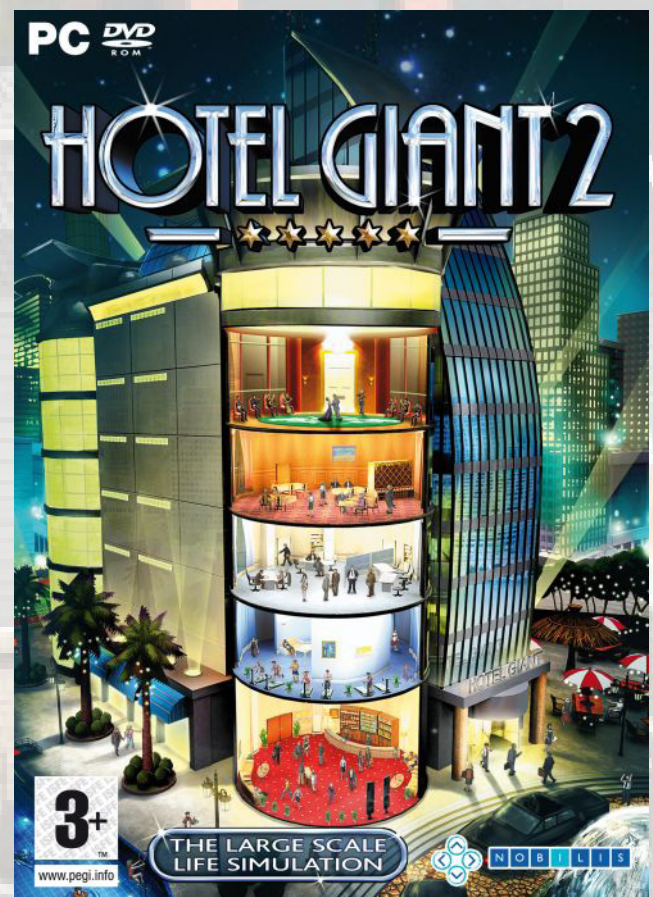
REVIEW

HOTEL GIANT 2

Unfortunately you cannot create the shape of the hotel; you have to choose from a selection that the game offers to you. When you edit your hotel you can also close the hotel, so that guests do not get in the way, and when you are finished with your work, you press the button to re-open your hotel. Whilst in-game, you have a button which can take you to the 'Information Screen', where it shows you all of your stats in the game so far. In your game you can offer packages for your customers, like discount on foods, half the price for guest rooms, or maybe one or a few days having free access to activities, like the spa or the computer room.

On the 'Information Screen' is the option to start advertising campaigns on the web, newspapers, magazines, on the radio, and on the television. Allegedly there are also 'Strategy Tips' in the game, entering a pop-up window going through all the tips to help you in the game. Lastly, the star class of your hotel is very important, as the more stars you get the more customers come in. The star rating of your hotel depends on the 'Required Average Staff Service Quality Level', and the 'Required Overall Customer Satisfaction %'. The better the staff's service quality, plus the more you satisfy your customers, and the more stars you get for your hotel, equals you attracting more customers. For example, to get a 0.5 rating of your hotel you will have the Required Overall Customer Satisfaction Percentage of fifteen to twenty-nine percent and the Required Average Staff Service Quality Level as zero.

As you have probably gathered, this game is all about the customers. How successful you are in the game is dependant on how well you treat your customers, and if you treat them poorly then the game becomes quite challenging to sort out. If you click on a certain customer you can view their needs, complaints, what activities they enjoy the most, and even activate what they call a 'Cheat Card'. What you can do with these 'Cheat Cards' is make a guest do any activity of your choosing. You start off with thirty of these cards, and after a week of running your hotel (not real-time), you are given an extra card to use. You select what activity you want your customer to do using the drop-down menu and you can press the clear button when you want that guest to stop that certain activity. Once you achieve 100 % customer satisfaction, you have a message box displayed. Through this you can attract other guests to visit, as well as unlocking a special reward item.



REVIEW

HOTEL GIANT 2

As you all know, a hotel isn't a hotel without its rooms and objects, so obviously you can add, move and delete rooms and objects. You can resize rooms, and place rooms in rooms. For example, you would place a bathroom in a bedroom, or a kitchen in a restaurant. If you add an item or change something in a room, potentially the rooms with the same layout can have this change repeated in all of the rooms. It can be done for resizing rooms too, if they have enough room to move about. This makes things a great deal easier, as it saves you time by not doing exactly the same change to many rooms. In your hotel you can also create many different rooms for all different activities, such as a restaurant, a coffee shop, a bar, a health club, a business centre, a games room, an indoor swimming pool and a library, to name but a few.

Sometimes you can have troubles creating a new layout for a room. This may be caused by there not being enough room, it is on an existing object, or if you don't have enough money to put a new room down. You can make six different rooms, depending on the required satisfaction of the room, the required size for the room, if there is a sub-room needed, and what type of bed is needed in the room. The possible rooms that can be made are ranked from Economy to the most luxurious grade of them all: Presidential Suite. The details of the items are very technical and very precise. For example, you can choose which screen size you want for the television when you put it in a room. Also, when you open, lets say a restaurant, you can choose what type of menu you want, and what goes into the menu.

When you put down an object, other than paying for the actual cost to put it down, you also have to pay a monthly fee to maintain it.

Another point worth mentioning is that at the different locations you go to, say a hotel in Los Angeles, sofas are different to the sofas you can choose from in Paris. This can be quite annoying because, most of, lets take sofas again, in Paris are rubbish compared to the ones in Los Angeles. Things you can make outside are: a swimming pool, with other items; parks, with paths and other objects for the park and you can even add a rock-climbing wall.

In conclusion, I personally love this game, and it is perfect for those that like simulation games like 'The Sims', 'Sim City' or 'Hotel Giant' - the prequel of this game. 'Hotel Giant 2' has brilliant real-life like graphics, whilst paying attention to a lot of detail.



REVIEWER: JESSICA
GAME: HOTEL GIANT 2
PLATFORM: PC
DEVELOPER: ENLIGHT
PUBLISHER: JOWOOD PRODUCTIONS
RELEASED: FEBRUARY 14, 2009

PLAYABILITY: 8
REPLAYABILITY: 8
SOUND: 5
GRAPHICS: 7

OVERALL: 8.5



GAME TRAILERS

JANUARY'S TOP 10 GAME TRAILERS

- Call of Duty World at War Zombie Mode Level
- Warhammer 40.000 Dawn of War 2 Space Marine Campaign
- Left 4 Dead : Mass Spawn : Witches (GameOn user video)
- Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War 2 E3 2008 Gameplay Trailer #2
- The Incredible Hulk Game Trailer : By Sega (HD) #2
- The making of The Incredible Hulk - The beast within Trailer
- SAS Secure Tomorrow Trailer
- Hotel for Dogs Trailer
- Hotel Giant 2 Trailer
- WALL-E Game Trailer VideoGame #1



GAME TRAILERS

GAMEON'S STAFF TOP TRAILERS FOR JANUARY

To welcome the New Year here at GameOn we've brought in a new feature to our uploaded game trailers chart! We've asked our staff members to name their favourite uploaded game trailer throughout the month and to kick start 2009 here are the results of our January GameOn staff chart:



MADWORLD Happy Holidays Director's Cut Trailer



Onechanbara Bikini Zombie Slayers Happy Birthday Trailer



F.E.A.R. 2 Project Origin Elite Powered Armour Trailer



Final Fantasy XIII New Vision Trailer

Keep an eye out for this chart in the mag to find out what which games the GameOn staff are checking out each month!



SEE YOU NEXT MONTH

