

GameOn MAG

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Shattered Horizon

Get upside down with the FPS from benchmarkers Futuremark



Tony Hawk: RIDE

Serious skills, or will it just make you board? Find out inside.



Lego Indiana Jones 2

Is he becoming a chip off the old block? Or is he still as cool as his younger self? More inside...



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First off, happy new decade!

2010 has finally arrived and is set to be one of the best years for gaming yet. With the much anticipated Bioshock 2 and Alien vs Predator due for release this year the GameOn team are bouncing in their chairs with excitement.

If you can't wait that long though we've brought together some of the best reviews from across the gaming world this issue. With an indepth look at the new online multiplayer Shattered Horizon that will see you floating around space, to the more sexy gunslinging Bayonetta which has been a huge hit on all platforms so far since it's release.

In case you are more into your flaming demons of hell kinda game, we have a preview of the new Dante's Inferno which is set to be hot, hot, hot!

To chill you too your bones we've an exclusive interview with the makes of Penumbra, Frictional Games, who have given us an insiders look at their horrifying new game.

So settle yourself down, put the kids to bed; make sure the boss is busy and the other half is sat in front of their favourite tv show and tuck into this game filled issue of the mag.

Happy gaming.

The Ed.



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DANTE'S INFERNO



Dante's Inferno follows a Knight in the Third Crusade (a real-life character by the name of Dante Alighieri who wrote about his vision of the afterlife in the 13th century) who has a red crucifix sewn onto his chest which depicts the events of the crusade. Dante is stabbed in the back (literarily) and is faced with the Grim Reaper.

Dante refuses to comply with Death so decides to fight him on a one-on-one dual. After many jumps and swings, Death is defeated and Dante claims his scythe for himself and the power that comes with it. With the scythe, you may pull off awesome combos, reap the souls of the eternally damned and gain magical powers (for some reason). You must use this scythe and newly acquired magical powers to fight your way through the nine rings of hell to reach your ideal woman, Beatrice.

Gameplay wise, this game is fairly simple and unoriginal. It mirrors the likes of God of War

and Spartan: Total Warrior in which you rapidly smash the face buttons to completely mutilate your enemies (in this case, demons and souls from the underworld). You use fountains to rejuvenate your health and mana by

inserting your scythe into them and hastily bashing the face buttons, hoping not to be attacked by any enemies in the process.

“Take out rather large demons by slotting your scythe into their temporal lobe.”

Mana is used to cast your spells that seem a tad out of the ordinary for a holy man such as a charge attack that leaves behind an ice trail but they are quite fun to disfigure demons with. Along with your magical spells you get a skill called 'Redemption'. While killing enemies you build up redemption



PREVIEW

DANTE'S INFERNO

"The gameplay is simple and addictive and the graphics are incredible."



and when your bar becomes full you can use it, speeding up your attack rate massively and causing more damage.

On top of all of this, you can take control of rather large demons by slotting your scythe into their temporal lobe. These control the same way as you would Dante. To do so, you enter an interactive fight-scene where you must press specific buttons when prompted. This is also how you can do a sort of finishing move on some larger enemies.

Just because this game has mirrored others, I am not saying that it isn't a good game because that would be far from the truth. Dante's Inferno is a very impressive game – if not a little adult due to the mature content. The developers do not seem to be able to keep a female's top on within this game.

The graphics both in-game and during the cinematics are pretty decent as well. The in-game graphics are what we expect from a game now-days but the cinematics are something to see. They match that of Modern Warfare 2 or Uncharted 2. They are simply brilliant.

In all, this game is nothing greatly new, but enough so that it's certainly one to add to the collection. The gameplay is simple and addictive and the graphics are incredible. Who wouldn't want to enter hell and decapitate demons after all?



REVIEW

LEFT 4 DEAD 2



The original Left 4 Dead proved to be one of the most popular and original multiplayer games of 2008, so it was something of a surprise when its sequel's announcement was met with a barrier of scepticism and concern from members of the community. Most of the cynicism stemmed from a perceived lack of variation, new content, little support for the original and, perhaps worst of all, the inclusion of banjo music. So, does Left 4 Dead 2 manage to shake off these worries and prove to be one of this year's must play titles?

Perhaps the most obvious differences between Left 4 Dead 2 and its predecessor is the setting.

The sequel takes place in the Southern United States which immediately gives it a different and very unique flavour. Largely gone are the original's constantly dark and gritty environments, instead they are replaced by a wide range of different locales and settings. During the course of the game you'll fight your way through a Dawn of the Dead inspired shopping mall, fight off hordes of infected in muddy swamps and face some adrenaline-pumping finale sequences. Many of the campaigns feature daylight elements, which create a strange sense of familiarity and heighten the game's intense atmosphere as you see normal streets populated by swarms of bloody creatures.

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

LEFT 4 DEAD 2

To go alongside these radically different locations, Left 4 Dead 2 introduces a new motley crew of survivors. It was always going to be difficult to create a group who had the charisma

and character of the previous survivors and this fresh bunch can't quite compete. They are all warm and likeable and their writing and voice acting is constantly superb, Elis and Coach especially; however the remaining two, Rochelle and Nick seem a tad bland by their counterpart's standard. As the game progresses though, there does become an attachment which becomes evident partly due to the inclusion of a more regimented story. In the previous title, the campaigns were nothing more than a series of "films": you picked one, played it and moved on. Here the campaigns are woven together into a story, with each finale leading into the next. This was a great move and gives you a greater sense of progression and achievement and a sense that the overarching story is being advanced.

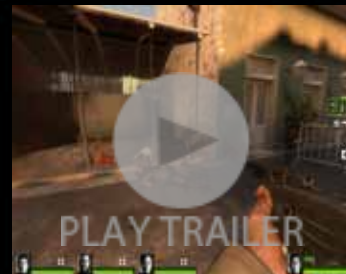
"You can now send them to their grave in ever more gruesome ways!"

Visually, the game has received a significant overhaul which is a testament to the variability of the Source engine. While Left 4 Dead 2's graphics can't quite compete with some of the latest high-end next generation graphics, they can still impress. Both day and night look fantastic with some excellent lighting effects and even the filthy swamp water has a certain charm to it. Most noticeable are the new animations of the infected who have found more ways to claw and climb after you. However, you can now send them to their grave in ever more gruesome ways thanks to a new dismemberments engine which usually sends limbs and bodily organs flying.

Thankfully, the fresh gameplay additions can match up to the visual overhaul. The greater variety in the weapons has a dramatic increase on



TRAILERS



REVIEW

LEFT 4 DEAD 2



gameplay and most display distinct advantages and disadvantages. Not only do you have to make the choice between shotgun or rifle, now you have to decide which sub-type you want. After Left 4 Dead 2, the original's paltry selection of weapons seems shameful. The melee weapons are a bit of a mixed bag with many feeling interchangeable. There can be no denying the worrying pleasure of gorily mutilating waves of the infected with the new chainsaw, but the only real differences between the rest of the weapons are cosmetic. On the harder difficulties carrying a melee weapon instead of extra pistols is tantamount to suicide, as the extra firepower is a godsend against the special infected.

All of Left 4 Dead's baddies return and are as dangerous as ever. The Hunter, Smoker and Tank are all back with a little cosmetic overhaul and can kill you faster than a moving train should the situation permit. The Boomer now comes in males and female varieties so you can be disgusted in a slightly new manner when you see a bloated, sore-

ridden body suddenly vomit on you from behind a corner. The Witch is now more dangerous than ever as she can wander during the day, which leads to some horrifying situations when you realise she is coming right for you.

Left 4 Dead 2 introduces three new specials to give you trouble and they are all cleverly designed to work with the others and make life hell. The Jockey, a cross between The Hunter and a headcrab can grapple a survivor and control the survivor's movements. This can lead to horrible situations where you are moved directly into a



Ellis

Coach

Rochelle

REVIEW

LEFT 4 DEAD 2

witch or thrown out of a hotel's window on the top floor. The Spitter has the ability to cough up patches of acid and aim them over long distances, which is ideal for either pinning the survivors or splitting them up to allow other infected to make their move. Lastly, the Charger can slam into survivors knocking some over before grabbing one to pummel into the ground. The "Uncommon common" infected also appear and are restricted to certain campaigns. These specially designed, themed opponents require a little more thinking to dispatch than your average enemy and are a great addition.

These new creatures help to show off the improved director AI which is at times, truly terrifying. The infected now really seem to work as a team, manipulating you into situations

you would definitely rather not be in. However, at times there are some issues with both your teammates and some of your opponents. The Charger has a tendency to not really do anything, often wandering around to get shot or charging in at bad times or picking isolated survivors. There seems a lot of potential for the creature but at the moment, the AI seems not to understand how to

utilise it. Similarly, your AI teammates still decide not to help you when pinned by a special infected despite being stood next to you, which remains incredibly frustrating.

However, despite these slight issues Left 4 Dead 2 rarely has you anything

less than gripped. The level design is outstanding and each campaign is far more varied and diverse, making the original seem linear and pre dictable.



REVIEW

LEFT 4 DEAD 2



Each finale is now radically different and there are several new formats which help to keep things tense. The new weather system which is heavily implemented in the Hard Rain campaign changes the atmosphere entirely and creates the first scary moments in a Left 4 Dead title. Slowly advancing through a field in rain so thick you can barely see, while Witches surround you was almost pant filling, especially when out of nowhere a horrible scream sounds and one of your team suddenly dies. The levels themselves are also different, following different templates and formulae. While still fundamentally being "Go from X to Y" levels, the route they take to get there changes nicely and with some levels altering slightly to create different paths there is certainly a degree of replayability added. The competitive multiplayer element returns, which only creates a more intense and difficult experience. With humans controlling the special infected, they are even more deadly

and "the versus" side of Left 4 Dead 2 offers both competitive and cooperative elements. A new mode, "Scavenge" has teams of survivors attempting to fuel a generator by collecting gas cans, while other players stop them. It's a very different experience that's perfect for a quick competitive game, rather than the more drawn out Versus mode. The teams can be a tad one-sided in these game modes, but generally they work well and offer more variation. The final new inclusion of Left 4 Dead 2 is Realism mode, which removes teammate's silhouettes, allows the enemies to take more damage and for there to be generally less guidance. The mode seems like a bit of an afterthought, but offers a way to play the game with friends, although voice-communication is generally a must. Its separate inclusion as an alternative game mode seems a little excessive when it could just as easily be a check box in a standard campaign lobby, but it will offer more to the skilled team players out there.

Yet, Left 4 Dead 2 has several issues which slightly mar the game experience. Many of the new additions have little effect, such as the new ammunition types. These boxes of ammo have to be picked up in place of a health pack and then deployed for your team. This means if you already have a health pack, you have to pick up the ammo, drop the health kit, deploy the bullets then pick the health kit back up. This feels unnecessary and simply wastes time. The bullets are never really that useful, except on the harder difficulties, and a lot of the time it causes more problems co-ordinating the dropping than simply moving quickly ahead. The new Boomer Bile bomb is largely pointless and summons a horde of infected to attack whatever is struck. However, they generally take so long arriving that whatever you hit is already

dead, leaving you with a horde to deal with. The biggest issue with Left 4 Dead 2 is whether it should have been an expansion pack for the original rather than a stand-alone title. While

this criticism certainly has its strengths, the variability, 5 new campaigns and a solid new multiplayer mode definitely outweigh the negatives. If you've never experienced the series, then this sequel provides excellent gameplay with great new additions. If you own the original, then you may be left a little disappointed with a largely similar gameplay experience. But that experience is tailor-made cooperative action in thoughtfully constructed locations with a great deal of replay value. However, it should be noted that Left 4 Dead 2 contains banjo

music and if you're so cynical that that criticism seems legitimate, then it won't be for you.

"The Witch is now more dangerous than ever as she can wander during the day, which leads to some horrifying situations when you realise she is coming right for you."



REVIEWER: CHRISTOPHER WAKEFIED
 GAME: LEFT 4 DEAD 2
 PLATFORM: PC
 DEVELOPER: VALVE
 PUBLISHER: VALVE
 RELEASED: NOVEMBER, 17TH, 2009

PLAYABILITY: 9
 REPLAYABILITY: 9
 SOUND: 9
 GRAPHICS: 9

OVERALL: 9



REVIEW

LEGO INDIANA JONES 2



Lego; what pie haven't they got their plastic little C shaped hands in? There are the Lego computer games of yesteryear i.e.- Lego Chess, Lego Trains and Lego Rock Raiders and their more recent offerings of Lego Batman, Lego Indiana Jones and even taking a stab at iconic film series, Star Wars. Each of these games have been received well and enjoyed by people young and old.

One year on from the release of Lego Indiana Jones: The Original Adventure, it's sequel, Lego Indiana Jones 2: The Adventure Continues, is

due to take over consoles and PC's during the Christmas period. Does it manage to retain all the charm and innovation of the original, or is it just the same game repackaged in time for Christmas?

The original Indy game covered the three films from the 1980's in bite sized chunks, with added humour and lots and lots of Lego! The sequel Lego Indy 2 brings you the previous 3 stories but focuses more on the new film, The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull. I have not seen the latest film but am aware that it was met with a somewhat mixed reception. If this is the case then Lego

SCREENSHOTS



LEGO INDIANA JONES 2

have really done their best with the plot they were given. The story is told rather humorously by a series of grunts and overacting (the Lego men don't talk). One particular bit that made me laugh was Indy and his accomplice using a refrigerator as a makeshift bomb shelter and looking thoroughly bemused when lands in a neighbouring city rather shaken but alive! The humour is purely visual and something you have to be there and see for yourself but it does make your literally laugh out loud!

As well as the new film, the older films are covered, although not as in depth as they are in the first game. The game is split into numerous acts, with Kingdom of the Crystal Skull taking up 3 acts, and the final 3 being re-enactments of the previous game. On top of the main game there is also a create your own level feature which adds some replayability to the mix.

So how does it play? I'll tell you, it's great fun! Each act has got a kind of hub screen where you start off; from there you can choose where you go and which part of the story you want to do first. There are of course limitations in place as you may need the aid of a character you've yet to

"It's down to you to get to the end of the mission..by any means necessary!"

meet to get through it. Once you've decided what you're doing, it's on to the levels. Well I say levels but that term is a little too restrictive, the act in itself is one giant level with loads of places to go and loads of things to do.



With a buddy of your choosing, it's down to you to get to the end of the mission by any means necessary. There are plenty of puzzles to keep your mind occupied, in the beginning level you are asked to rebuild a robot, so once you've found the build-able stacks of Lego bricks, you walk up to them and press and hold the circle button where you see them come to life and start building themselves. Once you have built that robot you are given 2 poles with mirrors on top, you give one to your buddy to hold and one to Indy. Who then

TRAILERS



LEGO INDIANA JONES 2



direct beams of light towards the robot giving it life. I found the puzzles to be pretty challenging, much more so than I originally expected.

Adding a touch of strategy to the game is the ability to switch characters between Indy and his friend. This makes things really interesting, each character has a specialty. Indy has his whip but his companions have explosives or the ability to fix things or the use of guns. Some places require Indy to attach his whip to things to swing or pull them down onto the floor, whereas others may need an explosion to move them out of the way or some areas may need to you drive a vehicle which needs fixing. In an interesting twist, each character also has phobias. If Indy sees a snake he will just freeze up, the same is true for support characters against spiders, rats and scorpions. You must take care to create a different path through these critters or your buddy will be rendered practically useless. The character selection is very easy to achieve and is done by pressing the triangle button. Other movements are equally as easy with running being done on the analogue stick or the D-pad, whichever is your preference. Jumping is done with the cross button, and individual

character special ability i-e whipping/ fixing/shooting/exploding is done with the square button. The circle button is used to cycle through items in your possession such as spades, weapons or simply your bare fists. Attacks are carried out using the square button. The simple controls keep the action from being uninhibited and make the game run smoothly. It's also possible to play through the game as two players with your friend controlling the second character, all they have to do is plug in a controller and press start.

Doing this splits the screen in 2 and allows each player to go their own separate ways if you so wish. This is a huge improvement on the original as split screen mode wasn't an option meaning you had to stay on the same screen together, which could get pretty annoying, as it would force you off ledges when the other player jumped.

A problem in the previous game for me was the fights, I found them to be pretty unresponsive at times which got very frustrating but luckily that problem seems to have been sorted now with smarter AI and far more responsive button inputs.

Going from one extreme to the other in terms of controls, however is the vehicle driving.



LEGO INDIANA JONES 2

The steering is just far too sensitive. It can be impossible sometimes to drive into the small spaces and make the jumps that the game wants you too as one mm tilt of the analogue stick will make your bike/car practically do a 180 degree turn. I found the driving sections of the game to be thoroughly frustrating. Luckily there isn't a huge amount of them.

As you go through the game you collect hundreds of thousands of Lego pieces, which you can spend on things such as extra characters, like soldiers and people to help you as you go along. You can also spend these points on vehicles to do additional races against the clock to win more Lego pieces. The added create your own level feature also allows you to spend these pieces on items to add a range of variety in the level building, a feature I have yet to explore in full. On top of the fantastic game play are great looking visuals. Everything is so well detailed - bright, bold colours that jump out of the screen right at you. A mix of real looking backgrounds, like flooring and skies and cartoony quirky Lego graphics seems to really work.

The music and sound effects are also top notch with many of the famous Indiana Jones tracks making an appearance. It really helps to create the Indiana Jones atmosphere.



All in all, this isn't just an old game rehashed; it's improved on the previous instalment 10 fold, all of the Indiana Jones charm, with lots added to keep it fresh and new. A fantastic game for gamers young and old.



REVIEWER: **STUART GUNN**
 GAME: **LEGO INDIANA JONES 2**
 PLATFORM: **PS3**
 DEVELOPER: **TRAVELLER'S TALES**
 PUBLISHER: **LUCASARTS**
 RELEASED: **NOVEMBER, 20TH, 2009**

PLAYABILITY: **9**
 REPLAYABILITY: **8**
 SOUND: **10**
 GRAPHICS: **9**

OVERALL: **9.5**



REVIEW

BAYONETTA

Bayonetta is the type of game you really do start to question what game developers do while they are creating their master piece of gaming history. You see the creator behind such great games as Devil May Cry and Viewtiful Joe is spearheading this new game and you can start of see where everything merges to create Bayonetta.

You see the style of Bayonetta is very much like a Devil May Cry type of game, there is a strong plot which is constant throughout the game, which allows the fighting and some puzzles to be the main focus of game playing. The best element of this game, therefore, is the fighting. The combat system is a refined Devil May Cry system. Its smooth fluid and damn right fun just to button mash the hell out of and get awesome combos and brilliant effects that illuminate the screen. The system is nicely laid out using the trigger buttons for dodging as well as having the face buttons laid out perfectly allowing you to switch up combos and create, as I've said, some wonderful death scenes.

Speaking of death sequences you will see that there is a lot of button mashing to be done when you are fighting some of the bosses in order to charge power ups to get the most of a kill or a finishing move. In some cases this meant nothing more than how many points you will get but for certain parts of the game, however, you have to make sure you get the most points out of the sequence otherwise you will fail and have to restart again.



The timing for the keys is perfect as well. There is no lag at all which allows for a better control system than I have seen in any of the third person beat 'em ups in a long time. There is no cover system, however, the dodge key certainly will get you out of trouble when you need it to the most.

The dodge system when you pull off dodges correctly you will be rewarded with something called Witch Time. This will slow down the game allowing you to solve puzzles within the game as well as getting an advantage on some foes as you try to fight them off.

As far as the puzzles, Bayonetta has very little imagination in the way these simple puzzles are used throughout the game. You can use Witch Time to solve most of these as well as tracking down keys to open locked doors. The story itself in Bayonetta is confusing alas, I will have a go at explaining what I know by playing through the game. It seems as if the world is caught between

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

BAYONETTA

two worlds' heaven and hell. Heaven is wonderful world which is light and airy place which is home to most of the angels you face throughout the game. The world of hell or Inferno as it is called throughout the game is the world full of demons which sometimes Bayonetta will summon to use with her witch powers. The world that is stuck on the middle of this is Purgatorio an in between world which exists for humans to be on much like our own earth. The worlds of heaven and hell exist on different dimensions which Bayonetta can shift between to engage enemies and also to speak to people on the planet such as Purgatorio.

The story starts 200 years ago where a great battle starts against the Umbra Witches and the Lumen Sages. The two sides both have a unique treasure, both have an eye of the world. Unfortunately during amidst the battle they are both lost and the world is thrown into panic, witch hunts are set out and both factions are wiped out. The last of the few go into hiding. Jumping back to the modern day Bayonetta awakes apparently after being

found at the bottom of a lake without any memories of who she is or anything about her besides her magical abilities. Cue the inevitable fights between the so called angels which appear from the sky to try and take Bayonetta back to hell from where she came. The game then twists and turns adding new characters in the story line. While I don't want to give too much away on the story line or the ending it is solid and will take you roughly around ten hours to get to.

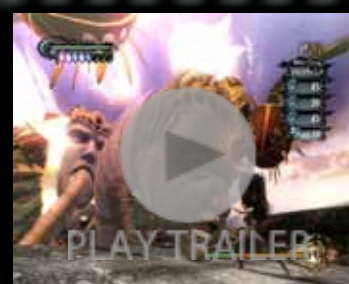
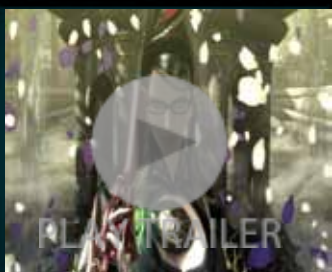
The money system in Bayonetta seems to have been taken right out of a popular Sega game. Once the angels which you will be fighting against a lot have died they drop "halos" which look to be remarkably like rings from Sonic. Anyway, these "halos" can be used to buy new moves to be used in battle or upgrade to newer weapons or just buy items which you can use to boost your health or

your magical ability or even to revive you once you have been killed.

The enemies within the game all carry their own strengths and weaknesses. Some are aerial foes which can only



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REVIEW

BAYONETTA

be shot while in mid air and can be a bit tricky. Most foes will be on the ground allowing you to mix up combos by throwing them in the air or juggling them as you fight them off. Also most foes seem to come with huge badass guys behind them - these will normally appear three or four times within a chapter popping up allowing you to take some health off them each time. Of course the main combat is split between your long range attacks from you guns to your close combat fighting with your fists. While the guns are really there just to give damage and keep smaller foes at bay the most effective way of finishing off enemies is too get close and really pound them with kicks and punches.

Within your move list as well you will be able to purchase special attacks which use your demonic magic to create a stronger attack. These techniques are quite effective against big groups of enemies and can be used to quite an effect. As well as having weapons on every limb of her body Bayonetta can also pick up most of the weapons that your foes wield. For example you can be pick up anything from an enormous axe which deals huge damage to a trombone that fires rockets.

The game is great to look at and this isn't just because of the standard women without much clothes on routine, the landscapes have had detail and time spent on them, which is a shame that most of them you won't be looking at for too long due to enemies suddenly filling every part of them for you to kill and maim with your brilliant moves. Talking about the graphics; there are a number of cut scenes in the game and while most give you clues to the story line others just seem to be there to take up some of your time for playing the game. At least there is a skip option even on your first run through and when are just replaying the levels.

And I think you will be revisiting the levels again. Just like DMC 4 there is a point system which gives you a trophy for how well you have done on each of the levels. This is divided up into your combo score, your time, and if you

**"From an enormous
axe which deals huge
damage to a trombone
that fires rockets."**



REVIEW

BAYONETTA



The game's music is a bit weird instead of the old faithful rock songs blasting out behind you while you are kicking arse and grabbing your "halos" the tracks have been somewhat changed. There is a more J-POP feel to the music which sometimes leave you feeling 'what the hell is playing while I am trying to mutilate angels' but seriously at some points it just works and is great to have a change of music. Oh and these songs will be stuck in your head and will be singing these even on your way to work, which can be embarrassing.

have taken any damage or not throughout the story. At the end of that chapter you are given an overall trophy, this gives huge appeal for people to get the best possible scores and couple that with the leaderboards [A1] and there will always be the diehard fans that want to get their name at the top of the board for that certain level. Of course how could I not speak about the new very easy mode which allows you to play the game one handed, while I don't know if this will be any use to anyone out there (no, seriously, no crude jokes) it's a entertaining move on the part of the developers.

On a whole Bayonetta doesn't do anything different from previous titles that are already out in the games market. However it is the small details that seem to make the difference in this game, and while most you probably will never notice such as the polish to the control system it's nice to see there have been improvements. These subtle changes are there and make the game so much nicer and easier to play. For diehard fans of this genre I am surprised you haven't already got this but for people who liked the DMC series this is a great extension on the genre and am sure we will see more of Bayonetta in the future.



REVIEWER: **STEVEN GREENFIELD**
GAME: **BAYONETTA**
PLATFORM: **XBOX360**
DEVELOPER: **PLATINUM GAMES, SEGA**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
RELEASED: **JANURARY, 8TH, 2010**

PLAYABILITY: **8**
REPLAYABILITY: **8**
SOUND: **8**
GRAPHICS: **8**

OVERALL: 9



REVIEW

SHATTERED HORIZON



So, in the not so distant and quite plausible future, Mankind have been taking advantage of the Moon's natural resources - mining minerals, searching for the existence of the Clangers and hosting I'm a Lunar Celebrity Beam Me Up Scotty! When suddenly the Moon explodes due to a catastrophic disaster in one of the mining facilities, scattering millions of tonnes of debris into space, most of which settle in orbit around Earth. A conflict opens up between two factions, the MMC and the ISA which brings us dear players into the picture by choosing which side we wish to play as in this 32 player, Multiplayer only,

Zero Gravity FPS title from the fine chaps at the Futuremark Game Studios. If you have read my previous previews of the games here and here, then you should be familiar with the concepts of the game, however if you haven't then I shall provide you with a brief summary.

Shattered Horizon is the first of what I hope to be many titles to appear out of the doors of FGS, utilising a modified engine which powered 3DMark Vantage so you can expect outstanding visual effects bursting onto your screen in this game. It's worth noting while not having a ridiculous set of minimum requirements

SCREENSHOTS



SHATTERED HORIZON

to run this game, it does however require

Direct X 10 or higher which simply means if you're still on Windows XP then I'm afraid this game is a no go area for you. As I mentioned before the game is a FPS title set in space, this means you have complete freedom of movement along any axis you so wish to zoom along. Now, what Futuremark have managed to create, via I can only assume is some form of witch craft, is a completely intuitive method of controlling your character in this zero gravity environment. The vast majority of FPS gamers will instantly pick up the basics of movement, they will quickly adapt to the momentum of your character after shooting themselves off a rock into space and in no time at all they will be swooping and looping and doing other manoeuvres that end in "oooping" to evade their adversaries in order to get themselves into that optimal position to strike.

"Upon firing up the game you notice that everything is nice, pretty and shiny making you go "Oooh Ahh, That's Nice"

You have a number of game modes,

ranging from straight team deathmatch, capture and hold and attack & defend over the currently available four maps. Now you may think this is a small number of maps, and I would agree but the fellows at FGS are constantly creating new maps and offering them to the community as DLC content. Upon firing the game up you notice that everything is nice, pretty and shiny making you go "Oooh Ahhh, That's Nice", you'll also be like this throughout the game as there's lots



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REVIEW

SHATTERED HORIZON



of views in the game that make you just stop and admire the lighting or the artwork or a combination of both, which will inevitably leads to you being shot. Lighting plays a huge part in this game, the glow from your thrusters, the flash from your rifle, even the glow from your rifle display, the natural light casting shadows over the environment, it's all been lovingly designed to be pretty yet an inherent game mechanic. You see, these pretty glowing lights is generally your visual give-aways to enemy positions, that muzzle flash on the horizon, the trail from your thruster exhausts shooting

"You disappear quicker than being shot with Barry Scott's Cillit Bang."

across the map, all of these things will give your position away to the enemy.

However you may activate silent running mode, this will shut down all your suit's systems bar life support while you slowly drift through space as you sneakily try and flank the enemy without giving away any visual clues to your whereabouts. While this sounds like an appealing tactic, you must remember that you will have no external audio, you're in space and no one can hear you scream therefore your suit simulates the sounds of the environment. Also, no radar or thrusters to help movement so it's down to your eyes to spot something worthwhile attacking before rebooting the system to blast back into combat.

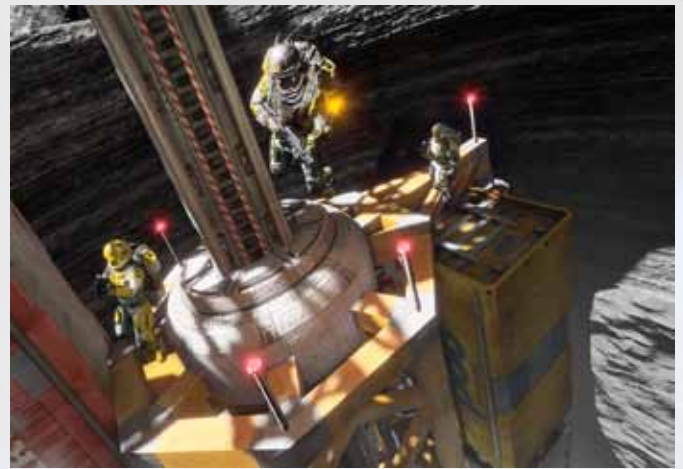
Additionally, when you're spotted by your opponents, your position then becomes



REVIEW

SHATTERED HORIZON

visible on every member of that teams' radar, pop silent running and you disappear quicker than being shot with Barry Scott's Cillit Bang. My only reservation would be that while it's a nice system to evade people, I don't think it's enough to shake the hardcore players from launching a volley of bullets with pinpoint accuracy into your helmet causing you to depressurise which inevitably leads to your death. So the weaponry in the game is rather limited.... Well you only get one weapon, the trusty assault rifle, equipped with a scope and a under-barrel grenade launcher with a four round capacity and three different grenade modes. While this puts everyone on a level playing field in regards to the weaponry, it can be detrimental to the longevity of the game if there's no variation for the player. However you are an astronaut in space and the last thing you want is a multitude of weapons dangling across your back while you fly through the stars. Perhaps a compromise may be having a selection of weapons at your disposal yet only allowed to wield one at a time, switching out after death like switching



between classes in Team Fortress 2 or the Battlefield series, or even just the addition of a side arm would have been nice too, either way I hope Futuremark address this issue or the game could become stale for players which would be a shame.

The game very kindly tracks your own stats and generates a performance page for yourself so you may keep tabs of how you are progressing online which is a nice touch but simply boils down to pure e-peen waving between the cream of the crop, though the main plus point for me is that they stuck to using dedicated servers.



REVIEW

SHATTERED HORIZON



Oh Lord have mercy, how I loathed Infinity Ward after they announced the decision to move away from dedicated servers for PC play for Modern Warfare 2, in favour of some hideous match making system. So yes, you can happily play on dedicated servers feeling relieved that little Billy McNoobsworth won't rage quit the game and halt the flow of combat as he was the sessions host after being shot in the face for the 17th time in a row and making everyone call him every name under the sun while the game searches for a new host.



For a very reasonable price on Steam, oh yes that's right I forgot to mention the game is Digital Distribution only, Shattered Horizon is a decent first attempt into the gaming market, it's not without it's minor flaws but I'm sure FGS will take on board the feedback in order to possibly make changes or just to reference to it in the future on a possible second game from them. However I do feel it is a game that should grace your gaming collection as it does offer a unique multiplayer experience.

REVIEWER: **NEIL HETHERINGTON**
GAME: **SHATTERED HORIZON**
PLATFORM: **PC**
DEVELOPER: **FUTUREMARK**
PUBLISHER: **FUTUREMARK**
RELEASED: **NOVEMBER, 4TH, 2009**

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

OVERALL: **8.5**





STAR TREK

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REVIEW

JAMES CAMERON'S: AVATAR



As gamers, we've reached the stage where we know what to expect from the games we buy. Back in the dawn of gaming, it was new and fresh and each game had merit - for its flaws and its as well as its strengths. Nowadays, however, the unfortunate truth is that we have been bitten before. As such, the stigma that comes attached to a film-to-video-game game is unavoidable. All you can do is brace yourself, pop the disc in and hope for the best.

Rarely a game of this ilk manages to pull this off, however, despite how fitting a film may suit the transition to video game. Avatar, being based on James Cameron's blockbuster film seems ripe for such a conversion; glorious and unique vistas to explore, an emotive and interesting war to fight and an eclectic mix of items, weapons and creatures to pull from the pre-created history. The game is set two years before the film, so many would hope for an in-depth storytelling leading up to the film's beginnings. Unfortunately, it

SCREENSHOTS



JAMES CAMERON'S: AVATAR

does not do this. As has become too common, this is just another film-to-game cash-in that will leave few happy with their purchase.



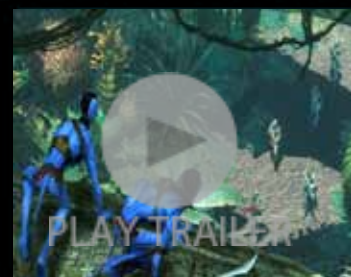
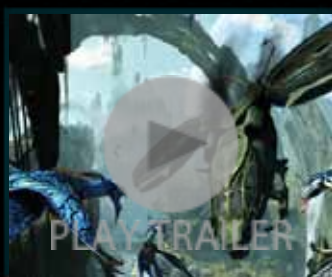
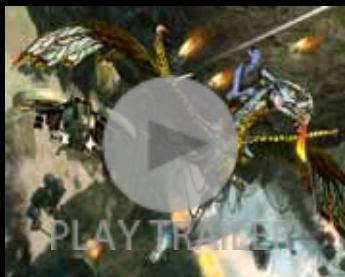
You begin the game as the character of your choosing, from a healthy selection of pre-created characters - each with a Human and a Na'vi form. You'll carry out some simple go-to-this-person and collect-this-number-of-things type of quests that are archetypal of this sort of game. It begins well enough, though the character interactions aren't brilliant and - for a game based on a highly CGI-focused cinematic experience - the graphics are sub-par. It's disappointing, since the opportunity to explore the glorious world as portrayed in the film is jarred by the poor graphics and even poorer animations. Of course, graphical and aesthetic flaws are the least important, but players will find it hard not to compare it to the film.

After a short while playing the game you'll arrive at a decision that needs to be made - and the game's key selling point. You need to decide whether to side with the RDA (the humans) or the Na'vi (the blue guys). This decision affects which path your character will take and the missions and places you go. This type of game concept is an enjoyable one, since it gives you reason to replay - to find the subtle differences between the two. Unfortunately, however, the game isn't really good enough to warrant a second playthrough and the two paths are so similar it wouldn't really make much difference. Your ultimate goal is to find and locate the Well of Souls by finding songs in the willow trees (yes, you did read that correctly). Regardless of the

path you chose, this will be your main objective - only who you speak to and who you fight changes. As a Na'vi the world of Pandora, or Eywa, is kind to them and most beasts and carnivorous plants will leave your player alone, and attack any nearby RDA. As a Human, you'll be able to commandeer a number of vehicles, each with their own destructive capabilities. Whoever you

"This is just another film-to-game cash-in that will leave few happy with their purchase."

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JAMES CAMERON'S: AVATAR

choose, however, will play exactly the same. While the Na'vi focus more on natural weapons such as bows, blades and the like and the RDA focus on a plethora of machine weaponry, the abilities either race uses are exactly the same. Sure, the names are changed, but they all function in the



same way. You have the healing ability, the stealth ability, the sprint ability and so on. Whatever ability you have as one race, you'd have as the other - just under a conveniently renamed title.

In the end, how you use the abilities is important and - as you have probably come to expect - it fails to impress. The animation is terrible, the damage detection is erratic and the AI is even worse.

There's no sense of gravitas to your characters - no feeling of actually controlling one of the large, agile warriors as you chase down your prey. If you decide to ally with the Na'vi, nothing feels different as though you're anything other than the same guy in a blue body. Okay, I know that's the point of an Avatar but being put in control of one should control or feel different. As the missions progress through brief conversations as your commanded where to go and what to do, the overwhelming sense of repetition is hard to resist. You'll wade in, kill the bad guys, collect what you need to collect and return to the next person to do the same. It'd be nice to be able to explore a little too, and the game does

give you that option. It begins positive enough, with each (relatively large and distinct) area providing you with a number of side-objectives, such as destroy a certain number of objects, kill a certain number of enemies or

collect a certain number of objects - as well as the all important 'clear 100% of the fog'. Those that are so inclined would expect to have a field day, keeping their eye out for all their required objectives and searching high and low to unlock all the fog. However, this falls flat when each area has you unlock all the fog anyway when the missions send you through every corner of the map.

Throughout the game there are objects that allow you to teleport from location to location where, when selecting these, you can choose to take part in the conquest mini-game. In this mode you



JAMES CAMERON'S: AVATAR

use acquired experience points to purchase units and try to take over the planet for your chosen side.

A globe is displayed, with each of the areas divided up into provinces. Your team begins with one province, which can't be taken, where you build your troops and expand our trying to, as the name suggests, conquer the rest of the planet. You can build defences or more troops, and transport troops through your provinces until you decide to attack. After you take a turn, your enemy takes a turn - it's like a big, digital game of Risk. I love Risk. This praise, however, is short-lived - saving your money and simply building the most powerful units (or which there are three types) means you'll be able to waste any of your enemies, so much so that provided you build enough of these (and enough troops to 'defend' your acquired provinces)



and you'll have no problems completing this.

Ultimately, Cameron's Avatar is a game that could've been much more. It could've had better graphics and weightier controls. It could've had a more intriguing plot choice and better missions. It's clearly a rushed game, thrown out to tie it in with the release of the film that - with a bit of time, care and attention - could've been far more entertaining than the this poor attempt.



REVIEWER: **STEVEN GREENFIELD**
 GAME: **CAMERON'S: AVATAR**
 PLATFORM: **PS3**
 DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT MONTREAL**
 PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
 RELEASED: **DECEMBER, 1ST, 2009**

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

OVERALL: **5**



REVIEW

PLANET 51



Film merchandise – when I was young you could get action figures, t-shirts and the occasional photo album. These days, any family film release is almost guaranteed to be accompanied by a tie-in game. The latest film/game combination to add to that tally comes in the form of Planet 51; does it have what it takes to break the cycle of poor licensed titles we’ve seen in recent years?

For those without children or an in-depth knowledge of every movie to grace the box office this year; the film (and the game, albeit slightly more loosely) follows the adventures of Chuck, a US astronaut who lands on an alien planet, only to discover that it is already inhabited by a race of little green men straight out of 1950s science-fiction. With the help of

Lem, one of the planet’s inhabitants, Chuck must recover his spacecraft and return home. This plot is translated into Planet 51: The Game as a series of driving games varying from straight racing to demolition derby and taxi driving mini games, all tied together in an (almost) open world. Not having seen the film itself, it’s hard to say precisely how closely the game’s plot mirrors the big screen version; but I would imagine that having discovered Chuck and hiding him in his room, Lem doesn’t go on to complete a series of chores in order to get a camera and take part in a photography contest.

When the plot isn’t deviating from the film, it spends the rest of its time flitting about without explanation. There are a number of instances where upon completion of a mission, you are left

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REVIEW

PLANET 51

with no idea of what you're supposed to be doing next, leaving you to follow an arrow on the HUD taking you to a completely unrelated mission.

Whilst most of the missions are stand-alone levels, the mini-games have 10 levels of increasing difficulty which can be completed to unlock extra vehicles and collectibles. The fact that the game refers to these as 'Tasks' does reflect on their repetitive nature – each level is exactly the same apart from having slightly less time to complete the task. This grates even more given the fact that all 10 levels must be completed in a single sitting; repeatedly mowing the same lawn (yes, it is one of the mini-games) for 30 minutes is not my idea of fun.

First impressions on loading the game are very much of a family friendly GTA clone; the open world, the pedestrians wandering aimlessly around the streets, the ability to commandeer vehicles (with the owner's consent rather than by force obviously). Looking closer however, it soon becomes

"The AI cheats more than most Mario Kart games"

clear that this open world is somewhat of a sham; aside from the tasks that can be played at any point once they've been unlocked, there is only ever one mission available to you at a time and once you get to that mission, there is only a single path around the level - whilst this may be a slight exaggeration, any shortcuts are subtly indicated by a large flashing arrow on your HUD.

It's probably a good thing that shortcuts are so obvious as you'll need all the help you can get in races; the AI cheats more than most Mario Kart

games. I clearly recall one such instance at the end of the second area; racing against the local gang of bullies along a spiralling canyon path, I managed to knock one of my opponents off the edge sending him plummeting to



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REVIEW

PLANET 51

one of the lower sections of the spiral – seconds later he was on my tail again. There are even times when the game is much more blatant about it; opponents can magically appear in front of you if you're doing too well.

Small niggles like this shouldn't detract from an otherwise solid racing game. Unfortunately, this is far from being a solid racing game. Tips on the loading screens recommend selecting the right vehicle for the mission; a job easier said than done. Vehicle handling is invariably poor with minimal discernable difference across the available cars and no stats or figures to enable you to compare and choose. With every vehicle being a hover car (or bike, or lawnmower), you have the ability to strafe with the vehicle – perfect, you think, the opportunity to drift the car around corners for some extra speed. The game has other ideas and any attempts to be clever will

“The game has other ideas and any attempts to be clever will generally not be pretty.”

generally not be pretty.

Graphically, the game looks nice while not doing anything in particular to stand out; the only real feature of note is that it is one of the few Unreal Engine 3.0 powered games not to suffer from noticeable texture pop-in, although this is most likely to be due to the simple nature of the textures rather than any particular refinements to the engine.

As the developers Pyro are owned by the same brothers that own the studio responsible for the film, it's obvious that the development team have had access to various pieces of artwork and models. It's just a shame that they didn't get to share the animation talent - lip-synching in cutscenes is minimal with characters flailing about seemingly randomly to prevent them from being completely static and lifeless.



REVIEW

PLANET 51

As a reviewer, I realise that I'm not part of the target audience for this game (nor have I been for many years) but it remains hard to see anyone but the biggest fan of the film wanting to play for any extended period of time, let alone play through all the tasks to unlock all the collectable items. Finding out that some of the vehicles within the game can only be unlocked by purchasing the action figures highlights the simple fact – this is not a game, it is primarily a piece of merchandise, and a lifeless and repetitive one at that.



REVIEWER: **MATT STUDD**
GAME: **PLANET 51: THE GAME**
PLATFORM: **XBOX360**
DEVELOPER: **PYRO STUDIOS**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
RELEASED: **NOVEMBER, 17TH, 2009**

PLAYABILITY: **6**
REPLAYABILITY: **4**
SOUND: **7**
GRAPHICS: **7**

OVERALL: 5



Not so long ago in leafy green August I had a first look at FIFA Manager 10 during GamesCom in Cologne, Germany, which is also the home of the game's developer, Bright Future. During that original sitting I was rather impressed at what an attractive package FIFA Manager 10 was shaping up to be. However, the real key to success for a football management simulator is to be addictive and generate long-lasting appeal. Now, with this follow-up review, I hope to be able to answer this question: has FIFA Manager 10 raised its game to earn the right to be named alongside league leaders and sales giant Football Manager? Read on for my conclusions.

Greeted with the old Grandstand theme music and soft but precise presentation, FIFA Manager 10 is immediately and noticeably different from the basic, but highly competent Excel charts fabled in Football Manager. Regrettably, these initial layers of stylish presentation during the opening moments were knocked down by the immediate download of a patch, made available soon after release to fix reported game-crashes and other lesser grievances.

Those aspects aside, let's establish the basics of your (hopefully) prosperous career. FIFA Manager 10 provides a decent line-up for different play-styles. Most will simply choose a club and/or national team for a managerial career, but



should it appeal you can negotiate a contract with a random team or even set up a new club. Following that choice is the typical customisation process – pick a database and leagues, create your manager profile and appearance using a fine tooth-comb and, if desired, set-up an optional personal life. At this point FIFA Manager 10 lets you choose from five difficulty levels spread over seven game areas, but being an average chap I went for Normal on everything, which later on seemed like the right choice.

It is also worth mentioning the exciting sounding "Action Mode" that can be selected. This optional mode allows for an additional career controlling a single player in the 3D mode, or more tantalising is the thought of a player-manager role. The problem with this idea is that unlike FIFA 10's "Be a Pro" mode, the player control is utterly terrible – amusingly my best efforts at manually controlling a player resulted in him getting slated by the

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FIFA MANAGER 10

assistant coach. As commentator Peter Brackley once said: "Nice idea, shame about the execution". Once you have addressed the small matter of picking a team to manage and defining your season's expectations, you're at last unleashed into this huge and daunting world of managing not just a team, but the whole football club. Everything from merchandising, advertising and stadium design is present and correct. The problem I had however was the difficulty in discovering all the important tasks which are required to be fulfilled around the club. Learning to swim from the deep end without floats attached is a daunting prospect; better to focus on the basics and drip-feed the ostentatious features later on. A useful blue info button is at least on hand to help explain what's being displayed on each individual screen.

As a result of my confusion I went through most of the pre-season being pretty inefficient at running the club, though favourably the various areas of club management can be set to automatic. I tailored the club management aspects to a level I felt more comfortable with, mostly trimming back on the admin work. With those problems dealt with, I could now focus on the team players and tactics. Keeping with the theme of FIFA Manager 10, there is an awful lot of detail here which just leads to an information overload.

In next year's game I fully expect blood type to be on agenda for player profiles.

To go into greater detail on everything FIFA Manager 10 caters for would be a Herculean task. To summarise, the great deal of varied tasks to get involved with form more of a distracting veneer on top of what is really important to most football managers. FIFA Manager 10 is privileged to contain all the club, player and league licences in the known universe, but all this would be pointless if there was no continued reason to play. The general feeling during my season with Norwich City is that the game successfully upholds interest over a season, though in the form of bite-sized energetic chunks as opposed to all out addiction.

It's hard to know whether the developers actually want you addicted or not – there is a real-world clock in the interface to remind you it's time to



TRAILERS



REVIEW

FIFA MANAGER 10

stop, but there is also a bizarre little feature which indicates the value for money recouped from the game. The major downer in drawing me back was most likely down to the deficiency of tactical depth, and there didn't seem to be enough feedback on why my decisions failed or suddenly succeeded. Feelings of joy and disappointment are always going to be a part of a football manager's job description, but more satisfaction would have made a refreshing change.

At any rate, the sound and graphics are two areas which FIFA Manager 10 can claim the crown over rival games in the genre. In the 3D engine – much improved from last year – the players, pitch and stadium are all notable for the right reasons, whilst the animations are now slicker and more diverse. Besides, seeing a ball hit the back of a net is even more gratifying in 3D. Loading times are no real problem and the presentation looks gorgeous, though the new menu layout will take some getting used to. The sound department meanwhile can boast respectable game music and atmospheric effects, while there is even basic match commentary from Clive Tyldesly and Andy Gray.

Not new to FIFA Manager? Well, this yearly update means there is going to be new and amended areas from the last game, some 400 changes in total. Several of the new features, like automatic substitutions, a jazzy season preview, a career scrap book and customisable desk seemed

“FIFA Manager 10, the best club manager simulator on the market.”



superfluous, making a modest impact at best.

There are a few decent new touches though, such as the ability to shout instant commands - like shoot, pass or cross - from the touchline in a control-freak manner which provides some witty moments. It is debatable whether there is enough to tempt a player back from last year to make a full priced upgrade to this latest and greatest version, though it is fair to envisage respectable value for money in the long term.

One of the major new additions to FIFA Manager 10 is the completely free online mode. Setting up an account is quick and easy so it's not long before you're in the lobby, where information on games available to join is displayed, including a handy friends tab too. The online mode is far less complex and quicker in pace than the offline counterpart. Each turn typically gives you one minute to tweak the basic training schedule, tactics and finances. Players are given an overall rating from 1-20 and can be transfer listed and then purchased via an auction system every week between July and April. There are no contracts to worry about and matches are played out in a few minutes using a very basic text display.

The first problem I encountered with the online mode is that despite there being a few dozen

servers running, the majority are German speaking using the unfamiliar Bundesliga division, with only a handful of these at the start of a season. I decided to take the plunge and join a game of six players (the maximum is eight), but soon after the season began the managers left one by one. By the time the first match ended the game was terminated due to the fact I was now alone.

Eventually I did manage to start a game with a committed and friendly manager called "buh4". We played a complete season in the Barclays Premier League (all matches including the cups), with various other players joining and leaving throughout. Online seasons were originally promised to be short portions of entertainment lasting no more than three hours; however our season took closer to six. With user attention regularly required throughout, during this long session I had to use the repetitive match days as a chance to make a cuppa and take a leak. Despite an early buzz of excitement during the opening part of the season, interest levels steadily decreased over the next few hours, only picking up towards the latter part of the season when the teams reached their climax and the banter between managers picked up.

This single online experience was one I will remember. However the major lack of variety - and the fact that tactical changes have little effect on matches - means that despite a rankings table to climb, I would only want to play a complete season like this once in a blue moon. Just about worthwhile as an addition to the main bulk of the game then, but the online mode needs to be built on and improved significantly next time around.

It is my overall opinion that FIFA Manager 10 can provide an enjoyable and rounded experience for managers new and old for a fair few hours, with superior sound and graphics to boot. However, if it is an addictive season-upon-season mentality and a polished match engine that you're after, then Football Manager still reigns supreme in those departments. While still the underdog, I would recommend giving FIFA Manager 10 a chance by at least trying out the demo before simply buying a rival out of tradition. You never know, it might just one day substitute Football Manager 10 as the greatest football management simulator on the market, but for now it will have to settle for being the best club manager instead.



REVIEWER: **PETE O'BRIEN**
 GAME: **FIFA MANAGER**
 PLATFORM: **PC**
 DEVELOPER: **BRIGHT FUTURE**
 PUBLISHER: **EA SPORTS**
 RELEASED: **OCTOBER, 30TH, 2009**

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

OVERALL: **7.5**



REVIEW

TONY HAWK: RIDE



Tony Hawk Ride, is it worth it? In short, no, but allow me to explain my abrupt answer. There was a lot of mixed feelings when the Ride controller was first announced, a mixture of anticipation for a new dimension in skateboarding games, and trepidation for a control system that could damage reputations of Activision, the Tony Hawk series and also the man himself who endorses the game. When I got the opportunity to review this game, I knew that it would lean more towards the review of the board and how it performs in the game rather than a review of the software alone. For this I decided it would be best to get more than just my own

opinion on the board, therefore I got a group together so I could compile everyone's views into a more rounded set of feedback.

On first inspection I could feel that the board was constructed to handle a lot of abuse, nothing really felt cheap or nasty and had a nice weight to it. There's four sensors on the board, one at the nose, one at the tail and one on either side, while all the controller buttons were located on one side of the board with the start button oversized on purpose so it may be operated by your foot while playing. The battery compartment to power the board is on the bottom and requires a small-ish Philips head screw driver to remove a screw

SCREENSHOTS



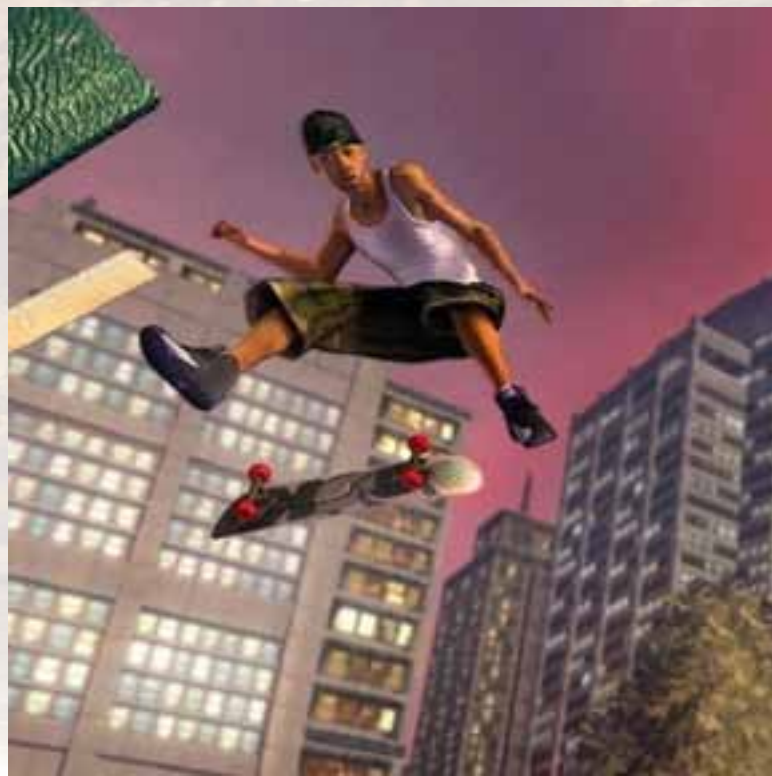
“Never ever, EVER play this in your socks, you’ll just slide about on the board.”

before access is gained to install your supplied batteries or replace them when required. I also had a handful of Velcro strips with the package too, well when I say Velcro strips I mean the furry half of a Velcro strip. The idea being you stick these on the bottom of the board so it theoretically should not mark non-carpeted flooring such as your wood laminates etc.

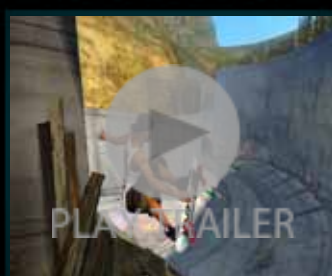
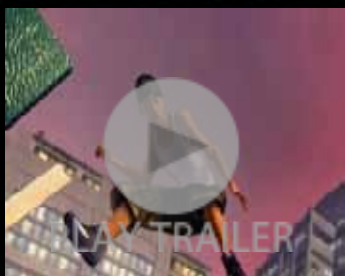
With batteries installed, I fired up the game hoping to jump straight into the action only to be met by the voice of Mr. Hawk himself telling me that we needed to calibrate the controller. Make sure you have plenty of space around yourself so that no furniture can be detected by the sensors. I would recommend about a metre radius to ensure nothing gets picked up. Once the tedious calibration is finished, I set about the task of getting into the game and generally have a good cock about the place. Here I made my first mistake, never ever, EVER play this in your socks, you’ll just slide about on the board, even with its supposedly grippy surface and I slipped off and fell on my larger

than average posterior. Definitely play this bare foot or in shoes/trainers/wellies/winkle pickers* (* delete as appropriate). While being on the more portly side of body types it was reassuring to know that the board sufficiently took my pie consuming mass with ease and showed no sign of weakness after a good few stomps from myself.

Obviously you stand on this thing like you were standing on a real skateboard, the aforementioned sensors on the front and sides detects your hands as if you were attempting to grab that area to initiate a trick, while raising the nose and lowering it makes you Ollie your board onscreen. In reality this system was more miss than hit for all of our



TRAILERS



TONY HAWK: RIDE



players using the board: the youngest of the group had to take, on average, two to three attempts at an Ollie before the game responded to his request, additionally he was so light on the board that it was literally moving across the carpet forcing him to get off, reposition it then getting back on, disrupting his flow of the game. This definitely frustrated him as concentration levels on the game dropped dramatically while he fought with the board more and more, exacerbating his temper to the point where he just gave up and walked off.

Not a great start for the title, next up we had a teenager play the game who had better success on executing the Ollie (perhaps its a weight related issue in raising the nose?) yet still failed miserably on turning the in-game character, even at the point of her nearly falling off the board with it being tilted so much it still felt sluggish. Again this meant her interest in the game dropped quickly and she vanished out of the room to tend to her precious Sims. Ok, two down with myself to go.

I get on and have no problem executing Ollie's and grinds etc, but the lack of response on pulling off tricks and still suffering from sluggish turns definitely marred my own experience. However wishing to give this the old college try I persevered

with the game, trying out the different control difficulty levels and events, which brings me onto the game itself.

In the game you have three main modes: Challenge, Trick and Speed. Challenge mode gives you predetermined objectives to complete ranging from landing and Ollie to grinding through an eye of needle while whistling Auld Lang Syne backwards. Trick mode gives you a set amount of

time to perform as many tricks as possible to get a high score, while Speed mode is simply a race against the clock with pick-ups along your route which either takes time off or puts time onto your clock, modifying your overall time for the course. Completing these modes allows you to unlock more area's to skate in and unlocking other skaters. While the mechanics of the game are solid enough in regards to completing objectives to further your career is consistent with previous titles, the sole use of using the board as your controller is the weakest link. In previous titles, players knew how to do tricks using the controller and could flip their way to victory till the cows come home. In Ride it's a completely different kettle of fish and may deter those who enjoy skating games who aren't necessarily a hardcore skater themselves as they do not know how to do the tricks on a board.



TONY HAWK: RIDE

As for the board controls, you have 3 levels of freedom to choose from. Casual which turns the game into an on rails skater where you just concentrate on tricks while the game controls your movement. Confident which releases you from the constraints of the previous level and allows you to freely roam about but will guide you into tricks such as grinds while Hardcore essentially leaves you to your own accord. While i had varying success with the real world environments performing the challenges etc. I did however have more success in the half pipe section of the game and managed to push out a fairly respectable performance in terms of tricks and points. It felt strangely more responsive in half pipe than a street scenario, to which even now I cannot explain why.



Graphically the game is like an Army grunt, it does not look pretty but it gets the job done. there's nothing ground breaking or anything of a visually impressive nature, it seems more time was made on making the game playable than pretty,

so don't expect eyeball melting visuals from this one. the licensed soundtrack used to accompany your skating time is nothing to write home about either, it's just there and it is functional. I do appreciate developers trying something new and on paper Tony Hawk Ride was definitely an

exciting prospect, yet it's a big ask for the general public to shell out around £100 for a game with a not so great peripheral - which only works with that specified game and nothing else - makes this game an avoidable product. Perhaps if the board was bundled with a pack of games which utilised it, such as skateboarding, snowboarding and perhaps some mini-games akin to how the Wii was bundled with Wii sports to help show off the control method of that product, then maybe it would have

been more appealing but as it stands I would only recommend this one if it appeared on sale below the £40 mark. The final question would be, if you are a hardcore skater, why bother with this when you could just go outside to skate?



REVIEWER: **NEIL HETHERINGTON**
 GAME: **TONY HAWK: RIDE**
 PLATFORM: **XBOX360**
 DEVELOPER: **ROBOMODO**
 PUBLISHER: **ACTIVISION**
 RELEASED: **DECEMBER 4TH, 2009**

PLAYABILITY: **4**
 REPLAYABILITY: **3**
 SOUND: **5**
 GRAPHICS: **5**

OVERALL: 4



REVIEW

CITIES XL



Cities XL is a game in which you can go worldwide and create cities. It is complex and this made it difficult to review at certain points. In Solo Mode you have five different terrains – coasts, mountains, valleys, canyons, and great plains. In each terrain you have up to five different cities ranging in difficulty, and you must keep note of how much flat or fertile land there is, and whether it is holiday suitable, alongside other factors.

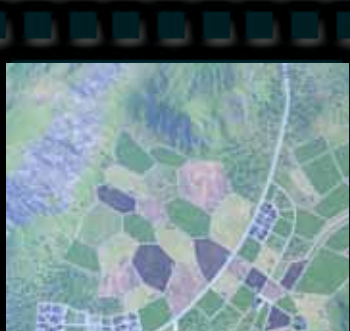
In this game you have to be tactical as rushing in to buy everything you can lay your hands on is unwise due to monthly costs. Nevertheless, although it is tactical, there is a form of gambling involved. For example, you can lose money rapidly, so one minute you may have 800,000 credits, and then all of a sudden, you can have -120,000 credits. You can do many things to get out of debt like changing the tax rates

and deleting buildings. Taking out loans is an option too, however it is highly ill-advised.

This is going to be a hard game to explain, so for those of you who haven't played a city building game before, this should give you a heads up.

Breaking the game down, you have four different types of accommodation for the workers, called "Zoning": unqualified workers; qualified workers; executive workers; and elite workers. To get this working you select an area on the map where you would like to place the buildings. You then select what type of worker you would like to attract. At the start of the game, you can only make accommodation for unqualified workers; the other three are not unlocked until your population grows more: the higher the population, the more advanced workers you can unlock. After selecting the type of worker to attract, you'll need to

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

CITIES XL

“The game is all about detail. Three words to describe Cities XL is detail, detail and more detail.”

designate the density of the buildings. This allows you to choose building sizes, from smaller houses to larger-scale tower blocks. These work the same as accommodation, where you can unlock the higher densities as you gather a bigger population.

You'll be able to construct a number of industries for your city, which includes the entire range you might expect a city might need. You'll have access to manual industry - such as Farming, Heavy Industry and Factories - as well as retail with shops and hotels to more tourism based buildings such as museums, bowling alleys or Ferris wheels. You'll also be required to build Utilities for your citizens, including electricity and water or Police, Fire and Medical services. Some of these sections are only allowed to be built on specific parts of the land, such as farming areas belonging to fertile land, and holiday hotels near a beach.

You can also add decorations like Trees, Plazas, where you can fill empty spaces and vacant lots, Parks and Monuments, which improves your

citizens' quality of life, Terraforming, which is where you can flatten land, and Blueprints, which is for more advanced stuff later on the game. On the note of flattening land, you don't actually have to flatten it to place down houses or roads. Some hills can be too sloped; therefore houses cannot be built in this area because they run a risk of falling off, and thus, cannot be placed in those areas. I think it is really handy because it saves you trying to flatten the whole land in order to place something, which then makes things a lot easier because it alters the land automatically for you.

You then have the two last icons: one being Transport, and the other being The Bulldozer. For transport you can have different roads (free angle roads, roads with 90° or 45° angles, or curved roads, highways, bridges and tunnels (if a bridge goes through a hill, it automatically creates a tunnel; you can also alter the heights of the bridges, however it is really finicky), and international transportation (which are basically airports and harbours). When you bulldoze, you can select one of two options: one, delete single objects; or two delete a group of objects in the designated area.

It automatically saves at frequent intervals, which



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REVIEW

CITIES XL

can be useful in case the PC crashes, however it does also prevent cheating if something goes wrong in your game.. Another thing I like about the game is that you can see how satisfied each individual type of business and housing is, as well as many other features, like where the pollution is and how many wealthy people are in your city. I really like this analysis feature because then you know exactly why and how to satisfy your citizens, because you don't want unhappy citizens since unhappy citizens are going to leave your city. There are many different tabs in which to do different things. For example you can edit resources, your city taxes, take out loans and see how well all the companies are doing (such as which buildings cost the most in monthly costs and the company you get the most money out of).

With overproduction of products, you can trade with other cities depending on how much underproduction and overproduction you have. You're given tokens for them (if you have an overproduction, then you have one plus; and if you have underproductions of products, it is -one and less), and whether other cities want to buy or sell them, you'll need these tokens to trade

with them. In the Solo Mode, you can only trade with a place called OmniCorp (which is basically an AI), while on Planet Mode, you can trade with people worldwide, as well as OmniCorp.

In Planet Mode you start off by choosing a planet to build your city on, and are given a large selection of land to begin the building of your cities. . Whilst managing and creating your city you are constantly in an online chat with the other people who have built a city on that world, just generally updating people on how far you've got, or asking people what to do if you are stuck. You can also go and visit their cities, to see how they organised the layout.

Although the game is out, it constantly gets updated, because the developers are always thinking of new improvements and modifications to put into the game. One project that they will be bringing into the game in the near future is GEMs (Gameplay Extension Modules). What this basically is, is independent games within Cities XL, like expansion packs. In each pack, instead of managing the whole city, you can manage funfairs or car manufacturing factories, amongst other



REVIEW

CITIES XL

businesses which are within your city. When you first get the game you get a username and password so that you can log into the online servers. What was nice about it was that when you first get the game, I was given a seven day free trial for the online play, nevertheless it started automatically, and not when you first play online. Once you're logged in, you get to create your 'avatar' which is basically a lifelike mayor, representing you when you visit other people's cities. The detail you can put into the mayor is phenomenal, because not only can you change the height, weight and chest size of your mayor, you can also adjust the depth of the face and its features as well as other parts of the body, like the feet.

After creating your mayor, you then go on to a very thorough tutorial about how to play the game and how to control your newly-developed city. I found it very helpful and I found that I didn't have to go back and look at the tutorials again (which is an option you can choose in the main menu).

This game is all about detail. Three words to describe Cities XL is detail, detail and more detail.



From creating the mayor, to the detail in the way you play the game, from zooming in and out to the way the road system works, everything evolves around the in depth detail. When zooming in and out I was astounded by everything you could see, it was all so clear. You could see each individual building, person and car, as well as all the flora. Also with road systems you can see how congested it is and you can 'upgrade' them to go one way or even into a different road.

All in all, this game is really in-depth, and has a lot of potential with the updates and expansion packs coming its way. I thoroughly enjoyed this game, and will play more of it in the future. We asked some of the players in the chat rooms about the game and we only got positive feedback from them, including the player's views that the monthly fee was reasonable and worth it.



REVIEWER: **JESSICA GREENFIELD**
GAME: **CITIES XL**
PLATFORM: **PC**
DEVELOPER: **MONTE CRISTO**
PUBLISHER: **MONTE CRISTO**
RELEASED: **OCTOBER, 9TH, 2009**

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

OVERALL: 8



MARIO AND SONIC: OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES



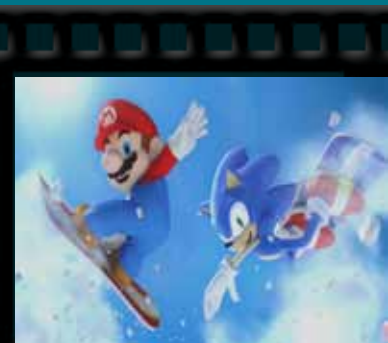
If you never played the original game of Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Games then you missed out. This was an absolute gem of a game on the Wii and just showed you what you can do with the console for controls and fun in gaming. So now we have our hands on the latest release, Mario and Sonic at the Olympic Winter Games. So will this game be a stellar knock out like the last game or will it not score as highly with the judges? Let's find out.

As with any normal review, I jumped straight into the training mode which is available on the start

up screen to get my bearings with the game before setting out to break some records. From the get go, you get nine sports and sixteen event modes which you can try your hand at, all of which are key events which you will be later competing against other characters for the top spot.

As training is completed you are rewarded with Star tokens. These allow you to purchase items within the shops to either customise your Mii, buy music from the game, decals and banners which you can add to your gear or even unlock and view trivia on the Winter Olympic Games,

SCREENSHOTS



MARIO AND SONIC: OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

which is readable at your leisure. While this is a nice extra bonus, the point of which is just to really show how good you have become at the game and really doesn't add anything other than showing off your latest designs or costumes which you have bought.

Again like in the previous Mario and Sonic Olympic Games, characters are split up into different categories ranging from an all around player which will be good on all events to Power, Speed and Skill type characters. This, again, is up to you as to who you pick but all are better at one event than others and you will have to see how you get on with each character to see which is the best for you. Obviously when having a downhill skiing race a Speed character is advisable but probably isn't the best for figure skating, though it is funny seeing Doctor Eggman, or Bowser trying to compete in these events. Another cool feature is the fact that you can now use your Miis, in these events. Again you can customise your character in the shops using the Star points that you collect from events.

Like in the previous Mario and Sonic Olympic Games, you are also given dream

“..Best for figure skating, though it is funny seeing Doctor Eggman, or Bowser trying to compete.”

events which are a twist on the normal events for the Olympic Games - these include skiing down a hill going through check points collecting rings and boxes, which have weapons that can be used against your foes. Most of the weapons

are lifted straight out of the Mario Kart, but it's a nice twist and it's good to see some classic levels from Mario and Sonic taking on a winter feel.

The final note on types of game play is the party play modes which use both dream and Olympic events to compete against friends. The first type of party play modes is the balloon attack where you have to earn balls to pop balloons. You first, however, have to compete in an event which will



TRAILERS



MARIO AND SONIC: OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

“You can now use your Miis in these events.”

decide on how many balls you get to throw to earn points. This is based on how well you did in the previous event. If you run out of balls before the timer is up your sight then becomes a barrier in which to stop other players from scoring points. After a number rounds the person with the most points is declared a winner. This mode is pretty much just a small add on from playing with your friends in single event mode, but adds a different element of throwing balls to get the best points.

The next party event is the wheel challenge, which will spin the wheel and select a character to become the leader. To win this event, you simply have to finish in front of the leader to get the points. There is also a VS mode in the wheel, where you will compete in a 2 vs. 2 mode with the two that win sharing the points.

The final party game is Panel Flip, where you are in 2 vs. 2 situations to gain the most panels



on the board. After competing in an event you are awarded mobility points which you can use to move your character around the board to gain panels. This again is based on your performance in the events, so knowing the events and playing well is the key. In all of these party modes you are really playing more events with your friends with add ons which in a sense doesn't seem to add anything to the game play. While this mixes up the game play, most just seem to make the events drag on a bit and the person who has spent the most time playing the game will end up winning due to their skill on the events.

After feeling a little bit braver I ventured into the single match before hitting the festival mode. While this allows for quick play style gaming allowing you to choose the event that you want to compete in, it is good fun and probably the best mode for anyone



MARIO AND SONIC: OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

who just wants a quick and casual run of a certain event. Again you will be rated on your performance and given Star points which you can use to buy even more stuff from the shops as you progress in the game.

While most of the sports use the standard one controller-one nunchuck arrangement, you can also add the Wii Balance Board on certain events. Unfortunately I haven't got a Wii Balance Board so I am not sure how the controls by using the Balance Board affects or hinders the feel of the game. The controls on a whole work well and most events will see you using the controls in different ways - in the Skiing for example, you will be using them to turn into corners and to do tricks. The controls however



are bit hit and miss and sometimes you end up going off the track just because the remote hasn't sensed how hard you are tilting your controller. A nice touch is the Ice Hockey event, which has you

in a team of four facing off against another four CPU controlled opponents. Passing is done via pressing 'A' in the direction you want the pass, once you have passed the puck around long enough the power will build up for you to take a power shot.

Movement is controlled via the nunchuck. Playing on the Ice Hockey is simple but again the controls let the game down sometimes since shots and passes go way off the mark thanks to the controller not picking up where I want the pass to go. After playing a few single events I decided to go



MARIO AND SONIC: OLYMPIC WINTER GAMES

During the festival you also have breaks where you can go and visit the village and enter the shops to spend your hard earned Star points to pimp your character or unlock certain items.

Nice little touches to the game - which I'm sure most people won't notice - is the weather settings allowing you, if you Wii is connected to the Internet, to get the latest forecast from Vancouver to play in the conditions that are there now, or even the weather from your local area. Even if your Wii isn't set up for this, you can always add the random weather effects. Again this is a nice feature but I feel will be over looked by most gamers.

So Mario and Sonic gets top points for adding some new variety with game modes and getting a control system that seems like it should work - however my gripes with the game, like most Wii games I have played, are down to the controls.



While this isn't a biggie, it does detract a little from the polish of the game, the events will keep you going longer after the Olympics are over and the fact that there are so many events to play and unlock it should keep you busy. This is a definite buy if you played the first as this just adds to the fun. It hasn't made any major changes to the series, but it just adds more fun.



REVIEWER: SIMON POULTON-BONDS
 GAME: M&S: OLYMPIC WINTER
 PLATFORM: WII
 DEVELOPER: SEGA JAPAN
 PUBLISHER: SEGA
 RELEASED: OCTOBER 26TH, 2009

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

OVERALL: 7.5





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REVIEW

KINGS BOUNTY



Kings Bounty: Armoured Princess is the add on to the original game in the series, Kings Bounty: The Legend which in itself was a remake of the game Kings Bounty, brought out way back in 1990 on the Commodore 64 and the Amiga.

Armoured Princess carries on from the original game, only this time you are given a new hero to control in the form of Princess Amelie. It seems danger has hit your father, the King's kingdom of Endoria. Constant fighting against the forces is proving fruitless and your people are starting to give up and loose hope. In your

possession is a watch, left in your safe hands by a knight of the realm, Bill Gilbert. He has asked you to look after this watch until his return.

Amelie is summoned to go and speak with her father where it is explained to her that this watch is of great importance in regards to the future of Endoria and she is to hand it over to the kingdoms mage. Amelie is then told to flee the kingdom in order to save her life. However it turns out that Amelie has a bit of an attitude problem when it comes to obeying higher authorities and follows the Mage, much to his disappointment, and

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

KINGS BOUNTY

destroys the watch, magically transporting her to the mysterious world of Teana. It is here that she must start her search for the knight Bill Gilbert and put an end to the terrible fate that faces her homelands.

Kings Bounty: Armoured Princess is a RPG but with some tactical elements thrown in. The way the game plays is classic RPG. It has a good solid storyline to it with plenty of plot twists and turns to keep you interested and lots of things to see and do. As you wander from town to town you can continue on with the main story or make yourself available to the villagers of various towns and see if you can complete some jobs for them. This is a great way to earn experience points and money to be able to buy more troops for your army, but this is something I will cover later.

The other usual RPG traits are all there, statistics, statistics and yet more statistics! You name it, there's a stat for it! You build these stats up by doing well in battles and completing jobs as already mentioned. The stronger the stats the stronger you and your troops are.



But battles are where things change from your usual RPG romp to a game of tactics. In villages you can buy different troop types for your personal army because no Princess fights her own battles right? What if she broke a nail or something? Heaven forbid!

You are given 5 slots in which you can fill with different types of soldiers. You can however fill these slots with 5 of the same types of soldiers but that would leave your battle plan incredibly flawed.

Soldiers come in all different varieties, from Monks to Paladins, Mages and Priests even down to legendary beasts like dragons, huge lizards and giant walking trees!



TRAILERS



REVIEW

KINGS BOUNTY

If dragons are your beast of choice though, you are in for a treat here. Right at the beginning of the game you are given a baby dragon of your choosing who grows along with you and becomes more and more powerful. I personally love dragons so this was a good thing for me! While Princess Amelie doesn't personally make an appearance in battle it is down to you, playing as her to control the army. This is where the tactics really come into play. Using Amelie on the field maps and outside town, walk into an enemy and you will initiate the battle screen.

Battles are fought in rounds and each round of fighting is turn based, kind of like a game of chess. You are given a set amount of spaces that each character is allowed to travel, you must plan your attacks and movement keeping in mind that you don't want to put yourself in any danger. Once moved to the desired space, you simply click on the enemy you want to hit and watch as they go to fisticuffs, getting treated to a nice short scene when one of the enemy troops have died.

There to give you an extra helping hand is your little dragon, or depending how far into the

"It is very evident to me that a lot of hard work had gone into creating the worlds of Endoira and Teana."

game you are, your big dragon. He is available to use once every 3 rounds and he can deal quite a crushing blow to an enemy or even use a defensive spell to aid you when things aren't quite going your way. Very helpful indeed! Also available to you is the chance to cast spells you have picked up whilst wandering this world at the beginning of each round, but be careful, you can only use each spell once so plan your spell casting efficiently and efficiently. Battles are won or lost when all of the opposing team's soldiers/beasties are dead or you are. You are then rewarded with xp, money and drops from the enemy.

I personally really liked the battle system as it added a element of thought to things, it's ok at



REVIEW

KINGS BOUNTY

first to just put your soldiers anywhere as your troops seem to be stronger than theirs but later on you find yourself really having to think about placement and actions and how they can have a knock on effect to the rest of your troops.

Another thing that I really liked was how the game looked, I was very impressed by how beautiful everything is. It is very evident to me that a lot of hard work had gone into creating the worlds of Endoria and Teana. No detail has been left out at all, characters are brilliantly drawn, even your troops look fantastic. They have created what I believe a fantasy world should look like, Enchanting and mysterious. The graphics are beautifully complimented by the musical choice. It succeeds in setting the medieval fantasy world scene well in my opinion. From lively pieces when in towns, to sinister music when in battles or in somewhere particularly dodgy.

Having not played the original unfortunately I cannot compare between new and old so am judging Armoured Princess as a stand alone game. In my opinion, it can be quite difficult to pull off a mixed genre game without seeming like your trying too hard and ruining everything for it. Kings

Bounty: Armoured Princess just feels right to me. It plays well, has a compelling story and is fabulous to look at. The one downside to me personally, is the inability to play as Princess Amelie in battle. At the beginning you get to choose her speciality, from magic, archer or warrior. I don't see the point in doing that if we cannot use her. I have however not completed the game yet (I'd Estimate I'm about halfway through) so am unaware if this changes later on. Not a huge niggle though and certainly nothing that ruins the game for me.



REVIEWER: **SARAH COLLINGS**
GAME: **KINGS BOUNTY: A.P**
PLATFORM: **PC**
DEVELOPER: **KATAURI INTERACTIVE**
PUBLISHER: **1C COMPANY**
RELEASED: **NOVEMBER, 20TH, 2009**

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

OVERALL: **8**



REVIEW

JAMBO SAFARI



While I never had any experience of it myself, I've been told a few times by friends they hammered the 50 pences into the Jambo! Safari arcade machines as little 'uns. SEGA has seen fit to deliver a new iteration of the game to Wii owners. Is it as good as you might remember though, or is it simply nostalgia?

To begin with, the game now has a story mode – instead of the pure arcade mode of the machine – where you have to capture animals and do other assorted things of the kind. You begin by selecting a character from two males and two females, who you can dress up and make look how you want. After that, you'll be lassoing animals with your shiny rope in no time.

The story mode sees you taking your ranger, tasked with finding quests from NPC's, gaining experience and trying to become a fully-fledged ranger. You'll spend your time driving around in a Range Rover, which you'll use to chase down

“Chasing them in a large jeep and lassoing them like some kind of modern day cowboy.”

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

JAMBO SAFARI



enough, it's sometimes difficult to make out which animal is which, leaving you wasting precious time trying to figure out which animal you're currently looking at.

The animal treatment is the main aim here though, as you are to 'rescue' the animals and take them back to the enclosure to be treated; you can only have three animals there at any given time. You treat said animals by participating in a mini-game (would you expect any less on the Wii?). These can become tedious after you've treated your fifth animal, which doesn't bode well when

your prey... sorry, this game isn't about hunting, it's about 'rescuing' the animals; by chasing them in a large jeep and lassoing them like some kind of modern day cowboy. The game has three regions, which each contain three levels – bringing the amount of playable areas to nine overall.

it's going to be done a lot more in the future. You'll get Ranger Points for treating the animals, and with these you can (surprise surprise) buy new hairstyles and clothing for your character. You can also upgrade your Land Rover (or the other three unlockable Land Rovers) with the points. Strangely

There's an assortment of tasks to perform, such as lassoing the animals, catching sick animals, then lassoing them, taking photographs of animals (which haven't been lassoed), but you'll never leave your Land Rover unless you want to change clothes or hairstyle. While the game is fun, I can understand its arcade appeal, but it doesn't fit well on a home console. If you enjoy lassoing animals however, and do so unprompted, the game will put you into an 'arcade mode' which is more like the arcade game, funnily enough. Here you have to lasso eight different species of animal in a set time limit – while this sounds easy



TRAILERS



REVIEW

JAMBO SAFARI

enough, in a game that is clearly geared towards kids, some of the female avatars' clothing you can purchase may be more revealing than you'd expect.

The graphics and sound of the game can only be described as 'there'. There's nothing special about any of it; animals make animal sounds, the whole place is covered in grass – and by that I mean a flat green surface – and you get the typical African drum music you would likely expect. That's about all there is to say, which is unfortunate.

There's a multi-player mode added in, which is pretty fun. You have one player controlling the jeep, while the other lassos the animals in. Good fun with a friend when things get hectic in arcade mode, but again, not as thrilling as it likely was back in the arcades. As well as the multi-player side, there are a host of party games, but none of these are very fun; with the possible exception of the Land Rover Football, – that's right, Football – in your Land Rover. This is mildly



entertaining for about ten minutes, but after that it's just as stale as the other mini-games, such as Ostrich racing and a game where you'll control a Meerkat running about collecting fruit, possibly saying "simples" to yourself every few minutes.

⊕ Unfortunately, Jambo! Safari crashed on me a few times, where-by the power button on the Wii or the reset button would do nothing. It was a case of unplugging the machine and restarting, so make sure you save your game often, or



REVIEW

JAMBO SAFARI

else risk losing everything you've done. When all is said and done – Jambo! Safari isn't inherently a bad game; if it had stuck truer to its arcade game roots it may have been a solid title. As it stands though, it's a glitch game with pretty unresponsive controls (control the jeep via the nunchuck, and the lasso with the Wii-remote). The multi-player can be fun, and if you're one of the gamers who hammered the arcade machine, you'll find something to like about this, somewhere. But for someone entirely new to the experience, the ridiculous premise and the rather bland design of the game, it's one best avoided.



“You’ll control a Meerkat running around collecting fruit, possibly saying “simples” to yourself every few minutes.”



REVIEWER: KEVIN MALONE
GAME: JAMBO SAFARI
PLATFORM: WII
DEVELOPER: SEGA
PUBLISHER: SEGA
RELEASED: NOVEMBER, 20TH, 2009

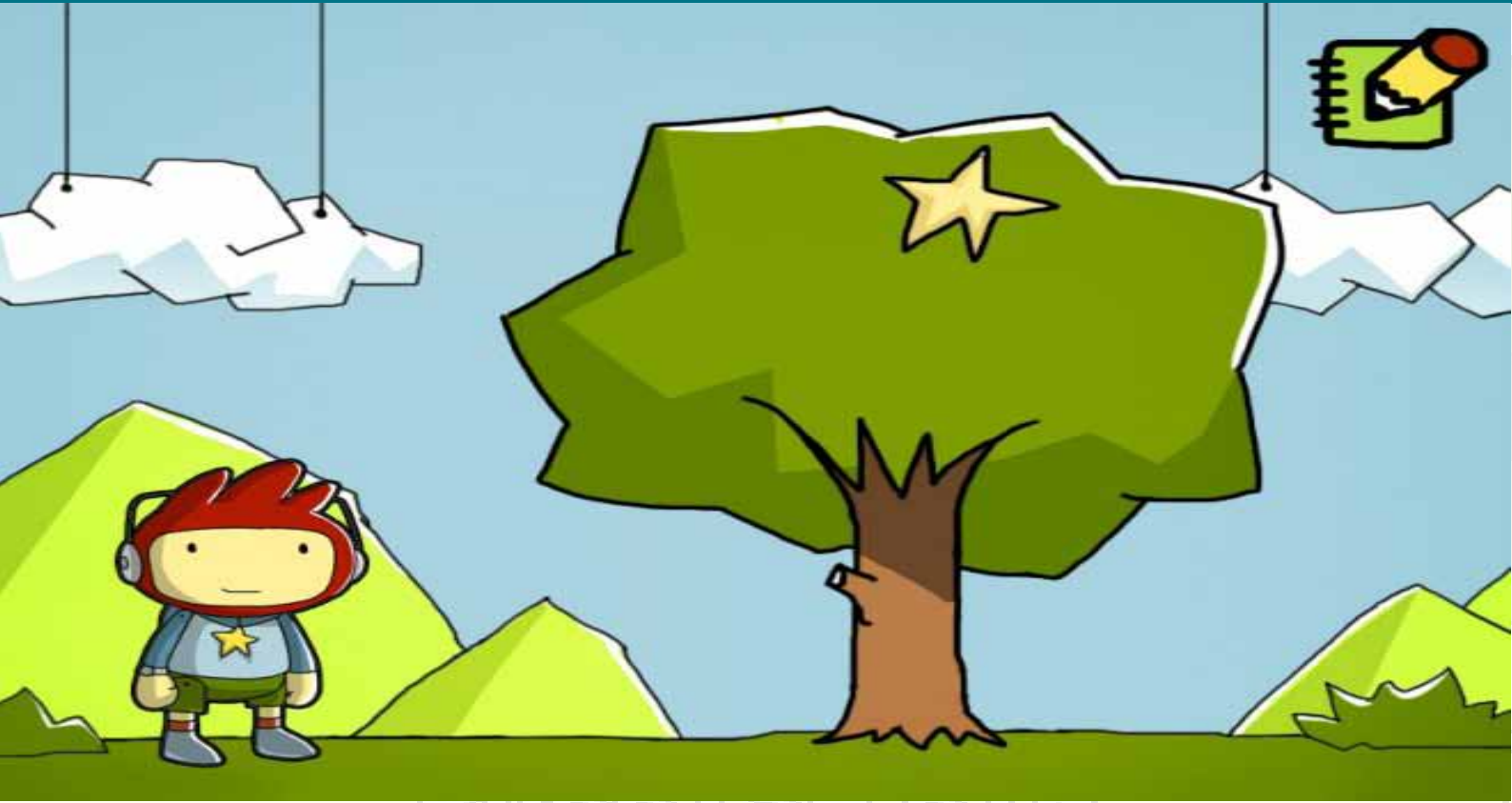
PLAYABILITY: 6
REPLAYABILITY: 7
SOUND: 6
GRAPHICS: 6

OVERALL: 6



REVIEW

SCRIBBLENAUTS



After seeing the game at E3 we have all waited with bated breath to see this game launch. A puzzle game which really only requires you, your creativity and a bit of spelling. It impressed me when seeing the first run through of the gameplay and how there is no right or wrong answers; just how you want to solve the game using what you think is the right tool for the right job.

The basis of the game is to collect "Starite" to do this you must complete the puzzles that are presented to you. The trick is that you can summon

anything to the game area to solve this puzzle whether it is a cat or even a helicopter: whatever you feel will help you solve the puzzle, you can use. To do this you simply write the name of the object or person on the DS screen. However there are limitations you cannot spawn anything which is trademarked or is a potential profanity.

The game is split up into 10 areas; you start in the University learning the ropes of how the game works and what you can do to the objects around you in the game. As this is explained to you, you are also told that there are two different types

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

SCRIBBLENAUTS

of levels - a Puzzle style level or an action level. Puzzle levels are real life situations where you have to solve the puzzle to get the "Starites", this could range from using a ladder to capturing a butterfly or helping someone out that you meet in the level. The "Starites" will then appear once the puzzle is solved. Each of the puzzle levels have a PAR to it, in layman's terms that is the standard number of objects a person has used to complete the level. You are rewarded for being lower than this, so creative thinking is always good to use. You are also rewarded with merits for doing or not doing certain things within the challenge, for example not using weapons or not hurting any animals within the levels.

The second type of level is an action level where there is no puzzle to solve, you simply have to get to the "Starite" which is located within the level. This is more of a side scrolling puzzle game where there are switches and spiked traps, where some

careful thinking before you move is important. Once a level has been complete a silver star is added to the side of it. This allows the level to be played in free play mode, at this point you are then challenged with completing the level three times without

"Scribblenauts is a fantastic game and you have hours of fun just playing around with the sheer number of limitless things."

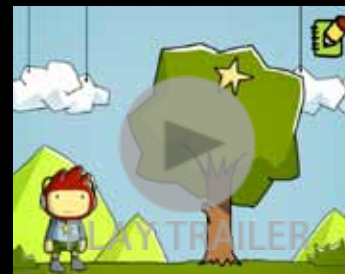
using the same object. So if on your first go you used a helicopter to cross the river you can't use it again. So using a lot thought is essential if you want to get a gold star for that level.

By getting certain rewards like being under par and finishing the level quickly you are rewarded with Ollars. This is in game money which allows you to purchase new areas to play in as well as avatars and other bonus features for the game.

To move your character you use the stylus which sometimes isn't the best thing in the world.



TRAILERS



REVIEW

SCRIBBLENAUTS

Having played it for a while, I have on more than one occasion accidentally sent my character flying across the screen, or when trying to get them into a car or other vehicle they will just proudly stand upon the vehicle rather than get in it.

As well as the niggles with the controls I have also found that sometimes the suggestions that were given to me by the game because of my poor spelling were not what I was after.

Scribblenauts is a fantastic game and you have hours of fun just playing around with the sheer number of limitless things you can play with in this sandbox area. As the puzzles get more difficult I feel that some younger



children may slowly get bored of the game. However due to the Ollars you collect you can skip the hard levels and still carry on with the game. With all the challenging puzzle games on the Nintendo DS, it is nice to see this one is refreshing and adds a whole new dimension to the puzzle genre.



REVIEWER: **SIMON POULTON-BONDS**
GAME: **SCRIBBLENAUTS**
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
DEVELOPER: **5TH CELL**
PUBLISHER: **WARNER BROS.**
RELEASED: **OCTOBER, 9TH, 2009**

PLAYABILITY: **8**
REPLAYABILITY: **8**
SOUND: **6**
GRAPHICS: **7**

OVERALL: 9



GAMES ON THE HORIZON IN 2010

2010 is due to bring some top new games to our consoles this year. We've compiled this list of some of the biggest names the GameOn team are looking forward to playing. Keep an eye out on the GameOn website and future issues of the magazine for reviews, previews and exclusive highlights! Hands up those who are excited!

- Mass Effect 2 (PC, Xbox 360) - Jan 29th
- Star Trek Online (PC) - Feb 2nd
- S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Call of Pripjat (PC) - Feb 5th
- Bioshock 2 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Feb 9th
- Aliens vs Predator (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Feb 19th
- Red Steel 2 (Wii) - Feb 19th
- Dead Rising 2 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Feb 26th
- Max Payne 3 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Feb 26th
- Napoleon Total War (PC) - Feb 26th
- Splinter Cell Conviction (PC, Xbox 360) - Feb 26th
- Battlefield Bad Company 2 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Mar 5th
- Gran Turismo 5 (PS3) - Mar 5th
- Silent Hunter 5 (PC) - Mar 5th
- Tom Clancys Ghost Recon 4 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Mar 5th
- Final Fantasy XIII (PS3, Xbox 360) - Mar 9th
- Alpha Protocol (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Mar 12th
- God of War 3 (PS3) - Mar 18th
- Command & Conquer 4 (PC) - Mar 19th
- Supreme Commander 2 (PC, Xbox 360) - Mar 19th
- APB (PC, Xbox 360) - Mar 26th
- Castlevania Lords of Shadow (PS3, Xbox 360) - Mar 26th
- Final Fantasy XIV Online (PS3) - Mar 26th
- Just Cause 2 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Mar 26th
- Mafia 2 (Xbox 360, PS3) - Mar 26th (Mar 31st for PC)
- Metal Gear Solid Rising (PS3, PC) - Mar 26th
- Rage (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Mar 26th
- Sonic and SEGA All Stars Racing (Wii, DS, Xbox 360, PS3) - Mar 26th
- Thief 4 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Mar 26th
- Beyond Good and Evil 2 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Apr
- DC Universe Online (PC, PS3) - Apr
- Sam and Max Season 2 (PC, Wii) - Apr
- Alan Wake (PC, Xbox 360) - May
- Metal Gear Solid Peace Walker (PSP) - May
- Prince of Persia Forgotten Sands (All formats) - May
- Blur (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - June
- Crisis 2 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - June
- Lost Planet 2 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - June
- StarCraft 2 (PC) - June
- Super Mario Galaxy 2 (Wii) - Aug
- Deus Ex 3 (PC, Xbox 360, PS3) - Aug
- World of Warcraft Cataclysm (PC) - Aug
- Fable 3 (Xbox 360) - Oct
- Star Wars The Old Republic (PC) - Nov
- Trackmania Wii and Trackmania DS 2 - Q2 2010



ARTICLE: GAMING HEAVEN AND HELL - HELL

Last issue I looked into some gaming heavenly delights which we love to encounter. This time around it's the turn of those features we would rather condemn to hell than stumble across.

Infinite spawning enemies – I will admit that unlimited enemies in RPG's where you can level up and make the game easier by fighting

more is a good thing. But to have an infinite German army defending a small town in Call of Duty removes all sense of progression and realism, losing the fun factor. Having individual people positioned in exactly the same spot every time on a map isn't exactly perfect either, but we are starting to see an ideal compromise. The AI Director in Left 4 Dead expertly controls game scenarios by adjusting spawn locations and rates, helping to keep the pace going at an optimum level while not making the gameplay feel unfair.

Games that tie your fate to a specific NPC–Forum user ExcessNeo mentions how: "We have all had those moments playing a game where you're told to babysit an NPC (non-player character). The issue with some of these is they chose these moments to tack on as a bad gameplay element." Personally, my heart always drops anytime in a game when I am forced to protect a dependant computer controlled character. Inevitably I soon find myself antagonised



by this character as they tend to get in the way, wander off and generally make that section of the game a chore. Female NPC Alyx, star of first-person shooter Half-Life 2, is a prime example of how to correctly make an interactive sequence with an AI character. Inadequate attention to detail – While not immediately obvious, games which lack a basic level of detail can lose immersion and authenticity. Dead Alive reveals one particular dislike, saying: "I do hate it when a new piece of armour or a weapon doesn't show on your character. Reading the stats of a ridiculously powerful item, only to note it doesn't actually change the appearance of your character leaves me feeling no sense of progression." TimmyShire reveals something he feels strongly about: "Oh! Invisible walls! I hate them! More than anything! To block you off with an invisible wall is so frustrating. Hell, I'd even prefer it if the game was based on an island and the main character couldn't swim than have an invisible wall..."

Badly designed tutorials and cut-scenes –

ARTICLE: GAMING HEAVEN AND HELL - HELL

A separate tutorial to the actual game, or worse, a tutorial that blocks access to other content until completed, are as welcoming as not having a tutorial at all. Unless enormously complicated



to learn, a game should give players small hints and tips on how to play the game in the opening sequences to attain better flow and immersion. Think about movies and TV dramas: they tend not to have opening sequences anymore, just sprinklings of credits on-screen during the first scenes. Not being able to skip a cut-scene is equally infuriating. If you are on a re-run of a game or are having to repeat a section due to previously failing, having to sit through the same sequences over and over grows very wearisome.

A sequel for sequel sake – A game might be a critically acclaimed success, a big seller or maybe just an idolised title, but that’s no excuse to churn out further mediocre titles to cash in on said successes. Dead Alive sums up, saying how he dislikes: “Sequels that are exactly the same as their predecessor”. Regular forum user Azrael316, goes further: “Take Mortal Kombat as an example. That game died a LONG time ago. No matter how often you change the colour palette, ITS STILL SKORPION!!”

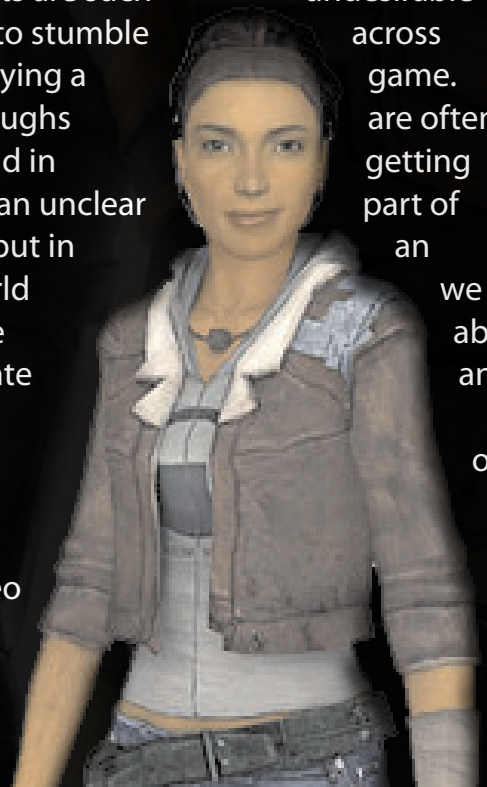
Poor enemy AI – One of the biggest immersion shattering features of a game is the AI. Either enemies stay motionless at the most unusual of times or manage

to shoot you in the face whilst looking the opposite way. Imitating realistic human behaviour is the hardest part to get right, but to have dumb or superhuman AI blemish your enjoyment remains

a bothersome interruption to a gaming experience. Bad voice acting is something else which cannot be exonerated in a game, though this is aspect is improving thanks largely to the fact that games are now mentioned along the same lines as other media, such as movies and music.

Getting lost or stuck in a game –

Maintaining good flow is important in sustaining interest and fun in a game, which is why poorly designed levels, puzzles or boss fights are such undesirable features to stumble across while playing a game. Walkthroughs are often a godsend in getting through an unclear part of a game, but in an ideal world we would be able to navigate and discover a game on our own accord. ExcessNeo explains: “Yes it is nice to have



GAMING HEAVEN AND HELL - HELL

an open area, but is it really necessary to completely forgo the actual story by making it too open and vast?"

Bugs – Any mildly keen gamer will know what kind of pest I am talking about here. Boiling Point: Road to Hell can be held as a model example on how not to release a game. Infamous for being massively bug riddled on first release, quotes from the Boiling Point patch change log include how 'all items from inventory were lost' and 'Police Station cannot be destroyed by a crossbow anymore' were fixed. TimmyShire adds: "A game should be released when finished, not put out with the expectation of releasing a patch." Vulpine asks: "Why do PC game makers (and console ones to a lesser degree) think it is acceptable to release games that are not finished!"

Rip-off Downloadable Content (DLC)– The furore over rip-off DLC came to light when developers Bethesda charged

£1.71 for a piece of horse armour in the otherwise excellent value-for-money RPG Oblivion. Dead Alive sums up the criticisms: "The idea of DLC is great, but recently I've come to hate certain charged for DLC such as Resident Evil 5's multiplayer mode. If it's something as simple as an unlock code which you have to pay to get something already in the game, or something that should have been in the game, I want it in the game I paid for."

Flawed achievements/trophies and multiplayer modes – The consensus amongst gamers is that features like achievements and multiplayer are a good thing, but get them wrong or even mix them together and you are going to start detracting enjoyment levels. In some games, for example Bioshock or Rock Band 2, you have to complete the game several times or in a way you normally wouldn't want to, just to get the last of the achievements – a



GAMING HEAVEN AND HELL - HELL

nightmare for any completionist. In some cases you have to pay for DLC in order to get access to the final achievements, or you may have to play a lot online in order to get them all. TimmyShire makes a final point about online multiplayer: "The more multiplayer modes that appear the more diluted the userbase is, so it makes it particularly hard to even get a game of something."

Heaven and Hell? –Love and hate entwined

Gaming Communities

Ironically, my last point is about what brings us here together – a community of gamers. Like any sort of community, there are friendships, rivalries and everything imaginable in-between. TimmyShire efficiently sums up: "Gaming, as far as I can tell, is the most enthused and interested communities I have experienced across a variety of hobbies. You can have intelligent discussions about games, or just have a laugh and, generally, gaming communities are full of people who just want to have fun." He continues: "Then there are those that spoil it for everyone. People looking to argue or believe that only their opinion matters. Thus, gaming communities are bittersweet."

The aforementioned gaming communities aren't just confined to forums. Games themselves are the battlefields of communities and individual players. There are selfish team killers online who insist on only killing their own team-mates, ruining the experience for everyone else. And there are those who spend literally hundreds of hours as engineers and medics in Team Fortress 2, only wishing to help their

comrades. Every gamer has a different view on what their ideal game should contain and what the gaming world should look like, but it is my view that the best just enjoy a game light-heartedly. At least that is my view.

If this kind of discussion has twitched your gaming senses or maybe you would like to add some ideas of your own, then you can voice them in our gaming forums.

I would like to end by saying thank you to GameOn forum users Dead Alive, TimmyShire, Vulpine, ExcessNeo, Azrael316 and Snoozer for their contribution and memorable quotes.

Pete O'Brien



INTERVIEW WITH FRICTIONAL GAMES



When news reached GameOn that Fricitonal Games, the talented studio behind the Penumbra series, were working on a new title we couldn't wait to find out more!

Thankfully, the development team took time out of their busy schedule to answer a few questions about giving people nightmares, the challenges of creating a game and their upcoming project Amnesia: The Dark Descent.

The Penumbra series was really terrifying, do you enjoy scaring people?

What we like is to create emotions in people and to create a really immersive environment where these emotions are explored. Frightening people is pretty easy in a game (at least compared to other emotions) and we also have a lot of interest in the horror genre. That is why we picked that emotion and will continue exploring it in Amnesia. That said, it is always

really satisfying when we know people have been really scared by our work! What makes other people lose sleep, makes us sleep really well!

One of the most impressive elements of the Penumbra games was the atmosphere, how did you go about creating this?

The main thing that we try to do, is to imagine ourselves in the situation and then try to figure out what we would be scared by. This is the way we think up the most basic elements of environments and the mood we want to create. It is worth noting that we often design the atmosphere and emotions on a whole that, instead of a specific event. What we want is that players can go around exploring the surroundings and sort of find the feelings themselves, instead of just having very specific events that are meant to be scary. We think that this is the way to go about it if one wants to take advantage of the interactivity

INTERVIEW WITH FRICTIONAL GAMES

that is so special about the game medium.

We really enjoyed using Penumbra's unique control system; can you tell us where the idea for it came from? How difficult was it to implement?

It was actually just an idea on how to get rid of doing animations for opening drawers and then it grew from there. Hard to say how difficult it was since it has been refined over such a long time. We have put quite a lot of time into it though and tweaking some of the behaviour has been quite challenging. Physics have this annoying habit of not doing what you want them to!

How important do you think pacing and level design are in creating a horror title and how did you approach these aspects?

I think level design and pacing are crucial for a good horror experience. Important to note is that when I say pacing I do not mean moment to moment stuff, but rather how the environments and intensity change. For example, if it is dark all the time it will lose the effectiveness pretty quickly. As for level design, that is also really important and in a way the level design is almost the entire experience! As we do not have any proper core gameplay that we can repeat through the levels, it becomes extra important that the levels are interesting and contain specific and atmospheric events.

There was a shift in gameplay between Penumbra: Overture and Black Plague, putting more emphasis on stealth. How did this decision come about?

Mainly because it made the game so much more scary

and it also forced the players to think in other terms. Players are so used to how other games work that when you give them a weapon they will try to kill everything they can! Even though we really tried to tone down the weapons in Overture, most people were focused on using them and they did not experience the game properly. Without weapons we did not have that problem and it made it easier to design a really scary experience. Also, almost every game makes the player a mean killing machine and we wanted to do something different but making the player vulnerable and ordinary.

"Frightening people is pretty easy in a game (at least compared to other emotions)."



INTERVIEW WITH FRICTIONAL GAMES



The Penumbra series was released across several platforms, including Linux and Macs. How hard is it to develop for several different formats?

Not that hard really as we have one guy, Edward, that takes care of all the porting. The engine was also designed from start to be portable so that has made it a lot easier.

You're currently working on a new game, Amnesia: The Dark Descent. Can you tell us what the premise is?

The premise of the game is quite simple: you wake up in some strange castle with your only strong memory being that something is hunting you. Now you need to explore the castle to find out about your identity and why you ended up there. The reason for using an amnesiac plot is that it ties really well into our main message of the game, which is to explore the nature of evil. We want players to become one with the protagonist and feel as if the revealed background was their own. They are forced to take a stance against the events that have happened and how they want to react to them. Our aim is to make a deeply psychological experience that will have the player

thinking long after the game is over.

Where has your inspiration for Amnesia come from?

There are tons of places from where we draw experience from, but the whole "human evil" theme comes from studies such as the Stanford Prison and Milgram Experiments. These are really fascinating insights into human nature and we wanted to take a stab at exploring that in a game. Also, we have been influenced by Lovecraft, David Lynch and the other usual suspects.

How will the gameplay compare to the Penumbra series?

There are many things that are similar to the Penumbra series and players of Penumbra should feel right at home. The main difference is probably the way we approach the design. In Penumbra the protagonist comments on a lot of things and there was also a big emphasis on having a strictly structured plot. In Amnesia, the player is supposed to be the protagonist so there won't be any descriptions of objects or reflections on events. It will be up to players to make their minds on what is going on and what the true nature of the events are. This is crucial for the underlying message of the game, which wants the player to think about and form an opinion on the events that have occurred. Our top goal is for the player to become the protagonist. Another difference, is that the structure of plots and events are more open and we never once lock down the player for a cut scene or similar. The player is always free to move around and while the game is linear there is freedom in how the accessible levels can be explored. There is a lot less "spoon feeding" of story, than there was in Penumbra.

INTERVIEW WITH FRICTIONAL GAMES

How difficult is it to create puzzles that aren't too hard or too easy for players? Can you tell us about your process of creating them?

It is really hard! Once you have designed a puzzle it is very hard to imagine what it is like for a new player to experience it. An interesting fact is that puzzle designing is a lot like designing scary situations, where it is very different to be a first-time player as opposed to one that knows exactly what will happen. In the end it is a matter of testing, but we try really hard to imagine ourselves in the situation of a first time player and try and get as much right from the start. Also, we must make sure the puzzle is fun to complete and relevant to the story, so there is a lot of juggling to be done!

The Penumbra Soundtrack has recently been released. How important is music and audio in Amnesia?

For us sound is more important than visuals in building a terrifying mood. When one hears a sound the imagination runs wild in a way that visuals cannot accomplish. Using the players imagination is at the core of creating a scary

atmosphere and thus the correct use of sounds and music is essential. We put a lot of effort in to this area.

As a developer how important is the reaction of fans and the community? Does this ever influence your decisions during the development process?

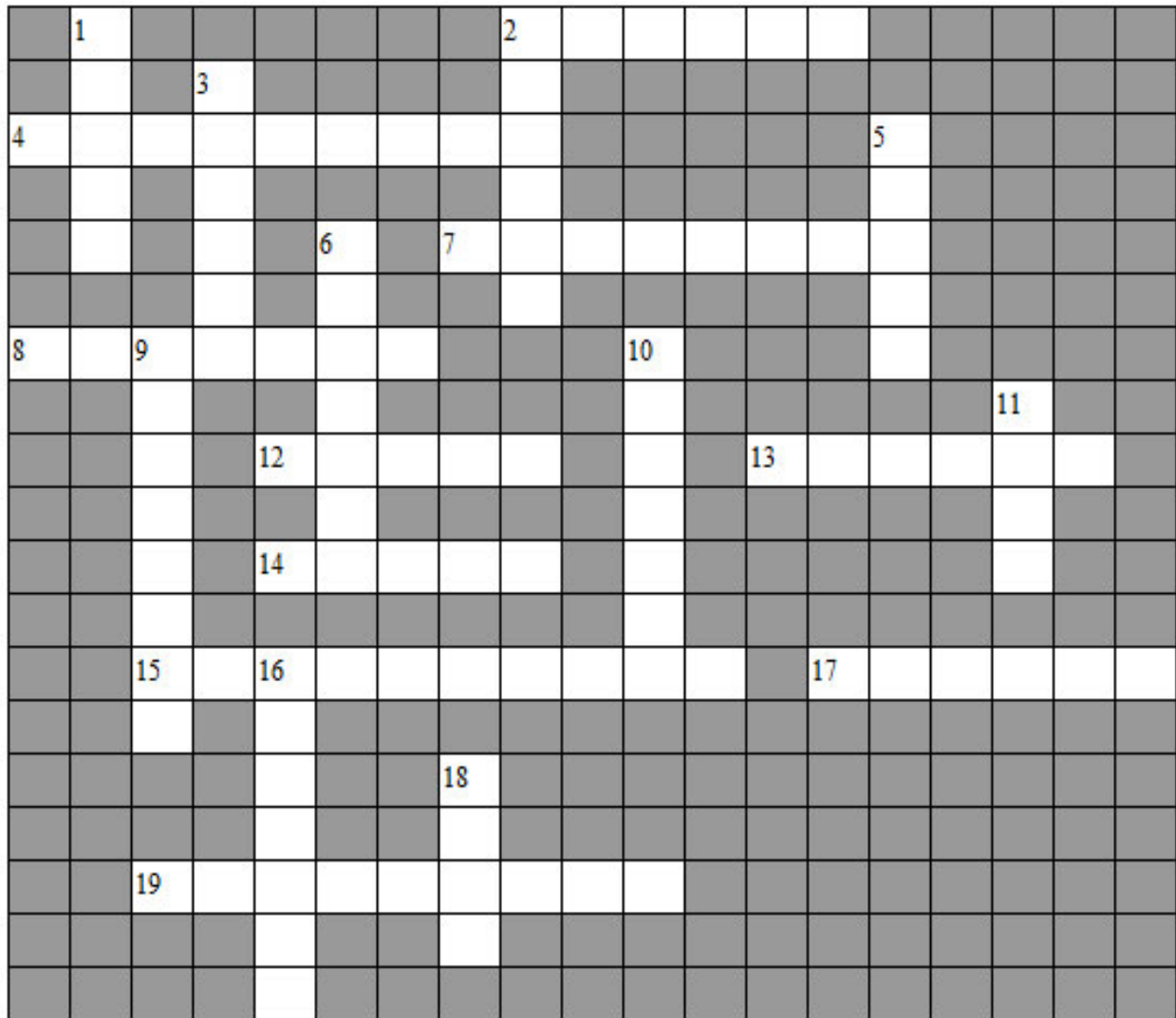
We try to listen to fans as much as possible! For example during the release of Overture we posed a bunch of questions to the members on our forums and the answers given helped greatly when designing Black Plague. Even though creating a game is satisfying no matter what anybody thinks, it is a lot more rewarding to hear when people enjoy our work. It really makes all those long nights of gruelling work worthwhile when we hear that we have given someone nightmares!

Our thanks to Frictional Games for this fantastic interview.



COFFEE BREAK

CROSSWORD



A bit of trivial fun now, all the clues are based on the contents of this months magazine. Can you name all the clues? Don't forget to post your answers on the GameOn forum.

ACROSS

- 2. You can find lions, giraffes and Jambo on a ...?
- 4. Devil May Cry style game with a sexy lead chick
- 7. Frictional Games top horror
- 8. Dante and his...
- 12. A very fast, blue hedgehog
- 13. A new weapon of musical choice in Left 4 Dead 2
- 14. The world's most famous Italian plumber

- 15. Shattered Horizon has lots and lots of this L word
- 17. Chuck and his alien friends live on 51
- 19. Cities XL contains lots of this B word

DOWN

- 1. He could train you basketball and how to kill a zombie
- 2. Indiana Jones hates them!
- 3. Famous for the term "Brains...Brains..."
- 5. The board used in the game Ride
- 6. The Na'vi live here, the Humans want it
- 9. FIFA Manager is based on which sport
- 10. A favourite gun to

- blow away zombie brains
- 11. The Ride game is based on which sport?
- 16. Shattered Horizon lacks this special G...
- 18. Indiana Jones goes nowhere without his..what?

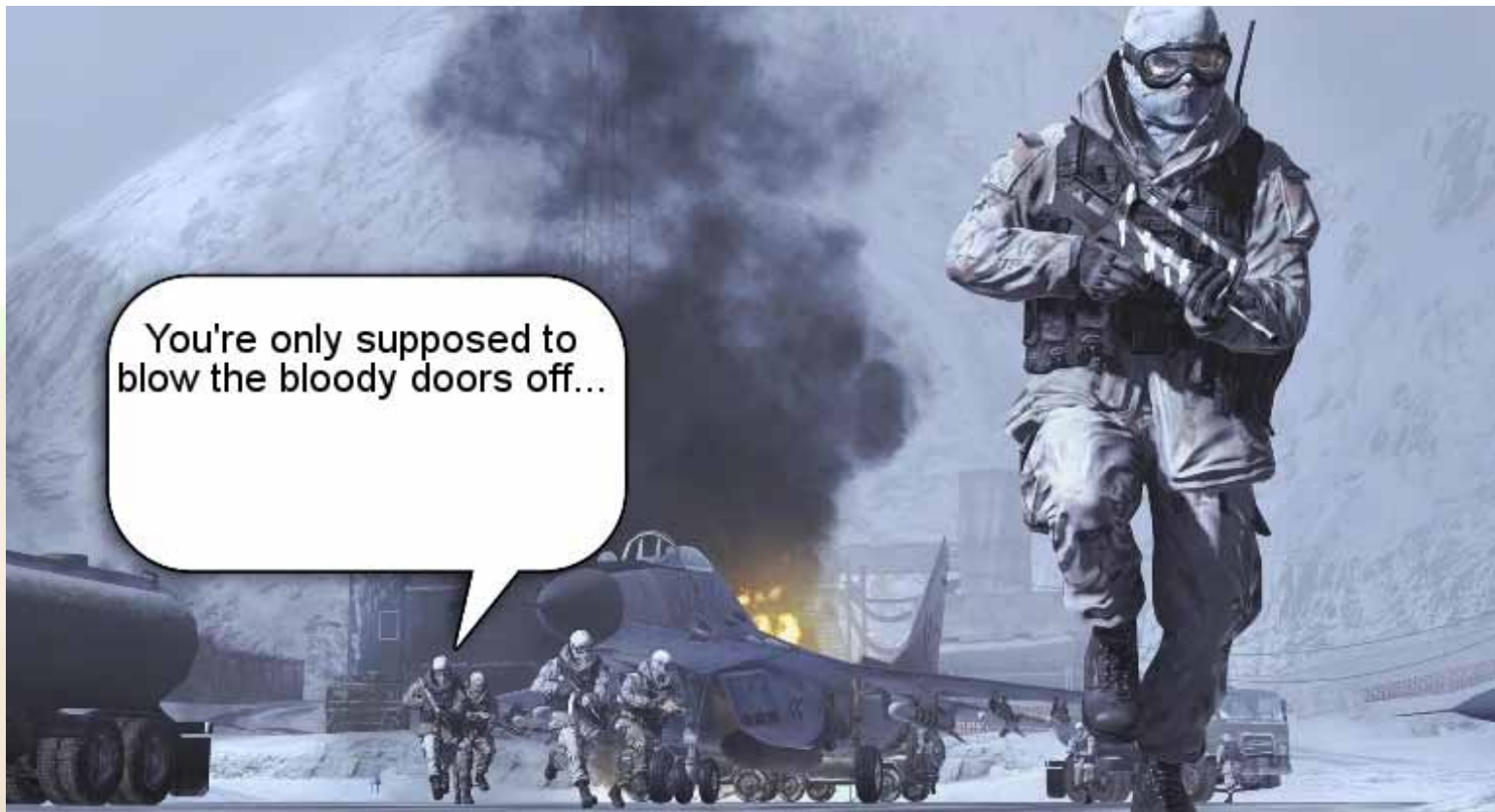
COFFEE BREAK

CAPTION COMPETITION WINNER

As you may remember, issue 16 there was a caption competition based on screenshots taken from the Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 game.

After tonnes of entries and careful consideration and much laughter, the judges have announced their winner.....

Jamz (Rupert) with this hilarious 'Italian Job' themed entry.



Keep an eye out on the
GameOn website and
future magazine issues for
more chances to win!

CALL-DUTY
MODERN WARFARE
2

Top 10 Multi - Platform Games

1. **Just Dance**
2. **Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2**
3. **Wii Fit Plus**
4. **Army Of Two: The 40th Day**
5. **Wii Sports Resort**
6. **FIFA 10**
7. **New Super Mario Bros. Wii**
8. **James Cameron's Avatar: The Game**
9. **Assassin's Creed II**
10. **Mario Kart Wii**



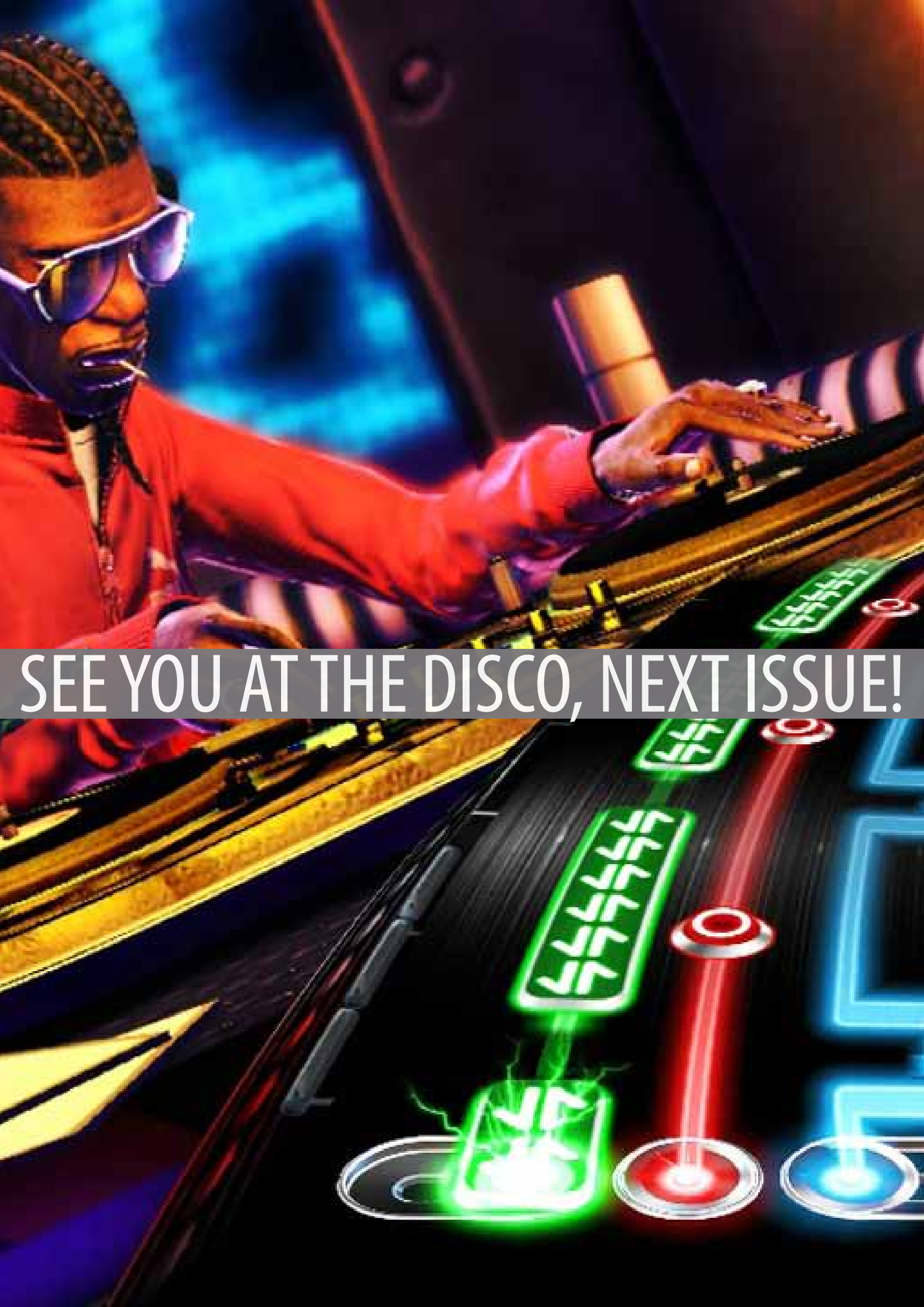
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