

GameOn MAG

The Official Gaming Magazine from GameOn.co.uk

Issue 9 March 2009

This issue packed
with game reviews

KILLZONE 2

REVIEWED AND RATED

PC vs. Consoles:
Sports Game

DS PS2 Wii PSP PC PS3 XBOX 360

A THOUSAND TINY FINGERS
CLAWING AT YOUR SPINE

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FILMED IN HORRORAMA AND SLATER COLOR THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD OVERKILL A SEGA PRO

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ISSUE 9

WELCOME

Meet the Team

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Welcome to Issue 9 of the GameOn Magazine.

This issue is packed with game reviews and the continuation of the hot topic PC vs. Console.

We have also re-added the coffee break section (word search) with more features coming in the near future. A new feature called cut outs start this month as well, you can only image the fun we are going to have with this one each issue.

We have also swapped the comment icon for a new clean design.



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THE EDITOR

GARRY

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PC vs. CONSOLE: SPORTS

Since the very start of the gaming industry there has always been a huge market for specific genres, the hot topic this mag issue is: Sports. There aren't many sports these days that you'll find haven't been turned into a computer game. From your extremely popular football and car racing to your ice hockey and badminton, but what we really want to know is; are sports games better on consoles or PCs?

Throughout video game history titles that come under the sports genre have been predominantly made for the consoles, as they are often seen as more popular, more reliable and generally more affordable. It seems these days however, sports games are starting to appear on home computer systems, meaning that those who have a decent computer and love sports can also join in on the action.

Sports on consoles have always been very popular and are easily one of the bestselling genres for that video game platform. Games such as FIFA are sold week in, week out, no matter what time of year, they are always popular. So what makes them so desirable? Football games on consoles are massively popular due to the world having such a love for the game. The games are designed to be easy to take home, play by yourself or with your mates for a general laugh. All you need is; a next gen console, a mate, two controllers and you are away. As well as playing with your chum in a living room or bedroom, it is very easy to hook up online and compete with people all over the world, allowing you to host your very own World Cup.



One problem remains with this though, online play prices. Now that everything is so hi-tech, some companies are charging for online play, meaning people with less money are missing out on all the fun. When you do get online, it is worth it, there is hardly any lag as the servers are very stable meaning gameplay is smooth and fluid.



As we have moved into the new generation of video game consoles, a new and exciting way of playing has arisen. Nintendo have taken it upon themselves to bring the essence of football onto their less conventional form of console, the Nintendo Wii. Back in 2008 I wrote a game review for Pro Evolution Soccer 2008 on the Nintendo Wii, I dubbed it as "how football games should be played". The idea of using the Wii remote to actively control each and every individual player on the field at any time is revolutionary and fantastic. This new take on the traditional console football game brings a new life to it all, I believed that when the Wii was released, sports games would be a thing of the past- but I was very wrong.

As well as taking football into a new perspective, Nintendo have done so with numerous sports titles. The popular Wii Sports game that was released by Nintendo, shows off what a new control system can really achieve. Wii Sports gives the player a totally new perspective on how to play sport based computer games.

PC vs. CONSOLE: SPORTS

Baseball, Bowling, Tennis, Boxing and Golf were all included in the game showing off how easy and ingenious the motion sensitive technology can be. Each of the in-game actions were performed by mimicking what you would be doing in reality, with the best part being that anyone can play, you don't need to be great at video games, you just needed to be able to swing a bat or throw a ball like you would in reality, which can mean the whole family playing leisurely games of Golf on a rainy Sunday.

Sports games on PCs are becoming more and more popular now the prices of PCs are going down, but there has always been one type of game that reigns high above the rest on PC; these are managerial football games. Games such as Football Manager delve into the role of a team's manager, demanding you to take control of your squad, your expenditures and your transfers to get your team to the top of the ingame league table. Most of the games have very little or no live football play at all, but are fantastic games all the same, being best suited for those die hard fans who wish to experience a different, more in-depth side to football. Games such as these have never really hit it off on the consoles with updates, real team stats and other online functionalities being prominent in the PC versions. They were and always have been extremely popular for their replayability and for only needing a low specced computer to play.



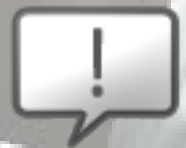
Knowing the success of the Wii football title (Pro Evo), the makers of FIFA have tried to adapt that style of play into their live football games for PC making the most out of the directional mouse. In my opinion, it doesn't work as well, as it isn't the same feel that you would get using a Wii remote.

The downside to the conventional playing in PC football games is as follows: it is expensive to get gamepads that work well as binding the buttons on the controllers can be very time consuming. Picture tearing is also an issue, I have experienced times where the picture breaks as the ball is kicked around the pitch thus making play unsmooth and non-flowing. Online play can also be a bit of an issue with servers being rather laggy and connections between computers being poor quality at times.



The sports game genre has the largest gamer fanbase with a variety of different people choosing their favourite style of play. When choosing the best platform to play your sports on, you have to take into consideration a couple things. Do you have a decent spec computer? Do you want online play? Can you cope with possible lag? What is your best method of play? In my honest opinion you are best to grab yourself a console version of the live game, whereas if you are more into the managerial side of play, grab yourself a PC title. Think about these things before you buy to ensure you get the best out of your favourite sports games.

JAMES BRALANT



ARTICLE

GAME CHARTS

Top 20 Platform Games

1. Resident Evil 5
2. Wii Fit
3. Tom Clancy's H.A.W.X.
4. Professor Layton And The Curious Village
5. Killzone 2
6. FIFA 09
7. Call Of Duty: World At War
8. Empire: Total War
9. Halo Wars
10. Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games
11. Socom: Us Navy Seals Confrontation
12. Ben 10: Alien Force
13. Street Fighter IV
14. Mario Power Tennis
15. Wii Play
16. Club Penguin: Elite Penguin Force
17. Disney's Bolt
18. Grand Theft Auto IV
19. Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection
20. My Fitness Coach



ARTICLE COMMUNITY



We have picked out what we felt was one of the best photos from the forums this month.

GameOn user Kaostic wins with close up photo of a monkey who seem to like helping out with trying to focus the lens.



From forum regular "Fat Tony" there comes this quote

"Her face? She looks like she gnawed the ugly tree into a pile of grotesque toothpicks"

The forum post can be found here



REVIEW

RESIDENT EVIL 5

From its humble beginnings all those years ago in the Arklay mountains, through Raccoon City and Spain, and now Africa, Resident Evil is a franchise brought into the new generation with a literal bang. The series has gone through a lot of changes in story, from starting with the T-Virus, and the inclusion of the G and T-Veronica virus in-between, Resident Evil 4 gave us Las Plagas and now Resident Evil 5 presents us with a different strain of this.

Resident Evil 5 (along with its predecessor RE4) has taken a drastic turn from the series' beginnings. Gone are the narrow hallways of the Spencer Mansion and the confined alleyways of Raccoon City. In their place are, for the most part, wide open environments where you'll be blasting hordes of the undead, or rather, the series' newest foes, the Las Plagas, whom fans of Resident Evil 4 will immediately recognise.



The Las Plagas are a more challenging enemy than your standard undead. They aren't slow and lumbering; instead, they will run, use weapons and try and outsmart you. Playing the game on Veteran and Professional mode, I constantly found myself being challenged as I proceeded further through the game, and the boss battles are nothing short of epic. These fights usually require more brain power than ammunition, which is a refreshing change.



SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

RESIDENT EVIL 5

One of the major complaints about the demo that was released was the control system - the major complaint being the inability to move and shoot at the same time. Capcom stood by the control method and I personally feel it works beautifully after about ten minutes practice. The controls feel fluid and are perfectly suited to this type of over the shoulder action game. The sudden stops also serve to build a bit of tension as a horde of Las Plagas come towards you and you have no choice but to aim for the head for the quickest take down.



Taking control of Chris Redfield it is your mission to find and arrest a man named Irving. He has been distributing Bio Organic Weapons, or B.O.W's, and it is up to Chris to bring him to justice. However, unlike traditional Resident Evil games, Chris won't be alone. He is helped throughout his adventure by Sheva Alomar, an African agent of the Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance (BSAA), the unit whom Chris now works for.

Playing a Resident Evil game essentially as a co-op game is a totally different experience from the older Resident Evil games. There are no truly scary moments here, such as that moment we all know with the dog and the window from the original. The feeling of isolation is all but decimated by the constant presence of your partner. While she is an able helper, even when controlled by AI, I can't help but feel an option of playing totally alone would have been of benefit to long time fans. The game is designed for co-op though and the game takes every chance to remind you (just how many broken ladders can one small village have?). Every time there's a broken ladder, you'll need to give Sheva a helping hand to climb them, and every door that Chris can't open on his own is no longer an obstacle once Sheva helps you out. It's all very teamwork based, and it works surprisingly well.



TRAILERS



PLAY TRAILER



PLAY TRAILER



PLAY TRAILER



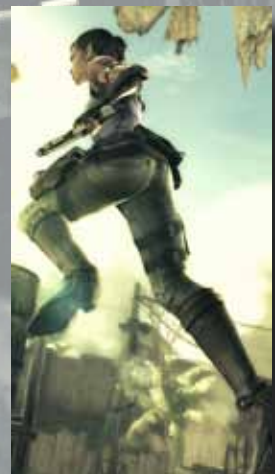
REVIEW

RESIDENT EVIL 5



With the inclusion of a partner comes the inclusion of dual inventory management. You'll have to swap items in and out for Sheva as well as yourself and more often than not, as able a partner as she is, you'll find yourself keeping weapons and ammo and using her as a packhorse for your items. This can be a chore as you constantly have to keep an eye on two sets of items instead of just your own; however this is where co-op comes in.

Any gamer of this generation (minus fighting games) knows online is the place to go for multiplayer action and Resident Evil 5's works perfectly. You can either start a game and allow another person to join, or search a list of currently active games and jump in, it's as simple as that. The only problem, as with any online game, is that if you play with a stranger there's a high chance they will take all ammo and gold for themselves leaving you short. However, if you can find an able friend to play it with, it's a joy to play online.



REVIEW

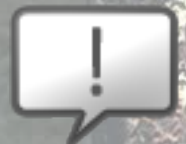
RESIDENT EVIL 5

The weapons in the game are good and varied, from pistols to the RE staple: the rocket launcher. Most of these weapons are upgradeable and once fully upgraded, it is available to purchase with infinite ammo for use on your next playthrough, useful for the harder difficulties. The game also has a good amount of replay value, giving you the option to shoot BSAA emblems to collect them, allowing you to purchase "character figures" for viewing, as well as new costumes, new weapons and the ever present Mercenaries mode, where you are dropped in a level with a set amount of ammo and left to kill as many Las Plagas as possible before the time limit runs out. It would be a crime to review this game without mentioning the visuals. They are some of the most gorgeous graphics on a console to date (and can give some PC games a run for their money) and the frame rate never takes a hit, even when there is a lot of action on screen.



The characters are well designed, however the voice acting is typical Resi fare and you'll most likely find yourself laughing whenever you hear Irving talking, as he releases such gems as "I've just had an extreme makeover" as he transforms into a hideous monster.

A fantastic game no doubt, but a questionable entry into the Resident Evil series. As good as it is, it just doesn't feel like a Resident Evil game. There's lots of action, lots of explosions but no scary moments. This doesn't stop it being a great game though, and one that deserves to be played by any third person action fans, as well as Resident Evil fans looking for the complete story.



REVIEWER: **KEVIN MALONE**
GAME: **RESIDENT EVIL 5**
PLATFORM: **PS3**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
RELEASED: **MARCH 5, 2009**

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

OVERALL: 8.5



HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL

House of the Dead: I spent many hours in the arcades playing this title, numerous shiny coins entering the slot of enjoyment allowing me to plough bullets through the skulls of the zombie-like denizens which inhabit the game. So when the opportunity to review the latest incarnation of the franchise arose, I naturally jumped at the chance.

To begin with I must place a disclaimer warning that if you are easily offended by things in this world then simply stop now, walk away and never purchase or play House of the Dead: Overkill. It has the BBFC 18 certificate for a reason people.

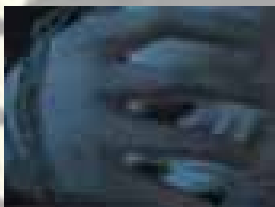
Now having said that, you're probably intrigued to why I placed the disclaimer in the first place. Well Headstrong Games were given the task of creating a new House of the Dead title and were allowed free reign, which is obvious as soon as the game loads in your beloved Wii console. I kid you not, during a quick 30 minute bout before the arrival of my Chinese food, I encountered no less than 25 iterations of 'F**k', 6 'S**ts', 2 'A*****s' and a toothless crack whore who wanted a chicken dinner.

The profanities are free flowing which surprised me for a couple of reasons.

1. I've never experienced this amount of profanity in House of the Dead.
2. I've never known Nintendo to slap a seal of approval onto something like this, EVER!

Seriously, this could be the title that removes the sheen of being clean and child friendly to which Nintendo is accustomed to, and in all honesty something the company needs to attract even more consumers to the console.

Now the Wii platform just seems to be the natural decision for on rails shooters, hence Headstrong adopting the Wiimote as the weapon of choice for the game. While not being as accurate as an arcade light gun, it works extremely well nonetheless, though I do recommend usage of a Wii Zapper or other 3rd party Zapper attachment to get the best experience.



SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL



The story of the game is set before the first House of the Dead instalment as we are introduced to Agent G as a rookie to the AMS on his first assignment. He then teams up with a Detective Washington to unravel the mysterious happenings of Bayou city. The overall theme of the game is a mishmash of Tarantino-esque grindhouse and 70's exploitation films, the effect of which works extremely well. Add a slice of funky riffs with meaty bass lines, alongside some sort of country music and you'll be grooving away while blasting the mutants with your boomstick.

Graphically, the game is nothing to sing home about, while being functional and covered in a film grain effect to keep it within the grindhouse theme. I did encounter a couple of moments of slowdown when facing multiple enemies and at one particular section of the game I was forced to restart the Wii due to having no enemies spawn, becoming frozen at a section requiring kills to progress.

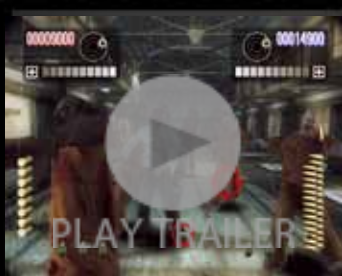


The gameplay itself is very simplistic meaning you can literally just pick up and play, the only problem being trying to put the controller back down. While playing you have the ability to switch between two weapons, once you have purchased a second at the gun shop. Each weapon is customisable in five areas, Damage, Rate of Fire, Reload Speed, Recoil, and Capacity.

While there are a handful of weapons available, the only ones with any real purpose is the shotgun, or the even more devastating automatic shotgun. Even at range these weapons devastate the mutants, they are also quite adapt at building up your combo meter to score extra points.



TRAILERS



HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL

Though with that being said, I did personally find the assault rifle quite gratifying when I was past caring about a high score. Just unleashing the dogs of war into a wave of mutants certainly beats trying to be accurate in my book. It's also worth noting that the mutants do have separate animations depending on where the bullet strikes, for example, shoot a zombie in the arm and it tends to shoot off in some random direction stunning the mutant slightly, before resuming its path to your brain clutching the stump.

Whilst the story is relatively short in length, only 7 levels spanning 3 to 4 hours or so of gaming, it's the replayability factor of this title which makes it rather compelling. Once you have completed the normal storyline a Director's Cut edition of the game unlocks, allowing you a different path and extra level content to what was previously played. This essentially doubles the lifespan of the title.

For an extra challenge you may click on the extra mutant button before entering a level to increase the hordes you face.

However, the ends of level bosses are terribly lacklustre and provide little challenge whatsoever. It's quite the letdown after surviving 20 to 30 minutes of mutant slaughter to face a foe which is swiftly dispatched with consummate ease by simply shooting the circled "weak spot" at the appropriate moment. I was left with that horrible taste of "Is that it?" in my mouth after every level with its only saving grace of another dose of ham acting and barrage of profanities from the lovable characters.



REVIEW

HOUSE OF THE DEAD: OVERKILL



The usual two player affair is available in both story mode and Director's Cut, but there are three mini games which are also available for up to four players, "Money Shot II", "Victim Support" and "Stayin' Alive". Money Shot being a simple game of accuracy with moving targets, Victim Support tasks you with the protection of civilians and finally Stayin' Alive just throws wave after wave of Mutants at the screen until you die or the timer runs out. Finally after conquering story mode and Directors Cut you are then allowed to blast through the game dual wielding the weapons which is very satisfying indeed.

Even though the humour and profanities do get old quite quickly, and there are the occasional graphical mishaps, the good points of the game outweigh the bad making Overkill a very enjoyable title indeed. As the critics' choice soundtrack suggests, "House of the Dead: Overkill, It's not just good, its f**king delicious".



REVIEWER: **NEIL HETHERINGTON**
GAME: **HOTD: OVERKILL**
PLATFORM: **WII**
DEVELOPER: **HEADSTRONG GAMES**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
RELEASED: **26TH FEBRUARY 2009**

PLAYABILITY: **8**
REPLAYABILITY: **8**
SOUND: **9**
GRAPHICS: **6**

OVERALL: 8.5



REVIEW

EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

In a similar style to its predecessors, Empire: Total War is a game of two halves. But do not be alarmed beloved reader, for I am not talking about football. A massive turn-based campaign map houses empire building, resource management and army movements, while the actual battles are fought out in real-time strategy on both land and sea. Veterans to the Total War family will know that naval battles were one of the few low points in what is a highly successful series, but now cannon wielding warships are deemed the flagship in this new chapter of Total War history. However, other than pirates and scurvy, what else does Empire: Total War pioneer?

Again developed by The Creative Assembly and published by Sega, Empire: Total War is essentially the latest evolution in the Total War series, with the general feeling of the game virtually identical to the Rome and Medieval II: Total War games. There are also plenty of gameplay tweaks and enhancements - including a period change to the 18th century - that all keeps the game fresh and long lasting. Before I mention anything further about the game, let me forewarn you that the game install is roughly 15Gb in size, and that you will need an internet connection to activate the game and Steam to actually play it. This will be frustrating for some, but the auto-update function and the ease of using Steam make it an acceptable platform.

For those completely new to the concept of the Total War series, let me briefly explain what you have been missing out on. As mentioned in my opening paragraph, Empire: Total War is essentially divided into a turn-based campaign map and real-time strategy battles. The former incorporates your empire building in the world - primarily large scale wars, diplomatic negotiations, territory development, trading and just about everything in-between. The latter meanwhile is where you get to control your army in battle in real time, with the headcount often entering thousands. Each part of the game can be left to the AI to deal with, thus ignored if parts of the game do not appeal.

If you are already familiar with basics of Total War, let me explain the key new features that veterans to the series will have to come to terms with in Empire. There are now three "theatres" in the campaign map to wage war on - the largest and most recognisable is Europe, with the addition of America and India as completely separate but inter-connectable areas. There are also four ocean-trading theatres to get involved in, where rather than building cities and waging land wars, you take merchant ships to trade spots and gain increased profits. More emphasis is now placed on trading for income, so you will need to protect these precious trade routes from rival nations and even pirates. Also new to Empire is technological research, which is similar if not as broad as the Civilization range of games. This does add an extra layer of burden for the player to consider, however

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

this increased choice over the direction of your chosen empire makes this an excellent addition. Another new feature is the government and revolutions system. However, the regular government elections and the resultant effects I encountered made this seem like an unnecessary addition and a relatively pointless new feature, since most players will want to develop their empire and battle foes, not play games of politics. Now that the year is 1700, gunpowder is in full use by all nations. This means tactics of old are of little use; pikemen and horses make easy targets for rifles and have to be used very carefully if they are to make a valuable impact. Cannons on the field are a more devastating form of artillery than ever before, and if used effectively they can rip an army to shreds. Cover can also be used to gain an advantage and buildings occupied, but using common sense and simply having more guns seemed to be the easiest route to victory in a battle.

No matter what previous experience players might have, everyone will be in the same boat when it comes to navy battles. These water fights play out in the same real time fashion as those on land; however, instead of many units of men you control each individual ship. Since ships fire their cannons from their flanks, you must position your fleet side on, and as such a completely different array of tactics is required. Wind also

plays a part in battles, and you can even board an enemy vessel in an attempt to capture it to add to your own armada for future use.

However, implementing naval tactics is exceedingly difficult and the inevitable

ensuing disorder is quite intimidating. My overall feelings about the new maritime battles are that they are a good addition to the Total War series, but not an exceptional one.



The main feature to this and previous Total War games is the Grand Campaign, which offers victory conditions of either territorial conquest or reputation goals. The different factions - of whom twelve are major and playable with countless other minor factions - have individual characteristics and thus different playing styles. Aside from the main campaign, there is also the "Road to Independence", a story-driven campaign which serves as an introduction to the main game or just a fun history lesson. Alternatively, if you fancy some quick single-player battle action, just fire up a one-off land, sea, siege or scenario battle. If you are feeling brave, you can also battle it out online with multiplayer ranked and casual fights on both land and sea. An exciting prospect of a multiplayer campaign map is also said to be on the way in the coming months.

TRAILERS



REVIEW

EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

There are tutorials for both land and naval battles to get you familiarised or refreshed on the battle systems, and there are advisors on hand to provide tips and useful snippets of information to help you get to grips with some of the finer details. With all the new features and additions this has become the most complicated Total War game to date, and as an experienced player I found many of the new features poorly explained, so new players may struggle even further. The game manual also failed to give enough details of some important points and I ended up missing key factors in the campaign that later resulted in regret and frustration.

Unfortunately, Empire: Total War is not without further problems. Enemy AI is often poor, a legacy which has never been addressed in the Total War timeline. A classic example I encountered in Empire was when my rifleman were up against cutlass wielding pirates. The pirates showed no interest in making a move on my men, despite being picked off from a distance - a voluntary firing squad if you like. The AI on the campaign map often makes poor tactical decisions - despite the fact I was playing on hard difficulty - meaning I was given silly advantages and not made to pay for making mistakes.

Further to these gripes, there are a few irritating bugs present. My original game file - where I was leading the fashionable British - failed to load since the file somehow saved corrupt. Further to this - half way through the new game I was forced to begin - my game started crashing when I tried ending my turn.

Upon researching these problems I discovered this isn't an isolated case. Other annoyances I encountered included simple things like ordering a group of ships to move forward in a battle, which would result in some going in completely the wrong direction - both bizarre and infuriating. None of the above mentioned woes were enough to deter me from enjoying this game immensely, but I can't help but feel disappointed in the lack of integrity of a long standing series and an otherwise polished and highly professional game.

The graphical personality of Empire: Total War does define excellence. The campaign map is hugely detailed and aesthetic on the eye, while the graphics engine for the battles is improved from previous Total War outings, with a plethora of graphical effects on offer. Land battles feature literally thousands of units on screen at the same time, whilst naval battles enter the series with beautifully detailed ships and gorgeous water effects and physics. Alas, one downside of these good looks is that a meaty computer is required to get Empire looking at its best. I recommend a multi-cored CPU to keep things running smooth and at least 2Gb of RAM to avoid lengthy load times.

Ambient music is also very well done and fits the scene perfectly. Voice acting is well done and the attention to detail in the range sounds is admirable. Unfortunately, on my computer at least, some sounds, such as those of rifles, seemed a bit rough, as if they were from the 16-bit era.

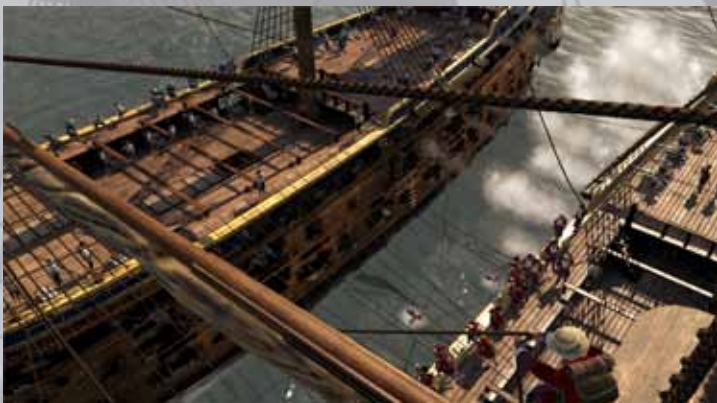


REVIEW

EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

It could be that these are the genuine sounds of that age, or alternatively it could be Windows Vista failing to cope as it so often does when it comes to sound. Either way this wasn't game breaking, but the immersion was often jarred with these sound effects feeling below par.

The general feeling of the game is, initially at least, daunting and hard to get into, but there is great fun, enjoyment and satisfaction to be had with the many conquests on the campaign map and memorable victories in the individual battles. The campaign map is bigger, better and somewhat more complicated than ever before, with gameplay tweaks and new features creating a lot of burden for the player to learn. The introduction of gunpowder as the key type of weaponry has created a requirement to learn different tactics, but it does feel like a positive change. Game destroying bugs and crashes are the worst feature to this game, but saving often and in separate files can help avoid tales of woe.



That said, Empire: Total War is the sort of game you can play for hours on end without losing interest taking the dreaded "one more turn" persona that has many people addicted to the Civilization series. I have managed to lose chunks of the weekend and most weekday evenings in my conquest to crush Spain with the adorable Dutch, with the rare excuse of "I have to play this much for the review" on hand to bail me from certain disapproval. You may not have that defence, but you would be missing a very worthwhile and thoroughly enjoyable experience if you do not play this early contender for game of 2009.



REVIEWER: **PETE O'BRIEN**
GAME: **EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR**
PLATFORM: **PC**
DEVELOPER: **THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY**
PUBLISHER: **SEGA**
RELEASED: **MARCH 4, 2009**

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

OVERALL: 9



REVIEW

KILLZONE 2

The amount of hype surrounding Killzone 2 is almost as unbelievable as the game's visuals. Since the first controversial pre-rendered trailer appeared almost four years ago the game has constantly been one of the oases in the drought of PS3 exclusives. Finally with us after a lengthy and fairly secretive development process, is it worth the wait? A review of Killzone 2 just wouldn't be complete without mentioning the simply astonishing visuals. I can't remember a game with graphics of this calibre on any console and it certainly rivals anything produced by the upper end of the PC market. Not only are the vistas incredibly detailed they are also very crisp and striking. Lighting is also fantastic and lightning effects in particular stand out as particularly retina-scorching. There is a healthy variation in styles and whilst there is an emphasis towards the grey and brown side of the palate, it all adds to the atmosphere.

The story follows the ISA (a coalition of interplanetary troops) as they invade Helghan the home planet of the militant and evil Helghast. That's as far as the story really goes; there is very little context or background whatsoever which is a severe disappointment. The Helghast themselves are brilliantly designed with glowing eyes, sinister trench coats and a plethora of fascistic iconography. In essence, they couldn't appear more evil if they were embezzling money from charity and regularly leaving dogs inside hot cars with no windows open.

It seems the main problem with the Helghast is that knowing little about them means fighting them seems a little futile. The parallels with recent military invasions are completely overlooked which certainly doesn't help the story. The characters and scenarios are drawn from so many action clichés you can scarcely go for 5 minutes where you don't recognise at least some elements. The main characters, the protagonist in particular, are either unlikeable or totally forgettable and at times I was hoping they wouldn't succeed as at least the enemy were charismatic.

In-game voice acting is also weak especially in comparison with many other recent titles. Brian Cox does a sterling effort in a minimal role to get across some sense of a tyrannical dictator but is nowhere near utilised enough. To add insult to injury the developers chose to reuse a voice actor from the previous game in a totally different role which is a baffling and confusing decision if you played the original. The majority of your enemies also seem to originate from the land of stereotypical regional accents, presumably as the ISA forced anyone with a personality to leave.

However, it is unlikely that you'll be playing Killzone 2 for its story and expecting some kind of high brow war epic would be asking a little too much. The game itself holds up fairly well, but with the incredibly high standards of recent additions to the genre it all feels a little outdated.

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

KILLZONE 2



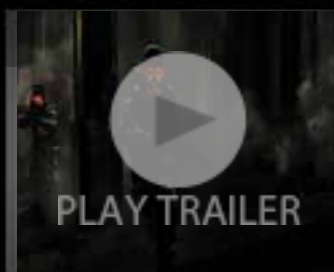
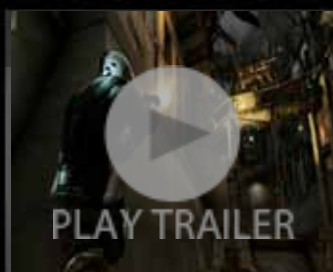
The weapons themselves are brilliantly designed and there is a really nice selection available. Doing away with the luxury of two main guns, á la Halo, you are restricted to a single primary weapon and a choice of two pistols. The selection is intelligent and they all feel realistic (the lightning gun aside) and powerful. The standard shotgun feels devastating at close range and the bolt gun is ridiculous but satisfying.

The first thing you'll notice are the controls. If you are a big action gamer you will likely be confused and check your settings. To say they are sluggish is an understatement and you can look at your watch safely in the time it takes to turn where you want.

Thankfully a recent patch has helped the situation and I would heartily recommend upping the sensitivity. Even after you get used to the system you never feel fully in control and picking off enemies never feels as precise as in other titles. I found myself finding the weapon with the highest rate of fire and flailing everywhere in the hope I would hit something on several occasions, which isn't what you want to do in a first person shooter.



TRAILERS



REVIEW

KILLZONE 2

As the game progresses the controls become less of an issue, but by the time you feel fully comfortable the game has finished. The single player is short at 10 levels (one of which takes all of 5 minutes) and none of them feel terribly connected.

Interestingly, Killzone 2 goes for a type of gritty realism which translates into the gameplay as having to take cover in a fire fight. Now, the idea of a cover system in a first person game is a strange one and is hard to get used to. Having to spend most of your time crouched admiring the textures of various walls and boxes isn't terribly fun and the controls governing it are fiddly to say the least. It is manageable, but slows the gameplay down to a snail's pace as you inch out of cover over and over again. Enemy AI is almost supernatural on the harder difficulty levels with every single Helghast trained to accurately throw grenades at a rate of one per minute over a distance of 200 metres.

You play through most levels accompanied by an AI team mate, which seems to scream out "co-operative mode".

Unfortunately this isn't the case and you have to endure some incredibly tedious and incompetent friendly AI. At times I thought this would be a twist revealing that your squad mates were actually Helghast double agents, such is their desire to get you killed.

Your allies frequently run headlong into lethal fire, hog the only available cover in an area and walk straight into sniper shots you spent several seconds carefully lining up. You are required to revive them should they go down which is usually in an impossible place to get to them safely. Their personalities also grate when they have the gall to shout at you, telling you what to do and insulting you for shooting them after they dive into your stream of fire. Personally I wished for an option to leave them to die or put the last bullet into them yourself.

These are niggles in what is otherwise a decent enough first person shooter. The level design is well thought out and the set pieces are certainly epic enough, especially when combined with the excellent visuals. The problem is Killzone 2 does nothing new for first person titles and it certainly doesn't do them anywhere near as well as other franchises.



REVIEW

KILLZONE 2



Thankfully, multiplayer is a saving grace and is definitely much improved when you get to grips with the controls. Playing in large team battles feels good and you aren't plagued by the awful AI when facing off against human opponents. There are a variety of game modes and an obvious influence from other popular class based multiplayer titles is no bad thing. A variety of collectables and unlockables from both the main game and the multiplayer is bound to extend its replay value and it already has a dedicated following.



Sadly, Killzone 2 isn't the killer exclusive that PS3 owners were hoping for but it tries so hard to be. At times you catch glimpses of the potential and it really has some excellent moments and set pieces. Unfortunately the single player is let down too often with frustrations and it isn't as accessible as it thinks it is. However, long term replay value from multiplayer is certainly an incentive and those visuals are something to at least see on a widescreen television if only to justify your purchase of a PS3. Killzone 2 is certainly the start of a next-generation franchise. Here's hoping whatever sequel follows adds more substance than style.



REVIEWER: **CHRIS WAKEFIELD**
GAME: **KILLZONE 2**
PLATFORM: **PS3**
DEVELOPER: **GUERRILLA GAMES**
PUBLISHER: **SONY**
RELEASED: **FEBRUARY 25, 2009**

PLAYABILITY: **7**
REPLAYABILITY: **8**
SOUND: **8**
GRAPHICS: **10**

OVERALL: 7.5



REVIEW

STREET FIGHTER 4

The Grandfather of fighting games has finally returned to our beloved homes. That's right; Street Fighter 4 has eventually hit the shelves after many, many months of teasing from Capcom, whetting our appetites for some hardcore Shinku Hadoken action.

Instead of going for some elaborate 3D combat area with multiple levels accessed via knocking the opponent out of the tier area, Capcom have decided to stick to what works best, gone back to the roots of Street Fighter if you will.

In this iteration of our trusted friend, we have a mix of beautifully rendered 3D models of our old familiar friends with a handful of new faces, with a stylised look of hand drawn artwork, also with certain visual effects being accented in calligraphic strokes, ink smudges and ink sprays during combat. Fighting toe to toe on a 2D plane set in various 3D locations around the world, ranging from a grassy play area underneath a fly-over to a bustling street in Japan, the whole package is solid and works flawlessly, emphasising that Street Fighter is back and hungering for fresh blood.

The combat system is so easy to pick up for the beginners new to the world of Street Fighter yet still remains deep and complex enough to please the SF veterans, combining focus attacks, EX (Define special moves and ultra combo's into devastating and visually impressive attacks which are destined to leave a mark or two on your opponents features.



During combat you'll notice the usual health bars adorn the top of the screen with the time remaining in the round centred between the two bars. At the bottom however; we have an EX

bar in 4 sections which powers your EX specials. These are basically your standard special moves but generally hit harder with an extra graphical edge to them. If you wish to build this bar up to the max you may unleash a super combo move which is a visual treat in its own right.

Next to this EX bar you have a three quarter circle gauge which builds up as you take damage with a revenge marker at approximately the half way mark of this gauge. This bar lets you perform your characters selected ultra combo which is a series of moves or a huge special move which connects with the opponent multiple times. You have a very short grace period in which you may cancel, or for your opponent to counter the combo, before the game takes over and runs through a short cinematic of the ultra combo. When executed at the right time, this can lead to the reassuring sound of 'K.O.' coming from the announcer.

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

STREET FIGHTER 4



A new feature to the combat in SF4, is the previously mentioned focus attack which allows the player to perform a move that has two key stages. Stage one of the focus attack, makes the character shift stances and absorbs an incoming move from the opponent. Then, entering stage two your character will then counter attack your opponent, the longer your buttons are held down, the harder the counter will land which normally results in your opponent crumpling to the floor. This new element shifts the emphasis away from constantly stringing combo's toward a more realistic system of combat, meaning you start learning and reading your opponents moves before he or she starts moving.

There are around 25 playable characters in total for you to get to grips with in the various game modes. The old favourites from SF2 are present and accounted for, with a few familiar faces from varying sequels attending too, while finally four new faces created specifically for this outing finish the line up.



TRAILERS



REVIEW

STREET FIGHTER 4

You have the standard arcade mode and VS mode allowing you to beat the snot out of either CPU or human opponents in your own home. Then we have a challenge mode, this pits your skills in a variety of challenges ranging from a simple time attack to a survival mode, yet the mode that was the most interesting to me and quite possibly the most interesting for you dear readers, is the introduction of an online mode. Yes that's right, Street Fighter is now available with the taste of online multiplayer action, fight anyone you want anywhere in the world.



REVIEW

STREET FIGHTER 4



This one simple addition to the tried and tested formula of Street Fighter gives the game almost unlimited replayability, the prospect of facing hundreds of thousands of different player styles offering a multitude of varying challenges in order to defeat your opponent quite simply made me moist. During my time online with the game, admittedly receiving more beatings than handing out, I experienced hours upon hours of glorious action with the evil nemesis of lag, nowhere to be seen. Everything ran smoothly and without incident indicating a very high degree of polish from Capcom before this title shipped.

Ultimately mastering the moves and techniques held within the confines of this title, whilst striving for all the titles, achievements and unlockable features is something I shall leave to the hardened few who are destined to be supreme champions. There was only so much blistering my thumb can take before I called it a day with Street Fighter 4 and believe me;

you will no doubt suffer a case of Street Fighter thumb yourself during your playtime of this awesome game.



REVIEWER: **NEIL HETHERINGTON**
GAME: **STREET FIGHTER 4**
PLATFORM: **PS3**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
RELEASED: **FEBRUARY 20, 2009**

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

OVERALL: 9



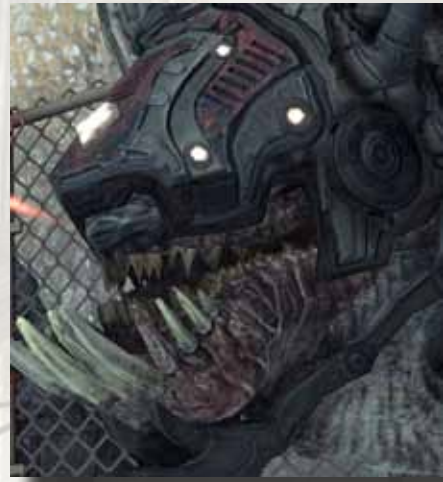
REVIEW

GEARS OF WAR 2

I never thought it was possible to make a game more masculine than Gears of War: I was wrong. This sequel is so laced with testosterone I had to grow a beard, wear a headband and talk about women loudly just to feel man enough to play it. Gears of War 2 manages to be bigger, bolder and better than its predecessor which is an impressive accomplishment. There are very few games that draw me back to them again and again but I can honestly say that Gears 2 does, thanks to its ultra-violent charms.



The plot follows on directly from the slightly unsatisfying cliff-hanger conclusion to the first game and a knowledge of the original story definitely helps. You again follow the actions of Delta squad as they combat a dangerous new threat the Locust have developed. Humanity is no longer safe and in order to make a last stand they decide attack is the best form of defence. Suffice to say this leads to explosions, gunfire and more gore than an exploding elephant in an abattoir.



The tight, refined and polished gameplay returns and is challenging but satisfying. The third-person action is tightly supported with an essential cover system. Standing out in the open with all guns blazing will buy you a one way ticket to your own messy death. In order to succeed in the frequent shoot-outs, it is necessary to take cover and gradually move your way forward, placing pressure on the enemy with covering fire and flanking tactics.

SCREENSHOTS



REVIEW

GEARS OF WAR 2

This is handled brilliantly being both intuitive and smooth, within minutes you find yourself taking down clusters of enemies with clever strategies.

Epic have listened closely to previous criticism and have added small but well thought-out additions to the armoury. All the guns in Gears 2 feel meaty and realistic thanks to great animations and enemy reactions. The new death dealers are excellent: poisonous grenades, a flamethrower and a minigun all feel right and leave only bodies in their wake.

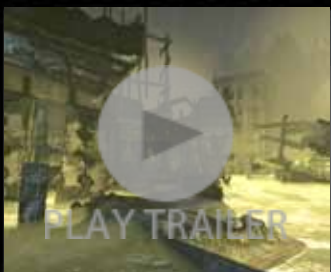


The real star though is the new and frankly ridiculous mortar which is tricky to master. Once you get the idea, no one is safe in cover which means you have to get to safety before you're reduced to a quivering pile of entrails.

Graphics in Gears 2 are simply astonishing and the increased variety in the game's levels means that it isn't merely grey and brown this time around. Lighting is jaw-dropping on occasions and the gritty tone and atmosphere immerses you in the title. The violence in the game remains extreme and is both exaggerated and at times shocking. Decapitations, evisceration and lacerations are all graphically depicted but this uncompromising vision of war sits well with both plot and style.



TRAILERS



REVIEW

GEARS OF WAR 2

The chainsaw bayonet returns and is as worryingly satisfying when you cleave someone in two. The characterisation is much improved on the one-dimensional masculine stereotypes of the original and as the game progresses you find yourself really caring for the team. The voice acting and dialogue are both incredibly well written and really go a long way to building a believable universe. The balance between humour and drama is excellent and I found myself chuckling at the dark exchanges between the members of Delta.

Co-operative gameplay is again prevalent and the game plays so much better with an additional player backing you up. Whilst the co-op computer AI is by no means terrible, a human companion is necessary on the harder difficulties thanks to improved enemy movement. Your enemies can now revive one another and the vastly increased varieties mean that you really do need someone watching your back. The increased roster of opponents is satisfying and you now have to develop a range of strategies depending on what you find yourself against.

The multiplayer mode is more refined, providing new maps and modes which are all well designed and very enjoyable. The usual range of competitive modes are available but the real diamond is the new "Horde" mode. Here you and up to 4 friends must fight off waves of the Locust which get progressively harder. Making it to the higher levels is seriously challenging but when a group of you make it to the end alive it feels special.



REVIEW

GEARS OF WAR 2

Gears of War 2 is clearly a great game but it does have a number of problems which tend to hold it back. The emphasis on co-op and team play is very prevalent but if you die in single player, your AI companion lacks the intelligence to revive you. This problem was present in the last game and should really have been fixed. There are times when an unfair shot leads to you dying with no hope of revival. This instant game over doesn't fit in with the rest of the game and playing the title co-op gives you a real advantage over single player.

The cover system is at times a little temperamental and could possibly have been tweaked a tad but as a whole it works well. The checkpoint system in the single player campaign is generally good, except in a few annoying locations. At times you are forced to replay several fire fights just to get to the difficult final one which feels like a cheap lengthening of the game on the hardest settings.

In their infinite wisdom Epic decided to include another driving level which is pretty basic and tedious in comparison with the third-person gunplay. Thankfully you can actually drive and shoot this time which is a godsend in comparison with the first game's section.

These criticisms are minor detractors in what is otherwise a satisfying, enjoyable and varied game. If you can stomach the violence and are a fan of shooters then this is undoubtedly a must-buy title. Gears of War 2 has the level of polish of a Hollywood blockbuster and is such, it plays like one. Explosions, shooting and decent acting make this the ideal "popcorn" gaming title. The replay value is excellent with a well sized campaign, co-operative gameplay and outstanding online multiplayer. Grab some armour, your chainsaw bayonet and sit down for an experience which makes you glad to be a gamer.



REVIEWER: **CHRIS WAKEFIELD**
GAME: **GEARS OF WAR 2**
PLATFORM: **XBOX 360**
DEVELOPER: **EPIC GAMES**
PUBLISHER: **MICROSOFT GAME STUDIOS**
RELEASED: **NOVEMBER 7, 2008**

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

OVERALL: 9



CUT OUTS

CONSENT FORM



Someone not happy about all the gaming you are doing?
Want to do something about it?

Here you can inform them in advance

Feel free to post any filled out ones on the forums :)



PERMISSION SLIP

I HEREBY GIVE MY:

- ☐ PARTNER
- ☐ SPOUSE
- ☐ SIGNIFICANT OTHER

PERMISSION TO PLAY IN THE FOLLOWING:

- ☐ TEAM FORTRESS 2
- ☐ COUNTER STRIKE
- ☐ LEFT 4 DEAD
- ☐ CALL OF DUTY
- ☐ OTHER: (PLEASE SPECIFY)

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SIGNED:

DATED:

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Printer friendly version can be downloaded here



House of the Dead: Overkill

Word Search

C L A F M H I S A A C P D K S
 U C S H S H O T G U N D L W R
 M A D S C I E N T I S T A O A
 E R H E L E R E H T O M R E S
 V N W L O I K M R E P R L M D
 E I I F W Y T I C U O Y A B I
 I V O N N O P R B H Z C T I O
 E A O L S P R E S R H N I S N
 G L L E E O R P D I O M P L N
 R P A R R N V X N A A T S O R
 E I G R A O C E R E C O O W B
 P S E G A V G E R S S R H M E
 S T N A T U M C V K I I A O U
 A O T J N T E Y E L I V E F L
 J L G S A C A E S A R L W O M
 O S F E I B M O Z A C S L S D

Agent G
 Caesar
 Evileye
 Guns
 Isaac
 Mother
 Pistols
 Stripper
 Violence

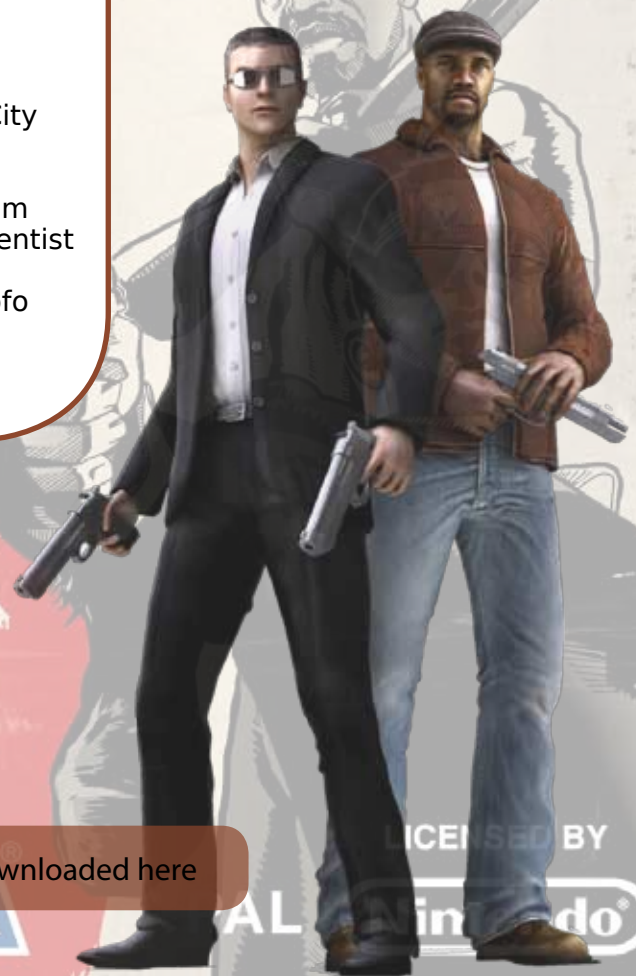
AMS
 Carnival
 Experiments
 Horror
 Jasper
 Motorbike
 Sega
 Swamp
 Wii

Arcade
 Clowns
 Flesh
 Hospital
 Machinegun
 Mutants
 Shotgun
 Terror
 Zombie

Bayou City
 Dead
 Gore
 Ice Cream
 Mad Scientist
 Overkill
 Slow Mofo
 Varla

This month's
 word search is based
 on the game
 House of the Dead:
 Overkill

All words are related
 to the game.





SEE YOU NEXT MONTH