

# GameOn MAG

The Official Gaming Magazine from GameOn.co.uk

Issue 4 Nov 2008

## F.E.A.R. 2 PROJECT ORIGIN™

We take a look at the newest installment of F.E.A.R. Will it stand up to the hype?

### EXCLUSIVE

Interview with the creators of the popular Zombie Panic Source Mod

### MCM EXPO

Behind the scenes at London's Movie Comic Media Expo

### ALSO...

Silent Hill Series History  
The Scariest Games... Ever  
More top notch reviews...

DS PS2 Wii PSP PC PS3 XBOX 360



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the next installment of the GameOn.co.uk magazine. In this issue we're aiming to bring you all the best Halloween based content.

We have a look at the upcoming F.E.A.R.2 Project Origin, which is set to be one hell of a scare-fest. Also in this issue is a sneak peek at Siren: Blood Curse, a survival horror game that could crack even the most hardened of horror fans.

We also have the usual assortment of games reviews, some halloween themed, and some not (that is unless you are haunted by the sheer addictiveness of Bejeweled).

So read on and enjoy this spooktacular issue!

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meet the team

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- 3 • Preview: F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin
- 4 • Preview: Siren: Blood Curse
- 5 • Interview: Creators of Zombie Panic Source
- 7 • Article: Silent Hill Series History
- 9 • Article: The Scariest Games... Ever
- 12 • Review: F.E.A.R.
- 14 • Review: Star Wars - The Force Unleashed
- 16 • Review: Saints Row 2
- 18 • Article: The MCM Expo
- 20 • Review: Condemned 2
- 22 • Review: Bejeweled 2
- 23 • The Column: Do Videogames Cause Violence?
- 24 • Coffee Break: The Month In News
- 25 • Top 10 Trailers Of The Month

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



While wandering the vast expanse of the Leipzig games convention I stumbled across a little booth guarded by two catalogue models pretending to be hard men dressed in some sort of PMC regalia. The reason: that the booth contained content only suitable for those over the age of 18. After flashing my press pass of +5 smugness, I easily breezed past the guards and into the darkened and slightly disturbing room of F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin. "Aha superb" I thought and quickly waddled over to the nearest free demonstration pod to try out this eagerly awaited sequel, while trying not look too worried about the operating table covered in blood in the middle of the booth.

For those who aren't too aware of F.E.A.R., let me give you a brief recap. F.E.A.R., or to give you its full name First Encounter Assault Recon, was created by Monolith Productions back in 2005 and was touted as a survival horror first person shooter. The story revolved around some spooky and rather mysterious happenings involving an 8 year old child called Alma who possesses supernatural powers and a psychic named Fettel who telepathically controls an army of cloned soldiers, to which the F.E.A.R. team is called in to stop.

Lots of shooting, explosions and hallucinations ensue along with a couple of expansion packs to the game which Monolith had nothing to do with. We now fast forward towards the present day. Monolith and Vivendi have parted ways which caused some friction between the two companies due to Activision holding the rights to the F.E.A.R. name which thankfully Monolith's new home of Warner Bros Interactive acquired from Activision earlier this year.

Ok, to the game itself. The story of F.E.A.R. 2 kicks off around 30 minutes prior to the end of the original title giving you control of the protagonist, a Delta Force operative named Michael Becket heading towards

the penthouse home of Genevieve Aristide as directed by the F.E.A.R. team. A big part of what made the original F.E.A.R. so wonderful was the enemy AI and I'm glad that this was still evident in the demo that I managed to play, yet somewhat tweaked from what I could tell.

I was attacked by 3 units forcing me to take cover behind a burned out car, one unit attempted to keep me pinned down with fire while I noticed the others sneaking round attempting to flank me. No more John Rambo style runs for me, as doing so would result in getting mown down by walls of hot lead in record time. There isn't just one type of enemy AI either, Monolith have gone to some length to introduce more soldier types with their own style of behaviour and tactics resulting in a change of pace and breaking up the gaming experience so that you don't fall into the dreary trap of repetitiveness.

Not only are the enemy units more challenging and more varied, but more of the game world is interactive too. Tables can be upturned to create a barrier; car doors can be opened for some cover and you can leap over walls and fences in the midst of a fire fight in an attempt to shield yourself from the bullets. Put the pair together, sprinkle in more varied locales with a few mechs that expel explosive death, destructible environments and you'll find that the stakes in Project Origin are higher and overall more fun.

The game itself looks quite impressive too, with the level of gore in the game verging on the lines of excessive helped via the improvements to the Jupiter EX engine. Everything seems to be three or four more times detailed than the original F.E.A.R. so there is a lot of eye candy for your brain to process then drool over and it's all shaping up to make F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin one of the must have titles for the Xbox360, Playstation 3 and PC early 2009

Neil Hetherington



# PREVIEW

## SIREN: BLOOD CURSE

The **Forbidden Siren** series was one of the unsung survival horror games of the last generation. Developed by some of the team behind the original **Silent Hill**, the game was a terrifying experience which introduced new ideas to the survival horror genre. **Siren: Blood Curse** is a next-gen re-imagining of the original game and it looks set to be one of the best survival horror games for the PlayStation 3.

The game takes place in Hanuda, a fictional area of Japan where a TV crew is investigating local folklore. Things take a dark turn when a sinister ritual occurs and the town is isolated by a sea of blood. Most people turn into sinister creatures, known as Shibito, who cannot be killed and whose eyes bleed. It is up to you playing as various survivors to try and survive the events and to uncover what is going on.

The game was originally released in episodes over the PlayStation Store and is broken down into 12 episodes, split into 4 chapters. This format meant that the game is great for playing through slowly and taking time to appreciate the storyline and atmosphere. **Siren** is an unusual and in-depth title. The gameplay itself is refreshing and very old school, which is nice considering the combat-heavy changes that Resident

Evil and **Silent Hill** have undergone. In **Siren**, fighting all the enemies and surviving is possible, but it is difficult. As a result of the bizarre change, the characters gain a new ability: "sightjacking". This skill allows people to "tune in" to the Shibito's eyes and allow them to see where they are patrolling and searching. This creates some incredible scenes of tension as you hide in a cupboard as one of the creatures starts to walk towards you... The camera splits the screen in two during these moments, allowing you to see normally and to see from the enemy's perspective which is an excellent touch.

However, if all goes wrong there are around 50 weapons to use to defend yourself, each with its own selection of moves. The weapons range from farming implements to rifles but beware: the enemies will always come back to life to hunt you down...

**Siren: Blood Curse** is an excellent reboot of the franchise with very impressive graphics and a strange discordant soundtrack which suits the mood perfectly. The story is complex and multi-layered and encourages you to replay the chapters. **Siren** is perfect for survival horror fans and the European release is scheduled for the 31st of October.

Chris Wakefield





## INTERVIEW: ZOMBIE PANIC SOURCE CREATORS

**Zombie Panic Source is a free mod built using the Source engine, which offers players the chance to try and either survive a zombie outbreak or to prevent others from doing so. The game has recently been released using Steam's new mod support system which makes it even easier to download and update.**

The game's premise is easy to understand, and the game is very pick up and play orientated. Taking place in the aftermath of a zombie attack, you play as either a survivor or a zombie. As a survivor, you must work together to stay alive and get to safety. Objectives change from map to map, but expect to be activating power supplies or disabling security doors, all the while being stalked by the undead. As a survivor you can gather weapons and ammunition to fight off the zombies, however carrying too much will only slow you down making you an easy target. Hording ammunition and weaponry will do the same, which makes resource management an important tactical element. Playing as a zombie you (mostly) start

out alone, and have to kill or infect humans in order for them to join your side upon death or transformation. In most levels zombies have a limited number of respawns, though these can be increased by killing survivors. Zombies also have regenerating health and the ability to see in the dark helping to make them serious threats.

The games vary significantly, usually starting off slowly as the survivors are harassed and slowly picked off one by one. However as time goes on, they usually end up as fast paced chases as the survivors desperately try to complete their objectives whilst the zombies swarm after them. The game is very well designed and is great fun to play, being tense and scary whilst still retaining a good sense of humour which makes it great to play with groups of friends.

Now available for free to anyone with a Source game, it is really worth checking out, especially with Halloween approaching...

With 2 new patches due for release before the end of the year and a thriving community,

Zombie Panic Source looks set to go from strength to strength. The mod-cofounder, Tatsuro, kindly took a break from battling the undead to give us this interview.

***GameOn: How does it feel seeing your game being downloaded and played?***

**Tatsuro:** When we first started all I wanted was a group of friends who I could join up with for a game of ZPS. I am happy to say that we've achieved that and more. I love seeing so many people enjoying the mod we worked years on.

***GameOn: How has the recent support from Valve over Steam helped you?***

**Tatsuro:** It's given us a chance to attract a broader audience while providing both new and old users quick and easy updates. Releasing on Steam has been an incredible rush for us and we're grateful for Valves support for the modding community.

***GameOn: What would you say is the most difficult part of the game making process?***

**Tatsuro:** I personally believe trying to please both yourself (quality of content) and your fans (more! now!) is the hardest part.

Things aren't always going according to plan which delays a feature or release and either you run PR, apologize, and get it done like you planned or you cut things out and release to appease the public. I like to think we balance it out pretty well.

***GameOn: What features do you feel are important for games to have?***

**Tatsuro:** The ability to rebind keys is by far the most important feature! Oh and those unexpected bugs you leave in as features.

***GameOn: How important are players in your development of the game, is their feedback important?***

**Tatsuro:** I think it's incredibly important. We designed the game the way we wanted it and we as a team debated, argued, agreed, and cried deciding what would fit and what wouldn't.





**GameOn:** Do you prefer to play as a survivor or a zombie?

**Tatsuro:** I like to win a game first as survivor, and then play 5-6 rounds as zombie. Hard to say one or the other as they are both satisfying but only in that order as I'm very stubborn and want my wins.

**GameOn:** What are your future plans for the game?

**Tatsuro:** We are working on new player models, maps, weapons, sounds, and other custom content as well as plans for another game mode that is still in the early stages of testing.

**GameOn:** What would you do in a zombie outbreak? Do you have a plan?

**Tatsuro:** Honestly, with a wife and 3 children (third due Nov 23rd) while living in Kyoto, Japan. I find it difficult to plan for a Zombie Outbreak. I figure I'd follow a couple of simple steps.

1. Get lucky and catch the outbreak early
2. Get a boat and get away (Hard to find a decent weapon and we've got plenty of Ocean)
3. Move to a more secure location whether it be Okinawa, another Country, or build my own personal Water World! I'm not sure.

could quote names (George A. Romero) hehe but I won't...again.

**GameOn:** The overwhelming odds against the survivors help to make *Zombie Panic* a unique experience, how did this aspect develop?

**Tatsuro:** Well... an evenly balanced zombie game just sounds boring. We started off with the idea that we wanted survivors to really enjoy their wins and decided that they should only on average win 5-15% of the time. We achieved this by tweaking player speeds, weapon & ammo weights, and overall damage. That and you win most of the time either way! If 90% of games end with zombies winning... you're likely to be part of that win :D

For things we decided on or just weren't sure about we looked to the public and they usually helped improve on these. We often browse our Ideas & Suggestions thread on the forums.

**GameOn:** Where was your main inspiration from the game drawn from?

**Tatsuro:** Our main inspiration comes from film which isn't surprising considering our theme. I



# ARTICLE

## SILENT HILL SERIES HISTORY

**Silent Hill is widely regarded as one of the most terrifying games ever and with very good reason. Whereas other survival games focused on shock moments, established horror conventions and clichéd characters, Silent Hill took a different approach. This was a horror game where every pixel was imbued with malevolence and as such remains a chilling experience.**

The story begins with a father and daughter travelling to Silent Hill, but it isn't long before things take a sinister turn and Harry, the protagonist, must search for his missing child. As the game begins the atmosphere is slowly built up as you search a deserted alleyway, where things slowly begin to change...

This is a very dark and adult adventure which refuses to stick to the predictable templates of its contemporaries. The atmosphere created in the game, even today, is nightmarish. The streets are permanently engulfed in an ethereal swirling fog, populated by bizarre and twisted monstrosities. Locations were all familiar: a school, a hospital, a coastal resort, but all are twisted and distorted into something far more sinister. The developers cleverly took the familiar and made it horrific, giving the game more psychological impact.

The game's setup also raised questions as to Harry's sanity: was this really happening? Was it all just a dream? The sections in which the town starts to literally transform into a grimy, rust filled abomination accompanied by the sound

of a chilling air raid siren still sends shivers down my spine. It is this "other world" scenario that really adds to the atmosphere, as here the locations are barely recognisable and filled with shocking scenes.

Enemies play large parts in the game's chilling ambience. Unlike the usual selection of monsters, Silent Hill was populated by a disturbing selection of horrors. The town was populated by nurses and doctors controlled by a moving parasite in their backs, flying creatures coated in maggots and even knife wielding child-like entities. This wasn't a game for the easily scared and the content proved too much for the BBFC, which led to the some enemies being altered.

Sound design remains one of the strongest in any title and was one of the key factors that created such a threatening and oppressive atmosphere. As you ventured down blood-stained hallways strange metallic clanging and disembodied screeches followed you. The use of your pocket radio was also a

masterstroke. As the creatures approached you in the darkness, the radio started to emit static which built to a terrifying crescendo as they loomed out of the blackness to attack. Yet, at times gentle piano pieces would accompany quieter sections and cut-scenes, creating a chilling contrast.

The pacing of the game is also excellent. While it is old-fashioned in that it comprises distinct locations, these are very well selected and you never spend too long lingering in one. Combat is also kept infrequent, in that monsters roam the corridors but most of the time all you can hear is the static of the radio as you turn out your light to try and sneak past. The psychology of this is interesting, as you try and avoid combat which leads to some real tension between encounters.

Upon release, the game sold strongly and proved a popular hit amongst gamers who wanted a really frightening game experience. After such a successful reception from players and critics a sequel was released in 2001.

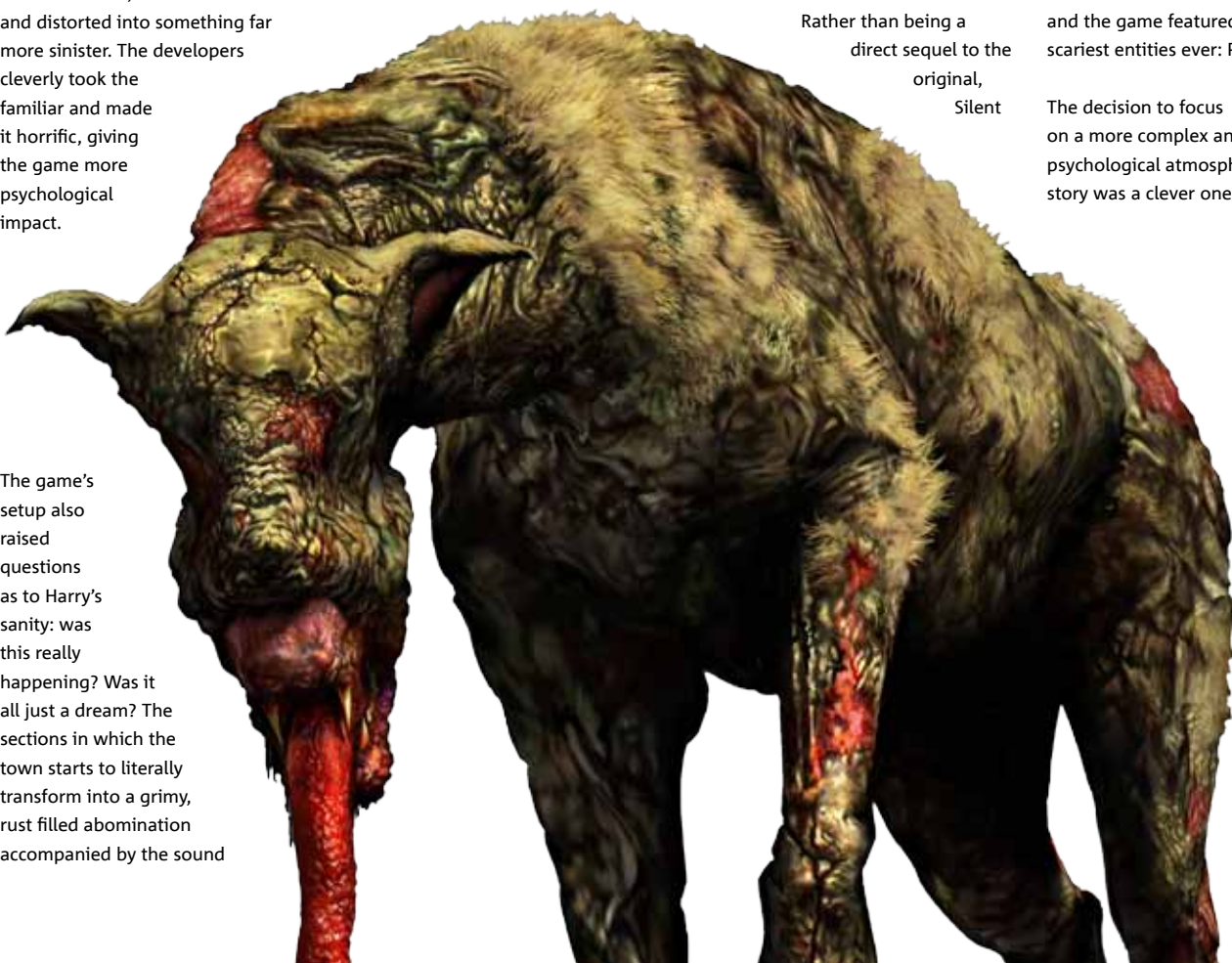
Rather than being a direct sequel to the original, Silent

Hill 2 instead introduced a new character and storyline as well as a different area of the town. The game retains many of the gameplay elements of the original. Combat was still rather clunky, puzzles and riddles played a key part to progressing and there was an emphasis on building tension with infrequent combat.

The graphics and sound were excellent and really showcased the PS2 at the time. Lighting effects and environments were incredibly impressive and really created a disturbing environment. Locations were rust-coated, blood-stained hell holes and investigating them was truly an eerie experience. Locations were also incredibly chilling: an abandoned prison, a filthy dilapidated apartment complex and the mental ward of a hospital were all terrifying enough without a faceless creature trying to murder you.

Enemy design in Silent Hill 2 was also well thought out and very Freudian. Enemies based around themes of sexual repression, aggression and insanity meant that they were more than simple monsters or mutants. Encounters were often memorable and the game featured one of the scariest entities ever: Pyramid Head.

The decision to focus on a more complex and psychological atmosphere and story was a clever one.





The story, revolving around the protagonist's search for his wife was genuinely interesting, especially as she was meant to be dead... The inclusion of a selection of other shadowy characters was also highly effective especially as you are never quite sure who could be trusted. For many, Silent Hill 2 is the definitive title in the series. The game was complex, disturbing and technologically impressive and really established the series as one of the scariest of all time. The game proved popular enough to get re-released with an extra scenario which added a new element to the plot as well as an extra ending.

When the third title was released in 2003, the series returned to earlier ideas and was more of a direct sequel to the original. Featuring a female protagonist who finds her world altered after a mysterious stranger talks to her, the game explored some new themes. Using a mixture of familiar locations and new ones, the game reached some terrifying new achievements.

The graphics in this title were outstanding, especially in the game's alternate world. When the locations shifted into nightmarish versions the walls pulsed and bled, metallic gratings covered over bottomless depths and strange fleshy creatures moved in the background. This was scary.

Characterisation was again a very strong element of the game, and as the story progressed you really cared for these people and what happened to them. The narrative was complex and for people unfamiliar with the series it could be difficult to follow. The combat in the game was also tweaked and a greater emphasis was placed on shooting which changed the feel of the game slightly.

Whilst some found that the game was a little unoriginal - in that it stuck to the same formula of previous games with similar focus on puzzles and riddles - it was still a well thought out title. Silent Hill 3 had some stand-out creepy moments which helped to make it memorable, in particular a haunted house set piece which becomes a little too real...

Silent Hill 4: The Room, was released not long after the third instalment and took the series in a very different direction. The game centred on Henry Townsend, a man trapped inside his own apartment until a mysterious hole appears leading to bizarre alternate worlds. Whilst the game doesn't actually take place in Silent Hill, the style is there and it tries hard to add some new elements to the series.

With first-person sections implemented whilst in Apartment 302, the game had a different feel and in the latter part this was a very effective way in creating some genuinely creepy scenes as well as building up layers of menace. The soundtrack was, as ever, outstanding with some beautiful and haunting pieces written and the game's graphics were another excellent showcase for the series.

The story itself was particularly bizarre and was genuinely disturbing, though at times it did venture too far into the occult. The characters in the game weren't quite as fleshed out as the previous instalments which didn't really lead to the immersion and fear of the original three.

The real problem with Silent Hill 4 was that while it tried hard to do

new things, these often went wrong. Being partnered with a non-playable character for the entire second half of the game and having to revisit the areas from the first area again were baffling decisions. This repetition meant the game was restricted to a series of small levels which were reused, making the latter section tedious and helping to undo all the hard work of the first section.

Enemies were also disappointing and lacked the real psychological manipulation that was present in the earlier titles. The lack of the town itself was also a strange decision and as such, the game never really had the same atmosphere, making it an interesting game in the series.

When Silent Hill Origins was announced for the PSP, there were raised eyebrows. For the first time in the series' history the title wouldn't be developed by Team Silent. Initial output from the game also looked worrying, as the game seemed to take on a Resident Evil 4 style with an action orientation which would likely have been a total disaster.

The title was changed and handed over to a new development studio, and when the game was released it stuck firmly to some conventions but tried to introduce new gameplay ideas. Firstly, the graphics and sound,

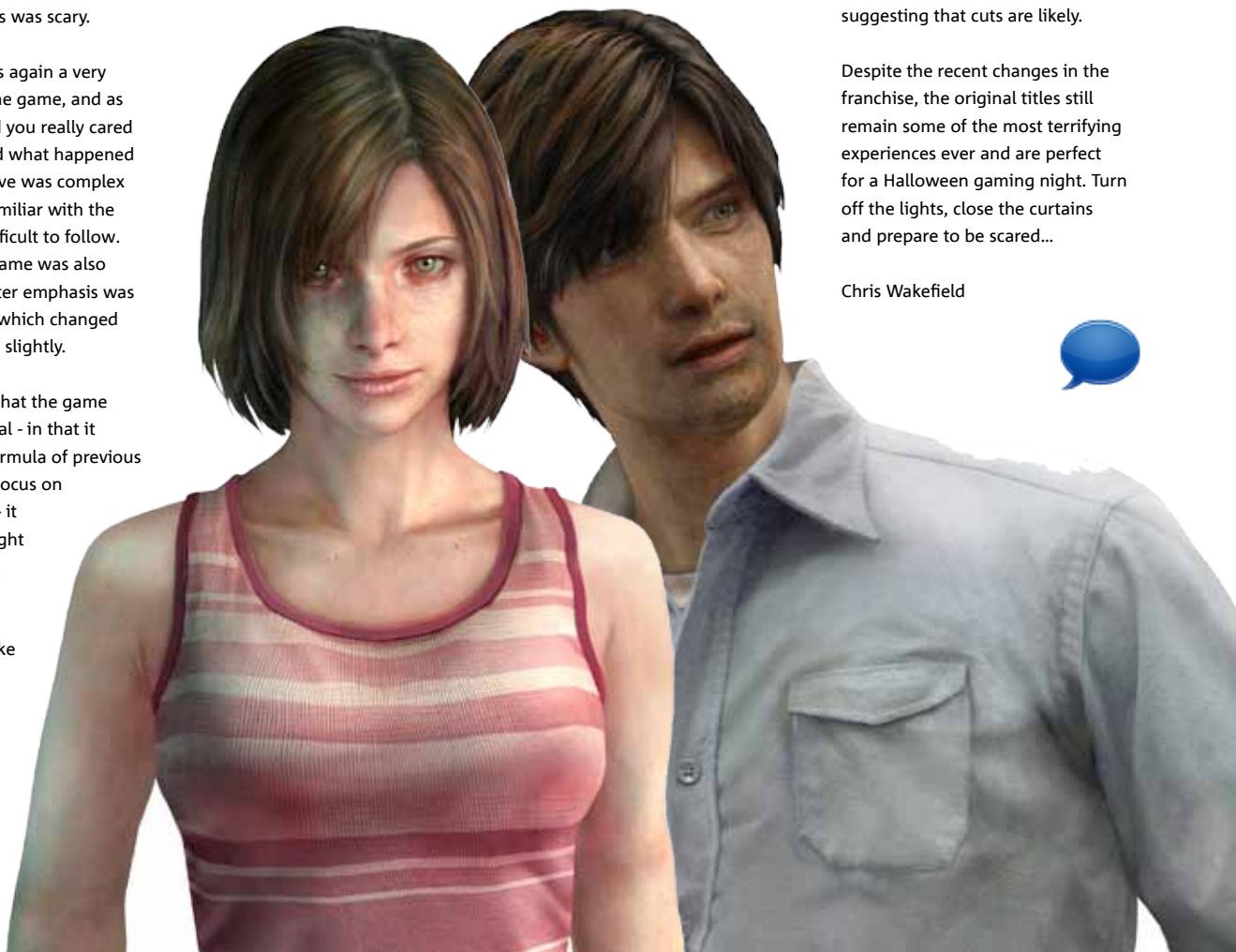
as ever, were outstanding for the format and really showcased the town and the monstrosities. However, Origins didn't always work. Much of the game reuses existing storylines and locations which had already been made fairly clear in the original title. The main problem with the prequel is that it takes the mystery out of some of the back story and setting. The fact that combat is more focused in this game isn't necessarily bad, but when quick time events direct from a rival series are crowd-barred in, things aren't good.

The main problem with the game was its lack of originality and that it stuck too closely to existing games, introducing enemies that are essentially the same ones from previous titles with different shaped heads. The game was an effective piece of survival horror for anyone new to the franchise, but for existing fans, it felt lacking.

A lot now rests on Silent Hill 5, a game which could make or break the series. Having a fresh new start on the next generation of consoles with a new team developing it means that the title has potential. However, the release date has just been pushed back to February in Europe, meaning the US gets it 5 months earlier. Initial reports seem mixed and content changes may well be included in the EU version, suggesting that cuts are likely.

Despite the recent changes in the franchise, the original titles still remain some of the most terrifying experiences ever and are perfect for a Halloween gaming night. Turn off the lights, close the curtains and prepare to be scared...

Chris Wakefield





# ARTICLE

## THE SCARIEST GAMES... EVER

With Halloween just around the corner we take the chance to look over some of gaming's seriously scary titles. These are the ones that had you hiding behind the sofa, leaving the landing light on and having to go and grab a clean pair of underwear. Enjoy...



### Resident Evil

Released way back in 1996, Resident Evil was the first true survival horror that reached a widespread audience on the consoles. Playing as one of two characters sent to investigate the disappearance of a Bravo team in the mountains, the game got off to a ferocious start. No sooner had you arrived, a pack of zombie dogs forced you to take refuge in a supposedly abandoned mansion. From here the game really picked up pace and was filled with jump out of your seat moments,

who can walk past a window in a survival horror game without leaning forward nervously? Resident Evil had a creepy atmosphere and the enemies were generally scary, some having the ability to kill you in a single hit. This meant that despite being toolled up with weapons, the lack of ammunition meant that the game was an unnerving and adrenaline filled experience. It is hardly surprising that the title spawned a huge franchise on multiple platforms, with the sequels managing to stand up well. Yet, it is the original that still remains one of the classic survival horror titles.

### Project Zero

Project Zero (also known as Fatal Frame) was a surprise hit. Developed by little known developer Tecmo, this was a true horror game. Set inside a haunted Japanese mansion most people initially thought of it as a Resident Evil clone, yet this was the only real similarity. Project Zero has a much scarier atmosphere and is supposedly based on a true story, though this wasn't exactly true. The story follows the plot of Kiri, who investigates the mansion when her brother disappears. The building turns out to be populated by very aggressive ghosts and her only defence is a camera imbued with supernatural powers. Whilst this may seem far fetched, it is unbelievably

creepy. Walking through the mansion usually results in glimpses of harmless ghosts as they flit around corners and disappear suddenly coupled with an undead face suddenly looming straight into your camera. There were moments in this game that were truly terrifying; a sequence in a room full of dolls, the sudden realisation that there was a hanging corpse above you and desperately trying to battle a spirit that floated towards you arms outstretched. Project Zero was unappreciated and little known in Europe, but its atmosphere rivalled other series' for sheer fear. A Wii update is due out soon which should increase the number of people who won't want to use their digital camera in the dark.



### System Shock 2

Created in 1999, System Shock 2 is regarded as a staggering multi-genre game. Key to its success was the combination of sci-fi and horror to create a brilliant atmosphere. Taking place on a space expedition in the far future, two ships investigate a distress call and are soon infected into an alien community called the Many led by System Shock nemesis SHODAN.

The game was a stunning combination of different styles though the game had thick horror undertones. The player was very vulnerable to the enemies and the inclusion of breakable weapons and scarce ammunition

only furthered the fear created. Light and sound effects were also very important in the atmosphere and could often make you jump as enemies suddenly loomed towards you. The game was also unrelentingly sinister, with SHODAN being a strange and unusual enemy. The lack of other characters in the game also made it stand out, as well as a surprising twist which helped to keep the game compelling. Sadly the game failed to meet sales expectations and as such a third game has only been rumoured. However the game received a successor in the form of Bioshock and its upcoming sequel which helped to preserve a similar environment, but still couldn't quite match the creepy ambience of System Shock 2.

### Alone in the Dark

Alone in the Dark was released in 1992 and as such remains one of the first ever survival horror games. At the time it was at the cutting edge of technology, though by today's standards it remains rather dated and tame. The game was in full 3D and tasked players with investigating the house of a man who committed suicide under mysterious circumstances. Soon it is revealed that the house was built on a sinister location and a former resident is desperate to try and use the player in a sinister occult ritual, which you must find a way to stop and escape the house. The game was influenced heavily by the famous horror

writer, H. P. Lovecraft and as such featured an excellent set of enemies and a great horror atmosphere.

Many enemies couldn't be defeated using normal means and had to be stopped by solving a puzzle which would disable or destroy them, leading to a game focused on exploration and clue gathering. The ability to play as two characters was a welcome addition and added extra playability to the game. Alone in the Dark was a pioneer and helped to lay down a template and formula that was taken and developed by most other horror franchise, but the game remains an excellent example of how to make a survival horror title. Besides, the game had one of the best endings ever, be careful getting into a taxi in future...





# ARTICLE

## THE SCARIEST GAMES... EVER



### The Suffering

Releasing a new survival horror franchise was always going to be a risky move, especially when the field was dominated by a few genre examples.

However, Midway had a surprise hit on their hands with this very adult horror title which didn't pull any punches. You play as a death-row inmate who is thrown out of the frying pan into the fire when his island prison is suddenly overrun by bizarre monstrosities who promptly set out slaughtering everything in their path. Having no choice but to team up with whoever he can (or

simply kill them), Torque tries to escape and survive. The game is very well designed and features monster design by Stan Winston, with the enemies all designed around methods of execution. The plot was also remarkably well fleshed out, with 3 possible outcomes and differences occurring depending on how you played the game. The story was fairly shocking and there are several points in the game where events get very creepy. A sequel soon followed which built on the first game introducing new elements and continuing the story, it is currently unknown whether the story will continue on the next generation of consoles.

### Forbidden Siren

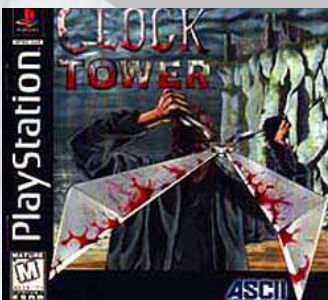
Forbidden Siren was released in Europe in 2004 and plays like a different type of survival horror. The game appears similar to Silent Hill in design due to members of the development team pursuing Siren as a different project.

The game takes place in an isolated town during the horrific aftermath of a ritual in which it is raining blood and the locals have been turned into monstrous indestructible creatures. The game was very strong and adult, enemies were

terrifying in design: their eyes constantly bled, they wielded weaponry and actively hunted down the player.

The focus in this game was very much on stealth and hiding, which led to unbearable scenes of tension. Fortunately the player has the ability to "sightjack" which allows them to see through the eyes of the creatures and this can be used to avoid confrontation and sneak past.

It proved successful in Japan (despite one of the advertisements being banned) and spawned a variety of sequels, the latest of which is due for release soon.



### Clock Tower

A point and click survival horror? Surprisingly the answer to that question is yes. Released in 1995, the game was a different style. You play a girl who, alongside a few other children is adopted and sent to the "Clock Tower" mansion of the title (mansions are popular horror locations, no?). Upon arrival, she is promptly pursued by a psychopathic scissor-wielding killer who proceeds to kill off her friends. Desperate

to try to know what is going on, you solve a series of puzzles and clues, all the while trying to avoid death.

The point and click format made the game surprisingly engaging and tense. The fact that you had no choice but to flee was a clever one to implement and there were often subtle chilling interactions, like taps which ran with blood. The series received a few sequels, but never really gathered popularity in Europe or America and as such another sequel seems unlikely.

### F.E.A.R.

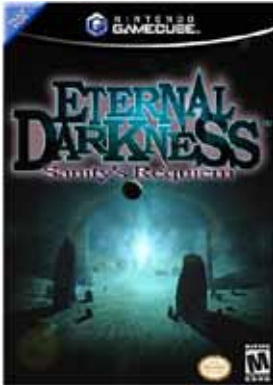
F.E.A.R. (First Encounter Assault and Recon) literally blasted its way into the horror genre in 2005. Instead of favouring the slow and methodical psychological terror of many other games on this list, F.E.A.R. instead went for the jump out of your seat shocks. About as subtle as shooting someone in slow motion with a shotgun can be, the game nonetheless had some eerie moments. The sections of the game in between the stand out gun fights were actually really rather sinister. Faint glimpses of a small child walking around corners only to vanish were

commonplace but set the scene well. The developers also used off screen action to get the shocks, sudden flashes on screen, screams and members of your team mysteriously vanishing were all effective ways of making you jump. Perhaps one of the best moments in the game is the sudden introduction of an enemy that can appear out of thin air and their introduction which takes you by surprise. With a series of expansions and an upcoming sequel, some have criticised F.E.A.R. for sticking to the same predictable scares over and over. F.E.A.R. 2 is scheduled for release in February, where it remains to be seen whether some new methods can be found.



# ARTICLE

## THE SCARIEST GAMES... EVER



### Eternal Darkness

This is a game that shows that Nintendo can do games for adults as well as new franchises, which only raises the question, why don't they do it more often? Eternal Darkness was a breath of fresh air and a true survival horror classic. This was a game of sheer genius, which rested on the sanity of the protagonist. You take the role of Alexandra who is investigating the murder of her grandfather, when mysterious things start to happen. The scarier things get the game changes, which is an incredibly sinister and manipulative device: it's brilliant. Messages saying that saved data was erased, coupled with

messages saying that the console was broken weren't real but appeared to be, leading to many people switching off their console and losing saved progress. This was a survival horror game that could actually make you lose your grip on reality.

The game was frustrating but scary as you weren't entirely sure when you would lose control of your character due to "the controller not being plugged in" or when the game decides to double the number of enemies on screen and then realising half aren't there!

Eternal Darkness is a game that deserves a sequel as it was a great original idea that deserved to be developed. Sadly, it seems that the story won't be developed.

### S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Shadow of Chernobyl

A largely non-linear FPS-RPG doesn't sound like the normal formula for a scary game, but that's what helps make S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Shadow of Chernobyl so terrifyingly atmospheric. You're lost and alone with weak weapons and little ammo, surrounded by hungry mutants. Now that's the definition of scary.

Chills down the back of the spine are too frequent to ever feel relaxed and comfortable, but what fun it is when you realise how you've just reacted to some glorified pixels on a screen.

But what makes S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Shadow of Chernobyl so scary isn't just the frightening shock of being jumped on

by a pack of irradiated hounds, its constant trepidation you experience as you walk through the eerie "Zone" with an accompanying score of howls and screams. To add to this are the linear missions, most notably Labs X18 and X16.

The type of nightmares you haven't even imagined yet are waiting to emotionally scar even the bravest of souls. And I'm not talking about graphical violence, but strange and freaky events you could never anticipate beforehand or forget afterwards.

The sequel Clear Sky failed to capitalise on any of these spooky fortes, but what happened to me in those dark and lonely labs will haunt forever.

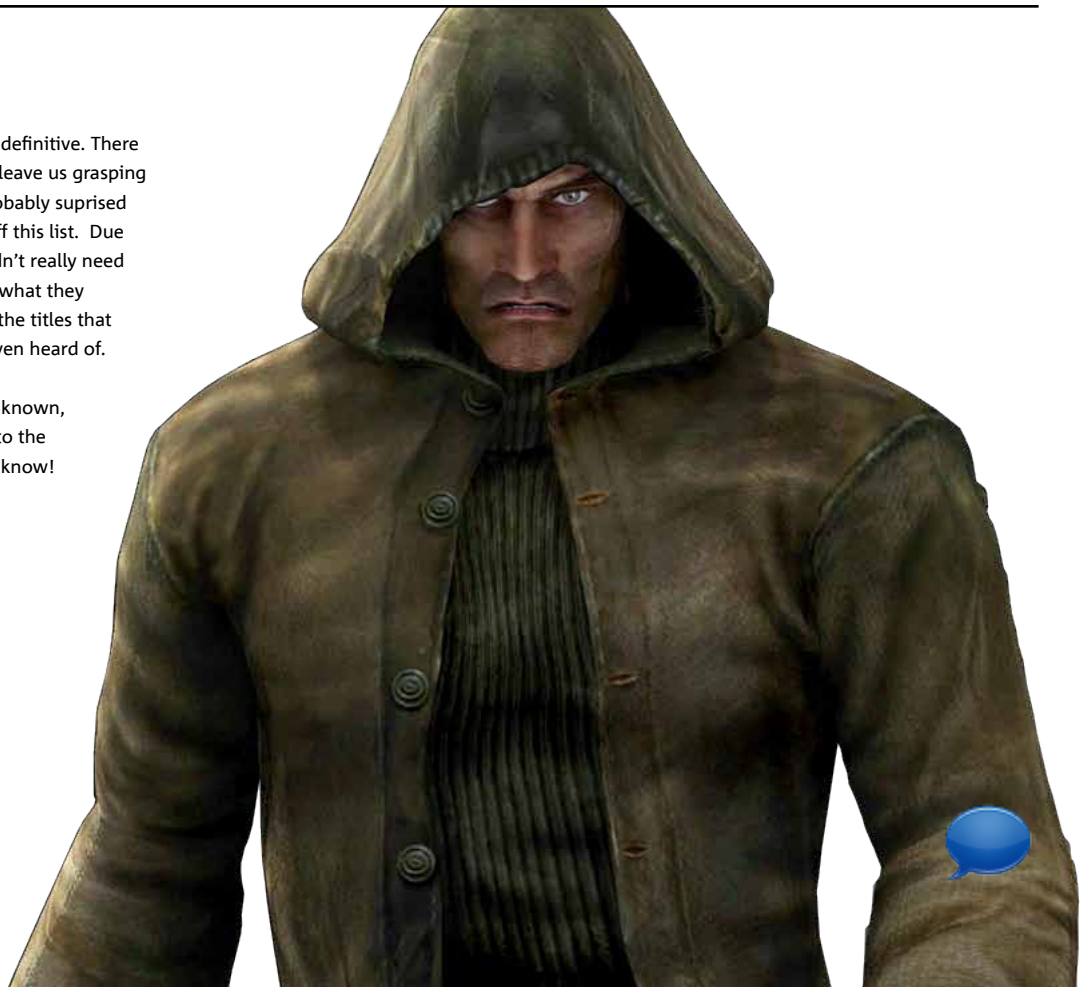


### Other Games...

Don't think for one second that this list is definitive. There are many other games out there that can leave us grasping for a clean pair of trousers, and you're probably surprised the likes of DOOM and Quake were left off this list. Due to the popularity of those games, they didn't really need any limelight, everybody knows them for what they are. This list, however, brings up some of the titles that some avid horror gamers may not have even heard of.

If you have any titles that are relatively unknown, and want to share experiences, pop over to the forums at [www.gameon.co.uk](http://www.gameon.co.uk), and let us know!

Chris Wakefield





# REVIEW

## F.E.A.R.



reviewed by:  
mohamed magdy

platform:  
pc

developer:  
monolith

publisher:  
vivendi universal

genre:  
first person shooter

released:  
18/10/2005

A lot of titles managed to scribe their name through history, A lot more withered trying. Developers grinding gamers as if they are playing a large MMO game, that is life. Every one wants his idea to be the one. The "Neo" Idea. But (I don't know whether to say sadly or say cheerfully enough...) only a handful have the ability to plot their names through history. And that is when F.E.A.R comes in.

F.E.A.R (which Monolith Studios obviously chosen that name only to give me cramps from typing that name each time) is a game that when you play it, you either scowl your screen for more, or that feeling would perish right from the start.

The new Horror - Action game is set on the near future where the USA (and it's 1001 private agencies) have decided to (yet again) make a new "Tactical Team" that should face the worst and welcome it with open arms. In other words they breed Neo, Hercules, Gandalf, and Chuck Norris all in one team to face "Those-who-shouldn't-be-spoken-about".

When it hit he shelves no one almost believed how much glamour and luster it had coated up in. The graphics, AI, game play, and the story all were great that it redeemed the disadvantages that might accompany such game. Deffinatly if you are into horror/action games you should buy it, it has a new feeling and honestly it does surpass Doom 3.

First Encounter Assault Recon (or F.E.A.R) is set in the near future where you are a newly transferred agent to the unit. As convenient as it might be, a disaster strikes and your team gets to be summoned in for investigation. Apparently some military operation have malfunctioned (seems that this reason won't stop showing up in games), a guy named Paxton Fettle, a commander controlling a genetically modified army has gone rogue. The game picks up with a scene showing you how "bad" the guy is and what happened after. you get sent you and a colleague to start investigation on the whereabouts of that guy. F.E.A.R isn't a single aspect success, no it excels in every branch there

is, whether it being graphics, AI, Atmosphere, or even sounds. My computer as an example (which might resemble a portion of yours too) is a low end PC (considering what is offered on the market now) so I have turn down graphics and even play it on low resolution. Frankly I thought the graphics will suck probably and I won't enjoy it. But Monolith took the liberty of proving me wrong. With Anti-aliasing turned off, resolution of 800x600 and turned down into a low graphics mode. This game still have the best graphics out there, even surpassing the new Half Life 2. If it looked that "horrible" on my low end PC imagine what it would look like on one of the new GeForce graphics . Even though my processor is 2.8 Intel HT, I managed with turning some of the options down (not all to be honest, I still managed to see the ribbles and reflections on water) it plays smoothly with no lags at all.

For that we must say not only the graphics that brings you to a bewilderment but also the atmosphere, and the music in game. Not only they push you right in the story, but it also serves right when the situation comes for you to wet your seat. And sadly enough I almost did twice. Not less than once I get visited by Mr. Fettle to remind me that I am not safe as I think it is because I just killed a dozen or so of his soldiers. Maybe this game is all horror and thrilling but I have to tell you, stopping every now and then to admire the graphics and the amount of details put in the environment is massive. Maybe it seems like you are going around in dungeons and sewers but you will have to admire the Graphics' designers work they pretty much did a lot more than a good job.

The AI however is a break through, I can't stress enough on how great this AI is. Mind you I had to replay a lot of portions of this game because of that specific reason. Not only will they behave like humans. But they will convince you they are by the time you decide what to do on the next battle with your opponents. Take this for instance if you don't believe me. My objective was simple to sweep a place and to find Mr.

Fettle (Well finding Fettle is the main objective from the start to the end of the game) I just got out from a "thrilling situation" and was hoping to chill for a moment. Here I am walking in a hallway when I am faced with a window and a door, but a couple of meters in front of me there is a staircase. As the lazy guy I am, I took the door of course. But I thought that I should probably take a look out the window, and I did. Luckily enough I spotted 4 guys out there with machine guns and sweeping off the place.

What would you do if you were in my position? Well I chose the staircase then, I went down and I saw a door and it was heading to the same area, only that it was guarded. I went back up and I managed to take out the glass of the windows quietly. I readied my sniper rifle (that I got from the ground not too long ago) And took aim. BAM two of them is down, that leaves two. I scouted the area with my scope and found them. I tried to kill them but as said the AI is too good, they were behind cover and shooting from behind it (They do know how to crouch behind covers, make their own covers, and even lean from behind covers to shoot). I realized the tactic immediately one of them is going to make a run to the stairs leading to the window I am sniping from while the other provides cover. So still being lazy I took out the guy behind cover and the other guy feel back seeking shelter, too late for him because a bullet managed to rest in his temple. Win was far away for me, because the minute that guy died I was on the load screen. I was furious of coarse I loaded up the game right before I chose which way and this time I went with the same scheme to see how the hell I died.

After replaying much of the last paragraph I realized that the first time I miss counted them and there was 6 of them really and two were getting up the stairs (the ones I lazily skipped) and by the time I managed to kill of them, they stealthily managed to sneak up on me and put my digital soul to rest. I managed to replay that very part again, this time I used the stairs and went the "Rambo" style by shooting

everything that moves with a shotgun. Sadly enough they grouped up on me and I was dead. Bottom line is, unless you start dealing with those AI bots you think worthless with some respect and with some intelligence you will be as good as dead.

Ofcourse Monolith didn't want you out there unprepared so they have equipped you with some cool gadget. You will have the basic weapons of all times, The Pistols. But don't get hasty and underestimate those, because apparently a well aimed shoot to the head will put the most cunning opponent to rest, or a couple in the chest if that matter. Following up is two types of machine guns, one for low distances the other for far ones. There is also the Nail Gun. You will only find that almost with one type of mobs, the full armored guys. There is also the normal explosive grenades and flash bangs. There is also the Sniper Rifle and the Gatling Gun, beating out your opponents instantly to vapor.

F.E.A.R is going to diffently put it's mark on the market, and will find a good cozy place in the heart of gamers. But hear this playing it with your wife beside you, batting you on the back, or in broad daylight, you won't get what it is all about (not that you shouldn't play it at those times..). Waking up at 1 AM opening up your windows that looks over the creepy tree, lights are out, sitting alone in the dark and putting the sound up as high as you can however will provide you with the most sheer excitement you will ever face playing F.E.A.R.



playability ★★★★★★★★☆☆  
re-playability ★★★★★★★★☆☆  
graphics ★★★★★★★★☆☆  
sound ★★★★★★★★☆☆



9/10



## STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED



reviewed by:  
stuart gunn

platform:  
psp

developer:  
lucasarts,  
krome studios

publisher:  
lucasarts

genre:  
action adventure

released:  
16/09/2008

If you've been hiding under a rock in a galaxy far far away, or blanking out when those pesky TV adverts have been on (I've been known to do that sometimes), then you'll not know about the latest Star Wars game from Lucas Arts.

Oh no, not another Star Wars game!

This one is slightly different from all the rest. Granted it's based in the Star Wars Universe and you do play a force wielding character, but that's where the similarities end. For "Star Wars: The Force Unleashed" is all about Darth Vader's secret apprentice, trained to be a Sith and tasked with killing the remaining Jedi in the Galaxy.

The game is based between "Revenge of the Sith" and "A New Hope", where Lord Vader is tracking down the remaining Jedi. And without spoiling too much of the story and the game, your character is the one killing the remaining Jedi (and minions!).

Similar to most games out on the market, the beginning level allows you to get a taste of a fully built

character, Vader. You're then given the main character, Starkiller, and have to learn how to use and build up his skill. The difference with this game from most is that instead of starting off good, and then given a choice to stay good or turn bad, "Star Wars: The Force Unleashed" starts you off on the bad side of the force.

**How does it play on my PSP?**

Hardware wise, having only the PSP1001 it becomes apparent that this game has been designed for the PSP2001 and PSP3000 models, as they have more RAM and faster loading times.

The controls are easy to use and the game actually helps you to complete the missions by displaying the keys needed. As already stated though, the loading time is extensive for a PSP game and can get tiresome in-between levels or at key points when short video clips are used. The graphics are what you would expect from LucasArts; nothing short of spectacular. If you've seen the trailers and the TV spots, the game looks exactly like a real movie. There's force power energy, lightning strikes and realistic looking troopers.

The sound score and movie scenes look like they were taken right out of the films, as well. However, due to the loading times, and sometimes freezing of the game to load a new level, the scenes do become a bit unfocused and the sound does chop up at times.

Don't let all of this deter you from playing the game. You really feel like you're in the middle of a battle with troopers fighting and flying left and right, Jedi and Sith fighting to the death and even the occasional screaming Wookiee!

**What's the game play like?**

Well, it's primarily a 3rd person battle game with the camera focus being automatic and always shows you what your character is looking at. This can be annoying when trying to look for hidden items, but it works well when doing battle. Sometimes; however, it does change to a platform style, giving

you a 3D environment to battle bosses with. This can work to your advantage as you're able to see the entire arena and know where the health and other bonuses are (and you're going to need them).

**I want to jump in and fight, what are the game modes?**

Well, for those wanting a quick battle there is the "Forced Unleashed" mode, giving you access to "Duels", "Ancient Battles" and even "Order 66", while choosing from a list of characters and using the force moves you've unlocked in the "Story Mode".

The other mode is obviously the "Story Mode", where you can become the apprentice and find and fight the scattered Jedi around the Galaxy.

As you progress through the game, you can pick up Health boosters and Force boosters (increase your available Health and Force). You can also pick up lightsaber crystals and hilts, using them to change your saber (if you so wish!).

Unfortunately for the PSP version however, there is no multi-player mode meaning that you can't challenge friends to a duel. Other versions like the Wii and PS3 do have this mode but it is believed that the PSP has additional content and a slightly different storyline.

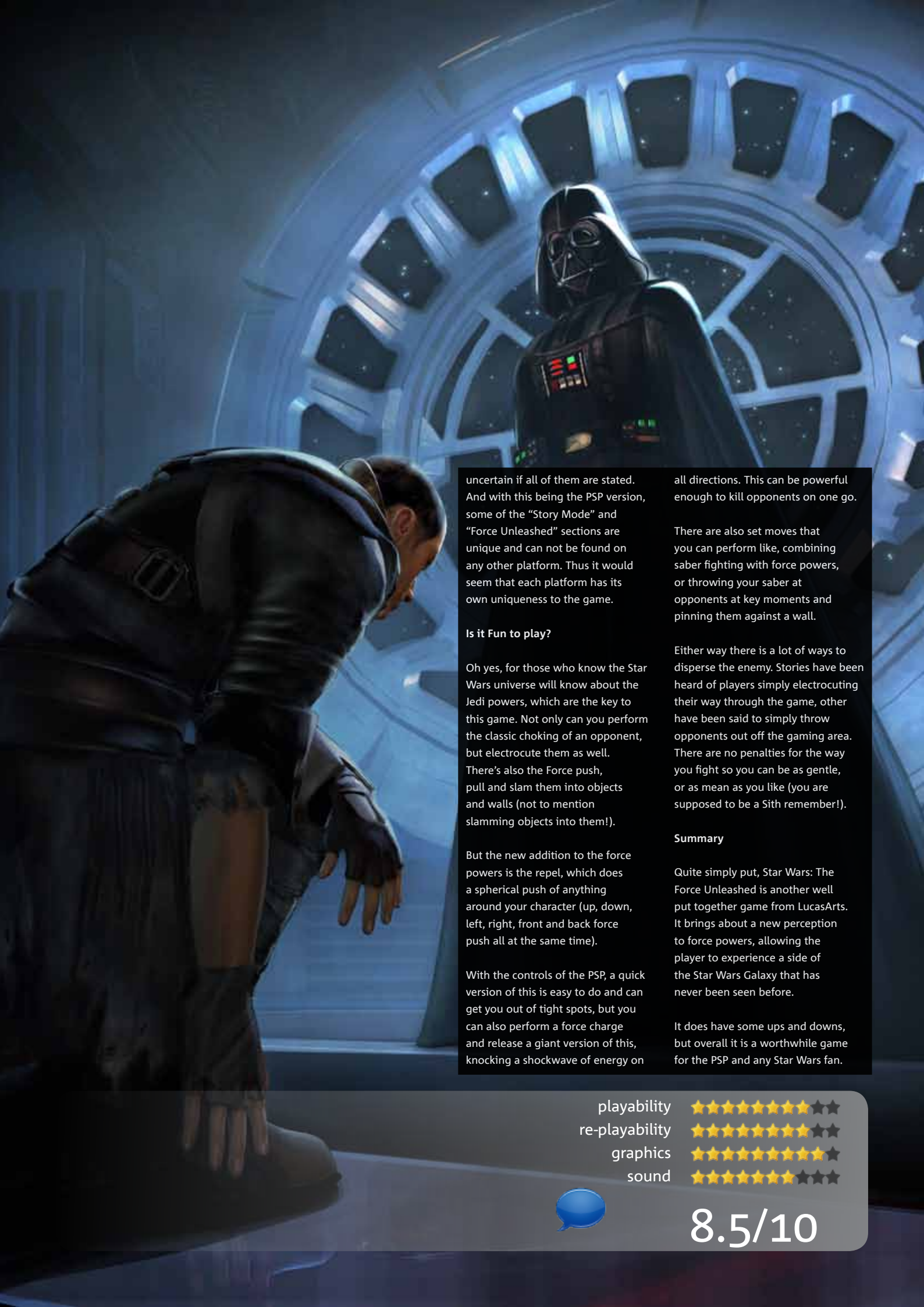
**What about bonuses?**

The "Story Mode" bonuses are called Holocubes. These are not required to complete the game, but give you a bonus insight into the artwork and rendering that made the game possible. But as the game has only just been released, it is uncertain if collecting all of the above gives you further levels or characters in the game.

You can also unlock some arenas and characters as you complete the "Forced Unleashed" section.

For example, a set amount of Duels won will give you a new character, or completing "Order 66" will grant you a new arena. Some of these are stated within the game but it's





uncertain if all of them are stated. And with this being the PSP version, some of the "Story Mode" and "Force Unleashed" sections are unique and can not be found on any other platform. Thus it would seem that each platform has its own uniqueness to the game.

#### Is it Fun to play?

Oh yes, for those who know the Star Wars universe will know about the Jedi powers, which are the key to this game. Not only can you perform the classic choking of an opponent, but electrocute them as well. There's also the Force push, pull and slam them into objects and walls (not to mention slamming objects into them!).

But the new addition to the force powers is the repel, which does a spherical push of anything around your character (up, down, left, right, front and back force push all at the same time).

With the controls of the PSP, a quick version of this is easy to do and can get you out of tight spots, but you can also perform a force charge and release a giant version of this, knocking a shockwave of energy on

all directions. This can be powerful enough to kill opponents on one go.

There are also set moves that you can perform like, combining saber fighting with force powers, or throwing your saber at opponents at key moments and pinning them against a wall.

Either way there is a lot of ways to disperse the enemy. Stories have been heard of players simply electrocuting their way through the game, other have been said to simply throw opponents out off the gaming area. There are no penalties for the way you fight so you can be as gentle, or as mean as you like (you are supposed to be a Sith remember!).

#### Summary

Quite simply put, Star Wars: The Force Unleashed is another well put together game from LucasArts. It brings about a new perception to force powers, allowing the player to experience a side of the Star Wars Galaxy that has never been seen before.

It does have some ups and downs, but overall it is a worthwhile game for the PSP and any Star Wars fan.

playability	★★★★★★★★★★★
re-playability	★★★★★★★★★★★
graphics	★★★★★★★★★★★
sound	★★★★★★★★★★★



# 8.5/10



# REVIEW

## SAINTS ROW 2



reviewed by:  
james bralant

platform:  
xbox 360

developer:  
violation inc

publisher:  
thq

genre:  
action adventure

released:  
17/10/2008

**Saints Row, when it was released back in 2006, never really appealed to me as a game. I had heard that it was just trying to be GTA with a bit of gang killing thrown in. After playing Saints Row 2, my opinion somewhat changed. This isn't a mere copy of the Grand Theft Auto series, it is a fantastic game in it's own rights with it's own unique style of play; and in fact, it could even be seen as better than Grand Theft Auto.**

You begin the game from where the last one left off. It's not really a spoiler, but in the end of the last one, you are seen getting blown up on a boat. In the beginning of the second game, you are in jail on an island. Awakening from a 20 year coma, you are introduced to the player editor. The idea behind this being, that you were "horribly morphed" from the boat explosion.

The editor itself is fantastic. If you think, Spore's Creature Creator meets human, then you can picture this. It's truly outstanding. I mean, who would think that you can change 14 different things about your ears alone. As well as it being thoroughly extensive, it is absolutely hilarious. You can choose either a male or female character, but no matter which one you choose, they can still have the same traits. For example, you could have a male character with a woman's voice, or a female character that taunts her enemies by tea-bagging them! It's genius.

After you finish editing your either strangely masculine female or over feminine male, you get into the real game. The movement of your character is very easy to get hold of, and you are introduced to some other basic stuff early on. Weapon shooting and weapon changing is done very easily but can take some getting used to, especially if you are a GTA player.

Once you get off the island you were imprisoned on, your mission is to regroup your gang. Twenty years have gone by, and the city of Stilwater, has changed a bit. A company called Ultor have taken over the city and turned it into a modern metropolis. Their wish is to

keep everything perfect, but there are of course gangs of people that want to ruin that peace. You are part of one of those gangs. After breaking out of jail, you meet up with a fellow gang member from the last game with a goal to rebuild your crew and re-take control over the city.

In the second game, there are now 4 gangs: 3rd Street Saints (your gang), Ronin (pimps), Brotherhood (tattoo freaks) and the Sons of Samedi (druggies). Each gang controls one part of the city. Your main goal is to take out each gang, one by one. By doing so, you need to wipe them out in various different ways. Take the Sons of Samedi for example, they mainly specialise in importing, exporting, growing and selling drugs to anyone they can. Once you have wiped out their business, their members and their leaders, then they are eliminated.

One good thing about Saints Row 2 is that you can't just complete the game instantly. You have to take time exploring the city, completing various side missions and gaining enough reputation to continue playing along these main story lines. This idea that THQ have brought in, instantly adds hours to the game length, which is great for everyone that wants the best for their money.

Some of the side missions are ingenious, and then again, some aren't. An example of a fantastic one, is Insurance Fraud. It makes the best and most out of a brilliant physics engine that the game has, by encouraging you to quite literally throw yourself in front of cars to claim compensation. After doing so for a certain period of time, adrenaline mode starts, where every time you hit a car, the physics engine overloads and sends you flying into the air, it's brilliant to watch, and to play. Other good examples are Mayhem; where you destroy everything you can in a certain time with unlimited ammo; and Septic Avenger, where you go around spraying everything you can with toxic waste. As I said though, there are some bad ones. Heli Assault is one, the idea is that you fly around, protecting your 'Homies' as they run certain errands. Sounds

simple enough, and usually it is. The problem is, the helicopter flying is terrible. Saying it was unpredictable, would be an understatement. You could be flying, quite causally over your 'Homie', take a turn, and be flipped upside down in mid air. Once this has happened, there is no way of counter acting it; so you are quite simply, doomed to fail.

As I am on the subject of bad points, I may as well state the few others there are. On many occasions during some side missions, the AI can be very stupid. An example would be the AI attempting to turn the corner and repetitively ramming into a wall whilst I get shot to pieces in the passenger seat. The only other real gripe I have, is the lack of checkpoints. All too often during missions, I get a long way through, get killed, and start all the way back at the beginning of the mission. It can be a tad annoying sometimes but there is a simple solution for this; not to die.

Humour is something that works brilliantly with Saints Row 2. I found myself laughing out loud at a lot of the cut scenes during the game and various acts that take place during play. The voice acting is something that adds to the effect, which each and every character having a quirky impact throughout the entire game. Some crack jokes, some look funny and some are just plain wacky. I haven't enjoyed playing a game in such a way for a long time.

The game shows off a lot of cool features that make you think more often than not: "Oh, that's quite a cool little feature". During the few loading screens there is in the game, instead of there being random artwork, you are presented with various screen shots of previous cut scenes you have viewed. As well as this, there are times in the game where you are destroying drug stashes. If you get to close to the drugs after they have been eliminated, there is a possibility you will get high, and the screen will turn into a frantic mass of waves and psychedelic colours. Transport throughout the game, with the exception of helicopters, is very good indeed. It isn't realistic

in the slightest, but it is defiantly a good feature. If you are in a car, and wish to go on a frenzied killing spree, you can press LB and switch on Cruise Control. This gives you the freedom of shooting at objects outside your car, without worrying about holding down the accelerator. Bikes are also very good to handle and planes aren't too bad either.

Achievements that can be unlocked throughout the game reflect how the makers of this game want you to play - thoroughly. You only get a couple achievements in the beginning, and a single one each time you successfully wipe out a gang. The rest are more specific in things such as completing each and every level of a side mission and doing special moves in free roaming. Of course there are secret ones too which I can only assume are for successfully tagging each and every specified spot around the city with your spray can, and collecting all the CD's you find around the city.

Co-operative mode is a great input into the game as it gives you a chance to run a around rampant with your friend sitting either next to your, or online somewhere across the world completing missions and destroying structures in endless ways. Although the single player is massive, it's always a lot better to have something like a co-op mode just to enhance the gameplay that little bit more.

Saints Row 2 is in a word, fantastic. In the games that I have played where free roaming and mindless killing have been involved, I haven't had more fun. It's fast paced, frantic action packed fun. It doesn't get boring, it doesn't get annoying and it's definitely one that will keep you playing for a very long time. Even if you haven't played the first game, this is one that will surely keep you entertained visually and mentally.



playability	★★★★★★★★★★
re-playability	★★★★★★★★★★
graphics	★★★★★★★★★★
sound	★★★★★★★★★★



9.5/10



# ARTICLE

## LONDON MCM EXPO

The weekend of 25th/26th October saw the latest MCM (Movies Comics Media) Expo event, this time held at the ExCel exhibition centre in central London. The events, held throughout the year, celebrate the finest animation along with top science-fiction and fantasy movies and television. GameOn previously attended the Expo event held in Telford last month and looked forward to this latest extravaganza.

Queues of fans, many in costume, were stretching along the main concourse long before the doors opened. As the queues grew and the cavalcade of colourful characters began to feed into the hall, visitors got their first chance to browse the stalls and exhibitors. As well as the comic and memorabilia sellers; EA, Ubisoft and KOEI were amongst the games publishers and developers giving gamers a chance to sample their latest and upcoming releases.

The presence of games was greatly increased this time around, as the Expo was featured as part of the London Games Festival. As midday approached, visitors braced the autumn air as they began to assemble on the steps overlooking the Royal Victoria Dock for an attempt on the World Record for "Largest gathering of people dressed as video games characters".

For many this was the first real chance to show off their costumes; space was at a premium within the exhibition hall itself, especially around the traders, making it hard to truly appreciate the amount of work put in to some of the costumes. Semi-professional costuming group UK Garrison (and spin-off Reel Icons) were out in force and as authentic as always, with a number of Stormtroopers, Colonial Marines, Aliens and Predators amongst others; however the homemade costumes were just as impressive, even with the substantially smaller budgets. The sense of joy and excitement amongst the crowd as they recognised characters in amongst the masses was incredible, with every movement revealing

costumes which had previously been obscured. The UKG members patrolling the terrace were excluded from the World Record attempt as all of their costumes were first and foremost film or television characters, so it was up to the gathered games fans to secure the record. The record was first set in March of this year and stood at 80 until a couple of weeks ago; a German event in September was officially recognised as the new record holder in the week before the MCM Expo, raising the bar to 337 people. As organisers made announcements for any last stragglers to register, the record inched nearer and was eventually surpassed, reaching a total of 342 and eliciting a loud cheer as the certificate was held aloft.

Back inside the hall, the panel sessions were getting underway as well as opportunities for photos and autographs. There was some disappointment amongst visitors as spaces filled up quickly whilst others were left facing long queues at the signing desks. Amongst the famous faces drawing in the crowds were stars of television series Heroes, Merlin, Primeval and Battlestar Galactica; asked about his experiences at the Expo, Greg Grunberg who plays mind-manipulating Matt Parkman in Heroes, enthusiastically replied "This is the best as far as how we are being received. It's just well organised - it's the show to come to in the UK", whilst Primeval's Andrew Lee Potts seemed to think he was elsewhere; "It's big isn't it!" he commented "I had no idea. It's like the Ideal Home Show... but with cartoon characters!"

As well as the MCM events, the MCM Expo Group also runs Memorabilia which focuses on collectables and classic television - the next event is scheduled for 22nd/23rd November at the NEC in Birmingham, and JapanEX which celebrates all aspects of Japanese culture - the event was not held this year but is due to return next year. See some of the photos from the event on the next page, and click to goto the full gallery!

Matt Studd









# REVIEW

## CONDEMNED 2



reviewed by:  
chris wakefield

platform:  
playstation 3

developer:  
monolith

publisher:  
sega

genre:  
action adventure

released:  
04/04/2008

**Firstly, I like survival horror games. In my opinion creeping down pitch black, dark industrial corridors filled with gibbering freaks is a pretty good way to unwind, so it is nice to see Condemned 2 delivering on these grounds.**

Having never played the original I was a little anxious about not being able to follow the plot, but thankfully the game provides several catch up sections to help get you up to speed without wasting too much time. The game throws you in at the deep end, playing Ethan Thomas the protagonist from the first title, who has become an alcoholic tramp following his previous experiences.

Soon it becomes clear that the city is in the grip of some strange crisis, the streets are lined with people desperate to batter you to death with various nasty implements. To make matters worse, Ethan's old employers contact him to help out with a series of bizarre murder cases. Inevitably nothing is quite what it seems...

The core gameplay consists of first person combat, which is one of the games strongest elements. This perspective gives the game some real scenes of tension and the immersion created is impressive. There are some memorable set pieces, the escape from a burning building wearing a gas mask which restricts your vision, whilst trying to fight off waves of psychotic lunatics is a particular standout.

The first person view also helps to add a visceral strength to the truly brutal melee combat which is genuinely bone crunching. Fire arms are a luxury; instead you will tend to fight off people using rusty pipes, broken bottles and in one surreal situation a table football piece. When your blows connect you have nowhere else to look and this lends real weight to the violence. The brutality of the moves and the reactions of the enemy only help to add to the general viciousness of the game.

The system can be punishingly difficult to master though, with L1 and R1 being your left and right attacks which form the core basics

of melee. You have to quickly learn the combos and the importance of blocking and gaining the upper hand with any weapon possible. There are times in the game when the system seems unforgiving, but by persevering or trying a new tactic you can get past these with a sense of achievement.

It is worth mentioning that this game is definitely not for those under the age of 18. There are some scenes which are pretty shocking and I was surprised at some parts being passed by the censors especially with the furore over video game violence at the moment. The inclusion of environmental finishing moves, reminiscent of The Punisher game, allows you to execute your enemy in a particularly hideous manner.

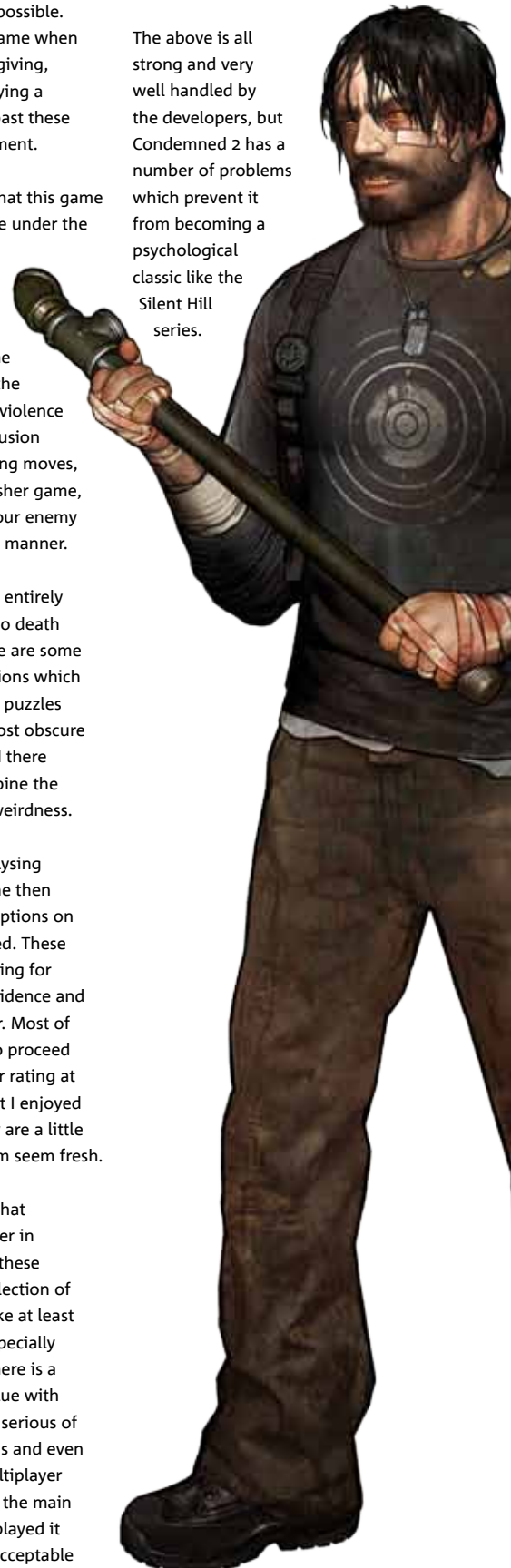
However, the game isn't entirely about clubbing junkies to death with table legs and there are some interesting forensic sections which remind me of CSI. These puzzles are much better than most obscure survival horror ones and there certainly isn't any "combine the apple with the turnip" weirdness.

Mostly they involve analysing evidence at a crime scene then selecting from a list of options on what you think happened. These generally include searching for clues, photographing evidence and examining blood spatter. Most of them aren't necessary to proceed and simply improve your rating at the end of a mission, but I enjoyed them and although they are a little underused it makes them seem fresh.

I was also very pleased that Condemned 2 wasn't over in a flash like most games these days. There is a good selection of levels, most of which take at least an hour to complete, especially on higher difficulties. There is a good sense of replay value with plenty of unlockables, a serious of combat based challenges and even a multiplayer mode. Multiplayer builds on the combat of the main game and whilst I only played it briefly it seemed to be acceptable if difficult. Although, I am unsure of

how popular a melee first person multiplayer game will prove to be in the long term.

The above is all strong and very well handled by the developers, but Condemned 2 has a number of problems which prevent it from becoming a psychological classic like the Silent Hill series.







Firstly, you generally can't go 5 minutes without a deranged murderer jumping out at you. If the game's developers had rationed out the combat a bit more then it might have created more tension and atmosphere. Whilst there are a number of scripted moments which work well, the game as whole tends to descend into violence whenever it thinks there is a lull. Whilst this by no means ruins the game, it prevents it from really getting to you and having a lasting impact.

There are also occasional "shooting" levels where the melee combat goes out of the window and instead you spend it blasting people with assault rifles which tends to undo the hard work of making guns seem a lethal godsend in the earlier missions. The shooting combat is also tricky, with a few hits required to kill you, making you replay some sections

over and over, especially on harder difficulties.

I was also annoyed that at times when your character needs to progress you can press X and clamber over lockers and obstacles, yet when the game doesn't want you to do this it is unavailable. It creates a strange inconsistency where you can't even step over a foot high metal girder, which breaks the realism of the game.

However, perhaps my main issue with the game is the frankly weird plot direction the game moves towards in the final few levels. I can't remember playing a game when things get so odd in such a short space of time. I won't go into the details, to avoid spoilers, but you may well be left disappointed at the switch away from horror to other genres.

Yet, criticism of the plot is merely my opinion and I am sure there will be some people who enjoy the changes. However, I really prefer it when a game takes time and focuses on the chilling elements that are familiar and distorts them. The first few levels of Condemned 2 really succeed in this and I found it disappointing that it undid this with a story which had me scratching my head at the peculiar developments. Yet, if you are a fan of survival horror then Condemned 2 is definitely worth a play, though a rental may be a slightly better idea to get a feel for the game first. The first true next gen horror title for the PS3 does a good job; the visuals and sound in particular really push the boat out and rarely have those pitch black industrial corridors looked so good. One word of advice though, try not to be overheard talking about the game out of context otherwise people might start to worry. "Well, there was this tramp that jumped out at me, so I grabbed a toilet seat and started to beat him...." You have been warned.

playability



re-playability



graphics



sound



8/10



# REVIEW

## BEJEWELLED 2



reviewed by:  
**pete o'brien**

platform:  
**pc**

developer:  
**popcap games**

publisher:  
**popcap games**

genre:  
**puzzle**

released:  
**5/11/2004**

The first in what has now become a highly successful "casual" range by PopCap, Bejeweled is a straightforward puzzle game. That was nearly seven years ago, and since then there has been numerous variants of the "match 3" concept, including its sequel, the cunningly named Bejeweled 2.

I acknowledge I got off to a really bad start with this game. As soon as the installer decided to spoil my neatly organised disk drive by automatically installing to the program files folder, I was rather irritated. The initial annoyance was soon reversed once I realised what a relaxing game this can be. I was greeted with gentle, motivating music, calm views of snow capped mountains, and a soft, somewhat cute menu. For those not familiar with the premise of Bejeweled, let me enlighten you. The gameplay involves you simply swapping one "gem" with a neighbouring one. The purpose being that you line up three or more of the same type of gem. When such a chain is created, the gems vanish causing everything above to fall down, with new gems being dropped to fill the gaps. During this process, a combination of new chains may form either by chance or through careful planning, which will gain you a lovely set of bonus points and a satisfying "excellent" from the announcer.

There are the numerous game modes to try which helps keep things varied and interesting. The first being "Classic", where the goal is to simply reach a set score on increasing difficulty levels. This I enjoyed until several levels down the line, when I ran out of possible moves to make. The announcer kindly told me the fact I had "no more moves", with the consequences being you have to do the whole process all over again. Several times I reached just beyond the third level just to fail, resulting in a complete loss of motivation to even try again. A simple fix would have been to have a checkpoint system, so you can at least restart the current level instead of having to start from scratch. I hate to think of the frustration on reaching the last level just to have to start over.

The other modes include "Action", which is essentially the same as the Classic mode, but with the points you score contributing to a timer which slowly winds down to zero, thus making things a tad more tense. "Puzzle" mode is a real brain teaser, in which the aim is to complete a preset block of gems, with a mounting difficulty of creativity required to eliminate all gems. The final mode you are given is "Endless", which is a never ending game with no final score or timer, and no risk of running out of moves. This in my opinion is by far the best element of the game, since you can sit back at your own leisure and enjoy the pleasures of what this game has to offer. There are also

several other "Secret" modes to unlock, but since they are defined as being secret, I shall leave them as a surprise.

The game also features four different types of gems to keep things spicy. "Power" gems are formed by matching four in a row, which when matched up explode, smashing nearby gems and bringing in a gathering of points. "Hyper cubes", formed by matching five gems in a row, can be used to eliminate all gems of the same type on screen. "Bombs" and "Rocks" are found solely in puzzle mode. The former being a timed detonation, destroying gems in the vicinity, while the latter is a nuisance block which can only be removed by an explosion. It's a pleasure to say it's all been presented well. The graphics are glittery, concise if somewhat basic, but it all has a nice enough feel to it. The audio is very respectable, with a superb range of gentle and captivating music, with good sound effects complimenting this. Couple all this with the Endless mode and you have a tranquil and charming game, which has calmed me down after a stressful day on endless occasions, if you can excuse the pun. It's a bit of a surprise then that the announcer's voice is a deep bellowing male, as opposed to something soothing and easy on the ear.

Other minor criticisms include a lack of options to make things a little more customisable. For starters it's not exactly that colour blind friendly. The different types of gems may have different shapes, but for me it's hard to see any difference between a brown hexagonal gem and a green octagonal gem. This creates quite a bit of strain on the eyes, and a little more care and attention would have been appreciated. There is also no way of turning off the automatic hint suggestions which pop up if you don't make a move after a short while. This is a useful feature for keeping the pace of the game going, but can be a pain if you're a purist or just want to take it at your own pace. Some sort of multiplayer would have been nice too; taking turns on a single board trying to out play each other would beat a high score table any day.

Bejeweled 2 is the next step on from its prequel; the same "match 3" concept, but with better visuals, sound, and a host of new game modes to keep you occupied with. Whether you're looking for a casual session to unwind, or thought provoking puzzle matrimony, you could do a lot worse than poke around with this purchase. I personally found it a real struggle to get on with the actual core of the game, as I frequently felt like the game went out of its way just to aggravate rather than relax. I'm sure there will be Bejeweled maestros reading this who are screaming out that I've missed the point of this game. But by just playing the Endless mode as a means to chill out, I have found a safe haven away from the cares of the world.

playability ★★★★★★★★  
re-playability ★★★★★★★★  
graphics ★★★★★★★★  
sound ★★★★★★★★



8/10

# THE COLUMN

## DO VIDEOGAMES CAUSE VIOLENCE?

In 8th or 9th grade, ages ago it seems, I wrote a paper on videogames and whether or not they cause violent behaviour. Do violent games really make us more aggressive? There are a lot of people that can be listed on the negative scale in this question. Concerned parents, certain politicians, some scientists, etc. These people will argue that the younger generation is growing up learning that violence is okay.

However, as far as I know there isn't any legitimate evidence that this is the case. In order to fail to make the distinction between beating someone with a bat on screen and doing so in real life (a scenario which has happened in real life), one must suffer from a mental state even before starting to play any videogames at all.

As an example, think of school shootings. These have frequently been blamed on videogames. But do you really think the killers were perfectly fine before they started to play videogames? And if they were, wouldn't it be more likely that the cause of the problem would lie outside the world of gaming? While there are some studies that do point towards increased violent tendencies among those who play violent videogames, there aren't really any – to my knowledge – that prove the actual violence in the games to be the cause. Yet this is what people tend to put the blame on: the violence seen on screen. We see violence in the movies we watch and hear it in the music we listen to, yet it's videogames that take the heavy blow.

The difference is that videogames are interactive and competitive, resulting in a stronger state of focus and an easier way to actually feel like you're a part of the game.

What I'm trying to say is that visually there isn't any major difference between for example movies and videogames, and neither can be proved to cause violent behaviour. However, a reason for videogames to be a villain in this matter is, the way I see it, the sense of competition. Even if there's less blood on screen, it's the element of competing – against the computer or other human players – that can cause a problem. We get so into it that the emotions can stick with us even after we stop playing. Yet, in defence of videogames, it is very important to remember that competing lies within the human nature.

We simply can't exist without competing against each other. And, when you look at other things involving competing against others, physical sports aren't any better.

Why do you suppose those football or hockey players always seem to fight? It's a fierce, adrenaline-packed and fast-paced battle, and on that point videogames and physical sports are quite similar. So yes, perhaps videogames do cause violent behaviour, but what I want people to remember is that it isn't the presence of violence in the games that's a problem, but rather the element of competition. And the element of competition exists everywhere, not only in videogames.

Thus, it's without valid support that videogames in particular are blamed, as they're only a small part of the problem. So if you want to ban a certain videogame for its violent content, you might just as well ban the sport of ice hockey while you're at it.

Johan Dahlberg





# COFFEE BREAK

## THIS MONTH IN NEWS...

### UK Console sales update

UK console sales have significantly increased over the past 12 months, with the combined sales of the "Big 5" nearly doubling over the past year to 17.3 million. The seldom released UK console sale figures, courtesy of GfK Chart Track, revealed that the Nintendo Wii once again reigned supreme with 3.6m units shifted, with the Xbox 360 falling behind with 2.3m units. The PS3 remains in last place with 1.4m units sold over the same period, but the gap is closing. The Nintendo DS won the handheld crown, shifting 7.1m units, while the PSP continues to struggle, selling a modest 2.9m units.

### Nintendo announce the DS-i

The first details of the all new DS-i have been announced at Nintendo's Tokyo conference. The most notable addition for the DS-i is the respectable 3 megapixel camera and accompanying SD card slot, which means on-the-go snaps are now possible. Music playback, built-in Flash memory and an Internet explorer browser were also mentioned, as was the interesting decision to remove the GBA slot altogether, which will no doubt alienate many. The DS-i will also feature larger dual screens, while being thinner and lighter than the DS Lite. European and US release dates are yet to be confirmed.

### Manhunt 2 to hit the UK this Halloween

By the time you read this, Manhunt 2 could already be released in the UK. The game was originally refused a rating, and thus banned by the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC) last year, for its "unrelenting bleakness and callousness of tone" – or in plain English, because of the games sickly and grotesque violence. Manhunt 2 was finally approved for release last March, but Rockstar has only just given the game a Halloween release date. Xbox 360 to get exclusive DLC episodes for Tomb Raider: Underworld

### Xbox 360 to get exclusive DLC episodes for Tomb Raider: Underworld

The Xbox 360 will see two exclusive episodes of downloadable content for the upcoming Tomb Raider game, Underworld. The two episodes - titled "Beneath The Ashes" and "Lara's Shadow" - offer up to another six hours of gameplay between them. "Beneath The Ashes" is due for release this Christmas period, and is set to follow on right where the story of Underworld finishes. The second pack, due for release in early 2009, will be introducing a new type of playable character.

### Taste before you buy, Left 4 Dead to get a demo

The hotly awaited zombie-based cooperative shooter, Left 4 Dead, which is currently undergoing development by Valve, will have a playable demo on the PC and Xbox 360 before its November 21st release. This is just one element of a whopping \$10 million (£6m) advertising campaign, which seems an awful lot of money considering the already unprecedented fame Valve's game has. Expect to be able to gobble up the demo in the first week or two of November.

### Halo 3: Recon sighted on the horizon

Details of the stand-alone prequel to Halo 3 have been announced, including a "Fall 2009" release date. Halo 3: Recon will see you take control of a new protagonist in the new single player campaign, in addition to several new maps for the multiplayer modes. This will be the last time that original developers Bungie will work their magic on the hugely popular series, but fear not: Halo Wars and a mysterious Peter Jackson project could well fill your Halo appetite in the future.

### Starcraft 2 to become 3 and 4

Blizzard has announced that the highly anticipated Starcraft 2 is to be released as a trilogy. All three separate games will have the same multiplayer and skirmish modes with all the three factions, but each will have a different campaign based on one of the aforementioned factions. The reasons for doing so are apparently to maintain the quality of the game, while avoiding a delayed the release. The price of each one is yet to be announced, with the year 2009 being the only vague release details known.

### Steam adds Football Manager to its starting line up

Football Manager 2009 will, for the first time its series history, be available to download on Steam. This means that you can pre-purchase and download the game in time for the 14th of November released date, in addition being able to use Steam's automatic update service. A demo of the game is also expected on Steam a few weeks prior to release.

### First PES 09 Wii details scored

It has been announced that Pro Evolution Soccer 2009 on the Nintendo Wii will feature "new AI, more control and modes galore", while retaining the same intuitive "point and click" controls of PES 08. This is while improved AI, co-operative play and the online mode are the big focus points for the Spring 2009 release. There are quite a few of the usual promised improvements and tweaks announced, but these details will be clearer and more accurate closer to the release date.

### Xbox Live Arcade retrofits

Following a summer of original arcade treats, a whole new batch of Xbox Live Arcade (XBLA) retro games has been announced. This list includes Space Invaders Extreme, Arkanoid Live, Meteos Wars, King of Fighters Ultimate 98, Metal Type 7 and R-Type. The news comes after Microsoft announced that they would delay plans to clear out failing arcade titles, including classics such as Pac-Man and Frogger.

### Gears of War goes gold

Gears of War 2 is still probably still going to be a shiny monotone grey colour, but the game's development has at least gone gold. This means that all work on the game is finished, just in time for its November 5th release. The original Gears of War didn't just sell 5 million copies worldwide, but it was a critically acclaimed success too.

### PS3 pricing to remain untouched over Christmas

The price of the PS3 is to remain the same over the coming year, regardless of the "credit crunch". The current price for a standard 80 GB PS3 is around £300, compared to £180 for a Nintendo Wii and £165 for a 60 GB Xbox 360. Console sales are increasing despite the current economic climate, but the PS3 remains routed far behind in the most recent console sale figures. How the other big two manufacturers – Nintendo and Microsoft – play the price cut game over the Christmas holidays is anyone's game.

### Trackmania DS on track for November 21st release

The highly popular Trackmania series will be coming to the Nintendo DS on the 21st of November. British developers Firebrand - who weren't involved in the PC title - are to improve on the successful premise of the creative racing series, by keeping the track-editing tools and multiplayer modes, in addition to some smooth and silky graphics. If you're a DS owner who is even slightly interested in racing games or original concepts, this title is certainly one to look out for.

### Microsoft reveal storage solution for the New Xbox Experience

The New Xbox Experience (NXE) dashboard for the Xbox 360 arrives as a compulsory download on the 19th of November, and you will require 128 MB of hard drive space. But Microsoft has announced some exclusive and generous offers to ensure everyone has the chance to taste the NXE.

Xbox 360 Core and Arcade owners will be able to log into Microsoft's Xbox Storage Upgrade website, and have access to some very special offers, such as a 20 GB HDD for £12.99, or a free 512MB memory unit. Such offers vary depending on your situation.



# COFFEE BREAK

## THE MONTH IN NEWS...

### Portal to sing Xbox Live Arcade, San Andreas coming to Xbox Originals

Microsoft has announced that Portal: Still Alive will be teleporting to Xbox Live Arcade on the 22nd of October, while Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas will be coming to Xbox Originals on the 20th of October. Each will cost 1200 Microsoft Points, which roughly equates to £10/\$14. Portal: Still Alive will feature additional "Portal: The Flash Version" elements compared to the original Portal in the Orange Box, while San Andreas is already backwards compatible, so if you can pick it up second hand for less than £10 you're in for a better deal.

### EA to 'kill' off games of insufficient quality

After the development of Command and Conquer FPS Tiberium was terminated, it has been said by the top man at EA Games that more could follow should they not reach the required quality. "When something's not meeting expectations... You can course correct by giving it more time, more money, changing the concept or killing the game," said John Riccitiello, CEO of EA Games. "If you're committed to quality, you take one of those paths. If you preclude any one of those paths, quality will suffer." He then went on to say that EA would not be afraid to "kill a game or two a year. Forever" if they had to.

### Seeing red – Microsoft face lawsuit over Xbox failures

Microsoft is facing a lawsuit over the "excessive" number of 360s which have had a system failure known as the Red Rings of Death (RROD), and also that Microsoft has not revealed the true extent of the problem in order to compete with the PS3 and Nintendo Wii. The class action suit, which was filed in the United States, is not only hoping to seek damages, but force Microsoft to create a refund programme for the Xbox 360 in the US state of California.

### PSP-3000 hits 140k sales in first four days in Japan

The third generation PlayStation Portable has taken Japan by storm, shifting 141,000 units in its first four days since release. This brings the total number of PSP's sold in Japan to a more respectable 10.3 million. The PSP-3000, which is currently available in the UK with a game for around £150, is reported to have a brighter and more vivid screen than previous versions. This means more crisper and intense colours, while suffering from less glare while out in the sun. There have been complaints about this though, with reports suggesting that this has introduced "scan-lines", which causes screen ghosting.

### World of Warcraft left for the dead

With second expansion World of Warcraft: Wrath of the Lich King going live on November 13th, a zombie plague has struck the world of Azeroth. It is rumoured that the plague originates from infected crates in the neutral faction city of Booty Bay; with the plague turning you into a zombie should you open one. You can spread the infection by attacking other people, but to avoid becoming completely zombified, you will have to seek out players who can cast "Cure Disease", or by paying a visit to new special healer NPCs in the cities.

News items by Pete O'Brien





# TOP TRAILERS

## MOST VIEWED IN SEPTEMBER



[Warhammer 40,000 Dawn of War 2 E3 2008 Gameplay Trailer](#)

[Star Wars The Force Unleashed PS2 Walkthrough Movie](#)

[Code of Honor 2 Conspiracy Island Game Trailer](#)

[Star Wars The Force Unleashed PSP Walkthrough Movie](#)

[The making of The Incredible Hulk - The Beast Within Trailer](#)

[WALL-E Game Trailer VideoGame](#)

[The Incredible Hulk Game Trailer](#)

[Warhammer Mark Of Chaos - Battle March E3 2008 Trailer](#)

[Stan Lee The Making of The Incredible Hulk Game Trailer](#)

[Lego Batman : The Video Game : Trailer](#)



# URL INDEX

## ALL THE LINKS FROM ISSUE 4

- 3 • Preview: F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin
- 4 • Preview: Siren: Blood Curse
- 5 • Interview: Creators of Zombie Panic Source
- 8 • Article: Silent Hill Series History
- 9 • Article: The Scariest Games... Ever
- 12 • Review: F.E.A.R
- 14 • Review: Star Wars - The Force Unleashed
- 16 • Review: Saints Row 2
- 18 • Article: The MCM Expo
- 20 • Review: Condemned 2
- 22 • Review: Bejeweled 2
- 23 • The Column: Do Videogames Cause Violence?
- 24 • Coffee Break: The Month In News
- 25 • Top 10 Trailers Of The Month







**COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE  
GAMEON IS 10 YEARS OLD**