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360zine

Issue 40 | March 2010

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

REVIEWED!

ALIEN VS PREDATOR

Alien, Predator or Marine... the choice is yours



HANDS ON!

ALAN WAKE

Who's afraid of the dark?

EXCLUSIVE

SPLINTER CELL: CONVICTION

Revenge is sweet – read our exclusive hands-on preview inside

PLUS!

REVIEWED!

FINAL FANTASY XIII

The ultimate RPG is finally here!

FIRST LOOK!
SPLIT/SECOND

REVIEWED!
SUPERSTARS V8 2

REVIEWED!

BATTLEFIELD BAD COMPANY 2



Welcome to 360Zine



This really is the craziest year on record. We're only in March, and we've already had Mass Effect 2, BioShock 2 and Bad Company 2 tearing up the charts and sapping away the hours, and in the next few months it's going to get even more overwhelming.

April brings us Splinter Cell Conviction (with our hands-on impressions readable in this very issue), May's all about Alan Wake (again, readable in a few pages time) and that's before we think about Red Dead Redemption and UFC 2010.

Backing up this melee of upcoming games is March's most interesting release. Final Fantasy XIII is finally here at long last, confounding and compelling in equal measure. Check our review, and enjoy the issue.

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

Dan Hutchinson, Editor
360zine@gamerzines.com

MEET THE TEAM
Probably the best games writers on the planet



Jon Denton
The master of all things 360 takes on the Final Fantasy.



David Scammell
David's been keeping some Bad Company.



Andy Griffiths
Andy's looking forward to Waking up with Alan.



BFBC2
Full review

Don't miss! This month's top highlights



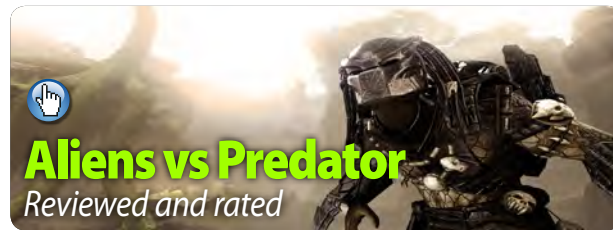
Splinter Cell Conviction

HANDS-ON PREVIEW!



Alan Wake

Previewed inside



Aliens vs Predator

Reviewed and rated



Final Fantasy XIII

The full verdict

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away!

Fable III
Halo Reach
UFC Undisputed 2010
Split/Second
Splinter Cell Conviction
Alan Wake

Medal of Honor
Final Fantasy XIII
Aliens vs Predator
Battlefield Bad Company 2
Superstars V8
Next Challenge

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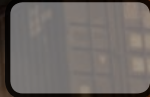
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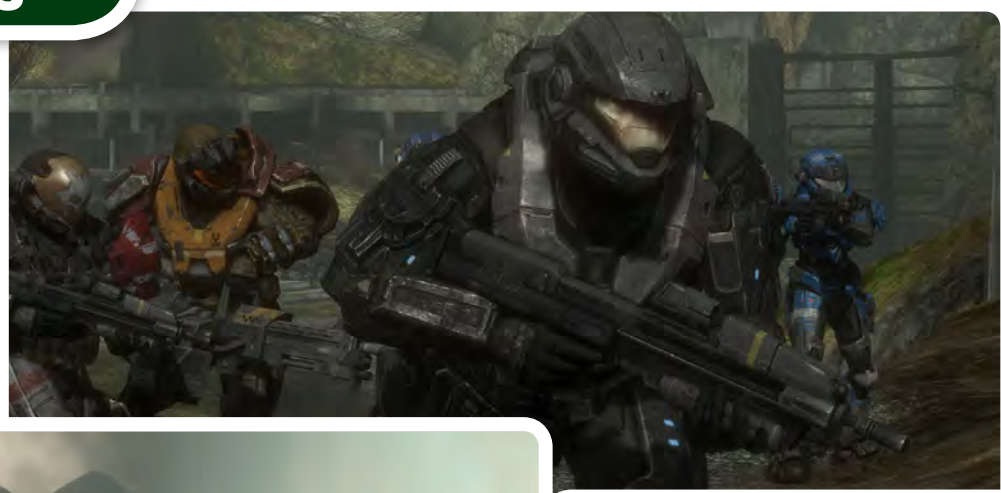
CONTROL →



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Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Bungie
Heritage: Er, Halo?
Link: www.bungie.net
ETA: Autumn 2010



FIRST LOOK

Halo Reach

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Halo Reach

These. Are. Spartans

What's the story?

Bungie's final Halo game is actually a prequel, detailing the 'fall of Reach' – the last human colony that was destroyed by the Covenant. You play as Noble 6, one of an elite group of Spartans, and Reach tells the story of your final battles in this horrific conflict.

How's it looking?

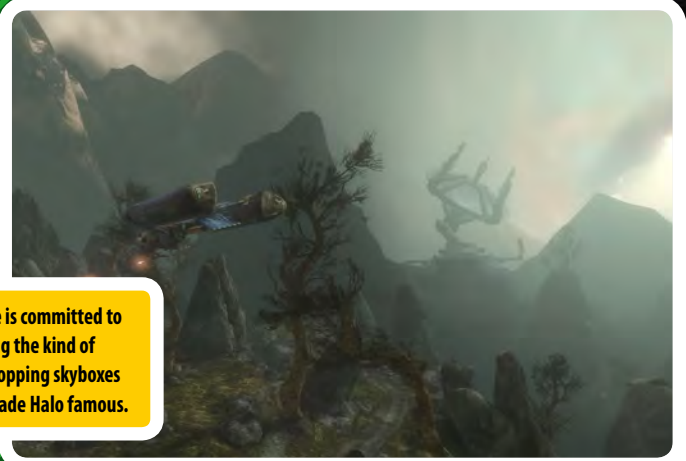
In a word: beautiful. Wary of complaints that were lobbied towards Halo 3 and ODS1, Bungie has completely rewritten its engine, pumping four times as many polygons into its environments and characters. It looks stunning in motion – a true 'next gen' Halo, and the work that has gone into facial animation, lighting and atmospherics is very noticeable. Bungie is promising gameplay that echoes the original Halo Combat Evolved, with large-scale skirmishes hosted in huge, open sandbox levels. It's all looking extremely promising so far.

Multiplayer?

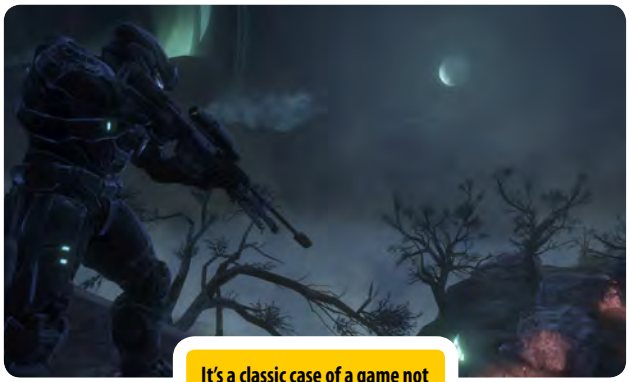
Of course. Two things to note here. Bungie has gone on record stating that Reach's multiplayer will 'take risks', one of which might be the inclusion of campaign environments as multiplayer maps. Hopefully that doesn't mean we'll be losing the intricacies of Bungie's map-making abilities. Still, the Beta will be here in May (for those who held onto Halo 3 ODS1), so we'll all have a clearer picture soon enough.

Anything else to declare?

With this being Bungie's final entrant in the Halo canon, expect them to go out with a pretty substantial bang. This will be the biggest 360 game of 2010 and no mistake, with the kind of marketing push that would make some small countries weep. Can Halo topple Call of Duty this year? Do you know what? It really can. This is going to be huge.



Bungie is committed to creating the kind of jaw-dropping skyboxes that made Halo famous.



It's a classic case of a game not looking as good in screenshots as it does in motion. Trust us on this one, though, Halo Reach is a stunning-looking game in every way.



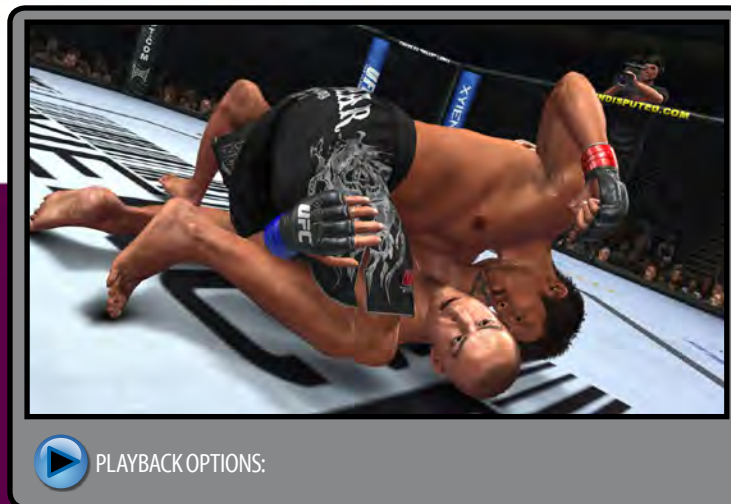
"Bungie is promising large-scale skirmishes hosted in huge, open sandbox levels"

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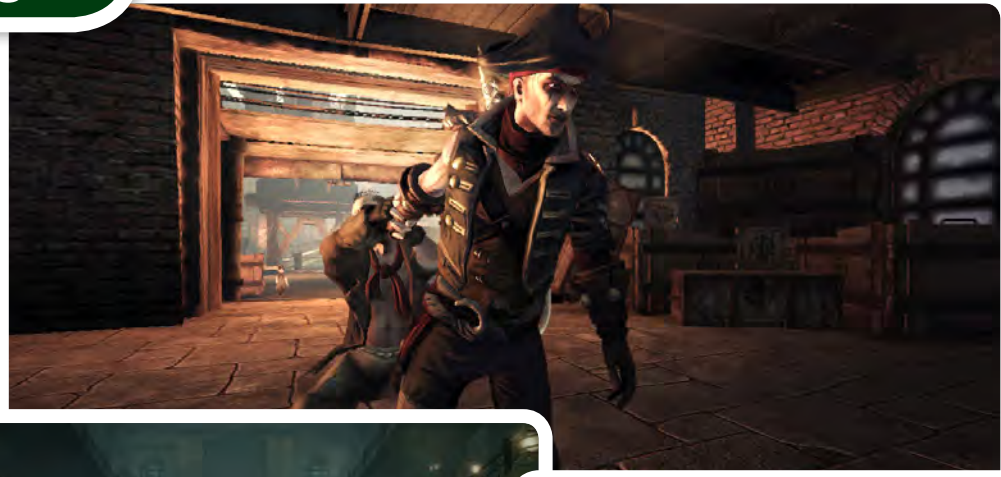


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FABLE III

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Lionhead
Heritage: Fable II
Link: www.lionhead.com/
 FableGame
ETA: Autumn 2010



FIRST LOOK

Fable III

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
 Click here to tell us what you think of Fable III

Let us tell you a story...

What's the story?

In Fable III, you're in charge. You're the leader of Albion, and it's up to you how you treat your denizens. Will you be an altruistic hero of the people or a vile dictator? It's not a traditional God game though, as this is still the Fable we know and love, albeit with a few ingenious twists...

Like what?

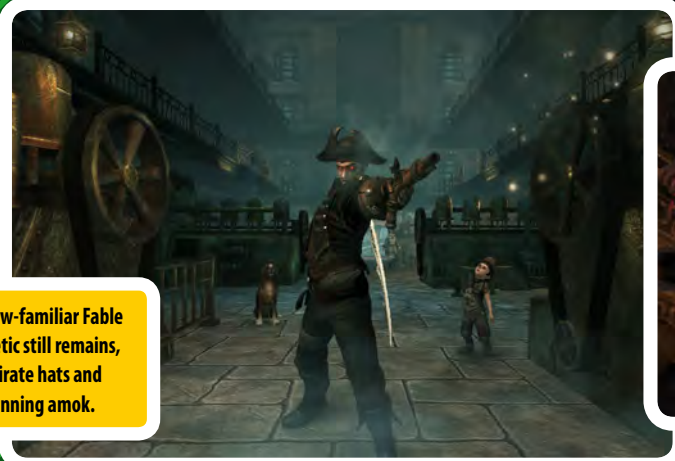
Well, you're still a 'hero', walking the streets, roads and fields of Albion. You can still happily interact with the people and shape the destiny of the land with your actions, and yes, you still have a dog. But Lionhead has ramped up the level of interplay between your character and the people around him (or her). Peter Molyneux (Lionhead's boss) is very excited about 'touch', the system which allows your character to drag other people around, pick them up or even just hold their hands. This adds layers of emotional depth, apparently.

Co-op?

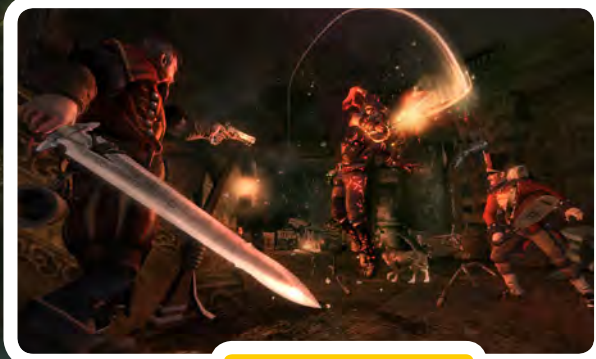
This time, instead of Fable II's half-baked two-player mode, you'll be able to visit a friend's Albion and do whatever you like there. Now it might be the case where you invite a partner into your game to hold hands and eventually get married, or you could make the mistake of bringing in a once-trusted friend who goes out and slaughters your family. Make sure you know who they are though, as the damage can't be reversed.

Anything else to declare?

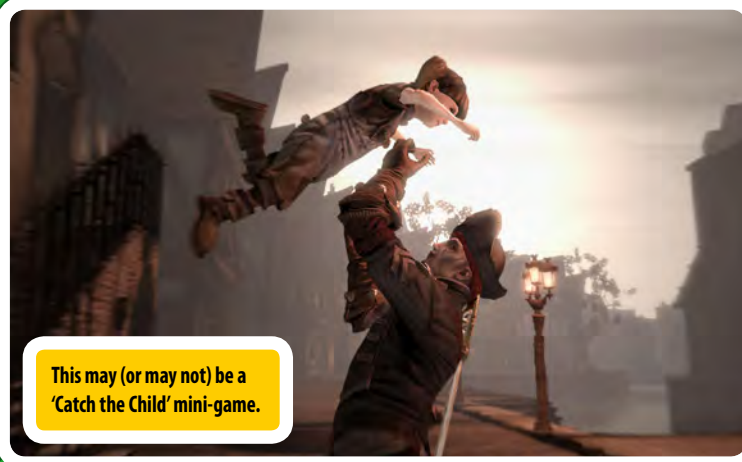
Lionhead has binned any notion of a HUD, completely cleaning up the screen and aiming for a more 'immersive' Albion in the process. And of course, there's the much-vaunted but still unspoken Natal interactivity to get excited about. Be under no illusion though, Fable III is not a Natal game - it's still a controller-driven adventure, which is probably for the best.



The now-familiar Fable aesthetic still remains, with pirate hats and kids running amok.



Your weapon will actually morph to suit your character. Murder lots of innocent civilians, and it might start dripping blood on its own.



This may (or may not) be a 'Catch the Child' mini-game.

"This is still the Fable we know and love, albeit with a few twists"

TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL CONVICTION



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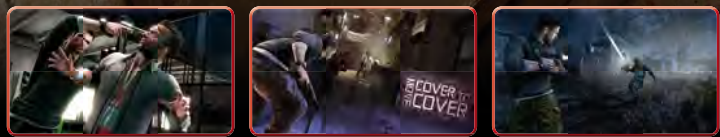


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Jump in.

XBOX 360.





Publisher: Disney
Developer: Black Rock Studio
Heritage: Pure, MotoGP 06/07
Link: <http://disney.go.com/disneyinteractivestudios/splitsecond>
ETA: 21st May



Buildings collapse, buses explode and the world almost ends in Black Rock's madcap racer.

"A bullet-fast, destruction-fuelled action-arcade thrill-ride unlike anything you've ever seen before"

Even when you're not avoiding collapsing bridges, you'll still have to contend with your rivals.



FIRST LOOK

Split/Second: Velocity

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Split/Second: Velocity

Make some time for Disney's explosive racer

What's the story?

While we're not ones to dismiss the importance of wearing a seatbelt, what good is a safety harness when helicopters are dropping 100lb bombs on your blisteringly fast supercar and air traffic control towers are crumbling all around you? Split/Second, then, isn't exactly your conventional street racer. Instead it's a bullet-fast, destruction-fuelled action-arcade thrill-ride unlike anything you've ever seen before, where each environment is as much a threat as your rivals, and where each race is guaranteed to get your pulse racing.

What do we know?

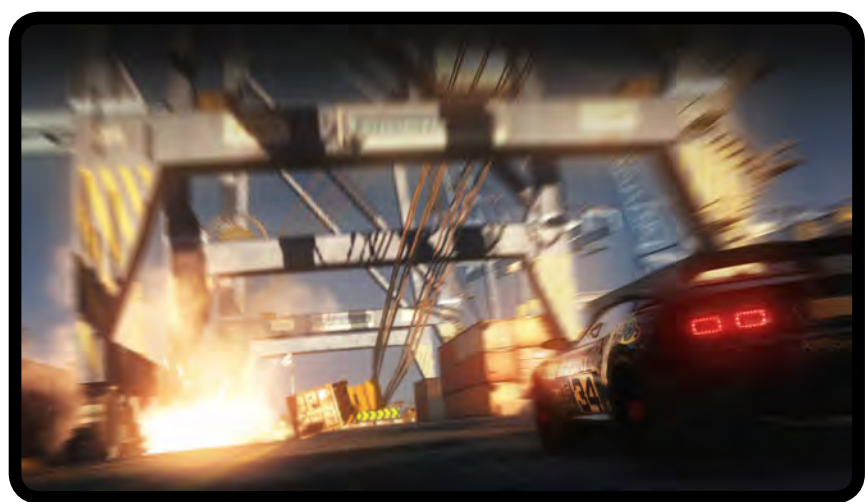
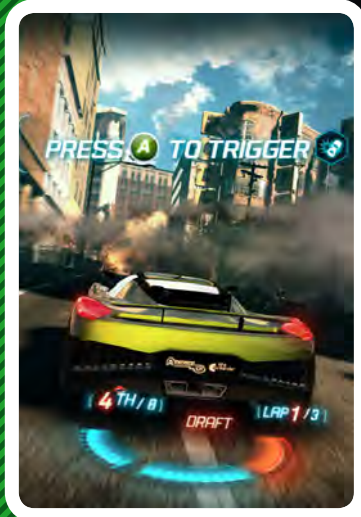
Despite the May release date, Disney has kept the vast majority of Split/Second's tracks under lock and key. But what we do know is that each one is themed around a different area of the game's city and that each dynamically twists and buckles into new shapes as much as the cars' chassis, opening up a wealth of new routes to explore. So far we've been treated to a race around the Airport level and seen a glimpse of the Downtown and Docklands, and we've been assured that there are still plenty more surprises to come.

When do we get more?

Before gearing up for our review in a few issues' time, we've teamed up with Disney to bring you a dedicated Split/Second: Velocity magazine in April that'll feature our hands-on thoughts of the game and an inside look at some of the explosive tracks you'll be declaring war on come May

Anything else to declare?

Getting ahead relies on the careful use of 'Powerplays', timed opportunities that allow you to manipulate areas of the track. Build up your powerplay bar and you'll be able to explode trackside buses, or more impressively, level entire buildings.



A NEW CON, A NEW CONSPIRACY

Play as Tom Paxton, a Company agent sent inside Fox River Penitentiary to observe and report on a prisoner named Michael Scofield. Learn what really happened as your assignment unfolds...



▶ **PLAYBACK OPTIONS:**

PRISONBREAK THE CONSPIRACY



- Featuring the original cast from the TV show
- Immersive stealth action gameplay
- Interact with and influence the story of season one
- Pick your favourite character and play against a friend in the Fox River underground fight club multiplayer

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prisonbreak.deepsilver.com



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UFC 2010

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Yuke's
Heritage: The SmackDown series
Link: www.ufc.com
ETA: May 2010

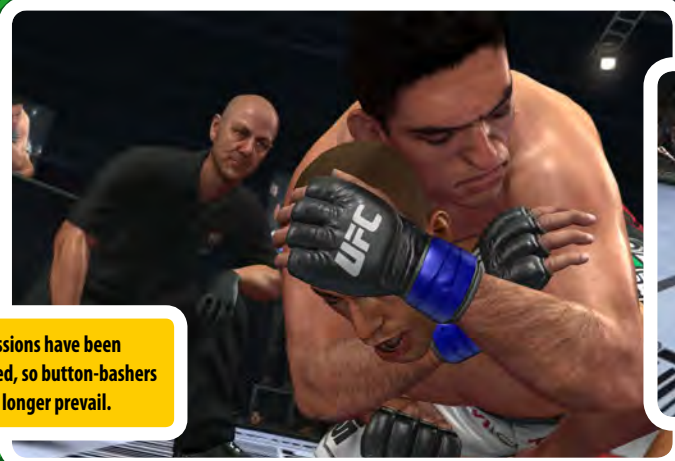


FIRST LOOK

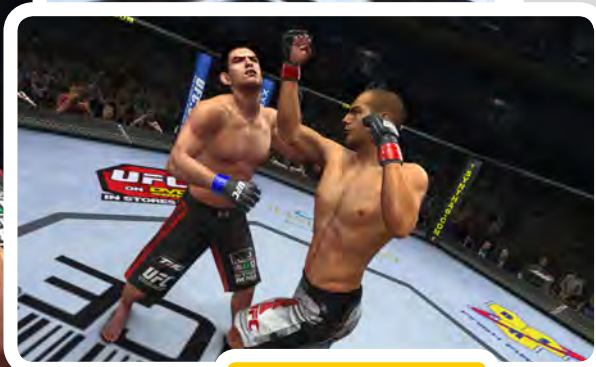
UFC Undisputed 2010

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of UFC 2010

THQ prepare to knock out EA with the backing of the UFC



Submissions have been tweaked, so button-bashers will no longer prevail.



Punching should be a lot more technical in UFC 2010. The sway system allows fighters to duck and weave away from strikes. Make sure you don't duck the wrong way though.



"In-fighting is a much more realistic proposition"

What's the story?

After the runaway success of UFC 2009, THQ is back 12 months later with an even better-looking sequel, complete with new moves, new modes and a new roster, too.

Who are the new fighters?

Some of the high-profile names that missed out on last year's game are present and correct this time around, so heavyweight contender Shane Carwin makes the cut, for example, as well as upcoming Welterweight title challenger and Englishman 'The Outlaw' Hardy. Every fighter has now been built from scratch using scans and photographs, so there are no more in-engine scappers.

Any new mechanics?

THQ and Yuke's have listened to the feedback that came from its first foray into digital mixed martial arts, and have incorporated some crucial new mechanics into the scrapping. Fighters can now 'sway' while standing up, meaning you can slip punches and counter, so in-fighting is a much more realistic proposition. Also, you can now use the cage to wear your opponent down or trap them on the ground. And a reworked clinch-grappling mechanic means that taking opponents to the ground won't be so easy.

Anything else to declare?

With EA releasing its own MMA game later this year, it's up to THQ and the UFC to really establish their dominance in this field. The last game sold well over three million copies, and the UFC are hoping to establish a 'Madden' or 'FIFA' strength to its videogame branch. Signs are looking good so far.

SUPREME COMMANDER 2



MARCH 2010

▶ PLAYBACK OPTIONS:

THE BRAVE WILL FIGHT,
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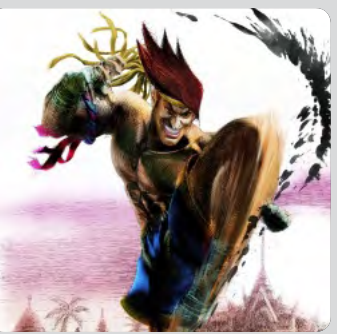


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INCOMING

A fistful of top new titles coming to 360...



Super Street Fighter IV

Publisher: Capcom | **ETA:** April
Ibuki, Makoto and Dudley have all been confirmed for Capcom's follow-up, and with preview code in our hands, we can guarantee that Street Fighter IV hands will not be disappointed. It's faster, slicker, far more varied and even more bombastic. Absolutely superb.



SBKX

Publisher: TradeWest | **ETA:** May
The SBK series has been gaining momentum in the periphery for a couple of years, but with SBKX, Black Bean and TradeWest are hoping that their slick motorbike sim will start making some serious moves. It's incredibly good looking, supremely realistic and lightning-quick, so if you're in to biking, then it's time to start getting excited.

Lost Planet 2

Publisher: Capcom | **ETA:** April
The news this month? Dominic Santiago and the irrepressible Marcus Fenix are going to be playable characters in Capcom's upcoming bug hunt. And not only are the Gears boys in there, but Albert Wesker of Resident Evil 5 fame is in there too. Expect a fantastic looking, fiercely entertaining slice of four-player co-operative blasting. Great stuff.



Ghost Recon Future Soldier

Publisher: Ubisoft | **ETA:** 2010
It's not been the best kept secret in the industry, but Ubi has finally announced Ghost Recon Future Soldier, the long awaited follow-up to the Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter series. As opposed to everything 'modern' in the Call of Duty franchise, Ghost Recon is looking forward, kitting out its soldiers with all the prototype future tech that the military is toying with, including a cloaking 'blanket' that you can check out in the trailer.



LA Noire

Publisher: Rockstar | **ETA:** 2010
The once-PS3 exclusive is now very much a 360 game, and after years in development, has finally shown its face. And what a face. LA Noire employs new facial animation tech that is detailed enough for your detective protagonist to garner information from suspects just by reading their expressions. Very interesting indeed.



Red Dead Redemption

Publisher: Rockstar | **ETA:** April
This just can't come soon enough. After our extensive hands-on last month, Rockstar has released a pair of new trailers explaining some of the specifics of Red Dead Redemption's fantastically detailed open-world. In a year where we've already had some truly incredible games, this could be the best of the lot.

UPCOMING

APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Red Dead Redemption Splinter Cell Conviction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alan Wake Skate 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crackdown 2 Split/Second 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dead Rising 2 LEGO Harry Potter

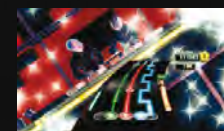


▶ **PLAYBACK OPTIONS:**

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PlayStation 2



Wii



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Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubi Montreal
Heritage: Splinter Cell
Chaos Theory
Link: www.splintercell.com
ETA: 16th April

HANDS ON

Splinter Cell Conviction

The very latest on one of the Xbox's top games of 2010

At Ubisoft's recent hands-on event for the oft-delayed but feverishly anticipated Splinter Cell Conviction, we finally got the chance to sit down and lose ourselves in Sam Fisher's tale of revenge and redemption. And what a ride it was.

Followers of 360Zine's Splinter Cell coverage will remember our hands-on time with Kestrel and Archer, the stars of the co-op missions (now named Prologue), but getting back into Sam's shoes just made the Splinter Cell experience seem real again. That gruff voice, the pragmatic but resentful attitude, and, of course, the ability to play as the world's most adept secret agent.

Much has been made about this being a rebirth for the stealth genre, and rightly so, but the most crucial and important difference between Conviction and its forebears is speed. Serious amounts of speed. Everything happens at least twice as fast as it ever did, whether it's moving from cover to cover (in the slickest system outside of Gears of War), creeping up behind a



This really isn't what it looks like.

Environments can be used to dish out the pain.

TOM CLANCY'S
SPLINTER CELL
CONVICTION



Sam's angrier than he's ever been.



They really wanted to watch Glee...

"While you can play Conviction like Uncharted, the levels, AI and combat mechanics still hugely favour the silent approach"

Sam can still move quickly when he needs to, despite getting on a bit.



> Splinter Cell continued

guard or just shimmying along a pipe, you no longer have to play the waiting game longer than you should have to. Ubisoft Montreal has taken great diligence in redefining Splinter Cell,

though. At first, it does seem like the whole thing has shifted into a cover-shooter, losing the franchise's essence in the process. But while it's true that you can now play Splinter Cell Conviction like Uncharted, the levels, AI and combat mechanics still hugely favour the silent

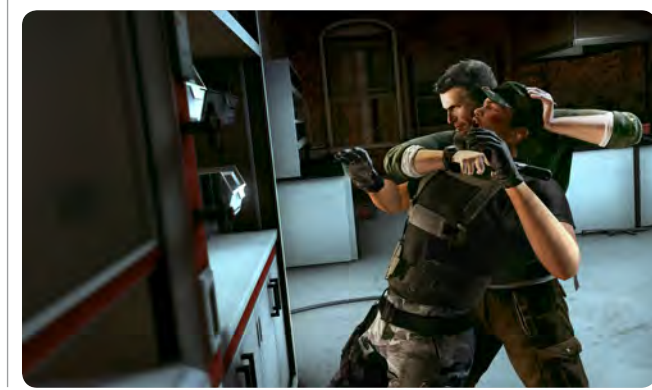
approach. So, you'll still be shooting out lights, silently dispatching enemies and playing with the minds and hearts of your enemies in classic Fisher style. Just now you'll be doing it much, much quicker. And that's a good thing.

Our hands-on time begins in Morocco, where Sam is casually taking in the sights and enjoying a drink. With this being a Splinter Cell game and not an episode of *Holiday*, though, it's not long before the intrigue kicks in. A waiter drops off a cellphone, and a mystery called tells Sam he's had a contract taken out on him, and if he doesn't get the hell out of Dodge (or its North African equivalent) he's done for.

Cue a slick opener-cum-tutorial that shows off everything that Conviction is about in one fell swoop. There's the cover mechanic which greys out the screen when Sam is shrouded by

darkness (Ubisoft Montreal want to minimise HUD distractions), the quick kills that come from jabbing the Right Trigger, the Mark And Execute quickfire mechanic, and of course the fantastic in-engine projections that entirely tell the story within the story.

Creative Director Max Beland told 360Zine that his main inspiration for



TOM CLANCY'S
SPLINTER CELL
CONVICTION



"Conviction encourages killing this time out and presents plenty of opportunity to use the environment against your opponents"



Taking hostages... good idea.

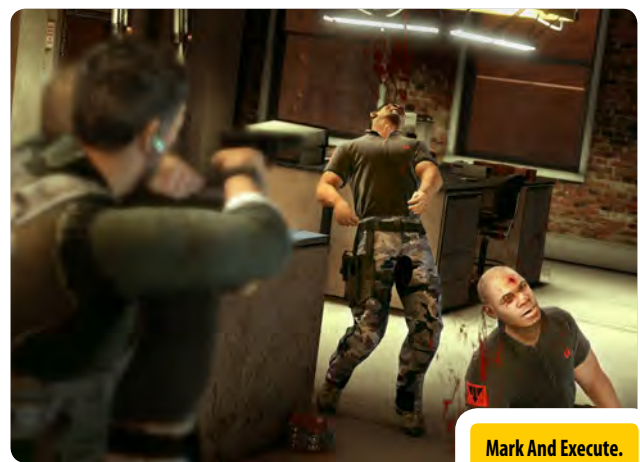
> Splinter Cell continued

these stylish projections was Tony Scott's scattergun revenge flick *Man on Fire*, which toyed with the reality of cinema by projecting images of what the characters were talking about directly into scenes.

It's even slicker in *Splinter Cell* though, and less self-conscious. We're used to having things flash up on-screen and interruptions to the action, so to have a game that's defiantly against pulling you out of your gaming trance is admirable, and like much of Ubisoft Montreal's work, ambitiously progressive.

As we progressed further into our Moroccan mission, Fisher had to force his way into the mansion made famous by the E3 demo, and dispatch everyone therein in the hunt for his daughter's killer. *Splinter Cell Conviction* encourages killing this time out – it makes sense narratively – and presents plenty of opportunity to use the environment against your opponents.

One large atrium in this sprawling house contains a huge ornamental object hanging from the ceiling. You can, of course, use it to drop on the heads of the unsuspecting guards below, but that will put the rest on high alert. Toying with the lights first, picking off the stragglers one by one and then



Mark And Execute. Bam, you're dead.

dropping the bomb... well that's the way Ubi want you to play it, and it's by far the most enjoyable way to do it, too.

With 'Deniable Ops', the thoroughly enjoyable two-player scenario mode and 'Prologue', the aforementioned narrative-driven co-op, joining Sam's sizeable story, *Splinter Cell Conviction* is looking like the proverbial total package. A few V-sync issues and framerate drops slightly marred what was an outstanding hands-on session, but we're happy enough to believe they'll be ironed out in the last few weeks of spit and polish (thus justifying the two month release date slippage), and we'll be left with a genre-redefining experience that proudly lives up to the *Splinter Cell* name. All will be revealed in next issue's outrageously in-depth review. We cannot wait. ●

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of *Splinter Cell Conviction*

360Zine



HOW COMPLETE? **90%**

FIRST IMPRESSIONS **90%**

With polish this could be incredible

Alan
WAKE

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Remedy
Heritage: Max Payne,
Max Payne 2
Link: www.alanwake.com
ETA: 21st May

HANDS ON

Alan Wake

You can sleep when you're dead

At Microsoft's recent hands-on event for Alan Wake, it finally became clear just what Remedy is trying to achieve with its long-awaited survival thriller. If some games aren't done justice by their screens, then Alan Wake isn't even done justice by its trailers – this is something that you need to play to truly appreciate.

"Some of the things that make a Remedy game are cinematic, movie-like action," or so says Remedy's Oz Hakkinen, going some way to explaining the combination of brooding atmosphere and surprisingly accomplished mechanics that defined our own particular play session.

"We're well known for the Max Payne games, where we had a story-driven experience and a strong lead character, and we're seeing a lot the same things happening with Alan Wake," he continued when quizzed on the motivations behind Alan Wake's protracted development. "But we've evolved it into a thriller."

You see, Alan Wake isn't just a survival horror game. It's more than that. It's a piece of work that's conscious of its

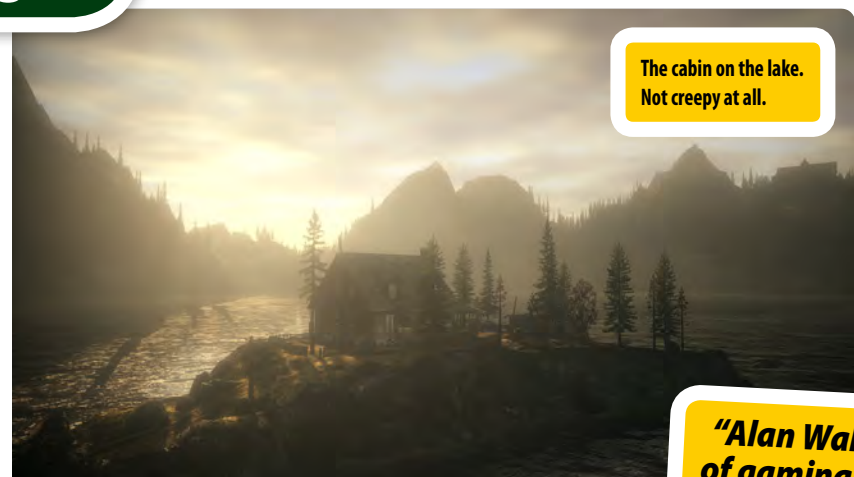


Just in case you were wondering, this isn't a driving section.



We're not quite sure why he has a pink mallet.

Alan WAKE



The cabin on the lake.
Not creepy at all.



It's just too small, Alan. Sorry, but
you won't be able to ride this horse.

"Alan Wake is a type of gaming experience that isn't afraid to blend narrative and gameplay together"



> Alan Wake continued

heritage – found in videogames, the movies and television – and translates that into a type of experience that isn't afraid to blend narrative and gameplay together, not relying on cut-scenes

interspersed with action, but instead combining the two. Alan Wake tells the story of a writer who is suffering from a creative block, and whose wife convinces him to take her to the Pacific North Western town of Bright Falls. Before long though, Alan

starts finding pages of a novel with his name on them, but which he has no recollection of writing. And then the horror contained within its pages starts to come true...

"We tip our hats to some of the greats. There's a bit of Hitchcock in there, certainly an echo of Twin Peaks in Bright Falls... Steven King of course," Hakkinen enthuses while the game's haunting music plays quietly in the background. "Sam Lake, our writer, is very much into popular culture. In the game you'll see a hedge maze – from The Shining obviously. There's a lot of those moments where you'll say 'okay, I've seen this somewhere else'. What happens with that is that it resonates really well, and you can't quite put your finger on why you're scared, or what emotions that it's pulling out of you. You've seen it somewhere else. It can be

the music or it can be the way we use the camera, it's kinda like 'the knife on the table, then you pull away, go back and there's something missing.' You only realise it's the knife when the action happens. So we take a lot of influences from popular culture like that."

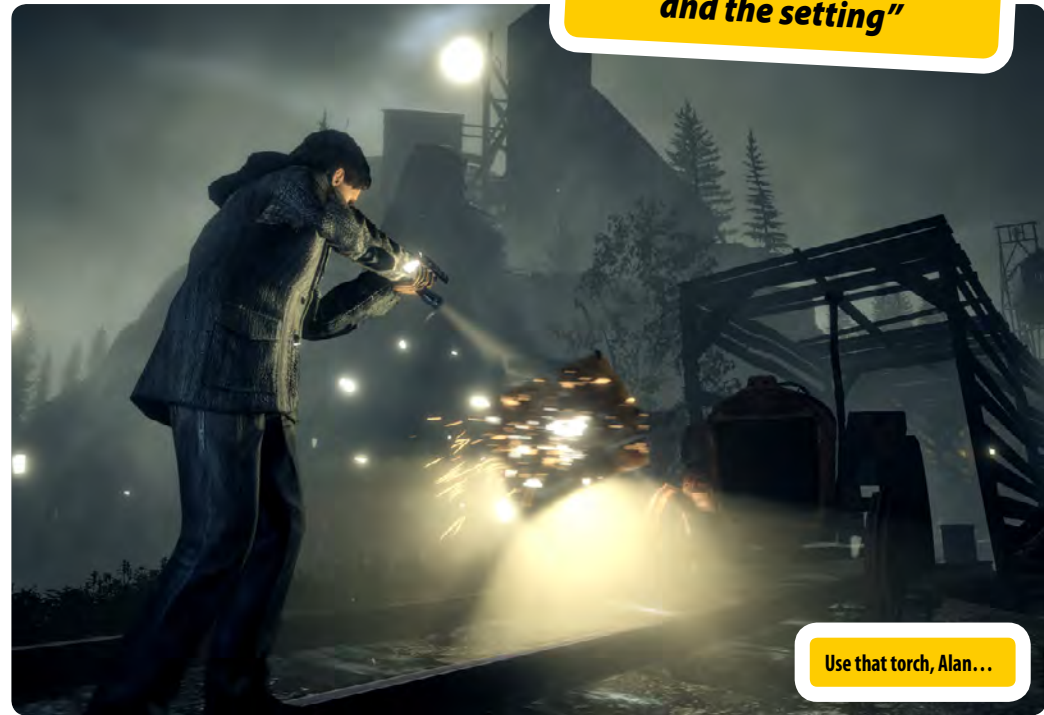
It's not all narrative pondering and atmosphere, though. Alan Wake has >



Alan WAKE



"The way that Remedy has designed the combat really suits the action and the setting"



Use that torch, Alan...

> Alan Wake continued

some serious gameplay chops to back up its style, and when Wake is attacked by the malevolent forces of darkness (literally), he's forced to look to the light. Charging up a torch beam and shining it on your foe will soften them up for a quick pistol shot to the chest, and the way Remedy has designed the combat really suits the action and the setting.

We're not expected to line-up headshots with pinpoint accuracy, but just remain calm enough when the adrenaline is pumping and the heart is racing to focus that torch, and then make sure we've got enough bullets to finish one of these spectres off. It's a suitably stylish way of doing things, but it's also very effective.

Of course, with this being Alan Wake, even the intricacies of combat have been given a cinematic flair, as Hakkinen explains: "We did want to use some of the things we'd learned about camera work and how to use those in a thriller. We have 'thriller moments', like a bit on a bridge where you're attacked by birds, so we pull the camera away here so we can get that moment of 'hunter and hunted'. You're still in control of the player, so it gives you a little more time to relax, but it also gets your pulse racing because we pull the camera back. There

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Click here to tell us what you think of Alan Wake



Lighting effects are beautiful throughout.

are cinematic moments as well, for example if an enemy is just about to hit you with an axe or whatever it might be... if you manage to dodge out of the way it activates a 'cinematic moment!'

And indeed it does, as the camera pulls in close and the action slows down while our Alan rolls out of the way of an incoming axe blow during our own hands-on time. During the first episode of Alan Wake's TV-structured tale, this was one of the tamer things that happened to our poor frayed nerves. With cars falling out of the sky and crashing through bridges, faces flashing up on the screen and making us jump out of our skins, and one of the eeriest American diners outside of a David Lynch movie, it was one of the more intense press playtests in recent times. Don't worry about staying awake, as after this, you won't be able to sleep. ●



HOW COMPLETE?	FIRST IMPRESSIONS
90%	90%
Slick, scary and seriously atmospheric	

MEDAL OF HONOR

Publisher: EA
Developer: EALA (single player)/DICE (multiplayer)
Heritage: Medal of Honor: Airborne, Battlefield series
Link: <http://ea.com/games/medal-of-honor>
ETA: Autumn

FIRST LOOK

Medal of Honor

EA reports for duty

When approaching EA's modernised Medal of Honor reboot, it's worth bearing in mind that the development of this Afghanistan-set first-person shooter is being overseen by Richard Farrelly, ex-Creative Director of Treyarch and a man very experienced in the school of Call of Duty cloning.

So, Medal of Honor's a CoD replica from the king of Infinity Ward would-bes, then? Well perhaps, but far be it for us to suggest that MoH is simply *just* another throwaway Modern Warfare wannabe. Though there are obvious parallels (a brief

encounter with the AC130's thermal imaging camera letting you rain hellfire on your shemagh-wearing targets being one, and the idea of taking out a pair of unsuspecting patrols via synchronised sniper fire another), there are also some significant differences that set Medal of Honor apart from its greatest rival.

For starters, Medal of Honor is aiming for sheer Gulf War-based authenticity, meaning that, unlike Call of Duty, Medal of Honor isn't a Hollywood blockbuster-alike that simply propels the player from one explosion or double-cross to the next. Instead it takes a more subdued approach, seeking to accurately emulate the range of emotion displayed on the battlefield, from the cold, impassive banter of the highly trained Tier 1 operatives, to the more fearful, yet equally heroic US Army Rangers. It recognises that modern warfare isn't simply a case of relying on the latest military hardware to run and gun your way to victory, but instead requires an element of tactical nous, of patience and precision, and in that respect, MoH seems a colossal success. >

When the bullets start pouring in, you better get yourself behind cover.



"A brief encounter with the AC130's thermal imaging camera lets you rain hellfire on your shemagh-wearing targets"



MoH's story tells the tale of two Tier 1 units working alongside US Army Rangers.





MEDAL OF HONOR

> Medal of Honor continued

As Medal of Honor's tagline puts it so well: 'War requires a sledgehammer, decisions require a scalpel!'

We're shown a mission set on the first day of Tier 1's deployment, joining our four-man squad in Shahikot Valley as they prepare to launch an assault on insurgents holed up in a hillside stronghold. Our objective? To take out the AA guns playing havoc with the AC130 circling above, enabling the military to offer fire support on a convoy of vehicles. So, Medal of Honor may not exactly offer inspiration, instead choosing to trade on tried and tested methods, but nonetheless it impresses as the mood and ambience of the scene keeps our hearts in our mouths as the demonstrator

desperately attempts to avoid patrol flashlights, only to stumble into a group of hostiles that are huddled over a campfire.

With the alarm raised and the gun silencers off, the pace of the battle flicks into something more familiar. Sandswept shootouts rage on as the AC130 joins in on the fight, with the thumping sound of shells colliding with their targets sending a surge of bass across the room, as we watch the tracer fire slowly descend on the target on the horizon. Later we experience the carnage cast by the airborne behemoth for ourselves as the approaching convoy is destroyed dangerously close, as the whole dawn-set scene erupts in a haze of reds, oranges and blues, a spectacle that passes all too swiftly as we're thrust



straight into another objective and back up that now lifeless hillside.

And that's the bottom line with Medal of Honor. It's the recognition that war doesn't wait, that it isn't a popcorn-friendly, firework-fuelled affair. It's gritty and it's cold, something EALA seem to have recognised superbly thanks to the direct input from Tier 1. EA, it seems, has the game that Treyarch always dreamed of making, and a game that, come autumn, could very well force Call of Duty off the top tier. ●



PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Medal of Honor



HOW COMPLETE?	FIRST IMPRESSIONS
60%	85%
Gritty and authentic – MoH's tussling for the top spot	



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Publisher: Square-Enix
Developer: Square-Enix
Heritage:
 The Final Fantasy series
Link: www.finalfantasy.com
OUT NOW

Final Fantasy XIII

Final-ly with us...

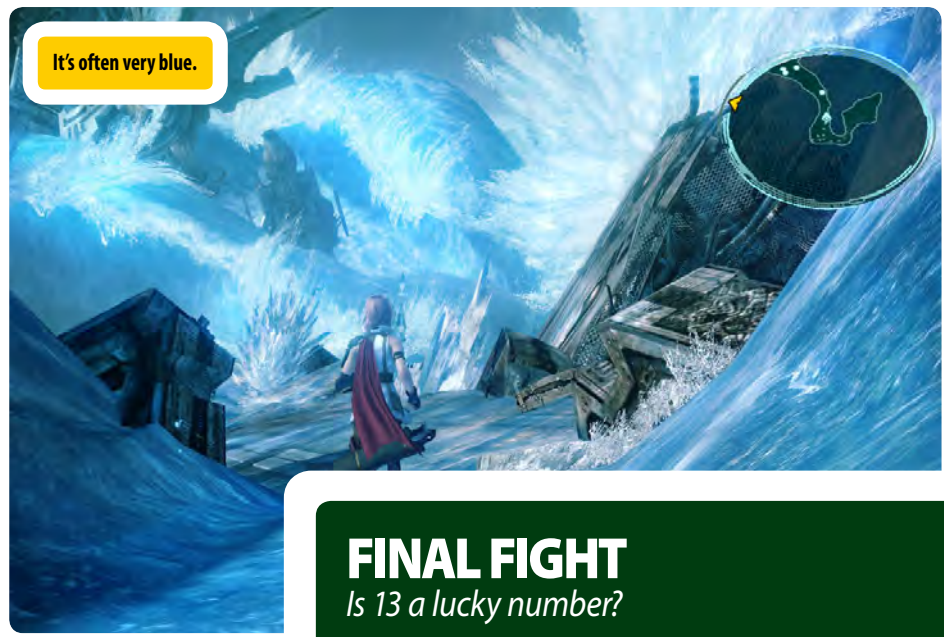
Waiting for years for a Final Fantasy instalment is a particularly unusual feeling, but it's undoubtedly a painful one. After what felt like an eternity of screenshots, trailers, announcements and import impressions, the PAL version of FFXIII is finally here. And at first, it's massively disappointing.

"After a searingly beautiful cut-scene, you're dropped into a long green corridor of despair. For a Triple-A game, it has to be the worst first hour ever"

After a searingly beautiful cut-scene that promises a world of wonder and unimaginable scope, Final Fantasy XIII drops players into a long, green corridor of despair. It's barely interactive, all you have to do is push upwards and jab the A button as you bash your way through the tutorials, endless weak enemies and shoddy voice acting. And just when you



There's still a bit too much emo-pondering, but overall the story is entertaining.



It's often very blue.

think it's going to end, you start the whole purgatorial trudge again as another character. For a Triple-A game, it has to be the worst first hour ever.

Quite why Square-Enix chose to kick off its most expensive project ever in such a fashion is a mystery, but mercifully, the opening 60 minutes are by far the worst you'll find in the 50-or-so that follow. The environments gradually start to open out, bringing more combat options, more narrative exposition, and a lot more enjoyment.

The world of FFXIII is a complex one, full of odd names and concepts. Basically, it tells the story of Lightning, a soldier, and Snow, a civilian with a cool hat, as they try and figure out the L'ci, a strange entity that conscripts citizens to become Fl'ci (essentially a servant) and have them carry out a 'focus' – basically a pilgrimage. As with every Final

FINAL FIGHT

Is 13 a lucky number?

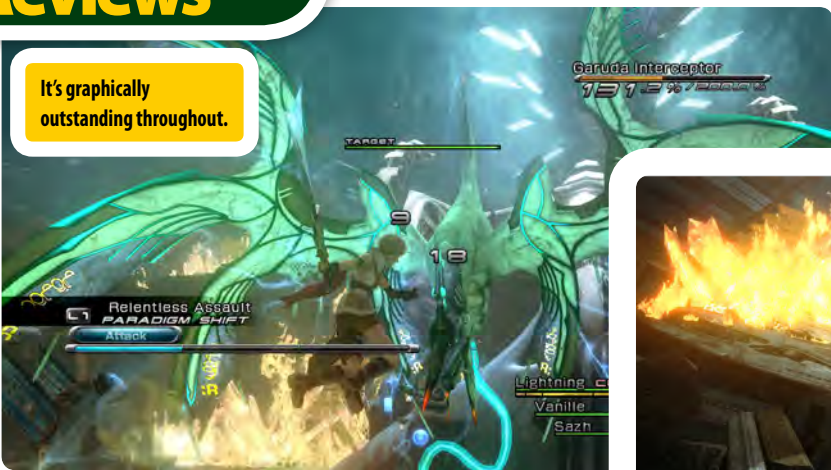


- Court summons**
- Team building**
- Snow joke**

Court summons

Summons are prettier and more impressive than ever, and lift the combat out of a button-mashing dirge into something more ethereal and beautiful.

It's graphically outstanding throughout.



"The turn-based ATB combat system owes much more to the classic to-and-fro of Final Fantasies past"



I'd look behind you if I were you, love.

> **Final Fantasy XIII** continued

Fantasy game, it doesn't ever really make sense, and takes a long time to reach any sort of coherence whatsoever, but the characters and landscapes are strong enough to compel you onwards.

None of this would matter if Final Fantasy XIII failed in its most important function – providing an engaging combat system. Thankfully, the protracted tale of Lightning and Snow doesn't let us down, basing its battles around the turn-based ATB system, probably the most kinetic and engaging turn-based structure yet devised.

As opposed to the pseudo real-time brawling of Final Fantasy XII's Gambit system, ATB owes much more to the classic to-and-fro of Final Fantasies past, but with one crucial difference: you only control one character in battle.

Yes, you still take a team into war, but your buddies will look after their own actions. You queue up your attacks

based on the amount of ATB bar they'll consume, and when the bar fills back up, you'll strike.

As the game progresses, you can start to order your team-mates to fight in certain ways, forcing them to bias particular moves. It's called 'paradigm', and adds the much-need strategy to the fighting that the early stages are

sorely lacking. When you begin to get tooled-up with paradigms, summons and great weapons, Final Fantasy XIII becomes as deep and engaging as any of its superb predecessors. And those those who struggled with XII's change of direction will find themselves in much more familiar and welcome territory. The tutorials also do a fantastic job of easing you into the complexities >

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game one step at a time...



10 MINUTES
Cut-scenes... You've gotta love them. Well, you do if you're playing a Final Fantasy game.



1 HOUR
That's one long, terrible and deathly boring corridor. Walking forward and pressing 'A' is not fun.



3 HOURS
Okay, that's better. Much better. Depth, tactical options and a story that's just starting to make sense.



10 HOURS
The game's starting to hit its stride and everything's beginning to fall into place. Good stuff.



30 HOURS
It keeps going. And going. And going. You'll have uncovered the Hunting mode and getting towards the end.



There are some excellent vehicles that you don't control.



Roll over screen for annotations

> Final Fantasy XIII continued

of battle, never overwhelming players with unnecessary information.

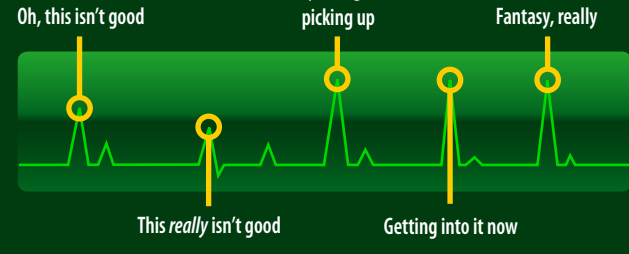
Perhaps the most outstanding aspect of the Final Fantasy XIII package though, is its most obvious: the looks. There has been plenty of Internet noise about the supposed inferiority of the Xbox 360 version, but be under no illusion, this is a beautiful-looking game.

Character models have been rendered with the kind of lavish detail and care that is normally reserved for CGI movies, and the subtle motion blur and soft lighting only helps to enhance its prettiness. And that's before you get to the really special sights of the enemies. Square-Enix has outdone itself with a weird and wonderful bestiary that owes a debt to Tolkien and Geiger at times, but is absolutely unique to the Japanese masters.

So, the only real problem with Final Fantasy XIII – once that ghastly first hour is out of the way – is its own lack of ambition. It's defiantly stuck in the JRPG template, entirely focused on the depth of its combat and the impenetrability of its story, removing almost all exploration and experimentation in the process.

It's not for all tastes, especially given the advances in Western role-playing games in the last few years, but for those wanting the most beautiful and composed version of Final Fantasy ever made, then look no further. The beautiful people are back. ●

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*

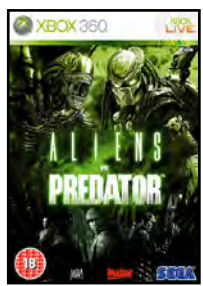


360Zine Verdict *Stuck in the past, but it's too beautiful to ignore*

- Visually amazing
- Deep combat system
- Overtly linear

85%



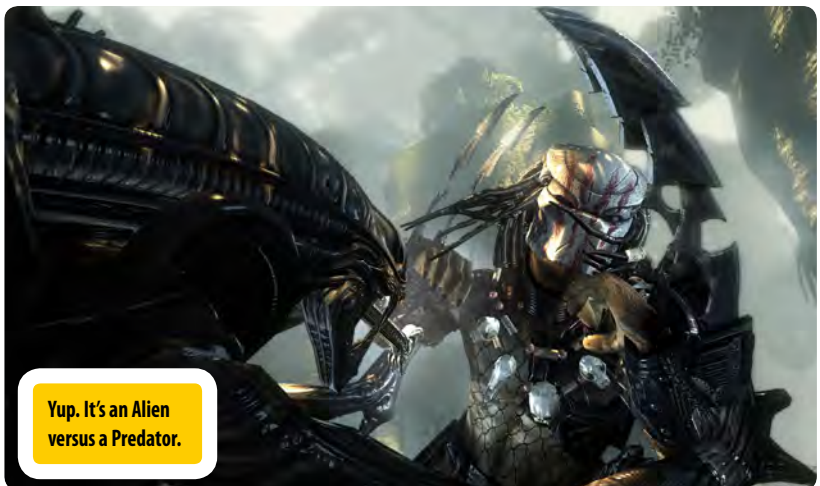


Aliens vs Predator

Publisher: Sega
Developer: Rebellion
Heritage: AvP (PC)
Link: www.sega.com/games/aliens-versus-predator
OUT NOW

Alien versus alien versus human... who will win?

"There's enough going on in AvP to coat your palms and brow in a fine layer of sweat"



Yup. It's an Alien versus a Predator.

Ten years is a long time in game design. The original AvP arrived on the PC just over a decade ago, and was rightly celebrated for its outrageously tense atmosphere and the confidence with which it approached three unique styles of play. Fast forward to the current day, and the same development studio is back with its highest-profile game in years. Rebellion has brought AvP to the CoD-era shooter fan, a slicker, prettier

reimagining of its three-pronged first-person shooter. So has it captured that ten-year-old magic? Well, yes it has, but perhaps too well. Despite Aliens versus Predator looking and sounding like a game from 2010, it really shows its age. Whether playing as the marine, Xenomorph or dreadlocked alien hunter, levels in the interlocking story campaign feel oppressively linear, almost to the point of tedium. Rooms exist only to ferry you from point A to

point B, with no concept of coherence or sense of place. It distracts from the meat of the experience; the raw, gut-punching thrill of existing within some of the most famous cinematic situations in recent movie history. Thankfully though, while the level design borders on the archaic, there's still enough going on in Aliens versus Predator to coat your palms and brow in a fine layer of sweat. Playing as the marine is the most familiar point of reference, and Rebellion uses the movie tropes well to ramp up the tension. The classic 'beep beep' of the motion tracker combines with some clever use of shadow to have you questioning everything you see, and when an Alien unfurls itself from the wall right in front of your eyes, you might well be reaching for the pause button as you try and muffle your girly shriek. As with the original, playing the role of Alien or Predator mixes things up nicely. The former is certainly the biggest departure from the traditional FPS mould, mostly due to your



THREE WAY

Who's the best?



Alien vs alien

Fatality

Blast from the past

Alien vs alien

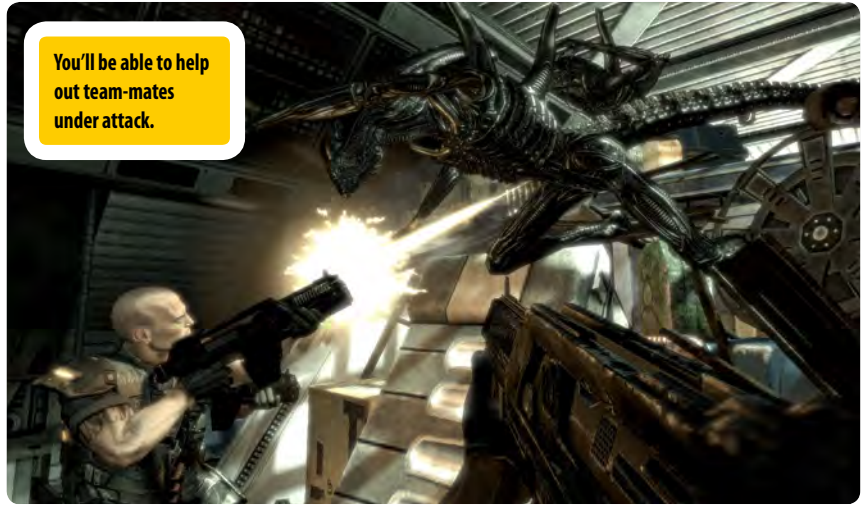
The Predator has the tools and the poise to destroy anything in its path, but the Xenomorph has the speed. See, it really isn't always about who has the biggest gun...



Not a good situation to be in at all.



They're coming outta the goddam walls!



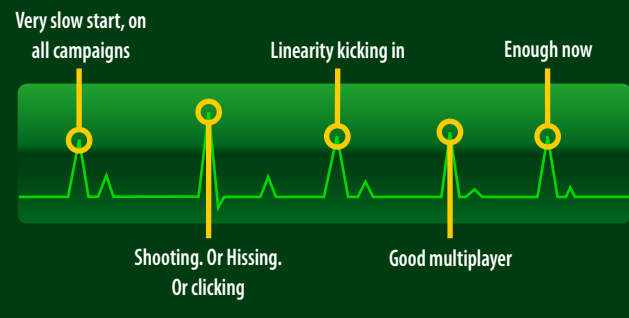
You'll be able to help out team-mates under attack.



Usually, you wouldn't want to be this close to a Predator.

"The differences in the three species make for a nicely varied multiplayer scene"

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



longevity to an otherwise short-lived bit of extraterrestrial action.

Still, ten years on, it's hard not to look back. The FPS has moved on, and AVP is stuck in the past. Still, at least the past has pulse rifles. And now, so do we. ●

> AvP continued

new-found ability to walk on any flat surface. Understandably, there's a period of adjustment as you accustomise yourself to your new body, but the speed and precision that it affords when hunting down hapless humans is tremendous fun – especially when you drop on them from above.

The Predator provides a stealthier approach, but sadly also highlights the problems with linearity. The jungle corridors don't offer enough scope for tactical murder, instead turning the hunter campaign into a viscerally satisfying but somewhat by-numbers gore show.

The differences in the three species make for a nicely varied multiplayer scene, with the objective and 'infected' style match types thoroughly entertaining, adding much needed

QUICKFIRE QUIZ

360Zine Verdict *Brings the scares, but it's just a but too dated for its own good*

- 👍 Tense atmosphere
- 👍 Fun multiplayer
- 👎 Pretty repetitive

80%

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Battlefield: Bad Company 2

Post-modern warfare

There's a moment in Bad Company 2 where the titular rag-tag quartet of roughnecks start cracking wise about Modern Warfare 2 – specifically about snowmobiles being for 'pussies'. It's an odd moment, and not just because it shatters a very esoteric fourth wall. It's odd because it makes Bad Company 2 look like it has an inferiority complex.

Normally, mentioning the competition is a tactic used by smaller

brands trying to get a leg-up by being mentioned in the same breath as the big guy at the top of the tree. Battlefield doesn't need to do this, as it's a seriously established franchise, a multi-million dollar product, and on the evidence of Bad Company 2, the finest online shooter around. Anywhere. So poking fun at Modern Warfare? Well it just comes off as cheap.

As before, you can comfortably separate Battlefield Bad Company 2 into



its two component parts. More on the spectacular online modes later, because DICE has remoulded its single-player campaign into something a little more recognisable, and in many ways, also slightly disappointing.

Once again you pick up your role as the rookie of B Company, a four-man squad of misfits, and you're sent into enemy territory to blow everything up, crack wise and generally get yourself into trouble. DICE has crafted a far more authored and linear experience this time around, clearly looking at that same competition its mocking as its key inspiration. And it's good – mechanically, visually, even comedically.

Sadly though, apeing (and mocking) Modern Warfare 2 and then not delivering a comparably thunderous thrill ride is a very dangerous game to play, and it's one that Bad Company 2 narrowly loses. It's all too forgettable; all too 'done'. After the six or so hours that it will take to blast through the globetrotting plot, the chances are that no-one will be returning.



TWO'S COMPANY

Guns, destruction... and laughs



Tanks for the memories

World warriors

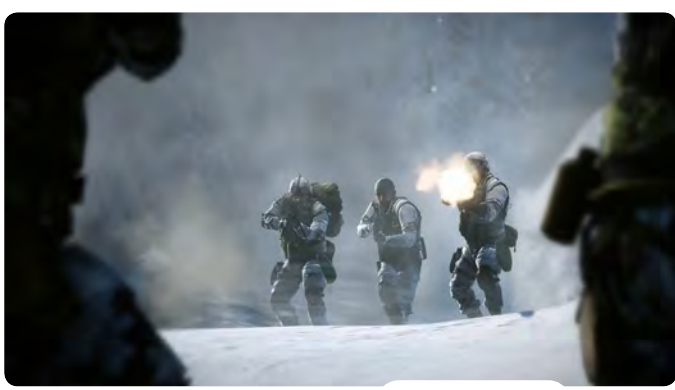
The hills are alive

Tanks for the memories

Getting into tanks is pretty much the best idea you can have. Any time you see one, get in it. You'll be safer, you'll pick up a bunch of kills and you can shoot down buildings.



Sniping online feels very cinematic.



The baddest company around.



> **BFBC2** continued

Not that they'd need to, really, as once again Battlefield finds true success when played with others. We've said it once already, but this could be the finest online shooter to date.

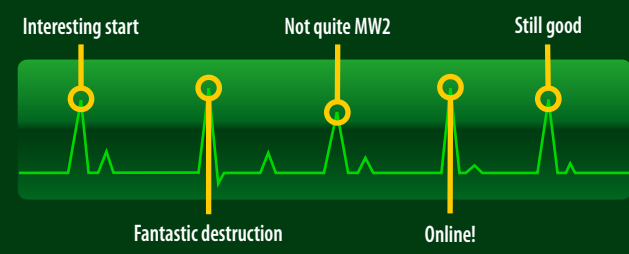
Taking to the online warzone is like a crash course in multiplayer design. It's all about balance. Huge, open maps have been meticulously crafted to host individual theatres of war, and whether it be the drama of a colossal airstrike or one lone sniper's 10-minute long struggle for survival, there's an almost Hollywood quality to each player's personal Battlefield story.

Backing that up is an engine that allows for incredible, game-changing destruction. Taking out a pair of camping sharpshooters by removing the entire



"Battlefield finds true success when played with others"

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



building they're sitting in is one of gaming's real fist-pumping triumphs. So, the next time DICE feels like poking fun, they should just bask in the glory of their accomplished online monster. And all without a Javelin glitch in sight. ●

QUICKFIRE QUIZ

360Zine Verdict *Supreme multiplayer, enjoyable single-player. Good company to keep*

- Fantastic online
- Beautiful to look at
- Overly linear campaign

90%



Superstars V8 Next Challenge

Start your engines!

It's all too easy to dismiss a racer when it's not from one of the so-called 'big' studios. Without Turn10 or Codemasters slapped across the front end, many will turn their nose up. Superstars V8: Next Challenge, though, is proof that slick vehicular action is not just the domain of the racing powerhouses.

Superstars V8 Next Challenge might look like a pure sim, but it's only when

you get onto the track that you realise just what sort of racer this actually is. This is far less concerned with inch-perfect camber and micro-accurate torque, but the sheer joy of bumper-to-bumper neck-and-neck racing in souped-up touring cars.

Opponent AI is good. The other racers are fiendishly aggressive and will think nothing of shunting you into a gravel pit if they get the opportunity, so



Probably not the best place to stand and take a photo, really.

"Superstars V9 is much more about the passion than the precision"

don't be afraid to do the same back to them. Not that this is a Burnout-apeing destructo-racer, of course, or even remotely arcadey. It's just that Superstars V8 is much more about the passion than the precision. And after months of Forza 3, that's no bad thing.

Former TOCA, F1 and current V8 Superstars champ Gianna Morbidelli has been directly involved with the development, and his input on how the cars react with the track and with one another is crucial to the way the races take place. There are 19 other cars on the track, so things can get seriously hectic, and it'll take concentration and dexterity to stay on past the first few corners of Monza, Imola and the other V8 tracks that mimic the real-life series.

Unfortunately, some dodgy car damage on impact and underwhelming weather effects slightly mar the experience, and despite its immediacy,



All the proper sponsors and liveries are present and correct.

there's not a huge amount of depth or long-term learning that make Superstars V8 Next Challenge a true competitor to Forza's absolute dominance in the driving genre.

Still, for anyone missing the joys of Codemasters' fantastic TOCA games, this is a pretty competent substitute. It's nice-looking, great-sounding and thunderously good fun in multiplayer or just hammering through the lengthy and complete season mode.

Ultimately though, Superstars V8 Next Challenge is a classic case of not judging the book by its cover. Or should that be car by its bonnet? ●

360Zine Verdict A much slicker racer than many would give it credit for

- Fun and frantic
- Nice looking
- Lacks real depth

80%

In **360Zine**
Issue 41



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