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360zine

ISSUE 63 | FEBRUARY 2012

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HANDS-ON PREVIEW!



MASS EFFECT 3

Shepard's supergalactic send-off leaves us **STUNNED!**

PREVIEWED!

PREVIEWED!

REVIEWED!

REVIEWED!



Catherine



MGS HD Collection



Ghost Recon: Future Soldier



Hitman: Absolution

47 has a price on his head



MASS EFFECT 3



MASS EFFECT 3

CONTROL →





Welcome to 360Zine

Girls, aliens, super spies and contract killers... it's probably the most interesting range of characters we've ever featured in a single issue of 360Zine, but you'll find them all spread over the next 30 pages.

Catherine attempts to tell us about the birds and the bees in this month's big review, but that certainly won't be what's on Shepard's mind in Mass Effect 3, where saving Earth from total annihilation may well be his final act.

Elsewhere, Snake sneaks onto Xbox 360 for the first time in Metal Gear Solid HD Collection - find out what we think of that, later - while Agent 47 proves he prefers dishing out pain via bullets and blunt trauma than strangleholds in our massive preview of Hitman: Absolution.

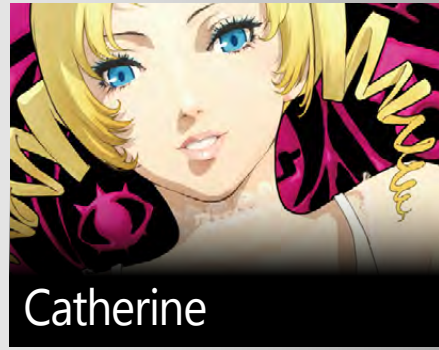
Enjoy the issue.
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360Zine FEEDBACK!
 Click here to tell us what you think of the new issue

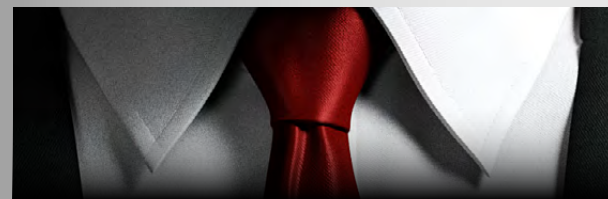
Don't miss! This month's top highlights



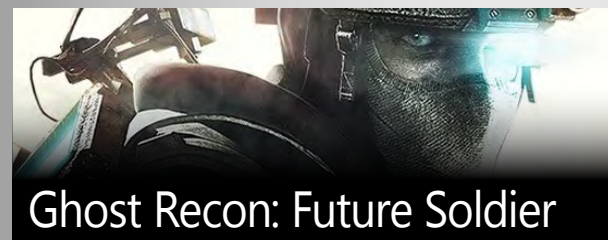
Mass Effect 3



Catherine



Hitman Absolution



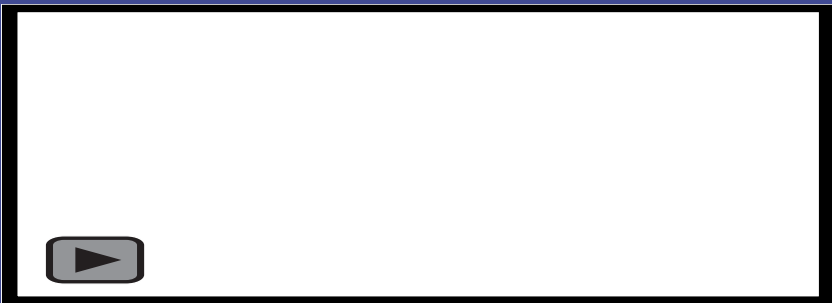
Ghost Recon: Future Soldier

QUICK FINDER

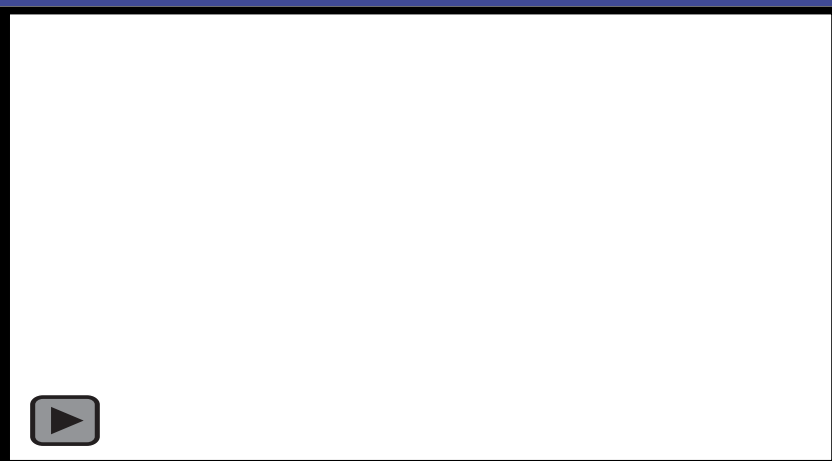
Every game's just a click away

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Mass Effect 3 | Metal Gear |
| Hitman | Solid HD |
| Absolution | Collection |
| Ghost Recon: | NeverDead |
| Future Soldier | SoulCalibur V |
| Kinect Rush | Amy |
| Catherine | |

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MEET THE TEAM

Playing games.
 Browsing Zune.
 Getting cheevos



Andy Griffiths
 Has his head stuck in the Cloud.



Dean Mortlock
 Noobtubing and YouTubing.



MGS HD



CONTROL →





Publisher: EA
Developer: BioWare
Heritage: Mass Effect series, Dragon Age series
Kinect Compatible: Yes
ETA: March



MASS EFFECT 3

Red sky at night

CAUTION!
Mass Effect 2
spoilers!

How did the dinosaurs become extinct? It's a question that's stumped scientists for centuries, with theories ranging wildly depending on who you talk to. Most of us, of course, have settled on the Asteroid Theory – a theory that suggests a flippin' great piece of space rock collided with the Earth millions of years ago, throwing enough dust

into the atmosphere to block out the sunlight and kill off the world's population. But 360Zine thinks it knows what really wiped them out: the Reapers, a hyper-advanced race of cybernetic machines that embark on a galaxy-wide genocide every 50,000 years, cleansing the galaxy of all forms of life in order to start anew. And they're about to do it all over again... >





> Mass Effect 3 continued

It's a setting that makes Modern Warfare 3's World War III scenario look like a back alley scuffle. This is an entire galaxy at war, an account of the last desperate acts of entire species, races and planets, each joining together to take down a seemingly unstoppable force. How it ends, we've no idea. Mass Effect 3 marks the end of the trilogy, and even if BioWare isn't prepared to abandon the universe it's crafted over the last six years altogether, Mass Effect 3 is certainly Shepard's final game. "[A satisfying conclusion] was one of the most important things we looked at when making this game," BioWare tells us. "We want the outcomes [Ed – note that it's plural – multiple endings will reflect the player's play style]

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
Great action or gripping narrative? Which are you most looking forward to from ME3?



"Every bit the threequel you've been hoping for"

to be satisfying to the player, and that doesn't necessarily mean they're all going to be happy or positive." Will Shepard die? Well, it wouldn't exactly be for the first time.

You'll be well aware of his vulnerability throughout your entire playtime, and kept on your toes by being put in control of a character that could potentially be killed off at any given moment. He/she (Shepard's sex, as usual, is decided upon by the player) doesn't in the first 90 >



Click here to see the enhanced version of this shot!





> **Mass Effect 3** continued

minutes at least, the snippet of the multi-hour epic that BioWare treated 360Zine to earlier this month.

Phone Home

Placed under house arrest following his role in the destruction of the Bahak system, Mass Effect 3 opens on Earth where Shepard is awaiting trial. Beyond its atmosphere (the blue skies and white clouds are a typically rare sight given the grand scheme of Mass Effect's universe), Earth appears distinctly unrecognisable, BioWare's futuristic vision of the home planet populated by angular high-rises and wide open waterfronts.

The Reapers, of course, want to put their own spin on the architecture by reducing it to rubble, launching an assault on Earth not even five

"Shooting is far more fluid and responsive"

minutes after pushing the Start button. BioWare is quick to enforce its intentions for Mass Effect 3 – no longer an RPG with third-person shooter mechanics, this is a story-driven shooter that can finally rival the mechanics found in other TPSs, with far more responsive controls and tweaked gameplay to make for a streamlined shooter experience. The clunkiness of ME2's shooting has been replaced by a system far more fluid than before, with Shepard easily able to switch between cover points and react far more responsively, while an expanded tech tree provides an additional layer of depth to the RPG mechanics. And





MASS
EFFEC



"An experience that simply can't be missed"



> Mass Effect 3 continued

with the addition of Kinect support, players can now access every weapon, power and command without ever reaching for the radial menu.

But it isn't just the core mechanics that have been spruced up for Mass Effect's second sequel, as BioWare's big hope for ME3 is to provoke a bigger emotional response than the previous games, with player choices (both from this game and the last two) making a much more profound impact on the story. "The scope and the scale is completely

different," BioWare tells us. "Players have to understand that they're an architect in what happens."

Escaping from Earth in the Normandy, Shepard receives orders to head to Mars, BioWare's vision of the red planet rendered fantastically aback an incoming sandstorm. What happens there we'll leave for you to experience for yourself next month but take it from us, you won't want to miss it. Ignore reports of a wonky script and a misguided focus on action, as this is every bit the threequel you'll have been hoping for, and an experience that simply can't be missed. ●



The most thrilling sci-fi epic this side of Star Wars



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CONTROL →





HITMAN™

Publisher: Square-Enix
Developer: IO Interactive
Heritage: Hitman series,
Kane & Lynch series
Kinect Compatible: No
ETA: TBA 2012

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Stealth hit or
should Agent
47 go back to
school? Let
us know!

HITMAN ABSOLUTION

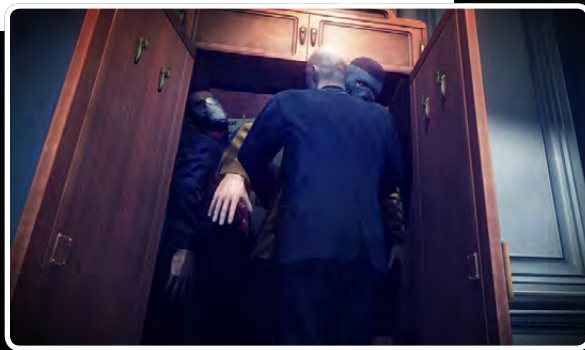
*"Absolution's one
of the coolest
games ever made"*

The perfect hit

Walking into a room filled with masked goons, Agent 47 casually picks up a fire axe. An unusual tool of the job, you might think, but a standard day at the office for gaming's original assassin. Slamming the axe into his target's forehead, his enemy's accomplices reel in surprise, letting off dozens of rounds of pistol fire in his direction. He pulls out his trademark Silverballers, mowing down a handful more in a torrent of bullets and gun powder, the camera swooping around their limp bodies as they plunge to the ground. For the grand finale 47 tugs the axe out of the lifeless thug at his feet

before throws it at the head of the lone gangster. The target falls to his knees. Job done. Back to the office.

To rearticulate Bleszinski's infamous turn of phrase, Hitman Absolution is bigger, it's balder, and it's definitely more badass. It's Jason Statham: The Videogame, and a title that will inevitably be host to countless YouTube videos ripped over the top of 'Let the Bodies Hit the Floor'. If you've ever oohed and aahed at the gunfights in The Matrix, Face/Off or Hard Boiled, you'll be left in awe by this. Simply put, Absolution's one of the coolest games ever made. But equally, it isn't Hitman as you know it. >





HITMAN™



Preaching to the converted: Agent 47 can still take a disguise from any of the fallen or subdued.



“Save the security guard for info on hidden weaponry, or ignore him to slip by unnoticed...”



> **Hitman Absolution** cont.

What we described earlier was just a small, 20-second sequence, a snippet of a level that sees Agent 47 breaking into an orphanage under attack from the cronies of cigar-smoking industrialist and all-round bad guy Blake Dexter. Rather than being broken up into individual cases, Absolution is the first game in the series to follow a storyline; a linear sequence of events that sees 47 trying to find the reasons behind the death of ex-handler Diana Burnwood. Dexter's the big bad villain, the guy who you'll (presumably) carry out the ultimate hit on during the game's finale, and a character who is eager to get his hands on a young girl named Victoria who shares undisclosed connections with Burnwood.

Victoria's housed up in the Rosewood Orphanage, a children's home turned mass grave just prior to 47's arrival. It's a gruesome sight; bloodsplatters cover the walls and empty cots line the dorm rooms, as the bodies of carers lie dormant across the abandoned hallways. The only sign of life comes via the gangsters plundering the rooms for Victoria, and a security guard being tortured in one of the bedrooms. Save him and he'll direct you to a hidden weapon, or ignore him to slip by unnoticed. It's your choice.

We're shown two playthroughs of the level: the first is an aggressive run through with 47 swiftly and stylishly dispatching his foes via a vast armoury of weaponry and household objects, including the aforementioned axe and a fire extinguisher (and via a new Red Dead Redemption Dead Eye-style >



"A hit you can't afford to miss!"

HITMAN™

> **Hitman Absolution** cont.

targeting system 'Point Shooting'). The second is a more 'professional' run, sneaking through the level, silently taking out goons using syringes and via chokeholds.

Beyond the differing levels of violence though, both playthroughs are very similar. It's all gone a bit Splinter Cell Conviction, a stealth action game with the emphasis on murdering up the place in style, and unlike previous Hitman games, where plotting your route and working out a particular path was key to success, here the path the player takes appears almost linear.

"It's more dictated by the story as to what happens and exactly how it happens," says Gameplay Director Christian Elverdam of the game's flow. It's a controversial decision by the developer, but one which Elverdam thinks helps rather than hinders the overall gameplay. "In the old gameplay we had this mechanic that when you were spotted everyone knew who you were and would run to you from the furthest corner of the level. All of that stuff is gone. I don't think there's necessarily any conflict here about building something that feels extremely cinematic."

Cinematography is key to the Absolution experience. Slow-mo camera pans set the scene at almost every turn, as the camera bounces and swoops during every shot of 47's 'Point Shooting', and a spookily mesmeric

orchestral score adds to the suspense of the grisly atmosphere. "[We have] a music system that can hook up to the brain of the AI," says Elverdam. "If you mute our playthroughs you can feel how much impact it actually has." Turn up your 5.1, as IO's going to raise the game when it comes to audio.

And talking of impact, Elverdam is keen to stress to the series' most hardcore fans that Absolution won't disappoint following the negative tongue-lashing after its E3 showing last year. "I definitely understand the concern about whether it's going to be linear or too different from the formula," he says. "I think some of the stuff is more controversial when you hear about it than when you actually sit with the controller and try to play it. I wouldn't worry, we're not going to disappoint."

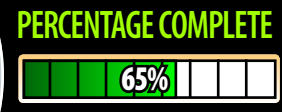
But regardless of whether or not it feels like a traditional Hitman game though, there's no getting round the fact that Absolution looks like an astonishing slaughter-em-up romp. Expect IO's best work yet when Absolution launches later this year, and a hit you can't afford to miss. ●



Click here to see the enhanced version of this shot!

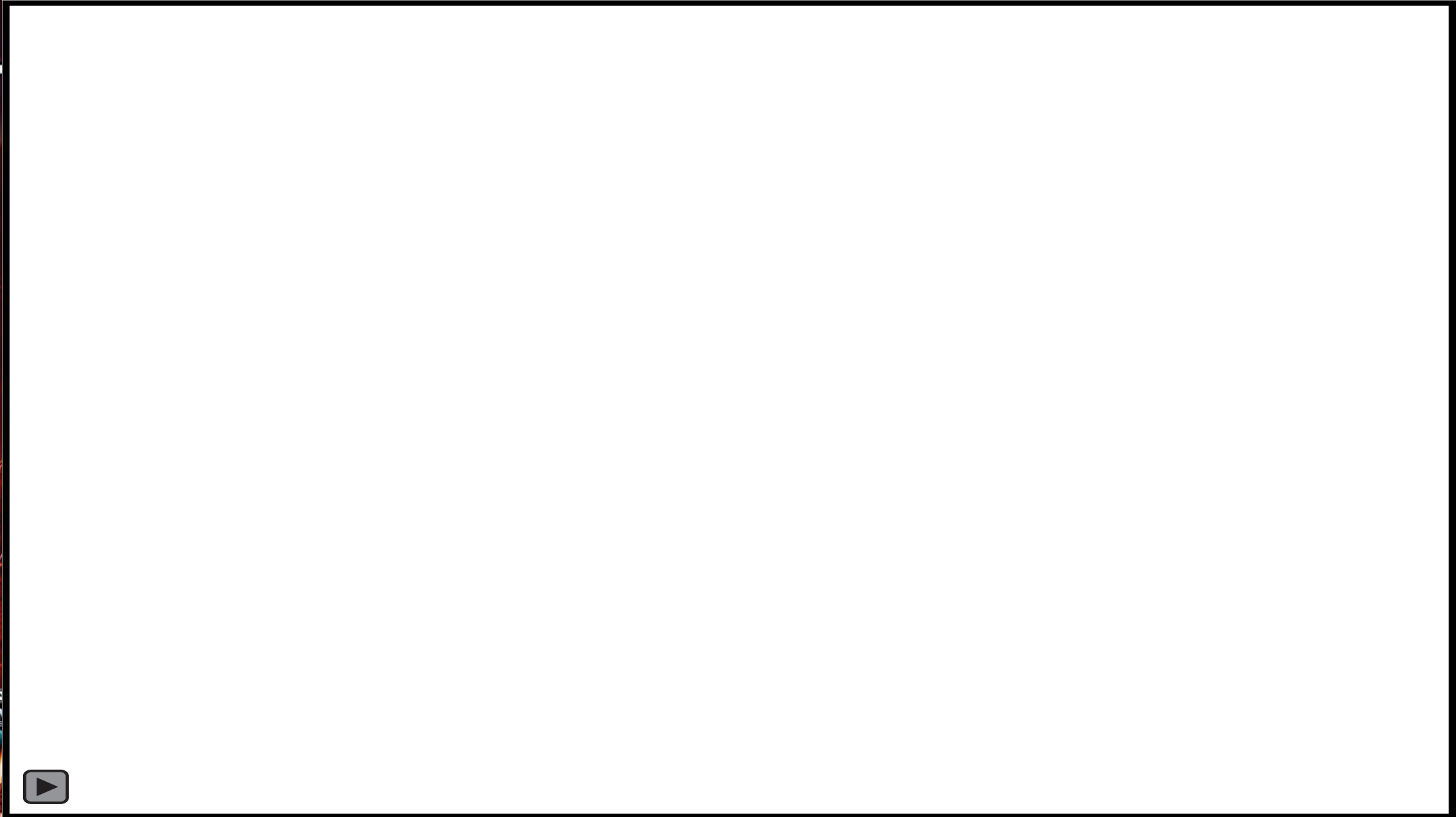


360Zine
 HITMAN™
 ABSOLUTION



Bigger, balder and more badass... Absolution's looking killer!

MASS EFFECT 3





Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Paris, Ubisoft Bucharest, Ubisoft Red Storm
Heritage: Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter
Kinect Compatible: Yes
ETA: 25th May

PREVIEW FEEDBACK!
 Does Ghost Recon still have what it takes?

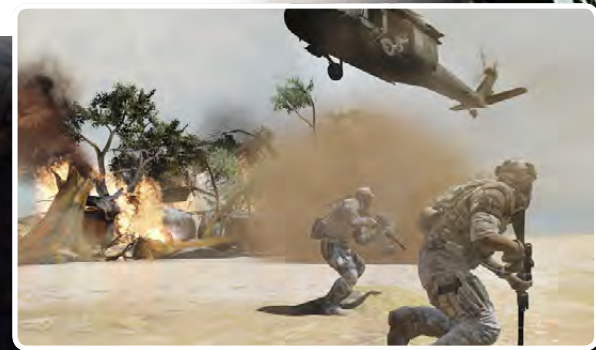
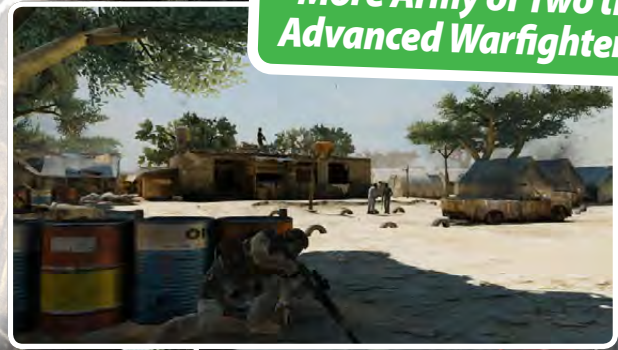
GHOST RECON FUTURE SOLDIER

Do you believe in Ghosts?

When a game's preview demonstration opens with the developer eagerly bragging about the number of animations tied to the lead character (2,500, fact fans) and the game's 'seamless transition from cut-scene to gameplay', you know you're in for a bit of a howler. But when there are wild claims flying around the room too, well... then it starts to become a lot more interesting. "For instance, we're absolutely not scripted," says Ghost Recon: Future Soldier's Executive Producer Yann Suquet moments after an armoured vehicle rips through the gates of

an enemy base. Our ears prick up. Did he just see what we did? We go back to playing, securing a hostage as the game breaks out into an on-rails shoot-out as helicopters fly into view and armed terrorists rappel out of the sky. "We're not scripted at all," he emphasises again. Surely this isn't a reactive AI, we ask ourselves. And then the truth comes out. "Well, we have some scripted events obviously." Could Future Soldier really have been a military shooter entirely devoid of scripted moments? Of course not. In the words of Suquet, Ubisoft has made Ghost Recon "more 'wow'". That means it's faster, it has more

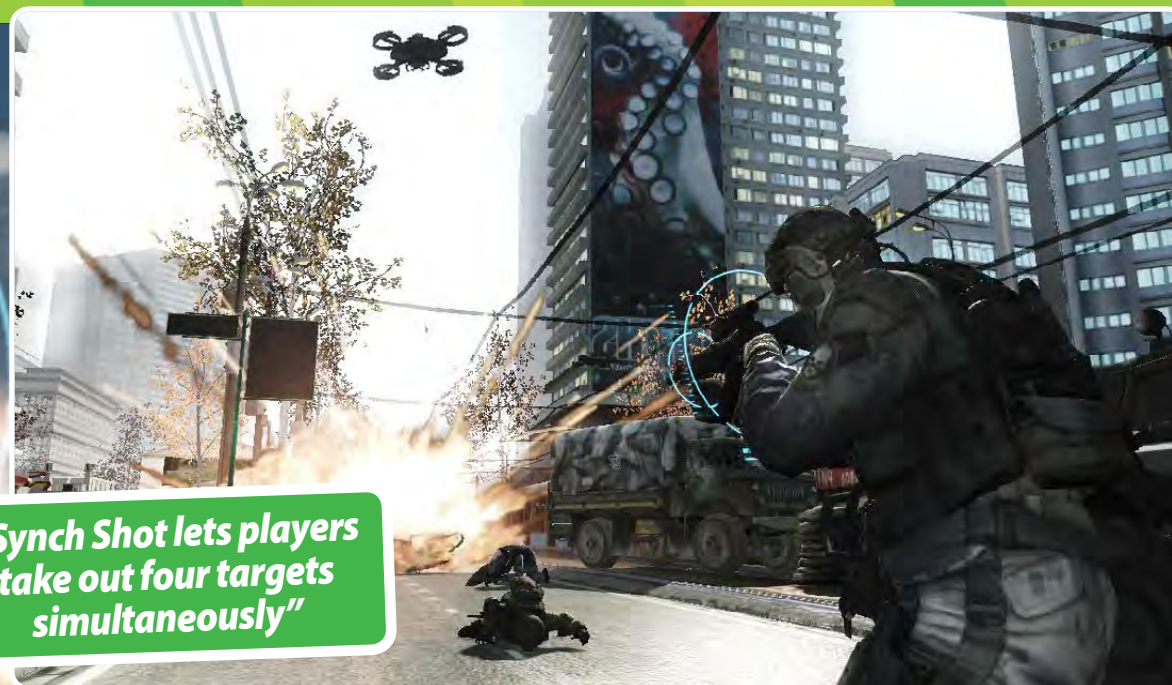
"More Army of Two than Advanced Warfighter..."



TOM CLANCY'S
GHOST
RECON
FUTURE SOLDIER

In spite of all the explosive urban action, the quiet woodland locations could be the best levels in the game.

"Synch Shot lets players take out four targets simultaneously"



► **Future Soldier** continued

explosions than a Steven Seagal action flick and yes, it has plenty of those scripted moments designed for that sheer edge-of-your-seat gameplay. It's vastly different to previous Ghost Recon games, far more akin to Army of Two than Advanced Warfighter. Gone is the ability to tactically position your squad, the new system reduced to simply allowing players to order team-mates which enemies to target. It's called 'Synch Shot' and works via the player targeting an enemy in their reticle before tagging them with RB. You're able to tag up to four enemies at once, with your squad-mates (Future Soldier's campaign has four-player online-co-op) simultaneously taking out the other three on your shot.

Or at least that's how it should work. We found the mechanic incredibly hit and miss (literally) with AI squaddies regularly missing their target despite having a bead pointing directly at their head. Along with the oddly downplayed use of the game's trademark optical camo, it was ultimately something that led to our detection. In one level in particular, a stealth mission set in the camp of a shady Zambian arms dealer, the AI's inconsistency created massive problems. With zero alerts allowed, howl ups by our AI squad-mates sent us tumbling back to the beginning of the mission time and time again – something that *could* be rectified by improved checkpointing in the final release, but a frustrating foible as it stands now.





> Future Soldier continued

And those AI mishaps could well be the reason why Ubisoft Paris appears to have put tactical play on the back foot, despite being given the tools to do it (recon drones, sensor grenades and the like are still available here) analysing the battlefield seems a far less practical tactic than in previous Ghost Recons. There's barely any benefit to reaching for your drone while fighting terrorists in the middle of a busy Pakistani intersection, for example, than there is blasting in all-guns blazing.

Which is a shame, really. When Future Soldier gets it right, it's a sublime reminder as to how good Ghost Recon games can be. The game's tenth level 'Valiant Hammer', a mission described by the developer as a 'homage to the franchise', is a large, open map set in woodlands and

perfectly primed for tactical play. Despite the YETI engine clearly struggling to convey scenes anywhere near as realistic as games like Battlefield 3 or Modern Warfare, it was the highlight of our demonstration, letting us establish our method of attack and slowly take out the soldiers surrounding the enemy base. It's great, but unfortunately levels like this appear to be in the minority.

We're concerned, then, but we are yet to play Future Soldier in a full four-player set-up, an area where we firmly believe the game will come into its own. Much like the Ghosts themselves, there's a very real danger that Future Soldier could slip off your radar, but with a brief bit of under-the-bonnet tinkering offered by the recent delay, we have our fingers crossed that Ubisoft Paris can deliver the Ghost Recon game fans deserve. ●



Click here to see the enhanced version of this shot!



Hold onto those Splinter Cell Conviction discs! You'll get one week's early access into the GR:FS Beta if you still have yours!



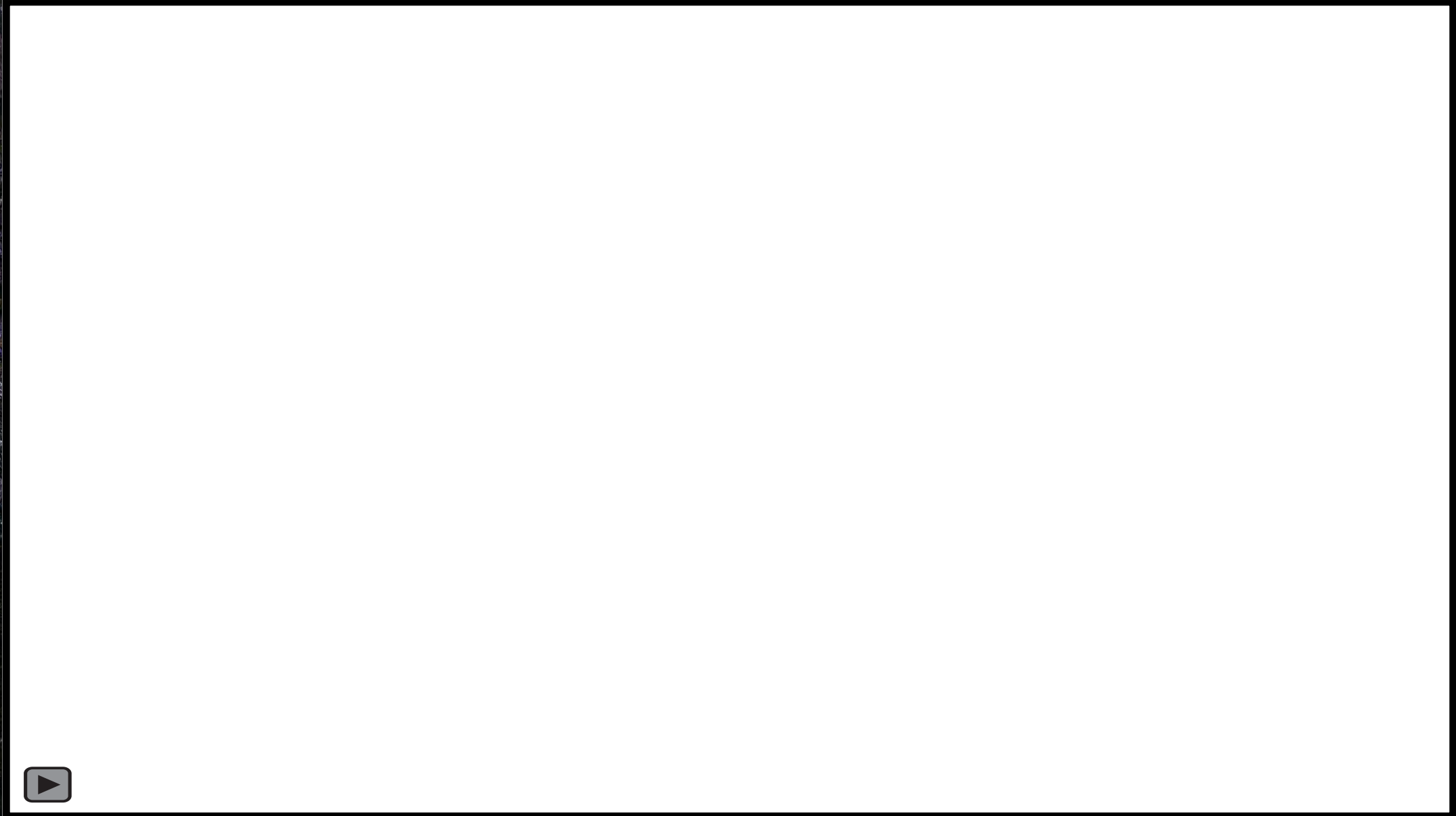
PERCENTAGE COMPLETE



FIRST IMPRESSIONS



A layer of polish is needed, but action fans needn't be concerned





Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: TBA
Heritage: N/A
Kinect Compatible: Yes
ETA: 23rd March

**PREVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
Do you want
Kinect to see
what you're
wearing?

KINECT RUSH: A DISNEY PIXAR ADVENTURE

New kids game holds the key to a hidden Kinect tech...

When it comes to kids' Kinect games, you already know the drill. Step into the universe of one of your favourite movies, become your favourite character and flail your arms about to throw things, fly and/or drive in one of the countless types of mini-games. But what you might not know is that Kinect Rush houses a feature we've not yet seen properly implemented into a disc release: KinectScan, a technology that transforms the player into an on-screen avatar straight from the set of some of the world's best-loved Disney movies.

Whatever clothes you're wearing will be recognised via KinectScan and represented appropriately in-

game. Wearing a stripy orange t-shirt, for example, will result in your Incredibles character outfitted in near-identical clothing, or represented on your Car via a stripy orange paint job.

Imagine GTA V recognising the threads you're wearing before transferring them onto the main character. It's impressive stuff, and as well as offering up some classic Pixar charm, Kinect Rush could be the origins of an emergent form of tech on the Xbox 360.

With the magic of Disney behind it, Kinect Rush looks certain to be a firm favourite for the youngsters. But if it can get that Pixar charm just right, it could be both the game that the child inside us has been yearning for, and an insight into the future of character customisation. ●

"Kinect Rush could be the origins of an emergent form of tech"



STAR WARS



CONTROL →



CALL OF DUTY



INTERACTIVE
FEATURE!

If you've signed up to be a Call of Duty Elite Premium member, you'll have already earned yourself a season pass to all of Modern Warfare 3's DLC.

Take a peek at what's coming by clicking on the months below...

MW3 SEASON

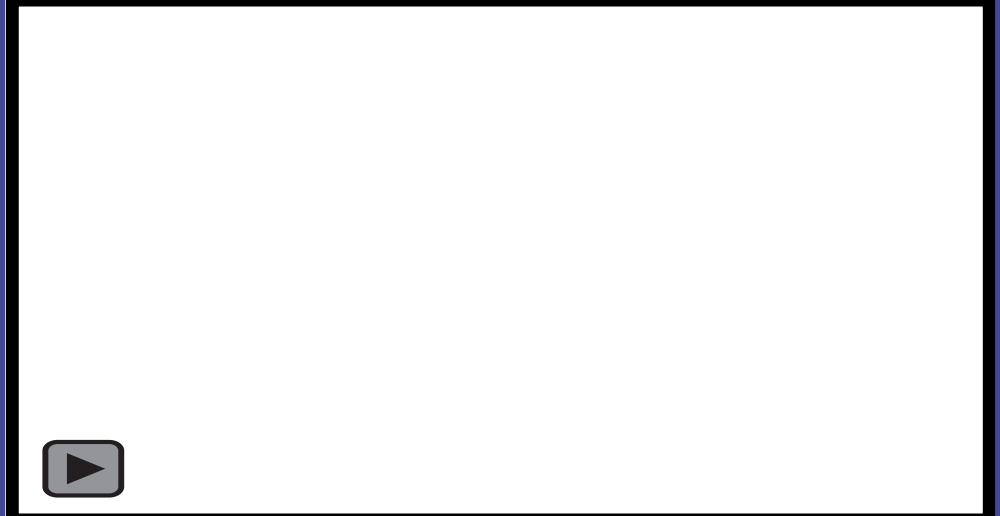
JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP

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Publisher: Deep Silver
Developer: Atlus Persona Team
Heritage: Persona series
Kinect Compatible: No
OUT NOW

CATHERINE

Carry On Gaming

Tits. That's probably the reason why you're interested in Catherine. To watch the lead characters get up to a bit of hanky panky while you sit there keeping the volume down so no one else can hear you getting off to the game's 'on-screen action'.

Well, how's this for a cock block? Catherine is a puzzle game. Kinda. And to top it all off, you don't even get to see any *proper* nudity – let alone sex – throughout the dozen or so hours you'll be sat there playing it.

Still with us? Let us explain. There are actually two sides to Catherine. One is a fast-paced puzzle game with very little

margin for error, where you'll need to think with your brain rather than your Johnson. Suffering from a series of nightmares, the core gameplay whips player character Vincent off to an isometric tower built of blocks, tasking him with reaching the top by pushing and pulling the different types of blocks into formation before those below him crumble. It's a metaphor for love (apparently) and one of those simple yet fiendishly difficult old-school head-scratchers that gets you hot



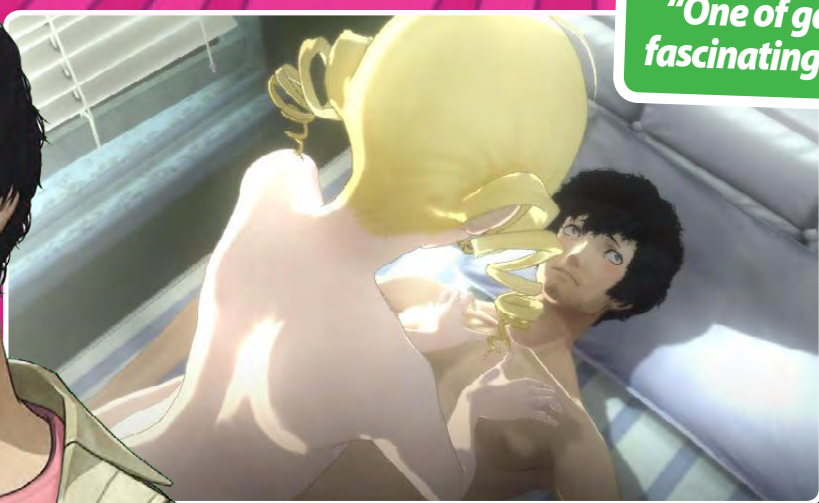
"You'll need to think with your brain rather than your Johnson..."



I die, or I kill you... Which would be better?



"One of gaming's most fascinating experiments"



You can replay each level to beat your time and step count, with bonus rewards offered on completion.

> Catherine continued

under the collar, but that you can't put down – and there's nothing remotely sexy about it.

The other part of Catherine is probably the bit you already know about – or at least, thought you did. Bookending the puzzle sections are hours of cut-scenes and conversations detailing

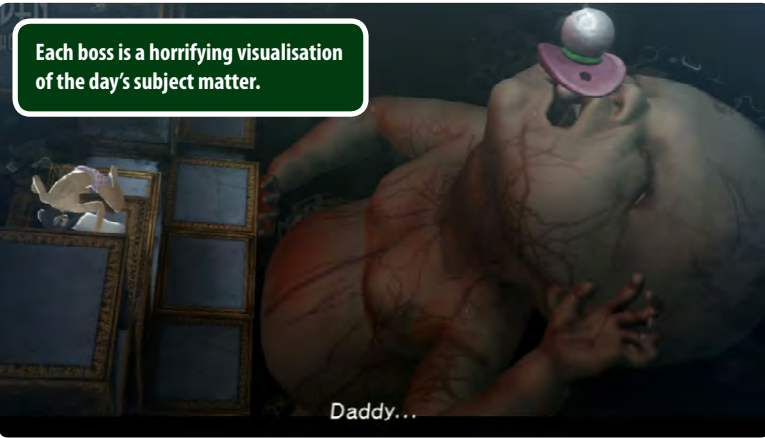
Vincent's affair with flirtatious blonde Catherine and his failing relationship with long-term girlfriend Katherine, flitting the player back and forth between Vincent's bedroom and the local bar where he's able to talk with friends, respond to text messages and help out others experiencing similar nightmares. The sections are barely interactive, but they're also the more interesting half of the game.

They're a rewarding payoff for persevering through the game's most difficult sections, carrying through the fun but tedious puzzle sequences with a relatable lead character and fantastically entertaining script. It's the writing itself that's the highlight, filled with multiple twists and turns while touching upon the taboos and issues related to adult life, and with an overarching story that reacts to the moral choices the player makes throughout. More importantly, the developer handles sensitive subjects delicately and maturely, keeping its daytime events and characters largely grounded in reality (often brilliantly awkwardly so), and saving the exploitation for the game's nightmare boss sequences – a commendable achievement given how easy it would have been for Atlus to simply divulge into smut.

If you *are* just here for the sex, then, consider yourself warned. Catherine is

adult, but far more so for its mature script and hard-as-nails puzzle sequences than any cheap thrills. Embrace it for its obscurity and you'll find an experience that'll remain in the mind long after the credits have rolled, and a title likely to be remembered as one of gaming's most fascinating experiments. A peculiar yet compelling story-driven puzzle game, Catherine is gaming's biggest brain workout this side of Portal 2 and one of the most interesting 360 games you'll ever play. ●

REVIEW FEEDBACK!
Is Catherine what you were expecting?



Each boss is a horrifying visualisation of the day's subject matter.

360Zine Verdict 360's oddest game – and one of the most difficult, too

- 👍 Lovely story
- 👍 Nothing else like it
- 👎 Too difficult for some

78%





Publisher: Konami
Developer: Rebellion
Heritage: Aliens vs Predator, Rogue Warrior, Shellshock 2
Kinect Compatible: No
OUT NOW

NEVERDEAD

Six feet under...

Max Payne crossed with Katamari Damacy and Buffy The Vampire Slayer. That's the pitch. A game where you get to play as an immortal demon hunter who can rip off his own head and roll it through a ventilation shaft to find hidden areas, or whose arms and legs tear off as the player is attacked, leaving you to thrash his dismembered torso around the level in an effort to reattach them.

We were quietly looking forward to NeverDead, a game which, on paper, sounded like a side-splitting spin on an overcrowded genre. So why, then, is it never as good as it should be?

That'll be Rebellion's doing, the British developer behind Rogue Warrior and Shellshock 2, and the good-but-not-good-enough Aliens vs Predator, and they've continued their run of wrong turns here. NeverDead isn't just a bad game, but it's one whose developer has unilaterally failed to capitalise on the unique concept it's been gifted by Konami.

The developer clearly has no idea what to do with NeverDead's clever concept, instead sending protagonist Bryce Boltzmann along corridor after corridor of woefully unvaried enemies, have him solve basic 'puzzles' (the

most challenging simply requiring the player to roll his head up a seesaw), and repeat the (admittedly fun) ventilation shaft trick ad infinitum.

The dismemberment system (itself rather clever, with dismembered arms still able to shoot the guns they're holding) is ignored completely, with Rebellion instead managing to make the mechanic more annoying than fun by blasting the player into a gazillion pieces at every possible opportunity. >

"Rebellion clearly has no idea what to do with NeverDead's clever concept"





Arcadia is Bryce's mortal partner. Unlike Bryce, she'll need reviving – frequently.



**"Utterly dismissible...
desperately frustrating"**



> NeverDead continued

To get your body back together, you've got to roll Bryce's head around to find the pieces – a process that can be slow and tedious at the best of times, but one that becomes a mind-numbingly frequent event around the game's mid-point. Worse still, the mechanic is made even more frustrating by the presence of 'Grandbabies' at almost every turn, tiny ball-shaped demons that suck up Bryce's head and lead to an instant game over.

The shooting's pathetic too, with guns so weak and feeble that they offer minimal feedback and accuracy (bizarrely, your aim is *always* off-centre unless you zoom in, stand still, or buy an upgrade), while an equally frail melee alternative turns the game into a thoughtless button masher. And, bar some relatively amusing sections in partner

Arcadia's apartment, the god-awful script and horrific soundtrack will have you reaching for the earplugs, with Rebellion's attempts at humour falling flat on almost every occasion.

And that's not all. The level design is just as dull as the execution of the core mechanic, with all the usual suspects – museums, churches, sewers, train stations, police stations etc – all held together by a story looser than a working girl's drawers. It's lazy, and a complete waste of the IP.

There is the odd semi-interesting scenario, although none of them are enough to act as the game's saving grace. Bryce's immortality means he can survive events players typically wouldn't in other games, including being hit by speeding trains, sucked into a whirlwind or set on fire – the latter used fleetingly as a gameplay mechanic to let him light up darker areas. But once again, their implementation often seems daft and

thoughtless, usually making an already tiresome section far more frustrating than it ever needed to be.

Had the developer chosen to build levels and half-decent puzzles around the opportunities provided by the dismemberment mechanic, NeverDead could have brought something new and interesting to the table. But instead, it's an utterly dismissible and desperately frustrating shooter whose unique concept has been hopelessly lost on Rebellion. ●

**REVIEW
FEEDBACK!**
*Did you have
your hopes up
for NeverDead?*



**360Zine
Verdict** **Lazy execution leaves
this interesting new
IP dead on arrival**

- 👍 Dismemberment funny the first time...
- 👎 ...but the joke gets old fast
- 👎 Pathetic shooting

50%





METAL GEAR SOLID HD COLLECTION



So Solid crew

If you're about to sit down with Metal Gear Solid for the first time with the release of the HD Collection, take heed of our advice: relieve yourself first, find a comfy seat and bring popcorn – you'll be sitting here for a while.

Fondly remembered for its obscure cardboard box-wearing adventures, superbly atmospheric stealth sequences, camp humour and insanely lengthy cut-scenes, Kojima's trio of epics have

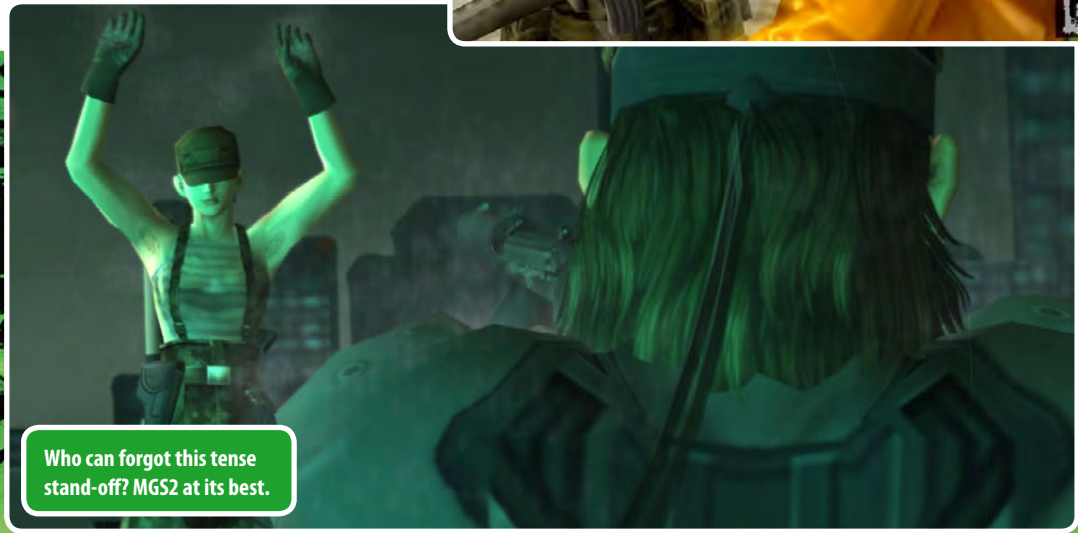
finally sneaked onto Xbox 360, each updated, tweaked and refined for a brand new HD audience.

To clarify, this isn't the complete line-up of Metal Gear Solid games. The original PSone Metal Gear Solid is disappointingly absent – often noticeably so given the parallels and references during MGS2 – as is MGS4: Guns of the Patriots; Snake's grand finale is still exclusive to PS3.

Instead, you've got Metal Gear Solid 2, 3 and PSP game Peace Walker, each outfitted with the bells and whistles you'd expect from an HD revisit. They're the re-released versions, too: MGS2: Substance, which features bonus missions aside from the main story, and MGS3: Subsistence, offering up an array of extras only really suited to series mega-fans.

Metal Gear Solid 2 is arguably the most famous of the three, notorious for Kojima's unprecedentedly

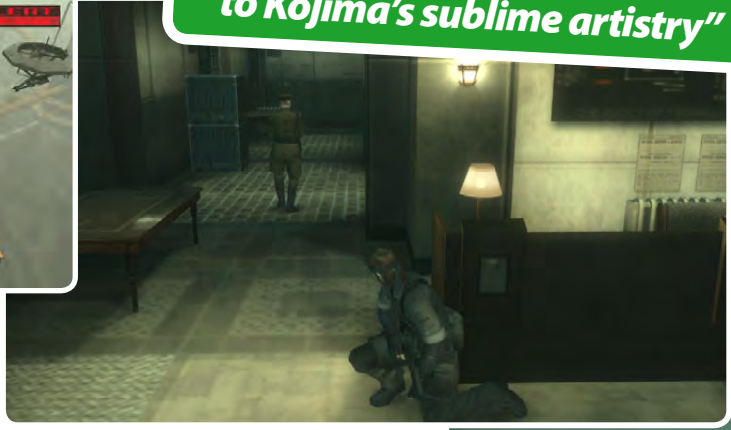
"They're perfect ports, but the controls don't fit the 360 pad"



Who can forget this tense stand-off? MGS2 at its best.

"That MGS manages to wow us a generation later is testament to Kojima's sublime artistry"

First-person shooting can feel awkward compared to modern shooters, firing off a round when you let go of the X button.



> MGS HD continued

cunning decision to replace MGS lead Solid Snake with new guy Raiden. But it's Metal Gear Solid 3 that's actually the most fondly remembered, famed for introducing new mechanics and intricately exploring the backstory that went on to shape the future of the series. Both are shining examples of Kojima's ability to direct a game that merged cinematography and sequences usually reserved for Hollywood with the finest stealth gameplay the industry has. Peace Walker, meanwhile, is an almost entirely different kettle of fish altogether,

a hybrid RPG/stealth/co-op handheld spin-off that attempted to take advantage of the Monster Hunter craze that swept across its home nation on its release two years ago. It's the most unremarkable of the three, and one whose comic book cut-scenes can lessen much of the impact that MGS usually relies on from its cinematics. Each are worth experiencing again, though, all perfect ports running at 60fps and with only the rarest jots of

slowdown during the most visually intense sequences. More impressively, Bluepoint has done a fantastic job in retaining the look and feel of each game post-HD jump. The hazed green of MGS3's jungle setting offers an incredible ambience, contrasting fantastically with the clean, quasi-futuristic look of MGS2's Big Shell, while the character models of both still stand up to some the best of today. Understandably, Peace Walker's PSP origins make it the ugliest of the bunch, but you can't criticise Bluepoint, who has clearly done the best job they can with the assets available.

Everywhere else though, HD Collection stands up terrifically well. As one of the first series' to really experiment with cinematic gameplay, the fact that MGS's presentation and pacing still manages to wow us a generation later is a testament to Kojima's sublime artistry. Featuring two of the best games of the last-generation as well as one of the better titles to ever grace a handheld, MGS's expertly crafted makeover and budget price makes HD Collection an essential pick-up. ●

The controls, an area where MGS2 stumbled during its port to the original Xbox, still don't quite fit the 360 pad though, with the triggers, rather than the bumpers, used to select items in the inventory, and an awkward two button RB/X combo required to aim in first-person. Outside of the cut-scenes, MGS can start to show its age through the animation as well, where the relatively stiff characters lack that extra lick of polish allowed by the current hardware.



360Zine Verdict *Kojima's masterpieces still have what it takes today. Essential!*

- Unmissable stories
- Perfect ports
- Controls can feel awkward

90%



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Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Project Soul
Heritage: Soulcalibur series
Kinect Compatible: No
OUT NOW

SOULCALIBUR V

The sword and the clone

We can't wait for the day when every fighting game has a half-decent go at delivering a worthwhile campaign. It's not as if they don't already have the characters or the stories for it – go looking for them and you'll find that Soulcalibur V's fighters each have incredibly intricate backstories, with relationships, interests and histories that could easily form part of an on-going narrative. NetherRealm recognised this with last year's Mortal Kombat, setting a precedent for the

genre with its excellent story-driven campaign. So why can't anyone else? Despite being the default option upon loading up the game, Story mode is clearly an afterthought for Project Soul, rather than the focus. A brief and creatively bankrupt extension on the usual Arcade mode, it tells the vague overarching story of Patroklos and Pyrrha Alexander, a brother and sister force sent on the trail of the spirit sword Soul Calibur. But beyond boring the player to tears, it doesn't ever achieve anything, simply

putting players up against a handful of classic SC characters and generic fodder in a series of bog-standard bouts. The cut-scenes that intertwine, meanwhile – an odd mix of sketches and CGI – are so tedious that you'll likely start to skip them around the halfway mark. It ends after 90 minutes thankfully, and you'll wonder why you, or Project Soul, even bothered. So, the story's a load of throwaway rubbish then, but thankfully the rest of the game holds up rather well. The core combat is up there with some of the best we've seen in the genre,

"SCV's moves will leave you awestruck"



"An unadventurous sequel, but still one of the best in the genre"



> **Soulcalibur V** continued

Soulcalibur's classic weapons system remaining relatively unique to a fighter, with characters giving their fists a rest and using nunchuks, samurai swords and six-foot poles to beat down their foes instead. Some feel slightly overpowered – Nightmare and Cervantes are typically cheap, and it's fairly easy for an amateur to pick up a quick, combo-heavy player like Maxi and destroy a sluggish character handled by a series pro within minutes. But at the same time, that's exactly the point.



Prepare yourself for that buzzword, then. Project Soul has gone to great lengths to make Soulcalibur V far more accessible than previous games, upping the tempo and tweaking characters to react that little bit more responsively. Bashing buttons can often result in some slick combos, making fights performed by even the most amateur fighter seem like balletic and beautifully choreographed dances of violence. You might not know how you've pulled off that sword-swinging stunner, but since when did that matter?

As such, heading online with SCV doesn't feel anywhere as intimidating as it can in fighters like Street

Fighter IV. Sure, seasoned pros will always have the upper hand, but the system makes fights far more enjoyable and far less competitive – a positive or negative point depending on your stance on the genre.

At the time of writing our review, online multiplayer was hindered by spots of lag, something which – as many fighting fans will already know – can make or break a fighter's lasting online appeal. There's still hope that it'll be fixed. Namco Bandai has promised us that an update should appear around the time you read this, but at this stage we can't make a call on it either way.

The character creator returns from Soulcalibur IV, again with the hilarious option of being able to take your creations online. But disappointingly (although not all that surprisingly), a lot of the customisation items seem to be reserved for premium DLC. Boo-erns, Namco Bandai.

So, its weak single-player offering makes Soulcalibur V a less than ideal option for solo players, but when it comes to the core fighting mechanics there's very little here to criticise. It's an unadventurous sequel, and its less than perfect balance means it certainly isn't going to topple Street Fighter IV off the top of a pro's favourites list anytime soon. But if you're in the market for a fun, gorgeous fighter packed with moves and choreography that'll leave you awestruck, SCV's the one to beat. ●

360Zine Verdict *Running out of steam, but SoulCalibur can still pack a punch!*

- 👍 Dazzling visuals
- 👍 Less intimidating than other fighters
- 👎 Weak single-player offering

80%



Developer: VectorCell
Heritage: N/A
Kinect Compatible: No
Price: 800 Microsoft Points
OUT NOW

AMY

"A game suited only to those as brain dead as its cast"

Sick and twisted, and that's just the controls

Oh, Amy. Where did it all go wrong? VectorCell's stab at creating a survival horror with an inspirational twist – the player is *already* turning into a zombie at the beginning of the game – may sound like a great idea on paper, but in reality it's a gamer's worst nightmare.

You play as Lana, a woman tasked with protecting autistic eight-year old Amy as they escape from the zombie-infected world of Silver City, using the girl's small size to clear puzzles and reach inaccessible areas. It's a third-person survival horror dressed in ICO's clothing, in other words – and in all

probability, that'll be the highest praise the game's ever going to get.

Disappointingly, the game behind the concept is bereft of any technical competence or stimulating gameplay whatsoever. It's filled with design flaws, mistakes and embarrassments that simply shouldn't exist in a 2012 release – let alone one from Paul Cuisset, the man behind some of the early 90's best-loved adventure games. It is, simply put, one of the most abhorrent titles we've ever seen turn up on the Marketplace.

The problems become fairly apparent early on, with poor weapon

placement and awful checkpointing threatening to throw players off as early as the opening chapter. Persevere and the instakills, appalling AI, dull puzzles, gimmicky scares and overcomplicated controls are met with a core mechanic that fails to work neither as well as it should, nor is communicated to the player effectively enough. Infected by the virus, Lana slowly transforms into a zombie when Amy isn't by her side and is – in theory – able to blend in with the locals during the transformation. But it's as cumbersome as it sounds, with no clear indication as to when it's safe to move or where exactly the player has to get to. Take too long and you'll die; move too quickly and you'll be rumbled. We've no idea how any of it got through testing – assuming the game even went through such a thing.

As a result of VectorCell's throng of design mishaps you'll fail time and time again – and take it from us, trial and error isn't fun when it's spaced 30 minutes apart. And even when you *do* manage to avoid death, it's just as likely you'll get snagged on an object and have to do it all over again anyway. Whether you actually *want* to reload, of course, is a



different story. Amy fails to offer anything vaguely compelling. Its puzzles are boring and its set-pieces cliched, while the woeful script, awkward acting, technical inaptitude and terrible controls mean it's a game that only manages to spark fear through the omnipresent horror of replaying the same section again, rather than via any sense of suspense.

The first game in years that's made us want to turn off our console in a fit of rage, Amy is nauseatingly difficult, unnecessarily infuriating and falls wide of the entertainment mark by quite a margin. If you want a good survival horror game, go and download Resi 4 again... heck, go outside and play hide and seek in the dark, but whatever you do, don't buy this game. A game suited only to those as brain dead as its cast, Amy's a creative darling crucified by technical howlers and cack-handed design. ●



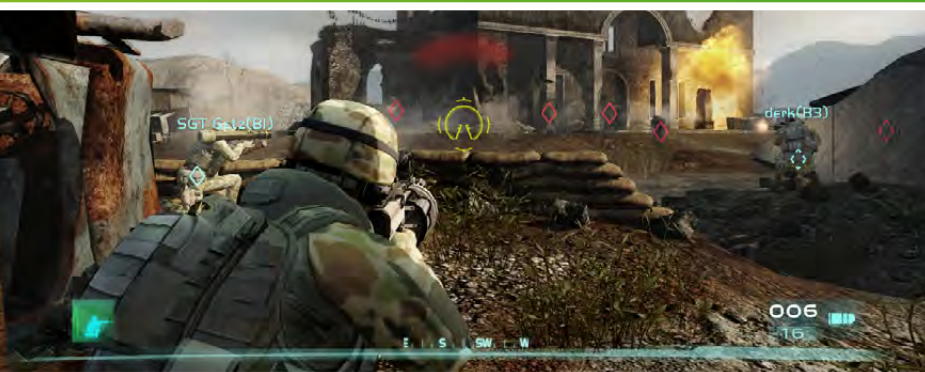
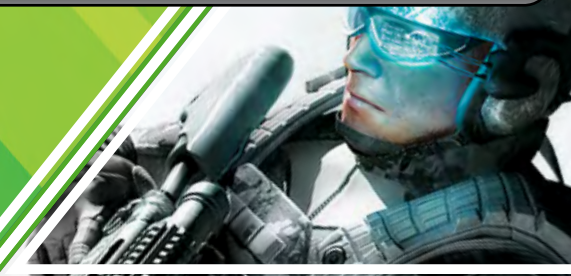
360Zine Verdict **Horrific. An early contender for 2012's worst game**

- 👍 Neat concept
- 👎 Technical disaster
- 👎 Just... no

24%



DEAD OR ALIVE



Been rummaging around the bargain bin? Each month we delve back into the multiplayer of a classic title to find out whether anyone's still playing it



Maps range from tight, dusty deathtraps to bigger tropical battlegrounds.

42:10

SGT Getz(B1)

This Month

RELEASED: 06/03/2007

PUBLISHER: Ubisoft

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Paris

PLAYERS: 2-16

ONLINE MULTIPLAYER MODES:

Elimination, Territory, Objective, Battle, Mission

ONLINE ACHIEVEMENTS? Yes

HOW MUCH? Around £5



What is it?

Ubisoft's tactical shooter combines the third-person cover-based shooting of Gears of War with the use of gadgets and character classes to encourage teamwork.

How many people are playing?

Though the games we played never managed to reach the 16-player capacity, it was still relatively easy to find a match. Player counts averaged around 12-14 players per game, but the maps' bottlenecks

meant that we were never far from the action.

Is it still fun?

GRAW's floaty controls, unusual targeting system and sluggish character movement can jar at first, but we found ourselves settling back in surprisingly quickly. Because of the game's low hit point counts there's a tendency for players to use more defensive tactics than in other shooters, meaning matches can often play out like games of paintball, with players almost always found

covering behind crates, sandbags and other bits of scenery. Fun? Not particularly, but the need to remain concealed within the environment can lead to some intense games of cat and mouse.

So should you try it out? Well, if you've ever complained about campers in CoD, you'll have a field day here. But if you want to get some practice in before Future Soldier, you could do a lot worse.

Verdict: ALIVE



In **360Zine** Issue 64



PROTOTYPE 2

The infection spreads...

Hands-on with Activision's brutal open-worlder!

PLUS!

SPEC OPS: THE LINE MASS EFFECT 3

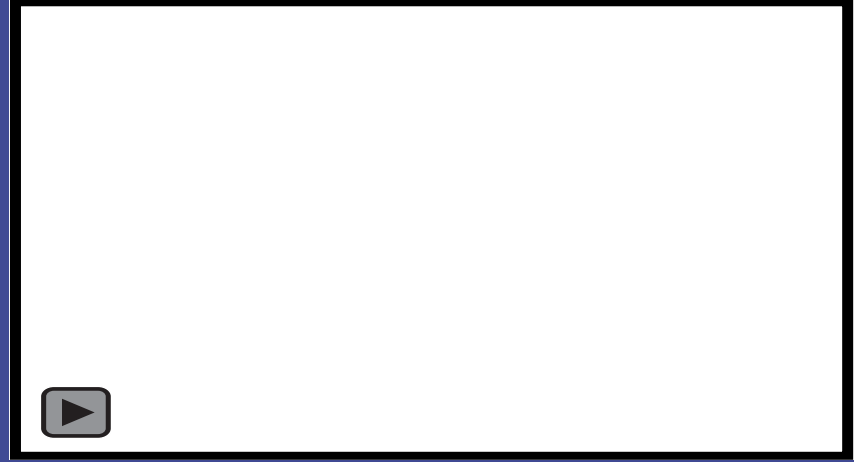
FIFA STREET RIDGE RACER UNBOUNDED DEMONICON

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