

360zine

ISSUE 68 | JULY 2012

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FIRST LOOK PREVIEW!

OMERTA

CITY OF GANGSTERS



HALO 4



LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW



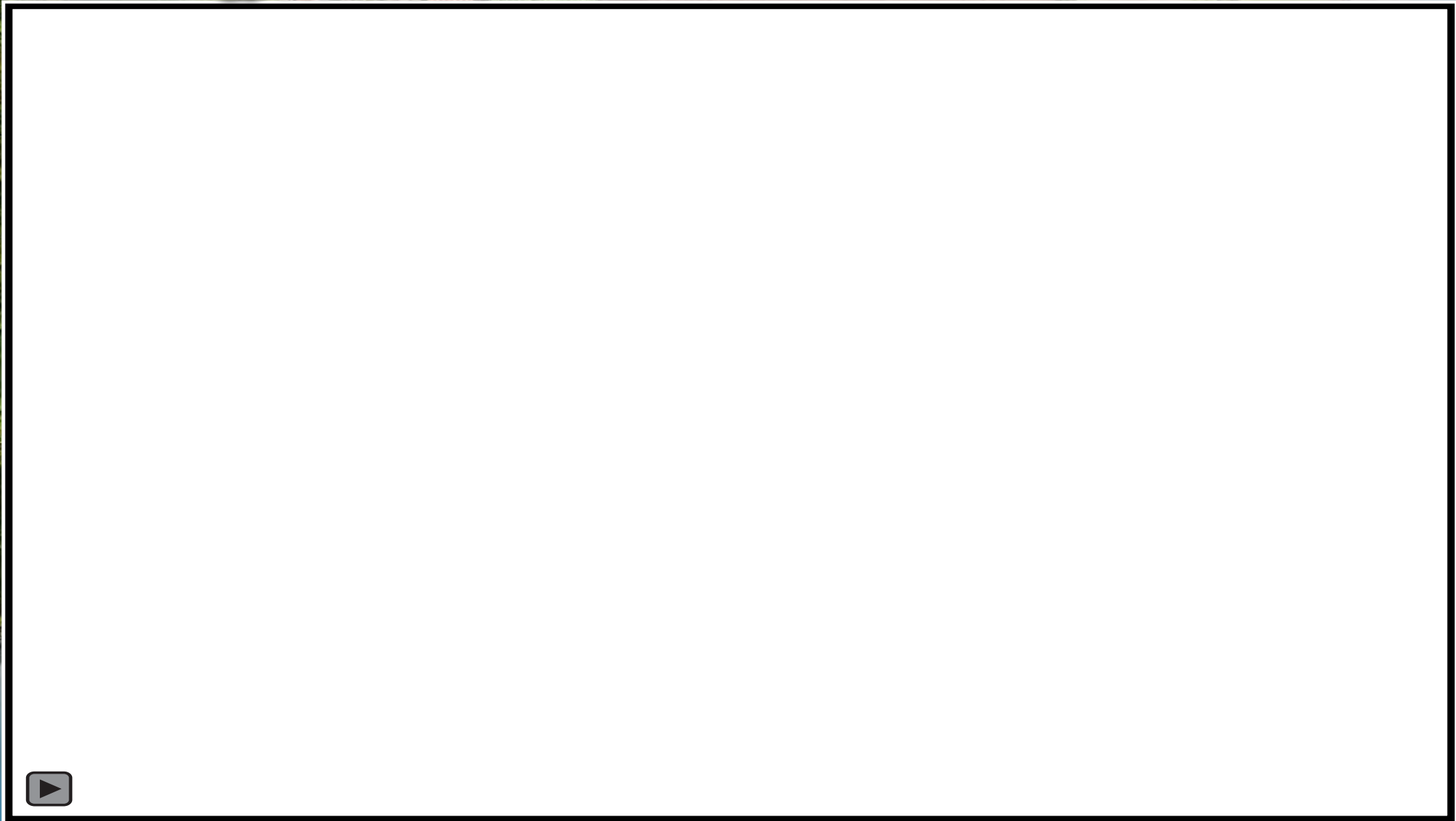
RESIDENT EVIL 6



SPLINTER CELL BLACKLIST

Port Royale 3

Pirates & Merchants



WELCOME TO 360Zine



What a time to start a new job. One week into it and E3, the biggest gaming event of the year, slaps us round the face with its explosive reveals and underwhelming conferences.

With some time to reflect on what made the headlines, for better or worse, there's never been a more exciting time to be an Xbox 360 owner. Games like *Halo 4*, *Tomb Raider* and *Resident Evil 6* suggest that even the oldest franchises can still be interesting and exciting, and brand-new announcements like *Watch Dogs* offer a promising idea of the things to come out of the console's final years. Meanwhile, our cover game might not have been on Microsoft's stage but make no mistake, *Omerta: City of Gangsters* will be on your radar by the time you've finished reading this issue.

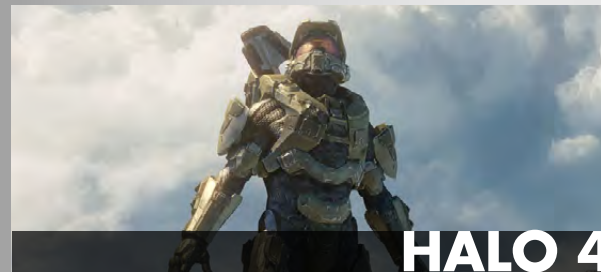
There's plenty to be excited about right now as well. Suda 51's *Lollipop Chainsaw* cuts through the pack as the most bizarre title of the month while *Spec Ops: The Line* has us questioning our moral fibres. As far as my first issue as editor goes, I think it's safe to say that we nailed this one. Thanks for reading and enjoy the issue.

Tom Worthington, Editor
360Zine@gamerzines.com

Don't miss! This month's top highlights!



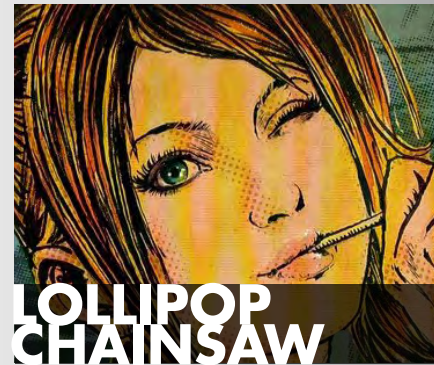
OMERTA: CITY OF GANGSTERS



HALO 4



RESIDENT EVIL 6



LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW



SPEC OPS: THE LINE

QUICK FINDER

- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|
| Tomb Raider | Lollipop |
| Forza Horizon | Chainsaw |
| Splinter Cell | Steel Battalion |
| Blacklist | Spec Ops: |
| Resident Evil 6 | The Line |
| Halo 4 | Virtua Fighter |
| Omerta: City of Gangsters | 5: Final Showdown |
| | Babel Rising |

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MEET THE TEAM

Playing games.
Browsing Zune.
Unlocking cheevos.



Andy Griffiths
Has his pom poms and chainsaw at the ready.



Dean Mortlock
Tonight, he's sleeping with the fish, see?



TOMB RAIDER

TOTALLY FREE!

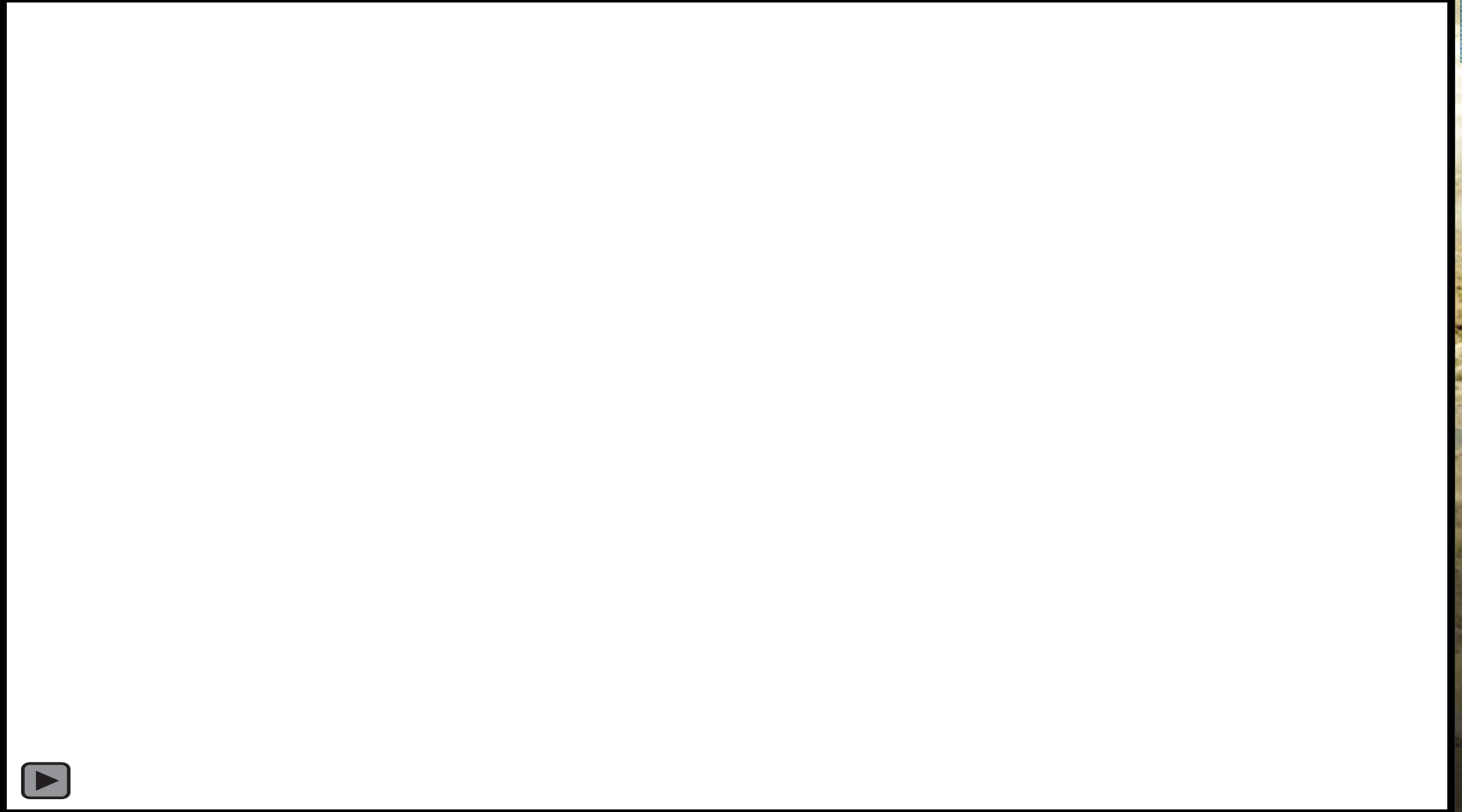
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TOM CLANCY'S
GHOST



PREVIEW |

INCOMING

CHECK OUT THESE E3 HIGHLIGHTS!

CLICK EACH GAME
FOR MORE INFO

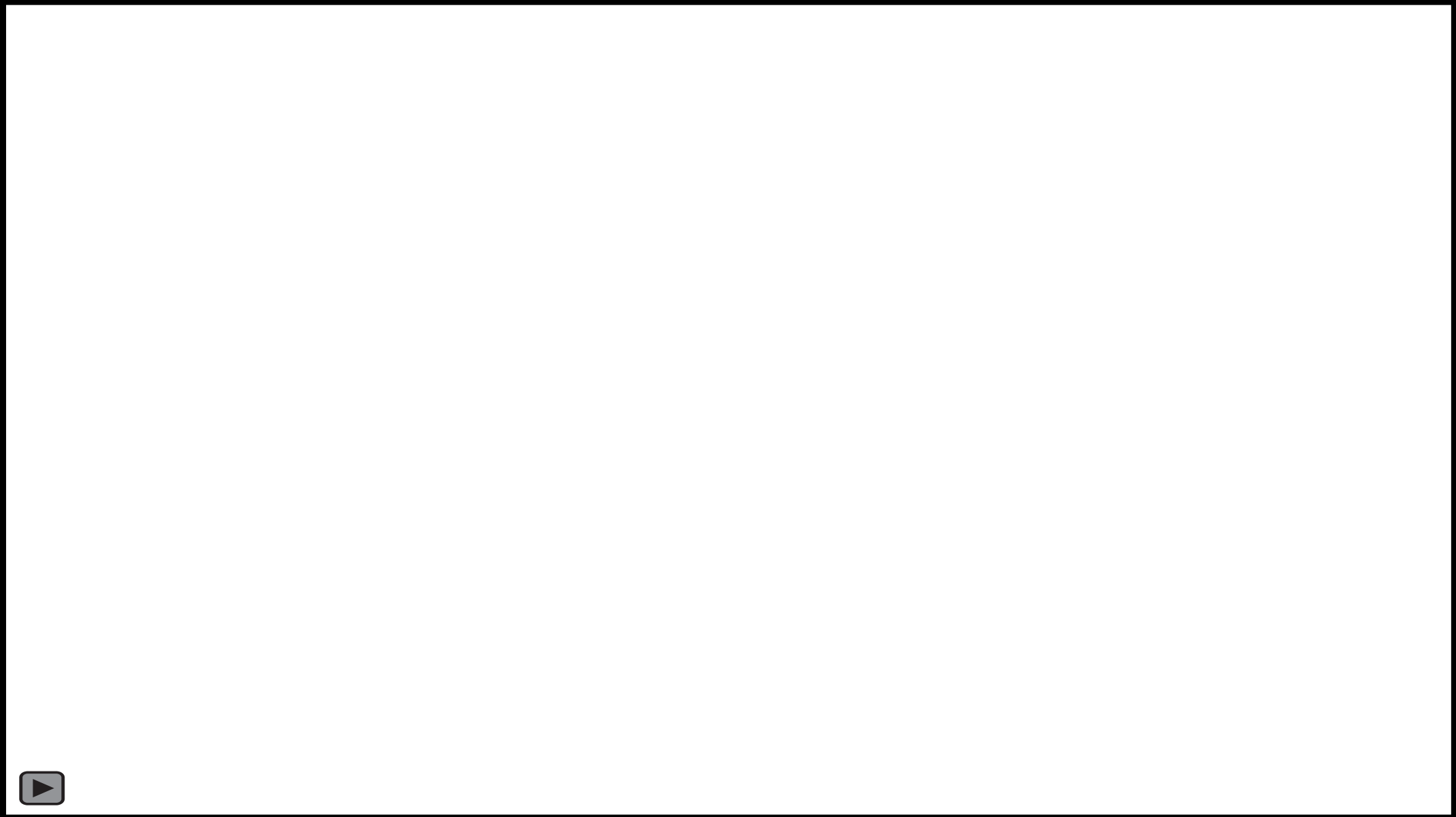
**GEARS OF WAR:
JUDGEMENT**

DEAD SPACE 3

**CASTLEVANIA:
LORDS OF
SHADOW 2**

WATCH DOGS

**DANCE
CENTRAL 3**



FORZA HORIZON

PUB: MICROSOFT
ETA: 26TH OCTOBER

FIRST LOOK

ROLL
OVER
FOR
INFO!

Forza Horizon is nothing like the Forza we know and love. It's still the spit-shined, roaring engine Top Gear of videogames that the series has become well known for, but Horizon is exactly what might happen if the series takes a well-deserved holiday.

Gone is the sterile presentation and orderly tracks of its forbearers as the series breaks out into the open roads of a sun-drenched Colorado, a US state that's been caught up in the commotion of the Horizon festival – a marriage of autoshow and your typical summer music festival.

Upon your arrival, Horizon puts you in 250th place of all its racers, tasking you with rising through the ranks by racing up and down Colorado's 206 different roads, competing with times and feats set by both the AI and your friends, and demonstrating your driving skills in both professional and reckless style.

It sounds more free spirited than what we're used to but it's all underpinned by the physics engine introduced by Forza Motorsport 4. Its open-world setting is home to 65 different types of terrain and picturesque vistas that beg us to drive to them – and if you can see it, Horizon promises that you can drive to it.

With Turn 10 handing the steering wheel over to UK studio Playground Games, we'll soon see how Forza Horizon's 'off the beaten track' approach handles when the game launches this October. ■



"THE WORLD - OR AT LEAST
THE CARIBBEAN - IS YOURS!"

-INSIDE GAMING

Port Royale 3



TOMB RAIDER

PUB: SQUARE-ENIX
ETA: 5TH MARCH 2013

FIRST LOOK

Those who see Lara Croft as a seasoned adventurer, a fearless fighter and also a controversial representation of the female hero may find her rebooted zero-to-hero origins tale something of an eye-opener.

Young, helpless and shipwrecked, Lara's survival against the elements sees a 21-year-old archaeologist snagged on animal traps, battered and bruised, and pummelled by branches as she glides through the forest.

Her adventure to save her shipmates from a group of mercenaries takes more than a few pages from Nathan Drake's diary in both its cinematics, blockbuster set-pieces, and attention to detail – and that's a good thing.

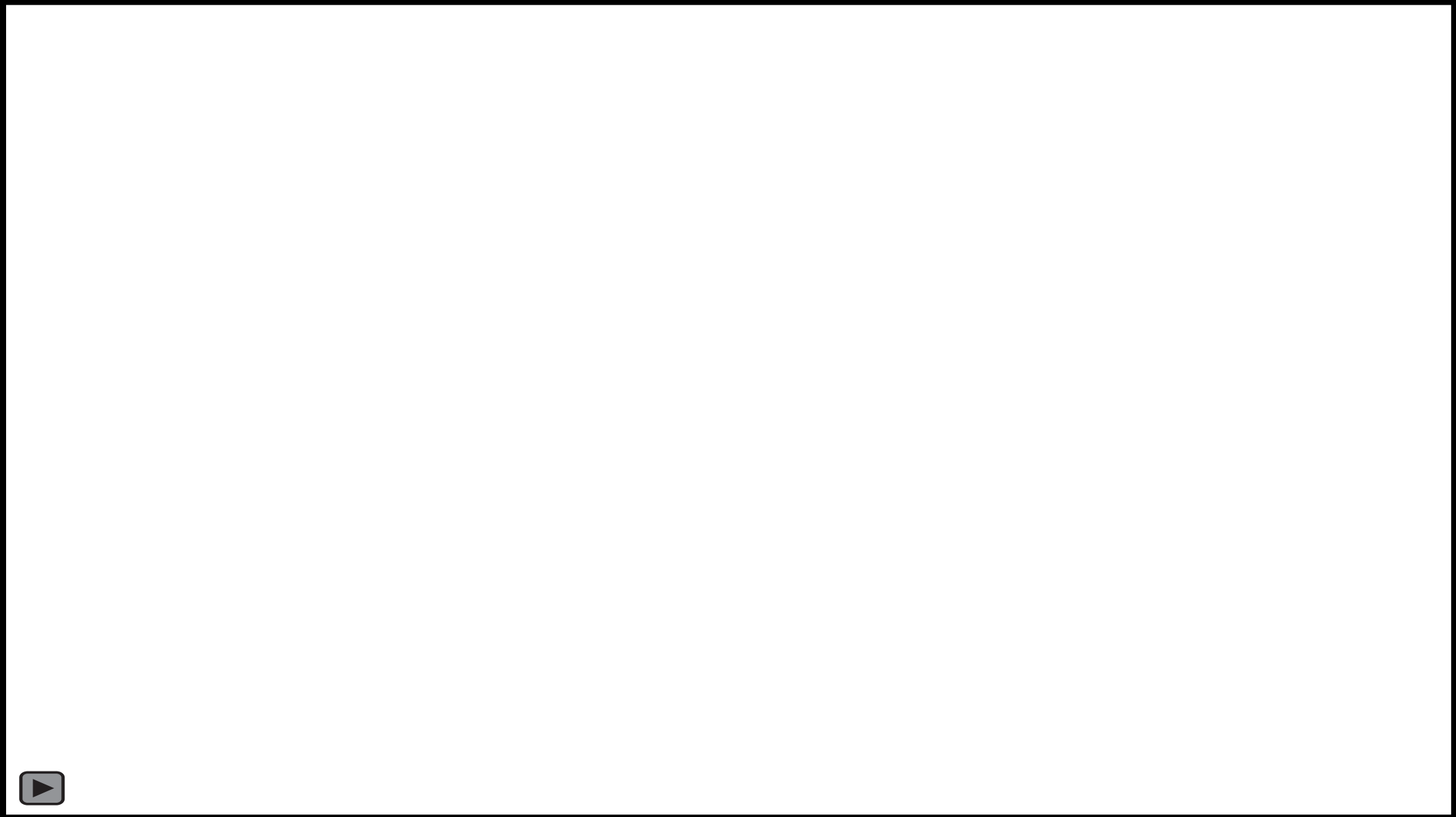
With non-linear exploring in an open world, an XP system for levelling ability and currency (called Salvage) to spruce up your equipment, Lara's got a few surprises up her sleeve, even after all this time. ■

ROLL
OVER
FOR
INFO!





ULTIMANI™



SPLINTER CELL BLACKLIST

PUB: UBISOFT
ETA: MARCH 2013

FIRST LOOK

**ROLL
OVER
FOR
INFO!**

Oh Sam, you're getting on a bit aren't you? You couldn't even sneak this one past us. We've known a new *Splinter Cell* game was on the way for some time so when *Blacklist* attempted to slip past E3 security, Fisher was greeted with a red carpet entrance.

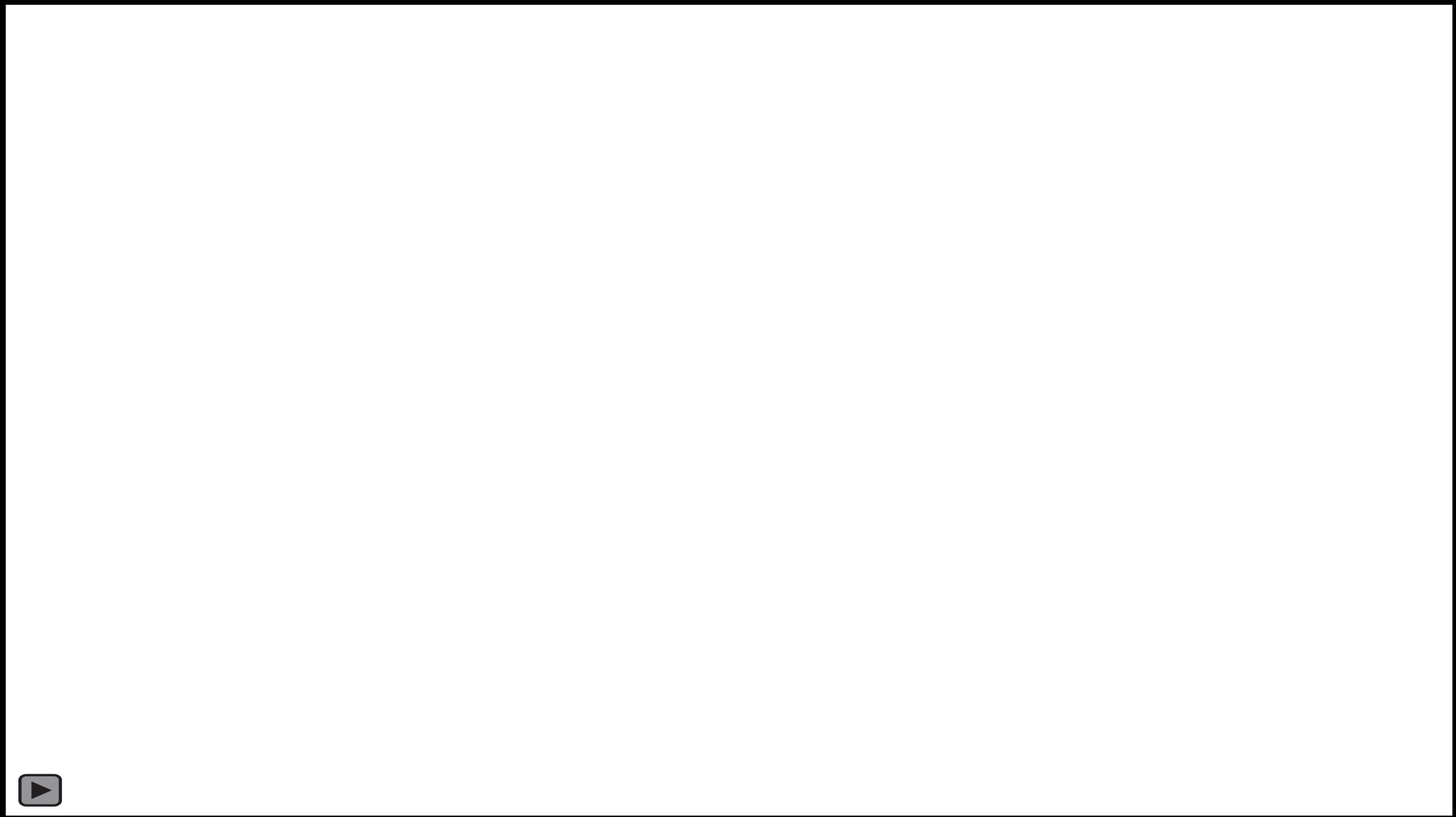
Back in his suit and goggles firmly attached to his head, *Blacklist* sees Sam out to build a new Echelon unit to bring a halt to the Blacklist, a countdown of terrorist attacks against the US.

An early look suggests the series will continue down the action-oriented road paved by 2010's *Conviction*, expanding on the old mark-and-execute trick with the more effective Killing In Motion technique. A new Active Sprint ability will also give Sam the ability to navigate his terrain with ease and climb up walls and buildings like a modern-day member of the Creed. Looks like you can teach an old dog some new tricks after all. ■



AVAILABLE 8TH JUNE 2012

GAME OF THRONES





OMERTA: CITY OF GANGSTERS

FIRST LOOK



PUB: KALYPSO
DEV: HAEMIMONT GAMES
LAST GAME: TROPICO 4
KINECT SUPPORT: TBC
ETA: SEPTEMBER

You're gonna go far, kid!

Omerita is a code of honour, a deep-rooted importance on staying out of other people's business, keeping the police unaware and, most importantly, keeping your mouth shut. We expect to find a horse's head in our beds any day now because we can't keep quiet about *Omerta: City of Gangsters*, the latest sim from Haemimont Games, the chaps behind the *Tropico* series.

You arrive as an immigrant to Atlantic City in the 1920s, and ready to experience all that its gangster underworld has to offer. Fresh off the boat, you'll be given the opportunity to customise your character beyond even what fans of *Tropico's* set up will be familiar with, as there's an even deeper level of unique design with each creation, quizzing you to answer questions, for example, like what sort of petty crime you committed as a minor shapes the overall stats of your character. Though your actions will ultimately speak louder, how your character is

QUICK QUOTES

“ Aside from the obvious interface adjustments there are no significant differences between the [PC and Xbox 360] versions. We believe that the extra effort in developing the game for another platform is worth it as there are only a handful of such titles on the Xbox. ”

Bisser Dyankov
Designer,
Haemimont Games



Omerta's boardwalk is a must-see landmark in Atlantic City.



Play nice. Your reputation will change how the locals help or hinder your empire.

kitted out in terms of stats can be crucial. For example, a character with more brawn than people skills may be able to muscle his way into deals but gang members might charge more to work alongside his uncontrollable flatulence and loud belching.

Omerta quickly thrusts you into one of the city's 20 districts, from recognisable sights such as the Steel Pier to the bustling Boardwalk all appearing in-game. In each district you'll have to manage your money, weapons, beer and liquor to establish a headquarters and slowly begin your takeover. Up to six gang members can be hired and be used at once, and you'll quickly be running a eco-system that will bring in a steady incoming and keep your reputation afloat.

For example, you can send members out on short jobs that don't require your direct involvement while you oversee a drive-by on a business you've been eyeing up. This could also mean a confrontation, something you'll

have to face head-on in turn-based scuffles. One instance we saw had us clear out a gang of KKK members from a local bar. Mixing movement and attack points, you're able to move your gang members accordingly allowing you to go in guns blazing or stealthily without being spotted by your hooded prey.

A cover system is in place and the talents and perks awards every time a character levels, as well as what weapons your member uses adds a deep tactical involvement in the proceedings. Taking over a business allows you to turn it into any number of new ventures, be it bootlegger, loan shark, lookout or speakeasy. Turn it into a speakeasy and you'll have a place to stock and sell your beer and alcohol stocks.

You'll also have to manage two types of money. Clean money is earned through legitimate operations while dirty money comes from all of your seedy deals. You'll need clean money in order to make buyouts of business and



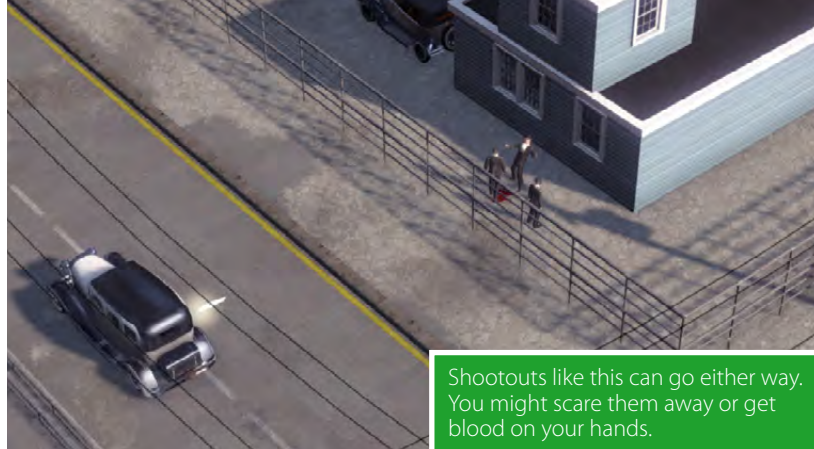
ZOOM

general purchases while dirty money will need to be laundered.

You'll also have a reputation to manage – will you be a good guy or a bad guy? Will you befriend the community and reap the benefits or instil fear into the locals and

have the police come down on you harder. There are so many variables in play that *Omerta* is bound to surprise when it takes over our towns come September. Now how do you dispose of a horse's head again? ■

PREVIEW



INTERVIEW

NAME: **BISSER DYANKOV**
TITLE: **DESIGNER**
DEVELOPER: **HAEMIMONT GAMES**
PREVIOUS WORK: **TROPICO 4**



How much have films and TV like *The Godfather* series and *Boardwalk Empire* inspired *Omerta: City of Gangsters*?

Key members of the Haemimont Games team are solid fans of gangster fables, as depicted in different media. *Boardwalk Empire* is just one of our sources of inspiration. Of course, we don't think anyone would dare venture into the genre without considering *The Godfather*, which defines in a brilliant way the typical gangster themes and tropes.

What sorts of games have influenced *Omerta*?

We've enjoyed several videogame titles (Rockstar's *L.A. Noire*, and *Max Payne* for starters), which influenced and inspired us. On top of it all, the original idea of *X-Com* and *Jagged Alliance*'s turn-based combat always fascinated us and helped us shape the tactical combat aspect of the gameplay.

What lessons did you learn from your work on the *Tropico* series of games that have been amended in *Omerta*?

We always feel that we can do better in establishing a deeper relation to the [*Tropico*] protagonist of the game – the (in)famous El Presidente. In *Omerta* the main character is quite prominent, not only in the narrative of the game, but also in the gameplay. We take care that the Boss goes out there personally and actually delivers a message to his opponents, most often from the muzzle of his gun.

How big a role will character customisation play?

We want flexible character builds that encourage experimentation and give the player the ability to

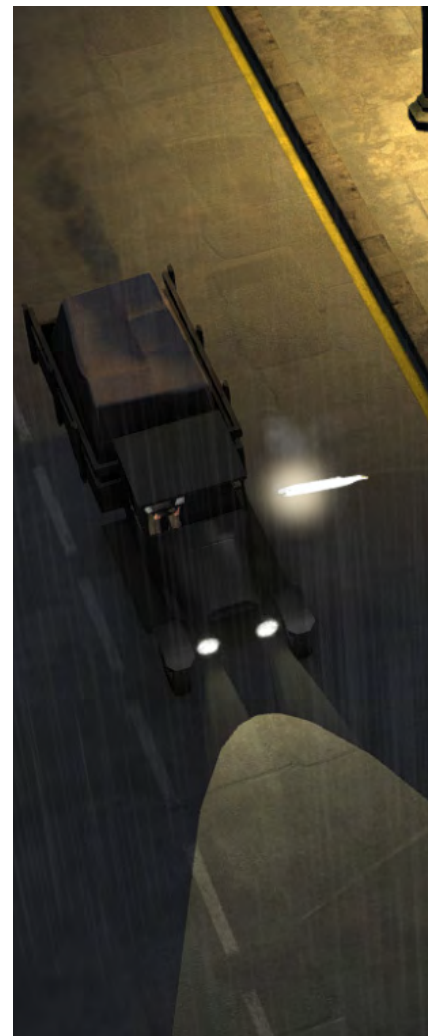
customise their gang to their own play style, then experiment with a new gang build, adjust that one as well, perfect a third, etc. It not only helps the replayability of the game but it also rewards the involved player, it helps the player who enjoys the game to explore it more thoroughly.

What can fans of 1920s gangster flicks expect from the soundtrack?

We are choosing the best soundtrack out there to enforce and enrich the unique 1920s atmosphere. I'm a fan of the *Chicago* musical, and I was really surprised to find out that listening to it actually helped me script some of the missions for *Omerta*.

How will *Omerta: City of Gangsters*' co-op work?

Omerta features a co-op multiplayer mode that allows players to combine their gangs and teach the cops and the rival gangs a lesson. Alternatively they can, of course, take a shot at a buddy's gang and see who's the biggest gangster of them all. ■



ROLL OVER FOR INFO!



RESIDENT EVIL 6

HANDS-ON

Variety is the spice of life

As far as major undertakings go, it's fair to say that *Resident Evil 6* is Capcom's biggest by far.

It's a monumental effort that currently employs a worldwide workforce nearing the four-figure mark, slaving away at a trifecta of campaigns that the publisher claims will deliver 36 hours of horror, action and revelation. It's a return to the series' roots while simultaneously attempting to break new ground for the survival horror name that it's failed to live up to in recent entries. Put simply, there isn't a gaming fan out there that

Capcom isn't trying to please with *Resident Evil 6*.

A three-fold effort that, judging from past games, is likely to culminate in an entire town being wiped off the map in a nuclear explosion, *Resident Evil 6* centres around the C-Virus outbreak, yet another infectious strain that's being pedalled round the world by returning villain Ada Wong – aka that bitch in the red dress.

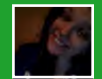
Leon Kennedy kicks off proceedings with a bang – a bullet fired right into the brains of a US President turned feral by a bioterrorist attack on the town of Tall Oaks. In another part of the world, Chris Redfield,

PUB: CAPCOM
DEV: CAPCOM
LAST GAME: DRAGON'S DOGMA
KINECT SUPPORT: NO
ETA: 2ND OCTOBER

TWITTER



@Mikejamesstevens
So excited for resident evil 6 and halo 4.



@Abrewahhh
You can move while you shoot in Resident Evil 6.



@NathanMartin92
Really can't wait for Resident Evil 6 to come out, looks like it'll be an amazing game!



@LinkDmitriLink
The more I see of Resident Evil 6, the more excited I get. I was expecting to be let down. That game came out of nowhere.

TWEET US @GAMERZINES



returning from a six-month sabbatical, drops onto the rooftops of a fictional Asian city where the regenerating J'avo run amok in the streets of Lanshiang. Both characters represent different parts of *Resident Evil 6*'s paradigm – Leon reviving the series' survival horror while Chris drags the gun-toting traits of *Resident Evil 5* kicking and screaming back into the frame.

Both are getting on a wee bit but there's not a grey hair in sight, and Leon and Chris have learnt a couple of new tricks in their old age. Moving and shooting now comes as standard, as is sprinting and diving to avoid gunfire or a

zombie mauling. Leon's taken up dual-wielding pistols *Max Payne*-style, whereas Chris's face-breaking punches are no longer limited to quick-time events, and are now executable by tapping the R trigger. Rotting and shuffling zombies are back and are more deadly than ever, running, leaping and lunging to take a bite out of Leon's tender flesh.

On the other hand, Chris will have the J'avo to deal with, Majini-like enemies armed with guns and an irritating ability to regenerate limbs you blast off. Shoot an arm and it's replaced by a red stretchy fleshy limb. Blast off its legs and it'll then grow wings to compensate.

Wrapping up the third part of *Resident Evil 6*'s campaign is Jake Muller, a mysterious bald mercenary revealed to be none other than the son of long-standing (and deceased) antagonist Albert Wesker.

Joined by the all-grown-up Sherry

Shoot these guys in the arm and they'll sprout another. Blast their legs off and they'll grow wings. Seriously.

Birken, who's been ordered by the Government to bring Muller in, both are on the run from Ustanak, a towering brute similar to *Resident Evil 3*'s Nemesis. Inheriting the supernatural abilities of his father, it seems Jake's blood is a hot commodity that the world is eager to get its hands on. With Ustanak constantly on Muller's back, the demo we experience started with a chase scene before we dived into a derelict building for a boss battle slowing the Nemesis 2.0 down the only way we know how – with very big explosions.

As the very sudden October launch nears, there's still an air of mystery surrounding *Resident Evil 6*. It's a three-in-one treat but can all three prove to make a winning formula that pleases everyone?

By the time you read this, those who picked up early-access codes in copies of *Dragon's Dogma* will be able to sample all three parts of the game we tucked into this month. Those without will have to wait a little longer to get a taste of Capcom's three-course meal. ■



A hug, Urstanka? With those arms? No thanks.





HALO 4 PREVIEW



PUB: MICROSOFT
DEV: 343 INDUSTRIES
LAST GAME: HALO: COMBAT
EVOLVED ANNIVERSARY
KINECT SUPPORT: TBC
ETA: 6TH NOVEMBER

You say goodbye, I say...

In 2007, when we finished the fight once and for all and as Master Chief prepared to slip into a cryogenic sleep that would last him five years, his final words to the world were "Wake me when you need me." Microsoft has found no shortage of ways of passing the time in the *Halo* Universe since that date. Prequels, remakes, even a real-time strategy game – there have been plenty of good reasons to finish the fight again and again, even if it isn't behind the Chief's familiar visor. So five years later, as rumours circulate that Microsoft is ready to retire the Xbox 360, does it reinstate its iconic soldier Master Chief to quell fears that the console is ready to die?

Marking the start of the Reclaimer Saga, *Halo 4* will see Master Chief awaken from his cryogenic slumber on the Forerunner planet Requiem. Up against threats new and old (including the returning >

TWITTER



@jacob_minero
I honestly cannot wait for Halo 4.



@JackyBhoy88
No even getting the new Call of Duty cause I'm sick of them. Halo 4 thank you.



@HaloWaypoint
If you need to catch up on all the Halo 4 goodness from E3, <http://halo.xbox.com/halo4> is the place to start.



@RobSemsey
I hope Halo 4 punched everyone in the mind.



@jakeb253
I can't wait for Halo 4 to come out so I can act like I'm 15 and ignorant of the world again.

TWEET US @GAMERZINES



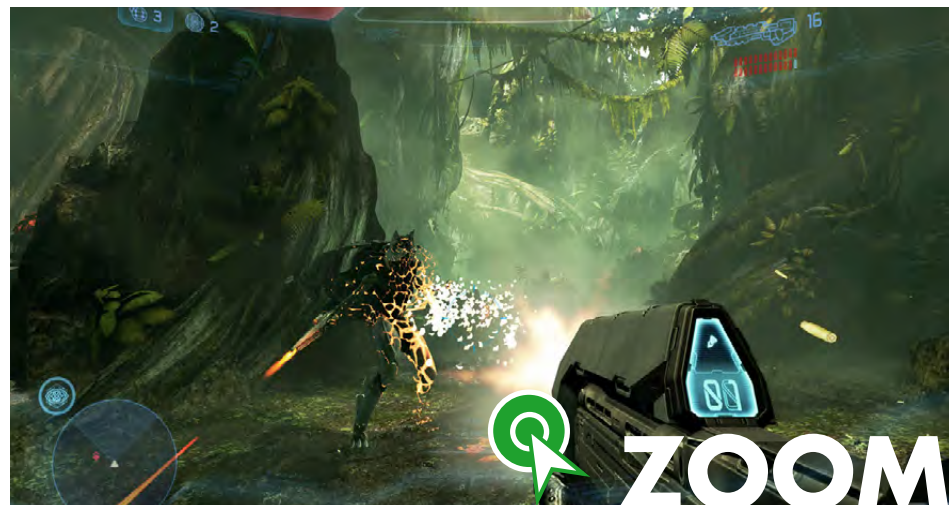
Red vs Blue? War Games is the new name of Halo's multiplayer.



Covenant), the Promethans are by far the most interesting addition to *Halo 4*, a new breed of enemy with a host of new technologies to stop the Chief and AI buddy Cortana. The Knight is another. A bipedal beast with a cybernetic structure, it's fast on its feet, dodging gunfire and lowering its shield to intimidate the Chief by showing the face behind its mask, a glowing red skull. In battle, The Knight can deploy a

Watcher, airborne support that both strengthens a Knight's shield as well as capture grenades to then throw back in your direction.

Story details are currently a little bit thin on the ground but after being on operation for so long, it looks like the sanity of the Chief's AI Cortana might be on the friz. But it wasn't *Halo 4*'s campaign that was the talk of E3 but instead its co-op Spartan Ops, a set of episodic multiplayer scenarios that 343 will be updating weekly with new episodes.



Talking numbers, *Halo 4* will ship with 10 multiplayer maps on the disc.



Following the crashlanding of the Infinity (the ship seen carrying thousands of troops in the E3 trailer), Spartan Ops will centre on Majestic Squad in TV-like episodes that will be playable with up to four players. It's unclear whether these adventures will interact with the Chief's story but it does promise to uncover more of Requiem's secrets and discoveries.

Multiplayer will also return under the guise of War Games,

a competitive player vs. player mode. You'll be able to create your own Spartan IV to dolly up with armour before sending them to fight in the 10 battlefields that will ship with the game at launch. Matching Bungie's monumental ability to be customised with *Halo Reach*, 343 says the multiplayer experience will bring the goods with new weapons, vehicles, loadouts, armour customisation, player progression >





That's the Infinity, the ship carrying new Spartan recruits in the thousands. Smooth landing, chaps!



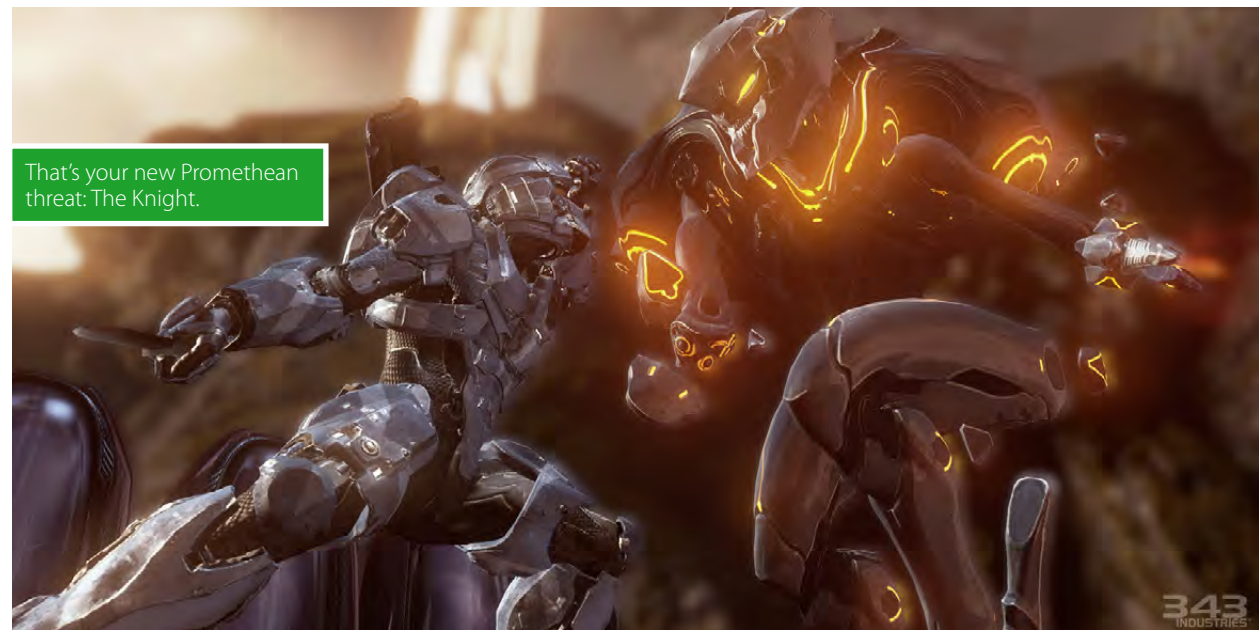
and gameplay enhancements that encompass both War Games and Spartan Ops modes.

The extent of these efforts is something that can't be accurately judged until fans can have a crack at the game themselves, but as it's up against *Call of Duty: Black Ops 2*, it will be interesting to see which fanbase is able to dominate our friendlists come November.

With 343 Industries at the helm of a new trilogy, much will be made of the studios efforts to pick up where Bungie left off. Five years is a long time to take a break, especially when you're helmet is the face of Xbox. This November should be very telling of how loyal Halo's fans are, and we suspect they're exceedingly so. ■



That's your new Promethean threat: The Knight.





LOLLIPOP CHAINSAW

Suck it and see

PUB: WARNER BROS.
 DEV: KADOKAWA GAMES
 LAST GAME: SHADOWS OF THE DAMNED
 KINECT SUPPORT: NO
 ETA: OUT NOW

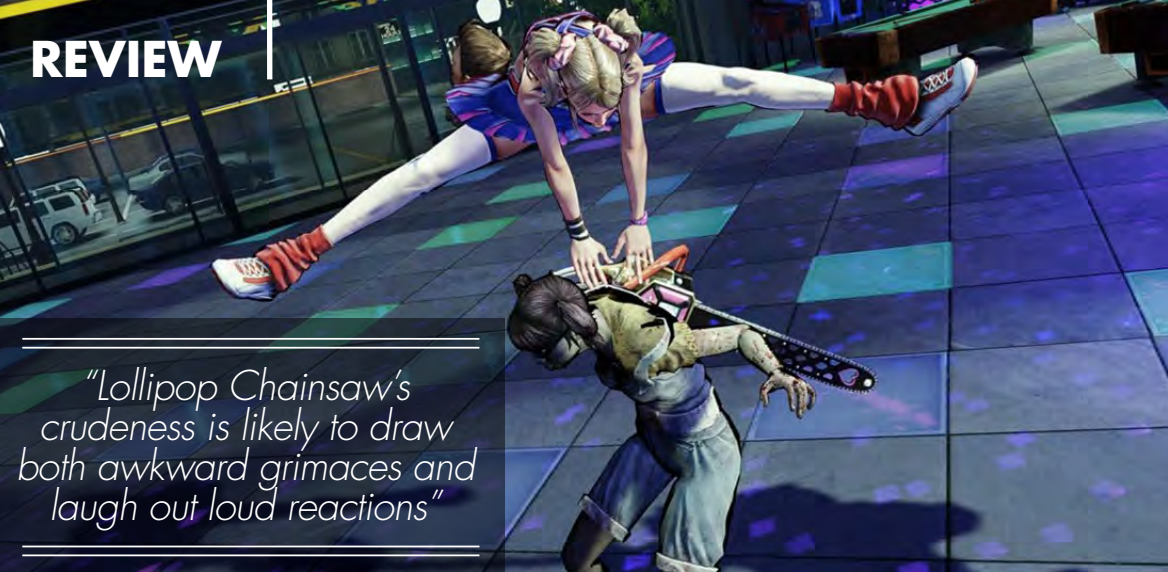
Lollipop Chainsaw is a game in which you play a zombie-slaying cheerleader who sucks on lollipops for sustenance while hacking away at the shuffling husks of her undead classmates.

With each swing of Juliet Starling's chainsaw, limbs fly into the air leaving rainbows and sparkles to colourfully spew from fresh stumps while the head of her decapitated boyfriend dangles from her hip just low enough to enjoy an upskirt view while Toni

Basil's classic song *Mickey* plays cheerfully in the background. It's bizarre, crude and often hysterical, so in essence it's everything that its gonzo director Goichi Suda has become notorious for.

With a zombie infestation running riot at her school – and ruining the ditzy teen's 18th birthday no less – Juliet takes action with her chainsaw in hand to live up to her family's zombie hunter reputation and stop her angst-riddled Goth schoolmate





“Lollipop Chainsaw’s crudeness is likely to draw both awkward grimaces and laugh out loud reactions”

We wish we’d been able to do this – chopping up our teacher and his desk without getting told off.



from turning her pals from normal schmaltz-loving teenagers into an army of the dribbling undead and therefore ‘totally uncool’.

Despite a history of quirky and left-field storytelling, *Lollipop Chainsaw* sees Suda channelling the likes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the best B-Movies – no doubt partly due to the collaboration with Hollywood B-Movie writer James Gunn, who brings a down-to-earth touch to Suda’s mad concepts.

It’s evident more than anywhere in the game’s script, which despite a

decent line-up of acting talent is weighed down heavily by an abundance of hit-and-miss gags. Riffing on popular culture and zombies that spout vulgar insults that are border on the offensive, *Lollipop Chainsaw*’s crudeness is likely to draw both awkward grimaces and laugh-out-loud reactions. Laid on even thicker is a sense of style, something that continues to be one of Suda’s strong points.

The colourful visuals will regularly detract from the fact that you’re decapitating zombies at an alarming

rate while the game’s soundtrack brings pop, punk and metal licks to this sweet treat. Gameplay on the other hand is a slightly soured by combat reliant on button mashing. With very few moves available outside of those purchased with Zombie Medals, and the amount of pummeling

required before your chainsaw can make purchase with a zombie’s neck suggests *Liquorice Baton* may have been a more appropriate title.

Despite an over-reliance on quick-time events to do even the simplest of tasks, *Lollipop Chainsaw* shines best when it veers off course into crazy mini-games that see Juliet playing a ghost in a game of *Pac-Man* and slam-dunking zombie heads in her high school’s gymnasium.

They’re pleasant filler for what is a criminally short five-hour campaign, extended only by leaderboards and an abundance of collectible outfits, moves, upgrades and music tracks.

It’s a Suda game through and through, but it feels like the gonzo Japanese director has been slacking. *Lollipop Chainsaw*’s story is nowhere near as cerebral as *Killer 7*; its humour less tongue-in-cheek than *No More Heroes* – even its cheerleading star fails to match up to the attitude of Travis Touchdown or Garcia Hotspur.



ZOOM

Just like the round sweet on a stick itself, *Lollipop Chainsaw* is little more than junk food for your gaming routine. It’s a short-lived sugary treat but when it’s over you’ll be craving something with a bit more flavour. Those still unsure will just have to suck it and see. ■



Juliet’s no sweetie pie but her ditzzy attitude makes her more adorable than bad ass.

FINAL SCORE Suda delivers style and gags in an effort that’s a cut below his usual

- Great punk rock soundtrack
- Gags aplenty, even if some don’t sit too well
- Dull repetitive combat, some pointless QTEs

70



SPEC OPS: THE LINE

Blood on the sand

PUB: 2K GAMES
DEV: YAGER
DEVELOPMENT
LAST GAME: N/A
KINECT SUPPORT: NO
ETA: OUT NOW

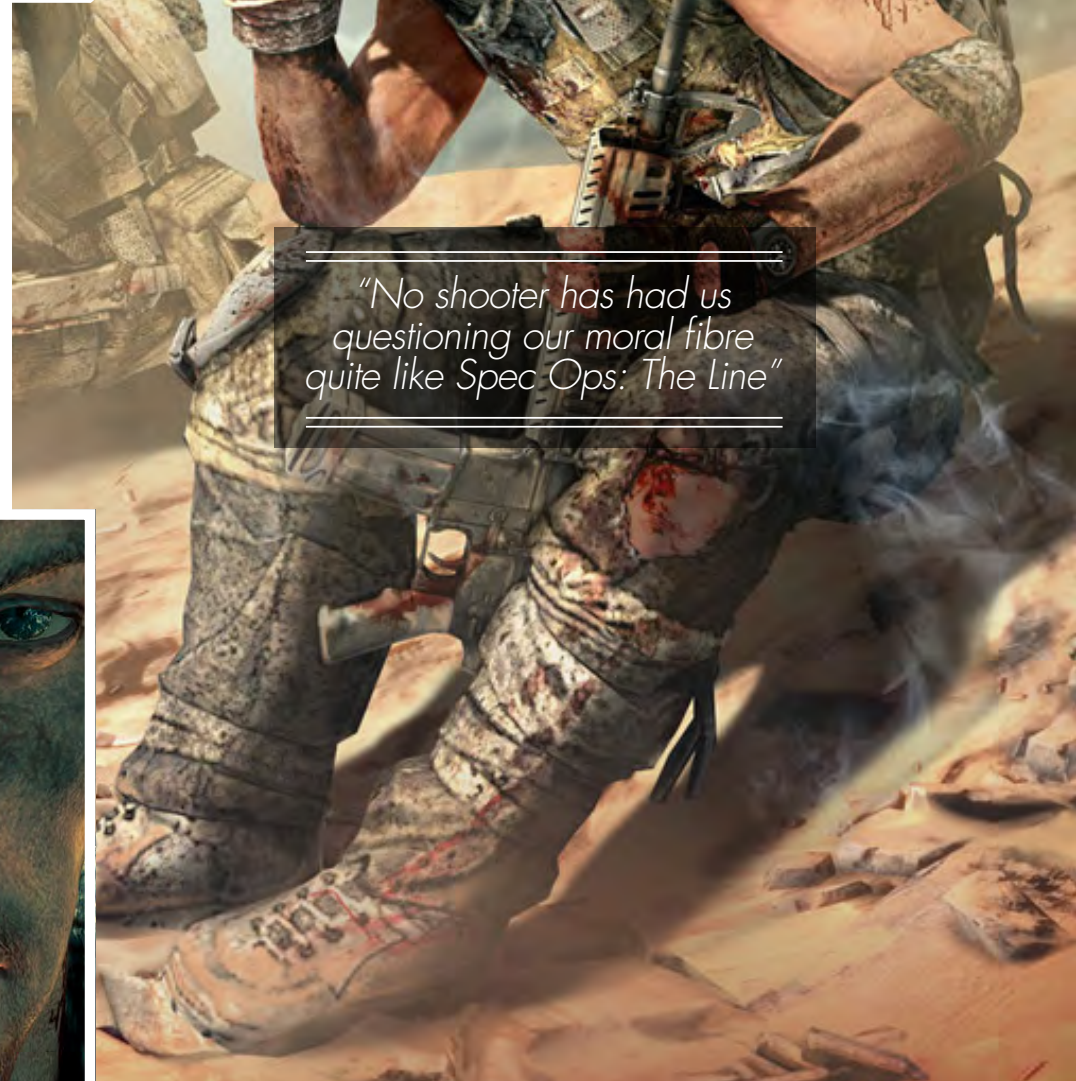
Despite its generic name, sandy pallet and bald mercenary who resembles a default Commander Shepard voiced by Nathan Drake, *Spec Ops: The Line* strives to be something a bit different.

As Captain Walker, you lead the tightly knit Delta Recon Team into Dubai, a once bustling metropolis wiped off the map by sandstorms that have left the city's skyscrapers buried and left to decay.

But unlike its beating hot sun, the surviving locals won't meet you with

the same warm welcome, forcing you to fight your way through sand and shootouts to uncover what's been going on in Dubai. In its early hours, *Spec Ops* reeks of a brawny shooter with banter weaved neatly between the explosive gunplay but there's a soul tucked in there. As you delve deeper into its meaty campaign, you and your squad are faced with dark dilemmas that'll put your integrity on the line.

Will you open fire on a rally of angry civilians? Will you cast judgement on innocent men or face



"No shooter has had us questioning our moral fibre quite like *Spec Ops: The Line*"



As you plod further into Dubai, your squad will bicker over your actions.





Another one bites the dust. Or should that be sand?



an onslaught from a gang of snipers yourself?

The choices aren't so easily defined and, typically, the right way isn't always the easiest path to take, but things really hit a crescendo when the game masterfully guilt-trips you through a series of grim cut-scenes and discomfiting messages during loading screens. Where others have failed to tap into our emotions, *Spec Ops*' harsh lessons leave a lasting impression.

Adding to its tone is Dubai itself – a once glamorous city turned into a rundown slum. You'll often wander through a corridor where the dead soldiers are piled high or hanging from the ornaments of luxurious buildings, where missing person posters are plastered all over its walls.

When it isn't tugging every ounce of remorse from you, *Spec Ops* is a third-person cover shooter that ticks all the boxes from a varied arsenal of weapons, enemy types, and battlefields for your squad to shoot up. It's a shame co-op didn't make the cut at launch but the two lackeys you're dealt do come in handy. Holding down the RB trigger allows you to highlight targets for your comrades, and ordering flashbangs and partner heals requires little intervention. What should differentiate *Spec Ops*' combat is its

abundance of sand pouring out of every nook and cranny. Shoot out a giant pane of glass and torrents of the golden stuff will pouring down on a well-placed enemy, creating an effective escape route. Similarly, grenade explosions will create sand clouds that stun enemies over a larger radius, although it also makes it harder for you to aim. If only the game could make more use of this infinite resource then we be completely won over by the idea. It comes into play more in multiplayer where you'll be able to build a character from scratch, ranking up and earning perks, weapons, and other trinkets.

Standard fodder then but the use of sandstorm, ziplines and sand traps across its six maps makes *Spec Ops* multiplayer something to sink into once you've squeezed a good 10 hours out of the single-player mode.

Though *Spec Ops: The Line* is largely a paint by numbers third-person shooter, it also introduces some



interesting storytelling ideas into the genre with mostly successful results. It won't be the best game to feature sand this year (an honour that goes to thatgamecompany's *Journey*) but no shooter has had us questioning our moral fibre to quite the same degree as this one. ■



FINAL SCORE

- ➕ Genuinely gritty lessons in morality
- ➕ 8-10 hours of solid shootouts
- ➖ More sand in our combat please!

For better or worse, this shooter leaves a lasting impression

85



PUB: CAPCOM
DEV: FROM SOFTWARE
LAST GAME: DARK SOULS
KINECT SUPPORT: YES
ETA: OUT NOW

STEEL BATTALION HEAVY ARMOR

Mech it stop!

Dropping buttons for motion gestures and a dash of controller input, *Steel Battalion: Heavy Armor* is an unlikely sequel to a game that once shipped with a 40-button control deck. It shows Capcom's got great faith in Microsoft's Kinect sensor but despite its best efforts, *Steel Battalion* will make you want to desert your squad.

Putting you in the cockpit of a Vertical Tank, giant hulking mechs that can dominate the battlefield

depending on how well-equipped you are to pilot them. You're crammed into the belly of the beast with three team-mates, a squad of stereotypes plucked from war flicks who'll want to shake hands, fist bump, and throw you urine-splashed apples in-between foul-mouthed outbursts.

With a controller in hand, you'll move and fire from your mech using traditional inputs while micromanaging with motion controls. They're mostly novel but largely cumbersome and

unwieldy gimmicks. Flicking switches, pulling panels, closing shutters, even slapping your squad-mate back into action isn't the satisfying example of motion control as it should be.

You view the world through the tiniest panel, unless you stand up and exit your cockpit to view the World War 2-inspired warzones with mechs and sacrifice control of your VT. Put that against short but aggravatingly harsh missions and it makes *Steel Battalion* hard to recommend to those wanting more from their Kinect.

You've got to give From Software some credit for going with the idea. On paper, we really wanted to see ourselves controlling a VT with simple gestures while micromanaging our team-mates with voice commands. Heck, online four-player co-op should be a hoot, but the idea of four buffoons waving their arms around for no real purpose? It's not for us.

We're dangling a white flag in front of our sensors for this one. And, sadly, yet another promising title is wasted on the device it was made for. ■



FINAL SCORE *Stand down soldier, this is one calls to arms that's best avoided*

50

- Some novel use of the Kinect sensor
- Unwieldy controls make it unplayable
- Harsh difficulty only adds to its problems



VIRTUA FIGHTER 5

Swansong suplex

PUB: SEGA
DEV: AM2



In the recent rise and fall of arcade fighters, one name has gone amiss among the genre's heavyweights. With its most notable combatants making haphazard appearances in the upcoming *Dead or Alive 5*, SEGA seems prepared to put *Virtua Fighter* out to pasture. We see this as something of a shame to be honest, because after five years of balancing and fine-tuning, *Final Showdown* proves itself to be a competent fighter.

A downloadable title that been stripped right down to its purest elements, there's enough for beginners to make a purchase with its combat but a deep well

of intricacies. It's a basic suite of dojos, arcade and online modes but the License's modes method of teaching that excels in show you the ropes behind each of the 19-character roster, from sumo wrestling techniques of returning fighter Taka-Arashi to the recognisable drunken kung fu moves of vet Shun Di.

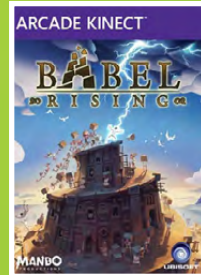
It's too late for the arcade fighter party perhaps, but for those who value depth of play over paintbrush flair, we're convinced that *Final Showdown* will have you digging out your arcade stick one last time. ■

90

PUB: UBISOFT
DEV: MONDO PRODUCTIONS

BABEL RISING

Are we the baddies?



Babel Rising isn't a god game. Yes, you do assume the role of a deity perched in the clouds, peering down angrily on the mortals that betray you below but despite its best efforts, *Babel Rising* rarely makes you feel like a god.

The humans below have banded together to build a tower against your will, therefore forcing you to take action. Armed with no more than two elemental powers at once, you'll deliver unholy justice, sending scorching comet showers, overwhelming floods, and boulders that hurtle down the spiralling structures into the path of the Babylonian workforces.

15 missions are spread across three towers of difficulty but you'll experience everything *Babel Rising* has to offer within a couple of hours. The survival, as

well as head-to-head and co-op multiplayer modes, keep things interesting but probably won't keep you massacring up to the 10,000 headcount achievement.

The root of *Babel Rising's* problem is that, in essence, it still feels like the mobile game poorly tailored to the console. The graphics have been buffed but the optional motion controls will have you focusing your wrath on the Kinect Sensor rather than silencing the irritating chants of the Babylonians.

A poor fit to be sure, but by no means a condemned failure as there is some fun to be had burning, drowning, squashing, freezing and shocking those who betray you, but there's not enough here to satisfy ones' godly aspirations. ■

55



Rather than artistic visuals, *Final Showdown* puts its efforts into what matters most: fighting



A well-placed boulder at a moment like this can deliver satisfying results.

DEAD OR ALIVE?



When you compare this to the giant purple dildo madness of *Saints Row: The Third*, this looks like an average Saturday afternoon down the road from our offices.



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...

THIS MONTH

FIRST RELEASED: 29/04/2008
 PUBLISHER: Rockstar Games
 DEVELOPER: Rockstar North
 PLAYERS: 2-16
 ONLINE MULTIPLAYER MODES:
 Team Deathmatch, Mafiya Work, Car Jack, Cops 'n' Crooks, All for One, Turf War, Deal Breaker, Hangman's Noose
 ONLINE PASS: No
 ONLINE ACHIEVEMENTS? Yes
 HOW MUCH? Around £15



What is it?

Though Rockstar has a track record of avoiding the annual expo, many were disappointed to see that *Grand Theft Auto V* was a no-show at E3 this year. So we decided to dip back into *Grand Theft Auto IV* and see how its multiplayer was holding up four years since its release.

The first *Grand Theft Auto* to bring true multiplayer to consoles (obviously we're not counting all the PC mods, as we're dealing pure console here), we couldn't

wait to play deathmatches across the entire length of *GTAIV*'s map. It certainly wasn't lacking in modes, and for its day there was no better sandbox for your friends than Liberty City.

How many people are playing?

Thanks to Rockstar's Social Club, *Grand Theft Auto IV* still has something of a pulse, although you will find that some of its more specialist game modes have disappeared. Team Deathmatch and Free modes are still active playgrounds for you to rack up kills and have

a laugh with mates though, and the Cops 'n' Crooks mode still retains much of its novelty.

Is it still fun?

While *GTA* might have been the catalyst for sandbox mayhem, it's no longer the kingpin. The likes of *Saints Row* are a better fit if you're looking to cause carnage with hilarious results. You'll get a kick out of revisiting its landmarks but you'll find better sandbox games elsewhere.

VERDICT: DYING





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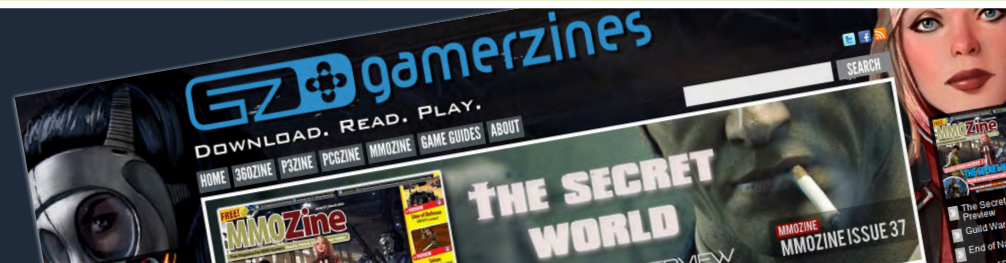


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