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P3Zine

Issue 25 | April 2009

Free Magazine For PlayStation 3 Gamers. Read it, Print it, Send it to your mates...



EXCLUSIVE!

UFC 2009 UNDISPUTED

Hands-On Preview & Exclusive Interview

PLUS!

HANDS-ON PREVIEW

FUEL

REVIEWED!

Resident Evil 5

REVIEWED!

Stormrise

REVIEWED!

SEGA Mega Drive Ultimate Collection

Welcome to P3Zine



This month we've been hands-on with Codemasters' new dirt racer FUEL and taken to the ring with THQ's ultra- realistic new swedge-fest Ultimate Fighting Championship 2009. We've also lined up exclusive interviews for UFC and Guitar Hero, to go alongside our first look at Guitar Hero: Metallica. Those who've seen the video of Neversoft hammering out the Saxon hit from the game will know just how amazing it's looking.

As for new releases, we're bringing you definitive reviews of Resident Evil 5, Sega Megadrive Ultimate Collection and new console RTS Stormrise.

Enjoy the issue !

Dan Hutchinson, Editor
p3zine@gamerzines.com

MAGAZINE FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of the magazine

MEET THE TEAM

There's nowt they don't know about PlayStation



Chris Schilling
Relished finally playing through Resident Evil 5



Steve Hill
The RTS veteran takes a long and very hard look at Stormrise



Mark Pilkington
Takes to the ring for a bout of UFC 2009

DON'T MISS!

This month's highlights...

The latest & greatest titles on PS3



UFC 2009

Hands-on preview & Exclusive interview



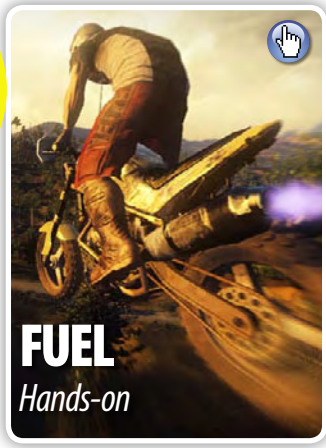
Resident Evil 5

Reviewed & rated



Guitar Hero: Metallica

First-look preview



FUEL

Hands-on

QUICK FINDER

Every game's just a click away

Guitar Hero Metallica
Need for Speed: Shift
King of Fighters XII
FUEL
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel
UFC 2009 Undisputed
Resident Evil 5
Stormrise
Sega Mega Drive

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We recommend you close and re-open the magazine and select "Play" when asked about the multimedia to enjoy the magazine as intended.

Guitar Hero Metallica

FIRST LOOK

Nothing else matters...

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Heritage: Tony Hawk series, Guitar Hero World Tour
Link: http://hub.guitarhero.com
ETA: 5th May

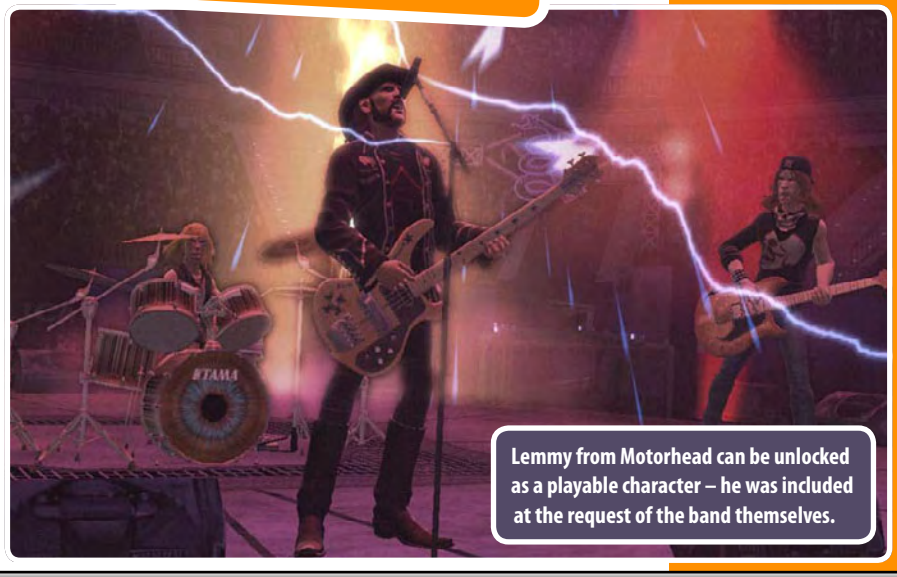
PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Guitar Hero: Metallica



Though you might be expecting a harder ride than usual, Metallica's difficulty level is said to be around the same as World Tour's.



"There's a new Expert+ difficulty mode for the most talented drummers out there"



Lemmy from Motorhead can be unlocked as a playable character – he was included at the request of the band themselves.

What's the story?

Following the success of Guitar Hero: Aerosmith, Activision clearly felt that dedicating editions of its insanely popular music franchise to famous bands was a bit of a moneyspinner. Cue Guitar Hero: Metallica – though this takes a slightly different look at the group in question. Rather than the nostalgia trip of Aerosmith, developer Neversoft has focused on the band as it is now, with the current line-up playing hits both old and new. Once again, you play as a support act before getting chance to rock out with your heroes.

What do we know?

The game features a hefty tracklist of 49 bruising rock tracks, with just over half performed by Metallica themselves. The remainder come from bands hand-picked by the title group for inclusion in the game. Indeed, Metallica were quite insistent on contributions from one or two artists, even though their songs weren't initially considered suitable for the series' fairly family-friendly approach. There's a new Expert+ difficulty mode for the most talented drummers out there – simply connect a second bass pedal (which you can buy separately and you'll have the option for double kick drums.

When do we get more?

Guitar Hero: Metallica is out on 5th May, and we'll have a review for you very soon.

Anything else to declare?

You'll be able to activate 'Metallifacts' – trivia about the band which appear over video footage in the style of Pop-Up Video.

IN A TIME WHEN MEN DIED
FOR CONQUEST OR FREEDOM, ONLY A FEW MEN
WOULD MAKE THE DIFFERENCE
BETWEEN DEFEAT AND VICTORY





MILITARY HISTORY

COMMANDER

EUROPE AT WAR

OUT NOW

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King of Fighters XII

FIRST LOOK

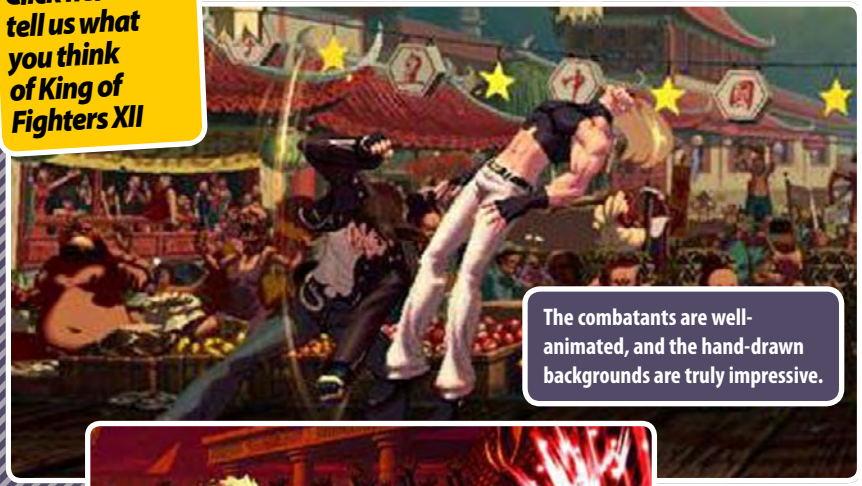
Shoto impress the beat-'em-up hardcore

Publisher: Ignition Entertainment
Developer: SNK
Heritage: Metal Slug series, King of Fighters series
Link: http://game.snkplaymore.co.jp/official/kof-xii
ETA: July

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of King of Fighters XII



It has some pretty spectacular special moves, though they can't quite compare in the visual stakes to SFIV's Ultras.



The combatants are well-animated, and the hand-drawn backgrounds are truly impressive.



It's a fairly familiar roster of characters, which should please fans.

"King of Fighters XII represents an exponential improvement in purely visual terms"



What's the story?

It seems the 2D fighter is back, and in a big way. Following on from the very decent Battle Fantasia and the superlative Street Fighter IV, SNK is bringing its own offering to the table, and it's a tasty-looking dish indeed. Do we have Capcom's masterpiece to thank for KOF's appearance in the West? Would it otherwise have remained in Japanese arcades? Whatever the answer, we're glad it's coming.

Why should we be excited?

The King of Fighters series is hugely popular in the East, and is a regular fixture in tournaments organised by the beat-'em-up community. Yet it's not changed much over the years, and XII represents an exponential improvement in purely visual terms. We're talking 100 percent hand-drawn art here – beautifully fluid, incredibly well-animated hi-def characters duking it out in front of some genuinely stunning backdrops. There's no technical wizardry here – as Ignition's Shane Bettenhausen would have it, "KoFXII fully embraces the refined aesthetic beauty that only human hands can produce." After 14 years of the same old sprites, it's little wonder serious fighter fans are salivating over the prospect of this gorgeous new entry in the series.

When do we get more?

It's due out in July. We're hoping to go hands-on with the game before then, so watch this space.

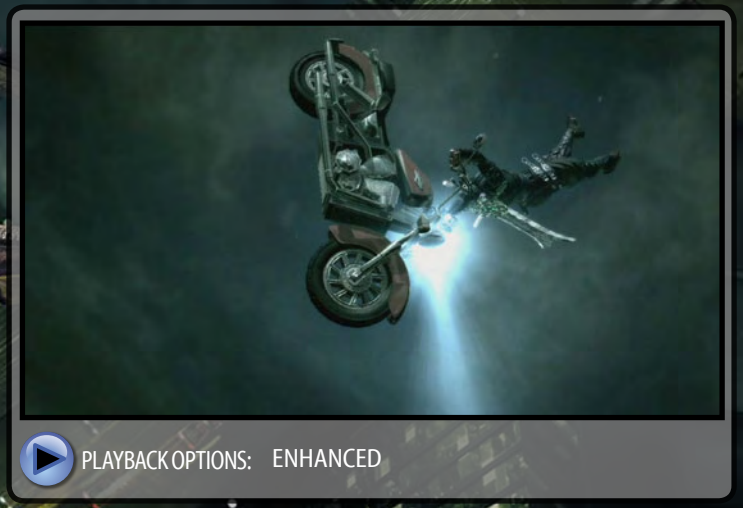
Anything else to declare?

It's the series' 15th Anniversary this year, so it's due for a lick of paint – and it's no surprise to hear that the development team has christened the game 'KoF Rebirth'.

OUT 3RD APRIL

NINJA BLADE

A MODERN-DAY NINJA FOR A 21ST-CENTURY ENEMY



'A SLICK NINJA GAIDEN CLONE THAT'S BEEN PULLED OFF RATHER NICELY'
OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

'ACE! IT LOOKS SUPERB AND HAD A GREAT FEEL TO IT'
NEWS OF THE WORLD

AN ARSENAL OF WEAPONS BEYOND BLADES | UNRELENTING ACTION FROM STREET TO SKYSCRAPER | STUNNING IN-GAME CINEMATOGRAPHY

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ONLY ON XBOX 360

FROM SOFTWARE

Jump in.

XBOX 360

Need for Speed: Shift

FIRST LOOK

A welcome gear change for the racing franchise

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Slightly Mad Studios
Heritage: GT Legends, GTR 2
Link: www.needforspeed.com
ETA: Autumn

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Need for Speed: Shift



Doesn't look like a Need for Speed game, does it? Shift isn't just a title, it's a representation of the game's move into the simulation genre.

"Shift is being created by Slightly Mad Studios, the developer behind much-respected racing simulations like GT2"



The game's engine runs superbly, and there's still plenty of time to polish it to perfection.



Developer Slightly Mad Studios promises a real sensory experience.



What's the story?

As last year's Undercover proved, the Need for Speed series has – creatively, if not commercially – been on a slippery slope for quite some time. Mediocre review scores and comparatively lacklustre sales forced EA head honcho John Riccitiello's hand – it was time for change. Cue Need for Speed splintering off into three totally separate directions – a casual focused title for Wii and DS, a free-play online game for PC owners, and this core racer for the HD formats and PSP.

Why should we be excited?

Shift is being created by Slightly Mad Studios, the developer behind much-respected PC racing simulations like the excellent GTR 2. As you might expect from the change of team, the theme is no longer underground street racing – instead, the sequel will be focusing on a more sim-like experience, with EA clearly hoping the name will sell it to the mainstream, while the mechanics will appeal to the racing hardcore. As you can see from the shots, it's already looking great – yet that's no great surprise when you find out its proprietary engine has been in development for two years.

When do we get more?

It's due out in the Autumn, so it's early days yet. Expect EA to reveal a little more over the next few months.

Anything else to declare?

The game features an in-car camera which allows players complete freedom of head movement with the right stick.

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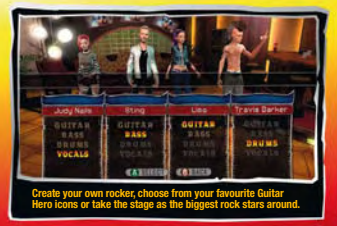
- Sing along using the mic and infuse your own style into the music

ROCK OUT ON THE GUITAR CONTROLLER OR ADD A DRUM KIT CONTROLLER AND A MIC FOR THE BAND EXPERIENCE

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- Pressure-sensitive pads allow creation of a wide range of sounds
- Authentic arrangement of the pads to mimic an actual drum set with raised cymbals



Create your own rocker, choose from your favourite Guitar Hero icons or take the stage as the biggest rock stars around.



Compose, record, edit, and share your own music online. Download and play community-created content for free! **



Rock out solo, with another guitarist or with a band. Kick it up with 4 vs. 4 Battle of the Bands play. **

COMING AUTUMN 2008

*Additional faceplates sold separately **Some features may be limited in the Wii™ and PlayStation®2 Guitar Hero World Tour games

PlayStation.2 PLAYSTATION 3 XBOX 360 LIVE Wii Vicarious Visions redoctane

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INCOMING

Another secret six heading your way...



The Beatles: Rock Band

Publisher: Electronic Arts | **ETA:** Late 2009

Announced for a 9th September release Stateside by US publisher MTV Games, it's anyone's guess as to when this will arrive in the UK – but arrive it will. This is a major coup for Rock Band creator Harmonix, and the developer has said it won't just be a re-skinned version of its popular music franchise. The special limited edition pack will cost a whopping $250 in the US, and will almost certainly be a package of some significance to Beatles' fans. Exciting stuff.



Aliens vs. Predator

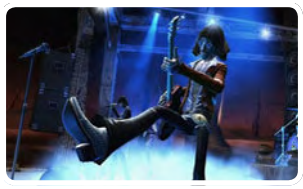
Publisher: Sega | **ETA:** 2010

Sega recently announced it will be publishing a new Aliens vs. Predator game early next year. The developer currently at work on the title is Rebellion, who some of you will remember as the creator of the first Aliens vs. Predator game. And that game remains one of the most frightening and intense multiplayer experiences ever, so the signs are good.

Guitar Hero Greatest Hits

Publisher: Electronic Arts | **ETA:** Summer

Why bother going outside this summer when you could be strumming, drumming and humming along to songs from Guitar Heroes past? This game will give the full-band treatment to 48 songs from the three earlier games, allowing players to attempt Through the Fire and Flames on drums on the new Expert+ difficulty. With a raft of features from World Tour, it might be wise to start trading in your old copies of Guitar Hero I to III.



X-Men Origins: Wolverine

Publisher: Activision | **ETA:** May

Set for release in a couple of months to coincide with the movie of the same name, Wolverine tells the backstory of the Marvel favourite, following his escape from a military facility through African jungles and beyond. It's a third-person action-adventure, as the hairy one uses his claws and superior reactions to slice and dodge assailants in the game's real-world environments.

I am Alive

Publisher: Ubisoft | **ETA:** 2010

Ubi's intriguing survival sim has been pushed back to next year, with original developer Darkworks being booted off the project and replaced by the publisher's own in-house team at Ubisoft Shanghai. A press release suggests that the split was amicable but obviously there were quality concerns. The concept still excites us though, so hopefully any issues can be fixed.



The Witcher: Rise of the White Wolf

Publisher: Atari | **ETA:** Autumn



The PC role-player is getting a complete re-tooling for console gamers. The game's universe remain intact, but there's a brand new combat engine to make fights a little more exciting and visceral.

IN THE PIPELINE

APRIL	MAY	JUNE	SUMMER 2009
THE GODFATHER II	VIRTUA TENNIS 2009	PROTOTYPE	WOLFENSTEIN
DAMNATION	BIONIC COMMANDO	OVERLORD II	FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

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PLAYBACK OPTIONS: ENHANCED



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FIRST LOOK

FUEL

Publisher: Codemasters
Developer: Asobo Studio
Heritage: Ratatouille, WALL-E
Link: www.codemasters.com/games/?gameid=2846&territory=EnglishUSA
ETA: May

> "You can just cruise around this vast landscape, challenging each other to impromptu races"

Does Codemasters' open-world racer prove that size really does matter?



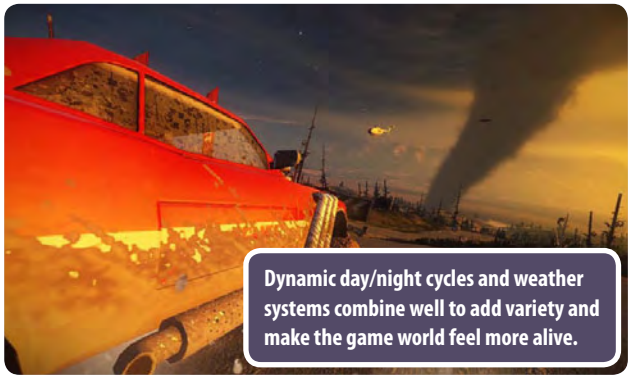
It's about finding your own racing line – your GPS will point you in the right direction, but if you think you've found a shortcut then go for it.

Have you ever played Motorstorm or its sequel, and wondered what was going on outside the barriers of your race? Wished you could just give up and drive off someplace else? Free-roaming off-roading certainly sounds like a mighty enticing proposition to us, and the freedom offered by Codemasters' latest is both enthralling and a little overwhelming. Well, wouldn't you feel a little daunted by 14,000 square kilometres' worth of terrain to drive across?

FUEL isn't just a name, it's a currency – the currency of this almost post-apocalyptic setting you're driving through. Okay, we're not at the stage where we're ferrying the lucky few into vaults and letting the rest get wiped out by nuclear fallout, but this is a world ravaged by global warming – the extreme weather conditions prompted by such significant climate change, turning huge swathes of the US into 'danger zones'. These racers aren't Mad Max-style raiders, but adrenaline junkies – snowboarders, skaters and base jumpers who've upgraded to something with a little more power. They venture into these inhospitable wilds to race through storms, floods and even hurricanes, testing their mettle against the best Mother Nature has to throw at them. And when they're done, they can just cruise around this vast landscape, challenging each other to impromptu point-to-point races. Last one to the top of that hill's a total douche? Oh, go on then.

Thankfully, FUEL seems to be low on the kind of faux-hip lingo developers seem to suddenly think is appealing to gamers young and old these days. It's a racing game which can be as structured or as freeform as you like. If you'd rather have something more regimented, then you can choose the Career mode – play some races, earn some money, upgrade, purchase new vehicles, get choppered into new areas and leave the exploring to those with time on their hands. If you fancy a bit of sightseeing instead, why not head for the game's many vista points – areas which offer stunning natural views of the procedurally generated world, in extreme cases showing you things that are 40 kilometres away, such is the faintly ridiculous draw distance.

On the other hand, you might just want to cruise around this massive world, finding exciting places to race, tackling events with friends,



Dynamic day/night cycles and weather systems combine well to add variety and make the game world feel more alive.



Rival AI can be quite aggressive at times.





There's plenty of variety in terrain and environment.

> FUEL continued

driving down steep inclines to see how much damage your vehicle can stand, chasing storms, dodging twisters, and just mucking about and generally having a laugh. And it's fair to say that online is where FUEL burns brightest. It's a decent single-player game – at least, our few hours riding solo suggested as much, but it's clear the development focus is on an enjoyable multiplayer experience.

It's no surprise to learn that the developer has been strongly influenced by Eden's groundbreaking Test Drive Unlimited, but Asobo has cut out some of the busywork in that game, and allowed for shortcuts whenever you want to use them. Heliports take you from place to place without lengthy treks between challenges or points of interest – you can drive there if you want, but you're never forced to.

The Career mode allows you to jump from event to event with no exploration, though in our brief time with the game, the temptation is too great to resist. It rarely feels like you're seeing FUEL at its best when its world is split by loading screens. Drive everywhere, and you won't see a single one – it's all streamed in, the landscape >

"It's fair to say that online is where FUEL burns brightest"



Leaping off a steep incline on a small bike is likely to total the vehicle in question.

> FUEL continued

generated from satellite maps of the Northern US, but remaining consistent rather than random.

So yes, it's fair to say that it's quite the technical achievement – and while we've seen racers with more polish and more detail, they don't even come close to approaching the scope of FUEL's world. Those obsessed with how many polygons a game is pushing will find time to gripe, but we're impressed with the consistency and solidity of this enormous playground Codemasters has crafted. Besides, the few rough edges we've spotted will likely be sanded down and smoothed over in time for release – two months of optimisation with Codies' tech wizards prodding and poking it into shape should do the trick.

It's impossible not to be drawn to FUEL's impressive stats – 100,000 miles of road, an engine developed over seven years and 14,000 square kilometres of landscape – but it really needs to get the small things right. With hundreds of challenges dotted about its vast gameworld, it looks like Codemasters might have that all-important balance. If not, FUEL faces the risk of boring its players. Though as long as you've got like-minded friends in tow, messing around doing nothing in particular on quads might just be one of the most refreshing online experiences you've had in quite some time.



There are no hidden walls funnelling you down specific routes – if you can see it on the map, you can drive there.

"100,000 miles of road, an engine developed over seven years and 14,000 square kilometres of landscape"



Particle effects are impressive and add to the chaos of a race in extreme conditions – as dust, dirt and grass whips up around your vehicle, sometimes partially obscuring the view.



The game features 19 huge zones, all linked together by a network of roads and paths.

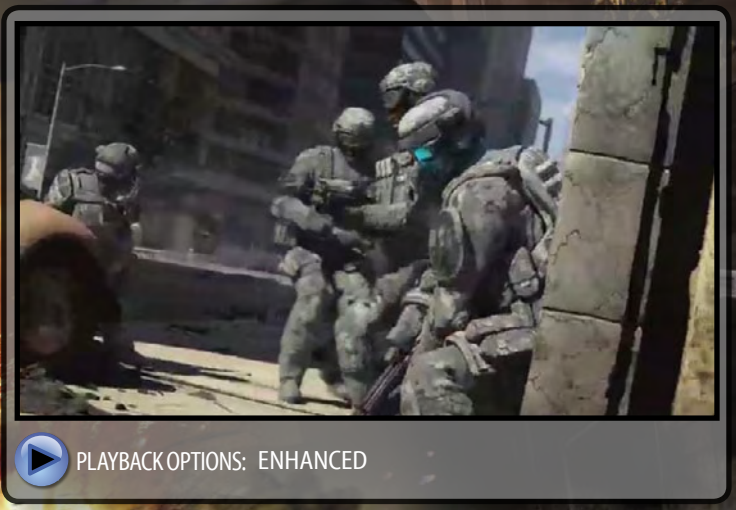
P3Zine FUEL

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 90%

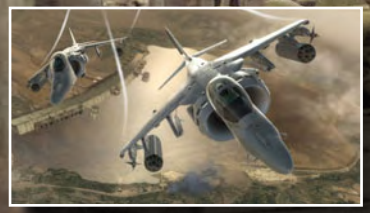
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FIRST LOOK

Sacred 2: Fallen Angel

Swing with us, ye Seraphim

Publisher: Deep Silver
Developer: Ascaron Entertainment
Heritage: Sacred, Runaway: Dream of the Turtle
Link: www.sacred2.com/landingpage/index_en.html
ETA: 27th March

PREVIEW FEEDBACK! Click here to tell us what you think of Sacred 2: Fallen Angel



Tired of being a goody-two-shoes adventurer? Take the evil path instead, or play as an Inquisitor.

Sacred 2 is a stat-fiend's dream game, with masses of detail about anything from the additional percentage damage your character deals, to wild animals to the defence and armour stats of the last three enemies you slew. Yet we're also dealing with a game that maintains that immense efficiency – streamlined menus provide overviews of your character, while a squeeze of R1 provides the extra detail. And the gameplay is a curious mix of the overwhelming and the disarmingly simple – combat is your basic Diablo-esque hacking and slashing with the odd bit of magic thrown in, yet the game world huge. After half-an-hour's play and plenty of wandering, we were shocked to discover that we'd seen less than 1% of the world of Ancaria.



"Combat is your basic Diablo-esque hacking and slashing with the odd bit of magic thrown in"

Top of the class

There are six character classes to choose from – the ethereal Seraphim, the nature-loving Dryads, the resurrected Shadow Warriors, the evil Inquisitors, the magic-wielding High Elves and the otherworldly Temple Guardians. Our preview code didn't seem to like us picking certain characters, so we stuck with the Seraphim. Bizarrely, all the female characters seemed to have forgotten to get properly dressed, while the male characters were incredibly ugly. Faced with the choice of playing a leggy blonde dressed in a skimpy top and bikini bottoms or a glowing-eyed zombie hulk, we're glad the game favoured our ethereal avatar.

Sacred 2 is a striking-looking role-player – viewed from above, its look is far more familiar to PC gamers used to dungeon-crawlers than the role-playing games to which us console owners are accustomed. While we've seen technically superior games, its world is hugely detailed and has real charm, the world often bathed in a magical, almost Fable-esque glow. The camera can be zoomed in and out, and should a tree get in your way, the branches will fade, and you'll have a network of twigs framing the >

> Sacred 2 continued

action until you move into the open – a nice touch.

The plot isn't really up to much – some guff about strange fluorescent magical goo named T-Energy – but that's not why we're here. We're here to quest and loot and fight, and Sacred 2 packs in plenty of all three. There's a main story where you can choose a light or dark path (though characters like Inquisitors can only pick the evil route) and you can align yourself with one of several deities which inform your special abilities. But there's plenty to distract you from that – including boatloads of sidequests, which are rated in terms of 'effort' – giving you an at-a-glance guide of whether you're likely to have to level up first before tackling said mission. Handy. Enemies level up as you progress, meaning areas where you can decimate opponents by merely breathing near them are out of the question, but it's nice that the challenge increases as your stats improve – we've played far too many console role-players that get easier the further you progress. Should you find the grinding a little dull, you can always get a multiplayer session going – with free world and player-versus-player options, if you fancy a break from going solo you can build your character's stats elsewhere; another nice touch.

"Given half a chance, Sacred 2 could well capture the imagination of a cult audience"

It's not a big-name game, but given half a chance, Sacred 2 could well capture the imagination of a cult audience when it's released at the end of March. It's certainly a game which doesn't deserve to get lost amidst the blockbusters – here's hoping that it proves to be as pleasant a surprise to the rest of you as it was to us.



You can assign weapons or special attacks to the face buttons, while the D-pad is used for potions and the like.



Though basic fights don't tend to last too long, a number of them in a row can leave your health depleted – make sure you're well-stocked with health potions.





P3Zine

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 95%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 85%

A winged wonder – this quirky RPG has real depth

HEAVY METAL

How heavy can Guitar Hero get? We're about to find out...

Any new Guitar Hero game is a big event, and they don't come much bigger than Metallica. Time to find out more, as we speak exclusively to the game's developer, Budcat Creations.

Was it daunting creating a game around one of the world's biggest rock bands?

Yes, absolutely. Metallica has such a rabid fan base, so if we screwed it up we would be sure to hear about it. I'm a big Metallica fan myself, as are most of the people on the team, so we wanted to make a game that we would most want to play.

Did your experiences on Guitar Hero: Aerosmith inform your approach with Guitar Hero Metallica or did you want to do things differently this time?

Guitar Hero: Aerosmith gave us a template on how to approach the Metallica game. One of the things that worked out the best was the interviews we did with Aerosmith that would play between each venue. Knowing that, we wanted to feature the band even more.

With Guitar Hero: Metallica we tried to put as much bonus content into the game as possible, such as old photos of the band, lyric sheets, behind the scene videos and live performances of the band. We even have a mode in the game called 'Metallifacts' which plays back the songs with a little bit of information on each song. It's kinda like DVD commentary and it's really cool for people who want to learn more about each song and a bit of the band's history.



One of the guest bands is King Diamond – no, we're not sure who they are either.

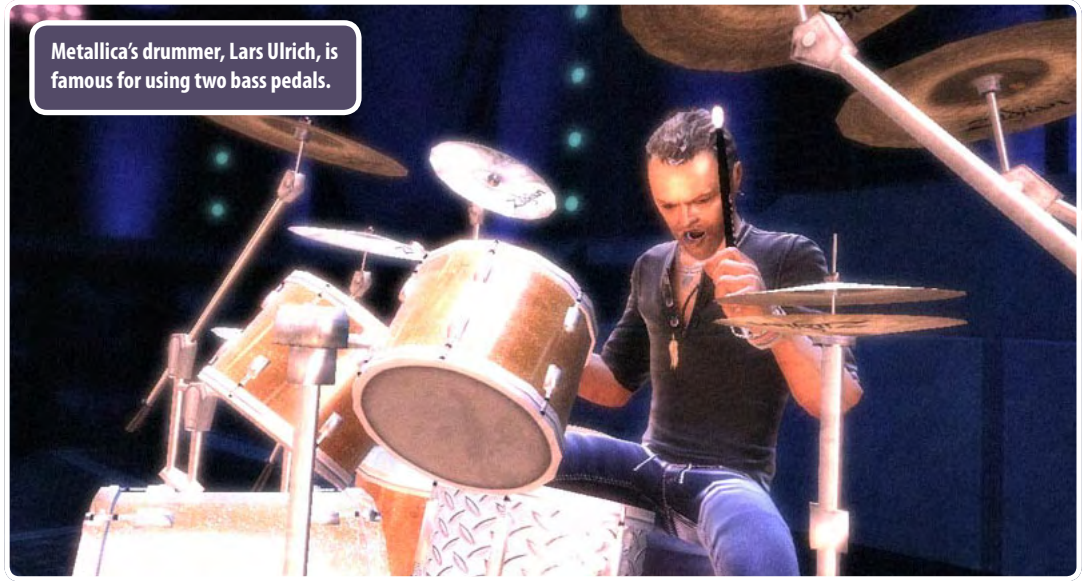
So what was it like working with the band? Were Metallica excited to have a game created around them?

Metallica were very involved in the game – they picked the set list of Metallica and non-Metallica songs, gave us venue ideas, story ideas, etc. Their enthusiasm really rubbed off on us. At one of the first meetings with Lars we just sat down and started 'riffing' as he called it, which is just throwing out cool ideas for the game. Before we knew it, three hours had passed.


Rock music doesn't get much heavier than this.

Are there any improvements to the core game in particular which Guitar Hero fans should be aware of?

One of the big improvements is to the user interface in band play. We got a lot of feedback from people who bought Guitar Hero World Tour that they were having a hard time telling how well they're doing in band play and when they're about to fail. So, we took the individual rock meters and stuck them to the sides of each player's highway. It's much easier to tell how well you're doing and when the band falls into the red and starts failing we put a >


Metallica's drummer, Lars Ulrich, is famous for using two bass pedals.


Here's the band in all their ear-splitting glory.

"With the additional kick pedal, we now have a new drum difficulty level called Expert+"

> **Interview** continued

red failure vignette over the screen that's kinda like getting low health in a shooter like Call of Duty. This helps your band mates realise: "Oh wow, I'd better fire off some star power."

Do you think the game can appeal to non-Metallica fans? How do you go about trying to make such a title appeal outside the band's fan base?
I think the Guitar Hero: Metallica set list really makes this a great Guitar Hero game, even if you're not a Metallica fan. If you like classic rock, we have Lynyrd Skynyrd, Queen and Thin Lizzy. If you're into newer metal, you can check out Mastodon and The Sword. We also have classic metal with Judas Priest, Slayer and Mercyful Fate. There's even Foo Fighters, Alice In Chains, System of a Down, Social Distortion and Samhain. It's really just a fantastic Guitar Hero set list, and there is something for everyone.

Can you tell us a little more about the new Metallica-themed power-ups in Battle mode?
We tried to put as much Metallica into the game as possible. We even did stuff like using Pushead artwork for the UI and sampling instruments that Metallica uses in the music studio. So, we also themed the power-ups in Battle mode to be more Metallica. We changed things like Amp Overload to 'Ride The Lightning'. Whammy Attack is now 'Trapped Under Ice' where your whammy bar freezes over. We even have a new attack called 'Fade to Black' where the notetrack of your opponent temporarily blacks out.

And how does the new double bass kick mechanic work?
If you have an extra kick pedal and a splitter you can use both pedals to hit bass drum gems. With the additional kick pedal, we now have a new drum difficulty called Expert+. When we track something for expert drums we try to track every single drum hit. I say try because in the past we would have to remove the really fast double bass drum hits because it is not possible to hit them all with only one foot. Now that we have two pedals, we can track every hit. And, if you think you're good enough, you can play Expert+ and try to play the song the way it was meant to be played. The later songs in the game like Slayer's War Ensemble and Metallica's Fight Fire with Fire are just insane on Expert+.

Are there any other bands you'd particularly like to base a Guitar Hero title around?
Any band that has a deep catalogue of music that is fun to play and a rich band history would work. But the one that I would be the most excited about is Led Zeppelin. There's just so much to work with. I would love to work on that!

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Heritage: Tony Hawk series, Guitar Hero World Tour
Link: http://hub.guitarhero.com
ETA: 5th May

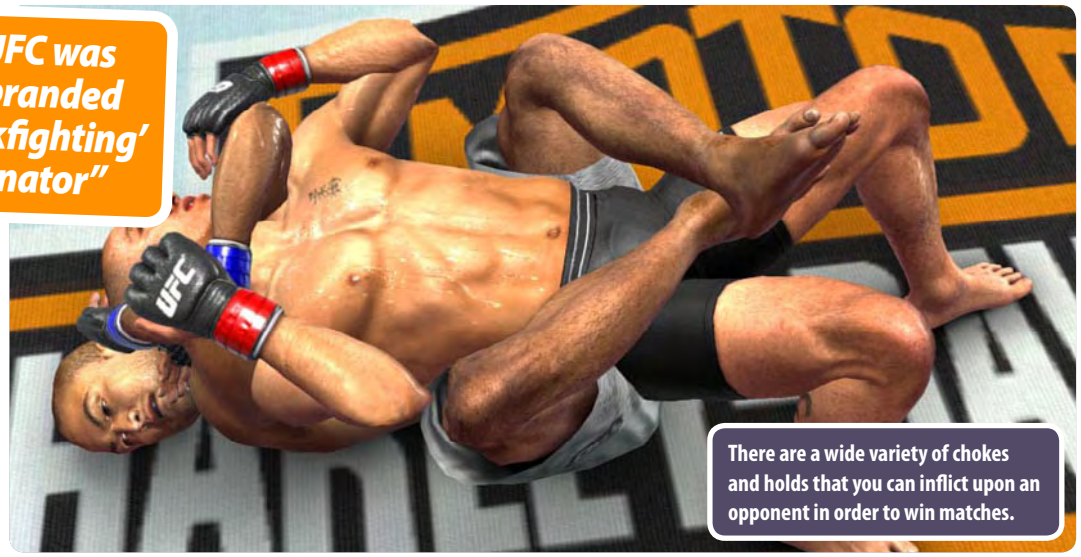
HANDS-ON

UFC 2009 Undisputed

Publisher: THQ
Developer: Yuke's Future Media Creators
Heritage: Facebreaker, WWE SmackDown vs Raw
Link: www.ufcundisputed.com
ETA: May

This is as real as it gets

"The real UFC was famously branded 'Human cockfighting' by a US Senator"



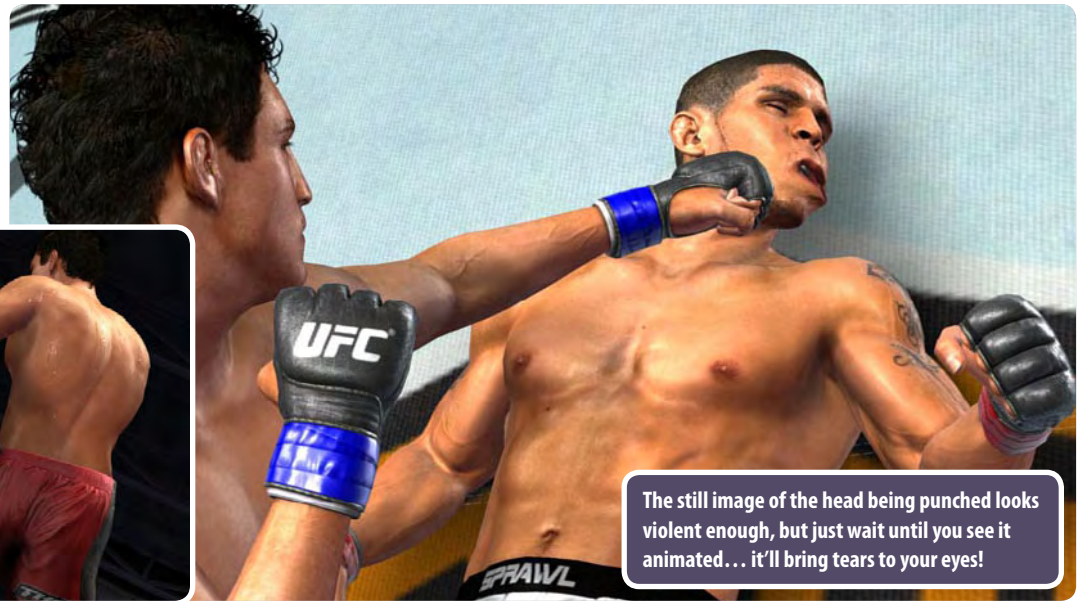
There are a wide variety of chokes and holds that you can inflict upon an opponent in order to win matches.

It was a chilly February morning as we made our way down to the 02 Arena in London for an exclusive hands-on preview of UFC 09 Undisputed. As press days go, this one promised to be somewhat special, as not only would we get to test out the latest version of UFC 09 Undisputed, but we would also meet two of the fighters and be treated first-hand to real life UFC fighting later in the arena itself. I would like to hasten at this point that we would be acting as mere spectators to the fighting, and would not be taking part ourselves. Just as well really, as the UFC is one of the most violent sports you're likely to come across…

The Ultimate Fighting Championship, as it is otherwise known, has a short but chequered history, having established itself 15 years ago in America where it quickly gained notoriety for its 'anything goes' attitude to mixed martial arts fighting – it was famously branded 'Human cockfighting' by Senator John McCain at one point. Soon driven underground and outlawed in many states, the sport was forced to introduce stricter rules. This in turn led to a gradual increase in popularity and public acceptance. As the years progressed, the Ultimate Fighting Championship has slowly developed into a global brand, followed by millions of fans worldwide. It has become arguably the third most popular full-contact sport outside of boxing and wrestling.

It is a natural choice for a videogame then, mixing action with tactics and showmanship – all the ingredients that make for a successful beat-'em-up. Unfortunately, previous UFC incarnations released on the small screen haven't quite lived up to their promise. No less than five games >





The still image of the head being punched looks violent enough, but just wait until you see it animated… it'll bring tears to your eyes!

> UFC 2009 continued

over the years have been released under the UFC brand, and each time the end product has left reviewers wanting. For some reason, the real-life action has never translated well to a videogame, with developers never quite getting it right.

Things certainly look more promising this time around, as Yuke's Future Media Creators (of WWE SmackDown fame) have taken the development reigns, and the care and attention to detail is apparent from the first time you see the game up and running.

Graphically, you could squint and be fooled into thinking you were watching the real thing – it's that good. All the fighters are beautifully rendered and animated, and the whole 'feel' of the game seems to echo that of a real-life broadcast of a fight. Everything you would expect from an actual UFC event is included in the ringside presentation, from the ring girls waving their placards, to the corner men and referees.

Each fighter has been scanned and digitised in glorious 3D, making their on-screen image as authentic as possible. They move and look just as they would in the real world, and the game's physics engine really comes into its own as both fighters lay into each other, being able to hit and be hit at the same time. As fights progress, you can see cuts and bruises appear over the fighters body. These affect the fighter both visually and physically, as the more injuries they sustain then the less effective that they will become when it comes to defending themselves.

While Yuke's have long specialised in wrestling games, this time around great lengths have been taken to ensure this release is the most realistic simulation of the sport yet. Tactics play a huge part in this game; you can't just rush in there and attempt to batter your opponent down, as you will quickly wear yourself out and be caught off-guard. This game forces you to think about your every move, >

THREE STEPS TO VICTORY

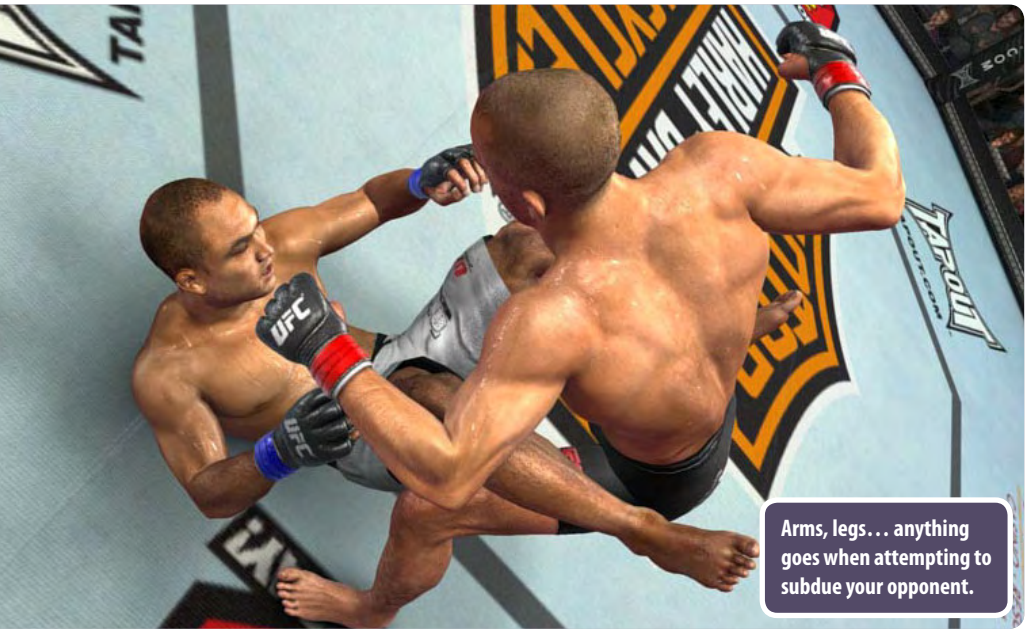
How to earn yourself a submission



The takedown | The hold | The submission

The takedown

The first step on this path to success is that you need to wrestle your opponent to the ground. There are a number of ways to do this, and if your rival is at full strength then you may struggle to achieve this to start with. However, after a healthy dollop of pummelling, you should find the going much easier.



Arms, legs… anything goes when attempting to subdue your opponent.



It is possible to push your opponent off you once pinned down, although keep an eye out for their counterattack as it is still easy for them to rain blows on you from a standing-up position.

> UFC 2009 continued

and while the control system takes some getting used to, after a few plays you'll soon get the hang of it and be pinning down your opponent in no time like its second nature.

Interestingly enough, there is no stamina bar displayed as default for each fight. You can select to have it displayed manually, although the developers feel that it only distracts from the realistic slant they are aiming for with the title. To be fair, you don't really need to see it anyway, as the game is more focused on performing takedowns and winning matches strategically, rather than by pure strength and power.

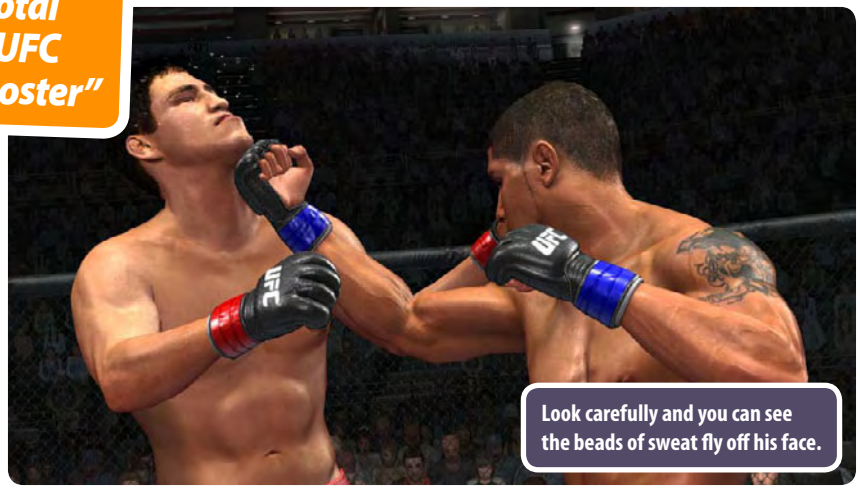
All-in-all there will be a grand total of 80 actual UFC fighters in the roster to choose from, spread across five different weight classes, each with their own particular strengths and weaknesses. Being a mixed martial arts sport, there are a variety of disciplines to master, with moves incorporated from Judo, Wrestling, Muay Thai, Boxing, Kickboxing and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu among others.

You can always tell from first impressions if a game is destined to be a classic or not, and we have to say that the signs from UFC 09 Undisputed are all very positive so far. Although the version we played wasn't completed, things are shaping up nicely for its May release. Prepare yourself for a violent Summer... ●

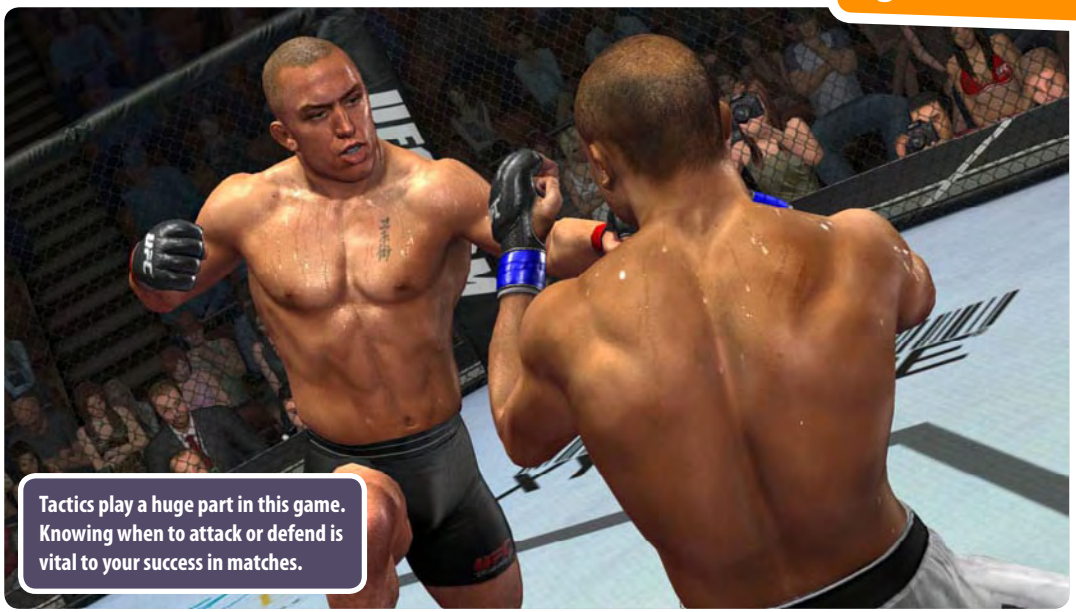


On the verge of breaking his arm, it won't be long until this fighter admits defeat.

"All-in-all there will be a grand total of 80 actual UFC fighters in the roster"



Look carefully and you can see the beads of sweat fly off his face.



Tactics play a huge part in this game. Knowing when to attack or defend is vital to your success in matches.

P3Zine UFC 2009 UNDISPUTED

PERCENTAGE COMPLETE 90%

FIRST IMPRESSIONS 90%

The most realistic fighting simulation yet?

UFC ONE-ON-ONE

We talk to UFC 09 Undisputed's Project Manager



While at the 02 Arena, we caught up with Neven Dravinski, the man behind UFC 09 Undisputed, and discussed how closely the game mirrored the real Ultimate Fighting Championship.

So tell me a little bit about your role working on UFC 09 Undisputed? What would best describe your job?

I'm the Project Manager, which basically means I'm the Producer of the title. I essentially get the game from the keyboard to the shelf.

So you see the game all the way through, making sure everything runs smoothly?

Yeah pretty much. That's actually a very interesting question – what do I do? You know, whenever my friends ask me that, I tell them to just pick a day and I'll tell them whatever I did that day. It ranges from making the trailers that you see online, through to getting legal work done, to calling contractors… Whatever needs to happen to get the game out the door.

When it comes to working with the UFC itself, how much access to the organisation did you have? How much of an impact has the UFC had into the game?

Oh, they have had a huge impact. We work very, very closely with their production people – you know, at this point I pretty much have the entire organisation on my cellphone. If I need the video guy, I can call him for this, or if I need the graphics guy, I call him for that. We're working with all their production staff who put the fights on and make the trailers that appear before the fights.

On top of that, they're the ones giving us access to their fighters, and providing us with all the help we need. Their PR staff are helping us out with putting on these events, even with Quentin and Marcus (two UFC fighters who were present at >

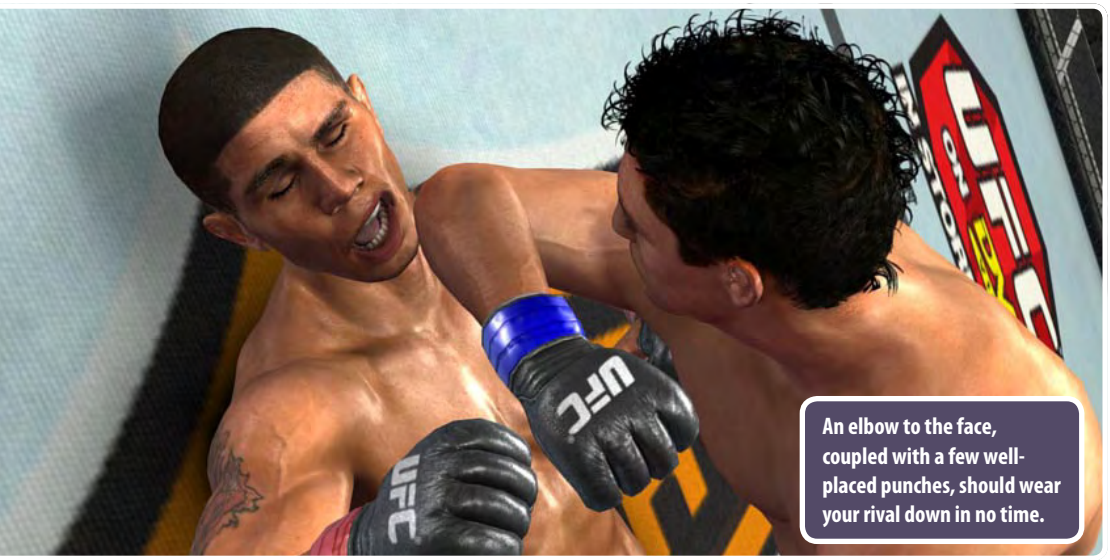
The man with the plan, Neven Dravinski.



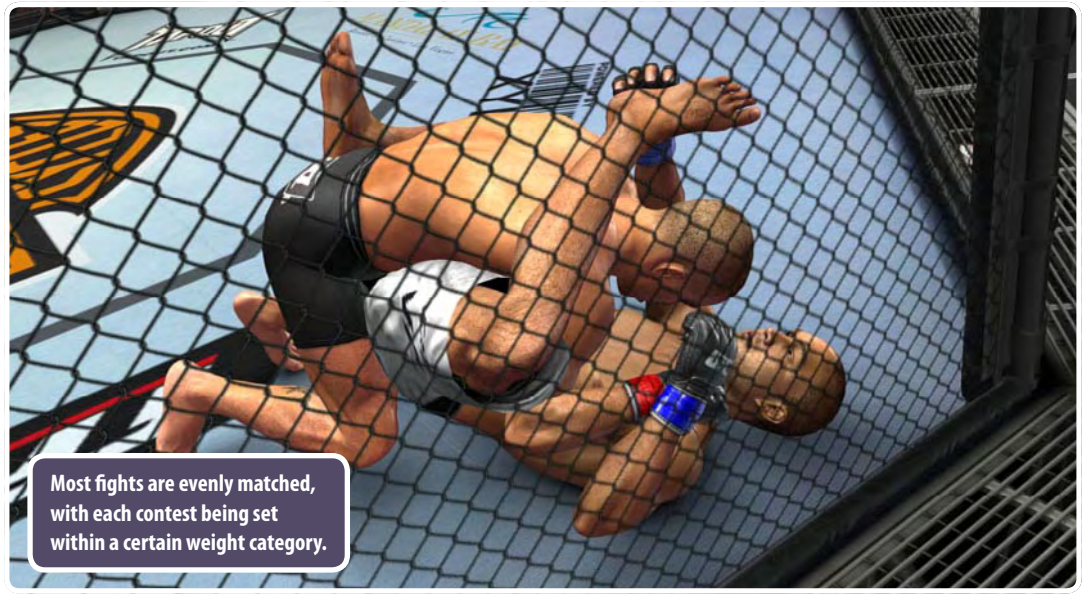
Much effort has been spent on making the games physics as realistic as possible, ensuring the fighters interact with each other just as you would expect in an actual UFC fight.



This is going to be painful… no wonder he's guarding his face.



An elbow to the face, coupled with a few well-placed punches, should wear your rival down in no time.


Most fights are evenly matched, with each contest being set within a certain weight category.

> Interview continued

the event) – you know I've hung out with Marcus when he came to get scanned and we talked videogames for a good several hours.

Does that mean that a lot of the fighters are gamers themselves?
Yes, certainly Quentin and Marcus are big, big gamers. As I said, I was talking to Marcus for quite a while about games, and I know Quentin is always playing all the time. These guys are serious gamers, and because we've had so much interaction with them touring events and bringing them out. We're always involved and I feel these guys are more like my professional colleagues – its very striking and I feel with have a different relationship with them than most people do. We're so close to the UFC, they're such a great organisation to work with – we're really a big part of their global expansion to other territories.

I think the great thing about the game is its opening more doors. I think we're going to educate people about mixed martial arts generally. The things that you need to do to be successful in the game are the same things the fighters need to do to be successful in the octagons. The concepts of moving from the positions of dominance, and all the terminology of all the positions, are the exact same things that happen in real-life fighting.

"It was once considered a fringe sport, and now it's a well-known and respected one"

How much do you feel that this game will impact UFC's recognition globally?
Certainly with our global reach, and with the fact that videogames are such a global business, UFC is at that point where they're exploding right now – they're really pushing to expand the market worldwide. They first started out with a couple of fights here and there, and now here we are in London at a sold-out 02 Arena for a UFC fight. It was once considered such a fringe sport, and now it's a well-known and respected one. UFC has not only expanded as a sport, but culturally too. Now when I ask people if they are familiar with UFC, they respond 'yes of course', when just a few years ago that may have not been the case.

The brand's just exploded massively, and is getting more and more popular year after year, and hopefully we can help boost that popularity with this title.



UFC 2009 UNDISPUTED

Publisher: THQ
Developer: YUKE's Future Media Creators
Heritage: Facebreaker, WWE SmackDown vs Raw
Link: www.ufcundisputed.com
ETA: May

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Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Capcom
Heritage: Resident Evil series, Lost Planet
Link: www.residentevil.com/5
OUT NOW

Resident Evil 5

It all began in Africa…

"It's almost certainly one of the best action games you'll play all year"

Let's get this right out of the way from the outset, so there's no doubt – Resident Evil 5 isn't as good as its predecessor. In many ways, it can be viewed as a disappointment. But when the game you have to follow is one of the best videogames ever made, that was always likely to be the case. Mikami's masterpiece felt like a stars-aligning one-off, and the only reason this feels like a comedown is because of what came before. For despite failing to match up to its illustrious predecessor, Resident Evil 5 will almost certainly be one of the best action games you'll play all year.

It starts off well – if similarly to 4 – with a sequence that slowly ratchets up the tension before exploding into violence, as returning hero Chris Redfield joins newcomer Sheva Alomar in investigating a disturbance in Africa. Naturally, 'disturbance' is putting it mildly, and the pair find themselves up to their necks in trouble – the local villagers having been infected with parasites which, as in Resident Evil 4, turn their hosts from peaceful villagers into shovel-wielding psychos. It goes without saying that crazy bioengineering company Umbrella is involved somewhere along the line, and the pair venture through shanty towns, into mines, tribal villages and oil refineries before venturing underground to a Tomb Raider-esque temple – eventually discovering a secret underground lab and mansion that have become the series trademarks >

SHEVA SAY DIE

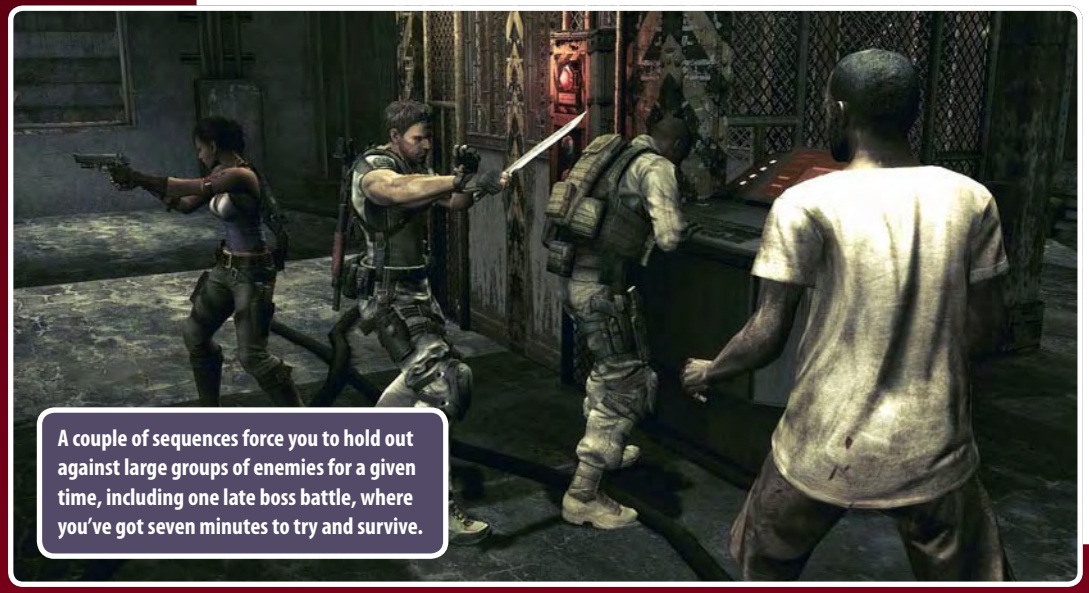
Learning to love Resi's African queen



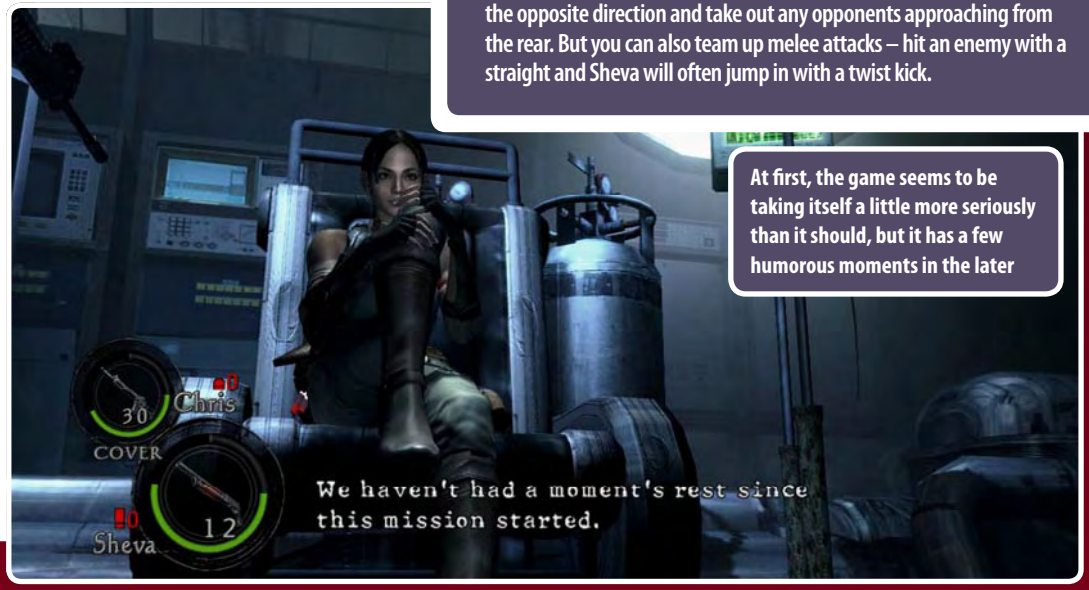
Kick off **Heal!** **Flip-reverse**

Kick off

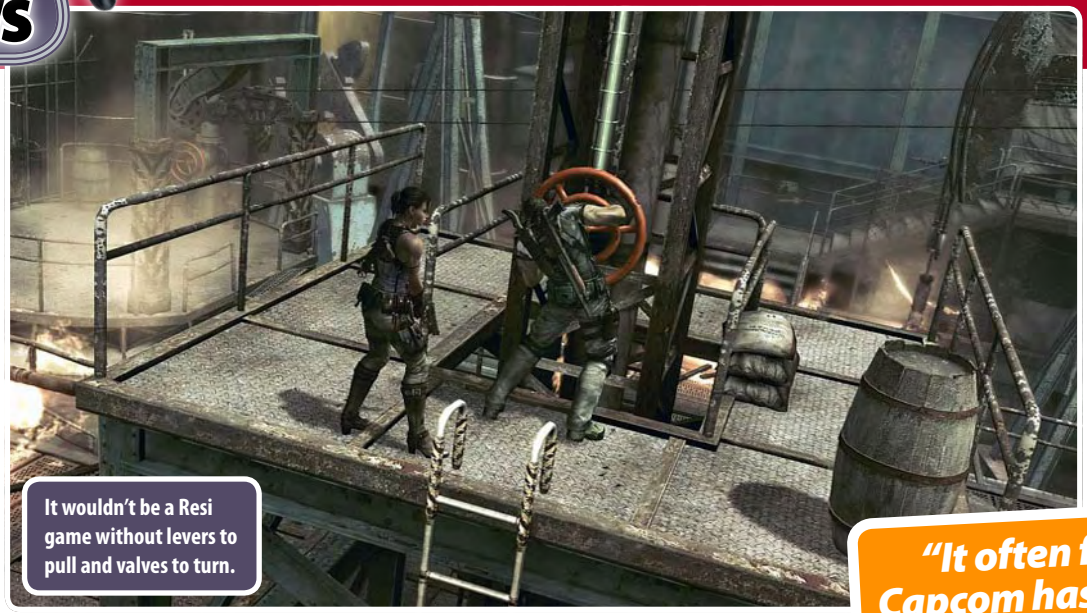
Sheva will stay by your side unless the action forces you to split up. This is advantageous for backup in combat situations, as she'll often face the opposite direction and take out any opponents approaching from the rear. But you can also team up melee attacks – hit an enemy with a straight and Sheva will often jump in with a twist kick.



A couple of sequences force you to hold out against large groups of enemies for a given time, including one late boss battle, where you've got seven minutes to try and survive.



At first, the game seems to be taking itself a little more seriously than it should, but it has a few humorous moments in the later



It wouldn't be a Resi game without levers to pull and valves to turn.



> Resident Evil 5 continued

before a final couple of stops at locations we won't spoil here. Those concerned about early shots showing predominantly outdoor areas will be heartened to hear that the later chapters mix some familiar series ideas with some brand new locations.

Indeed, that latter sensation is a feeling you'll get regularly while playing – almost as if Takeuchi and team are paying tribute to Mikami's game without really allowing this to form an identity of its own. The early village attack where the object is simply to survive against overwhelming odds, a room which apes the lava room in Resi 4's castle, a boss which transforms a squeaky-voiced antagonist into a writhing, slithering behemoth – it often feels like Capcom has simply reskinned the best bits of the previous game. And if it's not pinching from forebears, it's nicking from rivals – the later stages introduce gun-toting enemies and a cover system which feels like a direct lift from Gears of War, albeit far less elegant. One late encounter gives you a weapon which may as well be named the Hammer of Dawn. Even the alternate control schemes seem to be a nod to other third-person games, as if Resi doesn't have the confidence to be its own beast any more. >

"It often feels like Capcom has reskinned the best bits of the previous game"



Mercenaries mode offers eight maps taken from the main game and a host of unlockable characters to chase high scores.

FREEZE FRAME

Taking you through the game one step at a time



20 MINUTES
The start is seriously intense – stay away from this axe-wielding executioner.



2 HOURS
Two brief on-rails sections close Chapter 2 – this jeep chase is a highlight.



6 HOURS
Light turns into fire as you discover the secret behind the Las Plagas parasites.



7 HOURS
A garden underground? That's not all you'll find. Prepare for a surprise...



11 HOURS+
With the main adventure over, you can play some of the Mercenaries mode games.



Alligators patrol the waters on the excellent river level – stray too close and you'll get bitten in half.



As you progress, enemies get tougher and their weapons get sharper. Tribal warriors won't hesitate to leap forward and impale you on their spears. Nasty.

> Resident Evil 5 continued

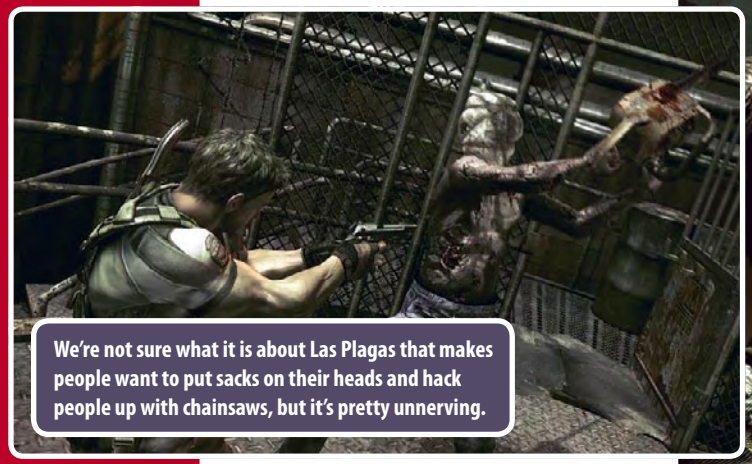
Though you still have to stand still to aim, an idea which – in this post-Gears, post-Dead Space world – feels a little antiquated. We're quite happy with it, as we feel it adds to the tension, but it seems some will have problems with its comparative awkwardness. Either way, these compromises feel a little forced. Resident Evil used to lead but now it seems content to follow.

If the controls are one potential sticking point, controversial mechanic number two is the introduction of an AI ally. Barring one or two brief sections where you're separated – and invariably, the split often involves helping out by sniping enemies from a distance – Sheva's a constant companion. Resi 4 paired you with President's daughter Ashley for sections of the adventure, but she had to be babysat, whereas your new partner is a dab hand with any weapon you choose to throw her way. Her introduction almost certainly compromises the scare factor – while 5 is intense, there's always that safety net of someone by your side which dissipates those shivers found even in the action-focused 4. And while she can handle herself in a gunfight, you'll have to make sure she's properly equipped – she'll rarely pick up items for herself, though will shout if she needs ammo. Micromanaging two inventories (in real-time no less) is clunkier than a paused alternative, >

"Barring one or two brief sections, Sheva's a constant companion"

Roll over screen for annotations





We're not sure what it is about Las Plagas that makes people want to put sacks on their heads and hack people up with chainsaws, but it's pretty unnerving.



Believe it or not, these flowers are actually key to the plot.

> Resident Evil 5 continued

but once you're accustomed to her foibles you'll find Sheva a big help. On our first playthrough she only died twice, and revived Chris on six or seven occasions. But it still doesn't feel quite like Resi – a feeling exacerbated by a script which tones down the wisecracks and the silliness, at least initially…

Though the latter stages of the game feature some real lowlights – one-hit-kill enemies, an abundance of sub-Gears stop-and-pop sections – the story suddenly abandons its rather po-faced approach, bringing back a few familiar faces for some epic cut-scenes, action sequences and bosses. The former prove Takeuchi has been watching The Matrix rather a lot (and Revenge of the Sith for that matter), while the latter allow the game to finally forge its own identity.



It's rare that Sheva finds herself in serious trouble.

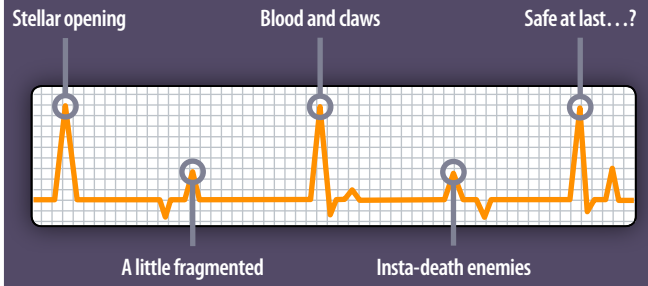
There's a voluptuous, heavily accented female villain who's constantly on the verge of spilling out of her dress, a few QTE-filled cinematics that ramp up the Eighties action-movie cheese to such levels that you won't know whether to laugh or gasp, an absolutely corking build-up to an encounter with an old enemy that brings old-school Resi chills back for the first time, and at least one heart-bursting jump-shock. Old habits die hard, and it does on occasion fall back on ideas used both earlier in the game and in Mikami's opus, but you at last feel that Resident Evil 5 has found its mojo which had been misplaced for much of the early game – with a notable exception in a riverboat level during the third chapter.

Fancy a treat?

Completion brings plenty of rewards – not least the return of the superb Mercenaries mode which can be played alone or co-operatively. Rankings for each stage encourage replay value, not least because the additional points can be used to purchase new items – detailed figurines of all the game's characters, for example. New costumes and even graphical filters can be applied to further playthroughs, and returning to the fray with fully upgraded guns turns a tense action game into a bullet-filled laugh riot. Plenty to enjoy then, and while Resi 5 might lack the charisma of its predecessors, and fails to match the brilliance of 4, grab an online partner and you'll definitely have a blast.

Chris Schilling

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



"An encounter with an old enemy brings old-school Resi chills back for the first time"

P3Zine Verdict

A great game that can't quite live up to Resident Evil 4

+ Superb graphics
+ A real sense of spectacle
- Too derivative

87%



Publisher: Sega
Developer: The Creative Assembly
Heritage: Total War
Link: www.sega.co.uk/stormrise
ETA: 24th March

Stormrise

There's a storm coming…

"Stormrise makes the bold claim of being the first truly 3D real-time strategy game"

There are some things that simply aren't meant to be: meat-flavoured ice cream, Goths driving cars, ITV dramas. To that list can arguably be added real-time strategy games on consoles. While many have been attempted over the years, dating as far back as the original PlayStation, only a minuscule number can be said to sit comfortably away from their natural home of the PC

Step forward Australian genre experts The Creative Assembly, whose renowned Total War series is held in high esteem by legions of PC boffins. Unfortunately, PlayStation 3 owners will not be boosting those numbers by many, as Stormrise doesn't so much revolutionise the genre as set it back years, proving a near unplayable mess that fails to convince on any level.

Making the bold claim of being the first truly 3D RTS game, this involves putting you at ground level and entrusting you to a control system that can politely be described as ill-conceived, and less politely as crippled. Using a mechanism dubbed Whip Select, units are selected by rotating the right stick until a straight line emanating from the currently selected unit chances upon the icon of another. And while it's vaguely manageable in the three-unit tutorial, as the numbers grow it becomes an increasingly hit-and-miss affair simply selecting the unit that you wanted, the problem only mildly assuaged by grouping a few together. And for further >

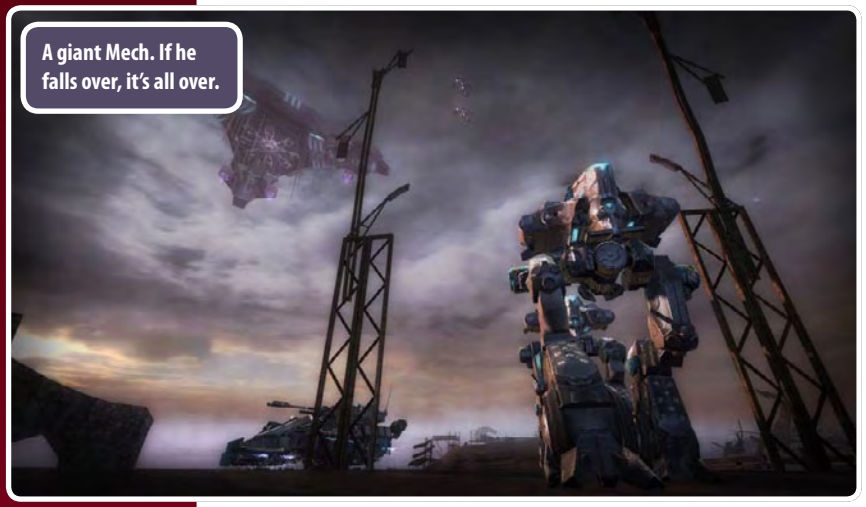
INSTANT WHIP

Evolution or Devolution of the RTS?

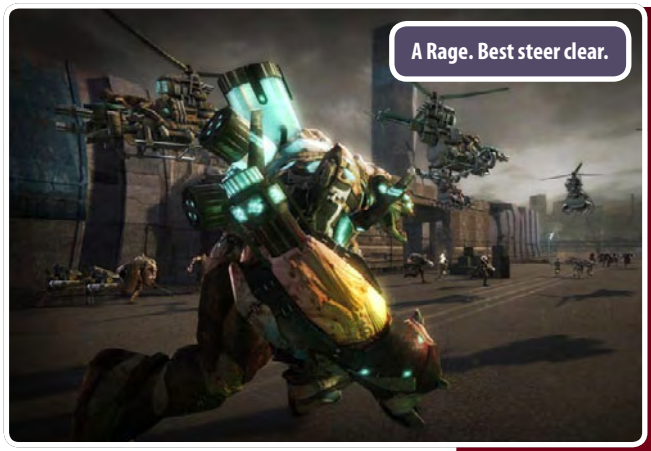


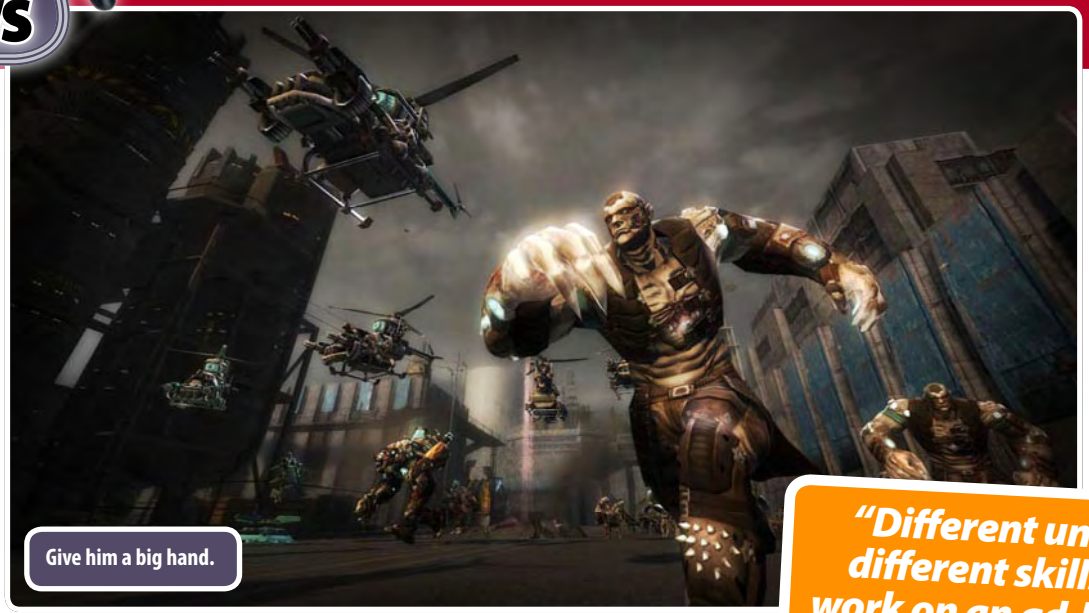
Whip it

Start by rotating the right stick until the line intersects the icon of the unit that you wish to select.


A giant Mech. If he falls over, it's all over.


These Enforcers pull out their shields if you ask nicely.


A Rage. Best steer clear.


Give him a big hand.



> Stormrise continued

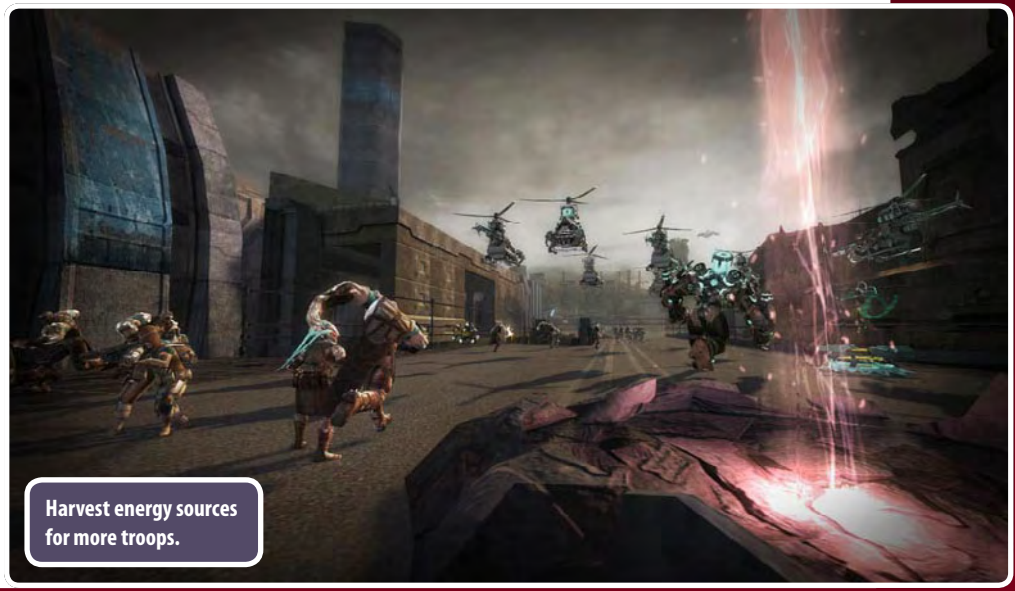
complication, different units have special skills, which seem to work on a largely ad hoc basis, no matter how hard you try to employ them.

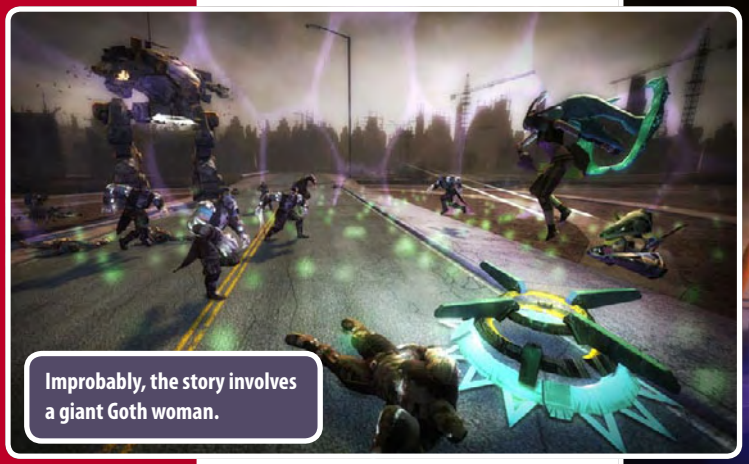
To compound matters, you notionally play the role of Geary, woken from a lengthy apocalypse-dodging sleep only to be strapped into a lumbering Mech outfit and thrust into the war effort against the mysterious Sai. So far, so clichéd, but the twist is that if Geary or any of the other Mechs is toppled, you lose the mission, forced to restart or return to a manual save point. So effectively, what should be your strongest weapons are forced to take a cautious approach, skulking behind the disposable minions. Further troops can be ordered up by taking control of energy beams, harvesting the energy and turning them into warp gates. As such, it often becomes a battle of acquisition, edging your way around the map, nabbing enemy beams, hampered by the appalling interface and the fact that you rarely know whether it's Tuesday or Norway. Almost by way of mocking your predicament, there's a so-called Tactical Map, which is little more than a blur of colours and shapes.

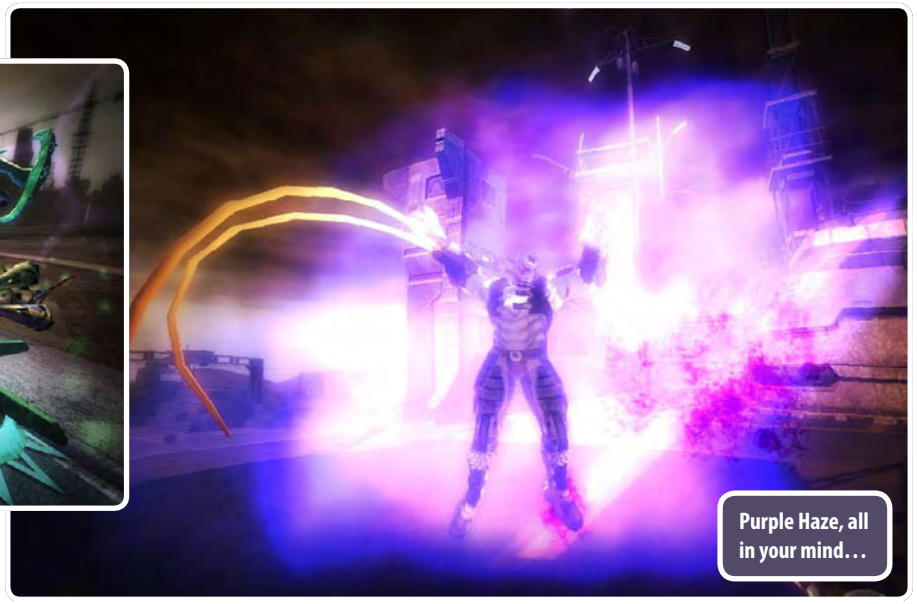
"Different units have different skills, which work on an ad-hoc basis"

In terms of frustration, Stormrise is an experience akin to plaiting snot. Even when you do vaguely get to grips with the control system, the game is hampered by bugs such as units getting lost, or blithely moonwalking into the scenery. Eking your way around the map, games are often reduced to a series of water-treading standoffs, with units stuck in bottlenecks, blindly >




Harvest energy sources for more troops.


Improbably, the story involves a giant Goth woman.


Purple Haze, all in your mind...

> Stormrise continued

killing each other with no progress made on either side. Graphically it's no great shakes, with the cities largely consisting of a series of grey buildings, the supposed big deal being that you can go inside them, and on top of them, thanks to the game's so-called 'verticality'.

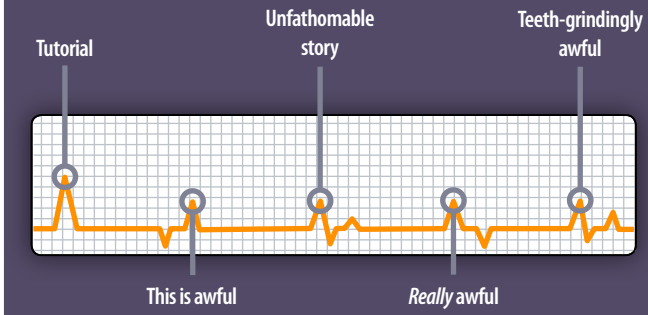
And if you haven't ground your teeth to stumps simply grappling with the mechanics of Stormrise, stylistically it's cringeworthy stuff, even stooping as low as to include some wholly inappropriate sexual undertones, the adult tone only vaguely redeemed by judicious use of the word "clusterf**k." It's rare that a game comes along that manages to do so much wrong, but playing Stormrise sometimes feels like one of those nightmares in which you are unable to move. While it's a patient gamer who will plough through the 12 levels of the single-player campaign, they may at least stand you in good stead for the skirmishes and the multiplayer.

Ultimately though, it has to be deemed a failure of sizeable proportions, and proof that you can't simply throw together a mish-mash of genres and hope that it works. There are times when you can almost see what they were attempting, but far more occasions when you realise that they should have stopped.

Steve Hill


A flamethrower raises the temperature.

PULSOMETER *Signs of life*



"Stormrise sometimes feels like one of those nightmares in which you are unable to move"

P3Zine Verdict

A shambles of a game with few redeeming features

- Dreadful control system
- Frustrating gameplay
- Awful dialogue

45%



Publisher: Sega
Developer: Backbone
Heritage: Everyday Shooter, 1942: Joint Strike
Link: www.sega.co.uk/games/?g=577
OUT NOW

Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection

Is this collection mega in every sense of the word?



Fantasy Zone is another Master System unlockable.

There's something gently heartbreaking about packaging a collection of 40 retro favourites on a single disc. For one, it's oddly sad to see all those chunky carts whittled down into nothing more than a tiny bit of space on a piece of optical media. And secondly, the price tag of £25 for some of the finest games on arguably Sega's best console is a slap in the face to those of us who spent £60 on Streets of Rage back in the day – not to mention slightly upsetting for those who've forked out money on the few titles from this pack that are available elsewhere – namely Wii's rather overpriced Virtual Console. Still, Sega's generosity is everyone else's gain, and putting aside our frustration at all that wasted money for a moment, we have to admit we're glad this compilation exists.

Ultimate Collection might be overstating the case a little bit, mind. The 40 games here are undoubtedly a decent selection of Mega Drive classics, and we understand the licensing issues surrounding third-party titles, but there are some surprising omissions. Wherefore art thou, ToeJam and Earl? Afterburner? OutRun? Perhaps Sega's holding some back for a future collection, though we'd like to see these added via DLC if possible. And there's no option for online multiplayer – it's perhaps mainly for the traditionalists, but it's a shame we can't play Streets of Rage over PSN.





The collection features a host of interviews with the original creators of the games as unlockable extras.

> Ultimate Collection cont.

That said, there are some undeniable classics here, as well as a few lesser-known games you should try to revisit. Comix Zone is one of the surprise treats – a truly inventive beat-'em-up taking place across the panels of a comic book, for our money it's among the top five games of the whole collection. Similarly, Treasure's Dynamite Headdy will only increase your appreciation of the cult developer's output, while Decap Attack is a macabre delight.

For the role-players out there, no less than four Phantasy Star games are included, while Shining in the Darkness is the kind of ultra-hard first-person dungeon crawler recently referenced by the likes of Etrian Odyssey and The Dark Spire.



Sonic 2 will be the highlight of the collection for some.

They really don't make 'em like they used to… well, sometimes.

Inevitably there are a few duffers in the mix, but you can award each game a rating when you've played it, forcing those you're not keen on down to the bottom of the list. The Museum option shows the boxart for each game as well as a bit of background information, which often makes for interesting reading – did you know for example that Decap Attack was a remake of a Japanese game called Magical Hat which was itself a reskin of a Master System game named Psycho Fox? Well, now you do.



The smoothing option works well on some titles, but reduces sprites in others to relatively characterless blobs.

Step back in time

With options to view the action in 4:3 mode – with appropriately themed borders – or stretched to widescreen 16:9, a smoothing option that smudges those pixellated rough edges – which works better on some games than others – and the option to save each game whenever you want and to redefine the controls, developer Backbone has produced a collection that pays suitable homage to Sega's 16-bit years. Whether you want a history lesson or just fancy something which harkens back to simpler times, there are few better-value packages than this. ●

Chris Schilling

HIDDEN GEMS

Three classics you might have missed



Vectorman | **Ristar** | **The Story of Thor**

Vectorman

A 2D platform-shooter, Vectorman was ahead of its time, using pre-rendered 3D graphics which almost rivalled the splendid visuals of Donkey Kong Country on the SNES. While its no longer quite so impressive to look at, it's arguably aged better than its rival, with Vectorman's transforming ability making for some creative gameplay and excellent boss battles.

P3Zine Verdict

Not quite 'ultimate', but a fine collection nonetheless

+ Some genuine classics here
+ Terrific value
+ A few duds

83%

PlayStation Network

Download 'em today!

Noby Noby Boy

Publisher: Namco-Bandai
Developer: Namco-Bandai
Price: £3.19

If a game's creator doesn't know why he made it, then how is anyone else meant to figure out why it exists? Keita Takahashi has followed up his much-loved cult hit Katamari Damacy with a game that's both recognisably his – visually, at least, it has his fingerprints all over it – and yet something outlandishly different. And not just different from Katamari, but from anything else you've ever played. It absolutely defies categorisation. As it turns out, that's a very good thing indeed.

The idea – and you'll have to bear with us on this one – is that you play as a four-legged creature called BOY who has to make himself larger. His feeble limbs are just about capable of dragging his chubby pink frame around, but it's not until you stretch his head and his backside apart with the DualShock's analogue sticks that his true form is revealed – out pops an extendable multicoloured stomach which can stretch and stretch the more BOY eats. Each level contains a host of objects – animal, vegetable and mineral – which BOY can consume to help him grow longer. The idea of using twin stick controls and consuming items to increase the size of the object you're controlling will be familiar to Katamari players, but there's a key difference in that you're not aiming for a particular size, you're not given a time limit to work in, and you can pick up whichever items you like. The only thing you're asked to do is to keep stretching.

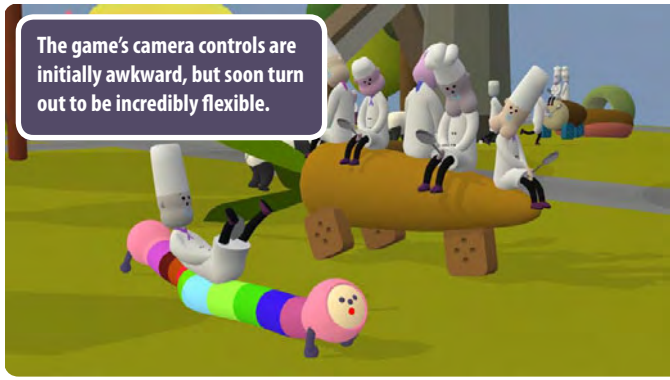


Noby Noby Boy's viral appeal has undoubtedly been helped by the ability to upload videos directly to YouTube.

Toy BOY

It might sound tedious, and to some people it probably will be – but most players won't be able to resist creating their own goals – seeing if BOY can wrap around that tree or whether he can thread his body through those clouds. Trying to reach a length of 500 metres, to stretch BOY so taut that he splits in two, to get a penguin to ride on top of you. The trophies give further ideas for experimentation – you can combine a human and an animal or a fruit in your stomach to create a strange hybrid. You can start a game planning to have a quick five-minute go, and then spend three hours pootling around a world of carrot-headed musicians. And all the while, a gentle, lilting guitar tune strums away in the background, almost sending you into a trance.

And then you discover that there is an aim to all this. All Noby Noby Boy's players are contributing towards a common goal – when you're all stretched out, you can report your BOY's length to an online character named GIRL, whose size is the total length of all BOYs worldwide. The game's players have already unlocked the Moon, which offers even more wild and wonderful environments, with Mars being the next stop.



The game's camera controls are initially awkward, but soon turn out to be incredibly flexible.

Undeniably odd, but also incredibly daring and innovative, Noby Noby Boy mixes moments of pure slapstick with peaceful reflection to become a true sandbox experience. It's play for the sake of playing, and its easy-going nature makes it impossible to hate. You'll either love it or turn it off after half-an-hour, wondering what the fuss was about. But at the price of a McDonald's meal, don't you owe it to yourself to find out which side of the fence you might be on?

P3Zine Verdict

Another quirky PSN classic

- Incredibly original
- Revolutionary idea

90%

Big in Japan

Why PS3's success in the East could translate to a Western triumph



Japanese gamers were queuing outside stores for Resident Evil 5, which should further spark PS3 sales in the East. It'll be pretty big over here, too.



Chris Schilling
Chris is the proud owner of all three 'next-gen' consoles. Every issue Chris will chart the progress of PS3 and commenting on Sony's latest and greatest initiatives.

As someone who frequently studies the Japanese market, I've noticed the PS3's star rising in the East for some time. For quite a while now, the weekly sales charts have shown a steady rise for PS3 – recently it's been closing in on the much-cheaper Wii, and at the time of writing has just overtaken it, with Ryu Ga Gotoku 3 (or Yakuza 3 as it would be known in the West if Sega was bothering to localise it) leading to a rush of hardware purchases, placing PS3 ahead of the pack.

Ignoring for a minute the upsetting fact that we're never likely to see a Yakuza 3 in the West, it marks perhaps a turning point for PS3's fortunes in the East, which could well have further improved by the time you read this with the release of Resident Evil 5. In other words, that sales spike might last a little longer, and it could lead to Sony's console being comfortably the top dog when it comes to home entertainment.

Why is this significant? Well, it basically means that the major players in the Japanese industry will have to start taking PS3 more seriously. Not that it's been wanting for third-party product so far, but it seemed that developers were starting to flock to Wii. But Nintendo's console is oddly flagging in its country of origin, despite having a significantly superior software line-up to its Western counterparts, which are still selling in crazy numbers. Though the 'Wii equals fad' arguments seem to have been shot down in the West, perhaps they're not too far off the mark when it comes to Japan. Or maybe it's due to the increased penetration of HDTVs in the notoriously tech-savvy Japanese market. After all, if you want to make the most of your shiny new set, a PS3 is a much more attractive option than the jaggy-tastic Wii.



Yakuza 3 might not be making any waves in the West, but its impact on the Japanese market will be felt overseas.

> **"Japanese developers have been keen on expanding into overseas markets for some time now"**

Admittedly, Sony's console is cheaper in Japan than in the West, and they've had to effect some pretty major price-cuts to spark some life into what was starting to look like a moribund PS3 a year ago. But week-on-week, it's been gradually eating into Wii's sales, and now it's on top, it'll take something big from Nintendo to topple Sony. Wii's MotionPlus peripheral will help, as will Wii Sports Resort, Nintendo's big first-party hope for the year. But that could well be a temporary reprieve for Wii, with the likes of Final Fantasy XIII certain to be system-sellers on PS3.

Western development

This will also affect Western development – Japanese developers have been keen on expanding into overseas markets for some time now, and Eastern giants like Square-Enix have been acquiring Western studios, distributing titles from the likes of Taito and Atlus in Europe and even purchasing publishing houses. So it stands to reason that if PS3 starts to become the dominant force in Japan, that success will likely impact upon the West before too long.

We've been told each year since the console's inception that the next 12 months will be 'the year of the PS3'. Though Wii is far enough ahead of the pack over here to keep its lead for the time being, future analysts could well point to 2009 as the year that the tide officially turned in Sony's favour.

In P3Zine Issue 26

Wolfenstein

The war never ends...



PLUS!

Bioshock 2
Wheelman
The Godfather II
X-Men Origins: Wolverine

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Tom Clancy's H·A·W·X

HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

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FEATURE

AIR COMBAT

Everything you need to win the war in the skies



WIN!

FLY A FOUGA MAGISTER JET PLANE



INTERVIEW

FLYING HIGH

Under the cockpit of Tom Clancy's HAWX



EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST

Tom Clancy's H·A·W·X

Air-combat will never be the same

Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

Welcome

As discerning, clued-up gamers, you're bound to have played one or more of Ubisoft's Tom Clancy games – the mark of the writer famous for his vision of near-future warfare and espionage has become a by-word for top-notch gameplay, thanks to the likes of Rainbow Six, Ghost Recon Advanced Warfare, EndWar and Splinter Cell. Now the Tom Clancy game universe has acquired a new franchise, HAWX, and like its siblings, it's an absolute corker.

In many ways, HAWX is Ubisoft's most ambitious Tom Clancy game yet, as it aims to drag a fairly obscure, special-interest genre (air combat) into the mainstream. That it succeeds, and provides a polished, thrilling and satisfyingly meaty gameplay experience – even if you're not a flight-sim-nut – is a testament to the skills of Ubisoft Bucharest. Its innovative assistance on/off system and clever virtual cockpit computer mark it down as that rarest of beasts: a game which has been the beneficiary of deep thought from an early stage and, as a result, it makes ancestors like Ace Combat seem pallid and one-dimensional in comparison.

We've enjoyed playing HAWX so much that we created this special supplement, in which you'll find pretty much all you need to know about it before it comes out, an exclusive developer's diary providing an insight to the making of HAWX and an interview with Ubisoft's head Tom Clancy honcho, Phil Brannelly. Hope you enjoy it.

Steve Boxer, Editor

WIN!
FLY A FOUGA MAGISTER JET PLANE



ENHANCED VIEW



Contents

Preview
Find out all about HAWX in our in-depth five-page preview feature.

Interview
We talk to HAWX's UK Senior Brand Manager, Phil Brannelly about the game.

Air Combat
Want to know more about how these planes really work? Our six-page guide tells you everything you need to know.



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Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

HANDS-ON PREVIEW

Tom Clancy's HAWX

We feel the need, the need for speed...



Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Bucharest
Platforms: Xbox 360, PS3, PC
Heritage: Blazing Angels: Squadrons of WWII
Link: http://hawx game.uk.ubi.com
ETA: 6th March 2009

Solid and blockbusting though his films are, and however fascinating his books may be, it's us gamers who have consistently got the best of Tom Clancy. It's 10 years since Ubisoft first invoked his name, on Rainbow Six, and a steady stream of subsequent triple-A titles – Splinter Cell, Ghost Recon Advanced Warfare and EndWar – means that gamers now see his name on a box as a stamp of quality. And now HAWX is set to broaden the Tom Clancy repertoire still further.

Despite being a departure – it's an air-combat game – it emphatically carries on the tradition of quality.

> *"HAWX's storyline has a real impact on the gameplay"*



Advice from your wingman will pop up in an on-screen video window.

Indeed, it single-handedly drags the air-combat genre – hitherto very much shunted into a niche – into the mainstream of 21st-century games. Which is quite an achievement. Its success can be attributed to two factors: clever use of the Tom Clancy universe and the investment of a considerable amount of thought into how to make air-combat games supremely playable.

THE PLOT

Like us, you probably don't set too much store by the stories which unfold in games (they're inevitably secondary to the gameplay), but HAWX's storyline has a real impact on the gameplay, allowing it to feature real (and future) aircraft without alienating all but flight-sim aficionados. It's 2019, and you play as David Crenshaw, who has been a special-ops pilot in the US military's HAWX flying division. But as it's Tom Clancy-world, HAWX has been disbanded, since private military companies (PMCs) have taken over from national armies, and you now work for Artemis Global Security. But there's a spot of bother in South America, which unfolds with you at its epicentre: war breaks out between Brazil and a bloc of

ENHANCED VIEW



The amount of ground detail is astonishing, with everything being accurately mapped in 3D.

Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

The flight of your life

The three versions compared



PC | PS3 | 360

HAWX on PC

If you have a suitably pumped-up machine, you should be able to get this looking even more spectacular than the PS3 and Xbox 360 versions – but it will run on a fairly low-spec, albeit less than a couple of year old, PC. The PC version does support all the joysticks that the flight-sim brigade are likely to own, but we'd recommend you buy a console-style gamepad to play it – that's what it was really designed to take as a means of input.

> HAWX continued

South American countries which calls itself Las Trinidad. At first, because Artemis aligns with Brazil, you actually find yourself taking on American planes. But as Las Trinidad takes the war to the United States and Artemis switches sides, you return to the HAWX fold. Mercifully, none of this unfolds in lengthy cut-scenes, but rather through snippets of video and audio delivered in mid-flight.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

If, for example, you've played Ace Combat 6, one aspect leaps out at you the moment you boot HAWX up. All the landscape and cities you fly over have been properly modelled in 3D (using GeoEye satellite mapping as a base), so you can fly between skyscrapers or under bridges.

HAWX starts you off gently with a rerun of a GRAW 2 mission in the Middle East, except this time you're giving air support. Which instantly gives you a point of reference in the Tom Clancy universe.

> "All the landscapes and cities you fly over have been properly modelled in 3D"



The plane models are nothing short of stunning.



HAWX takes in locations all around the world.



All the planes are packing some very serious weaponry.

Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

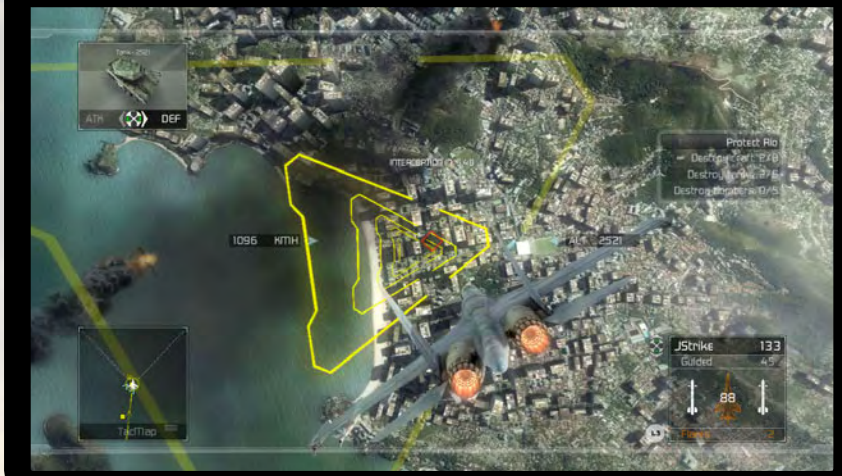
>HAWX continued



Some of the 50 aircraft you'll get to fly are more obscure than others.

The very fulcrum of HAWX, and the concept which renders it accessible to gamers who wouldn't necessarily class themselves as aviation-nuts, is the assistance on/off system. Essentially, it's a nannying system – when you turn it on your aircraft becomes less manoeuvrable, but also harder to crash, and you get a vast amount of info pumped through to your head-up display. Turning assistance off makes your aircraft super-manoeuvrable, but removes most of the HUD info, and moves you out from a first to a third-person view.

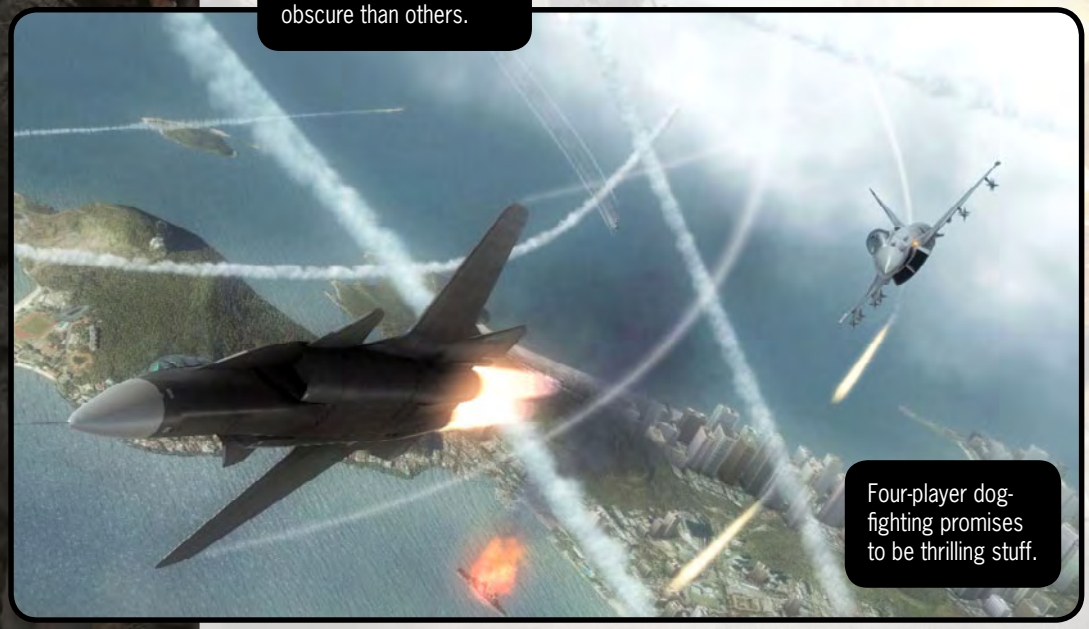
Roll over screen for annotations



Lead game designer Thomas Simon explains: "Assistance is useful for giving you the trajectories which can allow you to intercept enemies or make a surgical strike. You turn it off when you need to react quickly or when things start to get out of hand; when you have too many enemies to deal with."

The other key differentiator which defines HAWX's gameplay is the Enhanced Reality System (ERS). This too is a device enabled by the game's future setting – it's basically a head-up display which feeds vast amounts of information to you from spotters on the ground, AWACS radar planes and so on, as well as video-windows from your wingmen and support staff, and all your targeting information. It allows HAWX to sidestep the urge found in flight simulators to meticulously copy the planes' real HUDs, and present a consistent interface, no matter what you're flying. And it includes features that don't yet exist – for example, when you target an aircraft, you can press a controller button and the ERS will draw a series of gates allowing you to follow that plane and engage it in a dog-fight. And because – according to the game's story – you can download new features to it, it mutates

> *"You can press a button and the ERS will draw a series of gates allowing you to follow that plane"*



Four-player dog-fighting promises to be thrilling stuff.

Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

>HAWX continued

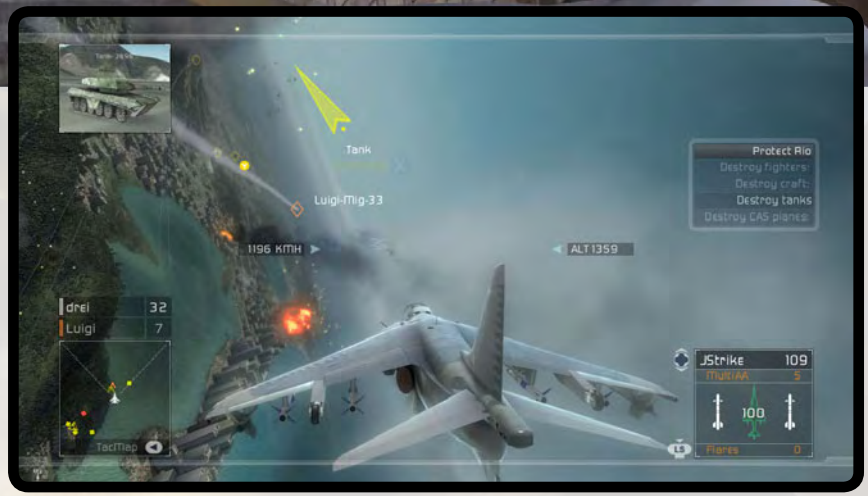
helpfully according to the mission your playing.

THE MISSIONS

The single-player missions are another area that marks out HAWX as a cut above previous air-combat games. They are varied, long, involving and played out in the skies above some gloriously rendered locations. You might, for example, have to evade radar and take out a succession of early-warning systems, protect Air Force One from attack or, indeed, the Space Shuttle as it bids to repair the crippled US satellite defence system – or take out both air and ground targets as Rio de Janeiro succumbs to a full-on enemy assault.

All the missions can be played by four people co-operatively and, while the overall objectives and geographical settings remain the same, they have been tweaked for co-op in clever ways, as Thomas Simon explains: "The pure level design evolves from the single-player to the multiplayer. So you really have to co-operate with

> "All the missions can be played by four people co-operatively"



Co-op gameplay: Players can jump in or out any time and, while overall objectives remain the same, more immediate objectives will alter according to how many people are playing. In the sequence shown above, you and your mates are defending Rio de Janeiro from attack – from enemies on the ground and in the air, as shown in the top left-hand corner of your ERS. Note how your plane doesn't remain rigidly positioned in the centre of the screen, giving rise to some luscious camera-trickery.



One mission has you escorting the President's plane, Air Force One.



It's fair to say that an air-combat game has never looked as good as this.

Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

>HAWX continued

your team-mates. Enemy units will come from new directions, and will have to be intercepted in a different way." You can also engage in some pure, no-holds-barred dog-fighting, thanks to the four-on-four Team Deathmatch mode.

Some of the world's most iconic military aircraft can be unlocked: the F-22 Raptor, Eurofighter Typhoon and Sukhoi SU-27 Terminator are the stock planes that you fly, but everything from the slow but deadly A-10A Thunderbolt (aka the Tank-Buster) to the F-117 Nighthawk Stealth fighter are present.

WHAT DOES THAT ADD UP TO?

Perhaps the greatest accolade we can give HAWX is that it's good enough to turn us onto the joys of air-combat – a genre which, we'll admit, we previously approached with trepidation. You don't need to be the sort of person who hangs out at air shows to enjoy it – by the time it requires higher-end flying skills from you, you've been exhaustively trained to meet the challenge, without having to endure any tedious training exercises. The storyline is utterly engrossing and surprisingly believable, too.

Possibly the easiest way to describe HAWX is as a very solid, meaty, intelligently designed proper game, which just happens to put you at the controls of some of the most exotic military aircraft in existence. And that sounds like the sort of game we want to play.

VERDICT

Percentage complete 85%

First impressions 91%

Tom Clancy and Ubisoft redefine air-combat games

ENHANCED VIEW

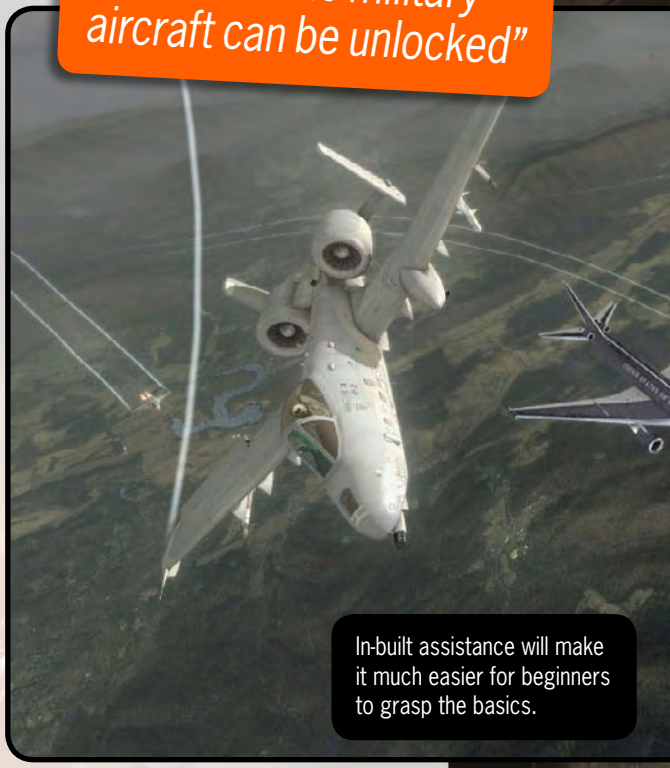


Your plane will be colour-coded to the location your flying in. This camouflage will make it harder for your opponent to spot you.



Whatever you do, don't fire at the President's plane!

"Some of the world's most iconic military aircraft can be unlocked"



In-built assistance will make it much easier for beginners to grasp the basics.

Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

INTERVIEW

The sky's the limit

So how do you make the most playable air-combat game ever?

We caught up with Ubisoft's UK Senior Brand Manager, Phil Brannelly, in order to grill him about HAWX. This is what he said...

HAWX moves the Tom Clancy franchise into the air-combat genre. Do you think that is a risk, as it's probably much more of a niche than existing Tom Clancy genres are?

Phil Brannelly: I think it's a calculated risk. Yes it is niche but don't forget, in Ubisoft Bucharest we had a team that were already producing highly successful air-combat games in the Blazing Angels series, so the marriage of them to the Tom Clancy universe really wasn't such a difficult decision. And our key objective is to grow the air-combat genre beyond anything we have already seen to date.



This is the perfect opportunity to live out those Top Gun fantasies.

What new aspects does HAWX bring to air-combat?

PB: The Tom Clancy universe first and foremost, but the most exciting feature is the assistance on/off mode and the Enhanced Reality System. Also, for the first time ever in the air-combat genre, players will be able to experience the entire solo campaign with seamless jump-in/jump-out four-player co-operative play. In PVP mode, players can challenge each other in intense dog-fighting sessions and find out who's the top gun. Winning players are rewarded with experience points and money to unlock more weapons. Players have the opportunity to take the throttle of over 50 famous aircrafts, and take them over real world locations and cities in photo-realistic environments.

How much input has there been on the project from Tom Clancy and his team?

PB: Last March, Ubisoft



"HAWX is a good mix between simulation and arcade gameplay"

Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

>INTERVIEW continued

concluded an agreement with Tom Clancy to acquire all intellectual property rights to the Tom Clancy name, on a perpetual basis and free of all related future royalty payments, for use in videogames and ancillary products, including related books, movies and merchandising products, meaning Ubisoft has total control of the franchise moving forward in all key areas. To be fair though, there was very little involvement from Tom Clancy himself in the past, or his team, apart from approval of assets that featured the Tom Clancy brand name and green-lighting games in their initial phase.

HAWX developers talk gameplay.



Is assistance on/off the game's key gameplay mechanic, and what does it mean for people playing the game?

PB: Players can ease into their flight missions and gain a level of comfort with the use of the assistance mode. Once employed, players can take full advantage of their technological support through the E.R.S and gain maximum piloting security, particularly if they are novice aviators. ERS is the core of the HAWX flight experience – aircraft interception trajectories, incoming missile detection, anti-crash system, damage assessment, tactical map and weapons trajectory control. ERS also allows players to issue orders to their squadron and other units, making this system as iconic to HAWX as the Cross-Com system is to Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter.

If the situation calls for the player to unleash the full potential of the aircraft, the assistance mode can be switched off and all safety features will be deactivated. This comes with increased risks, but allows the player advanced dog-fighting manoeuvres and stunning third-person views.

To what extent did you have to trade off realism (with, for example, all the existing military planes) and playability, and did the Tom Clancy licence manage to help with that process?

PB: HAWX is a good mix between simulation and arcade gameplay. We use a fully realistic physics engine, tuned in a way that allows every player to be able to

In-built flying aids will ensure that you'll be up and flying high within minutes.



"Our objective is to grow the air-combat genre beyond anything we have seen to date"

This one shouldn't be hard to spot.



Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

>INTERVIEW continued

enjoy it. The focus is on the gameplay depth, not on the gameplay complexity. Even if, at a first glance, our game offers a very accessible piloting experience, we also managed to keep the experience authentic, with huge room for skills improvement over time.

"Players can gain a level of comfort with the use of the assistance mode"

HAWX does not aim to simulate reality, but to build on it and provide an experience that feels accurate, while allowing everybody to perform complex, fun and rewarding manoeuvres. So everybody will have the same realistic weapons but how you use them is another matter...

HAWX was given a bit of extra development time. What was that used for?

PB: Fine tuning, polishing and last-minute features that were not certain to make it. This wasn't really extra development time, but more of a strategic move in terms of release date. We already had EndWar from the Tom Clancy franchise in as a Xmas release, so it made sense to give HAWX its own launch space.

Can we expect downloadable content for the game in future and if so, on which platforms?

PB: The console version of the game will certainly receive downloadable content in future.

What is your personal favourite mission in HAWX?

PB: Rio is a great level, and will be the featured level in the Xbox Live and PlayStation Network demo, which we are planning to release on 12th February, but other levels encompass a variety of missions, including Night Strikes, Close Air Support, Air Supremacy, Escort (of Air Force One, of course!), Rescue and good old dog-fighting.

How important is the Tom Clancy brand to Ubisoft?

PB: Having published games successfully under the Tom Clancy moniker for the past 10 years – including blockbusters that set standards in the videogame industry, such as Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon, and Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six – the future of our industry lies in our capacity to create and develop brands that captivate consumers. That presents a myriad of opportunities for the full spectrum of entertainment, be it videogames, books, movies or other media. The Tom Clancy brand is recognised around the world for offering people exciting videogames, films and books.

In the words of our Chief Executive Officer, Yves Guillemot, "Capitalizing on the strong franchises that we've built over the past 10 years, we will take the Tom Clancy game brand to the next level of the global entertainment industry." I think that means it's important!



We're very much looking forward to four-player dogfights in the skies above Rio.



The level of ground detail is unlike anything you've seen before in an air-combat game.



If in doubt, fire off a couple of missiles...

Tom Clancy's HAWX
HIGH ALTITUDE WARFARE

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THE MODERN AGE

Air Power in the Age of the Jet

In the decades since the end of World War 2, military aeronautics have evolved beyond measure, and now encompass aspects unknown in 1945. Manned flight is still essential but increasingly being usurped by electronic and unmanned warfare. In Korea in 1950, jet aircraft still duelled as in 1940, albeit with modification; increasingly air power was applied by Western nations to offset the numerical superiority of their enemies. Although with the introduction of helicopters to the battlefield, wars became more flexible, the limitations of air power were exposed in Vietnam against a largely hidden enemy prepared to accept high losses for political purposes. Then, and frequently since, the application of overwhelming air power has been severely curtailed for purely political reasons, constraints that did not apply in World War 2, even though, at the same time, unscrupulous and fanatical opponents have deliberately targeted defenceless civilians.

Between 1945 and the 1990s, technology remorselessly advanced but was often combat-proven by proxy in 'small wars' fought by lesser powers but armed by the two main protagonists, the Soviet Union and the United States, which equipped one side or the other. The escalating cost of all this 'hi-tech' type hardware eventually excluded all but the most major players, with the ultimate example being the way in which the mere threat of expensive 'Star Wars' technology helped to undermine the Soviet Union.



The Korean War of 1950 to 1953, saw the last large scale air-to-air clashes by groups of gun-only fighters. The F-86 Sabre and the MiG 15 fought bitter battles over North Korea in a war that ended in deadlock and partition.

Surface-to-air missiles proved an increasing hazard, but AAA continued to be a major threat. The same pattern is seen today in Afghanistan. Fighters continued to duel, but the opportunities for such aerial jousting continue to diminish. Air-to-air missiles, intended to revolutionise air combat, never totally replaced conventional fixed-cannon armaments, as evident in the F-22A, Mauser BK27-equipped Typhoon and the Rafale. With associated Forward-Looking Infra-Red (FLIR), ACS and HUD equipment, the fighter's gun still has its place as it did in the days of the hand-operated Lewis. The heavy bomber continued to decline; it brought North Vietnam to the peace table when used en masse, but was only a temporary reprieve, with the Vulcan attack on Port Stanley's runway in 1982 a defiant swansong.

Occasionally, as in the Falklands, totally outclassed aircraft, such as the Argentine Daggers, with superior pilots could still successfully hold their own, but mainly ECM warfare predominated. The need to avoid detection remained an important facet, with the introduction of the radar-absorbent, low radar cross-section F-111A Nighthawk, YF-22, A-12 and B-2 Stealth-featured warplanes, but even these are not invulnerable, as Serbia proved. The ability to overcome an entire nation's defence capability via 'Rapid Dominance' led to a 'Shock-and-Awe' concept of cruise missiles, laser-guidance bombs and B-61 'Bunker-busters', but was followed in Iraq by the same brutal stalemate on the ground. To counter today's clandestine terror-based conflicts, precision-guided weaponry, including unmanned drones, gives an added technological edge to an often murky, battle scenario. But the current Hellfire-C laser-guided-missile-armed RQ-1 Predator Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) is still a relatively slow, noisy and vulnerable machine that is easily taken out by the most basic weaponry. The enemy also moves with the times, using portable, but deadly, rocket-launching tubes to fire heat-seeking missiles. These Man Portable Air Defense Systems (Manpads), American Stingers or Soviet SA-7s, have already been used against both military and civilian aircraft, locking on to engine exhausts.



Dawn of the jet age. The revolutionary Me 262 changed the face of air warfare in the autumn of 1944. A considerable shock to the Allies when it entered combat, its technologies were much sought after by the Soviets and the West and both went to much effort to gather the relevant data in the ruins of post-war Germany.



Six-Day Air War. In 1967, four Arab states with 810 combat aircraft threatened to destroy Israel. The Israeli Air Force initiated a pre-emptive air strike (Moked) on 5 June. They destroyed 300+ Egyptian military aircraft in two hours. Jordanian, Syrian and Iraqi air forces were also eliminated. At a stroke, all aerial opposition was removed for the loss of twenty aircraft and twelve pilots. Israeli aircraft subsequently concentrated on providing close air support. Here, a MiG 21 explodes in flame, caught in the gunsight of an Israeli fighter.



An F-15 is refuelled in flight by a tanker. Logistical support has played a crucial role in conflicts in the Middle East and Afghanistan in recent years with large forces being deployed at relatively short notice.



The successful use of the Sea Harrier in the Falklands War of 1982 demonstrated the value of the aircraft carrier.



An Israeli F-15. Israel has continued to maintain its superiority in equipment and pilot ability.



An F-15 and a P-51 flying together at an air show. Although generations apart, many of the principles of air combat familiar to the pilots of World War 2, continue to be taught to current-day pilots.

Despite all these innovations, the skilled fighter pilot is still in demand, and today, no less than in 1918 or 1940, flying the world's most challenging aircraft in one of the most skilled, exacting and exciting professions.

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MISSION: VIETNAM AIR WAR

The lessons of fighter combat which were honed in World War 1, hurriedly re-learned during World War 2 and painfully resurrected in Korea, came close to being abandoned during the nuclear warfare obsession in the post-war era. In the USAF, the Tactical Air Command (TAC) mission became totally subservient to the overriding Strategic Air Command (SAC) lobby. The old maxim – 'Fighter aircraft would never again engage in dogfights because of the high speeds involved' – was heard again, as in the late 1930s and 1940s. In the 1960s, Air Combat Manoeuvre (ACM) was pronounced dead, deliberately abandoned for the need for pure interceptor missions which emphasised supersonic speed, electronic-target sensoring and total concentration on missile weaponry.

Moreover, political considerations began to dominate. The Beyond Visual Range (BVR) asset that missiles gave the fighter was, in itself, unacceptable to the cramping new Rules of Engagement (ROE) forced upon the military. Targets had to be 'eyeballed' before being taken out to prevent error, negating most of the advantages of the system! When missile-only armed McDonnell F-4D Phantom IIs subsequently intercepted MiG-17s of the Vietnamese People's Air Force (VPAF) over Vietnam at low altitudes, not only could these old aircraft, with determined pilots, out-turn and out-manoeuvre the Americans, but once all missiles had been expended, the latter proved incapable of destroying the MiGs, even if visually confirmed at point-blank range! Colonel Robin Olds, an early fighter-ace over Vietnam, summed it up concisely: 'A fighter without a gun is like an airplane without a wing.' Some very fast re-thinking had to be done after the resulting outcry when ancient MiG-17s shot down two Mach-2-capable Republic F-105 Thunderchiefs on 4 April 1965.

This led to a hasty 'fix' with cannon pods being added to the Phantom's weaponry, which adversely affected performance. The F-4E variant had an internally-mounted General-Electric Vulcan M-61 20mm cannon with a 6,000rpm rate of fire added, which quickly proved invaluable and was credited with one-third of all Phantom MiG-kills. So frustrated were the group known as the 'Fighter Mafia' at Systems Command policy, that they mounted a vigorous campaign, which later resulted in the F-15 being turned into a very different aircraft than that originally planned. Training was modified from 1968 onward, with the Dissimilar Air Combat Training (DACT), the Navy 'Top Gun' and Air Force 'Red Flag' programmes, reintroducing old skills from scratch.



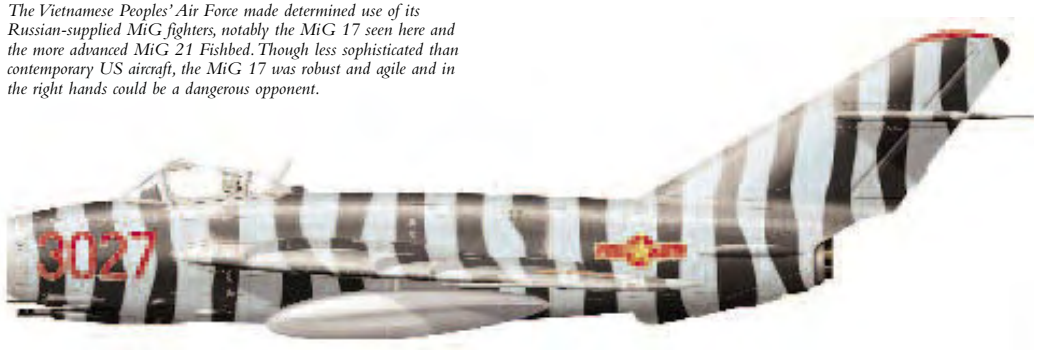
HELICOPTER WAR
The war in Vietnam will always be associated with the extensive use of helicopters. Helicopters gave new mobility to airborne forces, but could be vulnerable to ground fire. Many were turned into 'gunships', heavily armed with guns and rockets to provide suppressive fire in the landing zones or 'LZ'.

The fighter duellists in the Vietnam conflict were McDonnell Douglas F-4D Phantom IIs (145 enemy aircraft destroyed, making 75 per cent of kills); Republic F-105 Thunderchiefs – the 'Thud' – (30 kills) and Vought F-8 Crusaders (19 kills). The enemy was principally some 70 subsonic Mikoyan-Gurevich MiG-17F/PF Frescos, agile and equipped with one N-37 37mm and two NR-23 23mm cannon with Chinese-trained pilots from 1964; and Russian-supplied MiG-19F-13 Farmers from 1965. These were effectively utilised and forced strong counteraction as in 'Operation Bolo', which tricked them into battle with F-4s, destroying 50 per cent of the VPAF's inventory.

American tactics reverted to variations on the old World War 2 'Barrel-Roll', this 'short-cutting' manoeuvre enabling Sidewinder ATAs to be fired from astern the faster enemy, locking on to its engine exhaust. After a few such experiences, the Communists thereafter avoided fighter combat as much as possible, relying instead on AAA and SA-2 SAMs to inflict most American losses. Toward the end, a few Mach-2 capable MiG-21F-13/PF/PFM/MF Fishbeds were used which could out-turn the Phantom II.

A grand total of 192 MiGs were destroyed for the loss of 76 American fighters.

MiG 17
The Vietnamese Peoples' Air Force made determined use of its Russian-supplied MiG fighters, notably the MiG 17 seen here and the more advanced MiG 21 Fishbed. Though less sophisticated than contemporary US aircraft, the MiG 17 was robust and agile and in the right hands could be a dangerous opponent.





MUD-MOVERS
Much of the American air power fielded in Vietnam had been designed with a potential war against the Soviet Bloc in mind. The supersonic nuclear weapons delivery bomber, the F-105 Thunderchief, found itself ranged against conventional targets in North Vietnam, armed with conventional 'iron' bombs.



MiG-KILLERS AND GROUND-POUNDERS
The F4 Phantom, together with the F8 Crusader, were the primary counter to the threat from MiGs over Vietnam. The Phantom was also widely used in the fighter-bomber role in support of ground forces. Here, a Phantom is readied as a bomber, its bombs fitted with fuse extensions to cause detonation above ground level, a sign that the aircraft is assigned to a close air support mission.



MiG 21
Newly arrived MiG 21 Fishbeds brought a modern edge to the defending Vietnamese Peoples' Air Force of North Vietnam.



NEW DESIGNS
Despite early teething troubles, the introduction of the F-111 brought new power to the strike forces available to the USAF. The F-111 could carry the same bomb load as four F-4 Phantoms and its new terrain-following radar meant it could strike deep into North Vietnam with minimal ECM back-up.



FAST LEARNERS
The Vietnamese Peoples' Air Force had to learn fast to have even a chance of interfering with the massive American air effort. Here, a group of pilots listen as a more experienced pilot describes tactics employed in a combat mission.

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MISSILE COMBAT

The introduction of air-to-air missiles changed combat in many ways. Most significantly, the range of engagement opened up hugely; the distances of engagement as seen in World War 2 with machine guns and cannon in a visual field of combat had now evolved to vast distances. Missile combat also introduced the concept of 'fire-and-forget' weapons, allowing the pilot to engage multiple targets. And in the present era, it has now become possible to engage targets beyond visual range.

KNOW YOUR MISSILE

Guided missiles use one of two main methods of guidance: Infrared (IR) homing and radiation homing. Infrared or heat-seeking missiles detect heat from the bandit's engine or parts affected by air friction. Radiation-detecting missiles home in on radar signals reflected from the target; the radar might be carried on the aircraft or, in some cases, the missile itself. Semi-active radars home in on radar emissions from an aircraft's radar. Active missiles like the AMRAAM have their own radar. Most examples of semi-active missiles rely on the aircraft's radar guidance and then transfer to terminal/active guidance when they close on the target. The first generation missiles were IR homing. Their crude sensors could only 'see' the intense heat from a bandit's engine, and as a result they had to be launched from more or less behind the bandit. Also, they could be easily countered by flares, by turning the aircraft to conceal the hot tailpipe or by flying towards the sun to confuse the missile with its own heat signature. The IR missile was the first example of a fire-and-forget weapon. Once locked on to a bandit and fired, the attacking aircraft had no further role in guiding the missile to its target. The next generation of IR missiles had a larger viewing angle, allowing them to target a bandit from a wider arc on their direct '6' line. The most recent designs are 'all-aspect' missiles, sensitive to home in on any parts of a bandit that are heated due to air friction. Radar-homing missiles can detect bandits at longer ranges, but early designs relied on the attacking aircraft to continuously illuminate or 'paint' the bandit with a beam of energy along which the missile could fly to its target. This could put the launching aircraft in danger because its manoeuvrability was severely restricted until the missile hit the bandit. If the attacker was forced to break off, the missile would lose its lock, stop tracking and turn 'ballistic'. In other words, it would fall to earth. The latest generation of radar missiles carry their own transmitters which maintain a lock on the target once launched (the aircraft radar usually provides initial guidance). This produces a formidable long-range fire-and-forget weapon that can only be shaken off by an aircraft equipped with electronic countermeasures (ECM) or by hard manoeuvring with chaff that may break the aircraft radar's lock. Despite this, semi-active systems remain popular as they are considerably less complex to manufacture.



PRIMED AND READY
A fighter pilot performs his final checks before a mission. Part of the check is to ensure that missiles are armed and ready for combat. Here the pilot can be seen removing the protective cover from the missile's sensitive nose sensor.

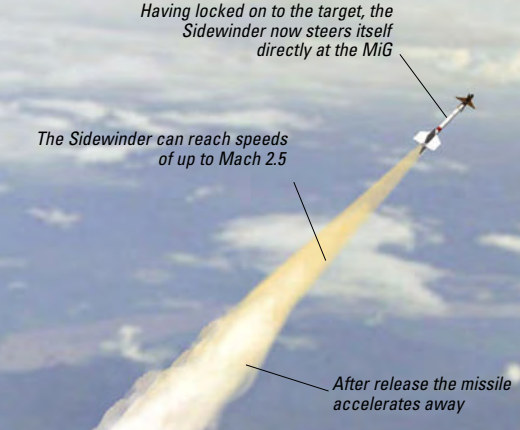


VIETNAM SHOWDOWN

High over Vietnam, an F-4 Phantom launches an AIM-9 Sidewinder at its North Vietnamese opponent. Missiles in Vietnam were not as sophisticated as their modern equivalents, especially the longer-ranged AIM-7 Sparrow. Frustrated Phantom pilots often found their missiles malfunctioning at the critical moment leading to the hurried fitting of a gun aircraft. Modern fighters carry both cannon and missiles, despite the increased power and reliability of contemporary missile models.



MiGS AND ATOLLS
The Russian and Chinese-supplied Vietnamese MiG 17s and MiG 19s were purely gun fighters, but from 1965 the North Vietnamese Air Force began equipping with the MiG 21, a true missile-era fighter. The MiGs were armed with up to four K-13 Atoll, a reverse-engineered copy of the AIM-9 Sidewinder. An example of the AIM-9 had been captured intact during a border clash between Taiwan and China in 1958, the missile having hit a Chinese MiG 17 without exploding and consequently being carried back to its base for examination.





NEW ERA
An AIM-9 Sidewinder missile successfully launches from an F/A-22 Raptor during a launch test, demonstrating its ability to fire an air-to-air missile from an internal weapons bay. In its primary air-to-air role, the F/A-22 will carry six AIM-120C and two AIM-9 missiles.



SIDEWINDER
An F-16 Fighting Falcon pilot fires an AIM-9 missile. The Air Intercept Missile-9X Sidewinder, developed by Raytheon engineers, is a fifth generation AIM-9 missile that is a substantial upgrade to the Sidewinder family featuring an advanced infrared seeker and a higher off-bore sight capability.



OUT WITH A BANG
There is no target like a real target and with the cost of missiles it is imperative that any test-firing be aimed at something as close as possible to the real thing. As a result, the conversion of redundant airframes into target drones has been a way of making sure that practice is as real as it can be beyond a shooting war. This F-102 Delta Dagger was converted to act as a target drone after serving with a National Guard unit in America.

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SAM EVASION

In today's war zones it is often the missile that poses the greatest threat to warplanes. Made in their thousands and widely exported, the SAM can be a potent danger to operations and where enemy air forces have done little to hinder operations in recent wars, they have continued to take their toll. Surface-to-Air missiles were the most feared threat to US aircraft in North Vietnam. The MiGs might come up when the conditions were in their favour, but the SAMs were always there. Knowing what to do when the alarms sound and the sky lights up is critical. Plan ahead and follow the drill. Every second counts.



FLYING TELEPHONE POLES
Caught on the camera of a US warplane over Vietnam, a SAM climbs towards its target. SAMs claimed 196 US aircraft in Vietnam up to 1973, their success making them a priority target in that war and every war since.

The F-15's Electronic Counter Measure pod (ECM) is mounted on the wing. If it is up-to-date, it should counter the SAM's onboard guidance

SAFETY FIRST
SAMs can be launched visually, for example, infrared shoulder-launched SAMs such as the SA-7. They can also be launched ballistically without guidance or with the aid of radar. If you want to avoid detection, avoid flying at high altitude which produces contrails and highlights your aircraft against the silhouette of a cloud. If detected, you can confuse the enemy radar by overloading its system with chaff, fooling it into believing the sky is full of multiple aircraft. Also, intelligence is key – know where the location of enemy installations are prior to your mission as it will give you the opportunity to conduct countermeasures.

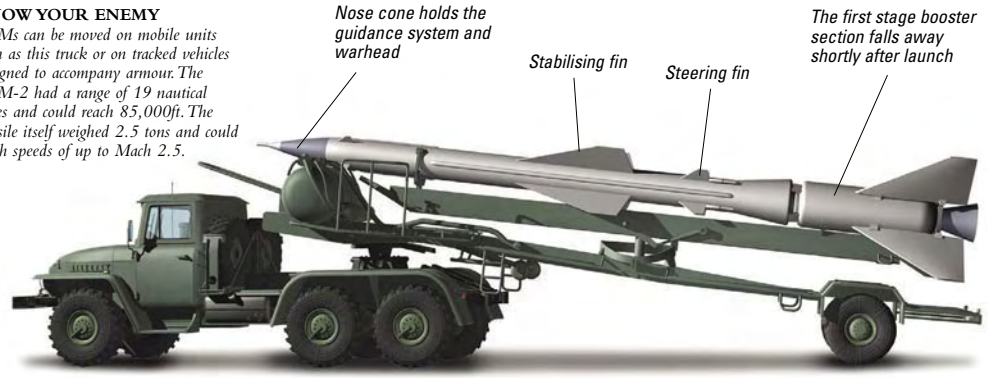
SHOW-STOPPER
An F-15 is witness to the fiery launch of a SAM over a desert target. Staying cool and making the right decision in the next few seconds will be vital if the crew are going to make it home.

There is nothing, absolutely nothing to describe what goes on inside a pilot's guts when he sees a SAM get airborne

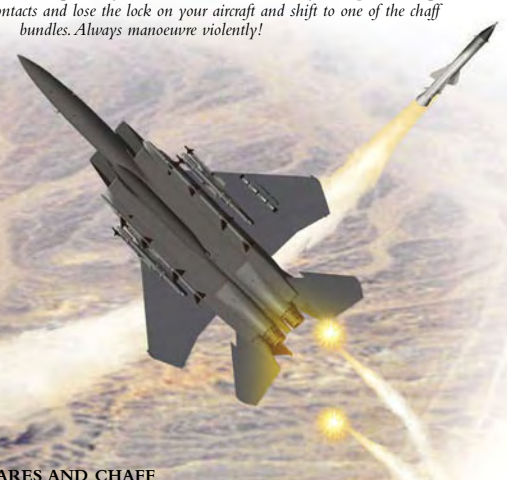
Commander Randy 'Duke' Cunningham, US Navy, 5 kills

The SAM leaves an impossible-to-miss trail, especially at night. If the pilot is alert he will see it, if not then only the aircraft's warning systems can alert him to the threat.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY
SAMs can be moved on mobile units such as this truck or on tracked vehicles designed to accompany armour. The SAM-2 had a range of 19 nautical miles and could reach 85,000ft. The missile itself weighed 2.5 tons and could reach speeds of up to Mach 2.5.



EVASION
Once the radar-guided SAM has launched, a 'lock-on' frequency beam is used to guide the missile(s) to you. When your 'threat warning' equipment notifies that the beam is active, you have to assume that a SAM is in the air and is coming your way. Make a hard turn and pump out two chaff bundles. It is possible for the lock-on beam to be confused by the multiple contacts and lose the lock on your aircraft and shift to one of the chaff bundles. Always manoeuvre violently!



FLARES AND CHAFF
Once a missile is sighted, you can try either to defeat its lock-on via electronics or fly out of its operating range. The use of flares can be important even with radar-guided missiles as some can carry infrared guidance as a back-up. Remember that a missile has a fixed time limit due to its limited fuel capacity. When the missile reaches your location, it may be travelling at a supersonic speed and can pull a substantial amount of Gs. The Aim-9X for example, can literally square a corner.



SAM SITES
Another option is to deliberately attack the SAM sites themselves, thereby making other sites wary of switching on their radars in case they are attacked as well. Fixed sites such as this are more vulnerable to attacks using anti-radiation missiles fired by 'Wild Weasel' aircraft specifically tasked with destroying SAMs.



JAMMING
Trusting on your electronics and radar alone is not advisable; keep your eyes peeled for threats and what you have on hand to detect and jam enemy defences. Jammers are usually contained in a pod on a wing and come in a range of types that can confuse, blanket and distort enemy radars. When the jammer is activated, it fills a portion of the SAM operator's screen with noise. However, the closer you are to the site, the better his chances of 'burning' through the jammer interference and finding you. Note that barrage noise is just one type of jamming as there are others. Here groundcrew prepare an ECM pod for use on a warplane.

HIDE AND SEEK
Of the various ways to defeat a SAM, the most efficient is to avoid detection in the first place. If the SAM battery does not know where you are, it cannot fire at you. Going in low allows the terrain to 'mask' you from radar detection.



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MISSION: A-10s in Desert Storm

The Hawg goes to War

The Fairchild-Republic A-10A Thunderbolt II ground-attack aircraft had a long and complex gestation period before entering service in 1975. By then, the 'Warthog's' role had been refined to 'tank-buster'. The A-10A had inbuilt capacity to absorb punishment and unmatched battlefield loiter capability. Her targets were the thousands of Soviet battle tanks expected to burst through the Fulda Gap into the south German plain if the Cold War went 'hot'.

The A-10 was virtually an airframe built around the mighty General Electric GAU-8/A Avenger Gatling gun, with its seven 7ft 6in long barrels, each with their own breech, firing 30mm PGU-13 high-explosive incendiary or PGU-14 armour-piercing incendiary rounds at 35 rounds per second. Each API round had a 15mm depleted-uranium penetrator in an aluminium base, capable of penetrating the toughest Soviet tank armour. Depleted-uranium strikes inject a jet of flame into the tank's interior, voiding tank and crew totally.

The A-10A also has eight underwing and three under-fuselage pylon stations with capacity for a huge range of Smart ordnance; AGMs, GBUs (AGM-65 Mavericks, GBU-10/12 Paveways, Mk 20 Rockeye or CBU-52 anti-personnel Cluster dispensers and Mk 77 Napalm canisters) plus conventional Mk 80 GP free-falling bombs, infrared countermeasure flares, chaff-dispensers, radar jamming pods and illumination flares, as well as defensive AIM-9L/M Sidewinders, although rarely used. To protect the pilot from incoming threats from SAMs to multiple AAA, the pilot is seated inside a titanium-armoured tub.

The feared Soviet tank breakthrough never materialised, but when the Iraqi dictator, Saddam Hussein, invaded the independent Gulf state of Kuwait on 2 August 1990, the bulk of his 4,000 tanks were Russian-built and supplied T-55, T-62 and T-72s. Eliminating these was the A-10A's prime task during the subsequent Operation Desert Storm.

The USA deployed 155 Warthogs, including six reserve aircraft, from the following units: 23rd TASS (15), 74th TFS (23), 76th TFS (28), 363rd TFS (26), 355th TFS (25), 511th TFS (20 and 706th TFS (18), although not all saw combat. The first mission of 322 sorties flown on 17 January 1991, was by Captain Tony Brown and Lieutenant Bryan Currier of the 74th. So-called 'Hawg' missions built up to three sorties per A-10A per day from Al Jouf. Despite the extreme heat and terrain, the Hawgs maintained a 98.67 per cent serviceability, far higher than any other warplane.

Besides tanks, APVs and the vast Iraqi ammunition dumps, A-10A targets included Scud-B missile mobile launchers, both by day and night with specially-adapted 'Night-Hawgs' using infrared targeting. Targets of opportunity included two enemy helicopters shredded by the GAU-8 at close range. Use of Mk 22 or LUU-2 flares and target-markers aided the destruction of hundreds of hostile targets in these night attacks and the A-10A took zero losses in return.

When the Iraqis sent fifty T-55 tanks into Saudi Arabia on 30 January, the A-10As pulverised them, one pilot, Captain Jack W. Thomas, personally taking out three tanks. The enemy was kept under continual pressure by the 'Push-Flow' method, ensuring a constant A-10A presence was continually reinforced over the battle zone.

A total of 987 Iraqi tanks was confirmed destroyed by the A-10A during Operation Desert Storm, along with 1,106 trucks, 926 artillery pieces, 501 APCs, 249 CPs, 11 Frog missile-launchers, 96 radar installations, 72 bunkers, 28 CPs and 10 enemy aircraft on the ground. An entire Iraqi tank column surrendered to the Hawgs as they circled overhead preparing to attack! During the panic-stricken flight from Kuwait City to Basrah, excellent servicing was achieved on enemy columns despite intense political restrictions on their usage. The A-10As flew only 16.5 per cent of all coalition missions – 8,655 combat sorties – and survived heavy damage. Just six Hawgs were lost in combat, five of them to SAMs, one to AAA.



BATTLEFIELD LOITER POTENTIAL
The great asset of remaining over the combat area for protracted periods was enhanced by the Hawg's ability to use in-flight fuelling to maintain their presence for extended periods, unlike fighter-bomber adaptations which could only run 'in-bash-out' type missions. The refuelling slipway was mounted high up on the nose of the A-10A, just ahead of the pilot's cockpit, for maximum visibility.



PENETRATING POWER!
When a PGU-14 DU penetrator round fired by the General Electric 7-barrelled Avenger Gatling gun penetrates the target's turret through the thickest armour, it lacks power to exit, thus remaining inside and voiding the occupants. Decapitated T-72s littered the battlefield in the wake.

DESERT HAWG - NATO COLOURS!
Designed for Close Air Support work in Vietnam, then converted to act as the 'Trip Wire' against the expected Soviet tank assault on Western Europe during the Cold War, the ungainly but supremely efficient and effective A-10A Hawg was based in England and Germany for many years and practised operating from autobahns and the like. Hastily switched to the baking sand deserts of Saudi Arabia when Iraq invaded Kuwait, many went into action still sporting their European camouflage schemes, but were just as effective. The A-10A also carried Maverick underwing missiles and eliminated other targets like SCUD missile launchers, heavy artillery guns, APCs and trucks – 6,834 targets in all for the loss of six of their number.

The Avenger spewed out a lethal cone of 35 APIDU rounds per second, each capable of gutting any known Soviet battle tank and vapourising its crew. They culled Saddam's Tank Corps during Desert Storm.

Digging in the armour to escape the attentions of the roving coalition aircraft merely rendered them inoperational and tactically impotent and in most cases the efforts proved unable to prevent them falling prey to the aircraft seeking to destroy them

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FUTURE WAR

Where Next for Air Combat?

Front line piloted aircraft are pricing themselves out of existence. At the time of writing, the F-22 Raptor costs over US $105 million per aircraft. Even the other US front line fighters are US $35 to $60 million per machine. Only the richest of nations can afford to manufacture these aircraft and those that cannot, can only afford them in limited numbers or buy older F-16s and Russian aircraft. The newest fighters are approaching the fine line where military assets cost too much to risk in combat, yet the various air forces of the world are just now starting to reap the full benefits of communication, Artificial Intelligence and unmanned aircraft technologies.



A CHANGED WORLD
The introduction of stealth technology has seen a reduction in the number of aircraft required to hit key targets in enemy territory. Less aircrew at risk and greater accuracy of the weapons deployed is a tempting scenario for governments wary of funding and political considerations. To remove the pilot and therefore the human risk implications is an understandable driving force. Stealth bombers such as the F-117 have proven their value in numerous recent engagements.



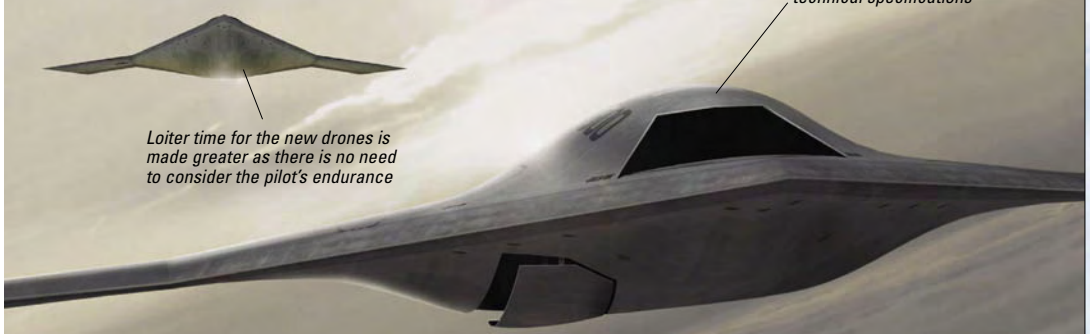
A QUESTION OF EXPENSES
Because new generation fighters as the F-22 Raptor cost over $105 million per aircraft, the pressure on government budgets is growing to new levels. Removing the human fighter pilot and his life supporting technologies could drastically slash the costs as well as allowing the aircraft to be designed with altered streamlining specifications.



NEW POSSIBILITIES
Pilots would be in no danger from training accidents or suffer losses in combat. The expertise of the pilot is safely retained. Depending on how important the destruction of a target is, a combat UAV may be used in a 'Kamikaze' role as a last resort. The combat UAV may be cheaper than a piloted fighter, but they will still be expensive enough that they cannot be casually thrown away. In their combat role they can provide firepower equal to the manned aircraft and remain on station longer. This Predator is preparing for a mission, armed with a range of air-to-ground missiles.

ATTACK OF THE DRONES

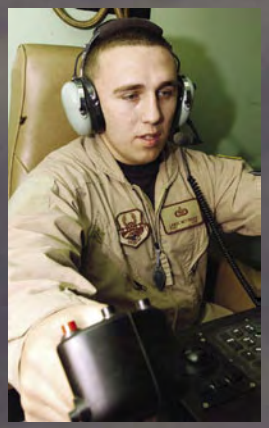
Reconnaissance and surveillance Unmanned Autonomous Vehicles (UAVs) have changed the way battlefields are viewed and fought and there have been the first moves away from a passive role to that of a combat one. So far however, targets have only been restricted to the air-to-ground scenario. Nevertheless, the full combat UAV will not be long coming and both the USAF and US Navy have been performing research along these lines. Such UAVs will be lighter and smaller than human-carrying fighters and cheaper to build and operate. How long before a country starts building these as its national fighter? When this happens, will the traditional fighter pilot fade away?



A BLURRED LINE
Today there are many flight simulators on the market that have very good flight dynamics. The Federal Aviation Authority in the United States even permits student pilots to use Microsoft Flight Simulator for some instrument-only flying time. There are many flight simulators devoted to aerial combat ranging from World War 1 to modern times. The more 'realistic' the flight and weapon models, the more real-world tactics have to be used. There are many sim-only pilots who have more 'flight' time than real fighter pilots. These sim pilots – the best of them – can go head-to-head with real pilots and come out ahead some of the time. While these sim pilots could not step off the street and effectively fly a combat UAV, in all likelihood they could at least attempt a credible mission. They would need training in formal tactics to refine what they already know.



FUTURE ACE?
With the remotely-controlled UAV replacing the piloted fighter, the loop comes full circle. Now the flight simulator and the real life fighter are both working from the armchair rather than the cockpit. In a future war, who knows? Perhaps the best of the simmers will find themselves in the front line!



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