12 HOURS OF XBOX GAMEPLAY VIDEOS INSIDE



XBOX ONE

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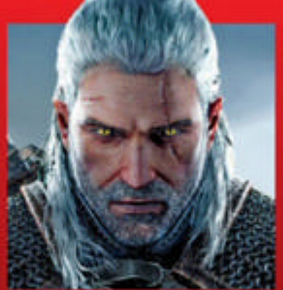
HALO 5 GUARDIANS

- MULTIPLAYER HANDS-ON
- NEW MODES REVEALED
- BETTER THAN DESTINY?

WORLD OF TANKS
HOW A FREE-TO-PLAY TITLE BECAME AN XBOX LIVE HIT



THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE
NEW INFO ON XBOX ONE'S EPIC MMO



THE WITCHER 3 HANDS-ON
IS THIS THE GAME TO BEAT SKYRIM?



BATMAN ARKHAM KNIGHT
A CLOSER LOOK AT THE NEW BATMOBILE

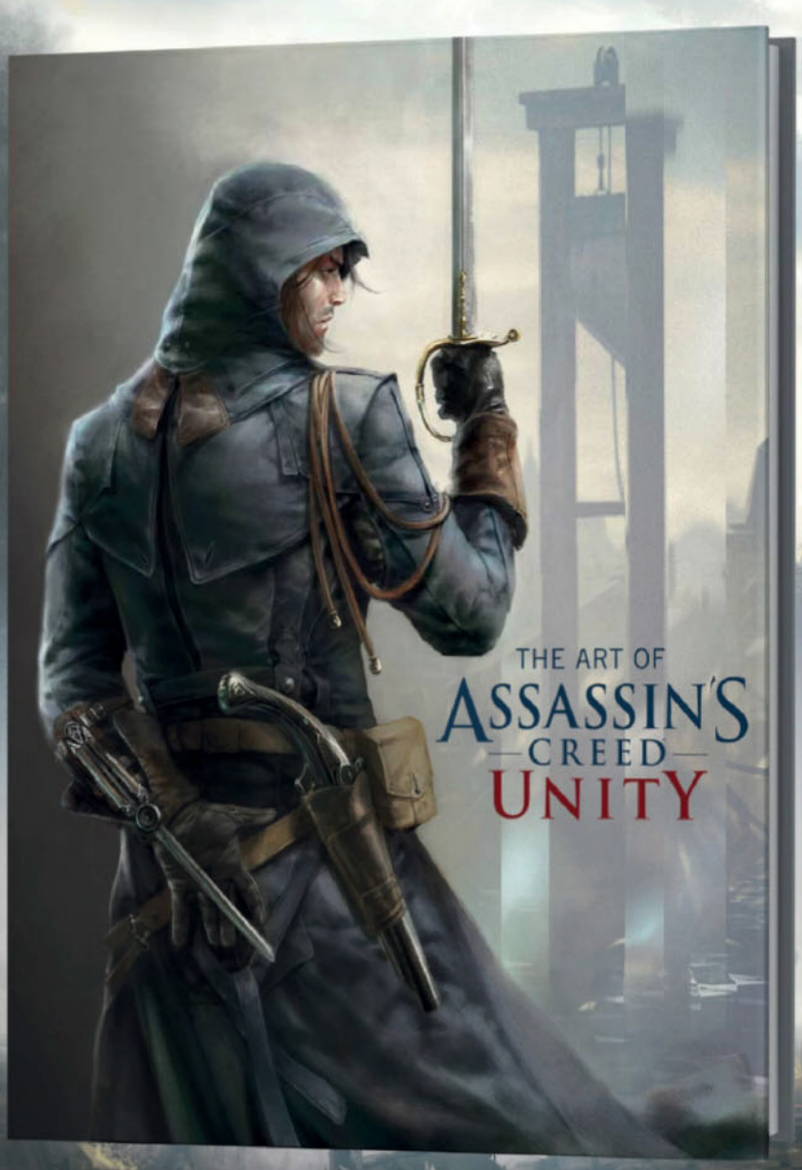


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Welcome to XBOX ONE



Playing *Halo 5: Guardians* makes me feel old. It only seems like yesterday that I was screaming at my TV in frustration as I tried to complete *Halo: Combat Evolved* on Legendary difficulty, or was sticking my friends with plasma grenades in multiplayer. That was over 13 years ago. Jeez. Things have come a long way, but some things never change.

This month we got our hands on *Halo 5: Guardians*, so if *Halo: The Master Chief Collection* whetted your whistle for some new multiplayer action, you're going to want to turn to page 6 right now. Still here? Good, because this issue is still packed full of stuff. With *Project CARS* on the horizon and *Forza 6* just announced by Microsoft, it's a real head-to-head to see who can take pole position (sorry) in the racing game charts.

We've also gone behind the scenes of *Battlefield: Hardline*, had our very first hands-on with *The Witcher 3*, and pulled together our top tips and best accessories to help you get more from your Xbox One. That's not even mentioning the previews and reviews that we've packed in, the guide to eSports, or the top 15 games we want to see revived and rebooted for Xbox One. It's a fully packed issue, and, frankly, I'm just stopping you from enjoying it at this point. Anyway, I've got some more *Halo* to play...

Steve Ashby

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We get our mitts on *Halo 5* and take the new multiplayer for a spin. Is it better than *Destiny*? Turn to page 6 to find out...

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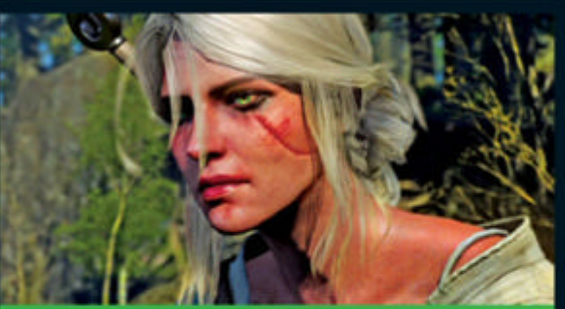
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XBOX ONE

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Words Josh West

COMBAT EVOLVED

THE FIVE WORDS WE'VE BEEN WAITING YEARS TO SAY: WE'VE PLAYED HALO 5: GUARDIANS

Holy god damn, it feels good to caught in the middle of some good old fashioned Red vs Blue action again. To be completely frank, the last three months have been something of galactic dream for constituents of the UNSC. Developer 343 Industries delivered not one, not two, but *five Halo* multiplayer experiences designed to let us headshot, shoulder-smash and gleefully teabag denizens of Xbox Live in the new generation. It doesn't matter if you were naughty or nice in 2014, 343 didn't discriminate when it came to dishing out the greatest present an FPS fan could ever dream of receiving. That's right, Microsoft's seminal series has established itself on Xbox One in the grandest way possible thanks to *Halo: The Master Chief Collection* – a boxset that not only contained over a decade of super hot Master Chief action, but gave our sweaty Spartan palms an opportunity to sample what's to come in the near future. Wait, do Spartans even perspire? Surely their MJOLNIR armour comes equipped with some sort of air-conditioning system that keeps them cool in even the fiercest of battles... wait, we have no time for silly asides. We've played *Halo 5: Guardians*. **X-ONE** had the pleasure of spending over three weeks entrenched in 343's attempt to not only return *Halo* to its core arena-combat principles, but to move the franchise to the forefront of competitive gaming. And we'll be perfectly honest, the wait until November to play more is going to be ruddy ridiculous.



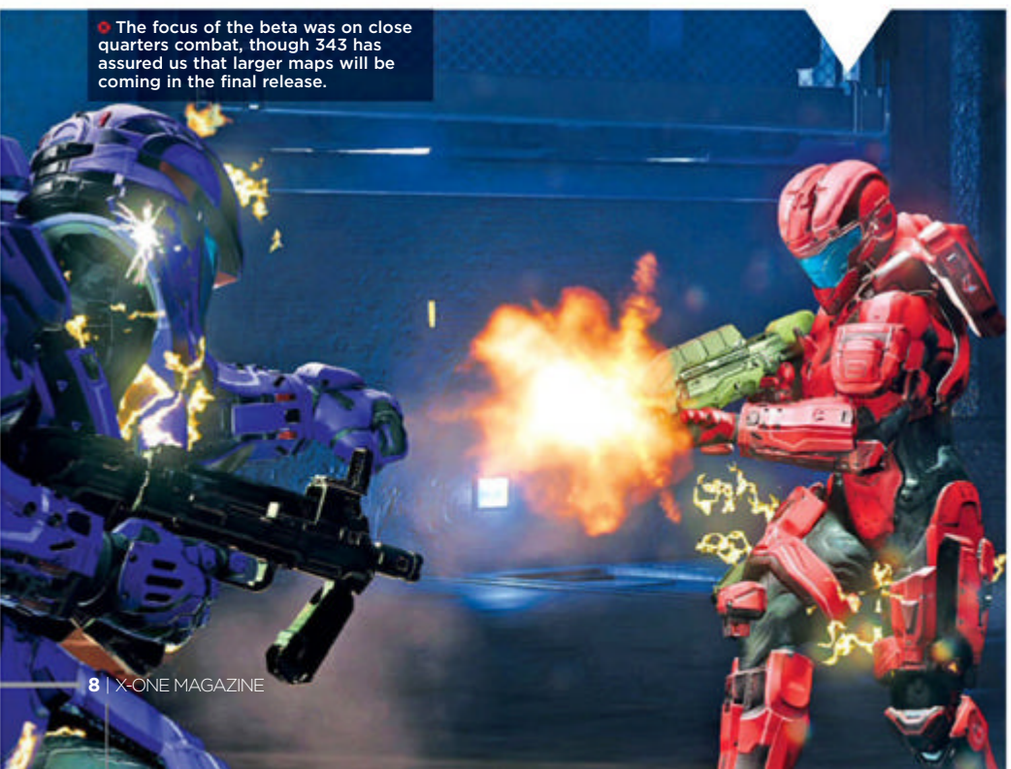
We spent three weeks with *Halo 5: Guardians* and one thing's for certain, 343 is about to bring the series screaming into the next generation.



Assassinations return from *Halo 4*, which give you the opportunity to brutalise any enemy Spartans stupid enough to turn their back on you.



"It's clear that 343 has learned a great deal from redeveloping the early Halo games for The Master Chief Collection"



The focus of the beta was on close quarters combat, though 343 has assured us that larger maps will be coming in the final release.

OUT WITH THE NEW, IN WITH THE OLD

Everything you disliked about *Halo 4*'s multiplayer has been either been altered to the point that it works appropriately within *Halo*'s established rhythmic action, or removed entirely. Loadouts have been cut, Ordnance drops have been eradicated and custom armour abilities are nowhere to be seen. Basically, the core experience has been tweaked and tightened so *Halo* is no longer the embarrassed kid caught dressing up in daddy's well-worn *Modern Warfare* suit. If you liked those things about *Halo 4*, well, we probably weren't ever going to be friends anyway. That said, *Halo* isn't about making friends. It's about stealing your teammate's kill with an insane Battle Rifle no scope headshot; it's ramming the butt of your gun into enemy skulls with a jet-pack assisted thrust; and it is *definitely* all about ground-pounding your rival so hard and fast that the last thing they hear before staring at a respawn screen is you screaming, "Xbox, record that!"

Oh, that's right. You probably haven't done a few of those things before, not in *Halo* at least. *Halo 5: Guardians*' multiplayer might be re-introducing the level playing field that we've been so desperately craving – as it brings fixed Power Weapons, de-scoping and a skill-based ranking system back into the fold – but that doesn't mean we won't have a few new toys to play with too. What would the point of a shift to 60fps be without something introduced to take advantage of all of those extra Xbox One-enhanced frames? Well, you mean aside from the fact that *Halo 5* plays faster, smoother and sleeker than anything that's come before it in the series? Oh, well, how about a host of new Spartan Abilities that ensure you finally feel like the most powerful genetically-enhanced soldier in the galaxy? Yeah, we thought that might get your attention.

Like in *Halo 2*, every player begins a round equipped with the same abilities and weapons, not to mention the same opportunities to grab power weapons and clamber around the maps, as everybody else. The MJOLNIR armour has been upgraded to include aspects of all of the best abilities from past *Halo* games – and, to just briefly touch on the mysterious campaign, believe us: if this is what Chief will have to contend with when he meets with Agent Locke and his team of Spartan Vs, he's going to have a hell of a time surviving. Still, before you get worried about the consequences of chucking a bunch of *Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare*-esque abilities at players and letting them run riot, you'll be happy to learn that it has been meticulously balanced. An ode to the amazing – and long-lost, but not forgotten – *Quake* and *Unreal Tournament* days, if you will.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BALANCE

Infinite sprinting is now the default reaction to clicking in the left analogue stick, but sprinting also restricts your shields from regenerating. Think you can get out of a messy firefight by high-tailing it away and around a corner to safety? Think again, and prepare to die swiftly and unceremoniously from a rogue grenade, melee punch or bullet if you try. In fact, despite *Halo 5* gaining a severe increase in its movement and combat speed, strafing and deft manoeuvrability is more important than ever.

This is assisted by a brand new ability that you *Advanced Warfare* players might be familiar with – pushing the analogue stick in a direction, along with a press of B, will see you utilise a swift jetpack-enhanced 'Spartan Boost' evasive manoeuvre. This is integral for moving in for melee takedowns, quickly jetting behind cover,

TRENDING

The features and additions we loved and loathed, and what we'd like to see 343 tweak before November

HEADSHOT



1 ADS

We never thought we'd say it, but the ability to aim down sights with every weapon is a fantastic addition to the *Halo* franchise. It's brought back mid-to-long ranged fights without sacrificing close quarters combat thanks to the return of de-scoping.



2 SPARTAN SPRINT

Sprinting pretty much sucked in *Halo 4*, we liked how slow and meticulous movement was back in the *Halo 2* days. But FPS games have sped up in a decade, and 343 has managed to balance sprinting perfectly with the shield recharge restriction.



3 MAP DESIGN

Of the seven maps we've played so far – one of which was a remake of *Halo 2*'s Midship – they've all proved to be a lot of fun, and are incredibly well balanced. Still built to encourage strafing, grenade lobbing and melee takedowns.



4 POWER WEAPONS

We are so happy to see fixed power weapons return. The rush towards the sniper rifle, rocket launcher and energy shields is intoxicating, and entire rounds can be dominated with solid communication and holding the power weapons.



5 SPARTAN BOOST

The ability to thruster boost has essentially made *Halo* faster and more chaotic. It has a small recharge time – so you can't spam it. There's a learning curve of knowing when the opportune moment to use it is in a one vs one situation.

BETRAYAL

1 THE SERVERS

Sure, this is still in beta so problems were to be expected. But this hasn't been a great showing for the new dedicated server support. After *The Master Chief Collection*'s launch fiasco, 343 will need to lock the server stability down.



2 SPARTAN SLIDE

While sprinting, you can click in the right analogue stick to slide – supposedly useful for slipping into combat and cover. But it has little tactical advantage, nor did it seem widely used by the player base. We'd like to see this fully reworked.



3 HOVER TIME

While in the air, you can bring your weapon to sights and activate a short jetpack hover. This allows you to get above cover and accurately lay down fire, but you're a sitting duck. Of all the new abilities, this seems like the one to drop.



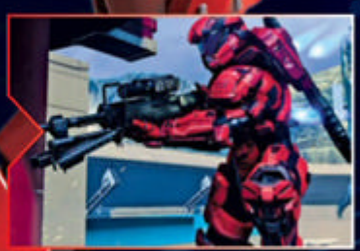
4 RESOLUTION

We aren't total resolution junkies, but this is *Halo* we are talking about. *Halo 5* looked pretty, but the beta was locked at 720p, and didn't give a chance to sample its full next-gen wonder. We need to see it in full 1080p, please, as good as it gets.



5 FRAME-RATE PROBLEMS

Again, being in beta this was surely to be expected, but the frame-rate needs to be solid before launch. While it ran at a smooth 60fps most of the time, there was some noticeable slowdown when eight Spartans hit the screen.



BREAKING DOWN HALO'S NEW GAME MODE

HOW 343 IS BRINGING HALO A COMPETITIVE EDGE



and for managing groups of two Spartans or more. That unlimited sprint we mentioned before can also be combined with other basic abilities for new results: running full pelt at another Spartan and hitting RB unleashes a brutal 'Spartan Charge' – a shoulder barge that, while difficult to aim, will provide an instant kill against anyone foolish enough to not be paying attention to their mini-map.

That's not all either. Your Boost ability can also be used in the air, letting you add a little extra distance on your jumps – especially helpful as you can now clamber over and onto objects in the tightly spaced arena maps. The frustratingly inaccurate 'crouch jump' technique has finally been removed from the meticulous *Halo* movement equation. We mentioned a ground pound attack earlier too, and we weren't kidding. Leap into the air and click in the right analogue stick, a red targeting reticule will briefly appear as you prepare and aim the deadly strike. Seriously, if you hit a Spartan head-on with a ground pound you'll earn a sweet medal and an instant kill for your trouble, but it isn't easy. Not only are players jetting, jumping and sprinting around at speed, but it'll rip away your energy shield on impact – so you better hope the enemy isn't running together in packs. High risk and high reward plays secure victory in *Halo 5*, and that's exactly how it should be.

Halo fans have always seemed to fear change, but the addition of new abilities is seamless. The new traversal options simply offer a wider range of approaches towards enemies and altercations, while the abilities feel like a natural extension of your role and prowess in the established universe. The best thing we can say about the additions and changes in *Halo 5*, is that it doesn't have any noticeable impact on the way you've been enjoying *Halo* competitively – even if you've been entrenched in



"To be honest, it's no surprise that Destiny and Halo 5 share some similarities in the gameplay department"

Red Vs Blue warfare since the LAN session days from back in 2001. There's a surprisingly small learning curve to contend with, and it won't take long for the muscle memory to kick in and take over.

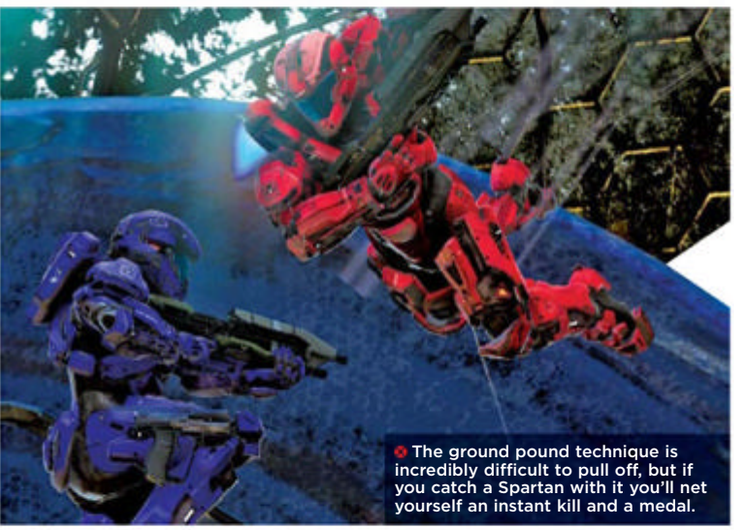
Truth be told, the hardest thing to wrap your head around is returning to *The Master Chief Collection*. *Halo 1* through *3* suddenly feel archaic; relics from a bygone era where you weren't able to sprint, clamber or thruster-boost? What was Bungie even doing back then? *Halo 5* has stripped away the extraneous features of *Halo 4* and, if the beta is a real indication of the final product, has refined 343's original vision – placing a laser focus on balance, competitive play and evolving combat in subtle, yet impactful, ways.

ADDRESSING THE DE-SCOPING CONTROVERSY

What would a 343 game be without a little controversy? One of the biggest complaints that could be levied at *Halo 4* surrounded the studio's decision to remove de-scoping in favour of flinching. In traditional *Halo*, whenever you zoomed-in with a weapon that could be aimed down sights, you would revert instantly back to hip-fire view as soon as you were hit. *Halo 4* replaced this with a *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield* inspired penalty, whereby you could stay in ADS but the player's reticule would randomly shift direction while you were under fire. It sucked. It meant those who were especially proficient with scoped weapons – such as the DMR, Sniper and Battle Rifles – could run unchallenged at a distance. De-scoping ensures that even the most accurate players need to close the distance, and get their strafing while hip-firing technique nailed down.



Despite ADS coming to all weapons in, the focus is still on careful strafing and hip-fire accuracy. You don't need to alter your playstyle drastically.



The ground pound technique is incredibly difficult to pull off, but if you catch a Spartan with it you'll net yourself an instant kill and a medal.

"Every firearm in Halo 5 can be scoped. The SMG, the Battle Rifle and yes, even the Assault Rifle"



It's back – and that's more important than ever. Every firearm in *Halo 5* can be scoped. The SMG, the Battle Rifle and yes, even the Assault Rifle. You can ADS with all of them for the first time in Halo, though it doesn't impact the game as much as you might suspect. This isn't Call Of Duty in a Halo skin, de-scoping ensures firefights are still deadly dances – where foot placement is just as important as how quickly you can pull the trigger. Scoping a weapon simply increases your accuracy at range and reduces bullet spread, but you won't be any less deadly firing from the hip. The seven early beta maps have been designed in such a way as to encourage moving into close-quarters combat, while still giving players the freedom to engage in long-to-mid range Battle Rifle and DMR shootouts. Unlike in previous Halo games, you need constant spatial awareness. You'll always need to be aware of where the four enemy Spartans are, and what power weapons they hold, if you want to claim victory.

BETTER THAN DESTINY?

Things were always going to get a little uncomfortable when Bungie eventually got around to releasing its first post-Halo release. Look, we love a good headline as much as the next news-baiting dweller of the Internet, and we'd love nothing more than to be able to turn around and declare that *Halo 5: Guardians* is Microsoft's middle finger to *Destiny,* but that just isn't the case. The truth is, while *Destiny* does have its roots in Master Chief's core gameplay and mechanics, structurally it is entirely different. Bungie has carved itself a new space in the shooter corner and, despite our reservations with *Destiny,* the studio has done enough to let it stand side-by-side a new *Halo* without cannibalising its old audience.

That isn't to say there aren't a few comparisons to be drawn, especially if you throw the spotlight on *Halo*'s new gameplay manoeuvres and abilities. The Spartan Ground Pound technique, for example, isn't that dissimilar to the super-smash AOE Fist of Havoc attack that all Titan-class Guardians can unleash, especially if you unlock and equip the Death From Above ability. And sure, *Halo 5*'s new melee bash attack has a similar instant kill effect on enemy players in a way that reminds us of the Hunter's Arc Blade special... chalk it up to coincidence, right? Besides, in *Halo 5* you can hover in the air and fire down on unsuspecting enemies without them even – oh, that's right; *Destiny*'s Sun Slinger Warlock class can also unlock the ability to float in the air while aiming down the sights. Damn, what's going on?

To be honest, it's no surprise that *Destiny* and *Halo 5* share some similarities in the gameplay department. After Bungie left for the greener pastures of Activision, 343 set about re-defining *Halo.* For all of *Halo 4*'s problems, the intent was to make the series faster, more fluid and aggressive than before – an element that we can see replicated by Bungie in *Destiny. Destiny* is, after all, superficially based upon Bungie's work on the earlier *Halo* games – it's quicker and more aggressive than anything the studio created at Microsoft – and, as a result, the two almost feel like alternate universe versions of one another.

At its core, *Destiny* is a subtle glimpse into where Bungie could have slowly taken and iterated *Halo* to over the next decade. While 343 – a large contingent of which is ex-Bungie staff that worked at the studio while it wrapped up *Halo: Reach* and prepared for *Destiny* – has taken a small step to altering the core *Halo* formula, Bungie took an almighty leap of faith with *Destiny* and its shared world and multiple classes set-up. Instead

of splitting powers up between classes, ensuring you need to work together in tight fireteams, 343 imbued every Spartan with the most powerful and badass attack in the galaxy. The MJOLNIR armour upgrades means you don't need to decide between Spartan Slide, Boost or Ground Pound – you have access to them all, but your playstyle, skill level and boldness will define whether they appear in your *Halo* combat rotation.

As *Destiny* looks to find its feet as Bungie continues to iterate and build upon the foundations it has laid, *Halo* will look and feel similar in a few notable ways, but this will change. 343 is refining the *Halo* formula, not making it broader – the focus on competitive gameplay, aggressive arena action and delicate strafing action means the comparisons will only dilute as Bungie releases more expansions and refine its broader concept.

WHAT 343 NEEDS TO IMPROVE FROM THE BETA

It's clear that 343 has learned a great deal from redeveloping the early *Halo* games for *The Master Chief Collection*. The focus on four versus four arena combat is compelling. The leap forward in a generation always seems to come with the demands for *more*. Higher player counts, bigger maps, more weapons – you've heard it, and probably said it all, before. We certainly have. But this early showing of *Halo 5: Guardians* has proven that bigger isn't always better. By scaling down battles and by designing maps designed for four versus four combat, *Halo* has regained its sense of speed, danger and pace. Of course, when the full game launches in November 2015, it will also come with larger maps – designed for 16 players, if not maybe more – and will introduce vehicles, more weapons and a host of other unknown quantities. *Halo 5* feels great scaled down, the question now is whether the abilities and ADS will have a detrimental impact on large scaled maps.

> "Halo fans have always seemed to fear change, but the addition of new abilities is seamless"

We also have some small concerns over the state of the new Halo 5 game engine. While this is still in beta and still obviously subject to change, it's clear from what we've seen so far that 343 has simply layered new effects over an old design. While the new lighting model looks set to embarrass the upscaled *Master Chief Collection* version of *Halo 4*, and the space-screen effects – such as the motion blur, lens flare and particle effects – are all pretty bloody lovely, we were hoping the studio was going to deliver a completely fresh engine to blow our minds. Still, the beta was locked at 720p, so we're sure it'll look suitably incredible by the time the 1080p final version arrives later this year.

The release of *Halo 5* is going to be important for Microsoft. With the recent success of *Titanfall*, *Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare* and *Battlefield 4*, the FPS competition has never been fiercer. But after the opportunity to sink a horrible amount of hours into seven incredible maps, we're certain that *Halo 5: Guardians* is going to be a powerful return to form for the defining Xbox franchise.



COMPETITIVE SKILL RANKING

Halo 5: Guardians is reintroducing a competitive skill ranking into the series. While many games opted to just let you track your kill to death ratio to show supremacy, Halo will now give you a fluid level that can rise and fall depending on your performance between games



SILVER III

1 GET RANKED
Each game mode features a separate ranking, and you'll need to battle through ten games to get your initial rank. Once you've got this you'll start fighting against players of an equal skill level.

2 THE TRUE TEST
Like in *Halo 2*, moving up the ranks is a difficult but engaging test of your ability, and breaking into the higher levels will be a real struggle – though it'll be worth your time and effort.

3 ARE YOU PRO?
You'll be able to see now how you fare against the top players in the world, moving between iron, bronze, silver, gold, onyx, semi-pro and pro. Only the top 200 players will ever be in the pro category.



GOLD

EXPERIENCE

You also have a Spartan Ranking that increases with everything you do in Halo 5: Guardians. This will let you unlock new armour and cosmetic items



XP to SR5
1087

XP Total
7413

Match complete	419
Victory	100
Performance	200
TOTAL	719

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GAMING'S BIGGEST FAILS

Which recent games suffered the most from technical issues and glitches, and how did they affect your experience?

Games should bloody *work*. They shouldn't need day one patches and updates, and they definitely shouldn't be released when the developers know they aren't finished. Right?

If that's true, 2014 missed the memo. Never before has so much money been poured into games that were buggy, janky, or just downright broken. *Assassin's Creed Unity*, *Halo: The Master Chief Collection*, *The Crew*, *FIFA 15* – they all suffered from issues so awful or so hilarious that they were featured thousands of times in YouTube videos. So what went wrong? Five years ago, triple-A titles like these would never be released in this sort of state. We could maybe expect it from licensed titles, but if a game like *Halo* was released it would work, and it would be brilliant.

In a world of over-the-air updates, though, things have started to slip. Developers five years ago were all brought up on games that shipped on a cartridge or disc, and if they were broken when they were shipped, they stayed broken for good. There would've been no patch if Sonic kept falling through Green Hill Zone.

The day one patch is like a buffer for developers. The team gets a few more weeks to work on a game, in which time they can get rid of the bugs that should've been removed months before. We're sick of it. We want games that work like they're supposed to. We want games that don't need day one updates. Let's hope devs listen to the complaints of gamers from last year, and seek to fix games before releasing them to the public in 2015. For now, it's time to vent – we asked you which games disappointed you the most due to technical issues and glitches in the last few years, and the response was huge. Here's what you thought.

"For me: #ACUnity Just had it crash which required a restart, then it glitches up after I completed a sequence in under an hour."
@GTAMISSIONS1

"Last time I played MCC I was working on a map and it randomly got deleted. Happened to my friends too."
@XXGHOSTBLADE6XX

"Assassin's Creed had some unique ones: Falling into the bottomless holes."
@LUNATIC BUNNY

"Halo for me because I really wanted to play it but couldn't ever get a proper game going, even co-op was borked."
@CHAOSRIOTZERO

"Only got X1 Xmas day so never experienced any game problems. The problem I dealt with was the servers went down on Xmas day."
@JEFFRIESKIERAN

"Call Of Duty Advanced Warfare, digital installation and started to 're download, due to corruption in mid game'? No thanks."
@FIRENZA275

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"Skylanders Trap Team was full of bugs and glitches but it will never get patched. Activision starting to take the mick now!"
SIMON ELLIOTT

"FIFA 15. Arguably the laughing stock of titles in terms of in-game glitches and bugs."
DANNY WILKINS

"No more rushed games, Microsoft please stop."
@GEN_X_COLD

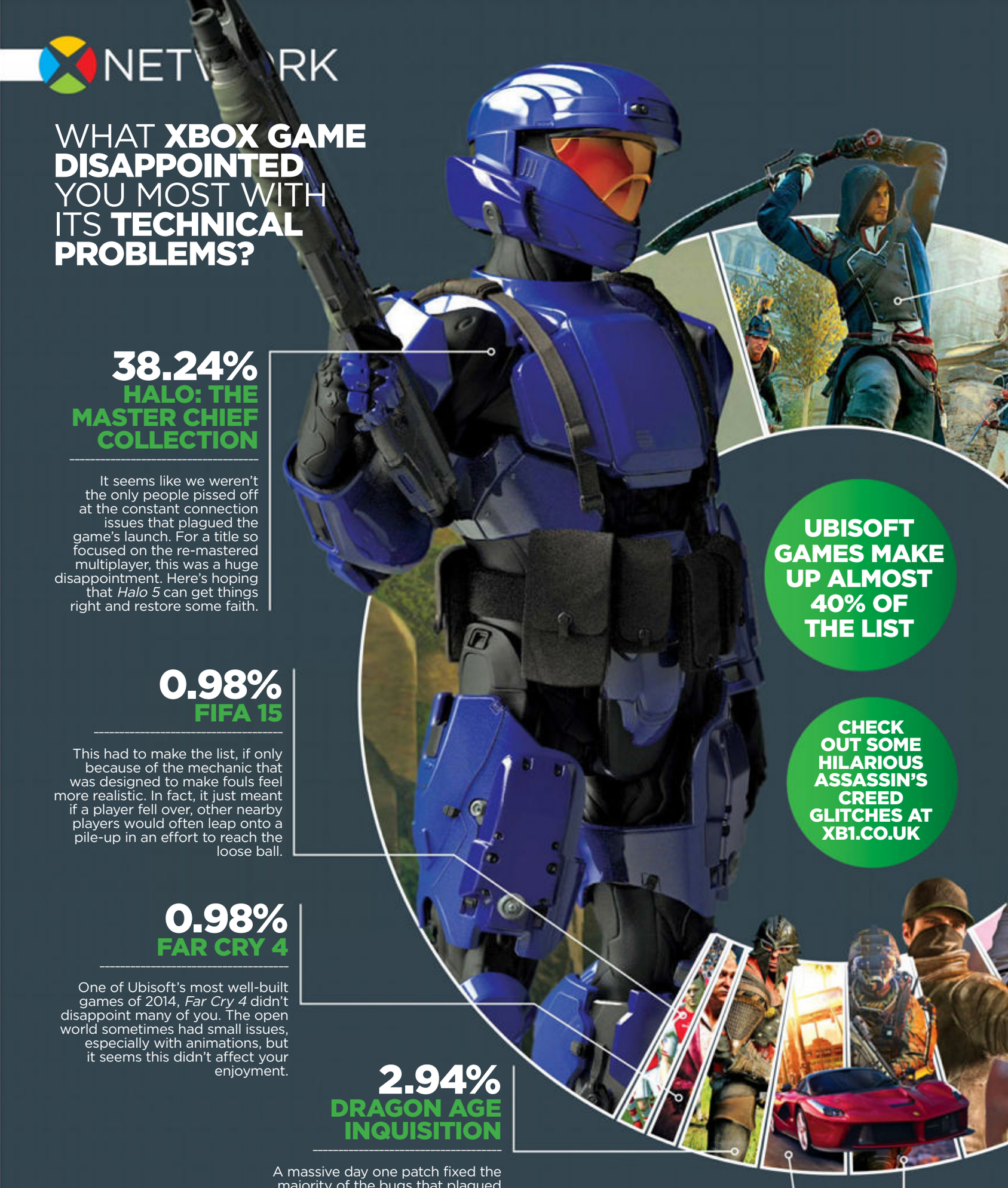
"All @Ubisoft games so far for Xbox One and PS4."
@SFORCESSGT

"Halo – as far as I can see its still shockingly slow to get a game."
@ENERGONMAN

"So it'll be just Ubi on top of the chart there haha."
@RABIDNOODLES

"All of them. I can't join any multiplayer with friends. Even the Halo 5 beta was messing up."
@ZACH_BOOKER318

WHAT **XBOX GAME DISAPPOINTED** YOU MOST WITH ITS **TECHNICAL PROBLEMS?**



38.24%
HALO: THE MASTER CHIEF COLLECTION

It seems like we weren't the only people pissed off at the constant connection issues that plagued the game's launch. For a title so focused on the re-mastered multiplayer, this was a huge disappointment. Here's hoping that *Halo 5* can get things right and restore some faith.

UBISOFT GAMES MAKE UP ALMOST 40% OF THE LIST

0.98%
FIFA 15

This had to make the list, if only because of the mechanic that was designed to make fouls feel more realistic. In fact, it just meant if a player fell over, other nearby players would often leap onto a pile-up in an effort to reach the loose ball.

CHECK OUT SOME HILARIOUS ASSASSIN'S CREED GLITCHES AT XB1.CO.UK

0.98%
FAR CRY 4

One of Ubisoft's most well-built games of 2014, *Far Cry 4* didn't disappoint many of you. The open world sometimes had small issues, especially with animations, but it seems this didn't affect your enjoyment.

2.94%
DRAGON AGE INQUISITION

A massive day one patch fixed the majority of the bugs that plagued the game, but it still seems to have affected your enjoyment.

24.52% ASSASSIN'S CREED UNITY

You guys seem to be sick of the melting faces, missing characters, glitching walls and odd enemy behaviour that has become synonymous with the new-gen *Assassin's Creed* title. We're not surprised.



11.76% BATTLEFIELD 4

When a huge multiplayer title can't connect you to any other players you know something has gone wrong. We suspect a lot of people voting for *BF4* have sat waiting to join a game for at least 20 minutes – getting this right for the upcoming *Battlefield Hardline* is absolutely essential if EA wants it to succeed.

9.80% GTA V

It might be the best-selling game of the last five years, but it's not without its problems. Graphical glitches and pop-in were the small concerns, with *GTA Online* suffering much more from connection issues and errors like cars disappearing from garages, money going missing and characters getting reset.

3.92% COD: ADVANCED WARFARE

The latest *Call Of Duty* was actually surprisingly solid – we very rarely experienced connection problems when we played. Still, if you sell as many copies as *COD* usually does, you're bound to get some users having issues.

3.92% WATCH DOGS

Ubi's early new-gen title was going to be The Next Big Thing™, but with a bland main character and technical problems plaguing the game, it was something of a disappointment. Still, the problems were only minor compared to some of the issues the rest of the games in this list suffered from.

2.94% THE CREW

Honestly, with a game this full of game-ruining bugs and glitches, we're astonished it didn't rank higher in your most disappointing games. Our guess is that perhaps you just haven't bothered to go out and pick up a copy after such bad review scores.

WHAT WAS THE **BIGGEST PROBLEM** YOU HAD WITH YOUR **'BROKEN' XBOX GAMES?**



SEVEN HOURS OF EXCLUSIVE GAMEPLAY ANALYSIS

The videos, trailers and live gameplay sessions we've been giving you on our on social networks



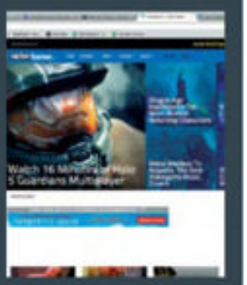
50 HARDEST ACHIEVEMENTS
We list the toughest Achievements for Xbox 360 and Xbox One, then show you how you can get them.



KILL THE BOSS
The greatest battles in gaming history collected into a stunning special edition digital magazine.

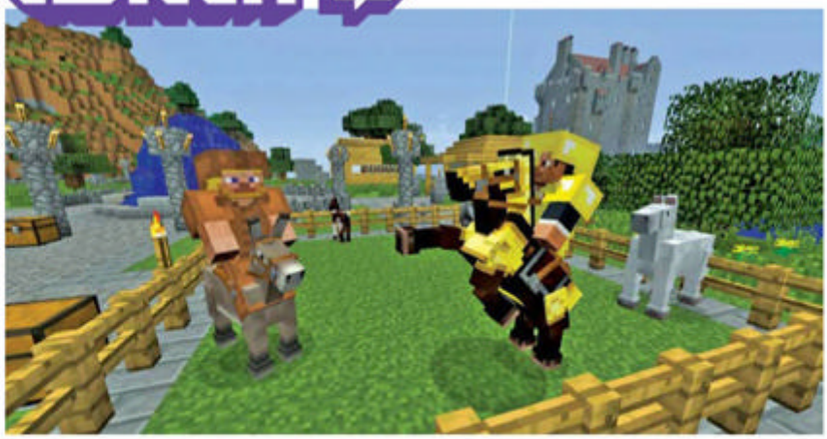


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MINECRAFT
We dive back into the Xbox One version to get ready for Telltale's story mode

TUNE IN TO WATCH US PLAY THE LATEST GAMES LIVE EACH WEEK



DYING LIGHT



BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE

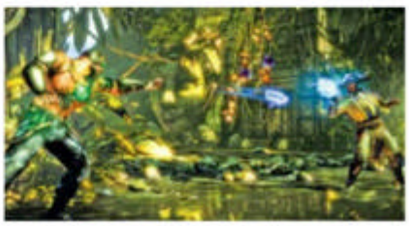
XONE WEBSITE www.XB1.co.uk



METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN
Introducing the all-new *Metal Gear Online* multiplayer mode



FORZA MOTORSPORT 6



MORTAL KOMBAT X



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT



PROJECT CARS

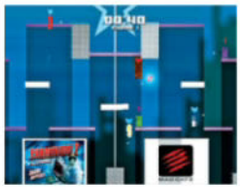
YouTube www.youtube.com/XONEmag



HALO 5: GUARDIANS
Our first impressions of the all-new *Halo* multiplayer


LIFE IS STRANGE


THE ESCAPISTS


#IDARB


BATMAN ARKHAM KNIGHT



EVOLVE
Giant monsters vs puny humans – it's on


SMITE


THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE


GTA ONLINE

5 THINGS WE LEARNT THIS ISSUE

The Xbox knowledge we picked up at **XB1.co.uk**

1



HOLOLENS WILL CHANGE GAMES

Microsoft demoed a new virtual reality headset at a press event, showing off a build of *Minecraft* that let you build a 3D world in your front room.

2



TESO IS OUT 9 JUNE

Finally we have a solid release date for *TESO*, which will be launching in June without any subscription fees. Buy the game and you can play without paying any more.

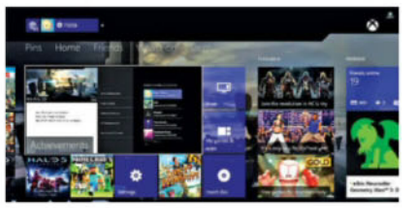
3



FORZA 6 IS COMING

We got our first taste of *Forza Motorsport 6*, with an announcement at the North American International Auto Show confirming the new title is on its way.

4



THE NEW DASHBOARD

Another month, another Xbox update – this time we're getting transparent tiles for the dashboard, so you can see more of your beautiful custom backgrounds.

5



MICROSOFT SOLD 6.6 MILLION XBOXES

Xbox sales shot up over the Christmas period, and for two consecutive months the Xbox One was the best-selling console in North America. Impressive stuff.

» Get your daily fix of Xbox One news, opinion and more at **www.XB1.co.uk**



After the delays and betas, we can only hope that EA has helped Visceral establish a stable base of servers.

DID YOU KNOW? Want to play *Battlefield Hardline* early? EA Access members will be able to sample it a few days before it officially launches

BATTLEFIELD HARDLINE

Visceral's next-gen shooter saunters into the firing line

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EA

DEVELOPER
Visceral Games

CREDITS
Dead Space [2008]
Dead Space 2 [2011]
Dead Space 3 [2013]

PLAYERS
1-64

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
Yes

RELEASE DATE
20 March

WEBSITE
battlefield.com/hardline

TWITTER
@Battlefield

ALSO ON
XBOX 360

Battlefield Hardline will be making its way to Xbox 360, but expect the experience to be considerably downsized.

XBOX ONE

Honestly, after the launch of *Battlefield 4* we didn't think we'd be so eager to jump back into another entry to the long-running franchise. But after our recent hands-on session with the single and multiplayer portions of the upcoming cops and robbers *Battlefield Hardline*, we couldn't be more excited. *Battlefield* finally feels fresh again; Visceral has completely revised the familiar formula to create something chaotic, fresh and immensely entertaining.

Of course, there's always the worry that the problems of the past will continue to haunt *Battlefield*, regardless of who is in the developer seat. Will persisting through the single-player campaign feel akin to a self-inflicted capital punishment? Will the servers be so frustratingly unstable that they will propel EA to be once again awarded the 'worst company in America' badge of dishonour? After multiple betas, a delay and a hellton of QA, we can only hope that Visceral is prepared for the eye of gamer scorn to fix upon its latest project; Sauron has nothing on those that dwell on the subreddits of this plane of existence.

X-ONE took the time to speak with Ian Millham, creative director of *Battlefield Hardline* and discuss the inception of the project, the challenges Visceral has faced throughout development and how the legacy of *Dead Space* has helped create two of the biggest shooters in the industry.

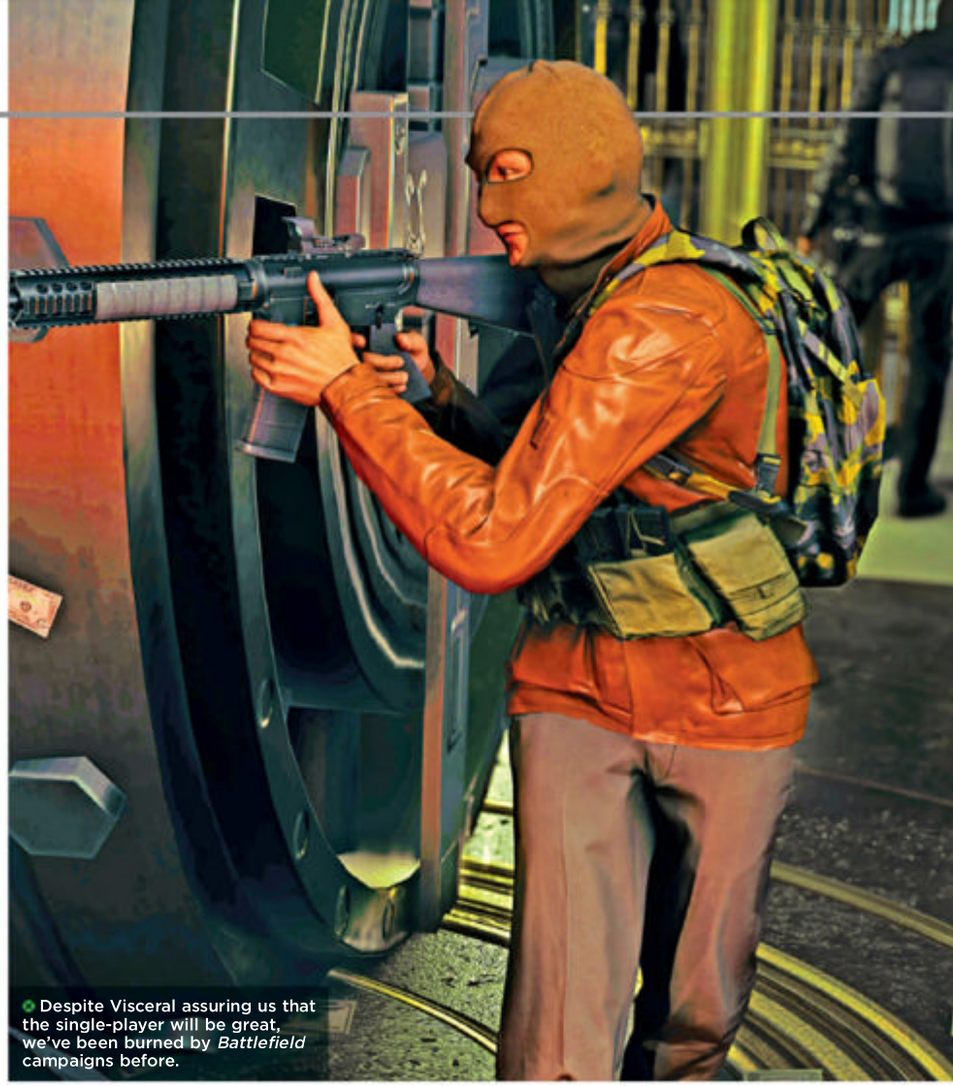
Has it been difficult to make the *Battlefield* franchise grounded in reality?
When we were first talking with the DICE guys, we wanted to establish that and they were totally open to it. It kind of felt like the right move; the idea was not to annualise the franchise in this invisible 'every Fall we come out with a *Battlefield* and they are all the same' type of plan. I think what's so awesome about the foundation that *Battlefield* has

built up is that those mechanics can really adapt to a lot of different things. So yeah, from the beginning we were like 'We don't just want to do another numbered one, DICE is doing a pretty fine job of that already'. So we were interested in doing a fresh take on it, and I hope people enjoy it.

Why did you settle on the cops and robbers hook for *Hardline*?
What I loved about it is that it's instantly relatable. People get it, there's not a lot of world building or explaining to do. The fantasies are very common; it felt like the game modes and experiences just immediately suggested themselves. If you joined our team and you wrote a list: 'In a cops and robbers game, here's what I wanna do: if I'm a robber, I want to rob banks. If I'm a cop, I want to go 'WOOP' with the lights [laughs]', your list would probably mirror very closely what we already wrote. So it felt like we had a real target to hit with it, and I think we have. The music, the characters, the whole thing, it felt different and fresh compared to what's out there.

You see a certain industry trend, I think, going towards sci-fi, as people have done a lot of modern military. But we had just spent seven years making sci-fi games, and we just felt like it was time for something different. And here was a whole spot that we felt could be cool and fresh in the marketplace.

Was the plan to always approach TV writers and directors to help with the story and scripting of *Battlefield Hardline*?
Our goal is not to make a realistic police simulator. It never was and it still isn't. We wanted to feel much more like a quality crime drama. One of the things that we love about this setting is that there's no need for a lot of plot and world building. There's no crazy ex-Russian general trying to use a nuclear weapon... we don't have to create a silly excuse to create World War III. The characters are the story. They already know each other and they are already opposed from each other, and all you need is good characters and cracking dialogue to get somewhere cool with it. So we went to the people know that stuff the best.



Despite Visceral assuring us that the single-player will be great, we've been burned by *Battlefield* campaigns before.

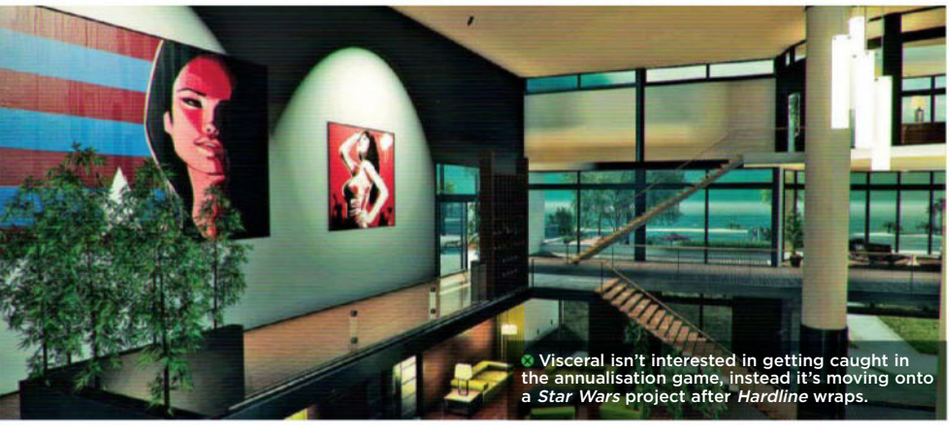
> **"You cannot take it more seriously than we are... People have a right to a game that works"**



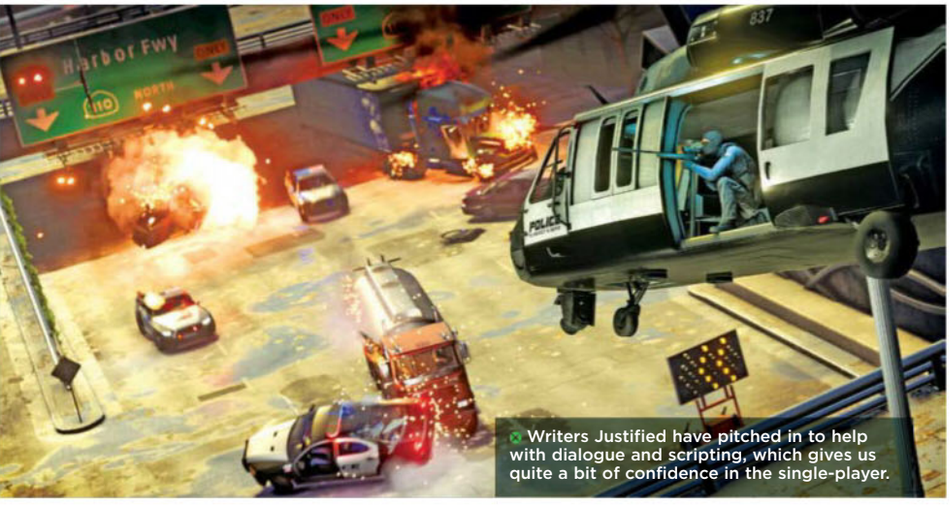
Car chase game mode Hotwire is proving to be a wonderful addition to *Battlefield Hardline*. It's ridiculously fun.

Speaking of creating a silly reason to depict World War III, a lot of your *Dead Space* colleagues joined Sledgehammer to create *Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare*. Is there a rivalry there?
Game teams are big, and a lot of talented people have joined both studios since Glen and Mike formed Sledgehammer, and they have been doing an awesome job with what they're doing and I think we've been doing a pretty good job with what we're doing. We're all still in touch... if there is any rivalry there, it's very friendly. It's good for games, it is good for the industry, and it's good for each other if we are both are successful. Actually, it's been really fun to have that *Dead Space* team grow and flourish into these two big, big projects... I think we all learned a philosophy of making games and a hunger for quality that has served us all since then.





Visceral isn't interested in getting caught in the annualisation game, instead it's moving onto a *Star Wars* project after *Hardline* wraps.



Writers Justified have pitched in to help with dialogue and scripting, which gives us quite a bit of confidence in the single-player.

I think anybody that plays them can see how different the games are, and how complementary and all that kind stuff. We're cheering for them and I'd hope they are cheering for us.

Was it an easy decision to move away from *Battlefield*'s traditional scripted campaign model?
Our feeling [is] that people, especially on the single-player side, are expecting more freedom, emergence and player agency. There's nothing necessarily wrong with a linear rollercoaster that's super polished. I've enjoyed those before too, but you can only make it so polished. We really wanted to push, especially on the single-player side, for more freedom, more tactics and player choice. Something a little more interesting, and I think we've really made a leap forward for *Battlefield* in that regard.

Is it difficult promoting a game about American cops in light of the recent problems in Ferguson?
We haven't necessarily toned down anything as a reaction to that specifically. I think the issues of police use of force and militarisation are real, and have certainly come to the forefront more than we knew or expected when we started this project. But, I think when people see and play what we are doing the differences will be clear. Our police are also jumping off of skyscrapers with parachutes, and *yes*, using *wildly* excessive force to stop bank robbers. But that's because we are doing a cops and robbers fantasy world, not an accurate police simulator.

Will *Battlefield Hardline*, you know, work, at launch?
Games these days are spectacularly complicated – we're talking about five different platforms, a simultaneous launch, seven game modes, a billion vehicles, and weapons, gadgets and possibilities – so it would be naïve not to expect turbulence. But, we are doing everything in our power, and I mean *everything in our power*, to have a stable and smooth launch experience for everybody. That includes multiple betas, hours of testing every day, a lot of certification, a lot of attention, and many, many, many people's jobs are nothing but performance and stability. You cannot take it more seriously than we are taking it; we are making every effort. Because people have a right to a game that works.

JOSH WEST

HOW'S IT LOOKING? *Battlefield 4* may have been a mis-step, but *Hardline* is genuinely looking like it could be the most enjoyable franchise instalment since *Bad Company 2*. Get excited.

COMMUNITY REACTION

"Simple as. "I never more will get a *Battlefield* again.""
@Igriao

"EA will get no more of my money for what is essentially a reskinned *BF4* with different plot"
@GiZmo_NiSmo

"It looks pretty awesome, can't wait! This is exactly what *Battlefield* needed."
Luke Searle

"*Battlefield 4* sucked, but I like Visceral. Why bother holding grudges against a publisher, it's childish and makes literally no sense."
Paul Mallin

THE WITCHER 3 WILD HUNT

It's time to ramble on

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Bandai Namco Games

DEVELOPER
CD Projekt RED

CREDITS
The Witcher [2007]
The Witcher 2: Assassins Of Kings [2011]

PLAYERS
1

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
19 May

WEBSITE
thewitcher.com/witcher3

TWITTER
@WitcherGame

XBOX ONE

Despite our best efforts, somewhere along the way we booked a one-way ticket to Rivia and boarded the hype train. It was easy enough to do; after all, everything about CD Projekt RED's perpetually delayed *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* screams 'next-gen starts here'. It is without question the biggest open-world to ever be presented in modern RPG history. It's been awarded so many 'most anticipated' medals that Geralt's armour is beginning to look ostentatious instead of intimidating, and, let's be honest for a second, the raw passion seeping from the pores of CD Projekt RED is electrifying.

But *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* has been kept behind closed doors for so long now we were beginning to wonder whether it was simply a mirage; a hallucination born from the litany of mediocre open-worlds we've trudged through in the last 15 months. That said, we've finally had a chance to get our hands all over Geralt's third and final adventure, and you better believe us when we tell you that something special comes our way, folks.

Unlike *The Witcher* games of the past, *Wild Hunt* takes place in an open-world. If we're talking sheer size alone, well, it's pretty bloody impressive. You've no doubt already heard the '20 per cent bigger than *Skyrim*' statistic thrown around in passing at one time or another, but it turns out that was a gross underestimation. Cobble together just two of *The Witcher 3*'s areas – Novigrad and Skellige – and you're looking at a playing area of 52 square miles of land to romp around, underwater ecosystems to explore and a metric hell ton of monsters to introduce to your silver blade. To put that in perspective of RPG-to-beat *Skyrim*, Bethesda's entire map barely covered 16 square miles. It's adorable that a game from 2011 is still considered king of a heavily-populated genre, though we've got a feeling Geralt is just about ready to start an uprising.

DID YOU KNOW? When CD Projekt RED is done with *The Witcher*, it will be focusing on *Cyberpunk 2077*, which looks similarly awesome



Don't worry, the switch to an open-world isn't going to affect the narrative. *The Witcher* is still resolutely focused on story.

The open-world is incredibly impressive in its size and scope, it's also immensely detailed. We're constantly surprised by what the studio is delivering.

MORE OF THIS, PLEASE

THERE'S A BIG WORLD OUT THERE



Our big take-away from getting hands-on is just how impressive the attention to detail is in the open world. It's littered with things to do, people to meet and monsters to kill. CD Projekt RED has also filled it with 22 years of *Witcher* lore to hunt down and lose yourself in.

"You better believe us when we tell you that something special comes our way, folks"

Then again, a gigantic open world is nothing but a hollow shell without content to populate it. One of the biggest concerns raised following the announcement that *The Witcher 3* would be embracing an open-world setting was that players would yearn for a return to the structured, and immensely well-paced, walled garden areas of previous games. We collectively feared CD Projekt RED had bitten off more than it could chew as it attempted its first Xbox One game – that the narrative would be lost under our attempt to develop orienteering skills to make it through the dense forests, untamed seas and rolling green hills. Thankfully our chaperoned hands-on session has done an admirable job of relieving us of our fears.

"It has certainly been a big learning experience, that's for sure," confides level designer Miles Tost to **X-ONE**. "Bringing this series into a full open-world setting has always been the ultimate goal, though – that's what the studio has always wanted... but previously the team has been hindered by available technology or budget.

"There has been a lot of experimentation to get to the point we're at now with *The Witcher 3*. Obviously, we didn't just show up on day one of development and nail the entire thing right away. It was a constant process of iteration and trying new things, but I think we've now come to a point where we've achieved a really good balance and we're where we want to be."

Tost doesn't need to tell us about the "constant process of iteration"; it feels like we've been waiting for *The Witcher 3* forever. Honestly, there was a time where it felt like it might never come out. But with the renewed 19 May release date in sight, content is locked down and the studio is off hunting bugs. The results are clear; while our playtime was restricted to the prologue area – an opening section designed to give new and existing players an opportunity to grasp the core concepts of monster hunting and interrogating the environments for quests and lore – it's immensely polished and well considered.





Combat is slicker and faster than ever before in *The Witcher 3*. Geralt finally feels like a formidable master of the world.



Not much is known about Ciri, *The Witcher 3*'s other playable character, though she will play an integral role to the story.



CD Projekt RED is now hard at work crushing bugs; the studio is eager to avoid the shortcomings of recent open-world action games.

"Wild Hunt takes place in an open-world. If we're talking sheer size alone, well, it's pretty bloody impressive"

"We don't want to build an open-world game, and then withhold that entire open world at the start just because you're a 'beginner', or because past *Witcher* games haven't been open world," Tost explains. "The open world is really good at serving our goal of teaching players the ways of the game and encouraging them to engage with it. You're very much encouraged from the start to venture away from the obvious routes and see for yourself what is happening away from the main quests."

Admittedly, the early side-quests we encountered outside of our main quest – which had us tracking and dispatching an almighty griffin with Geralt's sweet blend of swordplay and magical abilities – felt somewhat shallow, we can't deny that it feels great to play. Sure, helping wounded or stranded NPCs, playing pub games and searching for collectibles dotted around the large region aren't the most exciting side-quests in the entire world, but we're just happy to finally play an RPG that places as much emphasis and importance on polish as it does size and scope.

That's the take-away from our first hands-on session with *The Witcher 3*: it feels like a true next generation experience. It looks stunning, the particle effects and animations in particular make the combat feel slicker and more visceral than we ever anticipated. The freedom to explore and track monsters as you please is liberating. CD Projekt RED has always argued that *The Witcher* games are about *being* Geralt; about seeing a world through the eyes of an outcast and getting lost in the danger and excitement of slaying ridiculous monsters. As the studio explores new ways to tell stories, introduces new gameplay mechanics and delivers some of the best graphics we've seen on the Xbox One to date – seemingly without sacrificing performance – we've got a feeling that *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt* might just set a new benchmark for the RPG genre.

JOSH WEST

HOW'S IT LOOKING? Our time with *The Witcher 3* was glorious, and the wait until May is going to be excruciatingly painful. As long as CD Project RED can keep the bugs in check, this will be a must-play for everyone – not just RPG enthusiasts.

HIGH FIVE

1 SAY HELLO TO GERALT
Geralt of Rivia is a master 'Witcher' a magically-infused monster hunter destined to clear the land of evil.

2 SAY GOODBYE TO GERALT
CD Projekt RED has already confirmed that *The Witcher 3* will be Geralt's final adventure; perhaps the Wild Hunt will finally claim him.

3 THE WILD HUNT?
It's a band of murderous villains hellbent on tearing the life and soul out of any hint of civilisation that it encounters.

4 NEW CHARACTERS
For the first time in *The Witcher* series you'll be able to play as a second character, Ciri. Not much is known about this mysterious monster hunter yet however.

5 FREE DLC
Plus, once you're done with the main story, CD Projekt RED will be delivering 16 free DLC packs. One every week from launch, which is awesome.

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
DEVELOPER
Rocksteady
CREDITS
Chaos: Riot Response [2006] Batman: Arkham Asylum [2009] Batman: Arkham City [2011]
PLAYERS
1
KINECT?
No
SMARTGLASS?
No
RELEASE DATE
2 July
WEBSITE
batmanarkhamknight.com
TWITTER
@BatmanArkham

BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

Is Rocksteady still on the road to success?

XBOX ONE

We have faith in Rocksteady. It's only made two major console games in the last six years, but considering they were two of the best titles of the previous generation, you can understand why we trust the studio. And the more we see of *Batman: Arkham Knight*, the more we believe in the British developer.

But there's a lot changing in the last game of the series. We're still in control of the Dark Knight, and we'll still be swooping around the gargoyle-ridden rooftops of Gotham, but the power of the Xbox One has allowed the development team to add plenty of new features, the biggest of which is the Batmobile. Recently, Rocksteady has shed light on exactly what Bats' new transportation will be able to do; we already knew about the driving sections of the game, but we now we've seen the Batmobile in battle. As enemy tanks swarm around you, the wheels rotate, allowing you to dodge directly left or right without having to mirror, signal and do a three point turn. You can even turn on the spot if reversing is a little too taxing.

But it has plenty more tricks up its sleeve, too: a 60mm cannon and Vulcan gun on top of the vehicle allow you to disintegrate enemies in seconds, while electric shockers on the wheels and rubber bullets will incapacitate enemies without removing their heads. These tools are all accessible when the Batmobile is in Battle mode, with Pursuit mode offering an afterburner for extra speed, and a grappling hook than can pull down walls and barriers blocking your path. The rear containment unit has plenty of space for a weekly shop, or just a couple of rescued hostages that need a lift.

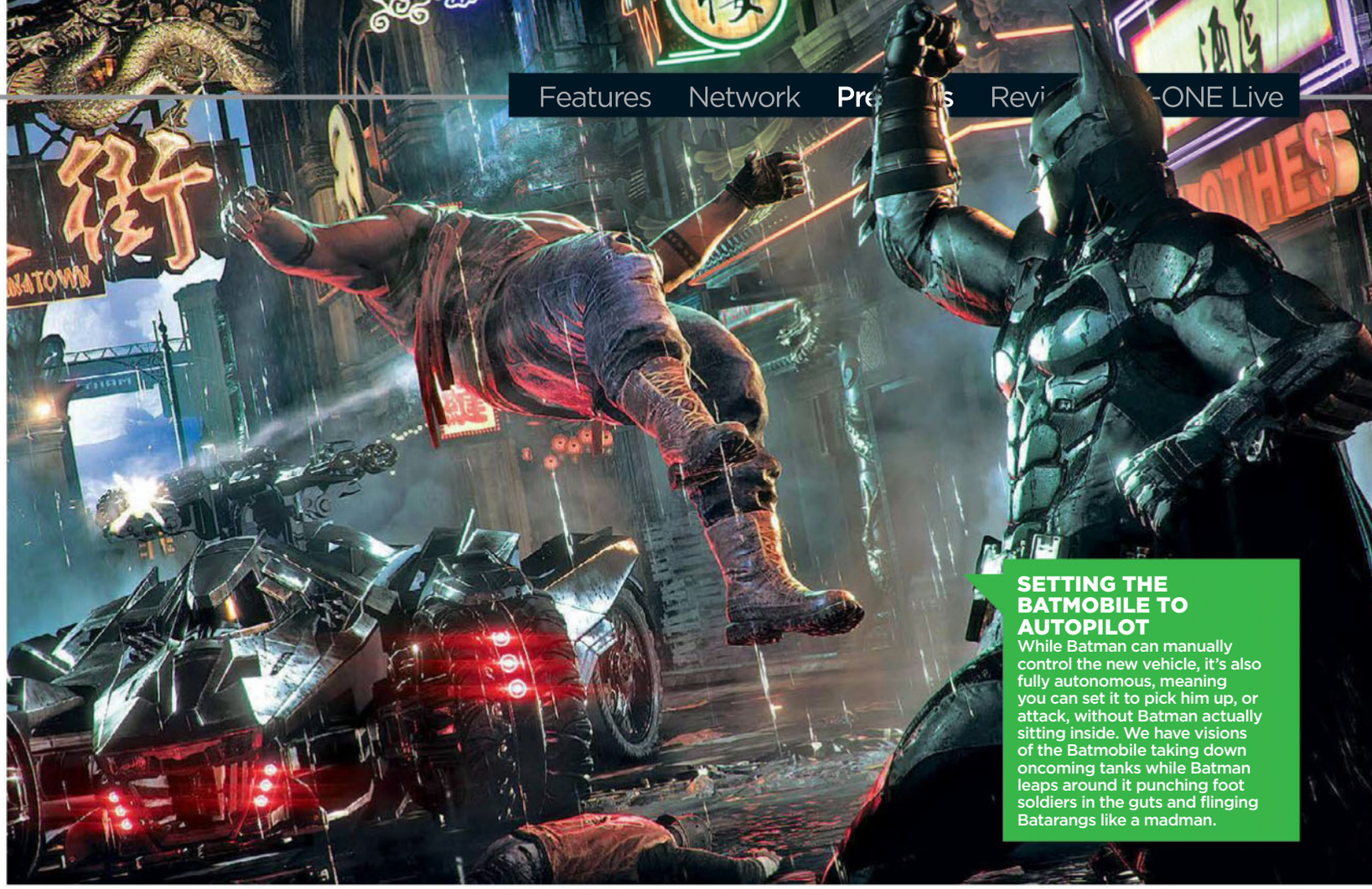
From what we've seen, though, the Batmobile is going to be used for a lot more than simply getting Batman from A to B. It seems as though many of the missions are designed specifically around the new hardware – in the level we've seen, Batman enters the Ace Chemical plant by jumping a gap in the Batmobile, destroying the attacking tanks, then leaping out of the car to beat up some baddies. The car combat looks tremendously fun, and if Rocksteady can get the balance right, it's onto a winner.

STEPHEN ASHBY

HOW'S IT LOOKING? From what we've seen, it's looking fantastic. We have no reason to doubt Rocksteady, but we aren't getting *too* overexcited just yet...



YOU SPIN ME RIGHT ROUND
Each wheel of the Batmobile can rotate a full 360 degrees, giving you huge manoeuvrability during fire fights with enemies and tanks. When driving Batman's new vehicle, you can dodge left and right to avoid enemy fire before unleashing the 60mm cannon, or rubber bullets, to take down the bad guys surrounding you.



SETTING THE BATMOBILE TO AUTOPILOT

While Batman can manually control the new vehicle, it's also fully autonomous, meaning you can set it to pick him up, or attack, without Batman actually sitting inside. We have visions of the Batmobile taking down oncoming tanks while Batman leaps around it punching foot soldiers in the guts and flinging Batarangs like a madman.

DID YOU KNOW? The game is set a year after the events of *Arkham City*, with Bruce Wayne at the height of his abilities as the Batman



OH WHAT A FEELING, DRIVIN' ON THE CEILING

That's right, when you enter Gotham's sewer system in the Batmobile you'll be able to drive up the walls and onto the ceiling. At the moment it looks like these sewer sections will mostly be Riddler challenges, but we're hoping we'll be able to use it to zip across town without taking to the streets.

HIGH FIVE

1 PLAY AS HARLEY
Previous games have allowed you to play as the Joker or Robin, but in *Arkham Knight* Harley Quinn gets four levels of her own as DLC.

2 THE RIDDLER RETURNS
The Riddler is back, looking like a crazy car mechanic, and setting Batman new challenges that involve the Batmobile.

3 VILLAINS UNITE
Arkham Knight sees Batman's biggest enemies united in a bid to bring down the Dark Knight – you'll see some familiar faces returning.

4 ROCKSTEADY STARTED SMALL
When Rocksteady started development of *Arkham Asylum*, it had only 40 employees, which went up to 60 by the end of development.

5 THIS IS THE END?
There are plenty of rumours surrounding the end of the series, with many, including us, wondering whether it will end with the death of Bruce Wayne.

In certain locations you can view moments frozen in time – the holographic recreations will help you find hidden items, food and secrets of the city.

DID YOU KNOW? In *The Division*, your character's smartwatch is essential – it offers access to the in-game map, plus upgrades and the HUD

SECOND SCREEN

OVERWATCH

Friends that drop into the game using the tablet app can provide huge tactical advantages, including the ability to heal team mates, tag enemies, and even direct airstrikes during heavy firefights.



Incredible lighting and particle effects could be achieved simply because the development team weren't simultaneously creating a previous-generation version.

THE DIVISION

That concerned feeling is becoming infectious...

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Ubisoft
DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Massive
CREDITS
Assassin's Creed Revelations [2011]
Far Cry 3 [2012]
Just Dance Now [2014]
PLAYERS
1-5
KINECT?
No
SMARTGLASS?
Yes
RELEASE DATE
Q3 2015
WEBSITE
www.tomclancy-thedivision.ubi.com/game/en-gb/home
TWITTER
@TheDivisionGame

XBOX ONE

Ubisoft is remaining tight-lipped about its next big open-world shooter. The Division has only been shown a handful of times since its original announcement at E3 last year, and while our last glimpse was encouraging, there are plenty of questions to answer after the shambles of Ubi's recent releases.

Still, the story has huge potential. So far, we know that the game takes place three weeks after Black Friday in New York. On that day, a deadly virus was released, and in the days that followed, society collapse and chaos reigned. The president has invoked Presidential Directive 51, activating *The Division* – a top-secret unit of self-supporting tactical agents.

At first, your goal will simply be survival. Your character has 72 hours of supplies, including food, water and gear. You'll need to scavenge as much as possible to get by, picking up anything you can find that will be useful. Eating and drinking will play a part as you progress, so ensuring you have enough to get you through the day is essential. Air will be a commodity, too – certain areas of the city will be so virulent that you won't be able to enter until you have upgraded your gas mask. It seems that this will be Ubi's way of controlling exactly where you can and can't go as the game progresses, which is no bad thing. We'd much prefer this approach to the invisible walls of *Far Cry 4*, even if it does mean dying of a horrible virus.

The biggest question, perhaps, is the online aspect of the game. In early live demos, it was clear that the aim was to have you and your squad facing off against other online players as you came across them randomly in the huge game world. Think a post-apocalyptic *GTA Online* and you're most of the way there. But there have been few mentions of the online components recently, leading many to wonder how much they will feature in the finished game.

> "Certain areas of the city will be so virulent that you won't be able to enter until you have upgraded your gas mask"

Of course, it wouldn't be the end of the world (ha!) if you only had NPCs to fight – as *Far Cry 4* has proved, co-op gameplay in an open world is still great fun, even if there are only two people involved. Just think about how much fun you could have with four friends. Two and a half times the fun, that's how much.

Perhaps the bigger question is the release date. *The Division* is slated for a Q3 release date, and as we slip into 2015, we're starting to wonder why we haven't seen more. Of course we may see a huge leap forward when the game is inevitably shown at E3 this year, but even then the game represents a huge challenge to the studio if it wants to meet fan expectations. Would you rather have a rushed version of game this year, or a stunning, platform-defining game after a six-month delay? After the launches of *Assassin's Creed: Unity* and *The Crew*, we think we speak for everyone when we say the latter.

But based on what we've seen, *The Division* has huge potential. If the online is as good as the early demos suggest, the graphics are as slick as Ubisoft are promising and the frame rate doesn't fall apart in every gunfight, it could be one of the best games of the generation. That's a lot of ifs, but even after *AC: Unity*, *The Crew* and *Watch Dogs*, we still believe in Ubisoft. They can't let us down *again*... right?

STEPHEN ASHBY

HOW'S IT LOOKING? Every month brings more questions about *The Division*. If all the pieces come together it will be stunning, but we'll believe it when we see it.

MORE OF THIS, PLEASE

MASSIVE ONLINE MULTIPLAYER



We've seen it in promo videos and demos, but that was a long time ago now. If all goes to plan, it seems that you and your team will be exploring the streets to find supplies, and may stumble across other squads doing the same, leading to epic fire-fights over the best kit.



Your friends can drop in to provide overwatch from drones or helicopters by using the associated tablet app, viewing fire fights live on the touch screen.

THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE: TAMRIEL UNLIMITED

Xbox One's first MMO is so close we can almost taste it

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Bethesda Softworks

DEVELOPER
Zenimax Online Studios

CREDITS
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind [2002]
The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion [2006]
The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim [2011]

PLAYERS
1-MMO

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
9 June

WEBSITE
www.elderscrollsonline.com/en-gb

TWITTER
@TESOnline

XBOX ONE

When you delay a game for over a year – April 2014 to June 2015 – you absolutely need to come back with a bang to get people's attention all over again. Honestly, Bethesda didn't quite hit that high note with the re-announcement of *The Elder Scrolls Online* – now with the added subtitle of *Tamriel Unlimited*. But the re-reveal did tell us that, as of the game's Xbox One release, the game's monthly subscription fee will be dropped – which is, let's be fair, a good move on the studio's part.

You will still be able to pay a subscription if you so choose, and doing so will give players access to premium extras, benefits and free in-game money to buy nice pointy hats with. It's certainly not life-changing, but it does seem like a very smart move by Bethesda – console MMOs have often struggled in the past, and it wouldn't be a surprise in the slightest if this was down to the fact that players didn't like having to pay a monthly sub on top of their Xbox Live membership. Now, it's just a matter of choice.

As for the game itself? Well, it's seen a lukewarm reception on PC since its launch last year, though things have slowly been turning around as the months – and the updates – have rolled on. While the building blocks are there, it's a vast open fantasy world and players have the freedom to explore and make their way as they see fit, there are complaints of the whole thing feeling a bit empty. Hopefully when *Tamriel Unlimited* hits the Xbox One – with all the PCs updates ready-installed – things will be more positive, because this absolutely is the kind of game we'd be happy to get lost in for hundreds of hours.

IAN DRANSFIELD

HOW'S IT LOOKING? It's come a long way since its mediocre PC launch, but there's still some way to go before *Tamriel Unlimited* becomes a truly essential Xbox One title.

> "The subscription fee will be dropped, which is a good move on the studio's part"



THE CONSOLE TOUCH
One good thing about the big wait between PC and Xbox One releases of *TESO* is that the version we get on our consoles will be up to date, and far more accomplished a title than that which was originally released on PC.

WE DON'T WANT NO SUBS
It's not free to play, as some initially thought, but *Tamriel Unlimited* won't require a subscription to play. This is a great move, as subs-based MMOs on console have always struggled to gain a foothold.



A WHOLE NEW WORLD
That title's a bit of a lie – it's not a whole new world, but the areas you get to explore throughout Tamriel are new for *TESO*. While some are walled off – for future expansions, of course – you do have a vast amount to explore and get lost in.

SLICE AND DICE
Combat in *TESO* doesn't differ a huge amount from its offline brethren, meaning it *does* differ from other MMOs. It's instant, tactile, impactful – much more like an action-RPG than in something like *World Of Warcraft*. That's... better, right?

DIFFERENT CLASS
Choosing between Dragon Knight, Templar, Sorcerer and Nightblade – as well as a number of different races – *TESO* actually offers a more open approach to class-building. Just like the offline series, you can get good at something by just doing it a lot.

FANTASY LIFE
With *Tamriel Unlimited* taking in a host of different regions from *Elder Scrolls* lore, it means we will be introduced once more to the weirder and more wonderful elements of the series' fantasy. This is great, as the last two games featured rather vanilla settings.

PREVIOUSLY

1 THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM
Despite slightly buggy brawls with dragons, *Skyrim* was one of the 360's finest RPGs.

2 THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND
Its looks have faded, but the sheer size and imagination in *Morrowind* live on.

DID YOU KNOW? There has been an *Elder Scrolls* title released on every single Xbox to date, taking *TESO* into account

It's your call, but we'd probably recommend you attempt to make this guy a friend rather than an enemy...

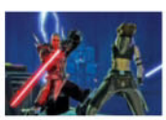
DID YOU KNOW? Stoic Studio is formed of ex-BioWare employees, founders Arnie Jorgensen and John Watson both played key roles on *SWTOR*

A new race of centaurs has been revealed as part of *The Banner Saga 2*'s announcement. Be they friend or foe?

PREVIOUSLY



1 THE BANNER SAGA: FACTIONS
Free-to-play, multiplayer-only and exclusive to PC, *Factions* alters and delivers *The Banner Saga*'s combat for online play.



2 STAR WARS: THE OLD REPUBLIC
Not from Stoic, but the studio's founding members occupied senior roles in the development of BioWare's MMORPG.

THE BANNER SAGA 2

Stoic Studio faces up to the difficult second album conundrum...

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Versus Evil
DEVELOPER
Stoic Studio
CREDITS
Star Wars: The Old Republic [2011]
The Banner Saga: Factions [2013]
The Banner Saga [2014]
PLAYERS
1
KINECT?
TBA
SMARTGLASS?
TBA
RELEASE DATE
TBA 2015
WEBSITE
www.stoicstudio.com
TWITTER
@stoicstudio

XBOX ONE

Trilogies are both terrific and terrible. On the one hand, you begin your consumption of them safe in the knowledge that there's more to come; on the other, if parts two and/or three fail to live up to the first then the enjoyment turns distinctly sour. You feel let down. Cheated. *The Banner Saga 2* is facing down this precise problem.

The original is generally recognised as a turn-based strategy gem – in no small part thanks to a heart-wrenching system of narrative-impacting decisions you must make over its campaign. If part two fails to at least match that same quality then the planned trilogy will be forever tarnished; good work spoilt by a sloppy second act. This middle portion not only has to carry the weight of the preceding part's plot, it has to set us up for what will hopefully be a finale of tension and drama. No pressure, then, guys.

Developer Stoic Studio is giving little away in terms of plot revelations and gameplay alterations at present, but what has been shown hints very much at an 'If it ain't broke' approach. The trademark hand-drawn visuals return, as does the promise of tough decisions that will test your guile and compassion as leader of a nomadic band of warriors. The continuation of tone and theme comes as little surprise given the studio's prior comments regarding the desire to make all three games feel like a single, cohesive epic – without any pauses along the way. Given that narrative events in game one can play out differently between individual player's games, it will be interesting to see whether or not your prior decisions come back to roost here.

> "The studio desires to make all three games feel like a single, cohesive epic"

Of course, such a continuation is impossible to achieve at present as far as the Xbox One edition of *The Banner Saga 2* is concerned – the original is currently exclusive to PC. Our fingers remain crossed that a re-release of *The Banner Saga* shows up on Microsoft's console prior to this new release, not only to facilitate the possibility of narrative persistence but also to open the game up to a wider audience. By way of reference, a port of the original has been confirmed for PS4 and PlayStation Vita. This being the first time the series is coming to consoles also raises the question of how interaction is going to be handled. With the turn-based combat playing out on a rigid grid of squares, the entire system fits the PC's mouse/keyboard combination perfectly.

The nature of a turn-based game means that you have a long time to plan and make your moves – removing the majority of the traditional difficulties associated with playing strategy games using a control pad. There's little question, however, that the mere idea of replacing a mouse with an analogue stick feels innately awkward. Too many PC games have failed to capture the imagination of a console audience thanks to precisely this, and it would be an almighty shame to see another added to the cemetery of failed ports. Although, no matter what the state of the controls, it's essential that this sequel delivers expanded combat diversity, as that was one of the few flaws of the first instalment.

We've seen at least one new faction entering the fray, although we don't know whether or not they're friend or foe at this point. Balancing new additions against well-loved ideas is a key challenge for Stoic to overcome, not least in a medium where fandom can quickly and frequently morph into aggressive fanaticism. There might be more questions than answers regarding The Banner Saga 2 at this point, but it's worth keeping an eye and ear out for the truth to reveal itself. The quality of the first game demands it.

JOHN ROBERTSON

HOW'S IT LOOKING? What little has been shown leads us to believe that this second act is following very much the approach of the first. In this instance, that's no bad thing.

MORE OF THIS, PLEASE

TOUGH DECISIONS GAVE THE ORIGINAL A SENSE OF GRAVITAS. WE WANT MORE OF IT.



Trying to second-guess yourself in the first game was a near-impossible task, your best intentions often leading to death and/or disaster for one or more of your troops. This lack of definite insight into future events made the experience genuinely dramatic and foreboding, giving its narrative an impact that is so rare in this genre.



If this image is anything to go by, we'll be spending just as much time ogling the visuals as we will actually playing the game.



"Creatures' limbs are angled and stylised and the environment has sudden cliff-face drops into seemingly endless abysses"

The struggle against darkness involves taking on bizarre flying whales, seemingly made up of a force of energy. As you do.

DID YOU KNOW? Fenix Fire's founder Brian McRae's first break was working on Blizzard's *StarCraft Ghost*

SOURCE

A world unlike any other – if you can find it

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Fenix Fire

DEVELOPER
In-house

CREDITS
Gates Of Osiris [2015]

PLAYERS
1

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
Q3 2015

WEBSITE
www.fenixfire.com

TWITTER
@FenixFireGames

XBOX ONE

So you're a small games developer and have an ambitious idea for a full-on console and PC project. To succeed, you need a good name. One that gets your brand out there. One that makes you easy to find online. Unfortunately, Fenix Fire is developing perhaps the single least googleable game in existence: *Source*. Only by already knowing and including the dev's name will you find this game before search page 20. And it's a damn shame, because *Source* looks positively fascinating.

Eschewing the normal gameplay of recent action adventure games, most of which go for immediate human relatability or a certain level of base realism even in outrageous situations, *Source* goes for the purely fantastical. Placing us in a surreal, almost Dalíesque world of flying whale-like beings and electrically-charged flowers, you take on the role of a firefly as it flutters around, collecting energy from its environment and other animals, while saving this strange world from being consumed by a mysterious force of darkness. It also forgoes a typical villain or enemy format, as Brian McRae, *Source*'s head developer, explains: "We're building an entire ecosystem in *Source*, each [creature] with its own set of behaviours and place among the others. Some creatures will be helpful, some harmful, some will be predators, some will be prey. There won't be the typical enemy type, you simply exist in this alternate dimension filled with strange creatures."



Source may become the first action adventure game where pollination is a central part of the player's tasks.

Source, which has used a blend of Kickstarter, personal savings, and private investment to fund itself, is described by McRae as, "all about *Metroid* and *Shadow Of The Colossus* for me, although lots of people see *Ecco The Dolphin*, *Journey*, *Descent* and even *Geometry Wars*." This is good news for those sick of countless action games, or those who prefer a more alternative gaming experience.

The graphics look a little boxy and jumpy at first, but the more you see of it, the more you realise that it all ties together. Creatures' limbs are angled and stylised, the environment has sudden cliff-face drops into seemingly endless abysses and living things look somewhere between cartoonish biology and scifi-esque mechanics. Relatability will be an issue, as the protagonist is a mute firefly in an alternate dimension, surrounded by monstrously angled alien creatures inside a cubist's wet dream. But get the gameplay and internal narrative right, and it could very well become a world to lose yourself in for days on end. So the only thing Fenix Fire really needs to do now if it wants to build up a proper fan base is get creative in finding ways to outscore the competition on Google. Good luck, guys.

ERLINGUR EINARSSON

HOW'S IT LOOKING? It's early days, but the strange, ethereal and fantastical world of *Source* holds some promise, even though concepts of gameplay and internal narrative are still extremely vague.

THE STORIES, STRATEGIES, HEROES & MACHINES

www.historyanswers.co.uk



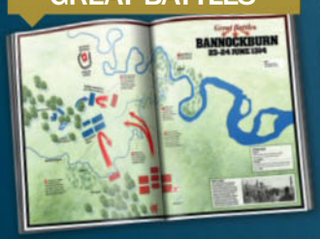
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DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Microsoft
DEVELOPER
Frontier
CREDITS
Kinectimals [2010]
Zoo Tycoon [2013]
Elite Dangerous [2014]
PLAYERS
TBA
KINECT?
No
SMARTGLASS?
No
RELEASE DATE
6 March
WEBSITE
www.frontier.co.uk
TWITTER
@frontierdev

ALSO ON
XBOX 360
ScreamRide will also appear on 360 – just expect a little less detail in the visuals and resolution.

SCREAMRIDE

Not a health and safety officer in sight

XBOX ONE

One of gaming's great joys is the discovery of the new. The relentless charge of endless FPS blasts and snow-capped RPGs might try and convince us otherwise, but this is a pastime that has the power to take us to new worlds, to try new things, to live impossible lives. Sure, we love shooting things, but it's great to see something a little different come our way. *ScreamRide*, from the firing synapses of the world-class minds at Frontier Development, wants to take you for the kind of ride you've never been on before. Yes, this is a rollercoaster game from a studio with quite the tilt-a-whirl heritage, but this isn't your granddad's rail-runner. This is as much about the carnage of destruction as it is the grandeur of creation.

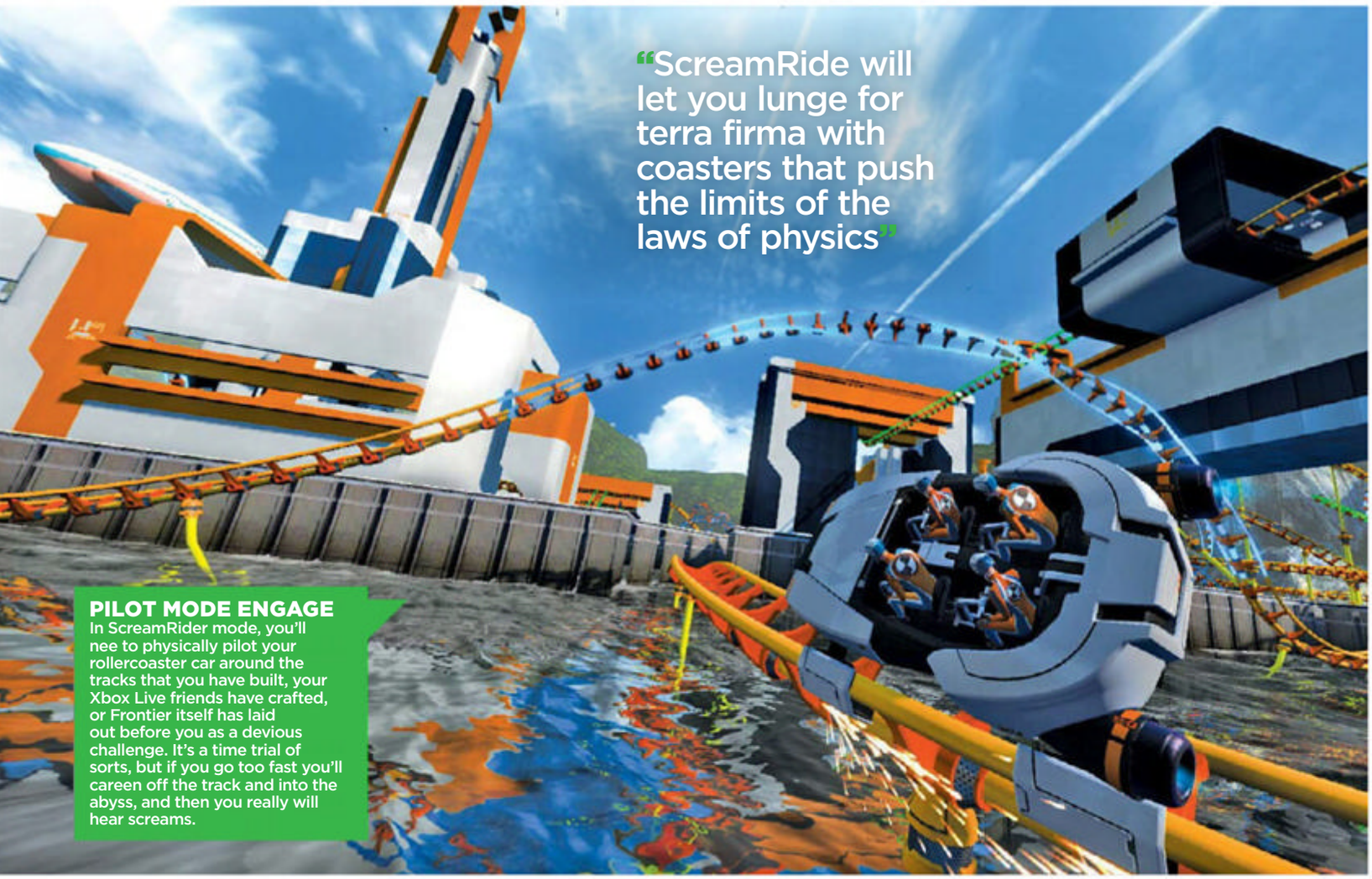
Yes, you will be using a vast and streamlined creative suite to build terrifying near-future thrill rides, and *ScreamRide* will let you reach for the skies and lunge for terra firma with coasters that push the limits of the laws of physics. Fun to ride, but way better to actually drive. Unlike most coaster games that ask you to just sit back and enjoy the ride, *ScreamRide* needs a bit more from its players. You're going to have to be one of the brave souls who actually have to test these adrenalin factories. *ScreamRide* then becomes something like an extreme Scalextric set, putting you in the driving seat of a tiny little car – you're actually going to have to negotiate the rails and keep your car from flying off to its, and inevitably your, death.

It's a time trial of sorts; competing with Xbox Live friends for the most rapid route, and even testing out their tracks. In truth, though, falling off isn't the worst thing you can do. In fact, it might just be the best part of the game. Send your car off at the right angle and you can demolish an entire rollercoaster by smashing through a key support, then watch as the whole thing comes crashing down to earth. It's an incredible spectacle. Of course, if you want to be a bit more precise, you can carry out a controlled demolition, leaving the poor sods in the car with absolutely no chance. They'll understand.

ScreamRide might not dominate the charts, but it's exactly why gaming is so interesting – games like this let us play around with living impossible lives, one destroyed theme park ride at a time.

JON DENTON

HOW'S IT LOOKING? It might not have the broad appeal of *Call Of Duty*, but *ScreamRide* introduces interesting new elements to rollercoaster games and comes from a team with a serious pedigree



PILOT MODE ENGAGE
In ScreamRider mode, you'll nee to physically pilot your rollercoaster car around the tracks that you have built, your Xbox Live friends have crafted, or Frontier itself has laid out before you as a devious challenge. It's a time trial of sorts, but if you go too fast you'll careen off the track and into the abyss, and then you really will hear screams.



FEAR BUILDER
With over a decade's experience under its safety harness, Frontier has serious know-how when it comes to digital coaster creation. *ScreamRide* promises a streamlined but deep set of tools to build any track you can think of – the only limits are your imagination, and a loose knowledge of the laws of physics.

DID YOU KNOW? Frontier has been making rollercoaster games since 2003, when *Rollercoaster Tycoon* appeared on Xbox

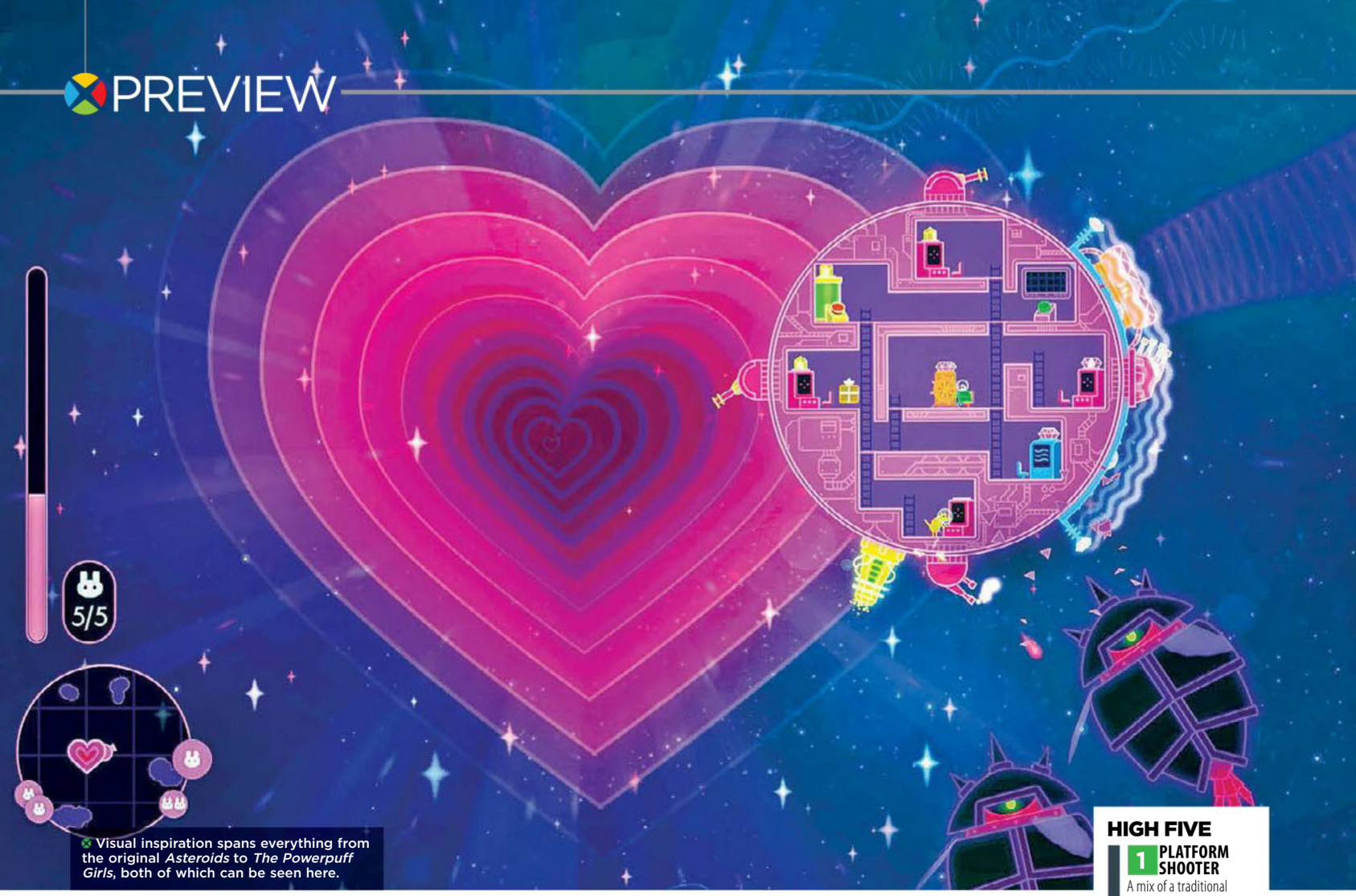


BREAK IT DOWN
What good is the ability to build something if you can't tear it down again? *ScreamRide* revels in destruction – you can obliterate your finest creations in style, and watch in glee as the poor test subjects hurtle from your shattered track down to the brightly coloured grass below. You can even use controlled demolitions to destroy the track.

PREVIOUSLY

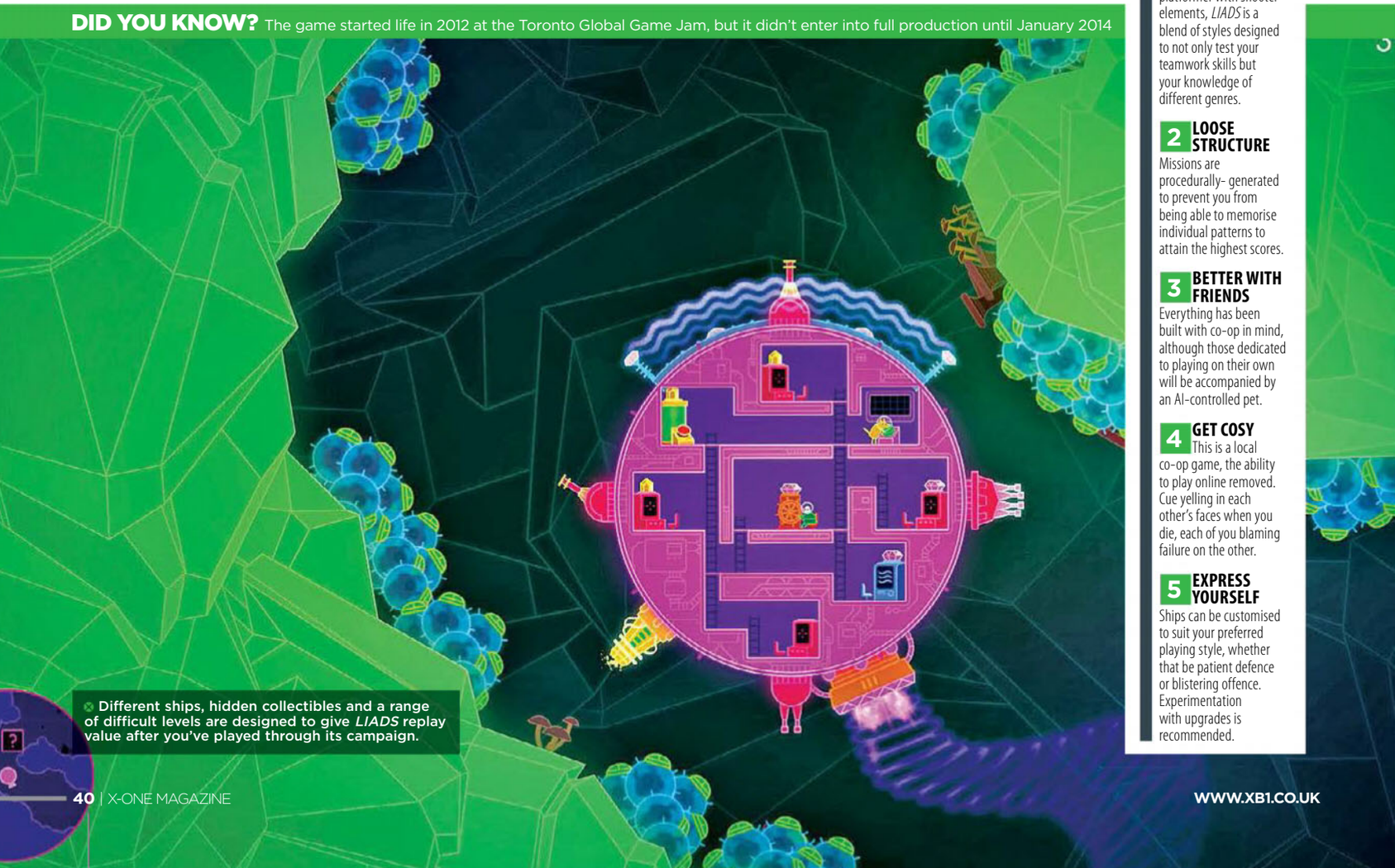
1 ROLLER-COASTER TYCOON
A building game classic. Took the concept of *Theme Park* and pushed it into the third dimension.

2 ZOO TYCOON
A beautiful and interesting Kinect effort that appeared at Xbox One's launch.



Visual inspiration spans everything from the original *Asteroids* to *The Powerpuff Girls*, both of which can be seen here.

DID YOU KNOW? The game started life in 2012 at the Toronto Global Game Jam, but it didn't enter into full production until January 2014



Different ships, hidden collectibles and a range of difficult levels are designed to give *LIADS* replay value after you've played through its campaign.

HIGH FIVE

1 PLATFORM SHOOTER
A mix of a traditional platformer with shooter elements, *LIADS* is a blend of styles designed to not only test your teamwork skills but your knowledge of different genres.

2 LOOSE STRUCTURE
Missions are procedurally- generated to prevent you from being able to memorise individual patterns to attain the highest scores.

3 BETTER WITH FRIENDS
Everything has been built with co-op in mind, although those dedicated to playing on their own will be accompanied by an AI-controlled pet.

4 GET COSY
This is a local co-op game, the ability to play online removed. Cue yelling in each other's faces when you die, each of you blaming failure on the other.

5 EXPRESS YOURSELF
Ships can be customised to suit your preferred playing style, whether that be patient defence or blistering offence. Experimentation with upgrades is recommended.

INTERVIEW WITH... **DESIGNERS JAMIE TUCKER & MATT HAMMILL**

LOVERS IN A DANGEROUS SPACETIME

Asteroids meets Star Wars. What could go wrong?

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Asteroid Base
DEVELOPER
Asteroid Base
CREDITS
Shuriken Skies [2011]
Gesundheit! [2011]
Guilded Youth [2012]
PLAYERS
1-2
KINECT?
No
SMARTGLASS?
No
RELEASE DATE
TBA 15
WEBSITE
asteroidbase.com
TWITTER
@asteroidbase

XBOX ONE

Trying to understand *Lovers In A Dangerous Spacetime* through images and videos alone is next to impossible. It looks so different from almost every other game in existence that there's not a benchmark on the Xbox One to compare it against. In a bid to understand the concept and execution we sat down with game designers Jamie Tucker and Matt Hammill to allow the duo to explain the upcoming ID@XBOX project in their own words...

How would you describe *Lovers In A Dangerous Spacetime*?
Jamie Tucker: Ahhh, this is the hardest thing to do! I'm usually really terrible at describing my own game to people. I'd say something like, "It's kind of like a mixture of *Asteroids* and that scene in *Star Wars* where Han and Luke have to run to the turrets to fight off the TIE Fighters." Even through a screenshot I find that the majority of people unfamiliar with the game don't even know what's going on. But when people realise what's actually happening inside the ship, and how the players are interacting, they usually get a big smile on their face.

What's the appeal of designing a game around a co-op experience?
JT: *Lovers In A Dangerous Spacetime* started at a game jam a couple years ago. We initially planned on making the game co-op because we wanted to make the kind of game that would be fun to watch people play at public events. So we strived to create a situation whereby playing the game would have the people playing talking and yelling at each other.

How much work goes into the testing and balancing?
JT: We're finding that it is extremely difficult to balance a co-op game because players' skill levels are kind of multiplicative. Therefore, two players who are good and playing together might find it too easy, while players who aren't as skilled will find the same task almost impossible. We've added different difficulty levels now, though, but it's something that you can only really test by watching people actually play the game.

To what extent is the ship customisable; how strongly does it impact the game?
JT: We have a few different layouts for the ships which we try to make feel completely different. Then along the way as you're playing the game you can collect gems that upgrade the ship's stations with different power-ups. So far we've found that everyone has their own favourite upgrades and their least favourite, so when people are playing together we see it as another way they can argue or debate about what the best strategy is. Ultimately, our goal is to have all the power-ups be valid playing options, so players have the freedom to go with what they think is most fun for them.

> "We wanted to try to avoid genre clichés like grim space marines in rusty battleships"

We've heard about these 'randomised star system layouts'; what are they and how do they affect gameplay for both players?
Matt Hammill: Our goal with the levels is to blend randomness with designed content. The fun of the game is in players working together and adapting to dynamic situations, rather than memorising level layouts. Even in one-player mode it's more fun when you and your [AI-controlled] dog are always dealing with fresh encounters. But we also want to take players on a journey through an interesting world – flying through a water planet, fleeing an explosion within an asteroid cave – so we're aiming for a balance with our designed content, too.

Missions are procedurally constructed from hand-made tiles, with randomised enemy and power-up spawning. At the most fundamental level, you progress through the game linearly – you're journeying through the universe rescuing your cute animal space pals and, as you pass through different galaxies, the level 'recipes' have different ingredients.

Even after the final mission there's still room for replaying levels in different ships, on higher difficulties, or aiming for more collectibles. It will be different each time. It's not a roguelike, but there are certainly a few elements that we're borrowing from that genre. One of our other big inspirations is *Left 4 Dead*, which gave us tons of local co-op fun, so we're trying to borrow bits and pieces from that game in that it's really session-based game designed for digestible co-op play. You get a good feeling of progress as you go through a campaign that has an awesome combination of both designed and procedural elements.

What were the inspirations behind the unique aesthetics?
MH: It's equal parts vintage space illustration, equal parts *Powerpuff Girls*... with dashes of vector games like *Asteroids* and some of our favourite indie cartoonists thrown in. The visual direction also dates back to that first game jam prototype. We felt a bit guilty to be making yet another shooty-spaceship game, so we wanted to try to breathe some fresh life into it visually and avoid genre clichés like grim space marines in rusty grey battleships. We wanted to go in the opposite direction. It was also just a new thing for us, as neither Jamie nor I had really done vector-based artwork before this.

What attracted you to the idea of releasing on Xbox One over other platforms?
JT: It was mainly because of the ID@Xbox program. We applied on the first day that Microsoft announced it and we started the process immediately. After that we found out that making the game for console really is a lot more work on the business side of things. Chris Charla [director of ID@Xbox at Microsoft] has been super helpful along the way and has taken the time to make sure everything was clear. He's a genuine dude.
JOHN ROBERTSON

HOW'S IT LOOKING? Any game boasting this level of originality deserves to be taken seriously and should be on marked on your 'watch list'. Hopefully originality doesn't overshadow quality, however.

SMITE

Prepare to get smitten... Smited? Smote? Oh, we don't know

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Hi-Rez Studios
DEVELOPER
In-house
CREDITS
Global Agenda [2010]
Tribes: Ascend [2012]
Smite (PC) [2014]
PLAYERS
1-10
KINECT?
TBC
SMARTGLASS?
TBC
RELEASE DATE
Q1 2015
WEBSITE
hirezstudios.com/smite
TWITTER
@smitegame

XBOX ONE

Just because a title has had millions of games played on PC, doesn't mean it is always going to be a success on console, but with *Smite* we think the transition is going to work. In January, Hi-Rez Studios held the first ever Smite World Champions; the three-day event included information about the Xbox One version of the game, but also included a tournament with the eight best *Smite* teams from around the world. The prize money was over $2,000,000. Two. Million. Dollars.

So yeah, *Smite* is a pretty goddamn big deal. For those of you that have missed out on the news, here's a quick recap: *Smite* puts you in the shoes of a god (and there are plenty to choose from) and drops you into a battle arena with the rest of your team. The ultimate goal is to take control of the enemy's base while defending your own, but the game will require different tactics depending on the game mode you choose.

All that is fine, but it's the third-person perspective that we think will make *Smite* more than 'just another MOBA'. Rather than managing your god from an isometric viewpoint, you're directly controlling them, getting involved in the action and throwing out your powers to help your team. As the game timer ticks down and your team's score ticks up, things get increasingly frantic – you're likely to find yourself shouting through your headset at your team-mates as you coordinate a last stand, or one final thrust at the enemy base.

Right now, we're still waiting on confirmation for the gods that will be making their way to Xbox One, but it makes sense for them all to pop up at some stage. Choosing your character, and working out how they can work with the rest of your team is really important. As you play a match, you'll level up your specific character, so that by the end of the game you'll be destroying enemies and using abilities that you didn't have before, before everything resets for the next match. More importantly, though, as you play you'll learn the best way to use a character's specific powers and abilities. Running into the front lines as Cupid, who can help heal your team and shoot from a distance, isn't going to end well for anyone, but leap in with Thor and you'll decimate the enemy in seconds – unless your opponents are ready for you.

> "Running into the front lines as Cupid, who can help heal your team and shoot from a distance, isn't going to end well for anyone"

Right now on PC the game is completely free to play, so you can enjoy the game without spending a penny. However, unlocked gods rotate, so unless you pay to unlock your favourite you will find that he, she or it will only be available for so long. We're not huge fans of microtransactions making their way to Xbox One, but this is the kind of title we can see ourselves opening our wallets for.

Our biggest concern right now is how the numerous controls are going to work on the Xbox controller. It's not a simple game, and with spells, attacks and more all requiring dedicated keys on a keyboard, the limitations of the Xbox One may cause confusion for players. Right now it looks like Hi-Rez is working on a system that combines triggers and buttons to unleash various abilities, which could work really nicely once you're used to it. We're really interested to see how the game translates – we'd love to see a PC vs Xbox match to see which control scheme gave the advantage.

You can sign up now for the Xbox One beta right now at hirezstudios.com, but that won't be going live for a little while. Still, if you sign up for the PC version right now you can start practicing for when it goes live on Xbox. And best of all, there are plans in place so that when that happens you'll be able to transfer some of your details over to the Xbox One version from PC.

STEPHEN ASHBY

HOW'S IT LOOKING? The aspect of microtransactions may bother some people, but if Hi-Rez Studios can nail the control scheme for the Xbox One controller, it's onto a winner.

BOW DOWN TO THEM

FOUR GODS THAT YOU MIGHT WANT TO START WITH WHEN YOU BEGIN WITH SMITE



HADES
Greek king of the Underworld
Ranged, Magical

The dark lord of the underworld doesn't disappoint, with special abilities like Pillar Of Agony, Shroud Of Darkness and Devour Souls. Hades works best at long range, diving into battle to do massive damage then backing out again.



APHRODITE
Greek goddess of love
Ranged, Magical

Aphrodite can use her special Kiss power on an allied god to make them her soul mate. After this, her powers will benefit both her and her soul mate, giving them extra speed, healing and more. She's also a long-range magic user.



APOLLO
Greek god of music
Ranged, Physical

Apollo uses mainly ranged attacks, with music being his greatest weapon, whether it's a strum on his Lyre that's so beautiful it literally hurts those around him, or a rock 'n' roll knee slide that knocks enemies back.



FENRIR
Norse wolf god
Melee, Physical

Fenrir is a powerhouse of melee combat, with strong attacks that can devastate at close range. His ultimate power is Ragnarok, which transforms Fenrir into a huge beast that can bite down on enemy gods and carry them away.

The control scheme is still under development, but on Xbox One it will probably use the triggers to expand your options.

DID YOU KNOW? *Smite* includes five game modes to play through, each with different rule sets

HIGH FIVE

1 MINIONS
Your team will be aided by minions that stream out of your base. If they make it to the enemy's, you'll score points.

2 POWERING UP
As each game progresses you can level up your character. Levels go up to 20, but you'll have to work hard to get there.

3 TEAMWORK
Teamwork is essential – if you can play with other Xbox owners in the same room you'll have a huge tactical advantage.

4 GAME MODES
Different game modes offer different objectives – and Match Of The Day offers a new challenge ever 24 hours.

5 MAP IT OUT
The maps are designed for each game mode, with tight, single-lane maps and more open arenas depending on the mode you choose.

Different game modes will take place on different maps – some are tight and tense, while others are wide open.

WWW.IMAGINESHOP.CO.UK



> "The harsher combat grading of DMC3 is replicated by the new Hardcore more and taken further yet with insane new settings"

Vergil was playable in the 360 version's DLC and he plays pretty differently to Dante. He gets his own Bloody Palace challenge arena here, too.

DID YOU KNOW? Early versions of Dante's redesign bear more than a passing resemblance to Ninja Theory boss Tameem Antoniades...

DMC DEFINITIVE EDITION

Better the devil you know

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Capcom

DEVELOPER
Ninja Theory

CREDITS
Kung Fu Chaos [2005]
Enslaved: Odyssey To The West [2010]
Disney Infinity: Marvel Super Heroes [2014]

PLAYERS
1

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
10 March

WEBSITE
www.devilmaycry.com

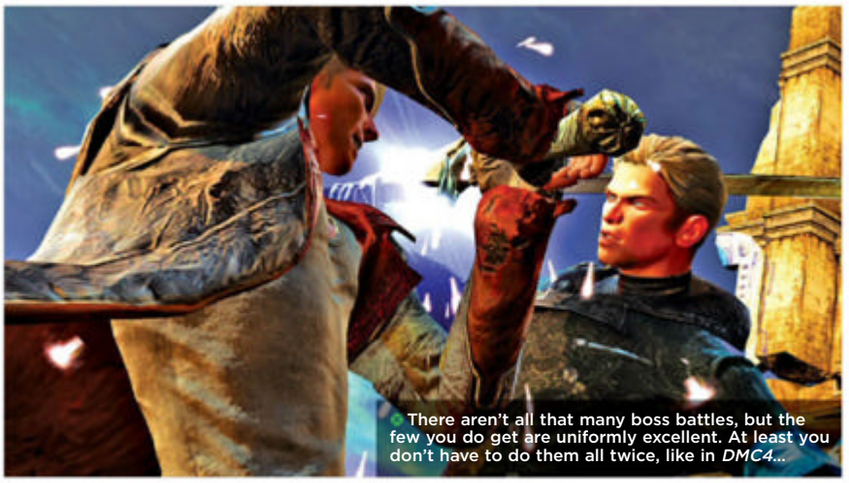
TWITTER
@NinjaTheory

ALSO ON
XBOX 360
It came out on 360 two years ago. This enhanced version looks better, runs smoother and comes with all the existing DLC and more.

XBOX ONE

While some may not like this 'new' trend for remastering old games on more powerful consoles (it's been happening since the 16-bit era, people – get over it already), there's a lot to be said for being able to enjoy the best possible version of a great game. And while it might not have gone down too well with hardcore fans, *DmC* is just that – a great game. Although Ninja Theory never troubled *DMC3*'s near-perfect combat, the studio still delivered an enjoyable action game that offered both an interesting look at what Dante might have been like before he became the showboating badass we all know and love, and some of the finest setpieces in the entire series.

It already looked pretty darn good on 360 but seeing the stylish action zip along at 60fps and upscaled to 1080p is glorious. Still, style was something even the haters would likely agree the game had going for it in the first place, so it's the more significant changes to combat and gameplay that stand to be that much more important. If you don't like nu-Dante, classic skins will allow you to replace him with something a little more familiar. Plus, the harsher combat grading of *DMC3* is replicated by the new Hardcore more and taken further yet with insane new settings like Must Style (enemies can only be damaged while your style grade is S or greater), Turbo mode (a 20 per cent speed boost to really put your reactions to the test) and Gods Must Die, where enemies can also use Dante's powered-up Devil Trigger mode for the ultimate challenge. While that last one is obviously a new skill level, it's unclear whether the others are unique difficulties or simply modifiers for existing ones – with SSS ranks across the board on Dante Must Die difficulty in the original, we'd love to have a crack at Hardcore Turbo Must Style DMD to see if we've still got it...



There aren't all that many boss battles, but the few you do get are uniformly excellent. At least you don't have to do them all twice, like in *DMC4*...

Improvements all sound good then, but it's the timing of this announcement (and that of *DMC4 Special Edition*, due over the summer) that is currently most exciting. The most obvious reason to get both these games back into the spotlight is to promote an upcoming release and since *DmC* didn't live up to Capcom's expectations, this leads us to suspect that the publisher is gearing up to bring Dante back in-house and announce a 'proper' *DMC5* at E3 in June. Wishful thinking perhaps, but the worst case scenario here is that Xbox One gets a duo of excellent remastered action games to fill a clear gap in the catalogue. SSSplendid stuff.

LUKE ALBIGES

HOW'S IT LOOKING? Capcom has made all kinds of steps to appease hardcore fans, from classic costumes and fluid 60fps combat to more challenging difficulty. If that can't win them over, nothing will.

GRAVE

Are you afraid of the dark?

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Koei Tecmo
DEVELOPER
Broken Window Studios
CREDITS
None
PLAYERS
1
KINECT?
TBC
SMARTGLASS?
TBC
RELEASE DATE
TBC
WEBSITE
www.grave-game.com
TWITTER
@gravegame

XBOX ONE

When was the last time a match saved your life? Unless you're Bear Grylls, the chances are that you really just use them for lighting candles when the power goes down. In *Grave*, a single match will be the difference between life and death.

Survival horror games are everywhere now, so it takes something special to stand out from the crowd. *Grave*'s hook is that the enemies you're facing can't stand light – in the day time you'll need to find as many supplies as possible, and possibly even shelter, because in the night, the enemies will come. But they're not just zombies or ghosts. These enemies are psychological projections that will literally disappear when they enter a well-lit area. If they run at you, you'd better not fumble with the torch for too long.

Rather than dropping you into a randomly-generated world, *Grave* mixes things up – instead of a randomly-generated playspace, every player will start in the same world, but when it gets dark that world will shift and evolve. By the time the sun comes up again, you'll look around and the landscape will be completely different. Setting up camp and waiting it out just isn't an option here; you'll need to be constantly on the move to survive.

> "Setting up camp just isn't an option, so you'll need to be constantly on the move to survive"

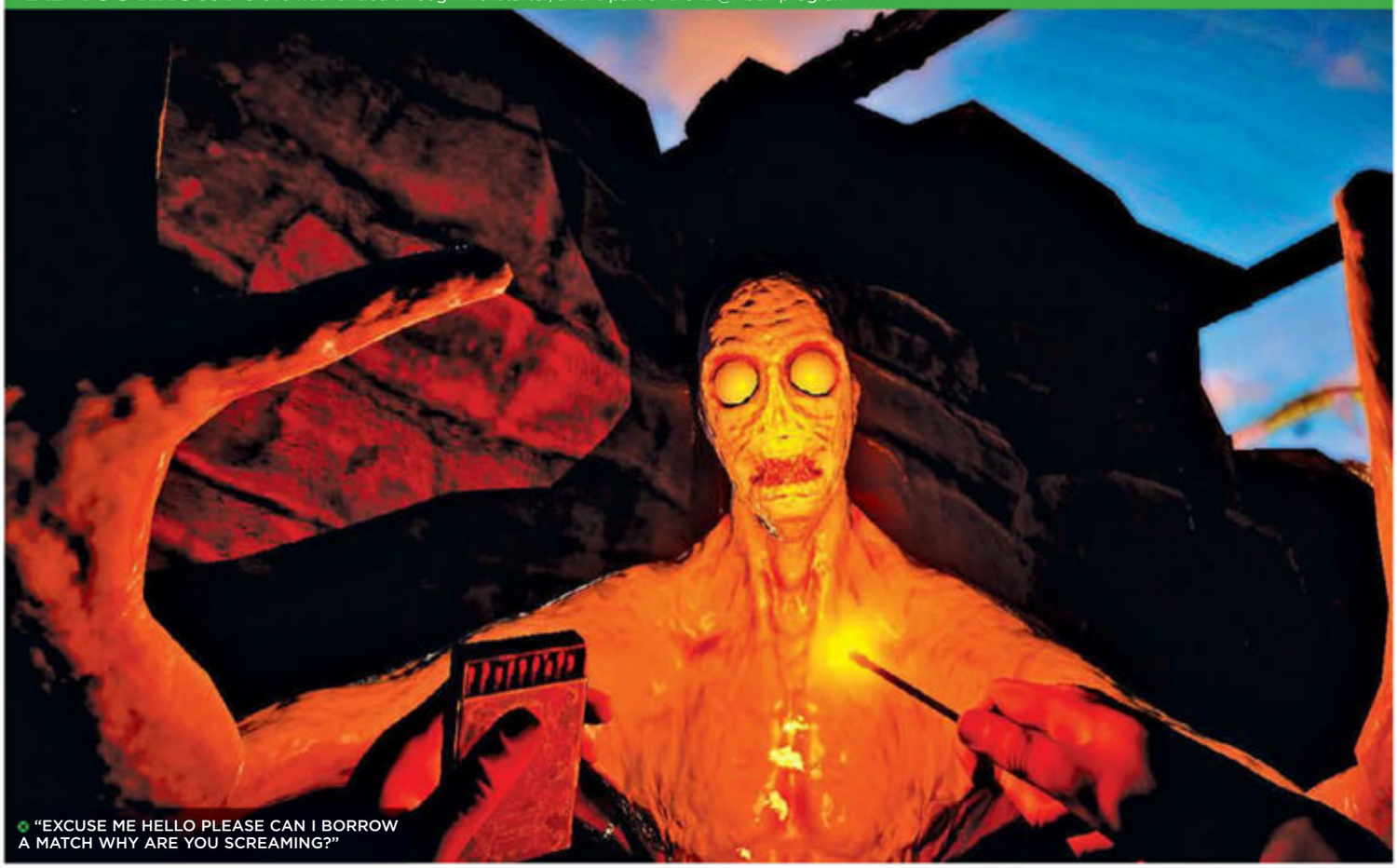
These two elements really do offer some intriguing options. If you find a petrol can, you can drop a circle of kerosene and light it to keep you safe for a few more minutes. Come across a generator hooked up to lights and you can be safe almost all night. But if you only find matches, or a battery for your torch during the day, the night is going to be a frantic sprint through the world as you look for somewhere you can defend yourself. You might find a good place to hide, but without exploration you'll run out of supplies – and then things will start to get tense.

We'd be lying if we said we were excited by every survival horror title we see, but *Grave* looks like it has some really great ideas for keeping the game fresh during every day/night cycle. The title was funded through Kickstarter last year, and currently doesn't have a solid release date aside from '2015'. We'll be keeping an eye on the title to see whether it can realise its potential when it goes live through the ID@Xbox program later this year.

STEPHEN ASHBY

HOW'S IT LOOKING? Genuinely impressive. We've still only seen early builds of the game, but the ideas behind it are strong. If the team get it right we could have another indie classic on our hands.

DID YOU KNOW? *Grave* was funded through Kickstarter, and is part of the ID@Xbox program



"EXCUSE ME HELLO PLEASE CAN I BORROW A MATCH WHY ARE YOU SCREAMING?"



GTA ONLINE: HEISTS

XBOX ONE

Finally, we've got some details; info on the missions, plus we now know that the long-awaited heists will mark the return of characters from the single-player. And you know what? It's looking pretty damn slick. There will be five unique heists, which in total will offer over 20 missions. Four players can take part, and they all have important roles – the leader will make key decisions about how these jobs play out, but will have to pay out the up-front costs for the heist and only gets a payout at the very end. The other members will get regular cash as they complete each prep mission. We still have no solid release date for heists – just 'early 2015' – but we don't think Rockstar would make an announcement like this unless it's close.

PNEUMA: BREATH OF LIFE

XBOX ONE

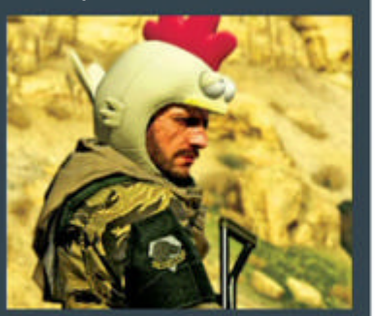
Did you like *Portal*, but felt there were just too many robots? *Pneuma* might be for you. The first-person puzzler doesn't test your skills with a controller, but instead offers a series of puzzles that will require perception, observation and lateral thinking. You take control of Pneuma, a self-obsessed god who's struggling with the nature of reality. His inner monologue will provide the basis for the story as you progress through each puzzle, many of which will bend reality and force you to think outside the box. The game is built in the Unreal 4 Engine, and will see you exploring a strange world in which the doors of Roman villas open into space. The puzzles look varied and challenging, forcing you to consider different viewpoints before you come up with a solution. It doesn't look easy by any means, but we love a challenge, and this one will be out on 27 February.



METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

XBOX ONE

We were excited about a big announcement from Konami over the Christmas break, hoping for news about new characters, story details or multiplayer information. Instead, we got the announcement of the Chicken Hat. Players that are new to the game, or just a bit crap, can pop the hat on to lower the difficulty and make it easier. Great?





RAVEN'S CRY

XBOX 360

After *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, we've been given a taste for pirating on the high seas, which we were sorely disappointed to not return to with *Unity*, so we're hoping that *Raven's Cry* will be able to quench our thirst for adventure. The game recreates the realities of pirate life in the Caribbean and merges them with the pirate lore that has been conjured up since. You take to the seas as Christopher Raven, a hook-handed pirate, and you have a huge game world to explore, from South America to hidden islands.

PAYDAY 2: CRIMEWAVE EDITION

XBOX ONE

It's been more than 18 months since *Payday 2* graced the Xbox 360, but it looks like it might finally be making its Xbox One, complete with a host of new content. *Payday* gained plenty of DLC on Steam, but the 360 was left out in the cold, with just a few extra weapon packs. We've got our fingers crossed for more heists.





NEVERMIND

XBOX ONE

A psychological horror game that allows you to explore inside the minds of mental patients sounds fascinating, for all that it would need to be handled very carefully, and this intriguing concept goes one step further. *Nevermind* will connect with a biosensor to send live information about your stress and anxiety levels to the Xbox – the more stressed you are, the harder the game will be. Pausing for a cup of tea or a cuddle with your cat will be strictly deemed as cheating in our eyes when the game launches later this year.



PATHOLOGIC

XBOX ONE

It turns out that under-appreciated 2005 psychological horror games do sometimes get to have their day in the spotlight. *Pathologic* was released for PC almost ten years ago now, but the award-winning title is now being remade for Xbox One thanks to a successful Kickstarter campaign. The game drops you into a town that has been decimated by a plague. You choose from three characters – a scientist, a shaman and a half-crazed healer – and progress through their individual stories as you try to save the town. You won't get the whole picture of what's transpired the first time you play through (if you even survive), and you might still be confused after finishing all three stories. This is a game that will require multiple replays to get all the answers. We shouldn't expect to see *Pathologic* until late 2016, but we're already excited to see how the game translates to the new console generation.

MINECRAFT ON HOLOLENS

XBOX ONE

At an event early in the year, Microsoft announced HoloLens, a computing platform that uses a headset to project 3D image onto the world around you. While HoloLens is still in early development, Microsoft demonstrated a variety of ways in which the platform could be used, including a genuinely exciting look at how games could work with it.

As part of the demo, an early build of a *Minecraft*-style game was shown off. While it was basic, the game used the HoloLens system to project a world onto the room around you; tables became mountains and animals grazed on the carpet. With a gesture you could pick up a block of TNT, throw it at the wall of your lounge, and blow a whole through it into a world beyond. It looks incredibly impressive, and while it's obviously still an early tech demo, the project has huge potential. We'll be keeping a close eye on the HoloLens technology in the next few months.





RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

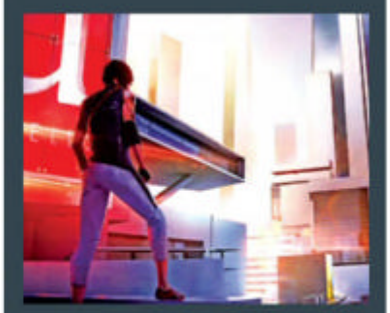
XBOX ONE

Last year's graphic novel series – did you know that was a thing? – which followed on from the end of 2013's *Tomb Raider*, has filled the Lara-sized gap in our lives, but now we're well into 2015 we can almost taste the new entry in the series. We're interested to see where the new title slots into the new, expanded storyline created by the comics. It's just a shame we have to wait until the end of the year before we get our hands on the finished game.

MIRROR'S EDGE

XBOX ONE

We keep hearing that EA and DICE had a lot of ideas that had to be cut out of *Mirror's Edge* before release, which in part contributed to the frankly ridiculous few hours of gameplay. With *Mirror's Edge 2*, we're hoping the teams manage to avoid the same fate – if we get another game that you could comfortably complete on a flight from London to Egypt then we might have to have stern words.





JUST CAUSE 3

XBOX ONE

We're still salivating over the images of the new *Just Cause* title that were released a month ago – how could you not? It looks awesome – but there's more news on the way. Aside from the new wingsuit that has been added to the game to make air-based navigation easier than ever, we're sad to hear that there won't be any multiplayer on offer in the open world of *Just Cause 3*, at least at launch. Fingers crossed that the grappling hook-filled mayhem will get a multiplayer update at some point down the line.

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

XBOX ONE

We're incredibly excited about *Battlefront*, especially after the release of the *Episode VII* trailer, but we can't help but see delays. DICE already has a lot to do with *Battlefield: Hardline* on the horizon, and after *Battlefield 4* all eyes are on EA to get the online service up and running for day one. But, if it gets everything right and releases *Battlefront* while we're all on a *Star Wars* high, it could be onto a winner.



PROJECT CARS VS FORZA 6





PROJECT CARS



THE BIGGEST CONTENDER FORZA HAS EVER SEEN?

Project CARS isn't suitable for everybody. After sitting down with the upcoming simulation racer, **X-ONE** is certain that you should be forced to answer a handful of vital questions before you're even allowed to open a copy up, let alone get your install rolling.

"Thank you for buying *Project CARS*, anonymous gearhead," the Slightly Mad Studios representative would say while handing over a copy of the questionnaire. "Please prove yourself worthy of this Community Assisted Racing Simulator before getting started, otherwise your licence shall automatically be revoked and your copy of the game destroyed."

You scan through the questionnaire. Does the idea of a 250-lap endurance race around Silverstone get you riled up in all the right places? Is managing the optimal caster and camber angles on a vehicle more important to you than partying with your friends? Have you memorised all car manufactures by year of origin instead of your children's names and birthdays?

Does even the idea of playing a racing game that doesn't feature working wing mirrors sound like heresy? Are you willing to sacrifice your sanity to dragging the Toe-In Angle as close to zero degrees as potentially possible? Do you hate life, but love cars?

Did you answer 'Yes' to all of the above? Good news, there is finally a game for you! You are clearly slightly mad about automobiles, and to be honest, you have to be if you want to play and – more importantly – enjoy *Project CARS*. The rest of you, well, you might not be ready for what *Project CARS* has got going on. It's somehow made *Forza Motorsport 5*, *GRiD* and *Gran Turismo* feel like arcade racers. To be fair, it should probably be acknowledged

VERSUS

FORZA 6 MOTORSPORT



WHAT CAN TURN 10 DO TO RETAIN POLE POSITION?

Trying to get information out of Turn 10 on *Forza Motorsport 6* is akin to attempting a refuel on the newly announced Ford GT supercar at speeds north of 200mph. It isn't impossible, but it's pretty bloody difficult. That said, it has been worth every effort, because 2015 marks ten years of motorsport dominance for the long-running Xbox franchise and we feel like it's time to start the celebrations. A decade of unrivalled supremacy in the simulation-racing sphere; one that has gleefully whisked us away to enjoy the world's most incredible cars, tracks and locations time and time again. But times they are a-changing.

As the Xbox One ushered in the next generation of interactive entertainment in November 2013, so too did Turn 10 attempt to usher in the next generation of racing games. It's fair to say that *Forza Motorsport 5* perhaps wasn't the triumphant Xbox One debut many expected it to be. In fact, the launch title was more of a pit-stop entry than a podium placer. Turn 10 can't afford to let that happen again; it has genuine competition in the form of *Project CARS* on Xbox One. The crowd-funded, community developed racing game has been picking up traction for the past 12 months and – with its release on the near horizon – Turn 10 will need to appropriately listen to fan criticism following *Forza 5*, assess the successes and failures of its newest rival, and be mindful of the feedback from *Forza Horizon 2*, if it wants to retain its crown. Thankfully, we believe Turn 10 when the studio says it has enough experience and tools at its disposal to get back on the right track.

"We're celebrating our ten-year anniversary in 2015, which means when we started out, gaming was in a very different place," considers Turn 10 Studios' community manager Brian Ekberg in an exclusive interview with **X-ONE**. "A decade ago with the original *Forza Motorsport*, we didn't

PROJECT CARS VS FORZA 6

just how big of an accomplishment this truly is: *Forza* has been the reigning king over Xbox's racing domain for a decade. *Project CARS* has just cruised onto the scene with its hippy crowd-funding ideals, impressive PC simulator features and ludicrous graphical fidelity and challenged the champion at its own game.

"The racing games out last year were all in the 'arcade' or 'action' space – you were going off-road in a free-roaming world or sliding around corners to collect points and grinding for cash to get the cars you really wanted to drive," considers *Project CARS* creative director Andy Tudor to **X-ONE** in an exclusive interview. "*Project CARS* is a competitor to *Forza* and *Gran Turismo,* it's at the simulator end of the [racing] spectrum."

Whether *Project CARS* has what it takes to actually overtake and claim that coveted number one podium spot is, however, still wide open. Turn 10 isn't bowing out of the race like some disgraced F1 driver that's just been handed a DUI charge, it's coming back stronger than ever in 2015 with *Forza Motorsport 6*. That's why Slightly Mad Studios is doing everything it can to ensure *Project CARS* doesn't repeat the mistakes *Forza Motorsport 5* made at the turn of the generation. Sure, the Microsoft racer was bloody beautiful and handled like a petrol-powered dream – but the lack of cars, tracks, options and dizzying reliance on micro-transactions left many gamers feeling burnt. There's no need to worry about *Project CARS*, in that regard at least. For better or for worse, it's a pure simulator experience like we've never before seen on console.

"It's got the beauty and technical prowess people have come to expect from [simulation racing] games. Everything looks, sounds, and feels 1:1 – exactly like it does in real life – and then goes beyond [*Forza* and *Gran Turismo*] with features the PC sim racing community have had for years that haven't been present on console," he said, adding. "Basically, if you want a game with a ton of different motorsports and forms of car culture on offer, a huge track roster, beautiful graphics, authentic handling, a career that makes you feel like a real racing driver, competitive online play, and asynchronous challenges with the rest of your fellow community, *Project CARS* is the game you've been waiting for."

> "Project CARS is very much like Destiny in that it's a game built for the future"

That last statement might not be strictly true. *Project CARS* might offer a plethora of options, but it feels like it's been designed to weed out casual drivers. It's for those that gain some sort of masochistic pleasure out of being the biggest car nerd on Xbox Live. Our first hour with the latest build was spent wrestling with menus, trying to work out what car models were pertinent to each career mode option, struggling to even alter the bloody colour of cars – yes, really – and attempting to decipher the secrets behind the ridiculously detailed engine tweaking system. Do we understand how to appropriately alter the force feedback on the suspension to better let us tackle the Donington Park Racing Circuit? Come back and ask us later. Did our tweaks to the air intake systems make a difference to the performance of our Pagani Huayra? No freaking clue. But the whole process had staff from our sister magazine **Total 911** rubbing their thighs in pure ecstasy in anticipation of the 17 March release date.

Despite Tudor's assurances that *Project CARS* breaks from simulator "tradition" by "promoting freedom of exploration for gamers of all ages and skill levels," we can't say we totally agree. At this stage – the code we've been hitting is still in production and subject to change – the meta-game, menus and customisation systems feel almost impenetrable for those that don't already spend their weekends tinkering under the hood of a real-life super car. That's one aspect *Forza Motorsport* still has over *Project CARS*;

VERSUS



Forza Motorsport 6 was unveiled with these lovely car renders in conjunction with Ford. While it isn't clear whether these are representative of the final product, we can't wait to see it in action this June.



The dynamic weather system is one of the most impressive facets of *Project CARS*, there's even a button to switch on your lights and windshield wipers to fight through the rain.

have the tools to listen and react to customer feedback the way we can today. We didn't have the tools to rapidly deploy improvements to our game experiences. In short, we've learned a lot about the diversity of our player base, what they want and how we can best deliver that to them. That touches all aspects of the *Forza* experience – from the car and track lists, to the feature sets, to the online capabilities, and much more."

We've already seen the "tools to rapidly deploy improvements" in action, as a response to the criticism levelled at *Forza Motorsport 5*. A diminished track and car list – no doubt a result of the challenges in creating content for the next generation of consoles– was one problem, though a healthy flow of both free and premium DLC seems to have made the best of that. Still, the bigger issue that can't be repeated in this year's iteration was the embracing of mechanics more typically associated with the free-to-play genre, where microtransactions and XP boosters are often found dwelling. Turn 10 responded quickly, assessed the backlash, and hastily reworked the virtual economy. But it hurt the studio's otherwise pristine reputation and, with *Project CARS* finally here – a game that has worked with its community every step of the way throughout development – Turn 10 will need to be wary of upsetting its community and keeping its intentions as clear as possible.

"I think one of the most valuable aspects of our studio's culture is our commitment to listening, learning and leading," continues Ekberg. "We are intently focused on our community. Both from an individual perspective – how can we make our games as inclusive as possible to new players, while still engaging the hardcore fans? – and from the perspective of our larger player population – what issues are players talking about? What do they care about most? What isn't working for them?"

> "Turn 10 has a genuine opportunity to create the most realistic racing experience of all time with Forza Motorsport 6"

Following our hands-on time with *Project CARS*, it's clear that *Forza* still has one critical advantage over its peers and rivals. Engaging the hardcore in sim heaven whilst simultaneously making *Forza* inclusive to newbies is a balancing act *Forza* has always had no trouble in maintaining. We're confident this won't change for *Forza Motorsport 6*, especially as *Project CARS'* menus, tuning systems and career mode are hidden behind an impenetrable wall for all but the most seasoned of racing fanatics.

Of course, the game isn't being unveiled properly until June, when Turn 10 will take to the stage at E3 2015 and no doubt blow our minds with some impressive looking in-game engine cinematics backed by a headache-inducing soundtrack. But around all of the "we aren't discussing any specifics" and "we have nothing further to share" PR double-talk, there have been a few exciting details to glean.

The box art of *Forza Motorsport 6* revealed Ford's all-new GT car, which will give Xbox gearheads the first opportunity to take the supercar out for a spin. Ekberg assures us that this will create "exciting possibilities" for the future of *Forza*, as fans have the opportunity to drive "numerous other cars in the Ford Performance line-up" for the first time in the world. On one of motoring's biggest stages, the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, Turn 10 also helped to unveil other vehicles making their way to *Forza Motorsport 6* – the brand new GT, Shelby GT350 Mustang, and the F-150 Raptor. Not only is this a great start to what already promises to be an incredibly diverse vehicle roster, but the key art has given fans a huge boost of confidence that Turn 10 is actually listening: why else would a series that's traditionally avoided dynamic weather and day and night cycles showcase a beautiful car in the dark with its headlights on full beam?

PROJECT CARS VS FORZA 6

PROJECT CARS



Project CARS might be the new car on the starting grid, but it's bringing the race to *Forza Motorsport*. Turn 10 will be watching intently to see how the crowd-funded racer fares.

it has insane depth and customisation, but it presents it in an easy-to-understand format. That's what those Microsoft big bucks will get you, we guess. Still, despite our headache-inducing experiences trying to figure out the finer details of *Project CARS*, Slightly Mad Studios is eager to convince us that it's a product designed for the casual automobile enthusiast.

"When you load the game up; it asks you what kind of skill level and past experience you've had with racing games in order to dial the game to your preferences. Then when you start your new career, create a driver and sign a contract [it] feels very much like playing *FIFA*," says Tudor, though we don't recall Ultimate Team ever forcing us to chose between locking a contract with Lionel Messi, Paul Pogba, Wesley Sneijder, Harry Kane or Joel Campbell down with little explanation or indication to the consequence of choosing one over the others could have on your overall enjoyment with the game in the immediate future. Like we said before, presentation of information is still *Project CARS*' pitfall.

> "Everything looks, sounds, and feels 1:1 – exactly like it does in real life"

"Gaining fans, winning accolades, and getting offers from other teams feels very much like *NBA 2K15*," continues Tudor, "Jumping into a Quick Race Weekend against a full grid of cars for a bit of *TOCA*-style pack racing, scheduling a game with your friends on the weekend, turning up for the practice session as the others join in-progress, then heading into the race, or trying to beat your friends by downloading their Driver Network Ghosts or enter regularly-scheduled Community Events... Honestly, when you start thinking of *Project CARS* as this hub from which to have all these different experiences – and experiences that are going to grow as we expand the game over time – then you realise that *Project CARS* is very much like *Destiny* in that it's a game built for the future."

VERSUS

FORZA 6



Turn 10 has unveiled *Forza Motorsport 6* surprisingly early, perhaps in an effort to steer its fans away from *Project CARS*. Either way, the game will surely see a full gameplay reveal at E3 2015 in time for its anniversary celebrations.

The addition of those two features is hardly a surprise. Sony's *DriveClub* and Slightly Mad Studio's *Project CARS* have already jumped ahead of *Forza* in that respect, and the reaction has been incredible. We're in agreement; *Project CARS* showcases some incredible visual effects and fidelity, so we're certainly excited to see what some of the best Microsoft-funded programmers and designers can do with the Xbox One and two years of exclusive development with the system. We aren't saying *Forza* needs a button dedicated to activating windscreen wipers, but a firm step in that direction is needed if it wants any chance of staying on top.

Forza Motorsport 6 will be appearing exclusively on Xbox One, ensuring Turn 10 can focus solely on delivering its most impressive technical and beautiful game to date. We can't see Turn 10 backing down from its commitment to 1080p/60fps racing with Forza any time soon – though the same can't be said for Slightly Mad Studios, which has struggled to appropriately optimise *Project CARS* at 1080p/60fps across Xbox One, Wii U, PlayStation 4, PC, 12K resolution displays and Oculus Rift. We'll have to wait until E3 to see if *Forza Motorsport 6* has what it takes to compete with *Project CARS* on a visual level, but we've learned to never count out a developer when it is laser-focused on one platform.

"The power of the Xbox One has enabled us to bring unprecedented visuals and features to the *Forza Motorsport* franchise, including an unprecedented level of visual realism at 1080p/60 FPS, and accurately recreating the physical characteristics of thousands of unique materials like metal, glass, leather, and concrete, which look real enough to touch," says Ekberg, probably all too aware of how we'd *love* to virtually interact with these cars with HoloLens integration. "Utilising the power of the Xbox One, you can expect us to further refine *Forza*'s industry-leading simulation."

"Just as Ford has pushed the boundaries of car technology in *GT*," adds Dan Greenawalt, creative director at Turn 10 Studios, "*Forza*

The thought of three Guardians storming the Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca aside, *Project CARS* is certainly built for the future. While the presentation could be tuned with time, the base experience is almighty enough to help eradicate any other fears. Honestly, every care in the world seems to slip away once you actually get on the track. Here's what we recommend to all of you when you eventually get a chance to play *Project CARS*. Avoid career mode, and instead create a quick race on your favourite track, ramp up the dynamic weather system and time cycle to double speed, drop 35 fast cars onto the grid and get ready for the race of your life. From Karts, to F1, to hatch backs to prototype machines built with a need for speed, every vehicle handles differently, impeccably. And chaotically in the sort of race we just proposed.

If *Forza Motorsport 6* has anything to worry about, it's how *Project CARS* is setting a new benchmark for handling, physics, sound design and graphical prowess. The roar of the engine as you perform a delicate overtake, the twitch of the wheels as you carefully manoeuvre around a tight bend at speed and the way your heart leaps into your throat as you attempt to avoid near collisions – *Forza* has got a lot of work to do where it counts; like we said, there's nothing quite like *Project CARS* in the simulation racing genre.

"As with any healthy competition, having other games out there only makes us strive for better," says Tudor, rather diplomatically. "Together we raise the bar in the racing genre. We don't necessarily feel pressured, but we always set out to set a new benchmark in our games – whether that's in graphics, handling, features, or innovation – and certainly on *Project CARS* we've delivered on that with dynamic time of day and weather, [high] resolution, laser-scanned tracks, a freeform sandbox career mode, [and] community-created app support." Slightly Mad Studios might not feel pressured to deliver, but all eyes are on the start-up to see how it fares against *Forza Motorsport* in the next generation. There's no way Turn 10 isn't watching development on *Project CARS* closely and trying to adapt. There's never been a more exciting time to be a fan of sim racers.



PROJECT CARS

Project CARS is the first game that feels like it has any chance of overtaking *Forza* for the coveted bottle of Xbox-branded champagne. As great as it handles, it has a habit of excluding those but the most faithful gearheads. It was crowd-funded by thousands of rabid simulation fans; they demanded something more hardcore, challenging and intricate, and – for better or for worse – that's what we're receiving. *Forza Motorsport 6* isn't out for a good few months yet, but Tudor is confident that *Project CARS* has got what it takes to overtake the behemoth franchise and maintain its lead. Mentioning with a wry smile as our interview closed, "I'm sure [*Forza 6*] will be very good when it eventually comes out, but they have some catching up to do at the moment."

Motorsport 6 will embrace that spirit of innovation as our most technically advanced racing simulation to date, offering a fun and realistic automotive experience for both car lovers and gamers." And that's the key. *Forza*, for whatever embarrassing stalls it might have encountered recently, is still the leading industry simulation experience. From the incredible handling and physics engines behind every vehicle, to the stunning visual fidelity, roaring sound design and frame-rate stability that brings everything together, *Forza Motorsport* is still the king. Turn 10 will be eager to continue to push the boundaries; improving its online stability, feature sets and diversifying its circuit and car rosters – that's a given – but we're perhaps most excited to see what *Forza Motorsport 6* can achieve with the millions of Drivatar data entries Turn 10 now holds onto.

> "Forza is still the leading industry simulation experience."

Project CARS might be bringing robust PC simulation racing features to consoles for the first time, but Turn 10 has an opportunity to create the most realistic racing experience of all time with *Forza Motorsport 6*. It isn't just about having an intricate physics engine, dizzying depth to the tuning systems, or even sublime rendering technology – it's about creating a human experience, making it feel like the Xbox One thumbsticks are somehow connected to the wheel and the triggers to the pedals.

In essence, the revolution in racing will come from whichever studio can pull you into a state of being where you unequivocally sacrifice your mind to a virtual reality; where you believe you're in the driver's seat of one of the most powerful and sexually attractive vehicles in the world. Will it be Turn 10 with *Forza Motorsport 6*? E3 2015 is only four short months away...



FORZA MOTORSPORT 6

Competition is exciting, it drives studios to strive for better and aim higher in its goals and ambitions. We aren't saying *Forza* has ever been guilty of coasting along on its reputation, but we're excited to see what Turn 10 can do under pressure. *Project CARS* is a technically impressive game, built to evolve over time alongside its huge and vocal community. *Forza Motorsport 6* will likely attempt to steal some of *Project CARS*' thunder this E3, though Ekberg tried his best to assure us that Turn 10 is happy to see Slightly Mad Studios in its rear view mirror. "We're intently focused on our vision for the franchise and commitment to quality. That vision is inclusive. We welcome *Project CARS* to the Xbox One." We're onto him.

PROJECT CARS VS FORZA 6



PROJECT CARS

$3,142,808
CROWD-FUNDED TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT COSTS

60,000
POLYGONS PER CAR



25
MANUFACTURES (IN CURRENT BUILD)



70 CARS
(IN CURRENT BUILD)

22
RACING DISCIPLINES

73 CIRCUITS
(IN CURRENT BUILD)

FORZA 6

16.82 MILLION
COPIES SOLD IN FORZA MOTORSPORT FRANCHISE WORLDWIDE (XBOX 360 & XBOX ONE)



67
CAR MANUFACTURERS (INC DLC)

50%
OF ALL XBOX ONE OWNERS HAVE PLAYED FORZA MOTORSPORT 5

306 CARS
CARS IN FORZA MOTORSPORT 5 (INC. DLC)

17 TRACKS
(INC. DLC)

REVIEW SCORES
FORZA HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY AWESOME FOR A LONG TIME NOW

FORZA MOTORSPORT 2
FORZA MOTORSPORT 3
FORZA MOTORSPORT 4
FORZA MOTORSPORT 5

9/10

HOW CAN PROJECT CARS BEAT FORZA?

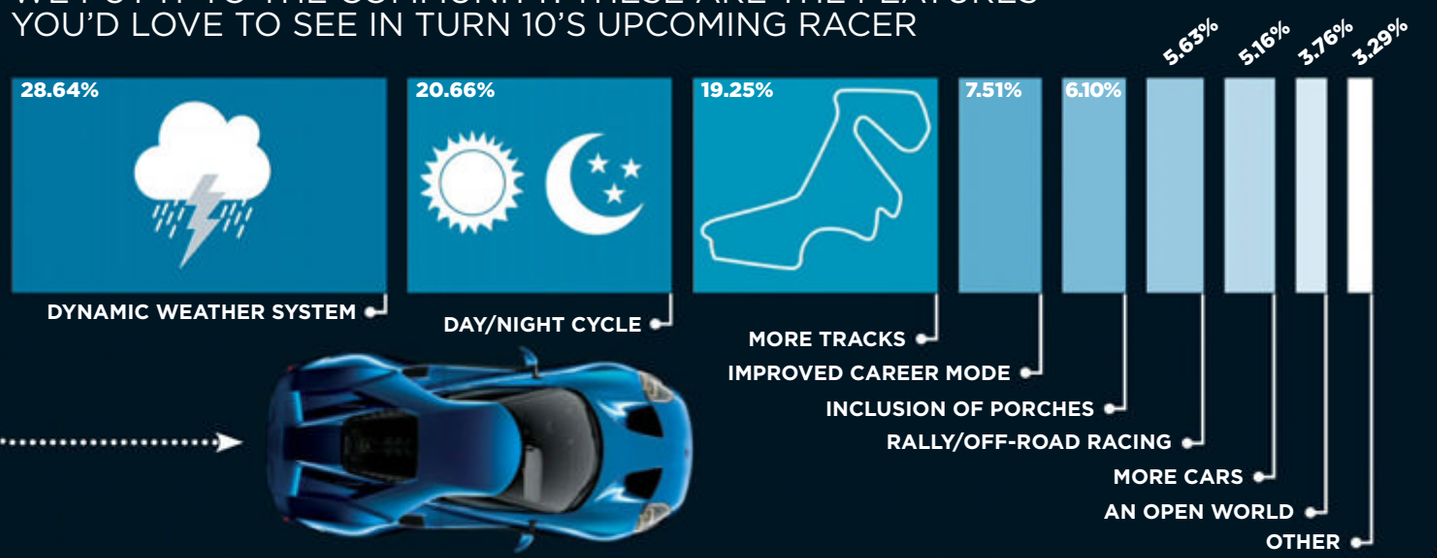
THIS IS WHAT THE **X-ONE** COMMUNITY WANTS TO SEE FROM THE RACER. WHAT CAN SLIGHTLY MAD DO TO DE-THRONE TURN 10?



VERSUS

FORZA MOTORSPORT 6 WISH LIST

WE PUT IT TO THE COMMUNITY: THESE ARE THE FEATURES YOU'D LOVE TO SEE IN TURN 10'S UPCOMING RACER



25 WAYS TO SUPERCHARGE YOUR XBOX ONE

Words Stephen Ashby



Out of the box, the Xbox One is a powerful piece of kit, but don't think that a controller and headset is all that there is to Microsoft's box of wonders. There are plenty of ways to make the Xbox One more amazing, from software tweaks to accessories and add-ons. Here we've gathered our essential tips and favourite hardware options together to help you power up your Xbox One in style.

POWER UP YOUR PROFILE

USE THE NEW OPTIONS TO CUSTOMISE YOUR VIEW

1

ADD A HIGHLIGHT REEL
You can customise your Showcase to include up to six game clips or achievements that you're particularly proud of. Simply hit the Menu button on a game clip and choose Showcase.

SMARTGLASS UPDATING
If you have a smartphone or tablet, you should definitely have downloaded the brilliant SmartGlass app by now. It can do all sorts, from controlling your console to typing out messages, codes and more on the touch-screen. If your Xbox is up to date, you can also view what your friends have been playing, and update your profile remotely.

2



3

CHANGE THE COLOUR
One of the biggest visual changes you can make on your Xbox is to change your profile colour. The change is echoed across the system, on everything from the dashboard to achievement pops.

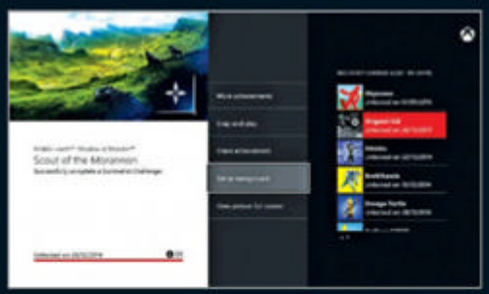
4

CUSTOMISE YOUR PROFILE
At last you can make more Profile changes without having to turn to your computer – you can now update your Location and Bio information right on your Xbox One.

5

CUSTOMISE YOUR BACKGROUND

Black is so 2014. With the new update you can customise your Xbox background with a few button presses, detailed below. And with any JPEG or PNG image file compatible it's really just a question of finding the perfect image. Of course, you can also choose the artwork associated with any Achievement you've unlocked, so if you want to celebrate getting 100% in your latest conquest you can do that too.



1. ADD AN ACHIEVEMENT

When you unlock an Achievement, you'll notice it has an image associated. Open up the Achievement to view it and you can use the menu to set the image as your background



2. PLUG AND PLAY

Alternatively, you can use an image from a USB drive or DLNA server. Connect your drive and open the media player, then select the image you want to use.



3. SHARE AND SAVE

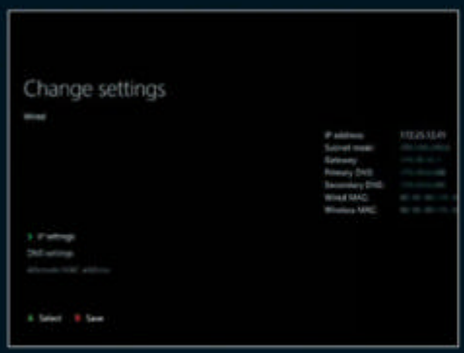
If you're happy with your choice, hit the Menu button on your controller and choose Set As Background. When you hit the Xbox button to return to your dashboard, it will be set.

DMZ SETTINGS 6

If you're having connection issues with Xbox Live, or your network's firewall is causing you problems, you can set up your router with the Xbox as a DMZ connection. Here's how to alleviate your issues:

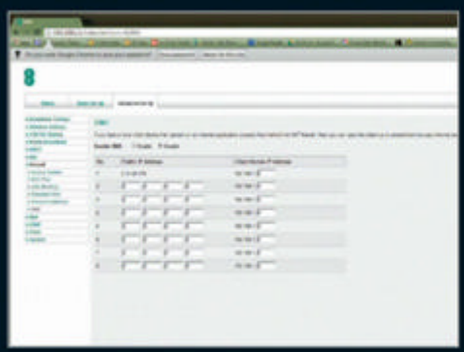
1. IP ADDRESS

First, you'll need to know the IP address for your console. Open Settings > Network and choose Advanced Settings – make a note of the number on the right.



2. ROUTER SETTINGS

On your Mac or PC, access your router's settings; the details for doing this will be in the instruction manual. Select the DMZ area and input your Xbox One's IP address.



3. CONNECT AND REBOOT

Once you've set this up, save the settings. To make sure the changes are put into effect, reboot your Xbox One. Now you should be set up without any problems.



UPGRADE YOUR AUDIO

When you're trying to get seriously into a game, you don't need a dog barking down the street or people next door watching a movie on full volume distracting you. Plus, if you're just using your TV's built-in speakers to hear game audio, it's likely that you're missing a huge amount of content. Grab a headset, hook it up and you'll feel like you're experiencing every explosion, gunshot and shout as if they were happening around you.

7



TURTLE BEACH STEALTH 500X

When it comes to gaming headsets, these set the bar. The first pair for Xbox One to offer the full 7.1 surround sound experience in a headset, the 500X offers a wireless connection to your console, on-ear controls and a mobile cable for switching to music on your phone.

8



GIOTECK HC-5

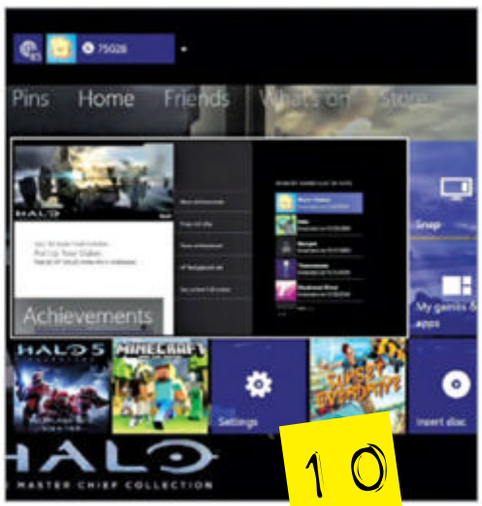
This sleek headset has the guts to back up its looks – the wireless connection and amplified speakers offer convenience and power in a single package. The on-ear controls are easy to navigate and the red LEDs look great, although we'd advise turning them off to get more juice from the built-in battery.

9



TRITTON KAMA

If you're on more of a budget, try the Kama. The controller is wired, but the Xbox One model includes a Stereo Headset Adapter for your controller so you can instantly plug and play. They're designed for comfort and flexibility, and they work seamlessly with other devices like phones.



10

MAKE TILES TRANSPARENT

The February Xbox update includes the ability to increase the transparency of the tiles on your dashboard. Rather than solid blocks of colour, you will now be able to make each tile slightly see-through. If you've customised your Xbox background and want to take things one step further, this is the perfect solution. It appears that the option will be enabled automatically when you add a custom background, but if not, head into Settings > My Xbox > My Background.

ADD GAMES WITH SMARTGLASS

If you use SmartGlass, you can now add games without ever needing to touch your controller. As long as your system is up to date, you can now browse the Games with Gold titles on your smartphone or tablet, and more easily browse the app and games stores. If you find something you like, you can use the touch screen to remotely start a download, or add it to the queue so when you next switch your Xbox it starts downloading automatically.

11



12

GET WRAP-AROUND GAMES

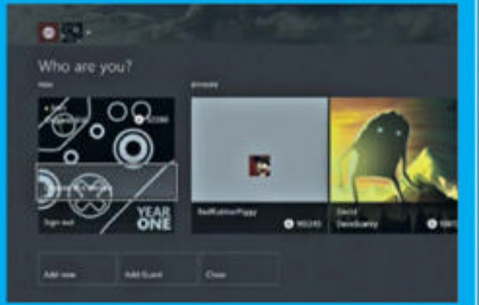


The Xbox One technically supports 4K, but Microsoft is still sketchy about exactly what the console can and cannot do. Most 4K TVs have upscaling technologies built in, which work to add more definition to 1080p images, but this can affect latency, adding a fraction of a second between you pressing a button and the action appearing on-screen. For gaming, HD screens are recommended, but that doesn't mean you have to skimp on features. Curved TVs, like the Samsung H8000, offer full HD, and the curved screen will give you an even more immersive gaming experience as the world wraps around you.

13

SHARE YOUR GAME LIBRARY WITH FRIENDS

It's as straightforward as setting your friend's console up as your own Home Console. This gives that console full access to all your games, and when you sign in on the console in your own house, you still have the same games accessible.



1. LOG IN

First, on your friend's console, log in with your email address and password. We recommend you only do this with friends or family you really trust with these details.



2. SET IT AS HOME

Open Settings > My Xbox > My home Xbox and set it as your home console. Then your friend can sign in with their own account and access games from both.



3. A FAVOUR REPAID

Of course, your friend can do the same on your console – have them set your Xbox as their home console and you can sign in and use your console as normal.



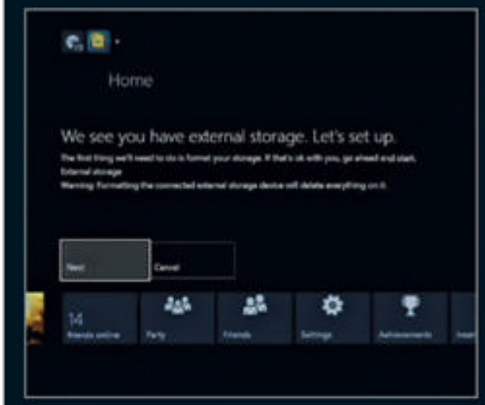
14

EXPAND YOUR STORAGE

You can't upgrade your Xbox One's internal hard drive, but you can add an external drive USB that can act as a second storage space for your games and apps. There are a few limitations – you need a USB 3.0 drive with a minimum of 256GB free space, like the Freecom Mobile Drive Mg – but if you have a compatible drive, here's how to get it set up.

1. PLUG AND FORMAT

You can plug in your drive to either USB port – your Xbox should recognise the drive automatically and offer to format it. Give it a name and then set it as your default install location.



2. SET IT UP

You can transfer all your data over if you want. To make things easier, when it reaches capacity, the Xbox will automatically start saving content to the internal drive instead.



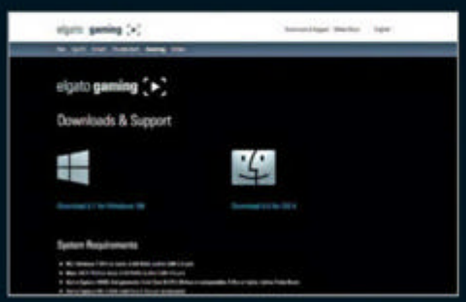
RECORD YOUR GAMING SKILLS IN FULL HD

15

If the Xbox One's 'record that' feature isn't enough for you, you'll want to try the Game Capture HD60. This box plugs into your Xbox, your computer and your TV, so that you can record your epic skills to your PC or Mac to share online with friends.

1. GET THE APP

You can download the Game Capture app from elgato.com for free, although you'll need the hardware connected to your Mac or PC if you want it to work.



2. HOOK IT UP

There are two HDMI ports and a mini USB port on the Game Capture HD60. Plug your Xbox's HDMI into one side, and connect to your TV and computer as well.



3. HIT RECORD

Fire up the Game Capture app and your Xbox display will appear on your computer screen. Hit the red record button – you can even add live voiceover if you wish.



ADD A SET-TOP BOX

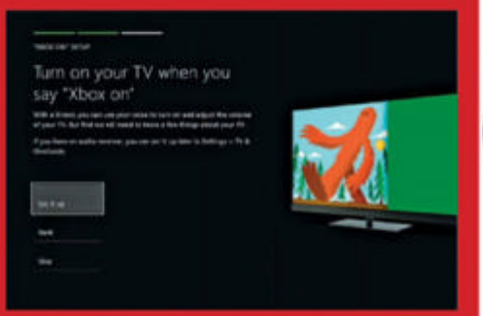
16

The Xbox One is all about TV, which means you can plug in your set-top box and control your TV experience through the Xbox with voice commands. Here's how to get it set up



1. PLUG IT IN

Plug your set-top box into the HDMI In port on the back of the Xbox. Open the TV app and you'll be prompted to set up TV on your Xbox. Choose Set It Up.



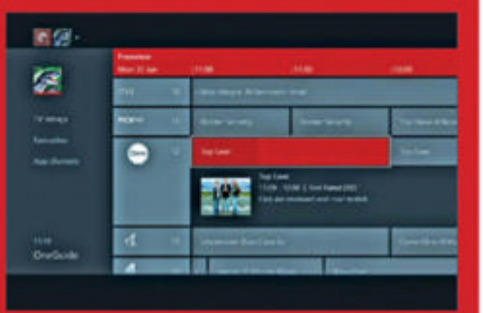
3. ONEGUIDE

You can set up OneGuide by inputting your postcode and selecting the TV provider. Some information within OneGuide is only available in the US right now, sadly.



2. GET STARTED

You can configure voice commands for your TV, too. Follow the instructions to find your TV on the list, then follow the on-screen instructions to use the features.



4. TALK TO ME

Either way, you should now be able to switch on and control the volume on your TV without having to pick up the remote: simply say "Xbox on" to get started.



PLUG IN YOUR KINECT

17

Just because Kinect isn't great for playing actual games doesn't mean it isn't useful for *gaming*. You might not want to leap around your front room like a lunatic, but for voice commands alone the Kinect should be a part of your setup. From shouting "XBOX ON" as you step through your front door to screaming "Xbox record that!" when you jump off a skyscraper on a skateboard and live to tell the tale, there are plenty of ways to use the little black box. It might not trump a controller in terms of gameplay, but it sure as hell beats switching your Xbox One on manually like a peasant. And with more features being added in future updates, don't rule the accessory out just yet. We hope to see Kinect redeem itself over the coming months.



18

TYPE FASTER USING A KEYBOARD

How many times have you tried to type out a message and found yourself giving up because it takes too long? If you just want to fire off a quick message, a keyboard is a much faster option than the sluggish on-screen system. Some, like the Logitech Harmony Smart Keyboard, include buttons mapped like an Xbox Controller, as well as a trackpad that can make dashboard navigation easier than ever.



19

ADD A SOUNDBAR

The sooner you accept that your TV speakers are crap, the sooner you can improve your situation. Grab a soundbar, like the Polk N1 Surroundbar for a powerful audio experience. There are plenty to choose from, and most include a woofer, which should make your room shake nicely at the boom of grenades.



21

USE ANY CONTROLLER

The Cronus Max can save you some cash; if you've got an old 360 controller knocking around, grab it, plug it into the Cronus and it's good to go. It works on any console, too, so if you're heading to a friend's and they only have a PS4, you can take your Xbox One controller, a cable and the Cronus and play comfortably.

SPEED UP GAME INSTALLS

20

How annoying are game install times on Xbox One? If you've ever tried to install a game to your hard drive, either as a download or from a disc, you know the pain of the hours of waiting. We're sick of it, and while Microsoft is still working on ways to speed things up, here's a tip that might work. Try disconnecting from Xbox Live before installing, either by unplugging your network cable or disconnecting via Settings > Network. There's no solid proof that this improves things, but we've noticed slightly better results. It's got to be worth a try, right?





22

EXPAND USB CONNECTIVITY

If you've taken all our advice here, you might find that you've already run out of USB ports on your Xbox One, which isn't ideal. Frankly, two ports is pretty stingy on Microsoft's part. But all is not lost; there are plenty of USB hubs that can extend the connectivity of your Xbox, without completely destroying the aesthetics of your console. Of course, any USB 3 hub should work, but the dreamGEAR hub is designed with the Xbox One in mind, so mixes good looks with functionality. And if you don't like how it looks, you can always shove it behind your console until you need it.

CUSTOMISED CONTROLLERS

GET THE BEST GAMING EXPERIENCE WITH CONTROLLERS DESIGNED FOR YOU

RAZER ATROX

The Atrox is one of a small number of arcade sticks for Xbox One, but with a customisable stick and buttons, interchangeable faceplate and moveable components this is without a doubt the best of the bunch.



23

DESIGNER CONTROLLER

If you want your controller to stand out from the crowd, head over to thecontrollershop.com, where you can create a custom controller with your own colour combination, finish and Gamertag.



24

THRUSTMASTER FERRARI 458 SPIDER RACING WHEEL

With *Project CARS* so close and *Forza 6* on the horizon, it might be time to invest in a wheel – this Ferrari wheel from Thrustmaster includes a customisable pedal setup and buttons for Xbox One control.



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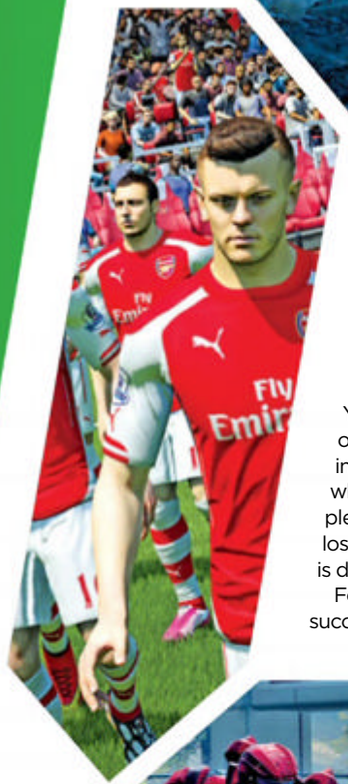




SPORTS: WHY YOU SHOULD CARE

Words Josh West





INTRODUCING ESPORTS: WHY IT'S TIME TO TAKE NOTICE OF GAMING'S BIGGEST NEW TREND

Hey, **X-ONE** readers, what would you say if we told you that one of the coolest things you can do with your Xbox One doesn't involve playing games? You'd call us crazy, right? Imagine how Microsoft's head of Xbox Phil Spencer is feeling right now. Perhaps he's sat in his office over in Redmond, California, happily planning what awesome Rare titles to revive in 2015 (*Viva Piñata,* please). Or perhaps he's sat with his head in his hands, at a loss for words trying to figure out what the Xbox collective is doing with everything Microsoft has given them.

For the better part of a decade we longed for a successor to the Xbox 360; Microsoft responded by delivering the excellent Xbox One. We demanded better online infrastructures; studios like Sledgehammer Games and 343 Industries gave us dedicated servers. Then we wanted more apps, so Microsoft hooked us up with the very best ways to watch channels such as Twitch, ESL and MLG. And how have we chosen to utilise the power, stability and ambition of the next generation? By turning off our games, putting down our controllers and watching other people play.

There's simply no escaping it, videogames are turning into a spectator sport. After decades spent on the fringes of mainstream culture, professional gaming is suddenly a commanding presence in the industry. The likes of *Halo 5: Guardians* and *Rainbow Six Siege* are being built specifically for top-level competition. Activision and Xbox are once again playing host to the biggest console eSports tournament around – one that's set to pay out millions in prize money to the best *Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare* players in the world later this year. Streaming service Twitch has quickly evolved from a place to laugh at prima donna gamers losing their shit on *FIFA 13*, to a service that Amazon felt comfortable acquiring for a cool $970 million US dollars.





Advanced Warfare is the biggest game in console eSports, though it's tough to break onto the scene.

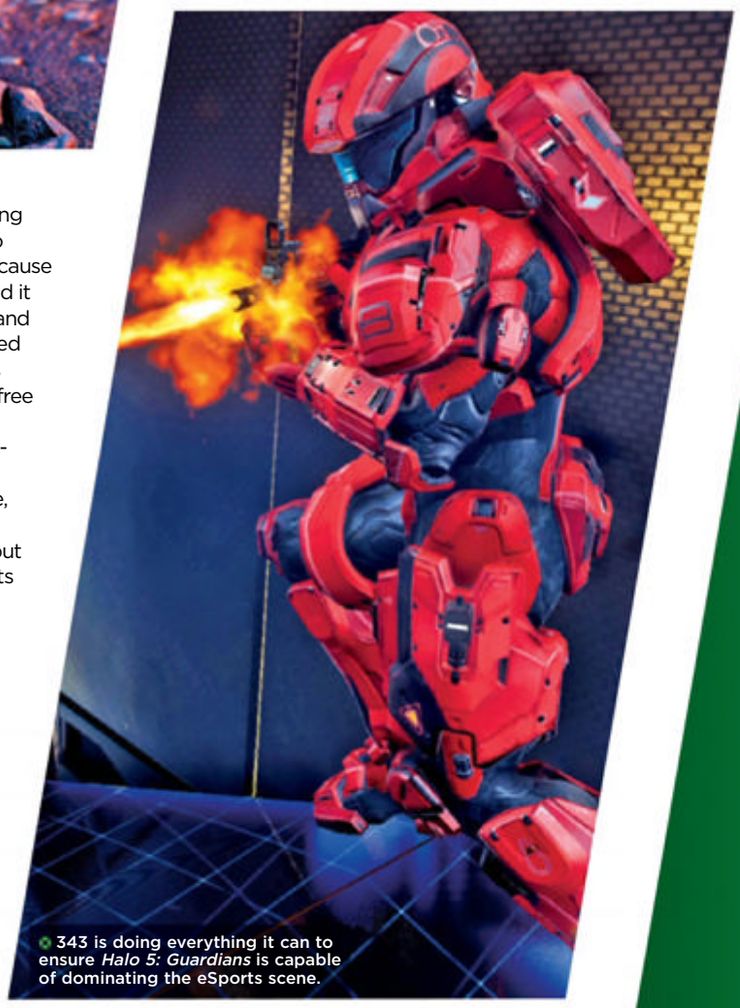
So, why the sudden interest in professional gaming – especially from an industry that seems to often so intensely distrust and fear new trends? It's partly because of the community that has organically formed around it in recent years. Unlike traditional sports like football and rugby, eSports are incredibly inclusive. Getting involved in the competitive scene – as a spectator or player – is accessible to anybody with a broadband connection, free Twitch account and an Xbox One. The foundations of eSports are further strengthened by a network of multi-cultural gamers with a mutual interest and devotion to online gaming. ESports has seen substantial growth due, partly, at least, to its roots in every corner of the globe.

Sure, there are a few trolls – that's the internet for you – but it's easier than ever to block, ignore or battle back. eSports is about so much more than watching other people kick ass playing videogames; in many ways it's the natural evolution of gaming forums, a place where players can interact and converse with gaming's biggest celebrities behind an ever-thinning veil of anonymity.

Wait, celebrities? The eSports scene has become a space where gamers – whether they are professional or amateur – can commentate and explore the escapades only found over Xbox Live. And with that, some of its biggest players have been thrust onto the global stage, earning huge pay-packets, trusted to reveal new games, and gaining insane access to developers in ways that most gamers only dream of. And what's great is that you could be one of these people. In many ways, that's down to the accessibility of streaming and game capture on your Xbox One. Twitch has basically become the Sky Sports of live gaming – but, you know, with the stuffy presenters replaced by a bunch of teens playing *COD* in their PJs.

You might be wondering what's so special about these lucky sods that lets them get away with playing games all day instead of going to work like everyone else, right? You do that already, so why can't you be earning a bit bank for your efforts? It's partly down to how these professional, or – and let's not beat around the bush here – full-time gamers, get seriously deep into game design. Once someone has chosen to master a particular title, they obsess over every nuance. Trawling through code in search of new tricks, dedicating thousands of hours to counting frames, learning map shortcuts and perfect Pick-13 combinations. They'll do anything to get the edge over an opponent, and – if you watch enough of them dominating – that knowledge will eventually be passed onto you. Whether you have the time, patience and dedication to practise and utilise it is in your capable hands.

It's a huge part of why people are choosing to spend their evenings watching a bunch of people kick ass on *Call Of Duty* and *Killer Instinct*. And it's this level of dedication that gets these full-time gamers in front of devs, with their expertise used to help shape game systems and mechanics. NetherRealm Studios famously invited tournament-level fighters to its offices to play test the *Mortal Kombat* reboot – often making changes on the spot. 343 Industries regularly has a pro team into its offices to run the latest *Halo 5: Guardians* build through its paces. And it's no surprise that among the first people in the world to sample *Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare* were champions of the eSports circuit.



343 is doing everything it can to ensure *Halo 5: Guardians* is capable of dominating the eSports scene.

NEXT BIG THING

THESE GAMES ARE GOING TO ROCK ESPORTS IN 2015



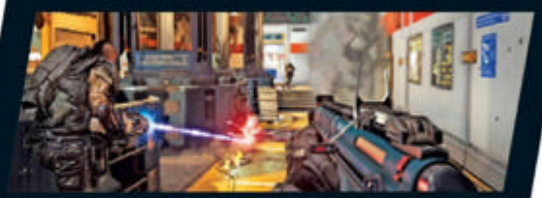
RAINBOW SIX: SIEGE

Ubisoft's latest is built with intense competitive play in mind. With its one-shot, one-kill action, easy to understand rules, and asymmetric set-up, *Rainbow Six: Siege* will be going straight for the throat of *Counter-Strike* when it launches later this year.



HALO 5: GUARDIANS

We've already had a chance to sample *Halo 5: Guardians*, and it's clear that it is going to have a huge impact on the console FPS eSports scene. Expect perfect balance, challenging modes and robust spectator modes. Start practising those strafing moves on *The Master Chief Collection*.



CALL OF DUTY: ADVANCED WARFARE

With the COD Championships fast approaching, Sledgehammer's debut will be on the global stage to showcase the potential of console-based eSports gaming. Spurring the teams on will be a one million dollar prize pot, with the finals will be streaming over Xbox Live.



SMITE

MOBAs come to Xbox One thanks to *Smite*, and as any follower of eSports knows, that's where the big bucks and epic rivalries are. The *Smite* beta begins this February, so get on board and start practising. This will be perfect for any entry level eSports wannabe.

This sort of critical testing used to be conducted behind the scenes by underpaid and overworked QA testers, now it's done by a group of people that you can watch, talk to and interact with in a matter of minutes. And who knows, you could even get to be one of them, with enough practice. It isn't difficult to get started, just start live streaming your online sessions and go from there. If you're charismatic, good and, perhaps most importantly, ambitious you'll start to build an audience. The ESL and MLG websites are free to join, and regularly hold tournaments for amateur competitors and legends alike. The days of awkwardly building clans and slowly crawling through the convoluted GameBattles brackets are way, way behind us (thank god).

If you're still struggling to see the appeal of eSports, we do recommend that you take some time to watch a major competition online. Think of a game you enjoy or understand the rule set of and go hunting. YouTube has tons of archive footage, though the best stuff comes from EVO (for fighting fans) and the Call Of Duty Championship. The COD Championship in particular is a huge event, and it doesn't take long before you'll get swept up in the chaos and grandeur of it all. Give last year's tournament finals ten minutes of your time and you'll surely develop a vested interest in the teams, dramas and personalities – helped wonderfully by the team of 'ShoutCast' commentators that narrate the rounds, a group of people that began commentating on live streams in their bedrooms and have risen through the ranks to cover a multi-million dollar event that's streamed out across Xbox Live and even highlighted on ESPN.



Thanks to its robust spectator mode, it's easier than ever to learn from the best players in the world.

> "These teams operate on another level; they have tactics you wouldn't have even considered, skills that seem to defy what a game should be capable of"



While the beta is now over, it's worth grabbing The Master Chief Collection to refine your skills now.

Call it what you like; competitive, professional or eSports gaming – when you see the raw ambition and quality of the gameplay, you'll be sold on watching games instead of playing. Or at the very least, as well as. These teams operate on another level; they have tactics you wouldn't have even considered, skills that seem to defy what a game should be capable of – and they all started by finding new challenges and pushing themselves to be better. Watching, reporting, ShoutCasting and playing games in a professional environment is available to *you* right now, and it's an exciting new aspect of the videogame industry. Something we can surely all agree is needed, following a year peppered with vile and exclusionary behaviour.

Millions of people tune in to watch live broadcasts of major events. Thousands of hours are spent every day, by average and professional gamers alike, streaming and sharing their passion. More games are adopting competitive rules and modes into their multiplayer experiences to engage the audience in the eSports arena. Social misconceptions of gaming are on the decline as earning money from playing videogames becomes accepted and understood by society. ESports isn't just a stage for talented gamers to showcase their immense talent and trash-talking skills any more; it's a space for people of all walks of life to engage with a brand new community. It's a platform for people to be inspired and entertained by seeing videogames treated in a similar vein to 'real' sporting events. We might be a few years off from seeing *Halo*'s Griffball at the Olympic Games, but the popularity of eSports shows no signs of wavering – and there's still time to get in at the ground floor. ■

HOW DO YOU WANT TO GET INTO ESPORTS?

A HANDY WAY TO HELP YOU DECIDE

I WANT TO

WATCH → TWITCH

Twitch promotes major tournaments and gamers on its homepage. Sign-up for an account, follow some channels and see who resonates with you. It won't take long to find someone you enjoy watching and talking to.



PLAY → MLG

Major League Gaming is one of the biggest professional gaming platforms in the world. When you're ready to get serious, sign up for an account and start entering into competitions and tournaments.



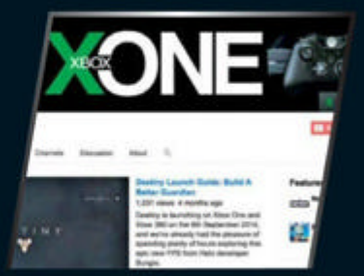
REPORT → BLOG

There's a surprisingly little amount of coverage of the eSports scene online, which means if you want to get involved you absolutely can do it right now. Start a blog and get going, it isn't difficult to build a rapport with pros.



COMMENTATE → YOUTUBE

Getting involved in ShoutCasting or commentating is trickier, but it isn't impossible. The best thing to do is to grab DVR Game Clips on Xbox One, splice them together in Upload Studio and start narrating!



BACK TO THE FUTURE



WE GO BACK IN TIME AND FIND THE 15 GAMES THAT WE WOULD LOVE TO SEE RESURRECTED ON THE XBOX ONE



PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY

Psi-Ops was such a fun little game that we're amazed it never received a sequel. It's extremely similar to Free Radical Design's *Second Sight*, which was released the same year, but we'd argue that it's far more fun to play. You're cast in the role of amnesiac Nick Scryer, who slowly developers a number of psychic powers that range from telekinesis to remote viewing and mind control. While you've access to a fair number of satisfying-to-use weapons, they become more and more redundant on later stages where you can truly run rampant with your powers.

The plot is overly familiar and Nick is just another clichéd grunt, but the far-fetched hokum feels purposely tongue-in-cheek, allowing all the silliness of the script to complement the over-the-top abilities Nick eventually possesses. While a sequel was promised in the game's final credits, we're still waiting for it 11 years later.

BETTER ON XBOX ONE

Hopefully someone will pick the licence up and create a fun alternative to *Force Unleashed* (which ripped off *Psi-Ops* big time). Obviously a sequel needs co-operative play from the get go, a hectic multiplayer mode and lots and lots of insane new powers. The processing grunt of Xbox One could allow you to manipulate huge objects in a sequel and let you throw around multiple enemies at once. The Bullet physics engine would be excellent here, allowing you to create absolute carnage with very little effort. Destructible environments should also be included, so you can throw things around after you've shot them all up.

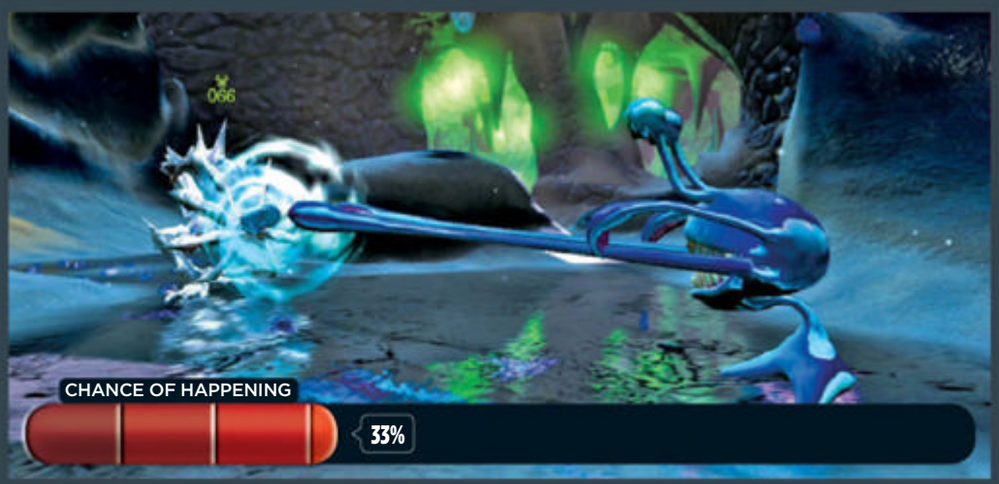
KAMEO: ELEMENTS OF POWER

This 360 launch title was originally planned for Xbox, but was enhanced visually and boasted incredible battle scenes that wouldn't have been possible on Microsoft's original console. It went through many changes during development, ending up as a *Zelda*-styled adventure with a lead character that can take on the abilities of a variety of fantastical looking creatures.

Despite high scores upon release, *Kameo* failed to shift the numbers Microsoft wanted, making a sequel highly unlikely. This in itself is rather ironic, as *Kameo* was the kind of beautifully presented, inventive game that persuaded Microsoft to purchase Rare in the first place.

BETTER ON XBOX ONE

Kameo was originally planned on GameCube as a *Pokémon*-like adventure, but was changed as it was too similar to Nintendo's franchise. Even now, though, Microsoft has nothing similar on any of its consoles, making it a potentially interesting angle for a sequel to take. We'd also want online battles and online trading as standard.



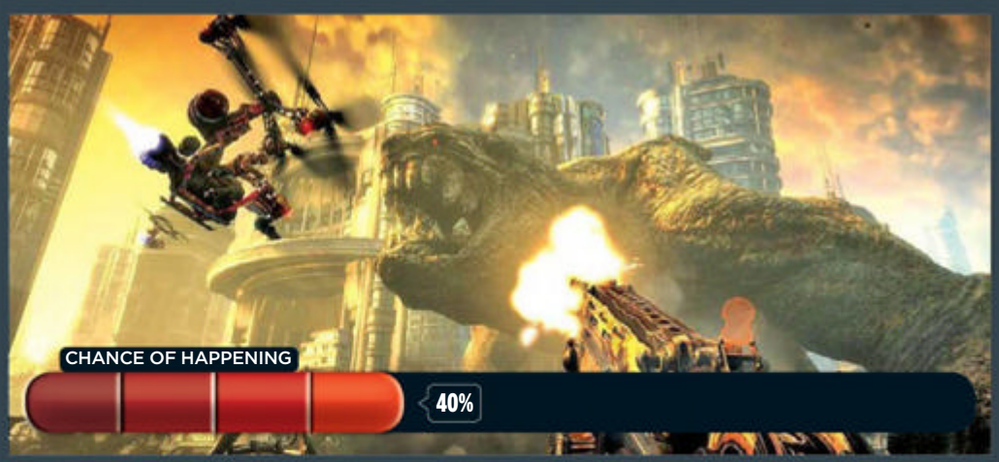
BULLETSTORM

Bulletstorm is one of the most creative and inventive first-person shooters to appear on the Xbox 360. Yes it's incredibly crass, with an over-reliance on gore and F-bombs, which are pretty unavoidable, so if you mind that sort of thing then this definitely isn't the game for you. It's also linear as hell with a multiplayer mode that disappointed many gamers, but the sheer amount of creativity on offer needs to be applauded.

Controlling remote-controlled dinosaurs, fighting on the sides of buildings and outrunning gigantic metal wheels are just a few of the ridiculous setpieces found in People Can Fly's game, but it's the inventive "Skillshot" system, built around a rope-like weapon called the Leash, that's the real highlight.

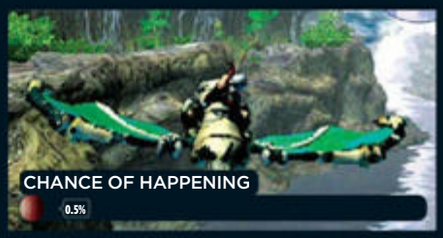
BETTER ON XBOX ONE

The raw power and enhanced graphical grunt of the Xbox One could allow People Can Fly to bolt a more traditional multiplayer mode onto any kind of sequel that it wants to make. The popular score-based "Echoes" mode would benefit from the Cloud by showing you ghosts of the best high scorers.



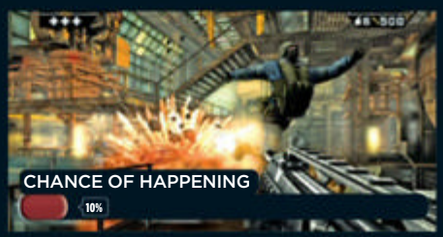
REAL OUTSIDERS

THE GAMES THAT ARE DEAD FOREVER



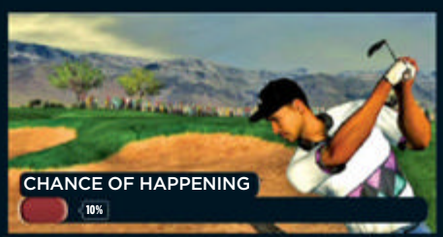
PANZER DRAGOON ORTA

This stunning but tough on-rails shooter is arguably the best traditional arcade blaster on the original Xbox, created by the now defunct Smilebit. *Orta* was a graphical tour de force, while switching between three dragons added much-needed strategy to the shooting, so all Sega needs to do is turn the graphics up to 11 and add co-op. Still, it's unlikely to happen as *Orta* sold poorly, as did its spiritual successor *Crimson Dragon*.



BLACK

Amazing destructible environments, suitably satisfying weapons and incredible sound design were all hallmarks of Criterion Games's great first-person shooters. Ideally, a sequel would use *Battlefield 4*'s superb Frostbite 3 game engine, but poor sales and EA's reluctance to fund a sequel makes one highly unlikely. A pity as its focus on only using two weapons and aggressive AI made it surprisingly strategic.



LINKS 2004

Indie Built's superb golf game may have lacked a popular licence, but it delivered a far better game of golf. Convincing physics and the ability to play multiplayer online at your own pace were key factors to its popularity, so use of the Cloud would obviously be the key to any sequel's success, allowing for playing against ghosts and persistent Drivatar-style golfers, but the death of Indie Built makes sequels unlikely.

ALAN WAKE

Remedy's five-year labour of love was a long-time coming, but worth that lengthy wait. Styled like a TV serial, levels were essentially standalone plots that melded together to tell a compelling story about the titular character who is investigating his wife's mysterious disappearance.

While its biggest influences are atmospherically-driven games like *Silent Hill* and *Resident Evil*, its focus on light and how it could destroy Wake's shadowy antagonists helped make it stand apart from similar games. Despite a DLC sequel and combined format sales of three million units, Sam Lake, Remedy's creative director, passionately explained online that *Alan Wake 2* had been postponed.

BETTER ON XBOX ONE

We're going to buck the trend here and argue that Remedy should simply port the superior PC version, which boasted enhanced visuals and a silky-smooth frame-rate. It would hopefully generate some much-needed interest in this slick survival horror and path the way for the sequel Remedy clearly desires to make.



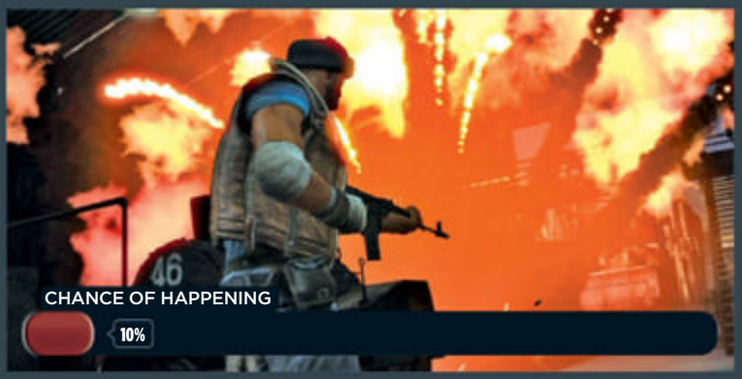
THE CLUB

It's a brave developer that creates a shooter that doesn't adhere to the *Call Of Duty* mould. Sadly, it's a gamble that didn't work for Sega and developer Bizarre Creation. *The Club* is a grittily-themed old-school fast-paced third-person shooter where you run through grimy locations racking up as many points as possible.

While it does include story and multiplayer modes, the real draw of *The Club* is its continual high-score chasing. Bizarre Creations' excellent level design and tight controls allowed for plenty of experimentation during play, but the commitment that was needed to truly master them left many gamers cold.

BETTER ON XBOX ONE

The Club lived on its score-chasing, so Xbox One's superior networking would certainly be a benefit for any sequel that happens. The Cloud could also store ghosts of rival players, enabling you to better master each level and discover strong high scoring locations. With more variety in the shooter arena these days, we reckon *The Club* would do well.



AMPED: FREESTYLE SNOWBOARDING

Microsoft's snowboarding game received two sequels, making a fourth far more likely than other games we've featured. We'd ideally like to see a return to the original game as it was far less zany then its sequels and delivered more technical snowboarding and a rewarding control system. The main draws of the *Amped* franchise are the huge mountains that can be tackled, plus their outlandish presentation, which did a great job of capturing the popular sport. Its *Tony Hawk's*-style focus on multiple objections also ensured plenty of longevity, while the Xbox's hard drive enabled you to create your own personal soundtrack.

BETTER ON XBOX ONE

Xbox One could not only create extremely realistic physics, but would also allow developers Indie Built to greatly increase the size and playing areas of available mountains. Cloud support could enhance standard play by introducing opponents as seen in games like *Forza 5*, making the mountainsides bustle with perceived life.



EARTH DEFENCE FORCE: 2017

We're huge fans of *2017*, even if it did have some of the most garish, ugly visuals to ever appear on the console. Created by Sandlot, it's a fantastic over-the-top shooter that uses crude visuals so it can throw around ridiculous numbers of giant enemy insects and topple over buildings at will. It allows for insane amounts of carnage that's immensely satisfying to witness. There are over 150 weapons to discover and experiment with and it's possible to leap into a large number of different vehicles. There's even co-operative play, although the lack of online play hurt it somewhat, and with three *EDF* games released on 360 a sequel is pretty damn likely.

BETTER ON XBOX ONE

The Cloud could be used to create an army of Drivatar-styled mates to help you take down the insane amounts of enemies an Xbox One version could and definitely should throw at you. We'd also want an insane physics engine, at least 1,000 different weapons and some expansive online play. This is definitely one of our most wanted.



BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

The Xbox was sorely lacking in *Zelda*-styled adventures, so Ubisoft's *Beyond Good & Evil* immediately stood apart from other games on the system. Created by Michel Ancel, *BG&E* is an imaginative adventure game that plays with a variety of genres, including racing, stealth and puzzle. It's the strong characters and robust story that made Ancel's game popular with critics however, particularly on the Xbox where *Zelda*-like games are far less common. Heroine Jade remains one of the strongest female protagonists of recent times, while the photography mini-game proved an innovative way of generating extra cash. Here's hoping the proposed sequel actually happens.

BETTER ON XBOX ONE

First announced in 2008, Ancel's sequel is still in development hell. Fortunately, the power of Xbox One should enable Ancel and his team to create the cinematic adventure that he claims the Xbox 360 was stopping him from achieving. We'd also love to see Pey'j upped to co-lead with Jade, allowing for co-operative play.



CALL OF CTHULHU: DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH

This innovative first-person shooter was heavily delayed and ended up burying the developer, making a sequel unlikely. It's a pity as the distinctive Twenties setting immediately sets it apart from other first-person shooters, while the focus on flight over fight also lets you know you're playing something that's a little different to the norm. Gauging your character's health by listening to his laboured breathing, having your movement affected by broken legs and bolting doors to deter pursuing monsters creates a tense, chilling experience that's further enhanced by some clever puzzles and a well developed storyline.

BETTER ON XBOX ONE

If a sequel did miraculously get the green light the main thing it needs is to fix the clunky combat system found in the original. It should also ramp up the chase sequences, and borrow the alien AI from *Alien Isolation*. In fact, give the licence to The Creative Assembly.

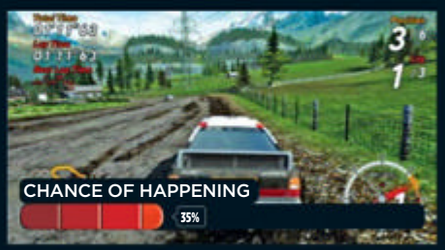


CRASH AND BURN

GREAT RACING GAMES WE'VE LIKELY LOST

SEGA RALLY REVOLUTION

The short-lived Sega Racing Studio delivered this sublime racer in 2007. It's notable for slick arcade-like visuals and excellent terrain deformation in the track design that affected the handling of vehicles as each stage progressed. We'd love to see the processing power of Xbox One massively enhancing this feature. Despite favourable reviews, releasing it the same week as *Halo 3* didn't help sales.



PURE

Excellent ATV-based racer with a main hook of getting boosts by continually pulling outlandish tricks and stunts. It's a stunning-looking game, bolstered by convincing physics and exceptional handling. It sports three different types of races, impressive track design and a solid online multiplayer, but it couldn't capture the public's attention.



OUTRUN 2

Another superb arcade racer from Sega, ported exclusively to the original Xbox by Sumo Digital. Blue skies, exceptional handling and the ability to drive some of the greatest Ferraris of all time make this the most likely lost racer to get an eventual sequel. Sega should get imaginative and make *OutRun 3* play more like the open world racing of *Forza Horizon*.



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XBOX ONE



DYING LIGHT

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Another paradise, another apocalypse

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Warner Bros.

DEVELOPER
Techland

GAME TYPE
Mirror's Edge meets zombies

PLAYERS
1-4

DLC
Be A Zombie

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
A Long Way Down (25G)

IN BRIEF

Techland finally leaves the *Dead Island* franchise behind and gets its latest FPS open-world zombie slasher out of the door after multiple delays.

Which of these is easier for you to believe? That Techland is actually capable of delivering a technically proficient game or that, despite what feels like a decade of near-constant zombie outbreaks and fever-pitch 'situations', civilisation is *still* wholly unprepared to combat a serious case of the living deads? Given Techland's track record, we'd be inclined to swing towards the latter. That said, as anyone that relies on public transport can attest to, if the local authoritative bodies can't manage a train timetable how could they possibly organise an assault on the zombified masses? And so we turn to *Dying Light*: a next-gen exclusive that has made us realise that Techland is not only capable of competency, but that gangland marauders will be forever more prepared to combat chaos than the government, go figure.

Perhaps the reason these viruses get so horribly out of control is because *we* are always sent in to contain them. It's been this way for a decade of survival horror; the lone ranger capable of packing an unusual amount of violence, items, and terrible quips into a bottomless backpack. All the while having patience of steel to deal with inane objectives and half-cut NPCs that figure a good use of your time is to bring certainly stale chocolates to their inanimate "mother". Instead of, you know, bludgeoning the baying horde of monsters at the door.

But that's *Dying Light* all over. Another paradise in turmoil, another biter-bashing romp from the studio responsible for the charmingly disappointing *Dead Island* franchise. 2015's biggest surprise so far – *Dying Light* isn't shithouse. In fact, it's actually pretty damn fun. It's an obvious blend of *Dead Island*, *Mirror's Edge* and *Far Cry 3*, retaining the visceral action of the former whilst terminating the infuriating bug infestation and reliance on terrible Australian accents that drove us to near-insanity back in 2011. But there's really no getting around this sticking point: *Dying Light* doesn't feel like it aspires to be anything more than the spiritual successor to *Dead Island*. It doesn't just resemble its predecessor in substance, style and setting – it reuses entire gameplay mechanics and systems, but spruces up the core experience with a sexy coat of Xbox One paint and the addition of parkour.

> "As a spiritual successor to Dead Island, it's a noticeable step-up in quality and technical proficiency"

There's still an unruly focus on bloody, head-smashing melee action. The gunplay is still detestably loose for the limited firearms you'll come across out in the open world. The kick you'll utilise against the undead when your stamina bar is depleted – which happens whenever you swing a cricket bat or machete – seems to reuse the same exact four-year old animation. The crafting also returns, allowing you to create



The map is huge, so it's wise to regularly clear safe zones – otherwise you'll get slammed at nightfall.

Sure, you can play with friends in four-player co-op. But that's how you get weapon and item envy.

weapons with all manner of ridiculous elemental effects as you endlessly sift through crates and boxes for blueprints, upgrades and resources. And, yes, you're going to be doing a hella-ton of fetch quests. Just because you're the only person capable of saving the world from disaster doesn't mean you won't still become the absolute bitch for every poorly-dialogued asshole you encounter during your twenty or so hours with the main campaign.

Good thing *Dying Light* has parkour, then, to break up the familiarity of it all, right? Hello, are you still there? No, of course you aren't. You've slipped into a boredom coma because – like the rest of the world – you're as sick of parkour being forced down your virtual throat as much as you are seeing it practiced when you trudge on down to the shops on a Saturday morning. Congratulations, you can hop between small gaps like a kitten, now get out of the way so we can grab a coffee.

Good lord we've become cynical, grumpy bastards haven't we? Blame the on-going delay to *Mirror's Edge 2*, the hatred directed at *Shadowrun* and that ever-lingering disappointment *Brink* dumped on us a generation ago. While it's certainly refreshing to view the beautifully rendered city of Harran from the rooftops, basking in the beautiful sun-soaked skyline and billowing smoke plumes – the act of free-running doesn't feel as intuitive as it could, or should, be.





Enjoy *Far Cry 3*? Good, cause this features plenty of tower climbing, safe house liberating and resource gathering.



EXTENDED EXPERIENCE



CALL OF JUAREZ: GUNSLINGER
Techland's best game is still kicking about on the Xbox 360 Xbox Live Arcade. An immensely entertaining and clever shooter, a must-play game.



DEAD RISING 3
Want to try something a little sillier than *Dying Light*? This zombie game is still one of the best open-world romps on Xbox One.



DEAD ISLAND
Go back to where it all started and laugh at the terrible dialogue and repetitive missions. Just don't play its sequel *Riptide*.



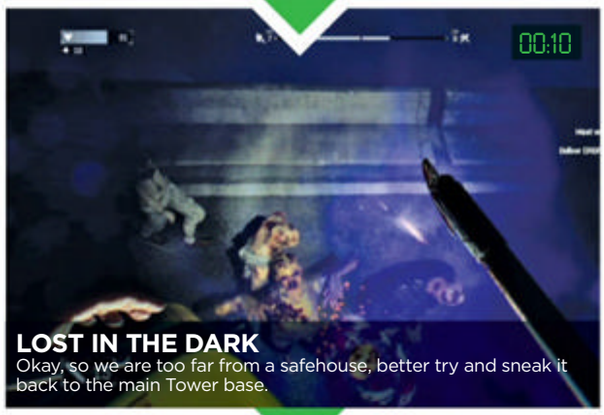
TRENDING

#TOOMANY COLLECTIBLES

Dying Light is full of useless collectibles; while some flesh out the ridiculous story, others are just there to appease the completionists.

SEQUENCE

Hello darkness, my old friend
The gameplay shifts once you hit night; this is how a standard altercation with the Volatile enemy types tends to go



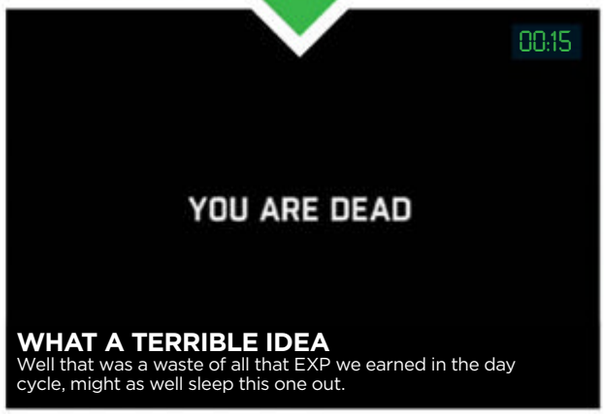
LOST IN THE DARK
Okay, so we are too far from a safehouse, better try and sneak it back to the main Tower base.



OHH, WHAT'S THAT?
But look, there's an objective just over there... maybe I'll complete it real quick under the cover of darkness.



UH OH, BIG MISTAKE
Oh god, this was a bad idea. Volatiles are too strong to fight and too fast to out-run... and we're outta flares.



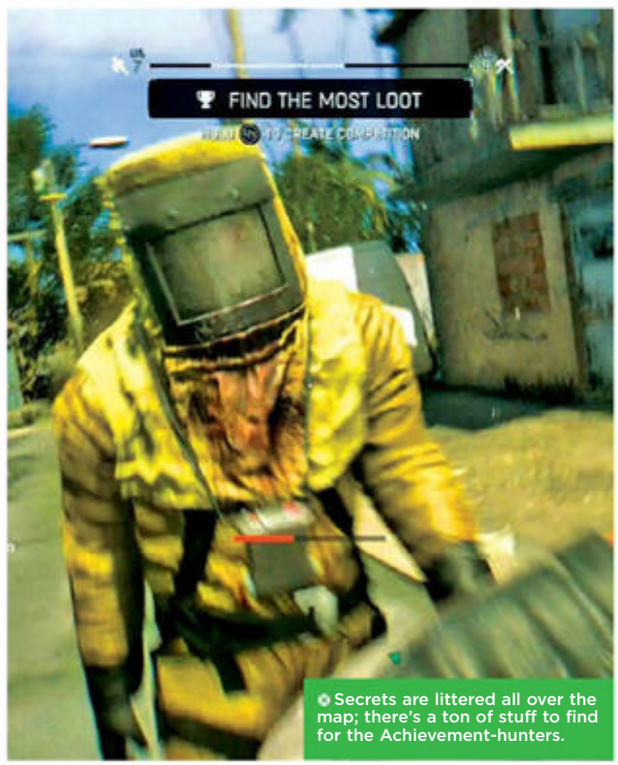
WHAT A TERRIBLE IDEA
Well that was a waste of all that EXP we earned in the day cycle, might as well sleep this one out.

"Another paradise in turmoil, another biter-bashing romp from the studio responsible for the charmingly disappointing Dead Island"

It's a one-button affair, of course, with the awkwardly-mapped RB handling jumping duties. Hold that down while sprinting or jumping and you'll grab onto whatever ledge you're looking at. It works, but it isn't elegant by any stretch of the imagination. Once you eventually unlock more parkour abilities – such as a new set of longer-lasting lungs, thigh muscles capable of leaping you over enemies and, of course, shins of steel to let you slide – *Dying Light* finally gains a bit of momentum, loosens up and becomes a little more fun. You'll welcome it when it does though; the open-world is huge and, with a distressing lack of fast travel, the rooftops are the only real way of getting around before night falls.

It's strange though; by putting so much emphasis on movement and manoeuvrability, it almost feels like *Dying Light* has disconnected itself from the core experience that Techland has recreated from the ashes of *Dead Island*. You're actively encouraged to avoid combat. Instead of revelling in the violence and brutality of the ridiculous situation, you're essentially pushed to circumvent altercations with walkers and the roaming gangs of AI characters entirely.

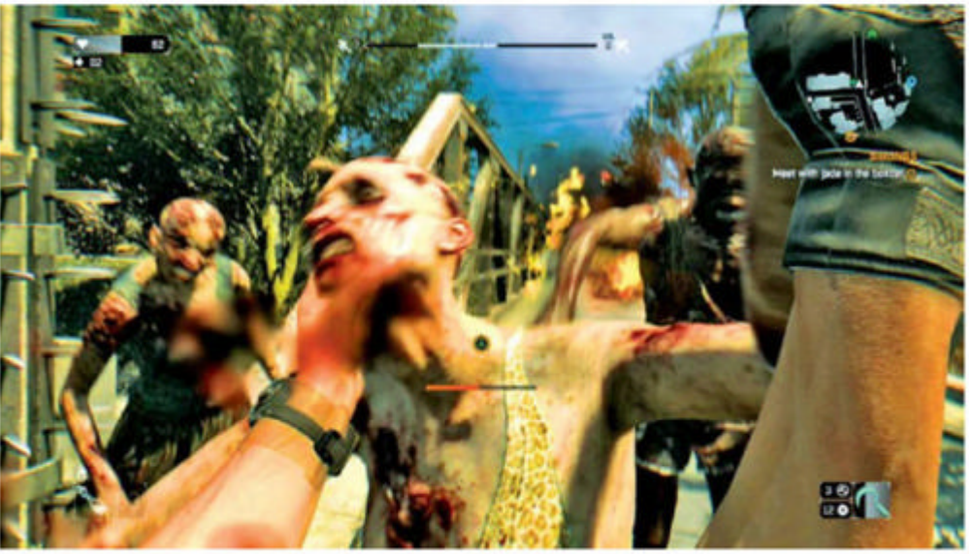
That's not to say it isn't still immensely satisfying to slice limbs off with a flaming Excalibur-replication sword or to crack skulls in with a beefed up cricket bat – but it isn't as anarchic as the combat found in *Dead Island*. Should you feel the wanton desire to go on rampages, you're going to find yourself dying quickly and often – especially if you get caught amongst a horde of zombies with your pants down and a lack of molotov cocktails in your backpack. Should you die, which you will, you can also kiss goodbye to all of your recent EXP gains – it's possible to essentially waste an entire skill tree's worth of levelling gains with a misplaced jump or dodge.



Secrets are littered all over the map; there's a ton of stuff to find for the Achievement-hunters.

Combat is as visceral as ever, but you'll soon get frustrated by how easily your badass weapons break. Seriously uncool.





Worse still, Techland is so eager to have you bounding across rooftops like an enthusiastic *Assassin's Creed* cosplayer that it's made the penalties to avoiding it relatively punishing. Weapon degradation is a nightmare to control and manage – even the hardiest weapon will reach breaking point after just a few strikes, not to mention the fact that they can only be repaired a certain amount of times before becoming useless. The economy system is brutal; discovering that baseball bat you bought for most of your cash and upgraded the fun-loving hell out of will only last for a few fights is a depressing realisation.

Another depressing realisation? Once the sun goes down you aren't anything like a badass zombie-slayer. *Dying Light* features an interesting day-night cycle that dramatically alters the pace of the game and your chances of survival. At night, deadlier, mutated zombies come out to play, known as Volatiles, and cause a ton of trouble. While staying out beyond curfew can reap massive rewards, the Volatiles are far more agile, vicious and difficult to exterminate. In fact, *Dying Light* constantly suggests you head to one of the many unlockable safe houses and catch some Zs to avoid the danger all together.

Dying Light proves to be fun in small bursts, but lacks the energy to carry your attention throughout a prolonged and immensely tedious campaign. The side-quests and world exploration aspects are undoubtedly the big draw, but played over long periods of time you'll begin to feel deflated by the limitations on the combat and parkour systems. You'll enjoyment will depend largely on what you want *Dying Light* to be. As a standalone new IP, you'll find its criminal lack of new ideas and dull re-purposing of aging mechanics and systems constantly scratching at any prolonged enjoyment you might look to have. As a spiritual successor to *Dead Island*, it's a noticeable step up in quality and technical proficiency for Techland across the board, and a good sign that the studio has left its bug-laden past behind it.

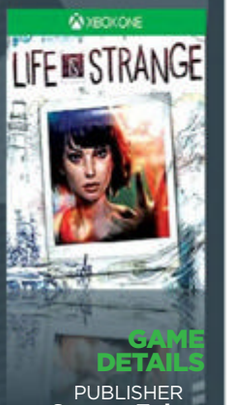
JOSH WEST

VERDICT

A lot of fun in small bursts, but no amount of polish, parkour or persistence can plaster over the cracks of the aging *Dead Island* mechanics and systems.

7

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
Dontnod

GAME TYPE
Time-warping teen adventure

PLAYERS
1

DLC
4 further episodes

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Visionary (45G)

IN BRIEF

An episodic adventure game from the creators of *Remember Me* in which you play as an 18-year-old girl navigating life, school, boys… and the ability to rewind time and re-do things all over again.

LIFE IS STRANGE: EPISODE 1

http://lifeisstrange.com /LifeIsStrangeGame @lifeisstrange

It isn't just strange – it's pretty good

What would you do if you could rewind the last couple of minutes of your life, at will? You'd abuse it to your benefit – possibly to help others too, right? Of course you would – so you'll be pleased to know it's just what you get to do in *Life Is Strange*, as lead character Max discovers she has that very power. Initially using it to learn information that helps her answer a question in photography class at the academy she's attending, Max soon enough uses the rewind functionality in her brain to stop an old friend being murdered in the toilet. Oh, the American school system…

This being a game of choice and consequence would make you think the rewind function, well, breaks everything, right? Far from it – *Life Is Strange* is designed with how you will affect things over time; the time you have no power over is the one that is *most* powerful. You might be able to make your decisions repeatedly in the moment, but once you're past it, the future is set – you, and others, will literally live and die by your decisions. Said decisions are made in a style anyone who's played *The Walking Dead* or *The Wolf Among Us* will be used to – a modern take on the point-and-click genre, and a slow, plodding pace compared to many recent Xbox One releases. But this pace – and the atmosphere it conjures up – benefits hugely from *Life Is Strange*'s visual direction, which couples fairly unspectacular, bog-standard character models and animation with a hand-painted touch. This extra layer of sheen really brings things alive visually, and adds a certain touch of the otherworldly to a game that absolutely benefits from being a touch *off* in its looks.

While we'd like to say the same about the choice of music, that isn't true. Sure, it is atypical in gaming to hear an indie soundtrack (in the US sense, not in the Oasis/Shed 7 sense), full of twangling guitars and tweeness leaking out of its orifices, but it's not otherworldly. It works though, because it helps to back up one of the biggest influencing factors for *Life Is Strange*: teen movies.

> "That's the hook – this is a series designed around choices that actually matter"

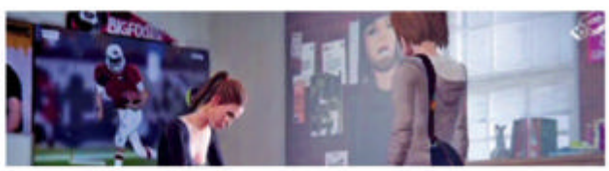
Anyone who's seen anything by the master – John Hughes – or the countless rip-offs of the genre he made relevant to so many millions will immediately see where *Life Is Strange* draws a big influence from. It's not written snappily or particularly cleverly enough to hit you with those emotional gut-punches that Hughes and his pretenders (the better ones, at least) could, but it's a refreshing – almost brave, in a way – setting to immerse the player in. No bald space marines, a lack of brown-saturated environments, an inability to shoot NPCs in the face – *Life Is Strange* just seems to have ignored everything that's apparently popular about modern gaming. And it's all the better for it. There's violence, bad language, drug use – all the good stuff – but this is a story first and foremost, and the place it's in – that being a college girl's life – isn't one for run-and-gunning ghastly aliens with a 45:1 k/d ratio. That'll probably arrive by *Episode 3*.

Life Is Strange also isn't difficult, in that it doesn't ask you to react quickly to things, it doesn't demand dexterity from its players nor do you really need to know where most of the buttons on the pad are. But it's not a game made to be hard – it's an experience meant to be had and shared with others, one where you learn and re-learn, one where you actually do think about what you're doing on a level deeper than in, say, *The Walking Dead*. That was a game where choices – absolutely correctly, because of the setting – were often between killing one person or the other, in a very direct, high-pressure fashion.

Life Is Strange, meanwhile, asks you to think: what *could* happen? You can likely figure out the short-term ramifications (in fact, you can literally see them, then rewind to your decision-making point), but can you figure out where things will lead in the long-term? And that's the hook – this is a series designed around these choices mattering – around innocent, 'good' things you did in the first episode coming back to bite you in the backside a few episodes later. While we haven't played the latter entries yet, we've been shown a few examples of decisions in the first game and how they affect things later on – it was genuinely surprising at times.

It's short, but at £3.99 for the single episode it's inexpensive, and absolutely an experience worth getting involved in. So long as the story keeps on a path of careful escalation, your choices continue to matter and things don't go down the route of something like *Fahrenheit* on the original Xbox (which saw you fighting hovering Mayan priests *for no discernible reason* in the latter stages of the game), *Life Is Strange* will be worth tuning in to for every episode.

IAN DRANSFIELD

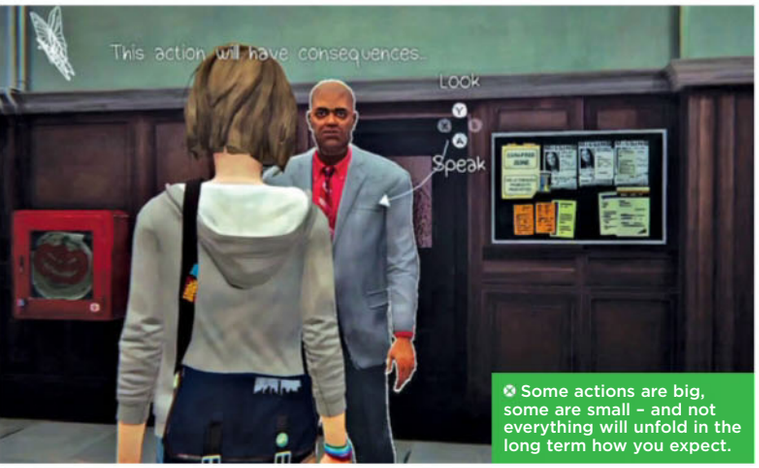




VERDICT

Clumsy dialogue aside, this first episode of *Life Is Strange* is a brilliant introduction to a story we can't wait to see the rest of – and make more choices in.

8



Some actions are big, some are small – and not everything will unfold in the long term how you expect.



You may have discovered a new superpower and impending doom, but you're not the only one with issues.



It's not *The Walking Dead*'s pressure-cooker timed choices, but that doesn't make it any less stressful at times.

TRENDING

#CHOICE TIME

Choosing an option, rewinding time then seeing what a different option gets you is great – and doesn't break the game, either.



It's not all sunshine and high school – something bad is just around the corner. But who will believe you?



Rewinding time starts out as something used to cheat in class, but soon becomes much more.

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Deep Silver

DEVELOPER
Volition

GAME TYPE
Another HD Remake

PLAYERS
1-2 online

DLC
Gat Out Of Hell (optionally bundled)

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Don't Look Down (10G)

IN BRIEF

After saving the world from nuclear war, the Boss becomes President of the United States. When aliens invade, the Boss is captured and trapped in a simulation of Steelport that they must break to escape.



You unlock telekinesis and elemental powers too, but the fast running and high jumping are still the most fun.

SAINTS ROW IV RE-ELECTED

www.saintsrow.com /SaintsRowIV @SaintsRow

Meet the new Boss. Same as the old Boss

Saints Row IV: Re-Elected isn't one of those HD remakes that take your breath away, but load up the original on your Xbox 360 and the difference is stark. With better textures and consistent 1080p resolution, *Re-Elected* is a welcome improvement. Frame-rate, however, is as inconsistent as ever, whether or not you select the bizarrely included V-Sync option. And this remake has failed to iron out all of the glitches found in the original. Then again, *Saints Row IV* – and thus also this new-gen version – is more about personality than polish, and what it sacrifices in visual panache it makes up for elsewhere.

Where more graphically impressive games might find women for some reason too difficult to animate, for instance, *Saints Row IV* lets you customise your character down to mixing gendered body types, voices, and clothes, and you can even switch gender during the game. In typical *Saints Row* fashion, each body type even comes with its own "sex appeal" slider that gives you the ability to equip your character with particularly large assets: up top for the female body, down low for the male.

It's a game built around freedom, initially the freedom afforded the President of the United States and then the freedom of a virtual reality. The simulation setting is a handy excuse for the kind of criminal behaviour players tend towards in open-world games, with none of that pesky dissonance. In fact, the point is to break the simulation in order to escape it. Thus you find yourself with superpowers like the ability to run so fast it makes cars seem pointless, and tasks to complete like throwing yourself into traffic as the mission text dictates "press trigger to rag doll". Throughout the campaign and side quests, *Saints Row IV* is gleeful in its mockery of other games, from the obvious *Grand Theft Auto* to the more surprising – and thus funnier – *Mass Effect* and *Metal Gear Solid*. That the jokes still work shows that games haven't moved on much since the previous-gen version first came out, but then it has only been about 18 months.

Unlike with other recent new-gen remasters, *Saints Row IV: Re-Elected* isn't visually impressive enough to tempt those who've played the original. But this HD upgrade does bring it closer to the kinds of graphics we expect from this new generation of consoles. If you've got an Xbox One and haven't played it, this is a great excuse to give it a try.

JORDAN ERICA WEBBER

VERDICT

Saints Row IV manages to lovingly poke fun at games and still be enjoyably escapist. Newcomers will also find this HD remake easier on the eyes.

7

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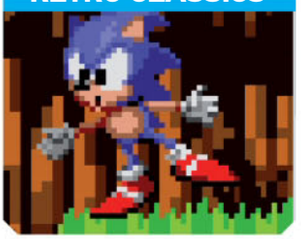
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XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Capcom

DEVELOPER
In-house

GAME TYPE
Horror

PLAYERS
1

DLC
None

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Hard

NEED TO UNLOCK
Don't Stop Running (50G)

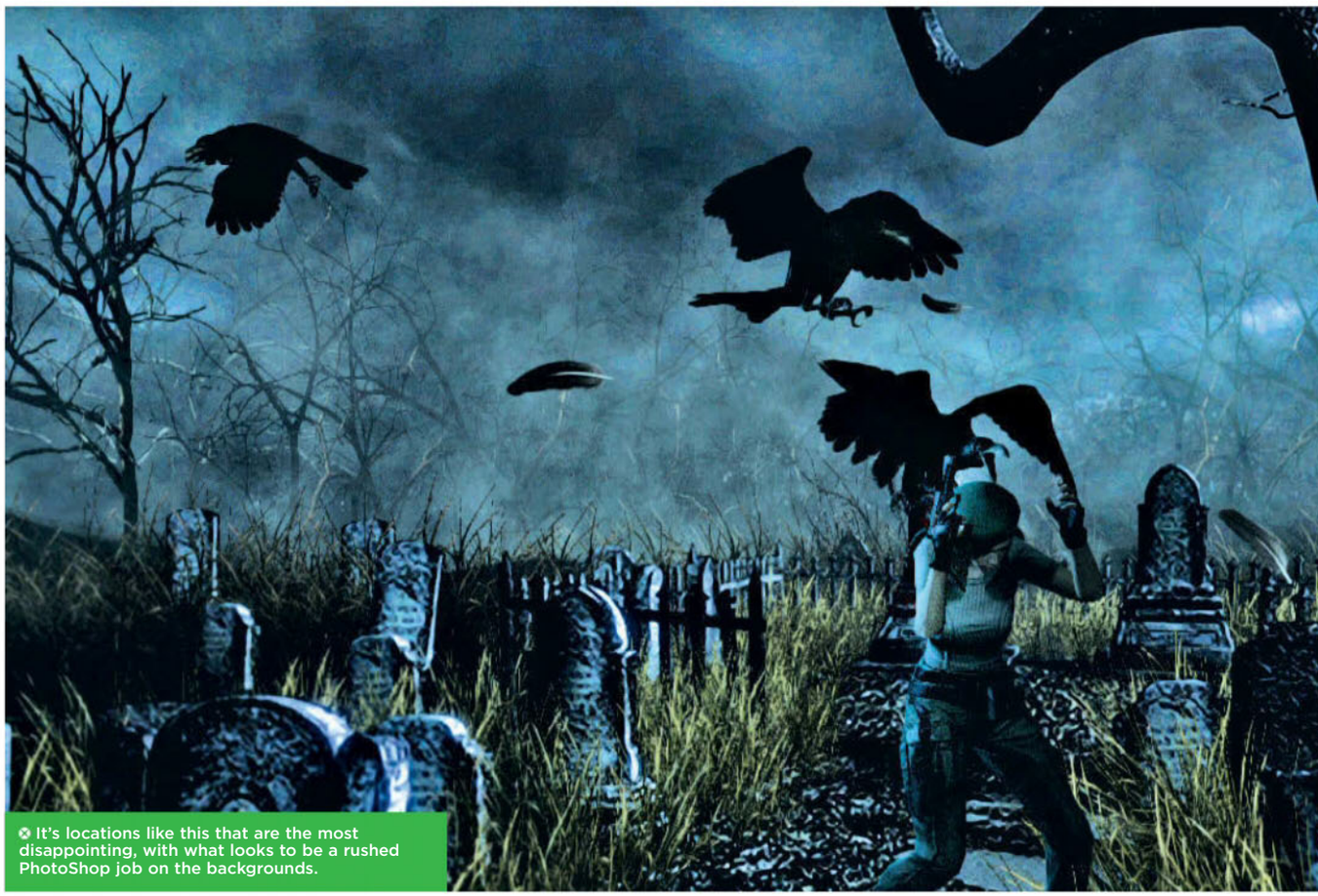
IN BRIEF

A virus breaks out in a small town called Raccoon City with reports of its inhabitants becoming cannibals, all thanks to a mystery hidden deep inside the spooky Spencer Mansion... stop us if you've heard this one?

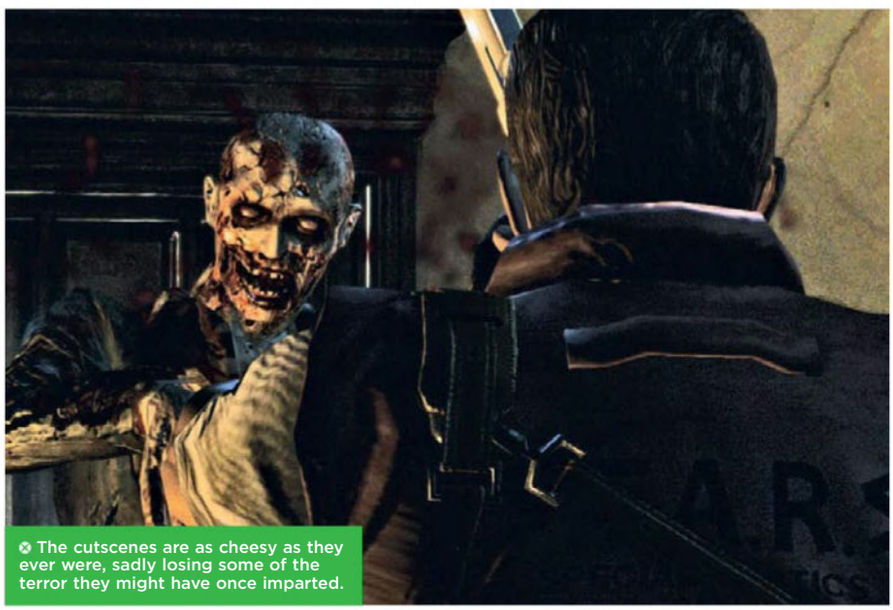


Say what you will of tank controls, anyone who played the original *Resi* will know how much it benefits the fear factor.





It's locations like this that are the most disappointing, with what looks to be a rushed PhotoShop job on the backgrounds.



The cutscenes are as cheesy as they ever were, sadly losing some of the terror they might have once imparted.



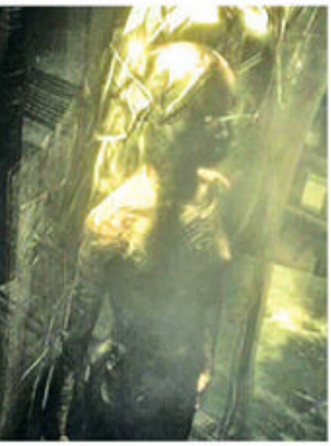


TRENDING

#TANKCONTROL 4LYF

It's a bone of contention now but tank controls get praised and criticised in equal measure and the debate will only hot up again with the release of this remaster.





RESIDENT EVIL HD REMASTER

www.capcom.co.jp/biohd /residentevilremastered @RE_Games



House of the dead

Was *Resident Evil* truly a terrifying horror game, or is it rose-tinted hindsight that makes the industry heap so much praise on it? It's an oft-asked question (pretty much every time Capcom announces a new one), and one that until now was tough to objectively answer. For a series that has taken a sharp downturn of late – though admittedly the console release of *Revelations* did something to perk fans up a tad – it's weirdly refreshing to play through the original *Resident Evil* with spruced up textures and polygon counts of more than ten. As *Resident Evil 6* had proven, Capcom has sort of lost its way, believing that the age of *Call Of Duty* had to infiltrate every aspect of gaming – its own *Resident Evil* included. That meant cover-based shooting, combat rolls and all the ammo you could wish for; essentially it was everything *Resident Evil* was not. So here it is, the answer you want to hear: yes, classic *Resident Evil* remains as relevant now as it ever was. We hope you're listening, Capcom.

Now, this is not a complete reworking of the original PS1 classic. *Resident Evil HD Remaster* is, in fact, an upscaled version of the Gamecube remake – and in all honesty a lot of that shows through. The character models aren't ever going to task the Xbox One, and there are times when old, washed out textures and backgrounds remain. It's actually a bit of a disappointment that Capcom would go to such lengths to 1080-ify its classic, but fail to overlook those crappy backgrounds. Not every room suffers this criticism, and in fact there are times when the improved backgrounds are downright *lovely* – which makes the stretched and pixelated locations all the more jarring. But this is a remaster, not a remake – meaning the widescreen support and scrolling cameras modernise its otherwise archaic technical designs and the older visuals, sadly, still remain.

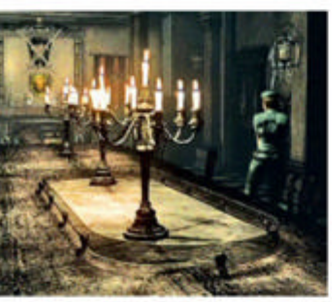
But none of that should really matter, because in its gameplay *Resident Evil* manages to remain as compelling as it did back in 1996. The limitations on inventory space – and, as a result, any spare ammo – or the slow-paced movement help create an atmosphere of discomfort. And while the shuffling inhabitants of Spencer Mansion might not have the same terror factor they once had – sadly, we've all grown up quite a bit since then – these limitations still make them a threat. You'll worry about leaving a green herb behind, or stepping into a new room without any ammunition for fear of what you might encounter. *Resident Evil* maintains a sense of dread through its mechanics, not its enemies, and that's what makes it such an important horror game. You'll once again relearn every corridor and every room, memorise the location of ammo you just didn't have the space to pick up or how close you are to the nearest save point. Sure, it's hard to deny that the *HD Remaster* is fairly old school with its systems, but it remains as fulfilling now as it was then.

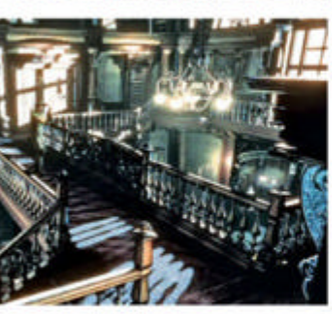
> "It's fairly old school with its systems, but it remains as fulfilling now as it was then"

However, if you're used to having checkpoints every time you kill an enemy then the concept of having strict save locations (and say nothing of conserving inventory space for ink ribbons so you can even save at all) then you might feel a little put off by this *Resident Evil* remaster. But there's a tension to survival horror games that can *only* be imparted by *Resi*'s harsh saving system; you know that if you die you've got half an hour or more to work through again just to catch up. The odds stack against you, you begin to crave the safety of a save room, and *that's* what creates the fear. The tank controls – for newbies, that's movement that is relative to your character not the camera – are still a big part of restricting the player too, but an alternative method has been included. It's an important concession, because while veterans will likely adore the bumbling steps of your character, we can admit that inexperienced players will struggle with this method. This alternative means that even those who aren't interested in the remaster for its nostalgia won't be restricted by how it plays.

As a game, *Resident Evil* manages to maintain its classic form. It doesn't match the same fear that the likes of *The Evil Within* or *Alien Isolation* can muster, but it couldn't ever compete with modern equivalents. In its place is a sense of uneasiness, a *real* fear that isn't brought on by the monsters you fight but your own decisions and reactions. Yet as a *remaster,* it's a little more hit and miss; the upscaled resolution means you can watch it on modern HDTVs without blood pouring from your eyeholes, but those untouched environments do let the whole package down. It's an awkward one to recommend, in all honesty, but let's put it this way: if you care *at all* about the state of survival horror then you owe it to yourself to get a copy – if only to prove to Capcom that gamers want more of *this* form of *Resi*, and not the mess that was *RE6*.

ADAM BARNES









VERDICT

As a remaster it's not as polished – graphically – as it should be, but it still proves that the core mechanics of *Resident Evil* are as thrilling as they ever were.

8

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Team 17

DEVELOPER
Mouldy Toof

GAME TYPE
Prison Sandbox

PLAYERS
1

DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Medium

NEED TO UNLOCK
Man On The Run (100G)

IN BRIEF

A top-down pixel art sandbox in which you have to bust out of prison using a mixture of ingenuity, persistence and timing. Forge alliances and instigate rivalries as you strive to become the only inmate to escape some of the world's most secure prisons.

THE ESCAPISTS

www.theescapists.com /Team17 @EscapistsGame

Not just another turn of the screw...

We've been toiling away in a laundry room for days, taking the dirty uniforms of guards and inmates alike and getting them clean. We do it for hours. Then we go and work out. Then we shower, get dinner, go to roll call and go to bed. The next day we do it all over again.

But tomorrow... tomorrow is different. Chad traded us a razor blade yesterday (we've been giving him cookies for a week, he owed us) and we managed to sneak a comb out of Brad's desk when no-one was looking. We crafted ourselves a rudimentary shiv, before sneaking one of the freshly laundered guard uniforms back to our cell. In the morning, we get into our new clothes, hide the shiv up our sleeve and wait. Wait for the last guard to walk pass on his way to roll call. He's a straggler, on his own, no backup. Idiot. We sneak up behind him and attack him with the shiv. He's unconscious, not dead – we're not *animals* – and our shiv's broken, but he's dropped his nightstick and a set of keys. No-one's seen us, we're in the clear.

Another guard rolls up – probably to check why we're not at roll call. We club him with the baton when he sees his fellow guard's body on the floor. That's two down, four to go. We carry on stalking the prison corridors in the morning, taking down unsuspecting guards who stop to greet their (apparent) new co-worker. Then it happens.

The warden sounds the alarm, the prison goes into lockdown – 'There's a maniac on the loose!' they probably shout to themselves. The other guards chase the prisoners back to their cells, and we walk straight out the front door, unchallenged. These are the moments *The Escapists* is about. These moments of tension, when you're holding your breath and seeing if it all pays off, are some of the most satisfying gaming moments we've had this year. We've been locked in some of these prisons for up to *90 days*; the game is sadistic and difficult. When you *finally* manage to pull off your escape without some dutiful guard or vengeful cellmate ruining it for you, you can't help but punch the air a little and grin like an idiot.

> "The moments of tension, when you're holding your breath and seeing your escape plans pay off, are some of the most satisfying we've had this year"

The Escapists is a true sandbox – there are six tiers of prison and although each has a recommended way of getting out, the game is pretty lax in how it forces you to do it. Want to tunnel out, flushing the dirt down the toilets? Go ahead. Want to clip that electric fence and sneak out at night? Good luck disabling the generator – oh, and if there are guards in the exterior towers, they'll shoot you, too.

You're going to want to learn how to craft items as soon as you're incarcerated: there are components *everywhere* and making a weapon or digging tool is vital in the early days of each bust-out. The game perhaps relies a little too heavily on trial-and-error here, but hey; the one-man development team *does* have a taste for the old hardcore SNES game or two. The RNG elements of cellmates that will sell you items is a little out of whack – duct tape (necessary for a shovel) taking five days to restock is a bit much. *The Escapists* in-game time isn't particularly pacey, and waiting around begins to drag. You'll want to keep a close eye on the durability of the fake walls/vents you put up, too: getting them damaged in cell shakedowns (which we fell victim to *far* more often than we thought fair...) can set you back in-game weeks in the later prisons.

The elaborate strategy/chance game you're playing in *The Escapists* makes it one of the most peculiarly satisfying games we've played on the Xbox One since launch. You've got to be tactical, you've got to be a quick learner, and you've got to be sly. There is *no* handholding whatsoever: you're dumped into the world and expected to figure out how to leave it. We enjoyed this – and we genuinely got stuck once or twice – but it's not for everyone. It has the scope to irritate, hugely. But if you're looking for a game that gets your imagination racing, that gets your mind ticking over, thinking of ingenious ways around iterative obstacles, then *The Escapists* is for you. The developer is guaranteed to be one step ahead of you at all times, but when (and if) you escape, you think you've won one over on it... until you're thrown into a more secure cell and it all starts again – except with reduced access, a worse job, and more guards. It's hard, but that's how we like it.

DOM PEPPIATT





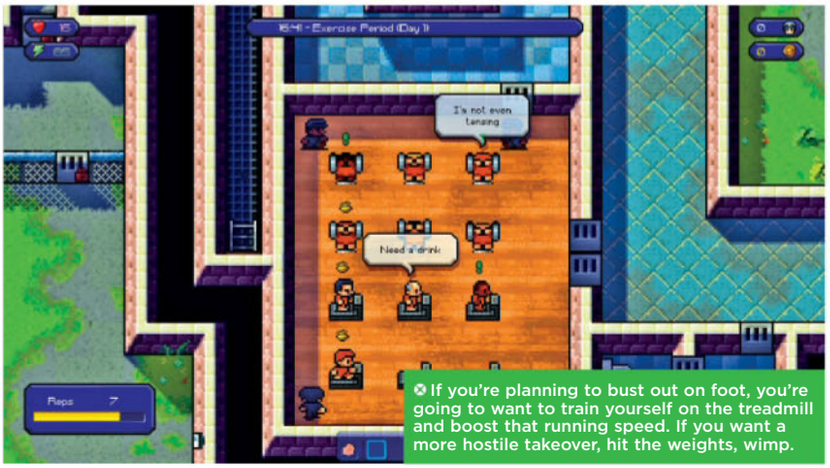
VERDICT

A mean-spirited but addictively difficult game that will have you thinking about its intricacies hours after you've put the pad down.

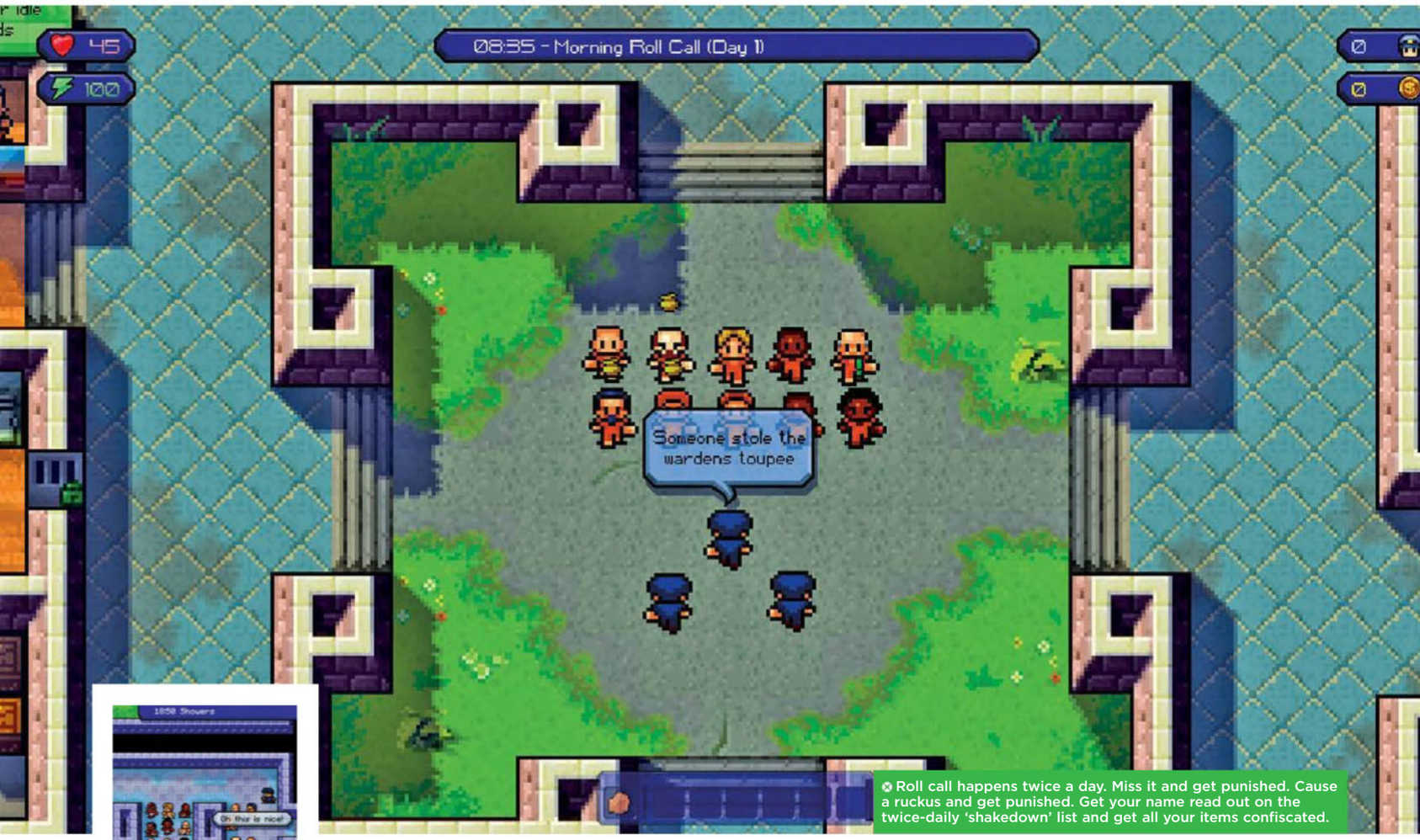
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The Achievements for *The Escapists* aren't hard, per se, but they will take *ages* to unock.



If you're planning to bust out on foot, you're going to want to train yourself on the treadmill and boost that running speed. If you want a more hostile takeover, hit the weights, wimp.

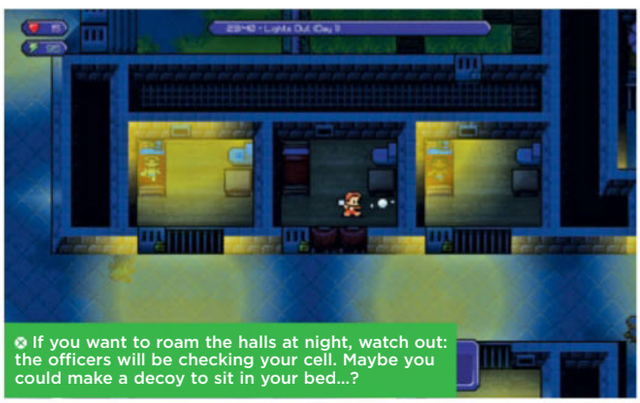


Roll call happens twice a day. Miss it and get punished. Cause a ruckus and get punished. Get your name read out on the twice-daily 'shakedown' list and get all your items confiscated.

TRENDING

#PRISON BREAK

Remember that awesome escape plan you pulled off? Where you totally pulled off The Shawshank? You'd better brag about it: no-one else will.



If you want to roam the halls at night, watch out: the officers will be checking your cell. Maybe you could make a decoy to sit in your bed...?



XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft Studios

DEVELOPER
Press Play

GAME TYPE
Puzzle platformer

PLAYERS
1-2

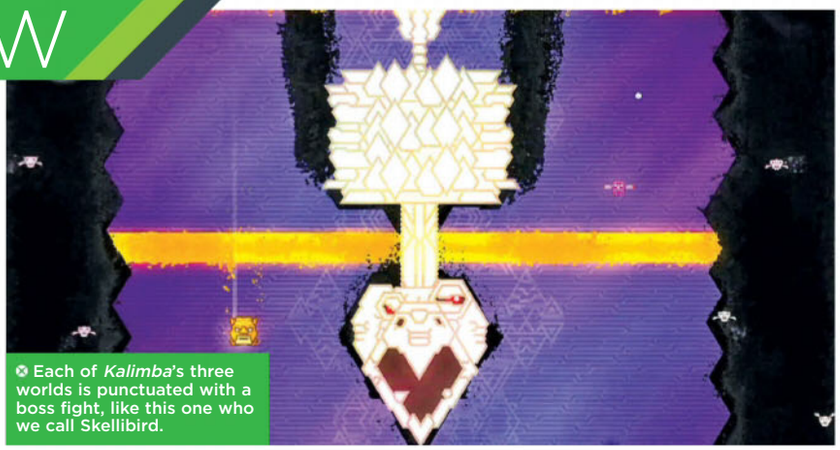
DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Hard

NEED TO UNLOCK
That's right! (25G)

IN BRIEF

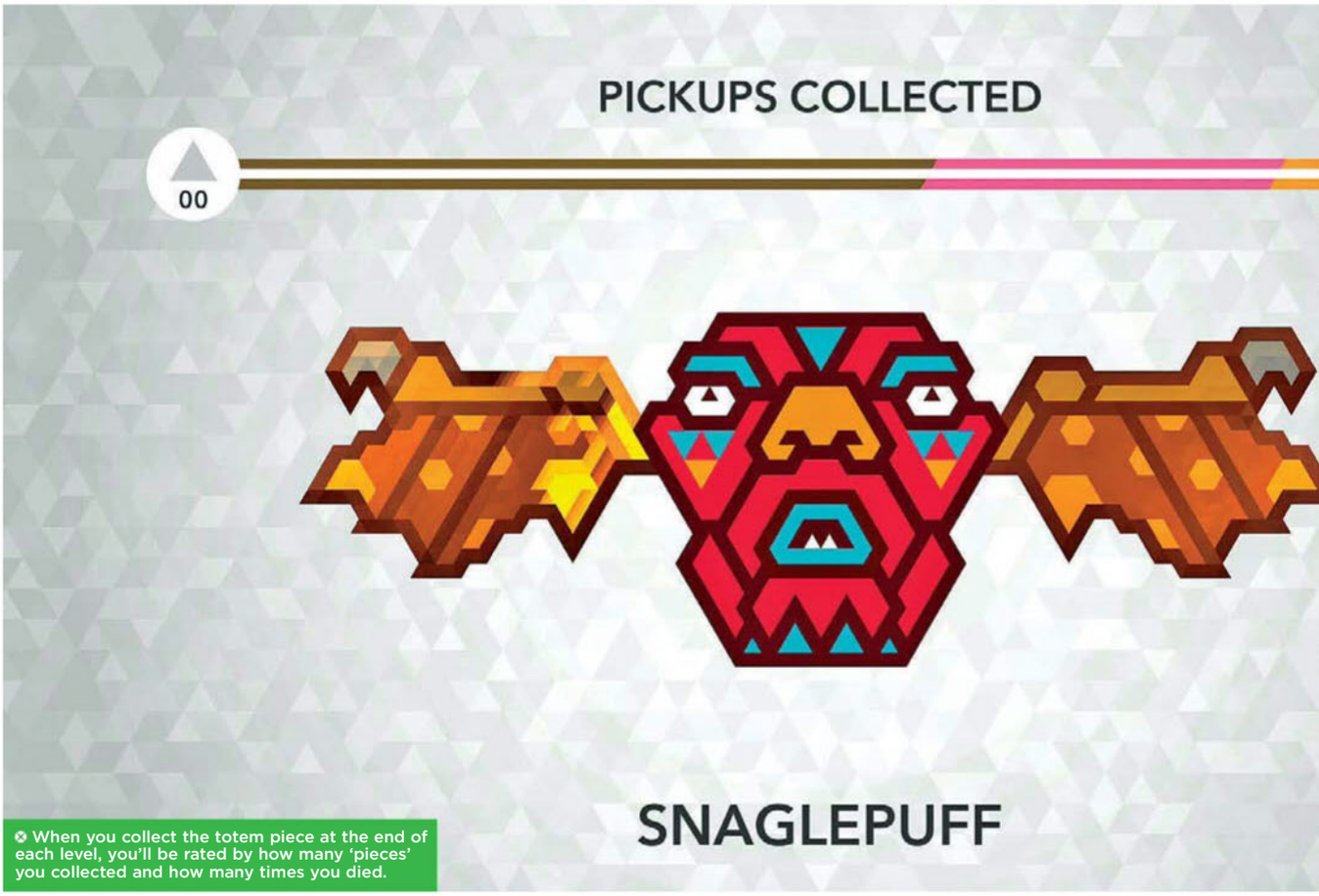
An evil shaman has sent the world of Kalimba into disarray by destroying its totem pole. You must collect the totem's pieces and reassemble the pole in order to restore Kalimba to harmony



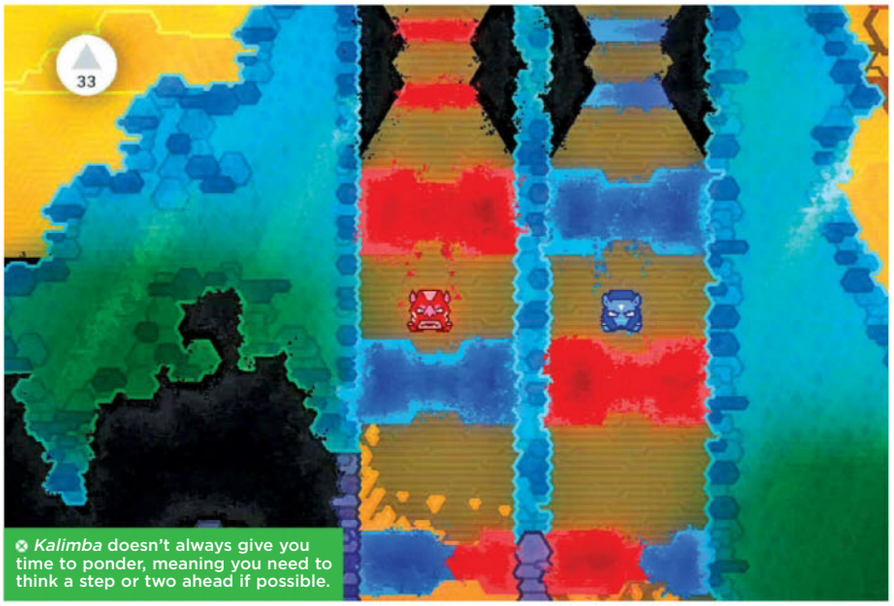
Each of *Kalimba*'s three worlds is punctuated with a boss fight, like this one who we call Skellibird.



The totems that you control can be wonderfully expressive.



When you collect the totem piece at the end of each level, you'll be rated by how many 'pieces' you collected and how many times you died.

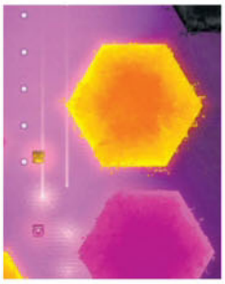


Kalimba doesn't always give you time to ponder, meaning you need to think a step or two ahead if possible.

TRENDING

#GODDAMN GRAVITY

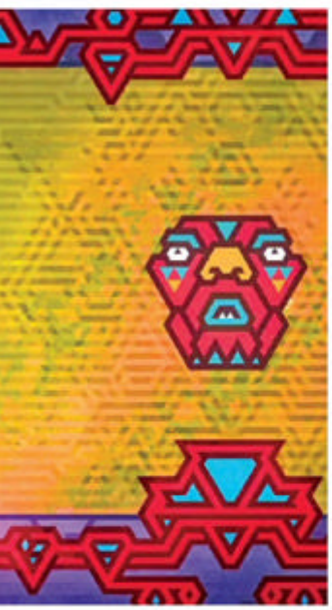
Kalimba's gravity-switching sections are some of its trickiest, meaning there'll be plenty of people blowing off steam on Twitter as they try to master the timing.











KALIMBA

www.pressplay.dk/games/kalimba /pressplaygames @pressplay_games

Totemly awesome

How many times in recent years have you played games that ended up overstaying their welcome in one way or another, your enthusiasm dwindling as said games squander your initial interest by settling into a seemingly never-ending pattern of repetition? How many times have you felt as if the developers of those games were more concerned with trying to wring as much as they can from every system and idea so they can say that their game provides X hours of 'content', rather than asking whether what their game is asking you to do is still compelling? Far too often, we'd venture to say. You need have no such concerns about *Kalimba*, a game that's consistently imaginative and that abhors repetition, that paces the introduction of its many ideas perfectly, ensuring that it is fresh and engaging from start to finish.

The premise around which *Kalimba* is based is that you control two totems simultaneously. At the start of the game, you find your totems split between two levels, almost as if you are playing a split-screen game. Pressing the left stick, for example, will move both totems in sync, meaning that you have to pay careful attention to the differing obstacles and pitfalls that confront each totem as you move through the level. From there, *Kalimba* gradually layers new systems on top of that basic premise – you gain the ability to swap the position of your two totems at any point; coloured areas are introduced that only the corresponding colour totem can travel through; power-ups that swap gravity or supersize one of your totems come into play; and so on. As such, you'll find that, though the basic concept remains the same, this is a game with a level of creativity that means what you're doing at the end of the game is quite different to what you were doing at the beginning.

> "As soon as you begin to feel like you might be mastering a system, Kalimba moves on"

Every time *Kalimba* introduces a new mechanic it does so masterfully. Eschewing tutorials, the game instead just gives you a new ability and combines it with an obstacle that's easy enough to ensure it's self-evident how it works, before ramping up the difficulty as each level progresses. From there, the game wastes no time in playing with how that mechanic can be used in new and interesting ways, throwing ideas your way at an invigoratingly relentless place. As soon as you begin to feel like you might be mastering a system, *Kalimba* moves on, chucking a new mechanic into the mix. In following that pattern, the game consistently forces you to re-evaluate what the game is and how you play it, meaning it is never boring, frequently challenging and always interesting.

Speaking of challenge, *Kalimba* can be frustrating in some of its tougher sections. As a game that combines puzzle-solving with twitch platforming, though, that comes with the territory. The game is meant to be difficult in its later stages. Having said that, the only punishment for death is that the rating that you get at the end of a level is downgraded, so you've got as many tries as you need to get past some of *Kalimba*'s more devilish sections if your objective is simply to finish the game. Of course, the reason *Kalimba* knocks your rating down when you die is that it wants to encourage replay. If you want to get a 'gold' run, you'll need to finish a level collecting every 'piece' littered throughout it, without dying once. No easy task when it comes to the game's later levels. In that respect, you could perhaps argue that *Kalimba* is needlessly finicky, ending up being reliant on you learning levels more than it is having a certain level of skill. Nevertheless, we'd by lying if we said there isn't a compulsion to go back and perfect those runs and a sense of satisfaction when you eventually master them, as infuriating as the process can occasionally be.

Aside from the fact that Kalimba can be frustrating (again, something which is to be expected with challenging games) there really is very little negative to say. You could argue that the game's visual and audio design is by no means spectacular, but it is pleasant enough. Granted, its attempts at fourth-wall breaking humour often falls flat, but, fortunately, it never becomes grating. In any case, pointing out those aspects in which *Kalimba* isn't quite stellar feels petty, because when it comes to actually playing the game – figuring out the puzzles, perfecting the timing of double jumps, acing a difficult section – *Kalimba* excels.

As a game that moves relatively swiftly from being simple to complex, without losing the player on the way, *Kalimba* is a masterclass in design. It also demonstrates that developer Press Play is a studio that understands the value of brevity – the game never overuses an idea, nor takes your attention for granted. Instead, it functions like a conveyer belt of creativity, delivering one pleasant surprise after another.

PAUL WALKER-EMIG



Hoebear thinks breaking the fourth wall is funny. Hoebear is wrong.



VERDICT

An excellent puzzle platformer that introduces new ideas at a breakneck pace. Its difficulty can make it frustrating, but you shouldn't let that put you off.

9

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
SoMa Play Inc

GAME TYPE
Puzzle

PLAYERS
1-4

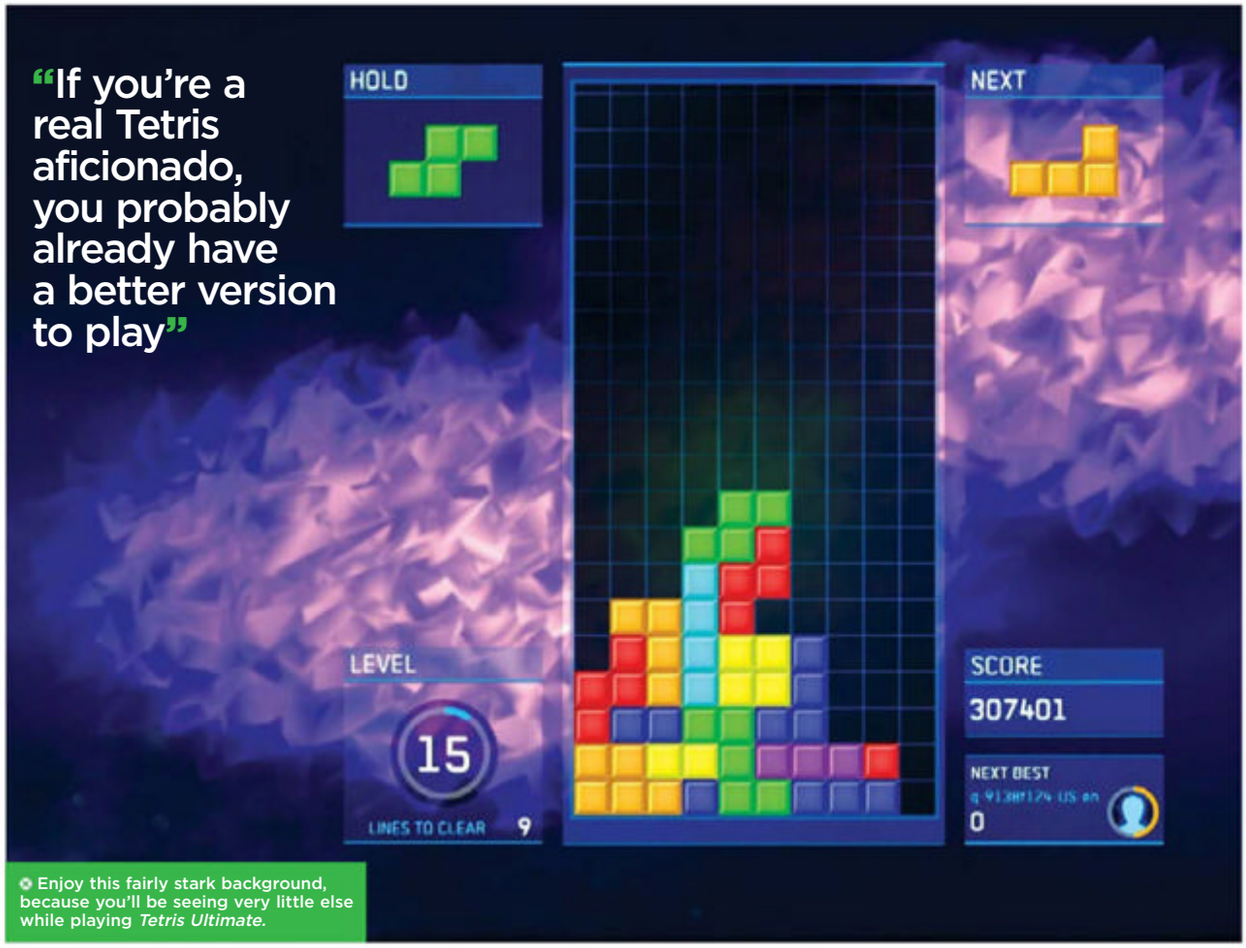
DLC
Additional modes

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Hardcore (125G)

IN BRIEF

The world's favourite block-dropping puzzler comes to Xbox One. The game boasts some additional modes and some robust multiplayer support.



Enjoy this fairly stark background, because you'll be seeing very little else while playing *Tetris Ultimate*.

TETRIS ULTIMATE

tetris.ubi.com /TetrisUltimate @TetrisUltimate

Ultimately, not good enough

Tetris Ultimate has been released to coincide with the 30th anniversary of Alexey Pajitnov's evergreen puzzle game, and knowing how many versions of *Tetris* have been produced over those years, this is a very strange game. For example, SoMa Play has correctly recognised that the basic game of *Tetris* needs no introduction, and it's possible to get right into the game without issue. On the other hand, very few of the non-basic aspects of the game are explained at all, including the functions of the various items available to players in the Battle Extra mode.

Commendably, the game offers experienced *Tetris* players the opportunity to toggle sorting methods, wall-kicks and T-spins. Unfortunately, if you don't know what those are, *Tetris Ultimate* won't tell you. You're in luck if you want to limit your game to three minutes, level 15 or 40 lines, but those variables are fixed, so you're not catered for if you want to limit your game to five minutes, level 10 or 100 lines, for example. The game's bland default skin is the only one available and a singular tune – a low-key remix of the classic *Tetris* theme *Korobeiniki* – is all that's on offer.

Despite the fact that *Tetris Ultimate* offers so much less than previous versions of *Tetris* in those ways, it's not all bad. The game offers plenty of awards and achievements for single players to chase, as well as solid AI opponents. The multiplayer service is also well-considered; as well as direct battles with players online, you can send and receive challenges and even utilise a Tetris Self. This is an AI profile based on your own personal play style as discerned by the Xbox One, which is uploaded for your friends to play against while you're offline.

Tetris is always an enjoyable game at its core, and if you just want to play a version of the game on your Xbox One and don't care tremendously about customising your game, *Tetris Ultimate* will suit your needs well. However, we can't wholeheartedly commend the game, given that it fails to offer relatively simple rule modifications which have been offered in other *Tetris* games over the last 30 years. *Tetris Ultimate* isn't awful , but it doesn't live up to its title – and if you're a real *Tetris* aficionado, you probably already have a better version to play.

NICK THORPE

VERDICT

If you need a version of *Tetris* on your Xbox One, this game provides for most of your needs, albeit with little finesse.

6

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
A Crowd Of Monsters

DEVELOPER
In-house

GAME TYPE
Runner

PLAYERS
1

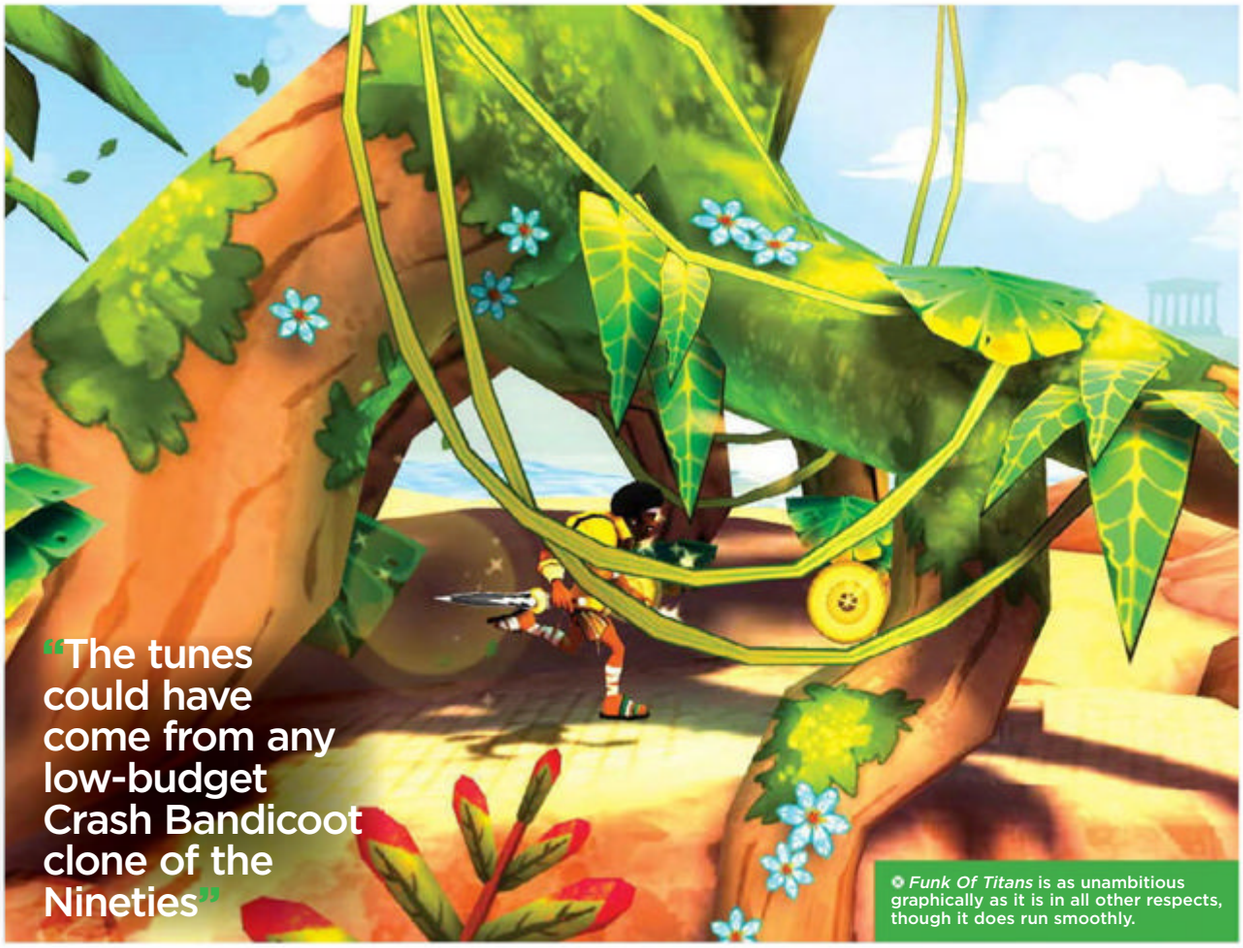
DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Funk, James Funk (30G)

IN BRIEF

At Zeus' command, guide Perseus through hazard-filled platform stages to ensure the supremacy of funk over the likes of pop, rap and rock, while taking down the titans that represent each genre.



Funk Of Titans is as unambitious graphically as it is in all other respects, though it does run smoothly.

FUNK OF TITANS

www.acrowdofmonsters.com /A-Crowd-Of-Monsters @crowdofmonsters

A missed opportunity

Funk Of Titans is the kind of game we really want to like, because the premise is great, but unfortunately it fails to deliver on the potential promise of being a music-themed endless runner in some fairly obvious ways. Take the boss battles: the game's three worlds, each themed after a distinct musical genre, offer occasional QTE battles against grunts and titans. But we're not sure why these button sequences feel so distinct from the backing music – this seems like the perfect opportunity to turn a QTE into rhythm action, but it hasn't been taken. And while the enemies are visually distinctive, they'd have stuck in the memory so much better with vocal battle themes.

Such missed opportunities are common throughout the game. For a title based on music, the audio accompaniment is surprisingly generic – the tunes themselves could have come from any low-budget *Crash Bandicoot* clone of the Nineties. The visuals don't do a bad job of conveying the game's intended personality, but there's a sense that any sense of humour is being repressed – the only time you ever see it is when you take a hit and end up in your underwear. The other key problem with *Funk Of Titans* is that it doesn't offer the variety or challenge of other games in the runner genre. When compared to other top games such as *Bit.Trip Presents Runner2: Future Legend Of Rhythm Alien*, *Funk Of Titans* offers fewer ways to interact with the world you run through, and doesn't do anything as clever with the moves and obstacles it does offer. The game is also short and fairly easy – you can clock it in only a few hours, and if you've got a modicum of experience with platform games the game proves to be something of a pushover.

Some games fail to impress because they lack key ingredients of a good release, but *Funk Of Titans* doesn't have that problem. There's nothing wrong with what *Funk Of Titans* does – every aspect of the game is produced with a degree of competence. Unfortunately, it's competence that isn't backed by any form of inspiration, leading to a game which is thoroughly workmanlike. With a little more time and budget, we suspect that *Funk Of Titans* would have been a game that stood out from the crowd – but it wasn't to be, so look elsewhere for a runner.

NICK THORPE

VERDICT

Funk Of Titans is an average game which is disappointing only in terms of the opportunities it misses. It's not disastrous, but it is bland.

5

WORLD OF TANKS REVISITED

WE RETURN TO XBOX'S FIRST STRAIGHT-UP FREE-TO-PLAY SUCCESS STORY AND SIT DOWN WITH WARGAMING TO DISCUSS ITS RUNAWAY POPULARITY

It's time we had a talk about *World Of Tanks: Xbox 360 Edition*. Honestly, its popularity defies belief. In the space of a year it has conquered Xbox Live. It has single-handedly proven that free-to-play games can not only exist within a restrictive console infrastructure, but can succeed in style. And perhaps most impressively, it has made us realise that there is still life in Microsoft's decade-old console yet. We've dipped back into one of Xbox 360's most populated communities and, you know what, our Xbox One might have to sit unplayed a few evenings a week – perhaps it's time you thought about doing the same.

"Our Xbox 360 launch and operations are a success," proudly declares Victor Kislyi, the CEO of F2P powerhouse developer Wargaming. "We demonstrated that, no, its not just crazy Russians, Koreans and PC players that play this free-to-play game. No, we once again confirmed the fact that a guy is a guy, anywhere in the world. No matter which piece of hardware is in his hands – be it a joystick, an iPad, a mouse and keyboard or the Xbox 360 controller – he loves tanks. The Guy loves tanks; he likes the manly clash of steel."

Clearly, the desire to experience a "manly clash of steel" is just an innate desire for those that choose to live their lives out on the servers of Xbox Live, because we're with you. We've happily willed the hours away as we've returned to *World Of Tanks*; all the while getting immense finger cramp from slowly manoeuvring tanks, headaches from trying to figure out the convoluted upgrade and



menu systems, and have, begrudgingly, emptied our wallets to try and scale the almighty pay-wall.

Yet, five years ago, even the mere idea that a F2P PC game would hold the same weight, power and industry importance as the likes of *Assassin's Creed*, *Call Of Duty* and *Halo* would have gotten you laughed off of NeoGaf with your tail planted firmly between your legs. Now? Well, we're left wondering why Microsoft didn't bring *World Of Tanks* to console sooner. Then again, we can't really blame our past selves for this immense oversight – that's back when we thought the coolest thing in the world was to invite strangers into our living room to jam out *Screaming For Vengeance* on plastic instruments every weekend, so what do we really know?

What we *do* know now, however, is that Wargaming has succeeded in an area where Crytek, Ubisoft and even Microsoft have failed. Before *World Of Tanks* migrated to consoles, F2P gaming had largely been reserved for mediocre Xbox Vision Camera releases and those god awful (yet strangely addictive) Doritos party games. But Wargaming approached the transition with a strategic intent and efficiency that will have most traditional publishers stumped. It harnessed the support structure, community construction, servers and ideals of a triple-A production. Even if the result is a little rough around the edges, it's got plenty of heart and determination, sometimes that's enough, it seems.

"It's been less than one year since we launched *World Of Tanks* on Xbox 360. It was a big experience for us and it was also a big experience for Microsoft, because they haven't had a big triple-A free-to-play game," continued Kislyi. "It's good news that [Microsoft] listened to us. Maybe not as fast as we wanted, but they listened to us when it came to our requirements for free-to-play update rate and a few other things."

When **X-ONE** reviewed *World Of Tanks* back in #109, it barely scraped a 6/10. Limited in its scope and supposedly niche in its appeal, the original release proved to be something of a rough diamond in a sea of immensely polished, albeit entirely static, releases. But you shouldn't take our original score as being completely dismissive of *World Of Tanks*. The game has evolved considerably in the last ten months, with Wargaming reworking the mechanics and systems to better suit console players.

"You have to understand that *World Of Tanks* as we have it today is a huge game with a huge amount of content, but it was accumulated through five years of non-stop [PC] development," explains Kislyi. "The strategy for any new free-to-play title is: you launch it, you see how it goes and then you start updating it. It's only been ten months of our update cycle on Xbox 360, but we don't stop. We quiz the team [Wargaming West], we strengthen our capacity to deliver more content and more features on the consoles.

"We are gradually learning things and improving things," Kislyi adds. "There aren't many cool free-to-play games on consoles, we are one of the first, and we are analysing data every day. Our team in Chicago is working tirelessly to make it better."

Looking at how Wargaming has grown – both as a global company and with how it is refining *World Of Tanks* – it's easy to get the impression that the studio won't quit until every single person

FREE-TO-PLAY FAILURES

ASIDE FROM WORLD OF TANKS, MICROSOFT'S OTHER ATTEMPTS TO ESTABLISH F2P GAMES ON XBOX HAVE BEEN AN UNMITIGATED DISASTER

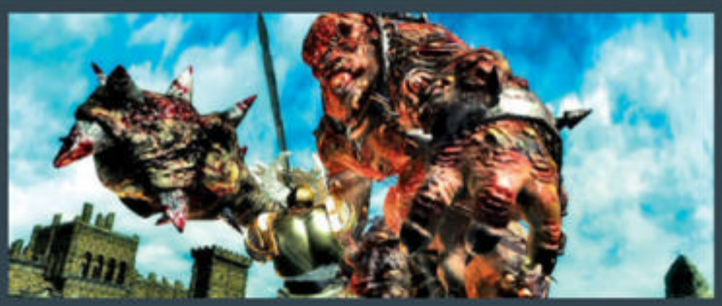
HAPPY WARS

The first major F2P game on 360, but it never picked up much steam. Cutesy graphics and a fantasy world just doesn't have the same global appeal as giant tanks, who'd have thought?



ASCEND: HAND OF KUL

This free-to-play RPG showed a lot of promise initially, but turned out to be a total grind – in every sense of the word. In fact, Microsoft ended up pulling the plug late 2014. Nobody mourned it.



WARFACE

It had perhaps the stupidest name in the industry – which is saying something – and matched that with equally mundane combat. Despite Crytek's efforts, Microsoft cut this one loose as well.



SPARTACUS LEGENDS

Honestly, the less said about this the better – Ubisoft really screwed this one up. Terrible monetisation system, broken combat mechanics and, worst of all, you don't even play as Spartacus.



that has so much as glanced at a tank is wrapped up in the gaming experience. But with over 100 million players registered to battle across Xbox 360, PC and mobile, perhaps Wargaming has already achieved that goal, and then some. *World Of Tanks* is a niche game on a ridiculous global scale, and it shows no signs of slowing down. To put that in perspective, our best estimates have the *Halo* franchise shifting just under 70 million copies – and that's a series that's been running and gunning for a decade.

Truth be told, *World Of Tanks* feels like a game that, by all accounts, should have been reserved for the hardcore simulation crowd. The fast-paced, yet strangely slow-moving, multiplayer action is difficult to initially swallow for those born and bred on an unhealthy diet of *Battlefield* and *Call Of Duty*. But it has resonated, that much is clear, especially after the refinements made to the Xbox 360 edition.

It's surprising to see how players have adapted to the style of combat on Xbox 360 after all these months, especially after taking a quick jaunt onto the PC version – which routinely sees games slowly lock down into boring stalemates. Take Team Battles, for example. They were quickly becoming horribly mundane deadlocks. 30 tanks – all hiding in shrubbery – staring each other down across ten huge open expanses. In *World Of Tanks*, the best offensive strategy is having a solid defensive line, which led to some immensely frustrating encounters. You can't have a "clash of steel" when you're hiding in a bush, desperately waiting for somebody to accidentally inch into range.

And so *World Of Tanks* adapted on Xbox 360. Scout tanks dropped out of rotation, the range and variety of high-tier battle tanks increased and new states of play were introduced. The imaginatively titled 'Standard battles' are where most of the action happens – intense capture the base scenarios where both teams attempt to secure the opposing base while trying to avoid obliteration. Then there are 'Encounter battles', that offer only one base to capture with both teams fighting to possess it. And finally 'Assault mode' offers a battle between attackers and the defenders during single base engagement.

While *World Of Tanks* is still slow-moving – not to mention immensely tense as you roll out to strategic positions – the actual tank-on-tank combat feels more visceral and fluid than ever. Getting caught out in the open as a sniper tank takes aim at your treads, disabling you and leaving you as good as dead for a destroyer to wade in, is a stressfully entertaining experience. Better still, if you somehow manage to turn the tables in your favour during an immensely disastrous encounter, you'll feel like the greatest damn soldier to ever wade into the Xbox Live firing lines.

Games have a 15-minute timer on them, though they rarely last for longer than five. Once the shells start flying, there's nothing quite like *World Of Tanks* left on the 360 – though we will always dearly love and remember *Chromehounds* (we're still upset with Sega for shutting the severs). Still, we digress; *World Of Tanks* has manoeuvred itself into an impressive position. It has beaten the generation divide and stayed healthy in a way so many other titles haven't – even *GTA Online* on 360 is a bit of a Los Santos ghost town now. Sure it might look a little scruffy and the menus







"Once the shells start flying, there's nothing quite like World Of Tanks left on the 360"

might be an absolute disaster zone to navigate, but there's something immensely appealing about playing a game where one shot can kill you dead. And thankfully, Wargaming shows no signs of slowing down.

"Wargaming is not a small company coming out of nowhere. We're a big company. Gamers, the media, the industry; it expects nothing less than top-notch, triple-A quality in every aspect and this takes time and effort," muses Kislyi. "We have a positive attitude, which is good for any company, but it brings high expectations, and hunger from the players. They want everything tomorrow morning, and expectation levels are very high."

Expectations are high for more, but we get the sense that Wargaming has delivered and then some. Sure, more DLC and updates are welcomed, but that's not what we're hoping to see tomorrow morning. We want *World Of Tanks* on Xbox One, though the studio is staying suspiciously tight lipped, holding a mysterious "Who knows what the future will hold?" line. All we know is *World Of Tanks* is fast becoming one of the only reasons to hold off on leaping into the next generation, and we can only hope Microsoft has the good sense to let it roll out onto its E3 2015 keynote presentation later this year.

AVOID MAKING THESE MISTAKES

RUSHING INTO COMBAT

You might be rocking a huge cannon, but that doesn't mean you can just run into combat recklessly. This is a game of cautious movement and expert marksmanship – who knew tanks were so tactical?



SPENDING YOUR CASH

While the game will encourage you to spend real money at every chance it gets, the joy of *WOT* is that you can dominate without buying Gold. Just pick an entry-level tank and learn it inside and out.



HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Might sound silly, but remember you're a tank. Tanks can be seen from miles away. So don't stay out in the open. Most are vulnerable from the sides and back, so try to hide in a bush. Apparently bushes mask tanks.



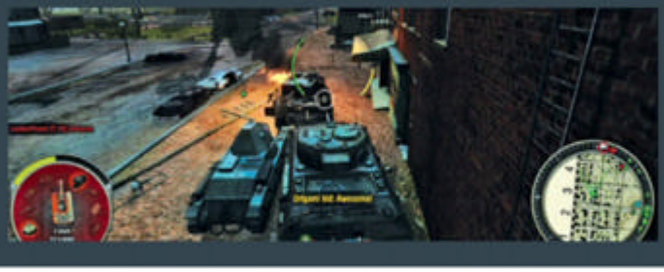
DON'T STOP MOVING

If you need to move, do it quickly. Know where you're going and don't waste time getting there. Mark targets and keep your cannon steady. If you stop moving you are vulnerable to artillery and flank fire.



WAITING FOR THE END

If your tank gets exploded early on, there aren't any respawns. Games can last for up to 15 minutes, so just leave. You'll still get the rewards, and you can jump straight into another game.



GRAND THEFT AUTO ONLINE

HOW TO PREPARE FOR HEISTS

ONE YEAR AND AN XBOX ONE RELEASE LATER, ROCKSTAR IS FINALLY READY TO UNLEASH CHAOS ON XBOX LIVE WITH ITS ONLINE HEISTS. JOIN **X-ONE** AS WE GET READY TO BECOME THE KINGS OF LOS SANTOS







THE MODE WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

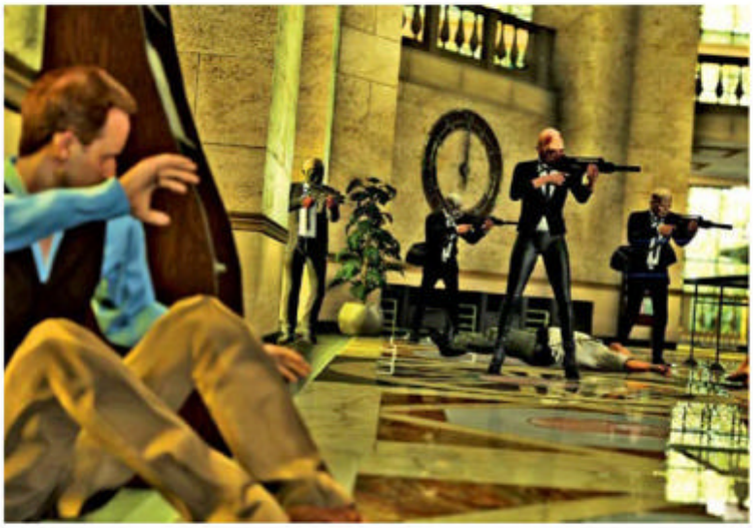
Grand Theft Auto Online is finally delivering on a promise Rockstar made well over a year ago. Like you guys, we've long been awaiting the opportunity to tear across Los Santos with a motley crew, stealing and pilfering anything we can get our grubby mitts on. So why the long delay? To be honest, it simply sounds like these heists are going to be far more in-depth and engaging than we anticipated.

"Heists were a much bigger challenge to create than we had originally anticipated," commented Rockstar in a recent Q&A. "Early versions were simply not good enough and had to be scrapped more than once as we honed in on how we thought they should work... we, as a company, have always been about trying to make something that is good rather than hitting a date. We apologise when this gets frustrating but firmly believe that rushing out second-rate content does not do anyone any favours."

Whether that was a dig at the less than stellar releases of *Assassin's Creed: Unity* and *Halo: The Master Chief Collection* remains to be seen, but it does make us confident that online heists are going to live up to the immense hype. We've assembled these top tips to get you ready to face the action when they land in just a couple of weeks...

What are online heists?

Are you serious? Where have you been for the last 12 months? Heists are the exciting new cooperative mode coming to *GTA Online*. The free add-on is set to build on the *GTA V* campaign heists to create a new gameplay experience that's heavily focused on teamwork, where everyone must play to their individual strengths to escape with the cash. These will appear in the form of multi-tiered missions that take players from prep work to scouting out a target, a diverse range of gameplay modes to get ready and a huge finale. Each heist promises to be different to the last, especially when you factor the unpredictable human element into proceedings.



Rockstar is just finishing up tweaking the last few elements of GTA Online's heists – they are expected to launch any time now. So get patched, get prepared and get ready to pull off the biggest score Los Santos has ever seen.

Buy a nice apartment

There's finally a point to owning a high-end apartment! Leading an online heist requires a room to make your plans. These apartments range from $200,000 – $500,000. While there are lots of options, we advise steering clear of Apartment #3 at Eclipse Towers – it's expensive and its central location means it's heavily congested with asshole players. Try Apartment #42 at Tinsel Towers.



Natural born leader

Not only will you need a high-end apartment to set your reign of terror on the Los Santos elite in motion, but you'll also need a lot of start-up money if you want to be the heist leader. While you'll get the chance to build your crew, assign positions, pick outfits and allocate each player's cut, you will need to personally front the costs to successfully plan and pull off a potentially very costly heist.



Get suitably levelled

The heists are designed to work with four other *GTA Online* players, each level 12 or higher. It isn't difficult to level up, though it might take some time. It's worth the investment, mind; Rockstar has promised five unique heists at launch – over 20 missions – and around 20 hours of new gameplay. Put down whatever else you're playing and start dominating online races for levels and cash.



Know your specialisation

Are you the best driver in *GTA Online*, a headshot king, flying ace or the master of damage control? Finding your specialisation will make it easier to slot into a group, and make your involvement essential. While some missions will have you working as a unit, others will have you splitting off to tackle separate objectives, from stealing getaway cars to sneaking into police stations.



The big finale

Once you've done a suitable amount of prep work, it'll be time to pull off the big finale. One example so far involves a prison break where players assault a location from all directions to extract a VIP target – requiring a pilot, demolitions nut and a hefty amount of undercover work. Interestingly, these finales won't always be about stealing money – we've been promised variety.



Get a microphone

Perhaps this should come as no surprise, but a mic is an essential accessory to the *GTA Online* experience. The heists have been designed for four players to work together. One player going rogue could not only kill the entire operation, but could cost the heist leader a lot of bank. Get that mic out of the box – or use Kinect – create an online party and start talking to your buddies in crime.



DLC UPDATE



ASSASSIN'S CREED: UNITY: DEAD KINGS

Ubi's 'We're sorry' DLC finally lands

Following the *Assassin's Creed: Unity* launch fiasco, it's easy to understand why faith in Ubisoft's behemoth open-world adventure franchise has been shattered. It's become commonplace in the modern era of gaming for titles to release in need of a day one patch to function as intended, but *Unity* was next-level broken. A plethora of game-breaking glitches, frustrating bugs, and a lacklustre frame-rate meant it became very difficult to enjoy Ubisoft's jaunt through French Revolution-era Paris for the first few weeks of November and December.

But *Unity* has finally been fixed and, with the problems in the past, it turns out *Unity* is one of the more enjoyable entries into the franchise to date. But how can the studio possibly mend the bridges of trust after 12 months of disappointing releases? Well, a free DLC pack is a good start. *Dead Kings* has been handed to players as a 'We're sorry we messed up' care package, and it's done a pretty decent job of reminding us why we liked the idea of *Unity* in the first place.

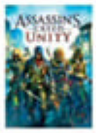
The once-premium pack, *Dead Kings*, continues Arno's story well after the events of *Unity*. Leaving Paris behind for a trip to Saint Denis in 1794, it sees the assassin raiding the crypts of dead French kings in the underground of the Basilica. *Dead Kings* provides an interesting dynamic change from what we've come to expect from *Assassin's Creed* – switching out towering buildings and intense free-running for a more considered and tense affair. Skulking through the catacombs of Saint Denis is an interesting enough experience, especially as Arno picks up a lantern to assist him on his grave-robbing, not to mention a pretty wicked new weapon – a Guillotine gun – to help him out.

You'll need every new badass weapon you can get your hands on, too; the crypts are full of a brand-new enemy type, the Raiders, who won't hesitate in laying an extra body to rest beneath the Basilica. Of course, when you're not defiling tombs, there are plenty of other open-world activities and side missions



to keep you occupied. New Murder Mysteries provide another fun – if not to easy – distraction, the enigmas continue to blow our tiny minds with the obtuse selection of clues and new co-op missions entertain. Thankfully, any new weapons, items and clothing you acquire in *Dead Kings* can also be brought back with you into Paris proper.

Dead Kings would have been a fairly adequate DLC pack were it still premium, offering a couple of hours of extra gameplay, but as it's free we are struggling to not find a reason to recommend it to you. If you're taking some sort of personal stand against *Unity* because of its launch problems, then more power to you, but if you're looking for something to tide you through the first few months of the year, it might be worth giving this a play. Hopefully it will, at the very least, tide you over until *Assassin's Creed: Victory* is officially announced.



Assassin's Creed: Unity was supposed to be the first new-gen-only title in the series, a bold statement of what we should expect in the future. Sadly, it launched in a sorry state. It's fixed now, though.



MIDDLE-EARTH: SHADOW OF MORDOR: LORD OF THE HUNT

Shadow Of Mordor proved to be 2014's surprise success, and that's why we're more than happy to see its bloody and unforgiving game world expanded with the *Lord Of The Hunt*. Just when you thought you had a handle on the ever-escalating Orc situation in Mordor, this DLC pack introduces more powerful Uruks to the battle – Warchiefs astute enough to whip your ass while riding huge beasts. Basically, this pack introduces enough new runes, enemies and quests to keep you enthralled for an extra couple of hours. Not that we need any excuse to continue returning to this fantastic open-world adventure months on from launch.



MINECRAFT: XBOX ONE EDITION

If you've been wondering what the Microsoft acquisition would possibly bring to the *Minecraft* table, it looks like we've finally got our first solid indication of what these extra resources can do. *Minecraft Update 1.6*. will let you ride and tame horses, which is what we've always felt was missing. You can also equip your own horse armour – don't worry it's free. (Are you paying attention, Bethesda?) You can also build fireworks, fight witches and hunt for a slew of new items. Basically, it's a pretty great update as always. Microsoft is ensuring there are plenty of reasons to return to *Minecraft* every month.

5 DIGITAL-ONLY GAMES THIS MONTH



RESIDENT EVIL: REVELATIONS 2

This *just* missed our deadline for review, but it's well worth your time if you've found yourself lamenting the direction of recent *Resident Evil* games. It's in need a lick of next-gen polish, but we appreciate the return to its roots.



LIFE IS STRANGE

Dontnod's *Remember Me* proved to be more forgettable than Capcom had intended, but that doesn't mean we aren't excited about the studio's new episodic adventure, *Life Is Strange*. Get the full review on page 76.



PNEUMA: BREATH OF LIFE

X-ONE is constantly finding itself impressed with the quality of titles coming through the ID@Xbox program, and this fascinating first-person puzzle game is no exception. It sort of looks like *Myst*, which we are down with, and it's bloody stunning to look at. Check it out if you can.



ASSASSIN'S CREED UNITY: CHRONICLES

This 2.5D expansion to the *AC* universe sees you take control of Shao Jun. 16th Century China is Jun's playground in this digital title, as she attempts revenge on the Templars that butchered the Assassins of the Chinese Brotherhood.



RISK: THE GAME OF GLOBAL DOMINATION

Playing board games is *so* Nineties; now you can sit back and plan global domination from the comfort of your bedroom as *Risk* comes to Xbox One. Thanks to Xbox Live league play, you're even able to compete with people around the world.

RECOMMENDED

MUST-PLAY GAMES FROM THE XBOX CATALOGUE

10 BEST CO-OP GAMES

VIDEOGAMES ARE BETTER WITH FRIENDS. THAT'S A TRUE FACT, BUT IF YOU STILL NEED CONVINCING, TRY THESE TEN GAMES WITH YOUR BUDDIES AND PREPARE TO AGREE



LEFT 4 DEAD

- Console: **Xbox 360**
- Developer: **Turtle Rock**
- Players: **1-4**

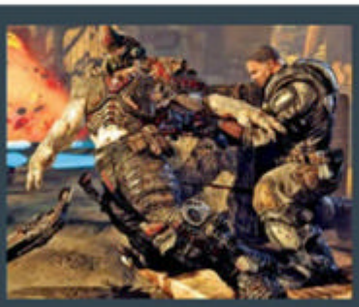
Evolve might be releasing any day now, but we still look into Turtle Rock Studio's back catalogue for the ultimate Xbox co-op experience. 2008's *Left 4 Dead* charged you and three friends with surviving the zombie apocalypse, and there's not quite been anything like it. The game offered five well-crafted campaigns that pushed your motley group to use teamwork, communication, and firearms to make it between safe rooms and eventually escape alive. The dynamic AI system, great mission pacing, and emergent chaos *Left 4 Dead* effortlessly breeds makes it fantastic to this day.



ROCK BAND 3

- Console: **Xbox 360**
- Developer: **Harmonix**
- Players: **1-4**

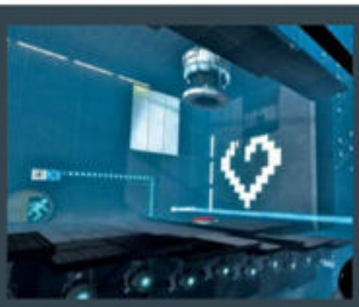
The thought of digging those dusty old peripherals out from under the bed is a terrifying concept, but it's still worth it – there's simply no beating the rowdy excitement that *Rock Band* can generate. The third instalment is the king daddy of party games – offering mountains of fun whether you're on a mission to party or devoting yourself to the ideals of Minor Threat for the evening. Multiple difficulty levels across all instruments mean everyone can play, and the song library is so vast that you won't struggle to find a belting track to butcher at 3am with your buddies.



GEARS OF WAR 3

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **Epic Games**
Players: **1-4**

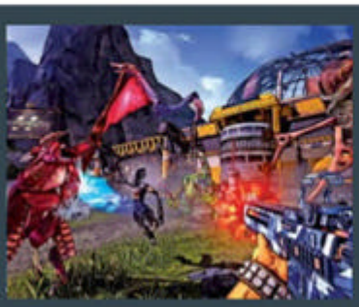
What's better than violently sawing a Locust in half with a Lancer? Sawing it in half with your buddy holding a *second* Lancer, obviously! While all of the *Gears Of War* games have had co-op support, it was the third and final game in the Epic trilogy that felt specifically designed to be played with your sadistic buddies in tow. *Gears Of War 3* presented plenty of opportunities to take advantage of branching paths, alternative vantage points and co-operative butchery. The bromantic story and ultra-gore mean this isn't one for everybody, but action buffs will love it.



PORTAL 2

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **Valve**
Players: **1-2**

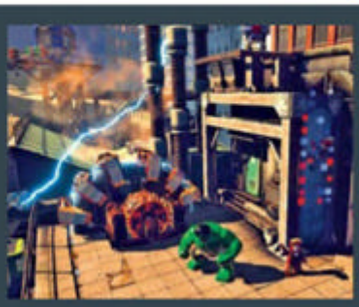
When *The Orange Box* released in 2007, nobody expected quirky puzzle game *Portal* to take the gaming world by storm. But it did, and spawned a hugely successful sequel. While the single-player is brilliant, it also happens to feature a fantastic two-player cooperative mode. Taking on the role of two silly robots, Atlas and P-Body, caught in the gruelling Aperture Science test chambers, you'll need to use all of your problem-solving skills and logic to make it through this challenging campaign. *Portal 2* is unlike anything else, requiring intense patience – but the result is immensely rewarding.



BORDERLANDS 2

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **Gearbox**
Players: **1-4**

The original *Borderlands* was pretty awesome, but it made us hungry for more. Thankfully, the sequel ramped up the chaos, ironed out the bugs and made us hopeless loot addicts. Sharing this particular crutch with friends proved to be a wonderful laugh, as every aspect of *Borderlands 2* was built with co-op play in mind. Combat scales with additional players, ensuring a constant challenge throughout the world of Pandora. With four unique characters to choose between, co-op groups work in any combination to conquer *Borderlands*' horde of outrageous enemies and bosses.



LEGO MARVEL SUPER HEROES

Console: **Xbox One**
Developer: **TT Games**
Players: **1-4**

Traveller's Tales has, for the last decade, consistently delivered some of the best all-ages co-op fun to be had on the Xbox platform. For kids and adults alike, the Lego games have proven to be a huge success thanks to the easy-to-grasp mechanics, entertaining objectives and ridiculous humour. The recent *Lego Marvel Super Heroes* is one of the most polished games in the franchise, not to mention a gigantic roster of characters to choose from. It's the ultimate celebration of the Marvel Universe.



FIFA 15

Console: **Xbox One**
Developer: **EA Sports**
Players: **1-11**

You want the ultimate co-op experience? Get a copy of *FIFA 15*, rustle up 10 of your bezzies and prepare for the greatest game of interactive football of your life. Be A Pro mode returns, and it's bloody good fun on Xbox One. This mode lets you create a custom player, define their role in a team and then join a squad. Working in tandem as a team – with no AI to pick up the slack – is tough, but too much fun to ignore. Communication is key – especially if you go up against another full squad of 11 real players. Just don't get stuck as the goalkeeper. It isn't fun in real life, and it isn't fun here.



TOM CLANCY'S SPLINTER CELL: CONVICTION

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **Ubisoft**
Players: **1-2**

Splinter Cell: Conviction may have catalysed the series' awkward transition from hardcore stealth game to stealth-action hybrid, but the co-op is pretty sensational. Not only does it feature the ever-wonderful Spies Vs. Mercs co-op multiplayer mode, but it also contains a focused two-player co-op experience that acts as a prologue to the main campaign. At heart, it's a great demonstration of *Conviction*'s often-overlooked stealth system, forcing you and your partner to combine abilities and tactics.



HALO: THE MASTER CHIEF COLLECTION

Console: **Xbox One**
Developer: **343 Industries**
Players: **1-4**

We are making great use of the space here, folks. We could have quite easily listed *Halo Combat Evolved: Anniversary* through *Halo 4* here, but *The Master Chief Collection* bundles all four games together into one hella awesome package for a pretty much unbeatable co-op experience. Whether you're taking down towering Scarabs, battling back the Flood, or racing Warthogs off of exploding Forerunner technology, the *Halo* campaign is certainly bettered by the addition of other friendly Spartans.



CASTLE CRASHERS

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **The Behemoth**
Players: **1-4**

If you're after a fantastic co-op experience on a tight budget, *Castle Crashers* is the way to go. It's nearing its seventh birthday now, but it's a game we still consistently return to when three friends are sat on the couch. *Castle Crashers* has barely aged; thanks in part to its insanely vivid world and design, its unique blend of genres, and its too-fun-to-ignore side-scrolling, beat-'em-up action. You can play this solo or with another friend if you want/need to, but it's at its best when the screen is filled with little warriors.



NEXT ISSUE

Mortal Kombat X

Finish Him! We get down and dirty with NetherRealm's stunning next-gen revitalisation of the Mortal Kombat series on Xbox One

+

THE BIGGEST ID@XBOX GAMES DETAILED

EVOLVE FINAL VERDICT

Note: While we'll do our best to ensure that the above fits into **X-ONE**, it might fall by the wayside. This isn't necessarily our fault, but we'll do everything we can to keep our promises.

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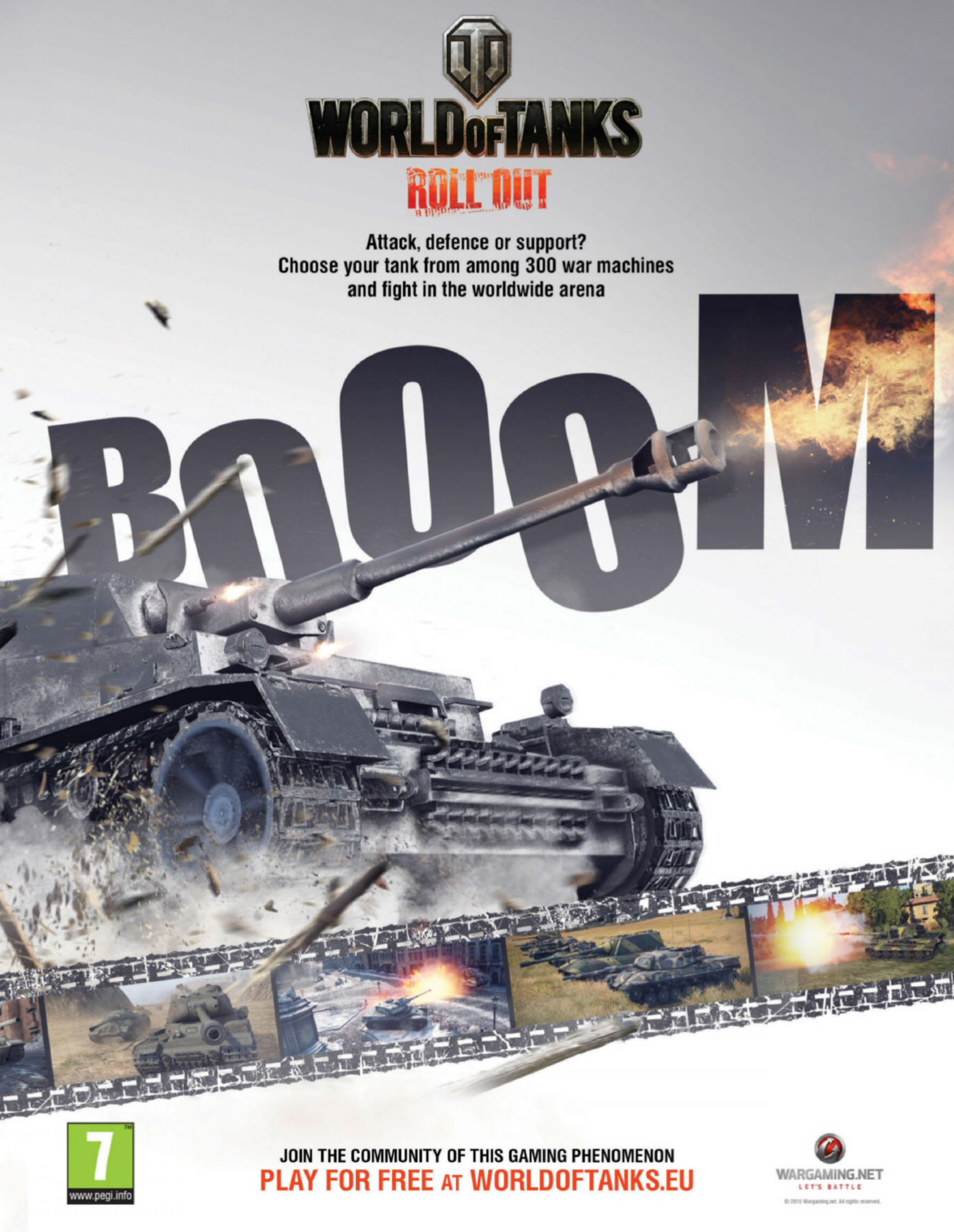
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