MAFIA III: 2K GAMES TALKS MOB MAYHEM



XBOX ONE™

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MULTIPLAYER HANDS-ON





+ EXCLUSIVE

ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE

BEHIND THE SCENES OF UBISOFT'S COCKNEY ROMP

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+ EXCLUSIVE

QUANTUM BREAK

TAKING THE TIME TO TALK LIVE-ACTION WITH REMEDY

+ **HOMEFRONT: THE REVOLUTION** STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT **DARK SOULS III** SCALEBOUND **BATTLEBORN** DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED **GUITAR HERO LIVE** FABLE LEGENDS

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Welcome to XBOX ONE



It feels like a lot more than three years since the last proper *Halo* game landed on Xbox. It's been so long, in fact, that saying 'The new *Halo* game is out in a few weeks' feels really odd. But it's *literally happening*, and we're starting to get seriously excited. *Halo* leads our trio of hot exclusives this month – we've talked to the voice behind Master Chief himself, and dug up the latest details on the new campaign, new characters and new multiplayer modes.

Elsewhere we've got interviews with Remedy for *Quantum Break* and 2K for *Mafia III*, plus some all-new hands-on impressions for *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* (and another interview, natch). To calm ourselves down after all that talking, we dove into some multiplayer mayhem in our other feature this month. You can get the ultimate Xbox multiplayer guide over on page 60, along with recommendations of the games you need to try out with your friends.

The reviews section is also packed, with *Forza 6* kicking off a crazy few months for big releases, and titles like *Disney Infinity 3.0* and *Smite* leading a stellar supporting cast. Meanwhile, our previews are packed with games that are screaming towards their release dates at the end of the year. We're hope you're ready for the next few months – the madness starts now.

Enjoy the mag!

Steve Ashby

Stephen Ashby
DEPUTY EDITOR

stephen.ashby@imagine-publishing.co.uk
Twitter: @Stephen_Ashby
Gamertag: Seryph01



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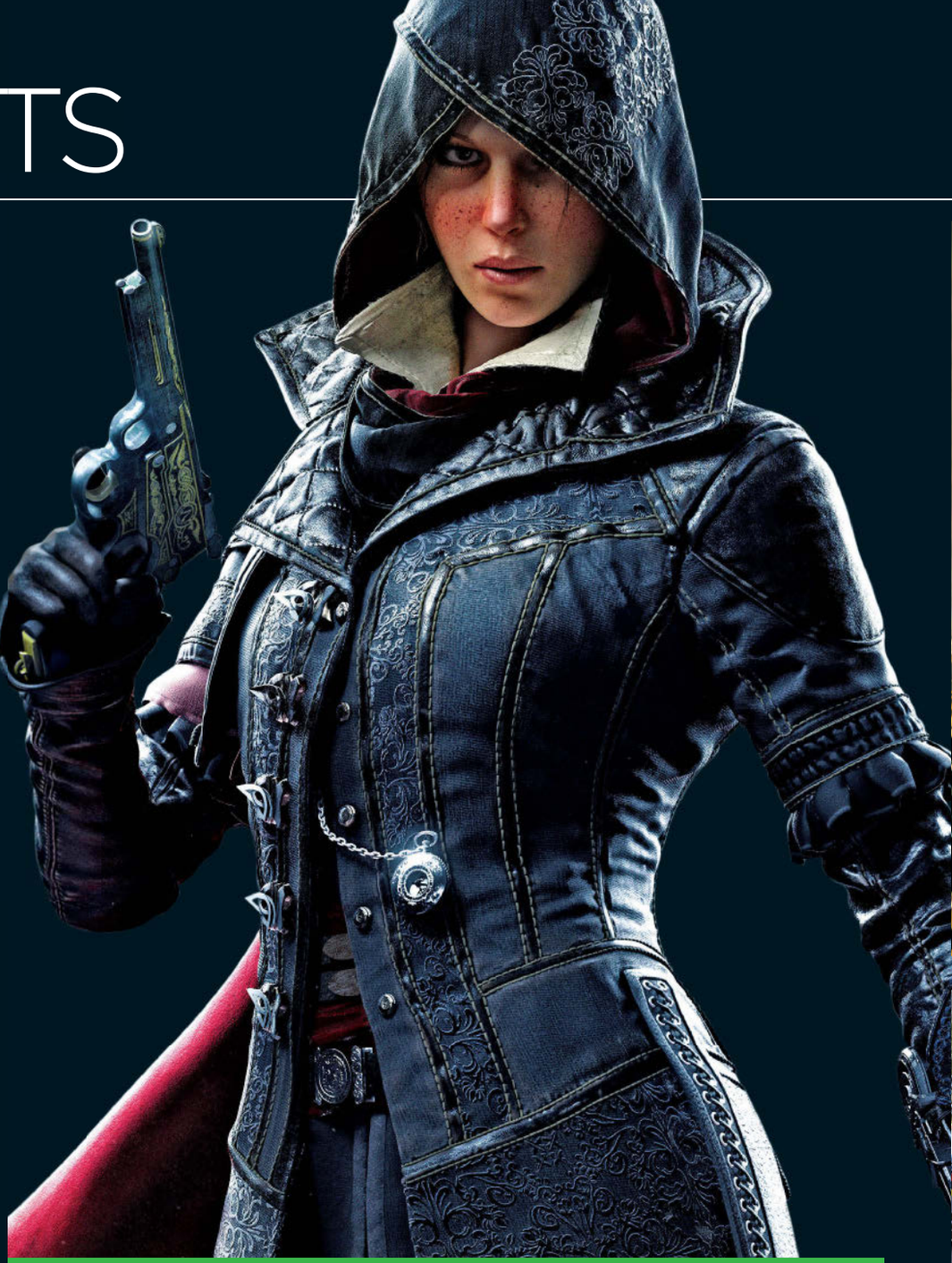
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We hunt the truth behind 343's latest *Halo* title in our exclusive interview

XBOX ONE

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HALO

5

WITH GUARDIANS ABOUT TO ORBITAL DROP, **X-ONE** TAKES THE CAMPAIGN AND MULTIPLAYER MODES TO TASK

"Anyone can get lucky once. This is where we prove whether we can really pull *Halo* off." So said *Halo 5: Guardians*' senior producer, Alex Cutting, during a ViDoc earlier in the year, a rare window into the pressure 343 Industries faces as it prepares to launch *Halo 5: Guardians*. Not only does it need to entertain millions of Xbox One owners and backseat Twitch gamers, but it also needs to prove that 343 – the studio forged in the fires of Bungie's defection to Activision – can make Master Chief bigger and better.

But *Halo 5: Guardians* isn't going to be your typical *Halo* experience. If 343 could be accused of playing it safe with its debut, the same certainly can't be said for the sequel. That much is clear from what we've seen behind closed doors of the game; the multiplayer at least is really going to push the franchise out of its comfort zone with brilliantly refined and expanded modes. But it's the campaign all eyes are on now; co-operative gameplay is at the core, so much so that you are surrounded by three other Spartans at all times.

There are two playable heroes here in an intertwining narrative, which could ultimately culminate in a rogue Master Chief – haunted by the death of Cortana – being executed by the newly playable Spartan Locke on orders form ONI. *Halo 5* has blown the comfort zone of the franchise apart with a well-placed Plasma Grenade, but whether it can once again raise the bar – or continue banging its head against it – well, that's the lingering question, isn't it?



Want to know the *Halo* universe essentials? This timeline should get you up to speed on all things UNSC

2511 CE
A lot happened before this, but it's the year John-117, the Master Chief was born. Where where humanity would be without him? All dead, probably.

2517 CE
The UNSC starts a top secret military project, kidnaps 75 kids – including Chief and the members of Blue Team – and begins the Spartan-II program.

2531 CE
UNSC engages with Covenant forces on planets Harvest and Arcadia, setting the stage for *Halo Wars* – it's also the first contact with The Flood.



It still hasn't been confirmed as to what role the behemoth Guardian will play, but it is thought Master Chief is stowed away inside.

CAMPAIGN

IS HALO 5 DOING ENOUGH TO IMPRESS WITH ITS CAMPAIGN?

"One of the biggest differences in the storytelling for *Halo 5* is our focus on two opposing teams of Spartans and all of the narrative possibilities that allows for," says franchise development director, Frankie O'Connor. "We're telling a sweeping sci-fi action story, but at the same time we want to ground that with more intimate and personal moments." Admittedly, that sounds great, but in this era of big budget, triple-A development, talk is cheap. We need to see results and, honestly, we are a little concerned by what we've seen so far.

A recent hands-off demo seemed to hit all of the right notes – big action setpieces, exhausting amounts of exposition and a killer orchestral score – but it was tricky to find anything truly exciting to rally behind as we watched a dev guide Master Chief and his rogue Blue Team – comprised of three other Spartan-IIs from the expanded fiction – through washed-out Covenant corridors. Perhaps it's unfair to expect *Halo 5* to be a trailblazer like the games that have come before it, but we're sadly still yet to see *Guardians* exercise its own creativity.

That's a difficult quality to gauge, especially in a hands-off capacity. Listening to 343 speak passionately about its upcoming title, it's clear that cooperative play is at the centre of the experience, but then again that isn't exactly anything new. Almost every game released today has some form of co-op support, and so 343 seems to be pitching everything around its integration and the subsequent dual narrative.

"Co-op was a core focus for the game from the very beginning," confirms studio head Josh Holmes. "*Halo* has always featured co-operative play but historically players have controlled four identical clones of the Master Chief. With *Halo 5: Guardians*, each player controls a different Spartan with a unique armour design, weapon loadout and HUD design. More importantly, each character brings their own personality and perspective to the story and dialogue so that the play experience is differentiated in subtle ways."

> "We're telling a sweeping sci-fi action story, but at the same time we want to ground that with more intimate moments"

Guardians is putting a greater emphasis on story than any *Halo* game before it; 343 is doing its best to streamline the messy timeline Bungie left behind and start afresh with a new chapter in Master Chief's life. While we're intrigued by the detective elements running throughout Spartan Locke and Fireteam Osiris' sections of the campaign, it's gameplay that has always been at the core of *Halo*. We keep *hearing* how *Guardians* has been designed around co-op, how levels are larger to accommodate extra Spartans, that the enemy AI has been re-designed to give a greater challenge and how the campaign is double the length of the last game, but we're yet to actually *see* any major evolution to the combat.

With co-op gaming at the forefront, there's concern surrounding the removal of split-



2552 CE
Unable to locate Earth, the Covenant strike the next best thing: Reach. Noble Team is dispatched to evacuate the planet and secure Cortana.

The fall of Reach hits humanity hard. Noble Team is successful in retrieving the irreplaceable Cortana and getting her aboard the Pillar Of Autumn.

The Master Chief wakes from cryosleep, discovers Halo Ring-04 – documented in *Halo: Combat Evolved* – and destroys it.

The Prometheans have been given a huge upgrade since *Halo 4*, they now move faster, strike harder and can wield UNSC weaponry.

HALO 5: GUARDIANS

Still with us? All you *need* to know is Dr. Halsey can rebuild Cortana, so Chief is probably looking for her. Happy hunting.

2557 CE

Chief finds himself on a Forerunner Shield World, awakening an ancient bad guy – The Didact – and the Prometheans. (*Halo 4* got a little silly.)

Master Chief stops the Didact by sacrificing Cortana. Dr. Halsey is betrayed by ONI and defects to Jul'Mdama's evil Covenant branch.

A human/Covenant truce is struck thanks to Chief and The Arbiter being besties, causing some Elites to form a new faction under Jul'Mdama.

Master Chief and his Blue Team are the best soldiers the UNSC has to offer. Old friends battle-hardened after years of fierce fighting.

Learning that The Ark is key to controlling the Halo rings, Chief and friends rush back to Earth, where there is some serious ass-kicking to be had.

While Earth is assaulted, Chief pursues The Prophet Of Regret to Halo Ring-05 but isn't fast enough to stop all 12 rings being primed to fire.

The Covenant accidentally discover Earth while looking for The Ark. An ODST team – including Fireteam Osiris' Buck, is first response until Chief arrives.

screen co-op, but at least the AI looks to be responsive. "Fireteam AI is designed to support seamless drop-in/drop-out cooperative play. Your Fireteam members are capable enough to support you throughout the campaign without getting in the way," says Holmes. "If you want additional control, we have a one-button contextual orders system. With it you can give commands to your teammates, ordering them to take a position, fire on your target, use a vehicle or turret and even swap weapons. Orders can make your teammates more effective if used correctly but they're never necessary and players can choose to play the campaign without them."

Guardians seems to have a lot in common with LucasArts' 2005 tactical-FPS *Star Wars: Republic Commando*. A great game, but it isn't Halo. The core gameplay loop – the '30 seconds of fun' mantra Bungie established way back in 2004 with *Halo 2* – seems to have taken a backseat to making co-op work, while the level design (that we've seen in action, at least) seems to weigh heavily in favour of controlling the flow of combat with setpieces, rather than letting you forge your own in a sandbox. *Halo*'s fun wasn't found in tightly guided setpieces, like you've no doubt seen from the Battle of Sunaion demo, but by being given the tools, space and freedom to create your own memorable adventures on Halo rings and Forerunner installations.

Of course, we've seen but a slice of what's in store. There's still a good chance 343 will open the maps up and ramp up the pace throughout the campaign, that these 'vertical slices' of gameplay were just a poor demonstration of what's to come. And we're are certain that 343 will surprise us when *Halo 5: Guardians* launches 27 October. But to do so, it needs to do more than introducing FPS-standard aim-down-sights mechanics and *Titanfall*-style movement options. Along with the disappointing news that *Halo 5* won't run in constant 1080p resolution – it will scale during big battles to keep the frame-rate at a smooth 60fps – as well as our concerns about the campaign, 343 has its work cut out to prove whether it can really pull *Halo* off. This franchise is known for setting the bar for the FPS genre; all we can do at this point is hope a co-op focus and a strong narrative is enough to bring it all to life.

HALO 5: GUARDIANS





LIEUTENANT JUNIOR GRADE FREDERIC-104
AFFILIATION:
UNSC NAVY (S-II), Blue Team
LOADOUT:
DMR, Magnum

An expert in strategy and battlefield command, Fred is the highest-ranking member of Blue Team – technically the leader, though he often defers to the Chief. A combat veteran, Fred takes great care and attention in trying to protect those under his command.

MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER JOHN-117
AFFILIATION:
UNSC NAVY (S-II), Blue Team
LOADOUT:
Assault Rifle, Magnum

Master Chief has steered the UNSC to multiple victories against the Covenant and Flood. Following Cortana's death, Chief reunites with his friends – and original Spartan-IIs – Blue Team. The team go AWOL following an incident at the beginning of *Halo 5: Guardians*.



PETTY OFFICER KELLY-087
AFFILIATION:
UNSC NAVY (S-II), Blue Team
LOADOUT:
Shotgun, Magnum

Blue Team's key reconnaissance talent and unmatched in melee combat, Kelly-087 is quick on her feet and even quicker to analyse any given situation. Considered to be Master Chief's closest friend, the pair have been running missions together long before the first Halo incident tore the world apart.



PETTY OFFICER LINDA-058
AFFILIATION:
UNSC NAVY (S-II), Blue Team
LOADOUT:
Sniper Rifle, Magnum

A highly skilled sniper, Linda-058 is the quietest member of Blue Team and the most observant. Linda has been known to take out multiple Covenant targets so quickly that observers don't know who she targeted first, not to mention downing Banshees with a single shot.

BLUE TEAM'S LEADER SPEAKS TO X-ONE

WE TALK TO VOICE ACTOR STEVE DOWNES, THE VOICE OF MASTER CHIEF

How did you first become involved with Bungie and the *Halo* franchise?
Bungie was originally based in Chicago, where I do my morning radio show on 97.1 WDRV "The DRIVE". Marty O'Donnell was a fan and asked me to do the voice of a character for a game he was working on call "Septera Core". About a year later he called me back to do the voice of Master Chief for their next game: *Halo*.

How would you characterise Master Chief, and the journey he has taken over the last decade?
The Chief has been on an amazing and challenging journey. One that I doubt even he expected. Certainly I didn't. He is obviously the strong silent type. I think his journey has been more complicated than he was prepared for. He discovered that his strength, weaponry and skills on the battlefield would not be all he would need to see him through. Life for John has not been as simple as 'Shoot first and ask questions later'. And now without Cortana, his struggle has magnified.

We remember reading that you weren't a massive gamer when you signed up for *Halo*, has that changed?
No. It's good to know what you're good at and what you're not good at. And I learned early on that I would not be able to devote the time and energy necessary to be a good gamer. And I decided that if I couldn't be really good at it, I didn't want to play at all. I have the highest regard for those gamers out there who are accomplished. My interest in *Halo* has always been the story.

Are you happy with the direction 343 has taken with the Master Chief story?
Thrilled! With *Halo 4* they took *Halo* to the next level. And now, the sky's the limit. Their devotion to the franchise has made me proud to have a role in it.

What sort of challenges does Chief face going into *Halo 5: Guardians*?
I'd tell ya, but I'd have to kill ya.

If Master Chief and Agent Locke walked into a bar and had in a fistfight, who would come out on top?
Master Chief *always* finishes the fight.

THE ARMOURY



SNIPER RIFLE
MANUFACTURER: Misriah Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 4 rounds
FIRING RATE: Semi-automatic

If you're looking to engage enemies from a distance, the Sniper Rifle uses potent anti-personnel rounds to penetrate both dissipative energy-shielding and heavy armour-plating from a distance.



ASSAULT RIFLE
MANUFACTURER: Misriah Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 60 rounds
FIRING RATE: Automatic

The Assault Rifle was primarily designed for close-quarters combat and is known for its lethal efficiency in the field. This weapon will help suppress enemy lines while your team uses flank tactics.



BATTLE RIFLE
MANUFACTURER: Misriah Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 36 rounds
FIRING RATE: Burst mode

The pride of the UNSC, this gas-operated, magazine-fed rifle has proven to be incredibly versatile in battle thanks to its ability to be used across a wide variety of ranges. It's great for pulling off headshots as well.



COVENANT CARBINE
MANUFACTURER: Iruiru Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 18 rounds
FIRING RATE: Semi-automatic

While it's unwise to mess around with enemy weaponry, you can expect the T-51 Carbine to handle decently at medium- to long-range distances. Think of it as a temporary replacement for the DMR.



DMR
MANUFACTURER: Misriah Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 14 rounds
FIRING RATE: Semi-automatic

Thanks to the new Smart-linked helmets, all Spartans can now take advantage of the Designated Marksman Rifle's Telescopic Sights. Incredible accuracy and stopping power awaits, if you can handle the recoil.



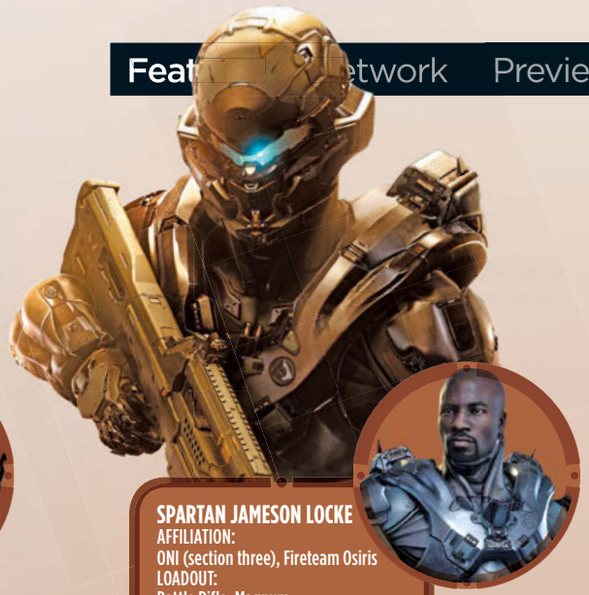
FUEL ROD CANNON
MANUFACTURER:
Merchants of Qikost
WEAPON CAPACITY: 5 rounds
FIRING RATE: Semi-automatic

The Fuel Rod Cannon is a Covenant wielded shoulder-fired heavy weapon that launches extremely volatile explosive projectiles that detonate on impact. It's basically an alien rocket launcher.



SPARTAN HOLLY TANAKA
AFFILIATION:
UNSC NAVY, Fireteam Osiris
LOADOUT:
DMR, Magnum

Little is known about Spartan Tanaka. After spending three years surviving in the nuclear fallout condition of her glassed homeworld, Minab, she joined the UNSC as a non-commissioned officer in the engineers before surpassing expectations and joining the ranks of the Spartan-IV program.



SPARTAN JAMESON LOCKE
AFFILIATION:
ONI (section three), Fireteam Osiris
LOADOUT:
Battle Rifle, Magnum

Before being promoted to Spartan status, Locke was an ONI Acquisitions Specialist – an expert in tracking targets, recovering military assets and eliminating high-value personnel. For *Halo 5: Guardians*, Locke has been tasked with leading Fireteam Osiris to apprehend or neutralise John-117.



SPARTAN EDWARD BUCK
AFFILIATION:
ODST, Fireteam Osiris
LOADOUT:
Assault Rifle, Magnum

During Buck's days as an ODST it was suggested that "if he were any better, he'd be a Spartan." That destiny has now been realised as Buck – played once again by a returning Nathan Fillion – joins Fireteam Osiris with years of combat skill and tactical expertise behind him.



SPARTAN OLYMPIA VALE
AFFILIATION:
Spartan Branch, Fireteam Osiris
LOADOUT:
SMG, Plasma Pistol

Regarded as a child prodigy, Vale established herself as a tactical asset for ONI thanks to her innate skill-learning and understanding of languages. Before getting dragged into conflict, Vale was positioned as a Navy liaison with the Sangheili post-war.

A NEW LOCKE LEADS FIRETEAM OSIRIS

AGENT LOCKE WILL SOUND A LITTLE DIFFERENT WHEN YOU PLAY HALO 5

With *Halo 5: Guardians* so close to launch, it might surprise you to learn that there have been some fairly substantial changes to the character of Spartan Jameson Locke over the last 12 months. Let's recap the original game plan: actor Mike Colter was originally cast to play Locke in both *Halo 5* and 2014's *Halo: Nightfall* – a live-action digital series that looked to bridge the gap between *Halo 4* and *Guardians*. Following the recent delude of trailers and promotional material, it has been made clear that, while Colter is still the face and body of Locke, he is no longer the voice.

When we spoke to Colter last year, he made it clear that he had already started working on both voice and motion capture after wrapping up *Nightfall*, commenting, "I've started doing the motion capture for it now, I've been doing the voiceover work for it." So, you might be wondering what's going on. Well, for starters, Locke is now voiced by actor Iké Amadi – responsible for lending his vocal chords to *Mass Effect 3*'s Javik, in the *From Ashes* DLC, as well as a host of additional voices in everything from *Call Of Duty: Advanced Warfare* to *GTA V*.

It's a subtle change, but you should be able to notice the difference if you compare the Colter-recorded *Halo 2: Anniversary* cutscenes to the Hunt The Truth advertising campaign, Amadi seems to display a more range in the role. The reasoning? According to Frankie O'Connor, *Halo*'s franchise development director, the switch was made because of Colter's casting as Luke Cage in an upcoming Netflix series. "Colter is face, Amadi is voice," Connor said to concerned fans on NeoGaf. "We deferred to his Luke Cage schedule because he's a cool guy and it's a huge break. Ike is amazing and was one of our faves during first auditions and so far reaction to his voice has been fantastic."

For what it's worth, Colter was fairly confident on Locke's chances against Master Chief. When we asked him who would win in a bar fight between the two characters, he had this to say: "Well, Master Chief is Master Chief. It's kinda like Hulk Hogan going up against some new guy coming up. I mean, if you're asking me... mano a mano? I don't know! I'm a Spartan-IV! Unless something happened changed with Master Chief between *Halo 5* and the last time you saw him... you know what? I've got him. I think I've got him." It won't be long until we find out for sure.



HYDRA MLRS
MANUFACTURER: Misriah Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 6 rounds
FIRING RATE: Semi-automatic

Sometimes a rocket launcher is too conspicuous, and that's why the UNSC designed the Hydra. It's an airburst, rapid-fire guided munitions launcher that locks onto enemies like the Covenant's Type-52 plasma launcher.



MAGNUM
MANUFACTURER: Misriah Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 12 rounds
FIRING RATE: Semi-automatic

Has your primary weapon run out of ammo? Remember, it's always quicker to switch to your secondary. The Magnum is a semi-automatic, recoil-operated killing machine – no Spartan should leave home without it.



NEEDLER
MANUFACTURER: Lodam Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 22 shards
FIRING RATE: Automatic

This is a volatile weapon, but sometimes that's what you need to get the job done. A compact, fully-automatic munitions launcher that fires explosive shards of exotic crystalline material.



RAILGUN
MANUFACTURER: Acheron Security
WEAPON CAPACITY: 1 round
FIRING RATE: Single shot

The UNSC's railgun is great for those times you need to unleash a dense tungsten projectile at hypersonic velocities at those pesky Covenant forces. There's nothing like a bit of kinetic energy to back you up.



SHOTGUN
MANUFACTURER: Misriah Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 6 rounds
FIRING RATE: Semi-automatic

Designed for close-quarters combat, the shotgun pretty much speaks for itself; it unleashes pump-action hot death onto enemies, cutting through energy shields and tears Covenant flesh to pieces.



SMG
MANUFACTURER: Misriah Armory
WEAPON CAPACITY: 60 Rounds
FIRING RATE: Automatic

After it became standard UNSC protocol to ban duel-wielding in the field, the SMG struggled to find its place. With improved recoil control, firing rate and damage output, it's considered a replacement for the assault rifle.

24 players split across two teams, as well as AI-controlled forces running wild, *Halo*'s battles have never been this freaking awesome.

MULTIPLAYER

HANDS-ON WITH WARZONE, THE FUTURE OF HALO'S MULTIPLAYER

As much as we've enjoyed *Halo*'s multiplayer over the decade, there's always been a lingering sense that its scale didn't match its potential. *Halo* has been popularised by an online community of eager Spartans and skilled enthusiasts, the story of super soldiers locked in a game of galactic warfare. Delegates of the Red and Blue armies fight for supremacy across an array of beautiful battlegrounds, while downtrodden Covenant and Promethean forces recover from the pounding Master Chief delivered from Installation-04 all the way to Requiem. But Team Deathmatch always felt too tight, while Big Team Battle just wasn't *big* enough. We've always felt like *Halo* was missing something, and now, thanks to the Xbox One, it can deliver. Enter Warzone, the future of *Halo*'s multiplayer experience. It is freaking glorious.

Warzone is 343 Industries showboating its ambitions and ability in the Xbox One's biggest exclusive to date; taking the depth and tactical dependency of a traditional *Halo* multiplayer match and blurring it expertly with elements of the single-player experience. 24 players are split into two teams and tasked with defending a base – so far, so standard – but it's when *Halo 5: Guardians* takes advantage of the Xbox One's unique Cloud processing prowess that it really comes into its own. Not only are you tasked with defending your base from 12 Red or Blue aggressors equipped with headsets, but you've also got over 50 AI-controlled Forerunners rampaging across maps that are four times bigger than anything we've ever seen in a *Halo* game to date. It's truly impressive, unnervingly frantic, and without question primed to be the quintessential *Halo* game mode.

> "We always felt like Halo was missing something, and now, thanks to the Xbox One, it can deliver"

Can AI really have such a huge impact on *Halo*'s multiplayer? *Titanfall* players will know how much of an effect computer-controlled combatants can have on the state of play – the Grunts and Spectres running around ensured there was always something to shoot at, keeping engagement levels at fever pitch – but *Halo 5* takes it one step further, regardless of your technical ability. "Ultimately it's just a big, fun mode," considers 343's studio head Josh Holmes. "However, we like to think there is something in here for everyone. We've watched pro players take a clinical, surgical approach to combat and objectives, and we've seen casual players revel in the madness and mayhem the full sandbox enables."

Oh, and by the way, Holmes is absolutely right – there is mayhem and madness to be found in Warzone's sprawling sandboxes. Regardless of whether you're trying to out-manoeuvre other Spartans, taking on a pack of Forerunners,



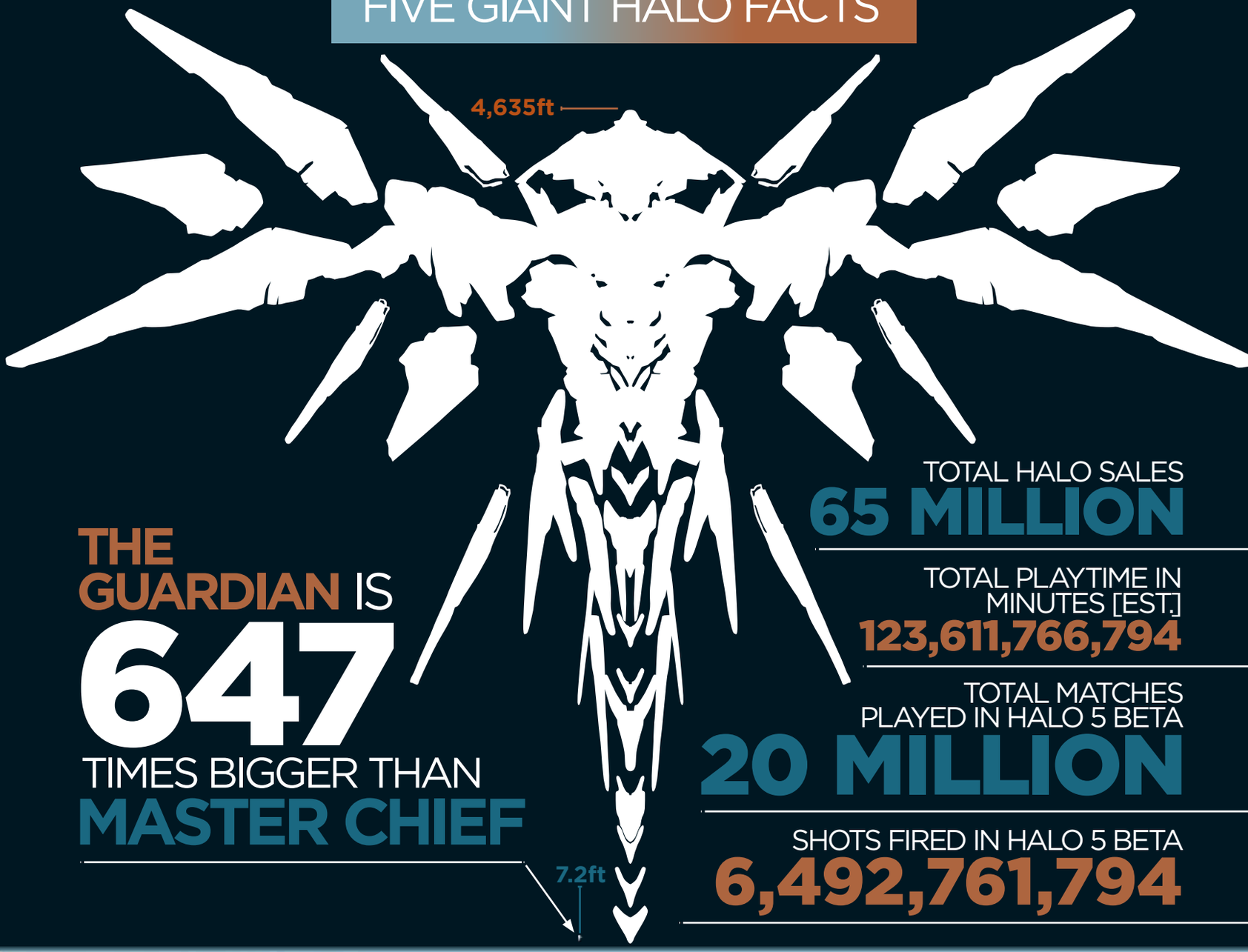


Warzone has proved to be a lot of fun, it's the multiplayer mode *Halo* always needed – now, thanks to the Xbox One, it's a reality.



Vehicles like the Warthog can be called into battle, once you've earned enough Req Points and Energy Levels.

FIVE GIANT HALO FACTS



THE GUARDIAN IS 647 TIMES BIGGER THAN MASTER CHIEF

TOTAL HALO SALES
65 MILLION

TOTAL PLAYTIME IN MINUTES [EST.]
123,611,766,794

TOTAL MATCHES PLAYED IN HALO 5 BETA
20 MILLION

SHOTS FIRED IN HALO 5 BETA
6,492,761,794

defending your base, battling bosses or completing the varied objectives littered across the map, everything you do in Warzone earns you points. This serves a dual purpose: while the first team to a reach a thousand points wins the game, you'll also quickly find yourself pushing to leap head first into engagements to earn as many of those points yourself as possible. This lets you level up within rounds – independently of your True Skill rank – to purchase new weapons and vehicles to help turn the tide of war in your team's favour.

"There are things in this mode for RPG fans – there's a great deal of player progress and customisation to be had, but without being so intrusive that it demands a ridiculous investment," continues Holmes, stamping out our concerns that *Halo* would swap out its easy-to-understand basics in favour of a convoluted loadout and progression system reminiscent of the last decade of *Call Of Duty* games. "You can either commit to the mode fully, or sample at will. Matchmaking and an in-game, per-session levelling system will ensure balanced and fun games for players of every stripe."

It's a neat idea, letting you tweak and upgrade your loadout as you progress through a round. Having a rotten time with the assault rifle versus a handful of DMR pros? Pick up a shotgun next time you respawn and unleash some close-quarters chaos. Is a rival tearing apart your buddies on a turret? Drop into a conflict with a sniper rifle and take 'em to task. Then again, perhaps you'll hit enough points to drop a Scorpion tank into the field and really start some shit. Warzone has a refreshingly unique pace; one minute you are racing alongside enemy Spartans to try and take out a high-level enemy first (which grants giant point rewards), the next you might be deftly avoiding Banshee and Warthog fire as you desperately sprint to the next objective.

> "There is mayhem and madness to be found in Warzone's sprawling sandboxes"

It only took one game for us to open up our hearts to Warzone, and multiple rounds only endeared it to us more. We were honestly beginning to worry that *Halo 5: Guardians* was pulling too big of a focus onto the claustrophobic Arena gameplay that ran in beta last year – while excellent, we were eager to see what 343 could really deliver with the power of the Xbox One behind it. But now we know; Warzone is clearly the driving force behind *Halo*'s multiplayer experience now. It retains everything that *Halo* excels at, but brushes it across a wider canvas. Warzone is unlike anything you've ever seen *Halo* deliver, and we absolutely can't wait to get our hands back on it.

WHICH XBOX ONE GAMES HAVE THE BEST DLC?

DLC can make even the most lacklustre title a genuine must-have. But which Xbox One titles have the best downloadable content?

A game isn't over when the credits roll – not any more. The main story may be finished, you may have grabbed all of the collectables on offer, you might even have dipped into replaying the story with New Game+ but there's always the DLC. Extra story missions, new characters, and new maps all add hours of extra content to the games that you've paid hard cash for, and can sometimes mean the difference between a game hitting the bargain bin or staying in your library.

The best of these DLC packs add loads of new content with little or no investment on behalf of the player – we're talking about free DLC that gives you awesome new stuff to mess around with, new places to explore or a whole new storyline to play through. But that's not to say that paid DLC is always a bad thing. When you're getting a huge amount of extra content for a few extra pounds, it's hard to complain. Especially when, in some cases, the DLC turns out to be better than the main game. We definitely felt this way about titles like *Evolve* – which added some seriously fun stuff to an otherwise pretty dull title – and *GTA IV* with its fantastic *The Ballad Of Gay Tony* DLC. In cases like these, DLC can be a rescue boat for a sinking ship, breathing more life into the original game than it ever had before.

Of course, not every DLC is like this. Some feel like quick cash-ins, or add-ons that really should've been in the game on initial release. In these cases the outcry is heard across the industry. Thankfully, these releases are fairly limited, and the majority of DLC adds genuinely good extra content. With that in mind, we asked you which Xbox One games have had the best DLC so far, and your response was incredible. Here's what you had to say...

"Well, Destiny DLC is supported for ten years. Just sucks me back in every time."
@KRAMZ80

"It has to be Sunset Overdrive. Great game and the DLC kept you playing."
@REIMFUGE85

"It's not on the list, but The Old Blood DLC for Wolfenstein: TNO was great in my opinion :)"
@SWENGLISHX1PC

"Forza Horizon 2 for me. Storm Island and the Porsche pack were awesome."
@BARRYMITCHELL24

"Love Destiny & Shadow Of Mordor. Both have great DLCs, but season pass for Ryse: Son Of Rome is also a brill add-on."
@CHRISCARR44

GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVE… X… ETWORK

xb1.co.uk /XONEmag youtube/XONE …ag



"Evil Within for me. Amazing length adds another layer of story and gameplay."
@RAYWAND

"Anyone who says Destiny needs a slap. Nasty business that whole thing."
@ORGINARYMAGOO

"The Witcher III! Even though they are small they get me excited to play with it and it is free!"
@JAKOBKMM

"Halo 3 ODST is a great DLC for MCC :)"
@REIMFUGE85

"Probably @AlienIsolation, being able to play as the characters from the first film is pretty amazing."
@77BOWMAN

"The Witcher III definitely has the best DLC... And it's free!"
@IMCHUCKY

"Forza Horizon 2 Storm Island not only added a bevy of new cars but also added a new, fresh and somewhat wetter playground."
@FURYAC3

"Dragon Age Inquisition, Witcher III and Diablo 3."
@SKEPTICALHUSKY

"Really enjoyed Shadow Of Mordor DLC, Titanfall's DLC maps are also great. Most other DLC has been a waste of time/money."
@POMPEYLADBFP

"I'm still on the fence about if I want to drop $40 for TTK when there are so many other great games coming out."
@ISLANDEREJ

"Titanfall did a good job with DLC. Kept bringing me back with maps, game modes, features. And now it's all free!"
@ELLIOTFINN

WHICH **XBOX ONE GAMES** HAVE THE **BEST DLC**?



1.26% DARK SOULS II

The three DLC releases for *Dark Souls II* added an impressive amount of extra content, with new items, weapons, armour and spells added to the title, along with bosses to fight. They were paid, though, which may explain why this is the last entry in the list, although the recent Xbox One re-release contained them all from the off.

1.27% TRIALS FUSION

Trials hit new heights of crazy with its *Awesome Levels Max* DLC, but even a cat riding a unicorn couldn't push *Trials* up our poll. Still, we are big fans of the extra content Ubisoft added to the title since it launched; sure, it was 'more of the same' but that's what fans wanted.

2.53% EVOLVE

We were disappointed with *Evolve* – the tense action we were promised felt samey and slow. The *Arena Mode* DLC, and the multiple new Monsters and characters, went some way to solving the problems, but they were just too expensive.

2.53% MINECRAFT

Since Microsoft took control of the *Minecraft* property, DLC has been hitting the store so regularly it's easy to lose yourself in it. We're talking character skins, texture packs for your game and even pre-built levels to explore based on topics from ancient Greece to *Halo*. They aren't free, but the support is clearly there.

2.53% COD: ADVANCED WARFARE

Surprisingly low, given the great zombie multiplayer modes. We're still pretty hyped for *Black Ops III*, although the idea of buying another season pass doesn't exactly have us excited...



31.65% THE WITCHER III: WILD HUNT

There's a reason this one is at the top of the list, and we can explain it in one word: free. The 16 DLC packs for *The Witcher III* might have only been small updates, but they were all offered for free to everyone who bought the game, which made everybody very happy indeed. Oh, and the Beard & Hairstyle pack let you customise Geralt's hairstyle, too, which must have helped.



16.46% GTA ONLINE

Considering the number of players that are still frequenting the online section of San Andreas, it's clear that Rockstar is doing something right. It has been regularly adding new weapons, cars and accessories to the game, as well as new missions – including the huge heists update – all for free.

13.92% DESTINY

There has been plenty of controversy surrounding *Destiny,* with some players complaining about paying again for *The Taken King* DLC, but when you consider how regularly the game has been updated, and how radically it has changed since launch, we can definitely understand why it's so high in this poll.



12.66% TITANFALL

Xbox One's standout shooter was a surprise hit when it launched in 2014, and EA kept the ball rolling with three DLC packs offering new game modes and maps, along with new customisation options and an awesome new ranked mode. The fact that these packs all became free on the game's one-year anniversary was the cherry on the top.

11.39% FORZA HORIZON 2

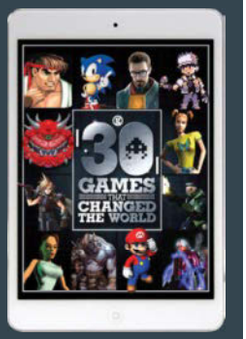
A healthy mix of free and paid DLC has undoubtedly pushed this up the charts – Turn 10 did a great job of adding new cars to the game regularly, with extra vehicles landing every few weeks. This was a key part of extending the gameplay, and for car enthusiasts it's the ultimate dream.

3.80% THE EVIL WITHIN

We suspect this is so low in the list simply because it was a smaller release compared to the blockbuster titles, but *The Evil Within* was a great example of DLC done well. The two releases retold the story through the eyes of other story characters, and offered unique gameplay that expanded the universe.

14 HOURS OF EXCLUSIVE GAMEPLAY ANALYSIS

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



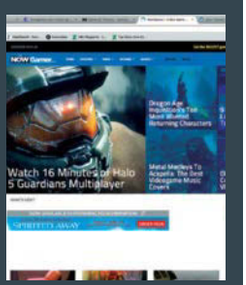
30 GAMES THAT CHANGED THE WORLD
From arcade titles to modern classics, these releases that have shaped the games we play today.



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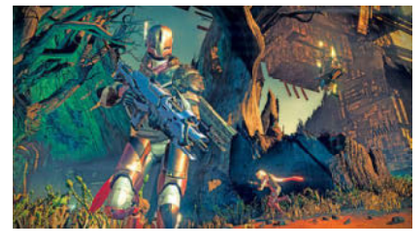


MAD MAX
We enter the wasteland and drive around aimlessly blowing stuff up

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

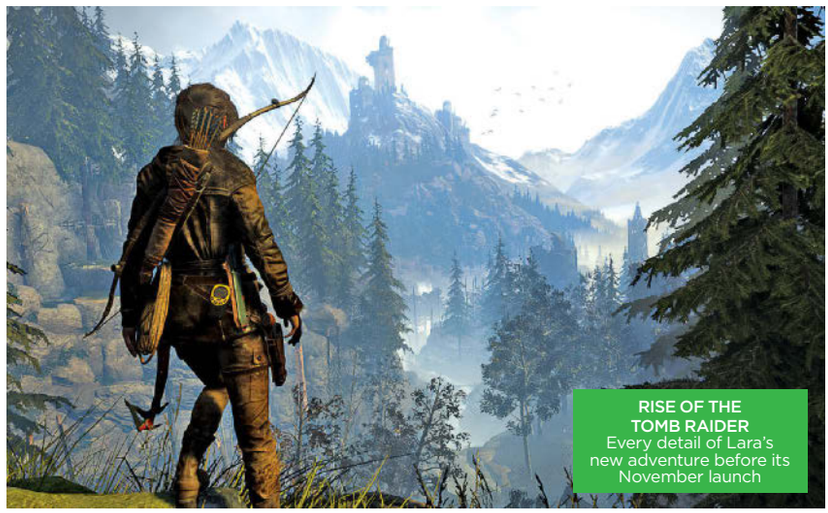


GEARS OF WAR: ULTIMATE EDITION



DESTINY: THE TAKEN KING

XBOX ONE WEBSITE www.XB1.co.uk



RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER
Every detail of Lara's new adventure before its November launch



FALLOUT 4



QUANTUM BREAK



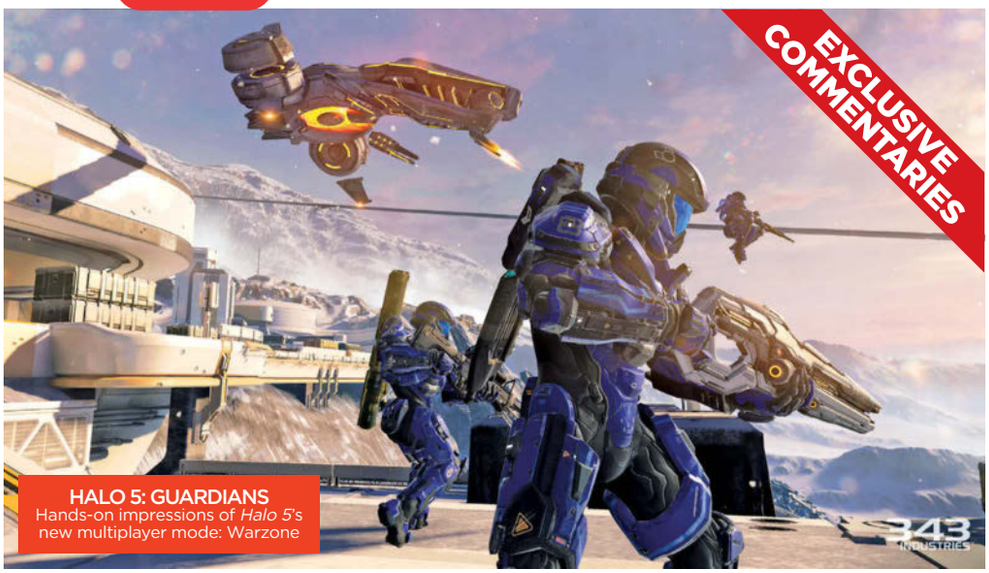
RAINBOW SIX SIEGE



ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE

YouTube

www.youtube.com/XONEmag



HALO 5: GUARDIANS
Hands-on impressions of *Halo 5*'s new multiplayer mode: Warzone



HITMAN



HOMEFRONT: THE REVOLUTION



STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT



JUST CAUSE 3



CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS III
Our hands-on verdict of the *Black Ops III* multiplayer beta



LEGO DIMENSIONS



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 5



THE DIVISION

5 THINGS WE LEARNT THIS ISSUE

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

1



HALO 5 LOOKS INCREDIBLE

We've been given a sneak peek at *Halo 5: Guardians*' opening cinematic, featuring Spartan Locke and his team. It's fast, action-packed, and explosive.

2



YOUTUBE GAMING IS LIVE

YouTube's Twitch competitor is here, and we've already seen a bunch of gamers backing it. There's no Xbox One app for it at the time of writing, but it's surely coming.

3



SPECIAL EDITIONS APLENTY

With so many big releases on the horizon, it was going to be high season for special editions, and Microsoft has gone all out with *Halo 5* and *Forza 6* leading the charge.

4



EVERYONE LOVES THE WITCHER III

The Witcher III: Wild Hunt sold six million copies on its first six weeks after launch, and in an open letter the head of CD Projekt Red said a big thank you to the fans.

5



FALLOUT 4 WILL GET FREE UPDATES

Bethesda has announced its plans for *Fallout 4* post-release. The game will get several free updates, like *Skyrim* did, along with paid DLC and a season pass.

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

REMOTE CONTROL
You're not just battling against the KPA but also the technology they have on their side. You can use your own tech too but it has a more homebrew flavour to it...

CALLING BACK-UP
With each battle, you'll have to assess how much firepower you're up against but also decide how much time you have before reinforcements turn up.

ESCAPE TO VICTORY
The open-ended design of *Homefront: The Revolution* means you can escape when things go wrong – you could duck through this gap in the wall, for example.

ARTIFICIAL STUPIDITY
The main area of polish that's lacking right now is the intelligence of soldiers themselves but there's plenty of time for Dambuster to get this right before release.

DID YOU KNOW? Only one member of the original *Homefront* team has made it over to Dambuster Studios: CJ Kershner, senior narrative designer







HOMEFRONT THE REVOLUTION

Don't call it a comeback, it's been here for years



DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Deep Silver

DEVELOPER
Dambuster Studios

CREDITS
N/A

PLAYERS
1-TBA

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
2016

WEBSITE
homefront-game.com

TWITTER
@HomefrontGame

XBOX ONE

It's been no less than two minutes since **X-ONE** has been thrown into a sweaty room at gamescom where the first official *Homefront: The Revolution* presentation and we've heard at least four words that start with 're'. Revolution! Reboot! Revamp! Refresh! But, noticeably, not words like remember or recall.

"It originally began under THQ as a direct sequel to the original game and continuing the gameplay style of linear, scripted, picking up the story from where the first one went off," senior narrative designer CJ Kershner tells us later. "When THQ went under and the studio got the rights, we said 'Given the setting, given the story we want to tell, given the gameplay we want to feature, doesn't it make more sense to take this open world?' That meant casting aside a lot of previously done work but it meant we could have a fresh start. So *Homefront: The Revolution* is a new chapter starting from a similar premise of fallen America occupied by the military force of North Korea... but the whole backstory has been rewritten, it's an all-new story and there's no real connection to the first game. It's its own thing. It's something new and different."

So it doesn't feel like a sequel to you guys? "It doesn't feel like a sequel," comes the answer. It's a reboot. A revamp. A refresh. Take your pick.

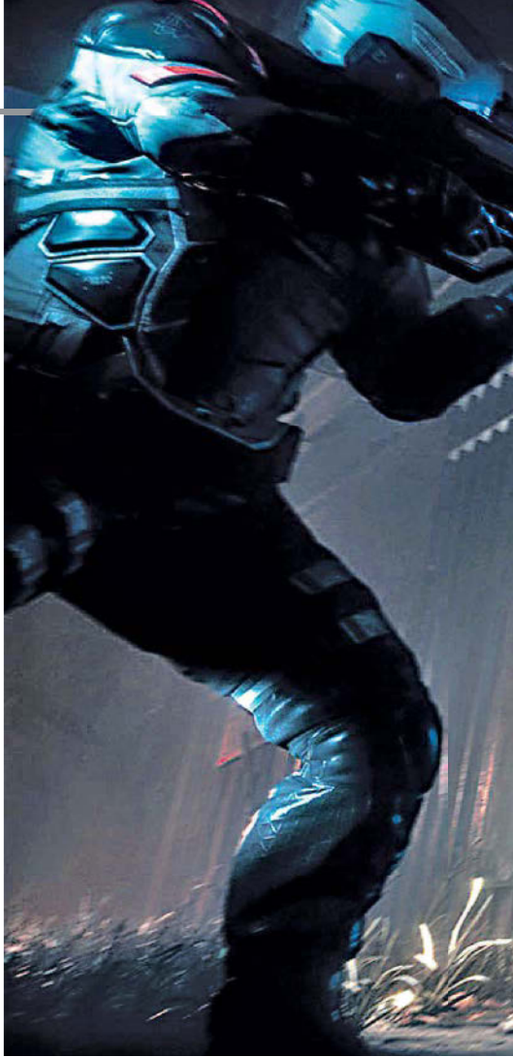
When we get to play *Homefront: The Revolution*, it opens with what effectively serves as a tutorial. You follow guerrilla fighters through grimy, ruined streets of Philadelphia as you're guided through some of the mechanics. Here you can scavenge items, which you can use to craft attachments for your gun. Here's a petrol barrel trap you can spring to take out the North Korean tank patrolling the streets below. And, er, here's how to actually fire your gun when the ensuing explosion draws the attention of soldiers in the area. Typically this scenario would involve standing your ground fighting back until everyone in the area is very dead... but in this scenario, we're forced to scamper to safety. It's a common theme in *Homefront: The Revolution* – you have to pick your battles, because you're a human being made of flesh and bone, not a near-immortal warrior who can mow down thousands of soldiers.





In situations like this, it might make more sense to avoid the area altogether and try to sneak around the back...





TALKING TO CJ KERSHNER

Senior narrative designer



Given this is effectively a reboot, is the original *Homefront* a help or a hindrance for *The Revolution*?
It helps us as an entry point. People know *Homefront*: fallen America, North Korean occupation, resistance. I don't think it hurts that the first game exists and it's out there and it's disconnected from this one. It's interesting in dealing with the idea that a game must necessarily follow the game before it, where canon and lore is sacrosanct.

Not a good example but I think with the *Star Wars* announcement, they said we'll take the trilogies as those things happened but everything else, that's out the window now. They're rebooting their canon in a way as well. So I think if it doesn't stand in the way of what you want to do, sometimes it might be okay to acknowledge that this thing was made and it's out there. As one of the developers on *Homefront*, I'm still incredibly proud of it but it doesn't have to be an anchor that we carry around with us. It can just be a touchstone, an entry point, a thing that people are familiar with that leads them into this new thing.

What will make *Homefront: The Revolution* stand out from other FPSs?
I think the world; watching how civilians live and having them in the game in general, in a natural and systemic way as opposed to 'We need civilians in this area, we'll spawn them in out of various doors and closets' and things like that. I think the theme of resistance and occupation is unique to *Homefront: The Revolution*, as a universe. And the idea of having to change the player's mindset from 'I am an unstoppable killing warrior' to 'I am a fragile human being who can quickly find himself in an unmanageable situation', I think that's going to be the biggest differentiator.

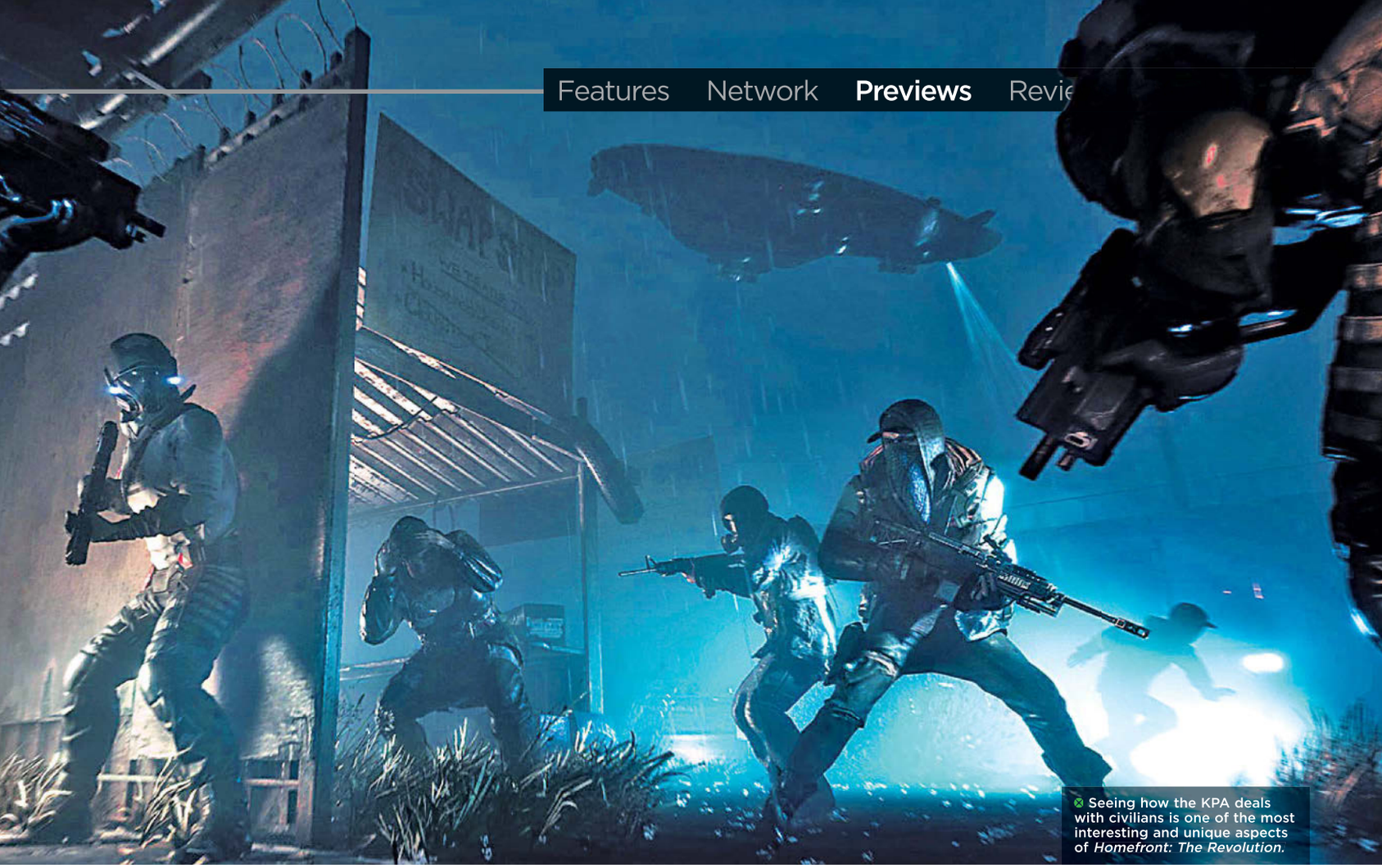
Do you have any behind-the-scenes stories you'd like to share?
Our testers running through our gamescom demo created a challenge for themselves. One of them, rather than springing the barrel trap, they were laying all of their explosives in a pile on the street and waiting for the vehicle to drive over it. One of them got it flipped up and onto a railing, took a screenshot and posted it on our internal forum.

It almost became a game of HORSE. Like, 'Bet you can't do that!' So some of the other testers were doing the same thing - piling all of their explosives into the street, waiting for the jeep to drive over it and detonating it. Often, it would rock the jeep over onto the side or hit into some scaffolding. But one of them hit the button and you saw the jeep go sailing over the building and it landed in a back yard. They literally had to run around the block of buildings to get a screenshot of this thing burning in the backyard. There's no other way of getting it in there. They took a screenshot of it and said 'Bet you can't do that!' And the competition restarted all over again.

"Running away in first-person shooter games is almost unheard of, having an open world means you can now start thinking about where your escape routes are going to be," Kershner explains. "Another key component of this is bringing vulnerability back to the player. The enemy forces are better armed, there are more of them and the response time for bringing in reinforcements is incredibly fast and really merciless. So really, again, it's about knowing when to run away and where to run to."

What allows you to adopt hit-and-run tactics is how open the game is now. The story of *Homefront: The Revolution* sees the world split into zones: Green Zone (affluent areas where the KPA headquarters are), Yellow Zone (ghetto areas where most of the populace lives) and the Red Zone (bombed-out no-go areas where people are shot on sight). It's the bombed-out Red Zone that we're playing through, tearing around the ruined city on a dirtbike.

But any exploration and scavenging for crafting materials has to be done with care. There are patrols and tanks to look out for, snipers on distant rooftops and seeker drones scanning the area for threats. Your mini-map is lit up with markers for story missions but also for optional strike points, such as hacking a KPA data transfer receiver in a guarded building. When completed, the strike points transform the nearby area; enemies will still lurk but more resistance fighters will take to the streets,



Seeing how the KPA deals with civilians is one of the most interesting and unique aspects of *Homefront: The Revolution.*

you'll see people spray-painting over the KPA propaganda, you'll see more pro-resistance posters up on the walls and so on. The idea is that by completing strike points before tackling the story missions, you're making life easier for yourself by bringing more guerrilla fighters to the streets, by ensuring you have more supplies, by ensuring you have a safe haven to retreat to should things go awry elsewhere in the city.

It's a bit *too* early to see how the vision for *Homefront: The Revolution* will come together yet and our 30-minute session was barely enough to scratch the surface and familiarise ourselves with the mechanics. So how will it have a sense of pacing and progression for the player? How will it tell an engaging story? How will it stop us from getting lost and doddering over to the wrong side of the map where five snipers kill us over and over again? In other words, how will an open-world work for this type of story-driven game?

"I think the benefit is you have this canvas of the world with which to paint a bunch of different stories on," Kershner reassures us, terrifying us slightly with his telepathic powers as though he's read our thoughts. "You'll have the main narrative and that will have the high production value that you expect from a single-player campaign in this day and age but we also have all of the side content and the strike points and the flash points, which are dynamically-generated missions.

> "You have to pick your battles – you're a human being made of flesh and bone, not a near-immortal warrior who can mow down thousands"

"I don't know the exact formula but too many resistance fighters and too many occupation forces in one area and it sends out a message to everyone in the neighbourhood to converge on that area for an epic gun battle. You'll see the way civilians are living and how they respond to the occupation. How they lived with resource scarcity for a few years. I think that's one thing that sets *Homefront* apart is that it does focus so much on the civilian population, how people have been living. Whether it's closed shops or people with market stalls or a back balcony with carrots and tomatoes growing on it, these are ways people deal with living in a world we know when there's some sort of disaster. So the open world has given us a really broad canvas on which to dot all of these interesting moments and emotions."

RYAN KING

HOW'S IT LOOKING? *Homefront: The Revolution* is more urban *Far Cry* than weak *Call Of Duty* imitator but it needs more spit and shine before we can assess how good it will likely be.





You can use materials to create anything from different sights for your guns to firecrackers to distract enemies to RC cars packed with explosives.



DID YOU KNOW? *Battlefront* is built on the Frostbite 3.0 engine, used to create the upcoming *Mass Effect: Andromeda*

STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT

Is the force really so strong with this one?

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EA

DEVELOPER
EA DICE

CREDITS
Battlefield 1942 [2002]
Mirror's Edge [2008]
Battlefield 4 [2013]

PLAYERS
1-40

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
20 November 2015

WEBSITE
starwars.ea.com/starwars/battlefront.com

TWITTER
@EAStarWars

XBOX ONE

Creating a Star Wars game is not easy. The expectation, the tragically obsessive fans, the strict rules and ideals embodied by the source material – it all adds up to a set of confines that are among the most stringent one could ever imagine a game developer working within. Wisely, then, DICE has decided to focus its effort on the multiplayer angle.

By doing away with having to tell a story, the studio can concentrate on the player-to-player interaction, not having to concern itself so much with whether or not it's staying strictly true to the canon headlined by Skywalker and the Ewoks. Yes, there are 'missions' that can be played as a single player and/or as part of co-op team, but in essence these are skirmishes against bots. The real effort here has gone into larger scale multiplayer combat. In this kind of arena you don't really need to worry about whether or not Darth Vader is uttering a line that contradicts a silent gesture he made in minute 67 of *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Most recently, we've gotten our hands on *Battlefront*'s dogfighting 'Fighter Squadron' mode, an aerial warfare affair that pits X-Wings against TIE-Fighters in 10v10 battles fought in the skies of various planets. Clearly, the goal here is to deliver such skirmishes in a way that is as easy to understand as possible; much of the technicality one associates with aerial combat in DICE's *Battlefield* series has been removed, presumably for the sake of making this mainstream product as accessible to as many people as possible. Both X-Wings and TIE-Fighters share the exact same attributes when it comes to speed, weapons and agility, for example.

The only thing that separates them are the aesthetics applied to their hulls and weapons. As a result, you needn't worry about sitting in that X-Wing for the first time having previously only experienced the TIE-Fighter. They're one and the same thing here, a reality that will surely perturb some of the *Star Wars* faithful. Your speed is governed by the left stick, pitch and yaw with the right. Such inputs feel a little clunky and stagnant at first, but after a few minutes they soon become second nature given their simplicity. While your speed can be altered as you see fit at any given moment, more complicated movements are locked into what is essentially a special ability gauge.

The likes of barrels rolls and quick 180 degree turns are assigned to the D-pad, a single press performing whichever action is assigned to the direction in question. Once performed you must wait for a cooldown meter to fill up before you can use it again, locking you out of the temptation to pull off barrel roll after barrel roll in an attempt to avoid enemy fire. While the theory behind the cooldown mechanic is sound, in practice it makes for a rather one-dimensional battle. Very quickly you and your opponents hone into the fact that your enemy enjoys only limited evasion tactics and, as such, the trick becomes to tempt a foe into using a barrel roll (or similar) before they actually need to.

This is actually an easier trick to pull than it might sound given that you're shown a warning whenever someone

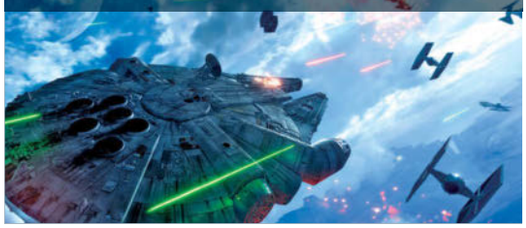


has their crosshair focused on you. As such, a rhythm of locking on to a target, before slowing down so that their evasive manoeuvre doesn't cause them to leave your vision, quickly takes hold and sees you rack up an enormous number of kills. Such levels of conformity and rigidity are not what we've come to expect from DICE and it certainly doesn't add up to the kind of heady spectacle that permeates *Star Wars*' vision of war and technology.

Hopefully, when played in short bursts alongside *Battlefront*'s other multiplayer modes, this flavour of dogfighting takes on a grander roll as our perspective is widened to take into account the overall vision of the game. As an isolated proposition, though, we're yet to feel convinced.

JOHN ROBERTSON

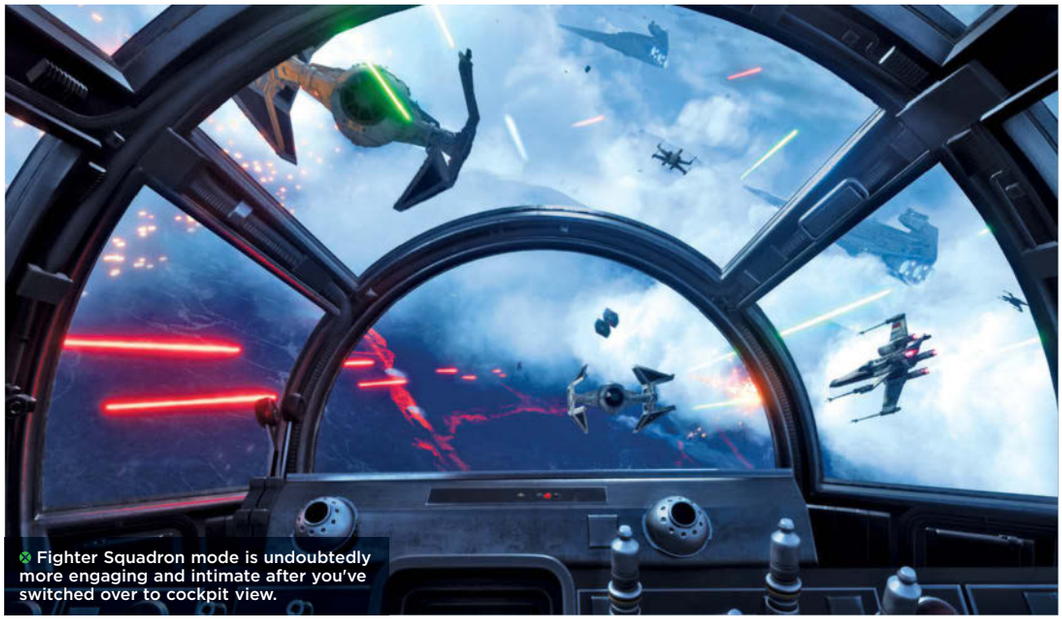
HOW'S IT LOOKING? Visually impressive and in keeping with the spectacle expected from *Star Wars*, but question marks remain over the core approach to design. Fingers crossed the final package works as a whole.



Sitting in the cockpit of an X-Wing and seeing the Millennium Falcon glide past you, blasters ablaze, does induce an avalanche of nostalgia.



Visually, there's a lot of variety across maps and game modes. There's no excuse, then, for *Battlefront* to not bring with it long-term appeal.



Fighter Squadron mode is undoubtedly more engaging and intimate after you've switched over to cockpit view.



You only get to play as the likes of Luke Skywalker if you perform well in battle. Don't be afraid to force the issue...

LESS OF THIS PLEASE

X-WINGS AND TIE-FIGHTERS ARE ONE AND THE SAME SHIP. BLASPHEMY?



In Fighter Squadron mode, X-Wings and TIE-Fighters are assigned the same stats. It's understandable in terms of balancing a multiplayer game, but it's disappointing in terms of imbuing the different factions with a sense of identity. Greater effort to make the ships unique, while keeping them balanced, would have been welcome from a studio of DICE's experience.

PREVIOUSLY



1 BATTLEFIELD 1942

DICE had released titles prior to this 2002 WWII shooter, but none that reached such popular heights.



2 MIRROR'S EDGE

Thought to be groundbreaking by some, overrated by others. Whatever the case, *Mirror's Edge* is worth talking about.

DARK SOULS III

Prepare to die... over, and over, and over again

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Bandai Namco Entertainment

DEVELOPER
From Software

CREDITS
Bloodborne [2015]
Dark Souls II [2014]
Dark Souls [2011]

PLAYERS
1-4

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
Spring 2016

WEBSITE
www.darksouls3.com

TWITTER
@DarkSoulsGame

XBOX ONE

He had a bit of time away from his beloved *Souls* games, but director Hidetaka Miyazaki is back at the helm for *Dark Souls III* – and it looks all the better for it, based on what we've played. Tweaked mechanics and an improved speed and fluidity to the game are the biggest changes, and both owe a debt to the PS4 exclusive *Bloodborne* – we may not be getting that over here on Xbox One, but we can reap the rewards of the experience it gave Miyazaki. Phew.

Jumping straight into *Dark Souls III* is a familiar experience for anyone who's picked up the other games in the series. It's instantly recognisable, the game starting us out at a bonfire and giving zero instruction – you just *go*. Immediately apparent is that this takes place in a huge, interconnected world just like before, but From Software is pushing the notion that, while the previous games' size represented towns and cities, *Dark Souls III* will represent *nations*. In layman's terms: it gonna be big.

Shuffling down a staircase and engaging with some half-hiding enemies – classic *Souls* right there – it quickly becomes clear there are some fairly big changes to the formula. While at the core it's very similar to before – buttons for your left and right-side equipment, roll-dodging, an emphasis on blocking and parrying – there's an increase in the speed and fluidity of the game that makes things more vital and exciting to play.

While it doesn't detract from the defensive nature of the game – it takes cues from it, but this *isn't Bloodborne*, a far more aggressive title – this increase in pace forces you to keep on your toes more than ever before. But it's not just a case of the enemy attacking quicker and you having to block more – pretty soon we were fairly accustomed to the pace and making even shorter work of the bog-standard foes than ever before.

The other marquee addition to *Dark Souls III* is the 'arts' system. These basically add alternate attacks for a limited time to your equipped weapon/s, essentially doubling down on how many ways you can thwack your opponents. It's another system that has *Bloodborne* to thank – this time for its 'switch' weapons – but is again handled in a different, more suitable to *Souls*, way. When

BODILY FUNCTIONS

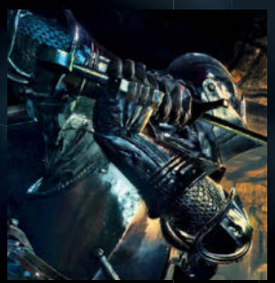
DARK SOULS III IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST PRESSING BUTTONS



LEGS

Used for traversal
Also used for running

Dark Souls III is going to have a lot of room for you to explore. And yet, at the same time, you're not always going to want to go forwards – sometimes discretion is indeed the better part of valour: run away!



ARMS

Used for smacking down enemies
Also used for blocking

It's probably possible to play through the *Souls* game as a pacifist for the most part, but there always comes a time when you have to fight. And when you're fighting, you can't forget to block, otherwise you'll die. Again.



HEAD

Used for scoping out threats
Also for deciding when to run away

Without your head, you're doomed in *Dark Souls III* – just as with previous titles in the series. You have to think, to know when to strike, to know when to block and to know when to run away. Use your noggin.

DID YOU KNOW? The *Dark Souls* series is actually the spiritual successor to the *King's Field* series



"There's an increase in the speed and fluidity of the game that makes things more vital and exciting to play"

In a shocking twist, it looks like *Dark Souls III* will feature some mystical dudes in armour with swords and weird capes. Who would've predicted that?!



You are, as ever, free to choose your approach in the world of *Dark Souls*.

MORE OF THIS, PLEASE

A WHOLE NEW WORLD TO EXPLORE – AND GET LOST IN



The *Souls* games are known for providing players with an incredible world to explore – vast and enticing, confusing and foreboding. *Dark Souls III*, from what we've played, looks to be giving us more of just that. With Miyazaki and co's cumulative experience, along with the technical grunt of the Xbox One, the world is sure to be more vast and uncompromising than ever.

> "A couple of high-end changes could refine already solid mechanics into superb ones"

engaging your arts you're able to, for example, buff a sword to be capable of shieldbreaker attacks, perform long-reaching lunges with some weapons, or just strengthen your battle axe.

It is, like many of *Dark Souls III*'s weapons, a double-edged sword, though. Just like how the improved pacing of the game can work against you, employing arts isn't just a win button. It's not even a special move button, really. It just offers alternatives – and with it more tactics in every battle. You *can* engage a shieldbreaker thrust to tackle a tricky (shielded) enemy, but the attack is slower, your timing might be off, you can't press your buttons and watch victory unfold: you have to learn the new techniques.

Initially we worried these tweaks to the core formula would mess things up – don't fix what ain't broken, as we always say (we've never said that). But from a short time with *Dark Souls III* it's clear to see that these changes and additions have been done with a real knowledge of their potential knock-on effect. It feels, as we would hope, very well balanced so far.

There are elements we weren't shown – a lot of them, naturally, as *Dark Souls III* will be a huge game. The boss fights throughout the game, with their mix between the tactical and the 'Oh god how do I just glitch my way to beating you?' styles of play; the obtuse, surprisingly deep story that leaves much open to interpretation and leads to us all praising the sun; multiplayer and its constant invasions of each others' territory, stalking or being stalked by someone who wasn't actually invited to your game; co-op and the fact that after hours of trying to get past one part of a level, you call in help and soon manage to break through the bottleneck; more bonfires.

That's not even mentioning the exploration. Environments are large and – initially – bewildering, full of nooks, crannies and alcoves to explore and get lost in (and die in). Add into that the aforementioned obtuse story – told in a hands-off, fill-in-the-blanks-yourself style – and you find yourself wondering just *what* are these corpse-y folks praying for? And what killed that dragon that's half in your





Face-offs like this will be instantly familiar to any players of previous *Souls* games.



It bears repeating: even bog standard enemies like these can take you out, quickly and easily.

way? Was it the other dragon that's trying to not let you past? And when *can* we get back to praising the sun?

The fact that all of this immediately came flooding back – familiar, welcome feelings from prior *Souls* games (and, we do have to admit, the excellent *Bloodborne*) – fills us with hope, even expectation, for what *Dark Souls III* will do for the series. A couple of high-end changes to how you play might not seem much to the untrained eye, but it's something that could refine already solid mechanics into superb ones.

Playing a game like *Dark Souls III* for such a short amount of time isn't enough to get to grips with the new systems. There's too much going on, too much to learn, too much to perfect about how you play the game. But we have very little doubt that *Dark Souls III* won't just be a good game, it'll be a truly great one. And when you get that feeling after not much time with a game, it usually means it is something special.

IAN DRANSFIELD

HOW'S IT LOOKING? It will take some getting used to, but the smoother, more flowing action looks like it could make the best even better. Even if it does mean a lot more death.

HIGH FIVE

1 DIFFICULTY
The *Souls* series is known for its difficulty over most other elements. While it can be harsh, it is usually fair… usually.

2 MYSTERY
There's an obscure nature to the narrative background of the *Souls* series – something that actually works in its favour – showing, not telling.

3 COMBAT
Tactics, thinking, taking your time – it's still refreshing to play a game which rewards all of those elements.

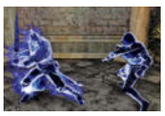
4 INVASIONS
Multiplayer in *Dark Souls III* is upped to four players, but still maintains the traditional 'invasion' angle. You go into other players' games and cause havoc.

5 DEATH
Coming back to the difficulty thing, *Dark Souls* is known for the amount of deaths you suffer. But it's not a bad thing – it's a learning experience.

PREVIOUSLY



1 BLOODBORNE
A PS4 exclusive, yes, but one that coloured *Dark Souls III*'s development – in a good way.



2 DARK SOULS II
An excellent game, but seen as a misstep by some purists. Number three has the original creator back on board

SHADOW WARRIOR 2

Return of the Wang

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Devolver Digital

DEVELOPER
Flying Wild Hog

CREDITS
Hard Reset [2011]
Shadow Warrior [2013]
Juju [2014]

PLAYERS
1-4

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
Q4 2016

WEBSITE
ShadowWarrior.com

TWITTER
@ShadowWarrior

XBOX ONE

Once upon a time, FPS games were *different*. They weren't about Sergeant BigBalls charging into a bland world of military browns and greys, armed with an AM789-XLR-PewPew assault rifle and three grenades, running behind a man with FOLLOW hovering over his head. FPS games used to be about battling the odds as one man versus hordes of oversized demons, about poking and prodding at the level design to find secrets, about twitch reactions and cycling through weapons to keep up with the breakneck pace of the enemies. Remember *Duke Nukem*? *Quake*? *Doom*? And yes, remember *Shadow Warrior*?

It's a slightly romantic view – this same FPS era plopped out *Daikatana*, after all – but push past your fuzzy memories of Pogs, *The Crystal Maze* and those weird bicycle things you got free with packs of Kelloggs Cornflakes and you'll remember how one-man-and-his-gun games used to be. That golden era of FPS games was briefly brought back last year, when *Shadow Warrior* resurfaced as a shooter that combined the best elements of FPS games from ye olde times with some of the whizz-bang magic of Xbox One. The short version of this preview, then: *Shadow Warrior 2* is the same but *better*.

Better in ways that you'd expect, such as the visuals. Flying Wild Hog has upgraded its own in-house proprietary engine, which is technical moonspeak for "this will look way better than the first game because of dull reasons to do with engines that we won't bore you with". The holy-crap-this-looks-amazing factor mostly comes from the lighting, such as how burning barrels and the rat-a-tat flash of your Uzi light up the gross pus-filled skin on each demon you're filling with lead. That's if you pay attention to the details – consider how fast the gameplay is and it's a feast for your eyes that you can barely keep up with.

But *Shadow Warrior 2* is also better in other ways you don't expect, such as how random drops power up all the new weapons you'll get to play around with. These random drops are awarded after killing the bigger enemies in the games and grant you bonuses such as faster reload speed, more damage or status effects like freezing enemies (who shatter when they're completely frozen). The revamped level design will also make a big difference to *Shadow Warrior 2*. That sentence will hardly set gaming crotches the world over on fire with excitement but let us explain. There are story levels in *Shadow Warrior 2* and these are stitched together by areas with randomly-generated elements to them. For example, a stone bridge that affords you an easy shortcut past a group of enemies could be collapsed, forcing you to take another route around. Night and day, sunshine and rain, certain chunks of level being present or not... the basic skeleton of these levels will be the same, but how they're fleshed out will be random.

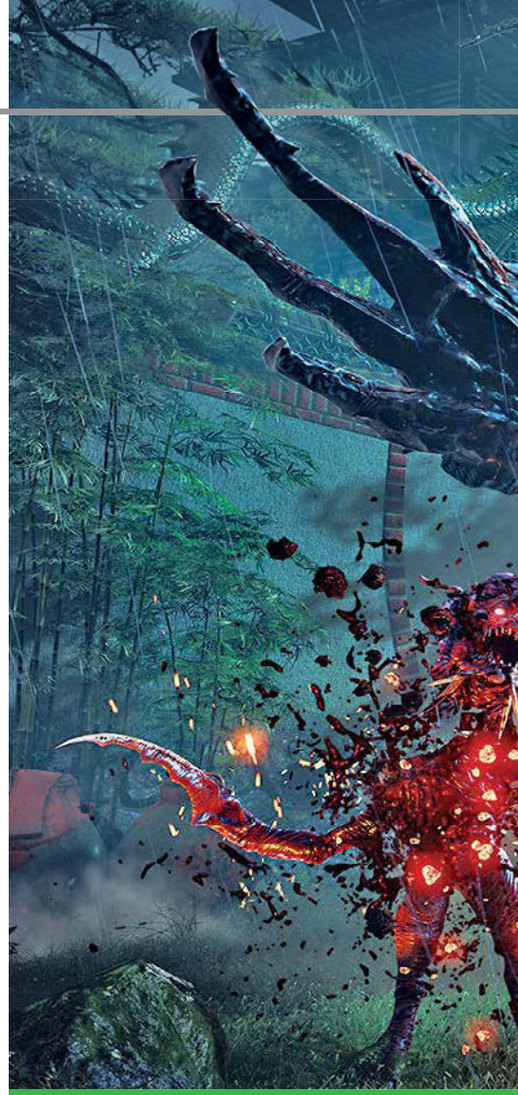
> "Burning barrels light up the gross pus-filled skin on each demon you're filling with lead"

Speaking of shortcuts and alternative routes, these will play a bigger part too. If there's a huge sword-wielding demon blocking your path – and there's obviously going to be *at least* one, we don't just make these examples up for the hell of it – it could be that you don't feel as though you're good enough to take it on. So you can swing by an alternate route instead, the one we saw taking us across the rooftops (helped by a spell that keeps Lo Wang hidden) and through an easier group of enemies.

The biggest change, however, is the addition of four player co-op. It's no longer you versus the world. It's now you, d3M0NSL4Y3r, xXSiikDr0pSh0TZzXx and masterchief1102 versus the world. *Shadow Warrior* was manic enough as it is, thanks to the volume of enemies and the sheer pace of the gunplay. Throw in three other players and pure chaos happens. And that's why, even though it's not due until the end of next year (sob), we're really excited for *Shadow Warrior 2*. It will bring modern-day muscle to old-school FPS gameplay and the end result should be glorious.

RYAN KING

HOW'S IT LOOKING? With four-player co-op, improved graphics, random drops, random level elements and the return of the fast-paced gameplay, *Shadow Warrior 2* looks rad as balls.





PREVIOUSLY



1 SHADOW WARRIOR
Successful reboot of the old 1997 FPS that combined an Asian setting, fast gunplay and 80s action movie humour.



2 HARD RESET
This PC-only cyberpunk shooter was Flying Wild Hog's first effort, and was ridiculously tough to complete.

The improved visuals and added co-op means *Shadow Warrior 2* will look chaotic when the action kicks off.

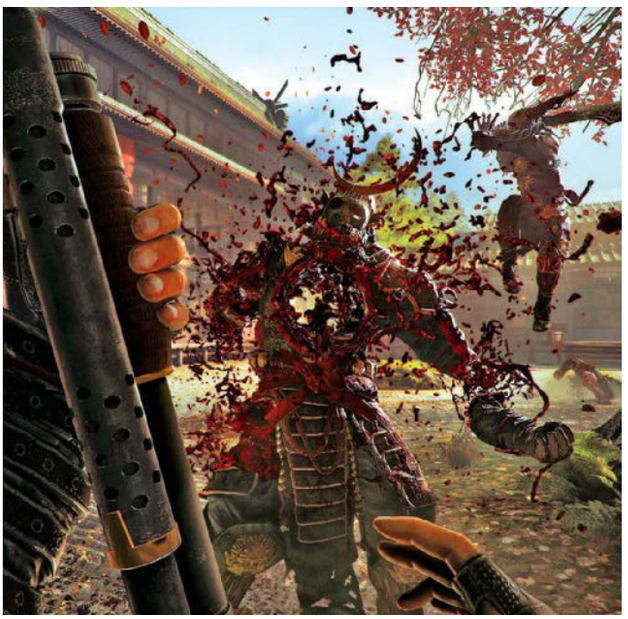
DID YOU KNOW? The original *Shadow Warrior* was created by 3D Realms, the studio famous for creating *Duke Nukem*



You can skip across the rooftops to take a shortcut, but that doesn't mean you won't face other unique challenges when taking alternate routes.

LESS OF THIS, PLEASE

KILL ALL THE DEMONS TO UNLOCK THE EXIT TO THE ROOM



It was part of *Shadow Warrior*, just as it's part of a lot of FPS games. You enter a room, the exit is locked off and it won't open until every attacking demon is dead. These forced encounters are a way to get players to navigate out of trouble when fighting demons up close but this is one design mechanic that feels archaic and we're hoping are scaled back for the sequel.

KILLER INSTINCT SEASON THREE

Microsoft's answer to SFV

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Microsoft
DEVELOPER
Iron Galaxy
CREDITS
Wreckateer [2012]
Divekick [2013]
Darkstalkers Resurrection [2013]
PLAYERS
1-2
KINECT?
No
SMARTGLASS?
No
RELEASE DATE
March 2016
WEBSITE
ultra-combo.com
TWITTER
@KillerInstinct

XBOX ONE

Given the trend for fighting games to continually be updated and re-released as standalone products, Microsoft's decision to instead build upon and improve the same *Killer Instinct* platform that has been an Xbox One staple since launch is extremely refreshing. Between this gradual evolution and its excellent free-to-play model, Iron Galaxy's enjoyable fighter is something the industry should be looking at to see how content delivery should be handled in this connected age.

Only one character has been officially revealed so far, seemingly the first of several guest characters that will grace the roster for year three – hey, it's been working for *Mortal Kombat*, so why not? Rash was one of the stars of Rare's super-tough NES scrolling fighter *Battletoads* and while he might feel a little out of place in terms of design and attitude, there's no denying that his moveset translates extremely well to a one-on-one fighter.

Powerful strikes see his various body parts transform, giving him great range on a lot of his normal attacks, while specials take this even further – a super kick with a spiked boot, a ram charge where he grows horns, and an armoured swing where he turns into a wrecking ball are just a handful. He can even use his tongue to zip around (like Spencer in *Marvel Vs Capcom 3*) or eat projectiles to build Shadow meter.

It seems like we'll also be seeing the return of Kim Wu from *KI2*. It stands to reason that *Season Three* would bring a few returning characters (Kim's *KI2* co-star Tusk is also heavily rumoured) and her flashy combination of quick stick strikes and tricky kick specials should make her a good fit for the new engine.

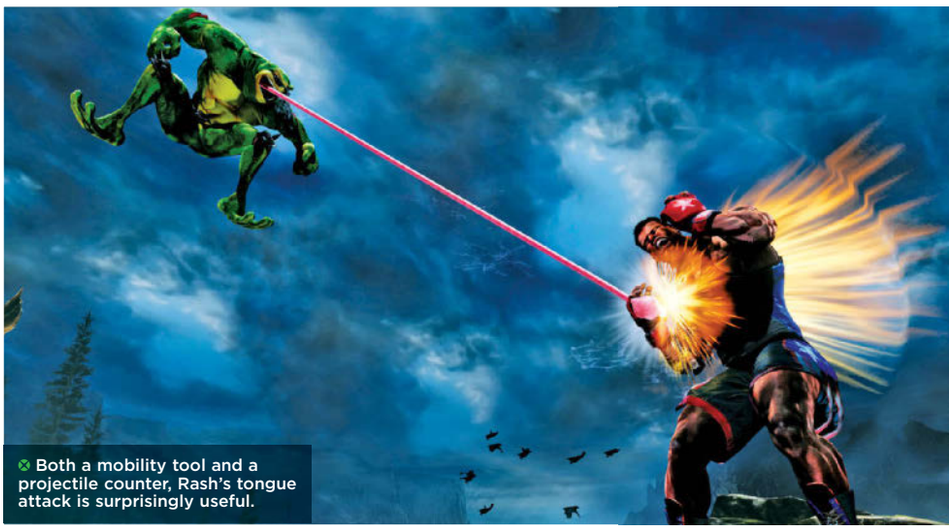
With *Killer Instinct* launching on PC at the same time as *Season Three* hits in March, the community is going to explode – cross-play will breathe new life into the game, just as the new wave of characters will send Xbox One players running back to it. Better start training now...

LUKE ALBIGÉS

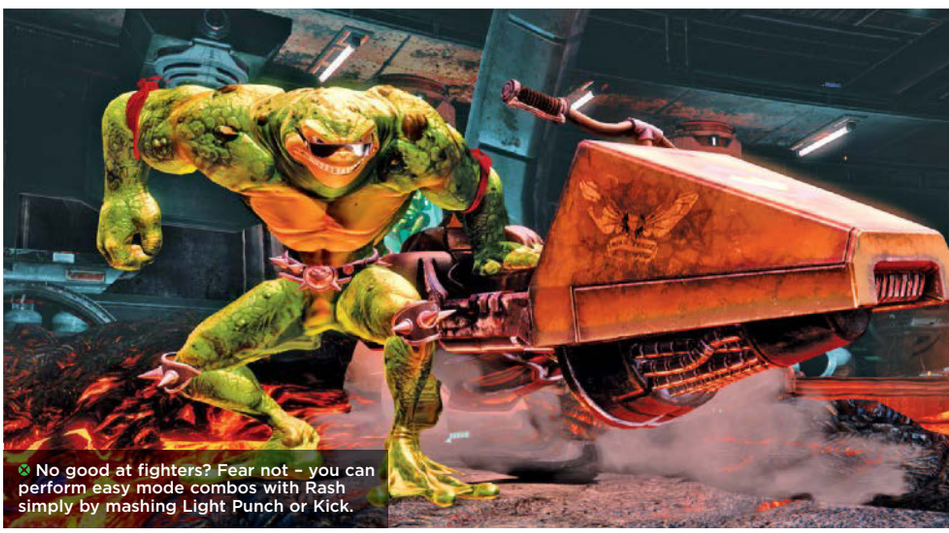
HOW'S IT LOOKING? Rash shouldn't work but he sort of does, his awkward cartoon style offset by an arsenal of awesome and genuinely strong specials. But who will join the fight next?



DID YOU KNOW? Rico Suave won the *KI* tournament at Evo 2015 using Fulgore



Both a mobility tool and a projectile counter, Rash's tongue attack is surprisingly useful.



No good at fighters? Fear not – you can perform easy mode combos with Rash simply by mashing Light Punch or Kick.



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Scalebound will feature small villages and towns to explore, letting you meet weird and wonderful characters, as well as purchasing new items and equipment.

DID YOU KNOW? *Scalebound* will feature four-player co-op to help you get through some of the tougher encounters



Verdict is out on Drew, he seems like the spiritual successor to Dante – a whiny pain in the ass, basically.



HIGH FIVE

1 INTRODUCING SCALEBOUND
Platinum's first Xbox One exclusive, *Scalebound*, is an exciting action-RPG featuring an annoying boy and his dragon in a mystical fantasy world.

2 TAKING CONTROL
Despite being a puny human, Drew takes the lead and offers a familiar but stripped-back combat experience, while Thuban can be given simple commands.

3 UNDERSTANDING COMBAT
This isn't your typical Platinum game, though combat is still overstated and stylish. Think *Bayonetta* without the reliance on combos or hefty movesets.

4 CUSTOMISATION
Customisation is based around messing with your dragon. You can upgrade everything from parts of its body, to its armour and its elemental fire.

5 CO-OP
Some enemies will just be too difficult and gigantic to tackle on your own, that's why *Scalebound* supports four-player online co-op.

INTERVIEW WITH... HIDEKI KAMIYA

SCALEBOUND

Exploring Platinum's most exciting title to date with director Hideki Kamiya

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Microsoft Game Studios
DEVELOPER
Platinum Games
CREDITS
Bayonetta [2009]
Vanquish [2010]
Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance [2013]
PLAYERS
1-4
KINECT?
No
SMARTGLASS?
No
RELEASE DATE
2016
WEBSITE
xbox.com/en-GB/games/scalebound
TWITTER
@Scalebound

XBOX ONE

There are few game directors that can truly strike fear into the hearts of gamers and journalists alike, but Hideki Kamiya is one of them. Have you tried taking him to task over Twitter? You'll be shot down in flames without hesitation. But sitting across a room from him, as he presents a behind-closed-doors demo of *Scalebound*, you can sense the pride radiating from him. This Xbox One exclusive is already looking like one of 2016's coolest games, and Kamiya was more than happy to dish some additional details.

At the heart of it, what is *Scalebound*'s focus and drive?
Scalebound is a story about Drew – he is a young man from our modern day world who has been transported to this world called Draconis, where he meets the dragon, whose name is Thuban, and it's really about the building of their relationship and their bond. Drew's arm has transformed into what we are calling right now the 'dragon arm'. What that means is that he has already bonded with a dragon. They are actually sharing a life source, in order for them to survive in this world they are going to have to work together.

Are both Drew and Thuban controllable?
As a player you are going to have direct control over Drew, the human character. Thuban the dragon is AI-driven. A very intelligent and independent character; he will be roaming around and navigating on his own. There is a light level of communication happening between the two of them, even in combat. Drew can point to a target and say 'Go there', or 'Attack', or 'Fall back' or 'Stay back'... Its not that there is no communication; there is some co-ordination through simple orders that take place.

So what's Drew's story?
Drew's back story is pretty simple: he's a normal guy from our version of Earth. He's been transported and thrown into the world of Draconis. He isn't a soldier, he isn't your typical action hero; he doesn't have sword-fighting skills or weapons that he has mastered. In that sense he doesn't have the level of customisation that a typical soldier character might have. We wanted to stay true to who Drew is, a boy from our Earth, so you will see light customisation to differentiate yourself [in co-op], but really the amount of investment in terms of customisation, comes with Thuban and how you want your dragon to look and play.

What can you tell us about Draconis?
The world of Draconis is developed and driven by this energy source called The Pulse. The Pulse is what is helping to shape the world and the formation of the land. You see the twisted trees and the floating islands – a result of the pushed up power that they are now floating in the sky. When I say energy, it isn't just the energy of the land, but also the energy that's streaming in living things and creatures. Thuban is also fuelled by the Pulse energy, so Drew is also partially fuelled by the Pulse energy.

> "As we further develop the game, the quality of everything you've seen will only get better"

So when Drew becomes powered by the Pulse – how does that affect the gameplay and action?
Drew, when fuelled up with Pulse power, the lower gauge, the one in the blue in the top left corner [of the screen], can turn him into this Dragon Form. It's basically a super-powered version of himself – his attacks become stronger and he can deal more damage against enemies.

You mentioned before that Drew and Thuban share a life source – so what happens if one of them dies?
Drew can revive Thuban, he can use his Pulse energy to bring him back to life. You can also heal him during combat. This story is about Drew and Thuban, and with Drew having the dragon arm and being already bonded, and also sharing a life stream. So when Thuban is down and about to die, Drew is in a similar state – he has a small grace period where he can try and revive him, but if Drew dies then Thuban will also die.

We've seen so far that there are some huge, screen-dwarfing enemies. What's Drew's role when fighting them?
This large-scale enemy, the Mantis [in the demo], is something that Drew can't take care of on his own, so he will have to work together with Thuban. For example, there was a stun mine that Drew successfully threw at the Mantis and it temporarily stunned and paralysed him, and in the meantime Thuban was really able to go after him with a fire attack.

There are occasions where you can be separated from [Thuban] for a little while – it's only usually because he is so large that where there are tight spaces, narrow corners or small paths, you will be temporarily separated from Thuban and Drew will have to find a way to get closer and join back up with Thuban. Fortunately, Drew is able to take on smaller-scale enemies. Maybe not as easily, but he can still do that, collect the gems and also earn skill points, which are his experience points.

Some concerns were raised about the frame-rate and the RPG elements that were shown off during the Microsoft gamescom briefing...
As I've said before, *Scalebound* isn't an action game. It's an action RPG, but we've only given a hint as to what RPG elements will feature in *Scalebound*. I want you to know that there isn't just a sprinkle of RPG here and there, this is a full action-RPG. The footage we captured for the demo is from a pre-alpha build of the game. With time, and as we further develop the game, the quality of everything you've seen will only get better, so please keep that in mind.

JOSH WEST

HOW'S IT LOOKING? *Scalebound* is legit one of Xbox One's most exciting games. The scale is insane, the combat is weighty and fun and, let's be honest, who doesn't love dragons?

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
2K Games
DEVELOPER
Gearbox
CREDITS
Borderlands [2009]
Borderlands 2 [2012]
Aliens: Colonial Marines [2013]
PLAYERS
1-10
KINECT?
No
SMARTGLASS?
No
RELEASE DATE
9 February 2016
WEBSITE
battleborn.com
TWITTER
@Battleborn

BATTLEBORN

100 percent yawntacular

XBOX ONE

Alright, we are going to hold up our hands and admit we might have made a mistake. It turns out Gearbox was right all along, *Battleborn* isn't *really* a MOBA.

Perhaps that isn't necessarily our fault; the entire reveal campaign has been a mess for the upcoming FPS, and that's left it with a tragic lack of identity. We've finally had the chance to sample *Battleborn*'s five-player cooperative mode – in which five heroes run through a colourful campaign to shoot and smash a litany of evil robots – and we just aren't sold on the concept. While it's mechanically solid, it lacks the chaotic irreverence and untameable fun it so desperately, obviously, wants to offer.

In many respects, you have to respect Gearbox for trying to broaden its horizons. While we are aware that *Borderlands 3* is on the horizon, it's always a pleasure to see what else the think-tank has up its creative sleeves – we just wish it was something other than *Battleborn*. Romping through the levels with other heroes by your side is fast and fluid, but gunplay lacks immediacy or weight. It's easy to switch off, to keep shooting at anything that moves with little worry about failure, though it is a little worrying to see player engagement so low as it prepares to leave alpha.

Gearbox has been billing *Battleborn* as a 'Hero Shooter' from the outset of development, which basically means every character has, well, character. While the array of robot butlers, gruff soldiers and mystic warriors that dropped into the battlefield came equipped with a unique visual flair or zany weapon, they lacked personality; felt flat against the gorgeous backdrop of chaos that's unfolding around you. We know Gearbox is capable of creating great characters – *Borderlands 2*, anyone? – but we aren't seeing that demonstrated here, not at this stage of development at least.

There's still a lot of work to be done on *Battleborn*. Between its unflattering co-op modes and confusing MOBA-style campaign, *Battleborn* is beginning to look less and less appealing. That isn't to say Gearbox can't turn this around. It has done it once before, saving *Borderlands* with a glorious change of art style at the last minute, but it's clear that some pretty big, sweeping changes need to be made to the core gameplay mechanics and systems before Gearbox lets this get anywhere near our Xbox One in 2016.

JOSH WEST

HOW'S IT LOOKING? After playing it, *Battleborn*'s not as great as the screenshots make it seem. *Battleborn* has potential, but its design seems to be working against Gearbox's strengths as FPS designers.



CHARACTER PROGRESSION
While we may not have been totally enamoured with the core gameplay of *Battleborn*, we were quite impressed with how it presented progression. Essentially, it resets every game, letting you build a custom-prepared character for the task at hand, letting you alter and bend your heroes DNA to gain new powers and abilities.

"Between its un-flattering co-op modes and confusing MOBA-style campaign, Battleborn is beginning to look less and less appealing"

SHOOTING FRENZY

Battleborn is clearly trying to give each character a special and unique way to play, but the reality of that just isn't there yet. The gunplay doesn't feel as solid or refined as that of *Borderlands*', which is a great shame. It's all well and good having this array of characters, but it's all for naught if it isn't satisfying to shoot, hit or stomp on something's face.

DID YOU KNOW? *Borderlands 3* is in development, and it can't come soon enough

GREAT ART-STYLE

While *Battleborn* lacks the personality of its FPS sibling, it does have a pretty wicked visual style. The colours and areas are vibrant and just begging to be explored, which is why it's such a great shame that we weren't given the opportunity to properly explore them – instead, we were funnelled from one uninteresting setpiece to the other.

PREVIOUSLY



1 BORDER-LANDS 2

Insanely fun co-op FPS adventure that offered laughs, loot and plenty of things to shoot in the face.

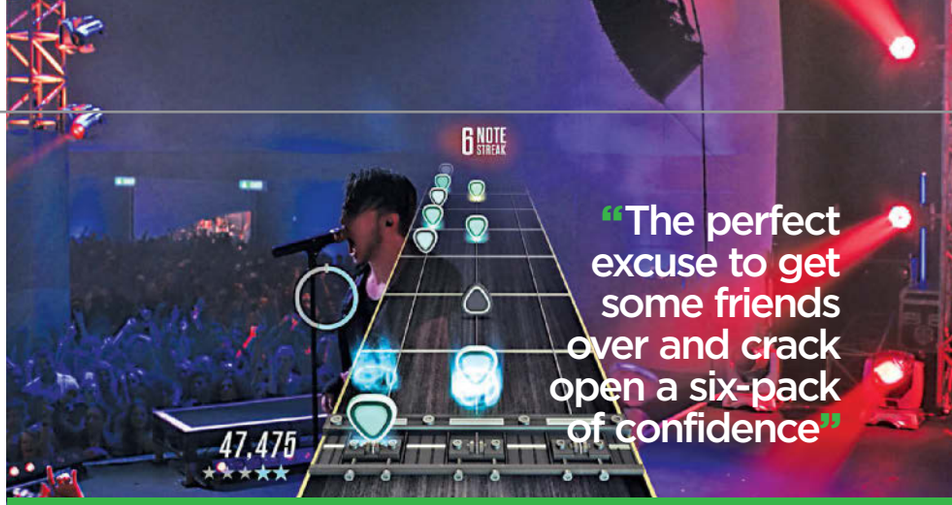


2 DUKE NUKEM: FOREVER

An unpretentious but ultimately disappointing attempt bring *Duke Nukem* back to the land of the living.

GUITAR HERO LIVE

The ultimate rockstar fantasy



DID YOU KNOW? *Guitar Hero Live* also supports singing; just plug in a USB microphone

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
FreeStyle Game3

CREDITS
DJ Hero [2009]
DJ Hero 2 [2010]
Sing Party [2012]

PLAYERS
1-2

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
Yes

RELEASE DATE
20 October 2015

WEBSITE
guitarhero.com/uk/en

TWITTER
@GuitarHero

XBOX ONE

We've got some killer news to report: *Guitar Hero* still the perfect excuse to get some friends over, crack open a six-pack of confidence and piss off your neighbours with the incessant clicking of plastic guitars long into the night. But there's been an air of negativity surrounding the imminent launch of *Guitar Hero Live*, which, after the opportunity to get hands-on with a near-final build, confuses us. Right now, you've got the option of *Guitar Hero Live* that's trying to update its played-to-death score attack gameplay with a new instrument, new fret board, live action interactions and an interesting new approach to song rotation and multiplayer. And then you've got *Rock Band*, which is basically picking up exactly where it left off back in 2010.

That's not necessarily a bad thing, but *Guitar Hero Live* feels so fresh and revitalised that we're left to believe the abrasive reaction is tied to the fear people have of change. But you need to embrace it, because *Guitar Hero Live* is awesome. The biggest alteration to standard *Guitar Hero* action is the addition of live action crowds that react dynamically to your success of failure on certain songs. Is it a gimmick? Sure, but when you're in the midst of a song, the crowds, douchey band mates and beautiful arenas go mostly unnoticed, such is the concentration required to figure out the new challenging dual fretboard set up and the colours flying in down the note board. But every so often you catch a glimpse of it; a thousand bobbing heads as you nail a riff, the smiles in the front row as you shred a solo, the nod of recognition from the singer that you finally stopped ruining the set and got your shit together.

It's impossible to not feel a twang of adrenaline and a little chill running up our spine as it all comes together. We might never have the opportunity to play in front of a giant crowd or dazzle an area with music live, but if this is the closest we ever get? Well, we're pretty content with that.

JOSH WEST

HOW'S IT LOOKING? From what we've played, *Guitar Hero Live* is a fun and fresh take on a genre we thought dead and buried. There's still a lot left to be revealed, but the core gameplay is great.

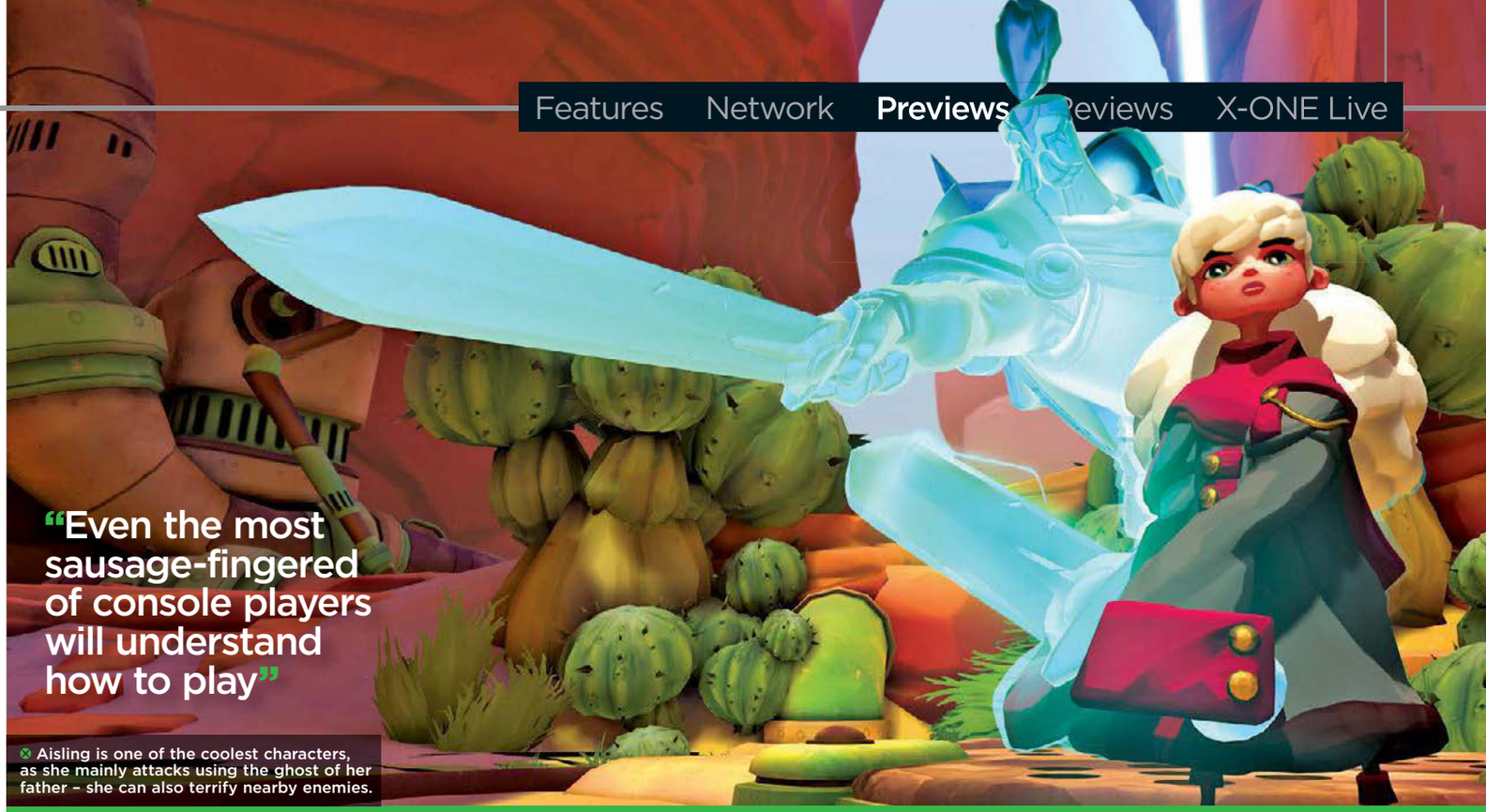


We never had an issue with the presentation of *Guitar Hero* in the past, but the addition of these live action arenas make a giant difference.



The track list still isn't fantastic, but we hope Activision can work on getting some of the old licences renewed.





"Even the most sausage-fingered of console players will understand how to play"

Aisling is one of the coolest characters, as she mainly attacks using the ghost of her father – she can also terrify nearby enemies.

DID YOU KNOW? It's also coming out on Windows 10, a fact that's about as exciting as cold chips

GIGANTIC

Meet the shooter that's daring to be different...

DETAILS
PUBLISHER
Motiga
DEVELOPER
In-house
CREDITS
N/A
PLAYERS
1-10
KINECT?
No
SMARTGLASS?
No
RELEASE DATE
August 2015 (beta)
WEBSITE
www.GoGigantic.com
TWITTER
@GoGigantic

XBOX ONE

Do you know how much money MOBAs make? It's a lot. Actually no, let's try and sound more convincing than that. It's a *lot*. Imagine Scrooge McDuck wearing a Monster T-shirt flecked with Doritos dust, swimming around that vault of money, and that's how every modern day MOBA developer feels. So why hasn't the MOBA magic been replicated on console?

Part of it is getting the quickfire controls to work on pad – watch any MOBA player on PC and they click around the screen faster than someone who's been interrupted during a "Private Browsing" session. But another big part of the challenge is getting Xbox One owners to buy into a fresh concept, which is why *Gigantic* could be huge for Microsoft. It's brought MOBA gameplay into the world of third-person shooters and even the most sausage-fingered of console players will understand how to play.

If you've never played a MOBA before, the basic concept is that you play well to unlock points, which are spent on upgrading your unique abilities as you play. We played as Imani, who attacks from distance with her sniper rifle. Imani's abilities include shots powering up the longer she stays scoped, a smoke bomb and a single one-off shot that does massive damage. We focused on levelling up Imani's smoke bomb – increasing the radius, then adding a stun effect, then adding an ability for team-mates to critically hit anyone caught in the smoke. What starts as a ho-hum defensive tool quickly becomes a useful way to support your team-mates, and a great example of how typical in-game MOBA progression changes how you play your character.



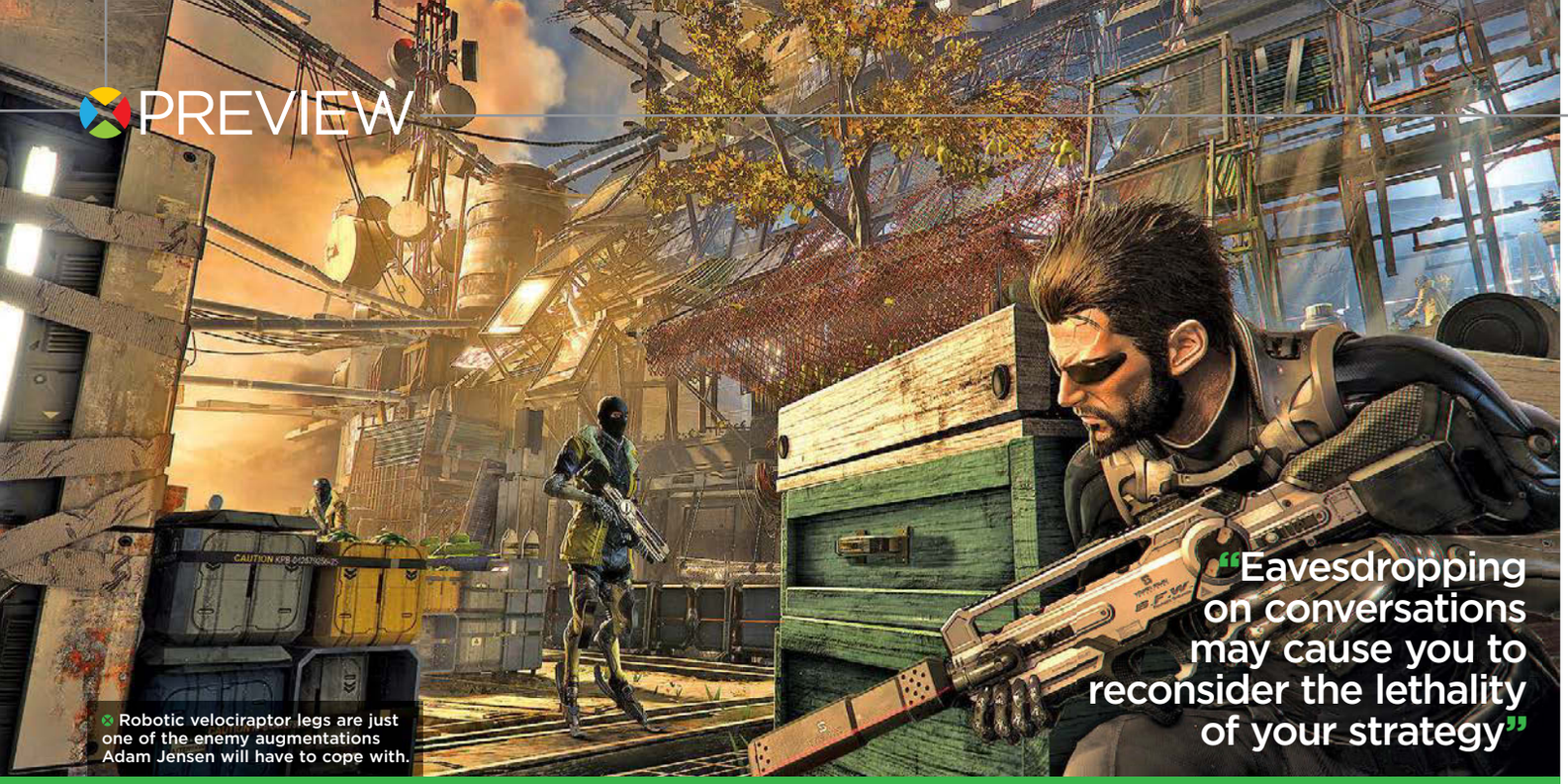
Look how bright and colourful it is! Look how much personality there is! So much better than *Generic Military Man #87.*

Imani is just one of the Heroes available to play as, but they all stand out in some way. There's Wu the martial artist frog who uses his tongue to pull enemies towards him, Griselma the wise summoner who disappears into portals to regain her health, Aisling accompanied by the ghost of her father, who terrifies enemies, Lord Knossos, with a name that we can't spell without double-checking the press release, and so on.

We haven't even gone into depth on the mechanics such as controlling the battlefield or Guardian Clash but that's almost beside the point. To play an online third-person that's so fast, so bright and so fun reminds you of how much scope shooters offer when developers aren't afraid to do something different. And it's F2P! We don't know how much money *Gigantic* will make but we're confident in how much fun you'll have playing it – and that's the most important thing.

RYAN KING

HOW'S IT LOOKING? Interesting, different, fast and fun, *Gigantic*'s MOBA twist will bring something new to Xbox One shooter fans bored of samey military shooters.



Robotic velociraptor legs are just one of the enemy augmentations Adam Jensen will have to cope with.

"Eavesdropping on conversations may cause you to reconsider the lethality of your strategy"

DID YOU KNOW? A movie based on *Mankind Divided* and its predecessor, *Human Revolution*, has supposedly been in development since 2012

DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED

Division was never our strong point

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Square Enix

DEVELOPER
Eidos Montreal

CREDITS
Deus Ex: Human Revolution [2011]
Thief [2014]

PLAYERS
1

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
N/A

RELEASE DATE
Q1 2016

WEBSITE
deusex.com

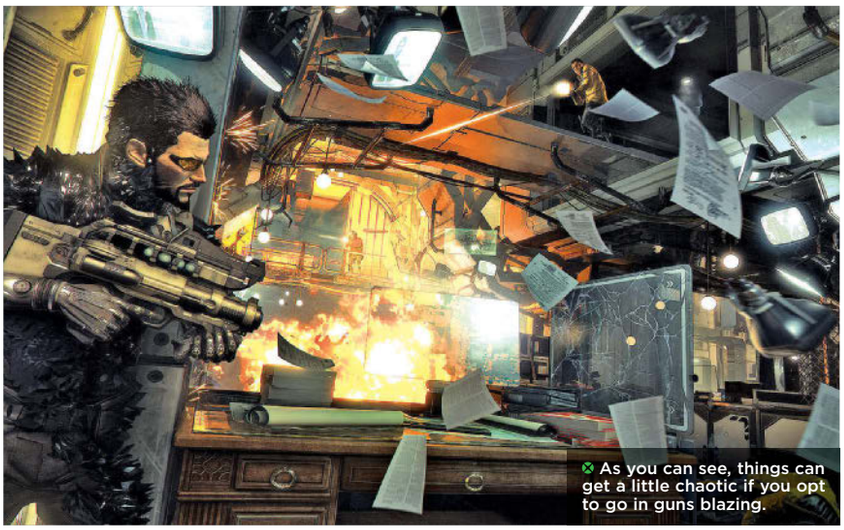
TWITTER
@DeusEx

XBOX ONE

As a series, *Deus Ex* has never shied away from exploring big ideas, but *Mankind Divided* looks to be digging deeper than ever into what it means to be human, and the conflicts that arise between groups whose definitions of that word differ fundamentally.

It's a weighty subject, to say the least, but it's one that Eidos Montreal is taking extremely seriously. Not only is the developer working typically hard to ensure the series' reputation for tough and meaningful choices remains intact, it's going to great lengths to ensure that the various factions at play are appropriately fleshed out and multifaceted – playtesters are being quizzed on their responses to the game's narrative and themes, as well as its functionality. There's no black and white here, and protagonist Adam Jensen will often find he shares as much common ground with his enemies as with his employers, the radical counterterrorist group Task Force 29.

The game's titular division – between those people with mechanical and electronic augmentations and those without – is at the heart of everything you do in *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided*. Often, your targets aren't inherently militant, as is the case with the members of the Augmented Rights Coalition Jensen was tasked with infiltrating in the demo we got to see. Eavesdropping on their conversations as you make the way through the facility may cause you to reconsider the lethality of your strategy, but then again you may simply want to take an 'any means necessary' approach to the mission.



As you can see, things can get a little chaotic if you opt to go in guns blazing.

Either way, Eidos Montreal is ensuring that there are as many layers to the gameplay in *Mankind Divided* as there are to its fiction. Jensen's arsenal is even more diverse this time around, and the developer is promising that you'll have more tools than ever at your disposal to tackle the game's intricate sandboxes. From what we've seen so far they'll be more smoothly integrated too – smart vision, active camouflage and on-the-fly ammo switching were all combined to devastating effect, while a more flexible movement and cover system seems to have solved the traversal difficulties that occasionally plagued *Deus Ex: Human Revolution*. The promise of many new augmentations to come, as well as news that the much-requested New Game+ mode will be available at launch, all point to an excitingly versatile and replayable experience. It might still be several months away, but *Deus Ex: Mankind Divided* is already looking like a more than worthy sequel.

ROSS HAMILTON

HOW'S IT LOOKING? We've still only had a tantalising glimpse of its potential, but *Mankind Divided* is covering some really fascinating ground, both thematically and in terms of its open-ended gameplay.

From the makers of XBOX ONE

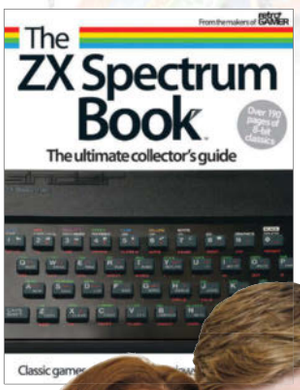


RETRO
MICRO GAMES ACTION

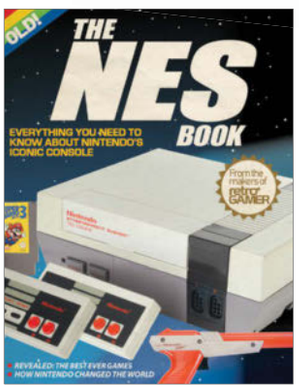
Celebrate over 35 years of gaming and take a look at the evolution of your favourite games. Packed with interviews from some of the industry's experts and in-depth looks at revolutionary games, this is a must-have for any gamer.



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CALL OF DUTY BLACK OPS III

It's all gone a bit Team Fortress

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Activision

DEVELOPER
Treyarch

CREDITS
Call Of Duty: World At War [2008]
Call Of Duty: Black Ops [2010]
Call Of Duty: Black Ops II [2012]

PLAYERS
1-TBC

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
Yes

RELEASE DATE
6 November 2015

WEBSITE
callofduty.com/blackops3

TWITTER
@Treyarch

ALSO ON XBOX 360

For those who haven't yet upgraded, you'll still be playing *COD* for another year – just expect some pretty standard graphics

XBOX ONE

It's not long now until we'll be shooting the future heads off future soldiers and/or robots in *Black Ops III*. "Hooray!" we hear you cry. "Another average single-player mode that we won't bother playing!" Well, you might be right, but that doesn't mean *Black Ops III* is going to get a 5 in our review, because Treyarch is going all-out on the multiplayer, and we've finally had a chance to play it. Short version? It's pretty good, especially for a beta.

Picking a specialist gives you access to a unique weapon and a unique ability. These vary from high-calibre revolvers that fire destructive rounds to active camo, which renders the player temporarily invisible. These abilities add a twist to the *COD* formula that keeps things fresh, but we still can't help but feel it's a little limited. While the game offers some customisation through these choices, there is no option to customise your character beyond their loadouts. This is still a huge part of the multiplayer game, but we want more. More hats, more camo options, more gear – we want a *Rainbow Six: Vegas* level of customisation, and it's just not quite there... at least not in the beta.

Gameplay-wise, though, the evolution is clear. Wall-runs and powered jumps make *Black Ops III* feel like a cross between *Advanced Warfare* and *Titanfall* – which is no bad thing. For some, though, the 'halfway' line that the game treads will rankle, committing to neither while trying to ape both. The dash moves we came to love in *Advanced Warfare* are missing here, and wallrunning just isn't as fluid as in *Titanfall*.

But it's not all bad. Of course there is time to fix these small niggles – that's the point of a beta after all – and the addition of wall-running and Specialists will give power players some incredible new skills, and we have to say the addition of abilities helps mix up the formula once again. We just hope our small complaints are ironed out ahead of launch.

STEPHEN ASHBY

HOW'S IT LOOKING? The beta wasn't perfect, but there's still time for Treyarch to fix our small complaints before launch. Do that, and we could have a fantastic game on our hands. Roll on November.



Specialist abilities and weapons have cooldown periods between uses, so picking a good loadout is still key.

DID YOU KNOW? There are eight Specialist categories to choose from in multiplayer

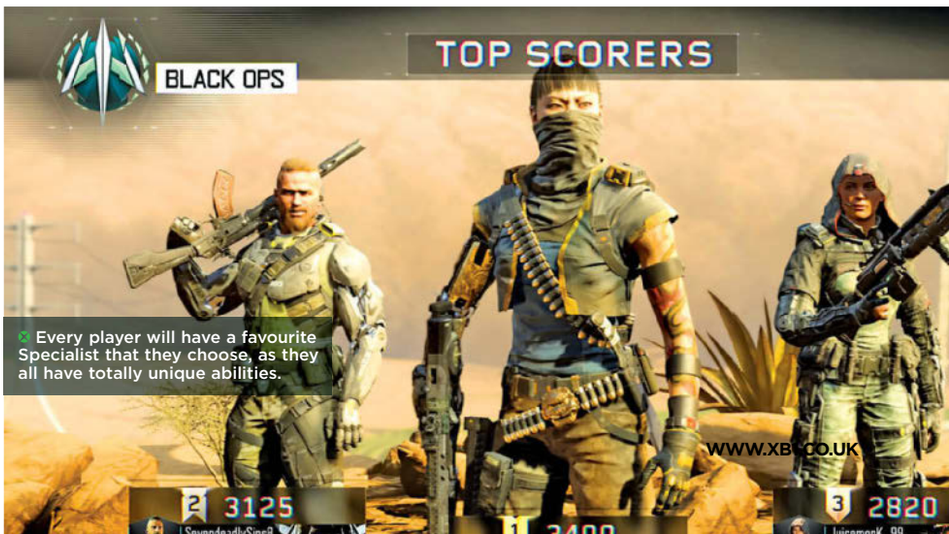


Wallruns and verticality make the maps much more interesting – there are far fewer stairs and gentle slopes.

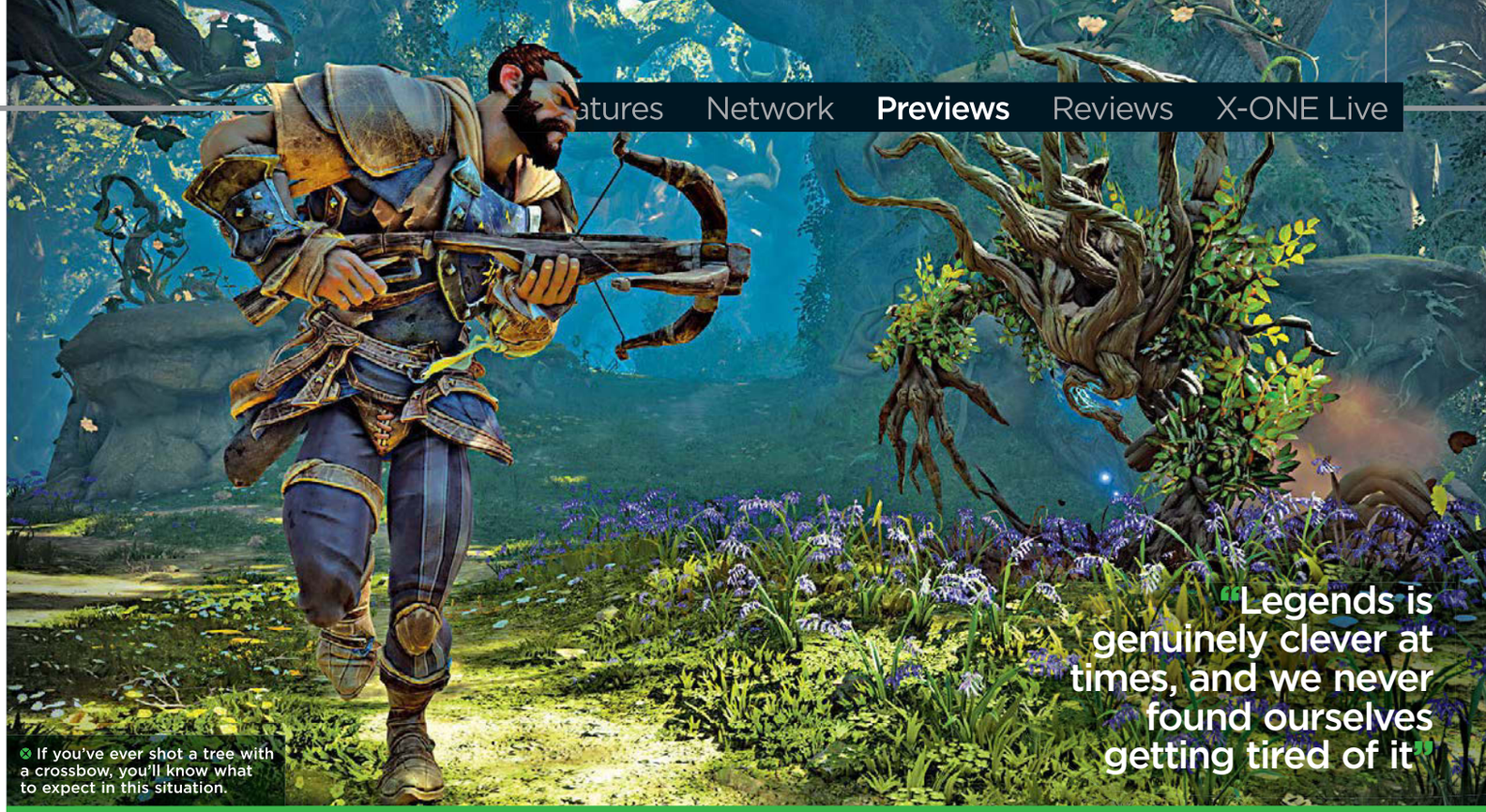


We wish there were more customisation options – at the moment the only things you can choose are your specialist and your loadout.

"Wall-runs and powered jumps make Black Ops III feel like a cross between Advanced Warfare and Titanfall"



Every player will have a favourite Specialist that they choose, as they all have totally unique abilities.



If you've ever shot a tree with a crossbow, you'll know what to expect in this situation.

"Legends is genuinely clever at times, and we never found ourselves getting tired of it"

DID YOU KNOW? This marks the eighth release by Lionhead of a *Fable* game, including re-releases and dodgy rubbish like *Fable Heroes*

FABLE LEGENDS

Exploring the wilds of Albion with three mates and a monster

DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft Studios

DEVELOPER
Lionhead Studios

CREDITS
Fable: The Journey [2012]
Fable III [2010]
Fable [2004]

PLAYERS
1-5

KINECT?
No

SMARTGLASS?
No

RELEASE DATE
Q4 2015

WEBSITE
www.fablelegends.com

TWITTER
@lionheadstudios

XBOX ONE

All the words spouted about *Fable Legends* over the past few months seem to have been catering to the PC audience. "It needs Windows 10!" they coo, then spout off something about 'tesselation' or 'dynamic grass lighting' to make us switch off a bit more. But fret not, for this four-vs-one action-RPG (with a dash of MOBA and RTS) is and Xbox One game first and foremost.

Playing about with it, we've found *Fable Legends* to be a surprising amount of fun. We'd have to sit down with it for another dozen hours or so to get a good idea of how it fares over longer periods, but a few games in it is a positive experience. Playing as the heroes is a straightforward, team-based action-RPG with hints of a MOBA, while the (more fun) villain gets a basic RTS system, setting up traps and letting loose goblin hordes. It's genuinely clever at times, and we never found ourselves getting tired of it – even if there's nothing truly *new* about the whole thing.

That worrying phrase 'free-to-play' is one of the key elements of *Fable Legends*, and it's undoubtedly one of our main concerns – we've all seen how the practice has destroyed the fun in mobile gaming and how it's bled over into the console world. But we were assured by *Legends*' director, David Eckelberry, that the F2P model would be a balanced one. What this means for the main game is that you'll be able to earn all the things that change the game itself, but you'll be buying cosmetic items. Like hats, probably. And we all like hats.



We haven't heard any traditional *Fable* fart gags in *Legends* yet, but they're sure to be in there.

Still, one reason to mention the PC version in this very magazine is the fact we'll be able to play with and against our home computer-owning chums. We haven't been able to test cross-device play as of the time of writing, however, so there's a worry when it comes to how the whole thing will match up. Nobody wants to play against cheating mouse-and-keyboard buggers now, do they?

It's looking like *Fable Legends* isn't going to be the cash-grab rush-job a lot of folks might have expected. True, it's still not the 'proper' *Fable* entry for this generation, but that's sure to come at some point. In the meantime, we have a contender for a surprise hit with *Fable Legends*. It's unlikely to be *amazing*, but from what we've seen anything below 'pretty bloody good' will be a surprise.

IAN DRANSFIELD

HOW'S IT LOOKING? Better than you might expect – the mix of genres adds a unique twist with the MOBA-like hero side being fun, and the RTS-like antagonist side offering a few wicked giggles.



THIMBLEWEED PARK

XBOX ONE

Point-and-click adventure fans rejoice! Ron Gilbert's upcoming game will be making its way to Xbox One, and as anyone who has ever played *Maniac Mansion* or the *Monkey Island* games will tell you, *Thimbleweed Park* is not to be overlooked. Gilbert and fellow creator Gary Winnick are aiming to go back to their roots with *Thimbleweed Park*, so come 2016, expect pixel art, esoteric puzzles and top-tier writing. What's more, the game's premise – two washed up detectives called in to investigate a mysterious murder in a down-and-out backwater town – is ripe for satire, so fans of *The X Files*, *Twin Peaks*, *True Detective* and the like will find plenty to love here.

KINGDOM COME DELIVERANCE

XBOX ONE

The balance between authenticity and fun can be a tricky one to strike with simulation games, but it's something that developer Warhorse Studios is looking to nail in *Kingdom Come: Deliverance*. Set in 16 square kilometres of meticulously recreated medieval Czech countryside, it promises an open-ended action adventure with a heavy emphasis on accurate swordplay. It's still in the early stages of development, but that core gameplay hook is already feeling polished and satisfyingly weighty. First-person sword fights are tense and tactical, and play out at a slower pace than we've come to expect from action titles. That's not to say that fights are any less thrilling, however. There's simply a greater emphasis on strategy – a fight can be over in a couple of blows, and so blocking, parrying and feinting are all essential. The combat has us convinced; now we're looking forward to seeing more of the game built around it.

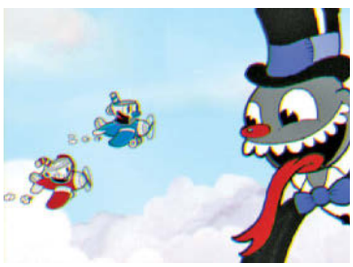


COBALT

XBOX ONE

'Sweet weapons', 'combat rolls' and 'space hamsters' are just a few of the things we can expect from *Cobalt*, Oxeye Game Studio's all-action 2D shooter. With a vibrant, *Castle Crashers*-style look and an infectious sense of humour, the game packs in a ton of maps and dozens of weapons spread across both campaign and multiplayer modes, and has all the makings of a cult favourite. Oh, and it includes automatic bullet time, which may be our favourite new feature of 2015.





CUPHEAD

XBOX ONE

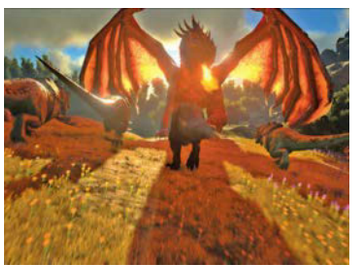
A lot has been written about *Cuphead*'s visual style, and rightly so – the warped Thirties cartoon aesthetic has made it one of the most original-looking games we've seen for years, on a Microsoft console or otherwise. But what screenshots and artwork don't get across is just how damn hectic *Cuphead* can be in motion, especially in co-op. With one player as Cuphead and another as Mugman, boss fights quickly become frantic exercises in twitch shooting and acrobatic dodging. Expect to die. A lot.

CRACKDOWN 3

XBOX ONE

You could be forgiven for having forgotten about the Xbox One's cloud processing capabilities, but *Crackdown 3* looks like the first game to really make use of the console's most underused piece of tech. Pulling in additional power from all those servers we heard about way back at launch, the game is showcasing a level of destructibility unlike anything we've ever seen. The sooner we can start levelling whole cities with our friends, the better.





ARK: SURVIVAL EVOLVED

XBOX ONE

Earlier this year, *Jurassic World* showed us all once again that dinosaurs are awesome – as if we needed reminding. If you're anything like us, you probably came out of the cinema wanting to take on the critters yourself, and thankfully *ARK: Survival Evolved* is here to make those dreams come true. It isn't all fighting dinosaurs, though. The survival aspect is key, and almost every aspect of *ARK*'s luscious open world can be deceptively deadly.



LEGO MARVEL'S AVENGERS

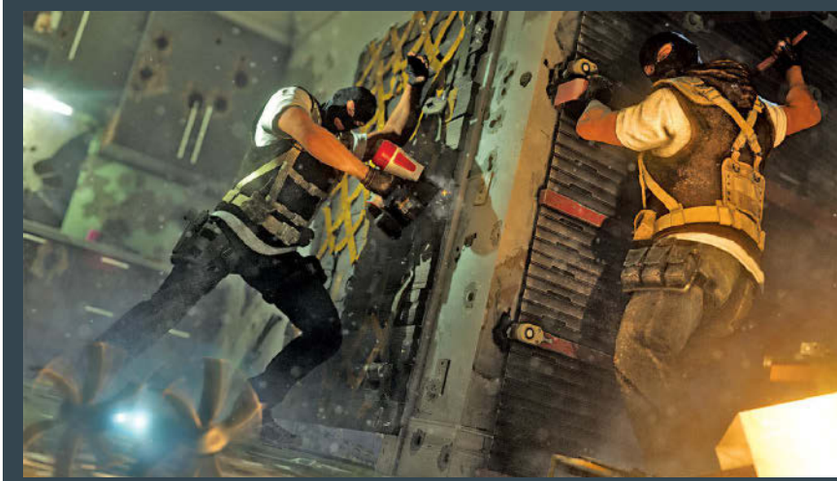
XBOX ONE

This time out, LEGO tackles the two main *Avengers* movies, though expect to see plenty of additional characters and locales from the Marvel Cinematic Universe making an appearance. One of the big advantages of working with the Marvel licence is the sheer number of characters available, and fans are unlikely to be disappointed – the game's roster currently stands at over 100 playable characters, and that's without taking the extensive customisation options into account. We loved *LEGO Marvel Super Heroes*, which threw all of our favourite characters (and some we hadn't even heard of) together – we just hope the plot of this one can keep us as entertained.

RAINBOW SIX SIEGE

XBOX ONE

We're finally getting a good look at *Rainbow Six: Siege* after years of being teased, and it looks like the long wait may just turn out to have been worth it. In many respects, *Siege* is classic *Rainbow Six* but it feels more focused this time around, doubling down on the strongest parts of previous games (Terrorist Hunt, anyone?) and streamlining them in order to concentrate on its excellent and deeply rewarding cooperatively competitive multiplayer. Communication, as ever, will be the most important weapon in your arsenal, but Ubisoft Montreal is giving you plenty of other toys to play around with too, from humble razor wire, to industrial explosives and futuristic scouting drones. A revamped spectator mode is also promising to provide a more insightful and comprehensive view of the strategic action, which should come in handy when we're inevitably gunned down in the first few minutes of a match.





WE HAPPY FEW

XBOX ONE

We Happy Few is a roguelike with a few notable differences. Not only does it feature a winningly bizarre retro-futuristic look, a warped and particularly British sense of humour and an intriguing premise set in an alternative 1964, but it's taking the unusual approach for the genre of using the first-person perspective. You'll have to use all your wiles to blend in with the crowd, scavenge for supplies and ultimately escape its procedurally-generated 3D city.

WORMS WMD

XBOX ONE

The *Worms* formula has stayed essentially the same for years, and with good reason, so with *Worms WMD*, due in early 2016, Team 17 isn't looking to reinvent the wheel. But with its UbiArt-like visuals, new features like turrets and drivable vehicles, as well as one of the greatest weapons line-ups in gaming, we have a feeling it won't be long before we're pulling the pin on a Holy Hand Grenade and blowing everyone (and ourselves) up just like the good old days.





BLOODSTAINED RITUAL OF THE NIGHT

XBOX ONE

Expectations are high for the most funded game in Kickstarter history, and with long-time *Castlevania* producer Koji Igarashi at the helm, backers can take comfort that the action adventure game is in safe hands. Demon-filled castles, exploring, outrageous weapons and a typically ridiculous story about a cursed woman whose crystallised skin grants her supernatural powers await.

NEED FOR SPEED

XBOX ONE

Recent footage of *Need For Speed* has shown an open-world racer that's blazing fast, heavy on customisation options, and packed with race types (not to mention drop-dead gorgeous). With developer Ghost Games made up primarily of ex-Criterion staff, *Need For Speed* is giving us strong *Burnout Paradise* vibes, and that makes us very excited.



MAFIA III



NAME
Burke

CRIME FAMILY
The Irish mob

BIO:
A major player in the Irish mob, Burke is in good with the cops of New Orleans, which has several advantages.

NAME
Lincoln Clay

CRIME FAMILY
The Black mob

BIO
After returning from 'Nam, Clay finds his family murdered, and looks to build a new life from the ashes of the old mob.

Words Josh West

TRUE CRIME

A BEHIND-THE-SCENES INVESTIGATION AND IN-DEPTH REPORT ON MAFIA III, HANGER 13'S DEADLY NEW TAKE ON CRIME AND PUNISHMENT IN THE USA

The when was 1968, the where was New Orleans, Louisiana. It was a turbulent time but, then again, the Big Easy had never known it any other way. Racism, violence, grand theft auto and larceny ran unchecked though the streets; the NOPD were either too corrupt or too cowardly to dare upset the balance of power. But here's the funny thing about that balance, it always seemed to weigh heavily in favour of mob boss Sal Marcano. There are some, those who survived the time with all 32 teeth in check, who will tell you that justice was blind. But that isn't necessarily true. There are others, rising-power players like Lincoln Clay, who knew justice just liked to look damn good in a fine Italian suit.

Of course, it wouldn't take long before that balance was skewed by rising tensions. 1968 was the year the rejects of Empire City wanted a bigger slice of the pie. The year the Black, Irish and Haitian mobs were pushed a little too far. It was the year a new breed of gangster saw the opportunity of a lifetime in New Orleans, grasped it by the throat with both hands and choked the life out of it until there was nothing left to give. This is the story of how a family of misfits, outcasts and lost souls reclaimed the term 'mafia' to mean so much more than the Italian mob.



NAME
Cassandra

CRIME FAMILY
The Haitian mob

BIO
A betrayal pushes the Haitian gang into a dangerous alliance with Lincoln's new take on law and order.



NAME
Vito Scaletta

CRIME FAMILY
The Italian mob

BIO
The aging protagonist from *Mafia II*, down on his luck and hungry for more of the power he used to have.

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

THIS IS ONE SANDBOX WE CAN'T WAIT TO TEAR APART

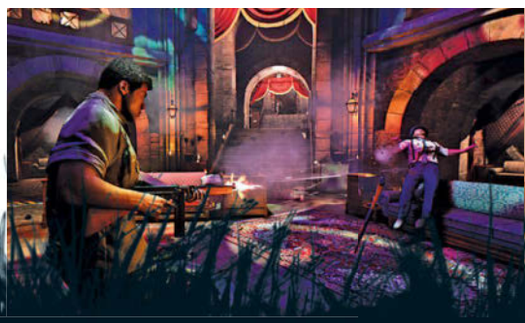


TAKING SIDES
Lincoln is ruthless and gangsters will soon need to decide what's better: joining forces or being thrown in a crocodile ridden Bayou swamp.

SEIZING DESTINY
After a tour of Vietnam, Lincoln Clay isn't messing around. After having his family torn from him, he's on a mission of explosive and bloody revenge.







INTRODUCING MAFIA III

"When we were asked initially to build a new game in the *Mafia* series, we considered it a real gift. This series is founded on certain principles that, to us as developers, are very important," remarked Hanger 13's executive producer Andy Wilson in an exclusive interview with **X-ONE**. "It's known for telling compelling stories about life within organised crime, and doing it within environments that are rich and immersive – specifically, they are always well known for their strong sense of time and place. With *Mafia III*, we wanted to go one step further. We didn't want to tell the expected tale of a rags-to-riches rise through the ranks as an Italian mobster."

It was this kind of thinking that led Hanger 13 down a potentially dangerous path: would the studio stick to convention, play to player expectations and risk looking instantly outdated in a time of great industry innovation? Or would *Mafia III* reach to conquer new interactive horizons, subverting genre tropes in order to define a new benchmark in open-world design? Thankfully, the studio opted for the latter, and the results are rather impressive. Out are the sharp suits, slick hair and predictable story beats that accompany games typically rooted in historical gangland violence; in is Lincoln Clay, a new type of protagonist for a new era of videogames.

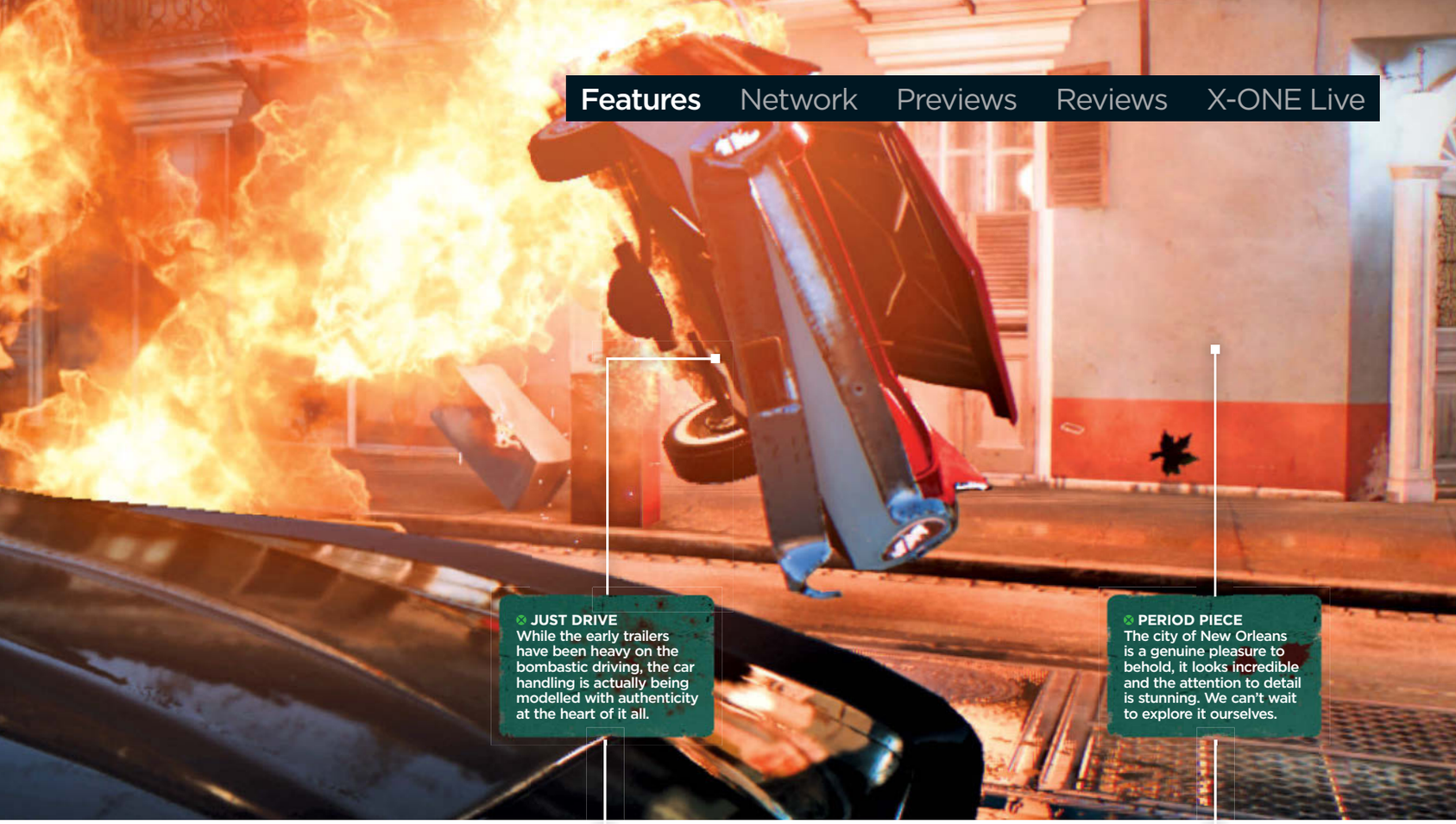
"Lincoln has been searching for this semblance of family and a place to belong his entire life," Wilson continues. "When the game opens, it is 1968, in our fictionalised version of New Orleans, Lincoln has just returned from a tour in Vietnam. Through a favour to a friend he has fallen in with the Black mob and found that sense of family he was looking for – through a mobster who treats him like a son, and a gangster that treats him like a brother. But it doesn't last, the Italian mob wipes the Black mob out, and Lincoln loses that family he's fought so hard for," he says, foreshadowing the bloodshed that's to follow, "and so he goes to war."

TIME WARP

We begin our 30-minute, behind-closed-doors demo in the streets near New Orleans' French Ward. The moon hangs low in the sky, and the area is alive with activity. Everything we see is lovingly era-appropriate: stoned buskers jam out folk tunes in dilapidated doorways; clothing is appropriately loud and ostentatious; the streets are bustling with people eager to get out of the rain; a young interracial couple is being harassed by officers of the law. We approach the situation before being stopped by a cop; he drops the N-bomb and sends us on our way. Lincoln can choose to intervene in situations like this, but tonight he has his sights set on a bigger target.

"*Mafia III* is based on a real world," comments Wilson, clearly taking note of our taken aback response to the intense, offensive language. "We aren't pulling punches, it's brutal and it's visceral. We're not shying away from any of it," he continues, "that [includes] the racial issues of the time, or the way the world reacts to violence. We made sure to get that right – there's a lot of research into [how the racial tensions] at the time worked, and we're *keenly* aware we can't mishandle that. But at the same time, we wanted to tell *this* story at *this* time, about *this* character in *this* city... so to have everything friendly and nice in this city, that would have been a real disservice"

There isn't a lot of "friendly and nice" to be found in *Mafia III*. Lincoln struts down the street like he owns it, barging people out of his way with intent and malice. We make our way towards a cemetery – a hangout for the local despots and drug dealers – in search of



JUST DRIVE
While the early trailers have been heavy on the bombastic driving, the car handling is actually being modelled with authenticity at the heart of it all.

PERIOD PIECE
The city of New Orleans is a genuine pleasure to behold, it looks incredible and the attention to detail is stunning. We can't wait to explore it ourselves.







information regarding a rival hideout in the area. A dark alleyway beckons, though Lincoln lingers on a street corner long enough to appreciate The Kinks' *All Day And All Of The Night* blaring from a nearby basement club. The commitment to realising New Orleans circa-1968 is damned impressive.

PURE BRUTALITY

Lincoln slides into cover behind a gravestone as he begins searching for his target, a dealer with information more valuable than the wares he carries. We see a high couple laughing freely and junkies strung out beside mausoleums. We're far from the bright lights and ambient city sounds now – this is a different, seedier side to New Orleans. *Mafia III* is committed to bringing its world to life – warts and all – and the result is an incredibly vivid and realistic sense of place. No time to dwell, though; it isn't long until we see an 'interrogate' icon hang over the head of our target. It's here where we get our first look at combat in *Mafia III* and it's as brutal as we expected.

The first henchman within grabbing distance gets his head slammed into a tombstone, with blood splattering across the stonework in stomach-churning detail. One violent act inspires another, and the guns soon come out to play. Lincoln ducks behind a crypt to avoid fire, bullets shattering the cover as they fly in from every direction. Lincoln's military background has its perks in situations like this, a few potshots and well-aimed headshots ripple through the dealers' protection, reducing them to a bunch of corpses without coffins. The combat looks like it's far from complete (this is early alpha code after all) though we can only hope that Hanger 13 continues to iterate here. It looks far too similar to the cover-based gunplay you'd expect to find in *Grand Theft Auto V* or *Watch Dogs*; it fails to match the raw ambition that permeates through the rest of *Mafia III*'s presentation.

"You're controlling this character all of the time, so if it feels like crap to actually go into combat – whether that's in a vehicle, from behind cover, in close quarters or anything else – then you're just ruining this experience for everyone," says Wilson, confirming – in a roundabout way – that there's still work to be done on the core combat mechanics systems and design. "There's been, for example, a two-year focus on melee, making sure that's feels tight and proper... we really wanted to make sure the whole thing felt fluid and natural."

FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

Still, there's a certain dealer that needs to be taken care of. He makes a break for a rather lovingly crafted convertible that Lincoln takes no time in commandeering for himself; pushing Lincoln to vault across the hood and jack the vehicle in an undeniably cool, fluid motion. Again, it's here where *Mafia III* still needs to update a few of its presentational aspects to bring them in line with its modern ambitions. A meter appears on the screen beneath the rear view mirror measuring your passenger's fear; reckless driving pumps it up, with every near miss and swerve into oncoming traffic making him more and more willing to divulge the information that Lincoln seeks. Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Fortunate Son* flows from the radio as the car shrieks and swerves around corners. It's incredibly cinematic, in fact; driving seems a huge step above that which you'd typically find in *Mafia III*'s contemporaries. It didn't take long to get the location on a local hideout Lincoln was after. At this point he could spare the dealer or bloody the leather seats – it was here we learned another lesson about Lincoln Clay: he doesn't trust a snitch.

A bullet to the head later and suddenly the police are in hot pursuit. The mini-map in

> "Each character has different tolerances; some are more resistant to you, say, killing cops"

the bottom corner of the screen displays the local cops and their cones of detection – not dissimilar to the ones found, again, in *GTA V* or *Watch Dogs* – though a few clever manoeuvres and a heavy dose of luck gave Lincoln the opportunity to ditch his car and reach a payphone to call for assistance from one of the many buddies he has in New Orleans. This is the first chance we have to see *Mafia III*'s incredibly awesome associate system in action – a feature that could separate it from the pack.

A NEW BREED OF MOB BOSS

Each lieutenant in the game – you might have glimpsed three of them in the reveal trailer – can offer a variety of different services to aid you within the game. In this instance, Lincoln makes a call to a friend that's in with the cops, using his influence to pull the heat off. Though it isn't a given that your lieutenants will even come to your assistance...

"If you start neglecting one supporting character, you're going to start having problems with them and that's going to have consequences down the line," says Wilson of the organic character support system. "Each character has different tolerances for what you go out and do in the open world: some characters are much more resistant to you, say, killing cops. But the character that has the 'call off the cops' service, for example, is going to start tightening up what he's willing to give you or removing that option altogether after a while. There's all of these different ways the supporting characters come into play."

This system isn't just for the odd job, service and get out of jail free card though, it also impacts the game in some fairly major ways. The hideout Lincoln is now on his way to liberate from an Italian mobster in a hail of blood and bullets is just one of hundreds that litter the various districts that make up the city. While we didn't see it in action, Hanger 13 did also promise that you'll be able to tackle each hideout in a variety of interesting ways that extends beyond stealth or action. Each building has multiple routes in, out and ways to draw the enemies into conflict. Once you've taken these over for your crime family, you'll need to assign them to one of your three lieutenants, and it's central to the core progression of *Mafia III.*

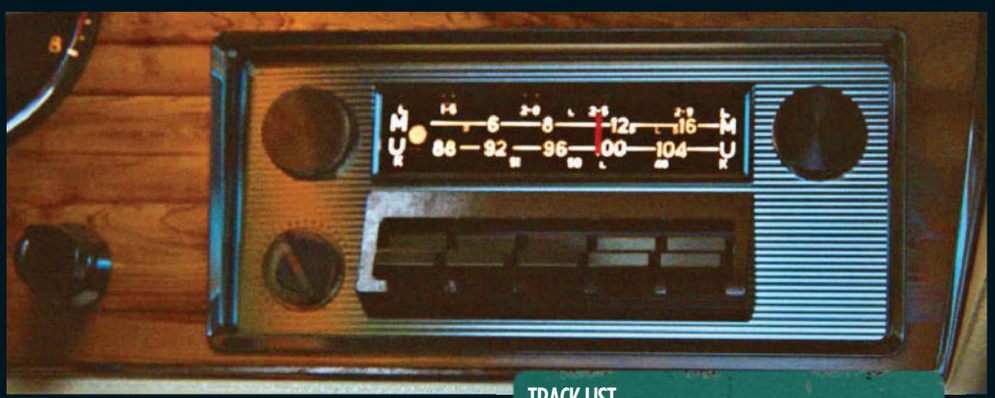
"We have, in every district, hideouts that you must take down or chip away at. You do this by getting information through informants – in doing this, you can plan your takedowns:

SOUNDS OF THE SIXTIES

MAFIA III IS SET IN 1968 – HOW'S THE SOUNDTRACK SHAPING UP?

For a rock and roll fan, *Mafia III* is going to be heaven. For the rest of you, it's going to be an electric lesson in one of the most exciting and influential periods of modern music creation. The demo made us confident that *Mafia* could have one of the best soundtracks ever committed to a videogame. Alongside the already fantastic offerings from The Kinks and The Jimi Hendrix Experience revealed, there are also the incredible developing jazz and blues scenes in New Orleans to contend with too. The period has a rich music tapestry, and it's one Hanger 13 will be able to run wild with.

What has us truly excited though is to see how the music will impact the world. NPCs seem to react to the music around them – hippies relegated to filthy club basements, streetwalkers looked on a jazz bar in disgust.



How will they possibly react to the emerging sounds of The New Yardbirds (Led Zeppelin) and Earth (Black Sabbath), not to mention the continuing rise of legends like The Doors and Marvin Gaye? If we have any concerns so far, it's that the demo featured swamp rock masterminds Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Fortunate Son* – which featured on the album *Willy And The Poor Boys* in 1969. Only a year out, but still, we thought they were going for authenticity here.

TRACK LIST

- ARTIST: The Animals
  TRACK: House of the Rising Sun (1964)
- ARTIST: Creedence Clearwater Revival
  TRACK: Fortunate Son (1969)
- ARTIST: The Kinks
  TRACK: All Day And All Of The Night (1964)
- ARTIST: The Rolling Stones
  TRACK: Paint It Black (1966)

do you weaken the hideout first, or do you assault? It's like a mini sandbox thing for a while, but then once you've taken out enough hideouts in a district, you'll unlock one of the big narrative missions for the area – that'll be to do with going after one of the big lieutenants or the capo."

BALANCING YOUR LOYALTY

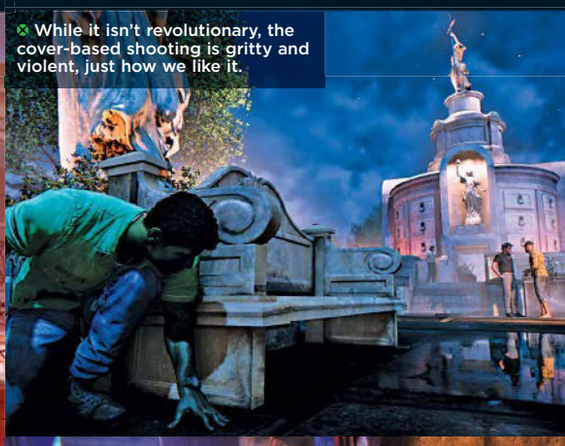
Once you've got these hideouts under your control, you'll need to assign them to your lieutenants – Lincoln can't run everything himself, he is but one man. Selecting who will run your various locations isn't a throwaway option in the menu though – making bad choices here can have a long-lasting consequences to everything from your open-world survival to the main narrative itself. Each of the three lieutenants offer specific rewards based on the hideout you've captured – and you can only earn it by assigning them to it. Choosing a reward isn't the only consequence though; once you've assigned enough hideouts you'll be able to assign the entire district to a lieutenant, and it's here where tensions and frictions begin to bubble over in the uneasy alliances you've formed.

"A lot of that reaction is cinematic," says Wilson. "They are persistent characters in the world, so you can go up to them and see how they react once you're around. That's how you gauge this stuff – by how they react to you. So you'll start to get a feel for how upset they're getting, and managing that friction becomes really important. You can designate one hideout in an area to *one* character, multiple hideouts in an area to *another* character, and once you've liberated the whole district, give the district itself to *another* character. That's going to potentially upset the apple cart, but you'd get three better rewards for it. You've always got to manage that balance."

When it comes to a game like *Mafia III*, while it's bombastic, loud, gratuitously violent and incredibly unflinching, it is all about balance. It also has a lot of smart ideas and a lot of heart behind the gangster peacocking. This incredibly early demo shows a lot of promise and that's why it's so exciting. New Orleans looks literally stunning, draped in detail and personality. Even in alpha, the mechanics and systems are surprisingly solid already. Though what surprised us the most is how narrative is still at the heart of this stunning open-world; as Andy Wilson puts it, "The series is famous for that curated narrative, you know, and we really want to celebrate that." ⊗



⊗ Accurate to the time, you'll notice the rising racial tensions in the streets of New Orleans.



⊗ While it isn't revolutionary, the cover-based shooting is gritty and violent, just how we like it.





Ubisoft has taken some small liberties with the historical realism in order to make the game more fun and playable – including connecting up stations that were never linked in London in 1868.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

X-ONE GETS ITS HANDS ON ASSASSIN'S CREED: SYNDICATE AHEAD OF LAUNCH, BUT CAN IT RESTORE FAITH IN THE FRANCHISE AFTER UNITY'S INCREDIBLE DESYNCHRONISATION?

Words Josh West







IT'S ALL ABOUT THAT TONE

WE CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT, BUT ASSASSIN'S CREED FINALLY FOUND A SENSE OF HUMOUR

There's always been a sense that *Assassin's Creed* has considered itself as the bastion of teaching kids about history. It always seems so serious, so po-faced that it couldn't let itself have any fun in the era that it recreated. That isn't the case with *Syndicate*; in fact, it finally feels like Ubisoft has accepted that this is a videogame. Sure, there is still all that crap about the Templars' worldwide master plan of evil and the pieces of Eden involved, but that's but a thread of a much larger tapestry. It's the central characters, Jacob and Evie Frye, that sell this idea – conversations between the pair of playable characters can be cheesy as all hell, but they're also fun – refreshing for *Assassin's Creed*. The dialogue between Sequences and main mission in particular is pure bants, but it also threatens to be funny at times.

"Well there's Guy Richie inspiration for sure, there's also Dickensian inspiration," reveals *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate*'s creative director Marc-Alexis Côté. It really does shine through, haphazardly wandering through London's history, brash and unflinching in its portrayal of the gangs and people of the era. Honestly, we – the English that is – are going to be mocked by the rest of the world forever after *Syndicate*, because it's establishing the babbling, cockney stereotype even more firmly, but that's not a *massive* issue. "Part of our intention was to attempt to capture the British humour, and have it in the game in a way that doesn't feel cheesy; it feels really authentic," Côté explains. "On the narrative side I think the game is very much defined as this bickering between the two twins. I think it brings a lot of freshness to the way we tell stories in *Assassin's Creed*."



"For me, the entire history of humanity, from the prehistoric age to yesterday is a good period of time [for *Assassin's Creed*]. We just need to find something that can make people dream about visiting an era," considers *Syndicate*'s creative director Marc-Alexis Côté. "I think it's a fantasy that's very deeply rooted inside of us, to relive a part of the past, and each part of our history has a story to tell. It makes the franchise unique, because it's one of the only games in the industry to tap into this exact fantasy, and we've got so many more things to cover."

While it's easy to smile at the prospect of making a daring leap of faith off of a Brontosaurus' neck in the prehistoric age, Ubisoft Quebec has in fact opted to configure the Helix to bring us to London, circa-1868. And you know what, it is freaking glorious. Victorian London is without question the most ambitious and striking recreation Ubisoft has tackled so far.

Getting hands-on with a near-final build of *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate*, we were free to sightsee, hunt collectibles, complete missions and admire the impressive array of top hats and facial hair that occupy the cobbled streets of London, but there was one thing we had to do first above all else. Honestly, given the option, what would you rather do: tail yet another informant across flat-textured rooftops (there is plenty of that) or scale Big Ben in the pale moonlight? We obviously opted for the latter, and for good reason.

"Honestly, there is so much reference material available for this era – it's the most well-documented era that we've ever had the chance to work on for *Assassin's Creed*, and it's the first time we have photographs of the era," says Côté, adding, with a laugh, "One of the things that inspired us the most is footage from the 1880s. Pretty much the first footage in the history of humanity was taken in London 15-20 years after the game, but to see the busy streets of London at the time, for real, it was like 'Wow, this is what we have to capture, to recreate... but in colour!'"

We scaled the iconic sky-piercing clock the old fashioned way – by holding RT, A and up on the thumbstick – leaving the new rope launcher tucked away in our waistband for quickly, and entertainingly, navigating buildings either side of



the wide city streets. Eventually we clambered up on top of the spire, synchronised, and cast our eyes over one of the most impressive game worlds we've ever seen. Horse-drawn carriages bustle for road space, boats sail down the Thames, plumes of smoke billow on the horizon and over-compensating cockney accents echo from the streets below. It's quite a sight; besting the interpretations of Florence and Venice in *Assassin's Creed II*. That said, a new location can only do so much for a game that still feels beholden to the mechanics and systems established in that six-year old game.

"We really wanted to bring the spirit of innovation to *Syndicate*, which is why we chose London and the Industrial Revolution. I hope fans feel that the game is very different to past centuries, and the series, but still respects all of the great legacy that we have. I think we've successfully delivered a game set at the doorstep of modernity, and it's really something that I think transpires throughout the entire experience," says Côté. We can't help but raise an eyebrow. The franchise – in terms of timeline – is now on the edge of modernity, as he rightly says, but why isn't the gameplay? After barely holding back the contents of our stomach after making a leap off of the booming Big Ben into a conveniently-located hay bale, we get stuck into *Syndicate* proper...

Losing Control

Let us be the first to tell you, *Syndicate* is a frustrating exercise in expectation management. Following *Unity*, even the most hardcore fans of the franchise were starting to flag, and so there was a reasonable assumption to be made that this game would step it up in all respects. It had to, really, otherwise we're looking at a franchise battling desperately to avoid being hooked up to life support. But there are still some majorly mind-melting problems with the core gameplay loop and systems that are impossible to overlook. As we begin to navigate the city as both Jacob and Evie Frye – you can switch between either in the menu while in the open world – the first battle we get into isn't with the roaming (stereotypically English almost to a fault) gangs that control various sections of the capital, it's against the jittery, weightless controls.

Movement is still the biggest killer to our enjoyment of *Assassin's Creed*, the hidden blade everyone seems to carelessly overlook, despite its intent on assassinating fun at every turn. It highlights the frustrating disconnect between the potential of the franchise and the reality of its actual gameplay. Perhaps the controls are no worse than any *Assassin's Creed* game that's come before it, but that's no excuse. After routinely getting caught on objects in the environment and battling against the parkour 'up and down' buttons that seem to inherently limit the freedom that the series' ideals are supposedly all about, it becomes harder to accept the slow and fiddly controls.

> "Horse-drawn carriages bustle for road space, plumes of smoke billow on the horizon"



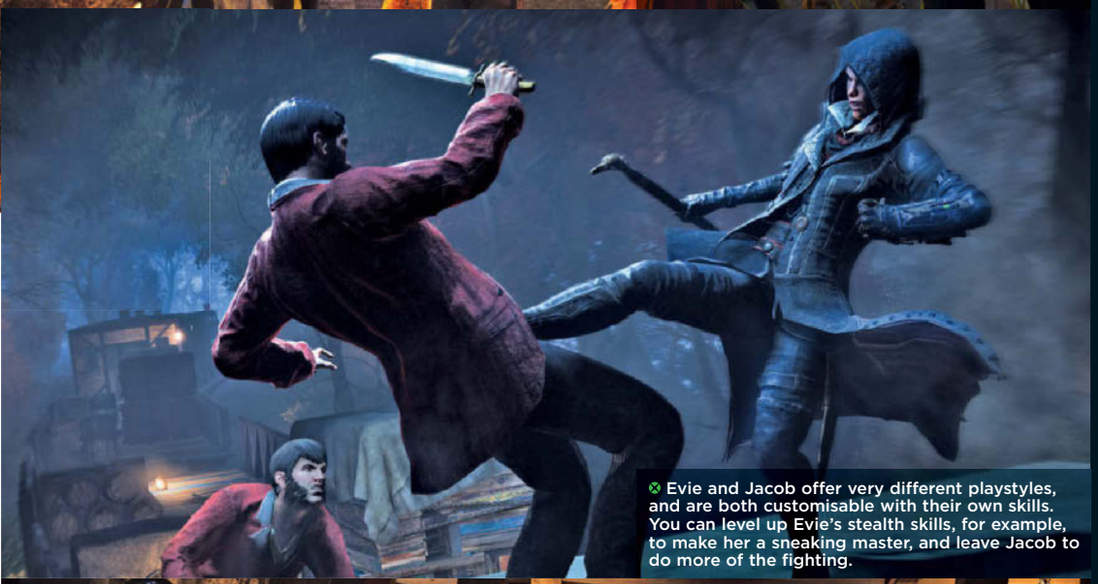
London Brawling

Still, Ubisoft Quebec has given the combat some fantastic fine-tuning. While it still feels like a button-masher's dream, there's a little more depth. "We've tried to make it more dynamic, so that enemies don't wait for their turn. The rhythm of enemies increases, so the idea behind that is to make the combat more intense between the player and his enemies," considers Côté, and we'd agree if the controls weren't so finicky and Jacob didn't keep ghosting through things mid-way through combat animations. "We often talk about having an approach that's more based on crowd control. If multiple enemies start attacking you at once, you can stun them, and then move onto another enemy, but you'll still need to pay close attention, because that enemy will 'un-stun'. It's really about dancing around, finishing off an enemy while you have stunned the others... it's much more dynamic, bouncing back and forth between enemies."

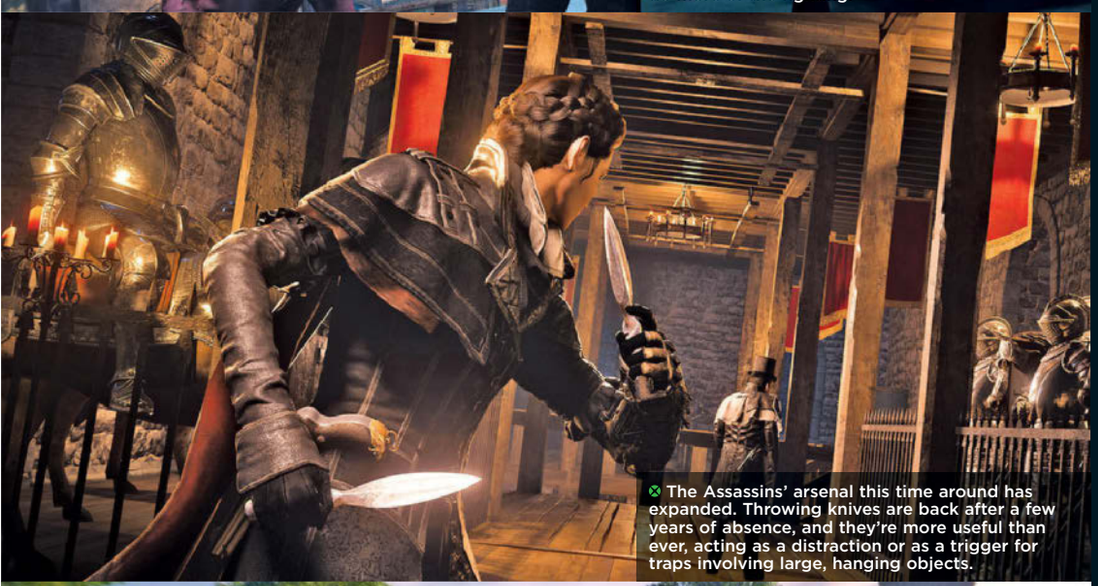
Bouncing back and forth: that's how we feel about *Syndicate* after our final opportunity to play it before review. We love the ambition and ideals behind the combat, but we're frustrated with the most basic aspects of *Assassin's Creed*'s core design. *Syndicate* has all the hallmarks of a typical *Assassin's Creed* game: a map full of objectives and collectibles, a ridiculous story about magic pieces of fruit, brutal combat, an incredible world, and controls that make other third-person action adventure games on the market feel like the most impressive videogames ever to be released. But plenty here seems like a real step forward for the series, such as the tone, combat and world design. *Syndicate* seems to be in better shape than *Unity*, but can it do enough to restore faith in the franchise? It's not long now before we find out.



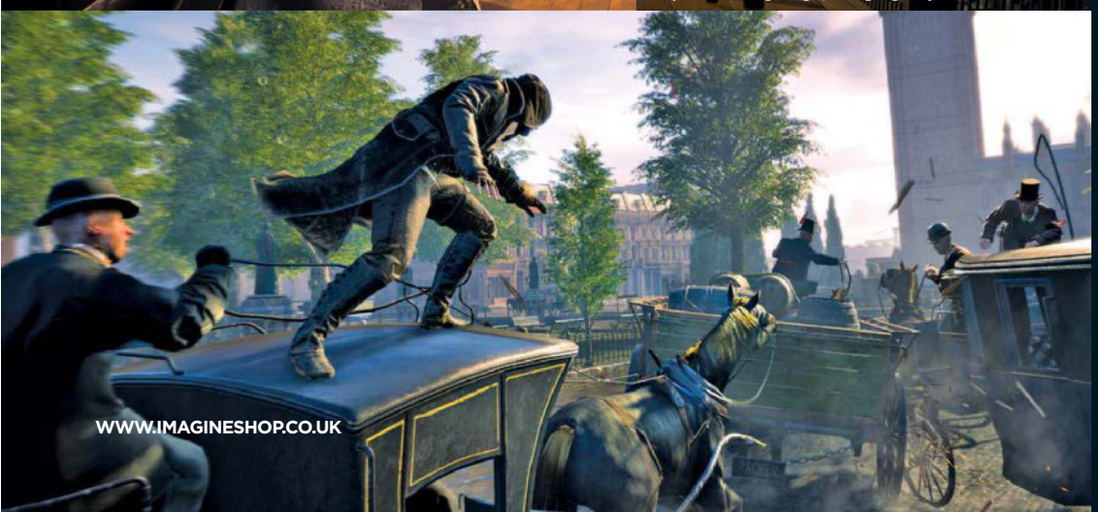
Beat a local gang in a bout of fisticuffs and your crew – The Rooks – will take over their territory. The fight system is faster this time around, and has been fine-tuned, but it's still not perfect.



Evie and Jacob offer very different playstyles, and are both customisable with their own skills. You can level up Evie's stealth skills, for example, to make her a sneaking master, and leave Jacob to do more of the fighting.



The Assassins' arsenal this time around has expanded. Throwing knives are back after a few years of absence, and they're more useful than ever, acting as a distraction or as a trigger for traps involving large, hanging objects.





QUICK FIRE QUESTIONING

WITH CREATIVE DIRECTOR **MARC-ALEXIS CÔTÉ**

Can players approach *Syndicate* any way they want?
The thing I want the most for players in *Assassin's Creed: Syndicate* is for them to have fun, but to have fun in the way that *they* want. We're not a game that's forcing combat or forcing stealth, or forcing navigation – enjoy the game the way you want to.

How historically accurate is *Syndicate* to London in 1868?
Assassin's Creed, for me, has always been about authenticity. You'll see that in the crowds, you'll see it in the music, [and] you'll see it in the dialogue. We've had the chance to work with incredible historians and authors who specialise in the Victorian era, and who help us capture this essence and put it into the game.

Favourite element improved on over *Unity*?
Just one of the things that we've improved is the crowd dynamics. You could see factions starting to interact more, the crowd being more naturally alive, and this is something that we expanded upon because we found it to be a great foundation for what we wanted to do with the Rooks, the Blighters and the Police in *Syndicate*.

Where should every gamer visit?
I would say Westminster Palace and Big Ben, they offer an impressive view on the city.

Why bother with the confusing overarching, present day story bits?
For fans and for newcomers, why go into the past? You need the justification, and it's the present that gives it this justification – otherwise why go into an Animus?

What can we expect this time, then?
As you'll see we've got a bit more important present-day component than we had last year, somewhere between *Black Flag* and *Assassin's Creed: Unity.*

All-important question: Is Desmond really dead? We hated that guy...
Desmond is *really dead* [laughs].





THE NUMBER ONE KILLER IS TIME

WE'VE BEEN BEHIND CLOSED DOORS WITH **QUANTUM BREAK** AND SPOKEN TO REMEDY ON THE XBOX ONE EXCLUSIVE'S INSANE CINEMATIC ASPIRATIONS...

"*Quantum Break* is an intense, story-driven, action game spectacle," explains Remedy's creative director Sam Lake. "At River Port University, a time travel experiment goes horribly wrong and time starts to break down. Jack Joyce, our hero, is caught in the blast of the failed experiment where he gains the power to manipulate time. He is fighting to stop the end of time, and time is literally running out." If you've listened to the former face of *Max Payne* speak about the upcoming Xbox One exclusive at all over the last two years, this should be common knowledge. But we are no longer questioning what *Quantum Break* is, but rather we are beginning to question Remedy's capacity to pull it off. After all, as Lake himself puts it, time is literally running out.

5 April 2016. Another delay to that release date would likely cause a digital riot. But a lot of things can change over a four-year development cycle. The amount of playable characters, locations, combat mechanics and story, for example, can be affected during the course of development on your typical triple-A videogame. But factor in *Quantum Break*'s risky transmedia venture, wherein Remedy seeks to intertwine an on-disc live-action TV show with the game, and then you're looking at throwing re-casting and re-writes into the mix too. These are all problems *Quantum Break* has had to overcome. What Remedy needs to do now, however, is prove that it has the capability to forge its own destiny.

LIVE-ACTION EXPLAINED

Remedy knows how to make a bloody good action game, and we don't expect anything less to be delivered. What Remedy doesn't know how to do, on the other hand, is make a bloody good live-action TV series. But the studio isn't going into this half-cocked: actors have been cast and their likenesses have now been added to the game, with *X-Men*'s Iceman (Shawn Ashmore) and Littlefinger from *Game Of Thrones* (Aidan Gillen) taking on hero Jack Joyce and villain Paul Serene, respectively, in both show and game. Big stars don't equal big success, though; success or failure of *Quantum Break* hangs delicately on how the disparate sections of the game come together. It could be a mess, or it could prove an incredible new future for interactive entertainment.

"The game focuses on the heroes, but the in-game live action show focuses on what goes on in the enemy camp, inside Monarch Solutions. It's a rather unique opportunity for the players to see both sides of the story," explains Thomas Puha, the head of marketing at Remedy, as we try to wrap our head around the moving pieces of *Quantum Break*. "You play an act of the game as our hero Jack Joyce [and] at the end of each act you get to play what we call a Junction Moment with the story's villain Paul Serene," continues Puha. "He can see alternative timelines and, based on what Serene sees, you get to decide which future comes to pass. The Junction Moment is followed by an episode of the live-action show, which is customised based on your Junction Choice."

Take that in for a second. On top of everything, *Quantum Break* also features a branching



> "Combining the game and the show has been a huge undertaking, as they share locations, characters and events. To pull that off has been surprisingly challenging"

narrative – one that will impact what you will see in the proceeding live-action episode. "[Each episode is] approximately 20-22 minutes [in length] with four episodes in total," confirms Puha. "There are five acts of the game itself [and] while some of the changes are subtle, some are drastic – like a character dying – but above all, it's the player who gets to make these choices that impact the live-action show as well as the game."

The curtain has finally been lifted on the live-action episodes and we are happy to say we are pleasantly surprised by the quality. The dialogue is expectedly hokey in places, but the direction and composition looks to be a small step

DISSECTING COMBAT

YOU KNOW HOW IT WORKS, BUT HOW DOES IT PLAY?



"The action in *Quantum Break* is definitely bigger and better than in our previous games," considers Mikko Rautalahti, Remedy's story team manager. "With Jack's special abilities and the world going haywire around him, there's much more of a sense of spectacle. So it's a different genre, a sort of high-octane sci-fi/superhero thing – but at the same time we take our storytelling seriously, so we also put great importance on our characters and the interaction between them."

Remedy is known for its wild action, cinematic approach to gunfights and engaging game mechanics thanks to the likes of *Max Payne* and *Alan Wake*, but we're aren't inclined to agree with the assertion that *Quantum Break* is breaking new genre ground for Remedy. Playable protagonist Jack Joyce might have an array of time-manipulating powers at his disposal, but the reality of the situation is that they are just minor variations on action genre staples. These come into play when time freezes or combat begins: abilities such as Time Rush (quick dash), Time Dodge (quick dodge), Time Blast (turns bullets into explosive projectiles), Time Stop (come on now, you've got the idea by now) and the rather self-explanatory Time Shield.



The powers turn every gunfight into an impressive spectacle, but they don't necessarily make the action look as fresh as we expected. That said, it would be unfair of us to expect Remedy to re-write the playbook every time it unleashes a new IP. A big problem here is that our 30-minute demo of a content-complete build was strictly hands-off. This is the kind of game that demands to be played to be truly appreciated. It would help answer the lingering questions: Is that cover system really automated? Are the gunfights as wickedly weighty and fluid as they look? Will the combat ever be considered challenging when you've seemingly got enough power to make even Thanos with a Time Gem your absolute bitch?

"I can understand why people would think that based off the trailers that focus to highlight the action, but rest assured we realise it's not much fun if Jack can just steamroll over the Monarch enemies," agrees Thomas Puha, head of marketing at Remedy. "We aim to offer exciting combat scenarios, and the time powers bring a lot of variety into the combat and gunplay. Monarch's elite soldiers have experimental Chronon technology that allows them to operate inside time stutters. They will offer a formidable challenge to Jack as the game proceeds. We have several enemy types in the game that we have not shown off yet," continues Puha, adding, "Balancing the time powers and the combat is of course something we are constantly working on and it is critical to get that right."





Quantum Break is content-complete, which is to say it is 100 per cent playable from start to finish. It's now where the team will work on pulling together the game and live-action sections, as well as combing meticulously for bugs.



The live-action show comes on the disc; it's all part and parcel. If, however, you don't have time to watch an episode, you can skip it and either watch it later from the menus or on a SmartGlass enabled device.



Quantum Break looks actually incredible. It's without question the Xbox One's best looking game and does a great job of showing off the console's capacity to stun the retinas.

> "It could be a mess, or it could introduce an incredible new future for interactive entertainment"

up on the production values delivered by your typical sci-fi show. To create the branching narrative, Remedy has had to record "a bunch of additional footage for each episode," as each of the Junction Moments pushes the storyline into a new branching path. "*Quantum Break* tells one fantastic story in many ways," continues Puha. "It's how you experience that story, through both the game and in-game show, that differs based on the actions made during the Junction Moments."

"It is important to understand that the live action episodes in *Quantum Break* are not cutscenes – all of our cinematics are created live with our North Light game engine on Xbox One, [while] the live-action show has been handled by Lifeboat Productions, with Microsoft and Remedy on board. The episodes are directed by Ben Ketai and produced by Jaime Burke and Amy King. Combining the game and the show has been a huge undertaking, as they share locations, characters and events. To pull that off has been surprisingly challenging."

We've seen one of these Junction Points in action, where a student activist is either brutally executed or threatened into recording a pro-Monarch video. The former will lead to the protest that we saw in last year's demo – where people flocked to the bridge that is subsequently destroyed by a runaway freighter – while the latter option turns her into an ally for Joyce later in the game. This is usually where cutscenes would fill in the narrative gaps to push the story forward, and if we're being honest, sticking with live-action feels like a hangover from Microsoft's original Xbox One entertainment aspirations, which essentially died with the closure of Xbox Entertainment Studios last year. It's certainly an interesting idea, but we still aren't entirely sure as to why it *needs* to be delivered live action.

Perhaps the reason we are still sat so firmly on the fence, despite a strong and confident showing of both the live-action sections and the core gameplay, is that seemingly so much has changed over the course of development. From the 2013 reveal onwards it was always cited that *Quantum Break* would feature three playable characters, with Beth Wilder joining Jack Joyce and Paul Serene in some time-amplified tomfoolery. Though **X-ONE** can now confirm that, while "Beth is still a major part of the game" the realities of time, resources and mechanics have seen her role diminished. Her time powers were never publicly revealed, so it's likely Remedy simply overstepped its reach when trying to integrate a third-playable character into its seemingly out of control vision.

But that isn't all. While eagle-eyed fans will no doubt see some story ambitions and time powers stripped from both the game and the marketing machine, our bigger area of concern was over Jack Joyce himself. Every actor in the show has also been fully face- and motion-captured for the game; was a re-casting of Sean Durrie – *Quantum Break*'s original lead – partly to blame for the delay into 2016?

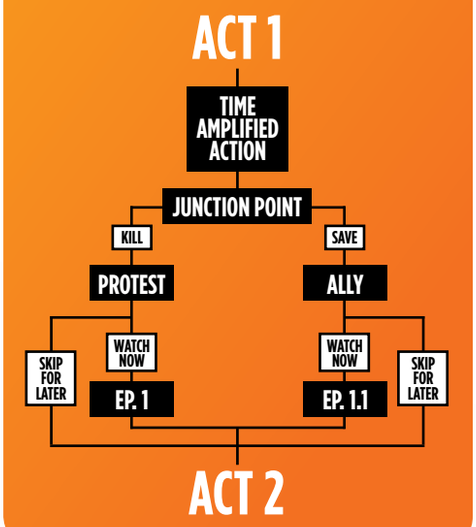
"A project like this – particularly when it's a new IP – tends to undergo a great number of changes during its development," says Remedy's story team manager Mikko Rautalahti. "[Sean Durrie] was cast, but he wasn't the final choice. It's tricky; sometimes you just have to go with the character model you have if you want to be able to show anything. Shawn Ashmore was signed early on, but due to various things – such as it taking quite a while to properly create a hi-res character model – we couldn't announce him until gamescom this year. So Shawn has actually been part of the cast for quite a long time. And Sean's still very much in the game; he's playing another character.

"As for reshoots and changes, the only things we've had to reshoot are the parts we've shown in public before announcing Shawn as Jack. It seems like a big change, but it hasn't had a huge impact on our narrative given how our production schedule works out."

That statement alone should give you a fairly solid idea of the work that's going into *Quantum Break*. It isn't just a killer exclusive for Microsoft early into 2016, it's also trying to change the way we play and interact with videogames. It's taking the good idea behind the disastrous FMV games of the Nineties and looking to merge it with the cinematic and badass action Remedy is known for. It might not work. But then again, it just might blow our minds. Time might be running out for the studio to pull it all together, but we will never run out of time for a studio that's always strived to – and has successfully – pushed boundaries in videogames. Keep your eyes on *Quantum Break*, whether it succeeds or fails on 5 April 2016; it shouldn't be missed.

GAMEPLAY BREAKDOWN

HOW QUANTUM BREAK CHANGES IF YOU CHOOSE TO KILL OR SAVE A CHARACTER

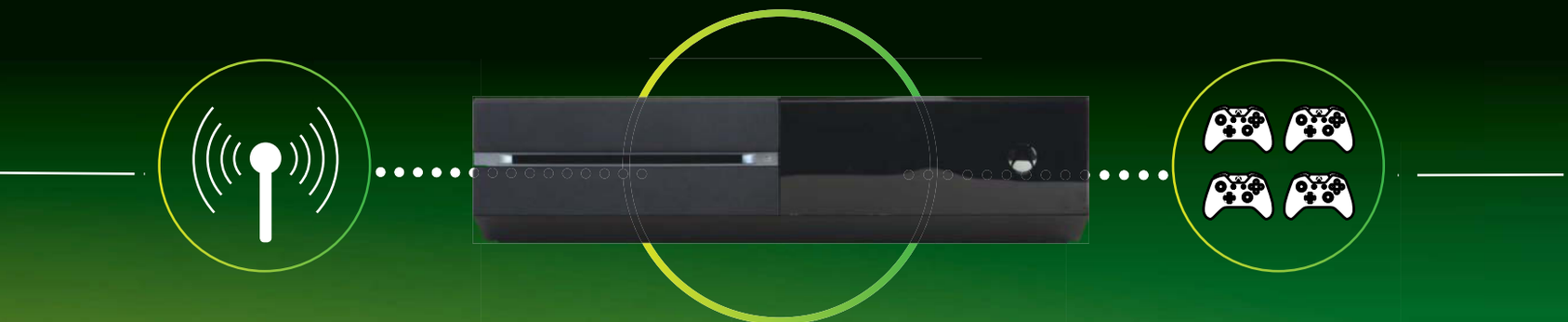




YOUR GUIDE TO MULTIPLAYER GAMING ON XBOX ONE

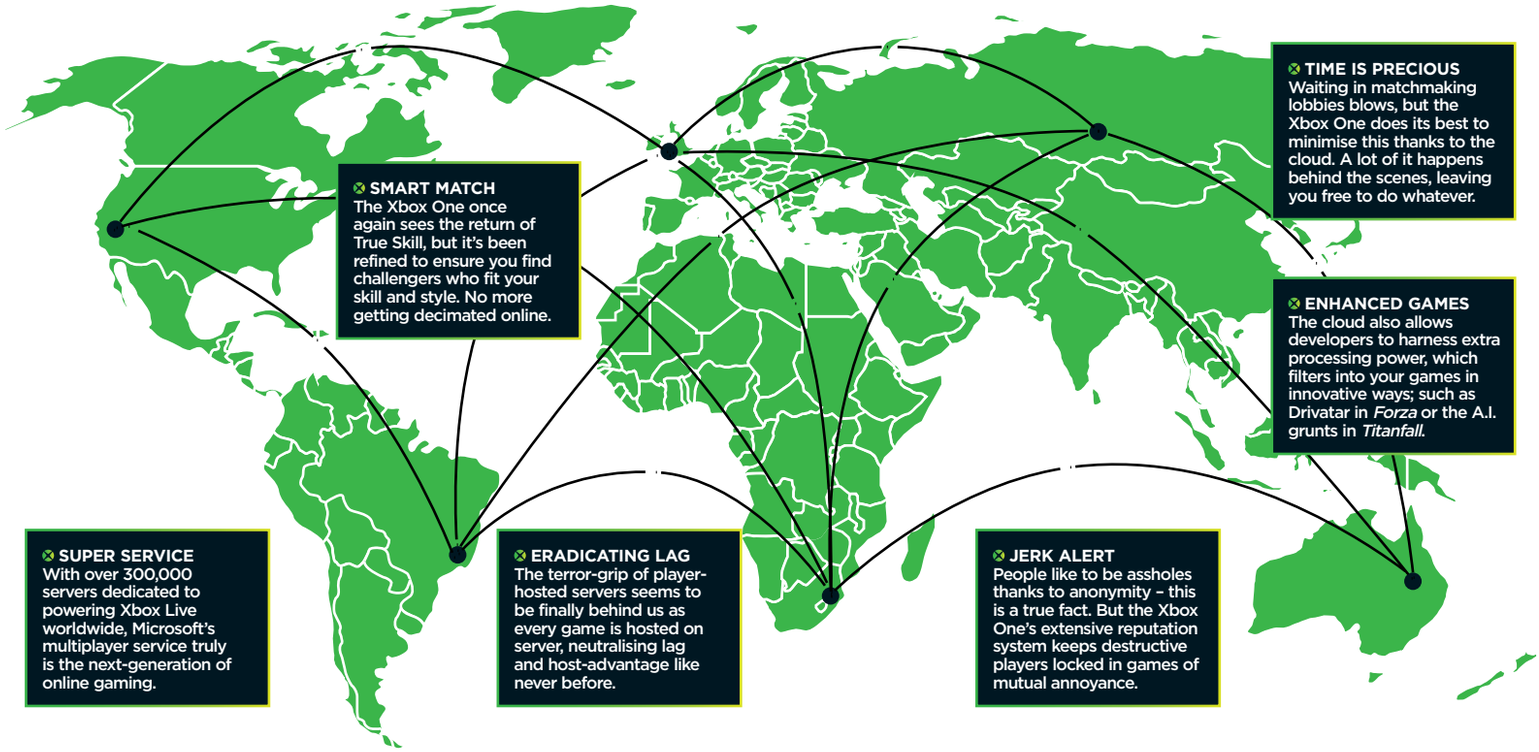
Words Josh West

HOW TO HAVE MORE FUN WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM YOUR FRIENDS



HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

SIX THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW TO UNDERSTAND THE NEW GENERATION OF XBOX LIVE



SMART MATCH
The Xbox One once again sees the return of True Skill, but it's been refined to ensure you find challengers who fit your skill and style. No more getting decimated online.

TIME IS PRECIOUS
Waiting in matchmaking lobbies blows, but the Xbox One does its best to minimise this thanks to the cloud. A lot of it happens behind the scenes, leaving you free to do whatever.

ENHANCED GAMES
The cloud also allows developers to harness extra processing power, which filters into your games in innovative ways; such as Drivatar in *Forza* or the A.I. grunts in *Titanfall*.

SUPER SERVICE
With over 300,000 servers dedicated to powering Xbox Live worldwide, Microsoft's multiplayer service truly is the next-generation of online gaming.

ERADICATING LAG
The terror-grip of player-hosted servers seems to be finally behind us as every game is hosted on server, neutralising lag and host-advantage like never before.

JERK ALERT
People like to be assholes thanks to anonymity – this is a true fact. But the Xbox One's extensive reputation system keeps destructive players locked in games of mutual annoyance.

SETTING UP XBOX LIVE

IT'S EASY ONCE YOU KNOW HOW

Yes, a Gold Account does cost £39.99 a year, and yes it is totally worth it. It lets you play online, gives you discounts on the store, free games every month and plenty more. Setting up your subscription is easy enough – and here is a top tip – while Microsoft will attempt to entice you with cheaper-looking options, a year is better value for money. It's also way too easy to forget about the monthly payment... and then suddenly it's been running for years and you are full of regret after wasting so much money. Either way, navigate your way to Settings and look for the Subscriptions menu. There you'll see the options to either pay monthly or yearly. You'll need a credit or debit card – and the bill-payer's permission, obviously – and then just follow the instructions. Once you've inputted all of that you'll be good to go, so have a look around the store and go to your Profile and begin building it up. It's also worth noting that having a SmartGlass-enabled device to hand makes inputting this info 100 per cent easier, or you can complete these same steps on Xbox.com.



THREE PILLARS OF MULTIPLAYER

THERE ARE THREE WAYS TO ENJOY MULTIPLAYER GAMING ON XBOX ONE

1 ONLINE GAMING

For the ultimate in online gaming, you want to get connected and join the millions of gamers playing on Xbox Live. Every game seems to foster its own little community, perfect for taking others to task and for showing off your skills on your favourite games.

2 CO-OPERATIVE

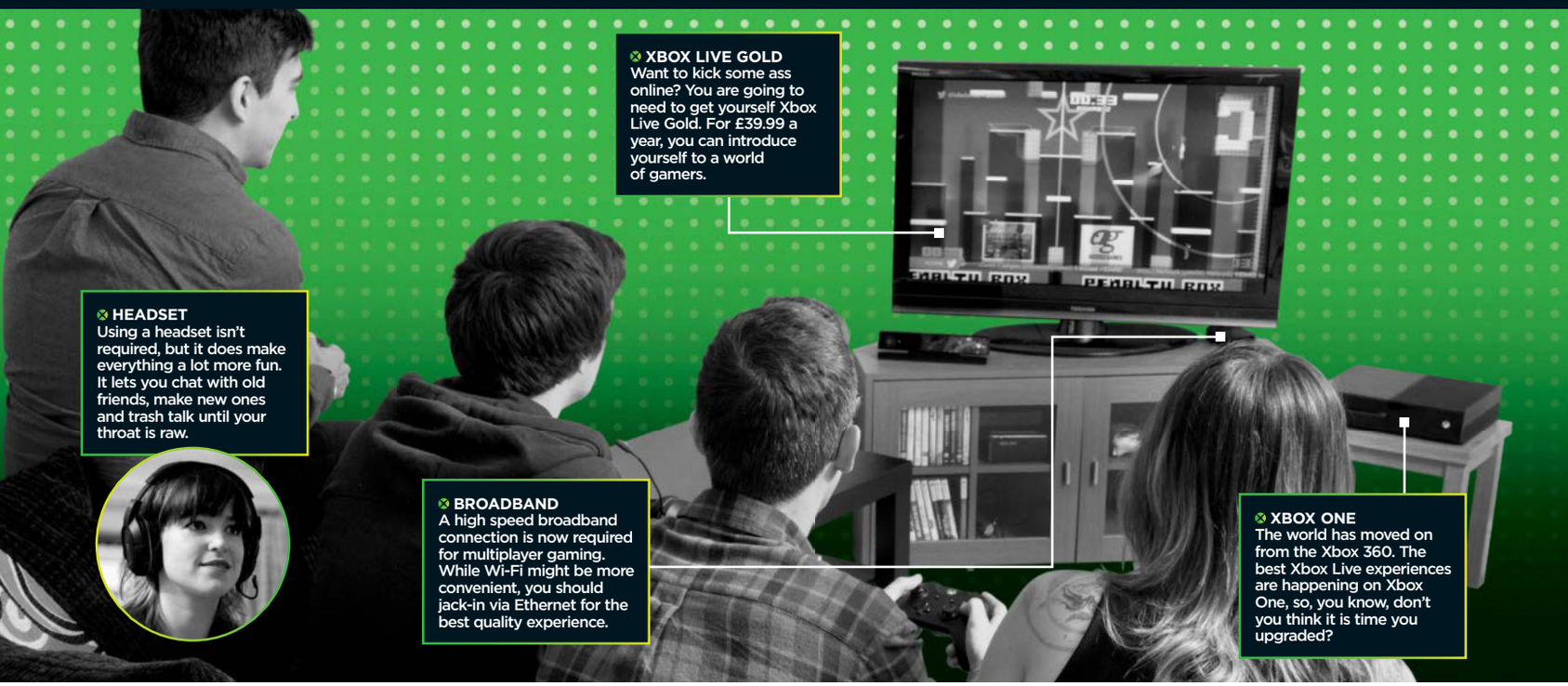
Whether it's with your friends side-by-side or over Xbox Live, more and more games are beginning to support co-op play. From tackling campaigns together to working together as a unit to beat a mutual goal, co-op gaming is the usually the best way to play.

3 SAME COUCH

While the last gen did its best to keep social interactions in gaming to a headset, there is now an increasing trend of same-couch multiplayer experiences. There's nothing better than being able to rub a victory in somebody's face, especially when they are sat next to you.

ONLINE GAMING ESSENTIALS

YOU'LL NEED THESE BASICS TO GET CONNECTED



XBOX LIVE GOLD
Want to kick some ass online? You are going to need to get yourself Xbox Live Gold. For £39.99 a year, you can introduce yourself to a world of gamers.

HEADSET
Using a headset isn't required, but it does make everything a lot more fun. It lets you chat with old friends, make new ones and trash talk until your throat is raw.

BROADBAND
A high speed broadband connection is now required for multiplayer gaming. While Wi-Fi might be more convenient, you should jack-in via Ethernet for the best quality experience.

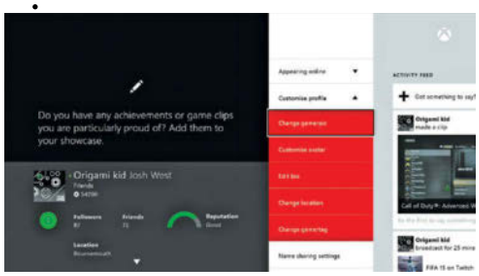
XBOX ONE
The world has moved on from the Xbox 360. The best Xbox Live experiences are happening on Xbox One, so, you know, don't you think it is time you upgraded?

REPORTING A PLAYER FOR BAD CONDUCT

BECAUSE SOMETIMES IT NEEDS TO BE DONE

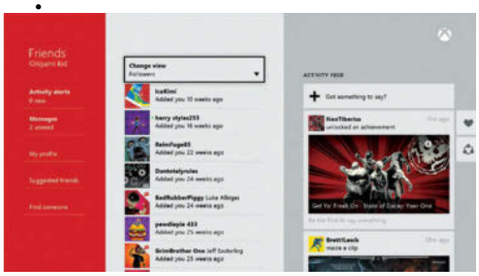
1 BAD REPUTATION

Sometimes someone is such a jackass online they need to be reported. Press the Xbox button on your controller and navigate to the Friends tile in the Friends App.



2 FIND 'EM

From there you want to go to Change view at the top of the screen and select Recent Players from the drop down menu and start looking for the source of your distress.



3 REPORT 'EM

Once the Gamertag has been located, select it and click Report Or Block. Select Report and then give your reason; then it's up to Microsoft to dish out the punishment.



ONLINE ETIQUETTE

SOCIAL CONVENTION AND SOCIETY'S RULES GO OUT OF THE WINDOW IN THE WILDS OF XBOX LIVE

DO

PLAY THE OBJECTIVE

It doesn't matter if you are playing Kill Confirmed in *Black Ops 3* or a Heist in *GTA Online*, play to whatever the pre-defined objective is – this will avoid irritation and will probably get you more in-game reward than dicking about.

REMEMBER YOUR ORIGINS

You were a noob once, too. Sure, you might have a squad mate that's sucking, but don't rush to abuse, just remember that everybody has to start somewhere – and sometimes it's a game that you're in. Just deal with it.

ACCEPT YOU'LL BE UNLUCKY

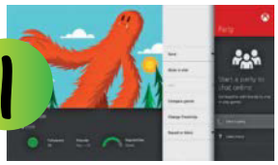
Not all the time, but sometimes for sure. Maybe it was lag, maybe that bro was spawn camping, maybe it's cheat city. Or, just maybe, *you're* having a bad game. In a bad run it's wise to mute the microphone, play nice, and try to be a gracious loser.

PRACTICE

Want to avoid the ire of an online lobby? Get practising before you leap into your first competitive game. This can be as simple as learning through single-player, or as time-consuming as scouring the internet for guides.

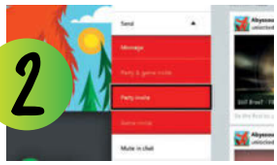
START A PARTY

HOW TO CONNECT WITH YOUR FRIENDS



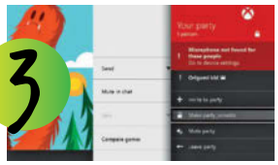
WHAT'S A PARTY?

If you've got friends on Xbox Live, a Party is the best way to talk, play and interact with them. Parties allow you to group up and chat with up to eight friends through your Xbox One, and it's simple to get one set up.



INVITING A FRIEND

Inviting a friend to your party is really easy. Go to the Friends hub on your Home screen and click the Friends tile. Next, select the friend you want to party with, click Send and then scroll through the list until you find 'Party Invite'.



JOIN A PARTY

If you know your friends are in a party and want to join them, you can actually jump straight in! From the Friends Hub, click on the Friends tile and select one of your friends in the party. If it's open, you'll see the option to Join Party.



INVITING FRIENDS TO A GAME

Once you've got a Party, load a game and double-tap the Xbox button to bring up Snap and select Party, then Invite to Game. This will send notification requests and, if they accept, will launch them straight into your lobby.



STARTING A PARTY VIA SNAP IN-GAME

Double tap the Xbox button to bring up Snap and select Party. From there, select Invite to Party and click the friends you want from the list and finally, select Party from the list of Invite options.



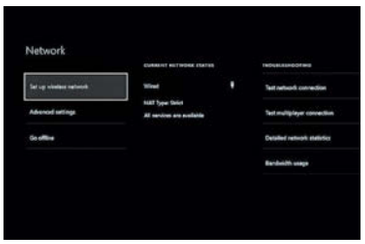
PRIVACY SETTINGS

The Privacy settings on your Party can be altered if you need to change them. Inside the Snapped Party App you'll see the option to set it to Invite only or closed entirely. You can also mute specific players here too.

ROUTER CONFIGURATION

GET THE BEST FROM YOUR NET

If you're having trouble connecting to Xbox Live, try opening some ports on your router. To open your router settings, type in your IP address to a browser window, log in with your provider details and select Port Forwarding. From there, you'll want to check to see if the following ports are available: Port 88 (UDP), Port 3074 (UDP and TCP), Port 53 (UDP and TCP), Port 80 (TCP), Port 500 (UDP), Port 3544 (UDP), Port 4500 (UDP).



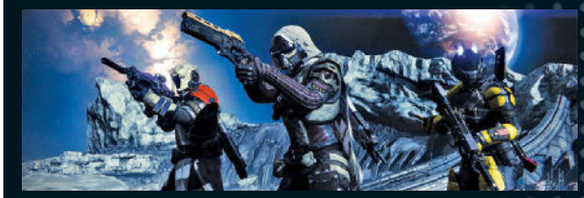
MULTIPLAYER

THE MOST AWESOME GAMES ON XBOX LIVE



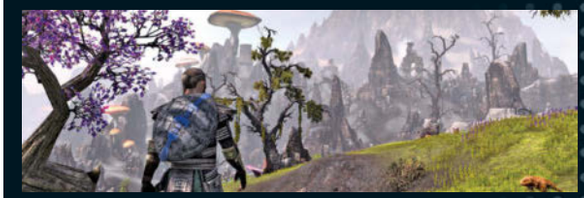
TITANFALL

While the community has shrunk somewhat, *Titanfall*'s introduction to EA Access and its free DLC maps means it's still quite active. Respawn's debut FPS is still great.



DESTINY

Thanks to a wave of recent changes, *Destiny* is no longer the hot mess that it launched in. It's now a sprawling and inviting alternative to *Call Of Duty* and *Battlefield*.



THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE

It's rare that we see a competent MMO launch on console and *TESO* proves that the genre can still find success with a controller in your hands. And it's awesome with friends.



GTA ONLINE

One of the craziest multiplayer experiences out there. If you want to really get the most out of your Xbox One, get a crew of buddies together and do some crime.

DON'T

FEED THE TROLLS

If you're getting abuse or wound up, just mute the player. If you rise to their level of childlike antics, you basically lose your right to complain about the behaviour later. Mute the assholes and talk to the team players for an easy life.

BE A TROLL YOURSELF

Sounds obvious, but don't be a troll. If you don't like receiving it, then you shouldn't dish it out. It's the easiest way to get booted from games, muted or outright banned on Xbox Live if enough players leave negative feedback on your account.

CAMP OUT

Don't listen to *Red Vs. Blue*, camping is not a legit strategy. It might be an easy way to bag a few kills, but you'll also quickly begin to feel the burning hatred of multiple strangers. Don't camp, don't spawn kill... Basically, don't be an asshole.

DISCONNECT

This is probably the worst thing you can do in an online game. If you're losing, don't disconnect, just wait it out. It's incredibly frustrating to have your opponent just up and leave, and it's even worse when a team-mate quits it mid-game.

JARGON BUSTER

XBOX LIVE HAS ITS OWN LANGUAGE – HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMONLY USED PHRASES...

1 K/D RATIO
Almost every online shooter ranks people according to their K/D, or their Kill to Death ratio. Simple stuff; get your kills higher than your deaths for victory.

2 NOOB
Short for newbie, it's basically a shorthand way of referring to new players who clearly possess no skill or are otherwise clueless about the game. Be nice, we were all there once.

3 XP
Shorthand for Experience Points, counted as you progress through a game. Hitting XP milestones usually sees your character level up, gain new abilities, and weapons.

4 CAMPER
Frowned upon by the community at large, camping refers to those people who would rather hold firm in a single area than romp around the map.

5 GLITCHING
Even though games are (usually) thoroughly tested for bugs, some players do find exploits and use them to have an unfair advantage over the other players.

6 GRINDING
The act of persistently completing an element, or a few elements, of a game, usually to quickly raise your XP, level up, upgrade weaponry, or obtain new equipment.

7 DLC
Or better known as Downloadable Content. This refers to all additional content that can be purchased online or downloaded directly to your console.

8 CLAN
If you're playing a team-based game, there's a pretty good chance it supports clans – essentially groups of friends and strangers that come together to form an online team.

9 PING
Your ping is the time (in milliseconds) it takes for game info to travel to the server and back. The lower the ping, the better your experience will be online.

HOW TO QUICKLY SYNC MULTIPLE XBOX ONE CONTROLLERS

YOU CAN'T PLAY CO-OP WITHOUT ENROLLING MORE GAMEPADS

1 LET IT FLASH
Once you turn on an unconnected controller the Xbox button should begin to flash. Once it's doing that, *press and release* the Connect button on the console.

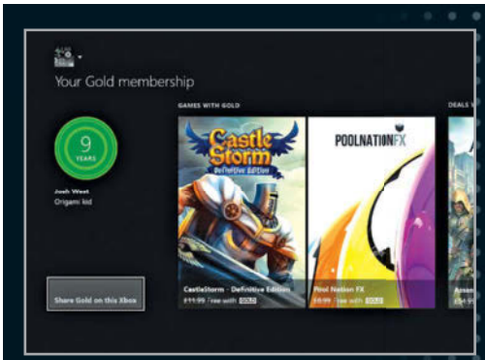


2 ALMOST THERE
Now, within the next 20 seconds, you need to *press and hold* the Connect button on the back of the controller until the Xbox button begins to quickly flash. Sorted.



DID YOU KNOW...

If you have Kinect you can just press and hold the controller's Connect button and point it in the direction of the Kinect sensor. This *should* work, but, well, you know how temperamental Kinect can be.



SHARE THE LOVE

GOLD HAS NEVER BEEN SO GOOD

Being an Xbox Live Gold member doesn't just mean you're able to get online and kick some ass, it also means your friends and family can join in on the fun too without any added expense.

As an Xbox Live Gold member, you can share the benefits of your Gold membership with other users while they are using your Xbox One console at home. All they need to do is create a free account and Gamertag and they will be able to enjoy Xbox Live - and everything it offers - via your membership, all you need to do is keep yourself signed in for them to have some fun!

This also extends to when you're on the move; so if you take your Gold enabled account over to a buddies' house they will be able to enjoy Gold on their console so long as you keep yourself signed in, it's pretty handy.

CO-OP ESSENTIALS

REMEMBER THESE FOR YOUR CO-OP SESSIONS



EXTRA CONTROLLERS
No co-op session is complete without them. While most games support up to-four players, the Xbox One actually supports eight players within pushing distance.

USE A CABLE
The biggest killer of co-op is replacing batteries. But a mini USB cable will get the job done. Run the cable from controller to front USB port and you'll be going again in no time.

PLAY NICE
Especially in co-op, stealing pickups and upgrades you don't need is a sure fire way to ruin a friendship. Work together and play the objective, it's the best way to play.

TRY TWITCH
Finding success on Twitch is hard, but the chemistry of playing with a friend is usually enough to keep watching. Get a co-op game on, start streaming and have some fun.

DON'T SCREENCHEAT
If playing competitively, just don't screencheat. It's hard when you're operating with just a slice of the screen, but nothing ruins a game faster than sneaking a peak.

BEST CO-OP GAMES

OUR PICK OF THE GAMES YOU CAN PLAY WITH FRIENDS

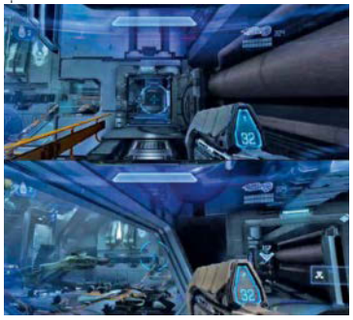
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XBOX ONE



FORZA MOTORSPORT 6

www.forzamotorsport.net /forzamotorsport @ForzaMotorsport

Everything the last game should have been

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft Studios

DEVELOPER
Turn 10 Studios

GAME TYPE
Racing/puddle simulator

PLAYERS
1-24

DLC
Car, track and VIP packs

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Real Deal (25G)

IN BRIEF

It's a driving game, meaning it's cars hurtling around a track, some slower, some faster. It also has really good puddles. No, honestly – it does. Oh, and it isn't littered with microtransactions, huzzah!

It's a bit of a bizarre one, first turning on *Forza Motorsport 6* and being confronted by one of the most pretentious, twerpish introductory sequences we've ever seen. It sets the stall out from the very beginning: this is a game that values cars and the racing of said cars (and some other vehicles) much more highly than anything else in the entire history of humanity. Cars are important. Cars matter more than you could ever imagine. Cars *speak* to you. Cars. *CARS*.

The thing is, *Forza 6* is so very bloody good we're almost able to overlook this astonishingly po-faced take on the act of flinging superpowered hunks of metal around closed-off bits of road (and specially-built bits of track). Almost, but not quite. It's hard to ignore the bit where the game literally compares racing a car to going to war. But even with that caveat firmly in place, there's no doubt about it: *Forza 6* is *the* racing game for Xbox One.

At the console's launch, we were met with the functional, but utterly launch-gamey *Forza Motorsport 5*. It was good, but it felt lacking in many ways: a limited selection of vehicles, fewer tracks than ever before, a huge reliance on tokens – and the microtransactions that came with them... It just wasn't as great as we wanted, but more importantly, it wasn't as brilliant as we knew Turn 10 was capable of producing. It was a bit rushed, a bit cynical, a bit unlike the *Forza*s from generations past. Thankfully, everyone involved in the decision-making process has listened when it comes to *Forza Motorsport 6* – so wipe those brows, there's very little to worry about here.

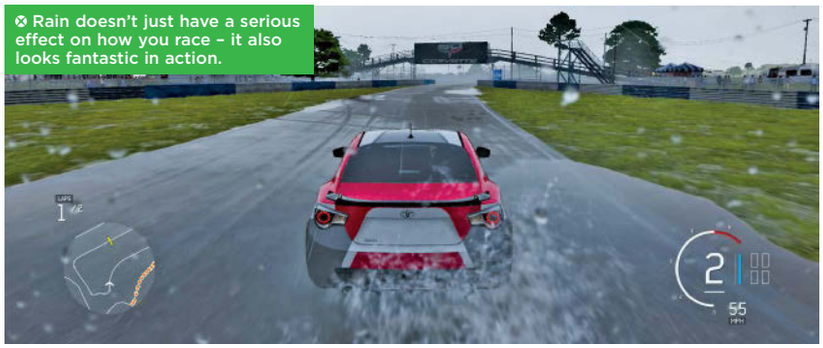
> "There are irritations, but there's nothing that would stop us from recommending the game to every Xbox One owner"

Once you've moved beyond that woeful introductory sequence and the irritating videos (and soulless voiceover) that riddle the game, the meat of *Forza 6* presents itself. It all centres around a career mode divided into five distinct types of racing, or 'Stories of Motorsport'. Said stories comprise of Super Street, Sport Icons, Grand Touring, Professional Racing and Ultimate Motorsport, with each taking in six different classes of vehicle.

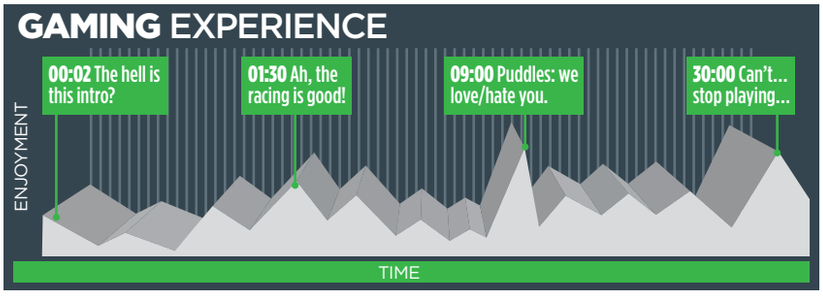
You'll start out blasting around tracks in compact coupés or hot hatches, moving on up through American muscle cars, SUVs, supercars, Sport GTs, touring cars, Formula E speedsters and on to frankly ludicrous super-vehicles that would probably take off and fly to the moon were it not for their impressively scientific downforce-producing flaps. With a selection of cars dating back to the dawn of the car as a personal transit tool, there's sure to be something in there even for the most drive-by-night of petrolheads. Or you can just stick with the Dodge Viper, because it's the best car in every driving game released since 1998.

While all of the cars on offer are visually up to Xbox One spec, complete with detailed cockpit views and full damage modelling (which can be purely cosmetic or not, as you choose), this isn't just a parade of good looks. Turn 10 has made very sure the cars handle just as they do in real life, so your approach to a race in the aforementioned Viper will be vastly different to that when you're pootling around in a Ford Focus, which again will differ from when you're tearing it up in a specced-up Honda NSX. Thankfully, all of this is scalable depending on your ability, so even those of you out there who don't consider yourselves king or queen of the road will be accommodated for – braking, steering, racing line, damage: it can all be switched on or off to varying degrees, helping or hindering as the case may be.

Another way in which Turn 10 has made sure the visual quality matches the actual impact of a feature is in both night racing and racing in the rain. The former might not seem like much – we've had racing in the darktimes for as long as we've had racing games. But there's a real difference to be felt when hurtling around a track at 150mph with nothing but your own lights illuminating the thin strip of track in front of you. It's an exhilarating sense of tunnel vision;



Rain doesn't just have a serious effect on how you race – it also looks fantastic in action.





Modern cars are, of course, superb – but we've a soft spot for ridiculous older vehicles like this one.



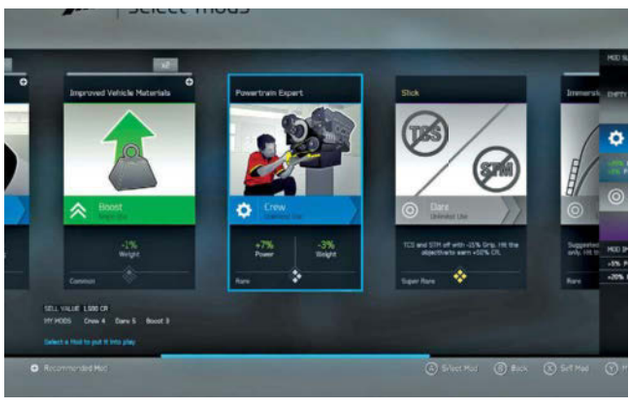


The track selection is varied, but we really see no need for both Daytona and Indianapolis. 'Turn left to win'.

TRENDING

#PUDDLES ACTUALLY MATTER

It seemed so silly before release, but it turns out *Forza 6*'s puddles are important *and* impressive. Who knew?





FORZA MOTORSPORT 6

EXTENDED EXPERIENCE



FAST & FURIOUS 7
■ Not only is it a great film about cars, you also get a free *Forza 6* car if you buy it from Xbox Video.



FORZA HORIZON 2
■ Seems a bit silly to recommend another branch of *Forza* games, but *Horizon 2* really is different, and brilliant in its own right.



FORZA MOTORSPORT 5
■ Head back to the Xbox One's launch title and you'll see just how far the racer has come in the last few years.

> "Puddles can throw you off your line, force wheels to lose traction and just generally mess up your race"

claustrophobic in a way, but ultimately a very rewarding feeling once you've come out the other end in the lead.

Then, the rain. We laughed – we really did – when Turn 10 spent so much time talking up the benefits of puddles in its pre-release *Forza 6* presentations. But we hold up our hands and accept the team was right to push this to the top of the features list: rain in *Forza 6* is a revelation. Not only does it have a serious impact on acceleration, braking and handling of the vehicles, requiring a modified strategy to take on those wet races, but it has puddles. Oh, the puddles. Crafted with realistic track placement and physics properties, these wet bastards are capable of throwing you off your line, forcing one or more wheels to lose traction, slowing you down a jot and just generally messing up your (race) day. You have to seriously take these splashy pools into account when racing in the wet, and it adds a dimension to *Forza 6* that we've never seen before in the series – or in any other driving game, for that matter. Puddles, eh? Who expected that?

Elsewhere in *Forza Motorsport 6* you'll see the usual array of features: single races; online modes to battle your friends, enemies and randoms in; the ability to test drive the game's vehicles for a laugh; livery and under-the-hood customisation to make each car truly your own. It's what you'd expect and it's all great, but there's more too: leagues offer you the chance to play through set, timed community events against anyone else who signs up. Once the time period is up, a winner is declared and prizes are doled out. Rivals allows you to take on time trials under different circumstances, related to players of similar skill levels and friends – take on Laguna Seca in a set car with set specs, for example.

Then there are the showcase events, unlocked as you play through career mode. There are ten categories and dozens of races within, each pitting you against a certain challenge – beat *Top Gear*'s Stig in a one-on-one race, tackle super-long endurance races, or live through the 'moments in motorsport' – the birth of grand prix racing, maybe, or a chance to mess about in vintage experimental prototypes. While you are required to play through Stories of Motorsport to unlock these showcases, they're well worth it: exciting, focused

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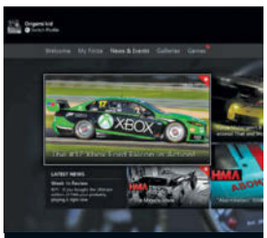
Forza 6 has a DLC plan in place you'll probably recognise



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A bundle of the monthly car bundles: 42 extra vehicles.
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FORZA HUB
The companion app that rewards you for playing more *Forza*.
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TOTAL PRICE £34.98



⊗ Night-time races often lead to claustrophobic, tunnel-vision sections guided just by your car's lights.







Races tend to be between vehicles in the same class, so you can't bring a Bugatti to a Transit Van meetup.



Forzavista mode allows you to explore the inside of every car in detail. You won't have time to look while you're racing, obviously.





and a great companion to the broader, less-themed career mode.

Forza 6 also introduces prize spins and 'mod' cards, and we can already hear you groaning. But don't worry: there are no microtransactions in this game, even though both of these features look perfect for gouging more money out of players. Instead, prize spins are offered every time you level up or complete a class in career mode, and the prizes offered are... well, pretty damn good. It's a bit cheeky to win a million credits when you hit level three, but at the same time it's nice not to have to pay 69p for it. Mods are also easy to unlock, but they're a bit out of place here – cards that modify performance and rules for bonuses (plus 9% grip, maybe) and 'dares' (e.g. play with simulation damage for a 10% boost to earned credits). They work, and you don't have to fork out real money for them... but they don't fit.

It's not a dealbreaker, mind. In fact, *Forza Motorsport 6* encounters zero dealbreakers. There are irritations – the game's off-putting attitude, the weird inclusion of mods, the speed at which your career goes from nothing to supercars – but there's nothing that stops us from recommending the game to every Xbox One owner. Unless you really, truly, pathologically hate cars – in which case, you might want to steer clear. Everyone else: go wild.

IAN DRANSFIELD

VERDICT

There are some foibles – notably the general attitude of the game – but there's absolutely no denying *Forza Motorsport 6* is a brilliant, deep, rewarding racing game.

9

X-ONE scored **9** for Forza Motorsport 6

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



MAD MAX

www.madmaxgame.com /MadMaxGame @MadMaxGame

Less mad, more slightly miffed

GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Warner Bros

DEVELOPER
Avalanche Studios

GAME TYPE
Wasteland survival action

PLAYERS
1

DLC
TBC

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Maximum Air (10G)

IN BRIEF

After a group of marauders led by Scabrous Scrotus steal Max's V8 Interceptor, Max meets Chumbucket, a mechanic who promises to build him a new car so he can reach the mythical Plains Of Silence.

Your V8 engine roars as you approach the top of the dune. You've got half a tank of gas, spikes all over your roof and a bumper that could clear the M25 at rush hour – you're feeling pretty powerful. As you crest the hill, you hear more engines in the distance, and spot a convoy. You kick on your nitrous, and slam into the side of the first car, exploding it into pieces. The second tries to take you out, but you fire a grappling hook at the driver and pull him from his seat, then detonate the fuel tank on its rear with a well-placed shotgun shell. Precious scrap flies everywhere, and as your adrenaline pumps... you realise you've got to get out of your car and run about like a lemon picking it all up. Oh, *great*...

This pretty much sums up the *Mad Max* experience. Most of the game will be spent in the Magnus Opus, your new murderous motor that can be upgraded with terrifying weapons and brutal defences. These are without a doubt the highlight, and thanks to the variety of car combat techniques, it constantly feels fresh and exciting. Whether you're pulling wheels from enemy vehicles, ripping down sniper towers, or boosting headlong into an oncoming convoy, these moments capture the vehicular magic of the *Mad Max* movies.

Unfortunately, though, your feet aren't only used for pushing pedals, and when you leave the Magnus Opus, things start going downhill. The camera causes problems, hampering your movement by showing lovely close-ups of walls that Max is running into, or failing to show an incoming punch. Okay, Avalanche, we get that your textures look lovely, but we didn't want to admire them *this* closely...

> "We lost count of the times we just stopped while driving just to admire the sunset"

This is most obvious when running through the tight corridors that make up a fair bit of the game's on-foot sections. As the area narrows, the camera pulls in close to Max, making it hard to navigate through the tight spaces. Combined with the fact that you have to hold the A button – not just press it – to do anything, grabbing scrap, picking up fuel cans, and climbing ladders can be infuriating.

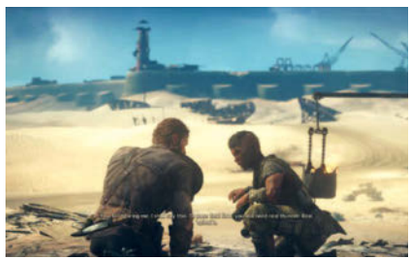
Thankfully, combat does a little to soothe this anguish, although it isn't faultless either. *Mad Max* borrows the tried-and-tested 'X to punch, Y to block' system used so brilliantly in the *Batman: Arkham* series, but without all of the Dark Knight's gadgets, it falls a little flatter. Max's punches are satisfying brutal, and when he enters Fury mode things only get more intense, but it's just slightly less smooth than in *Arkham Knight*.

Still, *Mad Max* is still fairly compelling. You may not get the same feeling of insanity from the characters as you did in the movies, but the design team has done a brilliant job of making them fit into the wider *Mad Max* universe. In fact, the whole game feels extremely faithful to the franchise; the wasteland is packed with things to do, and is absolutely beautiful. We lost count of the times we stopped while driving to admire the sunset or look out over the plains. It's tough to make a desert interesting, but Avalanche has pulled it off.

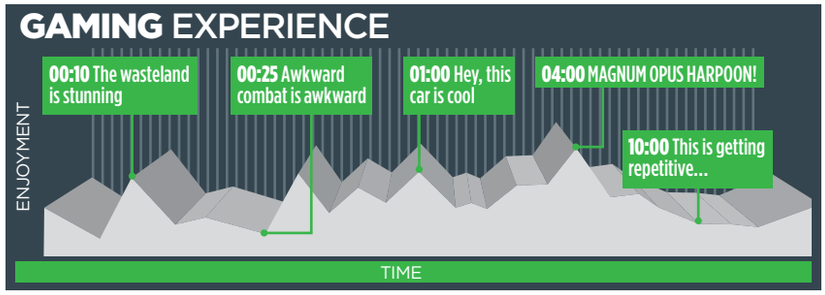
That's not to say every mission will interest you, though. The story will probably draw you in, but *Mad Max* suffers from what we've come to refer to as '*Assassin's Creed Unity*-ism'. The map quickly becomes completely packed with objective markers; yes, there's a lot to do, but it feels more like a checklist. When you reach a base, exploration is fun, and the fights can be challenging, but if you want to 100% the base you'll have to find every piece of scrap, every destructible insignia, every relic... the map doesn't show *these* in detail, meaning you'll end up running around for five minutes like someone who desperately needs to drop a deuce but can't find a toilet. Eventually you'll just give up, Google it, and jump back into your awesome car, rather than running around like a lost idiot.

It's not all bad, though – the game does do some other things as well as its car combat. Small details are key to the immersion, and they are everywhere. Jump from a high place and Max may not lose health, but he will limp for a bit as his ankles recover. And the dog food that Max finds around the wasteland is the same brand that Mel Gibson snacked on in the movies. It's little touches like this that could've made it a classic, but unfortunately the repetitive missions and frustrating on-foot sections constantly stall the fun you're having bombing around in your souped-up Magnum Opus, tearing doors from enemy vehicles as they engage you in a frantic chase.

STEPHEN ASHBY







VERDICT

The beautiful wasteland is incredible to drive around, but leave the Magnum Opus and the excitement dips. This is *nearly* excellent, but instead is frustrating.

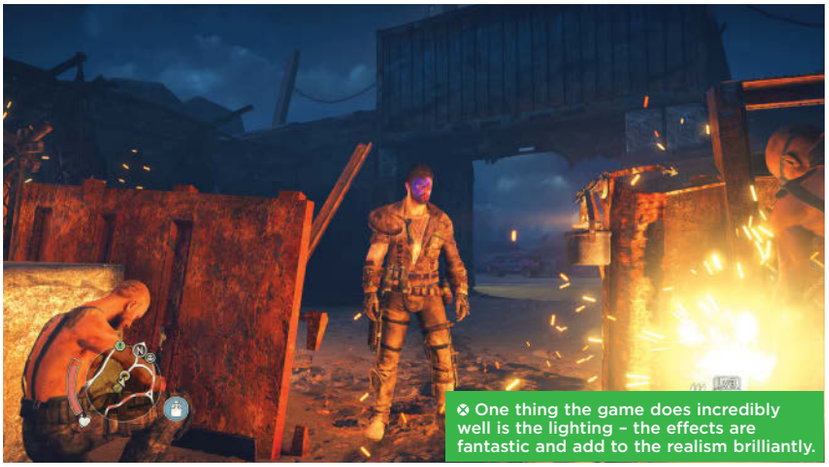


X-ONE scored **7** for Mad Max

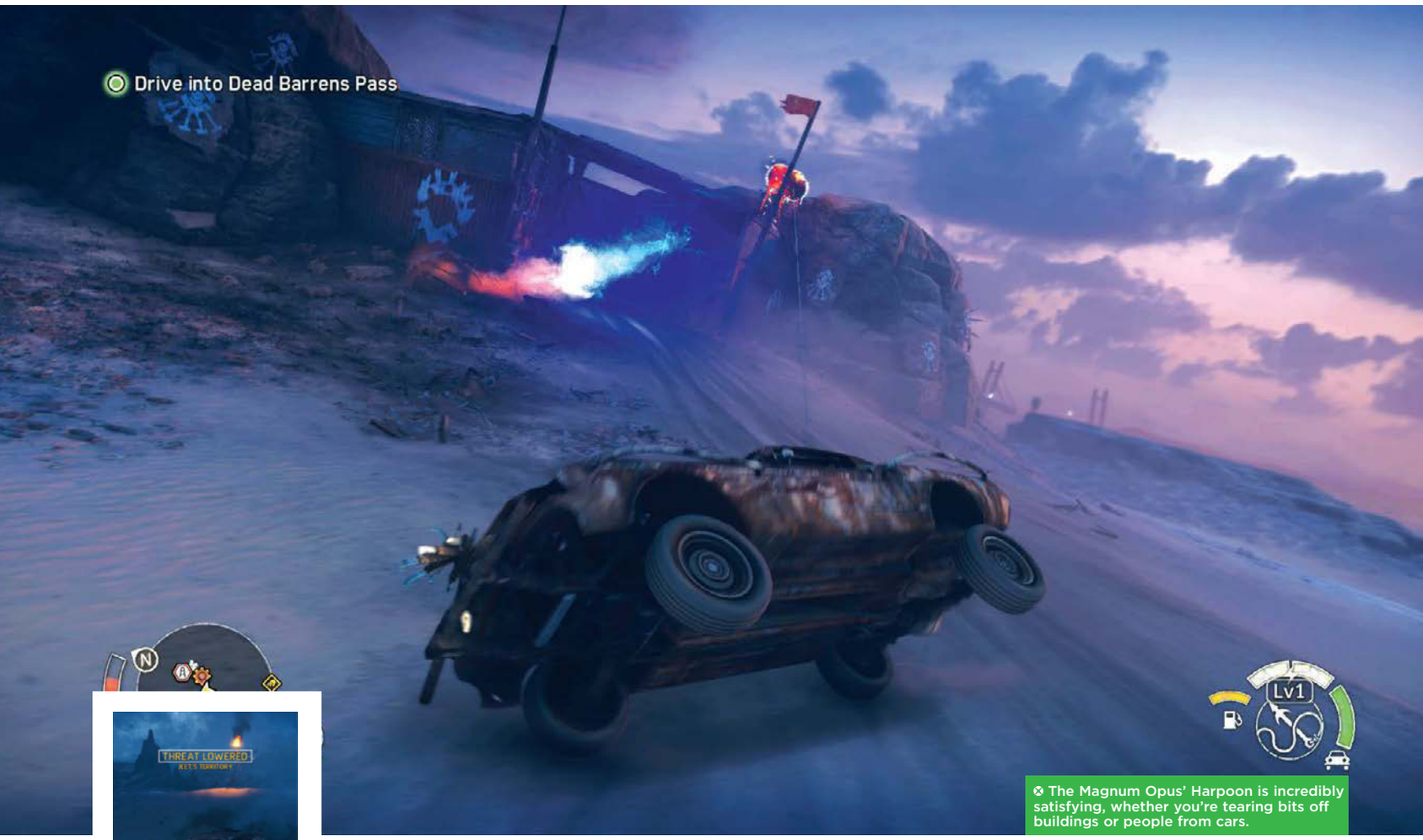
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE



Water will restore your health, but its tough to find, so filling your canteen whenever you can is essential.



One thing the game does incredibly well is the lighting – the effects are fantastic and add to the realism brilliantly.



The Magnum Opus' Harpoon is incredibly satisfying, whether you're tearing bits off buildings or people from cars.

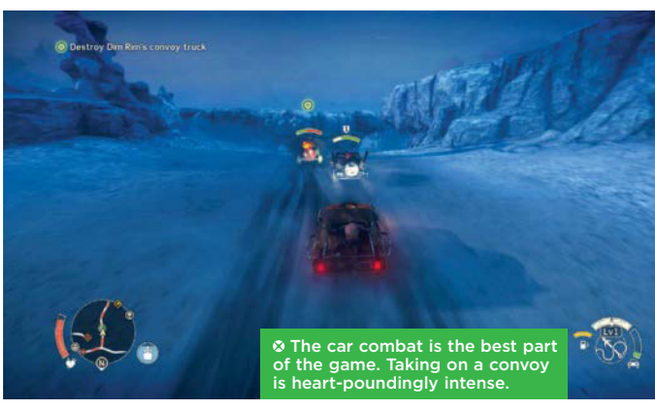
TRENDING

#MAGNUM AWESOME

The vehicular combat is brilliant, and the Magnum Opus should instantly be added to the videogames hall of car fame.

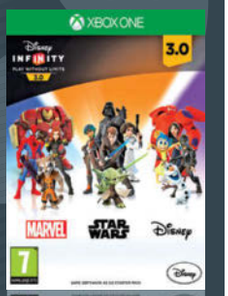


Hand-to-hand combat suffers from controls that just make fights feel less fluid than games like *Batman*.



The car combat is the best part of the game. Taking on a convoy is heart-poundingly intense.

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Disney Interactive Studios

DEVELOPER
Avalanche Software, Ninja Theory, Studio Gobo, Sumo Digital, United Front Games

GAME TYPE
Creation Builder

PLAYERS
1-2

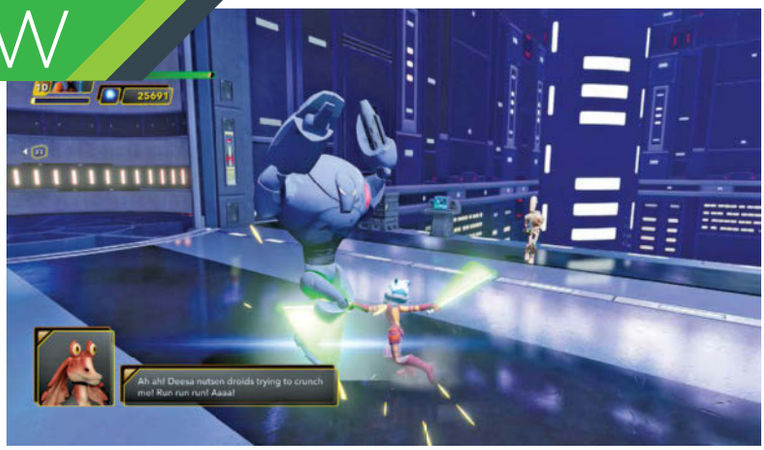
DLC
Toy Box Takeover (Dizzy does Diablo) Toy Box Racing (Disney does Mario Kart)

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Toy Store Buyout (100G)

IN BRIEF

The *Disney Infinity* juggernaut returns and now it's fuelled by the Force. Watch grown adults and kids crumble as the *Star Wars* setting takes the franchise to new highs.





⊗ Combat is excellent in 3.0, with Ninja Theory creating a solid base that offers plenty of flexibility.



⊗ Sidekicks finally have a purpose, helping you out during play. You can still chuck them around though.

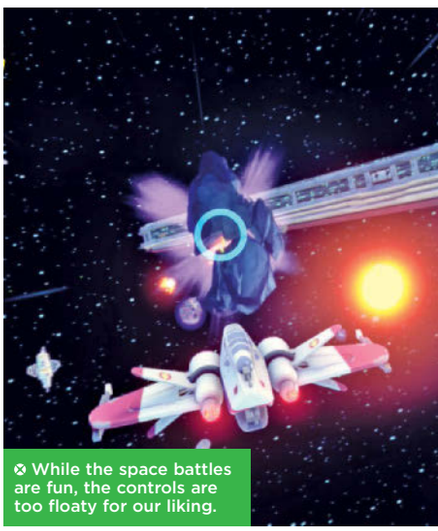




TRENDING

#WHERE'S BOBA FETT?

■ **Xbox owners aren't going to be happy about having to wait several months for the release of the coolest character in the *Star Wars* universe.**



⊗ While the space battles are fun, the controls are too floaty for our liking.







DISNEY INFINITY 3.0

www.infinity.disney.com/en-gb /DisneyInfinity @DisneyInfinity

Sorry, there's no bad Star Wars pun for you

If you wanted to buy every figure in the *Disney Infinity* series you'd have little to no change from £1000. It's an astonishing figure, and highlights just how clever the marketing bods behind the series are. You could make the argument that it's a cynical cash grab designed to empty parents' wallets and plug the latest Disney movies... and in a way you'd be right.

But you'd also be a little bit wrong, for while *Disney Infinity 3.0* is obviously designed to make you part with obscene amounts of cash — you're not playing as the Fett any time soon unless you own a PS4 or are prepared to pay three times his going rate — it also realises that customers don't like it when you take the piss. It's most obvious with the way it's actually possible to purchase *Disney Infinity 3.0*, allowing you to simply buy individual parts if you already own an earlier base set. Yes the core package (which is what we're reviewing here) is available, but so are other, cheaper options. *Disney Infinity 3.0* is flexible, it's parent friendly and it's welcoming to see.

Also welcoming is the fact that this is arguably the most robust offering from the series to date. Everything about it feels fuller, more complete than previous iterations. Take the base playset, *Twilight Of The Republic*, for example. It's still only going to take four to five hours to complete the story, but some actual thought and effort has gone into crafting it this time around and it's genuinely engaging, with your characters bouncing around five different planets in an attempt to restore peace to the galaxy. The gameplay has been beefed up too. Combat is far more structured than before with lots of cool combos to unlock and the ability to use blasters alongside lightsabers. So complex are the skill trees now that very young games might find them a little too intimidating, while everyone else will be pleased at the extra depth that combat now offers for figures new and old. Missions are also better than past games, with far more variety and lots of side missions to rinse once the main story has ended. The need to own certain figures to get every final star is a little naughty, but there's still plenty to do without forking out on additional toys.

> "Disney Infinity 3.0 is flexible, it's parent-friendly, and it's welcoming"

Once you've had fun with the story you can jump into the Toy Box and play around to your heart's content. It's extremely similar to previous iterations but the building tools are far more efficient and flexible this time around, making it easier to build your own creations. It will take a while to get to grips with some of the more complex aspects of the Toy Box, and it still feels occasionally unwieldy, but it's astonishing what's possible when you apply a little effort. Like many creation games, *Disney Infinity 3.0* rewards those who put the effort in, but if you're lazy like us, you can simply scour the online sections of the hub (typically the Disney Infinity Theatre) to find the works of others. They range from the banal to the brilliant, but they're all there for the taking and it's easy to see how they're constructed, giving you ideas for your own efforts down the line.

Multiplayer games exist online via Flynn's Arcade and offer everything from spins on paintball to basketball, while large numbers of mini-games are used to explain the game mechanics. Every aspect of *Disney Infinity 3.0* is explained to you via a clever game. Destroying TIE Fighters helps you with turret games, a tumble around an obstacle course built by Phineas and Ferb explains platform creation, while a search for R2D2 clues you into the use of landscape editing. It not only extends the life of the Toy Box but actively encourages you to get involved, and it's a pleasure to see.

Sidekicks have also been greatly boosted. Once upon a time they were simply used to talk to and gain information from. Now you can get them to fight alongside you, equipping them with hats and weapons and feeding them food to enhance their abilities. You can even get them to grow their own food so you can go off and have fun while they stay back and farm. It's a great new addition to the game and further expands a Toy Box that's already bursting to the seams.

However, all this content does come with compromises. Loading times are still cripplingly slow, while we noticed quite a few odd sound and graphic issues that suggested the game was struggling at times. They're annoying to be sure, but they also can't hide the fact that this is the most complete and comprehensive game to bear the *Disney Infinity* name. We've no idea what Disney has in store for next year's inevitable update, but it's going to have to be pretty special to topple this one.

DARRAN JONES





VERDICT

An excellent playset, alongside a comprehensive and easy to use Toy Box makes this an essential purchase and proof that Disney really wants to beat the competition.

8

X-ONE scored **8** for Disney Infinity 3.0

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Hi-Rez Studios

DEVELOPER
In-house

GAME TYPE
Third-person MOBA

PLAYERS
1-10

DLC
New Gods, skins and voice packs

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

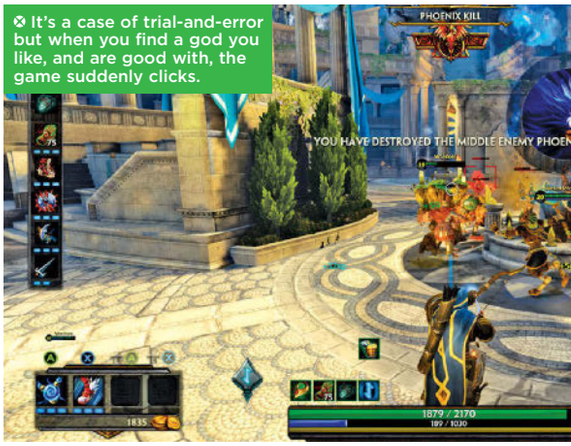
NEED TO UNLOCK
Penta Kill (40G)

IN BRIEF

Gods from across a range of mythologies – from the Viking god of thunder to the Chinese saint of war – duke it out in a fully-fledged 'proper' MOBA experience from a third-person viewpoint.



⊗ Some gods are easier to use than others, especially when first starting out. Check out the god list for their individual ratings.



⊗ It's a case of trial-and-error but when you find a god you like, and are good with, the game suddenly clicks.



⊗ The jungle monsters are significant game-changers, but it's easy to overlook that when you're still learning.



⊗ It might sound tedious that games can last so long, but it makes victory feel all the more rewarding.



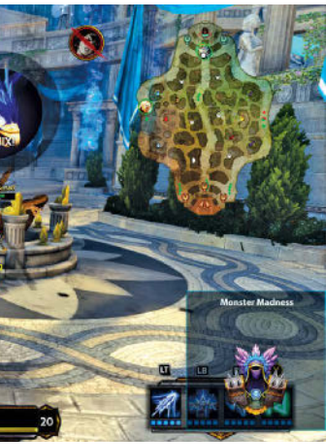
TRENDING

#MYFIRSTPENTAKILL

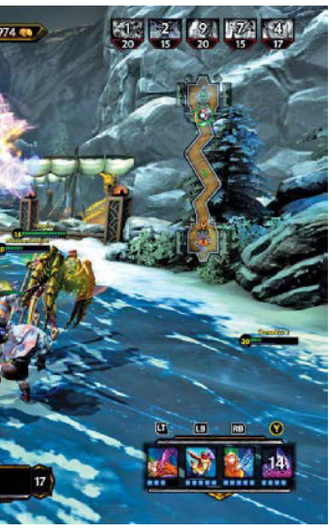
■ It's safe to assume that you'll be so thrilled by your first pentakill that the first thing you say is 'Xbox Record That'.



⊗ Consider Assault (random gods, single lane) or Arena (5v5 deathmatch) if you want to learn the basic controls and gameplay.







SMITE

www.smitegame.com /smitegame @smitegame

Thor 'eck, this is different

Let's be open-minded, eh? A cursory glance at the details would make it easy to dismiss Smite early on: it's a MOBA (whatever that is, right?), it's free-to-play (ugh... microtransactions) and a standard match lasts around 45 minutes (how long?!). And that's before you realise you haven't the foggiest about how to actually play the damn thing. But to overlook *Smite* would be something of a disservice to yourself, and if you're a fan of multiplayer gaming – especially those with a little more thought than a typical *Call Of Duty* match – then you might want to check this one out. But you *will* need to be open-minded, because *Smite* – like so many MOBAs on PC – fails to explain so many core elements that it might be a little overwhelming to console players still unfamiliar with the genre.

Sure, there's a tutorial that teaches you the very basic stuff – kill things for gold, search the jungle zone for powerful-yet-timed buffs and don't run headfirst into a tower's attack range – but it doesn't explain the important elements that run beneath all that, the parts that are arguably crucial to the genre's popularity. Why does a character's class matter, you might wonder, and how do I know what lane to fight in? What the hell is the Carry role? Why on earth do I have to buy items? It's all quite confusing, but due to the ever-evolving nature of the game – MOBAs as a genre tend to shift over the course of months as balancing, new items and additional characters change the state of the game – it's understandable why the tutorials don't really touch on these factors. And in truth *Smite* does include a number of novel features that will help ease newcomers into the fold; auto-level and auto-items in particular help remove some of the additional burdens to help you focus on learning how to play. The third-person viewpoint, too, makes it easier for a console crowd to adjust to the atypical gameplay.

> "How do I know what lane to fight in? What the hell is the Carry role? Why on earth do I have to buy items?"

The considerable number of modes helps, too. While Conquest is the 'core' MOBA experience – this is the one where a match can easily take around 45 minutes to complete – there's also 'Arena', 'Assault', 'Joust' and 'Siege', each of which offer alternatives to the baseline gameplay that are quicker than a standard game and offer better opportunities to practise. This is important, because with a (current) roster of over 60 gods to play as – all of which have unique visual designs, abilities and playstyles – there need to be such options available to learn the intricacies before heading into the more competitive, longer games of Conquest. It's in this vast range of playable characters that MOBAs – and by extension, *Smite* – really begin to appeal, however. In the same way that you'll have your preferred character in your favourite fighting game, *Smite*'s eclectic range of deities means there's always going to be someone for all tastes to play as. It offers up that same iterative improvement that fighting games always offer, and with only four abilities per character the barrier to entry is arguably much lower than even the simplest of beat-'em-ups.

In fact, as far as MOBAs go, *Smite* is probably the most successful attempt at porting the genre wholesale over from PC so far. Nothing has been sacrificed in bringing the game over to Xbox One, and it's the first great example of how well MOBAs can work with a controller. Admittedly there will be some teething problems for complete newbs – ranged attacks, for instance, have a short, finite range that won't appeal to a *Gears Of War* crowd – but with experience you'll find the only restriction to your success will be your own skill. Pro tip, though: switch to the Savage control scheme.

You won't even need to worry about the free-to-play monetisation, either: for a one-off fee of £20.99 you'll automatically unlock every single god ever released, including any others that are released in the future. And if you don't want to pay? Well no problem, a rotation of freely available gods occurs weekly, meaning there's always going to be someone for you to try out. You'll even earn points as you play, allowing you to permanently unlock and access your favourite god, and maybe even buy a skin to show everyone who your 'main' is.

No one can deny that MOBA beginners will have a lot to learn when it comes to *Smite*, but with the cost to try it out being absolutely zero it's definitely one worth giving a shot. It'll offer a totally new form of multiplayer that you might end up adoring, and – just like a fighting game – that sensation of really 'getting' a character makes it all the more rewarding to spend the time to improve. As a 'MOBA on console', *Smite* is an unfettered success; as a new multiplayer experience, *Smite* is definitely one to try.

ADAM BARNES





VERDICT

There's a lot of learning involved to make the most of *Smite* – and not enough done to introduce the more complicated elements – but as a competitive multiplayer game this is a game you really ought to try.



X-ONE scored **8** for Smite

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Microsoft Studios

DEVELOPER
The Coalition

GAME TYPE
Cover shooter, obviously

PLAYERS
1-8

DLC
The original's PC-only missions are integrated within the story

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Hard

NEED TO UNLOCK
Whack-A-Grub (10G)

IN BRIEF

Delta Squad, lead by Marcus Fenix, attempts to end a war by dropping a giant bomb into the nest of angry aliens. Sadly for the squad, it turns out to be even harder than it sounds.



Enemies still explode into gory pieces – it's oddly pleasing to remove a head with a Boltok pistol.





The Coalition reshot every motion capture sequence for the remaster, and it really shows in *Ultimate Edition*.





TRENDING

#WHEREISDOM?

Far too often your squad mates will sit behind cover doing nothing, or sprint straight at a boss and instantly die. Great work, guys!



The lighting effects are constantly impressive, whether it's the sun on the pavement or the reflection from a muzzle flash.



GEARS OF WAR ULTIMATE EDITION

www.gearsofwar.com /gearsofwar @gearsofwar

Kerb-stompingly good fun



Do you remember that moment on Xbox 360 when you saw the opening level of *Gears Of War* for the first time? You know, the slack-jawed wonder you felt when the camera zoomed out to show the level before you? Never had a console produced graphics like that; it was an incredible moment.

Thankfully, the game had the gameplay to back up those amazing looks, and it went on to become of the most well-loved franchise of the last generation. Now, with *Gears 4* on the horizon, Microsoft is dipping its toe back into the waters of the HD remaster pool to bring us the original in all its 1080p glory. And good lord, is it glorious.

It's obvious from the first moment to the final cutscene that The Coalition has spent an outrageous amount of time remastering the original game for this *Ultimate Edition*. The level of polish on show is fantastic – every asset has been reskinned, every cutscene has been reshot using motion-capture technology, and every level feels familiar, but still has the graphical punch to make you 'Ooh' and 'Ahh' like you did nine years ago. Most impressive, aside from the refreshed animations, are the lighting effects, which do a wonderful job of making every area feel as close to real as is possible when you're a bloke the size of a house carrying a chainsaw/gun combo. In the cavernous mines, the glowing Imulsion makes the dank rock glint and shine, while lamps reflect off your Lancer as you fire indiscriminately at enemies. More than once we stopped and just took stock of our surroundings. It might not have quite the same impact as when it first came out back in 2006, but it wasn't far off.





> "Your mission is simple: kill the aliens, and have fun doing it. And, for the most part, you do"

Aside from the refreshed visuals, though, little has changed. We were a little concerned about this going into it – game mechanics have come an awfully long way in the last nine years, of course – but we were pleasantly surprised by just how well the game has aged. Sure, the crappy bits are still there (we're looking at you, 'Press A repeatedly to turn the valve' moments), but the gunplay is still *massively* fun. You know what? We have really missed active reload. The mechanic which lets you get extra damage from bullet with a perfectly-timed reload still makes us feel like a hero every time we pull it off at a crucial moment of a boss fight, and curse like a sailor when we miss it by a split-second.

Plus, while the arsenal in the first game was never as diverse as that of, say, *Call Of Duty*, the weapons on offer are creative and all offer distinct advantages in single-player – picking your perfect loadout as you play still feels great. Plus, there are few greater joys in gaming than exploding an alien's head with a sniper rifle blast as it attempts to gut one of your squad mates.

But it's not all happy news. For a start, the AI is an absolute shambles; far too often, Dom will run in circles in a tiny room while you power ahead and take down every enemy. Instruct him to regroup on you with the quick command tool and you'll get a "Negative!" in reply. What's stopping you, Dom? Have I distracted you from your busy schedule of circle-running? Did you have plans for today other than shoot the shit out of the aliens that have invaded our planet? *So* sorry, please forgive my rudeness.

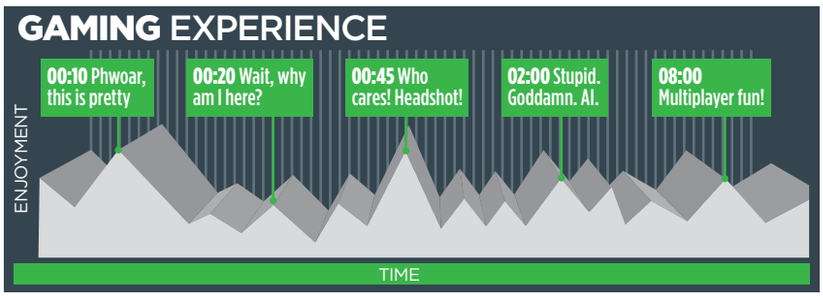
The plot is also full of holes. Best not ask why destroying an electrical station with a giant monster fixes the electrics in a mine, or why the invisible robot Jack isn't mentioned until a few hours into the game when you suddenly need him to open a door. Got a question about where the Locust came from? Save it for *Gears 2*; here the only thing we care about is mowing them down.

Extra levels have also been added to Act V of the single-player campaign, fleshing out a section that sees you fighting a giant Brumak. It's a fairly lacklustre boss fight, and doesn't really add that much to the story, but it's good to see the extra content finally on an Xbox console. Though, to be fair, the lack of story isn't necessarily a bad thing, as the lack of exposition saves you from confusion. Your mission is simple: kill the aliens, and have fun doing it. And, for the most part, you do.

The fun continues into the multiplayer, which adds a couple of extra modes and maps that console gamers didn't get to enjoy the first time round. Sadly, little has been done to balance the game, meaning shotguns are without a doubt the key to success. Still, grab a few mates and dive into a game of King Of The Hill and you're bound to have a laugh, just like you would have done in 2006.

And that's kind of the point. This is the same game you played back then, with the same flaws and the same moments of excellence. But for a game to hold up so well nine years on is quite a feat.

STEPHEN ASHBY



VERDICT

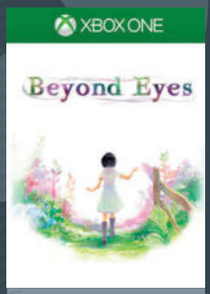
It loses a little of the original game's wow factor, and suffers from shocking AI, but the cover-based gunplay remains best-in-class, and it really is so goddamn pretty.

8

X-ONE scored **8** for Gears Of War: Ultimate Edition

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Team17

DEVELOPER
Tiger and Squid

GAME TYPE
Short children's story

PLAYERS
1

DLC
N/A

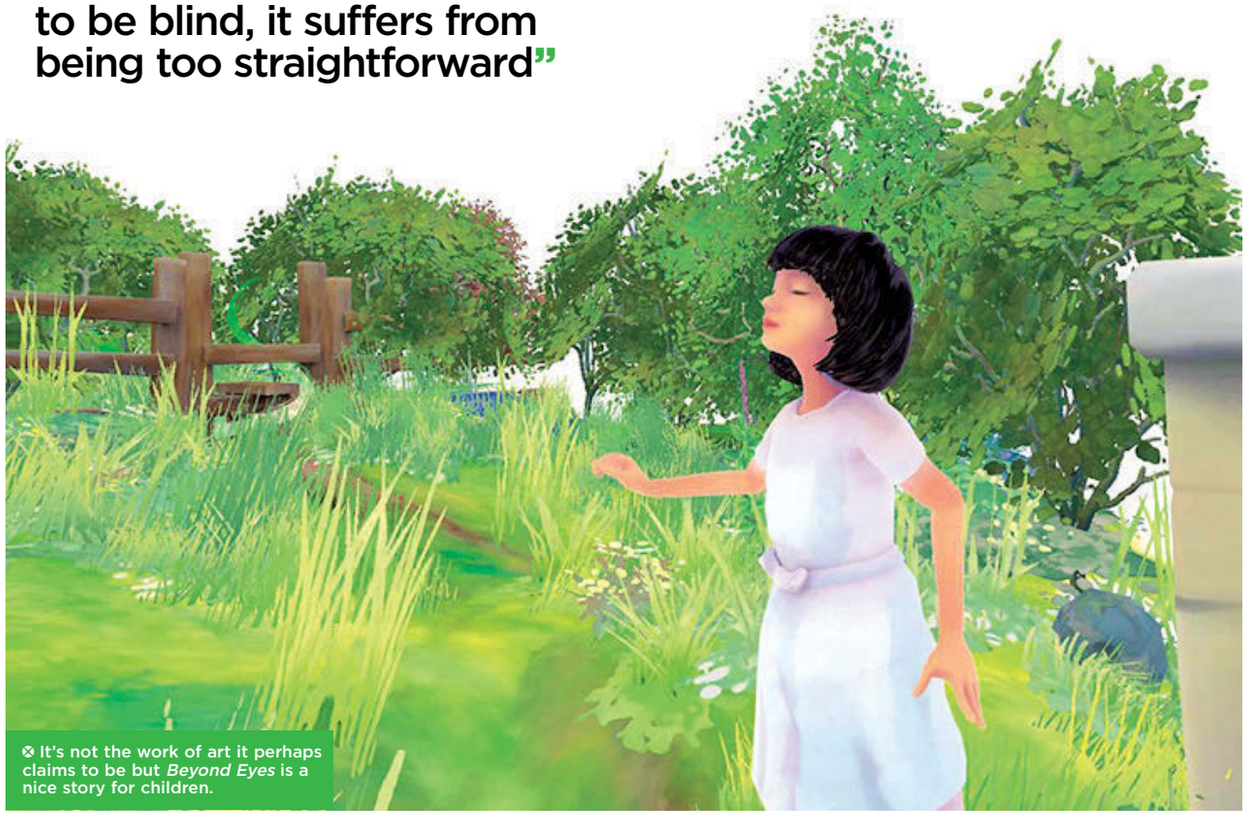
ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Bravery (60G)

IN BRIEF

Playing as Rae, a young girl who has lost her sight, you must use sound and touch to navigate the world around you and find your missing best friend, a cat called Nani.

"If Beyond Eyes is supposed to communicate what it's like to be blind, it suffers from being too straightforward"



It's not the work of art it perhaps claims to be but *Beyond Eyes* is a nice story for children.

BEYOND EYES

www.beyondeyes-game.com /tigerandsquid @BeyondEyes_

Seeing isn't always believing

The fundamental problem of Beyond Eyes is that it lets you see anything, at all. Playing as Rae, a young girl who has lost the use of her eyes, the idea is that you use sound and instinct to find your way around. But ultimately you explore the game the same way you'd explore any other, searching for paths, looking for visual clues and trekking back and forth until you find the right door. The world around you is supposed to be a representation of what Rae imagines using her hearing, but it's almost always completely accurate.

Though it's only revealed, slowly, as you walk along, you rarely get lost – rarely rely on noises to guide you. There are some instances where what you see isn't precisely what's there – an aggressive-sounding dog, for instance, turns out to be a lovable Collie – but they're small and occasional, and you ultimately finish *Beyond Eyes* without much impediment.

If *Beyond Eyes* is supposed to communicate what it's like to be blind, it suffers, essentially, from being too straightforward. Blindness can be an enormous challenge. *Beyond Eyes*, by contrast, is a simple, breezy game that you can stroll through in an hour or two. And it relies so much on visual design. The idyllic, watercolour aesthetic is appealing to the eye, and you're constantly encouraged to admire the scenery around you. That's in stark contrast to the subject matter. For a game that's apparently about absence of sight to be so fixated on lustre and style feels like missing the point.

There isn't enough struggle in *Beyond Eyes*. The story, wherein Rae is searching for her lost cat, seems less concerned by the realities and hardships of blindness and more interested in simple, minor sentimentality. As the gaming equivalent of a short story-book for children, *Beyond Eyes* is just fine. It's pleasant, harmless and picturesque enough. But as a sincere look at serious subject matter – as an example of the gaming industry's supposedly cutting edge indie scene – it feels weak. You walk along, you have some small interactions, there's the occasional sting of inoffensive music. But Beyond Eyes never engages with the rigours of blindness or disability, and it feels as if those topics have been used without much thought or research so as to lend the game artificial gravitas.

ED SMITH

VERDICT

An inoffensive and perfectly nice little children's story that ultimately struggles to engage with the serious subject matter that it purports. Picturesque and sweet, but largely empty.



X-ONE scored **5** for Beyond Eyes

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Uppercut Games

DEVELOPER
In-house

GAME TYPE
Rowing/ climbing exploration

PLAYERS
1

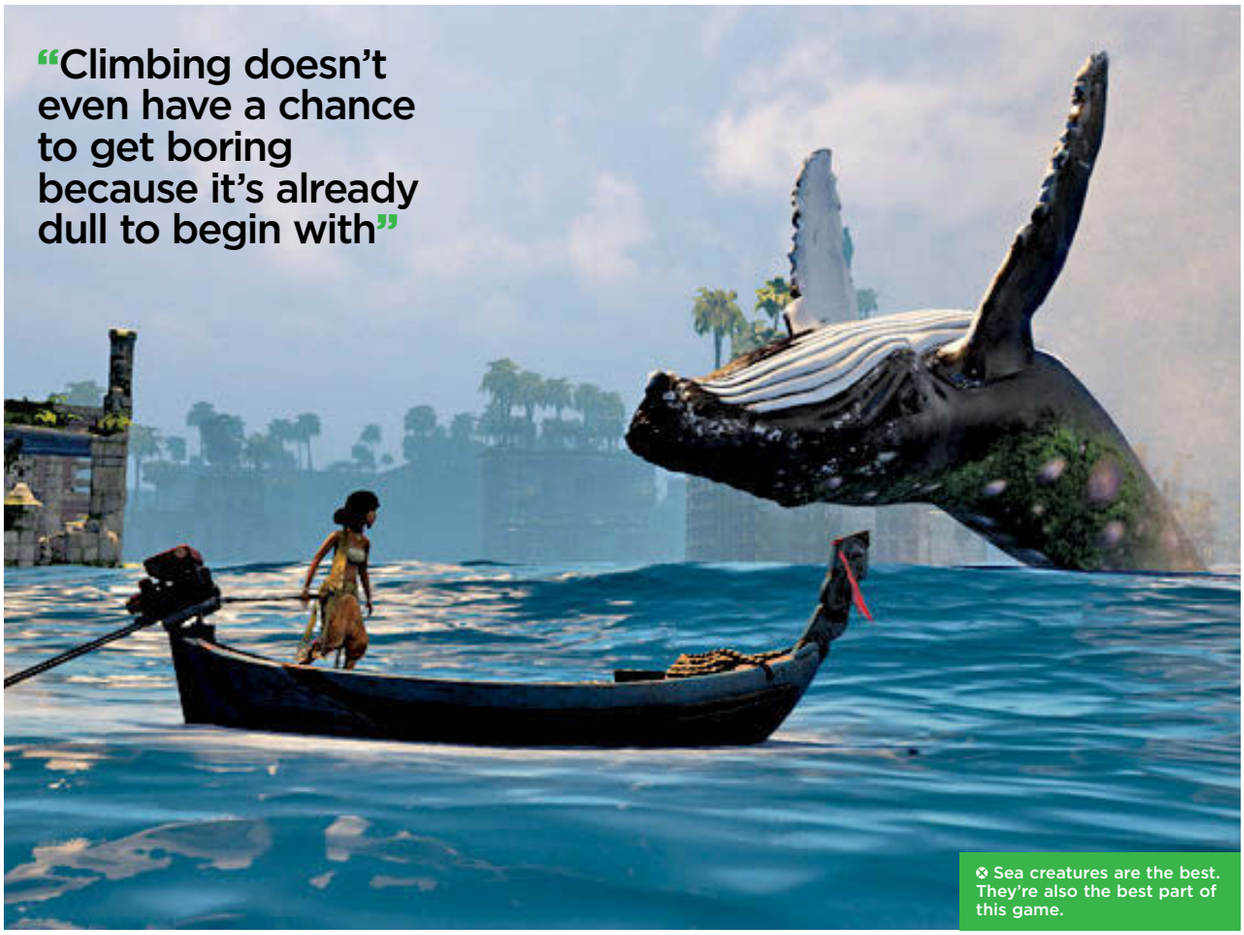
DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Mariner (100G)

IN BRIEF

A young girl called Miku has brought her injured younger brother Taku on a fishing boat to a flooded city to look for supplies, found at the tops of buildings, to save his life.



Sea creatures are the best. They're also the best part of this game.

SUBMERGED

www.uppercut-games.com/submerged /uppercutgames @UppercutGames

Pretty but shallow

The intro to *Submerged* seems to promise so much. A piano plays, the drowned city tugs at the imagination, and the focus on two children hints at an emotional tale. Then you get your instructions and realise this is a gamey game after all, and *Submerged* continues to disappoint from that point on.

Your job, as Miku, is to find ten crates of supplies and bring their contents back to the injured Taku. Each crate rests on a different semi-submerged building, and Miku must boat to each and climb up the outside to get to it. She can tackle the buildings in any order but each crate always contains what she was looking for. Speeding along in the motorboat is the best part, as it bounces over the waves and cuts through the gaps between buildings. The murky water is populated with mottled creatures. You collect cards for spotting them (as well as landmarks) but you'll want to watch them anyway.

Unfortunately, you spend most of your time climbing, which doesn't even have a chance to get boring because it's already dull to begin with. Paths around and up the building are made up of platforms, ledges, ladders, pipes, and vines. They're clearly marked and pretty linear, albeit with short offshoots that lead to "secrets", each one of 60 pictures that together tell the story of the city. Sometimes the camera switches to frame the climbing in a more interesting way, but it's still slow, repetitive, and – since she can't fall – totally unchallenging.

When you get to the crate, the game cuts to Miku's return to her brother's side, which removes the need to climb back down but does mean you'll have to go back if you've missed a secret and care about them. You're rewarded with pictures that tell the children's story, which gets vaguely interesting and then peters out, and a short cutscene in which Miku will look at her clearly suffering brother and then go to sleep. Small changes through these tell another story, but over the couple of hours it takes to collect all ten crates not much happens, and the ending fails to have much of an impact.

You can return without Taku to comb the map and collect the remaining secrets, but the resulting "city's story" is not worth it. This process of collecting diagrams seemed like it would serve an interesting narrative but in this game it just didn't. Both that and the drowned city setting deserve a better story to tell.

JORDAN ERICA WEBBER

VERDICT

Submerged looks ready to say something interesting but never does. The main activity, climbing, is boring, and the story collection mechanic could have been used to tell a far more interesting tale.



X-ONE scored **4** for Submerged

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Deep Silver

DEVELOPER
Revolution Software

GAME TYPE
Point-and-click adventure

PLAYERS
1

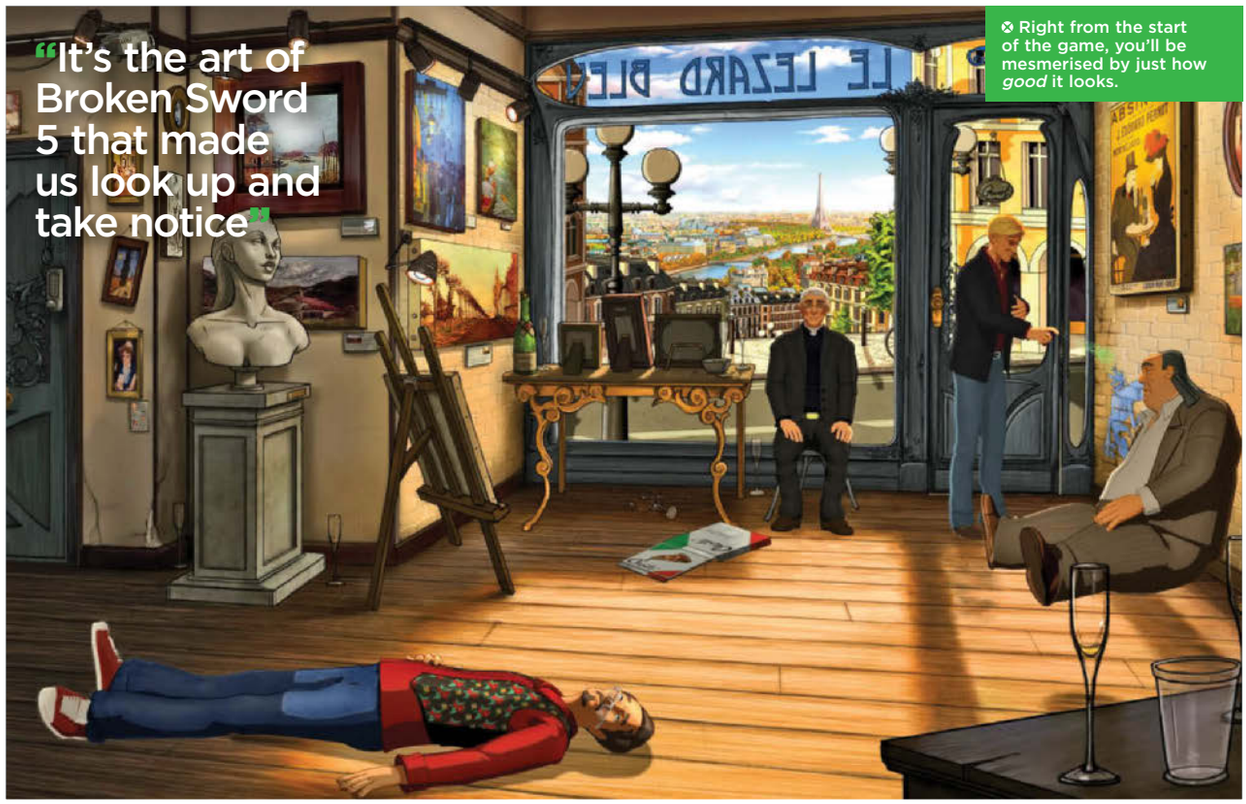
DLC
No

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Easy

NEED TO UNLOCK
Notorious P.U.G (50G)

IN BRIEF

You play as George and Nico – a pair of busybodies investigating the location of a painting seized during 1937 in a case brought to light in the modern day…



Right from the start of the game, you'll be mesmerised by just how *good* it looks.

BROKEN SWORD 5 THE SERPENT'S CURSE

www.revolution.co.uk/games/the-serpents-curse /brokenswordofficial @revbot

Oh my god, it's a mirage!

One of the biggest problems with contemporary point-and-click games is their insistence on frustrating you to the point of wanting to just give up or cheat. *Broken Sword 5* doesn't suffer from that, but instead of consistently smart puzzles or a riveting plot keeping us engaged, it's more the art style of *Broken Sword 5* that's made us look up and take notice.

That's not to say the puzzles are bad, though; there *is* some inventiveness to what the game's doing, and its own interpretation of left-field logic did have us smiling to ourselves at times. And there are definitely a *lot* of them. Still, while they can be fairly taxing on the old noggin, veterans of the genre are going to get bored with the transparent go-here do-that feeling some of the puzzles elicit.

A lot of contemporary adventures feel secure with their interfaces and puzzles, so they tend to just throw some backgrounds together and have you bumble through (we're mostly looking at shoddy iOS efforts here, to be fair). *Broken Sword* is like a total reverse of that trend: it takes *Broken Sword*'s insecurities about its age (because it *is* ancient) and replaces them with some fantastic art and amazing, lived-in environments.

The thing is, the game went overboard and overcompensated with cel-shaded 3D models over the top of the 2D backgrounds that just ended up feeling a little like marionettes. Their weird staccato animations sometimes drew attention away from the fantastic backdrops – and when the few dips in the pace of the game itself popped up, we found ourselves getting more irritated at these animations than we perhaps should have.

Those dips were few and far between, though, and for the most part, the game's plot is as intriguing and dark to any newcomer as it would be to more seasoned *Broken Sword* players. The dialogue-based puzzle bits weaved in perfectly well with plot progression, and the way certain characters were portrayed puts some triple-A writing to shame (looking at you, *Mad Max*...)

But overall, the whole thing just falls a little flat – there is some fantastic voice work in action here, rounding out some amazing script-work, but when the majority of puzzles feel more like a chore to get through than a genuinely exciting challenge, you've got a problem. We finished *Broken Sword 5* not because we particularly wanted to see the end of the story, but more because we just wanted to see all the environmental art that we could – and listen to the superb music that accompanied it.

DOM PEPPIATT

VERDICT

Broken Sword 5 has one of the best adventure game atmospheres on the Xbox One – it's just a shame about the sometimes lacklustre puzzles.



X-ONE scored **6** for
Broken Sword 5: The Serpent's Curse

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
Ubisoft

DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Montpellier

GAME TYPE
First-person survival

PLAYERS
1

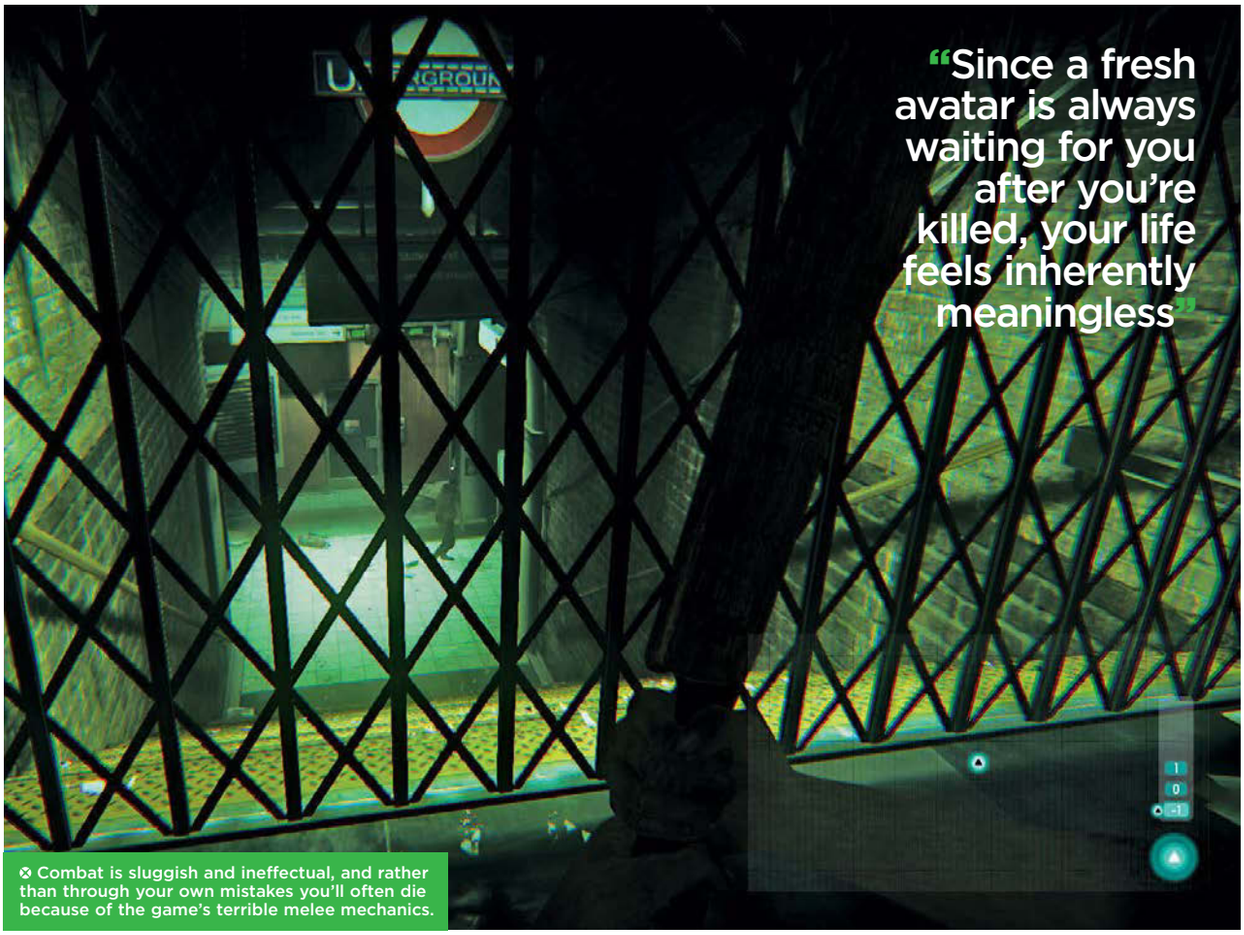
DLC
N/A

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Unbreakable (90G)

IN BRIEF

Using stealth, survival skills and a cricket bat, see how long you can survive in a zombie-overrun London. If your character gets killed, you get a brand new one and pick up where you left off.



Combat is sluggish and ineffectual, and rather than through your own mistakes you'll often die because of the game's terrible melee mechanics.

ZOMBI

www.ubisoft.com/zombi /Ubisoft @Ubisoft

"Are there any zombies out there?"

Unlike zombie games of recent years, like *Dead Rising*, *Dead Island* and *Dying Light*, which have focused on spectacle and dumb fun, *Zombi* – at least in its opening few hours – is about the crushing oppression of being alone and completely overpowered. Stopping to pry wooden barriers off a door leaves you vulnerable. Even checking your backpack to retrieve a gun or health item costs you valuable moments, which is more than enough time for one of London's many undead to get the drop on you.

Navigating the capital's dead streets is a truly unnerving experience. You look around an empty tube station, a ransacked supermarket, the corpses on the ground outside Brick Lane Market and you feel truly abandoned. Ubisoft has done its research. It's not just the constant darkness or the ticking-clock inventory system that make you scared – it's the fact these are recognisable places, now completely devoid of life.

But after a great introduction, *Zombi* starts to lose itself, devolving into a scrappy, stupid first-person action game. The plot shifts from raw survival to some nonsense about Doomsday and angels, and the key conceit – when you die, you begin from the last checkpoint as a new character – ruins the atmosphere. Since a fresh avatar is waiting for you after you're killed – there's a seemingly unending supply of randomly-generated Londoners for you to play as – your life feels inherently meaningless. Stalk, sneak and survive if you like, but you might as well rush into the zombies with a bat, take as many as you can, then return as somebody else to finish the job. Death has no penalty. You might lose the character you've been playing as for a few hours, but they're all mute and basically featureless, so it doesn't matter.

This new version of *Zombi* dispenses with the Wii U's finicky second-screen feature, permanently mapping the radar to the bottom left of your screen, and that's a relief. But still, it's a clumsy game, a lot of disparate ideas colliding together. You're encouraged to take monsters out quietly but the melee weapons are terrible. You're supposed to be under pressure and trying to survive, but if you die you just get a brand new body. And what on the surface seems like a grounded, bleak horror story eventually involves ancient prophecies, and sees you fighting a teleporting zombie inside a creche. It's perhaps trying to be colourful and abstract, but *Zombi* would be better if it stuck to its core.

EDWARD SMITH

VERDICT

A great opening eventually degenerates into a dull action game about prophecies and saving the world. *Zombi* has some neat ideas and great visuals, but the survival mechanics are spoiled by the way it treats characters.

6 X-ONE scored **6** for Zombi

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

XBOX ONE



GAME DETAILS

PUBLISHER
EA Sports

DEVELOPER
EA Tiburon

GAME TYPE
American football simulator

PLAYERS
1-4

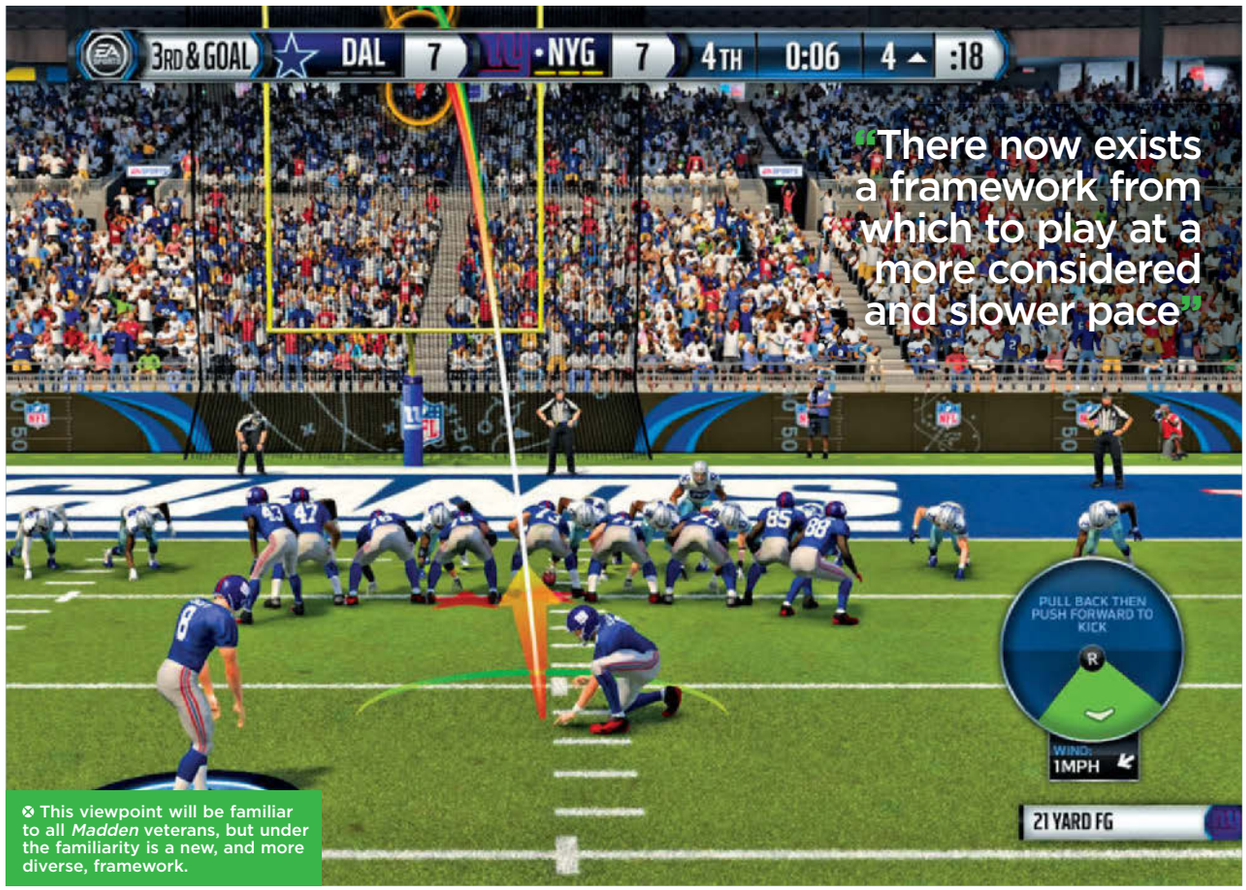
DLC
The usual slate of options remains for parting with real cash in return for Ultimate Team packs

ACHIEVEMENT DIFFICULTY
Moderate

NEED TO UNLOCK
Snickers You're Not You When You're Losing (30G)

IN BRIEF

A continuation of the long-running *Madden* series that was first launched in 1988. It has received annual releases since 1990, appearing on every Sony, Nintendo, Sega and Microsoft home console since.



This viewpoint will be familiar to all *Madden* veterans, but under the familiarity is a new, and more diverse, framework.

MADDEN NFL 16

www.easports.com/madden-nfl /EASportsMaddenNFL @EAMaddenNFL

In which grown men play fetch...

Throwing a pigskin through the air in the hope of it landing in the grateful grip of an ally has become an increasing popular sport over recent years in the UK, the NFL's annual sell-out games at Wembley proving that the American import has found genuine traction on this side of the pond. This is a marvellous thing indeed – the sport combines physical prowess quite brilliantly with tactical intricacy, making it an always-exciting proposition.

The *Madden* series, while generally excellent, has typically struggled to get that balance right. All too often the balance would be tipped in favour of the physical, with the approach of signing up all of the most athletic players winning out over a sophisticated gameplan. While this makes for some undoubtedly exciting plays, games would tend to feel more like highlight reel packages than tense, hard fought encounters.

Whether by accident or design, that has changed somewhat with *Madden NFL 16*. Finally, there now exists a framework from which to play at a more considered and slower pace. This comes down to the new catching abilities, allowing you to instruct how your receiver should go about gaining possession.

You can go for an aggressive catch, which sees your player jump high and early for a pass. If there are defenders in close proximity then you can reasonably expect to be hit hard, adding the risk of injury (and a dropped pass) to the reward of a successful play. Alternatively, you can make a catch in such a way as to make a downfield run easier – your receiver angling themselves towards the endzone as they catch it. Here you risk dropping the ball, or not catching it all, depending on your player's catching stats.

Best of all, though, you can opt for the conservative catch. Instead of looking for the big play, your receiver will simply focus on making a safe catch and gaining field position. This doesn't sound like much, but anyone that has played *Madden* for any length of time will be well aware of the ludicrous frequency that the easiest of passes would be dropped – making it all but impossible to play a high-tempo, short passing game.

While the new Draft Champions mode, tweaks to Franchise games and the return of the ever-popular Ultimate Team perhaps represent sexier angles from which to view *Madden NFL 16*, it's the catching changes that bring the long-needed alterations to what was becoming a stale formula. This is far and away the finest *Madden* game yet released on the current generation of consoles.

JOHN ROBERTSON

VERDICT

Represents a genuine, and much needed, leap forward for the series. Without question, this is a superior package to that offered last season. The future of *Madden* is, finally, looking bright.

8 X-ONE scored **8** for Madden NFL 16

Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

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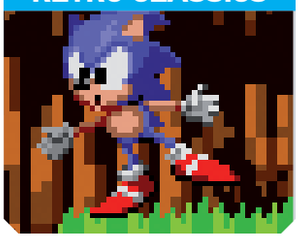
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XBOX ONE: THE NEW HOME FOR MOBA

THERE ARE MILLIONS OF PLAYERS ENJOYING THIS NEW GENRE OVER ON PC, BUT HOW IS THE XBOX ONE BECOMING THE CONSOLE TO TAKE THE GENRE FURTHER THAN IT'S EVER GONE BEFORE?

If you're a dedicated gamer – and since you're holding this magazine that's a safe assumption – then it's impossible to not have heard the acronym 'MOBA' over the last few years. Hell, just reading it now it might force you to roll your eyes in despair; as the likes of *League Of Legends* and *Dota 2* have dominated the PC scene, each of the biggest publishers and developers have looked to capitalise on the trend with their own clearly cynical equivalents.

Few have made a dent on the massive player bases of the two giants of the genre, however, leading to the next-generation of MOBAs – games that offer that battle arena experience, but with a twist. You'll be familiar with names like *Battleborn*, *Gigantic* or *Smite*, but more often than not the developers of these games are trying to downplay the term MOBA, so seeped it is in PC heritage that it can be off-putting to a console crowd. Kind of like how Bungie keeps insisting that *Destiny* isn't an MMO, really. But can MOBAs work on consoles, and how is the Xbox One making that happen?

While *Smite* isn't the first MOBA on Xbox One – that honour goes to the RTS-like *AirMech Arena* – it is perhaps the most traditional in terms of its inclusion of genre elements, features like computer-controlled minions, three lanes with towers and an item store to buy powerful upgrades as each match plays on. We spoke to Scott Lussier, systems designer on the Xbox One version of *Smite*, who described the decision to bring the game over to console as making "insanely good sense" for a number of reasons. "Our game is based around skillshots and uses



Battleborn is diluting the pure MOBA experience quite a lot, but still retains a lot of what makes the genre so popular.

"New MOBAs are having to reinvent the wheel to fit into a console crowd"

the Unreal Engine which a lot of different console games end up using," says Lussier, adding that "what makes *Smite* work on console is exactly the reason why we decided to port it over, and that's because it's a third-person camera angle. And that's why the other MOBAs so far haven't seen success, it's because they try to do the isometric perspective and it's just impossible without a mouse and keyboard. It can't work."

Where most MOBAs retain a top-down view, *Smite* resembles a third-person shooter, which are familiar to the console crowd. It lowers the barrier to entry, and while there are parts that need to be learned it isn't as immediately off-putting. "Console gamers are normally a little bit standoffish towards PC games," claims Lussier, "but they like what they see – it's just a big investment, right? You're looking at like a $1,000 computer and that's if you get a monitor, and that's the bare minimum and you've got to get all of the top-of-the-line equipment. Whereas an Xbox One, it's $350 and then you buy a monitor and you already have a controller and you're good to go."

The problem is all the extra baggage that comes with the genre, and that can be the trickiest part of bringing the game over to Xbox One. "PC gamers already have a basic understanding of a MOBA experience," states Lussier, "whereas the console gamers just don't – they're like 'Oh, *Call Of Duty*, I just shoot shit and people die, right?' It comes with education, and because of that we're looking at our tutorial and everything else to see how we can teach people better – so if anything it's helped us rather than hurt us." The feedback from *Smite* Xbox One players has helped mould it in a number of ways, but these improvements affect the PC version, too. The console audience is helping to shape the game in ways that would not have been considered otherwise; it's a new market for developer HiRez Studios, and so changes are being made and decisions settled on that the company had not anticipated.

But *Smite* is just the beginning for MOBAs on Xbox One. No one can deny the popularity of the genre on PC – *League Of Legends* is played by well over 60 million people each *month* – making it an impossibly difficult market to crack on the platform. In much the same way that the third-person camera really helped *Smite* make the transition to console, new MOBAs are having to reinvent the wheel in their own ways to fit into a console crowd. *Awesomenauts Assemble* is coming to Xbox One, porting those familiar aspects of the genre with a greater sense of accessibility – even when compared to *Smite*.

It's a 2D platformer, essentially, but you still have a selection of unique characters (and their abilities) to play as, towers to destroy and gold to gather for ability upgrades. It's simplified the experience, meaning rather than the lengthy 45+ minute games that many MOBA games force you to endure, a match in *Awesomenauts* will last roughly 10 or 15 minutes. Some upcoming titles

WHAT MAKES A MOBA?

NEW TO THIS SORT OF GAME? HERE ARE THE CORE COMPONENTS OF A THE GENRE...

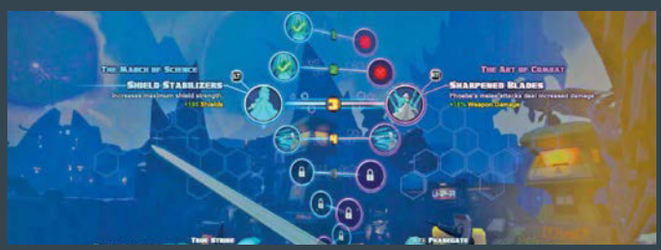
UNIQUE CHARACTERS

The single-most important element of a MOBA is its wide roster of characters. Rather than specialised classes – a la *Battlefield* – in a MOBA it's about using the different playstyles to find one that suits you.



LEVELLING UP

During a match, you'll level up, unlocking new abilities, gaining new power and – if you do it quickly – dominating your enemies. The difference, however, is that those levels are reset with each new match.



TOWERS AND BASES

Objectives differ, but almost always there is a base of some form to attack. In *Smite*, you need to reach the Titan by destroy the towers that defend it; in *Gigantic* your base is your moving behemoth ally.



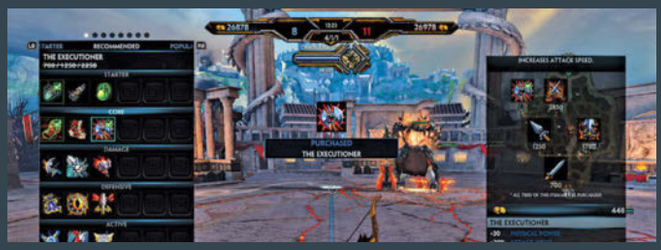
MINIONS AND XP

This is where *Titanfall* features MOBA elements: computer-controlled minions – or weaker NPC enemies – are used in MOBAs as cannon fodder, earning you XP and gold. Kill them quickly to level up faster.



BUYING ITEMS AND UPGRADES

Often an integral part of PC MOBAs, many upcoming games are dropping this element for a simpler experience. Gold you earn from minion and player kills can be used to purchase stat-improving items.







Gigantic has a comparatively small roster of characters, but you can be sure that those will be added to.



Smite's range of deities all draw on existing history and mythologies for their abilities and visual design.



Gearbox insists that *Battleborn* isn't a MOBA, but you play as unique characters, kill players and enemy minions to earn XP so you can level up within a single 5v5 match. That's a MOBA.

> "Microsoft is keen to see these new MOBA experiences flourish on Xbox One"

take the idea of simplification further still, such as *Battleborn* – which retains the varied and eclectic mix of individualised characters but removes the bother of buying items during a game. While Gearbox isn't calling *Battleborn* a MOBA, pay it no heed – this has all the hallmarks of the genre whether it cares to admit it or not. But as an FPS it does seem all the more original, taking that multiplayer experience we see all too commonly in *Call Of Duty* or *Battlefield* and introducing new MOBA elements that give players something new to think about in a match beyond finding the best sniper camping spot. Then there's *Gigantic* from Motiga, a completely new approach for MOBA gaming that recently released in beta.

Gigantic still gives players the roster of different characters to play, each levelling up during a single match, but scraps the idea of minions and towers completely – more than any other title, it reduces those genre elements down to just the key features, so much so it might not seem at all like a MOBA. "Here's the funny thing, we had a really hard time embracing the term MOBA," says Troy Hewitt, head of communications at Motiga, "because it comes with such a stigma." So Motiga is foregoing any kind categorising, instead letting its inspirations speak for itself. Hewitt adds that the move to include Microsoft's console, too, has been something of a revelation. "We're testing daily on Xbox Ones here in the office," he says, "and it just feels *right*." By removing a lot of the clutter of the genre, however, *Gigantic* makes for a much more action-orientated title, almost in line with a typical shooter in fact – so how is it a MOBA? "What it really boils down to is finding your hero," claims Hewitt. "The way that we designed our heroes means that they have very specific abilities and as you level through the match you could be playing somebody who is a tank, but you can choose skills that move you more into something of a tank plus ranged. It's a real mix."

More than anything else, however, it seems Microsoft itself is keen to see these new MOBA experiences flourish and make sure it all happens on Xbox One. *Gigantic* was originally releasing for PC only but Motiga is based in Washington state, down the road from Microsoft's headquarters – a partnership came about, and now it is releasing exclusively on Xbox One and Windows 10. *Smite*, too, is getting a little help from Microsoft, with the company even sponsoring next year's Smite World Championship – and yes, there is an Xbox One invitational for a prize of $15,000.

"The Xbox One has a little bit more of a competitive backing," says Lussier of why HiRez chose the console over the PS4. "One of the things about *Smite* is that there's one core element in eSports, and we love that element. Sony's excellent, Sony's huge, but they don't really have that eSports backing that the Xbox One has, plus with the optimised controls and the performance, it was just a natural fit." It's clear that MOBAs are here to stay, but what is unexpected is how the move to Xbox One is forcing a sense of innovation within the genre that just isn't happening on PC. They might never match the 60-odd million players of *League Of Legends*, but MOBAs on Xbox One will at least be offering something new.

MONDAY NIGHT COMBAT

HOW MOBAS ON CONSOLE WILL BECOME THE NEXT BIG ESPORT

eSports in the realm of consoles is currently dominated by fighting games and FPS titles – primarily *Call Of Duty*. But MOBAs already have a huge eSport following on PC, with millions of dollars given out as prizes for PC-based games like *League Of Legends* and *Dota 2*. Enter *Smite*: while the game does have its own PC tournament – having had its first World Championship earlier this year – next year there will be an Xbox One invitational, for pro console Smite players to enter as a team and compete to win $15,000. That's just the beginning, too; as more and more MOBAs enter the console space, you should expect to see a similar level of backing from publishers around the globe.



COMPLETE GUIDE TO GEARS OF WAR ULTIMATE EDITION ONLINE

LEARN HOW TO KICK ASS AND STOMP HEADS LIKE A PRO WITH OUR GUIDE TO GEARS' MULTIPLAYER

Things have changed since the first *Gears Of War* in 2006. Online gaming has changed, *Gears* has changed... hell, *we've* changed since back then. And after such a long absence from the Gears multiplayer arena, we thought you might appreciate a few tips and tricks to help you jump right back into the game.

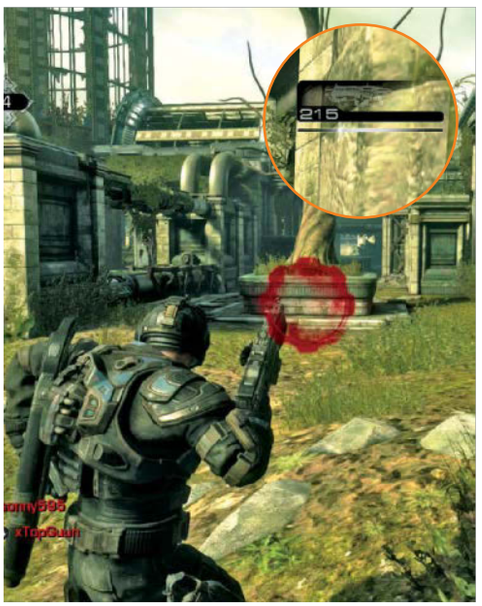
Whether you lost hours to the first *Gears* multiplayer or are a first-timer looking to kerb-stomp your way to victory, we've got the pro tips you need to take on the very best players online. If you haven't mastered bouncing or figured out when to use the Boomshot, prepare to get schooled.

BOUNCE, BOUNCE, BOUNCE



In *Gears*, movement is the most important part of the game, and hitting A to move in and out of cover is an essential skill if you want to win. When you're stuck in a shotgun battle with an enemy, you can use a technique called a wallbounce to quickly dodge and take you out of their line of sight. Simply look at a piece of nearby cover, or a wall, and hit A – if you're close enough to take cover you'll slide over to it, taking you away from the barrel of the opponent's gun.

PERFECT ACTIVE RELOAD



Hitting RB to reload is only half the battle. Hit it again when the white bar crosses the light area and you'll get a perfect Active Reload. After this, the flashing bullets on the HUD will inflict more damage on opponents, which can be the difference between killing and being killed. With a Longshot Rifle, for example, a powered-up bullet will be an insta-kill if you hit an enemy anywhere above the waist, while an active reload shotgun shell can be an instant kill at close quarters.

GO FOR POWER WEAPONS



Every *Gears* multiplayer match is effectively a race to the power weapons. You should make taking a weapon and controlling it a priority at the start of the match, as a player with the power weapon can change the course of a game. A good idea is to enter each map in a solo game without any opponents, then explore to work out exactly where the power weapons are, and the best way to grab them at the start of the match. When the game begins, it's a race to reach them.

WORK AS A TEAM



If you're playing with teammates in *Gears*, it's essential to work together to win. This doesn't mean you *have* to have a headset to win – instead, you just need to stick together, or cover your team from afar. When you see a teammate stuck in a 1v1 shotgun fight, for example, whip out the Lancer and shave some health off the opponent. This will get your partner a one-hit knockdown, rather than going down in a hail of shotgun fire.

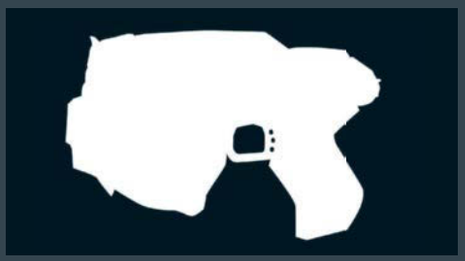
SMOKE, NOT STUN



Unlike later *Gears Of War* games, in which the smoke grenade also stunned enemies, in *Ultimate Edition* they just make a cloud of smoke. What we're saying is, throwing one onto the hill in King Of The Hill mode then sprinting into the cloud is a sure-fire way to get yourself killed. Instead, use them to cover your team's movement, especially in areas being watched by snipers. Chuck them at opponents and you're just blocking your own view of them.

8 WEAPONS YOU NEED TO MASTER

SNUB PISTOL



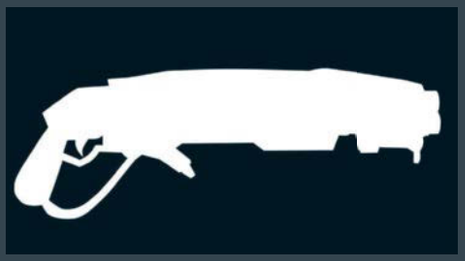
The Snub is surprisingly powerful despite its size. Pull it out between reloads and aim for the head – if you get a headshot with it, you'll get an instant down.

LANCER



Only use the Lancer at mid-range – for close range shooting go for the Gnasher. And don't even think about revving up that chainsaw; it's slow, loud and will get you killed.

GNASHER SHOTGUN



The ultimate close-range weapon is also the most-used by players online. Learning to blind-fire, and also to quick-scope, will give you the edge against most enemies.

HAMMERBURST



This Locust weapon is the poor man's Lancer, and lacks the chainsaw. If you come across this one, leave it and keep looking for the Longshot Rifle.

LONGSHOT RIFLE



Pretty powerful, this. Line shots up before you zoom, then click in the thumbstick to get that headshot. Active reload is essential with this single-round weapon.

TORQUE BOW



A bow that fires grenades is fine by us. If you can stick an opponent you'll get an instant kill, but you can also bounce the shots off walls for trick shot points.

BOOMSHOT



Unlike the later games, the Boomshot in *Ultimate Edition* contains two rockets. Guarantee a hit by aiming at an opponent's feet, or go for a multi-kill by hitting bodies.

HAMMER OF DAWN



This satellite-powered laser can kill instantly, and seeing it can have a major psychological effect on the opposition team. Aim for walls and floors near enemies for best results.

DLC UPDATE



DESTINY: THE TAKEN KING

Get ready to raid, Guardian

So, we've finally got some more in-depth information about the raid from *Destiny*'s newest update, *The Taken King*. Named 'King's Fall', the raid will be *Destiny*'s most complex and intricate to date, and will revolve around players breaking into the fort of Oryx (father of your latest biggest kill, Crota) and taking him *down*. It's designed by the same director as *Destiny*'s first raid, Luke Smith, so it's safe to assume the raid is going to have multiple sub-bosses and platforming sections, and that Oryx himself is going to be a *true* behemoth.

Smith has admitted that the *Destiny* team is still "discovering what raids can be, gameplay-wise" (and that makes sense considering *Destiny* is set to live *for ten years*), but with King's Fall, Bungie wants to expand upon the mechanics that you'll be introduced to in these cooperative missions – mixing the kinetic frenzy of the Crota raid with the tight problem-solving we had to understand with the Vault of Glass raid.

To that end, King's Fall will be the biggest *Destiny* raid yet and has promised to raise the stakes for the entire game experience. The story of Oryx and his presence in our solar system – you know, the one we've spent the last year defending from time-travelling robots and pissed-off alien gods – will continue after the credits roll, and *Destiny* plans to continually update the lore of this strange king after you face them in the game.

We interpret that as meaning the raid will be *different* the second time you set foot in it – something totally new in the *Destiny* experience. We must have killed Atheon a good 50 times now, and Crota just as many times, too, and the only difference is that the Crota mission-giver sometimes congratulates us on taking down the prince of the Hive. If the new raid has variable buffs and debuffs in it (like the Prison of Elders in the *House Of Wolves* expansion), then it's going to give the raid almost infinite replayability. Bungie has also stated that it's learned how to manage loot drops better – so all your efforts aren't going to be rewarded with just a Mote of Light:



you're actually likely to get some good gear for your efforts.

The way this DLC is shaping up, it's going to give players the chance to actually play *Destiny* the way they want – rather than being force-fed the best weapons that they *have* to use if they want to win. Instead, you can cater what you use to the character you want to be – to the way you want to play – and have the best time possible. Mix these changes in to the way PvP can now reward you equally to PvE, and a ton of new bounties, and we can safely say *Destiny* is out of beta, and the real game is about to begin.



Destiny launched in 2014 to a mixed reaction. Some loved it, some hated it, others hated it but are *still freaking playing it*. Anyway, Bungie promises that as a franchise it will run for ten years. Wowsers.



GTA V VIDEO EDITOR

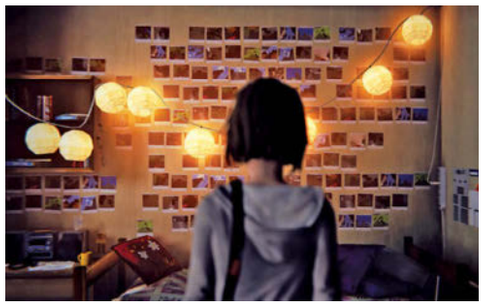
The September update for *GTA V* brings with it a ton of new features – a library of new ambient audio, a new slew of sound effects and, most importantly, the video editor. PC gamers have had this tool since the game launched on the platform, and it's been used to make some fantastic gifs, memes and machinima pieces already. Opening that up to Xbox One players is inevitably going to re-validate *GTA V* for the creative console crowd... not that it really needed it, mind.



BATMAN ARKHAM KNIGHT'S GCPD LOCKDOWN

Arriving in October, the *GCPD Lockdown* DLC pack will put players in the shoes (or pumps, or whatever) of Nightwing, who's going to have to derail the Penguin's attempts to break out Gotham City's admittedly low-security police cells. Apparently, the events take place *after* the main events of the game, which might hint at what's to come in the other four pieces of DLC that'll drop in December... maybe we'll even see *that* post-game scene clarified somewhat?

3 EPISODIC GAMES WRAPPING UP THIS MONTH



LIFE IS STRANGE

The climax to the best episodic series gaming has ever seen, *Life Is Strange*, Ep 5 promises to give us answers to questions we've been asking for about half a year at this point. Will Max's powers get stronger? Is it possible at all to save Chloe? All this – and more – to be wrapped up this month.



TALES FROM THE BORDERLANDS

We're going to see the end of Telltale's interpretation of the *Borderlands* world soon – this series has proved Telltale still has the creative gas to keep its template fresh. *TFTB* has been doing things with the choice-based system that we haven't seen Telltale do before – if that's not exciting, we don't know what is.



TELLTALE'S GAME OF THRONES

If you've been following this as closely as we have, you're going to have some serious consequences to live up to/live down in the final episode. The episodic stories have been a nice stop-gap since the most recent TV series of the show finished, and the cameos we've seen here have been great.

PARTYING HARD
ROCK BAND 4

It's been a long time since we've rock and rolled...



RICHARD NEVILLE
SENIOR PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, MAD CATZ

"We want to make you believe you're a rock god again"

How has the production of *Rock Band* benefited without MTV and EA being involved?
We just wanted to simplify everything this time, right? No disrespect to EA, they did fantastic work in some parts of the world [managing the production of hardware], but we just wanted to take them out of the equation. Harmonix wanted to be in control of its own destiny, too, like an indie publisher, and we've been making videogame controls for 20 years at Mad Catz... we have a 20-year heritage and wanted to simplify matters a lot, and we've ended up co-publishing the game, despite having nothing really to do with its development!

Did you start from scratch when you began production on the instruments, or were you able to reuse the old models?
It had been five years since *Rock Band 3* when we started working on the new hardware, so that meant a few things – it meant we had to get and find all the tooling: the plastics, the injection moulds... we found that they'd be in storage for so long, they were rusted. Each of these moulds – these 'tools' – cost hundreds of thousands of pounds. They're very precise, very sturdy, very heavy. You can do everything you can to protect them, but they're made of steel – by the time we were ready, they'd been sat there so long they rusted.

What happened to the old moulds, then?
We actually melted them down and sold them for scrap! Within months of scrapping it, of course, Harmonix was in touch and everything started going ahead [laughs]. But as it happens, all the old production equipment was unusable, so even thought all the new instruments *look* identical to the old ones, they're actually totally new – built from the ground up.



The new guitars do look almost identical to what has come before, but have there been any major iterations?
The guitar has gone through several changes since the *Rock Band 3* iteration... firstly, the guitar itself is *much* more solid when you're holding it in your hands – you can't twist it from the neck as much as you could with the old products: we've added structural reinforcements on the inside of the neck, and some extra ribbing to help out with that. You could also compress the old guitars – forcing down on the body, you could feel the plastic buckle. You can't do that in the new ones, and that's intentional – we want the products to feel less like toys, and much more like a real musical instrument. We want to make you believe you're a rock god again.

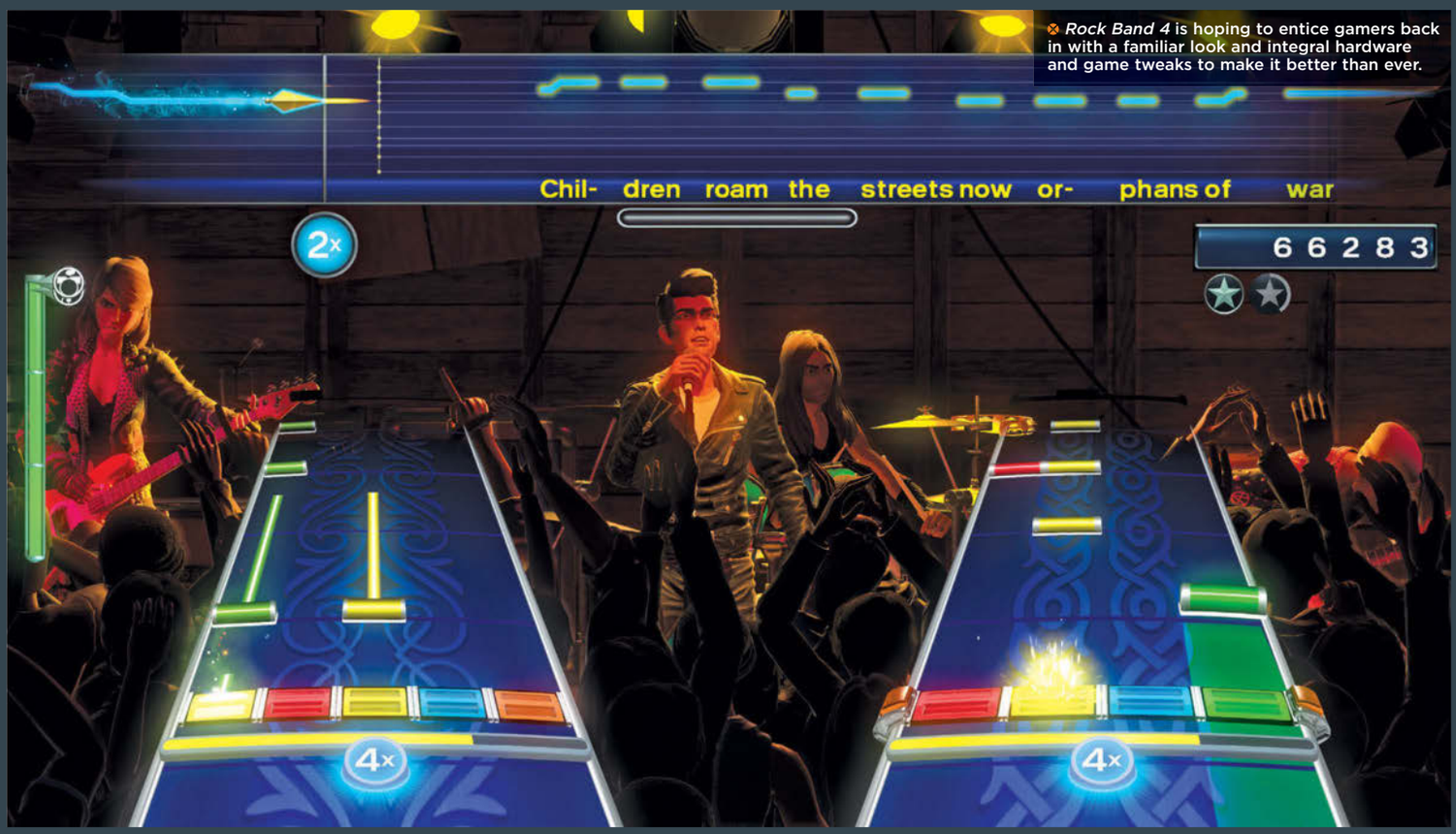
The old guitars had a reputation for being a little unreliable, has this been fixed this time out?
Another bug feature we've updated for the guitars is the tilt sensor... in fact, I can guarantee you if anyone goes digging out their old guitars and wants to use the tilt feature, I promise it doesn't work. It was a mechanical solution that used a ball-bearing or other switch, that after even a few months would start to struggle with it. The mechanical switch can either get stuck or just degrade and it wont respond anymore. What we've done, is we've gone with a digital accelerometer... we'd have done this before, but it wasn't cheap enough from a consumer standpoint, but since the technology's moved on in leaps and bounds, it's cheaper to use now.

What about the drums?
If you think back to *RB3*, the drums and the cymbals were digital – you could hit them and they'd have six different levels of pressure that they could sense. What we've got now is *truly* analogue – you can hit it gently and get a light response, or you can hit it heavily and get a loud response. Right now, this doesn't really need to exist [laughs]: the game is still beat-matching; you hit the pad when the gem falls on the screen and you get the points. Of course, Harmonix wants to make *Rock Band 4* a platform – they're not going to release a *Rock Band 5*, so we imagine they're going to want to do expansions in the coming years, and they might have something to do with this more analogue input. So of course, we have to figure that out... now – we need to think ahead, even if it's only something that *might* need supplying.

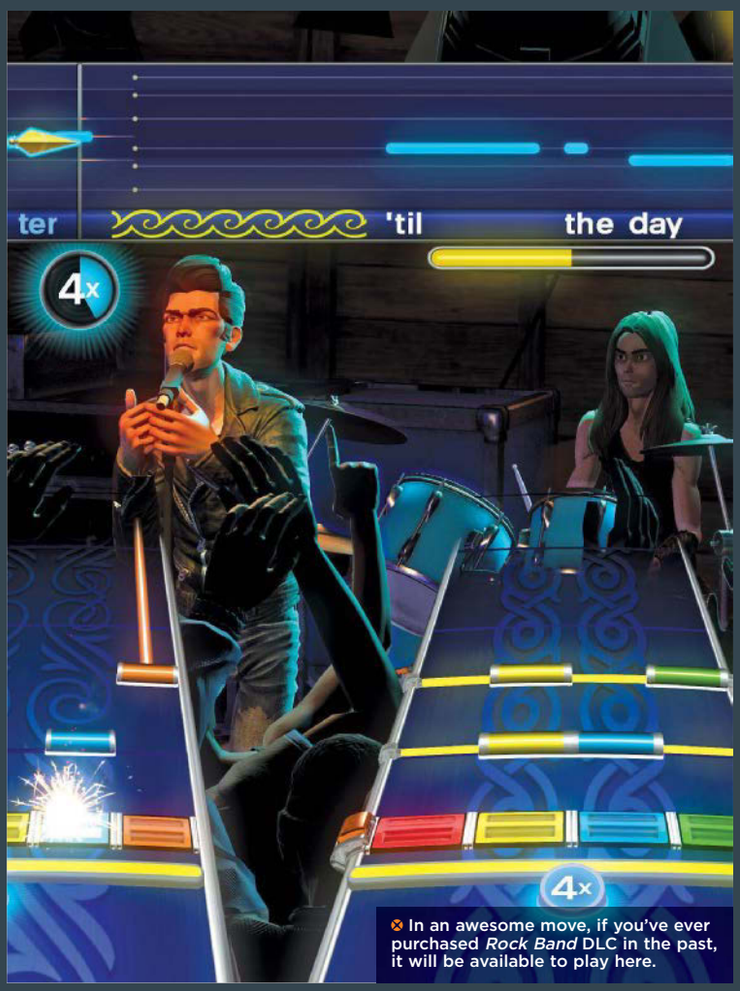
Are the pads more reliable?
A lot of drummers would hit the *exact* same point on the drum pad over and over and over again, and that would create little pits in pad that could throw off how the game reads what you're doing. So we've reinforced the drum pads to get rid of that dimpling issue.

What about the battery situation, our wallets used to curse Mad Catz back in the day...
We've managed to *dramatically* increase the battery life of these instruments – we're 35-40 hours on Xbox. And we've reduced the number of batteries they take to run, too... it used to be three batteries, which is *such* a pain: who buys a packet of three batteries, right? [laughs] We've lowered the latency, too. Absolutely everything in this kit is new – even if it doesn't look it.

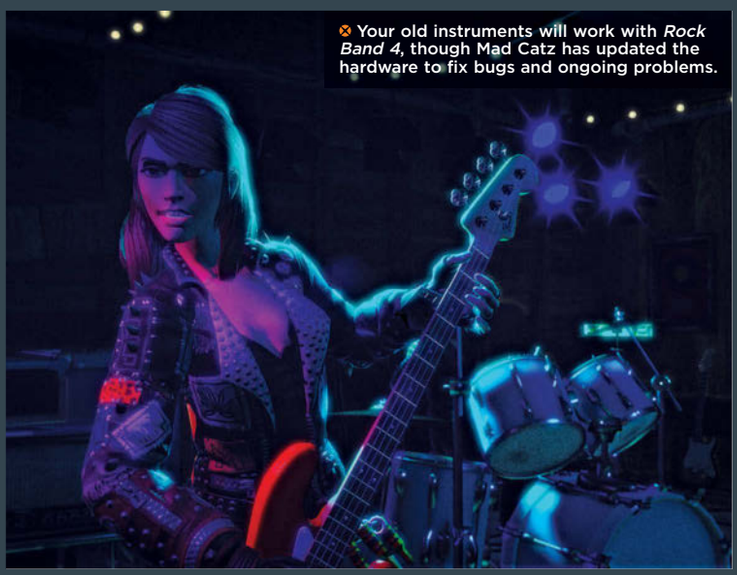
⊗ *Rock Band 4* and its suite of new hardware is now on available on Xbox One. You can use the old hardware, of course, but after reading this, do you really want to?



Rock Band 4 is hoping to entice gamers back in with a familiar look and integral hardware and game tweaks to make it better than ever.



In an awesome move, if you've ever purchased *Rock Band* DLC in the past, it will be available to play here.

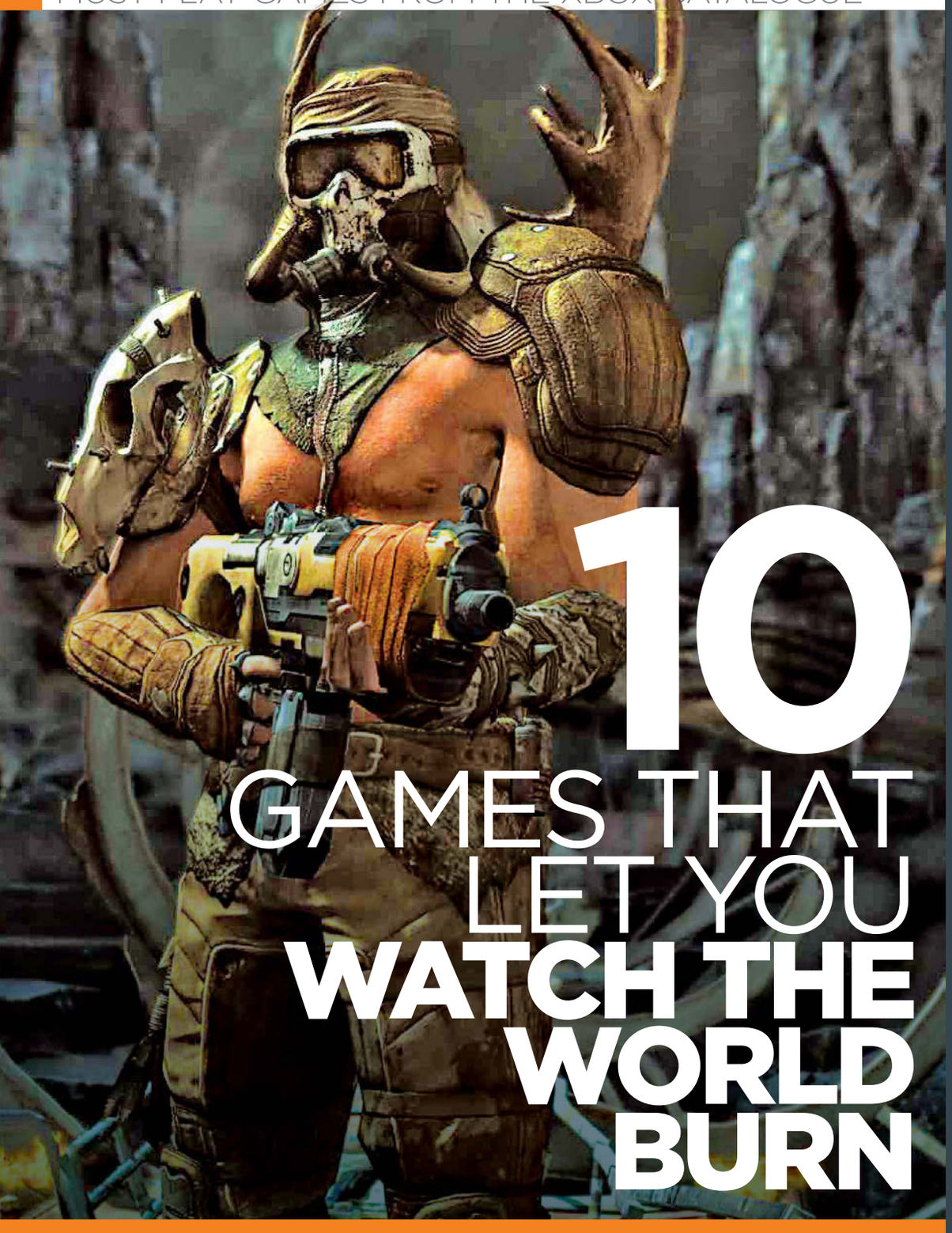


Your old instruments will work with *Rock Band 4*, though Mad Catz has updated the hardware to fix bugs and ongoing problems.



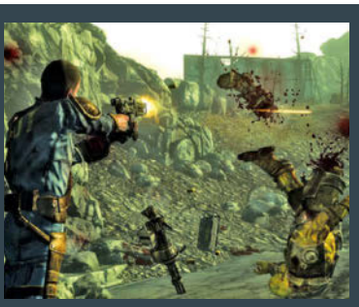
RECOMMENDED

MUST-PLAY GAMES FROM THE XBOX CATALOGUE



10 GAMES THAT LET YOU WATCH THE WORLD BURN

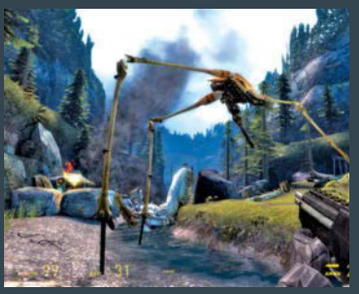
DONE WITH MAD MAX? IT ISN'T THE ONLY GAME TO TAKE YOU ON A WHIRLWIND TOUR OF THE APOCALYPSE. WHY NOT GIVE THESE WONDERFUL WASTELANDS A VISIT?



FALLOUT 3

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **Bethesda**
Release Date: **2008**

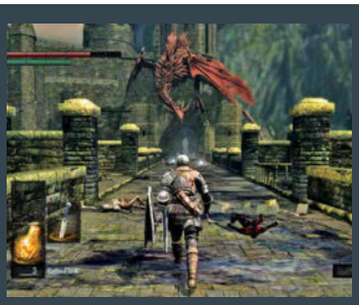
Fallout 3 isn't just one of the best games Bethesda has ever put its name to, it also happens to be one of the finest games of the last generation. In essence, it's a glorious apocalypse simulator; tracking your growth from child to ultimate saviour (or destroyer) of a land long-past its prime. Scarred by nuclear warfare, *Fallout 3* ushers you into a pretty hellish Washington D.C., and leaves you to your own devices. As a lone wanderer there is plenty to see and do, but visiting the sights – revelling in the destruction – that's the number one attraction here. You know, once you're levelled enough to survive the Super Mutants.



HALF-LIFE 2

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **Valve**
Release Date: **2007**

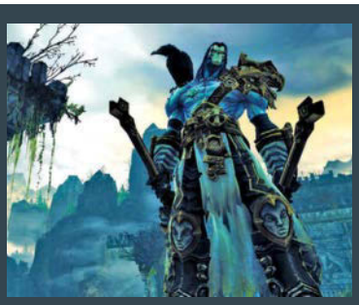
This isn't your typical apocalypse, in fact you might have cocked your head in surprise at its inclusion, but *Half-Life 2* presents a wickedly clever view of a sweeping apocalypse. Forget the totalitarian society Gordon Freeman and company are trapped in thanks to the Combine for a second and cast your mind back – yep, this is a game primarily swirling around a crazy alien invasion in this alternate history of Earth. Gravity guns, head-crabs and some stunning setpieces make this not only one of the best games out there, but it also does a much better job of alien peril than that *War Of The Worlds* movie could ever manage.



DARK SOULS

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **From Software**
Release Date: **2010**

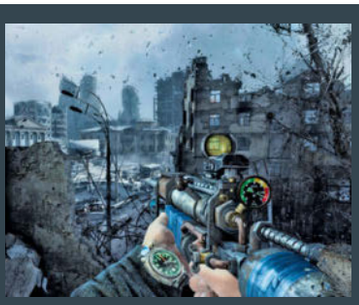
We still aren't entirely sure what sort of horrible curse befell Lordran before the opening credits of *Dark Souls* crawled across the screen, but it had a pretty nasty effect on the place. Skeletal warriors patrol the medieval, fire-scarred landscapes, ethereal beings guard the shadows, and unholy beasts await anyone foolish enough to progress past the first bonfire. *Dark Souls* presents a bleak, often unsettling take on a game world, which is only supported by frustratingly tough hack and slash gameplay and an unforgiving approach to death – has there ever been a better representation of the apocalypse?



DARKSIDERS

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **Vigil Games**
Release Date: **2010**

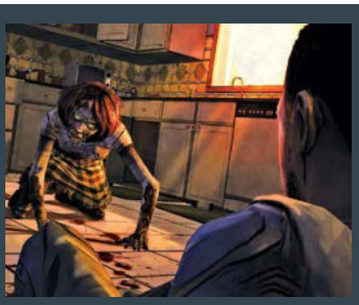
In *Darksiders* you were literally cast as War, one of the Four Horseman Of The Apocalypse. Who better to take you on a tour of the end of the world? Vigil Games found success by taking a very loose interpretation of the religious apocalypse described at length in Revelations, inviting a little gaming chaos into the mix and throwing it against a smattering of awesomely entertaining hack-and-slash combat and genre staples. *Darksiders* wasn't for everyone, but in many ways it was the closest we got to *The Legend Of Zelda* on Xbox 360, so that's something, right?



METRO REDUX

Console: **Xbox One**
Developer: **Deep Silver**
Release Date: **2014**

While we aren't massively keen on the trend of remasters filling up our hard drives, we were rather happy to see an HD remake of 2010's *Metro 2033* make the cut, if only because its take on the apocalypse is quite unlike anything else out there. It traps you, for the most part, in the sewers and underground metro tunnels of Moscow, forcing a claustrophobic and often terrifying gauntlet of human suffering and mutated monsters into your path. This adaptation of Dmitry Glukhovsky's works isn't for everyone, but if you can stomach it, you won't find a more unique take on the apocalypse on Xbox One.



THE WALKING DEAD

Console: **Xbox One**
Developer: **Telltale Games**
Release Date: **2014**

TellTale absolutely knocked it out of the park here. Riding high on the success of the AMC TV series, TellTale released its own adaptation of the popular Image Comics series with this quirky episodic title, and it is hella awesome. While the world might not be as totally ravaged as some of the other games on this list, you can't say a mass zombie infestation isn't cause for apocalyptic concern. Creating compelling gameplay through snap-decisions and long-lasting choices meant we were on the edge of our seats through this five-episode assault on the mind.



GEARS OF WAR: ULTIMATE EDITION

Console: **Xbox One**
Developer: **The Coalition**
Release Date: **2015**

Gears Of War: Ultimate Edition is the perfect opportunity to once again delve into the horrors of alien warfare from the view of those needed to fight. Set 14 years after Emergence Day, *Gears Of War* tells the desperate struggle of the remnants of humanity versus a vicious Locust enemy. While the cover-heavy third-person shooting is what it's remembered for, *Ultimate Edition* is another chance to see why this game was such a success back in 2006 – it's a freaking beautiful look at a world in peril.



RAGE

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **id Software**
Release Date: **2011**

Loving *Mad Max*'s wastelands? *RAGE* is, in essence, the most crazy, most unlicensed, take on George Miller's universe out there. King of the FPS, id Software, unleashed this on Xbox 360 back in 2011 and it still sticks in the mind to this day. It offered a large, explorable desert world – traversable by foot or via a weaponised, customisable vehicle – and tasked you with doing odd-jobs for stranded survivors, battling bandits with wasteland-madness and generally revelling in the chaos of the end of the word. If you're a fan of *Mad Max* you'll no doubt find this to be a very satisfying experience.



STATE OF DECAY

Console: **Xbox One**
Developer: **Undead Labs**
Release Date: **2015**

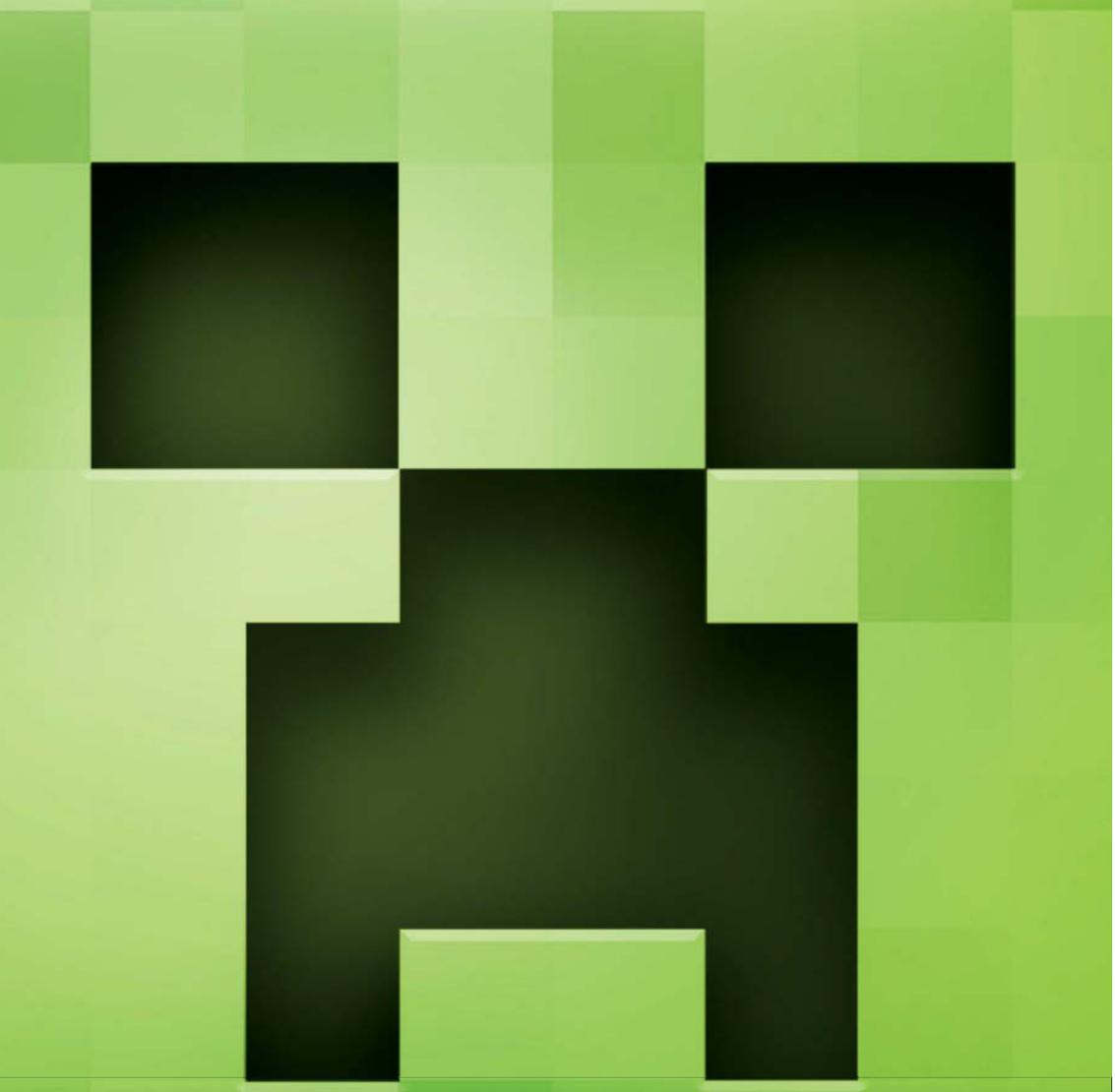
While we were initially hesitant to recommend another zombie game in this list, it's hard to overlook *State Of Decay*. What it lacked in polish, it made up for with tons of personality and some interesting gameplay systems; really putting you at the heart of a post-apocalyptic survival story. You aren't just responsible for your well-being, but that of an entire group of wasteland wanderers. It's a tough, often brutal, game – it's all too easy for your group to get torn apart by the living dead on a routine mission to gather supplies, but that's what makes this great. Think you have what it takes to survive the end of days?



BORDERLANDS

Console: **Xbox 360**
Developer: **Gearbox Software**
Release Date: **2008**

Borderlands is probably the most colourful, yet dangerous, interpretation of a post-apocalyptic world out there, a giant, sprawling wasteland comprised of the absolute worst humanity has to offer. Roving gangs of marauders patrol the deserts, crudely-constructed camps house criminally insane warlords, and hand-crafted vehicles help in navigating the beautifully desolate world. And then *Borderlands 2* does one better than *Mad Max* ever could; it lets you bring three other friends along for the ride and fills every inch of the world with loot, as opposed to pointless collectibles.



NEXT ISSUE

Telltale tells all

We talk Minecraft: Story Mode, episodes and the future of gaming with the legendary team

THE DIVISION'S APOCALYPTIC STREETS EXPLORED

HALO 5: GUARDIANS REVIEWED – GET OUR VERDICT

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Imagine Publishing Ltd
Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586200
Web: www.xb1.co.uk
www.nowgamer.com
www.greatdigitalmags.com

Magazine team

Editor In Chief **Ryan King**
ryan.king@imagine-publishing.co.uk
☎ 01202 586241
Deputy Editor **Stephen Ashby**
Senior Staff Writer **Josh West**
Production Editor **Rebecca Richards**
Senior Designer **Newton Ribeiro de Oliveira**
Senior Art Editor **Andy Downes**
Photographer **James Sheppard**
Head Of Design **Ross Andrews**
Publishing Director **Aaron Asadi**

Contributors

Luke Albigés, Adam Barnes, Ian Dransfield, Ross Hamilton, Darran Jones, Dom Peppiatt, John Robertson, Ed Smith, Jordan Erica Webber

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Head Of Sales Hang Deretz
☎ 01202 586442
hang.deretz@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Account Manager Anthony Godsell
☎ 01202 586420
anthony.godsell@imagine-publishing.co.uk

International

X-ONE is available for licensing. Please contact the International department to discuss partnership opportunities.

Head Of International Licensing Cathy Blackman
☎ +44 (0) 1202 586401
licensing@imagine-publishing.co.uk

Subscriptions

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Circulation

Head Of Circulation Darren Pearce
☎ 01202 586200

Production

Production Director Jane Hawkins
☎ 01202 586200

Finance

Finance Director Marco Peroni

Founder

Group Managing Director Damian Butt

Printing & Distribution

Southernprint Ltd, 17-21 Factory Road, Upton Ind. Estate, Poole, Dorset, BH16 5SN
☎ 01202 628 300

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