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GAME OF THE MONTH:

METAL GEAR SOLID V
THE PHANTOM PAIN

REVIEWS:

Author: Milan Živković **REVIEW**

METAL GEAR SOLID V

THE PHANTOM PAIN

SNAKE RIDES AGAIN! ... FOR THE FIRST TIME.

I have needed about a hundred hours of gameplay to come full circle and find a meaningful way to review this game. I have needed to let my instincts and the atmosphere draw me into everything that Phantom Pain offers, lest this text be found wanting as a review of the Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain. I'm not joking folks; The Phantom Pain is an immersive gaming experience that will feel different for every one of us. It's a product of the

most entertaining gaming concept of Metal Gear Solid series, which is in itself a tremendous compliment.

Let us assume that you have already tried out The Phantom Pain's short prologue, Ground Zeroes. In that case you have already experienced the depth of possibilities in gameplay and the progression tempo that the player dictates. There are rumors of players that got tens of hours of gameplay value out of that short prelude alone. If that's the case, those players would get

hundreds upon hundreds out of The Phantom Pain! The game is bigger, more developed, and richer in every conceivable sense than it's predecessor. Where gameplay is concerned, we have before us the most entertaining and polished Metal Gear Solid ever. But... Is everything that great? To best be able to convey how The Phantom Pain measures against it's predecessors, I will make step-by-step comparisons of each of their key components: the story, the direction, the acting, graphics and music, and of course, gameplay. So, let's begin...

"WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE? WE WANT CHATTY SNAKE AND SQUINTY VILLAIN OCELOT! WHERE ARE THEY?!"

Without fail, every single Metal Gear Solid game so far had an extraordinary, intriguing and smartly written storyline, with guidance from super-imaginative Hideo Kojima. Each one had gradually drawn you in with unexpected twists and epic epilogues that you could just about taste since the initial chapters. There is no Metal Gear Solid storyline that wasn't retold and theorized about. Each one would have at least once made you stop in silence, partly out of wonder and partly out of respect for the game that has surprised you when you've least expected. And how did Phantom Pain fare in that regard? We can say it did similarly, but not quite the same. Is that a bad thing? Not necessarily. The game starts with an elegantly intriguing prologue, which levels questions at you that you'll

be chasing answers to until the very end. But as for everything in between – you'll feel an unexpected emptiness. This emptiness that plagues the narrative of this sequel is mostly caused by the disproportionality between the amount of story vs. the amount of gameplay. While the series had always been known for it's cinematic experience interwoven with twists, and with a balance of interaction and cutscenes (with the exception of the fourth installment), in this one the story is barely noticeable. Even though it's interesting and well done, the gameplay simply overshadows it. When it comes to gaming, quality gameplay that allows you to create your own scenario can't be a good thing. But in the case of a Metal Gear Solid game, it's safe to say that it's a bit of a letdown.
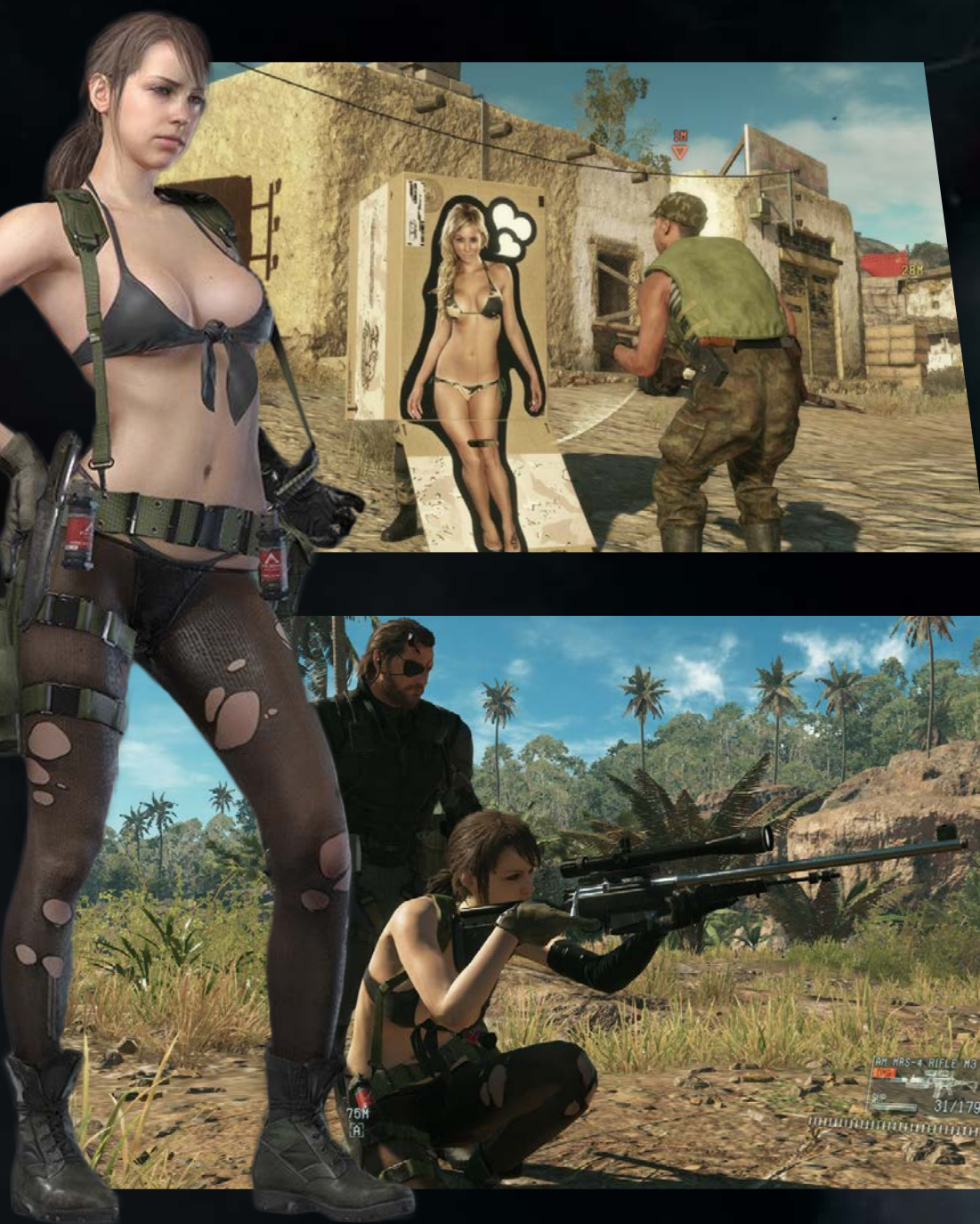
In direct correlation to this is the directing. While the previous Metal Gear Solid games had a certain flow to the narrative, in The Phantom Pain you'll often face the "problem" of choice. In other words, the time when you'll get to see the next cutscene will depend entirely up to you. And seeing how the game will gravitate you to complete as many side missions as possible to unlock the multitudes of upgrades for yourself and your army, you'll often find yourself asking when the last cutscene was anyway? Although each one of them is masterfully crafted and directed, and almost every one with any sort of action in it has that epic feel, you'll get to see them so rarely that you might lose track of the story progression. This is kind of reminds of the great Peace Walker for PSP, but taking into account that this is the fifth installment in the main franchise, you wouldn't be wrong to expect a different cinematic experience. You wouldn't be wrong, but you would be led astray. And a bit let down again.

Now we get to the acting and characters... Do you remember those long talks over the codec? That chatty Snake that could talk for hours about guns, and smokes, and the meaning of life? Well, now get used to the introverted silent Snake that carefully weighs every word. All jokes aside, it seems like Kiefer Sutherland had done all work in about two mornings. The two

characters that you'll hear the most from are Ocelot and Miller, but since you're going to barely discern which is which, you'll get the feeling that the same actor voiced them both and got his mouth completely dry while doing so. Add to that the lack of the legendary talks over the codec, and we're in for a completely different Metal Gear Solid experience, at least when it comes to the charm that those long conversations between the characters brought to the series. It seems that when it comes to the cinematic feeling, The Phantom Pain is a class behind it's predecessors. And it simply seems that Kojima relented to those criticizing the fourth game and decided to reduce the amount of cinematography and concentrate on the gameplay quality. I can't describe how disappointing that was for this old hardcore fan of the franchise. When it comes to the cinematic feel, if we weren't used to the kooky quality of the previous ones, we would have probably hailed The Phantom Pain's direction. But, although it's all well done, it just wasn't enough... Oh well, so how do the music and graphics fare?

The music is one of the most recognizable elements of the series, with it's accompanying themes that varies from one sequel to the next. The action sequence music, with it's recognizable sounds and effects, was always something to look forward to. This time

"NOTHING STARTLES THE ENEMY LIKE COLD STEEL AROUND THE NECK"

however, the man mostly responsible for the series' phenomenal music, Harry Gregson-Williams, just took on the role of the music producer this time around. And while the music is at times quite spectacular and very well done overall, it's not nearly as impactful as we're used to. You won't even be able to define the "theme" of this sequel. It is kind of disappointing that you're probably going to remember just "The man who sold the world" (since the game takes place in the 80s, you'll encounter many great tunes from that period) and "Quiet's theme". Although still great, the music is not on par with the previous sequels. So don't get me wrong, the music is 10/10, but when compared to the already established standards of it's predecessors – it's impossible not to criticize. You know, out of love.

And now, a few words about graphics –it's usually responsible for the first impression, but if the rest of the game is lacking, it would soon be forgotten anyway. But, since The Phantom Pain is a great game, the graphics here are just an icing on the cake. Even if at times you might not consider it very next-gen, so at others you most certainly will! The weather effects – rain, sandstorms, and other bad weather – are simply gorgeous. The light effect as it interacts with shadows, as well as the general lighting combined with well-modeled landscapes covered in quality textures, will at times seem almost photorealistic. The character models and animation is excellent as well. Simply put, you will be hard pressed to find a single fault in the game's graphics,

unless you look really, really deep and try to nitpick. The Fox engine does a great job; the game looks gorgeous. While it certainly looks the best on a PC, Playstation 4 is not too far behind either. It should be noted that the game looks pretty well on Playstation 3 and Xbox 360 as well, which is commendable.
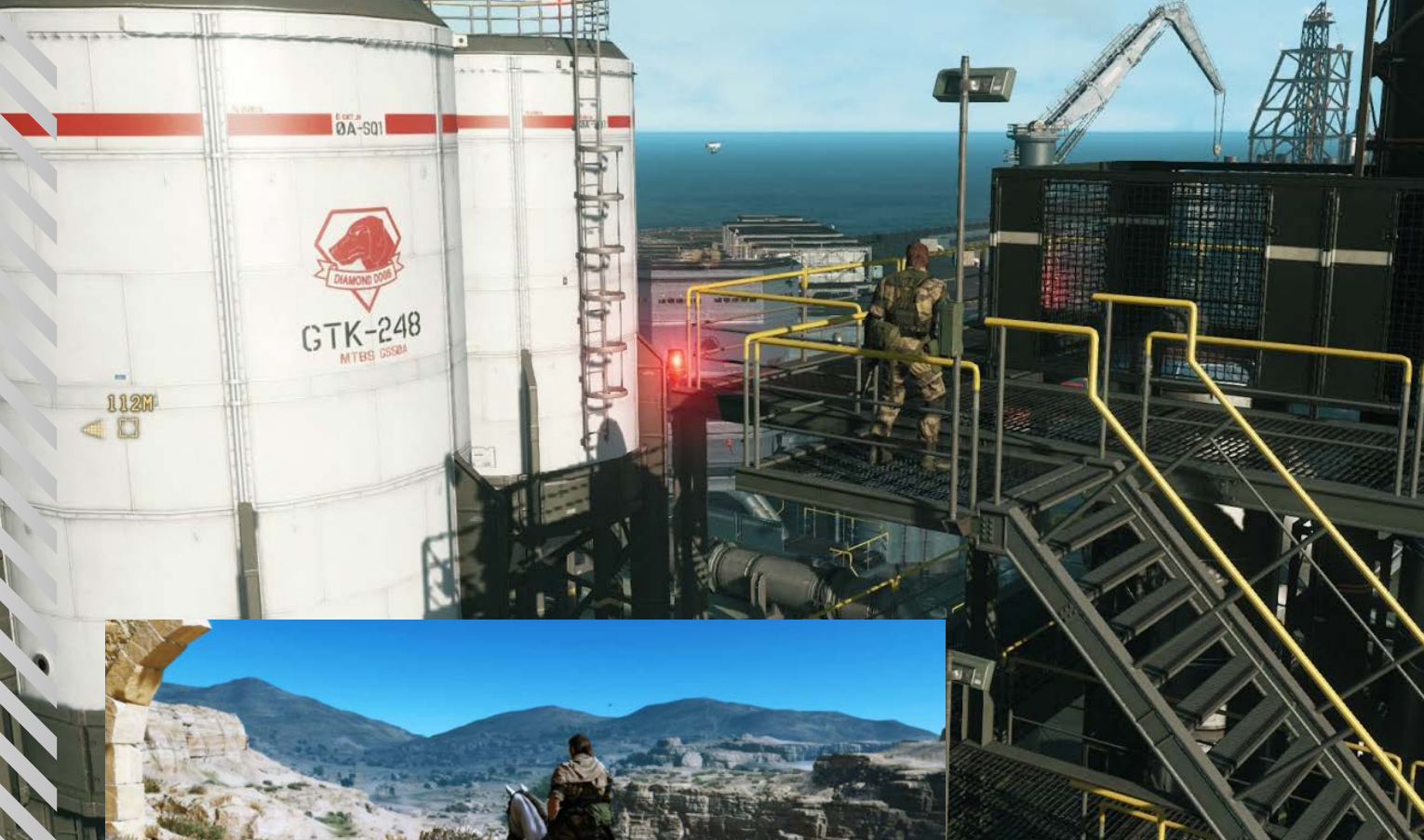
And what about the main aspect of any video game? How's the gameplay stacking up in The Phantom Pain? Well, where to begin... How about this – it's phenomenal! Extraordinary, fantastic, captivating! Without the superlative epithets we could simply say that the gameplay in Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain is... flawless. You have never encountered anything this good, polished, prudent and fun in this series. And beyond. It will draw you in, make you think and immerse you, make you plan every step, every bullet. The Phantom Pain will make you be Snake unlike ever before. Since the game is open world, you will have a frightening amount of freedom at your disposal. There are multitudes of methods and tools to finish the levels, and the combinations of them to apply are infinite. As before, we could divide them into stealth and action types, but that would only be broad categorizations. You can encircle your opponent, disable his communications, steal it for your own army, completely obliterate with an armored vehicle or with support of a personal chopper, you can simply skip them, shoot them from afar, scare them, beat them up, bomb them, put them to sleep, confuse, trample, avoid, or confront them in absolutely any way

"GIVE SNAKE A CLOWN COSTUME AND PAINT FULTON RED AND YOU'LL GET EVERY CHILD'S WORST NIGHTMARE"

SUPER MARIO MAKER™
WE ARE ALL MIYAMOTOS

RECOMMENDED PC CONFIGURATION:
OS: Windows 7x64, Windows 8x64
(64-bit OS Required)
Intel Core i7-4790 (3.60GHz) or better;
Quad-core or better
GPU: NVIDIA GeForce GTX 760
RAM: 8 GB RAM
HDD: 28 GB

imaginable. By combining the different weapons, vehicles and followers you'll be able to control the action as it unfolds. Although it might not sound admirable, since that's the point of video games anyway, the freedom of choice in doing it is spectacular. Will your "movie" be about Snake with a rocket launcher chasing a tank on horseback; or about Snake jumping in front of a jeep and shooting the driver in slow motion, thus saving the prisoner with whom he later dramatically escapes on a helicopter... It's all up to you. In addition, there is no difficulty setting to select, instead the game adapts to your play style to become harder; believe me, however much a mission might remind you of a previous one, you simply won't experience it in the same way. The gameplay is not a 10... It's a bloody solid, undisputable 10!

But there are other elements, right? Oh yes, in other fields, The Phantom Pain raises and broadens the standard of the series. Multitudes of easter eggs, specific tricks, humorous attitude that seems to joke about the attempted realism of the series. It's all there, and more. Add to that the many, many types of weaponry and gadgets, the varied

staff, hidden locations... Before you is a game that requires hundreds of hours just to discover and unlock everything. Furthermore, soon we'll be getting the Online add-on, Metal Gear Online, completely free of charge. Oh, the joy!

Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain is a game so good that it makes you realize that it could have been even better. Almost every critique about this game comes from the dismay that the perfectly utilized potention it has wasn't used even more, even better. With all it's bright sides, The Phantom Pain reveals it's imperfect ones. With it's geniality, it gives off an impression of incompleteness. Like a refreshing drink that leaves a bitter aftertaste, The Phantom Pain will make you mourn it's grandeur. It makes you ster into it's depths and wonder why it feels so empty when it delivers so much. Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain is an unreal phenomenon of a game that is too good. So good in fact, that you simply have to regret it's shortcomings in those areas that we weren't expecting them... Do not miss the opporunity to experience this refreshing diamond in the rough. You surely won't. This is what you've been waiting for, right?

GAME PROVIDED BY:
videotop

PLATFORMS:
PC, PS4, PS3, XBOX 360, XBOX ONE

PUBLISHED BY:
Konami Digital Entertainment

PRICE:
59 €

DEVELOPED BY:
Kojima Productions

TESTED ON:
PC

RATING 9

✓ Flawless gameplay
✓ Unprecedented depth and recognizable charm
✓ Excellent graphics and even better atmosphere

✗ Sidelined story and cinematic experience
✗ Lifeless protagonists compared to their predecessors
✗ Somewhat empty expanses

**N**intendo started to change. That much is certain by now. Or what's certain is the desire to change on their part. The fans certainly don't care if those few years with the company finances in the red were the reason for that. What does matter is that the company with the most close-guarded franchises in the industry had finally started opening up and Super Mario Maker is one of the best examples of that. Nintendo has offered their most sacred possession, the 2D Mario, to everyone to do as they please.

There's one thing I have to preface this with – I never liked building levels. And generally other stuff in video games. I always preferred to leave that bit to the professionals, while I enjoyed the imagination and creativity of those people that are much more creative than I am. Which brings us back on point – Super Mario Maker hit the bull's eye, even for me! It's a game in which I found infinitely fun things to do after only a couple of minutes. And when that became a couple of hours, I had that same smile on my face that I had only when Nintendo games were involved. The sort of gaming delight and joy that only the genius designers from Nintendo could ever elicit from me. Except that this time around I experienced it thanks to "average gamers" from the internet, or, to make the matter even more impressive, even from something I made by myself in game. So, if there's only one thing to take away from this, that would be the one.
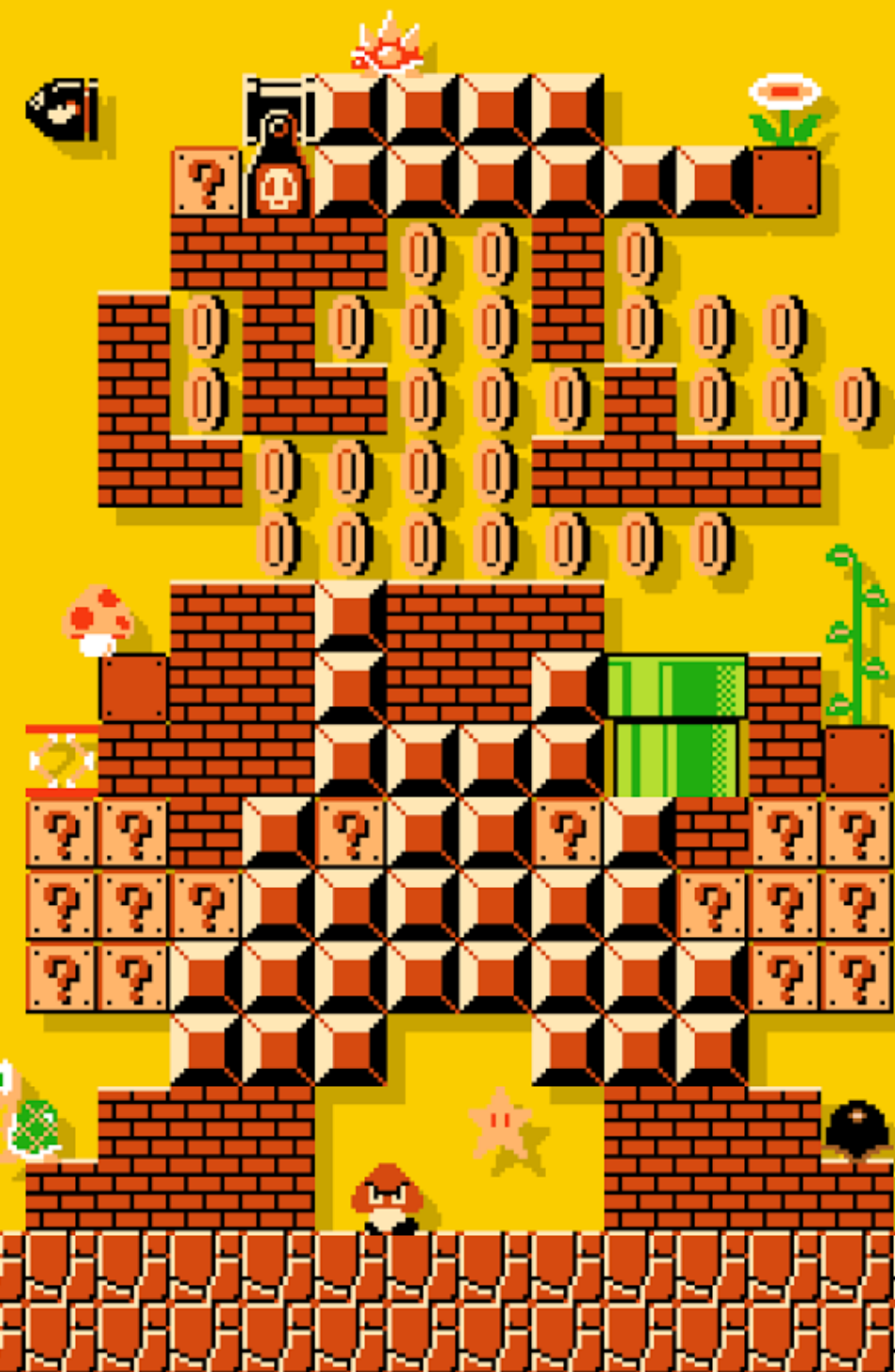
Super Mario Maker is an extremely fun game, even if building levels was never your cup of tea.

And how did Nintendo manage to accomplish this? The real answer is probably – because they're Nintendo! If the answer was any clearer, everybody would be making great games that follow a familiar formula. Not to argue what makes a game good or bad, let's move on and get introduced to some details about Super Mario Maker.

The game could be roughly split into two segments – the one where you play, and the one where you build. If you're still adamant about not building any levels, the 10 Mario Challenge mode challenges you to successfully finish six randomly selected levels created by Nintendo developers with 10 lives. These levels are a fair bit shorter than standard Mario levels and include all four "eras" that the game covers (Super Mario Bros, Super Mario Bros. 3, Super Mario World and New Super Mario Bros. U) and are pretty fun to play. Crossing from one era to the next in such short intervals is entertaining in itself, as each brings it's own visual style and it's own specific gameplay mechanic. By playing through these levels you'll also get a better idea of what you could possibly create when you decide to build your own.

And then, on the gameplay side of things, we get to the user-created content - that even now, since the game's release, is an endless source of entertainment. It's simply astounding how many excellent levels were created in such a short time. Not to mention that it's all very well sorted, so finding the most interesting levels is extremely simple. Nintendo has created a sort of a social network inside Mario Maker, so everything that you would come to expect these days is present – commenting, a content rating system, and following favorite creators. There is also a fully functional 'Search' system, as well as a 'Featured' section which has a ton of interesting content on offer. You can preview each level before playing, and one of the neat features that were implemented is that if you wish to upload a level, you'll need to play through and finish it yourself first, to prove that it's doable. And just like you would imagine, this is something that will inevitably tug on the people's competitive

side – "this level is so hard, that I'm the only person in the world that finished it". It seems that these sadistic levels were at the forefront of those created by the players, but that doesn't spoil the fun, unless you allow it to. There's a lot more to Mario Maker than that, so they can never overshadow the many excellent levels of normal difficulty. For example, the 100 Mario Challenge is an interesting mode that's linked to user-created levels. You get 100 lives and have to face a huge amount of randomly selected levels. You can even set the wanted difficulty, and if you really don't like a level, there's the

option to skip it at the cost of one life. This way, Mario Maker has created a full 2D Mario game that's different each time and often super fun to boot!

We'll devote the least space to the level editor itself. Yes, it's genius. Yes, building the levels using the Wii U gamepad is finally a good use for the controller. Yes, the possibilities are nearly endless. And yes, there's a ton of secrets and easter eggs. Even the tutorials, which are mostly in written form, are very well worded. But all of these functions of the level editor are firstly dependant on your own creativity and that will be the point of contention if you're good at it or not. There are a few tidbits to highlight, however. It's amazing how well the music is incorporated into the level editor. It's simply fantastic. The game plays "your tune" the whole time, and almost every move you make is accompanied with a melody and when it all comes together it actually sounds good. Genius! Another thing that we liked is that every level you play you can also download and tinker with for yourself. This opens up even more amazing possibilities. This part is too hard for me – maybe I could move these spikes to be a bit lower... Did Nintendo just about manage to make the game testing process fun?

If we really have to nitpick, we could say that even though the possibilities are almost endless, there is still that "almost" part, meaning that some

things that we've seen in 2D Mario platform games still can't be recreated. But trust us, the things that you can create presents you with a plethora of possibilities. Also, we have to remark that we were a bit disappointed that the Amiibo figurines allow you to bring only their 8-bit versions into the game. Although they are some of the most entertaining "skins" that we've seen in a video game, we would have liked to see them implemented for the other 3 eras too, especially the New Super Mario Bros U era. On the other hand, additional skins can at least be unlocked even without the Amiibo figurines, by playing the 100 Mario Challenge mode, which is praiseworthy.

With Super Mario Maker, Nintendo has given something precious to the players, something that has been exclusively theirs up until now. Does this mean an end to 2D Mario games that they will publish? What would be the next logical step for 2D Mario series, when we just got everything we would want? We are very interested to find out how will Nintendo tackle these questions in the future. But what matters now and bears repeating once again – Super Mario Maker is the best level editor that we have ever had the opportunity to try out. It's so much more than a level editor, and even if you're not at all interested in building any levels and you're a Mario fan, this is a game that you absolutely need in your collection. And the best of all is that as

the time goes by, Mario Maker can be only better and better. How many games can boast the same?
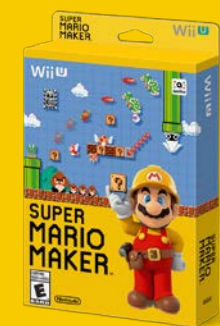
PLATFORM:
Nintendo Wii U

PUBLISHED BY:
Nintendo

PRICE:
60 €

DEVELOPED BY:
Nintendo EAD
Group No. 4

TESTED ON:
Wii U

RATING (9)

✓ An endless source of fun

✓ The interface is excellent and easy to use with the gamepad

✓ So much more than a simple level editor

✗ Some elements of Mario levels are still missing

Author: Marko Narandžić

REVIEW

DESTINY
THE TAKEN KING

THE FATEFULL "YES"

"DESTINY ENTERS IT'S SECOND YEAR STRONGER THAN EVER"

After the huge hype before Destiny was finally released last year, a lot of players were left a bit disappointed. Whether it was the high expectations after the pompous announcements that hardly any game could hope to fulfil or the shear amount of elements that were simply mediocre – in the end, it doesn't even matter. Destiny simply failed to become the next big thing in gaming. But to be honest, even in the state it was released in, it was still a fun game, especially when we consider the core console FPS shooter gameplay that Bungie had years to perfect with the Halo series.

The game got two expansions in the last year- The Dark Below and House of Wolves. Some things were polished up, but the game still divided fans into two categories. The first one being made up of those who have tried the game, got to a certain point and then simply gave up on Destiny after realising that there won't be any interesting story development and that the only satisfaction they would get from the rest of the game is grinding. The second category are the players who have persevered and continued to log in

and grind daily. Even though there are a large number of people in the latter category, when compared to the number of people that had bought Destiny, the amount of those who make up the first category is considerably bigger.

The Taken King is the third expansion and the first component of what Bungie and Activision refer to as "Destiny Year Two". The expansion, as well as the 2.0 update which has also been implemented just before its release, bring many fixes, new stories, enemies, missions, classes, abilities and much more, all of which can be taken as a new launch for Destiny.

The first thing you are bound to notice is that your faithful companion has changed his voice overnight. Peter Dinklage's ghost will gladly be forgotten by most players. Now that place was taken over by the well known voice of Nolan North. He sounds better than his predecessor, although still a bit strange. Maybe the real problem was the not-so-imaginitive generic text and not the voice acting...

The next thing you will surely notice is that the game now actually has a story and characters. No offence to the

hardcore Destiny fans, but going online to read cards on Bungie.net, which could maybe have served as an interesting addition, can't be used to make up for the sheer lack of story and context for why you are doing something in a game that aspires to potentially take hundreds of hours of playing in an MMO fashion. Now we have before us the traditional way of story progression - in the game itself, and not on the developer's website. There is also the memorable cliché villain Oryx, who's very angry at you for killing his son Crot during the events of the first expansion. The game now has cutscenes, made in a typical, bombastic, sci-fi

manner, and this finally gives a tangible context to your actions in game and gives it everything it lacked a year ago.

All three classes, Titan, Warlock and Hunter, got some new options as well as subclasses. Titans can now hurl a giant flaming hammer that is sure to ruin the day (or life) of anyone who stands in it's way. This adds an interesting dimension of fighting from a distance to a class that has mostly served to absorb and do damage up close. Warlocks now have the ability to float and shoot lightning from their fingertips. It's another interesting addition to the tactical approach to

battles and, we got to admit, also very stunning visually. Hunters have gained a new bow and arrow that mobilizes opponents which can be a pretty useful addition to your offensive arsenal. New enemies, 'The Taken', also contribute to the overall refreshing impression; although you will soon find out that they are more or less very similar to the enemies you've been shooting for the past year.

Progression system has been completely overhauled. The dreadful system from the original Destiny which was based on endless grinding has now been replaced
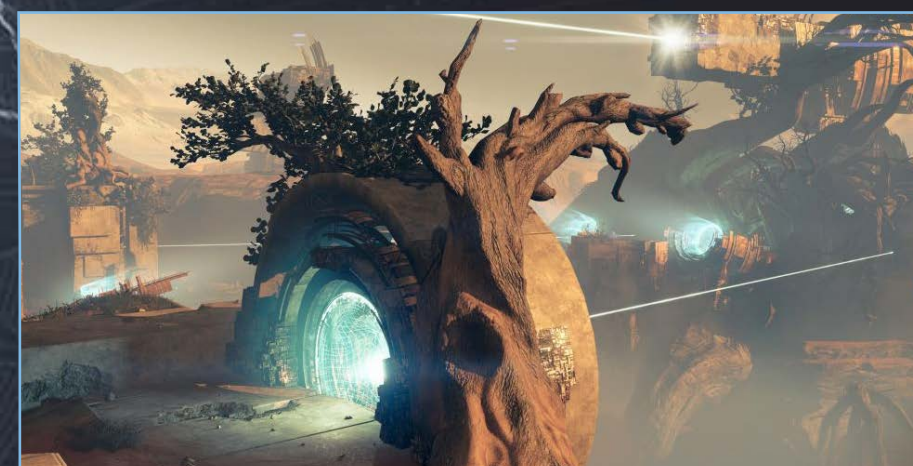
with one that allows you to level up by simple questing, killing bosses or playing the Cubicle mode. Speaking of the PvP aspect, expect new maps, better balance of weapons, as well as a few new modes, amongst which Rift stands out the most - it's a capture the flag mode, but the players carry a ball of electricity instead of a flag.

When we consider the new Raid, and finally dome interesting bosses, shootouts in Destiny suddenly don't seem as empty and pointless as they did a year ago. Bungie on the other hand continues to insist that the platformer elements can be interesting from first person perspective and it still fails to convince us. The frustration is especially apparent in one of the key new locations in game, a huge ship called Dreadnought, that's stationed near Saturn. The platforms will disappear from under your feet and that feeling you

get when you have to start a section over and over again is definitely not something you're going to enjoy, and we can't help but wonder who the hell thought this kind of platforming would be a good idea.

There is no doubt that Destiny is entering it's second year stronger than ever. If you gave up on the game some seven-eight months ago, this is the ideal opportunity to give it a second go. The entry isn't really cheap, since the price of the expansion is very near the price of the full game, not to mention that you're going to need all the previous expansions to play. But keep in mind that Destiny is much better polished and refined compared to its first year, and if you've liked what the game had the potential to be, but result had left you indifferent, The Taken King might reassure you with its many fixes.

PLATFORMS:
PS4, PS3, Xbox One, Xbox 360

PUBLISHED BY:
Activision

PRICE:
40 €

DEVELOPED BY:
Bungie

TESTED ON:
PS4

GAME CODE PROVIDED BY: COMPUTERLAND

RATING 8

✔ Finally, a decent story

✔ New gameplay elements, better progression system

✔ More quality content in all parts of the game

✘ Steep price

✘ Repetitive quests

Authors: Milan Živković, Marko Narandžić   REVIEW

FIFA 16

FIFA, UP TO 16

"TRY NOT TO PLAY AGAINST THE AI TOO MUCH. ONLINE IS MUCH MORE FUN!"

Years pass and fans of football simulations eagerly await to see what the guys from EA and Konami got cooking each year when it comes to that genre. When it comes to FIFA 16, at first glance, it seems like it's only a repaint of it's younger brother, FIFA 15. Although, not even it's older brothers would have been ashamed by this fancy new paintjob. It seems to us like FIFA 16 is the winner of a beauty pageant among EA's football games. All it's menus are nicely positioned and graphically well done. The music, we would say, is pretty similar to that of previous years, so no luck for folk music lovers. But, you probably won't buy the new FIFA game for music and menus, so let's get right into the main part of it – gameplay, and some other minor details that enhance the overall experience of a game whose main motive is it's love of football.

When it comes to the atmosphere, FIFA has once again fulfilled our expectations. They added new hymns, new stadiums, new graphical details, and new weather conditions. Along with full graphic support for the Premier League, this year Bundesliga got the same treatment, which will surely gladden the fans from Germany, and surely others too. The club jerseys are faithfully represented and a big chunk of clubs even have their third set in game, which is definitely a plus. Many teams can even pick retro jerseys. Even the fonts on player's backs

are no longer wrinkly and stretched from shoulder to shoulder no matter the name's length. This year, the letters are of uniform dimensions, which is a small, but positive change.

Gameplay-wise, the developers have worked on some new controls, like for example, a direct pass to feet, or running while still facing the opposing attacker that has the ball. This means that your player won't be slowly dragging along any more when you want to keep facing your opponent, which will certainly help to keep

up the pressure on the attacker. But, don't expect miracles... All these small changes barely influence the game. We could even say that some of the redefined commands even set it back, like for example, crossing the ball into empty space. By holding L1 (if you're playing on PS) while crossing and voila –with good timing in most cases, an attacker will create an advantage. And almost always manage to at least try a header towards the goal, and fairly often even score. It remains to be seen if the people at EA will fix this injustice towards defenders who are trembling at mere

suggestion of the opponent reaching for that wondrous L1+cross command. This is especially true if you decide to play against AI on one of the higher difficulty settings – be prepared to be terrorized by their constant use of it.

Another new option is body feint. While you're controlling the ball, hold L1 while moving around the left stick and your player will act like he's having a panic attack; although sometimes this feint maneuver might be useful, especially if you're not facing a computer opponent. All in all, when it comes to the general control responsiveness, we could say that there were some minor improvements.

This year, Ultimate team has a new feature – draft mode; that allows you to invest 15.000 futcoins to create a team out of 5 players on offer per position. First, of course, you have to choose a formation, then a captain who can be of any position and will usually be one of your best players. After that, you set up the rest of positions and substitutes. It can be played online or offline and the more you win, the bigger the prize. Five wins in a row is the biggest available streak and will net you the biggest prizes. And the prizes rise in value depending on the difficulty setting that you choose. You won't have to invest any coins for you first fut draft, so use that freebie wisely.

Of course, the biggest change this year is the availability of female national teams to play with. There are 12 of them and we have to admit that their faces and hairstyles are very well done. Since the last Women's FIFA World Cup, female football viewership grew drastically, so people from EA took this as an opportunity to help the sport out with a gentle push, and of course make a few coins out of it (not FIFA coins, mind you). Among the 12 selectable teams are the reigning champions - team USA.

It's worth mentioning that new challenges have been added to Skillgames that could serve as a good training or as a pastime while waiting for a match to load.

So, in conclusion, we could say that FIFA hadn't raised the bar this year, but had made a small step forward. But was that enough to beat out the competition? We're not so sure about that... But for all those FIFA fans, this year's edition will be more than enough to slake their thirst. A few nicks have been mended and the game received a new makeover. Nothing spectacular, but it will have to serve for this year.

"DEFINITELY TRY THE WOMEN'S FOOTBALL"

PS4

FIFA 16

GAME PROVIDED BY:
ewe comp

PLATFORMS:	DEVELOPED BY:
PC, PS3, PS4, Xbox 360, Xbox One	EA Sports
PUBLISHED BY:	**TESTED ON:**
EA	PS4
PRICE:	
59 €	

RATING 8.5

✓ Weather conditions and fan chants make for a great atmosphere

✓ Gameplay provides new tactical opportunities

✓ The availability of women's football

✗ A few unbalanced gampeplay elements

✗ Playing against the AI is frustrating

Author: Bojan Jovanović

REVIEW

Until Dawn™

I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST WINTER BREAK

The horror games so far have tackled many different themes, but none of them managed to capture the feel of the teen horror genre that started in the '70s with the movie "Halloween". The premise is always the same – a group of teenagers looking for a good time travel to a remote location and everything's great until a maniacal killer grabs a sharp object and goes on a spree. It's a plus if there's a tragedy that happened before that trip and because of which the killer wants them all dead. From "Friday 13th", to "Scream" and "I know what you did last summer", this tried and tested formula had given the creeps to generations, but was also (rightfully) parodied as well. And now we can even play in such a movie, thanks to Until Dawn.

On year after a bad practical joke in which two sisters lost their lives, their brother Josh gathers the company that was present on that faithful night for another bout of drinking and partying to commemorate the anniversary. Of course, the location of this gathering is a cabin in the woods on one of the snow-covered peaks of Blackwood Mountain. The clichés don't end here. Each of the eight cast members is an archetype of one of the typical horror movie characters in the way they look and act. That means you're going have to stomach lots of face-desk worthy dialogue, especially if you can't stand "bro-talk". Yet this is where the charm of Until Dawn lies, in simulating characters and scenes from a genre that had strived for decades on hilarious clichés and often one-dimensional characters. If you're had any experience with this genre, there is a likely possibility that you're going to enjoy this ride.

And what a ride this is! After initial introductions of the characters, and who's with whom, who was in a relationship

> **"A GROUP OF TEENAGERS OUT FOR A GOOD TIME AT A REMOTE LOCATION – SOUNDS FAMILIAR?"**

or argument, every one of them goes in their separate direction while a shadowy machete-wielding figure looks on from a distance. You'll switch between each character in turn and each one of them will have a part in the story during the game's 10 in-game hours (until dawn, as the title says). Mechanics of Until Dawn are quite reminiscent of the games from Telltale and Quantic Dream studios, in it's combination of free exploration and quick-time action sequences. And because it's a horror game, every character can get hurt - by their own or another person's fault. The nonlinear structure of the game is based on the so called "butterfly effect", a chaos theory according to which one small event can influence another, much bigger one. Every interaction, every decision and dialog can influence the outcome

of the scene, or even the whole game, thus putting the player in the thankless role of an executioner for eight virtual lives. Sometimes you'll have to make serious decisions in a nick of time, while sometimes you'll have all the time you need, but what both have in common is the cold sweat panic you'll feel while paranoia creeps in and you wonder which choice is the right one. The true horror is usually not on the screen but in the mind of a player as he makes a brutally hard decision.

So that the game doesn't turn into stumbling in the dark looking for a switch to continue the story, the developers have put in a multitude of clues and totems that you can collect. While the clues reveal the background of the game's great dark storyline, the totems offer you glimpses

of the future. Divided by their colors, the totems can portent a character's death or save one of them; i.e., it shows you the scene that you should avoid or enact. The hints are never too clear, because the shown sequences last for barely a couple of seconds, but finding most, if not all, of the totems will greatly increase the survivability of characters. To be fair, you'd also have another advantage if you've seen a lot of slasher horrors and you know not to run towards the ominous sounds or to try to use a knife only in a hopeless situation. But not everything depends on your genre knowledge. The quick-time events that require a quick decision also play a major role in the game, and sometimes you'll simply need to hide. When that occurs, you'll need to keep the controller perfectly still so that the built-in gyroscope

doesn't move the on-screen indicator too much. These are the tensest parts of the game, during which we didn't blink nor breathe; scared that even a smallest tick might jolt our controller ending with brutal consequences for our character.

The creepy atmosphere of the eerie mountain would be hard to convey without quality shadows and lighting, but Until Dawn is safe on that account. The modified engine from Killzone Shadow Fall shows some of the best light effects that we've encountered on PS4 so far, and the character models are up there too. What really stood out the most was the character animation however. Motion capture had obviously played a huge part in this project, and when you complete the game be sure to check out the short documentary on it, accessed from the Extras menu. The visual spectacle has it's price though, and the PS4 sometimes struggles to keep up with the minimum 30fps and slowdowns can be noticeable, sometimes even during the quick-time sequences. The cast is full of great young actors that have appeared in well-known TV-shows and their experience shows – Until Dawn not only looks fantastic, it sounds fantastic too. However, our favorite cast member is Peter Stormare,

who's absolutely brilliant as a psychiatrist who analyzes you between chapters using tests, similarly to Silent Hill: Shattered Memories. In conclusion, the production and direction of the game are some of the best on PS4 and beyond. One fault might be that the camera could have been better positioned, because the "cinematic angles" can sometime get in the way of good room visibility or the controls can suddenly switch when you move from one angle to the next.

Designed by passionate fans of this particular horror subgenre, Until Dawn was made in the same vein, mostly as a tribute – the game seems aware that the story is sometimes completely silly, but that does not distract it from it's course. If you're ready for such a precedent, you'll have a great narrative experience, a true interactive movie that immerses the player since it's excellent introduction, and offers real 'cause-consequence' choices that puts even Heavy Rain to shame. So play Until Dawn in the dark with headphones on, or with a bunch of friends around you, and visit the Blackwood Mountain and the cabin on it's shadowy peak. This is an adventure that you'll love to retell – if you survive!

PLATFORM:
PS4

PUBLISHED BY:
Sony Computer Entertainment

PRICE:
49€

DEVELOPED BY:
Supermassive games

TESTED ON:
PS4

RATING 9

✓ Faithfully reproduced atmosphere of teen/slasher horror movies
✓ Voice acting and motion capture
✓ Nonlinear story, replay value
✗ Unstable frame rate
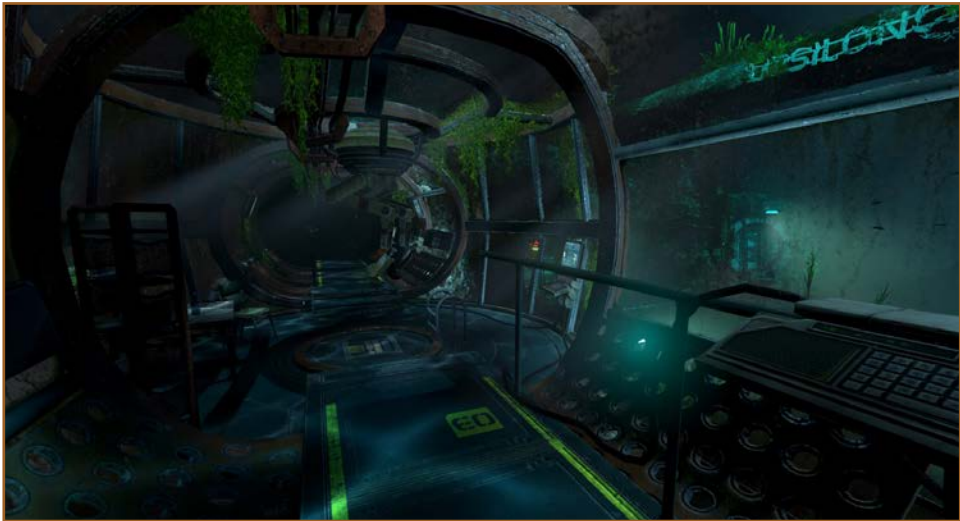✗ Occasional bad camera angles

Author: Nikola Savić   REVIEW

SOMA
What makes a man?

SOMA is probably one of the most anticipated games this year, which shouldn't come as a surprise when we consider that people behind it are the same ones that made Amnesia, one of the most important horror titles of the decade. In case you've never heard of Amnesia, then this text's probably not for you, because we will skip the part where we retell the stories and praises about one of the scariest and most original horror adventures ever, a game that has set the bar for the horror genre and has spawned many clones. We will however mention the Penumbra series, Amnesia's lesser known older brother, who undeservingly became overshadowed and which we wholeheartedly recommend if you liked Amnesia, which we know you did.

Anyway, back to SOMA. The developers have worked on this game ever since Amnesia: The Dark Descent (2010) released, because they've left Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs (2013.) in care of the developers from the Chinese Room studio. In Penumbra, we have visited secret underground facilities, in Amnesia we have roamed castles in the past, and now SOMA is taking us some hundred years into the future, to the underwater research station PATHOS-2. Your character, a simple Canadian guy named Simon, who one day in 2015 goes to a, seemingly, routine head check, but from which he wakes up in year 2104, on the aforementioned station PATHOS-2. Of course, he has no clue about how, where, what or why -

which leaves him with no other options than to investigate. The story unfolds in an excellent natural pace, and you will slowly reveal the details and find out where you are, what's going on, or more accurately, what HAD happened, as well as what had happened to the Earth in general, though your own personal part in all of that will remain a mystery for a long while. You will discover all of this by reading computer logs, listening to recorded crew memoirs on data stations, but also by talking to Catherine, the only other remaining person on the station. The writing is great and it deals with a topic we too could face in the near future - what makes us human? Which are the basic elements that make a human, and when does he stop being one?

The atmosphere and the pacing are in similar vein to the earlier Frictional Games' titles, although SOMA seems generally a bit less scary, or that's our impression at least. Atmosphere around the locations that we move through is dense with foreboding and there is a pressing feeling that something terribly wrong has happened on the station, while a slimy oily substance can be found leaking everywhere, and in the meantime some kind of biomechanical matter spreads around the decayed, rusty rooms. You can feel both oppressed and depressed while exploring, but the true fear is somehow left out. It's possible that the main reason for this is that your main character is quite talkative, unlike the ones you controlled in previous Frictional Games' titles, and not only

that, but his voice is also unnaturally calm and composed, sometimes even bizarrely cheerful given the situation he's in. There is no trace of fear or panic in his voice apart from his breathing intensifying during dangerous situations. One would think that you'd at least be upset if someone transported you a hundred years into the future, who knows how deep under the ocean surface, among robots who think they're human and everything around you is falling apart.

There's a wide variety of monsters in the game and just like in the previous ones, they have their locations which they 'guard' and your only goal is to do whatever you are supposed to undetected and move along. They aren't that scary either, but they definitely have interesting and unique designs, so almost every encounter will feel different and new. Some of the situations involving monsters can get tense, but that's more out of frustration over not being able to bypass them. The main character doesn't have a stress meter like in Amnesia, so you can huddle in the dark for as long as you want, and you will only enter a mild panic mode as danger grows, while many enemies indicate their proximity by creating static on your screen.

Gameplay is reminded us mostly of the previously mentioned Machine for Pigs, which was the first game to depart from classic inventory riddles we were used to seeing in Penumbra and the first Amnesia games. And while you can pick up, examine and throw any object around you that

you encounter, you will rarely have to do so – there's simply no need for it. Most of the time, the puzzles come down to solving something around the space you're in at the moment, like entering codes and coordinates, pressing various buttons and switches, tearing out cables etc., simply put - interaction with the environment. These puzzles, if they can be called that, are fairly trivial and you'll spend most of the time wandering around locations in an attempt to discover what to do next. You will often have to go from one end of the level to the other and back, which does provide some tension, especially if you're not yet clear if there actually are any enemies there or not. Simon can run, crouch, jump and sneak, but he can't swim. Which is completely bizarre and we think is a missed opportunity, especially considering that there are a lot of sequences on the ocean floor which look incredible, and which we could have enjoyed more of, if only Simon could have remembered how to swim.

Graphics in the game, while of an about average quality, are still good enough, as it always was the case with Frictional's games, so we certainly can't fault them for this. The design of the station is excellent and it makes up for a lot of the game's atmosphere. Narrow, claustrophobic hallways, abandoned rooms and facilities covered in verdigris and the aforementioned odd biomechanical mass, are alternating with locations on the ocean floor which look incredible and walking through them is a real pleasure, even during the moments of frustration when you think you got lost or aren't sure where you're supposed to go next. Sound effects are fantastic and they always were a strong point in these games, and even the rarely-heard music fits the ocean atmosphere perfectly and seems like it came straight out of an ocean documentary. We already mentioned the voice acting and that it seems to be the main 'culprit' to blame for the loss of scariness in the overall atmosphere, but on the other hand some of the robot 'voices' are excellent, and the

tone of a confused machine that believes itself to be human is represented well. Even though we may have made too many comparisons of this game to Amnesia and Penumbra, we would advise you not to do so, although that might be difficult not to do, if you're a fan of those games. SOMA is an excellent game with a well written story and an atmosphere than you can easily immerse yourself into, but don't expect any sleepless nights like you had after playing Amnesia, because here the tonal accent is on the psychological level, to make you feel uneasy, oppressed and claustrophobic, but you won't get scared too much.

RECOMMENDED PC CONFIGURATION:
OS: Windows 7
CPU: Core i5 / AMD FX 2.4Ghz
GPU: NVIDIA GeForce GTX 480 / AMD Radeon HD 5970
RAM:4 GB
HDD:25 GB

GAME PROVIDED BY FRICTIONAL
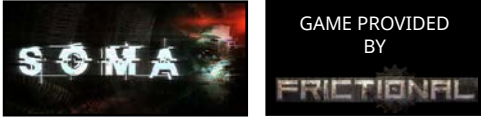
PLATFORMS:	DEVELOPED BY:
PC, PS4	Frictional Games
PUBLISHED BY:	**TESTED ON:**
Frictional Games	PC
PRICE:	
28€	

RATING 8

✓ Brilliantly designed underwater station
✓ Tense and uneasy atmosphere
✗ You'll spend more time wandering than solving problems
✗ Not as scary as earlier Frictional Games titles
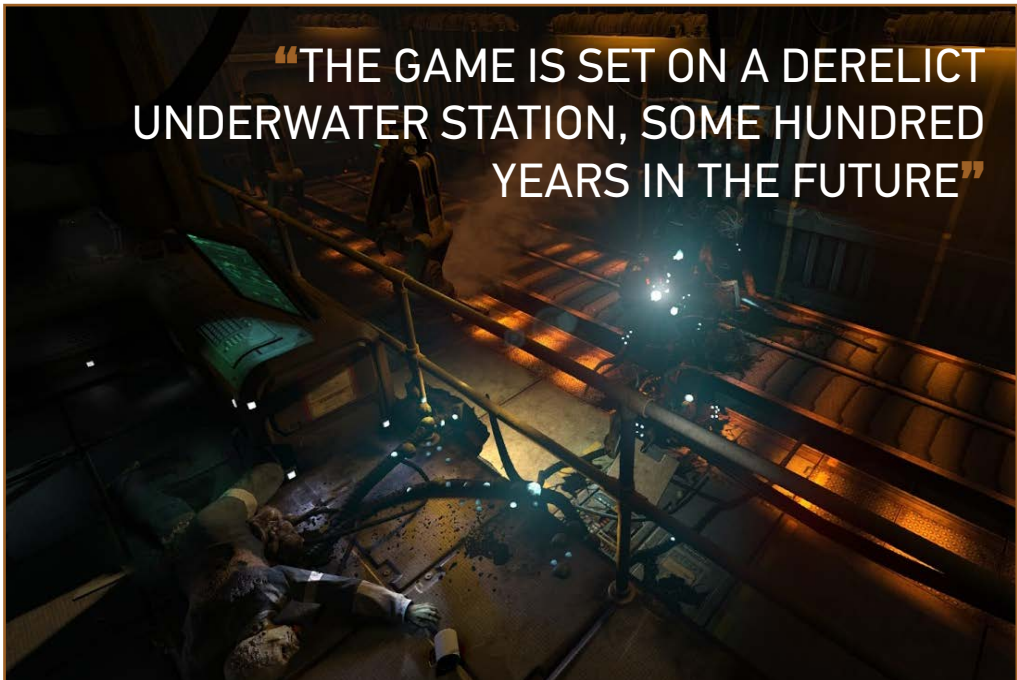
> "THE GAME IS SET ON A DERELICT UNDERWATER STATION, SOME HUNDRED YEARS IN THE FUTURE"

Play!

MAD MAX

HERE COMES THE GAME, STRAIGHT FROM THE FURY ROAD

Mad Max: Fury Road is considered by many to be the best movie this summer. Dumb, plotless, absurd and demented, it did it's job and entertained millions. George Miller, the series creator, gathered a big crew and asked for "all the crazy ideas". Thus Mad Max was born.

On the coattails of the movie comes the game in which you take on the role of Mad Max as he tries to escape the Wasteland, this time with the help of Chumbucket, an experienced if a bit insane mechanic, who gifted him the Magnum Opus, his new vehicle. What happened to the old one? It got destroyed by Lord Scabrous Scrotus, son of Immortan Joe, the main antagonist from the movie Fury Road. That also means that the Mad max game is not a movie adaptation, which is a positive. Magnum Opus is ok, but not good enough, especially for later clashes. What are you going to do about that? Upgrade it, of course. With what? Various accessories that you'll find along the way.

You're going to spend most of the time driving around and getting into fights with other clans and individuals, and their vehicles. And sometimes you'll have to face them toe-to-toe in melee combat, using the well known mechanic from other Warner Bros games. If you've played one of them, you've played them all. What's more important is that those missions are fun. The

"OPEN SANDBOX WORLD FOR MAD MAX FANS TO HAVE FUN IN, AT LEAST FOR A WHILE"

RECOMMENDED PC CONFIGURATION:
OS: 64 bit: Win 7 SP1, Win 8.1, Win 10
CPU: Intel Core i7-3770, 3.4 GHz or
AMD FX-8350, 4.0 GHz
GPU: NVIDIA GeForce GTX 760
(3 GB Memory or higher) or
AMD Radeon HD 7970
(3 GB Memory or higher)
RAM: 8GB
HDD: 32GB

MAD MAX

GAME PROVIDED BY:

videotop

PLATFORMS:
PC, Xbox One,
PlayStation 4

PUBLISHED BY:
Warner Bros

PRICE:
59 €

DEVELOPED BY:
Avalanche Studios

TESTED ON:
PC

RATING 7

✓ Fun (at first)

✓ Pretty big world map

✓ Solid vehicle combat

✗ Repetitive, goalless

✗ Combat consists of pressing just one button

combat is solid, weapons are plentiful, atmosphere is good and there are some great action scenes. Once you've gathered enough material, Chumbucket can upgrade your vehicle so you can be even stronger while roaming the desert. The problem? It's all too repetitive. After a few hours of gameplay you'll realize that you're doing the same things over and over again. That wouldn't be such an issue if the developers hadn't decided to complicate the search for resources and items you need to progress. That means that you might roam for hours upon hours in search of something you need without any encounters, battles or events. There are a number of side-quests out in the world along with the

main quest line, but once again you'll soon realize that they are the same set of repeating missions. Far being from it that Mad Max is the only sandbox game that's guilty of this. The problem is that this time the developers simply went overboard.

Be that as it may, the graphics, character design, animations, and general environment, despite being a desert wasteland, deserve all praise. Like we mentioned at the beginning, playing Mad Max is fun, but only for the first couple of hours. After that it starts to drag. Which is a shame, because the battles are pretty fun and so is the "pimping" of your vehicle.

STASIS

Let's play games, and not at being God

When you work on a project for years it becomes more than a simple job or pastime, it becomes your child, something you care about and worry about every little detail to make sure it's just right. And that's definitely apparent when you sit down to play Stasis, a game on which it's creator and designer, Chris Bischoff, had worked on by himself for years. In the early phases of development, he adamantly refused to appear with it on Kickstarter, but had ultimately ceased being stubborn about it and realized how much that money could help to cover his expenses and hire people to help. The game is now finished and ready for us to enjoy it.

Stasis is a 2D isometric P&C horror/SF adventure. The year is 2156 and you take on the role of John Maracheck, an ordinary man who's taking his wife and daughter on a vacation to the Jupiter's satellite, Europa. All three of you has gone into stasis for the trip there, but when you wake up next you find out that you're all alone on a different, unknown ship, pretty hurt and there's not a soul

in sight. The only thing in your mind is your family, so you start exploring the ship in an effort to find out what the hell is going on, only to discover bigger and bigger horrors as you move between locations. The real jewels of this game are it's story and tempo and for those alone we highly recommend it to all science fiction fans, even if you're not a fan of point and click adventures. Out of some ten hours of gameplay that the game offers, a good chunk of time will be spent reading log entries on computers and crew members' personal diaries on their PDAs. These diaries were written perfectly and through them we discover the events of the last few months that happened on the ship, but also the crew's character traits, feelings and thoughts, all of which gives the story much depth and makes those people seem real and lifelike, rather than just empty husks that further the story. The first ¾ of the story are simply perfect and will keep you glued to the screen as you seek to find out more details about the events, but it would seem that not even Stasis was safe from the malady of an abrupt ending, as the story becomes somewhat stereotypical
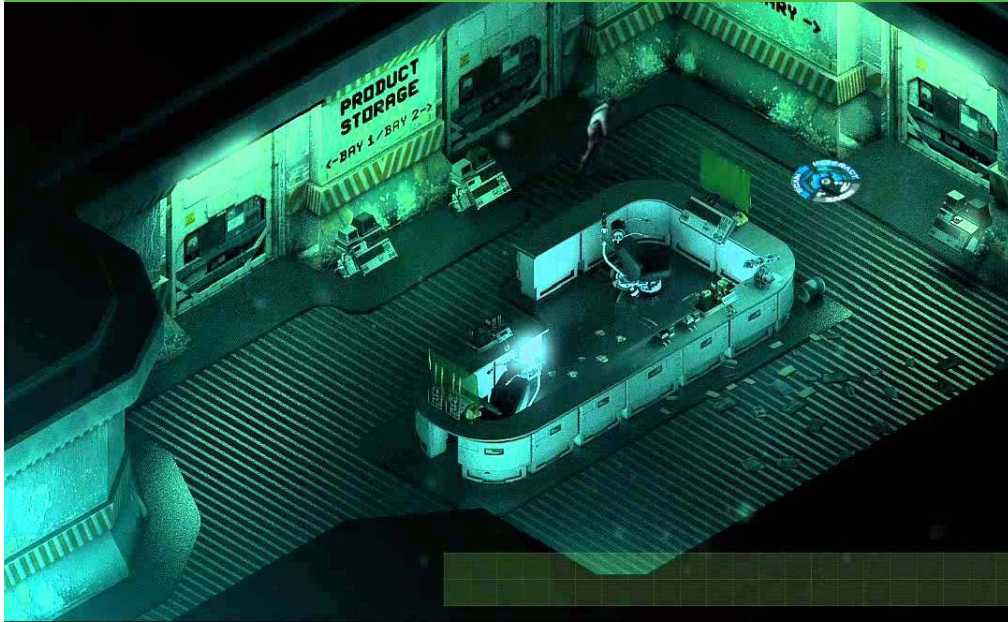
and „seen before", which does not diminish the game's quality, but there's remains a feeling that we were denied something original and that the final quarter could have done with a little more attention. Another disappointment would be the lack of multiple endings, because the game is linear from start to finish, even though there was enough room for alternate story developments. Once again, not something that affects overall quality, but it would have been a bonus and a great reason to replay the game.

The gameplay is your typical P&C adventure. You can move in all directions in 2D background locations, collect items that can interact with each other or the environment, and solve puzzles to further advance through the levels. The puzzles are mostly logical and flow naturally, so unless you overlook something major, you'll rarely get stuck. Also, your inventory won't get cluttered by too many items, so even if you have to randomly test items, there won't be too many to go through. While you're reading the diaries and computer logs you'll also get hints and insights into solutions for

some puzzles, so read carefully. While it's an unwritten rule of P&C adventures that you can't die, Stasis deviates from that rule, as there are plenty of opportunities to die. And those aren't your "standard" deaths either, because some locations need to be 'solved' in a specific way or you'll die in one way or another. A great feature is that every death in the game is unique, so if you're not careful, you'll see John die in a multitude of ways. The game has no "Hint" system, nor a way to denote the usable items around you, so you'll have to work hard to sweep every new room, so as not to miss anything.

The best asset of Stasis is it's incredible atmosphere. Even though it's just a 2D isometric game, the atmosphere around the ship is so well done, that the experience is not far behind the last Alien game for example, which is also set on a spaceship, but in high quality first person 3D graphics. Each location has been meticulously designed with many carefully crafted details that give them gravitas and tell a story about what happened there. And if that wasn't enough, what couldn't be told with 2D art was described with quality writing if you just hover your cursor over the detail you're interested in. Bearing in mind that it's hard to make too many diverse levels set on a spaceship, we can state that the locations are quite varied and unique, with each level having it's function on the ship and design in accordance to it. The game's atmosphere is dark and tormenting, the horror elements are psychological and disgust towards what you're seeing or reading, and all of that is accompanied by excellent music composed by famous

Mark Morgan (Fallout, Planescape: Torment, Wasteland 2) and chilling background noise like murmurs, muffled conversations, sudden screams, crying and children's voices.

Stasis is the game that fans of P&C adventures were waiting for a long time, and they weren't disappointed. We got a quality game that took a lot of effort and it shows in every segment of it, so we fully recommend it to all adventurers, as well as fans of science fiction, for it's great story, locations ans atmosphere.

RECOMMENDED PC CONFIGURATION:
OS: Windows 7
CPU: 2.6 GHz (Dual Core)
GPU: Nvidia GeForce 405,
AMD Radeon HD 5400 Series
RAM: 4 GB
HDD: 5 GB

STASIS

GAME CODE PROVIDED BY:
DAEDALIC ENTERTAINMENT

PLATFORMS:
PC, Mac

PUBLISHED BY:
Daedalic Entertainment

PRICE:
25€

DEVELOPED BY:
The Brotherhood

TESTED ON:
PC

RATING 8.5

✓ Atmosphere

✓ Music

✓ Visual design

✗ Tasks aren't too hard

✗ Somewhat stereotypical story ending

AFTERNOON FUN

Onikira is an indie game, from a not too well known development studio. As most indie games, this game tries to reel in players with flashy colors and exciting music. And, like most of them, it fails to actually succeed.

The easiest way to describe this game is as an attempt to copy the best elements of two much more popular titles - Mark of the Ninja and Assassins Creed Chronicles: China. Therefore, this is a samurai adventure set in feudal Japan, played as a side-scroller, in which the gameplay basis is: "go forward, destroy a bunch of enemies, go forward...". Besides having a basic attack and weapon, as you progress you'll acquire new weapons and combos that you can use depending on what kind of gear you equip.

All in all, it works pretty well - you progress through levels by cutting down your enemies while the music caresses you eardrums, but...

All of this gets very repetitive and boring pretty fast, kind of like the Game of Thrones show (hehehe). The environment doesn't change, it's almost identical throughout the whole game and most of the enemies are exactly the same as well. You'll be under the impression that you're standing still the whole time. This isn't just a product of repetitiveness, but also of the game's difficulty. However, this isn't Dark Souls type of difficulty, but simply dumb, frustrating difficulty which will make you barely get past the first level. Also, the game doesn't have a quicksave option, meaning that every death returns you back to the previous checkpoint.

The graphics are great, a mix of sharp textures of your fighter and enemies with the blurred background that reminds of ink stains on a parchment. The color contrast and the dominant blacks and reds add to the overall dark atmosphere and fit into the setting perfectly. Combat animations are fluid and realistic; you gain the impression that the weapon and the fighter are one.

If you're a fan of side-scrollers, definitely try it out. Don't be deterred by the number of bugs present. Nice graphics and good music, along with a relatively fluid gameplay, are guaranteed to provide a few hours of fun. But in the end, that's all this game has to offer which separates it from sub-mediocrity.

RECOMMENDED PC CONFIGURATION:
OS: Win 7
CPU: 1,8 GHz Quad Core
GPU: AMD HD 5000
RAM: 4GB
HDD: 4BG

GAME CODE PROVIDED BY:
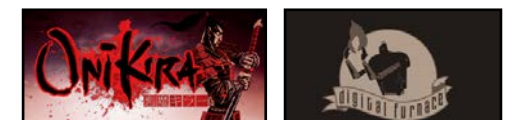
PLATFORM:
PC

PUBLISHED BY:
Digital Furnance Games

PRICE:
14€

DEVELOPED BY:
Digital Furnance Games

TESTED ON:
PC

RATING 5

✓ Likeable graphics

✓ Background music

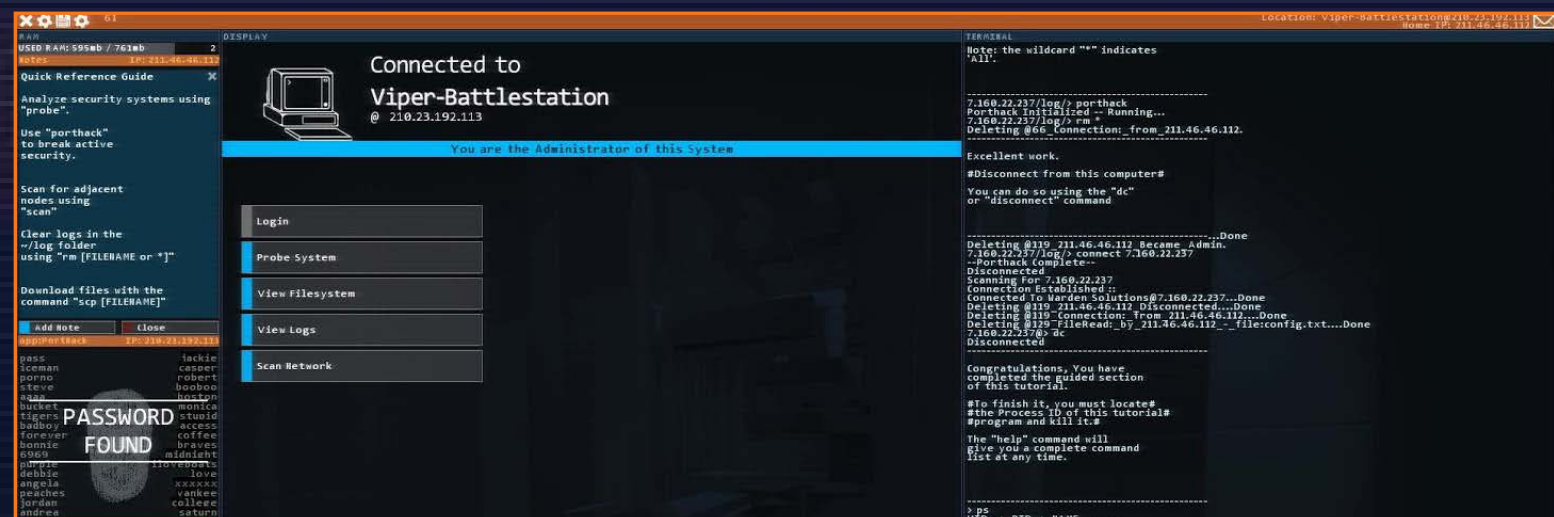✓ Fun setting

✗ Difficulty levels
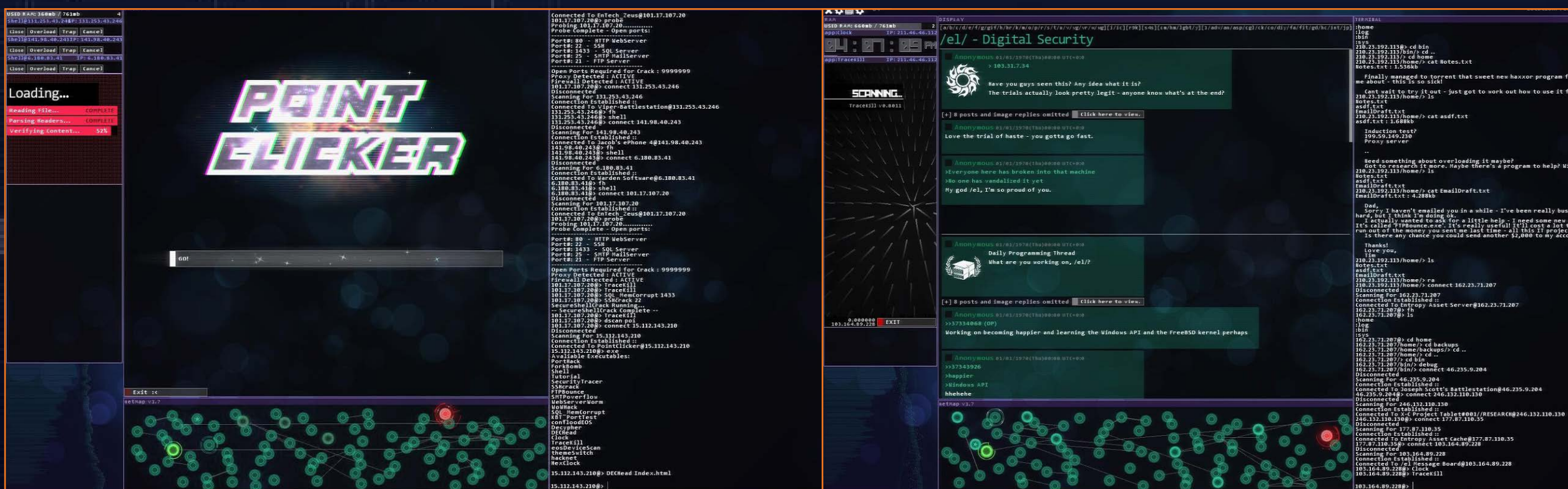
✗ Fun for one afternoon

Author: Borislav Lalović

HACKNET

You'd like to be a hacker?

> **"TINKERING WITH FILES WAS NEVER THIS FUN"**

GAME PROVIDED BY:

RECOMMENDED PC CONFIGURATION:

OS: Win XP or newer

CPU: Any with 2+ GHz

GPU: GeForce 8800

RAM: 512MB

HDD: 100 MB

Playing Hacknet late at night will leave you jumpy, twitching at the slightest sound, thinking that the hi-tech crime unit will pay you a visit. Paradoxically, this is a game that the beginners can use to practice for complex operations like breaking into databases, crashing websites etc.

That means that this is not some arcade, but a real simulation with realistic commands and realistic executive processes. If you have no experience in working with Command Prompt, make sure you finish the tutorial first because you won't be able to manage without it.

The plot is quite simple. You get an e-mail from a recently murdered hacker and following his instructions you venture deeper and deeper into the conspiracy and intrigue behind his 'sudden' death. Sounds interesting? You bet! Try playing it on a laptop somewhere outside and you'll soon find yourself either surrounded by kids or by the members of the law enforcement. If you've ever wanted to engage in this craft ('cracking', to use the correct term), but you didn't dare to or didn't own an adequate computer for it, then this is the right game for you.

It's the fluidity and immersiveness that grace this game which make it so well made and enjoyable. Besides, it has a retro feel, although it's not retro because it's fashionable these days, but simply because it's a hacking (or more precisely, 'cracking') themed game that has to look that way. However, not everyone is going to like it, especially not the younger generations who consider Watch Dogs to be an example of hacking. This is where we find the real issue - the target audience. This game might only appeal to older players who once might have wished to partake in this illegal trade when they were younger, though it's still questionable how much they would be willing to commit to this type of game now. But regardless of any of that, Hacknet is still a game that deserves your attention and you should definitely try it out.
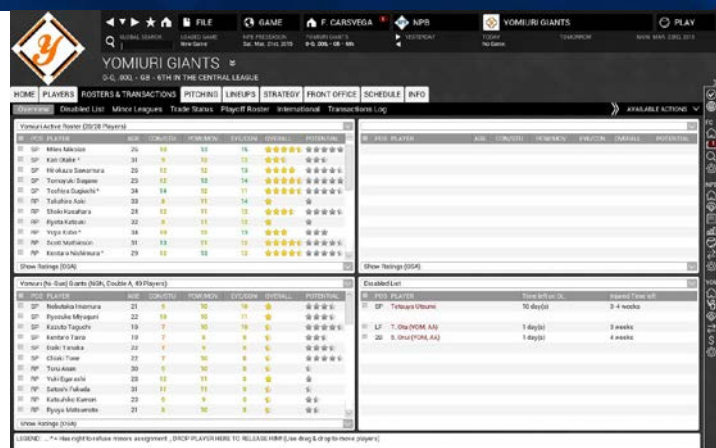
PLATFORMS:
Win/Mac/Linux

PUBLISHED BY:
Surprise Attack

PRICE:
20€

DEVELOPED BY:
Team Fractal Alligator

TESTED ON:
PC

RATING (7.5)

✓ Immersion, realism

✓ Fluidity

✓ The experience

✗ It's not for everyone

Author: Luka Zlatić

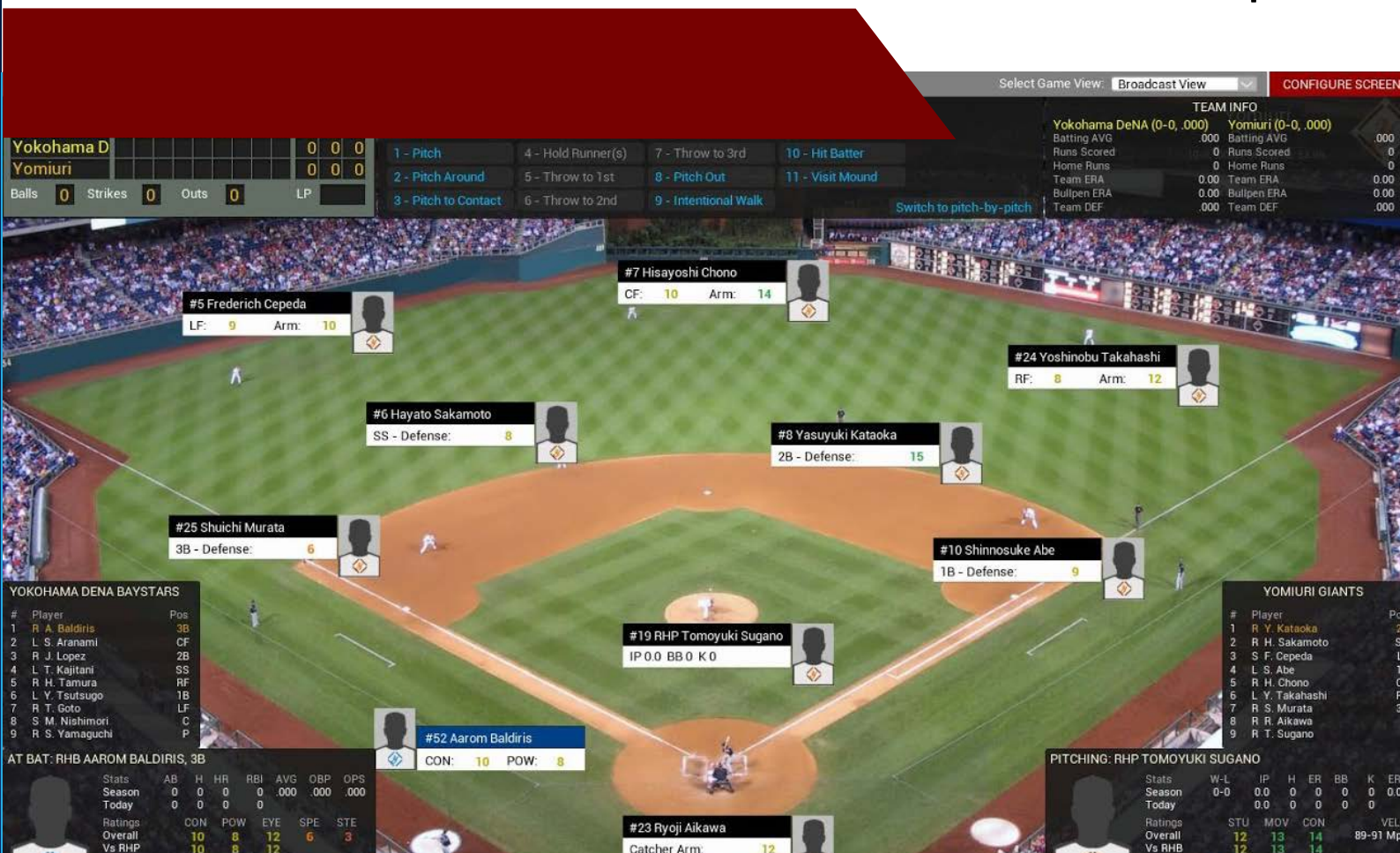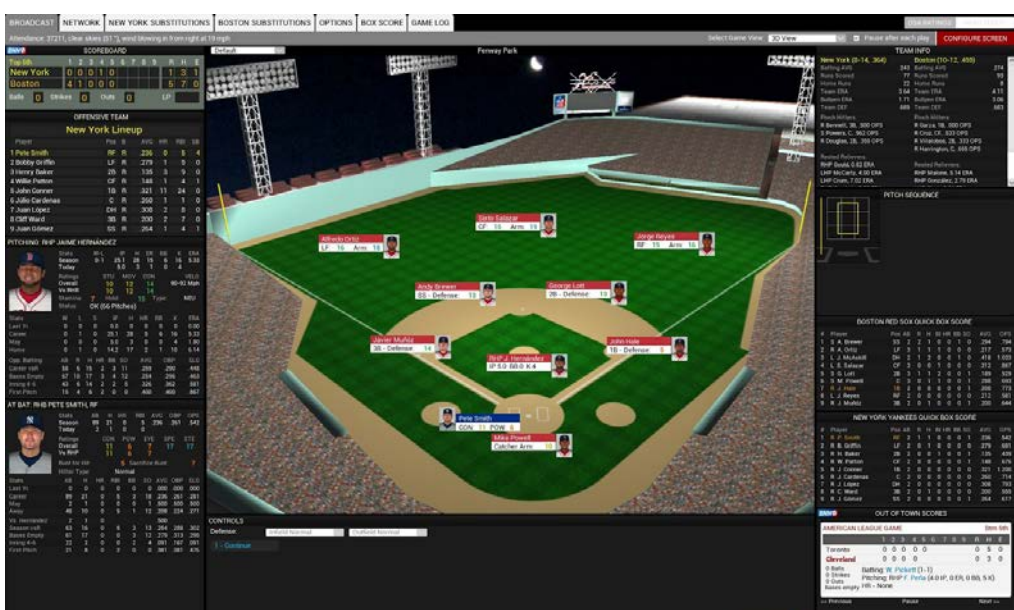**REVIEW**

OOTP 16

OUT OF THE PARK BASEBALL

The manager that might make you a baseball fan

The popularity of „American" sports is still where it's always been. We consider basketball our as our sport, we play American football fairly seriously, hockey has it`s fan base, and baseball remains a pastime for but a few fans. Yes, we have a few baseball clubs and from time to time it's possible to see a live stream of a game, but probably for the majority of our readers the most contact that they had with this sport was through the movie „Moneyball". We're centuries away from the popularity that this sport has on its native soil or in Japan, most likely because it's more interesting to play than to watch.

However, let's get back to the movie „Moneyball". The movie in which a small group of people (and Brad Pitt) attempts to manage a club by looking for players whose stats blend together, and build a successful team for a (relatively) small amount of money. In addition to being based on a true story, this movie represents the best way to play management games like Football Manager, or Out of the Park Baseball 16. We know almost everything about FM, and you will see that OOTPB is not too dissimilar and your previous knowledge of Football Manager could be very helpful.

Baseball is Heaven for statisticians, for those concerned with advanced analytics and who just love to turn sport into a game of numbers and mathematical operations. A management game is a database of numbers and mathematical operations which, with a bit of imagination, simulates sport. It is clear that managers and baseball are meant to coexist, and OOTPB16 (as well as several previous iterations) illustrate this claim with great success.

Out of the Park Baseball 16 is, therefore, a comprehensive spreadsheet with a bunch of tables that represent the world`s biggest leagues and clubs, professional players, youth players, coaches, free agent lists, potential trades, drafts and all the other parts of this sport. It is a game where you will be able to control every aspect of the club which you've chosen and fully devote to endless small details - from training, through tactics, to running the match itself. But it`s not just a dull pile of statistics; while playing the game you'll face real life-like situations that your players and club may face. Players may fight among themselves, the control may catch them after getting doped (doping scandals have already been shaking baseball for the past few years), they may get arrested for racing on the highway in the dead of night...

The beautiful thing about this title is that it can be played by people of different affinities differentiated by the amount of stats and control they want to have. The game can be slower and more demanding, but also faster and more relaxed; it all depends on your style, and the experience can be equally enjoyable. This can even be seen when starting the game, when it is possible to play with already established leagues, or create a whole new world of baseball according to your wishes, whether it's a league with characters from your favorite show, or a completely realistic representation of our local baseball league.

You can follow the matches as a unique combination of teletext and direct broadcast displayed in 3D. Unfortunately, although the 3D display is an improvement, it's still not top level, but it's something that the development team is working on, and what we can expect either in one of the frequent game updates, or in a future version.

This manager's strong core of fans claims that Out of the Park Baseball is the best series of this type. Fans of the Football Manager may not agree with this statement, but we have to admit that there is something to it... If you are a fan of managers, try OOTP. It's likely that you'll like it, even if baseball is not your type of sport.

GAME CODE PROVIDED BY

RATING 8

✓ Informations and options are detailed and clear

✓ Adaptable to all player's demands

✓ A superb manager game

✗ Missing player portraits

**Author: Bojan Jovanović**   REVIEW

BLOOD BOWL

Hut, hut, hut, upercut!

It's the last few seconds of the game; your team has the ball and only 20 yards from the touchdown line your team captain falls and breaks his neck, while one of his teammates is introducing an opponent's head with the grass by jumping on it, and the referee plots how to trip someone who's running by. Sounds like an American football horror story? Nope, just a typical half-time in Blood Bowl.

If you've never encountered this series, Blood Bowl would be best described as fantasy American football. But not the version in which you pick your dream team out of the best players of today, but instead a league made up of the various races from the Warhammer universe. Originally a miniatures board game, Blood Bowl had a few digital iterations and today we have before us the latest one with a '2' added to it's title. At it's core, this is a faithful adaptation of the board game. Two teams numbering 11 players fight

over ball possession during 16 rounds (8 in each half-time) in an attempt to score by crossing the opponent's touchdown line with the ball. Unlike the real sport that inspired the game, this nets your team only one point and there are no kicks afterwards. And probably the most important difference – fights are not only allowed, but are encouraged.

During the course of one round, i.e. turn, you'll be able to command your players to un to new positions on the field, chase after the ball or engage an opposing player. Each of your players has four attributes that determine how far he can move, how dexterous he is, as well as how good he is in a scrap. Just like in the board game version, these attributes influence
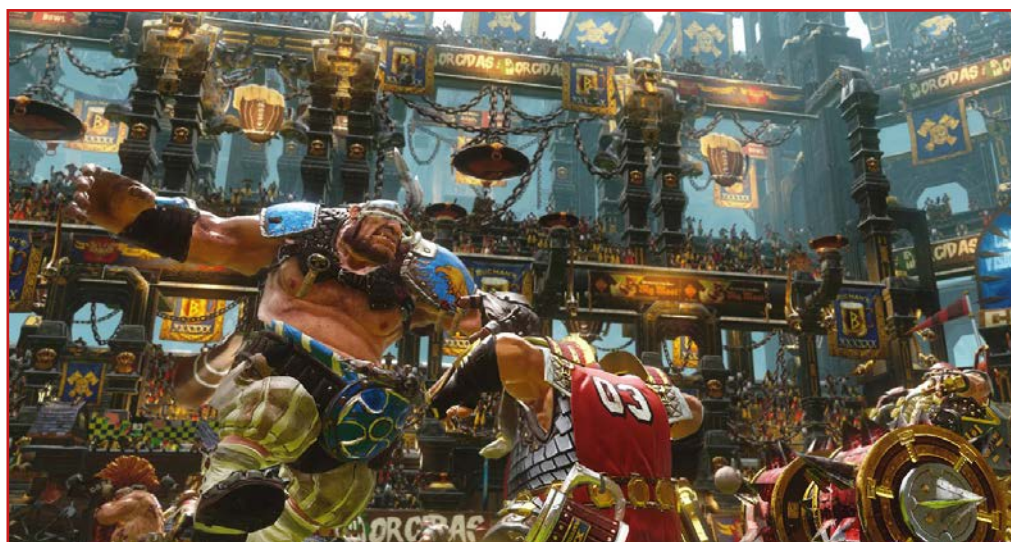
the die rolls that the game makes in the background and that determine if your runner manages to avoid getting tripped or if that Hail Mary pass will be a success. The only times when you can actually see the die rolls is when you attempt to tackle the opponent. Then, you'll be presented with three specific dice that will determine the result of the clash – will you manage to uppercut his jaw to the stands or just push him away, or maybe he will manage to counterattack you, or even they both fall unconscious from a mutual head butt. The strength of the involved players determines how many dice are rolled as well as which side gets to pick the result, so in the case of a weaker attacker two dice will be rolled and the defender gets to pick the result.

This seemingly simple mechanic can get pretty complicated when we include the deep skill system that some players can have and the positioning on the field. While the six-sided dice and random elements might be integral to the game, you'll still have plenty of ways to skew the odds in your favor and avoid turnovers
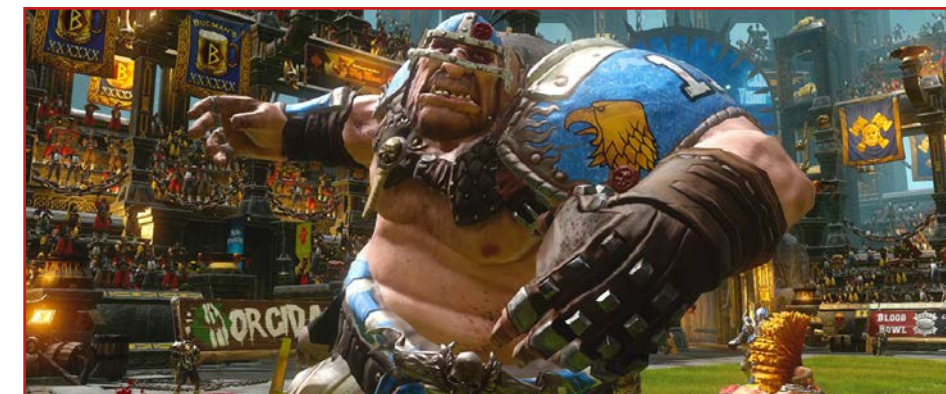
that force you give up your turn (by dropping the ball or having your player tackled). The basic systems might seem complicated at the start and the game's manual can only be read on the website. So, to get you started, there's a campaign in which you lead a human team, Reikland Reavers, through a hilarious story of trials and tribulations of this once-great team and through which you'll get to learn how the game works. Each match introduces one new mechanic, from basic passing to stadium upgrades. While the campaign is great, it's tutorial part crawls fairly slowly because in Blood Bowl 2 the matches can sometimes take 20-30 minutes.

Once you've got the hang of thing, it's time for the main course- the League. This mode will take away days and weeks from you as you take a slack-toothed team of misfits and mold them into pros that crack skulls and score touchdowns in equal measure.

Before you begin, you'll have to pick a race out of eight available choices that differ not just aesthetically, but statistically as well, as they all have different play styles. Some of the races have totally crazy mechanics, while others don't even attempt to score, but rather focus on trampling the opposition and kicking them while they're down. Over time, your players will increase their attributes and gain new skills and you can also sell them to other players in online auctions. Playing in the League brings with it serious hazards for your players, because there they can suffer injuries that can sideline them for the next match or even end their careers. The replay value of Blood Bowl 2 is crazy high, especially if you play online (AI can act silly sometimes). The main gripe that the players have is that the game came with less than 10 races, because the last title, Blood Bowl: Chaos Edition, had 23 of them. But even then, we should take into account

> **"YOU CAN ENJOY BLOOD BOWL 2 EVEN IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE RULES OF AMERCIAN FOOTBALL"**

somewhat complex tactical system. It's a great starting point for anyone who's not familiar with this universe and who wants a game that can be played for months, while those that own one of the previous editions will probably want to wait until a few more races are added before switching over to BB2. And us? Well, the orcs from Gouged Eye won't lead themselves to winning the championship...

RECOMMENDED PC CONFIGURATION:

OS: Windows 7
CPU: Intel/AMD Dualcore 2.5GHz
GPU: GeForce GTX260 or Radeon HD5670
RAM: 4GB
HDD: 8GB

BLOOD BOWL II

GAME PROVIDED BY:

FOCUS HOME INTERACTIVE

PLATFORMS:	**DEVELOPED BY:**
PC, PS4, XOne	Cyanide Studios
PUBLISHED BY:	**TESTED ON:**
Focus Home Interactive	PC
PRICE:	
45€	

RATING **8**

✓ Faithful adaptation of the classic board game

✓ Audio-visual presentation

✓ Humor

✗ Slow tutorial, no quick overview of the rules

✗ Camera control illogicalities

that the previous game had several re-issues, each fully-priced, which divided the fan-base already. Besides, BB2 will get new races in the form of DLCs.

Compared to the previous game, Blood Bowl not only looks fantastic, but there are no obvious problems or bugs. The atmosphere during the matches is ecstatic, partly due to the kooky commentating duo of Bob and Jim (an ogre and a vampire) who comment for CabalVision in a typical TV style, but mostly for the excellent art style and high detail of models on the field. It's absolutely tremendous when your successful moves get replayed in slow motion close-up, while the audience's cheers drown out

the commentators. The UI is improved as well and is uncluttered with useless information, so you can clearly see what each skill does and even features short animations of die rolls before you pick an action. The camera could have been done better however, for there is no option for free rotation, instead you have to pick one of the predefined angles with your mouse-wheel (luckily, there's a bird's-eye view).

Blood Bowl 2 is a game that is hard not to recommend, especially if the idea of rugby... erm – American football featuring orcs, dwarves, elves and other Warhammer races sounds like a great pass-time to you, and you don't mind getting used to a