

Below: *Infestation* contains a veritable hive of fan service: it features iconic locations, background characters, and a brilliant minigame that lets you play knife versus hand using the stylus. Aesthetically, the tone of the movies is well captured too.



Above: While the whole 'build your own squad' concept lends itself well to the franchise, unfortunately it's not as comprehensive or as absorbing as most players will probably be hoping for it to be.



STOP YOUR GRINNIN' AND DROP YOUR EXPECTATIONS

Aliens: Infestation

For children that grew up in the 16-bit generation WayForward's latest will likely conjure up after school hours playing *Alien³* on the Mega Drive, or its incongruent Super Nintendo cousin. Actually, in many ways *Infestation* plays like a blend of the two: the comic book aesthetic and comfortable controls of the MD version meet the more sophisticated structure of its SNES counterpart.

If you're not familiar with either game then know that *Infestation* is essentially a Metroidvania puzzle/shooter. It sees you running around labyrinthine levels trying to locate items needed to access otherwise inaccessible locations and complete your set objective, all the while blowing away anything black and shiny.

Checkpoint rooms scattered around levels provide the opportunity to save your progress, replenish health and ammo, and change not only your weapon but also the marine currently in your control. And this leads us to one of *Infestation*'s big swanks: you can customise your own squad of up to four marines and, through exploration, find and enlist more – 19 in all.

As we've come to expect from WayForward, *Infestation*'s animation,

DETAILS

FORMAT: DS
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Sega
DEVELOPER: WayForward Technologies
PRICE: £29.99
RELEASE: 30 September
PLAYERS: 1
ONLINE REVIEWED: N/A

visuals and overall presentation is exemplary. A slick (if needless) cover system, and useable Power Loader suits show a developer trying hard to both please and surprise, as does the plentiful level of fan service on display: iconic locations such as LV-426 and the USS Sulaco provide the level settings, Jones the cat pops up a few times, and there's a genius minigame you can unlock that lets you play Bishop's dinner table knife trick from *Aliens* using the stylus.

But there's something lacking. The lean campaign falls in at somewhere around four to five hours, and does little to encourage replay. The locations, though iconic, feel similar in their design, and, as mission objectives are of the 'plant explosives' or 'shut down the terminals' ilk, advancement requires more an understanding of level layouts than creative thinking.

Some inventive set-piece moments do break the exploration up – strapped behind the turret of an APC vehicle directing fire at alien hordes with your stylus, and donning a

spacesuit to hop around the outside of the Sulaco – but they're both short and oddly unsatisfying.

And then there's the team customisation component. While a roster of 19 different controllable characters sounds impressive, when you discover that only their appearance and dialogue set them apart it quickly feels shallow and underdeveloped. Coming to realise that the soldiers are

effectively just glorified extra life slots, you're thus left to wonder if perhaps a neater approach would have been to have a series of puzzles tied into

some unique skills and abilities of a few marines instead.

On a surface level, *Infestation* is a polished and entertaining use of the license while it lasts, but beneath lies a pretty average shooter – one that with a little more thought and ambition could have easily been something more memorable.

MISSING LINK

WHAT WE WOULD CHANGE

TEAM WORK - We feel a ball has been dropped by not developing the team-building concept and giving real skills and practical identities to the marines. It would certainly have promoted more replay value.



VERDICT 6/10
LESS THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS