

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

★ £39.99 • Fox Interactive • Out May

Everyone in the PC ZONE office could hear
Richie Shoemaker scream

TECH SPECS

MINIMUM SYSTEM Processor P200 Memory 32Mb **ALSO REQUIRES** Direct3D-compatible 3D card **WE SAY** P266, 32Mb RAM and a 3D card should keep most people screaming. Can get jerky with too much on screen, though

ALSO CONSIDER

HALF-LIFE (Cendant, £34.99) Still the best first-person shoot 'em up on the planet. But does it have yer official, turn inducing Aliens? Nope, it don't.

(PCZ #71, 95%)

ALIEN TRILOGY (Acclaim, £14.99) Conversely, one of the worst first-person shoot 'em ups on the planet, even though it *does* have the official, turd-inducing Aliens. Strange, that.

(PCZ #46, 79%)

PCZONE CLASSIC

Quite clearly, I'm mad. Bonkers, in fact. If I'm not going around the proverbial twist, then why is it that I think *Aliens Vs Predator* is so damn fine, while everyone else in the office is shrugging their shoulders with indifference and still spouting about *Half-Life*?

to poach for themselves. Nearly every 3D shooter of the last five years has nicked at least one idea from *Aliens* – if it wasn't those spindly insectoids with phallus-shaped heads, it was usually the facehuggers. The reason for this plagiarism is that whether you admit it in public or not, *Aliens* are scary. They are scary because we all know what they can do. If they don't rip your face off first, they'll play a kind of tonsil-hockey with you that's so unpleasant, you'd rather snog Thora Hurd.

Either way, you die. *AvP* may not be the best-ever 3D shooter but, thanks to its cast, it's certainly the scariest. Well, a third of it is.

FEAR FACTORY

Indulge me for a second while I explain to you what happened when I first played the *Marine* demo in the office back in

to scream like a baby when a facehugger first leaps at your head and deep-throats you.

As a Predator, you are spared any real pant-browning moments because, against Marines, you have little to fear. Against Aliens you feel a little more confident, with a spear gun that pins enemies to walls, and vision modes that enable weapons to automatically lock on whenever anything comes into view. It doesn't quite have the offensive capabilities of the Marine but, in a dark corner, immobile and invisible, the Predator is the perfect camper.

Choosing the Alien is a different experience. You collect health, not by picking up medikits, but by burying your inner jaws into human skulls. And you can only do that by sneaking up



My, what a shiny head.



The flamer: not too hot.



Fancy a quickie?



"Did you see that head come apart?"

☉ The Alien Queen is wonderfully animated.

Sure, *Half-Life* (PCZ #71, 95%) is the best 3D shooter ever made. But does it have Aliens? No. Does it have Marines? With smart guns? No. Instantly identifiable, the three subjects of *AvP* – Marine, Predator, Alien – are those that every game since *Doom* has wanted

December. The lights were on and everyone around was running around trying to get the January issue finished. I was in a different world – sneaking down a flickering corridor, chucking flares ahead, listening for movement. This didn't stop me screeching like a girl minutes later, though.

Work stopped immediately and concerned faces appeared, thinking I'd put my fingers in an electrical socket. I hadn't, of course. The reason my hair stood on end and a white crust formed around my lips was that an Alien had dropped from an overhead ventilation shaft and torn my face off. I had to take a break. Ten minutes later, I was back for more.

No other game has pushed my adrenalin level so high. Playing as a Marine for six hours with the lights off would probably kill you. I dare anyone not

on Marines or finding civilian colonists, which means taking out guards first or chasing colonists into a corner. Movement takes some getting used to, but the ability to scout swiftly over every surface adds another set of skills. You have to keep moving to avoid being split apart like an over-ripe peach, use shadows and air ducts to get in close and personal, then make your kill and move on.

With such diverse characters

"I dare anyone not to scream like a baby when a facehugger first leaps at your head and deep-throats you"

to choose from, *AvP* is a bit different to *Half-Life* and the rest. The Marine's motion tracker works up the fear factor by registering not only enemy movement, but also breaking glass and flying limbs. Blow an Alien to bits and they'll register until they melt through the floor. Graphically, *AvP* is unique.

relentlessly across the floor. Flickering lights even cause you to see things that aren't there. Then, when you're convinced you're not going mad, an Alien drops from the ceiling or a Predator phases into view.

The missions unfold more like a beat 'em up: complete the six missions for each character in



That'll be me dead, then.



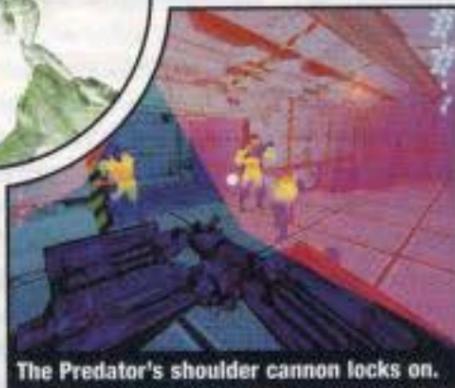
Be like Newt – hide under the grating.



...until you actually open fire.



Infra-red: quite handy...



The Predator's shoulder cannon locks on.



An end-of-level drop ship lands to take you away.

'training mode' and you open up two more. Finish them all in 'realistic mode' and you unlock a couple more. Do the lot in the 'Director's Cut' and you have access to over ten missions per character, each of which is replayable because the enemy doesn't necessarily start in the same place every time.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

There's no story to speak of, regardless of which character you choose. It's basically you versus the world. When it comes to playing as a Marine, *AvP* would have benefited from a few intelligent comrades running around.

You do see some in the later missions, but they're killed almost immediately.

Playing as an Alien, you feel completely alone and, considering the fact that you have to overcome an often confusing control method and have no ranged weaponry, the game would have been far more enjoyable if you were acting as part of a collective.

On the sound front, a few wisecracks from the Marines would have helped. And

remembering how, in the films, the Predator could emulate the human voice to cause a diversion, there's still more that could have been tapped from the licence.

But what makes *AvP* so enjoyable is

that for the first time since *Aliens* on the Spectrum, someone has finally made a decent *Aliens* game. If there was an award for the scariest game ever, *AvP* would win it hands-down. It's tense, challenging, frightening and, above all, different. I defy anyone not to enjoy its simplicity and revel in its moments of terror. It's a scream. **PCZ**

PCZVERDICT

- UPPERS Scary • Three distinct and unique modes of play for both single- and multiplayer games • Enemies don't always start in the same place • It's Aliens, for Chrissakes
- DOWNERS No storyline to speak of • Alien levels take some getting used to • No savegame • May induce nightmares or epilepsy – or both

91 The scariest game you will ever play

ALIENS VS PREDATOR VS MARINES

Play as part of a team for the best experience

As a pure deathmatch game, *Aliens Versus Predator* is not the best around. If you want a game of 'every man for himself', then you're better served with either *Quake II* (PCZ #59, 97%) or *Half-Life* (PCZ #71, 95%). *AvP* works best played as a team game. We played it in the office as a squad of Marines against hordes of AI-controlled Aliens. After the initial confusion blew over, it was a blast.

You can set the Aliens' AI and apply different frag points to each character, having each one equal or making the Predator the ultimate scalp to take.

Players in the PC ZONE office were concerned about the difficulties inherent in playing as an Alien, but this is offset by the fact that they are hard to kill. Mallo complained that they moved too fast, and Charlie, seemingly unable to grasp the concept of taking out lights, wasn't too happy about being left in the dark.

It's too early to tell whether *AvP* will catch on as a multiplayer game. It takes a lot of getting used to and, if you're still learning the ropes in *Quake II*, you're going to have to train very hard to get anywhere. But the potential is there, and multiplayers hankering for the *Aliens* experience will not be disappointed with what's on offer. As with the single-player game, *AvP* is a very different experience from what we're currently used to. I'd be surprised if *AvP* took over the world, but glad if it did.



Talk about well hung.