

FINAL FANTASY XIII BLOWOUT • PLUS: SQUARE'S NEW MYSTERY GAME — EXPOSED!



XBOX

OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

**THE HALO
YOU'LL
NEVER PLAY!**

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ALIENS vs. PREDATOR

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**15 GREAT
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JUNE 09 / ISSUE #97

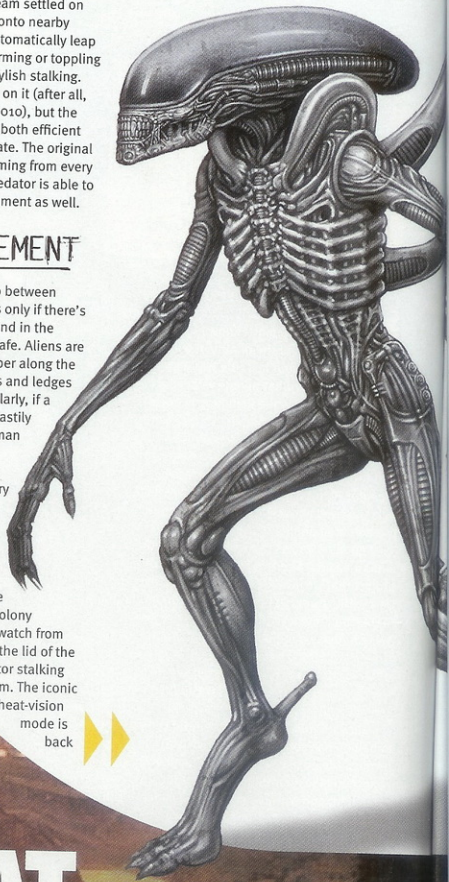
THE HUNT IS ON

That's not to say the warm glow is entirely fueled by nostalgia; this isn't just a total rehash of the late-'90s PC game. Rebellion has gone back and looked at how it should feel to play as a Predator, using the first film as its prime inspiration. A Predator doesn't trundle around like your standard FPS grunt — he leaps between tree branches and ledges, sizing up an attack from above using his various vision modes. Rebellion was excited to include this element as a crucial part of the Predator's movement, and the team settled on a system that allows you to lock onto nearby ledges and tree branches and automatically leap between them. No clumsy platforming or toppling from treetops here — just fast, stylish stalking. We weren't able to get our hands on it (after all, the game likely won't ship until 2010), but the "focus jumping" mechanic looks both efficient and intuitive even in this early state. The original *AvP* was always about threats coming from every possible angle, and finally the Predator is able to take full advantage of the environment as well.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

Of course, the violent relationship between these three warring species works only if there's balance, and simply hanging around in the treetops isn't going to keep you safe. Aliens are capable killers, and they'll clamber along the underside of the same branches and ledges that the Predators rely on. Similarly, if a Predator reveals himself too hastily while stalking a squad of human foes, the Marines' strength in numbers and instant-response ranged weaponry will turn him into bright green burger-meat.

Now, a unit of Marines cautiously works its way through a jungle on a distant colony planet; we watch from beneath the lid of the Predator stalking them. The iconic heat-vision mode is back



TRIPLE THREAT

ALIENS vs. PREDATOR



Aliens are capable killers, and they'll clamber along the same ledges the Predators rely on.

There are so many ways to die in AVP, you might not see them all.

Marines come extremely heavily armed — call it "semper firepower."

Rebellion wants the Predator to feel more movie-authentic this time around.

Be grateful if this is the last thing you see. At least you know it'll be quick.

▲ A Predator's wristblades can execute terrifying "trophy kills."

THE BIG MAN: The late Kevin Peter Hall played the title character in *Predator* and *Predator 2*. At 7 feet, 2 inches tall, he also played Harry in *Harry and the Hendersons*.

Two enemies already engaged? You can sit and watch or jump in to cause more pain.



Aliens swarm like insects. Then again, so does a Marine's ammunition.



As the Predator, you'll always have a stealth advantage against blast-happy Marines.



Heads, you win; tails, you lose. Unless it's an Alien tail...in which case, you lose and it hurts like hell.



(along with its counterparts for detecting Aliens and other Predators), allowing us to keep an eye on the Marines' steady progress through the area. One of the more convenient ways to pick off the troops is by using the Predator's shoulder-mounted plasma cannon, which locks onto enemies more quickly in the relevant vision mode. The other option is to dive in, using the Predator's lunging attack, and get your wristblades dirty. (In the final game, the Predator will have a full arsenal of weaponry; we're guessing — hoping? — we'll see the return of the glaive-like disc and a spear gun for stapling enemies to walls, although neither's confirmed at this point.)

GORE GALORE

In spite of all the Predator's toys, it was the up-close wristblade combat that provided the biggest surprise of the day. You see, in the films, Predators have a tendency to keep the skulls of their slain prey, and in *AvP* the Predator has an animated "trophy kill" that is genuinely one of the most spectacularly violent sequences we've ever seen in a game — and we've played a lot of games.

As the kill was initiated, a terrified Marine was hauled up into the middle of the screen by his throat. The unfortunate victim's struggling lasted a half-second or so before the Predator's scaly hands twisted his neck, accompanied by a crunch like that of raw celery, popping his head off like the lid of a Pringles tube. Naturally, a sizeable portion of the hapless grunt's spine followed, and, as the Predator drew the head back down to inspect it, we realized that the Marine was still rolling his eyes and gasping his last, with nothing but bloodied, glistening vertebrae beneath his chin. Cue an intake of breath from us that was clearly audible even above Rebellion's weapons-grade sound system.

Now, we're not tremendously squeamish when it comes to virtual viscera, but this was several measures more graphic than anything we've seen recently — so much so that we'd wager it'll be cut from the final game to avoid an Adults Only rating in the U.S. "The trophy kills are a big

MARINE

Clearly, the experience of playing as a Marine will be far closer to that of a standard FPS. Expect to be wielding the iconic Pulse Rifle and Smart Gun and switching between an image intensifier (to light up dark areas) and the motion tracker made famous in *Aliens*. Okay, so there aren't many surprises as far as the loadout is concerned, but the key to the Marine campaign is the sheer terror of facing off against the two movie menaces of the title.

This human campaign appears to be much more about surviving, with all the cutscenes showing your character's perspective. You can also look forward to plenty of nervous Marine backchat, though Rebellion has promised it won't be rehashing the now-clichéd lines from the films. This campaign is also where you're likely to garner the most info about the overarching storyline, given that everything in the Alien and Predator campaigns will be simply overheard (usually shortly before you dice the Marines into meaty chunks).



TRIPLE THREAT

MEET THE CAST



PREDATOR

The Predator's a technical and powerful stealth character; now that he's able to leap through the treetops, he handles much more like the creature in the film than in previous games. Key to the Predator's technical advantage are his vision modes, which allow him to quickly identify relevant prey. The challenge will be in firefights where both Aliens and Marines are present, because using the wrong vision mode renders the other enemy type almost invisible and makes weapon-locks difficult. Prioritizing the right targets is going to be key.

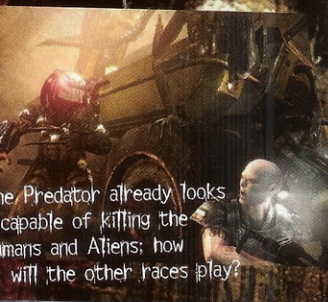
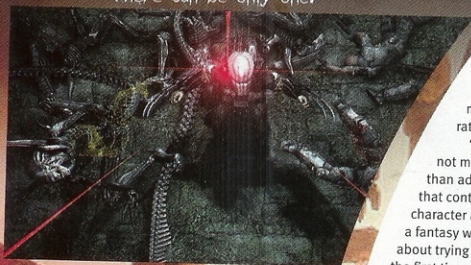
One element that hasn't been decided on is how to limit the usage of more powerful weaponry. The Predator is loaded with technology and stacked with hit-points, and previous games introduced an honor system to prevent their overuse. Rebellion appears to have settled on an energy system, recharged by trophy kills, but as yet it's unclear which parts of the Predator's arsenal this will apply to and what the energy hit will be for each.

ALIEN

Using this character will force players to get in close to their quarry, as the Alien's primary methods of attack are claws, tail, and teeth. A key part of the fiction is that the bugs skulk around in the shadows and rely on senses other than sight to detect their enemies (which is why the Predator's cloak doesn't work on them), so we're expecting foes to be lit up by a shiny halo effect as they were in the PC game. This, coupled with the Aliens' black color, means players should be able to use the darkness to their advantage.

Crucially, players will be able to climb on every solid surface in the game, although the Alien movement speed is much slower than it used to be, which might encourage sneakier play rather than blitz tactics. Rebellion is toying with including a mode that brings the Aliens back to their original, often disorientating pace, something that we're eager to see, perhaps tied to the difficulty level. Certainly nothing was creepier in the PC game than playing as a Marine and seeing a brief flash of a scuttling monster from the corner of your eye!

"There can be only one!"



The Predator already looks capable of killing the humans and Aliens; how will the other races play?



debate," Kingsley tells us. "This game is obviously based on R-rated movies, and we want to make sure it's very clearly a Mature-rated game.

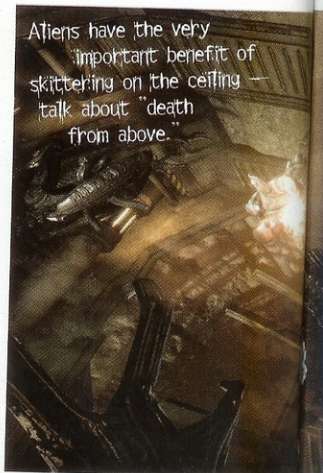
"Some games are for kids, but we're not making this game for anyone other than adults. That's very clear, and within that context, I think the violence is part of the character and the world — we're talking about a fantasy world here and fantasy creatures, and about trying to build up a mythos. I remember the first time I saw one of the particular Predator kills, everybody went, 'Oooh' — but it's what the Predator does in the movies." Extreme, but accurate.

ACID TEST

As you'd imagine, combat against Aliens plays out differently from fighting with Marines. For starters, the Predator's signature cloaking device — which renders him almost entirely invisible to humans — doesn't work with these extraterrestrial killers, meaning stealth is almost completely out of the question. The bugs can climb on any surface, making them much harder to track with weaponry, and for the most part, you'll be forced to take on the Aliens face to face on their terms — no mean feat when their blood is corrosive acid. Of course, if you're canny and the opportunity presents itself, you can pit the two species against each other, then simply pick off the winner. Everyone's each other's enemy, so unleashing a bunch of Aliens on the Marines, for example, will lead to a huge firefight that a Predator can observe from the safety of a vantage point above the battle area.

While we've been treated to only a portion of the Predator side of the game, we're clawing at the walls to see how the other campaigns play out. We're promised three separate but intertwined campaigns, with the Marine segment having a distinct survival-horror flavor to it, and that's not to mention the inevitable online multiplayer battles between the three species. It seems that after the mess that was *Shellschok 2*, Rebellion has something to prove, and where better to do it than with the series where the studio made its name. Could *Aliens vs. Predator* turn the film's slogan on its head? Because it certainly looks like whoever wins, we win as well. ●

Aliens have the very important benefit of skittering on the ceiling — talk about "death from above."



GOOD vs.

**ALIENS
PREDATOR
OMNIBUS**



GOOD

Aliens vs. Predator (Comic)

The original comic mini-series saw colonists on

the planet Ryushi caught in the middle of a Predator hunt. The planet is seeded with Aliens, which causes all sorts of problems for the humans, and then a Predator turns up and all hell breaks loose. This was the first dust-up between the three species and was faithful to the films and their fiction.



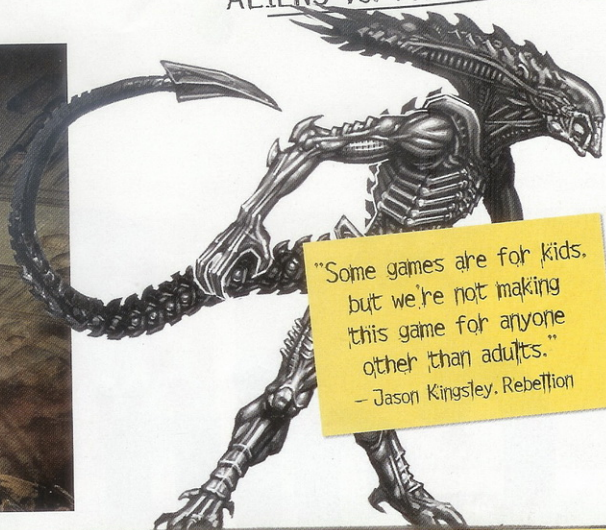
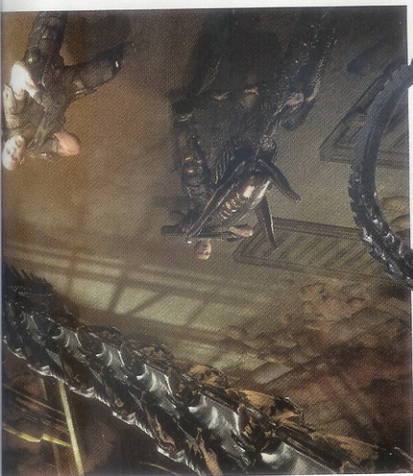
GOOD

Aliens vs. Predator (Atari Jaguar)

Rebellion's first punt at turning *Aliens vs. Predator* into a game established a lot of the themes that have continued throughout the series. You were able to choose from either an Alien, Marine, or Predator character and each started from a different area in a massive floating spaceship. Shame nobody bought the console.

TRIPLE THREAT

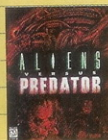
ALIENS vs. PREDATOR



"Some games are for kids, but we're not making this game for anyone other than adults."
— Jason Kingsley, Rebellion

BAD

Frankly, the AvP franchise isn't even batting .500. Dig into the history of this conflict carefully...



GOOD

Aliens vs. Predator
(PC)

Rebellion takes a great idea and makes it better, with the added horsepower and larger audience of the PC. This is the

success the development team will be attempting to replicate, and it's genuinely one of the scariest games we've ever played. If the new game is anything like this, we can't wait.



BAD

Aliens vs. Predator
(Film)

Unfortunately, the first AvP film was hardly the glorious union of the two species on celluloid that we'd hoped for. Despite consulting with Rebellion, the filmmakers came up with an action film that was roundly criticized by the film press. Why not just do a straight rip of the original comics?



BAD

Superman and Batman vs. Aliens and Predator
(Comic)

Okay, this is just getting ludicrous now. Superman and Batman discover a crashed Predator ship in the Andes that had failed to escape the Earth's gravitational pull (making it a pretty lousy spaceship). Supes and Bats persuade the Predators to leave our planet and...oh, it's just nonsense. Pretend it doesn't exist.



BAD

Aliens vs. Predator vs. The Terminator
(Comic)

Seriously, are Aliens and Predators not dangerous enough

without adding Terminators to the mix? The interrelation between the two extraterrestrials is just about plausible (as far as implausible crossovers are concerned), but lumping in all the fiction that goes along with the Terminator just seems like overkill.



BAD

Aliens vs. Predator: Extinction
(Xbox)

The AvP license's only previous outing on an Xbox platform was *Extinction*. Bizarrely, Fox and EA decided to go for a real-time-strategy format, and *Halo Wars* this was not. It offered dreadfully standard strategy, mixed with a clunky camera and poor controls. Besides, we don't want to order these guys around — we want to be them.



BAD

Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem
(Film)

If the first film was ropey, the second one was just a total mess. Too dark, terrible jumpy action sequences, and characters that were made entirely from cardboard. It's been the worst-performing of the *Alien* and *Predator* movies, but it still made back its budget and plenty more.