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ALIEN VS PREDATOR

HUNTER. SURVIVOR. PREY.

Which will you be?

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MEDIA WITH PASSION



**NOSTRONOMICAL...**

ALIENS VS PREDATOR

Steve Hogarty gets clubbed in the head and spurts white liquid everywhere

DEVELOPER Rebellion PUBLISHER SEGA WEBSITE sega.co.uk/games/aliens-vs-predator

THAT I LEAPT a mile when a man dressed as an alien slinked into the room and made some stupid hissing noise at my face, during my multiplayer hands-on, says a lot for my state of mind. To be fair, if anybody hissed at my face like that I'd probably drop dead like a timid canary. It was only after I regained my composure and let out a nervous laugh that I even made the connection between the game I was playing and the costume of the man SEGA had employed to terrify me.

THE LOWDOWN

- ✓ Races feel powerful
- ✓ Stealth kills work online
- ✓ Predator can cloak
- ✗ Animations look rigid
- ✗ Will it balance?

However, *Aliens vs Predator's* multiplayer isn't as terrifying as its single-player game. Or if it is, then certainly not in the same way. Online, the tension stems from not knowing who'll you face around the corner, be they alien, predator or that fragile collection of meat-and-blood sacks draped over a articulated coat-rack we call our human form. Ideally they're all equally effective foes. But before any notion of balance can effect itself, the more freakish looking two-thirds of the triumvirate appear to be the more immediately powerful foes.

THE HISSY ONES

The aliens have got claws, you see. Melee attacks fall into a rock, paper, scissors style arrangement: your heavy attacks will break a block, a light attack can counter a slower heavy attack, and a well-timed block can stop a light



attack in its tracks. Training yourself to recognise the animations, we're promised, will be key to winning fisticuffs, though here the Marine is at a disadvantage, as he can't use heavy attacks. Instead his penchant for ranged attacks (that is, his far-reaching pulse rifle) redresses the balance.

Meanwhile, while the predator's plasma cannon works at long range it's slow to arm and its bolts travel towards targets at a relaxed pace. And the alien can't even hold a gun. Stupid alien.

In this way, the three characters are in equal measures empowered and hobbled. Predators are effective at both close and long range, but they need to track down their best weapons before they can do anything interesting. Aliens maintain their ability to scoot up and down the walls, but they can't defend themselves from long-range attacks.

The ultra-violent trophy kills from single-player, which see the predator removing spines and aliens poking tails through chests, return online. These powerful stealth kills can be activated from behind any player, with the alien in particular able to stealth kill from a considerable distance. Marines can block alien lunges and counter with their own one-hit kill – a balls-of-steel neck-grab followed by a body slam and a few well-placed rounds to the skull.

Either way, opting for these fancy kills has you committing to a brief

THE STORY SO FAR...
**ALIENS VS
PREDATOR**



AVP

The first AvP was the first game to let you run along walls.

1999



AVP2

Monolith did the next one, and it was even better than the first.

2001



SHELLSHOCKING

Rebellion's last game, Shellshock 2, was a huge turd.

2009

AVP(3)

The game that you're looking at. Drippiest alien saliva ever.

2010

"And this is for the rubbish film!"

"And this is for the sequel to the rubbish film!"

ETA
**FEB
2010**

There'll be four-way co-op versus waves of zomb- erm, aliens.



DAVID BRICKLEY
SENIOR PRODUCER, AVP

THAT'S DEDICATION

Infinity Ward have shafted online communities by ditching support for dedicated servers in *Modern Warfare 2*. Will SEGA follow suit?

Q Historically *AvP* is a big PC game. How are you making sure you support the PC version and keep your community happy?

A This is a title that we want to support for a long time to come. If it's not been announced yet then certainly the PC version will benefit from DirectX 11 features. That's one thing we can use to make sure that people who invest in the hardware will get the absolute best. And it was originally a PC title so you can imagine the heritage and the need within Rebellion to make sure that people who still play and talk of that game are not left behind.

And are you guys going to have those dedicated servers the community so clearly expects?

Well the one thing we can say is obviously running an operation like that is monumentally expensive. For the period the original was up, people who played that game got an incredible experience. You know what the internet's like. We're obviously used to getting things for free over the years. I guess on our side the thing we're focusing on is whatever your set-up at home, you get the best possible experience from it. We're just trying to use our time and resources wisely.

So, um, is that a yes or a no on the dedicated servers?

As I said, the game is still quite a way from release, so I guess there are other things to be determined during that time.

Oooh, we are so good at questions.

animation, during which you yourself can be made the target of an opponent's stealth kill. It's even possible for short conga-lines of stealth kill animations to form in matches staffed entirely by inexperienced yokels. In deathmatch, at least.

'Survivor' mode pits marines against waves of aliens, much like similar game modes in *World at War* and *Left 4 Dead*. 'Infestation' sees a squad of marines fighting a small contingent of player-controlled aliens in a match where, once killed, marine players are resurrected as

part of the alien team. Once the marines are whittled down to a single plucky soldier, that player's given a huge cache of weapons with which to make his last (and probably short) stand.

'Predator Hunt' is the final mode we're shown. Here, just one player is permitted to step into the skin of the master hunter, and must string together as many brutal murders as possible before he's shredded to bits by miniguns. Once that happens, control of the predator is handed over to whoever finally swatted him.

It's still much too early to even wonder if Rebellion can meet the expectations of those still playing the finely tuned and intricately balanced decade-old shooter which birthed the series. Even if it can, those strange people will have made up their minds to discover infinite disappointment in every pore of this game. Comparisons spanning 10 years are pointless – *Aliens vs Predator* should be a visceral, blood-soaked thrill in its own right.

But the trick will lie in the balance, and that's harder to gauge at this point. Rebellion have made each character feel uniquely powerful – that's apparent from our hands-on – but if unfair advantages float to the surface in the wake of thousands of players piling into multiplayer, we'll be just as disillusioned with the game's online content as the man in the alien costume is with his career prospects. The twat. **PCZ**

"Should be a visceral, blood-soaked thrill in its own right"