

Info

Publisher Sega
Developer Rebellion
Players 1-16
Co-op 1-4

State of play

Must buy?

Can't wait

Looking good

Shaping up

Needs work

TAIL ACTION

You have no shield – so get spotted by turret guns or a Marine's torch and you're toast. The only way to safely move about is to use your tail to knock out lights, then drop behind the Marine and initiate a stealth kill. Let's just say slamming your tail through someone's chest, then dragging them further on it is up there in gaming's "Ohhhhh!" moments of all time.

ALIENS vs PREDATOR

The shadows are your protection, survival your objective. Come see the bug hunt with new eyes

Seeing things from a different perspective can give you a fresh take on routinely familiar things. We're pacing slowly behind a bulky Marine sergeant as he sweeps the darkened and dank room with a flashlight. The only sounds around the dull pulse of his motion tracker, are his cautious footsteps on the grating and the groans of contracting bulkheads, echoing off the metallic walls. Same old, same old.

Except while we might only be less than a few feet behind the armour-clad soldier, we're also 12 feet above him, hanging upside-down from a cargo bay ceiling, watching. Listening to the Marine's increasingly frustrated calls to the rest of his outfit. They go unanswered. We skitter along behind him, fully knowing the reason why this is. In our peripheral vision, we spot a small, bloody pile just ahead. The Marine's patrol will take him right to it.

It would be completely uncharacteristic for an Alien to snigger,

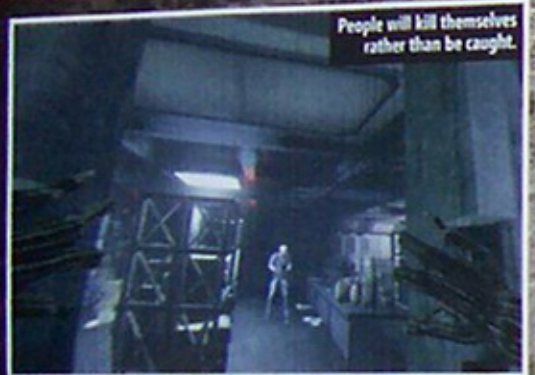
but we hear a few suppressed chuckles around us from the various journalists in the room. We (and Rebellion, which is demoing the game) are enjoying playing with our food.

The Marine's torchlight hits it first. He pauses for a second, letting the beam sweep the immediate area. When the light lands on a blood-covered helmet, the penny drops. He starts shouting out as he recognises the remains of one of his crew. His cries are ineffectual really. The other marines are right where we left them. Safely stationed

Release
Feb
2010

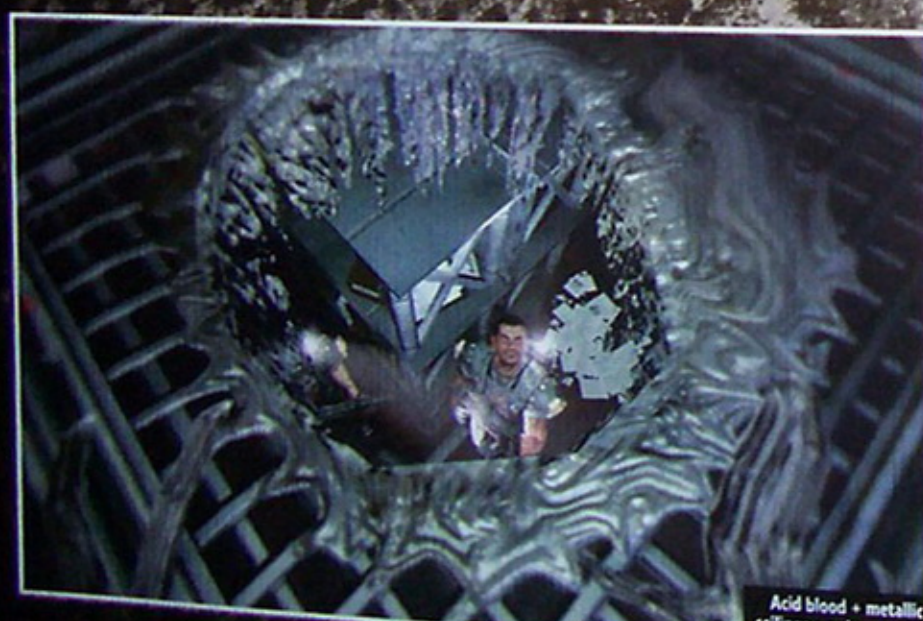


The 'tongue-cam' kill has to be seen to be believed.



People will kill themselves rather than be caught.

"A tail snaps out and spears a Marine. He's dead in seconds"



Acid blood + metallic ceilings = quite a mess.

above our wailing victim and swathed in darkness we take the opportunity to glance around at the other gore-covered piles dotted around the room. The lone soldier swings his torch behind him. A brief second's wait, then we pounce.

We land on top of him and in that split-second we weigh up the possibilities. Back, then tap a button. A tail snaps out from the side of the screen, spearing and lifting the Marine off his feet. He's dead in seconds. We fall back onto the ceiling and run through the darkness of the bay into the next open vent shaft.

It's an experience unlike any other in a sea of ideal PS titles, the nearest comparison is *Batman: Arkham Asylum* and *Resurrection*. Yet neither can convey the uniqueness of embodying a creature that is iconic yet truly, unutterably alien.

After an impressive and lengthy demo of the newly revealed campaign segment, we wholeheartedly agree with developer Rebellion when it describes the Alien as the 'nasty little bastard' of the tri-species war that's due to erupt early next year. Unlike the UNSC Marine jocks, it's not here for the glory. Nor like the Predator is it here for the thrill of the hunt. Its purpose on the planet is basic. Survival of the species... and survival means propagation.

I've got survivalism
Propagation also means hosts, the tracking down of which forms the next half hour of gameplay, as the Alien seeks out civilians. The catch is that the leanest and meanest Marine battalion

KNOW YOUR XENOMORPH

DIG DEEPER INTO THE ALIENS UNIVERSE WITH THESE THREE GREAT TIE-INS

ALIENS: LABYRINTH
Published by Dark Horse Comics years ago, the story took the *Aliens* universe and blended it with a *Frankenstein* style-story, as a scientist-gone-mad attempts to understand the Alien race through a series of horrific experiments. Like the literary classic it tries to ape, the true monster of the piece isn't necessarily an unfamiliar face.



GIGER'S ALIEN

A great companion book to the original film, this tracks the metamorphosis of one of cinema's iconic monsters in the hands of artist H.R. Giger through a series of paintings and models. The artwork is haunting, and a reminder of how frightening the concept was before the later films turned it a bit crap.



ALIEN: THE MOVIE
Nine years after the Aliens cinematic appearances (before the TV series). Okay, let's say several years ago you jettison the horror title *Alien: Resurrection* DVD, will you get the original film plus extensive docs - and considering this once retailed for around £100 quid and now goes for a quarter of that, this really is a must for your collection (as long as you're over 18).



this side of the galaxy is protecting those civilians. However, anyone who watched *Aliens*' middle act knows that firepower doesn't amount to much in vent-filled darkened corridors ripe for close encounters.

Stealth and quick decisions are paramount to survival when a shotgun blast will leave you a smoking splatter mark on the wall. An Alien can 'see' through walls, letting you spot the outline of prey when it is within close proximity. It can crawl through tiny vents, climb walls and ceilings... and run faster than a cheetah with a nitrous engine strapped to its back.

The idea is to track and follow the tactical deployment of Marines until



Rebellion certainly doesn't shy away from the gore.



RASHOMON, SCI-FI STYLE

Three different species, three different campaigns, three different perspectives. Choose at the start which one you want to play as, but there'll be points where the storylines bisect, letting you see set pieces from other angles. It means you get to play through the same scenario as a Predator and a Marine - the hunter becomes the hunted...

someone strays off alone. Your central crosshair will highlight where you can pounce to, letting you drop down, perform a stealth kill, and bounce back into the ceiling shadows before the rest of the troops are any wiser.

Death in the darkness

Rebellion demonstrated the rules of the game by showing us isolated Marines in a few simple corridors, then ended the presentation with a full Marine Battalion holed up in a cargo hold. Anyone who's played *Riddick* or *Batman* will know the scenario. Yet neither of those two games had streams of blood spraying the ceiling: neither of

"Rebellion describes the Alien as the 'nasty little bastard', and we agree"



Charge Marines, claws waving for some splatter.

"The game world could potentially be massive"

those characters had the power to powerslam into a Marine and cause bone and cartilage to explode on impact in a globe of red mist. It's not a nice death and, while we were watching, Rebellion misses the opportunity to plant a Facehugger on a civilian - he manages to stop quivering just long enough to offer an expletive before yanking the pin off a grenade and sealing his own explosive exit out of the world.

The world in question could potentially be massive. The image of huge sci-fi structures, vast areas of cavernous arid desert, mixed with the jungles and pyramids we already know



...or sneak up behind and cut their throats.

suggest Rebellion may be intent on positioning all three icons outside their usual habitat - and comfort zones. There's no doubt it's honouring the very best of both franchises' histories, but given the developer's past ties with the series, we're looking forward to it advancing the universe in new and exciting ways.

Species war

One such way could potentially be a new entry on Xbox Live's Most Played chart. While the main campaign has correctly balanced up the numbers for the three sides, with a solitary Predator, a small but tight group of Marines and a swarm of Aliens - what we might expect given each series' history - we have to admit the Aliens' numbers have disappointed from what we've seen so far. Being able to tot up the number of Xenomorphs on two hands seems to do them a disservice - we were imagining a relentless rolling black mass of them. We're keeping our fingers crossed the multiplayer mode will rebalance that issue.

With the promise of 16-player multiplayer scraps, we're already imagining setups to fulfil every scenario imaginable. How about 15 Alien players taking on a solitary Predator? Even if there's any limitations on the numbers for each species on the standard Deathmatch setup, there will probably be an offshoot mode to cater for your sci-fi whims. Sadly, speculation is all we can offer as Rebellion is keeping quiet on the subject, but it did reveal that there's a four-player co-operative Horde-style mode to be included. And even more interestingly, the developer is particularly chuffed by one map it has created, saying that it does "something no other map has done before..." Colour us intrigued.

In all, we're very impressed, with Rebellion obviously saving the best till last. With three different campaigns to get stuck into, plus the first leaks of the multiplayer modes to come, *AvP* could serve the legacy more fittingly than a decade's worth of rapidly deteriorating movie sequels.

Gillen McAllister



"I've got some bad news about your Sarge..."