

\* THE BIG SHOT

# ALIENS COLONIAL MARINES

## THE HARD SELL



“We’ve never had the true, honest, authentic Aliens experience. That’s not a burden, that’s a gift. I’m pretty sure we’re going to see more games where space marines fight to save the world from aliens. But we have to admit to ourselves that, every case where space marines save the world, it all started from this root. And we are now in that space, and to me that’s the dream.”

Randy Pitchford  
Gearbox Software



# FOUR-PLAYER CO-OP AND OBSESSIVE FAN SERVICE MAKES THIS THE ALIEN SHOOTER THE WORLD'S BEEN WAITING FOR

## DETAILS

**Format** / PS3

**Publisher** / Sega

**Developer** / Gearbox

**Release** / Spring 2012



**S**hooter franchises don't get much bigger than *Aliens*, and Gearbox know it. The developers are cramming in every moment of the much-loved 1986 movie they can fit, and studio head Randy Pitchford takes obvious pleasure in showing us just how complete their world is.

Our demo starts amid the ruins of the Hadley's Hope mining colony. All seems desolate until the motion tracker starts pinging seemingly anomalous readings – they're inside the room. Cue a frantic firefight which demonstrates that yes, they *do* come out of the goddamn walls.

"I've been stealing from this franchise my entire career," says Pitchford, beaming. "It's a dream to be able to actually work in the legitimate canon."

## GIVE US A HUG

Gearbox is working with a closeness to the source that makes a chestbuster seem standoffish. Pitchford prefers to muse out loud about how cool things would be than confirm actual details, but his nodding and winking makes clear that, if you can remember something from the film, it'll be here. You'll see everything from *that* scorpion-esque dropship to Bishop's blood in the cargo bay to the vent where Gorman and Vasquez explode (Gorman always was an asshole).

However, you aren't playing as Hicks, Hudson and squad. You're going in as a secondary team, one Pitchford assures us will be every bit as quotable – a big boast indeed. To help, Gearbox is using the writers of the



We only saw the power loader in use by AI, but surely you'll be able to wield it yourself



One of the new alien types is resistant to pulse rifle fire

SCAN IT!



Video interview



➤ superb Battlestar Galactica reboot to script the game.

The plot is one step removed from Aliens. Weyland-Utani, demonstrating the sort of corporate foresight that made Lehman Brothers what it is today, discover the remains of the Sulaco where it was left at the start of Alien 3, and send another squad of marines to LV-426 – because hey, nothing could possibly go wrong.

It leaves room for updates, including ‘a number’ of new Xenomorphs. We only see one, a hulking specimen with a Queen-style headpiece who proves immune to the standard pulse rifle fire. Cue a frantic dash through the dark, rain-drenched ruins, before finding brief respite in a hangar.

Here’s where Gearbox shows off what should be their best feature – drop-in four-player campaign co-op. The horde-style last stand firefights will be all the better for having friends on your team, although only non-player characters (controlled by AI) get to use the power loader. Boo. On the other hand, they get eaten when the big Alien smashes the hangar door open. Serves them right.

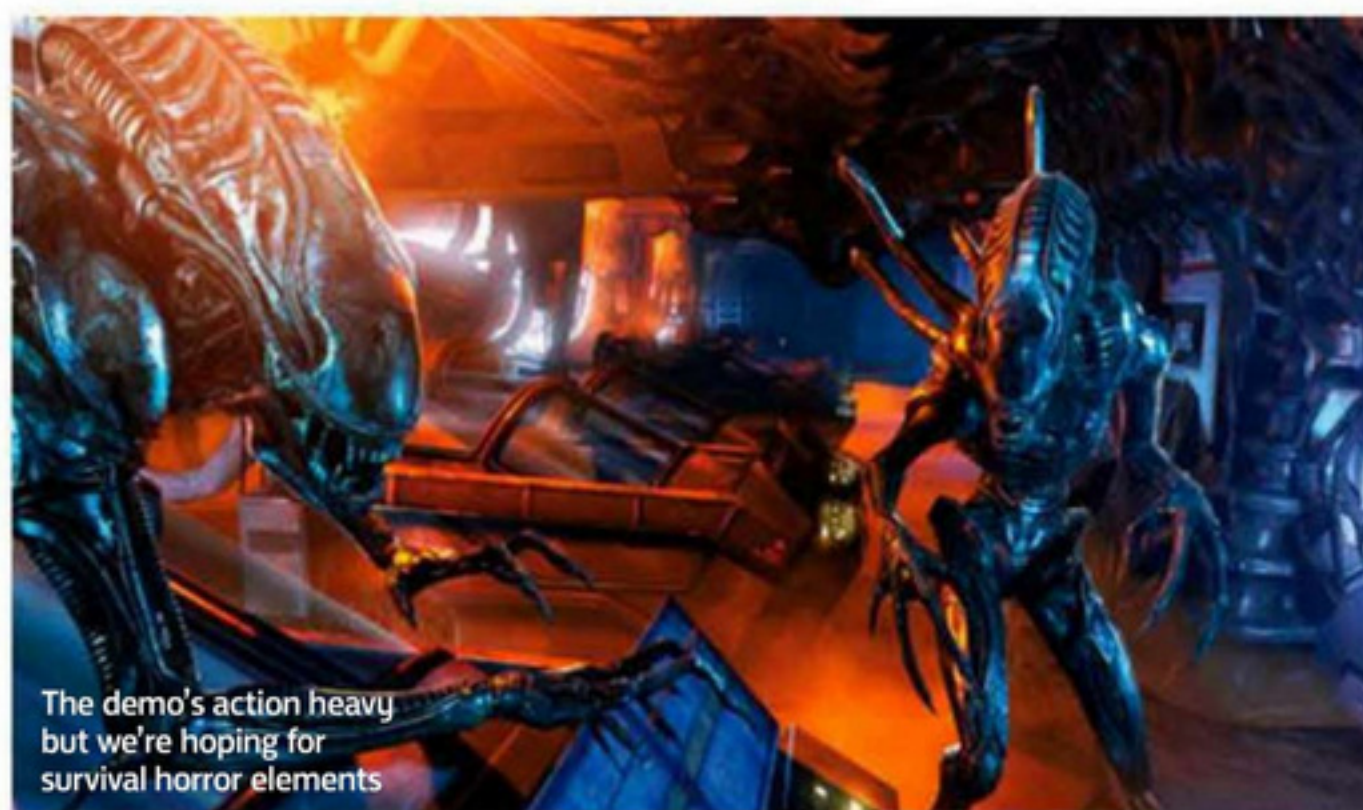
## NEW AND IMPROVED

Cards on the table: the biggest problem with Aliens is that we’ve already had 25 years of games ripping it off, plus 25 years of watching the VHS/DVD/Blu-ray. That might be why all this action looks strangely unexciting. It’s all perfectly serviceable – and you can’t deny the impact of a shotgun unloading into those shrieking jaws – but after the fresh thrills of *Killzone* and *Dead Space* it doesn’t have the impact we’d hoped for. Even the moody corridors seem less atmospheric than Rebellion’s *Aliens Versus Predator*.

## “IT WON’T BE BROTHERS IN ARMS IN SPACE – “YOU CAN’T FLANK AN ALIEN,” SAYS STUDIO HEAD RANDY PITCHFORD”

We wonder if the aim is to tickle your fanboy gland so effectively you won’t care – certainly Pitchford’s enthusiasm for the movie is vast. And to be fair, the demo was designed for the braying bros of E3, and doesn’t show the subtler survival horror elements or exploration. Even so, it won’t be *Brothers in Arms* in space, says Pitchford – “You can’t flank an Alien” – but you will be experiencing that teamwork and comradeship in the face of nearly unstoppable, nearly perfect killing machines.

Having finally seen the thing in action, three years after it was first revealed – “We probably announced it too soon,” says Pitchford, “it wasn’t a game back then, it was a prototype” – it’s clear that Gearbox has put its obsessive knowledge of the subject to good use. Just how good, however, really is unknown. Assholes and elbows then, people: get ready for another glorious day in the corps. ■



The demo's action heavy but we're hoping for survival horror elements

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## INFO BURST

Bite-sized updates on the spiciest new software



TBC 2012

## SOUL CALIBUR V

While *Soul Calibur V* won't release until 2012, we already know that nimble ninja Natsu (left) is in as a replacement for Taki. The two have similar fighting styles – explained by the fact that Taki apparently trained Natsu – and penchants for skintight outfits. That one's explained by the fact men like looking at busty, skinny women. Speaking of which, series dominatrix Ivy returns, ludicrous boobage and all, looking not a day older than she did in *SCIV*. The explanation? She stopped aging during the last game. Well, of course. The second new character is Z.W.E.I, who looks like a reject from *Final Fantasy* and is thought to share the style of single-sword characters such as Hwang or Yoshimitsu.