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# Aliens

## COLONIAL MARINES

» We go hands-on with the deadliest enemy ever!

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ALIENS  
COLONIAL MARINES







# FEATURE

ONCE APONE A TIME



AVGALAXY.NET

## The fabulous four

» It's only natural to assume the four Colonial Marines in all the artwork and on the boxart (above) are the four playable characters in the game's co-op mode - this is a trick Gearbox used in *Borderlands*' promotion, after all. But that's not the case. Instead, from left to right they are Cruz, Bella, Winter and O'Neal. Winter is the main protagonist, but the other three are all non-player characters: Cruz is the Lt of the operation, while Smart Gun lover O'Neal is the man who first welcomes you into the USS Sulaco.

The most interesting character of all is Bella. Rather than occupying the usual ass-kicking female role made famous by Ripley and Vasquez, she showcases a different strength altogether. You first meet her on comms after she wakes up from a facehugger attack, and it's immediately obvious her outlook isn't good. The rest of the game's spent with her battling on in hope, despite the grim certainty that - at any moment - a chestbuster could crack her open and ruin everything.





**World exclusive!**



# Aliens Resurrected

» We visit Gearbox for a world-first hands on as Aliens: Colonial Marines finally scuttles out of the vents and into our game-investigating crosshairs...

## » Info

**FORMAT** 360 (previewed), PS3, Wii U, PC  
**OUT** Late 2012  
**DEVELOPER** Gearbox Software  
**PUBLISHER** Sega  
**PLAYERS** 1-4 co-op campaign; 2-12 multiplayer  
**RATING** 18+  
**WE PLAYED** A few rounds of Marines vs Xenos Team Deathmatch after watching a brand new segment from the single player.

**WHAT IS IT?** First-person shooter sequel to one of the all-time great science fiction films.



marines versus xenomorphs: it's a battle that has been done before in videogames, but never like this.

**Rebellion's incredibly popular Aliens Versus Predator series gave us a fantastic multiplayer game but it wasn't what you could call pure.** The Predator – always the most popular option thanks to a supreme arsenal of weapons and abilities – often muddled the battlefield's balance.

Aliens: Colonial Marines is shaping up to change the Aliens gaming landscape forever. Those iconic battles from Cameron's movie? They're precisely the types of encounters developer Gearbox want to recreate online, with no third party involvement to spoil the mix. And that's why Colonial Marines' multiplayer is something to be very excited about because, for the first time in over 25 years of waiting, we're *finally* getting

Aliens' best battles faithfully recreated in game without any annoying compromises or concessions.

## » Dallas cowboys vs aliens

Our first minutes as a Marine start off rough. We're in a 6-on-6 Team Deathmatch battle set inside a sprawling garage on LV-426 (the planet from Alien and Aliens), and Gearbox's in-house testers are controlling the xenomorphs. It's a bloodbath.

We're pretty good twitch gamers, but trying to play Aliens: Colonial Marines like it's another Call of Duty gets us nowhere. An abundance of vents and holes in the ceiling and floor means xenomorphs can attack from all directions. From all surfaces too, and even though us marines have flashlight toggles, the darkness and shadows let the xeno hordes crawl along the ceilings and through the vents to get the jump on us



“ALIENS: COLONIAL MARINES IS SHAPING UP TO CHANGE THE ALIENS GAMING LANDSCAPE FOREVER”





# FEATURE

## RIPLEY'S GAME



with ease. Later on we understand why: their heat-seeking vision means the xenos can see all friendlies and hostiles through all walls, no matter where they are on the map. Cheaters.

The aliens' homing-vision's a definite advantage but marines have a balancing act in the form of the motion tracker. Just like in the film, it registers hostile movement as tiny blips on a small screen. Whenever we see a small '!' icon on the bottom of our screen we know there's motion nearby and it's time to switch to the tracker.

In a brilliant twist, doing so involves hoisting our Pulse Rifle up high, meaning there's around a second of time swallowed up in the transition from gun to tracker or tracker to gun. It's a crucial time that must be accounted for when monitoring the xenomorphs' distance, otherwise waiting until the xenomorphs

show their horrible, phallic faces before switching to the weapons is as good as stapling raw bacon to your chest before yelling, "come get me suckers," at the top of your voice.

### » Acid pain

A pattern soon emerges: solo marines quickly become shredded soldiers, while team players can make a worthwhile stand. The xenos are deadly in close-quarters, and even if you were to get a killing shot off with an alien in your face you'll get a health-sapping acid spa for your troubles. Six people can hold attack packs at bay, though, especially if one person's monitoring the motion tracker and feeding the info down to the other marines in the squad.

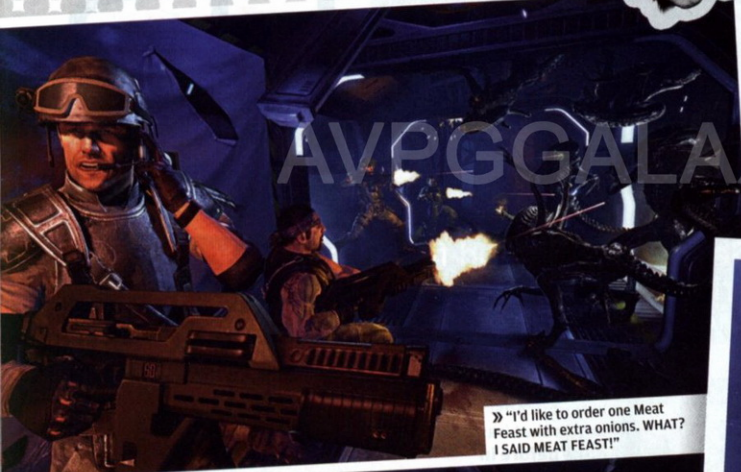
Knowing this our skills steadily improve, but to stop us from feeling too comfortable for too long Gearbox have

“A PATTERN SOON EMERGES: SOLO MARINES QUICKLY BECOME SHREDDED SOLDIERS”



### The inside line

We believe the xenomorphs were biomechanical. Some of the other films try to turn them into beastly creatures, but we want to keep them extremely foreign and unidentifiable. They're creepy because you don't know what the hell that is. They bleed but... is that truly blood? We don't know! It has pipes and things like that: elements we can't identify with.”  
Brian Cozzens, Art Director



» “I'd like to order one Meat Feast with extra onions. WHAT? I SAID MEAT FEAST!”



» In motion the lighting engine is a real work of art.

tossed a few jokers in to mix things up. First of all, marines and aliens aren't static characters. Each marine has a set of unique, customisable perks and weapon loadouts to pick from, with more unlocking over time as the experience and money rolls in. Strengthening characters and load outs through a constant battle of one-upmanship is the key to succeeding.

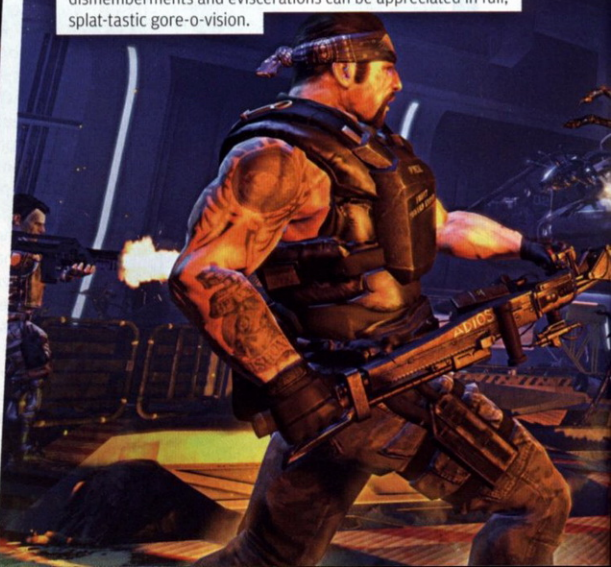
Xenomorphs too have different perks and abilities, but more than that they have different breeds. In basic Team Deathmatch the alien players can choose between the direct-and-dangerous Soldier xenos or the flank-happy Lurker sub-types. Then, every minute, one lucky xenomorph team member gets to become the Crusher.

She's a hulking xenomorph built like a freight container and powered like a drag racer, capable of charging triceratops-style into groups and turning them into marine schnitzel in a single attack. Needless to say, it takes a lot of firepower to drop her. Helpfully, if the marines are brave enough to explore the environment they'll find special weapons such as the auto-targeting Smart Gun to even the odds somewhat. Some graceful last-second side-stepping can even help throw off the Crusher's aim.

Despite the asynchronicity of the team powers we eventually get to a point where we can comfortably hold our own and we even manage to best the Gearbox team. Post-match we're bombarded with stats and figures about kill/death ratio, streaks, unlocked upgrades (our efforts are rewarded with

### » The taming of the view

To help ease players into the skin of the aliens as quickly as possible, the xenomorph multiplayer team plays in third-person view rather than first. The shift in camera allows players to quickly leap from floor to ceiling and back without flipping the view and becoming disorientated in the process. It also means the gruesome dismemberments and eviscerations can be appreciated in full, splat-tastic gore-o-vision.







### The number's up

» Although Gearbox want to stay true to the film wherever possible, they haven't shied away from updating elements that have dated. The Pulse Rifle's ammo counter, for instance, now lives on both sides of the weapon so the player can see the remaining ammo in first-person view: a crucial feature!

### Close encounters

» If hands-on time taught us one thing it's that it's rarely worth switching to the iron sights view unless the xenomorphs are good fifty metres away. Aliens are so fast you'll do better by sprayin'-n-prayin' (sod the short, controlled bursts!) than you will by taking the time to aim carefully.

an underslung grenade launcher, apparently), and do it all over again. With skills mastered we manage to come up trumps in both rounds of the subsequent match, and both rounds of the following one too. Before we get too cocky Gearbox drop two bombshells on us: the Crusher's only been respawning at half speed, and our favourite Smart Gun collectible's been respawning twice as fast as it should.

And this is only Team Deathmatch: by far the easiest mode to score a victory in as a marine. Although other gametypes are still under wraps for now we've been told they involve objective-based challenges in which one team must

complete various tasks spread across a map while the other has to pull out all the stops to hold them off. It sounds very much like Dead Space 2's approach to multiplayer, and it means we won't be able to win Team Deathmatch-style (that is, by hunkering down in the safest place and running down the clock). Gulp.

### » Xeno garden

Think that's awesome? So do we, but it's time to drop your linen and continue your grinnin' because the single-player portion of our trip is even more impressive. The campaign portion of our exclusive is sadly eyes-on-only, but after last



## Ghost ship

» The iconic USS Sulaco - and the fresh horrors trapped within its corridors...



01

### Hanging around

This is the hangar made famous by the Power Loader versus Queen fistfight at the end of Aliens. Look closer and you'll spot a gooey lump in the bottom right corner of the picture: they're Bishop's legs. Ick.



02

### No way out

The Sulaco's corridors are filled with hiding places, vents and breakable windows, making them perfect for xenomorph attacks and little more than a deathtrap for the ship's crew. Monitoring the motion tracker is essential.



03

### Smart attack

Picking up the Smart Gun in either the single-player or the multiplayer modes triggers this HUD display. Targeting is semi-automatic (be thankful as the xenomorphs attack in the dozens in this set-piece) but the gun can overheat.







# FEATURE

HICKS AND MORTAR

year's demo down on the surface of LV-426 we're now taken back in time to watch a sequence from the beginning of the game as protagonist Winter shows up in the USS Sephora and first steps into xeno territory.

In the Alien timeline it's been just over 14 weeks since the USS Sulaco was supposedly destroyed above Fury in Alien 3, but something's clearly amiss because at the start of the game Winter is preparing to step aboard the (mostly) intact ship. Sure enough, our demo begins with Winter strolling into an ominously bloodied airlock and through into a glass umbilical, where we get to see the USS Sulaco in all its glory. It's as beautiful as the day we first saw it in film sequel Aliens.

Half way across the walkway disaster strikes: an explosion from within the Sulaco rocks the tube and the glass starts cracking. A couple of dead bodies smashing into the umbilical from the other side doesn't help and before we know it protagonist Winter's charging towards the Sulaco before the atmosphere's fully vented and he's flushed into space. He makes it to the airlock with seconds to spare and tumbles into a dingy locker room.

Moving on and we rush through a couple of rooms from the film (The dropship hangar! The cryopod room! Ah, the memories!) before plasma-cutting our way through a jammed door and walking into a new area lathered with xeno tubes and slime. Winter's here to retrieve the Sulaco's flight recorder and return it to the Sephora, but truth be told we're struggling to take anything in

**“WE RUSH THROUGH A COUPLE OF ROOMS FROM THE FILM (AH, THE MEMORIES!)”**



» It's hard to do, but you can save fellow marines mid-execution if your shot's good enough.



## The light stuff

» Colonial Marines uses Gearbox's new deferred render technology (a fancy way of saying its new lighting model) and the results are gorgeous. Simply put, it creates some nifty-on-the-fly shadows perfect for fleeting glimpses...

## Next gen, this gen

» According to Gearbox, deferred renderers are the big thing people will be doing next generation, but through sweat and tears they've squeezed it into this one. Regarding lighting, Aliens is in a league of its own.

beyond the rows of open eggs and the hanging bodies with chestbuster-sized cavities in their chest.

We're in 'luck'. One marine's somehow still alive, and as we rush over and begin cutting him from his shackles with a few button presses we're attacked. Not from his chest, but from a xenomorph above. It drops to the floor, glares at us and... turns and scampers?

## » Creep show

This is the Lurker: a new xeno-type created for Colonial Marines that darts between cover and attacks only from the sides. What makes her really deadly is the amount of ammunition spent firing at her wake: she exists to keep you nervous and trigger-happy, and she'll never walk out into your sights.

And she's only the beginning. A pistol headshot finally takes her down, but when Winter retrieves the flight recorder from a nearby console the real assault begins. A familiar Soldier xenomorph dives through a plate glass window and



## Tablet terrors

» While Gearbox can't reveal too much about the Wii U version until Nintendo give the all clear, we learned two things about the Nintendo port. Firstly, it'll make the most of some extra oomph over and above the current gen hardware to beat the 360 and PS3 versions in the visual battle. And secondly, that the motion tracker won't be the only thing appearing on the controller's screen. According to Gearbox there's plenty of Aliens tech that's a perfect fit for the unique controller design.



## Finger on the pulse

» It should come as little surprise that Aliens: Colonial Marines has a weapon and armour upgrade system at play in its multiplayer mode. But what is shocking is news that it feeds into the single-player campaign too, and vice versa. Most weapons have a rail system on the top for locking in and swapping out attachments such as scopes and red dot sights. Underslung attachments can be bolted on too, while cosmetic changes will also play a big part in weapon and armour customisation.

into our Pulse Rifle fire - spilt acid burning into the floor texture as it dies. More xenomorphs come, followed by more and more still, knocking over objects as they pounce from the shadows. Winter could close the doors and make a stand if he fancied it, using the motion tracker to monitor incoming xenos, but our demo guide takes the sensible option and retreats to the hangar at double speed where an abandoned Smart Gun is waiting to be scooped up and used to hose down the dozens of pursuing aliens that spill out of the room's vents.

It's clear the Sulaco's lost to the aliens and the only option is to run back through the glass umbilical corridor to the USS Sephora and away to safety. But halfway along the route there's a problem: namely one marine surrounded by explosives and a chestbuster trying to break its way through his ribcage. With his final breath the marine bombs the corridor, severing the link between the Sulaco and the Sephora. Worse still it leaves Winter clinging onto the decimated corridor by his fingertips, and it's only through some tense climbing and debris-dodging skills (reminding us very much of a first-person Uncharted set-piece) that he manages to claw his way back into the Sulaco and into the xenomorph's breeding grounds for the rest of the game.

When it's all over we sit back exhausted and more than a little on edge. If this is only the opening few minutes of Aliens: Colonial Marines, we're left wondering what the hell Gearbox are going to be throwing at us later on in the game. We get the feeling that Colonial Marines is going to be a bug hunt rather than a straight-up fight, after all, but that we just might be the ones who are going to get squished...

MATTHEW PELLETT GM

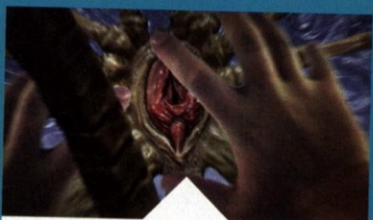


# Conspiracy theory

» A secret peek at some of the game's concept art - and what it might all mean...

## Curds and Wey'

» We're told *Aliens: Colonial Marines* reveals a lot of new info about mega-corporation Weyland-Yutani: far more than any previous story ever has. Those wondering how the Sulaco is filled with xenomorphs at the start of the game might be interested in this pic (its name is 'Sulaco Cargo 01', hint hint)...



## Hugs 'n' kisses

» Facehuggers! Their small size and one-hit-soon-to-be-dead attacks rank them among the game's trickiest enemies. Gearbox promise a fair-ish fight.

## Dropship and roll

» Last year we were told we'd get to ride in the dropship from the film, which is precisely what you're seeing here in a piece of concept art called 'Sulaco Breach'. This'll be how the squad safely touches down on LV-426 and transitions between the doomed Sulaco and the equally-doomed planet.



## Brute banner

» Curious one this: among the core character art we spied this 'Private Military Corporation (PMC) Brute'. Will we fight a Weyland-Yutani mop-up crew?

