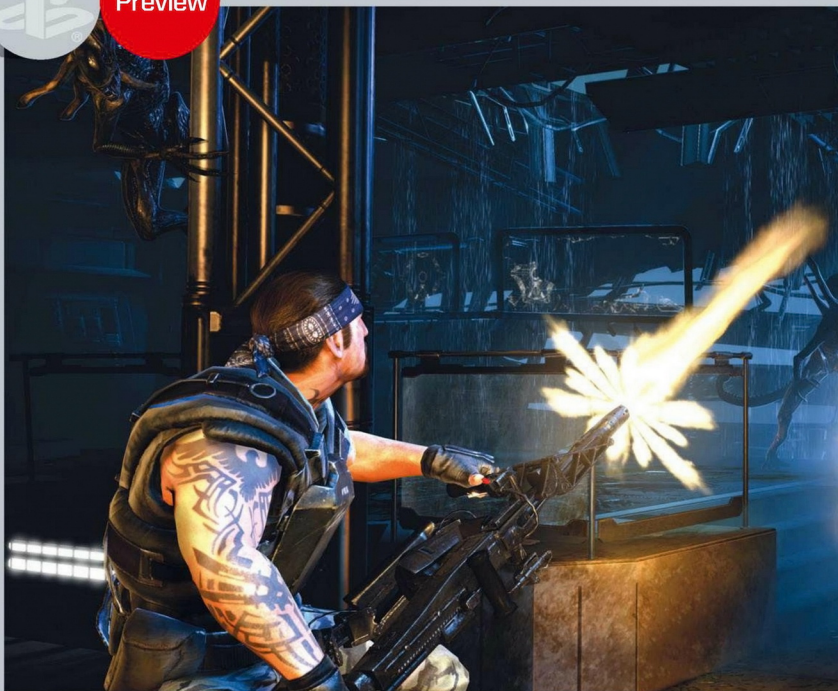




Preview



046

## Dev talk



"You're part of a battalion-sized force aboard the Sephora. There are over 400 marines on board, so we have lots of 'redshirts'. Having aliens rip them apart in horrifying ways is fun [laughs]."  
**Randy Pitchford**  
 President,  
 Gearbox Software

Hype Magnet | Format PS3 ETA 12 Feb Pub Sega Dev Gearbox Software

# Aliens Colonial Marines

Ⓐ Assholes Ⓞ Elbows ✕ Teeth Ⓞ Claws

**G**earbox's ET-blaster has been ping-pong on Motion Trackers for years without ever seeming to scuttle closer to release: a sure sign of an express elevator to development hell, if ever there was one. But at long last the final countdown to launch has been initiated, and with it the Texan studio has unscrewed its vent grilles to let us dive in, Pulse Rifles ready.

First impressions are that, outside of combat, Aliens: Colonial Marines does indeed look like a game that's been in production for an unusually lengthy period of time. Gearbox is

adamant that its proprietary deferred rendering tech (in normal speak: a next-gen lighting solution that allows for dynamic lights and shadowing) is core to Colonial Marines' atmosphere, and it backs up this claim by showing off new areas from the campaign.

The first is on LV-426. Having crash-landed on the planet, protagonist Winter and his squad are trekking across the surface in the middle of an electric storm, trying to find the wreckage of obliterated human colony Hadley's Hope. Their path takes them through craggy canyons and past film

props such as a crashed UD-4L Cheyenne Dropship and a broken M577 Armoured Personnel Carrier, with plenty of vista points placed along the way to encourage you to stop and admire your surroundings.

Blinding lightning flashes illuminate dark corners. Flares cast pulsating crimson shadows on shelves of rock formations. In the distance, the nuked terraformer billows smoke into the unravelling atmosphere while huge sheets of tarpaulin ripped from their anchor points fight losing battles against the furious weather. Grey and

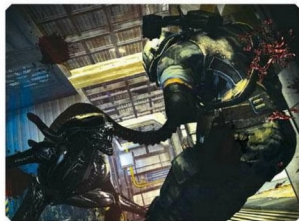




## Preview



■ Tension-builder alert: you need to holster your weapon before you're able to equip the Motion Tracker.



■ Areas not seen in the films are largely based on original Hollywood design docs.



■ The main story characters are all NPCs, while co-op players assume the roles of passive fellow Marines. Hmm.

resulting in a comedic effect that dashes all sense of fear that's otherwise been expertly crafted. What good are environments lathered in atmosphere if enemy encounters don't provide the biggest shocks of all?

Indeed, the sole scare factor from the combat stems from fact that close-quarters kills often leave you splashed with corrosive acid. Colonial Marines uses traditional health and armour bars-and-packs systems (although health is broken up into discrete recharging 'pips'), and an acid shower will instantly dissolve any armour you've grabbed.

### Abandon ship

While there's still work to be done on Xenomorph animations, *human* movement is looking fine. Not just those of friendlies, but of enemies, too – of the Weyland-Yutani PMCs, to be precise. We meet this faction in another new area – a sprint through the USS Sulaco as it begins to suffer catastrophic explosions – and three-way fights between the Marines, the PMCs and the Xenos soon begin.

In theory, *Aliens*' human-on-human combat works much like any other shooter, but as the Sulaco is buffeted by explosions, the ship shakes, drops and tilts all over the place, turning around like *Uncharted 3*'s cruise liner. Impressive? Undoubtedly. Yet with the visual gut-punchers of *Crysis 3* and *Bioshock Infinite* also due out in February, Colonial Marines has picked a tough month to stand out on tech

**"Close-quarters kills often leave you splashed with corrosive acid."**

alone. The delays surrounding that very tech have given Gearbox an altogether unexpected bonus opportunity, though: a chance to dive in and retcon content in the wake of Ridley Scott's latest piece of cinema.

"We did some things after we saw *Prometheus*," admits design director John Mulkey. "In our game you go into the derelict spacecraft. We knew [the *Prometheus* version] was going to be in people's minds probably more than the original *Alien* one, and after seeing

this... we had to have an amalgam of those designs that made sense. It was pretty painless. We went over to our artists and said, 'We've been watching *Prometheus* and we think we need to do this and this,' but they'd already changed it all!"

This sort of attitude has us thinking this still has a strong chance of coming good after all. Gearbox is clearly obsessed with *Aliens* and wants

Colonial Marines to be the game *Aliens* fans have always dreamed of playing. "When people get it, they're going to feel that if it's not the best *Aliens* game ever made, it's one of the best they've ever had a chance to play," says game director Brian Martel. "For us, it feels [like] the best that's ever been done: being in the boots of these soldiers, not throwing in *Predators* or [other] crap, really lets us focus on that." Now all we need is a deck of cards to tide us over until February.

### Rivals



#### Aliens vs Predator

(PS3, X360)  
Marines, Xenomorphs and Predators couldn't stop hellraising in a campaign effort from disappointing.



#### Dead Space 3

(PS3, X360)  
Human? Alien? Human adversaries? This looks quite the match for Colonial Marines.



#### Crysis 3

(PS3, X360)  
Corrosive alien-shooting FPS set in a futuristic New York after nature replaces the Big Apple.