

## PREVIEW

The Alien has reverse-jointed hind legs, like a dog. This isn't true of the film's version, but it looks better.



PUBLISHER SEGA / DEVELOPER CREATIVE ASSEMBLY / FORMAT XBOX 360 & XBOX ONE

# Alien: Isolation

We can't lie to you about your chances, but you have our sympathies

**F**ear is to structured thought what a sneeze is to a house of cards. All sense of past and future disintegrates, blown apart by the panicky pulsing of the present tense.

So while I'd love to write a preview for *Alien: Isolation*, with a proper conclusion and everything, the best I can manage is a series of vaguely connected episodes – moments of fumbling ineptitude and terror, deep in the heart of a half-dead space station. The most vivid is of a serene, chalk-skinned man with neon blue irises throttling me till I shake him loose with frenzied taps of the A button. Reeling back, I pull out a fat, futuristic revolver and put three

bullets through the android's chest, to no obvious effect. Then he's gone, and all I can see are teeth. There's no time to fire, not that this would have made the slightest bit of difference. As the Alien forces me to the floor, inner jaw flexing, I hear the android calmly observe that running is a common cause of injury. Shooting things doesn't seem to be good for your health, either.

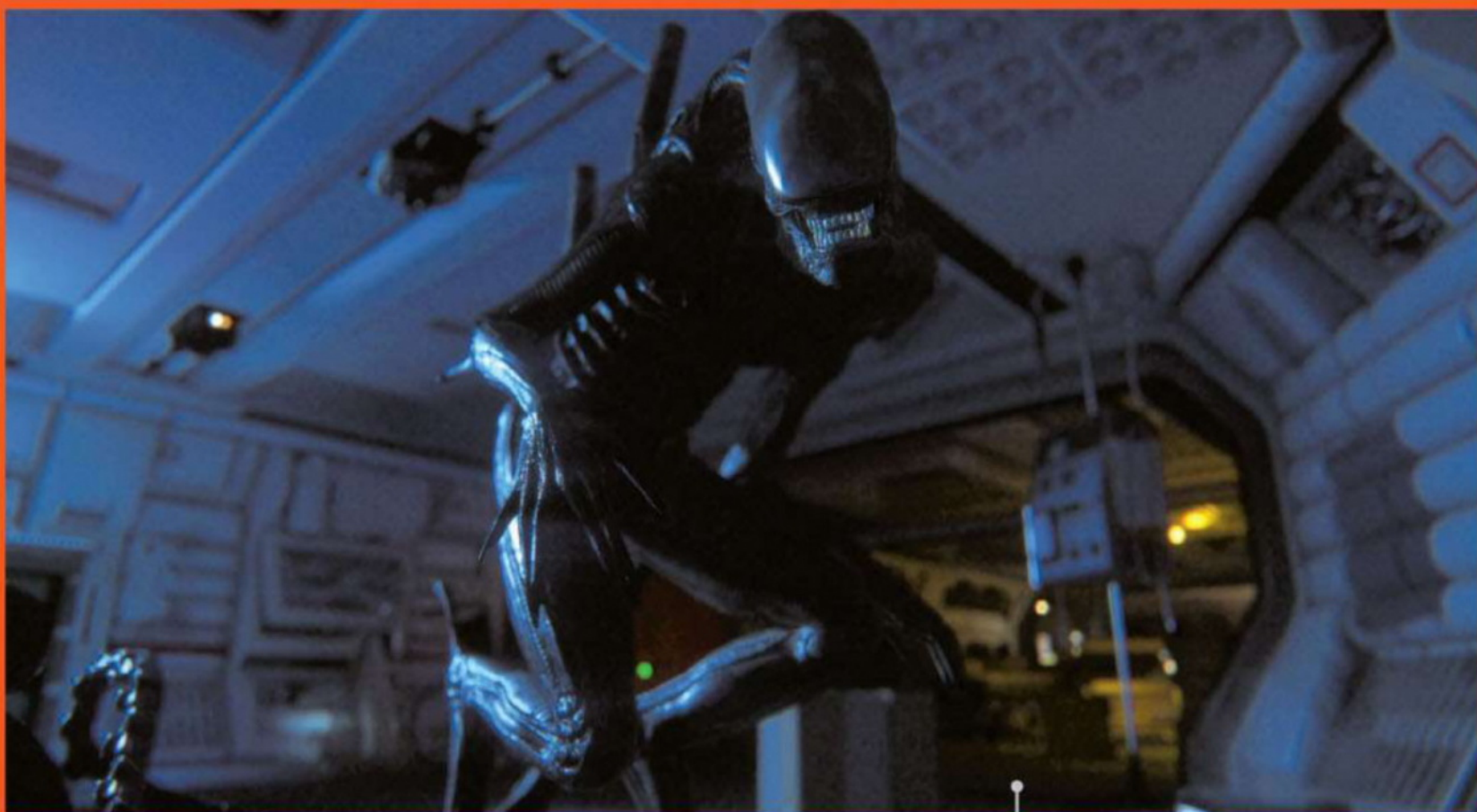
## Playing with fire

*Alien: Isolation* has guns – very nicely modelled guns, either taken directly from or inspired by the film – but they won't get you far. When Creative Assembly hinted at other kinds of enemy in the game, many cynically assumed that there would be 'palette-cleanser' shooting gallery sequences – steam vents

## Bluffer's Guide

First-person survival horror with just the one Xenomorph, which can be deceived but not destroyed.

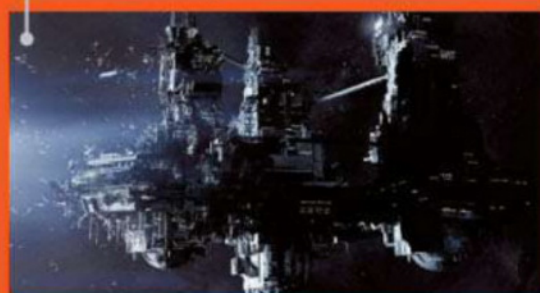




There don't appear to be any chestbursters. It's okay to turn your back on this corpse, then. Probably.

You'll gradually work out how far the Alien can 'see', via much (terrifying) trial and error.

The entire game takes place aboard a space station - there are no planetary levels, or alien ships.



Pretty much every character you meet in the game will have secrets, and not all of them will be trustworthy.



Which is best, asphyxiation or having something bite your face off? It's nice when we get to choose.



The flamethrower can't produce a constant stream of fire, so you'll need to aim rather than spraying and praying.







## // Isolation's nastiest ruse is that it looks like a corridor crawler, but it's actually a sophisticated sandbox //

The Alien's hearing has a certain range, even when it's up in the vents. You may wish to tread lightly regardless.

» along the pressurised pipe that is the campaign. They aren't. Here's another recollection to illustrate this: sneaking along a corridor, I bump into one of the Sevastopol's surviving crew. He levels his weapon, shrieking at me to get away. I foolishly try to slide beneath a table and out of sight, and he shoots me in the arm. I switch to my flamethrower, straighten up and manage a token belch of fire before the second bullet finds my head. As the scene fades from view, I derive a certain bitter satisfaction from the idea that the Alien has probably heard the exchange, and will surely descend from the darkness to rip my killer's guts out. Of course, had I managed to kill the guy I'd have had to deal with that little eventuality myself.

*Isolation's* other non-player characters aren't your enemies, at least to begin with, but you may be obliged to antagonise – or sacrifice – them if you want to escape the Alien's clutches. Twitchy human refugees may hole up in areas between you and the objective, opening fire on anybody who tries to push past (that's a very firm 'may', by the way – much of the content, including item distribution, is procedurally generated depending on your tactics as a player). Androids will leave you alone until you start meddling with the tech under their supervision, after which they'll pursue you relentlessly. This is a problem, because many of the mechanisms aboard Sevastopol could do with a bit of TLC.

Humans can be killed, providing you have ammunition to spare, and you're able to compensate for lead character Amanda Ripley's inability to aim down the sights. It's possible to nobble an android, too, using EMP grenades to paralyse it or fire to boil its skin off, though you'll need plenty of room to manoeuvre. This is also a great way to get the Alien's attention. This leads to my third memory: after hacking a terminal, I EMP an irate skinjob and take refuge in a vent, emerging in the hallway outside the chamber. The Alien drops down directly in front of me. My thumbs seize up, my heart leaps into my mouth... but my trigger finger involuntarily squeezes off a gout of flame. Startled, the Alien slides back up into the ceiling like a switchblade into a sleeve, and I'm permitted to run shrieking for a few seconds before it reappears and impales me from behind.

### Clever girl

The Alien is fast, strong and more or less invulnerable, but above all it is

smart. When you hear your foe rattling around in the ceiling, or see that ethereal blip trickle across the motion tracker, it's as though you're watching its thoughts coalesce. The creature has certain basic habits that are familiar from stealth games, but it doesn't follow a pattern. It remembers.

It learns. A flare tossed into a corner might distract your adversary the first time round. The second time, it might just glance at the light source and resume its search. The third time, it may start to think about where the flare came from. There aren't any HUD indicators to help you unravel the creature's mood – the nearest *Isolation* strays to that kind of artifice is an objective compass on

your motion tracker – but you might hear it hiss in a sort of working-things-out kind of way. A fine time, perhaps, to retreat to the previous chamber, before the Alien finishes running through its checklist of possible hiding places. Except now you've riled up the android again. Oh dear.

*Isolation's* nastiest ruse is that it looks like a corridor crawler, a procession of scares that can be memorised and thus, robbed of their intensity. It's actually a sophisticated sandbox, responding efficiently and believably to your choice of routes, items and tactics. A cautious player could navigate an entire area without rousing the Alien once (assuming you're not called on to trip some noisy mechanism in order to reach your goal). A reckless player... well, here's a final anecdote to play us out. I'm sprinting towards a medibay, the Alien directly behind me. A trio of humans open fire from the front. I stampede past them, dive into a locker, pull out my motion tracker and watch as one blip sets about the others like a fox among chickens. The screaming is brief.

Edwin Evans-Thirlwell

ETA  
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### Metadota

#### BEST BIT...



*Isolation's* art direction and audio are magnificently horrible. Environments are awash with bulbous objects and mechanical noises that can be mistaken for... something else.



### Survivor's toolkit

The items you'll use to avoid becoming the Alien's breakfast

Aside from EMPs, ammo and flares, you can craft noisemakers that can be thrown or placed, IEDs and medical kits for healing up after a gunfight (the Alien will kill you in one hit). Gathering the resources entails exploration, however, which entails putting yourself at risk, and you'll often have to decide which item you can least do without. Resource and item distribution is partly random, partly determined by the situation.