



FORMAT PS4/PS3 / ETA 7 OCT / PUB SEGA / DEV CREATIVE ASSEMBLY

ALIEN: ISOLATION

You'll wish you were alone in the dark



In the name of John Hurt's shattered rib cage: how the hell did Newt ever survive against a colony of these buggers for weeks on end? That's the burning question that plagues us after our latest hands-on with Sega's insidiously creepy horror house in space. The first time we encounter the game's only xenomorph, we struggle to survive for seven seconds, let alone seven days. Giger's monster is Miss Marple and the Terminator rolled into one ultra inquisitive, unstoppable, slaving abomination. No matter where we hide it spots us. Crouching in vents. Squatting in lockers. Lying under tables. Covering in cabinets. Nowhere is safe. Trust us, in space, even your partially deaf nan could hear our screams.

Easy to admire, harder to enjoy – that's how we'd currently describe Alien: Isolation. As a virtual approximation of the original film, it's difficult to fault. Whether roaming around the Sevastopol station, with its corridors dotted with retro sci-fi paraphernalia that could have been pulled from one of Ridley Scott's Pinewood sets, or an utterly impeccable score which captures the cloying sense of dread depicted in Jerry Goldsmith's pitch perfect soundtrack, Creative Assembly has comprehensively captured the spirit of the 1979 masterpiece.

Judged purely as a gameplay experience, things are a smidge tougher to praise. While the engine is adept at creating moodily lit corridors, it absolutely chugs next to the likes of Metro Redux. Of course, Isolation is as much a shooter as the alien is a Vanity Fair cover model, so buttery twitch-based controls are hardly needed. That said, the current code does struggle to maintain a steady 30 frames per second.

Old Penis Head's AI also takes a lot of getting used to. Such is the unpredictable nature of the alien's procedural behaviour, our time in Isolation is dogged by trial and error. Actually, mostly just error. Be too bold in your movements and the beast's heightened senses catch you out almost immediately; butchering Amanda before you can even think about drawing her near-redundant pistol via **R2**. Yet move too gingerly, and ET's homicidal cousin is as likely

to pull her out of that locker you're petrified to leave, before laying down a face-caving kiss. Can't we just have a nice cuddle tonight, dear?

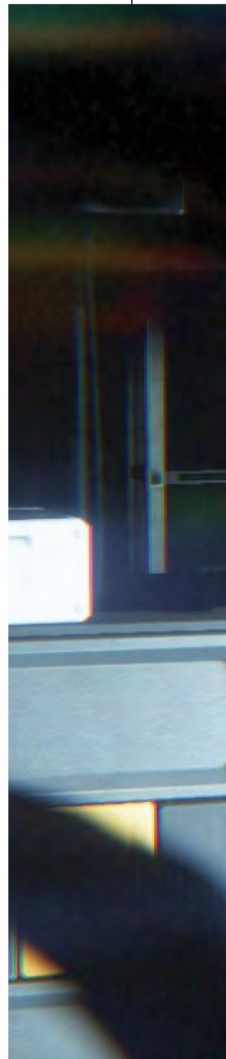
After years of being coddled by Metal Gear's vision cones and Splinter Cell's ridiculously forgiving shadows, Isolation is a stark culture shock. This feels like the next evolution of videogame stealth. A brave step forward where cutting-edge AI means you no longer manipulate your enemy through obvious hide-and-seek tactics but, instead, constantly adapt to a predatory force that's every bit as cunning as you. Would we like some more hidey holes, though? God yes.

DUCT THE TREND

It takes us nine tries to successfully slink past the first xeno encounter. *Nine*. Because the creature can crawl through air ducts, we find ourselves flanked at every turn. It means progression often feels haphazard, with the alien turning up in scenarios we've got no chance of surviving. Mercifully, we can improve our lifespan between savage checkpoints with one key trick: spamming the hell out of Ripley's motion tracker.

We use it almost constantly while the alien is on the prowl. Once drawn with **R1**, the device judges our proximity from the extraterrestrial stalker. Through canny use of the DualShock 4's speaker (each bleep and whirr chirps from the pad) and a rumble that escalates the closer we get to the monster, every aspect of tracking feels primal.

Is Alien: Isolation actually fun? Not particularly. Then again, it's not supposed to be. Instead, this a lavishly produced homage to a terrifying sci-fi staple with an unerring ability to unnerve. Right now, it's a game you endure, and one that's never anything less than face-huggingly addictive. ■



FACTRICK

1. GUN LIKE HELL

Though Amanda packs a pistol, you'd be a fool to use it against the xeno. Bullets just bounce off the beast.

2. FIELD OF DREAMS

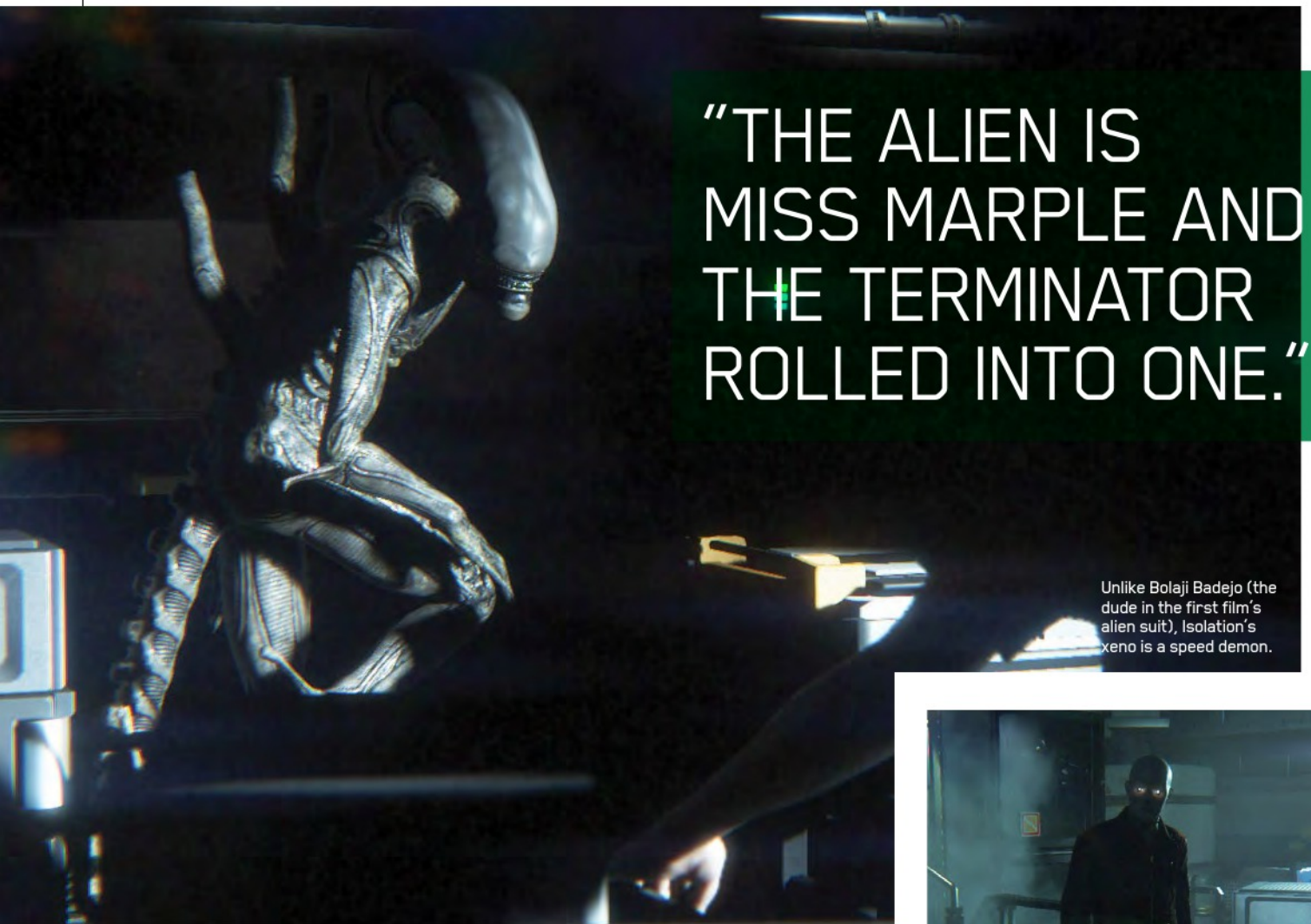
Equip the motion tracker; then press **R2** to switch the depth-of-field focus to your current surroundings.

3. CRYO ME A RIVER

The game takes place 42 years before Aliens, while Ellen Ripley is still in cryo sleep with her cat.



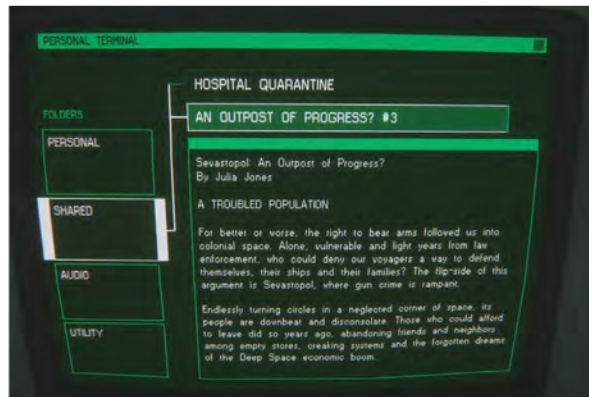
■ Danger and dread lurk around every corner, whether it's fire hazards, twitchy fellow survivors or copious corpses. The latter usually carry useful keycards.



"THE ALIEN IS MISS MARPLE AND THE TERMINATOR ROLLED INTO ONE."

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Unlike Bolaji Badejo (the dude in the first film's alien suit), *Isolation's* xeno is a speed demon.



Above Ash-style Synthetics roam the space station. Make too much noise while taking them on and the alien comes a-running. Ruh-roh.