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**FORMAT PS5, PS4 / ETA 24 AUG**

**DEV** GOLD IRON STUDIOS / **PLAYERS** 1-3

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"AN ALIENS GAME THAT DELIVERS THE TERROR OF THE FILMS AS MUCH AS THE SPECTACLE."



**S**omething is shuffling in the darkness, and it's not just in front of us. It's to our right, behind us, above us... *it's inside the room.* If you've been hankering for an Aliens game that delivers the terror of the film series as much as the spectacle, then Cold Iron Studios is here for you.

The team is passionate about the source material. That's evident in every pinged inch of Aliens: Fireteam's evocative world. We've seen the action take place aboard the Katanga, a space station orbiting

a refinery that evokes the industrial design of the 1986 James Cameron movie, upon which this is based. But now the developer has revealed it's expanding its horizons into the broader Aliens universe. Our latest look at the game reveals an Engineer temple is another setting, meaning some maps will be based on the lore of Prometheus and Alien: Covenant.

### HOT AS HELL

By including the wider universe set out by Ridley Scott, the devs are giving the game room to breathe. It's also interesting because Aliens:

Fireteam will have a strong narrative campaign. Looking like a sci-fi horror take on The Division, the missions are underpinned by a new story set after the events of Alien 3 (swerving the craziness of Alien Resurrection). It means we'll be exploring what Weyland-Yutani knows about the Engineers, and how this has enabled the corporation to experiment with Xenomorph variants. It's your job as a Colonial Marine, alongside two friends, to clean up the mess.

This game offers an interesting premise: the Xenomorph is no





# THE HOT 50



**1** New screens tease the inclusion of the Engineers in the game's campaign. **2** Prowlers, identifiable by their red carapaces, will leap at you like pouncing velociraptors. **3** The environment can be used to ignite traps; just be careful with friendly fire. **4** Gunners are the heavy class, and will take the lead using the famous smartgun from the movies.

longer a secret. The galaxy is aware of the species, and is adapting to its existence. It opens up many avenues for the developer to send us down – not least, it ensures a creative variety of Xenomorphs to shoot. The game will feature 11 Xenomorph types, which rises to 20 when you add on the Weyland-Yutani experiments and synthetic monsters created in secret labs.

To keep the aliens at bay you have some of the famous weapons from the movies, including the “standard-issue M41A Pulse Rifle” and fragmentation grenades. If you’re a fan, you’ll remember those. But just as the Xenomorphs have evolved, so have the Colonial Marines’ tools. New charge coils – sticky shock grenades – can stun even the toughest acid-blooded alien.

Weapons can be modified and loadouts customised depending on the class you choose. In another nod to *The Division*, you can select a set hero type – your options are Gunner, Demolisher, Technician, Doc, and Recon – each offering a different



way to play. The Technician, for example, can deploy a gun turret that will target creatures and defend the perimeter. Fans of the *Aliens* film will remember fondly the buzz of these weapons. The Gunner is a little more RPG in its approach, and can ‘overclock’ weapons for the team; this will result in time-limited boosts to firepower and reload rates. The Demolisher is the game’s heavy class, and this slugger can fire rockets from a shoulder-mounted launcher or release an area-of-effect energy wave to stall and stun

the advancing Xenomorphs. When all else fails they can shred enemies using the films’ famous smartgun. This setup is key to everything, and so if you play solo the game will team you up with AI marines.

## SMART GUNS

The developer says each class is designed to work with the others, enabling players to build unique squads of complementary classes. In-game this translates to players adopting loose support and assault roles; the developer demos the



The mission demo sees the Colonial Marines sent to the Katanga to answer a distress call coming from the space station. As mentioned, the Xenomorphs are a known enemy and this team's members are seasoned at dealing with the creatures, though where this leads may surprise. Cold Iron Studios teases that the industrial orbiting station is only the jumping-off point, and this campaign's action will most likely lead to the planet's surface and some surprising developments.

### PERK UP

If longevity is your concern, fear not: each class in the game can be developed and levelled up. A Perk Board enables you to enhance and alter your character's abilities. Moving through ranks unlocks more weapons and gear – there will be 30 guns in total. These can be tailored to your playstyle, and with over 70 mods promised for each weapon it sounds like we'll have plenty of room to tinker.

Likewise enemy creatures and blends of Xenomorphs are spawned randomly, so each campaign can feel different. A Challenge Card system, similar to that announced for *Back 4 Blood*, can be unlocked and used ahead of a co-op game to alter the content of that mission. For example, one card will dictate that only headshots harm the enemy – so accuracy will be crucial, and could affect which class of Colonial Marine you choose for the mission.

### MOON SHOT

While the formula is tried and tested, the execution impresses. The blend of aggressive AI, roleplay structure, and custom options as

game to show how this plays out. A squad of Colonial Marines is backed into a corner awaiting the arrival of a lift. It's a forced time-based survival stage that reveals how players and AI can group up for effect. The Technician sets up an auto-turret to stem the tide, while the Demolisher and Gunner classes sit behind this frontline and mop up the Xenomorphs as they attempt to crawl and scramble up and over the marines. The Technician has a broader view of the action and supports with charge coils to stun and stall the creatures.

For their part the Xenomorphs fall into loose classes too, including Spitters, Warriors, and Bursters (the latter are covered in acid sacs that are filled to bursting). The enemy not only attacks in many ways, using every axis to outmanoeuvre your squad, but the mix of Xenomorph types ensures you need to think strategically about which to take down first. Should you focus on the gigantic Warrior type that likes to stomp in close and grapple you, or turn your attention to the Jumper class that can close the distance on you in a single leap?

Of course, this is hardly original. The premise riffs on ideas set down by PC's *Left 4 Dead* (which is soon to be resurrected by that team's pseudo-sequel, *Back 4 Blood* – see p78). Yet attached to the *Aliens*

licence, and with a commitment to accuracy, Cold Iron Studios' shooter impresses. The atmosphere and attention to detail ensure *Aliens: Fireteam* succeeds. A torch lights low-ceilinged corridors reminiscent of the colony on LV-426, and there's a distinct feeling the Xenomorphs will attack at any moment.

### PLAN IT

It helps that Cold Iron Studios is aiming to build a coherent new story within the famous universe. The inclusion of the Engineers in *Aliens: Fireteam* sets the tone for the four story-driven campaigns we'll

## "TO KEEP THE ALIENS AT BAY YOU HAVE SOME OF THE FAMOUS WEAPONS FROM THE MOVIES, INCLUDING THE M41A PULSE RIFLE."

experience. The developer has yet to reveal exactly how the overall story plays out, and whether the campaigns are self-contained or interconnected, but we do know each will be split into three missions, and one campaign can be completed in an evening. If that sounds short, don't forget new material will be added post-release, including possible story campaigns, though the developer is yet to confirm this at the time of writing.

well as curated encounters to offer set-piece events, always surprises. Colonial Marines on PS3 is finally jettisoned from memory.

There are some surprises in store for *Aliens* fans too. A prequel book to support this game is in the works, further illustrating the publisher's commitment to the lore. A rumour that Disney is working on *Alien: Isolation 2* also suggests the future of the Xenomorphs on PlayStation looks gruesomely good.