

ALIEN TIDE

ALIENS: FIRETEAM ELITE isn't the perfect organism, but it's decent co-op fun.

By Robert Zak

Aliens: Fireteam Elite is dumb explosive fun – a swarm-based action game that's derivative of both *Left 4 Dead* and *Gears of War*, but with a few nice touches of its own. It has that competent mid-budget feel that's becoming identifiable as publisher Focus Home's house style, with sparse story and cheesy dialogue and NPCs who talk without opening their mouths.

It's also very co-op dependent, and how good a time you have will be dictated by whether you play alongside real people or the voiceless bots that stand in for them.

Set across four chapters of three missions each, the

Fireteam campaign is a slideshow of distinctly 'Alien' environments. There's the occasional pretty vista, but your traversal of these spaces is mostly flat and non-interactive.

That's not too much of a problem because you'll probably be occupied with blasting away the hundreds of aliens streaming out of every environmental orifice.

These claustrophobic levels are functional, heightening the balls-to-the-wall intensity as the walls and ceiling turn black with xenos. Your fusillade of gunfire will cause aliens to stumble and roll, but even so they continue to charge you with hive-minded ferocity.

The corridor runs and endless alien harassment can get a little tiring, so it's a welcome change of pace when you reach the wave survival segments in each level. Here you have the time to gather yourselves, prepare your defences, then trigger the encounter when you're ready.

With a strong defence, you can (mostly) keep the aliens at a comfortable distance. When you inevitably get breached however, the mechanics can get a bit scrappy – you have no melee attack, you can arbitrarily leap over some waist-high walls but not others, and the stop-and-pop cover system is only really useful on the rare occasion you fight armed enemies.

XENO BIOLOGY

Speaking of enemies, who knew that there was so much diversity among xeno species? Beyond the classic dark aliens, you have your sneaky Spitters, iridescent-brained Bursters, and red

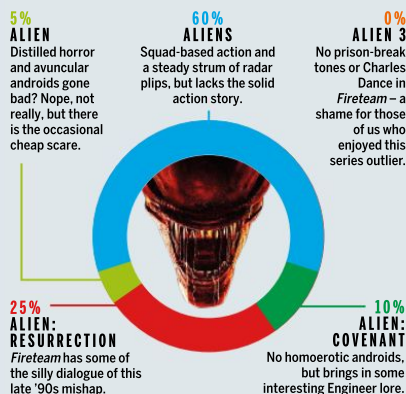
Prowlers who wait around corners to give you a cheap jumpscare and QTE event if they grab you. Gun-wielding synths appear at one point to give you an excuse to use those cover mechanics, and even the wonderful

Working Joes from *Alien: Isolation* make an appearance. It's all very goofy, and I'm not sure many of these creatures will make it into canon, but

Who knew that there was so much diversity among xeno species?

GAME OVER, MAN

How much of each movie is in this?



NEED TO KNOW

WHAT IS IT?

A co-operative swarm shooter set in the Alien universe

EXPECT TO PAY

£35

DEVELOPER

Cold Iron Studios

PUBLISHER

Focus Home Interactive

REVIEWED ON

Ryzen 7 5800H, Nvidia GeForce 3070 (mobile), 16GB RAM

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

LINK

aliensfireteamelite.com

it does its job of mixing up the threat and keeping you on your toes.

Each of the several classes to choose from has a couple of unique abilities that range from micro-rockets to healing turrets and group buffs. On higher difficulties, I particularly appreciated the more nuanced abilities of the Tactician, who has coil charges that slow enemies down, as well as a deployable turret that both shoots enemies and improves your defence when you stand near it.

Fireteam is flexible both in progression and in the missions themselves. I like the Challenge Cards, which let you earn bonus XP and money by doing things like disabling consumables or halving your ammo for the whole mission. Each player can pick one Challenge Card per mission, so you have a lot of wiggle room to play around with.

For a universe in which androids make up some of the most compelling characters, it's a shame that the bots accompanying you when playing alone have nothing to say. They perform poorly too, and I found myself having to drag them through the campaign.

The online matchmaking system needs work, as right now it's too restrictive, only matching you with players who are at that moment entering the exact same mission on the same difficulty as you.

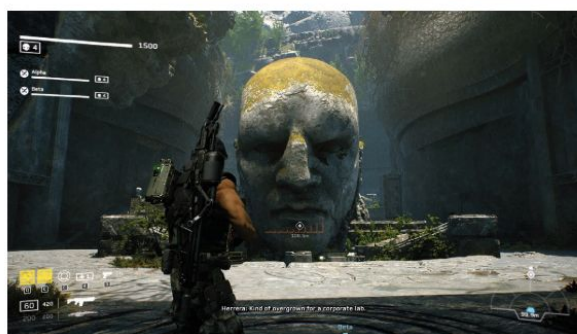
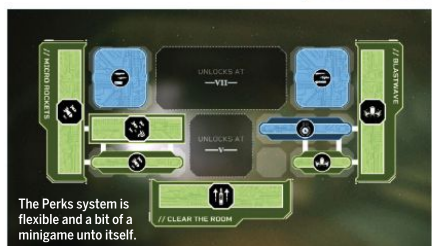
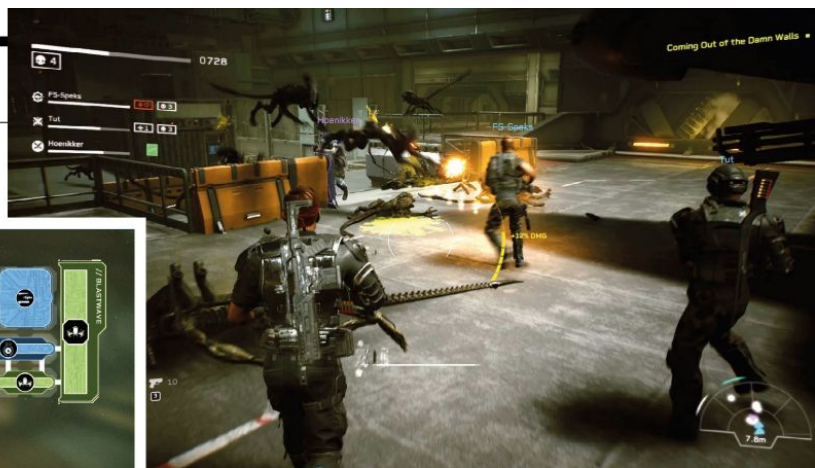
At least Fireteam's most glaring problems should be fixable with some patches (and a couple of friends). Yes, it plays into the trashy rather than the artful side of its franchise, but it embraces it as well, doing a better job of capturing that action-movie intensity than most past efforts have managed. ■

PC GAMER

VERDICT

Aliens: Fireteam Elite is a fun and flexible swarm shooter that's a little too reliant on being played alongside friends.

73



ABOVE: Things can get very messy very quickly once your defences are breached.

FAR LEFT: Fireteam's world and lore will offer some interesting tidbits for series fans.



BELOW: At its best, Fireteam offers some of the most frantic action in the Aliens universe.

