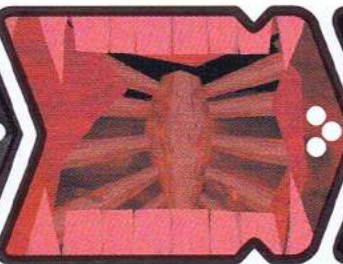


REVIEWER



Robin Alway



OUT: NOW

FORMAT: PC
PRICE: £30

DEVELOPER: MONOLITH
PUBLISHER: VIVENDI

SPECIAL FEATURES: ONLINE PLAY
OTHER FORMATS: NONE

CALL: 0118 920 9111
PLAYERS: 1-16

Who'll it Be?

AVP2's defining characteristic is that it lets you play as all three of the different races, kind of like a 3D version of *Starcraft*. Each type of character has its own set of missions to complete, along with different skills that you'll need to master. And, needless to say, each has its own strengths and weaknesses too.



▲ Marines have a tried 'n' tested arsenal of guns, rocket launchers, etc, and hacking and blowtorch skills for opening doors.



▲ Predators come with loads of futuristic weapons, plus spooky vision, ultra-high leaping abilities and a cloaking device.



▲ Weak in their larval stages, aliens must sneak about till they've grown up into tough-as-nails Beasties. Didn't help these ones, though.



▲ Chestbusters are the rubbishest aliens. Their special moves are wriggle along, and... er... get shot. They're no fun; they're just a shooting chore.

After a few games of this bug-hunting sequel you'll be sleeping with the lights on...

Aliens Versus Predator 2

If *Aliens Versus Predator* gave you the willies, the sequel will have your knees knocking together like maracas. It's been designed from the ground up to scare you absolutely poopless.

You don't actually see any aliens for the first half hour or so, but through the flickering gloom you glimpse chunks of dismembered colonists, hear your buddies' nervous radio chatter, and gradually become aware of scratching and scurrying noises coming from the ventilation system. So, when you're finally jumped by the first dribbling, chitin-clad fiend, you'd better hope there's a resus team on hand.

CHOICE CHARACTERS

As before, you can choose to play as a marine, predator or a series of weaponless but pointy-toothed

aliens. Each has their own rather brief set of missions, all intertwined around the same story (which involves, in accordance with the immutable laws of gaming, an illicit alien research conspiracy). The marine's missions are tackled with the usual array of *Quake*-style weaponry and, to be honest, can get a bit tedious, with increasingly predictable *Half-Life*-style scripted events. After a while you just know that if you pull a switch, an alien will burst out of the grating from behind you, smoothing the scary edges.

DON'T PLAY NICELY

However, lurking in the treetops as a cloaked predator is excellent fun. For a change, it's you scaring the humans out of their wits and avoiding their fire. Scurrying about over the walls and ceilings as a facehugger looking for a vulnerable grunt to impregnate makes for unbeatable entertainment.

And that's about the size of it: a bog-standard 3D shoot-'em-up that goes one better by letting you play as the baddies. Worth a gander if you're plucky enough.

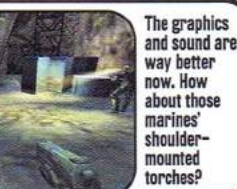
Improvements!

If you bought and enjoyed playing the first AvP you're probably wondering if it's worth forking out again for the sequel. Well...

There's a proper storyline to the game this time, with cutscenes to move it along and everything.



The graphics and sound are way better now. How about those marines' shoulder-mounted torches?



And this time - shock! - you can save your game anywhere you like. Makes it easier but kills some of the tension.



That'll teach those pesky kids to muck around with Spin Cycle on the washing machine.



The Best Bit



All's quiet. But why can you hear scary music? Was that a ping on the motion tracker? Nah. Then... Waaargh!

Judgement

GRAPHICS Nice characters and nifty special effects, but rather old skool environments.

GAMEPLAY Humdrum in a scary sort of way as a marine; big laughs as a predator or alien.

LIFESPAN Finishable in a few nights. Seems mainly geared towards LAN/internet play.

It's first-class fun playing as an alien or a predator. With some jumpy moments, it's best played from behind the settee, though.

Overall

81%