

Variety, Realism Distinguish Long-Awaited "Killzone 2"

Written by Luke Hamilton

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At the Electronic Entertainment Expo in 2005, game-play footage for *Killzone 2* was debuted as one of the big exclusive titles for Playstation 3. It looked fantastic, but there was debate whether the footage shown was actual play or a rendered video, making fans question whether the game would look as fantastic as suggested.

Fast forward almost four years to 2009, and with mega-hit shooter titles on the market such as *Bioshock*

, *Call of Duty 4*

, and

Halo 3

, the initial wow factor of

Killzone 2

- finally released last month - won't be enough to make it a staple in the shooter category. But it's just like real life: It's not only about looks.

Taking place in a war-torn futuristic world, you take the role of Sergeant Tomas "Sev"

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Sevchenko, a member of the Interplanetary Strategic Alliance (ISA), and lead Alpha Squad against the forces of the Helghast on the planet Helghan. There's very little background heading into the game other than the fights in the original *Killzone* and *Killzone: Liberation*, but it picks up as you head onto the battlefield. The story starts making sense after a while, and players will feel drawn to finish the fight. It's a compelling narrative, but nothing that hasn't already been done before.

The actual game play is where this title really shines. Taking cover from enemy fire will throw you off at first, though, as getting into cover prevents you from seeing anything that's going on beyond the wall, forcing you to peek out and take your shots quickly. It's by no means a bad system, but after many third-person shooters in which you can see what's going on and take your shots accordingly, it takes more getting used to than one might expect.

There's a fairly short learning curve if you've played a first-person shooter before, because most of the controls in shooters are similar from game to game. Weapon variety isn't as massive as some other games out there, and there's little in the range of creative weaponry, with the exception of electric hand grenades that spark up and take out enemies for a solid five seconds. The positive side of a small weapon variety is that you won't scrounge for ammo when you're in a bind.

Online multi-player revolves around your standard big maps loaded with players raring to shoot each other up. Play takes place in various team-based scenarios with other players online, in which your team's goal is to recover items, to secure areas for your faction, to kill more enemies than your opponents, or a combination of those until a team wins three out of five.



Another new idea implemented for multi-player is a system that allows players to take a more customized role with online play, with several character styles that enhance different abilities. You gain experience by playing online, allowing you to unlock new styles and weaponry to be used in battle. These styles can also be switched out during matches after you have been killed and need to re-spawn to get back into the match. The variety in play styles definitely helps ensure players won't get bored with the same old matches too soon.

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While online play is generally smooth, there can be moments of lag when your enemies seemingly disappear and reappear - a big pain when you're trying to use a sniper rifle. Not a major issue if you have a strong Internet connection, but going through a wireless connection can be problematic.

Graphically, this is one of the best-looking games in Playstation 3's library. The effects of the gunfire and explosions look fantastic, and the character models are highly detailed. It's almost grim how good the graphics are when you run by an enemy you just shot and see the blood spatter on the walls behind him.

But the biggest jaw-dropper happens right after you put the game in the system. The opening cinema scene to give players a little background looks so realistic that you'll wonder whether it was done with an actor instead of graphics.

The sound quality is another high point of this title. It's the little details that make the biggest impact, such as ricocheting bullets and explosions that leave your character's ears ringing, hindering your hearing for a brief period. And the voice-acting sucks you right into the moment. Going back to the opening cinema scene, the speech given by the Helgast leader sounds similar to speeches you would hear in a historical record.

After a few years of criticism and debate, *Killzone 2* has silenced the doubters and proven that it is one of the Playstation 3's best exclusives. Great game-play mechanics, a strong presentation, and online play with plenty of options ensure that people will be playing and talking about *Killzone 2* for a while.

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