



HITMAN 2

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WHILE STUBBORN CONSOLE FANS HATE TO ADMIT IT, PC GAMES have invaded their turf. If the number of ports available isn't convincing, then the number of PC-inspired games should be. Take note: strafing was a maneuver practically absent in console gaming until recently. Eidos' *Hitman 2* is the newest of the console games with PC roots.

Eidos brings the second installment of what was a mixed bag, and essentially a missed opportunity, to the PS2. Does *Hitman 2* outgun its predecessor? In many ways, yes. Following the trends set by *Tenchu* and *Metal Gear*, *Hitman 2* is an action game that relies heavily on stealth in order to complete its 20 missions. While you may succeed at some missions by charging into a group of gun-toting guards in one-man army fashion, chances are silent kills and sniping will serve a better route.

The story begins with Agent 47 retiring his sniper scope and plastic explosives for a life of gardening at his local cathedral. Purged of his sins by a priest friend, he is ready to begin his life of serenity. Fortunately for us, the priest is kidnapped and we get to use a bald and angry Agent 47 as a messenger of violent and bloody death in a search for his little Catholic buddy. The plot is set up through an impressive cinema sequence and the story continues as you continually violate the Sixth Commandment¹ in locations such as Russia, Sicily, Malaysia, and more. The voice acting is adequate and the music, by the Budapest Symphony Orchestra and Choir, is superb. Music is of a mostly classical feel, reminiscent of the *Godfather* films as it scores particular dramatic scenes.



¹ Thou shalt not kill.



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While the story is a fairly compelling tale in itself, the in-game action is where the real fun is. Choosing between first and third person views, one acquires weapons from victims including a knife, ninja sword, axes, SMGs, sniper rifle, shotgun, and an array of various armaments suitable for a man whose sole purpose in life is cold-blooded murder. Again, rather than walking up to guards and alerting others with the deafening blast of a shotgun, one should remain invisible. Dress as a merchant to snoop around unsuspected, kill quietly by strangling with fiber wire or slashing with a blade. Keeping a distance is sometimes necessary; zooming in with your exceptionally effective sniper rifle will leave a small, clean hole in your enemy's skull.

The graphics add to the game's high production value -high-res and running at a fluid 60fps. The game characters are well designed and feature distinct characteristics, most noticeable when their faces are marked by the crosshairs of your scope. The magnificent architecture of the many buildings and diverse color palettes used when traveling from country to country are also quite awe-inspiring.

Here come the complaints. First off, Eidos' product suffers from an unbalanced level of difficulty. While each mission is open for different ways of completion (increasing replay value), many are either too easy or too frustrating. This does not bode well when the control scheme becomes a pain to handle. This is a PC game at heart. Agent 47 must strafe and switch weapons simultaneously at will. While he can carry one weapon in each hand, confusion ensues as the assassin is attacked by large mobs. At one point, in an act of panic I pressed a combination of buttons to stealth my knife put a 9mm in my right hand and a crossbow in the other. Instead, I dropped all my weapons and pants, hurled my wallet at an oncoming attacker and flounced away. I completed the mission, but Agent 47 was not the slightest bit amused. Whether in the first person or third person perspectives, control can get cumbersome. Also, when it comes to close combat, Mr. 47 is about as agile as present day Cassius Clay.

Hitman 2 is undoubtedly fun as hell, despite its few holes. The control is reason enough to call a hit, begging for a mouse and keyboard configuration. If you don't own a PC and enjoy stealth based missions, and promise not to lose your patience and use your controller cable as a tool of murder, then pick this up. Otherwise, stick to the PC version. **||**

