



## FORMAT

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Insomniac Games

## REVIEWED BY

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## SUCH HEROIC NONSENSE

# RESISTANCE 2

**A**lthough *Resistance: Fall of Man* arrived as a PS3 launch title only eighteen months ago, it already seems like an aeon ago in videogaming terms. Insomniac's debut into the world of first-person shooters was a brisk, capable game that on reflection was more significant for its demonstration of the developer's capability with the new hardware than any innovations in gameplay. Indeed, the first *Resistance* was so successful because it was stamped throughout with the developer's personality (the idiosyncratic London setting, the pyrotechnic-friendly weapon-set); in a similar fashion to Criterion's *Black*, *Resistance* remains a superb genre piece, if little more.

However to reflect just how regularly boundaries are pushed back in this most crowded of fields, since the first game the likes of *Halo 3*, *Modern Warfare*, *Portal*, *BioShock* and *Far Cry 2* have each been heralded as modern classics upon release, expanding a certain area of game design, be it the use of open world or multiplayer mechanics, in ways that hadn't been previously seen. With competition like this it's no surprise then that Insomniac have, on the evidence of *Resistance 2*, removed themselves from any chance of being compared to Bungie, Infinity Ward et al. If that sounds like faint praise then it shouldn't: *Resistance 2* appears to be the game Insomniac always set out to make, for better or worse.

Considering that work most likely began on *R2* in late 2006, it's perhaps no surprise that the game will disappoint on every level if gamers approach their return to all things Chimera expecting another Best Game Ever. In fact for the first few hours it's only marginally better than *Haze* (on a side note

Free Radical's folly would have been immeasurably more successful if it enjoyed the 'launch title' critical context that *Resistance* was afforded).

Beginning in 1951 Iceland before skipping two years to the much-talked about American locale, the initial missions are tedious; gunfights suffer from unfair AI, the cutscenes are poor, and there's little motivation to drive the player from one objective to the next, something not helped by excessively linear early sections. Despite the widely-seen shots of U.S. skies awash with battleships, there's very little here that feels epic or reflects the disorientation and panic so well engineered by the *Call of Duty* series. The first game also began slowly though, and sure enough as soon as the campaign arrives in Idaho (around a third of the way through) everything vastly improves.

For it's here that you first encounter the charging Chimera, as well as environments that actually fulfil the evocative promise of 1950s small-town America, with the



PLAY ▶

PAUSE ||

STOP ■



**“LOOK FOR REVOLUTION  
IN RESISTANCE 2  
AND YOU’LL BE FOUND  
WANTING”**

attendant juxtaposition that fighting virus-infected hordes within the gardens of white picket-fenced houses brings (this time around there’s thankfully no Cathedrals, real or otherwise, to be desecrated). There isn’t a huge amount of detail throughout the game but little touches like wireless radios left on, or the classic cinema facades, are welcome. Visually, it’s the strongest part to a game that will never be remembered for its looks: one of the main complaints is the blandness that dominates the textures, and whilst the washed-out brown hue that coats everything may be a deliberate aesthetic choice, it certainly isn’t a pretty one.

From Idaho onwards the pace rarely lets up and whilst there are still issues with regards to level design, the sense of urgency is stronger. Coupled with some diverting puzzles, nods to Valve’s storytelling technique and a well-considered balance between checkpoints, this latter part of *Resistance 2* is altogether more successful. It’s not necessarily better than the first game in terms of its campaign (we actually preferred the London locations and structure of the original), but they complement each other well.

The headline grabbing claim of 60 players online also never quite fulfils its promise. Though it’s a technically impressive feat and works well in practice (for the most part you’re in one of six teams of ten), the multiplayer

component itself feels very lacklustre – slow respawning, levels that add little in the way of atmosphere - that it probably wouldn’t matter if there were 12 or 120 players. There is a great scope for reward, with XP given out at a rate that would alarm those used to slowly crawling their way to the next rank, but it all feels terribly antiquated. Again, back in early 2007, PS3 owners had nothing like *Resistance* online. Although the choice isn’t radically different now *Resistance 2* simply isn’t engaging enough to pull the majority away from the genuine AAA titles. If anything the campaign (and it’s co-operative alternative) is the real star here, multiplayer an area that we suspect will look increasingly barren as the months pass.

Another difference between *Resistance 2* and its predecessor is the introduction of a new *CoD*-esque health system, which has the effect of sacrificing any tactical depth for a straightforwardly aggressive approach to gameplay. This is, in fact, the spirit in which *Resistance 2* should be played; the fact that the levels are so sparse and the production values so surprisingly low suggests this isn’t a game in which every action should be savoured, but rather one to plough through at full pelt. It’s the first-person equivalent of fast food: low on substance, predictable and yet strangely satisfying. Just comparing the smooth somewhat unrealistic movement here to the heavy militaristic feel of your marine in the *Killzone 2* multiplayer beta speaks volumes.

In fact it’s *Killzone 2* which now finds itself the undisputed heavyweight when it comes to so-called “*Halo* beaters” exclusive to PlayStation 3. Its delicious promise, supported by astonishing in-game footage and the addictive nature of the multiplayer, has the paradoxical effect of removing any pressure that may have rested on the shoulders of Insomniac. Look for revolution in *Resistance 2* and you’ll be found wanting; Sony will, however, have a lot more to answer for should we be asking the same questions of Guerrilla’s showpiece in just under three months time.



**VERDICT** ★★★★★