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Go to war in this BiA title
GameSpot

[Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway](#)

World War II squad-based shooting at its best

It's a very tough market for World War II-based shooters nowadays. The huge number of games that have their action placed in the historical conflict saturated users, who have now come to reject anything remotely based on the legendary war. That is why games like Crisis or Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare have had such great appeal, since they are placed either in modern or future times in which players have more freedom and can explore different stories. In WWII, you're either on the winning side, the Allies, or on the losing side, the Axis powers.

But every once in a while, a WWII-based shooter comes along and offers quite an interesting experience that puts critics and analysts to silence. Some of the more appreciated WWII franchises, like Call of Duty, Medal of Honor or Brothers in Arms, have a certain feel about them that makes players forget the other WWII-based games. Such is the case with this week's review title, Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway, the third in the BiA franchise, following Road to Hill 30 and Earned in Blood.

Story

The story is relatively simple; you are now put in the shoes of the first title's protagonist, Staff Sergeant Matt Baker, and tasked with the historical mission of opening a road through the Netherlands, called by the soldiers Hell's Highway. As you all know, Matt has been severely affected by the tragic loss of a number of his comrades in the Normandy landing and in the fight for Hill 30. Most of the deaths have to do with Matt's presumed cursed pistol, which has the inscription Brothers in Arms. He regains possession of the pistol during this game and is quite affected by it, which is why the rest of his squad starts questioning his reason. They all begin to see that Matt is gravely affected as comrades under his command die in the front lines.

Historically, this game is based on Operation Market Garden, which had the main goal of cutting off the German troops in the Netherlands and opening up a road through the country, Hell's Highway. The missions Baker and his squad have to undertake are all historically accurate, and the 502-nd Parachute Infantry Regiment, which you are now part of, will play a key role in the success of the aforementioned operation.

A pretty interesting title The cursed gun

Gameplay

In terms of gameplay the title is very solid, with little bugs or problem areas. The squad commands are very intuitive and can adapt to any style of play, although some previous experiences with tactical shooters, like Rainbow Six Vegas, will give you an edge. The teams you can use vary at times and are very specialized, ranging from Base of Fire teams, which are equipped with long-range weapons, to Assault teams, with easier and shorter-range firearms, and you even have a Bazooka team, specially created to blast enemy cover and artillery. It's too bad that you can't choose your teams before a mission, as you are simply tasked to complete it with what you have.

The gameplay is basically the same as in previous titles; your teams provide cover fire and suppress the enemy and you, together with an assault team if you prefer, can flank your opponents and get the jump on them. Also, if you like, you can easily stay with your team and shoot the German soldiers from a distance, using the very precise weapons.

On the downside, the game can get a bit repetitive at times, your main opponents being either German soldier platoons, 88 mm artillery cannons or Panzer tanks. Also, the big number of pretty long cutscenes really takes you out of the action of the game and offers a not so pleasant cinematic view on a story that, if you haven't played the first games, can seem very confusing.

Concept

In what regards the concept of Hell's Highway, it's a very old one. As we said, WWII shooters have saturated the market and really dulled the senses of ordinary players, who tend to search for new and exciting stories set in contemporary or future times, not in past ones. But if you liked history and World War II, then this game will definitely appeal to you.

As a special treat, all the missions have certain areas, called Recon points, where you can witness actual events that happened in WWII and then view detailed reports about, let's say, the Phillips Plant in Eindhoven where a great battle took place, one that you now get to take part in. Sometimes, special features like these can really help the game in the eyes of the buyers; too bad it wasn't marketed enough, as it would have surely attracted a lot of players passionate about history.

Hell's Highway The protagonist, Matt Baker

Visuals and Audio

In terms of graphics, the Unreal Engine 3 shines. It recreates the beautiful atmosphere in the plains of the Netherlands and at night it transforms the once peaceful city of Eindhoven into a war-torn, burning wreck. The optimization that this engine has means that it will offer an enjoyable experience even on computers with less than recommended specifications. To feel the beauty of this game you definitely should check out our screenshots below.

In regard to the audio part, the game handles pretty well - the noises of the guns never sound the same. Also the shrieks caused by the German bombs can really take you by surprise and make you jump out of your seat. A downside is the fact that the taunts and in-game phrases your squad mates say are very repetitive and can get on your nerves if you play for a longer period of time, but don't worry because you can turn them off if you like.

Multiplayer

This is not the best aspect of the game, to say the least. It feels like it was just added in the final stages of development to brag that it offers an online experience. The 20-player capacity does sound interesting but to handle all of these players, the graphics of the game have been downgraded and only offer the minimum of detail. The two multiplayer modes don't feel natural although they are classic for any shooter - Capture, or, in this case, Raising the Flag, and Team Deathmatch. The good story from the single player experience is the best for this game and the multiplayer one could have just been skipped because of it.

Conclusion

All in all, BiA: Hell's Highway is a pretty entertaining game that can offer an interesting experience to those of us who like history and the Second World War. Also, if you happen to like squad-based shooters, then you might want to test your command skills with this title, as it will offer a very decent battle experience. The solid gameplay really attracts users who are tired of seeing bugs or glitches in their favorite games. But if you are tired of the same WWII titles, then you might want to avoid this one, except maybe if you're really bored in anticipation for the upcoming games, because then it will appeal to you.

Also, the demo for this title is up for download for the console versions, on the Xbox Live Marketplace or PlayStation Network, so you might want to test the combat and squad control systems before you buy the actual retail copy to see if they work up your interest.