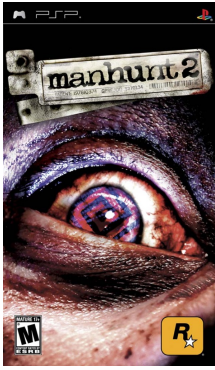


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By: Filip Truta, Games Editor



[Manhunt 2](#)

The door to your cell is open. What do you do?

Where to begin...? **Manhunt 2** has seen more controversy than any video game out there before it was even released. American rating board [ESRB](#) indulgently gave it an M for Mature, Europe's [BBFC banned it](#) not once, but twice from the market, all this while [child advocates](#) are begging parents not to buy the game. This is the price that developers such as Rockstar Games have to pay for being nonconformists, which isn't always bad, since they've managed to provide gamers with fun-to-play titles, also making a name for themselves. On the technical side, Manhunt 2 looks more like a sloppy job on behalf of the renowned GTA series developer. Manhunt (one) players will surely notice that the game not only hasn't evolved graphically, but has seemingly regressed from this point of view. Don't worry though, there are just a few negative aspects regarding visuals and controls that shouldn't affect gamers very much, and even less if we're talking to fans of the Manhunt franchise. **Story** An experiment at a secret research facility has gone catastrophically wrong. Daniel Lamb and Leo Kasper are the only surviving subjects. The Pickman Project will stop at nothing to hunt them down and stop the truth from getting out. Demented screams echo around the asylum that has caged you for the last six years. You open your eyes. A white-coated body slumps to the floor through your shaking hands. A bloody syringe slips from your arm. Waves of confusion and paranoia crash over you. You have no idea who you are or how you got here. The door to your cell is open. A friend, Leo, tells you to go with him if you want to survive. What do you do...? **Concept** Manhunt 2, although heavily altered from its original form, as there was no other way to throw it into the wild, still manages to deliver a terrifying experience, combining graphical and auditive violence on a scale that needs a reference update. Truly there is some stuff in this game that can't be good for everyone to see or hear, and we're guessing that the BBFC's decision wasn't a tough one to take. Launching a game where players find themselves in sticky sex clubs, or dark and gritty gas stations and warehouses, stuck with the visual capabilities of a retarded bat, and the memory of a 5-minutes-ago gruesome killing scene, was bound to capture everyone's attention in one way or another. The atmosphere within the game is very, very scary. The game's score, combined with what you know the "crazies" are going to do to you if they spot you, is going to have you holding your breath with every step that you take on your way out of a facility that looks like a mental disease itself. Forget about the blood on the walls, the dead bodies lying on the floor, sometimes missing a limb or two, and just keep focused on finding a way out. The message is clear here. Kill, or be killed! And so the manhunt begins.... **Gameplay** The first thing you'll notice when grabbing the controller is that progression is rather slow. That's until you press the X button and hold it down to run down the corridors of a place infested with... everything that's bad. Don't be scared though, Leo is with you every step of the way telling you what needs to be done in every situation. That doesn't mean that your job will be any easier. Sure, Leo will give you hints about how to stealthily progress through the vomit filled corridors, but it's you who has to perform every move and those moves need to be thought out well when waiting in the dark for the kill. You have multiple ways to perform executions. Yup, this part you'll love. Once you're given the go-ahead by the HUD to jump up to someone and terminate them, you can stab them in the back, kick them in the crotch, throw a manhole cover over their head, turn them into gravy with a crowbar and even douse them in gas, to get a camp-fire started and warm up because you'll notice that it's raining outside. The pause menu acts as a diary as well. When the game is paused, you're given hints to where you have to go and what you have to do, right below the stage name, compensating for the game being quite difficult, should you

start the experience on Insane. If you find yourself caught between two guards, hunters etc., your death is almost certain. No wait, let me rectify that: if you're caught between two guys that see you as a punching bag, on Insane, you're a goner for sure. Don't even think of throwing a few punches to just run off and get some health to continue the 2 on 1 wrestle either - they'll chase you to the end of the level if necessary. So you can only imagine what happens if there's more than one guy on your tail. There are three ways of killing someone: Hasty, Violent and Gruesome. When sitting still in the shadow, the life gage will turn blue, notifying you that you can now rethink every step while waiting patiently for the gruesome stab. This feature in particular is very realistic with the Wii version of the game. Sitting still in the dark means holding the Wii Remote perfectly still, while the PS2 version tells you to hit triangle so you can enter stealth mode. Another minus is the fact that some weapons knock you down pretty fast and by the time you get up, the screen will show the "episode failed" message, as kicks to the stomach and balls tend to fly around quite a lot if you don't get up in time. Add this to the slow response of command input and you'll have a very frustrating gameplay time if you're not the patient type. But in this game, you have no choice but to be the "patient" type. Overall though, Manhunt 2 offers a pretty satisfying stealth-action experience.

Graphics Right... Let's move on. Really come on, let's not talk about the graphics. Why? Because they suck. Ok, maybe they don't exactly suck, but visuals certainly aren't a plus here. Designers have managed to escape the fuss of creating a top-notch looking game, giving everything (characters, settings and objects) old VHS-tape quality visuals. We can all agree that this "effort" was for delivering the terrifying feeling, but for Danny and his enemies to feature toad hands... now that's a different matter altogether. Everyone's has three fingers on their hands for Christ's sake. Is this part of "The Project" too...? The censoring of cinematics adds to this particular faulty feature, but it is in no way, an excuse for Rockstar to not tweak up the game's looks. The blurry filter hiding the blood splattering everywhere, including on the camera lens, gives the impression that you're wearing Robo Cop's helmet - yeah, the "scan" lines... And as far as character models and animations go, they wouldn't look good even for a GameCube title, but hey, again maybe it's the VHS-thing that's confusing us.

Sound The audio experience on the other hand, is something worth mentioning as a plus. Not only does the game feature dozens of different lines for every person you interact with (cool ones too), but the game's score is absolutely superb. You'll literally feel danger approaching with dynamic crescendos that makes the hair on your back rise, let alone the one on your scalp. There is of course that environmental eerie noise too, featured in every horror movie and game, but there are also moments of pure silence, which only further accentuate the tension that you have to deal with.

Conclusion Even though looks and controls do tend to be unsatisfactory to the point that you just ask yourself, "what on Earth have they been working on for so long?", Manhunt 2 does deliver what it promised to deliver: terrifying, bloody, dirty, gritty, mentally-unstable action, with a touch of drama, provided by a very inspired soundtrack, all held together by an upsetting, yet realistic plot. We'd like to say that Manhunt 2 isn't for those weak of heart, but the reality is that Rockstar's game isn't for anyone *with* a heart.