

PlayStation 3 Forever



The Legacy of Killzone

Why is the PlayStation 3 Still Patched?

Thief

Murdered: Soul Suspect

& More

Contents

Team Update	3
Letter from the Editor	4
The Legacy of Killzone	5
Thief	9
Why is the PlayStation 3 still Patched?	12
Mellowing With Age	14
Murdered: Soul Suspect	16
Trophy Hunter	19



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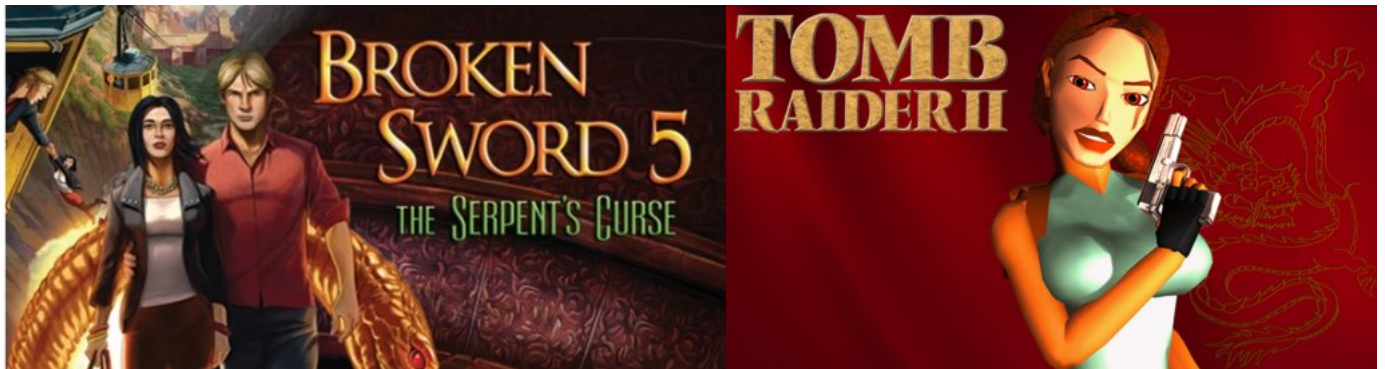
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Team Update

Matt

Editor

It's been a busy couple of months since the last issue. I went away to New York for a few days which gave me a lot of hours waiting at the airport and flying to play some games. On my trusty PlayStation Vita I played a lot of **Tomb Raider 2** which was surprisingly difficult and then got into playing some **Broken Sword** also on the Vita which was a lot of fun. Outside of that I am still working on the fantastic **Kingdom Come Deliverance 2** for the PlayStation 5.



Letter From The Editor

Heatwave



Gaming during the heatwave that has afflicted the UK is pretty difficult. If you think about it, you're really adding to the problem. The consoles take electricity, turns it into fun and ejects heat so I had to keep the gaming sessions to a minimum to give the PlayStation 3, and myself, a break from the intense heat.

There's been another PlayStation 3 update in 2026! Surprising? No not really, we seem to get one every 12-18 months but why? I looked at the possible reasons including the commonly stated "Blu-ray key update" that so many online seem to claim in this issue's feature.

The other big feature explores the Killzone Trilogy and its legacy on the PlayStation 3.

This issue also reviews Thief and Murdered: Soul Suspect which were released in 2014, late in the

PlayStation 3's lifecycle which also meant simultaneous releases on the next generation PlayStation 4 too. It's interesting to explore how the titles that were backported to a previous generation hold up amongst others.

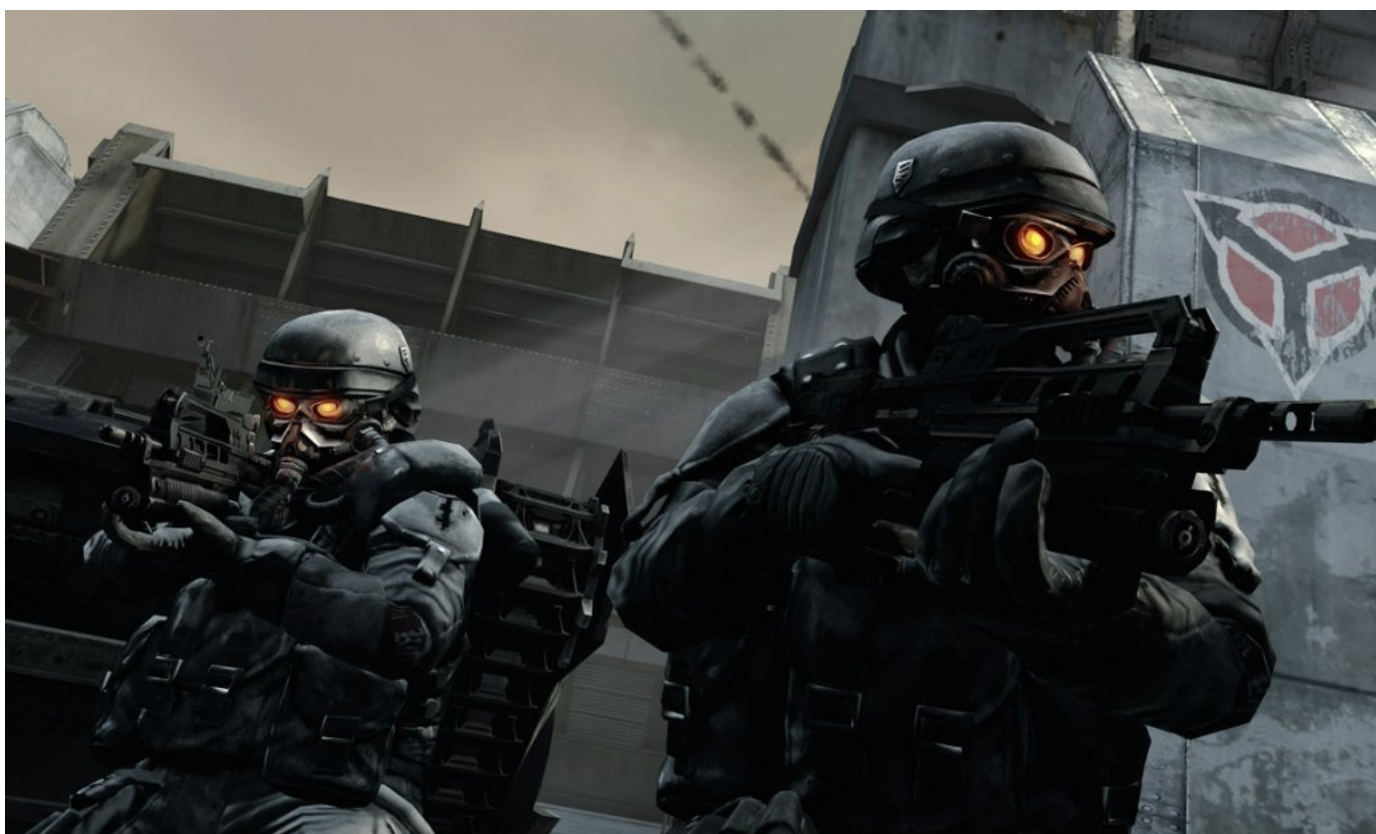
I have also been thinking about why I seem to be less critical when revisiting older games. Am I simply mellowing with age or is there something else going on?

This week's review title Murdered: Soul Suspect also provided me with an easy opportunity for another Platinum which is covered in the Trophy Hunter section.

If you have any thoughts or stories about the state of PlayStation 3 collecting, please send us a message at contact@playstation3forever.com or message us on our socials.

The Legacy of

KILLZONE



Throughout the PlayStation 3's lifecycle one genre seemed to dominate the landscape more than any other - the first person shooter. Whilst they certainly existed and were popular in the previous generation, it wasn't until now that they seemed to explode.

FPS games seemed more "grown up" which appealed to the aging demographic of core

gamers. The genre benefitted greatly from improvements in graphical fidelity and, perhaps more importantly, they were a natural fit in this new era of online console-gaming. Xbox had found success with its FPS exclusive Halo which transitioned over to the Xbox 360 with ease. Back on the PlayStation 2 Sony had attempted to promote an upcoming FPS exclusive of its

own as the "Halo Killer", that title being Killzone.

Killzone

Killzone was developed by Guerilla Games and released for the PlayStation 2 in 2004. It didn't live up to the hype of "Halo Killer". It had an intriguing premise but suffered with bugs and technical performance. Long time contributor to the



magazine Alessio remembers:

"I was incredibly excited for the release of Killzone. The aesthetics, play space, and promise of additional cooperative opportunities in a shooter had me eager, but my expectations would be dampened by technical issues and overall sluggish controls and game feel.""

Killzone was re-released onto the PlayStation 3 as Killzone HD, whose physical copies are very expensive on Ebay. For slightly less money you can also find it in the Killzone trilogy edition which features all 3 games. I have not played Killzone HD but from what I have read online it does address some of the bugs and performance issues that

plagued the original PlayStation 2 version.

The original Killzone defined the series lore. Set in the future in a post-nuclear war on Earth, human colonists now reside on a planet called Vekta - an Earth-like haven. But this wasn't the only planet in this system to be colonized. A group of rebels left Vekta and inhabited the neighboring planet Helghan - a less appealing planet covered in thick smog and radiation.

The Helghan adapted over the years and are now pale, bald and require the breathing apparatus and goggles that gives the enemies their iconic look. The events of the first game have you defend Vekta from a Helghan invasion.

Killzone 2

The PlayStation 3 was already achieving some success with its new exclusive FPS Resistance: Fall of Man but there was definitely room for improvement and when Killzone 2 came along it didn't disappoint.

Killzone 2 is a graphically impressive game, especially so for a game releasing in 2009 a few

years after the initial release of the console. It was massively more well received than its predecessor, gaining many 9/10 ratings and becoming a staple "must play" for any PlayStation 3 owner at the time.

Booting it up today I was reminded of the iconic opening cinematic, with its militarily inspired orchestral score played against a dynamic performance from actor Brian Cox (who would later find even more success in HBO's Succession) who plays Visari, the emperor of the Helghast and main villain of the game.

Killzone 2 picks up the thread but this time takes the fight back to Helghan. I enjoyed seeing how the designers created a sci-fi world that would exist under a militarism regime.

As I was playing, a memory from 2009 was triggered - Killzone is very heavy. It is not a fast and reactive first person shooter. Movement is slow, gravity feels heavy - grenades don't launch across the map at a tap of a button. This is deliberate and gives Killzone a unique feel but it is a slightly risky strategy as what can be designed as intentional weight can be perceived as sluggishness for those more familiar with a snappier experience.

I enjoyed revisiting the game and it still feels like a well rounded and polished FPS from this era but the major thing lacking is some unique mechanics. There's just nothing mechanically that makes this game really stand out.

Killzone 3

Killzone 3 was released 3 years later in 2011 to slightly muted levels of praise compared to its predecessor. It was good, no doubt about it, but it just didn't quite knock anyone's socks off.

This entry tried to stand out as a title

by leaning heavily into the additional technologies of the time. The game was fully compatible with the emerging 3D capability that PlayStation 3 offered and was compatible with the PlayStation Move.

I looked at the PlayStation Move functionality a few issues back, and whilst it is impressive it was only a gimmick that added to the experience in a novel way but not in a completely transformative way that made this a must-play title.

On the story front the game picks up immediately from the end of Killzone 2 and I mean like two or three minutes after. Which is interesting but also dampens the ending of Killzone 2 a bit for me. That being said, story was never the main selling point of these games.

Mechanically it's still a middle-

of-the-road FPS with no compelling unique mechanics. I noticed that the controls did feel a bit snappier, a bit more modern compared to its predecessor. The heaviness has been dialed back quite some way.

I even felt like the graphics were less interesting. On some level they were clearly better in fidelity but they lost the unique look of Killzone 2 imbued and with it some of the series' identity.

It's another solid outing, but when we replay old games here at PlayStation 3 Forever we are looking for a unique experience and out of the two Killzone 2 has more of that than its sequel does.





Legacy

After Killzone 3 was a title for the PlayStation Vita, Killzone: Mercenary and a launch title for the PlayStation 4, Killzone: Shadow Fall both in 2013. Whilst Halo has continued to produce a steady stream of titles ever since, Killzone remains untouched for 13 years and counting.

The development studio Guerilla Games moved on and produced much more successful titles with the Horizon Zero Dawn open-world games that fit better in the modern gaming landscape.

For now Killzone's legacy remains mostly on the PlayStation 3 with Killzone 2 still being one of the must play games for the system. I think the well may have been run dry for Killzone's lore. Like Star Wars, how many times can you keep extinguishing the empire

for another one to take its place? It starts to undermine the whole premise of the original idea. The gaming landscape moved on and Killzone doesn't really have a place in it. A "Halo Killer" it was not, but an iconic PlayStation 3 FPS it certainly was.



Thief

Please Square to Thief

STEALTH

RELEASED 2014



If you are familiar with this magazine you might know that I love the stealth genre and the PlayStation 3 has a decent chunk of interesting stealth titles: Deus Ex: Human Revolution, almost the entirety of the Metal Gear Solid series, the Assassin's Creed series, Dishonored, The Last of Us, Sly Racoon, I could go on. But how does Thief (2014) compare to those and to its classic namesake Thief (1998)?

The Thief series began in 1998 with Thief: Dark Project releasing on PC to critical success. It was followed up by

Thief II: The Metal Age in 2000, also a PC only title, and Thief: Deadly Shadows in 2004 which was the first to be released on a console (Xbox) as well as PC.

Two guards walking a cobblestone street After ten long years Thief was released in 2014 in this special transitional period between console generations. It could be purchased for PC, Mac, PlayStation 3, PlayStation 4, Xbox 360 and Xbox One, an awful lot of platforms to test on.

Like a lot of our stories at PlayStation 3 Forever it's fair to

assume the PlayStation 3 version is probably the worst port, I haven't played all of them but I can say it's at least worse than the PlayStation 4 version, but when has that ever stopped us before? Frame rate drops, long load times and pop in textures are just something we have learned to live with.

Gloomy

Graphically the game is OK. During this period you can really notice those games which were released on both the PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 3 as they clearly



have more detailed models, primarily for the next-gen version, but when those are downscaled for the PlayStation 3 you get a lot of texture inconsistencies, severe frame rate drops and some overall sluggishness.

Being primarily a next-generation game, the design takes advantage of the ability for a game to be dark with subtle lighting effects and small color variations that really pop out. The problem for us is that none of that translates when you squish those effects down in order to make it work for the PlayStation 3. The game ends up being very dark, uniform and forgettable because of it.

[Quick disclaimer that the screenshots in this article are taken from the PlayStation 4 version so if you want to imagine what the PlayStation 3 version looks like, just smear some grease over the screen.]

A rainy day in the city
The Victorian inspired city is done well, although quite bleak. Thief takes place in 'The City', a sprawling Victorian style, grungy, industrious city where a terrible plague called the Gloom has spread. The city is split up into a number of districts and locations where the main missions of the game take place. The game brings you back to this central location between missions, giving you a chance to buy items, do side quests and find collectables. I quite enjoyed this halfway style between open world and level



based missions.

Gameplay wise we're doing some stealth and stealing. A lot of stealing. So much stealing. A lot of Thief staples are here, different ground elements have different effects on sound and can alert guards more easily e.g walking on broken glass can alert guards or wading through water too quickly will do the same. There are a myriad of different arrow types such as the classic 'Water arrow' which can extinguish flames from a distance and Garrett's faithful blackjack which can reliably knock guards unconscious.

Thieving and Thieving

The levels and areas are littered with stealable items: trophies, cups, letter openers, rings, Garrett needs to steal them all, where he puts them I have no idea, but the money earned from stealing is useful for replenishing those arrows and

health items or to purchase different upgrades. It's just that there is too much of it, it is of course optional, you don't need to steal all of it, but if you enter a bedroom which may have a wardrobe and a chest of drawers, you can painstakingly open each draw and door to rinse an entire room of anything of value.

Garrett steals a mask from a house

Searching for the hidden collectables is fun the first few times.

Most of the gameplay relies on staying hidden. Despite the game seemingly taking place in a world that feels permanently dark, nobody has any night vision and simply snuffing out flames or hiding in a small amount of shadow renders you invisible, at least on normal difficulty.

Looking at the amount of press

information and appearances in magazines, I think the game was heavily pushed at the time. To mark the release, a select few branches of the GAME series of shops in the UK had a locked chest where customers could take part in a 5 minute challenge to lockpick it open. If they managed it, they could win a prize ranging from a brand new PlayStation 4 to some in-store vouchers.

Looking at the trophy list I was initially quite inspired to go for a Platinum run. But the main two problematic ones are beating the game on the hardest difficulty and beating the game without killing or even knocking anyone out which is much more of a tedious trial and error so for now my Platinum ambitions are shelved.



A bow and arrow pointing at a lit fire

The water arrows are an essential bit of kit.

The biggest problem with Thief (2011) is and probably always has been Dishonored. Dishonored is clearly inspired heavily by Thief but builds upon it in a satisfying way and makes a much more polished gaming experience.

Coming back to it now, I can live with some technical problems such as the frame rate drops and graphical hitches, but only if the experience is worth it and sadly Thief just doesn't excite me. It's dark, gloomy, a bit tedious and if you are going to play it, you probably better off playing a different version.



Why is the PlayStation 3 still Patched?



In March 2025 the PlayStation 3, a console released nearly 20 years ago, received update version 4.93 with the patch notes reading the same as it has for many years: "This system software update improves system performance"

One could almost get excited that this sounds like games will run better or the OS will crash less but we all know it is very unlikely to contain anything like that. Unfortunately they never give more details than that on what the details are, likely because they don't want to intentionally expose any security issues for older models unnecessarily.

Device Hardening

It is more likely they are fixing security problems that come up and maybe taking down vulnerabilities that are exploited in

order to jail-break the system.

Each new version often requires the jail-breaking community to find a new way to exploit the machine and get access to lower levels of the system.

Sony still has a keen interest in preventing this from happening.

PlayStation Network Compatibility

The PlayStation 3 can still connect to the Trophy syncing system, PlayStation Network and the PlayStation Store (just about). All of these are modern systems that will have newer security requirements and as such Sony will occasionally need to modify the PlayStation 3 so that it can still contact and communicate with those features.



Blu-ray Compatibility

The most commonly stated reason you read online is that these yearly updates are about updating encryption keys required to play Blu-ray discs.

For a while I just took this at face value and said OK makes sense. But one day I thought “Why do all my other 20 year old Blu-ray players (yes I have more than one) not require any firmware updates and they can play new Blu-ray discs just fine?”

The content on a Blu-ray disc is encrypted to try and prevent it from being copied or ripped. The system that is used for this is AACS (Advanced Access Content System). If a manufacturer desires to create a Blu-ray machine they must first be issued with a set of digital keys from the AACS License Administrator that they can distribute into their players firmware.

These are used to decrypt the content on a disc and let playback happen.

As part of that issuance, manufacturers are required to keep these keys secure within the player and make every attempt to prevent people from hacking open a device and taking the keys out which they could then use to copy disc content illegally.

But the early engineers knew that key leakage was inevitable and tried to design a system where exposed keys could be revoked and removed from the community. This would mean that whilst those compromised keys could be used to decrypt content on blur-ays that were already printed, the new Blu-ray releases could be encoded in such a way as to not work with those compromised keys.

Despite the Blu-ray technology and disc encryption technology being different it is inevitable for them to be perceived as

being intertwined. Sony is one of the principle companies involved in Blu-ray technology and so it is in their interest to ensure the technology is reliable. It may even be a contractual necessity to address these key problems on a regular basis.

Sony may have to regularly modify the AACS related data to ensure the PlayStation 3 remains compatible with all the latest Blu-ray releases. Blu-ray compatibility can also involve more than just decryption keys as the full extent of Blu-ray capability is quite large with features added over the years such as BD+ and BD-Java.

People who have not updated their PlayStation 3's in a long time still report being able to play most discs. This is because it is also up to the distributor which keys they encrypt the disc with and how strict they will be on refusing to play on players with known leaked keys.

Sony cannot keep this up indefinitely so it will be interesting to see how long it goes on for. We have already seen a change to the way the PlayStation Store works. I wonder how long it will be until the trophy sync support is removed and cloud saves no longer work. Hopefully we still have a few more years.

Mellowing With Age?

It's Old - So What?

Matt

In my early twenties reviewing and playing many new releases each week, I was a much harsher critic than I am today. I have noticed doing this magazine that games that I previously had problems with I now enjoy and games that reviewed poorly at the time I now feel were judged too harshly.

So I began wondering what it was that meant I became less critical over time and this is what I found.

Price

The first thing I realized was that price is no longer a key consideration, at least when it comes to thinking about most of these PlayStation 3 titles. I picked up each of our review titles for this issue, Thief and Murdered: Soul Suspect for around £5-8 each. Prices in the region of getting some food for lunch. There is much less jeopardy

when buying for that amount. But when these releases were new and at the £40 mark, £40 being worth even more than it does today too, if you purchased a game you really wanted it to be good and to keep you occupied until you could afford to buy another one and as such you were much harder on the quality of that purchase.

This is one reason why video game criticism, youtube channels and magazines exist, to help inform the buyer on which titles are most likely going to appeal to them. I know a lot of games in this era were judged harshly because of their story length. We often heard about games whose main story could be completed in 4-6 hours which is not great if that's the only game you can afford for perhaps another month if not longer.

But with modern day time constraints of being an adult with a job and kids, a 4-6 hour tight gaming experience is honestly kind of appealing, but only for the right price.

Passage of Time

I think there is also the issue of distance. We become unable to notice the small differences between titles as time and technology advances. When these games were brand new we were riding a wave of graphical and performance improvements, but





that improvement was a long term trend and from game to game the wave could either go forwards or backwards and it felt very important at the time to work out which was which.

When a new title dropped you could compare to titles released at a similar time or shortly before, how do the graphics compare? The lighting, the controls, multiplayer offerings - all of it mattered.

Now when I play a lot of these PlayStation 3 games they look and play very similar to each other. My theory is that my brain simply says "They all look and play much worse than the PlayStation 5" and just puts them in the same mental bucket. But at the time, the small differences between titles would be a huge discussion point.

Don't get me wrong, there are still PlayStation 3 games that look appalling and play even worse but for the rest there isn't enough in it compared to modern standards to really say too much about.

If I have chosen to play a PlayStation 3 game, it means I have mentally prepared myself that I have to accept certain technological limitations, like watching an old black and white movie. You

can enjoy it for the plot, the dialogue or even for appreciating the effects they used with the technology they had but you know those aren't as impressive as modern effects but you can still enjoy and appreciate it for what it is.

Positivity

The final reason is purely a mindset. I started this project to explore the PlayStation 3 and celebrate it in a positive way rather than simply pick up bad games and then talk about how bad they are. There definitely are games on the PlayStation 3 that are bad but for the most part I don't see the point in me revisiting them and therefore I don't pick them up.

Whether the mindset shift has changed due to age or just life experience I do not know but being negative for long periods can get a bit draining. Looking for the positives in something or simply accepting "this isn't for me" is enough, without having to tear it to shreds. I'll leave that for someone else. For now I am going to continue trying to enjoy as much as I can.

Murdered: Soul Suspect

A new found Joy

DETECTIVE STORY

RELEASED 2014



Sometimes you have an opinion about something but you don't really know where that opinion has come from. You can even be so sure that what you know is true. It's just some knowledge absorbed passively from the zeitgeist.

Well for the longest time, I just knew that Murdered: Soul Suspect was a bad game. I couldn't tell you why I knew this, but I did and I never really gave it any thought and I never played it, don't recall watching any reviews or deep dive videos on YouTube either. In the past

year, a couple of throwaway mentions on social media and comments by friends about the game really sparked my interest and made me want to check it out and see what I really thought about it.

Without looking up the game at all, I just impulsively ordered it off Ebay. This is one of those great times where I am so pleased I took a chance because this

game totally won me over and I think perhaps uncommonly, it





was easier to appreciate today than it would have been when it was released in 2014.

I wasn't exactly wrong with my original knowledge of the game, there was indeed a lot of negativity at the time, looking at reviews they are mostly in the 4/10 to 6/10, even Official PlayStation Magazine UK, a platform I would say were usually fairly soft on review scores, gave the game a 4/10 despite their three prior issues containing preview articles implying it was going to be good.

In the game you play police detective Ronan, who has just been killed and is now a ghost solving his own murder. This is not a spoiler, it happens in the first 5 minutes and is also on the back of the box. The game gives you lots of interesting ghostly mechanics like possessing people, walking through walls, teleportation

and interacting mildly with objects.

It took my brain a surprisingly long time to adjust to remembering I can walk through objects and walls and didn't have to follow the path.

On top of that the game play is mostly a series of small investigation sequences with very basic trial and error detective mechanics which all help to drive the story and central mystery forwards.

I am not going to get deep into

my criticisms of the game or mechanics, a lot of the articles and criticisms of the time did exactly that and I think they were right. The general assessment was that the game feels like it is the seed of a great game but that what we got was perhaps just a small, unpolished taste of what could have been and whilst I do actually agree with that, I think what we got was still entertaining.

The story is interesting but very surface level, the characters are predictable tropes, the side quests where you help other ghosts with their unfinished business is never explored for more than five minutes at a time.

Despite the criticisms, this kind of game is exactly the reason I love retro gaming and exploring old catalogues of games. There are hundreds of





titles out there I have never played, and they may have problems but they can also have some charm or unique mechanic that you don't often see elsewhere.

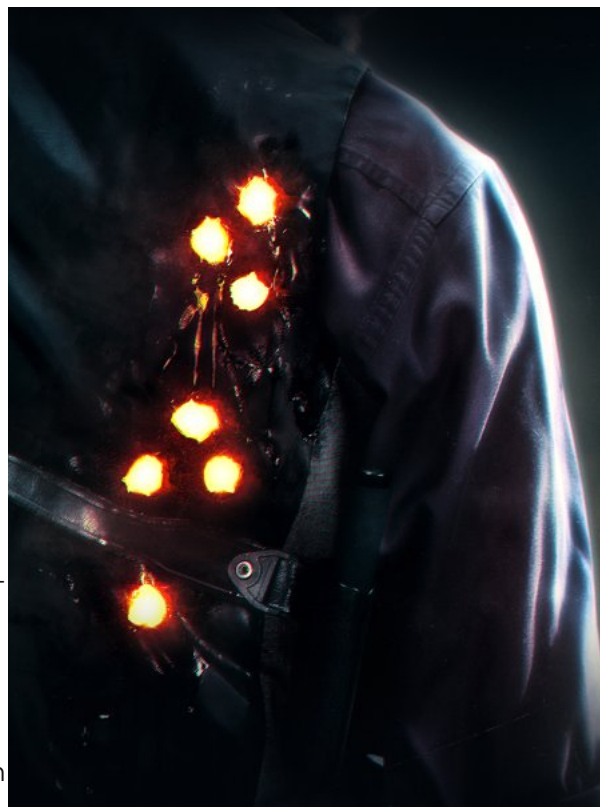
It is a short game. I think I finished the story and got the Platinum trophy in maybe 6 hours (See Trophy Hunter). Being an adult with limited time, a short, tight six hour experience is perfect for me but to understand some of the harsh criticism at the time I have to consider that consumers who picked this over a 30-40 hour open world game with much more replayability, may have felt their money could have gotten more for their money.

The graphics of the main character models were pretty detailed but the NPCs looked very flat, the text portions did not blend in with the paper on which they were meant to be on and the load times could

also be very slow. Fortunately the game doesn't load too often, but if you die (mega die? You are already a ghost after all?) and reload the last save point, this can take very long to load.

I think if you are on the look out for a short, interesting story-based game for the PlayStation 3 I would definitely recommend it to those who have an

open mind about trying out some mechanics that might not be fully fleshed out. I really enjoyed my time with the game and am glad to have played it.



Trophy Hunter

Murdered: Soul Suspect

It was becoming harder and harder to find short but fun games with a Platinum Trophy that I didn't already own, so I was pleasantly surprised when I checked out the trophy list for one of this issue's review titles, Murdered: Soul Suspect, to find it was a suitable candidate.

The game only has a main story mode to work through, coming in at around 6 hours long to beat and all the trophies can and need to be completed in one playthrough.

When you first check out a trophy guide it looks a little daunting as nearly all of them are missable, which is true, but it's not quite as bad as you may first expect.

We can split the list into 3 categories: unmissable story beats, side missions and collectables.

Unmissable Story Beats

Not much to say about these, just play the game until the

very end and you will get all of them. It's worth noting that the collectables end shortly before the final part of the game so don't be alarmed if you have all the collectables but are missing a few extra trophies.

Side Missions

Throughout the game there are a few side quests which you need to solve to get these trophies. It is very likely you would find and complete these organically and you have a few opportunities to do them as they take place in the main town which serves as the central hub. The four side mission trophies are:

Ingrid - Inside the first proper level the Apartments

Amnesia - Just outside the Church, on the beach

Carnage - Just outside the Police Station

Scorned - Just outside the Cemetery

These don't take long and can be completed as soon as you find them.

Collectables

The rest of the trophy list entries are all related to collectables and it doesn't really make sense to think about them separately as there is a poorly named 'Collector All' trophy which you need in order to get the Platinum and if you get that, you will also get every single other one along the way.

I followed an excellent set of video guides for each section, once I had explored them myself.

The only one of note is the Museum level which you cannot return to, so follow that one carefully.

All-in-all it's a great game for trophy hunting, you can enjoy the game whilst easily picking up the collectables and following the story. In fact, the collectables themselves all add to the story and world building, giving you little nuggets of information.