

Joystiq Hands-on: Killzone 2 Multiplayer

Killzone 2's multiplayer game was shown off behind closed doors at the Leipzig Game Convention this week and we were there to get our hands well and truly on. As is customary for these break-down sessions, we were given a short presentation by members of the development team.

We were told about the Squad system that lets players form four-man teams mid-game. The system will show your teammates' health bars and let you make use of the headset channel that is private. It also lets you use the leader of the group as a spawn point, keeping all players together. The spawn menu makes it simple to create squads. A flashing message will be sent to players who receive a squad invitation. It takes just few clicks to accept or decline an invite. This will ensure that you're always logged into the game.

Guerilla Games also reviewed the game's numerous community features. Full clan support, including 64 players per game 16 against 16 clan challenges with four different leaderboards as well as a myriad of stats that are tracked and the clan currency system. "Valor" is wagered by each clan before the start of inter-clan skirmishes, with the entire amount being awarded to the winner. Earning valor will boost your position on the leaderboards. The goal is to hold clan tournaments that are composed of 256 clans. The entire valor pot will be awarded to the overall winner. The community features are all very well, but without the game to back it up the whole thing is a bit tinny. Fortunately, Killzone 2 is an outstanding multiplayer experience. It's fast-paced, intense and enjoyable. This is made possible by the class system, which adds a tremendous amount of depth to the game. You'll begin your journey as a soldier. No special abilities to your name however, you have the most extensive selection of weapons. As you rise through the ranks, you will be given new "badges" (or classes) at certain intervals. They've been planned to ensure that they are given in a specific order and those that impact gameplay the least being the easiest to earn.

We started out as an Helghast scout; a three-eyed hooded assassin. A sniper rifle. Each class has two capabilities one of which is written in stone (invisibility in our case) and a secondary capability that can be exchanged for any other class' secondary ability. The Art Of Kerembeyit We chose to use the scout's ability of tagging enemy locations. These abilities are effective, however they have limitations. Whilst standing still our invisibility cloak functions perfectly, but whilst moving the strength of the invisibility decreases. Weapons can take it away completely. It is only possible to activate it after the ability has refreshed in WoW-style. This refresh time applies to all skills.

We played at a very high level and despite playing against Guerilla Games employees from Amsterdam there was no lag. The graphics are clear from single-player gaming. Motion blur and (incredibly) beautiful explosions are constantly present. This game is incredible. We have played it several times and are still amazed by how stunning it appears every time we get the chance to play it. Simon Larouche, Guerilla Games' copilot, said that multiplayer has one limitation. Physical objects like locker doors will be present in multiplayer, but fully

destructible walls will not.

Team Deathmatch uses a tug-of-war system. Each faction has a meter that indicates how close they are to winning. Your meter will get full with enemies who are killed more often. However, being killed lowers your team's meter. This means that in the event that two opposing factions have the same matched abilities, the game could continue for quite some time. It shouldn't be a problem. The class system lets you mix up your gameplay style following any death, Team Fortress style.

The game was massive and, at first, a bit daunting. There were also a few unpleasant moments when we were searching for enemies for what felt like five minutes only to be shotgunned in the face when we found an individual. Despite the absence of headsets, the team spirit was evident with medics assisting wounded and team mates hurrying to assist those who are who were stuck between a rock and a hard place. There's something about the game which makes you feel more connected with others on your faction.

An open beta is being developed but it won't be released until after the Resistance 2 or SOCOM betas. The game won't be suffering from any region locking - when you start a game, you're the server, which means that anyone in the world can join. If you are searching for an online game that is already played the default is to display games within your region. However you can also select to search globally if you want to.

Killzone 2's multiplayer is much more than just a mere bullet point on the back of the box. Considering all the hype has been about the single player for many years, we never imagined that multiplayer would be as detailed. It remains to be seen whether Killzone 2 can trump Resistance 2's 60-player online battles or Call of Duty 4's stranglehold on multiplayer gamer time, but Guerilla is fighting quite an effort.