



# GEARS OF WAR 2

THE MAGAZINE

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF 360ZINE, THE FREE XBOX 360 MAGAZINE

EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST

# GEARS OF WAR 2

Every level played from start to finish!

INTERVIEW

**CLIFF BLESZINSKI**

Get the lowdown on GOW2 from the man himself...



INTERVIEW

**MIKE CAPPS**

Epic's president discusses GOW2 and beyond...



# WELCOME

It's not every day you get the opportunity to play one of the year's most anticipated games over a month before its release, but we got that chance with Gears of War 2, and grabbed it with both hands. Quite literally, in a way – we managed to get prime spot in front of the one giant telly at the Microsoft event, and proceeded to blast through the first few acts of the single-player game before anyone else. Dedication to our cause saw us blitz most of the rest of the game throughout the night, resting for but a couple of hours before resuming hostilities with the Locust and finishing the following morning, with a completion time of around twelve hours.

So yes, it's longer than the first game, and we're sure most players will take a little more time than was afforded to the attendant journalists. With the campaign done and dusted, we then played several hours of the game's multiplayer modes, joining forces with Epic's Dr. Mike Capps, and being congratulated for a double grenade kill that he described as "beautiful", taking on the Locust during one particularly satisfying game of Execution single-handedly.

So it's fair to say we're in a prime position to reveal all about Gears of War 2 – and exactly how it compares to the much-celebrated original. Embargoes forbid us from rating the game, but suffice to say this extensive preview is the result of exhaustive playtesting of the final version. Would it get a Gold Award? The next issue of 360Zine will carry our final verdict, but for now you'll just have to read on and see what you think...

Enjoy the issue,  
**Chris Schilling**

*"At around twelve hours, Gears 2's campaign is longer than the original"*

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We've played through the entire single-player campaign and spent hours on multiplayer too.

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Don't miss our video interview with the president of Epic.

**GEARS OF WAR 2** Click here to watch the video!



HANDS ON

# GEARS OF WAR 2

Played to completion – will this be 2008's greatest game?

**W**hen we spoke to Cliff Bleszinski last month, he explained how his assertion that Gears of War 2 was “bigger, better and more badass” was just marketing speak. But it's hard to see a summary that's any more appropriate than that. We've played Gears 2 from awesome opening to ferocious, frantic finish, and it is indeed bigger, and better, and more badass than the first. Pound-for-pound, it's undoubtedly

superior to the original, with enough new in there to make it feel very much like Gears 2.0 rather than just Gears 1.5.

### CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Epic is clearly keen to talk about the game's story – a much criticised aspect of the original, which forewent a truly compelling narrative to focus purely on its fast-paced tactical action sequences and exciting set-pieces. We admit that we feared the plot might become a little too intrusive, getting in the way of more Locust-blasting action, but we can quell those worries immediately – while there's plenty of mythology-expanding, universe-building content, a driving narrative arc, and even a few sombre moments, it's still very much action first, story second. Indeed, given the amount of talk about the role of Dominic Santiago and the search for his wife Maria



Skorge is a fearsome opponent, but do you get to fight him? Well, that would be telling...

*“Pound-for-pound, it's undoubtedly superior to the original”*



An early set piece sees you taking on Locust atop the deadly flying Reavers

**Publisher:** Microsoft Game Studios  
**Developer:** Epic Games  
**Heritage:** Unreal Tournament series, Gears of War  
**Link:** <http://gearsofwar.xbox.com/>  
**ETA:** 7th November

EXCLUSIVE SCREENSAVER

# Thrills, spills and kills

What's new in Gears 2



Vehicles

Maps

Weapons

## Vehicles

Strictly speaking, most of Gears 2's vehicles aren't really vehicles, as they have legs rather than wheels. During the single-player campaign you'll witness the Locust riding bloodmounts, Reavers and even Brumaks – and you'll have access to the latter two during the game. One memorable sequence sees you taking to the water in a Locust barge, while you'll also travel in a vehicle that's almost a cross between a tank and a monster truck. Then there are the huge rigs which transport you to the drilling point, where you'll travel through the earth in grindlifts, ready to take the fight to the Locust... underground.

### > Gears of War 2 continued

becoming the emotional anchor of the plot, some players will be surprised that it doesn't feature more heavily.

#### WAR STORIES

Bleszinski always talked about giving gamers the choice of following the story or skipping the cutscenes (and even cutting short some of Marcus's radio conversations with Control) but we're confident that most will invest in the narrative to the finish – at least first time round. So no Kojima-length story sequences, just an



Fighting atop a moving rig against Brumaks is an early highlight. But you'll be getting even closer to the beasts in the final Act...

"No Kojima-length cutscenes, just a compelling story to drive the action"

interesting story to propel the action. And those spending some time wandering down the road less travelled will find items to be added to their war journal – diary entries, COG tags and more that flesh out

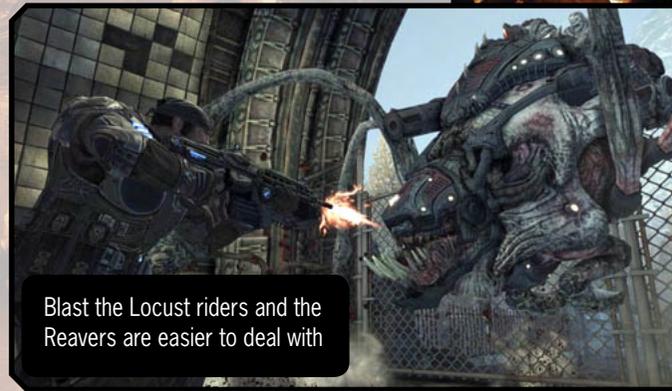
the background to the Gears universe, and obviously offer replay value for completists.

As far as plot details go, our lips have to remain pretty firmly sealed. Not only are we unable to talk about much of the overall story arc, but we'd be unwilling to anyway, as we'd undoubtedly spoil some of the game's biggest surprises. It's fair to say that events don't necessarily progress as you

BATTLE CAM

Ghost Cam Gamercard Hide Names Screenshot

▶ ◻ **GEARS OF WAR 2** Click here to watch the video!



Blast the Locust riders and the Reavers are easier to deal with

> Gears of War 2 continued

# PARTY OF FIVE

Why you'll all be playing Horde this Christmas

There's nothing that says 'festive' more than chainsawing a Locust to tiny, bloody pieces, but that's not the only reason that many, many Xbox 360 owners will find themselves addicted to Horde, arguably the finest and most addictive of Gears 2's new online modes. It's Epic's way of compensating for the lack of a four-player co-operative campaign mode – indeed, it supports a fifth human player, too - and it's pulse-quickeningly intense, breath-snatchingly brilliant, and very, very hard indeed. In many ways, it's as basic as they come – merely offering waves of Locust enemies, gradually increasing in size and number – but it soon reveals itself to be a game of remarkable tactical depth. Because it's so tough, you'll need to rely on all your team-mates to get through each wave – players will take different positions on the map and attempt to hold their ground while yelling warnings to others. High positions offer the opportunity to thin numbers out from a distance with sniper rifles and other long-range weaponry, while also providing a vantage point to gauge enemy locations and movement. Stay on the ground, and you might be able to pick up useful Locust weapons to use against your foes,

while you can execute any seriously wounded enemies with a swift melee attack. There's a very definite difficulty hump as you reach each tenth wave – after that enemies get stronger, withstanding more attacks, but they won't increase in number. But either way, reaching that fiftieth wave is going to take some doing, even on Casual difficulty. At the time of writing no-one at Epic has finished the mode – we're sure some talented gamer will manage it on Insane difficulty one day, but it's going to take some serious hardcore skills to get to that stage.

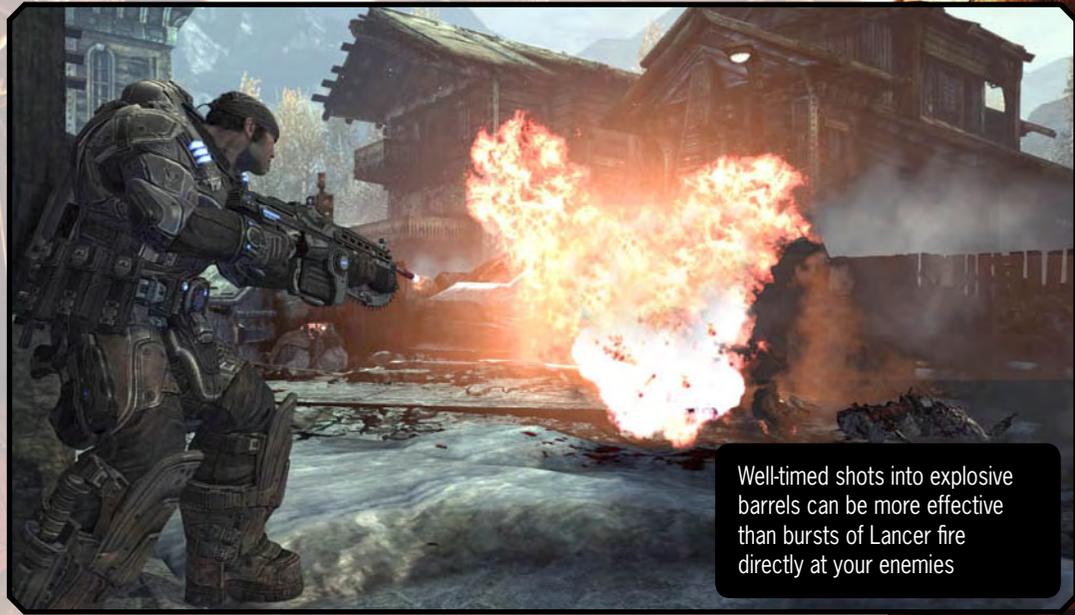


*"Horde is intense, brilliant and very, very hard"*

might think – while we're allowed to say that the COG armies are fighting back against the Locust as they attempt to protect the last remaining human stronghold of Jacinto, the resolution – as with the outcome of the Dom/Maria subplot – will be predicted by very few players indeed. It's testament to writer Josh Ortega that the deeper story doesn't feel too incongruous – while Dom's initial pining for his missing wife seems a little out of place and character for a man who barely mentioned her in



Fallen enemies can be used as temporary meat shields



Well-timed shots into explosive barrels can be more effective than bursts of Lancer fire directly at your enemies

### > Gears of War 2 continued

the first iteration, the game soon settles into a nice rhythm, integrating short sections of narrative into the stages pretty effectively and seamlessly. Put it this way: you'll rarely have chance to put down the pad for more than a minute at a time.

#### WORLD IN CONFLICT

When the game begins, you're once again taking control of Delta Squad, attempting to take the fight to the Locust, who are sinking entire cities (and you'll find out fairly soon how that's happening – but we're not telling). If you're new to the game, you can take newcomer Private

*"You feel much more part of an epic war this time"*

Benjamin Carmine out on a brief tour of duty which doubles as the tutorial, and immediately after that it's straight into the action. While Gears focused on relatively small scale battles against enemy Locust with the occasional fight against larger beasts, you feel much more part of an epic war this time round.

Before Act One is over, you'll have already tackled several flying, tentacled Reavers and taken down

some Brumaks along the way. Those bemoaning the latter's omission from the original (particularly once it was reinstated in the PC version) will no doubt be delighted that you won't just get to battle one, but several - and you'll even get to ride into battle atop a Brumak during the latter stages.

Indeed, Gears 2 is definitely more of a creature feature than the original, introducing several new enemy types to ramp up the variety. Among the most memorable are the Tickers – small, skittery suicide bombers, who'll scuttle up towards Delta Squad and detonate the explosives on their backs.

One early highlight 

### INTERVIEW

# SQUAD LEADER

**H**aving helmed the first Gears, Epic Games' Design Director Cliff Bleszinski has been in charge of Delta Squad for several years now. We caught up with him recently to ask him about the changes facing Marcus Fenix and co, and his thoughts about videogaming in general.

**The original Gears felt very streamlined. Given the size of the budget and the increased number of people working on the game, has it been difficult to stop it getting bloated?**

Oh, like featureitis, things like that? I think it's just a matter of keeping focused – it's not like we at Epic have quadrupled our team size. We've probably increased by 33 to 45 percent over the last couple of years, and of course not all those people were working on Gears, some were working on Unreal Tournament 3 and whatnot. So we've grown a bit but not that significantly, and we kind of kept our wits about us regarding the kind of game we were going to make. And not wanting to feature creep, you know. Yes, we have a party system, we have great new executions, we have Horde and things like that, but it's still Gears – a tactical, cover-based action game through and through.

**You say it's "epic yet intimate". What do you mean by that?**

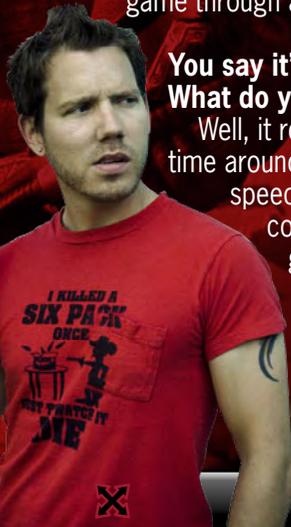
Well, it really feels like a war this time around - with the chairman's speech, seeing the armoured columns getting ready to go into Landown, and drill down and take on the Locust, things like that. But it's also very much a personal story. I mean, I



New team member Tai is a huge, powerful tattooed Maori



The blood and gore is messier than ever before – those chainsaw kills are even more gleefully nasty



### > Gears of War 2 continued



The weapon set has been enriched by a few new additions

sees you tackling a large group of these in a darkened tunnel, illuminated only by the lights on the transport rig behind you, and that effectively represents the difference between Gears 2 and the original – it's not afraid to really mix things up, and while not everything comes off – there's a short vehicle section which is pretty woeful – it's a small price to

pay for the effort Epic has expended in ensuring the action remains constantly varied.

#### WEIRD SCIENCE

There's a level which gives a whole new meaning to the phrase 'belly of the beast', while one extraordinary section has you creeping around a disused scientific facility, ratcheting up the tension to almost unbearable levels before an explosion of extended, astoundingly intense violence provides the eventual release. We fully expect that some players will be talking about such

moments for years to come. There may be a slight dip in Act IV – though the slower pace is very deliberate, given that one whole stage is dedicated to a significant plot development – but Bleszinski and co turn all the dials to 11 for the climax, with one blistering on-rails sequence which plays homage to Return of the Jedi, but provides more excitement than Lucas's similar set piece ever did. Which is a little ironic given that Gears 2 feels like Epic's Empire Strikes Back – a darker, more complex and interesting game than the first – which offers a few moments of levity, but feels like a more mature and accomplished work throughout.

That's not to say that it's

*"Some players will be talking about the highlights for years to come"*



One of four melee attacks can be performed when you're standing over a floored enemy. Punching is the least gory, but arguably the most satisfying

### > Interview continued

love big sci-fi experiences, but I'm also a big softie deep down – I love movies like Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind – to have Dom looking at this picture [of him and wife Maria] and holding it up, to see a big tough guy like that have these little cracks in his personality I think adds a little humanity that you don't see a lot of in a sci-fi shooter. And that's something that we're really going for this time around - yeah it's a little risky, but I think it's pretty damn compelling

#### Why is Dom the focus of this particular story and not Marcus?

Dom was very much chosen for this and that was intentional because when you create a videogame like this and you have a primary character, it's usually better to err on the side of caution for your primary guy in regards to the amount of personality he has. There's a reason why Gordon Freeman doesn't say anything ever, there's a reason why Master Chief doesn't say very much, there's a reason why Marcus isn't a chatty kind of guy – it's because the majority of players are projecting themselves onto this character. And the fact that Dom is the second player and he's along with Marcus - we can start playing with his emotions a little bit more, and leverage that, and that's definitely by design.

#### Is it fair to say the game has a more sombre tone to it than last time round?

Well, it's definitely darker. Sombre is not a word that's been used a lot but it's an adequate way to describe it. Any time you create a world like this, of course there are moments of levity and things like that – that's what the Cole Train is for, and whatnot. But you have to take some things seriously. If we don't take this world seriously, or the fact that humanity and this planet is struggling to survive – this man's lost his wife, his kids are dead, and everyone's lost something since the Locust have attacked, and this world has been at war for multiple



### > Gears of War 2 continued

unafraid to go old-school on occasion though – indeed, some of Gears 2’s finest moments are where it most closely apes the frenetic, small-scale conflicts of the original, pitting your two or four-man team against small but significant groups of Locust. The only differences here are in the enemies you’ll face and the weapons you’ll use – a few more of each makes for some surprising tactical changes. The huge but slow Maulers carry shields and wield



Dizzy is likely to be the character who polarises opinion the most – we rather like him

If you’re playing through again, Marcus can silence radio instructions with the press of a button. Just one of many neat touches to speed things along



*“Some of Gears 2’s finest moments are where it apes the small-scale conflicts of the original”*

maces that almost take you down in one hit, though once down, you’ll be able to pick up the former for your own protection, with your free hand wielding whichever pistol you have equipped.

The Grinders (rather appropriately) yell “GRIND” shortly before unleashing a volley of shots from the chaingun-like Mulcher, which can also be picked up –



### > Interview continued

generations... I think that’s one of the problems with videogame movies, is that they don’t take their videogame world very seriously. It’s like “wink wink, hey, it’s a videogame, whatever”, and that’s a shame. But it is sombre, and it’s a little sad in parts.

#### Would you say part of that is related to real world issues?

I think any good sci-fi extrapolates from real world themes – moments in history or current events, that sort of thing, and there’s a lot of that in Gears, but, I don’t like throwing it in people’s faces – I think if they get it out of the game, good, but if they don’t, that’s okay, I don’t want it to get in the way, I don’t want whatever my political agenda is to be sticking in people’s faces or anything like that. It just feels like something’s preaching, or like propaganda. I think any political angle we use in Gears is in the background. Real world metaphors are very much secondary – you know, war over an energy source, I mean, it’s not a very thinly-veiled metaphor. An enemy that uses more technology from the underground, that’s kind of like the Vietcong, right? So it’s there, but it’s secondary to the chainsaws that people always notice first.

#### You’ve mentioned recently the need to simplify game controls a little more – is that something you’d like to tackle with the Gears franchise, or are you thinking more of other games?

Well, when I was talking about simplifying controls I was talking about console controllers featuring fewer buttons – we could honestly maybe do Gears with one less button, possibly two. I just believe that context-sensitivity is an incredibly important way of working round things in the game, and I think future consoles will have more features like cameras that are built in, and microphones, certain motion sensors and things like that can supplement the ever-growing amount of buttons you get on controllers. I just don’t always think you need every single button





### > Gears of War 2 continued

albeit with difficulty – by Marcus. It can be fired from the hip or hoisted up onto cover, with walls and sandbags taking the weight while you turn Locust enemies into bloody

Gears 2 is incredibly cinematic even when you're fully in control

meat paste. Mortars offer the opportunity to take out larger enemies much quicker – slam it into the ground and hold down the trigger button until your shot reaches the required distance – while poison grenades offer distraction and destruction.

You'll now be able to crawl when downed, with a short window of opportunity to move back into cover and get revived by your partner – though you need to be wary that the Locust can do this, too. To prevent that from happening, you can choose from one of four melee attacks – executed with the face buttons - to finish them off as they



*“Epic has outdone itself in multiplayer, with a host of new game modes”*

struggle to reach safety, or you can grab them to use as a temporary meat shield.

#### MEAN FLAG

The differences in combat are most keenly felt in the multiplayer modes – again, Epic has outdone itself here, providing a host of new game types without compromising on quality. The idea of taking a Locust hostage has been explored in Submission (originally titled Meat Flag before Microsoft intervened) which is essentially a Capture the Flag variant where the flag happens to be a COG soldier or a Locust.

It's a game which gets rather chaotic, as dragging your opponent slows you down immensely, forcing team-mates to provide protection – or simply a temporary barrier - as you attempt the journey back



A few sections are essentially on rails, but they're every bit as enjoyable as the familiar 'stop and pop' sequences

### > Interview continued

to be used and every finger doesn't need to be active. I think in some ways that was one of the issues with accessibility of PC games back in the day. And that if your game came with a placard that showed what every single button did, then you weren't making a game at that point, you were making a sim - something for the hardcore which ultimately limits your audience.

#### With that in mind, with the new Casual difficulty in this game, did you consider trying to implement an even simpler control scheme?

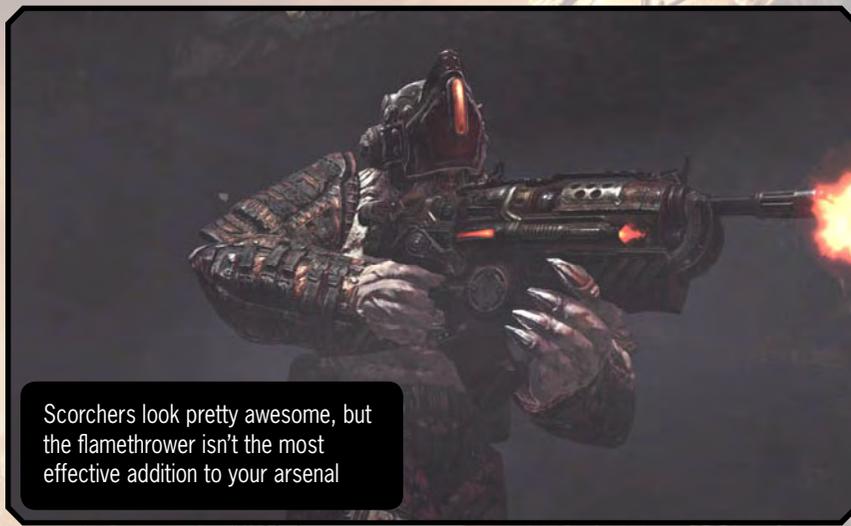
Well, I'll be honest – when you play Casual, you can probably get by without taking much cover. Because it's that easy. It's only when you get into Normal, and of course Hardcore and Insane that cover becomes very necessary...

#### So there are a lot of buttons you wouldn't necessarily need to use?

I think it just kind of cascades out of it with Casual, the way you can just run up to enemies and kill them, and just meander through the game, stumbling through it, and probably not needing to use cover or the roadie run - and that just naturally simplifies the game. Your average newbie gamer has a tough enough time with two sticks as it is.



### > Gears of War 2 continued



Scorchers look pretty awesome, but the flamethrower isn't the most effective addition to your arsenal

to base. There's a brand new King of the Hill mode, too – while Wingman is a xenophobe's dream, as you're joined by a clone, with the objective simply being to kill whoever doesn't look like you. We've spoken about the superb Horde mode already – suffice to say the increasingly large waves of Locust make for some thrillingly intense backs-to-the-wall moments for your five-man team.

Meanwhile, Guardian offers a slight tweak to Assassination from the first game, where enemies respawn until the team leader is killed. There are nine maps to choose from – some of which employ environmental effects to spice things up – and revamps of

five arenas from the original available as a free download to those who buy the game brand new. A better party system and numerous options to customise your experience are just the icing on the cake.

#### GREAT EXPECTATIONS

So: bigger? Yes. Better? Definitely. More badass? Absolutely. Gears 2 offers just about everything you could possibly want from a sequel – and provides a whole lot of stuff you almost certainly weren't expecting. Game of the Year? It's too early to call – but based on our experiences, it's going to be nestling near the top of most critics' top tens come December 31st. ●



Venture into the wilds at night, and you're asking for trouble.

*"Gears 2 offers just about everything you could want from a sequel"*



The Cole Train returns with his special brand of OTT humour – indeed, he and Baird get the funniest exchange of the entire game

*"The pacing is immaculate – Gears' mix of story and gameplay is spot on"*

# FENIX DOWN

## Does a darker tone suit Gears?

While the original Gears was hardly all candy canes and puppy dogs it never felt quite as bleak as end-of-the-world sci-fi often can. That's because it was a pretty gung-ho actioner, with the script only infrequently touching on the human cost of war. Meanwhile, characters like the Cole Train brought significant levity to the script with plenty of whooping and hollering, his rapid-fire trash-talking providing plenty of humour throughout proceedings.

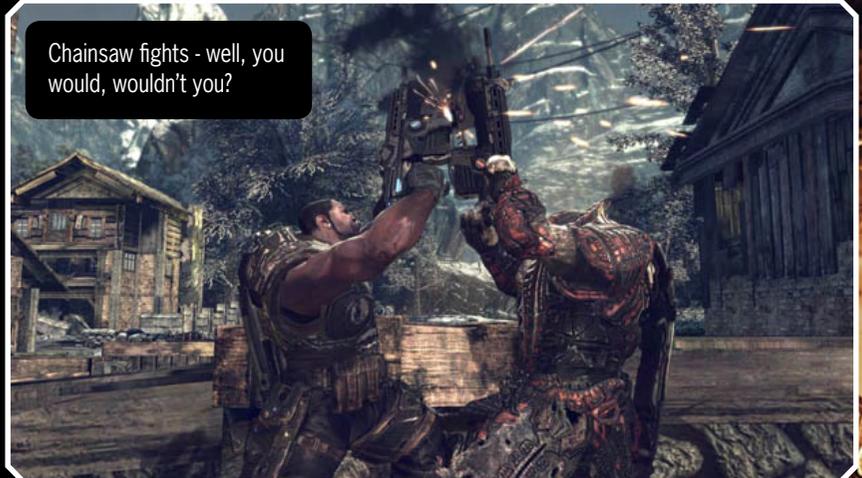
It's fair to say that Gears 2 is a very different beast in that respect. That's not to say that it doesn't have lighter moments – many gamers will be pleased to hear that Cole returns and is in fine (bellowing) voice as ever – but the general tone is darker and more emotional. That's not to say that you'll be shedding any tears – that may be what Epic hopes, but we'd be surprised if certain events give you any more than a slight lump in your throat. But the story is definitely successful in making you think about the wider consequences of the war against the Locust.

In our extensive preview in this special issue, we talk of how Gears feels very much like an Empire Strikes Back moment for the franchise – it's more complex, and deals with more adult themes than its predecessor, and in a mature fashion to boot. But it's important to note that the time spent on the relationship between Dominic Santiago and his wife Maria is roughly equivalent to the space given to the

Han/Leia subplot in Empire. Which is to say that, while it's a key ingredient in the narrative, it hardly dominates the game like some feared it might.

Much more than the first game, the humour feels like a release – a tension-reliever meant to relax the player. It's telling that most of these sections come either just after or prior to a particularly intense battle or set-piece, and increasingly it seems like Delta Squad's own way of dealing with the situation. Rather than jarring against the serious themes the game explores, it actually complements them – and the script's light sprinkling of humour ensures it never feels crass or insensitive. Indeed, one moment deftly references an oft-criticised fault with the first game in such an effective manner that it genuinely made us laugh out loud.

Yet those concerned that the plot might get in the way should stop worrying – it's not a replacement for the intense third-person shooter gameplay, merely a device that both drives the action and encourages you to keep playing. And the pacing is just about immaculate – it's not until you play other games that you realise just how spot-on Gears' mix of story and gameplay is. It blends short, sharp shocks of action with sections that force you to adopt a slower, more measured approach to combat. Vehicle sequences rub shoulders with traditional stop-and-pop battles. Open areas follow tight, enclosed spaces. And just



Chainsaw fights - well, you would, wouldn't you?

when you think it's settled into a rhythm, you'll be handed a story revelation, a boss battle, even a more puzzle-based stage, and all bets are off once more.

We won't reveal just yet whether Gears 2 has a happy ending, but we're convinced that it suits its darker clothes just fine. And with plenty of sobering background story provided by collectable COG tags, diary entries and other human detritus worth scouting out in the nooks and crannies of each level, it's all the motivation you need to really kick some Locust ass. ○




**EXCLUSIVE DESKTOPS**

*Click on an icon to save the image to your PC for use as a desktop background.*



Dr. Mike Capps is one of the figureheads of the current-gen technological revolution

INTERVIEW

# DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE

## Epic's president talks tech, Gears, and looks to the company's future

**P**resident of Epic Games, Dr. Mike Capps, flew into London recently to talk about Gears of War 2. We caught up with him for a lengthy chat about what it's like to create one of the biggest gaming blockbusters of the year...

scared everyone would get it and say "oh, you know, it doesn't also give me sliced bread and give me

great gas mileage, f\*\*k this", so yeah, we were really glad that everyone liked it, and that it



**Gears 1 was always set up to be a big hit – it was intended to be the game equivalent of a Hollywood blockbuster from day one. Even with that in mind, were you surprised at just how successful it was?**

Oh yeah, I mean we were scared to death. We were overhyped really, coming into 2006. We were really



Gears 2 takes 'destroyed beauty' to new levels, with vastly improved lighting and much more environmental detail

### > Gears of War 2 continued

stood up to the hype.

#### What exactly do you think made gamers respond to it in such a positive way?

Well, visuals are a very big part of picking a game up for the first time. I feel like we set the bar for next-generation gaming. That's what everybody wanted their 360 and their PlayStation to do, and so that got a lot of focus. And then we just had a really cool, intimate experience, with good pacing. We

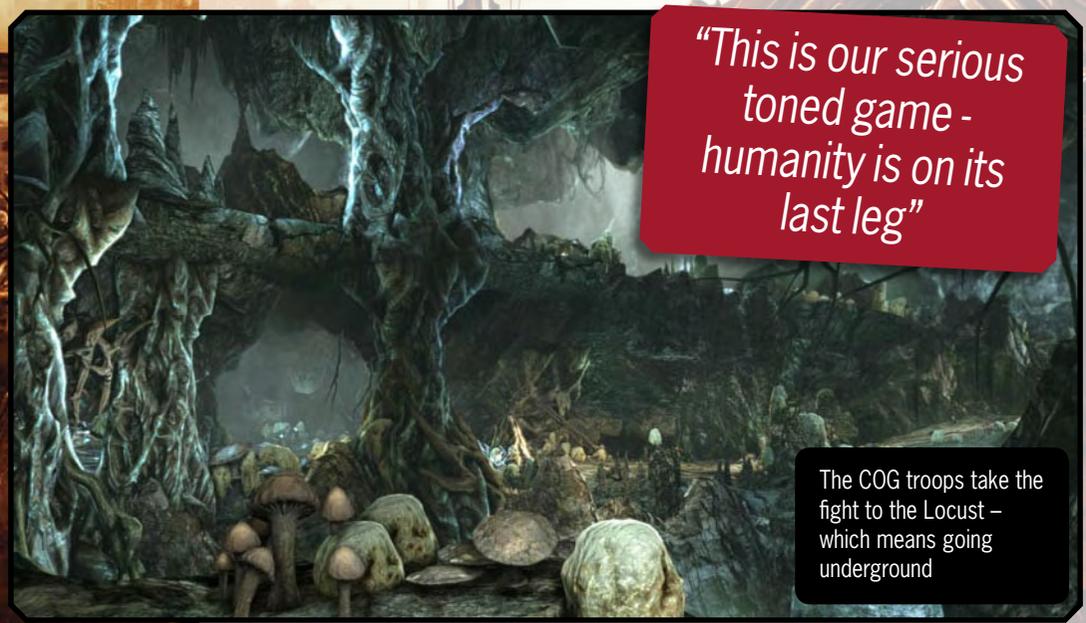
had some good breaks in the middle, and really high action scenes and moments giving you a chance to rest. It's like an action movie – if you get the pacing right, then it's a lot of fun.

#### Were you ever concerned about the level of violence in the game? And did you consider that the game could be criticised for that?

Oh, all the time, yeah. Microsoft, as you can imagine, had some concerns about our game because we were setting the standard for

#### EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

MIKE CAPPS EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW Watch the full interview here on the page. Enjoy!



*"This is our serious toned game - humanity is on its last leg"*

The COG troops take the fight to the Locust – which means going underground

Mature gaming at the time. So it was a little scary, but we decided to make the game we wanted to make and play - and we figured it's made for 18 and up, parents should know better than to buy Gears for their six-year-old kid for Christmas, and we just hope the rating system works. There's been some backlash, there are some stores we can't sell it in, and folks who don't like our advertising campaigns and won't run them, but overall I think I'd rather have the game that's cooler.

The first game was a little more gung-ho in terms of its story,

while the second has a bit more of a sombre tone – is that a reaction to the changing views of war in the interim?

Hmm, yeah. I mean, the cowboy American stereotype is not particularly popular worldwide, you know. And this is our serious toned game - humanity is on its last leg, right? I mean, we're barely surviving. We're worried about gathering enough food to keep people alive, it's not really a "woo-hoo!" game. But that said, we try to mix it up with some funny [moments], and some good old-fashioned action.



### > Gears of War 2 continued

**Has it been difficult to balance the human aspect of the game – as Dom searches for his missing wife – with the visceral nature of the action? Was it a risk that one could compromise the other?**

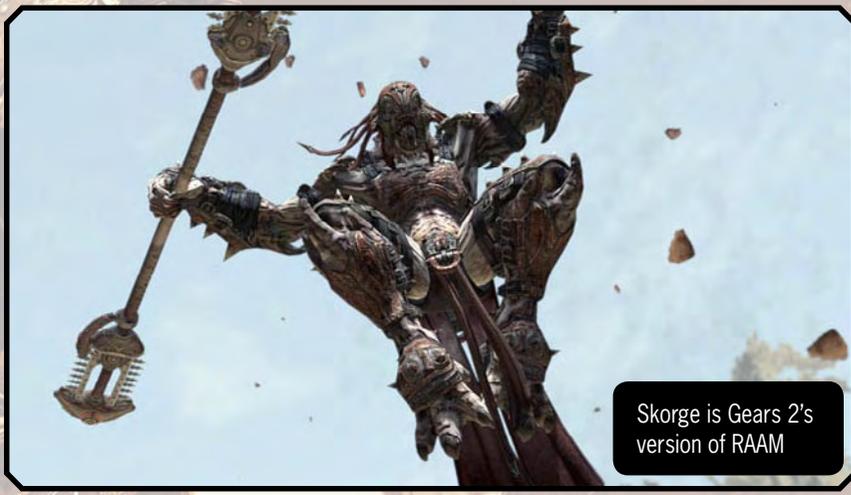
Yeah, I mean we've always been worried - by telling what is, in essence, boiling it down, a love story as well as a story of hope and redemption - that it could take away from the action. So we were very careful to make sure that our cinematics [fit] – Dom doesn't sit there and cry like a little girl, he hits a car and gets mad when he's upset about not being able to find his wife. These are tough soldiers

in the middle of the worst war ever who are dealing with human emotions.

**The Unreal Engine tech has advanced significantly in the years between the first Gears and its sequel – has that been the key to making a game that's very definitely Gears 2.0 and not just Gears 1.5?**

Oh, that's a great question. Sure, technology is a big part of Gears 2 being separated from Gears 1. It's

*“Dom doesn't cry like a little girl – he hits a car and gets angry when he's upset”*



Skorge is Gears 2's version of RAAM

Ironically, while the tone of the game is darker, the graphics aren't nearly as gloomy thanks to improved lighting



the same box, there's only so much we can do from a technology perspective. We can make more optimal use of the graphics hardware and the CPUs, but at the end of the day, it's about artistry – it's about knowing the platform well, and knowing what we can get away with, and being smarter about using it. But where we separate Gears 2 is the features.

Sure, it looks better, but honestly people remember Gears looking so good that when we show them Gears 2 they remember it looking better than it really did. You have this classic memory of “Gears of War was so much better than everybody else”, and so for this one, it's about the new game modes, it's about the

thicker story – I think that's what separates Gears 2 from the original.

**While the first game garnered much critical acclaim, as with any game, there were criticisms. Which ones in particular have you tried to respond to most with Gears 2?**

Good question. For everybody who said they loved Gears, there was someone who said they had a problem with it. I think the most heard complaint we had about Gears 1 was the lack of a driving story. We had a simple story, it's a nice, simple plot arc, but there's not a lot of character depth in the first one, and you need something to carry you through lots of ripping the



### > Gears of War 2 continued

Locust horde up for hours on end. So that's an area we really wanted to step up, and I think the team really impressed me there. Other areas... the party system was something everyone wanted – Halo did such a great job with the party system, and we said “we can take that, we can make it better, and we can do our own thing with it”, and I think we have.

#### When we spoke to Cliff last month, he talked about how Epic tried to avoid ‘feature creep’ – were there any aspects of the game which had to be dropped for that reason?

Yeah, I mean we can't just add fifteen new weapons and keep all the old ones, because there's a balance there and you don't want to overwhelm people with too much. So yeah, we tried to delete things out – there are monsters that were very popular in Gears 1 that don't show up at all in Gears 2 – quite purposely, because we need to give it a break, and put something new in there instead.

So yeah, of course, every time we start we have crazy ideas of all the things we want to do, and things have been cut. I don't think we've got

any good stories about great things that we cut, because we kept all the great stuff! It's the junk that we cut that you don't want to hear about.

#### Moving onto the multiplayer modes, how did the idea for Horde come about? And which is the multiplayer mode of choice in the Epic offices?

Well, it's sort of a two-parter there because Horde is definitely the mode of choice in the Epic office. We like Guardian, we like Wingman – I mean, we play them all, because we need to test them all, but Horde just catches you. What I love about it is that it's tactical. More than any other mode. You've got five guys playing together, and one goes down and he's going “there's a Boomer coming up the steps, watch out!” and “Flamer! Flamer!” You're like a military squad fighting against crazy odds, and that's so funny. You know, we've shipped game modes similar [to Horde].

*“We don't have good stories about what we cut, because we kept the great stuff!”*



The Locust enemies are more varied than before – some have protective armour, making headshots tricky

Unreal Tournament had one called Invasion, which had the old Unreal baddies coming at you wave after wave, so we've done something similar before. But you get to see all the monsters that you don't normally get to see in Gears unless you play through the whole darn thing. I don't know – it just really resonated. First time we tried it, we loved it, and then the question was how do we make it last? How do we make you want to play it again, and get to the highest wave you can, and the next day do it again? And I think we hit that.

The first game was hugely popular online, but soon developed a balance problem with the grenade-tagging, while



Gears' wintry atmosphere makes for some oddly beautiful scenes

the game as it is now seems to favour the shotgun. Will you be keeping a watchful eye on the online game and respond to any problems which may occur?

Oh God, yeah. We play constantly online, making sure there's no exploits, anything that takes





Dizzy is a new character introduced during the opening Act. His cowboy hat makes him instantly recognisable in multiplayer!

### > Gears of War 2 continued

the fun out, right? Because we want people playing online until we make a next game. So yeah, we solved the roll and shotgun problem – well, not really a problem, it just became a golden tactic that everyone was using, and that's no fun if everyone's using the same thing, so we've added stopping power in, so if someone comes in charging with a shotgun, you just put a few bullets into them, that slows them down real quick.

So yeah, we'll absolutely be online watching. Epic's had a reputation for years of patching and upgrading, and giving away downloadable content – whatever we have to do to

make sure our guys online are happy.

**Gears has a new, easier difficulty level for beginners, and the option to filter the blood and language, to make it accessible to more people. Do you think it can genuinely break out from its hardcore roots and become a game for casual gamers to truly enjoy?**

*"We'll do whatever we have to, to make sure online players are happy"*

I'd love to think that Gears would be "the game anyone can play". Sure, we start with a hardcore audience, and I think we expand from it. For example, a hardcore player plays co-op with his girlfriend or their friends, who aren't maybe the kind who play every shooter that comes out, but hopefully they'll get into it. They'll find it easy to play, exciting, and then they want to play it through – maybe buy a copy even! – and then we'll spread out to their friends and all that.

### Did you consider bringing out a version of the game which contains no blood or bad language, and selling it to a younger audience?

A teen version of Gears – how would you do that? The story's too mature to be a teen story, really. And there are markets like Japan and Germany who have pretty strict rules on that and we just decided to skip it. We'd rather make the game we want to make, and hopefully, gamers are going to like it again. The turning off the gibs, and turning off the bad language is really for hardcore gamers whose kids are in the room.

That's what it's for, it's not because we want to create a Teen experience, because you're using

chainsaws man! It's not that [type of] game.

### Where do you see the franchise going next? Can we expect a Gears 3 in two years' time, or is it time to look at a new direction for the series?

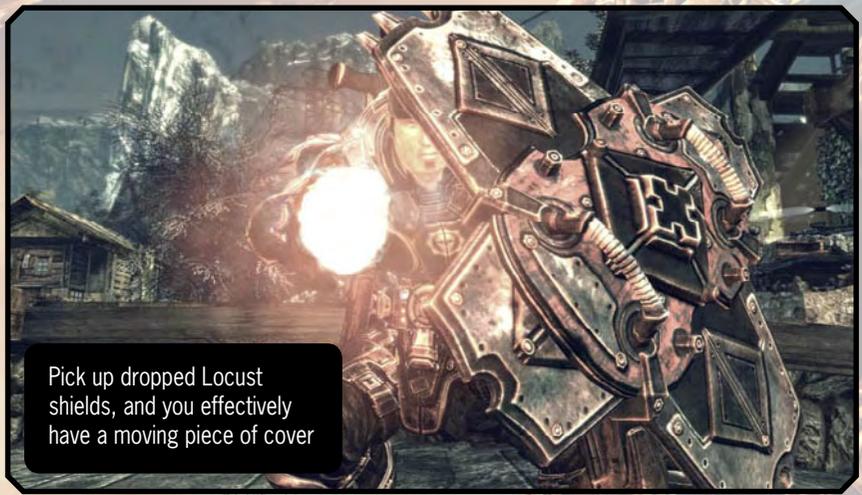
I think just as we said after Gears 1, we'll see if people like it, we'll see if we sell any, and we'll make a decision then. There was a lot of interest for more Gears, and it was awesome, and so we jumped on it, and I think we made a better game. So we'll see what folks say.

### Will Gears remain an Xbox exclusive series?

Well, we don't have any plans for another game, so it's hard to answer that one. Let's just say that as a developer being able to focus just on the Xbox has been



Locust artificial intelligence seems more robust than ever



Pick up dropped Locust shields, and you effectively have a moving piece of cover



The opening intro set in an abandoned hospital is an effective scene-setter, but things get much more intense later on

### > Gears of War 2 continued

great, because we can take that one machine and just make it sing. And of course Microsoft was pretty darn good to us – we got a lot of attention with the first Gears, and we're getting it again this time. No compromise there.

#### Can you tell us what downloadable content there will be for Gears 2?

We've only announced the first one, which is the five maps – the [free] Flashback pack which you get if you buy retail, so you'll have those on day one. But yep, can't say anything yet. More good stuff!

#### What else is Epic working on currently? Can we expect more from Unreal in the near future? How about new IP?

Well, we're working on next-gen engines, and we're thinking about next-gen platforms and Unreal Engine 4 – we've been on that for a year or two now. We're not quite sure when next platforms are coming but we all know they are,

*"Making a jaded reviewer cry in one of our cinematics was gorgeous!"*

right? So, we've got to be ready for that. We'll be out when the consoles are out, and we'll see when that is – 2012 or 2013 – I hope it's a long time. So that team's working on tech, but we're also working on Unreal Tournament – coming up with stuff for those guys, we're doing the big Make Something Unreal contest – a million-dollar contest for mods, and so we've got a team focusing on cool stuff for Unreal now. Because like I said, we make cool stuff available [for our games] long after we ship them.

#### Finally, what one single aspect of the game are you most proud of? Is there anything you've achieved that you previously didn't think possible?

Making a jaded reviewer cry in one of our cinematics was gorgeous! You know, I love to get great reviews, and all that but my fiancée played the game and she was really

impressed with the story. And that doesn't happen. Girls don't play an action game like Gears and go "wow!" or whatever else. And making a jaded reviewer tear up a little bit was quite something. I mean obviously not you guys [UK journalists] but you know us US guys, we cry all the time! So that's been really gratifying – to do something more than anyone was expecting with a hard-M [Mature] shooter. ●



Levels are essentially linear, though opportunities exist to explore and find additional ammo, weapons and hidden items

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