

Previews



GAMES MASTER

Our most wanted

» We can't wait for...



**ROBIN'S
TOP 3**

1. Aliens: Colonial Marines

» Back, after a year in hypersleep and looking so much more exciting a setting for a shooter than the 'stan. p8

2. Sonic Generations

» Yes, it's like they've had surveillance cameras in the GM office when we've discussed the perfect Sonic game. p64

3. NGP

» A real dark horse. But the tech is cutting edge, the games impressive and finally we get dual analogues! p26



**JAMES'S
TOP 3**

1. Resident Evil: Revelations

» Proper zombies! Limited ammo! Survival horror! Revelations might make me buy a 3DS!

2. Fatal Frame 2011

» I've been replaying the genius second outing on the PS2, mainly in anticipation of the fifth game on Wii.

3. FIFA 12

» Because there's more to life than survival horror. Sort of. Hmmm. When's the new Silent Hill out? p42



**SHAUN'S
TOP 3**

1. Need For Speed: The Run

» Black Box used to be synonymous with NFS. It's been years since they made one so this HAS to be great. p36

2. Ace Combat: Assault Horizon

» I can honestly say I've never been excited about an Ace Combat game. First time for everything, right? p46

3. Hitman: Absolution

» Developers IO have taken their time making this. Forget Kane and bloody Lynch - gimme Agent 47! Now! p48

» GM Instant Reaction

» The standout features of the game - that could make it great - appear in this little green box.

» Any low points, niggles and worries about the game will be highlighted here.

THRILL-O-METER 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5

» **THE PATENTED GM THRILL-O-METER** Are we excited about this game? The Thrill-O-Meter will tell you at a glance. The Thrill-O-Meter reveals our current thinking on the game's prospects, based on our most recent preview-stage access. A 1-2 means something is seriously amiss, 3 is average, and 4-5 mean this game could be a winner.



In deep ship

» Hunting the lost fleet of the Kublai Khan off Japan, Lara and the crew of the Endeavour are hit by a freak storm and washed up on a mysterious island. Just don't mention Lost...

GM Most wanted!



Tomb Raider

» M-rated and mysterious? Meet Indiana Jane and the Lost Crusade...

Inside Square Enix's Wimbledon headquarters stands a giant reminder of how far Lara Croft has come since 1996. Straining at the famous green vest of life-size original Lara are two enormous factors in the success of the biggest thing to happen to SW20 since competitive tennis. But 15 years on, out goes the Combat Barbie caricature and in comes a young, novice Croft - albeit one who's still able to kick some serious ass.

Even after nearly 100 presentations, global brand director Karl Stewart is clearly bursting with pride at



» INCOMING! POTENTIAL CORKERS ON THE HORIZON



» Metro: Last Light

Metro 2033 was a real cult hit with FPS fans. How's the sequel looking? **p34**



» BioShock Infinite

How does new setting Columbia measure up to Rapture? See here. **p38**



» FIFA 12

We've played the new FIFA. And we'll tell you all about it on... **p42**



Injury time

» You can't just go throwing Croftie off ledges at will any more; injuries you don't heal could prevent her from reaching new areas.



Crampon her style

» There's a limited gearset on the island, so you'll need to build your crafting skills in Salvage mode and then upgrade your kit yourself.

» Info

FORMAT Xbox 360, PS3, PC

OUT Winter 2011

DEVELOPER

Crystal Dynamics

PUBLISHER

Square Enix

PLAYERS 1

WE SAW An Xbox 360 demo of two early scenes.

WHAT IS IT?

Croftie's Batman Begins story as our heroine goes right back to basics.



PREVIEWS

LARA CRAFT



Tomb for a small one?

» The new, streamlined Lara has to squeeze into ever-tinier gaps, and she's mercilessly helped by the cinematographer's eye for a truly claustrophobic scene. Yipes.



» You'll need your wits about you to stop Lara becoming Pedigree Chum - this wolf pops out of nowhere.



» Damien Hirst's I'm A Celebrity takeover was beginning to freak the hell out of the contestants.



» Friends with benefits

She's spent 15 years as the world's most unfeasibly isolated explorer - now that's about to change. As she's only starting out, Lara needs the support of her elders (such as family friend and ship's captain Roth here) to get weaponry and help. We'll meet more people from Lara's world along the way. Just like This is Your Life, only explorer.

» Hurting junior Croft around the new hubs is like breaktime at Cirque du Soleil. Just mind how you land. Ouch.



» “Go away, I’m not Cheryl Cole!” Lara rued the day the savages got their hands on a Freeview box.



» the new Lara and keeps teasing us about the leaps in design taken since the footage we’re about to see was made. The M-rated reboot, washed up on a mysterious island after a storm wreaks havoc on her ship, is less posh Page Three and more Hilary Swank meets Pocahontas. “They’re very different characters, without a doubt,” says Stewart proudly.

Whole Lara shake-up goin’ on

Lara is a work in progress in more ways than one and the new game’s goal is to build her skills until we can go, “Now *that* is Lara Croft.”

Stewart is very open about the influence the *Batman Begins* film had on the team in breaking down the Croft character. Just as that franchise ditched campiness for grit, so too has Tomb Raider. At one point, Lara jokingly tells the Endeavour’s injured captain, Roth, that she developed her bandaging skills on the late shift at the Nine Bells. Lara? Saturday pub job? Hey, anything goes in the new universe.

The demo – hands-off for the assembled hacks, sadly – begins as a tutorial, but mood-wise you’re thrown in at the deep end. After escaping from an upside-down cocoon, Lara lands horribly on a spike of rock and then creeps,

“THE M-RATED REBOOT IS LESS POSH PAGE THREE AND MORE HILARY SWANK MEETS POCAHONTAS”



» New Lara doesn’t slice ‘n’ dice for fun, so expect this kill to affect her a lot more than usual.

rather than stalks, through the cave, swearing softly as she goes.

No wonder. There’s a dead crewmate in the next room, and clearing a potential escape route alerts one of the island’s mysterious inhabitants, prompting an attack that’s thankfully put off by some frenzied button mashing and falling boulders.

One beautifully wrought and hugely claustrophobic tunnel later, it’s onto our first puzzle. Lara is helped by her survival instinct, a tweaked version of *Arkham Asylum*’s





PREVIEWS

TOMB WITH A VIEW

Detective mode that stops working if you move.

After setting fire to flotsam to shove onto a flammable exit, the entire den starts to collapse, resulting in a jaw-dropping cinematic (and interactive) escape with nods to Indiana Jones and The Descent. Hats off to the CG team; getting Lara out of a cave has never been so exhilarating.

Next we find the ship's injured captain, called Roth, in the game's first play hub. This is one of several to break up linear play and let the player explore a free world. Find a new hub and you can teleport between them to save time, or open up new areas once you've learned new skills or weaponry.

Then it's off to find Roth a medipack and radio transmitter. There's a good 30 minutes of goodies to find in the hub, Stewart assures us, but in the meantime Lara scrambles, climbs and swings to get to the wolf cave, a tertiary tomb - as Stewart puts it - that gives you a quick five-minute adrenalin boost. On returning with the pack, Roth gives us the climbing axe and teasingly says we'll have to climb the radio tower next. End of demo, damn!

Glass case of emotion

In two Tomb Raider firsts, the team brought in a cinematographer to make the most of the tension and create some kick-ass action sequences. They also



took their actors to LA's Giant Studios, who did the motion capture work for Avatar, to physically perform the roles. When Lara pants while carrying Roth, that's the top-secret Brit playing her, lugging a hefty actor across the floor and probably ruing the day she signed up to this job.

With humanity being the game's buzzword, seeing Lara die now means more, emotionally, than annoyance at having to restart. It's bloody, vicious and

“THE DEN STARTS TO COLLAPSE, RESULTING IN A JAW-DROPPING ESCAPE WITH NODS TO INDIANA JONES”



» Not three minutes into the game and Lara's spiked herself. Careless. And what's that, you left your plasters in the car?



Tomb evader

» The new game is all about emotion and fear. Far from delightfully diving into every new tomb she finds, it's instead very much a last resort for the nervy ingénue.



Developer
Q&A

Shooting the breeze with Croft's keeper

» This ancient galleon is one of the motley collection of vessels drawn in by the island over the years.

far from those years of genteelly falling off ledges. Our heroine was variously ripped apart by a wolf, sent screaming into a void and - most squeamishly - crushed by a boulder, reaching out one perfectly drawn, shuddering hand towards the screen. By the time Stewart had merrily killed off Lara a few times more, we were looking forward to avenging her when the combat demos surface later this year.

Tomb Raider looks gorgeous and the love that's gone into the reboot shines through in what looks to be a genuinely thrilling shake-up for the franchise. Lara Croft might be a scared newbie in this world but, in gaming terms, our girl's finally coming of age. **KAT BROWN GM**

» I will survive

There are no zombies (or dinosaurs - see right) but the survival horror genre's influence affects Tomb Raider's every pixel. Lara's overwhelmed, it's claustrophobic and you've got next to nothing in your supplies bag. Gulp. Ready?

» Tomb Raider's global brand director, Karl Stewart, on putting a heart into gaming's best-known chest

Q What about this new title will shock longstanding players the most?

A Perhaps not shock, but they'll appreciate this. Although people loved the experience, there was no relatability. She's a caricature of herself. We've spent time making a character that you feel is relevant, that's human, and who has emotions you would have.

Q It's visually eye-popping. Which movies inspired you and the new film team?

A Ha, you know already! We did a lot of studying on core experiences we could bring from videogames, TV and movies. The Descent escape, you almost want to feel like that, you can smell the sea air. Bringing on a cinematographer was a key thing for us. How are we going to bring that raw emotion? Let's restrict the gameplay, let's bring the camera right up close, let's not be afraid to do things that we've never done before.

Q What was on the Tomb Raider mood board?

A Wow, that's a great one. It's an emotional side, everything goes through that survival filter. It's bringing realism, but still not forgetting it's a videogame and you're going to play for 10-plus hours. So, although we'll have new experiences, we've made sure we kept the foundation of what it is to

be Tomb Raider, so you'll come across things in the game where you go, "That's Lara Croft!"

Q Ooh... such as dinosaurs, for instance?

A There's no dinosaurs in this game. There's no pandas, bears, dinosaurs - what else have we got? No polar bears!

Q Damn. You've presented Tomb Raider hundreds of times now. Tell us something you haven't told anyone else.

A Hmm. Let's do a couple of questions and I'll think about that.

Q When you die now you respawn on the spot. How will you keep players careful?

A We'll make a decision soon, but it's a good point in that we want to make sure that it's not just, "Boom, I've died, I can come back!" A great example is when she gets killed by the wolf. I personally feel, after playing it as many times as I have, you respawn too quickly. You need to feel the tension build up.

Q The Lara that we saw in the demo is insanely powerful for a newbie...

A Right now, we heal her very quickly in the interest of showing you the game. But systems come into place. When you go into the play space you can climb to the

very top, but if you take a leap of faith and fall, it may stop you from getting as high. She's only human, but it's still a videogame at the end of the day.

Q Elements such as Instinct mode were borrowed from other games. What feature will we look back on and go, "That's Tomb Raider"?

A I think it gets back to emotion. She shows loneliness and strength and there are moments where she does something that you feel like, "Dude that's me, I'm becoming somebody." That's something very special for us.

Q Has Lara Croft ever actually worked in a pub? There's no Nine Bells anywhere, we Googled quite extensively...

A Ha ha! Well, from a licensing standpoint we can't have a pub in Yorkshire go, "You ripped me off!" We're trying to ground Lara Croft. Yes, she's a posh girl and there's a time when you experience that side of her. But right now it's having an emotional attachment to a character that you can relate to.

Q Finally, what drink would Lara order at the bar in her mysterious pub?

A We had this debate in the studio because someone came back with this name of bitter. I was like, you're kidding me! I think she's more of a vodka, soda and lime girl.



» Worried that the Take That boys might not notice her lighter in the crowd, Lara aims higher.

» GM Instant Reaction

» It's the most electrifying and cinematic Tomb Raider in the series yet.

» The new title's quicktime events and solo adventuring fit together seamlessly.

» The island looks absolutely gorgeous - and it just begs to be explored, too.

» At the moment the facial design looks a little Botox-y and it needs work.

