L.A. Noire

"Don't you need a warrant or something?"

In a time when opportunists are more concerned with recovering from the financial impact of World War II than doing what's considered good and right, it pays to be the guy with the gun and the badge and the right to kick down doors. It also pays to be the guy with the gun, badge and pockets lined with blood money, as Officer Cole Phelps, decorated war hero and all-round good guy, discovers in this crime drama. *L.A. Noire* is, quite simply, an adventure game, but one by the description with which people who played adventure games in the late '80s and early '90s would be familiar. While the screenshots scattered around these pages might lure you into thinking that this Rockstar-branded game is like the *GTA* or '40s-era "rival" *Mafia* series, *L.A. Noire* is far from it. Sure, there's driving and shooting and running over people, but there's much more to this game than a series of action sequences.

[**details**]

Platforms:
360/ PS3
Genre:
Adventure
Age restriction:
18+
DRM:
Disc-based
Multiplayer:
Local: None
Online: None
Developer:
Team Bondi /
Rockstar Games
Website:
www.
rockstargames.
com/lanoire
Publisher:
Rockstar Games
Distributor:
Megarom

The main focus in *L.A. Noire* is crime-solving. As Phelps moves up the ranks in the LAPD, he'll be tasked with attending a number of crime scenes that need his (your) attention to detail and intuition. You'll guide Phelps through each scene, examining the evidence, looking for clues and definitely not messing around with any of that latex glove and plastic baggy stuff you see on *CSI*. This is 1947: the cops play by their own rules and when, shortly into the game, Phelps makes the rank of Detective, you'll be the big man at each crime scene. It's a joy to play this type of role: the sort where you can call uncooperative witnesses "dollface" and book people because you don't like the cut of their jib. Phelps might be a good guy, but he's a bad-ass who wants to get the job done. No number of crooked cops or menacing Mafiosi will get in his way. Now, ordinary people might have a tough time trying to crack a crime scene, so the game has a few helpful audio

cues that alert you whenever you've done the right thing. Each time you pass by a possible clue (about half the things you stumble upon won't be of any use to you, which Phelps will mutter to himself), a chime will sound. Additionally, music that plays during a crime scene investigation will cut out when you've found all the necessary clues. This forms half of the investigation process for each case.

The second part to solving a case involves talking to witnesses and suspects. During conversations, Cole will use his trusty notepad that keeps track of all discovered clues, people, locations and objectives, to interrogate each interviewee. When Phelps asks each question on his list (which is populated as you uncover clues through inspection or interrogation), you'll have the opportunity to call the respondent's answer as truth, a lie or doubtful, which results in Phelps saying something supposedly appropriate for your choice. The system feels strange at first, and even later in the game once I thought I had it figured out, I'd still be surprised by the inconsistency of Phelps' response to my choice, especially between doubt and truth. Thankfully, there's a system in place to help you along, in which you can spend Intuition Points that Phelps acquires every few levels of experience. XP is earned by completing cases, successfully interrogating interviewees and many other actions.

There's more to the interrogation process than simply guessing, as the

/1/ Many cases will require a combination of clue finding and player logic. If that fails you, just keep trying until you get it right.

/2/ High-contrast lighting conditions add to the atmosphere and do their bit to ensure the game lives up to its namesake.

/3/ If you're going to call someone out on a lie, you need to make sure you've got the evidence to back up your claim.


game uses an advanced system of motion capture called MotionScan that generates incredibly realistic facial animations. The upside to this is that your own ability to detect lies, by watching peoples' eye and other movements, will be put to use in this game. For pure geek points, this game scores big. The issue with the system is that it's sometimes incredibly obvious when people are lying, and you'll find yourself shifting between guesswork, instinct and meta-gaming as tools to figure out the correct response. There are also a few ugly instances where the acting is bad, and that has the unfortunate effect of breaking immersion rather than enhancing it. For the most part, however, the acting is excellent, especially that of the lead characters.

Despite *L.A. Noire*'s strong adventure roots, it's not without its share of action. The game features an open-world, accurately-recreated 1947 version of a large chunk of Los Angeles around which you can drive either at leisure between investigation scenes, or during action sequences like car chases or when you need to tail a suspect. And the driving feels solid; one might challenge the historical inaccuracies with regards to the treatment of the

game's many licensed vehicles, but the end result is vehicles that handle well and aren't ever irritating to drive. There are plenty of other types of sequences: brawling; cover-based shooting; light puzzle-solving; tailing on foot; and more. Despite being rather easy, these sequences, like the driving between scenes, do a decent job of breaking up the monotony that the crime-solving falls into around the middle of the game, but there's a definite flat-spot at that point where even the extra bits struggle to help the game keep pace. Thankfully, there's a fantastic storyline that should encourage you to play through the parts of the game that tends to drag on, and, rest assured that the seemingly convoluted story comes together incredibly well as the game progresses, but it does feel a bit rushed towards the end. A better spread of key story elements would not be remiss here.

There's plenty more to talk about with *L.A. Noire*, but much of it is better left up to you to discover. It's an interesting and well put-together game that probably won't let you down as long as you don't go in expecting too much in the way of sandbox gameplay. As far as linear, story-driven adventure games go, *L.A. Noire* is great to play. **NAG**

GeometriX
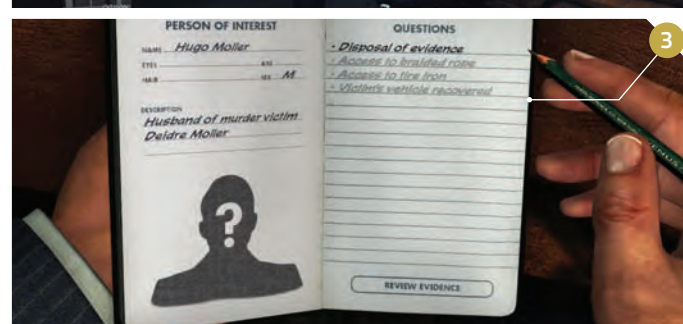
/ **PLUS** / Fantastic visuals / Animations and acting / Deep and interesting story / Great core gameplay
/ **MINUS** / Action sequences too easy / Repetitive / A bit buggy / Story pacing
IMAGINE OF *POLICE QUEST* BUILT WITH MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND A
'40S FILM NOIR SETTING.

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NAG

PS Vita
We play with
Sony's new toy

Reviews
L.A. Noire
The Witcher 2:
Assassins of Kings
Duke Nukem Forever
Brink
+ More!

BATTLEFIELD 3

Two words, Hands-on
multiplayer! Or is that
three words?

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