



• *Jericho* doesn't do "subtle" very well.

CLIVE BARKER'S JERICHO

Tom Clancy's *Hellraiser*

PUBLISHER: Codemasters DEVELOPER: Mercury Steam/Alchemic Productions GENRE: First-Person Shooter AVAILABILITY: Retail, E-tail (www.gametap.com) ESRB RATING: Mature MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 2.4GHz CPU, 1GB RAM, 2GB hard drive space, GeForce 6600/Radeon X1600 videocard MULTIPAYER: None VERSION REVIEWED: Gold Master

REVIEW

SPOILER ALERT: After battling evil through time, with the "big bad" awaiting you at the climax, your elite demon-busters dive into the water. Then the closing credits roll. That's exactly how *Clive Barker's Jericho* ends. I'm all for ambiguous endings—but this makes about as much sense to you right now as it did to me after 12 hours in gaming hell. Maybe I'm still there, trapped inside the Pyxis and forced to relive my struggles by writing a review. At least that'd be some kind of conclusion.

Jericho starts with a great premise: You're part of a secret branch of the U.S. Army Chaplain Corps that's really a mystic SEAL team specializing in occult warfare. True to form, Barker's vision for the cursed city of Al-Khali bubbles over with tortured, disfigured, and downright grim creatures. Hang in there for Barker's take on *Dune's* Baron Harkonnen for a real "treat."

However, even the greatest story ever told translates to videogame garbage if you don't understand the medium. *Jericho* is a clumsy collision of good ideas, and as the game struggles to tell an interesting tale, it keeps throwing in gimmicks to distract you.

Comically frustrating button-bashing events are perfect examples of *Jericho's* insanity. When one of the many scripted interactive "cinematic survival events" begins, you have nanoseconds to react. Miss a beat and you die—locked into the same lame looping sequence until you give up, the computer gives up, or you successfully complete it. That's not just plain evil—it's utterly pointless.

HELL IS FOR IDIOTS

As for the team gameplay, *Jericho* is a lot like hanging out with six slightly annoying pals. Individually, they're cool...but after you're all locked together in an interdimensional hell for a couple hours, you're ready to brain someone. Each squad member has an intriguing mix of

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paranormal abilities, like the power to control bullets telekinetically or slow time. The game briefly shines during the few sequences when the team splits up and you're only focusing on one or two troopers. That way, it's easy to get deeper into their individual play styles. Most times, though, it's just a big mess on the battlefield.

The problem comes with everyone else you're not controlling. Here's a game that screams "Multiplayer Co-op!" and yet, all we get is a single-player squad-based game, desperately lacking in good A.I. Shout out the "Follow me" command to these short-bus Ghostbusters, and more often than not, the team runs headlong into danger (as in directly into the line of fire). Saddled with the ability to heal others on the battlefield, my job goes from frontline fighter to medic and crossing guard. Wanna know how to win the game? Tell the troops to hang back until you need 'em.

Forget encouraging teamwork—the game fights you every step of the way. The reward for all that effort: an unfulfilling hard stop, like Codemasters—or Barker—just ran out of steam. Well, at least this review has a definite end: Avoid *Jericho*. •Darren Gladstone



• The dead dance with Delgado's fire elemental.

VERDICT

- Unique characters with an interesting premise.
- Bad A.I. and horrible button-mashing cut-scene games—am I in hell?

4/10

BAD

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