

COMBAT MISSION: SHOCK FORCE

Shockingly mediocre

PUBLISHER: Paradox Entertainment DEVELOPER: Battlefront.com GENRE: Strategy AVAILABILITY: Retail, E-tail (www.battlefront.com) ESRB RATING: Not Rated
 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 2GHz CPU, 512MB RAM, 1GB hard drive space, 128MB videocard MULTIPLAYER: 2 players VERSION REVIEWED: Gold Master

REVIEW

Y The *Combat Mission: Shock Force* manual contains a fascinating little discussion of the rationale behind setting the game in Syria: It's a nice story of the sort you see too rarely, where the designers let you in on their thinking...and what you're playing suddenly makes more sense. That would've been a great model to extend to the rest of the game.

The designers boast that, feature for feature, *Combat Mission: Shock Force* "has more differences [sic] with the earlier *Combat Mission* than you might expect." Mistaking additional features for gameplay improvements plagues many sequel designers, but with a series as solid as *Combat Mission*, it's not hard to imagine the motivation for putting in "more stuff." The game's speculative U.S./Syria conflict may just be a proxy for the Iraq War, but it opens a lot of interesting possibilities. The new *CM:SF* engine does a nice job of depicting infantry, which was the old game's weak suit. The question is: What happened to the stuff that already worked well?



THE NEW GAME FEELS LIKE A GIANT STEP BACK TO THE FIRST *COMBAT MISSION*.

The new game feels like a giant step back to the first *Combat Mission*, where the clunky controls, sluggish engine, weak A.I., and questionable unit pathfinding were all excusable because we hadn't really seen anything like it before. All four of those elements seem (if anything) even worse here. We finally get a campaign, but—perhaps partly because of the setting—the terrain looks flat and uninteresting. The vehicles and soldiers look great, but you'll rarely be zoomed in enough to notice. This goes into the Great Gaming Mysteries file: Who screwed this up, and will it get fixed? ● Bruce Geryk



● The vehicle models and textures are nice, but you'll only zoom in to check line of sight.

VERDICT

- Extremely detailed; looks nice up close.
- Pretty clunky and clumsy, with some questionable abstraction.

5/10

AVERAGE



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