



F.E.A.R.: PERSEUS MANDATE

Frighteningly uneven

PUBLISHER: Vivendi Games DEVELOPER: TimeGate GENRE: First-Person Shooter AVAILABILITY: Retail ESRB RATING: Mature MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 1.7GHz CPU (2.2GHz for Windows Vista), 512MB RAM (1GB for Windows Vista), 8GB hard drive space MULTIPLAYER: 2-16 players VERSION REVIEWED: Near-Final Reviewable

REVIEW

Y The thing I like about supernatural shooters is that they can really mix up the FPS formula. You don't always have to slog through the clichéd settings of parking garages and office buildings and...

What's that, Captain? We're going to work our way through the office building that was the setting of the original game? Starting with the parking garage? I see. Well, it could be worse; at least we won't have to do anything trite and overdone like, I dunno, making our way to the computer core and accessing the mainframe or something.

We are? Really? You mean, like we do in every other game set in a modern office building? Well, it could be a lot worse, right? At least I can look forward to a few trademark *F.E.A.R.* jump-out-of-your-seat moments.

FEAR ITSELF

Or...not? As each level passes, it seems less and less likely that this stand-alone expansion will offer the caliber of genuine scares the original did; instead, I'm just blasting away at hordes of Replicant soldiers. It's entertaining enough, but it's not exactly what I signed on for. Yeah, once in a while, things get a little creepy, but the designers probably could've raised the scare quotient a bit by not telegraphing most of the supernatural elements with the utterly obvious—ohgodwhatthellwasthat?

The preceding narrative is sort of how *Perseus Mandate* works: It spends the first few levels diligently lowering the bar of your expectations...then it starts surprising you. I don't know if the designers deliberately infused the first three "intervals" with FPS clichés and bland environments to instill a false sense of security or what. What I do know: Once you move into Interval 4, the entire tone of the game changes. Enemies become more interesting and far scarier; levels gain a creepy, ruined aesthetic that really jacks up the atmosphere; and encounters with the supernatural become signifi-

THESE GUYS CAN SEE YOU IN ABSOLUTE DARKNESS.

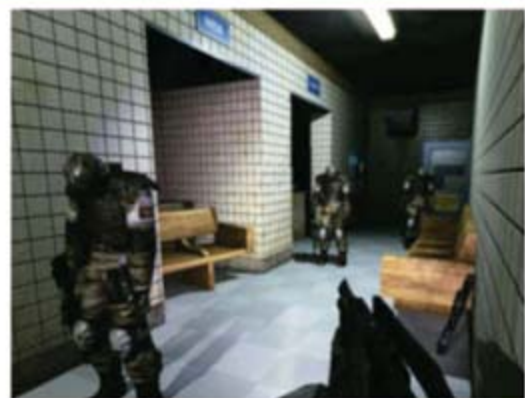
cantly more frequent. But not so frequent, I should note, that you become desensitized to them...just frequent enough to keep you dreading whatever's around the next corner.

JUST KEEP SHOOTING

And I do mean *dreading*, because in addition to its uneven level quality, atmosphere, and enemy design, *Perseus Mandate* has moments of almost absurd difficulty. This is partly legitimate; enemies behave more intelligently than in most shooters, and while this sometimes works in your favor (they often maintain cover long enough for you to recharge your slow-mo ability), it often means getting flanked and surrounded at every opportunity.

But this difficulty's sometimes also caused by your enemies' inhuman senses; these guys can see you in absolute darkness and apparently hear your hair growing from the next room. On one memorable occasion, I was spotted (and shot at) through a brick wall. That's not exactly fair.

Fundamentally, *Perseus Mandate* offers more of what made the original *F.E.A.R.* a hit. It just doles it out in oddly imbalanced amounts, interspersing long periods of more-of-the-same with occasional flashes of innovation. It's no classic, but it's competent enough to give horror fans a satisfying fix. **Joe Rybicki**



• One of the few environments that isn't a sterile office or steam tunnel.

VERDICT

Smart enemies; usually good atmosphere; some moments of real fright.

Lots of cookie-cutter enemies, levels, and plot elements; uneven difficulty.

6/10

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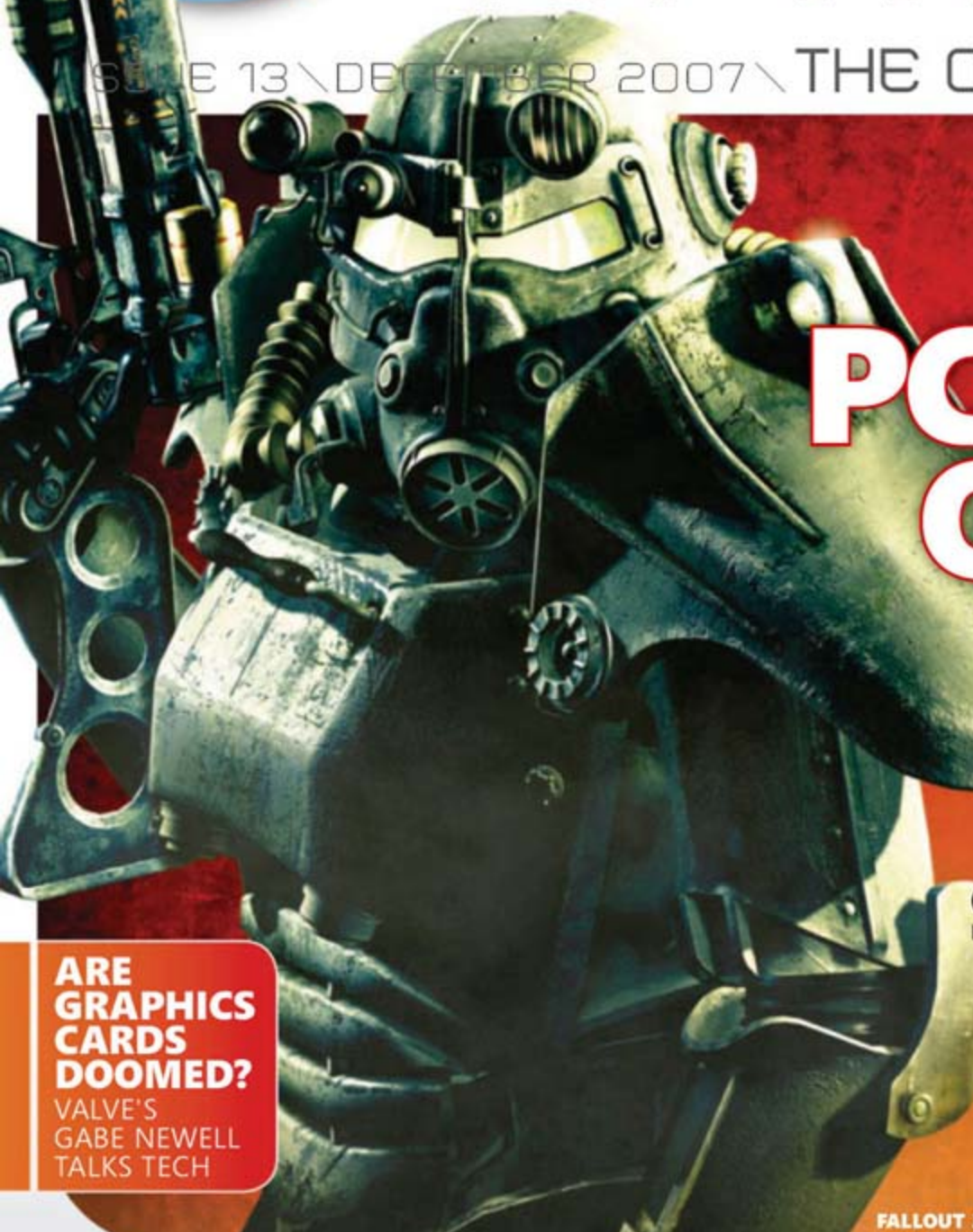
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