



PUBLISHER: **Ubisoft** DEVELOPER: **GRIN** GENRE: **Tactical First-Person Shooter** AVAILABILITY: **Retail, E-tail (www.ubi.com)** ESRB RATING: **Teen**
 MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: **2GHz CPU, 1GB RAM, 5GB hard drive space, 128MB videocard** MULTIPLAYER: **2-32 players** VERSION REVIEWED: **Retail Box**

REVIEW

Y **Sherman said, "War is hell." Sartre said, "Hell is other people." Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter 2** is what happens when the two get together.

The problem is this: Your three squadmates are, in short, shockingly stupid. It's not just that they blithely run, one after the other, directly into the path of a machine-gun nest; it's not even that they report "I'm taking fire!" and then seem utterly unwilling to do anything with this information. No, the problem is that they lack the most rudimentary navigational skills—and I'm not talking about backwoods survival training here, but rather sufficient navigational skill to *walk around a parked automobile*. This awful pathfinding A.I. means that these highly trained special forces are all but useless except as a noisy distraction, allowing you to flank the enemy while your team soaks up bullets (which mercifully quiets the irritating and almost constant stream of "Yes, sir?" "Captain?" "Sir?" that you'll endure if you try to stash them in an out-of-the-way spot).

TACTICAL INDIFFERENCE

The only other feasible approach is to use the new real-time tactical map to plot out their movements, step by step. But this is only marginally better; in order to get your team where you want them in a reasonable time, it becomes necessary to set waypoints around literally every obstacle—and pray that they don't run into *each other* on the way to their destinations.

It's a shame. This new overhead map should have made the game vastly deeper and more strategic; the *Ghost Recon* series, like its brother *Rainbow Six*, is at its best when you're coordinating complex, multilayered attacks. Even the console versions provide A.I. adequate enough for timed pincer maneuvers...but here, your squad can be worse than useless.

All that said, *GRAW2*'s single-player campaign is tense enough and challenging enough to prove a worthwhile diversion—provided you set aside any expectation of intelligence on the part of your computer-controlled compatriots. Sounds pretty mediocre, eh? That's because I haven't talked about online play yet.

REDEMPTION

Often, tactical shooters prove disappointingly shallow in online play, but *GRAW2* has one stellar mode going for it. Yes, you've got old standbys like *Deathmatch* and "Hamburger Hill" (the capture-and-hold model), but the real standout is *Recon vs. Assault*, in which one team attempts to destroy a selection of AA tanks while the other team defends them. Sounds simple enough, but dig this: The new scout class can "tag" enemies, which causes them to show up on all your teammates' HUDs—and the defenders have unlimited lives, while the attackers can only respawn after an AA tank is destroyed. You'll also level up your character over the course of a game, unlocking new gear—and you can gain points toward your new level *even when you're dead*, by piggybacking on another player while in "ghost" mode and tagging any enemies that get too close.

It's the kind of mode that rewards careful play and subtlety, and it's easily the most outstanding feature of this reasonably competent but otherwise fairly unremarkable shooter. Is it worth the full price of entry? Not quite—but the rest of the game is diverting enough to make up the difference. **Joe Rybicki**

VERDICT

➤ **Recon vs. Assault; tension and challenge; tactical map.**

■ **Offensively stupid squadmates; the rest of the online modes aren't on par with Recon vs. Assault.**

7/10

GOOD

Games for Windows
THE OFFICIAL ENGINE



Everything looks better when peeked at from around a corner.