



• *Shadowrun's* design aesthetic is more alluring to folks who prefer Elrond over Churchill and Orcs over counterterrorists.

CONSOLE CROSS-PLAY

1UP.com gave the Xbox 360 version of *Shadowrun* an 8 out of 10 score—but what's good for the goose isn't always good for the gander. The game simply screws up stuff that PC players take for granted. It has extremely limited server-browsing (when it works); no visible stat-tracking aside from Achievements (without transparency, TrueSkill matching might as well be voodoo); no text chat or command console; no way to make custom maps; and obvious aim/interface concessions. *Shadowrun's* biggest lure is the chance to play with console-only friends. Maybe...since you can't even be sure which team you'll end up on.



• To keep players from being resurrected by their teammates, dismember their corpses. Sounds grisly, but they just vanish in a flash of purple smoke.

SHADOWRUN

The Pledge

PUBLISHER: Microsoft DEVELOPER: FASA Studio GENRE: Multiplayer or First-Person Shooter AVAILABILITY: Retail ESRB RATING: Mature MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: 3.2GHz dual-core CPU, 2GB RAM, 4.5GB hard drive space, 256MB videocard, Internet connection, Windows Vista MULTIPLAYER: 2-16 players (online only) VERSION REVIEWED: Retail Box



• Kit out your own miniclass following the loose rock-paper-scissors model of well-balanced (and smartly restricted) metahuman powers.

multiple high roads for gliding types, underground tunnels for folks who prefer to crawl up ladders the old-fashioned way, and compound layers to mitigate the tactical trump card of X-ray vision and teleportation. The magical backdrops hang together better—both structurally and thematically—than the unappealing shantytowns and warehouses, and so only half of the nine maps really qualify as much fun. Maybe it's the overall lack of variety: Many single-player shooters (or their free mods) have more multiplayer content than this stand-alone game.

Or maybe it's *Shadowrun's* ultimate solution to cross-platform play. Depending on how you look at it, FASA has either given Xbox 360 players luxurious aim assistance (get your enemy in the big pizza-sized targeting circle and you're set—or purchase Smartlink technology for even *more* tracking help), or they've gimped PC players by eliminating the advantage of pixel precision. As in some other tactical shooters, moving temporarily widens your cone of spray, which would be fine if most weapons weren't hugely inaccurate even when you're crouched and statue-still. Only the sniper rifle takes much advantage of the mouse. Even hotkeys are gimped—you can purchase a large number of powers over the course of a game, but you can map only three at a time (exactly the right number to fit on the 360 controller's bumpers and triggers). PC shooter buffs will rightly resent this—and FASA's succeeded in making a PC FPS that will appeal mostly to people who don't like FPSes. That kind of paradox would normally stop a game's development cold on day one.

This is also the first time I've seen Live Achievements actively work *against* a game. In public matches, team tactics vanish as folks spam Trees of Life ("I'm trying to get my Healing Achievement!") or run rampant with swords simply so they can finish up their MMORPG-ish quota of 100 katana kills. I know this because people announce these intentions over Live chat as often as they yell, "Rez me! Rez me! Rez me!"

THE PRESTIGE

The PC version of *Shadowrun* does come with its own unique joy: Your rare arrival in a game lobby is treated like the return of a lost astronaut, the discovery of the last unicorn, or the birth of a messiah. The heavens open; the fatted calf is slaughtered; Achievements unlock in your wake. The Live voices stop jabbering and whisper, awed, "The Vista player...he is here." •Sean Molloy

AS WITH MOST MAGIC TRICKS, SHADOWRUN TURNS FROM "OOH!" TO "OH" ONCE YOU SPOT THE ACE TUCKED UP THE PRESTIDIGITATOR'S SLEEVE.

REVIEW

It's one of the most protracted tutorials you'll ever play, but it's also one of the most promising: regenerative golden trees straight from an Aronofsky film; magic-sucking grenades that weaken minds and Trolls' armored hides; energy monsters summoned from the place between worlds; brain gear that lets you spot enemies behind walls—and juju that lets you teleport *through* those walls. Work your way through *Shadowrun's* offline training missions, and you'll begin to believe its tagline's bold claim that, by gum, the rules of engagement *have* been rewritten.

THE TURN

But, as with most magic tricks, *Shadowrun* turns from "Ooh!" to "Oh" once you spot the ace

tucked up the prestidigitator's sleeve. That summoned beast from beyond? Well, he's pretty much a turret. The noble Tree of Life? A health dispenser placed by another game's medic. Enhanced Vision? Teleport? Developer-sanctioned wall hacks. Derivation is no sin by default, of course—so why does this shooter wear out its welcome so quickly?

Maybe it's the game types: You basically get only two versions of Capture the Flag and one version of Deathmatch, and that's it. Maybe it's the waiting: Click "Play," and it can take up to five minutes to find your first game, assuming you haven't messed with your game-type preferences (to be fair, once you're hooked up with a party, play moves smoothly from match to match...unless a server goes down; then it's back to square one).

Maybe it's the maps—complex anthills of zig-zagging corridors and crisscrossing ramps, with

VERDICT

✓ Cool setting; useful tactical powers; interesting race/class mix.

✗ Not enough to it; cross-platform compromises neuter PC's strength.

5/10

AVERAGE

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