



PUBLISHER: Midway DEVELOPER: Midway Chicago GENRE: Third-Person Shooter AVAILABILITY: Retail ESRB RATING: Mature MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS: Dual-core CPU, 2GB RAM, 15GB hard drive space, ATI Radeon X1300 or Nvidia GeForce 7800 videocard MULTIPLAYER: 2-6 players VERSION REVIEWED: Near-Final Reviewable

## REVIEW

**Hoo boy.** If you're one of those folks who's morally opposed to the idea of porting games from consoles to PC, you're gonna want to stop reading now—continuing will only make you angry.

Are they gone? OK, look: This version of *Stranglehold* is a near-direct port of the Xbox 360 version. It's all but identical, and because of that, it's missing some of the necessities PC gamers take for granted. For example, you might notice that the minimum system requirements seem unusually high. That's probably because *Stranglehold* offers almost no video customization options, so you can't really dial back the system demands to let this thing run on older gear. But the odd thing is the lack of gamepad support: The game doesn't even support the wired 360 controller, which seems like a no-brainer—not to mention, it defies the logic of the aforementioned console-centric foibles.

### BUST IT UP

If you can suppress the feelings of righteous indignation prompted by the shamelessly skimpy nature of this port, *Stranglehold's* a pretty good time while it lasts. This sort-of-sequel to director John Woo's seminal action flick *Hard Boiled* features a virtual Chow Yun-Fat reprising his role as Inspector "Tequila" Yuen, tearing things up in trademark dove-filled Woo fashion (no surprise there; Woo collaborated on the game). The ability to blast the living hell out of every environment is undeniably satisfying, a feeling that lasts longer than it has any right to—probably because you keep walking around thinking, "Can I destroy *that*? Why, yes! Yes I can! How about *that*? Why, yes!"

And Tequila's absurd gun-toting acrobatics are also plenty satisfying...when they work. This is one of the game's biggest problems: See, in order to interact with the environment—like by

sliding down a banister, flopping on a rolling cart, or swinging from a chandelier—you first have to aim at an object and wait for the white glow that signifies it can be used. Trouble is, triggering these objects is frustratingly unreliable. Sometimes you're too close, sometimes you're too far away, and sometimes it *just won't work*. So *Stranglehold* often (not always, but often) loses its balletic potential when what should be a string of supercool slow-motion moves is broken by the finicky nature of the interactive objects.

### WASN'T I JUST HERE?

The often-dull level design's also problematic. While certain areas stand out—an active demolition site is one shining example, as is the final level, set in a sprawling estate—many of the maps feel distressingly similar to one another. You could make the argument that the focus *should* be on the interactive and destructible objects within the levels rather than the level structures themselves, and I'd agree with you. Trouble is, the glitchy nature of the interactive objects means that you're not likely to exploit them, and thus the levels don't become the free-form playgrounds they were probably intended to be.

*Stranglehold* packs some impressive tech; the power to positively flatten nearly every object in a level offers a certain charm. And for the eight hours or so you'll spend playing through the story, it's reasonably entertaining. But with such unreliable environmental exploits, the game devolves into little more than a stylish, mindless, unusually destructive shooter. **•Joe Rybicki**



•Cart antics mean big style points.

### VERDICT

Deliciously destructible environments, a moderately interesting story.

Glitchy controls; too-similar levels make the game feel rushed and uninspired.

6/10

AVERAGE





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