

Video Game Review: Riveting, Thrilling Action of ‘Splinter Cell: Conviction’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 7, 2010 - 6:12pm

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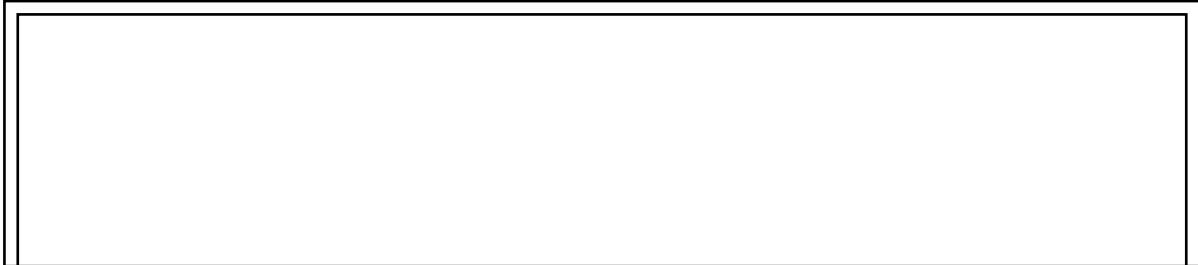
CHICAGO – With a consistently intriguing story, excellent voice work, and perfectly-paced gameplay, the Microsoft Xbox 360 game “Tom Clancy’s Splinter Cell: Conviction” is a surprisingly accomplished title, one that will suck you in for hours on end and nearly make you feel like a superspy yourself.

Sam Fisher is one angry S.O.B.. In fact, anger drives the majority of “Splinter Cell: Conviction” with its emphasis on a new “Mark and Execute” gameplay, brutal interrogations, and Michael Ironside’s gravelly voice work as the lead. Sam has reason to be angry. He has been used and abused in ways that would lead any of us with the right skill set to become killing machines. After losing his only love, his daughter Sarah, he has gone rogue in an effort to discover the secrets behind her murder and is hunting down her killer. God save anyone who gets in his way.



Splinter Cell: Conviction
Photo credit: Ubisoft

Years of training by former employer Third Echelon have given Sam Fisher skills to get to the bottom of any mystery. Where previous “Splinter Cell” games focused almost entirely on stealth and planning, “Conviction” changes it up a bit. Cover and silencers are still your best friends, but Fisher can also cause a lot of damage after he’s been detected. The emphasis is still on staying in the shadows, where you’re invisible to enemies, and then either melee killing or silently shooting your victim before he spots you and warns his friends, but Sam can also use being spotted as a technique. If you’re spotted in point A and then retreat to the shadows, a “ghost” of your character remains in the last point you were seen, allowing you to flank your enemies as they move in for the kill. If things go really bad, there’s always your handy grenades.





Splinter Cell: Conviction

Photo credit: Ubisoft

A unique new element of "Splinter Cell: Conviction" is the "Mark and Execute" feature. After you kill someone in hand-to-hand style, you gain the "M & E" ability which allows you to mark enemies with the RB button and one-button kill them with Y. It may sound like a cheat but it's really just another strategic element. When to use it, how to use it, and who to use it on varies enough to keep it fresh and interesting.

Instead of traditional cut scenes, much of the plot of "Conviction" is conveyed through Sam's interrogations of suspects. This guy would make Jack Bauer cry uncle. What first feels a little gratuitous becomes somewhat cathartic as the game progresses and you learn the depth of betrayal that has befallen Fisher. By the final few levels, you're itching to bash someone's head through a table to get the answers you need.

The single-player campaign is arguably too short at around seven hours but it is incredibly rewarding. The level design is remarkable, not only in its stunning level of background detail but in its variability, allowing for multiple playthroughs in that there's rarely one way to get past a group of bad guys. The character animations are a bit more awkward, especially in the goofy way Sam runs, but the enemy A.I. is spectacular. Yes, a few too many have the stupid habit of hanging out with their backs to windows but it's notable how the enemy will work together to flank you, stay behind cover, and expose your location.



Splinter Cell: Conviction

Photo credit: Ubisoft

When the SP campaign is over, you will still spend many hours with "Splinter Cell: Conviction". Without an Xbox Live account, you can still play through "Deniable Ops," a series of challenge levels in which you either hunt down a number of enemies (that increase if you're spotted) or try to survive a neverending wave of them as long as you can. "Deniable Ops" can also be played co-op, but the bulk of the co-op gameplay takes place in an entirely different campaign, one that serves as a prequel to the single-player campaign. It runs about five hours and isn't as rewarding as the main campaign but definitely adds depth to the gameplay and enhances the replayability of the overall title.

"Splinter Cell: Conviction" is an entertaining, riveting experience from the minute you pop the disc in your machine and it feels both loyal to the Tom Clancy universe and like a new start for a franchise that has been a bit left in the dust by titles like "Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2" and "Battlefield: Bad Company 2". In many ways, this game is just as rewarding as both of those titles and the single-player campaign is arguably better than either.

Good games demand more than just hand-eye coordination, requiring that you use brains with your character's brawn and great games go even further and produce an emotionally complex experience not unlike a fantastic movie or book. "Splinter Cell: Conviction" is a great game.

Check out the game's trailer, courtesy of Ubisoft:

'Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Conviction' was released by Ubisoft and developed by Ubisoft Montreal. It is rated M (Mature). The version

reviewed was for the Xbox 360, but the title is also available for the PC. It was released on April 13th, 2010.



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