

Video Game Review: 'Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Blacklist' is a Blast

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on September 9, 2013 - 9:00am

- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [2]
- [Paul Meekin](#) [3]
- [PlayStation 3](#) [4]
- [PS3](#) [5]
- [Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Blacklist](#) [6]
- [Video Game Review](#) [7]
- [Xbox 360](#) [8]

CHICAGO – A part of me likes thinking that somewhere in the Middle East, an American like Sam Fisher is prowling. Clear and present danger abound, mind racing with a dozen different ways the next few seconds could play out. A guard wanders close to his hiding place. Does he take them out with a silenced bullet to the head? Show mercy and knock them out - or simply let him walk by?



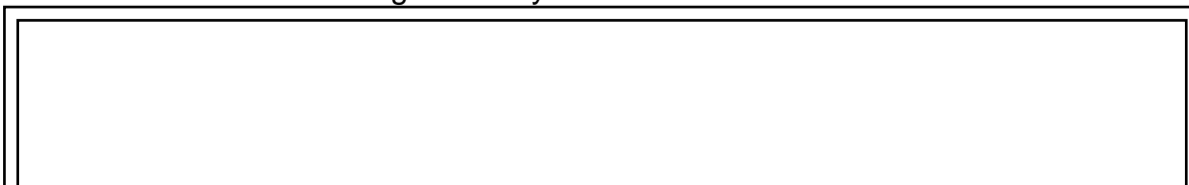
America's security rides on these so-called patriot games, this man's ability to make the brutal choices correctly, and without remorse. For this man, at this moment, there is no Geneva Convention, and politics are as far away from his mind as Bradley Manning, a Quarterback for one of those NFL football teams he doesn't have the time to care about. In a world of gray, his mission is as black and white as it gets. This is about us vs. them, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

And if "Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Blacklist" is any indication, neither would I. The long running franchise has been a personal favorite of mine, emphasizing strategy, sneaking, and reality, in a way "Metal Gear Solid" abandoned long ago. For those who have missed out on the tactical espionage action of the previous games, the setup is simple. You are Sam Fisher; soldier, spy, badass, and Dad. You traverse the world accomplishing a variety of Tom Clancy-ey objectives like securing valuable intel, capturing POIs, shutting down terrorist networks, and you even end up at Chicago's Navy Pier, assaulting a variety of terrorists in a location that I do believe currently runs a Cirque De Soleil show.



Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist
Photo credit: Ubisoft

While the setup is standard super-spy power fantasy fare, its confident storytelling sets it apart from the James Bonds, Solid Snakes, and Ethan Hunt's of the gaming world. Sam Fisher tends to talk almost exclusively in clenched teeth and shouting, but the rest of the cast including computer hacker Charlie, tough guy Isaac, mission commander 'Grim', and eventually an arms dealer named Kobin, all feel grounded in the pseudo-reality "Splinter Cell" presents. They don't have a lot of depth, but each character is personable and distinct, well acted and fleshed out enough where you care about their fate in the world.





Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist
Photo credit: Ubisoft

You'll also care about the fate of the world itself. "Blacklist" is intensely contemporary. Missions deploy all over the world in places most people are intensely familiar with. Iraq, Benghazi, Guantanamo Bay, and other locales you've heard of in the past decade or so are present and accounted for, making the narrative all the more immersive as the names, faces, and places are already familiar to anyone who has watched the news.

Simply put, Ubisoft has given us a narrative that feels...right. I've read more Tom Clancy novels than I can remember, and "Splinter Cell" nails it. The tech is cool and plausible, the characters talk and act like the best of the best in their given field, and the geopolitical underpinnings feel authentic. Writers Richard Dansky and Matt MacLennan have churned out a high quality potboiler.

Which is great because Ubisoft Toronto's 297 other employees churned out a massively entertaining game to go along with that narrative. "Blacklist" features incredible visuals (thanks to an installable HD texture pack) and thrilling gameplay. At its best, "Blacklist" presents you an open map, a variety of lethal and non-lethal weapons and gadgets (drones included), and lets you get from point A to point B any way you want. However your actions will be graded based on three paths. Ghost rewards you for sneaking through a level non-lethally, using smoke grenades, hiding in the shadows, and knocking enemies out. Panther lets you embrace your inner predator, rewarding you for killing your way through a level silently, attacking from the shadows and the rooftops. Assault rewards going out, guns blazing. The system is organic and you'll get a feel for how you'll want to play the game within a level or so, with the consensus among my peers being Panther is the most fun, and Ghost providing the most challenge.



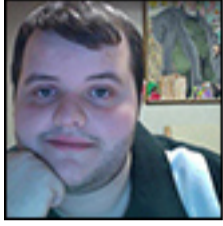
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist
Photo credit: Ubisoft

A stealth game has never felt so good. While "Splinter Cell" predates "Arkham Asylum" and "Assassin's Creed", it plays like a well refined combination of those games. The stealth rewards strategy, patience, and planning, and the verticality and ability to climb terrain, and hang off various arches, drain pipes, and gutters feels like it'd be right at home in Ubisoft's preeminent historical action game franchise. There's nothing quite like the thrill of tossing a sleeping-gas equipped camera into a group of enemies, igniting it, popping out from cover and shooting the two or three guards who run over to see the commotion via the assassination system, then sneaking up behind a 'high value target' and knocking them out for a bonus-point earning bag and tag before jumping out a nearby window to safety. This is just one example, and "Splinter Cell: Blacklist" provides hundreds. If you value the ability to creatively approach a given situation like in "Arkham Asylum", or "Far Cry 3", you really need to own this game now.

Why? Because the only reason you wouldn't buy this game is because you're worried it's short. It's not. "Blacklist" is packed with co-op missions, the always exciting Spies vs. Mercs, meta games, collectibles, annnnd tons of equipment upgrades, side-grades, unlocks, and bonuses. There's literally four different kinds of ammo you can put in your pistol for crying out loud. Hell, the gameplay is so solid that even non-canon DLC missions would be worth a look based on good faith alone.

"Splinter Cell: Blacklist" achieves the rare feat of blowing me away and sucking me in at the exact same time, feeling like a truly crafted experience versus a sequel in a franchise on a soon to be old console. In a bizarre way, I find "Splinter Cell: Blacklist" comforting. Here's a good guy, killing bad guys, saving the country one kick-ass mission at the time, and still finds the time to be a Dad. Despite all the technical complexity of our digital age depicted, "Blacklist" harkens back to a simpler time.

"Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell Blacklist" was released on August 20, 2013 by Ubisoft. The game was reviewed for the Xbox 360 but is also available for the PS3 and PC.



By [PAUL MEEKIN](#) [9]
Video Game Critic
HollywoodChicago.com

Source URL (retrieved on Sep 20 2024 - 12:22pm):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/22427/video-game-review-tom-clancy-s-splinter-cell-blacklist-is-a-blast>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/paul-meeekin>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/playstation-3>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ps3>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/tom-clancys-splinter-cell-blacklist>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/video-game-review>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/xbox-360>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#PAUL>