

Video Game Review: ‘Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2’ Delivers on High Expectations

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 29, 2009 - 5:17pm

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CHICAGO – One of the more anticipated games in years is finally here and, by now, most diehard fans of “Call of Duty: Modern Warfare” have played through “Modern Warfare 2” on multiple difficulty levels and spent countless hours working through the variety of multiplayer modes and special ops missions. Hardcore fans of this franchise don’t just “play” these games. They eat, breathe, and live “Modern Warfare” for months after the game’s release and with a title this good, who can blame them?



“Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2” is essentially divided into three separate, time-consuming installments - a single-player campaign, a massive multi-player experience, and a series of missions entitled “Special Ops”. Much has been made about the brief length of the single-player campaign, running under five hours for most players, but it’s merely a third of the overall title and it is such an accomplished, challenging, intense campaign that I have little problem with its running time. Ask yourself how much of the ten-to-twelve hour games you have in your collection are truly filled from front to back with non-filler, non-repetitive action, and realize that single-player experiences should be about quality, not quantity.



Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2
Photo credit: Activision

Even if it’s just for practice for multiplayer, most gamers will start with the single-player campaign, an international story that’s essentially about World War III. In the campaign, the player takes on several characters in a variety of locations, each with their own style, and each expertly designed. One minute, you’re dodging shooters in a favela, the next you’re protecting a small town against a massive attack, and then you’re slinking through a snowy forest, picking off enemies with a sniper rifle before they notice you.





Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

Photo credit: Activision

On a gameplay level, the most striking element of “COD: Modern Warfare 2” is the intensity of the experience. Casual players need not apply for this mission. Even experienced players of shooting games will die repeatedly. This is a tough, tough game that barely lets up in its non-stop action. You’ll spend as much time running or behind cover as you will shooting and even reload times become stress-inducing as vulnerability often means death. “Modern Warfare 2” tells a morally complex story (including a very controversial, optional undercover mission in which the player shoots innocent civilians in a Russian airport) across many regions and remains riveting from first scene to last.

As for negatives in the single-player campaign, there could have been a bit more effort into the weapon interplay. I too often felt like I was running through a massive arsenal (picking up whatever my latest victim had dropped) of essentially interchangeable weapons. I suppose in the real world that a bullet is a bullet and these games pride themselves on realism, but why allow the player to pick up so many different weapons that are basically the same? There could have been a bit more strategy as to what is the best weapon for the current situation instead of just grabbing whatever is in your path and emptying the clip.

There also could have been a bit more variety in the level design. I love the range of settings, but it doesn’t change the fact that most of the missions in “Modern Warfare 2” are variations on the same theme - kill the enemy and move on. Another stealth mission, a vehicle mission, or something else off the norm might have varied the overall campaign experience a bit more and made it that much more satisfying.



Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

Photo credit: Activision

Finally, the AI of fellow soldiers can be frustrating. Too often, my mates blocked my shot or missed the guy standing right in front of them. It’s a minor complaint, but something that stands out when the rest of the game is so expertly crafted.

As for controls, they will be familiar to anyone who’s played a shooter before with the two-weapon (and grenades) system easy to learn for those who are starting their “Call of Duty” careers with this title. Movement and shooting are fluid and easy to control. As for graphics, the game looks absolutely amazing, with some set-pieces arguably more accomplished and well-designed than most feature films released this year.

Possibly more than any game this season, the single-player campaign could be called a mere afterthought for a lot of fans of “Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2”. This is a game with legions of addicted fans who do nothing but jump into the multiplayer portion of the title for hours, days, and weeks on end. If you’re new to the world of “COD” multiplayer, prepare to get pwned for hours by the people who do virtually nothing but wait for newbies like you to destroy.

Multiplayer options in “Modern Warfare 2” are familiarly designed with “Team Deathmatch,” “Free-For-All,” and many more, but it’s not the games themselves but how well they’re conceived and executed that have made this series the industry standard for multiplayer. The maps

are perfectly designed, allowing for the same intensity as the single-player campaign but with actual opponents instead of AI. The multiplayer depth alone makes “COD: Modern Warfare 2” worth a purchase.



Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2

Photo credit: Activision

I do have one multiplayer complaint - upgradeable perks and weapons are earned through multiplayer accomplishments, which seems a bit ridiculous if you really think about it. I like the idea of rewarding the best players, but why take the toughest and make them even harder to kill? It takes the natural parity away from the multiplayer experience when your enemy can use a Predator Drone to take your rookie ass out in style.

The final third of “Modern Warfare 2” is devoted to “Special Ops,” a series of mini-missions that are based off sections of the single-player campaign and can be played solo or co-op locally or online. Not merely an afterthought, the “Special Ops” section of the game is as deep and expertly designed as the other two. When you finish the single-player campaign in most games, you’re pretty much done with the title. When you finish the story in “Modern Warfare 2,” you are really just getting started.

Very few games in this crowded season were more anticipated than “Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2”. With great anticipation comes great expectations. I think that’s why some have been nitpicking about the game’s short length and the lack of a true leap forward from the last award-winning title. If this exact game was a new IP and didn’t bear the “COD” name, it would be even more acclaimed. Of course, if it didn’t bear the “COD” name, it probably wouldn’t be this impressive.

‘Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 2’ was released by Activision and developed by Infinity Ward. It is rated M (Mature). The version reviewed was for the PS3, but the title is also available for the XBox 360. It was released on November 10th, 2009.



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