Modern shooters have long been about jumping around and shooting with high-frequency, fast firing weapons, rocket launchers or other exotic explosive weapons (throwback at Quake Arena and Unreal Tournament). With the arrival of World War II games, shooters took a more realistic turn. Now you would get killed by a single bullet or so and would need to master the aiming of your weapons before being considered as valuable on the battlefield.

With Titanfall, it seems like the cycle is closing in. Remedy Entertainment’s shooter brings back the vertical axis combat and fast paced combat and combines this with the predominant sensible-aiming paradigm that has been ruling the FPS genre for years. And this really blends perfectly.

Once you leave the short introductory tutorial, you quickly realize that movement is going to be at the center of the gameplay. As you run toward the objective you covet, you see the enemy team’s pilots (players) running on the walls and jumping from roof to roof, ignoring every would-be obstacles in other FPS’s. The extra mobility given by the pilot’s ability to double-jump and run along walls give movement a central part in the way a match unfolds. The movement is probably, and most surprisingly, the most exciting part of the game.

The obvious standpoint and selling pitch of Titanfall is the TITANS, and this effectively proves to be a game changer when it comes to the obvious gameplay duality it induces. Titans are gigantic robots that can be called down of the sky by pilots at a certain point in a match, granting them additional protection and extra firepower. You may think they would be absolute game-enders but pilots can easily jump on their back and target their core directly, leaving the titan powerless from the pilot’s attacks. This sometime results in an interesting cat and mouse game between the titan’s pilot and the attacking one as the only option is to get out of his titan to chase away or kill the enemy.

This duality is very interesting and has collateral implications on other spheres of the gameplay such as the map design. It is indeed in a very interesting way how the titan and pilot combat mix up. Maps have been designed vertically in an ingenious way, making roaming in the streets with a titan (and even on foot as a pilot) very claustrophobic and stressful. At any time, it feels like your titan can be assaulted by a sneaky pilot, waiting for a foe to come by.

The mechanics are fairly typical to latest games when it comes to shooting; weapons are mostly accurate; as long as you aim down the sight and the enemy’s death is only a couple of decently-aimed-bullets away. The now-conventional leveling system has been adopted alongside of his twin the, weapon upgrading. Even though this is not much of an innovation, this inclusion adds a bit of progression feel to the game that has no classic single player campaign.

What has been a concern amongst the audience was that there might not be enough content, maps and game modes, to entertain and be worth its price. However the game has about a dozen maps that are varied enough, in design and setting, to keep the game entertaining even after having played them all several times. Games modes also fill up the rest of the glass pretty well. Even though they are not revolutionary, they introduce interesting concepts such as getting points by killing non-player characters throughout the map and titan-only combats while betting on classic modes such as control the nodes and capture the flag.

Teamwork can be an important part in precise situations. Most of the time, you will see (or hear if you are fortunate enough to have speaking allies) your teammate’s titan being back ridden by an enemy pilot. This is your chance to exert your team working capacity by chasing show the pilot off the back of your friend’s automated armor. Although there is still some other opportunities for cooperation, the game does not feel like this has been thought with it as a center piece of gameplay. This is unfortunate since the game is essentially played online with people. Nevertheless, it is still conceivable that tactics could play a bigger role in higher skilled matches.

A story mode has also been implemented in the game under the form of multiplayer matches with a narrative. It takes the player through most of the game modes and maps by telling them a story about the origins of the hostility between the IMC and the Militia. It is a pity that no traditional single player campaign has been made out of the short story that has chosen to be told in a couple of multiplayer matches since even this little narrative was enough to arouse interest towards the environment.

Weak 9/10

Pros: Simple but efficient mechanics

Intense, fast paced combat

Impressive functionality in design

Cons: No conventional single player campaign

Titanfall is an ambitious first person shooter that tries to push back the rigid limits of the genre. By implementing simple mechanics it successfully changes how one thinks about shooters without losing players in ambiguity. The main downside to the game is that it leaves the potential for a great single player campaign asleep. Its dynamism reminds us of a previous era of shooters that may have been forgotten and proves that simple and parsimonious mechanics can lead to great design opportunities.