

= Half @-@ Life : Blue Shift =

Half @-@ Life : Blue Shift is an expansion pack for Valve Software 's science fiction first @-@ person shooter video game Half @-@ Life . The game was developed by Gearbox Software with Valve Corporation and published by Sierra Entertainment on June 12 , 2001 (it was originally set for release in Spring) . Blue Shift is the second expansion for Half @-@ Life , originally intended as part of a Dreamcast version of the original game . Although the Dreamcast port was later cancelled , the PC version continued development and was released as a standalone product . The game was released on Steam on August 24 , 2005 .

As with Gearbox 's previous expansion pack Opposing Force , Blue Shift returns to the setting and events of the original game , but portrays the story through the eyes of another person . The protagonist in Blue Shift is a security guard , Barney Calhoun , employed by the Black Mesa Research Facility . After a scientific mishap causes Black Mesa to be invaded by aliens , Calhoun must fight his way to safety . The game received mostly positive reception . Many reviewers were critical of the short length of the game and the lack of new content , although the inclusion of a High Definition pack that upgraded the models and textures in both Blue Shift and the preceding Half @-@ Life games was praised .

= = Gameplay = =

As an expansion pack for Half @-@ Life , Blue Shift is a first @-@ person shooter . The overall gameplay of Blue Shift does not significantly differ from that of Half @-@ Life : players are required to navigate through the game 's levels , fight hostile non @-@ player characters and solve a variety of puzzles to advance . The game continues Half @-@ Life 's methods of an unbroken narrative . The player sees everything through the first person perspective of the protagonist and remains in control of the player character for almost all of the game . Story events are conveyed through the use of scripted sequences rather than cut scenes . Progress through the game 's world is continuous ; although the game is divided up into chapters , the only significant pauses are when the game needs to load the next part of an environment .

The player battles through the game alone , but is occasionally assisted by friendly non @-@ player characters . Security guards and scientists will occasionally help the player in reaching new areas and convey relevant plot information . Blue Shift also includes a substantial section dedicated to keeping a major character in the story safe from enemy characters , and escorting him to a specific location . A selection of enemies from Half @-@ Life populate the game , including alien creatures such as headcrabs and Vortigaunts . The player also encounters human opponents in the form of a detachment of US Marines who have been sent to eliminate the alien threat and silence any witnesses . Blue Shift does not elaborate on the storyline in Opposing Force , the preceding expansion pack , and no enemy characters or weapons introduced in it appear in the game . The player is instead given access to a limited selection of Half @-@ Life 's original weaponry .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

Blue Shift is set in the same location and time frame as that of Half @-@ Life , taking place at a remote New Mexico laboratory called the Black Mesa Research Facility . In Half @-@ Life , the player takes on the role of Gordon Freeman , a scientist involved in an accident that opens an inter @-@ dimensional portal to the borderworld of Xen , allowing the alien creatures of Xen to attack the facility . The player guides Freeman in an attempt to escape the facility and close the portal , ultimately traveling to Xen to do so . As in Opposing Force , Blue Shift shows the events of Half @-@ Life from the perspective of a different protagonist . The player assumes the role of Barney Calhoun , a security guard working near the labs where the accident takes place . Calhoun is

responsible for the preservation of equipment and materials and the welfare of research personnel , and after the accident turns Black Mesa into a warzone , he must work with Dr. Rosenberg , a high @-@ ranking scientist involved in the experiment , to evacuate the facility .

= = = Plot = = =

Blue Shift begins in a similar manner to Half @-@ Life , as Barney Calhoun rides a train through the Black Mesa facility to reach his place of work . After reporting for duty , Calhoun is instructed to assist in maintenance on a malfunctioning elevator . As Calhoun finishes repairs , however , Freeman 's experiment takes place and results in a " resonance cascade " , causing massive damage to the facility and teleporting alien creatures into the base . The elevator is badly damaged and fails , sending Calhoun plummeting into the depths of Black Mesa .

Calhoun regains consciousness at the bottom of the shaft and begins to fight his way to the surface to escape . Emerging near Black Mesa 's classification yards , Calhoun learns that Dr. Rosenberg and his colleagues plan to escape the facility using teleportation technology . After freeing Rosenberg from the captivity of the US Marines detachment sent to silence the facility , Calhoun escorts him to a decommissioned prototype teleportation laboratory , where several Black Mesa employees have already gathered . Rosenberg then teleports Calhoun to the Xen border world to calibrate research equipment needed to pinpoint a teleport destination outside of Black Mesa . Upon his return , Rosenberg informs Calhoun that the teleporter 's battery power has been exhausted , and contact has been lost with a team sent to acquire a new power cell .

Calhoun travels to the power generators on a lower level to find a fresh power cell while firefights rage between the Marines and the forces of Xen . After returning with a new power cell , Calhoun assists Rosenberg in evacuating the few surviving personnel through the teleporter . Calhoun is the last to enter the portal and as he does so , Marines breach the laboratory and fire on him , causing the teleporter to explode . As a result of the teleporter 's destruction , Calhoun enters a " harmonic reflux " , causing him to be rapidly teleported to a variety of locations in Xen and Black Mesa . At one location , he witnesses Freeman 's capture by Marines mid @-@ way through Half @-@ Life , before eventually stabilizing at the intended teleport location with Rosenberg at the outskirts of Black Mesa , where they then escape the facility in a company SUV .

= = Development = =

A second Half @-@ Life expansion pack , revolving around a security guard in the facility , was first announced in the second quarter of 2000 as part of an upcoming Dreamcast version of Half @-@ Life , under the working title Half @-@ Life : Guard Duty . Although the main Dreamcast port was to be developed by Captivation Digital Laboratories , the new expansion was to be developed by Gearbox Software , the same studio who developed Opposing Force . Publisher Sierra Entertainment later officially announced the expansion on August 30 , 2000 , revealing the name as Blue Shift . As with Opposing Force , the name Blue Shift has a double meaning , referring to both the blue shift light phenomenon , and the name of the shift that the protagonist is assigned to . The Dreamcast version of the game was set to include higher detail models and textures that were double the polygon count of Valve Software 's original Half @-@ Life models . At the European Computer Trade Show in September 2000 , information about Blue Shift 's story and development direction was revealed , along with a release date of November 1 , 2000 , for the Dreamcast version of Half @-@ Life . The game was delayed by Sierra to ensure the " high expectations of consumers " were met , anticipating release by the end of the year . Further media , gameplay and story information was released in the following weeks and months . Despite this , the Dreamcast version of Half @-@ Life still did not emerge , and speculation in May 2001 suggested the game would be cancelled . On June 16 , 2001 , Sierra terminated development on the Dreamcast version of Half @-@ Life , citing " changing market conditions " in a press release . GamePro magazine , however , received and published a 2 @-@ page review of the game . A late stage build of the Dreamcast version was eventually leaked to the Internet , featuring essentially complete versions of both Half

@-@ Life and Blue Shift .

Although the Dreamcast version of Half @-@ Life was cancelled , Blue Shift persevered . Prior to the cancellation of the Dreamcast version , Sierra announced on March 29 , 2001 , that Blue Shift would be released for PC as well . The game would be released as a standalone expansion pack , a product that does not require the original Half @-@ Life to run . The new models developed for the Dreamcast version of Half @-@ Life would also be included in the PC version as the Half @-@ Life High Definition pack . In addition , Gearbox announced that the High Definition pack would not be exclusive for Blue Shift , but could be applied to both Half @-@ Life and Opposing Force as well . At the Electronic Entertainment Expo in 2001 , Gearbox announced that development of Blue Shift had been completed , and exhibited a playable version of the end product . The game was released on June 12 , 2001 .

Blue Shift and the High Definition pack were initially absent from the launch of Valve 's content delivery system Steam in September 2003 , despite the presence of both Half @-@ Life and Opposing Force on the system . The game was released on Steam on August 29 , 2005 along with the High Definition Pack . Blue Shift was also published as part of Sierra 's Half @-@ Life : Generation compilation in 2002 , and as part of Valve Software and Electronic Arts ' Half Life 1 : Anthology on September 26 , 2005 .

= = Critical reception = =

Blue Shift received a mixed reaction from critics , holding overall scores of 67 @. @ 40 % and 71 / 100 on the review aggregator sites GameRankings and Metacritic , respectively . The game has sold around 800 @, @ 000 copies at retail (this figure does not include later sales on Steam) . In a review for IGN , critic Tal Blevins noted that Blue Shift 's gameplay " is pretty much what we 've come to expect out of Half @-@ Life " by blending action and puzzle solving , stating that the latter " were all logical and well done , although some of the jumping puzzles were frustrating " . Though IGN praised the game for maintaining the " epic " feel of the original , Blevins was critical of the relatively short length of the game . GameSpot reviewer Greg Kasavin agreed with many of IGN 's criticisms , stating that " it 's not that the game is easy so much that it 's extremely short " and that Blue Shift " doesn 't amount to much on its own terms " . In addition , Kasavin described the graphical enhancements brought about by the High Definition pack as " helpful " , but noted that " they still don 't make Half @-@ Life look like a new game ? nor are many of the changes themselves very noticeable " .

Other reviews echoed complaints about the similarity of Blue Shift to previous games . GameSpy 's reviewer Jamie Madigan stated that " what really pulls the game down is the ' more of the same ' factor " . Although writing that the game " feels like just a few more levels for the original game " , he noted that this is what Blue Shift was designed to be , given its origins as an add @-@ on for a Dreamcast version of Half @-@ Life . Madigan described the single @-@ player campaign as " decent " and commented that the High Definition pack made the game " worthy of consideration " . Eurogamer echoed criticism on the game 's length ; reviewer Tom Bradwell commented that " although I 'm hard pressed to criticize what you get , the complete absence of everything we 've learnt from the likes of Counter @-@ Strike and everything since is frankly bizarre " . Bradwell did , however , criticize the game 's artificial intelligence and the occasional bug that caused a player to get stuck on a wall . PC Zone 's Mark Hill was more lenient in his comments , praising the game 's artificial intelligence as " intelligent as you could hope an AI enemy to be " . In addition , Hill praised the game for showing more activity in the base , noting that " a whole world goes on around you , with people eating at a cantina and scientists doing their laundry . The complex is more alive than ever before " . Hill also praised the focus " on a greater interaction with scientists as proper people rather than the two or three models that were cloned throughout the facility who kept repeating the same phrases " , describing this as Blue Shift 's " greatest achievement " . PC Zone 's review closed by commenting that " as a Dreamcast extra it works perfectly , but as a standalone PC title there 's not nearly enough to it . "