

= Deathrow (video game) =

Deathrow is a sports video game developed by Southend Interactive and published by Ubisoft Entertainment . It was released as an Xbox gaming system exclusive on 18 October 2002 in Europe and four days later in North America . Deathrow 's development began in May 1999 as an online PC (player computer) game . In early 2001 , Southend transitioned to an Xbox console release , which let the team use pixel shaders , bump mapped textures , and specular lighting . Deathrow was built on an in @-@ house 3D game engine and was Southend 's first full release .

The game is based on the fictional extreme sport Blitz , a futuristic full @-@ contact hybrid of hockey and basketball played with a flying disc . Two teams of four players attempt to move the disc through their opponent 's goal , and teams can either win on points or by knocking out their opposing team . There are 150 individual characters across 18 thematic teams . The single @-@ player campaign 's plot is set in the 23rd century , when Blitz is a popular , televised sport and the teams battle to scale the ranks and win the championship . Players earn credits from their goals scored , opponent knockouts , and crowd @-@ pleasing to be spent on player upgrades , bets , and new teammates . The game also supports split @-@ screen and System Link multiplayer for up to eight players across up to eight Xbox consoles .

Deathrow received largely favorable reviews . Reviewers praised the game 's fast @-@ paced action , and surround sound , but complained of its high difficulty curve , generic soundtrack , and lack of online multiplayer . Some critics felt the game 's use of profanity was excessive , while others thought it was a highlight . Reviewers considered the game 's concept and mechanics similar to other series , specifically Speedball . IGN and TeamXbox both named Deathrow an Editor 's Choice . The game won the TeamXbox 2002 Breakthrough Game of the Year award and the IGN 2002 Best Game Nobody Played . IGN later reported that a sequel would be unlikely due to the original 's low revenue . Southend dissolved in 2013 .

= = Gameplay = =

Deathrow is set in the year 2219 , where Blitz is the world 's most popular sport . Players attempt to toss a disc through a hoop while avoiding full @-@ contact from their opponents , including punches , kicks , throws , and stomps . Like a futuristic rugby , the sport combines elements of hockey , basketball , and full @-@ contact American football . Critics compared the game 's mechanics to Discs of Tron , Mortal Kombat , Blood Bowl , Final Fantasy X 's Blitzball , Blades of Steel , and Speedball , and its aesthetic to that of Blade Runner . The game 's premise was also compared to the 1975 film Rollerball .

There are four rounds in a match of Blitz , where two teams of four computer or human players score points for each energized Blitz disc thrown through their opponent 's hoop , which is eight feet off the ground . Players pass and travel with the disc across the arenas , and the game continues without pause between points scored . The team with the most points at the end of a match wins . Players can choose to brawl when not scoring points . Fighting depletes character health , depending on who takes the blows . Once his health is completely depleted , a character is removed from the game , and teams with all players knocked out are disqualified (though players can be substituted between rounds) . If a player tends towards belligerence , the game 's artificial intelligence will compensate and exact revenge for its teammates . Friendly fire , where teammates can intentionally or inadvertently hurt each other with attacks meant for their opponents , is permitted .

There are 150 unique players on 18 teams , each with thematic personalities in appearance , play style , and profanity . Teams also vary in skill set , and attributes such as defense , speed , strength , and teamwork . Examples include the Sea Cats (fast all @-@ female team with European accents) , the Marines (who wear camouflaged garb and use military jargon) , the Demons (high strength attribute with demonic language) , and the Black Dragons (ninjas with high agility and combat skills) . Teams battle in 32 arenas ? one half with traditional , open @-@ style stadiums , and the other half with environmental obstacles , such as the underground mines . Minor power @-@ ups

including health , credits , and skill augments for individual players regenerate regularly on the field .

Players earn credits for knocking out opponents , scoring points , and impressing the crowd with violence and skill . The credits can be used towards player enhancements such as black market performance @-@ enhancing drugs . A crowd meter displays audience support , which boosts the player 's team abilities when filled . IGN found the game to heavily rely on teamwork . Computer players on teams rated with low teamwork will not take initiative to pursue the disc or to help teammates in need . This attribute can be raised over the course of a game . Players can call plays including physical offense , fast offense , neutral , defense , and goal defense .

The game supports single @-@ player , four @-@ player local multiplayer , and System Link with up to eight players across up to eight Xbox consoles , but does not support Xbox Live online play . Deathrow has a futuristic electronic dance music soundtrack and over 3 @,@ 000 words of voice acting . It also supports 5 @.@ 1 surround sound and customized soundtracks . The game is backwards compatible with the Xbox 360 .

= = = Controls = = =

Players use the Xbox controller 's left analog stick to move the character , the right stick to strafe , and the main buttons to jump , block , punch , and kick . When on offense , the latter two functions become " pass " and " shoot " . Players switch between characters and taunt with the white and black buttons , respectively , and call plays with the directional pad . The left trigger modifies an existing action , such as running into dives , slide @-@ tackles , and grabs , and the right trigger orients the camera towards the objective (either the disc or the goal , depending on the team in possession) . This camera control is designed for precision when diving for the disc or shooting on goal . A character in possession of the disc will show a trajectory line of their potential shot or pass , which is altered by player movement , breath , and physical contact . Players charge the disc by holding the shooting button , whereby the disc turns greener as the shot grows more powerful . A fully charged shot called a Deathrow will incapacitate any player it hits , while overcharged shots electrify and stun the carrier .

Before each game and single @-@ player Conquest , players choose between Sports and Action camera views . Action view is a trailing third @-@ person shot similar to looking over the player @-@ character 's shoulder , while Sports view is a spectator perspective similar that of a televised basketball game . Enclosed arenas are inaccessible when using Sports view . The camera view cannot be changed once single @-@ player begins , so Conquest mode players in Sports view will not see the arenas they unlock . The Action view camera swings wildly and can be pulled back slightly in the menus .

= = = Campaign = = =

The in @-@ game story of Blitz begins in 2197 as a Los Angeles gang sport used to find recruits . Over 20 years later , the illegal sport is picked up for broadcast by the Prime Network , who forms the Blitz Disc Association (BDA) and plans for the first Blitz competition with exhibition games and prize money . Through exhibition games and prize money , 13 teams of humans with various competitive augmentations are chosen to compete .

Conquest , the single @-@ player tournament career mode , pits the player 's team against the ranked hierarchy en route to the championship . Up to three additional human players can join in the single @-@ player . Players initially choose between four teams , though 13 total are unlockable . Teams begin with four players with no alternates for substitution , and fight their way from fourth place in the Rookie Division to first place against each team in between . Players can continue to take challenges within the division before irrevocably moving on to the next division .

The player 's team receives randomized , team @-@ specific textual messages in between games , including offers for free agent offers , training sessions , drugs , bets on the player 's performance , and events including accidental gifts from the player 's manager , threats from the team 's owner ,

and organized crime extortions . Players can buy character attribute increases with their credits . Single @-@ player progress unlocks concept art and game assets external to the game , as well as new teams , players , and arenas . Each of the unlockable 13 teams has six unlockable players (for a total of 10 players on each) , and five additional legacy teams are limited to four players apiece . Multi @-@ disc and " Extreme " difficulty gameplay options are also unlockable .

= = Development = =

Deathrow was developed by Southend Interactive and produced by Ubisoft Entertainment . Five friends opened Southend in Malmö , Sweden in 1998 to fulfill their childhood ambitions to make video games . Southend began Deathrow development in May 1999 and expected the game to be an online PC video game tentatively titled Blitz Disc Arena . The idea for the sports game descended from a combination of Speedball 2 , the Quake and Unreal series , and Tekken . Southend 's nine @-@ person team received Xbox development kits in June 2000 and decided to move the game to console in early 2001 . According to Southend animator Rodrigo Cespedes in a 2002 TeamXbox interview , " Xbox was the only console that would allow [them] to produce the game as it was originally envisioned " , adding that Microsoft and Ubisoft encouraged the mature direction with emphasis on blood , brutality , and profanity . Thus they began to port the game to the console for its feature capabilities , including vertex and pixel shaders for bump mapped environmental textures and character animations , specular lighting , and bumped reflection mapping .

The game was developed on an in @-@ house 3D game engine under construction for multiple years . Each character is made of over 7000 polygons and 55 bones , making for players with facial expressions , over 800 animations , and a capacity to blink . Character faces can additionally express emotions like happiness or anger , and feelings of pain . The move to Xbox led to greater variation in the team personalities . The artists drew many options for each team and the developers chose from the lot . Deathrow was designed for the Action camera view , but Sports view was introduced to expand the game 's appeal .

Deathrow was displayed at Ubisoft 's E3 2002 booth , and was released on 18 October 2002 in Europe , and on 22 October 2002 in the United States as an Xbox exclusive . The game did not include Xbox Live online multiplayer for want of development time . At the time of release , Southend had no plans to release downloadable content , though they implemented a method to do so . The game was Southend 's first full release .

= = Reception = =

Deathrow received " generally favorable " reviews , according to video game review aggregator Metacritic . IGN and TeamXbox both named Deathrow an Editor 's Choice . The game won TeamXbox 's 2002 Breakthrough Game of the Year award and IGN 's 2002 Best Xbox Game Nobody Played . It was also runner @-@ up for their Xbox action game of the year . IGN felt that of the year 's praiseworthy yet unappreciated games , Deathrow alone " truly blew [them] away " . Critics praised the game 's fast , chaotic action and use of surround sound . The reviewers bemoaned its high difficulty curve , generic soundtrack , and lack of online multiplayer . Some reviewers thought the game used profanity excessively , while others considered it a highlight .

David Hodgson of Electronic Gaming Monthly (EGM) found Deathrow 's European origins apparent as " awkward , over @-@ the @-@ top expletives in obnoxious American accents " were paired with rugby . Hodgson said that Deathrow struggled to show grittiness in a very shiny environment . He added that the game suffered from immoderate violence , frustrating fighting sequences , lack of online play , and " steep learning curve " . Hodgson compared the core mechanics to a " mini @-@ game masquerading as sports entertainment " . William Racer of the Official Xbox Magazine (OXM) praised the fast @-@ paced nature of the game and its eye for detail , and complained about the camera angles and difficulty . He placed the game in a lineage of invented sports from a dystopian future and found the game more entertaining than the rest . Racer

also found the music generic , and the voice acting good . Eric Bush of TeamXbox complimented the computer opponents 's artificial intelligence and said that they put up a challenge . GameSpy 's Osborne appreciated the game 's small details like the streak trailing the disc through the air . IGN 's Kaiser Hwang called the arena lighting effects , bump mapping , and textures the best since Halo : Combat Evolved . 1UP.com , OXM 's Racer , and IGN 's Douglass Perry and David Clayman recommended Deathrow as a party game , with the IGN staff specifically recommending the game with System Link .

GameSpot 's Greg Kasavin spoke highly of the tight controls and accessible gameplay in spite of a larger learning curve . IGN 's Goldstein described the controls as " relatively simple " and easy to understand within a single game , and Scott Osborne of GameSpy found the controls awkward but easily learned . In comparison , Charles Herold of The New York Times and a friend could not figure out Blitz 's rules for 20 minutes , feeling " too macho " to do the tutorial . Pittsburgh Post @-@ Gazette 's Jonathan Silver thought the gameplay was too frenzied , like " NHL Hitz on steroids " . Hilary Goldstein of IGN 's only complaint about the controls was the camera 's looseness . She noted the game 's " serious attitude " and " very gritty view of sports " , and similar to hockey , felt that the non @-@ disc action was " one of the nicest aspects " of the game . She praised the graphics and environments , surround sound , the array of unlockables , the single @-@ player , and its replay value , but bemoaned the lack of options to change between camera views , the Action view in general , and the indistinguishability between players . Goldstein regarded Deathrow 's profanity as the " best use of endless cursing in a game ... ever " . Herold of The New York Times noted violence 's centrality to the game and figured that the game 's age restrictions were likely due to the " savage profanities " , which he felt gave the game personality unlike other sports video games . He added that the game 's frantic speed kept him too consumed to curse at the game himself . The Atlanta Journal @-@ Constitution 's Troy Oxford also connected the profanity to the game 's " ' M ' rating " .

Edge referred to Deathrow as a substance @-@ less and " contrived clone " of the 1990 Speedball 2 , which used a ball instead of a disc . David Hodgson of EGM similarly praised the 1990 title in comparison . William Racer of OXM did not mind the two games ' similarities and added that " you might as well copy from the best " . While Kasavin of GameSpot thought the theme was tired , The Atlanta Journal @-@ Constitution 's Oxford wrote that the game felt " fresh " . Reflecting on the release year , IGN director Peer Schneider said that games like Deathrow showed the games industry 's ability to make new , high @-@ caliber franchises . Two IGN staffers predicted the game to be a sleeper hit : one noted the sparse press compared to the game 's quality , and the other explained that Ubisoft was busy promoting bigger titles such as Tom Clancy 's Splinter Cell , Dragon 's Lair 3D , and Rayman .

= = = Legacy = = =

In 2006 , TeamXbox 's Matthew Fisher determined that the game aged well . In 2012 , Complex Gaming listed Deathrow 13th on its 15 Most Violent Sports Video Games . Scottish developer Ludometrics described their 2014 video game Bodycheck as a spiritual successor to Deathrow , Speedball 2 , and Skateball , though the game is set in the medieval past instead of the ultraviolent future .

Around the time of launch , Southend was interested in producing a sequel . In March 2004 , IGN listed Deathrow 2 as one of its five desired Xbox sequels , specifically for Xbox Live online play support . IGN placed its chances at a 90 % likelihood . IGN reported a month later that despite interest from Southend , Ubisoft would be unlikely to release a forthcoming Deathrow sequel due to the original 's low revenue . Southend separated from its Swedish IT consulting firm parent company , Tacet Holding AB , and became a fully independent company in April 2013 . With it , Southend CEO Fredrik Brönjemark announced that " now is the right time for Southend to manage its own destiny and to invest in its own products " , of which Deathrow and ilomilo were examples . Southend closed in June 2013 when its full 24 @-@ person staff was hired into Ubisoft Massive , another Swedish developer .

