Halo : Combat Evolved Anniversary

Halo : Combat Evolved Anniversary is a first @-@ person shooter video game set in the Halo universe and is an enhanced remake of Halo : Combat Evolved . Microsoft announced the game alongside Halo 4 at the 2011 Electronic Entertainment Expo . The game was released on November 15 , 2011 ? the 10th anniversary of the original title 's launch ? for the Xbox 360 game console , and rereleased as part of Halo : The Master Chief Collection for the Xbox One on November 11 , 2014 .
 Halo : Combat Evolved Anniversary was developed as a partnership between development studios 343 Industries , Saber Interactive , and Certain Affinity . 343 Industries , the Halo series ' franchise overseers , approached Saber Interactive to develop a remake of the original Halo in time for its tenth anniversary . After considering whether to remake the game entirely or to adapt and add features to the existing PC version , Saber decided to use its game engine for reproducing the original 's appearance and the original Halo 's engine for gameplay . A development tool for toggling between the old and new visuals became a game feature . Anniversary 's enhancements include a complete high @-@ definition visual overhaul , support for cooperative and multiplayer gameplay via the Xbox Live online service , new and remastered sound effects and music , and extras such as achievements and hidden in @-@ game collectibles . The game is the first in the series to include Kinect support .
 Critical reception to Anniversary was generally positive . The updated graphics , sounds , and ability to toggle between the remastered and original visuals were praised . Complaints included technical glitches , faults with the original game 's level design , and the multiplayer mode 's implementation .

Gameplay

 Halo : Combat Evolved Anniversary and the original , Halo : Combat Evolved , are identical in gameplay and plot . The game is a first @-@ person shooter with portions of vehicular combat taking place from a third @-@ person perspective . The plot follows the player character and protagonist Master Chief , a supersoldier , as he fights the alien Covenant on the mysterious ancient ringworld Halo . Players are equipped with a recharging energy shield that absorbs damage ; players also have health that can only be replenished by health packs scattered across the game 's levels . A variety of human and alien weapons and vehicles can be used .
 Players can switch between the " classic " graphics of the original game and new graphics developed for the remake by pressing the Back button on the controller . The classic and new graphics are presented in high @-@ definition , 16 : 9 widescreen compared to the original game 's 480i resolution and 4 : 3 aspect ratio . The remastered graphics are also available in stereoscopic 3D for compatible televisions .
 Additions to the gameplay include Xbox Live achievements , online cooperative gameplay , and hidden content : video terminals that provide additional plot information , and collectible skulls that modify gameplay when activated . Support for Xbox Kinect includes voice commands for video navigation , in @-@ combat directives , and environment @-@ scanning , which adds on @-@ screen items to an encyclopedia called the Library .
 The original Combat Evolved did not support online multiplayer , but players could play multiplayer locally via split @-@ screen or System Link LAN . Anniversary adds revamped multiplayer and two @-@ player co @-@ op campaign support available both online via Xbox Live and offline locally . The game 's multiplayer mode uses Halo : Reach 's engine and features seven remakes of Combat Evolved and Halo 2 maps . Anniversary also includes a new map based on Halo 's eponymous campaign level for Firefight , a wave @-@ based survival multiplayer game type in which players and their allies fight enemy groups of scaling difficulty . Anniversary introduced artificially intelligent Firefight allies to the series .

Plot

 After fleeing the Covenant 's destruction of the human world Reach , the human ship Pillar of

Autumn makes a random slipspace jump to avoid leading the Covenant to Earth . Arriving in uncharted space , the crew of the Autumn discover a massive ringworld orbiting a gas giant . When the Covenant attack , Autumn 's captain , Jacob Keyes , entrusts the ship 's AI , Cortana ? and her knowledge of defense deployments and the location of Earth ? to the supersoldier Master Chief for safekeeping . Master Chief fights off Covenant boarding parties and leaves the Autumn via a lifeboat to the surface of the ringworld while Keyes lands the Autumn on the ring .

 On the ringworld , the Chief rallies human survivors and leads a boarding party to rescue Keyes from the Covenant 's clutches . Keyes reveals that the Covenant call the ring " Halo " , and they believe it is some sort of weapon . The Chief is tasked with finding Halo 's control room before the Covenant does . Once Cortana is inserted into the control room , she becomes alarmed and stays behind while she sends Master Chief to find Keyes . While searching for the captain , Master Chief encounters the Flood , a parasitic organism that infects sentient life . The release prompts Halo 's caretaker , the AI 343 Guilty Spark , to enlist the Chief 's help in activating Halo 's defenses . The Chief 's activation of the ring from the Control Room is stopped by Cortana , who reveals that Halo 's defenses do not kill Flood , but rather their food in an effort to starve them ? meaning that activating the ring would wipe out all sentient life in the galaxy . To stop the Flood from spreading and Spark from activating the ring , Cortana devises a plan to detonate the crashed Autumn 's engines and destroy Halo . Fighting through Flood , Covenant , and Guilty Spark 's robotic Sentinels , the Chief manually destabilizes the Autumn 's reactors and he and Cortana narrowly escape the destruction of the ring via a fighter .

 = = Development = =

 = = = Overview = = =

 After Microsoft acquired Bungie in 2000 , Bungie developed the original Halo : Combat Evolved as a 2001 launch title for the Xbox . Bungie and Microsoft split in 2007 , but the rights to Halo remained with the latter , which formed an internal division to oversee Halo franchise development . 343 Industries , the internal division , approached Saber Interactive with a proposal to remake Combat Evolved for the game 's tenth anniversary . Saber 's Chief Operating Officer Andrey Iones recalled that the offer was " an opportunity we [could not] miss " , as Saber had never before worked on a major game franchise and many team members were fans of Halo . Saber developed concept art to form visual ideas for the remake and then flew to Seattle , Washington , to meet with 343 Industries .

 343 Industries wanted a complete remake of the original game by the tenth anniversary of Halo 's release , giving Saber just over a year to complete the project . The gameplay was to remain unchanged ; while the original game had imbalanced elements , 343 Industries decided to preserve the game experience players remembered while introducing young fans to the game for perhaps the first time . The visuals , meanwhile , would be updated along with added features like campaign skulls . Iones recalled that experimentation with the game was limited ? redoing keyframed character animations was off @-@ limits because redoing them could introduce gameplay bugs , and design choices like game balance had already been determined . Likewise , porting the PC version of the game back to the Xbox to add features would have constrained the amount of visual improvements Saber could make , as well as require significant time training artists to use the same production pipelines that were used for Combat Evolved . Saber decided to use the original engine for the gameplay and its own for the visuals , despite the compatibility problems this solution presented . Development began under the codename Spark . The game was completed and released to manufacturing (" going gold ") on October 15 , 2011 .

 = = = Design = = =

 To solve the issues of transferring information from the original game 's engine to the Saber engine

, the developers looked at how they used the third @-@ party Havok physics engine to handle object positioning , velocities , and collisions . Saber created a proxy of every object in the Halo engine to transfer into the Saber engine , meaning that the game 's original programming remained unchanged . The game 's ability to alternate between the legacy and remastered graphics engines in the campaign was made possible by the rendering engine developed by Saber Interactive . The technology allowed the developers to update Halo : Combat Evolved 's visuals and preserve the original gameplay . Originally , players would have chosen which graphical presentation to play from the main menu . The in @-@ game toggle feature quickly became a talking point among the developers , who pushed for it to be available to other players . Since the ability to switch between classic version and remastered version was provided to players , both engines work simultaneously to retain the spontaneity of game . This approach caused several problems , including collision issues ? because objects and environments in the original game were of a lower resolution with fewer polygons , higher @-@ resolution visuals in the Saber engine could deviate from the original significantly . As the original game 's geometry was used as the basis for collisions , in some cases characters could appear to walk through or above terrain , weapons could drop through the ground , and bullets would appear to be deflected by nothing . The sheer number of these issues , combined with the desire to keep the original gameplay intact , forced Saber to use a variety of approaches to fix the problems , including making tools for artists to visualize height differences and creating intermediate geometry . In some cases , the artists developed other ways of keeping to the same collision data while updating the visuals by changing the actual object ? turning a blocky , low @-@ polygon rock into an angular Forerunner structure avoided the collision issues .

Where possible , the developers drew on or adapted assets from Halo 3 and Reach . For elements that had no analogues , Microsoft sent art director Ben Cammarano to Saber 's offices in St. Petersburg to oversee the redesign of the game 's visuals . Cammarano established four tenets of Halo ? what Iones termed " heroic vistas , iconic imagery and characters , clean and vibrant aesthetics , and visceral action " ? to guide Saber 's artists . Since the original assets already existed , concept artists took screenshots from the original game and painted over new looks to show how environmental effects , improved lighting , and new textures could change the look of the levels . Some of Saber 's visual designs were considered too much of a departure from the original game ? while the artists had changed the position of the Halo ringworld and nearby planets to make a more pleasing skybox , Microsoft insisted maintaining continuity with the universe was more important and vetoed the changes . Vocal fans pointed out other inconsistencies with the game 's visuals in prerelease trailers and pictures that Saber ultimately changed . Iones pointed to the floor designs of the Forerunner structures , the assault rifle , and the look of the Chief as places fans had an impact . The Chief 's armor was redesigned from scratch instead of porting existing assets .

Saber doubted that it would be able to convert Combat Evolved 's split @-@ screen cooperative play to facilitate online play . Greg Hermann , a 343 Industries technical lead who had experience with Bungie technology , assisted Saber in development of a networking solution that would allow online co @-@ op . Since the original game would behave identically when given the same scenario and inputs , only the player inputs needed to be synchronized between players ' Xbox consoles .

Because of its previous contributions to the series ? Halo 2 's Blastacular and Halo : Reach 's Defiant map pack ? Certain Affinity was approached by 343 Industries to streamline the multiplayer maps to take Halo : Reach 's gameplay options into account . The multiplayer is powered by the Halo : Reach engine . 343 Industries director Frank O 'Connor said that the decision to use Reach for the multiplayer was controversial , even within the studio . " In Halo 's day , there was never a proper networking mode , " O 'Connor explained . " We couldn 't roll back the technology ; [recreating Halo 's local area network multiplayer] just wouldn 't have worked with things like latency and all other modern Xbox Live @-@ related problems . So we would have had to build it from scratch , and it still wouldn 't have been the experience [players] remember . " An additional consideration O 'Connor mentioned was that producing a full replication of Combat Evolved 's multiplayer would have divided the Halo player base and interrupted Reach 's lifespan . In choosing which seven Halo maps to remake , 343 Industries set a number of rules ? the map could not have been previously remade for a 360 @-@ era Halo title , it had to work with Reach 's gameplay

sandbox , and it had to be a fan favorite . The company retained the same art director between the campaign and multiplayer elements of Anniversary to make sure the two halves of the game looked visually cohesive .

Since 343 Industries developed Halo 4 concurrently with the anniversary edition , it decided to use Halo : Combat Evolved Anniversary to link the original trilogy with the upcoming Reclaimer trilogy by means of in @-@ game collectibles similar to Halo 3 's terminals , Halo 3 : ODST 's audio logs , and Halo : Reach 's data pads . While the other games ' collectibles were aimed at and enjoyed by serious Halo fiction fans , 343 Industries wanted to make Anniversary 's terminals higher @-@ budget , more impressive , and accessible to all players .

Though Iones described Anniversary 's one @-@ year development cycle as a " very smooth ride " , some production issues that were not discovered until late in development contributed to bugs and other problems . Saber relied on a partially automated tool to render the game 's cinematics , but did not do a thorough vetting of the results until after the game had reached the alpha stage of its release cycle . As a result , the developers realized that their addition of motion capture animation and lip @-@ syncing had caused serious audio syncing issues and animation bugs .

= = = Audio = = =

The developers refreshed Combat Evolved 's music and sound effects along with its visuals . While players can toggle the original music from Halo : Combat Evolved , the soundtrack was also rerecorded in partnership with Pyramind Studios , using the 75 @-@ piece Skywalker Symphony Orchestra and the Chanticleer vocal ensemble . Because there were no MIDI recordings of the original game 's music , Paul Lipson , Lennie Moore , Tom Salta , and Brian Trifon transcribed each piece of music .

The soundtrack was released digitally and in two physical formats : a two @-@ disc CD edition and a vinyl record edition , the latter of which was limited to 2000 units . The vinyl edition contains 16 tracks on two sides and comes with a code to download the rest of the Anniversary soundtrack digitally . The compact disc edition contains thirty @-@ nine tracks and was released on November 15 , 2011 .

= = Release = =

Halo : Combat Evolved Anniversary was announced to the public with a trailer on June 6 , 2011 , at Microsoft 's annual E3 global media briefing , which closed with the teaser trailer for Halo 4 . Bonuses for preordering the game included a Master Chief Xbox 360 avatar costume and an exclusive Grunt Funeral skull , which toggles whether enemy Grunts explode upon death . During the Halo Universe panel at the 2011 San Diego Comic @-@ Con , a short trailer showcasing the animation used in the terminals with a narration by 343 Guilty Spark was shown to the fans . Microsoft launched the Halo Living Monument , consisting of a live @-@ action short and a website , to celebrate the launch of Combat Evolved Anniversary .

Thirteen retail Microsoft Stores hosted launch events for Anniversary 's November 15 , 2011 , midnight release ; festivities included sixteen @-@ player multiplayer matches , limited @-@ edition giveaways , and appearances by the game developers . In the United Kingdom , Microsoft and the British video game retailer GAME held two prerelease events with the full version of the game and prizes . In another British promotion , those who purchased a special Halo @-@ themed Pizza Hut pizza during a two @-@ week promotional period surrounding the release date received two days of Xbox Live premium membership . VideoGamer.com 's staff found the pizza to be delicious , but its connection to the Halo franchise tenuous . Microsoft and Pizza Hut would run a similar promotion the next year for Halo 4 's release .

As stated by tracking firm Chart @-@ Track , Anniversary was the sixth best @-@ selling game of the week across all platforms in the UK ; it attained the fifteenth spot in Japan according to Media Create , while according to Amazon orders , it was the second best @-@ selling game for the 360 platform in the same period . It was the third best @-@ selling Xbox 360 game in North America

during its first week .
  The game was rereleased on the Xbox One as part of Halo : The Master Chief Collection on November 11 , 2014 .

  = = Reception = =

  Halo : Combat Evolved Anniversary received generally positive reviews . On aggregate review website Metacritic , the game has a weighted score of 82 out of 100 , based on 73 reviews from critics . On GameRankings , the game has an overall score of 81 @.@ 92 % based on reviews from 53 critics . The staff of Official Xbox Magazine praised the developers for preserving the original gameplay , avoiding " revisionist horrors " and Star Wars rerelease moments . Brandon Justice of Electronic Gaming Monthly wrote for fans of the series , " [Anniversary] is one of the best pieces of fan service our industry has ever produced , and you need to go buy it . "
  Reviewers disagreed on how the core gameplay of Combat Evolved , unaltered in Anniversary , had aged over ten years . Writing for GameSpot , editor Chris Watters opined that " the fundamental mechanics of the game have ... endured well " , with responsive controls and challenging enemies . PALGN writer Adam Guetti agreed , praising " rock solid " controls and tight gameplay , while Mike Wilcox of The Sydney Morning Herald argued the anniversary edition " [proves] a game with a winning formula doesn 't wither with age " . IGN 's Steven Hopper felt that the level design was dated , the repetitious environments making it easy for players to lose their bearings , and that vehicles handled poorly . Giant Bomb 's Brad Shoemaker wrote that while the best aspects of the game remained , other aspects ? such as the level design and fighting the Flood ? were no less frustrating after ten years ; Digital Spy 's Matthew Reynolds echoed the sentiment , praising the game for presenting situations unsurpassed in later titles while faulting irregular checkpoints with increasing frustration .
  The remastered visuals were positively received ; reviewers such as The Inquirer 's Chris Martin and The Escapist 's Russ Pitts singled out the graphics @-@ switch button for praise . The Guardian 's Steve Boxer called the feature " utterly fascinating ? a bit like ... archaeology on your console " , and said that the visual overhaul improved areas where the original game engine was weak , such as rendering outdoor environments . While praising most of the game 's refinements , Watters singled out the Flood as enemies he thought the original game envisioned better , saying " the simplicity of the classic look feels more sinister and alien " . Hamza Aziz of Destructoid appreciated the visual updates , but not some of the resulting audio ? animation syncing issues .
  Critics had split opinions on Anniversary 's additional features . The stereoscopic 3D effect was alternatively praised and dismissed : Matt Miller of Game Informer wrote that the feature " doesn 't add anything to the experience " , while Aziz described the feature as " fantastic " , considering its use in Anniversary to be more subtle and pleasing than in other games . Aziz also applauded the narrative terminals , although he condemned the Kinect voice command support for being slower in combat than pressing buttons . Ben Kuchera of Ars Technica enjoyed the improvements of the Halo maps in Anniversary 's multiplayer mode , but criticized the inability to play said mode via four @-@ person local split screen as in the original game . Reynolds agreed with 343 Industries 's choice to use Reach for Anniversary 's multiplayer mode , writing that the map pack offered " a smart way of reintroducing players back into the game " , as well as commending Halo 's combat for offering an alternative to contemporary military shooters .