

= Manhunt (video game) =

Manhunt is a stealth @-@ based survival horror video game developed by Rockstar North and published by Rockstar Games . It was originally released for the PlayStation 2 on November 18 , 2003 , and for Microsoft Windows and Xbox on April 20 , 2004 . The game was also re @-@ released through the PlayStation Network for the PlayStation 3 and PlayStation 4 in 2013 and 2016 , respectively . Players control James Earl Cash (voiced by Stephen Wilfong) , a death row prisoner forced to participate in a series of snuff films for an underground director , former film producer Lionel Starkweather (Brian Cox) .

The game received positive reviews by critics , with particular praise directed at its dark tone and violent nature . The game also received great controversy , due to the level of graphic violence in the game . It was banned in several countries , and implicated in a murder by the UK media , although this implication was later rejected by the police and courts . The game won several accolades , and spawned the sequel Manhunt 2 in 2007 . As of March 2008 , the series has collectively sold 1 @.@ 7 million copies .

= = Gameplay = =

Manhunt is a stealth @-@ based psychological horror game played from a third @-@ person perspective . The game consists of twenty levels , called " scenes " , as well as four unlockable bonus scenes . Players survive the scenes by dispatching enemy gang members , occasionally with firearms , but primarily by stealthily executing them . At the end of each scene , players are graded based on their performance , and awarded one to five stars . Unlockable content becomes available only when the player achieves three or more stars on a certain number of levels . On normal difficulty (called " Fetish ") , players can earn only four stars ; one is awarded for completing the scene under a certain amount of time , and one to three stars are awarded based on the brutality of the executions carried out during the scene . On hard difficulty (called " Hardcore ") , players are graded out of five stars ; one for speed , one to three for brutality and one for simply completing the scene . To gain the maximum number of stars , a set number of brutal executions must be carried out over the course of each scene ; face @-@ to @-@ face fighting does not award stars .

In order to carry out executions , players must approach a hunter from behind , undetected . To facilitate this , each scene is full of " dark spots " (shadows where the player can hide) . Enemies cannot see into the shadows (unless they see the player actually entering the area) . A standard technique in the game is to hide in the shadows and tap a wall to attract the attention of a nearby hunter . When the hunter has examined the area and is moving away , players can emerge from the shadows behind them , and execute them . The game has three levels of execution , with each level progressively more violent and graphic than the last : " hasty " executions are quick and not very bloody , " violent " are considerably more gory , and " gruesome " are over @-@ the @-@ top blood @-@ soaked murders . Players are entirely in control of which level they use ; once players have locked onto an enemy , the lock @-@ on reticule changes color over time to indicate the three levels : white , yellow and red .

Over the course of the game , players can use a wide variety of weapons , including plastic bags , baseball bats , crowbars and a variety of bladed items . Later in the game , firearms become available (which cannot be used for executions) . Should players take damage , their health depletes ; health can be restored through the use of painkillers , which are available throughout each scene . Players also have a stamina meter which depletes as they sprint , but automatically replenishes when remaining stationary . Manhunt also makes use of the PlayStation 2 's optional USB Microphone and the Xbox Live microphone feature on the Xbox in their respective versions of the game . When such a device is connected , players can use the sound of their own voice to distract in @-@ game enemies . This adds an extra element to the stealth aspect of the game , as players must refrain from making noises such as coughing as these sounds too can attract the attention of any nearby hunters .

= = Plot = =

In 2003 in Carcer City , the story opens with a news anchor (Kate Miller) reporting on James Earl Cash (Stephen Wilfong) , a death row prisoner recently executed by a lethal injection . In reality however , Cash awakens to hear a voice coming from an earpiece , revealing his lethal injection was only a sedative . The voice , who refers to himself as " The Director " , promises Cash his freedom , but only if Cash follows his instructions . He must move through an abandoned section of the city being patrolled by a gang called " The Hoods " , murdering them as he goes , all being filmed by CCTV . Cash successfully dispatches the Hoods , but despite the Director 's promise of freedom , he is beaten and thrown into the back of a van by a group of private security experts called " The Cerberus " .

Cash is then told by the Director that he reneged on their original deal and that he has more to do before the night is out . Cash is subsequently taken to various locations around the city and forced to face off against a series of increasingly dangerous gangs . First , he is pitted against a group of white nationalists and Neo @-@ Nazis in a scrap yard . Then , he faces a gang of a former military turned mercenaries called " The Wardogs " in an abandoned zoo . Here Cash has to save members of his own family who have been kidnapped by the Wardogs and are being used as bait to lure him out . Following this , he fights a gang of Satanic Latino occultists and perverted pedophiles called " The Innocentz " in a derelict shopping center .

During this conflict , Cash discovers that the Director had his family killed despite his promise to let them go . After watching their deaths on a TV set up for him by the Director , Cash vows revenge as the Director coldly tells him " I 'm all the family you need , now . " After again facing the Innocentz in a graveyard and abandoned factory , Cash is forced to face off , in what is supposed to be the final scene of the film , against a gang of schizophrenic , sociopaths called " The Smileys " who have taken over an insane asylum . Here , Cash unexpectedly survives , killing the Smileys (including their leader dressed in a rabbit costume) and escaping the asylum after killing several Cerberus . As such , the Director deploys the remaining Wardogs , led by the vicious Ramirez (Chris McKinney) , to hunt Cash down and kill him ; from this point on , the Director no longer communicates to Cash .

As Cash escapes the asylum and enters an abandoned apartment complex , he is caught by Ramirez and the Wardogs , who decide to play a little game of cat and mouse ; Cash manages to kill the gang and Ramirez before backup arrives . Upon fleeing the area , the journalist reporting on Cash suddenly arrives in her car and rescues him . She explains that the Director is actually Lionel Starkweather , a former film producer from Los Santos , who was popular in the 90s , but was forced to leave the industry due to a " scandal . " The reporter has been putting together evidence about Starkweather 's snuff movies for months , and now she has enough to expose him . First , however , she needs to retrieve some of this evidence from her apartment . Meanwhile , Starkweather orders the chief of the Carcer City Police Department , Gary Schaffer , to bring both Cash and the journalist to him , blackmailing him that he will expose his corruption to the Liberty City Supreme Court if he does not comply .

Protecting her from the police , Cash takes the journalist safely to her apartment , and from there , heads off to deal with Starkweather personally . Killing off several police officers , Cash then evades the SWAT teams , before making his way through a train yard , only to be cornered by more police and SWAT . They begin to beat him , and just as they 're about to execute him , they are suddenly ambushed and killed by the Cerberus , who recapture Cash and bring him to Starkweather 's mansion . There , they are about to kill Cash , but Piggsy - a mentally disturbed , chainsaw @-@ wielding psychopath , who wears a pig 's head as a mask and was normally kept chained up in Starkweather 's attic - breaks free . This distraction allows Cash to work his way through the garden and mansion , killing members of the Cerberus along the way . He finally reaches the upper levels of the mansion , where he and Piggsy stalk one another . Cash triumphs after luring Piggsy onto a grate that collapses under his weight . After using Piggsy 's chainsaw to hack his way through the last of the Cerberus , Cash finally confronts Starkweather in his office . Upon disemboweling him with the chainsaw , Starkweather pleads with Cash to spare him by saying " Cash , I made you ! " ,

but Cash thrusts the chainsaw into his face , killing and impaling him .

Later , the media and the police arrive at the mansion , with the journalist exposing Starkweather 's snuff ring and police complicity , and Schaffer is arrested for corruption and brought on trial in Liberty City for his actions . Cash , however , is nowhere to be found .

= = Development = =

Rockstar North began development of Manhunt in the mid @-@ early nineties , building the game with the RenderWare engine that had been used for the Grand Theft Auto titles . In September 2003 , GamesMaster published a preview of Manhunt , commenting " [Rockstar North has] scraped its imagination to further twist the way games are made in the future and delivers a chiseled , no @-@ apologies assault on gaming standards . [...] it possesses a warped subtlety that questions game reality ... It creates a barren , harsh , violent experience and then punctures it with something trippy and darkly comic ... "

Many more news outlets , including magazines and websites such as GameSpy , GameSpot and IGN , all previewed Manhunt from late 2003 to early 2004 , when the game was released on Microsoft Windows and Xbox . Rockstar also released exclusive merchandise , limited editions and pre @-@ order bonuses such as official soundtracks , a Piggy figure , and a handheld voice changer . During the release of the first game , a former Rockstar employee admitted that the game almost caused a mutiny in the company , saying that the team had " already weathered plenty of controversy over GTA III and Vice City ? we were no strangers to it ? but Manhunt felt different . With GTA , we always had the excuse that the gameplay was untethered ? you never had to hurt anybody that wasn 't a " bad guy " in one of the missions . You could play completely ethically if you wanted , and the game was parody anyway , so lighten up " . The game became available through the PlayStation Network for the PlayStation 3 on May 14 , 2013 , and for the PlayStation 4 on March 22 , 2016 .

= = Reception = =

Manhunt received generally favorable reviews . Metacritic calculated an average score of 76 / 100 based on 47 reviews for the PlayStation 2 version , 75 / 100 based on 28 reviews for the Windows version , and 74 / 100 based on 37 reviews for the Xbox version . As of March 26 , 2008 , the Manhunt series has sold 1 @.@ 7 million copies worldwide . At the 7th Annual Interactive Achievement Awards , the game was nominated for " Console Action Adventure Game of the Year " . In 2010 , it was included in 1001 Video Games You Must Play Before You Die , and listed at # 85 in IGN 's " Top 100 PlayStation 2 Games " .

The game 's dark nihilistic tone and violent nature was singled out by many critics as representing something unique in the world of video gaming . GameSpot concluded that , " like it or not , the game pushes the envelope of video game violence and shows you countless scenes of wholly uncensored , heavily stylized carnage . " Game Informer praised the game 's audacity and competent technical capabilities , stating " it 's a frightening premise that places gamers in a psychological impasse . The crimes that you commit are unspeakable , yet the gameplay that leads to these horrendous acts is so polished and fierce that it 's thrilling . " IGN complimented the game 's overall challenge , calling it a " solid , deep experience for seasoned gamers pining for some hardcore , challenging games . " Watchmojo listed the game at # 6 in its " Top 10 Rockstar Games " , calling it the publisher 's " most controversial game to date " while adding that " if you ? ve got the stomach for it , the tense stealth experience is really exhilarating from start to finish . "

The Chicago Tribune was especially complimentary of the game , arguing that it marked a significant moment in video gaming history ;

Manhunt is easily the most violent game ever made . It will likely be dismissed by many as a disgusting murder simulator with no reason to exist . But Manhunt also is the Clockwork Orange of video games , holding your eyes open so as to not miss a single splatter -- asking you , is this really what you enjoy watching ? Had Manhunt been poorly made , using the snuff film angle as a cheap

gimmick , the game would have been shameful and exploitative . What elevates it to a grotesque , chilling work of art is both presentation and game play . Manhunt is solid as a game ; it 's engaging to use stealth as you creep through the streets of this wicked city , using your smarts to avoid death , while dishing out much of your own . It 's Ubisoft 's Splinter Cell meets the cult Faces of Death videos [...] If Manhunt succeeds at retail , it will say more about America 's fascination with violence than any political discourse or social debate . That makes Manhunt the most important video game of the last five years .

The game received some criticism . Certain gameplay elements , such as the shooting mechanics , were called " frustrating " by Eurogamer , who claimed that " more than half the time the targeting reticule refuses to acknowledge an oncoming enemy until they 're virtually in front of you . " GameSpot concurred , noting that the " AI is much worse in the more action @-@ oriented levels . " 1UP.com said that one quickly became " tired of [the] violence [...] AI quirks [and] repetitive level design . "

= = Controversy = =

The controversy surrounding the game stems primarily from the graphic manner in which the player executes enemies . In 2007 , former Rockstar employee Jeff Williams revealed that even the game 's staff were somewhat uncomfortable about the level of violence ; " there was almost a mutiny at the company over that game " . Williams explained that the game " just made us all feel icky . It was all about the violence , and it was realistic violence . We all knew there was no way we could explain away that game . There was no way to rationalize it . We were crossing a line . "

The violence in the game drew the attention of U.S. Representative Joe Baca , who was the sponsor of a legislation to fine those who sell adult @-@ themed games to players younger than 17 . Baca said of Manhunt , " it 's telling kids how to kill someone , and it uses vicious , sadistic and cruel methods to kill . " The media was also drawn into the debate . For example , The Globe and Mail wrote " Manhunt is a venal disconnect for the genre . There 's no challenge , just assembly @-@ line , ritualistic slaughter . It 's less a video game and more a weapon of personal destruction . This is about stacking bodies . Perhaps the scariest fact of all : Manhunt is so user @-@ friendly that any sharp 12 @-@ year @-@ old could navigate through the entire game in one sitting . "

Toronto Star writer Ben Rayner , however , praised the relevance of the game , defending its violence and graphic nature as very much a product of its time , and condemning calls to have it banned ;

As entertainment and cultural artifact , Manhunt is totally disturbing . But so is the evening news , the " I 'll eat anything for money " lunacy of Fear Factor and the unfettered , misanthropic gunplay of Bad Boys II , so I will defend until my last breath Rockstar 's right to sell this stuff to me and anyone else who wants it . Do I think games such as these could have dire psychological consequences , particularly for young people ? As always , I remain agnostic on the matter . Who knows , really ? The debate will never be resolved . The American military obviously thinks there 's something there : The troubling new TV ad campaign for the U.S. reserves lures potential young soldiers with tales of adventure accompanied by blatant , video @-@ game @-@ styled animation . And , curiously , no one has complained about or tried to ban SOCOM : U.S. Navy SEALs , in which stealth and killing figure even more heavily than in Manhunt .

= = = The murder of Stefan Pakeerah = = =

The controversy surrounding Manhunt reached a peak on July 28 , 2004 , when the game was linked to the murder of 14 @-@ year @-@ old Stefan Pakeerah by his 17 @-@ year @-@ old friend Warren Leblanc in Leicestershire , England . Initial media reports claimed that police had found a copy of the game in Leblanc 's bedroom , which police had seized as evidence , and Giselle Pakeerah , the victim 's mother , stated " I think that I heard some of Warren 's friends say that he was obsessed by this game . To quote from the website that promotes it , it calls it a psychological experience , not a game , and it encourages brutal killing . If he was obsessed by it , it could well be

that the boundaries for him became quite hazy . " Stefan 's father , Patrick , added " they were playing a game called Manhunt . The way Warren committed the murder this is how the game is set out , killing people using weapons like hammers and knives . There is some connection between the game and what he has done . " Patrick continued " The object of Manhunt is not just to go out and kill people . It 's a point @-@ scoring game where you increase your score depending on how violent the killing is . That explains why Stefan 's murder was as horrific as it was . If these games influence kids to go out and kill , then we do not want them in the shops . " A spokesman for the Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers ' Association (ELSPA) responded to the accusations by stating " We sympathize enormously with the family and parents of Stefan Pakeerah . However , we reject any suggestion or association between the tragic events and the sale of the video game Manhunt . The game in question is classified 18 by the British Board of Film Classification and therefore should not be in the possession of a juvenile . Simply being in someone 's possession does not and should not lead to the conclusion that a game is responsible for these tragic events . "

During the subsequent media coverage , the game was removed from shelves by some vendors , including both UK and international branches of Game and Dixons . Rockstar responded to this move by stating , " we have always appreciated Dixons as a retail partner , and we fully respect their actions . We are naturally very surprised and disappointed that any retailer would choose to pull any game [...] We reject any suggestion or association between the tragic events and the sale of Manhunt . " Rockstar also reiterated that the game was intended for adults only ; " Rockstar Games is a leading publisher of interactive entertainment geared towards mature audiences , and [it] markets its games responsibly , targeting advertising and marketing only to adult consumers ages 18 and older . " As the media speculated that the game could be banned completely , there was a " significantly increased " demand for it both from retailers and on Internet auction sites . Giselle Pakeerah responded to this by saying " it doesn 't really come as surprise , they say no publicity is bad publicity . But I must say I 'm saddened and disappointed . The content of this game is contemptible . It 's a societal hazard and my concern is to get it off the shelves as there 's enough violence in society already . "

Shortly after the murder , later @-@ disbarred American attorney Jack Thompson , who has campaigned against violence in video games , claimed that he had written to Rockstar after the game was released , warning them that the nature of the game could inspire copycat killings ; " I wrote warning them that somebody was going to copycat the Manhunt game and kill somebody . We have had dozens of killings in the U.S. by children who had played these types of games . This is not an isolated incident . These types of games are basically murder simulators . There are people being killed over here almost on a daily basis " . Soon thereafter , the Pakeerah family hired Thompson with the aim of suing Sony and Rockstar for £ 50 million in a wrongful death claim .

However , on the same day that Thompson was hired , the police officially denied any link between the game and the murder , citing drug @-@ related robbery as the motive and revealing that the game had been found in Pakeerah 's bedroom , not Leblanc 's , as originally reported in the media . According to a spokesperson for Leicestershire Constabulary , " the video game was not found in Warren LeBlanc 's room , it was found in Stefan Pakeerah 's room . Leicestershire Constabulary stands by its response that police investigations did not uncover any connections to the video game , the motive for the incident was robbery . " The presiding judge also placed sole responsibility with Leblanc in his summing up , after sentencing him to life . The Pakeerachs ' case against Sony and Rockstar was dropped soon thereafter .

Three years later , in the build @-@ up to the release of Manhunt 2 , the controversy re @-@ ignited . Two days after announcing the game , which was set for release in July , Take @-@ Two Interactive (Rockstar 's parent company) issued a statement which read , in part : " We are aware that in direct contradiction to all available evidence , certain individuals continue to link the original Manhunt title to the Warren Leblanc case in 2004 . The transcript of the court case makes it quite clear what really happened . At sentencing the Judge , defense , prosecution and Leicester police all emphasized that Manhunt played no part in the case . " Later that day , however , Patrick and Giselle Pakeerah condemned the decision to release a sequel , and insisted that Manhunt was a

factor in their son 's murder . Upon the announcement of the sequel , Patrick stated " I 'm very disappointed . This is rubbing salt into the wounds in the month we will be marking the anniversary of Stefan 's death . I 'm very surprised they are doing this after all that has happened and all the publicity . " Giselle added " It is an insult to my son 's memory that they have announced this game in the month we will be marking this anniversary . These game moguls are making a lot of money out of games which are morally indecent . Why do they have to pump more violence into society ? " Leicester East MP Keith Vaz supported the Pakeerahs , claiming he was " astonished " that Rockstar were making a sequel ; " It is contempt for those who are trying very hard to ensure something is done to control the violent nature of these games . "

Several weeks later , Jack Thompson vowed to have Manhunt 2 banned , claiming that the police were incorrect in asserting the game had belonged to Pakeerah , and that Take @-@ Two were lying about the incident :

[I] have been asked by individuals in the United Kingdom to help stop the distribution of Take @-@ Two / Rockstar 's hyperviolent video game Manhunt 2 in that country due out this summer . The game will feature stealth murder and torture . The last version allowed suffocation of victims with plastic bags . The original Manhunt was responsible for the bludgeoning death of a British youth by his friend who obsessively played the game . The killer used a hammer just as in the game he played . Take @-@ Two / Rockstar , anticipating the firestorm of criticism with the release of the murder simulator sequel , is lying to the public on both sides of the pond in stating this week that the game had nothing to do with the murder .

His efforts to have Manhunt 2 banned were unsuccessful .

= = = Legal status = = =

In New Zealand , the game was banned on December 11 , 2003 , with possession deemed an offence . Bill Hastings , the Chief Censor , stated " it 's a game where the only thing you do is kill everybody you see [...] You have to at least acquiesce in these murders and possibly tolerate , or even move towards enjoying them , which is injurious to the public good . " The game was similarly " refused classification " in Australia on September 28 , 2004 by the Classification Review Board , despite having already been on sale for almost a year at the time with the classification of MA15 + (restricted to ages 15 and over) .

In Canada , following a meeting in Toronto on December 22 , 2003 between Hastings and officials from the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services , Manhunt became the first computer game in Ontario to be classified as a film and was restricted to adults on February 3 , 2004 . Apart from Ontario , however , Manhunt had little or no classification problems elsewhere in North America . The British Columbia Film Classification Office reviewed the game after the controversy in Ontario and deemed the Mature rating by the ESRB to be appropriate . In Germany , the Amtsgericht in Munich confiscated all versions of Manhunt on July 19 , 2004 for violation of § 131 StGB (" representation of violence ") . According to the court , the game portrays the killing of humans as fun . They also said it glorified vigilantism , which they considered harmful .