= Halo : Reach =

Halo : Reach is a first @-@ person shooter video game developed by Bungie and published by Microsoft Game Studios for the Xbox 360 home video game console . The sixth installment in the Halo series , Reach was released worldwide in September 2010 . The game takes place in the year 2552 , where humanity is locked in a war with the alien Covenant . Players control Noble Six , a member of an elite supersoldier squad , when the human world known as Reach falls under Covenant attack .

After releasing Halo 3 in 2007 , Bungie split into teams to develop two different games ? what would become Halo 3 : ODST and Reach . The developers decided to create a prequel to the original Halo game trilogy , freeing themselves from the obligation of addressing old story threads . As the game would take place on a human world doomed to be destroyed , they focused on making the environment a character unto itself . Longtime Halo composers Martin O 'Donnell and Michael Salvatori returned to compose Reach 's music , aiming for a more somber sound to match the story .

Reach was announced at the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2009 in Los Angeles , California , and the first in @-@ engine trailer was shown at the 2009 Spike Video Game Awards . Players who purchased ODST were eligible to participate in a Reach multiplayer beta in May 2010 ; the beta allowed Bungie to gain player feedback for fixing bugs and making gameplay tweaks before shipping the final version . Microsoft gave Reach its biggest game marketing budget yet and created award @-@ winning live @-@ action commercials , action figures , and interactive media to promote the game .

The game grossed US $ 200 million on its launch day , setting a new record for the franchise . Reach sold well in most territories , moving more than three million units its first month in North America . Critical reception was positive ; reviewers from publications such as GamePro , IGN , and Official Xbox Magazine called it the best Halo title yet . Critics generally praised the game 's graphics and sound , but the plot and characters were less positively received . Reach was Bungie 's final Halo game ; subsequent games have been overseen by Microsoft subsidiary 343 Industries .

= = Gameplay = =

Halo : Reach is a first @-@ person shooter in which players predominantly experience gameplay from a first @-@ person perspective ; the game perspective switches to third @-@ person when using certain weapons and vehicles . Gameplay is more similar to Halo : Combat Evolved than later games in the series . The player 's head @-@ up display displays and tracks a player 's current weapons , abilities , and health ; it also contains a compass and a " motion tracker " that registers moving allies , enemies , and vehicles in a certain radius of the player . The HUD changes when the player pilots aircraft and spacecraft .

In the game 's campaign , which can be played alone or cooperatively , players assume the role of Noble Six , a supersoldier engaged in combat with an alien collective known as the Covenant . The Covenant come in eight distinct varieties with different ranks and classes for each type ; for example , Elites are the leaders of a group , while Grunts are less intelligent and only dangerous in large groups . The player is equipped with a recharging energy shield that absorbs damage from weapons , fire and impacts . When the energy shield is depleted , the player loses health . When the player 's health reaches zero , the character dies and the game reloads from a saved checkpoint . Health is replenished using health packs scattered throughout Reach 's levels . The campaign 's encounters with enemies are typically large , open spaces with weapons caches , cover from enemy fire and strategic vantage points . New to the Halo series are dogfight sequences set in space .

Reach features updated versions of old weapons , plus new weapons fulfilling various combat roles . In Halo 3 , players can carry single @-@ use equipment power @-@ ups that offer temporary offensive or defensive advantages . This system of single @-@ use equipment is replaced in Reach by reusable and persistent armor abilities that remain with a character until they are replaced . The abilities are a jetpack ; active camouflage ; sprint ; hologram , which creates a facsimile of the player

running towards a target point ; drop shield , which creates a bubble that heals those inside and protects them from a limited amount of damage ; and armor lock , which immobilizes the player but grants invincibility for a brief period of time . When playing as Covenant Elites , players also have access to an evade armor ability .

Multiplayer

Reach supports player @-@ versus @-@ player multiplayer through splitscreen on a single Xbox 360 , local networks (System Link) , and the Xbox Live service . The game includes standard multiplayer modes such as " slayer " and capture the flag , as well as gametypes new to the franchise . In " headhunter " , players drop skulls upon death , which other players can pick up and deposit at special zones for points . When players die , all their accumulated skulls are dropped . " Stockpile " has teams race to collect neutral flags , holding them at capture points every minute for points . " Generator defense " pits three human supersoldiers , or Spartans , against three Covenant soldiers called Elites . The Elites ' objective is to destroy three generators , while the Spartans defend the installation . After every round the players switch roles . " Invasion " is a six versus six mode with three squads of two on each team . The gametype matches Spartans against Elites ; Elites vie for control of territories to disable a shield guarding a navigation core . Once the shield is disabled , they must transfer the core to a dropship ; the Spartans must prevent this . As the game progresses , new vehicles and areas of the map become open .

Alongside other multiplayer options is " firefight " , where players take on increasingly difficult waves of foes in a game of survival . Players can customize the firefight options , including the number and types of enemies . Firefight versus allows a player @-@ controlled Elite team to try to stop a Spartan team from scoring points . Game modes like generator defense are also playable in firefight .

Also included with Reach is " Forge " , a level editor . Players can edit the default multiplayer maps and a large empty map known as " Forge World " , adding or modifying spawn points , weapons and items . Objects may be phased into other objects , and can also be snapped to specific orientations . Other included features are the " theater " , where players can watch saved films of their games and take screenshots and video clips for posterity , and the file share , where players can upload their screenshots , films , custom maps , and gametypes for public viewing .

Plot

Setting and characters

Reach takes place in a futuristic science fiction setting ; the year is 2552 , shortly before the events of the video game Halo : Combat Evolved , and during the events of the novel Halo : The Fall of Reach . Humans , under the auspices of the United Nations Space Command (UNSC) , have been waging a long war against a collective of alien races known as the Covenant . By the events of Reach , almost all of humanity 's interstellar colonies have fallen . Reach itself is an Earthlike colony that serves as the UNSC 's main military hub . The colony is home to over 700 million civilians in addition to the military presence .

The game follows the actions of " Noble Team " , a UNSC special operations unit composed of elite supersoldiers known as Spartans . Players assume the role of a new addition to the team identified by the call sign Noble Six . Noble Team 's leader is Carter @-@ A259 , a no @-@ nonsense soldier . His second @-@ in @-@ command , Kat @-@ B320 , has a bionic arm ; together , Carter and Kat are the only remaining original members of Noble Team . The other current members include heavy weapons specialist Jorge @-@ 052 , assault specialist Emile @-@ A239 , and marksman Jun @-@ A266 .

Story

The game opens with the planet Reach in ruins , then flashes back to before the devastating invasion by the Covenant . Noble Team , dispatched to investigate why a communications relay has gone offline , discovers Covenant forces on Reach . Soon after , the team defends " Sword Base " , an Office of Naval Intelligence (ONI) installation , from a Covenant vessel . The team meets Catherine Halsey , a scientist and the mastermind behind the Spartan program and their MJOLNIR powered armor . Halsey informs Noble Team that the Covenant forces at the relay were searching for important information .

Jun and Six are dispatched on a covert mission to assess the Covenant 's strength and discover an invasion force gathering on the planet . The following morning , Noble Team assists UNSC forces in assaulting a Covenant ground base . When a massive Covenant super @-@ carrier joins the fight , Jorge and Six take part in a plan to destroy the super @-@ carrier using a makeshift bomb . The Spartans use starfighters to infiltrate a smaller Covenant corvette , prepare the bomb and set the corvette on a docking course with the carrier , but the bomb 's timer is damaged . Left with no choice , Jorge stays behind and sacrifices himself to destroy the super @-@ carrier . Moments later , huge numbers of Covenant ships arrive at Reach and begin a full @-@ scale invasion .

Six returns to the surface and travels to the city of New Alexandria . The Spartan aids the local military in fighting the Covenant and evacuating the city , reuniting with Noble Team along the way . They retreat to an underground bunker when the Covenant begin to bombard the city with plasma , but Kat is killed by a Covenant sniper before they reach it . Recalled to Sword Base , Noble Team is guided underground to an ancient artifact that Halsey believes is key to winning the war against the Covenant . Six , Carter and Emile are entrusted with transporting the artificial intelligence Cortana , and the information she carries concerning the artifact , to the UNSC ship Pillar of Autumn . Jun leaves the team to escort Halsey to another base .

En route to the Autumn 's dry dock , Carter is critically wounded . He rams his ship into a Covenant mobile assault platform , allowing Six and Emile to safely reach the shipyard . Emile uses a mass driver emplacement to defend the Autumn while Six fights through Covenant ground forces to get Cortana to the Autumn 's captain , Jacob Keyes . When Emile is slain by Elites , Six remains behind to control the gun , ensuring the Autumn 's escape . The Autumn flees from Reach and discovers a Halo ringworld , leading directly to the events of Halo : Combat Evolved .

The post @-@ credits scene puts the player in control of Six 's last stand against overwhelming Covenant forces . After sustaining heavy damage , Six drops his or her shattered helmet and is overwhelmed and killed . Decades later , Six 's helmet remains on the grassy plains of a now @-@ restored Reach . A narration by Halsey eulogizes Noble Team , who ultimately enabled humanity 's victory over the Covenant .

= = Development = =

Halo : Reach was announced on June 1 , 2009 , accompanied by a trailer at the Microsoft Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) press conference . A press release announced that an invitation to the open multiplayer beta of the game would appear in 2010 . Reach is Bungie 's last game development for the Halo series . Responsibility for developing future Halo games fell to Microsoft subsidiary 343 Industries .

A trailer released March 3 , 2010 , showcased the game 's multiplayer . Bungie revealed parts of the game 's campaign and Firefight at E3 2010 . The game reached the " zero bug release " milestone on June 23 , signifying a shift from content creation to troubleshooting ; buggy artificial intelligence or other elements would be removed rather than fixed at this point because of time constraints . Bungie released the complete list of achievements for the game on July 30 , including their titles , symbols , and requirements , and completed Reach between the end of July and beginning of August 2010 .

= = = Design = = =

After Halo 3 , development studio Bungie created an internal team to work on Peter Jackson 's planned Halo game , Halo Chronicles . Chronicles was eventually canceled and the team began working on a standalone expansion project ? Halo 3 : ODST ? while another team , led by creative director Marcus Lehto and design lead Christian Allen , worked on Reach . The team considered many different concepts and approaches to the game ; among the rejected ideas was a sequel to Halo 3 . The team eventually settled on a prequel to the first Halo game in brainstorming sessions . It would take place on the planet Reach , during a pivotal time in the war . " Reach , as a fictional planet , was just a great candidate [to] play around with . It 's such a rich world , with such a great fiction surrounding it , " said Lehto . " We were like : ' Okay , that 's it . We 've just got a lot of things we can do there so we can build an immense story with it . ' " No longer burdened with continuing the story threads of the Halo trilogy , Bungie used Reach to introduce new characters and settings . As Reach ends with the destruction of the titular planet , Bungie wanted to be sure players still felt a sense of accomplishment and success . " It is a challenge overall to ensure the player feels they 're doing the right thing all the way to the end , " said Lehto .

Lehto recalled that making a character @-@ driven story was a great challenge ? players would come to know more about them as they progressed through the campaign , but the Spartan characters also had to behave intelligently . " The Halo games consistently featured protagonists that were silent during gameplay sequences . Community manager Brian Jarrard pushed for allowing players to choose a female Noble Six and have the cinematics and dialogue change accordingly . The post @-@ credit game sequence was the subject of intense discussion ; some at Bungie wanted to remove it . Executive producer Joe Tung noted , " the ' survive ' component ... felt great to us . We definitely talked about different versions of how that was happening and different versions of ending [the game] cinematically , but I think the way that it ultimately ended up is just a really well @-@ paced , significant and emotionally impactful ending . "

The developers originally intended to port existing Halo 3 assets to Reach and update them . For Halo 3 , Bungie had been forced to shrink parts of the game to fit the game engine 's constraints , but wanted to make Reach look better than its predecessors . " The more we started looking into this , the more we found that realistically we could rebuild each asset from scratch with a huge increase in quality without significantly investing more time , " said Bungie 3D artist Scott Shepherd . Texture resolution and polygon counts for models increased ; the Reach assault rifle is constructed of more polygons than an entire Marine character from Halo 3 . The prequel concept also gave the art team an opportunity to redesign key enemies , weapons , and elements of the series . Artists found inspiration in the original concept art for Halo : Combat Evolved ; the shape for the redesigned Covenant Grunts came from a sketch that concept artist Shi Kai Wang created ten years earlier .

The developers redesigned the game engine , the software that handles rendering and much of gameplay . Bungie hired an expert in motion capture to develop more realistic character animations . Building a motion capture studio in @-@ house saved Bungie time as motion capture data could be applied to the game models the same day it was shot . The developers sought to increase replay value by focusing on improving artificial intelligence . Rather than scripting enemy encounters , they focused on a more open world or sandbox approach to battles .

= = = Audio = = =

Composing team Martin O 'Donnell and Michael Salvatori scored Reach . O 'Donnell wrote " somber , more visceral " music since the plot is character @-@ driven and focuses on a planet that is already known ? in the Halo fictional universe ? to have fallen . The first music he wrote for Reach was played for the game 's world premiere , and he used it as a starting piece to develop further themes . O 'Donnell began work on Reach while ODST , for which he also wrote the music , was still in production , but did not begin composing until August 2009 . Past Halo collaborators Salvatori , C. Paul Johnson , and Stan LePard assisted O 'Donnell . With Reach , he did not give them strictly divided responsibilities . " I decided this time to come up with some themes , tempos , keys , and other basic starting points for musical ideas , " explained O 'Donnell . " I shared these with all the other composers and just asked them to take off if they felt inspired by any of that material . " The

works @-@ in @-@ progress they came up with were either retouched by O 'Donnell or sent back to be finished by their composer .

In previous Halo games , sections of music overlap and change depending on player action . Reach 's system of interactive audio was much more complex , featuring the ability to combine up to seven layers of instrumentation compared to Combat Evolved 's two . Developers also expanded the sound effect system . Every interacting object in Reach produces two sounds for respective objects ; for example , a Warthog vehicle that hits an armored Covenant soldier produces a crunching metal noise based on the two colliding elements . The interaction between objects and terrain was demonstrated in an in @-@ game environment that O 'Donnell called " the stripey room " after the bands of alternating colors on the objects and environment .

= = = Multiplayer beta = = =

Reach 's multiplayer beta was open to owners of Halo 3 : ODST . More than three million copies of ODST were sold by November 2009 . Bungie estimated between two and three million players for the upcoming Reach beta , compared to the 800 @,@ 000 that participated in Halo 3 's trial . Development schedules forced Bungie to release a six @-@ week @-@ old beta , fraught with bugs and issues already addressed in newer builds . Though concerned that these issues might tarnish the game 's image , Jarrard noted that they had little choice but to ship it as it was and communicate with players concerning the fixes .

More than 2 @.@ 7 million players participated in the beta , which lasted from May 3 to 20 . The game was rolled out from an internal group of Bungie and Microsoft employees , with the total number of players in the thousands . When the beta went public , more than a million played the first day , causing back @-@ end servers to struggle to handle the traffic . While the engineering team had overestimated server load , bugs in server clusters caused game uploads to become backed up , slowing matchmaking until the underlying issues could be fixed . Jarrard noted that the 16 million total hours of play time and large @-@ scale rollout of the beta was vital to seeing how Reach would perform .

Bungie used the beta to fix mistakes , glitches , and balance issues within gameplay elements . " We needed our fans to provide feedback , " said Lehto , adding that having a large audience to " hammer " on the game allowed them to gather useful feedback to mold the finished product . The game automatically collected statistics such as upload and matchmaking speeds , as well as game preferences ; sorting out what Jarrard called " the more subjective anecdotal feedback " from emails , notes , and forums proved more difficult . The Reach beta generated over 360 @,@ 000 forum posts on Bungie 's community forums . Bungie created official threads for groups of issues to manage the high volume of feedback ; " We tried to give people a little bit more of a direct avenue to give that feedback and to make our lives easier . It was definitely a lot to assess and digest , " said Jarrard . Certain feedback from the players did not correlate with the statistical data obtained from the matches during the beta . Chris Carney , lead designer for the multiplayer mode , recalled vocal dissatisfaction with the pistol early in the beta ; by the end of the beta , the weapon was responsible for most of the kills coming from newly included weapons in the game . Bungie deployed special test matches to eliminate lurking variables , balance gameplay , and make other informed changes .

= = Release = =

Reach was released in three editions on September 14 , 2010 . The standard edition consisted of the game and its manual . The limited edition featured an artifact bag with story information , different packaging , and an exclusive set of in @-@ game Elite armor . The " legendary edition " contained all the materials from the limited edition , a different packaging , two hours of developer commentary on the game 's cutscenes , an in @-@ game Spartan armor effect , and a 10 @-@ pound (4 @.@ 5 kg) statue created by McFarlane Toys . North American players who purchased a first run copy of the game (in @-@ store near launch day or pre @-@ ordered) received an in @-@ game Spartan " recon " helmet customization ; players in other regions could earn it only by

pre @-@ ordering . Reach also came bundled with a limited edition Xbox 360 Slim that sports Halo @-@ themed sounds and finish and two controllers .

Bungie released a demo on May 24 , 2010 , featuring a single player level from the game 's story mode , a multiplayer competitive map , and a cooperative firefight mission . Microsoft later listed Reach as an Xbox Live Marketplace download on August 12 , 2010 , at a price of 99999 Microsoft Points (~ US $ 1250) . A spokesperson confirmed the download was for media review purposes , and that there were no plans to distribute the game to the public through Games on Demand . Four days later , hackers managed to access , download , and distribute the game online ; Microsoft stated they were actively investigating the matter . Halo 2 , Halo 3 , and ODST were similarly leaked ahead of their planned release .

= = = Marketing = = =

According to Jarrard , the team decided to have much more " grandiose " marketing for Reach than that of ODST . Microsoft gave Reach its largest game marketing budget at the time , surpassing the scale and $ 6 @.@ 5 million cost of Halo 3 's award @-@ winning marketing . Marketers focused their efforts on connecting with consumers via universal themes , rather than outdoing Halo 3 's push . Interpublic Group of Companies ' AgencyTwoFifteen handled strategy and video development for the marketing push , while AKQA developed interactive components . The agencies were involved with Halo 3 's marketing . The advertisers ' brief was simple : " Remember Reach . Focus on the heroes , not the victims . Expand our audience beyond Halo fanboys . "

The advertising campaign commenced in April 2010 with the live @-@ action short " Birth of a Spartan " . A series of online videos highlighting a day in the life of average Reach citizens before the Covenant invade , began on August 23 , followed by TV spots on August 29 . The series concluded in late August with another short , " Deliver Hope " . As part of the promotions , Microsoft created an interactive light sculpture ; users logged onto a website where they could direct a KUKA industrial robot to plot pinpricks of light ; over 54 @,@ 000 points created a monument to Noble Team that faded unless more points were plotted . Reach 's marketing won several industry distinctions , among them thirteen medals from the MI6 Game Marketing Conference Awards .

Several lines of tie @-@ in merchandise were launched . McFarlane , who had produced toys for Halo 3 , created a line of five @-@ inch action figures , while Square Enix 's Play Arts toy label created additional figures .

Reach was released Tuesday , September 14 in 25 countries . Tens of thousands of stores signed up for midnight launch events ; sponsored events took place in London , Oslo , Stockholm , and New York .

= = = Sales = = =

Reach made $ 200 million in first @-@ day sales , a record for the franchise . Its strong sales suggested to analysts that core titles in the holiday season could reverse sluggish video game sales in 2010 . In its first sixteen days the game sold $ 350 million worth of merchandise . Reach premiered at the top of Xbox 360 and multi @-@ platform charts in most territories . Figures from the NPD Group estimated that Reach sold 3 @.@ 3 million units in North America , making it the third game for its console generation (Xbox 360 , PS3 , Wii) to sell more than three million units during the first month of its release (alongside Halo 3 and Modern Warfare 2) . Halo : Reach became the third bestselling game of 2010 in North America , behind Call of Duty : Black Ops and Madden NFL 11 . It sold 4 @.@ 7 million units by September 2011 .

In the United Kingdom , Reach 's opening week was the fifth @-@ best launch in the territory , beating Halo 3 's debut by 20 @,@ 000 units and ODST 's by 200 @,@ 000 units . In its second week on the UK charts Reach was the second bestselling title , displaced by the racing game F1 2010 . Reach continued to hold the top place in North America . In Japan , the game debuted at first place with 44 @,@ 413 units , but fared poorly in the long @-@ term (as have other Halo games) . This showing was above ODST 's sales of 29 @,@ 734 in the comparable timeframe , but below

Halo 3 's 61 @,@ 143 . Reach dropped out of the top 20 best selling titles entirely its second week .

= = = Downloadable content = = =

 Reach supports additional downloadable content (DLC) . Bungie released the game 's first DLC , dubbed the " Noble Map Pack " , on November 30 , 2010 ; this map pack contains three maps , unique in that they are not based on Reach campaign levels . Microsoft partnered with Certain Affinity , which had worked on Halo 2 maps , to produce the second , " Defiant Map Pack " , made available for download on March 15 , 2011 .
 A " title update " was released by 343 Industries for Reach that modified game mechanics such as bullet spread and melee damage . The update also contained playlists for Halo : Combat Evolved Anniversary . Purchasers of anniversary edition received a voucher to download the game 's seven multiplayer maps directly into Reach , the map pack was also made available to purchase via the Xbox Live Marketplace .

= = Reception = =

 Halo : Reach received critical acclaim upon its release . On review @-@ aggregating web sites GameRankings and Metacritic , it holds averages of 91 @.@ 79 % and 91 / 100 , respectively . Critics such as 1UP.com 's Thierry Nguyen , the staff of Edge , GamePro 's Matt Cabral , and others considered Reach the best Halo title yet . Reviewers noted there were few major changes to the Halo formula ; IGN 's Erik Brudvig wrote that Reach was not " another rehash " , though franchise veterans would feel immediately at home with the game .
 Nguyen , Tom Hoggins of The Daily Telegraph , and others wrote that Reach took the best elements from previous games and combined them in Bungie 's final entry . Hoggins noted that this approach made Reach " a blistering , breathless crescendo to a decade 's worth of work " , but also that it was unlikely to convert non @-@ Halo fans . The Daily Mirror 's Kevin Lynch praised Bungie for introducing new gameplay mechanics like jetpacks without ruining the title 's learning curve or game balance .
 Brudvig praised the campaign for avoiding the " repetitive landscapes and circuitous , difficult to follow plots " of past Halo titles . GameSpot 's Chris Watters and others felt the artificial intelligence of friendly non @-@ player characters was less advanced than that of enemies , especially while driving . Steve Boxer wrote for The Guardian that Reach 's story made previous entries feel " amateurish " ; Nguyen felt that whereas previous Halo titles had become mired in inconsistencies and Star Trek @-@ like technobabble , Reach told a broader and more accessible story . Despite this , he contended , the game suffered from archetypal characters with which players spent little time : " I almost forgot that Noble Four (Emile) even existed for a big chunk of the campaign , as I rarely saw him . " Wired 's Gus Mastrapa unfavorably compared Noble Team to the marines of Aliens , writing that most of the characters were unmemorable and one @-@ dimensional . Nguyen also faulted the game for occasional lapses in exposition , but summed these up as " minor quibbles " compared to the improvements . In contrast , GamesRadar 's Charlie Baratt opined that Reach 's campaign was better than ODST 's , but lacked the " franchise @-@ changing potential " it promised . Lynch judged that while Bungie still had not learned to create a perfect story , " [Reach] does expertly set up bombastic scene after scene " .
 Ben Kuchera of Ars Technica enjoyed the multiplayer component of Reach for its scope ? " no matter how you play , you will find something to like . " Reviewers lauded the many customization options available to players : Watters and Kuchera praised the concept of psych profiles to hone more agreeable teammate selections , but questioned its effectiveness ; G4 considered Reach 's Forge World more expansive and impressive than Halo 3 's Forge offerings ; and Lynch wrote that the sheer quantity of multiplayer options would give the game a long life cycle for players .
 Critics considered the audio @-@ visual components a marked advance over Halo 3 and ODST 's . The New Zealand Herald 's Troy Rawhiti @-@ Forbes wrote that with the improved graphics and animation , " [Reach] looks just like a big @-@ budget Hollywood project . " Official Xbox Magazine

acknowledged better graphics in other games , but praised Reach for " eye @-@ catching beauty and breathless scope " , noting that the inclusion of wildlife and civilians heightened the impression of a planet under siege . Martin Robinson of IGN UK appreciated O 'Donnell 's moody score and the redone sound effects , writing that the new weapons " feel like they 're about to tear your hands off " .

= = = Awards = = =