

= Gears of War 2 =

Gears of War 2 is a 2008 military science fiction third @-@ person shooter video game developed by Epic Games and published by Microsoft Game Studios for the Xbox 360 . It is the second installment of the Gears of War series , with lead design by Cliff Bleszinski , . The game was officially released in North America , Europe and Australia on November 7 , 2008 and was released in Japan on July 30 , 2009 . The game expands technically on the previous game by using a modified Unreal Engine 3 engine . The development team brought in comic book writer Joshua Ortega to help write the plot for the game .

In Gears of War 2 , the COG continues its fight against the Locust horde , who are attempting to sink all of the cities on the planet Sera . Sergeant Marcus Fenix leads Delta Squad into the depths of the planet to try to stop the Locust during the assault upon Locust territory . The player controls Fenix in the main mission campaign , with the ability to play cooperatively with a second player controlling Fenix 's best friend and fellow Squad member Dominic " Dom " Santiago . The game includes several existing and new multiplayer modes including five @-@ on @-@ five battles between human and Locust forces , and a " Horde " mode that challenges up to five players against waves of Locust forces with ever @-@ increasing strength . New weapons and gameplay mechanics such as " chainsaw duels " and the ability to use downed foes as " meatshields " were added to the game .

On its release weekend , Gears of War 2 sold over two million copies , and within two months of release , had sold four million copies . It was the seventh best selling video game of 2009 and received several accolades . The game received similar praise as its predecessor , with the new gameplay and multiplayer modes seen as outstanding additions .

= = Gameplay = =

Gears of War 2 is a third person shooter with an emphasis on the tactical use of cover , and retains much of the same gameplay from the first game . The player , playing as either Marcus or Dominic in the campaign mode , or as any of the human or Locust characters in multiplayer mode , can only carry a pistol , one type of grenade , and two other weapons at any time , though they may swap these for weapons found in strategic locations or left by downed foes or fallen allies . Each weapon can be used for normal fire as well as for melee attacks ; the game 's signature Lancer , an assault rifle mounted with a chainsaw bayonet for its melee , can be used to instantly kill foes . The game introduces the ability to engage in chainsaw duels should the player attempt to chainsaw an opponent also using the Lancer ; the player is presented with a controller button to press rapidly to try to win the duel and avoid death . Gears of War 2 rebalances the power of the existing weapons while introducing five new ones : a flamethrower , a chain gun , a mortar cannon , a " Gorgon " Pistol , and the Ink Grenade . The chain gun and the mortar are heavy weapons , forcing the player to move at walking speed while carrying it in both hands . The Gorgon Pistol is an SMG @-@ like machine pistol that fires four four @-@ shot bursts per magazine . The Ink Grenade doesn 't damage with its detonation , but instead temporarily poisons the area it was thrown , making it very useful for driving enemies out of cover . Grenades can be planted on walls or floors as proximity traps that go off when an enemy nears , but only fragmentation grenades have the ability to kill foes when they go off .

The player 's health is represented by a red " Crimson Omen " that fades onto the screen the more damage the player takes ; staying out of the line of fire allows the player to recover their health . Depending on the game mode or difficulty , if the player takes too much damage , they enter a downed state where they can crawl around the map to get out of battle and seek help . During this time , a teammate can revive him , an enemy may brutally execute the downed player , or the player may bleed out if too much time has passed . The player can also grab a downed character and use them as a meatshield , allowing the body to absorb damage but forcing the player to use a one @-@ handed pistol . Explosive weapons will simply destroy the character they strike . Like its predecessor , Gears of War 2 features an optional mature content filter , which , when active ,

makes blood appear as sparks and removes harsh language from the dialogue . Furthermore , progress towards most of the Xbox achievements for the game can be earned in either campaign or multiplayer modes .

== Campaign mode ==

The campaign mode in Gears of War 2 allows for a single player or two players playing cooperatively as Marcus or Dom . A new " Normal " difficulty was added between the game 's " Casual " and " Hardcore " difficulties . There is also an ' Insane ' difficulty that is unlocked after the player completes the game at least once . Players in co @-@ op mode can select different difficulties , and a " communal combat system " will adjust the game 's artificial intelligence to give both players a fair challenge . The co @-@ op campaign can be played in a drop in / drop out manner , with the second player able to join the first player 's game in progress . As well as collecting some COG tags as in the first game , players can search other story @-@ based items such as personal letters and medical records , with discovered items being added to a war journal .

The campaign features a deeper story with new characters , new weapons , and new enemies according to John DiMaggio , the voice actor for Marcus Fenix . New vehicles have been added to the game , such as the Centaur Tank , which lead designer Cliff Bleszinski describes as a " tank with monster truck wheels . " Players will also ride a Brumak and Reavers in the game . Cut @-@ scenes use the better facial rendering technology of Epic 's Unreal engine , and engage in more dramatic angles for the conversation , as well as using a video screen on Jack ( the all @-@ purpose robot used by Delta squad ) to talk with their commanders face @-@ to @-@ face .

== Multiplayer ==

Gears of War 2 features an upgraded multiplayer mode that allows up to ten users to simultaneously play in teams of five @-@ on @-@ five . Gears of War 2 includes most of the multiplayer modes , including Execution , Warzone , Annex and King of the Hill , and adds in three new modes . Guardian is a modified version of Assassination from the original Gears of War , but allows players to continue fighting after the leader has been killed , but losing the ability to respawn . Wingman splits all ten players into five teams of two , where both members of a team play as the same character . Submission , formerly known as Meat Flag , is a version of capture the flag in which players attempt to " down " an enemy controlled by the game 's AI and move its body to their team 's base or objective to earn points . The 10 maps shipped with the game originally are Avalanche , Blood Drive , Day One , Hail , Jacinto , Pavilion , River , Ruins , Security and Stasis A Halo @-@ like matchmaking system has been utilized for the online multiplayer Players can now engage in multiplayer scenarios with any combination of human players and artificial intelligence controlled by the game , with the ability to set the AI 's intelligence level . Horde is a new co @-@ op mode for five players , fighting off waves of attacking Locust together , with each wave becoming more difficult . Horde Mode does not feature bot support as in competitive multiplayer , and can be played alone .

Players can pan around a map as the camera focuses on areas of intense fighting , and the Ghost Cam allows a player to roam freely around a map . The ability to take photographs is also featured , which enables the player to take a photo , which can be uploaded to the official Gears of War website and is rated on the quality of action in the shot .

== Synopsis ==

== Setting ==

Gears of War 2 takes place six months after the detonation of the Lightmass Bomb at the end of the first game . Though most of the underground army of the Locust Horde was destroyed , the

explosion also caused much of the liquid Imulsion underground to vaporize , causing a fatal disease called Rustlung to spread among the diminished human population . After months of peace , the cities of Tollen and Montevado suddenly and mysteriously disappear underground , leading the Coalition of Ordered Governments ( COG ) to suspect the resurgence of the Locust . Soon after , the once impenetrable Jacinto , one of the last remaining safe havens for humans , begins to show signs that the same fate awaits it . To stop the fall of Jacinto , the COG responds with a large @-@ scale counter @-@ offensive against the Locust . Senior Producer Rod Fergusson says " In order to save Jacinto , [ the COG ] have no choice but to take the war to the Locust . "

= = = Characters = = =

Returning characters includes the main protagonists of the series Marcus Fenix and Dominic ( Dom ) Santiago and others from the first game , including Marcus and Dom 's fellow Delta Squad COG soldiers , Augustus ' Cole Train ' Cole and Damon Baird . Also returning in supporting roles are radio dispatcher Anya Stroud and senior officer Colonel Hoffman . Lead designer Cliff Bleszinski confirmed that the character Carmine would be returning , but did not reveal how or in what capacity as Carmine was killed in the original Gears of War . It was later revealed that the original Anthony Carmine would not be present in the Gears of War 2 campaign , but rather his brother , Benjamin , would make an appearance . The game also introduces several new characters . They include Chairman Prescott , the noble , yet near @-@ dictatorial military leader of COG ; Tai Kaliso , " a spiritual and meditative warrior from a tradition of honor bound fighters ; " and Dizzy Wallin , a former Stranded who joined the COG to keep his family safe . Dom 's wife Maria also makes an appearance , and Dom 's search for her plays an important part in the story .

= = = Plot = = =

As Gears of War 2 begins , the COG army is mobilizing to send forces into the depths of Sera to assault the Locust directly . The COG deploy several units into the Locust Tunnels , known as ' The Hollow ' , despite sustaining heavy casualties . Delta Squad , consisting of Marcus Fenix , Dom Santiago , Benjamin Carmine and later Augustus Cole and Damon Baird , continues to search the Hollow and discovers that the Locust are using a giant Riftworm to sink the human occupied cities . The Locust plan to destroy the rock structures at the outskirts of Jacinto , the last major Human city , in hopes of sinking it into the ground .

Delta Squad kills the Riftworm before it can sink Jacinto and returns to the surface . They are ordered to investigate a nearby abandoned COG outpost where they encounter experimented creatures of unknown origin and learn of a back door entrance to the Hollow in the nearby Kadar Mountains . They find prisoner cages and Dom convinces Marcus that Maria ( Dom 's wife ) must be inside one of them . They manage to find her , but the Locust imprisonment and torture has left her severely disfigured and traumatized , unable to communicate . Faced with the nigh @-@ vegetative state Maria is in , Dom tearfully chooses to euthanize her . Marcus and Dom then charge into the Locust stronghold .

Inside , Delta Squad discovers the Locust Horde is locked in a civil war against the " Lambent , " or a group of Locust who have been exposed to Imulsion . They decide to destroy both the Locust and Lambent forces by detonating a bomb under Jacinto , which will sink the city and flood the Locust tunnels . Marcus and Dom battle their way through the Locust tunnels , while Cole and Baird use a helicopter to transport a bomb into the cavern . A Lambent Brumak destroys the bomb before it can be detonated . Marcus improvises by using a satellite targeting solution to bombard the Brumak with an orbital laser , which causes it to violently explode . Jacinto begins to sink and sea @-@ water floods into the sinkhole , destroying the remaining Locust forces . As the COG forces and civilians evacuate , a voiceover of the Locust Queen talks about unintended legacies . After the credits , a last voice over of Adam Fenix is heard , a radio transmission of a call for help , and a cry of desperation , revealing he is still alive .

= = Development = =

Gears of War designer Cliff Bleszinski has done several interviews to highlight improvements to the game . Heavy Netcode optimization has been done to negate the host advantage problem in the first title and hundreds of tweaks have gone into improving the cover system and movement . To provide a deeper story , the team brought aboard novelist Joshua Ortega as to incorporate more personal drama within the sci @-@ fi setting . Steve Jablonsky provided the music for the game . Epic Games also considered making the game easier after complaints about Gears of War . Senior producer Rod Fergusson admitted that ? for the first game ? " We overshot on [ the Casual ] difficulty and a game that was a little harder than we intended . "

A teaser image posted to the Gears of War 2 website on July 8 , 2008 suggested that the game was to be released on November 9 , 2008 , but it was confirmed during the Microsoft E3 2008 press conference that the game would be released on November 7 , 2008 . On July 14 , 2008 , the teaser image was removed and the official website relaunched and updated for Gears of War 2 .

Gears of War 2 was a focal point during Microsoft 's E3 2008 presentation on July 15 , 2008 , which included a " hands @-@ on " demo . A second trailer , entitled " Rendezvous , " was made available on July 14 , 2008 as a part of E3 . The Joseph Kosinski @-@ directed trailer , which features the Trans Am track " Diabolical Cracker " from the album Red Line , takes its title and spoken words from Alan Seeger 's World War I poem I Have a Rendezvous with Death . The game 's release date was also set , with a worldwide release to occur on November 7 , 2008 . Microsoft and Epic Games announced on October 10 , 2008 that Gears of War 2 had gone gold . It was stated by Cliff Bleszinski that , unlike Gears of War , the previous installment , Gears of War 2 will not feature a PC port .

= = = Graphics = = =

At the 2008 Game Developers Conference in San Francisco , California , as a showcase for the functionality of the Unreal Engine 3 , Gears of War creators Epic Games showed various improvements to the engine with specific reference to the sequel itself . The video showed several demonstrations of the improvements , the initial being improvements to the in @-@ game lighting through Screen Space Ambient Occlusion , in which dynamic shadows could be generated through the use of a pixel shading technique to render more realistically lit and shaded objects and actors , illustrated through comparison between character and environment models in the original game engine to that of Unreal Engine 3 . Also showcased was the ability of the engine to render hordes of actors within the engine , as demonstrated with a large crowd of locust flocking through the " Gridlock " multiplayer map from the original game . Alongside this technology was improvements to " Matinee , " an artistic tool used for the rendering and editing 3 @-@ dimensional scenes within the game .

Other physics @-@ related features included improvements to the rendering of water in which specular light and physical interactions with were displayed more realistically , improvements to soft body entities demonstrated with a " Meat Cube " and a floating ball possessing properties similar to that of liquid helium . The largest of these physics engine related changes was the introduction of destructible environments due to the implementation of real @-@ time structural analysis tools to generate the damage of the materials and subsequently their deformed shapes based upon resultant forces placed upon them . This was demonstrated with the use of explosive arrows fired from the " Torque Bow " of the original game causing damage to wooden planks , and also revealing rebar present after destroying areas of a stone structure .

= = = Downloadable content and updates = = =

On February 20 , 2008 , coinciding with the game 's official announcement at the Game Developers Conference , a free set of gamer pictures and a dashboard theme , as well as a teaser trailer titled " Duel , " were made available via the Xbox Live Marketplace . The first footage of gameplay from the

campaign , highlighting new features of the game , was released online and to the Marketplace on May 9 , 2008 . After the Microsoft E3 press conference , the " Rendezvous " trailer and the press conference demonstration was available for download as well as a new free set of gamer pictures and a dashboard theme . Upon release , every new copy of Gears of War 2 features a code to download the " Flashback Map Pack , " which includes five enhanced multiplayer maps from the original game . Customers who attended the GameStop Midnight Madness game release event received a code to unlock a gold @-@ plated Hammerburst rifle for use in multiplayer and a code for an exclusive Xbox 360 Dashboard theme optimized for the New Xbox Experience .

The first downloadable content released after Gears of War 2 was the " Combustible Map Pack , " which consists of three new multiplayer maps . This add @-@ on was announced and released on December 15 , 2008 . The second title update was released on January 21 , 2009 , featuring several adjustments to gameplay and adding additional Achievements , the patch attempts to correct many of the " glitches " that players have discovered since the game 's release .

A third update was applied to Gears of War 2 on March 24 , 2009 . The update added an experience @-@ based ranking system in which the player is given a numerical value based on their amount of experience points , which are gained by shooting or killing enemies in public multiplayer . The update also addressed several issues with matchmaking , including adding bots in place of players who have quit or lost connection to the game .

In early July 2009 , Epic Games applied a fourth update to Gears of War 2 , which added the ability to gain experience from the multiplayer Horde Mode , as well as applying several more gameplay fixes . On July 28 , 2009 , the " Dark Corners " add @-@ on was released . This add @-@ on consisted of seven new multiplayer maps , and an additional campaign chapter that was originally deleted from the game . The deleted scene takes place after Maria 's death , where the user can choose to either sneak into the stronghold as Theron Guards or charge in as in the original game , though the level is different from the one that appeared in the final game and features a cameo from a Stranded character from the original Gears .

== == All Fronts Collection == ==

On May 6 , 2009 , Microsoft and Epic Games issued a joint press release announcing the Gears of War 2 : All Fronts Collection , to be released on July 28 , 2009 . The All Fronts Collection was to be sold as a retail package , and would have included all add @-@ ons released for Gears of War 2 , a poster , and a strategy guide for the game . In response to complaints that the All Fronts Collection had identical pricing to the Dark Corners add @-@ on , but significantly more content , as well as the All Fronts Collection retail package not being made available in certain regions , Epic Games adjusted the release plan ; the All Fronts Collection was released digitally via Xbox Live and the Dark Corners add @-@ on was reduced in price .

== == Stereoscopic 3D == ==

In June 2010 during the Electronic Entertainment Expo 2010 Mark Rein ( vice president of Epic Games ) was showcasing a tech demo of Gears of War 2 in stereoscopic 3D running on an Xbox 360 thanks to the TriOviz for Games Technology . " This technology ? s great because it works on normal HD TVs , as well as the very high end 3DTVs , " Rein commented to Computer and Video Games . " We 're not planning to re @-@ release this in 3D - unless Microsoft want us to - but I 'm sure its technology may be keen to put in the games developed by our partners . "

In October 2010 TriOviz for Games Technology has been officially integrated in Unreal Engine 3 , allowing to easily convert in stereoscopic 3D , numerous past and upcoming games developed with this engine .

== Marketing ==

A Limited Edition of the game was confirmed on February 20 , 2008 . On July 14 , 2008 , more

information about the Limited Edition 's contents was revealed . The edition features alternative cover art , a SteelBook case with a bonus content DVD , a book entitled Beneath the Surface : An Inside Look at Gears of War 2 , which includes concept art and story @-@ related information , a keepsake photo of Dominic and Maria , and an exclusive Xbox Live code to unlock a gold @-@ plated Lancer for online play . As a bonus item promoted by electronics store Best Buy , customers who preordered the Limited Edition also received a bonus Remote Control Centaur Tank replica , just like the new vehicle introduced in the game , free of charge .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

Gears of War 2 received wide critical acclaim . It currently holds a 93 @.@ 32 % aggregate review score at Game Rankings , and a 93 / 100 from the aggregate review website Metacritic .

While the game has been praised for the addition of a deeper plot than the original Gears of War and being highly polished , reviewers noted that the multiplayer experience did not resemble the previous game especially in its quick pace and enjoyability . IGN noted that while the first four acts of the game were satisfying , in the final act " the last boss is a complete joke and the ending feels just a tad too abrupt , " and that there were some bugs and lag in the online multiplayer . Overall , IGN stated that " [ Gears of War 2 ] has its flaws when it comes to the technical side of multiplayer and the last act of the campaign and the voice acting might turn some off . Still , none of that comes close to holding back Gears of War 2 from its destiny : being one of the best games available on the Xbox 360 . " Also , even though the new plot was praised , critics such as Official Xbox Magazine scrutinized the game 's middle acts saying that most of the plot " falls flat . "

Both IGN and Eurogamer , among others , positively mentioned the new " Horde Mode " feature , with Eurogamer saying that " Horde is a weighty slab of fun that can turn almost any of them into a time @-@ sink , and the leaderboards are likely to be as compelling a reason to stick with Gears of War 2 as the leveling system has been for Call of Duty 4 : Modern Warfare . " X @-@ Play praised the game for its " polished cover system " and cooperative campaign mode . X @-@ Play also praised the new weapons and characters and its " brilliant " multiplayer experience . Game Informer called the single @-@ player campaign " satisfying " and called the co @-@ op campaign amazing and goes on to call online multiplayer " an outstanding contrast to team deathmatch or capture @-@ the @-@ flag scenarios . "

= = = Sales = = =

Gears of War 2 has achieved significant success after its release . In its opening weekend , the game sold over two million units , and set a new record for the number of simultaneous players on Xbox Live , with over 1 million people logging on to play the game . The game went on to sell over three million copies worldwide within the first month of its release , and pushed past four million in sales within the first two months . It was the sixth best @-@ selling game of December 2008 in the United States , selling in excess of 745 @, @ 000 copies . It was also the tenth top @-@ selling game in the United States in 2008 , with over 1 @. @ 3 million copies sold . As of May 7 , 2009 , Gears of War 2 had sold over 5 million units worldwide , bringing the franchise total to 11 million units sold .

= = = Awards = = =

Gears of War 2 won several awards following its presentation at E3 2008 . IGN gave it the awards Overall Best Shooting Game and Overall Best Graphics Technology of E3 2008 . Game Critics Awards gave the game Best Action Game of E3 2008 . Gears of War 2 also won Best Shooter and Best Xbox 360 Game at the 2008 Spike Video Game Awards .

= = Sequel = =

On April 13 , 2010 on Late Night with Jimmy Fallon , Cliff Bleszinski announced Gears of War 3 and debuted a trailer , titled " Ashes to Ashes . " The game is set 18 months after the events of Gears of War 2 . It was originally going to be released on April 8 , 2011 , but was delayed and was finally released on September 20 , 2011 .