XCOM : Enemy Unknown

XCOM : Enemy Unknown is a turn @-@ based tactical video game developed by Firaxis Games and published by 2K Games . The game is a " reimagined " remake of the 1994 cult classic strategy game UFO : Enemy Unknown (also known as X @-@ COM : UFO Defense) and a reboot of MicroProse 's 1990s X @-@ COM series .

XCOM : Enemy Unknown was released in North America , Europe , and Australia for Microsoft Windows , PlayStation 3 , and Xbox 360 in October 2012 . An " Elite Edition " , containing all previously released downloadable content , was released as a Mac OS X exclusive by Feral Interactive in April 2013 . In June 2014 , Feral released both XCOM : Enemy Unknown and its expansion pack XCOM : Enemy Within for Linux . A port for iOS was released in June 2013 and an Android conversion was released in May 2014 . An expansion pack , titled XCOM : Enemy Within , was released in November 2013 . A bundle containing both Enemy Unknown and Enemy Within was launched on the PlayStation Store for PlayStation Vita in March 2016 under the title XCOM : Enemy Unknown Plus .

Set in the near future during an alien invasion of Earth , the game puts the player in control of an elite multinational paramilitary organization called XCOM and is tasked with defending the Earth . The player commands troops in the field in a series of turn @-@ based tactical missions ; between missions , the player directs the research and development of new technologies from recovered alien technology and captured prisoners , expands XCOM 's base of operations , manages XCOM 's finances , and monitors and responds to alien activity .

XCOM : Enemy Unknown was critically acclaimed , with several reviewers commenting on the game 's difficulty , replayability , and addictiveness . A number of publications , including GameSpy , GameTrailers and Giant Bomb , named it Game of the Year . A sequel to the game , titled XCOM 2 , was released on February 5 , 2016 for Microsoft Windows , OS X , and Linux .

Plot

Setting

The game 's campaign begins in the spring of 2015 , as a global alien invasion begins . Prior to the start of the game , a group of countries called the Council of Nations has banded together to create XCOM (short for Extraterrestrial Combat Unit) , the most elite military and scientific organization in human history , tasked with defending them from the alien attack . The player assumes the role of the commander of XCOM , and proceeds to engage in a war against an extraterrestrial enemy with overwhelming technological superiority .

Story

After success with shooting down alien scout ships and securing the crash sites from surviving alien crews , as well as interdicting alien attempts to abduct human civilians for unknown purposes , XCOM manages to also obtain the corpses of various different alien troops . Autopsies reveal that all these types have been genetically and / or cybernetically altered , which seems to indicate they are merely foot @-@ soldiers for unseen leaders . XCOM 's head of research , Dr. Vahlen , requests that a live alien be captured for interrogation . This also involves developing a specialized weapon capable of capturing a live alien , and constructing a facility in XCOM 's subterranean base capable of safely holding a live alien prisoner .

Capturing one of the alien troops and conducting the interrogation reveals vague information about another type of alien called the Outsiders , artificially @-@ created crystalline beings encountered aboard UFOs , that appear to serve as pilots and navigators . Dr. Vahlen then requests that XCOM capture an Outsider for study . Upon capturing one of these , the examination reveals that the Outsiders ' exotic crystalline structures behave in a manner similar to antennas , receiving a signal

broadcast from a location buried underground on Earth . XCOM dispatches a team to investigate the signal ; it is found to be coming from a base that the aliens have secretly established on Earth , where experiments are performed on abducted humans .

 XCOM develops a method for gaining entry to the alien base and assaults it . During the mission , the alien serving as the base commander is discovered to have psychic abilities , but is nevertheless defeated by the soldiers . The commander 's psychic communication device is recovered and reverse engineered . Tapping into the aliens ' communications reveals a previously hidden , stealth " Overseer " UFO making rounds across the Earth . When the UFO is shot down , it is found to hold an alien species that had not been previously encountered , as well as a strange psionic artifact . The newly discovered species , called Ethereals , possess powerful psionic abilities .

 Once the Overseer ship is shot down and the psionic artifact recovered , the massive enemy " Temple Ship " reveals itself in low Earth orbit and attacks the Earth , causing earthquakes even as far away as XCOM HQ . The reverse @-@ engineering efforts enable XCOM to unlock and develop latent psionic powers that are present in certain human beings , thus enhancing their human soldiers . Out of these psychic human soldiers , the most powerful becomes the Volunteer , using the psionic artifact recovered from the Overseer UFO to tap into the aliens ' psychic communication " hive " , an experience that also increases his or her psionic strength . This allows them to attack and board the Temple Ship to seek out the Uber Ethereal , the leader of the alien invasion .

 During the final battle aboard the ship , the Uber Ethereal reveals that , because of their own failure to improve their own race further , they have been testing and experimenting on other species throughout the universe in an attempt to identify a race worthy of being " Uplifted " , searching for a race that is strong in both mind and body ; the various species of alien troops that the player has encountered have all been failures in the Ethereals ' experiments . By allowing humans to obtain their technology a few steps at a time , the Ethereals allowed humans to evolve to a fuller potential , and believe that humanity may be the culmination of their search , to find the perfect species to move on and prepare for " what lies ahead " , a vaguely worded destiny that they do not describe further .

 After slaying the Uber Ethereal , the Temple Ship begins to collapse into a black hole , which would destroy the Earth due to its close proximity . While the psionically gifted Volunteer urges the other XCOM soldiers to rush back to their transport and escape the doomed ship , the Volunteer stays behind , using the psychic gift to take control of the ship and fly it further away from the planet , finally causing it to self @-@ destruct and save Earth , though at cost of [what was thought to be] the Volunteer 's own life . In 2014 , Jake Solomon , lead designer of XCOM , revealed that the Volunteer in fact did not die , and instead disappeared before the temple ship explodes .

= = Gameplay = =

 Much like its predecessor , XCOM : Enemy Unknown casts the player as the commander of an elite military organization . As commander , the player directs their soldiers in turn @-@ based combat missions against alien enemies . Between missions , the player directs the organization 's research and engineering divisions in creating new technologies and improving XCOM 's base of operations , and manages the organization 's finances .

 The turn @-@ based ground combat uses a top @-@ down 3D perspective . The player controls a squad of between one and six human soldiers or robotic units as they hunt the aliens on the map and attempt to complete other objectives dependent on the mission . Map layouts are not randomly generated , but enemy placement is . Fog of war hides the aliens and their actions from view until the player 's soldiers are in range and have line of sight on them , and enemies normally do not act at all until the squad initially comes within line of sight . Soldiers can carry items and perform special abilities ; use of these items and abilities is controlled through a toolbar on the head @-@ up display (HUD) . A few examples of abilities include firing on enemies automatically after they emerge , launching explosives , and healing allies .

 Soldiers can take cover behind walls and objects in the environment to gain a measure of protection . Units can use suppressive fire to disadvantage enemies , and use active camouflage to

maneuver around opponents . Cutscenes and dynamic camera movements emphasise particularly exciting gameplay moments , such as kill sequences and use of special abilities . The game includes some tactical role @-@ playing elements , whereby the player 's soldiers can gain new abilities as they survive more battles .

The game 's strategy element occurs between missions . XCOM 's underground headquarters is presented in a view dubbed the " ant farm " . From this view , the player manages construction , manufacturing and research projects underway , and directs how the scientists and engineers use resources recovered from missions and received from XCOM 's sponsors . A holographic view of the Earth called the " Geoscape " allows the player to keep track of the situation around the world , ordering aircraft to intercept UFOs and dispatching soldiers to engage aliens on the ground .

This also influences the panic level of XCOM 's member nations . Responding to situations in certain areas decreases panic , and ignoring them results in a rise in panic and potential for the nation to pull out of XCOM . The " ant farm " also allows the player to observe the team of soldiers relaxing or exercising at the base 's gym . A memorial wall to soldiers killed in action is also viewable . Passive bonuses are provided depending on which continent the player chooses for a base location . The player can better detect alien activity by launching satellites and positioning them over territories of interest .

The game can be played on higher difficulty levels : Classic (in a reference to the original game) and Impossible , each with the option to enable the " Ironman " option (which limits players to a single save file) separately for each . Jake Solomon , lead developer , stated on numerous occasions that he believes that the " truest XCOM experience " is playing without the ability to reload saved games . On the higher difficulty levels , the random nature of battles , where soldiers under the player 's command can permanently die from one enemy attack , the against @-@ all @-@ odds nature of combat against the unknown and technologically superior enemy , and the requirement to sacrifice some resources ? including soldiers and even entire countries ? for the greater good combine to create a bleak atmosphere where the player feels the weight of command .

The game also features a multiplayer mode for one @-@ on @-@ one tactical battles . Players spend a predefined points budget on assembling a squad of up to six humans , aliens , or a mixture of both . Human units are customizable in terms of weaponry , armor and gadgets . A simplified version of the single @-@ player perk system is also present . Alien units may not be customized but possess the abilities of corresponding aliens types in the single @-@ player mode of the game .

Psionic combat from the original 1994 game is retained , but some gameplay features of the original have been removed or adapted . The time units system , the always @-@ visible grid map and the inventory system of the original have been removed . The initial mission phase of disembarking from the transport has also been removed ? missions now begin with troops deployed outside the craft . Unlike in the 1994 game , only one XCOM base exists , the location of which is chosen at the beginning of the game .

Although there are some differences in the interface between platforms , unlike other games such as Firaxis ' Civilization Revolution , the content is not simplified for the console versions . The PC version features a mouse @-@ driven UI and " the ability for modability " .

== Development ==

The game went into development in early 2008 as a " very , very big budget " project with about 50 ? 60 team members led by Jake Solomon . Its prototype was a straightforward remake of the original 1994 game UFO : Enemy Unknown with all the classic gameplay features . The game subsequently went through many revisions , and features were added , tested or removed to create the final result .

XCOM : Enemy Unknown was developed independently of 2K Marin 's XCOM (later rebranded as The Bureau : XCOM Declassified) , and although the two games are set in entirely different universes , the developers of both games were in contact with one another , As in the expansion Enemy Within , after researching Meld it says Dr. Vahlen discovered some records from the 60s

which shows that maybe they were in the same universe . Enemy Unknown was also the first title developed by Firaxis Games not to feature the name of Sid Meier , who served as the director of creative development but was not directly involved in the game 's development day to day . The designers also made an internal board game to help get the " feel " of the game right .

The interface team was split into halves to develop separate GUIs for the PC and console releases . All members of the development team played and finished the original Enemy Unknown game ? they were required to do so if they had not already when they joined the team . Roland Rizzo , who has been working with the X @-@ COM series since the beginning , became the audio lead for the game and was tasked with reimagining and updating John Broomhall 's famous original music score . Michael McCann , composer for Deus Ex : Human Revolution , was also involved in creating the game 's musical score . The Civilization series ' art director Greg Foertsch was given the task of reimagining the look of X @-@ COM , including redesigning the classic alien species . The aim was to have the characters resemble action figures , and the result was a stylized , bright , flat @-@ textured look .

= = Release = =

XCOM : Enemy Unknown was first revealed on January 5 , 2012 by Game Informer . A playable demo of the game was available at Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in June 2012 . Pre @-@ order bonuses included the " Classic X @-@ COM Soldier " (a haircut for the player 's male soldier based on the model for troops in the original 1994 X @-@ COM) and the option to customize the aesthetic design of soldiers ' armor . Those pre @-@ ordering the PC version on Steam also received bonus items for Valve 's Team Fortress 2 and a free copy of Firaxis ' 2010 strategy game Civilization V. The game 's playable demo version was released on September 24 , 2012 for Steam , on October 9 for the Xbox Live (available for the Gold subscribers of the Xbox Marketplace) and on October 10 for the PlayStation Network .

Eight custom promotional XCOM : Enemy Unknown arcade cabinets were produced in August 2011 by 2K Games and Bespoke Arcades . The machines were used to run tournaments of the game at various exhibitions including i47 , London MCM Expo , Play Expo and Eurogamer Expo with the machines being awarded as prizes .

XCOM : Enemy Unknown was released in stores on October 9 , 2012 for North American consumers and on October 12 , 2012 for Australian and European consumers . The game was released for digital distribution via Steam on October 9 , 2012 . On PC , two editions were released : a normal edition and a special edition which includes a variety of unique items , including an art book , a fold @-@ out poster of the XCOM headquarters , an XCOM insignia patch , and a collection of digital bonus assets such as desktop wallpapers , soundtrack and more .

An " Elite Edition " , containing all previously released DLC , was announced as a Mac OS X exclusive by Feral Interactive on February 26 , 2013 and was released on April 25 , 2013 . An iOS port , scheduled to be released in the summer of 2013 , was announced during a PAX East panel on March 23 , 2013 . The game was released on June 20 , 2013 at the App Store for $ 19 @.@ 99 , at the time one of the most expensive iOS games ever released .

The game was available digitally between June 16 and June 30 , 2016 on the Xbox 360 as part of Xbox Live 's Games with Gold .

= = XCOM : Enemy Within = =

An expansion pack , XCOM : Enemy Within was announced to be released on November 15 , 2013 . Like the numerous expansions of the Civilization series the pack retains the core storyline but adds a broad variety of content , including new weapons , special missions and the ability to enhance soldiers via genetic engineering or cybernetic implants . Both options consume an elusive substance called " Meld " that can be obtained during battles .

= = Reception = =

= = = Critical reception = = =

XCOM : Enemy Unknown greatly impressed the public and media at E3 2012 , where it won a number of awards from a variety of gaming publications , such as the title of " Best Strategy Game " from GameSpy , Game Informer , IGN , and Machinima . The game also won the titles " Best PC Game " and " Best Strategy Game " in the 2012 E3 Game Critics Awards .

A pre @-@ release version of XCOM : Enemy Unknown received highly positive previews by , among others , PlayStation Official Magazine , Official Xbox Magazine and Rock , Paper , Shotgun . The full version of the game also received a high praise from critics . Adam Biessener of Game Informer called it " a singular achievement that every gamer deserves to experience . " Ian Dransfield of PLAY called the game " a phenomenal reimagining of a classic title and an instant classic in its own right . " It was also described as " a hallmark of excellence " by Destructoid and " an exemplary turn @-@ based strategy game " by Joystiq .

Dan Stapleton of GameSpy wrote : " I consider the 1994 turn @-@ based tactical masterpiece X @-@ COM : UFO Defense to be the single best videogame ever made . Compared directly to that impossibly high standard , Firaxis ' 2012 remake , XCOM : Enemy Unknown , does remarkably well . " GamesTM called it " a worthy reboot of the franchise , easily the most addictive game this year , and one of our favourite Firaxis games ever , " with the final verdict of it being " fresh , yet authentic ? a stunning reboot . " Josh Harmon of Electronic Gaming Monthly (EGM) stated that " to say that XCOM : Enemy Unknown is a phenomenal remake would be selling Firaxis ? monumental accomplishment short . The developer hasn ? t just managed to capture the spirit of the original ; they ? ve also tweaked , trimmed , and innovated enough to deliver the freshest , most engaging strategy game in recent memory , if not ever . "

Eurogamer 's review by Rich Stanton described XCOM : Enemy Unknown as " a winner " and " a fantastic game " that " brings back and revitalises a classic . " Alex Rubens of G4 called it " an exceptionally solid return for the series , and one that every turn @-@ based tactics fan should experience , " adding that " even if you never played the original , XCOM : Enemy Unknown is turn @-@ based tactics and management at its finest , and a perfect introduction to the genre . "

David Houghton of Game Revolution said that despite its flaws , the game " feels like the revival of not just a brand , but a genre . " Polygon 's Russ Pitts criticized the " weird dichotomy " of the game 's strategy component , but praised the tactical gameplay , calling it " one of the best and most artfully designed strategy games in recent memory . " Edwin Evans @-@ Thirlwell of Official Xbox Magazine stated that it " isn 't just Xbox 360 's finest strategy experience ? it 's also a strategy game which changes how you think about strategy games . "

The game 's difficulty received both praise and concern . G4 's review noted that " the extreme difficulty of the game might not be welcomed by all players " and Official Xbox Magazine described the game as " reliably unforgiving " . According to EGM , " XCOM hates you . XCOM wants you dead . And XCOM will see you dead , over and over again . " Game Informer called it " one of the most challenging , intense gaming experiences of this generation . " PLAY 's review stated , " dying is back in fashion . "

Several reviews also commented on how addictive the game can be for the player . David Houghton of PlayStation Official Magazine called XCOM " one of the most unique and endlessly compulsive games of the year so far . " Erik Kain of Forbes called it " one of the most addictive games I ? ve ever played " that " falls somewhere between chocolate and crack on the scale of addictive substances . " Allistair Pinsof of Destructoid , in pointing out how easily one could be absorbed in the game , told readers to " take the act of me wiping XCOM from my hard drive as high praise . It speaks volumes on how addictive and replayable XCOM is . "

In a retrospective article about the original from 1994 , Alec Meer of Eurogamer compared both games , coming to conclusion that " X @-@ COM and XCOM are completely different games , both ingenious and both flawed in their own ways . " According to Chris Schilling of VideoGamer.com , " Enemy Unknown is respectful of Julian Gollop 's 1994 turn @-@ based strategy classic , but it 's not

reverential . " Charlie Hall of Ars Technica wrote that " in the end , this is not the X @-@ Com that everyone was expecting . It ? s more . It ? s better . If you ? re merely looking for a highly competent re @-@ skin of the original X @-@ Com , keep your eyes peeled for the upcoming Xenonauts . " Gollop himself said :

" I think Firaxis did a terrific job with the new XCOM . They have made a very console friendly and accessible game , but it still has a lot of strategic and tactical depth . The character progression is done very well , and the tactical combat system is great . I would have done things differently for sure . I was a bit disappointed that the Geoscape is basically irrelevant , with no strategy involved about positioning of bases , detection ranges , base attacks and so on . It is also a shame that there is no random map generation . The development of the alien menace seems to be driven by specific events , such as the first alien base assault , rather than the aliens own development agenda as in the original X @-@ Com . "

= = = Awards = = =

Multiple publications including Giant Bomb , Kotaku , MTV and GameTrailers gave XCOM : Enemy Unknown their overall Game of the Year award for 2012 . GameSpy also gave XCOM its Game of the Year award (" Achievements : Game of the Year , High Tension , Making Turn @-@ Based Cool Again ") , commenting that " few games can deliver the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat in the way that XCOM does . "
XCOM : Enemy Unknown was chosen by the 2012 Spike TV Video Game Awards as a nominee in the category Best PC Game . At the 16th Annual D.I.C.E. Awards , it was nominated for three awards , including Game of the Year , and ended up winning two for 2012 's Strategy / Simulation Game of the Year and Outstanding Achievement in Gameplay Engineering . Awarding the game its title of Strategy Game of the Year , PC Gamer wrote it can be " forging player memories that ? ll live as long as you play and care about games . "

= = Sequel = =

A sequel to XCOM : Enemy Unknown , XCOM 2 , was released on February 5 , 2016 . It was developed by Firaxis Games and was released on Microsoft Windows , OS X and Linux . At release it was a PC only game . The game takes place 20 years after the events of Enemy Unknown , with the aliens having taken over the human race . It is implied that the events of XCOM : Enemy Unknown were mostly tactical simulations being run inside the Commander 's brain after his capture by the aliens following a very early defeat of the XCOM Project . The player controls a small resistance movement fighting against the alien conquerors .