

Vegas like a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow

Tom Clancy's *Rainbow Six Vegas*

PC-CD ROM/Windows
Ubisoft
Rated M for Mature
On sale now

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When the original *Rainbow Six* hit store shelves in 1998, it was the first game to offer up a realistic, hardcore tactical-shooting experience. As the years ground on, however, the franchise migrated to the various consoles and what was once considered realistic, tactical shooting simply became shooting. As a result, there will be a tendency for PC gamers to ignore *Rainbow Six Vegas*, the latest in the *Rainbow Six* franchise—after all, it's a straight Xbox 360 port coming on the heels of a slew of others bearing the Tom Clancy stamp. But Ubisoft has done wonders to reinvigorate the franchise, and it would be a shame to miss out on *Rainbow Six's* overdue return to the PC.

In the campaign, you play as Logan Keller, the newly appointed leader of one of *Rainbow's* elite three-man counter-terrorism units, who's invariably called into Las Vegas to defend the glitzy casinos and high-rises. The plot is replete with various ne'er-do-wells, a feisty and unwholesome villainess, secret labs and other tired plot devices borrowed from too many other Tom Clancy games,

including a plot-twist more predictable than the onset of menopause. But despite a story thinner than the DVD the game comes on, what *Vegas* lacks in political intrigue and riveting dialogue it more than makes up for with some of the best tactical shooting to grace the PC in 2006.

And shooting there is. Plenty of it, which is one of the major differences between *Vegas* and its slower-paced predecessors. But thankfully, the tactical gameplay has been preserved—even evolved—from the original.

While it may not look or play like it's illustrious predecessor, *Vegas* is still a deserving holder of the *Rainbow Six* stamp and one of the best tactical shooters to grace the PC in awhile.

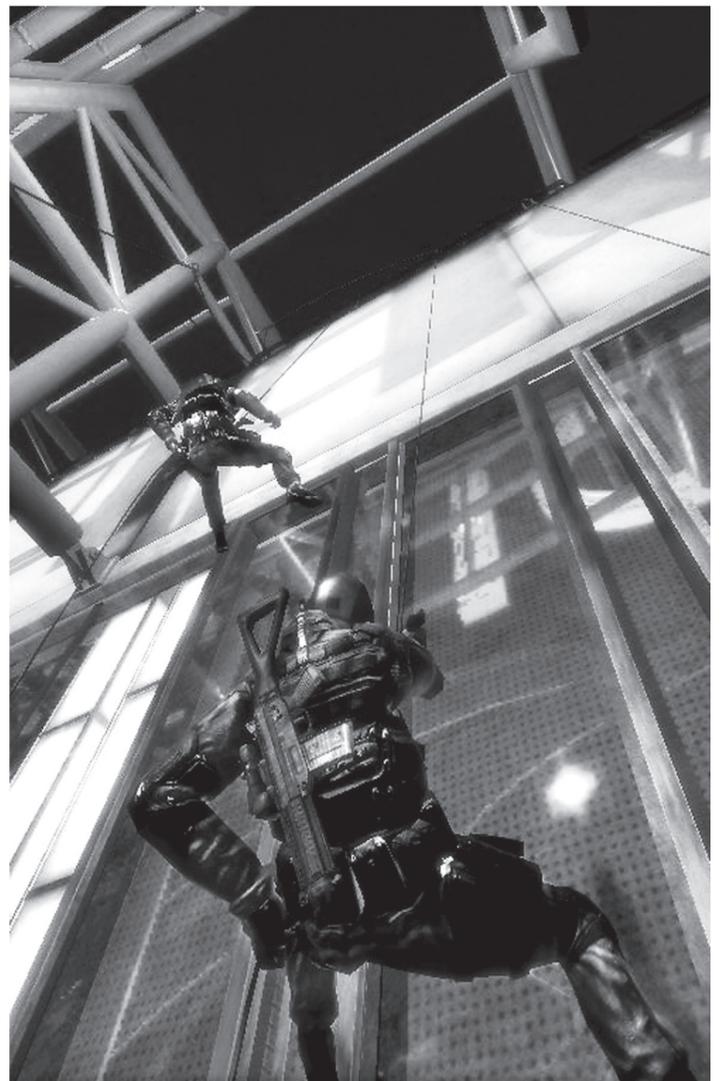
In *Rainbow Six Vegas*, cover is your best friend, whether it's a car, wall, or curiously well-aligned cluster of barrels. And thanks to the intuitive controls, it's relatively easy to use as well. Simply approach your cover of choice and hold down the right mouse button, and you'll "hug" the cover. You then have the ability to poke your body out to the sides or over the top to take quick

shots at the enemy. Or, if things are getting particularly dicey, you can poke your rifle around the corner and blind-fire without exposing all your tender bits to the bad guys.

Logan's mission in *Vegas* isn't a solo one, mind you. Filling out the three-man unit are Michael and Jung, two Pendleton trainees assigned to your team upon arriving in Vegas. Effectively joined at the hip, Michael and Jung perform every action together, whether it's following you, taking cover or rappelling down the side of a building. And again, thanks to the intuitive controls, commanding your team is easy. Simply point to some cover, tap space and they'll take cover. Do the same with a door and they'll "stack up" on either side and await your cue to breach and enter. Actually, one of the high points of the game is the ease with which you can setup and execute some highly intricate team-based maneuvers.

Rainbow Six Vegas has no equal on store shelves in terms of visuals. The graphics—from the casinos to your troopers to the *Axe* ads and *Dodge Rams*—are mind-blowing, and often border on the photo-realistic. The downside, of course, is that unless you have a top of the line rig or are willing to upgrade, expect your frame rates to be low.

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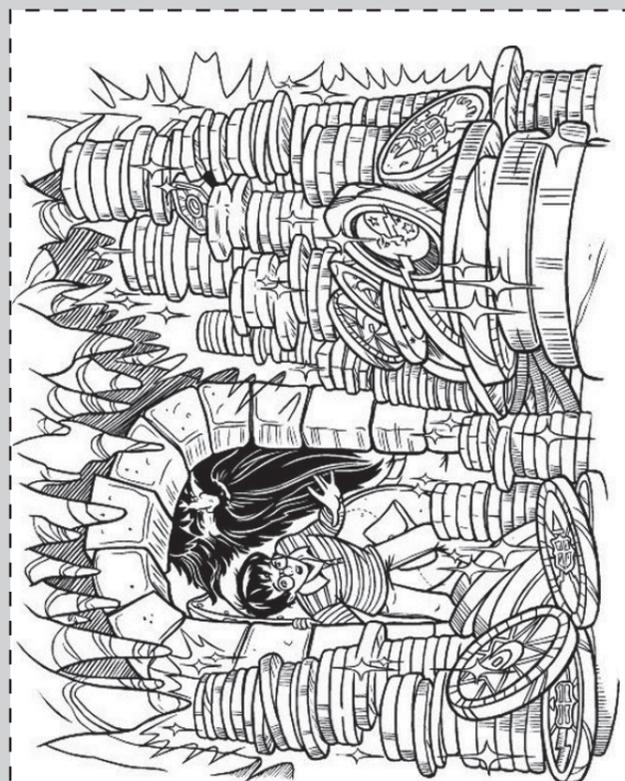
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