Assassin's Creed anything but deadly

Despite fantastic graphics, *Creed* won't leave a lasting mark with every gamer

game review

Assassin's Creed
Developed by Ubisoft
Available Now

RAMIN OSTAD
Arts & Entertainment Staff

Few games released this year have been as polarizing as *Assassin's Creed*. Who would have figured that a game about a Persian assassin—or Hashashin, for you history buffs—during the Third Crusade would stir up heated debate? Some have called it tedious and shallow, while others think it's one of the few truly next-gen games. Both sides are have their points, really: it all depends on how you want to look at it.

There are a few things, however, that everyone can agree on. *Assassin's Creed* is probably the best-looking game this side of *Gears of War*: both visually and aurally, the game is astounding.

The game's four cities—Masyaf, Damascus, Jerusalem, and Acre—were all created with historical accuracy in mind, and it shows: the cities are huge; no two buildings, structures,

and inhabitants are quite the same; and you can't help but feel the effort that went into designing them.

The sound design also creates a living, breathing atmosphere for these cities. You hear vendors peddling their wares from their shops, conversations about in-game affairs, and plenty of ambient rambling to make you feel immersed in the setting.

But despite the fantastic world Ubisoft's created, debates rage around if the gameplay reaches the same heights of quality. As a member of the Hashashin, your job is to—you guessed it—hashasinate people. As Altaïr, you'll use your parkour-like skills to hop, skip, jump, and scale tall buildings to reach each target—I guess David Bell learned to time travel. But before you can do that, you need to learn more about your victims: where they hide out and what they're up to.

The methods you employ to do this are three-fold: pickpocketing, eavesdropping, and asking informants.

The issue is that, with nine targets in total, doing the same three things in varying order can get very tedious. You also don't have to do all of the information missions for each target, so you can often scrape by with the minimum

amount of work needed to whack a guy. It really comes down to a question of patience—and maybe a little perspective.

If you view each target as just that, then you'll really have no desire to steal from every pocket or beat up every informant. You want to complete your mission, and you'll do it as quickly as possible.

The payoff to doing every mission, however, is gaining an understanding of just who your target is and why your guild would want him dead, even though it's not really necessary. In fact, the game's story, while being surprisingly sci-fi, provides a pretty amusing metaphor for this: do you blindly follow orders, as is your duty, or do you question the task that's been asked of you?

Both styles of play are right, but those in the latter camp will probably enjoy the game a lot more. If you have the patience for it and, like me, tend to view games as artistic representation, then you'll enjoy just how much detail went into the setting and story—despite a cliffhanger ending.

If you're not that patient, you'll still enjoy *Assassin's Creed* for what it is, but what depth it offers may not be the kind you're looking for.

cultura obscura

Urban Explorers

VICTOR VARGAS
Online Coordinator

Among the many duties a security guard has is to ensure that unauthorized persons aren't given accessed to restricted areas. This comes into conflict with the main objective of a "secret society" of people known as "The Urban Explorers Society," whose sole purpose is to get into places that they aren't suppose to be.

Now while they're relatively harmless, their ability to walk into a building and get into highly sensitive areas without ever being challenged and then brag about it has proven to everyone that no matter

how much security you have, there's always a way to beat it.
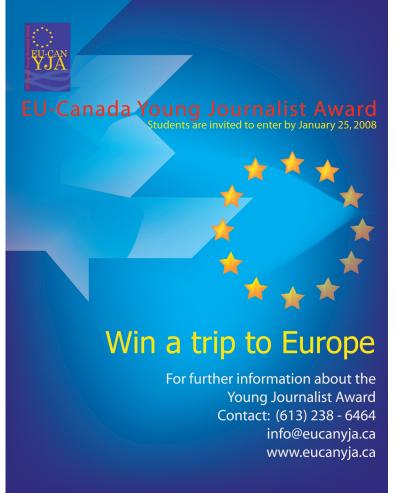
Understand that urban exploration *is illegal*. To participate in it involves the crime of trespassing and possibly breaking and entering. At the same time, urban explorers do have their own ethical code. The majority of explorers don't try and vandalize places—or at least leave any permanent damage. They tend to shy away from actively trying to defraud people or trick security systems, instead trying to find simple and ingenious methods in order to beat them. And also, urban explorers don't only annoy security guards—the targets are often abandoned or disused places like toxic sewers, smelly drains, haunted houses, abandoned schools, and the all-too-romantic condemned hospitals.

Urban exploration is not just about

breaking the law or travelling through a place where the air is filth—it's about bragging rights. Explorers often post their exploits on numerous websites and underground email newsletters that encourage others to try and replicate the feat. In fact, frequent targets of urban exploration often have a "guest book" where you can record that you, too, have travelled where all your explorer friends have gone before.

But most importantly, it's all about the rush of being able to go somewhere that you aren't allowed. After all, you, the urban explorer, managed to defeat the locks on the sewer grate and the security guard, and have reached a place only they eyes of janitors have seen. After all, a charge for trespassing surely must be worth the bragging rights of travelling through a mouse-infested sewer.