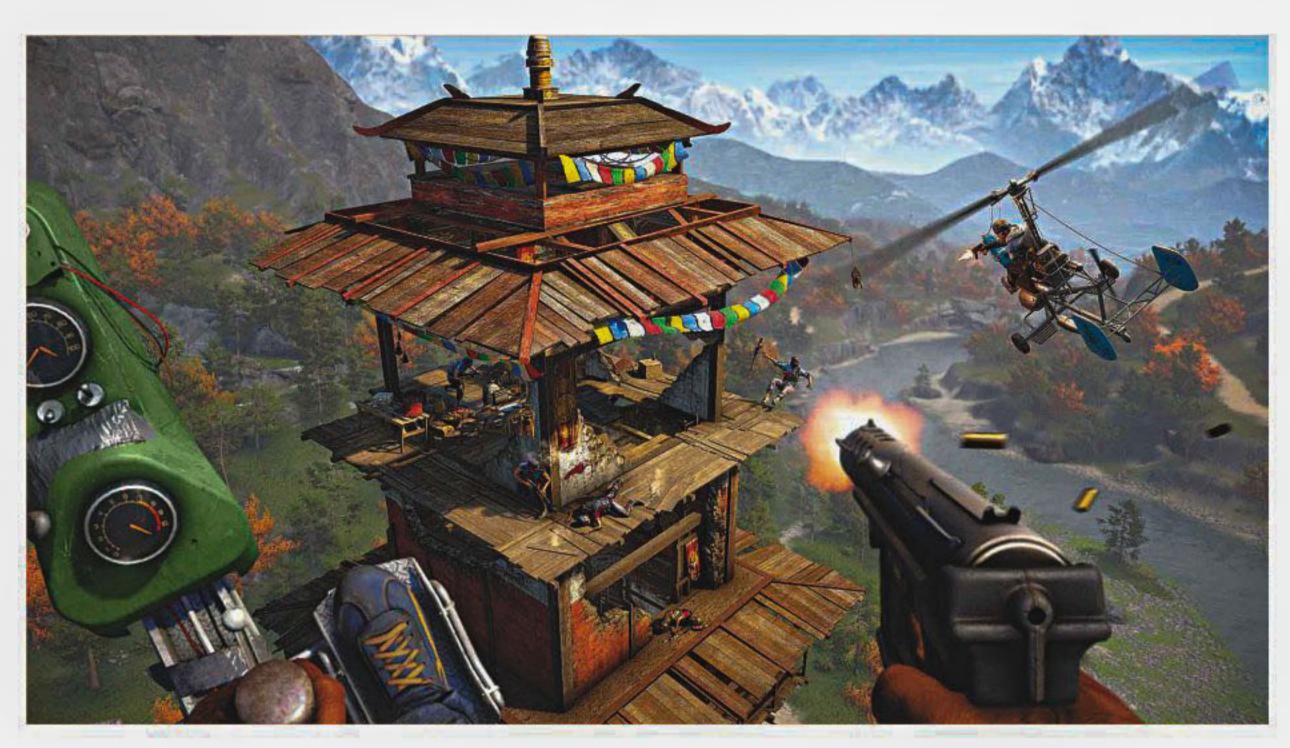## GAME REVIEWS

FAR CRY 4

RATING ▌ 8.5/10

SHAHRUKH IKHTEAR

Nowadays, video game sequels tend to be prettied-up rehashes of their predecessors. This trend has been rigidly followed by several popular game franchises like Call of Duty, Assassin's Creed, etc. At first glance, Far Cry 4 seems to be the game that ushers in the series' dip into mediocrity and repetition. However, upon further inspection it is apparent that Far Cry 4 holds its own identity as a game built upon the foundations laid by Far Cry 3.

The game puts you in the role of Ajay Ghale, an American whose roots lie in the fictional region of Kyrat. Ajay returns to his homeland to scatter his mother's ashes as per her will. A simple journey of paying respects goes horribly wrong as he finds that Kyrat is engulfed in a civil war between the false king Pagan Min, the main villain, and the Golden Path, the rebellious militia who seek to overthrow him. The flimsy premise is held together by a cast of interesting characters and variations in the main campaign missions.

Kyrat is eerily beautiful for a land filled with atrocities around every corner. The

vast landscapes are dotted by interesting activities such as opportunities to hunt for animals, enemy outposts to liberate, fortresses to conquer, racing activities, hostages to rescue etc. The region has been made much more dangerous than that of Far Cry 3. This forces you to be on your toes all the time, lest you are ambushed by a pack of wolves or caught in crossfire between the Golden Path and the Royal Army.

The game does a great job of just throwing you out into the world and allowing you to play the way you want to. There are several approaches to one single mission/objective. Suppose, if you want to capture an outpost, you can go in guns blazing and slaughter everyone there or you can let loose a berserk elephant and watch it wreak havoc on the hapless sol-

diers while you sip some tea on a nearby hill or you can exercise your creativity and accelerate a pickup truck filled with C4 through the main road, get out half way and then click the detonation button so that the vehicle blows up in your enemies' faces. The possibilities are almost endless.

Online co-op is available as well which will allow you and a friend to journey across Kyrat together, weaving all sorts of mischief. Having trouble taking down a fortress? Invite a friend and tell him to provide grenade launcher support from the air on a gyrocopter. An outpost is too hard to take? Perch yourself on high ground and snipe key targets from afar while your friend goes in with a silenced weapon and takes down stragglers. The multitude of strategies that can be crafted provide added flavor to the game's usual activities. There is also PvP multiplayer with several special touches.

Far Cry 4, while bearing many similarities with its predecessor, is an open-world game that does a lot of things right. You will never feel as if Kyrat is bland nor will you feel that some aspects of the game feel overused. The game sucks you in and does not let you go for hours on end.

CIVILIZATION: BEYOND EARTH

THERE IS NO REASON TO PLAY THIS

RATING ▌ 4.8/10

ZOHEB MASHIUR

Two games came out this year, each new additions to long-running and recognised franchises. They were both heavily-hyped by their developers and promised new innovations that would mix up the established gameplay. In actuality they were stripped-down versions of the previous iterations in the franchises, offering none of the complexity and depth built over years of expansion packs. Flashy new entries that were more of a step back than forward. The first of these games, The Sims 4, was lambasted by critics for these flaws. The second was largely lauded; presumably because it makes critics uncomfortable to compare Firaxis Games to EA Maxis.

Yes, Sid Meier's Civilization: Beyond Earth is as bad as The Sims 4. At least that game patched in those swimming pools.

Here's the run-down for those who haven't been keeping up. Beyond Earth is the new Civilization game; Civilization V is a tough act to follow up on, and Beyond Earth's approach is to not try at all. "If it ain't broke don't fix it" seems to have been the mantra at Firaxis because this is basically vanilla Civilization V. In space. It's a glorified mod. The other thing you need to know is that Beyond Earth is the spiritual successor to Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri, a beloved 1999 game.

There are cosmetic similarities between Beyond Earth and Alpha Centauri. Colonists

evacuate a dying Earth to settle in a distant planet, split into rival factions, and compete against each other and hostile native fauna for survival and eventually supremacy. This is a fine premise, and you can construct an exciting and layered fiction on it. Alpha Centauri did, hence its enduring popularity. In contrast, Beyond Earth is... superficial. By-the-numbers. There is no context, no life to the setting.

You won't have a Chairman Sheng-ji Yang preaching his fascist-ascetic credo at you in this game. Gone are Sister Miriam's musings on God and the universe. What you get in Beyond Earth are a generic friendly African, an old French woman and a profit-hungry American. Cardboard cutouts.

Much of the tension in the plot of Alpha Centauri revolved around the discovery that the planet was sentient. The humans had to

decide how to interact with the planet; environmentalism takes on a new dimension if the planet is actively trying to kill you. In Beyond Earth this is replaced by three different Affinities that represent three distinct visions of future humanity. Old Earth Puritanism, cybernetic augmentation or hippie one-with-planet sort of stuff. There are a myriad of ways to customise your future society in Beyond Earth, which is admirable. But none of it achieves a sense of place or importance. It's all numbers and bonuses.

The native fauna that you battle is a step forward from Civilization V's barbarians. They are much more varied and there is an overall AI that remembers and reacts to your interactions with it. However, they too are bland alien archetypes. Looking for Alpha Centauri's psychic worm swarms? Here are giant bees instead.

The only real innovation is the introduction of the tech web. Unlike the more linear tech trees of previous Civilization games, here technologies branch out into multiple directions, and you are offered the choice of spreading your research wide or deep. This is a good framework that one assumes will be developed better in expansion packs. The game gives the impression that it's not a finished product. It's a Sims-esque module to slot expansion packs into.

In which case, you should play this game sometime in 2016 when it's finally ready.

DR. GEEK SAYS

Using Avro in Illustrator/ Photoshop

Avro's Unicode fonts don't work in PS/AI. What you need to do is write down the Bangla in Avro then open the UNICODE to Bijoy Converter from Avro's Tools and paste your text in the top box. Then click convert and paste the text in your designing program. After that, change the font in AI/PS to an ANSI Bangla font like Siyam Rupali ANSI. An alternative is to change the Avro settings to output in ANSI but this will mean your browser won't display your writing correctly.