

B04 Beta Impressions: Black Ops 2 but a bit worse

SHAHIRUKH IKHTEAR

When I booted up the new beta for Call of Duty: Black Ops 4, I was *extremely* sceptical of how it would pan out. However, I was pleasantly surprised with the experience I got out of the game. Still, there *are* quirks that need ironing out for this to become one of the best CoD games in years.

I can't speak for everyone, but I have not finished the campaigns of the last three CoD games. They just don't hold up in comparison to the multiplayer. Yes, there used to be a time when CoD games had amazing single player experiences (all ghillied up, anyone?) but as time went on, and the annual release model got in the way of development, the campaigns started to feel like slapped-on modes just for the sake of having single player. So, no, I am not ticked off by the fact that this year's CoD ditched single player mode. I'd rather not have a half-baked experience in a game at all.

With that out of the way, let's talk about the core gameplay experience. What you're getting here is the solid gunplay of Call of Duty coupled with the old specialist abilities present in Black Ops 3. The difference is that, you do not have 3D movement anymore. This makes the entire setup much more enjoyable in my opinion as it puts more emphasis on the marksmanship and reflexes of players rather than how fast they can hit the jump button.

The core gunplay feels more like BO2 than BO3. Recoil is minimal, as expected from a CoD game but you'll still have a tough time engaging hostiles at long ranges with SMGs and shotguns. The damage fall-off distances of each weapon are appropriate according to their classes. So, the lack of "true" recoil doesn't hamper the gameplay experience much. Treyarch even implemented predictive recoil in the game to increase the competitiveness of the shooting. Time-to-kill (TTK) has been adjusted for the better with every player getting 150 HP instead of the usual 100 HP. Where CoD: WWII was a twitch-fest with people dropping in milliseconds, BO4 opts for a more sustained approach. Think Halo's TTK reduced a notch and you have BO4's TTK. This allows for players to get a second chance if they lost the reflex or spotting game and it makes every firefight fairer. Auto-heal is gone, so now you'll have to manually use stim-packs which have a cooldown timer. I am still on the fence about this change



because the stim-packs recharge way too quickly for them to be a tactical decision. Also, the heal-rate is abysmal so you can't really stim-bait people, which would've added an extra layer of depth to the strategy.

The maps still follow the classic Treyarch three-laned layout but it's *much* less noticeable now. I got so sick of the maps in WWII for being bland, unfair, and full of camping chokepoints. BO4's maps are a breath of fresh air and they *feel* like they're made for a more tactical approach to the game. Speaking of tactics, the game is an absolute blast to play when you're playing Domination, Hardpoint, or Control. The new mode, Control, is a great addition to the already-extensive options. Don't even bother with TDM because that mode is a hot mess at the moment with erratic spawn points.

The specialists have been overhauled a bit. Firstly, they now have two unique abilities. One is a utility ability which has a low cooldown timer. The other is the traditional BO3 ultimate ability which has a large cooldown

timer that gets shorter with kills. I vehemently dislike this aspect of the game. Most of the abilities have baseless balancing and some are just way too powerful. It breaks the flow of the game when you encounter a Battery spamming her grenade launcher into a well-fortified control point objective. It's unfair, it's quick, and it's too easy. Treyarch, either give us a No-Specialists mode or make sure you solve these problems at launch. Scorestreaks finally feel worthy of the effort you have to put in to get them but they don't feel unnecessarily over-powered.

All in all, I'd say CoD: BO4 has its fair share of problems but if you've been waiting for a decent fix after BO3, this will be more than what you need. Don't buy the season pass, though.

Shahirukh Ikhtear is a Management Trainee at Grameenphone and former sub-editor of SHOUT magazine. Send him business stuff or good music at fb.com/sr.ikhtear

Twitched

NUREN IFTEKHAR

The contemporary let's play phenomenon that took the world by storm brought with it a long withstanding culture. Watching someone's favorite streamer play on platforms such as Twitch and YouTube has become the preferred leisure activity of many. The very concept of this may sound absurd. Video games were set apart from contemporary books and movies because of the interactivity it brought. The joy is in your controller and what you do in that marvelous world created for you, right? Well, no, as it turns out. And that makes more sense than I would have thought.

So why is it that it's so enjoyable to watch someone else play a video game? Why are their streamers getting thousands of dollars in donation and more for, well, playing video games in front of people? I only had to look back to

my childhood to understand this phenomenon.

Being the younger child has a lot of cons. And one of them happens to be limited computer time. So most of childhood, I sat in front of the computer watching my brother play. And you know what? I had a jolly good time. I have to talk about one game in particular. It was Command & Conquer: Red Alert 2. Now I've never been good at real time strategy games. But my brother was quite good at it. So all of my fond memories of Red Alert 2 comes from what I've seen from my brother playing it. For me that didn't tarnish the experience at all.

The argument that 'If you haven't played it, you're not supposed to get enjoyment from it' doesn't really work.

Since the massive appeal of sports doesn't deteriorate from the fact that the viewer isn't actually playing it. What the mind wants is a spectacle. And video games these days do not give any less than that.

The effort of a streamer is not to be undermined either. Their commentary adds to the gameplay and makes the experience a little more than just watching someone play the game. It can offer humour, tips, excitement and sometimes just pure fun conversation on various interesting topics.

And 'Let's play' isn't nearly the only thing Twitch offers. Various professional tournaments in the e-sports scene are regularly broadcasted. And the entertainment value that e-sports can bring have been proven by the increasing amount of buzz being created

around it. It's always a joy to see the professionals dish it out in a game you enjoy. There's a comfy feeling to it that is hard to put to words.

Watching video game streams is a hobby with a rising popularity. And the popularity is well deserved. The world has changed several folds and so has the video games. Whether it's watching sports on television or gameplay on Twitch one thing matters to the viewers, and that is entertainment. Twitch streams cover that in an uncommon but satisfying matter because it's not just 'watching someone else play a game'. It's entertainment and that's all that matters in the end.

Nuren Iftekhar is your local stray cat in disguise; he interacts with people for food and hates bright light. He got Hufflepuff 3 times straight in Pottermore so no walking around that one. Send him obscure memes atn.iftekhar18@gmail.com

