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007 games, two of the year's best
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By John Powell - G4 Canada

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The latest news is that 'Bond 23' could be hitting theatres in November, 2012, with or without series star Daniel Craig. 007 fans need not hold their collective breaths though. With its rousing 'Blood Stone' and 'GoldenEye' releases, Activision has given them genuine Bond experiences that will keep those martinis shaken and not stirred for some time to come.

With 'Blood Stone', developer 'Bizarre Creations' has artfully reproduced the trademark Bond film elements fans know and love. From the opening action scene that sets up the story to the theme sequence featuring one of the best Bond songs ever written- 'I'll Take It All' by Joss Stone and Dave ('The Eurythmics') Stewart - to the over-the-top car chases and stunts, 'Bloodstone' is fundamentally, a playable James Bond movie.



Bruce Feirstein, the writer of Bond videogames 'From Russia With Love', 'Everything or Nothing' and 'GoldenEye', as well as the movies 'GoldenEye', 'Tomorrow Never Dies' and 'The World Is Not Enough', returns to the game series to pen 'Blood Stone'. There are many touches fans will surely be grateful for as Feirstein brings an air of authenticity to the character and situations. 'Blood Stone' may not be the most meticulous 007 story ever produced but Feirstein's experience and knowledge adds to the game's cinematic tone.



Like any great Bond adventure, 'Blood Stone' will take you around the world to many exotic locals and settings as he tracks down the source of a deadly bio weapon. The pedestrian rescue of a missing professor becomes a race against time to stop the toxins from being released on an unsuspecting world. Joss Stone pulls double duty playing a wealthy jewellery designer turned MI6 snitch/agent, Nicole Hunter, who lends James a hand..and maybe more.

Blood Stone's hybrid style of intense action begins with Bond preventing some yahoos from bombing the G20 summit in Greece. Swinging from a helicopter, 007 repels onto a yacht where he engages in a running firefight which becomes a speed boat race and then ends in a car chase as Bond speeds singlehandedly to stop the terrorists from carrying out their devious scheme. The over-the-top sequence is the best opening stage of any game this year.

'Blood Stone' developer Bizzare Creations shrewdly integrates their experience as the creators of the 'Project Gotham Series' by incorporating several dynamic driving missions that are as exhilarating as the combat sequences. The best ride though is the Moscow mission that takes you off-road onto a dangerously river valley as you chase down a speeding train. Slipping and sliding was never this fun.



Gone is the "duck and cover" system from the equally as 'Quantum of Solace'. It has been replaced by a "mark and kill" system much like the one everyone is borrowing from 'Splinter Cell: Conviction". Kudos to you, Ubisoft. The way it works is, if you take out any target using Bond's rapid strike hand-to-hand combat abilities, you will bank or earn up to three one shot kills. Mirroring 'Splinter Cell' some more, Bond's smart phone allows him to see enemies through obstacles, walls and points him in the right direction if you get lost.

The multiplayer element is your standard fare but the campaign serves up the action as one of the best FPS experiences and best games of 2010. The only slam I would make against 'Blood Stone' is that the final stage is far too long and presents far too many foes to wade through. It is a great example of having way too much of a good thing.

'Quantum of Solace' and now 'Blood Stone'? Activision has turned the Bond gaming franchise into a showcase of not only the best of 007 but of game development as well.

Made exclusively for the Nintendo Wii, 'GoldenEye' is not the seminal FPS you remember that changed the gaming industry and the genre itself. In keeping with the spirit of the ground-breaking title, Eurocom has re-imagined the story and gameplay taking 'GoldenEye' to a while new level.

The first indication you get that your cloak and dagger journey is going to be different is that you are Daniel Craig instead of Pierce Brosnan and you have been teamed with 006 - Alec Trevelyan - from the very start of the game. Like the original 'GoldenEye' though, stealth plays a large part in your success since you are doggedly outgunned and outmaned and there multiple objectives to complete throughout each level.



Eurocom rebuilt 'GoldenEye' from the ground up. It is an entirely new experience. In the place of traveling on foot through the base at the beginning, you will ride with Trevelyan in a truck firing away at Russian soldiers and other vehicles which are trying to run you off the road.

Updating the technology, Bond is also armed with a smart phone which can scan important information, hack computers and locate enemies.

Akin to 'Blood Stone', the level design and mission variety found in 'GoldenEye' are the reasons why you never feel bored and never feel stuck in a loop at any given time. The best thing about 'GoldenEye' though is when you ramp up the difficulty and play through the game again relying on armour to survive instead of regenerating health, new objectives, areas open up for the first time. The replayability factor is the game's most valuable asset.



'GoldenEye' allows for a variety of controller settings and options but veteran fans will be glad to know that you can use the classic controller or a compatible GameCube controller to duplicate the N64 controls and style of play you are most familiar with.

With its split screen capability, variety of maps, characters and adjustable gameplay options, the multiplayer mode of the original 'GoldenEye' is what made it so innovative. The same can be said of this reimagining but the lack of voice chat option online takes something away from the overall package when today's gamers are so used to communicating that way.



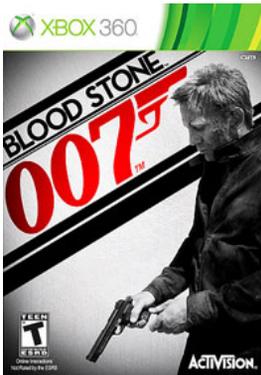
One of the best, if not THE best Wii game this year, 'GoldenEye' is exactly how a "revisit" should be done. Activision and Eurocom didn't take the easy way out and just port over the original, they have gotten their hands dirty, taking the elements fans loved and melding them into a brand new Bond installment.

'Blood Stone: 007'
 Format: Xbox 360
 Publisher: Activision
 Developer: Bizzare Creations
 ESRB Rating: T for Teen

Official Site: <http://bloodstonegame.com/>

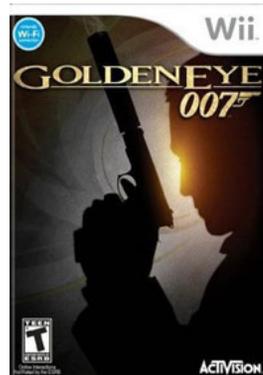
Rating: 9 / 10

'GoldenEye'
 Format: Nintendo Wii



Publisher: Activision
 Developer: Eurocom
 ESRB Rating: T for Teen
 Official Site: <http://goldeneyegame.com/>

Rating: 9 / 10



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