

Sandra Knowles, *Founding Editor*

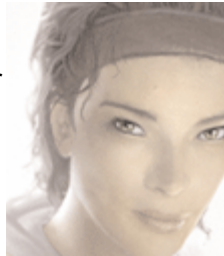
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Half-Life2

The original

Half-Life was released for the PC in 1998 by Valve Software, and was hailed as one of the best games of all time. It set new standards for first-person action/adventures with its interactive world, breakthroughs in storytelling, and attention to detail. It was a quality title. What Valve kept secret for many years after was that they started development on Half-Life 2 immediately after the release of Half-Life.

Now Half-Life 2 is out. Naturally, it's already being called "the best game ever made." I went down to my local GameStop videogame retailer and took it for a spin not long after it showed up on shelves November 16th.



Reviewed!

The story picks up after the first game. It takes place after the "incident" at the Black Mesa research facility-after you were forced to work for the mysterious G-Man. The world is different now. What you thought saved the world from an alien invasion in the first game, didn't save anything. The Earth's population has since dwindled down to near nothing and a new government was formed in a place called City 17, enforced by the Combine Overwatch. As Gordon Freeman, you stumble around town and meet up some old friends that turn out to be part of the resistance. From here you become quite a celebrity with the resistance as you attempt to bring down the one man who seems to be behind the Combine's wrath-Dr. Wallace Breen. You may remember Dr. Breen as the director of old Black Mesa, but now he has crowned himself as Administrator of Earth.

It's true, though, that more questions are raised than are answered by this installment of the Half-Life series. While some might not agree with this style of storytelling, most will agree that the experience was worth it nonetheless. Let me explain.

First of all, the game is beautiful. Even though the new Half-Life 2 engine, known as Source, doesn't quite have the graphical power of id Software's Doom 3, some will argue it looks much more realistic. It might be a case of "size doesn't matter, it's how you use it," but I have to agree that the game is the best looking game available today. Characters are more believable than ever. There's detail in every corner, even corners you wouldn't normally check out.

-by [Jeff Lindsay](#),
Digital Times® staff writer and
founder of Progium Software.

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CES 2005, Las Vegas, NV

Coming Up... This Week!



The fabulous **2005 International Consumer Electronics Show**, home of the "hottest technology under the sun" opens this week in Las Vegas, Nevada, running from the 6th through the 9th. This year's highlights include appearances by guitarist Les Paul and Bill Gates [probably not on the same stage]. As usual, I will inform you of some of the c-o-o-lest things there...like the **CEATEC Japan 2005** Press Conference and asia's latest technology in consumer electronics, Innovations showcase(s), Digital Entertainment for the home and much, much more. My roving reporter Lisa is covering digital cameras and the latest in cellphones. Michael will cover VOIP [voice over Internet Protocol]. Be sure to catch our reviews in the February Issue!

-editor

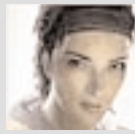
Results are IN: GameSpy 2004 Game of the Year

1) **Halo 2** (winner); Xbox, Bungee/Microsoft. A sequel to the classic first-person shooter with enhancements in just about every area.

2) **Half-Life 2**; PC, Valve/Vivendi Universal. A follow-up to the classic online first-person shooter, taking realism to a whole new level.

Half-Life2

Continued...



Certain parts of the game provide scenery good enough to be your desktop background.

The graphics, however, aren't the only showstopper. In fact, they're secondary to the amazing use of the new Havok physics engine that Source takes advantage of. Instead of having to figure out the game designer's rules to solving puzzles, you can now solve puzzles as you would in real life. The game uses all your basic laws of nature, and everybody knows those! Need to get up high? Pile some stuff up and get up there! With the help of one of the best weapons in the game, cleverly titled the Gravity Gun, you can accomplish amazing things interacting with the environment.

Then you have your action. Now, most shooter games are pretty much even in this department. They all involve some form of the kill or be killed manifesto. Half-Life 2 makes some decent attempts at making this more interesting. Certain parts of the game have a very strange, yet welcome Hollywood action flick feel to them. However, while the game boasts much smarter enemies, it sort of shows, but they don't seem all that smarter. Most of the time you can wait in a room and let them just come in only to get shot one after another.

What really stood out to me wasn't the intelligence of your enemies, but the intelligence of your allies. These guys will shout "Look out behind you!" where appropriate, hand you ammo when you need some, remind you to reload if you only have a few shots left, or, if they're a medic, provide you with medkits to replenish your health. You only get to fight with a small number of them here and there throughout the game, always being a pleasant experience, but towards the end of the game you'll be blown away by the finale battle.

The game is full of surprises, and even more detail. What most people don't realize is they pass up all kinds of nooks and crannies full of neat gadgets, scary surprises, or even story elements. And it's a pretty long game. This game is more than I expected, and I had some high expectations. Just like the original, with the release of Half-Life 2, Valve Software has gone right into development of the next installment... Half-Life 3. Of course, also like the original, there will probably be expansion packs for Half-Life 2 providing even more gameplay and more story to experience. Can't wait? Play Half-Life 2 again! ;)

-by [Jeff Lindsay](#),
Game Developer
Progrium Software

Half-Life 2 requires at least a 1.3 Ghz processor, 256MB RAM,

DirectX 7 compatible graphics card, Windows 2000/XP/Me/98, 4.5 GB available Hard Drive space and an Internet connection.

The information contained in Digital Times is a combination of original editorial content and information pulled from wire services, research and various online resources.

Top Six: GameSpy 2004 Game of the Year Cont'd

3) Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater; PS2, Konami TYO/Konami
The highly regarded stealth-espionage franchise takes the series to new heights.

4) Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas; PS2, Rockstar North/Rockstar Games
The much-anticipated San Andreas draws upon a new conceptual style.

5) World of Warcraft; PC, Blizzard/Vivendi Universal
The new installment in the Warcraft series gives players a new perspective in the world of Azeroth.

6) Unreal Tournament 2004; PC, Epic Games/Atari
Taking the core of Unreal Tournament 2003, this year's version improves every aspect of the game.

Award Page: [GameSpy](#)

In Our February

Issue:



. Review of the International 2005 Consumer Electronics Show.

. Digitally C-o-o-I Product, Software or Service!

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Sandra D. Knowles, Founder
email: editor@digitaltimes.com