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## Halo

16 Mar 2001 18:28 GMT

**Bungie's visually stunning sci-fi shooter will rock your ring-shaped world.**

### Part One



Crash course: The driving lessons weren't going well

**Developer:** Bungie  
**Publisher:** Microsoft  
**Format:** Xbox (featured), PC, Mac  
**Genre:** First person shooter/strategy

Mankind's last hope against the merciless onslaught of an alliance of alien beings known only as the Covenant is the most sophisticated piece of military hardware the universe has ever seen. That hardware is you.

You are a cybernetically enhanced soldier of lethal efficiency, and it falls on you to turn the tide in a bloody war, which is fast decimating SolCore-Earth's fledgling planetary empire. Many colony worlds have been annihilated and billions have died.

The last planet to fall is your own homeland, but you escape the carnage along with a group of marines aboard a SolCore corvette, the SCS Pillar of Autumn.



Halo: Awesome action

In a desperate bid to lead the Covenant away from Earth, the captain plots a course for an uncharted system. And, unbelievably, the entire alien fleet gives chase.

In unknown space, you stumble across a vast alien artifact orbiting between a gas giant and its Moon.

You have found Halo, a ring-shaped artificial world, 10,000km/6,200 miles in diameter and of unknown origin.

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Given the alien's pursuit of a single SolCore corvette, it would appear Halo holds secrets the Covenant covet.

The Pillar of Autumn is destroyed near Halo, but not before a ragged group escapes to the inner surface of the ring. And so it begins.

It's up to you to engineer a guerrilla war against the Covenant over land, sea and air, above ground and beneath the surface of this strange artificial habitat.

As well as utilizing SolCore military hardware and vehicles, you'll commandeer Covenant technology and that of the mysterious absentee landlords who built Halo, in a race to unlock the secrets of the artifact before the Covenant - thereby tipping the balance of the war.



Halo: A different kind of horizon

There's more than one sci-fi influence at work here, but the one Bungie is openly admitting to is Iain M Banks' *Culture* novels.

There is a structure called an Orbital in *Consider Phlebus* very similar to the Halo, and the style of ship names is also very reminiscent of the *Culture*.

Well, **Gamer** won't complain - you couldn't ask for a better pedigree.

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### Halo

16 Mar 2001 18:28 GMT

**Bungie's visually stunning sci-fi shooter will rock your ring-shaped world.**

### Part Two



Come out gunning: Hit alien soil running

*Halo* is one of the most eagerly awaited and closely watched shooter titles ever.

It was first announced at the Macworld Expo in July 1999 and had been in development for nearly two years then. But, back then, Bungie was an autonomous outfit and *Halo* was a Mac and PC game.

Now, Bungie belongs to Microsoft and *Halo* is an Xbox game. Some would even say *the* Xbox game.

Much has been made of *Halo's* supposed lack of levels or breaks in gameplay. When it was first unveiled it was touted as featuring a "world without end". These claims have since been tempered somewhat.



Whoops!: That'll be a cliff then

you'll know why.

Members of the press have famously felt the need to clarify they weren't

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watching full-motion video cut-scenes rather than game engine footage.

And, from reactions at Gamestock, it looks like the Xbox version of the game is living up to the high expectations set by the early PC demos.

*Halo* also boasts a universal physics model and state-of-the-art 3D animation techniques. In particular, Inverse Kinematics (IK) is a 3D modeling technique taking into account the interactions between different connected parts of a model.

This allows multiple simultaneous animations, making performing more than one action at a time far more realistic - such as shooting off a shotgun while executing a backflip.



Awesome: Check those lighting effects

The vehicle physics are incredibly lifelike. A famous example is the way each wheel on the jeep has independent suspension. It flips if you hit a rock at speed, and you'll see the wheels spin differently depending on the angle at which you hit different types of terrain. And, particle effects kick up sprays of dirt from beneath the spinning wheels.

Expect the way you manipulate weaponry to look more realistic than ever, with each weapon held in a different grip and various intricate reload animations.

In fact, expect *Halo* to completely obliterate preconceptions of what videogames can look like, with even cynical games journos admitting to slack-jawed awe at the level of detail and realism on show.

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**Halo**

16 Mar 2001 18:28 GMT

**Bungie's visually stunning sci-fi shooter will rock your ring-shaped world.****Part Three**

Ugly beast: Wouldn't want to tell him though

Another controversy surrounding *Halo* has been what perspective it will play from.

Bungie was originally talking about making it third person, but it looks like it has taken account of the furor this remark caused and *Halo* now uses the classic first-person perspective - apart from when piloting vehicles, when the game switches to third person.

There's still some confusion as to whether third person will be an option available throughout the game, or whether perspective will be forced. We'll have to wait and see.

From the demo at Gamestock, the potential minefield of how to control a first-person shooter with a gamepad seems to have been nicely negotiated.

For instance, control of the jeep uses the left analogue stick for gas and brakes, the right stick for direction, the trigger for fire and the buttons for crouch, jump and hand-to-hand blows.



Drive around: And shoot stuff

Early reports are it competes well with a keyboard and mouse, even at this stage with development time still remaining.

One of the most exciting things about the potential of this game has always been Bungie's attitude towards multiplayer.

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It was originally pitched as a squad-based multiplayer affair, with multiple vehicle positions so you could choose to drive a jeep or man its rear mounted machine gun. Or, you could stick to piloting dropships and never see the carnage of face-to-face combat up close and personal.



Firefight: Corridor frags

With the transition to Xbox, some confusion has sprung up around Bungie's multiplayer plans – in particular, *Halo's* online future.

Let **Gamer** reassure you, the up-to-four-player split screen is already in place and with Bungie's talent and attitude, and the Xbox's broadband Ethernet connection, it only remains for Microsoft to clarify its online strategy and for *Halo* to live up to its own hype.

*Halo* will still be getting PC and Mac incarnations, but with Bungie committed to it being an Xbox launch title, it won't be for some time yet.

Reason enough, if you still needed one, to start thinking about saving for a little black box of your own.

- *Simon Makin*

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