

# Humanity fights to survive: GOW 3

By Patrick G. Veilleux  
Managing Editor

Rev up a chainsaw bayonet, and dig into one of the most anticipated video games of 2011.

The conclusion to one of the decade's most popular video game series hit the shelves on Sept. 20. Gears of War 3 finishes what Epic Games started five years ago.

The series began in 2006 with the first Gears of War, which while it did not have a very in depth story, or redefining game play, still contended with Halo 2 and 3 for most played game on Xbox live, and also received the Game of the Year award from Imagine Games Network (IGN.)

The game is played in a third person mode where cover and tactical position is essential. People trying to walk around the field and lay waste to the enemy frequently results in being

overwhelmed by gunfire and explosives as the enemy picks off the protagonist from the safety of a barricade or a cluster of rubble.

The original game sparked a storyline comprised of a video game trilogy, five novels, and numerous comic books; all of which are considered canon to the storyline. It's direct sequel, Gears of War 2 built on the first game's success and brought new game play conventions such as meat shields, new brutal weapons and chainsaw dueling. Yeah, you read that right, chainsaw dueling. Paramount among these features was the original Horde mode, where players would fight waves of the games antagonists, the Locust Horde.

Gears of War 3 builds on these concepts presented in one and two. It allows a normal bayonet to be used in melee combat in the form of a charge, a sawed off shotgun that will mince an enemy in close quarters, and a multitude of grisly ways to finish a downed enemy.

The third game modifies the original Horde mode by giving

currency to players as they fight through three different Locust factions (some of which may fight with each other.) The currency can then be used to buy decoys, barbed wire fencing, automated turrets, and several different types of turrets that Gears can use to mow down the onrush of Locust soldiers. In addition, there is now a mode that allows the player to assume the role of various creatures in the Locust army to overwhelm humanity's last stand, called Beast Mode.

I think Gears of War comes to its own in campaign mode, where they allowed the author of the novels to write the storyline and scripts for the final installment. Karen Traviss vastly enhanced the quality of the Gears storyline. It made me appreciate every new and old character on a different level, as they behaved and reacted like real people instead of cookie cut stereotypes that are offered in so many video games.

The bad news about Traviss' involvement in writing is that unless you read the books you will not know about most of what is happening in the third game, even if you played the second game. One criticism I have heard which I do not empathize with, is the amount of cut scenes incorporated into the campaign, people say that it felt like a movie. For me, that is what makes a good video game, an almost cinematic value being added in was incredible, as well as seeing characters from the novels and comics making appearances for the first time, and playing pivotal roles.

The environments were another positive aspect of the third installment. You fight through deserts, paradise islands, canyons, bombed out cities, and even aquatic chasms, caves, and jungles of seaweed via a restored submarine. I cannot say if this is an environment, but there is also an airship chase through mountains, over forests, and above open plains.

With a game like this you might expect a very specific soundtrack of metal or rock and roll. On the contrary, Gears of War typically runs on large orchestral movements that evoke the exact mood the creators wanted in a given situation. The soundtrack provokes aggression, surprise, fear, sadness, and even a sense of empowerment, and it frequently does this while beautifully providing background music.

This game is nothing short of intense, and any room you play in will fire up to the sound of blistering gunfire, inhuman roars, and the doom saying growl of a rifle mounted chainsaw.

