

Video Game Reviews: Battle terrorists in style in 'Ghost Recon' sequel

by *Jeb_Haught*

Game: "Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2"

Publisher: Ubisoft

System: Microsoft Xbox 360

Cost: \$60

ESRB rating: T

Review rating: 3 1/2 stars

About a year ago, Xbox 360 owners were wowed by Ubisoft's stellar military action game "Ghost Recon

Advanced Warfighter," better known as "GRAW." Not wasting any time, Ubisoft has released a sequel.

With such a short development time, most fans - myself included - weren't expecting much. I was surprised by "Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2." The game has new abilities, better graphics and a much-improved online multiplayer mode.

Just like its predecessor, "GRAW 2" takes place in Mexico. This time, the country has been plunged into civil war and terrorists are massing on the U.S. border. Only Mitchell and his squad of "ghosts" can end the terrorist threat by completing several missions spanning the course of three days. In this case, intense combat will take place in dusty towns, barren deserts and modern cities. Unfortunately, the single-player campaign is rather brief.

'GHOST RECON' - Players can fight terrorists in dusty Mexican border towns and modern cities in 'Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2.' CNS Photo courtesy of Ubisoft.

WARFIGHTER - 'Warfighter 2' has new abilities, better graphics and a much-improved online multiplayer mode than its predecessors. CNS Photo courtesy of Ubisoft.

'CUSTOM ROBO ARENA' - In 'Custom Robo,' you can customize your fighting robot and then test it in battle online and off. CNS Photo courtesy of Nintendo.

FIGHTING ROBOTS - In 'Custom Robo Arena,' players can customize their pint-size fighting robots and then send them into battle, either in the single-player adventure or in online combat. CNS Photo courtesy of Nintendo.

Players can still control their squad or vehicles from any location, but in "GRAW 2," they have the ability to see through the "eyes" of those units, a very welcome addition. This gives players much more awareness of what's going on around them and lets them react faster to unexpected threats.

"GRAW 2's" online multiplayer action looks much better than that of the original, and a wealth of options are available to customize online matches.

While it's improved, the online play still isn't complete. Unfortunately, the awesome "cover system" from the single-player campaign isn't yet available in online multiplayer, and that's disappointing.

Still, action fans will have a blast with "GRAW 2," both online and off.

Game: "Custom Robo Arena"

Publisher: Nintendo

System: Nintendo DS

Cost: \$35

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 3 1/2 stars

Nintendo's "Custom Robo Arena" - an action-packed, mini-mech combat title - shows once again why the company dominates hand-held gaming. Players can customize their pint-size fighting robots and then send them into furious battle, either in the single-player adventure or in online combat.

A budding robot commander begins his escapades as a young boy attending a new school. Having just received his first custom robo as a gift, the lad must join a robo team and start battling teams from other schools to make his way to the championships.

Throughout the story he meets new friends, learns fresh moves and buys upgraded parts. After a while, he will accumulate several robos in his garage, each having weapon slots that need to be filled. This is where strategy comes in, as the player must decide which weapon combinations will be most effective.

Strategies can work better on some levels than others, with some areas offering cover behind walls. And since robos can dash through the air and attack while airborne, combat can be very unpredictable. Creating combination attacks is the key to success, and this requires stringing three or more different attacks together. Mashing the same attack button over and over will damage your opponent, but not nearly as quickly as mixing up available maneuvers.

Simply having a solid single-player adventure coupled with local multiplayer battles would have made a great game. But there's also great online multiplayer action.

As a result, "Custom Robo Arena" emerges as the DS' best action title.

RATING KEY

4 stars - Must have

3 stars - Pretty good

2 stars - So-so

1 star - Don't waste your time

- - -

Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

E: Everyone

T: Teen (13 and older)

E10-plus: (Everyone 10 and older)

M: Mature (17 and older)