# Gamers get Hollywood-esque touch in Uncharted 2

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Showgoers try out games at the PlayStation 3 exhibit in June 2009 in California. "Uncharted 2: Among Thieves", the video game released this week by California studio Naughty Dog, transports gamers into an action-adventure with pacing, effects and storytelling worthy of a Hollywood blockbuster. Sold only for the Playstation 3 platform, the game releases Tuesday in the US and Friday in Europe.

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Two years after the first episode sold more than 2.5 million copies worldwide, gamers once again step into the shoes of Nathan Drake, an intrepid treasure hunter who is part Indiana Jones, part Lara Croft, in this design-driven sequel.

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In this new adventure, Nathan Drake searches for a fleet of ships and treasure of unfathomable power mysteriously lost by 13th century explorer Marco Polo during his voyage between Mongolia and Persia.

The cinematic approach grabs players from the start and doesn't let go.

The game unfolds at an often breathtaking pace, alternating fluidly between high-octane gameplay and cinematic cutscenes, borrowing from the filmmaker's toolbox dramatic twists and turns like betrayals, unexpected reversals, and a tumultuous love triangle.

"Our guiding principal is to tell a story and convey emotion. That's why we approached Uncharted 2 like a film. There are 90 minutes of film sequences in Uncharted 2, it's like a film in the midst of a game," Christophe Balestra, co-president of the development studio, to AFP.

"In the first Uncharted, we asked Hollywood screenwriters to help us but that didn't work and we took it back.

"They didn't really understand video games. In our business, you have to write the game like a game and not like a film that you play," added Balestra.

While there is no mistaking that "Uncharted 2" is a game, both the characters and locations take PS3 technology to another level of entertainment.

"We always try to offer a universe that tends towards reality even as we style it in our own way. The ultimate goal is not to be photo-realistic," Balestra said.

At a basic level, the structure of this game, which lasts about twelve hours, rests on three principal ideas: exploration, combats and puzzles.

The first is fairly limited because generally only one path allows the player to advance. The combat situations, on the other hand, prove challenging, because the enemies possess artificial intelligence that allows them to create strategies for blocking Drake. The puzzles do not require intense intellectual thought.

In an advance over its single-player predecessor, Uncharted 2 allows up to 10 people to play simultaneously via Internet. Several types of classic confrontations are possible, ranging from the treasure hunt to capturing territories.

"We have a game mechanics that lends itself to multi-players. The characters can use weapons, hide behind objects and climb walls in environments large enough to be interesting. We tested it internally everyday after lunch and since the result was convincing, decided to offer it," Balestra said.

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