

Review: Sci-fi cliches mar beauty of 'Crysis 3'

February 21 2013, by Lou Kesten



This video game image released by Electronic Arts shows a scene from "Crysis 3." (AP Photo/Electronic Arts)

"Crysis 3" (Electronic Arts, for the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, PC, \$59.99) is a gorgeous game. Its creator, the German studio Crytek, has lived up to its promises that it will set a new benchmark for computer graphics. On a state-of-the-art PC, it's spectacular.

You probably don't have a state-of-the-art PC, but that's OK. I played "Crysis 3" on Microsoft's eight-year-old [Xbox 360](#), and it still looks

pretty good. If only all that beauty was in the service of something more interesting than another alien bloodbath.

Actually, "Crysis 3" throws two types of enemies at you: the alien Ceph and the human employees of CELL, a corporation that has built a giant dome over the ruins of New York City. As a supersoldier nicknamed "Prophet," your job is to get inside the Liberty Dome and figure out what CELL is up to.

Prophet is equipped with a "nanosuit," a combination of human and alien tech that has two primary functions, armor and cloaking. If you're the kind of player who likes to plunge right into firefights, you'll keep turning on the armor. If you'd rather avoid attracting attention from the Ceph, you can hit the cloaking switch for temporary invisibility.

The nanosuit's other major feature is a visor that lets you scope out the battlefield before you rush in, pinpointing enemies as well as locating ammunition dumps and fresh weapons. The visor also helps you hack enemy systems, so you can disarm minefields or turn turrets against their builders.

Of course, Prophet has the usual assortment of firearms at hand, from pistols and sniper rifles to [assault weapons](#) and missile launchers. You can also pick up Ceph plasma weapons, which are somewhat more effective at obliterating the aliens. The silent-but-deadly Predator bow is a little clunkier, but it does let you remain cloaked even while you're shooting electrified arrows.

All this takes place in a New York City that will be unrecognizable to anyone who lives there now. Familiar neighborhoods like Chinatown and Hell's Kitchen are flooded or overgrown with vegetation, and there are only a few glimpses of landmarks like the Brooklyn Bridge. Right in the middle of the whole thing is a hydroelectric dam, which makes one

wonder: Why is this set in New York?

It's a shame, too, that the story is so cliched. I don't think I'm giving anything away by revealing that there's a connection between CELL and the Ceph, and other plot twists are so baldly telegraphed that the only surprise is how long it takes the characters to figure them out. And it wraps up with a desperately tedious boss fight that makes some of the best tools in Prophet's arsenal useless.

Fortunately, "Crysis 3" comes with a robust assortment of multiplayer games. There are the expected variations on deathmatch, capture-the-flag and king-of-the-hill, but the real standout is "Hunter." It's a clever game of hide-and-seek in which nanosuit-clad hunters pursue less powerful CELL guards; any guard that gets killed joins the hunters. The suspense is excruciating.

For fans of first-person shooters, the solid online action may be enough to make "Crysis 3" a worthwhile purchase. If you're a PC gamer who wants to show off your new graphics card, it's probably essential. But if you're looking for a fresh approach to video-game science fiction, you won't find it here. Two stars out of four.

More information: www.crysis.com/us/crysis-3

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