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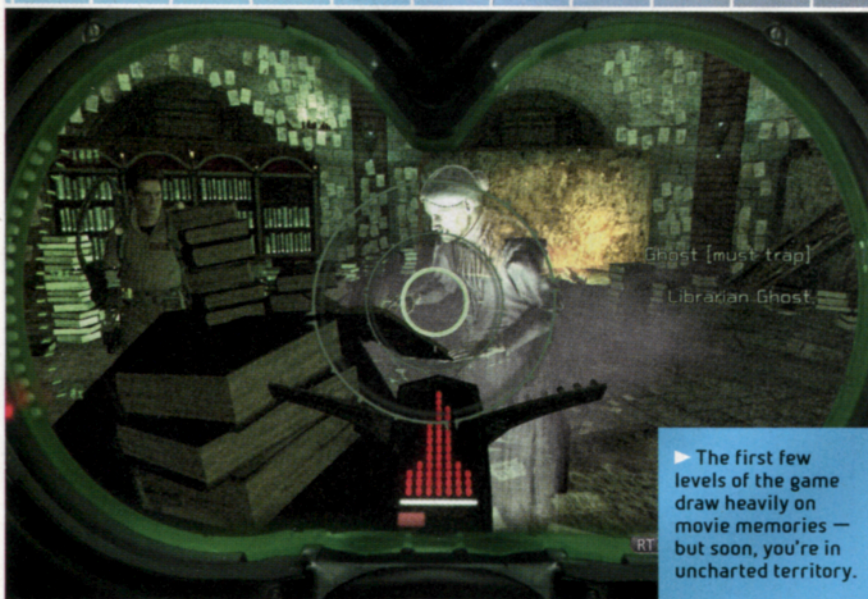
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Ghostbusters: THE VIDEO GAME

"All my readings point to something big on the horizon"



▶ "Um...we're gonna need two big-ass graham crackers and all the chocolate you can find!"



▶ The first few levels of the game draw heavily on movie memories — but soon, you're in uncharted territory.

It is with extreme, cheese-filled regret that we admit this, but...busting actually *does* make us feel good. We really didn't want to put it that way, but the heroic fun practically oozes out of *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* in both single-player and multiplayer modes.

We recently got a chance to march through the first few hours of the campaign, which included many of the areas already seen in our earlier previews — the return to the Sedgewick Hotel to recapture Slimer, the office building fight against Stay-Puft, and the journey through the New York Public Library to get the librarian ghost that got away. But this time, we also got to explore the Ghostbusters firehouse, escort the Ecto-1 to Times Square, and search for secret collectibles with our PKE meter.

Crucially, we finally got to hear all the actors playing their roles in full. Bill Murray's Peter Venkman is the lazy ladies' man — perhaps sounding a little older, but his ass is also a little



► Multiplayer matches are entirely co-op affairs. The best mode sends you and the crew out to trap as many ghosts as possible.

wisser. (Case in point, in a pickup line to new love interest Dr. Ilisya Selwyn: "You know, I never forget a face...attached...to all the rest of that.") Ray Stantz still sounds as enthusiastic as ever; it's as if Dan Aykroyd never stopped playing the role. You'll get to hear plenty of Egon Spengler and Winston Zeddemore, too, since you pair up with everybody for parts of missions — clearing debris from shattered New York streets with Winston, for instance, or blasting spectral books in the bowels of the library with Ray. The ghost-wrangling and trapping mechanic still felt fun several hours into the game: playing with new proton-pack functionality like the ghost-freezing Stasis Stream and sticky Slime Tether offered some welcome variety.

It's not exactly survival horror, but many parts of the game are at least unsettling, such as walking around a flooded hotel scanning for spectral entities, hoping a spider-like candelabra doesn't

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► Bustin' ain't easy, but it's necessary. While wrangling a ghost, slam to stun and trap it.



Ghostbusters continued

► Ghostbusters find dimensional portals in the darndest places. Terminal Reality has really taken advantage of the environmental freedom a game engine provides.



pounce on your face. Or in the darkened library, where symmetrical book stacks (just like the Philadelphia mass turbulence of 1947!) appear where you were standing just moments before. Stalking through the juvenile section of the library, listening to the cries and whispers of phantom children and seeing spectral handprints on the walls...brrrr. It's easy to remember *Ghostbusters* as a comedy, but it tried to be spooky, too. The game arguably does this even better, aided ably by great graphics and glowing visual effects. You'll catch cartoonish ghosts, but the 'busters themselves look only slightly caricatured, and the environments are rich with destructible details.

We like joining the iconic team as the freshly recruited Experimental Equipment Technician, but we're also happy that multiplayer lets us jump into the suits of the original four Ghostbusters. Did you like *Gears of War 2*'s Horde mode? Good, because that's basically what you're going to get here — six four-player co-op scenarios (and mini-campaigns that tie three scenarios together) on Xbox Live. Some are simply contests to see how long you can last, but they're all competitive: your performance will be ranked at the

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BEYOND EGON

Egon Spengler said "print is dead" — but we love him anyway. *Ghostbusters* co-writer Harold Ramis talks about fake physics, monsters in the closet, and Egon's final fate.



OXM: Talking about the first film's script, you once said, "I was concerned that the physics of it make sense somehow — that intelligent people wouldn't look at what we were doing and think it was totally ridiculous."

HAROLD RAMIS: Well, I would hate to be cross-examined by a real physicist, but we actually consulted with the jet-propulsion laboratory in Pasadena. We posed the question: If ghosts existed, how would we detect their presence? They talked about very discrete changes in temperature and barometric pressure, all kinds of motion sensors and smells — that's why Bill Murray is carrying a sniffer when he first goes to Sigourney's apartment. I was sort of more interested in the parapsychology aspect, but Dan Aykroyd had a theoretical basis in his head from the beginning, based on a real belief system of his, which I don't really share. But I slept through enough physics classes that it all sounded familiar and plausible to me.

OXM: As a result of that research, the *Ghostbusters* universe has always felt very believable and real. So when you see people building their own outfits and arguing over names of fictitious proton-pack parts, do you feel pride or shame?

HR: [laughs] When a woman tells me "My husband has watched *Caddyshack* 150 times," I usually feel bad about that. But in the case of *Ghostbusters*, I think it did a lot for

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NYC PILGRIMAGE: The Ghostbusters firehouse is a real, working firehouse in the Tribeca district of New York City. If you'd like to visit, the men at Hook & Ladder #8 are pretty friendly to fans. Take the 2 train and get off at Franklin; the firehouse is a block south on Varick. Knock on the side door and be polite — and bring some cash for a souvenir T-shirt!

Ghostbusters continued

► In multiplayer, you'll need to trap ghosts, save your friends, and beat the clock — simultaneously!



end of each round, and you'll earn both cash and bragging rights. Containment matches — where a wave ends when all ghosts have been eliminated (or time runs out) — bear the strongest resemblance to Horde; they're also the most fun. Other variations include Destruction (quickly blast the ghost-spawning artifacts that appear around the level) and Protection (defend your PKE Disruptors from the ghosts who try to destroy them). Quick, fun stuff.

Playing through the main campaign in co-op wouldn't make much narrative sense, nor would launching proton streams at your teammates, so co-op multiplayer really is the only option. While we're concerned that the few number of MP levels could work against the game's long-term appeal, what we played was a blast. There's enough positive stuff in place to make us think *Ghostbusters*, like *Riddick* and *Lego Star Wars* before it, could join the increasingly promising pantheon of Xbox 360 movie-inspired games that don't suck. And that makes us feel good, too.

— Dan Amrich



► Oh, the indignity! Venkman hates getting slimed, but frankly, getting flamed seems worse.

BEYOND EGON (continued)

kids. I'm an amateur psychologist, but there's actually a developmental age when kids develop this fear of what's in the closet or what's under the bed. The movie did a lot to empower kids — they were scared by the experience of watching the movie, but they felt like, "Wow, if those three idiots can handle this, there's someone out there who can protect me." And I've had calls from friends and acquaintances who say: "My child is terrified that there's a ghost in our house. Will you talk to them?" And I'll talk to the kid and say: "Do you know me? I'm Egon. I can assure you, there are no ghosts in your house. I promise you."

OXM: *Egon loosens up between the first and second films...*

HR: The second one was just on TV and I watched some of it. I kinda regret the loosening up — a little bit.

OXM: *But he seems to be back in the science box for the game. Take us into Egon's future — where is he when he's retired? What does he do for fun?*

HR: Because we're talking about a third *Ghostbusters* film and the script is being written, I have a very clear idea of where Egon is. The only hint I'll give you is that he's moved past the physical plane of reality — he's almost entirely on an ethereal plane.

OXM: *When it comes to unexplained phenomena, Dan Aykroyd has always strongly been "the believer" and you have always been "the skeptic." After 25 years of playing with the supernatural, are you still skeptical?*

HR: Oh, absolutely. Well...interestingly, having just finished a movie that has many points of contact with the Old Testament [*Year One*, releasing this June], it kind of does suggest the question of supernatural interference in our world, not unlike the question raised in *Ghostbusters*. And I was advised by a consulting rabbi that even though I'm a secular humanist, not to throw out the mystery. There are things we don't know and may never know. God lives in what we don't understand; that's the real source of religion. So I guess I can say that I'm a believer that there are things we don't know. But I stop short of trying to explain everything we don't know with seriously imperfect explanations. ■