SWAT 4

by Guest Writer **Chuck "Magnum MGG" Ankenbauer**

"Breach, bang, and clear"… oh how I loved giving that command in *SWAT 3*. To see my element stack up on the doorway, one officer would open it, while a second would toss in a flashbang, then *bang!,* the element would enter the room clearing left and right then the "all clear" report was given.

The SWAT series has been around for a long time. It first started out in the *Police Quest* series, and then it took a turn to a video based adventure game. Then a top down, real time strategy game which included police dogs and armored ram vehicles. Then came SWAT 3 winning the hearts and computer hard drives all over the world. SWAT 3 was so good that they came out first with the *Close Quarters Battle*, then the *Elite Edition* which added a multiplayer element. Then topped it off with the *Tactical Game of the Year Edition* which increased the number of multiplayer players from five to ten and added mod activation tools. Now, for 2005, comes the next level of SWAT action, **SWAT 4** with a new developer. Irrational Games has taken over the making of SWAT 4 after the debacle that was *SWAT: Urban Justice*.

Tutorial

SWAT 4 will contain a two part tutorial. The first part will cover using tools and certain skills in the game, while the second part teaches you how to use and control the AI members of your element.

Single Player

SWAT 4 will contain 14 missions where the player is the element leader. You will receive the call up, get your mission briefing along with either the actual floor plans of the building or a drawn map of the area of operation. A new feature, you will also have access to the 911 tape of the caller. You will then go to the equipment screen where you will pick and choose your gear along with your elements gear. Then off to complete the mission. Afterwards, your get a detailed list of stats and successes along with your total points for that mission. You will have the choice of a campaign, single missions, quick mission, or make your own quick mission.

Multiplayer

SWAT 4 will have an in-game browser and also be partnered with *GameSpy*. You will have a number of choices when it comes to multiplayer action. First is a co-op, where it's just like the single player mission but up to 5 players can be online to take a role of one of the officers. There's also three other modes of multiplayer head-to-head. Up to 16 can join these styles of games. One is the basic free for all death match which is pretty much required now days. The other two modes are more team cooperative. One being a VIP escort mission where one member of the SWAT team is the VIP and needs to be escorted somewhere, while the other side is the bad guys trying to capture the VIP, hold him for two minutes then kill him to win. The final mode is being kept hush hush, but I'm thinking it will be another goal type game. Maybe infiltrate an area and disarm a bomb, or rescue some hostages.

Interface

SWAT 4 gives you a choice in the options to pick either the classic SWAT 3 style command interface or the recommended new overlay command structure. It appears to work similar to the *Raven Shield* series of games. You place your cursor over an item, say for an example a door, you then right click your mouse and an overlay with different commands pop up, you then left click on your order and the element responds. What seems great about this is that there will be different options based on what you're looking at. Say for instance if you right click over the door lock, you'll get a menu with an option to pick lock, along with others. If you right click at the base of a door, you'll have the option to order your officer to use the optic-wand. You can also turn on a small window, like in SWAT 3, and see whatever your officer sees and issue commands from within.

One cool new feature is a sniper mode, you will have snipers in some of the missions and they will be placed tactically. You can open a window to see what the sniper sees, and then switch to the sniper to take the all important shot yourself. If what I read was correct, that's the only way your sniper will engage, if you take control, the AI will not engage on it's own but just call out what he sees.

Surroundings

SWAT 4 missions and locations are said to have more of a darker theme to them then the SWAT 3 locations. Irrational Games wanted to show you the true, darker side of the crime world, and I for one like the ideas. You'll go after hardcore criminals in some of the darkest areas. While doing your mission you will feel more involved in the situation then ever before. Weapon ballistics and environment ballistics are modeled and real as can be. You can shoot lights, windows, glasses, and other items within the environment. There are different choices of ammo you can pick and load, and each ballistics have been modeled. Some will go through plywood and some won't. Some will travel through two bodies and some only one, which I discovered in the beta when I shot a bad guy and the round went through taking out the VIP I was suppose to be rescuing.

Equipment and Weapons

SWAT 4 contains many of the nice toys from SWAT 3, along with a lot of new toys. The officers now have plastic flexi-cuffs to make there apprehensions with. You now get beanbag rounds for your shotgun, you get the regular flashbangs, and tear gas, but now you can have the ultra cool rubber ball grenades, which explode and shoot rubber balls everywhere, really putting a hurting on anyone in the blast radius. You also get pepper spray now, which I thought was stupid until I got a face full of it in a multiplayer game, and had to stare at a red screen for a few minutes, while the action continued around me. Another cool, new toy is the Tazer, when you shoot that at a subject the wires come out and prong you center mass, you then get shocked for about ten seconds, and can't move. You almost feel sorry for your in-game character because you just know that it's got to hurt.

The SWAT officers get a number of nice weapons. These include the M4 super shotgun, the Nova pump action shotgun, a breaching shotgun, a less then lethal shotgun, a pepper ball weapon, (CS ball launcher), M4 assault rifle, AK47, Uzi, HK MP 5, Silenced MP5, Colt 1911, Glock, Tazer gun, and Remington 700 sniper rifle.

The bad guys get a Colt M1911, Beretta M9, Scorpion machine pistol, USP40, A revolver, HK 53 SMG, UMP45, AK74, G36K, M4 enemy version, M1 Super90, and a sawed-off shotgun.

Conclusion

SWAT 4 is set to be released in April of 2005. It's looking really good. Any game can have co-op multiplay in it nowadays but the SWAT series continues to make it a true, "must work as a team to succeed" game. Irrational Games is doing well. From what I've seen in the articles, post, and the beta demo I'm currently involved in there is no doubt that SWAT 4 could be another "Tactical Game of the Year." Not only is the single player looking exciting and fun, but the multiplayer is the icing on the cake. Find yourself four disciplined gamers who can follow orders, and work well as a small unit and you got the making of some of the best co-op action out there. Look for SWAT 4 around April.

*Note: The information in this Preview is compiled from a number of sources including press released material, magazine articles written on the subject, official forum responses, and dedicated fan web sites like **10-David** and **The BBE Squad**. I also obtained a lot of the information from the limited release multiplayer beta. Also note that the final features list is subject to change and the weapons list has not been finalized. All screenshots were either officially released by Irrational Games or captured by me in the beta.*
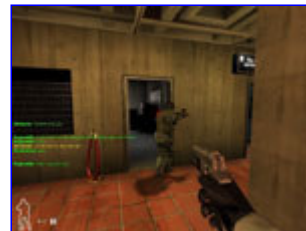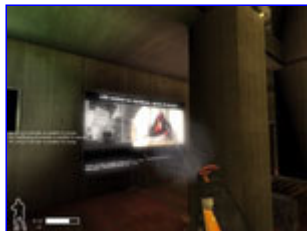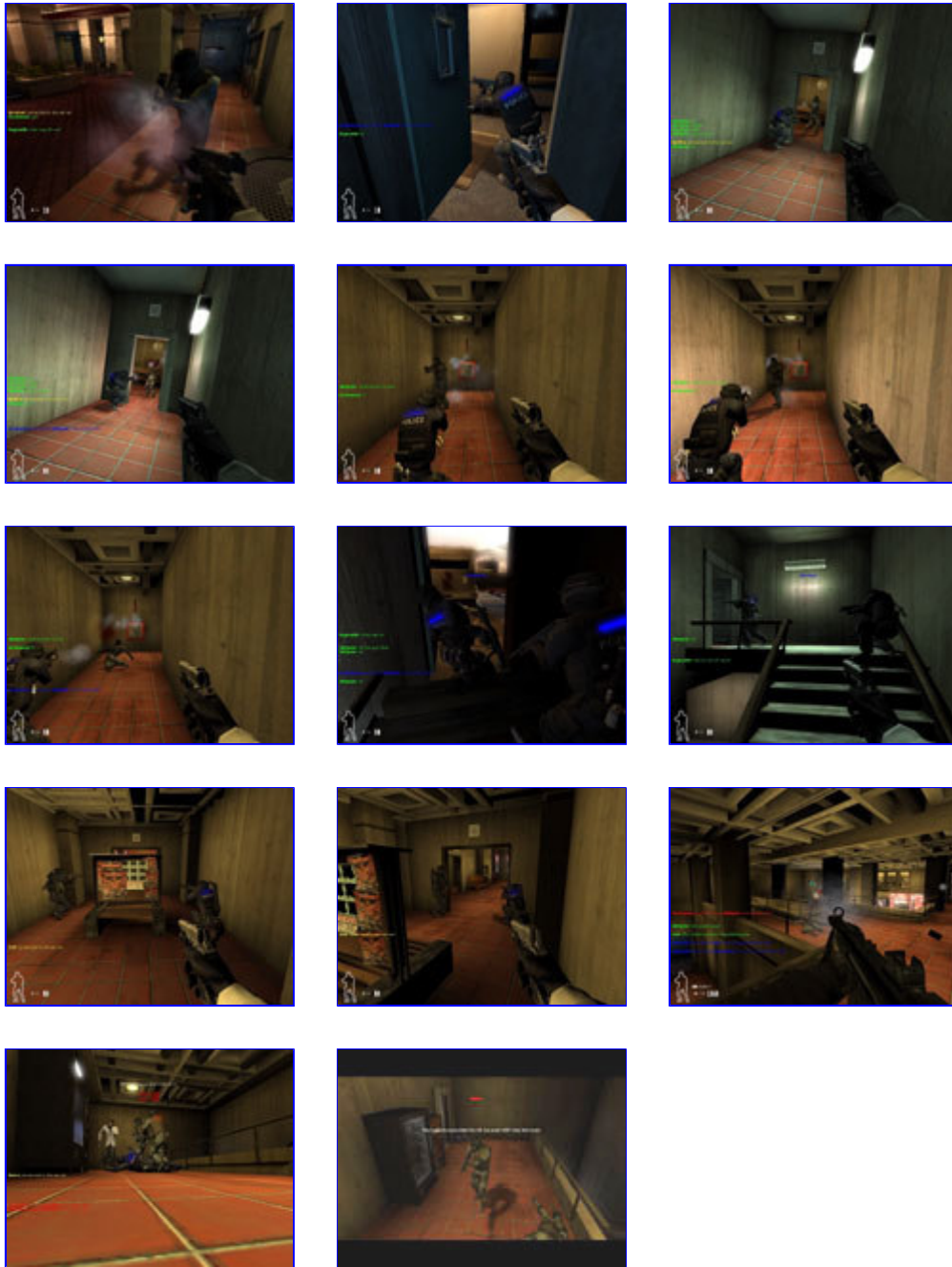
Previewer's System Specs

- Pentium 4, 2.0 GHz

- 2GB DDR RAM

- 180 GB Ultra ATA 100 HD

- Radeon 9800XT w/256 video RAM

- Creative Live 5.1 sound card

- Broadband cable connection for online play