Red Faction : Join the Revolution :

"Lured to mars by the Ultor Corporation's promise to a better life, thousands have come to seek their fortune and work for the massive mining company. But all is not as it seems. A deadly plague is sweeping through the barracks, and miners suffer daily abuse at the hands of Ultor guards. Is a revolution on the horizon?" (back cover)

Basic Information

Game Title:	Red Faction
Year:	2001
Company and Author:	Volition and THQ
Type of Game:	First Person Shooter
Price:	19.95 (Playstation 2 Greatest Hits)

Minimum Stated Hardware Requirements:
Playstation 2®
Memory Card 332kb
Digital or Analog Controller
Vibration Controller Optional

Actual Hardware Required
Additional space on the memory card is helpful
Analog Controller is necessary (not optional)

Game Summary

Quick Overview:

Red Faction is a first person shooter. The story takes place on mars in the near future. The graphics are good, the gameplay is good, and the storyline is good. None of the features are great, but the combination makes for a pretty good game.

Story Line

In Red Faction, the story line is not the focus of the game, but is still a necessary part of the experience. The authors find a nice balance between story and action. The story line flows with the game very well, there are not well defined levels, instead you go from place to place working your way through the mines. In each area you get to, you receive a transmission from a member of EOS suggesting that you make certain moves to help them or escape from an area. The game designers make it appear as if you have options on what to do, but for the most parts all paths lead towards the goal. This practice helps the game players to never get hopelessly stuck and gives them a fair chance.

The basic premise of the game is that you are a miner who made it to mars with the promise of wealth and a better life. At the start of the game, you are working for Ultor, the mining company in charge of operations on mars. You are frustrated with the guards, life in the mines, and the fear of an unusual plague. One day you are the witness to abuse of a fellow miner by the guards at this point "You are left with only one choice... Kill or be killed" (manual 28). From this point on your goal is to escape and take as many miners with you as you can. Many of the other miners are working to get out and find information about the mysterious plague and have formed a rebelious group lead by Eos. Many of your directives throughout the game come from Eos, but some come from Hendrix, an Ultor worker "sympathetic to the cause".

Player's Role:

"You are Parker, a miner employed by Ultor." (manual 28) Parker gets thrown into the revolt after witnessing a miner get attacked by guards. Throughout the game you learn more about the problems that are happening on the planet. The deeper

into the game, the more necessary your character becomes to making the revolt succeed.

Installation: None.

User Interface:

The default player controls are difficult to get used to and confusing. Re-mapping the controls was a helpful feature and made it easier for me to play the game. The games menu system and weapons selection was very intuitive. Volition also made the conversations in the game available in the menus. Having the game dialog available makes it difficult to loose track of your objectives. The user interface also allows you to save the game at any point in the game. This is a very important feature in this game, since it can be very easy to die.

Game Play:

The game play is pretty dynamic. The designers keep you busy exploring the world with different vehicles and weapons. Throughout the game you are faced with challenges. Some of these are explicit others implicit. The majority of the game your character is on foot. In general the goal of a particular section of the game is for you to get from point-a to point-b without being killed. This usually means kill the guards. Other sections of the game require you to avoid detection by guards or use a machine to trap an enemy.

Scoring:

During regular game play, the game is goal oriented. There really is no scoring other than the amount of shielding that you have and the amount of ammunition remaining. However, in the multi-player mode, you are scored based on how many times you have been killed and how many times you have killed an opponent.

Artwork:

The artists did a very good job creating a believable environment. All sections of the game were well designed and carefully thought about. Some of the mines have graffiti on the walls, the computer terminals are colorful, the weapons are detailed, even the chairs have texture to them. All of these things make a realistic feeling environment. One of the really interesting features of the game is the Geo-Mod technology. This technology makes the maps dynamic. Geo-Mod allows you to destroy walls, dig through rock to create new passages and avoid having to find keys to doors. This technology is incorporated into the game play and is necessary to accomplish some tasks.

Sound and Music:

Volition's use of sound effects and music is well done. The sound flows well from scene to scene, creating tension in tense parts of the game and releasing the tension when you have accomplished a goal. Most of the game uses background noise to give you a sense of location. Although some background noise is music, the majority is background noise.

Special Features:

Red-Faction has several features that set it apart from many games. The Geo-Mod technology is very well implemented. The game also features a multi-player mode. The multi-player mode has decent sized levels to play in with one other person and up to four other AI bots. The AI bots are good, and fun to play against, but they lack true difficulty levels. The difficulty is handled by the amount of damage that your character receives when hit. It does not seem like they change the accuracy or movements of the bots with the difficulty level.

Manual:

The manual seems small but is comprehensive. It covers everything

necessary to get started. It outlines the basic story of the game, gives an introduction, story line and character bios. All of the screens have descriptions and are well documented. All of the weapons and vehicles are also covered in the manual, each with a brief description and any necessary information on their controls.

Bugs:

I have not noticed any major bugs.

Game Review

Red faction is a lot like other first person shooters. There is not much that sets this game apart from the others.

The Good:

Red faction has an interesting storyline, good graphics, good sound, good gameplay. The storyline is simple, so you don't need to be immersed in the game to have a good time playing it. But, the storyline is a distinct part of the game also. It helps create the environment, and you are regularly brought into the story. It is a game that you can pick up several months after not playing it and start where you left off, not missing much. The sound and video work well with the action to create a realistic game that is fun to play. The story was enhanced by the voice actors in the cut scenes. Character development is decent and also adds to the realness of the game. The limitted number of main characters gives the main charaters more meaning. It is much easier to keep track of who is who.

The Bad:

This game did have some bad points as well. Actual background music would have been nice in some areas of the game, but the sound they have works pretty good. In terms of graphics, the backgrounds and textures were very well done, but the characters

faces left room for improvement, especially in the cut scenes. In terms of story and difficulty of the game, several of the solutions to problems are to really easy, at times you are even told explicitly what to do. I found one puzzle in the game that could not be solved without entering a certain room to activate a conversation. If you did not enter the room you could lure the enemy to the trap but not kill it. There was little of value in the room but without entering the room you could not defeat the enemy. Although most puzzles did not have this problem it was a frustration not being able to defeat the enemy the way I wanted to.

My only major issue with the game is the load time. The game pauses when you reached certain hot spots to load the next section of the map. Volition did not allow these maps to overlap so when you pass a point where map data needs to be loaded and then backtrack, the game reloads the old map data. This type of loading created problems with the game pausing to load while enemies were still on the screen, and somewhat hindered exploration. Map data that loaded as you progressed, instead of in large chunks would have been a much better system.

Similar Games:

The Quake Series, Unreal, Turok, Doom

Appropriate Audience:

The game is rated Mature. Mature is a reasonable rating for the game.

Design Mistakes:

load time

Summary

Overall Strengths/Weaknesses:

The Good:

Storyline

Background, and scenes

Voice actors

Ability to save anywhere

The Bad:

Characters faces

The UGLY:

Load time

Worth Purchasing:

This game is definitely worth purchasing. It is a very good price for a very good game. The game play lasts for many hours, and the story line is interesting. Red Faction also has a high degree of replayability. It has several difficulty levels, and is a long enough game with just the right amount of story line, and just the right amount of action for a first person shooter. The multi-player mode, even if you are just playing against bots, is very fun and a good reason to pick up the game.

Improvements:

First person shooter games always strive for more realistic violence and better graphics.

Caching the levels would be extremely helpful.

Moving clouds would be a plus.

The character's faces could be rendered better.