Game Evaluation: Payday 2

Company: Overkill Games Genre: First Person Shooter Price: $29.99

System Requirements

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| Minimum | Recommended |
| OS: Windows XP SP3 | OS: Windows XP SP3/Vista/Windows 7 |
| Processor: 2 GHz Intel Dual Core Processor | Processor: 2.3 GHz Intel Quad Core Processor |
| Memory: 2 GB RAM | Memory: 3 GB RAM |
| Graphics: NVIDIA GeForce 8800/ATI Radeon HD 2600 (256MB minimum) | Graphics: NVIDIA GeForce GTX460/ATI Radeon HD 5850 (512MB minimum) |
| DirectX®: 9.0c | DirectX®: 9.0c  |
| Hard Drive: 20 GB HD space | Hard Drive: 20 GB HD space  |
| Sound: DirectX 9.0c compatible | Sound: DirectX 9.0c compatible |

 Payday 2 is the sequel to the successful game Payday: The Heist. In Payday 2 you take on the role of one of four nefarious criminals, led by their mastermind Bain to complete a multitude of criminal acts. You may play as Dallas, Chains, Hoxton, or Wolf. Each has a personality that is not seen within the gameplay but within clues from character dialog and outside media. Bain sets you up with contracts and coordinates each heist and promises an overlaying storyline to each of the heists, but little can be determined from it at this time. DLC will be added further on to complete the story, if any, but until that time the twelve heists have little in common.

 Payday 2 is available for digital from Steam or the PlayStation store and a retail copy is available for PC, PlayStation 3, and Xbox 360. Payday 2’s demographic would be 18-30 year old male. Installation is very simple requiring only a few simple steps.

 Payday 2 is a co-operative tactical hoard survival FPS. The gameplay puts you four criminals, a large amount of money, and a large variety of obstacles for you to overcome on the same map. As of now there is no direct PVP. You are able to shoot your team mates but this is a bad thing. Each heist is very different from the rest ranging from knocking over a jewelry store, a bank, cooking and selling meth to gang members, stealing servers from the FBI, and stealing a prototype fusion engine to keep big oil in power. Every time you play the heists they also get a bit different which can influence gameplay. During the mission Bank Heist the kind of loot you can steal can be different (cash, gold, or nothing in which case you need to get into the safety deposit boxes) also after you get through the first safe a second door will be in your way. In the mission Rats, the gang members you sell the meth will pay you straight up, try to kill you and steal the meth, or it will be an FBI sting operation. Some heists can take place on multiple days (in game days, it just means it’s on a different map) and in between those days the player may be intercepted by the police and forced to fight police waves to advance to the next day, all while carrying all the loot they have gained throughout all days. These are “Escape” missions.

 Each character has their equipment and class which comes with its own skill points. Equipment can be purchased and skill points redeemed with money. Lower level skill points just increase basic stats (how long you can run, how many cable ties you can carry) but later game skill bonuses can redefine how heists take place (gaining access to C4 can blow down many doors, the ability to silently crack safes).

 Actual gameplay boils down to completing objectives until you are found out by the police, then it comes down to completing objectives while surviving. Nine of the twelve heists can be completed 100% “quietly” (you can do whatever you want as long as the police are not alerted). As long as you are quiet the police will not come. When being quiet fails; wave after wave of police will come to stop your plans. Civilians in game are quick to panic but you may get them under control by yelling at them to get on the ground. You may cable tie up civilians to make them hostages. The police force will not send as many or as difficult forces to those who have more civilians. The flow of how enemies attempt to hinder you is they start off slow getting progressive harder until you are defeated. The only way to escape the police for good is to complete your objective or never alert them. After a while in game they will start a “Police Wave” where enemies will spawn more frequently and their AI will tell them to rush you. There are special enemies the police will use including Sniper units, Tasers, and the Bulldozer. If you are brought down by the police, you have 30 seconds to be helped up by a team mate before the police take you into custody. You can still shoot your secondary while you are down but only until you take more damage. If you are taken into custody you can be revived by completing a hostage trade. Bain will mark out a tied up hostage for your team members to find and they will be released and you will be let back into the mission.

 Most objectives involve stealing something. Large loot items are placed in bags and meant for the player to carry and is a big part of gameplay. Bags can slow down the player and make him unable to interact with many other objects. In order for bags to count and you to be paid they must be escorted to the getaway car. This function alone makes teamwork and proper risk analysis.

 The user interface covering the main menus and the like are all very simple. Select the category and it will bring you to a more specific menu or screen. The UI for selecting heists has changed since release. Before you could only select heists from a picture of a map with little icons flashing in and out. You didn’t always get the mission you wanted right away. They have since then changed it to allow players to select from a traditional list of available missions. The user interface in game keeps all relevant information on the screen and also highlights important assets such as players, objectives, and medical and ammo bags. The player is able to spot out special enemies which will be highlighted for his team mates.

 The game provides three different metrics to assess your ability:

* Your Spending Cash: This is the money you may spend on weapons, masks, and skill points. About 5% of what you steal goes here.
* Your Offshore Account: This money can be used to purchase contracts and at a later date can be used to customize your safe room.
* Your Level: This determines how many skill points total you have, what equipment you can purchase and the amount of contracts available to you.

At the end of each heist you receive money, both to spending and offshore account, and experience. You also receive a “Payday” which can be a weapon mod, a mask, money, or an experience bonus. It doesn’t matter how well you do on a heist, only how much stuff you steal and how many people make it back with you.

The artwork for Payday 2 usually features the characters over a dark background displaying high end equipment or loot. The music you hear in game is very tense using combinations of percussion and techno assets to maximize drama and tension. The music also switches tempo based on what stage of the heist you are currently experiencing.

To those who bought the career criminal edition also get a copy of the soundtrack a unique in game mask.

There are a few bugs within Payday 2. The biggest and possibly most game breaking is the ability to interact with objects through walls. You can pick up bags, revive team mates, answer pagers and most anything through a wall (This may have been patched recently). There are some examples of the AI failing but other than that nothing too big.

Game Review:

What is fun about the game?

* (Actual) co-op is fluid and allows drop in and drop out
* Wide array of missions
* The graphics and audio for the guns are absolutely stunning

What is not fun about the game?

* The game is unforgiving with the later difficulties bordering on impossible
* “Bulldozers are evil”
* An hour of gameplay can be invalidated should the mission fail

There are not too many games that share this genre. In other games they are usually just bonus game modes apart from the already established game mode. The one game that does share this genre is Left 4 Dead and Left 4 Dead 2. Both games are about surviving hordes of enemies while completing objectives. A key difference in gameplay is Payday 2 has you staying in one spot while most of Left 4 Dead has you moving through the levels. Payday 2’s missions are more premeditated, you bring in your own equipment while in Left 4 Dead you have to pick it up off the ground. Payday does the genre better by giving a sense of progression, as you level up you gain access to more weapons and equipment that will allow you to do the heists on higher difficulty.

A large design mistake (that has been patched out) was the counter intuitive design of the heist selection UI. Another mistake was not having Escape missions after single day heists. This allowed a lot of people to grind money and experience in really simple missions whose obstacles were bypassed with the right skills. One last mistake is they replaced the voice actor for the character Hoxton. In Payday: The Heist, he had a suave voice which is no longer there and has made a lot of fans very disappointed.

Payday 2 is most accomplished with its gripping co-op action, wide arrangement of levels, and promises of future expansion with DLC heists. The only glaring weakness is the difficulty which at the highest is almost impossible and can be frustrating to even attempt. In my opinion this game is the most fun multiplayer experience of the year and is completely worth purchasing. Payday 2 have already improved on every aspect of Payday: The Heist but could still stand to include more heists to increase its replayablilty and more guns and gun mods.