



FEATURE

# Star Wars Battlefront 2

*This is not the Julian Rizzo-Smith you are looking for*

In a galaxy not so far away, Star Wars Battlefront 2 is making great strides to respond to fans' criticisms. EA President Andrew Wilson commented during EA's E3 press conference that DICE are actively responding to both positive and negative feedback from the original Battlefront.

"When we think about the feedback we focused on most, the first thing is that single player story," said Producer Craig McLeod. "People said, 'we love your multiplayer. It's really great. We're really happy with it but where's the story?'"

From here, DICE began developing a campaign co-developed by Motive Studios, the team currently working on former Uncharted writer Amy Henning's and Visceral Games' Star Wars IP. It follows Iden Versio, the leader of the Inferno Squadron, an elite Special Forces unit in the Galactic Empire, and their journey to avenge their fallen Emperor.

"It's a continuous story with a beginning, middle and end," Game director Mark Thompson told Eurogamer. "You follow Iden's journey for 30 years from the end of [Return of the] Jedi to up to the Force Awakens at Starkiller base."

"It isn't a discrete set of missions or separate war stories like Battlefield 1," he continued. "You do follow Iden through this journey whilst from time to time, switching sides and playing from the perspective of one of the iconic heroes because again, that's just part of Battlefront's DNA. Sometimes you're a Trooper, sometimes you're a pilot and sometimes you're Luke Skywalker with a lightsaber."

Motive Studios want to tell a new, untold story, and saw that in the Star Wars universe, we don't know much about the Empire.

"We really wanted to put ourselves in their helmet and think about who they are as people," Motive Studios' Content Producer Paola Jouyau told PlayStation

Lifestyle, "and give this other perspective on familiar events that we saw in the movies... We are really taking the open, authentic experience DICE is known for into single player. You have this 360-combat approach, the progression system that the multiplayer has to single player, and there is some player choices in the way you evolve your character, as well."

Commander Iden is accompanied by a companion droid who plays a role in the narrative and in battle.

"He gives her abilities that elevate her above the usual Stormtroopers," Jouyau said. "You give him specific actions to do... he can slice, he can shoot, he can take down enemies. He has these wide set of abilities coming from the Empire that you're able to use and customize as well."

According to design director Niklas Fegraues, DICE subconsciously adopted a Battlefield approach to designing the multiplayer, introducing a class-based system and vehicular combat. Tanks patrolling the streets and starfighters firing from above create a sense of breadth and depth DICE aimed to deliver in the 2015 shooter. Weapons are locked to certain classes and like Battlefield, a well-balanced team is one that communicates, with roles that support each other.

"The foundational idea with introducing a class system is to focus on team play," he said, "which is another thing we heard from players who played the first game. They wanted more ways to team up, play together and strategize; that's the main reason why it's there. We have a really broad and appealing set of classes that appeal to very different types of play styles and sub-play styles."

These include an assault class, equipped with classic aggressively offensive weapons, such as an assault rifle and frag grenades; a defensive heavy role; the specialist who can snipe from long-range

In an effort to keep the community alive, EA announced that all downloadable content for Battlefront 2 will be free. Finn and Captain Phasma will be the first post-game characters as well as a planet from the upcoming film, *Vill: The Last Jedi*, which will be playable before the movie's release in theatres.

DEVELOPER	DICE
PUBLISHER	Electronic Arts
PLATFORM	PC, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One
RELEASE DATE	14th November



Another feature, large-scaled space combat, will be co-developed by Criterion, who worked on the speeder bike missions from the first game. DICE weren't willing to go into any more details at E3 but described them as big battles with high stakes.



embodied the character of that hero," said McLeod. "When I play as Boba Fett, I want to feel what it would be like to strap on that jet pack, fly around and rain destruction from above. When I think about Darth Maul, he's incredibly acrobatic, spinning and wheeling, great at close combat - really just pushing through hordes of enemies. Rey does mind tricks, so she's very different. Han is your typical smuggler. He's got his crack shot, shoulder charge and bullies his way into the battle."

Like McLeod says, multiplayer encounters prioritise team play. In one match, I saw a group of four trooper soldiers take down Darth Maul quickly and efficiently. Two heavy units laid down cover fire while an officer buffed them from behind and a specialist moved to an advantage point to snipe.

"I saw this amazing thing happen just a little bit earlier," he added, "where Rey performed a mind trick on a whole bunch of enemies and Han dashed past, threw detonate charges and blew them all up. Our heroes aren't all powerful anymore, [either,] they have strengths and weakness. You need to use heroes smartly to really get the most out of them."

DICE aim to create a similar synergy within their heroes as with their trooper types. In many ways, McLeod likens their approach to the three Star Wars eras to how the Rogue One film brought the original trilogy into a more modern time.

"We're bringing all three eras together to create a cohesive experience," he said. "We're taking

the essence and the fantasy of this prequel era and these prequel battles and bringing it into something that's really modern, feels very cohesive as you play through these differing eras."

"From a multiplayer perspective, people want[ed] all the eras... more heroes, more Star Wars characters, more progression and more team play," he continued. "All these things that create that breadth and depth that a DICE sandbox is so well known for."

As shown in the extended cinematic trailer, Star Wars Battlefront 2 boasts locations from all three eras, and feels authentically grounded in the mythos of Lucas Arts films.

"What's really important is that we're trying to tell a story of the location [and] a fantasy," said McLeod. "When we think about what worked really well in the first game, [maps like] Walker, Song and

Hawk worked because [we] finally got to be a part of the battles we'd hoped for."

"When I think about Theed [the map playable at E3] and Naboo, this huge invasion that's the fantasy a lot of people want to live out," he continued, "it's about telling that story. Here [with Theed,] it's about escorting them up to the palace to breach the palace, to then get inside to that second stage, shut down the security, override the system, get into the palace and have that final last stand. That will not be the same fantasy you'll have on Yav or the same fantasy you'll have in Starkiller Bay."

"This is what's going to make this galactic assault signature game mode so unique. It will play differently to each location you go [to] but will be familiar to you as a Star Wars fan."

DICE's interpretation of the co-op Instant Action mode from

the original Battlefront series by Pandemic Studios returns. Skirmish was in the previous game a post-game update available only offline, joining players together against AI, but according to McLeod, will be fully featured from the start of the game.

"Couch co-op has always been there for us," he said. "It's been really important. I love watching Stars Wars, either with my wife, my kid or a friend, and the ability to bring them into the game is really powerful. We saw that in the first game and we brought Skirmish and people got really excited."

"When we say, 'we want this to be the essential Star Wars shooter,' we can back that up with a story, with space, with deep multiplayer, with couch co-op and really all those elements that people love," he continued. "No matter how you want to engage with our entertainment and our game, you can do that." ❧

distances and the supporter, which is the officer's class.

"[The supporter] can give everyone bonuses and lay down these turrets that can defend different angles," said Fegraeus. "If you have a big multiplayer sandbox with soldiers and vehicles and so on, of course it's similar to Battlefield, but the important thing for us is to make sure this feels like a Star Wars battle."

One way the team has done that is with the return of hero and special unit perks. Unlike the previous game which used blue collectables found around the map, you can take on the role of heroes from the films or classes separate to the four available

with in-game points unlocked during matches as a reward for completing objectives and assisting your team.

"When you become a hero it's such an awesome moment," Criterion's Matt Webster told Eurogamer, "but [in the first Battlefront,] it was becoming a brief experience for the lucky few, or people were just hunting and hanging around the spawn locations for tokens. So we wanted to expand the hero play within a battle, we wanted to increase that scope but also have a better system for players to be able to become a hero than just picking up a token."

"It was really important for us that with each of these heroes, they

Once again, Porkins fails to pull up because he is too close.

If you think about it, villainy in Star Wars is a bunch of cloned Kivis following a guy in a bath robe.

