

## Videogamer Empire: Total War Hands On Preview

Publicado por sertorio67 - 01 Dic 2008 20:37

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The main thing about being an 18th Century admiral is that it's a bloody complicated job. We mean this literally: it's bloody, and it's complicated. Life is hard enough when you're ordering troops about on dry land, but at least the basic principles are fairly obvious. You get your blokies and horsey-men (those are the technical terms) into a good spot, then you shoot the enemies with your boom stick, or twok 'em with something heavy and sharp. When you're out on the water, you've got to contend with a choppy and unpredictable sea. Your movement is largely governed by the wind. And on top of that, you've got to deal with the fact that most of your cannons fire from the side of your ship. From the side! How mental is that?

Okay, so that last paragraph is a gross oversimplification of the truth. In fact, it's not even remotely accurate - and it's a lousy piece of journalism to boot. For starters, manoeuvring your "blokies" on land is obviously a lot more complicated than we just implied - consider the fact that the performance of a regiment of musketeers will vary wildly depending on their formation, and who they're fighting against. Still, the fact remains that naval combat is a complex business. Budding captains will swiftly learn that there are lots of things they must keep track of. And since this is the first time that sea battles have appeared in a Total War game, the challenges will be fresh for everyone - even veterans of the series.

If you think naval warfare sounds like a difficult proposition from a gamer's point of view, spare a thought for Creative Assembly, the guys who actually had to design and code a system to support these battles. No-one would question the developer's skill, nor their enthusiasm for taking on such a task - but it's still a lofty goal. And yet we're happy to report that they seem to have nailed the job - on the basis of what we've played so far, at any rate.

We were lucky enough to be among the first group of hacks allowed to try our hand at boat-based multiplayer skirmishing. The setup for our battle was a two-on-two rumble-en-bateau, with each nation taking control of three ships. We were given charge of three Ships of the Line - heavy duty war vessels, bristling with cannons. Two of these ships were listed as being third class, the other was top-of-the-range first class - the heaviest-hitter of the trio. In the final game you'll see up to 20 boats for every nation joining the rumble, but three vessels was more than enough responsibility for an initial test run.

As with standard land-based combat in previous Total Wars, you'll begin by arranging your forces in a brief deployment phase. The playing field (well, the sea) is divided up into set zones for each participant, and within this space you're free to place and swivel your ships as you see fit. Ideally you'd want to do this quite carefully, but since we were fairly certain that the fight was about to turn into a massive free-for-all (it did), we just plonked our vessels down and got ready for a scrap.

The first thing you'll learn in Empire's naval battles is that positioning is absolutely key. Since you'll be launching your attacks from either side of your vessels, it's really important to keep your enemy in the right place. This is easier said than done, since large ships tend to take a while to turn around. As you might expect, you can guide your tubs about by simply clicking where you want them to go, but you can also get them to turn about via icons on the left side of the screen, or by repositioning a basic hull outline

that appears when you hold down the right mouse button. It takes time to get into a given spot, so you have to keep an eye on both where your opponents are now, and where you might be in a few moments time.

This need for careful timing is equally applicable for the firing of your cannons. While you can happily leave your forces on an automatic-attack setting, you'll often want to take charge for yourself. Another set of icons to the left of the screen will allow you to switch between ammunition types, while two large buttons will give you manual control of the guns on either side of your selected ships. Clicking once will ready the cannons and summon a white targeting arc from the side of your boats; a second click will open fire. Since it takes a fair while to reload between shots, it's a real necessity to make every shot count: the two skirmishes we played were packed with tense moments where we waited for our rivals to sail into the exact position that we'd receive the most damage.

The focus on precision means that a well-timed attack is extremely satisfying - particularly since there's a massive impact depending on your choice of ammunition and where you hit. Standard cannonballs have the longest range and are good at putting holes into hulls, while grapeshot will wipe out your opponent's crew, provided you can get close enough to use it. Meanwhile the middle-range chain-shot is excellent for taking down masts, crippling your enemy's ability to move. Ships will be affected differently depending on where they are hit - so while you might think it makes more sense to hit your rival's flank, firing down the length of a boat is more likely to take down sails and kill off sailors.

This location-based damage means that each of your units has three energy bars - for the health of its sails and for the left and right halves of its hull. The latter are fairly self-explanatory, but it's equally important to look after your masts - otherwise you'll end up stranded. One nice touch is that you can choose how many sails you're using at any given time. Unfurling everything will let you bomb along at speed but it'll also make you far more vulnerable. However you choose to sail, you'll have to contend with the wind. While Creative Assembly has tweaked the realism a bit here to make things more playable, you'll still find it hard going to head directly against good old Mother Nature.

The end result of all these considerations is that your ships feel like precious, valuable units. We're sure that things will become more natural once we've played a few more battles, but in the skirmishes we tried we loved the way that your tactics are inherently woven into the status of your units. If you've taken damage on one side, you'll have to try and keep all hostile forces in line with your stronger half. Or if you find a ship totally immobilised, as happened to us in our second fight, you'll still be able to affect the battle: we waited until our enemy was about to board us, then we ripped into his crew with a full swathe of grapeshot. This being a Total War game, you can also zoom right into the game models to watch the action from up close. Even when you're taking an embarrassing beating, you'll be able to watch on as tiny little sailors swarm over your boat. Oh, and when ships get plugged full of holes, they'll take on water and sink in accordance with where they've been hit. It looks incredible, particularly when your poor seafarers start jumping overboard in desperation.

The previous Total War games have been absolutely massive affairs and Empire will be no exception, with at least 12 playable factions from the get-go and a veritable banquet of diplomacy, dishonesty and dismemberment, spread across three theatres of war. This was our first hands-on with the game, so

there's still a huge amount for us see - but it was nice to see how naval combat will add a completely new flavour to the familiar mix. We're expecting great things from this game, because when it comes to strategy battles of this kind of scale, it's arguable that no-one does it better than Creative Assembly.

Empire: Total War is due for release on PC on February 6 2009.

<http://www.videogamer.com/pc/empire ...view-1390.html>

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[http://www.videogamer.com...war\\_campaign\\_trailer.html](http://www.videogamer.com...war_campaign_trailer.html)

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## Re: Videogamer Empire: Total War Hands On Preview

Publicado por CeltiberoGil - 01 Dic 2008 23:35

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Gracias Sertorio pero no me funcionan los links...

Creo que uno es este...

[http://www.videogamer.com/pc/empire\\_tot ... -1390.html](http://www.videogamer.com/pc/empire_tot ... -1390.html)

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## Re: Videogamer Empire: Total War Hands On Preview

Publicado por CeltiberoRamiroI - 02 Dic 2008 12:57

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Por intentar resumir las partes más importantes para los que se sienten incómodos con el inglés (el idioma :roll: ):

- Pruebas 2v2 con sólo 3 barcos cada uno.
- Manejo complicado de barcos por varios motivos: efecto del mar y del viento, movimiento en un sentido y disparo desde el lado, movimientos lentos que obligan a &quot;adivinar&quot; lo que va a hacer el rival para tomar decisiones en el momento oportuno
- Control manual o automático de toda una serie de parámetros: número de velas a usar (velocidad), carga de los cañones de un lado o de otro del barco, tipo de munición, momento de disparo
- Necesidad de control del tiempo. Los cañones tardan en ser recargados y desperdiciar un disparo te

quita un tiempo precioso en el que puedes ser barrido del mar. Al estar cargados los cañones aparece un arco de zona de alcance del disparo con el que puedes seleccionar el objetivo.

- Informe de daños en velas, babor y estribor. Así se puede cambiar la forma de maniobrar según la zona más dañada.

Hombre, si tenemos en cuenta que es un informe &quot;publicitario&quot; era de esperar bastante entusiasmo, pero algunas de las cosas que dice pintan bien e interesantes, por lo menos para las batallas on-line.

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## Re: Videogamer Empire: Total War Hands On Preview

Publicado por Celtíberolsmaylive - 02 Dic 2008 17:09

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Pinta más que bien :D

Suponiendo que todo se lleve a la práctica... Yo personalmente me veo jugando con calculadora y cronometro a mano para poder hacerme a tanta información xD Supongo que será cosa de acostumbrarse pero veo demasiado que hacer y tener en cuenta en poco tiempo. Vamos a estresarnos por el TS gritandonos de todo xD Pero Mola.... 🧑‍🎮

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## Re: Videogamer Empire: Total War Hands On Preview

Publicado por Stelios - 02 Dic 2008 17:13

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### CeltiberoRamiro escribió:

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Puuufff... Lo estoy viendo... pongo la mano en el fuego a que el tipo de combate va a ser al juego de PC &quot;Piratas del Caribe&quot;, rompiendo la dinámica de estrategias para ver que el barco con más alcance o que carga más rápido es el que gana... o ordenando el disparo con la barra espaciadora... xD



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## Re: Videogamer Empire: Total War Hands On Preview

Publicado por CeltiberoEmberrado - 02 Dic 2008 18:19

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Tampoco parece tan complicado. Es mas o menos lo que cabe esperar. Que vamos a tener que micromanejar los barquitos estaba cantado. La cosa es que no se pasen o que efectivamente de tiempo a todo. Si no; que implementen una pausa táctica como en los Combat Mission.

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