

What happens in

NEW VEGAS stays in NEW VEGAS ...until now

Neon, blue skies and cross-dressing mutants? That's the apocalypse, Vegas-style.

PSM3 travels to Obsidian to get the world-exclusive on Bethesda's epic RPG sequel

We want to offer people something that feels familiar but has new elements to it - more of an extension of *Fallout 3* than a complete reinvention of it" explains Josh Sawyer, *New Vegas*' project director. He's chatting to PSM3 over at Obsidian's studio in sunny Irvine, California following an extensive demo of an already polished, yet

surprisingly familiar-looking *Fallout: New Vegas*.

And it's true - at first glance the new game's similarities to *Fallout 3* are striking. Set three years after the events of *Fallout 3*, 40 years on from *Fallout 2*, *New Vegas* kick things off with a bang instead of a birth. You were a courier, intercepted on your way to New Vegas by persons unknown, shot in the head and left in the Mojave desert to feed the

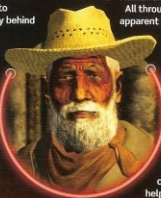
mutated wild-life. Fortunately for you, a kindly robot named Victor picked up your broken body and rushed you to the run-down, Wild-West style town of Goodsprings, where local sawbones Doc Mitchell patches you up. And so the scene is set for you to discover the mystery behind your attempted assassination.

Born again

When you wake up, eyes blinking, you go through the same story-embedded character creation system as you did in *Fallout 3*. Doc Mitchell asks your name and age before you climb out of bed, wobbling on your feet like a dazed boxer, and head over to a machine called the Vigour Tester. It does the same job as the You Are Special book in *Fallout 3*, allowing you to set your base stats, which incidentally, have stayed the same too. Next, Mitchell sits you down and gives you a

psychological profile test - it's the equivalent of the GOAT exam, only a little smarter and a lot funnier. The first round of questions is word association, and when Mitchell says "Mother" you get the option to plump for "Human shield".

All throughout the demo it's apparent that Obsidian are much more comfortable behind the keyboard than the team that made *Fallout 3* and, before that, *Oblivion*. The scripting is witty, the characters more distinct. "We want real, memorable characters. I think it helps you remember parts of the world you'd otherwise forget," explains Larry Liberty, lead producer. He continues: "We had to modify the dialogue engine from *Fallout 3* to include the types of dialogue and options that we wanted". This is something we discover sooner rather than later. But let us set the scene for you first.



Test of strength This is the Vigour Tester machine. You visit it at the start of the game to set your basic stats. It's your first taste of this new *Fallout*'s playful humour.

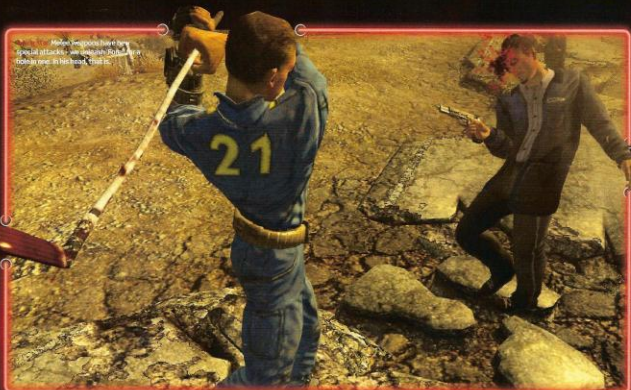
Perk up
Perks make a return - you'll bag one every time you level up. No word on what the new ones will be, but you can bet they'll have a Vegas theme.



Once the psych-test is over, you're free to leave Mitchell's shack and head into Goodsprings proper, armed with kit kindly given over by the Doc according to the skills you chose to invest most heavily in. So, for example, if you went heavy on medicine, you're given more Stimpacks. Clever. Outside, you're hit by one of *Fallout*'s trademark 'incredible vista' moments when you see the wasteland for the first time. Except this time you emerge shielding your eyes from the bright sunshine, barely obscured by wispy clouds in the intensely cerulean sky. You see



Here, you see how the special attacks - we call them 'Bob's' - are used in the game. In his head, that is.



relatively unspoiled houses, massive man-made structures in the distance, and... plant life. "In *Fallout* lore, this area wasn't as badly effected by the nuclear strikes. We have clear skies, we have saturated colours, we still have architecture that reflects the area" explains lead artist, Joe Sanabria. Ah, now we start to see New Vegas confidently pulling in a different direction to its predecessor.

Dyno-mighty

From here, you're free to do as you like. There is a tutorial for newcomers, which outlines the basics of VATS and inventory management, but - because the game is so similar - you don't have to take part. You can be free-roaming the sun-bleached wasteland five minutes after starting a new game.

"You can be free-roaming the sun-bleached wasteland five minutes after starting a game"

For the purpose of our first-look, though, we're taken into the main mission of Goodsprings. Here it seems the town has been caught in a conflict between a gang of escaped convicts called the Powder Gangers and a man called Ringo (who you find hiding out in the toilets in the local saloon).

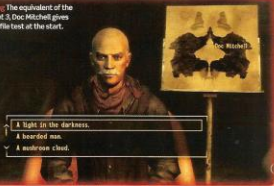
Hardcore mode

Thought *Fallout 3* was too easy? Now there is a Hardcore mode, which forces you to deal with dehydration, carry doctor's bags for broken limbs, and changes Stimpaks to make them heal over time.



As you'd expect, you're free to approach this scenario as you choose. You can gather supporters in the town to help drive off the Powder Gangers. You can ignore it. You can side with the cons and hand over Ringo. We opt to help him out, and go about town trying to win over residents and gather supplies; and it's here we see how the dialogue has changed. Now you can use skills other than speech to influence conversations, and the dialogue option that appears now reflects the chances of it succeeding. So, in our mission we use our Sneak skill to propose a stealthy approach to the Powder Ganger assault, but because our Sneak stats are low our plan sounds woolly and filled with words like 'er' and 'kind of'. Needless to say, we fail the conversation. Time for plan B. We head outside, chat to Easy Pete - a crazy old redneck - to see if we can blag some of his dynamite and, because we have a high

Character building The equivalent of the GOAT from *Fallout 3*, Doc Mitchell gives you a psyche-profile test at the start.



Anatomy of a mission

We walk you through one of New Vegas' side-quests and introduce you to a cross-dressing Super Mutant called Tabatha...



Black Mountain

The mission's set in a monitoring station called Black Mountain where mad, cross-dressing (yes) Super Mutant, Tabatha, holds a Ghoul called Raul hostage until he fixes her robot. It's guarded by Mutants and elite Nightkin, who can turn themselves invisible before uncloaking to attack.



Fight the mutants

Fight your way up the hill against Mutants and physics-based traps (we're nearly crushed by a boulder) and you reach one of the domes. Inside is a transmitter used by the Mutants to communicate. Through crafty speech we use it to turn the regular grunts on the Nightkin. Once they're dead, we rush in and rescue Raul, who is locked in a nearby shack.

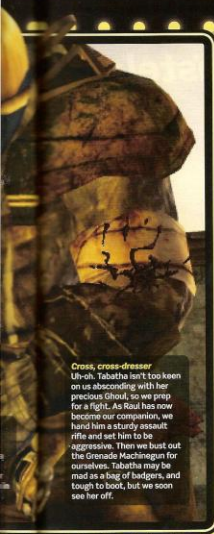


explosives stat, he agrees to hand some over.

With our prep done, the fight begins. It's all very similar to *Fallout 3*, with VATS featuring heavily as we blow off limbs using dynamite and a modified 9mm. One thing that is new is the addition of special attacks for melee weapons (currently mapped to Δ). Using a 9-Iron, we activate 'Fore!' on one unfortunate Powder Ganger, which sees our character swing a powerful shot straight into his nuts. Ouch. The fight concludes and the mission is over. We're awarded some positive karma for 'doing



The VATS targeting system on your Pip-Boy is back, only now it has a dusty yellow glow.

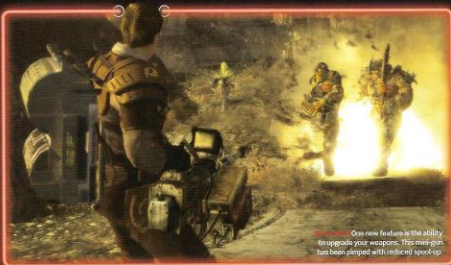


Cross, cross-dresser
Uh-oh. Tabatha isn't too keen on us absconding with her precious Ghoul, so we prep for a fight. As Raul has now become our companion, we hand him a sturdy assault rifle and set him to be aggressive. Then we bust out the Grenade Machinegun for ourselves. Tabatha may be mad as a bag of badgers, and tough to boot, but we soon see her off.

the right thing' and we gain favour with the people of Goodsprings.

Divided loyalties

Obsidian are well aware that the morality system in *Fallout 3* is far from perfect. In the Capital Wasteland people still trust you with their most intimate secrets and desperate missions, even if you butcher entire towns and fire mini-nukes at their children. *New Vegas* features a reputation system that runs alongside



One new feature is the ability to upgrade your weapons. This mini-gun has been pimped with reduced spool-up.



Dog days You find companions in *New Vegas*, just like you did in *Fallout 3*. Sadly, this hound already belongs to Sunny (pictured), who walks you through the tutorial.

karma to give the world a more realistic feel. Screw over a township and they won't forget it. Mess with a faction and word spreads, making other members of that group more hostile to you all over the wasteland.

Factions? Yes, and we're not just talking about the Brotherhood of Steel (they're not confirmed, but will undoubtedly make an appearance). During our demo, Obsidian revealed the two main factions fighting for control over *New Vegas* - the New California Republic (NCR) and Caesar's Legion, a slaver group.

"In *New Vegas* it's all about the player examining the ideologies of the various groups that are controlling the area and supporting one over the

So what's it like on PS3?

Fallout 3 was better on 360, but as for this...

Joe Sanabria, lead artist
"Developing on PS3 hasn't been an issue from my perspective. The only thing we've really had to be aware of is sticking within memory limits, but aside from that, we've been able to get some good performance out of the PS3."

Larry Liberty, lead producer
"The engine itself was used in *Oblivion* first, then moved over to *Fallout*, so I don't think it was made to be a PS3 engine from the beginning. It has been a challenge, but it works well now, especially with the new libraries that help to enhance performance."

Josh Sawyer, project lead
"To be honest, there were problems when Bethesda developed the engine and first released *Fallout 3*, but over time they've worked out a lot of those issues. We haven't found many problems with PS3. To be honest there are problems with 360, problems with PC, and problems with PS3. There isn't an inordinate number of problems with the PS3, so it has been no easier or harder to work with than the 360."



"Obsidian are far more comfortable behind the keyboard than the team that made *Fallout 3*"

New Vegas at a glance

Six things to know about New Vegas right now

1. The Strip

Obsidian are still working on Vegas' iconic Strip of landmark hotels and couldn't say much more. They did imply that it would have gambling, variety shows and concerts...

2. Power is precious

Also within the world of New Vegas is the power generating Hoover Dam. It's a key part of the map, as all factions are battling for electricity to power their assets.

3. Weapon mods

You can now buy mods for your weapons to give them an edge. Once attached, they add value to the firearm - handy when you're selling it on.

4. Factions

There are two main factions in New Vegas: the disorganised military group New Californian Republic, and the slaver organisation, Caesar's Legion.

5. The soundtrack

Although artists are not confirmed, Obsidian say they're aiming for a blend of Rat Pack style tunes with more Western numbers.

6. Orbital laser FTW

During one mission you get to fire an orbital laser at enemies on the ground. Later on, you can actually get a personalised version of this weapon...



others," explains Sawyer. "Each of the ideologies will have something good that you can relate to, but will also have massive flaws."

Brave new world

This is possibly *Fallout*: New Vegas' biggest asset. Instead of simply attaching a free-roaming environment to a trite, single-player narrative, it weaves your actions into the world, giving you greater power over the

The Western Wasteland

New Vegas' setting feels very different to the grim Capital Wasteland of *Fallout 3*. Here's why...



It has secrets
Radiation is still a problem, despite the lack of nukes hitting Nevada. There's an old nuclear test site north of Vegas to explore, and several mysterious radiation spills around the map. Don't ditch those Geiger counters just yet.

It has plant life

When New Vegas was being researched Josh Sawyer took a motorcycle trip to the Mojave desert to photograph the area. The result is realistic looking barrel cacti, agave plants and Joshua trees in the game.

societies and landscape of New Vegas than you ever had in the Capital Wasteland. "We want to make sure that the people in New Vegas have really fleshed-out motivations, and that players can interact with them and get meaningful results from their actions," Sawyer tells us. "And when it comes to the end of the game, we want the player to feel like they shaped the world." This not only means multiple endings, branching mission structures, and replay value: it also means genuine choice when it comes to creating your own story within the world. This wasteland isn't just a dead city gasping over its last lung-fulls of life - it's an emerging society born in the post-post-apocalyptic world. Every dent you

make in it, or kindness you show it will have consequences that you'll actually be able to see in the plot, the environment and the characters that live within it.

Obsidian are crafting New Vegas for the long-haul, rather than chopping and changing *Fallout 3*'s winning RPG formula to snag a few cheap, instant thrills. The initial similarities between



Obsidian's New Vegas' Hoover Dam is one of the most ambitious locations in *Fallout*'s rich history.

Fallout New Vegas

It has blue skies

According to *Fallout* lore the bombs didn't desolate America's West coast so, unlike the Capital Wasteland of *Fallout 3* the skies aren't dominated by dust and clouds. This means sunsets and sunrises, and oh yeah, plant life.

this game and the last are sure to ruffle a few virtual feathers of the vocal minorities on the Internet, but for anyone that looks deeper, the potential for this brave new wasteland will be obvious. The changes may be subtle but they're vital to the series evolution, and above all, they make the game feel significantly different yet comfortingly familiar. Sawyer describes the game as *Fallout*'s equivalent of *Vice City* - the brilliant second game that took *GTA III*'s potential to the next level and became a huge favourite among fans.

PSM3 Reckons

Brighter, funnier, smarter. That's how we'd sum up *Fallout: New Vegas*. The mechanics and structure will be very familiar to *Fallout* fans, but the colourful setting will feel like a breath of fresh air for anyone turned-off by the Capital Wasteland's unrelenting grimness. If Obsidian nail the feel of *The Strip*, this will be a vibrant, absorbing RPG.

It has new creatures

During our demo we saw a couple of fresh beasts inhabiting the desert. The first were Geckos, radiation enlarged lizards - fairly easy to dispatch. The second were Big Horners, mutated mountain rams.

Obsidian has promised every large monument in the game, like this dino, can be interacted with in some way.

