

Review: 'Hitman 3' is everything you want in a stealth game, despite lack of multiplayer

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Hitman 3 runs great on all consoles at locked frame rates. (Image Source: IO Interactive)

There's something special to be said for mastery in a video game. And it's something that all too often, we don't get to enjoy. You reach mastery in a game near the end, when you know every single button-press like the back of your hand, and you know exactly how every single bad guy will react to everything. You fully understand a game's mechanics and how to

wield them, and nothing can catch you off-guard.

It's in these moments that the [video game](#) can be at its most fun, because you're not "figuring it out" so much as you're enjoying everything about its world. But is there enough of the [game](#) left that you can enjoy this? Sometimes there is. Sometimes, not so much.

The beauty of "Hitman 3": It's all about mastery, all about taking the tools you've used in the first two chapters of this trilogy and leveling them up. Square Enix's reboot of the classic "Hitman" franchise concludes with this final chapter, and it doesn't focus on introducing any new mechanics. Instead, it builds on everything that you, the gamer, have learned before, challenging you to use the game's existing mechanics in new and deeper ways. It's a masterclass in letting a gamer appreciate their mastery. And if you love stealth gameplay, once you start this, you just may never stop. That's especially true too because of the multiple platforms where you can game. "Hitman" now lands on Nintendo Switch as well, with the game sitting on a cloud server, much as it does on Google Stadia. This proves fluid on Switch, meaning a new audience can appreciate the title.

A quick refresher course: "Hitman 3" has you playing as Agent 47, a supremely resourceful assassin. You're dropped into a series of areas with objectives communicated to you by your handler, Diana Burnwood, the other pivotal character in the franchise.

You're tasked with killing somebody, and there are multiplicitous ways to execute that death. Sure, you could take a shot, or do this whole game in messy fashion. But the magic of the game is in excellence and ingenuity. Forget your gun: Can you drop a chandelier on your target in what looks like an accident? Set them up to walk into a puddle, then electrocute them by flipping a light switch?

Try. Or try again in multiple playthroughs. Instead of muddling through an area, the "Hitman" franchise wants you to earn mastery, to make assassinations an art form.

A story gradually unfolds through these levels, and you hone your ability as you go. There's more than meets the eye to Agent 47 and Diana and their bosses, and you'll learn all this in expertly built cutscenes. Then you'll hone your mastery in each area by revisiting it, playing it better, and then using those levels in a variety of online challenges.

This all reaches its rapid crescendo in the final levels, the part of the game that make up "Hitman 3," and your skills should be at their best, too. If you've played the last two games in their entirety, you understand the mechanics by now, and "Hitman 3" wants to respect that. So it creates intricate, magical levels that challenge that mastery. One level pulls back on the versatile areas you know so well and packs into a far more narrow area, a train, pushing you to think that much more clearly about your strategy. Another drops you into a murder mystery, which you can solve as you handle your main task, too.

It's all building on the mechanics you know and love, and mechanics that have been refined to pinpoint perfection. Agent 47 is a master of disguise, and you'll navigate most areas by silently taking somebody down, grabbing their clothes, then acting natural. You're completing your mission and exploring the bounds of the gameplay in every section, and when all else fails, you have enough weaponry to defend yourself, too. It's satisfying and layered, everything you want in a stealth game.

This satisfaction is only offset by a lack of multiplayer options.

"Hitman" previously offered some a Sniper Assassin mode you could play with a friend, and a Ghost Mode that let you battle to rack up more quick kills than a friend. The first mode felt quite superfluous (although it was fun). But Ghost Mode continued to test that mastery, dropping you

into levels with which you held familiarity. It was a solid extra mode; it disappears in this third game. And yes, that's a bit disappointing.

What is here, though gives you plenty of satisfaction, thanks to the usual suite of additional elusive targets and other additions that push you back into levels you've beaten. If you haven't played the first two "Hitman" games, definitely don't jump into this one, because there's much fun to be had before you reach "Hitman" 3. Start at the older (and likely cheaper) games, and build some mastery.

Then arrive in "Hitman" 3 ready to attack. You'll have enjoyed the story and the gameplay. And you'll be ready to appreciate what you get right here.

4 out of 5 stars

Reviewed on Xbox Series X and Nintendo Switch

Available on Xbox, PlayStation, Switch, Stadia, and PC

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