

Exclusive Interview and Preview: "SAW II: FLESH AND BLOOD"

Written by Doug Norris
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Anyone familiar with the SAW franchise knows that it revolves around two things: ridiculous torture traps and bloody gore. The folks at Konami, home to the SILENT HILL series and no strangers to splatter and scare, plan to propagate that further with the newest installment in the SAW gaming series – SAW II: FLESH AND BLOOD. FANGORIA got a chance to spend some quality time with producer Jaime Bencia in the Konami suite at Comic-Con, getting wrist-deep in the grit and gore in another of Jigsaw's torture chambers.

"As far as SAW II: FLESH AND BLOOD is concerned, it takes place between SAW and SAW II," Bencia tells Fango. "The game's main character is Michael Tapp, the son of David Tapp (the main character in the first film). As far as the traps and gameplay are concerned, it's always about trying to figure out what you need to solve the puzzle. The game will never flat out tell you what to do; it's all about making you figure it out. In this scene, you have to cut open your own eye stitching to get the key and unlock the trap. If you mess up or hit the wrong button, you'll get the movie sequence of the pain reaction."

So here we find ourselves sitting in a chair, staring at a wall of static-screen TV's, with the trademark bear-trap device over our shoulders. The camera zooms into the character's eye, revealing a line of stitching and an incision on the bottom eyelid. Using a scalpel and a series of thumbstick and button movements, the game challenges the player to cut the key out from behind their eye before the trap sets off. Right out of the gate, the game sets the tone for tension-inducing puzzle solving. Upon the trap's release, the camera shifts to Jigsaw himself, watching through a window.



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Bencia continues, "Tobin Bell's voice was in the first game, but his likeness was not. We're really proud to feature that in the sequel.

Just like the movies, the idea is to look around and use your surroundings to solve the puzzles and get out of the traps that Jigsaw puts you in.

A lot of the early level puzzles are simplistic so that the player gets into the groove of the game. Later on, the puzzles get really complicated.

Another mechanic we're using is light and glow-in-the-dark paint.

That was used in the movies, and we wanted to continue that in the game.

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e've also thrown in is the quick-time event.

We've made it so that there are dangerous environments that weren't in the first game.

When you reach the event, you have to follow the button sequence to make sure the character doesn't die.

We've also included a lot of windows into the deaths of other characters in the same situation as you, so as to remind you where you are and what's going on."

The game leads us through a stage of using a flashlight to find a number sequence used in a combination lock. Immediately upon opening the door, the camera pans back to show multiple people trapped in Jigsaw's torturous maze. Another of Jigsaw's victims pulls open a second door, only to be met with a swinging scythe and ending up a bloody wall-decoration, a sort of mistletoe of dripping blood and entrails.



"A good example of our mini-game is the lock-picking sequence," the producer explains. "When you activate it, the camera shifts to the actual picking device and you have to guide it through the tumbler in a cinematic sequence."

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This segment showed one of the better designed portions of the gameplay. As the lock-picking sequence begins, the camera zooms inside the lock to give a first-person view of the actual pick. Using the triggers to control speed, the player guides the pick through the rotating tumblers and unlocks the door.

"In the previous installment, if you solved the puzzle, you received no reward," says Bencia. "If you didn't solve the puzzle and you died, you got a gory death sequence. This time around we added cinematics for both sides, so you're rewarded for solving the puzzle with a cool movie sequence, or you can die and get the gory death scene if that's your thing."

At this point, Fango's character is running down a hallway with a collapsing floor. As the foundation crumbles, we frantically smash through a series of button sequencing and thumbstick maneuvers to reach stable ground.

I ask if we can go back to see what happens when the correct sequence isn't achieved, at which point we're shown the bloody demise of our character falling through the floor face-first onto a bed of spikes.

Splash!

"Another change is the melee," he says. "We decided to use less emphasis on the melee for the sequel because the SAW series is not about melee and fighting people; it's about getting out of traps and solving puzzles. We've transitioned the melee to being a part of the cinematic sequence.

With this particular example, the enemy is too strong, so I have to use the environment to defeat him.

I open the elevator door and trick him into falling down the shaft.

The enemies will get harder as the game goes on."

Just as described, we find this monstrous torture victim in our path to freedom. He stands, hands bound and eyes covered, decked out head to toe in some spiked armor.

Struggling to get free, he uses sound to guide his direction, charging you at every stop.

We maneuver around the area and guide him into an open elevator shaft.

"The developer and I really studied the environments in the movies and tried to keep them as dark and gritty as the original," Bencia adds. "Another thing we incorporated that wasn't in the first are collectibles. Most people thought that

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SAW was an easy game, not much of a challenge.

We added the collectibles in so that if you really wanted to beat the game, you had to solve some seriously hard puzzles to get all the collectibles, and Jigsaw will of course threaten you when you collect the items."



Another color matching / combination lock deciphering segment is upon us to collect a Billy puppet. The Billy puppets, as well as jigsaw puzzle pieces, are scattered about the levels as added additional challenges to all those who want to truly beat the game. Does this mean that there could be a Billy puppet avatar award?

Konami wouldn't say, but c'mon...how cool would that look on the LIVE network?

"There are seven levels with five different traps and two melee/mini-game events that you have to conquer to succeed. Here, jigsaw presents you with the opportunity to save someone else or yourself, and there are two different outcomes," Bencia says.

Our player walks across a sort of balance beam, hoping to dive into an open elevator door before it closes. Up above, an AI controlled victim does the same task. We both head for the elevator, only to find that second-place truly is first-loser.

The door closes as we struggle to enter, severing one arm and leaving a massive blood spatter across the screen.

SAW II: FLESH AND BLOOD will hit shelves in October 2010 to coincide with the theatrical release of SAW 3D.

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