

INTRO: What is this CoD:MW3 of which you speak?

Unless you've been living under a rock for the past few weeks, you'll probably have seen the words CoD: MW3 on your daily commute. "I don't see what the fuss is all about! It looks just like another shooter game to me!" you might cry.

Well I'm here to tell you that Call of Duty is big...really big. In fact, the franchise is so big that it quite frankly puts more traditional entertainment mediums like movies to shame (more on this later).

So Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 (MW3 from here on out, video game names really shouldn't be such a pain to type) is basically a military First Person Shooter (FPS) with some role-playing game (RPG) elements, such as experience bars, because if there's one thing game designers have learnt, it's that nothing brings greater satisfaction to gamers than watching little bars fill up on screen.

It's also the latest addition in a long line of military shooters from Infinity Ward (owned by publishing giant Activision, whose notable franchises include World of Warcraft and Guitar Hero).

FEATURES: So what's new with this one?

The meat and bones of MW3 are found in what it's best at; Multiplayer. Following the RPG trend of filling little bars on screen, MW3 has done everything to make even the biggest noob (go go UrbanDictionary!) feel like they're progressing. It seems that every weapon, accessory and perk that you unlock through levelling (surprise surprise) becomes better with every use. In addition to this, careful attention has been paid to balancing the perk system, taming the excessively powerful kill streak bonuses that plagued MW2.

Activision, taking a leaf out of World of Warcraft's book, has also released their Call of Duty Elite service, which is basically a pay-to-play subscription service that Eurogamer calls a "stat-driven app with bonuses for those who sign up in advance for all future DLC". For the low, low price of \$49.99, Elite subscribers get access to post-match analytics to help them improve their competitive play, free downloadable content for the year (usually worth \$60), exclusive multiplayer game modes and co-operative missions, extra video storage for replay videos, daily tournaments and access to Elite TV (premium episodic content).

It's easy (and fair) to criticise MW3 for sticking so closely to a winning template, but like with BMW and Porsche, when the core template you're using is this successful, well...maybe it's worth being a little **conservative**.

PERFORMANCE: Enough talk already, how well did it sell?

6.5 million copies sold in 24 hours. Seriously...and that's just figures for USA and UK too. Really, if you factor in trading hours of most retailers, that works out at roughly 200 copies sold per second.

Okay, so Avatar sold roughly 10 million tickets in its opening weekend, garnering around \$77m. In comparison, MW3 sold 6.5 million copies for an estimated \$400m. Even the last Harry Potter book, after a whole decade of pestering from a generation of kids, only managed to make just over half of what MW3 managed with a six month campaign. So Modern Warfare 3 isn't really breaking new ground, and quite rightly so, as it's an evolution of the brand, rather than a revolution.

Infinity Ward had a lot to live up to over the past year, and not treading on the toes of your fans is much harder than it sounds. But their careful work seems to have paid off (a \$400 million payoff no less), and this juggernaut of a brand shows no signs of slowing down.

From your Gaming Gremlin,

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