

Evolve, a game of cat and mouse.

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If the game Evolve has taught me anything, it's that I'd make a rubbish monster.

Coming from the same studio that brought last-generation's brilliant co-op game Left4Dead, Evolve is a multiplayer game with a ratio of 4:1. The twist: the fifth player is a monster that must evolve and kill four human hunters before they kill it.

The narrative is flimsy – the hunters must defeat the monster that is causing trouble for planetary colonists – but the twist is a nice change for the same old, same old MP modes.

After each player has been assigned a role – support, medic, assault, trapper, or monster – the hunters free fall to the planet's surface, tasked with scouring the map environment for a monster.

Think of Evolve as a game of cat and mouse, except in this case the mouse is a pretty big and ugly monster, and each human character has a specific role to play in catching the monster (Oh, and the planet has vegetation and predator animals that also want to eat you for lunch!)



The assault role, for example, is charged with laying down hurt on the monster, wearing down its armour and health, while the trapper is responsible for tracking down the monster and keeping it confined so it can be defeated. The game ends when one of two things happens: The hunters defeat the monster or the monster defeats the hunters. It's that simple.

In my first game I was tasked with being the monster (you can indicate to the game what your preferred role is but you won't necessarily be assigned that role), the entry level Goliath (as the game progresses you can unlock the wraith and the kraken). Key to success for the monster is to evolve to Stage 3 as quickly as possible so you have to feed on unsuspecting indigenous wildlife that will speed up the process. All was going according to plan, it seemed.

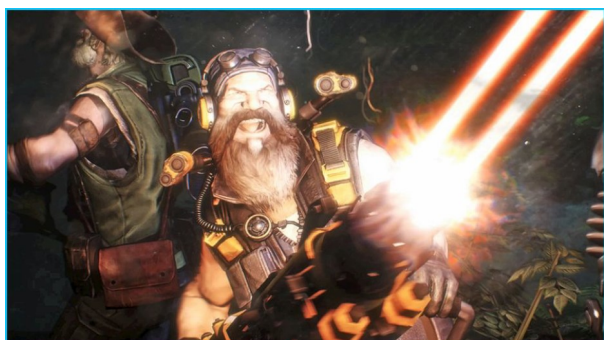
Sadly, I underestimated how quickly I should have moved about the map, eating indigenous wildlife- behaving monster-like, and how well the group of hunters worked together. Before I knew it, they were on me, cornering me in a tight ravine, unable to go anywhere thanks to the impenetrable barrier the trapper had set.



I threw rocks at the hunters, swiped at them with my claws and sprayed them with my fire breath, but it wasn't enough. My health was depleting fast and the writing was on the wall: I was going to die here – and quickly! And die I did, before I'd even evolved to Stage 2. Frankly, it was a pretty poor start to my time with Evolve.

I fared better in the next two games, which saw me play support class Hank, a bearded, cigar-chewing brute of a man, and working together, we soon found the monster, herded him to where we wanted and defeated him. I quickly realised that Evolve is the sort of game where teamwork is paramount to success.

Yes, you have a robot dog called Daisy that handily points in what direction the monster might be and clues like glowing footprints and flocks of birds circling the discarded carcasses of monster food give strong clues, but if you don't work as a team then it'll end in bloodshed. Probably yours if you're playing as a hunter.



I can't stress enough how important it is for players to work as a unit, and if you can find the monster quickly then the chances of defeating it are much more likely.

Evolve does have a single player component but it's essential the MP component but with bots, so MP is the best way to play it but be prepared to wait as it took time to find games. I'm not sure whether that's because not many people are playing Evolve or it's a server side problem, but sometimes I waited several minutes for a game to start. After waiting 15 minutes

for one game to find four other players, I gave up.

Another frustration is that much of Evolve's content (weapons, character skins and perks) are initially locked and it takes a lot of groundwork to unlock them. I know locked DLC is becoming more common in today's business model but Evolve's seem unnecessarily harsh.

At its heart, though, Evolve is a game of seek and find, which means there will be lots of crisscrossing the game map trying to find the monster (or the hunters if you're playing the monster). So be ready for matches to take time and be prepared for lots of footwork (and jet pack work as hunters are equipped with jet packs). If you're a player who likes their MP matches over in a few minutes then Evolve isn't the game for you.

After playing a lot of Evolve I've decided that it's a game that lives or dies on how well the four hunters work together. Success at defeating the monster is paramount on how well the hunters work as a team. But if the four humans playing the hunters act independently and do their own thing then the situation quickly gets out of hand, the monster gains the upper hand and it's all over Rover.



Look, Evolve is a game that does some things well, and when you're in the middle of a tense standoff with a Stage 3 Goliath in a tight ravine, engaged in a chaotic battle it's exhilarating stuff, but sadly, Evolve's "Wow" moments don't come often enough and after a while things do become repetitive – but that could be said of any game after you've

played it for a while.

Evolve does a good job in trying something different with the standard multiplayer formula and the four vs one idea is a breath of fresh air but the big question is: Is that point of difference enough for gamers to want to still be playing the game in a few months time?

I'm not so sure it is.