



ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATING BOARD

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ESRB STATEMENT REGARDING INVESTIGATION INTO MANHUNT 2

Manhunt 2 was rated Mature by the ESRB for ages 17 and older for *Intense Violence, Blood and Gore, Strong Language, Strong Sexual Content* and *Use of Drugs*.

Earlier this week we learned about a hack into the code of the PSP and PS2 versions of the game that removes special effects filters that were put in place to obscure certain violent depictions. We have investigated the matter and concluded that unauthorized versions of the game have been released on the Internet along with instructions on how to modify the code to remove the special effects. Once numerous changes to the game's code have been made and other unauthorized software programs have been downloaded to the hardware device which circumvent security controls that prevent unauthorized games from being played on that hardware, a player can view unobscured versions of certain violent acts in the game. Contrary to some reports, however, we do not believe these modifications fully restore the product to the version that originally received an AO rating, nor is this a matter of unlocking content.

Our investigation indicates that the game's publisher disclosed to the ESRB all pertinent content in the authorized Mature-rated version of *Manhunt 2* now available in stores, and complied with our guidelines on full disclosure of content.

What parents, and indeed all consumers, need to be aware of is that computer software and hardware devices are susceptible to unauthorized modification. Parents should be cognizant of whether or not their children are engaging in unauthorized modification of their games, consoles or handhelds, as those modifications can change game content in ways that may be inconsistent with the assigned ESRB rating. That being said, the vast majority of consumers have not made the unauthorized modifications to their hardware necessary to view the content at issue.

ESRB president Patricia Vance said:

"*Manhunt 2*'s rating makes it unmistakable that the game is intended for an older audience. The unauthorized hacking into the code of this game doesn't change that basic fact.

"Parents need to be vigilant about monitoring what their children are downloading on the Internet and ensure that they are not making unauthorized and oftentimes illegal modifications to software and hardware that remove the controls the industry has so diligently put in place for their own protection."

Q&A

How is this situation different from the “Hot Coffee” incident?

The *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* “Hot Coffee” situation involved a scene that was a) fully rendered in an unmodified form on the disc (the Hot Coffee mod did not alter the content that was there, it merely unlocked it), b) not previously disclosed to the ESRB during the rating process, and c) easily accessible to all owners of the PC version of the game. Conversely, in the case of *Manhunt 2*, a) content that was programmed to be part of the game (i.e., visual blurring effects of certain violent depictions) is being modified, b) the content was previously disclosed to the ESRB, and c) unauthorized versions of software and/or hardware are required to play the modified content.

How is this situation different from the one with “The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion?”

After the release of *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*, the ESRB discovered extensive amounts of fully rendered and previously undisclosed blood and gore in the game that warranted a Mature rating. In addition, there was a fully rendered anatomically detailed art file of a topless female character present on the disc that had not been previously disclosed to the ESRB during the rating process. The blood and gore was accessible to all owners of the PC and Xbox 360 versions of the game. The partial nudity was accessible to all owners of the PC version of the game if they downloaded a modification available on the Internet that replaced one version of character artwork for another, both of which existed in a fully rendered form on the disc. Conversely, with *Manhunt 2*, a) the content in question was previously disclosed to the ESRB, b) the content is being modified by removing the obscuring blur effect that was programmed as part of the game, and c) unauthorized versions of software and/or hardware are required to play the modified content.

Why does this instance not fall under the ESRB’s disclosure rule clarification requiring that locked-out content contained in the code on a game disc be considered in the assignment of a rating?

Our rule clarification following Hot Coffee required that pertinent content that is programmed to be locked out but which exists in an unmodified, fully rendered form on game discs must either be removed or disclosed to ESRB during the rating process. In the case of *Manhunt 2*, the scenes in question were playable (not locked-out), programmed to include the blur effect, and fully disclosed to the ESRB.