

► It wouldn't be *Fable* without some great action and you'll be even more agile this time around.



Fable 2



► Graphically, the game looks stunning, with so much attention to detail, even in the small winding lanes linking the villages.

The Xbox 360's biggest story...

► *Fable* was one of the biggest games for the original Xbox; a tale of good and evil that, most importantly, gave you the choice of whether you wanted to be a bad boy or a goody two-shoes, all combined in a truly epic RPG. Tantalising details have been leaking out over the past few months about the hotly anticipated sequel. This time you can play as either a male or female, get a pet dog... you can even get married and raise a family (ahhh). However, industry god Peter Molyneux was the talk of GDC (again) after letting slip even more details about this year's must-buy, must-own, must-play game: *Fable 2*.

Set in the land of Albion, five hundred years have passed since the original game and much has changed – and we're not just talking about the land either. Take the co-op system, for example; being able to pick a controller and join in a game isn't new but in the past it has been awkward territory for RPGs. Lionhead seems to have solved that little niggle, though, and if a friend wants to join you exploring Albion, they can simply become one of your loyal minions for however long they want to play for. Frankly, even the slightest hint of minions and henchmen makes us want to play it even more than we already did!

Of course, we're still excited about the prospect of a canine pet (who apparently will always love you

but never annoy you) and the husband/wife and kids. Molyneux has said that if someone kills your partner, they stay dead. Oh, and before you get excited and mumble about life insurance policies, you can't kill your own family – but that doesn't mean your minions are bound by the same rules. Be warned, however: there's no magic wand to undo the permanence of death, your kids will be mentally scarred and end up in orphanages if you're gone for too long. This dramatic event will also take its toll on your character, forcing them into a grief-stricken state and it may be a while before you can get hitched again.

One worrying question that we can't quite get out of our heads is, if your family can be shot, can the same be said for the dog? Surely killing a dog will be more detrimental to the enjoyment of younger players, even if you can get a replacement? At the same time, said canine is a vital part of the gameplay, even more so than your precious family. In a world where there are no life bars or mini-maps to be seen, the dog will warn you of incoming enemies and even help you to fight against them – but he's not immortal so do try and look after him.

As anyone who has played an RPG will know, there never seems to be enough cash flying around to finance the weapons or fancy armour you need to survive. Lionhead is attempting to rectify this imbalance with the intriguing opportunity to earn in-game money before *Fable 2* is released, using an XBLA game called *Keystone* which will be available a couple of months prior. Obviously this won't do sales of *Keystone* any harm either, but being able to save up some moolah to spend in Albion before the game is even finished is something new to the console. Similarly, when *Fable 2* is finally released you'll also be able to play certain XBLA titles in-game by visiting a local tavern.

GDC also heralded a plethora of new *Fable 2* screens and having checked them out, our enthusiasm for this game really can't get much higher. The open-ended, sandbox world and choice of alignments, gender and the huge amount of options, all linked by the effects of action and consequence, look set to make the game even larger than *Oblivion* and quite possibly the biggest title to hit the Xbox 360 this Christmas.

▶ Wielding a giant sword you can do plenty of damage although Fabio 2 brings guns into the equation so you can't always just jump in.



▶ Even the houses look perfect — we wouldn't want to leave!



Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Lionhead
Estimated Release: Winter 2008



▶ We're not sure what these guys are but if their sharp teeth are anything to go by, we'd be backing away.