



With the subtlety of Michael Bay, the slow motion grace of John Woo, and the big budget of an Hollywood summer action flick: [7th Serpent](#) is an action packed romp through city limits with no breaks, no remorse, and plenty of ammunition along the way.

I can't help but love action movies. There is something about having absolutely no subtlety, blowing up entire city blocks, shooting thousands of bad guys, then kissing a beautiful woman atop a pile of burning cars that just appeals to me. Can't imagine why.

And thus we come to *7th Serpent*, the mod community's equivalent of a Michael Bay film. In this, people don't die; they get shot in the head and hurled from rooftops. In this, people can dive across a room in slow motion *and still fire a rocket launcher with flawless accuracy*. Unlike *Max Payne 2*, which pitted you solely against an army of thugs, *7th Serpent* also asks you to take out helicopters, tanks, cars, armored trucks, hummers, and the occasional street sign in your .45-caliber quest to do....something.

Play begins with a long, startlingly well done introductory movie that explains little of what is going on, but is great to watch. Police forces chatter back and fourth on the radio about a building under siege as a helicopter races along the skyline of the busy metropolis. Below the chopper, police cars surround an office complex, setting up a defensive perimeter and sending in a twitchy squad of SWAT members. The camera then follows the troopers inside, flanking the building, silently moving through the deserted and blood soaked rooms, searching...



Oooh, shouldn't have taken the 'A' train.



Well, this will take a while to clean.

substance is, because people will still eat it up. The same applies here.

The voice acting, the camera angles, and the impressive visual flair make this simple opening sequence look more like a professionally made Machinema than the beginning of a community made mod.

Then, as the SWAT team finishes blowing apart an empty elevator, out steps our hero. Players take on the role of Damon, an abundantly Australian bad ass who looks like he should be holding a can of Red Bull as he goes about his day. Damon has a mission, an agenda, and I dare you to figure out what it is without reading the manual. However, much of it seems to consist of destroying the entire city police department, piece by piece, in a marvelously explosive action sequence that takes you from the interior of this office complex and out into the streets of downtown somewhere.

While the core game play elements remain the same, it is the presentation that propels this game forward. If there is one thing I learned from years of English writing classes, it is this: If you put enough style into your presentation, it doesn't matter what the

7th Serpent is slick, engaging, and littered with little problems you will gladly ignore as you set the streets on fire and paint the town red.

Production values ooze out of this mod wherever you look. From the great soundtrack, to the attractive menus, to the great implementation of new and old models in the game world: *7th Serpent* seems dressed for success.

And for the most part, it is. When you take on the persona of Damon, you will feel the excitement of this game world rippling around you. Does it matter that you have no idea what is going on? It didn't to me. That guy is shooting at me. So is that one. Seems reason enough to blow this entire town apart, right?

The core mechanics from *Max Payne 2* are preserved here, just given a new gloss of paint and a spit shine. You collect weapons, you shoot weapons. When you start to get swarmed by enemy forces, you can dive sideways in slow motion, avoiding the sprays of bullets that tear apart everything in their path, and return fire in the process. Then, once you have killed enough foes, you can hit the Bullet Time button to slow everything down to a crawl, racing around at high speed as you dispense death to everything in your path.



Tanks, Helicopters, and APC's are just some of the new foes you'll have to overcome.

The weapons, character, and environment are different, but the core is exactly the same, for better or worse, depending on your opinion of *Max Payne 2*.

What is different, however, are the load times. Or, load *time*, anyway. As the menu screen warns you as you begin to load up the main level of the game, this beast takes some serious time to load. Quite literally, we are talking about a five minute wait at a minimum, with the game cranked to maximum settings. Supposedly, it will be quicker if you turn these things down, but I wanted to experience everything to its fullest.

So I waited. And waited. And then I went downstairs. I got myself a glass of milk, drank it, refilled, and browsed around in the pantry a bit. Some Mexican bread? Maybe a peanut butter granola bar? Should I really be eating so late at night? Maybe it is best that I---Crap, the game!

So I head back upstairs, and it has *just finished loading*. I fully expected it to take a while, but come on. This borders on ludicrous.

However, once you get past this hurdle, the game runs flawlessly. With such a daunting amount of time spent on loading, I fully expected this game to creep past my eyes with a single digit frame rate. Imagine my surprise when the game popped up going full speed and looking phenomenal. Dying and reloading the game also only takes a matter of seconds, meaning that once you leap over the game's initial hump, the rest is just a smooth slide downward.

Those of you who have played *Serious Sam 2* may get a feeling of deja-vu as you start playing the game. Rather than a logical and constant progression forward through the levels, *7th Serpent* initially locks you into a series of zones and demands that you combat a set amount of enemies before moving on. As the game begins, you must blast through a SWAT team in a crowded building interior. Kill them all and the doors open for you to head outside, where you are stopped by a massive police road block. You can back track into the building you've been in before, but you cannot advance until killing all of the enemies hiding behind this level wall. Kill them, and progress into the next zone, and so on and so fourth until you destroy your first tank and are fully released into the rest of the city. And though these big city areas really follow the exact same pattern, they are large enough to trick you into thinking they are something more, which is not a bad thing.



Who let the tumblers into the room?

And as these zones progressively get bigger, the action rises with it. When the game begins, you are blasting police in hallways and over desktops and blotters. By the end of the level, expect to have blown up helicopters, tanks, subway trains, any and everything that stands in your way. Each time you progress, the stakes get higher, the explosions get bigger, and the body count swims. Pop some meds, reload your guns, and just try to guess how much you're going to destroy by the time when you reach the end.

And if you don't laugh your ass off when you shoot down that helicopter, you should just quit while you are ahead.



Police barricades do a good job of keeping you corraled.

And while explosions, guns, and damage in general are nice on their own, they work even better if they look cool.

Visually, *7th Serpent* does not disappoint. When you are in-doors, the building seems cramped and claustrophobic, almost too small to accommodate the action taking place. Then you hit the streets and the world opens up before you like a freight train tunnel to a mouse. Though your mobility in this environment is limited, it's huge! When I saw the view from the helicopter at the beginning, I figured it was just a set piece that would never see play time. Yet there I was, diving behind the skeletal remains of flaming cars, dodging sniper shots from the top of a nearby high rise building not ten minutes later.

The action of the game is big, but the sheer size and scope of the world is what makes everything feel epic in scale. When you see an entire police blockade blow up, it isn't just cool because it is an explosion that you helped cause: but also because it is *blowing up half the street!* Imagine the ever-escalating action of *F.E.A.R.* set in New York's Times Square and you might begin to approximate the sensation a bit.

I haven't felt such glee at city wide destruction since playing through *Duke Nukem* for the first time.

And a lot of what makes this work comes down to tiny details. If you pay attention to your environment, while you are busily shooting it apart, you'll notice lots of street signs and advertisements. Big billboards hang from the sides of buildings, bus station kiosks have different displays, even the lamppost have little decorative flags on them, proclaiming some upcoming event or location. While the world indeed feels massive, it is these nice brush strokes on the finished painting that makes the whole world just feel *plausible*.

Then, more stuff blows up.

On the sound front, however, things are a bit of a mixed bag. Voice work in this mod, though not perfect, is definitely above par. The only notable exception is the main character, who sounds a bit like *Crocodile Dundee* after a bad day of pit fighting. It almost sounds more like someone trying to imitate an Australian accent, rather than actually having one. I seriously saved my game right before moments where I knew he would speak, just so I could replay them again and again and try to place his accent. Maybe he is a hardworking man from the South with a cough, or just your typical Aussie down under, but I couldn't tell you. It isn't bad, but it feels off somehow, as if the delivery is stilted.

Sound effects also suffer some, most of which sound ridiculously under powered and really fail to give off an effective BANG for the weapons I was using. I mean, come on, why does a game that features a three minute long explosion also suffer from having weak sounding weapons? If nothing else, these guns should be too damned loud, drowning out the screams and the music in a beautiful operatic ballet of death. Instead, half the time it feels as though I'm shooting a potato gun at people.

Sure, *Max Payne 2* was guilty of this as well, but it still feels out of place here.

However, these few discrepancies don't mar the overall experience. If it sounds like I am bashing the game, it is because it has a few rough edges, but nothing that can't be overlooked for the fun and mayhem these creators have imbued into the title. Above any and all else, it is an experience, one that grabs ahold of you and refuses to let go from beginning to end. It isn't revolutionary and it isn't all that new, but the developers knew exactly what they wanted to do and they accomplished it. This is an action game for action game fans, one that pulls no punches and delivers exactly what is selling.

While it may not appeal to everyone, anyone with an appreciation of widespread destruction should definitely give this a try. It is easily one of the best *Max Payne 2* mods out there.

The full release can be downloaded from the team's [official website](#), or you can check out a preview trailer [here](#).



No wonder gas prices are so high.