

"Resident Evil 5": Terror Best Felt with a Friend

Written by Luke Hamilton
Friday, 20 March 2009 16:08

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Resident Evil 4 was released in January 2005 for the Nintendo Gamecube and quickly became the best reason to buy that system. Highly detailed visuals, an intense new chapter in the *Resident Evil*

story, and new game-play mechanics all helped redefine the survival-horror genre.

Resident Evil 4

took several gaming awards, including game of the year for several publications. It was re-released on the Playstation 2 (in fall 2005) and the Nintendo Wii (in 2007). With all this pressure looming for a worthy sequel,

Resident Evil 5

(released earlier this month) does deliver on some fronts, but unfortunately not all of them.

Players take the role Chris Redfield, the protagonist from the original *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil: Code Veronica*

. Since the last game he appeared in, Chris has been busy working with the Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance, looking to rid the world of biological weapons. Upon arriving in Africa for his new mission, he meets his new partner, Sheva Alomar. The villagers have been infected with biological weapons, turning them into crazed minions of a higher power that wants to kill Chris and Sheva. As the lead agents on the field, it is up to them to discover who is responsible for the outbreak, and to prevent it from spreading to the rest of the world.

Story plays a major role in the main *Resident Evil* series, and with six out of the 12 previous *Resident Evil*

games actually involved with the main story, there can be confusion about what's important and what's there mostly for zombie-killing fun. So one of the features I found worthwhile in

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was a history section that appears on loading screens and can be accessed directly in the Options menu, covering every major event in the series that has led up to this game. The story here has its strong points, as an old enemy returns and a showdown takes place that fans have been dying to see since the first

Resident Evil

title. It also has low points when the story-driven game becomes a repetitive shoot-'em-up, and with a horribly obvious plot twist involving Chris' former partner.

The playing style from *Resident Evil 4* returns in *5*, with the camera firmly positioned about two feet behind and above your character as you move around for a wider view, and lined up with your shoulder when you take aim at enemy combatants. Your character will stand completely still when taking aim, which might be realistic but feels awkward when using your knife. You can take cover from gunfire and explosions, but the system isn't utilized well until the second half of the game, when your enemies actually have weapons that make it necessary.

True to *Resident Evil* form, you regularly fight off the hordes of enemies with pistols, shotguns, machine guns, rifles, grenades, and the over-the-top but always fun rocket launcher, most of which can be upgraded as you go for higher damage, reload rate, and other variables. Also true to form, ammo runs out way too fast, so if you're going to shoot something, you need to make sure you land your shots.

Cooperative play is something new for the core *Resident Evil* titles and is a required part of this game. Co-op can be played via Internet connection with friends or random players, via split screen with a friend on the same system and TV, or alone with the AI playing as your partner. If possible, make sure you're playing with a friend. The AI-controlled partner won't seem bad in the early stages, but as the game moves on and enemies have specific weak points, it will drive you nuts with the random shooting and ammo-wasting. It also has no grasp of rationing your healing items or managing its own inventory, and it can be a major annoyance to reorganize the partner's items mid-level. These issues almost entirely disappear when playing with a friend, as long as your friend is at least halfway decent at video games.



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Resident Evil 5's presentation, similar to *Resident Evil 4's*, is simply amazing. While previous titles were shrouded in darkness, the addition of daylight brings a new sense of dread, as if to say that there's nowhere safe left to go. Several situations require players to be more active during a cinema scene - hitting buttons to interact with the scenes - or they'll be killed, adding to the tension during the scarier moments. By far, it's the closest thing available to *playing* a horror movie instead of just watching.

Between villagers attacking and shouting in Swahili, disgusting monsters with a craving to maim, and the extra-large monsters that are prepared to crush you into oblivion, you don't want younger ages watching or playing this game, because it will look and sound real enough to give them nightmares.

The biohazard threat has come a long way from puzzles and zombies in an abandoned mansion, and with it comes bigger, meaner threats and more firepower. *Resident Evil 5* is a great ride for anyone looking to continue the story or get some scares, but without a friend to play with, it can leave you frustrated.

If you're a fan of the series, your mind is already made up to pick this up. If you played *Resident Evil 4* and want more of the same, you'll get that and then some. But if you're new to the series, you should pick up *Resident Evil 4* to get a feel for the style before diving in.

Resident Evil 5 is available for the Xbox 360 and Playstation 3 for \$59.95. For this review, the author completed the main story and tested the cooperative-play features.

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