

“MadWorld”: Stylized, Bloody Violence Aimed at Adults

Written by Luke Hamilton
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Most Wii games are designed for the entire family. *MadWorld* is *not* one of those games: It takes family-oriented titles and cuts them in half with a chainsaw. With extreme violence being the central theme, *MadWorld* brings with it a different art style and the best sports commentators I've heard to set it apart from other games on the system.

Players take the role of Jack as he arrives on Jefferson Island, a locked-down city equipped with 10,000 cameras to document everything that happens. As it turns out, this city is the new location for a fighting contest known as DeathWatch, the point of which is to kill anyone higher ranked than you. Bottom line: Kill anything that moves. As luck would have it, Jack happens to be quite the experienced killer with a chainsaw attached to his robotic arm. But not everything is as it seems in the DeathWatch competition, and the only way to discover the truth behind the event is to kill your way to the top.

The game involves Jack running around different parts of the city and fighting to collect points. There are several tiers of points in each stage, and once a point value has been reached, Jack is given rewards such as food, weapons, and Blood Bath Challenges -- mini-games designed to rack up big points that can be then re-played in multi-player mode to shoot for high scores. Every stage's final tier involves a boss fight against a powerful ranked fighter.

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The constant fighting while walking is broken up with levels in which you ride and fight on a motorcycle, but these are few and far between. Playing the different scenarios can become somewhat tedious, but the ridiculous level of violence you can inflict keeps the game consistently engaging. On a single enemy, for example, you can bind his arms with a tire, shove a street-sign pole through his head, and throw him into a another enemy, impaling them both on a spiked wall. Players are actually encouraged to combine over-the-top kills to get more points more quickly, and you'd be surprised how many street signs you can put in a single body.

MadWorld is presented mostly in black and white (similar to the movie *Sin City*), with the only other color being the red blood that splatters everywhere. This stylization doesn't dull the impact of the violence; if anything, it emphasizes it with the pools of blood left in your wake. The visual style puts a clever mask on the graphical limitations of the standard-definition Wii console, and the distinctive art style makes it stand out from the competition.



The voice acting during cut scenes is good, but one of the biggest draws for me was listening to the DeathWatch announcers. The hilarious and raunchy back-and-forth between announcers John DiMaggio (Bender from *Futurama*) and Greg Proops (*Whose Line is it Anyway?*) motivated me to turn down the game's music and sound effects so I wouldn't miss a single wisecrack. I haven't heard better or more-realistic-sounding announcers in any game.

The controls are relatively easy to learn and enjoy. There's a general punching button, and a button to brandish your chainsaw, and swinging the Wii remote lets you execute either a big punch or a big slash with your chainsaw.

You can center the camera behind you with a quick click of a button, but getting the camera to stay in a position where it won't hinder your vision is tougher than it should be. Locking onto a single enemy helps alleviate the problem but causes troubles of its own when dealing with multiple targets.

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During boss battles, "Quick Time Events" swing the balance in your favor. These turn fights into reaction games in which you follow on-screen instructions on which way to swing your Wii remote to win those exchanges, leading to intense cinematic experiences. If you hit everything perfectly, you'll inflict big damage. Screw up and chances are you'll be killed. Most of the fights are fairly easy, though, and a dedicated player can burn through the game in less than six hours.

For the crowd complaining about the lack of M-rated games on Wii, *MadWorld* holds nothing back. One look at the laundry list on the back of this game lets you know this is not for younger audiences; it includes "intense violence," "sexual themes," and "drug references," among other things. But for the right age, gratuitous violence combined with vulgar and raunchy humor make for a fun time.

MadWorld is available for the Nintendo Wii for \$49.95. For this review, the author completed the story mode and tested the multi-player modes.

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