

“X-Men Origins: Wolverine -- Uncaged Edition”: Claws for Excitement

Written by Luke Hamilton
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The big-screen adaptations of X-Men left a foul taste in many fans' mouths, because Wolverine was not depicted as the bestial killing machine of the comics. Granted, he has a samurai's training, but when push comes to shove in a fight, he regresses to a vicious animal. And while *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* crushed big-screen hopes once again, the movie-based video game goes far beyond them.

The game was originally designed to be a stand-alone Wolverine title, and it was in production since late 2007. Once the movie had a release date, developer Raven Software was asked to adapt its game for the movie, causing a bit more of a rush on the final product. The end result is the one of the best Wolverine games yet, but it's not without its flaws.

You play as Wolverine and alternate between two different stories: the first going back to Team X's assault in Africa in search of the adamantium meteorite, and the second involving Logan's Weapon X experience and his quest for vengeance on Victor Creed. The stories would have worked much better if they were linear, but for someone who might not have seen the movie (I played the game before seeing it), it keeps interest piqued with the mysteries of what happened in Africa. The story runs close to the movie, but a big change takes place mid-game involving the production line of the giant mutant-hunting Sentinel robots, along with a big surprise at the end that will appease X-Men fans.

The gameplay in the Uncaged Edition is its best element, turning the PG-13 rated movie into an M-rated video game. While the standard version of the game is T-rated, the Uncaged Edition holds nothing back. It's that violence that makes the game great for fans, because it's Wolverine the way he's meant to be: The man has metal claws coming out of his fists, after all. Wolverine can also use the environment to eliminate enemies by throwing them off cliffs or impaling them on tree branches.

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The game employs a *God of War* style, with occasional platforming and puzzle-solving but with a heavy emphasis on combat. The control style is also similar to *God of War*

, with the quick-melee-attack, strong-melee-attack, jump, and grab buttons all placed exactly the same. There are several "rage" attacks that deal big damage if enough rage is stored, but one standard attack stands above all others: the "Lunge."



The Lunge is essentially a long-range grabbing attack. You lock onto an enemy, and Wolverine pounces like a wild animal. The attack stays continually gratifying to perform on lesser enemies as you take them down and eviscerate them with your claws, but it grows irksome against the occasional bosses that you piggy-back for a minute before getting brushed off like a fly. It would have been nice to have a different type of attack to use effectively against the giant enemies, but it at least makes sense to jump up and claw away at vital organs instead of their legs.

Because Wolverine is almost unstoppable -- with his mutant regeneration allowing him to recover from standard injuries -- a normal health bar doesn't cut it in this game. His self-healing power is demonstrated aptly, with his body literally losing chunks as he gets hurt and regrowing over time. It's similar to modern shooter games in which you hide out for a couple seconds and miraculously recover from injuries, but Wolverine's regeneration actually makes sense. Once he is hurt enough, his vital organs become vulnerable and he can be killed when attacked directly. Seeing Wolverine with only his adamantium bones remaining from his arm creates as intense a feeling as the comics.

The game's graphics look sharp during main boss fights and cut scenes but become bland with the common enemies. There are some minor visual glitches; for example, when Wolverine's skin regenerates, once in a while his shirt grows back, too. As far as sounds go, be ready to hear Wolverine screaming and groaning a lot, as he's constantly getting ripped up, drowning out the background music most of the time.

Slowdown occurs if too much is happening on the screen, and it's not limited to combat; a waterfall splashing nearby can cause the problem, although this was only prominent on the Xbox 360 version. The game ran much more smoothly for me on PlayStation 3 and had very few problems with graphics.

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None of these faults shows up frequently until after the midpoint of the game, which makes me believe that if this game had a few more months in development, it would have been more polished.

Still, if you're going to compare movie-based games, the uncensored version of *X-Men Origins: Wolverine* will decimate just about anything else. It doesn't stand up to similar blockbuster games such as *God of War*, but it's still fun to play. Outfitted with a strong combat system and hidden collectibles aimed at fans (Would anyone like to wear the classic blue and yellow suit?), *Wolverine* is enjoyable and keeps his style true to the comics.

X-Men Origins - Wolverine: Uncaged Edition is available for \$59.95 on Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3. For this review, the author played the PlayStation 3 story mode to completion and the Xbox 360 version story mode to completion.

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