

## Check the "Other" Box -- "Metroid: Other M," on Wii

Written by Luke Hamilton

Thursday, 09 September 2010 12:56

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*Metroid* is one of the few Nintendo franchises focused on hardcore gamers. A story in space involving aliens known as Metroids that absorb energy from living beings, space pirates looking to weaponize the Metroids, and a single bounty hunter burdened with the task of eradicating both sides definitely strays from the company's family-friendly norm.

The previous-generation *Metroid Prime* trilogy focused strictly on first-person shooting and was a different take on the franchise's story.

*Metroid: Other M* (on the Wii system) takes a gamble by returning to the original continuity and a third-person action style. It pays off big, though, with fantastic high-speed combat and a deeper perspective on the *Metroid* universe.

Picking up the story at the closing moments of 1994's *Super Metroid*, players return to the

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power suit of Samus Aran. While traveling in space seeking her next bounty, a distress signal reaches her. Upon her arrival at a satellite research facility, Samus must battle raging biological weapons that are clones of the space pirates she just eliminated and stop them before they wreak havoc on a nearby civilization.

Previous games were stories told through atmosphere and discovery, but here *Metroid* becomes more cinematic with conversations and flashbacks to Samus' past. It's different, but in many good ways. New players get a solid overview of the mythology, while old fans get to see classic scenes revamped for this generation. There are plot twists you won't see coming that hit all the right notes. And when you think you're finished, stick around past the end credits; even after a solid 10 hours of story, there's still plenty to explore in the epilogue.



Combat is definitely the highlight of *Other M*. With the Wii remote held sideways like an NES controller, the controls are simplified to moving and shooting, instead of overloading your memory with specialty weapons and abilities. A generous lock-on system automatically aims your shots at the closest enemies in the 3D environments, making fights more cinematic in appearance rather than a fancy duck-shooting gallery. The remote can also be pointed forward during play, switching the perspective from third- to first-person, allowing you to manually aim higher-power weaponry – but at the cost of mobility. As you progress, Samus learns advanced techniques such as dodging and close-quarters-combat attacks, staying easy in the control scheme but requiring precision timing.

Encounters with alien scourges turn into intense fighting experiences made even more rewarding because you're doing it all. Most games turn high-octane fights into cinema scenes in which you watch your character do everything while inputting minimally, or they make you to hide in a corner and shoot from afar to stay alive, but *Other M* puts you right in the driver's seat as you take down enemies with style.

The game's presentation might just be the best Wii has offered. The cut scenes go beyond what's been done before graphically on the system, and the gameplay is as smooth and speedy as you could want in a game so focused on action. The only visual drawback is a lack of brightness options, as some areas are too dark to navigate well. The voice work is a little drawn out at times, but for the first Nintendo-produced game to actually give characters vocal dialogue

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instead of text, it's forgivable.

*Metroid: Other M* addresses one of my long-standing complaints about Nintendo: Instead of re-telling the same tale with a new gimmick, this game upgrades a core franchise and moves the story forward. The gameplay is more intense without crossing into extreme violence.

It was a long time coming, but I finally had a good reason to play my neglected Wii. Here's hoping the rest of Nintendo's upcoming revivals follow suit.

*Metroid Other M is now available on Nintendo Wii for \$49.95. For this review, the author completed the main story and the epilogue.*

*Luke Hamilton is a buyer, creative designer, and online coordinator for Video Games Etc. He can be reached at [ssj\\_4luke@hotmail.com](mailto:ssj_4luke@hotmail.com).*