

Review: 'Devil May Cry' an infernal thrill ride

January 17 2013, by Lou Kesten



This video game image released by Capcom shows a scene from "DmC: Devil May Cry." (AP Photo/Capcom)

At the beginning of "DmC: Devil May Cry" (Capcom, for the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, \$59.99), demons run amok through a seaside amusement park. Arcades are yanked from their foundations, rides spin out of control and a Ferris wheel breaks loose and rolls down the boardwalk.

It's practically a mission statement from "DmC" developer Ninja Theory: You want a funhouse? We'll show you a funhouse.

The U.K.-based studio, best known for 2010's superb "Enslaved: Odyssey to the West," has been under a lot of scrutiny since Japanese publisher Capcom awarded it the "Devil May Cry" franchise. Could European designers deliver the same kind of flamboyant mayhem fans loved about the series?

A few minutes under the blood-red skies of "DmC" should put all those concerns to rest.

It's a reboot of the entire "Devil" mythology, reintroducing hero Dante as a surly, brown-haired punk rather than the white-haired emo boy of the previous four games. Dante is a nephilim, the offspring of an angel and a devil, and a demon with dreams of global domination wants him dead.

Dante has a few tools: his sword, Rebellion and his pistols, Ebony and Ivory. Holding down the left and right trigger buttons switches weapons between Angel and Devil modes; the angelic weapons deliver light damage from a distance, while the devilish ones cause deep hurting up close. Dante also has a grappling hook that he can use to bring down flying foes or hurl his own body across chasms.

It's the combination of all those devices that makes the combat in "DmC" so lively. You can soften up a monster with a few bullets, pull it toward you with the hook and finish it off with a huge ax blow. You're awarded style points for mixing up your attacks, and the enemies are so diverse that you can't just settle on one technique. And you're frequently rewarded with weapon upgrades that provide new ways to take the demons down.

Most of the action takes place in a parallel world called Limbo where the laws of physics don't necessarily apply. The ground shifts, walls collapse and chunks of pavement float in the sky. The unpredictable environments, often painted in garishly eye-searing colors, give Limbo

the look of your craziest nightmares.

Not surprisingly, the story in "DmC" isn't exactly subtle. Dante's primary nemesis, Mundus, is bent on controlling humanity through addictive soft drinks and an inescapable media empire. (His star performer sounds an awful lot like Rush Limbaugh.) Dante quickly discovers that his twin brother, Vergil, leads an Occupy Wall Street-like movement called The Order. If you like your hack-and-slash action served with a side order of heavy-handed social commentary, you're in the right place.

More tiresome is the punishing Aggrotech soundtrack, which is often accompanied by Dante screaming a certain four-letter expletive. And a few scenarios, such as a lengthy battle against an overgrown demon fetus, obliterate any boundaries of taste.

Still, if you have the stomach for it, the gleeful grotesquerie of "DmC" is kind of endearing, and it never takes itself too seriously. Fans of the first four "Devil May Cry" games should celebrate, because Ninja Theory has revived the franchise with style. Three stars out of four.

More information: www.devilmaycry.com/

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Citation: Review: 'Devil May Cry' an infernal thrill ride (2013, January 17) retrieved 17 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-01-devil-infernal-thrill.html>

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