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Devil May Cry 4 - Xbox 360

Can the fourth instalment impress?

by Stuart Miles published on 1 February 2008

Devil May Cry is back for a fourth instalment, but should you bother? We get slaying to find out.

Coming from the producer of the original Devil May Cry and Resident Evil 4 games, the game sees you play as Nero, a young knight, as well as Dante from previous outings.

Taking a cinematic approach (you can watch all the cutscenes back as one continuous movie) the game plays out a storyline of standard fare: revenge, a beautiful girl and plenty of demons to kill.

Getting started is the easy part. The game gives you two difficulty levels. For newbies there is an easier path to follow while hardened Devil May Cry gamers get a greater challenge with more baddies to defeat.

Adding to the mix, you can opt to control your fighting combos manually or automatically. You can also play both difficulty levels parallel to each other if you wish.

It is a good approach, not offending the fans of the series, but also making the game not completely impossible to newcomers. The Automatic combo option, which unfortunately can't be switched once you've started, is similar to the help in Formula 1 games that makes you stay on track.

To get started you are given a quick tutorial showing the basic moves and then it is into the game proper.

To help you complete your mission you've got a massive sword, a double barrel pistol, oh and an arm that has mystic powers.

The sword is similar to that featured in other Devil May Cry outings previously, i.e. big, and this time



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it comes with a feature the developers call the "Exceed System". The idea behind it is that it allows Nero to charge up his sword with a throttle effect, revving up to three levels with powerful attack options.

Really one only for the hardcore fans - you won't need to master it to go far - this revving action has to be activated at the exact moment you swipe your sword, dealing a killer blow.

Devil May Cry 4 is all about the combo and if you choose not to opt for the Automatic mode precise timing will be needed. That's not to say the Automatic mode takes all the fun out of it, far from it, but it's a case of seeing it as the arcade version.

Aside from the sword fighting you'll also get gun-toting action as well, although we found in our gaming that the gun is really only good for stunning victims as you "slam dunk" (the game's words not ours) them to the floor with your other weapons.

Completely new to the series is the powerful "Devil Bringer" arm that Nero has. Glowing blue, it allows you to grab opponents from across the room and smash them to the floor. The further the game progresses the more power you get and the greater its reach and it is a great weapon to use against all that come your way. Grab, shoot, slash - dead.

On either difficulty level there are plenty of enemies and those looking for a bit of a challenge will be pleased there is a good smattering of big bosses with some clever ideas and powerful attacks.

Gameplay itself is a balance between puzzles and a hack-and-slash mentality, although there is a greater emphasis on the latter.

Where the game grows beyond just another arcade fight fest is the ability to grow your skills

At a glance

What is it?

Action slash fest

Good

Graphics, arcade gameplay, skill building element

Bad

Puzzles aren't that challenging, playing without automatic mode on requires timing of the Gods

Verdict

Where Devil May Cry 4 succeeds is its fun and carefree approach, not in its ability to win the hearts and minds of the intellectual gamers out there

Price £35

Our score

8/10

Your score

?/10

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based on the number of enemies you kill.

Available mid-level or before you start a new level, you can upgrade your skills, abilities or items giving you new moves or greater impact with your sword.

This building of points is helped by locking exits at certain points until you've defeated all in the immediate area. Smashing your way through enemies builds your scorecard too. At the end of each level you can then see your total score and upload it to the Web to see how you fare against other Devil May Cry 4 players.

As for graphics - they are stunning. Forced camera angles are clearly designed to show off the environment to its maximum, sweeping vistas, waterfalls and gory looking monsters all sit within a medieval castle landscape while the developers clearly have a penchant for pseudo-porn judging by the female characters. The close-up shots of breasts and inner thighs will have any 15-year-old heading for 10 minutes in the bathroom...

VERDICT

So is it any good? As an arcade game that offers a hack-and-slash approach the answer is a definitive yes. As a game that offers great depth and puzzles that will challenge, probably not.

There are plenty of nice features here, the introduction of the new character, but the eventual reward of playing Dante later on are all good.

Where Devil May Cry 4 succeeds is in its fun and carefree approach, not in its ability to the win hearts and minds of the intellectual gamers out there.

This is a summer blockbuster, great fun and highly enjoyable, it is unlikely to pick up any Oscars.