Video Game Reviews: New, improved 'Geometry Wars' goes Wii

by Jeb_Haught

Game: "Geometry Wars Galaxies"

Publisher: Sierra

System: Nintendo Wii

Cost: $40

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 3 stars

SPACE WAR - In 'Geometry Wars Galaxies,' the player uses a spaceship to blast increasingly difficult waves of enemies without being obliterated. CNS Photo courtesy of Sierra. MORE THE MERRIER - In 'Advanced Wars: Days of Ruin,' new units such as motorcycles, sea planes, and anti-tank vehicles are available to help deal with global threats. CNS Photo courtesy of Nintendo. When a free retro-style game called "Geometry Wars" was included with the XBOX 360 title "Project Gotham Racing 2," the developers had no idea that it would spawn a series unto itself. A sequel was made available over XBOX Live soon after, and now the third installment, titled "Geometry Wars Galaxies," is available on the Nintendo Wii.

Using low-res 2-D vector graphics (which resemble glowing neon signs), this game won't stun players with

its visuals, but the game play is out of this world. Basically, the player uses a spaceship to blast increasingly difficult waves of enemies without being obliterated. There is no need to worry about gathering ammunition since the supply is unlimited, which is fortunate because so are the enemies!

"Geometry Wars" introduced an extremely user-friendly control scheme where the ship's movement is controlled with the left analog stick, and pressing a direction on the right analog stick fires projectiles in that direction.

"Geometry Wars Galaxies" lets players choose between using this scheme with the classic controller or using the Wiimote and Nunchuk. Ship control is still allocated to the left analog stick, but the player must aim the Wiimote and press "A" to fire. While this new control method is effective, it is also much easier to make mistakes with.

Also new to the series is a "satellite drone" that revolves around the player's ship and helps take out enemies. In addition to being upgraded, these drones can also be programmed to behave in different ways, which adds a nice variety to game play.

With 60 levels, two-player split-screen, online leader boards and frenetic game play, "Geometry Wars Galaxies" seems nearly as vast as our own Milky Way.

Game: "Advance Wars: Days of Ruin"

Publisher: Nintendo

System: Nintendo DS

Cost: $35

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 3 1/2 stars

As an avid fan of real-time action games, I used to think that turn-based titles were excruciatingly boring. That is, until I tried Nintendo's "Advance Wars" series. For the last seven years, gamers have been enjoying these military-themed strategy games on various handheld systems, and while the latest version, "Advance Wars: Days of Ruin," strays a bit from the traditional setting, it is by far the best one to date.

Rather than presenting the whimsical protagonists of past games, players are recruited to fill the role of a worldwide meteor shower survivor named Will. Since everything he knows has been reduced to rubble, Will takes it upon himself to help eradicate the wicked denizens of this dark new world. Whereas past games pitted players against rival military forces, "AW: DoR" introduces rogue leaders, scavengers and mutants (no, this isn't American Idol tryouts).

Fortunately, new units such as motorcycles, sea planes, and anti-tank vehicles are available to help deal with global threats. One particularly handy new unit shoots flares into dark areas of the map to make enemies visible from a distance. In addition, friendly units can learn new offensive and defensive abilities by defeating a certain number of enemy units. This simple addition makes upgraded units more valuable, so smart players will be less likely to steer them into dangerous situations.

Perhaps the biggest complaint about the previous installment was the lack of an online multiplayer mode.

Well, I'm overjoyed to reveal that "AW: DoR" not only lets players duke it out online, but they can also create custom maps and share them online as well. Talk about extending the replay value.

If you've ever wanted to hold the world in the palm of your hands, and then blow it to smithereens, look no further than "Advance Wars: Days of Ruin."

Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

E: Everyone

T: Teen (13 and older)

E10-plus: (Everyone 10 and older)

M: Mature (17 and older) RATING KEY

4 stars - Must have

3 stars - Pretty good

2 stars - So-so

1 star - Don't waste your time

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