

Video Game Reviews: 'Crackdown' lets you put the smackdown on bad guys

by *Jeb_Haught*

Game: "Crackdown"

Publisher: Microsoft

System: Microsoft Xbox 360

Cost: \$60

ESRB rating: M

Review rating: 3 1/2 stars

Pacific City has been taken over by three ruthless gangs on a nonstop crime spree, and it's up to one genetically enhanced supercop to bring peace to the teeming metropolis.

However, in the realm of video games, delivering peace usually requires lots of bloodshed, and Microsoft's open-ended action game "Crackdown" is no exception.

'CRACKDOWN' - You can rid the streets of Pacific City of thugs and earn added abilities in 'Crackdown' for the Xbox 360. CNS Photo courtesy of Microsoft.

SUPER FUN - Gamers who delve into 'Crackdown' will find that they can upgrade their character's natural abilities, eventually doing superhuman feats such as leaping from building to building, tossing cars and regenerating health. CNS Photo courtesy of Microsoft.

'WARIO' - Wario transforms into various characters with individual skills in 'Wario: Master of Disguise.' CNS Photo courtesy of Nintendo DS.

MASTER OF DISGUISE - In 'Wario,' the anti hero gets his powers through the ability to transform into various characters that sport individual skills. CNS Photo courtesy of Nintendo DS.

In the battle for justice, agents need to exploit every available advantage. Gamers who delve into "Crackdown" will find that they can upgrade their character's natural abilities, eventually making available superhuman feats such as leaping from building to building, tossing cars and regenerating health.

When these Herculean feats are combined with a vast arsenal of weapons, the result is a gorgeous, high-definition melange of orchestrated violence. I love the game's innovative aiming system, which lets players lock on to an opponent and then target specific locations. For example, blasting enemies in the hands will disarm them, shooting them in the legs makes them fall to the ground, and so on. Unfortunately, there's no easy way to switch between enemies when targeting, so it's easy to get shot up when fumbling with the controls.

Taking out 21 crime bosses and their mindless cohorts is no easy task for one agent of justice, so players can invite a friend to join them online. Co-op mode is fun and lets players explore the city at their own pace as well as team up to take on bosses at their own discretion, pitting a couple of uberagents versus hundreds of gang members. Maybe the bad guys should get some backup.

Game: "Wario: Master of Disguise"

Publisher: Nintendo

System: Nintendo DS

Cost: \$35

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 2 1/2 stars

Mischief is making its way to the Nintendo DS. Mario's adorably demented nemesis Wario takes a break from his foray into party games to star in Nintendo's latest adventure title, "Wario: Master of Disguise."

But it seems as if his tomfoolery has also invaded the programming, as the game frequently fails to recognize what's being drawn on the touch screen.

Like previous Wario games, the anti-hero gets his powers through the ability to transform into various characters that sport individual skills.

Arty Wario, for example, can draw blocks and other shapes that then appear in the game, while Cosmic Wario can blast enemies and Genius Wario can spot hidden doorways and items.

Drawing shapes on the touch screen activates each character's abilities, but it seems that the game has trouble recognizing anything that isn't drawn perfectly. How frustrating. Adding to this problem is the fact that changing Wario's form is also achieved by drawing, so it's easy to transform into the wrong character in the heat of battle.

Just when I thought I'd escaped the drudgery of minigames, I discover that every treasure chest in the game must be opened by completing one. Arrrgghhh! As if this weren't bad enough, they're all tedious and bland. What a surprise.

Wario fans may be interested in his latest outing, but it certainly isn't a step forward for the series.

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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Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

E: Everyone

T: Teen (13 and older)

E10-plus: (Everyone 10 and older)

M: Mature (17 and older)

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