

Video Game Reviews: Mind-bending puzzles lie at heart of 'Crush'

by *Jeb_Haught*

Game: "Crush"

Publisher: Sega

System: Sony PSP

Cost: \$30

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 3 stars

'CRUSH' - In 'Crush,' advanced puzzles require the ability to crush, or flatten, the surroundings into 2-D

and back again. When this is accomplished, Danny, the main character, can discover hidden pathways and walk over or around objects that previously hindered him. CNS Photo courtesy of Sega. MIND-BENDING PUZZLES - Solve puzzles to help Danny explore his mind and cure his Insomnia in the game 'Crush.' CNS Photo courtesy of Sega. 'DEATH JR. AND THE SCIENCE FAIR OF DOOM' - In 'Death Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom,' DJ is out to clean up a demonic mess before his nefarious father, the Grim Reaper, finds out. CNS Photo courtesy of Konami. SCIENCE PROJECT - Little Death swings his scythe in 'Death Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom.' CNS Photo courtesy of Konami. Although handheld consoles are brimming with puzzle games, none of them stood apart from the rest, until now. Sega has just released "Crush," a game that not only questions the very fabric of reality, but also lets the player alter it.

Insomnia is a terrible ailment, and young Danny will do anything to help him sleep. That's why he agrees to use Dr. Reubens' experimental device to travel into his own damaged psyche and heal himself.

While traveling through his own brain, Danny must locate his lost marbles to proceed to the next level. Three-dimensional puzzles are presented. The more advanced ones require the ability to crush, or flatten, the surroundings into 2-D and back again.

When this is accomplished, Danny can discover hidden pathways and walk over or around objects that previously hindered him. Barrels, blocks and other objects also can be manipulated to help the player progress. In addition, "thoughts" that appear as neon signs can be used when a level is crushed. These "thought power-ups" can slow time, make Danny jump higher or unlock rewards.

It's ironic that "Crush" is so addictive. With the objective of freeing its protagonist from insomnia, the game is sure to cause plenty of sleepless nights for players.

Game: "Death Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom"

Publisher: Konami

System: Nintendo DS

Cost: \$30

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 2 stars

Everyone's favorite pint-size bag o' bones, Death Jr., is back. In Konami's latest action-platform title, "Death Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom," DJ is out to clean up yet another demonic mess before his nefarious father, the Grim Reaper, finds out.

Just when you thought mini-Death's school was brimming with ghastly creatures, along come Moloch the demon and his minions. The game and its characters are so bereft of personality that any new characters, no matter how wicked, are welcome. It doesn't help that much of the game features 3-D characters fighting and performing actions in archaic, 2-D backgrounds.

However, there are plenty of cool moves and combos to perform using DJ's scythe. And who isn't dying to dabble with C4 hamsters? This game requires more jumping and tricky navigation than past versions, so why are the controls so finicky? Pushing on the analog stick makes DJ lurch forward, and as a result, players will frequently fall over ledges instead of slowly moving toward them.

Like a bad science project, "Death Jr. and the Science Fair of Doom" comes up short. Could this diabolically mediocre game be the proverbial nail in the coffin for the series?

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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