

Video Game Reviews: 'Darkness' beckons daredevils

by *Jeb_Haught*

Game: "The Darkness"

Publisher: 2K Games

System: Microsoft Xbox 360

Cost: \$60

ESRB rating: M

Review rating: 4 stars

'THE DARKNESS' - With its gory combat, 'The Darkness,' a first-person shooter game, isn't for the faint

of heart. CNS Photo courtesy of 2K Games. CURSED - Based on the gloomy comic series of the same name, 'The Darkness' follows the story of Jackie Estacado, professional hit man and victim of a genetic curse. CNS Photo courtesy of 2K Games. 'TOMB RAIDER ANNIVERSARY' - Search through ancient ruins and dark caves with Lara Croft in 'Tomb Raider Anniversary. CNS Photo courtesy of Eidos. BACK TO THE BASICS - 'Tomb Raider gets back to its origins in the latest chapter of the 10-year-old series, 'Tomb Raider Anniversary.' CNS Photo courtesy of Eidos. I've succumbed to "The Darkness."

Not that I've taken the path of evil, but I just can't stop thinking about 2K Games' latest first-person shooter. Whether I'm playing the game, going about my daily life or fast asleep, "The Darkness" seems to haunt me. So just like its protagonist, I've given up fighting against it.

Based on the gloomy comic series of the same name, "The Darkness" follows the story of Jackie Estacado, professional hit man and victim of a genetic curse. On the eve of his 21st birthday, Jackie's inner demon is revealed.

He discovers that being possessed gives him bizarre supernatural abilities. Then he's betrayed by the mob, which also brings heat from crooked cops.

So what's a former hit man infested with demons supposed to do? Whip out some heavy firepower, manifest The Darkness and take down enemies anyway he can.

With the press of a button, snakelike creatures protrude from Jackie's shoulders and his eyes begin to glow. In this demonic state, Jackie can impale an enemy with a razor-sharp tendril, send one of his shoulder-demons

out to perform stealth kills, create miniature black holes and summon supernatural demonic minions to do his bidding.

If this sounds macabre, believe me, it is. "The Darkness" isn't for the faint of heart, and its gory combat definitely deserves a Mature rating. However, it's also one of the most innovative shooters ever. Not only does it look fantastic, but it also features awesome, inventive abilities, great gunplay and an extremely realistic physics system.

The only downside to the game is the mediocre online multiplayer combat. The game becomes unplayable for everyone if a single player gets "lagged out."

Still, "The Darkness" is an exceptional first-person shooter that offers compelling game play with a great story.

Game: "Tomb Raider Anniversary"

Publisher: Eidos

System: Sony PlayStation 2

Cost: \$30

ESRB rating: T

Review rating: 3 stars

Getting back to one's roots seems to be a common theme among well-established game franchises nowadays, and it usually leads to a renewed interest by longtime fans as well as newcomers.

The original "Tomb Raider," which set the stage for most 3-D third-person action adventures, gets back to its origins in the latest chapter of the 10-year-old series, "Tomb Raider Anniversary."

The original spunky spelunker, Lara Croft, is back and nimble as ever as she searches ancient ruins and dark caves for the mythical object known as the Scion. At her side are two trusty pistols with unlimited

ammunition and a journal that fills with vital information as her adventure progresses.

Along the way, the firearm-adept femme fatale picks up a powerful shotgun as well as dual .50-caliber pistols and dual mini-SMGs. These lethal weapons will surely come in handy as Lara must fight carnivores ranging from hungry wolves to fearsome raptors to a giant T. rex.

New to her acrobatic repertoire is the ability to perch atop poles and run along walls using a grappling hook. Lara can still tumble and flip through the air while blasting away, but now she also can perform a slow-motion "adrenaline dodge." Basically, this move slows time, giving her the chance to pump her enemies full of lead while dodging certain attacks. Players can't perform the adrenaline dodge very often, but it sure looks cool when it kicks in.

"Tomb Raider Anniversary" is prime evidence that sometimes it's better to go back to the basics rather than reinvent a franchise. Now, if we can just forget that "Tomb Raider 2 and 3" ever existed, Lara can hop back onto the pedestal where she belongs. 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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