Video Game Reviews: 'Parappa' lets gamers rip the mic

by Jeb_Haught

Game: "Parappa the Rapper"

Publisher: Sony

System: Sony PSP

Cost: $30

ESRB rating: E

Review rating: 2 1/2 stars

FRIENDS BECOME ENEMIES - While play can become repetitive, in-depth customization options and

gorgeous visuals help to make 'Project Sylpheed' an enjoyable 3-D space shooter. CNS Photo courtesy of Microsoft/Square-Enix. NEW REMIXES - Sony has released an enhanced version of 'Parappa the Rapper' for the PlayStation Portable; it features eight new downloadable remixes in addition to the original levels. CNS Photo courtesy of Sony.Forget 50 Cent and Diddy. Original hip-hop sensation "Parappa the Rapper" returns to the video game realm, bringing portable mixology to the masses.

Anyone who enjoys playing "Guitar Hero" or "Dance Dance Revolution" should pay tribute to the rhythm genre's first game, despite its simplicity.

Sony has released an enhanced version of "Parappa the Rapper" for the PlayStation Portable; it features eight new downloadable remixes in addition to the original levels. It also includes the ability to use a wireless connection to rap head-to-head with up to three other MC wannabes. Yes, you, too, now can humiliate your friends to the tune of "Chop Chop Master Onion," unless you end up on the chopping block yourself.

For those not familiar with this title's game play, it basically follows a Simon Says style whereby the player must press the appropriate buttons, timed to the beat of the music, immediately after his co-rapper does. The player is judged by the timing and accuracy of each button press, and the results vary from "you rappin' awful" to "you rappin' cool."

Playing "Parappa the Rapper" is very much like playing "Dance Dance Revolution" without the dance pad and with buttons that scroll horizontally instead of vertically. Some gamers will tire of "Parappa" quickly because the game play is simple and it only features a few levels. Even with downloadable content, few players are likely to engage in cyber-rap for hours on end.

Still, the game's visual style and whimsical lyrics make up for the lack of complexity.

Game: "Project Sylpheed: Arc of Deception"

Publisher: Microsoft/Square-Enix

System: Microsoft Xbox 360

Cost: $40

ESRB rating: T

Review rating: 3 stars

Old-school gamers who have played in arcades will appreciate Square-Enix's remake of the classic "Silpheed" series, "Project Sylpheed: Arc of Deception." Set in the 27th century, this 3-D update of the side-scrolling, 2-D space shooter drops the player into the cockpit of a customizable intergalactic fighter, forcing him to dogfight his way out of one precarious situation after another.

After terraforming - making planets habitable, in sci-fi speak - and colonizing 11 star systems, the Terra Central Armed Forces now has to fight an enemy from within. As a result, three childhood friends now must part ways and fight on opposite sides. Budding space jockeys take on the role of a promising pilot named Katana who must struggle with issues of loyalty in the midst of war.

Fortunately, the player can call on up to three wingmen to help in battle, issuing support, attack, breakaway and formation orders. This comes in handy when the enemy has gigantic spaceships armed with dozens of lasers and cannons. In addition, smart pilots will target shield generators first to make disposing of these behemoths a bit easier.

Several maneuvers are available to help dodge incoming fire, such as siderolls, 180-degree turns and afterburner. One of the coolest features is the ability to match the speed of the enemy that you've targeted, making it much easier to blast your foe into space dust.

While play can become repetitive, in-depth customization options and gorgeous visuals help to make "Project Sylpheed" an enjoyable 3-D spaceshooter. 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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