



The Corrente Review of Games: Volume I, Number 11 (English Edition)

Submitted by Aeryl on Sat, 07/31/2010 - 8:52am

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The Corrente Review Of Games: Volume I, Number 11 (English Edition)

Masthead

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First item

A Review of Demon's Souls, More or Less

Lots of people reviewing and commenting on [Demon's Souls](#) ^[5], a Japanese RPG imported into this country, mention how difficult it is. Yeah, yeah, I thought. It might be hard, but I play other RPGs on nightmare level, I can get through Demon's Souls on normal. And I'm sure that's true. Someday, I will get through Demon's Souls on normal level. Probably not anytime soon, but some day. Until then, I'll give you my impressions of the game, albeit it's really just my early impressions of the beginning of the game.

As I've said, it's hard. What makes it so hard? If you die in any area, you get sent back to the beginning of the area. No saving right before a big fight and then re-loading when you get your

ass kicked. You go back to the beginning. Where all of the bad guys have re-spawned, so you get to fight them all again. Sure, you now know where they are and what they are, so that helps. And at times the game allows you to open up short cuts to let you go further without it taking so long. Still, all it takes is one hard opponent you weren't expecting and it's - wham! - right back to the beginning.

Because that's the other thing about Demon's Souls. You die really easily. See, once you die the first time, you're no longer in a regular body. You inhabit a soul form and the thing about a soul form is that it shrinks your health by 50% (25% if you wear an item known as the Cling Ring). So to recap, if you die because you're weak, the game responds by making you weaker. At least the first time. After that you stay at 50%.

It is unforgiving and brutal.

It's also addictive. Here's why. First, the combat system is pretty good. Blocking matters. Stepping out of the way of the attack matters. Stamina is critical. If you run out, you can't move so you have to be smart about how you fight. Rushing in and wailing is a good way to die. Instead, you have to take your time and figure each enemy out (often dying to go back to the beginning in the process). Still, the thrill of the hunt is there.

And when you kill an enemy, you get souls, which can be used to level up and to acquire equipment and other goodies. When you die, you lose all of the souls you've collected. But here's the thing, if you can make it back to the point where you died and touch your blood stain, you get all of the souls back. For some reason, that's extremely compelling. I find myself wanting to get back and collect all of those souls I just lost. Plus, I'll get a bunch more on the journey there. See, dying wasn't a bad thing, I'll come out in a better position. Unless, of course, I forget about the dude on the stairs with the firebomb who kills me early on, thus costing me all of the blood stain souls. But, hey, if I get back to the new stain, all will not be lost! I'll salvage something! Let's go. And on and on.

It's a simple, yet devious, means to keep you coming back for more punishment. I haven't even tried the very interesting on-line mode [6], which sounds different from most other on-line play. I'm too busy trying to complete more than one freaking level.

Eventually, I had to take a break. You can only die so often and have to go through the same area before you need a rest.

So now I'm playing Dragon Age [7] on nightmare level. It's a breeze.

Demon's Souls is different than almost any other RPG on the market. To say it's challenging is an understatement. Still, if you're looking for a challenge. A break from the RPG that you can master in a day or two, give Demon's Souls a try. If nothing else, it will make you appreciate the simplest feature in your other games - the save command.

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An Interim Review of Final Fantasy XXII

I have been very impressed with this recent incarnation of the Final Fantasy Franchise. Square Enix has definitely built upon the strong foundations of their predecessors, and improved.

The cut scene graphics are as incredible as always, but now the game play graphics are as photorealistic as any I've seen before. Now the characters you send all over the world, don't look like childish animation recreations, with many sharp angles, oversized heads. and stiff hair. Now hair ripples in the wind, and people look like people.

The depth of the story is definitely higher caliber, as well. It used to be, that you could count on FF giving you as little depth and explanation about the villain as possible. Not this time around, almost all of the cut scenes have been about what the Imperial villains are up to, what their motivations are, and the internal problems that are exacerbating the conflict with your heroes. It's also been the rare event where you learn more information, than your heroes have.

Extensive sidequests encourage you to interrogate every character you are allowed to talk to, to get the information you need to get superior weapons and armor, extra money, or just lots of experience. By doing this you get to follow the mini-arcs of several people, all over the world.

The updated battle system is quite a lot of fun, and still very user friendly. Former battle systems were turn based, bringing all game play to a halt every time you needed to issue commands. The new system is still turn based, but uses a device called Gambits, which allows you to issue a set series of commands you wish your heroes to do, prioritizing important ones. You get an extensive lists of Foe and Ally command options, which you use to tell your characters which foes to attack, and in which order, or which allies to assist. As you learn techniques and magicks, these are added to the list of commands you are allowed to set for your heroes. After these are set(and you adapt them continuously as you play) your characters will carry out these commands whenever a target is in range. And it's also very easy to halt game play, and give additional commands to your team. Your commands always take precedence over the preprogrammed Gambits.

FF12 is an incredible update to this game franchise, one I look forward to devoting many more hours to, before I come anywhere close to completing, I promise you that.

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