

Video Game Review: ‘Dead to Rights: Retribution’ Frustrates

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 12, 2010 - 2:30pm

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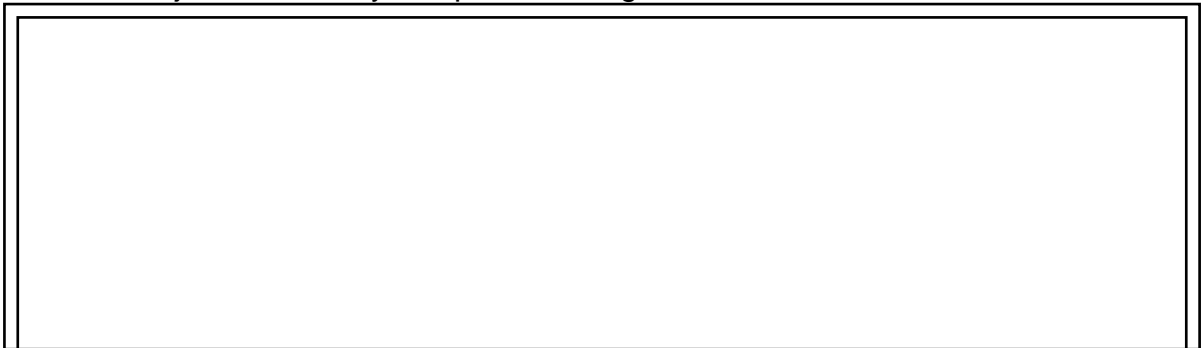
CHICAGO – Namco Bandai’s latest punch-and-shoot game, “Dead to Rights: Retribution,” has moments of visceral enjoyment but they become fewer and farther between as the structural flaws and awful combat system make the title nearly impossible to enjoy. As poorly designed games get more difficult, their drawbacks go from annoying to aggravating with deaths caused more by game design than player control. “Dead to Rights: Retribution” is such a game.

It’s a shame too because this reboot of the “DTR” franchise starts so ridiculously over-the-top that it promises at least a guilty pleasure experience. The player takes on the role of renegade police officer Jack Slate and his trusty dog Shadow. A brief prologue opens the game as the player gets used to controlling man’s best friend as Shadow tackles and mauls the gun-wielding bad guys trying to finish off a near-dead Jack.



Dead to Rights: Retribution
Photo credit: Deep Silver

The story then flashes back a few days to a hostage crisis at a skyscraper in the center of Grant City. While the bad guys toss innocent victims from floors too high for anyone to survive the fall, the cops sit and wait for a negotiator. Jack waits for no one. Giving up his gun and badge, he runs in with just two deadly weapons - his right and left hook.





Dead to Rights: Retribution
Photo credit: Deep Silver

And thus begins one of the more interesting and entertaining gameplay elements of “Dead to Rights: Retribution” - a serious lack of ammunition. Jack can disarm many of his enemies with one button, but even then he’s likely to only get a weapon with one clip and be back to hand-to-hand combat. Sadly, a lot of the fighting system of “DTR” is deeply flawed. It can be incredibly difficult to lock on a target and the actual mechanics - light punch, heavy punch, grapple, block - feel unorganic and hard to time. I found myself wanting to get into it “Arkham Asylum”-style with more enemies but getting so frustrated that I would usually pull my piece and shoot them in the head instead.

As for weapons, “DTR: Retribution” includes the standard fare but tries to amplify the combat a bit by allowing Jack to take human shields, shoot from cover, and even use a “Max Payne”-esque slowdown system that becomes available after headshots, takedowns, etc. But it all feels cobbled together from other titles and never fluidly comes together like the best punch-and-shoot titles.

It doesn’t help that “Retribution” is a pretty ugly game (and not just in the way Jack brutally kills his enemies, sometimes in slow motion while they beg for their lives). The graphics are mediocre at best and sometimes downright flawed. With a title that requires precision to plant a headshot or time a block in a fistfight, having graphics that feel underdeveloped is more than a mere aesthetic flaw. It effects the gameplay.



Dead to Rights: Retribution
Photo credit: Deep Silver

There are players out there who get off on ultra-violent, mindless games and there are certainly more problematic and less enjoyable ones to play than “Dead to Rights: Retribution”. But even those who “ooh” and “aah” at the first few slow-motion neck-breaks or skull explosions will have to admit that the game unveils all of its tricks before the halfway point. As the repetition of the title started to sink in, I became less and less forgiving of the game’s flaws. The novelty of a new game only lasts so long and the developers of “Dead to Rights: Retribution” don’t do enough to make the latter levels as entertaining as they are frustrating. And when the title is over in relatively short time, there’s no multi-player experience to add bang for your buck.

Some cheesy dialogue, a few levels where you actually get to play an enemy-eating dog, the kinetic thrill of general mayhem after a long day of work - there are things to like about “Dead to Rights: Retribution”. It’s just a shame that the problems with the title so outweigh what works about it.

‘Dead to Rights: Retribution’ was released by Namco Bandai and developed by Volatile Games. It is rated M (Mature). The version reviewed was for the Xbox 360, but the title is also available for the PS3. It was released on April 27th, 2010.

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