Video Game Review: Disappointing 'Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands'

Submitted by **BrianTT** [1] on June 6, 2010 - 9:15pm

- Brian Tallerico [2]
- Gemma Arterton [3]
- HollywoodChicago.com Content [4]
- Jake Gyllenhaal [5]
- PlayStation 3 [6]
- Prince of Persia [7]
- Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands [8]
- Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time [9]
- PS3 [10]
- Ubisoft [11]
- Ubisoft Montreal [12]
- Video Game Review [13]
- Xbox 360 [14]

CHICAGO – One might assume that the disappointing Jake Gyllenhaal summer action flick "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time" would have a movie tie-in game that's equally frustrating but Ubisoft's "Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands" is actually unrelated to the film other than being a part of the franchise that inspired it. No, you won't be able to play Alfred Molina's ostrich races, although you may wish you could.

Video Game Rating: **3.0**/5.0

To be fair, "The Forgotten Sands" isn't nearly as much of a disaster as "The Sands of Time" but it is a serious disappointment. Ubisoft Montreal's reimagining of the "PoP" franchise in 2008 wasn't much of a success critically or commercially but I admired the title for the chances it took and the impressive visuals (read the review here [15]). Sadly, "The Forgotten Sands" feels like a team that was burned by their last effort and have consequently pulled back on creativity to deliver something more appealing to old fans of the franchise and more traditional platformers. While the new "PoP" has moments of ingenuity and some impressive graphics, it's ultimately as frustrating as it is enjoyable and that's a shame given the heights this Prince once reached.
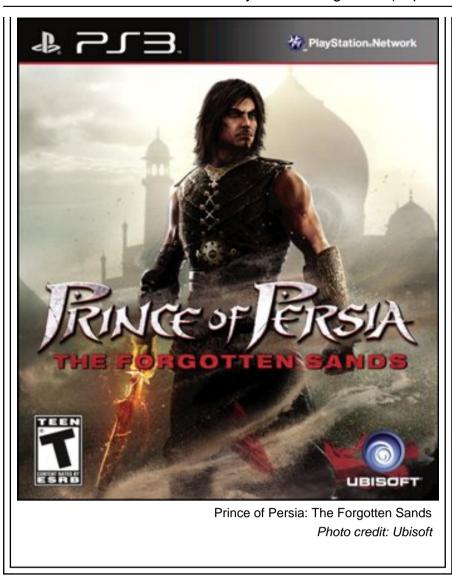

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
Photo credit: Ubisoft

Of course, in "Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands," the player takes on the role of the legendary title character, a parkour master who has never seen a wall he couldn't find a way to climb. In the very loose story, the Prince visits his brother and monsters attack. That's about it. In fact, the thin, uninteresting story is one of the main reasons "The Forgotten Sands" fails as a complete experience — there's simply no narrative to care about.

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
Photo credit: Ubisoft

Without a story to invest in, "The Forgotten Sands" falls back on nothing but gameplay and visuals. The graphics for the game are impressive, but the gameplay feels poorly conceived and sometimes borderline incomplete. The jumping, climbing, and swinging are once again the highlight of the title but the button-mashing combat is embarrassing. It's inconsistent, repetitive, and just never feels right. The player is granted new powers through upgrades made available by experience points and the added elements help but the combat is numbing in its repetition and often far more difficult to pull off than it needed to be.

One of the few new elements at play in this "PoP" title is that the Prince now has the ability to freeze water, something that feels exciting at first but is really merely a way to try and spice up the acrobatic gameplay as it starts to get repetitive. Instead of merely presenting the player with poles to swing on, now the designers have made them fountains to freeze and swing on. Still, the visual change of pace is interesting and having to freeze and thaw water mid-air during a few later sequences does add a new element to the traditional gameplay.

Ultimately, "Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands" may satisfy diehard "The Sands of Time" fans more than the 2008 attempt to reboot the franchise but it doesn't feel nearly as daring or unique to this player. Sure, it looks great and a lot of the platforming/acrobatics sequences completely work, but the combat never clicks and the story is simply impossible to care about. A player really has to be drawn in by the climbing, jumping, and falling with style for "The Forgotten Sands" to work. For this player, I was hoping for a little something more. In the end, it's certainly better than your average movie tie-in (as it's not really one at all other than in the timing of its release) but doesn't quite live up to the legacy of the Prince, something that's clearly been a bit tarnished in 2010.

Check out the launch trailer before you begin your adventure:

'Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands' was released by Ubisoft and developed by Ubisoft Montreal. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was on PS3, but the title is also available on XBox 360. It was released on May 18th, 2010.

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