Video Game Review: Shockingly Enjoyable 'Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions'

Submitted by **BrianTT** [1] on September 27, 2010 - 4:22pm

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CHICAGO – There have been so many bad superhero games that, despite my adoration for last year's amazing "Batman: Arkham Asylum," I still approach them with serious trepidation. And 2008's Peter Parker Activision title – "Spider-Man: Web of Shadows" – was just not good. So no one is more surprised than I am that "Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions" is one of the most enjoyable games of the year. It's a web-slinging blast.

Video Game Rating: **4.5**/5.0

The developers of "Shattered Dimensions" start with a concept that instantly helps them overcome one of the biggest problems of their genre — repetition. Most superhero games devolve into a series of button-mashing as you learn the deadliest moves and unleash them on a wave of faceless enemies. "Shattered Dimensions" brilliantly avoids repetition by providing four linked-but-unique games in one, each with their own style and indvidualized play.
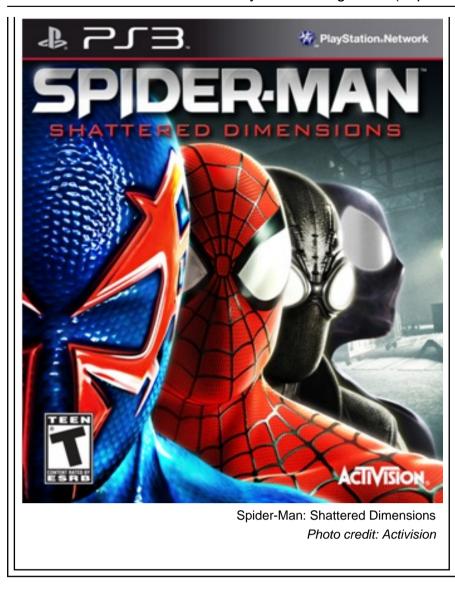

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions
Photo credit: Activision

The underwritten plot of "Shattered Dimensions" (easily the weakest element of the title despite being scripted by acclaimed comic book writer Dan Slott) revolves around the Tablet of Order and Chaos being shattered across four parallel universes. Four variations on Spider-man have to collect the pieces of the tablet in order to return life to normal across the multi-verse.

Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions
Photo credit: Activision

The four worlds of "Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions" are that of The Amazing Spider-Man, The Ultimate Spider-Man, Spider-Man 2099, and Spider-Man Noir. Amazing features the red-suited Tobey Maguire incarnation of the character, Ultimate features the black suit, 2099 is a futuristic take, and Noir is a stylish variation on the character in which stealth becomes a priority. All four of the worlds feature some of the same controls — so don't worry about four completely different skill sets — but also have their own distinct energy and pacing.

All four of the universes in "Shattered Dimensions" feel expertly-designed but any one of them could have become repetitive if spread out over an entire game. The way the title is organized allows the player to spend no more than an hour in each character before being "refreshed" by a new world and villain to challenge.

And I do mean villain. Every level of the game is essentially a giant boss battle featuring legendary villains from the books. For example, the first level features Amazing Spider-Man chasing Kraven across a jungle landscape. Spidey has to kill henchmen along the way, but the focus of the entire level is on catching the big bad guy and getting his piece of the tablet. It's how most of the levels work and they usually incorpate mini-boss battles within the structure. You'll catch up with Sandman, defeat him, and then have to catch him again. Of course, some of the levels are more expertly-conceived than others (I loved Deadpool's reality show from Hell but was a bit bored by Electro's shock corridors) but the genius of the game is that each lackluster level or boss is usually followed by one that completely works.

"Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions" is a visual and auditory delight as well. The design of the game is simply beautiful, arguably the best in the history of the superhero video game. From the beautifully sparse design of Spider-Man Noir to the fascinating futuristic take of 2099, "Shattered Dimensions" looks simply amazing. It's gorgeous. And some of the sound design matches the ingenuity of the visuals, especially the voice work, which includes Neil Patrick Harris as The Amazing Spider-Man. The dialogue itself can get repetitive and the story sucks but it helps to have great voice actors delivering the lines, even if they are cheesy lines.

The most important thing to stress about "Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions" is a simple one that often gets lost in video game reviewers desperate to make a point that sounds deep — this game is FUN. It's a just a good time. It looks great, sounds great, never gets repetitive, offers hundreds of collectibles and in-game challenges to keep its replayability high, and shatters expectations (pun only slightly intended) when it comes to often-derided superhero genre. Fans of the web-slinger and Marvel aficionadoes in general definitely shouldn't miss it and the game even convert those of you that aren't yet in love with Stan Lee's timeless creation.

'Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions' was released by Activision and developed by Beenox. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was for the PS3, but the title is also available for the XBox 360 and Nintendo Wii. It was released on September 7th, 2010.

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