

Video Game Review: Fun ‘Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 14, 2010 - 11:50am

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CHICAGO – Everything old is new again. It’s fall 2010 and there are millions of gamers playing a new incarnation of “Castlevania” (review [here](#) [15]), a reboot of “Medal of Honor” (review coming soon) and yet another variation on another of the most legendary franchises in gaming history in “Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light,” an immensely-enjoyable downloadable title now available on both the Playstation Network and Xbox Live Arcade.



Not unlike “Castlevania: Harmony of Despair,” Crystal Dynamics and Square Enix have distilled elements of the franchise into something that feels inspired by “Tomb Raider” but not directly in its lineage. I could see hardcore fans of the franchise being upset that their heroine has been mostly turned into killing machine in this arcade game, but it should be considered a spin-off more than a sequel. Judged on those terms, it completely works, delivering an amazing amount of content for the purchase price and likely to give you more hours of joyful playtime than a majority of the \$60 on-disc titles released this season. It’s just fun.



Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light
Photo credit: Square Enix

The structure of “Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light” is simple enough. You play Lara. She has guns and a grapple hook. You kill a lot. Climb a lot. Solve a few puzzles. Find some treasures. Honestly, the “plot” of “Guardian of Light” is secondary to the arcade-esque experience in which your player, either single or cooperatively, drops grenades, throws spears, and fires multiple weapons at waves of enemies.



Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light
Photo credit: Square Enix

The levels of “Guardian of Light” are simple enough but the developers have wisely enhanced them with a number of mini-challenges and point levels to reach. I know, a “Tomb Raider” game with points probably sounds like blasphemy to some, but it works perfectly to keep a title like this fresh. It’s rare for me to instantly rerun through a level to try and raise my point total but I did just that at one point in “Guardian of Light.” And some of the mini-challenges, like solving a puzzle in a certain amount of time or collecting all the hidden objects on the level, are perfectly-designed to bring people back to the title again and again.

Downloadable titles have developed by leaps and bounds this year. In fact, they may be the story of the year with games like “Limbo,” “Joe Danger,” and now “Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light” offering more value for your hard-earned dollar than most store releases. Gamefly and Gamestop probably don’t want to hear it but this is clearly the future of gaming. As developers continue to play with the potential of gaming through downloadable content, we’ll see more and more titles like “Guardian of Light.” Let’s hope they’re all this much fun.

Sadly, for now, co-op is only off-line but a patch that will make it playable between two people across the internets is forthcoming.

The final notable thing about “Guardian of Light” is that the game gives you more than you could possibly expect for \$15 but the developers have also announced that there will be five packs of new puzzles, exploration, and combat experience before the end of the year. It’s a great game that will only get better.

‘Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light’ was released by Square Enix and developed by Crystal Dynamics. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was for the PS3 through the PSN, but the title is also available for the XBox 360 through XBLA. It was released on PSN on September 28th, 2010.



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