

Video Game Review: 'Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II' Wastes Opportunity

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on November 9, 2010 - 1:39pm

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CHICAGO – “Star Wars: The Force Unleashed” was universally embraced, a winner of multiple awards and an addition to the George Lucas canon that met with approval from nearly every corner of the fan base. With that kind of support, we all assumed that “Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II” would build on what worked in the first game and be the “Empire Strikes Back” to the first game’s “A New Hope.” Sadly, the more apt comparison is “The Phantom Menace.”



Video Game Rating: **2.5/5.0**

“The Force Unleashed II” upgrades the combat of the first game to include dual lightsaber-wielding and a pretty nifty Jedi mind trick but the improvements pretty much stop there. On every significant level — especially storytelling, enemy A.I., and level design — the game is a serious letdown. With an incredibly short running time, a disappointing ending, and two of the most legendary characters in the history of the universe reduced to pathetic cameos, “Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II” is easily one of the biggest disappointments of 2010.



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

Photo credit: LucasArts

Those of you that finished the first game may wonder who the hero is of this title considering Starkiller died at the end of “The Force Unleashed.” The answer to that little problem should be obvious to anyone who’s followed the franchise in the last decade — clones! Yep, in a storytelling move that immediately starts the game off with something of a cheat, you play Starkiller yet again. Technically, you’re a clone of the legendary hero (or are you?) who starts to regain memories of his source and even his memories. When Starkiller has a vision that Vader will kill him, he escapes and tries to track down his one true love, Juno Eclipse, before it’s too late. Yoda and Boba Fett make unbelievably useless cameos but Vader, naturally, plays a major role. Once again, the plot takes place between “Star Wars, Episode III: Revenge of the Sith” and “Star Wars, Episode IV: A New Hope,” although this one feels much closer to the prequels in terms of quality than the previous

game.



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

Photo credit: LucasArts

To call the narrative of "Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II" thin would be an understatement. There's so little to it that you could be stunned when you realize that it's coming to an end after only about four hours of play. It's ridiculously under-developed. Starkiller escapes, kills a bunch of guys, and has a big, exhausting fight at the end. Roll credits. Yes, some of the enemies get a bit more difficult and your powers do increase through a points/upgrade system, but you'll never get engrossed in this story.

Part of the problem is the lack of variety through the brief title. There are a limited number of enemies and once you've figured out their weaknesses, you can mow through them with your Force Lightning, dual sabers, or other enemy-specific combinations of powers. It's not just the story of "The Force Unleashed II" that's thin but every element of the design as well. The levels, the repetitive enemies, the dull boss battles, the fact that you'll do EVERYTHING in the game more than once — this is one of the most frustrating titles of the year on a development level. It just feels lazy.

What's new? To be fair, the combat has been refined a bit. The "pick up and throw" technique is much smoother with a Force Grip that feels like you can actually control it and, while it's mostly cosmetic, the ability to wield two lightsabers is pretty cool. Starkiller also now has the power of Mind Trick, an ability that forces your enemies to either attack each other or jump off the nearest platform. It's fun but not very handy nor necessary until the final battle. Like most elements of the game, it feels like a bit of an afterthought. You can also build and use "Force Fury," which allows for a more powerful attack, although it's also rarely necessary.



Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II

Photo credit: LucasArts

As for graphics, enemy and environment design is strong but remarkably repetitive. I longed for a new enemy to use my considerable powers on instead of wave after wave of troopers. It's not long before you're so powerful that you're simply destroying everything and everyone in your path. That is until a ridiculously-unbalanced section of the game comes along. The difficulty variations in "Force Unleashed II" are baffling. I would go an hour barely being hurt and then run into an enemy or room that killed me over and over again. Games should build not

just peak every once in awhile on their way to a concluding boss battle.

The short game with a lackluster story is accentuated by alternate modes and multiplayer, right? Not really. There are a few “challenge levels” but they feel totally secondary to the story experience and no multiplayer to speak of. There’s almost no reason to play through the game again after you’ve finished the story unless you’re dying to wear different costumes or use different lightsabers.

How disappointing is “Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II”? I was never eager to return to its world and kept pushing forward just hoping it would end. The controls are too smooth and the graphics too refined for it to be truly painful, but the repetitive nature of the title combined with the awful storytelling consistently hold back the experience. If the first game was a game Han Solo could admire, the sequel feels more inspired by Jar Jar Binks.

'Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II' was developed and released by LucasArts. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was for the PS3, but the title is also available for the XBox 360, PC and Nintendo Wii. It was released on October 26th, 2010.



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