

Video Game Review: Riveting 'Dead Space 2' Can Hear You Scream

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 2, 2011 - 5:42pm

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CHICAGO – If you play games as a way to relax and unwind after a long day at work or school, “Dead Space 2” might not be for you. It is the opposite of relaxing. Rarely have I literally felt my heart rate increase or my hands become a little shakier than my average caffeine buzz as when I was playing this riveting, terrifying, great game, a must-own for single-player fans held back only slightly by a few minor disappointments in the multi-player realm.



Video Game Rating: **4.5/5.0**

If you didn't play the excellent “Dead Space,” the single player campaign on the follow-up cleverly includes a “Previously on Dead Space” feature to catch you up. You once again play Isaac Clarke, who wakes up strapped into a straitjacket and running for his life. From the very beginning, you have no weapons or use of your arms and all Hell is breaking loose on the Sprawl, the floating city on which you find yourself. In other words, RUN!



Dead Space 2

Photo credit: EA

Over the course of the next fifteen chapters, Isaac will once again battle something that feels like a cross between zombie survival horror like “Resident Evil” and a breakneck sci-fi/action experience like “Aliens.” In other words, it's white-knuckle time as a variety of creatures will sprout from your nightmares and try to rip you limb from limb as you run out of ammo and oxygen. Prepare to die. A LOT. But also prepare to have one of the most accomplished, mesmerizing, and enjoyable video game experiences of the year.



Dead Space 2
Photo credit: EA

"Dead Space 2" follows a pretty linear format through its single-player campaign — arguably too linear. There were times when I hoped for an option or to be able to explore the spectacularly-designed Sprawl like I did Rapture in "Bioshock." At first I was frustrated, but as the game progressed, I understood why there's almost always only one way to go in "Dead Space 2." What's scarier, choosing which door to go through or knowing that you're moving forward through that terrifying one in front of you no matter what? There's no "way around." The fact that "Dead Space 2" sometimes feels like a rail game in that it has so few player choices could be considered a slight drawback but it adds to the tension. You have no choice. You have to move on.

As you do, you'll encounter a series of creatures that go from annoying to nightmare-inducing. From the small/fast ones like the screaming child-like monsters that seem to only come in packs of two dozen to the red-eyed monstrosities who swing their spear-like arms at you like blades, different strategies apply. Not only does the game feature a variety of weapons (although it's ALL about the Line Gun) for your perusal and enjoyment, but, once again, Isaac has the power of kinesis, which not only means he can grab objects and throw them at his enemy but freeze them in time for brief moments. Way too brief. You haven't played "Dead Space 2" until you've run out of ammo and are telekinetically picking up objects around the room and throwing them at a Necromorph while you scream. And, when it works, it's a visceral sigh of relief.



Dead Space 2
Photo credit: EA

The variety of weapons, creatures, and environments in "Dead Space 2" are remarkable but they all feel like part of the fabric of a very cinematic story. "Dead Space 2" actually reminded me of "Uncharted 2" in the way that it unfolded. Both games include basic shooter gameplay intercut with cinematic set-pieces. Memorable ones in "Dead Space 2" include an amazing train sequence, a school-based level that will raise the hairs on the back of your neck, and a breathtaking scene where you're dragged out a window into outer space and must battle a creature while you hang on for dear life. I audibly screamed through that last one. My wife laughed at me.

The cinematic experience of "Dead Space 2" is almost perfectly designed. Some of the checkpoints will frustrate you. There were several

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times that I made it through a door with a bar of health left in my HUD and two shots left in my Plasma Cutter only to encounter a vast number of deadly creatures. In other words, I made a mistake earlier and had to reload a save point because there was no way I was surviving that checkpoint without some better ammo management or purchases at one of the in-game stores. In general, the ammo management and distribution is brilliantly designed. You will rarely feel "armed enough" for the door you're about to open and will have to think quickly as to which low-stocked weapon to use for what's coming your way.

The single-player campaign of "Dead Space 2" is one of the best you will play all year. And it should be noted that the Limited Edition for the PS3 includes the Nintendo Wii rail game "Dead Space: Extraction" for the Playstation Move. It's been upgraded for PS3 graphics and looks great although the Move controls don't seem as well-mapped as the Wii-mote in terms of reloading, kinesis, etc. It took me some getting used to. Still, "Extraction" is an underrated, enjoyable game, and to get it as a "bonus" is remarkable. It's worth at least \$20.

Now, what about that multi-player we heard so much about? It's a moderate success at best but the fact that there's not much to it shouldn't surprise and shouldn't frustrate too deeply. Honestly, the "Dead Space" franchise is all about single-player, about survival horror, about being caught with dozens of deadly creatures, limited ammo, and no one to help you. In other words, it's not exactly something designed for multi-player parties. With that in mind, what EA developed is interesting for MP but not something I imagine will keep players busy for too long. In the main multiplayer portion, players are split into teams of humans or Necromorphs and sent into 4 on 4 battles. Now you get to know what it feels like to be one of those killing machines that haunt your dreams. Explain that to your shrink.

"Dead Space 2" was developed by Visceral Games and released by EA. It was released on January 25th, 2011 for the PS3, Xbox 360, and PC. The version reviewed was for the PS3. It is rated M (Mature).



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