

Video Game Review: 'LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean' Rides the Seas

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on May 10, 2011 - 2:35pm

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CHICAGO – Traveller's Tales clearly seems 100% unconcerned about exhausting their "LEGO" brand as they have released "LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4," "LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars," and, now, "LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean" in less than a year. Clearly timed to capitalize on the theatrical release of "Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides," the new LEGO game falls squarely in the middle of the series, not quite as seamless as some of the best but also far from the worst.



The LEGO games have brought a unique sense of humor and a clever, family-based puzzle platforming style to "Star Wars," Indiana Jones, Batman, and Harry Potter. Would you have guessed that "Pirates of the Caribbean" would be the next franchise to join the world of LEGO? It makes sense in hindsight but it certainly doesn't seem like a world as rich or a legacy as deep as the other LEGO titles and that hampers the gameplay somewhat. It may be a byproduct of my age, but playing Luke Skywalker, The Dark Knight, or Indy has a different historical resonance than Jack Sparrow.



LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean

Photo credit: Disney Interactive Studios

It also doesn't help the game that the "Pirates" films have been pretty repetitive. The universe of "Star Wars" or "Harry Potter" is much richer in depth of character and location. Playing through the four movies in "LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean" reveals that they may not be as creatively impressive as the former inspirations for this franchise. There's a difference between unlocking all the various characters of

Lucas-verse and unlocking Jack Sparrow in different outfits. In other words, this game will only truly work for the most hardcore fans of the series, something I can't really claim to be.



LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean
Photo credit: Disney Interactive Studios

Despite that fact, “LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean” still delivers hours of platforming fun. Play is arguably more focused on puzzle-solving than ever before as Jack, Will Turner, and the rest of the gang have to work together using different skills to get from point A to point B. The basic gameplay of the “LEGO” franchise hasn’t changed — collect as many studs as possible, unlock as many secrets as possible, get from the beginning of the level to the end, and then do it all over again with new characters if you want to get anywhere near 100% completion.

Over 20 levels divided evenly over the four “POTC” movies (along with secrets to be found back at the port, which serves as a hub from movie to movie), the player takes control of the major and minor characters of the hit Disney franchise, while also reenacting the major moments of the series like the Kraken battle that ended “Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest.” Instead of traditional combat gameplay, the player has to alternate characters to find boxes of dynamite, light a cannon, and take down the legendary beast (before a somewhat-disappointing final battle).

With its emphasis on puzzle-solving, a lot of the success of the LEGO series comes down to the design of said mental gymnastics. Here, they’re just OK — not as clever as “Harry Potter” but also not as frustrating as some of the Indiana Jones or Batman levels. And for every puzzle that I felt was hampered by camera issues or inconsistency, there was a level that simply worked from beginning to end. The short review of “LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean” would be that if there’s something about the title that leaves you frustrated, just work through it and it will be only minutes before you’re back in the groove. None of the issues here last long enough to sink the overall enjoyment of the game.



LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean
Photo credit: Disney Interactive Studios

What I've loved about this entire series is how effectively it plays for multiple generations (something that can be said about the Johnny Depp movies as well, I suppose). An eighteen-year-old can enjoy playing "LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean" co-operatively with his eight-year-old brother and there aren't many games in today's market for which that is true.

It should be noted that the game looks pretty great with cleverly-written cut scenes and an overall aesthetic that works. Yes, there could have been a bit more detail put into the water and sand, but this is a LEGO game, and, judged on that scale, it's always visually appealing.

The game also has deep replay value, encouraging players to go back to past levels with new, unlocked characters who have different skill sets that make different areas of the level accessible. It will take days for the most hardcore gamers to get to 100% — another notable element of this franchise. One can never complain about not getting enough bang for the buck.

The LEGO games are at their best when they merge two childhood joys — that excitement created by the blend of LEGO toys with the memories of Chewbacca action figures was one of the main reasons that "LEGO: Star Wars" was such a phenomenon. To that end, it is the kids who have grown up with Jack Sparrow who will get the most out of this title. Set sail with your favorite toys and your favorite movie character and prepare for a long, fun journey with "LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean."

Check out this great trailer for the "On Stranger Tides" portion of the game before you start practicing your swordplay:

'LEGO: Pirates of the Caribbean' was released by Disney Interactive Studios and developed by Traveller's Tales. It is rated E10+ (Everyone 10 and older). The version reviewed was for the Xbox 360 but the title is also available for the PS3, Wii, PS2, PC, and PSP. It was released on May 10th, 2011.



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