

Video Game Review: Explosive 'Red Faction Armageddon' Offers Thrilling Ride For Shooter Fans

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on June 3, 2011 - 3:39pm

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CHICAGO – “Red Faction Armageddon” is a stellar game for players who like their action explosive. The last game in this franchise, “Red Faction Guerilla,” was based more on open-ended gameplay with destruction being a key element. As the title suggests, things have gotten a bit more intense in the follow-up, which is a much more linear shooter but hasn’t lost the franchise’s defining characteristic — things that go boom.



Fans of the last game may be initially thrown by this experience, which features a very clear path (you even have a GPS that guides you on it), well-defined objectives, and even a rather-limited variety of enemies. There are cultists and aliens and that’s about it. You have an increasingly-awesome selection of firepower (that you can cycle out regularly with weapons lockers peppered throughout the game) along with a powerful device called the Nano Forge, which serves multiple purposes. The key to the game is knowing the right weapon to use in the right situation, along with a lethal combination of dodging and Nano Forge powers. When it really starts to click, it can be as addictive as anything released so far this year. The game is a bit repetitive and the story is a bit lackluster, but judged on pure action, this is one of the most enjoyable games of the year to date.



Red Faction Armageddon
Photo credit: THQ

It’s been 50 years since the action of “Guerilla,” a game built around revolution. In that title, Alec Mason and the Red Faction overthrew the EDF. To do so, you had to weaken their powerhold, destroying buildings and key locations as often as you did enemies. Naturally, when one powerful group is removed, it’s only a matter of time before another takes their place. There was even a SyFy movie (and the company gets credit on this game as well) that bridged the gap between that game and this one called “Red Faction: Origins.”

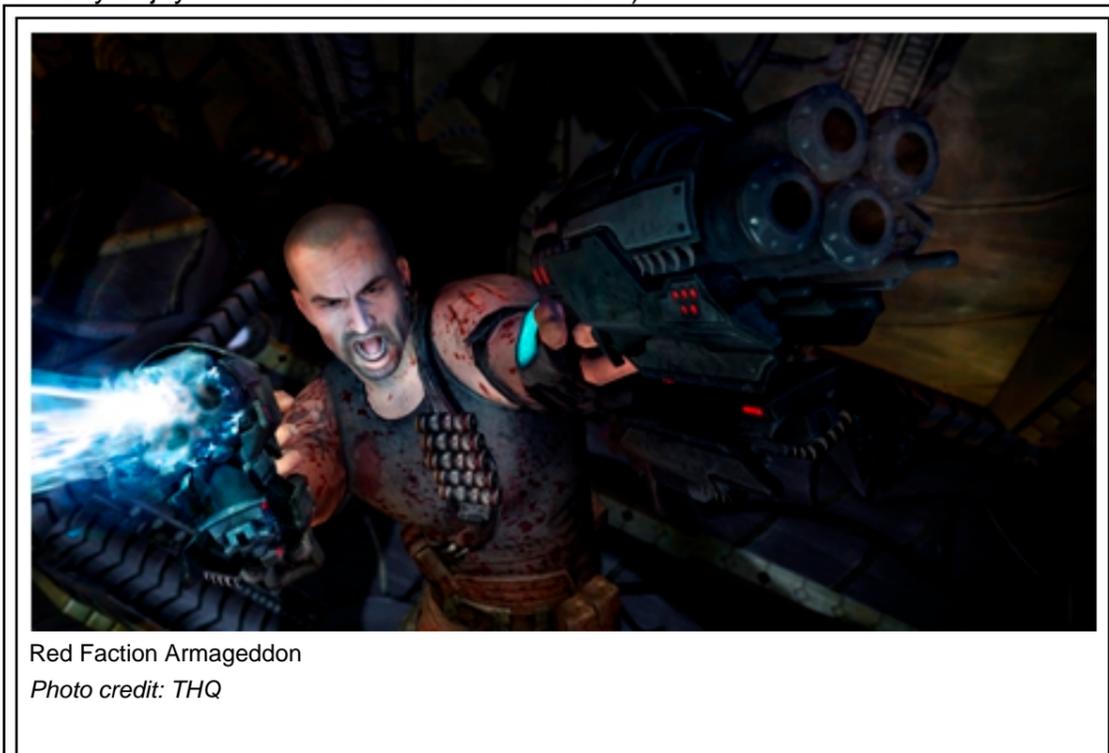


Red Faction Armageddon
Photo credit: THQ

The EDF are gone on the surface, but the threat in "Red Faction Armageddon" comes from underground. You play Darius Mason, grandson of Alec from the last game. There was one thing keeping the surface of Mars habitable, a device called the Terraformer. When a cult leader named Adam Hale destroyed it, the colonists were forced to move underground, where they found something as terrifying as the creatures in "Dead Space." Darius is forced into action to save his people, just like his father did, but this mission is even more dangerous.

Once again, the key to "Red Faction Armageddon" is destruction. You can cycle through four weapons and you'll quickly find your favorites for each situation. There are weak-enough enemies that using the Assault Rifle or Shotgun becomes the easiest way to go and then there are massive creatures for which only a Rocket Launcher or Plasma Beam will get the job done. Other awesome weaponry includes a Charge Launcher, Singularity Cannon, and the wicked new Magnet Gun. This device allows you to shoot once at one target — let's say an explosive gas tank — and then shoot at another, pulling the two together. It can be a difficult weapon to use in close combat, when quick timing is often everything, but it's essential to succeeding in "Ruin Mode," which is exactly what it sounds like — point-based destruction.

The Nano Forge is mapped to the trigger buttons and serves multiple purposes. It is a nanite-based technology which can be used to build or destroy. Your combat will regularly bring down structures like ramps or bridges to proceed. Not only can the Nano Forge rebuild these but it can also come in handy when you need to get your cover back in an intense firefight. Throughout the game, the player finds upgrade stations, at which they can buy upgrades with salvage found in play. Some upgrades are typical (health, clip size, etc.) but others enhance the weapon usage of your Nano Forge, including abilities like Shockwave, Shell, and the wicked Berserk (which I didn't buy until way too late in the game to really enjoy it...don't make the same mistake).



Red Faction Armageddon
Photo credit: THQ

"Red Faction Armageddon" does get a bit repetitive after killing the same creatures over and over again, but I can't say I was ever bored. It's the kind of repetition that becomes apparent if you sit down and think about it, but doesn't really bother you in-game. Yes, I wish there was a bit more variety to the game play (many of the underground caverns start to look the same after awhile) but the upgrade and weapon variety keep the title fresh. Your enemy may often be the same, but how you approach them doesn't have to be. Even in the final hour of the title, I was experiencing new combinations of explosive destruction simply due to the choices I had made at the last weapons locker or upgrade station.

The game comes with two alternate modes — "Ruin Mode" and "Infestation." The former is a solo affair in which you have a time limit to reach a certain point total based on destruction or you cannot move on. It's tough and often comes down to replaying different sections with different weapons to figure out how to make the biggest bang in the shortest amount of time. "Infestation" is 1-4 players with online functionality that's a wave-based system of survival. It's OK, but I do wish "Armageddon" has a more-detailed multi-player format with more variety, including deathmatch. I'd LOVE to unleash a Singularity Cannon on an actual human player. Or dodge a chunk of building as it moves toward me from someone else's Magnet Gun. Don't get me started on Mr. Toots. I imagine the variety of environmental destruction simply couldn't be recreated in an open-play, deathmatch environment. Maybe next time.

The biggest flaw of "Armageddon" is in the storytelling, which never really resonates as great games do. We've become accustomed to big-budget action movies in the summer season that are a bit slight on character and plot. Such is also the case with "Red Faction Armageddon," an explosive summer blockbuster for your Xbox or PS3.

'Red Faction Guerilla' was released by THQ and developed by Volition. It is rated M (Mature). The version reviewed was for the Xbox 360, but the title will also be available for the PS3 and the PC. It will be released on June 7th, 2011.



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