

Video Game Review: ‘From Dust’ Approaches Arcade Gaming From New Angle

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on August 11, 2011 - 7:17pm

- [Brian Tallerico](#) [2]
- [From Dust](#) [3]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [4]
- [PlayStation 3](#) [5]
- [PS3](#) [6]
- [PSN](#) [7]
- [Ubisoft](#) [8]
- [Video Game Review](#) [9]
- [XBLA](#) [10]
- [Xbox 360](#) [11]

CHICAGO – “From Dust” is such a unique, unusual experience that it’s tempting to recommend it based purely on its originality. It stands out from the crowd and, for that fact alone, deserves a look for those of you with credit to burn and in need of something refreshing. Ambition needs to be matched by execution though and there are frustrating elements of “From Dust” that can’t be ignored.

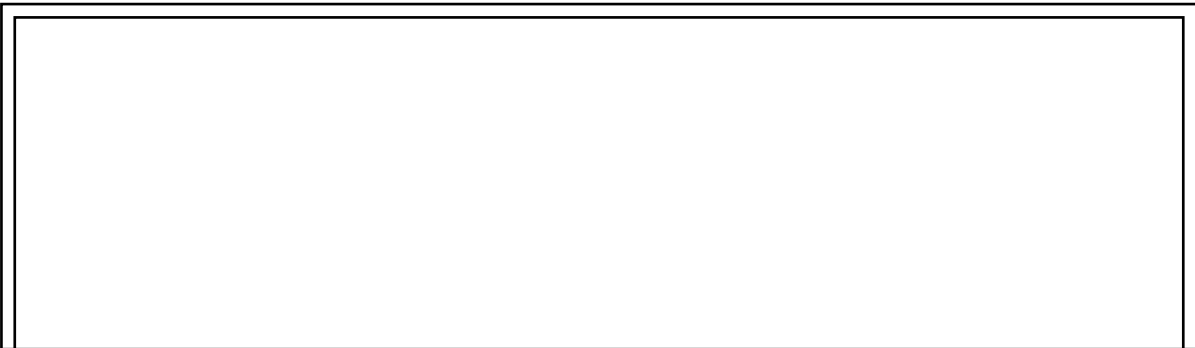


How many games have tried to essentially replicate the creation of life? Of course, there are the sim titles like “Civilization” and (showing my age) “Sim City,” ancestors of “From Dust” in the way they offered control over a growing society, but this title’s goals are more nature-driven and even spiritual in tone. It’s a game that turns you into a God, but not in the way you might expect. Some of the gameplay can be a bit frustrating and it feels like the downloadable game could have used a bit more refining in the development process but I respect the attempt.



From Dust
Photo credit: Ubisoft

“From Dust” attempts to recreate nothing less than the creation of a civilization. Taking control of something called the Breath, you rearrange the Earth and build a new world by changing the landscape, building villages, and bringing new powers to your people. It’s essentially a puzzle-solving game. How do I get my people from this patch of land to this one? Where do I build a bridge of Earth? And can I do so before the tsunami comes?





From Dust

Photo credit: Ubisoft

The best thing about "From Dust" (besides the clever, original concept) is the ever-changing landscape. You may need to build an Earth bridge at one point but if you do so through a raging river then you should be prepared for it to erode. Water, earth, lava — the playing tools of "From Dust" are the most powerful known to man — those of mother nature.

The game works on a collectible system in that you're trying to unlock lost memories by building villages, keeping your people alive, and expanding the plant and animal life. You send your people to collect powers by finding special stones to teach them how to survive.

But you never control them directly. The actual control system of "From Dust" is an odd one in that you don't actually move villagers. You guide them through the "Breath" and open paths for them but they're not unlike the characters in "Lemmings" (once again, showing my age) and yet often less manageable. "From Dust" can be remarkably frustrating in that it will look like a villager should go from point A to point B but they just don't go. It's clear that you have to create paths in just the right place for the game to progress. So, while it may look right to you, it's not to the internal game logic. It's irritating.

Visually, "From Dust" is very strong. You play overhead but you can also zoom in and the graphics are detailed, especially for a downloadable game (with a soothing, interesting ambient score that fits the material perfectly). Watching the Earth form and waves crash can be relaxing when you're not moaning about the awkward controls. It's not easy being a God.

"From Dust" was released as a downloadable title for the Xbox 360 and PS3. It was developed by Ubisoft Montpellier and released by Ubisoft. It was released on July 27th, 2011.



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