Video Game Review: Disappointing, Repetitive ‘Spider-Man: Edge of Time’

Submitted by BrianTT [1] on November 2, 2011 - 7:57pm

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CHICAGO – As completely as “Batman: Arkham City” lived up to high expectations (and even surpassed them), Activision’s “Spider-Man: Edge of Time” has been such a disappointment that it’s actually taken me longer than normal to put it into words. Last year’s “Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions” was such an entertaining treat, the best webslinger game yet produced. All they had to do was build on the elements of that game that worked. Instead, they tore them down.



Video Game Rating: **2.0/5.0**

Maybe I should have known better. Superhero tie-in games have been almost nothing but disasters over the last few years. I still have nightmares about the “Iron Man” game. As superhero films have become more daring, adult-driven pieces of entertainment, superhero video games have turned into smash and dash affairs that require nothing but button-mashing. They’ve often gone the opposite way of creative inspiration, seeming at times to be almost purposefully simple to attract younger players. As if older players can’t get a kick out of superhero games. For every “Arkham City,” there are a dozen “Green Lantern”s.



Spider-Man: Edge of Time
Photo credit: Activision

Last year’s “Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions” broke the rules. It turned the typical expectations of a superhero game and defied them, presenting a variety of gameplay types across four variations on the legendary character. Two of those iterations have been imported to this new game from Beenox (and yet it’s not a traditional sequel) in The Amazing Spider-Man and Spider-Man 2099. It’s the traditional webslinger in black and a futuristic version of himself with barely-differing powers. One of the major strengths of “Shattered Dimensions” was the development of gameplay that allowed for four distinct heroes while also never making the player feel lost in complex, different control schemes.



Spider-Man: Edge of Time
Photo credit: Activision

One of the major weaknesses of “Edge of Time” is how the two characters chosen for this unofficial follow-up blend into one another. Yes, they do have some different powers but it’s the same combination of button-mashing that will get you through each half of the game whereas “Shattered Dimensions” often actually required four different strategies. There’s no variety of gameplay here. You never do anything but collect, swing, and combat. As unique as “Shattered Dimensions” was, “Edge of Time” is that generic. And if you think it unfair to compare the game so completely to its predecessor (although having two of the same characters from the same developer), you should know that “Edge of Time” would be a misstep for Activision even if last year’s underrated gem had never been released.

The boring plot of “Edge of Time” features a mad scientist named Walker Sloan traveling back from Spider-Man 2099’s time to the ’70s to start his empire of evil. His ventures fracture time and create an alternate universe in which Peter Parker dies. To save time from closing in on itself and because every alternate universe needs a Peter Parker, Spider-Man 2099 goes back in time and grabs another Spider-Man to save his own. It may sound like intense science fiction but the story is remarkably dull, incoherent, and uninteresting. Most damaging is the repetitive nature of the level design in which the player never feels like an active participant in the storytelling. Kill a room of enemies. Find a key. Go down a nondescript, boring hall. Kill another room of enemies. And, all the while, you collect useless collectibles and are never sucked into or engaged in the story at all. In all of the ways that “Shattered Dimensions” avoided repetition, “Edge of Time” seems to embrace them.

It comes down to attention to detail and a desire to make a unique gaming experience. The problem with “Edge of Time” is that it has no personality of its own. We’ve played games like it before and we’ll barely remember this one by the time another “Spider-Man” title hits the market. Is it a total waste of time? There’s an inherent joy in swinging across a vast space on a spider’s web or shooting at an enemy that simply can’t be denied. In other words, there are elements of the Spider-Man character that simply are too much fun, especially for those of us raised on him, to be completely destroyed. But “Spider-Man: Edge of Time” tries.

“Spider-Man: Edge of Time” was developed by Beenox and released by Activision on October 4th, 2011. It was reviewed for the PS3 but is also available for the Xbox 360.

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By BRIAN TALLERICO [13]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [12]

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