Video Game Review: Amazing 'Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception' is Sony's Masterpiece

Submitted by **BrianTT** [1] on November 5, 2011 - 2:51pm

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CHICAGO – Just move forward. Just keep going. Don't stop. Jump. Shoot. RUN. Rarely has a game been as intensely driven and well-paced as "Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception," an absolute masterpiece of a game that will certainly be involved in the conversation about Game of the Year 2011. "Uncharted 2" won a number of GOTY awards. "Uncharted 3" is better.

Video Game Rating: **5.0**/5.0

This is the kind of action-adventure storytelling that is so often missing from our summer blockbuster films. I was more engaged in the story of "Drake's Deception" and its intense action, multiple twists, and satisfying ending than I was in nearly any of the recent Marvel films, the last "Pirates" movie, or most recent Hollywood CGI extravaganzas. The world of video games has become dominated by open-world games inspired by the success of the "Grand Theft Auto" franchise but it feels like the art of game screenwriting and storytelling has been somewhat ignored in favor of customization. I'm all for the increasing sense of authorship in gaming, but sometimes you just want to ride the roller coaster instead of choosing which way it's going to go.

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
Photo credit: Sony

The first thing one notices about the Campaign of "Uncharted 3" is a visual appeal that's undeniable. The game simply looks amazing. It's not a drastic revision or difference from the gorgeous "Uncharted 2" but backgrounds are a little more detailed and when the action gets intense, the animations are sometimes jaw-dropping. This is the kind of seamless graphics presentation where it's sometimes difficult to tell where cut scenes end and action begins. There were times where it took me a second to realize that I still had control over Nathan Drake because the graphics were so impressive that I thought I had transitioned to a cut scene, and, inversely, you'll often get thrown back into the action and barely notice a difference.
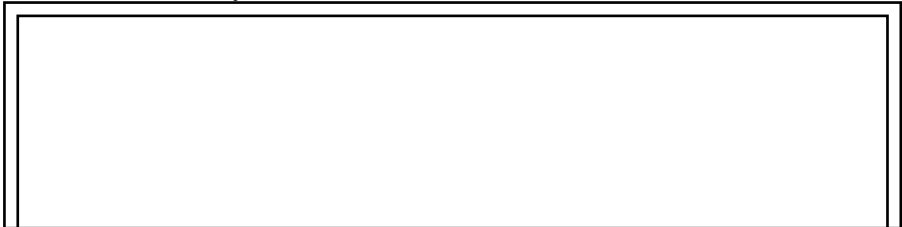
Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
Photo credit: Sony

As for the types of action to expect in this "Indiana Jones"-inspired adventure, the depth of settings and the associated challenges within them is what truly sets this title apart. As much as I love games like "Red Dead Redemption" and even "Mass Effect 2" (my top two of last year), the type of gameplay challenge and the settings for them remained similar. "Red Dead" is a Western and "Mass Effect 2" is a sci-fi adventure. "Uncharted 3" is several games in one but always in pursuit of the same incredible story. In one chapter, you're trying to escape a burning chateau. In another, you're on a sinking ship, dodging gunfire. Hanging from a plane, trudging through a desert, riding a horse through a convoy in a chapter that seems almost inspired by the brilliant "The Good, The Bad, The Weird" and stands as possibly the best single gaming chapter of the year. The variety of "Uncharted 3" allows the title to never become repetitive. Not once did I feel like, "Oh, I've done this before." I was always in the moment, with the characters, and that's what makes this a strong contender for Game of the Year.

Of course, if one really thinks about it, "Uncharted 3" is a constant exchange of puzzle-solving and combat. Now that it's over, it does feel a little light on the former. There are a few times where you'll pull out Drake's Journal to solve a puzzle, but the title is heavy on combat, which makes sense given the intensity of the story. You will shoot hundreds of well-armed, angry enemies with a variety of weapons. At the same time, you'll also engage in a strong challenger to "Batman: Arkham City" for the most-exciting melee system of the year. Don't believe the idiots who call these melee exchanges "Quicktime Events." That term implies nothing but button-pressing, a la a takedown in a "God of War" game. That's nonsense. The melee in "Uncharted 3" is much closer to "Arkham" in that you have to aim your punches, time your counters, and choose your moment (i.e., don't engage in fisticuffs if your target has a buddy with a shotgun nearby). I found it to be one of the most rewarding and enjoyable melee systems ever.

Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception
Photo credit: Sony

As for weaponry, the game has a nice variety and places a strong emphasis on one of personal favorites — the grenade. You'll have to quickly get accustomed to using them, dodging them, and even throwing them back. As for enemy A.I., it's stellar. Enemies won't just pop up in cover and wait for you to shoot them. If you try to stay in cover, they will flank you, throw grenades, and even destroy the little wall you thought

might protect you. You will die A LOT in "Uncharted 3." But it's never overly-frustrating or extremely difficult in a way that takes away from the enjoyment of the game. There are chapters that will try your patience. But, by then, you're so engaged in the story that you can't wait to see what happens next.

What story? Careful readers may notice that I've barely mentioned the actual plot. The story for "Uncharted 3" centers around another quest for buried history and the enemies who stand in the way of Nathan Drake and his good pal Sully but it's such an incredibly crafted tale that I won't spoil anything beyond that. All I'll say is that I found it incredibly engaging on an emotional level as the title becomes as much about saving a friend as it does finding hidden treasures. And when something jaw-dropping happened near the end, I actually yelled at the screen like I haven't done in a game in ages. If ever.

The campaign of "Uncharted 3" would put the game firmly in the conversation for 2011's Game of the Year but I was equally stunned by the engaging and addictive multiplayer portion of the title, something that didn't grab me nearly as much in "Uncharted 2." With incredibly deep customization, great map design, and a variety of gameplay types, this is one of the best multiplayer games of the year as well. The inclusion of multiplayer and even a series of co-op missions make this a title with something for everyone. And the multiplayer could have been a mere afterthought, a cherry on the sundae that is the campaign. That's not the case. If I haven't spent just as much time in multiplayer as campaign by now, I'm sure I will soon. And then surpass it.

Perhaps the best compliment I can pay "Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception" is this one — I knew the game was 22 chapters. When I got into the late teens, I became increasingly saddened by the fact that the game was going to end. I wanted to keep going, keep exploring, keep challenging. It's that good that you want it to go on longer. Which just means you'll have to increase the difficulty and play again. Once we get through the onslaught of titles this season, I know that's what I plan to do.

"Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception" was developed by Naughty Dog and released by Sony exclusively for the PS3 on November 1st, 2011. It is rated T (Teen).

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