

## Video Game Review: Bad Mechanics Leave ‘NeverDead’ Clinging to Life

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 7, 2012 - 6:48pm

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CHICAGO – I was annoyed more often than entertained by “NeverDead,” Konami’s admirable attempt at undead humor action that misses its mark by virtue of repetitive action and poor mechanics. I was hoping for a clever, fun ride with a zombie hero, a relative of the surprisingly-fun “Shadows of the Damned” perhaps. Instead I got a game closer to “Duke Nukem Forever” with bad gameplay, awful writing, and uninteresting storytelling. This is a major disappointment.



It’s difficult to describe “NeverDead” without making it sound pretty damn cool. You play an undead hero, a guy who not only can regenerate and carries a wicked arsenal of weapons but uses his zombie-like abilities to his fighting advantage. Not only can you survive attacks as your body flies into pieces that you try to roll back together into one or hop around like the knight in “Monty Python and the Holy Grail” but you can pull your arms off and use them as weapons or even decapitate yourself, throw your head to a hard-to-reach location, and regenerate someplace that you couldn’t reach before. You carry weapons that you can often dual wield along with an awesome sword that is actually your most powerful tool of destruction.



NeverDead  
Photo credit: Konami

Sounds awesome, right? It should have been. Instead, “NeverDead” just gets frustrating fast. While you’re trying to kill your 1000th brainless demon dog but having difficulty rolling your head back onto your body and onto your arms, you’ll just want to throw your controller at the screen. Every time my head popped off in combat, I let out a sigh. You can wait to regenerate (the advisable route) or try and roll your body back together. You’ll feel dumb doing so.





NeverDead

Photo credit: Konami

It might alleviate the torture of the gameplay if the storytelling wasn't so ill-conceived. "NeverDead" is a series of wave missions. You enter a room. A wave of enemies comes at you, usually accompanied by a few enemy generators called wombs that pop out of the ground, you kill them all, and you move on. It's such generic, poor game design and it takes what's original about a title like "NeverDead" and makes it feel generic and cliched. A game in which you can rip off your own head shouldn't be this boring. A game in which you can hop around on one leg shooting an assault rifle shouldn't be this lame. It's almost harder to take because the potential of the concept seems so easy. It's like watching someone swing for a home run and accidentally pop up to the catcher.

What story? You play Bryce Boltzmann, a wise-cracking immortal who is often accompanied by Arcadia Maximille, a useless partner who seems to be around mostly just so you can revive her every once in awhile or open a door for the young lady. Neither character resonates at all. They are merely tools for gameplay, which worked fine in the mid-'00s but people demand more from storytelling in 2012 and "NeverDead" just doesn't deliver.

The backgrounds, the characters, the level design — it's all so predictable and boring. Yes, there are enemies that require different strategies (some need the end of your sword instead of bullets) and the destructive environments get more interesting as the game goes along, but to call the storytelling thin here would be an understatement. Too many of the chapters feel like missions in a better game. "Survive the wave in the Asylum." Sadly, that's the campaign and not merely a bonus feature.

There are two violent, undead games on the market in early 2012 and "The Darkness II" is easily the superior to "NeverDead." The former will likely have a loyal following. The latter will be in bargain bins by the time the snow stops falling.

*"NeverDead" was developed by Rebellion and released by Konami. The version reviewed was for the Xbox 360 but the title is also available for the PS3. It was released on January 31st, 2012 and is rated M (Mature).*



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [12]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

[brian@hollywoodchicago.com](mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com) [11]

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