

## Video Game Review: 'LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7' Gets Standard Port to PlayStation Vita

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CHICAGO – I have played many LEGO games on the Sony PSP and enjoyed how well the series translated to the handheld generation. There was something about the bite-sized nature of the LEGO versions of “Star Wars,” “Batman,” and “Indiana Jones” that made them a natural fit for smaller screens and smaller controls. They didn’t really lose much in the transition from LCD to PSP.



Video Game Rating: **3.0/5.0**

And so I was very excited to play “LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7,” the first game in the mega-franchise for the Sony PlayStation Vita and another reminder that the sage of the boy who lived is not going anywhere culturally even if people seem to be all about “The Hunger Games” and “Twilight” nowadays. To be blunt, it’s a decent port of a console game but it doesn’t play to the strengths of the LEGO franchise and is ultimately a bit too forgettable for what is essentially a launch title for a major system. It doesn’t show off the capabilities of the Vita with its relatively inferior graphics and repetitive gameplay. The LEGO games have been hit or miss in the last few years. Given that there’s no reason to buy this version with the Xbox and PS3 versions on the market, this is a miss. Unless you’re one of those rare souls that only has a Vita.



LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7

Photo credit: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment

“LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7” allows players to adventure through the last three books and last four films — “Harry Potter and the Order of



the Phoenix,” “Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince,” and “Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows” — in pure LEGO style. If you’ve somehow lived under a rock and never played one of the more-than-three-dozen LEGO games, the often-clever franchise takes familiar, iconic stories — “Star Wars,” “Pirates of the Caribbean,” “Batman,” “Indiana Jones,” “Harry Potter — and filters them through a tongue-in-cheek, nostalgic kids game viewpoint.



LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7  
Photo credit: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment

The LEGO games are heavily built around collection and puzzle-solving. Destroy items in the environment and earn studs. The more studs means the more points, encouraging you to play again and again to collect them all. You can also find collectible items all over the place and unlock characters that allow you to access other hidden areas of the levels (making for serious replay value for hardcore fans).

So, in this case, you play Harry, Ron, Hermione, Hagrid, and the rest of the gang through the final four films, which are a bit heavier on wand-wielding action than “Years 1-4.” The adventures aren’t exactly precisely tuned to the action of the books or movies, offering their own LEGO interpretation of events and sending you back to a hub between adventures. Still, you do get the highlights of your favorite flicks from the last few years in LEGO style.

As for Vita functionality, you can use the touch screen to cast spells with your wands and...that’s about it. If you looked over someone’s shoulder who wasn’t using the touch screen, you’d barely know that this was the generation above the PSP. The graphics don’t show off the incredible engine of the machine like “Uncharted: Golden Abyss” or “Rayman: Origins,” looking pretty lackluster at times. Well, it’s not a “bad”-looking game but one wonders if enough effort was put in to make the debut Vita LEGO game shine like it could on a visual level.



LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7  
Photo credit: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment

I know these games are essentially created for kids but past LEGO titles have played well for both adults and little ones — this one feels more tuned to the latter. It’s pretty easy and pretty repetitive. Most of the time, the game walks you through the puzzle-solving and while the array of spells may first seem impressive, they’re all pretty similar. Wand battle combat is kind of fun but uncommon. The game has its moments of clever fun, especially for serious fans of the J.K. Rowling franchise, but it’s too simple given the high drama of the last three books and their related films.

Finally, there are no multiplayer options at all for "LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7," which is somewhat surprising given both the role it's played in past LEGO titles and how many Vita games have focused on the social experience. With so many games like "LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7" and "ModNation Racers: Road Trip" emphasizing the social networking ability of the Vita, it's odd that the first LEGO game doesn't do the same. There will SURELY be another LEGO game for the PlayStation Vita. Let's hope this one takes better advantage of the capabilities of this impressive machine.

*"LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7" was released by Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment for the PlayStation Vita on March 6th, 2012. It is rated E 10+ (Everyone Ten and Older).*



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