

Video Game Review: ‘Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance’ Slices and Dices

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on February 28, 2013 - 11:00pm

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CHICAGO – A decade or so ago, “Metal Gear Solid” came out and accomplished two things. First, it invented the stealth action genre for consoles. Sneaking behind enemies, choking them out, and making it through a particularly grueling area undetected achieved a cycle of stress, relief, triumph, and joy. Secondly, and more importantly, it showed an entire generation that games could be like action movies. “Metal Gear Solid” was like an ’80s action movie, and David Hayter’s performance as the gruff, world-and-war-weary Solid Snake grounded the player in the reality of world that included a telepathic dude wearing a gas mask, a robot ninja, and a giant, nuclear weapon launching mech — Metal Gear. The script featured a number of themes including concepts of destiny and the nature of people who will kill on a battlefield. The game was an instant classic and spawned a franchise that has endured to this day, spawning spin-offs, sequels, comic books, and more.



It was in one of these sequels “Metal Gear Solid 2”, that Hideo Kojima pulled a fast one on gamers. An entire generation, with their fancy new PS2s were clamoring for more bad ass Solid Snake adventures, and they got it. For about 45 minutes. Following a harrowing and exciting introduction aboard a rain-slicked freighter, gamers were shocked (and appalled) to find the actual protagonist was the decidedly *not* bad ass, Raiden. Raiden had pale skin, long, silver hair, was sort of a sissy, and ultimately a pawn in a larger, convoluted scheme that left gamers feeling a bit screwed. Eventually Raiden popped up in “MGS3” in a fancy ninja suit, and folks seemed to warm a bit to the guy thanks to his artificially enhanced bad assitude.



Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance
Photo credit: Konami

But questions still linger about Raiden’s ability to carry a game on his own, and surprisingly, most of the questions are answered in “Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance”, a brutal, fast-paced slash-em up that forgoes “Metal Gear Solid”’s stealth tactics and heavy-handed storytelling for button-mashing swordplay.





Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

Photo credit: Konami

"Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance" balances style and substance nearly perfectly. As Raiden, you're given a fancy electronic Katana, another, smaller blade on your foot, and more agility than Shawn Johnson after four cappuccinos. Your X button is used for primary attacks, and your Y is used for your secondary weapons, of which there are a few. You eventually get a very "handy" bow-staff that practically steals Raiden's sword-play thunder (that joke will be funny once you play the game). But, the highlight here is "Blade Mode" which allows you to slice up your enemies into chicken-nugget sized bites at will.

Blade Mode saves the game from being a generic (but pretty) hack-n'-slash adventure by giving gamers a layer of strategy to the proceedings. Blade Mode is used in a bunch of unique ways, but is primarily used for two purposes. The first being slicing the hands and spine out of your enemies. The hands are used for upgrades, and the blue, spine-looking things power up Raiden's blade mode meter. It's also used for taking down particularly brutal bosses and tough enemies, and the game helps you out via a fancy Japanese Kanji symbol that pops up during boss fights and battles with tough enemies. It's a really unique mechanic that needs to be seen in action to be believed (and it great to show to friends and squeamish parents for yucks), and while you think you'd grow tired of slicing enemies up like minced onions would grow boring, it doesn't.

Probably because the campaign is short, really short. My play time clocked in at a few ticks under six hours, but I'm traditionally very bad at games that throw a gauntlet of enemies and tough boss battles at you, so you'd likely find your play time to hover around the five-hour mark. While I typically lament spending 60 dollars on a game you can finish in a sitting, here it's not really a problem. Playing through "Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance" is a marathon of tough-as-nails brutality that would likely lose your interest and find itself labeled as a game you'd get around to finishing "someday" if it was any longer.



Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance

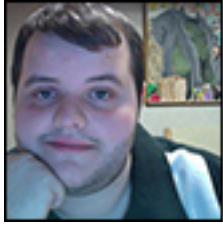
Photo credit: Konami

The plot is something of a disappointment. As a hardcore "MGS" fan, I've followed the plot of these games fairly closely, going as far as to read a 3000-word description of the PS3 exclusive "Metal Gear Solid 3"'s plot in an attempt to keep up with the mythos in preparation for this game. While the trappings of a quality "Metal Gear Solid" plot is here - soliloquies about the nature of war, patriotism, nationalism, and a bunch of other isms, alas it falls a bit flat. While I won't reveal too much, the main thread, featuring some horrible experiments being done to children has a lot of promise that is squandered via cheesy line delivery via Raiden, who at points tries to sound tough, but frankly, isn't, and a lackluster supporting cast featuring Russian, German, African American, and female stereotypes as your main compatriots on the battlefield. The enemies fare a bit better, but since the game is so short, there's not a heck of a lot of opportunity to compel the audience to the characters. When the most human character in your game is a talking robot dog, something has gone wrong.

Yet, despite the many missed plot opportunities, "Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance" is an utter thrill. Its gorgeous visuals produce a variety of unique and memorable set-pieces, the boss battles will frustrate and confound the player like the great battles of "MGS" games of old have

done. Once you get over that this isn't "Metal Gear Solid" as you know it, and you accept the cartoonish antics, one dimensional characters, and cheesy line delivery, you can truly come to appreciate what you have before you. A quality with with a capital-G game. It's not an action movie, it's not an "interactive" experience, and it's certainly not as enlightening or groundbreaking as it's predecessors. So, while "Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance" isn't a lot of things, it truly excels at the things it is — primarily among them, fun.

"Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance" was developed by Platinum Games and released by Konami on February 12, 2013. It was reviewed for the Xbox 360 but it was also released for the PS3.



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