

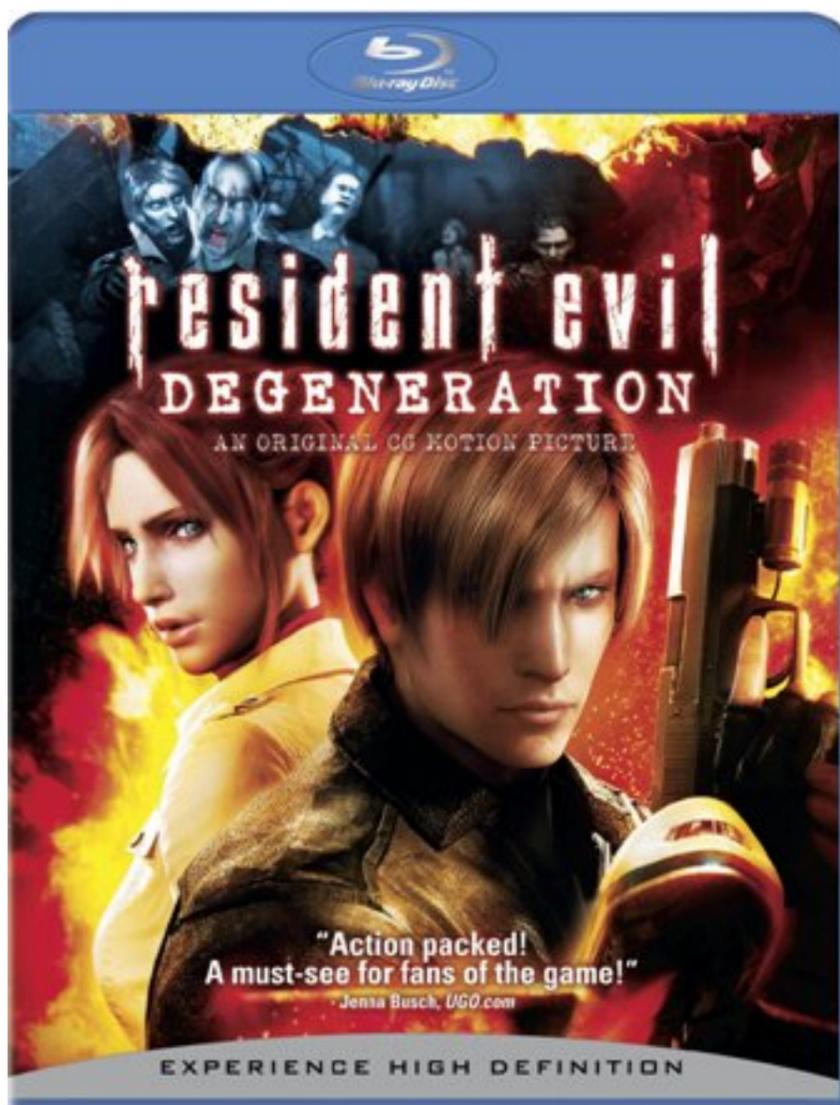
Blu-Ray Review: 'Resident Evil: Degeneration' Dead on Arrival

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on December 31, 2008 - 12:15pm

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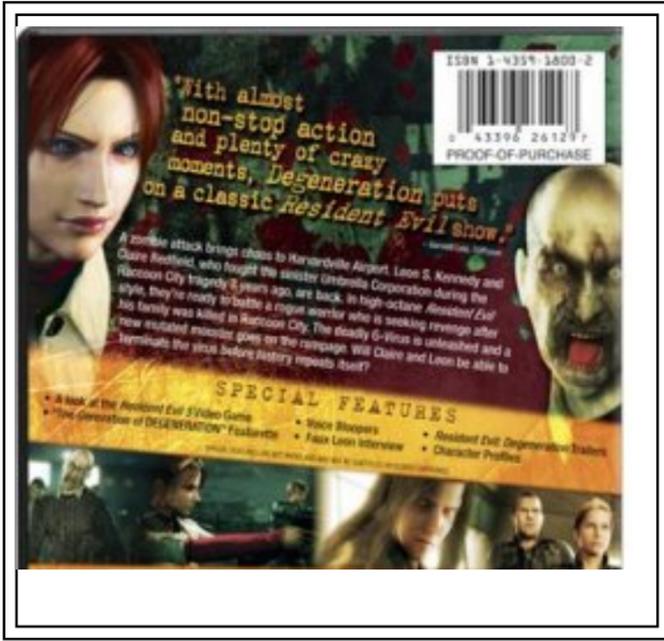
CHICAGO – Instead of playing one of the most anticipated games of the last few years, “Resident Evil 5,” fans of one of gaming’s most influential franchises are being asked to watch what is essentially a 96-minute cut scene that serves as a prequel or appetizer for what is to come in 2009.

Not as much fun as the Milla Jovovich movies and not nearly as well-conceived or written as the games, “Degeneration” feels like an afterthought, stuck between the world of the movie trilogy and the world of some of the best games ever made. Without the B-movie charm of the former or the blockbuster action of the latter, “Resident Evil: Degeneration” ends up as the last thing fans of the “RE” movies or games usually think of their beloved franchise, forgettable.



The most remarkable thing about “Degeneration” is how disposable the entire affair feels from the very beginning. The CGI visuals aren’t as impressive as they should or could have been and look much less refined than more recently produced computer-generated films. I honestly am more impressed by the visuals in the preview for the “Resident Evil 5” game or the cut scenes in recent titles like “Call of Duty: World at War” or “Metal Gear Solid 4” than the majority of “Degeneration”.

If “Degeneration” had any chance of working, it needed to look absolutely remarkable. Instead, the facial features are flat, movement looks stuff, the character designs are boring, and even the motion-capture material looks about ten years out of date. In extreme darkness, the action works, but I was constantly reminded of the film’s lackluster aesthetic, something one never wants to consider if they’re trying to get into a zombie action film.



"Degeneration" opens with Claire Redfield trying to move on after the events of Raccoon City and the nefarious dealings of the Umbrella Corporation. She happens to be in an airport when all zombie hell breaks loose, including the most effective shot in the movie, a plane full of zombies crashing into the terminal. Enter the legendary Leon Kennedy, another Raccoon City survivor, to help the survivors escape the infested airport.

The opening scenes - the airplane crash, Leon's entry into it - feel like a model for a game that was never made. The urge to pick up the controller and help Leon stop the dead guy trying to eat his neck will be powerful, especially for people watching the Blu-Ray on a PS3.

The action-driven, cut-scene approach to storytelling could have potentially worked for the entirety of "Resident Evil: Degeneration" but the script falls apart after its effective opening, concentrating on organizations tied into the T-Virus and the more powerful G-Virus. Bluntly, "Degeneration" follows its own title and becomes too boring to justify its existence. The lack of a single memorable line of dialogue or interesting voice work doesn't help.

"Resident Evil: Degeneration" is presented in 1080p HD with an aspect ratio of 1.78:1. A CGI film on Blu-Ray should look visually flawless and there's certainly nothing wrong with the transfer of "Degeneration". It's not as memorable as recent Pixar or DreamWorks animated presentations, but it's certainly not as disappointing. The lossless 5.1 Dolby TrueHD track is even more impressive. Naturally, this is a film with a lot of explosions, screams, and moaning zombies. An effective audio track makes a world of difference.

The two most interesting special features on the Blu-Ray release of "Degeneration" are an interactive picture-in-picture feature that allows fans to watch animatics, motion capture footage, or storyboards as the film plays, and a trivia track. One of Blu-Ray's most impressive features as a format is the ability to learn more about the film than just listening to a commentary. It's nice to see "Degeneration" and Sony take advantage of that potential.

An HD featurette called "The Generation of Degeneration" offers a half-hour look at the development of the project and the package is nicely rounded out by voice bloopers, a faux Leon interview, trailers, character profiles, and BD-Live, but the real draw for those of us counting the days until the release of "Resident Evil 5" is the supposed special footage of that game.

Wouldn't it have been amazing if Sony and Capcom had thought to include a demo or something brand new to connect "Degeneration" and the game? Nope. All we get is the trailer from the 2008 Tokyo Game Show and a general trailer. They're both awesome and my anticipation for that game grows daily, but it feels like a wasted opportunity to do more to tie this release to it. Kind of like the movie itself.

'Resident Evil: Degeneration' is released by Sony Pictures Home Video and features voice work from Alyson Court, Paul Mercier, Laura Bailey, and Roger Craig Smith. It was written by Shotaro Suga and directed by Makoto Kamiya. It was released on December 27th, 2008.

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