

Video Game Review: ‘LOTR: Conquest’ Fails to Live Up to Name

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 29, 2009 - 10:08am

- [Aragorn](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Conquest](#) [4]
- [Electronic Arts](#) [5]
- [Gandalf](#) [6]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [7]
- [Lord of the Rings](#) [8]
- [Pandemic Studios](#) [9]
- [Peter Jackson](#) [10]
- [Video Game Review](#) [11]



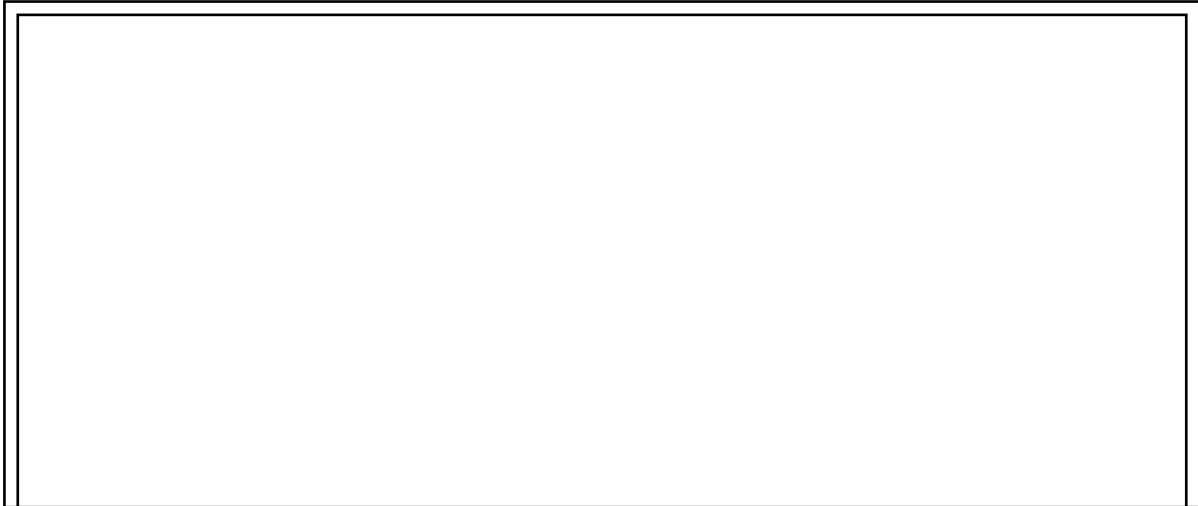
CHICAGO – Instead of the strategy title that it could have been, “LOTR: Conquest” is just another button-masher, a game that banks off the goodwill of one of the most successful franchises of all time but does nothing worthwhile with it.

“Conquest” is one of the most frustrating, disappointing, and baffling games that I’ve played in a long time, providing only the occassional thrill for a serious fan of Peter Jackson’s movies but completely blowing the opportunity to be something truly remarkable.



LOTR: Conquest was released by Electronic Arts on January 13th, 2009.
Photo credit: EA

The concept of “Conquest” is a good one - Play through all of the major battles from the “Lord of the Rings” trilogy as any number of characters, including standards like “Warrior,” “Scout,” “Mage,” and “Archer,” or notable heroes from the films including “Aragorn” and “Gandalf”. The battles at “Helm’s Deep,” “Pelennor Fields,” and the “Mines of Moria” are lavishly recreated.





LOTR: Conquest was released by Electronic Arts on January 13th, 2009.

Photo credit: EA

The problem is that, like battles themselves, being in the heart of these affairs can be incredibly repetitive. Each character type has special moves and weapons, but they're all incredibly similar, involving nothing more than combinations of the same buttons. If hitting L1 and a face button gets you through a field of Orcs with any character type, is there really a difference between them?

"Conquest" sounds great on paper. Players can mash their way through both good and evil campaigns, playing the arc of the films and then playing the "what if" scenario from the other side. "What if Sauron had stopped Frodo from destroying the ring?" You can play nine battles from the other side, trying to destroy the forces of good.

Players can also play cooperatively or competitively either online or split-screen, which is a nice feature. A lot of games have forgotten that some people like to play two-player or more games with friends that are actually in the same room.

Of course, it's hard to get over a dozen people in the same room, but online "Conquest" players can include up to 16 players and connect them online in battle.

It all sounds great, right? And every time I turned on "Conquest" and heard that music and thought about being able to play Aragorn and my other favorite characters from a trilogy I hold close to my heart, I got excited. It would quickly pass.

The battles in "Conquest," designed by the same team that made and sharing a lot in common with "Star Wars: Battlefront," are models of what *not* to do in action game design. Every one is a series of repetitive goals. After you've kept Orcs off the wall for 90 seconds, you have to go kill torch-bearing Orcs in the field, and then run back and do the next on-screen assignment, and so on, and so on. It all feels so random and poorly conceived. The "LOTR" movies were so brilliantly designed and executed that it's shocking to play a game that feels so manic and sloppy.



LOTR: Conquest was released by Electronic Arts on January 13th, 2009.

Photo credit: EA

Instead of giving players any sense of the scope of these battles, they are all boiled down to a few missions that start to feel shockingly identical. Even the "name characters" are just variations on the basic four. "Aragorn" is a "Warrior" with a fancy name and an actor trying to sound like Viggo Mortensen.

The combat is shockingly clunky and the camera work is unacceptable. We should all be well past the point in the world of game design where a player could close his eyes and smash a few face buttons and face a 50-50 chance of success and the amount of times battle occurred off-screen because of the wonky camera was shocking.

The biggest problem is that "Conquest" features such a poorly designed combat system that it manages to somehow be overly complex and boringly repetitive at the same time.

The AI is also a throwback to games of the early '00s. At one point I actually stared an Orc in the face for a few seconds before I swung my fire sword through his gut. These games require waves of similar enemies, but do they have to be so dumb?

Is it all bad? Well, the recreation of the battles and the landscapes on which they were fought do look impressive. And, like I said, there's a visceral thrill every time you get to play a character you know and love like Gandalf (as long as you tell yourself you're actually doing something more than you just were as the unnamed "Mage"). And there's something pretty creative about being able to go and burn down the Shire in the evil campaign. If you've ever wanted to massacre Hobbits, now we have a game for you.

And, of course, games that boast 16-player online play are really designed for the multiplayer fanatic, who is likely to be more satisfied than one only interested in the single player campaign, which runs only about five hours. In online play, there's an addictive mode actually called "Conquest," which makes you wonder if it's not *supposed* to be the highlight of the game, considering it shares a title with it.

Ultimately, "LOTR: Conquest" is a pretty good-looking game with neat multiplayer modes, but that's not enough to stand up as a part of this legendary franchise and horrible control design, awkward camera work, and repetitive gameplay make this a wasted opportunity to be something special for fans of the franchise.

'LOTR: Conquest' was released by Electronic Arts and developed by Pandemic Studios. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was on PS3, but a version is also available on Xbox 360, PC, and DS. It was released on January 13th, 2009.



[12]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [13]

Content Director

HollywoodChicago.com

brian@hollywoodchicago.com [12]

Source URL (retrieved on Apr 19 2024 - 2:22pm):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/6666/video-game-review-lotr-conquest-fails-to-live-up-to-its-name>

Links:

[1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>

[2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/aragorn>

[3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>

[4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/conquest>

[5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/electronic-arts>

[6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/gandalf>

[7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>

[8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/lord-of-the-rings>

[9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/pandemic-studios>

[10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/peter-jackson>

[11] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/video-game-review>

[12] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>

[13] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>