

Video Game Review: 'Ghostbusters: The Video Game' Makes Geek Dreams a Reality

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 21, 2009 - 7:05am

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CHICAGO – If I could go back in time and tell the nine-year-old me that there would one day be a video game in which I would stand alongside Peter Venkman, Ray Stantz, and Egon Spengler, battling Slimer, the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man, and other supernatural baddies, that kid would have had a permanent smile whenever he thought about what the future would bring.



Video Game Rating: **3.5/5.0**

Of course, as any good gamer will tell you, this is FAR from the first “Ghostbusters” video game. The Ghostbusters legacy goes all the way back to the Atari Video Computer System, and there have been various (and dubious) arcade and home iterations throughout the years. But none have been quite as hyped as the ‘Busters debut on the next-gen consoles, a game that has been touted as an experience akin to actually playing a third film in the legendary comedy franchise.



Ghostbusters: The Video Game

Photo credit: Atari

“Ghostbusters: The Video Game” may be a dream come true for an entire generation of movie lovers, but the actual game is one that leaves this critic very conflicted. What’s important to you in a video game? For me, the most essential element is always going to be the use and ease of the control design. Gameplay will always be king over storytelling, graphics, multiplayer, or any of the conceivable bells and whistles. And the gameplay in “Ghostbusters” can be incredibly frustrating.



Ghostbusters: The Video Game
Photo credit: Atari

Players take on the role of a new recruit in the Ghostbusters squad. The structure is essentially that of a shooter with the player using their proton pack instead of a semi-automatic. As a recruit, you’ll have to work co-operatively with your fellow Ghostbusters, all voiced by the original cast, including Dan Aykroyd, Harold Ramis, Bill Murray, and Ernie Hudson. The often-clever dialogue, delivered by the original actors, is one of the highlights of the entire title. Aykroyd and Ramis even get a screenplay credit on the game and Dan has called it “essentially the third movie”. The repartee between these talented comedy stars is easily some of the best game dialogue of the year.

When the player comes across a ghost, he generally has to use his proton pack to weaken the spirit before he can grab it and throw it into a trap. This leads to a lot of “wrangling” of ghosts and, when there are multiple enemies on the screen, it can lead to gameplay that feels somewhat chaotic. I generally got better at it, but even deep into the game, there were moments where I swear I was just firing my proton beam blindly into the air.

As the game goes on, the player is encouraged to identify new species of ghosts with a PKE meter, find haunted artifacts, and upgrade all of their equipment. Your health has a standard regenerative quality as long as you don’t take damage and your fellow Ghostbusters can come to your aid if you fall in combat. Yes, Venkman can save your life after you’re slimed to death. That’s undeniably cool.



Ghostbusters: The Video Game
Photo credit: Atari

Players can play online in a cooperative mode but there’s no local multiplayer capability, which is an incredibly stupid decision – why not allow friends to take on missions together when they are actually in the same room? Are consoles actually punishing their users for having real-life, flesh-in-blood pals nowadays instead just oversea avatar companions?

Those quibbles aside, “Ghostbusters: The Video Game” was undeniably made for that nine-year-old kid in all of us and that creative impetus behind game shines through in the design and the general entertainment level of the title. I wish the control scheme was more intuitive and enjoyable, but battling Slimer and playing a game alongside Bill Murray and Dan Aykroyd can make up for a lot of controller frustration.

The “Ghostbusters” phenomenon has had a remarkable staying power. With a recent, acclaimed Blu-Ray release, rumors of a new film in the

franchise, and one of the most anticipated games of the year, the franchise has been thoroughly revived. You don't see games based on "Gremlins" or "Beverly Hills Cop" (two films that came out the same year), although based on the overall success of this title, maybe you will.

'Ghostbusters: The Video Game' was released by Atari and developed by Terminal Reality. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was for the PS3 but the title is also available for the Xbox 360, Wii, DS, PC, and PS2. It was released on June 16th, 2009.



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