

# Video Game Review: ‘Dark Void’ Free Falls as First Disappointment of 2010

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on January 27, 2010 - 10:52pm

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CHICAGO – There really is a void in the center of the first disappointment of 2010, a game that sucks in too much of its incredible potential into classic traps of the gaming world like thin storytelling, mediocre graphics, and, most damagingly, sketchy controls. “Dark Void” isn’t horrible but that’s faint praise indeed when one considers the expectations for this title and the cleverness of its concept.

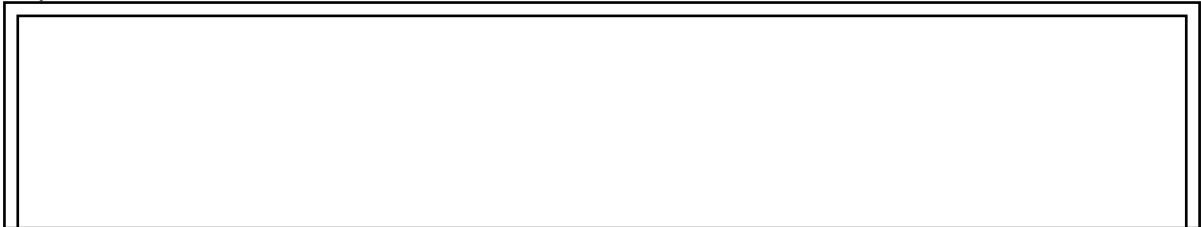


The first thing that an experienced player is going to feel while getting “Dark Void” off the ground is a sense of familiarity with the best game of last year, the amazing “Uncharted 2: Among Thieves”. Reminding players of not only one of the best games ever made but one released so recently instantly sets a bar of comparison that can be difficult to hurdle.



Dark Void  
Photo credit: Capcom

Just as “Uncharted 2” was clearly inspired by action/adventure stories of the past in its structure and Indiana Jones-esque hero, “Dark Void” owes a significant chunk of its foundation to familiar archetypes of its genre, most notably “The Rocketeer”. The man with the jet pack this time is a pilot named Will, a fellow who finds himself thrust into the titular dark void, a place overrun by creatures holding the love of his life captive.





Dark Void

*Photo credit: Capcom*

The conceptual foundation of “Dark Void” promises for old-fashioned excitement with a new twist to the shooter genre - vertical cover. Naturally, the unique promise of the game created high anticipation, but it’s not long before those expectations start to fall faster than Will when he runs out of hover boost. The controls are often problematic and the promise of a new gaming experience is never fulfilled. With only a few exceptions, “Dark Void” feels overly familiar and more like a relic of gaming past than a sign of the future.

Part of the problem with “Dark Void” is with the loose, bizarre story that never quite gels into something interesting. One of the promotional materials sent with my review copy contained an interview that mentioned Christopher Nolan’s great “The Prestige” as an influence. The writers of “Dark Void” copied that film’s use of Nikolai Tesla as a character but missed the riveting storytelling so necessary for a modern game to work.

Will is a pilot reunited with former flame Ava on a mission that takes the two of them into the heart of the Bermuda Triangle. Bam, it’s off to the “void,” another world with alien/robot/whatevers trying to kill you. There’s a loose plot involving your jet pack and your arrival being possibly foretold, but all of it is so loosely connected that it never registers.

The game opens with a flying scene that throws the player into the jet pack controls pretty quickly and the adrenalin boost is captivating. At first, expect to be thrown off by the 360-degree play, but it’s easy to get accustomed to the set-up. Sadly, after shooting a few spaceships, you’re back on the ground. It’s not long before you’re back in the air, but you should be warned that there’s plenty of on-the-ground shooting as well and even the touted vertical combat is really a variation on familiar shooting structures.



Dark Void

*Photo credit: Capcom*

When “Dark Void” isn’t feeling familiar, it’s merely frustrating. The jet pack becomes more of a hindrance than a helper in most combat scenarios. When you’re being attacked, what’s easier? Finding cover on the ground or hovering in mid-air to take out targets below? And the melee system is poorly designed. At the beginning, when your weapons aren’t that great, it can take roughly forty shots to kill an enemy OR you can run up to them and hit ‘O’ and they’re instantly dead. That’s the kind of poor combat system that makes most modern players shake



their head in disbelief.

The weapons get more interesting and the jet pack gets more useful, but the first two hours of "Dark Void" are so disappointing and frustrating that I can't imagine most players will get that far before they return their rental or sell their purchase. And just as the game starts to fine tune its mechanics to the point that it no longer gives the player a headache, you'll realize that it's completely out of new tricks. The game is shockingly short and repetitive with enemies that all start to look the same, spaceship dogfights that reach a point where you'll wish you could fast forward, and several combat sequences that just go on way too long.

One more problem - the game is way too visually unrefined for 2010. The graphics are mediocre and glitchy, the voice acting is so-so, and it just doesn't compare to so many recent titles like "Assassin's Creed 2," "Uncharted 2," or even "Dark Void" and "Darksiders" (two other new 2010 games on the shelf that are way more worth your time).

Ultimately, "Dark Void" is far from "worst of the year" material. It's merely mediocre and forgettable. It's unlikely to even be the worst game of the quarter. But it could be the most disappointing.

*'Dark Void' was released by Capcom and developed by Airtight Games. It is rated T (Teen). The version reviewed was for the PS3, but the title is also available for the XBox 360, PC, and DS. It was released on January 19th, 2010.*



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