

What's This Game? Dead Space

Written by Marron

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It's the 26th century, and the USG *Kellion* has been dispatched to answer a distress call from the USG *Ishimura*. What the crew of the *Kellion* finds when they arrive isn't pretty; the mining ship *Ishimura* is infested with beings called Necromorphs--an alien virus has transformed and reanimated human corpses, turning them into violent and grotesque beings.

I have a pretty bad feeling about this.

Game Mechancis: B+

Playing as the engineer Isaac Clarke, *Dead Space* is a third-person shooter (or, as I like to call it, a "stalker game" as the camera view is over the shoulder of the main character) of the survival horror genre. There are quite a few things that I enjoy about a third-person camera view; first of all, I don't experience the same sort of motion sickness that I get from playing a game with a first-person camera view. This camera view is a bit new for me and took some getting used to, but I came to like it quickly.

The controls take a little getting used to, but are fairly easy. There is no HUD, as is common in many games of this type; instead, all of the information that Isaac receives, including video communiques from his shipmates, are shown through a holographic projectors built into his suit--a projector on his arm feeds him video from his shipmates, a projector on his wrist shows how much ammo he has, and so on. As well, instead of a health meter somewhere on the screen, Isaac's health meter is on his suit, in the form of a glowing meter built into the suit's spine that goes from blue at full health to red at critical. Along with firing his weapon, Isaac can also swing the weapon to attack in close-range combat and stomp enemies that are on the ground (stomping can also break open cargo on the ground, which sometimes contains health or cash). Audio and video clues are also scattered around the game and can be picked up to help advance the story.

The weapons in *Dead Space* aren't your typical guns; rather, they are make-shift weapons consisting of mining tools. This may be because the main character is an engineer instead of a soldier. The first weapon that Isaac picks up is a plasma cutter, and later other tools such as a rotary saw and a flamethrower. There is also a military rifle that you can pick up in the game, but because of the nature of the Necromorphs, I feel that it's not as useful as the plasma cutter. There are also tools such as the stasis gun, which temporarily slows down objects (such as malfunctioning doors or Necromorphs that have come up on you by surprise) and a kinesis module that lets Isaac pick items up and throw them.

Shooting the Necromorphs does very little to slow them down, and it isn't the way to kill them. Instead, in order to defeat the Necromorphs, they must be dismembered. Sst shooting off the arms and legs of the creatures seems to be the most effective way of taking care of business. Funnily enough, many of the necromorphs carry ammo for the plasma cutter or cash, which can be used to upgrade or buy new tools and suit upgrades. I'm not sure I want to know where they keep that cash, because I didn't see any pockets!

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Story and Gameplay: A+

I absolutely loved this game. I don't think I've been this creeped out by a game since the first time I played the original *Silent Hill*. About 20 minutes into the game, I was already on the edge of my seat as I turned corners and navigated my way through the seemingly-abandoned Ishimura. Clawing and screaming sounds behind a door as I found the plasma cutter had my heart pounding, and I think I actually yelled a profanity or two as I opened that door and encountered my first Necromorph.

The necromorphs are tricky, scary buggers. As the game takes place inside of a ship, there's a lot of back-tracking. A lot of times, you encounter the corpses of Necromorphs you've previously dismembered, but sometimes there are still-living Necromorphs hiding amongst the dead and waiting for Isaac to approach so they can spring to life and attack--and scare the hell out of you!

I won't ruin too much of the plot, but I will say that audio and video clues are scattered throughout the game, and it turns out that a religious and governmental conspiracy may have been an indirect cause of unleashing the alien virus that is infecting the bodies of the dead and turning them into the Necromorphs. It's up to Isaac and his two remaining shipmates to get to the bottom of the conspiracy and make things right again.

Graphics and Sound: A

The graphics in the game are smooth and sleek. Like other survival horror games, it's a rather dark game, but the brightness can be adjusted if the suggested settings are too dark.

The soundtrack, as is expected, is very creepy. The music definitely helps with the anxious and intense feelings of the game.

Overall: A

Did I mention that this game is scary? Because it is. It's also very fun. With games like *Resident Evil* and *Silent Hill*, it's hard for newcomers to really make a mark--but *Dead Space* has certainly earned a place amongst its peers. It's definitely a game worth checking out!

Where Can I Find It?

Available on Xbox 360, Playstation 3, and Microsoft Windows, *Dead Space* retails for \$39.99 plus tax. You can find it used at GameStop for \$34.99; estarland.com has the Xbox 360 version used for \$31.95 plus shipping.

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If you're a GameFly member, you can get *Dead Space* for as low as \$26.99 with free shipping for both PS3 and Xbox 360 for a savings of \$13.00.