

'Dead Island' is worth your time and money

By Alex McCracken
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What will you do when the zombies come? Admit it, you've thought about it at least once. You start looking at things around you, things to barricade doors with, sharp objects, the stray propane tank. It's this kind of thinking that the game of Dead Island is built around.

Every single zombie game on the market gives you virtually no weapon to engage the undead with other than guns. It's so obnoxiously overdone that when I heard Dead Island was almost exclusively focused on melee combat I immediately turned up my nose. That's no way to kill zombies, I thought, everyone knows you'll never survive a zombie apocalypse without a pistol, a shotgun, a flamethrower, and a sniper rifle crammed into your magical attaché case that fits in your pocket, never.

I was wrong, and Dead Island promptly forgave me for my prejudice with the most thrilling and rewarding combat I've played all year. Though don't take my excitement the wrong way. It's not a masterpiece, and at face value it's almost a disaster. I feel like when I praise this game, I'm defending Seabiscut. Its bugs are too big, its budget's too small, the graphics engine's too old, but I guess I'm too dumb to know the difference; Because I've never had more fun killing zombies, and in my day? Brother, I've killed me some zombies.

So what would you have at your disposal if you had to escape from a tropical resort? You'd have kitchen knives, baseball bats,

crowbars and cleavers. Everyday objects that double as surprisingly useful instruments of death given the right circumstances. And it's pretty clear in the first five minutes of the game that indeed those circumstances are given. But wait, there's more to the game than simply hacking away mindlessly with a wooden cudgel. Find some whisky bottles and a couple oily rags in a suitcase cart? Then you mosey on up to your nearest workbench and whip up some Molotov cocktails. Do you have a knife or a machete and a few stray wires and batteries? Then by all means, electrify them.

Smacking a zombie upside the head with a flaming baseball bat is a very special kind of rush. Particularly in this game, where if you get too cocky, even for a second, bam! A walker just snuck up behind you and clawed its way through half your health bar. If you find yourself surrounded by more than three zombies and the best idea you have is to swing your sugar cane knife at the air, you are going to die. Navigating Banoi Island's mindless horde is a surprisingly strategic affair. But when you tip toe over a mob of eight re-deaded zombies without a single scratch on you? You feel like a surgeon.

But let's move on to the jaw dropping size of this title, I rushed to the end of this thing not stopping to smell a single undead rose and I barely got under twelve hours of continuous gameplay. I tried to see if the game clock was lying to me by ticking while being paused . . . it wasn't. You'd be surprised how often games pull that trick. I've since played again, sopping up all the side missions I can find and I'm at twelve hours again, only this

time I'm halfway through. But let's back up for a second and talk about the kind of people you'll be running with during the game, or rather, the kind of people you'll have the choice of playing as.

At the start you'll have your pick of a litter of four folks with a curious immunity to the virus plaguing the rest of Banoi. A washed up NFL linebacker, a one hit wonder hip hop artist, a feminist Chinese spy (who rocks), and an ex African cop. Each have three entirely unique skill trees relaying their combat skills, survival skills, and their "fury" ability which after they kill enough zombies will allow them to fly into a rage for a short time to kill even more zombies more quickly for experience bonuses. . . obviously.

What's interesting is the multiple ways to approach each tree for each character. For instance, it's entirely possible to play the same character in a completely different way. To the point where it's perfectly entertaining to play as the exact same character all over again. So for those keeping score, this is a twenty hour game with four different characters each designed for multiple play-throughs. Dizzy yet?

The take away message here is this: if you can put up with dated graphics, a few killer bugs and cringe worthy voice acting. Then you won't just fall for this game, you'll fall dead over heels. Yeah, and I also stand behind that face palming pun.



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