

## XENOBLADE CHRONICLES

by Lucas Smith

Xenoblade Chronicles has been on the radar of JRPG aficionados and Wii owners for quite some time now and is probably one of the most anticipated Wii titles of this gen. Is it even possible for it to live up to the massive amount of hype surrounding its NA localization? Going into this review, I promised myself I wouldn't jump on the "greatest JRPG of this gen/of all time" bandwagon but, after playing through the game, I have to break that promise. Xenoblade starts out like any other JRPG would. Shulk, a young orphaned boy, sets out for revenge after his town is ravaged by the Mechons, the game's villains. Along the way he picks up the Monado, a mysterious sword that allows the wielder to see into the future, and he is swept up into an adventure he wasn't expecting. The Monado's ability makes for some fantastic moments in the game as Shulk has to constantly deal with the fact that he can't save everyone despite knowing the future. Xenoblade is full of touching moments and twists that you simply won't see coming.

The overall presentation and visual style is the first thing that will catch your attention. First things first, yes, this game is on the Wii and, yes, it would definitely look better if it were on an HD console. However, despite the graphical limitations of the console, Xenoblade is a stunning looking game and pushes the Wii to its limits; Monolithsoft should be given props for what they've accomplished. As for the setting, unlike most games that take place on a planet of some kind, Xenoblade takes place on the dead bodies of two giant robot gods. The organic beings inhabit Bionis while the Mechon inhabit Mechonis. Whenever you're traveling and look up at the sky, you'll see the limbs of the mechanical beings. What this adds up to is a game that makes up for its technical limitations with a distinct visual style.

The game's musical score is absolutely phenomenal. Created by four composers, Yasunori Mitsuda (Chrono Trigger/Cross and the Xenosaga Trilogy), Yoko Shimomura (Street Fighter and Super Mario RPG), Manami Kiyota, and Ace+, Xenoblade features a wide variety of music ranging from emotional piano pieces to guitar-heavy battle tracks.

The voice work is spot on for the most part and every voice actor is able to nail their character's emotions

perfectly. The only sour spot for the voice work is one of the main villains who sounds like a bad Nicholas Cage attempting a cockney pirate accent. As funny as that sounds, the villain gets irritating very quickly. For the purists out there, Monolithsoft also included the original Japanese voiceovers.

Xenoblade's gameplay also feels innovative and refreshing. The combat takes place entirely on the open world with no battle transitions and feels like a tactical MMO. You initiate battle by targeting an enemy and simply moving into attack range, and you control one character while the other two members are AI controlled. Once in combat, your characters will continuously auto attack while you choose different spells and abilities to use. As battles progress, a party gauge will slowly fill up, which can then be used in a variety of ways. You can use up filled bars to help a teammate recover from status effects such as topple and daze, or completely deplete the gauge to unleash a chain attack. A chain attack will pause time and refresh the cool down on all of your abilities. From this point, you go from character to character to use abilities in combination with each other. You can either chain status effects such as breaking an enemy, then toppling and dazing them or you can use the same types of attacks, such as chaining physical abilities, which builds up a chain gauge. As the chain gauge fills up, any ability of the same type will be grow in power.

If you own a Wii and love JRPGs, you have no excuse not to play Xenoblade Chronicles. Not only does it deserve the massive praise that it has received but it also creates a new benchmark that future JRPGs will have to live up to. With a straight play-through clocking in at a good 50-60 hours and with that time being easily doubled with the game's ludicrous amount of side quests, you will most definitely get your money's worth. Xenoblade Chronicles manages to keep the core aspects of the genre alive, all while getting rid of the genre's more pesky features such as save points and long pointless backtracking. While the game does have a few technical blemishes, I feel like the fault lies with being on a weaker console rather than it being the fault of the developer.

The full review can be found at <http://geek.pikimal.com/2012/04/15/xenoblade-chronicles-redefining-jrpgs-for-generations-to-come/>

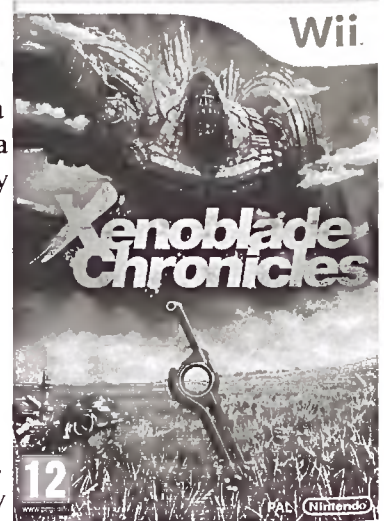


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