

“RISE OF NIGHTMARES” (Video Game Review)

Written by Thom Carnell

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Back when modern gaming was young and groundbreaking titles like RESIDENT EVIL first came out, there were problems—the primary one being that the games’ user interfaces were, well...wonky. Oftentimes, when one least expected it, players would be left standing in one spot, spinning uncontrollably, while the undead hordes closed in. It was frustrating. It was pointless. And it made for a very unsatisfying gaming experience, to say the least. Well, games have come a long way since then, and now, with Xbox’s Kinect technology, we collectively find ourselves back at that place with a new user interface being introduced—and, sadly, the same problems seem to be rearing their unwanted head once again.



With Sega’s new RISE OF NIGHTMARES, we get a decent enough premise: A man’s wife is abducted from a train on which the two are spending their vacation. The rest of the game, for the most part, is our hero clumsily making his way through a series of levels involving zombies, mad scientists and assorted other creatures. While the look is dank and oozes atmosphere (comparisons to CONDEMNED, HOUSE OF THE DEAD and THE SUFFERING are not too far off base), it is the play action itself that makes RISE OF NIGHTMARES such a pain in the ass. You see, with Kinect games, players are expected to use their bodies as controllers, using big, explosive movements that—hopefully—will make their character *do something*. Sadly, because of the way it is set up, RISE has players standing for long periods of time, arms raised, as they allow the game’s AI to take over and whisk them down long hallways, through railway cars and around gloomy dungeons. Once things heat up (sometime after The Crypt), things get a little more exciting, but the AI still plays a major role.

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It all makes for a rather boring and frustrating adventure.

Granted, horror games need pauses in order to ratchet up the fear quotient and make the appearance of a threat all the more exciting. In RISE, however, when the poop hits the prop, the user’s sudden motion is often too much for the Kinect to recognize, and one’s character is left flailing and not doing much of anything else. It begs the question of how the game might have been received had a standard controller been used. Honestly...not very well. Since the gameplay is predicated on being controlled by the Kinect, there is little doubt that this property would never have gotten off the design board otherwise.

Now, this is not to say RISE is without any worth. It’s a bold and inventive experiment that hints at a greater—and more fun—style of play. In other words, it’s a solid first step. And given time, as more and more developers climb aboard the Kinect technology, we’re sure to see better and better incarnations of this same basic idea. And don’t get me wrong, there is the seed of a very good idea here—but “first fruit” are rarely sweet. So, give the developers time, and the Kinect will be a force to be reckoned with. Sadly, though, while RISE OF NIGHTMARES is a decent enough first footprint in the sand of that beach, it’s not without its share of problems, and therefore only a mediocre game.

