

GAME REVIEW



Game of Thrones: A Telltale Games Series

PLATFORMS: MICROSOFT WINDOWS, OS X, PLAYSTATION 4, XBOX 360, XBOX ONE, IOS, PLAYSTATION 3, ANDROID

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This is an interesting game to review insofar as I really like it but the things I have to say about it will probably discourage people from getting it. In order to compensate for this eventuality I'm starting off with making it quite clear that I REALLY DO LIKE THIS GAME AND WOULD RECOMMEND IT.

So, Telltale Games make point-and-click adventure games based on existing creative properties and put an emphasis on storytelling and player choice. They release their games episodically. This is them trying their hand at adapting Game of Thrones, and have made it to their second episode.

The player is given command of various members of House Forrester of Ironrath, Stark bannermen who play a teensy little role in the novels and who have finally been given their hour in the limelight. Unfortunately this hour starts at the Red Wedding, which is the worst time to be minor Stark vassals. The playable characters will have to take various actions to ensure that House Forrester don't all get it in the neck. The family has one bargaining chip: the biggest grove of the invaluable Ironwood in Westeros and the knowledge to harvest it. However their ability to hold onto it is not guaranteed with the likes of Ramsay Snow and Cersei Lannister (all voiced by the TV cast) breathing down their necks.

The game manages the difficult job of taking these original characters who aren't terribly interesting and making you care what happens to them. However it is the depiction of the settings' established antagonists that the game excels in. Ramsay Snow's brief but explosive scene in Episode One is as good as anything that's been on the show. Never have I felt more afraid when making dialogue choices. In most games you can clearly tell what a given character wants to hear. Not so in this game: how do you sweet-talk a recreational torturer? Even the sane characters cannot be so easily predicted, creating a sense that you are speaking to actual (if one-dimensional) people rather than quirky quest-givers.

The dialogue choices are the real meat of the game, but there are other things to do, namely: walking, picking up items, and quick-time-events that can mean the difference between life and death. These are all terrible things. The controls are exceptionally stiff and at times confusing, and the camera lock does you no favours. It's tolerable to misclick on an item, but when your head gets chopped off and you need to listen to a minute's worth of dialogue again because you couldn't click on a sword in time, it won't do. Couple that with an atrocious user interface and you have something that's quite a hassle to play. In terms of sound and look it's best described as mostly functional: there are clearly a lot of texturing problems that are apparent even to I, and I am as casual as they come. Very annoying.

The game promises a very well-told and tense storyline, featuring a competent cast of characters, marred by poor technology and very silly design decisions and awful controls. I believe any A Song of Ice and Fire fan who avoids the game on account of its shortcomings will be missing out on excellent entertainment, but I'd understand why they may feel there's better stuff on the market for them.

Bottlenecks and How to Get Rid of Them

Actually, you're the main bottleneck.

AHNAF AKEEF

In the context of computers, when a particular component is so incapable that it hinders the potential performance of other components, that component is called the bottleneck of that system. Essentially, anything in a computer from a cooling fan to a core component like the processor can be a bottleneck. Ideally speaking, every one of those components should perform at its hundred percent at all times. But reaching that equilibrium is nearly impossible. So users tend to focus on maximising the performance of individual components depending on what they're using the computer for. For example, a graphically intense game is more dependent on the graphics card than on anything else. So the best performance would be achieved if bottlenecks are non-existent so that the graphics card always performs its hundred percent. Again, a CPU-intensive software application will not perform optimally if the graphics card cannot keep pace with the processor.

Now that you know what a bottleneck is, here's how you can identify them. The simplest method of determining a bottleneck is to simultaneously monitor the performance of all the components in a given application/game. The component that exhibits a saturation of its full potential is ascertained as the bottleneck of that system in that



application/game. We recommend MSI Afterburner as our choice of monitoring application. It is the most reliable application that allows you to monitor and log the usage and temperature of various components while an application/game is running and thus helps to identify a thermal bottleneck as well as a performance bottleneck. You can download it for free at <http://event.msi.com/vga/afterburner/download.htm>

Once you've identified the bottleneck, proceed to eliminating it via one of the following means.

1. Upgrading: The easiest route to getting rid of a bottleneck is to upgrade the bottlenecking component. Getting substantially better hardware will almost always get rid of a bottleneck unless the issue is very acute. Although in particular cases upgrading becomes a must in getting rid of the bottleneck. For example, if an application/game requires more system/video memory or number of CPU cores than is available, an upgrade becomes a must because of the immutability of these specs of the components.

2. Overclocking: A zero cost procedure called overclocking can do wonders in reducing bottlenecks. But it requires extensive technical know-how on overclocking various components. This is recommended only if you have pertinent knowledge and experience with overclocking. Note that overclocking will not help if the bottleneck is the amount of available system/video memory, number of cores on the CPU, amount of available cooling, amount of wattage on the power supply unit or amount of available space on the hard drive.

Bottlenecks are quite often the culprit behind lacklustre performance in applications/games. Getting rid of bottlenecks can unlock the untapped potential of your system which might even make purchasing a new system redundant. So we suggest that you get your system checked for bottlenecks before splurging on a new computer.