

## GAME REVIEW

# ASSASSIN'S CREED SYNDICATE: CLOSE...BUT NOT QUITE

SHAHRUKH IKHTEAR

How the mighty have fallen. The Assassin's Creed games were once quintessential for every gamer, however, its recent instalments have failed to impress. Syndicate released with one notion: to revive the series for the better. But does it succeed? The answer to that is not clear cut at all.

Starting off with the graphics; anyone who has played last year's Unity will notice that Syndicate looks a bit downgraded. Crowd density has been massively lowered, walkable interiors have been all but removed, minor character details such as clothing, hair and facial textures have been reduced. The overall global illumination looks much less realistic compared to Unity. But despite how beautiful Unity was, it performed disastrously on all platforms. Thus Ubisoft had to tone down some of the more ambitious eye candy to get Syndicate running at a stable condition. This is not to say that Syndicate is a bad looking game. The city of London is rendered in breathtaking fashion from the meticulously detailed vistas of Westminster to the humble residential buildings of Lambeth.

Now on to the gameplay. Syndicate refines the traditional parkour movement mechanics of the AC series and adds the new rope launcher, a device similar to Batman's grappling hook that lets you traverse tall buildings and gaps with ease. The combat is unlike any AC game out there. However, it feels all too familiar. The simplistic button mashing combat of Arkham Knight has made its way to an AC game and it is not a smooth transition. It feels satisfying, at first, but then it gets repetitive to the point where combat feels like a chore. There is an option to stealth through the game but it is so mundane that you're better off just beating everyone up instead. The ability to control gang members to fight alongside you is more or less similar to Assassins that you can call to in the previous games. However their functions are rather limited as you can only command them to wait, follow or

fight enemies.

Upgrading your gang members, yourself and the markets is a good way to make the game easier but it doesn't yield any significant change that makes you feel your investment was well worth it. For the first time ever, there are vehicles in an AC game in the form of carriages. They are a bit sluggish to control but that is justified as they are horse-drawn.

Syndicate brings with the strongest story of any recent AC game; with twin siblings Evie and Jacob Frye as the main protagonists.

Despite being family, their personalities are worlds apart; Jacob being the brash, arrogant one while Evie is more patient and calculative. The supporting characters also add a lot of flavour to the main plot. Charles Dickens and Darwin are arguably the best of the bunch bringing along their quirky personalities to serve as comic relief during their side missions.

The industrial revolution is captured rather well as the game displays the plight of the working class being exploited by the people of the upper echelons of society. Child labour, smuggling, and business malpractices run rampant in the Victorian rendition of London.

Syndicate aspires to bring the Assassin's Creed games back to the glory days, a feat which is nigh impossible at this point. While Syndicate is laden with positive aspects, they are not enough to revitalize the series. Perhaps it is time to give the series a break or put it to rest completely.

*Shahrukh Ikhtear is a gamer who doesn't rage. A writer who doesn't read. A musician without a teacher. Full time procrastinator. You can reach him on Twitter @sr\_ikhtear and email: shahrukh.ikhtear@yahoo.com*

