

**GAME REVIEW**

The Best Souls Game till Date

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Platforms: PC, PS4, XB1
Release Date: April 12, 2016
Developer: From Software

Dark Souls III brings nothing extraordinarily revolutionary to the table. Instead it is akin to an ideal last chapter of a satisfying novel which is wrought with mysteries waiting to be unearthed. It is the Souls game that will be the vessel of remembrance for the entire series.

(The next two paragraphs will talk about the Dark Souls series in general. If you are a regular of the series, you may skip them.)

For those who are unacquainted with the series, the Dark Souls games have always been synonymous with crushing difficulty. They are so tough that they are considered as rites of passage for gamers who want to transcend to the status of the elite few who can proudly say they've beaten a Souls game. Thus, the games of the series are not for everyone. An immense amount of patience coupled with an unflinching will is necessary for trudging through the seemingly unconquerable challenges that the games serve up at every turn.

From what can be read above, it is easy to quickly discern that such games are simply anti-fun. While they can be incredibly frustrating at times, gamers keep coming back for more every time. Not because they take pleasure in the truly sadistic nature of the game, but because of the satisfaction and thrill that engulf them when they slaughter that one foe that has been killing them over and over again for the past hour.

Dark Souls 3 proudly bears the banner

of the series' long standing qualities.

Starting off with the premise, gamers play the role of the Ashen One, an undead warrior who is tasked with preventing the apocalypse. To do this, he/she must stop the conflict between the Light and Dark. However, this feat can only be performed if the Lords of Cinder are destroyed.

Pretty vague. But Souls games do not follow conventional video game storytelling. They will not serve up a concrete narrative and guide gamers down the storyline as they progress through the levels. Instead, the lore and story have to be found out from item description, conversations with NPCs, hidden trinkets, and exploration. Gamers are not forced to invest in lore hunting. However, there is a rich reward to be found if the time is taken to carefully sift through all the information and paint a holistic picture of the storyline.

It is indeed rewarding, especially when the world to be explored is so vast and magnificent. Dark Souls 3 has fewer worlds than Dark



Souls 2 but the game interconnects every single world together via a myriad of shortcuts and pathways akin to Bloodborne. The graphics are, expectedly, the best of any game from From Software. From intricately detailed vistas to eerie flatlands under purple skies, the environment is a sight to behold. Character detail is top notch yet again. Armour pieces are very well designed and none of them look overly tacky or improper.

Sound design is brilliant here as the clashing of swords with flesh and steel, alike, give off a very satisfying feel. The guttural noises of the various beasts of the game are also menacing and haunting. The glorious soundtrack composed by great talents Yuka Kitamura and Motoi Sakuraba is breathtaking. They simply elevate the grandeur of the game to great heights. Each boss battle is truly a spectacle simply because of the amazing music.

Speaking of boss battles, while I won't spoil much about them, they are indeed difficult and epic just as they should be. This time around, the developers have taken a page out of

Bloodborne's book and gave bosses varying moves that trigger with the status of their health. The frantic changing of tactics keeps the battles from feeling too predictable.

Combat this time around is smoother and faster. Yet it does not match the pace of Bloodborne. And rightfully so, as the Souls series has always been about careful planning of moves before execution and defensive playstyles. However, in Dark Souls 3, aggression is not as punishing as it used to be. In fact, it is quite preferable to all out defence at times. The magic points system from Demon's Souls returns and casting spells will deplete magic points. They can be refilled by a new form of Estus Flask called the Ash Estus Flask. New special attacks called Weapon Arts also use magic points. The weapon customization, this time around, is much more tactical as pushing attack power numbers will not mean that the weapon will be effective at all times. This adds a new level of dynamism to the deep yet simple combat system.

Dark Souls 3 embodies all the core values that made the Souls games so famous. It does away with many of the frustrating bits of the other games and breathes new life into the series. It is sad that there will be no Dark Souls games anymore. Yet, we can all hope that From Software returns with more amazing titles in the future.

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