

GAME REVIEW

A DISAPPOINTING CONCLUSION

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I tried. I tried so hard to come up with something good to say about The Ringed City. But the truth is, The Ringed City, like the term paper you sent in the last minute, is ripe with content at the beginning but is dwindling in the middle till it turns to scribbles by the end of it. And then your professor fails you on it because most of it was plagiarised.

So what went wrong for me with The Ringed City? The short answer is that despite the incredible soundtrack, the vast landscapes, the unique enemies and boss designs, the fast and fluid combat, it all felt like something I had already experienced before in a Souls game. It did not deviate enough nor did it go back to the original grim feel found in Demon's Souls and Dark Souls I.

There are a lot of spoilers ahead so if you're planning on playing the game and the DLC itself then do so before proceeding.

The Ringed City opens into two new areas, The Dreg Heap and The Ringed City. The Dreg Heap is an expanse of land, reached only upon following a downward slope, while fending off infinitely spawning enemies and projectiles. While that sounds fun on paper, the design and placement of the enemies makes the process very tedious. The only unique enemies here are the Harald Legion Knights. The Dreg Heap is the initiation into the DLC with one boss battle between you and entrance into the Ringed City. With any DLC, the starting area has a lot of weight on it in defining the tone of the content and the first boss can shape the final critique the player ends up making. And this is possibly the only thing The Dreg Heap gets right. The Demon Prince, in my opinion, is a better double-team boss fight than Ornstein and Smough from Dark Souls I. The fight itself harkens back to the old thrill and excitement once had with the Ornstein and Smough fight with one Demon showering down acid and lasers from the back while the other is constantly chasing you down with its light attacks. As you bring one of the bats down, the two emerge, making for one final row with the Demon itself. An enjoyable fight in and of itself but the area you traverse to get to it, leaves a lot to be desired.

After clearing out The Dreg Heap, we move into the main showcase which is The Ringed City. Met with jaw dropping vistas and an array of colors, you'd be a fool to not stand and stare at what is probably the prettiest sight found in any Souls game. The section upon entrance into The Ringed City is a spectacle to behold. However, constant repeats upon death by infinitely spawning archers can get old after some time. This has been a common trend with this DLC,

moments of pure genius marred by the same old routine.

The Ringed City houses the three remaining bosses, meshed together under one swamp. For as large as the vistas may be, the map is really small with almost all of the loot piled together in the same location. It's more or less a downwards spiral towards the main castle which leads to the next boss battle which is a glorified PVP fight. Dubbed as Halflight, Spear of the Church, the fight isn't very memorable unless you play online, and even then, with how barebones and basic the PVP in Dark Souls III is, it fails to live up to the Mirror Knight fight from Dark Souls II or the Old Monk fight from Demon's Souls.

After defeating the Spear of the Church and conquering another humanoid enemy we are met with the final boss, Slave Knight Gael. This fight is incredibly fast paced, with different phases, on a seemingly infinite plane. Sounds familiar? If you've played Bloodborne, then it should remind you of the Orphan of Kos fight. With similar lightning AOE's and projectiles, the unique attacks the final boss of the final content of the Souls series has all end up feeling stale, where you're forced to draw from the old muscle memory you picked up from previous Souls games. The fight is accompanied with an over the top score and a murky backdrop of the world's end and the 1v1 setup of the fight feels very reminiscent of the Artorias fight from Dark Souls I.

The Ringed City did one thing better than its forefathers by giving us a perfect dragon fight. Darkeater Midir, a dragon perfect in size, arena large enough to fit a crowd, a moveset reminiscent of Sinh and Kalameet with the added aggression ends up changing the formula just enough to make for the one unique fight in this DLC. A very difficult yet rewarding fight, Midir stands out as the best thing about this DLC.

The DLC when compared alone stands out as quality content but the problem with being the last ever piece of Souls content was the weight of expectations it had to bear. And unfortunately, it could not bear the weight of it. But by no means is Dark Souls III or The Ringed City a bad game, it just pales in comparison to its predecessors.

Asif Ayon's favorite color is a particular shade of ash but he tells everyone that his favorite color is blue. The alliteration in his name bothers him a lot too. To inquire more about what else keeps him up at night, hit him up at asifayon@live.com

