

## GAME REVIEW

# A punch-up brawler for the fans

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The Tekken series has never been afraid to be a little bonkers, even in a world where every little disagreement can be solved with a few rib jabs and kicks to the face. When the bell sounds, though, this punch-up brawler knows its audience. It's for those who return home weary from work and want nothing but fist-flying action. And for that, Tekken 7 delivers.

All of the returning cast members have their signature moves, which can be pretty intimidating for series newcomers - there are literally hundreds of variations, combos and multi-stage throw techniques to get your head around. A few new additions make their series debut, too, but lots of familiar faces aren't here.

After that, you've got the Rage mechanic to digest. This first showed up in Tekken 6, but has been transformed for this new iteration with two new attributes - although both only kick in once you've dropped below a certain health threshold. The first, Rage Attacks, are more devastating versions of your regular arsenal - pull one out in the middle of a combo to really rack up the damage.

The other is "Rage Arts", cinematic attacks that do huge burst damage and have the potential to turn a losing round back in your favor. They're almost identical to Street Fighter's Super attacks, but surprisingly don't feel out of place here.

That's not the only thing borrowed from traditional rival Capcom's most famous series, either. Iconic villain Akuma also crosses over, making an appearance in the main story and representing the Satsui No Hado in the multiplayer mode. His fireballs, uppercuts and spinning kicks are all present and correct, right down to the button combinations. He's even got an EX meter for powering up his special moves. He's a great starting point for any Street Fighter fans picking up Tekken for the first time - expect to see his face a lot when you first step online.

Everything looks spectacular in motion, with sparks flying whenever you land an attack. Namco has really put the Unreal Engine to good use, making this the best-looking game in the series by a mile.

As the seventh full entry in the series, you'd think Tekken 7's story would have progressed further than a family spat between three generations of Mishima men, but here we are: Heihachi and Kazuya have pretty much decimated half the globe with their rival mega-corporations, and Jin is the walking equivalent of a weapon of mass destruction.

If you thought your family was bad, you should know that these guys have a history of throwing each other off of mountains. Between each bout, everything unfolds through overly long CGI cutscenes. Most consist of evil scheming, cheesy dialogue and maniacal laughter, with plenty of character-hopping to show different points of view.

Not everyone makes the cut, either: finish a chapter of the main story and you'll unlock two separate character "stories" - essentially a single fight, bookended by full motion video that explain why that fighter wasn't included in the main plot. While the five hour campaign answers a few of the questions Tekken fans have been pondering over for

years, Namco just couldn't help itself and managed to sneak a sequel-baiting post-credits cutscene in there for good measure. We probably haven't seen the final chapter just yet.

You can take a break from the family drama in the other game modes, which still see you throwing punches and kicks, but this time with any member of the roster - not just whoever the story calls for you to play as.

Treasure Battle is a never-ending wave of progressively stronger AI opponents, with each subsequent win unlocking new gear and accessories to customise your character with. Think new hairstyles and new outfits - plus a whole host of goofy clothes like witches hats, traffic signs and toilet plungers. Why these items aren't drip-fed through the multiplayer modes, or even the story, is a mystery though. You've got to grind your way through this one specific mode just to unlock everything.

The Jukebox and Gallery modes add some welcome Tekken nostalgia too. You can pick music tracks or play back movies from every game in the series (once you've unlocked them using the in-game currency, that is) and remind yourself just what the heck is actually going on between the crazy cast of combatants.

It's the 1v1 multiplayer that will decide if Tekken 7 lives a long and healthy life, not its single player story. Things look good on paper - especially with an online tournament mode ready right from the off. You can set up single- and double-elimination brackets, which are the mainstay of offline tournaments. A spectator mode will let viewers tune in to watch the action, with voice and text chat built-in for good measure, but the 8 participant player limit could be a bit small.

Otherwise, it's the usual mix of ranked and unranked matches, with points earned and lost based on your performance.

It's standard stuff, but there aren't any other incentives to keep on playing. Whereas Injustice rewards players with constant loot drops, here you're just playing for pride. It's properly old-school, which will either be refreshing or boring depending on how many other fighting games you've currently got on the go.

Tekken 7 is happy doing what it does best: letting you pummel the hell out of your opponents, either online or face-to-face. For those who love the Tekken series inside out, it breathes new life into the series as it looks for a place in an increasingly crowded scene of fighting games.

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