

# Are you boss rushing or are you boss dragging?

SHAHID AHMAD ABRAR

Studio MDHR's debut game Cuphead, first teased back in 2013, finally got released after high anticipation on September 29 and boy, does it deliver. The game can be defined as an indie "run and gun" fashioned in a retro motif similar to *Mega-man* and *Contra*. The game's animation was inspired by 1930s American cartoons and truly captures its subversive and surrealist elements. Small additions such as water coloured backgrounds, smooth animation, and its captivating visuals make it a genuinely perfect experience.

The gameplay comes off as rather simple (at first) and purposefully punishing –kind of like the *Souls* series. The player controls Cuphead and, if playing with a friend, Mughead, as they battle one boss after another with a few on-foot traditional levels thrown into the mix. Each of the boss battles contains a lot of creative and unique variations with some of the levels taking place in the air in a bullet hell style of gameplay. With three lives, this is the kind of game where the player can be expected to fail very often due to its difficult but fair nature. While a "simple" mode is offered, it comes off as rather pointless as it does not help very much in progressing the game. The ranking/high score system adds to the games

replayability along with its multiple endings but players in general can expect to replay a single level multiple times to the point where it often becomes very frustrating.

But the frustration is always towards the gamer themselves. Cuphead's controls are tight and responsive. Unlike certain sloppy games, the controls allow for some really tight maneuvers with a jump, shoot and dodge button assigned to the face buttons and the ability to change weapons using left bumper. I personally find it a lot easier to assign the shoot button to the bumpers or triggers as that allows the players to fire while dancing around the screen. The parrying seems somewhat impossible at first but it is a skill one must hone as it is vital to master the game. Cuphead can also fire a special attack which is charged from shooting the enemy and parrying attacks but players can choose to either charge up for a big special or fire it as it refills. Either of the specials makes the player temporarily vulnerable. The specials require one whole second to fire. Now that may not seem like a lot but in a game like this with all that's happening at once, one second can mean a lot.

The soundtrack is absolutely amazing too. An upbeat Jazz soundtrack recorded by a live orchestra not only



compliments the animations but conveys the 30s feel. We're looking at the best video game original score of the year here. And a vinyl worth adding to the collection.

What makes this game truly stand out is its attention to detail. Small things such as showing the player their progression in a level before they had failed or how random lines and white spots show up like old black and white films render this a masterpiece. For anyone into nostalgia powered classics, Cuphead is worth buying. With all that polish and an amazing soundtrack to go with it, an affordable price tag of 20\$ is appreciable. If it makes you feel any better, the developers had to mortgage their house to deliver this game.

## GAME REVIEW

# GREAT GAME, NOT SO GREAT SEQUEL

NONY KHONDAKER

*Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus*

Developer: MachineGames

Publisher: Bethesda Softworks

Engine: id Tech 6

Platforms: PC, PS4 (review platform), XB1

Release Date: October 27, 2017

The Wolfenstein franchise has been around since the '80s and is renowned for its unique blend of gore and alternate history. 2014's *The New Order* took things up a few notches by packaging all of that in a more cinematic and emotional bundle and that's why the game is still easily in my Top 3. So, quite naturally, I was excited for the next chapter in the franchise, *The New Colossus*.

*The New Colossus* picks up right where *The New Order* left off. BJ is critically injured from the final boss fight against Deathshead in the previous game. Unable to cure BJ completely, the scientist Set Roth gives him a power armour that puts him back in the battlefield. The rest of the game deals with BJ and the Kreisau Circle joining forces with various rebel groups across a Nazi-dominated America and fighting against General Engel's army.

*The New Colossus* plays quite differently from *The New Order*. In the previous game, the levels would have fewer number of enemies but they were very powerful and needed to be taken down strategically. *The New Colossus* gameplay, however, feels more like *DOOM* than *The New Order*. The



shooting galleries are overflowing with enemies and if you are not constantly moving around, you are eventually going to get outnumbered and die. This huge shift in gameplay style might be questionable but I personally enjoyed it since it helped me relieve a lot of stress. The visuals of *Wolfenstein II*, even

though a step up from the previous game, feel quite dated for 2017. The optimisation is not all that great either since I faced frequent stutters and frame rate drops on the PS4. The game freezes for a few seconds before every cutscene which hurts the immersion of the game quite a bit. The soundtrack feels eerily

similar to that of *DOOM* which has the same composer and ultimately is not very fresh or memorable.

My biggest and the only major gripe with the game is its plot. Initially the plot is very slow and feels like an excuse to set up the shooting galleries. However, the story does pick up during the second act. There are some very emotional scenes such as the ones regarding BJ's childhood. There are some mind-bending plot twists that will make you get off the seat and scream at the screen. The portrayal of Hitler, who makes a cameo appearance, is very creative and completely different from how the controversial leader is usually portrayed. However, in the final act, the game loses steam once more and feels like one shooting gallery after another. The final nail in the coffin for *The New Colossus* is the anti-climactic ending. The ending is not satisfying at all and it infuriates me even further when I compare it with the emotional ending of *The New Order*.

Overall, *Wolfenstein II* is a great shooter with an excellent second act. Get this game if you are looking for a fast-paced shooter that will help you relieve stress but don't go into it expecting the emotional and cinematic excellence of *The New Order*.

*Nony Khondaker is an introvert who complements his non-existent social life with video games, Netflix and a whole lot of ice-cream. Send him memes and cat videos to cheer him up at [fb.com/NonyKhondaker](https://fb.com/NonyKhondaker)*