



CHAINSAWS AND GUIDED MISSILES GALORE

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The Gears of War series has never been one to shy away from delivering some of the most over-the-top action that video games can offer today. Does Gears 5 continue that steamroll? Or does it feel like a beat-up monster truck running on fumes?

First, let's start with the premise. The game takes place right after the events of Gears 4, with you playing as Kait Diaz for most of the single player campaign. The story focuses on Kait's connection to the Swarm, an evolved version of the Locust Horde who were the antagonists in Gears of War 1 to 3. It's a coherent, well-paced tale with fleshed out characters. I won't go too much into the story at the risk of spoiling it but I'll say that Gears 5 has some of the best writing in the entire series. Characters like Marcus Fenix, JD Fenix, Del, and Cole all make a return. I'd suggest playing the previous Gears titles if you want to understand the myriad of references the game makes to the previous stories.

The missions in the campaign are of two types – you have the usual, linear shooting galleries which guide you to the next story point, and then you have the open-world areas which seem to mimic the God of War style by letting you explore the game's world. The open-world sections feel tacked-on most of the time as you're whizzing past empty plains of snow or sand in your Skiff, a wind powered vehicle you'll be using to traverse said open-world. The world doesn't offer the same environments or atmosphere as games like God of War or Dark Souls. Regardless, the bits of story that you can uncover while going through every nook and cranny do feel rewarding if you're a lore buff. In the linear sections, however, Gears 5 takes on a completely different face. Environments are littered with small details that make every level feel unique. Derelict research labs that



contain horrifying genetic experiments, old abandoned train tunnels where danger lurks around every corner, and a city that has recently turned into a theatre of war are some of the unique places you'll be stomping grubs in.

The action is still the same heart-pounding explosion fest with different enemy types forcing you to change your tactics in a mission. Each encounter with the Swarm provides opportunity for mayhem. It doesn't get boring either as the gameplay loop is extremely satisfying. The fan-favou-

rite guns such as the Retro Lancer and Gnasher Shotgun make a return, and they are joined by new entrants such as the Lancer GL, a modified Lancer Rifle with a targeted mortar system attached underneath the barrel. All in all, the campaign's action never fails to deliver and you can expect the same as the previous instalments.

Graphically, Gears 5 doesn't really do a lot to improve upon its predecessor. That being said, it's still a technically proficient game in the visuals department. Volumetric particle effects are plentiful, the lighting pairs beautifully with the environments on offer, and character and gun models are meticulously detailed.

Coming to the question of multiplayer, nothing much has changed other than the inclusion of Escape Mode. Here, you're dropped deep behind enemy lines into a Swarm Hive. Your objective is to take it down from within. Escape is a three-player co-op experience that focuses on you going on the offensive and taking various sections of the Hive for the COG. There are three characters each with their own unique abilities. This makes the whole experience centre on squad play and you'll have to work with your teammates in order to beat the most difficult levels.

I didn't have too many issues finding PvP matches and I'm happy to report that they are the same heavy octane matches that we've come to expect from Gears titles.

Overall, while the series might not be as popular as it was back in its golden years, the newest entry does pack a punch when facing up against modern titles. Give this one a shot if you're looking to cure that third-person-shooter itch.

Shahrukh Ikhtear roams the mystical plains of adulthood in search of the fabled work-life balance. Help him out with good music or just say wholesome things at shahrukh.ikhatear@gmail.com