Written by Brian Patrick O'Toole
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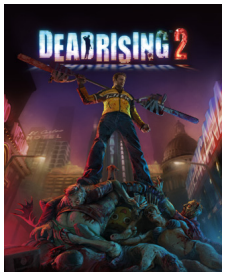
Ever since George A. Romero’s NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD first sparked horror fans’ love affair with the zombie, the walking dead have lumbered (and run!) into all facets of popular culture, most notably the video-game world. From UK company Quicksilva’s ZOMBIE ZOMBIE for the ZK Spectrum computer in 1984 through such staples as Capcom’s RESIDENT EVIL and even non-horror games like the CALL OF DUTY series, the undead have been unavoidable, and in 2006, Capcom decided to take them in another direction with the open-world slaughterthon DEAD RISING.

The game follows a freelance photojournalist named Frank West as he sneaks into the recently sealed-off burg of Willamette, Colorado to find out what’s going on. What follows is 72 hours of zombie-fighting, psycho-busting, survivor-saving adventure where anything and everything can be used as a weapon. DEAD RISING was unique because it tapped into the Xbox 360’s processing power and was able to present hundreds of ghouls on screen at one time. After selling over a million units, Capcom not surprisingly went ahead with a sequel, on the result is DEAD RISING 2, which goes on sale today for the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and Windows 7/Vista/XP.



DEAD RISING 2’s hero is former motocross champion Chuck Greene, who has come to the Las Vegas-esque Fortune City to compete in a reality TV show pitting contestants against zombies for big money prizes. Chuck’s taking part in order to win cash to buy Zombrex to keep his infected daughter Katie from turning into one of the living dead. The sequel promises to be bigger, badder and bloodier than its predecessor; this time around, thousands of zombies fill the screen, and players have the ability to combine weapons to make some kooky new weaponry. In a new addition to the series, DEAD RISING 2 offers two-player co-op, so a friend can jump into your game and lend a helping hand. Best of all, there’s a four-player competition mode in which on-line gamers can join up to take on the flesheaters in a gladiator-show environment.

For this two-part story, Fango spoke to DEAD RISING 2 developer and Blue Castle Games senior producer Josh Bridge about their new and improved zombie action.

FANGORIA: Playing through CASE ZERO, the prologue demo of DEAD RISING 2 (see review here), I couldn’t help but notice that you and your team have created a more sympathetic character in Chuck Greene. Frank West was a self-centered guy looking for the big scoop in a shopping mall—a greedy consumer’s cathedral—whereas Chuck is on a mission to save his daughter Katie in New Fortune. Can you talk a bit about the story development?

JOSH BRIDGE: The key theme we started with was greed. The setting, the story and antagonists’ motivation are all rooted in that concept. We wanted to develop a hero who has a personal attachment to the situation and isn’t necessarily an opportunist. He is blamed for the outbreak, so along with having to survive with his daughter, he needs to clear his name or face incarceration, even if he manages to stay alive. Chuck’s motivation is pure in contrast to the theme, though he has to rely on society’s greed to pay for the Zombrex for his sick daughter. Also, CASE ZERO isn’t necessarily a demo, but rather a unique stand-alone content that bridges the gap into DEAD RISING 2.

FANG: The ability to create your own superweapons from other hardware really adds a twisted but creative spin to the game. Certain zombies react differently to the DIY weapons as well. How much time was spent restructuring the AI of DEAD RISING 2, and can you share some surprises we should look for or can trigger within the game?

BRIDGE: The technology behind DEAD RISING 2 was written from scratch by Blue Castle Games, with no code porting from the previous game. Our first goal was to push the largest amount of zombies we could muster on screen. They are by no means intended to be supersmart killers, more like dumb animals that can be lured by a noisy helicopter or will continue to slip and fall on marbles over and over again. We have expanded on how they can be dispatched and played with—things like accurate modeling of slicing/decapitation, or freezing them with a CO_2 fire extinguisher and then shattering them into tiny bits. Zombies are toys to play with in DEAD RISING, so we expanded on things like “pin-cushioning”; with a single zombie, you can slam a wooden barrel on, impale it with a stick through its abdomen and cap it off with a bucket on its head.

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