

“DEAD ISLAND” (Video Game Review)

Written by Amanda Dyar

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DEAD ISLAND was one of the most anticipated zombie games to date. Techland and Deep Silver started a new phenomenon with this title, which offers players a new type of survival horror that adds in RPG and melee combat mechanics unlike any that have ever been attempted before.

The game (available for the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and PC) centers on the island of Banoi, located in the South Pacific near Australia. Banoi is home to the beautiful resort of Royal Palms, and it is, unfortunately, the latest setting for a zombie outbreak. You control one of four characters stuck on the island, and work with other survivors to fight off carnivorous hordes of undead in order to escape. Each individual has a unique and riveting history that is explained in explicit detail before you start playing. These four folks—a rapper, a resort worker, a former football star and a fugitive on the run—seem to have nothing in common except an unexplained immunity to the virus that is running rampant through the population. The quartet soon encounter the mysterious Colonel Ryder White, who convinces them that there may be a vaccine to treat the disease and send them on a journey to find it.



The fundamentals of DEAD ISLAND’s mechanics place emphasis on the combat system, where each character has a weapon specialty: blunt, sharp, throwing and firearms. The game

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starts off allowing your character to only use melee weapons, but as it continues, stronger powers or abilities start to show. Characters progress by accumulating experience points, gaining levels and acquiring new attributes and abilities from their unique skill trees. In melee combat, there is the added feature of target tracking, which allows you to expertly target specific areas of the undead while swinging. The first-person-shooter combat is somewhat glitchy, but it is such a small part of the game that you'll barely notice.

The melee combat looks spectacular, as appendages are severed by sharp weapons or bones are shattered from blunt force—but in fact, the whole island of Banoi is an impressive work of art. You travel around the outer edges searching the beaches for survivors at first, but later you enter darker, ominous areas that are made even more frightening by the awful sounds of the undead. This really sets up a nice atmosphere that is topped off with an impressive soundtrack to slay zombies to, which allows DEAD ISLAND to give a whole new meaning to rocking the game industry.

DEAD ISLAND is open-world, and you'll spend a lot of time running around Banoi, completing missions for survivors. You only have the ability to travel on foot at first, but you soon gain access to vehicles to get around faster and more efficiently. There are a slew of side missions for you to complete in addition to the main storyline's missions, which will ensure that you get plenty of free time in a single play-through of DEAD ISLAND if you choose to complete these extra quests.

DEAD ISLAND may have disappointed to some extent, but the sum of all its parts will allow you to overlook its minor flaws. Any devoted player comes to expect small hiccups in games that have been in development for a long time like this one. DEAD ISLAND proved worth the wait and is a must-own for any zombie lover. But be forewarned that you may find the intro song, “Who Do You Voodoo,” stuck in your head long after you stop playing.

