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If you've been keeping up with BIOGAMER GIRL on FANGORIA, you'll know that Slant Six Games' RESIDENT EVIL OPERATION RACCOON CITY was one of the most anticipated survival horror games of the year. When you consider everything that was to be combined into the game—namely the chance to play as the evil Umbrella Corporation's henchmen to kill heroes from the past RESIDENT EVIL titles and literally rewrite history as we know it—the new twist on Capcom's classic series had amazing promise. The introduction of six individual characters, each with their own class and upgradeable skill sets, was a big drawing point as well, as it took something that the classic RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK used, and advanced it a few steps beyond what that game accomplished with its character choices. That said, RESIDENT EVIL OPERATION RACCOON CITY didn't quite live up to expectations upon last week's release, but it's still a fun ride that any RESIDENT EVIL fan should catch.

The year is 1998, and an outbreak of the T-Virus has overtaken Raccoon City. You take control of one of six Umbrella Secret Service soldiers as you progress through the events leading up to your mission in Raccoon City. In theory, the mission is simple: Enter Raccoon City and eliminate all traces of the outbreak that can be linked back to Umbrella. This includes destroying top secret files, survivors and preventing Government issued Special Ops from recovering informative data. Of course, you'll have plenty of zombies and other B.O.W.s to contend with along the way as well. The storyline of the game is simple, to the point and shallow. There's very little character progression aside from learning things such as Beltway has a potty mouth, but some of the missions the story creates from the historic plot are simply amazing fun for any true RESIDENT EVIL fan (e.g., attacking former protagonists Ada Wong, Leon S. Kennedy and Claire Redfield will definitely give you goosebumps).

Although there are six protagonists whom you can choose for your team, only four can be utilized at once. In between chapters, you're allowed to select one character, which you can customize by selecting an outfit and equipping a primary weapon, secondary weapon and an activated ability. More guns and abilities can be purchased by using experience points unlocked throughout playing the campaign mode and online versus matches. This fun, and time consuming, game mechanic will feel very familiar to anyone accustomed to playing squad

based shooters, but a bit different to veterans of the RESIDENT EVIL series. Still, your primary objective will typically ask you to mow down hordes of zombies, while using First Aid Sprays and green herbs to stay alive and complete obscure objectives.

Once you've actually started a session, you'll instantly notice that the game features some fairly impressive graphics and a great tone setting soundtrack. Classic RESIDENT EVIL sound effects make their way into this game and will activate when completing actions such as picking up items and healing with herbs. As you play through the relatively short campaign, you'll soon encounter classic locations and enemies from past games in the series. While the locations are a nostalgia-producing fangasm waiting to happen, some of the enemies don't exactly produce the same sentiment for lack of intelligent A.I (Nemesis, I'm talking to you).

In fact, one of the major problems with the game is the intelligence of the game's characters, and this problem rears its ugly head even more prominently for your computer controlled teammates. Not only are your teammates not allowed to revive you in combat should you die, but they simply don't help you in combat nearly as much as they should. Often times they'll run into traps, stand around not fighting during epic shootouts, or do other meaningless actions that will get you killed and annoy you to no end. This presents a huge spike in difficulty level, so playing with other people is heavily advised. Other problems persist as well including becoming stuck in a Licker's tongue grasp, falling through the maps, difficulty in reviving teammates who unfortunately fall on a stack of items, etc. While these issues aren't completely out of the ordinary, they are still problems that no gamer should have to endure after dropping $60 for a new title.

When you become bored with RESIDENT EVIL OPERATION RACCOON CITY's campaign, you can head online to try out one of the four multiplayer modes available straight out of the box. “Team Attack” mode works similar to team deathmatch modes from other games, with teams winning for having the most points earned from kills at the end of the match. You'll be

awarded a greater amount of points for killing players from the opposing team, but you can also gain points for killing zombies and B.O.W.s who spawn around the maps. “Biohazard” mode tasks teams with finding missing G-Virus samples that spawn around the maps, and transporting the vials to the team's base. Whoever gets the capture limit or has the most captures when time runs out is declared the winner. “Survivor” mode requires players to reach an escape helicopter to evacuate the city. The only problem is that there are two teams, and not enough room for every soldier on the helicopter. Finally, “Heroes” mode pits a team full of pumped up protagonists against a group of powerful antagonists from the series' past in a fight to the death. When players die in this mode, they respawn as a character of ordinary strength, and a team is declared winner only when all of the other team's overpowered characters have been eliminated. Each of these game modes brings a unique style, so countless hours could be spent in the online modes without ever becoming repetitive.

RESIDENT EVIL OPERATION RACCOON CITY has a few problems, but the good outweighs the bad. Alas, you will feel that true team spirit as you once again return to that four player co-op that was so beloved from RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK. True leadership abilities come forward as you continuously carry your teammates through each level and pick their dying bodies off the cold, ground below before they bleed out. While not everyone will appreciate this new look for a classic franchise, there’s still something fun and familiar about pumping shotgun shells into Hunters and Lickers until they dissolve into a puddle at your feet. And with so much bonus content, such as unlockable items, abilities and concept art, leaderboards, downloadable items and missions, and a whole lot more, you'll find yourself coming back to Raccoon City again and again. Even after all these years.