Bloodbore Review
Dark Souls meets H.P. Lovecraft - but better

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Created by the good ol' folks who made Demons Souls and Dark Souls, FromSoftware, and Hidetaka Miyazaki, Bloodborne could be described as being the spiritual successor of Dark Souls, just as Dark Souls was to Demons Souls. The same mechanics and trends are there, but given nice little twists that make this game unique form the others. Just as it was with the Souls games, so too is Bloodborne deviously difficult and challenging, absurdly beautiful, and subtle in its approach to telling a story. Bloodborne can only be described as a modern classic, just as the Souls games are.

Instead of being set in a Gothic medieval fantasy world consumed by demons or the undead, Bloodborne takes place in a dark and twisted Victorian-esque city plagued with Beasts, the whole premise and world is an interesting take on werewolves and vampires without ever using the names. You are a Hunter, tasked with killing these beasts that haunt the city of Yarnham.

Just as it is with the Souls games, Bloodborne delivers its story and world through cryptic jigsaw pieces, it tasks the player to put these pieces together and come up with their own interpretation and fill the blanks. It is a method of storytelling that thrives in the video game format as it encourages exploration and use of imagination – there's none of this "here have a ton of exposition through a 30 second cut scene rubbish. Once again FromSoftware have succeeded in creating a fascinating and wonderfully disturbing story and world just as they did with their previous games.

Bloodborne is as close as you'll come to ever getting a HP Lovecraft styled videogame. This is all very well known as the world and story delves into the minds of madness, insanity, and cosmological nightmares. However, story of Bloodborne could also be described as Lynchian as it bears some similarities to a David Lynch film. You not only watch the story expand, but also unfold and you try to make sense of it all and you know that every tiny detail must mean something to the bigger picture.

Bloodborne's story is disturbing, surreal, completely mental, but fascinating and imaginative, plus the use of dreams/nightmares furthers my belief that Miyazaki is a fan of Lynch (then again who isn't?).

So it has a fantastic story and the world is encapsulating, what about it's gameplay?

Well, it took and already amazing formula and somehow made it better. I've found Bloodborne to be far harder than Dark Souls, but also more entertaining. Every encounter is tense, as you can be killed relatively quickly, and passivity just invites more death, it's like walking on a tightrope as one slip up could easily cost you. The combat, compared to Dark Souls, is both faster but also meatier. You have to commit to attacks as any misjudgement means that you will be inviting enemies to pounce. Enemies hit hard and bosses hit harder.

Speaking of bosses, the designers and animators have out done themselves. By the looks of it every boss has 1000 different attack animations; reading their attacks, predicting what that attack is, and choosing when to make your own attack make each and every fight an intense and adrenaline pumping display. Plus there is no greater feeling in a video game than beating a boss you've been struggling with, it's like climbing a mountain and the reward itself is the fact that you've done it.

To wrap up I'm going to talk about an area that perfectly sums up how marvellous Bloodborne is.

On the outskirts of the dark, seedy, and haunted city of Yarnhem with its narrow cobblestone streets is the Forbidden Woods. When you first enter this area it seems like a 'normal' dark and spooky forest. Large dark trees block the moonlight and the beast-like peasants shuffle through the forest paths holding torches. So far so good. However, the deeper you go into the woods it quickly turns into a labyrinth. The trees are twisted and the roots intertwine each other, massive tombstones (an object that features predominantly in Bloodborne, shoving the message of death and despair in you face) are dotted around the place, and bundles of snakes infest these parts –the enemies are literally tangled bundles of snakes. Some of the peasants have also fallen to the snakes, turning them into monstrosities with snakes bursting out of their head (similar to the village folk in Resident Evil 4). You quickly find yourself lost in this horrible place, every twist and turn reveals a new horror that you must face.

Bloodborne creates an atmosphere of horror without ever being really scary, and it is that atmosphere that has been created that makes this one of the best games from the last decade.