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- Ericka Dunlap



# MISS AMERICA

## 2004

Wednesday, February 11, 2004

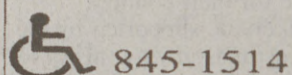
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# ARCADE ARCHIVE

## Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic XBOX and PC Bioware



COURTESY OF LUCASARTS

Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic features vivid graphics and top-notch voice acting. Mini-games and side-quests are special features sure to add to players' enjoyment.

Star Wars. We all know and love it. Well, not so much now as evidenced by the dismal failure of the last two movies, but that's in the past. Now, "Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic" by famed RPG makers Bioware is expected to redeem the franchise.

Set 4,000 years before Episode One, the Republic is under assault from a massive Sith armada with seemingly limitless resources. Amidst all this, players take the role of skilled Republic soldiers who appear to be little more than that. As players advance through more of the game, engaging in missions and seeing events unfold, they will discover there is more to the Republic soldiers than meets the eye, and the fate of the galaxy rests on their shoulders.

Players travel across several planets seeking the legendary Star Forge, which the fate of everything is tied to and the choices that they make along the way will determine if they become heroes of the light side or leaders of the dark side.

Of course, all this would be meaningless if there was nothing to draw players in and hold them, but "Knights of the Republic" has more to offer than battles. With a story and plot that soars above the drivel that was exhibited in the saga's last two films, it is easy to become wrapped up in the game for hours at a time. But the real meat of this "Star Wars" game is its light saber battles, blaster duels and large space dogfights.

The fighting of the game is all in real time, but it uses RPG rules. This means that while players fight, the computer is rolling dice to determine the outcomes of your moves, such as if you hit, how much damage was done or if the enemy is dead or alive. While this may seem a bit confusing, it works surprisingly well and will force players to make good use of their teammates and Jedi powers. It's not just a hack-and-slash game; it requires strategy to beat most of the bosses which, in the end, makes the entire game more worthwhile.

Players are joined by nine other characters, each with his own unique and memorable personality. This is brought about by the extensive dialogue tree that each character has and the conversations players have with them during the game. Their extensive biographies help move the supplementing characters up from tag-along grunts to true companions. All characters are

fully customizable, so as they advance in players can give them all sorts of powers master's speed, throw light saber, force jump the simple, yet effective force kill. Custom nuts will have a ball going through the while those who just want to play can make of the handy auto upgrade feature.

To add more depth to the game, there are several mini-games for players to have fun ranging from racing to dueling, bounty and being an errand boy. Most of them usually result in gaining more money, experience points and items. There is also a dance of side-quests for players to complete will help them get to know their teammates get them goodies as well.

The sound and voice acting are top-notch with a cast of more than 50 actors reading a single line of dialogue. The acting is some of the best since "Grand Theft Auto: Vice City" released and helps bring out each individual actor. The sound effects are the standard "Star Wars" sounds from the swinging and clashing the light sabers to the shrill pitch of the blaster. Each sound effect is authentic and sounds completely natural.

Even with all of these features, there are things that pull the game down. The graphics, while very good, do not make good use of XBOX's power which is capable of producing photo realistic effects. There is also a small rate issue when players get into some of the fiercer battle scenes with lots of people running around on the screen. The pacing of the game is also uneven at times. But once players are on planet, the game really takes off, though it tends to slow down in a few places and will run around and backtrack a lot. Finally, the loading issue. Nearly every time players go to a building or into another area of the game there is a load screen. This becomes tiresome since the areas are fairly small and in the "Metriod Prime" proved that games don't need load times for a huge game world.

Those minor issues are minor compared to everything the game offers. The gameplay and sound will grab players and pull them into the fantasy world. Bioware has produced a console RPG and is a must have for any Star Wars owner.



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