

'Duty' calls once more

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"Call of Duty: World at War" has proven to be one of the most critically acclaimed and financially successful games of 2008 on the Playstation 3 and XBOX 360. The Wii version of Activision's World War II swan song has gotten little to no love from critics who don't feel like wasting their time on a "gimped" version of a great game. The online multi-player is a pale shadow of the more powerful versions, and the attack dogs and zombie mode are missing entirely.

The fact that the game even made an appearance on the Wii is a bit of a surprise after "Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare" skipped the system entirely, yet it somehow made an appearance on the Nintendo DS. With all the factors working against it you would think that the Wii's "Call of Duty" is a complete wash but you'd be dead wrong. The game still has an ace up its sleeve that the other versions can't compete with—motion controls.

Anyone who's ever played a first-person-shooter on the Wii, excluding train wrecks like Far Cry, will tell you that standard controllers just don't cut it anymore. Using the Wii remote to aim your gun feels so natural



Photo courtesy of IGN.com

and fluid that you'll never look at dual analog controls the same way again.

Graphics fanatics might be quick to point out the Wii's visual shortcomings but it's hard to complain about looks when you're fighting off a Japanese bayonet blitz with self-aimed headshots. No amount of Hi-Def visuals can immerse you in the game quite like this game's controls.

There are plenty of control options for players to choose from including a Wii Zapper mode, and you can adjust the sensitivity to suit your style. Even newbies will feel right at home with the controls, after half an hour of spasms and profanity of course.

Just because this "World at War" lacks Hi-Def graphics

doesn't mean it phones in its visuals. This "Call of Duty" is easily one of the most visually striking games to hit the Wii period. From the scorched paradise of the south Pacific to the bombed out buildings of Berlin, this game puts 90 percent of the Wii's lineup to shame.

Character models look solid if not a little simple and the game runs smoothly on a modified "Call of Duty 4" engine; kudos to developer Treyarch for pulling that off. There are a few nice graphical effects thrown in for

good measure, which sometimes leads to gorier kills and makes weapons like the flame thrower more satisfying. Overall it looks like the developers actually CARED about the way this game looked, something that has become an unfortunate rarity on the system.

While the world of "Call of Duty" shines, the characters that inhabit it sometimes aren't so bright. The game throws you into the fight on two fronts; you'll fight the Nazis in Europe and the Japanese in the south Pacific. Both forces have different battle tactics. Whereas the Germans take cover and try to flank you, the Japanese will bum-rush you every chance they get. Activision has had four games to perfect the German A.I. and it shows. The Japanese, on the other hand, are still a little bit new at this, which results in them making some hilariously bone-headed mistakes.

During ambushes, they have a tendency of running right past you in favor of stabbing your teammates and to call them grenade-happy would be an understatement. You'll spend almost as much time returning these little explosive care packages to their rightful owners as you will shooting people. Despite these shortcomings, the super aggressive soldiers add a breath of fresh air to the combat. With a little polish, they could become a force to be reckoned with. For now, it's just funny to watch them screw up.

It's a shame that Nintendo didn't put a little extra horsepower under the Wii's hood. The spot on controls mixed with top of the line graphics could have made this the definitive version of "COD: World at War." As it stands, it's a very impressive teaser for what the system is capable of in the first-person-shooter genre. While everyone waits for "The Conduit" to come out this May, kick back and enjoy one of the most satisfying shooters on the Wii.

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