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History of Games

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For Honor Game Analysis

Introduction

For Honor is an amazingly immersive hack and slash action fighting game developed and published by Ubisoft. It was released for Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, and Xbox One Systems. The game allows players to control heroes from three of history's most legendary fighting forces, those being knights, samurai, and Vikings. The player is forced at the start of the game to pick one of those three factions. This adds a special connection to the chosen faction by continually fighting for them, but this choice, however, does not stop the player from only being able to use the heroes of that faction instead they are allowed to use any of the 12 heroes and any future ones released later through DLC. The game makes the player feel immersed in a few ways being the history of its development, the campaign, the multiplayer, gameplay and combat mechanics. The history of the development of a game shows what a game has learned and expanded from its predecessors to succeeds also it shows how the developers created this believable world to inhabit.

History

The historic value of this game is that it is building upon the building blocks of games that are like its forefathers like the games *Combat* (1977) or a more recent game like *Ryse: Son of Rome* (2013). This game is also firmly cementing Ubisoft as the leader in this historic action

genre which was started with their titles like Assassin's Creed franchise. It is the developers' first action strategy game. A big part of the immersion for this game is the world that the game engine creates. For Honor was built in the AnvilNext 2.0 game engine which is the same engine used to make games like *Assassin's Creed Syndicate* and *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Siege*. The first iteration of AnvilNext 2.0 which was known as AnvilNext was first developed for Assassin's Creed III and featured a number of enhancements from the original Anvil engine. This engine featured enhancements. The first enhancement made was that it adds support for a new weather system, which allows for specific weather settings as well as an automatically cycling mode as seen in *Assassin's Creed IV* thus creating realistic environments with changing weather options that make the world of the game more believable. The second enhancement was that the renderer was rewritten for higher efficiency and support for additional post-processing techniques, enabling up to 3,000 non-playable characters to be rendered in real time, this is expressed in the game with the armies of fodder soldiers you both control and kill making it really feel like you are a legendary hero on the battlefield. The developmental history and engine enhancements make the world of this game more believable thus making the story it is trying to tell through its campaign more immersive.

Campaign

Whenever there is a story to be told the user of that media will try to insert them into it, this is no different for *For Honor*. The overall story of the game is that after a natural catastrophe that pitted the most fearsome warriors in the fight for resources and territory, the bloodthirsty warlord Apollyon believes the people of the Knights, Vikings, and Samurai have grown weak and wants to create an age of all-out war through manipulation of each faction.

The campaign is broken into three chapters, one for each faction. Each chapter has a main protagonist with an intriguing backstory allowing the player to better identify with them, the player can also customize their look and gender giving the player a better sense of self-in-game. The first chapter is the Knight Chapter where the player takes control of Warden. The second chapter is the Viking Chapter where the player takes control of The Raider. The final chapter is the Samurai Chapter where the player takes control of The Orochi. Each chapter allows for the player to get used to playing style of some of the other classes in that faction. There are six missions per faction in the story mode of For Honor, leading to a total of 18 missions for the entire story. These missions also vary in objective and play style with some you're leading a massive army invasion of an enemy stronghold or you play as an assassin sneaking into a base to sabotage it then escape. YouTuber Halcyon Gaming when talking about the hardest difficulty which is known as Realistic Mode which has harder AI enemies and minimalized UI stated "8-9 hours on realistic, Apollyon is tough" (Halcyon Gaming), this most likely gave him a better sense of immersion in the game because of seeing minimal UI and making fights tougher. Playing the campaign in co-op can and having a friend help you siege areas is fun and never dull. There are also around 196 collectibles scattered throughout each of the levels, and the collection of these can also add to the length of the campaign. While the story is intriguing and engaging, at times the campaign can feel like an extended tutorial which throws off some of the immersion. At times the game feels like the campaign was made secondary to the multiplayer as a result the player can feel like that it is missing something. While achieved in somewhat different ways both the campaign and multiplayer modes do immerse the player.

Multiplayer

The multiplayer is where players can get a really solid sense of immersion. Much of the multiplayer structure is similar to the structure of modern shooters but the sense of sword fighting with another player instead of an AI bot gives a better sense of immersion than a shooter because it becomes more of a personal fight that can be fast or slow. *For Honor* has five modes, dominion, brawl, duel, skirmish, and elimination. Dominion mode is a 4v4 PVP map that allows players to battle against each other. There are three strategic control zones on this map. The goal is to control as much of the map as possible and gain points. Once a team's points have reached over 1000 the losing team goes into sudden death where respawning is no longer allowed but reviving dead teammates is allowed and if both teams reach 1000 points then they will both go into sudden death. The layout of the map in a dominion map consists of the objective points of A, B, C, with it generally being B as the one central area and A and C being the two outer areas. Soldiers will converge in the center and attack other soldiers and players so it is important to clear them out so your soldiers can take control of the point. The other two points are taken over and controlled by players or the AI bots. Brawl is a 2v2 mode in which each team of two players will need to kill the two enemy Heroes to win a round. The players are put at opposite ends of the map and paired up against an opponent. From there it is up to them to decide how to defeat the enemy team by either working together or fighting one on one battles. Duel is a 1v1 fight to the death much like brawl with an emphasis on skill against skill there is no running away or hiding, just two players battling to the death. Players who are unaware of their environment can find themselves knocked off or thrown from a cliff or wall, skewered on spikes or shoved into a fire. Elimination is the 4v4 version of brawl following the same rules. Skirmish is a 4v4 Team Death Match like mode where it has the same rules as

dominion except for the control points and it spans some slightly stronger soldiers known as captains. Players score points for their team by killing players, soldiers, and captains of the other team. Dominion and duel offer the player the best senses of immersion because of the more personal fights and in dominion specifically the feeling of a waging battle going back and forth. One of the most unique features of the multiplayer of *For Honor* is the Faction War. The Faction War is a map that shows which of the three factions control which territories on the map. This is a cross-platform feature meaning that it is one cohesive map for Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and PC. Players can either attack or defend territories by deploying war assets but they can only do this to the territories that their faction is touching. War assets are earned at the end of each online match and must be manually deployed or the game will choose for you where to deploy assets. The map updates every 6 hours to show who is winning. A full season of Faction War is made up of 5 rounds each round lasting 2 weeks meaning the full season lasts 10 weeks. The winners of a round or season get special rewards for coming in first. The Faction War makes this feature makes the factions fighting against each other more realistic and immersive. This multiplayer would not be as immersive without the gameplay.



Faction War Map

Gameplay

The gameplay of this game is very enjoyable and both fast paced and slow paced at times especially in a one on one duel. The realistic like combat gives it a certain sense of immersion. This sense of immersion can go even farther by removing the hud in options. The hud is very simple health and stamina bar over the player character, mini-map on the right-hand side, feats you have available / can unlock in the left-hand corner. Feats are the four perks a player can have in a game which is different for all 12 heroes. There are four different classes that characters fall under Vanguard, Heavy, Hybrid and Assassin. Vanguards are balanced Heroes with good attack and defense capabilities. They also have great versatility. Heavies have the highest resistance to damage but their attacks are slower than the other types, although still deadly. They are best used to defend a capture point and exterminating AI enemies. Hybrids are a mix of the other three types, making them a little more difficult to master due to their unique use of tactics, but they are no less effective in killing for the player willing to make the effort. Assassins are swift and lethal. They have good offensive skills and are a good choice for duels. The Knight characters are Warden/ Vanguard, Peacekeeper /Assassin, Conqueror/Heavy and Lawbringer/Hybrid. The Viking characters are Raider/Vanguard, Berserker/Assassin, Warlord/Heavy and Valkyrie/Hybrid. The Samurai characters are Kensei/Vanguard, Orochi/Assassin, Shugoki/Heavy and Nobushi/Hybrid. The appearance and play style can be customized through gear which is unlocked at the end of a game or through chests. Each character has their own advanced moveset which makes them all unique. The gameplay is further enhanced by the combat mechanics.

Combat Mechanics

One the best features of this game are the battle system known as the Art of Battle.

There is no traditional "block" button for blocking attacks it is a guard mode system. Players will need to read their opponents carefully and react with the proper stance and abilities to parry and counterattack. For an example, players with a controller, moving the right stick to the left, places the sword to the left side of the character's body and moving the sword to the right is done the same way by moving the left stick right. By reading the stance and weapon position of the enemy a player can be able to determine their opponents next intended move. Players can use the same mechanic to feint an attack and hope that the enemy falls for it, allowing them time to change stance and counterattack with a different move, possibly even an execution strike. The Art of Battle system also affects attacks with light and heavy attack having to be in a different stance than the opponent in order to hit and not be blocked. This type of quick time event like system further increases the immersion of the game as mentioned above, by making strike and block count and forcing the player to come up with strategies in real time. A characters exhaustion plays a big part in duels as when the character uses more attacks they get tired and slower making timing your attacks ever more crucial. If a player is able to land a heavy attack as the killing blow in guard mode then the Art of Battle system will allow them to do an execution. Executions make the respawn time longer of the victim also making it impossible for a teammate to revive them. They also have a benefit for the player who is the executor, by giving them health and stamina back. Players also have this revenge bar right above their feats on the hud. This bar is filled from blocking, taking damage, and attacking. When the bar is filled a player can go into revenge mode which gives a boost to their attack, defense, and stamina and if used at the right moment can knock opponents next to you to the

ground. This combat system makes the player sort of feel the weight of their sword. Although this system is good and is at the root of the game it's most immersive feature nothing is perfect.



Art of War Battle System

Issues

This game may be good but it is not without its flaws. One major flaw is that as mentioned above in the campaign paragraph is that the campaign can feel like an extended tutorial. This wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing if the game didn't already have a tutorial that it makes you play right after you chooses a faction. The campaign teaches you things that the actual tutorial should have like the quick soldier clear attack which is very effective in dominion. Also, each character has two video tutorials a basic and an advanced that teach the moveset but these videos cannot be paused and they show the button combinations before they display the move instead of having both on the screen at once so a player can see what they are doing. Another flaw is how the campaign seems more like an add-on than a key component. YouTuber Kawaii Leonard commented on a gameplay video saying "I swear the single player of this game

is beyond rushed. Ubisoft was just scraping together whatever they could when all they were really after was the multiplayer aspect. Scared of what happened to *Evolve* perhaps” to which chocomelt44 replied to this comment by saying “Ubisoft games, in general, are rushed, they are always trying to release their games within 1-2 years apart from each other. Look at *Assassin's Creed*, *Far Cry*, *Watch Dogs*, *Tom Clancy's*, *Just Dance*. All have good gameplay, but the missions are a grind and repetitive, prime example being AC Unity” (Halcyon Gaming). If the story of the game is an afterthought it shows and lets players/consumers down. While not an initial flaw on Ubisoft's fault there are some flaws with their combat system with instead of fighting some players only use the throw attack to throw opponents off the map or into a hazard, while this is not a necessarily bad thing it does frustrate some players along with the players who build their character to overuse the revenge meter getting it after taking only one or two blows giving them an unfair advantage in a fight. The last flaw of the game is AI bot difficulty in an online match. The bots can range from easy to hard and there is little consistency of what a player will face. All of these flaws subtract from the immersion and make it harder for the player to get into the game.

Conclusion

Overall *For Honor* fully immerses a player into its medieval world. This is done through the bettering of the structure laid out by the games previous to it like *Combat*. But it is also through the world itself brought to life by the AnvilNext 2.0 game engine which creates diverse terrain with dynamic weather and vast armies to control or destroy. *For Honor* has an impactful story which not only invests the player in the characters but makes them see themselves in them. The multiplayer combined with the gameplay and combat mechanics form the ultimate

immersive experience by making a dynamic fighting experience while dueling other players and/or their armies. But there are still times when this game takes you out of the immersion like when instead of playing and experiencing a story you are just playing a longer tutorial or when you're dueling someone and right before you execute them the game kicks everyone out. Needless this is still an amazing and immerse full game that everyone should go out and experience battling for glory and *For Honor*.

Work Cited

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