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Consumer Electronics Gaming Gaming Software

### Batman: Arkham Asylum

Riddle me this, could Batman: Arkham Asylum on the PC, Xbox 360 and Playstation3 be the best superhero-themed game to date? We think so and it is certainly in the running for 2009's game of the year.

Blending gritty realism, an outstanding control system, fluid gameplay plus immersive environments and cinematic plot and pacing, Arkham Asylum on the Playstation3 takes all the good parts of Batman's mythology and unfolds it in player's hands. This game takes you deep into the bowels of Gotham City's maximum security asylum for the criminally insane to match wits and brawn against a legion of escaped criminals.

Created by developers Rocksteady Studios, publishers Warner Brothers and Eidos Interactive Batman: Arkham Asylum mixes elements of stealth, hand to hand combat, detective work, technology and weapons mastery into one glorious gaming experience that will keep even the most hardened gamers riveted for hours.

As Batman gets trapped by the Joker with the inmates of Arkham Asylum, most of which are vengeful super villains he helped incarcerate, he is forced to sneak around, glide, solve puzzles and take down hoods and bosses along the way.

Guided by an intuitive system called Detective Mode, Batman picks up clues and reads opponents by seeing who is armed and how scared they are based on their BPM. At Batman's disposal are his Batarangs, Batclaws and explosive gels that help him get out of tight spots.

#### Batman's in a bind

The attention to detail in this game is mind-boggling. When Batman takes on multiple enemies and unleashes combo moves the action is captured in slow motion and each punch, kick and takedown move is captured in hyperrealistic detail. Everything from the fabrics to the way Batman's cape flows when he moves around is lit accurately depicted and moves with uncanny realism.



Voice acting is another element that pushes the boundaries in this game. Hinged on Mark Hamill's spot-on portrayal of the Joker, whose sassy narrative and relentless taunting harasses Batman throughout the game, is leaps and bounds above anything we've experienced.

Background music is both heroic and tense and there are parts of this game that get one's blood pressure spiking because the soundtrack gets creepy all of a sudden foreshadowing all sorts of unfortunate events.

Powered by the Unreal Engine 3.5, the visuals and movement of this title are slick and render beautifully on HD. The game has a dark, brooding mood to it and manages to sustain suspense while moving the plot along briskly.

Controls were easy to figure out and specially the portions where Batman needs to scale walls, lurk in dark corners or jump across obstacles. A lot of this is reminiscent of Eidos' hallmark Tomb Raider title but way, way darker.

#### Rogues Gallery

Much of what makes the Batman property tick is the assortment of demented bat-villains and this game has them in their deadliest forms. The only character who looks remotely cartoonish is the Joker and that's just because of who he is. The Joker is a total psychopath but able to effectively spring trap after trap on Batman. The rest of Batman's enemies are equally scary, dangerous and out for blood.



So far we've encountered Harley Quinn Zsasz, the Riddler, Killer Croc, the Scarecrow, Bane and Poison Ivy and each are bosses that Batman must outsmart, overpower or outlast to defeat.

One of the extras on the Playstation3 version is that you can download a patch that allows the game to be played as the Joker. While this is interesting and brings a twist to the game, isn't as effective as the Batman option because Batman gets hurt less and has more weapons at his disposal.

We appreciate how well researched and developed the plot, characters and the feel of

Batman: Arkham Asylum is. There is tons of depth in the game and a lot for one to discover.

Pitting the caped crusader against his most dangerous foes in an unpredictable and threatening environment makes for a stunning concept and Rocksteady Studios has acquitted itself extremely well.

The game redefines the hero genre and is far from shiny spandex and cheesy situations that many fall prey to.

Children would have a better time and have fewer nightmares playing the Batman Lego titles, Batman: Arkham Asylum is strictly rated T for Teen.

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