

## **Rogelio Lara**

**Game:** Star Wars: The Force Unleashed 2 for the Nintendo DS

**Developer:** LucasArts, Aspyr Media, and Red Fly Studio (Not altogether but for different console versions of the same game)

**Director:** Julio Torres

**Date:** October 26, 2010

**Rating:** T for Teens

### **Game Mechanics & Gameplay:**

Although I am not a Star Wars fanatic by any stretch of the imagination as I got most of my knowledge through the Family Guy special, Robot Chicken, and memes on the internet, you do not need to know much to follow along with the play-through of this game. Throughout this game, you play as Starkiller, a recently awakened secret apprentice of the villain Darth Vader who seems to have forgotten the basics of combat experience and all of his unique Jedi abilities. During the game's tutorial, Vader is "kind" enough to instruct you on how to attack both on the ground and in the air with your red lightsabers as this is one of the main methods of attacking having you use your Nintendo DS stylus (or finger if you're irresponsible) to damage opponents with the same 3-5 hit saber swings. When the hack-and-slash experience is not cutting it anymore for enemies, the tutorial introduces you to all of his unique Jedi abilities all having individual cooldowns of their own made clear through separate color icons

present in both gameplay and U.I. The following list of things is what the player can do in the game: electricity enables you to power up generators or stun shock enemies temporarily in place while also damaging them, the “Force” (which is Star Wars' way of saying telekinesis) allows you to move objects to your will to advance or fling opponents long distances, wind blasts which, when powered up, can unleash powerful damage that knocks back behind, and finally Saber fling which, exactly as the name implies, allows you to move both of your Sabers into any direction which is drawn on the lower screen of the DS device. As the story continues, Starkiller confirms he does not remember much except for his beloved Juno Eclipse, but when Vader refuses to give any information of her whereabouts, he lashes out by escaping to try and look for her. Now with the rebel army against him, the player's motivation is Juno herself and he explores new locations, albeit you as the player will experience bland and linear level designs for the most part. The large enemy boss battles presented in specific chapters will probably be the most excitement you will ever get because Starkiller's abilities are key to taking down the large enemy which is seriously really well done, but can be repetitive without much variation changes into how you get the task accomplished. Overall, the gameplay is alright for what it was trying to accomplish in its feeling but understandably can get rather dull after some time.

### **Graphics & Sound Design:**

One of the first things to bring up in the game's main menu is how lifeless some

of it feels in some sense. While I do feel it's great that it transitions itself into different areas and understands that it's trying to get across as this dark mysterious story taking twists and turns, it did feel rather basic. The game is pixelated because it's on a Nintendo DS game and it gets the job done at conveying things that are on fire, background environments, and many more while maintaining the integrity of the Star Wars universe of things not feeling out of place. The boss fights of such large-scale creatures are where the art truly shined as they came across as beastly, otherworldly, and intimidating, further enhanced by the lighting and color used. Regarding the sound design, I do not have anything negative to say about it as everything felt "correct" and in place with what was happening on screen like robot lasers, the wind being blown away, etc. The game does an extremely well job at having its level design convey certain emotions with its music because during high-stakes sections where death can be very easy to do, the music would change its tempo and it was consistent throughout the game so when I heard it I immediately kept my guard up.

### **How is the replayability of the game?**

I only played the hell out of this game due to my small library of DS games during my childhood, which I am forever grateful for in keeping me entertained, but that does not justify some things it could have improved on. This game lacks any replayability factor aside from a change in difficulty, but even then, it does not feel like much of a difference considering the enemies behave the same but there are either more to

defeat, more health, or something too minor for me to mention. If, at the very least, they made a new game plus, it should have focused on striking a balance between providing varieties that feel new to want to come back to (eg, music and A.I) and an experience that sometimes makes me die often or want to pull my hair out (eg, new steps to defeating the boss and noticeable changes in level design).

### **Reflection & Improvements:**

Our lord and savior, Masahiro Sakurai, once stated in an interview that to be a good game designer, you must play bad games and understand why they came to be like that. The Kirby games, while criticized for being a bit short, the level design and mechanics were given the utmost respect and attention, unlike Star Wars: The Force Unleashed 2 for the Nintendo DS which feels short and rushed. This game is a little below decent as the thrill you'll have will only last a few hours before you realize that you have completed the entire game. You want more, but at the cost of experiencing repetitive gameplay all over again and so I can't recommend this game unless you find it for less than \$10 and nothing more. I'm not exaggerating when I say this game could use some improvements and my feedback comes from a place of love because of all the memories I have with this game. Here are two that I believe are reasonable to implement to create an enriching experience.

#### **1. Combine abilities/expand uses of abilities**

Because the gameplay felt repetitive, I would suggest a change in the ability system because this game is confirmed to be non-canon to the Star Wars lore so there would be no issues doing this. Imagine some enemies in the new game plus or in general gameplay cannot be taken down before with just one ability and you have to combine some of them which changes how you handle enemy takedowns. One example is if you combined the wind and electricity, what if the wind knock back and sent them flying away and on the floor instead of normally getting up they remained stunned on the floor? Maybe this is a lot to program as it's a new system, but what about building further on the Jedi abilities? Commonly present in the game is being surrounded by a bunch of spiders and a bunch of enemies at the same time. What if I could use the force on the spiders and fling them onto enemies which now have them turn against each other rather than the focus being on me? This idea in itself would make gameplay and combination possibilities more diverse for the player to have fun and choose HOW they want to take down the enemy.

## 2. Story needs to be reworked in some capacity

I understood my objective of wanting to save/see a girl that Starkiller wants, but why should I, the player, feel invested enough to want to save her? The game does not build up this connection with me as a player so ultimately it boils down to a cheap use of the damsel in distress cliché. They could have used level design to tell stories about her, added small memory cutscenes, or something along these lines.

Images below

