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Regardless, I haven't played a single-player shooter this energetic and satisfying in its moment-to-moment action since 2016's Doom; it's clear that developers Avalanche and id transplanted some of that game's successes into this large-scale shooter, making its action feel markedly different from and more vibrant than a Far Cry or Borderlands game.Rage 2 picks up the story of the 2011 original, brushes off seven years of accumulated dust, and declares it still good under the Five-Second Rule. You definitely don't need to have played Rage to understand the simple concept of a future Earth where an asteroid impact destroyed just about everything that wasn't sheltered underground in Arks, which are basically Fallout's vaults (without the sadistic experiments). Now Mad Max-style raiders run rampant and a techno-fascist group called The Authority is trying to kill or subjugate everything in sight - the connections to the events of Rage are thin and distant enough that Rage 2 is effectively a soft reboot.The opening moments have a fun Duke Nukem/Bulletstorm action movie parody vibe to them, including one hilarious gag immediately after you select your character's gender. It even goes so far as to name that character - who carries the title of Ranger - "Walker." But it's wildly inconsistent with that comedic tone and also tries to shoehorn in some emotional weight by introducing and immediately killing a mentor character. Every time that's brought up it feels out of place next to all the gung-ho heroics. I wish they'd fully embraced the madcap fun with the same enthusiasm that Borderlands did with its sequel.Throughout the course of the story there's nothing really approaching character development for anybody, no decisions are made, and of the handful of allies you meet only the returning Doctor Kvasir stands out as remotely memorable, thanks in large part to his creepy demeanor and really gross sidekick. The original Rage's General Cross also returns - in person this time - as a blandly evil tyrant who believes that "humanity has run its course" and should be replaced by his brand of cybernetic mutants. He doesn't make any argument for his philosophy, so it comes off as evil for evil's sake and makes sure Cross never becomes anything more than a cartoon villain.Right from the get-go the feedback from shooting is excellent.That's fine for Rage 2's purposes because it puts its action front and center. Right from the get-go the feedback from shooting is excellent, from a satisfyingly juicy melon-popping sound effect that accompanies headshots to the reticule flashing a skull icon to indicate a kill. The latter is extremely useful because enemies react dramatically to being hit, including falling down and getting up again or having helmets or pieces of armor fly off to indicate that that hurt. And, though I wouldn't call the AI smart by any means, they're aggressive and generally keep on the move. While I'd have loved to have seen them bounce off walls to the extent they do in the original Rage, they're excellent punching bags for you to use your ever-growing toolbox of tricks on.Combat and movement start off fairly conventional, but Rage 2 does a fine job of doling out one game-changing power after another to keep it feeling fresh for its 20 hours of campaign missions and loads of optional side content. For instance, you begin with the ability to scramble up ledges and execute an extremely handy dash-dodge that lets you rapidly strafe out of the way of incoming projectiles or charging melee attacks, which feels great. But unlocking the double-jump opened up the map in a big way, especially after I put some upgrade points into it, letting me reach and explore the vertically stacked enemy bases much more easily.Add to that the hyper-satisfying Shatter attack, which is effectively a Force Push or Fus-Ro-Dah that sends enemies flying, and the ground-pound area-of-effect blast and there are a lot of options to keep in mind while you're trashing groups of thugs or mutants. There were several times when I felt cornered by a heavily armored enemy who was soaking up my bullets, then remembered that I had a Shatter charged and ready and flung the unsuspecting goon over a railing to his death.Stringing all of that together into combos feels fantastic and fluid, especially when you mix in the weapons' alternate-fire functions. They're pretty standard guns at a glance, but most have interesting twists: the assault rifle zooms in as you'd expect when you hold alt-fire, but the pistol switches from the default burst-fire to single shot, the shotgun turns into a knockback gun that works at long range, the rocket launcher locks onto targets, etc. Each gun's behavior changes again to be more extreme when you activate the Overdrive ability, which (after you charge it up by racking up kills) gives you a brief run of super-powered destruction. It's a great way to get out of a jam, and not unlike Doom's Berserk power-up.One thing Rage 2 has definitely learned from Doom is how it encourages you to dive into the fray.Once you finish a brief intro mission you're turned loose into the world, free to meet the three main quest-giver characters and do their bidding in any order you choose, or to strike out on your own and explore. Every activity you do ends up filling one of the three progress bars that represents each of those characters anyway, even if you haven't met them yet, which is great because it means no progress is wasted no matter what path you take.One thing Rage 2 has definitely learned from Doom is how it encourages you to leave a position of relative safety and dive into the fray. Most enemies drop a resource called Feltrite when they die, which is one of a ridiculous number of currencies used for upgrades. Feltrite expires relatively quickly, which means you have to put yourself out there in danger orders relatively quickly, but doing so is made more survivable by the fact that Feltrite also heals you when you pick it up. It's thrilling of the constantly be in the thick of it, fighting enemies on all sides, and putting yourself into situations that would be suicidal in other shooters but are perfectly reasonable here. Ammo is, for the most part, extremely plentiful, and I didn't find myself running dry on shotgun or assault rifle ammo until the last handful of missions when you're up against enemies with lots of damage-soaking shields and armor. As the violent name would suggest, Rage 2 is not a game about stealth. Sure, you can get in a free shot before a group notices you, but there's no concept of a stealth kill. That's a good thing, as far as I'm concerned - skulking around would slow down the pace that makes these battles so much fun. But you can still get the lay of the land before charging into a big fight: with the push of a button you can illuminate every enemy or mission objective in a large radius of you, even through walls. That's extremely helpful for knowing when the action's about to heat up, finding the last straggler you're supposed to kill, tracking down fuel tanks you need to blow up, or just for figuring out which way you're supposed to go next since there's no minimap to guide you.Enemies across the four main factions are the expected and reasonably diverse mix of light, heavy, explosive, melee swarms, stealth, and armored troops, but there are a few fun surprises in there. Goon grenadiers, for instance, whack grenades at you with baseball bats, which means if you shoot them as they toss the explosive into the air and wind up to swing the grenade will drop, killing them and anyone around them. There's some color there, and it goes a long way toward making them feel unique to this game.There were long stretches where I would've loved to have seen more mission variety.The actual objectives could use a bit more of that, because most of your missions, especially early on, will have the straightforward goal of "Kill All Goons." That's not the worst thing in the world considering how much fun it is to kill goons, but at the same time it's frustrating that Rage 2 doesn't make great use of the mission variety that actually exists. Later on, you'll occasionally see quests that involve holdouts of attackers, hunts to destroy specific types of objects, getting trapped while a horde of mutants attacks you, and more. But there were long stretches when I would've loved to see some of this variety interspersed between goon-killing sessions.After wiping out each group of enemies, you can easily spend a lot of time hunting down chests full of cash, Feltrite, or various ability upgrade points. Every location will helpfully tell you how many such goodies it has left to find, but until you earn the upgrade that gives you a hot/cold proximity indicator for how far you are from one of them I don't recommend getting too hung up on seeking them out - even with the assist they can be frustratingly well hidden despite being bright pink, and time wasted hunting for a box is time not spent having fun in a firefight. Each gun has an upgrade menu. Each ability has an upgrade menu. Each of the three main allies has their own tree of upgrades. Your car has its own upgrade menu.With all of these great abilities and upgrades comes some cumbersome management. First of all, there's just an absurd number of different currencies and resources to collect. In addition to Feltrite, which is used to upgrade abilities and guns, there's cash to buy things in stores or summon vehicles, there are unique upgrade points for each of three different specialty trees, unique upgrade points for your car, and more. To go along with that are a ridiculous number of upgrade menus and trees to apply these points to. Each gun has an upgrade menu. Each ability has an upgrade menu. Each of the three main allies has their own tree of upgrades. Your car has its own upgrade menu. You can upgrade all of your craftable items with new behaviors, like allowing the Wingstick to bounce between targets. I found I had to pause periodically to go through every menu to see if I was leaving things un-upgraded, often finding a pile of money that needed to be spent or points that needed to be allocated in one place or another. While many of those are simple stat boosts to damage or cooldown times, others let you pick between modifiers like increased clip capacity, increased rate of fire, or even homing shots. They're definitely worth checking out.On top of that is a very light crafting system where you combine two of a handful of collected resources to create consumables like healing items, grenades, or Rage's signature three-bladed boomerang, the Wingstick. This feels like an obligatory homage to the original Rage's crafting system - the fact that you can upgrade things in the middle of an intense battle to go into a menu and craft more healing items as long as you have the materials takes some of the sense of danger out of things.There are a handful of boss fights within the story missions, and those are mostly well thought out challenges that force you to make extensive use of the dash dodge ability. However, you'll also be put through several fights against the biggest behemoth mutants, and even though they very much nail the look of a classic id Software monster, on Normal difficulty (the second of four settings) they're are kind of a joke as long as you have the rocket launcher and a handful of rockets. A single shot instantly disables it, exposing its weak point that you can blast away at with an assault rifle or shotgun, so especially if the beast doesn't have a lot of backup it's reduced to a helpless pushover.The open-world map is expansive enough and each of the regions does a decent job of flavoring itself with a different variety of post-apocalypse (generic wasteland, desert, jungle, etc), and in general it looks good and runs well. I played on a GTX 1070ti at 1080p at ultra settings with a steady 60fps, though a GTX 2080 had to turn the resolution down from 4K to 1440p to hold that same frame rate (it was in the mid 40s at 4K). The problem is there's not much spontaneity or life to it, at least next to what you'd see in a Fallout or Far Cry. Sure, you'll come across groups of enemies fighting each other (which is fun to watch) and every so often some cars will zip by on the roads, and you'll occasionally stumble upon a wizard in a flying house selling cheats, but I've seen very little by way of interesting random encounters or wildlife. In more than 24 hours of playing, I've had exactly one run-in with a pack of roaming wolves - which is odd, because Avalanche included wildlife in the design but made it so rare you might never see it despite the world feeling barren for its absence. That said, some of the best toys (and an entire city!) are hidden off the main story path, so there's definitely a reason to ignore the mission markers on the map and explore on your own. I completed the campaign without ever finding the impractical but hilarious Grav-Dart launcher, which lets you chuck enemies off into the sunset, or several other weapons, and have been tracking them all down in the post-game, which continues merrily along even after you defeat The Authority.The Phoenix is so fast, armored, repairable, and upgradable that there's little reason to use any other vehicles.Rage 2's fully open world makes good on the promise of the original game's concept of a Mad Max-style world where you cruise around the post-apocalypse looking for trouble, but there are few opportunities to make use of your tricked-out Christopher Nolan Batmobile-style car/tank, the Phoenix. This thing is so fast, armored, repairable, and upgradable that there's basically no reason to use any of the other vehicles you can find and unlock until you get the low-flying Icarus aircraft that lets you travel from point A to B as the crow flies and explore with complete freedom. What good is a tank if it can't keep up with a fast-moving enemy? What good is a speedy race car if its weapons are so ineffective? They all pale in comparison to the Jack-of-all-trades Phoenix, which is just more fun to use.The best thing we got to do in a car is a series of Convoy activities in which you chase down and attack speeding trucks and their armed escorts, which are constantly roaming the map. Some of the cars are shielded and have to be hit with certain attacks to expose their weak points, and those fights can be a blast once you figure out which weapons to use.Other than that, though? There's basically nothing to shoot at from your car besides random motorcycle goons, and there's not really a point to that since there's no reward for dusting them. You can drive up to an enemy base and open fire and thin the herd before you head in, sure, but that hardly seems sporting and isn't nearly as much fun as going in on foot because the absurdly effective auto-aim does all the work for you. After running a couple of races, I definitely found myself looking in vain for more ways to use the car. My reaction here is to be just kind of... confused. Rage 2 is a single-player game, with no co-op and no competitive multiplayer of any kind. And yet there's a store page on the main menu that exclusively sells skins for your weapons - many of which can be unlocked for free with a pretty reasonable amount of in-game currency if you felt strongly that your weapons should look different than the already pretty cool default appearance. Some of them make your weapons appear to be made of gold, which just seems tacky outside of a match of GoldenEye 007. Everything in the store is currently either 350 or 450 Rage Coins. [Update: Rage Coins are now on sale.] Depending on whether you're buying the 500 Coin package for \$4.99 or the 4,500 Coin package for \$34.99, these skins cost between \$2.72 and \$4.49, which is quite a lot to pay for a weapon skin that no one but you will ever see.Note that the BFG 9000 weapon is confirmed as being a Deluxe/Collector's Edition exclusive for the time being, though despite playing on a Deluxe version I have not yet stumbled across it. Almost nine years after its predecessor launched, Rage 2 is here. The game's May 14 release date for Xbox One, PS4, and PC has finally arrived! Now that the review embargo has lifted on the game, we at last know whether Rage 2 is any good.In GameSpot's Rage 2 review, Michael Higham awarded the game a 6/10. He said the game contains a "variety of clever, destructive abilities [that] make combat a blast," but also an "underwhelming narrative and bland characters." Thanks to Rage 2's DLC roadmap, we know the game is getting some interesting Twitch features in the future, so hopefully that fleshes out the game a little bit. You can read a selection of other critics' verdicts below. Alternatively, for a wider view on critical opinion, check out GameSpot sister site Metacritic.GameSpot -- 6/10"Rage 2 is at its best when you're given the chance to keep up a gratifying momentum in combat, but struggles to set up the scenarios its combat deserves. It's satisfying in the way clearing out an open-world checklist is, especially because powers are such a joy to use. The disappointment comes from the fact that those abilities are rudimentary in nature and the decent ones end well before you get your fill." -- Michael Higham [Full review]PC Gamer -- Review-In-Progress"Rage 2 is a really good videogame, but an inconsistent one. The combat is sensational and some of the story mission set-pieces are brilliantly constructed. But then it falls flat when it comes to world-building and creating a compelling sense of place; something the original game, for all its flaws, did pretty well. But when you're in the thick of a firefight, chaining power combos, unloading that sublime shotgun into those cocky wasteland bandits, you won't give a damn. I need to play a little more before I stick a final score on the end, but overall I'm pleasantly surprised by Rage 2. Avalanche has done a stellar job giving this largely forgotten series an exciting new lease of life." -- Andy Kelly [Full Review-In-Progress]Game Informer -- 7.0/10"For all of its attempts at garish glitter, Rage 2 is a muted, cliché, and uninspiring experience that's propped up by spectacular shooting and neverending battles that sometimes live up to the promise of a carnival of carnage." -- Daniel Tack [Full review]USGamer -- 4.5/In Rage 2, you move fast and kill faster. It's the synthesis between id Software's 2016 reboot of Doom and Avalanche Studios' Mad Max, bringing together some of the best ideas from both. Moment-to-moment play on foot is fantastic with each weapon and ability just opening up your options for destruction. Driving could be improved and it's a little on the shorter side, but Rage 2 is a damned good time." -- Mike Williams [Full review]VG24/7 -- No score"The interplay between the AI, your abilities, the physics of the world, and your guns is some of the best I've seen, and I never thought I would be saying anything like that about a sequel to Brown Shooter: Apocalypse. There's much more to this than its kooky, pink-hued marketing campaign. If you sleep on it, you're sleeping on one of the best--if not the best--single-player FPS games of this generation." -- Kirk McKeand [Full review]GamesRadar+ -- 3/5"Rage 2's core combat feels so much like Doom in an open world, and it wouldn't surprise me if that's exactly what this was--developer id Software testing the waters for such a concept. But were that concept ever to be made real, it will need to be executed much better than this. The Rage 2 roadmap has already been revealed, showcasing world events and wasteland challenges in an effort to follow in the footsteps of successful games like Destiny 2 and The Division 2, but the difference is that this is a single player game. Anyone who purchases this game on launch is undoubtedly expecting a full release, rather than a relatively empty world that will be later populated with content under the guise of the 'Games as a Service' industry trend. There is no reason for this content to be time-gated. Defeating these guys and their leader, General Cross, is your primary motivation in Rage 2—not to mention fighting off gangs of raiders, bandits, and other goons. But honestly, the story is entirely forgettable. The combat is the black, beating heart of the game, and the reason you'll keep playing long after you've stopped caring about the plot. You may like Rage 2 is a magnificent first-person shooter, but brutal, tactile weapons like that beastly combat shotgun are just one piece of the puzzle. As you locate and crack open more Arks, which are found scattered around the open world, you unlock forgotten fragments of technology which grant you what are, essentially, superpowers. Some of these are pretty understated, such as a gravity-defying double jump or the ability to float in mid-air for a few seconds while aiming your weapon. But others are much more dramatic.Slam is my favourite of the lot. Activate it when you're above a group of enemies and you'll unleash a concussive blast when you hit the ground. Anyone in the impact zone is immediately turned into a bloody paste, while the others are tossed into the air like gruesome ragdolls. And the higher up you are when you use it, the more devastating the discharge when you land. Rage 2 is a game where you frequently find yourself swarmed and overwhelmed by fast-moving enemies, making Slam an effective means of crowd control.Rage 2 is a game where you frequently find yourself swarmed and overwhelmed by fast-moving enemiesCause enough mayhem and you can hit the V key to activate Overdrive mode, which makes your weapons more powerful, regenerates health, and reduces the cooldown time of your powers. You can also conjure up protective energy shields and drag groups of enemies together by tossing a swirling vortex into the battlefield. And all of these abilities— and pretty much everything in the game, including weapons and vehicles—have their own upgrade trees. There's a huge amount of customisation in Rage 2, offering countless ways to deal with any given combat situation.Other powers include Shatter, which lets you charge rapidly towards an enemy with a surge of power, smashing their armour to pieces or, if they're close enough, exploding them in a mist of claret. Over the course of the game your powers, weapons, and upgrades stack up, and the combat becomes exponentially more fun in the process. If you loved the precision, brutality, and fluidity of the Doom reboot id Software released in 2016, but wished it had more variety, Rage 2 is the answer to your dark prayers.Curiously, however, the default key bindings for your powers are incredibly clumsy. You have to hold down the control key, then press another key to activate them. That might not sound too complicated, but in the thick of a frenetic, fast-paced firefight, when you're also trying to run and jump and shoot, it feels like you're wrestling with your own fingers. Luckily you can rebind your powers, and I found assigning them to the number keys felt much more intuitive. It's clear Rage 2's UI has been optimised for a gamepad, because even menu navigation feels a little awkward with the mouse. So we've established that the shooting is exceptional, but what about the rest of the game? Well, unfortunately, nothing else here quite manages to reach the high watermark set by the combat. The world is a consistent disappointment, being a surprisingly dark, uninspiring place. Co-developer Avalanche created a beautiful, haunting post-apocalyptic wasteland for its take on Mad Max in 2015, but this dreary expanse of swampy forests, rocky valleys, and dusty dunes is deeply uninspiring. Much of the game is spent driving long distances between missions, which only heightens the lack of visual interest.Performance & settingsSettings Vsync (on/off/soft), Motion blur (on/off), chromatic aberration (on/off), anisotropic terrain filtering (on/off), geometric details (low-ultra), global illumination (on/off), depth of field (on/off), SSAO (low-ultra), anti-aliasing (off/FXAA/TAA/FXAA + TAA), shadow resolution (low-ultra)Performance With a GTX 1080, 16GB of RAM, and an i5-6600K overclocked to 4.0GHz I was able to play Rage 2 at 1440p on max settings at a largely stable 60fps. I'd get obvious dips in really busy parts of the map, but had no issues with frame pacing. Check out Jarred's performance analysis for more. A lush jungle region to the north, The Wilds, is the most interesting in terms of visuals and atmosphere—It's only because it's so different from the rest of the game. And I do like how Rage 2's world is relatively small, especially compared to other Avalanche games. It feels like a more curated, considered space, rather than an endless, empty sprawl. The fidelity of the world-building isn't quite enough to make exploration very rewarding, however, and the open world feels more like a means of getting you from one mission to another, rather than an intrinsic part of the experience. A good open world should compel you to venture off-road and explore, but I never felt much of an urge to break away from my GPS route. The vehicle handling is another sore point—especially if you happen to be playing with a mouse and keyboard. Your main ride is the Phoenix, a chunky little APC with a couple of loud, rattly machine-guns strapped to the front. You can also drive other vehicles you find (or steal) in the world and, if you've unlocked a specific upgrade, drive them back to settlements such as towns and cities to add them to your collection. The problem is, they all feel pretty horrible to drive. The handling is sluggish, smeary, and unresponsive, and you never feel like you're fully in control whenever you're behind the wheel.Driving is a little more enjoyable if you switch to a gamepad, but the overly wide turning circle many of the cars seem to have makes you feel like you have to fight to get them around a corner. It's a peculiar, strangely isolated dip in quality, because pretty much everything else in Rage 2 feels amazing: from the exciting little knee-slide you can transition into if you crouch while sprinting, to something as simple as smashing a crate open.Rage 2 is one of the most satisfyingly crunchy first-person games I've played in a while, which extends to everything from the punchy visual feedback of your powers to basic navigation such as jumping and mantling. Artistically, however, it stumbles. The game suffers from a distinct lack of personality, with a lifeless world that looks like a dozen other dusty wastelands, edgy humour that frequently falls flat, and a shallow story straight out of a Saturday morning cartoon. No amount of adolescent swearing or hot pink spray paint can change the fact that Rage 2 is about as punk as a Michael McDonald album.But in the heat of the moment, besieged by enemies, chaining powers and firing those thunderous guns, I forget about Rage 2's bland world and story. The combat is a powerful distraction from the game's problems—at least until the gunfire stops. There's a lot to love here, but the gulf in quality between the combat and just about everything else is ultimately harmful to the overall experience. Despite those issues, though, Avalanche and id Software can still be proud of the fact that Rage 2's shotgun is one of the best in the business. Reddit and its partners use cookies and similar technologies to provide you with a better experience. By accepting all cookies, you agree to our use of cookies to deliver and maintain our services and site, improve the quality of Reddit, personalize Reddit content and advertising, and measure the effectiveness of advertising. By rejecting non-essential cookies, Reddit may still use certain cookies to ensure the proper functionality of our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. Rage 2 is one of the video gameiest video games I've ever played.The game's designers didn't just borrow ideas from a couple iconic first-person shooters; They cribbed from the genre's entire history. Good games, bad games, nearly forgotten ones. Remember that weapon from Dark Sector? Or that monster from Gears of War? Or that setting from Borderlands? Or that color palette from Sunset Overdrive?And yet Rage 2 is so satisfying in action, so totally shameless, that I find it hard to put down. I could list the game's inadequacies and describe its bizarre menus or upgrade structure all day long, but the more I talk about the game the more I find myself preferring to play it instead.Rage 2 exists as a collection of unoriginal, but well-executed, ideas held together by a structure that can just barely be described as an open world.I play as Walker, who can be a man or woman, depending on my choice at the story's beginning. In this protracted intro, Walker puts on the armor of a fallen Ranger to become the most powerful soldier fighting against an authoritarian force called, what else, the Authority.As Walker, I travel across a comparably small open-world map, searching for Arks — huge techno-chambers from (I believe) before the apocalypse (the story isn't always clear) — that unlock new abilities and weapons, which the I can then use to kill the many, many bandits and mutants who make this world unsafe for anyone without a gun.After I complete the intro, I am told to visit a few characters across the map so we can work together to fight back against the Authority. Once I do those favors, the game's practically over. What seems like Rage 2's prologue is, in fact, the entire thing.It's best not to think about any of this too hard; the setup and mainline missions are just a thin excuse to justify my magical powers and array of weapons and send me off into the open world. The game would clearly rather I spend my time slaughtering mutants, collecting various currencies, and upgrading my soldier to god-like status. I can power up each gun, vehicle, ability, and secondary item like grenades or health packs using one of the game's many tech trees, and then modify them again using a second series of menus that are strangely hidden behind the first.While I can win just about every battle using the machine gun and shotgun I'm given in the game's first hour, the rest of my tactical options are enjoyable enough that it's worth fussing over each upgrade path to turn into a super-soldier who can stampeede over everyone in his path. While I can use a combination of button presses to dodge in any direction, I never need to use this tactic while playing Rage 2 on Normal difficulty mode.Why worry about evading when the game's Overdrive function, which gives me super-powered weapons and partially restores my health, allows me to crush even boss characters without breaking a sweat?There aren't traditional levels, and there are very few missions. Each challenge basically requires me to drive to a specific place, kill the people there, collect currencies and items from various crates, and grow in power. Rage 2 is ostensibly an open-world game, but upgrades and weapons are given out at specific locations, and trying to explore by driving off the indicated path between each outpost is futile. Cliffs and bottomless pits make sure I'm rarely able to paint outside the lines.The game's marketing may try to push the idea that this is a punk-rock, neon-plastered celebration of rebellion, but the systems of Rage 2 don't allow for much creativity outside of selecting the order in which I visit each area. The game's structure suggests a linear, relatively short Doom-style single-player game that is only cosplaying as an open world title.So why can't I get the game out of my head?I can use one ability to fling enemies backward, slamming them into walls or each other. I can use another ability to force enemies to float in the air, pulling other items toward them as if by the gravitational force of a very small black hole. I can turn myself into a human grenade and slam into the ground, reducing everyone around me to a bloody smear. I can upgrade my ability to leap high into the air until I can basically climb up the face of sheer-looking cliffs by spamming the jump button. I can unlock new vehicles or find them in the world. I can turn my vehicle into a hell machine if I want. I can buy intel that tells me exactly where to go to unlock each weapon or power.Or I can ignore each of those options completely and just use the basic weapons to pave a highway of death through the game. There is no punishment for doing so, nor is there reward for getting creative with your killing. Rage 2 gives me so many tactical options that I am sometimes overwhelmed by choice. I will go hours forgetting some of the abilities I have at my disposal.The game's design is so ambivalent about its own possibilities that it's almost discouraging. It's like being handed a gigantic box of tools of all shapes and sizes before being asked to replace a lightbulb. Sure, I can always build a step stool by hand before knocking the lightbulb out of the socket with a hammer, use a potato to remove the now-broken pieces of glass from the light fixture, knit a glove to keep my hand safe while I install the new lightbulb, and screw that bulb in using a custom attachment on a power drill so it goes in with a single pump of the trigger ... but why wouldn't I just stand on my tiptoes, unscrew the old bulb, and put the new one in?I the fastest way to kill an enemy in Rage 2 is just a rocket to the head, why not do that every time? The short answer is because that's not as fun, and Rage 2 is a ridiculously fun game once I understand how to approach its otherwise rote design. Which is to say, the best way to have fun in this world is to create my own.Each weapons looks, feels, and sounds perfect, even before I upgrade and modify them. Using the shotgun's secondary attack to send mutants flying through the air is fun in the first hour of the game, and it remains fun by hour 10. Sure, it's not always effective, but it lends itself to experimentation. Can I complete an entire area by knocking enemies off high ledges, sending them to their doom below? I can certainly try!It's a testament to the quality of the game's combat that it's able to redeem so many of the game's less inspired choices. The worst parts of Rage 2 aren't tedious or distracting. They're merely competent. That's fine, considering the best parts of Rage 2 are damn near transcendent. The first Rage was so aggressively bland that it was forgotten almost as soon as it was released and now, for some reason, there is a sequel. After playing both games I have very little understanding about what makes a Rage title special, or why they exist at all, but if a series this redundant has to exist, at least the shooting itself is loud and violent and playful enough to help me forget the by-the-numbers nature of everything around it.Rage 2 is enjoyable as long as I make the effort to do very simple things in the silliest ways possible, and game's many systems reward this style of play more by their quality than by any extrinsic payoff. There is creativity and joy hidden here. You just have to find it beneath the pile of ideas pulled from a thousand other games.Rage 2 was released May 14 on PlayStation 4, Windows PC, and Xbox One for \$59.99. The game was reviewed on PC using a final "retail" download code provided by Bethesda Softworks. 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