

LEAP OF FAITH

MIRROR'S EDGE

Mirror's Edge is stuck in the midst of an uncomfortable identity crisis. Dressed as an inventive hybrid of genres and a refreshing venture from DICE, it has the makings of a title that we'd ordinarily welcome with open arms. A first-person platform adventure that principally ditches guns in favour of perfectly timed jumps, brain-bending puzzles and sophisticated timed runs, *Mirror's Edge* piqued our interest throughout its on/off showings over the past two years.

And in those areas in particular, *Mirror's Edge* wholeheartedly delivers. DICE's unique vertical movement has been implemented flawlessly, giving our free-runner heroin Faith an unparalleled level of freedom within the urban environments. Using the L1 and L2 buttons to zip over and under objects feels completely intuitive and, after a few minutes of play, a natural addition to the more traditional first-person control setup. Its faultless execution ensures that both

amateurs and practiced enthusiasts will whizz through each of the environments fluidly and instinctively, all the while never losing sight of *Mirror's Edge's* "wow" factor; your first cross-skyscraper jump proving to be just as memorable and as astonishing as the last.

The action is also paced to perfection, with increasingly difficult "how am I supposed to get there?" puzzles and the gradual introduction of slightly more open-ended environments that beg the player to choose their own route, rather than be forced down a pre-determined track. The included time trials, as well, do a great job in emphasising DICE's ambition that this is a very different first person title to anything you've played before, emblazoned as they are with a speedometer and ticking clock.

But it soon becomes apparent that DICE had very little confidence in the ability of *ME's* USP to hold players' interest throughout the game's relatively short seven to eight hour campaign. Steadily (and unnecessarily) the game dives into areas that it's seemingly ill-equipped to deal with. DICE gradually begin to place a greater emphasis on combat, itself so thoroughly raw and sloppy that you'll begin to question whether its inclusion was intended all along, or tagged on at the last minute to flesh out the game's unconventional gameplay. Though balanced so as to never come into play for more than a few minutes at a time (holding a gun slows Faith down and restricts her movement throughout the environment), both melee and gun-based combat is clunky and heavy-handed, and although it's dissuaded, you'll often feel the need to take out pursuant "Blues" in order to progress.

FORMAT REVIEWED

PlayStation 3

OTHER FORMATS

Xbox 360, PC

PUBLISHER

EA Games

DEVELOPER

DICE

REVIEWED BY

David Scammell



“A COMPELLING TITLE THAT REVELS IN ITS UNIQUE MECHANICS”

Both gunplay and fistcuffs are mapped to the R2 button, resulting in a manic flurry to subdue your enemy before others surround you, with the option to disarm your opponent also being somewhat irksome, reliant on allowing your opponent to attack first before hitting the triangle button in a perfectly timed split-second. Of course, *Mirror's Edge* was never intended to be a shooter, but you'd expect a whole lot more from the studio that brought us the celebrated *Battlefield* series. It's a markedly sour side to *ME*, and one that doesn't go unnoticed.

At other times, *Mirror's Edge* dips into thoroughly unsuited set-pieces. A particularly frustrating sequence atop a moving train that has you jumping back and forth between trains while ducking and diving between overhanging signs proves to be thoroughly infuriating and overly long. It's a side to the trial and error nature of the game that isn't welcome, as one inopportune jump sends you all the way back to the beginning of the ill-advised escapade.

The narration, somewhat surprisingly, never really finds its feet either, with the story of the shady totalitarian government and Faith's



involvement so vague and fleshed out with underdeveloped characters that you'll find it difficult to care for. It's a great shame and something that we hadn't expected given Rhianna Pratchett's involvement; the impressive art style and anime-influenced cutscenes lending themselves perfectly to a deep and engaging story. A missed opportunity, we feel.

However, you can't really pour scorn on *Mirror's Edge*'s presentation: the minimalist, clean visuals perfectly complementing the elegant action at hand, as the beautiful blue skies overlooking the mesmeric cityscape contrast with the vivid green, white and orange hues that exude from the various sewers and office blocks. Gracefully dancing through an office interior before bursting through a door into the dazzling midday sun is something that you'll savour from beginning to end.

And when all's said and done, it's hard to stay angry with *ME*'s shortcomings for too long. Despite DICE's uneasy underhandedness to force players into more conventional situations that the game simply isn't built for, *Mirror's Edge* is an impressive experiment and a compelling title that revels in its unique mechanics. If DICE had put as much time and effort into their combat mechanics and narration as they've evidently done with their parkour, we'd undoubtedly be looking at an all-time classic. As it is, *Mirror's Edge* falls at the final hurdle.

VERDICT ★★★★★

