After Rogue Entertainment’s American Mcgee’s Alice, in 2000, EA decided to bring back to life another iteration of Alice’s twisted come back to Wonderland. In this newest version, Alice is haunted by memories of the murdering of her family, which she accidently torched with flames along with her entire house. Catching up during her rehab, we find her consulting doctor Lidell in an asylum where he tries to erase her painful memories.

Alice is an intriguing character that is developed throughout the game. As part of her now prevalent madness, she does not hesitate to slash her wretched foes to death, only by means of reaching her goal: find what has corrupted Wonderland. This question will be observed under many different angles by Alice as she gradually collect back memories that she has long tried to forget. The evolution of the character can be noticed throughout the game as her she gains confidence in her quest and in herself, making the story uplifting by itself.

The heroine’s profile certainly does not match the usual mold for it. While not absolutely assertive, Alice her attitude sometimes flirts with disobligingness and she often express anger, under the urge to find out what is the cause of the massive destruction observed in the once charming kingdom. But it feels like it is a fit. The story is written in a way Alice’s disgraceful behaviour makes her a charming character and all the seemingly extreme actions she takes provide her with a sense of leadership, which she absolutely needs to survive the perilous enterprise she dives into.

Many foes are to be fought against all along the game. Fortunately, diversity is tailored as the game progresses, adding more and more abominations to fight against. As tradition has it each of those have their particularity in battle, each one needed to be approached carefully.

To do so Alice is given many tools that will help her deal with this variety in many different ways. The eternal kitchen knife, known as the vorpal blade, is the first weapon at her disposal, to dispose of her enemies. Collecting teeth will enable the player to upgrade every found weapon so they can achieve greater destruction power. Brawls are fast paced and gory, adding another convincing touch to the crooked Wonderland atmosphere.

When no aggressors are around, danger comes from the hazardous terrain. Platforms and pits are probably the game’s greatest danger. Fortunately for the player, not much is lost when a leap fails. Most of the time, it is possible to reappear right next to where the jump was tried to seize a second chance. This is good news, considering that a lot of the play time consists of platforming, which, after a few hours of gameplay, turns out to be easy and repetitive. It sometimes feel like all the jumping around is used as a filler, between fights and story bits. Little puzzles come to enhance the jumping adventure, however, overly-explicit and abundant camera cut scenes dictate what move should be made, giving to room for platforming challenge. It comes as a consolation that the combat is more challenging, and in turn entertaining.

Most is gotten game emerges from the story. Setting in London, trips between Wonderland and England’s emblem are repetitively taken, the former where most of the action takes place and the later where most of the story is told. Unfortunately, the story’s pace is uneven and the first couple of hours does not seem to feed the player with much tale content. On the other side, story seems to pick up right where the platforming does not seem entertaining enough to lift the gameplay to an enjoyable level. A wider gap between both could have been disastrous.

Coming along the taking storyline are delightful visuals that manage to treat the eyes with candies even though most of Wonderland is laid to waste. Many visual themes follow one after the other, each providing refreshing visuals to enhance the experience. Interestingly enough, it is possible to draw lines between the universe of Wonderland and London when followed in sequence, adding a bit of deepness to the interpretation that can be made of the story.

Alice may be one of the great female models that the video-games industry has to offer. Conserving a quite traditional look, with her thin silhouette, high pitched voice and girly outfits, she still exhibits great qualities that are so rarely seen in female characters, qualities like leadership, courage and strength.  Fighting against her own madness, Alice shows that she is a unique character and that she succeeds in proving the naysayers that great video-games heroines can be remarkable.

Pros:

Interesting, original storyline

Variety of beautiful visuals

Great female model

Cons:

Redundant platforming

Uneven storytelling pace

Alice: Madness Returns will take you on a tour through a young women’s troubled mind. The game is filled with action, platforming and puzzles, all of which support the story around Alice’s remission. Gory battles, refined humour and fantastic visuals will entertain you through this journey. This game is worth trying for anyone who knows Wonderland’s story and has a bit of affinity with action platformers.