Game Analysis Report

Devil May Cry 5

Zachary Dair

5.11.2020

R00159222 Zachary.Dair@mycit.ie

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the 2019 action-adventure game, **Devil May Cry 5** ("[Devil May Cry 5 Fandom Wiki](#)"). And to do this we will be breaking down the core components of the video game, and analyzing them using the MDA framework (Okumura) and also providing evaluation on the flow and pacing of the game.

Devil May Cry 5, released on PC, Xbox and PS4 in March of 2019, is the fifth and most recent entry in the **Devil May Cry** franchise developed and published by **Capcom**. ("[Capcom Website](#)")

These games are designed as single player story experiences where the player fights their way through levels, with some platforming and puzzle elements, however, it's the combative gameplay that entices, and attracts players. The player is expected to use a series of combos to beat enemies, and is ranked based on their performance, the performance is defined by how "Stylish" the combat was.

Story and Setting

DMC5 is set 5 years after the events of the fourth game, and follows three protagonists, demon hunters, who also happen to have demonic abilities to aid them in their mission to defeat the demon king **Urizen** before he destroys the human world. Two of the playable characters are recurring from previous entries in the franchise **Dante**, and **Nero** but the game also features a never before seen character, called **V**.

The story is told in a unique manner, allowing the player to experience the events of the game from three distinct perspectives, at the start of each mission the player is provided with the date and time, and the loading screen also showcases a timeline of events, this allows the player to begin piecing together the story as they play as each separate character on their way through the same story.

The game comprises two main areas, **Red Grave City**, and inside of the **Qliphoth** despite there only being two areas, each mission is segregated and features unique level design linked with the events of the story, following a general design theme of the overall location where the mission is set.

Three variations of Red Grave City

Three variations of the Qliphoth

Genre Placement

DMC5 fits under several genres, such as 'stylish' action, hack n slash, action adventure.

There is a lot of variation due to the scale of the game, and also due to how most **AAA**("[AAA Wiki](#)") games will merge aspects of different genres.

The **DMC** franchise is quite possibly the cause of the creation of the 'stylish' action genre, a subsection of action games where the combat is done in combos with a ranking system based on completing a wide range of combos and not getting hit in combat.

A single player action game akin to **DMC5** would be **God of War (2018)** ("[God of War](#)") however despite being an action game, and also a hack n slash it does not have the combat ratings, as such may fail to be qualified as a 'stylish' action game.

A very similar game would be **Bayonetta**, which also features combo style combat, with a ranking system, thus placing it alongside **DMC** in the 'stylish' action game genre.

Core Gameplay

In this section we will be discussing how the game is structured, the overarching gameplay loop, and how this gameplay is split into subsets of similar but different mechanics.

DMC5, is a single player story experience, where a heavy focus on the narrative and the characters is what attracts players.

The story is divulged to the player as they progress through levels from 1-21, in the form of cutscenes, in game dialogue but also in game events.

In a somewhat unique approach **Capcom** designed the story missions to not all missions take place chronologically, some missions also give the player a choice as to who they play as, based on their choice they will experience the story in that segment differently, in some cases the player will also see the other characters played by other players in a **"cameo"** style multiplayer sequence ("[Cameo System](#)").

The introduction of a character choice for certain missions adds a level of replayability to the game, but the combat mechanics and difficulty levels are the main reasons to experience the game again.

Characters

As we've covered the structure and how the character choice affects the player's experience of the narrative, it's important to understand the core differences between the three playable characters.

Dante   Nero   V

Dante, The original protagonist of the series, only sharing the spotlight in the **DMC4** and 5. The main difference playing as **Dante**, is that you have 4 different combat modes, and a wide range of different weapons to use, and from the start of the game the devil trigger ability is available and a brand new sin devil trigger as the game progresses.

Nero, widely considered the main protagonist of **DMC5,** was introduced in **DMC4**. As in the previous game, Nero has his sword **Red Queen**, and the signature ability to rev the sword to do special moves. Unlike **Dante**, he has one fighting style, and no devil trigger (until post story completion), his uniqueness comes in the form of "**Devil Breakers**" prosthetic arms that the player gains throughout story events, each giving Nero unique abilities.

V, unlike the other two heroes who fight up close with swords and abilities, **V** uses three familiars to lay waste to enemies.**Griffon**, a hawk-like creature as a ranged weapon, **Shadow** a panther as a melee weapon, and finally **Nightmare**, a colossal hulk-like demon, who smashes everything in sight. Unlike the others **V** is unable to "finish" enemies with his familiars, requiring **V** to use his cane to kill the weakened creatures.

MDA (Mechanics Dynamics Aesthetics)

This section is dedicated to breaking down the game into three categories: The **mechanics**, these can be considered as the actions the player can do, and the in game systems that make up the game. The **dynamics**, these are the in game effects of the mechanics and the player's inputs. And finally the **aesthetics**, which can be classified as the player's emotions evoked by the game.

Mechanics:

Player movement

The game is played in a 3rd person perspective, using standard movement controls, allowing the player to control their character and move around the 3D space.

Combat

Each character has a standard moveset, consisting of heavy, light and ranged attacks, but also dodges and taunts. The characters all have unique weapons and abilities that are unlocked through playing the game more on the unlockable skills below. The combat is based around the player completing combos to execute specific moves, and chaining these moves with other abilities to fight in a stylish manner.

Combat Ranking

During combat, a letter ranking and bar will appear inside the letter, beginning at **D** the ranking system increases, as the bar fills up, to fill the bar you must complete various combos on the enemies, you can also increase it by taunting, or dodging attacks, once the bar fills the ranking moves to the next. If the player doesn't complete actions to fill the bar fast enough or gets hit it will reset.

As the ranking increases from **D(Dismal)** through the ranks **(C, B, A, S, SS, SSS)** the unique character combat music progresses further into the song, this is based on in game actions and the ranking. Initially looping the intro of the character theme, from rank **D-B** a new segment loops with some random verses added, as the bar fills for the A rank the drum beat and intensity increases, and once you reach **S** rank the main chorus plays until the combat ends or the rank decreases below **S**. And finally once the combat ends the music dissolves into the background music of the mission.

Dynamics:

The aspect of **'Challenge'** is the main appeal and accentuated by the dynamics created in **DMC5**.

Each of the four mechanics outlined above, merge together alongside visual effects to create the overall combat dynamic, the player is typically challenged with facing an assortment of enemies in a restricted area, with limited health, and only a few ways to heal such as killing specific enemies, or using their devil trigger ability.

The combat ranking and reactive music pushes the player to play aggressively and to do last minute dodges in order to increase their rank, instead of playing passively and only using ranged attacks. This adds to the challenge because it forces the player into risky situations.

An additional challenge is once the player's health depletes they must restart from a checkpoint, these can be sparsely spread throughout levels, or they may return to life using a somewhat rare and limited item (which will also decrease their overall rank).

Aesthetics:

The game's general aesthetics could be split into, sensation, narrative and challenge. There may also be others but these can be considered the most prominent.

The reactive music, which adds an extra level of pleasure to the game, as the player experiences cool looking combos during combat, matched with the outstanding visual effects when enemies are hit, or when abilities are used, the music is tied to the player's actions, as explained in the mechanics section, this creates very satisfying moments, as the music grows to a crescendo as the ranking reaches **S**, and the requirement to reach **S**

rank or above, is constant chaining combos, and not being hit by enemies this all amalgamates to a great satisfying sensation when the chorus of the battle theme is playing and the player is visually stimulated by the combos and defeating enemy after enemy.

<u>Narrative</u>

DMC5 like it's predecessors is at its core a medium to convey a story, the plot much like the previous games focuses on inner struggles with the characters, specifically Nero having a huge character arc. But not only that, it tells the story in a unique manner by using multiple perspectives and not strictly following it chronologically, this allows for great moments of suspense and has extended the already existing franchise narrative to new levels. With veterans of the series having some seriously shocking moments.

<u>Challenge</u>

The combat acts as the main challenge, by being drip fed new content in the form of abilities as the player progresses, it allows the learning curve to be much longer than some other hack and slash games, extending past a single play through. And requiring a lot of practice to truly master the combat. The game can be played and enjoyed very easily with an accessible combat system, but has a huge skill ceiling, the hardcore players use special moves such as jump cancels and much more to complete impossible looking combos.

Flow, Balance, Novelty

Each mission in **DMC5** starts with a cutscene, advancing the story and following this will typically place the player in the last position of the cutscene, preventing any jarring changes.

The player will then traverse the mission, and when encountering enemies will be restricted to that fighting area, by semi transparent walls, this prevents the player from running from a fight in a lore friendly way.

When in combat areas, the music's intensity grows, and once the combat is over dissolves into the outro and the ambient mission music, this eases the transitions between the high intensity fights and the more relaxed exploration segments. This allows the player to flow between high and low intensity gameplay smoothly.

Each character has widely different movesets, and combat styles causing each character

to feel very novel, and the wide range of abilities and weapons cause combat to feel very distinctive. However with all of this variation the characters are balanced extremely well, allowing each character to progress at a similar pace.

As missions progress and the player becomes better at combat and gains new abilities the enemies become more difficult to fight, and unlike typical difficulty advancements, it is not limited to increased enemy damage and health, but typically by the enemies being completely unique, either faster or by requiring specific attacks to defeat them.

The wide range of variation in the character's playstyle, and the enemy types allows the game to feel extremely novel, as there are many approaches to combat, but also some missions can be played as different characters increasing replayability.

The difficulty levels also increase the novelty of the game as each one is a unique way of playing the game, an example of this is the '**Heaven or Hell**' ("Heaven Or Hell Difficulty") where everyone including the player dies in one hit.

Conclusion

Devil May Cry 5, is a great addition to the franchise, providing a new unique character and playstyle, much expanded combat systems, with a wide range of abilities and weapons.

It also extends the storyline and allows for a huge character arc for **Nero**, and the return of a beloved character and sets up a very interesting continuation for future games without the ending feeling like a cliff-hanger.

The combat, and story are excellent, and personally the combat has ruined most other games, as there are very few combat systems that play as fluidly and are as satisfying as in **Devil May Cry 5**.

Bibliography

"AAA Wiki." *AAA Wiki Page,*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/AAA_(video_game_industry).

"Cameo System." *Cameo System Fandom Wiki Page,*

https://devilmaycry.fandom.com/wiki/Cameo_System.

"Capcom Website." *Capcom Website,*

https://www.capcom.com/.

"Devil May Cry 5 Fandom Wiki." *Devil May Cry 5 Fandom Wiki,*

https://devilmaycry.fandom.com/wiki/Devil_May_Cry_5.

"God of War." *God of War Wiki Page,*

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_of_War_(2018_video_game).

"Heaven Or Hell Difficulty." *Heaven Or Hell Difficulty Fandom Wiki,*

https://devilmaycry.fandom.com/wiki/Heaven_Or_Hell.

Okumura, Kaki. "Applying the MDA Framework for Video Game Design to

Productivity." *Applying the MDA Framework for Video Game Design to*

Productivity, 2019,

https://medium.com/swlh/applying-the-mda-framework-for-video-game-design-to-

productivity-8329115ce30f.