

Frederick Solleder

Professor Ehrhart

ENGL 1301.010

1/31/2024

Halo 3: ODST (Video Game) Evaluation

Thesis: Being a spinoff of the wildly successful original *Halo* games allows Halo 3: ODST to defy the expectations from a Halo game in the realm of gameplay, scope, and storytelling.

Halo 3: ODST, as opposed to the mainline *Halo* games, where you play as one of the few remaining Spartan super soldiers, puts you into the shoes of an Orbital Drop Shock Trooper, an (almost) ordinary unit that you'd typically fight alongside in *Halo 2* & *Halo 3*. ODST's aren't the power-armor equipped, genetically modified, walking & talking human tanks that Spartans are, however, sporting no genetic augmentation and no power armor, much closer to a regular marine than anything else. This wouldn't be an issue if it was just human on human fighting, however, humanity's foe in this case aren't average joes with rocket launchers fighting the military, but the Covenant; an alien empire hellbent on wiping humanity off the face of the galaxy.

The game starts with a monologue about humanity's current situation; describing the sheer magnitude of the threat that the Covenant posed to humanity. At this point in the story, humans had only Earth left, compared to the 800 they had prior to the Human-Covenant war. Thunder and lightning crash in the background over a burnt and broken New Mombasa; an African megacity in which a Covenant carrier has landed for an unknown reason.

Upon making it past the opening sequence, we are greeted on a UNSC starship, and are told to get set for an orbital drop. The following drop pod sequence is one of my favorite parts of this game: upon beginning our descent through the atmosphere, we see the smoldering, broken remains of UNSC ship after ship, with one of our teammates commenting on how badly the Navy got its butt kicked by a single Covenant carrier. Upon breaking through the cloud cover over New Mombasa, the carrier becomes visible to us, and our drop pod adjusts trajectory in order to intercept it, but as this is occurring; our radiation sensors begin to go ballistic as the carrier begins to make a slipspace jump; effectively setting off a nuke inside the city as the carrier slips away. An interesting fact: this event takes place during *Halo 2* in the middle of the campaign, not *Halo 3* as the game's title would suggest.

Our ODST wakes up, still firmly strapped into the drop pod, stuck into the side of a building overlooking a darkened street below. A Covenant Phantom skulking by with its spotlight; searching for any survivors of the Covenant's attack on the city. This is where *ODST* shines brightest; upon jumping out of your drop pod, you immediately take some critical damage; the game uses this as a tutorial, and also to inform you of one critical factor: you are not a super soldier, you do not have insanely advanced power armor, and you don't have any shielding to protect you. You are just a highly trained operative, but other than that: you are just a normal guy. You are required to utilize the health pack to regain full health, and the mission continues from there.

There are many other gameplay changes as well, you cannot jump as high, melee attacks on enemies are significantly less effective, and you cannot dual wield, as said by Mr. Brudvig: "[They] can only aim one weapon at a time. [They] have a health bar that requires health packs to restore once their light overshield is depleted. [They] cannot jump as high or fall as far or take as many bullets without stumbling into Death's open arms." (Brudvig)

Works Cited:

Erik Brudvig. "Halo 3: ODST Review" *ign.com*, September 9th, 2009.

<https://www.ign.com/articles/2009/09/20/halo-3-odst-review>