

= Star Wars : The Force Unleashed II =

Star Wars : The Force Unleashed II is an action @-@ adventure platform video game developed and published by LucasArts . It is the second installment of the The Force Unleashed multimedia project , and the sequel to Star Wars : The Force Unleashed (2008) . The game was released in the United States on October 26 , 2010 , and throughout Europe on October 29 for the PlayStation 3 , Xbox 360 , and Nintendo Wii consoles , as well as the Nintendo DS and iOS portable devices .

Players control a clone of Starkiller , who himself was a secret apprentice to Darth Vader in The Force Unleashed . The clone embarks on a quest to find his identity and find Starkiller 's love interest , Juno Eclipse . Production for The Force Unleashed II transpired over an approximate period of nine months ; while it possesses some similarities to the previous game , producers modified several aspects such as the sound effects and gameplay . Sam Witwer again provides the voice and likeness for Starkiller , and several cast members return to voice and provide likeness to their respective roles .

The Force Unleashed II produced varying responses from critics , who despite adulating the sound design and aesthetics , were concerned with several gameplay elements and an underwhelming storyline . Aggregate scores range from the 40 ? 70 % range at websites GameRankings and Metacritic . During the first few weeks after its release it placed fifth or higher in sales for several regions .

= = Gameplay = =

The Force Unleashed II is a third @-@ person action game in which the player 's character 's weapons are the Force and a lightsaber . The game has a combo system for stringing lightsaber attacks and for combining lightsaber attacks with Force powers . Like the original Force Unleashed , experience points earned by killing enemies and finding artifacts can be used to increase Starkiller 's powers and traits .

The Force Unleashed II refines gameplay elements from the first Force Unleashed , and adds more variety with such features as puzzle solving . Combat was modified to include the ability to wield dual lightsabers , which can dismember or decapitate enemies . The game also adds more Force powers , such as " Mind Trick " and " Force Rage " .

= = = Platform @-@ specific elements = = =

According to lead producer Vinde Kudirka , the goal of the game across all platforms is to make the player feel like " a super @-@ powerful Jedi " . Executive producer Julio Torres said that while the story is consistent across platforms , gameplay decreases in style across platforms to reflect each platform 's uniqueness and strengths . The Wii 's control scheme is focused on being able to precisely control Starkiller 's Force powers and saber combos . The Wii exclusive " Force rage " power puts the game 's protagonist , Starkiller , into a bullet time mode exclusive to that platform ; the Wii version also has a Force sight power not included on other platforms . The Wii version also has a multiplayer mode , inspired by The Outfoxies , in which four players can challenge each other in a fighting @-@ style combat game . The Wii game also has an extra story @-@ based level , on Dagobah , that is not present in the HD version of the game , making the plot of the Wii game slightly different from the HD version .

The PC , PlayStation 3 , and Xbox 360 versions feature new Force powers , new skins for Force powers that appear in The Force Unleashed , an improved rendering system providing richer colors , and a new audio system . The gameplay also highlights the potential to " destroy " the game environment . Neither of the PC , PlayStation 3 or Xbox 360 versions of the game include multiplayer . The Nintendo DS version features the same Force powers as the console versions , but was designed for shorter play sessions due to its mobile nature .

= = Plot = =

The game takes place approximately six months after the events of the first game , and a year before Star Wars . The Force Unleashed II is described as the " dark entry " in the series , and a more personal story for the game 's protagonist than the first game .

Players control Starkiller 's renegade clone , a failure of Darth Vader 's attempt to create a perfect secret apprentice . After a vision that Darth Vader will kill him due to his inability to kill a test droid , the clone escapes from captivity on Kamino . After eliminating his stormtrooper captors , Starkiller embarks on a quest to understand his identity and to find his template 's love interest from the first game , Juno Eclipse . Meanwhile , Darth Vader has hired Boba Fett to track down Juno Eclipse to lure Starkiller out of hiding . Starkiller rescues Jedi Master Rahm Kota from a gladiatorial arena , and encounters Yoda on Dagobah . After encountering strange visions on Dagobah , Starkiller rushes to Juno 's ship , only to arrive just as Boba captures her .

With help from Kota , the Rebels launch an all @-@ out assault on Kamino . Starkiller crashes a ship into the planet 's shield , allowing Kota to stage a ground assault , while he goes after Juno . In a confrontation with Vader , Juno is thrown out of a window , crashing to the ground . Starkiller , thinking Juno is dead , attacks Vader viciously , cutting off his hand and defeating him . Kota arrives with his men , and tells Starkiller not to kill Vader : he wants to interrogate the Sith Lord for the Empire 's secrets , then put him on trial , and then later execute him . As in the first game , this allows the player to choose either the light path or the dark path :

If the player chooses the dark side , Starkiller raises his saber to kill Vader , only to be stabbed by a shrouded figure who uncloaks behind him . Kota attacks the figure , but is driven back and force pushed over the edge with numerous troops . As the figure removes his cowl , Vader tells the dying Starkiller he lied when he said the cloning process had not been perfected , revealing the figure to be a dark , perfect clone . Starkiller takes one last look at Juno 's corpse and dies . Vader instructs the kneeling clone to take Starkiller 's ship and kill the remaining leaders of the Rebel Alliance . Downloadable content released in December 2010 expands on this ending , with Starkiller 's clone participating in the Battle of Endor in which the remnants of the Rebel Alliance desperately attack Endor in the hopes of destroying the Death Star II . The dark Starkiller is sent to eliminate the threat and kills Ewoks and Rebels (including Han Solo and Chewbacca) in the process . Eventually he finds Princess Leia Organa , who is revealed to be a Jedi , waiting for him and duels her . Starkiller succeeds in killing her . Meanwhile , the Emperor scolds Vader for creating the dark copy of his failed apprentice and subdues him with Force Lightning (calling him Skywalker) . The Emperor then orders Captain Sarkli to kill the dark Starkiller .

If the player chooses the light side , Starkiller lowers his blade and allows Kota 's men to capture Vader . Starkiller discovers Juno survived the fall , they kiss , and the two travel into hyperspace together aboard the Rogue Shadow , taking Vader prisoner . Starkiller confronts Vader again saying that because he made the conscious choice , of his own free will , to spare Vader 's life , he is finally free of the Dark Lord 's control . Vader 's response is that as long as Juno lives , Vader will always have control over him . Unknown to Starkiller and Juno , Boba Fett pursues in his spacecraft .

= = Development = =

Following the commercial success of its predecessor , a sequel was formally announced at the Spike Video Game Awards . The game was released for the PlayStation 3 , Xbox 360 , and Nintendo Wii consoles , as well as the Nintendo DS and iOS portable devices . A version was initially developed for the PlayStation Portable , but was cancelled for undisclosed reasons . The Force Unleashed II was released in North America on October 26 , 2010 , and in Europe on October 29 , 2010 .

= = = Writing = = =

Haden Blackman served as a writer for the sequel . In crafting the dialogue of The Force Unleashed II , Blackman sought influence from Darksiders (2010) , as well as other video games such as

Uncharted 2 : Among Thieves (2009) and Heavy Rain (2010) . In the wake the early stages of conceiving The Force Unleashed II , the main protagonist Starkiller was initially intended to be replaced with a new lead character , but such plans never materialized as LucasArts opted to develop more backstory for the character . As the character progression of Starkiller initiates , the story follows a dark nature ? much like its predecessor . Blackman suggested that as opposed to his empathic tendencies in The Force Unleashed , Starkiller becomes conflicted with his loss of an identity , ultimately culminating into what he called a " much more personal story " ; " He 's dealing with a sense of identity and not knowing whether he 's going insane or not , " he added , " and the possible collapse of the Rebel Alliance , and his being torn between what he wants and what Kota wants . " Blackman 's main objective was to have the storyline be attractive to a broad audience ; while he asserted that fans with a general understanding of the Star Wars franchise would be more enthralled with the storyline , Blackman emphasized the need to appeal to a more mainstream demographic . " With The Force Unleashed II again we 're trying to create a story that if you ? ve played The Force Unleashed , " explained the comic book writer , " you 're going to know a bit more going into it , but hopefully the story still stands on its own and you can enjoy it even if you haven 't played [the first game] , whether or not you 're familiar with all the continuity . "

Unlike in its predecessor , Blackman achieved more freedom in developing the story for The Force Unleashed II , as it took place in a relatively uneventful time period . Blackman and the writing staff had to receive approval from Star Wars creator George Lucas to portray the game in their vision . " He had some comments on the way we wanted to use Princess Leia in the first one and he wanted to make sure that we were aware that Bail Organa was one of the founders of the Rebel Alliance , but that was it ? those were the only real constraints that we had . " To avoid any perceived constraints , they would travel to the headquarters of Lucasfilm in San Francisco , California to give an overview of their plans . " With The Force Unleashed II , remarked Blackman , " because we ? d already established this notion of Darth Vader ? s secret apprentice , really it was just sitting down with licensing and saying ? this is what we want to do ? and getting a few pieces of feedback from them . "

The primary cast from the previous game returns to voice their characters again in The Force Unleashed II . Sam Witwer returns to provide both the likeness and voice of Starkiller , the game 's protagonist . He also voices Emperor Palpatine having earned the part during a read @-@ through of the script during development . Witwer petitioned David Collins , voice of PROXY and audio lead for the game . He told Collins that " if [he was not] going to get Ian McDiarmid to do this [...] I 'll do it . " Actress and model Nathalie Cox reprises her role as Juno Eclipse , as does Cully Fredrickson as General Rahm Kota . Matt Sloan , who portrays Darth Vader in the webseries Chad Vader : Day Shift Manager and voices Vader in the original The Force Unleashed returns to the role in The Force Unleashed II . Veteran Star Wars : The Clone Wars voice actors Tom Kane and Dee Bradley Baker are also included amongst the cast . Kane voices Jedi Master Yoda , a role he has provided several times within the Star Wars franchise . Baker voices bounty hunter Boba Fett , a clone and adopted son of Jango Fett . Baker provides the voice of all of the clone troopers in the Clone Wars series , of which Boba is one .

= = = Technology = = =

The Force Unleashed II derives from LucasArts ' Ronin 2 @.@ 0 game engine , an update to a similarly named proprietary game engine used by its predecessor . Like The Force Unleashed , the game integrates three third @-@ party technologies : Havok for varying types of body physics such as ragdoll animation , NaturalMotion 's Euphoria for realistic non @-@ player character artificial intelligence , and Digital Molecular Matter for dynamic destructible objects . Blackman felt the second game takes better advantage of the powerful engine than does the first game . LucasArts acknowledged players ' frustration with the first game 's targeting system , and worked to revise it in the sequel ; Blackman said fixing the Force grip feature was the developers ' top priority . The game also includes fewer enemy types , instead focusing on making enemies more " ' special and unique " ; the game was also designed to offer " epic " boss battles . Other adjustments include allowing

players to dismember enemy characters and improving menu speeds .
The game is AMD Eyefinity validated .

== Sound effects ==

The audio engine received a massive overhaul to upgrade the quality of sound effects . Brian Tibbetts was declared the lead sound designer of the sound effects team , resuming his endeavors from The Force Unleashed . David Collins , who formerly served as the lead sound designer , sustained a supervisory position . The sound effects team was divided to address specific details ; Tom Bible was in charge of creating sound for weapons and force powers , while Aaron Brown specialized in the spaceships . Although some effects were borrowed from The Force Unleashed , the vast majority of sounds were completely new . Tibbetts thought that collaborating with his peers to be one of the most complex and challenging parts of his job . " I chose to have my office in the main area of game development and always had an open door policy regarding communication with other disciplines . There were many meetings regarding asset changes and in general communication at Lucasarts is good between disciplines . I ? ve always stressed that we should work together as much as possible and there were many moments of myself and sound designers working directly with designers , artists , and producers at their desks or ours . "

The nine @-@ month schedule of The Force Unleashed II caused difficulties with Tibbetts , who found it frustrating to keep up with the frenetic schedule . " There are many different ways to integrate our audio assets including scripting or placing sound emitters directly inside environment art and our work was unfortunately blown out many times , " he stated . As production neared its conclusion , Tibbetts created an emailing system with a group of engineers that would notify them after audio reference was edited . According to Tibbetts , " This helped a lot especially as the responsible parties didn ? t realize or intend to blow us out and were more than happy to help resolve the situation . By the time this tool was built though , we had already had to re @-@ author / integrate excessively though which is always frustrating . "

== Special effects ==

Dmitry Andreev devised a framing system that gave the illusion of operating at 60 frames per second (FPS) , despite running at 30FPS . To familiarize himself with the process , Andreev observed various 120 Hz television sets that incorporated two frames in producing an intermediate image , resulting in a smoother and clearer picture . The design team utilized a variety of interpolation techniques on multiple parts of an image , such as transparency and reflection . Andreev stated that " as soon as I got back home , I started to play with it and soon after that realised that there are a lot of issues . Mostly the artifacts of a different kind , that appear in more or less complex scenes , as well as performance issues [...] . " In response to the difficulties , he constructed a prototype that performed several enhancement techniques which examined images for vectors that demonstrated how " elements of the image would move from one frame to the next " . The LucasArts coder realized that such processes could be repackaged for a different use . " We already know how things are moving as we have full control over them . This way we don 't need to do any kind of estimation , " he professed .

Interpolating the graphics in 30FPS was opted due to the large variety of rendering technologies that were practical to developers , as well as a less stringent time schedule . Although Andreev felt that it was not impossible to produce a video game in 60FPS graphics , he felt that it would require much more rigorous efforts on art , engineering , and design . " It is fair to say that in a lot of cases , " he explained , " during pre @-@ production , studios try to see what it would take to make a 60FPS game . Then , they get something that doesn 't look very pretty when running at 60 , realising that all the art has to be produced very carefully as well as level and game design . "

== Reception ==

== Commercial performance ==

The Force Unleashed II performed under expectations . In the United States , it sold 500 @, @ 000 copies within its first two weeks , thereby becoming the fifth best @-@ selling video game of October 2010 . The Force Unleashed II was the fifth @-@ highest selling game of the week in the United Kingdom , denoting sales of 56 @, @ 064 copies . In Sweden , The Force Unleashed II was the third best @-@ selling overall game of the week ; the PlayStation 3 version of the game topped its respective chart , while the Xbox 360 version trailed behind Fable 3 as the second @-@ best selling Xbox 360 game of the week .

== Critical response ==

Commentators were divided on The Force Unleashed II . The Wii version of the game was generally considered by reviewers to be the better version of the game , due to the significantly different storyline , extra levels and the addition of a multiplayer mode . This was an unusual occurrence , however most reviewers thought it was simply the most completed version of the game , and that the HD version was rushed , resulting in a less satisfactory product . The Observer columnist Toby Moses avouched that the game failed to live up to the expectations established by its predecessor . Alexander Sliwinski of Joystiq derided it as a " desperate cash grab " , which had no intentions of aspiring to be a " major part of lore or to be nearly as epic " as The Force Unleashed . " It simply cobbles together glorified fan fiction for what amounts to an unexceptional subplot as it abruptly ends in the second act screaming , ' SEQUEL GOES HERE ' , " remarked Sliwinski . Despite proclaiming that The Force Unleashed II had " dazzling " gameplay , The Washington Times ' journalist Joseph Szadkowski concluded that it was " one of the most underachieving games of the year " . In his 6 @. @ 5 out of 10 rating review , Anthony Gallegos of IGN stated that The Force Unleashed II immediately captivates the audience with its visuals , albeit being plagued with repetitious gameplay , a " shoe @-@ horned in story " , and a nonexistent depth " in the experience " . " Scenery is , of course , massive and massively impressive , and the possible repetitive nature has been broken up with some freefalling levels and the odd exploratory moment , " commented Neil Davey of The Guardian , who issued the game a four out of five stars .

Game Informer ' Andrew Reiner said the game 's mechanics are more fluid than the first game 's , and praised the textures and animations as " among this generation 's best " . GamePro 's Mitch Dyer and Matthew Keast of GamesRadar highlighted the game 's variety of lightsaber crystals and their ability to boost Starkiller 's powers . Keast observed that LucasArts seemed to take player feedback from the first game seriously , and made numerous subtle improvements for the sequel. he also praised " substantial " improvements to the Force grip power , although Alexander Sliwinski of Eurogamer did not detect any improvements . The Writers Guild of America nominated the game for its Outstanding Achievement in Video Game Writing recognition .

John Teti of Eurogamer said the game overall " feels like it was created out of obligation rather than inspiration " , and points toward Blackman 's departure from LucasArts before the game 's release as a potential sign of trouble . IGN 's Anthony Gallegos criticized the game 's repetitive level design and underdeveloped story . He also felt that because Starkiller begins the game as a powerful character , leveling up does not feel as satisfying as in the first game ; while the game does offer increased variety in enemy types that " occasionally present a challenge " , defeating them eventually becomes formulaic . Andrew Reiner of Game Informer criticized the story and the dissatisfying appearances by Boba Fett and Yoda . GameSpot 's Kevin VanOrd called the final battle repetitive , and that the game 's end sequence erases the story 's dramatic tension . The Force Unleashed II was later one of GameSpot 's nominees for " Least Improved Sequel of 2010 " . GamePro ' Mitch Dyer faulted several performance issues and the game 's brief , unfocused story . The downloadable content was poorly received by Luke Plunkett of Kotaku , who criticized the expansion 's murder of Han Solo and Chewbacca .

Nintendo Power praised the Wii version 's multiplayer mode , as did Lucas M. Thomas of IGN .

GameSpot 's Kevin VanOrd was more critical of the multiplayer , calling it " unspectacular " . VanOrd did go on to praise the game 's art , combat , and control scheme .