

Lazytango

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METAL GEAR SOLID V THE PHANTOM PAIN

"An Amadeus part 33 years in the making"

- Lazytango

The Metal Gear franchise has always been unique among other tentpole video game franchises. I played the original, Metal Gear on the NES and haven't missed one of these increasingly overwritten and increasingly bat-shit insane games since then. For a series that has featured, giant robots, vampires, zombies, cyborg ninjas and an obese man on roller skates it's clear that writer/director, and noted pen-on-paper masturbator, Hideo Kojima wanted to make a James Bond game. Buried deep somewhere in Metal Gear, which somehow spans about 20 games, there's the basic story of a spy infiltrating A to recover B... Now that story is buried under so many Japanisms that choosing to watch Inuyasha instead of playing these games would mark you as a more stable adult. All in all Metal Gear is James Bond mixed with a Japanese panty vending machine, peppered with Rambo, a poorly researched book of mythology and the wet dreams of a conspiracy theorist.

Metal Gear Solid 5: The Phantom Pain is more than likely the final proper game



of the long running series. Konami, the company that makes the game, very publicly fired Kojima in 2015 for unknown reasons. The firing was so scorched-earth in its execution that the noted pachinko machine makers actually tried their best to remove Kojima's name from as many places as they could while advertising Metal Gear Solid 5. In what seems to be an almost purposeful attempt at creating bad press for themselves, Konami also added probably the most ridiculous paid content to the game this side of Train Simulator's barrage of \$2,000 DLC — base insurance — Actual homeowner's insurance for the player's virtual home.

MGS5: The Phantom Pain is a very strange Metal Gear game even by lofty standards set by the previous games. In this mildly intoxicated gamer's humble opinion, The Phantom Pain has the best gameplay of any Metal Gear before it, but has the most disappointing story of any Metal Gear before it. We've all become accustomed to how convoluted the story is at this point, but here it doesn't make things harder to understand, it just adds bad ideas to a story that was great and didn't need bizarre concepts to muddy the water.

Spoilers

Skull Face, the main antagonist of the game, and the revelation of who he was and why he did what he did was great, it added an element to the whole of the Metal Gear lore that really did a fantastic job of raising the right questions and letting your imagination do some work as to how he and his team would fit into everything. XOF being a cleanup crew for FOX was something unexpected but it made sense.

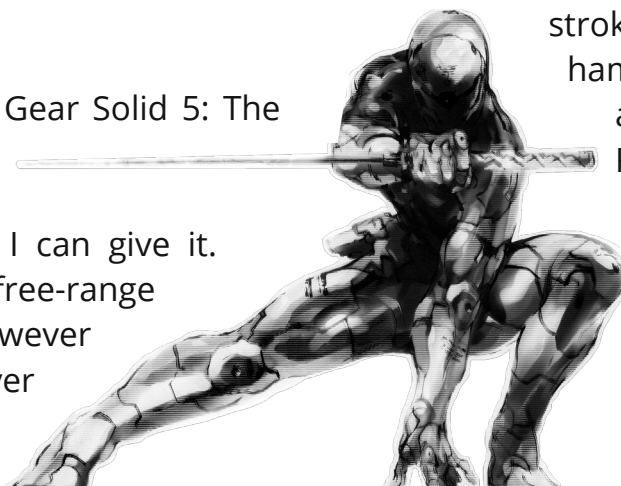
The problem comes around the time that we learn that Skull Face is breeding parasites in people's throats and teaching the parasites languages by shoving earphones into said throats. I tried my best to chalk that weird shit up to basic Kojima lunacy, but somehow immortal vampires and a villain that knows I played Castlevania make more sense than this.

The big reveal at the end... Much like Metal Gear Solid 2, it felt like someone gave you a Rolex and after letting you wear it for 50 hours he tells you "oh, by the way, that Rolex is fake... It's actually a Casio, but we made it look like a Rolex, so you know... Fuck you... I mean enjoy."

Gameplay-wise Metal Gear Solid 5: The Phantom Pain is really fun and that's the best compliment I can give it. The game gives you free-range to tackle missions however you want using whatever weapons/tools you

want. There's something for everyone whether you like to burst into a military base with rocket launchers and a take-no-prisoners attitude or if you like to sneak into a military base with a tranquilizer gun and a take-all-as-prisoners attitude. Using a very incorrect idea of how the Fulton surface-to-air recovery system works, you airlift enemy combatants from the field and they always appreciate the ass-kicking and being shot into the air on a balloon so much that they willingly join your ranks. Once a part of your crew, Diamond Dogs, the former enemies are assigned to jobs that best suit their abilities and help you develop new weapons, get resources, provide intel on hot zones, etc. It's a good thing that, for the most part, the base management is pretty automatic, because it could have easily been a deal-breaker for the game if base management were a more intrusive factor... Which it kind of is at one point.

Hideo Kojima is known for a lot of things: Making great games, wearing leather jackets, being a competent and sushi-eating version of Peter Molyneux, but one of those things is not subtlety. I'm fairly sure that Kojima doesn't know what subtlety is and if anyone tried to explain it to him in concept he'd have a stroke. There are so many ham-fisted references and ideas in The Phantom Pain that one of the biggest ones actually has a pigs face on it.



At one point you meet a child soldier (Yeah... There are child soldiers in the game and it's pretty uncomfortable every time the story deals with them,) that goes by the name White Mamba (guess why?) He's the leader of a child soldier army and he sits on a throne on a beached boat. When you first meet him, he's sitting with a pig's head on a table in front of him (you already see where this is going.) White Mamba has a conch shell in his pocket and wears a jacket that says "Never Be Game Over" with a drawing of a pig with an eye-patch just like Snake.

Side-note

Sneak can acquire a pet dog called D-Dog. Much like Sneak is a mercenary pretending to be a freedom fighter, D-Dog is a wolf pretending to be a dog. Don't get it? They also both have eye patches. Subtlety!

After a while of being with Diamond Dogs, White Mamba (Who has a real name, but I'm trying to avoid too many spoilers,) instigates a fight between the other child soldiers and one of the kids dies when he's crushed by a pipe. Now, without further information and knowing that Kojima thinks Subtlety is just the name of a character he's going to put in a future game, what was the name of the kid that died? Keep in mind that none of the kids are fat. If you guessed anything other than Ralph you're clearly not much of a reader so I commend you for having made it this far in the article. It was a very on-the-nose Lord of the Flies reference.

Relatively early on in the game you run into a sniper called Quiet... Because

she's quiet. Quiet, or as she's known briefly in a later part of the game Ms. MacGuffin (that's a joke, but I need to clarify because I'm pretty sure it must have crossed Kojima's mind to do that,) dresses in a skimpy bikini, doesn't talk and does yoga on the helicopter between missions. In case you're thinking that she wears a bikini just to satisfy a



repressed Japanese sexuality, there actually is reason that she wears a bikini into battle that fits into the story, so I won't reveal it, but needless to say it's bullshit because other characters with the same reason as her are fully clothed. Let's just say that Quiet is deathly allergic to clothes much like Kojima is deathly allergic to nuance.

Alternate costumes for Quiet can be researched and include a bikini covered in fake blood and gold body paint in what I assume is an homage to Shirley Eaton.

There's a scene in which Quiet takes a shower in a cage while soldiers watch on and I can almost picture Kojima making the case for the scene to Konami: "She's a strong female character! That half-naked shower scene is integral to the story and empowering for women!" I also have to imagine that Kojima was mid-masturbation while making the case.

The Good

Amazing gameplay and freedom

Airlifting things (cars, people, goats, shipping containers) is surprisingly cathartic

The Bad

Some of the worst Kojima-isms this side of Staring at Meryl's breasts

Worst downloadable content idea this side of horse armor

Not the best way to end the 33-year story of Metal Gear

The Verdict

Metal Gear Solid 5: The Phantom Pain is a great and fun game that fans of the franchise and fans of games in general should play. The game gives you tremendous amounts of freedom to tackle objectives any way you see fit and if you can overlook some round pegs hammered into square holes story-wise, you'll find one of the best games of 2015.

77/100



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