

# RESIDENT EVIL 3: NEMESIS

**GENRE(S):** Survival horror

**AVAILABLE ON:** GameCube, PC, PlayStation, Sega Dreamcast

**DEVELOPED BY:** Capcom

**PUBLISHED BY:** Capcom

**RELEASED:** September 22, 1999 (PlayStation)

With the arrival of a new console generation, the development and progress of the *Resident Evil* franchise became even more complicated than it was before. Producer Shinji Mikami and director Hideki Kamiya both agreed that in the wake of *Resident Evil 2*'s great critical and commercial success, they couldn't pass up on the opportunity to see one more quick game surface before their planned projects could reach fruition. An inexperienced team led by one Kazuhiro Aoyama was hand-picked to spawn one more *Resident Evil* game for the original PlayStation to tide fans over in their anticipation of a next-generation title. *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* was the final product, and to this day, it is perhaps the most divisive game in the main series. There are some who consider it the best classic *Resident Evil* game there is, others consider it overrated and not worthy of a numerical entry. Sadly, I belong to the latter category of fans. The game had a lot of potential, but nine out of ten of its ideas blew up in Capcom's hands, and all these years later, *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* feels like an even bigger disappointment than it was from the start.

The plot itself contradicts most logic and rules of time, but here goes: about 24 hours before Leon S. Kennedy and Claire Redfield become aware of the shit going down in Raccoon City, S.T.A.R.S. operative Jill Valentine finds herself stranded in the heart of it, fighting for survival. As she makes her way through the zombie-infested streets to find a way out, she discovers she is the final target of a new bio-organic weapon specifically designed by Umbrella Inc. to eliminate every surviving member of the group that nearly destroyed their research.

I am a lifelong fan of *Resident Evil*, therefore it might be hard to believe but I actually completely missed

*Nemesis* at launch. It just somehow managed to slip by, and it managed to slip by a lot of my friends who were almost as much into the franchise. Apparently we were all so taken by the *Final Fantasy* storm in the late 90's that we didn't have time for anything else. When I finally realized that I, of all people, had missed a *Resident Evil* game, I was furious, but when I read about it, I wasn't too excited about it. Something about the game just didn't add up. I was in no rush to get or even try it. It took some time, but eventually some fans – friends and neighbors – started calling it the best game in the series, so I finally decided to give it a go, after *Code: Veronica* and actually, even *Resident Evil 4*. I came to this conclusion: *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* had fresh ideas and just a fantastic main villain, ON PAPER, but it's one of the worst games in the main series, and one confusing ball of yarn that seriously can't settle on being one thing or another. This time, even the remake made many of the same mistakes – and people finally got what was so wrong about the game in the first place. I like to call this the *Donkey Kong Country 3* of the PlayStation; a good game that retains no idea of where it came from. But the main difference besides the obvious is that as a game, *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* is not nearly as good as *Donkey Kong Country 3*.

So first of all, the game ditches the scenario choice to slam it all on the back of one character – save for about a 45-minute “sidequest” starring a dude called Carlos - and naturally, this makes the game longer than any single scenario in a previous *Resident Evil* game. Not necessarily a good thing when we look at all the half-baked foundations the game is built on. Despite the lack of options, the game is split into two distinct acts; the first one takes place a day before *Resident Evil 2*, and the second takes place two days later. The plot is full of holes; for example, the police station – yep, we go back for a brief visit – is all boarded and busted up, and the only surviving cop that Leon and Claire met in the beginning of the game is already dead. In general, the city's in complete chaos while it seemed quite peaceful in the beginning of *Resident Evil 2*. Basically, they wrote a good story here, but it would be better as an honest non-canonical spin-off than an attempt to sell a functional prequel, sequel and interquel all at the same time.

Apart from the zombies, chaos and destruction around every corner, Jill's got one personal, eight-foot tall problem; a whole new type of Tyrant is on her tail, and not only is this son of a bitch highly intelligent, he

is incredibly fast, strong, and he knows how to use a God damn rocket launcher. Ouch. Unlike Umbrella's previous hellspawn, he doesn't kill for a primitive urge, instead he's been "programmed" by Umbrella to hunt down and kill every surviving member of S.T.A.R.S., as well as everyone preventing him from accomplishing his mission. His name is Nemesis, and you will get to know him really, really well. Much too well.

Like I said, on paper Nemesis is an absolutely fantastic villain; a true monster that possesses every nasty quality of the original Tyrant, Mr. X and the little less meek version of Dr. Birkin, all in one neat package, plus a few traits of his own. Yet, they managed to kill his appeal after an admittedly strong start; they overplayed the character. Let's compare him to Mr. X in *Resident Evil 2*. Every time Mr. X smashed through a brick wall to ruin the most quiet and peaceful moment, followed by an abrupt "JESUS JUMPING CHRIST!!", only to quietly disappear again when you entered another room, that was horror. Nemesis is a constant nuisance you can't get rid of. He follows you everywhere except save rooms, and since the map of the city is so big and confusing in itself, it's really frustrating to try and make progress, or at the very least navigate, with that colossus constantly on your ass. "JESUS JUMPING CHRIST!!" turns into "oh for fuck's sake, not again" in record time. It's not horror when you grow to expect the guy so quick. Yeah, you'll get some good items if you manage to temporarily put Nemesis down outside the few mandatory boss fights, but I'm not sure if they're worth the amount of bullets this guy eats from any gun. I mean it: I'm not sure. The game was made that way.

To compensate for the lack of replay value in the traditional *Resident Evil* sense, all of *Resident Evil 3* depends on almost roguelike, randomly generated content. No playthrough is identical; some puzzle solutions are not cast in stone, enemies respawn or get replaced with sets of stronger ones, items and especially weapons are not in the same places every time. It's like a living *Director's Cut*. The thing that affects each playthrough the most is Live Selection, where you are literally given two choices during setpieces, and you must decide fast because indecision leads to a quick and certain death. One of the choices is usually an easy, but non-lucrative way out, while the other one is far from easy and leads you on

an extra path of death, but you'll gain better rewards. Once again, it's up to you to decide if these rewards are worth all that you'll most likely lose along the way.

If you thought hauling around Ink Ribbons to be able to save was a pain in the ass, get this: Green Herbs are quite scarce, but Red and Blue Herbs are found just about everywhere. Since I haven't mentioned them before in the earlier reviews, let me enlighten you: you can't even use Red Herbs by themselves, and Blue Herbs are used for poisoning and are good for no other health problems. Most of the dead bodies in the streets have ammo stashed on them – most of them are mercenaries and police – but there are so many enemies in the game that you pretty much have to craft ammo yourself, using a special tool and jars of gunpowder of different types, all of which you have to carry around as well and no, those jars sure as fuck don't stack. The fair amount of save rooms in the game doesn't cut off the fact that the game is still much worse when it comes to unnecessary inventory management and constant backtracking than the first two games combined. You have to stay on your toes all the time. You have to at the very least pack your herd-culler of a handgun and two stronger weapons, and one health item along at all times. Plus the ammunition for each of those weapons. And the key item of the minute, of course, which is usually just one part of the solution in this game. All of this leaves you very little space to just push forward and maintain your flow; at worst you'll have to make three trips to the storage chest within five minutes. Usually, on the third round, Nemesis creeps in to kick your ass a little, as if you're not annoyed enough.

The first two games pretty much guided players to not just shoot their way through everything, *Resident Evil 3* does just the opposite and encourages you to waste every bit of ammo on everything that moves. Well, at least they realized that this leads to situations where the player runs out of bullets in the fourth screen of the game, so they added "advanced combat tactics". Causing heavy environmental damage to enemies is cool, blowing up fuel kegs and such, as long as the secondary auto-aim specifically designed to target these types of objects works the way it's supposed to. The whole new dodge manouever and the quick turn – soon to become a priceless staple of the series – they just don't work here, and unfortunately, you'll find yourself praying to the gods of input reaction whenever you're pitted against Nemesis in a fight

you can't escape from. You absolutely need those tactics to survive.

*Resident Evil* moved on to wide open exterior areas a long time ago, but the gameplay and style changed in parallel; in these times of old school tank controls and fixed camera angles one of the main attractions of the game was the fear of walls and narrow corridors, varying speeds of footsteps other than your own on wooden floors and some heavy breathing mixed with unearthly moaning and the snarking of rotten flesh, creating an uneasy feeling you couldn't quite describe. Here, you mostly wander the streets, literally aimlessly most of the time until you eventually get the hang of the map through some extensive backtracking. It just doesn't feel the same – even the name of the game loses its point when the action is taken to the outside. What also hurts the game that its only truly frightening enemy is also its biggest flaw. There's a new, slightly more rotted but also weaker model of the Hunter from the first game, and some venomous Spider-Men who think a little too highly of themselves, who are kinda like a poisonous mix of Lickers and the boiler room bastards in the first game. Oh, and of course, fat zombies who are just hilarious and they probably wouldn't make it off the planning table in 2026.

The game is highly difficult in comparison to its fabled predecessors, and for all the wrong reasons. Running out of *everything* at the most inconvenient times is a rule rather than an exception, since the game doesn't have any extended moments of peace and clarity. There aren't that many actual boss fights, the game itself is like an aggressive, five- or seven hour boss fight, which ends with ridiculous unlockables. Unlocking plenty of alternate attires for Jill or especially unlocking eight brief pieces of text called the Epilogue Files simply isn't worth eight consecutive playthroughs of this nightmare. Like in *Resident Evil 2*, a full-on "minigame" is unlocked after the first full playthrough, called "Mercenaries", which has since become a staple in online gaming. It's simple fun already; it involves a hand-picked character placed in a random part of Raccoon City, attempting to save as many civilians and kill as many enemies as they can within a time limit. Good way to pass brief amounts of time, at least here you know what you're stepping into.

After all this ranting and raving, I'd like to have you know that I consider *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* a decent game, just not a good *Resident Evil* game. Most of the negativity surrounding my statements is me comparing the game to its predecessors, and also its follow-up – the final game made in the vintage style, which I always considered much more of a real *Resident Evil 3*, just like the producers. In this game's case, the remake indeed failed to improve on the original, it just pretty much capitalized on its mistakes, but we'll return to that later when the "real canon run" begins.

## 7.0