

# RESIDENT EVIL CODE: VERONICA X

**GENRE(S):** Survival horror

**AVAILABLE ON:** GameCube, PlayStation 2, Sega Dreamcast

**DEVELOPED BY:** Capcom

**PUBLISHED BY:** Capcom

**RELEASED:** March 21, 2001 (Sega Dreamcast)

*Resident Evil Code: Veronica* came to be when Shinji Mikami's plan to release a port of *Resident Evil 2* on the Sega Saturn fell through; the time of the Saturn was coming to an end, and it was to be replaced by the commercially hyped Sega Dreamcast. In excitement of all the new possibilities, Mikami commissioned his team to work on a whole new Dreamcast title instead; no one could've predicted how flat a technological marvel and great gaming system such as the Dreamcast would fall on its back in the world of consumers. When *Resident Evil Code: Veronica* came out in the February of 2000, it was already too late. The critical and commercial acclaim, and the already widely renowned brand of this one exclusive game simply wasn't enough to save its native system. Almost exactly a year after the game's release and days before the Dreamcast's official discontinuation, the game was re-packaged and -released as *Resident Evil Code: Veronica X*, and finally ported back home to the PlayStation 2, as well as the GameCube as part of a long-term deal between Capcom and Nintendo. The re-release was a win for Sony, Nintendo, Capcom and the franchise all the same – albeit thoroughly strange and suffering from a few utterly unfair, game-killing spikes in difficulty, *Resident Evil Code: Veronica* was a triumphant send-off to vintage *Resident Evil*.

My personal story with this game isn't quite as interesting as most, but it brings a nostalgic smile to my face nonetheless. I had no interest in following any happenings in camp Sega, so the original release of *Resident Evil Code: Veronica* came as a huge surprise to me, and its review in my favourite magazine melted my face off. I was furious at Capcom; how could they let this happen? Why did they want this to happen? Things only got worse when they started announcing that their next titles were going to be released exclusively on the Nintendo GameCube. It was like they were completely ignoring where they got

their start, and disrespecting fans. I know that was not the case at all, but it sure felt like it to a teenage hardcore fan. When I finally bought my own PlayStation 2 more than a year later, I went on a supermarket hunt for a whole bundle of games to get me started, and I suddenly stumbled across this game called *Resident Evil Code: Veronica X*. At that time I had very little idea what had happened to the Dreamcast, and even less idea of the game's release on the PlayStation 2. I took this one home without hesitation, and man, I felt like I had time-jumped back to 1998. The game smelled like an audiovisually buffed up version of *Resident Evil 2*, until the story started to take some really weird and unnatural turns, but also some extremely cool ones which actually pushed the whole arc forward, instead of just opting to stomp in place like *Nemesis*. Just like Shinji Mikami himself, I consider *Code: Veronica* the real *Resident Evil 3*, and *Nemesis* the spin-off too many fans embrace *Code: Veronica* as.

Three months after the nuclear attack that completely destroyed Raccoon City, Claire Redfield's continuing investigation into her brother's disappearance brings her all the way to Paris, where she infiltrates Umbrella's European headquarters, only to be captured by one of their military units. She is taken to an Umbrella-owned facility on a remote island, the eventual site of another massive viral outbreak. Refusing to give in to a legion of undead Umbrella employees, a bitter old nemesis looking for retribution, and the homicidally insane proprietor of the facility, Claire attempts to escape the island together with a young man separated from his family.

Let me tell you this right away: *Resident Evil Code: Veronica* is easily the longest, hardest and often even the most frustrating game in the vintage series. Longest? It has a whole number of faux endings, leading you from scenario to scenario. Hardest? Think of the amount of respawning zombies in *Nemesis*, and the fact that you have just as little ammo to spare. Frustrating? Yeah, we'll get to that, but there is one thing that sets *Code: Veronica* apart from *Nemesis*; the only thing on your constant trail is a frail human instead of Jason Voorhees in a straightjacket. If you threw in a guy like *Nemesis* in a game that's already long, hard and full of backtracking for first-timers, it would be damn near unplayable.

The graphics are simply great, but the audio – the one thing I didn't even want to mention in the case of *Nemesis* since the voice acting took a turn for the better there – is just God damn awful. Most of the soundtrack is taken straight from the first couple of games. Alyson Court reprises her role as Claire and the voiceover work from the rest of the crew is just rancid. The voice "talent" behind Alfred and Alexia Ashford is even worse than the guys working Chris and Barry in the first game – you can't even make out what they're saying since they're so caught up in their phony British accents and overacting. Speaking of overacting, I'll have to mention Bill Houston, who voices Steve Burnside, the most despicable throwaway character in *Resident Evil* history.

The general gameplay finally shies away from the fixed camera angles of the past, opting for a 50% fixed camera following you wherever you go, complete with auto-aim and properly highlighted items. But, this coin also comes with the flipside; there are plenty of environments, plenty of rooms, plenty of ground to cover, get your head fucked up and waste your bullets on those you don't need to waste 'em on. What's great about the whole loooooong ordeal is that *Resident Evil* returns to its roots here, for one final time, to show *Nemesis* what's what; old-school *Resident Evil* is all about exploring narrow and cramped environments. *Code: Veronica* does just that. It's just not one environment, there are plenty, but they're all narrow and cramped.

There's only one scenario, but it takes about ten hours to complete, and it's split in equal halves of two between two characters: Claire and a "surprise guest" to take us towards and through the endgame. So once again, this ain't like Carlos' glorious 45 minutes in *Nemesis*. In addition, Claire unfortunately has a sidekick, the unholy abomination known as Steve – the son of an Umbrella scientist stuck on the island as well.

As far as the actual horror goes, this game just might be the GOAT among the originals, at least when we're talking about blasting zombies, but also – I don't know how much Konami's *Silent Hill* had to do with this – *Resident Evil Code: Veronica* gets you on the inside as well. The game's alleged main antagonist

is a sniper-wielding, completely unhinged psychopath, who clearly wants to protect his family secrets to death, and his mere, recurring presence is enough to trifle with the player's brain. Not to mention the puzzles he's planted all around the facility.

The puzzles are far from the only thing that make *Resident Evil Code: Veronica* so God damn hard. The zombies are quicker, the Hunters are quicker and there's a poisonous breed of them. There's this new enemy type called "Bandersnatch" that just drives you crazy. Since I'm all about nicknaming enemies in games, I like to call them "Mr. Not-So-Fantastics" due to their incredible agility and elastic limbs. They first appear as a sort of miniboss but then turn out an annoying, recurring waste of good firepower (from any gun) for an extended amount of time.

The one thing that makes *Code: Veronica* so damn hard is not knowing what comes next. There's been a telltale sign in almost every game ever, but not here, and considering the ultimatums, these few examples could easily be called difficulty spikes which are a bit too unfair for even *those* players very familiar with the "original trilogy". Here, you'll have to weaken a boss enough to finish him with an environmental attack. How much? Well, that's pretty much up to your calculation. You'll also have to shoot a boss straight into the heart with a certain type of weapon for a certain amount of times to be able to finish him off with something else. Also, since the game is not nearly as linear as its first two predecessors, you're blocked off from certain weapons, ammunition and items if you make one wrong move at the wrong time.

"Not knowing what comes next" rings the most true during the final hour of the campaign, which is just a series of nightmares; quick switches between the two main characters, who both share the same item box. You have to be extremely precise in item and weapon management, so neither of them are fucked during their final boss encounters – both characters have their own unique shitstorms to deal with in that category. To expect this level of perfectionism from first-time players is a symptom of psychosis on the developers' part.

The *X* version of the game has a different character model for Steve than the original; this one was made to resemble Leon from *Resident Evil 2* for some odd reason, and even the nostalgic look about him doesn't make him come off anything less of a flaming asshole. It also has more cutscenes, mostly involving a certain character to better explain his presence and agenda. After the first playthrough of any version of the game, "Battle Mode" is unlocked; it's basically an iteration of "Mercenaries" which was introduced in *Nemesis*, but probably not named such since actual mercenaries were such an integral part of the previous game's plot.

*Resident Evil Code: Veronica* retains what was good in the series from the get-go, and fills the gaps with some gameplay-related things from *Nemesis* and some lore-related things that lead us into *Resident Evil 4*. But, God damn, it is hard, mostly for what I consider wrong reasons, and through the most of it, just as hard to listen to.

## 8.2