

# RESIDENT EVIL 0

**GENRE(S):** Survival horror

**AVAILABLE ON:** GameCube, Nintendo Switch, PC, PlayStation 3, [PlayStation 4](#), Wii, Xbox 360, Xbox One

**DEVELOPED BY:** Capcom

**PUBLISHED BY:** Capcom

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How *Resident Evil 0* came to be is a very odd and complicated story in the history of the franchise. Its development dates back all the way to when the core team originally started making *Resident Evil 2*, and *0* was actually planned as a Nintendo 64-exclusive spin-off more in touch with the one game that originally inspired the franchise, *Sweet Home*. They were so sure about the eventual fruition of the 64-bit project that they actually teased the game in the Nintendo 64 version of *Resident Evil 2*, with the first mention of its secondary protagonist.

However, the script of the game wasn't finished until 1999, when the original PlayStation trilogy of games had already concluded, *Code: Veronica* had been announced for the Dreamcast and Nintendo 64 was getting run over technologically and commercially. Not only was the development team struggling with keeping up to the new standards altogether, their innovative ideas revolving around two simultaneously played characters simply couldn't be realized with the technology at hand. Production of the game shifted to the GameCube in late 2000, and the game's build pretty much had to be started from scratch. The final product was finally unleashed about eight months after the release of the *Resident Evil* remake, and fan reception was mixed to say the least – some considered it S rank, classic *Resident Evil*, while some called it altogether dumb and outdated, confusing and way too hard.

Never minding the naysayers, here I once again found myself hulking up on the fact they once again released a GameCube exclusive *Resident Evil* we had to wait for years to finally make its way to the PlayStation. When it finally did, the same time as the remake, 12 years later – well, if the story behind the

game was odd and complicated, so is the game itself. It's not bad. It's just struggling to make sense, and its perhaps most important unique feature is a consistent pain in the ass, making the game a lot harder than it was probably ever supposed to be. What we – who care – get in return, is priceless lore a true *Resident Evil* fan cannot afford to miss.

A day before the mansion incident in *Resident Evil*, a train with dozens of Umbrella employees on board is attacked by a mysterious young man, who unleashes a pack of virulent leeches on the passengers and crew, turning them into the undead. Some hours later, S.T.A.R.S. Bravo Team is dispatched to investigate a series of murders in the Arklay Mountains. Their helicopter crashlands in Raccoon Forest, near an overturned military police truck where medical officer Rebecca Chambers finds a file on an escaped murderer, former U.S. Marine named Billy Coen. Ordered by her captain, Rebecca splits from the rest of the Bravo Team and searches for Billy in the now motionless train. There, she finds herself stuck in the middle of a zombie nightmare, but gets unexpected help from her soft-spoken quarry.

Considering the time window it was released in, its looks, and having been re-released together with the *Resident Evil* remake in the following years on many platforms, starting with the Wii, it's no wonder at all that the game is often considered a by-product or a companion release for the remake by people who don't know the franchise's history that well. It's nothing of the sort, as it was made by a completely different team and its development started before we could even call *Resident Evil* a franchise, definitely long before anyone could imagine *Resident Evil* being remade. All of these things show, unfortunately. What is certain, is that the game was written by a dedicated team very in love with the franchise; the writers' team was led by the late Noboru Sugimura (1948-2005), who in his own words was a hardcore fan of the first game, and obsessed with the untold lore of Umbrella and the T-Virus. That shows as well, and that's fortunate, because this is the one game in the franchise you will want to play if you're interested in how shit went down and who was ultimately responsible for just about all the horrors of the *Resident Evil* franchise. The backstory's just great. However, the present day storytellers could've been picked better.

When it comes to storytelling, the one person that drags the whole experience down from our angle – or at least mine – is none other than Rebecca Chambers. She has her fans, so I have no choice but to elaborate on some things that I consider obvious. OK, so first of all, the team should've been allowed to play the *Resident Evil* remake before finishing the script, I think that's the problem, that would be one logical explanation as to why in the remake, Rebecca comes off somewhat of a fan or admirer of Umbrella's work. Here she spends hours killing monsters left and right with Umbrella written all over everything. Literally. Tens of files that are signed "Yours truly, Evil Bastard from Umbrella" - and one of the most evil bastards in the bunch is the main antagonist of the game. With all the information she's already supposed to have, regarding Albert Wesker to begin with, Chris' mission in *Resident Evil* would've been over a lot quicker. Besides, if Rebecca is this good at everything, Chris could've just taken her along, not kept her cooped up in some save room (oh I'm so glad he didn't).

Billy Coen is a decent, but obviously single-use addition to the line of male protagonists of *Resident Evil*, despite the fact the development and conclusion of his character arc can be seen from miles away even before he steps in as the second character. And, like to the rest of the game, Rebecca's presence is a distracting factor. Now it's the other way around; since they were already almost done with this game when the remake came out, couldn't they at least give us a little hint that there once was this guy called Billy in the remake? Just one previous mention in a specific port of *Resident Evil 2*, of all games, isn't quite enough to give this guy's mere existence some plausibility.

Again, apart from its choice of leads, the story works. This is most definitely the heaviest game in the franchise when it comes to Umbrella lore, and what I specifically like about it, is its chronicling of the early years and the original creation of the T-Virus, as well as the portrayal of the professional relationship between the main antagonists from both *Resident Evil* and *Resident Evil 2*. *Resident Evil 0* can be a lot of not-so-nice things we'll go into in just a click, but one thing I can't deny is its huge importance to the entire timeline, and how playing through it simply makes you understand the rest of the franchise

better – if you're interested in more than blasting zombies. You'll get more than God's handful of that as well, don't you worry.

The reason why I want to place so much emphasis on how great the game is with lore, is simply that as entertaining as it is at its best, the game is largely clumsy, frustrating and hard beyond all sense. *Nemesis* and *Code: Veronica* were difficult games, for sure, and I still stand behind my claim that the latter is most likely the most difficult game of the old *Evil* breed. The thing is that *Resident Evil 0* really isn't of the old or the new breed, it's not even from the between; it's a one-time deal that's very similar to the old games, yes, and it runs on the same engine as the *Resident Evil* remake, but there's one very distinctive difference between it and every other game in the series. You control and manage two characters simultaneously. Kind of cool, huh? Not really. I'd like each and every fan of old *Resident Evil* reading this to imagine an already difficult game, where each character has six inventory slots. You have to trade items and equipment all the time between them, because you never know what's behind the next corner, and more specifically, you never know when they get separated and have to work through some shitstorm sequence on their very own. This is just the beginning. The constant management and rearrangement doesn't get any easier or comfier with time. It's fucking annoying and distracting.

Ink Ribbons are still required for saving the game, but get this: the item boxes are gone. Since most bigger weapons take up two slots in your inventory and you pretty much have to have one for each character, plus the ammo, plus the healing items, plus the key items, the developers thought that it would be nice if you could just drop your shit anywhere you please, to be picked up later when you need it again. Bringing this feature back from *Sweet Home* after all this time actually wasn't a bad idea at all, but you'll still probably find yourself doing this near typewriters since that's where you need to visit the most often. I know: since day fucking one to this fucking day, *Resident Evil* has pushed you to not save and not use healing items. Take my word for it: as experienced as you might be, do NOT give in to temptation here. Heal and save as much as you can, and be wary of trusting your gut on subsequent playthroughs also. Remember this: the person you're controlling might be in ace shape, you might be doing just fine, but

there's also the tail end of your little caravan you need to watch over all the time – their life meter, and their ammo reserve. If the passive partner dies, it's game over just as well. The general incompetence of the passive partner is the number one reason for the (constant) appearance of the ever so lovely "You Are Dead" screen, mark my words. One more thing that requires your constant and gratuitous attention is seeing that your partner is actually following your lead when you're together, and not just standing around as dumb and defenseless zombie fodder; you never know when some tired and urgent misplaced button press results in splitting up the team at the worst possible moment.

The differences between the two characters are quite tangible. Billy is better with standard handguns than Rebecca, he can withstand a LOT more punishment and he can also push objects that are heavier than your everyday wooden crates. He has a lighter in his special inventory, however it's out of fluid in the beginning of the game. Rebecca can mix herbs, she fits in tight spaces and she has a toolkit to combine chemicals and substances into different compounds that are needed to solve certain puzzles.

*Resident Evil 0* features an all-star cavalcade of enemies, including Hunters and even Tyrant, but also an exclusive enemy called Mimicry Marcus; these utter assholes are extremely difficult to kill with something else besides fire, so here's a free tip: save your Flame Rounds and Molotov Cocktails for whenever you encounter one of these slimy bastards, 'cause they can and will simply feed on all of your other firepower, in addition to the health of both your characters at the same time, due to their long, whip-like arms. Luckily there's only a set amount of these enemies lurking around, and the proper weapons are usually available nearby.

With a very patient combination of luck, trial and error, you will beat this game, and when you do, two additional game modes are unlocked, the latter of which is exclusive to the HD remaster. The first one, *Leech Hunter*, has Rebecca and Billy running around the Umbrella training facility – the mansion of the game – searching for leech-shaped charms. The ultimate goal here is to kill all enemies and collect each and every charm there is, but you can end the game at any time by exiting the mansion, and you'll get

ranked based on how many of those little fossils you found, and a bonus item to boot. The exclusive mode is a fun one: Wesker Mode. Here, Billy is "replaced" with Albert Wesker; not the human version from the main story, but the T-powered half-vampire from *Code: Veronica* and beyond. He has also "possessed" Rebecca, as she also has red irises and a black leather outfit, but her skill set is of the standard variety, whereas Wesker himself can kill zombies and some other enemies just by staring at them. Seriously. It's quite cool, it makes for a good, fast second round, since you'll be able to preserve truckloads of ammunition by having Wesker around.

*Resident Evil 0* is one damn hard game to review, 'cause it has its obvious ups and even more obvious downs. It's a game serious *Resident Evil* fans just must play, but for any casual players, it's one game you might want to skip unless you're in for a serious challenge for all the seriously wrong reasons. Even though I spent a lot of time destroying its casting choices, I think the final rating should be based on the gameplay alone, otherwise it's too much of a conflict and rating the game down the middle would be unfair and unethical. As soon as I got past the most terrible quirks of the two-character gameplay and beat the game for a second time, I realized that while *Resident Evil 0* is not from the most glorious end of the franchise history, I hold the entirety of this pseudo-spin-off in a slightly higher regard than *Nemesis* or *Resident Evil 6*.

## 7.2