

SHERLOCK HOLMES VERSUS JACK THE RIPPER

We review Sherlock Holmes for Xbox 360. Read our thoughts.

Posted by [Dan Pearson](#) on Dec 1, 2009 19:46

Ask most under 20 year olds today if Sherlock Holmes was real and they would say yes. I don't know what happened to make the lines between fiction and fact blur so much, but this game does not help, where they have taken a real event, on this occasion the Jack the Ripper murders from 1888 and plonked our fictional opium smoking detective in the mix to solve the mystery. Even the box states real case reports from the crimes have been used for authenticity, again seamlessly mixing fact with fiction. Next in the series, the true tale of Jessica Fletcher versus Charles Manson.

Reality checks aside, I have of late enjoyed detective games like this which are sadly few and far between on consoles. The slower pace and deductive thinking of games like CSI tend to get overshadowed by loud explosions and twitch reactions of Modern Warfare 2. Just because it has not got a multimillion pound investment does not make it a bad game.



The game starts with the villainous Jack the Ripper killing his first victim on a dark Whitechapel street. You witness the murder through Jack's eyes, with a cockney prostitute about to sell her wares before Jack strangles and then guts the victim. It all sounds a little gory, but with the power of suggestion doing most of the work it is still powerful, if a little unnerving.

The following morning we join Watson and Holmes enjoying their usual repartee, with Watson coming across the murders in the papers, piquing Holmes's interest, who comes across as a stropky and bossy chap, ordering Watson to find his map of Whitechapel before they depart for the police station. Controlling each character is very simple and you can change from a fixed camera showing the whole area to a first person view with ease. Holding the left trigger will highlight any area of interest with a hand or magnifying glass, with either Holmes or Watson giving you a brief description. Once the map is found the game is then afoot and you make your way to Whitechapel. Seeing Holmes play many angles and never showing his full intentions is great and is very in keeping with this classic character, with plenty of dialog between characters and the game giving you the occasional prompt to ask more questions.

Whilst investigating the murders you will need to do favours to earn vital info, these are usually quick fetch or chat missions but occasionally involve a short puzzle like cracking a combination lock or making a walking stick from assorted parts and clues given by other characters.

Each of Jack's victims have a few gameplay events surrounding them, the first is to investigate the crime scene, as Holmes you can walk around and look at points of interest with Watson taking notes. You can also investigate the body with a magnifying glass, again looking for clues like bruises, blood splatter and knife wounds. With this information you then need to deduce a plausible hypothesis using the notes taken by Watson. The notes are put on a board with you linking and working out exactly what happened and possible methods of death, for example, the way the throat is slit indicates a left handed assassin. Once all pieced together you then recreate a crime scene, sadly for Watson he inevitably plays the victim, with Holmes practicing numerous ways to stab and strangle until satisfied. In this mode you play as a director of sorts, choosing which hands to use, what part of the body to attack and positions of the people involved. With a play button and multiple camera angles you can work out exactly what happened, get it wrong and Holmes will advise what the problem could be, allowing you to try again.

The game takes a very realistic viewpoint with an angle as indicative of that era, Police and locals thought only a Jew could carry these murders as an Englishman could not possibly do such horrible atrocities. There is also plenty of lore surrounding Jack, referring to the original case notes like involving the Leather Apron suspect and Sherlock fans will pick up on a few nods to his previous cases, though a little has been taken from both the books and TV versions.

Though there is a lot of running around you soon figure out there is a quick travel option, taking you to most hot spots in town, cutting down the tedious searching as remembering where you going in the maze like London using just the map can be difficult.



Graphically this title isn't screaming HD but it does a good job of putting you in the era with cobbled streets, horse and carts, street kids running around and lots of smog. I really need to mention the quality of the voice actors, most of them, especially Watson sound great, with plenty of passion and conviction on their lines and the occasional cheesy cockney, sadly Holmes is a bit of a letdown, the quality sounds like the designers did not put the original recordings through any sort of production, giving it a very raw sound, plus the actor just seems to reel off his lines, making it very unbelievable and a little hard to follow. It is a shame that the lead role lets the rest of the characters down like this.

Sherlock Holmes versus Jack the Ripper is a rarity that really makes you work those grey cells and puts you in the great detective's shoes as he tries to capture one of the most famous murderers of all time. Don't let the graphics and pace put you off, this is a gripping tale.

Our Rating for Sherlock Holmes Versus Jack The Ripper	
8.5	Story Play as Holmes and Watson as you try and deduce who Jack the Ripper is.
8.0	Lastability The gripping storyline and taxing puzzles will keep you hooked until the end.

9.0	Playability Having a third and first person view caters to all play styles and the easy to follow controls lets you concentrate on the great story as it unfolds.
7.5	Originality A PC conversion that translates well to the Xbox 360.
6.0	Graphics Not really pushing the Xbox 360 but good enough.
8.0	Sound Loads of great voice acting let down by a poor leading man.
8.0	Overall If you have ever had an interest in Sherlock, Jack the Ripper or detective stories in general then this is a solid game with some great puzzles that will entertain for days.