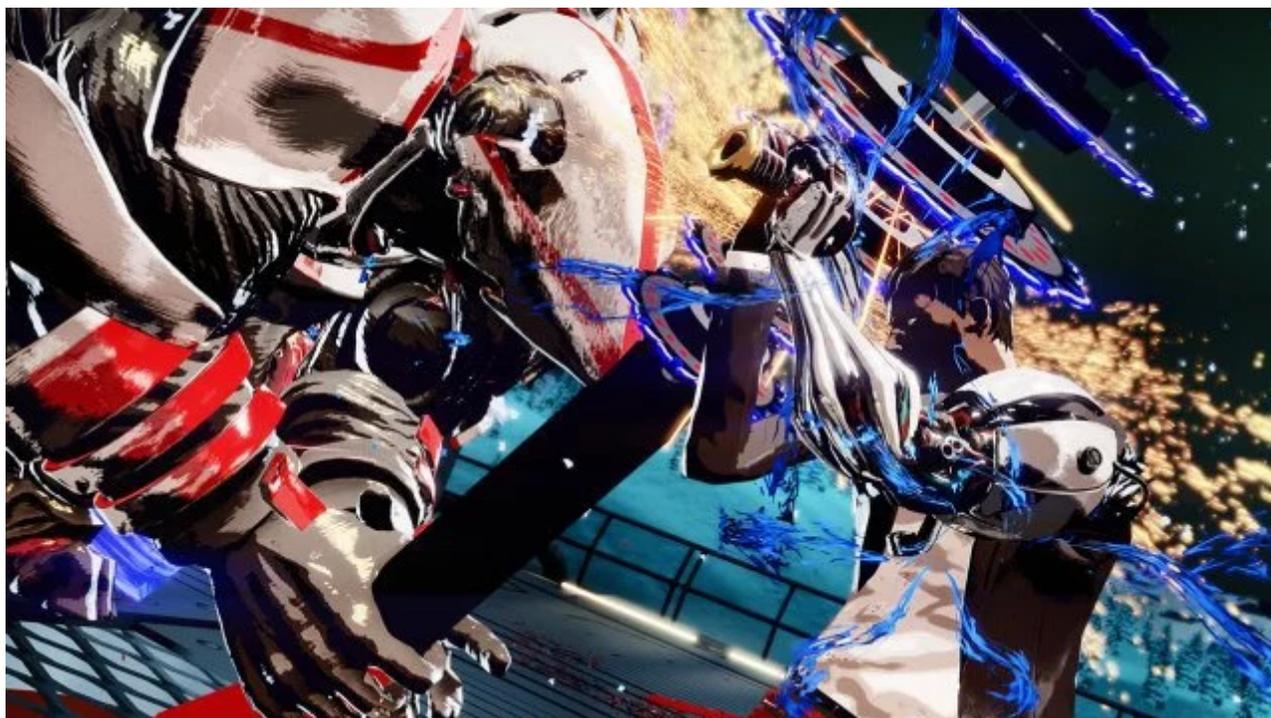


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Killer Is Dead Review – Let Me Play Already

Grasshopper Manufacture and Suda 51 tell a long story about nothing.

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At the very least, Grasshopper Manufacture creates game worlds where the phrase, “I stayed on the moon last week,” casually leads to all people listening to nod their heads in understanding. *Killer Is Dead* fails to portray the token weirdness of previous Grasshopper games, and when that realization dawns, the shifted focus on gameplay and story quickly exposes the game’s flaws. Despite its short length, *Killer Is Dead* still manages to effectively waste your time with seemingly endless, pointless cutscenes



and too infrequent moments of play.

Mondo Zappa works for a government funded assassination agency where he carries out contracts killing local trouble makers. With his Genkkou Katana and robotic left arm called the Musselback, Mondo easily dispatches enemies with plenty of time left for the ladies. Like most Grasshopper games, *Killer Is Dead* injects themes of sexuality all throughout the game.

While the amount of cleavage shots and sex jokes doesn't even compare to the total found in games like *No More Heroes* or *Lollipop Chainsaw*, this time Grasshopper and Suda 51 opted for the creepier, more sexist Gigolo missions to get their perversion across. The Gigolo missions place Mondo on a date with a female friend. With the goal of heading to the bedroom established early, when she looks away, you must stare at your date's naughty parts to raise your Guts meter. Muster enough Guts and you can give her presents to increase her Love meter. You know, like real life.



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I wanted to avoid bringing up the Gigolo missions so quickly, but their necessity to gain better weapons forces you to endure not only legitimately boring spamming of L1 to stare, but it forces to endure the secondary embarrassment for those associated with *Killer Is Dead*.

Once you complete the encounters with the Gigolo missions, you can finally focus on enjoying actually playing *Killer Is Dead*. But once again, Grasshopper puts another barrier between you and actually engaging in combat. The story, without question, brings *Killer Is Dead* to a painfully slow crawl. In between the 12 chapters that clock around 20 minutes each, Grasshopper fills the time with cutscene after cutscene adding nothing of value to the story. Mondo will break the fourth wall to make jokes about “the game” and “the player,” but his banter just pads the game’s length.

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Majority of *Killer Is Dead* ultimately prevents from enjoying the only redeemable quality of the game, the combat. To add another barrier, on about three different missions, you will enter this dream state where Mondo fights with his past trying to make sense of his memories. In these dream states Grasshopper locks Mondo to this incredibly slow walk that you cannot skip. As you walk, the floor assembles in front of you leading you to (you know what’s coming) another endless cutscene! You will eventually enter combat in these dream states but not after you built up this unhealthy anxiety from your continually tested patience.

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When you get passed the loading screens, cut scenes (which you can thankfully skip), menus, Gigolo missions and dream states, you will find simple to learn, but flashy, sword combat. Attack, block, and Guard Break all map to their own buttons. While combos don't extend beyond just pressing the attack button constantly, well timed block and dodges (like block but performed while moving) allow for flashy kills and executions. Using his left arm, he can transform it into guns and drills to kill at range or powerful melee attacks. You won't find a large variety of Wires – the enemies in *Killer Is Dead* – that force a change in your approach, but the combat rewards all players with impressive displays of Mondo's attacks, not just those who excel in the combat.

Just as you start to enjoy slashing Wires in half and upgrading to new abilities, the mission ends. Missions typically don't last very long and the game always stops you prematurely. Couple the s

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ing the path to the combat, and you quickly develop this sense anxiousness to jump right back into the combat. Since the side missions (although very short) just threw you into game to complete the objective, I ended enjoying the side missions more than the main game.

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You can make the argument that Grasshopper didn't focus on the story and instead focused on the combat, but no developer would put the same amount of time and effort into cutscenes to want players to just skip over them. The dream state missions just act as evidence showing the commitment to telling some sort of story that you will not care about.



While in combat, you will immediately notice some technical and graphical stylized problems. Any tight corridors or small rooms will be pitch black, and you will stare at your television without a clue of what appears on your screen. The bright neon colors and explosions contrast well against the black for some awesome effects, though areas with little vegetation or objects look like black voids. *Killer Is Dead* also suffers from

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inexcusable screen tearing that feels like playing a game on an analog airport departure board.

The unnecessary attention to a worthless story and the fluff preventing you from enjoying the combat in *Killer Is Dead*, only gets worse with the technical problems and a juvenile approach to sexual themes. You can skip cutscenes to speed the process, but the optional Gigolo missions that provide valuable weapons, make them necessary and obtrusive. At the end of it all, you will wish that the time spent waiting at loading screens or watching cutscenes, were spent actually playing.

Final Verdict

4 out of 10

Killer Is Dead was developed by Grasshopper Manufacture and published by XSEED Games. It was released on August 27th, at the MSRP of \$59.99. A copy was provided by the publisher for the purposes of review.

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