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BioShock Infinite makes gaming real

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By [John Powell - G4 Canada](#)

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One thing we have learned from 'BioShock Infinite' is the world above the clouds is just as screwed up as the world under the water.

Truthfully, with all of its racist, totalitarian and extreme religious undertones in Infinite's Columbia, I think I would rather take my chances with Rapture and its Big Daddies any day.

When it comes to the racial divide in 1912 America, Irrational Games and 2K Games must be commended for keeping with the time period and including such a controversial theme. They could have easily dodged the issue and nobody would have been the wiser. Most of us are not used to seeing that level of contempt and cannot help becoming emotional invested in the plight of the characters and Columbia as a whole.



Above anything else, the BioShock series has become known for grand stories with grand twists. The kind you would find in any decent Hollywood movie. Infinite doesn't disappoint. For all intents and purposes, the floating city of Columbia is the main character. A marvel of technology, the city drifts in the clouds as a result of "quantum levitation" (Whatever that means) and the use of blimps, balloons. Airships, cable cars connect the different parts of the city.



As Booker DeWitt, part bounty hunter, mercenary and private investigator, you arrive in Columbia as a civil war breaks out. Assorted factions are trying to wrest control of Columbia away from religious fanatic Father Zachary Hale Comstock who vilifies Abraham Lincoln and worships the likes of John Wilkes Booth.

Booker has been contracted to rescue a woman to clear a debt. The free-spirited Elizabeth has been imprisoned in Columbia and observed as some sort of living experiment most of her natural life. She has had little contact with the outside world. Her guardian and only friend is Songbird, a giant mechanical bird, who has been programmed to become enraged like a spurned lover if she were to ever escape, which she does courtesy of Booker.

Elizabeth accompanies Booker on most of his journey and unlike many AI characters, she is actually quite helpful. You never have to babysit her. She can dodge, hide on her own. When you are in need, she provides you with ammo, first aid, mystical energy (salt) and even cash. She also picks locks and can open dimensional tears. By breaching other dimensions when asked to, Elizabeth can reveal useful objects such as barriers to hide behind, hooks to swing from and even weapon caches.



All in all, she is the best video game date ever since Cortana.

Booker is no slouch himself. Just like Bioshock's Jack, he acquires elemental powers (vigor) which require salt to power. Along with the traditional lightning strikes, fireballs and water spouts, he can levitate baddies; summon a flock of savage crows or even possess enemies so they fight alongside instead of against him.

The unfriendly denizens of Columbia thankfully outnumber those found in BioShock, which became a bit stale after your fifth or sixth encounter. Columbia has clockwork robot patriots, flame-throwing firemen, armoured beasts and screeching ghosts that can resurrect the dead. If those weren't strange enough, you have giant cyborgs called Handymen and teleporting wraith-like figures with coffins chained to their backs: Zealots of the Lady. There is no shortage of enemies just waiting to shred you to teeny-tiny pieces.



If 'Infinite' has a shortcoming, it is in its level design, structure. For the most part, gameplay goes like this...you arrive in a large communal area via cable car or having swung along the rail-based highway. You search that area for ammo, money and maybe encounter some baddies. You enter simple buildings, explore, search them or complete tasks as

required, crack some skulls and then it is on to the next building hub. On and on we go. The only real exception is the very start of the game. There isn't much free-roaming. You are pretty much stuck to that rail pulling you along, just like in the other BioShock titles.

Reminiscent of 'Inception', 'Infinite' is also weighed down by a plot that is far too heady and clever for its own good. The finale is especially overwrought, over-written and overstays its welcome.

Overall though, Irrational Games and 2K Games have truly outdone themselves. They continue to broaden the definition of a video game by carving out their own path. 'BioShock Infinite' is a triumph of imagination, creativity and technology.



BioShock Infinite
Format: Xbox 360
Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: Irrational Games
ESRB Rating: M for Mature

Official Site: <http://www.bioshockinfinite.com>

Rating: 9 / 10



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