City of Villains Review: City of Heroes -City of Villains Re-Review - Edit

Where are all the bad guys?

That was how I felt reentering the world of Cities of Villains and, for an older game, it makes sense. The population has grown up and is PvP-ing and hanging out with the other big kids, so it was a lonely trip back. But even in older MMORPGs, you can see new players or alt players running around, looking to group while they level up fast. You feel immersed in a world populated by others, but being a villain, creating an evil character, running around? It felt, well, kinda lonely.

The uniqueness about Cities is how easy it is to get attached to your particular character, and the desire to take that character to the ultimate goal: PvP -- battling those awfully good guys in the case of Villains.

So much has been said about the ability to customize a character, and I still feel it's one of the best boons of Cities, in both the Heroes and the Villains. I spent a lot of time customizing my character and getting everything 'just right.' This ability to create such a unique character grants almost immediate investment. The only complaint I have is with the monster face. I just can't find a body that looks right with the face. The rest? I could spend hours just dressing a superhero, and probably lost some prime play time trying out the many different variations. I settled on a Brute with Technology origin, with a great kick-ass leather duster. If you're going to be a villain, you might as well do it right.

Origins

The origin of each Villain can be selected from Science, Mutation, Magic, Technology and Natural and each origin has its own unique power. Mutants are born with it, Science deliberately sought it, Magic is sought after or bargained for with Technology is for those who alone have no powers but use tech to enhance or create powers, and Natural is the development of super-like powers through training and honed skills. Each origin comes with allowed enhancements ranging from Training and Gadget to Genetic Alteration and Dimensional Entity.

I chose the Technology brute, and selected my primary power set -- electrical melee over dark melee and a secondary set. The secondary power set tends to be the defensive powers -- for instance, my secondary set, Stone Armor, provides some pretty serious defensive shielding.

Once set up, I ran into the city, ready to do villainous deeds and gain infamy...

...after I ran through the tutorial... it's been a while...

Brief word on Contacts and Cell Phones

I hate running around. After all, as a Villain, naturally, I'm lazy at heart. If I had minions, I wouldn't even be running around. I'd be sitting in a lair somewhere orchestrating evil. This is where, in the modern world of the Rogue Isles, cell phone technology comes in. After you've completed your first missions, your contact will share his cell phone number, and other contacts' cell phone numbers once you meet them. Never again will you traipse back and forth to your contact to find out the next mission. You can just call!

Villainous Deeds

Once I entered the Isles, things got lonely. It seemed to be just me and some hungry zombies. Now, one of the greatest joys of playing Cities is the team/group experience so not having anyone around to group with was slightly discouraging and made leveling feel much slower.

The missions are key in both City of Heroes and City of Villains, and this is where I felt less than evil. I felt more like a hero from Paragon City in an alternate world that was just grungier, darker and a bit more tattered on the edges. Though the mission was always to do some dastardly deed, often related to destroying a competitor or stealing from someone, the nature of the mission and the task itself seemed to blend with each mission until they all felt the same. There wasn't a lot of variation in the stories. Most were basic, cut to the chase missions with very little story, a clear objective, and geared toward the 'easy to beat' side. They were also slightly addictive. See, I like goals and I like clear-cut instructions: go here, do this, get rewarded. I became obsessed with getting the next mission, because of the instant-gratification gained by their completion. I became so obsessed with completing mission after mission, that, after having played for a week alone, I missed my one and only invitation to join a team! I also liked the fact that at the end of each mission, I could select 'exit' rather than having to run back to the entrance.

One thing I did notice when doing the missions solo, rather than with a group, was the wonky AI. It seemed like the mobs were being polite, waiting until I was ready to face them. There were several occasions where I charged in and should have been mobbed, but instead only pulled one, two or at most

three mobs.

Outside of the instances, I found that the real focus was on missions rather than exploring. Most doors wouldn't open, and while I understand the impracticality of having every door in the city open it didn't stop me from trying.

Wandering around the world, I did get the feeling of being stuck in an urban jungle, trapped by skyscrapers and part of a world that never got to see the country-side often -- and I felt it added to the game, this feeling of urban decaying life. I would have liked to have seen some more wandering mobs but the overall feel was right. The NPCs were either trying to kill me or wandering around in a dejected, please-don't-mug-me fashion. After practicing some of my skills I found myself in the Architect Mission building.

Mission Architect

This is something I want to try my hand at, very badly, but haven't yet done. From everything I've read and heard, the ability to create your own missions is a somewhat revolutionary, but risky, breakthrough in MMOs, though my gut says it would be more fun to create a mission than to run around someone else's, and I can't wait to create one.

After I got tired of running around the world, I returned to my disturbingly OCD-like compulsion to complete more and more missions, clearing map after map after map.

Mayhem Missions

The Mayhem Missions are more fun than the normal missions -- because there is an element of urgency: the instanced missions give you only so much time once you begin to complete the task. It does add variety to the sameness of the missions -- you can't just wander around exploring every corner at your own speed before you accomplish a mission -- you have to accomplish your task against the clock. In Villains, it's another way to feel a bit more evil -- steal something, engage in civil disobedience -- get out. And quick. These missions add some variety but aside from the time factor, have the same issues missions from contacts have. This feature, more than anything else, helps the player to actually feel like a "bad guy."

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