

Video Game Choice: Knights of the Old Republic

For my game this semester, I have chosen to play *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*, often known simply as *KotOR*. Several elements contributed to this decision. First of all, *KotOR* seems to be an excellent game, as indicated by great reviews across a variety of game ranking sources (<http://www.gamerankings.com>). In addition to this, I am a long time fan of the Star Wars series, especially the original three movies, which immediately attracted me to this game. Finally, I am interested in *KotOR*'s morality system, which allows players to affiliate with either the light or dark side of the force, as determined by their actions throughout the game. With these factors in mind, choosing *KotOR* was an easy decision.

The outstanding reviews *KotOR* received across the board played an important role in my selection of this game. The website www.gamerankings.com, which combines rankings from a variety of resources, gave *KotOR* a score of 94% based on 105 media outlets. Included in these sources are two of the video game websites I trust in particular, <http://www.ign.com> and <http://www.gamespot.com>. Gamespot.com awarded *KotOR* its editor's choice award, and in both his written and video reviews, editor Greg Kasavin sings the game's praises, his only real complaint being the somewhat spotty graphics, an issue which doesn't particularly concern me (Kasavin, 2003 [1]; Kasavin, 2003 [2]). In his review on ign.com, Aaron Boulding provides a similar description, with a bit more of an emphasis on the story (Boulding, 2003). Both reviews rave about the voice-acting and sound effects in the game, and conclude that the game as a whole is definitely worth

playing (Kasavin, 2003 [1]; Kasavin, 2003 [2]; Boulding, 2003). This viewpoint was echoed during personal interviews. All the people I spoke to recommended the game highly, some to the point of claiming it is one of the best games they have played (Rust, 2007; Dersh, 2007).

One sentiment echoed throughout my research is that this game represents the original ideas of Star Wars through and through. Both Kasavin and Boulding claim that *KotOR* holds up the tradition of the original Star Wars better than any other game, and that it is superior even the newer Star Wars movies. Everything from the music and light saber sound effects, to the general attitude of the characters, to the theme of light versus dark is a throwback to the original Star Wars I know and love (Kasavin, 2003 [1]; Kasavin, 2003 [2]; Boulding, 2003). Also, according to my friend Devin Dersh, one of the biggest Star Wars fans I know, *KotOR*, tells a lot of the back story of the Star Wars series, providing a look at the history of both the Jedi and the Sith, and an explanation for the state of the republic during the movies (Dersh, 2007). By playing this game, I hope to obtain a more in depth look at the sci-fi world I came to love as a child, and even to take part in the actions first hand.

Another aspect of *KotOR* which intrigues me is the system of customization and morality. The elements of customization include your character's appearance as well as the skill set at which they excel. Perhaps more interesting is the constant choice between good and evil. Each decision you make, and apparently there are a lot of them, influences your characters status as either light or dark (Kasavin, 2003 [1]; Kasavin, 2003 [2]; Boulding, 2003; Dersh 2007; Reiner 2007). In my conversation with my friend Ian Rust, he explained some of the small touches that make this system even better.

Apparently not only does your character's appearance change to mirror their moral leanings, but other party members react differently to your main character, depending on their own status as light or dark (Rust, 2007). In addition, the impressive plot culminates in one of two separate endings, depending on whether your character is good or evil (Rust 2007; Reiner, 2003). This gives the game a high replay value, and I will most likely play through once as light side and once as dark. Indeed it is the system of customization and morality that seems to set *KotOR* apart from many other games and the area from which I expect to learn the most.

Works Cited

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