



DEAD ISLAND RIPTIDE

Just another day at the beach • Words: Nick Pino

From the minute the game leaves port, it's clear: *Dead Island Riptide* will never sail worlds beyond its tepidly received predecessor, *Dead Island* (it scored a 2.5 in @GAMER 14). What the follow-up does right—however small—advances its predecessor's wobbly shamble and contributes to a large improvement. Yet, what it continues to do wrong is tough to overlook.

I'll admit this outright: I was part of the vocal minority that, even with all its bugs, foibles, and less-than-perfect exterior, still really liked *Dead Island*. If you missed the first game, *Riptide* pulls you into the current by recapping the original's story, then quickly

sets out to mend the series' somewhat disjointed narrative. At this point, you can either import your previous *Dead Island* character or start fresh with a new protagonist beginning at level 15. Though importing my old hero kept most of my skill tree intact, I quickly traded Level 31 Logan's middle-of-the-road abilities for the chance to play as series newcomer—and clear Wolverine clone—John Morgan (see the "Meet Morgan, Bub" sidebar).

Where *Riptide* breaks free from its too-tedious past, however, is with its

new safe-haven defense scenarios. These Horde-like, protect-the-base-with-your-life interims break the static fetch-quest feeling left over from the original. And with the satisfying ratcheting-down in difficulty this time around, combat never got as irritating as it frequently did in *Dead Island*.

The occasional hiccup and glitch still occur, forcing you to double back to your last checkpoint, but these moments are few and shouldn't be enough to scare you away from this progressively improving series. ◎

IMPROVES ON THE ORIGINAL WITH ITS SAFE-HAVEN DEFENSE SCENARIOS