

# Review of *Clock Tower 3*

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*Clock Tower 3* is a survival horror for Playstation 2, published in North American in March 2003 by Capcom. I had been awaiting its release for months because I love horror in video games.

In *Clock Tower 3*, the main character is Alyssa, a 14 year old schoolgirl in England. Something fishy is up, & she suspects her mother needs her help. Was her mother killed by the killers that she meets fairly early in the game?

I had forgotten how much I love horror. I hadn't played a new one in about a year, maybe longer. This one isn't like *Resident Evil* in that you (get this) don't get to shoot back. Hell, even *Fatal Frame* allowed you to hurt the ghosts in some way. In *Clock Tower 3*, you have three choices: dowse the monster with holy water to stun it momentarily (but you can only carry 3 doses of holy water), hide, or RUN! That's it. You spend a lot of time & effort ditching the baddies or hiding from them. At times, it can make for a tense experience.

During boss battles, Alyssa transforms, sort of like people do in anime movies, where they're fed-up & their super-powered inner selves come out. (Yeah, corny, I agree.) Alyssa's transformation has much of the visual pizazz of those in animes, but the result is different. Instead of turning into, say, a super-powered mechanoid that can bust planets, Alyssa becomes . . . a person who can hit back. That's it. Okay, okay, she hits back with a bow-&-arrow, & if she gets a really, really good, arguably "perfect", shot, the baddie is stunned while Alyssa fills him with arrow holes, but she's hardly a planet busting machanoid. And the odds are against her. Where Alyssa can survive about 4 direct attacks from a boss, a boss has hundreds of hit points, & one shot from Alyssa does about 1 hit point of damage.

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I finished the first boss, & it was rough. On the other hand, I usually hate boss fights, but I liked these. Sure, they were frustrating, but they were fun. There was a sort of rhythm to them, & it made for a good experience. I'd say this was the most fun I've ever had in boss battles. Yeah, definitely.

Outside of boss battles, there are no hit points. Instead, Alyssa has a panic level. When she's near a baddie or attacked by one, her panic level increases, the music intensifies, & at high levels of panic, you can hear her breath & hear her heart beat. If the panic meter fills up, she panics. You can't control her as well, & the display is distorted somewhat. (I wouldn't be surprised if the display at these times doesn't show items that you can otherwise pick up.) You have to get Alyssa away from the baddies, preferably to a hiding space, until her panic level decreases & Alyssa returns to the world of the more-or-less sane.

A nice touch to the game is that Alyssa sometimes has to get on her hands-&knees to crawl through holes or under things. At first, I thought it was silly, but now that I've been playing a while, I see that it fits perfectly in a horror game. Crawling isn't the posture of a gun-toting adult who is in control of the situation.

The graphics & voice acting are good or better. There's a generous helping of movie cut scenes; all of them are good, & a few of them are outstanding. (If I remember right, the one that introduces you to the third chapter/level is the best.) Also, the soundtrack is good or better at all times, & in a few places, it's outstanding.

My main problem with *Clock Tower 3* was the camera & control. It uses a direction scheme like that of *Devil May Cry*, where the character moves in the direction you push the controls relative to the camera, but the camera tends to change at inconvenient times. It can make control frustrating. The camera is mostly stationary, though it sometimes tracks Alyssa. Overall, I prefer *Silent Hill's* camera & controls, though *Clock Tower 3's* are pretty good. I know that a lot of people really like this type of control scheme.

The first couple of bosses were seriously, grimly frightening, but the later ones were a little silly. The later bosses were still frightening, & I really liked the next-to-last pair, but they had elements of silliness.

To compare *Clock Tower 3* with *Fatal Frame* & the *Silent Hills*: CT3 is not quite as frightening as FF & not quite as disturbing as the SHs. (FF is very scary but not very disturbing, & the SHs are very disturbing but not as frightening most of the time.) CT3 has more action & excitement than FF or the SHs. So CT3 finds a nice niche for itself in the genre.

Anyway, if you like horror, check out *Clock Tower 3* for Playstation 2.

## References

[Sto03] Gene Michael Stover. Review of clock tower 3. *personal web site*, March 2003. <http://www.CyberTiggyr.COM/gene/htdocs/ct3/>.