

Review of *Rez*

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1 Summary

Pure shooting satisfaction.
Scores 9 out of 10.

2 What Rez Is

Rez is a video game by, um, Sega, I guess, though the box is on the other side of the room & I'm too lazy to go over there to verify my own words. At the time I'm writing this (13 July 2002), *Rez* isn't new. I believe it was published late 2001 or early 2002. It runs on Sony Playstation 2.

I bought *Rez* just today because I had read some pretty good, though not raving, reviews of it. It took me this long to get around to buying *Rez* because, well, it just wasn't high on my video game wish list.

3 Impressions After One Afternoon

I haven't been playing the game the entire afternoon. I've played about 3 hours in many sittings of about 30 to 45 minutes each.

The premise behind *Rez* is that you are a network intruder in a world that has a consensual, neon-trimmed Matrix like those in William Gibson's cyberpunk novels. You're breaking through many levels of security as you attempt to reach the center of the network to correct a serious problem in the network itself.

The game is an arcade-style shooter. It reminds me a lot of *Tempest*, which is one of the few arcade-style shooters I like, & which I still play on PS1. Your avatar/shooter is flying through cyberspace, & you must shoot & destroy the hordes of anti-intruder security programs (a.k.a. monsters) that try to stop you. Besides reminding me of Gibson's Matrix for its graphics & *Tempest* for

shooting hordes of baddies, *Rez* reminds me of *Tron* for its premise & some of its visual elements.

Rez isn't just *Tempest* with a story from *Tron* & a face-lift from *Neuromancer*. It contributes some elegant twists to the arcade shooter genre. The most prominent such element is that you don't press a fire button to shoot. Instead, you sweep the cursor across targets while you hold the X button to select your targets, & you release the button to shoot all those targets. I know my description doesn't make it sound very appealing, but it works really well. What's more, there's a catchy, energetic, but not too tense sound-track that melds with the sound-effects to make an almost interactive music-making experience. Hell, I almost suspect the sound-track adjusts itself according to how I play, but I'm not sure.

The graphics are mostly in a neon style. They lack the detail that's common in other current video games, but it's appropriate & appealing for the concept of the game. And a lot of the scenes in the game are imaginative & even inspiring, such as when entering the presence of the boss for a level.

The music & the visuals all combines to makes for an abstract, smooth, catchy, rhythmic shooting experience. Like I said, it reminds me of *Tempest*, but not as tense & jittery. This is pretty much what I read in the reviews that led me to *Rez*.

For what it's worth at this state (having played *Rez* for less than a day), I suspect it'll have good replay appeal, even after I complete all the levels.

Rez is an elegant, imaginative little game. It's a nice break from the *Soul Reavers*, *Silent Hills*, & *Fatal Frames* that make up my usual gaming fair. Highly recommended.

4 The Next Day

At this point, I've completed levels 1 through 3, & I've had my butt kicked a few times by the boss on level 4.

As you'd expect, the music & the visuals get better on successive levels, but I didn't know how good they could get. Level 4 has surpassed my imagination. It's still in the neon, abstract style of the previous levels, so nothing is technically different, but it's almost stunningly clever. Some graphics artist earned his pay when he designed the end of level 4. So I'm upgrading my recommendation from "high" to "if you are one of my gaming buddies, you *will* be coming over to play *Rez* soon". And if you're someone I don't know, you could do worse than to go out & buy *Rez* in the next day or two.

5 Four Months Later

Rez is thoroughly one of my five favorite games. It's a great way to spent half an hour after work every few days. I like to play standing in front of the TV

so I can tap my feet & move around¹ to the music. It's fun to experiment with different rhythms & patterns of shooting to see how they affect the music.

I highly recommend *Rez*, even for people who, like me, don't normally like shooters.

¹Dare I call it dancing?