

Lending a hand to old school fighting games

God Hand

Playstation 2
Clover Studios
Capcom
Rated M for Mature
On sale now

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After years of playing game after game, it can sometimes become difficult not to judge a case by its cover graphics, so to speak. Often, it's easier to simply look at a few screenshots and maybe a video of a game, and pass judgment over its general quality, without actually laying your calloused thumbs on the controller. However, it does pay to give some of those passed-over games a try. You may just find a diamond in the rough; you may just find that, under its unpolished visuals and odd premise, there's a game that's quite enjoyable—and, the first time I used an ethereal baseball bat to knock a guerilla wearing a wrestling mask straight into space, I knew that *God Hand* was one of those games.

Made by Clover Studios—creators of *Viewtiful Joe* and *Okami*—*God Hand* follows Gene, a skinny, well-toned badass alpha male who likes nothing more than a good fight. The game's title refers to Gene's right arm, called the God Hand, which apparently possesses some very awesome power. The story—though you can barely call it that—has Gene battle all sorts of other fighters, including a trio of scheming demons, who want this power; since Gene's got a score

to settle with them anyway, combat inevitably follows. Along the way, Gene fights a number of hilarious villains, including a fat Hispanic demon who likes to eat people, a pair of flamboyantly gay, scantily clad exotic dancers and a dominatrix who's so evil, she kicks puppies.

What *God Hand* does provide, though, is an entertaining, if not nostalgic, experience for anyone in the mood for a good beat-'em-up game.

But let's be clear: *God Hand* is nothing more or less than an old fashioned 3D fighter. However, it just happens to be one of the few games of its kind that's actually any good. For one, the game has a very irreverent and distinctive sense of style. Any fans of *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* will really get a kick out of some of the mohawk-sporting biker dudes that are gunning after Gene in the game's corroded and seemingly desolate environments. The audio is also great, with plenty of hilarious voice acting and dialogue that's rich with pure cheese. Unfortunately, the style is a bit undermined by *God Hand*'s shady visuals. The environments, as stylistic as they are, become repetitive really fast; they're fairly boxy and uninteresting, with plenty of pop-in going on, which means any number



of walls, tables and banisters spontaneously phase for no real reason.

That said, it's a very good thing that the combat in the game is incredibly tight. Over the course of his rather long affair, Gene will gain access to over a hundred different motion-captured moves and *God Hand* powers—with humorous names like “Pimp Hand” and “Kung Fu Mamba”—which can then be bound to each of the face buttons on your controller. There is also a rage meter

that builds up as you fight; when it's full, you can unleash your *God Hand*—or rather, *God Arm*—at the push of a button, making you invulnerable and allowing you to punch away at your enemies until the meter is depleted. Gene may not be able to block, but he can dodge with a flick of the right analog stick in any direction. With an arsenal like that, the combat continually stays fresh and fun, despite the sometimes cookie-cutter enemies you encounter.

However, *God Hand* isn't for everyone. It isn't packed with stunning visuals and realistic physics, so anyone looking for a “next-gen” game and the like should probably look elsewhere. What *God Hand* does provide, though, is an entertaining, if not nostalgic, experience for anyone in the mood for a good beat-'em-up game. With a refreshing sense of style and fairly deep fighting system, *God Hand* is a game that should not be overlooked.

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