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About This Game

In the medieval land known as GALER, a thick fog begins rolling in from coast to coast, and rumors of the dead walking have people in a panic. It is at this time an ancient mind awakes and begins reaching out to some of the last survivors on the planet, having them unite as one force in one of the last surviving kingdoms. These strangers are then faced with a truth so terrifying that they must confront their own inner demons if they ever hope to make a stand against the living dead, for the true force behind it all is waiting on the other side..

Special Features-

Unique dual random battle system- Choose four characters in your immediate party to complete sections of the game, during which there are random encounters happening both in this immediate party as well as back at the home base, choosing from your remaining characters. This allows for added

difficulty in GALER, as a defeat in either random battle results in game over.

Magic creation- Players have the ability to test and create new forms of magic using ingredients collected throughout GALER.

Checking for traps- Not unlike detect traps in Dungeons & Dragons, if a rogue is on your team they can perform a detect traps skill in dungeons.

Appraise items- A player can uncover rare items during the game that can be appraised and equipped as magical weapons/armor

Tons of subplots and hidden storylines- Depending on who is (and who is not) on your immediate party and the time in which you are in certain areas, unique subplots can be revealed that changes the relationships between other characters in the game.

Title: GALER: Plague of Heroes

Genre: RPG

Developer:

Graham Dodge

Publisher:

Graham Dodge

Release Date: 5 May, 2017

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English







galer plague of heroes

Having played hundreds of classic JRPGs, I'm always on the lookout for a fresh experience. Zombies are still a rare appearance in classic JRPGs. "Wolfenhain", a free German RPG, implemented them in a Low Fantasy setting last year. "Galer: Plague of Heroes" is this year's High Fantasy JRPG embodiment.

If you like Final Fantasy VI (large cast of characters, dawning apocalypse scenario) and zombies, bothered to read my review and don't dislike RPG Maker (2003) games, there's a good chance this game might appeal to you.

While the story (see the game description) is executed fairly well (despite\because of a lack of major, but therefore also often unbelievable plot twists), it suffers from typos and a "doughy", seemingly unrelated beginning. If you can make it past that, though, you'll have a hard time finding another JRPG like Galer that forces you this strongly to question your heroes' success. Despair's palpable as you seem to fight a losing battle. This might be the game's greatest merit, as the heroes' victory in other JRPGs is never in any real danger (unless these games deliberately offer "bad ending" or "chaos" routes). Finally, a satisfying ending rounds out the story.

The beginning is typical JRPG fare (visit town, clear dungeon, rinse and repeat). Things get more interesting when the player is granted full control over his own home base. Here, he can change party members, forge equipment, create items and much more. A lot of systems and mechanics have been implemented compared to other JRPGs of this kind. While this is commendable, the player can find enough rare equipment in dungeons without ever having to rely on the opportunities the home base has to offer.

Speaking of implemented mechanics, there's a rather unique one: When traversing the world map, the player doesn't only fight random encounters on the world map, but also random encounters to protect the home base (either-or, so this doesn't mean twice as much random encounters). This feature creates the chance to test all characters in battle and contributes to the story scenario's flair. Furthermore, if the home base party is strong enough to scare monsters away (happens automatically), the player receives a "Wild Card" that awards, when used, a randomly created bonus. The effects range from mere money to (permanent) status-raising items, free level-ups, summons that can be used in battle and even new skills. I deem this mechanic refreshing, but easily abusable once the party members are strong enough. In any case, be prepared for a rather high random encounter rate with no way of mitigating it. Apocalypse isn't known to let the players rest.

When the home base becomes available, the player has to choose a difficulty setting. "Normal" leaves everything as it is, but "difficult" forces the player to buy food rations in order to survive overworld trips. Despite underlining the fight for survival, this feature complicates exploring the world map, so I'm glad it's purely optional. It may very well be this feature doesn't pose a problem anymore once the player is able to travel by (air)ship.

My biggest gripe with the large cast of characters is that there aren't enough meaningful battles for all of them to participate in. There are some scenarios that force the player to use certain party members, but it just isn't enough (so don't expect a "Suikoden"). Especially the game's final stage, despite being intense as hell, wastes a lot of potential in this regard (compare JRPGs like "Legends of Illarion" that force the player to use all party members by forming different parties for simultaneously - successively - fought battles). It doesn't help that many characters receive hardly any development (if any at all). The antagonists aren't anything special, but they get their jobs done. On the other hand, the main characters and their problems are likable and believable. To name a few: Paladins struggling with the fact that the god they believed in may not exist, regular people having to cope with the loss of their friends, a defector having a hard time to be (and feel) accepted - while the wheel isn't reinvented, any JRPG player will feel right at home.

Dependent on which party members the player takes (and sometimes doesn't take!) with him to certain locations, he's awarded with additional story scenes or side quests that become available. The player can discover enough hints to find most of the optional stuff, but he's likely to miss something without developer's knowledge. Most of the side quests unlock scenes from the past of certain characters, which the player can view at the home base. There are also some "one-time only dungeons" and other permanently missable things. Thus, be aware that this game can be frustrating for completionists, particularly as it doesn't offer any replay value.

Another typical problem that comes with (too) many party members: The player doesn't know which characters will be useful until the end. Should you level up your characters evenly or concentrate on a few select ones? It's definitely the latter for this

game. Since there are enough (voluntary) opportunities to grind and even to buy level-ups for party members (using money earned in-game at the home base, requiring increasing amounts of money at higher levels), any player will be able to circumnavigate potential "roadblocks". The game features some unwinnable boss battles, though, a device I truly despise. This is even more aggravating considering this game could really use more boss battles in general. Fortunately, at least the ones available can be exciting and force the player to make full use of all his battle options.

Battles feature the standard RPG Maker 2003 system, which means ATB ("active time battles") like in earlier Final Fantasy games. Bars fill up for your party members, and if a bar is completely full, you can input an action. Dependent on the setting, this system either resembles real-time combat (active) or turn-based combat (wait). The wait function is fully automatic, so battles halt completely when it's the player's turn to input an action. I really appreciate this execution, since a lot of JRPGs only halt battles when pressing center or while navigating through menus.

Apart from the battles, there are several "mini games" that require to avoid or run away from zombies or to quickly fetch some things to barricade a house so that zombies can't enter. Some of these sequences are difficult, especially when the player isn't accustomed to 2D action games, but they are never unfair and instead manage to make the zombie apocalypse feel more real (also, there's only a few of them). This isn't "The Walking Dead", where zombies don't pose much of a threat nowadays. Additionally, there are some sequences during which the player has to "perform" while being pressed for time (e.g. flee from a collapsing cave within five minutes like in "Wild Arms 1"). I don't like being pressed for time in JRPGs, but these sequences fit the game's style, and they are - once again - never unfair.

In terms of graphics and music/sound, the game seems to rely on resources from RPG Maker 2003's RTP, mixed with a few fitting original pieces. These graphical resources are, to my mind, the best ones to create a Super Nintendo JRPG flair, but as a consequence, this game looks like any other game made with RPG Maker 2003. There's room for improvement when it comes to mapping, but the overall dungeon design is mostly motivating. The developer responds quickly to bug notifications, so the game shouldn't suffer from game-breaking bugs anymore.

I enjoyed this game despite the aforementioned flaws, and I encourage any JRPG aficionado to at least give it a try. Galer isn't a masterpiece, but it's a tremendous (mostly) one-man effort, a love letter to classic JRPGs, adding a special zombie touch. Trying like Galer to tweak the formula without breaking it, that's what more classic JRPGs nowadays should try to accomplish.

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