

**MORONS**  
Sometimes people wonder why Raccoon City is the one town in America stupid enough to allow itself to be overrun by zombies. Then they just look at the name of the town hospital and realize it makes total sense.



# RESIDENT EVIL OUTBREAK

ONLINE OR OFF, IT'S STILL DISAPPOINTING

**COMMUNICATION IS A GOOD THING**  
Want examples about why communication is so important? You've got 'em. One early situation (left) requires you to pick up a lighter and use it to ignite an oil spill, which you cause about 20 yards away. Being able to say, "You get the lighter, I'll spill the gas" would be oh-so-welcome. But you can't. Nor can you even indicate which floor you should head to after you enter an elevator—each player chooses his or her own floor, so odds are, you're getting separated for no good reason.



Three years ago when the Network Adaptor was first announced, word leaked of a game known simply as *Resident Evil Online*. Excited gamers everywhere speculated on how a networked *Resident Evil* could possibly work—but no one could figure it out. Now that *Outbreak* has finally spread to PS2s everywhere, one thing is painfully obvious: neither could Capcom.

**Online—the primary way you'll want to play it—*Outbreak* disappoints.** It's a sad thing because the escape-from-zombies/ solve-dumb-puzzles formula actually does have online potential. Not being able to chat with your companions really screws things up, though. During gameplay, you get only 10 commands programmed into the right stick—useful, but way too limiting. Communication is critical in a game like this, especially since the fixed camera angles don't allow you to properly locate your comrades.

These levels are *long*, too, allowing players all the more time to lose one another. The shortest one takes about 30 minutes if you know what you're doing. But odds are, at least one—or two or three—of your companions will be absolutely clueless. And even though the last couple of scenarios last about an hour when you all *do* have a clue, there's no way to save your progress.

You're going to die a *lot*, too, and you'll turn into a zombie more than you'd like (at least online). That may sound cool, but do you *really* want to suddenly turn against the teammates with whom you worked so hard to make it so far? If so, you're probably as likely to die just so that you can be evil like that. For everyone else, this doesn't make the game fun—just annoying.

You'll probably enjoy *Outbreak* more as an offline game—at least at first, when you want to figure out how to beat all five scenarios (which, sadly, for the sake of storytelling, in no way relate to one another). The A.I. player characters aren't perfect, but they can hold their own well enough. And unlike online players, they'll almost always readily hand you any item of theirs you want.

I like how each of the eight selectable characters has his or her own special abilities—anything from picking locks to playing dead. David's ability to combine items to make weapons (e.g., combine a battery and lead pipe to form a shock stick) demonstrates *Outbreak's* welcome sense of **inventiveness**. If only you didn't need a strategy guide to see everything the game offers.

Beyond the online component, *Outbreak* essentially plays like any other *Resident Evil*, only with a lesser story, better (though still imperfect) controls, and improved voice acting. It really is a solid survival-horror game that fans should check out. It just could have been so much better. **«Chris Baker**

PlayStation RATING

**PROS** Very inventive, excellent graphics and atmosphere, characters have own personalities, includes lots of stuff you'd never think of  
**CONS** No voice/keyboard chat, no true save ability, instant deaths, just plain disappointing  
Pub. Capcom Dev. Capcom ESRB Mature MSRP \$49.99

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## EQUAL TIME



"Oops! I just locked you behind this barricade with the zombies. I'd blame it on my inability to communicate...but the truth is, I just really hate you and I want you to die."

**Yeah, so maybe** we had some problems with *Outbreak*. Some things made us just wanna ask the developers why they opted to do certain things. So we did. Tsuyoshi Tanaka (a former Japanese videogame magazine editor) is the game's producer. His first game was *Devil May Cry 2*, and he's currently heading up the team behind *Monster Hunter*.

**OPM** Why not include voice or keyboard chat during gameplay?

**TSUYOSHI TANAKA** Trying to get the maximum number of enemies and characters on the same screen was putting quite a hit on the CPU. The number of enemies and number

**OPM** The scenarios don't seem to relate very well to one another—one moment you're in a bar downtown, another you're in a lab. Why?

**TT** This was an intentional choice. There are plenty of movies out there that cut back and forth from past to present. Those cuts give the movie an unsettling, jarring feeling, like you can't relax because you don't know what's coming next. We feel it pulls you into the confusion and anarchy that is going on at various points in the *Outbreak* world.

**OPM** Why can't we save games online? And why do we have to exit to the Main menu in order to save in the single-player mode?

### "AS A TEAM, WE WANT TO MAKE PLAYERS CHALLENGE THEMSELVES."

of onscreen characters is a fundamental area we felt had to be implemented perfectly in the game. Adding voice chat/keyboard functionality would have in turn required us to take away from a different area of gameplay, so we decided to pass. However, even more than the technical limitations was the staff's idea of what the game should be. In our research for this game, we played lots of online games. Most of them had voice chat. Unfortunately, most of them turned into insult exchanges and shouting matches. We soon realized that this wasn't the type of atmosphere we desired for a horror game.

**OPM** Why is it that the A.I. characters (especially Alyssa in scenario 2) sometimes never shut up in single-player mode?

**TT** We all know them—the type of people who just won't stop talking. The A.I. characters in the game have individual wills and personalities. So some are going to get freaked out and start speaking a mile a minute. I think this is the closest to true reality that you are going to get.

**TT** We really didn't want to add [the ability to save offline] because we think that the scenarios are already just the right length. They aren't so long that it would break your will having to start from scratch. Part of the game's tension or fear, if you will, comes from the fear that you may die and have to start all over again. Making the save system easily accessible would have allowed players to save every step of the way. There are tons of gamers out there who do it. As a development team, we want to make players challenge themselves. Make the game too hard, and you get complaints that it's too frustrating. Make the game too easy, and it's not satisfying, either. Making the save system hard to reach was our way of challenging the player.

Saving the game online was never an option. If you saved it online, you'd have to have the same exact team members continue playing. That would be great for playing with your friends, but a lot of people are just going to play with random strangers who they may never see again after that one game they play together. So we decided not to include this as an option. **«**