



AT THE 200 HOUR MARK: A REVIEW

GENRE	Third Person Action, Role-Playing Game, Singleplayer
PLATFORM AVAILABILITY	PC (Steam), PS3, Xbox 360
RELEASE DATE (PC)	January 15 th , 2016
LAST MAJOR PATCH	January 27 th , 2016
DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
REVIEW VERSION	1.1
REVIEW DATE	February 20 th , 2016
PLATFORM/PERIPHERAL	PC, Mouse and Keyboard
REVIEW REFLECTIVE OF	256 Hours Playtime

Overview

At a glance, the game may look like a generic medieval fantasy themed game. Much of the monsters appearing early to middle game are traditional mythical creatures, e.g Chimera, Griffon, Cyclops. The unique aspect of the world of Dragon's Dogma isn't revealed until much later on the high completion of a playthrough. A few things that have appeared to be oversights in the story turned out to have logical explanations later on, and details about the characters in the game are available through dialogue at specific contexts.

As for gameplay, there are some good ideas the game has with much potential for improvements. I felt some things were limited, an example being only three skills assignable per weapon (shields also considered weapons). In the endgame, definitely there is the concept of running through the map for loot and can be compared to a dungeon crawler. Though it is described as a labyrinth, truly it is not with a composite of multiple maps with only enemy placements changing per visit.



*In another place, in another life, another child of man blazes your path.
Scene from the Prologue.*

The Arisen, the Player Character

Character Creation Screen

After the introduction of the game, there is a character creation screen. It doesn't only customize appearance since character height and weight have a significance in gameplay.

Weight will affect movement speed, stamina regeneration, and knockback resistance. The lighter characters will restore stamina quicker and move faster, but will also be easily knocked back by attacks. Heavier characters may also carry more in their inventories while lighter characters will sooner encounter tiers of movement speed penalties.

Height will affect walk and run speed, weapon reach, and the accessibility of some small parts of a map (e.g short characters may not reach high ledges like a tall character would, but they may crawl in small tunnels). In combat, the larger the character, the larger the collision and hitbox is.

It's possible to customize the player character further after the initial creation. Visiting a barber shop will give limited options for

customization, but the entire Character Creation Screen can be unlocked at the main menu. I'm not one to notice the nuances of character creators between games, but Dragon's Dogma appears to give a breadth of options. Though the "sliders" are really increments between two sides of a spectrum, the creation screen still grants options such as heterochromia, elf ears (despite no elves in the game), above average height, children, and elderly with 12 voice options per gender. Unnatural skin and hair colors are unlockable.

Vocation and Character Building

Vocations are the classes of the game. A character may swap between vocations freely after first unlocking it. There are nine vocations available to the player.

- **Fighter**, durable melee attacker, using one-handed weapons and shields.
- **Strider**, mobile attacker using shortbow and daggers.
- **Mage**, spellcaster with support, utility, and offensive spells.



Portion of the Learn Skills Menu- showing Forward Roll as a skill available only when using daggers.
Lvl ∞ is an alias for level 200.

- **Warrior**, advanced vocation of Fighter- warriors deals with heavy two-handed weapons with lessened focus on damage mitigation.
- **Ranger**, advanced vocation of Strider- rangers shoot from a longer range with lesser melee capability.
- **Sorcerer**, advanced vocation of Mage- sorcerors cast powerful offensive spells with lessened focus on support.
- **Mystic Knight**, a hybrid of Mage and Fighter- knights have both utility in enchanting weapons and enhanced skills in magical counterattacks with shields.
- **Assassin**, a hybrid of Strider and Fighter- the versatile weapons master capable of wielding a larger variety of weapons than any other class.
- **Magick Archer**, a hybrid of Mage and Strider- an archer with enchanted shots for both offense and support, with versatile elemental damage to exploit weaknesses.

Each of these vocations have a weakness and a strength hence normally the need for a pawn to accompany the player. The most independent vocations perhaps being the hybrid vocations capable of covering more scenarios of enemies. For example, melee vocations have trouble with flying enemies and targets suspended in air, and for those encounters they would need a ranged attacker. Other scenarios may be enemies completely impervious to spells or enemies impervious to physical damage.

Character building is based on how many times has the player leveled up as a vocation. Each time the player levels up, s/he acquires stats towards Health, Stamina, Strength, Magic, Physical Defense, and Magical Defense depending on the active vocation. After level 100, the amount of stat points granted are significantly decreased. These stats are irreversible, and the level up is not manual. Additionally, each vocation has a set of passive bonuses (Augments)

granted on leveling vocation ranks. These may be used while playing as another vocation- a Mage may equip augments from the Fighter vocation- and swapped freely at an inn.

In my play experience, my character was not planned nor optimized for a vocation, yet was capable of going through the entire game on Hard Mode. But it's not to say I wantonly picked my vocations to level up as. If I wanted more Stamina, I went with a vocation that granted more Stamina per level up than the one I was playing as, same goes for the other stats. I had a clear preference for playing as Assassin, Mystic Knight, and Magic Archer, so a few times on my journey I switched between them.

Primarily, the character is made more effective on both offense and defense through equipment upgrading. The stats granted by late game equipment tend to overshadow stats gained from leveling. Though I would not doubt there is a noticeable difference in effectiveness for the extreme cases, i.e. never playing as the magically or physically inclined vocations until max level then suddenly playing as one.

Equipment Specific Defense

Each vocation has a set of useable weapons, and tied to some of the weapons are useable defensive maneuvers. Understandably, one needs to use a shield in order to block, but the usage of such is limited to Fighters, Mystic Knights, and Assassins. Dodges (rolling out of the way) are tied to daggers useable by the vocations Magick Archer, Assassin, Strider, and Ranger. Additionally, some offensive skills can be used as an evasive maneuver e.g. Hindsight Strike and Exodus Slash. Mage and Sorcerer vocations do not have either blocking or dodging.



*Also known as Myrmidons, Pawns are denizens of the Rift.
Identical to humans except for a glowing mark on their right hand; lacking will, emotion, and mortality.*

Pawn

Near the beginning of the game, the player creates a Main Pawn. Pawns are computer controlled characters that accompany the player. Their behaviors are dynamic with a system that emulates learning behaviors based on the player's playstyle, what appears to be the need of the party, and prior experience with aspects of the game. For example, pawns can guide the player on quests and acknowledge weaknesses for each enemy (from elemental weaknesses to strategies such as cutting tails off).

Like the player character, the main pawn goes through a character creation screen and similar leveling up mechanics, except they are restricted from hybrid vocations. Through the online feature, Main Pawns of other players can be hired- two supporting pawns for the maximum party size of four.

Inclinations and Dynamic Behavior

Pawn characters have an extra stat called Inclination. Each inclination is associated with a set of behaviors. The higher the value of an inclination, the more often the behavior in that set will occur. The value will slightly shift with how the player behaves, but it can be realigned in a more significant way with specific elixirs. Though the Status menu only shows the two most significant inclinations a pawn is set to, the rest are also in effect.

Inclinations are mostly the make or break in how useful a pawn is within combat because it could mean the difference between a pawn that contributes in combat or goes off looting while everyone else is fighting. Because of this, in the online feature, players hire pawns based on the inclinations on a higher priority than the equipment.

Some of inclinations as a primary or secondary are not held in high regard by other players because those inclinations will lead to counterproductive behavior if given a high value. For example, Guardian pawns may not be picked because of its issues with the context of ranged combat; however if the inclination is too low, the pawn may not timely assist the player in dire need. Acquisitor in-

clined pawns may never be hired at all. It can be said, that not all the pawns inclinations are equally useful, but the less so useful ones may fill a niche.

In my opinion, it's an interesting system that makes Dragon's Dogma unique, though it has been the source of some frustrations. It's possible to set undesired inclinations very low; however inclinations are still in flux and will gravitate to what the pawn thinks is best for the party. Typically the player's actions gives positive points towards certain inclinations, but there's no way to disincentivize specific behaviors except for trying to influence other behaviors. In my case, Nexus is an inclination that constantly creeps up in my pawn's inclinations. With how the party is set up, any other thing he (as a Fighter) could be doing is just more useful than carrying fallen pawns to me. But to prevent the inclination from rising, it means to ignore fallen pawns for some time even though it'll occur to be a good idea not to for some circumstances.

Playing with the Pawns

The pawns work autonomously without direct player control, but they can be directed to do certain actions. These are limited to 3 combat commands, "Go!", "Come", "Help!" which cover at least some basic scenarios.

Particularly, "Go!" tells the pawns of the party to engage with the enemy if the combat scenario is active, otherwise it tells the pawns to venture farther from the player (extending a metaphoric leash). Unfortunately, both melee and ranged attackers may respond to "Go!" in a similar way. While it may be acceptable for a melee fighter to climb monsters, a spellcaster is less effective when climbing as spells can not be cast in that context. The rest of the directives are quite straightforward in what they do, but using these will minorly affect main pawn inclinations in potentially undesired ways.

The weaknesses of each vocations are more noticeable when playing with poorly trained pawns especially when there is no functionality to designate a target to focus on. This may make some encounters drawn out longer than it needs to be especially when the situation



Sample Results screen.

After resting at an inn or a bench, the server is checked for any updates on whether or not the pawn has been hired and returned.

presented is the weakness of the player's vocation. E.g the Metal Golem is impervious to direct attacks, but has damageable medallions around the room that must be destroyed. When playing as a melee inclined vocation, the dependence is on pawns to destroy the medallions floating in air. Depending on training, they may not reliably attack the right target. For nearly all encounters, the golem can simply climbed and jumped off, with a midair swing to hit the medallion, but the strategy is dependent on whether or not the golem stays close to the desired target.

Since the behavior of the main pawn is affected by the player character at some points I considered the concept troublesome when I wanted to play something that deviated in style from my main pawn. For example, a considerable amount of time I played as melee with my pawn who also fought melee. I mostly intended for him to remain on the ground so he'd use skills to hit multiple targets and inflict the debilitations tied to his weapons; however after climbing monsters enough times, he started climbing monsters as well. Not even the monsters that are reasonable to climb for either, and in locations where climbing monsters increases the risk of falling off a bridge. For this scenario, I felt tethered to play in a way I really didn't want to in order to retrain him.

Shortcomings

Beyond what is adjustable for inclinations, there are simply some limitations to the pawns' ability to make rational decisions. An example is a wasteful use of a curative as no inclination designates conservative use of such. A case, Panaceas are potions that cure all debilitations. Really, it is simply better not to give them these potions and instead cures for more specific ailments. Pawns may repeatedly waste these for out-of-combat situations while walking around in places simply with a lot of water (repeatedly becoming Drenched) as opposed to ignoring it and waiting to dry off.

Introduced in Bitterblack Isle, there are imprisoned giants who are initially passive until damaged enough. Pawns may provoke these enemies and add to the battle instead of finishing off what's actively attacking the party. This is most noticeable for Scather inclined pawns as they will pursue the strongest foe. Though this section lists some examples, there are other limitations.

Inclination Name	Realignment item description
Scather	Realigns a pawn's inclination that s/he might readily pursue the strongest foes.
Mitigator	... s/he might first wipe out the least dangerous of any group
Challenger	... s/he might go after foes wielding ranged weapons or magicks.
Utilitarian	... s/he might focus on strategies to give his allies advantages.
Guardian	... s/he might act to keep the Arisen from danger above all else.
Nexus	... s/he might make his fellow pawns' safety his highest priority
Pioneer	... s/he might ever travel far and wide to seek out new locations.
Acquisitor	... s/he might seek out and collect hidden items, even during battle.

Today, like every day, waves gently lap at the shore
near your tiny village.

The twin blessings of warm sun and bounteous waters afford
a simple but pleasant life. Nets are cast and chores completed;
friends and families gather to laugh and talk around the fire.

So it has always been, and so it will always be...of this,
you are certain.

Until the afternoon grows late, and you hear the rush of wingbeats...

*Two situations, intro and outro, there will be story related text on the loading screen.
Depending on the PC, the game may transition to the next scene before one can finish reading.*

Online Experience and Pawn Hiring

The main pawns of other players are available in the Rift for hire. The cost to hire is free if the pawn is the same or lower level from the player; otherwise there's a cost which gets higher the greater the disparity in level. When the pawn is returned to the Rift, based on the session, will retain any learned Quest, Travel or Bestiary knowledge and bring back currency (Rift Crystals) to his/her Arisen from a percentage of gained experience points. Additionally, gifts, ratings, and comments are sent if given. Within communities, it's considered rude to send back a pawn with default ratings with no gift or comment.

At the lower to middling levels, pawn hiring is active, but the activity decreases at the higher levels where there are less people at the same or lower level. This may change later on as more people level up. At level 200 my pawn doesn't really get hired, with one hire returning once every few days. This is likely because people are finishing the game before reaching the very high levels (150+) and there is no strictly level 200 content to continue playing for.

Particularly with endgame content and instant pawn forfeits, it's very likely to receive the default rating and comment. Though it is possible to rehire a previously forfeited pawn before updating party information to the server- the updating process is done when resting at a bench or inn, the online etiquette has yet to be established on Steam's community at the time of this review.

Since Pawns are not on a separate save file from the player, there has been mention of corrupted save files because of cheaters hiring pawns. So far, I've only hearsay. I did get some hires marked "Invalid Data", but my save file's integrity is still intact. The option still remains to ignore the online features and set the connectivity to Offline.

Story

Game Phases and Quests

There are four categories of quests, Main, Side, Ambush, and Notice Board. More important with story elements, are the main and side quests of the game- Ambush and Notice Board quests are more generic. Some are only available on specific phase of the game. The phases being irreversible chronological segments of the game, which progress on the completion of certain main quests.

Potentially, one can miss side quests and parts of the story if advancing through the main quests; side quests not meant to be available during a phase will be canceled on transition. Very easily at the start of the game, a side quest that is a prerequisite to many other quests can be missed.

Affinity and Romance

Almost every NPC has a level of affinity for the player and is romanceable except for a few exceptions, regardless of the player's gender. The system itself is simplistic. If the NPC likes the player, as a store owner s/he may have expanded wares to sell. Affinity increases when the player interacts with the NPC, and greatly increases when given a gift. Affinity decreases when the player does some inappropriate actions such as unsheathing weapons, bumping into the NPC (from sprinting), and obviously attacking.

Obtusely, a high affinity level indicates potential love interest (Beloved), which will later serve for a story related event later in the game. If the player doesn't pursue a love interest, the game will assign one. In the original Dragon's Dogma, there was some notoriety that innkeepers and blacksmiths became the player's love interest



The Arisen climbing a Hydra- a multi-headed snake with regrowing heads.

through normal frequent interaction, but this has mostly been fixed in Dark Arisen. Not only that, the non-generic NPCs with specific lines as the love interest very easily reach high affinity through quests; one through the main quest, others through side quests.

As for the importance of a Beloved itself, at the very end, the NPCs definitely designed as a love interest have unique lines that hint at different details that may explain the significance of what the player has done in the ending sequence. A generic NPC or NPC with other functions such as a storeowner, innkeeper, blacksmith, etc do not have these lines. Some simply obvious, but others with crucial details. To get at least clear up some ambiguity of what has been done and it's meaning to the future of the game's world, it may be necessary to complete the game a few times with different characters as the Beloved.

This is from the perspective of playing as a male character with female romance options. I'm not aware if the same could be said for a female character with male romance options, or if there's parity in content between them.

Enemies

Non-Scaling

Monsters don't scale with the player as the player levels up. Around the map, some enemies may be too high of a level for the player and eventually some places will be filled with trivial enemies. It takes a bit of exploration to find out whether or not an area is suitable to be in. At the last phase of the game, the enemies will be replaced by stronger counterparts e.g where there used to be wolves, there will be hellhounds.

I consider it fine as the player isn't to completely ignore progressing through the phases of the game, but the issue of the player being

disproportionately stronger than most enemies in the game appears for NG+. Everything about the player character and pawn is retained on it or switching to Hard Mode- no mechanism available for a level and stat reset. The differences between Hard Mode, should the player change difficulties by the time of NG+, is not noticeable besides the greater experience and gold rewards. Eventually, only Bitterblack Isle remains as the appropriate area to play in for the very high levels.

Grabs and Climbing

Players and pawns can grab, carry, or restrain enemies. When used on larger enemies such as but not limited to Chimera, dragonkin, and Ogres, it is climbing. While climbing, stamina is constantly drained and the skill options are mostly limited to climbing variants of light and heavy attack, with some exceptions.

Potential boredom, on a (non-flying) creature distracted by other targets such as pawns, it may be possible to simply stay on it and continuously light attack it to death. In other situations, the creature attempts the shake the player off, which drops the player's stamina significantly and prevents the character from attacking until balance is regained. If flying, there's the added risk of falling off and incurring fall damage. More commonly, I've had the enemies try to shake my character off, but this may vary because of threat mechanics and how actions are prioritized between player and pawn.

Like the player, some of the enemies can grab. On the larger monsters, this is normally from clinging onto them for too long; other cases it can be from being knocked down. When the player is trapped in a hold, it prompts the key mashing context, equivalently analog stick wiggling for controllers, to escape. For the regular enemies like a wolf, it can be easy to free oneself, however on higher levels for things such as Eliminators and Cyclops, the amount of keystrokes



A griffon landed to the ground after the wings catching fire- player character underneath the left wing.

can be extremely demanding given the time frame. Most cases until I realized pressing both keys at the same time is valid input, I had to rely on the pawns to free me or take the hit of the special animation on failure to break out.

The Details

For some monsters, there's a few neat details between each in a nongeneric way. The following is not comprehensive.

Weight

Character weight plays a role in relation to grabbing specific monsters. Most noticeably flighted monsters, the heavier a character is the more burdened the creature is when it flies, to the extent when multiple adult sized characters grab on, the creature can no longer sustain flight. Likewise, when a flying creature grabs a lighter character, they can easier gain altitude to drop the character at, incurring fall damage.

Coordination

Certain monsters appear in groups and operate with some coordination. For example, harpies flock together and will sing as a group; depending on the type of harpy the song's effect can either be healing or inflicting debilitations on their targets.

Fire

Fire is capable of burning feathers on the wings of a Griffon, preventing it from flying or sustaining flight- the same applies for other feathered monsters such as the Cockatrice and harpy. Likewise, inflicting fire on the stump after cutting off a hydra's head delays the head regrowth.

Though fire seems to have this effect, the same sort of dynamic doesn't seem to be truly present for the other elements such as ice and lightning. It's possible to throw flasks of water to inflict Drenched on

the enemy, but with relation to elemental attacks it is a damage boost. (Likewise, throwing flasks of oil boosts fire damage.)

Day and Night Cycle

The time of day affects the availability of shops, monsters, herbs, and quests. It may be advanced to morning and evening, vice versa by resting at an inn. A more significant monster, if killed, will respawn based on the number of game days passed.

There are other little details, but later in the game, I consider the day/night cycle less important. The late game area, Bitterblack Isle, it is permanently night time. There are player augments that grant bonuses at night, but these still fluctuate in Bitterblack Isle as opposed to a permanent stat bonus.

Items and Inventory

Encumbrance

Each item has a weight, and each character has an encumbrance limit. It's not possible to bring along a ridiculous amount of an item without penalty. At a high encumbrance, combat effectiveness is affected. Running speed is slowed; Stamina expended per action is increased and restoration over a period of time is lowered.

Passive Effects

Certain items grant bonuses if simply kept in the inventory as opposed to stash. Though adding to encumbrance, these items can simply be kept on a pawn in the party.

Combination and Crafting

Most of the mentioned crafting in item descriptions is equipment upgrading with a special cost of a quantity of items. Even there, the



A view of a stash- Elder Ogre Claws, Lizard Horn, Frostwyrm Scute, and more are all represented by the bones icon.

equipment upgrading is limited to tiers of higher stats or added resistances (upon Dragonforging), rather than the player appending custom modifications to a piece of equipment.

Item combination always deals as an addition of two items and mostly deals with consumables. At the high level, the curatives made from item combination are more potent than infinitely available store-bought ones, but some stores may also sell the products of combination at a limited stock. Though one component can be readily available at a shop, the other usually requires foraging.

Time Sensitive Items

Food will spoil. Flowers will wilt. Some items are prone to degrade if kept in the inventory for too long. Strangely, the middle ground between fresh and rotten is the sweet spot for curative items. If a fruit becomes moldy, it heals more health. If meat becomes sour, it restores more stamina. It's a strange concept that moldy fruit would heal more health, but it appears not a mistranslation for ripeness as the icon for moldy fruit displays something not so ripe looking.

Some items in their moldy/sour and rotten form become components for certain crafts. E.g Moldy Apples can be combined with a Flask of Water to create White Wine, which restores three times more health than a fresh Apple at the small cost of barely increased carrying weight. Notably, an item can be restored from rotten to fresh with Spring Water (from healing spring) after being preserved in an Airtight Flask, but the "sweet spot" of optimal restoration is never acquirable with that item anymore. Additionally, items preserved in an Airtight Flask have the sum weight of the original item and an Airtight Flask making it inefficient in terms of encumbrance.

Bufs and Ridiculous Damage

It's possible to deal notoriously large damage in combat with certain expendable items i.e Conqueror's Periapt (for physical attacks)

and Demon's Periapt (for magic). The effects respectively may stack four times, and will result in the player dealing amplified damage. For non-magical bows, the combination of Blast Arrows and Conqueror Periapt can make the endgame bosses a joke.

These items aren't particularly rare either. The Blast Arrows may be sold at an NPC with infinite supply for a trivial amount of money (considering late game where the player has a lot of gold). The Periapt having finite supply for all NPCs except a specific one that may be removed permanently from the game until NG+ unless rescued.

The same NPC also sells an item called Maker's Arrow that can 1-shot anything it hits with the exception of some endgame bosses. For the exceptions, it simply takes off a portion of the health bars. Though it comes with a reasonable restriction of one per inventory, and disappears when reloading to checkpoint. Admittedly, it's quite useful for speedrunning.

Though expensive at early game, I would say that these items can undermine a challenge in the game. For actual numerical values, the cost of a Periapt is around 1.5k gold each. For the Blast Arrow, 650 gold each. Late game, especially when the player sells excess weapons and armors dropped, easily 1 million gold can be made. I would note that doing a ridiculous amount of damage isn't completely alien to me as the same kind of concept existed in the team's other game, Devil May Cry 4. Whether it's poor balance (lack of a cap for gold when selling items, etc) or something intentional, I don't know.

Counterfeiting

Items can be duplicated at a cost, one at a time, and at most taking an entire in-game day at the scrivener. For most items such as crafting materials, the duplication is perfect. Quest items may be also be counterfeited with the forgery turned in instead; however as imperfect copies those may have consequences or interesting results later on.

Flawed UI

Dragon's Dogma's platform of origin was not the PC, so the user interface doesn't fully utilize the capabilities of the mouse. If not all, many menus inside the game do not use mouse-over events nor the scroll wheel. The control scheme for menu interactions consists of the arrow keys and Enter. Even though the keyboard has an additional functionality of being able to hotkey items to use, I would still say there's some inefficient interactions with the menus. This is not to say that the controller is optimal for menu interactions as the problems are abstract from the peripheral of choice.

Inventory Icons

There's a notable amount of asset reuse for items in the inventory. Despite the grid, the player may need to go through each icon to see if the name is what is actually desired. This issue extends itself for equipment changing, the common case occurring when the player has changed vocations.

No Loadouts

Every time the player changes vocation, s/he is unequipped of all armor and weapons, which must be manually re-equipped. This is primarily because most equipment is restricted to some vocations, but even if the current piece of armor is useable by the vocation switched to, it is unequipped. Commonly, vocations are changed while purifying cursed items since the resulting weapon is based on the current vocation.

Bias

Expectations

From the development team, I've played Devil May Cry 4 (DMC4); purely an action game, but I haven't played an RPG from them. So I came in thinking the combat would be more DMC-like. Generally the moves in the game do not follow up with each other in air like those in DMC4. Neither was the combat as fast paced; though I can still draw some parallels (e.g stepping off enemies, animation cancels, slightly floating in the air when swinging attacks).

Based on DMC4, it could be expected that the items were a crutch for the player and eventually useless, but here it's a nice surprise that the interactions with the items in this game weren't something to ignore entirely. Ultimately, I wasn't really disappointed that the game didn't turn out like DMC4, and found myself appreciating what makes Dragon's Dogma unique.

Genre Background

I consider the large portion of my RPG background being hack and slashers (e.g Diablo II, Torchlight), where there isn't much of story, NPC interactions, choices, and consequences. Instead, there being the character building and simply going out to kill things to further upgrade equipment. In Dragon's Dogma, after completing all quests associated with a story, I played as if I was dungeon crawling in Bitterblack Isle, though really there isn't randomly generated maps to add to the variety of Bitterblack Isle visits.

I played action games like Bayonetta and DMC, so in Dragon's Dogma hitting the right time for perfect blocks was actually really easy and the timeframe felt more lenient. Moreso, dodging didn't require the last possible moment to the same extent in DMC.

Playing Experience

Dragon's Dogma: Dark Arisen's PC release is the only game of Dragon's Dogma I have played. I completed all quests with a story to them (as indicated by the achievement, The Hero). Since I played DMC4, a couple design nuances were easily noticeable and understandable for me. Not a comprehensive list:

- The use of offensive skills as evasive maneuvers.
- Using the jump button to cancel certain actions or animations.
- The funny physics where the player is bumped slightly up in the air if an attack is blocked.

Sometimes, it is not so simple to have the inventory sorted by best stats and re-equip the top of the list especially when aiming for debilitations and resistances over pure damage and damage reduction.

Combination

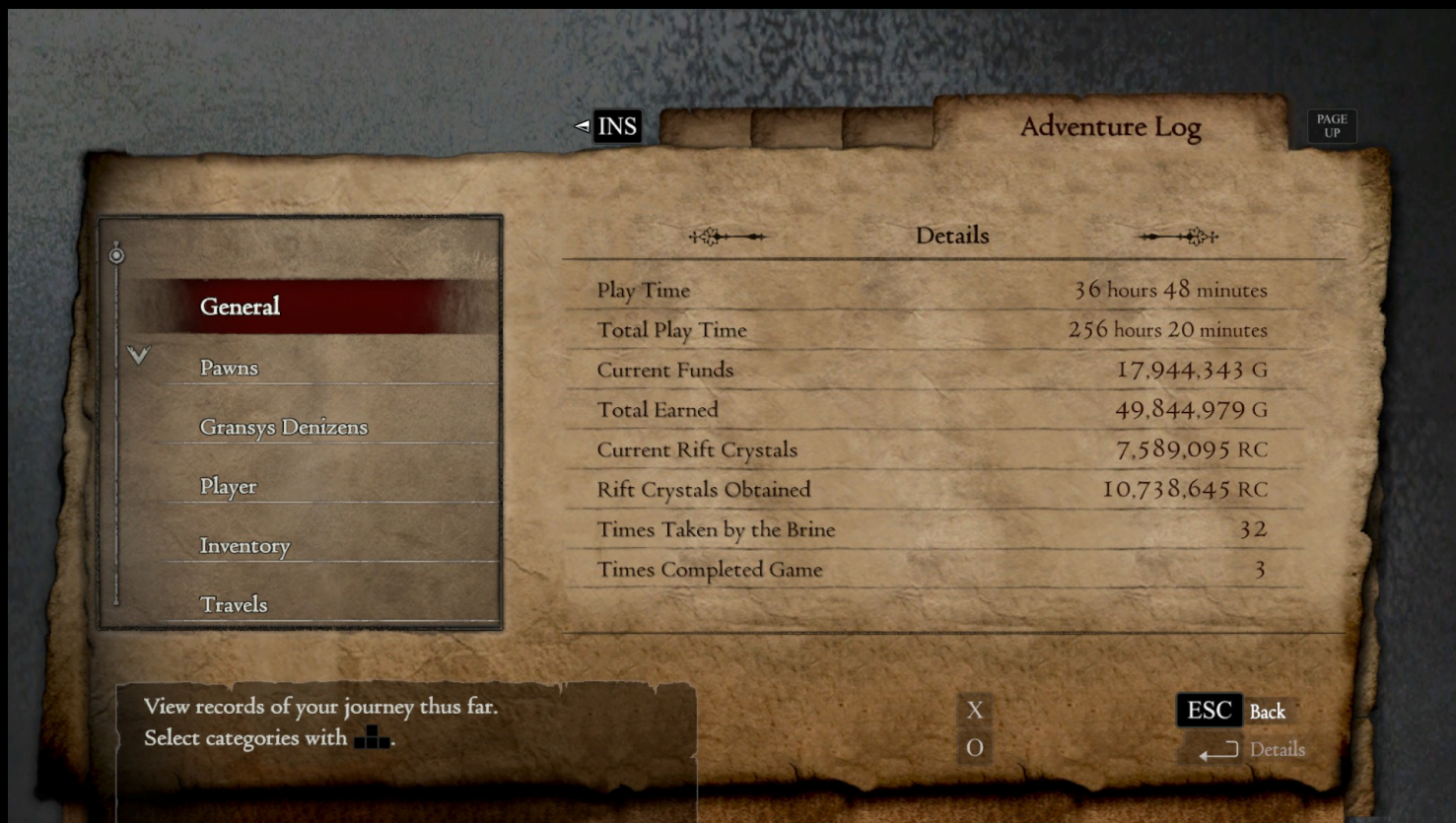
Items may be combined, but the menu interaction is based on the components and what can be made from them instead of the product with the components listed. Should the case come that one should desire to create a product, a lot of time can be spent checking whether each item is a component for that product or not.

Repetitive Behavior and Looting

For things like mining ore deposits or gathering from bushes, there may be more than one item granted before it is exhausted. However only one item per looting animation can be acquired. Typically, these caches of items require two and maybe up to four interactions to be fully used. This isn't too terrible of a thing since pawns can loot for the player.

All Previous DLC Available

Items that were originally being sold as DLC are available for the PC release upon entering the first city. I couldn't help but think this affected the playing experience not so well when opening my stash and suddenly having items I didn't place in there. Some items just more powerful than what I had before and others I didn't know what to do with. Notoriously, this has resulted in online pawns from other people all wearing somewhat of the same thing at the lower levels.



Play Time notes the amount of hours spent for the current playthrough while *Total Play Time* is the cumulative count across playthroughs. Most of the time is spent on the final phase, playing in Bitterblack Isle as opposed to resetting the state of the game to NG+.

- Torpor, "slowed" debuff causing enemies to fall slowly as well.

Within Dragon's Dogma, I rotated vocations as I was leveling up, but the vocations I spent the most time in are Mystic Knight, Assassin, and Magick Archer. The vocations I played the least are the spellcasters, Mage and Sorcerer- the long cast times with limited mobility wasn't my thing. I've only played as a character that is at average adult weight and height so I was capable of reaching ledges and carrying Blast Arrows and Periapt, but I wasn't able to crawl in goblin holes or the like specific to small characters.

Normally I play with pawns and the party set up is at least one Fighter (my main pawn) and two hired Sorcerors. Consistently, this has been my set up for endgame content. I don't usually bring along any healers since the damage dealt makes the battles fast enough so the risk of getting hurt is rather low. I notice pawns will not partially cast for a weakened but timely heal especially when the higher levels of the healing spell have long cast times.

On my first playthrough, before doing the final sequence I decided to play through Bitterblack Isle before moving on to NG+. As a result, my equipment was overpowered by the time I decided to complete the game to the extent I could kill the final boss in one hit. Later on for NG+, I decided to start Hard Mode, and there since NG+ does not scale in difficulty and all equipment is retained, Hard Mode was simply where there was more experience and gold drops per kill. So generally, I didn't really experience much of a challenge from this game past the first phases except the last of my first playthrough, and the first few times visiting Bitterblack Isle. In retrospect, it was probably best for me to complete the playthrough far before venturing around in Bitterblack Isle (especially when it's available near the start with no trouble accessing it for NG+).