

So, after finishing F.E.A.R. and its expansions, I really did not have much hopes for the sequel. Besides, some people told me that the original F.E.A.R. has no sequels and everything that came after it are cheap attempts to milk money from the franchise. So, I started F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin without any expectations... and was pleasantly surprised...

Story, soundtrack, atmosphere. The core story is basically the same but is expanded and shown from a different point of view (aka different protagonist). The events start right before the ending of the first game and continue from there revealing new characters and lore facts. The main plot is somewhere on the level of the original F.E.A.R., yet its presentation is much better. You now have proper cutscenes, proper dialogues and a lot more interaction with characters. Unfortunately, a lot of lore is revealed through notes scattered around the levels, nonetheless, I find them to be a bit better solution than audio logs from the previous game. With a note, you can read it diagonally in a few seconds and generally understand what it is about and whether you want to read it thoroughly. With an audio log, you have to sit in one place for a minute or two and listen to it until the end; the time to consume the information does not depend on you. The soundtrack is mostly for the background and, just as with the first game, I honestly did not remember any track. As for the atmosphere, well, the game is still not scary. Yeah, it got better graphics and better story-telling but if you have watched/played at least a few horrors before, F.E.A.R. 2 can hardly make you... fear.

Gameplay. It is the strongest part of F.E.A.R. 2 and it was noticeably improved from the first game. First things first, the level design became much better and now you don't feel like you are roaming copy-pasted rooms. Yeah, the layouts themselves still hardly have anything to do with real-life interiors and the game still tends to give you 2-3 consequent levels that happen in the same environment that begins to bore you, but, overall, it's a big step forward. The surroundings also became more interactable, and you can now turn them over to create a cover. Nonetheless, leaning was removed completely even though it was a very useful feature in the original (and it is generally very useful for any cover-based shooters). To compensate for that, the slow-mo now became OP. It barely slows down you but significantly slows down the enemies around; going out of cover to make headshots has never been so easy. I barely used slow-mo in the first game, yet, here, I have a hard time imagining how you are supposed to play the game on Hard without using it. Even though it is good that F.E.A.R. 2 doesn't make this mechanic mostly redundant as its predecessor, I am sure with enough testing the developers could make it feel less overpowered.

Speaking about the difficulties, Hard is really hard and you will die from 5-6 shots with full health and armor and from 1-2 with just full health. This may sound masochistic, however, the game is surprisingly well-balanced for the aforementioned slow-mo. If you use it in on time, stay aware of your surroundings and won't run headfirst into the fight (and you are also experienced in FPS genre), you won't have much trouble playing on Hard. Except for 3-4 places where enemies obliterated me and I got stuck for 10-15 minutes, I barely died throughout the campaign. Manual saving was removed and now you only have checkpoints. Even though it does make the game more challenging, I, as a fan of retro shooters) would still prefer to have manual saves.

Last but not least, the gunplay is still very fun and even became better in some aspects. Now you have proper sprint; it is short but just enough to run away from a grenade. Now you can carry 4

different guns instead of 3. Even though there are not that many new weapons, almost each gun has its use for a specific combat situation. The exclusions are pistol, flamethrower and a local BFG (which shows up two times in the game and really sucks). You can now hold a grenade before throwing to time the explosion. There are some new types of enemies like snipers, melee mutants, and “telepath” mini-bosses. Though AI did seem to become less smart and more scripted in comparison to the first game, it still provides fun and challenging combat situations. Finally, you will have two short turret and mech riding sections which serve as a nice break from the main gameplay.

Reborn DLC. The only DLC which was released for F.E.A.R. It has only four missions, no new weapons or enemies, and can be completed in 1-1.5 hours depending on the difficulty. Nonetheless, the gameplay still rocks, you visit several different locations and because of the duration you don’t get bored. It also has its own short plot which serves as a small expansion to the main story. The only problem I have with this DLC is its price: 10\$ is too much for 2 hours (at best) of gameplay even when the gameplay is good. I would recommend waiting for a 50% discount. Finally, I personally do not understand why it was not integrated into the main game after all these years, like DLCs for the first F.E.A.R. were.

Conclusion. I started playing F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin with zero expectations and the game managed to pleasantly surprise me. It improved the original F.E.A.R. formula in many aspects and added a few of its own features. Even though the first game may feel more atmospheric and nostalgic for some people, I personally enjoyed the sequel much more. After finishing F.E.A.R. and its expansions I felt drained and never wanted to return to it again. After finishing F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin and Reborn DLC I left craving for more and even completed all in-game single-player achievements, even though you can no longer 100% the game because the servers have been dead for ages. Whether you are a fan of the first F.E.A.R. or skeptical about it like me, I really recommend checking out F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin. Moreover, if you only heard bad reviews about the sequel but never actually played it, I strongly advise giving it a shot.

P.S. There is actually one redundant mechanic that I totally forgot about. Some weapons have 2 fire modes that you can switch between. This could be a cool mechanic for advanced guns like rocket launcher, flamethrower, or laser, however, these “some” are just 2 rifles and on hard difficulty you will never need to switch your gun semi-automatic, considering it does not increase the damage.