

WWE Legends of Wrestlemania

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Like many guys my age, I was a wrestling fan in the 80's and 90's. I loved watching all the wrestling I could, cheering on guys like Hulk Hogan, Steve Austin, and The Rock, and booing the bad guys like Ric Flair, Mr Perfect and Rick Rude. When Wrestlemania came around each year, the biggest event in the wrestling calendar, I made every effort to see it. So when I heard that Yukes, makers of the Smackdown vs. Raw games, were making a Legends of Wrestlemania game, I was sufficiently excited to get the chance to play as my old wrestling favourites. As far as offering a trip down memory lane for old wrestling fans like me, Yukes does a sterling job. Unfortunately however, when it comes to gameplay and longevity, the job is not quite as sterling as I would have hoped.

WWE Legends of Wrestlemania features 42 wrestling superstars and managers, all of whom featured at Wrestlemania during their wrestling career. As well as the superstars mentioned in the opening paragraph, the game features wrestlers like Bret "The Hitman" Hart, The Undertaker, The British Bulldog, Shawn Michaels, "Superfly" Jimmy Snuka, Bobby "The Brain" Heenan, Jake "The Snake" Roberts, and more. While these guys can all claim the title of legend, some of the other guys on the roster really can't. Koko B. Ware? Kamala? Big John Studd? They may have been well known and even popular wrestlers back in the day, I certainly wouldn't call them legends. I appreciate that no matter what roster Yukes settled on, they wouldn't please everyone, but I feel there are some really glaring omissions. Where is Randy Savage, or Ricky Steamboat, or Owen Hart? How about some more classic tag teams, such as Strike Force, Demolition, or the Nasty Boys? It's a minor point I know, but a few more bone fide legends wouldn't have gone amiss here I think. The action in the game is much more arcade than the Smackdown series, and it is apparent right from the start. The body damage icon from Smackdown, extremely useful if you wanted to concentrate on a body part to set up a submission finish, has been replaced by a standard health bar. If your opponent's health is gone, then he's ripe for a pin or submission, irrespective of what body parts your attacks have been aimed at. Gone is the control scheme as well, replaced instead by a simpler 4 button scheme using the face buttons. The game now uses a combo based system that utilises many quick time style events, where you have to press the button indicated on screen before your opponent does. Should you land enough successful attacks, the combo meter located under your health meter will increase. As you increase it to level 2 or 3, more powerful grapples and attacks will be available, with your finisher also available at level 3. Activating your finisher starts another quick time event, which means a move combo to set up and then hit your finisher. The arcade style action extends to the taunts, which have different benefits for your character, such as restoring health, increasing the speed at which your combo meter increases, and making you quicker. Each taunt will cost you some of your combo meter, but as it's easy to build it back up again it's never really a problem. With the game being played in this way, and with the smaller moveset for each wrestler, it doesn't take too long before the action starts to get a little repetitive. You'll soon find out the quickest ways to increase your combo meter, and more than likely resort to them so you can get your meter high enough to land your finisher. Matches very rarely go on beyond 5 minutes, which is fine if you want some quick fights, but if you're looking for more in-depth wrestling action then you won't find it here. One of the other problems with Legends of Wrestlemania is the number of game modes available. There are the standard Exhibition and Xbox Live options, as well as 2 additional modes – the Wrestlemania Tour mode, and the Legend Killer mode. The Wrestlemania Tour mode is split into three sections – Relive, Rewrite, and Redefine. The Relive section has you wrestling in a classic match from Wrestlemania history, such as Ultimate Warrior vs. Hulk Hogan from Wrestlemania 6, Bret Hart vs. Steve Austin from Wrestlemania 13, and Steve Austin vs. The Rock from Wrestlemania 15. Before each match you'll be shown a video package regarding the match, which explains the match and how it came about. You'll also be given a list of objectives to try and complete during the match. This may be something as simple as performing your finisher on the opponent, to something more complicated like dragging him up the aisle and throwing him into the Wrestlemania sign. All the objectives in these matches relate to actual scenarios from the real matches, so if the objectives tell you to make your opponent bleed, and then win with your submission finisher, you can be sure that it actually happened in the real match between the two. The further you progress in this mode, the harder the objectives are and the more you need to complete if you wish to get a gold medal in that match. Doing so isn't compulsory, but none of the objectives are stupidly hard and intentionally going for them injects some much needed variety into the matches. The Rewrite matches are similar to the Relive ones, except here you'll be trying to achieve a different result to the historic match. For example, one of the matches is the Iron Man match between Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels from Wrestlemania 12. In the real match, Shawn Michaels won the belt in overtime, giving him his first World Title reign. In the Rewrite mode, you'll take control of Bret Hart instead, aiming to win the match this time. Just like the Relive matches, you're treated to a video package and given pre-match objectives, only here the objectives are much more generic, as you're trying to rewrite history instead of recreating it. The objectives may be to hit 5 successive attacks, perform 3 strong grapples, or successfully hit 2 top turnbuckle attacks. As they're so generic it makes the matches slightly less interesting than then Relive battles, but having something to aim for still keeps you entertained. The Redefine section lets you rewrite history even more. Here you're presented with a match from Wrestlemania history, only in a completely different situation, and you get to choose who wins. So this time, the Bret Hart vs. Yokozuna match from Wrestlemania 9, which was initially a standard match, takes place in a steel cage, and you get to pick which character you play as. These matches also carry the same set of generic objectives as the Rewrite matches do, again making them less gripping than the Relive matches. In each of these sections there are 6 matches to go through, with only the first match in each area unlocked, with the rest becoming available as you progress onwards. For the old wrestling fans such as me, this is a really enjoyable mode as the video

packages alone provide some real nostalgic moments. Even for the younger fans that perhaps weren't around for some of these great moments, it'll give them an insight into where wrestling was 10/20 years ago and how it progressed over the years. As there are only a total of 18 matches though, it feels quite short and you're left feeling like they could have added so much more. Considering we've not long gone past Wrestlemania 26, they really could have doubled the matches in each section and had plenty more to choose from should they want to release extra matches via DLC. The Legend Killer mode is a gauntlet style mode played with a created wrestler. In it, you'll go through several tiers, all but two of them containing 10 opponents. To complete the tiers, you must beat all 10 men in each of them to unlock the next one. In doing so you'll gain experience based on how you perform, which can be used to increase the attributes of your created superstar. The final two tiers contain all the wrestlers from Legends, and all the wrestlers from Smackdown vs. Raw 2009, should you own the game and choose to import them. This mode unfortunately does suffer from repetition fairly quickly, as you strive to beat your opponents quickly without suffering much damage. This means you'll end up using the combo meter increasing moves often, landing your finisher, and moving on to the next opponent. More variety in this mode, perhaps by making some matches ladder matches, or in a steel cage, or a Hell in a Cell match, would have really helped here. One final problem that Legends of Wrestlemania suffers from is the overall length of the game. The Wrestlemania Tour mode will probably take you no more than 3-4 hours, with the same amount of time required to beat the Legend Killer mode. As there's no career mode in the game, it means that when you've done everything here, there's really not much reason to come back to it. WWE Legends of Wrestlemania feels like a huge missed opportunity to me. It does several things really well, such as the video packages available in the Wrestlemania Tour. The matches and objectives in the Relive section are really well done, and more of this would have been nice. Unfortunately though, the game soon becomes repetitive due to the arcade style action here, and if you're a fan of the Smackdown games you'll certainly notice it sooner rather than later. For the old school wrestling fans like me, I'd recommend picking this up cheap for a good trip down memory lane. If you're just after the best wrestling game around though, then I'd advise you look elsewhere, as Legends just doesn't have enough to keep you hooked beyond a few hours. Discuss this in our Forum