

# Saint Row: Gat out of Hell

Taking Saints Row to Satan's playground  
Author: Brooke Geller

What do you get when you combine cliché, cheesy sci-fi motifs, organised crime and political power struggles with the dark recesses of hell? That's right boys and girls, the new Saints Row has arrived, and this time that trademark ludicrously inappropriate humour has been toned down ever so slightly to give us a chance to run amok in Satan's very own diabolical playground.

For the first time in the series' history, the player is presented with a choice of two playable characters, rather than a customisable protagonist. Foul-mouthed, wise-cracking Johnny Gat and his unwilling accomplice Kinzie Kensington are forced to enter an ominous portal to the underworld in order to rescue the infamous president from the clutches of old mate Lucifer, who believes the political power figure to be a fine suitor for his beloved daughter.

To describe this satanic ghetto as 'fun' would be an absurd understatement. Exploring the apocalyptic wasteland of New Hades is ridiculously entertaining right from the word go; the cracked streets of the slums ooze with pockets of explosive lava, and beat-up bomb versions of typical Saints Row rides cruise around, blasting ass-kicking rock and metal riffs- despite the complete absence of radio stations in hell.

Bald, emaciated tortured souls wander the streets, resembling cranky and indignant I Am Legend mutants. They're completely, harmless, and totally perfect for monster truck fodder. Speaking of which, monster trucks are the fuzz vehicle of choice, complete with jet streams of angry flame and massive horns.



"A GUN THAT SHOOTS EXPLODING FROGS?  
ANOTHER GUN THAT ATTACKS YOUR ENEMIES  
WITH SWARMS OF BLOOD-SUCKING INSECTS?"



These are piloted by highly irritable, super buff red demons, who act as peace keepers of New Hades.

In a surprising and almost progressive decision on Deep Silver's part, Kinzie features as a playable character alongside Johnny, and the two are interchangeable throughout the game; however, the twisted fairytale storybook device utilised to narrate the story and fill in plot gaps only ever refers to Johnny as the protagonist, even if the player decides to use only Kinzie.

Kinzie and Johnny side with Dane Vogel, who has set up shop with Ultor in New Hades and has quickly involved himself in the many political power struggles of land rights in hell. The narrative moves quite fast- almost too fast, in fact. It seems as though the player is being whizzed through the story at an unreasonably fast pace, with sudden bursts of hectic combat thrown in to cover this up. Almost every mission involves killing swarms of enemies in a brazenly gung-ho style, which proves to be far too easy and very repetitive.

The fights do, however, make for a chance to utilise the many fantastically ridiculous weapons. A gun that shoots exploding





frogs? Another gun that attacks your enemies with swarms of blood-sucking insects? How about a reclining armchair with heat-seeking missiles attached- that you can ride around the streets? Weapon upgrades are fantastic and totally justify spending that hard-earned in-game currency.

Supernatural abilities are equally as entertaining, and varied enough to keep things interesting. With most games, I find myself sticking to just a couple of favourite powers, but this time there's a great range to add to your frequently-used arsenal. The standout power is the ability to fly by utilising Lucifer's cracked halo, which bestows Johnny and



Kinzie the majestic wings of morning star. The flying is satisfyingly smooth and easy to control, even when bouncing through chaotic rubble. The ease of flying actually makes the Saints Row tradition of carjacking an unnecessary novelty; why struggle with the game's irritatingly clunky driving controls when you could just soar over that giant pool of lava with wings that look like they've been copied exactly from *Infamous: Second Son*?

There are some familiar faces thrown in as well, with the return of classic characters Troy, Dex and of course the ever-charming blonde nightmare Dane Vogel. However, the depiction of historical figures as enemies of Satan (and your potential allies) seems slightly shallow. For example, Shakespeare may be one of the most prolific

playwrights of all time, but in *New Hades* he's a dull nightclub owner and DJ, spurring badly written verses riddled with cheap puns. Similarly, Black Beard is essentially a run-of-the-mil, hipster-beard pirate who still lives on his ship. Move on, dude. It seems like this game had an opportunity to do so much with these characters, but simply chose to waste an opportunity.

For such a small game, there are an immense amount of side quests and mini games. Sadly, it's difficult to even differentiate these from the main quests due to their similar and repetitive nature. This seems to be the case for the entire game, really. As exciting as exploring this new environment is, there's just not enough substance to really let it shine. Even that signature Saints Row shock factor seems to be lacking. Maybe it's time to for Deep Silver to atone for the sin of poorly constructed story and repetitive combat in the slums of New Hades?

GAMEPLAY	STORY	OVERALL
6	5	5.5
7	4	
GRAPHICS	REPLAY	