



You'll believe that Danish plastic bricks can fly!



**ACTION-ADVENTURE GAME**



# Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga

A chip off the old block

**THE LEGO SERIES** has been hard to avoid since the first *Star Wars* game in 2005. Also including *Indiana Jones*, *Batman*, *Harry Potter*, Marvel, DC, *Pirates...* Lego has cherry-picked the jewels in the crown of modern entertainment, converted them into plastic blocks, and now returns to where it all began.

This isn't a franchise you'd expect to give up any new details or meanings after over 40 years but in Lego guise, it gains the charm Lucas always stretched for with his droids, porgs, and jizz music, but never quite grasped. The little moments are everywhere, from the beginning where a space traffic stop leads to the hiding of some suspicious Evil Plans, while the Death Star levels show what stormtroopers do on their days off—and we weren't expecting tai chi.

Rather than choosing to simply boost the resolution and port the older games into a new engine, *The Skywalker Saga* contains fresh takes on familiar events, turning the linear levels of the past into open-world romps in which you explore

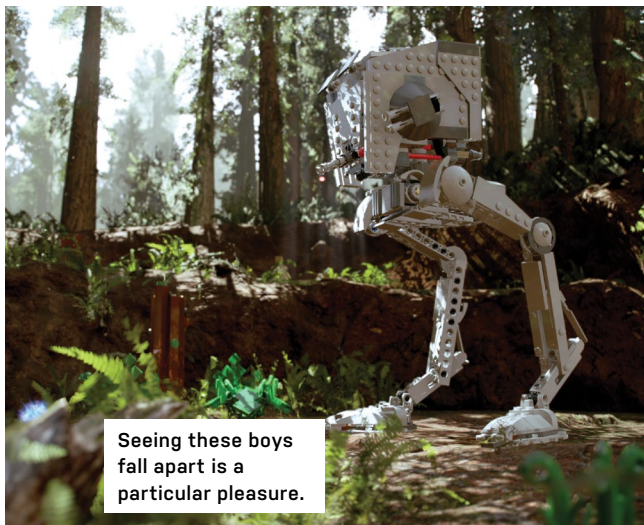
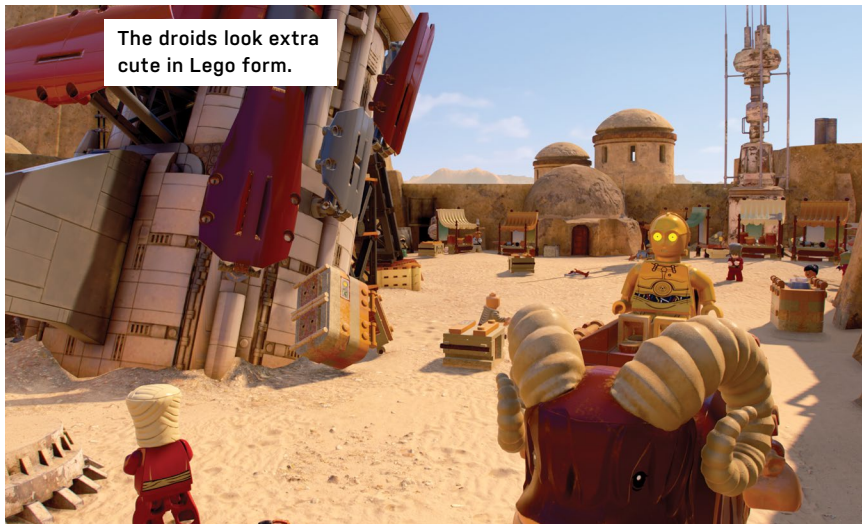
to discover who to talk to and where to go next. All nine of the movies are here, split into five levels each, and even the ones we don't like to talk about involving Gungans are rendered a lot of fun simply through the inclusion of one feature: local co-op.

Hook your PC up to a big TV facing a sofa, and sit there with two controllers and a kid or partner for some simply awesome gaming times. We tried it on a five-year-old test subject, for whom it marked only their second contact with videogames, and were amazed as she turned Princess Leia into a punching machine, taking stormtroopers apart close-up in a style sadly not seen in the movies. Later, as Obi-Wan, the same tactics saw battle droids chopped into tiny pieces with a lightsaber. There's a combo system behind all of this, launching your character into the air while raining blows down on your target.

Even the blasters get some love, as *The Skywalker Saga* takes Han and Co in a third-person shooter direction, with aimed shots meaning you'll now rival

the stormtroopers for accuracy. Building remains part of the game, with the need to create switches out of nearby blocks before you pull them, or stack handy platforms to access higher areas. There are, of course, certain objects that can only be interacted with by particular characters—Han is good with anything mechanical, Rey builds gliders and traps, while only Jar-Jar can play the Gungan dancing game that lets you take a transport to the surface, blasting giant fish on the way. The previously underused protocol droids also come into their own when faced with an NPC who speaks a language you can't understand.

In between levels, you're punted to orbit, where you can fly around shooting rocks and discovering side missions before deciding to carry on with the story. There's a progression system tied to the collection of kyber crystals, with 1,100 or so hidden around the various levels that can be used for upgrades to walking speed or gigantic space lasers, and more than 350 characters to unlock along the



way. It's a huge hunt, and going back to previous levels with new characters just to wrinkle another one out from its hiding place can double the length of the game. Nothing here is particularly difficult, but solving the puzzles that release the crystals is a fun challenge.

### TO BOLDLY GO

Along with being the new boarding point to the Lego games for those who haven't played before, what *The Skywalker Saga* brings to the series is nostalgia and fan service. You can play the trilogies in any order, though you always have to start with the first film (yep, even *The Phantom Menace*), but this just means *A New Hope*, the most iconic of them all, is in easy reach. Its new twist on the 'Han shot first' controversy takes its lead from *The Naked Gun*, and while each episode follows the plot of the film, they're not afraid to throw in extras to poke a little fun at a po-faced moment or enhance a puzzle sequence.

It also takes advantage of the simple geometry of its block-based aesthetic to

put on some really remarkable sights. Battles as the sun goes down, the light catching the sharp edges of fighter ships, or the shadows among the trees of Endor as AT-STs stomp about can rival the sights of other more realistic games. Of course, you get to fly a speeder under the legs of an AT-AT, and the trench run depicts a Lego set of such complexity we don't think we'd ever get it finished. Even the Gungans' underwater city is rendered and lit lovingly, turning it into the *Final Fantasy* conurbation that never was.

If we have one complaint, it's the way the game adapts its missions to its new more open world. We spent so much time following Luke around at walking pace that we began to lose interest in what he had to say. And trying to find the right character to talk to in a bustling city full of NPC figures can also be time-consuming. We also dislike that the split-screen presentation of co-op remains in splitscreen all the time, instead of merging the two views when the characters are close enough, something

even *Lego Indiana Jones* on the Wii was able to manage.

Otherwise, this is an extremely polished production, filled with jokes and fan service, that will enthrall those unfamiliar with the material and provides a new angle on old events even for those who have played it all before. It's a game designed to be shared in the moment, rather than as a series of war stories after the fact, and the small amount of hassle involved in setting up a co-op session pays off handsomely in terms of added fun. **-IAN EVENDEN**

**VERDICT** **8** **Lego Star Wars: The Skywalker Saga**

**HAN CO-OP** Good-looking return to a galaxy far, far away.

**HAN SOLO** Some missions are duds; can feel over too quickly in single player.

**RECOMMENDED SPECS** CPU, i5-6600 / Ryzen 3 3100. RAM, 8GB. GPU, GTX 780 / R9 290.

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