Dark Corners of the Earth

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Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth is in my opinion one of the best survival horror games ever made. It's my personal favorite and I've played most of them. I'll keep this post pretty short as I haven't played it recently so I don't feel I can do a proper in-depth review. I should also add that I played it a few years ago and had an almost completely bug free experience while doing so. Apparently that's no longer the case (at least for the Steam version on 64-bit systems). If you are having problems, here's an unofficial patch (haven't tried this myself).

If you don't know anything about the game, I'd recommend first playing it as I will give away some minor spoilers and it's best experienced without knowing when what events will start happening. Don't be scared off too much by the slow start of the game, there will be plenty of action later on. Also note that it's from 2005, so it will look a bit jaded now. It's also apparently considered pretty difficult (which I don't recall, other than that I had to redo some areas multiple times), so choose your difficulty level carefully. Finally a warning: This is a Cthulhu Mythos game, which means it's content can be pretty disturbing / depressing.

Friendly townspeople

The first reason I feel this game is so great, is the atmosphere it creates. The first part of the game has very little action and most of the time the story / atmosphere is slowly building. This for instance involves spending some time basically just exploring a creepy village with all kinds of weird happenings going on without knowing when things will go to hell (as they of course will). After that it becomes

more action oriented, but most levels are pretty original / very crazy / very creepy. Overall this makes for a pretty unpredictable overall storyline as you have no idea what kind of horror you will experience next. I wouldn't call the storyline great as it's full of plot holes, but that hardly seems to matter when drawn in.

The game plays (after the first part) as a shooter as most levels involve some level of violence. However there are also stealth levels / puzzles / boss fights in which you have to do specific things and escape sequences, so it's definitely not a straightforward shooter. One of my best memories of the game is one early chase sequence that's pretty much the most tense chase sequence I've ever experienced (it's in the town and you'll know it when you come across it ;)). Another worthy memory is that it took me some time to discover I could actually aim my gun, so I spent the early action sequences thinking firing from the hip was the only way you could play (which made the combat sequences much more difficult).

Naturally time moves while you are in here.

The second reason is the game mechanics regarding health / sanity / saving. They are all done relatively realistic which makes playing very tense. First of all you only have save points in specific points, so you need to survive till that point or you will have to redo that area (which can get frustrating at times, but is still a good choice in my opinion). Secondly, you have a very interesting health system in which injuries directly impede your movement / vision / etcetera. If in example your leg is hurt, you start limping. Thirdly, you can go insane; too many crazy things happening at once and you start seeing hallucinations / you lose control. This is even made worse because you have no HUD, so you have to approximate

how far gone you are. And finally naturally ammo and medicine is limited. All this means you can’t just shoot everything you see, but you really have to balance all these aspects continually.

Link to a more in-depth review.

Finally, here’s a no commentary play through for those who want to check out the beginning / just want to watch it as a movie: