

Reverse review bomb? AC: Unity draws praise for Notre Dame preservation

Enlarge / The famous cathedral lives on in interactive digital form.

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At this point, we're actually a little tired of stories about "review bombing," where various put-upon groups of gamers gather together to leave a flood a negative user reviews, often for issues that have nothing to do with the game itself. But this week's flood of *positive* reviews for Ubisoft's *Assassin's Creed Unity* on Steam is a different (and much rarer) story altogether.

The impetus for this reverse review-bomb (Review rocket? Review scaffolding? Review hug?) came earlier this week after the tragic fire in Paris' Notre Dame cathedral. On Wednesday, Ubisoft announced it would be donating €500,000 to help rebuild the cathedral that's recreated as a central landmark in *Assassin's Creed Unity*. On top of that, the company is giving away free copies of the game on its UPlay platform through April 25 as a way to encourage further donations and in order "to give everyone the chance to experience the majesty and beauty of Notre-Dame the best way we know how."

"When we created *Assassin's Creed Unity*, we developed an even closer connection with this incredible city and its

landmarks,” the company wrote this week. “One of the most notable elements of the game was the extraordinary recreation of Notre-Dame... We hope, with this small gesture, we can provide everyone an opportunity to appreciate our virtual homage to this monumental piece of architecture.”

The PR-focused altruism seems to have paid off on Steam, where what had been decidedly mixed user reviews for *Unity* (partially driven by a bug-addled launch) have shifted to hundreds of “Very Positive” reviews in the last four days. Those reviews seem to be pretty evenly split in thanking Ubisoft for the free game and in appreciation for the real-world Notre Dame (and hopes for its rebuilding).

“I hope this game will be able to help the reparation [sic] of Notre-Dame de Paris,” reads one characteristic recent Steam review. “Although its [sic] not a good game for everybody (seems like) but Ubisoft paid much efforts on this [sic]”

If you want to get technical, these laudatory reviews could probably be classified as “off topic” under the strict letter of the definition Valve outlined in a recent blog post. But since the reviews aren’t “aimed at lowering the Review Score of a game”—one of Valve’s criteria for identifying a review bomb—it seems doubtful the company will implement the same kind of user review fix that was recently needed for the *Borderlands* series.<https://arstechnica.com/?p=1493821>