Scorn’s slithering spookiness is only slightly scary

In *Scorn*, the survival horror game that slithered onto Game Pass last week, it’s just another day at the flesh factory. A couple of hours in, that’s what it feels like. I’m just a guy, clocking in at H.R. Giger & Sons to hit buttons, stick my fingers into prehensile holes, and scoop the innards out of screaming human meat things. Just all in a day’s work for a blue collar working stiff like me.

I wanted to try *Scorn* because, well, it’s on Game Pass, which obliterates my usual hesitation in trying weird games that look like they’ll trigger the shit outta my misophonia. I also wanted to try it because it’s the high holy days of Spooky Season, and *Scorn* itself generated a lot of buzz on social media despite receiving little fanfare or marketing ahead of time.

I didn’t know what to expect from this game. The advice on social media was to go in knowing as little as possible, so all I knew was to expect things to be dark and wet in precisely zero sexy ways. Surprisingly, despite being based on the works of horror artist H.R. Giger and your character walking around a spaceship (??) that gets its decor inspiration from the inside of the human colon, my misophonia triggers didn’t really trip. Yes, you do squelch a lot, but the sound is designed in a way to not be as bad as I was expecting. A nice ironic surprise since the most wholesome game on the planet right now, *Splatoon 3,* is completely unplayable for me because of all the splat noises.

A less nice surprise is that *Scorn* also doesn’t feel very scary. The game throws you into the flesh pit with a bare-

bones UI that only appears when you're holding a weapon or interacting with a device. There's no voice-over, no hints. Nothing. And while that adds great atmosphere – it feels like it's you running around the inside of a rotting blue whale – it also lends itself to feeling like a bit of a meat puppet. With nothing that seemingly grounds you in a story, no information on who you are or why you're there, the game becomes: go here, do this thing, do the next thing, and hope you don't get lost. The fact that you start with no weapons and that nothing attacks you (at least not in the parts I've played so far) doesn't help in the scariness factor. If the game were littered with little hidey-holes to crawl into to avoid some kind of slow-plodding menace à la *Amnesia: The Dark Descent*, I think it would be *a lot* more frightening and, thereby, more interesting. But there's nothing. Even when you are attacked in the game's second area, there's nothing you can do to stop it or defend yourself; you're just supposed to take it. The only thing that's truly upset me in this game is the way the holes on devices quiver when you stick your fingers in them and the way the alien cattle prod weapon – I'm sorry, there's no better way to describe this – *thrusts* when you fire it.

Not knowing anything about the game may have done me a disservice here. If I'd known a little bit about the kind of survival horror puzzle game *Scorn* is, I could have moderated my expectations of fear a bit differently. That said, if a game is purportedly inspired by H.R. Giger, damn it, at least give me a jump scare or two.

The puzzles are fine, if a bit obtuse at times. Again, this game gives you nothing. So half the time, you're wandering around wondering where to go or what to do, and if you do get to a puzzle, you better pray you understand what the puzzle's asking. There has got to be a happy medium between the kind of *Horizon Forbidden West* style of "blurts out the puzzle's solution 10 seconds after actually glimpsing the puzzle" and

Scorn’s style of “figure it the fuck out you misbegotten sack of electrified meat.”

I’ve only played a couple of hours, and so far, it doesn’t have its hooks in me yet, which is a bit of a cardinal sin for a Game Pass game. There’s just *so much* on offer that, if a game feels tedious or uninteresting, there’s no worry of money wasted. That said, the puzzles are *just* interesting enough to keep me playing *Scorn* for a little while longer. Hopefully the scary will kick in soon.

Scorn is available now on Xbox Series X / S, Xbox Game Pass, and PC.

https://www.theverge.com/2022/10/21/23416630/scorn-h-r-giger-xbox-game-pass-horror-game