RYG Evaluates Dragon Age: Inquisition

by
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We spent two weeks looking at Dragon Age: Inquisition and here's our initial thoughts: This could be the turning point for EA and Bioware in respect to the games they've published post Dragon Age 2 and that's good. It's playable for the most part, but higher-end PCs will benefit mostly from the extensive visual features in-game. With respect to Denuvo we haven't found anything that may degrade PCs performances across the board. With Origin as a service and product it's a question of how tolerant players are in terms of having it on their systems. Anyway, our detailed thoughts are within the report.

RYG's Assessment
59%
Bargain Basement Material
(64% and Below)

About Dragon Age: Inquisition

Dragon Age: Inquisition is a third person action, role-playing game and is the third game by EA and Bioware of the same franchise utilising the latest Frostbite engine. Please refer to each section for our results we've evaluated and our summarised thoughts to gain a better understanding of how Dragon Age: Inquisition affects PCs and plays as a PC Game.

RYG Disclaimer

This Windows version of Dragon Age: Inquisition (Build: 1.00) was obtained through EB Games independently with RYG funds for the purposes of evaluation and product testing. Dragon Age: Inquisition was evaluated on the following system specs: Windows 7, Intel i5-4460, 16Gb RAM, AMD Radeon R9 290.

Availablity

Origin: https://www.origin.com/store/buy/dra...andard-edition

Note: All other versions and copies purchased through physical and/or digital retailers will require EA's Origin platform.

Recommended System Specs

OS: Windows 7 *(Windows 7 Version Tested)*
CPU: Intel Quad Core Processor at 3.0 Ghz or AMD Hexa Core Processor at 3.2 Ghz
GPU: AMD R9 270 or NVIDIA GeForce GTX 660
RAM: 8 Gb
HDD: 26 Gb

Source: EA Origin

Note: Dragon Age Inquisition is a very demanding game and even the recommended specs might not match with the intended gameplay that players may want (e.g. 60fps at 1080p on ultra visual settings).

Section 1 - Content Strategy and Product Marketing

+ Was released simultaneously with its console version
+ Is available through Origin
+ Minimum / Recommended specs provided through origin.com
+ origin.com advises how Origin and Denuvo are used in Dragon Age: Inquisition
+ In-game documentation and/or tutorials provided
+ EULA, Privacy Policy and Terms of Service accessible through origin.com
+ All game-related info is conveniently found on dragonage.com

- Was released with different global dates for the PC version
- Is available only on Windows
- No known DRM-Free version
- Certain DLCs provided on specific versions of Dragon Age: Inquisition
- No publiclly available demo

Our Thoughts: It's pleasing to see EA providing as many points of information as possible on the game's official website, specifically with specs, content within the game, DRM and even the legal side of things, such as their EULA, Terms of Service and Privacy Policy. We weren't surprised with the lack of any publicly-accessible demo and their Windows-first mentality. What surprised us was their direction in taking on another DRM layer, Denuvo (nee. Sony DADC), which, from their website, was meant to increase sales, etc. Two weeks later and with little information on how sales performed it begs the question as to why EA bothered with Denuvo in the first place.

Section 2 - Digital Distribution

+ Is available worldwide through Origin
+ Download / Client Manager is optional for download of Dragon Age: Inquisition
+ Minimum / Recommended specs provided through Origin
+ Released DRM Free through Origin
+ Origin advises how Origin and Denuvo DRM are used in Dragon Age: Inquisition
+ Only Username, Email and Password are required to create a Origin account
+ Alternative payment options provided by Visa, Mastercard and Amex
+ Confirmation of purchase and receipt provided
+ Free and unlimited access and downloads after purchase
+ Can backup purchased games 'offline' (e.g. external or optical drives)
+ Refunds and/or exchanges offered for purchased games under specific provisions
+ Can access personal data

- Is priced inconsistently across global regions through Origin
- Currency notification not provided prior, during and/or after purchase
- Complete download size not provided
- Download / Client Manager required to play Dragon Age: Inquisition
- All players warranties waived whenever they use Origin
- Cover waived against any unforseeable damage and/or service disruptions within Origin
- Very difficult and/or impossible to terminate account
- Account termination voids past purchases and licenses to play Dragon Age: Inquisition
- Players prevented from disputing / validating Terms of Service breaches made against them
- Can't review and question changes made in Terms of Service
- Past purchases voided after refusing to accept Terms of Service

Our Thoughts: We've been quite critical of Origin for a few years now and, even as a distribution platform, it doesn't make sense as a "Steam Killer". On the front end Origin is user friendly and easy to use, hands down. The issues here fall under the following: price points, particularly to AUS gamers, distribution settings, privacy and tracking (which is meaningless to say the least) and their DRM service.

Section 3 - Privacy Policy

+ Privacy Policy found on ea.com
+ Applies to Dragon Age: Inquisition and/or Origin only
+ Written for easy comprehension
+ Policy specifies what information are collected at specific areas of the platform
+ Players advised where the info is specifically stored
+ Info is used solely for payments, opt-in email campaigns & acct management
+ Third parties visibly identified
+ Visible opt-in / opt-out process in respect to emails and promotional material
+ Players given visible access to all their game and player data

+ Players can access, modify and validate their Origin Account

- Not formatted for easy reading online
- Players not visibly notified of any changes made to the Policy
- Players not consulted on future revisions to the Privacy Policy
- 'Personally-identifiable' & 'non-personally identifiable' info aren't easily defined
- Assurances of safety and security of information not provided
- Players cannot export their information tied to their Origin account
- Player data is retained by EA for an extended period of time
- Can't review and query (legal) changes made to the Policy
- No specific information on how info will be used in the event of a sale/merger
- Players must accept ALL changes made to the Policy before using Dragon Age: Inquisition

Our Thoughts: This is a consistent observation we're seeing with their Privacy Policies in relation to the game (and with Origin in tow) and it's virtually inescapable. If you're comfortable playing this game within a physical connection, and allow EA to track / monitor / collect any data they will want from your system, then by all means. Otherwise, the "offline mode" through Origin is useless. One can force disconnect their system during gameplay...but an offline mode functionality exists through Origin for a reason. A lot of the data sent / received is protected, but that shouldn't be a reason to trust in the level of security EA has provided given larger video gaming companies over the past several years have been susceptible to online attacks.

Section 4 - EULA and EA's TOS

+ EULA and/or TOS accessible through ea.com
+ EULA / TOS covers Dragon Age: Inquisition and EA's Origin platform
+ Refunds and/or exchanges offered for purchased games under specific provisions
+ Terms and conditions for Origin and Denuvo DRM are clearly defined
+ Can legally make archival copies of Dragon Age: Inquisition
+ Players can create content based on Dragon Age: Inquisition and monetise it online
+ Detailed resolution process provided

- Not formatted for easy reading online
- Cumbersome / difficult to read
- Drafted to only abide by the laws of the US
- Players not visibly notified of any changes made to the EULA and/or TOS
- Players not consulted on future revisions to the EULA and/or TOS
- Can't review and query (legal) changes made to the EULA and/or TOS
- License to play the game only provided
- Replacement copies provided for a fee
- Circumvention of Origin and Denuvo DRM prohibited
- Dragon Age: Inquisition's source code is restricted
- Not permitted to create free 'mods' of Dragon Age: Inquisition
- Dragon Age: Inquisition will blacklist certain softwares and services
- All players warranties waived whenever they use Dragon Age: Inquisition

- Cover waived against any unforseeable damage and/or service disruptions within Dragon Age: Inquisition
- Termination process dictated by EA

Our Thoughts: Again, where information and the visibility of information is present on the outside (See section 1), EA are well known to stack layers of jargon, rights and clauses against the favour of their gaming customers. Don't expect too many consumer rights retained in their terms of service and EULA and while their refund policy is commendable it is by no means the solution against any backlash from gamers with conflicting expectations.

Section 5 - Installation

+ Custom installation options provided
+ Currently-executing background services won't interfere with installation
+ Error-free installation

- No installation logs of files and registry keys
- Extra game files found outside of installation directory
- Extra DRM files found outside of installation directory

Our Thoughts: While the files for Dragon Age Inquisition will remain where you choose to install all Origin games, Origin's files and keys will be all over the place, which makes it difficult to successfully remove them in the event of a clean up.

Section 6 - Automatic and/or Manual Patching

Our Thoughts: This was tested in the vanilla version that's currently sold through retail. There's yet to be an official word from Bioware of a future release of their first patch. In terms of gameplay we found that, for the most part, the game was playable and can be played (20+ hours so far) without Bioware's impending patch. However, the patch should be a welcome sight for many invested in the game.

Section 7 - DRM and Activation

+ Instructions provided on activating Dragon Age: Inquisition
+ Currently-executing background services won't interfere with activation process
+ Firewall and AV settings not modified
+ Unlimited online activations
+ Can play Dragon Age: Inquisition offline
+ Unlimited hardware activations
+ Unlimited Installations
+ Troubleshooting process provided for failed activations

- Can't verify safety and reliability of the activation process
- A non-transferrable user account is required
- Game is locked to specific account after activation
- More than one DRM system implemented

Our Thoughts: This is a one-time activation service for any first-time installation(s) of Dragon Age: Inquisition. As far as we can tell it's very similar to how Steam works. Previous evaluations have found that games would go through a third party DRM provider (Sony DADC in some cases). Not with this particular version of Dragon Age: Inquisition.

With respect to Denuvo we found very little impact whatsoever in terms of system performance, connectivity and even gameplay. Whether the developers or DRM guys want to call it an anti-tamper system a DRM is a DRM is a DRM. Again, we're pretty suspicious with Denuvo's premise in improving sales with respect to Dragon Age: Inquisition given the lack of information that's available at the moment.

Section 8 - Gameplay

+ Can play on minimum specs
+ Can play a backup copy of the game
+ Disc not required for gameplay
+ Can play in full screen mode
+ Can play in windowed mode
+ Can play in multiple resolutions up to 1080p and beyond
+ Extensive visual settings are provided in-game
+ Complete options in remapping keyboard and/or mouse controls
+ Complete options in remapping console
+ Separate volume controls provided for music, sound, voice and master
+ Full subtitles and/or captions provided
+ French and German audio are supported alongside English
+ Can play Dragon Age: Inquisition in offline mode
+ No known connectivity issues during gameplay
+ Can opt out of achievements and leaderboards
+ Can play Dragon Age: Inquisition error-free
+ Dragon Age: Inquisition won't blacklist specific background services or software
+ Can play game at last save checkpoint
+ Can manually save gameplay
+ Can modify savegame and/or configuration file
+ Denuvo and Origin DRM isn't running after gameplay of Dragon Age: Inquisition

- No option for players to provide custom subtitles and/or localisation
- Will 'phone home' without players consent
- Can only play on one PC at a time

Our Thoughts: In spite of its many flaws (Camera, AI Tactics, mouse control issues, its inventory and character UI, lack of modding, DRM) Dragon Age: Inquisition is an impressive game (in respect to gameplay and its in-game settings). With respect to the PC control settings this was a subjective thing and we ourselves didn't have too many issues playing it, although some adjusting was required (e.g. holding right mouse key during movement retained some point of view for the player). It's not an ideal solution, but something that EA and Bioware would definitely need to address given the amount of complaints they've received in respect to this.

It is also a graphic-hungry game and we struggled pretty hard on attaining 60 fps at 1080p on its ultra settings. Turning AA down to MSAA increased the frame rate considerably. Many of its in-game settings are vast (including language and subtitles) and further tweaks and settings can be made through the in-game console commands (e.g displaying true frame rate, for example). This is by no means a perfect PC port, but given EA's past performances with their PC games post Dragon Age 2 (2011) this is a game that can mark their return to genuine PC gaming development.

Section 9 - General PC Maintenance

+ PC clean of viruses, malware, spyware and rootkits after installation and gameplay of Dragon Age: Inquisition
+ HOSTS was clean
+ Windows Startup was clean
+ GOG isn't running after gameplay of Dragon Age: Inquisition
+ No other PC settings were modified after gameplay of Dragon Age: Inquisition

Our Thoughts: Players shouldn't have any issues with their systems before, during or after gameplay of Dragon Age: Inquisition.

Section 10 - Uninstallation

+ Players provided with options to back up their savegames and in-game settings

- Some files and registry keys remain
- No known external tools or process found that will remove specific files and registry keys

Our Thoughts: Removing Dragon Age: Inquisition and Origin will be a pain for the adventurous as there are files and registry keys everywhere and will require considerable time in manual removal post CCleaner.

Section 11 - Customer and Technical Support

+ From The Official Website: http://forum.bioware.com/forum/70-dr...ge-inquisition and
http://forum.bioware.com/topic/52252...list-opinions/

Changelog

05.12.2014 - Report published on RYG