

## **Martian Gothic: Unification – Windows**

**Developed by:** TalonSoft (<http://www.talonsoft.com>)

**Published by:** TalonSoft (<http://www.talonsoft.com>)

**Reviewed by:** Tim Maxwell

**Official Site:** <http://www.talonsoft.com/martiangothic/index.html>

**Genre:** Action

### **System Requirements:**

Windows 95/98  
266 MHz Pentium II or equivalent processor  
32 MB RAM  
4 MB DirectX compatible video card  
3D Accelerator Card  
DirectX compatible sound card  
450 MB Hard Drive space  
4X CD-ROM Drive  
DirectX 7

**Supports:** joystick/gamepad

**ESRB:** Mature

**Overall Rating:** 6.5

**Graphics:** 7/10

**Sound:** 8/10

**Documentation:** 7/10

**Getting Started:** 5/10

**Gameplay:** 6/10

**Value:** 7/10

**The Good Press:** Great script and voice acting; interesting plot; frightening atmosphere.

**The Bad Press:** Frustrating control; tons of mindless backtracking; atrocious save feature.

**Overview:** *Martian Gothic* will delve you deep into the depths of the red planet, but will control problems keep you from coming home alive?

### **Tips:**

Pay close attention to the character's description when examining an item. He/she may reveal an important clue about your next course of action.

Try to keep inactive characters out of rooms with dead bodies around. You just never know when they'll rise up and come after you.

*Resident Evil* has garnered quite a large group of followers since its original release several years back. In fact, you'd be hard pressed to wander down the game aisle at your local electronics store without noticing at least a few clones of the venerable series. The game is well represented on just about every gaming platform, and though many have tried, no game has been able to overtake *RE* in terms of sheer scare factor and storyline. That brings us to *Martian Gothic: Unification*—one of the PC's first legitimate *RE* clones. And while it combines some innovative new twists with a solid storyline, its questionable control and awkward interface keep it from true elite status.

The story in *Martian Gothic* is perhaps the game's most unique aspect. It seems that a Martian meteorite hit ground in Antarctica in the year 11,000 BC and was discovered in 1984. Upon further analysis, NASA determines that there is an existence of microfossils on the meteorite. Determined to further examine the possibility of living organisms on the red planet, NASA launches the first manned mission to Mars in 2009. The crew establishes Vita 1 base and begins an investigation of Martian bacterial life. Nine years later, a puzzling message is sent from Vita 1: "If you send a manned craft, warn the crew to stay alone. Stay alive." Radio silence ensues, and this sinister transmission is the last from Vita 1. Ten months later, a team of three investigators is dispatched to Vita 1 to find out what's going on. Heeding the obscure secondary mission directive, the three enter the base by a different airlock. They anticipate dealing with, at worst, the aftermath of a bacterial outbreak. They couldn't be more wrong.

The game puts you in control of not one, but all three of the crewmembers sent to the base. A quick button click allows you to switch characters at any time. Each of the characters begin in small chambers and are equipped only with a few relatively useless items, a hand-drawn map of the base, and their wits. To succeed, you'll need to have them work together, but at the same time, stay apart. If you happen to bump them into each other, well, let's just not do that, ok? You can however communicate with them from time to time using your trusty radio, and share items by making use of the storage hatches or futuristic vacuum tubes. You'll have to learn to share early on, as often times, beaming a key card to one of your colleagues is the only way to keep things going. Having direct control over all three characters certainly adds a distinctive strategic element to the game, and also adds a high degree of challenge—if one character dies, you all die.

As you progress, you'll quickly realize that this mission is much more than you'd bargained for, as the halls are infested with bloodthirsty zombies and other abominations. Since only one of your characters has access to a weapon at the outset, surviving the first part of the game could be one of the game's biggest challenges. In terms of control and perspective, *Martian Gothic* is nearly identical to the *RE* games. Since this is the case, you have to contend with camera angles that often don't allow you to see what's directly in front of you, awkward controls that complicate aiming, and sluggish character movement. I was particularly frustrated near the beginning of the game when I found the computer room and was able to unlock the doors for the other characters. As soon as I logged off the computer, a zombie rose up from a nearby bed and began pursuit. To make a long story short, I turned into a midnight snack for the monster several times because a) I didn't have a friggin' weapon, b) that damn kick button is worthless, and c) the door had a bad habit of closing just before I could get out.

Despite the aforementioned control problems and early frustration, the game manages to keep things interesting by combining brilliant voice acting (something that could never be said for any of the *RE* games or likenesses) with strong script work and nice graphics. First off, acclaimed science fiction writer Stephen Marley wrote the script and dialogue for *Martian Gothic*, and his expertise really proves how much solid dialog can bring to a game. The voice acting is also very well done—no incessant whining (a la Jill Valentine) or cheesy pep talks here. Rounding things out are the impressive graphics and musical score, which combine to create an atmosphere of sheer terror that perfectly sets the mood for the mission ahead. In terms of presentation, *Martian Gothic* certainly doesn't disappoint.

The major gripe I have with *Martian Gothic* is the decidedly console-esque save feature. It's bad enough that you have to trudge around through the whole base looking for a computer terminal to save your game, but you're also only allowed to save three times at any given terminal. I just don't understand the logic behind this feature—nothing is more annoying than finally finding the way out of an area only to die searching for a computer to save the game. Perhaps I wouldn't adamantly loathe this feature as much as I do if the stinkin' zombies would just stay dead when I shoot them. As a measure to heighten the tension, enemies will respawn over and over—even in areas that you've previously cleared. While this certainly accomplishes the goal of making things all the more creepy, it tends to cause undue frustration when searching for computer terminals, not to mention the taxation on your ammo levels. I'm all for a challenging game, but an option to turn enemy respawn off would be welcome. Other than this, I was pleased with the fact that there were no mind-numbingly difficult puzzles to solve, and, other than computer hunting, backtracking was kept to a relative minimum.

When all is said and done, *Martian Gothic* has all the makings of a great survival/horror game, but falls just a bit short of the mark due to control issues and an obnoxious save feature. Still, Talonsoft is to be commended for devising a brilliant plot and combining it with solid voice acting and good visuals. If you're a fan of the *Resident Evil* series or just enjoy a good story, give *Martian Gothic* a look.