



Street Fighter V review

It is actually more about Ken than Ryu

By **Chan Khee Hoon** - Feb 15, 2016



Platform:

PlayStation 4, PC

Reviewed on:

PC

Genre:

Fighting

Publisher:

Capcom

Developer:

Capcom, Dimps

Release:

February 16, 2016

Oh, how times have changed. When Capcom first unveiled *Street Fighter V*'s roster of combatants in 2015, one of the biggest surprises was undeniably the redesign of Ken Masters, the American counterpart to broody lead character Ryu. Originally conceived as a simple palette swap of Ryu's in the first few games – Ken in red, Ryu in white – Ken even had a completely identical moveset. However, Capcom wanted to differentiate the two fighters and made a few key tweaks throughout the series; for instance, Ken's moves were more agile and stylish, while Ryu's attacks were slower but packed a greater punch (or kick).

As the duo gradually become the most iconic [martial arts bromance](#) in video game history, Ken was nonetheless still being featured in every iteration of *Street Fighter* with his trademark bright red gi and luscious blonde locks – in contrast to Ryu's white gi and short, brown mop. It is almost as if this is an unshakable tenet behind all *Street Fighter* games.

Street Djent-er

That is why Ken's decision to trade his sweat-drenched gi for a black training shirt after 29 years was met with some derision, with Capcom brand manager Mike Lunn even addressing [his questionable attire](#) in an interview. But this change isn't as drastic as most might think and is rather emblematic of Capcom's approach to *Street Fighter V*. Sure, Ken looks different, and his new hair harkens back to the days of centre-parted hairstyles from the 90s. But he is still quintessentially Ken, with his self-satisfied smirk, thick black eyebrows, and overpowered Shoryuken. He is also faster. Flashier. And much more aggressive.



Make no mistake, *Street Fighter V* is a fighting game, and it involves plenty of punching and kicking. What makes this punching and kicking seem all the more satisfying has become its own science, and Capcom has proven its mastery of the topic. One of the first things that greeted me in-game was the sweet, soaring progressive metal/djent music of the menu theme song, which certainly sets the mood for *Street Fighter V*. Even the character selection screen music was such an adrenaline rush, right down to the shred of the guitar, the tremolos of the notes, and beat of the snares.

I feel ever-so-ready for battle. I ripped my shirt off and hunkered down for the game.

Some familiar faces

In *Street Fighter V*, Ken now looks like a boybander who has accidentally wandered into a world where everyone is obsessed with fighting, but he still plays mostly like the Ken we were familiar with. Similarly, *Street Fighter V* is not a complete upheaval from its predecessor; instead, it continues to steer in familiar grounds, while delivering some major changes in mechanics.



To start, character designs are not so much of a departure stylistically from *Street Fighter IV*, apart from a few details. For those keeping tabs, you would have known that Dhalsim is now sporting a turban and beard, Bison (the dictator, not the boxer) has white hair, and Birdie had been binge-eating and that mysterious hole in his mohawk is no more. The vibrant graphics of the various stages are also much more refined while remaining just as beautiful, but do not differ that much from *Street Fighter IV*.

What is vastly different for this iteration of *Street Fighter* is its game mechanics. *Street Fighter IV*'s revenge and combo gauges are now replaced by a new mechanic called the Variable System. How it works is simple; it's made up of two gauges, the V-Gauge and the EX Gauge. When the bars from the V-Gauge are filled, either by taking damage or using a defensive attack called V-Skills, they can be used to execute V-Reversals and V-Triggers. Each of these "V" attacks are unique to every fighter; for instance, Ryu's V-Trigger increases the damage of his other attacks, whereas Rashid's V-Trigger is a powerful tornado attack that inflicts a huge amount of damage.

Capcom also did away with one of *Street Fighter IV*'s most recognisable features: Focus Attack, which grants the character immunity against a single attack while charging for a punch that sends opponents crumpling to their knees. In its place is the aforementioned V-Reversal, which allows your character to unleash a counter attack in exchange of one stock of the V-Gauge. While ditching the Focus Attack is a bold move by Capcom, the new system is an innovative way of keeping battles fresh. It accentuates the fighting style of every character, making each of these 16 characters truly unique while encouraging players to specialise in one or two fighters. Changes like this help to make *Street Fighter V* a perfect blend of accessibility and depth.



How can punching meatbags feel so good?

Along with the new game mechanics are a narrative-driven tutorial and story mode, which serve as an introduction to *Street Fighter V*'s fighters and basic controls. This being a fighter, I wasn't expecting an in-depth emotional tearjerker about Ryu's relentless struggle against the Satsui no Hado, and Capcom keeps it that way by intentionally keeping story interludes short and sweet. In particular, the story mode was a brilliant way to introduce new players and veteran gamers to the characters, while interjecting each battle with anime-styled dialog scenes in an attempt to string a story together.

There are also a myriad of other modes, including the versus mode, survival mode, challenge mode, and training mode. The survival mode was particularly addictive, pitting you against a succession of fighters and challenging you to last as many rounds as possible. Health and the energy in the gauges can be carried over from one battle to the next, and winning each fight bags you precious points that can be spent on battle supplements at the end of the round. From restoring your health bar to suffering certain penalties in exchange for even more points, the supplements add another dimension to the game and keep fights engaging. Plus, since the survival mode can be pegged to various difficulty levels from "easy" to "hell", casual players can quickly jump into the game and rain special attacks on their opponents with wild abandon, while seasoned veterans can plan and strategise moves while dissecting the gameplay.



Too bad for PC gamers...

But what is a game without its flaws? It is obvious that *Street Fighter V* had always been developed for the Playstation 4 first and then carelessly ported to appease its legion of PC gamers. Rebinding the default keyboarding configuration is not an option, and I had to discover the controls on my own by blindly pressing every button, one by one. To say that this process was frustrating was an understatement. What's worse, Capcom neglected to configure a player 2 keyboard configuration, making the versus mode effectively unplayable without a fight stick or another controller.

So, I did just that. I borrowed a fight stick from a friend and plugged it in, only to realise that it was probably incompatible with the game. Unless you are fine with *Street Fighter* being a single player game, you're better off getting it on the Playstation 4 instead.



Verdict

When *Street Fighter IV* launched in 2008 after the series spent nine long years of hiatus, it set a monstrously high standard for fighting games, receiving universal critical acclaim and securing a spot as one of the best games of its generation. Developing a sequel to such a game was no doubt an uphill task, but Capcom managed to pull this off with much aplomb. Since *Street Fighter V* was never meant to dethrone its predecessor's position as an incredibly polished fighting game, Capcom instead focused its attention on making its latest iteration a formidable title that can stand on its own merits. Like Ken in his black training shirt, *Street Fighter V* offers a different fighting experience without losing its soul and essence. If Capcom can fix the frustrating PC issues with the keyboard, this game would truly be impeccable.

Besides, Ken's new look is slowly growing on me. But if there is an alternative costume that I can purchase to get rid of his hair, you can be sure that it will be the first thing I do when the in-game shop launches in March later this year.

A digital download of Street Fighter V was provided for the purpose of this review. Please see our [Ethics Policy](#) for more information.

REVIEW OVERVIEW

Gameplay

8

Longevity

8.5

Visuals

8



Sound

8.5



SUMMARY

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8.3

★ ★ ★ ★ ☆

OVERALL SCORE

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