

Bloodborne



General Information

Genre:	Action-Roleplaying, Action-Adventure, Survival Horror
Release:	24. March 2015
Developer:	Fromsoftware, Japan Studio
Publisher:	Sony Computer Entertainment
Platforms:	Playstation 4, Playstation 5
Analysis from:	Nio Saner, Maksym Kliuzko, Marcel Gamma

1. Game Description

Players take the role of a person with an unknown illness, drawn to the dark gothic city of Yharnham for its long history of blood ministration. Unfortunately though, this same blood used for healing appears to also be responsible for turning the people of this city into mindless beasts. Taking on the role of a Hunter, the player must embark on a journey to uncover the mysterious eldritch beginnings of this plague, and defeat whatever gets in their way.

Trailer: www.youtube.com

2. Sound Description

Suitable for the gothic horror genre, the soundtrack mostly consists of melancholic strings, especially cello, sustained and with lots of vibrato, reminiscent of wolves howling in the night. It also doesn't shy away from incorporating christian-sounding chorals, as well as dissonant music boxes, utilising a wide scope of its dark, oppressive mood. The sound effects have a heavy, sometimes visceral quality to them, from blood splattering and flesh squelching after a successful hit to the piercing, high-pitched noise of the healing blood vial.

3. Sound Analysis

3.1 UI Sound

The UI sound can largely be deconstructed into two categories: Selection and confirmation. Within menus, moving from option to option generates clicking noises that sound largely conventional in the history of inventory systems. More impactful choices, such as traveling to the hunter’s dream or selling off items, interestingly results in a heavy metal clang, accompanied by the sound of tearing flesh. Opening a menu, however, sounds a lot like rustling cloth. Uniting all these is a sense of mechanic practicality, the Hunter’s nature. If one wishes to interpret, the clicking could stand for the gun used to parry, the clanging for the main weapon, and the rustling for the protective armor, thus creating a full picture of the experience of a hardened warrior.

Main Menu / Character Customization

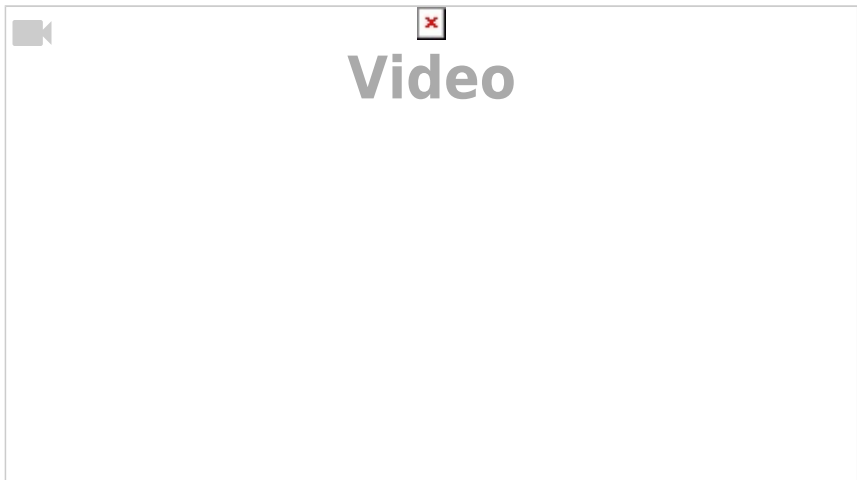
Ingame Inventory

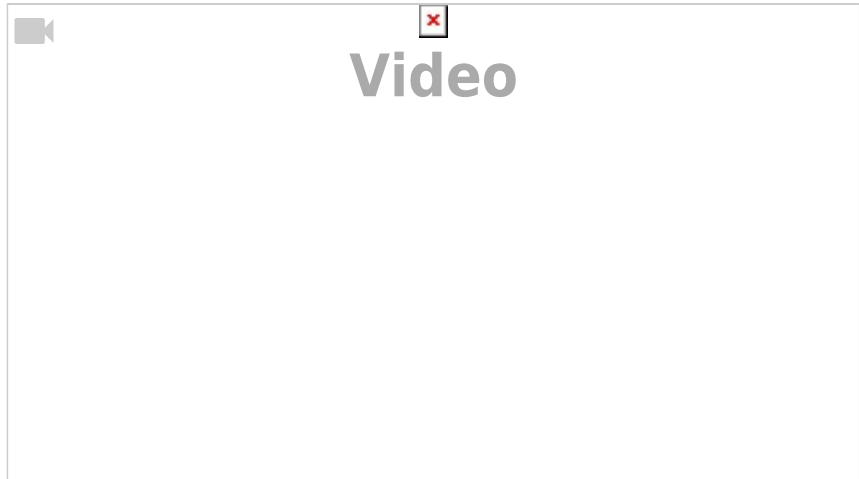
Cursor Move	cursol_move.wav	Selection Menu Open	menu_open.wav
Cursor Select	cursol_select.wav	Menu Open	menu_close.wav
Cursor Cancel	cursol_cancel.wav	Menu Close	menubar_open.wav
Cursor Ok	cursol_ok.wav		

3.2 Spatial Sound

3.2.1 Diegetic

As with any good game, the soundscape of Bloodborne is flexible to the environment the player is in. In the main city of Yharnham, one can hear church bells and crackling torches, befitting the religious fervor of its inhabitants. In the wintry area of Cainhurst, special attention was paid to the soft drizzle of snowflakes, and footsteps sound muted and crunchy against the soft snow. Inside buildings, attentive listeners will often perceive a quiet yet ominous drone reverberating from the huge stone walls.





3.2.2 Non-Diegetic

A good example for a non-diegetic environment sound is when the player enters a new location. A stinger is played to signal the transition into the area, accompanied by its name in the UI.

New Location	bb_new_location_sound.mp3
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3.3. Player sound

3.3.1 Enviroment

This includes sounds such as footsteps, rustling of clothes, picking up items and interacting with doors, levers, ladders and the like. Being firmly rooted in the physical world, they share a common theme of decay that is inherent to the mortal realm. Levers and doors creak and moan with age, and the fabric sounds tattered yet heavy against the Hunter’s back.

Collect Item	bb_item_collected.mp3
Retrieve Blood Echoes	bb_blood_echoes_retrieved.mp3

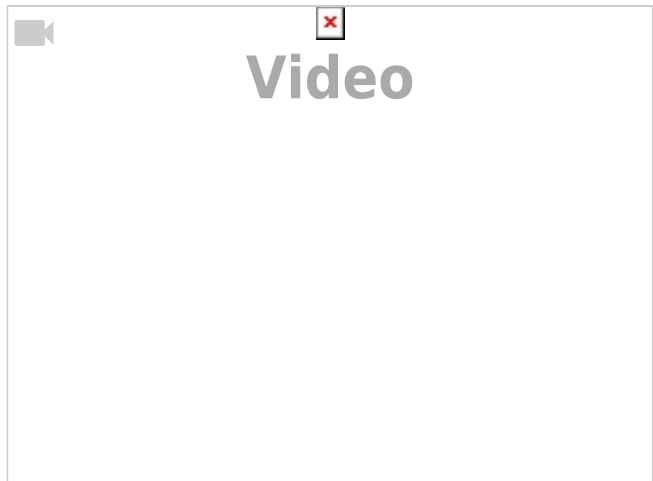
3.3.2 Combat

This is where the Hunter truly shines. Equipped with one of a wide range of trick weapons, a pistol for parrying, resources for combatting both health loss and status effects, and throwable items like pebbles or molotov cocktails, the player can hope for at least somewhat of a fair chance against the onslaught. As previously mentioned, damaging an enemy sounds and feels appropriately heavy and visceral, rotten flesh giving way to cold, rough metal. The pistol and the throwable items support this gritty sound aesthetic in their own ways. A slight contrast is presented by the sound effects for healing, as well as collecting blood echoes from slain enemies. These seem much more light and ethereal, hollow whistles that sound like they were reversed. This could be attributed to the mystical nature of blood in this game.

Trick Weapon Transformation

Other Combat Related Sound Effects

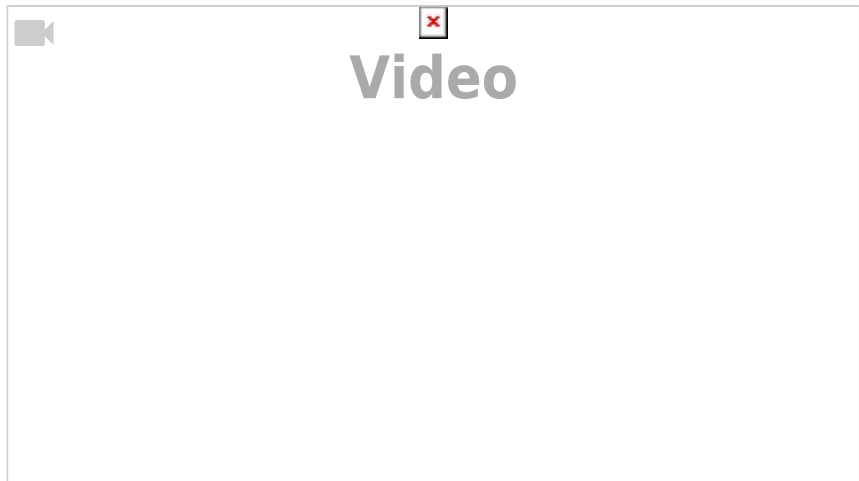
Parry and Visceral	bb_parry_and_visceral.mp3
Player Death	bb_death.mp3
Blood Echoes Suck	bb_blood_echoes_suck.mp3



3.4 NPC and Enemy sound

3.4.1 Enviroment

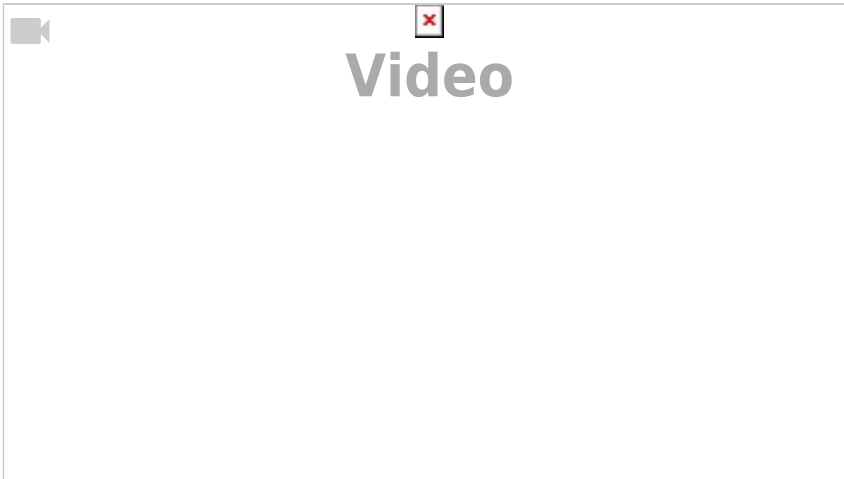
Many of the non-hostile NPCs are most aptly characterised not through their looks, but their voiceovers, their dialogue. The game has a habit of hiding them behind doors, chuckling at or lamenting the player for their inability to find shelter from the terrors of the Hunt, much unlike them. For the enemies, environment sound relates mostly to the noises that reveal their presence before they come into view, a common tactic in horror games. This includes footsteps, shrieking, and in the case of the Bound Widows, pained weeping. The interesting aspect here is once again the storytelling perspective. The Bound Widows may be enemies in the situation the Hunter finds themselves in, but they are ultimately victims, loudly lamenting their fate before they notice the Hunter as yet another potential threat.



3.4.2 Combat

The most iconic enemy combat noise is probably the screeching of what is the first boss for most players, the Cleric Beast. Its piercing inhuman wail does an excellent job at setting up the themes for the rest of the game: Agony, violence, and a loss of conscience and sanity. It goes straight to the bones. Aside from that, many enemies will scream at the Hunter in one flavor or another, including the aforementioned Bound Widows, and their claw and/or weapon swipes possess a heavy clanging quality similar to the Hunter’s strikes.

Cleric Beast	cleric-beast-roar.mp3
Carrion Crow	crow-death-sfx.mp3



4. Comparsion: Bloodborne and Pineview Drive

Both Bloodborne and Pineview Drive are horror games that successfully communicate a sense of hopelessness in the face of adversity. While Bloodborne might enable the player to take up arms and fight, they are gradually made aware that they're trapped in a vicious cycle of violence. In Pineview Drive, no combat mechanic exists in the first place. The absence of combat intensifies the feeling of vulnerability and helplessness, as players must navigate a haunted house with no means of direct confrontation. Both games also walk the thin line between reality and imagination, and this is especially visible in the sound aesthetic that plays a crucial role in conveying this disorienting experience. In the case of the second game, it also functions as a primary game mechanic. Specific sounds act as cues for the player to investigate potential sources, but doing so results in a loss of sanity points. Player must discern between real and imagined sounds, resisting the urge to investigate certain sources to maintain their sanity.

Concerning sound aesthetics, both exhibit the ominous worn-down creaking sounds common to horror games, but Pineview Drive's sound effects seem much more grounded, realistic, less stylized overall. This makes sense concerning the games' narratives, while they are both about the supernatural, Bloodborne is set in a dark gothic fantasy with tons of fictional worldbuilding, while Pineview Drive is mostly set in the real world, plus ghosts. As such both soundscapes serve their intended purpose.

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