

Nier Automata: The End of YoRHa Edition – Menu Analysis



Figure 1: Game Logo

Introduction

The objective of this document is to evaluate the main menu of the game “Nier: Automata, The End of YoRHa Edition” from various perspectives:

- Theme: How the menu enhances the game’s theme and immerses the player in the game’s mood from the very beginning;
- Understandability: How accessible is the game and how easy it is to navigate at all times;
- Functionality: The effectiveness of the game menu for all intended purpose.

It is also crucial to consider the target audience and the platform on which the game is played.

About the game

“Nier: Automata, The End of YoRHa Edition” is a 3D action RPG game published by Square Enix and developed by Platinum Games in 2022 for Nintendo Switch.

The game is a ported version of the original game, “Nier: Automata”, released in 2017, which contains the two DLCs “3C3C1D119440927” and “6C2P4A1168680823” and the compatibility with Joy-Con’s HD Rumble and Motion Controls.

The game, as its previous porting, is destined for a mature audience (PEGI 18, ESRB Mature).

Theme

In the game, the player assumes the role of an android named 2B, whose mission is to go on a post-apocalyptic Earth that has been ravaged and overrun by machines which forced humanity to move to the moon since they have attacked the Earth.

The game themes are about:

- Post apocalyptic, dystopian future;
- Androids and machines;
- Nature of humanity, free will and morality.

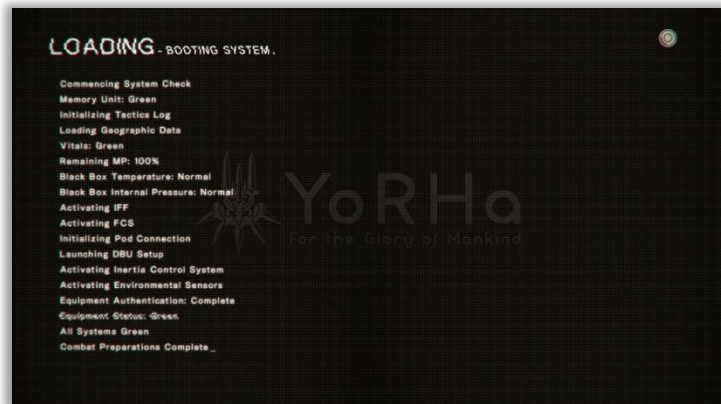


Figure 2: Loading Screen

The game uses its narrative and gameplay mechanics to pose questions about these topics to the player.

The main menu of the game incorporates various screens that reflect the first two themes and subtly hint at the third theme that the player will encounter further in the game.

Before reaching the main menu, during the boot loading process, the game displays a “Booting System” screen. This immediately gives an idea of the game’s technological and computer-related theme. In fact, the lines shown in *Figure 2: Loading Screen* are compiled in real time, similar to a terminal.

The Title Screen shows different elements:

- The game’s title and few options;
- At the background there is a blurred landscape of the city’s skyline where the game is set;
- At the foreground, stylized worn drawings similar to plants.

Furthermore, in the game screen are present glitch effect on the title and the selected option, while the entire background is filtered with a sepia filter.

These elements collectively capture all the previously mentioned theme: the glitch effects, the few line choices written with a *sans serif* font in a minimalistic way, hint at futurism and technology. The background gives to the player the idea that the game is set in post-apocalyptic future thanks the ruined skylines, while the sepia filter conveys a sensation of melancholy and nostalgia. The stylized plants introduce feelings related too nature or rebirth.



Figure 3: Title Screen

From this screen, it's possible to catch the essence of the game: the designers have carefully selected a few elements that harmonize well together, yet evoke diverse feelings about the game in the player. The starting screen sets a series of parameters and expectations, the understanding of which will be deepened as the game progresses.

Upon selecting "New Game" or "Load Game", the game's aesthetic shift: the line options rearrange their layout to appear on the left of the screen, while the background turned into a minimalistic drawing with drab colors that maintain the mood set by the previous screen. The minimalistic details and the simple drawings here also evoke a sense of futurism, consistent with the first screen. The designers have chosen an aesthetic that seamlessly integrates with others menu encountered during gameplay.



Figure 5: Load Game Screen



Figure 4: Start Menu Screen

At the end, the background music is very minimal and not much noisy, it just accompanies the player without steal their attention.

Understandability

All the options are very minimal and disposed in a readable way.

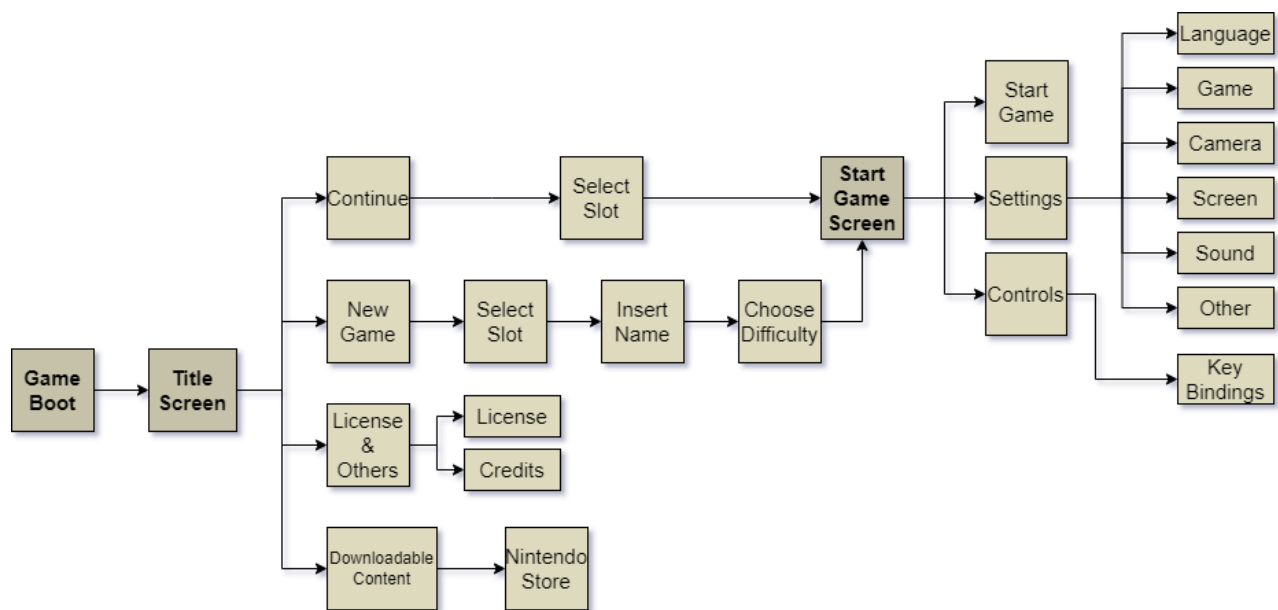


Figure 6: Main Menu Flow Diagram

The Title Screen offers 4 options:

- Continue;
- New Game;
- License & Others;
- Downloadable Content.

The game aims to launch the player directly into the gameplay, bypassing a potential settings section. This can be somewhat disorienting, as it's a common practice to include a settings option from the Title screen. This is particularly noticeable considering that this option was available in previous versions of the game.

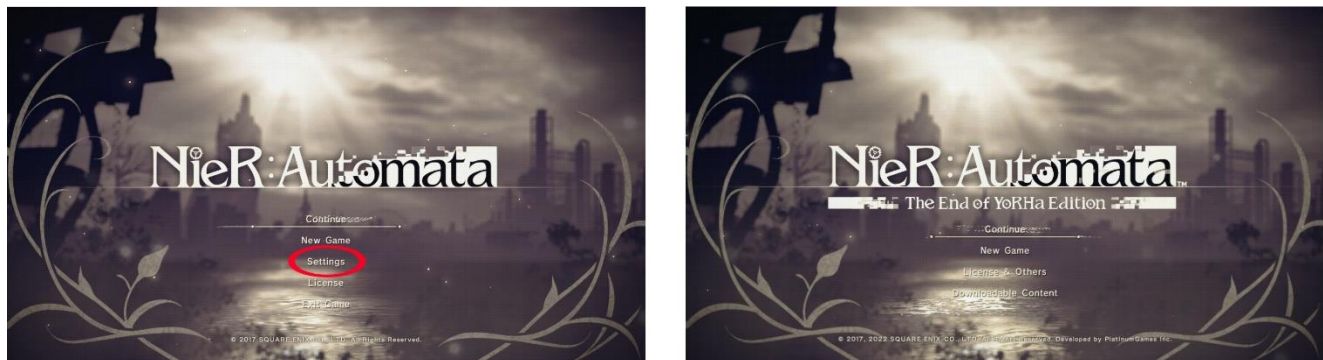


Figure 7: Comparison between the 2017 version and the 2022 version

To access the settings, the player needs to either start a new game or load a previous one. Only then, they will be able to customize their experience.

This design choice is very particular, as it allows the player to choose different settings for each saved game. For instance, a player could have one saved game with the Y-axis set to “inverted” and another with the Y-axis set to “normal”. However, this feature makes no sense since the is played by the same user. If a different player wants to play the game with different options, they can do so by using a different account. As such, the actual position of the settings doesn’t seem to serve a specific purpose and might confuse the player who expect to find these options in the main menu. The same consideration applies to the “Controls” configuration, that could be included in the Title screen too or directly within the “Settings” menu.

The options available in the menu after selecting a game, unlike the main menu, are laid out on the left of the screen. This configuration results very useful and intuitive, as it allows each piece of information in the “Settings” and “Controls” to be displayed on the rest of the screen.

At the bottom of the screen are the controls that can be used during each screen, along with a brief description of what each selected option does.

One final note is about the pop-up messages that appear when the player attempts to leave a screen without saving or when they try to load a saving data. These messages appear giving two options: “Yes” and “No”. To select one of these options, the player must move the left stick of the pad or press the D-Pad before selection. This kind of interaction, especially for console player, can be counterintuitive. It would be more intuitive to map the decision to accept or decline a certain action directly to two specific buttons: one for confirmation and one for going back. The game obviously has a shared configuration across different platforms, from home console like PlayStation 4, Xbox One and Nintendo Switch to PC Desktop. However, since the game is special edition for Nintendo Switch, it would have been appreciated if this detail had been addressed to improve the flow of actions in the game menu.



Figure 8: Settings and Controls are not present in the Title Screen



Figure 9: The options expand rightward the screen



Figure 10: Pop up message

Functionality

The “Nier: Automata, The End of YoRHa Edition” main menu provides the essential options needed for gameplay. The options to launch the game are quite standard: the player can either start a new game, deciding if it’s worth occupying a new slot or overwriting an existing one, or load a previously started game.

Once the game is set up, before launching it, as already seen, the game offers to the player the opportunity to change the settings and control configuration.

In the “Settings” section there are different possibilities:

- Language;
- Game;
- Camera;
- Screen;
- Sound;
- Other.



Figure 11: Camera settings provide depth customization

The customization is fairly basic, with the exception of the “Camera” settings. Given that this is an action game, the player is provided with a lot of options to meticulously adjust every aspect of camera rotation and orientation.

Significant depth has also been added to the control configuration, allowing players to assign their preferred function to each button without any restrictions. This level of freedom is particularly appreciated in this game genre where the pad must adapt to the player's needs, not vice versa.

There aren't other notable insights: the game explores more options within the game, outside the main menu, where the player can build and customize their character and navigate the 3D map.

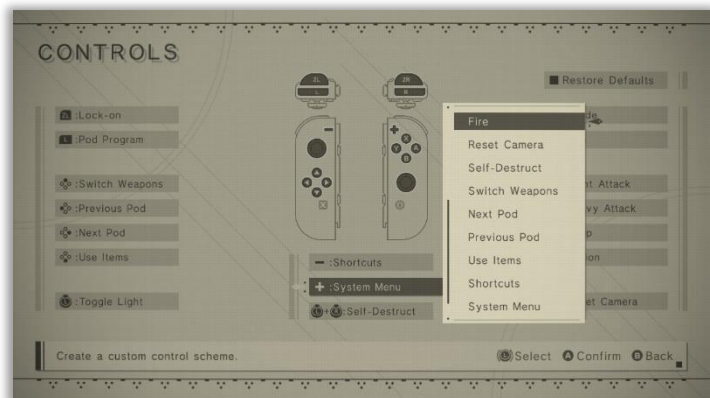


Figure 12: Key bindings without any restrictions

The main menu functionalities seem to lack just for the possibility to manage or erase data.

In Conclusion

“Nier: Automata, The End of YoRHa Edition” is minimalistic. From the aesthetic to the possibilities gives to the player in terms of options. There are aspects that are not completely understandable but the flow of the menu navigation is good: the player can feel the atmosphere of the game and customize the experience of the game as they want since the Title screen. And this is the most important aspect for a Main Menu.