

SKOAR!

LIVE TO GAME

REEVU
PlayStation 5

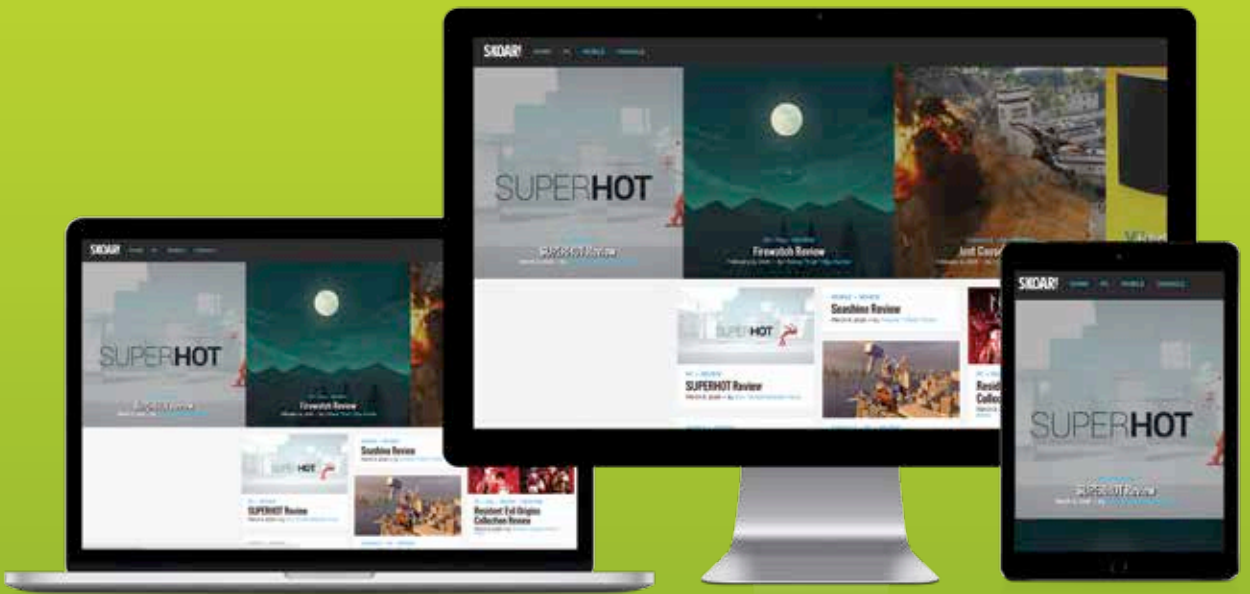
Rage

Hades

THE MOST ANTICIPATED GAMES OF 2021

TIME TO FALL VICTIM TO THE HYPE TRAIN AGAIN





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TO HYPE OR NOT TO HYPE

Manish “Trigger-Happy” Rajesh

SKOAR! Overlord | feedback@skoar.in



Welcome to the first SKOAR! issue of 2021! As is the norm, we're late. We really don't want that to be the norm though. It's just... games are really distracting. Okay that's just an excuse, we're also really very lazy. We'll pick up the pace, promise!

At the risk of coming across as hypocrites, this month's cover story is all about the most anticipated games of 2021. I know, I know, don't get aboard the hype train. We've said it oh so many times. It's right up there with don't pre-order games. Yet, there's just something about looking forward to something that just cheers people up. It's hard not to have expectations, even if they do come crashing down when you finally get your hands on the game. We're totally not referring to any game in particular here... Now that the most anticipated game of all time has finally released, it's time to move on. To better things, or potentially worse things. Who knows what the future holds?

For this month's cover story we've got a nice distribution of genres, from AAA games to Indie games, for you to look forward to this year. 2021's got a pretty solid lineup of games, sure nothing is as hyped as CP2077 was, but I see that as a good thing. Just means you won't be let down as hard. On the flip side, if it turns out to be good, well then it exceeded expectations, didn't it? _(ツ)_/

That's that, obligatory discord plug: <https://discord.gg/VVqmRGPw>

And also, congratulations to Shivendoo and Pulkrit for winning this year's SKOAR! Game of the Year raffle! *

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SKOAR!

LIVE TO GAME

OVERLORD
Manish “Trigger Happy” Rajesh

THE LORD’S VASSALS (WRITERS)
Mithun “barbarian monkey” Mohandas,
Dhriti “DeeDee” Datta,
Sameer “PsychoMantis” Mitha,
Shrey “Twinkle Fairy” Pacheco,
Rahul “Ch1ckenDump1ng” Chettiyar,
Kshipra “faafdaajalebii” Jadav

MILITARY COUNCIL (DESIGN)
Art-Director Warmaster: Anil VK
Lord General: Baiju NV

Cover Magic: Anil VK

THE LORD’S COURT (PRODUCTION)
Managing Jarl: Rakesh Upadhyay
Executive Dukes: M P Singh, Mohd. Nadeem Ansari

*Legal stuff we can’t mess with
MANAGEMENT
Editor: Vikas Gupta
Chief Editor: Robert Sovereign-Smith
Managing Editor Digit Geek &
Brand Head - Devworx: Mithun Mohandas

OFFICE
9.9 Group Pvt. Ltd.
205, Arjun Centre, B Wing, Station Road,
Govandi East, Mumbai - 400088
help@skoar.in
For any business-related enquiries, contact
business@skoar.in

Published by Vikas Gupta for and on
behalf of the owners, 9.9 Group
Private Limited. Published at 121,
Patpargang, Mayur Vihar Ph.I,
Near Mandir Masjid, Delhi-110091
Editor: Vikas Gupta

e-mail



What's New



NINTENDO ESHOP STRUGGLES

The new Monster Hunter game isn't even out yet on the Switch, but it's already crashing the Nintendo eShop. Capcom released a demo for the upcoming

Monster Hunter Rise, and the Nintendo eShop clearly couldn't handle the pressure, promptly up and crashing. The site was still unreachable the following day. Monster Hunter Rise is set to release on 26th March, and the demo is available until the 31st of Jan.

<http://dgit.in/democrash>



NEW ARKANE GAME IN THE WORKS

Arkane Austin is working on a new game, and the co-creator of Dishonored is apparently working with the developers of Dishon-

ored and Prey for this one. According to Twitter user Timur222, the LinkedIn profile of senior VFX artist Lisa Charriere shows that the company is currently working on an unnamed project in Unreal 4 followed by the word "Fantasy" in brackets. We don't have more details on the game, but we can guess, considering Bethesda is owned by Microsoft, that it could very well be Microsoft exclusive.

<http://dgit.in/newarkane>



THE FUTURE OF XBOX IS “EXCITING”

Xbox division head Phil Spencer, recently on a podcast, revealed that while 2020 was an important year for the Xbox Game Pass, 2021 is going

to be “incredible”. He went on to say that he was very excited about the lineup of games that were making their way to the service. He broke down the future into phases, with next year being “Horizon 0”, two to three years down the line is “Horizon 1” and finally “Horizon 2” for ten years down the line. More details will be revealed in time, but Spencer promises it will get people excited.

<http://dgit.in/xboxfut>



LEAGUE OF LEGENDS MMO

Riot Games have basically confirmed that they’re working on an MMO in the League of Legends universe. Something a lot of people have been asking

for, for ages. The news came from the Vice President of IP and Entertainment, Greg Street, who just kinda... tweeted it out. It was odd, to say the least. But hey, confirmation is confirmation. The tweet that led to the reveal was this, “My recent job at Riot has been to help develop the League universe, which we’re going to need! Because it is time,” he wrote. “My new job is to kick off a big (some might say massive) game that many of you, and many Rioters, have been asking us to create.” Followed by, “It’s an MMO”.

<http://dgit.in/lolmmo>



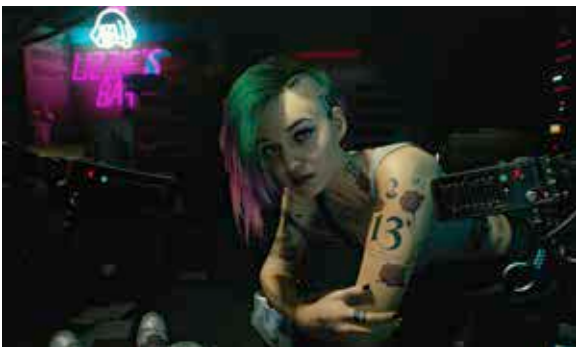
VIDEO GAME BOOKS

Pfft, gamers don't read.

Just kidding. Some of you might love reading. If you happen to enjoy both reading and gaming, then well, this list is perfect for you, or

if there's someone who you might want to gift a book to. Polygon has basically come up with the "best 10 video games books of 2020". There are a lot of interesting reads here, and variety in the way you consume them as well. One of them is a pop-out book! Not for kids, don't worry. Check it out.

<http://dgit.in/vgbooks>



CYBERPUNK PULLED FROM PLAYSTATION STORE

Cyberpunk had a pretty disastrous launch. If you thought you had it bad on PC, well, let's just say last

gen consoles (PS4, Xbox One X|S) had it way worse (hah!). To the point where it was literally unplayable. And not in the meme way. Naturally, Sony pulled the game from the PlayStation store, and offered a full refund to all gamers who purchased the game. CD Projekt Red also offered the same, allowing anyone who wanted a refund to get one, even at their own expense if the retailer wouldn't take the physical copy back.

<http://dgit.in/cp77pull>

UP AND COMING



SCOTT PILGRIM VS. THE WORLD

Scott Pilgrim is back! The classic with a cult following is making its way to the Nintendo Switch as well this time, with a Complete Edition, including all the DLC.

Release date – January 14



HITMAN 3

Hitman 3 will be the conclusion to the rebooted, episodic Hitman series, which has actually delivered pretty well so far. We're looking forward to the myriad of ways we can kill someone in this game.

Release date – January 20



STRONGHOLD: WARLORDS

Stronghold is easily one of the most recognisable RTS franchises on PC. With Warlords, Firefly Studios are planning to add regions, units and features never seen before in the Stronghold games.

Release date – January 26



IMMORTALS FENYX RISING™

**ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY'S
LIGHTHEARTED YOUNGER SIBLING**

BY MANISH "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Immortals Fenyx Rising, initially teased as Gods and Monsters, didn't really excite anyone when it was first revealed. We'll go as far as saying that even up to the point of its release, not too many people had the game on their radar. After all, "yet another open-world IP from Ubisoft, it's probably just going to be more of the same". In fact, it's the third open-world game they've released in under a span of two months! So how does Immortals fare? Well, we're glad to say, pretty damn well. Read on!

STORY

The story of Immortals Fenyx Rising is based entirely on Greek mythology. The protagonist, you, are Fenyx, and your tale is being narrated by Prometheus, the supposed creator of human beings. They've done this bit very well; it's very similar to what we've seen in games like Bastion, where the narration depends on what you do in the game. You start off with character creation, where you can choose from a variety of face types, skin colours, and hairstyles and between two body types, male or female; you aren't locked to a gender.





The premise of the story is that Typhon has broken out of Tartarus, or whatever mountain he was being held under. Who's Typhon? Well he's a monster whose sole aim is to defeat the gods and rule the cosmos. Clearly, Zeus is not too happy about that. Unfortunately, most of the other gods have been defeated or "handled" by Typhon already, so Zeus has no backup. He has no choice but to go to Prometheus for help. Prometheus is the Titan who created human beings and even gave them fire to defend themselves and evolve. Zeus wasn't too happy when he did that so he sentenced Prometheus with a rather grisly punishment for all of eternity. It's important to note that while it all looks and sounds pretty doom-and-gloom, at no point does the game deviate from its lighthearted nature. Right from the moment Zeus approaches Prometheus until the point you're introduced, it's well written and hilarious. Throughout the game, you'll find Zeus making quips about what you're doing or



experiencing. He even makes quips during character creation! Then there are the squabbles between Prometheus and Zeus which are hilarious. It's easy to just ride this narration all the way through to the end of the game, even if you didn't happen to enjoy any other aspect of the game.

Coming back to the story, you're basically tasked with rescuing the Gods from whatever predicament they're in, and it's interesting to see Fenyx's reaction to each of the gods as she encounters them. It becomes very obvious right from the beginning that Fenyx is a huge Greek mythology nerd. Fenyx basically acts as your guide, explaining the many references to greek legends and mythical creatures as you encounter them. It's also fun to see Fenyx freak out as she comes to terms with the fact that she herself might be in one of those epics.



GAMEPLAY

Gameplay in Immortals Fenyx Rising can be divided into three categories, combat, puzzles and exploration.

COMBAT

Combat is easily the best part about Immortals Fenyx Rising. It's fun, fast-paced, and has plenty of variety, giving you plenty of options when it comes to how you want to approach fights. There's a plethora of weapons to unlock, and a lot of godly powers thrown into the mix as well. Eventually you'll begin to feel truly god-like. Not like combat wasn't easy to begin with though. As far as enemies go, there isn't a LOT of variety, but there's enough. It's fun dancing around enemies as you learn their attack patterns. The game has a great combat system in



place, with indicators for when to dodge, or to show you which direction attacks are coming from. Plus, it all looks very stylish and flashy, so it's always a spectacle. Immortals has somehow managed to make combat fun, despite not being a challenge. The only real challenge you'll face are boss mobs.

PUZZLES

Mixed in with the combat are plenty of puzzles. However, they're nothing particularly new or unique. Still, they aren't a chore to do, it's not like we were dreading the next puzzle we would come across. They're still fun and designed pretty well. Doesn't imply they're different from anything we've done before though. You'll be needing to complete these puzzles in order to unlock new armor, powers, abilities, upgrades etc. The puzzles are similar to the kind in Legend of Zelda BotW. For that matter, this game seems to have drawn plenty of inspiration





from LoZ, from the combat, to the exploration, puzzles, and even art style.

EXPLORATION

Which brings us to exploration. This is what you'll be doing when you're not fighting something or solving puzzles. The world is littered with collectibles, in typical Ubisoft fashion, yet like the puzzles, it doesn't feel like a chore to explore and find them all. We say explore, but the game literally gives you a far-sight ability that lets you scout an area and reveal all collectibles before making your way towards them. These range from Vaults of Tartaros, to treasure chests, or ambrosia among other things. This does take away from the exploration aspect, but the completionist in you will have a ball. You have a stamina bar that you need to keep in mind while exploring, but it's easy to stack up on stamina potions until you're upgraded enough to





not need them anymore. One of the biggest parts of exploration is the use of your wings. Icharos' wings, which you get at the very start of the game. Initially all you can do is double jump, but eventually you'll be able to fly and glide around, as you improve the wings. Like LoZ, you can climb just about anything, as long as you have the stamina to make it to the top. Exploration is a lot of fun in Immortals, and a lot of it has to do with how good the game looks. Which brings us to the graphics.

GRAPHICS AND AUDIO

Like we mentioned above, the visuals are very Legend of Zelda inspired in many ways. The Golden Isle has gorgeous landscapes and stunning vistas, and plenty of variety too as you travel from one end of the Isle to the other. One could easily get distracted and spend a minute simply standing on a cliff-side and taking in the views. The game also has a day-night cycle in place. Even the character designs, the monsters, the gods, Typhon, they're all very well designed, and voice-acted might we add. We've already mentioned how good the banter between Zeus and Prometheus is, but the rest of the cast have also done an excellent job.

THERE IS A CASH SHOP

Fortunately, it's mostly just cosmetic items, and you can easily get through the

MOAR!

PUBLISHER

Ubisoft

DEVELOPERS

Ubisoft, Ubisoft
Quebec

PLATFORMS

Nintendo Switch,
PlayStation 4,
Google Stadia,
Microsoft
Windows,
Xbox One, Xbox
One X|S,
PlayStation 5

PRICE

₹2,999

entire game without even opening the cash shop. As a plus, a lot of the weapons and armor you get in the game itself look pretty nice, so you needn't worry if you want your character to look fashionable.

VERDICT

Immortals Fenyx Rising is an open-world RPG that's full of character and personality. It doesn't feel bloated, and nothing feels like a chore. At the same time, nothing is too challenging, so you can breeze through the game, which might be an issue for those who're looking for a challenge. The puzzles, while well-designed, aren't anything new, and exploration could have been better if we actually discovered things by stumbling across them, rather than marking them from afar and then beelining towards them. The gorgeous visuals do somewhat make up for this though. Overall, Immortals is a fun, lighthearted, open-world adventure to dive into. *



Airborne Kingdom

**AN ENGROSSING SKYBOUND
CITY-BUILDER**

BY MANISH "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

The Airborne Kingdom – a vast cornucopia of propellers, fans, and minarets, sailing through the skies as it casts an ever growing shadow on the lands below; the very same lands that fuel its growth. While that sounds rather gloomy the way we’ve put it, the game is everything but. Read on for the complete review!

STORY

Most city-builders will throw you into the game, give you a bunch of tutorials on how you can get started, and then leave you to it. This is not exactly the case with Airborne Kingdom, where you have a final goal that you’re required to achieve to “win” (or end) the game. The gist of the story is that there used to be an Airborne Kingdom that brought prosperity to the lands and connected all the kingdoms on the land. However, one day the kingdom went poof and over aeons it was just thought to be a legend. During this time, the kingdoms lost their connections to each other; all that connected them now was the existence of a prophecy that



told of the return of the Airborne Kingdom, which would once again bring prosperity.

As prophesied, the tech to restart the Airborne kingdom was found again, and this time, you're in the pilot seat. You have to ensure that the Airborne Kingdom prospers (and remains flying), all while also finding and connecting all the kingdoms.

GAMEPLAY

At its core, Airborne Kingdom has all the elements one would expect from a city-builder. You've got your bare necessities à la food and water, in addition to resources such as wood, clay and quartz which you can gather. These resources will be used to make construction material like bricks, glass and cloth. In order to actually gather these materials from the land, you'll need to



build a hangar. Once you have a hangar, you'll be able to see little airplanes making their way down to the resource and then heading back. And did we mention the whole kingdom is mobile? You're basically flying around gathering up resources as you pass overhead.

Coming to building, unlike building on land, in the sky, everything has to be connected to the town centre. This is done with paths, which are essentially the glue that keeps your kingdom together. Every structure you can build has to be connected to a path.

In terms of the buildings themselves, they're divided into categories such as resources, storage, desires, and buildings that help keep the entire kingdom airborne. These include



stuff like lifts and propellers. Storage buildings include warehouses, food silos and water tanks. And of course, let's not forget housing. In addition to the above, there's also Academies. These unlock your ability to do research and improve your buildings and utilities. Resource buildings are essentially buildings that process raw material and turn them into usable construction material.

Relics are another resource that you have to keep an eye out for. You will come across ancient ruins as you fly around, explore these for relics, which can be used as a currency to purchase blueprints for buildings to add to your airborne kingdom.

In the wee stages of your kingdom, your people don't want for much, they're happy as long they have enough food, water and housing. However, as the population grows, they'll start becoming more picky, asking for things like lighting, buildings of faith, and general beautification of the kingdom. In order to actually grow your population though, you'll need to visit settlements peppered across the land and look for willing recruits. The recruits will join depending on the overall happiness of the people in the kingdom. Additionally, visiting any of the major cities or kingdoms that you're supposed to convince to join your cause and completing their quest will also give you a boost in population. Of course, more population will mean more consumption of food, water etc. Similarly, as your kingdom grows in size and weight, and you start employing more buildings to keep it airborne, your coal consumption will also go up.

The quests that you're required to complete are very easy, ranging from simple fetch quests to simply providing them with



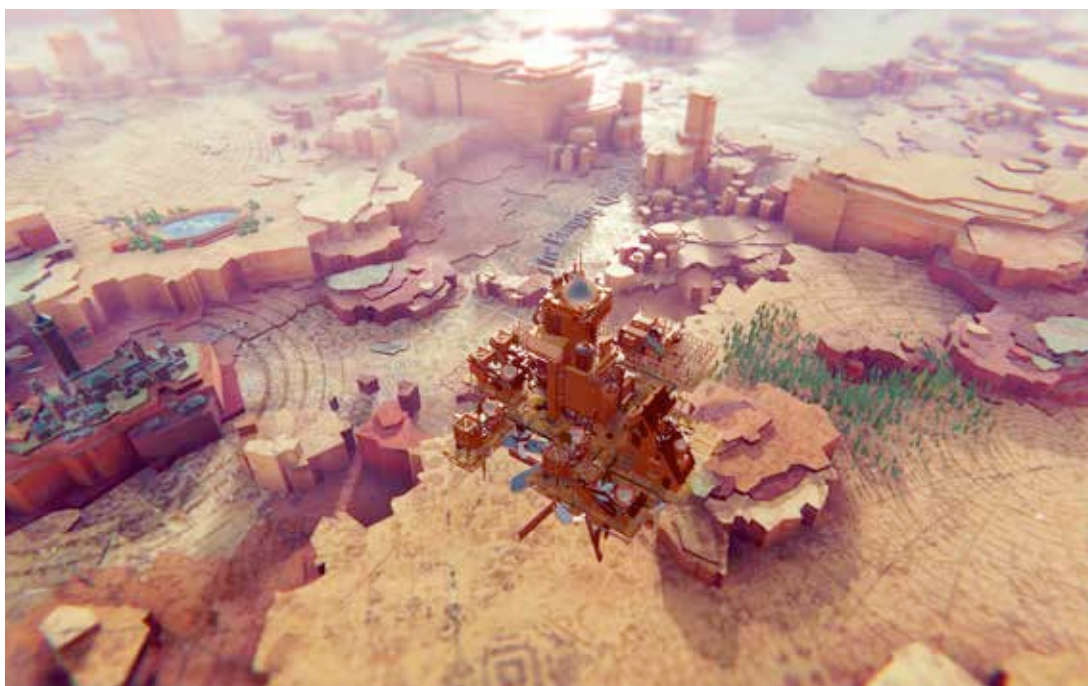
some materials that you most likely already have. Once you finish the quest, you also need to build them a skyport to finalise the deal. Once they're onboard, they'll provide you with +1 of a material every in-game hour. These kingdoms and cities are also the places where you actually use those relics we talked about above to purchase blueprints.

Over time, as you acquire more blueprints and finish more research in your academy, it is possible to become almost completely self-sufficient in the sky.

EXPLORATION

The world below is divided into three different biomes, with each biome having four major kingdoms for a grand total of





twelve. As you make your way towards a new biome, you get a little prompt telling you what to expect, so you might prepare before heading there. For instance, the archipelago biome has plenty of cotton, but coal is scarce, while the mountain biome is rich in ores and minerals, but food and water is rare. You start in the desert biome, which has an even spread of resources.

MANAGING TILT, LIFT AND SPEED

We finally come to the most interesting aspect of the Airborne Kingdom, the airborne aspect of it. You're certainly free to shape the kingdom however you see fit, however, you need to keep some things in mind. Build too much on one side of the kingdom and it'll tilt, tilt too much and well... we needn't say more. So you need to balance it out, building on the other side as well. You have to do this while keeping in mind that the housing area can't be close to the refinery buildings, since that upsets your citizens. You also have to keep in mind that some buildings, like propellers can only be built towards the front of the kingdom, while structures like wings, and oars can only be built on the sides. As you build more structures in your kingdom, it gets heavy, so you'll need to build structures

MOAR!

DEVELOPER

The Wandering
Band LLC

PUBLISHER

The Wandering
Band LLC

PLATFORMS

Microsoft
Windows,
Macintosh
operating
systems

PLAYED ON

Microsoft
Windows

PRICE

₹754 (EGS)

that generate lift to offset this. This includes stuff like wings and fans. Weight also causes your kingdom's overall movement speed to suffer, which you can alleviate by building structures like propellers and oars. Even these structures differ and have their uses based on the situation, with some offering less lift or speed, but being much cheaper to build. On the flipside, the more expensive structures, which while they do consume a lot more fuel, need not be manned, saving you a few citizens who you might use for other tasks.

CONCLUSION

It's easy to get engrossed in Airborne Kingdom, as you try to manage your growing kingdom in the sky. The limitation of building in the sky is more of a challenge than a hindrance, and

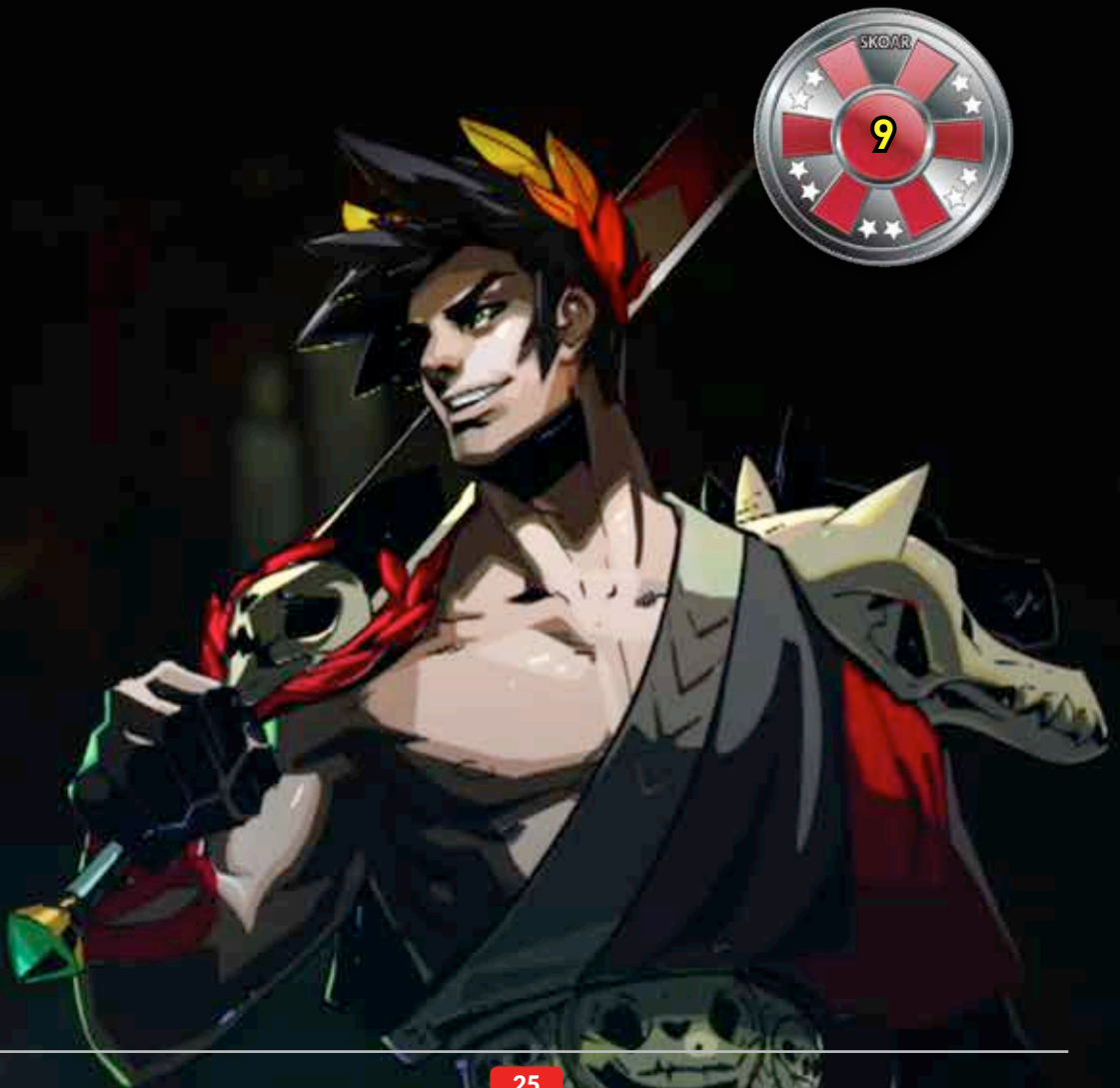


offers a new perspective that we haven't seen in city-builders for a while. Factors like lift, tilt and speed in addition to a mobile kingdom add a new layer to city-building gameplay that keeps things interesting throughout the game. *

HADES

GOD-LIKE ROGUE-LIKE?

BY KSHIPRA 'FAAFDAAJALEBII' JADAV
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN



Hades is a roguelike hack and slash game that gained a lot of attention recently. It was first released on 'early access' in December 2018 followed by a full release in September 2020. What is so 'special' in this game that drove reviewers to give it 10/10 on Steam with an 'Overwhelmingly Positive' response? All the roguelike hack and slash games are button mashing games, right? Where you just have to spam Mouse 1 to fire and you're done with the game. Right?

Wrong. You see, Hades does something different from the crowd. Although it is marketed as a roguelike and it very well IS a roguelike in all aspects. But the addition of story, characters, voice actors, and other stuff that we will cover in this review sets it apart from the crowd, making it a must play if you're a fan of the hack and slash genre of games.

STORY

You play as Zagreus, the son of Hades himself. You're bored of living in the underworld and living under your father's command. So, what do you do in this situation? You escape. But the escape is not as easy as it sounds. You have to clear multiple dungeons and kill various types of enemies, all increasing in difficulty as you progress through them. There will be mini-bosses and main bosses for each level of the underworld you clear. The main bosses, often are your own relatives that your father has sent to stop you. Kill them, and you move to the next level. Eventually, you will encounter your own father, Hades – The God of Death and the king of the underworld itself. You have to kill him to clear the game. We'd be lying if we say that this is all



the game's story has to offer. The story gets deeper. Diving into each character's dark past and uncovering secrets and major plot points. We'll not be discussing that here, since we don't want to give out major spoilers for the storyline.

The storyline is only one of the factors that makes this game unique. But such a well written storyline is often hard to find in today's major titles and it is even rarer in roguelikes because you see, roguelikes by nature, are not much story-driven titles. The obvious story is there, but it doesn't play a major part in the game and rarely affects the gameplay. Where Hades differs from the crowd is it's story, it's way of conveying it to the player (almost like a visual novel), and its effects on the gameplay. More on this will be explained later in the article.



GAMEPLAY

There's the usual WASD controls to move, 'E' for your Special Attack and 'Q' to Interact and 'Space' to Dash. Mouse 1 to fire and the cursor to aim at enemies. Although if you turn on aim assist, you won't need to aim at them as the player will automatically attack the enemy nearest to him. The camera is mounted on the top of the player so you get the top-down scroller feel. The world around you will be very detailed. From the ghosts floating around you and their reactions based on what you do around them to approaching all the different gods and goddesses.

COMBAT

The combat mechanics of this game are mind blowing. Before starting each round, you need to select your choice of weapon.



You like to spam Mouse 1 and melee the heck out of your enemies? Choose the sword or the gauntlet. Or you're a more tactical player, want to plan your shots and fire from a long range. Choose the Bow & Arrow or the rifle.

Once you enter the game, on the very first level you'll be given a powerup from a God which will aid you in combat.



Then you'll encounter many enemies like Doomstones, Skull Crushers, Gorgons and etc. and you need to kill a set amount of them before you can move on to the next dungeon.



You can pair up attacks and movement styles to deal more damage. For eg. if you attack while dashing, more damage will



be dealt compared to a regular attack. And you can do special attacks or if you have a boon from a particular god, you can call an air attack to deal even more damage.

POWERUPS

The power ups are an integral part of the overall gameplay experience. Power ups can come in any kind. They could be in

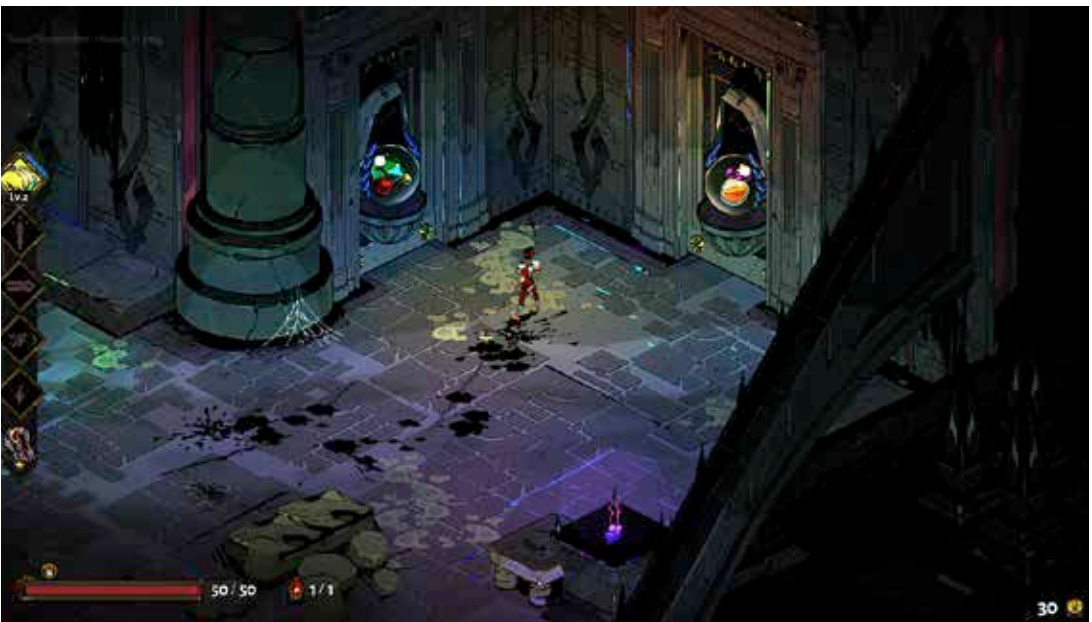


the form of a boon granted to you by a God, or you can get some power ups by interacting with NPCs in game, or you could improve your abilities by spending some of the dark energy you acquired from your time in the dungeons.



There is also a gifting mechanic in the game where if you gift a vial of nectar to a God and they will give you a Keepsake in return. This Keepsake will in turn increase your abilities by either increasing your damage, or your health or decreasing the damage taken from enemies and so on. At the end of each dungeon, you will have two choices in front of you. Selecting either one of those will grant you a powerup based on what you chose.

There is also an ingame shop which usually appears between dungeons where you can buy extra health, or increase your ability to give damage.



ARTSTYLE

This game features a rather unique artstyle. Something you don't expect from a game which is based on Greek Mythology. If you have seen some paintings from that era or statues

of Greek Gods, you know that they follow a very bland colour palette. There's not much colour to the paintings or the statues. Well, this game is a literal reimagination of the Greek mythology. Every character has colourful clothes and even ornaments. They just seem to make the character come to life. From their hairstyles, to their dresses to the environment, nothing in this game is even close to being bland. Also, all the characters are drawn in a very cartoonish manner which seems to aid their surroundings. They also change their expressions based on the dialogue they're speaking.

The world around the characters is also very detailed. The rugs in the House of Hades, the paintings, the walls, the dining area and other things are detailed to the level of perfection. You can see little burn marks and lines on the place where Zephyrus has dashed. Attention to detail folks.

AUDIO

The soundtrack of this game is heavily influenced by the Rock and Metal genre. It is a progressive type of soundtrack. Hence, when you're doing nothing and just moving around, a clam



traditional type music plays but when things start getting heated up, it gradually shifts to Rock and Metal. It really immerses you in the fights and the game.

Another thing that deserves an award is the voice acting. All the characters have their own personality traits and the voice actors have matched them perfectly. Their tone, their way of speaking, their pace of speaking. Everything is done to perfection.

CONCLUSION

Overall, this game is fantastic. Every little part of this game is perfectly designed. This is the fastest paced game by this developer. If you want some slower paced games, you should try other games from them. Also, it requires real good reflexes and the term 'button mashing' doesn't do much justice to this game. As, every move you make will have to be calculated rather than just going in random directions and spamming the fire button. There are other aspects to this game too like fishing, quests, and other side-stories but we think you will enjoy them more if you discover them yourselves. *

MOAR!

DEVELOPER

Supergiant Games

PUBLISHER

Supergiant Games

PLATFORMS

Nintendo Switch, macOS, Microsoft Windows, Macintosh operating systems

PLAYED ON

Microsoft Windows

PRICE

₹569 (Steam)



DUNGEON MANAGEMENT MEETS RTS

BY MANISH “TRIGGER-HAPPY” RAJESH

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

First off, why are we reviewing a game from 2017? For one, because we haven't reviewed it yet. Second, it was free on the Epic Games Store and we love free games (who doesn't). And finally, it's a damn good game. Also, the Dungeons 3 Complete Collection released this year, so there's that too. Dungeons 3 is one of those games that doesn't exactly fit a genre, but whatever it does, it does pretty well. Realmforge's 3rd attempt at a dungeon management game embodies the proverb “third time's the charm”, and here's why.

STORY

Dungeons 3 comes with a campaign that you can easily spend hours on. Depending on how you play, you could easily take from just 30 minutes to over an hour just to finish one mission from the campaign. The story itself is also pretty good. The Dungeon Lord (you), aka, the Evil, has conquered everything there is to conquer and is now completely bored and has no motivation to do anything. The Evil's grunts and minions are also worried, since he hasn't left his room to bully them and toss them around, among other (more sinister) things. That is until he discovers unexplored lands to the East, which is where most unexplored lands in video games lie, which the narrator helpfully points out. In the East, the Evil finds himself a champion by possessing a Dark Elf named Thalya. Dark Elves are apparently inherently evil, however, Thalya's foster



father, a Paladin, was trying to “brainwash” her by having her do good. Ugh. This, however, presents an interesting angle to the voice acting and narration. Throughout your quest to conquer the Eastern lands, the narrator (an excellent one might we add, the same guy from the Stanley Parable) often breaks the fourth wall and interacts directly with the player and characters from the game. Thalya has a bit of a “Gollum” issue, wherein she sometimes grows a conscience and good Thalya shows up, then evil Thalya and good Thalya have an argument, sometimes with the narrator involved. Overall, the game has some hilarious writing, and is not afraid to make fun of itself. There's plenty of references to pop-culture, especially Lord of the Rings and fantasy settings.



GAMEPLAY

Gameplay in Dungeons 3 is a mix between what one might call a dungeon management simulator and an RTS. The RTS and overworld aspect is something unique to Dungeons 3, and possibly the first of its kind, at least to be executed in this way. Basically, you've got two minimaps, with the overworld on the bottom left and your dungeon on the bottom right. Even controls are different on each map, with the game playing more like an RTS when you're on the overworld, but in the dungeon, you have a more direct "hand" in things, literally. While in the dungeon, you're the dungeon lord. This is indicated by a giant floating hand wearing a gauntlet. That's you. With this you're able to command your Little Snots (small goblin creatures, your main labor) to dig, to build, to mine or whatever grunt work it is you need them to do. These guys are unable to fight,



but they'll handle any and all of your dungeon renovating needs. Little Snots are the only unit you start with, in order to get an actual army (or horde) going, you're going to have to do some research. The research tree is fairly simple, and to start off, all you need is gold. Which you should have plenty of with your Little Snots scurrying about and collecting it for you from around the dungeon. Once you've researched a bit you can start recruiting basic units, and as you progress through the tree, you'll get access to stronger units. Initially you'll have access to just basic orcs and goblins, but eventually you'll get access to demons and even undead.

Recruiting creatures is just one aspect of dungeon management though, in order to actually house these creatures, you're going to need ample amounts of room for them to sleep. If you



don't meet with your creatures' needs, they'll simply go on strike and refuse to fight for you. Even if they're being whacked to death by an enemy. Keep an eye on them to see what they need, they usually have a little thought bubble over them indicating what they're missing. You'll also get a notification at the bottom right, right above the dungeon minimap. In addition to resting areas, and food, for which you'll need to create gobbler farms, you'll eventually need to make stuff like breweries to satisfy your mobs. In order to access stronger units, you'll need to research deeper into the tree, but you'll eventually start needing more than just gold, you will need evilness. No, seriously. Evilness. This is where the overworld part of the game comes in. You'll need to gather your recruited units and head to the overworld in order to destroy settlements. When you do,



they start generating evilness for you. This is another resource that you'll need in order to access stronger units and level up your existing ones.

Now, while you've got your troops in the overworld, if like us, you like to bring your entire army to the overworld, you've left your dungeonheart defenceless. The dungeonheart is basically your dungeon's HP, which is one big crystal right at the center of your dungeon. It's got a bunch of HP, but if that breaks, it's game over. What you can do is set up traps in your dungeon. Kind of like a tower defence game. Set them up along the path from the entrance to the dungeonheart and watch them make short work of intruders.

You've also got access to spells, which consume mana, another resource in the game. Mana is also used to spawn undead and revive your fallen demons. Spells are a great get-



out-of-jail card when you're in a pinch, allowing you to quickly make short work of enemies.

Also, as the overlord of the dungeon, you have the right to whack any unit you own, by simply right clicking them. If you see them slacking, feel free to give them a whack and watch them scurry away. Or you can just do it for the lulz. Every creature reacts differently, so it's fun to experiment.

As you can see, there's a lot of layers to the gameplay here. While the tutorial isn't great, it doesn't take too long to get a grasp on the game and understand the more finer details of dungeon management.

GRAPHICS AND AUDIO

If Blizzard released a sequel to Warcraft 3 back in the day, we'd assume the graphics would look something like this. So, pretty good. The character designs are great, the animations are also great. The voice acting is fantastic, and the music is fitting, nothing too spectacular. Overall, it's a great package.

VERDICT

Dungeons 3 carves out somewhat of a niche for itself, by combining genres and offering an experience that's unique. Add to that the fantastic and humorous writing, the amazing voice acting, and the vibrant graphics and quirky animations, what you have here is possibly Realmforge's best work. Dungeons 3 is an easy pick-up for those looking to try something new, especially if they're into dungeon management and RTS titles. *

MOAR!

DEVELOPER

Realmforge Studios

PUBLISHER

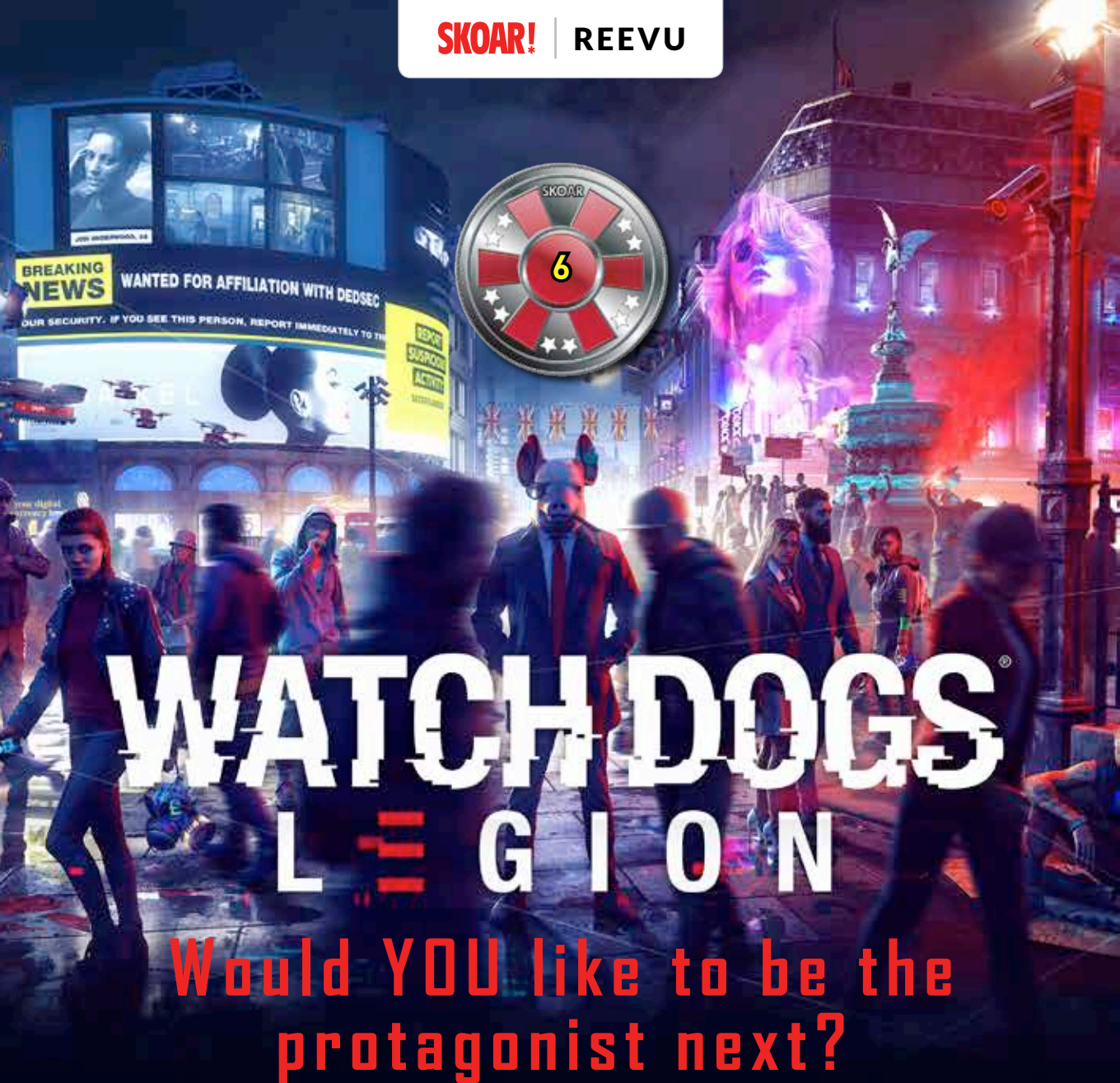
Kalpso Media

PLATFORMS

Linux, macOS,
Microsoft Windows,
PlayStation 4,
Xbox One

PLAYED ON

Windows



WATCH DOGS LEGION

Would YOU like to be the
protagonist next?

BY MANISH “TRIGGER-HAPPY” RAJESH

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Watch Dogs: Legion is the latest entrant to Ubisoft's hacking open-world franchise. Now, if you've watched any of the teasers or trailers for this game, then you know that the biggest change, and probably the USP for Watch Dogs: Legion is the ability to play as literally anyone. The protagonist is whoever you're controlling at the time. That's pretty crazy, but did they manage to pull it off? Unfortunately, not really. Read on for the full review.

STORY

Watch Dogs: Legion's story puts us right back in DeadSec, the same organisation that we were part of in the last game. This time around, we're being framed for blasts around London by another group called Zero-Day. As a result, law enforcement have been given the shoot-on-sight order for known DeadSec



members, while doubling down on surveillance around the city. So what's the solution here for DeadSec? Simple, let's recruit some civilians off the street, give them high-tech gadgets, and have them break into high-security areas for DeadSec. While the idea behind play-as-anyone is really cool, the execution is pretty terrible. From a story perspective, there's little to no incentive to actually play as anyone else. When you try to recruit anyone, they ask you to do them a favour and that's it, you can now play as them, no questions asked. They're now willing to die (or rather, go to jail) for DeadSec. Now that's from a story perspective. Even from a practical, gameplay perspective, there's little reason to go out of your way to recruit anyone. Most of them essentially have the same skills. You can hover over potential recruits to see what skills they can offer. Even unique skills, like construction worker cargo drones are readily



available everywhere, so you don't really need them to summon one for you in most cases.

Now, since the game has no fixed protagonist (only the supporting characters are fixed, eg, friendly neighbourhood A.I., Bagley), the lines used for everyone are pretty generic. They feel extremely forced and leave you cringing. You simply couldn't imagine two people ever conversing like that in public. Overall, the writing and dialogue is pretty horrible, and while the story has a few good moments, it is pretty disappointing.

GAMEPLAY

Watch Dogs: Legion has all the tricks you picked up in Watch Dogs 2, with the hacking and disabling of tech, hijacking drones, using your own little gadgets for surveillance and



remote hacking etc. Then there's the cover-and-peek gunplay when stealth fails you, which it will. Driving is a bit icky, we don't quite know what's going on there but it doesn't feel right. The entire game is essentially a gameplay loop of breaking into places, hacking things and then walking out. The map of London is divided into boroughs. And in order to fully liberate them or put them in rebellion mode against the suppressing overlords, you've gotta complete the required tasks. Which is what we described above. Break in, hack, or steal, or whatever, get out. This gets boring very fast. Each DeadSec recruit has abilities that can come into play when you're doing certain things, the idea is that you should switch to the optimal recruit before taking on an activity, however, the difference is usually so minute it doesn't really matter. Like we mentioned before, this is



where the practical aspects of play-as-anyone falls flat. There really aren't any key recruits that you should be on the lookout for that are harder to acquire or anything like that.

The only aspect of gameplay that we did enjoy were the parts where you control the Spiderbot, oh and the hacking mini games. They were the only things that broke the monotony of an otherwise dull gameplay loop.

GRAPHICS AND AUDIO

At least the game looks nice, it has that going for it. This is an accurate representation of London, so if you're someone who's familiar with the nooks and crannies of the city, you'll probably appreciate the game more. Of course, there's a coating of Neon "paint" on the city to highlight the modern technology at play,

and of course, there are a lot more drones flying about. The game apparently has long loading times on the PS4, but we didn't seem to have any issues with the game on PC and got a pretty smooth 60 fps on high graphics with our Radeon 5600 XT.

We've already mentioned how bad dialogue in this game is, other than that, no issues really. You can tune into the radio while driving to listen to popular music by British artists. That's about it.

CONCLUSION

Watch Dogs: Legion is the most disappointing entry to the franchise. While play-as-anyone helped hype the game up, it's also the most disappointing feature about the game and falls flat on its face for various reasons. The boring and repetitive game-play loop doesn't help either. The only good thing about the game is its detailed representation of London. *

MOAR!

DEVELOPER:
Ubisoft Toronto

PUBLISHER:
Ubisoft

PLATFORMS:
PlayStation 5,
Xbox Series X and
Series S,
PlayStation 4,
Xbox One, Google
Stadia, Microsoft
Windows

PLAYED ON:
Microsoft
Windows

PRICE:
3,999

PlayStation 5



WELCOME
TO THE NEXT
GENERATION OF
GAMING!

BY SAMEER “PSHYOMANTIS” MITHA

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

When Sony and Microsoft launched the PS4 and Xbox One back in 2013, both consoles were quite underpowered when compared to an entry-level gaming rig of the time. They ran on an outdated Jaguar CPU, came with slow mechanical hard drives and getting 1080p 30 FPS in some games was tough. Nonetheless, Sony pulled up its socks and gave us some breathtaking games like God of War, Ghost of Tsushima, The Last of Us Part 2 and many, many more. In 2020, Sony gave us a deep dive into the specs of the PS5. The console comes with a custom SSD that can outperform most popular PC SSDs, has a respectable AMD Zen 2 CPU and an AMD RDNA 2 based GPU that can also support Ray-tracing. It has also re-envisioned the controller with haptic feedback and adaptive triggers. Needless to say, for an asking price of Rs 50,000 for the disc edition, the PS5 can put any similarly priced PC to shame. Let's dive deep into our experience with the PS5 spanning a little over a month.

BUILD AND DESIGN

From the official reveal of the console, it was clear that the PS5 is a huge console. Just how huge is something that will dawn on you only when you have it in front of

PROS

- Fantastic launch lineup of games.
- Sublime performance of games mastered for the next-gen.
- The DualSense feels like a next-gen controller.
- Whisper quiet console.
- Super-fast load times.
- PlayStation Collections makes building a game library easy.

CONS

- No Dolby Vision/Atmos support.
- SSD expansion bay doesn't work yet.
- VRR support will come in the future.
- No native support for 1440p monitors.



you. Needless to say, gone are the days when you could simply place a console below your TV. Just for perspective, the PS5 disc edition is 390mm x 104mm x 260mm (width x height x depth) in size. It is taller and deeper than the Xbox Series X when kept horizontally and slimmer in width.

One thing to note is that all promotional material makes the console look white, but it isn't exactly 'white' in colour. Think of it as an off-white or egg white colour. This isn't a bad thing as off-white doesn't get dirty as fast as plain white. It has this sandwich-like design with the white plates on the exterior, a matte finish and the centre of the console housing a glossy black finish which can easily turn into a fingerprint magnet. From the design of the console, it feels like Sony thought of the digital edition of the PS5 first with its symmetric design and a futuristic tower of Mordor look before deciding to slap a disc drive on one side of the console for good old disc-based games. The PS5 is rather heavy as well, weighing in at about 4.5kgs.

The PS5 can be kept horizontally and vertically and changing the orientation isn't as simple as the Xbox Series X which can simply be placed horizontally or vertically, based on your preference or mood. There is an actual mechanical process for the PS5. There is a base stand that needs to be rotated and screwed in to hold the console vertically. When kept vertically, the base stand holds the console surprisingly well and prevents it from wobbling a lot. It is in this orientation that the console was intended to be kept as when the lights in your house go down



and the two LED strips on the console light up, it does look quite futuristic. Kept horizontally, they kinda look out of place.

But then again, when the console is horizontal, there is no screw holding it to the base stand. It is a simple clamp design that holds the PS5 to the base stand. The console may wobble a bit in this position when prodded but from the front, it looks like its levitating which, at times, looks cool.

You either love the design of the PS5 or you don't. We, for one, don't love the design but it tends to grow on you. It has its charms, yes, but it's too big, too bulky and unwieldy. It may be too big for the average home entertainment setup. But the size comes with a much-needed trade-off - Cooling. With liquid metal and a pretty large intake for air, it looks like Sony took all the PS4 jet engine memes seriously and has made the PS5 whisper quiet. But more on that in the performance section.

SPECIFICATIONS

Unlike the Xbox Series X and S which have vastly different specs under the hood, the PS5 disc and digital editions are identical with the only difference being the disc drive. So here is a quick look at the specifications of the PS5.

- **CPU:** x86-64-AMD Ryzen Zen 8 Cores/16 Threads at 3.5GHz (variable frequency)
- **GPU:** AMD Radeon RDNA 2-based graphics engine. Ray Tracing Acceleration. Variable frequency, up to 2.23 GHz (10.3 TFLOPS)

- **Storage:** Custom 825GB SSD of which 667GB is usable (5.5GB/s (Raw), Typical 8-9GB/s (Compressed)).
- **RAM:** 16GB GDDR6/256-bit
- **Expandable storage:** Yes, NVMe SSD Slot for PS5 games. PS4 games can be played off an external USB 3.0 drive. Minimum drive size for games is 256GB.
- **Optical drive:** Ultra HD Blu-ray (66GB/100GB)
- **Video Output:** Support for up to 8K at 60Hz, 4K at 120Hz over HDMI 2.1. (VRR support expected in via an update in the future)
- **HDR:** Yes
- **Dolby Vision:** No
- **Dolby Atmos:** No
- **3D Audio:** Yes
- **Wi-Fi:** Yes (Wi-Fi 6)
- **Connectivity:** USB Type-A port (Hi-Speed USB), USB Type-A port (SuperSpeed USB 10Gbps) x2, USB Type-C port (SuperSpeed USB 10Gbps), Ethernet port, HDMI port.

WHAT'S IN THE BOX

In the box, apart from the console and manual, you get the DualSense Controller, a USB-A to type-C cable, power cable, manual, HDMI 2.1 cable and the base stand. The screw to hold the PS5 vertically is housed in the base stand. You don't get any physical game with the console, but Astro's Playroom comes preinstalled with every PS5.



UI

Let's jump ship to the UI for a minute. It's the one place Sony has taken everything it has learned with the PS4 and PS3 and implemented the best of both worlds. From the get-go, the entire UI is in HDR and the visuals just pop on the right TV. Fire up the console and log in, and you are greeted with 2 tabs - Games and Media. Your most recently used games populate the home screen and the rest are in a listing at the right end of the navbar. Hopefully, Sony will implement folders just like it did on the PS4 UI to the PS5 at some point in the future. While



on the home screen, each game has a small tile but the rest of the screen is filled with stunning artwork and a soundtrack from the game. It highlights the game you are about to play in a unique and refreshing way.

Press down on the D-Pad and you will see activities related to the game. The leftmost icon in the game's navigation menu is the PlayStation Store which, this time around, is integrated into the UI rather than being a separate app. The UI of the store has changed as well and is as easy to navigate as the PS4 store, so no complaints here. The Media tab houses all your entertainment apps and for now, we have YouTube, Netflix, Prime Video, Apple TV, and Twitch. There is no Disney+Hotstar app, which is a bummer. Also, because the console does not support Dolby Vision, all the content is available in HDR 10 only.



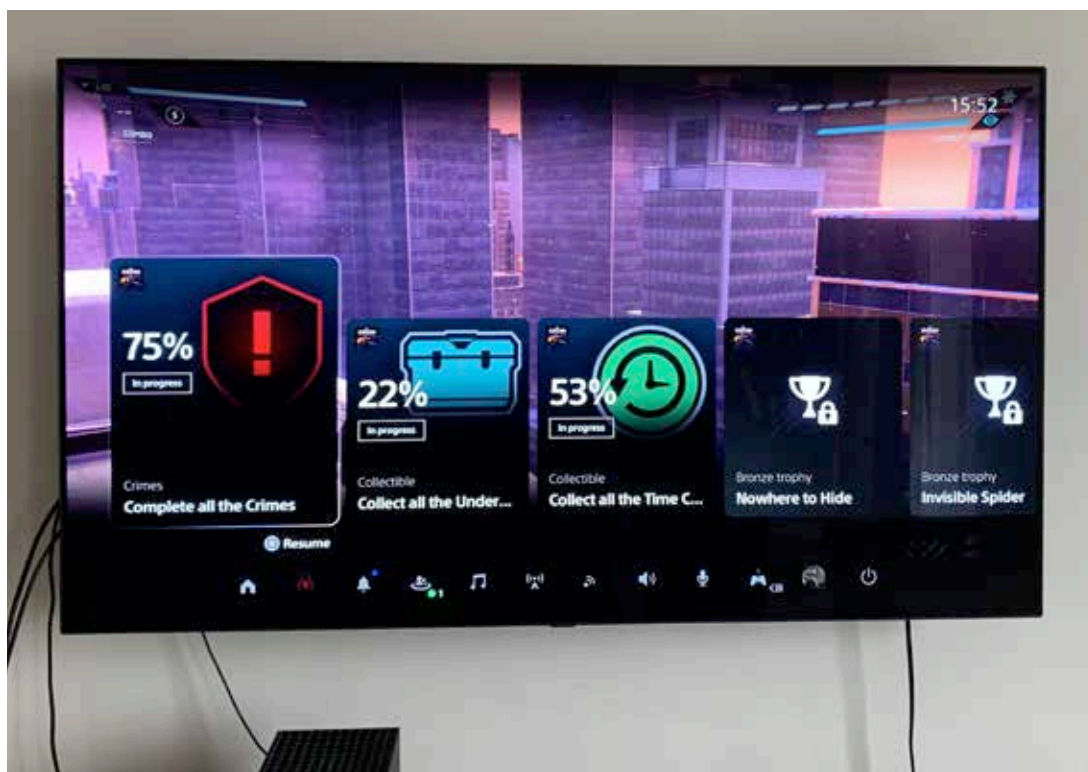
The biggest change to the UI comes when you are in-game. Pressing the PS button on the controller now brings up your trophies, missions and a guide. There is also a hints system that a developer can choose to implement which will help you solve a puzzle at hand, for example. It's the equivalent of looking up the walkthrough on YouTube but saving you the hassle of opening your phone or laptop and Googling the solution. We see the potential for this in some puzzle heavy games. The



solution to the puzzle can play PIP (picture in picture) which makes it very easy for you to follow.

The pop-up menu also tells you how much time a particular mission will take. This time is an average determined by your playstyle. So, for example, in Spider-Man: Miles Morales, we saw that the next mission would take us 30 minutes to complete, letting us know whether we'd finish it in the amount of free time we had. We think this is a great implementation for those of us that have limited time and don't like to leave a quest halfway.

Tapping the PS button on the controller brings up a quick UI menu in addition to the activity's cards, and you can choose which functions are available in the quick UI. From broadcast to audio settings, games details, controller settings and more can be easily accessed. Long pressing the PS button takes you



back to the home screen. This can take some getting used to as the roles were reversed on the PS4.

There was some annoyance with the UI which has been fixed since we've started using the console. For starters, the console now warns you if you are about to start the PS4 version of a game that has a PS5 version as well. This wouldn't happen earlier. Also, the main games library shows both the PS4 and PS5 version of a game, making the library seem unnaturally bloated. I wish the Xbox style smart delivery was an option here, keeping only the PS5 only version of the game automatically for those games that have a next-gen version.



Another issue is with the transfer of the save files. You need to upload the save files from your PS4 to the cloud and then download them to the PS5. The cloud service only works if you are a PS Plus member. Else, you can connect the 2 consoles via Ethernet and transfer the data or simply copy your save files to a USB drive. Here as well, the Xbox has a more elegant solution with its cloud saves automatically syncing across your devices.

Overall, the UI is a refreshing change from what we had on the PS4. It has a few misses, but that's OK as the overall experience is pretty smooth. Just like we saw on the PS4, we will see the UI evolve over the years with new features added to the mix. Those that liked customizing themes on the console will feel left out as the PS5 doesn't support themes, as yet.

PERFORMANCE

Once you go DualSense, there's no going back, that's for sure. But let's talk about the controller separately and start with one of Sony's highlighted features - the SSD. The SSD is so fast that it may help us overcome our smartphone addiction. We were spending time on Twitter and checking Instagram while we waited for a game to load. Looks like those days will soon be behind us. Spider-Man: Miles Morales is a great example of this. Fast travelling anywhere on the map is a mere 2 seconds. Loading a match in Mortal Kombat 11 is a mere 3 seconds.



Same for Dirt 5 and DMC 5 Special Edition. The game just loads superfast. Take a sip of water or crack your knuckles, and you are in the game. Sure, PS4 games won't take advantage of this feature as much but Cyberpunk 2077, which takes a long time to load on the PS4, loads in a mere 15 seconds from a cold boot on the PS5 and 10 seconds for fast travelling/reloads. And Cyberpunk 2077 isn't even optimized for the PS5 yet.



From the games that have been mastered for the PS5, we played Spider-Man Miles: Morales, Dirt 5, Mortal Kombat 11, Call of Duty: Cold War and DMC 5 Special Edition, to name a few. 60FPS is the new normal. While we were initially bummed that one has to choose Ray-tracing or 60fps in Spider-Man: Miles Morales, the new RT performance mode gives you the best of both worlds.

Playing the game on the LG B9 OLED TV, the game looks sublime. If this is what games look like at the beginning of the generation, we can only imagine what games will look like once developers unlock the full potential of the console.

While Digital Foundry has made it clear that Devil May Cry 5 won't hit a consistent 120 FPS on the PS5, the 60FPS mode with Ray-tracing enabled is the best way to enjoy the game. The PS5 doesn't support VRR (Variable Refresh Rate) out of the box, which is an important HDMI 2.1 feature and valued by gamers. Sony has said that VRR will be added as a feature via a future update. Just for reference, the Xbox Series X supports VRR out of the box. The PS5 also doesn't support 1440p resolution which is a downer for those rocking a 1440p monitor. Sony has said they will include the feature in the future if they see enough demand for it, but our question is, is it really a problem to implement 1440p from the get-go? The Series X already supports 1440p.

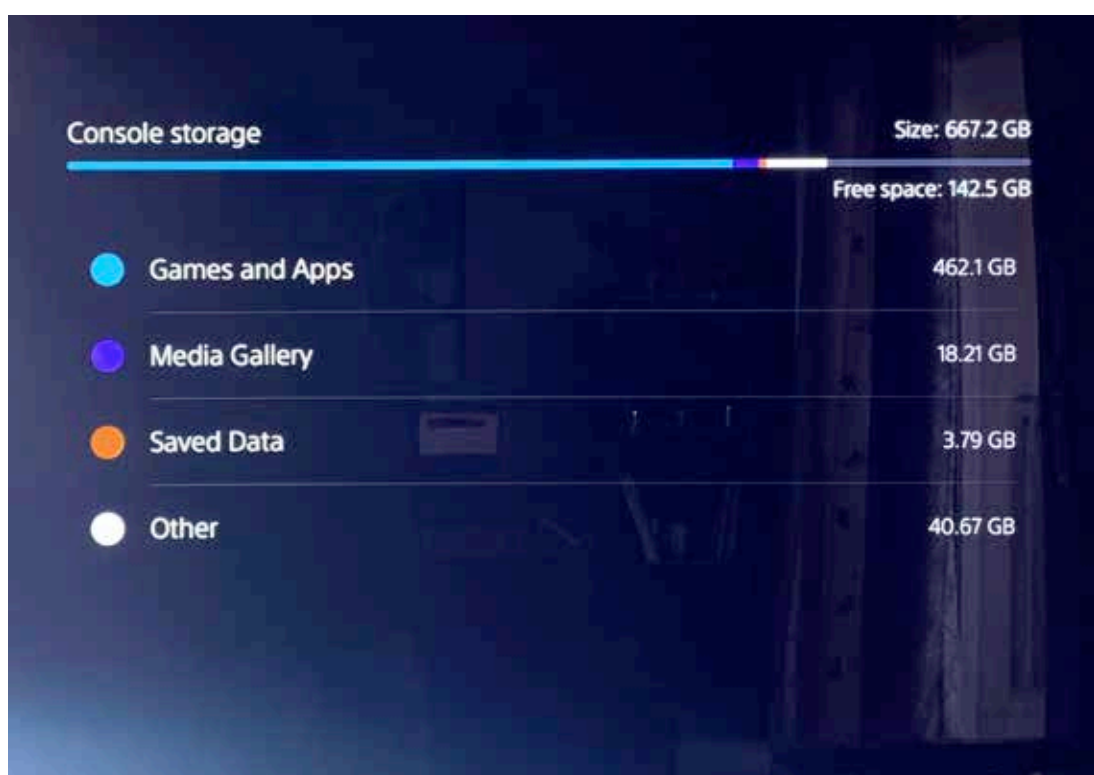
Moving over to 3D audio, this feature works with any headphones connected to the DualSense Controller via 3.5mm. You



can always go into the console's settings and adjust the 3D audio based on your listening profile. We used a HyperX Cloud Core II gaming headset connected to the controller via the 3.5mm port. The games that use 3D audio do give you a surround sound experience. So, in Astro's Playroom, it feels like the rain is coming from above you. You feel the sounds of the city pass you in Spider-Man and when the action gets hot, it's like the sound is everywhere. It is definitely an interesting take on surround sound and from what we experienced at CES 2020 with Sony's 360-degree Reality Audio, it's clear the company knows how to deliver immersive audio.

There is a problem with the audio though. We connected the console to the TV and it in turn, is connected to the PS5 via HDMI ARC. For a lot of games, the sound wasn't coming from the soundbar at all, and we had to manually choose a 2-channel setup from the PS5's audio settings to get things to work.

The biggest downer with the console is the built-in storage. It has a 667GB of usable storage which can get filled up pretty fast. There is an expansion slot, but Sony hasn't enabled it yet. Until then, if you fill-up the internal SSD, you will have to delete the PS5 games to make space and re-download them later if you want to play. Speaking of downloading, you can download the single-player or multiplayer-only version of a game if you want and this can help with significant space management. We only wish you could copy and keep your PS5 games on an external drive and copy them back when you need to play them



(a feature the Xbox Series X supports) eliminating the need to delete them to create space on the built-in SSD. Hopefully, this feature will come in the future.

We spent hours playing games on the console and throughout all our play sessions, the console was whisper quiet. There are reports online of the console making some noise and our unit is a retail unit and doesn't seem to have any of these issues. But then again, right now the console is being used in the Delhi winters. We will talk more about the cooling capabilities of the consoles once we use it for a few more months, especially during the brutal Delhi summers.

DUALSENSE CONTROLLER

The biggest “next-gen” feature of the PS5 has to be the DualSense controller. Starting with the haptic feedback, it's something you've experienced if you have an iPhone or a Mac with the Force Touch trackpad. The difference in vibrations on the trackpad gives you the illusion that you are actually clicking something whereas there isn't anything actually moving on the trackpad. It's a haptic motor simulating the physical click. Similarly, a game like Rush Hour 3D on the iPhone gives you the impressions of a car engine starting with its unique and subtle vibrations. This is exactly how the DualSense controller mimics the feeling of walking on different surfaces in a game like Astro's Playroom. Walk on the sand, in the rain or on a metal



surface, the sound from the controller, along with the haptic feedback really does give you a very different feeling from the traditional vibrations, making you feel like you are actually walking on these different surfaces.

In a game like Astro's Playroom, the haptic feedback feels like overkill sometimes, but then again this is a demo for what the controller can do. In Miles Morales for example, when you get a text, a part of the right side of the controller vibrates just like your smartphone would. Interactions in combat have different intensities of vibrations.

A game like Call of Duty: Cold War brings different degrees of tension to the adaptive triggers, giving you a unique experience with every gun you use in the game. When playing COD and hammering away at the triggers, there were times when we heard the motor controlling the adaptive triggers which led me to question its durability. Alas, we weren't alone as people have reported the adaptive triggers of the controller are breaking. Thankfully, we haven't faced this issue yet.

In Miles Morales, you get subtle feedback from the triggers when swinging. In Dirt 5, the trigger struggles based on the surface you are driving on giving you a very unique experience.

The battery life of the DualSense is as bad as the DualShock 4, which is to say that you should get about 8 hours of life with all features dialled up to 11. The controller lost about 70% charge in our playthrough of Astro's Playroom but then again,



that's a tech demo dialling the controller features to the max. It took us a mere 4 to 5 hours to finish the game. Thankfully, the DualSense is rechargeable, unlike the Xbox Series X controller which still uses AA batteries.

Coming to the form factor of the controller, Sony has changed it considerably, making it a lot bigger than the DualShock 4. The DualSense has a much better grip than its predecessors and can finally go toe to toe with the comfort and ergonomics of the Series X controller. It has a textured grip at the back and upon close inspection, you will notice that the texture is made up of the icons on the controller, a neat touch.



One more thing to note is that there isn't a plastic divider between the shoulder buttons and the triggers like we had on the PS4 controller. This makes the shoulder buttons a lot bigger and easier to press. The D-pad is the same as the PS4 controller and while we know a lot of people don't like the D-pad We're OK with it. Yes, the new D-Pad on the Series X controller has better ergonomics, but this one gets the job done quite well.

The DualSense controller this time around comes with a built-in mic. During our live session with Cyberpunk 2077, we were talking to our viewers using the built-in mic, and it got the job done quite well. You can always mute the mic with a button on the controller if you like. The addition of a mic is a godsend.



When playing Ghost of Tsushima: Legends, we found ourselves with a team that spoke and coordinated attacks. We didn't need to go and find a headset; we simply used the mic on the controller. Same for typing. Gone are the days of typing a message or a title for your live stream. Simply dictate it and it's done. The mic has very good recognition and my Indian accent wasn't an issue.





We were the only ones that thought the DualShock 4 was a great improvement over the DualShock 3 but still felt a little like a toy when compared to the Xbox controller. This time, however, the DualSense is a generational leap, and you really need to experience it to appreciate its features.

GAMES

What good is a next-gen console without games, right? While at launch we have games like Spider-Man: Miles Morales, Demon Souls, Sackboy: A Big Adventure, BugSnax and a few more, Sony has ensured the momentum carries on in 2021 by announcing games like Ratchet and Clank Rift Apart, Returnal, Deathloop, Horizon Forbidden West and God of War: Ragnarök, to name a few. And these are just the exclusives. There will undoubtedly be a plethora of third-party games to look out for. Even first-party games like Ghost of Tsushima, The Last of Us Part 2, Days Gone and God of War, which are PS4 games, offer an upgraded experience on the PS5. Games like Days Gone and Ghost of Tsushima have been patched to offer smooth 60fps gameplay, making them all the more enjoyable and worth a revisit.

Some games like Miles Morales and Demon Souls bring with them visual fidelity one would expect in the second year of a console generation which makes us even more excited for future titles coming to the PS5.



PLAYSTATION COLLECTION

While Xbox has the prowess of Game Pass, Sony has introduced PlayStation Collection for PlayStation Plus members. PlayStation Collection is a curation of 20 PS4 games comprising 10 first-party and 10 third party games. The collection of games is no small feat. If this is your first PlayStation console ever then this is a collection of some of the best games to



get you started and keep you hooked till you build your library of games.

The first party offering in PlayStation Collection includes

- Bloodborne
- Days Gone
- Detroit: Become Human
- God of War
- Infamous Second Son
- Ratchet and Clank
- The Last Guardian
- The Last of Us Remastered
- Until Dawn
- Uncharted 4: A Thief's End

The third-party offering includes

- Batman: Arkham Knight
- Battlefield 1
- Call of Duty: Black Ops III – Zombies Chronicles Edition
- Crash Bandicoot N. Sane Trilogy
- Fallout 4
- Final Fantasy XV Royal Edition
- Monster Hunter: World
- Mortal Kombat X
- Persona 5
- Resident Evil 7 biohazard

PlayStation Plus subscribers also get 3 games per month, the offer of three games includes two PS4 games (that work on the PS5 thanks to backwards compatibility) and one PS5 game. It will be interesting to see how this offering evolves as we move forward into the PS5's lifecycle.

BOTTOM LINE

The PS5 is a beast of a console. You either love the design or you hate it, but you can't ignore the fact that Sony has done everything in its power to ensure the console is whisper quiet even under heavy loads. The removable side plates are great for those looking to customize their console. Apart from packing in some next-gen hardware, it is the DualSense controller which really stands out. The PS5 also has a very good launch lineup and considering the high price of a AAA game, PlayStation Collections is a good way to keep you gaming on the console while you slowly build your games library. While the

667GB built-in storage feels limiting, the option to install off the shelf expansion in the future is there. Not to mention the fact that you can play your PS4 games off an external hard drive. The Xbox Series X and PS5 both cost 50K in India and both are compelling consoles. The lack of Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos support may be a limiter for those looking for the console to double up as a home entertainment device. But considering the package on offer, you can definitely consider the PS5 as your next-gen gaming console. If you are ready to go all-digital, then the Digital Edition makes sense as it saves you Rs 10,000. *

THE MOST ANTICIPATED GAMES OF 2021

TIME TO FALL VICTIM TO THE HYPE TRAIN AGAIN



BY MANISH “TRIGGER-HAPPY” RAJESH

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Initially, this was going to be all about how Cyberpunk still hasn't been released but then it actually did release (and that was a trainwreck) so we guess we need to anticipate other games now...

Fortunately, there are a LOT of new games worth anticipating, with some games like HITMAN 3 which should already be out by the time you actually read this. We've got a mixed bag of games here, with various genres across all platforms, from AAA stuff to potential indie gems. We've tried to keep exclusivity down, but some exclusives are worth the hype, so they're in there. We had a “Most anticipated game” category in our game of the year winners section too, and the runner up for that was God of War: Ragnarok. You can guess what the winner was. Turns out, having just five options to choose from might have been a bad idea. Without further ado, in particular order, here are what we think are some of the most anticipated games of 2021.



Back 4 Blood

As we all know, Left 4 Dead 2 never had a sequel. This probably has to do with the fact that Valve hates the number 3. Thankfully, Turtle Rock Studios, developers behind the original Left 4 Dead are working on Back 4 Blood. What we can expect to see is the traditional 4 vs horde gameplay plus some more added multiplayer modes that the original Left 4 Dead games really should have had. Expect Back 4 Blood sometime this summer.



Horizon Forbidden West

Horizon Zero Dawn was one of those games that sold the PlayStation 4. What was initially a PlayStation exclusive, even made its way to PC eventually. The apocalyptic open world game had a unique setting and an even better story to tell. Horizon Forbidden West will once again put us in the shoes of protagonist Aloy as we return to Sylens to unravel the secrets of the world.



Vampire: the Masquerade — Bloodlines 2

Possibly the most hyped game on this list right now since the release of Cyberpunk 2077, is Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines 2. Unfortunately, the game's development has been rather turbulent. Developer Hardsuit Labs, who had brought on the writer of the original Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines game, Brian Mitsoda, let him go sometime in the middle of last year, without explanation. The game's release was then delayed to this year, which is why it's still on this list. Let's just hope it's not as big of a mess as Cyberpunk 2077 was at its launch.



The Medium

From the creators of Observer and Blair Witch, The Medium is a psychological horror game that's releasing pretty early in the year. It's also one of the few Microsoft exclusives on this list. This is one to watch out for; Bloober Team has even got composers Arkadiusz Reikowski and Akira Yamaoka on-board, of whom the latter is well-known for the music in the Silent

Hill series. If what they've already got in their portfolio is anything to go by, then we're in for a scare with The Medium.



Psychonauts 2

Psychonauts was a beloved 3D platformer, and it's hard to imagine that it's been more than 15 years since developer Double Fine released the game. Now, we're finally getting a sequel, one that's been in development since 2015. Psychonauts 2 has also seen a lot of delays, and was initially planned for 2018, then postponed to 2019. After Double Fine's

acquisition by Microsoft, the release date was finalised to 2021. Plus, the extra budget helped them add more content to the game, which is always great.



Stray

Post apocalyptic settings are a dime-a-dozen. So, the best way to stand out is to do something we've never seen before. That's where Stray steps in by making you play as a stray cat lost in a post-apocalyptic world where humans no longer exist, only sentient robots. Of course, it helps that Annapurna Interactive is behind the steering wheel on this one. Also, the

cat's wearing a cute little techno-backpack.



Deathloop

Deathloop is the next title from Arkane Studios, the developers behind the fantastic Dishonored franchise. The game revolves around two assassins stuck in a time loop where they kill each other over and over again. One wants to break the loop, while the other wants to preserve it. Do we know why? We will when we actually play it. You can expect some fast-paced first person action from this one.



Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time remake

The return of a classic, one of the early 2000s most memorable titles is making a comeback this year. What's also surprising is that this would be Ubisoft's first ever true remake. While they've been in the remastering game for a long time, this is a first, meaning we could see more such remakes in the future. The remake will be faithful to the original, but with current gen graphics. We're sold.



Far Cry 6

Ubisoft's Far Cry has been around for a long time, and to be honest, we haven't enjoyed any Far Cry game nearly as much as we enjoyed Far Cry 3. Of course, what sold that game was Vaas Montenegro, the villain. With Far Cry 6, they're bringing in Giancarlo Esposito for the role of the villain. If that isn't Ubisoft pulling out the big guns, we don't know what is.



Halo Infinite

Halo Infinite was expected to launch along with the new Xbox Series X, but it got delayed an entire year. Understandably, because when they showcased gameplay in 2020, there were some jarring issues, especially in the visual department. So we'd say it was a smart move on their part pushing the launch date back. The game's expected to launch by fall 2021, but Halo games rarely ever let down, let's hope this doesn't either.



Lord of the Rings: Gollum

We haven't seen a Lord of the Rings game in recent times. Of course, there are the Middle-Earth games that are set in the same universe. Lord of the Rings: Gollum is unlike any LOTR game we've seen so far, featuring, well, Gollum. It will feature primarily stealth gameplay, for obvious reasons. The game will also feature moments from the Lord of the Rings, but from Gollum's perspective.



Chorus

Deep Silver has quite a few hits to their name, the Saints Row series, Wasteland 3, and Metro Exodus to name a few. Their upcoming title, Chorus, puts you in the shoes of Nara, in a sci-fi space-action setting. She's on the run from a space cult and has some OP abilities herself, including a ship that's alive. Need we say more? If the trailer is anything to go by, this is easily something to keep an eye on.



Ghostwire: Tokyo

GhostWire: Tokyo is an interesting concept; everyone in Tokyo has disappeared, and instead, the city is occupied by ghosts, which the protagonist will have to deal with using a combination of magic and martial arts. Being based in Japan, a lot of the lore and combat is inspired by Japanese folklore. Also, this is from the same people who made Evil Within, which is fantastically scary. If you haven't seen the trailer for GhostWire: Tokyo yet, you should.



Resident Evil 8: Village

Phew! The number of Resident Evil games are really racking up, especially if you consider that the first three have been remade. The next Resident Evil game from Capcom is a direct sequel to Resident Evil 7 Biohazard, which offered something different (and more scary) with its first-person perspective. Resident Evil 8, or Resident Evil Village will also see series mainstay Chris Redfield make a return.



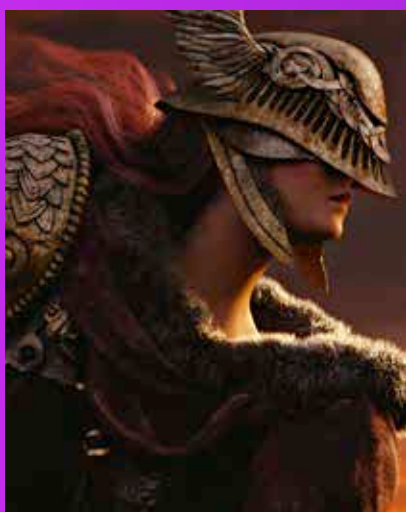
Hollow Knight: Silksong

Hollow Knight was easily one of the best platformer/metroidvanias we can think of in recent times. Equal parts charm, equal parts challenge, all packaged together nicely with some great visuals and an amazing soundtrack. Hollow Knight: Silksong will star Hornet, who was a side character in the original Hollow Knight. It will also feature an entirely new world with new mechanics added to the already impressive metroidvania.



Senua's Saga: Hellblade II

Hellblade: Senua's Sacrifice was a sleeper hit, so it shouldn't come as a surprise that its sequel is highly anticipated. The first look we got of Hellblade II at The Game Awards didn't give away too much detail, but the entire trailer was rendered within the game engine. We can definitely expect the story to only get darker though, and hopefully, be even more impactful than the original.



Elden Ring

When Elden Ring was initially announced in 2019, it was pretty hyped. It even had George R.R. Martin in the credits! If that wasn't all, From-Software's Hidetaka Miyazaki even called Elden Ring their biggest title yet. Unfortunately, we know nothing else about it. We didn't get a peep from From in 2020, which we can probably blame on the pandemic, but we're hopeful we'll hear more from From soon. From From, lol.



God of War: Ragnarok

Little is known about God of War: Ragnarok. Heck, we don't even know if it will actually be called Ragnarok when it launches. What we do know is that it is the sequel to 2018's fantastic God of War reboot, which made non-playstation owners VERY jealous. However, there hasn't been any indication that the game has been delayed, so we will hopefully be

seeing the game release this year. If the title is anything to go by, the Norse gods are in big trouble.



Gotham Knights

Batman is dead. It's time for the Bat family to step up and protect Gotham. This means you'll get to play as Robin, Batgirl, Red Hood and Nightwing. What's more, the game will also feature two-player co-op, which is something to look forward to. Gotham Knights is not going to be set in Rocksteady's fantastic Arkham series world though, and it looks like Gotham city itself will be a more central setting.



New World

Amazon of all companies is coming out with a new MMO. We've known about it for a while now but it's still pretty surreal. New World has been in the works for a while now, and it's already had a few successful closed Alpha runs. After a pretty long wait, 2021 might finally be the year we see this MMO releasing. New World will apparently be a more realistic take on

traditional MMOs, with player choices having a far more major impact on the game's world.



Ruined King

Riot Games is on a roll, finally justifying the s in Riot Game(s). After the success of their MOBA, followed by their successful card game, auto-chess game, and FPS game, they can do no wrong. They'll probably be hoping the roll continues when they release their new RPG this year, the Ruined King. Rumours are, they're also working on an MMO set in the LoL universe.



Age of Empires 4

Age of Empires 4 was announced ages ago, and we still haven't heard a lot from developer Relic Games. Then again, since we haven't heard from them, we can probably assume that work on the game is still very much underway and it'll probably come out sometime this year. That might be wishful thinking on our part though. We're still excited to see where the classic series will go.



Sable

We first saw Sable back at E3 in 2018, and we immediately got Journey vibes from the game. The aesthetic is very unique; it looks somewhat like Borderlands, but in 2D, with the black outlines and its desert-themed colour palette. The game was planned for release in 2019, but has been delayed quite a few times since. Hopefully, we'll see its release sometime this year.



Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart

Ratchet & Clank made a comeback four years ago and blew it out of the park. With the advent of the new PlayStation generation, it only makes sense that they're back again with Ratchet & Clank: Rift Apart. Insomniac Games haven't failed to deliver so far, and the new Ratchet & Clank looks like it'll have a whole new arsenal of weapons and new worlds to explore in bright and vibrant third-person action.



Little Nightmares 2

Light Nightmares did exactly what the title suggests, give you, the player, nightmares. While it was a short little horror platformer, it was a terrifying ride. Little Nightmares 2 is set to release early this year, and will continue the same terrifying ride with its creepy, nightmare-inducing aesthetic.



STALKER 2

The original STALKER was lauded for its realism and difficulty. This was a survival game where survival wasn't a cakewalk, as it usually is nowadays. Now, almost 14 years later, we're getting STALKER 2, which will take us back to the post-apocalyptic, alternate-reality, mutant-infested world of Chernobyl. The game's expected to release this year, but we have no fixed date, as with most games on this list.



Dying Light 2

Dying Light was a fantastic first-person action game. As far as zombie apocalypse games go, this was an easy recommendation. Naturally, we're quite excited for Techland's Dying Light 2. We've already seen gameplay and it definitely looks like an improvement over the original. We will, of course, reserve judgement till we actually play the game, but

we're hopeful nevertheless. Dying Light 2 is expected to come out sometime in the first half of 2021 for all main-stream platforms.



Dungeons & Dragons: Dark Alliance

Way back in the day, we're talking early 2000s here, we had Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance. Now, we already have Baldur's Gate 3 in the works, and Wizards of Coast and Tuque Games are finally making a Dark Alliance sequel, with Dungeons & Dragons: Dark Alliance. The sequel will feature characters from previous Dark Alliance games, and will feature online and local co-op gameplay.



Kena: Bridge of Spirits

Not exactly on anyone's radar we're guessing, but it looked charming enough for us to warrant putting it in this list, because we think people should anticipate it. Kena: Bridge of Spirits is a beautiful looking game starring Kena, who helps guide the dead to the spirit world. It's not as sinister as it sounds, but instead features more Breath of Wild-like graphics.

It's expected to release sometime this year for the PlayStation and PC. *

BEYOND 2021

These games aren't releasing anytime this year. Okay most of these games. The rest don't have confirmed release dates. Expect a surprise pikachu face from us if any of these do release though.

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Ark 2 | ■ Metroid Prime 4 |
| ■ Fable 4 | ■ Diablo 4 |
| ■ Dragon Age 4 | ■ The Elder Scrolls 6 |
| ■ Mass Effect | ■ Hogwarts Legacy |
| ■ The Legend of Zelda: | ■ Starfield |
| Breath of the Wild 2 | ■ Beyond Good & Evil 2 |



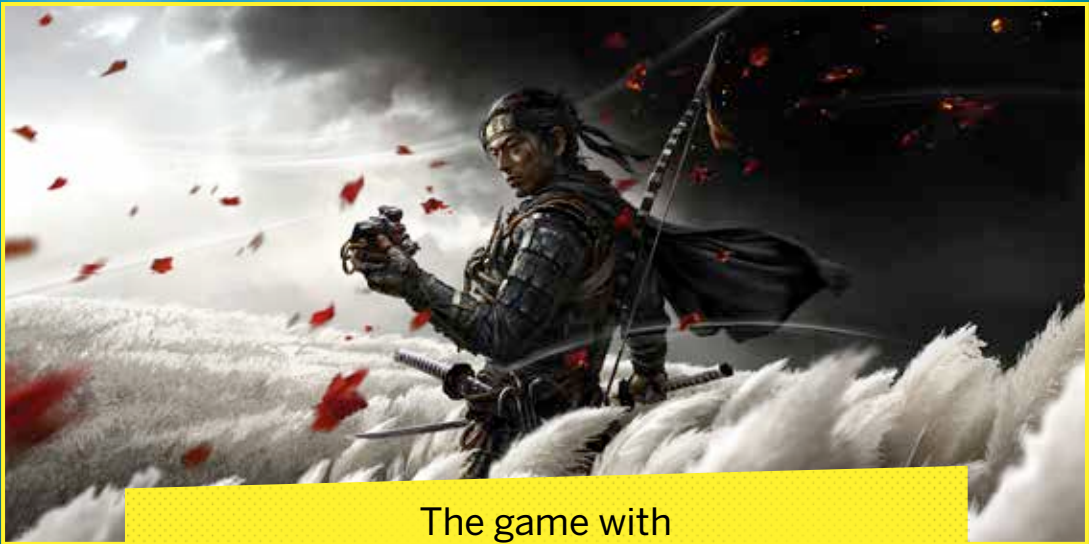
SKOAR!
GAME
OF
THE YEAR
2020
WINNERS

HERE ARE THE WINNERS FOR
THE SKOAR! GAME OF THE YEAR 2020!

BY SKOAR! CLAN
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

The votes are in and we have our winners! It was extremely close in some categories and a landslide in others. Our game of the year falls in the former category. Make your way to the end to find out which game is **SKOAR!'s Game of the Year 2020!**

And of course, read on to find out who won the Cyberpunk 2077 T-Shirt and Mafia Trilogy Steam PC key!



The game with
the **BEST GAME DIRECTION** is...

Ghost of Tsushima

This shouldn't come as a surprise. Ghost of Tsushima blew all of us away; making you feel like you were bang in the middle of one of those samurai movies of old. Our reviewer simply couldn't stop raving about the game. Real bummer this was a PlayStation exclusive, imagine how good it would look on a PC.



The game with
the **BEST NARRATIVE** is...

The Last of Us part 2

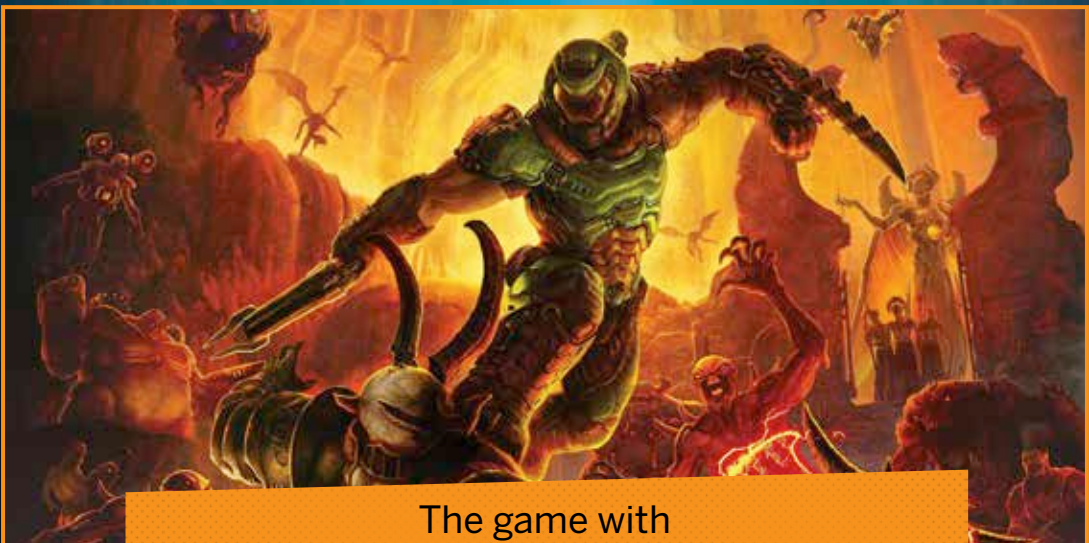
When it comes to storytelling, few do it better than Naughty Dog. While not everyone was particularly happy with the story in The Last of Us 2, there's no denying that it was executed excellently and definitely had the impact they were looking for.



The game with
the **BEST ART DIRECTION** is...

Ghost of Tsushima

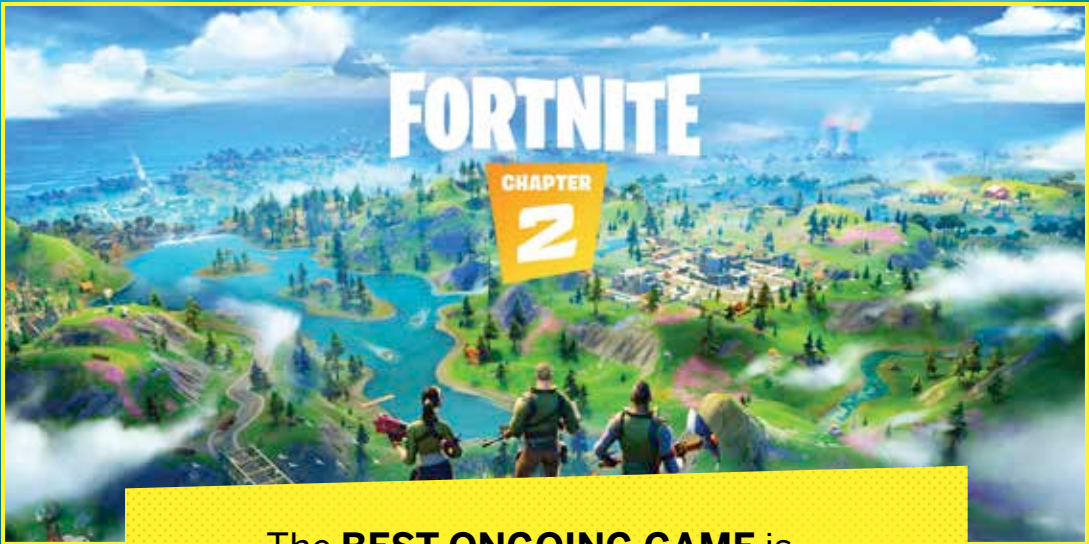
Again, not much a surprise. In order to pull off the feel of those samurai movies of old, the game was paired with gorgeous visuals; from character design, to beautiful landscapes, the attention to detail is hard to miss.



The game with
the **BEST SCORE AND MUSIC** is...

Doom Eternal

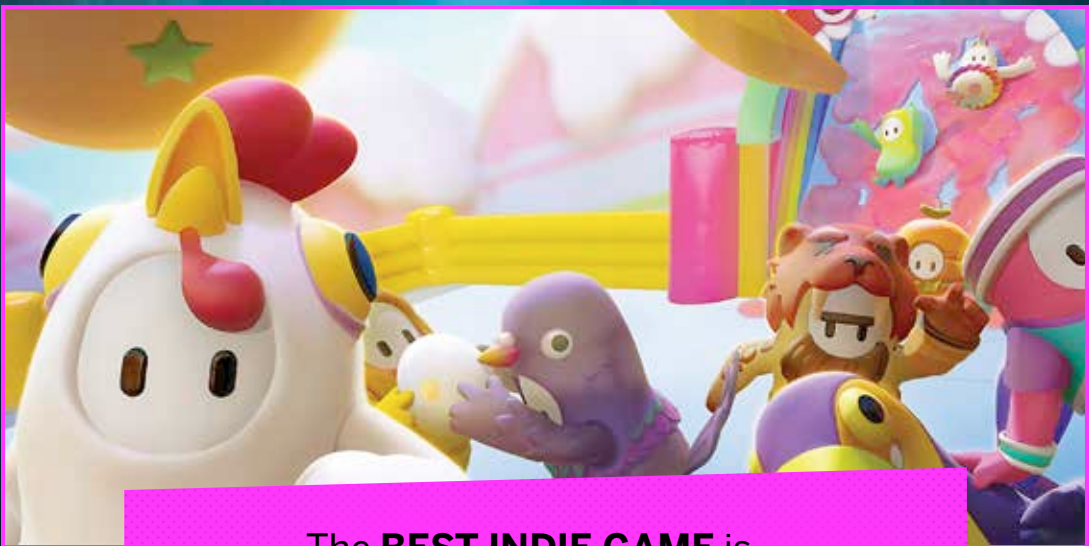
Mick Gordon blew it out of the park with the Doom Eternal soundtrack. We didn't think he'd top 2016's Doom, but he managed it with flying colours. An easy addition to any metal-lovers playlist, heck even if you don't particularly enjoy metal, this still kicks-ass.



The **BEST ONGOING GAME** is...

Fortnite

One might think the Fortnite craze has died down of late. But just because the game isn't in the news as often as it used to be doesn't mean it's any less popular. Of course, credit where it's due, Epic have a winner here with their unique Battle Royale gameplay and a consistent flow of new content.



The **BEST INDIE GAME** is...

Fall Guys: Ultimate Knockout

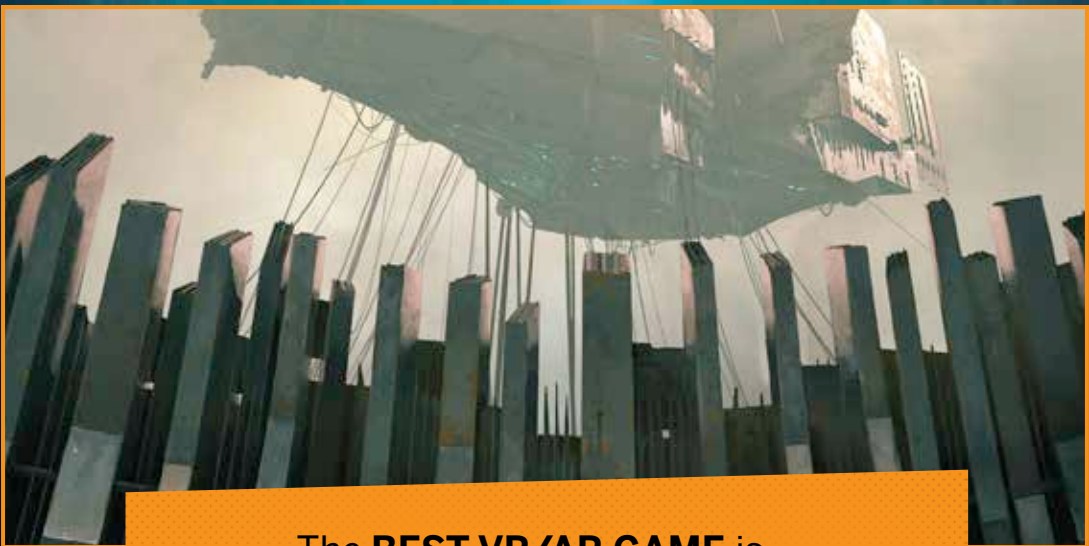
Takeshi's Castle but with jelly beans, that's how our reviewer put it. We're inclined to agree. Plus it's incredibly fun, so there's that too. During these trying times, Fall Guys was one of those games that brought cheer to the world, at least for the few months it was in the spotlight.



The **BEST MOBILE GAME** is...

Call of Duty Mobile

The game that replaced PUBG, for well, obvious reasons. Of course, it helps that this is a well optimised game for mobile with intuitive controls and plenty of game modes and QoL features on offer. Plus, simply having the Call of Duty title in the name means you can expect AAA quality.



The **BEST VR/AR GAME** is...

Half-Life: Alyx

Whenever Valve releases a game, you can expect it to change the gaming landscape. Half-Life: Alyx may not have had the same kind of impact a Half-Life 3 release might have had, but it definitely turned heads and had a lot of people wanting a VR headset of their own.



The **BEST ACTION GAME** is...

Doom Eternal

It's Doom. What did you expect? If the game had a middle name it may as well have been Doom "TONS OF ACTION" Eternal. No surprises here, Doom Eternal took all the things that made 2016's Doom fantastic, and multiplied it tenfold. Now that's how you make a sequel, people.



The **BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE GAME** is...

Assassin's Creed Valhalla

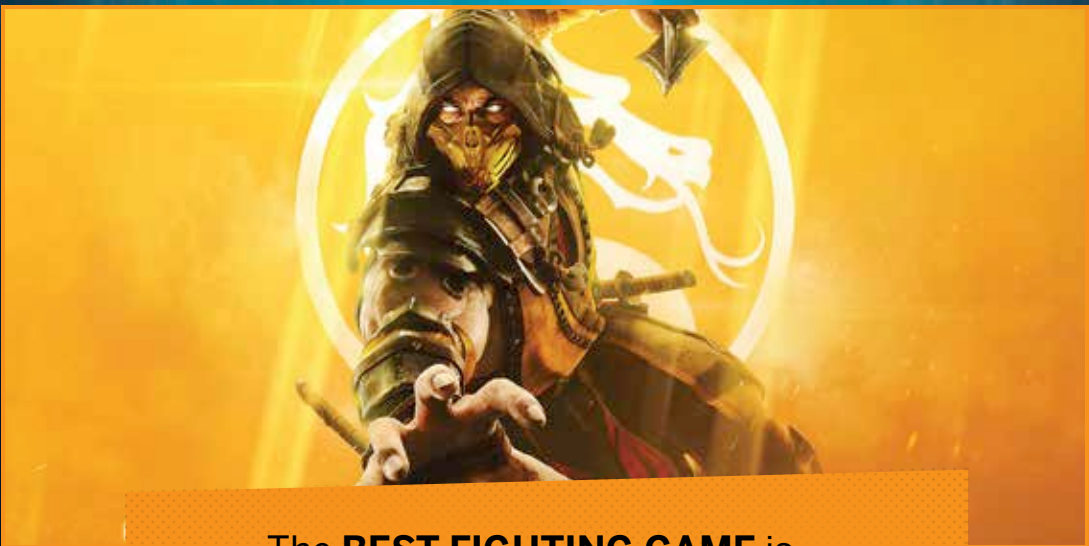
The kings of open-world games, Ubisoft, graced us with a new Assassin's Creed near the end of 2020. As it turns out, having made so many open-world games, they're getting rather good at it. Assassin's Creed Valhalla is a fun ride from start to finish for those with the action/adventure itch.



The **BEST ROLE PLAYING GAME** is...

Final Fantasy VII Remake

The remake of the 1997 classic isn't relying on just nostalgia to sell. Complete with modern graphics and gameplay, the Final Fantasy VII Remake is the remake everyone dreamed of. This is in a way, the benchmark of what a remake should look like.



The **BEST FIGHTING GAME** is...

Mortal Kombat 11 Ultimate

The long running Mortal Kombat franchise (it's at number 11 already, jeez) with its iconic fatalities and gore-galore has been around in the game for so long now, it's hard to think of it ever going away. Over time Netherrealm has improved upon both the graphics and gameplay of Mortal Kombat. And of course, turned the gore up to 11.



The **BEST SIM/STRATEGY GAME** is...

Microsoft Flight Simulator

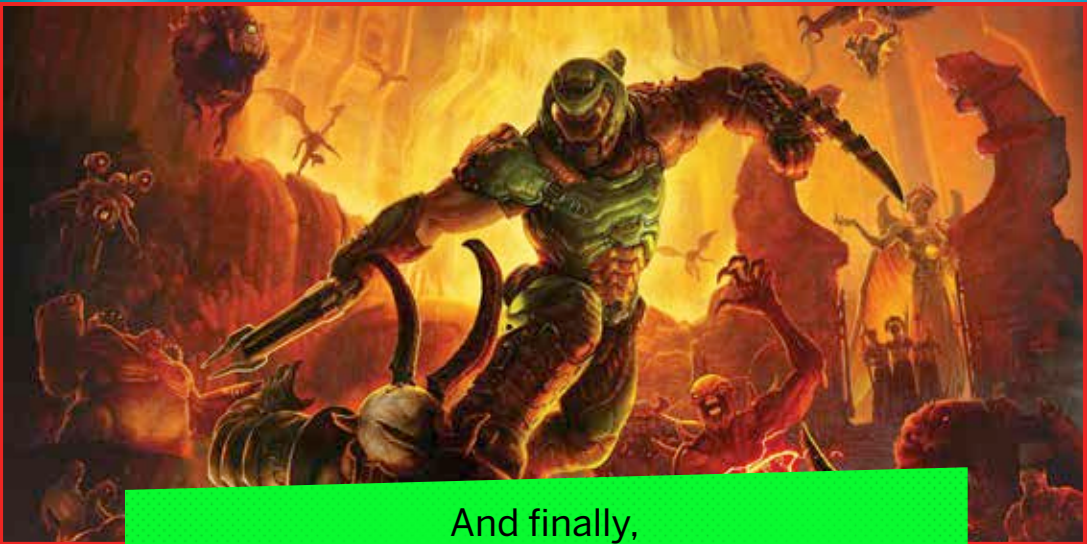
Possibly the most realistic Flight Simulator ever, if you're an actual pilot, you might feel right at home. Microsoft's dedication to realism shows, with an almost to-scale world within the game for you to fly around. Just the initial download is a whopping 150GB, with more to download as you play.



The **BEST DEBUT INDIE GAME** is...

Raji: An Ancient Epic

Nodding Heads Games Raji is a visually gorgeous adventure game which draws its inspiration from Indian Mythology and Pahari paintings. And it definitely shows, we're looking forward to what Nodding Heads Games does next.



And finally,
the **SKOAR! GAME OF THE YEAR 2020** is...

Doom Eternal

Rip and tear! Id Software and Panic Button Games' Doom Eternal is the epitome of fast-paced action gameplay. Like we mentioned above already, Doom Eternal took everything fantastic about 2016's Doom and made it 10x better. We didn't think it was possible, but they somehow managed to pull it off. This year, the voting was really close, with Doom Eternal just beating out Ghost of Tsushima and The Last of Us part 2. But there you have it, your deserved SKOAR! Game of the Year 2020 Winner – Doom Eternal.

We haven't forgotten about our prize!

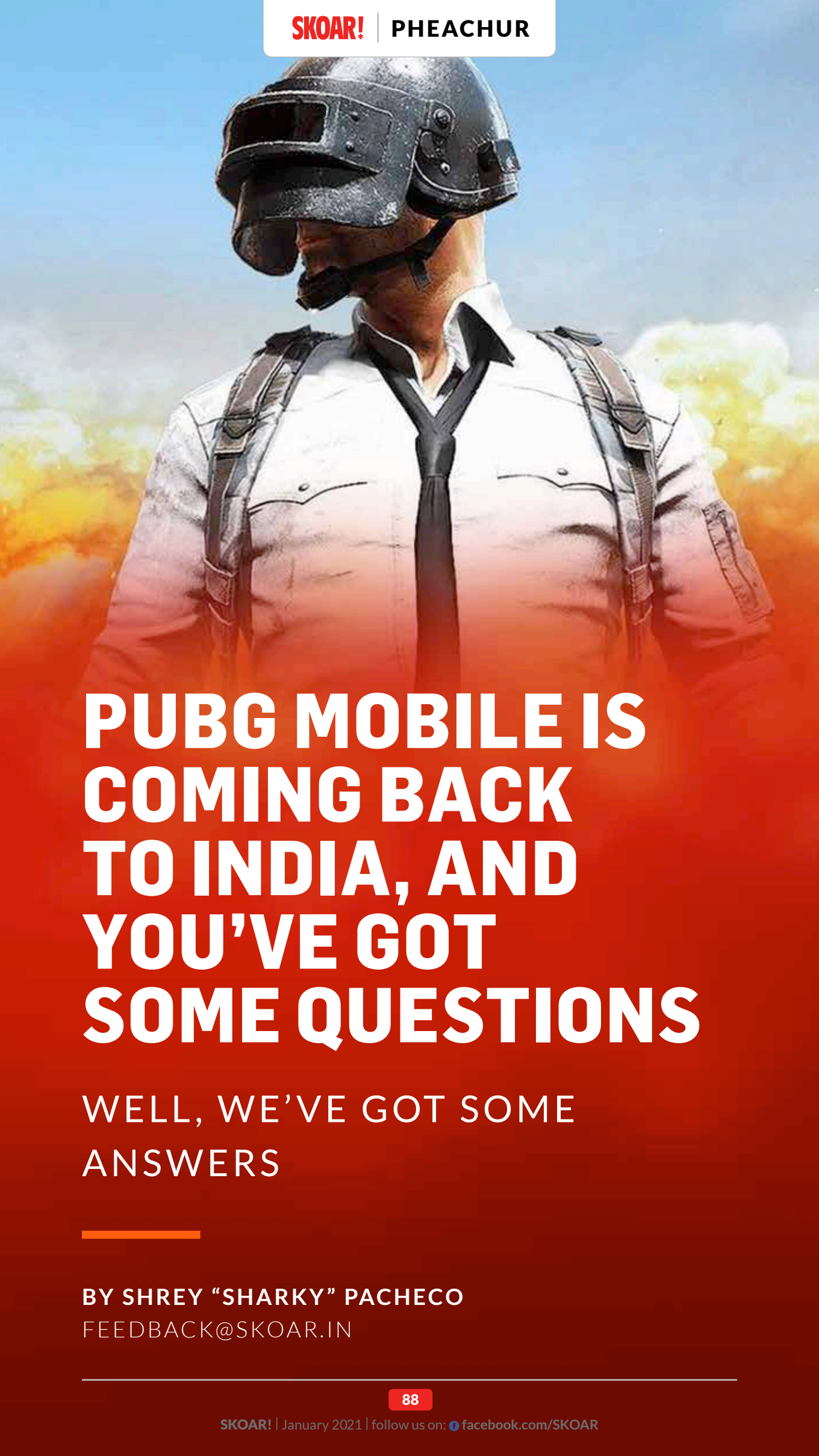
Below are the winners of the **SKOAR! Game of the Year 2020** draw:



The winner of the
Cyberpunk 2077 T-Shirt is
Shivendoo Deshmukh!

The winner of the
Mafia: Trilogy Steam PC
key is **Pulkit Agarwal!**





PUBG MOBILE IS COMING BACK TO INDIA, AND YOU'VE GOT SOME QUESTIONS

**WELL, WE'VE GOT SOME
ANSWERS**

BY SHREY "SHARKY" PACHECO
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

PUBG Mobile is finally coming back to India in an all-new avatar, as revealed by PUBG Corporation. The future of the popular battle royale game was hanging in the balance ever since the game was banned by the Indian government over security and privacy reasons on September 2. PUBG Corp cut ties with publisher Tencent following the ban of the game in the country with one of its largest player bases.

If you have been following the return of PUBG Mobile in India, there's still a lot that has not been revealed by the company. The website of the game recently went live as well along with a teaser released across social media channels. Here, we have compiled a list of some common questions that PUBG Mobile fans have been concerned about.





HOW IS PUBG MOBILE COMING BACK TO INDIA?

By the end of October, Tencent terminated its services for PUBG Mobile in India and subsequently, Krafton Inc, the parent company of PUBG Corp announced a partnership with Microsoft for its cloud service Azure. Following this announcement, PUBG Corp revealed its India plans that include releasing a new version of the game dubbed as PUBG Mobile India with in-game content specific to the Indian market.

PUBG Corp has also announced that it is creating an Indian subsidiary and plans to invest over \$100 million to boost esports and game development in India. PUBG Mobile players in the country have been waiting for the game to relaunch in India and now it's just a matter of when the game is officially available for download.

WHEN IS PUBG MOBILE RELEASING IN INDIA?

The official statement from PUBG Corp says that “more information on the launch of PUBG MOBILE INDIA will be released at a later date.” The company has not revealed an exact date for the launch of PUBG Mobile India however, previous rumours and speculations have pegged the launch date from a few weeks to the end of 2020.

A teaser for PUBG Mobile was also released across the social media platforms and so it is expected the developers are planning to release the game as soon as possible.

HOW DIFFERENT IS PUBG MOBILE INDIA FROM THE REGULAR VERSION?

PUBG Corp has revealed that the special version of the game is set to feature customised content including virtual simulation

training ground, clothed characters, green hit effects and more. The game will also include restriction settings on game time in order to instil healthy gameplay habits for young PUBG Mobile players in India.

WILL YOUR EXISTING PUBG MOBILE DATA BE TRANSFERRED TO THE INDIAN VERSION?

There have been several doubts over the existing PUBG Mobile player data and whether it will be transferred to the Indian version of the game. While there is no official word yet in this regard, however, several players have reportedly already migrated to the new game. This hints at the likelihood of existing PUBG Mobile player data including achievements, purchas-



es and rewards being safe and fans of the game won't have to start from scratch when the Indian version launches.

HAS THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT LIFTED THE BAN ON PUBG MOBILE?

There is no official word from the Indian government regarding the lifting of the ban on PUBG Mobile in India. According to a report, government sources have indicated that unless PUBG Corp. addresses the security and privacy concerns of the Indian government, "it will be difficult to grant any relaxation" to the popular battle royale game.

IS PUBG MOBILE INDIA BEING DISTRIBUTED BY CHINESE ENTITIES?

Soon after the Indian government banned PUBG Mobile in India, PUBG Corp decided to cut ties with Tencent and can-

cel the license that allows Tencent to run PUBG Mobile in India. Currently, the rights to publish the game in India is with PUBG Corp.

WHAT ARE THE NEW FEATURES TO EXPECT FROM PUBG MOBILE INDIA?

PUBG Mobile will be re-launched as PUBG Mobile India and is set to feature customised content including virtual simulation training ground, clothed characters, green hit effects and more. It will also include restriction settings on game time in order to instil healthy gameplay habits for young PUBG Mobile players in India.

WHAT PLATFORMS WILL BE SUPPORTED BY PUBG MOBILE INDIA ON LAUNCH?

PUBG Mobile is expected to be released on Android and iOS and will be available to download from the Play Store and App Store respectively.



WHAT ALTERNATIVE GAMES CAN I PLAY TILL PUBG MOBILE INDIA LAUNCHES?

While PUBG Mobile fans swear by the game's mechanisms and the experience, there hasn't been a game as popular as PUBG Mobile in India. PUBG Mobile remains one of the most popular battle royale games in India with over 50 million active players and many other games have been trying to get the kind of spotlight ever since the game's exit from India. Some other games you should try include, Call of Duty: Mobile, Fortnite and Free Fire, to name a few.



PUBG Mobile lightweight installation feature explained

WILL I BE ABLE TO PLAY AGAINST PLAYERS IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

In all likelihood, when PUBG Mobile relaunches, it is expected to have its own designated servers for India. With the latest PUBG Mobile Season 16 release, players will not be able to switch servers and the feature has been moved to the System settings menu. Moreover, once a player changes the server to another region, they will only be able to change it again after 60 days.

WILL THERE BE OFFICIAL TOURNAMENTS ORGANISED BY PUBG MOBILE?

In its announcement for India, PUBG Corp revealed that it is also preparing to host India-exclusive esports events and tournaments with massive prize pools once the game launches in India.

WILL I BE ABLE TO STREAM PUBG MOBILE INDIA WHEN IT LAUNCHES AGAIN?

Yes, PUBG Mobile India is expected to feature some cosmetic changes while the other features of the game will largely remain the same. Players will be able to stream the game in India just like any other game once it launches.

I HAVE DOWNLOADED AN APK, AND I AM PLAYING PUBG MOBILE. HOW WILL THIS CHANGE WHEN THE GAME FINALLY LAUNCHES?

PUBG's parent company Krafton Inc. has announced that it

would be working with Microsoft’s Azure platform. With this, the company hopes to ensure that storage of personally identifiable information of its players follows appropriate requirements in the territories where Krafton and its subsidiaries operate gaming services.

WILL I BE ABLE TO PLAY THE NEW VERSION OF PUBG MOBILE ON PC?

A lot of the players also use emulator clients to play PUBG Mobile on PC. However, it is currently unknown whether the developers will release a PC client for the PUBG Mobile India once it is released.



CAN I PREREGISTER FOR THE GAME ON TAPTAP?

The official statement from PUBG Corp. still says that “More information on the launch of PUBG MOBILE INDIA will be released at a later date.” This means that the company has not initiated any pre-registration links for the game on Play Store or the App Store.

The game is expected to hit official channels soon, and we would recommend our readers to wait for the game’s appearance on either the Play Store or App Store when it launches in India.

HOW DO I KNOW WHICH VERSION OF PUBG MOBILE IS THE CORRECT AND REAL ONE?

Whenever PUBG Mobile India is officially released, it is expected to be available for download on Google Play Store or Apple App Store. As revealed by PUBG Corp, it is planning a special

version of the game for the Indian audience and it will feature custom in-game content. This will be similar to the global version but more granular details are unavailable at the moment.

WHAT RESTRICTIONS/MONITORING WILL THE GOVERNMENT IMPOSE ON PUBG MOBILE TO ENSURE IT COMPLIES WITH PRIVACY RULES?

The Indian government has reportedly indicated that unless PUBG Corp. addresses the security and privacy concerns of the Indian government, “it will be difficult to grant any relaxation” to the ongoing ban of PUBG Mobile in India. To this end, PUBG Mobile India will also include restriction settings on game time in order to instil healthy gameplay habits for young PUBG Mobile players in India.

ALSO, PUBG MOBILE WON'T TAKE UP A LOT OF SPACE ON YOUR PHONE ONCE IT'S BACK IN INDIA

PUBG Mobile has released a lightweight installation feature for Android users that don't take as much space as the previous versions of the popular battle royale title. PUBG Corporation recently announced that PUBG Mobile will soon be relaunched in India following its ban by the Indian government in September. The new version that is being especially prepared for the Indian market is set to feature some cosmetic changes along with restriction settings on game time in order to instil healthy gameplay habits for young PUBG Mobile players in India.

In order to make the base installation small in size, PUBG Mobile in its latest update brings the lightweight installation feature for Android smartphones. This reduces the size of the game by up to 70%, from 1.9 GB to 610 MB. Moreover, the battle royale game now offers users to customise their game and can uninstall the unnecessary elements. Do note, however, this feature is only available for Android phones and the game size for iOS version is 1.63 GB.

In an attempt to reduce the size of the main PUBG Mobile game, the developers have released a new feature which decreased the file size to 610MB. With this, the game also now offers players to customise the game according to their own needs. PUBG Mobile players can now choose to install select features as add-on updates from within the game.

Players of the popular battle royale title can now choose and customise the different in-game elements including maps, gameplay modes, features and more. Some features can also

be uninstalled as needed. This means that players just have to download the game from the Play Store and it will contain the basic features and classic map and other add-on maps and modes will have to be downloaded separately.

This makes way for easier download and players won't have to wait for the whole game to get downloaded with major updates. The in-game contents can be easily updated as well and the game also provides smart suggestions for cleanup and patch downloads. The lightweight installation feature takes up less space on your phone now and players can opt for different resource packs based on the storage available on their phones. It also helps users download the in-game content in batches that is expected to help users on smaller data packs. The graphics pack is an additional 332 MB download while the visual effects pack is 592 MB in size.

Once PUBG Mobile India is launched in the country, we expect the same feature to be available on that version as well. This will help many users across India as it gives them the ability to download the in-game content that is needed and not the whole game at once. There are many maps and modes that users don't play and the choice to uninstall some of those features is also a welcome move. *



LOW-SPEC GAMING HAS NEVER LOOKED THIS GOOD



BY KSHIPRA “FAAFDAAJALEBII” JADAV

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

■ D Software and Bethesda really did a number with this game. Released back in 2011, for Xbox 360, PC and PS3 this game was a hit. It sold off the shelves and till date it has 7/10 on Steam. As for the low-spec aspect, yes. This game requires minimal hardware to run. We tested it on our trusty old low spec PC with Intel i3-3220 APU and 8 gigs of DDR3 1333MHz RAM and it gave us no issues running at almost 40-50 FPS on High Settings.

The question is how? How can a game look so good but still run on minimal hardware! At that time, the GTX 590 was considered to be the RTX 3090. A card that could run every game you threw at it at the highest settings possible. But still, RAGE required none of that. It had modest requirements of a Core 2 Quad and a GeForce 9800 GTX. That's right, a mid-range card released almost 4 years before the release of this game could play it at max settings with 60+ FPS! To put it into today's perspective, it's like having a GTX 1060 run CP 2077 on Ultra Settings. Sounds pretty impossible, right? Well, the folks at iD Software had some tricks up their sleeves to help them achieve this impossible task of getting such a good looking game running on low level hardware.

Game engines. Yes, the base level and the foundation blocks of all the games out there right now. The term itself is pretty self explanatory. An engine, to drive the game, to make the game work in the smoothest way possible, to calculate all the different variables, vectors and do some complicated math required to run a game are called Game Engines. We will be talking about iD Tech 5, the game engine used for RAGE and how it optimised RAGE to run on practically any piece of hardware out there.



ID TECH 5

iD Tech 5 was developed by John Carmack, the founder of iD Software. It was first unveiled by him in Apple's WWDC 2007 event where an eight-core computer was used; however, the demo only used a single core with single-threaded OpenGL implementation running on a 512 MB 7000 class Quadro video card. Since then it was used to develop multiple games like Rage, Wolfenstein : The New Order, Wolfenstein :

The Old Blood, etc. Carmack has used a number of tricks to get this engine so well optimised that the games based on it could run very smoothly on Xbox 360 and PS3.

Among other optimisations, the main one which we are going to focus on in this article is a technique called MegaTexture or Virtual Texturing. This is one thing that ended up saving processing power and memory while making the game look and feel different and better than others at that time.

TEXTURES AND THE WAY THEY WORK

Before we get into the nitty gritty of Virtual Texturing, we need to first understand how a game handles textures. Textures are small files that a game loads as and when required depending upon the player's location. They could be as small as 128x128 or could even be 4K depending upon the level of detail the game offers. The only caveat with these textures is that they come in very large quantities. A regular video game could have tens of thousands of those individual texture files for a particular location. Another thing which seems to trigger most people is an effect called 'tiling'. This is done when a large landscape is to be filled with the same texture, so the game just takes one 128x128 file and duplicates it across the entire landscape effec-



tively making square 'tiles' which gives a repetitive effect to that particular texture and can break the immersion of a player playing the game. It also triggers the OCD of some people just because of how bad it looks.

HOW ID TECH 5 IMPLEMENTED TEXTURES

Carmack overcame this entire problem by developing his own texture applying method called 'MegaTexture'. Here, instead of having thousands of individual texture files, a very large texture file is made which effectively covers the entire map. Think of it as a bedsheet or a blanket being put on to a map. It bends and deforms according to the map and covers the whole area evenly. Carmack said that the texture file can be as big as 128000x128000 pixels! This technique is exclusive to iD Tech 5 and it helps overcome two major problems.

- 1. Tiling.** As discussed above, tiling is an immersion breaker for large landscapes. However, in MegaTexture, there is no tiling to be done as the whole area is being covered by one giant texture. Artists can implement different layers of detail by simply painting the whole terrain. Note that the repetitiveness is still present here but it is far less prevalent and not as noticeable.
- 2. Memory usage and processing power.** iD Tech 5 handles this part very efficiently. Considering that the average VRAM in cards of 2011 was only 1GB or even worse, the PS3 and Xbox 360 had 256MB and 512MB VRAM respectively, it was a challenge for most games to achieve 40+ FPS with a playable experience back then. Virtual Texturing solved this problem by effectively 'streaming' the textures as and when



required instead of loading all the textures at once. This took a huge load off the GPU and in turn gave better performance. The whole big texture file was broken down to bits and those little bits of textures were then streamed into memory from the discs and the unwanted textures were removed which made space for the other textures to be streamed into it. It also solves compatibility issues with different types of hardware and the VRAM + processing power available as the texture quality can be scaled up or down as per the hardware it's being played on.

Obviously, iD Tech 5 came with its own sets of disadvantages like static lighting. Since, it is all a big texture, you cannot 'light' different areas of the map differently. Hence, static lighting has to be implemented and the concept of night/day has to be forgotten. In most places, shadows are literally PAINTED on to the texture file to have some sense of depth and immersion. Also, they are pretty hard to patch. For example, you got a texture error and you need to fix it. In Wolfenstein The New Order, the Textures folder is of 40 something gigs and the largest single texture file in there is of around 2.9 gigs. So, if you have to patch a texture error in that file, the users will have to download a 3 gig patch just to fix that small error.

RAGE. SHOULD YOU PLAY IT?

Coming back to RAGE, it's a nice game to play, especially if you have a potato PC. Sure, there are a number of downsides to the game like enemies being literal bullet sponges, shady driving mechanics and unfair gun fights but it is all somewhat made up for by the story of the game. You will feel like you're an Amazon

delivery boy at times, just going from one place to another to give an item to a particular person but other than that, the story is pretty good. Also, the weapon mechanics and the implementation of different types of bullets for the same weapon is creative. The thing with RAGE is that it tried to master many things at the same time but it failed miserably at that. It tried to master:

1. Storyline
2. Character development
3. Fighting and enemies
4. Being an open world game
5. Racing

And out of those 5, it only succeeded in the storyline. But, it is a must play if you have a potato PC and are a sucker for good looking games at a relatively low processing power.



CONCLUSION

When we first saw 'From the makers of DOOM and QUAKE' in the poster of the game, we honestly thought that it would live up to the expectations and would land somewhere around the heights that DOOM and QUAKE have achieved. But we were a bit disappointed to see the game. Playing through it, it was not a smooth experience. We experienced many glitches and discontinuity errors in the game. Yes, looking at the story of the game as a whole, is good and a bit enticing. Only if you find enough motivation to play through the entire game ignoring the above mentioned caveats. But if you still end up playing the game, don't forget to share your experience with us at feedback@skoar.in *



XBOX SERIES X

EXPLORING THE INNARDS OF THE SPEC-MONSTER

BY DHRITI 'DEEDEE' DATTA

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

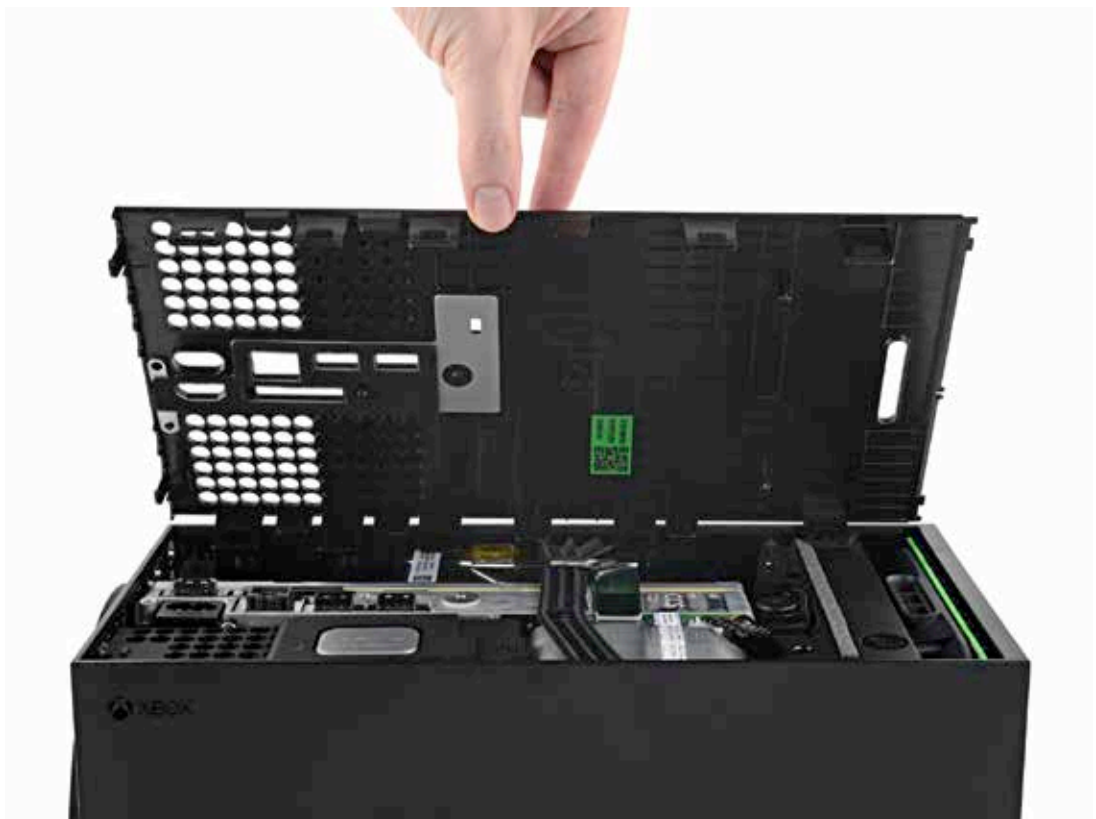
iFixit Link: <http://dgit.in/XboxSeriesX>

Images Courtesy: iFixit



GETTING INTO THE CONSOLE

Two bright green T8 screws are tucked underneath stickers and a trap door, which makes it difficult to access. However, with the right opening kit you can get into the device pretty easily. The next component to be removed is the beefy-look-



ing 130mm fan. It pops out of place easily, which means cleaning it from time to time won't be too tedious. If your Xbox is sitting upright, this is an upward exhaust for the console. Microsoft also snuck in a Master Chief logo inside, quite a quirky Easter egg!

OUT COMES THE OPTICAL DRIVE

Upon removing the circular disk from the bottom of the console, you can see some screws hidden underneath. Once these are unscrewed, the optical drive can make its way out. It is actually the very same drive from the Xbox One S and the Xbox One X, down to the model number. However, the optical



drive's internal circuit board is paired to your console's MoBo, so it won't allow for easy replacements. Still, you can desolder the board from your original optical drive and put it into a new drive to get a working board again.

REMOVING THE REST OF THE INNARDS

Once the optical drive is out, all that is left inside is a giant assembly in one piece which is basically all the heat management that is strapped onto the boards of the console. There's a black rubber strap that surrounds this assembly which provides some isolation or cushioning from the vibration



of the device. The strap also houses some convenient labels such as 'center chassis', 'PSU', and 'AC cable routing'.

THE POWER SUPPLY UNIT

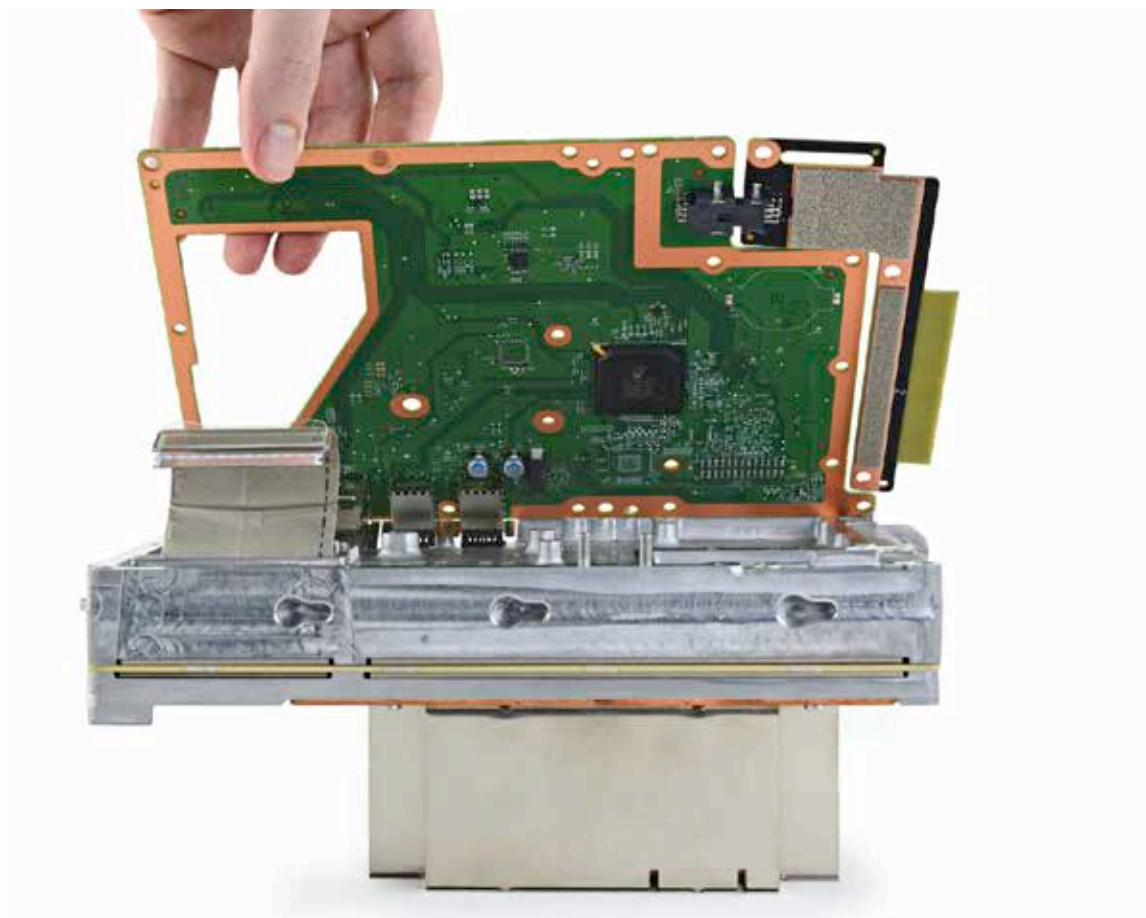
The PSU can be lifted away from the assembly that was extracted from the console's exterior box. This PSU's primary rail outputs up to 21.25 amps at 12 volts, which equals to 255 watts. Adding the peripheral 60W output, the total goes up to



315 watts which is significantly higher than the Xbox One X's 245-watt PSU. It is still lower than the PS5's 350-watt PSU. This PSU utilises long-lasting polymer capacitors instead of electrolytic ones which are usually cheaper.

OF BOARDS AND CHIPS

The boards are sandwiched on top of each other and the aluminum block between them is to direct air between the boards and keep them cool. The first board houses Microsoft



M1139994-001 T6WD5XBG-0004 Southbridge, Texas Instruments L339A quad differential comparator, Realtek RTL8111HM gigabit ethernet controller, and a few other chips. The storage on the device is a custom 1 TB SN530 m.2 2230 NVMe SSD by Western Digital. The final board has chips such as the "Project Scarlett" 100-000000388 SoC, 16 GB of GDDR6 SGRAM, and others.

KEEPIN' IT COOL

The expansive cooling system of the Xbox Series X is certainly a sight to behold. There's a lot of mint green thermal compound applied generously which helps dissipate heat. On the left, fins pull heat from the copper vapour chamber which is



then absorbed by cool air which is pulled in through the bottom of the console by the fan. Along the copper plate, the metal frame acts as an EM shield which also transfers heat away via a thermal pad. The center chassis sinks heat and maximises board cooling. On the right, another EM shield protects the other motherboard while allowing air to cycle through. *

The Twitch logo is centered in the upper half of the image. It consists of the word "Twitch" in its characteristic white, rounded, sans-serif font with a black outline. The logo is partially obscured by several diagonal yellow ribbons that cross over it. Each ribbon features a repeating pattern of a green padlock icon followed by the text "DMCA" in black, bold, sans-serif font. The background is a solid purple color.

RANT: TWITCH'S DMCA DEBACLE

IT'S TIME TWITCH FOUGHT FOR
ITS CONTENT CREATORS

BY RAHUL "CH1CKENDUMPL1NG" CHETTIYAR
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Imagine this. You get your brand-new gaming PC; a webcam, a microphone, a desk, a couple of piss bottles, you know... the whole shebang. You get everything set up to live stream for the first time ever, and launch your favourite game. You play for a few hours, rack-in a handful of viewers, have fun and get off. Hell, you might even start seeing it as a viable career option. You go to bed all happy, thinking that tomorrow's going to be a better day, if not the same. The next morning, you wake up to an alarming email notification from Twitch, saying that your newly-built channel has been struck with a DMCA takedown notice! Three of those, and you are permanently banned from the platform. Your career is over before it has even begun. And you don't even know, what you did wrong!

Twitch has been smoking some weird variation of the Devil's lettuce, lately. If you think that the unfairly biased and inconsistent ban system was the biggest problem on the platform, then oh, boy... you are highly mistaken! Unless you've been living under a rock, you might have heard about thousands of streamers getting bombarded with DMCA claims, left, right and centre. This is probably the worst kind of dispute for a streamer, since the only way out of it is to take the matter to court. That is, if they want to continue streaming. Now, content creators, across all platforms, have always had issues over copyright infringement. Nothing new here. Usually, it's over copyrighted music from huge record labels or some reused movie clips. But, quite recently, there have been reports of multiple streamers getting DMCA strikes, for simply playing games with music and sound effects in them. And not just any music, but

“IN-GAME” music, mind you! To make matters worse, it doesn’t even have to be a new game or a much recent stream either. You could very well be getting a strike for a videogame you played 5 or 6 years ago on stream, simply because the broadcasting license for a particular audio piece has expired! Every time you stream something, Twitch saves a VOD of that particular broadcast within your channel. So, when record labels deploy these automated, music-detection bots, they pick up on audio cues from those videos or saved highlight clips, and automatically file a copyright strike. This was one of those moments, where Twitch, as a company, could have easily earned back at least an ounce of respect they had lost within the past few years! All they had to do was act like a real, well-established business and hold its ground; come to a legal agreement with those labels. But instead, what solution did this abomination of a “community-friendly” platform come up with?! They shamelessly asked streamers to delete their entire life’s work and just mute the in-game audio, going forward!!



Think about it for a second here. A streaming company is willingly choosing not to fight for its content creators. The streamers that helped create and flourish their billion-dollar platform in the first place, are being asked to fend for themselves! The way this entire situation is being handled is cowardly, unprofessional, ignorant and outright disgusting! In case you didn’t know already, Twitch is owned by Amazon. So, it’s not like they don’t have access to enough resources or capital to fix this either! Plus, if they did take the matter to court, they would most probably come out victorious, because all of this comes



under transformative content, ergo fair use! But, they choose not to do so, because those gremlins sitting at Twitch HQ with their hands inside their pants, are just so goddamn lazy and stingy! As for erasing your entire legacy, everything you put your heart and soul into for years, there is no 100 percent guarantee that it would work. Deleting a clip or VOD from your channel does not translate to permanent removal, as the information would continue to live on, within the Twitch servers. Meaning, you could be doing it all for absolutely nothing. It's simply a matter of luck, at that point. Also, what kind of dipsh*t moron comes up with the idea of playing a videogame with no audio?!! Has to be some wack *ss intern. I'm not even gonna bother arguing on that subject.

A good chunk of the problem arises from Twitch's infrastructure itself. For starters, unlike other platforms like YouTube, Twitch does not have a dispute system in place. Where streamers could actually review their allegedly infringing content and take necessary actions. Such as directly contacting the copyright claimant or sending a counter-notification for "manual review". Remember, DMCA strikes are usually fired by automated bots. So, a secondary insight from an actual human being wouldn't hurt. Secondly, when Twitch blindly ordered everyone to delete their VODs and clips, they never offered any tools that would allow streamers to mass download or transfer all that footage. Hell, they couldn't even be bothered to link or promote some helpful, third-party, open-source applications that were already in existence on GitHub! Also, did I mention that there is no option in place to make those videos private? Nine years since its inception, and all they did was create a Twitter account, enforce hard-coded advertisements and somehow manage to bring back two top streamers from Mixer!

Quite clearly, Twitch is operating on a broken system that is synonymous to a wet fart. Every second you spend on that platform (as a creator) has to be with the highest level of caution, starting now. You never know, when those greedy, wine-sipping, record label boomers sitting in their multimillion-dollar mansions might choose to browse through Twitch. It's a problem that's never going to stop. Because at that point, it's no longer about greed. It is gluttony. And this company won't do jacksh*t about it! Even if we do go by the books, where streamers themselves take the matter to court, only the top streamers would be deemed safe, while the smaller streamers suffer in silence. Simply because they can't afford to hire a good lawyer. Honestly, it wouldn't surprise me if Twitch streamers started shifting to other platforms like YouTube or that atrocious entity they call Facebook Gaming, within the next couple of years! At least, they have the decency and morality to stand up and fight for its creators. *



mobile madness

YOU HAVE TO TRY THESE
GAMES OUT ON YOUR
SMARTPHONE!

BY TEAM DIGIT



Star Wars: Starfighter Missions

Star Wars: Starfighter Missions is a mobile shooter game, kinda similar to Galaga, but of course, with some pretty great visuals and models. Lucasfilm and Korean game company JOYMAX have worked on Starfighter missions. There

are over 80 starfighters in the game, and the levels are based on iconic moments and battles from the Star Wars movies.

Once you start the game, you get a short tutorial which explains all the basics to you. Avoid incoming fire while taking down incoming enemy ships. You also have power ups and special abilities, which is all pretty standard in these kinds of games. What makes Star Wars: Starfighters stand out is the whole Star Wars thematic, which is really well done.

Once you're past the tutorial, you'll start building your own squadron of starfighters. You're able to switch between them freely while you're on missions, allowing you to bring more abilities to the table. You're also able to play both sides, with there being both light and dark side missions. Some of the iconic starfighters you can collect and upgrade included the Millennium Falcon, Luke's X-Wing, and Vader's TIE fighter. It's an easy pick up with its scaling challenge and uncomplicated gameplay, especially if you're a Star Wars fan.



Shadow Fight Arena



When it comes to fighting games on mobile, few have as much polish as the Shadow Fight series of games. Shadow Fight Arena is the latest game from NEKKI and features a few improvements over its predecessors.

For one, they've ditched the shadowy 2D silhouettes for more 3D models. Even the animations look better in Arena, with some cool slow-motion effects thrown in. There are new combos and there's also real-time online PvP battles. Controls are still as simple as ever, with the d-pad on the left and attack buttons on the right. There are four combat buttons, attack/weapon attack, kick, ranged, and shadow mode abilities. Each of these can be combined with the d-pad to perform various different moves. Overall, Shadow Fight Arena is a step forward in the Shadow Fight series and worth picking up if you like fighting games on mobile.



Tomb Toad



This retro styled game by Crescent Moon Games caught our attention with its unique gameplay and aesthetic. Sure, the pixelated graphics and the chiptune music give it a retro-ish vibe while playing it, but the main fun lies in cleverly clearing the dungeons while keeping monsters away and collecting coins.

Tomb Toad is a dungeon style game where you control the gravity by rotating the dungeon around. You are a toad and you have to clear every dungeon by guiding the toad toward the exit. You have to rotate the whole dungeon with just one finger in order to move the toad and collect all the coins. We often found ourselves rage quitting just because we didn't turn the dungeon properly or didn't pay attention to the monsters. It is a simple concept with nice music and one touch controls and 100+ levels to play with varying levels of difficulty. Check it out if you want some mind-bending puzzles or if you just want to pass some time playing something productive.



Rush Royale



Rush Royale is a tower defense game from developer IT Territory, which features deck-building and strategy elements. It does however, have a twist.

Where normally we would have control over where we place our units, in Rush Royale it's random. You have a grid on which your troops are randomly deployed. You can't decide what gets deployed or where it gets deployed. Then comes the next part where you can merge two troops of the same kind. We've seen that before, however, merging two troops of the same kind will give you a random merged troop. So for example, if you merge two level 1 archers, you could get a level 2 mage out of them, or a priest, or anything really. This continues endlessly, for as long as you can keep merging. This randomness does keep you on your toes though. In addition to summoning troops, you can also level them up. The cost for both summoning and leveling troops up is mana, which is gained primarily from defeating enemies. There are special troops which also provide mana in some way or the other.



The game has two multiplayer modes, PvP and Co-op. In both modes, your opponent or partner is directly opposite you. Their grid will be on the top half of your screen. In PvP, every enemy you defeat is sent to the other side, and this continues until the enemies break the opponent's – or your – base. In Co-op mode, you're both working together to defeat the stream of enemies. It uses a wave system, and you basically have to beat as many waves as possible. Overall, Rush Royale is pretty fun, and a nice twist on the Tower Defense genre.

The First Tree



This one is one of the better looking games that we've seen on a mobile device in a while. Developed by an indie developer David Wehle, it will surely catch your eye with its minimal but beautiful graphics and immersive storyline. It is a third person exploration game set on the snowy mountains of

Alaska. Two stories are being played simultaneously here. You play as a fox who is trying to find his missing family and a son reconnecting with his estranged father in Alaska. There are just three simple controls here; a D-pad to run, a button to jump and an 'interact' button for when you encounter interesting stuff along the way. You will have to explore the mountains of Alaska while the story is being narrated in the background and you will also have to collect stars on the way. You will need a decent device to run this, but trust us, you will adore the visuals and the scenery around you once you start playing the game.



Laser Quest



If 3D puzzle games are your thing then you should certainly check out Laser Quest. You simply rotate reflective surfaces to guide a laser beam or two, towards an orb. The game starts you off with very simple levels which barely stress your grey cells. And once you do figure out how one particular reflective

device works, you should find all the remaining levels simple. There's no penalty for wrong configurations nor are there any points of no returns. We went through over 180 levels and found the levels to retain the difficulty gradient. It's like the Candy Crush of intellectual puzzle games since it appeals to a different audience. It wouldn't take you more than a minute or two to figure out any level and the game does introduce new elements every 15-20 levels to keep things fresh and ticking. The visuals are very minimalist and the sound track is calming.



Fruit Ninja 2



Fruit Ninja was possibly one of the most celebrated and popular mobile games of its time. The satisfaction one gleaned from slicing fruits clean was unmatched back then. Now, over 10 years after it's predecessor's monstrous success, Fruit Ninja 2 is here to have people slicin' and dicin' again.

While Fruit Ninja 2, at its core, has the same mechanics of skillfully slicing fruits using one's Ninja reflexes and skills, the sequel has changed considerably in some aspects with additions such as multiplayer, customisation, and modes. There are some enjoyable game modes including Minigame Shuffle and a rhythm-based mode named Fruitar Hero, a nod to all the Guitar Hero fans!

Those who have played the OG Fruit Ninja will definitely feel the nostalgia but will also be enthralled by the new features in the sequel. You now get powerups to make you stronger, you can customise your weapons, outfit and even character, and you can complete challenges to earn rewards.



In the multiplayer mode, players face off against an online opponent and they must compete to secure the most points via combos and skills before the timer runs out. There's even a Season Pass that allows users to unlock skins and rewards. The developers have done a great job maintaining the true essence of the game while still gamifying it enough to feel relevant in 2021.

Overall, Fruit Ninja 2 managed to capture our attention with nostalgic gameplay and graphics and updated gameplay aspects such as multiplayer and other game modes. There's a shop where you can buy in-game currency but the game doesn't depend on it unless you want to heavily customise your character. There are no ads too, which is always a huge plus! We definitely urge you to give this game a whirl! *

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