

SKOAR!*

LIVE TO GAME

INSIDE

REEVU

Cyberpunk 2077

PHRANCHISE

Castlevania

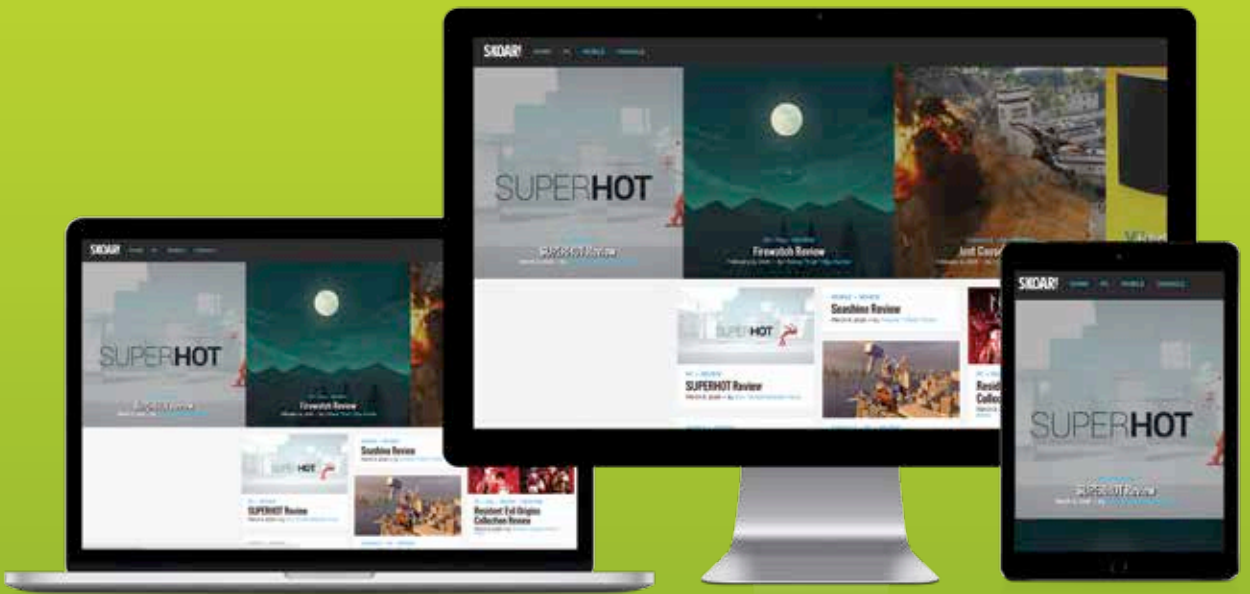
REEVU

Hitman 3

VALHEIM

PERFECTING
THE SURVIVAL GENRE





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IT DOESN'T *HAVE* TO BE HARD

Manish “Trigger-Happy” Rajesh

SKOAR! Overlord | feedback@skoar.in



We give video games too much flak for being too easy, or not being challenging enough. “If you’re not good enough to beat a souls-like game, you’re not a true gamer!” That’s a mindset a lot of people share. While it’s true that there are many games that cater to the “hardcore” gamers out there, we all need to realise that there are a lot more people gaming nowadays. *Especially* nowadays. For veteran gamers, an FPS or RTS game is pretty much muscle memory. We don’t realise how hard it is for someone completely new to gaming to pick those skills up.

Just recently, I attempted to introduce someone to PC gaming. Knowing that they played PUBG on mobile, I suggested an FPS game that I rather enjoy – Borderlands 2. Another reason was the fact that the game was co-op, so I would be able to guide them in-game as well. In my mind, that was a pretty solid plan. It was only when they actually started playing that I noticed their struggle. For someone who has never done it before, using the WASD keys to move is a foreign concept. Forget WASD, even using a mouse and a keyboard at the same time can be a challenge. Not trying to poke fun at anyone here, that’s just how it is. While you and I may think Borderlands 2 is ez, it’s a challenge for them to simply run in a straight line without constantly looking directly at their feet.

So then I thought, well, maybe Minecraft? Simple and easy to pick up, nothing too complicated in terms of controls. Plus, there’s plenty of challenge if you go looking for it; you have the freedom to decide when. It worked. Furthermore, it acted as a stepping stone to more games. They were able to get a grasp on using the mouse and keyboard together, using the WASD keys to move, and even using the number keys for the hotbar. With those skills, a whole new world of gaming has just opened up to them.

What I’m getting at is, if everything’s as difficult as a souls-like game, then we might as well forget about new people ever getting into gaming. *

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SKOAR!

LIVE TO GAME

OVERLORD

Manish “Trigger Happy” Rajesh

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What's New



MICROSOFT ACQUIRES ZENIMAX MEDIA

Microsoft have finalised their \$7.5 billion (INR 54 lac crore approx) acquisition of ZeniMax Media, which is the parent company of Bethesda Soft-

works. The confirmation came from Microsoft's Xbox head Phil Spencer via Twitter in a blogpost. The acquisition of ZeniMax Media brings with it a lot more studios than just Bethesda. You've also got id Software, Arkane, Machine-Games, Roundhouse studios and more. Including all of the studios Microsoft previously acquired, this brings the total to 23 first-party studios. Expect a lot more Xbox Exclusives in the near future.

<http://dgit.in/msbet>



PSP, PS3, VITA ONLINE STORES CLOSING

Owners of the PS3, PSP, and PS Vita will soon lose access to the PSN stores, as soon as this July if sources are to be believed. The PSP and PS3

stores will shut down on July 2, while the PS Vita will continue to have access till late into August. Post that, you will no longer be able to buy digital games on any of these consoles.

The PS3 is one of Sony's best selling consoles, and only ended production four years ago. The PSP is also one of the more successful handhelds in the market which was released way back in 2005. If you ever wanted to own a game on any of these consoles, now would be the time to buy it.

<http://dgit.in/pnsclos>



ELDEN RING LEAK

We haven't heard or seen anything about FromSoftware's latest title, Elden Ring, since it was first revealed back in 2019. All we got was a cinematic. But a leaked video has

been circulating around which shows a lot more footage, including what looks like gameplay; the footage is what appears to be a gameplay trailer for the game. From the looks of the footage, it's definitely a very FromSoftware game, featuring souls-like combat, in a high fantasy setting featuring Dragons and even a player with a pointy wizard hat flinging spells around. The game also appears to have what looks like an open-world. Still, there's no confirmed release date or information, and we don't know how old the footage actually is and how far in development the game has come. The game reportedly had several delays due to the pandemic, which is understandable. But we're excited to see more of FromSoftware's fantasy action-RPG.

<http://dgit.in/ertr>



MICROSOFT BUYING DISCORD?

There are rumours flying about that Microsoft is in talks to buy Discord. Doesn't come as too much of a shock after their recent acquisition of ZeniMax

media and everything that came with it. Turns out, that's not necessarily true. It's Discord that's going around looking for buyers, and Microsoft happened to be one of them. Neither party has confirmed or denied the rumours, so it's still in the air. Will they go public? Will they find a buyer? Guess we'll find out soon. Honestly, we wouldn't want Discord to be owned by anyone, they're doing a pretty good job with it so far and have become pretty much essential for social gaming. The Microsoft rumour just gave us Skype PTSD **shudders**.

<http://dgit.in/msdisc>

LAUNCHES, REVEALS AND DELAYS

Severed Steel – Announced!

<http://dgit.in/sevsteel>



Forspoken – Revealed!

<http://dgit.in/forspok>



TMNT: Shredder's Revenge – Announced!

<http://dgit.in/tmntshred>



System Shock – Revealed!

<http://dgit.in/sysshock>



Bomb Rush Cyberfunk – Revealed!

<http://dgit.in/brc>



UP AND COMING



OUTRIDERS

Square's upcoming co-op third person looter shooter has already made news for being available on the Xbox Game Pass on day 1. The gameplay we've seen as well is crisp.

Release date – April 1



ODDWORLD: SOULSTORM

It's been a while since we've seen classic platformer Oddworld, with the last title having released in 2014. Oddworld: Soulstorm will continue where 2014's New 'n' Tasty! left off.

Release date – April 6



NIER REPLICANT

NieR Replicant ver.1.22474487139 is an updated version of NieR Replicant that was released only in Japan. It's a prequel to the award winning NieR: Automata, and if it's anything like Automata, you don't want to miss this.

Release date – April 23



HITMAN III

DEATH AWAITS



**BALDY IS BACK AND THAT TOO
WITH A STEELY VENGEANCE.**

BY MITHUN "BARBARIAN_MONKEY" MOHANDAS
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Hitman 3, the latest in IO Interactive's Hitman World of Assassination trilogy provides a fitting conclusion to the series for fans of Agent 47. The game does very little in terms of new gameplay mechanisms but the graphics overhaul is significant and can sometimes make you pause and take in the beauty of the world. Folks who might have played Hitman 1 and Hitman 2 from the World of Assassination series would know how the story arc has taken a more personal approach and that continues and comes to a satisfying end in Hitman 3. Also, there were no flying suitcases in this game.

STORY

One of the major changes with Hitman 3 is that the game takes a more linear approach in certain levels to hone the players' focus on the Agent 47's story rather than giving them free-reign to do whatever they want. While this change might be irksome in the beginning, if you power through you'll realise why the developers took such a call. It all comes down to the story.



What starts off as a series of seemingly disconnected and run of the mill ICA assassination contracts in Hitman 1 are soon revealed to be part of a shadow client's machinations to unravel and destroy a secret organisation called Providence using ICA as a puppet. Mid-way into the first game, both organisations realise what the shadow client has been doing. Providence sends its own agents to hunt down the shadow client and so does ICA.

In Hitman 2, it's later revealed that the Shadow client is another cloned assassin from the same facility as Agent 47 and the two take it upon themselves to bring down Providence upon learning that the organisation was responsible for their creation. We know how much havoc one genetically-engineered super assassin can wreak, so two was only going to make things ... more fun. Both 47 and Lucas Grey (a.k.a. The Shadow Client) destroy the key individuals running Providence, but it's learnt that the actual masterminds have had their identities concealed through an elaborate hierarchical structure which is compartmentalised to the extent that only one individual knows the identities of all the masterminds. Yes, the game employs a lot of Scooby Do-esque plot mechanisms which unravel the actual perpetrators to be someone else all along.

Hitman 3 begins with the identities of all three masterminds being known to you and you're out to kill them all. Without spoiling the story for you, we can tell you that the story doesn't end with the three masterminds. Being a super secret organisation that has its creepily long fingers hooked onto major corporations, governments and other echelons





of power; Providence isn't all that easy to beat. And that's where most of the fun lies.

GAMEPLAY

Not much has changed. In fact, you could say that Hitman 1, 2 and 3 are all the same game with little new gameplay mechanisms. Early on you'll get access to a new camera gadget which allows you to hack and unlock doors and windows. However, this seems to be a forced addition just for the sake of adding something new. The old lock pick could have done the job much better. But the camera feeding into your handler does bring a certain modern outlook to the job.

And with unlocking comes the new concept of persistent shortcuts. If you do unlock certain doors or paths in one playthrough then they remain unlocked for subsequent playthroughs. While this can be seen as a quality of life improvement, it does take away from the element of challenge from subsequent playthroughs. The devs say this opens up more opportunities, we don't see it from the same perspective.

The new Hitman world of assassinations trilogy has gained quite the reputation for its elaborate level designs. Hitman 3 carries on that legacy with the same level of detail. The devs have put in a lot of work on each of the six levels in the game and it shows. Right from the first mission in Dubai to the subsequent ones in Dartmoor, Mendoza, Berlin and Chongqing, the worlds are massive and present multiple opportunities to go about them.

However, it doesn't feel that way during the first playthrough. Remember how the devs decided to make things a bit

linear with Hitman 3? Well, that's why. The first playthrough feels a bit straightforward and that's where the 'persistent shortcuts' mechanism helps. It opens up the levels to a more sandbox structure after you've finished the first playthrough. The devs are basically telling you that the story matters a lot in Hitman 3 and it's best that you go through it once the way it was meant to be played before you go about the sandbox approach. Nothing quite hammers this point in than the last mission in the game.

Then there are levels which are quite different from what every Hitman game has been thus far. We were all given targets and the handy Instinct vision would make things super obvious. But one of the levels leaves you in a lurch because you're the one being hunted and you have no idea who all are



after you. If you've been playing Hitman a certain way until now then the Berlin level will really make you rethink and change your entire playstyle. In our opinion, this was a great addition to the game.

GRAPHICS

With each release in the World of Assassination trilogy, IO Interactive has significantly upgraded the graphics in the game. This is evident from the very first mission in Dubai where you parachute onto the top of the tallest building in the world and are met with a ridiculous amount of reflections that have been really well-executed. IOI has upgraded their Glacier Engine to incorporate screen space reflections along with render to texture methods to really make materi-

als pop and seem life-like. Be it reflective glass panels, water or just shiny globes placed along the levels, the engine has really **cough** shone **cough** through. One could even say that the game puts NVIDIA's RTX to shame with their implementation of reflections. Yes, the game does not have RTX but it's not like we're feeling its absence in any way.

Even the older levels have been upgraded to incorporate the new features. Of course, you'll have to play the older levels via Hitman 3 and not from your older purchases to witness this. Putting Hitman 1, 2 and 3 side-by-side really shows how far the game engine has come. The Chongqing level really takes it up a notch with dark visuals punctuated with oodles of neon lights and the addition of rain is the icing on the cake.

VERDICT

Not a lot has changed on the surface of Hitman 3 but the game makes significant changes to the things that matter. Sure, some of these changes have been seen as controversial and as straying from the Hitman path but we can see how it has really added value. Overall, the game is a great addition to the World of Assassination trilogy and brings about a fitting conclusion to the series. *

MOAR!

PUBLISHER:

IO Interactive

DEVELOPER:

IO Interactive

PLATFORMS:

PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X | S, Nintendo Switch, PC, Google Stadia

PLAYED ON:

Intel Core i9-10900K and RTX 3070

PRICE:

₹5,699/₹1,419

CYBERPUNK

2077



**MAYBE IT SHOULD HAVE
COME OUT IN 2077**

BY MANIS "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

It's been a long time coming, but here it is, finally, our Cyberpunk 2077 review. We're going to be honest here, it's not pretty. Okay, wait, we're always honest wtf. What we mean is, if you were living in a cyberpunk bubble, we're here to pop it, if playing the game hasn't popped it for you already.

First things first, some backstory. A lot of us here at SKOAR! are big fans of CDPR, or CD Projekt Red. With the masterpiece that is The Witcher 3 under their belt, it really shouldn't come as a surprise. Plus, their social media posts, their interactions with the community, overall, we got – we still do for that matter – a pretty good vibe from them. Naturally, because of this we made a mistake, a mistake we've frequently warned others against. We got aboard the hype train. **sigh**

THE RELEASE

Development for Cyberpunk 2077 started in 2013. To say the game was ambitious is an overstatement. It was on December 10, 2020 that we finally got our hands on the game, many of us having already pre-ordered it. Another cardinal sin in the world of gaming. Of course, this would come to bite us in the arse. You



see, the game was expected to launch early last year, slated for an April 16 release. But it was delayed to September 17. No worries, CDPR are working on it, polishing it up, they want to avoid crunch; all valid reasons (read “excuses”), and we’re a reasonable lot. Come September 17 no Cyberpunk, it’s been delayed to November 19. Same excuses, we buy it, moving on. November 19? No dice. The game got pushed back yet again. Now, at this point, there were understandably quite a few upset gamers. Gamers who had pre-ordered god knows when and were now wondering if the game would even actually release. Oh but it did release. Only, it seems that those extra 8 months of development time were not enough. The game was a buggy mess at launch, with crashes aplenty. PC users still had it easy. The most unfortunate lot were the ones who got the game on PS4



and Xbox One. The game ran like garbage on these two consoles. It was so bad that Sony removed the game from the PlayStation store. The problems with the release didn't end there though, CDPR apologised for the game's performance and offered full refunds across all platforms, except, Sony went “nah, not happening, we can't refund a game that's not even on our store, see?” Then they yanked the game from their store. What lesson did we learn here? Wait for the review kids. And **don't Pre-order.**

STORY

Cyberpunk 2077's story is probably its biggest strength. Although, it doesn't feel anywhere near what CDPR were promising, considering how quickly you can actually wrap the main



story up. While we're sure that there might be a number of alternative endings or different routes to take, just the state of the game when we played it discouraged us from bothering to pursue them. You can only take so many crashes before the exact same sequence before going "f*ck it!" and stop playing. Which is exactly what happened to us. The game kept crashing at the exact same point every single time; we even made new characters to test this and again, a crash at the exact same spot. So we literally gave up on the game and waited for patches. A few patches later, we weren't crashing anymore, and managed to actually get through the story.

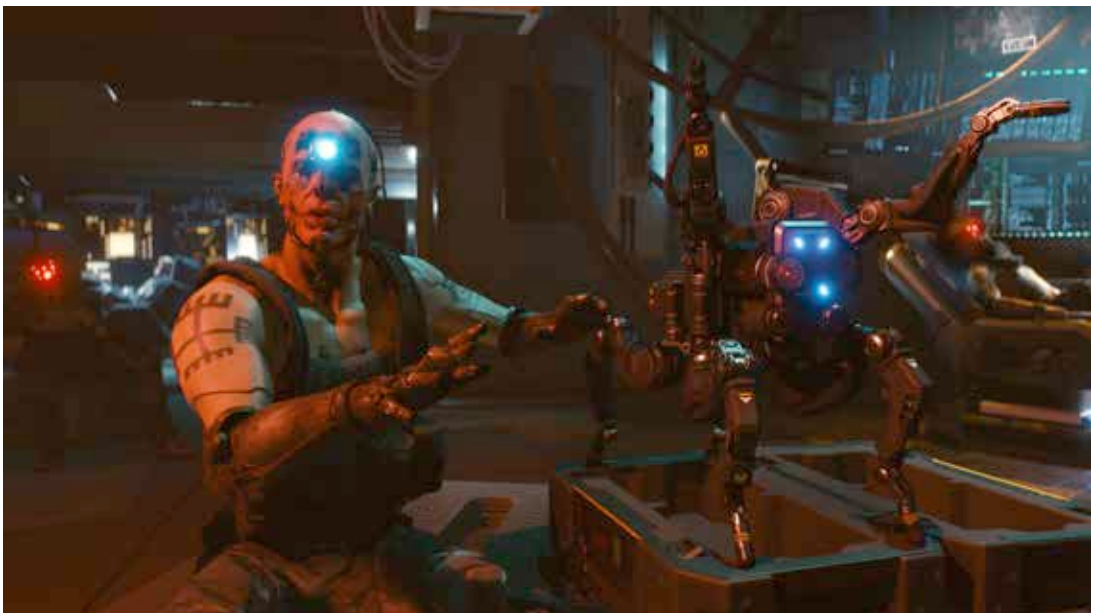
As is the case with most western RPGs, you start off by making your own character. In this case, V. Cyberpunk 2077's character creation was also pretty hyped before the game's launch.



The demos they showed us looked pretty fantastic, they were going all out with the customisation, even including the character's nether regions. It's rated M afterall. However, what we've learned is that it all looks pretty terrible if you don't have a powerful enough rig.

Moving on, you've got the three origins you can choose for your character, Corporate, Street Kid, and Nomad. If you thought picking one over the other meant something different down the line in the story or interactions with people, you're wrong. Your origins carry no weight. No matter where you start, ultimately all three origins end up at the same point. Which is kind of bummed, because they clearly put effort into those origins. It feels like a waste to have all those loose ends and great characters and then never see or interact with them again.

Coming to the main story itself though, if you survive through the bugs and glitches, it's actually pretty good. CDPR definitely knows how to make memorable characters, we've seen that in The Witcher 3. Plus they know how to animate faces and expressions, and most of the time it looks great. Characters like Jackie Wells (your first companion), Judy and Panam (potential romance options, with quest chains to boot), and Johnny Silverhand (Keanu Reeves' character) can help you power through the game's story if you're not keen on anything else the game has to offer. Without giving away too many spoilers, the story basically has you taking on the big bad Arasaka megacorporation, who have somehow poisoned/hacked your brain, and you need to find a cure before it consumes you.





GAMEPLAY

When it comes to gameplay, Cyberpunk 2077 doesn't exactly revolutionise anything. Take GTA gameplay, add in a little bit of Watch Dogs hacking, and you're good to go. The game has plenty to offer for those who are willing to look for it. The world's littered with side missions and activities for you to while your time away. Unfortunately, the fear of crashing at any second veered us away from doing anything but the main story. Of course, we did get sidetracked by the odd interesting character or two.

Getting general gameplay out of the way, next you have stats, or your character's build. Depending on how you choose to play, this could have a significant impact. If you're simply looking to run and gun, you don't need to bother too much, and just focus on the stats you think will help. This is easily the most forgiving option. Similarly, hackers and stealth players will want to adjust their stats accordingly, but these approaches can be more challenging.

There's plenty of loot to be found, that also offers stats, such as damage, defences and more. Additionally, you can upgrade your body with cybernetics, with the caveat that you shouldn't go full robot. These upgrades can be used to focus even further into your preferred playstyle, making you stealthier, making it easier to hack stuff, helping you aim better and more.

GRAPHICS AND AUDIO

We've mentioned it a few times now, but Cyberpunk 2077 runs

**MOAR!****PLATFORMS**

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

PLAYED ON

Microsoft
Windows

DEVELOPERS

CD Projekt, CD
Projekt RED

PUBLISHERS

CD Projekt, CD
Projekt RED

PRICE

₹2,999 (Steam)

best on a tripped out gaming PC. If you haven't got one of those, your experience is going to be a buggy bummer, because the difference is quite significant. We aren't even going to bring up how horribly the game runs on last gen consoles. Oh wait, we already did earlier in this review.

The audio though, right from the main menu music to the voice acting, it's top-notch stuff. We're sure we aren't the only ones who have the Cyberpunk music from the trailers in our playlists.

VERDICT

There's no denying the game released a buggy mess. There's also no denying that CDPR put in a lot of effort into this. It probably – okay definitely – needed more time in the pot before being served. All the patches that have been released so far have definitely worked towards making the game more stable, at least on PC,

we can't speak for consoles though. CDPR have a decent track record, and this will definitely go down as one of their biggest fudge ups, but there's definitely potential here. For the time being though, we'd advise against buying the game till it's actually finished. *



VAMPIRE KILLING IS FAMILY BUSINESS

BY MANISH “TRIGGER-HAPPY” RAJESH
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Only a few franchises have ever inspired an entire genre of games. Considering how few genres there are and how many game franchises exist, this is a pretty huge deal. You obviously know which franchise we’re talking about, since it’s in the title. Castlevania, along with Metroid, is considered to be one half of the inspiration for the popular Metroidvania genre. In case the name of the genre didn’t already give that away. This is a franchise with a rich history, almost as rich as its antagonist, Count Dracula. So let’s dive into one of the most iconic franchises of all time – Castlevania.

Konami's Castlevania franchise has been around for more than 30 years and it is not only one of the longest running platformers of all time, but franchises in general. It is also credited with being one of the first franchises to successfully adopt RPG elements outside of RPGs. Something that's fairly common in today's modern gaming era. Additionally, it was one of the games that defined Nintendo's gaming console (the NES) back in the day. Specifically for being really hard.

WHERE DID IT ALL BEGIN?

For 30 years, the Belmont family has been trying their level best to take down Count Dracula. Now this name, Belmont, is important. Why? Because only a Belmont can wield the iconic "Vampire Killer", the family's ancestral whip. We don't think we need to explain what the whip is good at. Every Castlevania game to-date has a Belmont present in it, if not as the main character, as a supporting character. They really, *really* hate Dracula's guts.



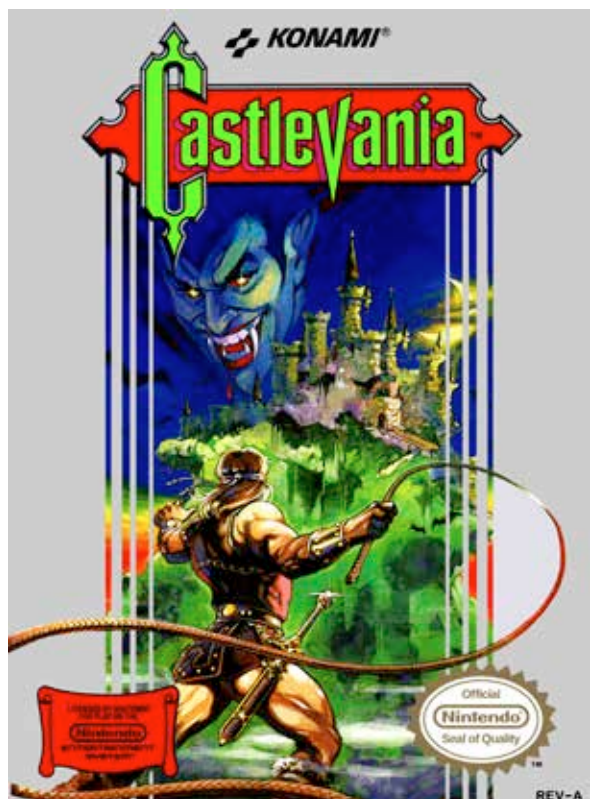
In order to defeat Dracula, one has to first make their way through Castlevania, which is basically Dracula's demonic castle that's loaded up with all kinds of supernatural baddies. In most games, one has to make their way to the heart of the castle, where they can face the final boss, which is usually Dracula himself.

In case you were wondering where the name comes from, the original Japanese release was simply called Demon Castle Dracula, in the west, it was released as Castlevania. The reason we're guessing, has to do with the fact that it rhymed with Transylvania, which is considered the traditional home of Count Dracula. There's no mention of the word Castlevania in the series until 28 years after the release of the first game, where we find out that there's a city named Castlevania City that's built atop the ruins of Dracula's castle.

Now, there are over 30 games in the Castlevania franchise, including spin-offs, and it would take forever to cover them all, so we'll just take a look at the most prominent titles in the series. Starting with, the very first.

CASTLEVANIA 1986

In the very first Castlevania was released for the NES in 1986, players would take control of Simon Belmont, a descendant of the Belmont family. This was a classic side-scrolling platformer. You continued in one direction as the game threw enemies at you, getting progressively challenging – to be fair, things started challenging in Castlevania – as you neared the final boss. This is also the game that pretty much defined the aesthetic that we would come to expect from Castlevania games, with its mix of gothic and horror themes, at least for a while. Like we mentioned above, it would also become iconic for its difficulty and challenge.

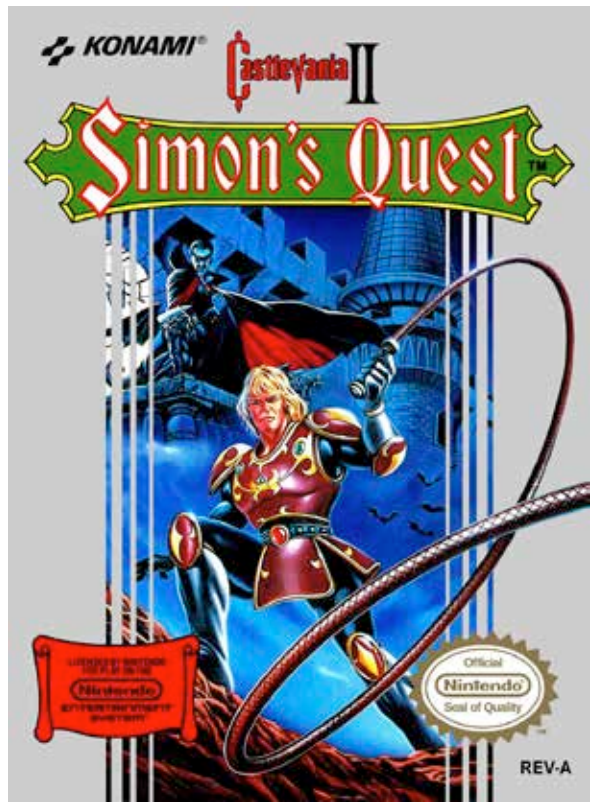


The very same year that Castlevania released, Vampire Killer would release a month later on the MSX2, a computer platform. This would be the first Castlevania game to showcase Metroidvania elements, i.e., the ability to freely move within the castle. The difference between a classic platformer and a Metroidvania is that a Metroidvania is essentially an open-world 2D-sidescroller, where you can freely return to areas

you've been to before. In traditional sidescrollers, you can only move forward and in a single direction, like in the Super Mario Bros for example.

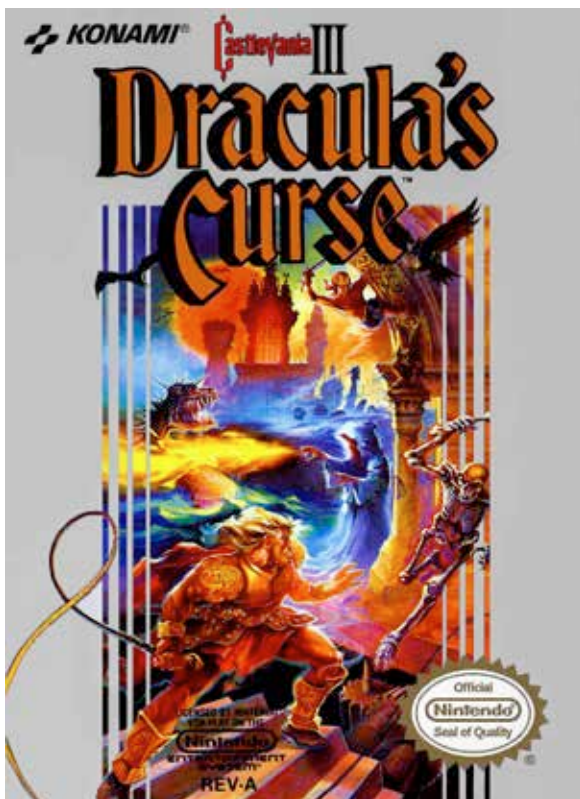
CASTLEVANIA II: SIMON'S QUEST

Castlevania 2, a direct sequel to the first Castlevania, also featuring Simon, would be the first to introduce RPG elements to the game. This would also now be a proper Metroidvania game, featuring a world that Simon could freely explore, including revisiting older areas. Furthermore, he could now visit stores, buy supplies and upgrade his equipment at various small towns. Of course, the biggest RPG element would be the introduction of a leveling system.



CASTLEVANIA III: DRACULA'S CURSE

Released in 1989, Dracula's Curse saw the game return to its roots, with gameplay similar to the original Castlevania. Of course, a lot of the newer features that were introduced in part II still carried over. Castlevania III however, also introduced alternative paths as a feature. This included new stages and even multiple playable characters. This is the first time Castlevania would feature optional



stages, with easier and harder paths that you could choose. It would also be the first Castlevania to include non-Belmont playable characters. These playable characters would open up new ways to combat enemies and new ways to explore the now 3x larger castle of Count Dracula. Dracula's Curse is considered one of the all-time greats of the 8-bit era, and was the last Castlevania game to release for the NES.

CASTLEVANIA X RONDO OF BLOOD AND BLOODLINES

1993's Castlevania X Rondo of Blood is considered by many purists to be one of the best Castlevania games of all time. It was released on Super CD, a "console" that never really released outside of Japan, making it extremely rare. Rondo of Blood is praised for surpassing the limits of what could have been expected from a side scrolling game. It also required a lot of skill on the players part, requiring players to know their character and their skillset to the T.

Castlevania Bloodlines would release a year after Rondo of Blood for the SEGA Genesis in 1994. Bloodlines is notable for



introducing a second vampire hunter to the game, Eric Lecarde. The introduction of Eric Lecarde would open the door for more memorable characters in the future of the franchise, including one Alucard.



SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

The undisputed best Castlevania game for the majority of the franchise's fans, 1997's Castlevania: Symphony of the Night for the PlayStation took everything that was good about the series and improved it tenfold. It also featured far better graphics than any of the titles so far, of course in part due to the PlayStations superior hardware. Symphony of the Night managed to maintain the classic Castlevania look and playstyle, while also adding a lot more features to keep the game fresh. This included the addition of several RPG elements and systems, like inventory and equipment management, and leveling. This was a metroidvania



in every sense of the word, allowing players to freely move back and forth between areas. Players were initially restricted to only few areas of the game, and had to meet certain objectives in order to further open up the world. These could be things like finding certain objects, unlocking new abilities to reach new places or boss fights. The overall difficulty of the game was toned down, but not so much that the challenge was nonexistent. Tight controls and smooth animations ensured that enjoyment was paramount throughout your playthrough.

Symphony of the Night also saw a change in the series' art direction. This was the first title to depart from the franchise's gothic horror aesthetic and went for a more elegant and aristocratic aesthetic, inspired by European Baroque art. It remains so to this day, save a few titles that were released in between.

CONCLUSION

Like we mentioned above, there are well over 30 titles in the Castlevania franchise. While we've gone over the more iconic titles, there are a few notable titles, like the Lords of Shadows reboot, that significantly changed gameplay. These titles, often clubbed together as "Modernvanias", depart from the 2D platformer style and adopt a more 3D, action-adventure approach, with combat borrowed from the hack n slash genre. These games usually released to mixed reception, perhaps making it evident what the fans preferred. Afterall, the games did inspire an entire genre, they must have been doing something right. *

VALHEIM

PERFECTING THE SURVIVAL GENRE

MANISH "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH
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If you've been following the world of gaming lately, then you've definitely heard of Valheim. Developer Iron Gate Studios' debut game has taken the survival genre by storm, and has already sold more than 5 million units since its release on February 2, 2021. That's incredibly impressive, especially if you consider that the game was made by a five person studio and it's still in Early Access! It's uncommon for a game in EA (Early Access) to have overwhelmingly positive reviews on Steam, especially when it has the survival, open-world, and crafting tags (completing the four horsemen of the apocalypse meme from back in the day).

One could argue that Minecraft does a pretty good job of setting the bar when it comes to survival sandbox games. For most, if you can get past the blocky graphics (which in itself is



actually not that bad), it has great progression, a sense of achievement when you accomplish goals, and it does all of this while not exactly holding your hand, but nudging you in the right direction. At the same time, it's not hard to get into; there's plenty of content for the adventuristic players out there, while those who are happy to simply settle down in a nice area and build a pretty base are free to do so. Since Minecraft, we've had a plethora of survival sandbox games, from Rust, to DayZ, Conan Exiles, Ark: Survival Evolved and more, all trying to do something new in the survival sandbox genre, be it a different time setting, introducing dinosaurs, or adding more convoluted game systems. All of these games enjoyed a surge in player count at the time of their launch, and most of them, even today, have a sizable player base that still plays dedicatedly. Thanks to the pandemic, most of them saw a resurgence in players, with many of them hitting their new peak player count during the lockdown. However, none of them reached the peaks that Valheim has, and in such a short time even. So, what is it that makes Valheim the phenomenon that it is? Let's find out.

WHAT IS VALHEIM?

In case you haven't heard of Valheim, it's a third-person open-world survival crafting game from Iron Gate Studios. If you were to take Minecraft, drop the blocky graphics and replace it with gorgeous looking voxel graphics, and then slap a Viking theme on top of it, what you would get would be pretty close to Valheim. It's also got a bit of a backstory. Valheim is the tenth realm in Norse mythology, one of the planes that are connected to the world tree, Yggdrasil. You're dropped into this realm





by a valkyrie, with no memories and no possessions except a rag tunic. The first thing you'll notice is that you've been dropped in the middle of Stonehenge looking structure. Each of the runestones in this structure represent a deity. Your goal is to conquer this realm in Odin's name. You do this by defeating the deities that inhabit this world, each representing one of those runestones we mentioned above. That's the jist of it. There's a lot more going on, and we'll go through all of it here.

PROGRESSION IN VALHEIM

One of the things that Valheim does exceptionally well is progression. In general, most survival games have a pretty standard sense of progression. You start with nothing, you need to scrounge around for resources, build low quality items, then use those items to get better resources in order to build better items. This cycle is pretty consistent across all survival games, you could even say it's a core part of the entire experi-



ence. This cycle is present in Valheim as well, however, it does a few things differently that makes things a lot more interesting. The game's progression is tied to defeating the deities we mentioned above. In order to progress further and get access to better materials and tools, you need to defeat these bosses. For example, the very first deity you face, Eikthyr (which is a super cool looking lightning-infused Stag), drops the materials you'll need to craft your very first pickaxe. As you discover and collect new resources, you'll start "remembering" how to craft things. This includes interesting weapons and armor as you hunt the more challenging enemies the game has to



offer. After defeating Eikthyr for example, you will remember how to craft a weapon called the Stagbreaker. This is a massive hammer that sends shockwaves out from its point of impact. It's not necessarily easy to craft at that point in the game, but it gives you something new and interesting to work towards. Defeating Eikthyr also means that you have to now start preparing for the next boss, the Elder. Defeating the next boss, will in-turn, open up the game even more. But getting to these bosses, summoning them, and defeating them is no easy feat. Which brings us to the second aspect of progression in Valheim – combat and exploration.

COMBAT AND EXPLORATION

Valheim's progression forces you to go out and explore the world for resources. Plus, your hunt for the deities will take you to all corners of the procedurally generated world the game has to offer. And the world has a LOT to offer. You will come across



abandoned buildings, crypts and burial chambers, troll caves, mystical runestones and more. Plus, you can build yourself a longboat and sail the seas to discover new lands, in true viking fashion. There's plenty of different types of biomes to explore, from peaceful meadows, to haunted black forests, windswept mountains and more. You will need to figure out how to best explore these biomes. Of course, with all this exploration comes a host of new and challenging enemies to face as well, and you need to learn how best to deal with them. Combat, while simple, can be both punishing and satisfying. You need to be aware of tougher enemies and their attack patterns, as one misstep could lead to death. Pulling it off means you've got your hands on some useful materials for your crafting needs. There are different types of damage that you can deal, for example, axes and swords do slash damage, arrows and spears do piercing damage, and the Stagbreaker that we mentioned





earlier? Blunt damage. There's also stuff like fire damage and poison damage as well. Different enemies are more susceptible to certain types of damage while being immune or otherwise resistant to other types. Preparation is key, especially in Valheim. Don't be surprised if you get one-shot out of blue by something you've never seen before, it happens. A lot more than you'd think. Personal experience.

VIKINGS NEED SKILLS

The third aspect of progression in Valheim are your skills. If you've ever played Runescape or Albion, then this might be familiar to you. Simply doing things will make you better at doing them. As you sprint around the world, you'll notice your running skill going up. Cutting wood a lot will make you better at it. Just about anything you can do has a skill level attached to it. Running, jumping, swimming, mining, woodcutting, unarmed fighting, blocking etc. When you die, you lose some of your "memories", i.e., you lose some skill exp. But don't worry about it too much, you will die a lot. When you die, you'll leave behind a gravestone that holds all of your items. This won't despawn or disappear, so you can take your time to get back to it and collect your stuff. This also encourages you to have multiple sets of gear stashed and ready incase you go kaput to some troll who sneaks up behind you and whacks you with a tree. Although, admittedly it's our own fault for not having noticed a massive troll sneaking up on us.

CHALLENGING, BUT NOT A PAIN

Valheim isn't exactly an easy game. However, the challenge in Valheim is a lot of fun, as the game avoids a lot of the exces-

sive realism that comes with survival games, which usually end up being a chore. For example, you have a hunger meter, but you won't die of starvation. Eating food increases your health and stamina pools, so it's definitely something you want to do, but you won't suffer (unless you're out in the wilds of course) for forgetting. You can eat up to three different types of food (i.e., have three food type buffs active), and every type of food has something to offer. For instance, eating cooked meat will give you substantially more health than eating berries and roots. However, some types of roots, like yellow mushrooms that you will encounter a little while into the game, will give you a more significant boost to stamina. As you progress you'll unlock better recipes which provide much larger boosts. It's up to you to mix and match. Combat is challenging, and you'll get a taste of it in your very first boss fight vs Eikthyr, which happens pretty soon after you first start. Exploring isn't a pain, it's fun, you never know what you'll encounter or what resources you might find which will unlock new things for you to craft. Dying, which you'll be doing a lot of, doesn't feel as punishing, because you get all your stuff back without worrying about it being destroyed or stolen. You know, as long as you have an agreement with the friends you're playing with. Repairs cost nothing, which could be changed later on since the game is still in EA, but for now, it's a blessing. The only thing that possibly could be a pain is travel. This is a massive world, and you will definitely want to explore every inch of it. The game allows you to build portals to quickly travel from one point to another, however they've made it so certain objects cannot be teleported, such as ores for example. This was intentional and we totally see why. It



forces you to build bases in new places. However we can also see this being a pain point. But it's literally the only one we can think of right now with Valheim.

MORE FUN WITH FRIENDS

Valheim is meant to be a co-op experience. The game is definitely playable solo, but even having one extra person along with you makes the viking shenanigans a lot more fun. Also, having someone watching your back as you take on the tougher content the game has to offer is recommended, for the best experience. You're also able to craft anti-grief stuff in case you're in a public server, like wards, which prevent other players from building near or destroying your buildings and stuff.

VISUALS

Valheim is a gorgeous game. Sure it doesn't have hyper-realistic graphics, but the pixelated textures and simple models are still beautiful, especially when paired with the amazing lighting



and environmental effects. The animations are also amazing, from the very beginning of the game, when you chop down your first tree, you'll stare in awe as it comes crashing down (maybe even on you, accidentally killing you). At night, you can see a gorgeous night sky, with the world tree's branches literally looming over you. Impact is a thing in Valheim, trees crashing down, your pickaxe breaking rocks, attacking things, everything has a satisfying oomph behind it paired with the appropriate animation. The visuals and the satisfaction of just doing stuff make exploring the world Valheim has to offer a joy.

CONCLUSION

We would rarely ever recommend a game in Early Access. EA usually means the game is unfinished, unpolished. Valheim is definitely not finished, and the developers have said they have a lot more planned for the game's future. This only makes us excited, because what we already have with Valheim is a very polished and fun experience. Whatever is there, feels complete. Whatever you can already experience feels refined and polished. There's a very experienced team behind this game and it shows. Plus, for only ₹529 on Steam right now, it's easily worth the price, because you'll be spending a LOT of time in the tenth realm of Valheim. *



CELESTE



LIFE IS A MOUNTAIN WORTH CLIMBING

BY MANISH “TRIGGER-HAPPY” RAJESH

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Celeste from developer Matt Makes Games is a heartwarming story about overcoming challenges while also being a fantastic platformer game. The game was released back in January 2018, and was easily one of the best indie games of the year. We're just upset it took us so long to actually play it. Let's get to it!



STORY

Celeste is a story about climbing a mountain, in more ways than one. The main character, Madeline by default, wants to make her way to the top of the mountain, but in order to do so, she has to get over her fear and anxiety, which are represented in the game fantastically. There's no proper way to describe it; the best way is to experience it yourself. During your journey to the top, you will encounter fellow climbers, who will have little nuggets of wisdom for you, and tales to share while you take a break from the struggle to the mountain's peak. Which is what it is, both for you as the player, and Madeline herself. The writing is short but heartfelt and does a great job of elevating the game's overall immersion and experience. We haven't gone into too much detail here, even though it is technically a two-year old game. We still think this is something best experienced in person.

GAMEPLAY

Celeste features tight and precise platforming; if you're someone who enjoyed Super Meat Boy, this should be right up your

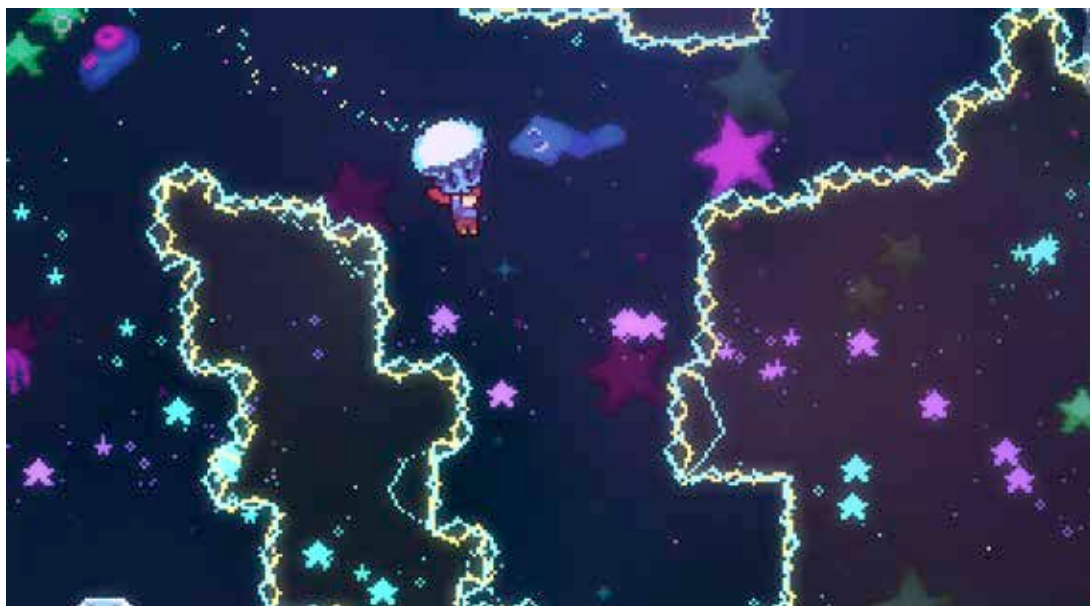


alley. However, Madeline has some extra tricks up her sleeve. For one, rather than a double jump, she can dash mid-air in any direction. This opens up a lot of options when it comes to mobility in the air. Secondly, she can grip onto the sides of walls and climb up vertically until she runs out of stamina. The early levels of the game do a good job of familiarising you with Madeline's abilities, while also offering a good amount of challenge. As you slowly progress up the mountain, which isn't



seamless mind you, the game's levels are divided up by chapters, the platforming starts getting a lot more challenging. This forces you to discover new ways in which you can use Made-line's abilities to progress. For instance, one of the first such moments you will come across is having to use the momentum of moving platforms to propel yourself to the next platform. This requires timing on your part, and once you've launched off, you need to have the presence of mind to know if you need to grab onto something or dash somewhere. Fortunately, if you fail, you will immediately respawn at the start of that particular platforming section, and not at the start of the level itself. This is great, and incentivises people to keep trying.

As you progress, you'll come across more elements that will help you complete levels, and of course, more obstacles to pre-



MOAR!
PUBLISHER

Matt Makes Games

DEVELOPER

Matt Makes Games

REVIEWED ON

Microsoft Windows

PLATFORMS

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

PRICE

INR 565 (Steam)

vent you from succeeding. The game paces these new challenges out perfectly, meaning you never really get bored as things are constantly kept fresh. The moment you've mastered one segment of the game, you've already got new obstacles in your way.

Additionally, there are floating strawberries hidden across the game, in hard to reach spots. Going for them is usually a detour, but the collector in us forced us to go for them. Only to find out at the end of the level that we managed to find less than half of them! These aren't necessarily important to complete the game, but they affect the game's ending in a small way.

GRAPHICS AND AUDIO

A lot of indie games go for the retro pixel art style, for a reason. It just works really well with 2D platforming. The levels are gorgeous, and so are the animations. The way the lights flicker in the background, and

Madeline's hair as you jump around, no complaints.

The accompanying soundtrack for the game fits really well, with each level of the game having appropriately themed music. There are B-Side cassette tapes that you can find, in addition to the strawberries we mentioned above. These cassettes unlock a much harder version of the level for you to play,





which also features a remixed version of the music as well. Mind you, the normal levels are hard enough, B-Side levels are for masochists. Or gamer gods.

CELESTE - THE VERDICT

Celeste is a brilliant platformer, the kind that doesn't come along frequently. Offering both a great platforming experience, and a heartwarming story. The tight controls, retro pixel art style, and accompanying music make for an amazing overall experience. Definitely give this game a go if you ever get the chance. *



EVERYTHING WE THINK WE KNOW ABOUT GTA VI

LEAKS AND RUMOURS HAVE SHED SOME
LIGHT ON WHAT WE CAN EXPECT FROM
ROCKSTAR'S NEXT GTA PROJECT

BY MAYANK SACHDEVA
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It's been eight years since GTA V came out, so fans of the Grand Theft Auto series are desperate for information on the game's sequel, GTA VI. The game has not been officially announced yet, but thanks to leaks and rumours we know that the game is in early development. Still, we suggest that you take all the information from this article with a grain of salt. Now that's out of the way, here's everything we think we know about GTA VI:

Location & Setting

Rockstar draws huge inspirations from big cities like Miami, New York, Los Angeles, and London for the locations for its GTA instalments. Rockstar's big three cities have always been San Andreas, Liberty City, and Vice City which are based on Los Angeles, New York and Miami, respectively. Similar to how Rockstar returned to Liberty City for GTA IV and San Andreas for GTA V, it is widely expected that GTA VI will return to Vice City.

One theory that has been really popular online has been that GTA VI will take place over multiple countries primarily Miami, USA and a new fictional city based on Rio De Janeiro, Brazil with players being able to fly between them. The more

likely theory is that this new fictional city will be limited just like Ludendorff in GTA V. The same leaker also suggests that some missions will be based in Liberty City which will also be quite limited and linear.

GTA games based on Vice City largely thrive on being set in the 1970s and 1980s, right around when the hippie revolution started to decline. GTA VI seems like it will not be an exception to this, although we would love to see Rockstar's take on a neon-nightlight Miami set in the present time.

Storyline & Missions

Just like all previous Grand Theft Auto games, GTA VI will also primarily be based on criminality, violence and drugs. Being set in Vice City, the story for GTA VI is surely going to be influenced by drug empires. In fact, one leak suggests



that the protagonist, likely named Ricardo, is an up and coming druglord wannabe who starts off as a grunt doing runs as a cocaine smuggler from Vice City to the new South American area before making connections with big-time drug lords and making his way up. The same leaker suggests that the storyline for GTA VI is highly inspired by Netflix's *Narcos*, a TV series about the life of Pablo Escobar and the origins of the cocaine trade. The game will also discuss topics like HIV and the immigration problems of that era.

The narrative for GTA VI will likely feature a chapter system, similar to Rockstar's *Red Dead Redemption 2*. GTA VI missions are going to be quite free and will let you choose your own paths with many interesting side quests throughout the storyline. The length of the storyline is reportedly going to be about 60-hours long.



Mechanics

Grand Theft Auto games are highly detailed and expansive, which make the sandbox-style single-player game mode extremely fun. Leaks suggest that GTA VI will feature a drug empire-building mechanic similar to GTA Vice City, but simply bigger. Your player will only be able to have weapons on your person, not an arsenal in the back pocket, like in previous games. As time will progress in-game buildings will change and get older, classic cars will become rarer and more expensive.

The weather is supposed to be a huge part of the game with storms, hurricanes and floods bringing changes to the city. You will be able to store guns, ammunition, and armour in the trunk of your car and if you decide to wear armour it won't be invisible like previous games, adding that much more detail to the game. The next iteration of GTA will also see developers focusing heavily on non-player characters with passers-by commenting on your outfits, exclaiming if they see a classic car on the street, or honking and overtaking if they are in a hurry. GTA games are incomplete without minigames some of which include Surfing, Windsurfing and Roller Derby.

Release Date & Launch Platforms

Predicting the release date of Grand Theft Auto VI is going to be very tricky as we know that its prequel, GTA V, is soon going to be remastered for the PS5 and Xbox Series X, S consoles. Logically, Rockstar would give some cool off time before releasing GTA VI, in an attempt to prevent cannibalis-

ing their sales. According to a report, “a new entry in the Grand Theft Auto series,” is early in development as of April 2020, so it is very hard to imagine GTA VI coming out in the next 12-18 months. One leak suggests that the game will be released in October 2023, but remember these are just leaks and nothing is official.

Don't worry though, all hope is not lost. A new job listing by Rockstar hints at a GTA VI trailer coming out soon. Rockstar's career page has been advertising a new role, Cinematic Gameplay Capture Artist. The job description for the same reads “The Gameplay Capture team works with our video editing and trailer teams to produce outstanding videos using exclusively in-game shots.” The role also wants a



“World-class player of current platform (PS5, Xbox Series X, PS4, Xbox One, PC) video game titles.” This could easily be for the GTA trilogy which is reportedly being remastered for Xbox Series X, S and PS5, but if it is not then it means that GTA VI is developed enough to the point where Rockstar is confident in revealing it with a trailer soon.

According to rumours and speculations, the launch for GTA VI will be limited, with the single-player mode coming out first with the GTA Online counterpart launching later. This launch pattern seems likely, especially after Take-Two CEO Strauss Zelnick stated that Rockstar Games will continue to make single-player games, “The folks at Rockstar Games intended to create a powerful single-player experience with a story-driven

experience. And Rockstar has always been known for great stories and great single-player experiences and then developed in addition, a massive multiplayer opportunity over the past years. There was, I think, there was an argument just a couple of years ago, not around here, not in this shop, but in some of our competitors' offices, that single-player is dead, that it's all about multiplayer," he said. "We didn't believe that I said specifically and publicly that we didn't believe that, our labels don't believe that." This all but confirms that the next GTA will have a single-player mode and that this genre of gaming isn't dead yet.

The game will almost definitely launch only on the next-gen consoles and will not launch on the Xbox One and PS4 seeing how Cyberpunk 2077 had a very buggy launch. Here's to hoping we can play GTA VI soon and that the developers at Rockstar make use of the excellent haptics and Adaptive Triggers in the Dual Sense Controller. *



State of Play

EVERYTHING ANNOUNCED AT THE PLAYSTATION NEWS EVENT



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As far as next-gen consoles go, it seems that the PlayStation 5 is taking its games rather seriously. With a launch line-up that included Demon's Souls and Spider-Man: Miles Morales, Sony is looking to bolster its already massive game library. With the company's State of Play presentation, it's becoming clear that Sony is concentrating on delivering epic gaming experiences. If you missed the event, here's a sweet round-up of everything that was announced at Sony PlayStation's State of Play presentation.

DEATHLOOP

One of the most-anticipated titles for the PS5 is Arkane Studios' Deathloop. The game was first shown off a few years ago,



and it immediately reminded fans of Dishonored. Given that Arkane are masters at stealth gameplay and massive, sprawling levels, it will be interesting to see what the studio has cooked up for us this time. The game follows an assassin who is contracted to eliminate 8 targets but finds that he is also being hunted. The characters look rather generic with a generic black guy and generic afro-haired black woman, but we're waiting to see how the game actually plays.

CRASH BANDICOOT: IT'S ABOUT TIME

The OG mascot of the PlayStation is back with another rip-roaring adventure in Crash Bandicoot: It's About Time. We don't have too many excellent platformers out there with Mario



Odyssey being the best of the lot, but we're glad to have another entry in the genre in the form of this game. The visuals look crisp and really sells the world of Crash. The gameplay looks to be a throwback to classic Crash with detailed and treacherous levels thwarting your every move!

RETURNAL

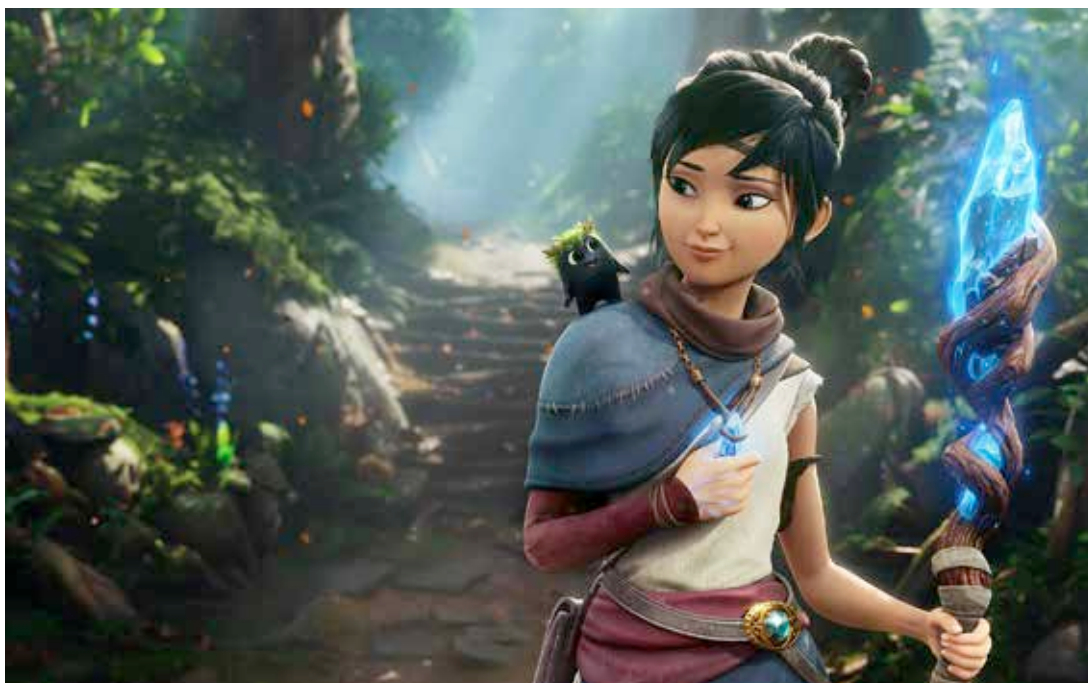
There have been a lot of people who are hyped for this game but personally, it just looks like any other third-person shooter with a fresh coat of alien paint. The movement is derivative and the mechanics just look so dull. Even worse, it's some kind of Rouge-like level design and that just means the designers are lazy and can't be bothered to craft meaningful levels, letting the algorithm do the work for them. Your mileage may vary with



this game but for me personally, give me Elden Ring, any day, twice on Sundays.

KENA: BRIDGE OF SPIRITS

When we were still mashing on the original PS One controller, we all wondered how awesome it would be if games actually looked like cutscenes. Well, with how games look these days,



that's a moot point. Kena: Bridge of Spirits is what we would have imagined when we were kids. The game is absolutely gorgeous, with a very Disney/Pixar art style that just shines through every frame. Players looking for a deep adventure should find the 'scratch for that particular itch' in Kena: Bridge of Spirits.

SIFU

In what looks to be a martial arts extravaganza, Sifu clearly captures the feel of those early kung-fu movies, drenched in gritty corridor fisticuffs, ala Oldboy. We're not sure what to



make of this game because we just have not seen enough. But from what we can ascertain from the trailer, Sifu looks to channel the energy seen in old kung-fu movies but with a modern, brutal twist.

SOLAR ASH

Probably the least interesting game of the lot, Solar Ash looks like a hodgepodge of disparate ideas that just don't seem to blend. We have a bit of that 'ooohhh', 'wooooow' factor that a game like Journey provided but also the lack of real combat



has us raising our eyebrows. The developers stress the mechanics of movement, but it truly looks like a game that is completely missable, if we're being honest. Nothing really stands out about the game.

ODDWORLD: SOULSTORM

Oddworld, as a franchise, has been around for decades and even though it may not have achieved the notoriety of games



that came out around the same time, it has always had a loyal and dedicated fanbase. With beautiful visuals and that platforming gameplay we all love, Oddworld: Soulstorm looks to be another cracker in the franchise.

KNOCKOUT CITY

We thought that with a name like Knockout City, we'd finally get a next-gen boxing game but no, instead what we get is dodge-ball. Yes, you read that right. Knockout City looks to be another



Fortnite, Splatoon clone that is as dull as it is uninteresting. You may find some lineage from its fast gameplay, but we can't see anything here that really catches our eye.

FIVE NIGHTS AT FREDDY'S: SECURITY BREACH

A strange indie hit, Friday Night at Freddy's was not really a game. It was more like a point and click adventure without



pointing and clicking and adventure. It catered to the jump scare generation and follows depowered protagonists in games like Amnesia, where you are literally hiding all the time. This just looks like another generic entry into that franchise.

FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE INTERGRADE

Who doesn't love the Final Fantasy universe and the fact that we're getting a remake of one of the best games in the fran-



chise is just the icing on the cake! With upgraded graphics and animations, the game looks to be a nostalgic train ride that we've all been waiting for. With a launch scheduled for both the PS4 and PS5 modern gamers will finally be able to experience the epic adventure that is Final Fantasy VII! *

**32
BIT**

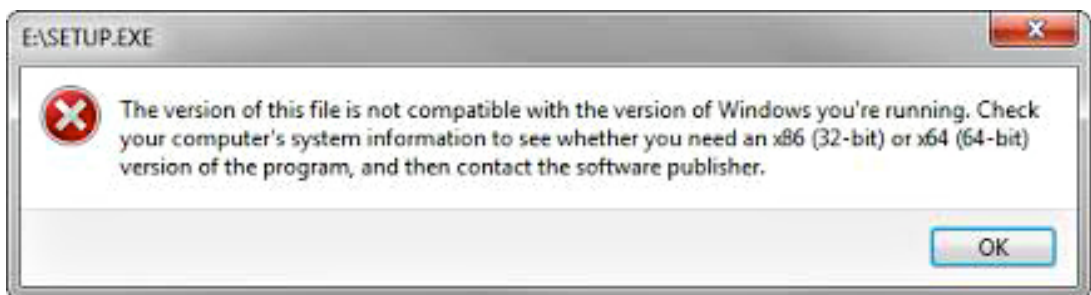
**V
S**

**64
BIT**

READING ‘BIT’WEEN THE LINES

BY KSHIPRA “FAAFDAAJALEBII” JADAV
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If you have been installing programs and games on your system for a while now, we're sure that you have come across this error at least ONCE in your life: and we're also sure that you just downloaded the 32 bit version of the required program and went on with your life. But what IS 32 bit or 64 bit? Infact, what IS a bit? Why is there 32 and 64 written in front of it?



Don't worry. We're here to answer all of your questions and random thoughts regarding these seemingly random numbers.

WHAT IS A BIT

Before we fuss about 64 bit and start throwing around large numbers and some technical jargon, let us first understand what a BIT actually is. What does it mean when we refer to bits and bytes. To know that, we need to look at this image:

This is a vacuum tube used to build very early editions of the modern computers when they still occupied a room to function. This has just 2 states. If electricity is flowing through it, it is ON. If electricity is not flowing through it, it is OFF. And that's it. That is a BIT. A bit is a piece of information that could have only two possible values : ON or OFF. Now, in the computer world, these values are denoted by 0s and 1s. So, if the state is ON, the value is 1 and likewise, if the state is OFF then the value is 0.

Now, imagine a small box in your head. You have two choices;

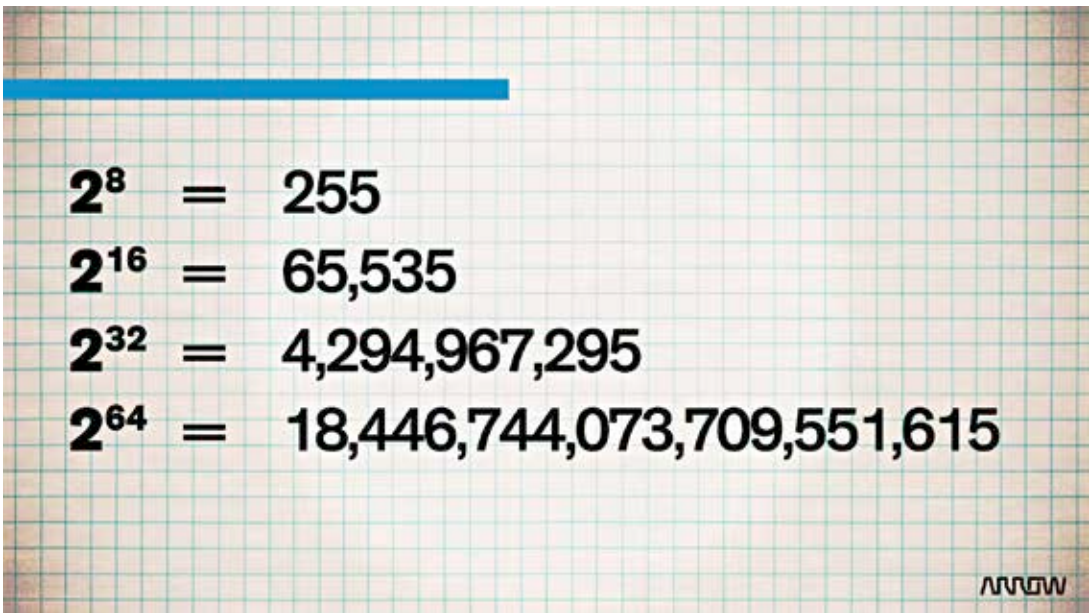


you can either put 1 in it or you can put 0 in it. Now, imagine 8 of these boxes side by side. You have a BYTE in your head now. So, 8 BITS make up 1 BYTE. Hence, when we say that we have 16 GIGABYTES of RAM in our PC, we are actually referring to $16 \times 8 \times 10^9$ BITS of storage i.e. 128 BILLION BITS or 128 BILLION boxes that could either have 1 or 0 stored in them.

HOW ARE BIT VALUES CALCULATED

Overtime, it became difficult to write and speak; all the bit values were getting exponentially bigger. So, just like BILLION can be simplified to GIGA, bits are simplified using a formula.

To calculate the number of bits, we need to use a simple formula : 2^n where n is the number of bits. So, when we say 2-bit we actually mean 2 bits i.e. 4 bits. You can find a really handy chart here:



2^8	=	255
2^{16}	=	65,535
2^{32}	=	4,294,967,295
2^{64}	=	18,446,744,073,709,551,615

What this chart really signifies is that if we have a 2-bit system, it is capable of 4 permutations of the numbers 0 and 1. That comes out to be 00, 01, 10, 11. Those are all the possible values that system is capable of handling. Hence, as we move upwards in bits, the system becomes capable of handling more permutations of 0 and 1, it becomes capable of doing more calculations and it becomes more capable of addressing more memory at once.

This brings us to the main topic of this article : 32bit vs 64bit.

32BIT VS 64BIT

This is the moment you all have been waiting for. What exactly does 32bit and 64bit mean and how is one better than the other?

RAM

Well, as discussed above, 32bit means that the CPU can address 2^{32} values at a time and that comes out to be approximately 4 billion. If you do some conversions, you can directly co-relate this to the maximum amount of RAM that the 32 bit CPU can address and that comes out to be 4 Gigabytes. Hence, if you have a 32 bit CPU, it can address only 4 GB of RAM, so, even if you have 16 GB of RAM installed in your system, the CPU can only recognize 4 GB of it and will work within those limitations. When we go to the 64 bit side of things, we see that a 64 bit CPU can address 2^{64} values at a time and that comes out to be 18 quintillion. Now, if you convert that to bytes, you get approximately 16 EXABYTES or 16 BILLION GIGABYTES of RAM at once. Now sure, that is a LOT of RAM but as correctly stated by Ken from Computer Clan - “Now, that may sound amazing but remember, big numbers are only useful if your software knows how to leverage those large amounts of RAM in the first place. But let’s just leave it to the developers for now.”

Speed

If you have a 64 bit CPU then it can and it will perform faster than a 32 bit CPU and before we see how it performs faster, we first need to understand the term ‘clock speed’.

Now, clock speed means how fast a CPU can perform a certain task in a second. Hence, if your CPU is clocked at 2 GHz then it can perform 2 BILLION tasks per second. For example, your mom requested a glass of water from you. So, you go to the kitchen, fill a glass of water, take it to your mom, wait for her to finish it and then take the glass back. Here, you have completed ONE CYCLE. Here, the CPU is you, the software utilising the CPU is your mom and your instruction set is : “bring me a glass of water” and how many times you (the CPU) can perform that particular instruction set is your CLOCK SPEED. Here, you encounter a software bottleneck first rather than a hardware bottleneck but more on that later.

Once we know what clock speed means, we can understand how 64 bit CPUs are better than 32 bit CPUs. So, a 64 bit CPU can process 64 bits per clock cycle while a 32 bit CPU can only process 32 bits per clock cycle. Hence, going back to our example, if you were a 32 bit CPU, you’d only have room for the instructions “bring me a glass of water” whereas if you were a 64 bit CPU you will have extra room for the instructions “bring me a glass of water and put some ice in it too”. Here, the “put

some ice in it too” part wouldn’t have been possible if you were a 32 bit CPU as you could only process “bring me a glass of water” per clock cycle but when you are a 64 bit CPU you can also process “and put some ice in it too” with the old instruction set per clock cycle. Hence, 64 bit CPUs can theoretically process more data per clock cycle than 32 bit CPUs can do.

The reason we have used the word THEORETICALLY in the above paragraph as we mentioned that you would encounter a software bottleneck first rather than a hardware bottleneck. To put it in perspective with our example, you(a 64 bit CPU) can only process the extra information(adding ice to the water) if your mom(the software) can utilize it(drink the water) fast enough. Hence, if your mom is slow in drinking the iced water or if she drinks it at the same speed as if it were regular water, there is no realistic need for you to process more information now.

Hence, you are bottlenecked by your mom’s ability to drink and hence, you will encounter a software bottleneck first rather than a hardware bottleneck.

Use of 64 bit CPU in gaming and other tasks

Whenever you install a program in your computer, it generally comes with two executables : a 64 bit version and a 32 bit version. As a rule of thumb, if you have a 64 bit CPU and an OS then always launch the 64 bit version as it will be able to address more RAM and it will be able to process information faster. Many modern games REQUIRE you to have a 64 bit machine and won’t even run on 32 bit machines.

The real problem starts when 32 bit applications are converted to 64 bit applications. Usually, when you have to make a 64 bit application out of an already existing 32 bit application, you need to re-write the whole thing and then optimise it for 64 bit so that it can make use of the full potential of 64 bit architecture but many devs just skip this step and instead of rewriting their whole program, they just convert it to 64 bit. This results in poor performance and the program obviously not being able to make use of all the features of 64 bit.

This brings us to the end of this article. We hope you found the information useful. Still, if you have any doubts, feel free to ask us at feedback@skoar.in. *

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HTC VIVE Pro

REPAIR-FRIENDLY VR HEADSET

BY DHRITI “DEEDEE” DATTA

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Images Courtesy: iFixit



HTC VIVE Pro

Repair-friendly features and neat assembly

The original HTC Vive was pretty easy to disassemble and repair and the Vive Pro is no slouch in this regard. Without even starting disassembly, there are a few repair-friendly features on the surface itself. Standard Philips screws and spring contacts connect the modular headphones to the headset, making them easy to remove and replace. You can also peel off a few foam pads and open the plastic compartment cover to find the Vive Pro's custom cable. HTC has managed to pack all the power and data lines into this single cable.



Outer shell removal

The audio cables on the Vive Pro connect the twin headphone contact boards via a standard connector. This is good for easy disassembly as well. Moving on to unthreading the headphone cables, a few Torx screws need to be removed and the strap



lifts off easily. You can also see the model number here - 2Q29100. A few divots in the front cover house Torx screws that need to be removed in order to lift off the outer shell. This shell splits down the middle and slides off in two halves.

Removing the IR sensor plate

Inside these shells, there are IR-friendly windows that help fil-



ter out visible light so the IR sensors can easily spot IR beams. Like the original Vive, the Vive Pro has numerous photodiodes lying under the surface of the Pro. A few screws need to be removed to have the faceplate or the IR sensor plate come off.

Of microphones and cameras

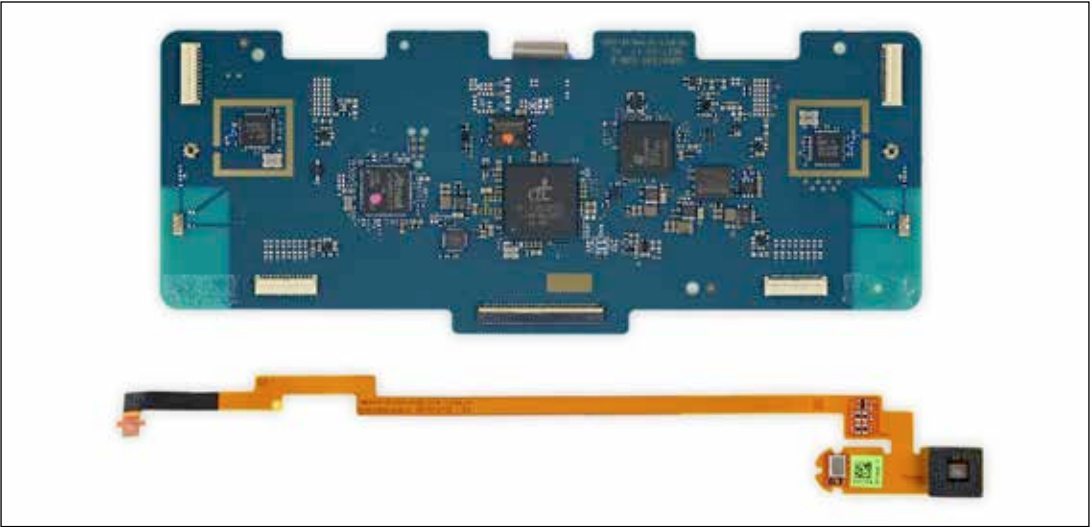
After lifting off the faceplate, you can see the dual microphone assembly near the bottom of the faceplate. It takes



some heat and prying to remove these cleanly though. The Pro has twin microphones that offer improved noise isolation. Next, the faceplate-mounted mainboard comes off. It houses the IR sensor arrays, cameras, and microphones. There's also a slab of copper foil beneath the board for EMI shielding and cooling. There are two separate cameras with no unique markings on them.

An array of chips

The mainboard comprises of the following chips - Two Nordic Semiconductor NRF24LU1P Ultra Low Power 2.4 GHz RF SoC, Atmel SAM G55J 32-bit microcontroller, Two Winbond 25Q32JV1Q 4 MB flash memory, Alpha Imaging Technology AIT8589D, and Lattice Semiconductor iCE40HX8K Ultra Low Power FPGA. There's a second board as well that houses a receiver, high-performance DAC, audio chip, and step-down DC



converter. Flip the chip around, and there are a plethora of chips here as well.

Display panel

In order to get a look at the display, the entire optics assembly must be taken out of the midframe. The lenses of the headset



have the same concentric rings as the standard Vive. As you handle the lens assemblies, the display cable can be carefully threaded out. The display on the Vive Pro is a Samsung AMS-350MU04 AMOLED panel, that Samsung reportedly uses in their own Odyssey MR headset. *



mobile madness

YOU HAVE TO TRY THESE
GAMES OUT ON YOUR
SMARTPHONE!

BY TEAM DIGIT

Kitty Letter

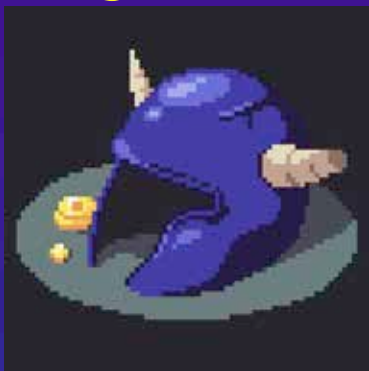


From the creator of the popular card game, Exploding Kittens comes a free mobile word game called Kitty Letter, which seems like an odd mashup between Scrabble and Clash Royale. The game pits you against AI or another real player and the best linguist comes out on top. The creator of the game is also

behind The Oatmeal webcomics and the game's story mode certainly has a comic book style of narration. The premise is simple, exploding cats threaten the integrity of your home, and you must formulate words from a mix of letters. Each correct word you create transforms into a band of kittens that destroy the opponent's kittens and make way to their "base" to explode. The player that has lost the least points due to these volatile kitty explosions wins! What we really enjoyed about the game was the lack of in-game currencies, in-game purchases, or ads. The only thing you can spend money on is some in-game cosmetics. Kitty Letter is completely free to play, yet doesn't go down the road many other "freemium" games do to monetise. The game is also easy to pick up and is quite a time-killer when you're bored. Between the single-player campaign and the 1v1 online games, there's enough to do allowing you to sink hours into the game.



Knightin'+

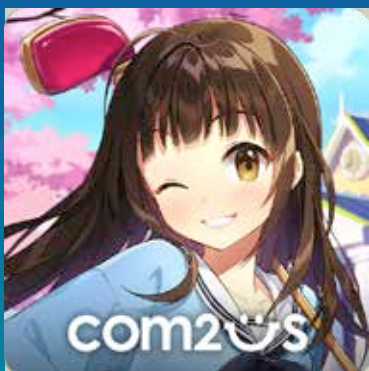


Knightin'+ is a game that launched on Steam back in July 2019 and just made its way onto Android and iOS devices. In the words of the developer, Muzt Die Studios, this is a Zelda-lite adventure game, which is very evident the moment you start playing it. The knight you play as, Sir Lootalot, really only

has one goal in life. We don't think we need to mention what that goal is. The game very obviously pays homage to games from the 90s, this includes its pixel art graphics and its retro soundtrack. Gameplay is fairly simple. You've got an analog controller on the bottom left side of the screen which you will be using to move around, and you have your action buttons on the bottom right side. As you unlock more items and abilities, more buttons show up. Overall, decent game, which should probably have been free. It doesn't really do anything new or different to change the formula up, but it's a polished game nevertheless.



Birdie Crush: Fantasy Golf



Birdie Crush was not the game we were expecting when we first downloaded it. Sure, we were expecting a golf game and that's what we got but what we mean is we weren't expecting an anime-themed fantasy golf game with superpowers.

You have multiple characters to choose from, with each having their own advantages and disadvantages, including a different set of powers that you can use. Gameplay is actually quite simple. The only really skill is in timing, when you actually make shots. Other than that it's fairly straightforward. There are a variety of game modes to enjoy, both single and multiplayer. You've got friendlies, tournaments, event matches, and a lot more. All of these give you the opportunity to get customisations and better gear for your characters. Overall, this is a decent gacha golf game, give it a shot. There's a premium version as well, with a one-time fee that gives you access to more stuff.



Crash Bandicoot: On the Run



Crash Bandicoot: On the Run! is the latest game from King, a powerhouse when it comes to mobile gaming. The polish is there, right off the bat you can tell that this isn't some second hand Crash Bandicoot game. It's the real deal with its wonderful 90s bright and vibrant cartoony graphics that are as true to the

original as can be. Crash also has most of his signature moves, from spinning to sliding and of course, jumping.

This is an endless runner game, so if you've played games like Temple Run or Subway Surfer in the past, the controls will feel extremely familiar, heck, even identical. Swipe up to jump, down to slide, left and right to move, plus you can tap the screen to have Crash spin, allowing you to attack certain enemies and crates. If you think about it, Crash Bandicoot was doing this way before endless runners, or even mobile gaming was a thing, so there should be no doubts about them nailing the formula.



The game features multiple game modes, with a story mode that's complemented by the other game modes. The story mode is split up into various different challenges, at the end of which you will face a boss. This usually means more obstacles for you to dodge during that particular run. In order to unlock them, you need to craft special vials, which need materials and time to craft. Which can of course be bypassed by paying. The good thing is, you can grind for resources and such on the other game modes while this timer is going on. So you're still playing the game but you've taken a break from the story. Survival Runs are a mode where up to three players can run at the same time, you're not competing against each other, but need to score high as a team, to end up on the leaderboards. These are limited to a few runs a day.

Overall, Crash Bandicoot: On the Run! is a polished endless runner, which is ridiculously easy compared to the original, involves some amount of grind, but is fun while it lasts nonetheless. King has a lot more content planned for the game, so there's that.

Titan Quest: Legendary Edition



Titan Quest is a game from way back in the day, and one of the few games that was a solid contender to Diablo II. Some time ago the game celebrated its tenth anniversary edition, and released the game on iOS and Android. As with all things that transition from a large screen to a smaller one, there are issues. Both in terms of performance, and the UI. If you can get over the framerate dips every now and then and have fingers small enough that the UI doesn't bother you, this is a fantastic game. It's got a LOT of content; easily hundreds of hours. This is an isometric hack n slash RPG, defeat hordes of mythological enemies for epic loot so you can kill them more efficiently. There's a unique class system as well, allowing you to mix and match and giving everyone a unique sense of progression. The only gripe is the UI, which feels like it ruins the experience on mobile, if not for that this is an easy game to recommend.



Mitoza



Mitoza is all about a seed. A seed that sprouts into a rocket, an ice cream parlour, a bowling ball, a giant carrot, and much more. Sounds bizarre? Well... this game, or more accurately, toy is just that. The game is so deviously simple, it's stupid. You start off as an innocent seed with two choices - pot the seed or have a bird feed on it.

Sounds pretty reasonable so far, but as you go on the choices become more and more absurd and unrealistic. The game is actually 10 years old and first launched as a flash game. It has now been revived for iOS and Android. There's only one end goal of the game, as far as we could tell at least. It is to unlock all the "endings" or objects that are by-products of your choices. If you reach an ending, you start off again as a seed and you can try other combinations of choices to reach a different ending. While some may like its absurd nature, some may absolutely detest it. Give it a try to know which side you're on!



Project CARS GO



Project CARS has garnered a large following for being a good motorsport racing simulation in a very short time. And Slightly Mad Studios, the developer, has been eyeing the mobile market for quite some time given that mobile gaming has been growing by leaps and bounds.

However, most video games that do well on the mobile form factor have had simple controls. A simulator, even a racing simulator, wouldn't be easy to implement on such a limited platform. And Slightly Mad never claimed that they'd be doing so. Or perhaps, we should say Gamevil didn't say so since they're building the game. The promise was to deliver a "one touch racing game" to adapt the sim experience to the mobile form factor and we could say that they've done a good job at that.

The race tracks have coloured arches along the way which prompt you to tap at the exact time for a good gear shift and when the red arch appears, you'd tap and hold till the green arch appears to slow down before a tricky corner. Pretty simple, right? The game has multiple race formats such as drag races which incorporate rapid taps to keep the RPM within a certain range. Do it right, and you'll always win.

If you've ever played any racing game on the phone, then you'd get a good idea of all the different formats and events available to play. You get your own garage to keep all the new cars you'll be buying and the customisation options are decent. The UI is fairly simple to understand and nowhere close to being as convoluted as Asphalt 9. The graphics don't quite match up to Asphalt 9 but then again, the two games are vastly different in play styles. Project CARS Go is not a super-monetised arcade game. And that's a good thing. One would be a bit taken aback by how quickly you can progress in the game without all the silly gating mechanisms but that's not a con in our books.

All said and done, Project CARS Go is a good game considering that Slightly Mad has managed to build a decent racing game for a format that's completely alien to them but at the end of the day it does nothing new or out of the ordinary. *



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