SKOAR!*

LIVE TO GAME



BLOCKAPALOOZA!

Get creative with these Minecraft alternatives

IMITATION IS THE SINCEREST FORM OF FLATTERY...

Manish "Trigger-Happy" Rajesh
SKOAR! Overlord | feedback@skoar.in



...that mediocrity can pay to greatness. That's the rest of the saying from Oscar Wilde, in case you didn't know, and in many ways I think that still applies today, especially to the video games industry. The problem is that we seem to be running short on greatness, and it's all mostly imitation now, which is a bit of a bummer.

It's not all bad though. Fortunately, not everyone is out to make an exact replica, they're willing to modify, add a thing or two; they've got their own vision of what great should look like, even if its conception had nothing to do with them. What this means is, when the next great thing comes along, you can bet that there will be several thousand clones of it. But there will be a few trying to make it even greater, and that's not really a bad thing, now is it?

When PUBG first exploded on the scene, it was the next great thing of its time. As a result, every game to release in the next three years incorporated a Battle Royale mode in some way or the other. It was like it was almost mandatory for it to be there. Of course, the only "imitations" that stood out were the ones that either did something different with the format, or improved upon it. Fortnite comes to mind with its building element; it eventually even surpassed the OG.

Before PUBG, there was Minecraft. We don't need to tell you about the influx of sandbox survival games that came after that. There's too many to name. Before Minecraft there was

DotA, which spawned at least four fairly popular MOBAs that define esports today. Even before that, it was World of Warcraft, and so on and so forth. It's a cycle, and it's definitely not ending anytime soon. What you'll notice though is that a fair number of these imitations go on to become more successful than the thing they're imitating. Of course, it doesn't apply to everything, but there are enough cases to prove my point.

This month's cover story is about imitations, in a way; imitations of Minecraft. It's interesting to see the differences between the imitator and the source, the result can be a fairly unique experience, or a twist on a familiar one. At the end of the day, it's for you to decide. *



What's New



SONY ACQUIRE PC PORTING STUDIO

Sony have changed their stance on PC gaming in recent times, and we've known that they're looking to bring more of their IPs to PC. To that end, they've acquired porting studio Nixxes to make that happen. This is different from the ports we've seen so far, which have come from a variety of studios, including a few third-party publishers as well. Games that have been ported so far include the likes of Horizon Zero Dawn, Death Stranding, Days Gone, Detroit Become Human and more. The acquisition of Nixxes means that they've now got a porting studio of their own, and will no longer need to rely on third parties for the same. Nixxes have previously worked on porting several of Square Enix's games to PC, and even Marvel's Avengers and the Tomb Raider games among others.



GAMING ON NETFLIX

Netflix is looking to expand into video games, and their most recent hire, Mike Verdu, certainly seems to be a step in that direction. Mike Verdu is a former Facebook and Electronics Art executive, and has joined Netflix as their new VP of game development, as reported to The Hollywood Reporter.

At Facebook Verdu oversaw Oculus Studios, and he was the senior VP mobile for EA, where he was responsible for games like Plants vs Zombies 2 and Star Wars: Galaxy of Heroes.

We don't know how Netflix will approach or distribute gaming on their platform, but we know that it will supposedly be "free". Whether this means an increase in the subscription costs or otherwise, time will tell.



ASSASSIN'S CREED INFINITY

The next Assassin's Creed game, Infinity, will reportedly be a cross-studio collaborative project that will be taking a different approach from the way we've normally consumed AC games so far. Rather than a new title releasing every year or bi-year, Infinity will simply keep evolving with new content and updates, similar to what we've seen in games like Fortnite. According to Bloomberg, Infinity is designed to run for years, and the platform will encompass multiple different Assassin's Creed games and timelines.



ACTIVISION BLIZZARD LAWSUIT

After a recent lawsuit against video game studio Activision Blizzard for a history of harrasment and discrimination, employees at the studio – unsurprsingly – staged a walk out. The walkout was reportedly organised by the employees after the company's initial response to the civil lawsuit. The response for the most part defended Activision Blizzard's actions, and made light of the allegations being made against them. Company CEO Bobby Kotick eventually apologised for the company's "tone deaf" response.



PS5 IS THE FASTEST SELLING PLAYSTATION

Sony has sold more than 10 million PS5 consoles, making it the fastest-selling console in Sony's history. While the console is selling well, supply has still been constrained making it a difficult console to get your hands on. Sony is also coming out with a revised model of its Digital Edition, which will be 300 grams lighter than the current digital model, which weighs 3.9kg. We don't yet have any info on what has been changed in the new model, the specs and dimensions for the new model are however the exact same.

UP AND COMING



HUMANKIND

Amplitude Studios' Humankind is a 4X strategy game, or a civ-like if you will, where you will rewrite the course of humanity's history on Earth. Definitely an interesting premise, worth keeping an eye out for if you enjoy grand strategy games.

Release date – August 17



PSYCHONAUTS 2

More than fifteen years after the first Psychonauts, Double Fine is coming out with Psychonauts 2. Funds for the game were raised via crowdfunding, so people have definitely been waiting for this. Here's hoping it turns out to be good.

Release date – August 25



NEW WORLD

A new MMORPG from Amazon of all things, New World is all set to "shake up" the MMO world, with supposedly new and fresh offerings for the dying genre. We really hope it's everything they claim it will be, the MMO genre needs a boost.

Release date – August



A SOLID ENTRY POINT FOR BEGINNERS TO THE SERIES

BY MANISH "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH

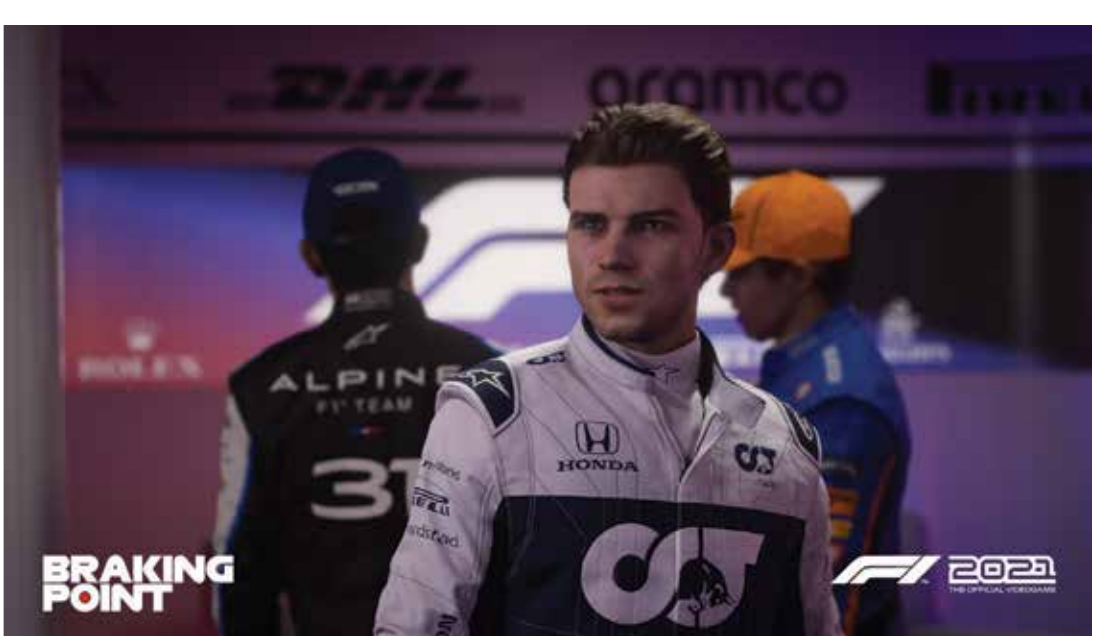
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Let me get one thing out of the way right away, I haven't played any of the previous F1 games, so I went into F1 2021 with it being my first F1 game. The F1 games are normally known to be pretty hard, attempting to simulate what it would actually be like to be in the cockpit of an F1 car. With F1 2021, while you can certainly enjoy the complete F1 experience, you can tone it all down making it much more accessible to newcomers to the series. That being said, the latest entrant to Codemasters' F1 series could very well be considered a good entry point into the series. Let's get into the review.

BRAKING POINT - THE STORY

F1 2021 sees the introduction of a story mode to the series for the first time ever. Well a proper story mode, there was an attempt in 2019, but this is definitely a lot more fleshed out. Depending on how good you are at the game, the story mode will last around 6 hours. Dubbed Braking Point, the story mode sees us filling the shoes (and perspectives) of two drivers, Aiden Jackson and Casper Akkerman, both at very different points in their careers, with Aiden Jackson being brand





new on the scene, and Casper Akkerman being a veteran beyond his prime. Both drivers are competing for the same team, but early in the story we see some drama develop between the two due to events that take place in a race. Enter Devon Butler, who some might recognise if they played F1 2019, he is basically the antagonist in the story, who's more than happy to add fuel to the fire between Aiden and Casper. Codemasters have tried to bring the drama of real F1 into the game with Braking Point, and while the plot is fairly predictable, it's a welcome addition to the game.

The story is also a great way for new players to experience the F1 series; during the course of the story you'll be introduced to different aspects of the game, or learn the ropes, so to speak. The story also isn't as simple as "win this race",





but takes a different approach, with cinematics taking place in the middle of races as you fulfil objectives, which was nice. The game definitely has a difficulty curve, but stick with it and you'll get there.

GAMEPLAY

Coming to the gameplay, like we mentioned earlier, you can tone down the difficulty aspect to an almost casual level in F1 2021. This doesn't mean that it's braindead now and you just need to hold down the accelerator key, there's still some level of skill and timing involved when coming into turns or attempting overtakes, among other things. If you're a purist, or crave all the realism, you can turn everything on, including transmission, vehicle damage, fuel management, etc. We assume this immediately makes a lot of things on the HUD very important, which





for most part we ignored because in this case we were ***gulp*** filthy casuals.

Vehicle damage has different effects depending on what part of the car gets damaged. If the floor gets damaged for instance, the car becomes top-heavy, tires can be affected by different kinds of damage, ramming into barriers can cause them to delaminate, and they can even burst if you aren't paying attention. There's no lack of attention to detail. Overall, we had no complaints about gameplay, but then again, at a casual level we didn't have to worry about too much.

Then there's Flashbacks. Basically the "oops" or "oh f*ck" button. Go back in time. You have the option to turn this off entirely, or even limit the number of times you can use this





per race. In case you screw up in some way, you can hit the Flashback button, and the game then starts a recording of the past few seconds. You can resume from anywhere within that time. It's a handy tool for those learning the ropes, and you're free to disable it entirely, or limit your uses if you don't want to rely on it too much.

The controls can also be a tad confusing for new players, since it's not the usual w, a, s, d, but 'a' to accelerate, 'z' to slow down, and ',' and '.' to turn left and right respectively. X is the flashback button, and menu controls use the Function keys for some reason. The game's probably best played on a joystick (or racing wheel, even better) anyway.

As for game modes, Career mode and My Team mode are



MOAR!

DEVELOPER
Codemasters

PUBLISHER
EA Sports

PLATFORMS
Microsoft Windows, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Xbox One, Xbox Series X/S

PLAYED ON
Microsoft Windows

PRICE
₹ 3,499 (Steam)

both present, as they were in F1 2020, and for the most part are the same with a few QoL tweaks. The story mode doesn't tie into either of these game modes in any way, which is kind of a bummer. The game modes themselves are pretty solid and well-rounded, with Career mode seeing you take on the mantle of a racer and My Team allowing you to manage an entire team.

There's multiplayer game modes as well, with local split screen, and up to 22 players online. You can even play 2-player Career mode with a friend online, with you both joining the same team, or even competing with each other as rivals.

GRAPHICS

This is a good looking game, and runs surprisingly well even on slightly weaker machines, as long as you're running it at 1080p. However, if you've got the rig to run it at 4K with RTX on, but all means, go for it, it looks fantastic. The game should still look really good with RTX off, and save you a chunk of frames as well. The roads, cars, damage, even the character models look pretty good, making this the best looking F1 game yet.

CONCLUSION

Like we mentioned earlier, we hadn't played any F1 games prior to F1 2021, and we had a surprisingly good time with this one. We enjoyed grinding it out and learning the ropes in the story, and appreciated the ability to tone down the difficulty, making it easier for a wider audience to pick the game up. The game is updated with the latest teams and rosters, and you have the option to update it after races to keep up with the teams. We weren't really familiar with anyone, but if this is something important to you, then it is an option. Overall, a solid addition to the F1 series. *



TAKE A BREATHER

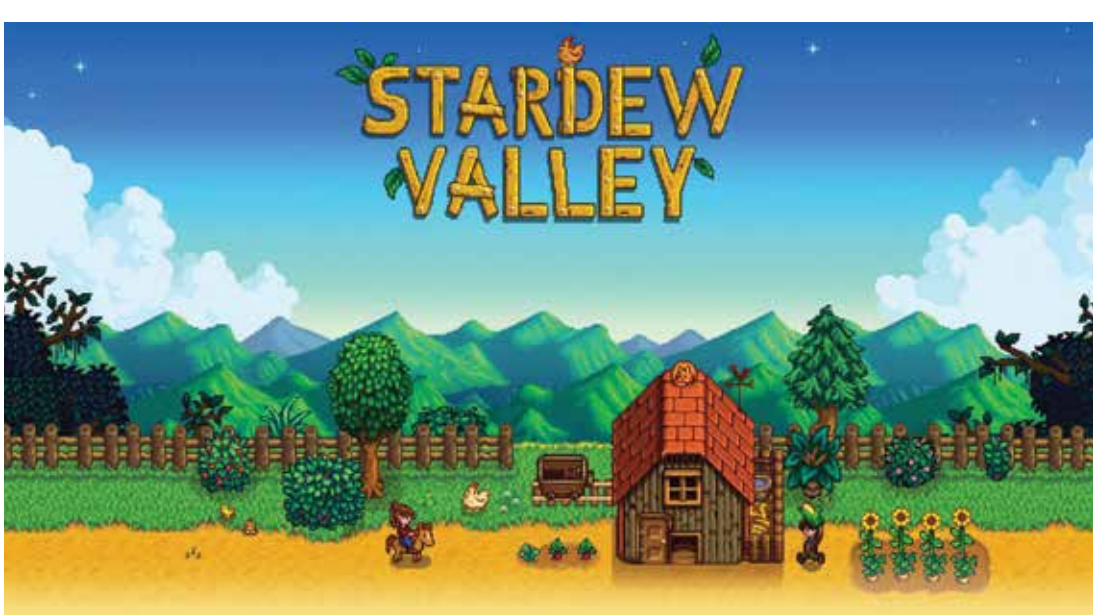
DE-STRESS YOURSELF WITH THESE CHILL, LAID-BACK GAMES

OMANG "RESPAWNER" BAHETI
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

We don’t always want to finish a long, stressful day by racing through ultra-difficult platforming games or blasting our way through a chaotic online battlefield. Instead, there are times when we just want to curl up in our chairs with a relaxing game to help us forget about our worries. We’ve chosen the most relaxing PC games from our collection. These are the games we play when life gets too much for us, and we simply want to bury our heads and ignore life’s frustrations.

STARDEW VALLEY

You begin in a tiny rural village with only a decrepit house and agricultural fields that look more like a wilderness than a place to produce food. The game’s concept is simple: construct a farm, generate money, and live your life. The game becomes much more complex as a result of what you can do with it. You have complete flexibility to explore the town and interact with its inhabitants and build your farm into whatever



you wish it to be at your leisure. Sure, there are events to attend, festivals to attend, men and women to romance and marry, children to have, houses to build, fish to catch, and strange tiny slimes to fight, but how and when you do those things is all up to you. Whether or not Stardew Valley is realistic, it's one of the finest RPG games for individuals who fantasise about escaping the city rat race. That's why, after a long day, Stardew Valley is one of the finest relaxing games to pass the time on in the evenings and weekends.

DORF ROMANTIK

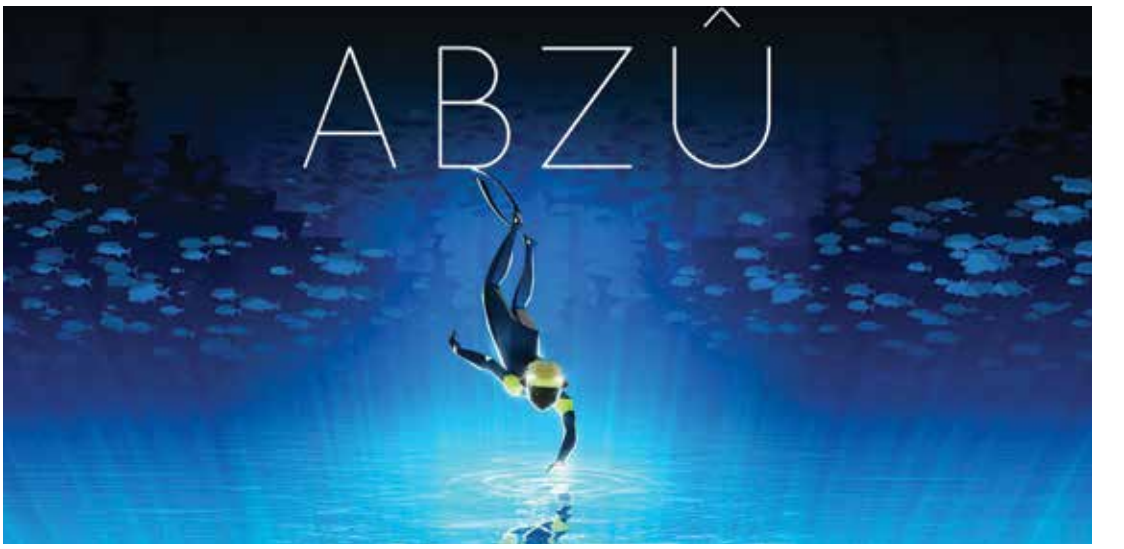
A curiously addicting game that straddles the line between a puzzle game and a casual strategy game. It's difficult to put into words how good this game is; it's quite a relaxing yet demanding game experience for people who love a casual



puzzle that may quickly become complex. The game is similar to Islanders but with a bit more complexity and challenge. One of the game's key strengths is its engagement, ending up investing a significant chunk of your time without even realising it. This is one of those laid-back, relaxing games that you may play before bed or when you have some free time. If you have played Islanders and enjoyed it, this game is well worth your time.

ABZU

This is a soothing game from the developers of Journey that invites you to slow down and take it all in. You have the freedom to explore at your own speed, allowing you to gain a



thorough understanding of the ocean. It's a beautiful game for zoning out because of the smooth, easy swimming controls, soaring soundtrack, and leisurely pace. There's also a meditation option that allows you to relax and take in the watery environment around you, including a diverse array of exotic sea creatures. Although it takes a basic approach to gameplay, Abzu's mesmerising ocean is far from shallow.

CATS ORGANIZED NEATLY

Cats Organized Neatly is a soothing puzzle game with a charming theme. While relaxing music plays in the background, you slot cute cats of all shapes and sizes into grids, attempting to make them fit precisely. The game continuously adds new furry creatures, each with a unique shape and bio to offer new obstacles. This game is for you if the sound of a cheerful meow and satisfied purr helps you achieve true zen.



ALBA: A WILDLIFE ADVENTURE

Pinar del Mar, an island off the Mediterranean coast near Valencia, provides the setting for a nature adventure. Alba spends a week in the summer with her grandparents, who have taught her to love and care for all animals. On the first day on the island, the entire community learns that the mayor, Toni,



intends to demolish the natural reserve to build a luxury hotel. We aim to halt this nefarious enterprise and protect the island's natural riches by persuading the people to sign your petition and rescue the day by requesting that the mayor refrains from building a hotel on the island. This involves doing odd jobs for the people of the island, which are small and environmentally minded. The majority of your time will be spent picking up trash, rescuing animals from litter and oil spills, and repairing sections of the island that have become run-down.

CLOUD GARDENS

Cloud Gardens is a lovely gardening game set in a post-apocalyptic world. It's nothing short of soothing at any point in the game, thanks to the pleasantly gentle ambience accompanied with relaxing lo-fi beats, as well as the low degree of difficulty. You must plant seeds and nurture plants over scenes of urban ruin in Cloud Garden. It's like being the gardener in a post-apocalyptic garden, guiding the plants to recover their dead planet. The art is lovely, and you get to witness your environment grow as you plant and nurture additional seeds. If you're looking for a relaxing and intriguing game that encourages



players to be attentive and de-stress while still being creative, this is the game for you.

DONUT COUNTY

Donut County is a delightful and entertaining game about piloting a magical hole in the ground that allows you to “eat” everything. The chasm grows larger with each object that falls into it. You’ll start with tiny items like bricks and animals, but your all-consuming maw will soon be devouring entire sky-scraper blocks, and you’ll be laughing. The Trashopedia drips with surrealist humour from nonsensical descriptions of



objects you’ve ingested. Donut County oozes charm owing to its colourful array of characters, the game’s fantastic soundtrack, and its overall uplifting message that what matters is who you are, not what is around you. This, along with the game’s fundamental puzzles, makes this irreverent title the ideal game to play after a bad day.

KIND WORDS

The idea is straightforward. When you initially start the game, you're greeted by a deer that invites you to write a short letter about anything that's bothering you. This message will then be distributed to members of the community who will react to your wishes. Everything is kept under wraps. You can share a sticker with someone if you appreciate their response. A collection of lo-fi calm beats play in the background as you wait, giving everything a dreamy vibe. That's all there is to the game. This game truly puts what other people are going through into perspective. Everyone is battling their problems, and this allows you to be there for them anonymously, if only



for a little time to give an ear and a few friendly words. Kind words can go a long way, and this campaign helps get the message out when it's most needed.

FLOWER

Your mission as the wind is to collect petals and direct them past barriers to resurrect the dead meadows. It may appear to be a simple game that many would dismiss, but its stirring soundtrack and breathtaking visuals, as well as a vital message, have struck a chord with many. The simple input of its motion controls provides a pleasant sensation of least effort/maximum reward, allowing you to resurrect dead plants by coasting across the field and discovering life at your speed. The mechanics barely change but offers a broad range of satisfying outcomes with progress. Flower has tremendous ambition and a definite purpose in mind, despite



its simplicity. The game gives you an escape from the real world and become a leaf on the wind. *



A Beginner's Guide to **Rhythm Games**

YOUR GAMING EXPERIENCE JUST GOT A LOT MORE MUSICAL.

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We all love to play different genres of games. Some like FPS games like CS:GO, Valorant, etc. while some like to have a bit more connection with the story and the characters and hence they play story based games like Portal, Half Life, Far Cry, etc. Some are die-hard fans of the roguelike genre or like spamming the living hell out of their fire button while for some, gaming isn't as much of a hardcore thing as it is for others and hence, they stick to 2D side-scrollers or platformer games, not that all of them are casual. All of the above genres and many more sure have their differences and similarities but one thing that binds them all together is their music. Their background score. Their sound effects. How well the scene on your screen is being conveyed to your ears. You may be in an intense fight with lots of enemies or you might just be wandering without anything to do. Whatever you do, we're sure there will be some sort of ambient background music to accompany that. Hence, whatever the genre of the game may be - without music it is all incomplete.

But pretty soon, we run into a problem here. You see, in all of the above scenarios, even though music plays a big part in the immersion of the player or the conveying of the scene, the game does not DEPEND on the music, right? Let us put this a bit more simply. The events of the game aren't DETERMINED by the music. Infact, it is the other way around. The music of the game is DETERMINED by the events happening around you. If you are in the middle of an intense fight then upbeat high intensity music will be played to give you that extra adrenaline rush but if you are just wandering around the plains or doing something not as intensive as fighting, then, chances are that the main score of the game will be playing in a slow, soothing manner. Here, the music being played is directly determined by the events happening around you. It is always like this and not the other way round. But what if we say, there are some games where it is the other way around? Meet Rhythm Games. Rhythm games are a genre of gaming where your actions and inputs in the game are primarily decided by the

music playing in the game or more specifically - the rhythm of the music and hence the name - Rhythm Games. Here, instead of having the story as the main reason for progression in the game, we have levels. The higher you go, the more the difficulty increases and in general there are little to no story elements in these types of games. Sure, the lore around them exists on the internet and there are some exceptions where story also plays a part but in general, the story doesn't matter. Rhythm games are infamous for having a steep learning curve and we completely agree with that. Rhythm games tend to be a bit on the harder side of the difficulty graph and are not exactly beginner friendly. But, don't worry. We're here to introduce you to the world of rhythm games!

The games that we're gonna recommend to you will be for a person who is just getting into the world of rhythm games and will be sorted by difficulty - from easy to hard. Note that this is our perception of the game's difficulty and hence this list is based on our opinion. Yours may vary from us. With that out of the way, the first game that you should play if you have never played rhythm games before is –

Rhythm Doctor

On first glance, Rhythm Doctor might not look like much. You play as an online intern in a hospital where the main doctor has found a miraculous way to cure the patients. By tapping to the patient's heartbeat in-order to synchronise and correct it. You - the intern will be incharge of a remote defibrillator and will have

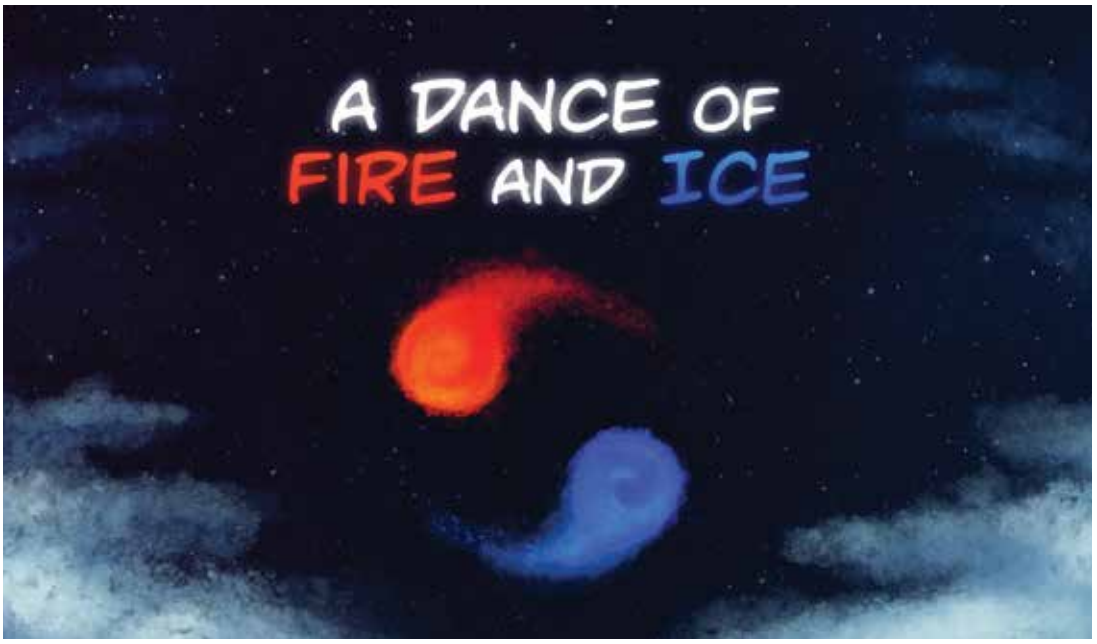


to tap on every 7th heart-beat. Seems simple enough, right? Well, the heart beats of the patient will be synced with the music playing in the background and hence, you will have to follow the music in-order to tap at the 7th beat in-time. Tapping too early or too late will result in the beat getting missed. Miss too many of these and it is game over for you.

Now, why did we suggest this game to newbies? Well, there are a couple of reasons for that. Usually, rhythm games tend to be boring at the start - as you don't know the game's mechanics and unless you have the interest to stick around, there are more chances of you uninstalling the game 15 minutes after you have installed it. Rhythm Doctor is a bit different from the traditional rhythm games. It puts you right to the heart of the action and while doing that, it eases you into the game to make you familiarized with the game's mechanics. Another reason why this game can work for newbies is that you will only require one button to control the game. It can be your Spacebar or the Enter key or any key from your keyboard. But only one key is required to play the game. Usually, rhythm games require two or more keys to play and stuff starts to get pretty hard pretty soon. Hence, Rhythm Doctor is the perfect game for someone who wants to get into the genre.

A Dance of Fire and Ice

A Dance of Fire and Ice or ADOFAI for short is an interesting game. You play as two dots - one red and one blue. Representing fire and ice respectively. ADOFAI has different zones or



worlds. Those worlds contain some levels and then a final BOSS level. You have to tap to the rhythm of the music playing in the background to make the two dots move on the path one by one. As the difficulty of the game rises, so does the amount of inputs and their specific timing and hence, the two dots look like they're dancing to the beat of the music - hence the name, A Dance of Fire and Ice. The levels serve as the tutorials for the theme of the world. One world will be based on just offbeat music or one world will contain just S-shaped paths (trust us, those were a pain in the butt to pass). After you clear these levels, there will be the boss level which will combine everything that you would have learnt in the previous levels. ADOFAI is a perma-death game. Hence, if you fail at any point during the level, if you miss once, it is game over and you gotta restart that level.

In terms of difficulty, this game ranks a bit higher than Rhythm Doctor. Although it is a single-input game like Rhythm Doctor, it gets a bit more complicated when you start climbing the ranks. As you progress through the game, the levels will get more complicated and hence, sometimes, two or three inputs in rapid succession will be required (or even more). The game also has 'Speed Up' and 'Slow Down' feature where if you encounter a snail icon, the BPM of the currently playing song will be cut in half. If you encounter a rabbit, the BPM will rapidly rise up. ADOFAI is a game where stuff gets real complicated, real quick. It will take a lot of retries just to clear one level. Heck, sometimes you won't even be able to figure out the rhythm of the upcoming S-bend or curve. Hence, ADOFAI has a bit of a learning curve attached to it but once you are accustomed to the mechanics of the game, it can get pretty fun too.

Muse Dash

Muse Dash is a catchy game in general. It has catchy songs, catchy characters and catchy game design. How? Well, for starters there isn't a hint of a muted color palette in the game's colors. Everything is brightly colored in shades of yellow and red. Then there are the girls, the main characters of the game. Each girl comes with its own powerups that will help you in the game. There are different versions of each girl - each having a signature powerup. Muse Dash is a map-based game, meaning it has maps with several difficulties for a certain song. If you are a beginner, you can start from the low stars gradually going for the high



starred maps. It is a 2D side scroller game, where the girl keeps on running and keeps smashing the obstacles that come in her way, obviously to the beat of the song. How will she smash the obstacles you ask? Well, the obstacles will either appear on the top or the bottom and to hit them, you'll have to assign a key for each. There will be two circles in front of your girl. One will be at the top and the other will be at the bottom. You will have to hit the obstacle exactly when it is at the centre of the circle. You either do that or you can pay no heed to the circles and hit the obstacles to the beat of the song. Hence, this is a two-keyed game. You can assign more than one key to the top and the bottom for maps with high obstacle density. All the obstacles are in the shapes of either cubes or rockets or something according to the color scheme of the map. Hence, you can say that Muse Dash has a very childish approach when it comes to graphic design. But the game is definitely not meant for children to play. Once you cross the 5 star limit, stuff really starts to go down. The scrolling speed increases and the obstacle density too, increases. Hence, if you have not trained your reflexes and your senses well enough till then, you are bound to fail.

Unlike the past two games, Muse Dash requires multiple keys to operate and that's what makes it a bit difficult to play. You have to have very strong hand-eye coordination with both of your hands to hit the obstacles in time. The game gets pretty hard, pretty fast and hence it is a game which is easy to pick up but difficult to play for a long time. Sure, you will pass the 1-2 star levels in your first try. But the crux of the game and the main enjoyment of the game lies in passing and even-

tually Full Comboing the higher starred level.

OSU!

This weird named rhythm game is probably the hardest of the bunch. In Osu! You have to click the circles to the beat of the song. Sounds simple, right? Nah! There are a ton of things that play a huge factor in making this game a bit more difficult than the rest. For starters, to click the circle, you will have to aim on it. To aim, you will have to use your mouse to take your cursor there and with the other hand, you will have to tap. The game strictly accepts only two inputs. Key 1 and Key 2. Ofcourse, both keys can be set to any two keys you want. For the aiming part, you can either use a mouse or a drawing tablet. Yes, a drawing tablet. Just like Muse Dash, Osu! is a map based game with difficulty of a certain map being counted in stars. Hence, the higher star the map is, the more difficult it is. There are other mechanics like jumps - where you have to hit the circles in rapid succession which can be very far apart from each other, streams - where the circles are so close that you will have to alternate between pressing the two keys in rapid succession to hit them. Oh, and to correctly time your hit, there will be another bigger circle that will close down onto your main circle and you are supposed to hit the circle when both the circles meet. If all of this seems very far-fetched for you, don't worry. You will eventually get the hang of it.

All the games included in this list use just a keyboard as the main controlling mechanic of the game. But the introduction of



aiming with your mouse or tablet adds an extra layer of difficulty to the game. Many people will not be able to pass even 1-2 star maps on their first try just because of how steep the learning curve is. But with high risk, comes high rewards too. The adrenaline rush you get when you Full Combo a high star map is unmatched. You can even apply certain mods to change up the gameplay a bit and to get a higher score. For example, the Double Time mod will speed up the music by 1.25x or the Hard Rock mod will make everything just a bit harder.

Conclusion

These were the four games that we think you should play if you are absolutely new to the genre and haven't played a rhythm game in your life. Once again, this is just our opinion/our take on what games a newbie should play and if you are a vetran at rhythm games, then your opinion might differ from us. Do note that all rhythm games are extremely input sensitive and hence, having better peripherals with low polling rates and having a higher refresh rate screen (provided your GPU can push out that many frames per second) will definitely improve your gameplay and the overall experience. For the lowest, we will recommend a decent branded keyboard and a PC powerful enough to run these games with a constant 60FPS or above. *

BLOCKAPALOOZA!

GET CREATIVE WITH THESE MINECRAFT ALTERNATIVES

BY MANISH "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH
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Minecraft is the best-selling game of all time, and with good reason. Not only is it available on every platform imaginable, it's also a really good game. There's so much you can do, from trying to brave the game's survival mode to letting your creative juices flow in the game's creative mode. And that's still selling the game short. Unfortunately, Minecraft isn't free and it isn't necessarily cheap as well. Of course, that's only one of the reasons you might want to look for Minecraft alternatives, the other is that you're simply burned out on Minecraft, and are looking for something else to sink your time into.





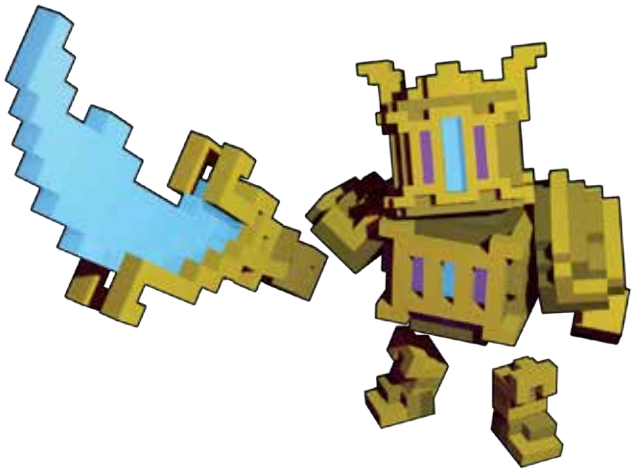
Now, while you can play Minecraft for free by questionable means or otherwise, there are plenty of Minecraft clones out there, both free and paid. The majority of them really aren't worth your time, but there are certainly a few worth checking out that could scratch your minecraft itch.

Here we've got a list of free alternatives to Minecraft that should satisfy you for your blocky needs. Let's get started!

FUHREE!

Trove

Trove is an MMO, featuring a lot of the voxel goodness we've gotten accustomed to with Minecraft and then some. The game has been running for quite some time now, so there's no shortage of content; the game recently added a Battle Royale mode and has Steam Workshop support for mods. Trove features destructible voxel environments like Minecraft, and allows you to build and craft as well, additionally, Trove also features RPG elements, such as class selection, leveling up and scaling equipment and gear. The game can get pretty grindy if you aren't willing to spend money, but no content is locked behind a paywall, save for some classes. The game's combat is a lot more dynamic than Minecraft, especially with the various classes and their abilities thrown into the mix. There's a lot more focus on combat and exploration than building in Trove, although you can definitely go crazy with building here too; there's a wide selection of blocks and decorations that can help you create your dream base.



Creativerse

Creativerse, like Minecraft, is a voxel-based sandbox game, however it's free to play. It features a comparatively more modern aesthetic, going for a more Fortnite-ish look. As for game-



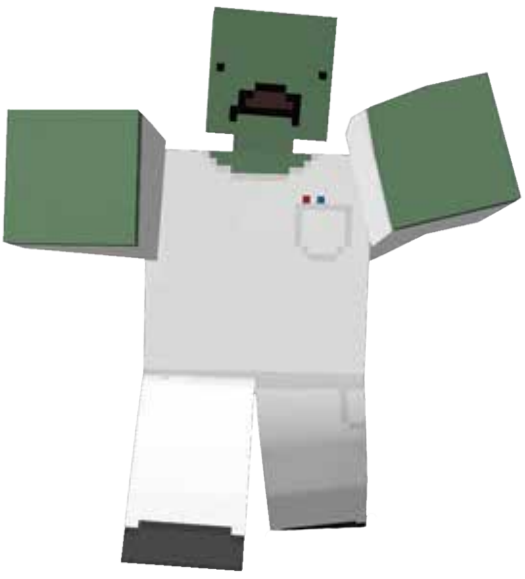
play, Creativerse probably comes closest to Minecraft out of anything else in this list. You can be rest assured that this is not some cheap knock-off, and has some things it does differently from Minecraft, including some features we wouldn't mind seeing in Minecraft! For instance, the way you acquire materials or "mine" blocks in this game is different from Minecraft, as is the way you harvest ores. Crafting is quite expansive, and so are the biomes you can explore. Combat is also more dynamic when compared to Minecraft. One of the best features we think is the blueprint feature, which makes building structures incredibly easy. Additionally, the game has Steam Workshop support for mods. However, Creativerse has a paid Pro version that comes with, well, a lot of pros, such additional items, and QoL benefits like increased stamina and inventory slots. If that doesn't bother you, this is a great free Minecraft alternative.

Robocraft

For the more PvP focused Minecraft players, we have Robocraft. Build machines that you will ride into battle in an arena, and pit them against the creations of other players. While it doesn't have the vast open-world and exploration that Minecraft offers, it's definitely a whole new level of PvP, with an added focus on being able to build and customise the battle machine of your dreams. Of course, once you build your machine, you will need to test it, because you need to be able to control it as well, which adds a whole new layer to the crafting aspect in Robocraft. Finding the right balance between maneuverability, attack and defense is all part of the fun with Robocraft. The game features realistic physics, for instance if the propeller on one side of your flying robot gets destroyed, you're going to be flying lopsided.

Unturned

The best way to describe Unturned would be zombie apocalypse meets Minecraft. Okay, maybe not the best way since



Minecraft already has zombies... hmm. Unlike Minecraft, Unturned is a zombie survival game first, with a Minecraft aesthetic slapped on top. The game was made by a one-man dev, who was a teenager when the game first dropped, so one-teen dev really. Now, several years and hundreds of updates later, it's a pretty solid game, and is still free to play. Minecraft is usually considered a fairly casual-friendly game, Unturned wouldn't exactly fall in that category, you need to scrounge around for resources while trying to avoid zombies. The challenge is real and in no way diminished by the voxel aesthetic. The game's got plenty of content and depth if you give it a chance.

Roblox

The free to play online MMO phenomenon Roblox is unique in that it's not exactly a game, but a game platform. Roblox is powered entirely by user-generated content, you're free to create your own game, or play one of hundreds of thousands previously created ones. Roblox is a mixed bag of all kinds of contents and genres, and if there's any game you like, there's a chance that Roblox has a blockier clone of the game, from CSGO, to PUBG, to anything really. Roblox is fully free to play, but it does have microtransactions. It is also incredibly popular, with over 120 million



monthly active users, so you should have no problem finding people to play with.

Open source Minecraft – Terasology and Minetest

Terasology started its life as a Minecraft-based tech demo, and is now an open-source game being developed for Windows, Mac and Linux. When it comes to aesthetics, these games look the most similar to Minecraft, more so than anything else on this list. Plus, since Terasology is open source, you can mess around with the source code if you know what you're doing, or simply download one of the many quests and in-game systems that have been created by others to change the way you play the game.



Similar to Terasology, Minetest is also an open-source version of Minecraft for PC, Mac, Linux, and even Android, with complex modding capabilities, for both single and multiplayer worlds.

These games are basically for those who want to go "further beyond" vanilla Minecraft, and possibly want to tinker around and create their own versions of Minecraft.

PAID ALTERNATIVES

Now while for some of you the cost of Minecraft may be the only deterrent to getting the game, for those of you who don't mind paying for a different experience, there are plenty of paid options to fill the void.

PixARK

PixARK is based on Ark: Survival Evolved, which was a fairly popular sandbox survival game back in the day. PixARK takes a lot of elements from Ark and



brings it into a procedurally generated voxel world. Every player has their own quests to complete, and they have to survive while gathering resources and fending off against dinosaurs. The game also has a creative mode if you don't want to deal with survival. On the whole though, PixARK tones down the difficulty of the OG Ark, and adds a lot more casual, and some might even say, fun elements to the mix. Mind you, it's the same developers as well, so you're probably going to encounter a few bugs along the way. :P

Block Story

Block Story is a full blown single-player RPG slapped onto a Minecraft world. You've got classes and skills and abilities and can even tame and ride animals. You've got the usual crafting elements, such as mining for resources and crafting gear, you'll also need to keep yourself and your pet fed etc. There's a lot of content and some QoL features present as well, such as being able to teleport between beds for instance. The game is not without its flaws however, and you'll certainly have an easier time of it if you're willing to invest more money. Not something we're fond of in a paid game that's also single-player. Still, the game has potential and is worth checking out.

Terraria

Terraria is often the first games people will suggest to someone looking for Minecraft alternatives. If Minecraft were 2D and a sidescroller, it would probably be something like Terraria, however Terraria has a lot going for it, in addition to the usual building and crafting. The game is a lot more action oriented, and features a plethora of boss battles and magical abilities that you can use. Additionally, the world is pretty massive, with plenty of variety in biomes and the critters/enemies you can encounter in them. You can find hidden dungeons with baddies and traps and treasure to loot. The game can be a lot to take



in when you get started, but it's a rabbit hole just waiting for you to jump into it.

Eco

Eco is an interesting concept, where players need to work together to build up a civilization that can stop a meteor from destroying the world. It's on this list because its gameplay mechanics are similar to Minecraft, including its overall aesthetic. The game was initially developed as an educational tool to teach economic sustainability.



Lego Worlds

Lego Worlds is basically Minecraft meets LEGO, with a vast open-world for you to go crazy in. If it's just the creative aspect of Minecraft you enjoy, then Lego Worlds definitely has a lot of that to offer. Not much on the survival side of things here though, it's all sunshine and rainbows.

Portal Knights

Portal Knights is a co-op adventure, think Minecraft meets RPG, and a very polished one at that. You got the usual RPG classes, powerful gear to be crafted, quest giving NPCs, in-game events and boss battles, it's got a lot going for it. The "islands" you visit are all randomly-generated and you will scour these islands for the materials and resources you will need to upgrade your items. The game supports up to four player co-op or solo play.



Boundless

Boundless is an MMO sandbox title, where the



focus is on survival. There's a lot of content in this MMO, dare we say even more than Minecraft, and it can easily occupy you for hours. There are hundreds of craftable items, and a player controlled economy, which is pretty standard for MMO games. Its MMO nature definitely pushes towards a more cooperative playstyle, but there's nothing stopping you from trying to wing it solo. The game's world is vast and features an otherworldly aesthetic that simply works for the game.

Dragon Quest Builders

The Dragon Quest games aren't something you'd traditionally associate with Minecraft, but Dragon Quest Builders is exactly that; Dragon Quest meets Minecraft. You've got the usual blocky (but clean) aesthetic, with the gathering resources and building, with a Dragon Quest story slapped on top of it, with you filling in the shoes of a legendary builder. Dragon Quest Builders 2 also adds online gameplay. *





Tabletop DnD

THESE TOOLS ALLOW YOU TO EXPERIENCE TRADITIONAL PEN AND PAPER GAMING USING NEW DIGITAL TOOLS FOR COLLABORATIVE STORYTELLING

BY ADITYA "SPARKLINGPWNIE" MADANAPALLE
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While textual narrative is the heart and soul of traditional role playing games, the experience can be improved considerably with tools that recreate the tabletop experience in a virtual environment. Some of these are pretty advanced and sophisticated, simulating the look and feel of video games, allowing dungeon masters to craft engaging campaigns.

Owlbear Rodeo

Owlbear Rodeo is easily the simplest of the lot to use, and the quickest as well. It has limited features but if you want to get a party up and running in as little time as possible, with the least demanding app in terms of system resources, then just go for Owlbear Rodeo. You have to go to the website, where you can set up a room with a password, then send the link to your party, and they can just click on it to join. The Dungeon Master can then load a map, which is essentially an image file. Here the DM can use their own maps, or one of the many battlemaps available on Reddit. A bar on the right has tokens for common enemies, races and classes, and there are enough choice of tokens available for placeholder ones for monsters or items that are not represented accurately. Users can just drag their tokens



around the map, and getting a game going is as easy as that!

Now there are a couple of extra features that makes Owlbear Rodeo really appealing. The Dungeon Master can create a fog on the map, which is great for exploring stuff like jungles, caves, mazes and catacombs. The players will be able to see only the portion of the map revealed by the DM. There is also a handy scale, that can be used to measure the distance between two points, which is great for finding out if baddies are within range of weapons or spells, and also to find out exactly how much a player can move on any given turn. Users can also attack sticky notes around the map and a creative DM can use this feature to give more background information about a location, such as descriptions of items in the room or



back stories. On top of that there is a pretty sophisticated drawing toolbox, that allows you to create shapes, and scribble directly onto the map. Note that the eraser tool works a bit differently, always deleting the whole shape or line or patch of paint drawn, instead of selectively erasing out only the parts that you move over. There are just enough features to make this a great tool to use quickly and out of the box.

Talespire

TaleSpire is in Early Access and is in the early stages of product development, so there is a lot of potential for where this tool can go in the future. It is essentially like a 3D version of Inkarnate, allowing DMs to craft custom maps by using preset assets in a digital library included within the app. Right

now, there are only a few tiles and not a lot of range, but is still sufficient to create experiences for most regular campaigns. Each of the users can move their own characters, with tools for measuring distance and area of effect. From the DM's side, things can get pretty complicated with making doors, fog and even ambient soundscapes. The DM can craft the entire campaign in game, with multiple maps for the players. For the players, the whole experience is a lot like straight up playing a videogame.

The good thing about Talespire is that it plugs in directly to your DnD Beyond accounts. Users can also send messages to chat in the game itself, and there is a really funny emote system that keeps getting more complex. All the dice needed for



rolling can be thrown onto the board itself, bouncing off the figures, which is a nice way of doing it. Creating maps is a fast and easy process, but the really great thing about this software is the ability to create complex, layered three dimensional maps. So it is totally possible to create a multi storey house for people to explore on their own for example. The great thing is that the DM can go into the build mode and change stuff around in real-time, even when there are players already in a party. There are a few drawbacks to Talespire though, the software costs about ₹569 and requires all the players to purchase a copy, it is fairly demanding in terms of system use, and it is easy to stress out a laptop where Discord and Talespire are being used at the same time, which is a frequent scenario. Navigating the software is pretty complex, especially when it comes to changing the lev-

els, and going higher up or underground, or underwater that can take some getting used to. However, as we mentioned, this is a software that is still in Early Access, and is getting better all the time.

Foundry VTT

Foundry is a 2D environment, where the DM just loads the maps, imports the characters from DnD Beyond, and you are good to go! The VTT in the name stands for Virtual Tabletop, and that is exactly what this is. Once the characters are loaded, you get to pick all their spells and attacks from a handy list available on the interface. Many of the common spells and attacks have really cool animations, and the funny thing is that if you roll and miss, than the animation attack misses too! The really cool thing about Foundry VTT is a cone of vision, where the DM does not have to create a fog, it gets created automatically. Only what the players can see is lit up, which can be an interesting experience as users waiting just outside a door for example, may not be able to see what the rest of the party is doing within a room, something that is difficult to pull off in other virtual tabletops. The underlying system is powerful and modular, supports mods and is very flexible. There are a lot of things you can do with Foundry, and the software strikes a good balance of simplicity and features.

This is a web app and not a standalone app, which is problematic in its own way, at least in terms of consistency of experience. The app does take quite a time to load, is demanding on system resources, and can randomly freeze or crash the browser. While only the Dungeon Master needs to pay for Foundry to allow all the players to access the instance, it does require the use of Hamachi or Zerotier to set up a virtual LAN among the players if many people need to use the tool. However, the good thing about Foundry is that it is flexible enough and works almost the same even if the DM only streams their own version, without allowing the others to participate in the game at all. *



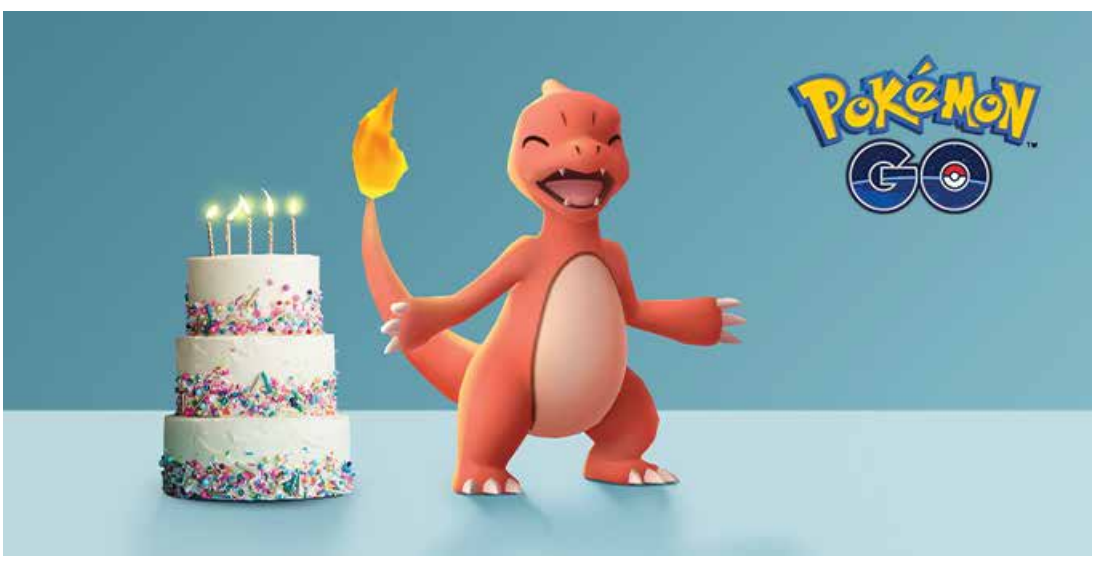
WE TAKE A LOOK AT HOW IT CHANGED MOBILE GAMING

BY SHREY "TWINKLEFAIRY" PACHECO
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It's hard to believe it, but Pokemon Go is now 5 years old. What seemed like just another game at launch turned into a worldwide phenomenon that got more mainstream recognition than any other mobile game before. In fact, one could argue that it has gotten more recognition than any game since, including PUBG Mobile. So on its 5th anniversary, we look back at how Pokemon Go changed mobile gaming.

Helping turn smartphones into a legitimate gaming platform

Around 2015/16, the smartphone was not that big a deal when it came to gaming. Sure, there were a lot of popular games on the platform like Subway Surfer, Angry Birds, Jetpack Joyride, and many more. AAA developers still preferred to stick with the established platforms. That changed when Nintendo and Niantic partnered to release Pokemon Go. In fact, it was so popular and raked in so much money that AAA developers had to sit up and take notice of the smartphone as a legitimate gaming platform. It pretty much paved the way for titles like PUBG, Call of Duty, Fortnite, and more to come to the smartphone space.



Made gamers exercise

The Pokemon franchise has always been about getting gamers out of their homes. This is why the title was almost exclusive to Nintendo's handheld consoles. Do note that the Switch is technically a handheld platform too. The smartphone seemed like a natural fit for the game. Parents everywhere were happy that their kids were going outside, while kids were more than happy to walk about catching that elusive Charizard or capturing a Gym. It was multiplayer gaming in the best way possible. Meeting friends, going places, doing things together.

Brought AR to the masses, kinda...

Augmented reality was experimented with by a number of different companies and platforms. Most notable of these was Microsoft and its Hololens wearable. But Pokemon Go seemed to work quite well. To be real, the AR in Pokemon Go wasn't actually AR. It was more like a 3D character being added to the image from a camera. However, that was enough for both



Google and Apple to release ARCore and ARKit respectively to push for more AR games. Sadly, AR games haven't yet taken off with the last major AR title, Minecraft Earth, shutting down in June 2021.

Made the world adapt to gamers

The thing with Pokemon Go is that the game made Pokemon Gyms and PokeStops extremely important, which obviously attracted a lot of players. These locations were selected on how notable they were. However, Niantic didn't really notify these locations. So you can imagine the confusion as hundreds of players would suddenly congregate on locations, surprising the occupants. As such, many locations such as monuments and religious places had to put up signs to dissuade people from trespassing on private property. However, there were some other locations that seemed more welcoming to their new visitors. On the darker side of things though, many people did die when playing the game, resulting in authorities warning users about the dangers of playing the game.

While Pokemon Go's popularity faded almost as quickly as it rose, the game is still popular among hardcore gamers. In fact, the game is still one of the biggest earners on mobile. Add to this the regular slew of updates that the game gets, and it looks like the game will be a part of the culture for a very long time. *



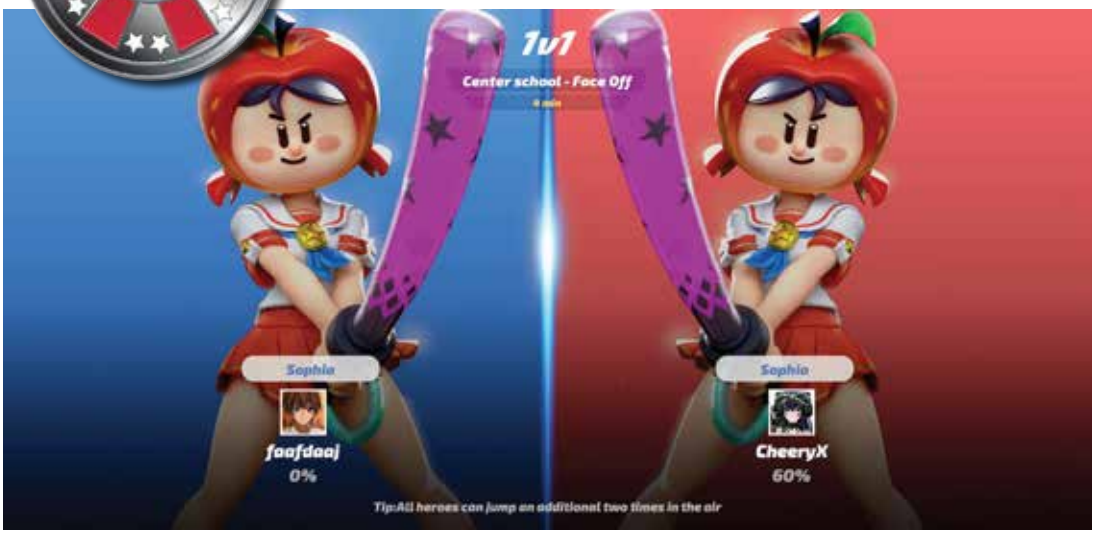
MOBILE MADNESS

YOU HAVE TO TRY THESE GAMES OUT ON YOUR SMARTPHONE!

BY TEAM SKOAR!
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Flash Party

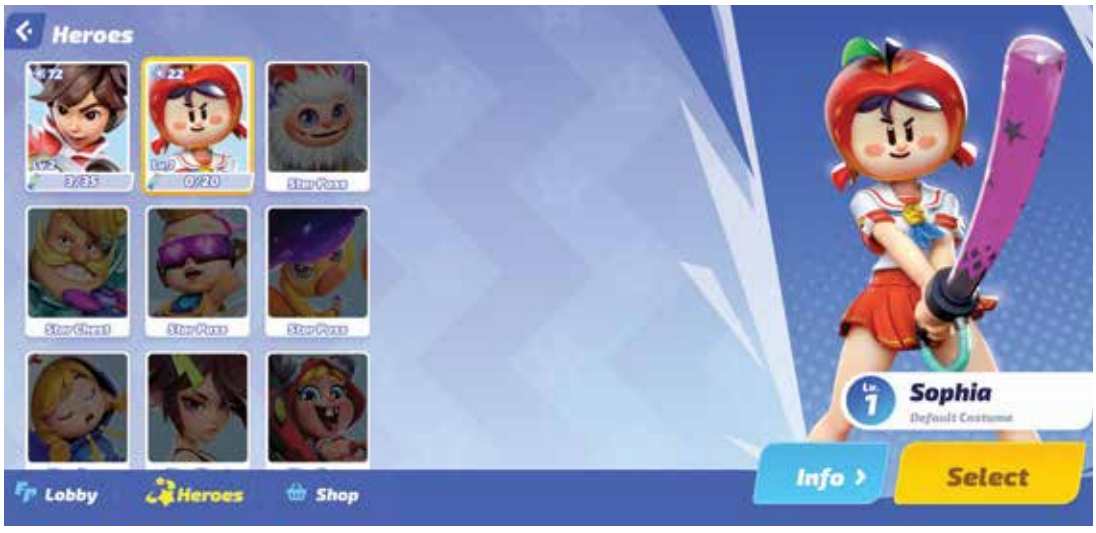
From the makers of Muse Dash and Human Fall Flat, comes this 2D platformer game that is both additive and rage inducing at the same time. Flash Party is a 2D platformer game developed by XD Games. It follows a simple (and literal) concept of "last man standing wins". Flash Party is a PvP online game, that means that you will be matched with real players around the world and the main objective of the game is to knock the opponent off the platform three times. Do that and you win the round.





But the way this whole "last man standing" is implemented is a bit different. The combat mechanics of this game are what make it so special. On your left thumb, as always, you will get the movement joystick. On your right thumb, you will get the jump button, the special ability button and the attack button. That's it. The whole combat of the game relies on those three buttons. As soon as you are matched with a player and you enter the game,





you will have to defend against your opponent's attacks and meanwhile land some hits on your opponent causing him damage and eventually knocking him out of the platform.

The special ability button and the attack button, both are direction sensitive. Meaning, you don't just have to tap them to attack, you have to swipe in the direction you want to attack too. The direction plays an important part as it will decide the intensity and the type of attack that your player will perform. For example, with Sophia, if you swipe left or right on the special ability button, she will perform four consecutive strikes on her opponent using her bat but if you swipe up or down, provid-

ed your timing and placing is right, she can directly knock the opponent out of the playing field.

Coming to the heroes, there are several heroes that you can either buy using micro-transactions or unlock the regular way by just playing more. Each hero comes with its own unique special ability and stats. The stats too, can be upgraded using in-game currency or micro-transactions.

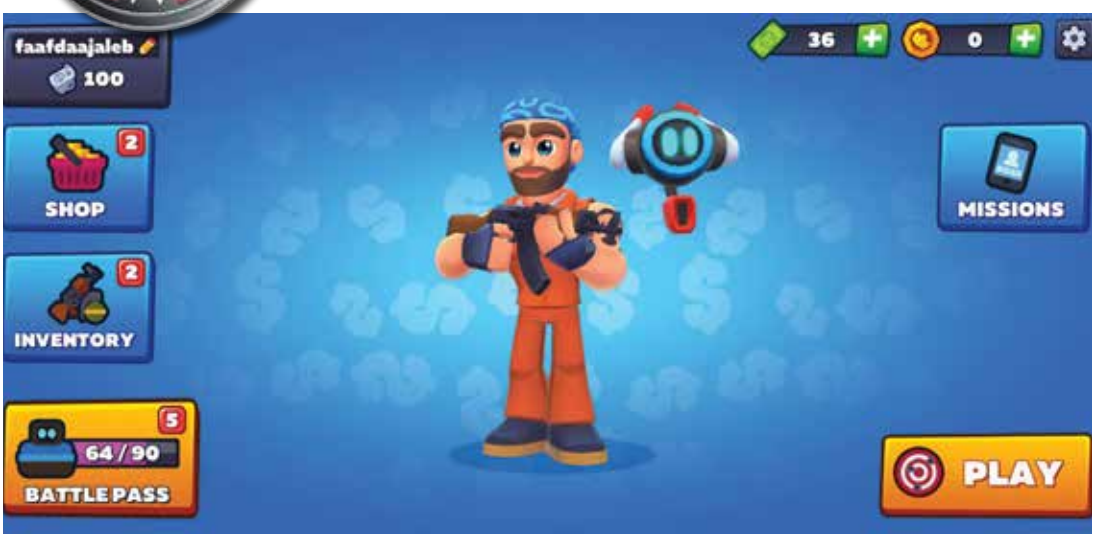
Overall, this game might seem like a button masher where you just have to mash the attack button mindlessly, but once you actually complete 2-3 battles, you will realise the importance of timing, placement and direction of attack. We highly recommend you give this one a try. It supports both online play as well as friendly play too where you can create a room and play with your friends.

Happy Zone

Happy Zone is a battle royale game developed by PARTY ROOM studios. The thing that sets this game apart from other games in this genre is it's casual approach towards the battle royale genre. Usually, when we see 'battle royale' mentioned somewhere, we immediately think of a fast paced, high action, survival game with next gen graphics and mechanics. Well, Happy Zone does none of that. Instead, it focuses on just one thing - making battle royale as casual as possible.



In the game, you will be matched with



just 12 other players and all the genre's common rules apply here i.e. you have to be the last one standing and there will be a circle closing inwards, forcing players to a specific part of the map. For the map, since the game is relatively new to the scene,







it has only one map. But, for 12 players, the size of the map is more than enough. You will be spawned in the outskirts of the map in a "jail - cell" and the other players too, will be spawned in similar "jail - cells".

Coming to the fighting mechanics, the player can be moved with a dynamic joystick which is - by default - mapped to your left thumb. For the right thumb, there are a number of things you can do. You have a roll button, a reload button, an emote button, a grenade button and a fire strike button. Notice how



there's no fire button present here? Well, in this game, the shooting happens automatically. That means that as soon as you are close enough to the enemy, the game will automatically fire your gun for you. Another thing that will happen automatically are the melee attacks. Whenever you are very close to the enemy, you will put your gun aside and start hitting the enemy with your fists. The "health" system in this game works a bit differently. You will start with full health by default and your player will automatically heal if the health goes down. The healing process is slow but it will heal you fully if not interrupted.

You can upgrade the player, the weapon and even your robot via micro-transactions. The transactions will happen with the in-game currency which you can earn by completing challenges

or opening chests or you can simply just buy them using real life money. There's also an option of the "Battle Pass". The free version will give you common chests and some rare ones from time to time and the paid one will obviously give rare and epic chests more frequently.

All in all, Happy Zone is a hyper casual battle royale game meant for all ages. If you are looking for a lightweight, addictive game to pass your time, we'd highly recommend that you try this one out.

Evan's Remains

Evan's Remains is a 2D platformer puzzle game that is sure to catch your eye. Even though the game is 2D, the animations more than make up for it and the intriguing story is sure to have you playing for days.

We start with a letter from Evan which states that he is at an island in the Pacific and that he wants Dysis, our protagonist, to come and meet him there. As Dysis reaches the island, she is stranded as her boat has crashed and all she can do is try and find Evan on this uninhabited island.

As Dysis moves ahead while giving constant updates to her remote scientist friend, Nikolai, she faces tons and tons of monolithic puzzles which seem to have futuristic technology. Dysis needs to pass through the various puzzles all in a different way and by making use of the various







different monoliths that seem to have different functions.

The graphics on the game are a very beautiful pixel design and the landscape in the background is something to sit down and listen to lo fi music to. The music in the game is also very well placed with a soft jingly tune while you're travelling through the beach and intense drumming where needed.

From the character design to the animations, Evan's Remains will keep you hooked throughout your playthrough and surprise you every time you think you know something.

As the story unfolds, the mystery grows, Is Evan even on the island? What is the weird guy doing on this uninhabited island? Will we find out? We'll have to keep playing I guess.

Farlight 84

Farlight 84 is a battle royale game developed by Miracle

games. The best thing about this game is its storyline. Whaat, storyline?! Its 2081 and all the people have connected their brains to a centralized network, an unknown virus swept across the world and turned those brains into Zomborgs (zombies & cyborgs) and the survivors are led by the lead character “Nova” and they settle on a island called Isle cities and the games begin!

The gameplay is not on par with other popular BR games available in the market like Battlegrounds India or Call of Duty mobile, but being a sci-fi BR and one of its kind, it’s worth checking out.

The weapons are provided to the characters by the four big manufacturers and each weapon has its own abilities which can be enhanced and they really feel futuristic, like they belong to 2081.

There are a wide variety of futuristic vehicles as well, cars with guns loaded on hoods and flame throwers on four legged









vehicles and there are also hovercrafts and war SUVs.

The controls of the game are similar to most battle royale games but there are buttons to control your jetpack because it's 2081 and the players are called capsulers. And you can also unlock a wide range of characters, each with different and unique abilities of their own. If you like playing sci-fi games you must give Farlight 84 a shot.

Botworld Adventure

Botworld adventure is an open-world RPG and the most colourful game we have played on mobile in quite a while, let's go directly to game-play.

You're the botmaster and you have a team of AI powered bots with lots of abilities to upgrade and yes you can upgrade the bot's AI as well. You have to collect scrap from around the 12 unique zones in order to upgrade the bots and their abilities and find blueprints to unlock new bots. When you're at home,





called Scavenger's Landing, you'll meet a lot of other colourful characters and go on challenges that are assigned to you by the mayor. This earns you some coins, which you will need to upgrade and make your bot army stronger.

While collecting scraps around the map, you'll find other hostile botmasters waiting for you if you take their scrap. Like most mobile RPGs out there, Botworld Adventure features an Auto-Battle mode, just tap on it and your bots will fight on their







own. The more you upgrade your AI, the better your bots will fight. You gain experience when you win a battle and that will also be used to upgrade your bots with the coins we mentioned earlier and other materials you collect from all over the map.

The gameplay is so soothing, if we talk about controls, you can move your character with a free joy-stick or mark the place where you want to go by tapping it and your botmaster will make their way to it. The music and even the sound effects in battles are amazing.

The game is still in early access so you'll notice some minor lags and glitches sometimes but other than that, we didn't really come across any issues. *

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