SKOAR!*

LIVE TO GAME

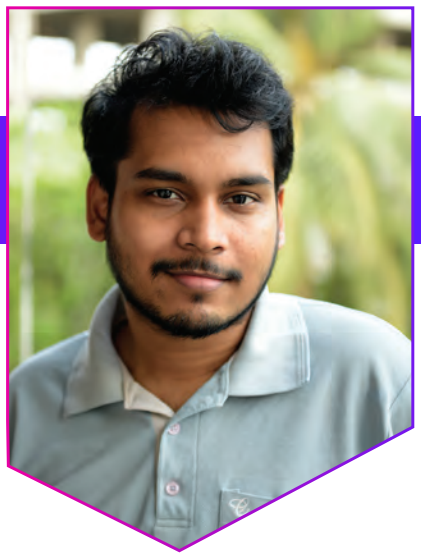


IT'S ALL IN THE CARDS

The best card-based video games you can play

THAT'S NOT META

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



So, Facebook is meta now. If you're a gamer, you realise how odd that sounds because Facebook has been anything but meta for the past few years. Will changing the name make much of a difference? Who knows. The meta Facebook is going for is derived from the Greek word meta, which means 'after' or 'beyond'. For us gamers though, meta has an entirely different meaning, the most effective tactic available. Meta.

Anyway, what does Mark Zuckerberg's "metaverse" bring to the table? At least on the gaming front of things, we don't really care about the rest. Socialising? Pffft. In his words, we can do anything you can imagine in the metaverse. "In this future, you will be able to teleport instantly as a hologram to be at the office without a commute, at a concert with friends, or in your parents' living room to catch up. This will open up more opportunities no matter where you live. You'll be able to spend more time on what matters to you, cut down time in traffic, and reduce your carbon footprint."

That sounds pretty cool, to be honest. On paper at least. The first thing that comes to mind is something like Ready Player One, or even the recent Free Guy movie in a way. The world is going virtual.

The demonstrations we've seen so far just look like slightly better VR. So you're going to need a VR headset I'm assuming,

which in turn already puts a barrier on the number of people that can use Meta in the way advertised. Facebook does own Oculus, so there's another revenue angle in it for them. This also means they certainly know their way around VR technology and hardware, so I don't really have any doubts about how the experience might be.

What I'm most interested in about meta is that Zuckerberg announced it will be a collaborative effort between creators and developers. Naturally, we want game devs to jump in on this, and see where it goes. In a virtual world, the possibilities are quite literally, limitless. Imagine being able to switch between games by teleporting from one game to another. Imagine being able to take items from one game into another, and the item actually working the same in the other game. In this virtual world, all your stuff would theoretically be tied to one account, and not several different accounts with different games. That's the metaverse for ya. I'm definitely curious to know what will come out of it.

Facebook the social media will still remain Facebook though, and try as it might, it's never going to be meta again. *

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SKOAR!*
LIVE TO GAME

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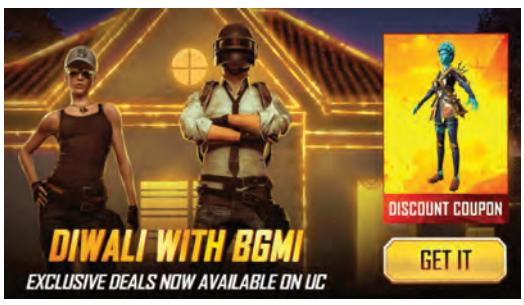
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What's New



BGMI CELEBRATES DIWALI

With Diwali just around the corner, Krafton Inc. has announced special offers for Battlegrounds Mobile India players in order to celebrate the occasion.



PUBG: NEW STATE RELEASING NOVEMBER 11

Krafton Inc. has announced that its upcoming mobile game, PUBG: New State will launch on mobile devices next month. The company also notes that the game has crossed the 50 million pre-registration mark.



FACEBOOK GETS SERIOUS ABOUT GAMING IN INDIA

Facebook has announced its first-ever gaming event in India. Called FBGamingPressStart, the virtual event will be spread across two days and aims to give game developers, publishers, and creators across India an opportunity to build, grow their communities, and monetize on Facebook.gal programs via the developers' security system and community monitoring. In simpler terms, these accounts were banned for using illegal cheats such as aimbot, wall hacks, speed mods or even a combination of multiple hacks.



APPLE MUSIC MAKES ITS WAY TO SONY PS5

In a move that is sure to interest gamers and music lovers, Sony has announced that Apple Music will now be available on the PlayStation 5. The company notes that this makes it the first gaming console to integrate Apple Music. This will allow gamers to listen to music from the PS5 either during or between their gameplay sessions.

On the official Sony PS5 blog, Erin Metzger, Director of Product Management at Sony Interactive Entertainment stated, "starting today, PS5 users with an Apple Music subscription can enjoy more than 90 million songs from Apple Music, tens of thousands of curated playlists, music videos in 4K, Apple Music Radio streaming today's hits, classics, and country live, and personalized playlists based on your music preferences.



NINTENDO SWITCH'S JOY-CON DRIFT ISSUES MAY NEVER BE FULLY RESOLVED

In a post on the official Nintendo website, Ko Shiota, Head of Nintendo's Technology Division and Toru Yamashita of the Technology Development Department answer some questions regarding the development of the new Nintendo Switch OLED. In one of the answers, both of them suggest that the Joy-Con drift issue won't be going away anytime soon.

For the uninitiated, Joy-Con drift is the colloquial term for the issue wherein the Joy-Con controller on the Switch would receive false inputs, even when they weren't touched.

UP AND COMING



CALL OF DUTY: VANGUARD

It's the clash of the FPS titans, with CoD Vanguard going back to WWII, and this time it's all about special forces.
Release date - November

Release date – October 7



FORZA HORIZON 5

The next installment in the Forza series is all set to blow your rigs up with its hyperrealistic graphics. This time in Mexico.

Release date - November 9



BATTLEFIELD 2042

The other titan in the upcoming clash of the FPS titans. Unlike CoD, Battlefield 2042 will not feature a single-player campaign.

Release date - November 19

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Once a guerilla, always a guerilla

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

Far Cry 6 takes us to the fictional island of Yara, a beautiful, Cuba-inspired island which also happens to be ruled by a fascist dictator, Anton Castillo. At this point, everyone knows what to expect from a Far Cry game, at least in terms of gameplay. Understandably, it can get pretty hard to hype a new Far Cry game because of this. Not for Ubisoft though, who pulled out the big guns when they announced that Giancarlo Esposito would be the one playing primary antagonist, El Presidente, Anton Castillo. That definitely put the game on our radar. So here we are, we had a run at Far Cry 6, and here's our review.

STORY

Going off of what we said in the intro, Yara is a fictional island in the Caribbean that's ruled by El Presidente, Anton Castillo. His dream is to restore Yara to its former glory, which he plans to do by selling Viviro to the world. What is Viviro you ask? It's a smokable cure to cancer that happens to grow only on Yara. Viviro is farmed and produced by slaves, or as Castillo likes to call them, outcasts and fake Yarans.

In what is a rather gripping intro sequence, you, the protagonist, begin the game trying to flee from Castillo's tyranny. The game truly begins after your failed escape attempt. You can choose to be either male or female, but your name remains the same either way. Dani Rojas. There's no face customisation either, kinda like in Assassin's Creed Odyssey.

Dani is an orphan, who also served time in Yara's military. This does two things, justifies Dani being able to handle weapons, and also Dani's connection with the people of Yara; he or she knows what the people of Yara are going through.

That's about all we'll say about the story in order to keep things spoiler-free. What we can tell you though, in typical Far Cry fashion there are plenty of twists and turns in the story. The story itself is a lot more closely tied to reality compared to other Far Cry titles, some of which even have supernatural elements tied to them. Compared to Far Cry 5's Joseph Seed, Castillo wouldn't seem out of place if he was an actual person





in today's world, which in turn puts a spotlight on the kinds of things people like Castillo do in the name of results. Food for thought.

GAMEPLAY

If you've played any Far Cry game, or open-world Ubisoft game recently for that matter, you should already be familiar with all of the game's controls. Sneak up on enemies and assassinate them with your machete, scale cliffs and buildings with a grappling hook, use your phone to mark enemies and glean their weaknesses, etc.

Far Cry 6 also has a stealth mechanic that's similar to the Assassin's Creed games, wherein you can simply holster your





weapon and the guards will pay you less heed. Wander too close to them and they'll start to suspect you. Of course, if you're trespassing a high security area, they're not going to think twice.

It wouldn't be a Ubisoft game if there wasn't plenty of stuff to do on the side. There's unique weapons to be found, hunting missions to complete and side quests to pick up. In typical Far Cry fashion, you start out as an underdog with little to no equipment. As you progress through the game you'll start upgrading your arsenal using the trusty old workbench and of course, finding new weapons. Then there's the gamechanger, the Supremo.

The Supremo looks like a defunct jetpack, but it's actually a pretty busted piece of equipment. You start off with a flame-thrower and rocket launcher combo which is just as overpowered as it sounds. It's also a massive fire hazard, so be careful of setting yourself on fire while you burn everything else to the ground. You'll eventually be able to unlock more Supremo, including stuff like an EMP, that shuts down security systems and vehicles. Super handy.

Combat in the game feels smooth and fluid, you can take the sneaky approach or go in guns blazing. You can modify your weapons for stealth or to focus on enemy weaknesses. They can also be customised with some bling, like charms and such.

Far Cry 5's Fangs for Hire system also makes a comeback,



this time as Amigos. No human followers this time around, but who needs them when you've got Guapo the crocodile following you around. Or Chicharrón the rooster having your back. Your amigos serve as great distractions, but also do pretty well in combat.

Yara has a lot of wild horses for some reason. Wild horses you can actually ride, which is nice. All wild horses you find can be dropped off at a pick up point, making them available for you to call later. You can pet and feed just about all of the wildlife on Yara, which is amazing. Of course, if horses aren't quite your speed, every kind of vehicle is up for grabs, from land to sea to sky. Driving is not the best experience in the game though, and does feel a bit disorienting.

GRAPHICS AND AUDIO

The game looks amazing, Yara is a beautiful island with beautiful beaches, teeming with wildlife and greenery. We played the game on an RX6800 XT, so we were able to play the game on Ultra settings without any hitches. There was a bit of screen tearing

MOAR!

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

DEVELOPERS
Ubisoft Toronto, Ubisoft Milan

PUBLISHERS
Ubisoft, Ubisoft Milan

PLAYED ON
Microsoft Windows

PRICE
₹ 2,999 (EGS)



here and there but that may have had more to do with our monitor than the game.

Coming to the audio, you've got a pretty generic action-adventure soundtrack that works well with the game. The radios in houses and cars are all blasting upbeat Spanish music that fits the whole beach aesthetic of the game. Then there's the voice acting which is fantastic. It's one of the things Far Cry does really well, and they've certainly maintained that in Far Cry 6, especially, we don't even need to say it, Giancarlo Esposito, who plays his role to perfection.

VERDICT

Far Cry 6 is a Far Cry game through and through, which is not necessarily a bad thing. It's got all the things you would expect from a Far Cry game, and then some. Yara is beautiful and lots of fun to explore, and the story is pretty good as far as Far Cry games are concerned. Overall, if you enjoy the Far Cry format, or open world games in general with a decent but fairly predictable plot, then Far Cry 6 is an easy pick up. *



NOSTALGIA REVISITED

BY MITHUN "BARBARIAN_MONKEY" MOHANDAS

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If you grew up playing video games in the `90s then you'd no doubt have played tonnes of RTS games. You had the Command & Conquer series and Starcraft for futuristic combat, Warcraft and Warhammer 40K for high-fantasy skirmishes and then there was Age of Empires for historical battles. Quite a few of us thank the Age of Empires franchise for piquing our interest in History. "An army marches on its stomach", said Napoleon Bonaparte, or at least the voice actor did in AOE2, the most memorable game from the entire franchise. One that has left lasting memories that have survived more than two decades. Every AOE game that came after it tried hard to step into its shoes. There was Age of Mythology which went its own way detracting from history and delving into mythology, while Age of Empires 3 turned things upside down with a new engine. They all fell short. And over the years, true RTS games have taken a backseat to action-packed first-person action adventure titles. Brainless is the way to go if you want to earn money from gaming.

We don't know if Microsoft had planned AOE4 all along or if it was that one redditor who asked Bill Gates for it in his AMA that triggered it all. All we can say is that we're thankful for another proper RTS title after all these years. Here's what we felt about the game.

VISUALS AND AUDIO

Relic Games does a great job with the graphics in Age of Empires IV. It is very much the true successor to AOE2,





unlike AOE3. AOE 3 made a drastic change to the way the players interacted with the map and the way cutscenes played out and that didn't go down with a lot of fans for that reason. AOE4 goes back to how AOE2 did things and takes the visuals up a notch or two. Just enough to make the game feel modern and look aesthetically pleasing but not too much that it feels completely out of place in the franchise. In a way, you could say that like all RTS games, AOE4 is built in such a way that your PC doesn't crawl to a standstill once you build hundreds of units and place tens of buildings into mid or late-game. So no, this doesn't kill your system the way Sid Meier's Civilisation games do.

The level of detail for buildings and units is quite decent for a game that's played from 30,000 foot view. But don't expect it





to scale once you zoom in. The units seem fairly lacking in detail up close and that's entirely forgivable. After all, this is Age of Empires and not Total War.

We played the game on a system built using the Intel Core i9-10900K coupled with an NVIDIA RTX 3060 Ti and the frame rates were consistently in the higher 70s to lower 80s. The game is optimised for processors with higher frequencies and isn't as multi-threaded as many of its contemporaries so don't expect performance to scale with a higher core-count CPU. There is a slight sluggishness when you move the frame around which is quite irksome considering that this is an RTS game wherein there is a lot of camera movement. You do get used to it after a while but we feel this should be handled better.





Then there's the HUD, one of the most important aspects of an RTS title. It's very similar to what we've been used to in AOE2 and other RTS titles. The minimap is on the right with various map orientation and alert buttons whereas the building and unit options are on the left. The summary of resources is also on the left and not at the top of the screen. This makes it a bit easier since you don't need to be shooting your eyes all over the HUD every three seconds. The alerts are on the right, this also includes attack alerts, since the minimap is where most RTS players rest their eyes, this is a welcome change. As for the keyboard shortcuts or hotkeys, Relic has chosen to go with a combination of QWERTY+keys rather than what we were used to in AOE2. That requires a bit of context since AOE2 also has different hotkeys. Before the HD version, you had to remember the hotkeys for each building and units. That changed with AOE2: HD and AOE4 has continued with the same. This makes the game more beginner friendly and helps get more gamers used to the hotkeys.

On the audio front, there is a vast assortment of audio cues from the units and buildings. And that changes as you progress through the ages. Your civilians pick up newer audio cues each time you upgrade and this makes for a richer experience. The background score is pleasant and makes use of a dynamic system of layering which is triggered by the number of combat actions on the screen. One moment, you could be sitting idly watching the villagers harvest crops with a soothing harp playing in the background and suddenly you'd be shocked to action as hundreds of horns in a way that would put Hans Zimmer to



shame. The devs have included a combat score to the camera view which dynamically adds layers of music based on how deep you are in the throes of battle.

Overall, the visuals don't alienate AOE4 from the Age of Empires franchise but at the same time, there's a decent amount of improvement to the level of detail that makes the game stand up to its contemporaries.

CAMPAIGNS

If you were hoping for campaigns that are carried forth with a nice voice-over just as we'd seen in Age of Empires II, then you might not get exactly what you were looking for. Yes, there is voice-over acting, but the focus has moved from the voice



to the visuals. Instead of elaborate sketches done on parchment paper or sheepskin, we are met with visuals that involve live action roleplay and animated sketches that have been overlaid over the actual locations where the battles or engagements had come to be. Like Age of Empires II, there are plenty of informative videos that open up once you complete a campaign mission. In a way, the campaign is set up in a documentary fashion. While this might detract from the way things were done in Age of Empires II, we see this as a welcome change wherein the studios have leveraged modern methods of story-telling within the campaigns.

As for the campaigns themselves, there's a lot more European theatres of war in Age of Empires IV. While this might make the campaign seem white-washed, we should note that the Age of Empires II: HD and Definitive Editions have both done a great job of covering some of the more popular South-East Asian and South American historical figures already. And honestly, the European conflicts have been documented in better detail in the history books compared to other regions. Also, Age of Empires IV will have rich expansions just as much as the previous iterations so they needed to leave out some of the conflicts for later expansions.

GAMEPLAY

The civilisations in Age of Empires IV are more distinguished from each other than ever before. Back in Age of Empires II, we had most of the technology tree being the same across the



entire gamut of playable civilisations. Only a couple of unique technologies and one or two unique units were the only differentiators aside from the civilisation bonuses. In Age of Empires IV, the civilisation bonuses are much more diverse and the units as well as the buildings are much differentiated. However, the number of playable civilisations are far lesser than what we saw in Age of Empires II.

It's not just cosmetic changes that make the buildings and units seem apart, even the way they function is differentiated. For example, the Mongols have unique buildings and the proximity of certain buildings to others, enable additional tech and features. Also, certain buildings can only be built on geographical features so you'll have to fight your way to get that built. This adds an element of balance to what appears to be a powerful civilisation.

MULTIPLAYER

Speaking of balance, certain civilisations can seem unbalanced at first sight but as you figure out the mechanics and counters, you'll be able to better utilise units and buildings. We had tonnes of victories in multiplayer battles with the English civilisation at the onset but as we went through more battles, the French and Russian civilisations seem to be more powerful and even in some cases, broken.

MOAR!

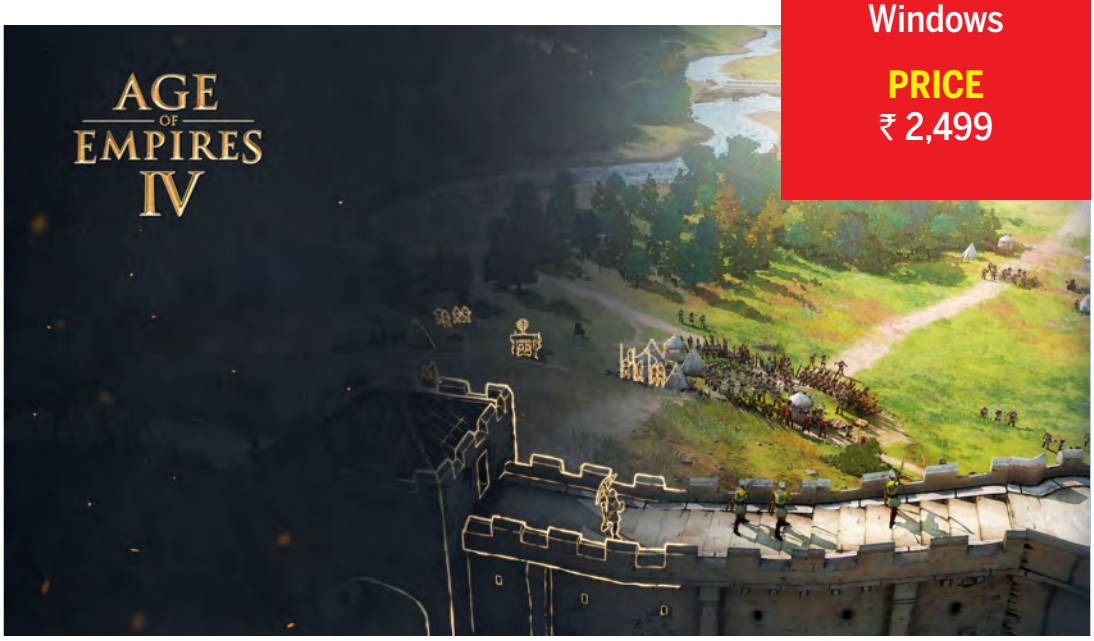
Age of Empires IV

DEVELOPERS
Relic Entertainment, World's Edge

PUBLISHER
Xbox Game Studios

PLATFORMS
Microsoft Windows

PRICE
₹ 2,499





Naval combat is equally interesting. Most players tend to focus on terrestrial combat and are well-versed with terrestrial combat mechanics and naval combat mechanics are often ignored. This would appear to be the case again in Age of Empires IV as the number of water maps in Age of Empires is limited and so are the buildings and the units that they produce. It only seems natural for Naval theatres of war to be on the backburner since there are so few in comparison to terrestrial battles.

CHEESE, STEAK, JIMMY'S

There's no denying that everyone who has played any Age of Empires game has enjoyed a run at the game with the cheat



codes. Whether you'd stockpiled enough resources to end world hunger and build every kid a rollercoaster in their backyard, or if you were zooming across the map in a Shelby Cobra car shooting tonnes of lead at your enemies, or if you'd be bestowed the gift of divine sight that could unravel the fog of war permanently; cheat codes were fun and added a level of silliness to the game. Unfortunately, AOE4 does not come with any cheat codes at launch. We're not saying that it will be the case permanently, but if you were planning on finishing the game over a weekend with a little help, then think again.

VERDICT

Age of Empires IV is very much a hard-core RTS game and a true successor to Age of Empires II. It comes with detailed campaigns, differentiated civilisations and plenty of quality of life upgrades that make it approachable to everyone. We hope it triggers a renewed interest in RTS games for the masses because the fans are certainly hooked. *



IT'S ALL IN THE CARDS

The best card-based video games you can play

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

When you think of a CCG(collectible card game), deck builder, or card battler game the first thing that usually comes to mind is Hearthstone, or the more recent Legends of Runeterra. Of course, they in turn are inspired by even older card games like Magic: the Gathering (heck, we could even drop the Pokemon card game here). While we may not be familiar with Magic the Gathering, we are familiar with shows like Yu-Gi-Oh, or the less popular Duel Masters, which were also card battlers. All of these have plenty in common; the hunt for the strongest and rarest cards, theorycrafting the strongest decks, pitting your creation against other players to see how it fares, and then you're back to square one when you get stomped by pros who have PhDs in the game. This aspect of card games make them one of the most competitive genres out there; also let's not forget, Clash Royal is technically a deck builder too, and it is one of the most competitive games on mobile.

However, there's a lot more to card games if you delve deeper, games from indie studios that experiment and combine card game mechanics with genres in a way you might never have thought possible. We'd probably never have known we could have a deck builder roguelike before Slay the Spire came along – which is obviously on this list. So without further ado, let's take a look at some of the best card games you can play right now. Not counting Solitaire.

MAGIC: THE GATHERING ARENA

Magic: The Gathering is one of the most popular card games period. The game has been around for a long time, easily longer than anything else on this list. As a result, the game has been through a plethora of changes, with multiple formats and gameplay possibilities. Bring all of that possibility to a digital format, and you have Magic: The Gathering Arena, which pairs the game with the visual and animation overhaul you expect from a video game. It's a match made in heaven; who doesn't want to see iconic creatures and characters from fantasy come



alive on their screen? What's more, it's a great place to find and compete against other players, a task that was otherwise rather tedious in the realms of the physical world.

LEGENDS OF RUNETERRA



Riot Games' card game, Legends of Runeterra is in our opinion one of the best card games you can play. Being a bit late to the party, it's had a lot of examples to learn from, and as such it does a lot of things right. It's much easier to acquire the cards you want, and create the decks you want, without relying too much on RNG, or luck. You can work your way towards the cards you want. While the game shares a lot of elements with other card games, it also has plenty of gameplay elements unique to itself, making for a familiar yet unique experience.

Plus, if you're familiar with Riot Games' MOBA, League of Legends, Legends of Runeterra greatly expands on the lore from the game and brings more character and backstory to the characters from the MOBA.

SLAY THE SPIRE



One of the prime examples of Indie genius, combining deck building with roguelike elements, is Slay the Spire. The goal of the game is pretty simple, make your way to the top of the spire. On your way to the top, you will be battling hordes of enemies and building your deck as you go. If you're beaten, you'll find yourself all the way back at the bottom. That's where the roguelike element kicks in, no two runs are the same. Meaning you need to rethink your strategy, and rethink the way you build your new deck. Simple goal, but certainly not simple to achieve. The game encourages experimentation with different builds and paths, you never know, the results could be unexpected.

MONSTER TRAIN

Another combination of the roguelike genre and card building, Monster Train has you take command over two out of five demon clans, a primary and secondary clan. This of course determines the kind of cards you'll have access to. In Monster Train, you're transporting the last burning pyre to Hell, which has frozen over, and this is the only way to save hell. Your train



has three floors, with the Pyre sitting on top, and you need to defend it from the armies of heaven. In a way, the game features tower defence elements as well, as the angels move a floor each round until they're defeated.

You can decide the course of the train which determines the bonuses you will get, and you can also upgrade your cards to create powerful combos.

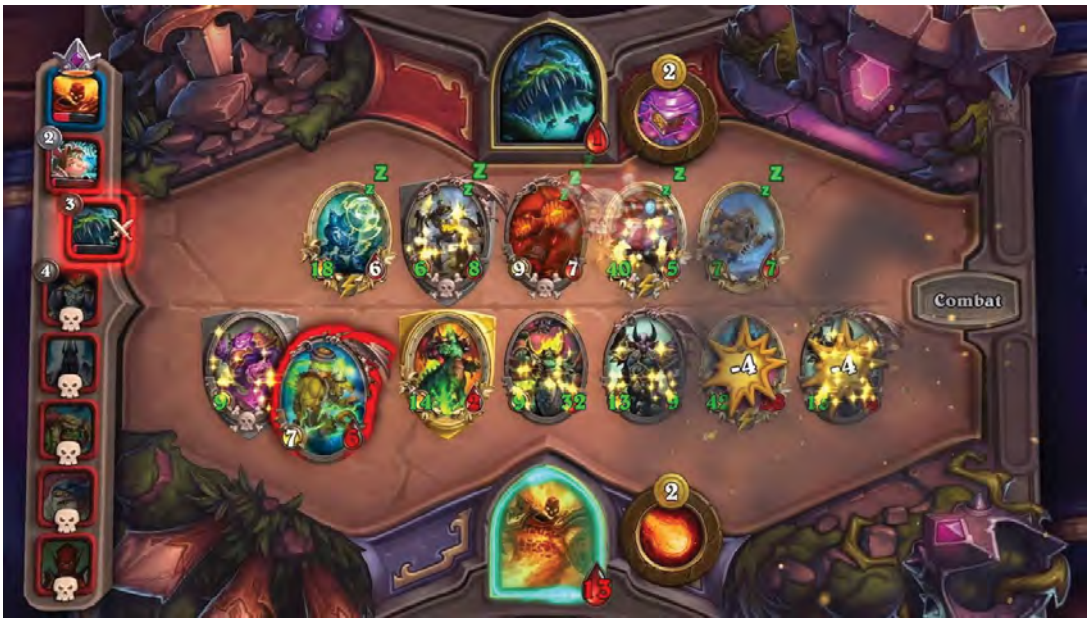
GWENT: THE WITCHER CARD GAME



When the Witcher 3 dropped, we doubt anybody would have thought that they'd end up spending most of their time in-game playing Gwent. It was a great time sink within the

game, building your deck and travelling to taverns around the land in search of powerful cards. Of course, it was a no-brainer for CD Projekt Red to then release Gwent as a standalone game. The standalone version of Gwent is slightly different from the version within The Witcher 3, and features a lot more spells, units and special abilities. There's a lot more content to learn and master, but hey, if we could do it once in The Witcher 3, we can do it again. Besides, the mechanics aren't all that complicated.

HEARTHSTONE



Probably the most well known CCG out there, Hearthstone single-handedly put the deck building card battler genre on the map. Well at least, as a video game. It quickly became one of the most played games on the planet, especially during its peak. The game still has a dedicated player base and an active competitive scene.

What made the game so popular? It was simple and easy to pick up, it was charming and full of personality, and it got regular card expansions and events which kept things fresh.

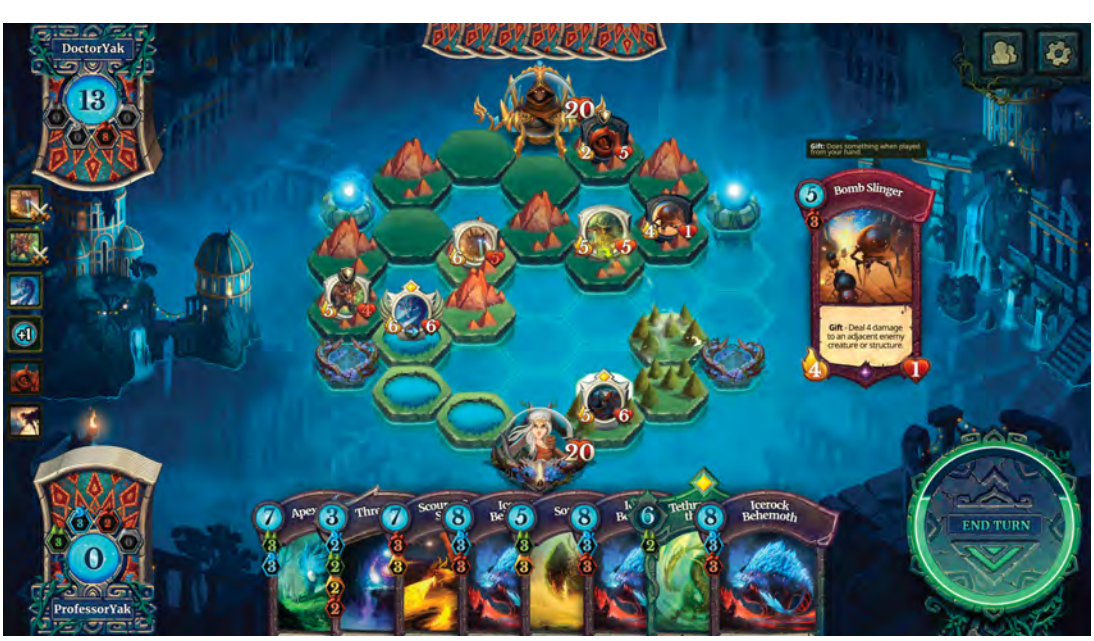
There's also the fact that it's based on Blizzard's World of Warcraft, with plenty of familiar faces and new ones as well. The flavour text, the voice acting, the animations, the board, the expansions and card packs, it all just worked very well, and Blizzard had struck gold with Hearthstone.

SHADOWVERSE



If warlocks and warcraft aren't quite your fancy, i.e., you're not quite into Blizzard's whole high fantasy shtick, then Shadowverse is a good alternative. When it comes to gameplay, Shadowverse is essentially identical to Hearthstone, however, the aesthetic is completely different. Instead of a western RPG aesthetic, Shadowverse uses a more Korean MMO anime-esque aesthetic. While gameplay is the same, Shadowverse does have some extra mechanics, such as evolution of cards, and powerful faction cards which can lead to some ludicrously powerful decks if you know what you're doing.

FAERIA



Another brilliant merger of card game and strategy, Faeria is a card game where you build the board as you play. When the game starts, there are vacant tiles between you and your opponent. How you play is up to you; you can beeline to your opponent if you so please, or spread out and look for Faeria wells that are dotted across the map, which are the magical resource of the game. You will need them if you plan to play some of the more powerful cards in the game. Faeria is also very new player friendly, and encourages deck building from the get go, and makes the deck building process easier for new players. It encourages players to pick codexes, which are a collection of three cards that synergise. You build your entire deck out of these codexes so you're guaranteed to have cards that work well with each other. This method of deck building also makes it one of the more unique deck building mechanics on this list.

GRIFTLANDS



Combining RPG and deck building, all of the actions in Griftlands are determined by cards. From speech checks to combat moves, to currency and even character traits, it's all in the cards (see what we did there?). As you progress through the game, you unlock more cards which in turn unlock more actions for your character. The game itself is charming and teeming with personality, and you can of course, start all over again and have a different experience, because the game has roguelike elements as well.

CARD HOG



An interesting mix of card battler, dungeon crawler, and roguelike, Card Hog is a card game where the cards on the table double as a map for your character to traverse. This traversal doubles as the deck building element as well, which is pretty darn creative. This new approach to deck building forces you to think and plan differently to traditional deck builders and card battlers. Maps are littered with enemies, weapons, loot and traps, how you navigate and build your deck is up to you.

STEAMWORLD QUEST

Take a turn based RPG and combine it with deck-building



gameplay and you get SteamWorld Quest. This single-player game has you assemble a team of heroes with unique abilities, which are represented by cards. Unlike the more PVP focused card games on this list, SteamWorld Quest only has around 100 cards, but it's more than enough within the game's world. The game also avoids the usual RPG tropes; let's just say, the healer is not necessarily only good at healing.

ANCIENT ENEMY



I know we said 'not including Solitaire' in the intro, but this is not exactly Solitaire. Okay it kinda is. Ancient Enemy is a blend of Solitaire with a turn-based combat system, puzzles, and an RPG. You take on the role of a mage who has awakened in a world that has been destroyed by evil. As you progress through the game and defeat increasingly challenging opponents, you acquire new cards which will help you take down the more stronger foes in the game. Developer Alien Games is known for blending Solitaire with other genres of games, their previous title, Shadowhand, is also worth checking out, but it's fairly similar to Ancient Enemy.

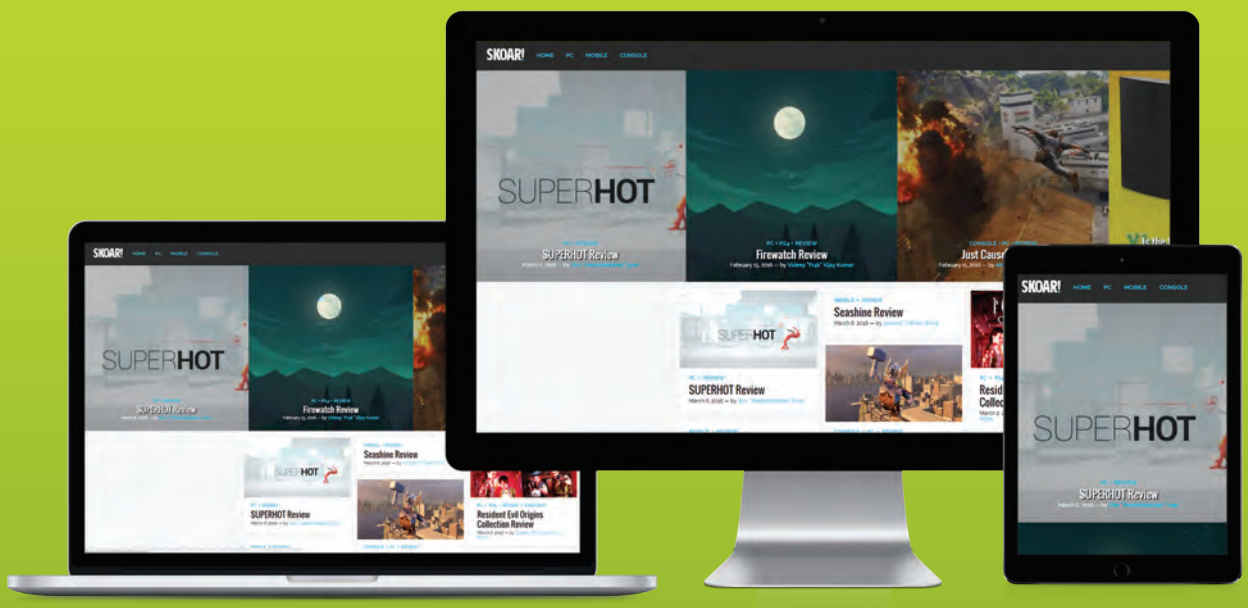
GLOOMHAVEN

Like Magic: the Gathering Arena, Gloomhaven is a digital recreation of a tabletop game. The game itself is an amalgamation of turn-based, co-op, RPG, and strategy, with, of course, deck building. You crawl through dungeons facing a



variety of foes, each requiring different strategies to take down. You earn new gear, loot and cards as you progress, and cards can even be modified. The best part about such games going digital is being able to find people from across the world to play with. This is a fairly accurate rendition of the board game, so the experience is the same, or only amplified by the visuals and animations.

There are a lot more creative uses of card game mechanics in other games too, of which we've definitely missed many. We tried to avoid games where the cards were a secondary mechanic, or not a core aspect of the game. That being said, do let us know what your favourite card-based games are by writing in to us at feedback@skoar.in *



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SKOAR! College Gaming League spotlight

Vidyalankar Institute of Technology

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



Dr. Saurabh Mehta

The Skoar! College Gaming League (or SCGL) is India's first structured program for collegiate esports, which introduces gamers from colleges across India to one another, and to the world of competitive collegiate esports.

Our goal with SCGL is to create and nurture an ecosystem encompassing India's collegiate gaming community. In order to do this, we want to create India's 1st structured program for competitive esports at the college level. By providing students with the opportunity to compete against one another, we wish to develop a competitive platform where they can develop their skills, gain recognition, and get the chance to go pro.

Arun Yadav, Head, New Initiatives, had this to say – "At SCGL our mission is to provide a structured environment where col-

lege gamers can come to connect, explore, win, play a part, and be themselves through the gaming experience. We are excited to partner with Vidyalankar Institute of Technology and look forward to creating a vibrant student gaming community."

Vidyalankar Institute of Technology joins the battle!

Vidyalankar Institute of Technology is the first college to join SCGL, it is also the first college to establish its own esports club. VIT Faculty Coordinator, Prof. Yash Shah, had this to say about being the first college to establish an esports club, " In recent years esports have been up and rising talk of the town. It gives me immense pleasure to see my institute to be one of the first ones to officially promote E Sports in collaboration with Digit. I hope this collaboration will lead to more and more students getting interested in E Sports and open doors to new age career options."

Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Saurabh Mehta, also added, "It is high time to think of gaming as a serious business and professional career. In earlier days, gaming used to be a medium of entertainment. In recent times, the gaming industry has been one of the fastest-growing sectors in India. It is attracting the best talent in India. I may suggest young budding engineers

taking gaming not just as entertainment but as a rewarding career choice."

When does the SKOAR! College Gaming League begin and how can you register?

The first SKOAR! College Gaming League Tournament is scheduled to start in November 2021 and it will be hosted digitally and be streamed on the SCGL YouTube channel. Only college students of India will be allowed to participate in this tournament. Students can register themselves via the SCGL website, i.e., scgl.digit.in and block their slot for the upcoming tournament. For even more information and regular updates, join the SCGL Discord at https://dgit.in/scgldiscord. *



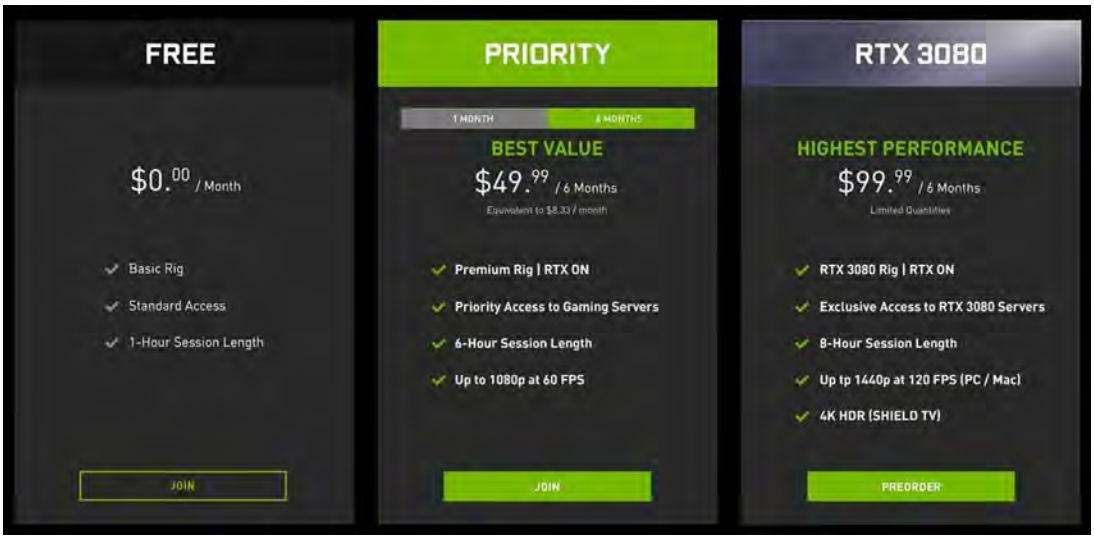
Bluestacks X

Android Emulation on Cloud

BY KSHIPRA 'FAAFDAAJALEBII' JADAV
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Google Stadia made pretty big headlines when it first came out. GeForce now too was praised by many when it first came out. Although we can't comment on Stadia's current state, GeForce now on the other hand, seems to be doing alright. The world is slowly moving towards game "streaming" instead of game "playing" and why wouldn't it? It's easy and convenient and you don't even have to have top of the line hardware to play these games. All you need is a copy of that game linked to your Steam or UPlay or any game platform and boom you're ready to go. All the hard work will be done by the respective company's servers and you just gotta have a good and reliable internet connection

– which most households do. The current silicon shortage too isn't helping much and hence, if we were to play a game on max settings, there is no realistic way for us to play it except using GeForce Now or Stadia to stream the game.



You can even play games with RTX ON up to 1440p at 120 FPS!

Okay, streaming games which you don't have the hardware for is understandable but did you know that you can stream Android games too? The most famous Android emulator - BlueStacks now has a web version where you can STREAM Android games.

The latest offering from BlueStacks - BlueStacks X will allow users to stream android games to their browser. This means



that we can technically play any android game as long as we have a browser and all the resources and other stuff will be managed by BlueStacks.

ABOUT THE SERVICE

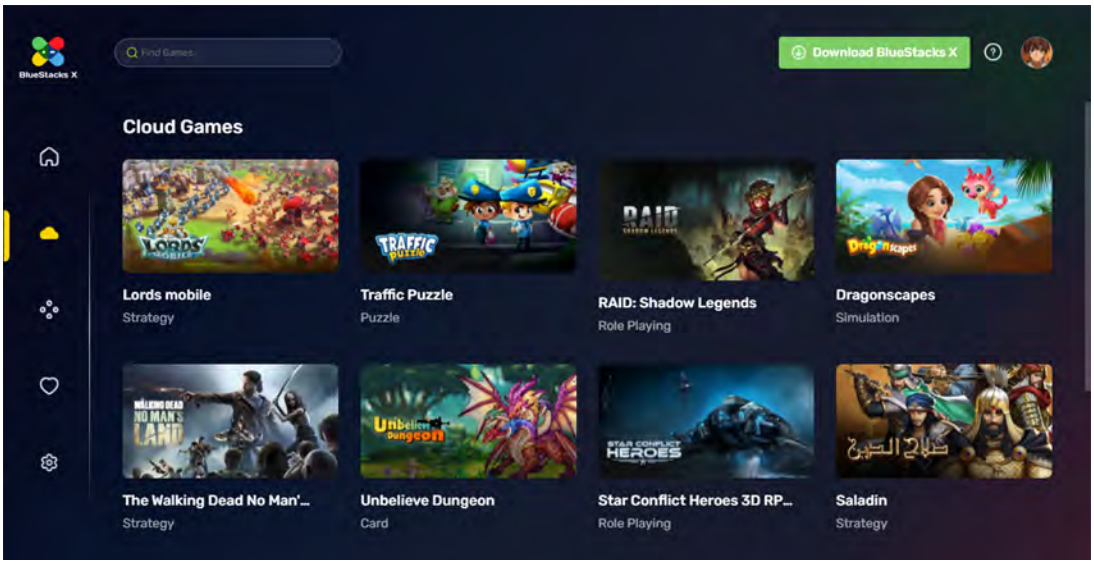
Bluestacks X uses now.gg – a subsidiary service of theirs to stream the android games. Now.gg initially caught fame because it allowed users to play Roblox Games without downloading them. It allowed users to stream those games and it got popular among children since it allowed them to play Roblox even on their school computers where generally gaming sites are blocked. Games like Among Us, Gacha Life, Gacha Club, etc. were available to play on their website for free.



Coming to Bluestacks X, you will need to make two accounts to play games. One on Bluestacks X and another on now.gg. Thankfully, there are options to Sign Up via Google, Facebook or Discord and choosing any one of them will get your account set up in a matter of seconds. Once you have successfully set up both of your accounts, you can access the game library and can play any of the games mentioned in it for free.

OUR EXPERIENCE

There are a number of things that we'd like to point out here. Firstly, even though setting up the accounts is easy, we realistically didn't see a need to create two separate accounts for playing the games. Since now.gg is essentially owned by



Some of the games that Bluestacks X offers.

Bluestacks, if we created an account on Bluestacks – it should reflect on now.gg too.

Coming to the main point of this article – the gaming experience. The first thing that we didn't like was the lack of good titles to play, at least at the time we tried the service. At the time of writing this article, Bluestacks X had a very... very limited library. It didn't have a few major titles like Genshin Impact, Call of Duty or even Subway Surfers! Although it is mentioned that new games will be added every week, we just have to take their word for it. Coming to the gameplay, it was not fun. You will need to go through two unskippable 15 second ads to get to the loading screen. Once the game is loaded, you can play it normally as you would on an Android emulator. The keyboard and the mouse are mapped to the game's controls but it does not have the option to change those mappings. The game will be streamed at 720p 30 FPS. 720p just looks bad on a big monitor and we'd really recommend Bluestacks X to add options to change the resolution and the framerate. Besides that, the gameplay was smooth for the most part. Even mobile data worked really well for us and hence we saw no need to test it on WiFi. In War Robots, we had really good ping – about 30 - 50 ms on average and a constant 30 FPS. There was almost no input lag but the game did stutter once in every 5-10 minutes.

MU Origin 2 performed just as well as War Robots although stutters increased a bit there. MU Origin 2 is a decent game with a decent campaign and some very good graphics and playing that at 720p just does not do it justice.



Again, all the controls were mapped perfectly and the gameplay was smooth too.

CONCLUSION

It's been 2 months since the service was released to the public and it is still in Beta. library-wise, it does not look too good right now. Major titles are missing and we'd suggest apk



support too so that a user can sideload his/her games and play them online too. Gameplay wise, since the whole thing is in Beta, we'll look over the 720p 30 FPS cap. Now.gg servers are perfectly capable of handling 1080p 60 FPS playback and we'd really like to see that option in the future. We think that this platform has a lot of potential provided that Bluestacks – the parent company puts enough resources and commitment

behind it. Since it's world's first android game streaming service, we don't expect it to be the best because it is a first generation product.

Coming to our opinion on the whole "Android Cloud Gaming" thing, we deem it as unnecessary. Firstly, because it defeats the whole motto of "Cloud Gaming". The reason cloud gaming is successful in the PC world is only because most people don't have the hardware required to run many games at decent and acceptable frame rates. But if you switch over to the Android side of things, the story is completely different. Even mid rangers today can give you at least 30 FPS on Genshin Impact on Low settings and BGMI on Low settings too and almost everyone has a mid-high end phone nowadays and those are perfectly capable of running almost all the games at a decent frame rate. Hence, the whole point of "streaming a game just because you don't have the hardware to run it" becomes invalid.

Again, all of the above opinions are our own opinions and what we feel about the service. If you have another opinion, feel free to let us know at feedback@skoar.in *



MOBILE MADNESS

YOU HAVE TO TRY THESE GAMES OUT ON YOUR SMARTPHONE!

BY KSHIPRA "FAAFDDAJALEBII" JADAV
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My Friend Pedro

My Friend Pedro is a side-scroller action game developed by DevolverDigital. The basic premise of the game is to shoot enemies, jump over obstacles and clear the levels. That's it. But what makes this game unique as compared to others is the game mechanics and the story line.

Coming to the mechanics, there are no arrow buttons to move and shoot buttons to shoot. There are only two movement mechanics in this game. Jump and roll. You jump over





walls, and roll beneath low obstacles. Sometimes, if the wall is long enough, if you jump onto it, you'll cling to it so that you can slide and jump onto the opposite wall. Now, how do you even jump? Well, since there are no buttons in the game, you drag to move. Just like in Angry Birds, if you pulled a bird one way, the game would display it's trajectory of jump on the opposite side - just like that, if you drag in one direction, it's equivalent jump trajectory will be displayed and you'll be able to jump in that direction. The same goes for rolling too. Instead of dragging upward, if you drag in a straight line, an

arrow will be drawn, indicating your roll direction. That's it. Those are the only movement mechanics in the game. These mechanics make the game stand out from the crowd. Since it's a bit hard to get a hang of the jumping and rolling mechanic, you'll spend a considerable amount of time before you figure out how to jump and roll efficiently.

Things aren't bland in the combat department too. There are a number of guns available throughout the game but the only one which you start with are your dual revolvers. Whenever you come into an enemy's line of sight, the game will slow down and consequently, a timer will start giving you some amount of time to react and kill the bad guy. At first, this won't seem like a big thing but trust us stuff really gets complicated in later levels where there will be more than one enemy that you'll have to take care of and all of them have different timers popping off.

The story line is a bit interesting in this game. You play as a hitman - Pedro, and your friend, a banana - yes, a literal banana - is worried because his family got kidnapped by his gangsters. Hence, to help out your friend, you venture out into the gangster's den hoping that you will be able to save your friend's family in time. Now, we won't say much further about the story or we will give off some major spoilers for the game.

All in all, My Friend Pedro is a must play if you really want to challenge your reflex and aiming skills and have some light humour while you're at it.

Comix Breaker

Comix Breaker is a roguelike deck building game developed by MojitoGames. The main aim of the game is to defeat the monsters and eventually the boss using your cards. The aim, although vague, sums up the game perfectly since there is nothing better to do in the game than this. Before we go into the mechanics and the story, let's dive into the graphics first. For the graphics, this game gets 10/10. All the characters, enemies, bosses are perfectly animated and just fit well with each other. The cutscenes between the levels too are perfect and the other small stuff like hit animations just a general browse through the menu too are just perfect. The attention to detail

and the level of quality in terms of graphics is very high here. One thing from the UX perspective still bugs us though. The main menu is overloaded with all the events, daily quests and other unnecessary stuff like that. So much so that the main play button of the game is just a small button in the bottom right corner of the screen. The remaining screen real estate is taken up by different events, shops and missions. New players who are playing the game for the first time will easily get overwhelmed by the plethora of choices available to him/her.





Coming to the main mechanic of the game - the gameplay. In Comix Breaker, you will enter the world of different comics where you will fight the enemies and the bosses and eventually conquer the comic world. Then you will just move on to the next world. Now, the way you actually defeat the enemies is by using cards. You will have a number of cards at your disposal which have various stats related to Attack, Defense and Final Attack. Since you have a limited number of turns before the enemy starts their turn, you need to make sure that you deal the maximum damage and meanwhile protect yourself from the incoming damage before your round is over. If you feel like you're losing the round, you can just press the Restart button and the match will start over.

For the miscellaneous aspect of the game, if you'll not be in a match, chances are that you will be trying your luck on the Gacha system in the game. You'll basically try to get your hands on more powerful cards and powerful items so that you can upgrade your character and make him and his attacks

more powerful than before. Since there is a Gacha system, you will, most definitely at some point, end up paying the game money in order to get a premium loot box or something to get the card that you desire.

All in all, Comix Breaker is a very good game for those who like deck building games and for those who take one game and stick to it. If you're sure that you will not develop a crippling gambling addiction for trying to get better cards, give this game a shot and you will not be disappointed.

Rollflow

Rollflow is a 3D platformer Arcade game developed by Non-Static studios. The main aim of the game is that you have to get the ball from point A to point B (usually, the finish line) without hitting various obstacles along the way or falling down. The





main mechanic in the game is gravity. Yes, gravity. Mainly because the game follows a level based pattern where your ball will be spawned to the starting line. Now, the starting line isn't a line per say but it's just a point in mid air. You now have to make different platforms which the ball can follow to get to the finish line. Coming to the platforms, there are four directions and hence there are four different kinds of platforms that you can make in the game. Curving upwards, curving downwards, straight left and straight right. All the platforms do their job as their name suggests.

In the graphics department, things look really good. Because the game is still in its infancy, it is not optimsed for many android devices out there but if you own a flagship, at least graphics-wise you are going to have a good time. Almost everything has particles of its own and you can find some particles just floating away on their own. Everything that collides will generate particles and that's not necessarily a bad thing; it makes the game look good.

Coming to the main game's mechanics, here is where things get interesting. We talked about guiding the ball from point A to point B by building platforms and we also said that gravity is the main mechanic of this game. Tying the above sentences together is the fact that you will be doing all of that in real-time. Yes, when the level starts, the ball will start dropping and you will have to make platforms in real-time to guide the ball to the exit. That's what makes this game more challenging - the fact that you are literally racing against gravity to complete your level. There's also the mechanic of "Active Pause" where you can literally pause the game, look around the level and build three tiles ahead of time while the ball just floats in mid-air. It is good for someone who's trying the game for the first time but we really recommend playing the game without Active Pause because, after a point, it just feels like cheating.

All in all, Rollflow is a decent game with good graphics and good level design. The initial tutorial levels are free and if you want access to the 60 ish handcrafted challenge levels, you have to pay ₹600 as a one time payment to unlock everything that is available now and everything that will come in future updates.

Drones 4: Zombie Strike

Done 4: Zombie Strike is a top-down action shooter developed by Reliance Big Entertainment (UK). The main mission of the game is to kill all the zombies in a specified area with your drone's gun. Well, this is just another typical zombie shooter and it is as generic as it gets. Let us explain.

Firstly, talking about the graphics and the graphics alone - they're decent. Neither good nor bad. The whole UI of the game feels like it was made in 5 minutes but other than that, the





gameplay graphics are actually decent. Whenever you will have a top down view of the area, all the trees and models will be appropriately detailed and textured. For the generic-ness of the game, well, at the loading screen and in the screenshots uploaded on the game's PlayStore listing show two soldiers fighting in lethal battle. Gunshots being fired, enemies taking cover, grenades being thrown, etc. Hence, when we first saw this game, we thought of it to be an FPS with some side missions/ability to use a drone and kill zombies. While in reality, just the drone part is true. That essentially IS the whole game.

Coming to the game mechanics, they too are decent. Whenever you enter into combat, your screen will have two buttons. One for firing and one for moving the camera. That's it. The main objective behind this game is that you're a drone and you have to go inside a battlefield to kill zombies which are infesting the place. Now, since the zombies will be moving, with the button on the right side, you can move the camera in all directions and if you tap and hold the arrow keys you'll be able to move the whole drone instead of the zombie and get a good shot at killing it. Each time a zombie has to be killed, a purple square will be drawn around them and firing inside that square will damage the zombie. As far as firing mechanics are concerned, they're not good. The game has an option for multiple guns as we advance through the game but even then, the guns just feel lackluster in the game. To prevent the user from just spamming the fire button and get the level over with, there's an overheat

function of the gun which does put the player's firing habits under control.

All in all, Drone 4: Zombie Strike is just an average game with average graphics. If you are in the market to play top-down action shooters, there are a lot better options in the market and we'd recommend that you play those instead. *

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