SKOAR!*

LIVE TO GAME

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- **PHEACHUR** | Hackers vs Corporations

THE GAMER'S RETIREMENT PLAN

Draft the final level of your life





MOBILE MONTHLY

Rocket League Sideswipe - A faithful 2D mobile adaptation of the classic

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2021 and Gaming

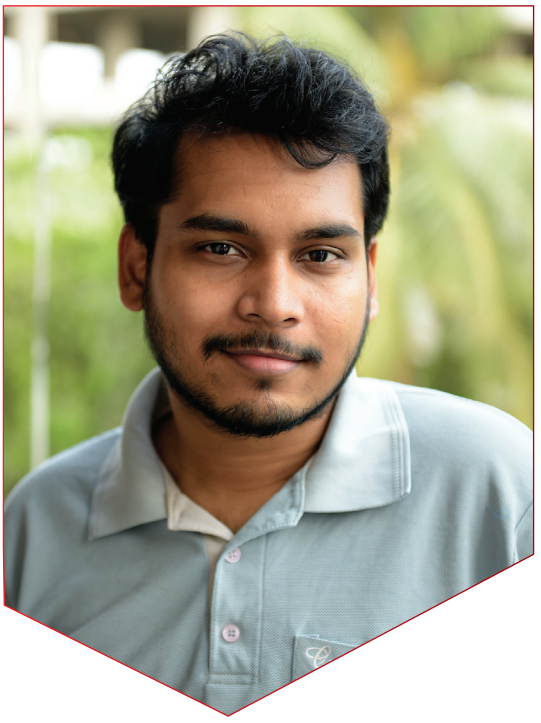
It's already the end of 2021, and that's year two complete with a pandemic ravaging the planet. From the looks of things, that's not changing anytime soon. Fortunately, that hasn't stopped the gaming industry from churning out titles this year, which is a step up from last year where just about everybody was getting accustomed to working from home. The entertainment industry in general has actually benefited from the pandemic, what with all the people stuck at home with nothing else to do.

That being said, let's take a look at some of the highlights of 2021 in gaming. Funnily enough, the majority of the first quarter of 2021 was spent discussing the perils of pre-ordering games. I'm pretty sure all of you know which game I'm talking about. That was a wake up call for a lot of gamers, and while many were fortunate enough to be able to get a refund, many were stuck with the game and a bad taste in their mouth. In CDPR's defense, they ironed out plenty of the kinks the game suffered from at launch, however, it's definitely too late and we're going to be wary about whatever they come out with next.

Following up on that, there were a lot more delays this year with plenty of titles postponed to 2022, even 2023. Whether it's a result of the botched launch I just mentioned or not, it's certainly a good thing that games will be spending more time in development. Just take a look at Halo Infinite. One extra year in development can do wonders for a game. I've said it before, I'll say it again, I'd rather wait a while for a great game than play a broken mess right now.

Then there was the console wars. Or rather the lack of consoles. The pandemic really did a number on console availability. Which is a bummer because the new consoles are pretty great. Both Sony and Microsoft have been gobbling studios up like crazy for a while now (Microsoft's acquisition of Bethesda probably being the most noteworthy of the lot), but the biggest surprise was easily Sony FINALLY bringing PlayStation exclusives to PC and acquiring a dedicated porting studio to do it. Of course, they're delayed launches but I don't think anyone minds.

Hmm, what else? Oh yes, Google Stadia studios is dead. Yeah. Nobody saw that coming. >_> Also, Netflix is doing gaming now. The big bosses



at Netflix believe that their biggest competition isn't other OTTs, but the gaming industry. They're probably right, and putting games on the platform at no extra cost is actually a big brain move. It's just mobile games for now, let's see where they go with it.

The much awaited GTA III Trilogy remaster had everyone hating on Rockstar again. Not surprising, they dropped the original trilogy, which wasted years of the work of modders who did a better job than them at remastering the game, and then released a dysfunctional broken mess of a remaster. They did apologise, but the damage was already done.

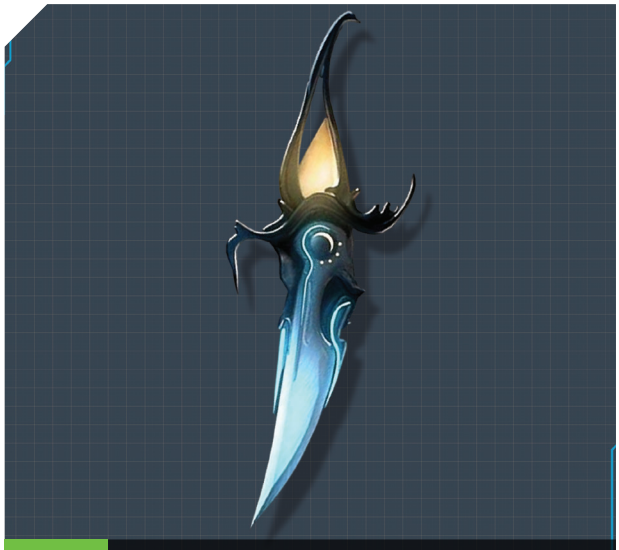
That's all the major stuff I can think of from 2021. Oh yes, there's the NFTs and Metaverse stuff too, but it's too soon to tell how that's going to affect the gaming industry. There were plenty of wins and plenty of fails in 2021, and we're looking forward to where gaming goes in 2022.

–Manish "Trigger-Happy" Rajesh

SKOAR! Overlord | feedback@skoar.in



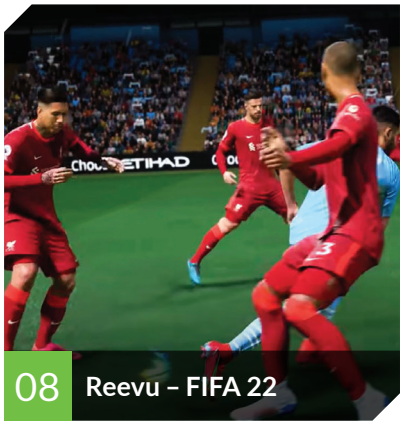
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Draft the final level of your life



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SKOAR!*
LIVE TO GAME

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

Editor: **Vikas Gupta**

Google announces best games of 2021



Google gave its award for the best game of the year to Battlegrounds Mobile India. The game was launched earlier this year and is a version of PUBG: Mobile that was specifically designed for India. The User's Choice Award for the best games won by Garena Free Fire Max.

Razer's handheld console leaked?



Great news for all you gamers, it seems that Qualcomm is collaborating with Razer to offer a new gaming handheld developer kit. This kit will be built around its upcoming Snapdragon G3X processor.

BGMI to end PUBG: Mobile data transfer



Krafton has confirmed that this will be the last month that PUBG: Mobile players will be able to transfer their old game data to Battlegrounds Mobile India. After this, those players will lose all of their previous purchases and achievements to BGMI.

Rockstar apologise: GTA Trilogy release



Fans are furious over Rockstar after the release of the official "Grand Theft Auto: The Trilogy - The Definitive Edition" on PlayStation, Xbox and PC. The game was released as a broken mess with many technical issues essentially degrading the gameplay to a great extent. Rockstar apologized for the broken state of their latest games and acknowledged that the new game does not meet the studio's world-famous standards.

Sony working on a mobile controller?



It's been a full year since the launch of the PS5 and Sony is now looking at developing a new controller for mobile hardware. First reported by VGC, a new patent has emerged on the internet and it shows off a controller that looks suspiciously like a DualShock 4 but modified for mobile devices like phones. It does resemble regular mobile controllers in that the right and left sides of the controller have been split.

UP AND COMING



Halo Infinite

This franchise needs no introduction. You might have already tried out the free-to-play multiplayer aspect of Halo: Infinite, we have and it was damn good. We can't wait for the single-player campaign.

Release date - December 8



Century: Age of Ashes

A free-to-play, Dragon dogfighting game, need we say more? The trailers for the game looked amazing, and then they dropped the gameplay and we were blown away yet again. Best part? Free to play!

Release date - December 2



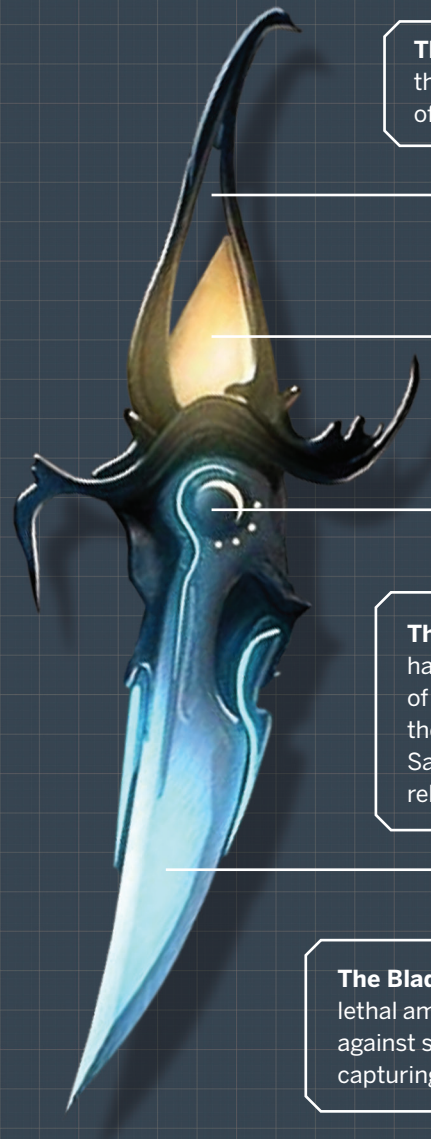
Solar Ash

Solar Ash looks like a mashup up of Journey and Outer Wilds, both of which are amazing indie games in their own right. Obviously, combining the two has to be a winning formula. At least we're hoping it is.

Release date - December 2

TENTACLE: A gene and protein that separates your right brain from the left, and determines you have two eyes is called sonic hedgehog.

THE DAGGER OF TIME

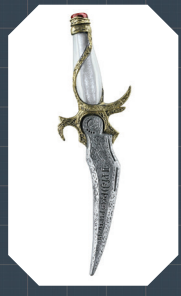


The Sand Chamber – Apart from the Hourglass, the Dagger of Time is the only container capable of holding the Sands of Time.

The Sands of Time – The Sands of Time are Kaileena's (The Empress of Time) very essence. The Sands of Time are trapped inside the sand chamber allowing the bearer to alter the fabric of Time and if freed, they have the potential to turn all living things into terrible beasts. These sands are also what give the wielder the ability to manipulate time itself.

The Dial of Time Travel – This is where the real magic happens. A blue and gold accented button located in the centre of the Dagger's hilt is employed to activate the Dagger. It, like the Medallion and Staff of Time, defends its wielder against the Sands of Time's effects. This is also what allows the wielder to release sand from the chamber in order to manipulate time.

The Blade – The curved outgrowing blade contributes heavily to the lethal ambience of the dagger. This is a deadly melee weapon but only against sand creatures; it is the only weapon capable of harming and capturing Sand Creatures.



Prince of Persia the movie: Sands Of Time – The Dagger of Time in the movie was created when the Gods were convinced by a young girl to spare humanity from a sandstorm trapped inside an hourglass, which only Dagger of Time can break.



Prince of Persia: The Two Thrones – The Dagger's length is increased in The Two Thrones and its capacity decreased.



BACK 4 BLOOD

THE TURTLE ROCK COMEBACK WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR

By Manish "Trigger-Happy" Rajesh
feedback@skoar.in

When Left 4 Dead first dropped, it became THE co-op run-and-gun zombie survival game. You'd be hard pressed to get a similar experience from any other game out there. Unfortunately, thanks to Valve's innate fear of the number 3, we never got anything beyond Left 4 Dead 2. Until now. The same studio that worked on the original Left 4 Dead has now come out with Back 4 Blood, a game that could potentially dethrone the zombie king. Key word being potentially, let's get into the review.

GAMEPLAY

We usually start with the story in these reviews, but we'll start with the gameplay here, which is the core of Back 4 Blood. Thankfully, things are still as fast-paced as they were back in 2009. Pumping bullets into swarms of zombies with your friends is still incredibly fun, but that's not all Back 4 Blood has to offer. With Back 4 Blood, you also have deck building, looting, hero abilities and even roguelite elements. There's a lot to unpack here, and we're going to go through it all. The first big difference you'll notice with Back 4 Blood is that you're no longer playing as helpless survivors trying to make it through the night. This time around, you take on the role of hardened mercenaries who hunt down zombies, look for survivors and scrounge for supplies. Levels begin with your party leaving from Fort Hope, which is a gathering hub for zombie-hunting mercenaries.

These mercenaries, or Cleaners, are immune to the Devil Worm parasite, which is basically what's turning people into brain-chomping zombies. This makes them ideal for taking on the zombie hordes, and fortunately, these eight characters also have plenty of tools in their arsenal to kill zombies and boost teammates. You've got melee specialists like Holly who gets stamina back with melee kills, support characters like Mom who gets one free revive per mission, utility characters like Hoffman who provides extra ammo for the entire team etc.

Each character has something unique to bring to the table, and brings a semblance of roles to the game, i.e, being able to play with a supportive, defensive, or offensive playstyle. All of this ties in really well with the next aspect of the game, the deck building.

DECKBUILDING

Players can build 15-card decks between runs, and these cards can have minor benefits like slightly increased health, to major game changing bonuses. There are more than 100 unlockable cards, so you've got plenty to choose from. Every player picks a few cards at the start of a mission, after which you only draw one card per level. If the run ends, then all decks are reshuffled.

Early on, the cards you have don't have too much of an impact and only

provide small stat boosts. Eventually though, you can unlock some pretty powerful cards. Combat Knife for instance amps your basic melee attack with a powerful knife attack, Down In Front! will prevent you from taking or dealing friendly-fire while crouching. However, a lot of the powerful cards are also double-edged swords, for instance, the Ammo Mule card will add 75 percent to your ammo capacity, but entirely disables your support slot, i.e, you can't carry medkits or bandages. The Quick Kill card increases your hipfire accuracy by 50 percent, but entirely disables aiming down-sights.

Deckbuilding adds an entirely new element to gameplay and strategising, allowing you to experiment with different playstyles. Plus, it compliments the game's core gameplay really well.

THE GUNZ

The arsenal has also gotten a major upgrade over B4B's predecessors, with new guns and a gun customisation/attachment system. The gunplay between them is unique enough to warrant a different feel with each gun, allowing you to pick the style you want to go for. At the start of each mission players can visit a store to buy upgrades, grenades, healing items and more.

Attachments in B4B don't have any drawbacks, but you're limited by how many you can use with a gun. If you decide to use a suppressor for the sneak attack damage, you're going to have to forgo the fast mag to speed up your reloading. There's an attachment to offset every gun's weakness.

On harder difficulties it becomes important to prioritise the team over yourself, and resource management becomes a lot more important.

THE MAIN CAMPAIGN

Back 4 Blood has a pretty long campaign with around 30 levels. These are sprinkled with difficult finale missions between Acts. Unlike Left 4 Dead, environments are less linear, and there's more room for exploration, however, you might not exactly have the time for it before the next horde comes along. When you do have time though, it is nice to be able to scavenge around for extra resources.

The missions are also varied, with the card system causing variations in maps. Corruption Cards can modify the world and the zombies in it, like fog to reduce visibility, or armoured zombies for instance. There's quite a bit of randomness and variety, which is what brings in the roguelite elements to the game. Naturally, things only get harder the further you progress, with the zombies becoming nastier and faster. This becomes even more evident when you turn the difficulty up, and suddenly resources become scarce and health restores which were otherwise free now cost currency.











MOAR!

DEVELOPER
Turtle Rock Studios
PUBLISHER
Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
PLATFORMS
Xbox Series X and Series S, PlayStation 4, Xbox One, PlayStation 5, Microsoft Windows
PLAYED ON
Microsoft Windows
PRICE
₹2,999 (Steam)

PvP

Back 4 Blood has a PvP mode, called Swarm. This is basically the Ridden vs the Cleaners. Cleaners need to hold out as long as possible, and when they all die, they switch sides. Best time wins. Ridden get increasingly powerful as time passes (which kinda makes sense) to the point of becoming overpowered. Being overpowered is fun, being on the opposing end, not so much. This is however a feature of the game mode.

VERDICT

If you're someone who enjoyed Left 4 Dead and have been waiting for the third installment, look no further, Back 4 Blood has you covered. There are certainly some kinks that need to ironed out, in the networking front and the balance of it all, but they've definitely captured the co-op fun and chaos that the original Left 4 Dead games had. *



FIFA 22

MORE OF THE SAME, AGAIN

By Sushant Talwar
feedback@skoar.in

EA's latest edition of its football simulator is finally out, and in our opinion, it's just more of the same we've been served over the past years. Despite being called the first next-gen FIFA game by EA Sports, the reality is that FIFA 22 does not do much to change what has held the series back.

But we get ahead of ourselves. So, before we get to where we think FIFA 22 doesn't do enough, let us tell you where it does. To begin with, EA has tweaked the gameplay to make FIFA 22 more of a simulation and less of an arcade-style goal banger. With this in mind, EA has added new features including HyperMotion technology, which brings in 11v11 motion capture and uses a proprietary machine-learning algorithm to enable more fluidity and realism within the gameplay.

There's also a revamped machine learning engine which EA claims learns from over "8.7 million frames of advanced match capture, then writes new animations in real-time to create organic football realism across a variety of interactions on the pitch." One of the by-products of this is more in-depth tactics on display from the game's AI, which in turn makes playing against the computer not feel like a repetitive chore anymore.

In our experience, this made playing Squad Battles matches within the Ultimate Team mode, more of an enjoyable experience than ever before, as the computer-controlled teams now felt more aware of my tactics and play to not only do better in defence but also make smarter runs in attack and generally do more in build-up play to give these matches a more competitive feel.

What's new in FIFA 2022?

EA has also done a good job of improving ball physics and adding new animations in the game, which overall gives it a more realistic feel. For example, players now make more life-like additional touches before actually controlling the ball or even attempting to make a 60-yard long pass. Another thing we really loved about FIFA 22's gameplay is the through balls. While we would agree they are a little too overpowered at times, generally, they feel well-weighted and can unlock defences from difficult angles.

However, this is pretty much all we like about FIFA 22. While there are a lot of positives to the gameplay, EA has made some absolutely ridiculous choices that appear to have taken the gameplay back several years. For example, the shooting system in-game is completely broken, with finesse shots getting a marked advantage over overdriven shots. In fact, as somebody who has been

playing FIFA football simulators for over a decade now, we'd say the finesse shot system hasn't been this bad since FIFA 13 where we could simply loft the ball up to the likes of Arjen Robben and Frank Ribery to score outrageously unreal goals from virtually impossible areas on the field.

Apart from this, the game still relies heavily on pace, with the likes of Timo Werner and Leicester City's virtually unknown striker, Daka, enjoying an advantage over other more complete players such as Harry Kane and Edison Cavani. This is quite disappointing as the overreliance on pace completely breaks down EA's attempts to turn FIFA 22 into a simulator.





Features

Oh, and let us not forget about the keepers in the game. For some reason, all keepers in-game are now a curious mix between prime De Gea and Jordan Pickford each and every time they set foot on the pitch. While they will make outrageous stops, both from long-range shots and near-goal attempts, they for some strange reason, cannot understand the flight of the ball anymore, and almost any finesse shot from outside the box now ends up going over the head of the keeper and into the goal.

Away from the gameplay, and into FIFA's money-spinning Ultimate Team mode, some significant changes have also been made here. Changes that we're not sure are entirely for the good of the game. This is because, with FIFA 22, EA has completely revamped the Division Rivals and FUT Champions mode. Now, players aren't forced into the weekly grind of qualification matches. Instead, now you focus on progression between division and ranks based on winning and losing games. It's an easy system, however, it makes you play more than what you did in the previous iterations of Ultimate Team. Apart from this, the usual issues, including what feels like scripting within games (EA calls it momentum shift) still remain an issue in competitive FUT games.

Verdict

Overall, FIFA 22 is a mixed bag in our opinion. There are definitely things to like about the game, including its slightly revamped gameplay that attempts to focus on the slower build-up and slicker passing. However, EA's inability to fix certain long-standing issues such as overreliance of the game on pace as well as the infuriating momentum shift system, make sure FIFA 22 remains held back. Add to that the fact that EA has also managed to break the shooting system in-game, which makes us think hard before recommending FIFA 22 to anyone.

But then again, this comes from a long-standing fan of the series who has been hopelessly throwing money EA's way for each iteration of the game since FIFA 2010, all because there is no real alternative. So once again, EA, come take my money, because, well, there really isn't an alternative. *

MOAR!

TESTED ON
PS5
DEVELOPER
EA Vancouver; EA Romania
PUBLISHER
Electronic Arts, EA Sports
PLATFORMS
Xbox Series X and Series S, Google Stadia, PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Nintendo Switch, Xbox One, Microsoft Windows
PRICE
₹4,400 (PS5), ₹3,999 (PS4), ₹2,499 (Nintendo Switch), ₹2,999 (PC)

FARCRY6 ON PS5

4 things we loved and 2 we didn't

By Sameer "PsychoMantis" Mitha | feedback@skoar.in

We've been playing the PS5 version of the game for some time now and thought we'd break up some things we loved about the game and some things we didn't.

WHAT WE LOVED

A great villain

A hallmark of the Far Cry games has always been its villains. From the chilling Vaas Montenegro in Far Cry 3 to the intimidating Joseph Seed in Far Cry 5 and even Far Cry 4's Pagan Min, the series has some villains that will go down in history as some of the best villains in video games. Adding to that list is Antón Castillo AKA El Presidente played by the legendary Giancarlo Esposito. But you may better know him as Gus Fring from Breaking Bad. His performance is top-notch in the game and some of his motivations though sinister, selfish and outrageous, has grounded roots. His son in the game doesn't agree with daddy dearest's ways and brings about an interesting element to the story. Overall, there's nothing more engaging than taking down a great video game villain and while the path to that may be padded, it is definitely a fun journey.









Rule number 9

Throughout the game you will learn about the various rules a "Guerilla" will live by and the most important is rule number 9 - the right equipment for the right job. There are workbenches scattered throughout the map that you can use to customise the guns at hand and they are all located in very handy places. Early on the game has a tutorial where you scan a base with your smartphone's camera to judge the enemies and based on whether you want to take the silent approach or go guns blazing, know that your arsenal probably has the right tool for the job, even if that's a launcher that shoots pirated Macarena CDs or is a machine gun powered by a motorcycle engine. Not only is the arsenal diverse but you have the option to switch your loadout, bullets, and weapon customisation by visiting one of these workbenches before a mission. Add to it the fact that you can play the game with friends and you are in for one heck of a ride!

It's a Far Cry Game

If you have played a Far Cry game in the past, then you will feel right at home. Actually, scratch that, if you've played Ubisoft games launched in the past, be it Assassins Creed, Ghost Recon, The Division and more, you'll feel right at home with some of the mechanics. Frome safe zones that you can explore in third person, to stealthy clearing out a camp, to bass building, sending allies on missions, playing tabletop games, to a cockfighting minigame, so on and so forth, there are elements from other Ubisoft games at play here as well and it shows. You have companions in the form of amigos to help you in your mission which we have seen in action in previous Far Cry games.

Open-ended approach

There are a lot of vehicles for you to drive in the game from cars, tanks and even a horse, which to be honest was my favourite mode of transport. Coming from Far Cry 5 a lot of elements feel familiar and that's not necessarily a bad thing, especially when you add the new elements like holstering your gun to sneak by enemies undetected in plain sight, or bribing enemies for information or simply setting things on fire.

WHAT WE DIDN'T LOVE

Padding to prolong the game's life

Like we've seen with so many Ubisoft games in the past, there is a lot of padding, and grinding required to progress. While there is no recycling of missions, you do need to go through a bit of a grind to proceed and that can get a little off-putting in the game.

Buggy AI

While these are things that will get fixed via updates, there are times when the AI was so buggy, it was frustrating. In an early mission with an AI companion, I climbed a small guard tower to get a better view of the mission at hand and my AI companion stood right in front of the ladder blocking my exit and I couldn't escape. I even started a firefight in the hope that the AI companion would move but nothing happened. Similarly, the Amigos did not respond to my commands and at times. These happened often enough to warrant a mention.

MOAR!

TESTED ON
PlayStation 5
DEVELOPER
Ubisoft Toronto, Ubisoft Milan
PUBLISHER
Ubisoft, Ubisoft Milan
PRICE
₹2,999

Bottom Line

Overall Far Cry 6 is a fun game for Far Cry fans and will appeal to those looking for an engaging shooter with quirky one-liners and an intriguing story. The map you explore is HUGE and there is a lot to do in the game if you want to wander off the main path. The weapons arsenal is diverse and the fact that there are proper cutscenes involving your character and not just in the first-person view adds a bit more flavour to the story. The opening sequence of the game reminded me a lot of Uncharted: The Lost Legacy's opening and that's a very good thing. Despite its niggles, Far Cry is a fun game for those looking to venture into the fictional land of Yara and fight for the revolution! *



AVAST YE! HACK'RS VS C'RP'RATIONS

Stories o' treasure hunting video games

By Omang "Respawner" Baheti | feedback@skoar.in

Piracy. The word takes its root from the kings of the seven seas, the robbers scouring the waves, plundering and looting from the rich and living a life of criminal adventure. Of course, the modern pirates are a lot less glamorous. They surf the waters of the internet, combing it methodically, to find and crack paid software and redistribute it illegally, available for anyone to download and utilise without spending a dime.

The early piracy scene began from the split-up of Bell System, breaking AT&T's monopoly on the telephone and modem industry in the 80s. The infrastructure change that resulted gave many smaller parties access to the inner workings of these systems and the subsequent techniques of breaking them and bypassing them. Circulation of video games burnt onto unmarked floppy disks began in these parties. Over time the parties grew in size and influence, and eventually, they were collectively referred to as the "Warez" (pronounced wares), deriving from the term Soft'wares'. With the introduction of peer-to-peer (P2P) networks and Torrents, Warez grew in popularity and demand, and the older physical systems of sharing declined slowly. The modern piracy scene runs almost purely on Torrents, and any step to neutralise it is rendered useless due to its decentralised nature.

Let's dive into some fascinating counts of piracy.

3DS:

Nintendo is an interesting company to talk about when viewing from the lens of piracy. It's a company that solely makes games for its consoles and has produced some of the most notable and historical series of handheld consoles and video game franchises. They have one of the most robust catalogues of awe-inspiring games, making them a very high priority target for cracking both the games they release and the consoles themselves. The security of the 3DS was designed keeping in mind the breach of the Wii. However, it had one major loophole: The 3DS was capable of backward compatibility with DS games.

GateWay, a company involved in cracking games, released chips to break the 3DS entirely two years after its launch. The technique they used was clever: Using the pre-existing hacks available for the DS, they took control of the DS portion of the 3DS. From there, they overloaded the parent system being the 3DS, with information that was more than the hardware of the 3DS could handle. While in this vulnerable state, the chips would crack the whole system and make it capable of running ROM hacks and other chips. There were patches by Nintendo and subsequent counterplays by GateWay, who eventually stayed on top of this cat and mouse game. Any competition to GateWay was also crushed by including measures for bricking devices that used said competitor's cracking techniques, which ended up putting GateWay in a negative light, and people began looking for alternatives. Another issue was the lack of support for HomeBrew, the launcher for games made by solo devs for the 3DS, which bypassed the hardware restrictions created by Nintendo to prevent unauthorised development.

During the release of the new Nintendo 3DS, consisting of minor software and hardware upgrades, a new exploit was discovered, and it involved a poorly programmed game called Cubic Ninja. The newly named Ninjhax utilised a similar technique to exploit the security of the 3DS. Cubic Ninja allowed for user-designed levels, and there was no



Linux Arch on 3DS

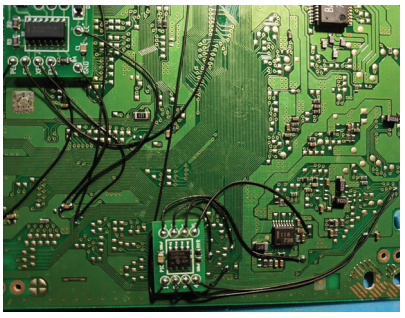
code to validate the actual size of these levels. So by "creating a level" that was ridiculously large, the system would once again be overloaded and put into a vulnerable state, which would act as the entry point for even stronger hacks. The difference between this and GateWay was that Ninjhax allowed the launching of HomeBrew games. The cracking war would continue to be waged, but these two significant events marked the early days of hacking the 3DS.

PLAYSTATION:

Sony's PlayStation is iconic as one of the most powerful and accessible consoles of its era. The first PlayStation used a region lock to confirm if the disk was made for the specified region and check if it wasn't a duplicated disk with the contents of an original game. The way to bypass this was crude but simple: by switching an original disk with a fake disk after the region check, the console would think the game had passed the region check, but in reality, the switch had loaded an entirely different game. Mod-chips eventually automated this, which were easily soldered onto the motherboard.

As the chips grew rampant, Sony struck back with a patch. The mod-chips were always active, and they would return information about the region location whenever triggered. So by checking for the region when the system should return nothing, it could detect its presence and invalidate the game being played. There was an additional 16-bit key that was on the ROM itself and added as a backup piracy check. However, both measures were soon overcome, which brings us to Spiro, Year of the Dragon.

Every other game with the new set of protections would instantly fail if the console caught the run disk as a fake copy. The crackers would simply bypass that, and once the game would boot and the first few minutes would play, they would be satisfied that crack was successful. However, Insomniac Games had a clever checksum system to recognise if the copy of the game was a pirated one. It would be quiet about it till a little further down in the game, something the cracking community didn't check. At that point, one of the characters in the game would inform the player that the game was a



Mod Chip on a PS motherboard

pirated copy and they could continue playing it, but they might experience some strange issues. The player would lose gems, their egg collection progress, and the game would randomly crash and save data would be lost. The goal was to make the experience of trying to play this incorrectly cracked copy as infuriating to play as possible. The leading cracking group at the time, ParaDox, took an extra couple of months to bypass all the hidden checks and protection and even thanked the developers and programmers of the game for giving them such a challenging task.

PLAYSTATION 3:

Sony was no stranger to piracy and modding, and with the release of the PS3, they were determined to make sure they created the ultimate "unhackable" console. The PS3 and the Xbox 360 had a hypervisor set up, which acted as an all-mighty gatekeeper, protecting the console from hacks. Hackers shredded the Xbox protection pretty early on with hardware attacks, but the PS3 was safe for around three years. It was considered a successful launch of a console, probably the greatest in video game console in history.

But it was about enough time for some expert hackers. George Hotz (aka Geohot) was a renowned security researcher who decided to dive headfirst into breaking the PS3.

The PS3 supported a framework called OtherOS, which treats the PS3 like a regular machine capable of running user-installed software, including Linux distributions. The most popular of these was Yellow Dog Linux, and Geohot theorised that this could be the entry point for the hack. Sony instantly went into a state of panic, and they believed that this compromised their hypervisor and instantly nuked the OtherOs functionality with further updates. This was a massive blow to the PS3 as OtherOs was one of the major selling points for the console.

However, this was the only further incentive for people to take hacking the PS3 much more seriously. A PS Jailbreak device was released into the black market and sold a few months later, running cracked and unsigned



Accessory to jailbreak PS3

code on the device. The exploit was based on Sony's same principle to set the PS3 into a factory service mode. Subsequently, the hack would later even allow rolling back versions, allowing users to access OtherOs.

CONCLUSION:

Piracy is ever-pervasive and omnipresent in the ocean of the Internet. The Warez scene will forever remain active for many reasons, ranging from the accessibility of games in regions to not being able to shell out the exorbitant amounts charged for modern AAA titles. It's a battle of minds and code, and only time will tell which side will genuinely reign supreme. *



NOSTALGIA REVISITED

By Mithun "Barbarian_Monkey" Mohandas
feedback@skoar.in

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. Over the years, true RTS games have taken a backseat to action-packed first-person action adventure titles. 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 well with a lot of fans. 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.

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.

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







MOAR!

DEVELOPERS
Relic Entertainment, World's Edge
PUBLISHER
Xbox Game Studios
PLATFORMS
Microsoft Windows
PRICE
₹2,499

RTS players rest their eyes, this is a welcome change.

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.

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.

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. 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 fewer.

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. This adds an element of balance to what appears to be a powerful civilisation.

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.

THE GAMER'S RETIREMENT PLAN

DRAFT THE FINAL LEVEL OF YOUR LIFE

By Satvik Pandey | feedback@skoar.in



Once a gamer, always a gamer, they say. But there comes a time when you cannot move the controller or the mouse and keyboard as fast as you could back in the day. If you were a pro, that marks the end of your career, and for a casual gamer, it is a sign of moving on to a different hobby, and more likely than not, probably a job to bring in the dough. If only you could turn back time and work on a proper 'retirement plan', as many call it, you could be reaping the rewards of the seeds that were sown in the past.

But it is never too late to start. The first step you take at any time towards achieving a goal is progress. So, if you are a gamer and want to know what you can do to make your passion for gaming a part of your retirement plan, this is the story for you. Here, we will be taking you through the basics of the in-game item market's economics and talk about the careers you can take up related to the field of gaming and eSports, helping you draft the perfect gamer's retirement plan.

SKINS AND THE ECONOMICS OF THE TRADE

Almost every single one of you must have heard about how someone in one corner of the world made a fortune by selling an in-game item for a ton of cash. A few years ago, this might have been like a one-off, with some insane collector wanting a specific item and paying a fortune for something that most others would pass up on. Now, the trading of in-game items has become a real business for many, and there are corporations and individuals involved in trading in-game items like CS:GO skins. If you, the gamer, make the right choice at the right time, you could be playing with tons of cash by the time you decide that it's time to end the grind on your go-to game.

To shed more light on this, we talked to Oliver, a.k.a. Zipel, a legendary CS:GO skins trader, who told us about how the economy has boomed in the last few years and how anyone, if they make the right moves, could profit from it. Before we move on and quote the man himself, here's some information for the uninitiated.

The in-game items' market, which started as a hobby for some, has now transformed into a real profession for many. What happens in these trades is that one person, in exchange for money or a single or a set of equally valued items, trades their in-game item like player skins to another player. While this can be done with in-game items from many games, the titles whose in-game items are the most popular in the trading world are CS:GO, Dota 2, Team Fortress 2, and RUST. Everything here works like the stock market. There are trends and the simple principle of supply and demand that brings the prices of these items up or down.

Now, coming back to what Zipel said. When asked about how viable is it to invest in skins and in-game items, he said, "Investing in skins is insanely viable. Historically, there is only a really short window of time where you could have bought a diversified amount of different skins and be down money today." "Basically, anything with limited supply that's old and still has high demand should perform well over time," he added.

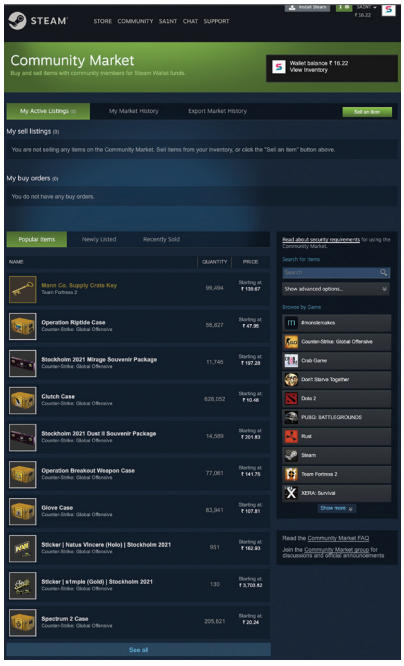
Zipel then shed some light on how an insane investment could cost you a lot of money. Taking the example of an amateur, supposedly millionaire trader, who invested heavily in CS:GO skins recently, but lost a lot of money, because of lack of patience, he said, "It is not investing, it's stupidity." What Lunar, the investor who lost a ton of money, did was that he bought a lot of gloves (a type of in-game item in CS:GO), of a variant whose supply was still abundant and ongoing. Then showing a slight stroke of brilliance, he bought 14 of the 40 existing Titan (Holo) stickers from 2014 EMS One Katowice CS:GO Championship. But it wasn't going to do him any good because due to his impatience and lack of understanding of the skins market, he sold the items that he had bought for a significant loss, earning a bad reputation in the skins community and himself incurring a financial hit.

This is what should not be done. There is potential for rare in-game items to go over the roof in terms of their pricing. For those still not convinced, as predicted by Zipel, the fabled, Pattern 387, Karambit | Case Hardened (Factory New) knife from CS:GO could sell for as high



Gamer by the night, investor by the day

IMAGING BY **ANIL VK**



The Steam Community Market is the stomping ground for many starters

as 1.5 to 2 million dollars. Sounds crazy, right? It really isn't. The right investment made at the right time could leave you swimming in money.

ON THE STAGE AND WITH WORDS

Before you go all out and spend every single penny you have on some random in-game item, sit back and read through. While it may seem a lucrative option, in-game item investments are not the only way in which gamers can make a fortune. There are other fields too. The most prevalent ones are casting and analytical writing. One is where you go on stage and share your wisdom with the audience, and the other is where you sit back and pen down your thoughts in the form of blog posts and articles. Both are very viable career options.

There have been a ton of professional players and even casual players who have found their way into either of the two above stated fields of work. Some have done it while being active in the game, while others have done it after they stopped using their keyboards to peek around corners. The question that must be starting to stir up storms in your mind must be, 'Where do I start?' Well, for going on either of the paths, you will have to pass your tests. To become a writer, who analyses the gaming scene and shares 'expert insights' about the gaming world, all you need to learn is the sorcery of words. For doing that, you need to do two basic exercises, read and write. You can start by reading a ton of articles from your favourite authors, writing for top-level organizations. If you are a regular reader of SKOAR!, you can consider this part of the process almost done.

While reading, take care of two things, first is the writing style of the author, and second is the way in which they prioritise the facts that

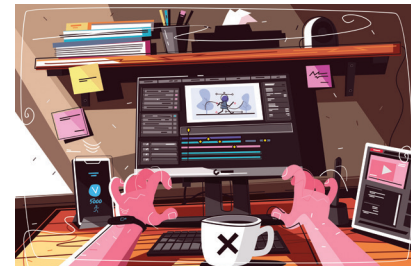


Take some time off and give words to your thoughts

are being presented in the story. You will see a ton of variations, but as you read, you will better understand why certain things are done the way that they are. A short online course on writing could also be of a lot of help. You can even take cues from the team here at SKOAR!, if you are genuinely interested in learning the art of writing, write to us, and we would be happy to help you. When it comes to writing, the best thing is to write as much as you can. Collect facts from reliable sources and write stuff on your own. Publish it on a blog, which can be created for free.

The casting path, while being seemingly more intimidating than that of writing, follows the same structure. The only difference here is that instead of reading and writing, you will need to learn how to talk and present yourself in front of an audience. The two things that you will need to do here is watch the best and then practice on your own. Make it a point to watch the pre, mid and post-match shows of different gaming tournaments, where you will, in all probabilities, see a now-retired gamer, or an experienced casual player in the casting panel. Then, when it comes to making your own content, you can make opinion videos on the game of your liking or resort to reviewing and analysing clips of professional players from the eSports scene. Here, again it is very important to properly document everything that you create.

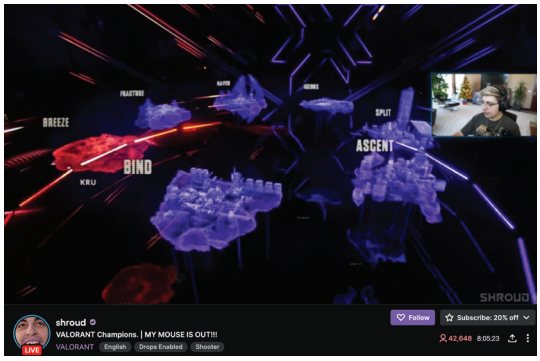
Make your friends and connections in the gaming world read or watch your work. Ask for suggestions and work on them. Once you have perfected the art of writing, you can take the portfolio of articles or videos that you built and approach the right people. After that, it is just about the way that you present your work, and the opportunities that come your way. If your blog or for instance, YouTube channel catches the eye of enough people, you might even be able to monetise it yourself! Keep in mind that for either of these options, you need to know the game you're talking/writing about extremely well.



Never forget to save your progress in real life

STREAM AWAY!

Streaming is another way in which both professionals and casual gamers have found a way to engage and earn money for themselves, after passing their prime. There is nothing that hasn't already been said or heard about streaming games. So,



Lights, Camera, and it's Shroudy Rowdy Time!
(Source: Shroud via Twitch)

here, the only thing that we would ask you to do is, stay consistent. Even Shroud, one of the biggest streamers on Twitch at the moment, once used to stream with less than 10 concurrent viewers. But he stayed consistent, and one thing led to another, and next thing he knew, he was picked up by a professional organisation to play the game he loved.

After he was done playing professionally, what did he do? Start full time streaming again, bringing back his days gone by and making it into his version of a retirement plan, where his viewers come to absorb his persona rather than those nasty flicks, which sometimes they also catch a glimpse of.

THE TWO-MISSION QUEST

Now that you have all the options laid down, it is time to know what you must do in the preparation stages.

The first thing that you must keep in mind, during your active years as a gamer is to keep an eye on the trends surrounding the industry that you are a part of. Even if you are not a professional, you still should be aware of all that is going on in the scene surrounding the game(s) of your choice. Say if you are a casual CS:GO player, make sure you keep an eye on the skins market, and pro tournaments, watching and listening to pros that made their way into the world of casting. More often than not, you would find insights that will help you in one way or the other. Make sure to keep your eyes and ears wide open, when you are involved with the sport. If you are at the highest level of being professionally involved with the sport, or someone who has logged in thousands of hours in a title, then there is literally no one who should know better than you about everything about the game(s) of your choice.

Having made your observations, you need to act and take the plunge at the right time. If you want to enter the world of casting or writing, then start publishing your work, a year or two prior to, when you would ideally want to put an end to your grind. If you want to become a streamer, then the path that you would follow is the same. Start streaming a year or two before. While doing this, make it a point that you will not let it affect the thing that you are doing at the time. For example, if you are a pro, make your practice the first priority, and content writing or creation the second. Likewise, if you are a casual player, put your main vocation at the helm.

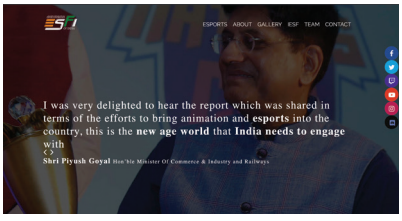


You get paid for opining. Great! ...Right?

If you are planning on investing in items, then your move would start much before than that of the others. From the very time you have learnt enough and made the observations, you will have to start putting your bets on the right horses. Make sure that they are the ones that are certain to win you the race. This is where your years of trend analysis would come in clutch. Make the moves at the right time, and make sure that everything that you do is not a gamble, but an educated guess. We are calling it that because there is nothing certain to happen here. All of it is based on the market dynamics, which can change in the blink of an eye. So, tread carefully and at your own risk. Never go all in. When you are cashing your investments, make sure you trade with trusted individuals or portals, otherwise, all of your hard work would be scammed off from right under your nose. Choose middle-men wisely when trading and do your pricing research while selling an in-game item, to set the right prices for your inventory.

WHAT'S THE M.E.T.A.?

If it were an FPS game, we would have suggested a gun or a style of play here. Given the subjectivity of this topic, there is nothing much to say here. At the end of the day, it is you who has to take the call. If you are someone who is the heart and soul of a LAN party, you could go and try your hand at casting. If you were the one scoring the highest marks in essay assignments in school, then writing may be the way for you. If you are really good with numbers, the go ahead and try your hand at in-game item investing. At the end of the day, it is you who knows yourself the best, and write the story of your life's game. So, now we leave it to you to figure out what the m.e.t.a. of your life's game is, and that will help you draft your own gamer's retirement plan. *



India has an eSports federation of its own!
(Source: eSports Federation of India)



UNPUTDOWNABLE

By Nayan "Aestivial" Panda
feedback@skoar.in

If you put an ample amount of Pokémon and MOBA in a cauldron and stir it with a sprinkle of competitiveness, you get Pokémon Unite. Pokémon Unite is a free-to-play, multiplayer online battle arena (MOBA) video game developed by TiMi Studio Group and published by The Pokémon Company for Android and iOS and by Nintendo for the Nintendo Switch. It's a one of a kind cross-platform game straight from the franchise, debuting into the MOBA genre. And for Arceus' sake, it's not Basketball with Pokémon!

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

To be honest, when we got our hands on the mobile version, we were quite skeptical with rumours of the game being pay2win. What we instead couldn't overlook was the attention to detail and how polished the game looked and felt.

Pokémon Unite greeted and encouraged us to check out everything they had to offer, all without making it appear unnecessarily ambiguous. The tutorials are easy to grasp and given the games emphasis on simplicity, you cannot possibly do anything wrong anyways. We found it a fairly good choice for anyone looking for a casual yet enjoyable MOBA.

GAMEPLAY

The game is pretty univocal and easy to pick up for beginners. Especially anyone who has played any MOBA before. The game features the common PVP 5v5 matches where players try to dominate their opponent's team, but here by scoring goals. Navigation is pretty intuitional and easy too, wherein you can access most settings from the main menu screen by clicking on your profile. The game allows you to intensively customise your avatar as well as your fellow Pokémon by unlocking new skins/gear items. New Pokémon Licenses and items can also be purchased from the shop ingame in exchange of Aeos coins, gems or tickets. All available Pokémon fall into one of five categories: Attacker, All-Rounder, Speedster, Defender, and Supporter.

The game heavily emphasises on a mechanism that balances out the game for all the players. They are allowed to choose their favourite Pokémon from their available Licenses, where every player has to pick a unique Pokémon to play as. Every match also allows you to do some battle preparations. This includes choosing a single battle item from your unlocked ones, which you can use indefinitely during the match, however with a certain cooldown once it has taken effect. There are also held-items that can be assigned to your Pokémon beforehand, in order to enhance certain attributes of it during a







match. This is where we realised why the game has been chastised for being a pay-to-win game. Apparently, these items, unlike the battle items, can be upgraded. However upgrades to held items, which are the foundation for all your Pokémon, can get ridiculously expensive.

Matches are basically of three types: Ranked (Competitive), Standard (non-ranked full scale matches) and Quick (faster paced short matches). You can easily call in friends to your lobby and play together. In-game, the standard maps are divided into three areas that players can traverse, each of which is occupied by randomly spawning Wild Pokémon. Players earn points (Aeos Energy) by defeating (and capturing) wild Pokémon or enemy Pokémon, and scoring in the opponent's goals. To score points, Pokémon must transfer their stored energy to an opponent team's goal and "dunk" it through the hoop. The dunking sequence is fantastic, with the Pokémon crashing the energy down through the hoop. Your own team's goals offer you benefits as temporary shields and healing, while the opponent team's area slows down your Pokémon's mobility. Antithetically, every Pokémon starts at its lowest evolution (Level 1) and depending on how many wild Pokémon are acquired/defeated, the player's Pokémon also evolve over time. Not only that, players also battle other enemy Pokémon for points. Throughout the match, some boss wild Pokémon (like Rotom and Drednaw), will spawn on the map, which can be defeated for bonus Aeos Energy and add-on buffs. Around the last few minutes into the match, Zapdos reigns down on the match right in the middle of the battlefield and provides likewise benefits to the team who defeats it, followed by a temporary stun to the opponents. When the timer runs out (10 mins in a regular match) the team with the most points wins.

MOAR!

DEVELOPER
TiMi Studio Group
PUBLISHER
The Pokémon Company
PLATFORMS
Android, iOS, Nintendo Switch
PRICE
Free to play

SWITCH VS MOBILE

We were excited to compare the two against each other and here's what we found. The first major difference we saw was the enhanced experience on the mobile, thanks to high resolution graphics preset and soaring high frame rates. Combine that with real time haptic feedback from vibrations, and the game feels awesome to play in-hand. Not only that, using the touchscreen on mobile instead of the analogue stick on the Switch to target crucial skill shots becomes significantly more convenient. The analogue stick on the Switch doesn't have enough sensitivity options or modifications to accommodate a variety of choices.

On the Switch, to even control the Pokémon's auto-targeting, users must use something called a lock-on icon wheel, where the right analogue stick must be used to correctly navigate the wheel to the correct Pokémon. This makes sense, but during the times when players are amidst the heat of a hectic battle, properly navigating the wheel with the control stick gets pretty tricky (not to mention there are a total of six options to decide).

VERDICT

The game is already a pretty well designed concept of a MOBA featuring Pokémon, and is super gratifying to play (Um, we definitely didn't slack off from work to try this game out more than we needed to oki). It might not exactly be revolutionary, but it does tick off the right boxes in our list. A little renovation here and there is all that it needs in future. Nevertheless, regularly introducing new items, Pokémon and balanc changes helps to keep the game interesting and trenchant while staying true to its roots of a casual MOBA. There's absolutely no reason why Pokémon enthusiasts shouldn't dive right in and enjoy this enchanting and fascinating MOBA already. Charmander is red, Squirtle is blue. We enjoyed the game, and hope you do too! *



ABSOLUTE ESSENTIALS FOR A PC GAMER

You'll probably want to download a few of these

By Satvik Pandey | feedback@skoar.in

S. No.	Name	Short Description
1	**MSI Afterburner**	Evergreen software to measure the performance of and monitor your PC hardware. The MSI Afterburner is a tool simple enough for the starters to use, and also has the capabilities that can be of use of a seasoned professional computer user. It can also be used as an overclocking tool.
2	**Nvidia GeForce Experience / AMD ReLive**	Inbuilt screen recording and game appearance utility for Nvidia and AMD GPUs. These utilities for being a manufacturer-provided piece of software, are polished for the most part and, just like the Afterburner are great for all levels of PC users for tinkering around with their display settngs.
3	**Ninite**	Ninite is a tool for installing/updating some essential PC applications. There are a lot of times where you are unsure of which place to get a software from, especially if it is an open source project with no dedicated webpage. And, going to those sketchy websites can be risky business. So, in that case, Ninite is your best and safest bet.
4	**OpenRGB**	Making all the components of your dream gaming PC light up in sync or in a set pattern, when they are not centrally managed can be a tough task for even the most experienced builders. And OpenRGB, an open-source software, lets its users to customise and calibrate different RGB components of your PC altogether.
5	**KeePass**	KeePass is a one stop solution for all your password storage needs. It is a safe space for storing all your passwords, which you can use to make sure that you never have to click that forgot password button again, or write the password down on a piece of paper and stick it on your monitor bezel.
6	**WizTree**	With games and softwares from all the different genres becoming bigger and bigger in size, and the cost of fast and reliable storage on the rise, it is very important to take control of your computer storage and manage it effetively. A multi use storage analyser, WizTree helps you take gauge of the storage space distribution on your computer system.
7	**Lightscreen/ ShareX**	Game modding has been something that is as old as the concept of computer games itself. Even one of the most fabled open world game franchise, almost applied a community mod, and re-released the game with a remastered label. So, we are pretty sure you might also have wanted to download a mod, but could not find it. Well, with this bit of tiny software with a claimed database of about 1500 games and their related mods, all of your mod download realted queries can be put to rest effectively.
8	**HWinFO**	It performs task that the Afterburner does, and is a popular alternative to its MSI counterpart. The only place where HWinfo lacks, due to which it drops behind the Afterburner is its lack of overclocking capabilities.
9	**Display Driver Uninstaller**	Display driver issues, especially if you are the one who is into getting their hands on the latest releases of the display drivers for your graphic card, are becoming increasingly common. There are many times where you get display glitches after installing a graphic driver, but fixing the driver is a big challenge. Dispaly Driver Uninstaller, helps get rid of your display drivers incase the new updates suck.

S. No.	Name	Short Description
10	**Vortex: Nexus Mod manager**	Game modding has been something that is as old as the concept of computer games itself. Hell, even one of the most fabled open world game franchise, almost applied a community mod, and re-released the game with a remastered label. So, we are pretty sure you might also have wanted to download a mod, but could not find it. Well, with this bit of tiny software with a claimed database of about 1500 games and their related mods, all of your mod download realted queries can be put to rest effectively.
11	**Nvidia Profile Inspector**	Limited by the options.features of the stock Nvidia control panel and want to spice up your graphic settings to extract the maximum viewing pleasure and performance out of your graphics card? Then Nvidia Profile Inspector is your best bet. It is an open souce alternative of Nvidia Control Panel with added options.
12	**Notepad++**	Improved alternative for notepad. Does everything that the older notepad does, but better and adds a wide aaray of other functions too. You can edit source code of programs, and do all sorts of coding activities with this small piece of software, which from the broader looks of it, replaces the Notepad on Windows. And, as the creators of this software say, "Notepad++ is trying to reduce the world carbon dioxide emissions. When using less CPU power, the PC can throttle down and reduce power consumption, resulting in a greener environment."
13	**Borderless gaming**	Borderless gaming enables the users to force any application in a smaller, bordered window, to go into a full screen mode, with ease. That is what the name says and the software does.
14	**Flawless Widescreen**	To play games, made for a smaller native aspect ratio, in widescreen. A great scaling tool to run legacy game titles. There are a lot of scaling issues in games, especially the older ones and Borderless gaming is like the one stop solution for all the gamers who are willing to run the fabled title from the 90s or planning to use an ultrawide monitor or a monitor setup which the developers of the game, could not even think of, while coding their way through each mission.
15	**JoyToKey**	For mapping keys to your controller. Want to play a PC game with a controller? Use this! Yeah, you read it right. Some games specifiacally made for PCs do not support controllers natively. By using JoyToKey, you can easily map your keyboard keys to that of the controller that you are using to have a seamless controller gaming expereince.
16	**SuperF4**	Smashing your montior or your keyboard might not be the best option to rage quit games. SuperF4 helps you bind one key to the famous Alt+F4 key shortcut, so that you can peacefully click that one escape button and get out of that excruciating GTA Online session.
17	**DisplayFu-sion**	Some games are best experienced in a multi monitor setup, and with more and more users coming in to upgrade their setups, adding some spice to it by adding more than 1 monitor, window management has become an issue, especially while playing games, because of the host of limitations that comes along, when using Windows. But DisplayFusion is like an answer to all the prayers of the gamers who have been fiddling around for hours to get that perfect setting for their multi monitor setup.
18	**Everything**	Windows search in many cases is not the wisest choice, when it comes to searching through large pools of data stored on your computer. Everything takes every problem that teh stock windows search has, and chucks them out of the window making your searches faster, when you use this software.
19	**Bulk Crap Uninstaller**	Just like many other softwares on this list, the name of this software is enough to indicate, what its core use is. Bulk Crap Installer, helps you uninstall crappy sofrwares on your comput-er in bulk, to free up space for that latest Warzone update.
20	**Fraps**	Frame rate related statistics, are the best way to flex on your friends, when firing up that latest AAA title. But, getting hands on accurate, and properly logged frame rate statistics is a chal-lenge for all of us. But, with Fraps, you can get all your FPS related stats in a single place along with decent customisation options. All of this without sacrificing much of your computer's resources, which could take a toll on your FPS count.



HALO INFINITE

Xbox Game studios opened the free multiplayer for Halo Infinite and you can bet we tried it!

By Paarth "Cruciator" Pareek | feedback@skoar.in

Not gonna lie, we were excited to try out the latest addition to the Halo Franchise but well, the game took so long to start up that by the time it did start up, we had lost interest and closed it. So yeah, even though the game was installed on NVMe SSD, it took a helluva lot of time to boot up for the first time. Anyways, the next time we started the game, it didn't take as long to boot up so most probably it's a first time thing.

The Gameplay

Once you get into a game, you spawn with the default assault rifle and the opening cutscene introduces each and every team member of both teams and then the game begins after a short countdown. As the game continues, you can bask in the glory of amazing graphics and movement that seems a bit slow but not so slow that you can't traverse the entire map on foot because you most definitely can but certain maps also have vehicles that spawn in them. There are separate points where you can get a different gun and plasma grenades but those areas are really hard to spot at first.



Halo Infinite doesn't start with a tutorial. Instead, you can directly join a bot practice game and get trashed as you try to figure out the controls of the game by looking at the keybindings. If you're a new player coming into the game, you'll have a better time having someone to teach you the ropes.

The Characters

Halo doesn't have any specific characters apart from the Spartan which is customisable with skins you can get in the game shop for real money or through the battlepass which, again, can be bought for cash.

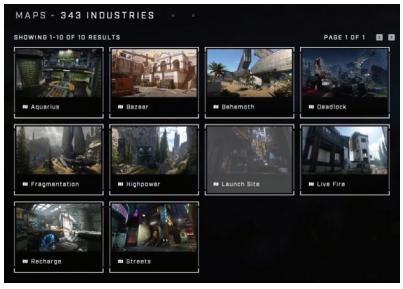
The Maps

Halo Infinite has been released with a



selection of 10 maps to start with and all of them provide for different playstyles. Here's a list of a few of the maps we got to play :-

Aquarius: Aquarius is an arena style map where you have narrow hallways and huge rooms, each with a different battle waiting for you in the form of groups of enemies or a sniper holding an angle to take you out as soon as you peek. As far as vehicles go, you won't find any on this map.



Bazaar: Bazaar is another arena-style map with no vehicles. This run-down streetside map is larger than the map of Aquarius but has a similar mix of elevated structures to go along with its open streets making it another great map for snipers.

Behemoth: Behemoth is a medium sized map which has a huge structure smack in the middle of the map and open planes on either side of it. There's only a few vehicles that are present on the map but all of them are able to maneuver through the tight corridors of the building.

Streets: The name says it all for this map. Streets sets players against each other on the street with a handful of buildings to use as cover and set up short-range combat situations. If you're someone who doesn't like to face off against people who run and gun a lot, this might not be the map for you.

Live Fire: This is the map that has been a part of Halo Infinite since the testing phase. With tons of choke-points, and a new powerup dropping in every few minutes, this map is one of the most competitive maps.

The Guns

Halo Infinite comes with all the classic Halo Guns such as the Assault Rifle, the Needler, and much more. Each of the guns can be found at different spots in different maps and that way, you can go for an upgrade or simply a change in case you've run out of ammo. Apart from regular weapons, there's also extraordinarily powerful weapons such as the rocket launcher which is one of the special weapons placed in neutral ground on some maps for both teams to fight over.

The Game Modes

Halo Infinite has six playable game modes namely:



Capture the Flag: The classic game mode which we're sure you are all well acquainted with. Both teams try to capture the other team's flag while trying to save their own. Whichever team gets the opposite team's flag a set amount of times wins.

Fiesta: This game mode is exactly what it sounds like, a fiesta. You spawn with two random weapons and there are no pickups on the map.

Oddball: Another classic game mode where whichever team holds the oddball, gets points and the longer you hold it for the more points you gain. Once you reach a set number of points, your team wins.

Slayer: A fancy name for team deathmatch. Standard 4v4 or teams of 12 playing against each other with lots of vehicles in the mix.

Stockpile: Stockpile is a new 12v12 Big Team Battle game mode where players collect "power seeds" found across the map and deposit them back at their base to score points. When teams deposit 5 power seeds, they score 1 point. The first team to 3 points wins the match and the game mode has a time limit of 15 minutes. Killing the enemy to prevent them from depositing seeds, obviously plays a critical role in winning.

Stronghold: Stronghold is a mode returning from Halo 5: Guardians which pits players against each other to control three distinct zones on the map. Much like the domination mode in Call Of Duty, this mode also gives you points for every second you have control of two sites. If you have control of all three sites, your team will gain points significantly faster.

Final Thoughts

In the end, Halo Infinite is a good game to play with your friends or just by yourself if you have been a long time fan of the series. It's not as fast paced as other games such as Splitgate or Valorant, but it has its own charm and we are sure its at least worth a shot in our books because hey, who knows this might be the game you go pro in. *



A SHOOTER FOR THOSE WITH AN ACQUIRED TASTE

By Kshipra 'faafdaajalebii' Jadav | feedback@skoar.in

We have all played at least a dozen shooters. Every shooter has the player doing the same three things in a loop - pick up a gun, kill bad guys, repeat. However, it is the story and the representation of those three things that make the shooter stand out from the others. Take the classic Quake 3D for example. There too, you essentially do those same three things in a loop. What makes Quake 3D the classic game it is? The graphics, the character models, just the idea of having literal armored knights beside four legged aliens who eat you is what makes Quake special!

We won't be wrong when we say that the current market for FPS games is a bit saturated. Things just feel repetitive and even though game devs are increasing the quality of graphics and the audio, the changes which are necessary and required are just not happening in the FPS genre right now. But, there is still hope.

Every once in a while a game from some random Indie developer comes and blows our mind. It consoles us that there are hidden gems in the big, vast jungle of FPS games just waiting to be found. Last month we covered GoreScript - a game which brought back the magic of those classic games like Quake, Doom and Wolf3D. The game which we will be covering in this article is Post Void. We can safely say that this game is a polar opposite to the game we covered last month but it still ends up being in the "hidden gem" category of FPS games since every game is unique in its own way.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of the game is as simple as it gets. As soon as the game starts, you're put into a colorful psychedelic world of blood and gore. Your only objective is to keep killing till you reach the level's end. That's it. Nothing else matters. Your topmost priority is killing. You cannot even stop to figure out which way to go. Press 'W' and hope to god that you reach the level's end. The thing that makes Post Void stand out is the absence of a concrete objective to the game. You see, in Call Of Duty - even if you play story mode, there is a certain objective. Maybe you have to ambush an enemy's camp or maybe you have to save your friend from getting executed. Take any major FPS game and you will definitely find a concrete objective towards completing the game. Whereas, here, there IS no objective. There's a gun in your hand, there's a skull in your hand (details coming soon™) and that's it. You see enemy, you kill, you reach end.

GRAPHICS

You thought the objective of the game



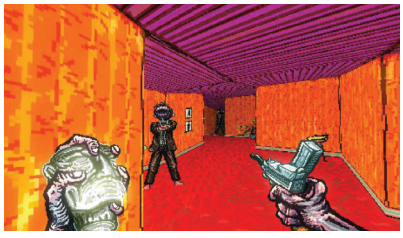
was pointless? Wait till you see the graphics. Never have we ever seen a color palette so out of the world and so batpoop crazy, we think the devs were dropping acid while making the game.

And that's just the color palette for one level. Other levels contain similar design but with a much broader color spectrum and textures. All the colors taken and used in this game are bright, hit you bang in the face, which does help you maintain 100 percent focus on the game just because they are bright.

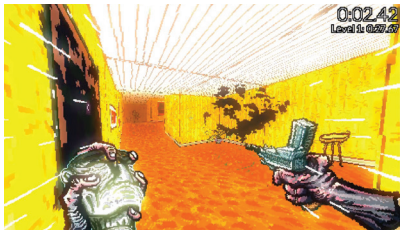
Coming to the actual graphics in this game, the devs have gone for a



90s art style and graphics vibe for this game. The character models are pixelated and low resolution. The textures used in the game to populate the environment are low resolution while the weapon that you're holding and the skull in your hand remain at a relatively higher resolution. We think that



this helps the player to subconsciously differentiate between the foreground and the background. Looking at the color palette used for the skull and the weapon themselves, they can blend into the background pretty seamlessly and hence this little



change of resolution and quality is indeed a welcome one.

GAMEPLAY

This. Is. Pure. Chaos. The gameplay of Post Void is a huge adrenaline rush from start to end. The mechanics of this game are pretty simple too. WASD to move, Mouse 1 to shoot and Shift or Ctrl to slide. That's it. That is literally the whole movement mechanics for the game. It doesn't even have the option to ADS even though it is an FPS Shooter. The fact that the game has simple mechanics to begin with, makes it really easy for anyone to just pick up the game and start playing it.

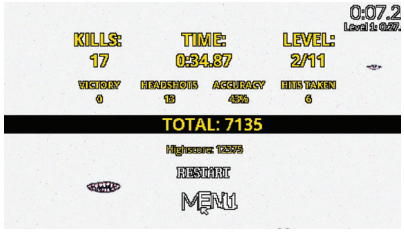
The core gameplay is fast paced and action packed. Yes, we used two heavily clichéd words here but trust us, the game really lives up to the words. As soon as you press start, you will be dropped into level 1 with a skull in one hand and a gun in the other. As said earlier, your main objective is to kill enemies and get till the end of the level. One thing that makes the game what it is, is the walking speed of the player. It is fast, like really fast and it gets even faster towards the end. So, can't we just pause for a moment, collect our breath and then continue the level? No. Here, the skull that you'll be holding in your left hand comes into the picture. It is the health bar. But it definitely works differently than a regular one. You see, it drains if enemies hit you. That's normal. But the damn health bar drains if you don't kill enemies too. That means that you just cannot pass a level without killing a single enemy. You WILL HAVE TO kill enemies and that too constantly (because the health drains pretty fast) to stay alive in this game.

This game can technically be classified as a roguelike too since it is a perma-death game. Meaning, if you die - you will have to start from Level 1 again. No saves and no checkpoints.

Coming to the shooting mechanics, there's nothing fancy to see here. You will be given a pistol by default. There is no limit to how much ammunition you can fire each round but due to the fast nature of the game, you won't even have the extra time to fire extra rounds. But, the pistol isn't the only weapon in the game. You can get an Uzi, Shotgun and a Knife to serve as a replacement for the humble pistol. How to get them? Well, every time you complete a level, you will be presented with 3 choices. Those 3 choices would be an upgrade for the rest of your run.



Lastly, there must be a question in your mind. If the gameplay is fast and you won't have time to react then why not just memorize the whole map? Well, the maps are procedurally generated too. This means that no two runs of the same map will be the same. This also means that enemies can sometimes spawn right in front of you or they could be hiding in the corner taking potshots.



CONCLUSION

Post Void is a beautiful game. It is also a game for people with acquired taste. Chances are that you might absolutely hate the game for the first few runs but the game will gradually grow on you. You will start to like the game. The thing with Post Void is that it engages your brain in such a way that you will not have time to think about anything else. It requires 100 percent of your concentration or you will simply die. This leads to some interesting results sometimes. You might just go silent and play the game non-stop for an hour in a desperate attempt to beat it or you might just give up after the first few runs. But we assure you that it will make you keep coming back for more. *



SKOAR! GAME OF THE YEAR 2021

IT'S THAT TIME OF THE YEAR AGAIN

It's that time of the year again where we've gone through an entire year's worth of gaming and are just about ready to pick our favourites for the year. SKOAR! also had the honor of being part of the jury for The Game Awards, unfortunately, not all of our favourites made it as nominees, so here they are, the SKOAR! editorial's individual picks for Game of the Year 2021!



Pathfinder: Wrath of the Righteous

Manish Rajesh

It's been a while since I've delved this deep into an RPG. Wrath of the Righteous is a CRPG, akin to Diablo and Baldur's Gate of old, complete with fantastic characters, an excellent story, and an epic soundtrack to back it up. Like any true RPG, you have the freedom to play how you want to and your decisions have consequences. The game also features the most extensive character creation I've ever seen. If ever there was a gold standard for tabletop RPGs adapted into video games, this is it.



Age of Empires IV | Mithun Mohandas

Age of Empires IV, for me, is more of an emotional joyride. it's a franchise I've grown up playing and it's after a really long time that I'm getting to play a decent RTS title that is not only balanced (to a large extent) but also has a strong focus on the single-player campaign. We don't get to see a lot of that these days. The franchise was brought out from the grave purely because fans wanted it. Age of Empires IV is my pick for GoTY because ... ***gets emotional*** ... it signifies hope.



Kena: Bridge of Spirits | Sameer Mitha

The one game that really stuck with me this year was Kena: Bridge of Spirits. The game is a throwback for an aging gamer like me to the classic PS2 games. Visually, the game is nothing short of a Pixar movie and its gameplay, though simple, is ideal for those that love a good platforming action adventure game with some clever head scratching puzzles. Kena brings with it a beautiful world to explore, interesting combat and a heartfelt story making it a game I would revisit again.



Pokemon Unite | Dhriti Datta

The game that has made the biggest impression on me so far, and has me repeatedly going back to it, is Pokemon Unite. Pokemon Unite allows mobile gamers to delve into the MOBA genre and it really nails many aspects of the genre. I've spent many hours trying to perfect my "mains" – Gardevoir and Zeraora, most recently, spent hours raging at people taking my "jungle" or not rotating to Drednaw but that's just what makes it fun, infuriatingly so, but still, a blast!



Forza Horizon 5 | Shrey Pacheco and Ali Akbar Merchant

Gorgeous graphics, excellent locale and a focus on racing (and not the story). It does not matter which school of racing you like, Forza Horizon 5 will have something to keep you hooked. But the game is more than just that. It is a showcase of what the Series X and S are capable of. Overall the game is a delight for both the visual and auditory senses. Not to mention the incredibly diverse map of Mexico (yeah, that's where Horizon 5 is set).



Resident Evil Village | Andrew Lu

I've been a fan of the Resident Evil series since I blasted William Birkin in the face in RE:2. Almost 25 years later, the franchise is still going strong. With a 'back to basics' approach, Capcom have finally come full circle with Re: Village. The game isn't as cryptic as Resident Evil 7 and has a more action-oriented approach but it still retains the spirit of the older games. 2021 has been a bit of a dead year when it comes to games but RE: Village was a bright spot in a rather bleak year.



Death's Door | Yetnesh Dubey

Death's Door follows the story of a hard working crow with paperwork and souls of the dead to collect. The crow you play as dorns a cute hoodie, fights with a red sword and avoids unnecessary political messaging, making him the best video game protagonist for me this year. The game features a wide variety of tough bosses to fight, a wonderfully designed world to explore and a lot of different enemy types. The controls feels tight and it runs smoothly on all gaming consoles and PCs.



PUBG: New State | Siddharth Chauhan

At its core, New State uses the same mechanics and combat styles as BGMI but spins it in a futuristic setting with new weapons, vehicles and upgraded graphics. You've got drones, electric vehicles, trams and entirely new ways of combat. PUBG New State also brings in a revamped Erangel 2051 map which is a nice throwback for BGMI fans. While I spent the better part of the year playing COD Mobile, PUBG New State has been my go-to game since its launch last month.



Ratchet and Clank: Rift Apart | Sushant Talwar

The best game I've played this year has to be Ratchet and Clank: Rift Apart. The game offers eye-catching ray-traced visuals which help you immerse yourself in an experience that's very different from most games you can get your hands on right now. Ratchet and Clank: Rift Apart also offers a plot that's dense and an adventure that's fulfilling. In my opinion, the game is one of the best advertisements of just what next-gen consoles and in particular, Sony's latest, Playstation 5 can do.



MOBILE MADNESS

You have to try these games out on your smartphone!

Team Digit

Cats and Soup



Cats & Soup is a management incremental clicker game with cute kittens that hits the stress bustin' sweet spot. This entry in the idle game genre demonstrates that the developer, HIDEA, can execute ideas with stunning graphics. The game begins with you on an empty land with only a single cat companion stirring a stew. You will receive a set number of coins for each bowl of soup that is served. If you sell enough soups, you can upgrade the workstation or add new ones. You'll be collecting cats to chop veggies, squeeze juices, and even invent new recipes. The game also allows you to spoil your cats by feeding them fish (accompanied by yet another fishing minigame) and dressing them up with in-game merch.

However, the game's elementary gaming mechanics can grow monotonous after a while. While the cute graphical style will get you hooked on cramming the cookbook and the land with as many cats as you can, at some point, the player runs out of things to do. As most mobile games do, Cats and Soup also relies on ads and in-app purchases. However, the game integrates the ads in a way that does not disrupt the gameplay experience. The user can watch ads when they choose to, in exchange for in-game currency. While the game is graphically cute and aesthetically pleasing while also being non-intrusive when it comes to advertisements and in-game purchases (unlike most mobile games today), it however, lacks engagement and leaves something more to be desired from the game.

Game of Gods

Game of Gods is a game that resembles an MMORPG in which your main objective is to protect several God Gates in different locations around the world.

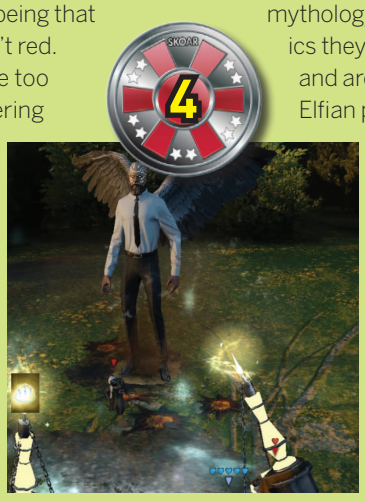
There are different types of demons that you can face off against, each with their own strengths and weaknesses.

What bugged us a bit is the inaccuracy of the outfits of the Gods and the humans and how big of a difference there is in the time periods of the clothing. The people are shown in togas and old Greek outfits whereas the God which is assigned to us at the beginning resembles Agent 47 from the Hitman Series with the only differences being that the God has a beard and the tie he wears isn't red.

The dialogues from the God are repetitive too but it is something we can overlook considering how many games have the same thing and to be honest, it's kind of a part of the charm of a mobile MMORPG at this point, we guess?

The game also has two sets of Gods, the Good Gods and the Evil Gods(?).

The good Gods are led by Odia, the Goddess of Life and the Evil ones are led by Faldir, The God of Death. Each God has different targets set for you. The Good Gods want you to protect the humans that spawn in the middle of the battlefield trying to escape through the God Gates whereas the evil ones want you to kill them so that Faldir gets control of more souls. It is quite easy to protect them as you can simply tap on them and the game uses a little bit of mana from your mana meter to put a shield around them so they're not affected by your attacks to kill the demons. This creates a moral problem for the people playing the game and honestly, we struggled to decide what to do too since both God's gift you spells to use if you do their bidding.



Apart from these problems, the game also seems to be suffering from a severe case of "I-don't-know-which-mythology-to-follow-itis" as the font and menu graphics they use are more Nordic, whereas the outfits and architecture models in the game follow a more Elfian pattern from an old fantasy tale.

Ignoring the game being a bit inaccurate and loose on the history, the game does provide a good source for passing your time and can be played if you're getting bored without the internet as it also has an offline mode.

Would only recommend it to people who are bored of everything else on the playstore and are looking for a way to pass their time in the form of a mobile game.

Rocket League SideSwipe



Rocket League Sideswipe is a smartphone version of the massively popular competitive car-based soccer game Rocket League but in 2D. On paper, it seems like a bad idea to constrict the degree of freedom and give the player less control. However, it makes it practical and straightforward enough for a mobile game while also packing a punch.

Sideswipe's tutorial is incredibly rapid, and players will be exposed to the touch controls one at a time, allowing them to get right into the action. You can boost, jump, and double jump, just like in the actual Rocket League, allowing players to do slick movements like aerials, flicks, and power shots all on a 2D plane. Sideswipe's controls have a straightforward layout, providing a simplified way of interacting with the game and keeping the cognitive load to a minimum for the player. Even though the controls are simple, the game allows you to alter their location and size so that you may experiment until you discover what works best for you.



Sideswipe looks amazing in motion, even though Rocket League isn't known for its aesthetics. The ball is well-detailed, and the effects are vibrant without being distracting. The game provides several presets and control over the FPS and the fidelity of the game's graphics, which the user can fine-tune depending on their device.

Rocket League Sideswipe is entirely constructed around touch controls, allowing for a level playing field in online matches. There are three modes in all, and they're all fantastic. In the conventional soccer mode, you may play 1v1 or 2v2 matches and play a 2v2 basketball style. As things are, we could quickly join online matches and never had to wait more than a minute.

The controls are very responsive and allow for rapid change in movement directions and fine air control. The game is very reminiscent of the original version of Rocket League and offers a very befitting mobile version with an equivalent skill ceiling, with an accurate physics system with quick matchmaking.

Modern Warships: Sea Battle Online

Cube Software's Modern Warships: Sea Battle Online is a new game that features ultra-realistic ship visuals taken directly from drawings that explain the minutiae of each warcraft. The player has 30 ships from different countries, over 200 weapons and fighter jets, submarines etc. In this game, it is essential to be resourceful with your ammunition. There is one initial loadout at the start to pick your weapons and aircraft, after which the player is transported into the online PVP battles lobbies with friends or strangers. This online experience is made better with excellent UI, completely immersive graphics, dialogues and pleasant sounding engineering.



Unlike most other naval games, players can directly control their planes and helicopters from their ships, rather than just have them float around mindlessly and shoot at random opponents. Players get to engage with and strategise to accommodate their opponent's presumed strategies and their depleting resources in real-time situations. From all the battle components provided, the ships are well-built and plenty in number. There is consistency in the ship builds corresponding to their countries of origin. However, this component regularity is lost when it comes to aircraft. Some aircraft types such as the Harrier, F18 Hornet as well as the J-15 are depicted accurately. Still, some airforce aircrafts such as the F15 Eagle, F22 Raptor and J-20 etc. are used in a large capacity, even though they are not carrier compatible.



Along with issues in real-world consistency, many features that make this game worth a play are locked behind a paywall. A lot of the initial gameplay needs to be covered at an accelerating rate to get to the higher levels. Most players struggle to get past level 15, as the daily missions lack proportional rewards. It is easier for a player to lose motivation to engage with the game after that point. Overall, this game is a perfect match for people who have a lot of time and interest in challenging naval combat games.

Final Fantasy VII: The First Soldier



Final Fantasy VII: The First Soldier is a free-to-play PvEvP experience that follows the events that take place 30 years before Final Fantasy VII Remake. The First Soldier puts you in the shoes of a customisable character to fight with 74 other players in a world filled with severe natural hazards such as bombs, lesser dragons, and other such creatures. The goal is to be the last one standing, and how you accomplish this is determined by your playstyle. You can choose the warrior way, where you go headfirst into the obstacles in front of you, or you can be the stealth-master that disappears into the shadows to emerge unscathed in the final round of the game.

The game has a clear UI to support the worldbuilding, character and sound design. However, it premiered with really laggy graphics and server issues. The main attraction in this game is its magic gun, which can be used by all five combat styles - Monk, Ninja, Ranger, Sorcerer, Warrior. This new weapon is extremely experimental and fun to play with, but it brings an unbalance between melee and ranged combat. The gun trumps as the winner no matter what the hand-to-hand combat skill of a player is. And even then, close combat cannot be exercised to its fullest because of the spacing of control buttons on the screen. It is extremely inconvenient to use your left thumb to control character movement while using your right thumb to attack/shoot and operate the camera, and since the lock-on doesn't follow enemies, you're continuously swiping your screen to turn the camera to see where they are.

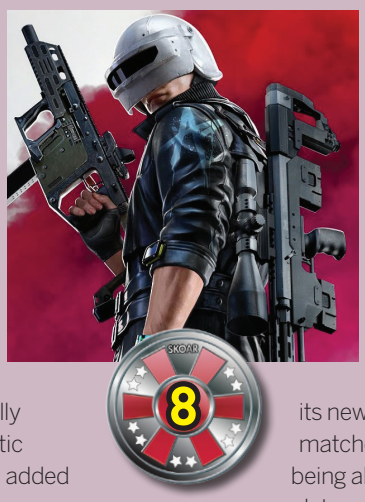
There is much to be desired from a fantasy game that hails from such a prestigious franchise. The battle style reads like a basic battle royale game, the graphics are laggy and the on-screen controls are ill-designed for mobile gameplay. The First Soldier would do much better with some optimisation and mobile-friendly controls.

PUBG: New State

PUBG: New State by Krafton Inc is a thrilling next-gen smartphone game that combines good graphics with the immersive gaming experience from the old PUBG Mobile. Although keeping some of the vital aspects of PUBG intact, there are notable changes to the game and it's overall experience. The idea of the PvP style matches still remains pretty much the same but the game will have a steep learning curve for new players as it includes a slew of new features too like the new revival and Recruit System. Although it's still a lot of fun to play given it is indeed the successor to an already popular battle royale title.

To speak of some evident changes from the original PUBG Mobile, Erangel will appear familiar, but it will also feel like a new terrain, with many historic structures being destroyed over time. The buildings and structures have been given a distinct look with a variety of aesthetic enhancements, yet they are still recognisable by the players. Apart from Erangle, a new map: Troi is introduced as well, which is likewise quite beautifully designed and feels considerably more futuristic than the former. Some locations also provide added benefits to the players, like in Troi some structures have bulletproof glass that can give cover as you search for supplies and ammunition. Other than that, the TDM station map is very similar to BGMI's TDM mode with some meagre changes. Along with these, all the vehicles are now transformed into their electric counterparts which can now also store supplies, drive themselves, and travel at a far faster rate. Vehicle doors can also be used as cover, which can be helpful in tactful battles. Another major addition is the Drone Store, which lets players order supplies in-between matches. Now, casual and new players might find this challenging because they will have to familiarise themselves with the equipment and strategise first instead of jumping in head first. These changes stress upon the fact that the game is meant to be a more strategy oriented title instead of a casual action game.

As for the reformed game mechanics, the new changes make the gameplay much more realistic and the graphical enhancements make the game appear closer to PC or console level game. With a great push in its graphics and game mechanics, compared to other mobile battle royales, PUBG: New State goes head-to-head with well established titles like Call of Duty: Mobile. The gameplay is quite fascinating but given its new arrival, we encountered some bugs during matches and found some textures and terrains being abrasive, although those can be fixed as newer updates are pushed. Overall, New State was a familiar yet refreshing experience over PUBG Mobile and has managed to elevate the PUBG Mobile/BGMI gameplay experience with appreciable futuristic touches.



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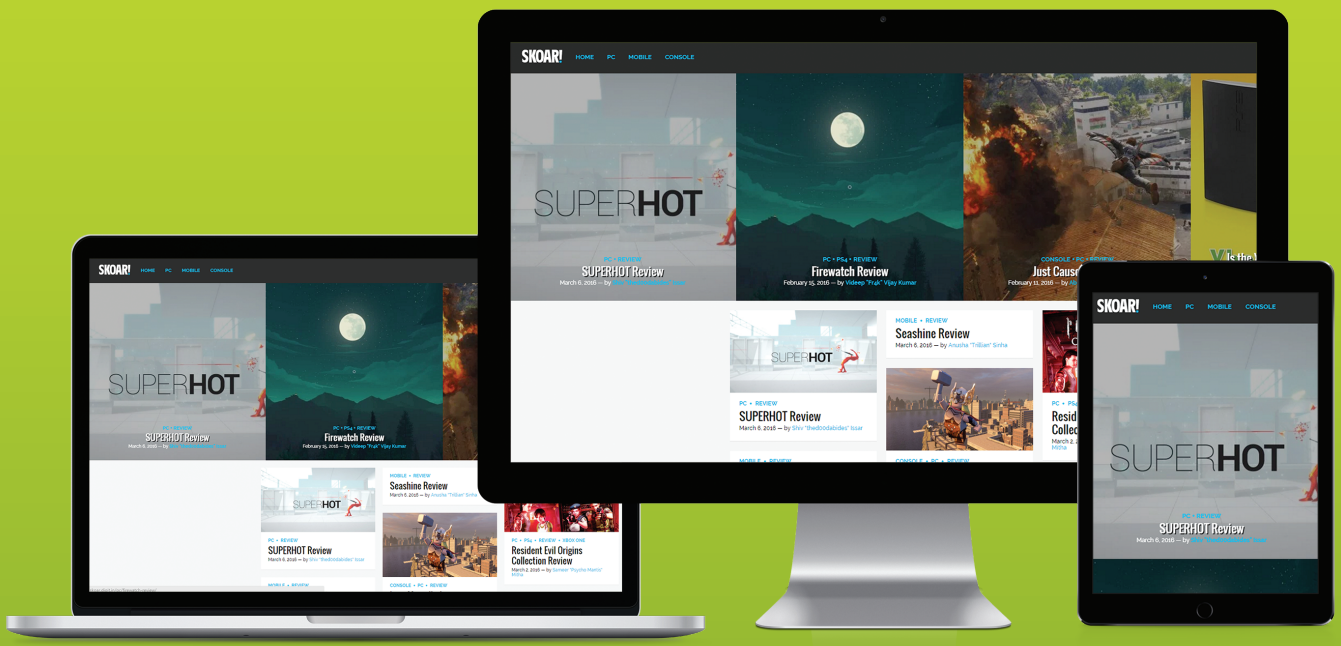


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