

SKOAR!*

LIVE TO GAME

gaming in the metaverse

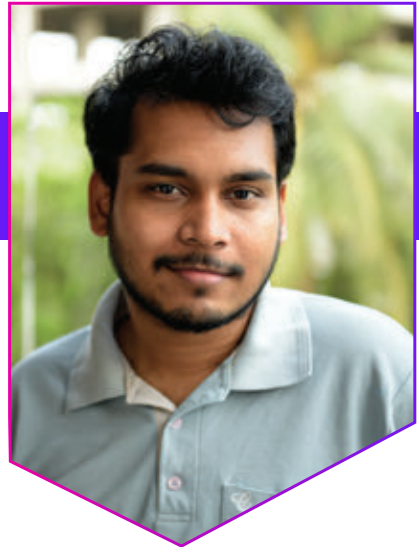
IS THE FINAL FRONTIER
OF GAMING UPON US?



TO TRYING NEW THINGS

Manish “Trigger-Happy” Rajesh

SKOAR! Overlord | feedback@skoar.in



Us gamers are a fickle bunch. We may complain a lot about some things, but still continue to keep doing said things *cough*pre-ordering*cough* over and over again. That being said, we're usually a hard lot to please. We hype easily, and are just as easily disappointed. This puts game developers and publishers in a rather difficult position. Yes, I know, *whaaat? Is this guy really taking their side?* But hear me out.

Everything publishers and developers do, is done with the end goal of making as much profit as possible. Understandable, at the end of the day, it's a business. However, companies know that the best course of action for them to reap the maximum profits is to not disappoint us. This, in turn, means that they will take as little risk as possible. That's the key word here, risk. With gaming being the billion dollar industry it is, everybody wants to play it safe, nobody wants to gamble on something new. This means we're always going to keep getting iterations of the same franchises; think EA's sports games, all of the Call of Dutys and Battlefields, the Far Crys and Assassin's Creeds, games we've just come to expect every year. And every year, without fail, gamers will buy these games. They'll have a lot of the same complaints, there might be one-offs in between that are really good, but companies know they can rely on these franchises for steady income.

Because of this, few AAA companies ever want to launch new IPs, outside of Indie studios who don't own any major IP to

begin with. The game that got me thinking about this was Bethesda's upcoming title, Starfield, which also happens to be a new IP. I honestly couldn't care less about it at first. I'd rather they worked on a new Fallout, or The Elder Scrolls VI, both of which are franchises that I'm familiar with and have enjoyed in the past. However, at some point in time, both of these were new IPs too. You never know, Starfield might just be the next huge RPG franchise for Bethesda. Dragon Age: Origins, a game I'm very fond of, was a huge gamble for BioWare at the time, they were still riding high on the success of another new IP they had just released 2 years prior – Mass Effect, and both of them have gone on to spawn very successful franchises of their own. I still pretend Andromeda never happened. Every successful franchise today was a fresh new IP, only times were different, and I guess gamers were more eager to try out new stuff? Or maybe that hasn't changed, and it's just me.

I know that this year, I'm going to be more open minded about trying new IPs, and maybe even dip into genres I haven't explored before. *

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SKOAR!

LIVE TO GAME

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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
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What's New



BGMI ANNOUNCE SPIDER-MAN: NWH CROSSOVER EVENT

Krafton has announced that it will be partnering with Sony Pictures to introduce a crossover event between Battlegrounds Mobile India and the movie, Spider-Man: No Way Home.



UBISOFT+ MAKING ITS WAY TO XBOX

Ubisoft has announced that its subscription service, Ubisoft+, will be making its way to Microsoft's console. As an added bonus, Game Pass subscribers will be able to play Rainbow Six Extraction on launch day.



KRAFTON BANS 70,000+ ACCOUNTS

Krafton banned 71,116 accounts in the period between December 27, 2021 and January 2, 2022. As has been the case for a while now, the developers have also posted a list of all the accounts that were caught hacking. The list can be accessed via the official BGMI website.



ALIENWARE CONCEPT NYX

The idea behind a service like Nyx is to allow users complete and unfettered access to all their games on any device that can run them on your home

network. The service works by rendering and processing all the data on your home PC while it streams games to any other device in the vicinity. Remember though, this is all on your home network and not streaming through the cloud. According to a report on Engadget, the service could run two games simultaneously on two separate devices. As of now, Steam's Remote Play feature allows you to do that as well but it could use a bit of work. All of this is just conceptual right now.



XBOX GAME PASS VALUE FOR MONEY

According to a report by The Loadout, "Xbox Game Pass added more than \$6,300 of games in 2021" which roughly translates to games worth more

than ₹4,70,000!

This includes AAA games from Microsoft such as Halo Infinite, Psychonauts 2, The Ascent and Forza Horizon. It also includes a slew of third party games available on the service like Scarlet Nexus, The Gunk, Mortal Kombat 11, Back 4 Blood, Outriders, Control, and many many more.

According to the report, "The month which offered the most value was March 2021, where almost two dozen Bethesda games were added to the service after Microsoft acquired the publisher and its developers. The total value of March's Game Pass additions is \$964.67" (More than ₹70,000).

UP AND COMING



MONSTER HUNTER RISE

The latest edition to the Monster Hunter franchise, Monster Hunter Rise, is making its way to PC this month. This will be the second Monster Hunter game after Monster Hunter World to also release on PC. Being big fans of MHW, we're excited to try out Rise.

Release date - January 12



GOD OF WAR

We know it's not exactly a new game, but we're excited nonetheless because God of War is making its way to PC this month. We were big fans of the game when it was released on console and we can't wait to play it on PC.

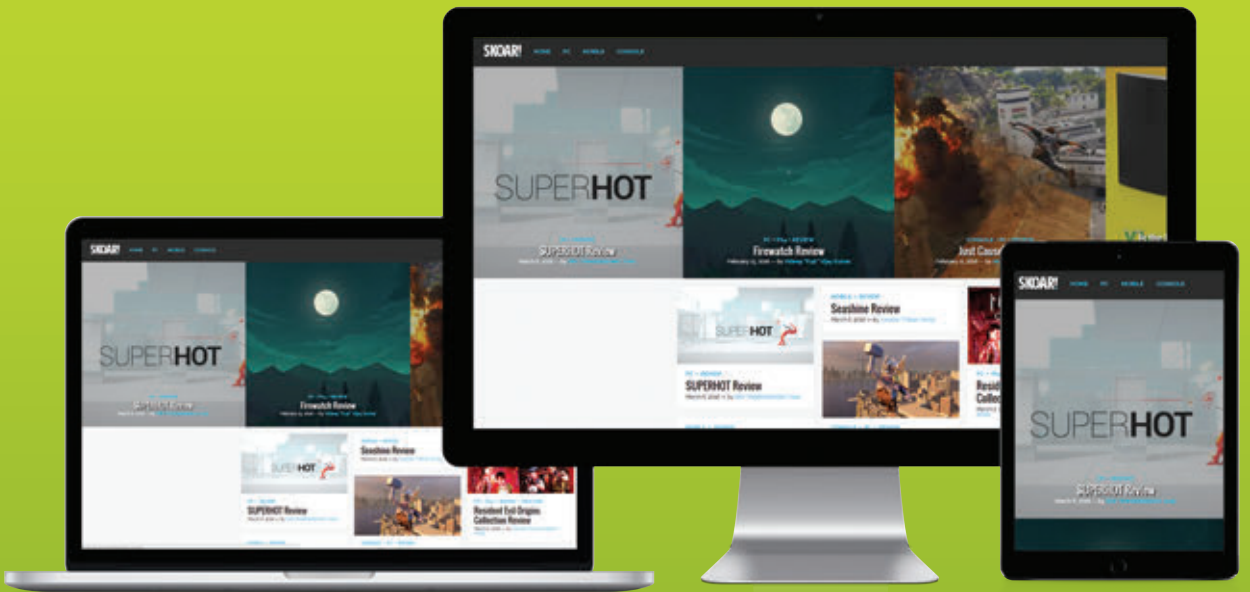
Release date - January 14



POKEMON LEGENDS: ARCEUS

An interesting twist on the classic Pokemon RPG format, featuring unique combat, and the most open-world we've seen in a Pokemon game. The game is set in the Hisui region, which is basically what the Sinnoh region was called in the past.

Release date - January 28



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BATTLEFIELD

2042

OVERAMBITIOUS

BY MANISH "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN



We'd gotten so used to yearly iterations of Battlefield that it completely escaped our minds that it had been 3 whole years since Battlefield V released. One might think that after cooking for 3 years Battlefield 2042 would be DICE's return to form, a revival for the franchise and all that good stuff, but unfortunately Battlefield 2042 is far from it. Read on for the full review.

STORY

The decision to skip on the single-player campaign and focus completely on the multiplayer aspect of Battlefield would have gone down fine with fans if the game wasn't such a mess. It's the multiplayer that everyone buys the game for at the end of the day, so the fact that they decided to double down on that and go all-in was brave, and understandable. Unfortunately, we don't think it really paid off.





GAMEPLAY

When it comes to the gameplay mechanics, it's the same game you've been playing for years. The controls will immediately feel familiar and you'll be able to jump right into the action the moment you get the game running, which mind you, is not a bad thing. They've got a quick tutorial once you start the game for the first time, and after that you're free to dive into any of the game's available game modes.

ALL-OUT WARFARE

The game mode that defines the Battlefield franchise, All-Out Warfare is the large-scale battle mode, where two sides of 64 now, instead of the usual 32, are pitted against each other in a quest to conquer and hold the majority of the map. DICE's aim here was to make Battlefield 2042 the biggest Battlefield ever, and the steps they took to achieve this was to bump up the player count and scale the maps up.

To accommodate the extra players, DICE have gone ahead and scaled the maps up to ridiculous proportions. As a result, we now have to deal with large amounts of empty space, with so many maps having swathes of barren wasteland which don't see much action. The only places that see any action are the capture points.

To compensate for the amount of travelling players need to do, you can now call-in a variety of vehicles for free, or even

spawn in existing friendly vehicles on the map. Being able to choose where you spawn does make it easier to play along with friends, as opposed to them spawning on the opposite end of the map. That still does little to reduce the amount of time you will spend running between points when you don't have a vehicle drop-in available, or if your spawn point is too far away from where you need to go. On an additional note, it was a pain to try and maneuver any helicopter in this game with a keyboard and mouse, but that might just be us sucking at the game.

In terms of overall experience, the increase in the number of players isn't really noticeable. The scale of the map and the amount of time it takes to get from point A to point B is noticeable though. And on the rare occasion that you do see north of 64 players rushing a contested warzone, it's just chaos. One might argue that bullets flying everywhere with no clue who or what is shooting at you is Battlefield's MO and part of its charm, but scaling the number of people up just makes things more frustrating, not fun. It doesn't help that the game was a buggy mess on launch, which only adds to the frustration.

In its current state, there's very little of Battlefield 2042 that isn't plagued with bugs. In fact, there are some bugs that have actually carried over from recent Battlefield titles! The list is pretty endless, from the usual animation bugs, clipping through the ground, rubberbanding, you name it and Battlefield 2042 has it. Unfortunately, this is something long-time players of the franchise are already familiar with, and it's a sad state of affairs



when players still need to deal with the exact same issues despite the game spending much longer in development.

We personally didn't have a very good time with the game's matchmaking either, which might have more to do with the region we're playing in, but it's very evident that there's a lack of players. Very understandable considering the state of the game. Unfortunately, fewer players means unfair matchmaking, and we often got paired against people over 50 levels higher than us who had no problem picking us off from a million miles away.

BREAKTHROUGH

Breakthrough mode attempts to bring all the action to one point, with an attacking and defending team. The caveat being that once a zone is captured, it can't be recaptured. This also means you've basically got all 128 players vying for a single zone, be it either defending or attacking. So take the chaos, and turn it up to 11. The attacking side seemingly has an advantage here, because the defending side can pretty much be spawn camped, which as we all know, is not fun.

"SPECIALISTS" LOL

Battlefield 2042 features 10 playable "Specialists", which at first glance seem to be based on the four original Battlefield classes, i.e., Assault, Support, Recon and Engineer. Turns out, the classes mean nothing. You don't need to pick a medic to be





a healer, you just need to equip the medical crate gadget. You don't need to be an engineer to repair stuff, anyone can equip a repair tool. Plus all specialists can equip any gun. The only thing that makes them stand apart is a single ability unique to each of them, like for instance, Rao can jam vehicles, Casper has an OV-P Recon drone for scouting, Sundance has a wing-suit to get around faster when dropping into maps, Mackay has a grappling hook, etc. This still isn't enough to make it feel like picking any specific specialist will make much of a difference to a team; everyone can do everything plus one extra skill.

HAZARD ZONE

Why did we bring up Specialists before talking about Hazard Zone? Because this is pretty much the only game mode where they actually matter. Hazard Zone is a battle royal-esq game mode, where up to 32 players, or 8 teams of 4 drop in to collect data drives scattered across the map. These data points are defended by AI soldiers, which all squads need to deal with. If a squadmate gets killed, then a teammate needs to secure a respawn uplink to revive them, which is similar to what we've seen in Apex Legends. There are limited extractions as well, and like a battle royale (again), you can betchoyass that the last extraction will be hotly contested.

Gathering data from the drives increases the amount of credits you'll get, and you can loot uplinks along the way which allow you to call in Rangers (robo dogos), a recon vehicle, and the team redeploys we mentioned above. The game pings redeploys for you on the map when your teammates are down. The

MOAR!**DEVELOPER**
DICE**PUBLISHER**
Electronic Arts**PLATFORMS**
Xbox Series X and
Series S,
PlayStation 4,
PlayStation 5,
Xbox One,
Microsoft
Windows**PLAYED ON**
Microsoft
Windows (Origin)**PRICE**
₹2,999
(Standard
Edition)

cool thing here is that team redeploys will revive all your downed teammates, and not just one.

At the start of a Hazard Zone match, you can pick any available Specialist, you can't have two of the same on a team though. Your loadout is limited however, since you won't have many credits to spend on your loadout. Your credits carry over to the next match, so dropping in, looting a few drives and extracting would mean that eventually you would have enough credits to get your favourite weapon with all the customisations you want. This in turn should allow you to stay longer and loot more drives. Successfully extracting also nets you Extraction Streaks, which unlocks extra Tactical Equipment slots for your specialist. This raises the stakes with every drop, because losing your streak means losing out on your slots. These streaks are also attached to the Specialists; they won't carry over if you decide to switch.

The sense of progression in Hazard Zone is great, plus it makes the Specialists and choosing the right team comp actually matter, because teamwork is key in order to succeed. However, Hazard Zone still isn't the best mode Battlefield 2042 has to offer. That honour goes to...

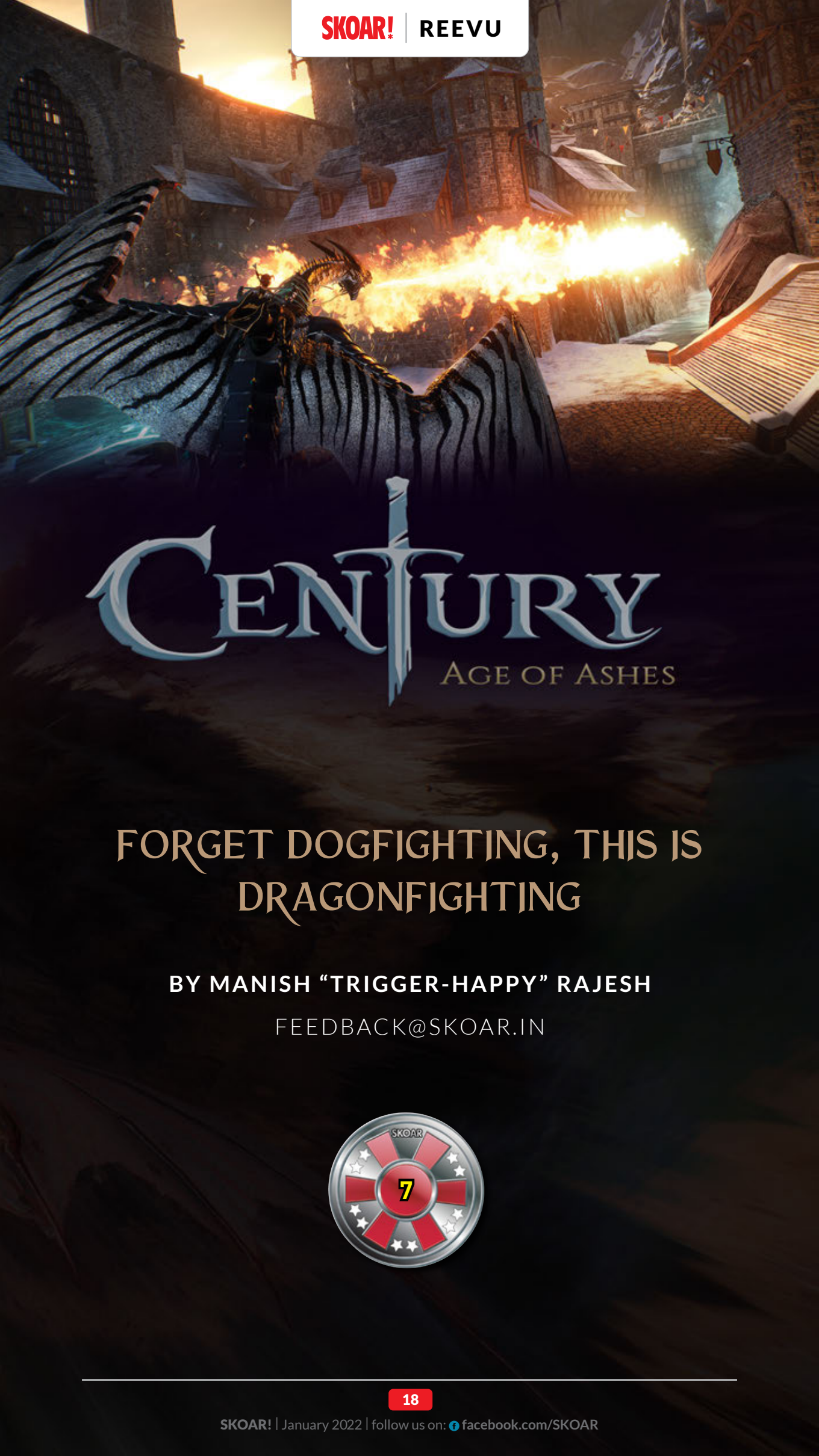
PORTAL

Probably the most fun game mode in Battlefield 2042, Portal mode basically allows players to create their own game modes, with their rules and whatnot. The mode's toolkit includes maps and weapons from Bad Company 2, Battlefield 3, and Battlefield 1942. In addition to player created content, there are a few preset modes which include Battlefield 1942 Classic Conquest, Battlefield Bad Company 2 Classic Rush, and Battlefield 3 Classic Conquest with their original rulesets and maps (64 players). All of which feel so much better to play than All-Out Warfare.

The real fun though lies in the amount of player customisation and rule-tweaking you can do. All the rules and values can be tweaked to include some ridiculous stipulations, like needing to jump a set number of times in order to reload. Player created game modes can be a lot of fun, and they're easy enough to discover as well, with featured player created modes on rotation on Portal's home page.

VERDICT

Battlefield 2042 tried too hard to become the biggest battlefield ever, and unfortunately, the game's core game mode, All-Out Warfare, is the least fun of all of its offerings. The new Hazard Zone game mode is actually a pretty good, strategic, game mode but the Portal mode takes the cake and is the only thing that makes Battlefield 2042 even slightly worth picking up. It also shows that people would still rather play the previous Battlefield games than what 2042 has to offer. That is of course, without mentioning the long list of bugs plaguing the game. Also, we never really came across any of those massive weather events, which is kind of a bummer. We've heard they're fairly awesome. *

A large dragon with dark, textured wings is breathing a massive stream of fire into a medieval city. The city features stone buildings, a church spire, and a bridge. The scene is set during sunset or sunrise, with a warm orange glow. The dragon's wings are spread wide, and the fire is intense and bright.

CENTURY

AGE OF ASHES

FORGET DOGFIGHTING, THIS IS
DRAGONFIGHTING

BY MANISH "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN





Century: Age of Ashes is something we didn't know we needed, and left us wondering why it took so long for something like it to come along in the first place. Age of Ashes is a free-to-play dogfighting game where instead of piloting some spacecraft or fighter jet, you're riding a friggin' dragon. Just the concept alone was enough for us to download the game and give it a try. Plus of course, it was free to play. We were both pleasantly surprised and left wanting a lot more. Let's fly into the review.

GAMEPLAY

There's no story here, just a team-based PvP dogfighting game. Like we mentioned above, just the premise alone was enough to make us download and try the game out. Flying





around on epic looking dragons while spewing fire on opponents, what's not to like?

When you first start the game we'd recommend going through the tutorial because there's a bit of a learning curve, both with combat and maneuvering the dragons. However, once you get a grasp of the controls, what you have with *Century: Age of Ashes* is a pretty decent flying experience, with the ability to pull off maneuvers you never could in any other dog-fighting game. This is also largely thanks to the level design, which is littered with peaks, tunnels and castles to weave through in order to give your pursuers the slip.

Combat is also quite satisfying, with enemies burning to a crisp when you finally take them down. The targeting system





works well with the game's control scheme, and taking down enemies feels rewarding, especially if they're slippery. The same applies to when you successfully manage to outmaneuver pursuers, or even better, turn the tables on them.

DRAGONRIDER CLASSES

The game currently features three playable classes, all of which are already unlocked, and it looks like there's one more on the way.

The three featured dragonrider classes include the Marauder, the Windguard, and the Phantom. Each of them have a different role to play, with the Marauder being a straight up bruis-

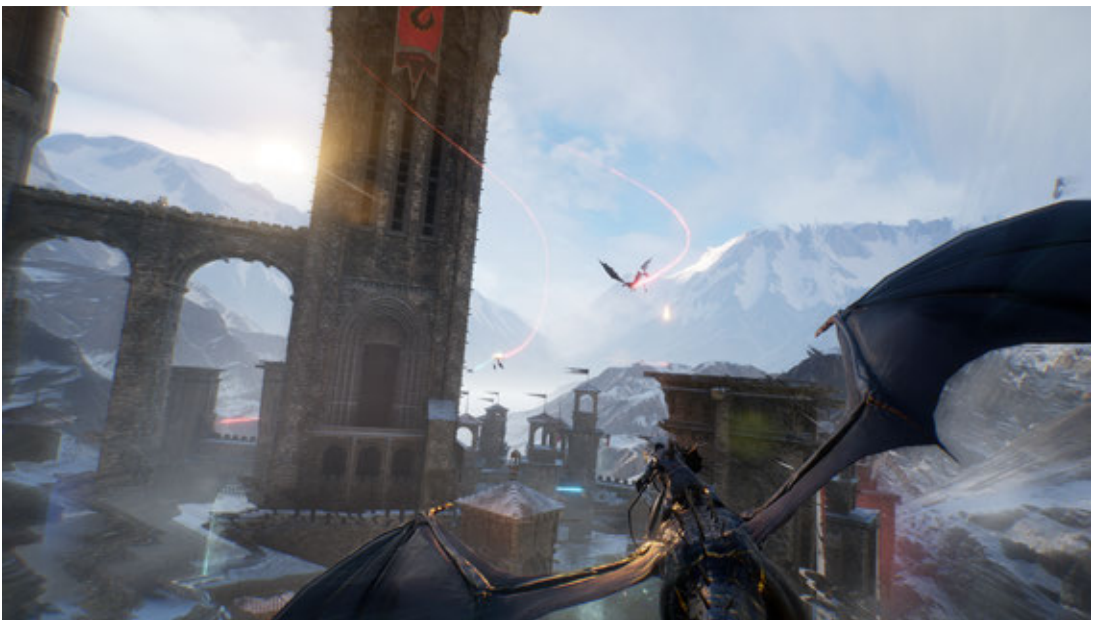




er with skills designed to help him ruthlessly hunt down enemies. Marauders can choose between frost bolts to slow opponents down, or gust to stop approaching projectiles, i.e., fireballs. Their main ability, hunter's mark, allows them to rain fireballs on enemies without any cooldown. The Windguard is the game's support class, who can heal and buff allies with shields. She can also leave behind a trail of poisonous fog, which deals damage and prevents opponents from being able to lock-on to you. This fog also does a great job of blinding pursuers. Finally, the Phantom is the game's stealth or assassin class, with the ability to go invisible and deal increased damage and set traps via mines. Each class has a fixed primary ability, and the ability to choose between one of two abilities for the secondary slot.

THE GAME MODES

Century: Age of Ashes currently has very limited game modes and maps. There are four in total, including the Spoils of War, Skirmish, Carnage, and Gates of Fire. Skirmish and Carnage are straight up brawls; the team with the most kills wins. Skirmish is a 3v3 while Carnage is a 6v6. Racking up kills also racks up a bounty, and taking down someone with a bounty nets more points. Gates of Fire on the other hand is Age of Ashes' version of Capture the Flag, and it can get pretty fierce with constant back-and-forth.



Spoils of War is the game mode they've clearly put the most work into, with it being the game's only ranked game mode as well. Here you need to hunt down AI-controlled gold carrying dragons and steal their loot to bring back to your vault. Additionally, you can also steal loot off of your enemies, and even steal their vault key, locking off their vault and preventing them from being able to deposit gold. There's also a bomb that spawns on the map, which if carried to the enemy vault blows it up, sending all their gold flying. All of these additional mechanics add a lot more depth and strategy to the game mode. This particular mode is quite skewed in favor of the Phantom class, which can go invisible. Naturally, most of the lobby for this game mode is populated with Phantoms. Don't let that take away from the other classes in any way though, they're all very enjoyable. Each of them requires you to adapt your playstyle in order to excel.



Unfortunately, once you've experienced the three classes, the four maps, and game modes, you've seen everything *Century: Age of Ashes* has to offer. You'll definitely keep playing thanks to excellent gameplay mechanics and the gorgeous visuals, but the lack of variety becomes evident very fast.

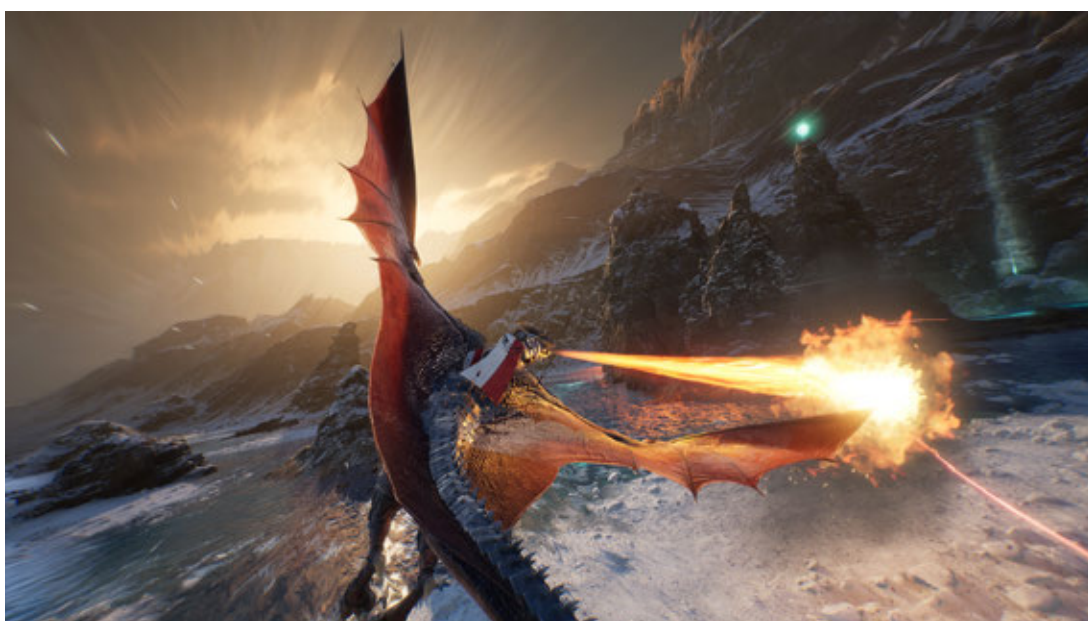
LEVELING, AND THE CASH SHOP

Player levels affect the number of game modes available to you, and certain game modes are locked behind levels. Carnage for instance unlocks at level 6, and ranked play at level 10. This makes sense, ensuring that players are familiar with the game's mechanics before jumping into ranked matches. As is the norm now, you've got a battle pass and you're rewarded with goodies



and cosmetics as you level up and complete challenges. There's also a weekly chest system, with daily missions which improve the quality of the loot you'll get at the end of the week. This includes cool stuff like cosmetics, titles, and dragon eggs, which you can actually hatch and watch them grow by completing in-game challenges. Unfortunately, dragon eggs come along rarely, after the very first egg you receive, it takes a while to reach the next milestone that rewards a dragon egg.

Century: Age of Ashes also features an in-game cash shop, featuring tons of epic looking cosmetics, both for your dragon-rider and the dragons themselves, titles, emblems, oh and of course, MOAR dragons! This is the fastest way to get more dragons without actually grinding for eggs or the currency itself to buy them directly. There are a LOT of dragons in the



game, with unique options for each dragonrider, and, we can't stress this enough, all of them look awesome. If you're not willing to shell out real money, you can, like we mentioned, grind your way to the cosmetic or dragon you want, but keep in mind it will take a while. The cash shop also features XP boosts to speed up the leveling, which can be pretty slow otherwise.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

This game looks amazing. The dragons look kickass, the animations are beautiful; on the visual front, we have zero complaints, this is what a dragon dogfighting game should look like. There's so much attention to detail with all the dragons, especially the named Legendary dragons that look out of this world.

The accompanying soundtrack is also very fitting and the sounds, from the fire breathing to the roars, are great.

VERDICT

Century: Age of Ashes features some of the best aerial combat we've seen in a game. I may be biased towards the fantasy genre in general, but the visuals are breathtaking and the dragons look epic. The unique classes in the game are badass, and whatever game modes and maps the game does have to offer are excellent. Unfortunately, it's too little, and once you've experienced the same content, no matter how great the experience, for the nth time, it will start to get stale and repetitive. Once the game has more game modes and maps, and sorts out some balancing and matchmaking issues, this would be the no-brainer dogfighting game recommendation from us. *

MOAR!

DEVELOPER

Playwing

PUBLISHER:

Playwing

PLATFORMS:

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

PLAYED ON:

Microsoft
Windows

PRICE:

Free-to-play



INFINITE

**THE CHIEF IS BACK
WITH A VENGEANCE!**

BY MANISH "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN



Before we get into this review for Halo Infinite, I should let you know that I haven't exactly been following the Halo franchise. The only Halo game I'd played prior to Halo Infinite was the very first Halo Combat Evolved, which was a damn good game. Understandably, I'm skipping a considerable amount of lore and backstory here by jumping straight to Halo Infinite without playing Halo 2 through Halo 5. Although, Halo 5 was apparently a dumpster fire anyway, so I guess I dodged a bullet there. With that being said, I actually had a really good time playing Halo Infinite, and while I definitely felt a bit of a disconnect at times from the game's main story, it was an enjoyable ride. Let's dive into the review!

GAMEPLAY

We'll get to the story in a bit, but I cannot stress enough how incredibly fun Halo Infinite's gameplay loop is. It's not just a single thing that stands out, but rather how everything works





together. This is the first Halo game to embrace the open-world format, and the execution in Halo Infinite is excellent. 343 Industries has done an excellent job of taking the linear(ish) environments that Halo was originally known for and blowing it up to a grander scale. They've managed to do this without making things feel cumbersome or monotonous. There's a healthy sprinkling of things to do on the world map as you make your way towards the next story objective. These include recapturing Forward Operating Bases(FOB's), rescuing marine squads, infiltrating Banished fortresses and priority targets, which are like boss challenges. I should mention that the game's not "truly" open-world, in the sense that parts of the world won't open up till you complete the relevant story mission.

Before you even set foot on the open-world however, you will spend the early hours of the game learning the ropes, or firing





it out of your wrist rather. We're talking of course, about the Grappleshot. Like everything else in Halo Infinite we've mentioned so far, a grappling hook is nothing new. You should already be familiar with it if you've played games like Just Cause and Titanfall. But again, like everything else, it just feels right in Halo Infinite. You can use the grappleshot to grab weapons or fusion coils from a distance, get out of a pinch batman style when your shields are depleted, or literally launch yourself at enemies and whack them in the face with a stronger-than-usual melee attack. The grappleshot is the first of the equipment you will unlock in Halo Infinite, and the one you will probably use the most. It makes traversing around the ring a joy, as you grappleshot just about everything and spider-man your way across the map. You can also grappleshot vehicles to automatically drive them, or in-case an enemy is already on the vehicle, hijack it.





The targets or boss fights we mentioned earlier make for some of the best content Halo Infinite has to offer, managing to walk that fine line between being both challenging and fun. As a plus, beating them will also unlock new unique weapons in your arsenal. There's plenty of variety in the bosses themselves, and in the ways you can approach them.

As you recapture FOBs the map shows more points of interest for you to explore, and on your way to them you can come across other interesting stuff, like propaganda radio towers, captured UNSC marines, and even collectibles that unlock cosmetics for the multiplayer mode. Speaking of FOBs, you can quick-travel to them, and replenish your ammo and access your arsenal of unlocked weapons at them. You can also call vehicles in here, and there's a long list to choose from. Just keep in mind, TANKS BEAT EVERYTHING!! Jokes aside, vehicles are pretty stronk in Halo Infinite, I personally preferred traveling on foot and grappleshotting my way around, but some vehicles are worth it just for the firepower, which you will need for some missions and areas. You won't have access to everything right off the bat though, doing activities on the map will earn you valor points, which unlocks more weapons and vehicles for you to use at FOBs.

In addition to the collectibles we mentioned above, littered throughout the world are Spartan Cores. You will use them to upgrade your equipment. As you progress through the game you will unlock more equipment like the grappleshot, such as a drop shield, or thrusters. With Spartan Cores these can be



upgrades. For instance, the grappleshot can be upgraded to stun enemies, while the thrusters can be upgraded to make you invisible for a few seconds on use.

All of the above is a tried and tested open-world formula that we've seen in just about every Ubisoft game in the last decade, but again, Halo Infinite pulls it off fantastically, by not crowding you with stuff to do, or being too monotonous. There's a good and solid flow to the action.

STORY

Like I mentioned in the intro, I haven't followed the story of the Halo franchise, and from what I've heard and seen online, it was all good up to Halo 4. Then Halo 5 came along and it was a crime to gamerkind. You didn't even play as Master Chief for



MOAR!**DEVELOPER**

343 Industries

PUBLISHERXbox Game
Studios**PLATFORMS**Xbox Series X and
Series S, Xbox
One, Microsoft
Windows**PLAYED ON**Microsoft
Windows**PRICE**

₹3,999 (Xbox)

most of the game! Imagine that. Halo Infinite makes an effort to bring things back on track, by trying to tie-up loose ends from Halo 5, and attempting to get a new story going, especially for newcomers to the franchise.

That's a hard task, and it shows. However, Halo Infinite still manages to be compelling enough to keep you going all the way. This in large part has to do with the dynamic between Master Chief and his new AI, Weapon. Throughout the story you see the relationship between the Chief and Weapon grow, and the banter between them is excellent.

The story revolves around The Banished, a faction that split off from the Covenant and first made an appearance in Halo Wars 2. This is where a bit of a problem arises, you may be familiar with them if you have been following the franchise for a long time, however if you're new (like me) you have no clue how we got here. Who are the Covenant? What happened to Cortana? Why did she go rogue? And other such spoilery questions. The game does little to answer these questions; you either need to do some reading yourself or watch a few YouTube videos to catch up. A story-so-far cinematic would have been nice 343.



SOUND AND GRAPHICS

You should listen to the Halo theme while reading this review. That's a banger. Just like the rest of the accompanying music. Both Steve Downes, who reprises his role as the Master Chief, and Jen Taylor, who voices Weapon (she also voiced Cortana btw) have done an excellent job. It's hard to imagine anyone else voicing these characters.

Coming to the graphics, the game looks really good. Makes sense considering it was meant to be a showcase for the Xbox Series X. That being said, some more environmental variety in Zeta Halo (the Ring) would have been nice. What's present is fantastic though.

VERDICT

Halo Infinite is some of the most fun I've had in an open-world game in a long time. This is an excellent shooter, with plenty of challenges and the freedom to approach things the way you want to with a wide variety of options at your disposal. The only thing lacking in Halo Infinite is the main story, which despite great characters and casting falls a bit short. It's certainly still a massive step-up from the mess that was Halo 5. If things keep going this way though, the future of Halo looks bright. *



**FORZA
HORIZON 5**

VIVA LA MEXICO!

BY SHREY "TWINKLE FAIRY" PACHECO

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

I love racing games and I love cars. It was a love affair that possibly started with playing games like Road Fighter and City Connect on my NES knockoff console back in the day. However, things really got into top gear when I first played NFS II: SE at a friend's place. Whether it was NFS, Test Drive, Colin Mcrae Rally, Twisted Metal... Played them all, loved them all.

If you ask me, the Forza Horizon series has always been the pinnacle of arcade racing for the last decade. And each new instalment in the series has raised the bar. With Forza Horizon 5, developer Playground Games has set its eyes on continuing that trend. But Forza Horizon 4, the developer already raised the bar pretty high. Will Forza Horizon 5 manage to reach those lofty heights? Yes... Yes, it does.

GRAPHICS: OOH... SHINY...

We played Forza Horizon 5 on the Xbox Series X and it looks absolutely gorgeous. This is possibly the best-looking racing game I have played and helps to best showcase the possibilities on offer with Microsoft's new console.

The cars as well as the landscapes are incredibly detailed. The way dirt, dust and water react to your car is incredible. Just driven through the desert, your car will be covered in dust. Bombing through the jungle will leave your tires caked in mud. A quick dip in the water will leave your car all shiny again. While the game does not feature a complete damage mode, crashes will leave your ride with cracked windshields, and dented bodywork.



The best part is that this graphical fidelity does not come at the cost of performance. The game does offer you a choice between performance or graphics at the start. I chose to play the game in graphics mode and I didn't really feel any noticeable drop in frame rates or such.

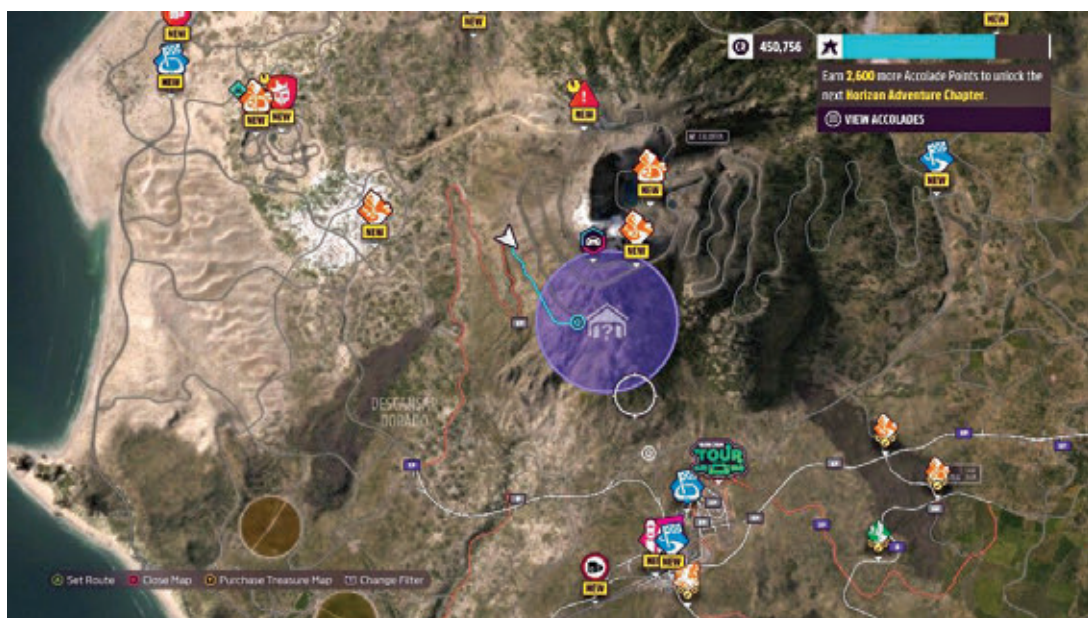
Interestingly, taking pictures via the game's built-in photo mode really takes things up a notch. While the game does not offer ray tracing during gameplay, it turns it on during Photo Mode and the Forzavista mode. This lets you really appreciate the hard work Playground Games did. It also lets you take some pretty stunning shots, which is something the developers wanted you to do. Photo Mode is turned on the moment



you press 'up' on the D-pad, letting you freeze the action and take your time in crafting the perfect shot.

SETTING: MUY BUENO AMIGO

The setting in a Forza Horizon game is usually just as big a star as the cars. Thankfully, the choice of Mexico is excellent. Of course, the map isn't an accurate representation of the country, but more than a 'best of' collection of some of the more notable locations in the country.



The swathes of sand towards the west allow for some Baja racing action, while the tropical rainforests in the south are ideal for some cross-country action. The central area features

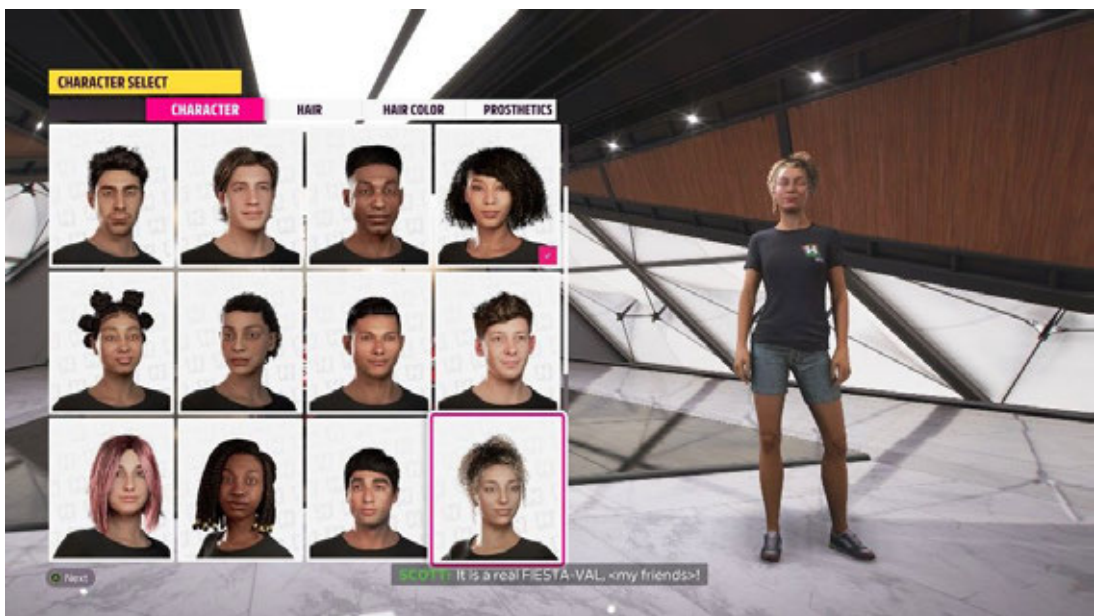
a large desert complete with giant cacti. There are also cities that allow for some tight street racing action. Up north is a giant mountain that truly lets you take in the sheer scale of the map.



STORY AND GAMEPLAY: THE STANDARD HORIZON EXPERIENCE

The story is pretty straightforward and I'm quite grateful for that. I don't want my racing game to feature an in-depth story with twists and turns. It doesn't need it *stares at the Need For Speed franchise*.

In Forza Horizon 5, you aren't a nobody trying to make a name for yourself. The game continues over from Forza Hori-



zon 4 and as such, you are already a big name within the Horizon Festival. This is why ONLY YOU can help the in-game organisers set up the Festival and partake in the Showcase events. And you know what, that's fine! This gives players a great way to experience all that the map has to offer.

In Forza Horizon 5 is the fact that your custom character isn't just a mute spectator in the proceedings. There's a lot more interaction with NPCs both on and off the track. Thankfully, off-track interactions are usually brief, while on-track interactions are usually limited to radio chatter. So the focus on racing remains. Unfortunately, the voice options are limited to just male and female with a British accent. I would like to have more options in terms of accents, but maybe we will see that in a future update.

The basic gameplay in Forza Horizon 5 remains unchanged. In fact, former Forza players should feel right at home here, especially Forza Horizon 4 players. It doesn't matter if you like bombing through the jungle in rally racing or cutting through a city in street racing, there should be something that everyone should enjoy. Forza Horizon's Showcase events also return, letting you race against some non-car competition.



There are over 500 cars in the game and this number will go up as more DLC content is released in the future. These include everything from vintage classics, legendary supercars, retro rally monsters, finely tuned track day cars, modern hypercars and pretty much everything in between. Players can

build up a sizable in-game garage through multiple means. As players progress, they can unlock Wheelspins that can give them a chance to win a ride, or they can bid on a car they like in the Auction House. If you're normal, you could just head over to the Autoshow and buy a car with your winnings. The series' staple of finding abandoned cars in barns returns, but this time, players can add a vehicle from their own collection for other players to find if they want. Players can also auction off any unwanted cars in the Auction House or customise them with paint jobs or tune them.



The EventsLab section of the game lets players create their own races. While there is a host of creating tools available to players, I just wasn't active/creative enough with that. Thankfully, there are other, more creative users who make pretty



interesting racing. Like for example. There was one race created at the top of the mountain that challenged us to get to the bottom by basically driving off the mountain.

VERDICT

Forza Horizon 5 is a natural step up from Forza Horizon 4 and that's a good thing. The game takes whatever makes the latter awesome and cranked things up a notch. The map is bigger, and more diverse, which makes for very varied races. The icing on the cake is the fact that the graphics are awesome, which makes each locale that much better to drive through. It doesn't matter what type of racing you like, Forza Horizon 5 has something to offer to all. But the game is more important than the sum of its parts. The game is also the 'killer app' for the new Xbox Series X and Series S consoles. It is an 'exclusive' Microsoft desperately needed to compete with the likes of Spider-man: Miles Morales or on the Sony PS5.

My only nitpicks would be the clunky UI and average soundtrack. But they don't take away from the best aspects of the

MOAR!

DEVELOPER

Playground Games

PUBLISHER:

Xbox Game Studios

PLATFORMS:

Xbox Series, Xbox Series S, Xbox One, Xbox One X and PC

REVIEWED ON:

Xbox Series X

PRICE:

₹3,499 (Steam), ₹3,999 (Microsoft Store), free for Xbox Game Pass subscribers

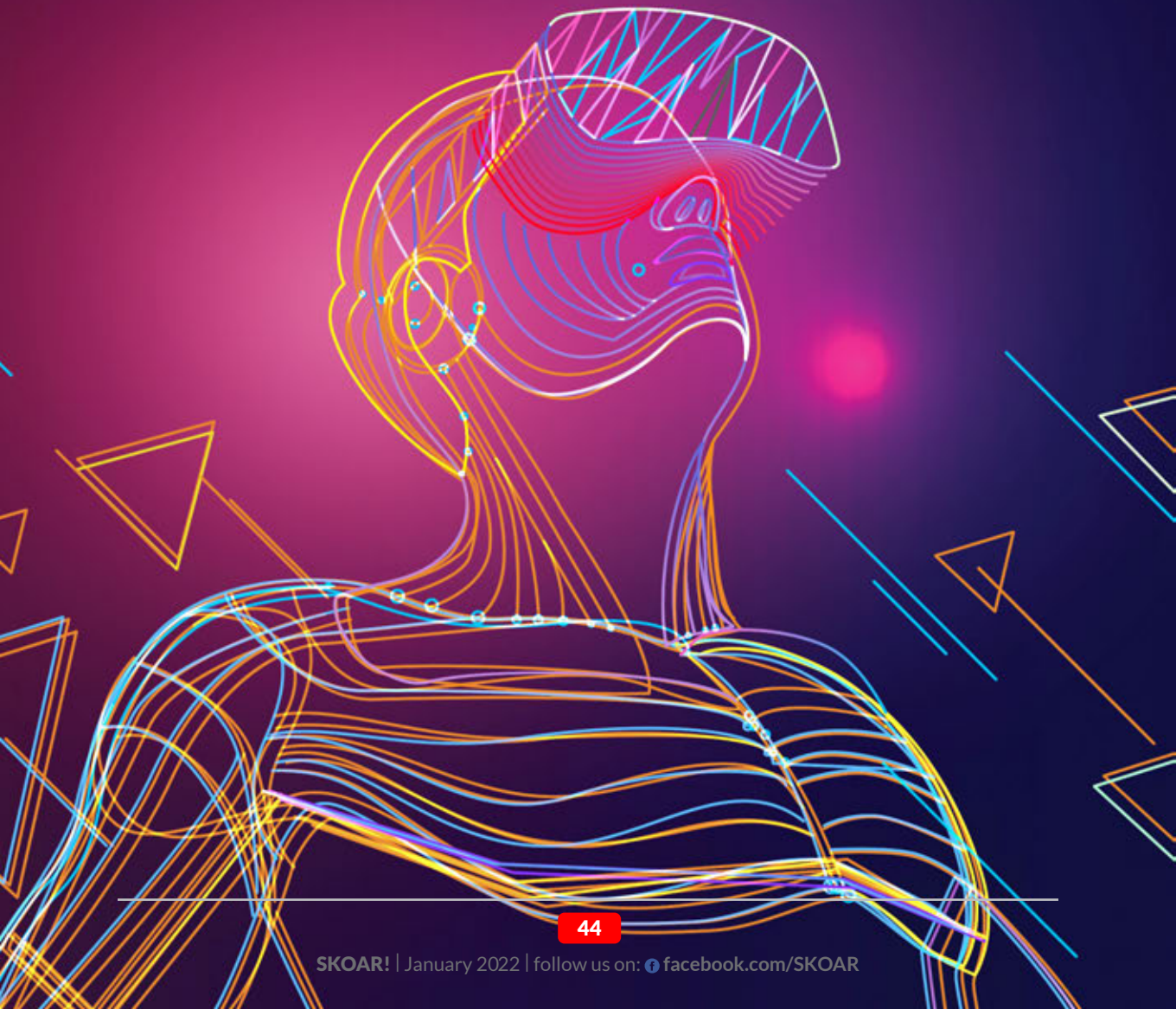




game, which is the racing and beautiful setting. Forza Horizon 5 is a game that anyone can pick up and play. You don't have to be a Forza devotee to enjoy what the game has to offer, which is exactly what new buyers of the Xbox Series X/S would look for. *

gaming in the METaverse

IS THE FINAL FRONTIER
OF GAMING UPON US?



BY NAYAN “AESTIVIAL” PANDA
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Albeit digitised, the metaverse may open the doors to a completely new generation for gamers as they discover some interesting changes in the gaming world. Here are some points that would probably be the most distinct changes to dawn upon the gaming-verse as metaverse slowly strides closer to becoming a functional reality. Let's go through these discernible updates and explore what they add up to our existing systems.

IMMERSION ORIENTED

We are not only talking about enhanced and enriched visuals and acoustics but the very first-person-perspective to give you the sensation of “being there” in a game. This means, newer titles that want to dominate in the metaverse would probably be focused on the enrichment and surreal-



ism that they bring onboard for the players, sometimes more than the story and progression. Another thing to note is that the metaverse would also span across our real world exploiting the existing milestones delivered by augmented reality. Together with Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality stepping inside the ring, we can expect metaverse inspired games to somewhat try to fulfill the promise of a truly “immersive world”.

DECENTRALIZATION BOOM

The idea behind metaverse, specially in gaming, revolves around a decentralised virtual-reality world where a grand number of players can interact with each other or have a



simultaneous experience. With blockchain and decentralization being the buzz word around metaverse, players will be imparting more value to decentralised platforms for gaming, which in turn will inspire more games to adopt the same. While some trillion dollar companies might have their own ambitions for the metaverse race, metaverse would fundamentally be nascent decentralised. Thus, as metaverse is on the way, the use of decentralised technologies like cryptocurrency would be evident in games and their systems. On top of that, these games will no longer need to depend on servers owned by big companies and therefore would be more reliable to the players as they can offer uninterrupted services.

HARDWARE INDEPENDENCE / GREATER PLATFORM FLEXIBILITY

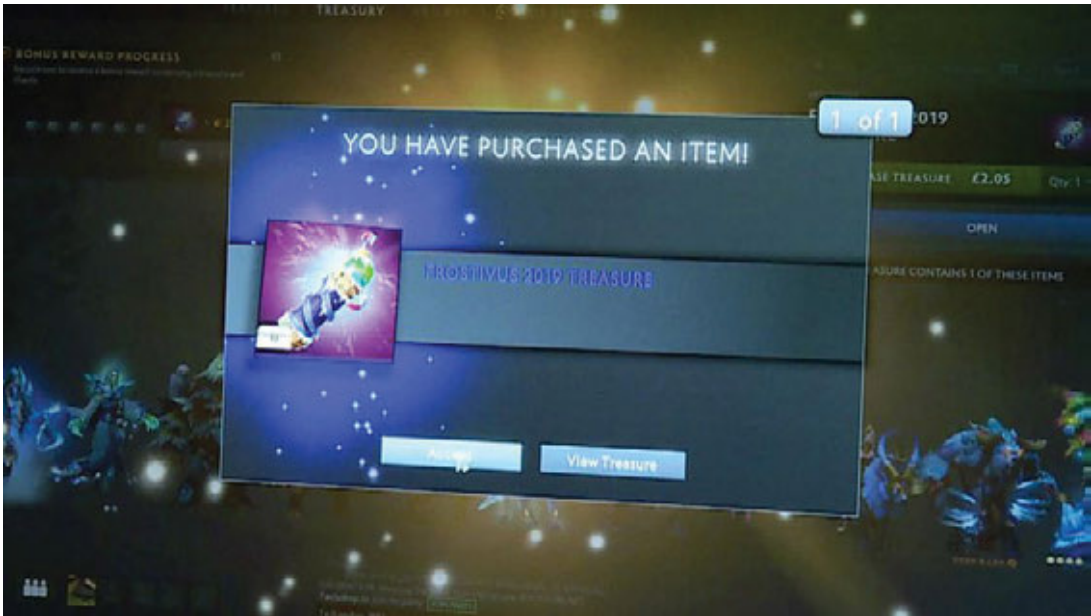
While it might appear as if games built for the metaverse would require a gruesome amount of performance to fuel the promises they bring, we believe the opposite might be actually true. You see, metaverse is all about breaking boundaries so people can seamlessly interact beyond the existing physical restrictions like devices and hardware. Popular examples, like Decentraland, already make use of the existing device browsers to allow the user to explore what their world offers. And while we don't accuse the



newer games of being browser based, we believe that similar implementations may be adopted for future gaming experiences. This fulfills the metaversical claim of seamless user interactions by making use of one of the strongest pillars in the foundation of Web 3.0.

REVISED TOKENS

Currently, the reward systems in games are severely lack luster for players unless they are particularly interested in the game's progression. In-game rewards are either focused on items or tokens, both of which hold value limited to the game itself. This would not be the same with metaverse being around. Players can expect actual trading of items



and rewards in the form of either NFTs or decentralised cryptocurrencies. These items and tokens would no longer be restricted to the respective game and would hold actual value even beyond the game. This introduces players to an all new sphere in the system, which adds on greater value to the particular game. Players will also be able to interact with and support their favorite idols and players in new ways thanks to the integration of eCommerce and the spread of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) along with other collectibles in the Metaverse.

A great example would be how the famous actor Kamal Haasan said himself, that he plans to hold an (unspecified) auction for his very own virtual memorabilia in the form of non-fungible tokens (NFTs) inside a metaverse-based game.

REDEFINED REALITY



Since the meta-hype phase metaverse has been closely speculated to be built upon virtual reality experiences. This is only half the truth as metaverse makes use of more than just VR to deliver a staggering ambience. These fundamental components of metaverse namely include Augmented Reality, 3Di, Social web and other similar progenies of web 3.0. While VR and AR are highly anticipated to be the harbinger of the metaverse, all heads are turned to the games that would be putting these features to unexpectedly amazing uses. On a similar note VR and AR based games would receive profound limelight. Existing 3D titles might even try to espouse virtual or augmented reality experience into their systems while others would make use of exalt mechanics to embrace a mixed-reality experience that may help us escape reality.

GAMING GOES GOLD

Metaverse-based games will entertain the most recognition because of the various impressive aspects that metaverse provides, like decentralization, miscellaneous realities, seamless cross-playing and bulk user interactions. With such fulgurant concepts at play, the gaming community and especially multiplayer games would get a whole new meaning. In fact, games with little to no multiplayer interactions will probably lose much of their hype, just like how 2D games got left behind once 3D entered the reign of gaming.



Meanwhile, FPS and fast-paced games in VR might receive the most appreciation as they allure more naturally to players than any other type. AR games would contrast the pacing but be available more readily to the players thanks to the affordable smartphone outburst in the market. We all know for a fact that a full-scale metaverse based game that promises fascinating features like touch-sensation and more alluring futuristic features are nowhere near to being commercially available. However, we do not expect the initial metaverse based games to be Ready Player One beta in disguise either. While there aren't many genres that can be predicted to foundationally be metaverse sensations, we do expect heavily interactive games like sandboxes and co-op multiplayer to dominate.

PRIVACY AT PLAY

Cryptocurrencies have already proved to us that with a decentralised network of peers and a public ledger, it is quite possible to achieve reliable and auditable computing.

We are particularly more interested in what such decentralised networks bring for the players. As users own and control their data thanks to a decentralised personal data management system, we can expect some pretty concrete privacy oriented systems. As we know, for both functioning and income, video game platforms and business models are known for increasingly being based on the collection, usage, and sharing of personal information. Such privacy oriented



systems will thus contribute to a more secure existence for players in the macrocosm of metaverse based games.

METaverse-COMPLIANCY

With the paradigm shift that Web 3.0 brings to the internet, implementation of metaverse would be pretty instinctive. As more and more of the internet is swept into this inescapable upgrade that metaverse brings, we will witness more apps and platforms trying to be compatible with this shift. Games would not be an exception either and there is expected to be a massive surge in metaverse friendly games and gaming environments, beside existing games which would try their best to adopt metaverse compatibility. The metaverse would rather be an amalgamated space stitched from the vast network of such special applications and games.

As Mark Zuckerberg (CEO of Meta) said himself, “What I think is most interesting is how these themes will come together into a bigger idea. Our overarching goal across all of these initiatives is to help bring the metaverse to life.”

DYSTOPIAN UTOPIA

Don’t get us wrong, we are equally excited on how promising the metaverse and its applications can be. As if like some fantasy, metaverse strides close enough to a future of gaming that we always dreamed of at least once. Humans have always been social animals, and with metaverse and its concepts we are talking about warping straight into something that would force us to re-evaluate what we justify as



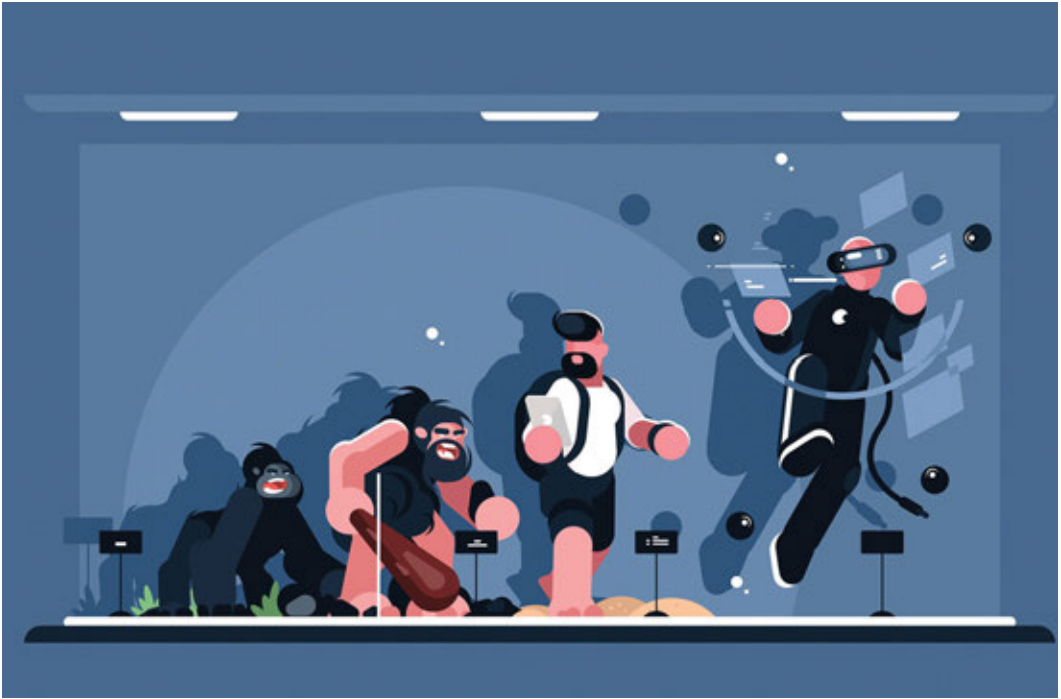
social media and communities today. Even apart from the broader motif of the metaverse, the gaming-verse and games that ascend from it would certainly not always be the same as we conceive for the time being. For certain, games would allude a lot more to players given their introduction of a whole new dimension. For the first time, players can actually 'earn' some value by spending their time on a game, while the earning may not even be passive. For there might not exist boundaries to redefine yourself in this space, albeit digitised, to truly be what you wish to be as. These new aspects of surrealism, worth and independence might excogitate as the characteristics of a digital utopia for sure. Although only for the fact that it ain't.

As John Hanke (Founder/CEO of Niantic - the Pokemon Go company) puts it, "It takes us away from what fundamentally makes us happy as human beings. We're biologically evolved to be present in our bodies and to be out in the world. The tech world that we've been living in, as exacerbated by Covid, is not healthy. We've picked up bad habits like kids spending all day playing Roblox or whatever. And we're extrapolating that".

The fundamental idea behind metaverse deeply resonates with this for its immense real-time presence in the real world. This means that metaverse in existence will be present side-by-side for every individual to access, anytime they wish to. And when you take into account the fact that this very presence also offers utopian-like services to have you glued to their applications and games, things start to look pretty concerning. Addiction to games is pretty common even during the current time. As the metaverse affiliated new games show up, the chances are pretty vehement that it will keep a major portion of the population hooked up for a pretty sweet amount of time. This is again very alarming because of the mental, physical and economical effects that it will wreak. This very ubiquitous yet piquant presence of the metaverse is what makes it both a boon and a bane.

PARTING NOTE

As of almost till the last few months, the idea of a vast space at the intersection of the digital and physical worlds imbued with storytelling, and functionality might have sounded ridiculously like a dream. But when Meta came up



front to present us the flare and possibility of achieving metaverse, it was like a soft nudge to drag us to this awe-inspiring reality. The very thought of having even a remote experience of the virtual reality as portrayed in movies and sequels, is enough to make us feel like living on the edge of a time which is advancing towards a utopian future. Meeting people without having to physically meet them in-person comes so natural to us, thanks to our locked-down-lives revolving around it, that we forget to take our time to step back and appreciate this marvelous system at play. Similarly the metaverse has been around us, slithering in the shadows, waiting to be confronted, without us realising its presence.

As Mithun “barbarian_monkey” Mohandas once said, “The Metaverse isn’t a new concept that Meta introduced to the world. The Enterprise Technology space has been using similar technologies on the factory floor for a couple of years now.” But while the concept in itself is not something new, the substantial and sustainable delivery that is being delivered, least even appearing possible, just leaves us in awe of what is to come next.

But beyond that idea, will the metaverse completely change the existing experiences and never let us look back? Well, we don’t think so. While it’s true that what metaverse will bring to the table is something we never experienced before, there would still be an insane amount of time before people actually get to experience it at a fully functional state, and even more time to start getting the hang of it. The

shift that we talked about above is also not something that would happen in a day or two, but probably in years! VR and AR have been around us for quite some time now, and while there have been claims of ground-breaking gaming experiences, we guess our grounds are made of obsidian. None of these claims have brought us any closer to a glimpse of 'Ready Player One' or 'Sword Art Online' like experience, but that is where Metaverse sounds promising. In fact it has less to do with the veridical experience and more with the concrete cardinal background upon which such virtual worlds can actually function. While there is always potential, we can only hold back and observe how well these latent possibilities are harvested. *



Anyone Can Stream! @VIT, Vellore

With Harsh Salunkhe

BY TEAM SKOAR!
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN



On November 25, 2021 we held the Anyone Can Stream! event at VIT, Vellore, where we were joined by YouTuber and streamer Harsh Salunkhe.



A little more on Harsh

He goes by Harsh Khelraay on YouTube where he has 35.6K subscribers. He is a Redgear sponsored content creator who primarily plays and streams Valorant, and you can find him mostly playing on his main, Viper. At night, you can find him streaming photoshop tutorials. Harsh is also the creator of a Discord community called HARSH KA SERVER for media creators, which currently has over 6000 members. Over here, members can help each other learn and find job opportunities.

Harsh is a self taught YouTuber, who learned by watching foreign YouTube channels, like the Sidemen. We asked him if he had any one message he could pass on to the audience, he said that everyone should respect creators and entertainers, as they put a lot of effort into getting ideas, planning, and executing them.

Anyone can stream!

With Anyone Can Stream, we asked Harsh to show us the ropes with popular streaming software StreamLabs OBS and also drop some gyaan on some of the other software used in the streaming and YouTubing industry.

Harsh began with a tutorial of how to launch a stream using OBS, and showcasing the various features available in it. He

additionally gave tips on creating and developing content on YouTube. We had the students of VIT, Vellore in attendance, as a part of SCGL, who were able to ask various questions regarding the software's usage, the specifications that were needed to stream and also about his personal experience as a streamer. He shared how he manages time by doing academic work during his free time in college, between classes and then making videos at home; he said if one wants to become a successful creator, they should understand the importance of time, focus on quality content, catchy 2-3 word titles, and not big sentences. He said don't be afraid of trying something new, keep experimenting and you will reach your goal ultimately. Don't lose hope if you are not getting expected views, 10-15 views as a beginner are totally fine, don't stop there, be consistent and remember to upload videos at the same time everyday – If you uploaded one video at 4PM today then upload another between 3.30 and 4.30PM tomorrow. Wise words Harsh, wise words.

Anyone Can Stream was held live on the SKOAR! College Gaming League Discord, which you can join here – <https://discord.gg/W37d7tyaXF> – for alerts and invites to future events. You can join the Digit SQUAD Discord here – <https://discord.gg/ATzCA6m8RQ>.

We hope to see you there! *



MOST ANTICIPATED GAMES OF 2022

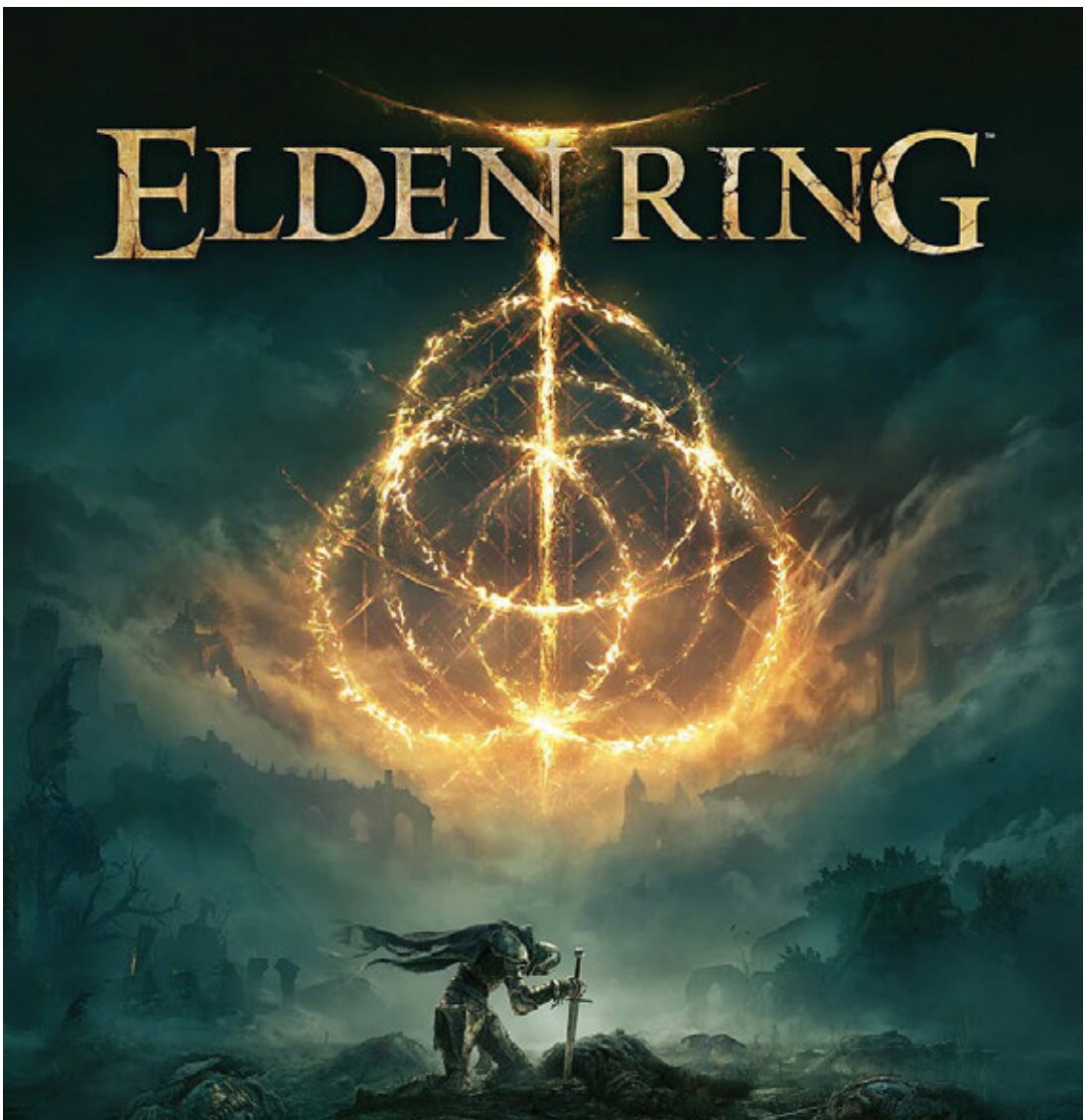
Keep an eye out for these upcoming games

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

2021

saw some pretty great video game releases, unfortunately, the year was plagued with delays.

But hey, that only means we have a lot more games to look forward to in 2022. It's only the start of the year and the calendar already looks pretty packed, and that's without knowing what else 2022 will have in store for us! That being said, in no particular order, we've got here some of our most anticipated releases of 2022.



ELDEN RING

Coming soon this year, Elden Ring has some big names behind it, including Dark Souls director Hidetaka Miyazaki and Game of Thrones author George R.R. Martin who brings his narrative expertise to the table. We've already seen some of

the gameplay and we're definitely getting Dark Souls vibes from the game, but there's definitely a lot more going on in Elden Ring.

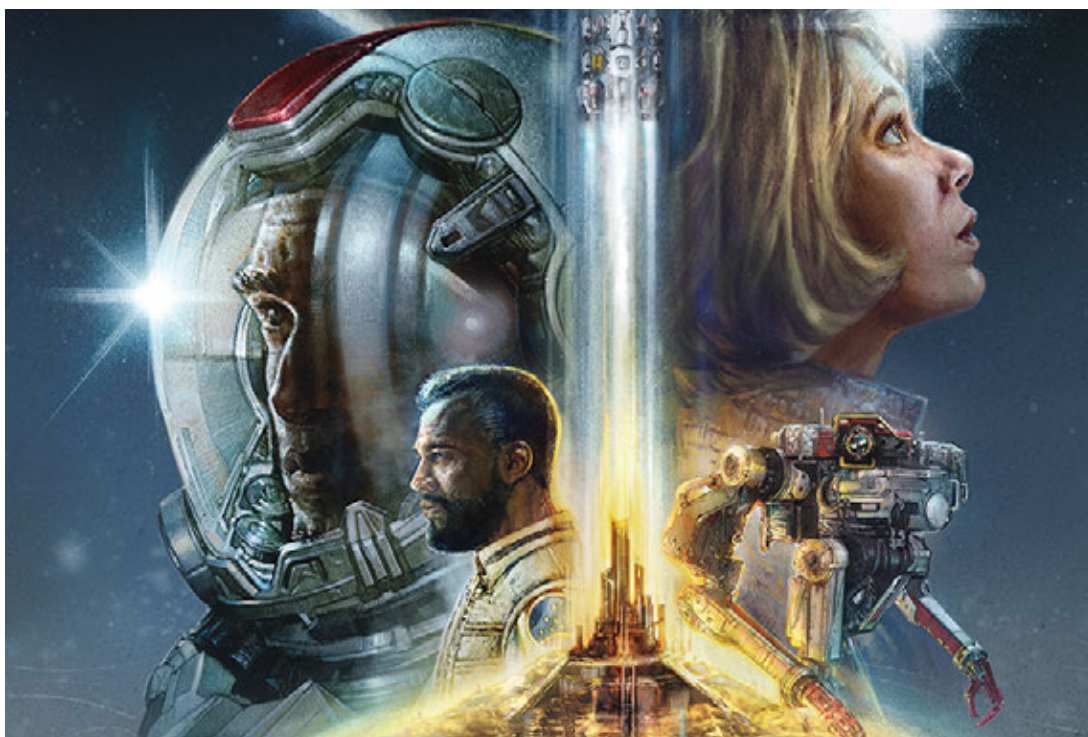
HORIZON FORBIDDEN WEST



The hotly anticipated sequel to 2017's Horizon Zero Dawn was expected to release last year, but it looks like we'll finally get to play it early this year. Zero Dawn was an amazing game with both great story, and gameplay, and we expect nothing less from the upcoming sequel. Whatever gameplay we've seen so far has us giddy with anticipation.

STARFIELD

Starfield is an upcoming sci-fi RPG from the makers of Fallout and The Elder Scrolls. This is a new IP from the studio who have been banking on their tried-and-tested franchises for a



while now; it's something new and fresh to look forward to. Of course, that doesn't mean we're any less excited for Elder Scrolls VI which will begin development in earnest post Starfield's launch. Starfield will also supposedly be running the game engine which future Bethesda games will run on.

GOD OF WAR: RAGNAROK



God of War: Ragnorak will continue and supposedly end the Norse chapter in Kratos' life. Who knows, he might move on to another pantheon after that? Any bets on which one? Ragnorok was another one of those titles that was delayed to this year, and we're all for it. If it's anything like the first (rebooted)

God of War, then every minute spent in development was worth it. No clue on when exactly it's releasing this year, but we should expect this fairly soon.

LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD 2



Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild, much like the console it released on, was a phenomenon. All for good reason, it checked all the right boxes. Naturally, the sequel is highly anticipated, and people have been waiting for a long time; it was first teased back in 2019. We've had little to no new information since then, other than we're headed to the sky. However, we're just kinda just hoping it releases this year.



POKÉMON LEGENDS: ARCEUS

Pokémon Legends: Arceus is an interesting twist on the usual RPG format we've come to expect from Nintendo's long-running franchise. Coming out early this year, Arceus takes us to the Hisuian region, which is basically what the Sinnoh region used to be back in the day. The game has showcased new battle mechanics and even some new Pokémon variants and evolutions. Definitely one for fans of the franchise to look out for.

DYING LIGHT 2 STAY HUMAN



The first Dying Light was a pretty kick-ass game, and Dying Light 2 promises to take everything that was kick-ass about the first game and refine it. Additionally, leaping across buildings and taking on zombies has never looked this good. The game's expected to release sometime in the first quarter of this year.



FORSPOKEN

When we saw the trailer for Forspoken we were already hooked. But that might probably be because a lot of us are fantasy nuts here at the Digit labs. If the isekai anime genre were a game, it would probably be this, with the protagonist whisked away from the real world into a fantasy world where she hella OP. We've got former Final Fantasy XV developers working on this one too.

BAYONETTA 3



Arguably the only character in gaming who does stylish combat as well as Dante from Devil May Cry, Bayonetta is all set to return 7 years later, unfortunately as a Switch exclusive.

The game was first teased four years ago, and we got a glimpse of new monsters, powers and more. No fix on release date yet.

GOTHAM KNIGHTS



Not exactly a continuation of the Arkham Series, but made by the devs behind Arkham Origins, in Gotham Knights, Batman is dead. As absurd as that sounds, it is now up to the bat family to take up the mantle, meaning you will be able to play as Batgirl, Robin, Red Hood and Nightwing. The combat is excellent, as was expected, but we're interested to see where they take the plot in this one.

HOGWARTS LEGACY

Harry Potter fans have wanted an open-world RPG set in the



world of magic forever, and Hogwarts Legacy hopes to be just that. Set in the 1800, players will be able to create their own wizard or witch and enroll at Hogwarts. This too was one of the delayed launches, and JK Rowling being a controversial topic hasn't really helped the game much.

GHOSTWIRE: TOKYO



When we first saw GhostWire: Tokyo we were confused and intrigued. Maybe Death Stranding(ish) vibes even? We've got a combination of magic and martial arts, in a world where most living people have vanished. What's left? Ghosts apparently. We don't have much idea about the plot, and the trailer really didn't help much. Looks interesting though?

TOTAL WAR: WARHAMMER 3



We've already mentioned that Total War and Warhammer were a match-made in heaven in our review for the game. Since then, the franchise has only gotten better, and Total War: Warhammer 3 promises to be the best of the lot. With Total War: Warhammer 3, we'll hit a whopping 15 playable factions, and all of the franchise's previous maps will be included, or rather, merged into one giant map.

STRAY



A bit of a surprise entry, but the premise of Stray is simply too interesting to ignore. We've got a cyberpunk world inhabited by robots and droids, while you control a lost cat trying to make its way home. We think. Still, it looks amazing, and publisher Annapurna Interactive rarely ever disappoints. It's a game where you play as a cat and do cat things to peo- sorry robots.

There we have some of the game's we're looking forward to this year. There were a lot more we wanted to add, and we're sure there are some titles you folk are also waiting for, so write in to us at feedback@skoar.in and let us know! *



The Slav Remake of Quake

BY KSHIPRA 'FAAFDAAJALEBII' JADAV

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN



If you've been following the past couple of Indie Spotlights then you know that we've got an eye for shooters that go out of their way to bring the old classic FPS experience back.

HROT is a retro FPS set in 1986, Czechoslovakia. Once you take a look at the screenshots on it's Steam page, you'll be inclined to believe that the game was made in the same year it is set in. But no, it was released in January 2021 and has been gaining "Overwhelmingly Positive" reviews ever since.

GAMEPLAY

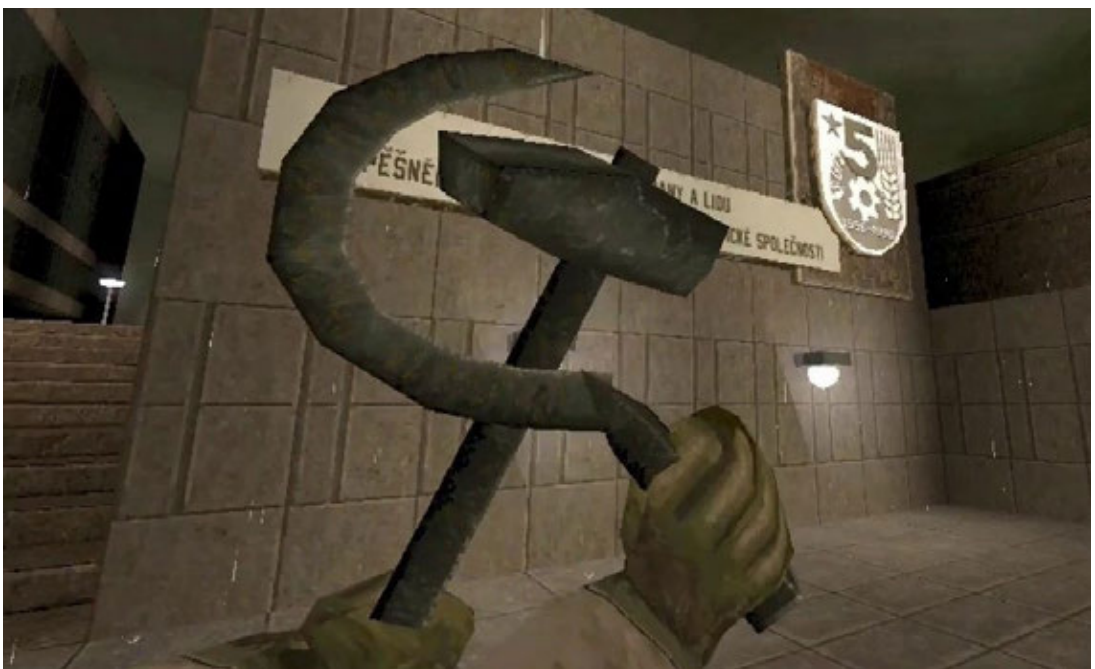
Gameplay wise, HROT really does pick up a couple of elements from Quake. Hence, why we've called it the "Slav remake of Quake" in the leader. During our time with the game, we found HROT to be more similar to Quake than any other old FPS game we could find. Before pointing out the similarities, let us first get to know the game better.

You start out inside a room with nothing but a pistol. Now usually in such games, the first level is the "tutorial", but HROT takes a different approach by throwing you into the chaos and expecting you to learn along the way. There's no

tutorial, but since the mechanics are really simple, the user takes almost no time to adapt to it. You got WASD to move, E to use, Space to jump, M1 to fire, M2 to throw a grenade and F to use the flashlight.

GRAPHICS

This is where the game excels. The graphics. What makes this game special is that this game was not built with the help of any modern game engine like Unity or Unreal Engine 5. Instead, according to the Steam listing of this game, the game engine used here is “A custom engine written in Pascal imitating 1990s software-style rendering with unfiltered tex-



tures and polygon jitter.” Now that’s what we call dedication. This absolute madlad wrote a whole game engine, that too in Pascal of all the languages just to imitate the “old-style rendering” that games of the time had.

The whole game has an eerie brown filter all over it. Almost everything is just another shade of brown in the game and honestly, that gives us the creeps. The character models are pixelated and low resolution.

The gun models are the only models in the game which have just a hint of smooth edges.

Graphics wise, if there is one thing that this game has nailed, it is the environment and the buildings. The sky is overcast with clouds and tall buildings litter the landscape, with various artefacts around them. According to the Steam



listing, the developer has tried to make these buildings and artefacts as close to real life as possible. Every level has its own set of weird artefacts. From a rotating gorilla with “swan-poles” to an abandoned children’s playground in the middle of the level, there has been a lot of attention to detail and we appreciate that.

SIMILARITIES WITH QUAKE

From the moment we laid our eyes upon this game, we knew something looked familiar. Slowly, as we started playing through the game, we realised that HROT has a lot of similarities with Quake. We are neither angry at the dev “blatantly” ripping off the old classic nor are we giving it a pass. Just hear us out.

We are not going to deny the fact that some elements in the game really have been copied one-to-one from Quake. Firstly, although it is a bit subjective, the overall colour palette and the environment the game is set in - the eerie brown filter - has been copied from Quake. Another small but really noticeable thing that has been copied is the hit/kill animations in the game. You see, whenever you fire a bullet and it hits something, a group/cluster of white dots appear on the place where the bullet hit. If you have ever played Quake, you know for a fact that those dots come from there. In Quake, if you keep shooting your enemy even after it dies, a very gorey animation plays where the enemy’s body blasts into pieces with blood splattering all around. Well, the exact same thing has been ported over here. The game’s start screen



and the level-end screen, both have been copied over from Quake.

There are a lot of things that the dev has copied from Quake but we are ready to forgive most of them. Why? Well, because it adds to the overall experience of the game.

SOUND

Unfortunately, this is the only area where the game lacks heavily. The soundtrack for the game is practically non-existent. Before the soundtrack, let's talk about guns first. Hon-



estly, even the gunshots leave something to be desired. They aren't as bad as the soundtrack but something is missing from them and that is noticeable everytime you will fire a gun. We think that the gunshots are too saturated around the mids and hence the lows don't get a chance to shine through. All a gunshot needs in this game is a little extra thump to it and we think it would be good to go.

Now, coming to the soundtrack for the game, as we mentioned earlier, it is practically non-existent. Throughout the course of the game, there is no concept of background music or assistive music. It's just the player, his footsteps and his gunshots. We get it that sometimes, it is needed to increase the "horror" factor but here, it just does not fit.

Even though the game is in early access, we'd still advise the dev to work on the music.

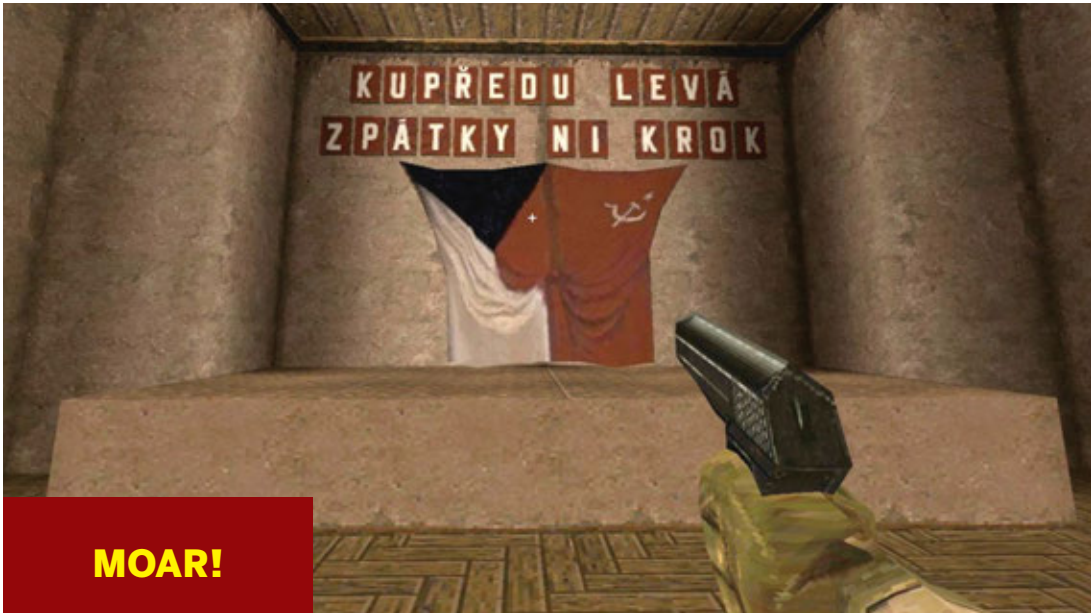


CONCLUSION

Every game has its own strengths and weaknesses. What makes a game stand apart from the crowd is its ability to hide its weaknesses and showcase its strengths in such a way that the user has very little to no time to think about the weaknesses at all.

Similarly, HROT has its own set of strengths and weaknesses but the good part here is that its strength (gameplay and action) almost always overpowers its weakness (sound).

All in all, if you're looking to pass some time and solve some puzzles, this game might just be the one for you. It has a good balance of difficulty and action which is sure to give you jumpscare sometimes or give you frustration just because you cannot find the exit. Also, if you like reading about Russian and Soviet lore then you too should play this



MOAR!

DEVELOPER

Spytihnêv

PUBLISHER

Spytihnêv

PLATFORMS

Microsoft
Windows

PLAYED ON

Microsoft
Windows

PRICE

₹396
(Steam)

game. Even though the fights and the enemies might not be realistic but the place in which it is set in sure is and you'll see some pretty interesting stuff in the game. If you happen to be a fan of Quake like us and you play this game, be sure to email us about your thoughts and opinions regarding the game to feedback@digit.in. *

SKOARMORY!



Aloy's Spear



BLADE

The blade is not as much a blade as a sharp piece of scrap metal that Aloy herself may have hunted using her bow.



GRIP

The grip is made of wood and has Nora engravings to provide a better hold on the weapon.



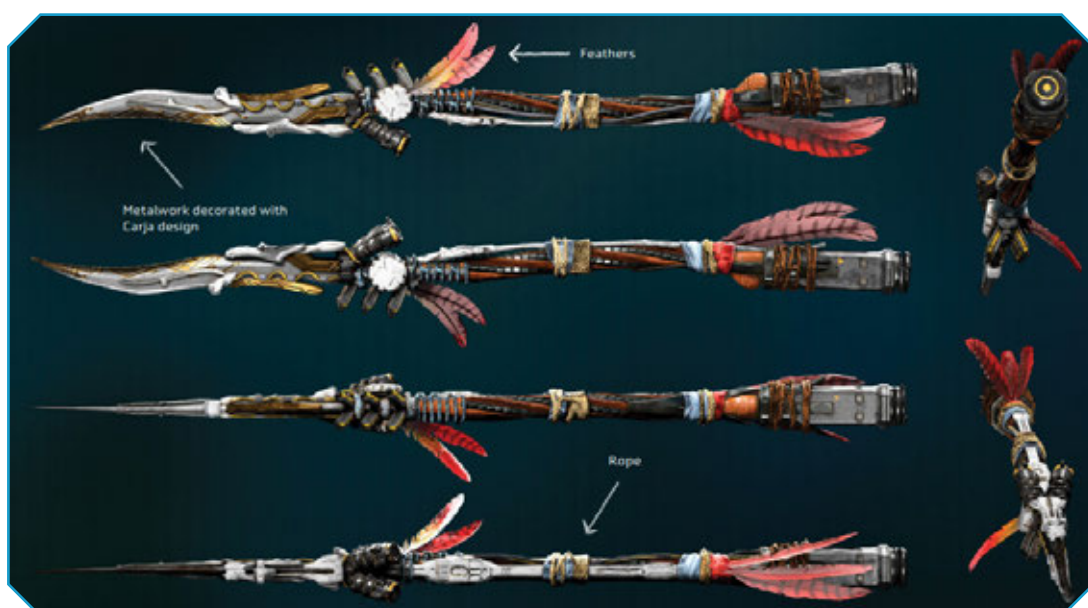
FEATHERS

Exotic feathers for cosmetic purposes and to boast that Aloy is such a skilled hunter that she can hunt birds that people haven't even seen.



VERRIDE MODULE

The Override module is added when Aloy defeats her first corruptor. Completing Cauldron Quests can help you gain access to more overrides which can help you override more machines.



EXTRA LORE

The spear gets a cosmetic overhaul in the second game as we see Carja engravings on it which may indicate growing relations between Aloy and the Carja. Aloy's Spear is the shortest melee weapon in the game. We also get to see the Spear as a harvesting tool in Fortnite and strangely enough, it has two override modules instead of one.



MOBILE MADNESS

You have to try these games
out on your smartphone!

BY TEAM SKOAR!
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN



FarmVille 3 - Animals

Farmville 3 is a mobile version of the Farmville series of games found on Facebook. The game includes new animal husbandry mechanics, meaning there are baby animals in the mix. It was originally launched on Facebook, but it was taken off the app by the end of 2020 as the pandemic did not do its sales and play time any favours. The original launched along with some of the biggest hits in the gaming at the time, such as Demon’s Souls, Call Of Duty: Modern Warfare 2 and Dragon Age: Origins. Compared to these games, it certainly hasn’t stood the test of time. However Zynga, the developer of the game, has now betted big on a redesigned, graphically superior “next-gen” Farmville 3, which debuted almost out of nowhere.

Farmville 3 boasts many features which potentially sets it apart from other games of the same genre. It has more than 150 animals to collect, breed, and nurture. Diverse farm-lands to fish, lumberjack, and craft to help with building the overall revenue for your farm. You can also use dynamic in-game features to alter weather patterns to speed up crop development, catch more fish, and earn more cash. As for the environment, you can build your own “co-op” farm with other players to exchange things and work together to win events and unique decorations. Festivals can be commemorated by dressing your farmhands in sea-



sonally available clothes for Halloween and Christmas. However, how does Farmville 3 perform with all these features?

The main objective of the game, while the same, is still intriguing for users banking on the nostalgia of their “Farmville” and “Farmville 2” days. The ad-free experience only enhances the overall affinity of the user to the game. However, as the game goes on, storage capacity for various crops and water is reduced, and making the crops takes too much time. Overall, Farmville 3 seems like a fun throwback to the days of Facebook games, but not one that people would stick to and continue playing for a long time.

Life in Adventure

The creator of ‘Life is a Game’, Studio Wheel, has written a text-based game called ‘Life in Adventure’ that appeals to users because of its deeply adventurous and exciting nature. In this game, you are an adventurer in a D&D-style fantasy world, where you come across various happenings and must decide what to do next. A number of situations, such as your ability, objects, assets, previous choices, and work will be among the events and possibilities you will encounter to decide the results.

You’ve always wanted to be an explorer, according to the game’s setting. Finally, you strike out on your own to fulfill your ambition. And that’s pretty much all for the overall plot. You’ll encounter a few objectives to do, but they don’t form a coherent story. Nothing connects a quest to rid a manor of its hideous nightly guests with a quest to catch a spouse



cheating. Essentially, all of the quests are enjoyable side quests that you can ignore depending on your decisions.

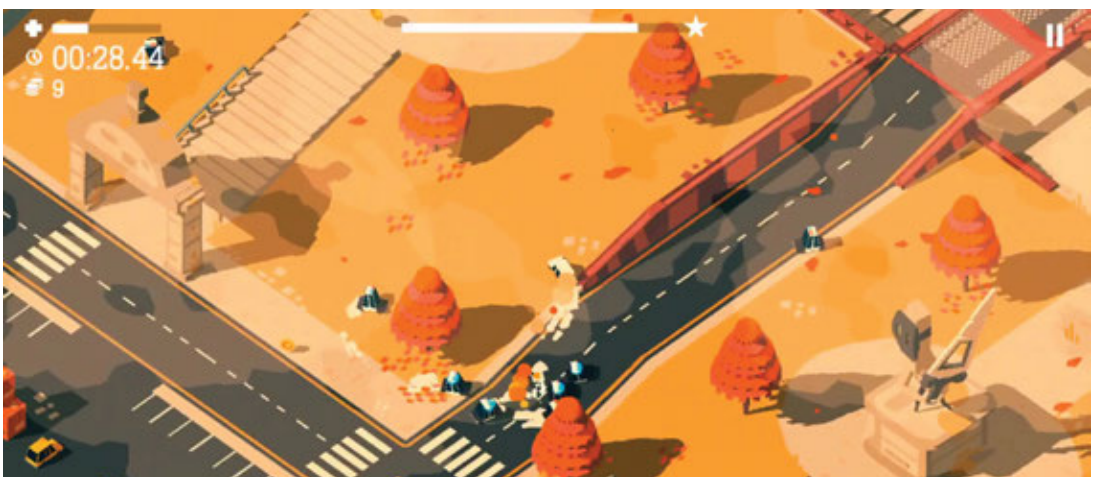
In-app purchases are available in “Life In Adventure”. Luckily, the game avoids the use of paywalls. Players can buy gems which are generally used to purchase alternate storylines, tales that offer new side quests and random encounters, and qualities that let you give an adventurer a bonus stat when they’re created. If the player dies, they can use Gems to resurrect themselves.

“Life In Adventure” is a game that could have some improvement before it reaches its full potential. The game’s pixelated art style is popular among players, and it works well with the provided battle system. The quests are also amusing, although the lack of a defined main questline detracts from the game’s overall rating. The random encounters and unrelated quests, on the other hand, provide a fantastic time.

Pako 3

Pako 3 is the latest edition to the legendary “Pako” series famous for its chaotic and stressful gameplay. The main objective of the game is similar to all of the other games in the series. You get a car and you have to chase off the cops for a specified amount of time without crashing into the nearby vehicles, cop cars, or walls. In the movement mechanics department, there are only two movement mechanics - Left Steer and Right Steer. You can do the respective ones by tapping either the left or the right hand side of the screen.

The only things that are new in Pako 3 are the improved



graphics, new locations and new cars. The game lets you REALLY customise your car. And there are a ton of new levels, game modes, and stages to clear, and honestly, they're a nice addition to the game. Especially the improved graphics.

The thing that makes the whole Pako series so rage-inducing as well as addictive is the chaos and destruction that happens in the game. For some reason, it all feels satisfying to do. Difficulty wise, it follows almost the same curve as any endless runner game - you start out slow and before you know it, cr*p hits the roof. The "rage" part mostly comes from the fact that the car handling in combination with the physics are finicky at best. We figure that they were purposely programmed that way so that the player would go into a rage fit and the developers have successfully managed to do so!

All in all, if you're looking for a game to kill time, which you can play on your way to work or when you're bored, Pako 3 is a definite must play. We'd like to see support for higher refresh rates because a chaotic game like Pako 3 would look and feel absolutely beautiful at 120Hz.

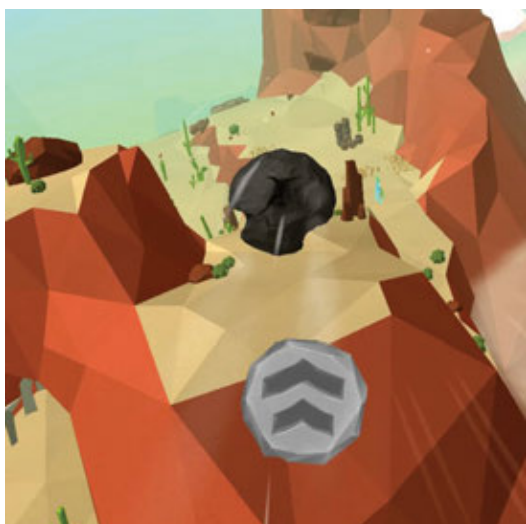
Downhill Legend

The game starts with a reference to Sisyphus, the Greek trickster who is known to have cheated Thanatos, The God of Death, not once, but TWICE! Zeus, offered him a deal, if he were able to push a boulder to the top of a hill, he would be granted immortality and he wouldn't have to trick death anymore. Sisyphus took the deal and to his regret, the challenge was rigged for him to always fail as soon as he would feel he were to succeed.

If you couldn't tell, Greek fanatic alert. But yes, the game itself does deserve it's fair share of praise too, though it could do with a few tweaks to enhance its framerate. The game itself is fun to play and quite engaging.

You are in control of the rock as soon as the Sis Fox is about to reach the peak and no later than you start the game does the boulder start rolling down.

The controls are simple enough to start with, you touch the screen to accelerate the boulder in case you feel it's not fast enough, and you can simply let go once you want it to slow down. You can tilt your phone to turn the boulder in the direction you want it to turn.



There are two ways that your run can end. You can either get caught by Sisy Fox if you aren't able to reach the next checkpoint in the stipulated time or your rock gets broken if you crash into things too much. Don't fret though, your boulder's health will be displayed to you in case you hit something.

The game also gives you a few powerups which must be very well known to anyone who has ever played Temple Run 2. A ghost powerup that makes you immune to getting hit, a hyper speed powerup that, you guessed it, gives you hyper speed and a worlds changer that "changes worlds".

Apart from that, you can also make a few cosmetic modifications to the boulder by spending money on it but then again, it wouldn't be a boulder if it didn't look like a rock. It'd be a bush if it had leaves, and an uprooted tree if it looked like the tree's roots. With that thought, fun game to kill time, give it a shot.

Offroad Racing

If you feel the name is generic, just wait till you read this review.

The game starts off with a hint of originality when they give you a car modelled after the Ford Raptor Pickup Truck and name it T-Rex.

Make no mistake, the model looks good and it holds well, but the game doesn't really show an aspect of anything original after that. It is exactly what the name suggests, Off Road Racing.

This seemed like a half hearted attempt at something that the developers wanted to milk money from with ads



and in game purchases.

You can buy more cars in game but there are only two others to buy so not really sure what you'd want to buy in the game. But hey, you at least have something to work towards we guess?

You also get points to level up and the leveling up doesn't do much except giving a number on your profile. No battle pass means no free rewards. The only way you can get something in the game is by grinding which we somehow appreciate considering how most games don't do that anymore but the number of times we got stuck in a random rock was truly infuriating. Especially with no way to escape our situation other than to start over by pressing the tow button and beginning where we had initially been spawned in the game's "open world".

You may have noticed we put double quotes before and after the word open world, and yes my dear reader that wasn't a mistake. We did so because the game claims to be open world and yet somehow traps you in a somewhat linear path with high hills that you can't even reach.

Overall, the game was frustrating to play and the plagiarism of putting in three classic cars in there with super generic names just annoyed the car enthusiast in us even more.

Touchgrind Scooter

Touchgrind Scooter is a parkour/stunt game developed by Illusion Labs. The objective of the game is simple. You're given a scooter and a stunt course and you have to perform



various tricks to gather as many points as possible before you reach the end. If you want it from a different perspective, think of Tony Hawk's Pro Skater - but for a scooter.

For the movement mechanics, the scooter is controlled by two fingers. One finger rests at the handle of the scooter and the other finger rests at the tail of the scooter. The bottom finger gives acceleration and the top one is

responsible for manoeuvring. We'd like to clear up that acceleration is automatic here i.e., we cannot control the speed of the scooter. The speed automatically increases as you rack up the combo counter by doing different tricks.

Speaking of tricks, the way you actually perform tricks in this game is a bit weird. When your scooter is in mid-air, (after a jump) you either have to swipe your top or the bottom finger to do a trick. If you swipe your top finger, the handle bar will rotate giving you points, and if you swipe your bottom finger, the tail will rotate and ultimately, before hitting the ground you need to hold both fingers in place again so that the scooter lands perfectly. That's pretty much it when it comes to doing tricks in the game.

All in all, we found some bugs and some game breaking glitches but we still decided to cover it because of the graphics and the customisability of the scooter. It is and will be a decent game if the developer decided to improve it a little but if you're a hardcore x-sports fan we'd recommend that you stay away from the game as it is appealing to the more casual audience..

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