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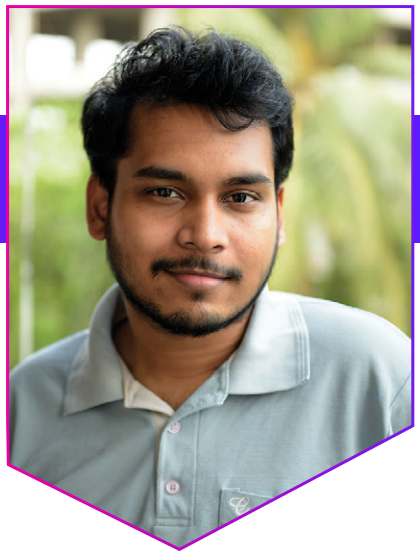
LIVE TO GAME



KEEPING GAMEPLAY FRESH

ALL YOU NEED IS SOME RNG

SOMETIMES SIMPLE IS BETTER



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

This past month, everyone in the office has been addicted to a little game called Vampire Survivors. At a glance, this game has no business being as addictive as it is. It's got super retro graphics, a very simple (but catchy) retro soundtrack, and super simple graphics. It's also got extremely simple gameplay to go with it; WASD or arrow keys to move. That's it. It wouldn't feel out of place if it was released 20+ years ago. Yet, just about everyone in the office was engrossed over the game, trying to optimise their builds and reach the 30 minute mark, which was basically where the game ended.

This game is what you might call a reverse bullet-hell rogue-like. You've got hordes of enemies swarming you, and as you level up you've got a wide selection of weapons and power ups to select from to help you survive the onslaught. The weapons fire automatically, and there's no aiming involved for the most part. Enemy AI, like most of the game, is very simple. There's plenty of variety in the way they look, but all they do is run towards you at different speeds with different amounts of health. While you have some degree of control over what you pick, it's still mostly RNG, which actually ties in pretty nicely with our cover story this month.

Keeping gameplay fresh and exciting. It's a simple concept, simple gameplay, simple graphics, yet highly addictive. Even successfully surviving 30 minutes isn't enough, you want to

optimise and theorycraft your builds next, do the highest amount of DPS possible, pull in the highest amount of gold. We've all squeezed hours worth of gameplay from this tiny game, more than we've spent on any AAA game this month.

That goes to show you that you really don't need much to make a fun game, even if the fun is short lived. We're all pretty sure we got our money's worth and then some, plus, the game's still in Early Access, meaning we'll probably go back to check out what new challenges await us. *

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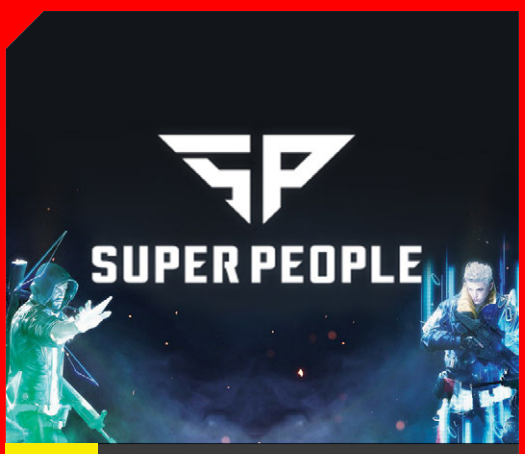
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SKOAR!*
LIVE TO GAME

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Manish "Trigger Happy" Rajesh

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What's New



NEW CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE SEQUEL CONFIRMED

Activision has confirmed that we will be seeing a sequel to 2019's Call of Duty: Modern Warfare this year. Further, we will also see a "new warzone experience". The names of the new titles are not yet known.
https://dgit.in/newmw



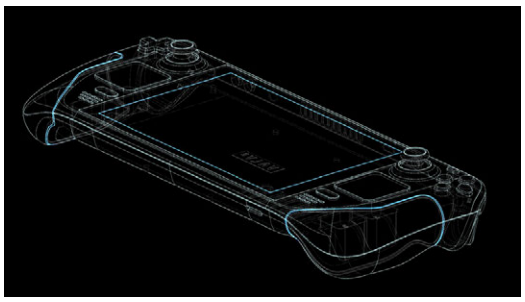
PS5 BETA ROLLS OUT BETTER ACCESSIBILITY AND MORE

Sony's new software beta includes some new features based on the feedback received from players. These include new party chat options, game base enhancements, accessibility options, and UI features.
https://dgit.in/ps5beta



GHOSTWIRE: TOKYO GAMEPLAY SHOWCASE

Tango Gameworks upcoming game blends Japanese mythology with technologically modern Tokyo. We recently had the opportunity to get a closer look at its gameplay, check it out at the link below.
https://dgit.in/gwtgameplay



VALVE RELEASES CAD FILES FOR THE STEAM DECK HANDHELD GAMING CONSOLE

Two weeks prior to its official release, Valve published the CAD files for its Steam Deck console's exterior shell to GitHub, under a Creative Commons License, saying "Hello! Good news for all the tinkerers, modders, accessory manufacturers, or folks who just want to 3D print a Steam Deck to see how it feels."

This enables gaming accessory manufacturers, modders, as well as DIY enthusiasts to use the drawing and schematics to 3D-print custom shells of the device.

The CAD files, however, enable users only to build a shell for the Deck, and not the entire Deck itself. They include STP models, STL models, as well as drawings of the device for reference.

The move is in sharp contrast to Sony with its PlayStation 5 console, with the company taking legal action against third-party vendors selling replacement covers for the console, ensuring that users purchase only officially licensed ones.

https://dgit.in/deckcad



SONY REVEALS PLAYSTATION VR 2

Sony has announced the launch of its new PlayStation VR 2. The announcement was made on the official Sony blog where the company posted images and broke down how the device would function. Sony also gave us a bit of information regarding the design of the PlayStation VR 2 with its circular controllers and more rounded shape of the headset. It also follows a similar design to the current PlayStation 5. Sony has not reinvented the wheel with the VR 2 but rather, improved on it. The VR 2 comes with new features such as a lens adjustment dial, so users have an additional option to match the lens distance between their eyes to optimize their view.

https://dgit.in/psvr2

UP AND COMING



GRAN TURISMO 7

The eighth installment in the PlayStation exclusive Gran Turismo series is all set to release early in March with mind blowing visuals and the complete sim experience.

Release date - March 4



GHOSTWIRE: TOKYO

Ghostwire: Tokyo is an interesting blend of Japanese mythology and martial arts. The trailer left us very confused, but definitely intrigued.

Release date - March 25

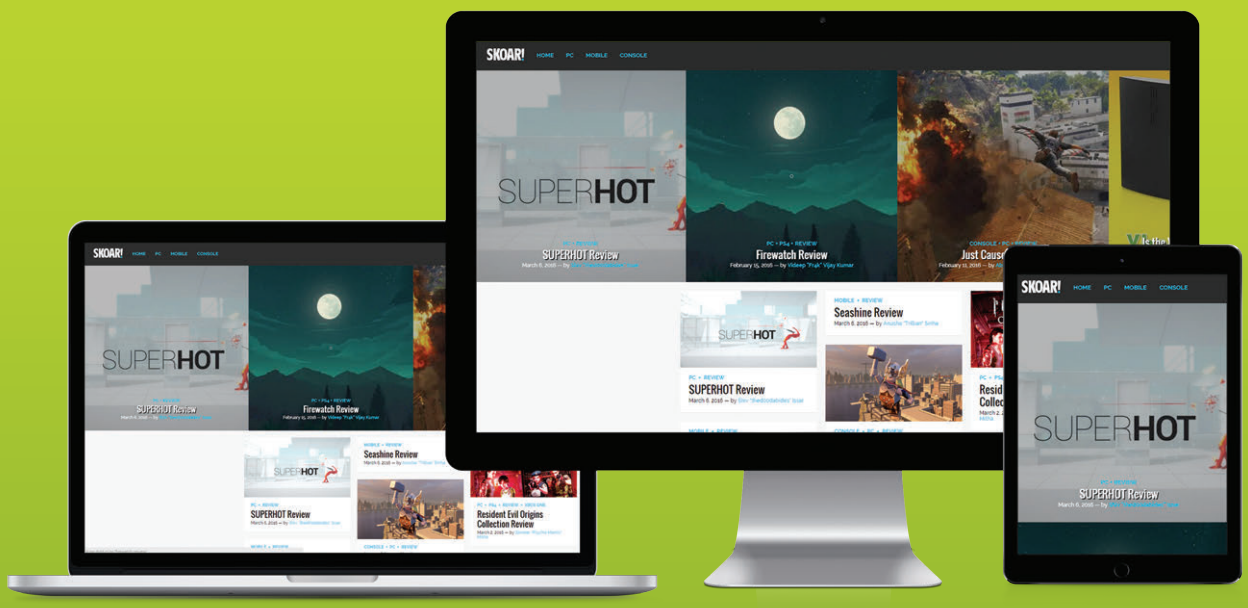


TINY TINA'S WONDERLANDS

Tiny Tina's Wonderlands is the successor to the Tiny Tina's Assault on Dragon Keep DLC for Borderlands 2, which we quite enjoyed. We're just happy for more Borderlands.

Release date - March 25

TENTACLE: *The iconic Bowser, from Super Mario Bros. was originally intended to be an ox.*



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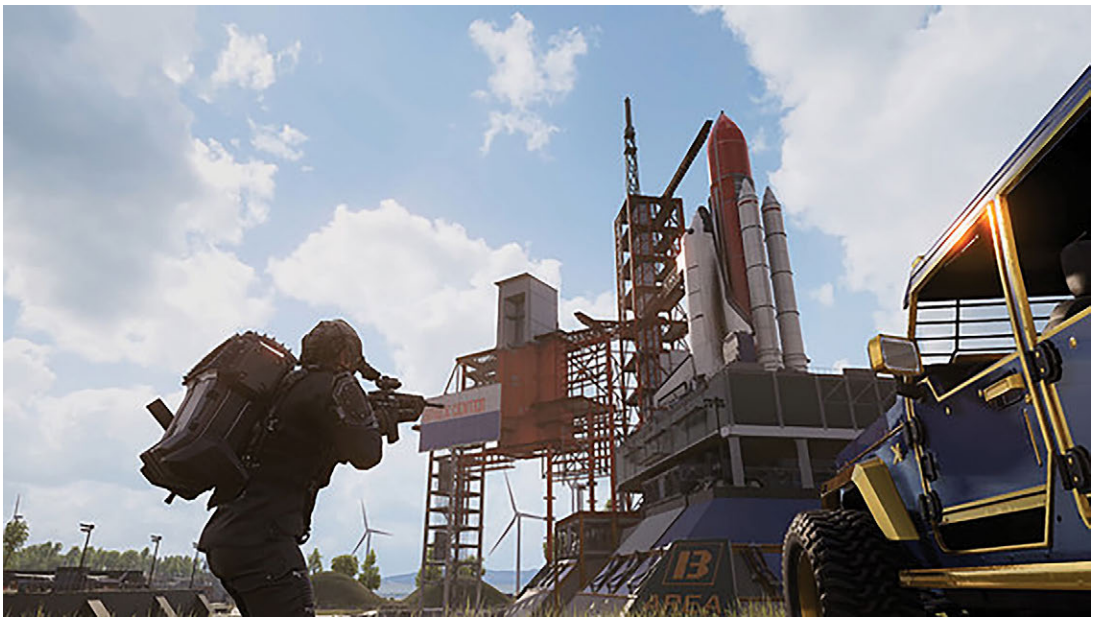
BY **PAARTH "CRUCIATOR" PAREEK**

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Another battle royale game comes into our midst in the form of Super People with just a little bit of twist which seems to be inspired from other popular games which incorporate a system of unique characters having abilities.

THE BACKGROUND

You are introduced to the backstory of how you got to the island as you start the game for the first time. So basically, an organisation called Orbital was preparing for a human mission for terraforming the red planet, i.e. Mars. But in order to survive in the conditions that Mars puts up, Humans need to become stronger and faster. Hence, they developed a super capsule. To conduct experiments in a Mars-like environment, Orbital created Orb Island, a place to conduct extensive experiments for their leap forward in the pursuit of terraforming Mars. And of course, when you're developing such high tech stuff that could have value in the billions or even trillions, you'll catch the eyes of people who wish to get rich quick, terrorists. They took control of the island quickly and to get rid of them, all special agents around the globe were called, each having a different speciality in a different field. As the day for them to infiltrate



the island arrives, they do it with ease and just when all was going good, an agent went rogue and in his own ambition of power and started ambushin his own comrades which leaves them with no choice but to use the super capsules for themselves and so, the survival of the fittest begins.

THE BASICS

Well you are greeted with a tutorial and a quick basic runaround of how to use your abilities and what to do in the game exactly. The controls are simple, the same basic staple movements and of course, you can change the keybinds whenever you want to.

You jump onto Orb Island with 99 other people and fight for your survival.

Here's a friendly tip from our side, you can simply jump onto anmy random house in the zone and you'll get decent loot unless you are absolutely unlucky.

Once you get onto the island, there are various supplies you can find such as meds, ammo and weapons and of course, super capsules.

There are different variations of the super capsules that you can find such as the red ones, the blue ones, the green ones, the white ones, and lastly, the golden ones.

Each super capsule enhances the ability you have in the corresponding colour of the capsule. For eg. if you consume a red capsule, the ability your character has in red will be enhanced and so is the case for each coloured capsule. The white one will enhance a random ability and the golden one will max out one random ability.

You also have an ultimate ability available to you which differs from agent to agent and can obviously help you change the tide of a fight.

Now, as you jump down, you can do so in three modes and two perspectives. Solo, Duos or Squads, and all of them in either First person Perspective(FPP) or Third person perspective(TPP).

THE AGENTS

Super People has 12 agents and each has a different set of abilities with proficiency in a different weapon. You are assigned a random agent at the beginning of each game and you do have the ability to change what class you want to play but it is a bet you need to make using the in-game currency(gold coins). It costs 500 gold to change your class in the beginning of the game and in case you liked your previous class more than the one you just got, you can pay 100 gold and revert back to your original agent.

Here's a small list and a brief intro of a few of the agents you can play in the game which we found were a few of the best :

1. **Gatling Soldier:** the gatling soldier is the equivalent of a heavy class in any other game. This class starts out as an attack based agent but as you level up, it becomes equally good at both attack and defence. His main perks include bullet tracer, Dodge roll and a tactical slide which makes this class the perfect choice for people who have trouble dodging bullets otherwise in such games.

   The Gatling soldier's ultimate ability is Spitfire which allows you to release an unstoppable torrent of bullets on your enemies.



2. **Shotgun Master:** The shotgun master plays hugely on the element of surprise with his skills of knockback, upgraded flashbang, and super jump. This class of agents is very versatile and the kind that is quick on their feet. This class is also a natural behind most weapons and with an ability like super jump, they can easily overcome positional disadvantages and use that ability to make unbelievable plays.

   Shotgun Master's ultimate ability is the tank Shotgun which deals a lot of damage with just a single shot.

3. **Strike Force:** This class has access to enhanced technology which enables it to attack and defend with lethal efficiency. The Strike Force class displays a bulletproof shield, air walk, and Lacerating rounds as its abilities, meaning this class takes it's armour very seriously and wants to eviscerate other's as soon as possible. This class is an excellent response to any sudden fights that may come up on it.

   This class' ultimate ability is Dash which allows them to take advantage of any sudden situation that may happen. They can either decide to close out the gap between them and the enemy or make a quick escape depending on other factors such as health and armour.

4. **Sniper:** This class is a force to be reckoned with. The Sniper can take out even the toughest of enemies without even being spotted. With perks like Steady Shot, Amplifier, Precision Bomb, and Booby trap, you can be sure that this class

will wreak havoc when nobody is watching. However, this isn't a class that just camps and snipes. In fact, it is far from it. With it's bombardment skills, the sniper class can easily play a much more active and threatening role throughout the game.

It's ultimate ability is Deadeye which is a powerful single shot attack that allows you to penetrate through the enemies' armour and cause fatal damage.

5. **Teleporter:** The teleporter is fit to take fights as he wishes, be it long range or close, his skills provide him an advantage in both situations. Their main perks are One Shot One Kill, Tomahawk, Field Medic, and Quick Fix which makes them the perfect teammate as they can heal others and also keep a steady hand while aiming to hit that shot.

   The teleporter's ultimate skill is, you guessed it, teleport, which does exactly what it says it does. You can teleport wherever you want to in a certain radius while only being limited by your own imagination. You can either rapidly change your positions while trying to ambush enemies making them think you'll be attacking from one direction but have them expose your backs to another teleport of yours. Or you can simply just teleport away from the enemies if you are running low on health or have another strategy to pursue. Either way, the teleporter is one of the best classes to have in the game.



COSMETICS

Super People has our appreciation for not introducing an in-game credit which you'd have to buy using real money. Every piece of cosmetic item currently in the game can be equipped by you at no extra cost and used in-game. Whether or not they will continue to have this philosophy though is a question to ponder upon since skins are a huge basis of income for such multiplayer titles.

CONCLUSION

Overall, Super People seemed like a fun game to play with your friends or even alone if you're a battle royale nerd.

However, keep in mind the game does not have dedicated India servers and does require a decent setup in terms of hardware for it to run smoothly so anyone without a GPU in this shortage, sorry but this game is not for you. Not unless you get your hands on a GPU at least.

Other than that, We really enjoyed this game and would definitely recommend this to anyone looking for a battle-royale with a twist. *

MOAR!

DEVELOPER
Wonder People

PUBLISHER:
Wonder Games

PLATFORMS:
PC

PLAYED ON:
PC

PRICE:
Free to Play



A POST-APOCALYPTIC WILD WEST ADVENTURE

BY **SAMEER MITHA**

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Horizon Forbidden West is a sequel to one of Sony's most successful open-world games - Horizon Zero Dawn. Forbidden West has been one of 2022's most anticipated games as gamers have been waiting with bated breath to get their hands on the game, especially since the State of Play dedicated to the game showed off not only new machines but also some incredible new combat mechanics. We've been playing Horizon Forbidden West for quite some time now and we can tell you this, if you are a fan of the franchise and are waiting for Aloy's next adventure, then this is definitely a game for you. It isn't without its flaws but the overall package on offer is one that will definitely keep you hooked for a very long time.

STORY

The story of Horizon is... well... complicated. If you haven't played the first game, then I highly recommend you watch this quick 20-minute recap of the game and if you are enticed by the premise, then this deep dive into the lore of the first game will be more alluring to you.

Horizon Forbidden West takes place 6 months after the events of the first game. The world is engulfed in some form of Red Blight that's killing all the vegetation and will eventually lead to the extinction of humanity until our hero Aloy can put a stop to it. Here is where your knowledge of the first game comes into play to get a better grasp of the story. Without spoiling too much, on your journey you realise that you need GAIA, the AI developed by scientist Elizabeth Sobeck to save the world during the first rise of the machines (if this is too complicated, go back and watch the videos recommended above).



As always, through your journey, you will encounter a new threat which I will not spoil here, but I will tell you this, the roots of this new threat are present in the first game. It's like when the developers were writing the story of the first game, they knew exactly where they wanted the story of the sequel to go.

The twists and turns that ensue will at times keep you at the edge of your seat while at other times you will know the obvious plot twist is around the corner. It's a very well woven story and does justice to the deep lore the first game laid the foundation for.

In addition to the overarching 'save the word story,' there are a lot of small stories you will encounter related to the various new tribes in the game along with expanding on the stories of key characters found in the first game. This time there is a new foe in the form of Regalla. She has an immense hatred for the Carja tribe and her origin story is also something you come across in the game adding weight to her motivation. She is a very well written villain and it's easy to understand how her hatred has blinded her to all reasons to the point where she also loses some of her followers during the course of the game.



Not only Regalla's story but even the side quests you encounter in the game are extremely well written with each small story trying to have an impact rather than being a simple fetch quest or a "bring me these resources" kind of quest. The only downside to the depth of the lore is you need to be invested in it. While it's easy to get a grasp of the overarching story, I found myself skipping some of the conversations in the side quests, as I'd honestly, lost the plot.

Without spoiling anything, the story of Forbidden West will definitely appeal to those that were invested in the lore of the first game. It has some truly wow moments when certain new key characters are introduced, especially when you come across Tilda (played by Carrie Anne Moss) and others like her. Safe to say, the story is one of the game's best highlights and I highly recommend you check out the story recaps mentioned above to get up to speed with what Forbidden West has to offer.

GAMEPLAY

Those that have played Horizon Zero Dawn will know that even though taking down a Thunderjaw was a lot of fun, the game had its fair share of problems. Traversal was limiting, inventory management was a pain and taking down human enemies became a chore after some time. If you have seen the GDC talk 'Horizon Zero Dawn: A Game Design Postmortem' then you will know that the developers were aware of these issues. So, it is natural that we have seen improvements here.

Let's start with human foes. They are as complex as taking down a machine. A lot of them have armour plates you need to take out before you can deliver the killing blow. The human foes



also ride and control machines, mixing up the fight each time. Add to it the fact that they are more aggressive and strategic in their approach and you have a diverse encounter each time.

When it comes to machines, they are more varied than the first game. Not only are the machines varied, but you almost never have a single type of machine to encounter at a single time unless it is a boss fight. Each group of machines has their own strengths and weaknesses that you must exploit, forcing you to not only change your tactics but also the arsenal you have. This is kinda like what we saw in Doom Eternal where each enemy was vulnerable to a different weapon. The implementation isn't to the same level of strictness here but it pays to use machines vulnerabilities against them using the right weapon.

The diversity of machines is also well spread out throughout the map so each new area adds a new machine to the mix, offering something fresh for you to take down with each new area you explore.

Add to it new traversal mechanics like the Pullcaster that can get you out of a sticky spot with ease and the Zelda inspired glider to cover long distances, and the fighting mechanics are far deeper than the first game.



I'm not going to talk about the big underwater sections as those are to be experienced spoiler-free!

Just like any open-world game, there are a lot of side quests and activities to do. Speaking of the activities, in addition to the hunting grounds you also have melee pits where you can test your melee combat abilities and a chess-like board game called Strike. Strike will appeal to those that enjoyed Gwent in the Witcher 3. Strike is a lot like the Harry Potter version of chess where each machine piece that you have has a special move set and the board.

Inventory management has changed too. You no longer have a limited case of inventory that you carry. In fact, inventory management has become quite smart. It's not unlimited like Breath of the Wild. You can carry a limited number of health regeneration berries and other resources, and once your on-hand inventory is full, all your resources are sent to your stash. You have access to this stash at multiple points on the map which makes restocking a breeze and takes away the cumbersome inventory management from the first game.

Crafting and finding upgrade resources has also become simple. You can "create a job" which highlights the area of the map where you can find the resource for the weapon or outfit



upgrade making it easier to track. If you need a specific machine part intact, you can highlight it on the machine and ensure you detach it from the machine with a well-timed shot before taking down the machine. This adds another layer of mini-game to the full game and is a welcome distraction if you want to spend a couple of hours hunting for resources before returning to the main adventure.

The way the map is laid out, the cauldrons where you learn to override the machines, fast travel and more are just extremely well placed on the map. Travelling is no longer a chore but more like a strategic move from one point of the map to the other.

The way the side quests are laid out also reminds me a lot of Ghost of Tsushima. Each quest is a small story and there are times when AI companions will accompany you as well. Side quests this time around also have meaningful rewards in the form of new weapons, upgrades and more.

Last but not least is the upgrade and skills tree. There is an extensive skill tree that can be used to unlock new skills, upgrade some abilities and enhance some of the firepower at your disposal. Let's break it down. While there are familiar and new weapons at your disposal, each weapon now comes with a



unique ability that can be unleashed by pressing L2 to aim and R1 for the special fire and R2 for the regular fire. This special fire is unlocked in the skill tree. You also unlock 'valor' surges which give you some enhanced abilities. So, you can enhance stealth takedowns, increase the power of your weapons, or increase your resistance to damage, etc. these 'valor' surges are upgradable. Overall, while the gameplay will feel familiar to those that have played Zero Dawn, the depth of combat, upgrades, and skills has been expanded upon to offer players a diverse gameplay experience.

GRAPHICS AND SOUND

Horizon Forbidden West is playable in two modes - performance and resolution. While resolution lets you play the game in 4K, it limits the frame rate to 30FPS. The second mode reduces the resolution and gives you a 60FPS experience. While I did notice some lag and stutter in the game, these were tied to very specific sections. So even when the action gets intense on-screen, the game maintains its target 60fps 95% of the time. There are some game-breaking bugs I encountered like getting stuck behind an invisible wall or getting stuck looting a crate till I rebooted the game. While these bugs do detract from the game, they didn't happen at every turn but happened



often enough to annoy me. The game also randomly crashed a few times on me.

With the annoyances out of the way, Horizon Forbidden West is a stunning looking game with vivid colours and punchy environments. The character model of Aloy looks a lot more detailed and has ever so slightly more realistic movements. One of the biggest improvements to the game is with cinematics. No longer are cutscenes just a closeup of two people talking to each other. There is more animation and expressiveness in it. And while character models look detailed and stunning there is the occasional blip here and there which can be ignored.

A special mention to the design of the machines you encounter. Each and every one of them has a unique design, stance, special ability and more. Their movement and the overall quality of animation is very good, especially when you encounter some of the machine boss fights.

Another impressive feat is the diversity in the environment. From the minute you enter the "Forbidden West '' you take this long elevator ride that gives you an expansive horizon and this horizon sets the scale for the environments you will encounter. From open deserts with dense rainforests to San Francisco and



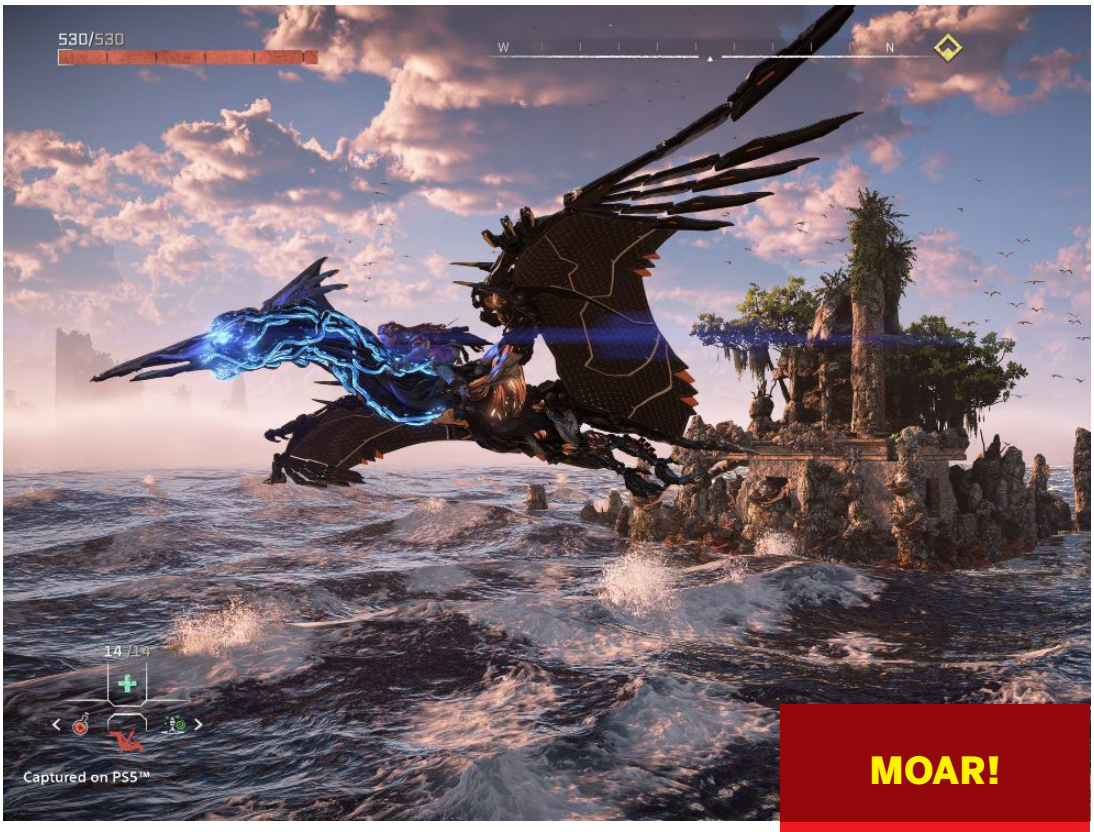
some locations which I won't spoil here, the game is truly breathtaking in scale and design especially when you play it on a PS5. A special mention to the design of the underwater levels, but I won't spoil that here.

Another immersive factor is your ability to control the HUD. You can have a detailed HUD as we saw in Zero Dawn or a minimal God of War (2018)/ Ghost of Tsushima style HUD which gives you basic information, but you can pull up more information as and when you need it with a simple click. The minimal HUD does add an immersive experience to the game.

When it comes to the sound, let's get obvious out of the way. The voice acting in the game is marvellous with key characters from the first game reprising their role for the second and newcomers like Carrie Anne Moss donning key characters. Let's just say the developers have "upped" the cinematic experience of storytelling in the game.

Even your weapons have very distinct swishes and thuds. And the roars of the machines and even the background score during an intense battle add a level of immersion. If you play with headphones, know that the 3D audio implementation is also very good, giving you a surround experience. But I do recommend playing the game using a home theatre if possible





MOAR!

DEVELOPER
Guerrilla Games

PUBLISHER:
Sony Interactive Entertainment

PLATFORM:
PS4, PS5

PRICE:
PS4 - ₹3,999.
PS5 - ₹4,999

because adding to the surround experience is the speaker on the DualSense controller which adds sounds like the swish of a bow being fired or the tightening of the string as you pull an arrow, so on and so forth.

VERDICT

Horizon Forbidden West isn't without its issues. There are invisible walls you can get stuck behind and the game has glitched out on me on multiple occasions. A patch for the same has gone live since I started playing so it is possible you will not encounter these issues. But the package on offer can be defined as a sequel in the true sense of the word. The expansion of the story, gameplay mechanics and the overall experience feels like the same generational leap we felt when moving from God of War 1 to God of War 2 on the PS2, or when moving from Jak and Daxter to Jak 2 or the leap which one felt going from Uncharted 1 to Uncharted 2 or even Assassins Creed 1 to AC2. The leap is truly one that will appeal to fans. Ubisoft open-world games can also learn from the quest design and open-world nature of Horizon Forbidden West. There is a lot to do

here which is optional and there is a lot to do without it feeling like bloatware. If the Witcher 3: Wild Hunt is my favourite open-world game ever, then Horizon Forbidden West is most definitely a very close second! *



KEEPING GAMEPLAY FRESH

ALL YOU NEED IS SOME RNG

BY **OMANG "RESPAWNER" BAHETI**
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

Imaging by Anil VK



ideo Games are a unique mode of digital media, with no fixed formula to develop one. There is no established science behind game design, no structure behind the development process, no template behind the art, and no core principle behind the industry. Even after 50 years of its inception, it still struggles to understand what makes or breaks a video game completely. As such, the evolution of video games has been happening in spurts, with different factors affecting it, be it new ideas that provided a new perspective on what could be inculcated in a game or the tech that powered the games. There have been times when the game industry has flourished very rapidly, seemingly unstoppable, and other times, it just stops dead in its tracks, sometimes even accompanied by a decline. Keeping gameplay fresh has always been a struggle for game designers.

The inception of video games saw developers taking two approaches, games that were inspired by real-life games and others fueled by the crazy mania surrounding D&D. Titles like Ultima and Wizardry (both released in 1981), taking inspiration from D&D aimed to make the personal computers a digital dungeon master. They had genre-defining mechanics like a turn-based battle, story-based quests, random encounters, top-down sprawling maps, hunger systems, dungeon crawlers, and so much more. These games were ahead of their time and were precursors to the RPG genre of games we know today, and most modern RPG games can be traced back to these pair of games. The other end of the game industry was developing more mechanically dependent games, starting with Pong. These games were very abstract in terms of their

narrative. They mainly were mechanically dependent, with very few innovations due to several factors like technical limitations and corporate greed, which eventually led to the crash of the video game industry in the mid-1980s. Publishers wanted to maximise their profits with a minimum effort and time, resulting in low-quality games, resulting in angrier customers over time. Ultimately, the 1982 game E.T. burst the bubble, with high pressure on the developers to deliver the game before the Christmas sale, giving them only about five weeks to develop it. Absolute mayhem followed and brought the entire console market to its knees.



A game so trash, it had to be buried away

When the game industry recovered, it saw several titles that changed the industry forever. Each of these titles set a precedent that other companies wanted to emulate. Doom helped in popularising 3D games and spawned multiple FPS titles. After GTA: Liberty City, many games wished to emulate the player's open-world nature and freedom. However, the problem with most of the games with the new emerging market of these new AAA games was that they were highly linear. All the content in the game was tailor-made and was supposed to be played in a distinct linear pattern. Call Of Duty downright controlled the game's tempo, while GTA followed a very linear narrative even with its open-world nature and the freedom given to gamers. This model of populating content in the game required a lot of resources, teams with hundreds of developers, a big bank and a high development time. And in return, the game had very little replayability value.

The only games that could offer any replayability were branching storylines or multiple difficulty modes. This still required a ton of extra effort with very little value added to the game.

RNG

Let's completely switch gears and talk about something seemingly unrelated for the time being: RNG. The term "random number generator" refers to a computer programme that generates random numbers. A random number generator is a device or technique that generates numbers by chance. RNG, in-game terminology, refers to occurrences that do not repeat themselves every time you play. While it may appear to be straightforward, computers have difficulty generating random numbers. This is because computers are programmed to obey instructions, which is the polar opposite of randomness. Giving instructions on choosing something randomly is an oxymoron therefore you can't just order a computer to "come up with a random number." As a result, most video games use something called Pseudo-RNG. Pseudo-RNG generates a random number using an algorithm that conducts mathematical operations on a beginning value called a seed. It's critical to select a seed as random as possible to get different results each time. Using the same seed will produce the same results.



All Hail the RNGesus

Game designers primarily apply RNG in games in two ways:

Input Randomness

This sort of randomisation provides information to the user before making a decision. Think of procedurally generated dungeons and maps in roguelike games or telegraphing information about the enemy in games like Slay the Spire, or Into the Breach. Input randomness gives players a chance to react to an unpredictable event.

Output Randomness

After a decision is made, random information is introduced into the game. In games like X-Com, you pick whether or not to shoot the alien, and then a dice roll/random number generator determines whether or not you hit. To put it another way, with output randomness, the player has zero time to "do anything" with the new information that has been provided.

Utilising randomness in a game can either make or break the gameplay. Randomness is a very abstract idea that can be hard for gamers to digest. Once we've developed a relationship with these abstract data points, they begin to matter and signify something. In games, information takes on meaning based on its relationship to other components of the game state, such as the history of game states, but most importantly, it takes on purpose based on your input. The chances, such as having an 81 percent probability of hitting, have a more profound systemic significance since they are linked to how you trained your person, where you positioned him, what weapon you provided him, and so on. But the fact that he misses or hits himself – that boolean flag of 0 or 1 – has no systemic significance; it has no connection to the gamers at all. Players don't want items that appear to permanently alter the game state because they haven't had time to build a relationship with it. This is why input unpredictability is beneficial, but output randomness is detri-



Output randomness at work

mental. However, if used creatively, even output randomness can make the gameplay more fun. No one would complain if output randomness worked in their favour (Eg, If enemies miss attacks due to output randomness). Using a system that does not depend on boolean states, but rather several different states, each with a different set of effects and outcomes.

INDIE GAME DEVELOPMENT:

As games started settling down into specific templates, there was a certain expectation from most video games: the duration played should average anywhere between 30-40 hours. This has slowly increased to the industry standard of 60 hours in today's age, which indie developers can't hope to compete with. Let's dial back for a second and talk about indie development first.

Deriving from "independent", the indie game development scene typically has the same hallmarks of a startup. No workforce, no budget, no time, unlimited creativity. Where the well-established studios have to stick to the norm, indie developers can easily break free of the mould to try new and exciting ideas and mechanics. But they have to be clever about it, since resources are scarce. Games that have been considered the darlings and underdogs of the indie video game scene, like Fez and Braid, took 5 and 3 years, respectively. This was very expensive and stressful for the developers and indie studios realised that this model could be scalable only if they have the backing of a small-medium sized team or they need to rely on various tricks and techniques to extend gameplay time without necessarily hand crafting all the content for it. This most often assumes using randomness, or RNG for deciding certain parameters, such as configurations of enemies you face, or the loot that you may find. But when this principle is dialled up to eleven, we get to see it in a form which is practically unthinkable for the Triple A industry.

What if you could generate entire worlds using the power of generating random numbers? Create dungeons and maps on the fly, control the player's progression through these worlds, have enemies scaling up accordingly, and create a new experience every time they boot up a game? A single playthrough of

such games could range between 30 minutes to maybe 3 hours. But the replayability value is infinite. Every experience is unique, and every decision was taken into account with what the game provides in that specific playthrough or run. It opens up a world of possibilities, and it can be done without handcrafting all this content for the audiences.

Surprisingly, this had already been explored before by enterprising game developers of the retro era leading the Indie developers to turn to old relics like Elite (1984) and Rogue (1980) which utilised random number generation (RNG) and procedural generation. A lot of space sims chalk up Elite as their inspiration including Eve Online (2003) and No Man's Sky (2016), while Rogue by itself was so conceptually practical and unique that catalysed an entire genre of games, decades later after its release.

PROCEDURAL GENERATION



Elite: A retro space sim

Procedural generation is one of the most popular applications of RNG. Procedural generation (aka Procgen) is when a computer generates content in a semi-random manner rather than by hand by a human. Procedural generation techniques often create environments, monster encounters, and treasure drops. Procgen is a potent tool, and when used correctly on the right project, it may drastically improve a game's quality and lengthen its longevity by enhancing its replayability. The players aren't forced to replay the same material over and over. Procedural content can assist in keeping them engaged for much longer. This is the most obvious way that procgen can help you improve your game since it allows you to produce content for your users in near-infinite ways. Take a look at the durability of games like Spelunky, Dead Cells and others that make good use of procedural level generation. People have poured hundreds of hours into these games, and they have aged like fine wine, with their gameplay experience still unique, even with the advent of new titles.



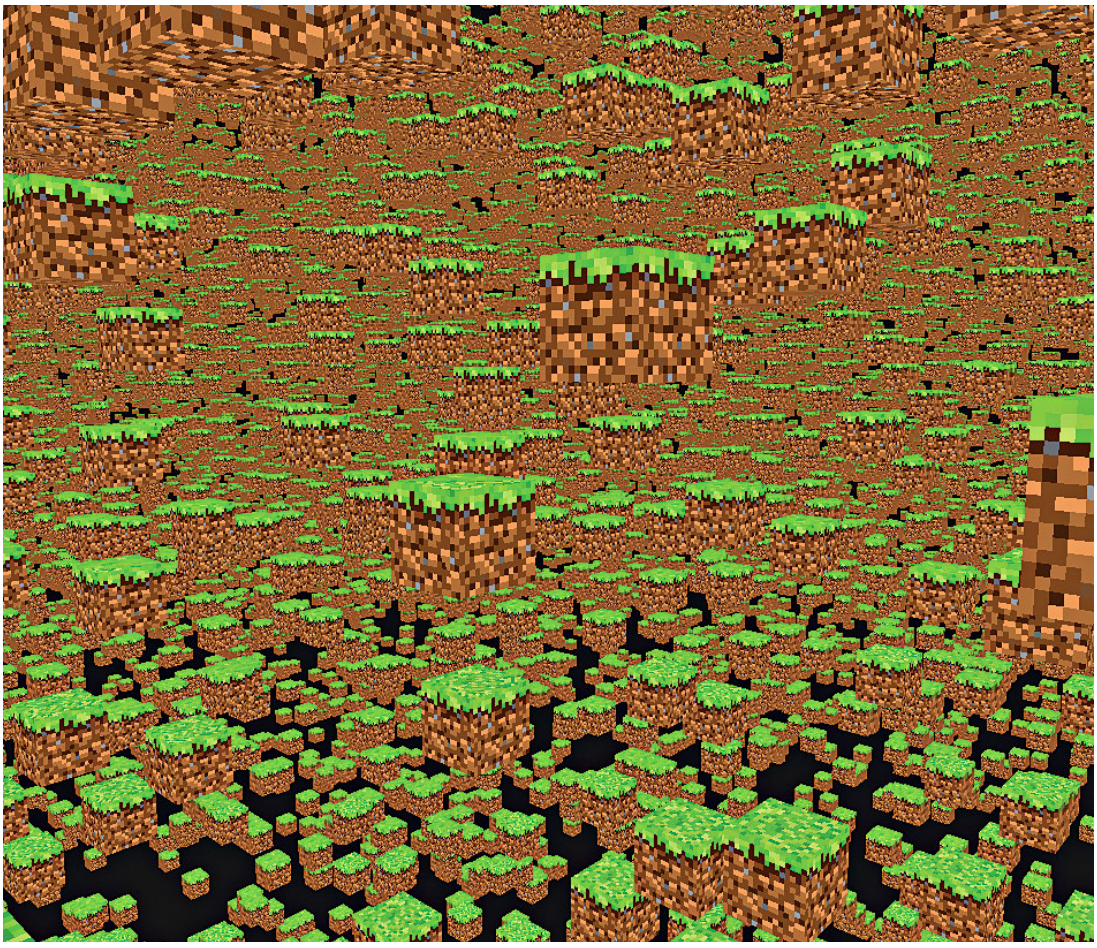
Terraria uses procgen to create natural terrain in 2D

Procedural generation techniques aren't just restricted to level generation, and they have various use cases. Shadow of Mordor leverages procedural generation to generate enemy orcs. The notion allows gamers to form bonds with orcs they face in battle. Every orc is distinct from their names and looks to their speech patterns and interactions with other orcs, the game's Nemesis System has built them all algorithmically. Every encounter the player has with a specific orc leaves

behind a permanent change that they can notice on the subsequent encounter giving the impression that they're fighting particular and unique archrivals rather than the identically programmed sub-bosses in many other games. Cameron Browne took procgen to another level by creating a program called Ludi that generated game rules procedurally. Ludi generates games by taking the rules of current games and scrambling them into new combinations using genetic programming (G.P.) techniques of crossover and mutation. New games are evaluated via self-play trials and given a quality score based on their anticipated ability to entice gamers; hence, the creation, testing, and assessment process are automated. Ludi uses a Markovian method seeded with Tolkien-style terms to develop a unique name for each evolving game. Yavalath was eventually published as a board game in 2009.

The way procgen systems leverage randomness to create unlimited content is interesting. There are several problems that the developers have to tackle. Modern computers are good at following rigid instructions, and randomness as a concept is very foreign to the fundamentals of how computers work. Simulating randomness on computers is computationally expensive and is still a mammoth task to this day. Hence, computers use pseudo-randomness to make it computationally cheap and practical for computers to simulate randomness. Another challenge procgen systems pose is manipulating randomness into something that makes sense. If Minecraft developers just used random numbers, it would look something like this:

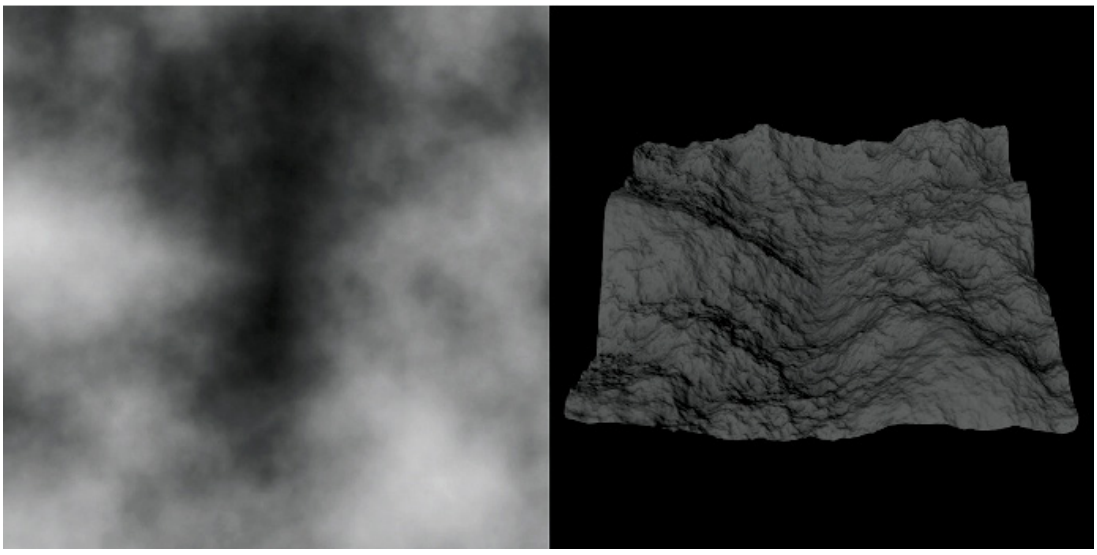
Creating something complicated and chaotic yet structured and ordered is a highly complex task, and this problem tormented Ken Perlin. He hated the way CGI back in the 80s looked so structured, especially with natural things like terrain and smoke. So he developed an algorithm that would create random but structured patterns, called Perlin Noise, which became the industry standard for such applications. The way minecraft uses Perlin noise is by creating a 2D height map using Perlin noise. Each pixel value in the Perlin noise represents a specific height used by the game engine to extrapolate a mesh to that height in 3D. Adding some more basic rules (For example the game should add snow to areas above a certain height) could create some decent looking terrain for a game. This only resolved the terrain generation, but what about cave



Courtesy: Lucas Camolezi

systems? Building cave systems and cliffs with overhangs was another challenge that required a unique approach. To generate a cave, Minecraft utilised something called a Perlin worm. The idea is simple: Pick a random point in 3D and mark that as the point where the cave terminates and navigate through the terrain in a noisy way, subtracting chunks and creating a cave till you make your way out to the surface. This requires a 3D Perlin noise map, with the 3rd dimension signifying the angle where the Perlin worm should branch off into.

Procgen is not a magic wand that game developers can use to shoo away all their design problems and reduce their development time. Developing procedurally generating systems that are robust and create content that is always engaging is a big challenge by itself. Procedural level creation still requires a designer to fine-tune the limits and parameters of game level building blocks, but a lot of the work that a level designer used to do will now be done by a programmer. The developers often lose sight that having a lot of variety doesn't always equate to being a better experience. Hello Games learnt it the hard way when they released No Man's Sky in 2016. No Man's Sky was



On Left: Perlin Noise
On right: terrain Generated using Perlin noise

released on PlayStation 4 and P.C. after years of anticipation; however it fell short of expectations. The game was criticised for various reasons, including mindless resource-gathering gameplay, planets that all looked the same, and lonely alien life forms that could always be found in the same places, saying the same things. Since then, it has improved significantly, having made a resurgence last year for one of the most improved games since launch.

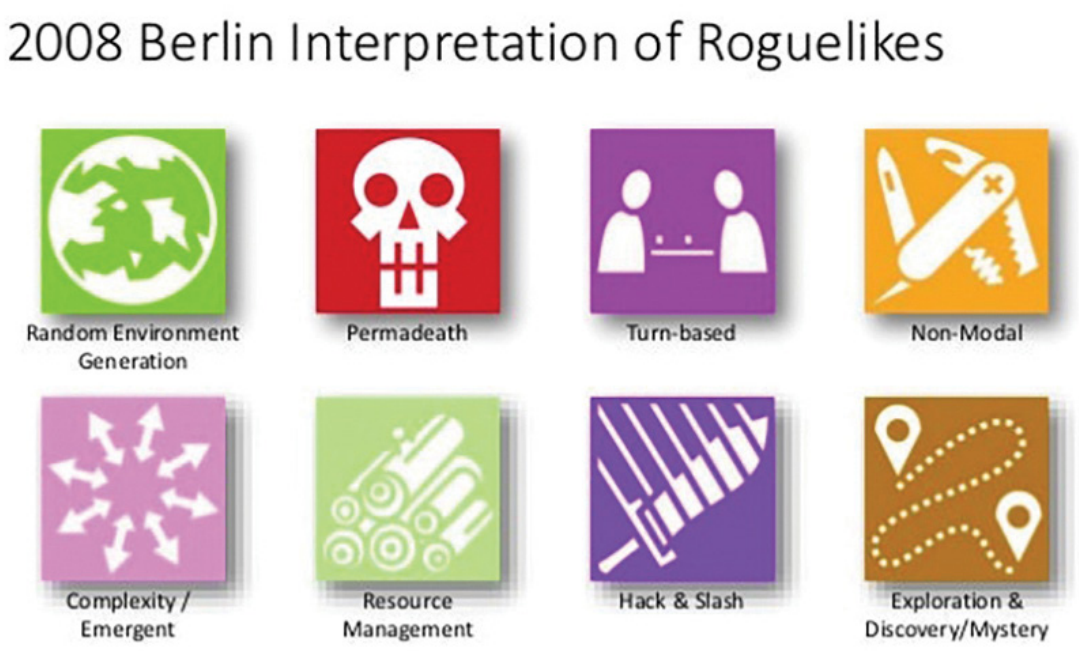


Perlin worm at work
Courtesy: MaximumADHD on Youtube

ROGUELIKE GAMES

Roguelike is a genre of games that build upon the concept of RNG and ProcGen and heavily relies on it. The two major com-

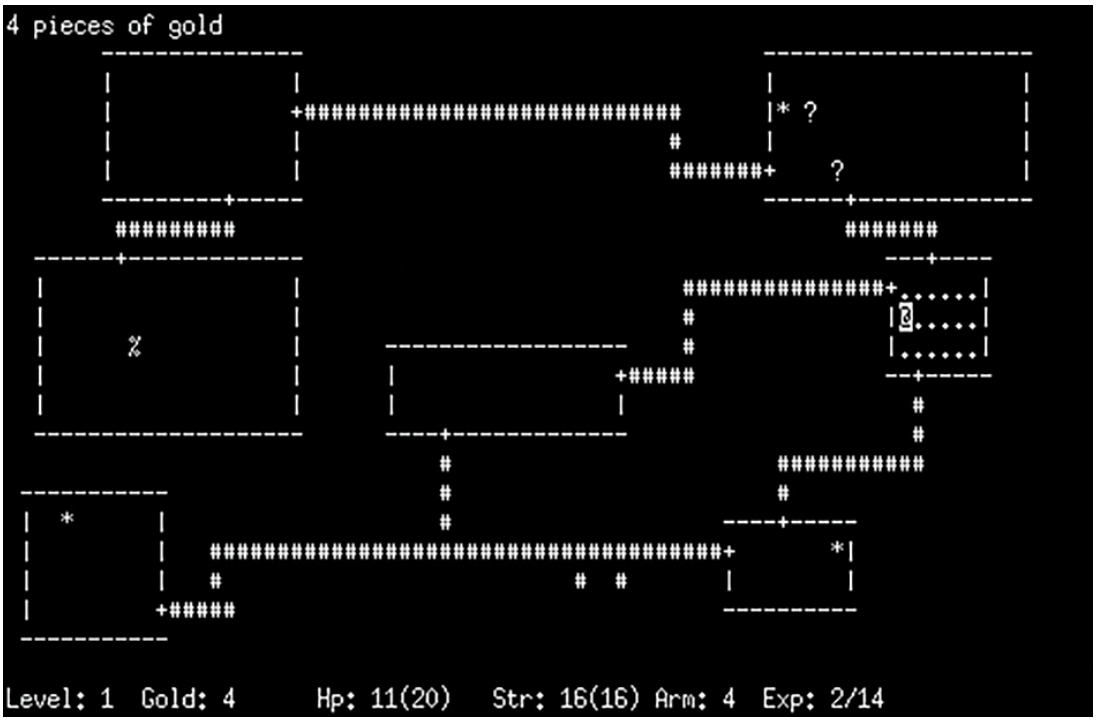
ponents that define a roguelike game are perma-death and randomly generated dungeons, adopted from a 1980 game called – Rogue and hence the name "roguelike". The term comes from old discussion boards, where people hunting for games similar to Rogue called them roguelikes. A lot more goes into developing a roguelike game than just these two elements, and some developers tried to narrow down all of the elements, which eventually became the Berlin interpretation of roguelikes. They had 8 'high-value' factors and 6 low value 'factors'. Each element of the Berlin Interpretation plays off of each other well.



Ze' Berlin Interpretation of Roguelikes

That was a lot of terminologies that make very little sense unless you're heading the game design department of Supergiant games, so let's simplify: Roguelikes involves random dungeon generation, mystery loot, and perma-death. The goal is to make it through a series of these randomly generated dungeons and make choices between the available loot to maximise strength and make it to the end. But if the player dies, then that marks the end of that run, and you need to start again from the very beginning with nothing in your pocket. This makes sure that each run in the game is a new experience, which constitutes the core of most roguelike games.

Even with a similar design foundation, roguelike games released in the past decade have demonstrated a unique character and style. They have proven to be highly adaptable to



Rogue: Godfather of Roguelikes

drastically new ideas. This is characteristically different from other genres of games that can only differentiate themselves in terms of their narrative, aesthetics and graphics. The variation found in mechanics can be wildly different among roguelike games compared to other genres. A roguelike game can encompass a dungeon crawler, a turn-based battler, real-time combat, card games, tactics based gameplay, platformers, and so much more. Tweaking the basic formula can vividly create different experiences in a roguelike game, especially when it creates a synergy with other game elements. If we take away turn-based combat and switch it up with real-time combat, it can create higher stakes for the player with less time to think, making the gameplay more exciting and rewarding them for improvisation and quick action. It also coerces them to understand and master the underlying mechanics of the game to perform better on subsequent runs.

A core mechanic of roguelikes is perma-death, which means you lose all your progress (including any power-ups) if you die and will have to start again from the first stage. While this raises the game's stakes, making the gameplay more thrilling, it can also deter a lot of casual gamers for numerous reasons. Starting from scratch can be frustrating for many of them, and investing hours upon hours in a game with no tangible progress can be disheartening. Studios have tried time and time again to account for this lack of tangible progress and circumvent it

using creative solutions while also not impacting the game's structure. Binding of Isaac and Enter the Gungeon let the player unlock fun stuff with no impact on the difficulty of the gameplay. Nuclear Throne allows them to unlock new characters while Downwell unlocks cosmetic upgrades. Hades goes in a different direction altogether, where it unlocks new lore before every run, encouraging the player to keep on to know more about all the characters in the House of Hades.

Changing the roguelike formula to provide permanent upgrades through different runs warranted a significant change to have a genre of its own, called roguelites. Where roguelike games depend on the player to master the game, roguelite games assist them with upgrades that they acquire through different runs. It creates an entirely different difficulty dynamic in contrast to roguelikes and traditional games. Roguelikes only scale up in difficulty from one level to the other and do not change their difficulty scale over time, and classic games scale up with player skill and progress in the narrative. But roguelite games follow a completely flipped approach where the game difficulty becomes easier as the user becomes more proficient at the game. This can be a problem sometimes, as the game needs to keep on challenging the player while keeping the difficulty level digestible at the same time. But, through progress, they can become so overpowered that they might eventually get bored once they achieve a level of upgrades, making it easy to decimate the enemies.

It is interesting how roguelike games, once tweaked, can assume so many different forms and create so many different game dynamics. It is not just randomness that augments the experience but also the designer's approach and creativity that can significantly make it stand out in keeping the gameplay fresh. This is one of the sole reasons why we see more games relying on RNG and Procgen from indie devs than Triple-A studios. Indie studios tend to have off the wall ideas and take their development in unconventional areas to stand out. Depending on roguelikes has become a staple formula to stand out in a highly saturated market of games with hundreds, if not thousands of titles released every day.

What is also intriguing is that there have been games that take inspiration from roguelike principles but don't follow it

completely. Let's say, as a developer, you wanted your target audience to experience a fantastic hand-crafted level but still wanted replayability. Mooncrash, the DLC to Prey, does just that. It takes place in an infinitely repeating simulation of a lunar base. The only way to stop the simulation is for each of the 5 characters to explore, track down and use all the escape methods within the same loop. This would have been very stale and uninteresting to play because over multiple runs, the player would have eventually figured out the exact method to escape and complete the simulation and probably never touch the DLC again. However, the developers put an insane twist to the simulation. Many smaller elements are randomised in different runs but significantly impact the overall gameplay. It bends the rules of random dungeon generation and perma-



Prey: Moon Crash

death to make its experience rather unique. The game keeps on changing the environmental hazards, locations of items and enemies, the architecture (which may cause certain areas to be inaccessible). Gaining familiarity with the lunar base becomes an important facet of completing the simulation but not in a way that can make the gameplay stale. The player must improvise and think on his feet each run because an escape route might not work in one run, or environmental hazards can make a shortcut inaccessible, continuously derailing plans. It has a more rogue-lite stance on the idea of perma-death, providing permanent upgrades between different runs. However, the game keeps on ramping up the difficulty with the player's skill and upgrades, keeping things spicy for them.

CONCLUSION:

The world of video game development will always be filled with exciting ways to immerse gamers into crazy experiences. While the big-budget titles will mostly opt for content that is controlled and tailored to their wish, indie game development will always pave the way with unconventional design choices and wield the metaphorical staff of RNGesus and generate unique experiences. They do not rely on well-designed models, expansive storylines, or a million side quests, and will instead rely on simple ideas which are executed brilliantly with smart design and programming to generate unique adventures, one that players can claim only happened with them and no one else. The ravine next to a mountainside facing a vast ocean



where someone built a japanese style mansion in MineCraft, the broken Dead Cells run where every single weapon stacked and compounded bleeding, the desolate planet in No Man's Sky with a million monolithic structures looking like a fallen futuristic society, these are all incredibly beautiful capsules of experiences which are only possible by the power of randomness. This is the one aspect of video games as an entire industry that is exclusively found in only indie projects. And it is truly breathtaking. *



BUILD YOUR OWN DAEMON PRINCE

BY **MANISH "TRIGGER-HAPPY" RAJESH**

FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

When we reviewed the first Total War: Warhammer game we were pretty smitten, and we recall saying that it was a match made in heaven. Two more instalments down the line, that sentiment still stands. While we were certainly wondering what direction Creative Assembly would take with Total War: Warhammer III, what we got was actually a bit of a surprise, and not necessarily in a bad way. With that being said, let's dive into the review!

STORY – OFF TO HELL WE GO

The game starts off with the prologue, which not only does a decent job of teaching you the ropes, but also functions as the reason the entire game's campaign is taking place. As far as Total War: Warhammer, or Total War games in general go, the storytelling in the prologue is some of the best we've seen. You're put in the shoes of the Prince of Kislev, who's fighting his way to Ursun, the bear God of the Kislev, who has somehow been imprisoned by the daemon Be'lakor. Along the way, the prince is corrupted by Chaos, so when he finally makes it to Ursun, he shoots him with a cursed bullet. Ursun's deafening cries of pain are powerful enough to open rifts between reali-



ties, allowing armies from different planes to cross over into the Realms of Chaos. Here, depending on the faction you're playing as, your goal may vary. Some wish to free Ursun, others seek to gain more power, either by making a deal with Ursun for his freedom or imprisoning him themselves. Then there's a few who probably just want to literally consume him.

All of this leads to a very unique Total War campaign experience. The priority is no longer the usual conquering of the entire map, but making it to Ursun's prison before everyone else. Every 30ish or so turns, you have rifts opening up all over the map, spewing out daemon armies, and through these same rifts you can enter the Realms of Chaos. Once through the rift, you will need to test your armies' mettle against one of the daemon princes. These involve massive survival battles against the armies of daemon princes, and the reward for doing so is the soul of the daemon prince. Collecting four such souls will open up the way to Ursun.



The battlefields in the Realm of Chaos reflect the Daemon prince who rules that particular domain. Slaanesh's realm is very purple, and the lands are connected by a series of portals. Every step of the way, Slaanesh will tempt you with amazing gifts, at the cost of leaving without what you've come for in the first place. Nurgle's domain on the other hand is rife with pustules of plague, pestilence and toxins. It's an ugly looking place where your armies suffer under constant attrition. Tzeentch's realm is a twisted maze of floating islands, and the route to the final battle is random. Khorne has the most straightforward



realm, naturally. Kill all the things till you've earned enough glory in battle.

These rifts create a sense of urgency in the campaign. You know there's going to be a rift opening up soon so you need to rapidly expand and prepare the best army you can, but you also need to keep in mind that while your best army is in the rift, you still need to defend your own territory from the forces of Chaos and other enemy factions. The goal is to be the first to get four souls, so you can choose to strategically let a soul go if you know you're ahead and focus on your own territory or expansion. However, this also means that when the end is near, you might need to act quickly if another faction is also in the race to claim their fourth soul.





The game still gives you a chance to come back, which is nice. If you were unable to stop an opposing faction from claiming their fourth soul, you need to beeline to Ursun's prison and defeat the approaching army. Successfully managing to do so will buy you another 15 turns to try and catch up. Of course, this applies to your enemies as well, in case you claim your fourth soul.

We can't recall any other Total War campaign experience like this one, and it definitely provides for a very interesting and fresh first playthrough. However, after a few runs the novelty did wear off a bit, and we found ourselves enjoying the game's core sandbox modes better, which was more straightforward.

They also added tower defence elements for the final battles



of the Rift segments, where you invest resources earned in battle to erect towers and walls and call in reinforcements. However, there are pre decided locations where you can build them, you don't have a choice when it comes to where they go, and as such, it doesn't feel like they end up having too much of an impact in the grand scheme of things in the final battles. The idea that one might be able to manipulate Warhammer III's largest battles with these tower defence structures is nice, but it ultimately ends up doing nothing, especially since we can't finetune them. Like the main campaign, it's interesting for the first few runs, but the novelty soon wears off.



THE FACTIONS

Warhammer III has a few new factions for you to explore, including the new Chaos gods' factions and the Daemons of Chaos faction. Each of the Chaos gods we mentioned above have their own factions led by a powerful representative of the faction, however, the Daemons of Chaos, led by the corrupted Kislev prince, lets you recruit units from all Chaos factions. You also have access to each army's unique abilities, and the prince himself is customisable. Basically you can replace his limbs with new ones, which you earn by dedicating your victories to specific gods, or even just Chaos in general. There is a surprising amount of variety in the number of limbs and weapons you can equip the prince with, to the point where playing as the Daemons of Chaos is almost like playing a Total War RPG.

The other Chaos factions, which feel somewhat limited in comparison, still have unique characteristics and traits that help them stand out and affect the map in unique ways. Be it Slaanesh seducing his way into your territory, or Nurgle spreading his plague and corrupting the lands. Of course, all the Chaos factions spread corruption, and it's visually represented on the map, with the kind of corruption depending on the faction doing the corrupting.



Next, you have the Kislev and Grand Cathay factions. Kislev is all about ice magic and thunder bears. While Grand Cathay's leaders are literal dragons who can shapeshift in the middle of battle. There's also the Ogre kingdoms, who are part of the pre-order DLC. They need to manage an additional economy of meat, or they start eating each other. Keep 'em fed and they're damn powerful.

DIPLOMACY – NEVER BEEN EASIER TO MAKE FRIENDS, OR START A WAR

There's been some QoL changes to diplomacy with Warhammer III, with some features that were introduced in Three Kingdoms making their way to Warhammer. This includes the quick deal option, which allows you to quickly figure out which factions are open to actually dealing with you, instead of going through all of them one by one. Then there's the outposts; forming an alliance allows you to construct outposts, which allows allies to garrison their troops. This allows for you

to recruit troops from allied factions, making for an interesting way to round out your army composition. What's more, troops recruited from allies don't count towards your own recruitment cap. Thanks to the advantages of diplomacy this time around, you're encouraged to use diplomacy more often. Reinforcements cost Allegiance, which can be earned by helping allied factions, which is usually by defeating armies of their opposed factions.

MULTIPLAYER

You now have simultaneous turns in multiplayer, allowing for players to move and take non-combat actions without needing to wait for other players to finish their turns first. When a player does get into combat, the game pauses for everyone else and they can watch the action unfold. Unless they auto-resolve. Which has also been balanced a bit, so it should work more in your favour most times.

POST RELEASE PERFORMANCE ISSUES

It would seem that the build reviewers played the game on, and the game build that actually released were optimised differently. There have been several complaints about the game's performance, even on high end rigs. We played the version on the Xbox App, and didn't encounter too many FPS issues, but we certainly saw plenty of dips and can't say that the performance was consistent throughout on our AMD RX 6600.

A FITTING CONCLUSION

We'll be honest, Total War games can be confusing, especially for those who've never played them before. There's a lot going on in Total War: Warhammer III, and

MOAR!

DEVELOPER
Creative Assembly, Feral Interactive

PUBLISHERS:
Feral Interactive, Sega

PLATFORMS:
Microsoft Windows, macOS, Linux, Macintosh operating systems

PLAYED ON:
Microsoft Windows

PRICE:
₹3,399 (Steam)

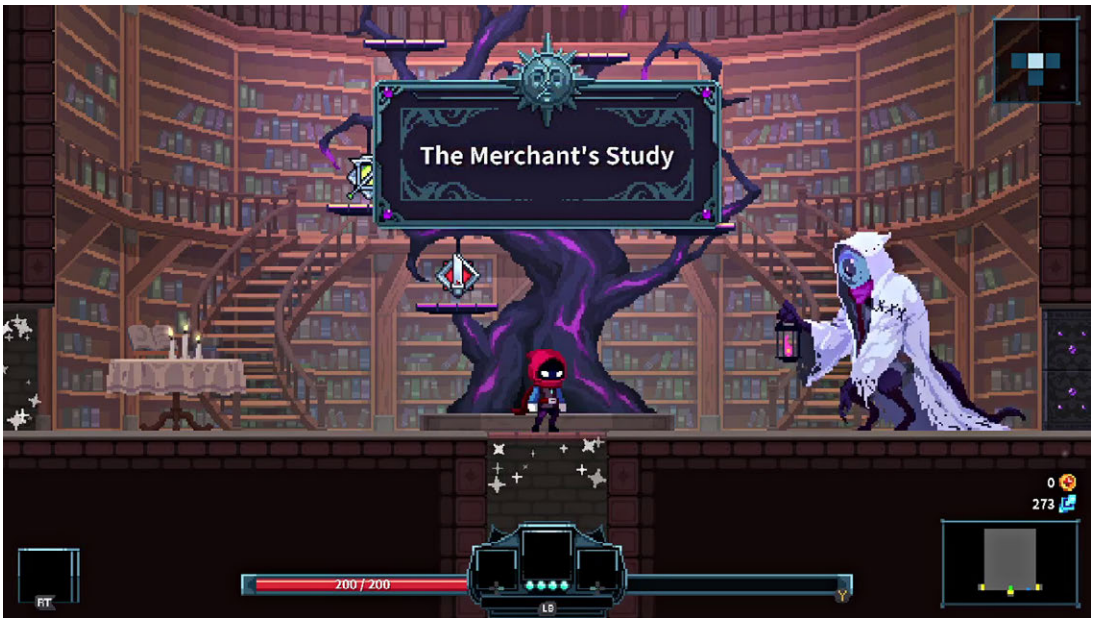
it can be a bit overwhelming for newcomers, but the tutorial does a decent job of teaching you the ropes. That being said, Total War: Warhammer III is a great conclusion to the trilogy, with the best part being it's not over yet. The new mega-campaign expansion, Immortal Empires, will merge all three games into one. All the factions from every Warhammer game so far, on a single massive map. If that doesn't excite you, we don't know what will. *



THIS ROGUELIKE ISN'T ROGUELIKE

BY **KSHIPRA 'FAAFDAAJALEBII' JADAV**
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN

There are four elements that make a roguelike game. Difficulty, perma-death, replayability, and upgrades. Some roguelike games check all of those boxes. Take Hades for example. Now, we aren't comparing Hades with all the other roguelike games nor are we saying that Hades is THE BEST roguelike game ever made. The game comes with its own set of flaws. We're just saying that out of the four factors mentioned above, if a game fails to tick even one box, said game isn't really a roguelike. The game in question is Nightmare: The Lunatic. It is the new roguelike on the block and we're gonna tell you why this roguelike isn't a roguelike.



Nightmare: The Lunatic was released on January 7th, 2022 on Steam. The game was released in early access and it still is in early access. Nobody has picked it up and marketed it nor is anyone famous playing it. It's just sitting on the Steam listings - on the sidelines. So, why did we pick it up and review it? Well, to put it mildly, because this game is weird.

STORY

The main character of this game is a nameless faceless guy who just happens to get stuck in his dream – a nightmare, to be precise. He finds himself waking up in a dungeon with multiple platforms. With no idea where to go, he starts roaming around, exploring all the different platforms. Suddenly, he bumps into a Dream Merchant who also happens to be stuck in the same nightmare with him. The merchant came there to trade but unfortunately (or fortunately) got stuck in this never ending nightmare too. The main character and the Dream Merchant decide to work together and get out of this never ending nightmare. You see, you cannot just wake up from this nightmare. It is never ending. Which means that the only way out is to dig deeper and hopefully find an exit.

The story is okay and it does provide a decent base for the game to rest upon and everything makes just a little bit more sense if you know the story. However, at the same time, even if the story wasn't there and the player started directly from level 1, it wouldn't have mattered. What we're trying to say is that the story does not provide a good enough

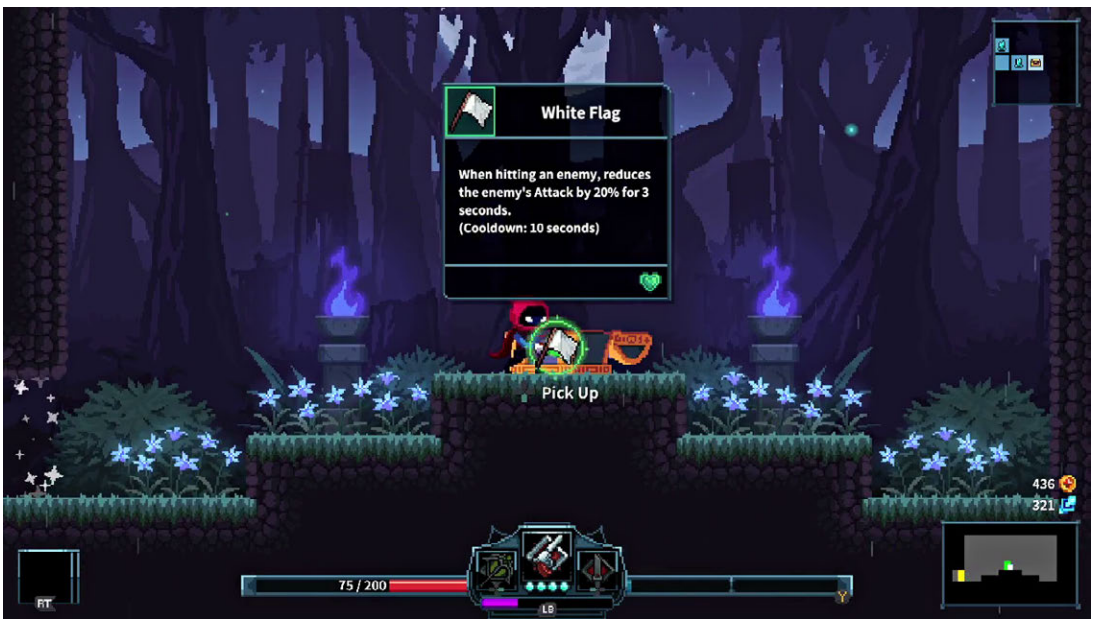
reason for the player to be interested in the game. And the absence of "story elements" throughout the game just adds fuel to the fire.

GAMEPLAY

There are several gameplay elements which we liked and disliked about the game. Gameplay is this game's strongest point. One big advantage that this game has over the others is the fact that you can use a controller without having a severe disadvantage while playing the game. Let us explain. You see, most roguelike games REQUIRE a precise aiming device i.e. the good ol mouse. Nightmare: The Lunatic changes this up by giving you three ways to play the game. If you're a hardcore keyboard fanatic and just don't want to take your hands off of it then the "Keyboard Only" setting will be perfect for you. If you prefer the good old keyboard + mouse then this game has got a separate control scheme for that too and lastly, this game also has a separate control scheme for controllers. We tried it with a controller and have zero regrets.



Coming to the core gameplay, this game is basically a 2D dungeon platformer and side scroller. If you've ever played Dead Cells then you'll find this game to be extremely similar to it but obviously, there are some major differences. For each round, you'll get three weapons which you can choose beforehand. Using those three weapons, you need to kill all the enemies and advance to the next chamber.



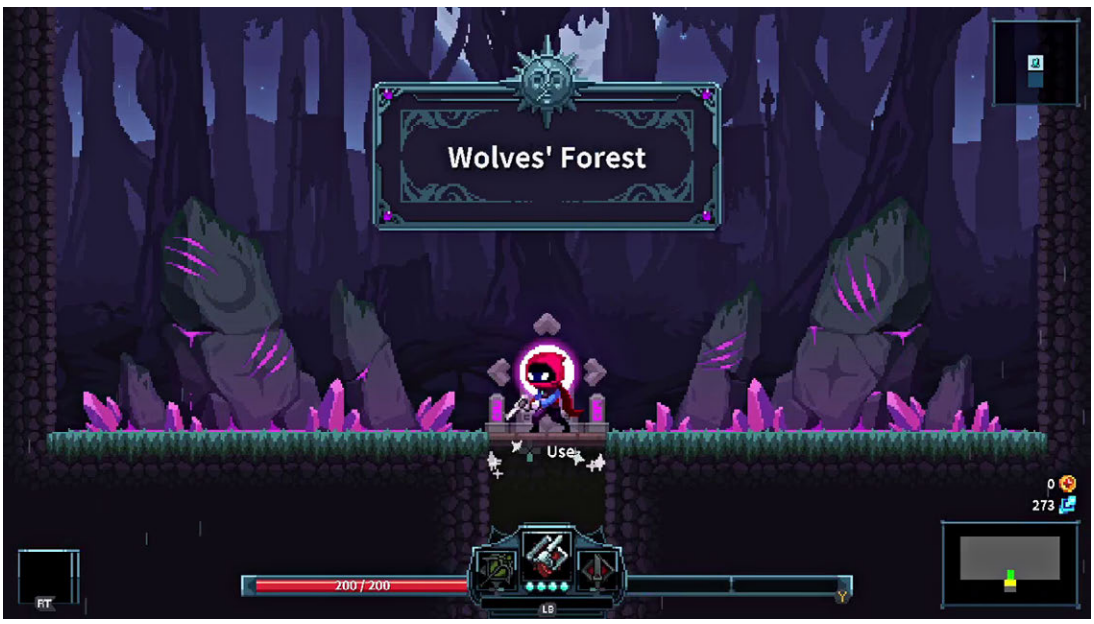
You'll progress through the current level till you encounter the boss. Defeat him and the chamber is cleared. Sometimes, during the run, you may encounter special rooms where chests are kept. Opening the chests will give you a free powerup but it'll only be valid for your current run. Another thing that you can spot while playing the game is the Dream Merchant's shop. This shop will appear at random times in random rooms. Here, you can replenish your HP and buy power ups using the gold coins that you've collected.

There's also a full blown powerup shop which you can visit before each round starts. There are a lot of powerups in the game but at a time, only eight are available to buy. The power ups will change periodically and there is a slight chance of the player getting a rare powerup too.

Finally, the movement mechanics for this game were a bit finicky. Since this is a 2D, side scroller game, there's no need for the 'Up' and 'Down' key. There's 'Left' and 'Right' for movement, 'C' for jump, 'X' for attack and 'Z' for dash. Pressing the jump button two times will result in a double jump and if you do it while you're near a wall, you can wall jump too. You can drop through some specific platforms by holding the 'Down' and the jump key and finally you can block / parry with the Ctrl key.

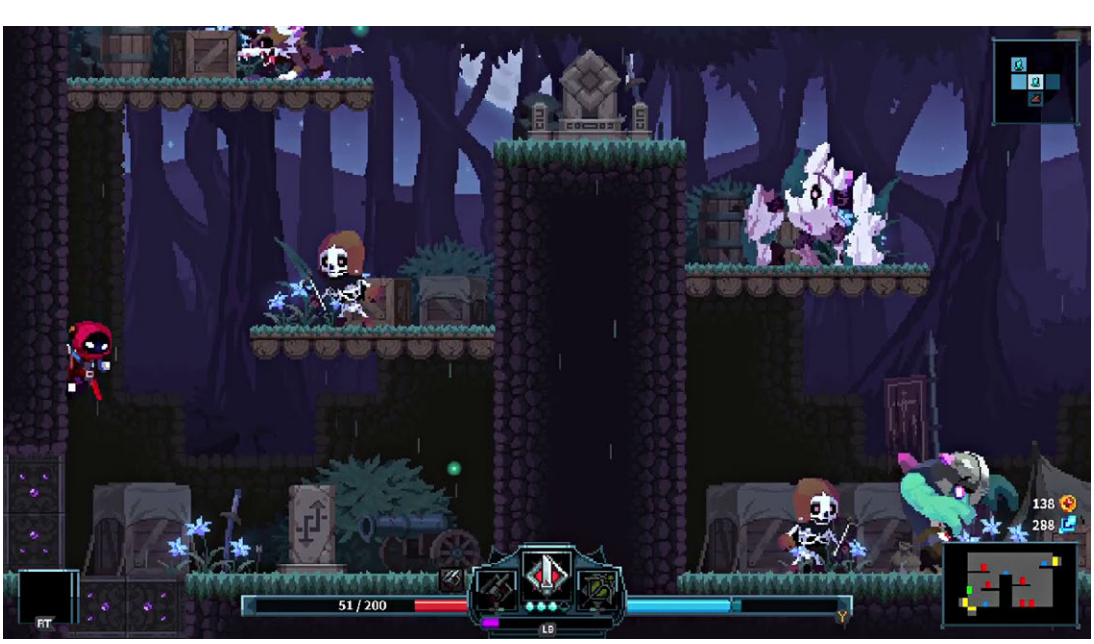
COMBAT

The game has two special attack bars. The first one charg-



es up periodically while you kill enemies, after which you can invoke a special attack which will deal extra damange. We were quite satisfied with this special attack until the "Overload" mode came along. Overload mode boosts your damage, speed, and will make your enemy fire bullets in all directions. This will be a temporary boost for a few seconds till the Overload bar drains. After that, you'll return back to normal. We personally think that the addition of this Overload bar just makes things a tad bit more complicated. Plus, we never encountered a situation where we desperately needed to use the Overload mode.

There's also a lack of variety when it comes to enemies. Because of this, we quickly memorised the best ways to deal with the few we encountered.



The bosses on the other hand, are REALLY hard to beat. We know that bosses are supposed to be hard, but when you barely struggle against the smallfry and die in literal seconds against the boss, there is definitely something wrong.

We really liked the weapon cycling system in the game. There is only a limited number of times that you can cycle through the weapons, after which the "weapon change" bar drains. This forces you to play with different weapons and experiment with them.When you swap from one weapon to another, the weapon that you swapped to gets a temporary boost and perk from the previous weapon.

MOAR!

DEVELOPER
Maetdol Games

PUBLISHER
Maetdol Games

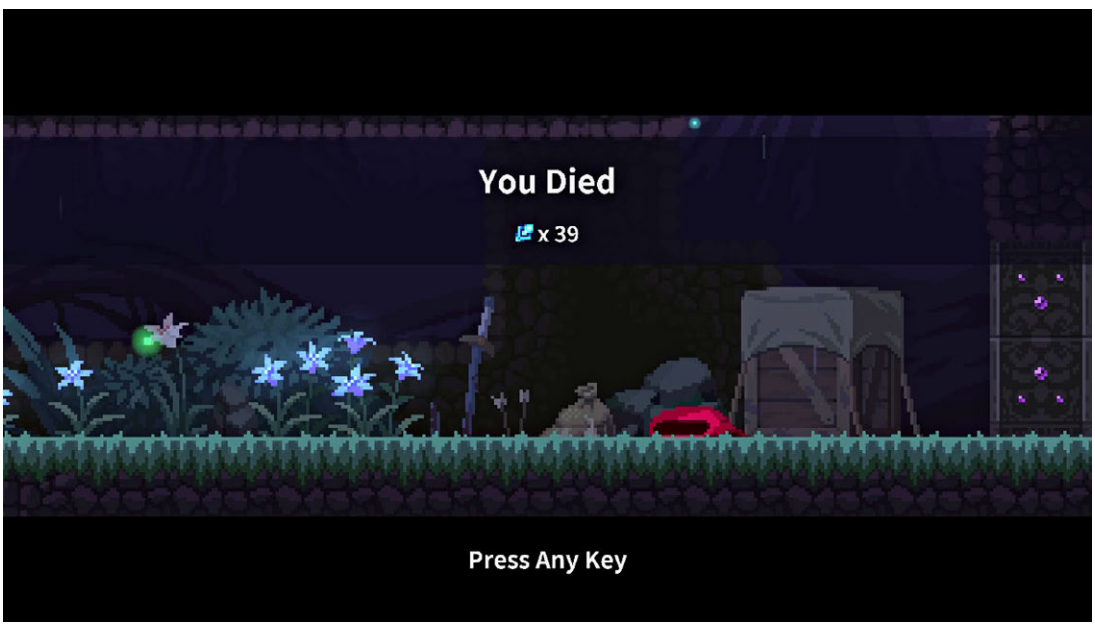
PLATFORMS
Microsoft Windows

PLAYED ON
Microsoft Windows

PRICE
₹459 (Steam)

CONCLUSION

Roguelike games are supposed to be action packed, hardcore and rage inducing while retaining almost infinite replayability and giving atleast one thing new to the user in each run. Nightmare: The Lunatic does none of that. Well, we kinda liked the game anyway. The game has FANTASTIC graphics. It uses pixel art and it does not fail to deliver. The Dream Merchant, the main character, the weapons and the enemies are all drawn to perfection and we really couldn't



expect anymore from the devs. As far as graphics are concerned, they have done a REALLY good job. Even though the combat has its own set of flaws, it feels moderately fun to play. The different dashing and weapon combos add some freshness to each run.

All in all, Nightmare: The Lunatic is a mediocre game with above average gameplay. While it has some elements from roguelike games, we'd rather not classify it as a proper "roguelike'' game. Although, if you have some hot takes of your own about this game, you can convey them to us at **editor@digit.in** *



MOBILE MADNESS

You have to try these games out on your smartphone!

BY TEAM SKOAR!
FEEDBACK@SKOAR.IN





Rush Rally Origins

Rush Rally Origins is a racing game by Brownmoster Limited. In total, there are three game modes offered by this game. Time Trial, Race and Championship. In the Time Trial mode, you will have to complete the track in a fixed amount of time to get either gold, silver or bronze medal. After that, you just have to beat your personal best. In the Race mode, you will race against different opponents and of course, you'll have to be the first one to the finish line. Lastly, in the Championship mode, you'll be given a car and a map to race on and you'll have to finish in the top 3. If you do, you move on to the next stage. As of the latest update, there are only 6 stages in the Championship mode. Well, if you saw the rating that we gave to the game, you must be asking yourself now - Why did we give such a low rating to the game? Firstly, the EXORBITANT price that the devs are charging for anyone to download and play the game. As of February 2022, the price of this game on the PlayStore is 460 INR. Yes! Almost 500 bucks for a mobile racing game and this is just the starting. We could pass the high price if the game really delivered in terms of gameplay. But it doesn't. It just doesn't. Let us explain.

Coming to the graphics first, they are mediocre at best. Even at ultra settings, the game didn't feel or even render like "ultra" settings. We had to manually check 2-3 times in the settings menu to make sure that the graphics were set to ultra. Secondly, the sound design. The music is bad, the car sounds are bad

and the mixing of both are bad too. In short, this game is better played at 0 volume ¯_(ツ)_/¯

Coming to the actual gameplay, you get two camera angles. If you've played a racing game before, you know the value and importance of good camera angles in a racing game. A good angle can make or break the racing experience. Well, we're pleased to say that this game takes all those analogies and throws them out of the window. There are only two camera angles to switch between in this game. One is the classic top-down angle and the other one is a very weird "Retro Isometric" angle which is just like the top-down angle but the camera's position has been offset to the right and it zooms in and out based on your car's speed. The core racing experience was a nightmare in this game. You get a lot of choice when it comes to controls. You can use touch, tilt, wheel and arrows. But all four of them are really poorly calibrated which results in you either overturning or under turning on critical turns of the map which ultimately leads you to crashing into a tree. The handling and the control calibration is really bad and we couldn't really "race" as we kept crashing into trees.

All in all, Rush Rally Origins is a really rage inducing game that we strongly advise you to stay away from. We think that the 460 INR is better spent somewhere else as compared to this game. We recommend you to look elsewhere if you're in the market for some good racing games.

Bridge Constructor Portal

Bridge Constructor Portal is an aptly named "Bridge Building" game by Headup. There are a lot of things going for this game mainly due to the "Portal" branding. If you're not familiar with the Portal franchise in the first place, then you're missing out on a lot of fun. We highly recommend you to play the Portal franchise on PC and experience some of the best games ever made. Coming back to the game, the main objective of this game is to, of course, build bridges. But the backstory is what makes this game a lot more interesting. You see, you - the player are selected in an interview to build bridges throughout the Aperture Science facility for the easy transportation of the employees. Hence, you need to work with bridges as well as





portals in order to accomplish this task. You will be guided by the very own GLaDOS throughout the game at different times. Whenever a specific level needs introduction or a new thing gets introduced, GLaDOS will pop up and guide you. The best part about this is that GLaDOS in this game is voiced by the original voice actor - Ellen McLain. That makes the whole journey throughout the game a lot more interesting. Another good thing about GLaDOS is the script writing. The devs have made sure to put in sadistic and sarcastic lines for GLaDOS to speak just like in the original Portal game.

Coming to the core gameplay, you will need to build bridges between two points of land. Beneath the empty space will be "acid" which obviously the employees are not allowed to fall in. Hence, you need to take the cables and wires necessary in order to build a strong bridge. The bridge cables can only be extended to a certain length and hence you will definitely need more than one cable to cover the distance. These cables will either be supported by more bridge cables beneath them or strong wires above them. Your end goal is to get the employees and their carts from one end of the level to the other. You will also get a chance to work with the propulsion gel, repulsion gel, companion cube and much more.

All in all, Bridge Constructor Portal is a fantastic game to play if you're a Portal universe fanatic or just like construction games in general. Since the devs have acquired an official

licence to use the SKUs from the Portal universe, the whole game feels more like a part of the Portal universe rather than an off-brand knock off. The only thing that we didn't like is the steep pricing at 400 INR. Yes, this game is paid and will cost you 400 INR to play. We highly recommend you to try this game out and if you don't like it, you can just refund your payment. But if you do end up liking it, make sure to play through all the mind-bending 60 levels.

Wilderless





Wilderless is a new adventure game unlike any other open-world game you've undoubtedly played before. Most games feature riddles to overcome,as well as the fear of attackers and enemies hiding around every corner, tree, or bush.This is especially true in open-world games that provide infinite exploration and a plethora of objectives to complete. Many of those objectives will need you to deal with various adversaries and monsters.

The experience in Wilderless, on the other hand, is quite different. There are no adversaries, missions, surprises, or any form of jump scares. Its portrayal of nature – of being in the big outdoors – seems to be both tranquil and massive in size, while it's not aiming for the same loot-hunting, monster-killing thrills that have been synonymous with the genre.

The ability to alter your shape at will is one of the game's most appealing aspects. You may either run about as a person or turn into a hawk and soar around at your leisure. You may also swim and take in the sights of trees and mountains while enjoying the crystal-clear water. Grab your skates and hit the ice if you want to do something a bit more active. Skate about as the sun sets, with the neighbouring snow-capped mountains serving as a backdrop.

Naturally, there's a rather comprehensive photo mode that allows you to record anything that catches your attention, from little, intimate moments to wide images of the entire world. You'll be able to shoot some nice photos with the game's camera mode while on your trip, which has been a popular feature in many games. You may use filters to customise the photographs to your desire. It could be a fun way to make some cool iPhone wallpapers or share on social media.

Turmoil





Turmoil is a new casual business simulator/strategy game based on the American oil boom of the nineteenth century. Players must play as industrious entrepreneurs who do their hardest to harvest oil from their estates and sell it for a profit.

The game appears to be simple at first, and while it is simple to comprehend how things operate, there is a lot to learn, and

defeats are likely to occur early on. However, if players grasp the fundamentals, the cash will start flowing in. The game does a wonderful job of explaining the fundamentals to the player. It has a very minimalist aesthetic in terms of visuals.

Buying an oil-rich plot of property at the municipal auction is the first step toward becoming an oil baron. After that, you bring in all of the dowsers, moles, and scans to find all of the oil. It will need a clever and well-placed network of pipelines, which will be hauled by carts and stored in silos, to get it to the surface. The only thing left is to sell it. Now you have the option of waiting for the ideal selling price or raising the price yourself with natural gas.

Upgrades such as improved drilling gear and technology that make it simpler to puncture through rocks, efficient processing to reduce oil spills, and procedures that take use of natural gas pockets will all help to increase profitability. Head to the saloon for some sneaky yet profitable transactions.

The game now has no advertising, which is usually a nice thing because it allows for a more uninterrupted experience. There is, however, a one-time fee, and without it, gamers will only be able to play a small portion of the campaign. It's up to them to judge whether the game has enough content to justify the price.

To summarise our assessment, Turmoil is a somewhat engaging though simple-looking game that would be suitable for anybody interested in real-time business games. It has a lot to offer (including DLCs) and has minimalistic and intuitive gameplay, but there are a lot of things that players must consider when playing.

Fotonica

In a most wonderful succession of masterfully designed warp speed stages, the glowing vector lines and psychedelic neon waves that illuminate from the corners of your vision like some kind of excitement driven euphoria, Fotonica is unending runner perfection. When you achieve that zen-like state of attention, everything speeds up even more, the colours and





motions get even more intense, creating a stunning audiovisual overload that sets it apart from the others.

You may start running on a linear course by pressing any button. When you release the button, you jump but do not accelerate, and when you push it again, you accelerate and go closer to the ground.The course selection is entirely bizarre. Some are made up of broken bits of railway track, while others are made up of living room furniture. There are large holes of nothing in between. You must retry the level if you fall. Levels aren't more than two minutes long. In the higher stages, you must learn when to leap short or long.

Arcade mode is divided into seven distinct levels, each with its own set of routes that ascend and descend. The aim isn't only to climb as high as possible in these levels; because the dots that may award extra points are scattered around the level, finding the best pathways for dot collecting, as well as picking up and maintaining speed, is critical to climbing the leaderboards. On iPad, each arcade style level may be played in split-screen vs mode, with the first person to reach the end winning.

Endless mode is a complex case, with three distinct levels that at first appear uninteresting due to their absence of the multi-tiered architecture of the Arcade levels. But if you keep playing them, you'll realise what the difficulty is all about: repetition, not only making a leap from one height to another, but doing it twenty times at rapid rates. This game also teaches

players how to handle specific circumstances, such as jumping from the middle of the ledge to reach the next platform instead of the end. It's intriguing since it employs the same ideas in a more straightforward manner for a new difficulty.

The controls, physics, and soundtrack all contribute to Fotonica's alien feel. Last but not least, there's a dizzying combination of frantic, furious electronica and spaced-out ambient rumblings.Fotonica always feels hypnotic, as if you're a robot going through its own fever dreams in a dazed stupor, a sensation that's amplified when you reach top speed, when the on-screen visuals turn golden and the audio muffled, as if the sound waves can't quite reach your ears.

My Hero Ultra Impact





Bandai Namco has released My Hero Ultra Impact, a new gacha RPG. You've probably familiar with the gacha formula, especially if you're a regular gacha gamer. You summon characters from the show, assemble a squad, enhance them, and then use them to defeat villains. A large part of the fight revolves around each character's unique powers, known as Quirks. The plot of the game allows you to experience scenes from the anime and manga, enhancing the narrative

Each episode is separated into stages, which might depict battles with evildoers or bosses, graphic novel-style discussion

between characters, or comic-style cinematics. As the tale develops, the degree of difficulty grows, as do the prizes and the criteria to confront the fights. The fighting is turn-based and mainly automated, so you won't have to do anything besides tap once in a while to line up your fighters. There's also an auto option, which allows the game to run without the need for players to intervene.

The game is really very liberal with its rerolls, making it a lot more welcoming to free-to-play users than most other gachas, and nothing is hidden behind a paywall. Players will have to grind for resources, like with other gachas. Because there are no advertisements in the game, the gameplay experience is uninterrupted. While the game does include in-app purchases, the rerolls make it one of the greatest gacha systems available.

My Hero Ultra Impact is a good game, and it's one of Bandai Namco's finest, leveraging the IP in a very effective manner. It offers solid turn-based gameplay, a wonderful tale to follow, and most of the elements are in place. It doesn't really provide anything new to the table and may come off as a little bland to some, but it's still effective at what it does. Anyone who likes MHA and gacha games should give this game a go. *

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