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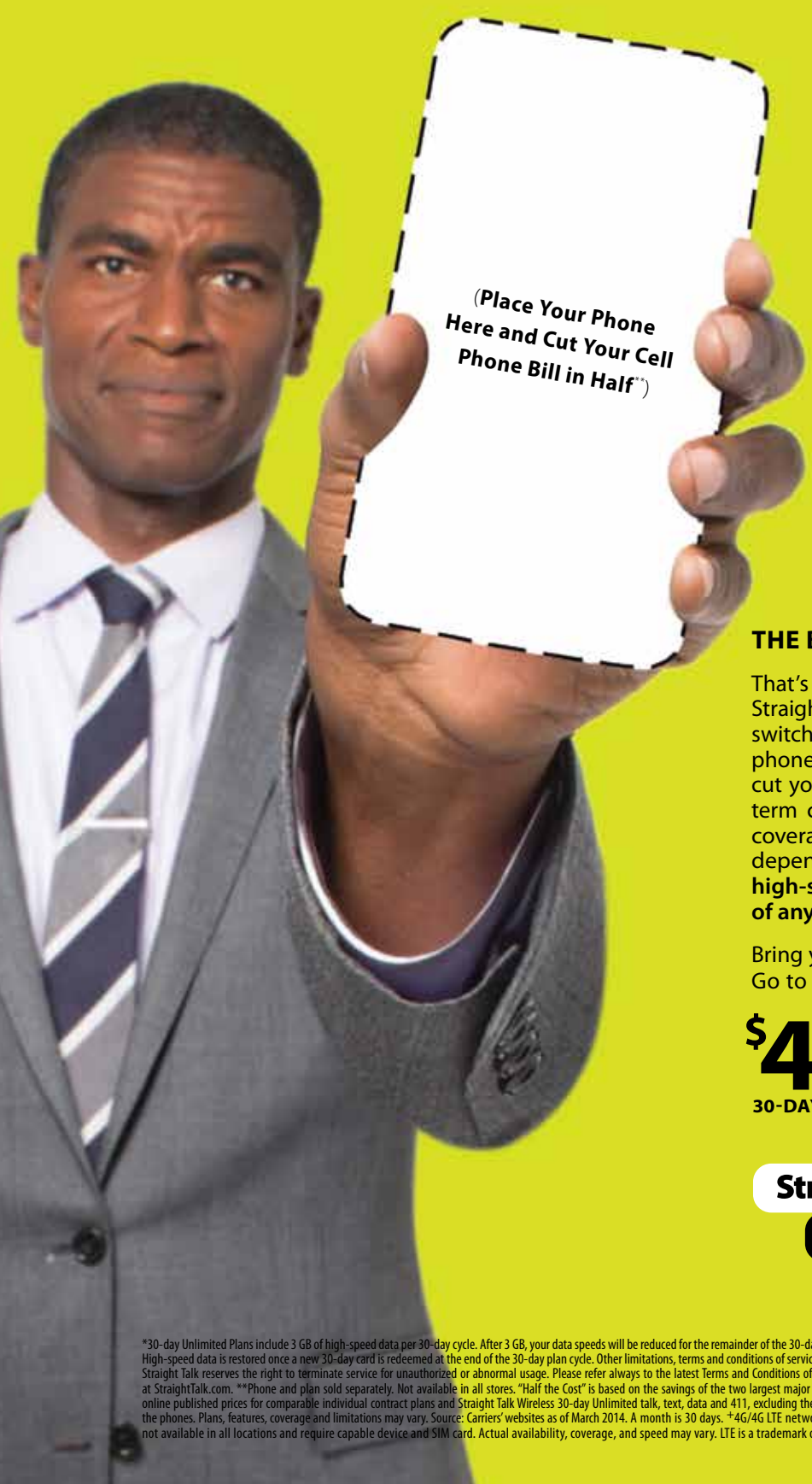
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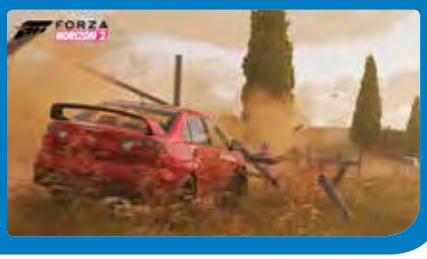
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BIG GAME PREVIEW 30

We don't need a crystal ball to see into the future, instead the game companies have opened their doors and have shown us all the games we call look forward to in 2014 and more!



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welcome
FROM THE PUBLISHER



ALWAYS LOOKING FORWARD

Walking into E3 2014 brought with it a severe sense of déjà vu. Weren't we just at the Los Angeles Convention Center looking at two new systems—the Xbox One and PS4?

Indeed, the past year has gone by incredibly fast and left us with some great games like *Titanfall* and *inFAMOUS: Second Son*. But the time has come to once again look forward to the games coming for the 2014 holiday season and beyond.

While new console announcements are exciting, the real fun comes once game developers have had some time to work with the new hardware and figure out some tricks.

Take *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare*, coming in November from Sledgehammer Games. The fluid action, advanced tech, and stunning graphics look to be the same leap in quality we experienced when *Modern Warfare* first hit in 2007.

Then there's *Batman: Arkham Knight*, our clear choice for Game of Show. Rocksteady Studios has created a new, massive Gotham City to explore with the series' latest character: the Batmobile.

True, classifying a car as a character may seem like an overstatement, but once you play the game, you'll understand. The Caped Crusader can use the armored wonder to solve puzzles and flank enemies, and while the control remains in your hands, it's easy to imagine a future where an AI-controlled Batmobile provides the Dark Knight with independent support.

Dozens of great games are on their way, and we've picked our favorites to showcase in our annual Big Game Preview. If you don't see one of your favorites, though, don't worry. It might be because we've already covered it previously or because we've got something special planned for the near future.

And don't forget about the great game remasters coming to new-gen systems: the PS4 adaptation of *The Last of Us*, a stunning version of *Grand Theft Auto V* for PS4, Xbox One, and PC, and perhaps best of all, *Halo: The Master Chief Collection*.

Possibly the most comprehensive compilation ever, this collection includes anniversary editions of *Halo: Combat Evolved* and *Halo 2*, as well as the original versions of *Halo 3* and *Halo 4*. Not only can you play through all of the stories as a seamless campaign, but Microsoft's also including every series multiplayer map ever—more than 100 in all.

It's projects like these that have us really excited for the coming year. They'll carry us to E3 2015—which will surely get here way too fast.

STEVE HARRIS
PUBLISHER

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GAME ON!

GAMING NEWS, NUMBERS, AND GOSSIP

BY ERIC L. PATTERSON

MEET AMIIBO, NINTENDO'S NEW LINE OF INTERACTIVE CHARACTER FIGURINES



Videogames that work together with real-life toys and figures have become big business, and after the smashing success of *Skylanders* and *Disney Infinity*, it seemed to only make sense for a company like Nintendo to try their hand at a similar product, given how many long-lasting, beloved characters they've created over the years.

During this year's E3, Nintendo announced that they'd be doing just that when they revealed amiibo, a new line of figures that can directly interact with a number of upcoming Wii U and 3DS games. What makes amiibo different than other, similar products is that they won't just target one specific title or franchise; instead, Nintendo sees their foray into the world of toys as something to connect fans and players with a wide array of game projects in the future.

The first major release the amiibo figures will interact with will be *Super Smash Bros.*, where—by syncing up the toy for one of the fighters with the game itself—players will be able to customize their in-game character, beef up its stats, and then save all that information back to the toy. Take that figure to a friend's house, load your amiibo into your friend's copy of *Super Smash Bros.*, and your customized character will be ready to go. While the exact details of what they'll do in relation to each game have yet to be clarified, Nintendo announced that amiibos will also be compatible with *Mario Kart 8*, *Mario Party 10*, *Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker*, and *Yoshi's Woolly World*. As for the figures themselves, 10 will be available upon launch this fall, with more coming through the end of the year and during 2015. So far, Nintendo has shown off 14 possible figures, including Mario, Link, Samus, Donkey Kong, Pit, Pikachu, and Fox McCloud.

NINTENDO SEES THEIR FORAY INTO THE WORLD OF TOYS AS SOMETHING TO CONNECT FANS AND PLAYERS WITH A WIDE ARRAY OF GAME PROJECTS...



For Wii U owners, you've already got all you'll need in order to interact with the amiibo figures, since the technology required is build into every Wii U GamePad. For 3DS owners, a special peripheral that enables the portable to connect with amiibos will be released next year.

BY THE NUMBERS

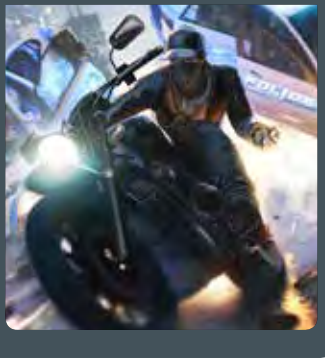
12/27/2014 Date the *Halo 5: Guardians* multiplayer beta will kick off

4,000 Achievements available to earn in *Halo: The Master Chief Collection*

72 Players that will be able to battle one another in *Final Fantasy XIV*'s upcoming Frontline PvP mode

30 to 35 Hours of dialogue per announcer recorded for *WWE 2K15*

4 million-plus Copies *Watch_Dogs* sold in its first week, making it Ubisoft's fastest-selling game ever





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WHITE IS THE NEW BLACK FOR THE PLAYSTATION 4

While the old adage says that black goes with anything, sometimes you want something a little different in your life. For that, Sony's announced a brand-new system color for its PlayStation 4, coming as part of a *Destiny* bundle set for release on September 9th. Available for purchase or pre-order either in your local Walmart store or on Walmart.com, the bundle will include a Glacier White PlayStation 4 console, Glacier White DualShock 4 controller, a copy of Activision and Bungie's epic new open-world first-person shooter, *Destiny*, 30-day trials to PlayStation Plus and Music Unlimited, a $10 PlayStation Store voucher, and a mono headset (along with all necessarily power and video cables). Sony will also be offering new color variations on the DualShock 4 separately later this year, including Wave Blue and Urban Camo.

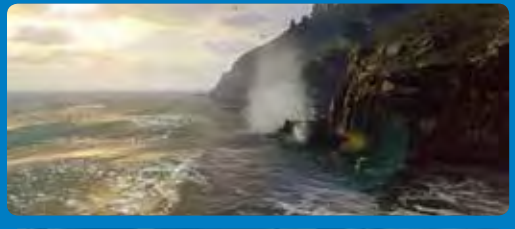


MICROSOFT CONTINUES TO BRING NEW FEATURES TO THE XBOX ONE

Since the release of the Xbox One late last year, Microsoft has put serious effort into expanding and enhancing the system's features and capabilities. In June, the company updated the development tools for game creators, allowing for a 10 percent boost in power that can be used for improving elements such as resolution, framerate, or the number of characters onscreen. Now, Microsoft has revealed details about their next firmware update, and it'll include a feature many fans have long wanted: the ability to snap the Achievements list for the game and track (in real time) the progress that's been made on those Achievements that have yet to be completed. Launching the Snap feature and switching to it will also now be much easier to do, and you'll be able to "Like" the Game DVR clips of friends or other players that you follow.

GRAND THEFT AUTO V MAKES THE JUMP TO THE PLAYSTATION 4, XBOX ONE

With all of the recent announcements of previous-gen games getting upgrades for the PlayStation 4 and Xbox One, one name continually came up as a most-wanted announcement: *Grand Theft Auto V*. Well, good news, as Rockstar officially announced that the latest game in their blockbuster series will be hitting both new-gen consoles this fall. Of course, one of the biggest benefits will be to the game's visuals, with draw distance, texture detail, the amount of traffic on streets, resolution, wildlife, weather and damage effects, and many other elements all getting huge improvements over the PS3 and Xbox 360 versions. With what's been seen of this new version of *GTAV* so far, the change is pretty stunning—bringing the city of Los Santos to life on a level never before seen. And, for those of you who can't get enough of *Grand Theft Auto Online*, fear not: Your character and all of their progress will be fully transferrable to the new consoles.



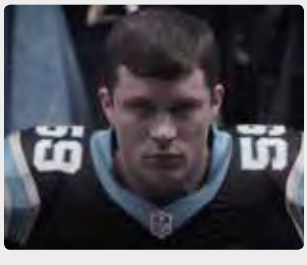


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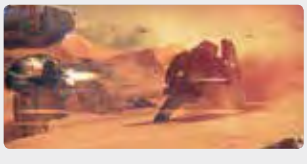
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GAMING GOSSIP

COMPILED BY QUARTERMANN

THE LAST GUARDIAN LIVES, QUANTUM BREAK INFO ON THE WAY, AND NINTENDO'S TAKE ON VIRTUAL REALITY

My feet are sore, I've lost five pounds, and I just got done playing over a hundred games in the span of three days—either the Q's just had another one of his epic birthday bashes, or another year's Electronic Entertainment Expo has come and gone. And while you're ever-faithful Quartermann may be the super-sleuth of secrets when it comes to the world of gaming, even *I* have my limits right after the biggest flurry of gaming reveals to happen every 12 months. So, gentle readers, let me switch things up a bit this issue and look into what you won't find as you flip through the pages of this fine publication: the games that *weren't* at E3 2014.

Let's start with two titles that share more than a few similarities: *The Last Guardian* and *Final Fantasy XV*. Both were announced five or more years ago, yet they seem no closer to release now than they did then. Both were initially revealed as exclusives for the PlayStation 3, only to later have their platforms change (*The Last Guardian* moved to PS4, while *FFXV* is going to PS4 and Xbox One). And both games were also completely absent at this year's E3. So, where are they? After reports that *The Last Guardian* had been officially cancelled, Sony announced that was definitely *not* the case, and that they'd clearly announce if it were. If you want the Q-Mann's opinion, now that it's obvious the game won't make a 2014 release date, my guess would be a showing at either Gamescom or Tokyo Game Show. The PS4 is lacking in terms of Japan-developed titles at the moment, so showing off such a game on Sony's home turf makes a lot of sense. Meanwhile, *Final Fantasy XV* producer Shinji Hashimoto told Japanese gaming publication *Famitsu* that E3 isn't the right time to show more of the game. Again, I'm turning my Quarter-eyes toward Tokyo...

For all the Xbox One owners out there, you're no doubt a little puzzled by the complete lack of one *Quantum Break* at this year's show. Heavily promoted during the reveal of Microsoft's latest console, Remedy Entertainment's much-anticipated mix of police drama, sci-fi intrigue, and live-action television has been nowhere to be seen recently. Fear not, however—it's not bad news. The team's hard at work on the project, and sometimes all that time and effort doesn't translate into something ready for E3. Instead, that'll come a few months down the road. While stopping time is a real feature in the game, it just *feels* like the world is going in slow motion as we wait for more info...

What definitely *was* at E3, however, was a man by the name of Shigeru Miyamoto. Nintendo's legendary game creator is almost always on hand for the show, and during his down moments, the man behind Mario loves to wander around and check out what's happening in the world of gaming beyond the walls of the Mushroom Kingdom. This year, yours truly spotted the developer with a strange contraption strapped to his head: the Oculus Rift. If there's one thing I've learned over the years, however, it's that Miyamoto-san is a hard man to impress—and it seems that's indeed the case when it comes to VR. "I have a little bit of uneasiness with whether or not that's the best way for people to play," Miyamoto told *Time*. You know, I might have to agree with him here—because if I had the chance to slip on a VR helmet and delve deep into *Metroid Prime 4*, the world might never see their beloved Quartermann again.

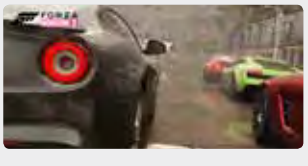
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THIS MONTH'S TOP-SELLING VIDEOGAMES...

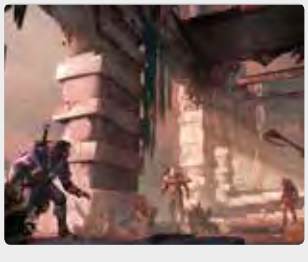
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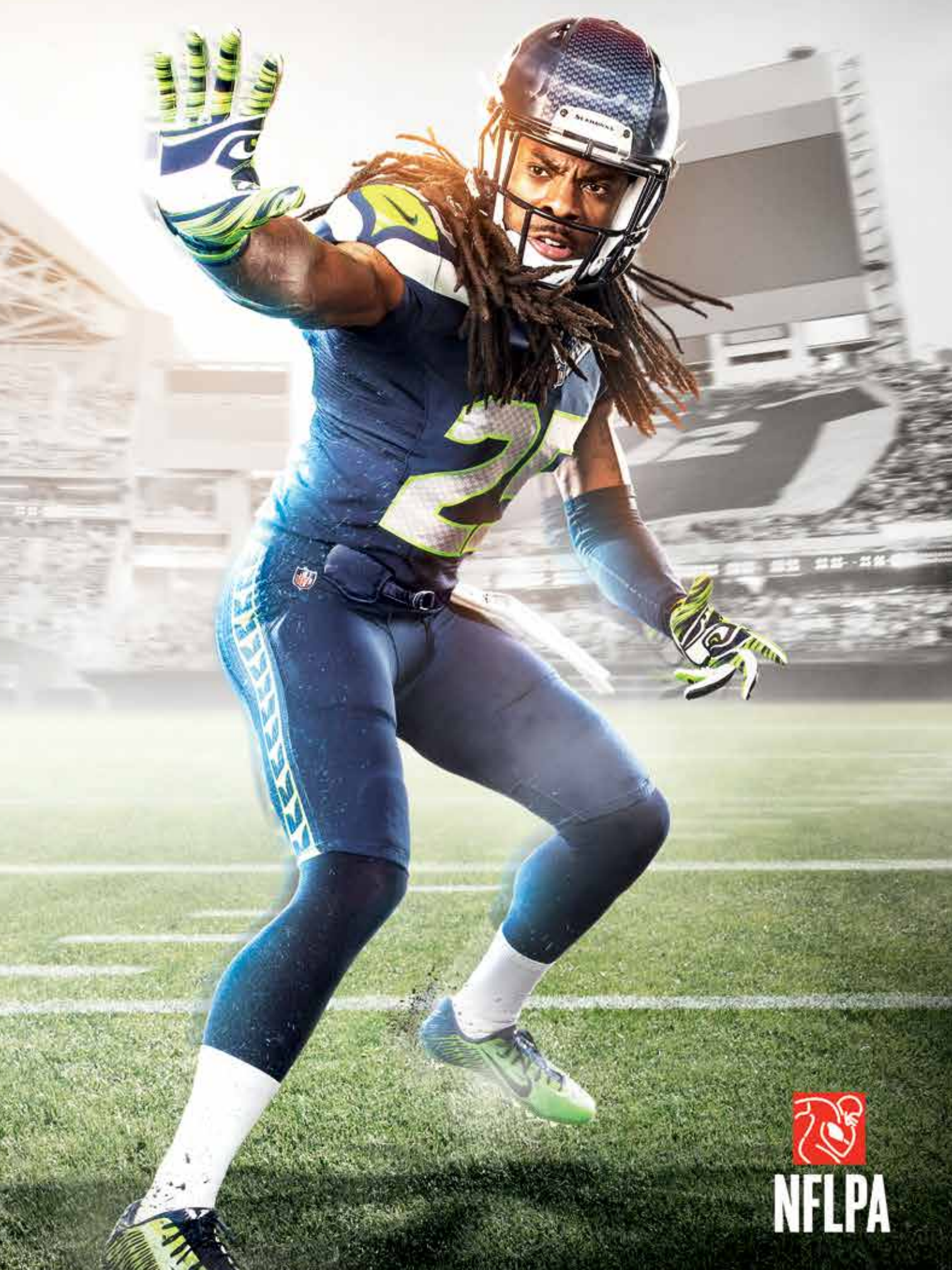
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NFLPA



TRANSFORMERS: RISE OF THE DARK SPARK

1

- **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER** EDGE OF REALITY
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, WII U, 360, PS3, 3DS, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** JUNE 24

"For years, we've had two major *Transformers* continuities—the live-action films and the *Cybertron* games—running side by side, always with the understanding they existed in the same universe but never really interacting with one another. *Dark Spark* finally brings those two worlds together by having the game take place both on Cybertron before the Autobots escaped on the Ark in *Fall of Cybertron*, and their new sanctuary on Earth. As for the gameplay, anyone who's played one of the *Cybertron* games should feel right at home; this series is still defined by fast-paced action, huge battlefields, and the power to change forms in the blink of an eye. But we've also put a renewed focus on the series' co-op multiplayer, wave-based survival mode, Escalation. There are about 40 characters to choose from, far more than ever before, and we've added dynamic new features, such as defensive fortifications."

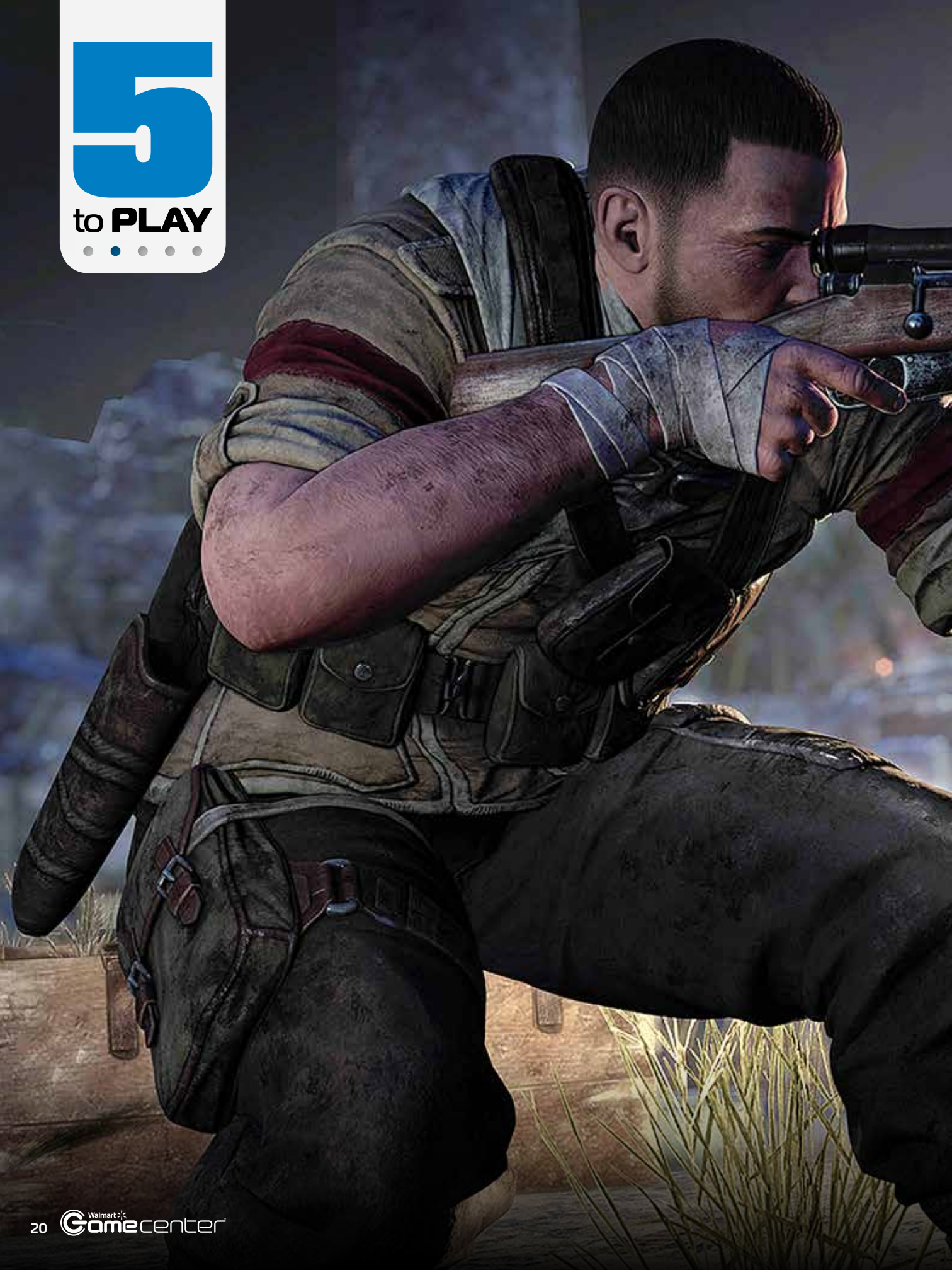
—ANDY OWEN, PRODUCER, ACTIVISION

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SNIPER ELITE III 2

- **PUBLISHER** 505 GAMES
- **DEVELOPER** REBELLION OXFORD
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** JULY 1

"While *Sniper Elite III* is actually a prequel to *Sniper Elite V2*, we've added a lot of new elements to the game. For starters, you can now customize your weapons and will be able to upgrade the scope, the barrel, the bolt, and the stock. We've also got new stealth tactics, which let you hide bodies and throw rocks to distract enemies. You can also play the entire campaign, as well as two other modes, with a friend via co-op. But the big thing is that the game is set in North Africa, as opposed to Europe. That means that instead of corridors and alleyways, you're in larger, more open areas. This gives the player more options when it comes to deciding which way they want to go and which way they want to approach their targets and objectives. It's also strikingly different, visually speaking, from the usual European theater you see in games."

—MICHAEL GREENING, PRODUCTION COORDINATOR, 505 GAMES

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TOMODACHI LIFE 3

- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
- **PLATFORM** 3DS
- **RELEASE DATE** JUNE 6

"Tomodachi Life lets you create fully customized Mii characters of your friends and family to live alongside celebrities—including Christina Aguilera, Shaquille O'Neal, and Shaun White, whose Miis you can upload via QR codes—and historical figures on a fictional island. After creating Miis, players essentially turn them loose on one hilarious adventure after another. And while it's similar to *Animal Crossing* and *The Sims*, in that characters build day-to-day life experiences around unique activities, *Tomodachi Life* uproariously diverges from reality by putting daily life through an outlandish lens. You may spy your grandfather dancing the hula, delight your mother with an astronaut suit, or watch a rock concert where your parents are singing backup for your favorite band. Players will find themselves checking up on island life often, because even though they can't dream up what will happen next, they know they won't want to miss it."

—BILL TRINEN, DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT MARKETING, NINTENDO OF AMERICA

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ULTRA STREET FIGHTER IV

4

- **PUBLISHER** CAPCOM
- **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM
- **PLATFORMS** 360, PS3
- **RELEASE DATE** AUGUST 5

"Our fans said they wanted to see more of their favorite characters, so for the *Ultra* version of *Street Fighter IV*, we added Rolento, Elena, Hugo, and Poison—all of whom are quite different from how they were in *Street Fighter X Tekken*—and Decapre. But we also improved the existing cast to the point where the fans have always desired them to be. Characters that weren't a threat previously are now scary in the right hands. We also made changes to the battle system; tournament players let us know that unblockables made the game rather unfavorable. Since all unblockables are performed on characters after they're knocked down, delayed 'wake-up' was added so that unblockables would be almost impossible to perform consistently. Meanwhile, casual players mentioned that they wished that they could use both Ultra attacks simultaneously instead of having to choose just one. Taking that into account, we introduced Ultra Combo W."

—PETER ROSAS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF BATTLE DESIGN, CAPCOM

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5 to PLAY



ENEMY FRONT

5

- **PUBLISHER** BANDAI NAMCO
- **DEVELOPER** CI GAMES
- **PLATFORMS** 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** JUNE 10

"*Enemy Front* is a World War II first-person shooter, but it's not like other WWII shooters in that you're not just going from one battle to the next. Our game has more of a sandbox feel, and you have a bunch of different ways to accomplish your objectives. You can run-and-gun, you can snipe, you can use stealth, or any combination of them. You even have binoculars, so you can mark your targets, which will show you where they are on the map, and even which way they're facing if you want to sneak up on them. And when you do, you can use them as a human shield and can shoot other people while you have a hostage. Along with the single-player campaign, *Enemy Front* also has multiplayer, and the game includes deathmatch, team deathmatch, and Freedom Fighter, which is similar to capture the flag."

—STEPHEN SKELTON, PRODUCER, CITY INTERACTIVE

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Available on the App Store

10 secrets of WATCH_DOGS

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BY PAUL SEMEL

In *Watch_Dogs*, you play as a hacker who, when not trying to avenge his niece's death, can hack anyone he sees and steal their secrets. But since turnabout is fair play, we decided to hack the people who made *Watch Dogs*—OK, we actually asked them nicely—to reveal some of their game's own secrets.

01 | HORSIN' AROUND

If you've played *Watch_Dogs*, then you know that almost everything is hackable. And we do mean almost everything. "There was a screenshot of a hackable object that was behind one of those horsey rides," says dev tester Samuel Jacques. "But someone thought you were supposed to hack the horsey ride, and people then thought that hacking the horsey was such a good idea that we made the horsey hackable."

02 | FIELDS OF DREAMS

Watch_Dogs is set in Chicago, and the developers tried their best to make sure that the Windy City seen in the game looks and feels like the real thing. But that isn't to say they didn't take some liberties. "We wanted to pay homage to the entire sports community in Chicago," explains art director Sidonie Webber. But there was only so much room. "Our May Stadium is actually a mix of Soldier Field, home of the Chicago Bears, and Wrigley Field, where the Cubs play."



03 | HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Given that Chicago is such a sports-loving town, it seemed obvious that the game's protagonist, Aiden Pearce, should wear a baseball cap. This suggestion became all the more obvious after scriptwriter Ethan Petty put it to the test. "One day, I decided to wear a baseball cap when I went to get lunch," he recalls. "At the nearby deli, I kept my head and hat pointed down, yet I was able to order my food, have a pleasant conversation with the employees, and pay for my meal without anyone ever seeing my face. After that, we knew Aiden needed to wear a hat."

04 | BABY, PLEASE DON'T GO

While game developers often enlist friends and coworkers to provide the voices of background characters, audio director Olivier Girard actually used child labor. "In one of our 'invasion of privacy moments,' when you hack and peek inside someone's home, you hear a baby crying offscreen and his mother caring for him," Girard notes. "That crying baby is actually my son Henri, who was born while I was working on *Watch_Dogs*. And his sister, Viviane, who also born during *Watch_Dogs*' production, can also be heard in the game if you know where and when to listen."



05 | HOT COFFEE

Like all videogames, *Watch_Dogs* was made on computers—computers that run on electricity. So, you'd think the developers would have devices in their studio to make sure the electricity doesn't run out. You'd be wrong. "We kept experiencing a series of power outages in our team's area," recalls programmer Jared Thomson. "It took two weeks to figure out that the problem was the 12-cup coffee maker on my desk."

06 | GHOST DOG

To some, the anarchistic themes of *Watch_Dogs* probably seem rather punk. But according to level designer Scott Morin, hip-hop had an influence on this game as well. "In the 'Who is Bedbug?' mission," he explains, "the player is supposed to save and protect Gary 'Rabbit' Diggs, whose name was conceived from combining Gary "GZA" Grice and Robert "RZA" Diggs from the Wu-Tang Clang, which is why a Wu-Tang Clan song plays during a later mission in that arc."



07 | HACK/SLASH

In working on the game, the developers created a system so they could send commands to any working version of *Watch_Dogs*, so long as it was connected to the Internet. Naturally, you know what happened next. "Some people discovered the tool," confesses lead online programmer Jean-Francois Roy, "and they started messing up with other people's games, changing the weather, creating blackouts, and so on. Though, eventually, the pranksters got bored."

08 | SPACE INVADERS

In keeping with the hacking theme, your friends can actually hack your game of *Watch_Dogs*, joining in to help you out or work against you. But it only works at certain times. Why, you may ask? "One guy wanted to prove how seamless our engine truly is," explains Roy. "He made it so that anyone could join anyone's game at any time, even during missions. But we ended up with random players shooting civilians during serious cutscenes, which proved it wasn't such a good idea after all."

09 | WHY?

As we mentioned, *Watch_Dogs* is set in Chicago. And when the developers went to the City of Broad Shoulders to get a sense of how it should look and feel in their game, they noticed something weird. "When the art team went to Chicago for scouting," Webber recalls, "we found the letter 'Y' hidden in the architecture throughout the city." Why? Who knows, but as Webber notes, "The hidden QR codes in the game are a nod to this."



10 | TWO THOUSAND ZERO ZERO

Watch_Dogs is set in the not-so-distant future. So, why does Aiden Pearce use a PDA like it's 1999? "I don't know," confesses Thomson. "I don't know the history or reason behind this. But Aiden's phone is called a PDA throughout the game, in both the code and the design, and even on his phone's menu."



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THE BIG GAME PREVIEW

THE HOTTEST GAMES FOR 2014 AND BEYOND

BY GAMECENTER STAFF

Alien: Isolation

- **PUBLISHER** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER** THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 10.07.2014

Equal parts follow-up and homage to Ridley Scott's 1979 sci-fi thriller, *Alien: Isolation* puts players in the futuristic Chuck Taylors of Amanda Ripley, daughter of the film's iconic protagonist, Ellen, as she sets out to discover what happened to her mother. When her investigation takes her to the space station *Sevastopol*, she gets dangerously close to the truth, encountering an Alien much like the one that attacked Ellen—only bigger. To make it out alive, Amanda will need to use caution, stealth, and improvised gadgets, since the creature hunting her is viciously lethal and nearly indestructible.

That means there won't be much traditional gunplay or combat in *Alien: Isolation*, and the little there is will be reserved for human foes and androids occupying the station. Even then, an aggressive approach won't be smart, because ammunition will be scarce and noisy, always running the risk of attracting the Alien's attention. This is a truly unconventional experience by modern triple-A standards, where fear is the No. 1 priority and frailty is the player's default state. In a game where surprises can be lurk around any corner, the biggest shock might be that a major publisher backed such a refreshingly different idea in the first place.





Assassin's Creed Unity

- **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MONTREAL
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 10.28.2014

Assassin's Creed has always focused on the art of blending into a crowd, but with the limitations of technology in the previous console generation, its in-game streets could sometimes feel a little more barren than you might expect. That won't be the case in *Assassin's Creed Unity*, which is great news for players excited at the chance to play out the French Revolution in the latest entry in Ubisoft's history-hopping stealth-action series.

Unity's 18th-century Paris truly feels like a metropolis in the throes of upheaval, with its packed city streets really imparting the mass of humanity that was at the center of one of the most famous uprisings in human memory. What's more, if you see an open window while walking these crowded alleys, it's not for decoration—you can hop right in and engage in missions that focus on the city's "hidden history." Of course, you can't have *Assassin's Creed* without an Assassin, and debuting protagonist Arno Dorian promises to bring the same swagger and agility we've seen in past entries on his quest to uncover the truth behind the revolution. With co-op missions available this time around, though, it won't just be about sneaking around on your own.











Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare

- **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER** SLEDGEHAMMER GAMES
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 11.04.2014

Sledgehammer Games brought nine full minutes of *Call of Duty: Advanced Warfare* gameplay footage to E3, and while it might've seemed like standard fare on the surface—action-packed cinematic moments, blockbuster set pieces, the whole nine yards—those nine minutes gave just enough of a glimpse at *Advanced Warfare* to see how significantly it's shaking up an otherwise stilted formula.

As the former *Call of Duty* developers at Respawn Entertainment showed with *Titanfall*, mobility and momentum is the future for shooters, and *Advanced Warfare* realizes that. Armed with exoskeletal armor in the vein of Matt Damon in *Elysium* or Tom Cruise in *Edge of Tomorrow*, this year's *Call of Duty* supplies players with extra speed, extra strength, extra high and far (and double) jumps. On top of all that? An assortment of future tech that makes combat even more elevated and more about strategy. Take the variable grenade, for instance, which can do anything from marking targets that you can track on your HUD to operating as "smart grenades," which hover briefly in the air, track the nearest target, and then rocket toward them.





Battlefield: Hardline

- **PUBLISHER** ELECTRONIC ARTS
- **DEVELOPER** VISCERAL GAMES, DICE
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 10.21.2014

Few fans expected a new *Battlefield* release for this year, and even fewer could've imagined that what we'd get is *Battlefield: Hardline*. Coming as a collaboration between DICE and Visceral Games (the folks behind *Dead Space*), *Hardline* offers a major change for the franchise, breaking away from the traditional battlefields that give the series its name. Instead, the action will be closer to home, as players delve into the struggles between cops and criminals in cities across America.

Visceral's knack for storytelling will be evident in *Hardline*'s campaign, and the team promises an experience that feels juicier, grittier, and more relatable to players as they fill the shoes of SWAT member Nick Mendoza. After some disappointment by fans over previous *Battlefield* campaigns, we can't wait to see if this shakeup indeed pays off. Fear not, however—*Hardline*'s multiplayer will still be everything that *Battlefield* fans love and expect, just given a twist thanks to the new map possibilities and shift in themes. Battles between cops and crooks in the streets of downtown Los Angeles really provide a fresh new twist on the multiplayer experience, and they're just one of the many ways *Hardline* looks to give *Battlefield* players everywhere something a little unexpected.



Batman: Arkham Knight

- **PUBLISHER** WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
- **DEVELOPER** ROCKSTEADY STUDIOS
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** TBD.2015

In the conclusion to Rocksteady's epic trilogy, the fallout of *Arkham City* is finally ready to be felt by the denizens of Gotham. The Scarecrow has decided that it's time to emerge from the shadows to fill the villainous void left by the Joker's demise. And he's not alone: A new villain named the Arkham Knight is supplying the Master of Fear with a near-endless army of military drones and foot soldiers to carry out a bomb attack that'll blanket the East Coast in his patented Fear Toxin. In exchange, the Arkham Knight gets his vengeance on the man he blames for his own troubles, Batman.

In order to combat this new threat, the Caped Crusader is pulling out all the stops, including a brand-new, multipurpose Batmobile that can be used to both combat Arkham Knight's drones and pursue villains trying to flee. New combat moves like the Fear Takedown can help Batman get the drop on multiple enemies, and the power of new-gen consoles sees the use of location-specific knockouts to help our hero sift through the Arkham Knight's army. It's all up to Batman as he sets his sights on stopping the mysterious man in the camouflage armor and restoring order to Gotham.





Far Cry 4

PUBLISHER UBISOFT
DEVELOPER UBISOFT MONTREAL
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3, PC
RELEASE DATE 11.18.2014

Players take on the role of Ajay Ghale, a native of the fictional Himalayan region of Kyrat, who's looking to return to his roots at the dying request of his mother. When Ghale gets to Kyrat, what he finds waiting isn't a culture ready to embrace him with open arms, but instead a madman named Pagan Min who's proclaimed himself the ruler of the area—and whose insanity will put Vaas from *Far Cry 3* to shame. Armed with only a small gun and some cash, Ghale will see himself sucked up into the revolution taking place within Kyrat's borders.

Beyond the dynamic characters, *Far Cry 4* will take players to a region they've never been before in the series, which allows for even crazier ways to achieve your objectives in the open world. You can lead a herd of rampaging elephants into a fort to help conquer it or crawl in stealthily with nothing more than a silenced pistol. Then again, you might prefer using a sniper rifle to pick off Pagan Min's patrolling soldiers from a safe distance. The player freedom *Far Cry* is known for is still there, but it's got a whole new set of tools to take advantage of a beautifully rendered new-gen world.





Forza Horizon 2

PUBLISHER MICROSOFT STUDIOS
DEVELOPER PLAYGROUND GAMES, TURN 10 STUDIOS, SUMO DIGITAL (XBOX 360)
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, 360
RELEASE DATE 09.30.2014

Forget the drab deserts of Colorado. In *Forza Horizon 2*, the series' fictional music and automotive racing festival is headed to the romantic cobblestone streets of the Old World—the south of France and northern Italy, to be exact. Developer Playground Games has more in store for armchair gearheads than a simple change of scenery, though. For starters, a great deal of attention has been paid to making the open world feel much more open this time around.

You'll find fewer invisible walls and indestructible fences, and a ton more opportunities to head offroad through the fields in an effort to shave precious seconds off your time. There's also a brand-new dynamic weather system—a first in any *Forza* game—that can turn those winding coastal roads into rain-slick hazards without warning in the middle of a race. And if you were a fan of *Forza Motorsport 5*'s Drivatars, which learned their behaviors from the way real-life players drove in-game, you'll be happy to know that they're back and greatly expanded to suit *Horizon 2*'s more open nature. Now, in addition to how people drive, these virtual doppelgangers will also notice *where* they drive, learning shortcuts and putting them to use online.





Madden NFL 15

- **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS
- **DEVELOPER** EA TIBURON
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3
- **RELEASE DATE** 08.26.2014

It's fitting that Richard Sherman, one of the league's best cornerbacks, would break the streak of offensive players appearing on the *Madden* cover, since this year's game is putting a huge emphasis on what you do on the defensive side of the ball. Giving the players the option to use a new "tackle cone," *Madden NFL 15* makes it easier than ever to know when it's a good idea to truck the running back ready to break through into the secondary or when it's wiser to make an ankle tackle instead.

This new feature is only part of a larger philosophy change within the franchise, since *Madden* is taking it upon itself to try to help gamers learn more about the ins and outs of modern football. Another aspect of this initiative comes from the playbook. This year, players will get real-time stats showing how successful a play has been in the past from other gamers in similar situations, as well an idea from the computer on how well it thinks the play will do. Of course, that part's optional, but one thing everyone will see is the upgraded presentation: Dynamic highlights will make you want to watch the halftime show now instead of skipping over it.





Splatoon

- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
- **PLATFORM** WII U
- **RELEASE DATE** Q1.2015

Nintendo's always full of surprises, and at E3, they showed off *Splatoon*, a new third-person shooter for the Wii U that replaces soldiers and bullets with squid people and colored ink. The goal is to dye as much of the map as possible with your team's ink, a feat not easy to accomplish, since one color of ink can be "painted" over by another at any time. *Splatoon* looks to really stand out thanks to some fascinating gameplay tactics, such as being able to turn back to a squid at any time to hide in (or traverse through) ink of your team's color.



Borderlands: The Pre-Sequel

- **PUBLISHER** 2K GAMES
- **DEVELOPER** 2K AUSTRALIA, GEARBOX SOFTWARE
- **PLATFORMS** 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 10.14.2014

The origins of Handsome Jack are revealed as four new Vault Hunters head to Pandora's moon to help a young Jack down a path that will lead to his infamous villainy in *Borderlands 2*. Along with new Vault Hunters come new powers, such as boosted jumps thanks to the moon's lower gravity. What's more, *The Pre-Sequel* sees laser-based weapons from every gun manufacturer. Something tells us that those space bandits won't be too keen on staring you down while you're wielding a Cryo-Laser.



The Crew

- **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER** IVORY TOWER, UBISOFT REFLECTIONS
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 11.11.2014

The Crew might not be the only open-world racing game headed to new-gen consoles this year, but it's certainly the most ambitious. Its massive map—a condensed, funhouse-mirror version of the lower 48 United States—covers thousands of square miles and more than a dozen major cities, linked together by iconic natural landmarks and scenic vistas. If epic road trips aren't enough to get you on board, *The Crew* also has some of the most detailed car customization you're likely to find, unconventional events like takedown missions, and seamless online multiplayer that allows you to team up with friends or battle head-to-head.



Dead Island 2

- **PUBLISHER** DEEP SILVER
- **DEVELOPER** YAGER DEVELOPMENT
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** Q2.2015

The first two *Dead Island* games were good fun, but they were marred by technical issues and iffy writing that made many think the franchise would be better off under a different developer. Cue *Dead Island 2*, which hands the series off to the studio behind the critically acclaimed *Spec Ops: The Line*, Yager Developments. The shakeups won't just be behind the scenes, either, because this sequel features new playable characters, seamless 8-person online play, and a shift in setting from the South Pacific to an open-world version of California that spans from L.A. to San Fran.



Evolve

- **PUBLISHER** 2K GAMES
- **DEVELOPER** TURTLE ROCK STUDIOS
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 10.21.2014

The buzz was already strong for *Evolve* and its four-hunters-versus-one-giant-alien-monster concept, but the hype got kicked up a notch at E3 thanks to some big reveals. We saw a new beast, the electricity-spewing Cthulhu lookalike Kraken, and four more Hunters with some imaginative abilities—robot Bucket can even toss his head in the air and use it as a drone! With a multiplayer-only focus and matches designed to last under half and hour, variety will be essential, which is why it's exciting to see 2K and Turtle Rock bringing it in spades.



Halo: The Master Chief Collection

- **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT STUDIOS
- **DEVELOPER** 343 INDUSTRIES, SABER INTERACTIVE, CERTAIN AFFINITY
- **PLATFORM** XBOX ONE
- **RELEASE DATE** 11.11.2014

Yes, it's true: All four of the mainline *Halo* games—*Halo: Combat Evolved*, *Halo 2*, *Halo 3*, and *Halo 4*—are coming to the Xbox One, remastered in full 1080p and 60 frames per second. Thankfully, the developers weren't satisfied with just slapping the games on a disc and calling it a day. Instead, all four titles are being combined into one gigantic game, where *Halo* fans can choose to play as little or as much of the content as they wish in single-player, or hop online and compete against others on more than 100 maps, each playing as they did in their original versions.



Homefront: The Revolution

- **PUBLISHER** DEEP SILVER
- **DEVELOPER** CRYTEK UK
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** TBD.2015

While an interesting concept—switching things up for shooters and having Americans be the disadvantaged underdogs forced to resort to guerrilla tactics—2011's *Homefront* amounted to little more than another corridor-of-killing *Call of Duty* clone. But like the proverbial phoenix, *Homefront*'s been resurrected by new developer Crytek (of *Crysis* fame) and given new life as a proper sandbox experience. Set in a near-future Philadelphia, *Homefront: The Revolution* will see players compensate for being underpowered by employing equal measures of observation, planning unconventional methods, and quick-hit encounters to liberate the City of Brotherly Love.



Lego Batman 3: Beyond Gotham

- **PUBLISHER** WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
- **DEVELOPER** TT GAMES
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, WII U, 360, PS3, 3DS, VITA, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** Q4.2014

Beyond Gotham picks up right where *Lego Batman 2: DC Super Heroes* left off, and as our story unfolds, Brainiac wants Earth for his own nefarious purposes—and it's up to Batman to stop him. The Caped Crusader will have to use the Bat-Rocket to get to the Watchtower, the Justice League's orbital space base, but the Legion of Doom is going to try to cut him off at the pass. Big Figs will make their *Lego Batman* debut, as characters like Solomon Grundy and Killer Croc have been completely remodeled here. Also, you'll encounter entirely new Lego planets, since Batman's newest adventure will take him to the farthest reaches of space.



Hyrule Warriors

- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- **DEVELOPER** OMEGA FORCE, TEAM NINJA, NINTENDO
- **PLATFORM** WII U
- **RELEASE DATE** 09.26.2014

Link's landmark adventures in Hyrule over the past 25 years have always focused on exploration. While combat has always been part of the equation, it hasn't played a central role in the proceedings. That'll change in *Hyrule Warriors*, a *Zelda*-infused take on Tecmo Koei's *Dynasty Warriors* franchise that sees Link—and several of his comrades like Princess Zelda, Impa, and Midna—fight huge crowds of foes that'll turn traditional Zelda strategy on its ear. But through it all, familiar strategies remain: Dodongos, for example, are always susceptible to bombs.



LittleBigPlanet 3

- **PUBLISHER** SONY COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT
- **DEVELOPER** SUMO DIGITAL
- **PLATFORMS** PS4, PS3
- **RELEASE DATE** 11.2014

Millions of user-designed levels have been produced for the first two *LittleBigPlanet* games. Well, good news, Sackboy fans! All of them can be brought into *LittleBigPlanet 3* on the PS4, and every one of them will arrive with improved graphics, to boot. You'll also be able to use all previously unlocked and purchased costumes to give you plenty of options out of the box. But the best news is the addition of three new characters—Oddsock, Swoop, and Toggle—each with distinct abilities to help Sackboy solve all manner of nefarious puzzles.



Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain

- **PUBLISHER** KONAMI
- **DEVELOPER** KOJIMA PRODUCTIONS
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3
- **RELEASE DATE** TBD

For those of you who think *Metal Gear Solid* is all about bizarre cutscenes and crazy characters, think again. The series' trademark tactical espionage action has always been a major component, and with *The Phantom Pain*, director Hideo Kojima promises to take it to a whole new level. Instead of being boxed in (so to speak) while hiding inside the series' famous cardboard container, you can crawl out and leave it behind or even pop out and get the drop on unsuspecting foes. But the biggest new draw is probably the customizable home base, which allows you to recruit defeated foes to your cause.



Mortal Kombat X

- **PUBLISHER** WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
- **DEVELOPER** NETHERREALM STUDIOS
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** TBD.2015

Serving as a follow-up to the 2011 reboot of the legendary fighting-game franchise, *Mortal Kombat X* builds on what came before with an infusion of improvements and new ideas. In addition to some familiar returning faces, new additions such as Cassie Cage (the daughter of Johnny Cage and Sonya Blade) will help mix things up, with a new "variations" system allowing players to tweak the fighting style of every member of the roster. NetherRealm Studios will also take a page from *Injustice: Gods Among Us*, giving *MKX* interactive backgrounds that players can use to help gain an advantage over their opponents.



Rainbow Six: Siege

- **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MONTREAL
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, WII U, 360, PS3, 3DS, VITA, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** TBD.2015

While there's still a lot to be revealed about this first new *Rainbow Six* chapter in six years, *Siege* already has us excited for more. At E3, we got to try out a 5-on-5 match, where one group of masked men worked to overtake and fortify a suburban home, while a SWAT team attempted to get in, take the terrorists out, and get the hostage to safety. The slower, more teamwork-focused style of previous *Rainbow Six* titles will now be contrasted with an incredible amount of environmental destructibility—where windows, walls, and even floors can be blown away in an attempt to gain an advantage.



Tom Clancy's The Division

- **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MASSIVE
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** TBD.2015

New York City is the center of hustle and bustle in America, but what would happen if a pandemic swept through the Big Apple and destroyed society within a matter of days? That's the premise behind *The Division*, a third-person tactical shooter that puts players in the boots of an agent from the Strategic Homeland Division, the last hope for restoring order and infrastructure to a city that's seen its most basic needs, including food and water, suddenly disappear. Role-playing and social elements should help *The Division* stand out among the slate of shooters appearing on the new generation of consoles.



Sunset Overdrive

- **PUBLISHER** MICROSOFT STUDIOS
- **DEVELOPER** INSOMNIAC GAMES
- **PLATFORM** XBOX ONE
- **RELEASE DATE** 10.28.2014

Insomniac's latest project is loud, brash, chaotic, and colorful—and that's why we're looking forward to it. As the studio's first exclusive game for an Xbox console, *Sunset Overdrive* is a fun-loving third-person shooter, where players will battle against the monsterized citizens of Sunset City using a wide array of creative weaponry and the ability to traverse around the metropolis by running along walls or grinding across power lines. And you'll be doing all of this with your own highly customizable hero or heroine—who can then be taken seamlessly into multiplayer to battle some mutants with friends.



Bayonetta 2

- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- **DEVELOPER** PLATINUM GAMES
- **PLATFORM** WII U
- **RELEASE DATE** 10.2014

Japanese developer Platinum Games is back with their stylish sorceress, Bayonetta, and her second adventure is looking to be even bigger and better than her first. *Bayonetta 2* will feature all of the over-the-top action and attitude of the original, expanded with new maneuvers, even crazier bosses, and a two-player mode. Serious gamers will still find a high level of challenge and difficulty, but now casual players will be able to enjoy Bayonetta's adventures thanks to easier controls provided via the GamePad's touchscreen. Oh, and if you missed out on *Bayonetta* the first time around, fear not: *Bayonetta 2* comes with a free Wii U version of the game.



UNDER CONSTRUCTION

One of the best parts of being a gamer is that there is always something new on the horizon. And while we've been treated to lots of information on some of these (thank you, *Batman: Arkham Knight*!), others remain but a distant promise. Here are just a few of the games that have us wishing for a DeLorean and a flux capacitor.

System exclusives are always a big draw, and there are some doozies coming up. Microsoft has a couple of huge games in hopper, including the next installment in the *Crackdown* series and *Halo 5: Guardians*. The latter will explore the origins of Master Chief as he reflects on his existence...and presumably shoots a bunch of aliens.



Meanwhile, Sony has promised *Bloodborne*, a new game by *Dark Souls* developer From Software, and *Uncharted 4: A Thief's End*. Does that subtitle mean the end of Nathan Drake? We'll have to wait a while to find out.

Nintendo has announced a huge slate of future fun, including the next *Star Fox*, *Yoshi's Wooly World*, *Mario Maker* (which allows players to create their own 8- and 16-bit Mario levels), and a new *Legend of Zelda* for Wii U that features a fully open world where you can tackle dungeons in any order.



As if all those weren't enough, plenty of games are coming from third-party developers as well. EA's given us a peek at *Star Wars: Battlefront* and *Mirror's Edge 2*, both of which are coming along great. The publishing giant has also revealed *Mass Effect 4*, and though Commander Shepard is gone, there's still plenty of adventure left.

Finally, *Rise of the Tomb Raider* allows us to join Lara Croft on her next great adventure. We don't know where she's going, but we can't wait to get there.

SKYLANDERS: TRAP TEAM and DISNEY INFINITY: MARVEL SUPER HEROES



TOYS AND GAMES COLLIDE AGAIN IN DISNEY INFINITY AND SKYLANDERS SEQUELS

BY MATT CABRAL

Thanks to the enormous success of *Skylanders* and *Disney Infinity*, the toy-meets-videogame business is booming, big time. With game fans and toy collectors alike clamoring for new figures—and fresh virtual worlds to unleash them in—it's no surprise that both series are readying bigger and better follow-ups in their respective franchises.

First up, the creative collision of plastic playthings and interactive experiences adds *Skylanders: Trap Team* to its ranks. Following *Spyro's Adventure*, *Giants*, and *Swap Force*, the fourth entry in the family-friendly universe adds an awesome new hook to the toy/game hybrid category. As the story goes, returning villain Kaos has busted Skylands' biggest bads from prison, and it's up to the player to recapture them from behind a new breed of Skylander.

Officially dubbed "Trap Masters," the titular titans wield oversized, crystal-based weapons, as well as the ability to imprison foes. This latter skill is especially cool, since it allows players to trap baddies in small crystals that plug into a



new Portal of Power peripheral. Crafted from a magical substance called Traptanium—of course!—the tiny crystal prisons are based on the series' eight elements—Earth, Water, Magic, Fire, Life, Tech, Undead, and Air. For players, this means possessing the right trap type to capture specific criminals.

On top of the reward of bringing a bad guy to justice, the act of transforming them from game to Portal is packed with a number of immersion-ratcheting effects; once defeated onscreen, Skyland's most wanted are vacuumed into a vortex while their whimpering voices travel from game to peripheral. Tiny blinking lights, as well a small speaker hidden within the Portal, help sell the illusion. While forcefully removing foes from the game world into your living room is a blast, it represents just one part of this neat little trick. Once sucked into a trap, a target can be re-released into Skyland as a force for good controlled by the player. This means fans can not only play as the boss they just beat, but they can also unleash the same powers. Additionally, with both a prisoner-holding trap and figure positioned on the Portal, players can swap between the two characters on the fly.

Kaos himself will be among the 40 evildoing enemies that can be reduced to crystal-en-

SKYLANDERS: TRAP TEAM



TRAP TEAM'S TEAMMATES

Skylanders: Trap Team's new heroes and enemy-ensnaring tech might steal the spotlight, but this sequel's also got some other surprises locked away in its toy prison. In addition to the Trap Masters, the game will introduce new Core Skylanders figures, as well as some familiar favorites in fresh poses. On top of the promised 50-plus playable characters, *Trap Team* will also support all previous series' figures. Couple all these sweet sculpts with the new collectible traps, and faithful fans can look forward to many, many trips to the toy store.





DISNEY INFINITY: MARVEL SUPER HEROES

WHETHER YOU'RE A DISNEY DIEHARD OR SEASONED SKYLANDER, BOTH FRANCHISES' NEW CHARACTERS, FRESH FEATURES, AND FAN-PLEASING APPEAL PROMISE TO KEEP YOU PLAYING.

capsulated allies, allowing fans to play as the franchise's main antagonist for the first time. Regardless of whether you've thrown the cuffs on Kaos or one of his minions, though, *Trap Team* will also let you take your prisoners into other games and over to friends' houses via the collectible crystals.

While *Skylanders* is primarily relying on a single innovation to move the franchise forward, *Disney Infinity*'s taking a more drastic approach to evolving the concepts introduced in its debut. Subtitled *Marvel Super Heroes*, the follow-up isn't so much a sequel as it is a "2.0 edition." As its name suggests, it introduces a new, spandex-clad cast of characters ripped from the pages of Marvel comic books; the starter pack is bundled with Iron Man, Thor, and Black Widow, but other iconic characters—including fellow Avengers Captain America, Hawkeye, and Hulk—will also be busting bad seeds on launch day.



Like its predecessor, *Disney Infinity*'s second chapter will unleash fans in standalone, story-driven adventures called Play Sets, as well as encourage them to let the leash off their creative sides in the do-it-yourself Toy Box mode. The former component promises to pack more action and narrative than its predecessors did, delivering the sort of experiences Marvel fans have come to expect from the media giant's movies. The first Avengers-themed Play Set—included in the starter pack—will see the day-savers and do-gooders take on Loki and his Frost Giant army in Marvel's Manhattan. Thwarting this threat won't be easy, but players will be able to wield the characters' signature powers and abilities; whether it's Hulk's pavement-buckling smash attacks or Iron Man's high-flying skills, there'll be no shortage of evil-banishing tricks tucked into *Marvel Super Heroes*' utility belt.

When not saving the world in universe-expanding romps, players can combine characters, vehicles, terrain pieces, and other virtual props to craft their own minigames, challenges, and free-for-all adventures in the Toy Box. The perfect place for budding designers, this mode refines and evolves many of the concepts introduced in the original game; a more intuitive interface, improved tools, and streamlined building mechanics promise to make it an engaging, creativity-encouraging place for fans of all skill levels.

On top of brimming with DIY possibilities, the new Toy Box will host more dedicated gaming experiences via new Toy Box Game Discs, the first couple of which will include Marvel-themed tower-defense and dungeon-crawling entries that can be enjoyed in quick-burst play sessions. New Power Discs will also allow players to summon AI teammates—like Iron Patriot—and don their superheroes' alter egos in alternate costumes. Toss in new character-progressing skill trees and the ability to use the first game's characters in the next chapter's Toy Box, and *Disney Infinity 2.0* is shaping up to be a magical mashup of pixie dust and superpowers.

Whether you're a Disney diehard or seasoned Skylander, both franchises' new characters, fresh features, and fan-pleasing appeal promise to keep you playing in the months and years to come—and collecting—until the next batch of toys is ready to spring to life in your videogames.

MORE THAN MARVEL

Despite its name and comic-book cast, *Disney Infinity: Marvel Super Heroes* isn't aimed solely at armchair Avengers. While you won't see any pretty princesses or playful pirates getting up to mischief in Marvel's Manhattan, the series will continue supporting content that'll appeal to the mouse ears–wearing masses. In addition to all previous *Disney Infinity* characters being forward-compatible in Toy Box mode, new fairytale favorites—including Maleficent and Merida—are on the way. We can't wait to pit Hawkeye and Brave's crimson-haired heroine against each other in an archery competition!

SKYLANDERS: TRAP TEAM

- **PUBLISHER** ACTIVISION
- **DEVELOPER** TOYS FOR BOB
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, WII U, 360, PS3, WII, 3DS
- **RELEASE DATE** 10.05.2014

DISNEY INFINITY: MARVEL SUPER HEROES

- **PUBLISHER** DISNEY INTERACTIVE
- **DEVELOPER** AVALANCHE SOFTWARE
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, WII U, 360, PS3, VITA, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 09.23.2014



- **PUBLISHER** WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
- **DEVELOPER** MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS
- **PLATFORM** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 10.07.2014

MIDDLE-EARTH: SHADOW OF MORDOR

RETURN OF THE WITCH-KING

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BY ANDREW FITCH

Middle-earth. Few fantasy locales conjure the feelings and emotions seen in the land of Hobbits, Elves, Ents, and Witch-kings. But why haven't we yet seen an open-world action-RPG that truly captures the essence of J.R.R. Tolkien's timeless universe? Developer Monolith Production hopes to change that perception with *Middle-earth: Shadow of Mordor*, and they've tapped Christian Cantamessa, who served as a writer and lead designer on Rockstar's *Red Dead Redemption*, in order to craft a narrative worthy of the setting.

"I think the story that Christian's written is really strong," says director of design Mike De Plater. "I think that's going to be a real hook. It's a very, very strong story in its own right, but I think it also has very interesting connections to the lore and to Middle-earth. For fans or non-fans, I think it'll be really enjoyable."

In a bit of a change for a game set in Middle-earth, you'll play as Talion, a Wraith-possessed Ranger who wants nothing more than to exact justice after tragedy befalls his world. And as you navigate your way through his quest for vengeance, a secondary narrative will play out via your encounters with Mordor's considerable cadre of evildoers. For example, if you happen to burn an Orc commander's face and he escapes to fight another day, he'll remember the encounter the next time you meet—with a sizable grudge of his own.

Of course, while it's fun to flambé Orcs, the big draw for many players will be going toe-to-toe with Sauron in this tale, which takes place in between the *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* stories in the Middle-earth timeline.

"Sauron's a really fascinating character, because he's the central villain, but we don't actually get to see a lot of him in *The Lord of the Rings*," De Plater says. "We only see this sort of end state. How did he become like that? So, seeing Sauron's moment of return and being able to explore him as a character and investigate that, it's really compelling."





WATCH_DOGS

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When *Watch_Dogs* was unveiled at E3 2012, Ubisoft promised a radically different gameplay experience that would define the next generation of consoles. After two years of waiting and an unexpected last-minute delay, it's finally out, and those claims seem a bit overzealous.

That's not to say that *Watch_Dogs* is a bad game. When it comes to hitting the most important beats of open-world action—driving, gunplay, and a sense of sandbox freedom—Ubisoft Montreal has succeeded. All these features feel as fluid and comfortable as they do in much more established franchises, but a grasp of the fundamentals is only ever just the start. A great game needs something extra to push it above mere competence. *Watch_Dogs* has no such spark. Its virtual Chicago is bland and forgettable, the plot and characters are uninteresting, and apart from a few cleverly designed campaign missions, there aren't enough memorable moments to keep you invested in the world.

What should have differentiated *Watch_Dogs* was protagonist Aiden Pearce's ability to hack into the city's infrastructure to distract, attack, and surveil enemies. It's a strong idea that struggles to find footing in the execution, with most of the interactions feeling like reskins of familiar abilities from other games.

In the end, the closest thing the game has to a saving grace is the online component, which takes a page from *Dark Souls*' book by allowing players to invade each other's game sessions and attempt to hack their phones without being spotted. It's a tense, innovative twist on the concept, but it's slight enough in scale and too disconnected from the core game to become anything more than an occasionally enjoyable distraction.

WHEN IT COMES TO HITTING THE MOST IMPORTANT BEATS OF OPEN-WORLD ACTION, UBISOFT MONTREAL HAS SUCCEEDED.

rating **72%**

- **PUBLISHER** UBISOFT
- **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT MONTREAL
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 05.27.2014





GAME OF THE MONTH





MARIO KART 8

There's something about the *Mario Kart* series that makes you feel like a kid again, even if you were already an adult when the first installment hit on the Super NES. It's the combination of whimsical stages and extremely competitive racing—and it doesn't hurt that Nintendo always comes up with something new to keep the action fresh. In *Mario Kart 8*, it's the addition of antigravity racing—the chance to speed along walls and ceilings while seeing your competitors on the track below you. The ability to race through the air and under the water continues from the 3DS installment and makes *MK8* the most diverse kart racer yet. The Wii U's high-definition graphics don't hurt, either, since the characters and tracks both look better than ever. Potent power-ups and a great mix of new and classic courses round out this high-octane racer—it's a must-play for anyone with a Wii U.

NINTENDO ALWAYS COMES UP WITH SOMETHING NEW TO KEEP THE ACTION FRESH...

rating
92%
GOLD

- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
- **PLATFORM** WII U
- **RELEASE DATE** 06.30.2014





EA SPORTS UFC

EA Canada's first rumble with the UFC may not have all the bells and whistles of seen in previous games featuring the MMA promotion, but the game does offer a stellar control scheme that'll make it far easier for fans of the sport to get into this digital representation of mixed martial arts. Stressing the importance of balanced fighting—standing up, in the clinch, or on the ground—is a hallmark of this game, and it finally gives the feeling of what it's really like to be in the Octagon. While you can win the occasional fight by trading blows like a boxer or going straight for the submission like a wrestler, only players who utilize all available skills will succeed, much like real UFC fighters. And speaking of submissions, it's never been easier to lock one in and make your opponent tap. There's nothing more satisfying than knowing you made your adversary cry uncle, and these elements help top off the most complete UFC gaming experience to date.

THERE'S NOTHING MORE SATISFYING THAN KNOWING YOU MADE YOUR ADVERSARY CRY UNCLE...

rating
88%
SILVER

- **PUBLISHER** EA SPORTS
- **DEVELOPER** EA CANADA
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4
- **RELEASE DATE** 06.17.2014

TOMODACHI LIFE

Nintendo has long had a history of releasing some truly unusual games, many of which never ended up seeing release outside of Japan. However, the company decided to take a chance on their quirky 3DS life simulator *Tomodachi Life*, and the experience is as bizarre as it is compelling. Players import or create Miis of anyone they choose—friends, family, famous celebrities, whomever—and then watch as those Miis have a wide variety of adventures during the course of their daily lives.

Indeed, watching will be one of your major activities in *Tomodachi Life*. Unlike games such as *Animal Crossing*, you're never directly in control of any particular character here—you'll simply be interacting with them at various times to do things such as feed them, outfit them in a new wardrobe, or give them a little advice on their future. Because of this, some players may find life on *Tomodachi Life*'s island to be a little dull. For those who do enjoy it, though, there's loads of humor and charm to be found here.





rating
73%

- **PUBLISHER** NINTENDO
- **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO
- **PLATFORM** 3DS
- **RELEASE DATE** 06.06.2014

WOLFENSTEIN: THE NEW ORDER

Wolfenstein: The New Order may seem like your standard first-person shooter, but there's a lot more depth beneath the surface. Although the story can be a bit disjointed at times, the narrative—surprisingly—is one of the game's high points. The plot spins a powerful tale of a man lost in time, the result of series protagonist B.J. Blazkowicz waking up from a 14-year coma at the start. Even when the story starts to come apart at some points, though, strong level design and standout gameplay—highlighted by the ability to dual-wield every weapon—combine to pick up the slack. The game also offers strong replayability, considering the countless collectibles spread out over the 16 levels and several special modes. In essence, you can beat the campaign a half dozen times and have it play out differently with each playthrough. All told, *The New Order* marks a triumphant return for one of gaming's most celebrated franchises.





THERE'S A LOT MORE DEPTH BENEATH THE SURFACE...

rating
86%
SILVER

- **PUBLISHER** BETHESDA SOFTWORKS
- **DEVELOPER** MACHINEGAMES
- **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, 360, PS3, PC
- **RELEASE DATE** 05.20.2014

NINTENDO 3DS™
PLAYER'S GUIDE PACK

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MARIO KART 7

WUHU LOOP



FLOWER CUP

Drift, jump, and boost your way through Wuhu Loop! The track provides the fastest route, but alternate paths put your glider to good use. Unlike most events, this race takes place over one long lap. The course is divided into three sections, so use the Touch Screen to monitor your progress. If you're not in the lead by the time you reach section 3, it's time to pick up the pace!

THE KART OF CHAMPIONS

- **Character: Peach**
- **Kart: Pipe Frame**
- **Tires: Slick**
- **Glider: Peach Parasol**
- **Expert Time: 1:28.157**

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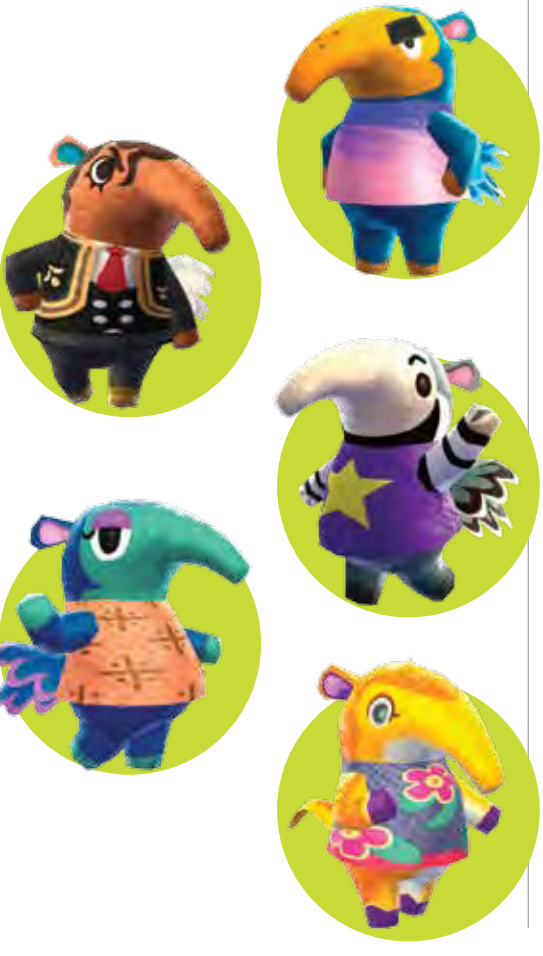
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NEIGHBORS

More than 300 different animal neighbors can move into your town. Not all at once, of course—that would be silly! The following tables reveal important information about each potential neighbor, and you'll find this information quite helpful on various occasions.



ANTEATERS

ANTEATER NEIGHBORS

NAME	CATCH PHRASE	BIRTH DAY	SIGN	SKILL	FUTURE GOAL	FAV. COFFEE	FAV. STYLE	FAV. SONG
Anabelle	"Snorty"	2/16	Aquarius	Jumping rope	Judge	4-B	Cute	Aloha K.K.
Annalisa	"Gumdrop"	2/6	Aquarius	Waking up early	Astronaut	3-A	Iconic	King K.K.
Antonio	"Honk"	10/20	Libra	Playing horseshoes	Baseball player	5-B	Basic	K.K. Faire
Cyrano	"Ah-CHOO"	3/9	Pisces	Whistling	Journalist	6-B	Iconic	K.K. Faire
Olaf	"Whiffa"	5/19	Taurus	Dancing	Dancer	8-A	Official	K.K. Milonga
Pango	"Snoooooof"	11/9	Scorpio	Tongue twisters	Esthetician	4-B	Modern	K.K. Casbah

BEARS

BEAR NEIGHBORS

NAME	CATCH PHRASE	BIRTH DAY	SIGN	SKILL	FUTURE GOAL	FAV. COFFEE	FAV. STYLE	FAV. SONG
Beardo	"Whiskers"	9/27	Libra	Memorizing stuff	Professor	8-A	Official	K.K. Sonata
Charlise	"Urgh"	4/17	Aries	Hitting snooze	Archae-ologist	1-B	Sporty	Mr. K.K.
Chow	"Aiya"	7/22	Cancer	Trivia	Chef	6-B	Flashy	K.K. Steppe
Curt	"Fuzzball"	7/1	Cancer	Whistling	Carpenter	6-A	Iconic	K.K. Lament
Grizzly	"Grrr..."	7/31	Leo	Brainteasers	Photog-rapher	6-B	Basic	K.K. Dirge
Groucho	"Grumble"	10/23	Libra	Competitive eating	Pro wrestler	4-B	Historical	K.K. Lullaby
Klaus	"Strudel"	3/31	Aries	Debating	Politician	8-A	Historical	K.K. Milonga
Nate	"Yawwwn"	8/16	Leo	Playing horseshoes	Sumo wrestler	6-A	Basic	K.K. Lullaby
Paula	"Yodelay"	3/22	Aries	Baton twirling	Volleyball player	1-B	Flashy	K.K. Dixie
Pinky	"Wah"	9/9	Virgo	Hula dancing	Cartoonist	4-B	Cute	Imperial K.K.
Teddy	"Grooof"	9/26	Libra	Playing old maid	Police officer	5-B	Basic	Mr. K.K.
Tutu	"Twinkles"	9/15	Virgo	Typing	Teacher	4-B	Cute	K.K. Steppe

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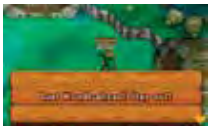
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LOST WOODS REGION

The Lost Woods region lies in Hyrule's northwest corner. It includes the Lost Woods itself, along with the few inhabitants of Hyrule brave enough to live so close to the mysterious forest—this includes the Fortune-Teller, who lives in the tent to the south, and Rosso, the ore miner, who lives in a cabin up north. The Lost Woods itself lies to the west, and features three paths leading into its entry area. Link can explore much of the Lost Woods' entry area early in the adventure, but he can only venture deeper into the Lost Woods after obtaining all three Pendants of Virtue.

SPECIAL ITEMS (LOST WOODS REGION)

Got It?	Item	Notes
✓	Bell	Given to Link by Irene shortly after you clear the Eastern Palace. Use it to summon Irene and fly to any active weather vane (save point).
✓	Hint Glasses	Given to Link by the Fortune-Teller during their first meeting. Wear them to speak with Hint Ghosts that reveal secrets in exchange for Play Coins.
✓	Master Sword	A legendary blade that's kept deep within the Lost Woods. Link can only obtain it after he finds all three Pendants of Virtue.
✓	Power Glove	Given by Rosso, the ore miner, when you speak to him after clearing the Eastern Palace.

CHESTS (LOST WOODS REGION)

Got It?	Chest (Contents)	Notes
✓	Hyrule Chest #9 (Purple Rupee)	Given to Link by Rosso after you pick up and throw all of the small rocks around his house.
✓	Hyrule Chest #13 (Red Rupee)	Inside a cave that's blocked by a peg behind Rosso's house (the hammer is required).
✓	Hyrule Chest #28 (Red Rupee)	In the Lost Woods' entry area, beyond a large rock that requires the Titan's Mitt to lift.

PIECES OF HEART (LOST WOODS REGION)

Got It?	Piece of Heart	Notes
✓	Piece of Heart #5	Beyond a thin gap between the walls just south of a log (merge through the thin gap to reach it).

LOST MAIAMAIS (LOST WOODS REGION)

Got It?	Maiamai	Notes
✓	Lost Maiamai #9	Stuck to the cliff just south of Rosso's place (the ore miner).
✓	Lost Maiamai #10	Under a small rock in the Lost Woods' entry area.
✓	Lost Maiamai #11	In a bush in the Lost Woods' entry area.
✓	Lost Maiamai #12	Visible in a tree in the Lost Woods' entry area (dash with the Pegasus Boots to knock it down).
✓	Lost Maiamai #13	Under a small rock in the passage north of Kakariko Village that leads into the Lost Woods. (The hammer is required to pound down pegs and reach it.)
✓	Lost Maiamai #16	Stuck to the side of the Fortune-Teller's tent.
✓	Lost Maiamai #89	Stuck to the side of the cliff above the entrance to Death Mountain. To reach it, you must lift the large rock within Death Mountain's entry passage with the Titan's Mitt.

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POKÉMON X & POKÉMON Y:

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UNKNOWN DUNGEON

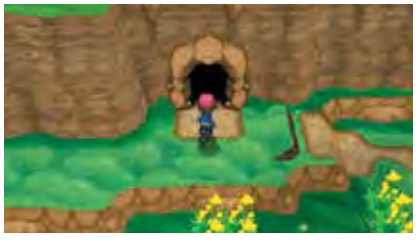
Return to the Pokémon Village and you'll have access at last to the Unknown Dungeon. Within it you will find a very rare and very powerful Pokémon: Mewtwo, a species of Pokémon that was artificially created through cloning.

CATCHING MEWTWO

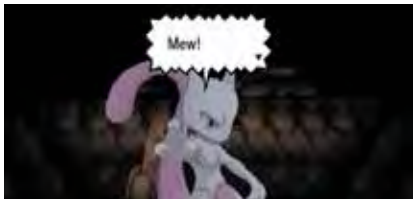
Field Moves Needed: Surf



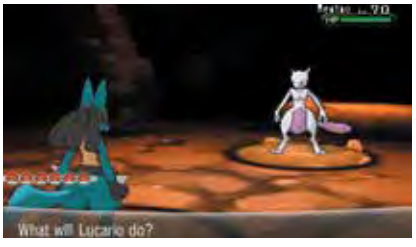
This Legendary Pokémon resides in the Pokémon Village in a cave called the Unknown Dungeon. Use the Surf field move to cross the Pokémon Village's west river and reach the cave.



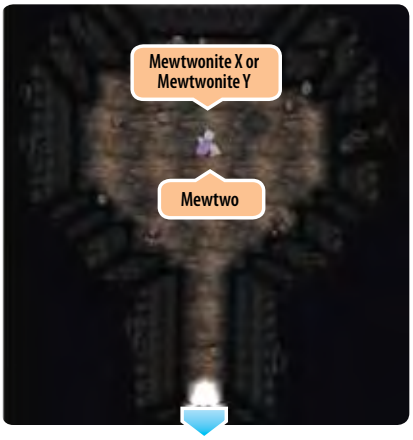
A man may have blocked your way if you tried to enter the Unknown Dungeon before taking on the Pokémon League, but return to the Pokémon Village after entering the Hall of Fame and the man will be gone, allowing you access to the cave.



A towering Pokémon stands in the Unknown Dungeon. It's Mewtwo! Prepare your party and save your game before approaching this Legendary Pokémon.



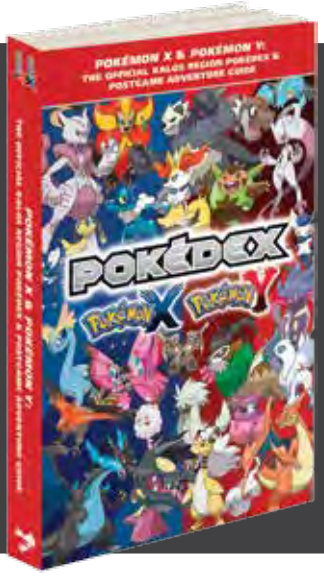
Mewtwo is challenging to catch due to its strong defensive moves. It will use Barrier to increase its Defense, and Recover to restore its lost HP. Settle in for a long battle, make use of status conditions, and try using a Timer Ball to catch Mewtwo after several turns have passed. You can buy Timer Balls at the Poké Marts in Coumarine City and Snowbelle City. If you catch Mewtwo, you'll get a Mewtwonite X or Mewtwonite Y, depending on which game you're playing.



Entrance



AVAILABLE NOW





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ONE ON ONE WITH

SHINJI MIKAMI

GAME DIRECTOR, THE EVIL WITHIN

When you think of the survival-horror genre in videogames, one of the first franchises that comes to mind is *Resident Evil*. Well, the father of that series has a new project called *The Evil Within* that's getting ready to drop, and this game looks to take everything Shinji Mikami learned in Raccoon City and turn it on its head on new-gen consoles.



WGC: What did you most want to express in *The Evil Within*, and what inspired the game?
Shinji Mikami: I wanted to go back to the origins of survival-horror, so this is not set in the real world. It's a surreal world, an imaginary world, a psychological world. So, there are a lot of strange things happening, and I want players to enjoy that.

WGC: In the best survival-horror games, you get scared as a player, but you want to keep pushing forward and keep playing them. What do you think makes us want to keep playing games that scare us, and are you ever scared of players not wanting to play anymore if things get *too* scary?
SM: When I first made survival-horror games, I was worried about that, but not anymore. There's a Japanese phrase that roughly translates to "You always want to see something scary," so I think people generally want to see those scary things to feel the risk of losing their own life and learn how to avoid that. It's part of human nature.

WGC: How do you go about making a horror game? Is it from your own personal experiences? Do you poll your team and find what makes you afraid as a collective?
SM: Firstly, you have to be scared. You have to put something in there that's going to make you scared. To simplify: A narrow, dark area is scary. Asylums are scary. A school at night is scary. So, you try to mix up all those different things to create a world. The next thing is the creatures or characters that live in that world; those characters have to be scary, so how you design those characters is going to be important. Then you add the sound effects and soundtrack, all around ambient audio, so you add something not from your eyes, but from your ears.

Then you try to play that entire experience with a controller, and then you tweak the overall balance of it. I created the scary environment first. Then, within that environment, I put the action and exploration, and then I decided where to put the puzzles. Then it's trial-and-error after that. I see how players feel about how things are laid out and then tweak it a lot. The balance of the survival-horror. The fear and horror elements and then having to overcome this fear by fighting and going directly against those creatures and getting a sense of achievement out of it. So, there's the survival and the horror, and the fine balance this game delivers between the two is what I'm most proud of.

WGC: *The Evil Within* seems to be getting into more psychological horror than you've dealt with before. What made you want to go in this direction with your game, and what differences are there between physical and psychological horror?
SM: It's easier to express the physical horror, because it's an interactive game, and you use the controller. In addition to that, because of the story of this game, I'm just adding the psychological horror to it. I wanted to do psychological horror, just because I hadn't done it before. The *Resident Evil* series was grounded in the real world, so I wanted to do something different where it could be a real world, it could be a surreal, not-real world mixed up, but anything could happen in that world, and I wanted to try that.

WGC: If you were put into the world of *The Evil Within*, do you think you'd survive?
SM: I'd probably hide and never come out! [*Laughs*]

> *I WANTED TO GO BACK TO THE ORIGINS OF SURVIVAL-HORROR, SO THIS IS NOT SET IN THE REAL WORLD.*

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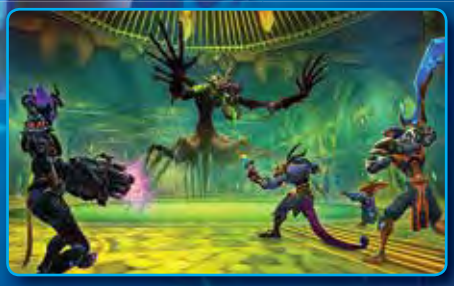
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