PREVIEW
TEAM SONIC RACING

PREVIEW
TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION 2

REVIEW
SUPER SMASH BROS. ULTIMATE

INTERVIEW
ACE COMBAT 7

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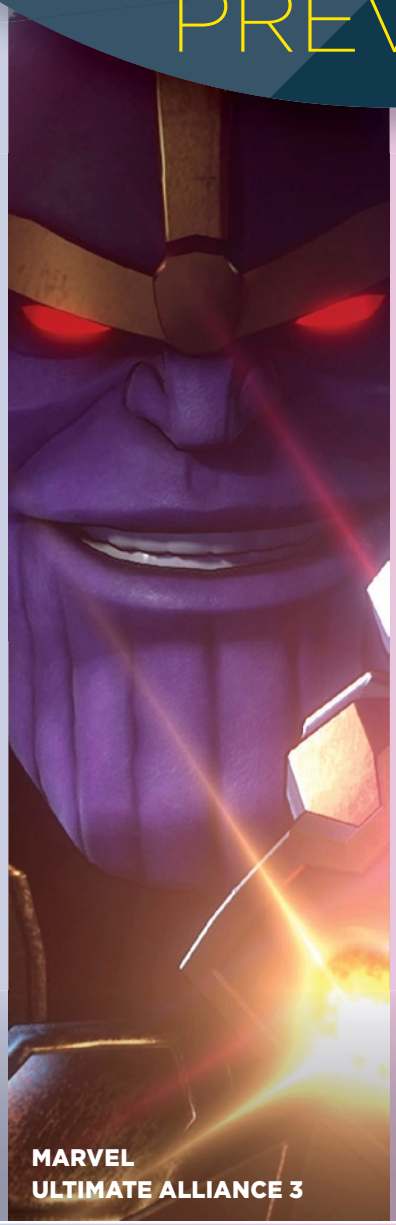
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ISSUE 62

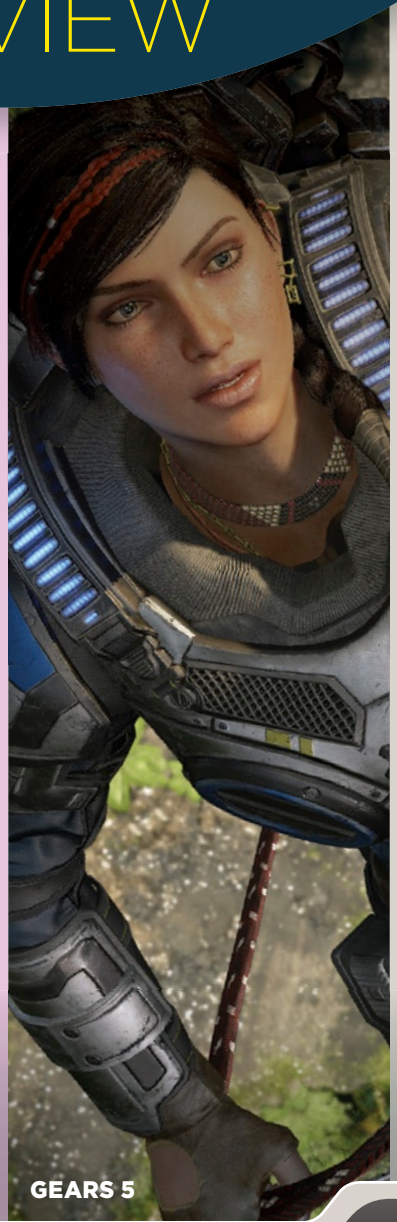
2019 PREVIEW



THE LAST OF US PART II



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GEARS 5



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Walmart Gamecenter

CONTENTS

ISSUE 62



COVER STORY

THE BEST GAMES OF 2018 24

In a year of truly spectacular games, find out what stood out enough to earn honors from the *Walmart Gamecenter* experts.

COVER STORY

2019 PREVIEW 30

Gaming isn't slowing down this year, with plenty of hotly anticipated titles on the way in the months to come. Get a crash course in 2019's biggest games.

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Intense Violence
Strong Language
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CONTENTS



PREVIEW
TEAM SONIC RACING 36
When Sonic the Hedgehog and his friends take to the track for racing action, there's only one thing to do: Gotta go fast!

SECTIONS

EDITORIAL 08
GAME ON 10
5 TO PLAY 14
PARTING SHOTS 50

PREVIEW
TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION 2 40

PREVIEW
SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE 44

PREVIEW
DAYS GONE 46



REVIEW
SUPER SMASH BROS. ULTIMATE 48

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DEEP SILVER

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Blood and Gore
Intense Violence
Partial Nudity
Sexual Themes
Strong Language
Use of Drugs

*While Supplies Last. Metro 2033 Redux Exclusive to Xbox One & Dynamic Theme Exclusive to PlayStation 4. Code will be packed with your game.

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WELCOME
FROM THE EDITORS



A tough act to follow

By the time you read this issue of *Walmart Gamecenter*, another year of gaming will have officially come to a close. And what a year it was. You've no doubt already played some of the amazing games that made 2018 so special, and you'll read about plenty more in our awards feature starting on page 24. The past 12 months truly felt like the culmination of an already-great console generation, with developers pushing the Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and Nintendo Switch to new heights.

That leads us to the obvious: Could 2019 possibly top it? It won't be easy, but there's reason to think this year could be just as impressive as the last. For starters, we already know for sure some great games are on the way, many of which are covered in the following pages. Read on and you'll find previews of *Tom Clancy's The Division 2*, *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice*, *Team Sonic Racing* and *Days Gone*. We also cover news of the recent *Far Cry New Dawn* and *Mortal Kombat 11* reveals.

Then, of course, there are the other great titles we round up in our special feature on all the 2019 games to look forward to. Beginning on page 30, we highlight games like Obsidian's recently revealed RPG *The Outer Worlds*, Sony's *MediEvil* remake, *Gears 5*, *Wolfenstein: Youngblood* and many more. But even *those* are just a small selection of 2019's exciting games—and that's not even counting the ones we don't already know about. Who knows what announcements are in store for the big conventions and expos?

Of course, we've also heard talk, official and otherwise, that the next generation of game consoles is rapidly approaching. Could this finally be the year that we get full reveals of the PlayStation 5 and Microsoft's next-gen Xbox, reportedly codenamed Scarlett?

And if we do learn about the future of gaming hardware, what will it look like? This generation has already redefined our expectations with the PlayStation 4 Pro and Xbox One X, adding power and new features while allowing us to keep our game libraries intact. Plus, the Nintendo Switch proved you don't need the beefiest hardware to make the next hit system. Throw in the rise of streaming and cloud-based gaming and the still-nascent world of virtual reality, and it's hard to imagine exactly what our favorite hobby will look like tomorrow.

There's no doubt 2019 will be another wild ride for fans of gaming, so buckle up and get ready for another year of surprises and delights. We'll be sure to bring them all to you, along with the expert analysis you've come to expect, right here in the pages of *Walmart Gamecenter*.

Josh Harmon and **Mollie L Patterson**
Editors

Walmart Gamecenter

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019

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BioWare™

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GAME ON

GAMING NEWS, NUMBERS & GOSSIP

BY GAMECENTER STAFF

Far Cry New Dawn creates the most colorful apocalypse

Far Cry fans got a treat last May with *Far Cry 5*, and now they won't have to wait long for a sequel. As Ubisoft unveiled at The Game Awards 2018, a brand-new game dubbed *Far Cry New Dawn* will be in stores before you know it.

Far Cry New Dawn picks up after the end of *Far Cry 5*. Seventeen years have passed since nuclear bombs fell on Hope County, and the world has started to pick itself back up and recover. While civilization is in shambles, this is no grimy, barren wasteland. In the nuclear fallout, much of the landscape turned to desert before undergoing a super bloom, causing the world to blossom with a bright mutated rainbow of flora and fauna.

You'll play as a newcomer to Hope County, one of a number of survivors hoping to fix up a new haven called Prosperity. Scavenging in a post-apocalyptic landscape is difficult enough, but surviving is made even harder by the presence of the Highwaymen. This rough rival gang, led by deadly twin sisters Mickey and Lou, establishes its own rule of force. They revel in lawlessness and living in the moment—especially if that means taking what your settlement has built.



In addition to wresting control back from the Highwaymen's local camps, players will be able to embark on special Expedition missions. These missions, meant to be played with a friend or an AI companion, send the player outside Hope County to farther-flung enemy bases around the world, offering a glimpse of how the nuclear fallout has affected other areas. Players will need to fight or sneak in, grab some loot, and hightail it out without dying.

Toward this end, *Far Cry New Dawn* offers players a signature new weapon, the Saw Launcher. This cobbled-together motorized crossbow launches saw blades at enemies, and it's the perfect weapon for infiltrating the Highwaymen and their fighting pits. As befits a world beginning to rebuild from the apocalypse, scavenging for parts and constructing something new from the ruins plays a major theme.

Far Cry New Dawn launches on Feb. 15 for Xbox One, PlayStation 4 and PC. Be sure to secure your copy on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store today.

BY THE NUMBERS

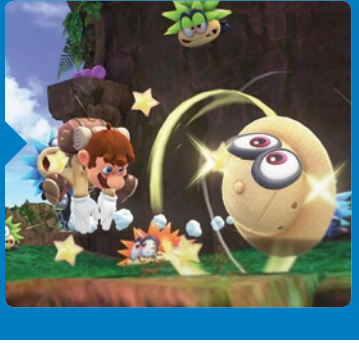
100 Number of times Charles Martinet has voiced Mario, earning him a Guinness World Record

1.4 Final *Stardew Valley* version creator Eric Barone is working on solo before his new dev team joins him

250 vs. 250 Number of players for one of the modes in Daybreak Games' new release *PlanetSide Arena*

Over 50 Percentage of U.S. Switch owners, according to Nintendo, who own *Super Mario Odyssey*, *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe* and/or *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*

20 Number of teams competing in *Overwatch* League's 2019 season



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Purchase your digital download card at the register...



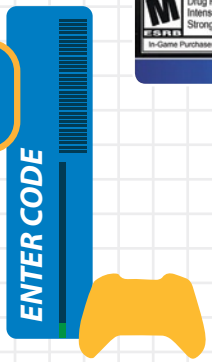
3. Keep

Keep your receipt and locate the download code printed at the bottom...



4. Redeem

Redeem the code printed on your receipt in your game console to download (when available) and then Play First without returning to the store!











Crash Team Racing Nitro-Fueled races onto the track

Crash Bandicoot is back, and it's looking like he has no plans to go away anytime soon. After the *Crash Bandicoot N. Sane Trilogy* brought the crazy orange marsupial's adventures onto modern consoles, fans suspected that another favorite *Crash* game would be next. That guess proved correct with the recent reveal of *Crash Team Racing Nitro-Fueled*.





Nitro-Fueled is a remaster of *Crash Team Racing*, a popular kart-racing game that first appeared on the original PlayStation back in 1999. Players can control different characters from the *Crash Bandicoot* universe, smashing through fruit crates, grabbing Wumpa Fruit for speed boosts, and powersliding around corners.

In the *Nitro-Fueled* remaster, players will see the same iconic tracks, karts and characters, but with vastly improved graphics. More importantly, the game now includes online play, letting players race with friends who aren't in the same room and prove their racing skills to the world.

Crash Team Racing Nitro-Fueled is set to race onto shelves on June 21, 2019. Preorder your copy for Xbox One, PlayStation 4 or Nintendo Switch today on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.

Walmart

RELEASE CALENDAR

All the great new games on the way to Walmart and Walmart.com

KINGDOM HEARTS III	SQUARE ENIX / XBOX ONE, PS4	jan 29
YO-KAI WATCH 3	NINTENDO / 3DS	feb 8
CRACKDOWN 3	MICROSOFT / XBOX ONE, PC	15
FAR CRY NEW DAWN	UBISOFT / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC	15
JUMP FORCE	BANDAI NAMCO / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC	15
METRO EXODUS	DEEP SILVER / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC	15
ANTHEM	EA / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC	22
TRIALS RISING	UBISOFT / XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH, PC	26
DEAD OR ALIVE 6	KOEI TECMO / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC	mar 1
DEVIL MAY CRY 5	CAPCOM / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC	8
KIRBY'S EXTRA EPIC YARN	NINTENDO / 3DS	8
TOM CLANCY'S THE DIVISION 2	UBISOFT / XBOX ONE, PS4, PC	15

Trademarks hint at future games

While there are many games that we know are coming in 2019, there are a few we can only speculate about. Thanks to some copyright listings, we've gotten a few clues about new games we suspect are currently in development, though the developers have yet to confirm anything.



First up is something related to *Parasite Eve*, the action role-playing series that first debuted on the original PlayStation in 1998. The last time we saw Aya Brea was in 2008, when *The 3rd Birthday* arrived on PlayStation Portable. Now, though, Square Enix has filed for a *Parasite Eve* trademark in Europe, which may be a hint that we'll see some new content from that series soon.



Next is 20th Century Fox, which has filed a trademark application for *Avatar: Pandora Rising*, a game that presumably ties into the upcoming *Avatar* movie sequels. The details aren't known, but Massive Entertainment has stated that work on a "cutting-edge" new game based on that universe is in the works.

Finally, Konami was issued a trademark for *Metal Gear* in Europe, perhaps hinting at a remake of the original games.



Mortal Kombat 11 adds a more personal touch to the series

The *Mortal Kombat* series is set to make a major return with the reveal of *Mortal Kombat 11*. The latest entry in the long-running fighting game series was recently unveiled, and it promises to be the most brutal one yet.

The roster is one of the most important parts of any fighting game. While we don't know much about who will appear to round out the ranks, three warriors are confirmed so far. Series mainstay Raiden is back, sporting red lightning instead of his usual blue, which may hint at a darker turn for him. He dukes it out with Scorpion, another iconic series figure, perhaps proving that the events at the end of *Mortal Kombat X* when (spoilers!) Raiden became corrupted are still influencing his actions.

The third confirmed character, Shao Khan, will be unlocked as a preorder bonus. Preordering *Mortal Kombat 11* also grants players access to the beta, which will take place in March 2019 for PlayStation 4 and Xbox One. This beta will give fans a chance to test out the game before it launches in full.

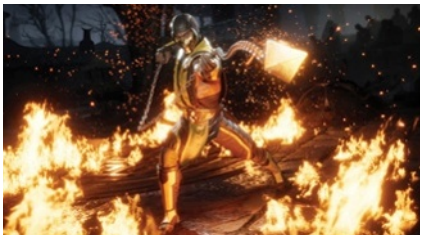
Whatever characters appear, though, it seems that fans will have more choice than ever in deciding how to play. The game boasts an expanded Custom Character Variation System, which sounds suspiciously similar to the one NetherRealm Studios used for *Injustice 2*.

"By giving players more creative control, *Mortal Kombat 11* is a testament to why this iconic franchise is so strong and increasingly relevant after more than 25 years," said Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment president David Haddad. "This game showcases NetherRealm Studios' extensive talent to innovate and create epic experiences for the *Mortal Kombat* fans and new players alike."

Creative director Ed Boon had similarly positive notes, citing the game's "infinite amount of options" for personalization as a huge new draw to the series. He promised fans that more information would be unveiled in January and beyond.

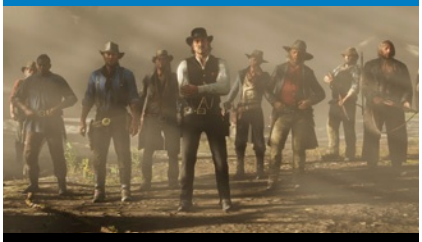
Mortal Kombat 11 releases on April 23 for Xbox One, PlayStation 4, Nintendo Switch and PC. Preorder your copy now on Walmart.com or at your local Walmart store.



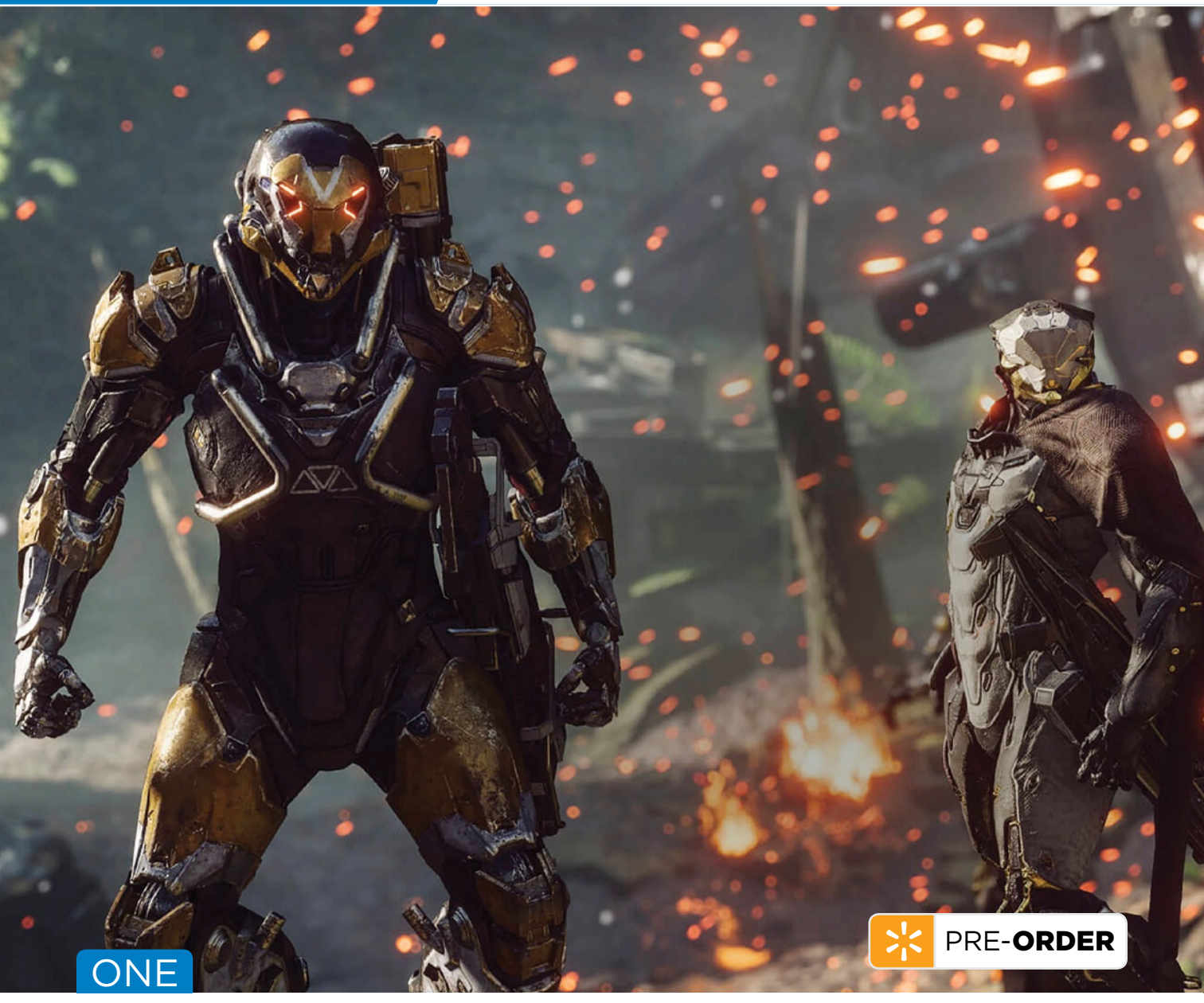


Walmart's TOP SELLERS

THIS MONTH'S TOP-SELLING VIDEO GAMES ...



01	**RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2**	ROCKSTAR XBOX ONE, PS4
02	**SUPER SMASH BROS. ULTIMATE**	NINTENDO SWITCH
03	**CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS 4**	ACTIVISION XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
04	**MADDEN NFL 19**	EA SPORTS XBOX ONE, PS4
05	**POKÉMON: LET'S GO, PIKACHU and POKÉMON: LET'S GO, EEVEE**	NINTENDO SWITCH
06	**NBA 2K19**	2K XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH
07	**SUPER MARIO PARTY**	NINTENDO SWITCH
08	**MARIO KART 8 DELUXE**	NINTENDO SWITCH
09	**FORTNITE: DEEP FREEZE BUNDLE**	WARNER BROS. XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH
10	**MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN**	SONY PS4



ONE

ANTHEM

MIKE GAMBLE, LEAD PRODUCER, BIOWARE

"In *Anthem*, you take on the role of a Freelancer, someone who can pilot powered suits of armor called Javelins, and use them to protect humanity. The world of *Anthem* was abandoned halfway through its creation by its gods, called the Shapers, and now it's a hugely chaotic place with monsters that tower over normal humans, warlike factions trying to harness the powers of the Shapers for their own nefarious means, and other scary things. Though you can play it by yourself, *Anthem* is an action role-playing game that's best experienced with other players cooperatively. We have four different Javelins, each with their own strengths, as well as multiple loadouts and tons of customization. Iron Man and other comics and superheroes were definitely inspirations, but you'll also see elements of such grand adventures as *Lord of the Rings* and the great space operas. It's really our attempt to create something that feels superheroic and iconic."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS
DEVELOPER BIOWARE
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 02.22.2019

PLAY ANY TIME ANY WHERE















Games Shown:

EVERYONE 10+ E 10+ ESRB

Games, systems and some accessories sold separately.

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Nintendo



TWO

RESIDENT EVIL 2

TSUYOSHI KANDA, PRODUCER, CAPCOM

"This latest version of *Resident Evil 2* is built from the ground up with modern technology. Our main objective was to create a survival-horror experience with truly terrifying zombies who are both frightening and resilient. We switched the perspective to an over-the-shoulder camera view so that when you get bitten by a zombie, it's that much more immersive and personal. At the same time, it also gives the player more freedom and control of where they're looking and aiming. The narrative and puzzles have also been revamped. We shifted the order that events play out, and the puzzles have been modified somewhat so that there's a heightened level of believability that such contraptions would exist in reality. We're also very happy with the way the zombies came out. We felt people have started to become desensitized to how threatening they are, so extra care was taken in making sure each zombie is grotesque and terrifying."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER CAPCOM
DEVELOPER CAPCOM
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 01.25.2019

DEAD OR ALIVE® 6

I'm a Fighter







PS4 XBOX ONE STEAM®

MATURE 17+
M
ESRB
Blood
Language
Sexual Themes
Violence

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teamninja-studio.com/doa6/



THREE

YO-KAI WATCH 3

BILL TRINEN, TREEHOUSE, NINTENDO

PRE-ORDER

"*Yo-kai Watch 3* is a role-playing game, but it's different from other RPGs because it's about hundreds of sometimes cute, sometimes spooky, and usually mischievous Yo-kai that inhabit our world, causing such everyday problems as missing socks. There's more than 600 in this game, a record for this series, and each have their own characteristics that make them unique. In this installment, Nate has moved to a new town called St. Peanutsberg in the area of BBQ, and must adjust to his new life there while solving all the goofy problems caused by Yo-kai. But players can also switch to Hailey Anne, a new character, who has come upon a Yo-kai Watch of her own. The game also introduces a new battle system, lots of minigames and sidequests, and even a zombie invasion. *Yo-kai Watch 3* includes all of the Yo-kai in the *Sushi*, *Tempura* and *Sukiyaki* versions of the game."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER NINTENDO
DEVELOPER LEVEL-5
PLATFORMS 3DS
RELEASE DATE 02.08.2019


NINTENDO SWITCH
Nintendo
TRAVIS STRIKES AGAIN
NO MORE HEROES
PHYSICAL VERSION INCLUDES SEASON PASS
MATURE 17+
M
ESRB
Blood
Drug Reference
Partial Nudity
Strong Language
Violence
UNREAL ENGINE
GRASSHOPPER MANUFACTURE
Game and system sold separately.
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GOLDEN DRAGON
NINTENDO SWITCH
PLAY TOGETHER ANYTIME, ANYWHERE



PRE-ORDER

FOUR

KINGDOM HEARTS III

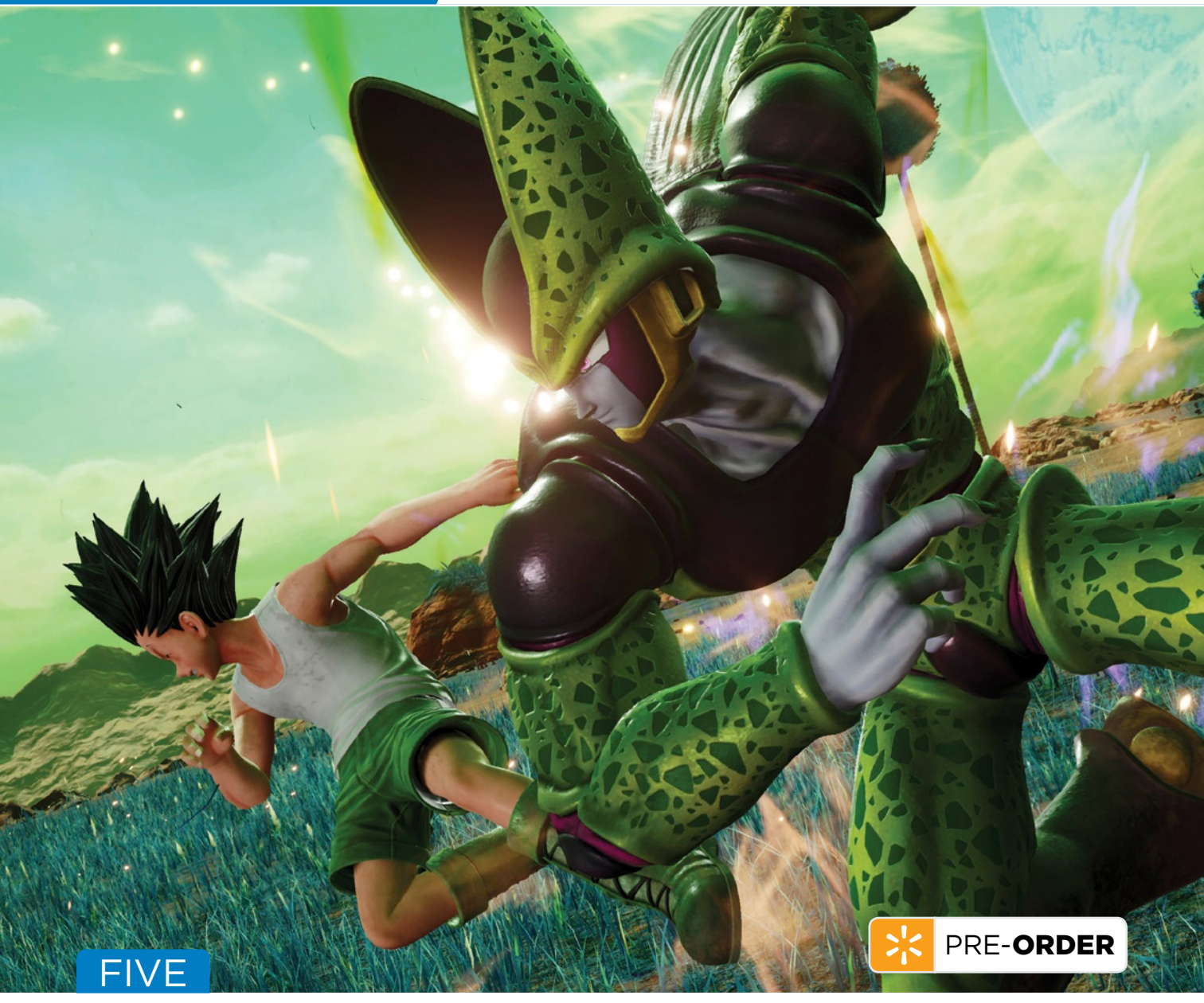
BRENDAN DOCHERTY, SENIOR PRODUCT MARKETING MANAGER, SQUARE ENIX

"In *Kingdom Hearts III*, fans that have followed this action role-playing game series since day one, and have fought the villainous Master Xehanort, can look forward to a fitting conclusion of the Dark Seeker Saga storyline. For the first time, fans will be able to journey to Pixar worlds, from *Toy Story* to *Monsters, Inc*. We've also added Attractions, which are special attacks inspired by rides and parades from the Disney parks. Imagine spinning the giant pastel teacups of the Mad Tea Party ride to tear through waves of Heartless, or summoning a massive, swinging pirate ship to take down your foes. Longtime fans will also appreciate that Sora can now carry up to three Keyblades at once, so you can always keep your favorite Keyblades equipped and ready for battle. The Keyblades also now undergo powerful transformations that give them additional powers and ways to defeat the Heartless."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX
DEVELOPER SQUARE ENIX
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4
RELEASE DATE 01.29.2019





FIVE

JUMP FORCE

STEPHEN AKANA, BRAND MANAGER, BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA INC.

"After the worlds where the *Shōnen Jump* manga characters live merge into our reality, and the villains begin a campaign of chaos and destruction, the heroes band together to establish the Jump Force, led by Goku [from *Dragon Ball*], Luffy [*One Piece*], and Naruto [*Naruto*], to restore peace. *Jump Force* is stylistically similar to such 3D-arena fighting games as those in the *Naruto Shippuden: Ultimate Ninja Storm* series, the *Dragon Ball Xenoverse* series and *My Hero One's Justice*. While specific actions are easy to understand, allowing players of any skill level to play as their favorite characters and use their signature moves, the combat system also has levels of strategy. Players can also create their own unique avatar in the story mode, mixing different characters' costumes and moves to, say, create a character with a hairstyle from *Yu-Gi-Oh!*, an outfit from *Dragon Ball Z*, accessories from *One Piece*, and a special attack from *Saint Seiya*."

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT AMERICA INC.
DEVELOPER SPIKE CHUNSOFT
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 02.15.2019

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* Not included in the Nintendo Switch Version. While Supplies last.

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MILESTONE

BEST GAMES OF 2018

We always look forward to our Game of the Year awards. However, this year we enjoyed so many fantastic playing experiences that we had difficulty choosing our winners. For every game mentioned here two, three or even five more just missed the cut. Consider them worthy of your time and attention, as they likely would have won honors in other years. To recognize as many great titles as possible, no game was eligible for more than one award. We tried to fit them in where we thought they most deserved acknowledgement. We hope you've enjoyed a number of these great games and will find a few more to try.

BY GAMECENTER STAFF

BEST SHOOTER

BATTLEFIELD V

PUBLISHER EA **DEVELOPER** DICE **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC **RELEASE DATE** 11.20.2018

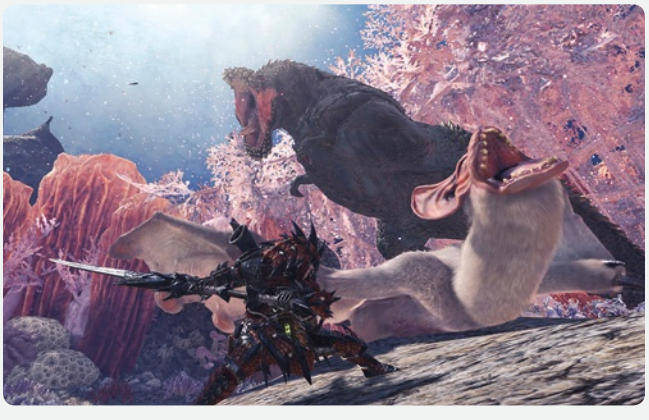


Battlefield V brought a return to the series' roots as a World War II shooter, combined with all the modern advances that have made the franchise one of the premier multiplayer shooter experiences. Gunplay feels physical and deadly, and running from cover to cover gets the blood and adrenaline pumping. Teamplay is more important than ever, especially with the new ability to revive squadmates regardless of class, and the ability to build cover with Fortifications gives players even more tools in the game's gigantic sandbox maps. *Battlefield V* still managed to capture the cinematic chaos that made previous entries so addictive, while crafting a more tactical, hardcore experience. But *Battlefield V* isn't just a multiplayer experience, and its single-player War Stories put all of the game's mechanics to good use while telling compelling, untold tales from lesser-known fronts. It's a great package that only promises to get better over the next couple of years.

BEST RPG

MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD

PUBLISHER CAPCOM **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC **RELEASE DATE** 01.26.2018



The biggest and most ambitious game in its series yet, *Monster Hunter: World* welcomes players to explore steaming jungles, coral forests, crystalline caves and more in pursuit of ever-larger monsters to slay. *Monster Hunter: World* takes some of the most important RPG pillars—character customization and progress—and builds the entire game around them. The beasts you encounter and—if you're prepared enough—kill, provide the feathers, venom and bones that go straight into building your next set of armor or weapon, making the game a constant challenge to improve and seek out even more deadly foes. *Monster Hunter: World* requires skill as well as gear, however, with hundreds of creative-but-deadly monsters, each with their own unique behaviors and attacks. With 14 different weapons to learn, an almost immeasurably huge number of quests to undertake, and a massive world brimming with life, *Monster Hunter: World* was the best RPG 2018 had to offer.

BEST SPORTS

FIFA 19

PUBLISHER EA SPORTS **DEVELOPER** EA VANCOUVER **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH, PC, 360, PS3 **RELEASE DATE** 09.28.2018

With its most recent entry, the *FIFA* series proved that it's the champion of sports games. While some series can get a little too comfortable with rehashing the same gameplay year after year, *FIFA* has consistently gone out of its way to deliver new and exciting mechanics that significantly affect the experience on the digital pitch. This year, *FIFA 19* dove headfirst into creating highlight-worthy gameplay, with a completely new moveset that empowers players and makes pulling off volleys easier than ever. The game matched the flashiness of football with appropriately entertaining game modes, not least of which is the third and most extensive chapter in *The Journey*, *FIFA*'s game-changing single-player story mode. But the real trophy is the UEFA Champions League, which brings all of the excitement of Europe's best football league to life. *FIFA 19* is the biggest and best yet in a storied franchise.



BEST RACING

FORZA HORIZON 4

PUBLISHER MICROSOFT STUDIOS **DEVELOPER** PLAYGROUND GAMES **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PC **RELEASE DATE** 10.02.2018

Playground Games always delivers excellent open-world racing with its *Forza Horizon* series, and *Forza Horizon 4* didn't break that winning streak. The impressive scope of previous entries remained intact, with deep customization, tons of event variety and so many cars to unlock the collection in your garage will make Jay Leno envious. Just as important are the racing physics, which are a happy compromise between sim authenticity and arcade accessibility, with assist options for racers of every skill level. The new elements proved every bit as impressive. Take the map, a reimagined slice of Great Britain that offers beautiful views. Thanks to the new seasons system, you get to experience four different versions of that open world, each with distinct vistas and weather conditions that change how races play out. Throw in more robust online play and you've got a strong step forward for an already-great franchise.



BEST FIGHTING

DRAGON BALL FIGHTERZ

PUBLISHER BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT **DEVELOPER** ARC SYSTEM WORKS **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH, PC **RELEASE DATE** 01.26.2018

There's perhaps no better anime series to turn into a fighting game than *Dragon Ball Z*. While the long-running show has been given the gaming treatment a few times over the years, Arc System Works and Bandai Namco's *Dragon Ball FighterZ* gave us the perfect melding of the series' high-octane action with addictive gameplay. Using an impressively large roster of fighters such as Goku, Cell and Android 17, players pick a team of three for tag-team fights filled with punches, kicks and energy blasts. Just like fans have seen on TV, players can even teleport behind their opponents to unleash a Super Dash or call in another fighter on the team to deliver a powerful blow. The gorgeous 2.5D, anime-style visuals amp up the experience, letting you feel like you're in control of your own episode of the show. In short, *Dragon Ball FighterZ* is the sort of Super Saiyan entry we'd been waiting for.



BEST ACTION/ADVENTURE

MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT **DEVELOPER** INSOMNIAC GAMES **PLATFORM** PS4 **RELEASE DATE** 09.07.2018



Spider-Man swung back into our lives looking better than ever, with a perfect balance between action and quirky one-liners. Many games this year could have clinched this spot, but *Marvel's Spider-Man* won out for a few reasons. Firstly, any great open-world action-adventure game needs an enjoyable method of getting around. *Spider-Man*'s web-swinging traversal system gave that to players in spades. The game's other great strength is in the combat, which is equal parts challenging and accessible. Players learn new moves over the course of the game, broadening their combat potential in tandem with their own personal expertise. Few games this year offered the sense of progression and mastery that *Spider-Man* gives players in both combat and environment traversal alike. The action is here, the adventure is here, and the successful execution of both made *Marvel's Spider-Man* the clear winner.

BEST FAMILY

NINTENDO LABO

PUBLISHER NINTENDO **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO **PLATFORM** SWITCH **RELEASE DATE** 04.20.2018



Even for a company known for years of innovation and unique gameplay ideas, *Nintendo Labo* still caught most by surprise. Because this time, instead of thinking outside the box, Nintendo literally gave us the box. We were a bit perplexed at the thought of crafting controllers and other contraptions out of cardboard and then pairing those creations with the Nintendo Switch. It turns out that the idea was indeed crazy—*crazy fun*. Nintendo figured out ways of mixing physical cardboard objects with the Switch's input options to come up with totally new interactive experiences. From hitting physical keys to play music on a virtual piano, to making a working steering wheel complete with gas pedal, to even wearing a contraption that lets you control a giant robot with your body movements, *Nintendo Labo* mixes entertainment and education in a way that only Nintendo could.

BEST REMAKE

SPYRO REIGNITED TRILOGY

PUBLISHER ACTIVISION **DEVELOPER** TOYS FOR BOB **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4 **RELEASE DATE** 11.13.2018



All games look better in our memories. Nostalgia plays a big part in influencing how an older game appears and feels in our minds, blurring the edges of clunky gameplay and 20-year-old graphics. The *Spyro Reignited Trilogy* managed to not just live up to the original trilogy as it is preserved in our memories but surpassed it. Spyro bounds through a gorgeous series of worlds, Sparx zipping along beside him, with gameplay so smooth you'll forget that the camera wasn't always tied to the right thumbstick. Small touches, like paintings on the wall of a dragon's home, bring the world to life, while practical improvements like the Guidebook make tracking all of the trilogy's collectibles a much more manageable task. And, most importantly of all, the *Reignited Trilogy* still feels like Spyro at heart. Bouncing through levels, grabbing gems and roasting sheep never gets old.

BEST CAMPAIGN

ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY

PUBLISHER UBISOFT **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT QUEBEC **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC **RELEASE DATE** 10.05.2018

No game in 2018 offered a more expansive, compelling narrative than *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*. Players stepped into the sandals of the Misthios, one of two siblings living in fifth-century Greece and lived out a thrilling story. To fulfill an ancient prophecy, the siblings are thrown off a mountain as children. Though the choice between Alexios and Kassandra doesn't affect the story, for the first time in an *Assassin's Creed* game, other choices do have an impact, as the series has firmly embraced role-playing sensibilities. This allows the narrative to flow organically across the enormous map, through missions, sidequests, stealth attacks and even ship-to-ship warfare. It all came together for the most sprawling adventure of the year. Ancient Greece is where the epic originated, and this game makes it easy to see why.



BEST MULTIPLAYER

CALL OF DUTY: BLACK OPS 4

PUBLISHER ACTIVISION **DEVELOPER** TREYARCH STUDIOS **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC **RELEASE DATE** 10.12.2018

Call of Duty: Black Ops 4 was the first *Call of Duty* to focus almost exclusively on the multiplayer experience, so it's appropriate that it's also won Best Multiplayer this year. Treyarch built three distinctly different modes in which players can socialize, whether it be competitively through the game's fast-paced multiplayer, cooperatively in its Zombies survival mode, or with a little of both in the series' first venture into battle royale, Blackout. While Blackout may be the hot new thing, the multiplayer and Zombies mode were not to be outdone. The multiplayer launched with no fewer than 14 unique maps, while Zombies mode sported four cooperative levels. This is more multiplayer launch-day content than any *Call of Duty* before it, and there is still more to come. Even for those who don't wish to throw down for the game's Black Ops Pass, free content updates will regularly add new stuff to enjoy, making sure the experience never slows down.



BEST VR

ASTRO BOT RESCUE MISSION

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT **DEVELOPER** SIE JAPAN STUDIO **PLATFORM** PSVR **RELEASE DATE** 10.02.2018

Who would have thought a platform game would have worked in VR, let alone be good enough to warrant a category award? The premise is simple enough: As a bot named Astro (see what they did there?) it's your job to roam the galaxy and rescue other bots. Through 20 levels of platform action you'll hop, jump and confront creative enemies, all while feeling immersed in the action. Combining tastefully implemented VR motion controls and use of the standard PlayStation DualShock makes movements precise in the 3D environment. Since good home VR became a reality, it's needed a killer app. While *Astro Bot Rescue Mission* isn't flawless, it's certainly a double-jump ahead of most other VR games on the market today when it comes to earning that title. PlayStation VR owners would do well to invite Astro into their living rooms.



BEST EXCLUSIVE
XBOX ONE

SEA OF THIEVES

PUBLISHER MICROSOFT STUDIOS **DEVELOPER** RARE **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PC **RELEASE DATE** 03.20.2018



Everyone's dreamed about being a pirate at one point or another. The freedom and danger of the open seas is a siren's call, and *Sea of Thieves* let us live out those fantasies in a new kind of multiplayer experience. Gathering your crew and setting off to unearth buried treasure and uncover the untold mysteries of the deep is an adventure unlike any in video games before, especially with other rival crews lurking on the horizon. But *Sea of Thieves* isn't just about digging up gold and crossing swords with fellow pirates. It's one of the most social games that's ever existed, with complete strangers regularly raising their cannons and banding together to defeat mythical beasts like the Kraken. It might not have the most in-depth story, but creating your own legends is half the fun, especially within *Sea of Thieves*' meticulously crafted world. Never has pirating looked better or been more fun.

BEST EXCLUSIVE
PS4

GOD OF WAR

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT **DEVELOPER** SANTA MONICA STUDIO **RELEASE DATE** 04.20.2018



Reinventing *God of War* couldn't have been an easy task. For more than a decade, the series had been inextricably linked to two things: the Greek mythology of its setting, and the one-dimensional rage of its leading Spartan, Kratos. Remarkably, though, Sony Santa Monica managed to make *God of War* relevant and vital once again, all without sacrificing any of the established canon. Bringing Kratos into the world of Norse mythology opens room for new surprises, while introducing a son, Atreus, turns our favorite angry boy into a mad dad struggling with his own flaws and the weight of fatherhood. By combining this new narrative with tighter, more varied gameplay and astonishing technical ambition, *God of War* delivered the most stunning showpiece for the PlayStation 4 in a year that had no shortage of competition.

BEST EXCLUSIVE
NINTENDO SWITCH

SUPER SMASH BROS. ULTIMATE

PUBLISHER NINTENDO **DEVELOPER** BANDAI NAMCO STUDIOS, SORA LTD. **RELEASE DATE** 12.07.2018



Nintendo's long-running tradition of throwing together a huge collection of iconic game characters into one brawler continued with *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate*. With the largest roster of fighters in series history, all the customization features fans love and the introduction of an addictive single-player experience, this is one game that lives up to its name. Characters like Mario, Pikachu, Solid Snake, Bayonetta or Simon Belmont going head-to-head in free-for-all Smash battles remains as thrilling as ever, and many of the series' best stages and items are back. If it's not enough having everything you love about the series return, the new Spirits bring a role-playing element that shakes up the formula in all the right ways, with over 1,200 Spirits to collect, each offering special buffs to your fighters. *Ultimate* is the definitive *Super Smash Bros.* experience, and it proved to be the Switch's highlight in 2018.

BEST HANDHELD GAME

WARIOWARE GOLD

PUBLISHER NINTENDO **DEVELOPER** INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS **PLATFORM** 3DS **RELEASE DATE** 08.03.2018

Way back in 2003, Mario's dastardly nemesis Wario decided that he'd found a fabulous new scheme for making money: video games. Thus, at least according to the story, *WarioWare Inc.: Mega Microgames* was born. Wario's quest for cash played out as a series of minigames based around everything from famous Nintendo games to boring everyday tasks. The idea of fast-paced, always-changing gameplay quickly caught on, and the *WarioWare* series went on to spawn hits across numerous Nintendo handhelds and consoles. Fifteen years later, *WarioWare Gold* is a celebration of that series, collecting 300 of its best games in one fantastic package. Using buttons, touch, tilt and voice, players must incorporate all of the features of the Nintendo 3DS to survive the onslaught of challenges—and maybe make Wario a little richer in the process. That's okay though, because *WarioWare Gold* is so much fun that we all get to share in his riches.



GAME OF THE YEAR

RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

PUBLISHER ROCKSTAR GAMES **DEVELOPER** ROCKSTAR GAMES **PLATFORM** XBOX ONE, PS4 **RELEASE DATE** 10.26.2018





Red Dead Redemption 2 came into 2018 about as far from an underdog as it gets, and even that's putting it mildly. No game in recent memory has been more anticipated than Rockstar's cowboy epic. A sequel to a game many regard as the pinnacle of the last console generation. Years of hype. A massive budget. The full development might of a company with one of gaming's strongest pedigrees. Our expectations were impossibly, irrationally high, but *Red Dead Redemption 2* still managed to fulfill many of them—and delivered its share of surprises, to boot.



This is a game confident enough to break free from established norms and skillful enough to get away with it. Has any high-profile game offered gameplay this slow and, at times, contemplative? Sure, protagonist Arthur Morgan may get into plenty of massive gunfights that put the O.K. Corral to shame. But threaded between those action beats is gameplay that's downright languid. You'll spend 10 minutes riding your horse across the map, even at a gallop. You'll walk through town at a pace that makes *Call of Duty*'s soldiers feel like Sonic the Hedgehog by comparison. You'll take baths, shave, chop firewood and exchange pleasantries (or unpleasantries, if you so choose) with the townsfolk and your gangmates.

The thing is, *Red Dead Redemption 2*'s meandering moments never drag because they're really an invitation to explore the most richly realized world in gaming history. Around every bend is an American landscape as jaw-dropping as any painting but infinitely more alive, bursting with lifelike animals and opportunities for adventures both authored and emergent. So often, stepping into Arthur's boots doesn't feel like playing a game. It feels like being lost in a different world, in a different era, as a different person. Like the best games, *Red Dead Redemption 2* changes our expectations of what the medium can do in subtle but profound ways. In a year of great games, nothing was greater.

2019 PREVIEW

The new year is only just upon us, and already it seems jam-packed with titles jockeying to occupy our time. In fact, narrowing down the list of games to include in this feature was so tough that we had to leave off tons of big games like *Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order* and *Battletoads* simply because we don't have enough info yet. (We also omitted anything releasing before the end of February, and games we've covered elsewhere in this issue.) But even with those limitations, the spread of games on the next few pages is one of the most exciting and varied in recent memory. No matter what kind of games you love to play, 2019 has you covered.

BY GAMECENTER STAFF

THE LAST OF US PART II

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT **DEVELOPER** NAUGHTY DOG **PLATFORM** PS4 **RELEASE DATE** TBD

Anyone who played *The Last of Us* can tell you it wasn't a game that cried out for a sequel. Naughty Dog told a compelling, remarkably self-contained story with a masterful ending. Even creative director Neil Druckmann originally said he wouldn't make a sequel unless he found a story just as important, and later shared that the studio worked for years before discovering an idea it considered worthy. In other words, the fact that *The Last of Us Part II* exists at all promises huge, ambitious things.

So far we know very little about the story, beyond the fact that we'll be returning to Joel and Ellie some years after the first game, when they appear to have found some modicum of stability in a world ravaged by a fungal pandemic that turns humans into, well, mushroom zombies. Beyond that, all we know for certain is that we'll primarily be controlling Ellie, and that at some point she'll leave that newfound peace behind and embark on a dangerous quest that takes her to the Pacific Northwest. Oh, and there's also the matter of that mysterious woman we've seen



in the game's trailers, who seems suspiciously like a second playable character and might just have a special connection to Ellie.



Combat looks even more brutal and tense than the original game, and the visuals are so good it's hard to believe they're not smoke and mirrors. Naughty Dog is clearly squeezing every bit of power out of the PlayStation 4, with lush environments and impossibly smooth animations. Watching Ellie dodge gunfire, grab a bottle off a ledge and chuck it an at enemy in one fluid sprint is a remarkable thing.

Living up to its predecessor won't be an easy task, but *The Last of Us Part II* certainly has us intrigued. Now we just need to hope it'll be done and out before the end of 2019—not just because we went out on a little bit of a limb including it in this feature, but because we truly can't wait to play it.

DREAMS

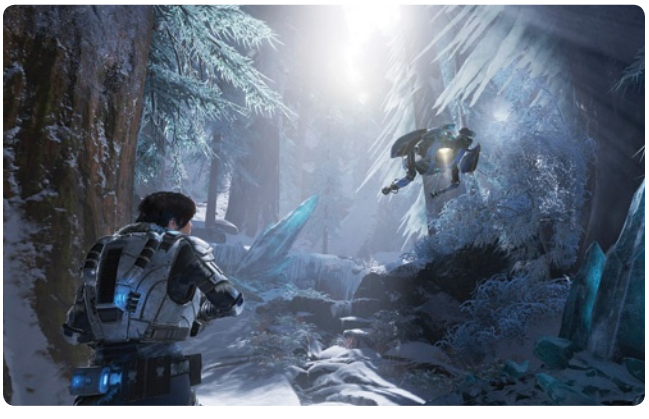
PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT **DEVELOPER** MEDIA MOLECULE **PLATFORM** PS4 **RELEASE DATE** 2019

Dreams is the latest project from Media Molecule, the creators of *LittleBigPlanet* and *Tearaway*, and it's also looking like their most ambitious. While the concept of "playing your dreams" didn't seem to make much sense at first, what the team is putting together here is nothing short of fascinating. *Dreams* builds on the ideas of *LittleBigPlanet*, where players are encouraged to imagine and create their own games. However, *Dreams* takes that concept much farther, as players will no longer be limited to two dimensions or more preset gameplay types. Characters, objects, stages and more can be created from scratch, and then levels with different themes can be connected together, much like how our dreams can change from one moment to the next. As a game, *Dreams*' concept is still a bit hard to fully wrap our brains around, but that's one of the reasons we can't wait to get our hands on it.



GEARS 5

PUBLISHER MICROSOFT STUDIOS **DEVELOPER** THE COALITION
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PC **RELEASE DATE** 2019



It might seem strange that *Gears 5* has dropped the "of War" from its title, but that's probably because it promises to be the most personal tale in the series. Following the events of the last game, *Gears 5* finds Kait questioning her family's legacy and possible connection to the now-extinct Locust Horde. To discover the truth about her past, Kait travels with Del to the northernmost parts of Sera, where they uncover a terrifying new threat spread across the most diverse game world the series has ever seen. *Gears 5* brings back the series' greatest qualities—incredible visuals, explosive gunplay and extensive multiplayer options—while taking the story in an exciting new direction. New weapons should throw a wrench into the established multiplayer meta, and playing all modes in 4K at 60 frames per second on the Xbox One X will make every second a feast for your eyeballs. *Gears* heads will be happy in 2019.

LUIGI'S MANSION 3

PUBLISHER NINTENDO **DEVELOPER** NINTENDO **PLATFORM** SWITCH
RELEASE DATE 2019



This year, Mario's lovable brother will be getting back into the ghost-hunting business. *Luigi's Mansion 3* continues the spooky adventure series that debuted on the Nintendo GameCube in 2001, placing Luigi in another mysterious building packed with ghouls. Not much is known about the upcoming title, but we do know that the titular hero has his trusty Poltergust vacuum and Strobulb to blind ghosts and suck them up. What's more, the adorable but slightly frightening Polterpup, as well as an array of nefarious poltergeists, are hiding around every corner. Unlike the previous entries, though, Luigi is investigating what seems to be a massive hotel, not just a mansion. That means there will be several floors of potential scares and puzzles to solve. It's anyone's guess why Luigi has entered the ominous locale, but if Nintendo is pulling narrative threads from the larger series, it could have something to do with Mario.

MARVEL ULTIMATE ALLIANCE 3: THE BLACK ORDER

PUBLISHER NINTENDO **DEVELOPER** TEAM NINJA **PLATFORM** SWITCH **RELEASE DATE** 2019



If there was ever a time for *Marvel Ultimate Alliance* to be resurrected, it's now. Thanks to the Marvel Cinematic Universe, superheroes are more visible than ever. Even previously B-list characters like Doctor Strange and the Guardians of the Galaxy are finding great success, and the fun of watching them all kick bad-guy butt together is the basis of a billion-dollar franchise. *Marvel Ultimate Alliance 3: The Black Order* will let players recruit their own superhero dream team from the Avengers, Spider-Man, the Guardians, and the X-Men to combat Thanos and the Black Order in their bid to take over the world. Developed by Team Ninja, *Ultimate Alliance 3* looks to build upon the series' excellent action-RPG mechanics with an even bigger focus on action. Marvel fans will not want to miss this Nintendo Switch exclusive when it launches in 2019.

MEDIEVIL

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER OTHER OCEAN INTERACTIVE **PLATFORM** PS4 **RELEASE DATE** 2019



A return over 20 years in the making, Sony Interactive Entertainment's remaster of *MediEvil* brings Sir Daniel's first adventure back to the masses. Fans of the original 1998 game can revisit Sir Dan's action-adventure journey, using classic hack-and-slash techniques to overpower monsters and ultimately reach the final battle against the evil sorcerer Lord Zarok. This time, the skeleton knight is protecting a gorgeously remade version of Gallowmere. However, developer Other Ocean Interactive didn't just touch up the visuals of the original *MediEvil*. Instead, the game's been completely remade on a new engine. Everything, from tombstones to trees, has been reinterpreted and remade, giving fans and newcomers something new to see. Players with a PlayStation 4 Pro can also explore Gallowmere in 4K, giving every fiend, spooky swamp and Sir Daniel a richer look. PlayStation fans will have exclusive access to this amazing remaster when it launches in 2019.

SKULL & BONES

PUBLISHER UBISOFT **DEVELOPER** UBISOFT SINGAPORE
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC **RELEASE DATE** 2019



It's a pirate's life for us later this year. Following the success of the sailing feature in 2013's *Assassin's Creed IV: Black Flag*, Ubisoft Singapore decided to hone its nautical skills in a game solely focused on sailing, and with that, *Skull & Bones* was born. Shirking the on-foot gameplay that normally complements sailing in other pirate games allows *Skull & Bones* to give exclusive attention to its naval gameplay. There are tons of different ships to unlock, each boasting variations in size, speed, maneuverability and durability. Just as important as mastering the build of one's ship is mastering the weapons equipped to it. These are the means by which players will defend the valuable loot they've pillaged, and in the game's Hunting Grounds mode, players will have to defend against the greatest threat of all: other players. Never have the high seas been more dangerous.

YOSHI'S CRAFTED WORLD

PUBLISHER NINTENDO **DEVELOPER** GOOD-FEEL **PLATFORM** SWITCH **RELEASE DATE** 03.29.2019

Following in the footsteps of other cute craft-material games like *Paper Mario* and *Kirby's Epic Yarn*, *Yoshi's Crafted World* lets players loose in a miniature universe made of felt, paper links, buttons and cardboard. An adorable fuzzy Yoshi is the star, bouncing across platforms in an all-new jumping and timing challenge with tons of collectibles to find and secrets to unlock. Unlike most 2D platforming games, *Yoshi's Crafted World* lets the player flip the camera around, revealing an entirely new side of each level. Pass by the flat front of a house by the road, for example, and you'll be able to flip your view around to peer into the back—and interior—of the house. Behind the new look and new perspective, though, players will find the same familiar Yoshi gameplay they know and love, eating enemies, laying eggs and bounding across levels alone or with a friend.



WOLFENSTEIN: YOUNGBLOOD

PUBLISHER BETHESDA SOFTWORKS **DEVELOPER** MACHINEGAMES
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC **RELEASE DATE** 2019



Recent *Wolfenstein* games have all been about the new and old, but the series' next mission will give some attention to the young. *Wolfenstein: Youngblood* follows the daughters of franchise hero B.J. Blazkowicz in the never-ending fight against the Nazi regime. In B.J.'s timeline, the Nazis won World War II, forcing the hero to spend his entire life fighting off the Reich's tyranny. It is now the 1980s and his fight is over, which means he must turn the crusade over to his twin daughters, who pick up the mantle in Paris. As always, this fight is about survival, but the twins have to learn to fight smarter than their old man, evolving the hunting and survival skills that B.J. taught them. *Youngblood* is a co-op experience, so coordination will be key in the push to get the Nazis out of a reimagined Paris.

THE OUTER WORLDS

PUBLISHER PRIVATE DIVISION **DEVELOPER** OBSIDIAN ENTERTAINMENT
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC **RELEASE DATE** 2019



The creators of *Fallout: New Vegas* are returning to the RPG scene with a bold new game: *The Outer Worlds*. The frontier of space is no longer a land of untamed promise but a breeding ground for megacorporations and advertisements. Into this world comes your character, stranded, with most of their fellow passengers left in cryosleep. While *The Outer Worlds* features tons of combat with a wide variety of different weapons, the game's true strength lies in its story, characters and huge element of player choice. Choose flaws for your characters as well as perks, and watch your story unfold tons of different ways, depending on your relationships with your companions and your approach to each new situation. Who you side with, whether you approach situations stealthily or with guns blazing, and how your unique character fits into the world will determine the path you take, and your ultimate ending.

RAGE 2

PUBLISHER BETHESDA SOFTWORKS **DEVELOPER** AVALANCHE STUDIOS, ID SOFTWARE **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC **RELEASE DATE** 05.14.2019



No one would fault you for forgetting the original *Rage*. Though a competent enough shooter, its story and world offered little more than a generic brown-and-gray rehash of tired post-apocalyptic cliches. *Rage 2* looks to change that by injecting more color, more personality and a whole lot more 'tude. This time, *Just Cause* developer Avalanche Studios is partnering with id Software and bringing along some of its trademark mayhem. For starters, *Rage 2* aims to offer a far more memorable batch of weapons to master and enemies to conquer. The game also unifies the previously divided shooting and driving segments into a single open-world design. Taking on a two-story cyborg mutant in a hot pink dune buggy decked out with cannons is a far cry from the series' drab origins. Plus, rocker and notorious party enthusiast Andrew W.K. is involved, and he doesn't show up unless it's going to be a good time.

DEVIL MAY CRY 5

PUBLISHER CAPCOM **DEVELOPER** CAPCOM **PLATFORMS** XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 03.08.2019



After a 10-year slumber, Capcom's monstrous over-the-top action series has awakened once again. *Devil May Cry 5* promises to bring all of the stylish combat and atmosphere that fans came to love from the *Devil May Cry* series to our current generation of gaming consoles. This time, however, a fresh face is also joining the fray. When a new demonic invasion threatens our world, Dante, Nero and the mysterious V must answer the call. Amping up the action is the fact that all three heroes will play very differently, giving players the chance to either pick their favorite style or experience the game in a variety of ways. We're especially curious to try playing as V, who makes up for his lack of combat ability by calling upon three animal familiars to do his dirty work. With its promises of a diverse cast, stunning visuals and satisfying combat, Capcom seems poised to return the *Devil May Cry* series to its former glory.

DRAGON QUEST BUILDERS 2

PUBLISHER SQUARE ENIX **DEVELOPER** SQUARE ENIX **PLATFORMS** PS4, SWITCH
RELEASE DATE 2019



While it was easily to assume that the original *Dragon Quest Builders* might be just another *Minecraft* clone leading up to its release, the final game proved to be so much more than that. Now, Square Enix's exploration-meets-building adventure RPG is coming back, and it'll be bigger and better than before. Like in the previous game, *Dragon Quest Builders 2* will drop players into a world inspired by classic *Dragon Quest* mythos, where the only thing that can stop a growing evil is the rise of a young hero. The game will still feature a balance between adventuring, combat, exploration and building, as players defeat enemies and then help rebuild civilization back to its former glory. Of course, *Dragon Quest Builders 2* will sport a lot of new or expanded features over its predecessor, from a variety of new block and item types, to new gameplay options and even a vehicle to make travel faster. In *Dragon Quest Builders 2*, players won't just save the world—they'll help rebuild it, brick by brick.

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TEAM SONIC RACING

RACE TO THE FINISH TOGETHER

BY EVAN SLEAD

The *Sonic the Hedgehog* universe is extending its reach to the racetrack. This year's *Team Sonic Racing* takes Sonic and his many friends and enemies in a new direction, not only for the franchise but also for the racing genre.

Unlike traditional kart racers, gameplay centers on teamwork, not being the first one to the finish line. Players take control of one of 15 characters from the *Sonic* world and team up with two others, working together to earn points for cooperation. Out of the four teams of three that compete, only one trio comes out victorious, and that's all contingent on how well they work together.

As for the characters who speed around the track, they're all from the



PRE-**ORDER**

Sonic universe. Instead of pulling in recognizable faces from other Sega series as in *Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing*, series producer Takashi Iizuka said the team was inspired by a past entry in the franchise to focus solely on the blue hedgehog's companions. "We released *Sonic Heroes* a while back, which is an action game where three *Sonic* universe characters form a single team, so we thought it would be a good base to build on the teamwork in *Team Sonic Racing*," Iizuka said.

Unlike traditional kart racers, gameplay centers on teamwork, not being the first one to the finish line.





CLASS IS IN SESSION

Team Sonic Racing's characters are broken up into three classes, each with their own unique abilities. Since players can mix and match which types they use on a team, it's important to know the pros and cons of the classes to form the best trio possible before hitting the track.

Speed
These racers have the highest top speed in the game and can even perform drifts. If they pull off a trick the kart will emit a radial burst to block projectiles.

Power
The Power characters have higher defense than other racers and because of that can break through obstacles on the raceway to open new paths for their team.

Technique
For players who want to get from start to finish as fast as possible, the Technique drivers are immune to slowdowns caused by obstacles on the field, such as ice or grass.



FACT FILE

PUBLISHER SEGA
DEVELOPER SUMO DIGITAL
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, SWITCH, PC
RELEASE DATE 05.21.19



Joining the titular hero Sonic will be 14 others, including Tails, Knuckles, Big the Cat and many more, each of whom will fall into one one of three racing classes: Power, Technique or Speed. "We added in popular characters such as Silver and Blaze, and I personally wanted to have Chao participate in this race, so they were added as well," Iizuka said.

Outside of standard multiplayer races, players will also have access to several other high-octane modes. Team Adventure is a single-player and local multiplayer story that lets players learn the ins and outs of teamwork. As players progress through the campaign, they play as preset teams of various class combinations for a collective experience. Exhibition offers more control over the race, with fully customizable rules and options. For a classic experience, Grand Prix is a tournament across four separate tracks to see which team comes out victorious. There's also a Time Trial mode if you're the type of racer who loves trying to outdo your own speedy scores.

Outside of a standard multiplayer race, players have access to several other high-octane modes.

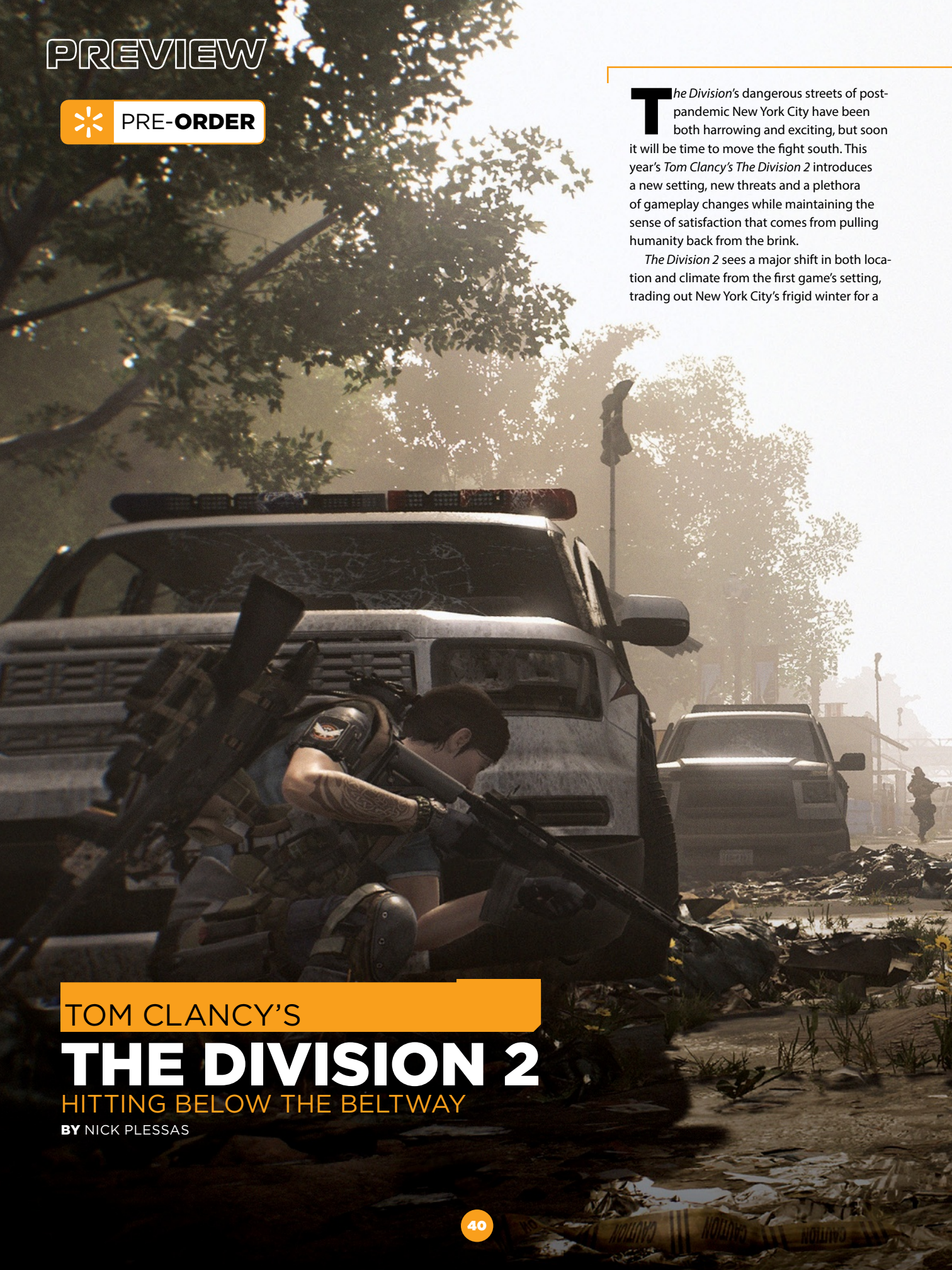
Team Sonic Racing is a significant step away from *Sonic*'s traditional action-adventure gameplay, but its beloved characters and focus on speed fall in line with what fans love. Plus, the twists on the racing formula make it an intriguing experiment for Sega, with our favorite blue hedgehog leading the way.





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PRE-ORDER



The Division's dangerous streets of post-pandemic New York City have been both harrowing and exciting, but soon it will be time to move the fight south. This year's *Tom Clancy's The Division 2* introduces a new setting, new threats and a plethora of gameplay changes while maintaining the sense of satisfaction that comes from pulling humanity back from the brink.

The Division 2 sees a major shift in both location and climate from the first game's setting, trading out New York City's frigid winter for a

TOM CLANCY'S

THE DIVISION 2

HITTING BELOW THE BELTWAY

BY NICK PLESSAS

scorching summer down in Washington D.C. While we'll still be fighting in an iconic metropolitan area, D.C. offers greater variation in its environments, with tighter combat zones like Georgetown leading into larger engagement areas like the National Mall.

These distinct locales are teeming with hostile survivors looking to take what's ours, their ranks bolstered by new and powerful enemies. The enemies are split between various factions that will hunt players whether they're cruising through the open world or taking on one of the game's many missions.

But not everyone wants you dead, which means there will be a bit of variety to how you'll interact with survivors in D.C. "As you play through the game, you are at all times surrounded by the other factions of the world, both friendly and hostile," game director Mathias Karlson said. "They have their own goals and are [rarely not] in conflict with each other. To what degree you want to interfere and help

Next year's *Tom Clancy's The Division 2* introduces a new setting, new threats, and a plethora of gameplay changes.

THE DARK ZONE: ROUND 2

The Dark Zone was one of *The Division*'s most intriguing and substantial features, where players could group up and take new weapons, abilities and combat knowledge to test it against other players, all while getting some sweet loot out of the deal. This PvP arena will make its grand return in *The Division 2*. The Zone is expected to have a similar structure to that of the previous game, with a large portion of the map sectioned off for the action. In here, players can once again find AI- and human-controlled threats alike. But according to game director Mathias Karlson, *The Division 2*'s Dark Zone will strive for a much more fair and balanced experience than before, while also being more inviting to new players. What exactly that means in terms of features, missions and ways to fight fellow Agents still remains to be seen.



FACT FILE

PUBLISHER UBISOFT
DEVELOPER MASSIVE ENTERTAINMENT
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 03.15.2019





The improvements to the core gameplay are plentiful, and with free DLC and a more dedicated focus on the endgame, launch will only be the start of an Agent's journey.

is up to you, but there will always be something to engage in, and you'll be rewarded accordingly. Helping friendly factions also [results in] tangible benefits and impact."

Players will need something to shoot with, and *The Division 2* brings a sizable overhaul to the first game's weapon system, with a new semi-auto rifle class and much more user-friendly weapon customization. Similarly impactful is the addition of set bonuses for specific brands of gear, offering perks for players who deck themselves out in one company's wares. (This is in addition to the returning Gear sets, which require specific gear pieces to unlock bonuses.)

Tom Clancy's The Division 2 isn't taking the easy road to building a sequel. The improvements to the core gameplay are plentiful, and with free DLC and a more dedicated focus on the endgame, launch will only be the start of an Agent's journey. Come this March, it will be time to divide and conquer.

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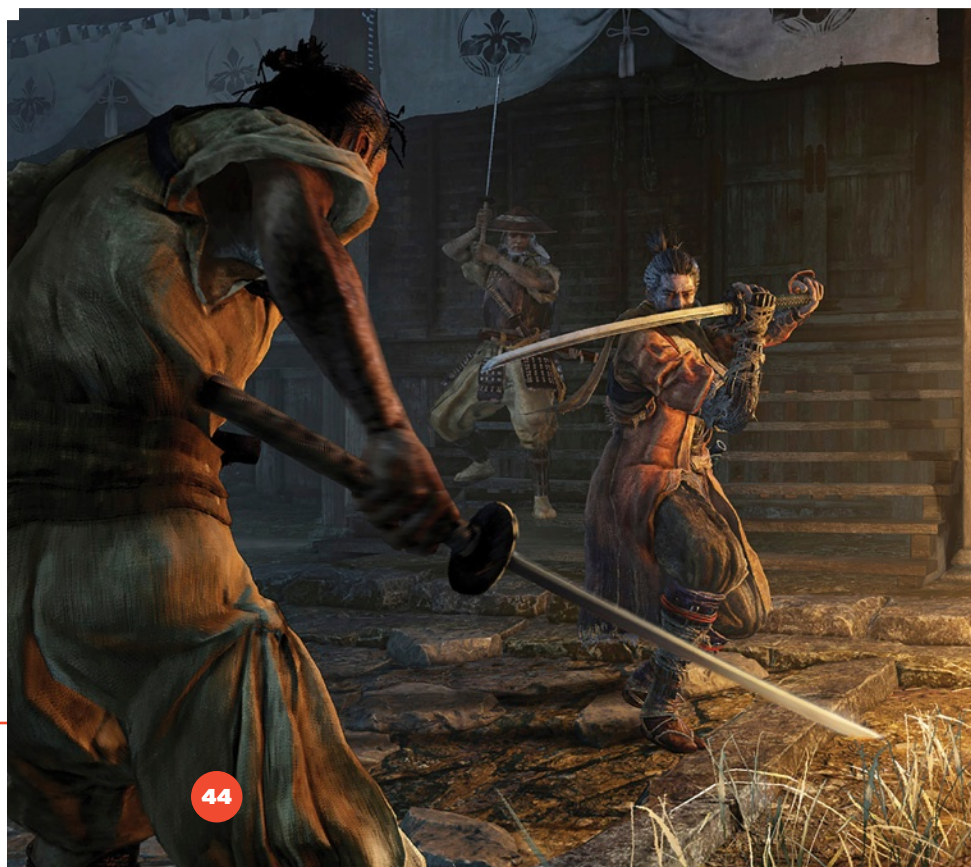
SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE

THE SOUL(S) OF A WARRIOR

BY MICHAEL GOROFF

At first glance, *Sekiro* might look like just another "Soulsborne" game. Set in 16th century Japan, during the war-torn Sengoku period, *Sekiro* shares some aesthetic similarities with FromSoftware's most popular series, *Dark Souls*. Its mixture of gothic and impressionistic styles, tinged with more than a dash of the grimdark, creates a familiar but otherworldly version of Japan that both samurai and the supernatural call home. The enemies inhabiting this world are deadly and intimidating, and one wrong move can mean certain death. Like FromSoftware's previous titles, *Sekiro* is not for the faint of heart.

If you dig a little deeper, however, *Sekiro*'s divergences begin to reveal themselves. First of all, it's got a story, and not one you need to look through its item descriptions to find. After his young lord is kidnapped by the Ashina clan, the titular shinobi must hunt down those who wronged him and save the boy, who's thought to descend from an ancient bloodline.





FACT FILE

PUBLISHER ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER FROMSOFTWARE
PLATFORMS XBOX ONE, PS4, PC
RELEASE DATE 03.22.19





Sure, that plot setup might not be the most profound or original, but it's a heck of a lot more straightforward than anything From's done in the past decade or so.

Following this trend, *Sekiro*'s gameplay might also seem a little more traditional than Soulsborne games. This is a straight-up single-player experience, which means another player won't invade your game as tends to happen in *Dark Souls*. Considering Sekiro himself is a shinobi, there are elements of stealth, letting you sneak up on enemies and take them down with one button press. You won't be leveling up your character or switching out gear. Sekiro is armed solely with his trusty katana and the gadgets hidden in his prosthetic arm, which include a grappling hook, a shield, an axe and more.

Like FromSoftware's previous titles, *Sekiro* is not for the faint of heart.

Combat is where *Sekiro* really sets itself apart. Based on a traditional kendo style of martial arts, sword battles will feature a back-and-forth mechanic called "posture." Break your enemy's posture and you can perform a devastating blow that, if it doesn't kill them, will take a huge chunk out of their health bar. But overextend and you might find yourself on the wrong end of a samurai sword.

More than *Dark Souls*, *Sekiro*'s lineage is another From series, *Tenchu*, with its mixture of stealth and action. But comparing this latest game to its predecessors is unfair. *Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice* looks like a wholly original beast—and another soon-to-be FromSoftware classic.

GIVE HIM A HAND, FOLKS!

Sekiro's most iconic characteristic is his prosthetic arm. But it isn't there to just look cool. Hidden inside the bony contraption is a veritable toolshed of useful weapons and gadgets. Here are a few of the ones we know about and how they'll help you on your journey.

GRAPPLING HOOK

Verticality plays a huge role in how players stealthily approach enemies and explore new areas, and the grappling hook can get you out of a pinch in the middle of a fight.

AXE

The axe is great for breaking through an enemy's defense. When a bad guy is blocking with a sword or shield, whip out the axe and deliver a punishing blow.

SHURIKEN

Sekiro isn't a samurai. He's a shinobi, and that means he's got access to a different set of tools. The shuriken are throwable projectiles that will let you hit those hard-to-reach enemies.

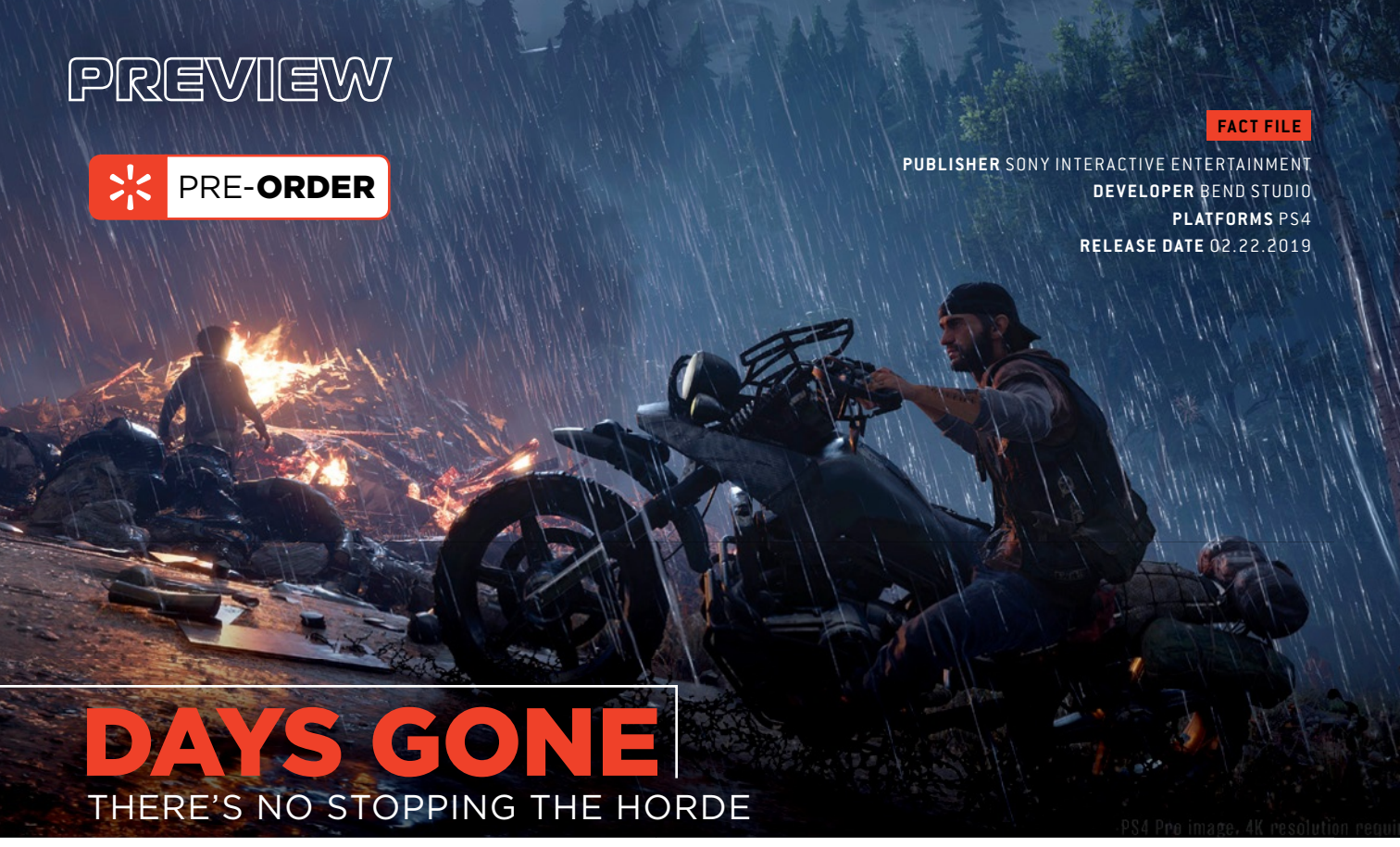
FLAMES

One of the gadgets hidden in Sekiro's prosthetic arm lets the shinobi set his sword on fire for a limited time, dealing extra damage. On top of that, you can use the flames to stun enemies and create an opening in battle.

PRE-ORDER

FACT FILE

PUBLISHER SONY INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT
DEVELOPER BEND STUDIO
PLATFORMS PS4
RELEASE DATE 02.22.2019



DAYS GONE

THERE'S NO STOPPING THE HORDE

BY NICK PLESSAS

Zombies and open-world environments are equally prevalent in gaming these days, but if you think about it, there are only a handful of major franchises attempting to fuse the two together. Sony is taking on this very challenge with *Days Gone*, setting players in a lawless world teeming with hordes of ravenous monsters called "Freakers." They may not be zombies in name, but if you're a veteran in fighting undead hordes, you'll be right at home in *Days Gone*.

The world as we know it is no more, with the only survivors of the infected outbreak forced to split into competing gangs for survival. One of these survivors, protagonist Deacon St. John, is a former outlaw whose history with a biker gang has given him a proclivity for the open road, but who must team up with one of these gangs in order to stay alive. While at camp, he can obtain upgrades and resources from his fellow survivors, which are integral when exploring the game's harsh wilderness.

St. John's primary method of exploration is riding his trusty motorcycle, the most important of his many upgradable tools. The more upgraded the bike, the further and more reliably you can explore. Should something happen to your ride, either through neglect or ambush, you can find yourself in a tight spot with little means of escape. At these points, you'll have to rely on your wits and combat skill. There are a wide variety of craftable and customizable weapons in *Days Gone*, but while firearms are safer to use than melee weapons, ammo is limited, so engagements should be chosen wisely.



When stranded, rival survivors will only be half the player's problem. The Freakers fall squarely into the tradition of "fast zombies," far more aggressive than George A. Romero's shambling corpses. Swift and numerous, Freakers need to be taken out quickly before they overwhelm, or alternately stealthed around to avoid expending valuable resources. Infected enemies will also come in different varieties, with certain Freakers far more daunting than their run-of-the-mill brethren.

Days Gone isn't reinventing the wheel with its survival experience, but it's definitely putting its own spin on the genre. With a massive map to explore and plenty of infected hordes to keep the pressure on, this quest for survival will be tense and demanding from start to finish. It's a freakish world out there, and soon we'll be living in it.

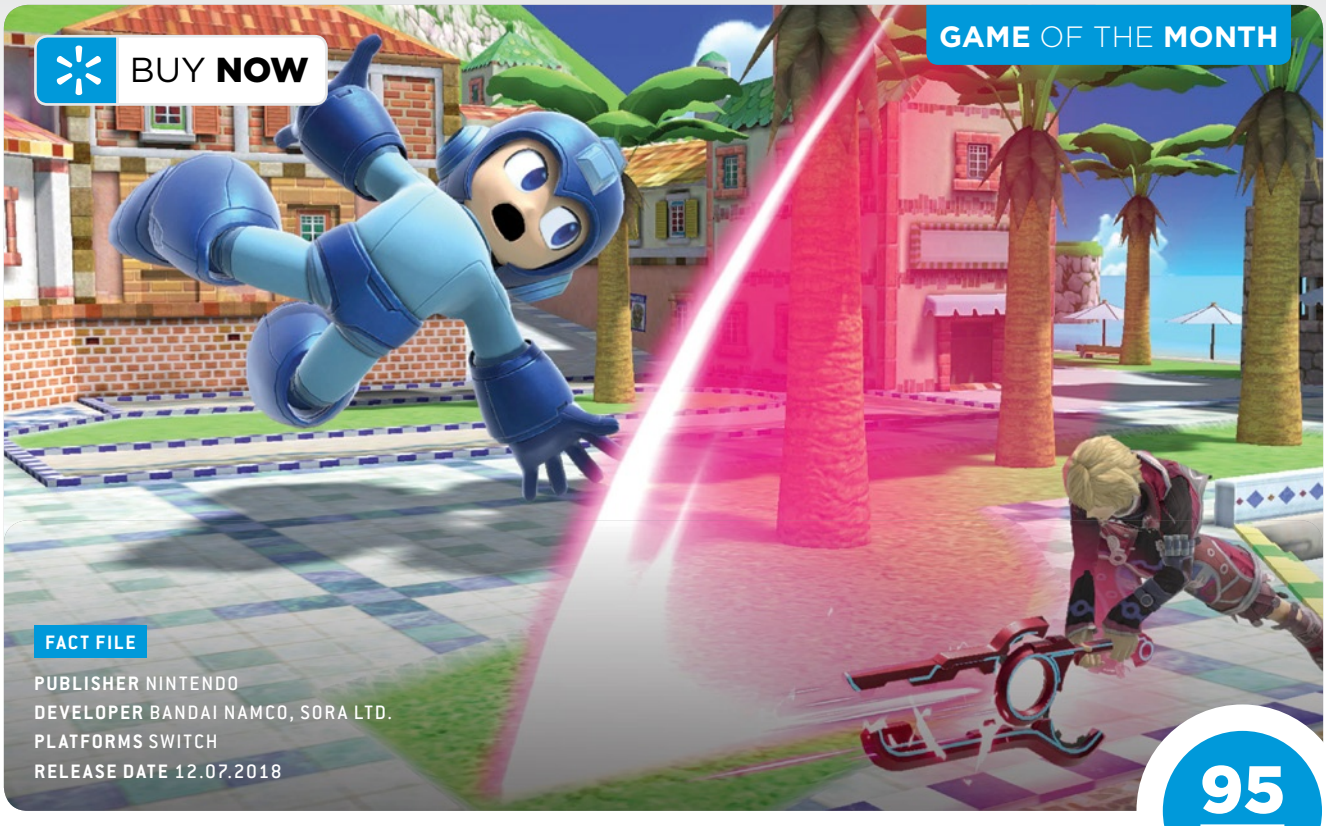
If you're a veteran in fighting undead hordes, you'll be right at home in *Days Gone*.



MATURE 17+
M
ESRB
BLOOD AND GORE
INTENSE VIOLENCE
STRONG LANGUAGE

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95
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SUPER SMASH BROS. ULTIMATE

EVERYTHING, EVERYONE AND MORE

BY EVAN SLEAD

Super Smash Bros. Ultimate takes its name seriously by pulling in everything and everyone fans have loved from past titles. The tried-and-true mode the series is known for—Smash—is still the centerpiece, allowing players to go head-to-head in free-for-all or team battles. The over 100 stages can either make the fight a more intimate experience, as when battling on the small Final Destination, or more of a hunt, like playing on the epically large Palutena's Temple. While there are too many stages with environmental hazards that can divert the player's attention, the customization features make up for them. For players who prefer fewer frills in their fights, the many custom options let you reduce the number of items, create a smaller playing field and more.



Ultimate's greatest achievement, though, comes down to its impressive roster of fighters. Players can use up to 74 different characters, a majority of whom are returning combatants from past *Super Smash Bros.* games. It's a treat to have every character in one place, and the new additions that make their debut in *Ultimate* also bring something intriguing to the table. For example, Ridley and King K. Rool have a leg up over other heavy fighters, as Ridley's wings help him maneuver easily and King K. Rool's special attack can knock projectiles back at the speedier opponents.

Where *Ultimate* makes its mark is the brand-new World of Light story mode. In it, you'll come across Spirits, which are helpful support characters fitted with stat boosts and other in-battle perks for your hero, such as increased defense or a Beam Sword. The role-playing element they introduce adds a new level of strategy to the *Super Smash Bros.* formula and will please both players who gravitate toward RPG mechanics and those who love collectibles. The mode's 25-hour length is a bit much, but the constant focus on strategy shakes up the gameplay enough to make completing it worthwhile.



Having *Ultimate* on Nintendo Switch feels like the perfect marriage of content and mobility. Since the game features so many fantastic modes to enjoy and calls for players to pull in friends, the Switch's ability to be played at home or on the go is a plus. The customization options, deep story mode, amazing roster of fighters and the hybridity of the Switch all combine to make *Super Smash Bros. Ultimate* the best entry in the series—at least, so far.

Having *Ultimate* on Nintendo Switch feels like the perfect marriage of content and mobility.



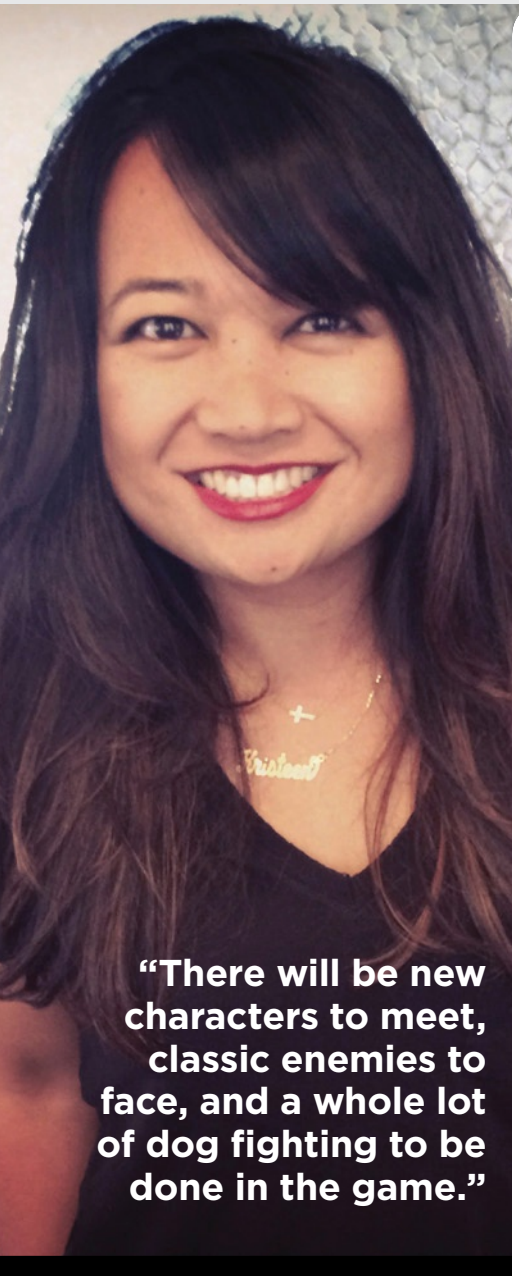
1 on 1 with

PARTING SHOTS

Kristeen Laut

BRAND MANAGER, ACE COMBAT 7: SKIES UNKNOWN

After years of quiet skies, the roar of jet engines can be heard overhead once more thanks to the return of the *Ace Combat* series. *Ace Combat 7: Skies Unknown* is a technological and gameplay leap above its predecessors, even bringing the franchise to VR for the very first time. To learn more about the game before it takes flight, we spoke to *Ace Combat* brand manager Kristeen Laut.



"There will be new characters to meet, classic enemies to face, and a whole lot of dog fighting to be done in the game."

VITAL SIGNS

OCCUPATION

BRAND MANAGER, BANDAI NAMCO

GAME HIGHLIGHTS

11-11 MEMORIES RETOLD

WGC: It's been 11 years since the previous game in the *Ace Combat* series, and a lot has changed in the world of gaming. How can fans expect *Ace Combat 7: Skies Unknown* to advance the series after all that time?

Kristeen Laut: While many years have passed since the last *Ace Combat* game was thrilling fans with its aerial combat action, one thing remains ever constant: Good gameplay and storytelling continue to be cornerstones in delivering great gaming experiences to players. *Ace Combat 7: Skies Unknown* has both in spades. From its deep storyline, to its updated graphics and effects, and the inclusion of VR mode on the PlayStation 4, *Ace Combat 7* is back to push the boundaries of aerial combat games once again.

WGC: One of the interesting elements of the *Ace Combat* series has always been its blend of more arcade-style action and the deeper elements traditionally found in flight sims. What would you say to new players who might worry that *Ace Combat 7* would either be too fast-paced or too simulation-heavy for them?

KL: I would say they have nothing to worry about. While *Ace Combat* has always presented itself in stunning realistic graphics each and every time it's been released through the years, its controls have always leaned toward the side of being easy to pick up and play. *Ace Combat 7* bridges that gap between realistic presentation yet easy to control and play, so it's really a perfect blend to delivering a great time.

WGC: Story had long been a big part of the *Ace Combat* franchise, so can you tell us a bit about the adventure players will go on in *Ace Combat 7*?

KL: *Ace Combat* wouldn't be *Ace Combat* without an enthralling storyline and *Ace Combat 7* promises to be full of drama, high-tension moments, and surprises. There will be new characters to meet, classic enemies to face, and a whole lot of dogfighting to be done in the game.

WGC: *Ace Combat 7* is the first chapter of the series built using Unreal Engine 4. Can you tell us anything about the technical and visual work that went into the game, and how the new technology and graphics make *Ace Combat 7* stand out from its predecessors?

KL: Unreal Engine 4 has enabled the Project ACES development team to push the visual and physical boundaries of the game—on current-gen systems—like never before. Without getting too technical, Unreal allows the team to deliver more detail, more depth, and dial up the visceral presentation of the *Ace Combat* experience. This all adds up to better gameplay for new players and returning fans. Aerial combat has never felt more real or more intense.

WGC: For those playing on PlayStation 4, *Ace Combat 7* supports PlayStation VR. How does playing in virtual reality change the overall *Ace Combat* experience?

KL: This is truly one of the most exciting experiences we're bringing to players in *Ace Combat 7*. Through PlayStation VR, players will be able to experience three awesome missions in VR mode, dialing up the "in cockpit" experience like never before. Imagine taking off from the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, looking around for the signal to launch, then looking down to see yourself at the helm of the controls of some of the most advanced and lethal fighter jets in the world before engaging in intense dogfights; it's truly groundbreaking for the franchise. Beyond the three missions, players will also be able to experience VR air shows and check out the fighter jets up close and personal in a special "Hangar Mode" as well.

WGC: If you were a pilot in the world of *Ace Combat 7* and had to pick any Bandai Namco character as your copilot, who would you pick and why?

KL: I would have to pick Pac-Man. His expertise navigating intricate mazes, outrunning ghosts, and attacking at the right time would most likely make him the best copilot or wingman any player could have out of all the Bandai Namco characters.



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Disney SQUARE ENIX

KINGDOM HEARTS III

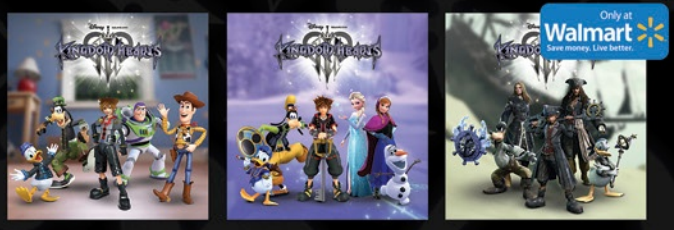


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