

WIN!



A NINTENDO SWITCH!

PLUS! A COPY OF THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD

PS4

XONE

SWITCH

PC

3DS

PSVITA

ANDROID

iOS

GAMES MASTER



**MIDDLE-EARTH:
SHADOW OF WAR**

» THE EPIC SEQUEL'S
SECRETS REVEALED

**THE SWITCH
VERDICT IS IN**

» THE CONSOLE AND THE
LAUNCH LINE-UP REVIEWED

P R E Y

HANDS-ON AND BEHIND THE SCENES WITH THE
NEXT EVOLUTION OF SCI-FI GAMING

**SEA OF
THIEVES**

» A RETURN TO
GREATNESS
FOR RARE?

WIN!
A SONIC
ART
BOOK



REVIEWED!

PERSONA 5

We rate the new king of JRPGs

ALL THE INFO!

XBOX GAME PASS

100 Xbox One games at your fingertips

HANDS-ON!

**RETURN TO
MORROWIND**

The Elder Scrolls Online reborn

ホースト・バスター
**A GHOST-BUSTING ADVENTURE
LIKE NO OTHER!**



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THE UK'S NO.1 MULTIFORMAT GAMES MAG GAMES MASTER

Issue 315 / April 2017

“A quartet of modern classics in one month? Stunning!”

This is already shaping up to be an absolutely incredible year for gaming. Not only have we got a new Nintendo console in our midst, but over in the review section you'll find four 90+ scoring titles. A quartet of genre-defining modern classics in one month? Stunning!

There're already plenty more GOTY contenders on the horizon for 2017 too - including Prey, a sci-fi shooter so slick and inventive we just had to go hands-on for a massive cover feature. From shape-shifting aliens to bizarre space experiments, we've seen it all, and believe us: you should be excited.

Then there's the incredible-looking Middle-Earth: Shadow Of War, The Elder Scrolls Online's grand Morrowind-themed reinvention, brilliantly creepy horror-platformer Little Nightmares, sea shanty-'em-up Sea Of Thieves, superhero biffer Injustice 2, and many, many more - and you can read about the lot inside your jam-packed issue.

Roll on, 2017 - it's going to be a good 'un.

Enjoy your GM!

Robin

Robin Valentine - Acting Editor

GET MORE FROM YOUR GM!



Online at www.gamesradar.com/gamesmaster



...or subscribe. See p92 for details.



EDITOR'S CHOICE
MY TOP PICKS THIS ISSUE



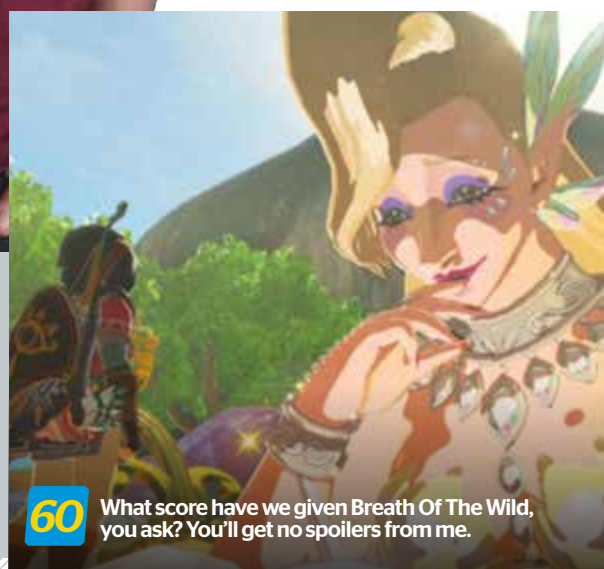
10

I'm proper excited for a sequel to Shadow Of Mordor - I'm going to make so many new orc friends!



18

Now that we've had plenty of time with Switch, we're ready to deliver our launch verdict...



60

What score have we given Breath Of The Wild, you ask? You'll get no spoilers from me.

Contents

What's In Your Latest Issue?



COVER STORY

Only the best games are featured on GM's cover!

26 PREY

Hands-on with the sci-fi epic that takes place in a world where Kennedy survives assassination and pours billions into the space programme. We do these things not because they are easy, but because they are hard.



60 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD

Link leads the charge in our highest-scoring issue in recent memory. We bait fish with steak, sell pie to buy clothes, then we play Zelda.

74 HORIZON ZERO DAWN

Our verdict on Guerilla Games' open-world robot revolution – a revolution that started with Roombas and Furbies, and climaxes with mechanical giraffes and electric crabs. We brought this on ourselves.



GM Previews

36 THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE: MORROWIND

Everything you loved from Morrowind is back. And also Cliff Racers.

40 IMPACT WINTER

Survive after the apocalypse by being super nice to people and working together. Nah, that'd never work.

44 LITTLE NIGHTMARES

For sale: baby shoes, never worn. Properly loads. An entire room filled with them. Mint condition.

46 SEA OF THIEVES

Grab your mates for some booty-seeking Jolly Rogering in this multiplayer pirate-em-up.

48 XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 2

We can't even comprehend another Switch open world after Zelda, so we found a writer who could.

GM Reviews

64 1-2-SWITCH

Prepare for the traditional 'justify your purchase to friends and family' launch game.

65 SUPER BOMBERMAN R

Lure your friends down dark alleys and trap them with bombs. It's terrifying stuff.

66 PERSONA 5

Steal the rotten hearts of corrupt adults, then go for sushi with your school friends. Student life is hard.

70 SNIPER ELITE 4

A patience-testing shooter with guts, brains, and plenty of balls. Try to aim for them.

72 HALO WARS 2

Command an entire army, much like we commanded two entire arms to type this sentence.

GM Regulars

06 FANBASE

Should they call off the console wars? One reader thinks so. Is he dangerously radical, or a bold visionary?

10 UPFRONT

We sharpen our swords for Shadow Of Mordor 2, then natter with Monkey Island man Ron Gilbert.

56 INDIEMASTER

Set up your stall at Mineko's Night Market and get ready for crafting, cats, food, cats... and cats.

86 RETROMASTER

Looking back at Fable, the game where you most certainly cannot plant a tree and watch it grow.

90 CULTUREMASTER

World-renowned musician Tina Guo strings us along with her renditions of videogame soundtracks.

Team GM

Meet The Magazine's Makers!



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THE MOST DEDICATED TEAM IN THE BUSINESS

Office socialising is at an all-time low as every spare minute is taken up staring down at Switch screens. Worse, Robin's attempt to fit in by dusting off his PS Vita has made him a complete pariah.



Ben Griffin

Upon hearing the rumour that Nintendo Switch cartridges taste bad to keep children from swallowing them, Ben set out to investigate for himself. The verdict? Bitter, but no worse than the office toasties. Alright with a dollop of chilli sauce on the side.

How would you use shapeshifting powers?
Transform into that MC Escher staircase.



Rob Crossland

We're starting to think our art ed's car obsession is getting too weird for the office. "I'd give my right arm for a go on that," he says, pointing at a souped-up motor. "That's sexual chocolate." Alright mate, let's concentrate on the games, yeah?

How would you use shapeshifting powers?
Turn into a 2017 RUF Yellowbird



Leon Hurley

All the crafting-focused Early Access games we keep making him play have clearly had an effect on Leon. Just today we caught him attempting to punch his desk into its component parts so he could reassemble it into a more pleasing new shape.

How would you use shapeshifting powers?
Make myself look slightly buffer.



Louise Blain

The latest office clear-out has claimed its saddest victim yet - Louise has had to give away her prized statue of Assassin's Creed 4: Black Flag star Edward Kenway. It just won't fit in her house. Why? Oh, because her abode is already filled floor to ceiling with AC merchandise...

How would you use shapeshifting powers?
Become Buffy The Vampire Slayer.



Mental health problems are much more common than many assume - but they're still rarely discussed.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Gaming helped me fight depression, says Jamie

In response to Ryan Booth's letter last issue, I thought I'd throw my cap into the arena of mental health issues and gaming.

I too struggled with severe depression. I was told by a counsellor not to game, as it removes you from dealing with issues. But like Ryan, I found this to be false. I had friends over to play games with me - Titanfall, Tomb Raider, South Park, and Halo to name a few. I truly cherish those memories, I had little other happiness in my life at the time. It meant so much to me that I named my son after one of my friends I gamed with. (Middle name, of course, as Rory is a bit of a silly first name).



Do your part to make the gaming community as friendly and inclusive as it can be - you could save a life one day!

And I found solace in achievement hunting, as it felt like 'achieving' something. Now that sounds stupid to some, but those with severe depression can struggle to do the smallest things for themselves. I had to keep a diary to remind me to eat, clean, etc. Achievements helped me become more active and I got over my depression after a long battle.

So gaming is more than just a hobby for nerds. We have Internet communities allowing people to share experiences with others in ways the older generation do not understand.

Gaming wasn't the answer, but for me it built lasting bonds and helped refocus me, setting me on the road to recovery.

Jamie Garbutt, email

Thank you so much Jamie for another perspective on gaming's relationship to mental health problems.

Following Ryan's letter last month, we decided to dedicate this issue's Take Aims to this topic too - head over to p22 for our contributors' own experiences. ■

WIN!

Got an opinion? Have even the barest grasp of words and how to put them together? The best letter bags a free mystery prize!

*Don't forget to include your postal address and chosen gaming format!



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Make games not war

Why don't we stop the 'Console Wars' so companies can co-operate? Imagine GTA on Switch. Or Luigi's Mansion on Xbox. There could even be games made by multiple companies. Imagine Smash Bros with Xbox, PlayStation, and Nintendo characters! You could put Mario against Master Chief, Snake against Banjo Kazooie, even bring in third-party devs, such as EA, or Square. Rico vs Wario? Now that I want to see.

So, why don't we make a peace pact and enjoy jolly co-operation together?

Andy Rigby, email

Sign us up for this gaming utopia, Andy!

School runnings

We are a Year 3 class at Cooper & Jordan Primary School in Aldridge and we are writing to you because we have just carried out a topic finding out how useful games can be in the classroom.

Our topic was all based around persuading people that videogames can be useful, and to show people exactly how they can be used. We knew that this was a big job and we had to do it properly to ensure that we provided people with the best information possible.

To start with we decided we needed the help of experts from around the games industry. We contacted people from all over the world to try and find out their views and also to find out a little more about what it is like to work in videogames. As a class we decided on a variety of people we would like to ask from big game companies through to individual designers and developers. One of the people we contacted was Robin from this awesome magazine. He gave us some brilliant answers about what it is like to work at a magazine, the fun that he has, and also his own ideas about using games in the classroom!

As well as Robin, we were contacted by Sam and Steve, the presenters from Go 8-bit; TT Games; Aaron Souppouris and his friends from Engadget; Jason Garlick from Codemasters; and many others as well.

One of the companies that contacted us was Media Molecule, the developer behind Tearaway and Little Big Planet. Not only did they help us by sending us the answers but they also sent a lovely note and a set of badges for everyone in the Year group!

Once we had received all of the replies we read through them carefully and looked for useful quotes and highlighted

QUESTION TIME

What's your favourite game world to just explore?

Far Cry 3's Rook Islands let me live my dream of being a naturalist, roaming around cataloguing the wildlife. And by that I mean hunting and skinning.
Ben Griffin, Senior Staff Writer

Gotham City is my favorite world. I am **Batman!**
Daniel Climo, Facebook

Star Trek Online, I think it has one of the largest game universes. You can spend hours and still not visit every world.
Joseph Bowden, Facebook

Any of you remember Midtown Madness 3? Loved messing around that world looking for glitches with my mates.
Stu, @odeadpool

Wind Waker's Hyrule. So much going on, Islands to find, Moblin towers to reach, and treasure to hook.
Oliver Roderick, Facebook



"IMAGINE GTA ON SWITCH, OR LUIGI'S MANSION ON XBOX"

them ready to use in our final pieces of persuasive writing.

We also decided as a year group that it would be important to make sure that we had researched as many different games as we could so that we could give real life examples of how videogames were useful in the classroom. To do this we had our own gaming week!

For one whole week at school we used a videogame to help us in every lesson. It was not an excuse just to play games, though, we wanted to see whether games really could help in class. We used a wide variety of games to help us out across as many lessons as possible.

In English we used games such as Journey, Lego Dimensions, Tearaway, and No Man's Sky to help us with our writing. We created and carried out an experiment in Science using LittleBigPlanet. Using the soundtracks from some of the games we created music reviews. In Maths we used Pac-Man to help us learn more about angles.

We then visited the National Videogame Arcade in Nottingham, where Iain (the museum director) and his team gave us lots of information about games. The museum is packed full of games and we got to play all of them, from dancing games, to classics, to some

games that haven't even been released yet. After an awesome trip, we were then visited the next day by Neil Dodd, who worked on Guitar Hero and the Formula One racing games. He gave us a fantastic talk and we learned a lot about the hard work that goes into making all of the games that we see on the shop shelves.

Following all of this research we then wrote our final persuasive pieces to try and show people the positive effects that gaming can have in the classroom. We used all of our experience of games as well as the brilliant responses we received from the gaming experts to create our writing.

Year 3, Cooper & Jordan School, email

Amazing work guys! Sounds like you've proved once and for all that games can be a great educational tool.

Read more about the kids' work over on their blog: <http://bit.ly/gmschool>

Wheel life

Loving Yakuza 0, but please put pressure on Sega to add wheel support for its Out Run mini-game! It would be amazing. Why don't Sega ever release the old classics anymore? Gotta be worth £9.99 a pop. Keep up the good work!

Andy Rigby, email

Why release them separately when Sega can just keep including them in successive Yakuza sequels? Much more convenient for everyone. ■



YOUR TOP 5

MOST WANTED

The most exciting upcoming games, as voted for by you on our Facebook and Twitter pages

1



RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

Format PS4, XO **ETA** Autumn
Like a stone-faced Clint Eastwood, Rockstar's staying tight-lipped about its upcoming sequel - but that clearly hasn't dampened your excitement.

2



SUPER MARIO ODYSSEY

Format Switch **ETA** December
With the launch of Switch, Mario's double-jumped his way from number five last month all the way up to second place this issue. Wahoo!

3



THE LAST OF US PART II

Format PS4 **ETA** Winter 2018
Back in the charts and back in our hearts after a month's absence. Such a long wait for this one - we'll be living in a real post-apocalypse by then, surely.

4



CRASH BANDICOOT N SANE TRILOGY

Format PS4 **ETA** 30 June
The marsupial with 'tude makes his triumphant return. Wonder if Nathan Drake will give this a go?

5

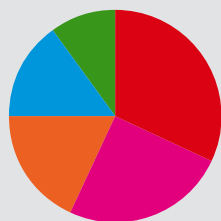


PERSONA 5

Format PS4, PS3 **ETA** 4 April
You can check out our super-early review of this long-awaited sequel over on p66. Spoiler: you're bloody right to be excited about it.

OFF THE CHART!

The hot topics you've been gabbing about



- 32%** Nintendo Switch's launch lineup
- 25%** What's going to be announced at E3 2017?
- 18%** Your first steps in Breath Of The Wild
- 15%** Square Enix's new Avengers project
- 10%** What's the best game of all time?

Rich Pemberton's the proud owner of an original 1993 GamesMaster Golden Joystick...



TERRIFIC TROPHIES!



...and Larry Bundy Jr's been showing his off too!



@MyGamerXP's collection of classic issues includes this amazing Mutant League Football cover from GM03...

MAG-NIFICENT!

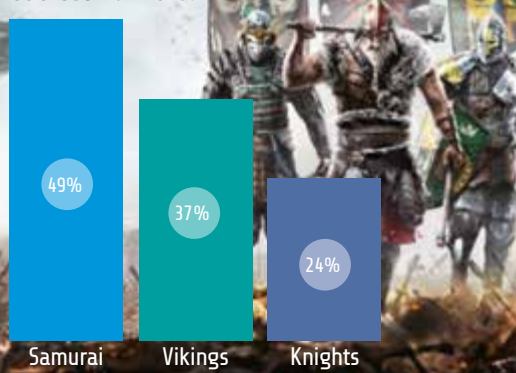


...and Nitty Grimes even has a copy of our very first issue!

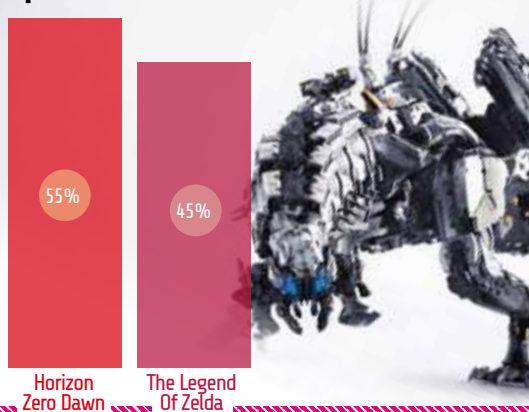
POLL POSITION

Keeping democracy alive on our Twitter feed

Who are history's coolest warriors?



What's your bow-obsessed open world of choice for March?



SOCIAL GROUSING

Wisdom and weirdness from our bustling social media channels



First thing I'm going to do in Breath Of The Wild? Kill Link in an utterly unexpected and completely ridiculous way, no doubt.

Mandleswitch, @mandlecreed



I want more Rockstar Batman... I'm sure they're done but after playing the Arkham remasters and Arkham Knight, I'm not ready to say goodbye to my favourite series yet.

Kimberley Fraser, Facebook

MANIAC OF THE MONTH!



I'd love a game to really have a try at doing time travelling well. Ideally a Telltale Quantum Leap licensed title.

Martin Dixon 2k17, @BunnySuicida



Got a feeling the majority of this year's E3 will be catching up on games already announced a year or two back.

Craig, @EvilCSLD



Ubisoft is going to start making games in my hometown along with Sega and Codemasters. Now they just need to give me a job there...

Daniel Reid, Facebook



I'd love a side-scrolling online RPG. Create your own character, go off in teams of four through randomised dungeons. Add in loads of rare loot, rare monsters, and huge bosses too!

Rikkee Bond, Facebook

WAKE UP. BATTLE. CONQUER.
REPEAT.

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BUILT FOR GREATNESS

With a sleek design and Dragon Red backlit keyboard, you're ready for the competition.

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OMEN by



Over 100 games for a £7.99 monthly subscription? Sign us up for Xbox Game Pass.

HAVING SECOND FORTS

Talion lays siege to Mordor's strongholds in **Middle-Earth: Shadow Of War**



There'll still be junior captains roaming the wilds, but fort sieges will provide many of the most climactic moments.

MORDOR THE MERRIER

Introducing three new features that will make Shadow of War prrrrecious



Shadow of War's new orcs hold Sauron's forts, answering only to the Dark Lord and the Nazgûl.



An expanded range of beasts roam the wilds in Mordor, and you'll once again be able to dominate them.



Monolith's promising an expanded range of biomes, with snowy mountains, arid deserts, and even forests.

14 Uptown junk



Scrap: build spaceships with it, or get into one. We do both in Galactic Junk League.

16 Spoken worlds



Lego Worlds' Associate producer Chris Rose tells us about the new kid on the building block.

18 Joy or Con?



Everybody's talking about it - now Nintendo Switch is put to the GamesMaster test.



Going toe-to-toe with the Dark Lord Sauron can't be easy. He's well defended, for starters, boasting an unmatched army of vicious Uruk-Hai and a network of fortresses spread across the vast expanse of Mordor. He's feared, too, inspiring fierce loyalty through the mere fact of his terrifying power. And he's got that nifty black armour, as well, which is very slimming. But Talion plans to take him on regardless, mounting an offensive against Sauron on his home turf, challenging the Dark Lord's dominance by turning his own Uruk-Hai and Orcs against him in this new sequel.

And to do so, he's forged a new Ring Of Power in the fires of Mount Doom. That might sound like a bit of a stretch for a lowly Gondorian ranger like Talion, but don't forget that the ghostly form of the legendary Elven smith Celebrimbor resides within his pleasingly buff frame. Armed with this freshly minted magical artifact, Talion and Celebrimbor are able to dominate the orcs of Mordor, assembling an army of indoctrinated Uruk-Hai to stage epic sieges on Sauron's sinister strongholds.

We visit Monolith HQ to see one of these fort

Mordor, and returns in a much-expanded form here. This alchemical algorithm imbues each Uruk with its own personality and history, and sets the stage for all manner of emergent scraps between Talion's noble greenskin followers and Sauron's wretched commanders.

Eventually Talion discovers the fort's overlord, Ur-Hakon The Dragon, tucked away in the keep, which has been converted into a villain's lair. As his name suggests, this hulking war troll is a bit of a firebug, and thanks to the upgraded Nemesis System Ur-Hakon's sinister

"TALION LEADS A GROUP OF TRUSTED FOLLOWERS AND ANONYMOUS FODDER INTO BATTLE"

sieges in action, and watch as Talion leads a group of trusted followers and anonymous Uruk fodder into battle, taking down the citadel's captains as he goes. At one point, an Orc necromancer has the ranger on the ropes, but one of Talion's followers - a sharpshooting double-agent by the name of Mozû - looses a well-timed crossbow bolt into our attacker's forehead, ending the clash in dramatic fashion.

Talking orc

These moments of upset and intrigue aren't the product of Monolith's writers, though - they're the result of the studio's Nemesis System, which made a stunning debut in 2014's Shadow Of

dwelling reflect his pyromaniacal personality. The keep is decked out with all manner of fiery traps and hazardedly hot surfaces to catch Talion out as he battles this fearsome boss.

Eventually, the ranger prevails, wresting control of the fortress from the Dark Lord and claiming the area for his armies. The land of Mordor is broken down into discrete sandboxes this time around, each boasting its own fortress to conquer, and each offering a substantially larger playground than any of the regions featured in Shadow of Mordor. Talion may have claimed victory here, but come 25 August, on PS4, XO, and PC, Sauron will be dispatching his forces to take back what's his. ■



That's a whole lot of games for not a whole lot of dosh - and no faffing around looking for trade-in deals.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX



Microsoft launches the Xbox Games Pass – 100 games for £7.99 a month

M

icrosoft is going all-in on the Netflix business model with the launch of Xbox Game Pass, a new premium

subscription service for Xbox One. It might seem the same as Sony's PlayStation 4 offering, PS Now, but this is a cheaper, more sturdy alternative. Where PS Now utilises the cloud to pipe games onto your console, Xbox Game Pass lets you download its titles.

Xbox Game Pass will offer lag-free gaming across an initial selection of over 100 Xbox One and Xbox 360 games, all for £7.99 a month. Microsoft will no doubt see this as a win over Sony's offering, which is both much more expensive and at the mercy of your internet connection.

Of those 100 games, Halo 5: Guardians, Saints Row IV: Re-Elected, Mad Max, NBA 2K16, Lego Batman, Terraria, Payday 2, Gears of War: Ultimate Edition, and even more will be present when the service launches this spring. Microsoft is hoping to represent every genre, giving players a varied selection.

Sub way

If you decide you want to keep anything you stumble upon while you're subscribed, games on the service will also be offered to buy at a discounted

rate, as will DLC. You get a 20% discount on games and 10% off any add-ons – though the latter only applies after you buy the game itself. This is probably to stop people picking up standalone stuff cheap, otherwise there wouldn't be much point. Who's going to bother buying horse armour when they have no horse? Mind you, people buy Rich Tea biscuits...

Loads more games are planned to follow this launch batch, from first-party exclusives to third-party hits. Publishing partners announced so far include 2K, Bandai Namco, 505 Games, Capcom, Codemasters, Deep Silver, Focus Home Interactive, Sega, Warner Bros, and more.

Other than your hard drive's capacity, there are no restrictions on how many games you can download, so you can flip between games like an excited kid after too many Skittles (or like anyone who owns a large Steam library). You won't need an Xbox Gold subscription either, though you will if you want to play them online, obviously. You can also download and play games offline for up to 30 days, if you prefer being off the grid.

Microsoft says new games will be added each month, so expect those 100 titles to grow substantially. If the company puts in half the effort it does with backwards compatibility, it could end up being damn near essential.

Just like Netflix, sometimes titles will be taken away too. That's one problem

“MICROSOFT IS HOPING TO REPRESENT EVERY GENRE, GIVING PLAYERS A VARIED SELECTION”



Step back into the space boots of Master Chief in Halo 5: Guardians, but you'll need Xbox Live to play online.

when you don't truly own your games. Of course, you could always take advantage of those discounts. It will be good if we're warned before licences expire, giving us chance to snap games we really enjoy up before they vanish.

Pass time

When Microsoft first announced the service, the FAQ suggested Xbox Game Pass would also be available for Windows 10 PCs. However, this isn't the case. Additionally, while you'll be able to play a bunch of Xbox 360 titles on your Xbox One on the subscription, you won't be able to do the same on Xbox 360.

As always, a preview build will roll out first for people in the Xbox Insider Program. With a limited library of games in the preview build, Microsoft will use this smaller audience as a round of testing to iron out any creases in the system. Hopefully this will make for a smooth launch, where the only problem we'll have is deciding which of the many games on offer to play first. ■

The Burning Question

What's your favourite ever Xbox One game?



Recore

Yes it has some technical issues, but the gameplay is amazing and the puzzles and dungeons are pure genius.

Andrew Pelletier,
Facebook



Destiny

Because words cannot describe how good your first six-man blind raid experience is. Nothing comes close.

James Harvey,
@blockeight

Visit www.facebook.com/officialgamesmaster and www.twitter.com/gamesmaster to take part in next issue's burning questions.



Travel back to a time when Lego games were about mute slapstick in Lego Batman, and have fun rounding up escapees from Arkham Asylum.



Saints Row IV Re-Elected is the most ridiculous game in the sandbox action series, and you can find out why with Xbox Game Pass.

WE DO NOT COME IN PEACE

Living long and prospering in Galactic Junk League

In space, no-one can hear you weigh up engine-to-power ratios. That's why most films and games focus on blowing stuff to pieces instead. Galactic Junk League is a construction-based shoot-'em-up where you build and battle your own ships in multiplayer arenas and, in Leon's case, jump to the dark side as soon as you realise they have better ships.



5 MINUTES

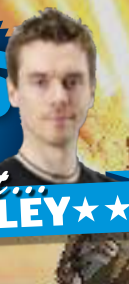
Han Solo, Jean-Luc Picard, Neil Armstrong – the best space flying... people had to start somewhere that wasn't a space ship. So I don't mind Galactic Junk League's offer of a tutorial. If you're about to throw yourself out into the universe in a tub you built yourself it's best to understand how to fly it. And why bits keep falling off. It turns out that space piloting is easy, just requiring the usual WASD controls along with CTRL/Space to go up and down. At the risk of belittling NASA's achievements over the past 60 years or so, I'm going to say reaching for the stars is actually pretty simple. I'm sure if more people knew all you had to do was hit the checkpoints and not crash then everyone would have a go. The GamesMaster International Space Agency: Galactic Operations has a certain ring to it. Or GISA: GO, for short.

HURLEY ACCESS

ADVENTURES IN EARLY ACCESS

With your host...

★★ LEON HURLEY ★★



10 MINUTES

I've been a space captain for literally minutes and no-one's died yet, so obviously it's time for me to go to war. Galactic Junk League's half about building ships and half about blowing them up, and before I put together my craft I want to see how all the pretty stuff goes so I can work out how many guns I'm going to need. Combat's simple but satisfying – and oddly soothing. The ship turns gently, and you can target any enemy in the 6v6 matches as long as your guns can get an angle on them. (Note to self: make sure your guns don't all point the same way.) It makes fighting all about lazy drive-bys as you keep your crosshairs locked on the opposition. There's something extremely satisfying about watching your ship come around to bear its guns on someone from the other side as they lose their firing angle.



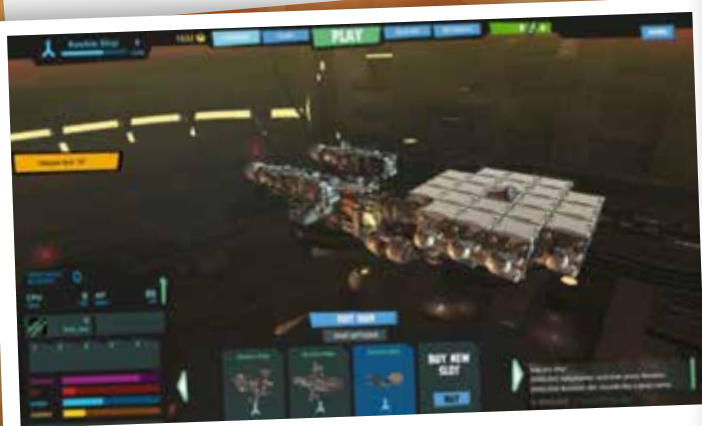
20 MINUTES

Obviously I've mastered the basics of space stuff so now it's time to learn how to build my own ship. I start off simply enough with the most obvious modification: more guns. The phasers the default ship comes with are cool, but strapping machine guns to every available square inch of the hull will be way cooler. And they are. They're a little more spray-and-pray, filling the air with bullets as opposed to the phasers' need to be on target all the time to do damage. Rocket launchers are similarly an improvement on the phasers, firing out swarms of missiles. All my early attempts at ship building basically focus on one key design idea: how many guns can I strap on to my vessel and still have a flyable ship? The answer is 'A lot, but not as much as I'd like'. If I could strap a rocket on a cannon and call it a day I would.



25 MINUTES

As much as it's all I want, there's more to ship building than engines and weapons. You need gyroscopes, for example, to help with turning. There are four basic areas you have to think about: damage, health, speed, and energy. Then there are extras like speed boosts, jump drives, and advanced weapons you can unlock by research. Paying for that comes from the junk you earn in multiplayer matches. So I've got two choices. I can go pro, playing matches, working the upgrade tree, and trying to perfect my spaceship's true potential. Or I can try to build the Enterprise and scream "Make that so!" as I blow people up. I think by now you can guess which one I picked.



40 MINUTES

I wish my Enterprise were more 'big Hollywood budget', but I'm constrained by a CPU load. Everything from basic blocks to weapons and even armour takes up CPU power. As a result my attempt ends up on the smartprice end of the scale, looking like an Enterprise that hasn't been finished yet. Scotty would not be impressed. Still I manage to load up on phasers (what else?) and a little armour. There's even a light on the saucer section for authentic detail. A few things worry me. The basic design leaves the core horribly exposed, for example, but this is all about boldly going. Major structural flaws are for the weak. Pretty sure Kirk said something like that...



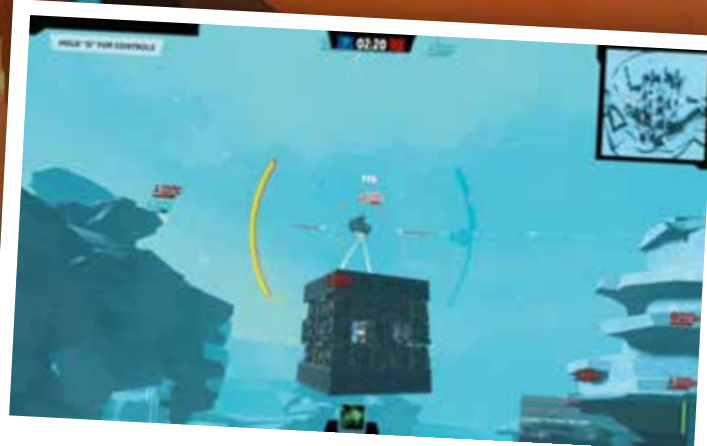
45 MINUTES

All my reservations about my junk Enterprise vanish as soon as I take it into battle. It's... glorious. I mean it looks hideous and one good shot to the centre will pop it like a giant mental piñata, but the second the phaser banks open up I'm in love. God knows what the other players think of me. Their ships are all carefully balanced assemblies of armour and fire power; squat, well-protected hulls with plenty of engines and fire power. I've basically turned up in cosplay. Nothing can take away the thrill of piloting this thing, though. There's more space battling action in the next ten minutes than *The Next Generation* managed in a season.



55 MINUTES

Seeing the compact nature of other ships and realising just how fragile my beautiful Enterprise is has made me think. I need something less sculptural. Something sturdier and minimal that really focuses on what's important in space travel: blowing other people up. Fortunately there's an obvious candidate in the Star Trek universe: a Borg Cube. I'm going to ignore the fact that it's taken me less than an hour of being in space to jump from noble Star Fleet captain to murderous robo-plague, because we all know who had the most powerful ship. When it comes to that, resistance really is futile. Work begins on a massive flying brick with one face entirely covered in guns. The Borg might have been on to something as well, because the compact nature of the shape provides plenty of armour while freeing up CPU for more guns.

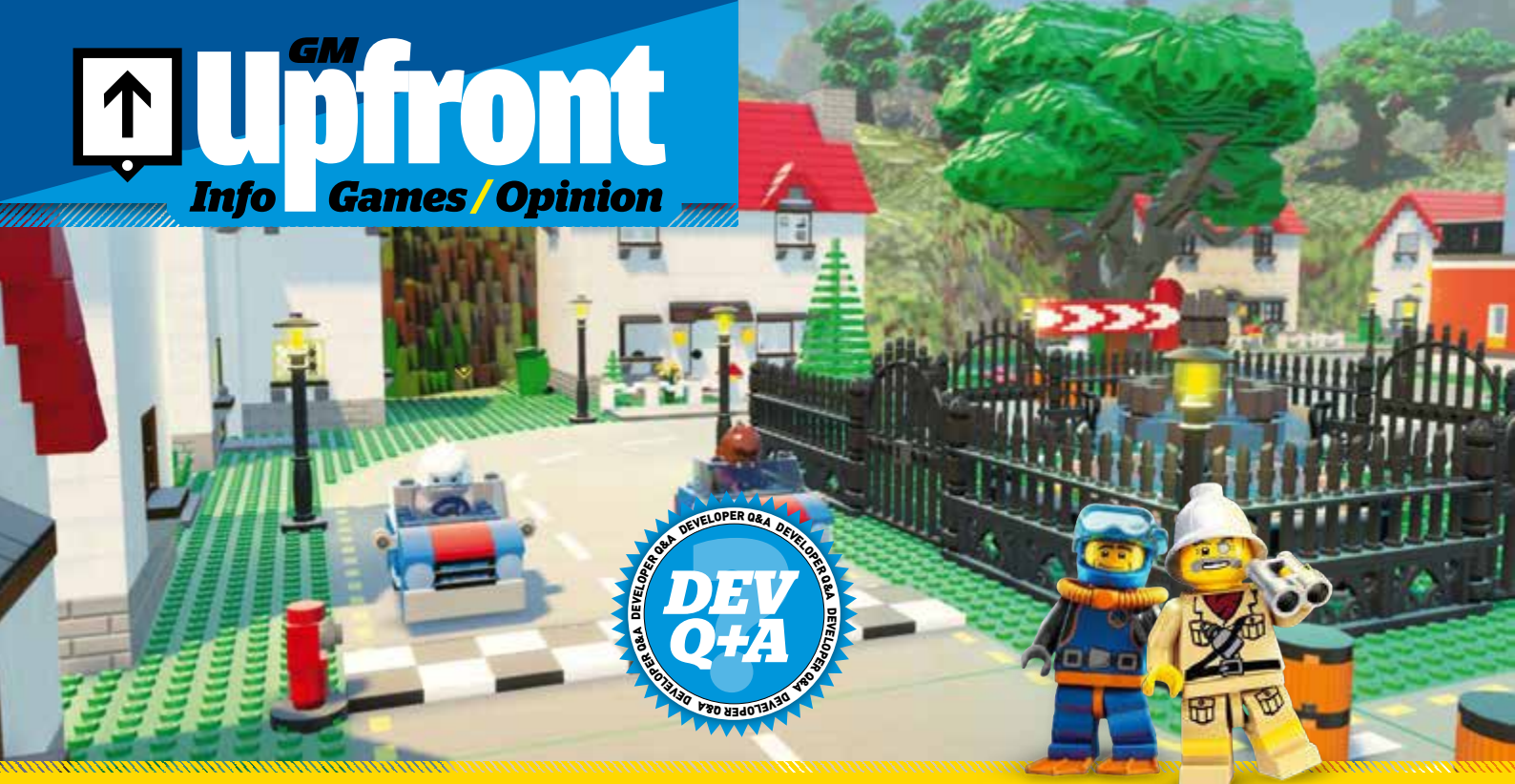


1 HOUR 10 MINUTES

Basically, yes. The Borg were onto something. The massive bulk of the cube can take a hell of a hammering for one thing and there's something very threatening about that shape. It looks... wrong. Bricks should not be in space so there's something unsettling about seeing one impassively bearing down on a dogfight. Especially now I've fitted a jump drive so I can just teleport into battle for that real warp Factor 10 feel. An entire wall of phasers doesn't hurt either. When I open fire it's like the entire front of the ship lights up. There's something very satisfying about watching enemies shed armour and engine parts under the hammering I unleash on them while my block shrugs off missiles with barely any reaction. Even with half the thing blown away I'm still dangerous. I might not win any prizes for looks, but I *will* win.

STATUS REPORT

Galactic Junk League's still pretty basic at the moment but there's already enough here to have fun. There's a practical link between building and battling. You're not just making cosmetic changes, you're tinkering and adjusting things that make a difference, and you start to bond with your ship as a result. Yes, it's a hunk of junk but it's *your* hunk of junk, and you know every inch of its ill-thought out design. That said we'd like to see more modes and options moving forward. There are plenty of in-game purchases for ship, and cosmetic flourishes, but only one basic team deathmatch mode. What's here is good, but it's going to need more.



“THE GAME SHOULD FEEL LIKE TIPPING OUT A LEGO BUCKET, AND DIVING IN”

Associate producer **Chris Rose** talks about how the Early Access community helped build **Lego Worlds**

From the sunlight glinting off mottled Lego bricks to the endearing animations of the rag-tag denizens populating its worlds, **Lego Worlds** is looking like an impressive procedurally generated blocky world-builder. It has the potential to become **World of Warcraft** to **Minecraft**'s **EverQuest** - a bright, glossy successor to a game that's dominated its genre pretty much uncontested for years.

But **Lego Worlds** associate producer **Chris Rose** doesn't see things quite so combatively. We spoke with him about the community's role in making **Lego Worlds**, and why this seemingly

obvious idea for a videogame didn't materialise sooner.

Q It's rare to see a AAA game do the whole Early Access thing. What is it about **Lego Worlds** that made Early Access so useful?

A There's a few aspects to it. Because the game is so different to anything we've done in the past, we've had to start from scratch in a lot of places. It relied on its underground community in Early Access, who gave us their opinions, told us if they wanted a particular building or item, then gave feedback when we made those things happen.

Because **Lego Worlds** is so creative and based around building, the creation tools needed to be up to scratch.

Obviously, if you're working on the game 24/7 it becomes easy to use the tools no matter what, but others might find it difficult. It just made so much logical sense to throw them out to people.

When Early Access started, we weren't even thinking of a console release. Being able to work on it with our community helped us get to a point where we felt comfortable bringing it to consoles. These test builds let us get feedback not only from fans, but from different studios too.

Q You had other developers involved in the testing? That's really unusual.

A Yeah. So the **Scribblenauts** developers, **5th Cell**, have been helping out, telling us the things they liked and didn't, as well as other studios. After all these development-minded people had their time with the game, we decided to put it into the hands of actual users.

Some of the ideas people had were so simple yet helpful that we wondered how we had never thought of some of

them before. Like the first-person camera - we'd never done that before, but everyone demanded it so we went ahead and did it. Our thinking during development shifted to 'Why would we not put a first-person camera into the game?'.

Q **Lego Worlds** is such a free-spirited game that it feels like much of the thinking that goes into it is based around 'Why not' rather than 'Why'. A fair description?

A Definitely. There were so many things along those lines that came up in Early Access. At one point, people were asking 'Where are the dinosaurs?' so our thinking was 'Right, why are there no dinosaurs?' and added them in. That stuff translates into actually playing the game. There is so much stuff you can do for its own sake, and we don't want to restrict the player. Earlier on I picked up a chicken and was running around with it, throwing it at other **Lego** people and knocking them over, because why not?

That kind of inverse thinking brought us closer to our audience in Early Access.

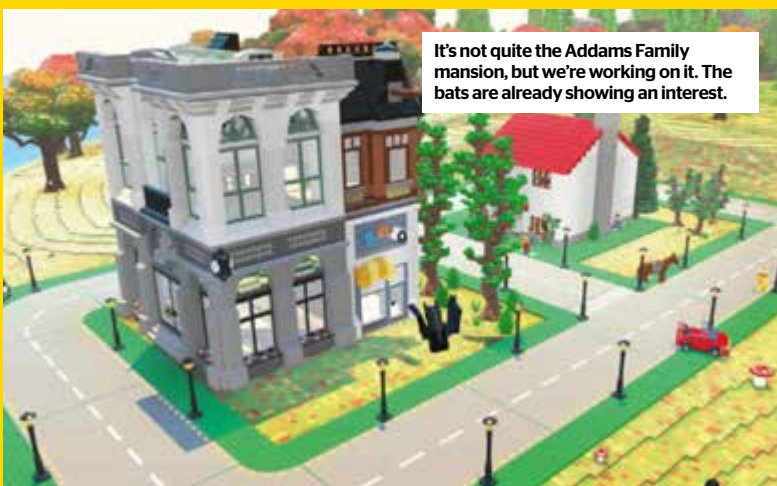
“EARLIER ON I PICKED UP A CHICKEN AND WAS RUNNING AROUND WITH IT, THROWING IT AT OTHER LEGO PEOPLE, BECAUSE WHY NOT?”



Helping people can take you on some very strange adventures. Let's leave this small town behind.



Ah, the identikit suburban dream! There aren't the sort of houses we're inspired to build, quite frankly.



It's not quite the Addams Family mansion, but we're working on it. The bats are already showing an interest.



We're ever so grateful to people who have played Lego Worlds. They have really helped us a lot in ways we didn't even expect. Some people were giving us models from their save data, and we'd like them so much that we'd add them to the game, then add the creators' names to the credits.

Q Has there been any fighting talk, or, for that matter, well-wishing, from Minecraft designer Markus Persson or anyone at Mojang about you making Lego Worlds?

A The day we went to early access, Notch [Markus Persson] sent us a tweet expressing how happy he was, and also had a little dig saying "Congrats on your Infiniminer clone", which is what people were saying to him when he first made Minecraft.

At E3, I think it was, we bumped into him and one of the leading players involved in Early Access, and just chatted about the game. It's incredible how closely-knit the community of developers and players is, and how it all crosses over. There's never been any fighting talk

because it's good for everyone when there's more variety.

Q Lego Worlds is now entering the space previously dominated by Minecraft. Do you think that Lego is the only brand that can compete with such a phenomenon?

A I don't even know if I'd call it competition. There are so many great building games out there at the moment, and in this genre it's great how open and well-wishing everyone is. There's no competitiveness, just everybody doing their own thing in delivering games that encourage players' creativity.

Q In a way, it's amazing that you guys didn't make this game sooner. It's Lego, it's building stuff! What took you so long?

A It's actually something we've been toying with for a long time, but wanted to be patient to get it just right. One of our early inspirations was actually the level builder in Lego Indiana Jones 2.

It was way more basic than what we're doing now, but really good for the time, and the tech behind it was really promising. At the time, our thinking was 'Okay, so this is a good entry point for something bigger later. Let's just give technology a little while to catch up with what we want to do, and then go for it'.

Since then, we've been able to go much further with things like brick resolution, slopes, and tools to really sculpt the world. We had a lot of people focusing on the boxes, cubes and squares, and making it feel really physical. We were adamant we had to make the game to look and feel like tipping a Lego bucket out onto the floor, and diving in.

Q You and the developers made the decision not to include loads of game modes, just to focus on the one. Is this a case of starting off broad, then listening to feedback after the game's been released to see what people want?

A It was important that the game had 'a point', which here is to go on an

adventure where you become a Master Builder. Rather than fitting in loads of modes off the bat, we wanted to do something a little different, a little more focused. Once you've done the three starting quests, you're free to continue questing, go build, play with a friend, whatever. But we wanted all this to happen within one nice big system.

Q I guess starting with something so big and open means you can then hone in on individual modes down the line...

A Exactly, now we can chisel away at the game rather than just throwing stuff on top of it, which never really improves a game. If you chisel, you can split modes if you want to. But we want to approach it similarly to Early Access. In a way, it's like the journey is starting over again.

There's no reason why we can't include modes in the future, and we've got a whole whiteboard of ideas, but after three years of doing this, we just want to put our ears to the ground and listen to hear what everyone thinks. ■

THE BIG SWITCH-ER

Our definitive launch verdict on Nintendo Switch

1 The bold interface is a breeze to navigate. It features an alternate colour theme, swapping bright whites for deep blacks, which is easier on the eyes for those who find theirs drying out easily.

2 Like 3DS, Switch has consistent save states. Power down - even mid-boss battle - and you're there when you turn it on again; there's no more wading through splash screens.

3 To transfer pictures off Switch you'll need to flip the stand and insert a microSD card. Copying pictures involves selecting them individually because, annoyingly, there's no 'select all' option.

4 Attaching Joy-Con straps is troublesome. We did ours upside down - easy to do in the absence of direction indicators - and jammed it. It took our amazing strength to force them apart.

5 There's no online ecosystem like the 3DS' Mii Plaza or Street Pass, and a lack of apps such as video capture, Netflix, or iPlayer. We want something to fiddle with.



WHAT DO YOU THINK OF NINTENDO SWITCH?

Let us know on Facebook or Twitter, or email us at gamesmaster@futurenet.com!

5



In 'wow, neat' news, if you have a coloured Switch and purchase a second set of coloured Joy-Con, you can make a solid-colour Switch.



“MOVING BETWEEN ITS THREE CONFIGURATIONS IS SO PAINLESS AS TO BE ALMOST PLAYFUL”

It's impossible to spend a few days with Nintendo Switch and not be won over. It'd be like hating a puppy. From a purely hardware perspective this is a fantastic little console, expertly blurring the lines between home and portable play like nothing before. It finally achieves what Nintendo's been shooting for since it first bolted a sturdy carry handle on GameCube.

Moving between its three configurations is so painless as to be an almost playful experience. You can roll with each Joy-Con slotted into the side of the screen, the console feeling like an elongated Game Boy, or fix the Joy-Con into the grip and prop your Switch on its stand, or dock the Switch and use the telly. It all works, and there's no right or wrong way to play. With its rubbery matte controllers and satisfying assembly clicks and clacks, this is a typically high-quality Nintendo device designed to instantly befriend you.

We do have some reservations, however. First is the range on the Joy-Con. We position Switch at the end of our bed and find it struggling to

recognise our inputs at a distance of no more than seven feet. At one point during *The Legend Of Zelda*, Link walks straight off a cliff. We also have to pat the sheets down flat because any object, even rumpled bedding, between the Joy-Con and Switch interferes with the signal. The second is storage: 25GB just isn't enough, and you'll inevitably have to pay for an additional microSD card to save your games and captures.

Prepare to dock

The ever-mercurial Nintendo delights and frustrates in equal measure. Switch is light and portable, and it runs completely silently to boot, but the battery life is a mere three hours, which is a bit frustrating if you want to take it out for the day. Taking screenshots is a matter of pressing the dedicated capture button, but to transfer them you need to select them all individually.

The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild is its saving grace, which proves just how important a solid library of games will prove to be. After all, this is a pure games device - no playing media or browsing the Internet here. Nintendo Switch, built on solid hardware, has everything needed for greatness. Now let's see it. ■



“IF YOU ENJOYED FIREWATCH OR THE WALKING DEAD, YOU’LL LIKE THIS”

Famed point-and-click game developer **Ron Gilbert** fills us in on his latest project, **Thimbleweed Park**

With 1987's *Maniac Mansion*, developer Ron Gilbert brought the point-and-click adventure genre to life. With *The Secret*

Of *Monkey Island* and its sequel, he created two of its most beloved titles. Now he's back, helming his own personal return to that golden age: *Thimbleweed Park*. From its brilliantly strange setting to its sharp, witty dialogue, it looks set to stand confidently shoulder-to-shoulder with the classics – so we just couldn't resist delving into its development with the master himself.

Q Were there any aspects of traditional point-and-click adventure games that you felt you had to do differently for this game?

A In terms of design, yeah there are some things – like when you play *Monkey Island*, there are a lot of cases where you would go and talk to somebody and they would tell Guybrush that they wanted him to go get some item for

them, and they would never tell him that again. That was accepted at the time, but I think more modern players, players that haven't played point-and-click games, they'd expect to have a little more feedback for what they're doing.

So in this game, if you go talk to somebody and they ask you to do something you can go talk to them again and they'll repeat what it was that they wanted, and if you talk to them a couple more times they might actually get more specific about what they want you to do.

It's making sure that players have clarity in what they're supposed to do. It's not like a hint system, we never lead people around by the nose and walk them through what they're supposed to do. We just do a lot of things in the world that make players feel comfortable and that they're going in the right direction.

Q You seem very against the idea of a hint system – do you think there's too much handholding in modern games?

A Yeah, I think they do a lot of that and, to me, if there are going to be

hints in the game they should all be integrated into the fantasy of the world. So that's why if you go and you talk to somebody they may give you more information. That's kind of a hint system, but it's built into the fantasy of the world as opposed to some little item you click and then you pick that you want a hint. I personally just don't like that stuff and so I really don't want to do that.

I also figure that we have this entire internet out there, there are going to be walkthroughs of the game. I think there's lots of areas to get that kind of information for players, but I think that if you have puzzles that are logical and challenging, but not confusing, it gets rid of the necessity for hints. I think a lot of hints systems in adventure games are needed just because the puzzles are so ridiculous that you would never think of the solution on your own. We really tried to never have puzzles like that, that just make no sense. It should make perfect sense after you've solved it.

Q Do you approach making puzzles in a different way than you did in the days of *Maniac Mansion*?

A To me, when you have a challenging adventure game puzzle, the feeling I want the player to have when they figure it out is 'Oh, I should have thought of that!'. I don't mean this in a bad way, but I want them to blame themselves for not solving the puzzle, not blame me as the game

designer for making it too hard! This isn't a battle between me and the player, it's a battle between the player and the game, and there's a subtle distinction there.

I think a lot of adventure games, as you moved into the mid '90s, I felt like I was in this battle with the game designer, where they were like 'I've got this horrible puzzle for you', and that just took the enjoyment away from me because I wasn't engaged in the game any more. So we got rid of all of that kind of stuff.

Q That classic style of adventure game is intrinsically linked to comedy. Why do you think there is that kind of special link?

A In point-and-click games, I've always found comedy a lot more natural because you are putting people into strange worlds and asking them to do strange things, and if you can wrap it in this comedic icing, or whatever you want to call it, it just makes it a lot easier. If you've kind of got some humour around it, as a player you start to accept these slightly absurd puzzle situations. I think that's why comedy adventure games have always worked better for me.

Q Has it been strange for you seeing developers such as Telltale Games pushing the boundaries of the adventure game genre?

A I wouldn't use the word strange. I think it's actually a good thing

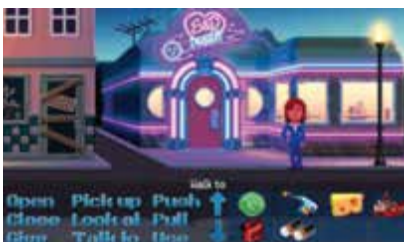
“I WANT THE PLAYER TO BLAME THEMSELVES FOR NOT SOLVING THE PUZZLE, NOT BLAME ME FOR MAKING IT TOO HARD”



Ransome the clown is both cursed and cursing. We haven't heard such bad language since high school.



When a corpse washes up in the once-thriving town of Thimbleweed Park, you're called in to investigate.



Open Close Look at Pull Give Talk to Use



Open Close Look at Pull Give Talk to Use



Franklin's tale is a really sad one. Don't worry, Frank, we'll solve your problem. Though you'll still be dead.



because I really enjoy narrative games and I enjoy games where the story is an integral part of the game. I enjoy games where story and puzzles and the world and everything is just all really intertwined. The success of the Telltale games, or *Gone Home*, or *Firewatch*, any of these, tells me that there are millions of gamers out there who like really good stories in their games.

I think with the point-and-click stuff, because of a lot of the stupidity that happened in the mid '90s, there's almost this stigma that's attached to them. People that have never even played them still see them as those really weird games with arbitrary puzzles where you have to try everything in your inventory. This is our way of saying they don't actually have to be that way. If you enjoyed *Firewatch* or you enjoyed *The Walking Dead*, you're going to like this game. It's different, but it still has a very heavy narrative focus, and it's not a bunch of stupid puzzles, it's a bunch of really interesting puzzles that you have to solve.

Q What in particular is it about the point-and-click genre that is so special to you? What made you decide to return to the genre for *Thimbleweed Park*?

A As I mentioned, I really enjoy narrative games, and I think adventure games are always a really good way to do narrative games. I've always liked playing new point-and-click-style games.

This whole project came from when Gary Winnick and I did *Maniac Mansion* together; we were just sitting around lunch one day talking about the charm those old adventure games had, and even though I really like a lot of modern adventure games, there's just this unique charm that seems to be missing from them that those old games had. For us it's about trying to recapture whatever that charm was.

And that's where the idea for *Thimbleweed Park* came from. ■

Ron takes his rightful place in the 8-bit world – well, he's definitely earned it.



Open Close Look at Pull Give Talk to Use



Open Close Look at Pull Give Talk to Use



Delores here wants to be a game developer. We're not taking bets on the genre she'll specialise in.



“Don’t ever let anyone tell you games aren’t important”

It’s okay to feel sad sometimes, says Adam Cook, and games can be a useful tool for helping you take care of your mental health

Poor mental health is a killer. We should work to live, but we live to work, and that’s all wrong. Videogames can be a beacon in the darkness, a thing to cling to, a world to escape into – something to just make us feel okay for a little bit.

I found my solace in games when I had a horrendous time after suffering a heart attack in my early 30s. It’s bad enough to have that happen at such a young age, but to have people look down on me because I appeared weak,

distant, and at my worst, like I’d never be right again – well, that attitude made things worse.

Aside from a supportive family, I had videogames to help me through it. When it all got too much, when it felt like my brain was a smaller version of me running around an office where all the desks were upside down and the paperwork was on fire

with no extinguisher in sight, I’d lose myself in the things that people tell me are childish, and for kids – I should be spending my time doing something productive, they tell me.

Serious fun

But games were my safe haven through a terrible ordeal. They were the cloud I could float on and feel okay for a

“IF A ‘DAFT GAME FOR KIDS’ LETS YOU ESCAPE AND FEEL OKAY FOR A LITTLE BIT, THAT’S JUST FINE”

little while. Don’t ever let anyone tell you games aren’t important. That Dragon, Cancer helped people deal with something nobody should have to face, The Witcher 3 let someone forget their troubles for countless hours, and Tank Tank Tank’s stupid giant monsters made me laugh at a time where nothing else could.

Have you ever been told that you should smile more? I have. I get that a lot from a certain generation. Because smiling instantly makes the world better, doesn’t it? It makes all the political unrest (and that’s putting it mildly) go away, and absolutely makes me feel like I’m not raising my beautiful children into a world that feels like it’s actively trying to destroy their future. (Hi John and George, by the way – I love you, and want you to know it’s okay to feel sad sometimes.) I think the reason being told to smile annoys me the most is because it feels like, despite how far we’ve come as a society, mental health is still this bizarre thing that isn’t real because we can’t see it. After all, we all know that telling someone to just stand up and walk will fix their broken legs. Right?

Society is changing, and so are videogames – they’re now as important as any other medium, and given how hard we work these days, if a ‘daft game for kids’ lets you escape and feel okay for a little bit, that’s just fine. ■

STATS MAGIC The gaming month in facts and figures

80

New Pokémon from Gold and Silver’s Johto region added to Pokémon GO in its newest update.

390

New cards coming to Hearthstone in the next 12 months, bundled in three 130-card expansions.

10,000

Value in dollars of cartridges lost while being shipped as part of a project to digitally preserve every SNES game.

70%

Increase in profits for Konami for the nine months ending December 2016, despite parting ways with Hideo Kojima.



“What happens when a game immerses you in the thing you need to escape?”

There's a danger of games hurting rather than healing when violence makes their escapism hollow, says Ben Tyrer

There are times when turning to games is a therapeutic salve. Something that helps ease stress and drags you through life's harsh twists. But what happens when a game immerses you in the thing you're trying to escape?

During the summer of 2012, I had a few spare weeks on my hands, which I was going to while away cruising around the neon streets of Hong Kong in *Sleeping Dogs*. It's a sandbox with few rules, and I settled into its rhythms nicely. A few missions here, some random carnage there, it was the sort of accessible mayhem simulator I was after. Like every other open-world

game, I felt zero remorse when I slammed my cars into NPCs. After all, it's something I'd never paid attention to in *GTA* and *Saints Row*, because seeing how a complex collection of codes reacts to having a vehicle rammed into it was part of the appeal.

And then my friend Sean was killed in a hit-and-run.

Hit the brakes

The morning I found out, I retreated to my bedroom and attempted to numb myself by turning to Hong Kong. I lasted ten minutes. I was driving towards a mission when I took a turning late and hit an NPC. I turned off my console and broke down. In trying to block out an overwhelming reality, I had inadvertently recreated something that still haunts me.

As I tried to find something else to escape into, it dawned on me how much of my collection was indebted to virtual violence. The cartoony excess of *Burnout*, the casual brutality of *COD*, even the wild lands of *Skyrim*. It felt like revelling rather than escaping. *FIFA* was the only thing I could play for weeks, one of the few games I had where I didn't need to worry about watching someone suffer.

This is not to say that violence in our gaming diet is a bad thing. Escapism comes in many forms, and there's a catharsis in playing games. If you want that release to be over-the-top and bloodthirsty, so be it. Of course, there's also a large catalogue of games, like *Journey* and *Minecraft*, where violence isn't the primary language.

Over time, I returned to the games I love. I even managed to see *Sleeping Dogs*' Wei Shen through to the end of his story. But, during the days and weeks after losing my friend, I needed something that avoided what I was trying to hide from, rather than making me an active participant in it. ■

“IN TRYING TO BLOCK OUT AN OVERWHELMING REALITY, I HAD INADVERTENTLY RECREATED IT”

GM MOST WANTED

What's most tickling the team's fancy this month



ROBIN'S PICK

Absolver

Mark my words: this is going to be the surprise hit of 2017. The martial arts combat looks as deep and meaty as a ham ocean, allowing you to build a custom fighting style out of an arsenal of strikes, feints, parries, and stances. That fighting game spirit forms the foundation of a sprawling RPG across a mysterious fantasy world - one you can play alone, or alongside and against your mates. And early hands-on sessions have convinced me that the team at developer Slocap can pull off this ambitious project.

PC, XO, PS4 - Autumn



BEN'S PICK

Little Nightmares

I like being scared, but not too scared. That's why I'm really looking forward to this cuddly horror platformer, which is a bit like what I'd expect if *Amnesia* got covered in *LittleBigPlanet* dust (*Little Nightmares* developer Tarsier actually worked on the latter). During my recent hands-on, I escaped a metal cage, waded through a sea of children's shoes, and hid from a dirt-caked janitor who chased me with horrible elongated arms. Creepy undersea resort *The Maw* will surely hide a litany of awful secrets and I'm *just* brave enough to want to discover them.

PC, XO, PS4 - 28 April



STRUCK OFF

Bad news for anyone who gets their Counter-Strike victories through nefarious means: Valve is working on a way to stop cheaters, using AI. The system will observe players and differentiate between those with serious shooting skills and those who abuse the system. Valve says an early version has yielded "promising" results.



YOU



ENTRY LEVEL

League of Legends has finally got a sandbox mode. Dubbed Practice Tool, the much-requested feature lets fans play solo or with enemy bots. This grants hardcore players the space to hone their skills and newbies the chance to get to grips with the game away from the pressures of competitive play.



DRAC'S BACK

Netflix may be about to make vampires cool again with an animated series based on Castlevania. The first series is due out later this year, with a second scheduled for 2018. Details are still pretty scarce, but producer Ali Shankar is promising a dark and satirical adaptation that will "flip the vampire sub-genre on its head".



FAN-TASTIC!

The London Symphony Orchestra is celebrating the work of Final Fantasy composer Nobuo Uematsu. Taking place on 20 June at Barbican Hall, this is the first concert dedicated solely to Uematsu, who's responsible for creating most of the scores for the series. There'll also be songs from his other work, including Blue Dragon and Lost Odyssey.

Topping the leaderboard this issue

WIN
LOSE



YOU



SKINNIN' THE GAME

If you were thinking of decorating your Switch with a vinyl skin or some decals: don't! Specialist online seller Dbrand has released a statement claiming that the adhesive used in such products reacts with the console's outer coating, causing some unsightly peeling. The company's had to cancel its entire planned range of skins, and is refunding all preorders. Good on them for letting us know, at least!

No, we don't want to continue thanks



BYE-U

Nintendo's final game for Wii U has been canned. Designed by Shigeru Miyamoto, Project Giant Robot was demoed for the console back at E3 2014, but sadly Nintendo has powered the project down, presumably to concentrate all its efforts on the fresh and fashionable Switch. The game's cancellation makes The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild the last game Nintendo will produce for Wii U.



NOW OR NEVER

Sony is pulling support for its PlayStation Now service on PS3, PlayStation Vita, and PlayStation TV. The service, which allows users to stream over 450 PS3 games, will now only be supported on PS4 and PC. Sony says it's reduced the volume of platforms for PlayStation Now in order to "further develop and improve the user experience". Lovers of those consoles might want to stock up on boxed games.



DROPPED SHIP

Elite Dangerous: Arena, the standalone component for Frontier's space sim, has been removed from sale. Featuring the game's PvP mode, the product has been pulled from Steam, Xbox Games Store, and Frontier's own store due to lack of players. Happily, Arena is still playable through the main game and will continue to be supported as part of the wider Elite Dangerous experience.



26/03

TIME AFTER TIME

The clocks go forward today – an hour of precious gaming time lost.



28/03

BEAT THAT

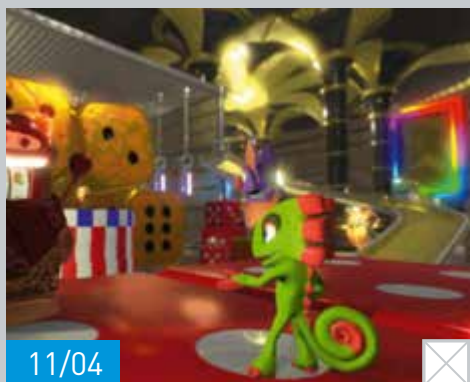
The only Sony mascot that matters returns – Parappa The Rapper Remastered is out now.



30/03

LONDON'S CALLING

EGX Rezzed returns to London's Tobacco Dock with Ken Levine as this year's keynote speaker.



11/04

OLD SCHOOL RARE-VIVAL

3D platforming and unsafe levels of cuteness abound in Yooka-Laylee, on shelves now!



16/04

EGGCELLENT

Does chocolate make you a better gamer? Test the theory this Easter Sunday.



31/03

MIX UP

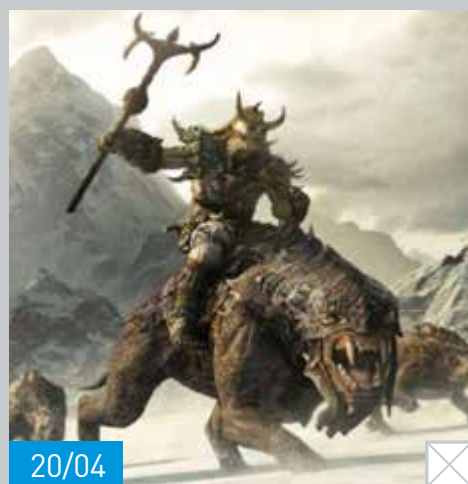
Kingdom Hearts HD 1.5 And 2.5 Remix releases today on PS4. How many more until 3?



13/04

RELIC RUN

Raise a shield to celebrate the 25th anniversary of The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past.









20/04

FUTURE PERFECT

Issue 316 of GamesMaster is out now. Grab a copy for your month's fill of gaming goodness.

INCOMING

Six big releases headed to a format near you...

<p>01</p>  <p>Syberia III Format PS4, XO, PC, Mobile ETA 20 April</p>	<p>02</p>  <p>Dragon Quest Heroes II Format PS4 ETA 25 April</p>	<p>03</p>  <p>Little Nightmares Format PS4, XO, PC ETA 28 April</p>	<p>04</p>  <p>Mario Kart 8 Deluxe Format Switch ETA 28 April</p>	<p>05</p>  <p>Prey Format PS4, XO, PC ETA 5 May</p>	<p>06</p>  <p>Birthdays The Beginning Format PS4, XO ETA 12 May</p>
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GM Feature

On The Cover!





ARMED AND DANGEROUS

Search for identity amid the stars in a boundless quest for self-discovery... and aliens

P

resident John F. Kennedy was never assassinated. The attempt on his life in Dallas only made the notorious space nerd continue his NASA programme emboldened. This is a vision where America's space race with Russia was not the pinnacle of mankind's effort to reach the stars, but the precursor to a continuous golden age. Over 20 years the USA poured billions into a lavish research space station, one that held a dark secret: it was originally built to contain hostile shape-shifting aliens. And they're still there.

In the '80s these organisms, Typhon, escaped. All that funding and America apparently couldn't be bothered to install thicker glass. After that the facility lay derelict. Until, that is, mega tech-corp TranStar bought it in 2030 and transformed it into Talos 1, a cutting-edge centre for understanding Typhon. Perhaps TranStar wants to harness their abilities for commercial use. Maybe it wants to weaponise them. Whatever the case, space is big business, and Talos 1 the crown jewel.

"We imagined that [Kennedy's] personal taste influenced the look of everything," Arkane Studios president, and Prey creative Director, Raphael Colantonio tells us. "So the station started in the '60s and that was the first version of it, and then there have been all these layers on top... visually we've been inspired by a hotel called Viceroy in New

GM Feature

On The Cover!



PREY-VIOUSLY

What does this game have to do with the first one?



Well, nothing. The 2006 original spent nine years in development hell due to technical problems and engine revisions. The end product was nevertheless an innovative shooter following the story of alien abductee Tommy as he explored a strange space ship. There were portals before Portal and gravity shifts before Super Mario Galaxy. Prey 2 was announced soon after, but work didn't fully begin until 2009 when Bethesda acquired publishing rights. Human Head again handled development duties of what was then an open-world sci-fi game casting players as a bounty hunter in an alien city. Bethesda cancelled the project in 2014. Dishonored developers Arkane then took over and scrapped all previous work, making 2017 Prey a re-imagining rather than a reboot, carrying over nothing of the original besides being a first-person shooter with aliens.

York which has a lot of late '60s, '70s vibes and materials. It feels very rich, very over-the-top. And then other than that there's a little bit of Total Recall, Sunshine, Alien, Moon in there as well." It's an orbiting hub of opulence where old-world ripples reflect in golden neo-deco monuments explicitly designed to attract Earth's best and brightest scientists. Like you.

GOOD MORNING, MORGAN. TODAY IS MONDAY, MARCH 15TH, 2032.

That's the automated alarm clock speaking. Morgan slaps it groggily and picks up his ringing phone from the bedside table. It's his big brother, Alex. "Hey, Morgan. Wake up. You're burning daylight," he says. "I sent the helicopter to pick you up. It's just a few tests. See you soon." We can choose either a male or female Morgan Yu from a screen in which both, dressed in futuristic red boiler suits, stare into a bathroom mirror, prodding under-eyes for dark

bags and angling heads to pick out grey hairs. The game begins, fittingly, at our first day on the job. We pick up and smash a cup in the kitchen to celebrate. Hey, you can grab mostly anything not bolted down in Prey, and it's our kitchen.

We then head out into the corridor, past a caretaker fixing a wall panel, and onto the roof where a sleek white chopper is waiting. "There's a nice view on the bay there," our pilot says as we cross a gleaming body of water crisscrossed by yachts. We land on the skyline's biggest skyscraper, a shining black monolith adorned with the golden logo of TranStar, and report to the test facility.

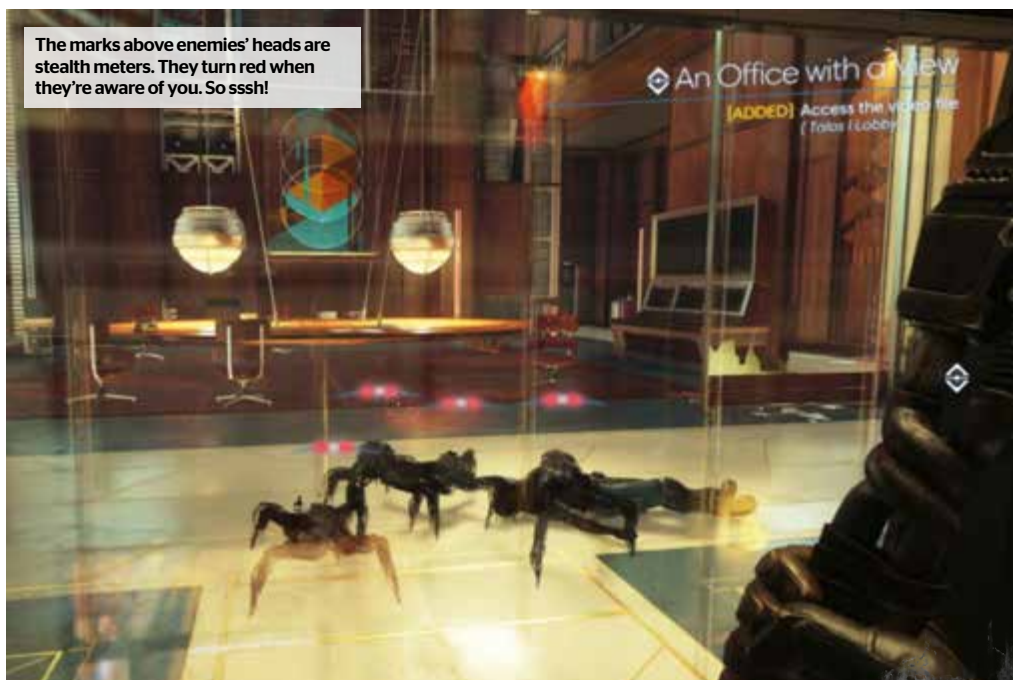
Heading downstairs, past a quote on the wall that says, "The last frontier is the human mind and we are its pioneers," and past our bro Alex (who wishes us luck), we enter room A. Before us is a button, and behind a heavyweight window stand three people in lab coats. "Good morning, Morgan. I'm Doctor Bellamy," says the middle one. "For this first test I'd like you to

You explore the outside of Talos 1 too. That's provided you craft a propulsion system or have very powerful burps.



Yu's supremely interactive apartment sets a high benchmark. You can turn on taps, read books, and fling mugs about.

The marks above enemies' heads are stealth meters. They turn red when they're aware of you. So sssh!



remove the boxes from the red circle as quickly as you can." We obediently grab them with X and throw with RT, prompting one doctor to nervously question whether the glass will break. She seems to think we're dangerous for some reason. But this is just some kind of fitness trial, right?

In the next room we're instructed to hide. It's not as easy as it sounds, because there's nowhere to hide, besides a lone chair in the middle of the room. "Morgan, we can see you there," says Bellamy. Chalk that attempt up as a failure. For room C we vault over a ledge as

quickly as possible, and in room D there's a questionnaire to complete. It starts off gently - "You're planning a vacation, do you go somewhere A) Familiar or B) Different?" - and then gets weird. "A runaway train is bearing down on five people. Do you push an enormously fat man onto the track to stop it?" What are we testing here, exactly?

We see Bellamy sip from a mug. Only it's not a mug. It's a shape-shifting Typhon in disguise! The spider-like creature transforms and wraps four oily black legs around Bellamy's head until his skin melts off and leaves behind a grinning

skull. Green gas seeps into the room and Morgan passes out.

GOOD MORNING, MORGAN. TODAY IS MONDAY, MARCH 15TH, 2032.

We wake up in our apartment. Was it all a dream? We head outside and it's clear something's wrong. The lights are off and the caretaker's dead. We take her wrench and double back to our apartment. Let's give it a go on the window. It shatters and the San Francisco view gives way to something entirely unexpected: a cold, grey lab. The city view was an illusion, a video projection.

"I definitely wanted to put the player in a state of, 'What's going on?'" says Colantonio. "That's the goal. We wanted to go with something physical as opposed to, you know, someone removes a virtual headset from your face or something, because the illusion is not as

"THE SPIDER-LIKE CREATURE TRANSFORMS AND WRAPS FOUR OILY BLACK LEGS AROUND BELLAMY'S HEAD UNTIL HIS SKIN MELTS OFF"

GM Feature

On The Cover!

You can see the influence of Dishonored and Dishonored 2 art director Victor 'Good Artist' Antenov (our nickname).



Hi there, Doctor Bellamy. You'll be dead soon. That's what you get for having ulterior motives.



Slot weapons and powers on the favourites wheel, or assign them a D-pad direction for even quicker access.

interesting. When it's physical then it feels more like the Truman Show, or something that is a true mind-f***."

An activity log on a nearby table has been tracking us. '8:04am, takes shower. 8:26am, leaves apartment.' No record of us smashing cups, mind. There's a folder labelled 'audio events' on a computer. Clicking 'wake up call', we get the same message from Alex we heard earlier. It's pre-recorded. We enter a hanger and see the helicopter that once ferried us across the city (or so we thought) perched on hydraulic rigging that jolted it around to give the impression of motion, its windows, like the ones in our flat, simply monitors displaying video feed. A lift up ahead takes us from floor 101 to 71, except the malfunctioning doors stay open and we see everything. The lift never goes anywhere - it's just the panels that recede and shift around to create a new room layout. Has our entire life been a lie?

Things get even weirder farther into the guts of this facility, where we encounter our first

Typhon species, colloquially known as a Mimic. A boardroom battle confirms they're skittish blighters, teleporting in and out of range, so we need to time our wrench swings well and be careful Morgan's stamina meter doesn't deplete and leave our vision blurred. Melee combat does feel a bit aimless, Mimics more of a pest than a threat, but the strikes are meaty and leave big marks on the ground when they miss. In fact, you don't actually spend all that much time shooting things in Prey.

"Players will always go for the most direct route," says Colantonio, "so that's why we deliberately have a limited amount of bullets and ammo on any direct weapons onboard the station. We encourage the player to use other tools. Some of the tools are not initially designed for combat but there are ways to use them to kill the Typhon, so that was our goal - for it to feel like you're a smart survivor." Prey's equipment include the GLOO Cannon, which freezes foes solid, builds new traversal paths, and plugs jets of flame; the Disrupter Stun Gun,

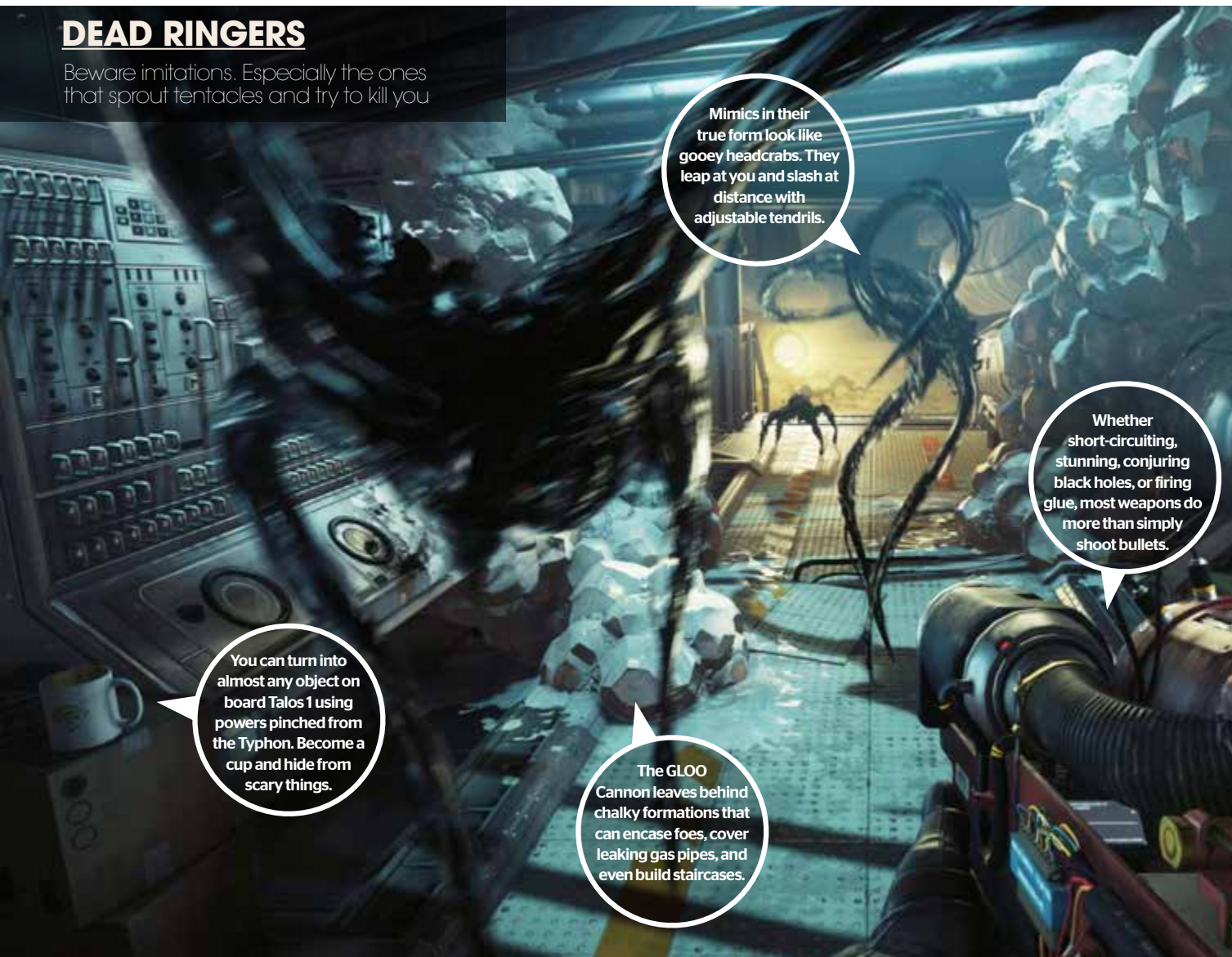
a handheld electroshock weapon immobilising humans and short-circuiting machines; and the Recycler Charge, an experimental black hole grenade, which clears paths and breaks objects into chunks you can craft things from.

The most intriguing powers come from the Typhon themselves. Soon you're able to recreate their genetic code and blast foes with superheated plasma, propel with kinetic blasts, telepathically control minds, send annoyances skyward by reversing a column of gravity, and temporarily turn into everyday items. Why would you want to become, say, a stinking ashtray? To hide. While going loud in the early game is perfectly acceptable, powerful Typhon call for sneakier approaches. If you spot the Nightmare, an angry 10-foot mess of walking tar, it's probably best to turn into a chair and wait in the corner. A toggleable torch, silenced pistol, and visible detection meters above enemy heads give the stealth system depth.

Next we loot a tumour from a Mimic's corpse. Well you can't waste a perfectly good tumour.

DEAD RINGERS

Beware imitations. Especially the ones that sprout tentacles and try to kill you



You can turn into almost any object on board Talos 1 using powers pinched from the Typhon. Become a cup and hide from scary things.

Mimics in their true form look like gooey headcrabs. They leap at you and slash at distance with adjustable tendrils.

Whether short-circuiting, stunning, conjuring black holes, or firing glue, most weapons do more than simply shoot bullets.

The GLOO Cannon leaves behind chalky formations that can encase foes, cover leaking gas pipes, and even build staircases.

"YOU'RE ABLE TO RECREATE THE TYPHON'S GENETIC CODE AND BLAST FOES WITH SUPERHEATED PLASMA AND PROPEL WITH KINETIC BLASTS"

Exotic materials like this are used to fabricate Neuromods, while foodstuffs like crisp red apples and sparkling wine give us health, and scavenged spools of frayed wire and plastic tubing can be broken down into spare parts. This all requires the Recycler, a machine you come across occasionally that turns junk into useful non-junk. That non-junk can go in a second machine, the Fabricator, to make tools like the Artax Propulsion System, which boosts jumps and even enables you to venture outside the station in zero-G.

GOOD MORNING, MORGAN. WAIT, WHERE ARE YOU? THIS IS YOUR ALARM CLOCK. HELLO?

Keeping our feet on the ground for now we push into the Research and Design area. Here's where the game is starting to open up. We can proceed by either heading into a vent or stealing the keycard from Bellamy's office. Some routes aren't available to us yet, like hauling a

piece of heavy equipment out the way, fixing a control panel, or hacking into a high-level terminal, but we can always return once we've got the required upgrades. They're extensive, and to get them, you need Neuromods.

The first one sits behind a glass display case in the Neuromod Division, an exhibit dedicated to human progress. Installing it sees Morgan lift up the chunky '80s-camcorder-looking device and let two sharp needles pierce his eyeball.

Now we can see three level-up trees. The first, Scientist, is all about smarts and self-preservation: Metabolic Boost doubles health gained by eating food; Hacking lets you bypass security measures on terminals and robots; and Necropsy lets you recover more valuable organs from deceased Typhon. The second, Engineer, centres on strength and skill: Leverage allows you to carry bulky objects and brute force doors open; Repair lets you fix turrets and electrical junctions; and Suit Modification allows extra inventory space. Finally, Security revolves around firearms and

EQUAL FIGHTS

Raphael Colantonio on letting players choose their gender.



"It's the way the world evolved in the past decade or so. If you look statistically, I think we are at a very close 50/50 percent of both gendered gamers, and so it's just a matter of representing everybody. In fact, it's not just genders. It's also ethnicity, sexual orientation. We believe that we're in a world where now everybody matters equally. So it's a good way to identify yourself. First of all in the first-person game a lot of it is about identification, so we give you these choices at the beginning."

GM Feature

On The Cover!



Meet some unfortunate victims of the GLOO Cannon. When you hit victims frozen by it, they shatter.

First Resident Evil 7 and now Prey. What is it with games featuring weird monsters made out of jam?



Three skill trees let you pursue the occupations you're not remotely skilled enough for in real life.



CHAIR MAN OF THE BOARD

Four objects we'd love to mimic in Prey

You can harvest alien powers and turn into all manner of objects in Arkane's transmogrify-tastic shooter. Become a cup and squeeze through a gap. Become a turret and shoot everyone. Become a drone and fly around going "Wheee I'm a drone". But what else? Here are four suggestions that aren't in the game but could be if Arkane took our calls.

MOTORBIKE

What better way to get to work in style? Although we'd have to construct a sophisticated silicon dummy to sit on top so it doesn't get stopped by the police.

HELIUM BALLOON

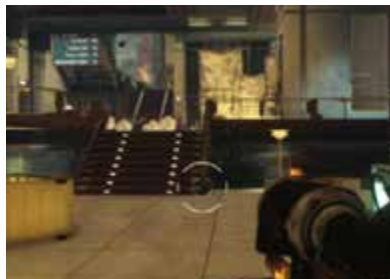
Whenever life gets us down we can abandon our troubles and just float quietly off into the sky. Landing would be tricky, mind you. We'd need some kind of air-releasing valve.

TELESCOPE

Oh, to be able to stare off into the stars and appreciate the wonders of our solar system every night. And also spy on the neighbours.

THE MONA LISA

So we could hang in our dingy flat and class the place up. The irony is that we could never truly appreciate ourselves.



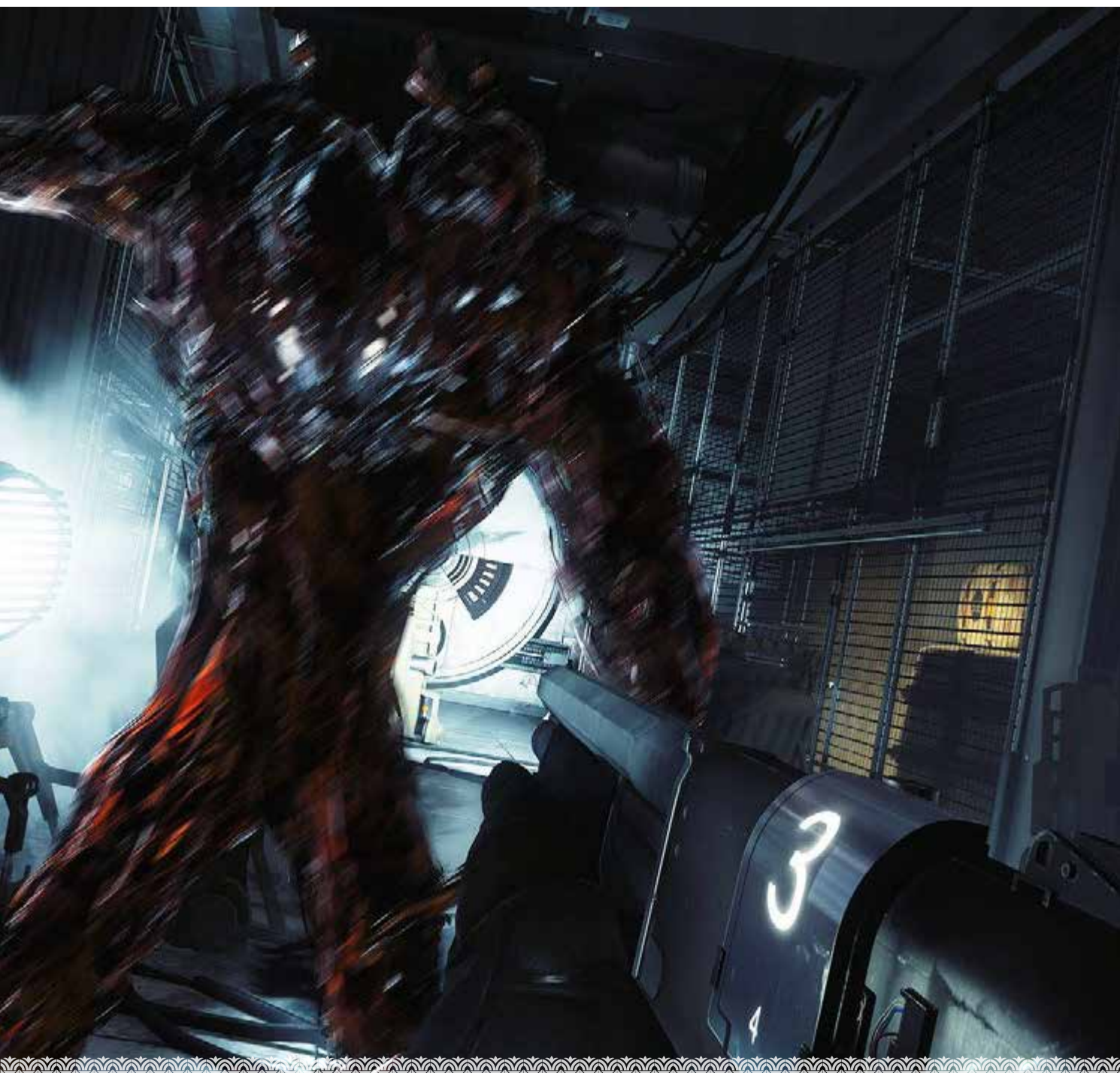
"COMBAT, STEALTH, CUSTOMISATION, AND CONSEQUENCE ALONG AN EPIC JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY"

fitness: Combat Focus slows time; Stealth lets you sprint without making noise; and Sneak Attack does double damage to enemies unaware of your presence. There are plenty more besides.

Neuromods are Arkane's way of springboarding into philosophical questions on the trajectory of mankind. So is this a cynical vision of the future or an optimistic one? "Well, actually it's a little bit of both," says Colantonio. "One of the themes of the game is there's a great progress that has been made, and progress is that now people can actually learn abilities from each other. If you observe the world champion tennis player, then you can

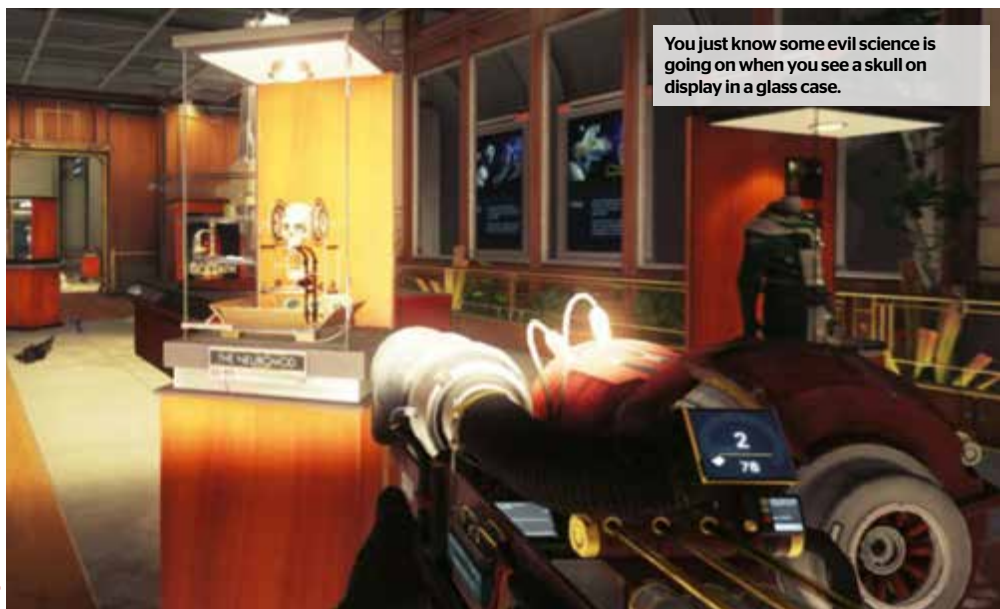
actually use a device on yourself and learn to play tennis the same way. The question is, what would you do with that? What would Earth become if you did use this, and what kind of power struggle would be generated by such a technology and such possibilities?"

After installing a handful of Neuromods directly into our head we emerge into Talos 1's splendid lobby. It's gently revolving in the shadow of the moon, a twinkling Earth peeking just behind it. The entire game takes place here, and it's fully roamable from the off, with main missions, optional goals, and plentiful secrets. One example of a side-quest fleshes out Bellamy's important research on Psychoscopes



which, according to an email we happened to read, he kept in his crew quarters. We need to find his body for the keycard. For now though we endeavour to unravel the story by heading into our executive office. Morgan Yu, it appears, is no lowly test subject, but the VP Director of Research for TranStar Corporation. Gaffer to guinea pig - that's a heck of a demotion.

A locked control panel stands in the way, but we discover its code by hacking into a nearby computer (we say 'hacked'; the password is pasted on the side with a post-it note). The video file we find on Yu's terminal is a bombshell we don't want to spoil, and it leaves us wondering what other classified information awaits in this cloak-and-dagger world. Like *Dishonored*'s richly realised pseudo-Victorian setting, this is a densely layered alt-near-future built on a solid foundation of reality. *Prey* is a game of combat, stealth, customisation, and consequence along an epic journey of shape-shifting and self-discovery.



You just know some evil science is going on when you see a skull on display in a glass case.



ABOVE OUR SPACE STATION

We talk science fiction, shape-shifting, and Terry Gilliam with Arkane Studios president **Raphael Colantonio**

Q Some people say the best science fiction is all about inner exploration. Does this hold true for *Prey*?

A It is both a place and personal exploration. The first player motive is just escape a place that is hostile to you and survive. So that's very primal and easy to grasp for any player, and it's self-motivating really. And the second one is to figure out why you're here, what happened to you, who you truly are and what you are going to do with this information once you have it.

Q How important is it to give players ways to manipulate and interact with the game besides just shooting everyone with bullets?

A So we have not only some other type of gadgets but also we have powers so that the player can actually learn some of the powers from the aliens themselves. Whatever weird thing they do eventually the player can also do them if they invest points in that. So, for example, they can lift themselves in the air,

they can mimic other things including robots and turrets, they can duplicate themselves and shift in a direction and leave a duplicate of themselves behind that acts as a lure, etc.

Q How many different objects can you turn yourself into? And is it useful for doing more than hiding from aliens?

A Pretty much any object in the game. Anything that is not too tiny, if something really is tiny then you can't do it, but most of them you can... Another reason might be that you want to go on the other side of a door... then you can turn into something that's small enough so that you can slip through it.

Q There's a flashlight, mimicry, and enemies with stealth meters, so is it safe to assume there'll be a stealth portion later? Will we be doing some sneaking around?

A Yes, totally. The idea is to, at least for a while, until the player finds the better tools, he's

always going to feel a little threatened by the imbalance of power.

Q The original *Prey* was released some years ago. What elements - if any - are you drawing from that game?

A The only thing in common with the original is the theme and premise. It's a first-person shooter on a space station with aliens and with interesting mechanics, that's pretty much the only thing. As for the rest, people have to look at it like what happens in Hollywood when, you know, there's been ten times the same name for a different movie over the past 50 years and it's the same kind of thing really.

Q What was the inspiration for the design of *Talos*? We've really been struck by how distinctive it looks.

A Artistically, we wanted something that felt kind of 'raw' as far as technology goes. A little bit like Terry Gilliam kind of things. The only difference in our case is that Terry Gilliam goes very dark and we have dark-looking aliens, so we wanted to keep it more with colourful and saturated colours, so that they really contrast with the aliens. So it's a mix of a lot of influences but it does come up with something that is unique, that feels '60s, '70s-inspired but pushed in the future with a lot of those bright colours. All of that with a grounded raw type of technology so that it's not too crazy. There's no teleportation. All of it feels kind of like something that could maybe exist one day.

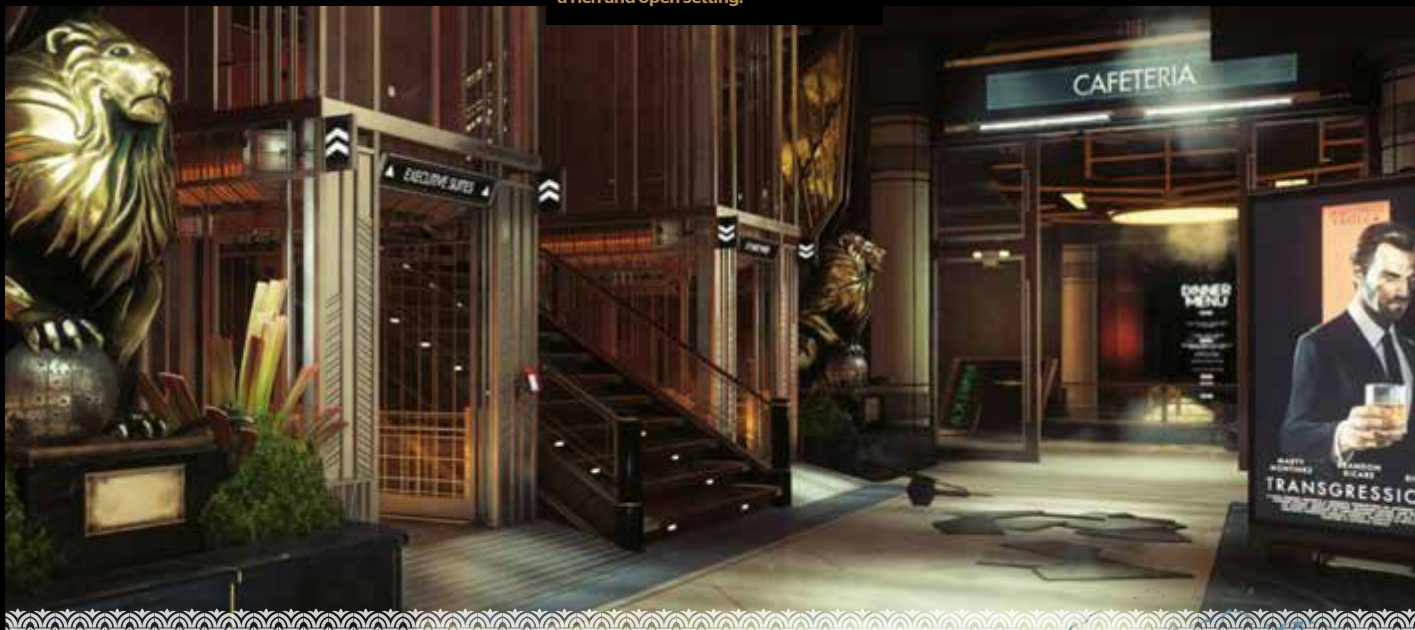
Q There's a lot of snooping to be done as your character looks through other people's computers. How do you keep this tried-and-tested mechanic fresh?

A Something we did that is a little different than most games is you find the equivalent of iPhones or tablets or whatever, we call them Transtrike, and those actually feature a full conversation, as opposed to just one person doing a memo to themselves... in our case we extended that to actually what you find is actually full conversations.





From lush arboretums and welcoming crew quarters to austere laboratories and the cold vacuum of space, Talos 1 is a rich and open setting.



Q What can you tell me is your favourite part of working on Prey?

A I would say it's been true of pretty much every game we made at Arkane Studios, it's the moment where everything starts to become alive and almost out of control of the designers. When you design the systems independently of each other with some rules that are in abstraction of anything, that are logical rules, and then you put all those systems together and then... things start to interact and surprise you and give you new ideas or make you laugh, or inspires you to do some other mechanics or to fix some stuff - that's the best moment for any game when we develop them.

Q What iterations did the game go through during development?

A The very first version was more about the plot and the overall motives of the player... it was not super satisfying because the only thing that was agreed on would be that it's a grounded sci-fi type of thing, we didn't want it to be too wacky. But as we were doing this then it was also a little hard to find an identity, so that's when we looked up some of the artists from France including some help from the art director of Dishonored, some help from Victor Antenov. And then we came up with a narrative for the backstory and what led to this place being the way it is and that spawned a million ideas, because once you have that, then everything becomes logical and you make things that are also filtered through the same

lenses, and so that was key to the big change of our location.

Q Are there any features that you got carried away with, and you had to rein yourself in?

A Yeah, of course. If we did not push for grounded from the get-go we would then be all over the place right? So the thing that is not so grounded is turning into objects and jumping around in the level, that comes from a grounded idea which is, 'If the Mimic can turn into anything, and at some point you can actually learn their abilities, then you could do also whatever they're doing, including turning into anything', but the fact is, as this happens and as you play with it, it leads to a lot of funny situations. Which is fine because it's more like a funny situation created by the player than us showing something funny.

Q Have you encountered any unintentional hilarity during testing?

A Something funny for me happened at a Christmas party thing where you show what everyone's working on. We were demonstrating the Mimic power, and what happened was that I mimicked for the first time, and when you do that you fall to the ground as this object next to the other object, and then a few seconds later a Mimic came close to me and turned into the object too, so there were now three times the same object... And this just happened systemically. It's a great example of when the designers don't even control exactly what's going to happen.



The iconic Netch – aka ‘Sky Squids’ – are just one of the strange creatures inhabiting the wilds of TESO: Morrowind.



“A PLACE WE FONDLY ASSOCIATE WITH EXPLORATION, SPONTANEITY, AND THE JOYS OF GETTING LOST”



The volcano may not have erupted yet, but there are still some mushroom-meltingly harsh environments in this centuries-earlier version of Morrowind



TESO mascot and uncomfortably idolised fan favourite Naryu Virian returns in Morrowind to act as your guide.



GM Preview

Eyes-on With Future Hits!

Format PS4, XO, PC **Publisher** Bethesda
Developer Zenimax Online Studios **ETA** 6 June

THE ELDER SCROLLS ONLINE: MORROWIND

With pet bear in tow, TESO ventures to the strange land of Morrowind...

It's rare to see a developer kick off a videogame presentation by listing everything that's wrong with the game, but that's what happened at the unveiling of Morrowind, the latest Elder Scrolls Online expansion. The fact that the developer can so candidly look back on TESO's shaky beginnings is testament to how far it's come since then.

We speak with Zenimax Online Studios creative director, Rich Lambert, about the game's progress since that rocky start: "When we were working on the game soon after release, with all the mixed reviews and feedback, it was a kick in the balls," he admits. "But we grinded it out and turned it around. Perception of TESO

has pretty much done a complete 180 at this point."

TESO's turnaround makes this the perfect time to visit one of the most beloved locations in Elder Scrolls history. The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind was arguably the most intriguing and ambitious game in the series. Look past the dice-rolling combat and swarms of cliff racers pecking at your eyes, and you'd be captivated by its weird world of towering mushrooms and meteors suspended in the sky, of cities split between five secretly warring factions and a mortal hermaphrodite god sitting in a palace resembling a Mayan temple.

On the level

Aside from eradicating the countless bugs that blighted the game's launch, a key part of TESO's recovery was the introduction of level scaling with the One



This being Morrowind, you'll be able to venture into abandoned Dwarven ruins filled with clockwork monstrosities. And then fight with them.



The new Warden class is great with animals, but when you're getting burned to death by a demon, he just stands and stares at you. Useless numpety.

Settling down with Homestead

Move into ESO's home-owning expansion

Buy

There are nearly 40 different homes to choose from in the free Homestead expansion, representing each of the game's races. Your first one will be a poky room in an inn, but hey, foot on the ladder and all that...



Decorate

Once you have your humble (or gaudy) abode, you'll be able to decorate with around 2,000 bits and bobs, placing them wherever you like. If you're no interior designer, you can auto-furnish it too.



Craft

Those hours toiling away at crafting stations pay off in Homestead, as you'll be able to use your crafting skill to make home furnishings. Time to retire from the sword-making and build yourself a rocking chair.



Expand

You'll be able to own more than one home, and give specific people permission to access or even decorate them. Homes are tied to your account, so are shared between all your ESO characters.



Tamriel update in October 2016. This opened up the world, allowing low-level players to travel to previously high-level areas by scaling enemies to them. It also let newbies group with their veteran buddies, with everyone gaining XP appropriate for their level. It was a drastic departure from the traditionally vertical structure of MMOs that forces players to grind and level up before venturing into new and dangerous areas, and moved TESO towards a more sprawling, typically Elder Scrolls feel. Likewise, the Justice system that facilitates good old-fashioned thievery, and the recently-released Homestead expansion that adds home ownership, have helped give TESO more of the core appeal of the mainline games.

These changes set the game up for a return to Morrowind, a place we fondly

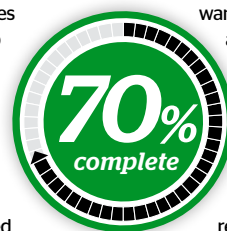
associate with exploration, spontaneity and the joys of getting lost. Players of any level will be able to venture there, and it uses the same map as that of Elder Scrolls III, albeit one retrofitted to look how it did 700 years before the events of the original game.

While returning Morrowind players will know how to get around and recognise many of the landmarks, creatures and cities, there are plenty of differences in the topography; the capital city of Vivec, for example, is only partially built and covered in scaffolding, while the volcanic wastes of the Ashlands cover less of Vvardenfell because the Red Mountain hasn't yet erupted, making much of the island more lush and verdant than you'll remember.

iteration that takes time when making a new class," he concludes.

Like every TESO class, the Warden has three skill trees. Winter's Embrace is ice-focused and tanky, Green Balance focuses on nature and healing, letting you, among other things, sprout a lovely temporary garden within which party members heal up, and Animal Companion summons critters to deal big damage. The Warden feels like a more eccentric and experimental class than the default bunch; a perk, Lambert tells me, of being able to focus solely on creating one class instead of the four that the game launched with.

If going on a historical jaunt around Vvardenfell, diving into the lore, and checking whether a certain tree stump containing a certain valuable object can still be found in Seyda Neen doesn't quite satiate your bloodlust, then perhaps the three-way 4v4v4 PvP combat of Battlegrounds is more your tippie. When



"WHILE RETURNING MORROWIND PLAYERS WILL RECOGNISE MANY OF THE LANDMARKS, THERE ARE DIFFERENCES IN THE TOPOGRAPHY"

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Beastie boy

Morrowind is also introducing TESO's first new class, the Warden, which can best be described as Elder Scrolls' take

on a druid or beastmaster. Lambert tells me that creating this class was a huge challenge. "You'd think that we'd have a template to work with, but with the Warden we're introducing ice magic, nature magic, and animal magic, all of which require a whole new set of animations," he tells me. "At first, we

wanted the Warden to summon animals like the bear and cliff racer (a creature that'll evoke post-traumatic shudders in Morrowind players who've spent untold hours being harassed by it), but then we realised we'd have about 40 different animals around us." The solution was to keep the bear as a summonable permanent ally, but turn the cliff racer into a spell, where it appears from the ether, crashes into its target, and disappears. "It's that kind of

iteration that takes time when making a new class," he concludes.



The distinctive oversized 'shrooms of Morrowind are back and - pardon the cliché - they really are bigger than ever. We're going to need a bigger frying pan.





One of The Warden's spells unleashes a swarm of wasps at your enemies. Not just any wasps, but big, mean, high-fantasy wasps.

That giant mushroom in the background is the same Telvanni Stronghold we see in Morrowind, only 700 years younger and much prettier.

Thanks to the excellent level-scaling overhaul in One Tamriel, you'll be able to group and hunt around Vvardenfell with friends of any level.

TESO director Matt Firor was asked on-stage what existing game it most resembled, he shrewdly described it as "a slower-paced version of Quake" – a comment that should probably be taken with a pinch of Void Salt considering Quake is conveniently another Bethesda IP and, well, it's not that similar.

Quake my day

With that said, Battlegrounds is about as close as TESO will ever get to an arena

shooter. It features Capture the Flag, Domination, and Deathmatch modes, and there will be three maps at launch, all of which have the array of vantage spots and bottlenecks you'd expect from a sporty multiplayer shooter. Unlike the larger-scale Alliance War PvP, Battlegrounds isn't Alliance-based, making it a playful, separate side-dish to TESO's main narratives.

Zenimax prefers to call TESO: Morrowind a 'chapter', not an expansion,

suggesting the developer wants it to be treated more as a valuable addition to Elder Scrolls lore than a clinical MMO bolt-on; Morrowind, with all the weight its name carries for gamers, deserves no less. It's worthy of this respect. A fresh start of sorts, Morrowind is a fitting, evocative label for the latest chapter in a game that has gone from exemplifying the idea the MMO genre is on its last legs, to a confident dragon shout that it's anything but. **Robert Zak**

GM Instant Reaction

+ The developer has been extremely faithful to the lay and lore of the original, well-loved Morrowind.

- PvP Battlegrounds looks a tad generic, and seems to highlight the game's so-so combat mechanics.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

Set to be the biggest, most ambitious TESO expansion to date.



What we're learning from these pictures is that people don't like attacking fiery things with swords. Can't someone just summon a bottomless water bucket?



Format PC Publisher Bandai Namco Developer Mojo Bones ETA 12 April

IMPACT WINTER

Or: a period of prolonged cold weather due to an asteroid hitting

It's a game set after a global catastrophe sends society spiralling towards oblivion, yet there's not a zombie in sight. It's a miracle. Despite its heavily stylised visuals, this is a grounded post-apocalyptic survival about enduring 30 days under severe conditions until rescue arrives.

Crafting, exploring, and helping strangers you encounter reduces the timer. Inside an old church turned base, you'll build relationships with four survivors who each have their own set of skills: Blane is a hunter, endowing you with expertise to

explore new areas of the white tundra known as The Void so you can reclaim his supplies from an illusive white bear, while mechanic Maggie boosts the church's defence to hamper scavenger raids.

Heart of cold

Death matters here. "You can resume from certain points," says Mojo Bones co-founder Stuart Ryall. "But if a team member dies, that stays with you. You have to live with the idea that that particular skill set is now cut off from the team and naturally your journey becomes a little bit more arduous, and it's a little bit more tough to reach the 30 days." So if cook Wendy isn't around to whip your ingredients into nourishing

dishes you'll resort to heating up canned food, turning sustenance into a struggle. While followers are automated to an extent, you'll have to monitor their health, stamina, temperature, hunger, hydration, and morale. We give Maggie some scrambled eggs, for instance, and her food and happiness ratings soar because everyone loves scramby eggs.

Venturing into The Void is key. On its snow-covered surface you'll hunt, fish, pilfer seeds, and trade with nomads, while underneath lie goodie-stuffed supermarkets, crashed airplanes, and even oil tankers. Random events, from freak storms to strange illnesses, require thinking on your feet. "Although the map is fixed, it's very dynamic," says Ryall.

"IF WENDY THE COOK DIES YOU'LL RESORT TO HEATING UP CANNED FOOD, TURNING SUSTENANCE INTO A STRUGGLE."



Allies freeze if the fire goes out, they tire from lack of sleep, and even get depressed and wander off when over-worked.



You can't see them, but trust us, menus are clear and concise. They're easy to navigate.



"The weather is dynamic, the characters that you meet, the strangers wandering the map, the items that

are in the searchables you find, all of those things are conjured up on a new game and, of course, the rescue timer, this idea that you might have got rescued in seven hours, I might have got rescued in eight hours. So there's also this idea of, let's play again, let's try and rescue the entire team."

Mr snowbot

An in-game day is 30 minutes real-time, and Mojo Bones clocks a typical playthrough at anywhere from seven to 14 hours. Whatever your timeframe, robot companion Ako-Light is invaluable. You can upgrade his radar range, torch brightness, enemy scanner, and more. Reach the topmost tier of his thermo-drill and it'll not only burrow through ice to open new routes but melt locks too. And don't forget batteries. Once they die Ako-Light goes offline and you'll have to expend energy hauling him back to base.

This hovering 'bot is an essential pack mule, and you're able to load him up with

hundreds of items across seven categories: electronic scrap repairs him, junk is used for fuel, and old-world trinkets give your team a morale boost. Life in Impact Winter, then, is a balancing act between looking after your party and looking out for yourself, about taking your chances in the great unknown, and about giving some beans to someone to really make their day. ■ **Ben Griffin**

GM Instant Reaction

+ Picking through the ruin of a rich, wintry world in an effort to lead a group of sympathetic survivors to rescue.

- We're unsure about the randomisation. To avoid predictability, the key will be how many different events there are.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

Grounded character-driven survival. Icy, but with a warm heart.

Chill guy

Mojo Bones co-founder Stuart Ryall on...

The snow

"We've got a tessellation system for the snow, that's not in this demo, that'll have you actually carving through the snow and leaving tracks... That's one thing that'll be in future promotion."



The look

"Originally the game was 2D... When we started prototyping it we decided to stick with a lot of the concept art that we'd already done... A lot of realistic survival games can be quite bleak."



The publisher

"The negative thing of being five guys is that you can become quite blinkered... Bandai Namco doesn't just pop up and say, 'hey, we've got an event'. There's full-on assessment of the game."

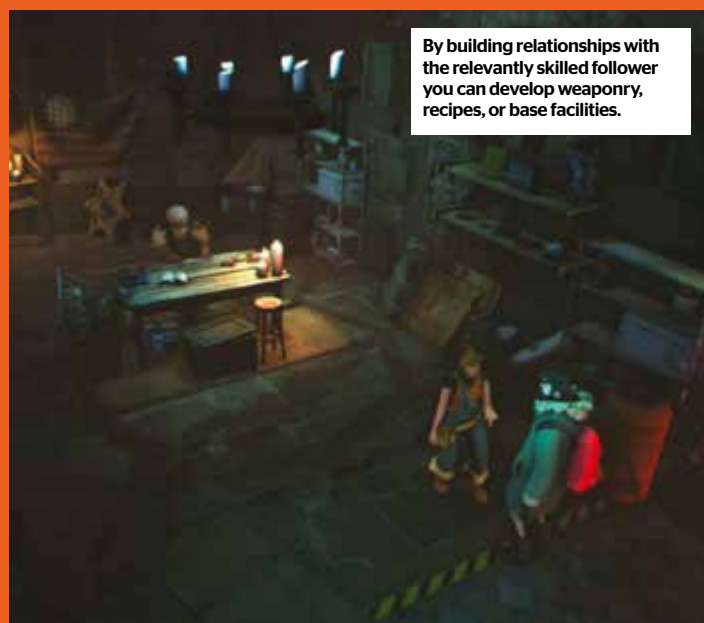


The inspiration

"I'm a big fan of the old LucasArts adventure games. Although this isn't a point-and-click adventure, you can see from things like the viewpoint and when you look at the church it kind of has that flavour to it."



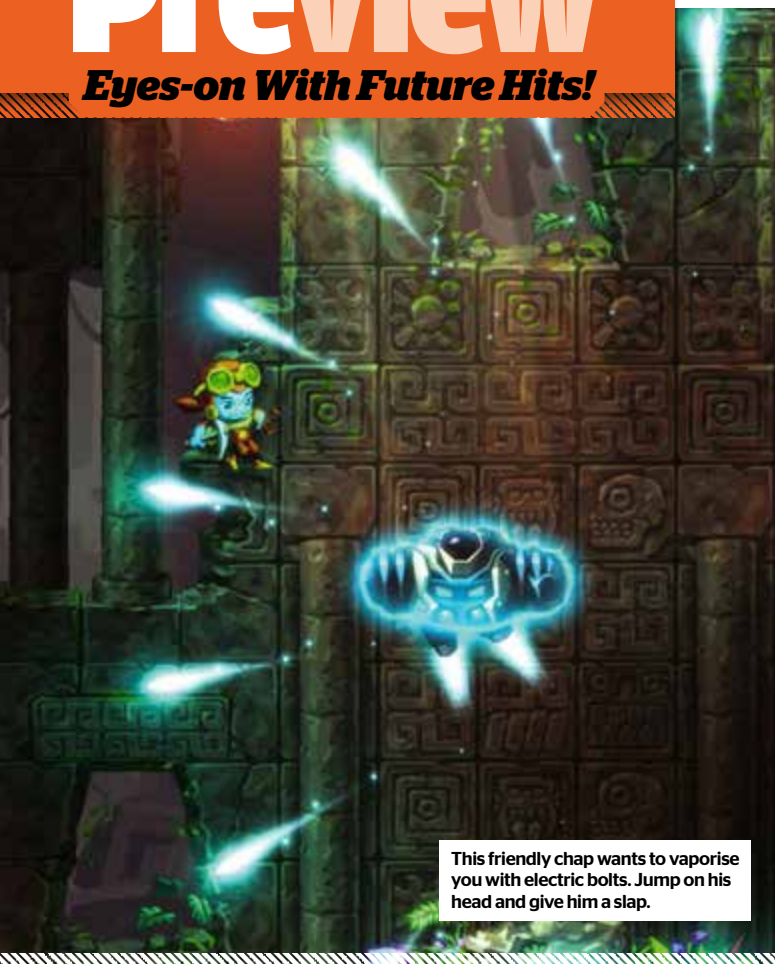
Little hovering robot Ako-Light is equipped with a zip-line, thermo drill, light, and scanner. Use these wisely because his battery life is limited.



By building relationships with the relevantly skilled follower you can develop weaponry, recipes, or base facilities.

GM Preview

Eyes-on With Future Hits!



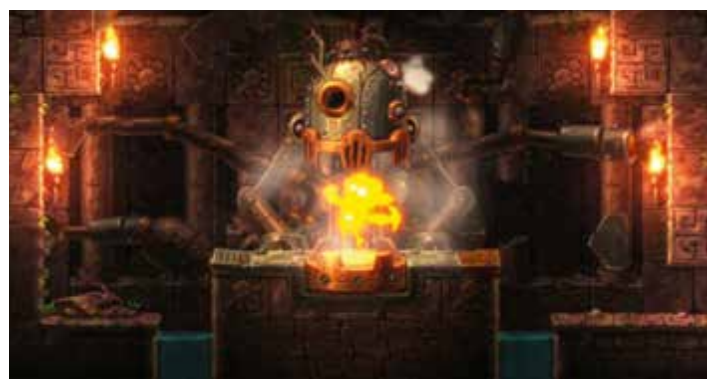
This friendly chap wants to vaporise you with electric bolts. Jump on his head and give him a slap.



Once you've got the Sprint Hydraulics upgrade you can make an extra-long jump after getting up to speed, allowing you to reach new areas.



You can hop up walls, so you can always get out of the pits you dig.



Format Switch **Publisher** Image & Form Games
Developer Image & Form Games **ETA** Summer

STEAMWORLD DIG 2

Proving that one robot's Trashium is another man's treasure

If the phenomenal success of *Minecraft* has taught the gaming world anything, it's that there's nothing

players want to do more than excavate dirt. *SteamWorld Dig 2* seems to have taken that lesson very much to heart.

Building on its excellent predecessor, this sequel sees you step into the shoes of steam-powered automaton Dorothy to burrow down through the layers of an alien world in search of 'Trashium' ore and other valuables. Getting rich isn't as simple as just swinging your pickaxe a few times, however...

Down in the darkness, strange things stir - ancient, evil, electric-powered machines hatching dark plots. You'll need

to avoid their sinister, fanatical cultists as you explore.

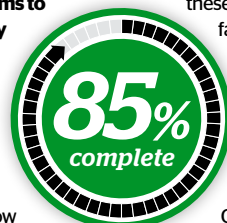
The ruins you'll uncover have their own surprises for you, too. From dart traps to spike pits to blocks ready to fall from the ceiling and crush your metal bonce, it's clear the original architects of these buried temples played their fair share of *Spelunky*.

Dig this

Luckily, those devilish builders also had the generosity to leave a few handy upgrades behind too.

Grab these to unlock new areas, *Metroidvania*-style. Can't run fast enough to get through a trapped passage? Sprint Hydraulics will give your little legs the get-up-and-go they need.

Currently the game is coming to Switch only, but more platforms are to be announced soon - expect it on PS4, XO, and PC before long. **Robin Valentine**



Instant Reaction

+ The first game was fantastically good fun, and this sequel looks ready to follow in its robotic footsteps.

- It might be a little too similar to its predecessor - hopefully it brings more new ideas to the table than we've seen so far.

THRILL-O-METER



An indie treasure that should be perfect for Switch.



Image & Form's games all take place in *SteamWorld*, a setting where humans are long gone and steam- and diesel-powered robots populate the universe.

Format PS4, PC Publisher Square Enix
Developer Square Enix ETA 20 June

FINAL FANTASY XIV: STORMBLOOD

The ultimate FF fan theme park heads East, and it's almost too big to take in

The best MMO on consoles is about to get even bigger, with new classes, dungeons, gear, and a massive map that goes far beyond what even diehard FFXIV fans were able to predict. After ending a 1,000-year war, your attention turns to liberating an area called Ala Mhigo from the Garlean Empire, which has been conquering any nation it can with an army of Magitek war machines.

That's just the beginning. You'll also be heading East to a new continent inspired by Japan and China. Othard is full of towering pagodas, plains visited by nomads, mountain villages, and even an underwater temple trapped in a giant bubble. You'll spend most of your time based out of the port city of Kugane following the tale of FFXIV regular Yugiri – an Au Ra ninja you met during your earlier adventures. Though just what that entails won't be seen until the expansion launches in June.

A touch of class

To help you cut through the onslaught of new monsters and dungeons, two new

classes are arriving: the classic Red Mage, who wields a magic rapier and attacks from afar with spells before closing the gap with blade strikes; and the Samurai, who uses katanas and builds up combos of strikes before unleashing devastating special moves. Both are damage-focused, so there aren't any new healers or tanks this time, but all existing classes will also get new abilities as well as a raised level cap of 70.

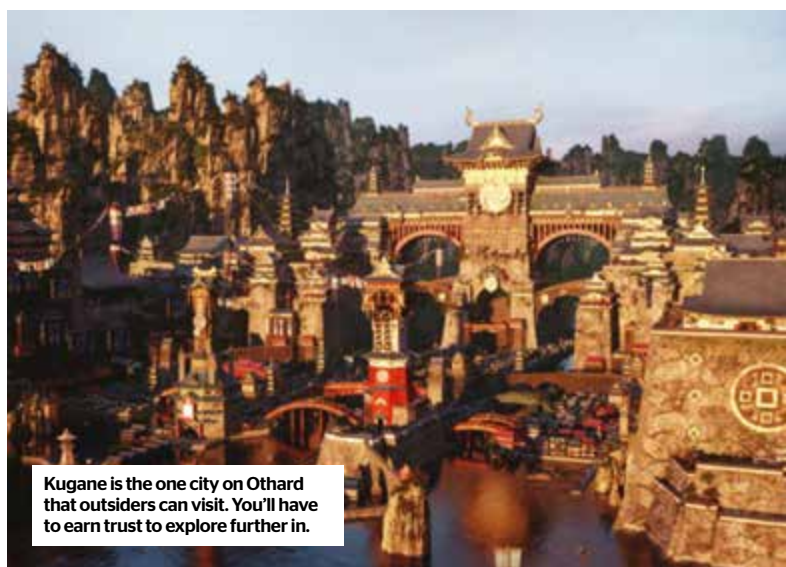
The battle system is also set to get a major overhaul to make it easier than ever for even MMO newbies to get involved, and to make sure all those new skills still feel comfortable if you're playing with a controller. Of course, there's also a

plethora of new items to collect and craft, a new housing area to show off all of your new furnishings in, new raids to contend with, and new Primals and beast tribes to topple. Lakshmi is a snake-like goddess who previously appeared in Final Fantasy VI, whereas the knight-like Susano is entirely new to the series.

And yet after all that we've still only seen a tiny fraction of what the Stormblood expansion has to offer. With loads more still to be revealed, Final Fantasy fans are sure to be in for a real treat in June. ■ **Daniella Lucas**



There's one plains area that the nomadic Au Ra race call home. It'll be the largest area in the game – perfect for wandering around, even without a travelling tribe.



Kugane is the one city on Othard that outsiders can visit. You'll have to earn trust to explore further in.

GM Instant Reaction

+ The scope of the new areas looks set to exceed all expectations, and the Samurai class looks amazing.

- Only two new jobs this time instead of three due to balancing issues – and both of them are damage-focused.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

The next expansion looks huge – prepare for a massive adventure.



The new, and rather lovely, housings area won't be available at launch to stop people racing ahead to it too quickly. Looks like we'll have to cancel the removal van for now.

Format PS4, XO, PC Publisher Bandai Namco Developer Tarsier ETA 28 April

LITTLE NIGHTMARES

Hands-on with a quaint and queasy horror platformer



You always have a lighter on hand. It's actually affected by environmental air flow, flickering when you're near fans and chasms.



This is the tale of macabre undersea resort The Maw, where boatloads of children are deposited and never seen again, and the one kid making a break for it - Six. To do so she'll have to navigate a threatening and oddly proportioned world clearly designed by something bigger, meaner, and with no respect for interior design.

The exaggerated scale makes simple tasks challenging. At the start of our hands-on demo we physically grab doors to pull them open, scramble up crooked stacks of books, and throw old toys to hit out-of-reach switches. With Six's pristine yellow mac standing out from the stagnant setting, and her tiny footsteps marking against industrial clang and static, there's a wordless emphasis on surreal dislocation.

Sea no evil

In the next room we encounter the Janitor, an unnerving figure dressed in a dirt-caked overcoat, pork pie hat, and bandages, who uses elongated arms to feel his way around in service of eyes, which are hidden under a flap of skin. We try to sprint past but he swiftly catches Six between two spider-like limbs before bringing her up to his ear and listening inquisitively, like you would to a seashell. She passes out and the screen fades to black in one of the creepiest 'game overs' we've ever seen.

The creaky floorboards reveal our position, so this time we tiptoe across carpets to a trapdoor. To winch it up, we have to jam a lever into a socket and turn. The rope tightens and the trapdoor rises with a loud squeak. The Janitor's coming. With the escape route only half open, we take our chances and jump down as a pair of arms swat the air above our heads. Next we

**"CREAKY FLOORBOARDS
GIVE OUR POSITION AWAY
SO THIS TIME WE TIPTOE
ACROSS SPONGY CARPETS"**



Placeholder art cast the protagonist as a simple triangle. You can see echoes of it in Six's bold and effective silhouette.



travel through a vent, using Six's lighter in the darkness, and find ourselves under the Janitor's feet. Flicking the right stick to pan around and keep tabs on his location, we climb into the room, lure him over by brushing past a cymbal-banging monkey playing, then slip by as he investigates.

Mac and me

There are shades of *Inside* and *Limbo* to this nightmarish adventure, but where both those games stayed locked to a 2D plane, free movement here opens up playful possibilities. Take the library, in which we must outmanoeuvre the Janitor amid a series of clocks and bookshelves. Ledges above hold pots we carefully weave between so as not to alert our long-limbed foe. The 3D setting, combined with Six's grabby hands, gives you a greater sense of presence within it; it's less a stage to travel across and more a sandbox to play within - that terrifying game of hide-and-seek with the Janitor being one example.

This freedom comes at a cost, however. At the end of our demo we find ourselves at a dead end, dodging the Janitor's clutches as he reaches under a door that's wedged open by a cage propped between it and the floor. The idea is to run up to the cage and pull away its bars one by one until it collapses and closes the door, but we can't get the precise angle and Six grasps at thin air, giving the Janitor a window to squash us. At other times we struggle to jump off ladders and drag suitcases because of occasionally inconsistent controls.

Indeed, nothing here is quite right. All the proportions are weird, with squat tabletops balanced precariously on spindly legs, and teetering stacks of slender shelves that look set to topple over. The camera's an almost ethereal presence, lurching between rooms and crawling along floors like a sailor struggling to find their sea legs. And the momentum-based movement of your character is slightly delayed, as if each limb is struggling to process instructions from the head. It's all very stop-motion-like. But where the previous series *Tarsier* contributed to, *LittleBigPlanet*, always felt a bit 'off' in floaty platforming and spotty grabbing and dragging mechanics, that 'offness' suits *Little Nightmares* perfectly. An offbeat and otherworldly horror with qualities to delight and disturb. **Ben Griffin**

GM Instant Reaction

+ The sense of desperation as you navigate this little dollhouse of grotesquerie is brilliantly palpable.

- One or two frustrating sections where the physics play up and prevent us doing what we need to do are a pain.

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

Like a fairytale lost to time for being slightly too disturbing.



There's plenty of life in *The Maw*, not all of it as threatening as the Janitor. These little creatures seem benevolent, if skittish. Could they be captured children like yourself, perhaps?

Format **XO** Publisher **Microsoft** Developer **Rare** ETA **Autumn**

SEA OF THIEVES

Booty and bonding await in Rare's hearty pirate 'em up

Must. Resist. Pirate puns. Rare's upcoming high seas MMO is all about swashbuckling camaraderie.

Letting you pillage with pals is the number one priority. Be it hunting treasure chests, fighting rival skull-and-crossbone crews, or simply reading a map, every act in *Sea Of Thieves* works better with fellow Thieves works better with fellow rum-swigging scallywags by your side.

Perhaps more than any other game currently headed to Xbox One, Rare is

creating an action-adventure where you need friends to get the most out of the experience. Just look at the navigation system. No one crewmate has all the information needed to successfully sail *Sea Of Thieves*' mighty pirate ships. Instead, different players have to pool their info to ensure the vessel doesn't end up at the bottom of Davy Jones' locker.

Mapping up

"Not all the information is on the map," reveals senior designer Andrew Preston, speaking on one of Rare's Inn-side Story vlogs. "The person on the wheel has some information, while the person on

the map has different information."

Unlike most titles, maps in *Sea Of Thieves* are physical in-game objects you actually have to observe in real time. On ships, the main sailing chart is found below deck, meaning in order to study it so your crew doesn't crash on those rocks around

Cannon Cove, one player physically has to go downstairs, then shout directions up at whoever's controlling the wheel.

"Splitting it up so that the world map is on the middle deck is a deliberate decision so that the line of sight is broken," adds Shelley Preston, another of

"DIFFERENT PLAYERS HAVE TO POOL THEIR INFORMATION TO ENSURE THEIR SHIP DOESN'T END UP AT THE BOTTOM OF DAVY JONES' LOCKER"



Steering the ship is a big job, and you need to rely on other crewmates to help you spot danger. Stay alert, me hearties.



Your crew should dock at outposts often. It's here you can cash in any gold reserves you're carrying.



the game's senior designers. Said decision ensures players are forced to communicate with each other over Xbox Live, and multiple sets of pirate peepers are required to master Sea Of Thieves' ships. Even the map is no substitute for a pair of alert eyes. "All the rocks and other small nuances of the world design, you have to see them from the wheel or crow's nest," says Andrew Preston.

Call of booty

Teamwork is also key when it comes to protecting your crew from other ships. Rare shared a video of several of its devs hopping onto the game's servers during a recent alpha test, and it's safe to say other players don't give them an easy ride. If you want to protect your ship and its precious booty, manning the cannons like a slickly oiled unit is essential. Of course, you could go the pacifist route and band together with your fellow pirates to play a collective ditty on some accordions in the hopes your attackers take pity on you... On second thought, stick to the cannons.

Whether you're excited by all these co-op mechanics or not, you can't deny

Sea Of Thieves is the most ambitious project Rare has undertaken in years. This feels like the sort of warmly crafted adventure we've not seen from the Twycross studio since its halcyon N64 days. With its endearing cartoon outlaws, treasure hunts and challenging sailing, Sea Of Thieves has the potential to be Xbox One's most timber-shivering exclusive. **■ Dave Meikleham**

GM Instant Reaction

+ The co-op mechanics are super clever, and have clearly been hardwired into every fibre of the game's DNA.

- Having friends to enjoy these high seas shenanigans with is pretty much essential. Lone wolf pirates need not apply.

THRILL-O-METER



Finally, Rare have been let off the leash for a new adventure.

The treasure of a man

On the hunt for pirate gold

The map

Tracking down treasure is the main way to raise funds for your crew. To find these chests, one player has to take charge of the map, physically holding it up for their fellow treasure hunters to examine.



The dig

Once you locate that precious booty, it's time to break out the shovels and get digging. Co-op play is once again king here, and if multiple pirates all dig at once, the chest can be nabbed much faster.



Banking booty

Just because you've managed to dig treasure up doesn't mean it belongs to your crew yet. To bank those juicy funds your crew must quickly take the gold to the nearest outpost and sell it to a shipwright.



The chase

Cashing in gold at outposts isn't easy. Rival crews will try to attack while you're transporting treasure. Keep communicating, and be ready to fire that blunderbuss should a pesky ambush arise.



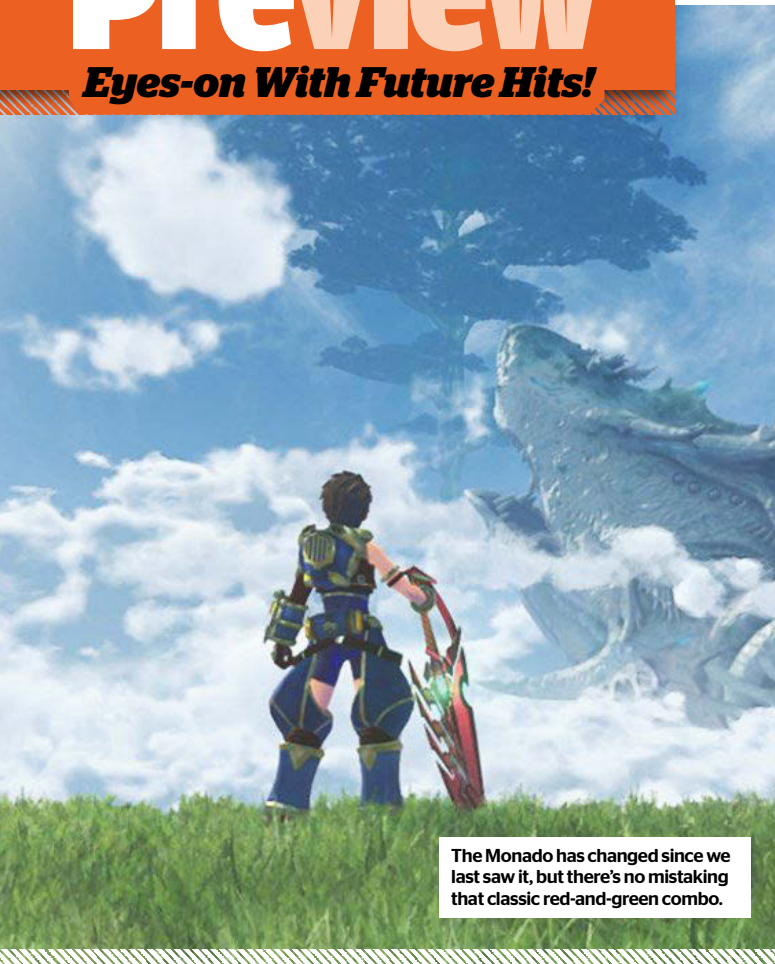
Yes, there is rum in the game. And yes, it would be thoroughly rude not to consume as much of it as your virtual pirate liver can stand.



It wouldn't be a proper skull-and-crossbones adventure without a gang of Pirates Of The Caribbean-style reanimated skeletons.

GM Preview

Eyes-on With Future Hits!



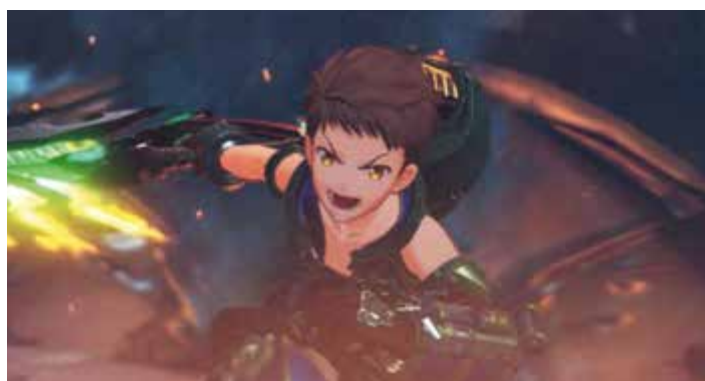
The Monado has changed since we last saw it, but there's no mistaking that classic red-and-green combo.



We yet don't know who this lady is, but we bet she's a descendant of the first game's half-human, half-robot Machina, Fiora. She's got the look.



This tiger's rider looks like she has cat ears of her own - a new race, perhaps?



Format Switch **Publisher** Nintendo
Developer Monolith Soft **ETA** Autumn

XENOBLADE CHRONICLES 2

Having a whale of a time

Shulk and co may not be returning for **Xenoblade Chronicles 2**, but having scraped our eyeballs away from the game's first teaser trailer, we have to say we're really feeling this one, and you'd be a joker if you said otherwise.

remains to be seen, but at least the creative team is pleasingly familiar. Tetsuya Takahashi is back to direct, and the original's trusty squadron of composers (minus Yoko Shimomura) has already begun tinkling out some suitably rousing theme tunes.

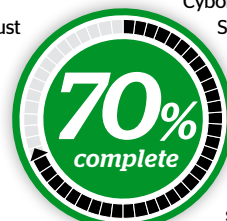
Show me the Monado

Cyborg 009 designer Masatsugu Saito brings some fresh blood to the team, chibi-fying our host of protagonists, but with a CV of mecha anime to his name, we may well see the return of X's Doll bots. We've already caught sight of what looks to be

Shulk's famous Monado sword, and a certain red-haired lady looks distinctly like a long-lost cousin of the original's half-humanoid Fiora, too. With a currently vague release date, however, it looks like we'll have to wait a while before we find out. Consider us hyped. **Katharine Byrne**

So what have we learned? Just like Wii U's X, and the Wii original, Xenoblade 2 looks screen-hoggingly epic - and a lot more fantastical than its forebears to boot, which is good news if the sci-fi leanings of X left you cold. We've yet to glimpse its local wildlife (fluffy Nopon aside), but we do know we'll be visiting giant sky cities, riding white tigers through dense forests, and gazing thoughtfully at huge, mysterious sky whales.

Whether this is the new 'endless world' created at the end of the first game



Instant Reaction

+ Huge worlds! Giant whales! Ridable tigers! If **Xenoblade 2** released tomorrow, it would already outweigh X by a long shot.

- Any hopes of seeing legendary swordsman and badass Dunban have been cruelly dashed. Oh, how we miss thee...

THRILL-O-METER

1 2 3 4 5

The sequel to one of the best JRPGs of the last decade? Yes. Please.



Running around with a diving bell strapped to your back can't be remotely practical, but maybe we'll finally be able to go underwater in this one.



Format PS4, XO, PC **Pub** Bandai Namco
Developer Bandai Namco **Out** 2 June

TEKKEN 7

The weirdest cast of fighters in Tekken history unites for this Unreal Engine 4-powered brawler. There's supernatural exorcist Claudio, the thought-to-be-dead wife of Heihachi, Kazumi, and two actual bears in Kuma and Panda. They're all yours to use in player-created online tournaments, which feature up to eight competitors and award fight money and items to those victorious. Rest assured, there's been fine-tuning aplenty since the last game, which ensures fairness in a dramatic story mode seeing two icons – Heihachi and Street Fighter's Akuma – wage war. *So many bears.* ■ **BG**



Format PS4, XO, PC **Pub** Bandai Namco
Dev The Farm 51 **Out** 26 May

GET EVEN

This psycho-thriller sees you playing as amnesiac Cole Black, an investigator for clients of high importance and low profiles. Early in the game you wake in an abandoned building with nothing but a cell phone inundated with texts about a kidnapped girl who's about to be blown up. To stop that happening, you can track clues such as footprints using the device's scanner, map, and UV light. Gunplay is a bit rote, even with Black's CornerShot firearm that bends around corners, but the high-fidelity graphics, made using a technology that 3D-scans real-world environments, shine. ■ **BG**



Format PS4, XO, PC **Pub** Focus Home
Interactive Dev Cyanide **Out** Winter

CALL OF CTHULHU

Insanity reigns supreme in this Lovecraftian mystery (this is one of the few times we can use that word without sounding pretentious). Private investigator Edward Pearce has crippling phobias you'll need to manage, from claustrophobia, shown on a meter that depletes when you hide, to monsterphobia, which spells game over if you stare at monsters. This is more thinky than fighty: at one point Pearce must stand before a painting and 'press X to use psychology'. Hmm. Hopefully that's a tone-deaf blip in an otherwise layered Lovecraft interpretation. ■ **BG**



Format PS4, XO, PC **Pub** Bandai Namco
Dev Slightly Mad Studios **Out** Winter

PROJECT CARS 2

Where Slightly Mad's first Project Cars held a sparkling mirror up to reality, its sequel jostles that mirror around and throws dirt over it for good measure, loose-surface racing tossing mud, gravel, snow, and ice into the mix. In our hands-on we drive a Mercedes around Fuji Speedway and watch heavy clouds gather and unleash pouring rain, which streams across our windshield and seeps out of oversaturated ground, eventually pooling in crevices. You can play each of the whopping 60+ tracks under numerous weather conditions, and at both day and night. ■ **BG**



Format PC **Pub** Sega
Dev Relic Entertainment **Out** 27 April

WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR III

The Boyz are back in town – and up for a scrap

Relic is doubling down on the scale of this entirely more massive RTS, from map-obliterating weapons such as orbital death beams to giant stomping heroes like Imperial Knights, Morkanauts, and Wraithknights, who dominate battlefields by crushing barriers and leading the charge.

You collect and upgrade elite units in an epic single-player campaign centring on a weapon called the Spear of Khaine. When word spreads of its presence on the world of Acheron, three factions converge: the Space Marines, Eldar, and a very cockney Ork horde. Rest assured, they all hate each other. Like in previous games, the aim is to control maps by seizing power generators and capture points, and, as before, cover is vital. It's amazing levels are standing after clashes between Dreadnoughts, Predator Tanks, Howling Banshees, War Spiders, and the incomparable Nobz. ■ **Ben Griffin**

GM Instant Reaction

THRILL-O-METER 1 2 3 4 5

Classic Warhammer for devotees.



The roster of superheroes you can play as is growing – Catwoman, Poison Ivy and Harley Quinn are also options.

Format PS4, XO **Publisher** Warner Bros. **Developer** NetherRealm Studios **ETA** 16 May

INJUSTICE 2

Build a better Batman

Where most fighting games task you with finding a character who fits your style, and then mastering them over a long journey of combo-learning and violent, personal expression, NetherRealm's new comic-book warriors are open to interpretation on an even more fundamental level. Find a weakness, or an attribute you don't like? Then change it.

One person's Superman could be a defensive tank, focused on wearing down the opposition to beat them, while another's Supes can be a glass cannon, packing devastating power but as fragile

as a Kryptonian dandelion. You see, every activity in Injustice 2 will furnish delicious, Destiny-style loot drops, taking in four types of armour – with differing stats for attack, defence, health, and ability power – and perk-delivering accessory weapons. The idea sounds entirely broken (after all, no genre relies on balance quite like the fighting game) but in practice, it's nothing but exciting.

Because pleasingly, it seems that as divergent as players' character-builds will be, balance is nonetheless at the forefront of NetherRealm's thinking. All the gear we've seen so far has been typified by clear strengths and drawbacks, which, coupled with the game's random drops, makes the

creation of any game-breaking god-build feel unlikely to happen.

Throw in the ability to disable level advantages in competitive play, a la Destiny's Crucible – or even switch gear stats off altogether – and you have a game that could deliver serious, long-term compulsion with total respect for the genre's traditional needs. And don't worry about microtransactions either. Injustice 2's loot system is keeping it all in game, so players won't have to shop to success. ■ **Dave Houghton**



GM Instant Reaction

THRILL-O-METER 1 2 3 4 5

Evolving the fighting game experience.



XBOX

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FUTURE SHOCK

Our grim gaming predictions



Even the GM crew's relentless optimism has its limits these days. If we don't allow ourselves a little anxious speculation every now and then we'll collectively go bonkers. Following a binge-watch of the latest season of *Black Mirror*, we've come up with our six biggest fears for gaming tech's future - all of them based in scientific fact and, unfortunately, 100% guaranteed to come true. Read on and despair...

BOT FROM THE GRAVE

You may recall this strange tale from 2014. Posting in reply to a YouTube video entitled 'Can Games Be A Spiritual Experience?', user OOWartherapy00 regaled readers with the story of an Xbox game belonging to his dearly departed father. Having never been entirely wiped, the console itself still contained many of the man's old save states - chief among them a number of RalliSport Challenge lap times. Now, as anyone who's ever played a racing game can attest, these record-setting run-throughs can actively be challenged as 'ghost data' - lightning quick apparitions that appear on track.

And so it was with this user, who described the serenity that came with racing his dad as though he were sat down beside him. Soothing though it is, you can't help but wonder at the same situation occurring in 20 years' time, by which point our games will have discovered ever more realistic ways to mimic our behaviour. Hell, we already input our faces as avatars - though these often have more in common with Tomb Raider III's botched cosmetics test recipients than ourselves. Likewise, AI

developers regularly tap into real player data for results, even going so far as to create accurate facsimiles of our personal styles of play. It doesn't take a futurist to imagine a world in which players might run the risk of encountering these 'doppelgängers of the dead', more keen to shoot you than to talk over their tragedy.

And you thought reanimating dead celebrities to flog chocolate was bad...

"Great Aunt Ursula, so good to see you!"



Geordie Bob's face was mangled by botched cosmetic experiments. He fits right in on PS1.

THE LAST RIGHTS

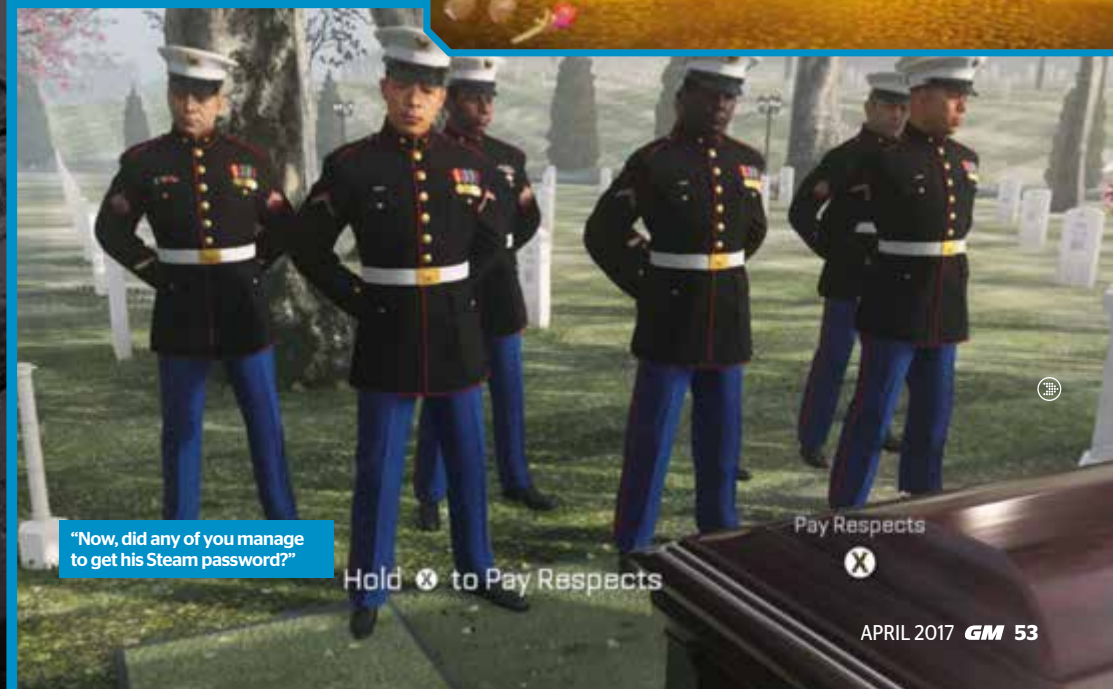
Wealth may be wonderful, but as the old adage goes, 'You can't take it with you', no matter the amount.

Indeed, 'tis harder for a rich man to enter heaven, than for a single camel to operate its own brand of successful cigarettes, or something like that... Sadly, where some digital content is concerned, you can't exactly leave it behind either. Steam, for instance, makes absolutely no provision for the passing on of digital property, even to a next-of-kin. Some users claim that even raising the issue can result in the account's termination. Talk about finality...

Now, while this problem might not sound as utterly terrifying as seeing dead old Uncle Bernard gurning at you from across a lobby, it still has some rather troubling potentialities. Just think: if videogames can be claimed by the great big customs agent in the sky, then why not music, film, literature, or just about anything else that's hosted on a modern-day server? Losing access to a subscription service is one thing, but owned content disappearing into the ether - that's far more alarming. And you don't even need to die for it to

happen; if the service goes, so does 'your' stuff. Might this be the fate of our future generations: to be left nothing and to own nothing, doomed to purchase reissued port after port until the sun finally explodes and Peter Moore recedes back into the Eye of Terror from whence he came? Better start praying to GOG.

Pictured: wealth being wonderful.



"Now, did any of you manage to get his Steam password?"

Pay Respects

Hold X to Pay Respects

GM Special

Exclusive Feature!

"Ah, Jensen, hand me that ruler will you?"



PAY TO SKIN



"Git gud, citizen."

If you thought pro pads, tourney sticks, and superfast Internet offered an unfair advantage to game players with more cash to splash than you, just wait 'til you see the terrifying world of tomorrow. Aimbotting eyeballs, whippet-quick fingers, and the reaction times of a

housefly playing ping-pong: these are the cybernetic enhancements gamers could be buying for themselves in the future – a bit like *Deus Ex*, just with fewer kill-whisks for hands...

Of course, while this might sound a little far-fetched, it's worth remembering that the human race already takes many such innovations for granted. Consider if you can, just how many computers – aka 'magical knowledge boxes' – are being used solely to peruse pictures of cats? Who's to say that we won't equally come to take for granted MadCatz-branded ring fingers, or Alienware eyeballs? After all, no-one in the 1960s had any idea we'd one day be using pipes full of numbers to buy groceries, trade insults with people halfway round the world, or find love, and yet here we are.

Now as to the actual implementation of this tech: that's where things get interesting. Upgrading your body like a high-end PC will quite clearly favour both the wealthy and the obsessive – ultimately creating a sort of stratified online environment of 'haves' and 'have-nots' – much in the same way that new multiplayer maps often push non-adopters to the fringes of a game. Some people might only have older upgrades, and the poorest could lack them entirely. There's uneven playing fields, and then there's just holding up the spirit level like He-Man. Here's hoping Sony and co find a way to reinforce TV sets before little Johnny RoboCop gets back on Xbox live.

LOOK, WHO'S TALKING?



If Patrick Stewart can provide the voice for a poo emoji, he can also be our horse.

Fear not: SWAT members are specially trained to hold your hair back while you puke.



Adobe software teaches us that reality is not fixed – and that if seeing is believing, a little time with Photoshop can ensure reality is altered completely. The company's latest exercise in mischief comes in the form of Project VoCo, which promises to accurately recreate human voices when given as little as 20 minutes of data to work with. Soon it'll be ubiquitous, with applications ranging

from espionage to never having to go to work never, ever again. Thanks for the sick note 'Doc'.

Of course, once that's done it won't be too long before another enterprising coder comes up with a way to overlay these voices onto our own, a bit like those celebrity face apps you can already get on your phone. Swapping your accent for the more charming tones of Tom Hiddleston or Idris Elba is just the start. Next stop, Xbox Live and PSN for a bloody good chinwag with Hitler, or an expletive-laden rant from Mother Theresa.

The fun doesn't stop there either, with friends, acquaintances, and even family members soon trying your pipes on for size. How weird would it be to hear a five-year-old relative babbling in your voice, or your nan chuntering on about soaps exactly like you wouldn't? It sounds great, doesn't it? Like a non-stop party – but what about when those same knuckle-dragging bozos on the other side of the gaming lobby also decide to indulge? After all, who has the time to check whose microphone icon is flaring during a mad-scramble for the flag? Why, it'd be all too easy for someone to toss enough nasty words around in your voice to make your player-rating plummet, or even see you banned from online multiplayer entirely. Heck, they might even make you SWAT yourself.

ETERNAL VICTIMS

You remember Prometheus - that middling sci-fi flick about space goo, aliens, and a zombie Karl Pilkington? Yes, well this is the other one, the mythological Prometheus: a Titan who stole fire from the Gods in order to help out humanity, only to be rewarded with an eternity of pitiless torture. Being the level-headed chap that he is, Zeus chained the twisted fire starter up to a rock to be pecked at by an eagle forever. Unfortunately for Prom, he was pretty much immortal, meaning this soon became his daily routine.

The fact that this poor godling suffered so that we might enjoy another flame-grilled Whopper is just one of the things a sentient AI might relate to, assuming humans are ever dumb enough to actually create one (spoiler alert: we are). When it comes to gaming, the pursuit of effective AI may eventually lead us down a dark road, as our playthings edge ever closer towards sentience. Just like the robots of Westworld, gamers may one day find themselves routinely torturing these 'living' (or at least thinking) bots - mowing down wave after wave of enemies, only to

Players may also remember Prometheus from *God Of War II*, or is that Sean Connery shooting Zardoz?

Trying telling Skynet this was 'just a bit of fun'.

raise them back up again at the start of the next round. Good thing they aren't coded to master weapons, kill things, and exploit our human mistakes, isn't it?

THIS IS NOT THE END

Ditching your fleshy form to become one with the Wi-Fi might sound like the sort of dross you'd hear from a balding, buck-toothed cultist (just as the last drops of Kool-Aid settled into your stomach), but this is one concept that has plenty of legs. Not that you'll be needing them, not any more... In *Black Mirror*'s San Junipero, this notion's tackled with uncharacteristic optimism, charting one woman's journey from lifelong paralysis to an eternity of virtual playtime. It is, to put a finer point on things, a heaven of humanity's making, but that doesn't mean it's perfect. For some, this multiplayer hub of the future feels more like a purgatory - though these folks are portrayed as more lovelorn than truly lost.

What happens however, when the endless game goes wrong - when there's no more body to return to? If the human mind becomes code, how might that code be hacked, controlled or turned entirely against itself, all for some troll's amusement? What happens when a mere computer virus or system glitch triggers a mental breakdown, or a never-ending state of mania? What if you accidentally switched your pain threshold to minus 80,

Unitology has a more 'hands-off' approach to cult indoctrination.

or if the server holding your data were to be partially destroyed? Then there's the money issue to consider. Who will pay for these soul-storing servers and why? How will they recoup their investment, or seek to monetise 'the players' by using them as extras in crowd scenes or, worse, cannon fodder in shoot-'em-ups. What if the off switch doesn't work? And will we be required to purchase *seasonal DLC*? ■

An eternity of poorly-rendered crab hands awaits.

IndieMaster

The Best Of The Indie Scene!



One of the biggest influences for the game was Lemonade Stand for the Apple II. Old enough to remember it?

Who is...



Made up of talented duo Brent and Brandi Kobayashi from Vancouver in Canada, Meowza Games has worked on an intimidating slew of indies. For this title, Brent is focussing on art, design, animation, and programming, while Brandi is on design, writing, and production.

Format PC Developer Meowza Games ETA Summer 2018 Web <http://bit.ly/gmmineko>

#1 MINEKO'S NIGHT MARKET

Go stall or nothing in this gorgeous sim

We don't want to make enemies of dog lovers (we've some lovely puppies on p88), but add cats to a game and it increases feelings of happiness by approximately 4000 per cent. Imagine then, an island overrun with Dreamies lovers where you have to juggle your time between looking after your very own market stall and

exploring the world, collecting crafts and eating new foods. Welcome to Mineko's Night Market.

"We realised that most of our joy in gaming comes from discovery and the small moments that make you laugh," explains Brent Kobayashi when we ask what has driven development. "We were missing that. So we spent a lot of time focusing more of our energy towards crafting a meaningful narrative, including more moments of delight, and creating a largely exploratory game. Prior to games, we used to run a craft show booth in real life, and we wanted to introduce that experience in the form of a game."

Food vibrations

But don't worry, you won't be stressing about running out of stock or making sure one person is there so that the other can go to the toilet. "Our original design

started out more as a resource/time management sim," continues Brent. "You are free to play it strategically and plan best routes to collect the greatest returns, but we wanted to offer the option of just enjoying the chill experience of absorbing the world without the pressure of wondering if you made enough money that day. We wanted to do this while paying homage to Japanese culture and introducing our own living, breathing world."

And the game's all built around one person. "Mineko is a young, crafty girl who recently moved to a struggling Japanese island town with her father," explains Brandi Kobayashi. "Being one for crafting, she opens up a booth at the weekly Night Market, the cornerstone of the town's economy, to help out her family's finances. She quickly becomes entranced by the story of Abe, the sun-cat worshipped by residents of the



With the switch in platform, Brent and Brandi have had to tweak the previously 2D sprites to create a 3D world. Adding a dimension ain't easy.

"YOU HAVE TO JUGGLE YOUR TIME BETWEEN LOOKING AFTER A MARKET STALL AND EXPLORING THE WORLD"



The couple have been inspired by their own local night markets in Vancouver, and cite their love of the community they create. But even if you're not into crafting your way into a community, how could you resist those kawaii Kitties?



All kinds of exciting food, from tempura to tasty-looking desserts, await at each market stand. Snacks will be a must-have companion for playtime.

town. When rumours of Abe sightings begin popping up over town, Mineko immediately jumps in to join the hunt."

Even when you're running the market, Mineko doesn't need to stay at her stall, meaning you've got always got plenty of choice as to where to go and what to do next. "There are no penalties for leaving your booth unattended," Brandi reassures. "Along with eating foods unique to the market, there will be a variety of minigames at the booths as well, so feel free to spend your time exploring all the market has to offer, as the theme of the market

changes every week (four per season, 16 per year) and with it comes new booths, items to purchase, foods to eat, mini carnival games to play, and a special weekly main event to perform in."

If the mention of unique foods whets your appetite, there'll be all kinds of ways to make yourself ridiculously hungry

while sitting at your PC in Mineko's Night Market. "We want to pay homage to Japanese cuisine but like real-life towns, the locals in our made-up island adapted Japanese cuisine to their distinct flavours and offerings to go along with your usual fare of sushis, ramens, and tempuras," Brent says. "Some of the unique offerings

include a soft, cloud-like substance found only on this particular island, sakura flowers, and jellyfish jelly." Okay, everything was sounding really delicious until that last one...

It seems the only problem you'll find is having to decide

how best to fill each day "One of the biggest challenges, as in anything, is fighting time - one of the most valuable resources in this world," Brandi explains. "Exploring will cost you time, so you are constantly weighing options with regard to how you want to spend each day. Do you want to spend half a day venturing



out to the caves in search for rare minerals? Do you want to spend your day in town? Is it worth investing in a bullet train ticket to get you downtown faster? Should you take the cheaper, but slower, cat-drawn buggy?"

Design for life

The colourful art style comes from the couple's desire to make us feel like we're inside a Japanese animation. "We wanted to capture the spirit of Japanese culture, but there are so many varied aspects to it; a culture that has a fascinating ability to preserve traditions while simultaneously adapting to modern times," says Brent. "Both of us being big fans of Miyazaki films and Japanese TV shows, we wanted to create the feeling of living inside a Japanese cartoon."

Incredibly, midway through development the couple switched from a 2D mobile setup to a 3D PC game, meaning they're now crafting an even larger open world and tweaking their sprites. While we'll have to wait a little longer for the release, we'll get a bigger, beautiful world to explore. Want Animal Crossing levels of time-sink, plus bonus cats? Prepare to be whiskered away. ■



The 60 Second Pitch

Getting hungry with Brandi Kobayashi

Mineko's Night Market is a game about crafting crafts, eating eats, and catting cats. You play as Mineko, a curious girl who has just arrived at her new home on a struggling superstitious Japanese island overrun by cats at the base of Mount Fugu. The locals on the island worship the sun-cat, Abe. Always thought to be a myth, sightings of the creature began popping up in recent times. Discover the secrets of the town and manage your daily activities by completing various jobs, quests, and resource gathering. The economy of the island largely depends on the Night Market that arrives every week, where you sell your crafted wares and perform in stage shows. Spend your earnings buying rare collectibles and playing various minigames. The better your market stall does and the better you perform in the main event, the greater the market draw is to attract new booths and attractions. Mineko's Night Market is a love letter to Japanese culture, while introducing a heartwarming story of friendship, choices, and cats.

IndieMaster

The **Best** Of The Indie Scene!

Format PS4, XO, PC Developer Gloomywood ETA Summer Web <http://bit.ly/gm2dark>

#2 2DARK

The kids aren't all right

Everyone loves to throw the word 'dark' around. Whether it's the later Harry Potter movies or Nolan's darker Batman, everything seems to need us to turn on the light. But then there's the kind of darkness that awaits in the latest game from Alone In The Dark creator Frederick Raynal. The figurative and literal darkness that lurks in this top-down stealth horror has to be seen to be believed, and it's hard to describe what we experienced in our hands-on without a trained psychiatrist present.

Smith is your typical noir detective. Grizzled, a smoker, armed with a pistol, *discovered the mutilated body of his wife in the woods on a camping trip with his children, who have now gone missing...* 2Dark follows Smith in his quest to find not just his own children but all those of Gloomywood, who keep being stolen by psychopaths and serial killers. Like Lemony Snicket's A Series Of Unfortunate Events, believe us when we say it's not going to get any better, and if you want happy news, feel free to head to RetroMaster (p86) to get your fill of nicer pixels.

Fright light

The first level doesn't exactly ease you in slowly. Smith has travelled to Gloomywood's abandoned theme park, where the first thing we see is a little blonde girl being led away into a tent by a clown. Oh. Great.

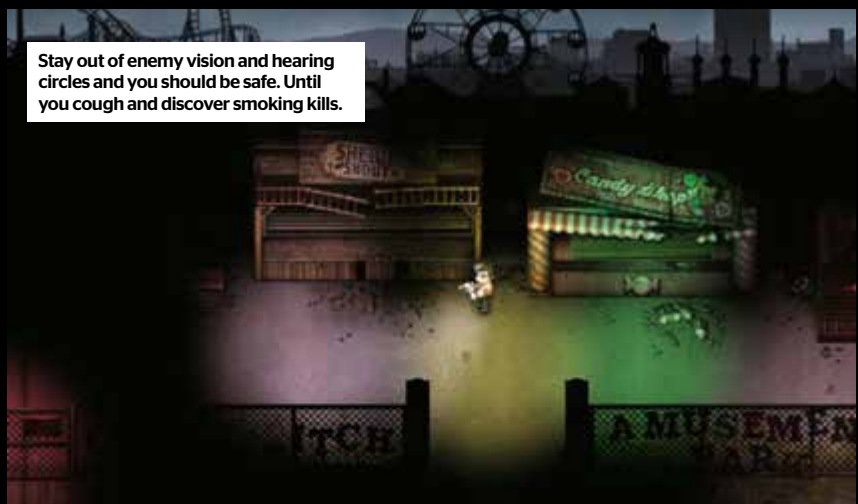
Each level has one very simple mission: get the children out. There's a glowing exit sign to take them to, and whether you get them one at a time or collect a whole raft of kids, all you need to do is take them to the exit and they'll be safe. And, of course, that's a hell of a lot easier than it



As if you didn't think you already needed to report it to some kind of watchdog, you can use candy to lure children in your direction

sounds. Everything that doesn't actively want to kill you wants to be noisy enough for you to be discovered by the lethal ones. From the rats that gnaw at your voxel feet - which are just 3D enough to make you feel like you're playing a gritty claymation - to the fact that the children cry while you're on the way to the exit, game overs are everywhere. And you haven't just failed yourself. No, think of the *children*.

While you can, of course, save the game whenever you want, with a slightly laborious but satisfying combination of cigarettes and a lighter as you take a quick noir smoke break, you're limited by your number of cancer sticks. Not only that, you need to bear in mind that if you smoke too much, creeping through the dark halls of a funhouse might just set off a coughing fit and give away your location. The tension is horrific as you gradually make your way through grim environments that look like Leatherface got a chance to go on Grand Designs. Naturally, there's a torch but only limited batteries, and given the chance that your light will be spotted, we feel safer carrying a quivering lighter through the darkness. Disturbing? Check. Tense? Check. This horror is seriously grim. Enjoy? ■



Stay out of enemy vision and hearing circles and you should be safe. Until you cough and discover smoking kills.

Small... But Perfectly Formed

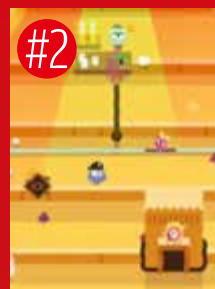
The best indies coming to Nintendo Switch



#1

THE BINDING OF ISAAC: AFTERBIRTH+

You'll never escape the basement. This is the biggest and best version of Edmund McMillen's roguelike - that + in the title means even more items, hideous enemies, vile bosses, and disturbing areas to explore. A must if you've not played it elsewhere yet.



#2

TUMBLESEED

Never played a 'rolly roguelike'? Yep, it's new to us too. Taking control of a seed, you must steer yourself to the top of a mountain to save the day. It might look like Technicolor fluff but Tumbleseed seems pretty vicious and you'll need to avoid holes and enemies. Just don't swear too loudly on the train.



#3

HUMAN RESOURCE MACHINE

From the devs behind Little Inferno and World of Goo, this devious darkly comic puzzler turns a workforce into computer code and lets you program a company into existence. It turns out that if/then statements and functions work for people too. Don't try it out in your HR job.



#4

YOOKA-LAYLEE

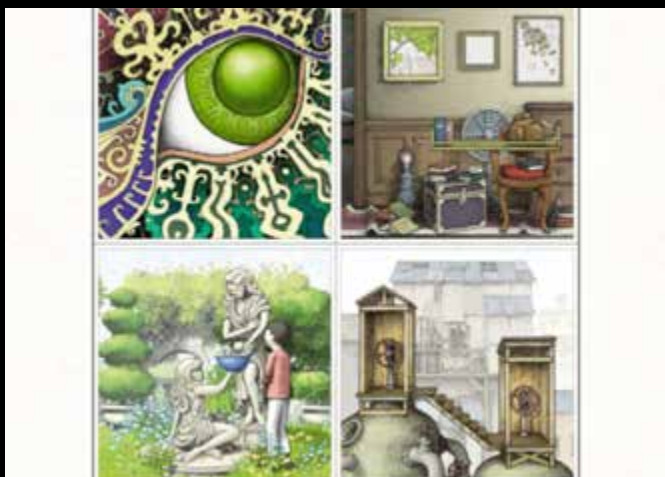
So the bad news is that if you pre-ordered this Kickstartered platformer on Wii U, you're out of luck - but the good news is that there will be a digital Switch version. It might not be ready day and date with other versions, but it's definitely on its way to let you get portable with the cutest new heroes around.



#5

SHOVEL KNIGHT: SPECTER OF TORMENT

What better excuse to return to Shovel Knight than the new DLC (even if the r and the e are the *wrong* way around, America)? A slew of new levels are on offer on Switch, where you play as the misspelled Knight. Perfect for some portable platforming. ■



Format PC, Mobile Dev Buried Signal ETA Summer Web <http://bit.ly/gmgorogoa>

#3 GOROGOA

Turn on frame assist for this puzzler



he very best brain-bending challenges seem simple on the surface. Two different-

coloured dimensional portals, you say? How hard can it be? Well, just like Chell's adventures but without the sadistic AI and Schrödinger flavour cake, Gorogoa has a minimalist premise. Four beautiful hand-drawn pictures by lone developer Jason Roberts await on each screen. From gorgeous landscapes to surreal patterns and abandoned rooms, all you have to do is work out how the images interact in order to progress the animated narrative. Simple, eh?

Well, no, of course it's not, but therein lies the charm. You'll never get more than four panels, and the solution isn't hidden or restricted. You can zoom into each individual panel to highlight a specific part and then slide it over to another to interact with another, a bit like those physical puzzles you used to rage-quit when

you were growing up. Perhaps the solution is as easy as a doorway being dragged over to let someone pass through, or maybe you'll need to zoom into a bowl in one picture, then drag it under an apple hanging on the bough of a tree and let the bird from another panel land and make it drop.

Quick draw

Every tiny interaction is hiding in plain sight, making this catnip levels of irresistible as a puzzle game. It's taken Roberts years to develop due to the fact he's drawn every single panel by hand in Photoshop and has constantly been tinkering with the art style. This at least ensures we'll have something lovely to look at while we have no idea how to progress. Plus, the good news is that Gorogoa will be on mobile as well as PC when it's out later this year, ensuring missed trains and stops galore when we finally get our beady eyes on it. If you're looking for a game that gives you that incredible feeling as you crack a puzzle after hours of pondering, here's the one to watch. ■



Solve all the pieces and you'll uncover a poignant narrative. Make sure to get the tissue box ready - there will be tears.



Format PC Developer Devolver Digital ETA Autumn Web <http://bit.ly/gmminit>

#4 MINIT

Gone in 60 seconds



hat can you do in a minute? Watch a 90th of a movie? Start to sweat as you gaze at the

second hand slowly

ticking down to your inevitable demise? Wow. That got dark fast. Anyway... Minit has been coined a '60-second adventure' by indie publisher Devolver Digital, which has teamed up with a group of developers. Jan Willem Nijman (aka Vlambeer), Dominik Johann, Jukio Kallio, and Kitty Callis have formed an Avengers-style indie team and crafted a gorgeous retro-style black-and-white adventure with a difference.

"Minit is a peculiar little adventure played 60 seconds at a time," announced Devolver Digital. "Journey outside the comfort of your home to

help unusual folk, uncover countless secrets, and overcome dangerous foes, all in hopes of lifting a rather unfortunate curse that ends each day after just one minute."

Clock blocked

Your hero is a tiny duck-billed blob that looks a bit like your Tamagotchi when it went through that weird middle-aged ugly stage, and the first footage is suitably intriguing. This miniature adventurer explores a gorgeous pixelated world, with things like a lighthouse, boat and even a bar, armed with a sword and battling enemies such as crabs before inevitably keeling over when 60 seconds is up.

This curious monochrome adventure might just redefine your 'Oh, just one more minute' argument before you let yourself go to sleep when it's out later this year. ■

"THIS MINIATURE ADVENTURER EXPLORES A PIXELATED WORLD"



Every second counts as you try to see and do as much as possible before time runs out. Oh no. Another all-too-brief life is about to come to an end.

GM Reviews

The Final Verdict!

64 1-2-Switch



It's our party, and we'd cry if this was the only game on offer. Every launch needs its stinker...

HOW WE SCORE

0-39 Awful Avoid it as you would a bullet with your name on.
40-59 Poor Major issues here that won't be solved with a hug.
60-69 Decent A mixed bag filled with sweets and sharp stones.
70-79 Good Some flaws, but still a very enjoyable experience.
80-89 Excellent Buy it, love it, thank us when you're done.
90-100 Outstanding A rare and essential piece of brilliance.

The small print: We rate games in comparison to what else is available on the same system, in the same genre, and for the same format at the time of release. So this year's FIFA might score less than a FIFA from three years ago, but still be a better game. Because time, and our expectations, move on. Hey, you're smart, you get it...



Not awarded based simply on score, but rather given to games that possess a special blend of qualities. For instant classics that you won't regret owning.

Format Switch (reviewed), Wii U Publisher Nintendo Developer Nintendo ETA Out now Players 1

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: BREATH OF THE WILD

Getting lost in Nintendo's wondrous open world is a breath of fresh air



You stand on a precipice overlooking a sweeping valley and pick out a distant Shrine. Between you and it lie miles of open terrain, some of it flat grassland, some scorched desert, some icy tundra, and some volcanic wastes so hot they'll

burn the clothes on your back. An epic adventure awaits, and anything could happen along the way: you might get electrified by your own sword in a vicious lightning storm, or creep past a dozing giant, or encounter a bard who points you towards treasure, or witness a group of Moblins hurling spears at a boar, or find a killer recipe for apple pie.

Hyrule has so much life and opportunity it makes previous Zeldas feel positively inert. But that's not to say there isn't a rigid underlying framework to the game. The story starts with legendary Hylian hero Link awakening from a 100-year slumber, the sole survivor of an epic war against dark lord Calamity Ganon. Link's mission involves travelling to the villages of some of his former allies – a Goron, Zora, Rito, and Gerudo – and cleansing corruption from four mechanised Divine Beasts to recruit them.

The interior of each Divine Beast forms a dungeon. To access gigantic soaring eagle Vah Medoh you'll have to fly through the air with your paraglider and shoot bomb arrows at its weak points until it opens up. Once inside a

beast you can take control of it to solve puzzles. Tilt the elephantine Vah Ruta's trunk, for instance, to douse flames and turn water wheels. The dungeons' short length, half that of previous Zelda games' hour-long endurance, means they never feel like work, and because they're often open-top with views to the outside, you've always got a consistent sense of place within Hyrule. Nintendo is clearly keen not to deprive you of the overworld's visual delights.

Beast mode

The concentrated puzzle injection dungeons used to provide is obsolete now puzzles are everywhere. Navigation

is a puzzle in itself. During our ascent up a sheer cliff face just outside Kakariko Village, for instance, we seek flatter patches of rock to catch our breath, refill our stamina meter by consuming restorative meals, and pray pouring rain doesn't send us slipping off. Grunting up a mountain grip by laboured grip then looking down at the distant spot you were at 20 minutes earlier gives your adventure a spirit of endeavour – the sense you're both a monumentally tiny presence in this world, and that you can accomplish anything with perseverance.

Only by trekking to towers far and wide can you unlock fast travel, here more a privilege than a right. Reaching their summits adds detail to your map in the shape of suspect arrangements of rock, spiral peninsulas, and peculiarly named regions you immediately want to visit (we wonder what's on Tingle Island...). As a result, the more map you



"WE SURF ON OUR SHIELD THEN PARAGLIDE OFF – SO EXTREME WE SHOULD BE WEARING A GOPRO"

Is Link's trusty steed Epona in the game? Who cares when you can hitch a ride on a sand walrus?

66 **Persona 5**



Japanese student by day, psychic avenger by night - we get up close and Persona with this epic JRPG.

70 **Sniper Elite 4**



He shoots, he kills! He shoots, he kills some more! Find out if there's any depth to all the gore.

74 **Horizon Zero Dawn**



We hunt down Sony's latest PS4 exclusive and harvest its various parts for our in-depth review.



SERIES GUIDE

The most important landmarks in Nintendo's legendary series



You could walk diagonally in A Link To The Past. This was useful for fleeing angry chickens.



Ocarina of Time brought us lock-on Z-Targeting. Without that you'd still be flailing around like a fool.



Wii MotionPlus allowed precise sword slashes. Can you guess how to kill this scorpion?



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA (1986)

Nintendo's top-down NES adventure sent Link questing across a continuous world to obtain eight Triforce pieces and free Princess Zelda from Gannon. Save files let you preserve your progress - a vital innovation.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: A LINK TO THE PAST (1992)

This game, which saw Link traversing Light and Dark worlds, introduced many features now central to the series: the Master Sword; Hookshot; spin attack; and the idea of parallel realities.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME (1998)

Widely regarded as the greatest Zelda, this is Link's first 3D adventure and Epona's debut. Here he played songs to travel through time, rescue Sages, and stop Gannon getting his hands on the wish-granting Triforce.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: SKYWARD SWORD (2011)

The last console entry saw Link descend from his floating home, Skyloft, to the surface to save Zelda. The Goddess Sword, inhabited by a spirit named Fi, incorporated Wii MotionPlus for motion-controlled combat.



uncover, the more you want to discover in person. Each of the 15 towers also offers a unique problem to surmount. In one we have to cross a toxic pool by building a bridge from metal crates; another lacks handholds, so we surf down the neighbouring slope on our shield then paraglide to the top in a move so extreme we should be wearing a GoPro to record it. It's open-ended enough to feel improvisational.

The bite-size puzzles presented by Shrines are more set in stone. Some employ motion controls to have us tilting the Joy-Con and manoeuvring balls

"YOU'RE A MONUMENTALLY TINY PRESENCE IN THIS WORLD, YET YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING"

through floating mazes; some are obstacle courses in which we have to conjure platforms out of water using ice; some are combat trials against a single powerful enemy. One of our favourites is a putting challenge where we end up using a hammer to whack a massive iron ball into a hole at the far end of the room.

You get a Spirit Orb for beating each Shrine, and four of these can be pledged to any goddess statue you see in return for an extra heart or quarter of stamina, giving a crucial sense of progress in a game that could easily have felt open and aimless. It's an echo of Zelda's formerly inflexible structure that routed you through set gates into environments and steadily prescribed mission-critical

items like medicine. Conversely, you begin Breath Of The Wild with most of the tools you'll ever need - paraglider, sword, shield, and rune powers of Remote Bombs, Magnesis, Stasis, and Cryonis. Success relies on your invention and ingenuity. Gone are the days of kicking open a chest and knowing you're about to get either a compass, map, or rupee cluster. The outcome is a completely unpredictable world that begs exploration.

Korok and roll

This new Hyrule is also tough. We've died more times here than in any other Zelda. That comes with the freedom. We also have the freedom to walk our butts

straight out of boss fights against rock golems and sand worms, or the freedom to loot a wizard's Meteor Rod and return to throw fireballs at it. Combat's marvellous for the most part, a clash of sound and colour that, in its looseness, feels like an extension of the game's freeform principals.

Hyrule is at once massive and carefully designed, and despite its impressive breadth there's always the subtle trace of human hands. Take our infiltration of Gerudo Town, a female-run stronghold we can only enter if disguised as a woman. We're not dressed for that.



INSTANT EXPERT

Four important sets of armour, and where to get them



1 Hateno Village's dark green Warm Doublet comes closest to classic Link. Why not visit the dye shop over the road to turn it a brighter shade? There's in-built cold resistance thanks to sturdy fabric and thick gloves. Just don't expect much protection in fights.

2 The Hylian Tunic, Trousers, and Hood are purchased in Kakariko Village. The leather means it gives decent protection without sacrificing breathability. It's popular with travellers, so you'll fit in with the locals, and the hood makes you instantly more mysterious.

3 Each generation's Zora Princess crafts Zora Armour for her future husband - that's you. Well, a century ago anyway. Luckily it still fits. Found in Zora's Domain via the main questline, it increases swimming speed and lets you butterfly stroke up waterfalls.

4 The Soldier's Armour is the sturdiest set, and confers a high defence total that multiplies when you wear all three pieces. It's relatively easy to upgrade, too. For level three of the chest piece, a Great Fairy only requires three Lizalfos Tails and one Hinox Guts.

TOP OF THE WORLD

Hyrule holds many secrets. You'd best get started, then...

Trekking to each of the game's 15 towers is a worthwhile endeavour for the emergent stories alone. That they fill your map in is a bonus.

There are around 100 Shrines. They increase your heart containers and stamina wheel, and once activated they serve as teleportation points.

Weather's more than a visual flourish. Rain makes surfaces too slippery to climb, while lightning storms render metal equipment unusable.

Guardians patrol the outskirts of Hyrule Castle. They're your fiercest foe, with a ludicrous healthbar and lock-on laser. They are killable, though.

Where can we find a suitably womanly outfit amidst the dunes? A well-placed bystander hints at a merchant who travels between here and a nearby bazaar. Later, during our trek to Zora's Domain, the path we take is subtly dictated by the onset of rain, which coats the rocky canyon walls and prevents us climbing out and getting lost. The game

is like a flower, exquisitely pruned and left to bloom.

Kingdom for a horse

That curation is sometimes a touch too heavy. You're prevented, for some reason, from calling your horse unless it's actually within whistling earshot, because according to the stable owner,

"they're not magic". This is a game in which you can spawn an unlimited amount of bombs from thin air. Subsequently you'll spend a lot of time on foot, especially since abundant jagged terrain prompts regular abandoning of your ride, and with the care put into rendering and animating horses that feels like a waste.

There are technical issues too, such as slowdown in busy scenes and wildlife sometimes evaporating from view, but you can forgive these visual sins in a systems-packed game that lets you, say, feed slabs of meat to dogs, levitate bombs with a creature's inflatable guts, and launch your paraglider on the whoosh of wind from burning grass.

This is everything Zelda's always promised but never delivered, closest in feeling and philosophy to the original adventure. It's like going off-road after 20 years of driving on a motorway, at once foreign and familiar. Nintendo's masterful touch has been given room to breathe. ■



GM LOVES...

- ✓ Hunting, cooking, climbing, fighting - where do we start?
- ✓ An extraordinary world full of life, beauty, and surprise.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Occasional graphics hiccups mar the experience a little.
- ✗ Horses are strangely restricted. You're left trudging on foot.

Better than...



The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time

Is it evil to say Breath makes Link's 1998 adventure look like a joke? Ocarina's Hyrule Field is like a football pitch.

Worse than...



The Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker

Blame growing up, but nothing will eclipse your preferred childhood Zelda. Wind Waker is ours.

DLC



Planned DLC introduces new trials and a hard mode in the summer, then in winter comes even more story and an extra dungeon. Oh, and Link gets a fetching Switch T-shirt. £17.99 in total.

GM JUDGEMENT

96%



Up there with the finest Zelda games, Breath Of The Wild is bold, liberating, and utterly astonishing.
Ben Griffin

GM Review

The Final Verdict!



Format Switch Publisher Nintendo Developer Nintendo ETA Out now Players 1-6

1-2-SWITCH

Party games for people who don't get people or parties

There are 28 games in this multiplayer collection and they're mostly complete bobbins. The idea is you hold either a left or right Joy-Con and learn Switch's novel features - motion control, HD rumble, IR Motion Camera, little plastic stand, etc - via a string of bite-sized experiences.

As a rough idea, Zen's about holding yoga poses and attempting to keep your Joy-Con as still as possible; Shaver sees you pass the Joy-Con under your chin to chop away the whiskers before your opponent; and Baseball involves one person swinging their Joy-Con in an attempt to 'hit' a ball pitched by player two. They range from boring to broken. Firstly, there's an overall lack of intuitiveness. People are born with an innate understanding of how to, say, chuck a ball or punch someone else in the face, as in Wii Sports, but not how to milk a cow, or catch a samurai sword, or

strut down a runway. These are complex actions for which the Joy-Con are unsuited. You're never sure what they're actually measuring, nor how they're recognising your inputs, and being constantly told to "look your opponent in the eye" rather than focus on the screen means often there's a lack of visual feedback.

In Copy Dance you must mirror your opponent's moves. But why? There's no camera capturing your body, so only the orientation of your Joy-Con matters, and at that point half the game is in your head. Why not go one step further and pretend you're an astronaut? In fact, turn the game off and run around your flat going "Neeoww! I'm a plane boy!"

24-second party people

The same goes for the timebomb-style Soda Pop, in which you shake the controller then pass it around and try not to be the one holding it when it explodes. You don't need to cradle it like a giant bottle of bubbly, as grinning actors in an introductory video show, because the

Joy-Con merely registers how vigorously you shake it. It's smoke and mirrors stuff, and inaccurate too: rhythmic games based purely on listening to audio, like Table Tennis and Baseball, don't give you enough to work with, and as a result the outcome feels random.

To be fair, it's all highly dependent on who you play with. We actually had fun joining our parents in Telephone, where you race to grab your Joy-Con when you hear ringing, and Rotation, where you take turns rotating the Joy-Con with satisfying clicky sound effects and try not to squander your total by jiggling it. When it works, 1-2-Switch feels second nature, the line between physical and digital game blurring.

For the most part, though, these are trivial tech demos inferior to literally any other activity you can do with people, like talking to them for instance, or going jogging. "Throw an impromptu party anywhere," Nintendo says in promotional materials. That's true, provided your ideal party consists of being very quiet so you can hear the sound cues, and looking befuddled. We played 1-2-Switch with those both familiar and unfamiliar with games, and ultimately had the same experience: abject indifference. It's a bunch of games so insubstantial you could replicate them with two twigs and some imagination. ■

"HALF THE GAME IS IN YOUR HEAD. WHY NOT GO A STEP FURTHER AND PRETEND YOU'RE AN ASTRONAUT?"

GM LOVES...

- ✓ The presentation is slick, from clean menus to bold tutorials.
- ✓ One of the actors looks like Matthew McConaughey.

GM HATES...

- ✗ It's a bunch of games no-one would ever want to play.
- ✗ Many of them are confusing and don't work properly.

Better than...



We Dare

These adult-themed minigames saw you strip, kiss, and spank your partner. Like 1-2-Switch, its target audience was essentially nonexistent.

Worse than...



Wii Sports

Instantly accessible minigame compilation that introduced novel control schemes to a fresh audience. Enough depth to last repeated plays.

2ND OPINION



"1-2-Switch is a disaster, and I don't say that lightly. What should be the defining multiplayer experience of Switch's launch is a baffling mess. The fact that it's a full-priced game rather than a pack-in just adds insult to injury - spend your hard-earned cash on this and you'll be sorely disappointed." Robin Valentine, Acting Editor

GM JUDGEMENT

54%



Appealing presentation masks a litany of awkward microgames you'll never play again. Ben Griffin



You can play with the Joy-Con turned vertically, horizontally, or with a Pro Controller. Do whatever feels best!



Format Switch Publisher Konami Developer Konami ETA Out now Players 1-8

SUPER BOMBERMAN R

It's bomb appetit with the return of an absolute blastard

No-one uses bombs with such reckless abandon as Bomberman, who chucks them about mazes to trap opponents while trying to avoid the same fate. He's been doing it since 1983, and little has changed in the interim. The view is still top-down-ish, fuses again last exactly three seconds, and explosions always travel down channels, making this all about quickly deducing each bomb's potential blast area, then running for cover between square columns. The name of the game is angles and evasion.

So, what's new on Nintendo Switch? The biggest bonus is built-in multiplayer. With the Joy-Con you're guaranteed at least one spare controller to offer to potential player twos. Group options are plentiful: you can set up a local game for up to eight players, each joining by synching Joy-Con or Pro Controllers, and fill any remaining spaces with bots; you can

search for Switches in the vicinity and link up; or you can look online.

There's something nostalgic about turning your Joy-Con horizontal and playing it like a SNES, although its lack of D-pad causes issues. The thumbstick fails to recognise our inputs so we often miss our turning window, and that's a glaring problem in a game requiring precision. Even navigating the menu is difficult, the cursor going up or down when we want to go sideways and vice versa.

Demolition man

Different levels change the action: Slippery Garden contains icy alleyways that send you skidding unstoppably like a newborn deer; The Great Wall has a raised ridge permitting flanking and ambushing; and walkways in Labyrinth ascend and descend when someone hits a switch to separate players across two different levels like that duel at the end of The Phantom Menace with the laser walls. Maps transform to accommodate player counts too, with differently sized stages for both four and eight people.

Most alternative maps are too fiddly to be viable candidates for regular rotation; they're more palette-cleansing curios.

Customisable rulesets are better at providing variety. You can permit power-ups that allow you to, say, punt bombs, pick up and throw them, or boost their explosion radius, and add 'Revenge Carts' on which eliminated players can hover along the sidelines launching bombs to mess with anyone remaining.

There's a story mode if you'd rather team up. Here an evil space wizard and his Five Dastardly Bombers want to rule the cosmos, but not if Bomberman and his seven Bomberman Bros have anything to say about it. They must journey between planets and clear the handful of stages on each one of AI enemies. Konami seems reluctant to diverge drastically from the multiplayer formula, but the campaign improves in co-op where you can coordinate moves and plan attacks (or just accidentally blow each other up).

It's worth noting none of this is new. Bomberman has had a story mode, personalised rules, and different maps for decades. What Super Bomberman R brings is accessibility. Playing with friends is easy, and finding others online equally so. It just doesn't do enough to justify a full-priced release. Bombs are dangerous, but this is as safe a sequel as it gets. ■

"WHAT SUPER BOMBERMAN R BRINGS IS ACCESSIBILITY. PLAYING WITH FRIENDS IS EASY"

GM LOVES...

- ✓ It's super-easy to set up a multiplayer game.
- ✓ Playing with the Joy-Con horizontally feels nostalgic.

GM HATES...

- ✗ It doesn't attempt to do much in the way of anything new.
- ✗ It's hard to play Bomberman without a D-pad.

Better than...



Bomberman: Act Zero

Perhaps this surly 2006 misstep is the reason Konami has refused to experiment with Bomberman since. Hey, at least it tried something new.

Worse than...



Bomberman Generation

The definitive Bomberman. Although a bit of a faff getting four GameCube controllers together, the D-pads were the perfect precision tool.

ONLINE



A league system awards Battle Points for winning matches and sends you up the tables to face better opposition. If all that sounds too competitive and intimidating, you can just stick to free play.

GM JUDGEMENT

67%



Switch's hardware makes it the most social Bomberman ever, but it's stubbornly old school.
Ben Griffin



Format PS4 (reviewed), PS3 Publisher Deep Silver Developer Atlus ETA 4 April Players 1

PERSONA 5

Atlus proves that all a JRPG needs is a heart – though a brain and some courage don't hurt either

Before colour TV, people dreamed in monochrome. Black-and-white images aren't necessarily our default dreaming state, but early television had a huge impact on the mass subconscious, so our resting brains dreamed in greyscale.

Colour television left a similar footprint on our shared consciousness, making dreams pop with pigment. Perhaps now we dream in HD, compared to the static-lined trances of our ancestors. We never imagined we'd end up learning much during class in this school-set JRPG, but this strange fact is just one of many trivia takeaways from Atlus' latest.

In Persona 5 you take on the role of a mute protagonist: a high-schooler who intervenes when he sees a woman being molested in the street. As a result, he's charged with assault, put on probation, expelled from school, and sent to live with family friend and café owner Sojiro Sakura in Tokyo, to attend Shujin High School. Living in a dilapidated attic above the café, the young lad discovers a world beyond our own, triggered by a visit to the mysterious Velvet Room – a jail within his mind. The prison's overseer, Igor, installs an app on the teen's phone that allows him to enter distorted mirrors of our own world, manifestations of the twisted hearts and minds of their owners.

One of the first characters you meet is Ryuji, a rebellious kindred spirit. You stray

together into another dimension – the subconscious thoughts of their school's abusive gym instructor. While exploring the pervy teacher's world, materialised as a castle, you meet Morgana, a talking cat who explains the situation: these depraved dimensions are called Palaces and they only form in subliminal thoughts of the truly loathsome. By stealing the Palace owner's treasure, located at the centre of the JRPG's many dungeons, the trio can force them to confess their crimes in the real world. After discovering your hidden potential within your Personas – powerful guardian spirits that represent a person's inner psyche – you

and your friends form a vigilante group called the Phantom Thieves Of Hearts and set about changing the world, one awful person at a time.

School of life

This JRPG may feature a chatty cat who can transform into a car, and demons that live in vases but, multi-dimensional weirdness aside, Persona 5 leverages normality. Developer Atlus understands the importance of contrast, with the game's intricate dungeons and tactical, turn-based battles feeling like a tonal shift after you've just spent a week exploring Tokyo, dining out, working a part-time job, studying, doing pull-ups in your room, watching movies, and myriad more stat-boosting side activities. It revels in the mundane, creating a distinct, unique, and compelling experience.

When not fighting your way through a Palace or attending school, you're free to



"IT REVELS IN THE MUNDANE, CREATING A DISTINCT, UNIQUE, AND COMPELLING EXPERIENCE"



Why did the games journalist take two weeks off work? To review a JRPG.



www.gamesradar.com/gamesmaster

911
THURSDAY
Evening

AN AVERAGE DAY IN PERSONA 5

Coping at school is just the start of your problems

Taking Confidants on dates is important, but it gets much harder to manage the more people you meet. Bring suitable gifts for bonus points.

You need to make sure you upgrade all your core stats in the real world too: Knowledge, Guts, Charm, Kindness, and Proficiency.

The weather can affect activities, changing enemy behaviour in Mementos and more. Have some moist protein and do pull-ups in the rain for extra HP.

If you get a bit of spare time, be sure to brew some SP-recovering coffee or make yourself a few infiltration tools for your next Palace visit.

Chihaya

Almost like the laws of nature. Eternal... impossible to defy...

SCHOOL'S OUT

When you're not delving into people's mental dungeons, you need to make sure you're spending your time wisely, as you can only do two things once school is over. Here are three ways to make the most of your time...

Borrow books from the school library. Sometimes you can read for free on the Tube.

Buy a television for your room as soon as you can. Sunday is shopping channel day.

Be mindful of the weather. Take a bath on rainy days for a bonus stat boost.

explore lovingly recreated slices of Shinjuku and Shibuya, as well as the Greater Tokyo Area, though each activity passes a chunk of time. Every new Phantom Thieves target adds time constraints, too. If you don't secure a route to the treasure before the time limit, it's game over.

Memento moreish

When you're not battling in dungeons, Persona 5 is almost relaxing, helped along by a funky acid jazz-influenced soundtrack, but time restrictions give it an edge. You need to prioritise. Do you want to increase your HP, or bond with a friend, boosting their Confidant rank, unlocking special actions and strengthening Personas? Perhaps you'd rather study? You could even dip into Mementos, a Palace in the Tokyo underground that represents the shared

"IT'S LIKE JUGGLING GRENADES WITH THEIR PINS PULLED... A COMPULSIVE GAMEPLAY LOOP"

subconscious of the citizens - essentially a procedural, side-mission-filled dungeon. After all, you'll want to level up those combat skills. It's like juggling grenades with their pins pulled, and it makes for one of the most compulsive gameplay loops we've experienced.

The best tactic is to prioritise securing a route to the treasure, then use the remaining days to do everything else on your agenda. Cleverly, you can't just stock up on 99 healing potions like in many JRPGs, so you often have to use powers to heal up, depleting your stamina points (SP). Once they're gone,

you need to retreat from the Palace so you can replenish both SP and bullets, used for special projectile attacks. Dungeons need to be chipped away at, and it makes for great pacing.

Persona 5 does a fantastic job of getting you into this slow and steady mindset, with safe rooms placed at intervals throughout dungeons, as well as looping routes and shortcuts back to them, letting you save up and chat to your team about your progress. It gives you a good gauge of when to press on and when to pull out, with Morgana, your talking cat/car buddy, warning when

there's a boss nearby. Even the game's loading screen reinforces this ethos, with a piece of spinning text simply telling you to "take your time".

Persona 5 is a power fantasy about fixing a corrupt world. All of your party members are social outcasts, and many don't have parents. They're isolated, institutionalised, and under pressure, but they find meaning under the banner of the Phantom Thieves. There's a real optimism at the story's heart, and a clear message about retribution, but it isn't afraid of touching on some genuinely bleak subjects. The pressures Japanese students face in school is a recurring theme. Most keep their heads down.

Whether walking the streets, waltzing through the underground, or strolling through the school corridors, you can't help but notice non-important NPCs are faceless. For Ryuji and your other



Multiple personality

Your companions each have one Persona, but you're capable of holding many. You begin with Arsène, but you can capture enemies on the battlefield and turn them over to your side, unlocking new abilities and opening up more strategies during fights. You have limited space for holding them, but it's a good idea to get every Persona once.

Find a weak spot

To recruit Personas, you need to find enemies' weaknesses. Once you've found them – by using different abilities in battle until you land a critical hit – you'll know for future fights. The weaknesses are often obvious, with fire working against icy foes and guns dropping flying creatures. Get every enemy down and you can perform a Hold Up.

Have a nice chat

Once held up, you can ask enemies for items or money. Who doesn't love stuff and cash? However, if you ask them to lend you their power, you will strike up a conversation with them. Choose the correct responses to enough of their questions and they will give you their mask, granting you power over their Persona. Fail and they'll get up.

Mix and match

You might be wondering why we suggest you get every Persona when you have limited space for holding them all. That's because you can head to the Velvet Room later on and combine Personas you've collected into more powerful versions. They will even take on traits from each other. Confidant ranks will give them a further stat boost.



companions, it's different; they don't want to conform. They want to be someone, and Palaces are gateways to a place where they are. In dungeons, your party members become their true selves. Characters' clothes reflect their personality, as do their Personas: each vengeful spirit is a twist on a famous antihero. The main character begins with Arsène Lupin, master thief.

Stealing hearts

Being a burglar is another recurring motif. Dotted around each Palace are breakables that you can swipe and sell on as treasure. You can also jump along the rafters at certain points, duck into vents, and take cover on corners. Corner cover is used for ambushing enemy shadows. Get against a nearby wall when they're unaware and you can tap a button to sweep in and rip off their mask, giving

you a free turn when the battle begins. As far as stealth in a JRPG goes, it's actually not terrible, keeping you engaged when navigating these puzzle-filled mazes.

Combat is a simple, elegant system that allows you to end most of its turn-based encounters swiftly. When you first meet a new enemy type, you need to discover its weakness, firing out different elemental spells, shooting it with a firearm, and prodding away. When you find that sweet spot, the enemy drops to the floor and you're given a free turn, in which you can attack again or pass it on to another character. If you manage to get all enemies on the floor within those two turns, you can perform a Hold Up. From there, you can attempt to recruit them with multiple choice questions, ask them for money, request an item, or do a (mostly) fight-ending special attack to simply get rid of them.

Capturing Personas this way is important, as you can head to the Velvet Room and combine the creatures into more powerful forms. The power of this Persona crafting is also influenced by your Confidants, giving you more incentive to go out with your buddies in the real world. That's the genius of Persona 5 – almost everything feeds something else, so you're always considering your next move, even when you're not playing. It takes a good six hours to open up, but it really grabs hold when it hits its stride.

It's rare you come across a game so thematically consistent as this, to the point where it drills into your actual subconscious. Even when not playing, you'll find yourself humming its tunes and thinking about your next move. Just like colour TV, there's a good chance Persona 5 will invade your dreams. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ The characters are all fantastic, even the awful people.
- ✓ It's super stylish, with a distinct look and sound.
- ✓ Lessons, extracurricular activity, and fights are equally compelling.

GM HATES...

- ✗ The first six-ish hours drag as you're taught the ropes.

Better than...



Final Fantasy XV

Final Fantasy XV is a decent attempt at reinventing the JRPG. Persona 5 doesn't revolutionise the genre, but it still feels fresh and innovative.

Worse than...



Suikoden 2

Another JRPG with big ambitions, Suikoden 2 blends base-building, turn-based strategy, and role-playing. As close to perfect as it gets.

ONLINE



Outside dungeons you can bring up a journal showing you what activities other players did on that day. (We love nosing round diaries.) It also tells you what level the average Persona 5 player is.

GM JUDGEMENT

95%



A personality-filled, stylish adventure with gripping mechanics that drill deep into your brain.
Kirk McKeand

GM Review

The Final Verdict!



Approach however you want, but always remember to be as calm as Karl. Look at him! Not a care in the world.

THE ART OF THE KILL

Best laid plans

Getting an incredible kill requires patience and planning. Set up, get the kill, search the body, then dispose of it. Don't end up like us, cowering behind a corpse.



Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, PC Publisher Rebellion Developments Developer Rebellion Developments ETA Out now Players 1-4

SNIPER ELITE 4

One-hit wonder

As the high-velocity sniper bullet zooms towards its oblivious target, so many questions come to mind. Once it hits, the only one left is 'Why am I watching slow-motion x-ray footage of a man's testicles exploding?'

The obvious answer is that it's a genuine accident. You were staking out a enemy camp that's patrolled by a lone lookout, but your sweaty palms made you slip and fire too soon, as you meant to slowly bring your aim up to his head. The crotch shot was all down to a damp trigger finger. The honest answer, though, is that it's just really, really funny. A crotch shot is gratuitous, incredibly violent, and it's a

hallmark of a series that has finally reached its potential.

With the fourth Sniper Elite game, Rebellion delivers what feels like a culmination of all the great ideas it's ever had, poured into a game that feels part Metal Gear Solid V and part 2016 Hitman, but also a game that brings in its own ideas, and a multiplayer that genuinely deserves your attention.

Heart of war

But let's back up a little, before we get too carried away. We're playing as the icy-veined, steel-nerved Karl Fairburne, a US soldier who's been commanded to go and help the Italian resistance against the Nazis. Karl's somewhat lacking in personality, even appearing slightly arrogant and cold when meeting people

who might offer helpful advice, but then, do we really want our dead-eye sniper to care too much about the lives he is taking? 'No,' is the answer. Not a bit.

That said, one of the many collectible items you can find in each of the eight single-player levels are seemingly innocent letters. Offering colour to the battlefield, these letters give humanity to the sniper's prey. Often soldiers would write a last letter so that, if they were to perish in battle, there would be some kind of goodbye to pass on to their loved ones. In a game that glorifies and celebrates death via the x-ray kills (zoomed-in, slow-motion kill-cams that show bones, brains, and organs splattering), it's interesting to see Rebellion also attempt to humanise the fallen, and remind us that they're just following orders in the same way Karl is.

In truth, though, it falls slightly flat. The idea is nice, but when you're shooting targets and seeing bullets explode through their eyes and out the other side of the skull, it's hard to think of the game as anything other than pure violence,



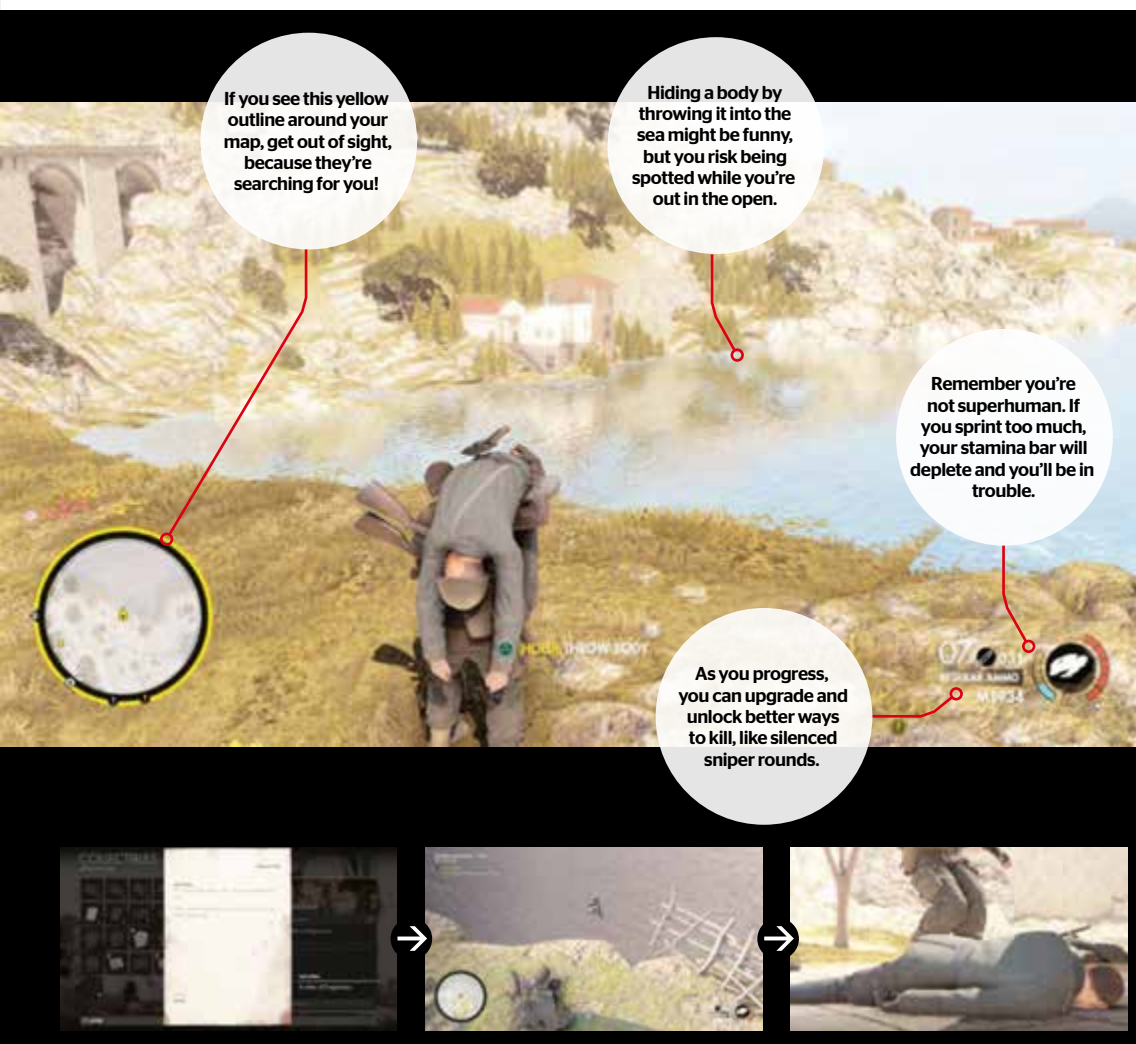
CHEST THE THING

Heavy breathing boosts a long-distance relationship

One of the most satisfying things about a game focusing on sniping is that you can kill people from absurd distances. And just in case your friends and family refuse to believe your skills really are that awesome, Sniper Elite 4 has leaderboards that measure your longest shot so far, and will put you into a table that pits you against your friends.

Using the iron lung ability, you can hold Karl's breath and gain superhuman targeting skills. A small red reticule will show up, enabling you to precisely direct your bullet for one-hit kills from hundreds of feet away. Sniping is the most enjoyable thing in the game, from any range, but nailing that long-distance shot is exhilarating.

"YOU START FROM AFAR WITH MULTIPLE TARGETS, TAGGING ENEMIES, OBJECTS AND VEHICLES"



If you see this yellow outline around your map, get out of sight, because they're searching for you!

Hiding a body by throwing it into the sea might be funny, but you risk being spotted while you're out in the open.

Remember you're not superhuman. If you sprint too much, your stamina bar will deplete and you'll be in trouble.

As you progress, you can upgrade and unlock better ways to kill, like silenced sniper rounds.

and while you can turn down the frequency of the x-ray kills, it's clear they're supposed to appear often.

The narrative is thinly spread and pretty dull. The star of the show isn't the story, it's the levels you inhabit. The planning phase is exciting and intricate. You start from afar with multiple targets, whipping out your binoculars and tagging enemies, objects, and vehicles while you come up with ideas about how to execute your mission. All that's good, but it's the fact these places are so vast yet feel so alive that makes the experience something special. Planes will zoom overhead and create an audio mask for you to take the shot, or a boat may buzz through the surf, providing a distraction. Generators can be rigged to make noise and then explode when an enemy investigates, and when it all goes wrong, you can open fire or hide - it's your choice.

On the regular difficulty, the main disappointment is that the AI isn't terrific. Enemy soldiers don't make much attempt to flank you if spotted, and generally speaking they will come at you one by one, meaning you can gun them down, clear the area, and just move on. They have cones of vision that will give you a warning if they notice something out of the ordinary, and once it goes from yellow to red, it's too late, and you're going to have to take them out quickly.

Fundamentally, though, this is a stealth game. The options afforded suggest silence, and you'll get better XP and rank up more quickly by being a subtle assassin. But crucially, you never feel out of your depth if you end up making a mistake and drawing attention to yourself. It's important that this is the case, because spending upwards of an hour per level hiding in bushes and taking out enemies without being detected, only to mess up at the last hurdle would be devastating. But no matter how well you plan, or execute, you'll feel in control.

At first, you'll want to complete all objectives and scour the level for every single hidden item (searching corpses often yields collectibles, as does killing optional higher-ranking officers, or searching out caches or places of interest). However, within a few hours you'll realise the tasks boil down to either killing someone, or finding something. It's a shame there's not more variety to what you're doing, but then, it is a game about being... well, an elite sniper.

Shooting gallery

Let's face it, everything is better with friends, and Sniper Elite 4 is no exception. Teaming up with your mates to take on any of the multiplayer modes on offer is something well worth doing. For a start, you can just go at the story missions with

your friends or random other people, but the Overwatch mode (which is nothing to do with Blizzard's masterpiece) is even better because it allows one of you to play as a sniper while the other acts as his spotter. If you can stop arguing long enough to coordinate your attacks, this is the mode we think most people will go back to after finishing the game. It's amazing how naked you feel as a sniper unable to spot, or as a spotter with no sniper rifle. The maps are split in a way that means you can see your friend, but not meet up with them. You rely on each other to work together to make the mission a success, and it's a genuinely great mode. We're hoping there will be more to this, as right now there are only two maps, and once you know them well, the only novelty left to be found is in pushing up the difficulty.

If you like any part of Sniper Elite 4, there's little chance you'll be bored or disappointed at the value for money. Whatever you're after from Sniper Elite 4 (as long as it's being a sniper), the game has bags of replayability. Disappointing base-level AI and a lack of variety are made up for by a hugely compelling, enjoyable moment-to-moment experience. If you lack patience, you'll struggle, but for those happy to bivouac down in the bushes on a hill and wait for the perfect shot, you'll be hard pushed to find much better. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Open levels offer replayability and satisfying planning.
- ✓ Multiplayer options give the game longevity.

GM HATES...

- ✗ The AI can be annoyingly clueless on normal.
- ✗ Objectives don't have much variety. Find, kill, find, kill...

Better than...



Sniper Elite 3

For an open-world experience, the latest Sniper Elite trumps the previous games. It's full of emergent moments, and the lengthy levels are rewarding.

Worse than...



Metal Gear Solid V

When it comes to a reactive world, few are better than MGSV. Sniper Elite 4 can't approach the sense of place Konami's masterpiece gives players.

i NEED TO KNOW

Founded in 1996, Rebellion Developments doesn't just make cracking shooters. The studio has also made games based on Tiger Woods PGA Tour, The Simpsons, and Harry Potter!

GM JUDGEMENT

80%



A glorious celebration of what it means to be a sniper, with some cracking co-op play to boot.

Adam Cook

GM Review

The Final Verdict!



Format XO (reviewed), PC Publisher Microsoft Developer Creative Assembly, 343 Industries ETA Out now Players 1-6

HALO WARS 2

You had us at Halo

The idea of combining the Halo universe with a real-time strategy game makes sense, but to deliver it as an Xbox 360 exclusive in 2009 was a bold move from Microsoft. It paid off, with Halo Wars emerging as arguably the greatest console RTS of the time. Eight years later, Creative Assembly has teamed up with 343 Industries to develop a sequel, advancing on the original concept without deviating too far from its successful formula.

Halo Wars 2, then, is very similar to the first game in the series, offering the general RTS fare of developing bases, gathering resources, and commanding troops in battle. The original's notable selling point was an intuitive control scheme for console players, and it's clear that extensive time has gone into enhancing this aspect of the sequel.

It's a welcome update, as this is a slightly more complex and strategic

game than its predecessor, and charging in with all your units and a gung-ho strategy is a surefire path to failure in most scenarios. It's now much easier to select individual troops and group them together. While the intuitiveness of the Xbox One control system is praiseworthy, it occasionally stumbles when the action gets frantic. It's generally simple to get to grips with, though, and continues to silence those who claim that real-time strategy doesn't work on consoles.

Brute force

Halo Wars 2's campaign is on the short side, but there's fun to be had after grinding your way through the early tutorial-based missions. Its story focuses on the most recent timeline of the Halo series and introduces the Banished enemy faction, spearheaded by a dominant brute named Atriox. The immense threat of this antagonist is revealed in some visually striking and lengthy cutscenes, and these populate the campaign to keep the somewhat entertaining story flowing.

Then there's multiplayer, which incorporates a variety of team-based modes and co-op offerings. The brand-new Blitz mode takes centre stage, replacing base-building with customisable decks of cards that spawn troops and abilities. The key to success is capturing two or more zones, but achieving that goal centres around the cards you collect. These can easily be obtained in-game, but, yes, there's a micro-transaction option too. Blitz is built for long-term appeal, and while it won't suit everyone's tastes, its fast pace is a welcome contrast from the usual fare.

The game modes are brought to life by impressive, if not spectacular, visuals, and Halo's universe continues to flourish in a real-time strategy setting. We did encounter the odd bug on Xbox One, including crashes to the dashboard and missions stuck in limbo. Nothing major, but enough to frustrate.

It's apparent that Halo Wars 2 is trying to satisfy all audiences, from newcomers to RTS veterans. It does a generally great job of achieving that aim, but falls short of encompassing the level of complexity to overcome its biggest rivals. But that's not the main goal here, and while the game is forced to make allowances for its console-based players, its intuitive control scheme remains the Xbox One version's biggest asset. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Upgraded controls offer greater depth on the battlefield.
- ✓ Visually stunning cutscenes add intrigue to the game's story.

GM HATES...

- ✗ The short campaign includes a few uninspiring missions.
- ✗ We ran into a handful of bugs playing on Xbox One.

Better than...



Halo Wars

The original game certainly broke new ground with its well-designed control system, but its sequel has it bettered in almost every way.

Worse than...



StarCraft II: Legacy of the Void

The final chapter in Blizzard's sequel took years to arrive – but it was definitely worth the wait.

NEED TO KNOW



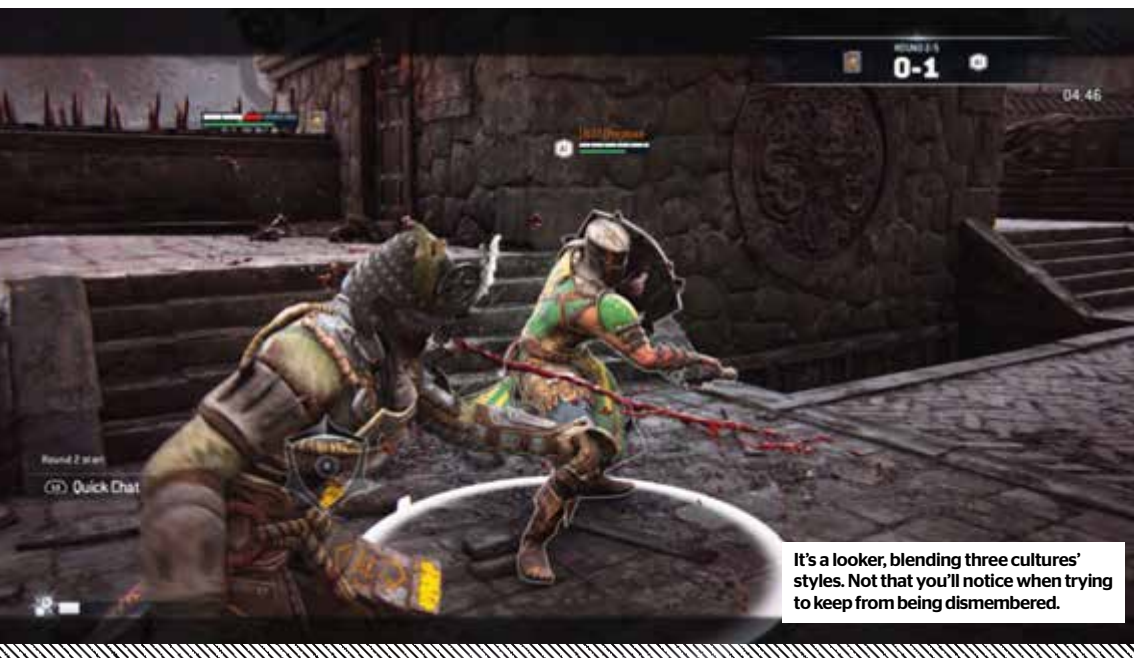
Halo Wars 2 is part of Microsoft's Xbox Play Anywhere program, so if you buy it on Xbox One, you can get access to the game on Windows 10 PCs too.

GM JUDGEMENT

82%



Nothing revolutionary, but worthy of any strategy fan's attention, and a must for Halo devotees.
Fraser Gilbert



It's a looker, blending three cultures' styles. Not that you'll notice when trying to keep from being dismembered.



Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, PC **Publisher** Ubisoft **Developer** Ubisoft Montreal **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

FOR HONOR

Will the honourable gentlemen please die?

Duels in Ubisoft's era-colliding, hyper-violent brawler start you at the opposite end of the battleground from your opponent. You could sprint over and kick things off with a swift attack, but any half-decent adversary will swat away such a heavily signposted charge, then strike back with a move of their own. Instead, then, most fights begin with the two of you circling, assessing each other and posturing, until someone breaks and launches the first blow. Whether it's your first time in the arena or your hundredth, this tension never abates.

Brutal combat is at the core of For Honor. Attacks can be struck from the left, right, or above, and blocking is a case of matching the direction of attack. A guard-break move can stagger an opponent whose blocks are proving unbreakable, though this is counterable. There's also a stamina bar to manage,

parrying, throws, dodges, combos, character-specific quirks, environmental hazards, limited-use special moves, and crunching execution moves.

It's a complex system, but its learning curve is smooth due to the mostly solid matchmaking. Button mashing might get you past another beginner, but a more experienced player will just block until your stamina bar runs out and then slice you to pieces. As you climb the ranks, you're forced to master a new element of the game's systems to defeat a new tier of opponent; occasionally you'll face off against someone who rips you to shreds, or who doesn't understand a basic block, but for the most part it does a good job of matching you with worthy adversaries.

All knight long

Despite this, it's worth spending time watching your character's training videos, completing tutorials, and playing through the short (circa five hours) single-player campaign. The latter is a glorified preview of the online modes, with a bare-bones story which spans the

game's three factions: vikings, samurai, and knights. However, online multiplayer is where you'll spend most of your time.

Ignoring the largely uninteresting metagame, which sees you helping your chosen faction gain territory on the world map, there are three main modes: Deathmatch; Dominion; and Duel/Brawl. The former is self-explanatory, Dominion is a standard capture-the-objective mode, while Duels and Brawls are 1v1 or 2v2 fights to the death. It's hardly the most generous package, but all the included options are enjoyable, and the difference in the gameplay of Dominion as opposed to a Duel is huge.

If the choice of modes is limited, the selection of characters is anything but, with 12 very different options, ranging from mace-swinging crusaders to nimble ninjas to axe-wielding berserkers. Swapping on the fly is a challenge, despite the core moveset, because each requires a new frame of mind.

The heroes provide much-needed variety in a game that fundamentally only ever asks you to kill and avoid being killed – luckily the core mechanics of doing so are incredibly satisfying. Its central battle system is magnificent, its characters are balanced and nuanced, and its battlefields stunningly beautiful. It's just a shame that the wider package feels a little bare. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Vikings. Knights. Samurai. I mean, come on now...
- ✓ Lopping off a tricky foe's head is seriously satisfying.

GM HATES...

- ✗ A little one-note at times – best played in shorter bursts.
- ✗ Chasing a fleeing enemy is frustrating – bloody cowards!

Better than...



Sonic & The Black Knight

Sonic's medieval outing might be easier than For Honor's punishing combat, but it's much harder to enjoy.

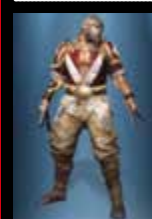
Worse than...



The Banner Saga

Still the ultimate Viking game, we reckon, despite its lack of gory finishers. It could do with some Samurai, though: get that in BS3.

NEED TO KNOW



Customisation in For Honor is absolutely cracking. When you're sizing up an opponent, nothing is as terrifying as seeing them kitted out in the best gear and a natty colour scheme.

GM JUDGEMENT

79%



An addictive, nuanced and surprisingly deep battler, prevented from being a killer by its lack of variety.
Alex Jones

"IT'S A COMPLEX SYSTEM, BUT ITS LEARNING CURVE IS SMOOTH DUE TO SOLID MATCHMAKING"

Are petitions demanding things annoying? Generally, yes, but petition for a Star Wars game with this combat system please...

Format PS4 **Publisher** Sony **Developer** Guerilla Games
ETA Out now **Players** 1

HORIZON ZERO DAWN

Supreme sandbox exclusive is a metal marvel that ushers in a new era of excellence for PS4

Guerilla should never make another Killzone. The Dutch studio spent nine years delivering dreary sci-fi shooters. Spend nine minutes with Horizon Zero Dawn, and you'll immediately appreciate how head and shoulders above the

Helghast the dev's new IP is. This is a sensational sandbox; a game of such beguiling quality, it's astonishing to think it's the first entry in a fresh franchise. An excellent compilation of combat, hunting, and stealth systems, combined with gobsmacking world-building, Guerilla's hot new PS4 property is one of the best open-world games in years.

Hell, Horizon is more than that. It's the best exclusive on PS4. Genuinely. Forget Uncharted 4, Ratchet & Clank, or Bloodborne. Not a one of them can match the ambition, technical craft, or ingenuity routinely flaunted by this open-ended action-adventure. Yes, you read that right: Horizon Zero Dawn is a better technical showcase for PS4 than Uncharted 4. Hold us.

It also feels alive with possibility, more so than any other game we can think of this generation. People routinely moan that modern games merely look prettier than titles of the past, rather than evolve the gameplay. That's not a critique you can lay on Horizon. The emergent behaviour systems of the robo-dinosaurs alone makes you feel like anything is possible in the world Guerilla has created. Just wait until you witness two 45-foot AI alligators emerging from a river, a tribe of hunters whaling on them with spears, as

a Pteranodon-dwarfing Stormbird pelts the lot of 'em with electric bolts, and tell us this could have been done on PS3.

Zero to hero

In case you've been stuck for aeons in the sort of primordial ooze it appears the game's metallic leviathans crawled out of, let's back up and clarify just what Horizon is. Actually, it'd almost be easier to tell you what it *isn't*. Guerrilla has crafted such a dizzying melting pot of mechanics, half a dozen triple-A titles come to mind after spending a little time in this mysterious sci-fi sandbox. The breezy platforming of Uncharted, all easily signposted handholds and improbable leaps. The beast-on-beast smackdowns seen in Far Cry. Metal Gear Solid V's playful,

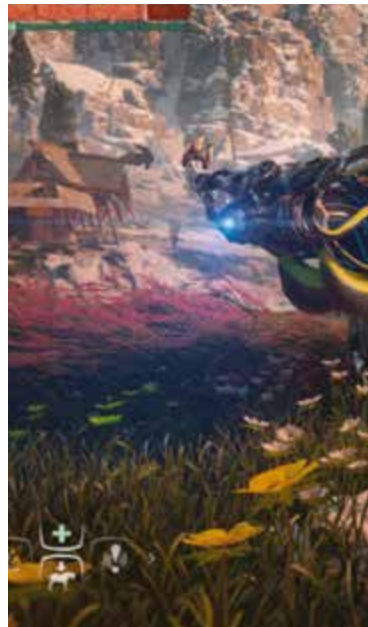
malleable stealth. The precision archery of rebooted Tomb Raider. Riding a trusty mount across a beguiling fantasy land ala The Witcher 3 - granted, jumping on an electronic buffalo isn't exactly like hitching a ride on Roach. Horizon combines lots of elements from big-hitting franchises, and crucially, it nails every single system it attempts.

We'll get to the nitty-gritty of why Horizon is such a mechanical triumph shortly. In the meantime, you need to know about the setting. The key facts: embattled human factions eke out an uneasy existence alongside a bevy of AI animals known as the Machines (that'd be the aforementioned robo-dinosaurs).

Yes, this is yet another dystopian world ravaged by war... wait, come back! It's nowhere nearly as derivative as the clutch of recent games that have riffed on the apocalypse. For fear of spoilers, we won't delve into specifics of the exact time period, or why tribal clans who rock Neanderthal gear are sharing real estate with advanced beasts that look like the



**"IT'S THE BEST EXCLUSIVE ON PS4.
FORGET UNCHARTED 4, RATCHET &
CLANK, OR BLOODBORNE"**



Did Dave hug his TV when he saw Horizon in 4K? What happens between a man and his Ultra HD OLED is none of your beeswax.



Horizon's ace camera mode is made for the Share button. We took nearly every shot for this review with it - and we're not tired of sharing yet.

GM Review

The Final Verdict!



Horizon sets a new graphical high watermark for consoles. It looks incredible at 4K on PS4 Pro.

byproduct of The Matrix reimagining Jurassic Park. Just know this: Horizon's story is not what you're expecting.

Rather than tell some clichéd tale of proud luddites battling the evils of technology, Horizon weaves a thoroughly interesting tale of cultural clashes, discovering one's identity, and the hubris of mankind's desire for advancement. Also, robots. Lots of robots. Against this setting it throws you into the moccasins of Aloy, a young warrior who's as hard to pigeonhole as the story she stars in.

Aloy unto herself

Shunned by her tribe from birth, and raised by a noble hunter called Rost, this nomadic loner has yearned to belong her whole life. Aloy is a really interesting lead, especially by sandbox standards. She's no generic criminal seeking redemption. Instead, Aloy is a compassionate paradox who simply wants to know where she

came from... y'know, in between shooting arrows at monstrous mechanical hippos. Pained yet hopeful, energetic yet reluctant, spiky yet understanding; Aloy is more emotionally layered than almost any character outside Joel and Ellie from The Last Of Us.

Stripped down Mass Effect-esque conversation wheels give you multiple dialogue options while taking on missions, allowing you some agency over her character. Choosing between confrontational, compassionate, or intelligent answers doesn't have much of an impact on how the story plays out, but it's still nice to have control over the RPG-lite responses.

Regardless of whether your Aloy is kind or cranky, Horizon's story is consistently well written. Is it a little overly morose? Sure. It's also morally intriguing, and surprisingly thought-provoking, tackling themes as complex as mankind leaving a cultural

footprint for future generations, to issues as uncomfortable as ethnic cleansing. Who knew Guerilla had this level of storytelling prowess under its belt?

Even if you skip the cutscenes - and you really shouldn't - you can't deny the quality of the Machine-murdering action. Horizon is a truly wonderful systems-driven sandbox. Stalking robotic creatures to harvest their valuable parts, then trading them in for shards (the game's currency) and weapons upgrades; clearing out bandit encampments with predatory, impeccable sneaking that matches MGSV's brilliant brand of enemy-tagging stealth; reminiscing about Shadow Of The Colossus as you figure out how to scale a Longneck to reveal new areas of the map - think Far Cry's antennae, if they sprouted legs and suddenly turned into a cyborg giraffe - there's a wealth of diversions on show, and all of them are fantastic fun.

The stars throughout all of this are, of course, the Machines. You won't find a more varied, constantly cool clutch of creatures on PS4. No matter the species, each robotic monstrosity is forever fun to engage. Horizon gives you so many tools to nullify (or sometimes harvest) the



BUNKER DOWN

Going deep underground to conquer Cauldrons

Among the most useful side activities to tick off in Horizon Zero Dawn are the Cauldrons. A set of underground bunkers that act as production lines for the Machines, every AI creature originated from one of these twisted cave networks. Completing each Cauldron involves light puzzle-solving, a sprinkling of platforming, then a big ol' boss fight. Prevail, and Aloy unlocks the ability to hack into a new wave of bots with her Overload power. The more Machines you can brainwash out on the plains, the easier battles become. There's nothing like having a Ravager watch your back.

**"HORIZON'S SHIFTING SCENERY
MAKES IT ONE OF THE MOST VARIED
OPEN WORLDS EVER"**



A Thunderjaw is the ultimate hunting challenge. Our advice? Disable its head-mounted cannon.



Aloy pips rebooted Lara Croft to claim the crown of videogame's best hair. Her flowing locks are amazing.

powers of these beasts, encounters never get old. Hacking a Stalker and making the cloaking, Predator-style big cat lay waste to other unsuspecting Machines is a thrill, as is battling a Thunderjaw - the game's apex predator - and shooting its Disc Launcher off with the Tearblast arrows of Aloy's Sharpshot Bow, then using the behemoth's own weaponry against it. Even tripping up the gigantic, crab-like Shell-Walker with the sneaky delights of the Tripcaster is fun. Every Cabela's game put together couldn't match the magical moments of Horizon's bionic big game hunts.

All this monster mayhem features prominently in the game's central story missions and abundance of sidequests. Both are granite-strong. The former wisely combines setpiece spectacle, thrilling boss encounters, and combat encounters where you're entirely free to choose between stealth and balls-out combat. All the optional quests are even more engaging, partly because the rewards for completing them constantly feed into making Aloy's arsenal stronger, in turn making Horizon ever more rewarding. Each wad of XP you gain, NPC you save from robot attacks, or Machine part you harvest goes into making your

AI asskicker quicker, stealthier, and more empowering to play.

World beater

Horizon's best feature? Its world. Have you noticed we've not named it yet? Pssst, it's a spoiler thing. Still, you don't need to know the moniker of Guerilla's vast sci-fi land to be in awe of it. A varied, geographically thrilling environment, as much inspired by King's Landing from Game Of Thrones as it is the dystopian jungles of cult hit Enslaved: Odyssey To The West, the terrain here is nothing short of breathtaking. The scenery shifts so often, there's no question Horizon is one of the most visually varied open-worlds ever made. It begins by riffing on the frigid wastelands of Far Cry 4's Kyrat, then later manages to recall the yawning, Death Valley-inspired canyons of Red Dead Redemption.

Whether jungle, desert, tundra, or opulent outpost, the spectacle of this land is boosted by a stunningly placed camera. Said perspective always frames Aloy in a convincingly cinematic way, never failing to show off wonderfully clear views of Horizon's topography. The draw distance is insane, too. You can see Machines - like giant gliding Glinthawks,

which patrol the skies - from miles away. Whatever way you slice it, Horizon is silky beautiful. Like 'the most gorgeous console game of the generation' beautiful. If you're lucky enough to have a PS4 Pro and a 4K TV, the sight of Guerilla's latest in Ultra HD is something your little peepers will cherish forever.

Whatever blemishes mar that surface are tiny. A few early boss battles drag, owing to both ludicrously fat health bars, and the fact it takes hours to fully tool Aloy up with the best kit. A few of the story missions also devolve into 'kill every dude in your eyeline' a smidge too often. Of course, when the overarching experience is so invigorating, focusing on teeny flaws is like complaining about a crack on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

That Guerilla - a maker of technically brilliant but perennially 'pretty good' games - has made its first-ever open-world title such a masterpiece is mind boggling. If Sony has any sense, it will immediately tie the studio in for a multi-game deal focused on Aloy's continuing adventures. Uncharted may be gone, but if Guerilla keeps making more games set in this universe, PlayStation's Horizon is blindingly bright. Say hello to PS4's new killer franchise. ■



SKILLS TO PAY THE BILLS

Picking out Aloy's most potent powers

Your badass nomad has quite the suite of powers at her disposal. Horizon's skill trees are broken down into three core categories: Prowler, Brave, and Forager. Seeing as there are 36 different abilities to unlock, that's a whole load of XP points you're going to need if you want to complete Aloy's stabby, Machine-hacking, forage-loving arsenal. To help, may we be so bold as to point Madam/Sir in the direction of some of our favourites...

For starters, Concentration is absolutely essential. This ability slows down time when firing your heroine's various bows, and it's a complete godsend in the heat of battle. Silent Strike should also be one of your very first picks once you've built up enough skill points. This stealthy, utterly lethal spear attack lets you blindside Machines and humans alike from behind - it's a brilliant crutch to fall back on when you're hunting in areas with lots of tall grass to hide in. Stab! Stab! Like we said, buy it early. Precision is another skill you want as soon as you are able to acquire it. These brutal melee attacks have a high chance of knocking a Machine's armour off. They can also be broken out when an enemy is lying prone. As a final recommendation, you can't go far wrong with Call Mount. It's a higher-tier ability, but once unlocked it allows you to immediately call a Charger, Strider or Broadhead to ride. Considering the size of Horizon's expansive map, it saves Aloy's poor hamstrings a whole lot of strain.

HORIZON ZERO DAWN

GM LOVES...

- ✓ The gorgeous world is a magnificently varied sandbox.
- ✓ Every system is excellent, especially robot hunting.
- ✓ Aloy's a great lead, and the plot is winningly thoughtful.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Certain boss battles can be a bit of a grind. Cheaty bots.

Better than...



Uncharted 4: A Thief's End

Far more ambitious, somehow even better looking, and heck, just plain better than Nate's stellar swansong.

Worse than...



Grand Theft Auto V

Still the best open-world game of all time. That said, such is the sheer quality of Aloy's adventure, Horizon Zero Dawn runs it mighty close.

i NEED TO KNOW



The enigmatic Sylens is played by Lance Reddick. The character actor is best known for playing Lt Daniels on The Wire - and, in games, for his role as Hatch in Remedy's Quantum Break.

GM JUDGEMENT

95%



PS4's best exclusive, and an exhilarating new IP that spits at sequelitis. An instant open-world classic.
Dave Meikleham

GM Review

The Final Verdict!



Remnants of lost civilisations litter every corner of the world, representing long-forgotten cultures, races, and religions.

These coloured spheres indicate your might, speed, and intellect pools, which are used in almost every interaction, including combat.

You can use these glowing portals, left behind by an unknown civilisation, to travel quickly around the Valley Of Dead Heroes.

You can travel without a party, but it makes the game a lot harder, and you'll also miss out on some interesting character interactions.

Format PS4, XO, PC (reviewed) Publisher Techland Publishing Developer inXile Entertainment ETA Out now Players 1

TORMENT: TIDES OF NUMENERA

Make your mark on a weird far-future world



Centuries ago, a legendary figure called the Changing God discovered the secret to immortality. He learned how to build new bodies, far superior to normal humans, and transfer his soul into them. But when he was done with one body, he'd abandon it for another. And you play as one of these Castoffs, an empty vessel that grows a consciousness of its own and becomes... well, whoever you want them to be.

Tides Of Numenera is set a billion years in the future, in a world where countless advanced civilisations have risen and fallen. Everywhere you look there are fragments of the old world: arcane machines, statues of forgotten gods, ancient computers, and other objects. And this is where you, the youngest of the Changing God's children, find yourself.

This is a role-playing game in the truest sense. Previous Castoffs have

become many things—assassins, slavers, priests, poets, even royalty—and you get to decide what path you'll take. The Ninth World is full of opportunities, and getting tangled up in the lives of the people there leads to encounters and dangerous situations that will shape your character.

Quests are varied and unpredictable. A simple task will often spiral into something much more complex, forcing you to make tough decisions. And you never know what you'll be doing next. One minute you're hunting a serial killer, the next you're trying to convince a race of electricity-eating monsters to stop tunnelling under a city and destroying people's homes.

Tall tale

The writing is superb. Some of the best we've seen in an RPG, in fact. It's rich, evocative, and poetic, drawing you into its world and making you genuinely care about its characters. At first the sheer strangeness of the setting can be overwhelming, but you soon adjust to it. You'll form deep relationships with your

companions too. They all have fascinating backstories to discover and personality quirks that you'll grow to love or hate.

The world is governed by 'Tides' – gold, red, blue, silver, and indigo – which replace the binary good/evil system seen in most RPGs. Do a good deed and the gold tide will shift. Make a tough decision for the greater good and the indigo tide will shift. And the more a particular tide shifts, the more likely it is to become your dominant one, which will determine how people regard you.

There's deep turn-based combat that will be familiar to anyone who's played games like Pillars Of Eternity or Baldur's Gate. But one of the best things about Numenera is how conflict can almost always be avoided. You can persuade enemies to back down, but your likelihood of succeeding depends on your stats. A silver-tongued Castoff might be able to pull this off, but one whose stats lean towards combat, magic, or technology may not.

A compelling, beautifully written story, varied quests with multiple outcomes, and a fascinatingly weird setting make Tides of Numenera one of the deepest, richest RPGs we've played in years. Whichever path your Castoff takes through this world, and whatever they decide to become, you can be sure their journey will be an interesting one. ■

GM LOVES...

- ✓ An imaginative, emotional, and brilliantly written story.
- ✓ You can talk or think your way out of almost every situation.

GM HATES...

- ✗ The sheer amount of reading required can be exhausting.
- ✗ It takes a while to get your head around the bizarre setting.

Better than...



Tyranny

Obsidian's experimental RPG has some clever ideas, but Numenera has more variety and imagination, not to mention significantly better writing.

Worse than...



Planescape: Torment

Numenera is more than a worthy successor, but the original Torment is a masterpiece of storytelling, role-playing, and world building.

I NEED TO KNOW



Tormment: Tides of Numenera is based on a tabletop RPG setting created by veteran D&D designer Monte Cook. It's the spiritual successor to Black Isle's cult classic Planescape: Torment.

GM JUDGEMENT

92%



Wonderful writing, deep quests, and the ability to truly shape your character make for a quality RPG.
Andy Kelly

"THE WRITING IS SOME OF THE BEST WE'VE SEEN IN AN RPG, MAKING YOU CARE ABOUT ITS CHARACTERS"



Mae's dreams delight the senses, with beautiful visuals and tunes that'll be stuck in your head for weeks.



Format PS4, PC (reviewed) **Publisher** Finji **Developer** Infinite Fall **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

NIGHT IN THE WOODS

You're in for a big surprise

Mae Borowski is a college dropout returning to her small home town of Possum Springs after several years off living the student life. Dropping out of education, moving back in with parents, and rekindling friendships are fairly normal activities - normal for people, that is. Mae also happens to be a small black cat, and that's only the tip of the iceberg of oddities you'll encounter in Night In The Woods.

Possum Springs is a bustling and vibrant place, its inhabitants as colourful as its beautifully rendered backdrops. The daily interaction Mae has with her comrades, family, acquaintances, and neighbours is the central focus of this cartoon-style 2D world. Each day brings the opportunity to explore the town and converse with as many or few of its citizens as you like.

There's a surprising amount of freedom offered when delving into this

world, including dialogue options and the choice of which of Mae's unconventional companions to engage in misadventures with. Spending time with different characters develops their individual stories, and you'll need a number of playthroughs to explore the various branching paths of this zany adventure.

The main cast includes an excitable deer with a liking for petty crime, a moody goth crocodile, and a quiet, contemplative bear - who also happens to come in handy when you've corrupted your computer visiting dodgy sites. As you may have gathered, Night In The Woods is not your usual narrative gaming experience. There's no heavily armed hero swooping in to save the day here. Instead, it's a simple yet clever commentary on modern society, which uses dry humour to tell its character-driven story.

Stranger things

The oddity of the animal cast is perfect for providing some distance in a game that deals with real-world issues that

humans face, from a populace concerned over the dwindling economy of a former mining town to the pressures facing young people fresh out of mandatory education and trying to find their place in the world. The individual personalities make it amusing, but the tone is serious and the themes startlingly relatable.

There's a range of activities on offer aside from the insightful and amusing conversations with all manner of domesticated animals. Participating in band practice sees the game turned into an indie Guitar Hero with the difficulty ramped up to insane. Mae's computer also grants access to Demon Tower, a delightfully retro isometric dungeon-crawler perfect for kicking back with after a day of millennial drama. Nighttime sees Mae dream of exploring. These artsy sections add some light platforming to proceedings and offer an element of diversity that complements the game's expertly written narrative, even if they are rather basic.

From graphics to gameplay the elements of the game are simple, but its delivery is something that feels unique and inspired. Its colourful aesthetics and cute characters encapsulate a clever, contemplative, and often moving adventure that skilfully uses wit and humour to unveil the serious struggles facing its oddball cast. ■

"THE CAST INCLUDES A DEER WITH A LIKING FOR PETTY CRIME AND A MOODY GOTH CROCODILE"

NIGHT IN THE WOODS

GM LOVES...

- ✓ Excellent writing makes the cast of characters entertaining.
- ✓ There's lots to explore outside of the main narrative.

GM HATES...

- ✗ Frequent and, at times, lengthy load screens interrupt the fun.
- ✗ The infrequent platforming sections are overly simplistic.

Better than...



Broken Age

Double Fine's point-and-click adventure has its own distinct charm, but it doesn't tie up its comical and serious elements as neatly as NITW.

Worse than...



The Walking Dead

Not many chuckles to be found, but Telltale's defining series is still the one to beat when it comes to narrative-driven adventures.

NEED TO KNOW



Night in the Woods began life as a Kickstarter project created by a team of just three people. It reached its \$50,000 funding goal in only 26 hours, eventually earning 400% of the asking price.

GM JUDGEMENT

85%



A delightfully different narrative experience that offers the perfect blend of serious and silly.
Anne-Marie Coyle

NOW PLAYING



This month's biggest time sinks on Team GM



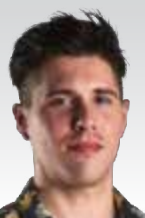
1 HORIZON ZERO DAWN PS4

I can't remember the last time I was this excited to get my hands on a game. Rest assured, it lives up to the hype - Guerilla has created something special here.
Robin Valentine, Acting Editor



2 OXENFREE PC

Impressively natural in-game conversations collide with creepily supernatural events - this adventure game is so up my alley I'm ashamed I didn't get round to it sooner.
Robin Valentine, Acting Editor



3 DRAGON AGE INQUISITION PC

I'm itching to enter another Bioware universe, but I can't get past the character creator. What horns should my Qunari mage have? This is important.
Ben Griffin, Senior Staff Writer



4 THE LAST GUARDIAN PS4

Trico's like a giant annoying dog, constantly disobeying orders and running off, but when I see that face I can't stay mad. Good boy.
Ben Griffin, Senior Staff Writer



OFFICE LUNCHTIME GAME OF THE MONTH: EXPLODING KITTENS TABLETOP GAME

That's right, another card game. By 2018 we'll have given up videogames entirely and rebranded as 'CardMaster magazine'.



Each colour switch will move the coloured line its counterpart is attached to. Later on, these will have enemies on.

Format PS4, PC (reviewed) Pub Brett Taylor Interactive Dev Brett Taylor Interactive ETA Out now Players 1

LINELIGHT

A great pick up line

Brett Taylor's relaxing puzzler feels like just what the world needs. A magical little game that takes away all your worries and transports you for a fleeting moment to a better place. Yes, it's that good, and yet you've never heard of it until right now.

Simplicity is key, and on a very basic level, all you need to do is get the

glowing line you control all the way to the end of the course. Failing isn't severely penalised, and only sets you back at the start of the area you are in, but each level gets progressively more fiendish and rewarding as you progress. You'll find it hard to put down (but you should, or it'll be over too soon).

You use the left stick (or D-pad) to dart along the line, flicking switches that change tracks, allowing you to progress. It gets harder, though, as enemy "lines" will run along the same tracks, and you'll

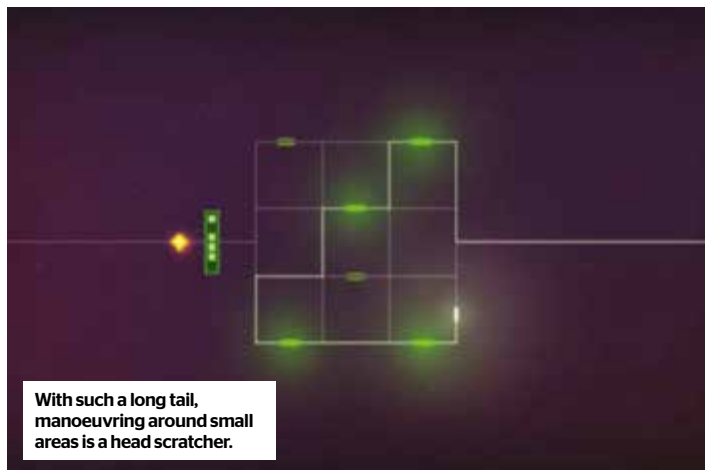
have to get out of the way of them. Later levels even give you a tail, which leads to some head-scratching as you try to solve problems while becoming familiar with the latest nuance to the mechanics.

Since the bulk of the levels sees you trying to avoid, or even manipulate, hostile lines, the chase sequence-like finales feel like cathartic adventures with a buddy. Once your foe, now your friend, you will race along trying to keep the timing right, as teamwork will often be required to complete a smooth run through. It's remarkable how Linelight manages to switch it up in this way, and it feels like a strange emotional connection forms by the time you've gotten to that final section.

Whether it affects you so deeply or not, Linelight is a lovely game, a welcome distraction, and deserves to be praised for everything it achieves. If there's a complaint it's merely that we wanted more, and while there are collectibles along the way and a level editor to extend the fun, the main campaign is our favourite part.

Regardless, this is as essential a puzzler as we've seen for some time. ■

Adam Cook



With such a long tail, manoeuvring around small areas is a head scratcher.

89%



The hex-based levels can fill up with enemies very quickly, and planning is essential.

Format PS4, PC (reviewed) **Publisher** Hollow Ponds
Developer Hollow Ponds **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

LOOT RASCALS

Decksed-up hexy rogue-like

Loot Rascals distracts you with bright colours, shiny ability cards, and cute owls. Then, when you're least expecting it, a demon horse trots up to you, rips off one of your legs, and shoves it up your nose.

It's a tough-as-nails turn-based rogue-like where victory requires careful planning, both of your next action and of your

eight-card deck, which sits in the background and determines your combat skills.

We died frustrating deaths over and over again trying to make our way through five randomly generated levels, but the game never felt unfair. Its core systems are all so simple that death will always be your fault, and the challenge comes in working out how those systems interact in any given situation so you can avoid dying the same way in future.



Moving round the board is a carefully choreographed dance, as you manage a day/night cycle and work out whether you should pop an attack ability, heal, or risk fighting a stronger enemy to get a unique card. Card management, often a chore in other games, is an intricate maths puzzle, as you move your cards in a grid to get the best configuration.

If we had to nitpick, Loot Rascals' predictably means it doesn't have the staying power of, say, Binding Of Isaac or Spelunky, where weapons and powers are more outrageous and can alter a run completely. Most of the cards in Loot Rascals have basic modifiers, and even the rarer cards offer fairly standard changes, such as boosting your HP or increasing the stats of all cards in one row. Variety would be welcome. ■

Samuel Horti

81%



The music, visuals, and difficulty give this one a distinctly retro vibe.

Format PS4 (reviewed), XO, Wii U, PC, PS Vita **Publisher** MixedBag
Developer MixedBag **ETA** Out now **Players** 1

FORMA.8

Lost in space

Exploring the galaxy is a dangerous occupation. It's even more hazardous when you're separated from your companions and stranded on an alien planet teeming with devilish puzzles and dangerous enemies.

Forma.8 sees you navigate its vast Metroidvania-style world as a tiny floating exploration probe. Environments

are exquisitely designed, with striking Limbo-esque silhouettes in the foreground and beautifully coloured backgrounds that add a sense of depth to its 2D world. From the design to the controls and story, everything has a charming, minimalist style.

Don't be fooled by its modest exterior, though. Underneath lies a game that demands careful consideration. Finding the keys and upgrades required to unlock new areas requires solving some



tricky logic puzzles. Armed only with a shield attack and bombs, combat needs thought, and a lapse in concentration can prove costly thanks to punishing obstacles and minimal health.

Crucially, only the entrance and exit are highlighted on the map. There are few hints here, making Forma.8 a lot like life – you'll frequently find yourself not knowing what to do next.

When you do figure it out, it's an engaging and inventive puzzle adventure game with clever boss battles that balance challenge with difficulty. It's a shame, then, that more hasn't been done to indicate points of interest to avoid having so much tedium sandwiched between the fun. ■

Anne-Marie Coyle

69%

HOT DOWNLOADS

The latest DLC and expansions explored



The first of this month's DLC offerings provides us with the chance to dust off those **Mafia 3** discs and return to the crime-infested streets of New Bordeaux. **Faster Baby**, the first of three planned story chapters, sees Lincoln Clay team up with old flame Roxy Laveau. The pair attempt to take down a shady sheriff who's been harassing civil rights activists in the city. In keeping with the game's fondness for style and spectacle, fast cars, dramatic chases and stunt driving are all promised. Hot on the tail of this is the second story DLC, **Stones Unturned**, arriving in May.

For a more up-close-and-personal shooter experience there's the first **Battlefield 1** expansion. **They Shall Not Pass** features a host of new maps, weapons, and the French Army as a playable faction. The new maps include some of the most iconic settings from WWI: Verdun Heights recreates the Battle of Verdun, while Soissons features large scale tank assaults in the idyllic French countryside. Still not sure you're getting enough bang for your buck? The DLC also features new game mode Frontlines and the ability to pilot a 'steel behemoth' tank.

If you prefer your games with fewer guns and more gravity-defying hairstyles, you can now grab the first additional story episode for **Final Fantasy XV**. Each instalment focuses on a different member of Noctis's posse, with tattooed bruiser Gladio taking the first swing at centre stage. **Episode Gladio** offers the chance to play as Noctis' beefed-up bro, and features a reworked combat system that differs from playing as the prince. Fan favourite baddie Gilgamesh also makes a reappearance.

But why settle for gravity-defying hair when you can ignore gravity completely? **Raven's Choice** is the first DLC offering for **Gravity Rush 2**. The additional content allows you to take control of Kat's physics-borking companion Raven, who, as you'd expect, has a decision to make (and it's a little more important than what to have for breakfast). The extra content is about five hours long and is, rather generously, being offered completely free as way of an apology for the game's delayed release. So what are you waiting for?

FL4UT

TOTAL INSANITY



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GM Comp

Win This!

WIN!

NINTENDO SWITCH
PLUS THE LEGEND OF
ZELDA: BREATH OF
THE WILD



STRIKE IT SWITCH

Win a Nintendo Switch and Zelda: Breath Of The Wild!

You know that new Nintendo console that's just come out? The one you can take on the go, with the controllers you can split apart, and the incredible new Zelda on it? We're giving one away, complete with red and blue Joy-Con, to a lucky reader, ie possibly you!

You can enjoy Nintendo Switch in many places: in your bed, on a train, underwater with James Cameron in his expensive submersible if it manages to withstand the immense pressure, in the queue at your favourite pop-up bagel shop, or

beneath your desk at work while your boss is away.

But what will you play on your new Switch, if you do win? None other than a copy of The Legend Of Zelda: Breath Of The Wild, included with your prize! In the largest Zelda yet, Link awakens from a 100-year slumber to traverse a huge Hyrule and defeat Ganon, but not before hunting, cooking, raiding bokoblin camps, and interacting with famous races from the series' history. Check out our (glowing) full review over on p60 for more info, but needless to say: you want this.

To be in with a chance to win a Nintendo Switch and a copy of Breath Of The Wild, all you have to do is head to the

web page over on the right and enter your details plus the answer to the following question by Thursday 27 April:

Q Which of these Zelda legends is true?

A. The Triforce consists of three golden triangles.

B. Link was originally called Funkmaster Flex.

C. Tingle is based on an unpopular Japanese politician.

HOW TO ENTER

ONLINE

Make your way over to <http://bit.ly/gmswitch> to enter, where you can fill in your details and submit your answer.



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GM Comp

Win This!

WIN!

A SONIC THE
HEDGEHOG 25TH
ANNIVERSARY
ART BOOK!

ART AND FAST

Win one of three Sonic 25th Anniversary art books!

There are few video game mascots more iconic than Sonic. The blue blur has been bombing through pop culture since 1991, starring in dozens of games, TV series, and comics in his time. We even had a Sonic ringtone at one point. And what better way to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Sega's speedy blue critter than the official Sonic The Hedgehog 25th Anniversary art book?

This weighty volume is packed with early design sketches, wonderful illustrations, and rare promotional materials covering

Sonic's entire lifespan, from charmingly tubby funster to svelte kisser of human women. It's perfect for bookshelves, coffee tables, and standing on to add inches to your height. Alongside the lush art, figures central to both the foundation and future of Sonic - Yuji Naka, Takashi Iizuka, Kazuyuki Hoshino, and Yuji Uekawa - give detailed accounts of their experiences shaping the world of Sonic. Do they attempt to justify Big The Cat's existence? Enter our competition for a chance to find out.

We've got three copies of Sonic The Hedgehog 1991-2016 from the fine folks over at Cook & Becker to give away. This videogame art publisher is a favourite

among enthusiasts and collectors for producing digital art at museum-grade levels - so you know they know their stuff. To be in with a chance to win this lush 200-page hardcover, simply head over to our competition web page (see the box on the right) and enter all your details along with an answer to the following question by Thursday 27 April:

Q What's the name of Sonic's spiky red echidna pal?

- A.** Knuckles
- B.** Fingernails
- C.** Toe Bones

HOW TO ENTER

ONLINE

Make your way over to <http://bit.ly/gmsonic> to enter, where you can fill in your details and submit your answer.

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RetroMaster

We ♥ Old Games!



Fable's endearingly chunky art was the result of a concerted attempt to move away from D&D-style RPG trappings.

FABLE

Drawing on folklore to craft a legend



Peter Molyneux may be an icon in our industry, but these days he has a bit of a reputation. The last few years have left a subset of gamers mistrustful of the legendary designer, sceptical that his pre-release promises won't always be realised in the finished product. But that wasn't always so. Back in 2003, Molyneux was hard at work on a remarkable project that would come to define the studio he'd co-founded, and was telling the press all about it...

The origins

Project Ego, as it was then known, was unashamedly ambitious – a fantasy role-playing game that would enable players not only to shape their hero, but also the world around them. The plan was that whatever action the player took, they could expect to see the consequences play out around them.

Some of those ambitions made it into the final game. If a Fable player performs consistently virtuous actions, their character will slowly change into a glowing exemplar of saintly benevolence,

surrounded by gently fluttering butterflies and enmeshed in a holy glow. Pursue the path of evil, however, and your hero's eyes will glow crimson with hatred as twisted horns erupt from their pallid skull. And if you eat a lot of pies, you'll get super-fat.

But Project Ego was about more than cosmetics. In highly animated interviews, Molyneux gave the impression it would be an incredibly reactive world that developed and changed as your player character aged. He explained that you might plant an acorn as a boy and return to the same field years later to find a mighty oak in its place. Or say you injured an acquaintance in a bout of youthful fisticuffs – that character would bear the scar of your encounter for years to come.

The legend

When Fable launched in 2004, many of these features were nowhere to be seen, but for the vast majority of players that didn't matter. Albion proved to be a captivating destination, drawing on myth and folklore in its depiction of a peculiarly British fantasy realm and eschewing bearded seriousness in favour of jovial approachability. So, while your quest

Developer Big Blue Box, Lionhead Studios
Publisher Microsoft
Released 2004
Format Xbox, PC
Get it Steam

from childhood tragedy to adult heroism touched on familiar tropes, it did so with an uncommon lightheartedness.

Even Fable's approach to good and evil was different, eschewing the profound moral tests found in the likes of Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic in favour of an altogether sillier system that allowed for both vaudeville villainy and messianic goodness. A virtuous hero might chow down on some tofu between battles, while a more sinister sort of player could chew on crunchy chicks to quash their appetite.

Although Albion wasn't quite the reactive simulation some had perhaps hoped for, Fable still responded to player choice in appropriately ebullient fashion,

with NPCs reacting to the player's righteous beauty or wicked pestilence with appropriately comic levels of desire or revulsion. And if Fable's tone made it more accessible than many of its genre stablemates, then its gameplay followed suit, with a streamlined combat system that enabled players to flit between magical pyrotechnics, chunky swordplay, and ranged crowd management with unusually casual ease.

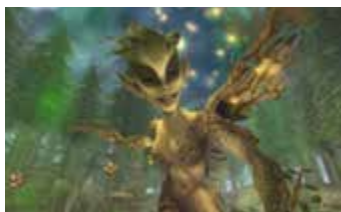
The legacy

Back in 2004, the launch of Fable was significant for bringing an excellent new IP to Microsoft's first home console, but today it stands out as one of the first high-profile occasions when a developer publicly apologised for a game's failure to live up to player expectations. Molyneux publicly rowed back on his own excitable pre-release jabber in a lengthy post on the Lionhead forums.

“MANY PROMISED FEATURES WERE NOWHERE TO BE SEEN – BUT FOR MOST THAT DIDN'T MATTER”



Albion was no open world - more a series of detailed hubs linked by paths.



Lionhead tragically closed in 2016, and Fable Legends was cancelled.

"When a game is in development, myself and the development teams I work with constantly encourage each other to think of the best features and the most ground-breaking design possible," Molyneux explained. "When I tell people about what we're planning, I'm telling the truth, and people, of course, expect to see all the features I've mentioned."

"If I have mentioned any feature in the past which, for whatever reason, didn't make it as I described into Fable, I apologise. Every feature I have ever talked about was in development, but not all made it." Although Molyneux typed these words in 2004, they will sound utterly up to date to anyone who followed the backlash surrounding the launch of space-travelling survival game No Man's Sky last August.

But it would be utterly unfair to end a discussion of Fable's legacy on such a sour note. Instead, we'll focus on the manner of ways in which Lionhead opened up fantasy role-playing with its trademark sense of humour and effortlessly streamlined design. Fable was a series that boasted truly widespread appeal, and Microsoft's home console offering is poorer for Albion's absence. ■

Studio Spotlight

Five more games that couldn't have been made anywhere else



1 Black & White

(PC - 2001)

A deeply idiosyncratic success story that combines AI systems with god-game management and a very British sense of humour. The game cast you as the deity of an idyllic island and tasked you with earning the adoration or fearful devotion - depending on your inclination towards good or evil - of its dinky inhabitants. Naturally, you had a giant animal familiar to help you...



2 Black & White 2

(PC - 2005)

The acclaim afforded to Black & White led Lionhead to revisit its creature-filled curio a few years later, adding a graphical upgrade as well as enhancements to its animal AI. As in the first game, your familiar would develop its own distinct personality, which you could shape through positive or negative reinforcement. Slap your giant heifer to punish it, or give that cuddly cow a lovely stroke to reward good behaviour.



3 The Movies

(PC - 2005)

On one level, The Movies is a fairly straightforward business simulation in which players run a film studio and manage the careers of their acting talent. But the ability to create your own blockbusters in-game and have them acted out by hammy digital thespians turned this straightforward sim into an absolute hoot. You could even use your PC's microphone to record dialogue and Foley for your mini-epic.

4 Fable II

(Xbox 360 - 2008)

The inclusion of an ever-present breadcrumb trail leading towards your next objective made Fable II even more accessible than its predecessor, but it was surely the presence of a furry four-legged best friend that proved the most memorable addition to the franchise. This adventurous pup would trot excitedly by your side, aid you in combat, and even sniff out buried booty every now and then.



5 Fable III

(PC, 360 - 2010)

The final mainline instalment in the Fable franchise suffered from a compressed development timeframe. That left Lionhead unable to realise the game's ambitious monarchic elements quite as fully as they'd planned, and incapable of squashing a number of bugs that made it into the final product. In spite of these shortcomings, Fable III retained the eccentric personality that made the series so beloved.

SIX OF THE BEST... POOCHES

Presenting our pick of the most precious polygonal pups

Whether you're engaged in smalltalk on a first date, making friends in a pet shop, or attending an animal-themed Halloween party in a slapdash home-made costume, there's one question that's bound to crop up time and again: are you a cat person or a dog person? There is, of course, only one answer.

Cats are scornful creatures known to ignore their owners for days at a time before vomiting a clump of half-digested fur onto your decorative antique doilies. Cats enjoy knocking your fragile unicorn figurines from high shelves and moulting all over the hardwood floors you *just* swept. Cats, in short, are emotionally withholding jerks. Dogs, meanwhile, are loyal companions with almost unlimited appetites for attention and affection. They have cold, wet noses and lovely fluffy coats. What's more, they've proved pretty handy in videogames, too. ■



JAKE

Dog's Life
(PS2 - 2003)

This bizarre sidestep from Elite creator David Braben cast you as a lovesick pupper on an epic quest to rescue his dognapped belle. At the end of the game, Jake produces an anal vapour so foul that it kills a woman. Seriously, look it up.



DOGMEAT

Fallout
(PC - 1997)

Dogs are renowned for their loyalty, but Dogmeat has gone above and beyond, serving as a faithful canine companion to Fallout players for 20 years. This fearsome warrior-dog has chewed up many an irradiated foe.

SMUG DOG

Duck Hunt
(NES - 1987)

While you might remember this particular pup as a judgemental tittersmith casting scorn on your marksmanship, it was reimagined in the latest instalment of Super Smash Bros as a friend to ducks and hunters.



R=12

SHOT

HIT



GENERAL PEPPER

Lylat Wars
(N64 - 1997)

Who's a good boy? General Pepper's a good boy, rising through the ranks of the Cornerian Army to take charge of the planet's entire military forces. We'd reward this behaviour with a juicy bone and an entire string of sausages.



DOG

Fable II
(Xbox 360 - 2008)

The handsomest hound in Albion is introduced at the start of Fable II, when you save this mutt from a nasty bully. From then on it's your constant companion, which makes it even crueller when Lionhead kills the poor beast off at the end of the game.



AMATERASU

Ōkami
(PS2 - 2007)

Okay, so technically Amaterasu is a Shinto sun goddess incarnated in the form of a white wolf, but we bet this lupine deity isn't too high and mighty for a nice game of fetch and a lovely scratch behind the ears.



267200
SCORE

Grab Bag

Retro gems from every era

Awesome Boss



Ninja Gaiden

Format Xbox Developer Team Ninja Released 2004

Team Ninja's Xbox masterpiece is renowned for its ferocious difficulty, and Alma is arguably the single hardest boss battle in the game. Flying on periwinkle wings, she'll harry you from on high, swooping down to deal gnarly damage to Ryu before flinging chunks of masonry at the beleaguered ninja. Don't let her grab you; the lady's got one hell of a grip.

Classic Moment



Aliens Versus Predator 2

Format PC Developer Monolith Released 2001

Monolith's crack at this long-running crossover features three separate campaigns, the first of which casts you as a terrified marine up against legions of lethal Xenomorphs. Blasting your way through that skittering horde is utterly nerve-shredding, so the moment you're handed control of one of those alien killing machines represents a triumphant turning of the tables.

Remake Request



Star Wars: Masters Of Teräs Käsä

Format PS1 Developer LucasArts Released 1997

Okay, look - we know that Masters Of Teräs Käsä was a bit of a clunky also-ran that couldn't hold a candle to contemporaries such as Tekken 3 and Street Fighter 3. But what it lacked in fighting finesse, Teräs made up for in generous fan service, enabling players to take their pick from a range of movie characters and duke it out with lightsabers and blasters drawn.

CultureMaster

The Outer Regions Of Gaming!

Guo shot the video on location in Oregon and kept being distracted by Pokémon Go. Hopefully there was a Ditto among the Pidgeys.



STRING WHEN YOU'RE WINNING

We bow down to movie and game soundtrack professional cellist **Tina Guo** and find out what makes her want to be the very best

Spoiler: this isn't going to be one of those CultureMasters where we attempt to recreate whatever craft we cover. This isn't perler beads, gaming with a ridiculous controller, or trying out a cross stitch that inevitably gets covered in blood. Unless you want to hear our sad (and shrill) tale of learning to play the Assassin's Creed theme on the penny whistle, we'll just have to report on the joys of music instead - and when it comes to that, Grammy-nominated cellist Tina Guo is in a league of her own.

Thirty-one year old Guo might play on a slew of adverts as well as the Hans-Zimmer-composed soundtracks to Sherlock Holmes, Iron Man 2, and Batman v Superman, but videogame music has always been a part of her life. "One of my earliest memories of it being there is when I started playing videogames with my little brother," she tells us when we catch up with her after her live London show. "We played games like Tarzan and I was always really bad at it! But growing up playing Zelda, Super Mario, Donkey Kong, and all the rest let the music seep

into my head, so yes - in that way I've always been interested in videogame music."

Journey's friend

You might not realise it, but Guo has already made you feel like you want to cry with her music. Those beautiful cello sections on Austin Wintory's Journey soundtrack are all down to her, and she's back for more tears and feels. Guo's new album Game On has music from the Legend Of Zelda, Uncharted, Skyrim, and The Witcher 3. It's also got the soundtrack from Final Fantasy VII, which she plays alongside the Budapest Symphony Orchestra. "Who's my favourite videogame composer? That's a tough one. Everyone is so talented. I'd have to say Nobuo Uematsu is up there, though," she says. "He composed the Final Fantasy soundtrack, which is instantly recognisable to everyone, and one day it'd be amazing to work with him. I was really excited to work on the Final Fantasy VII medley we did. It's so grand and so beautiful with such a unique sound - you can really tell it's Uematsu that composed it!"

But as you can see from the pictures above, Guo isn't just happy playing on stage. Like violinists Lindsey

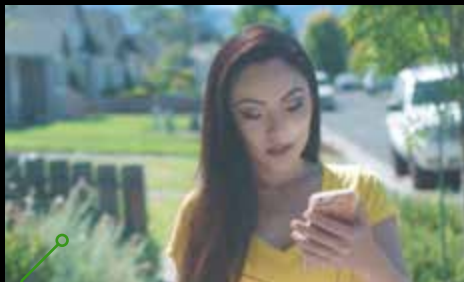


With music from The Witcher, Tetris and Pokémon, Guo's album is out now on iTunes and Spotify.

Stirling and Taylor Davis, the videos for her work make the very best of the source material. While the video for her Skyrim soundtrack is filled with fire breathers, Guo's Pokémon video shows off the dangers of playing Pokémon Go. Donning a Pikachu tee and wandering the streets, Guo can be seen going against the rules of the mobile app and trespassing into an abandoned location where she ends up meeting an evil Team Rocket equivalent of herself, complete with electric cello and 'string attack'. Despite fierce competition, she takes her evil alter ego out with some serious bow work.

"The video was super fun to film - we did it in Oregon, and the video team actually had the idea of doing the battle between the two Tinās - one as Ash and the other

"GROWING UP PLAYING ZELDA AND ALL THE REST LET THE MUSIC SEEP INTO MY HEAD"



So you want to know Guo's favourite key to play in? Butterf-EE flat. Gotta play 'em all...



Guo has starred in videos for both Skyrim and a Legend Of Zelda medley (complete with ears).



The fight between the two trainers was inspired by a previous video where Guo superimposed herself into her own living room to play Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's Flight Of The Bumblebee.



as Team Rocket," she explains. "They based it on a video I did in my living room back in 2015, playing Flight of the Bumble Bee, where I superimposed myself twice into the video. They thought it'd be fun to do the same thing for Pokémon!"

And Guo wasn't just mocking up her Pokémon Go addiction. The problem was very real, and the streets were just too full of Poké Ball opportunities. "I've been playing Pokémon Go a lot," she admits. "In fact, in the video scenes where I was 'playing' the game, I was actually out playing it! During the shooting, it started to turn into a problem because I kept wanting to go and catch more Pokémon."

Soviet block

Sadly, taking to the global stage doesn't leave much time for Guo's solo gaming time other than Pokémon Go, but she has a blocky go-to game that she celebrates on her album. "I used to play a lot growing up," she says.

"Now, because of all the work touring and recording, it can be more difficult to find the time but I will always play Tetris at least, which I have on my phone for whenever I am travelling!" Yep, you'll only realise Tetris should have a cello soundtrack once you've heard it.

In terms of future gaming soundtracks Guo doesn't have anything planned for the year ahead - yet, at least. "I would be extremely honoured and excited to play on any upcoming game soundtracks! I love music in general and being able to record is an amazing experience which I'll never tire of," she says. "The reaction [to the game soundtracks] has been really good. Today I've been scrolling

through the comments on social media and the feedback has been absolutely amazing across the board. I'm so happy that everyone is enjoying it as much as I've enjoyed being a part of it!" ■ **Louise Blain**

Hear this!

You can hear all of Guo's incredible gaming arrangements on her new album, *Game On*, which is out now:
<http://bit.ly/gmtinaguo>



GLOBAL MASTER

Gaming food (almost) too good to eat



BATTER THAN EVER

This adorable Snorlax is doing exactly what we would do after visiting professional pancake artist Dr Dancakes. Now working with coloured mix since we spoke to him back in 2014, Dan is getting better with every flipping design. See more of his tasty work at [drdancake](http://drdancake.com) on Instagram.



ROWLETS EAT

How does CoderXBaker do it? Not only has he made Pokémon Sun and Moon's starter set in biscuit form, but each one has its own flavour. Popplio is blueberry, Rowlet matcha green tea and Litten strawberry. Do we have to pick just one?

SWEET PROBLEMS

And fine, we couldn't resist including (now-ex) Official PlayStation editor Matthew Pellett's The Witness-shaped leaving cake. It was a real puzzle from the game (The Keep) and he even got to solve it with icing before everyone consumed its delicious chocolate innards. Who knew problem solving could be quite this tasty? Amaze-ing work.



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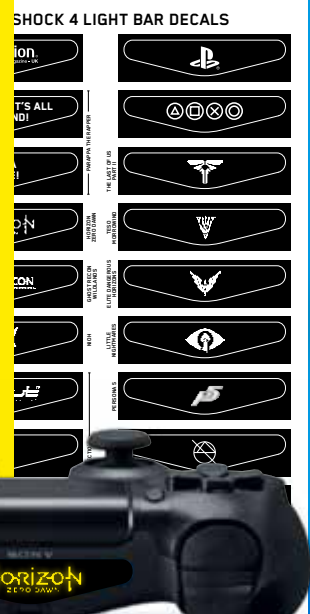
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MIDDLE EARTH: SHADOW OF WAR

IT'S TIME TO MAKE SOME NEW ENEMIES AS
THE BATTLE FOR MORDOR CONTINUES

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PREVIEWED

- Injustice 2
- Dawn Of War III
- Project Sonic 2017

REVIEWED

- Mass Effect: Andromeda
- Nier: Automata
- Ghost Recon: Wildlands

GAME GUIDE



Welcome to GM's carefully collated list of the most essential gaming experiences you can undertake right now. If even one of the 50 games on here has passed you by, get a shift on post-haste



1



DARK SOULS III

PS4 / X0 / PC

The first game might be closer to fans' hearts, but this is Souls - and gaming - at its current-gen finest.

2



THE LAST OF US

PS4 / PS3

Naughty Dog brings all of its strengths to the fore, fusing engaging gameplay with stunning storytelling.

3



THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

PS4 / X0 / PC

An epic proposition that truly lives up to its promise. Engaging, mature, and unbelievably vast.

4

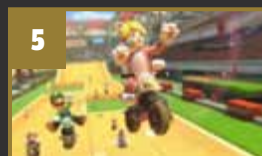


GRAND THEFT AUTO V

PS4 / X0 / PC / PS3 / 360

The most comprehensive sandbox going, full of wonderful distractions and typical Rockstar humour.

5

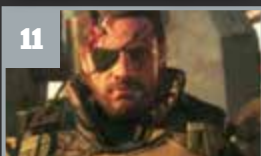


MARIO KART 8

Wii U

Reinvention is what Ninty does best, and nowhere is that more apparent than in this joyous karter reborn.

11



METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

PS4 / X0 / PC / PS3 / 360

Hideo's last hurrah brings open-world action to the revered series.

12



DESTINY

PS4 / X0 / PS3 / 360

Now packed with content thanks to a string of expansions and updates, Bungie's FPS MMO is better than ever.

13

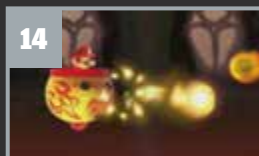


HER STORY

PC / Mobile

An engrossing mystery that makes us believe in FMV again. Utterly, wonderfully unique.

14

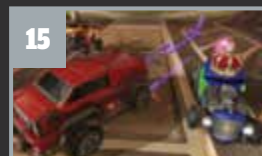


SUPER MARIO MAKER

Wii U

The most brilliantly accessible level-creation game around, dripping with Nintendo's slick signature style.

15



ROCKET LEAGUE

PS4 / X0 / PC

2015's surprise hit combines football and motors to create an amazingly universal multiplayer experience.

21



PORTAL 2

PC / PS3 / 360

22



BATTLEFIELD 1

PS4 / X0 / PC

23



GUILD WARS 2: HEART OF THORNS

PC

24



HOTLINE MIAMI

PS4 / PC / PS3 / PS Vita / Mobile

25



POKÉMON SUN AND MOON

3DS

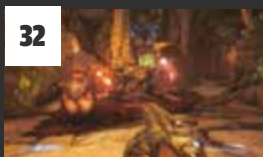
31



BAYONETTA 2

Wii U

32



DOOM

PS4 / X0 / PC

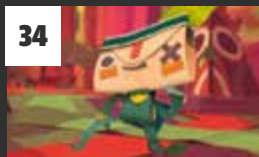
33



MIDDLE-EARTH: SHADOW OF MORDOR

PS4 / X0 / PC / PS3 / 360

34



TEARAWAY

PS Vita

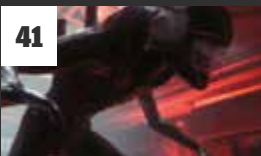
35



FAR CRY PRIMAL

PS4 / X0 / PC

41



ALIEN ISOLATION

PS4 / X0 / PC / PS3 / 360

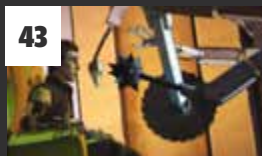
42



NIDHOGG

PS4 / PC / PS Vita

43



TALES FROM THE BORDERLANDS

PS4 / X0 / PC / PS3 / 360 / Mobile

44



INSIDE

PS4 / X0 / PC

45



DOTA 2

PC

FORMAT BUYER'S GUIDE

Just bought a spanking new console? Configured a new rig? Or perhaps you have a new handheld ready to go? Whichever machine you've got, GM is here to ensure you're clued in on the top exclusives

PS4

1 THE LAST OF US REMASTERED

2 JOURNEY

3 UNCHARTED 4

4 TOWERFALL ASCENSION

5 BLOODBORNE



1 HALO 5: GUARDIANS

2 KALIMBA

3 FORZA HORIZON 3

4 QUANTUM BREAK

5 ORI & THE BLIND FOREST

Wii U

1 MARIO KART 8

2 SUPER MARIO MAKER

3 SPLATOON

4 BAYONETTA 2

5 SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD

Guilty Pleasure

Team GM comes clean on the games it secretly plays when no-one is watching...



This month, Robin shamefully gets his ass to Mars with **The Technomancer**

There's something magical about C-tier RPGs. I know they're naff, tripping over their own limitations as they ape the likes of *The Witcher* and *Mass Effect*, but I still can't help sinking hours into games such as this one. The *Technomancer*'s lesser means grant it a kind of freedom - without a major publisher calling the shots, it's allowed to be earnest and just *brilliantly weird*. Post-apocalyptic cyberpunk sci-fantasy Mars: that's a setting unique enough to be worth enduring awkward combat and cringey voice-acting for.



6

JOURNEY

PS4 / PS3

This intensely emotional trip through a strange, beautiful world is a truly spellbinding display of games as art.

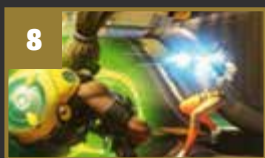


7

UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END

PS4

An incredible end to one of the most spectacular series in games.



8

OVERWATCH

PS4 / X0 / PC

A wondrous foray into first-person shooting from the World Of Warcraft dev - essential for team players.



9

TOWERFALL ASCENSION

PS4 / PC / PS Vita

Still nothing on current-gen has come close to matching the multiplayer thrills found in this twitchy battler.

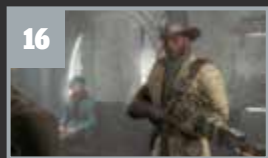


10

XCOM 2

PS4 / X0 / PC

Turn-based strategy gold that doesn't pull its punches. Try not to get too attached to your soldiers, eh?

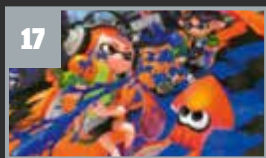


16

FALLOUT 4

PS4 / X0 / PC

A hundred little improvements over its predecessor make this trip to the wasteland one worth booking.

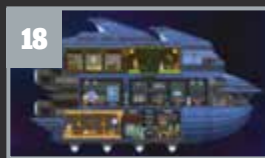


17

SPLATOON

Wii U

Injects more fun and colour into the online shooter genre than we ever thought possible.



18

STARBOUND

PC

Side-on crafting at its best. It's a wondrous world filled with planets to explore and furniture to plunder.



19

THE WALKING DEAD SEASONS ONE AND TWO

PS4 / X0 / PC / PS3 / 360 / PS Vita / Mobile

Telltale's episodic formula at its best.

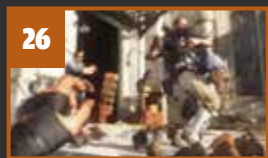


20

TITANFALL 2

PS4 / X0 / PC

The most creative and varied FPS campaign in years, with a side of fantastically fast-paced multiplayer.



26

DISHONORED 2

PS4 / X0 / PC



27

BLOODBORNE

PS4



28

RISE OF THE TOMB RAIDER

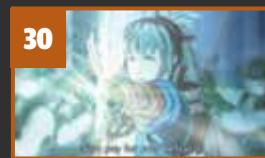
PS4 / X0 / PC / 360



29

ROCK BAND 4

PS4 / X0



30

FIRE EMBLEM FATES

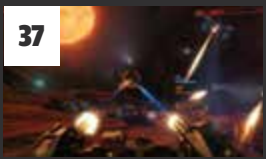
3DS



36

STREET FIGHTER V

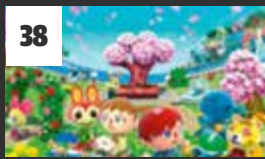
PS4 / PC



37

ELITE DANGEROUS

X0 / PC



38

ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW LEAF

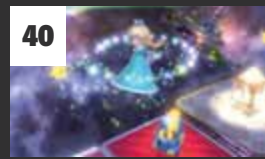
3DS



39

SUPERHOT

PC / X0



40

SUPER MARIO 3D WORLD

Wii U



46

HALO 5: GUARDIANS

X0



47

SALT AND SANCTUARY

PS4 / PC



48

TOTAL WAR: WARHAMMER

PC



49

STELLARIS

PC



50

MONSTER HUNTER GENERATIONS

3DS

PC

1 XCOM 2

2 HER STORY

3 STARBOUND

4 GUILD WARS 2

5 DOTA 2

3DS

1 POKÉMON SUN AND MOON

2 FIRE EMBLEM FATES

3 ANIMAL CROSSING: NEW LEAF

4 MONSTER HUNTER GENERATIONS

5 LUIGI'S MANSION 2: DARK MOON

PS VITA

1 TEARAWAY

2 PERSONA 4 GOLDEN

3 VELOCITY 2X

4 ZERO ESCAPE: VIRTUE'S LAST REWARD

5 GRAVITY RUSH

iOS

1 80 DAYS

2 FTL: FASTER THAN LIGHT

3 SORCERY

4 HEARTHSTONE: HEROES OF WARCAFT

5 PAPERS, PLEASE



CONTROL FREAK

Nintendo Switch is nothing if not versatile – here are some games to realise its true potential

Cruel Nintentions

Inspired by the bizarreness of Nintendo Switch multiplayer compilation 1-2-Switch, with its motion-controlled sandwich-eating, cow-milking, and yoga, we at GamesMaster envision our dream assortment of minigames. We haven't trademarked any of these, which is a decision we might live to regret.



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 4 CREW MEMBERS

 35KM/H

 105MM L7A1
(UP TO 70 SHELLS)

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