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# PlayStation®

ISSUE 173 APRIL 2020  
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## Official Magazine - UK

EXCLUSIVE  
HANDS-ON  
VERDICT

# FINAL

THE COMBAT,  
THE WORLD,  
AND MORE

# FANTASY VII

## REMAKE

The icon returns on PS4! Does it  
redefine PlayStation... again?



WE'RE #1  
FOR ALL THINGS

# PS5

Next-gen horror gets  
photoreal – exclusive  
access inside!

WE PLAY IT

## RESIDENT EVIL 3

Single-player and multiplayer, we play  
all of Capcom's hot horror remake



THE 24 GAMES MADE IN  
DREAMS YOU MUST PLAY

GRANBLUE FANTASY: VERSUS  
REVIEWED FIRST INSIDE!

HARMONIX IS BACK! CREATE  
YOUR OWN MUSIC IN FUSER





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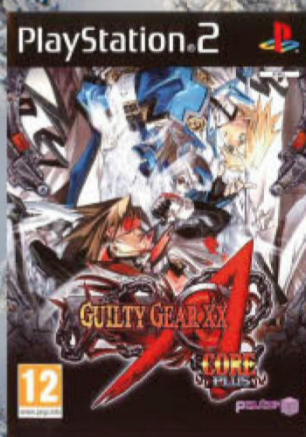
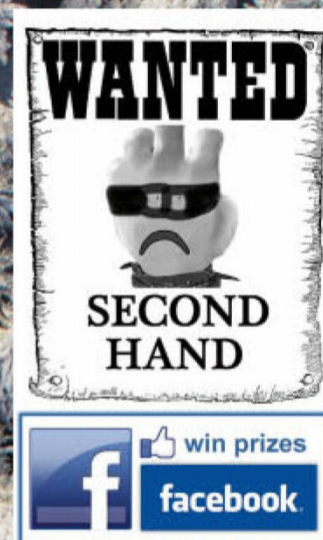
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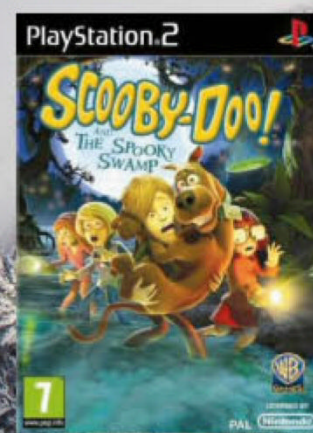
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**Printed by** William Gibbons & Sons Ltd on behalf of Future

**Distributed by** Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf,  
London, E14 5HU [www.marketforce.co.uk](http://www.marketforce.co.uk) Tel: 0203 787 9001

ISSN 1752210

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The ABC combined print, digital and digital publication circulation for Jan-Dec 2019 is  
**18,776**  
A member of the Audited Bureau of Circulations



Future plc is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR)  
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# Welcome



**GAME OF THE MONTH**

Darksiders Genesis

**SQUAD GOALS**

Knights Of The Round Table

“PS5-BOUND  
OUTRIDERS IS  
DESTINED TO BE  
A CULT CLASSIC.”

**Ian Dean**

EDITOR

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on page 54

## THIS MONTH'S FANTASY TEAM



**Oscar Taylor-Kent**  
GAMES EDITOR

“There’s no planet B,” says Oscar as his hands-on with FFVII Remake (p48) turned him eco-savvy. He’s devoted to recycling bad puns.

**GAME OF THE MONTH**

Granblue Fantasy: Versus

**SQUAD GOALS**

The Lowain Bros



**Jess Kinghorn**  
STAFF WRITER

Jess finally got to make the game of her Dreams (p70) – the horrors of cat dating. Prrrrfect match?

**GAME OF THE MONTH**

The Yakuza Remastered

**SQUAD GOALS**

Phantom Thieves



**Miriam McDonald**  
OPERATIONS EDITOR

Murder and photoreal Tuscan vineyards in Martha Is Dead (p6)? Mim’s planning her holidays on PS5. Is that pour taste?

**GAME OF THE MONTH**

Two Point Hospital

**SQUAD GOALS**

Lego Marvel Super Heroes



**Milford Coppock**  
MANAGING ART EDITOR

Keita Takahashi (p56) chose to answer our questions in doodle form, a language Milf understands. They’re both very articulate.

**GAME OF THE MONTH**

Hunt: Showdown

**SQUAD GOALS**

Diamond Dogs



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A joyful chat with the Katamari and Wattam creator.

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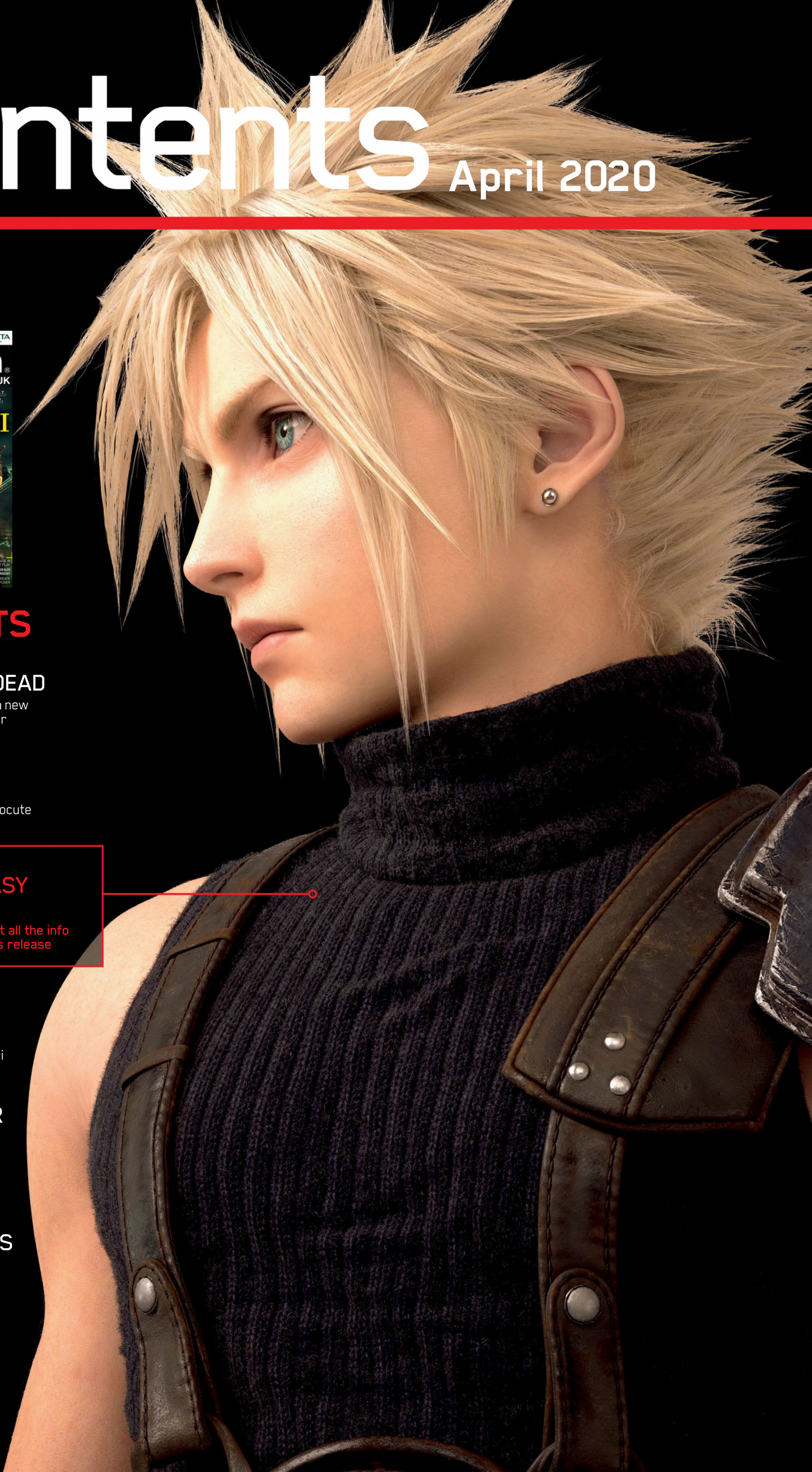
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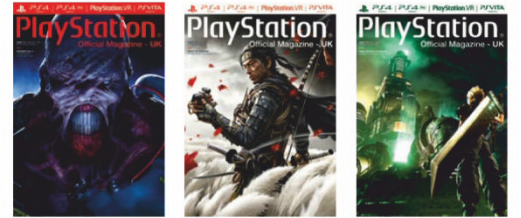
We exclusively review Arc System Works' latest fighter.





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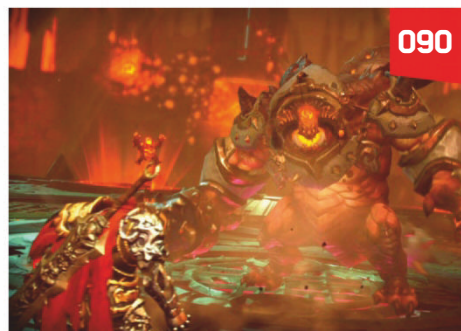
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“THE DEVELOPER WANTS  
TO MAKE MARTHA IS DEAD  
ONE OF THE YEAR’S MOST  
REALISTIC GAMES.”



Martha certainly looks very dead in our exclusive images... but is she?



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# The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT

## Horror gets photoreal on PlayStation 5

Photoreal visuals? 3D audio to tingle the spine? PS5 will bring horror to life...

01

We've sweated over the specs for months. Now, finally, some developers are ready to

talk and tease how PlayStation 5 will change the way we play games. This issue we sit down with Martha Is Dead developer LKA's studio head, Luca Dalcò, to discuss how the power of Sony's next-gen hardware is being harnessed to make horror truly terrifying.

"PS5's specifications are incredibly exciting – particularly for us is the additional graphical power and inclusion of ray-tracing architecture," says Dalcò as we dig into how PS5 will offer higher visual fidelity. "Our studio has come a long way over four years and Martha Is Dead will strive for photorealism."

The developer has always placed believability at the heart of its games, and PlayStation 5 will make that more achievable. "We're excited to see next-generation hardware

incoming to support us bringing our vision to players," adds Dalcò.

What PlayStation 5's graphical boost over PS4 means is we'll be seeing incredibly detailed textures in our new games. Dalcò explains: "We worked a lot in order to use the highest-resolution textures as possible also on PS4; nonetheless, PS5 will allow us to use an incredible Texel density, up to 4096px/m – that means the visual will be fully detailed also in higher resolutions. It's one of the most important advances in visual capability that we were waiting for!"

### NEXT-GEN STORY

Dalcò tells us that a high level of graphical detail – the studio wants to make Martha Is Dead one of the year's most realistic games – is crucial to telling the game's story, particularly as it is designed to deeply unsettle us.

"Martha Is Dead is a story, and videogames are the medium. Whatever medium you choose to tell a story, you must harness all of its attributes to capture the imagination



007





# The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



## SOUND OF FEAR

3D audio is an exciting prospect for LKA and Martha Is Dead: "The game is deeply atmospheric, so anything which allows us to push further with our audio design within the game is incredibly welcome," says LKA's Luca Dalcò.

»

of your audience, so for Martha Is Dead we must strive for the best visual quality – in the photorealistic style we have chosen – and the best gameplay we can invent," says Dalcò.

Though a lot is being made of the game's visual muscle, Dalcò is keen to point out that action isn't being overlooked in a race to showcase what the next gen can do.

"We believe Martha Is Dead makes great strides in gameplay, adding unique aspects not seen in the genre," he says, but adds: "We must have the visual quality to match."

## DROWNED AND OUT

So what *is* Martha Is Dead? Pitched as a psychological thriller set in 1944 Tuscany, it's played in first-person and mixes disturbing, dreamlike sequences with a photoreal recreation of World War 2 Italy. Superstition, psychological trauma, and the horrors of war are the backdrop to the mystery of a woman who is found drowned. Thematically the game feels like a progression from LKA's The Town Of Light.

Dalcò explains: "Following a project like The Town Of Light, of course there is a spotlight on mental health within our games, however Martha Is Dead is a very different game. Many months of research helped to mould Renée's story in The Town Of Light – with Martha Is Dead we wanted to do

something different. The game will still explore the human mind, but with a more artistic approach, frequently suspending reality and creating symbolically powerful abstract scenes – for this reason I think it is perhaps unhelpful to compare the two projects, although there are elements that do tie the games together."

The idea for the game came from the team's love of Tuscany and a desire to show a different side of the region mostly known for its scenery. "I like to use the contrast between the beauty of the landscape and the gloom of the story: indeed war, violence, and unease are the ingredients of the Martha Is Dead story. [What] started as a simple concept... has become very complex and has grown and evolved constantly during the development of the game," says Dalcò.

## RAY OF LIGHT

Bringing the conversation back to PS5, Dalcò picks ray tracing as a standout weapon in the next generation's arsenal. It's an

■ ■ AS THE TECHNOLOGY MATURES... I THINK IT WILL REALLY TRANSFORM THE INDIE GAME SPACE. ■ ■

"incredible technology [...] for independent studios," Dalcò says, "allowing games to reach new levels of realism without the need for huge teams. As the technology matures and becomes even easier to implement, I think it will really transform the indie game space. This next generation of consoles is set to transform the market."

Likewise PS5's use of an SSD will enable the team to deliver a new experience in Martha Is Dead. "High-quality assets are naturally larger in size so will benefit from the faster load times. On top of that Martha Is Dead has a more expansive in-game world than anything we've created before as a studio."

Dalcò clarifies that Martha Is Dead isn't an open world game, but we will be able to visit places in and around San Casciano. The dev says, "These different areas can be travelled between on foot or by cycle without the constant separation of loading screens; an SSD will definitely help with these transitions."

It's clear LKA sees PS5's features as an opportunity, but "it's more about jumping to that next level of immersion than delivering the next great gaming fad". We'll be keeping a close eye on PS5's Martha Is Dead... from between our fingers.

\* LKA's Martha Is Dead is yet to get a release date, but it's PS5-bound.

A woman is found drowned by an Italian lake, but why did she die?



■ The open coffin takes on a eerie feel in LKA's photoreal visual style...



■ ...Particularly when lightning at the windows reveals a ghastly sight.



The photoreal visuals ensure objects in the game look good enough to play with.



009

■ LKA has painstakingly recreated the period details to ensure every environment in Martha Is Dead feels real. It's a little bit spooky too.



Mist and fog, and motorboats. It looks like we'll be exploring the lake at the mystery's heart.



Tweaks to the game show improvements, and PS4 owners will be playing first.



# PS4's Avengers is looking Marvellous

New gameplay footage shows the game's delay is working out fine

02

As she leaps into the air, Ms. Marvel swings her oversized hand above her head before crashing it into the ground. Enemies flail and fly into the sky, machines spark and explode, and we sit back, smile, and enjoy the spectacle of Marvel's newest hero doing her thing. Love. It.

The latest Marvel's Avengers gameplay we've seen puts Ms. Marvel up front as she teams up with Hulk for a smashing time. The new hero can hold her own with the green giant as she features a similar arsenal of clobbering moves, but how similar will ultimately be up to you as each hero features a

**EDITIONS AND CONTENT ONLY PS4 PLAYERS CAN GET.**

customisable moveset that you can upgrade and develop.

There are also signs developer Crystal Dynamics is making some subtle changes to the game's visual aesthetic. Using the extra development time afforded to the team by the recent delay, the game now looks more subdued, its colour

tones ratcheted back. There's a suggestion that some characters have had facelifts too, as Thor looks more angular and features shorter

hair in the new sequences. The glow from Mjölner as Thor juggles an enemy into the air before thumping them down to Earth is magic.

Best of all, as a PS4 gamer you'll play as Ms. Marvel, Hulk, Thor, and the rest of the Avengers before



## team talk

"Exclusive PS4-only editions and early access to the game? How can we not get excited? Better still, it looks like Crystal Dynamics is using its extra develop time to polish the gameplay and character designs. This one could surprise a lot of people."

Ian Dean  
Editor

anyone else. We already knew Square Enix would offer early access to PS4 players, but new details reveal this partnership is going beyond simply allowing us to play ahead of other platforms. There are new editions and content only PS4 players can get.

## NEW (PRE)ORDER

All pre-orders on PS4 offer early hands-on time with the game via the Beta. The exclusive Digital Edition comes with a Ms. Marvel nameplate and 1,000 credits to be used on customising your heroes. Most interesting for Marvel fans is the inclusion of the Marvel Legacy Outfits. Inspired by the comics that launched each character, these skins include Captain America's Golden Age Front Line Outfit from his time as America's war hero, Thor's Silver Age Jack Kirby design, called the Asgard's Might Outfit, recalling the



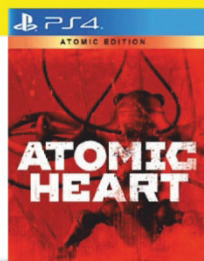


© 2020 Marvel

hero's origins, and Black Widow's Classic Stealth Outfit, which apes her original suit and features the Widow's Bite detailing.

The other editions, the Deluxe Edition and Earth's Mightiest Edition, feature metallic versions of the iconic costumes and 72-hour Beta access. The latter physical collector's box also offers a Avengers 'A' icon steelbook case and comes with game-themed goodies, including a 12-inch statue of Captain America, a Hulk bobblehead (as seen wobbling away in last year's Kamala trailer), a Mjölnir keychain, Black Widow's belt buckle, Iron Man's prototype armour blueprint, Kamala Khan's Honorary Avenger pin, and a commemorative Avengers group photo as seen in the game.

\* Marvel's Avengers is now due for release 24 September on PS4.



## RUSSIAN THE ORDERS

Pre-order the game at [mundfish.com](http://mundfish.com) (in US dollars) and you can get seven-day early access, a soundtrack, an artbook, and an in-game ID that grants access to a unique location.

We could be exploring these bloodied corridors very soon on PS4.



# Atomic Heart opens its bunker

Pre-order the stunning BioShock-like shooter

03

Robotic worms spin and circle overhead, a giant mutated plant threatens to turn us into mulch, and a cutscene shows a large portrait of Russian writer Chekhov floating about the remnants of a forest community. Mundfish's Atomic Heart looks surreal and very, very good.

Though the developer has been silent for some time after missing the game's late 2019 release date, pre-orders for the title have now opened on the official website ([mundfish.com](http://mundfish.com)). The PS4 bundles offer everything from early access to the game to exclusive 'Founders' items so everyone knows how much you love it.

With pre-orders now live, rumours are circulating that Atomic Heart will release as early as April.

Why are we so excited? Because there's a BioShock-shaped hole in

our life that Atomic Heart's blend of shooting, puzzling, and narrative-led exploration can fill.

## MACHINE THINKING

The recent gameplay demo released to coincide with the pre-order offers reveals a game happy to play with physics and our sense of reality. Set inside an abandoned science

facility in an alternate Soviet Union, there's more than psychotic machines lurking in the game's overgrown and crumbling corridors. One

sequence reveals how water is collagulating in the air, forming tunnels we can swim down. There are strong hints of Valve's iconic Half-Life 2 in here too as you need to solve physics-based puzzles to progress. Sign up, comrade! Join us in Mundfish's brave new world.

■ ■ THERE ARE STRONG HINTS OF VALVE'S ICONIC HALF-LIFE 2 IN HERE TOO. ■ ■

Are you eager to play Atomic Heart? Tweet us your thoughts @OPM\_UK.



“THE FULL RELEASE THIS  
AUTUMN WILL FEATURE  
100 SONGS TO REMIX AND  
PULL APART FOR CROWD-  
PLEASING MASHUPS.”





## A DREAMS FOR MUSIC?

A scratch pad featuring six different instruments allows you to mix in your own music. You can get time with the demo yourself at EGX Rezzed, 26-28 March at the London Docklands.

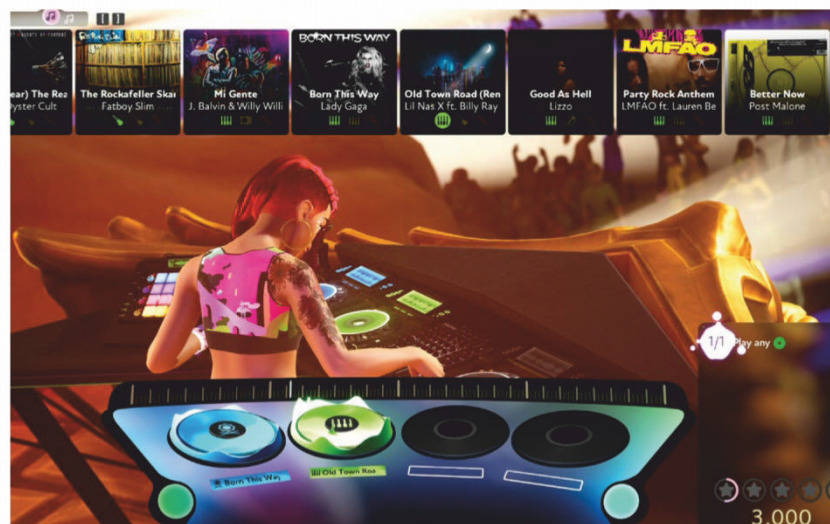


# The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



■ Fulfilling multiple requests simultaneously nets a stack of points.



■ Beyond the rhythm game at its core, creating mixes is a ton of fun.

# Harmonix plays to a new beat

## The Rock Band developer reveals Fuser

# 04

The Rock Band team are making a comeback with another accessible rhythm game. In

Fuser you assume the role of a fully customisable, electronic musician as they take on the festival scene.

Our hands-on demo features 16 licensed smash hits ranging from Lizzo to Blue Öyster Cult, but the full release this autumn will feature 100 songs to remix and pull apart for your crowd-pleasing mashups.

Navigating a selection of tracks listed along the top of your screen with **R** and **L**, you can freely mix and match between each song's vocals, guitars, drum beat, and keys across four turntables. You can either hover over your chosen banger and press the face button that corresponds to the element you want to lift or simply drag-and-drop. Overlaying two vocal tracks is a bold choice but easy-peasy this way. Some impressive tech working in the

background melds everything together seamlessly, and during later sets you can manually tweak things such as the beats per minute.

### CAN YOU BEAT IT?

The challenge comes from not only learning how to paint with your musical palette or splicing in new elements on the down beat, but also from fulfilling fan requests. Someone may tweet at you to play something from the 2010s, while another could ask for more pop in the mix. Borrowing Lady Gaga's distinctive vocals will please both and net you more points than fulfilling each request individually. And, of course, a well-timed bass drop really amps up the crowd.

We've been lacking a killer new music game, but Fuser could have just what it takes to top our must-playlist. With an enviable soundtrack and accessible controls, our hands-on suggests it could be charting highly when released.

★ We'll be making more music with Fuser in a future issue. Watch this space.





## the big shot

eagle-eyed analysis

It's a beautiful night for a fright: they're afraid of the light and you're afraid of them. Don't get too close!

They look like people but can you believe your eyes? A dreamlike sequence in the demo suggests not.

# Meet Those Who Remain

Darkness falls and evil rises

05

You, Edward, think the worst has already happened. You are wrong. As you're caught between a gun and a bottle, a phone call interrupts your dark train of thought. An old flame asks you to meet her at a secluded motel but when you arrive she's nowhere to be seen. All she's left is a note that tells you to stay in the light. And now you're alone with whatever is lurking in the shadows...

In this horror game, venturing into the dark means death. Your only defence is bringing back the light, but this is rarely as easy as flicking a switch. What's more, strange, glowing doorways offer a way into a similar, yet unreal world. Puzzles range from simple locks needing keys to complex ones requiring you to make changes in another dimension. We'll shine a light on it all when it's released later this year.

\* Find out about Camel101's eerie project at [thosewhoremain.com](http://thosewhoremain.com).

Edward's home, Dormont, is plagued by mysterious disappearances. You can guess what's causing them.





**number game**  
we do the maths

€199

Price of the Doom Eternal collector's edition – with a Doom Slayer helmet.

02

Projects from Stardew Valley's Eric Barone are in development.

30+

Days after New Year, Anthem's Christmas decorations were still up.

600mm

Tall: the alien figurine in the priciest Destroy All Humans' collectors' edition.

03

Titles in development at Remedy – one of which is completely unannounced.

5,000,000

Copies of Tekken 7 are out in the wild as of the end of last year.

20

Packages can be stacked on the Sam Porter Bridges Nendoroid figure.

One puzzle has us jumping between dimensions to turn on car headlights and create a safe path.

You are Edward, a man already deeply troubled even before evil comes creeping out of the dark.



Take yokai souls to equip their powers yourself. Send 'em back to Hell.



# Nioh 2 promises to be a total masocore

## How Team Ninja perfected the art of balancing difficulty

06

Team Ninja defines the Nioh games as 'masocore' – its own coinage. As we sit down to play we're warned that our demo, starting at a point midway through the game, might be a little tough. It is. (And you can find out just how tough for yourself as the game hits shelves right after this issue.) But we're ready for this; the calluses on our hands have been forming ever since we played the dev's Ninja Gaiden games on PS3 and PS Vita.

While the Sengoku-era samurai series clearly owes FromSoftware a debt for its Dark Souls-inspired action, Nioh is also the next stepping

**WE DON'T THINK DIFFICULT EQUALS GOOD. IT STILL HAS TO BE FAIR.**

stone in the koi pond from Team Ninja's prickly-as-kunai ninja games. "When we made Ninja Gaiden we just wanted it to illustrate the high-speed combat and the intense battles. And as a result, it ended up being a difficult game," says Yosuke Hayashi, Nioh 2's general producer, when we compare the two series. "And with ninja and samurai combat, I think Nioh kind of grew into the genre as well, but it was just an interesting coincidence."

### STEEL RESOLVE

It might have been with Nioh that Team Ninja came up with the term masocore (which Hayashi defines as "the tension of life or death at that moment, in this one instant"), but difficulty has always been a crucial



### dev talk

"In Nioh we picked the second half of the Sengoku era [as a setting], which is a time of war until it calmed down. [Though] the first half of the Sengoku era is the most popular time period in Japanese history, so it was crucial to use that time period [this time]."

**Yosuke Hayashi**  
General producer,  
Team Ninja

part of the studio's games. "[We] like very difficult games. But we don't think difficult equals good. It still has to be fair," Hayashi explains. "It has to feel right when you die, so we carefully balanced difficulty that way. And we hope that makes the game accessible enough for the new players as well." The truth is anyone can make a super-hard game, but it takes real skill to create one that is extremely challenging but also has a fair path to mastery.

But it's not like Nioh was designed to frustrate players. "We weren't actually specifically making a masocore game at the start, but we wanted to express the tension of the samurai sword battles. As a result, that genre worked really well with Nioh. It is currently a masocore, but it will keep growing and it might eventually grow out of it. I don't know what's going to happen as it





**THE ODA UNDER**  
“Nobunaga’s Ambition is [...] one of the very reasons Koei Tecmo exists,” says Hayashi. “So it’s very exciting to portray [Oda Nobunaga]’s existence in Nioh 2.”



# The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE’S TALKING ABOUT



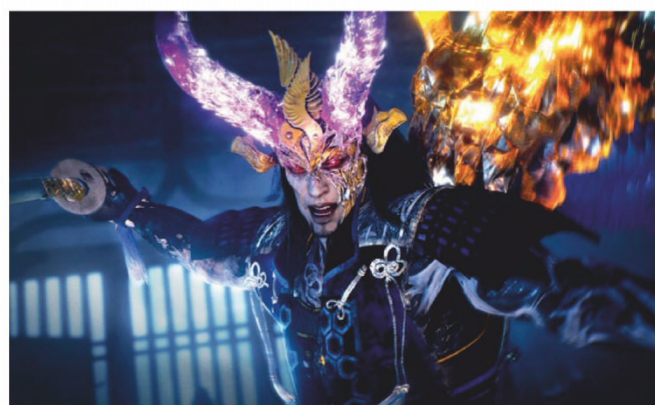
■ Key characters have animal guardian spirits which affect how you Yokai Shift.

Nioh 2 will be even more challenging, even with online play.

In the past the problem with this style of gaming was it required lots of people to be playing at the same time in order for matches to be made – but thanks to AI player ghosts this is no longer the case. As well as matching with real players at shrines, you can get help from their friendly markers on the ground. “We wanted the players to feel the connection with other players even when they’re not online at the same time,” says Hayashi. “In Nioh 2 it’s not just about killing enemies together, but it’s also working together, helping each other. So I think the meaning of ‘being online together’ is diverse in Nioh 2.”

As a prequel, it builds towards the events of the first game, showcasing the bloody conflicts that defined the first half of the Sengoku era. This time you play as someone allied with the famously charismatic real-life samurai Oda Nobunaga. We won’t spoil real-life history for you, but he was constantly surrounded by drama and tragedy, and Hayashi assures us the big moments will be represented, for better and worse.

\* Keep your eyes out for next issue, when we’ll have our full review of Nioh 2.



■ Yokai Shift, and your demonic powers make you horny. No, not like that!

info patches  
update your brain



## SAVE(ROOM) UP

The Resident Evil 3 Collector’s Edition is coming to the UK exclusively via Game. Inside a STARS-item-box-style case, mimicking those in the game’s safe rooms, you’ll find a poster, an artbook, a soundtrack, and a Jill Valentine statue in the same scale as Resi 2’s Claire statue (so you can get the set).



## FALLING AGAIN

Now past eight million total sales, Star Wars Jedi: Fallen Order has been a success for EA. Striking while the iron is hot, Respawn has already started hiring for new roles on the Star Wars team, which means we should be getting more Star Wars action from the studio sooner rather than later.



## REMAIN VERGIL-ENT

While it’s far from the first Devil May Cry V statue we’ve seen, Prime 1 Studio’s Ultimate Premium Masterline Vergil is one of the most detailed (as you’d expect given it’s priced at over £600 and doesn’t release until early 2021). He stands at 29 inches tall, including the base, and is SSSeriously SSStylish.

evolves,” says Hayashi, teasing how the series might continue.

### CLAN MEETING

One way Team Ninja has balanced the difficulty in Nioh is by embracing online play. As in Dark Souls, players can team up online to work through the levels and take on big yokai together. After all, most things are easier with a comrade fighting alongside you.

“I think when we started making Nioh, Dark Souls was already out. We thought they did really well in that regard, and we got inspired by it to be able to give the players the option to play online or offline,” explains Hayashi. “Depending on who you get [matched with], the player can be a bit rubbish or they can be amazing. And that adds to the fun.” Though he does add that due to players saying co-op made the first game too easy,



# The Last Of Us Part II is 'done'

Ellie's PS4 journey is getting closer to release

07

We're counting the days until The Last Of Us Part II releases on 29 May. We. Can't. Wait. That

excitement hit fever pitch this month as Naughty Dog's director of communications, Arne Mayer, took to the PS Blog to reveal the game has "entered the final stretch of production [...] The end of development puts us one very large step closer to launch."

The news that this hotly anticipated sequel is in the final polishing stages came as Naughty Dog gave us free wallpapers and PS4 themes to celebrate. And there's news that the game's massive The Last of Us Part II Ellie Edition is back in stock and pre-orders are being taken.

## IMPORT-ANT INFO

While that edition is only available at US and Canadian retailers, including Amazon, we're sure Ellie fans will be able to find a way of securing

one. (That cousin you've not spoken to in ten years? Maybe it's time to reconnect over a shared love of The Last Of Us Part II.)

Priced at \$229, the Ellie Edition contains some unique goodies, including a fully-functional replica of Ellie's backpack, an embroidered patch, and a seven-inch vinyl single featuring music from the game.

## FIGURE AS MUCH

Closer to home, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe (SCEE) is partnering with Dark Horse to promote the game's release with two beautiful statues. You can order the eight-inch Ellie With Machete polyresin statuette at [direct.darkhorse.com](http://direct.darkhorse.com), but the cutoff is 13 March so you'll have to be quick. If you miss out, Dark Horse will be releasing an eight-inch PVC version of the Ellie With Bow statue will be available this summer.

Finally, if there's still room on your shelf you can also preorder The Art Of The Last Of Us Part II from Dark Horse Books. Created in collaboration with Naughty Dog, this offers 200 pages of exquisite concept art. Best read after you've finished the game.

\* What games merchandise tempts you? Let us know on [opm@futurenet.com](mailto:opm@futurenet.com).

Did you get your time-limited Ellie dynamic theme? We're hoping ND does it again.

THE END OF DEVELOPMENT PUTS US ONE VERY LARGE STEP CLOSER TO LAUNCH.

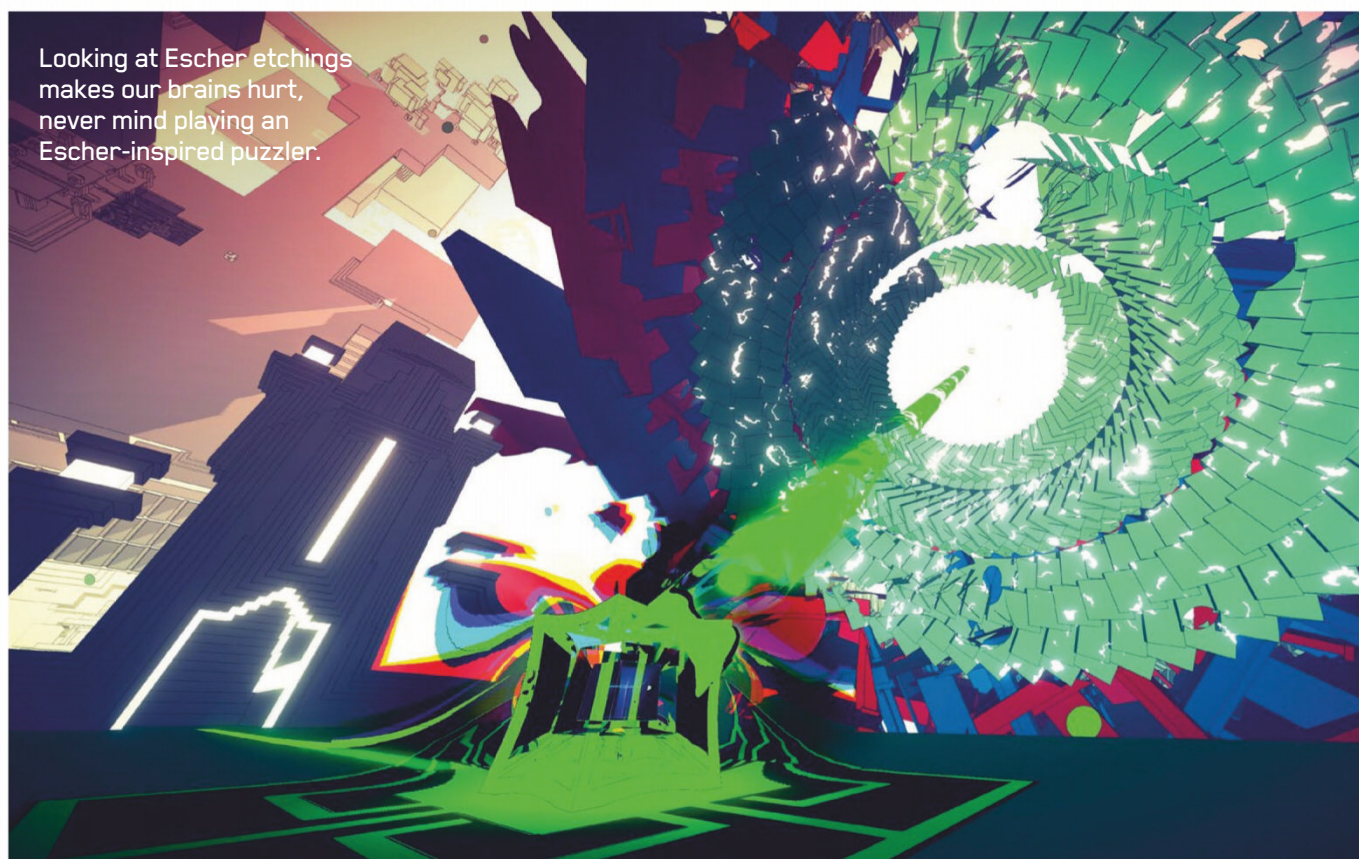




## ROOM TO GROW

"I rarely have the final design in mind when I start creating a level," says Chyr. "I'll often begin with an idea – sometimes that's a puzzle, sometimes it's a particular architectural element."

Looking at Escher etchings makes our brains hurt, never mind playing an Escher-inspired puzzler.



# Getting lost in Manifold Garden

## How the Escher-like spaces were designed

### 08

Manifold Garden is made up of mind-bending puzzle spaces. The idea for them came to William Chyr, the game's creator, as he played loosely with concepts, toying with physics and space in his engine.

"There were certain moments that I wanted the player to experience," he says, [such as] "discovering a new way to apply the

rules of gravity, discovering world wrapping for the first time, coming into a new space and witnessing infinity. Those are magical moments." Once he focused on how to introduce mechanics to build up to those moments, he felt what he was working on transform from a tech demo to a full game.

Even then, finding that focus took experimentation. At first Chyr concentrated on mechanics, but soon "exploring the architecture became the focal point," he says. "I discovered that the intersection of physics and architecture brought out a rich core for interesting puzzles." Chyr credits playtesters and designers brought in towards the end of development for helping to build on that core. "I had been working on the game for so long that I couldn't experience the game from a player's perspective," he says.



■ The infinite stepwells here make this one of Chyr's favourite levels in the game.

★ Get lost in Manifold Garden when it comes to PlayStation 4 later in 2020.

## PlayStation voices

the month in  
mouthing off

"My stomach's in knots from the pressure of just trying to make sure that fans of the manga and the anime are gonna be happy." My Hero One's Justice 2 producer **Aoba Miyazaki** is giving it her all.



Cyberpunk 2077 Is "Going to be f\*\*\*ing good," says **Grimes** as the singer reveals she'll play a pop star in the game.

"I have lived out my edgy JRPG character fantasies from when I was a kid." **Dylan Sprouse** is living the dream voicing Yozora in Kingdom Hearts.







## instant opinion

strong vs  
wrong

### PS5'S GAMES

The few PS5 games to be announced already look sizzling. Could there be some unannounced ones too? We couldn't say. But soon... maybe...

### EGG-STRONAUTS

The latest update to No Man's Sky, called Living Ship, enables us to grow a new spaceship from an egg. That's some weird science.

### ANTHEM RELAUNCH

BioWare's failed Destiny-like shooter is being relaunched by the dev. This is expected to coincide with a PS5 edition at the end of this year. Exciting? Maybe.

### NFS HEATS UP

Criterion Games is taking back the Need For Speed series for the next installment. Does this mean Rivals-like chases will be back for PlayStation 5?

### MORE MEDIEVIL?

After the internet got itself hyped for a MediEvil sequel, the musicians behind the story, Bob and Barn, told OPM there's nothing happening as far as they know. Sad, as we'd love more MediEvil.

### GONE-CHESTER

Sony's PS-VR-focused Manchester Studio has been closed down. It opened in 2015 but never announced a game. Our thoughts, and best wishes for the future, are with all affected staff.

Wonder-Red is the master of the Unite Hand (according to his dating profile, anyway).



# PS4 becomes more Wonderful

PlatinumGames brings its superheroics to PS4

09

PlatinumGames' The Wonderful 101 is coming to PS4 for the first time in remastered form thanks to a

Kickstarter campaign, which at the time of writing has raised more than £1,000,000. This is also the beloved studio's first foray into the world of self-publishing, giving it greater control over what it makes.

The developer is well-known for its fast-paced character action games like Nier: Automata, Bayonetta, and Vanquish. One of the big differences between those and The Wonderful 101

is that in the latter, instead of controlling one character, you play as many; and unlike the close-to-the-camera combat of the other titles, The Wonderful 101 is zoomed out.

Visually, it combines '60s-inspired retro-futuristic Americana with a dash of live-action Japanese superheroes to create a unique aesthetic. It's set in idyllic Blossom City, and the Wonderful Ones must protect Earth from an alien invasion. You start out with Wonder-Red (the team's leader, who's a teacher by

day), collecting additional heroes as you progress, and unlocking more Unite Morphs – shapes the Wonderful Ones can form together. For

Unite Sword, they make a blade, Unite Guts sees them becoming jelly to deflect attacks, and Unite Gun turns them into, well, a gun.

This is just the tip of the Unite Iceberg as The Wonderful 101 Remastered heads up what the studio has termed the 'Platinum 4'. It's yet to announce the titles of the other three games it's publishing.

THIS IS  
PLATINUM'S FIRST  
FORAY INTO SELF-  
PUBLISHING.



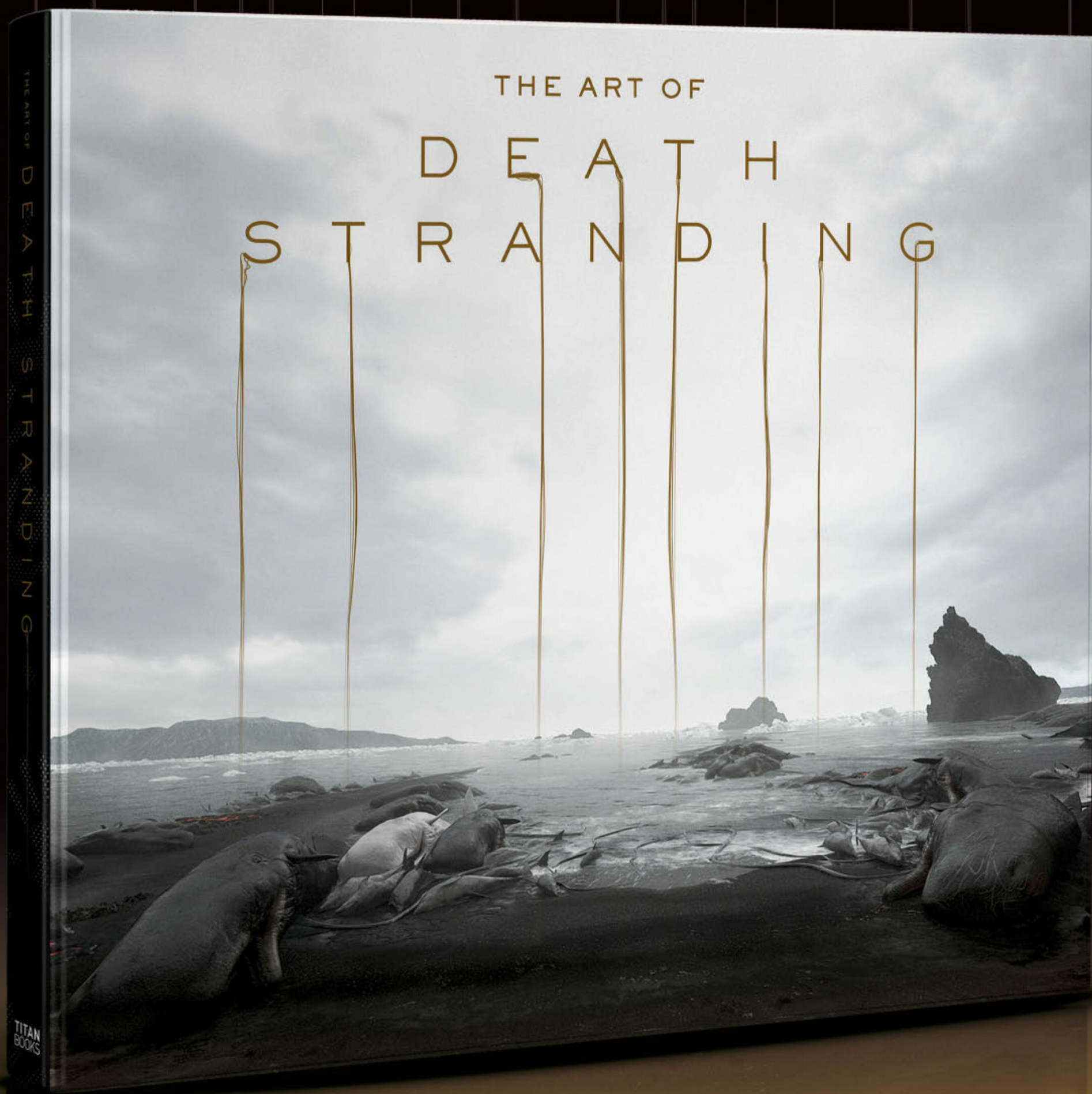
Different Wonderful Ones have different powers. Everyone has a place.

\* The Wonderful 101: Remastered should be on track to release digitally in April.






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# The Big 10

STORIES EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT



## HOUSER MOVES

Rockstar co-founder Dan Houser is leaving the development studio in March. The controversial writer and producer helped make Grand Theft Auto the third best-selling series ever. So what next for GTA?

10

just one more question...  
the team debate this month's burning issue

## What does Dan Houser leaving Rockstar mean for GTA VI?



**IAN DEAN**  
EDITOR



**FLAWED GENIUS DAN HOUSER'S WRITING MADE US CONNECT WITH OUR HEROES.**

Red Dead Redemption 2 revealed the strengths and weaknesses of Dan Houser. It was like playing a time capsule. While open worlds in games have moved on, RDR2 chewed tobacco and refused to follow. In development for over seven years, influences waxed and waned as trends came and went. Yet Houser's writing elbows itself front and centre and refuses to be ignored. The game, and Houser's GTA series, forces us to care for the unlikeliest heroes. I'll miss his nasty, funny, but often endearing characters as these *were* GTA; here's hoping someone at Rockstar has been taking detailed notes. ■



**JESS KINGHORN**  
STAFF WRITER



**ROCKSTAR GAMES HAS PLENTY OF TIME TO FIND A REPLACEMENT; GTA V IS STILL PLEASING THE PLAYERS.**

Much like how the loss of its lead writer doesn't necessarily mean better writing in future instalments, my dislike of the series in general has little bearing on its high probability of future success. I'm a Yakuza woman myself but that doesn't mean I want Rockstar to copy Sega's homework. My kid sister's I AM effing and jeffing about the latest group of hoodlums to make off with her shipment of cocaine is a fine reminder of not only the fandom's fervour but also how well that audience is catered to by the existing product. GTA VI? I don't think Rockstar is in any hurry. ■



**OSCAR TAYLOR-KENT**  
GAMES EDITOR



**GTA VI COULD BE GTA ONLINE ONLY. HERE'S HOPING THE HOUSERS' AMBITIONS HAVE LEFT THEIR MARK.**

There are few gaming fans who haven't been given a little smile by the Houser brothers' criminal simulator. From the off it was never really a series that needed good writing to win people over, but the mixture of outrageous satire and drama added a lot nonetheless. Many of those moments stick with us. Given how successful GTA Online has been, I'm holding out hope that the single-player aspect will remain just as important going forward, thanks to the Housers' ambitions. Hopefully traces of his aspirations remain even though Dan's gone, as otherwise Online could usurp single-player. ■



**MILFORD COPPOCK**  
MANAGING ART EDITOR



**GTA WILL CARRY ON REGARDLESS; THE SERIES HOUSER HELPED BUILD IS TOO STRONG.**

It's feels strange to think Dan Houser won't be around for another GTA, or indeed a Bully, Midnight Club, or Max Payne. This is a developer who has defined three generations of videogames, and to think any new GTA will be Houser-less is sad. And yet he's laid the solid foundations for others to build on. I'd like to think his influence on the series is so strong that even without him GTA VI – whenever it arrives and whatever it is – will carry on in the same vein. You can't really have a GTA that isn't spiky, arrogant, filthy, and acerbic – a grubby mirror on modern living, a playground for our darker sides. ■





# GAME DRIVE

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# REPLIES

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#172 We tracked down Jin Sakai, the elusive Ghost Of Tsushima.

## Seven's heaven

I just read Luke Kemp's article about how he thinks games are more relatable to the wealthy, how he couldn't relate to Lara Croft because his bedroom was the size of her wardrobe. I've never compared myself to game characters or situations but now I think about it, I don't think I've ever played a game and felt like I could relate to it. It would be good to see a game tackle something like this and interesting to see their take on lower-class living and how they could create something entertaining out of it.

And with regards to buying a new console, it

took me two years and a Black Friday sale to get the PS4 and it may be a similar situation for the PS5. So shout out to Luke.

Dan P via email

**We gave Luke something more relatable this issue – flick to p96 to see if he enjoyed the daily grind in Mosaic any better than slipping into Lara's posh-girl short-shorts.**

**Next-gen's backwards compatibility should mean PS4 will run in parallel with PS5 for a**

while, we won't need to switch immediately. On which note...

## Lock or load?

Just read your piece about PS5 in issue 172. What struck a chord with me was the potential backward compatibility of PS1 and PS2 titles and while nothing is known, the only down side I can see to this is that if it does allow us to use our discs that we have lovingly collected over the years, then we're more than likely going to fall foul of the region-locking that was on original PlayStation and PlayStation 2 consoles – would Sony build that in after all this time? Or, do you think Sony would be more like 'nah, what's the point'?

Rich Lenton via email

**We'd be surprised if there's a region lock – PS5 is the future of PlayStation, not the past, and region locks are definitely relics!**

**IT'S BEEN SO GREAT TO SEE THE GAMING COMMUNITY BROUGHT TOGETHER.**

## Star letter Seven's heaven

So Final Fantasy VII day is almost upon us. There's been something very special about the wait for this one. It's prompted some very emotional reactions from people – more so than the usual excitement for something new or the nostalgia of an old classic.

It's been so great to see the gaming community brought together with genuine love for the game and it's characters. I can't think of another game that could get this kind of response. For a lot of us it was the first time we realised what games as a medium could be. The first time we got attached to a story and its characters.

And it's still one of the few game soundtracks that gives me goosebumps.

I hope it makes the same impact on the new audience as the original did on so many of us, and continues to bring people together at a time when it's so easy to be critical and cynical about things.

Pete Wisdom via email

**From what we've seen so far, FFXVII looks like bringing us all together – newcomers will get caught up in the story like fans did years ago, and the fans will love the extra depth and amazing graphics. We're looking forward to launch day too.**



## CAN I GET A RT?

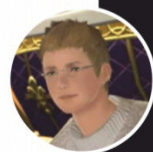
The most pleasing tweetings from the @OPM\_UK timeline...



@NIGHTOWL2007

PS4 needs a new boxing game. Fight Night needs to happen.

With the boxing talent the best it's been for a long time across many weight classes it would be very popular. Throw in PS VR interaction as well it can't fail.



@FEDGAMER

I just want peace and love... and a huge buster sword to slice my enemies in half.



@KIERANROSEART

Now that PlatinumGames have 4 projects in the pipeline I'm hoping one of those is a follow on or remaster of Metal Gear Rising.



@BILLYJAYGAMING

I want either remakes/remasters of all the Splinter Cell and Prince Of Persia games or just new ones to finally be announced for PS4!

TROLL OF THE MONTH

T



@NATHANHARKINS7

It's 2020 and I need to buy a magazine?

[Yes! – ed]



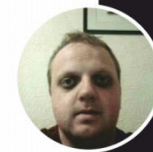
@CANORICK1

Some people will always want physical copies and a box under their tv.



@LLAMAFLUFF42

@OPM\_UK covers are always great



@BYRONB1986

I will die on the hill of a Croc remaster I have a dream that one day we get 4K Gobbos





"Entertaining the idea of 'comebacks' is what allows the industry to release unfinished games."

NEWS OF ANTHEM'S REBOOT FAILS TO IMPRESS LEIGH FORTE

"The only way this will get a renewed gamer base is if it goes free to play."

CLINT GARDNER AGREES. OH, EA!

# READERS' MOST WANTED

Which games are bleeping loudest on your radar?

## 1 The Last Of Us Part II

Was it the free dynamic theme, or the news that the game was in the final stages of production (see p18)? Either way, this is back at the top of your list.

FORMAT PS4  
ETA 29 MAY

## 5 Resident Evil 3

Only number five? But with so many great games coming in 2020 we can live with that. Turn to p40 to discover why we *can't* live with Nemesis...

FORMAT PS4  
ETA 3 APR

## 2 Ghost Of Tsushima

We're all still hungry for a bit of stealth-samurai action – last issue's big feature couldn't have hurt, either.

FORMAT PS4  
ETA TBC

## 3 Final Fantasy VII Remake

We're almost there – and you're already very excited. Turn to p48 for an appetite-whetting teaser.

FORMAT PS4  
ETA 10 APR

## 4 Elder Scrolls 6

Oooh, here's a new one. We've had no news on it specifically, but with Skyrim coming to TESO, The Elder Scrolls are getting hot again.

FORMAT TBC  
ETA TBC

**VOTE NOW!**

Tell us the five games you can't wait to play at [opm@futurenet.com](mailto:opm@futurenet.com)

?

## EXIT POLL

Our Facebook fans answer a final question

Who's your favourite Guilty Gear character?

21% Reckon loveable dimwit Chipp's enough.

18% Stay in the pink with Baiken.

15% Embrace the darkness of Zato-1

26% Bag first place for Faust.

8% Have fallen hook, line and, er, anchor for May.

12% Tell us Sol Badguy's their guy.

## NEXT MONTH

We're returning to Skyrim – so which Elder Scrolls Online race do you like to play as?



Jordan Oloman

# PS VR'S EXCLUSIVES DESERVE SO MUCH PRAISE. WE SHOULD KEEP UP THE SUPPORT OR RISK WATCHING IT DIE OUT LIKE PS VITA.

Sony's inspired VR outlet needs more than a cult following

**T**he PS VR party had already started by the time I arrived, once it got relatively cheap in the dying throes of the decade. I'd been fascinated by it ever since I donned the plastic cowl to play Arkham VR at Gamescom 2016 (I still use the T-shirt I was given as pyjamas), so unwrapping it years later felt like the start of a momentous virtual pilgrimage.

It was my Achilles heel, Psychonauts, that eventually unravelled my fiscal sensibilities. After nearly losing the plot waiting for the pennies to turn into pounds, I picked up a PS VR on Black Friday in 2018 and investigated every vertex of the Rhombus Of Ruin, never looking back. At the time, I simply would not shut up about the system when talking to my mates. From the blood-pumping grit of Blood & Truth to the synaesthetic soul food that is Tetris Effect, PS VR, above all other VR platforms, has a growing roster of games that feel especially curated, like a console launch lineup.

Where else have we seen such a breadth of unique experiences – weird, experimental oddities like Déraciné and Bound that defy the conventional gimmicky VR format in favour of unbridled creativity? Who could have predicted that one of the finest platforming games



## WRITER BIO

Jordan Oloman has steamed up his gamer goggles far too many times playing through Tetris Effect's tear-jerking Journey mode, and is in constant fear of losing his beloved PS VR to the eldritch maw of wires and plastic lurking tangled underneath his bed.

in recent years, Astro Bot: Rescue Mission, would be delivered via virtual reality and serviced by the most underpowered headset on the market? PS VR has constantly proved its haters wrong by doing so much with so little. It's never mattered that the headset has a low resolution and the peripherals are ancient PS3 technology.

When the games are that impressive, the medium barely gets in the way.

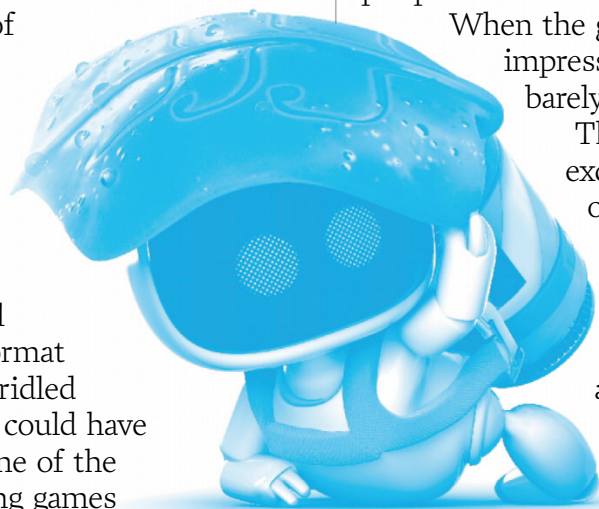
This is why I'm so excited for the future of PS VR. With PS5 compatibility confirmed and five million units sold, I'm hopeful that a new generation of developers will be inspired by the likes of Tetris

Effect and drawn to the platform by its creative potential. With inspired games like Eric Chahi's Paper Beast and Media Molecule's Dreams on the way in 2020, it clearly won't be gathering too much dust. Yet, this excitement arrives with a gigantic millstone of concern.

## HEAD IN THE CLOUDS

Much like the rest of the virtual reality headsets that have arrived in the last five years, PS VR has yet to achieve true mainstream success despite its low price point, and its exclusives are starting to run thin as they're ported to other VR platforms. I'm not in the business of vapid gatekeeping; the more people who get to experience these excellent games, the better. I just hope the collective subconscious doesn't forget about the provenance. These games debuted on and were nurtured by PS VR, and that's something to be celebrated.

We mustn't forget the cautionary tale of PS Vita either. I'm sure we're all still hurt by the soul-crushing demise of the handheld, which fell to the wayside despite a serious cult following and some clever exclusives. I'm desperate that PS VR doesn't suffer the same fate and find itself dissociated from the PlayStation ecosystem in the next generation. Sony should take its somewhat successful streak seriously and continue delivering exciting games for the players – and in turn, we should do our best to voice our support for the platform, and make sure this special gateway to emotion and action doesn't end up in the tat bin with the rest of the misfit toys.







Jess Kinghorn

## WE'RE ALREADY HAVING A BALL – WHY NOT MAKE STORY THE GOAL?

Sports games shouldn't shy away from story. There's untapped potential in every match

**O**kay, I know what you're thinking: 'Cor, she plays one game mode in FIFA and suddenly thinks her opinion about the future of the genre is worth sharing.' Well, my response to that is, uh, you're goddamn right. Alex Hunter's story is a bit of a light touch in terms of narrative design but it leaves something of an open goal in its wake.

If you want to sit and play a match in your favourite yearly sports title, I'm not arguing that should be taken away from you, even if I do enjoy that part of the game a lot less myself. But you know what I'm well into? Sports anime and manga. I just want all the good boys and girls to achieve their dreams, and at its best, that's the part of my brain Alex Hunter's journey managed to lightly tickle.

### LONG ROAD AHEAD

The Journey's opening at the exit trials does an excellent job of balancing tutorials with story stakes you care about and even just a smidge of challenge. Unfortunately, once you've got the contract, the story more or less vacates the stadium for minutes at a time

during your pro matches. What a missed opportunity! The beautiful game shouldn't become a QTE-laden nightmare, but there's plenty of untapped potential for storytelling in a match – just look at long-running series Captain Tsubasa.

Could Tsubasa's latest title, subtitled Rise Of New Champions, strike that sports-anime-but-in-videogame-form sweet spot? Possibly not, but the squad's powered-up moves sure are flashy. None of that is to say that FIFA should go full-on anime either; keep the very British drama, just give us more of it and pepper the matches with it. FIFA's in-game commentators do an admirable job of telling a story and providing context, but what is admittedly excellent sound design should supplement storytelling and not attempt to replace it (I'm looking at you, Final Fantasy XV). While series like Madden tend to pivot towards player-created protagonists for their story modes, The Journey feels stronger thanks to Alex's pre-defined relationships and background. I just wish greater use had been made of them.

#### WRITER BIO

Jess Kinghorn found herself instantly invested in Alex Hunter's dream of turning pro. Sadly, experiencing Germany's 2014 World Cup win up way too close and personal means she's unlikely to ever care for a kickabout in real life.



Rebecca Stow

## I WAITED THREE YEARS FOR A BLOODBORNE 2 ANNOUNCEMENT. BUT IN THE END I DIDN'T NEED TO.

Thanks to FromSoftware's other games, I've finally realised I don't need a Bloodborne sequel

**B**loodborne is far and away my favourite videogame of all time. With deep lore, challenging combat, and a deliciously twisted aesthetic, the streets of Yharnam have always been my go-to destination whenever I have some spare time. But five years and two FromSoftware games on from Bloodborne's release, where is the sequel?

Like all soulsbornes, Bloodborne is known for being extremely difficult. Even for a competent player, a full playthrough can take a few months. It took me two years marred by many deaths before I finally grabbed the Platinum trophy. And my first thought upon obtaining it? When is the sequel coming out?

For three years I waited, eagerly streaming every PlayStation event in hope of a Bloodborne 2 announcement. But time and time again it didn't happen, and to vent my frustration I had to load up Bloodborne just to rage-slay some bosses or rage-raid some Chalice Dungeons.

### 'BORNE AGAIN

But recently I had a revelation. I did everything there is to do in Bloodborne three

years ago, and yet I still play it all the time. I have this one perfect game that is so comprehensive in terms of lore I never tire of it. I don't actually need Bloodborne 2 because I can always play more Bloodborne!

Don't get me wrong, should FromSoftware announce a sequel, I will be delighted. But the studio needs to be free to make what it wants, not what I and other fans demand it make. Since Bloodborne, FromSoftware has released two more gruelling action adventure games in the form of Dark Souls III and Sekiro. After playing them (and getting over my initial resentment of them not being Bloodborne 2) I realised they are both exhilarating experiences; more than enough to scratch my soulsborne cravings.

On top of that, FromSoftware is currently working on Elden Ring in collaboration with George RR Martin. I'm excited at the thought of these two giants of fantasy storytelling creating something together, and I can't wait to play the end result when it releases. In between lengthy bouts of Bloodborne, of course.

#### WRITER BIO

Bloodborne was Rebecca Stow's gaming Everest, but she did eventually conquer it and obtain the Platinum trophy. Since then she's spent a lot of time daydreaming about a sequel, mostly when she's meant to be working.



IN  
THE  
MOOD  
FOR...

# Product placement

Shilling in style with the cheekiest bits of commercial branding on PlayStation

## 1 HOMEFRONT

In an alternate reality where a unified Greater Korean Republic has decimated the States, you can still pick up a dirty burger. In a tin-eared bit of product placement, both burger chain White Castle and infamous bar Hooters pop up. Not even Doomsday can suppress the USA's appetite for baps.

## 2 YAKUZA 0

Despite having abs you could grate cheddar with, Kaz likes his margherita. In a cheeky tie-in with Japanese chain Pizza-La, Kiryu orders a lovely piping hot pie in the 'Passport to Pizza' sub-story, after mishearing a woman who's in need of a visa.

## 3 DEATH STRANDING

He may be a visionary auteur, but Hideo Kojima isn't shy about product placement. Just look at Death Stranding. In a dystopian US where rain monsters prowl, Monster Energy drinks and Norman Reedus' AMC bike show have survived the apocalypse.

## 4 RAINBOW SIX SIEGE

As part of the Ubisoft Club rewards system, Siege fans who boot up The Division get a special weapon skin (imaginatively named 'The Division'). We look forward to an update patching in the Raving Rabbits Glock 17.

## 5 THE DIVISION

The end of the world will be chilly. To help your survivor stay warm, Ubisoft teamed up with Mechanix Gloves to cover your virtual mitts, and these tactical gloves sure look toasty. Business is booming for Mechanix despite society's collapse.

## 6 JUDGE DREDD: DREDD VS DEATH

"I am the law... now hands up and give me all your taurine." Mega-City One's gruff judge is probably cranky because he never gets a decent night's kip, so we're not sure knocking back Red Bull is a good idea. In one cringey mission, he even has to arrest members of a gang which is smuggling the drink.

## 7 METAL GEAR SOLID V: THE PHANTOM PAIN

Another Kojima game, another crafty piece of product placement. This time, The Phantom Pain's cast get the chance to sport fancy French specs thanks to a tie-in with JF Rey. Ocelot and Miller rock the shades, which we're sure gave fashion-conscious Koj all the kicks.

## 8 DEAD RISING 2

You are one mucky pup, Chuck Greene. Thanks to a deal between Capcom and Playboy, the world's most famous skin mag appears in Dead Rising 2. Producer Shin Ohara said it was a good fit as the undead sandbox was "not a children's playground, but an adult playground."

## 9 GT SPORT

GT Sport's Brand Central is stuffed with product placement. One of Polyphony Digital's main partnerships is with watch maker TAG Heuer, which may be a bit tacky, but you have to admit Patrick Dempsey's hunky wrist looks good with one.

## HONOURABLE MENTIONS

### Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory

How does Sam Fisher keep his breath so minty fresh? By eating Airwaves during cutscenes, that's how.

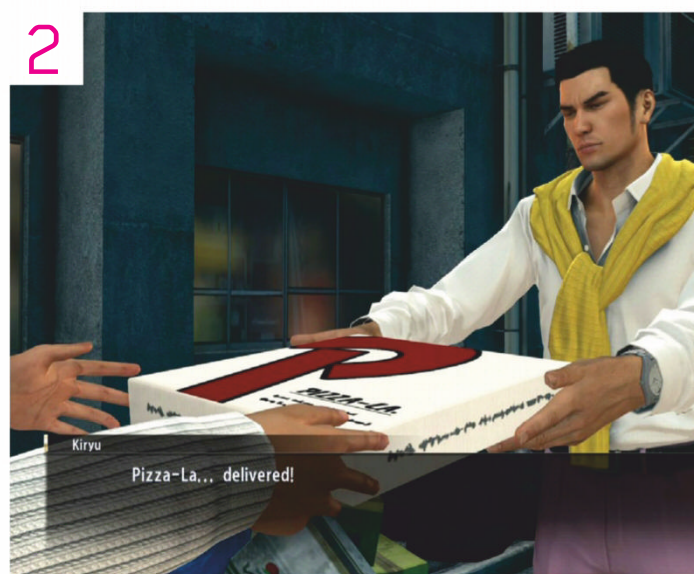
### Uncharted 3: Drake's Deception

Nate joined in a campaign shilling Subway sarnies, with Subway tees appearing in DD's beta.

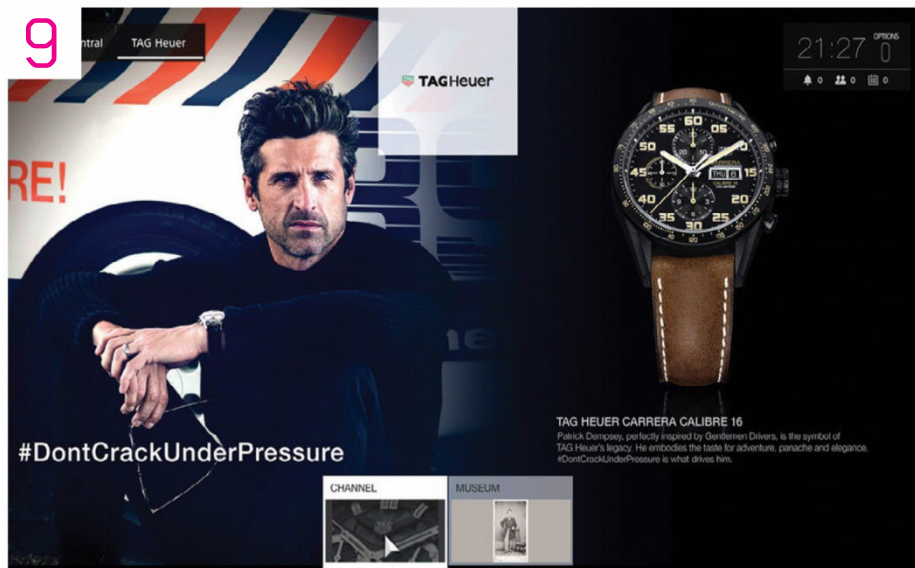
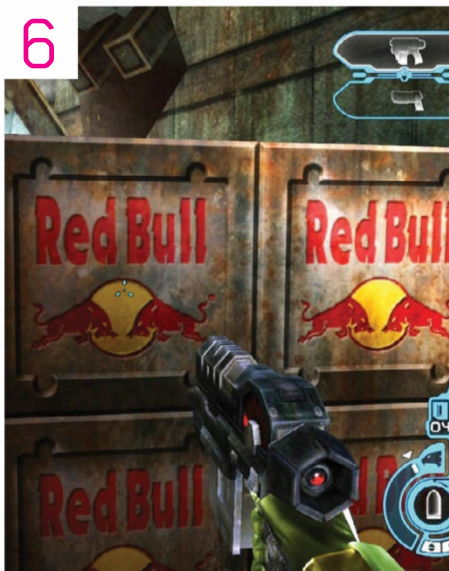
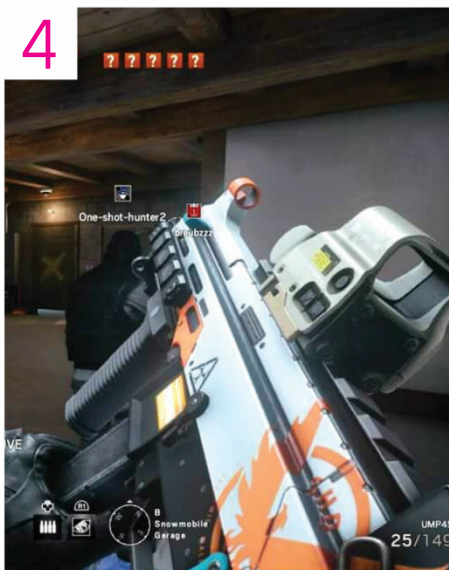
### PlayStation Home

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a gaudy minigame designed to flog meat juice! Bless you, Red Bull Air Race.

Did we miss your favourite product? Got a brilliant In The Mood For idea? Tell us at [twitter.com/opm\\_uk](https://twitter.com/opm_uk).











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- Wired & wireless connectivity







## PREVIEWS

### 40 RESIDENT EVIL 3

We go hands-on and discover it's no fun being Nemesis' Valentine.

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# PREVIEW

It's a co-op sci-fantasy shooter similar to Destiny but without lootboxes or endless DLC to confuse.





“THE GREENERY OF ENOCH HAS BEEN REDUCED TO MUDDY TRENCHES.”

**FORMAT** PS4, PS5 / **ETA** TBC  
**PUB** SQUARE ENIX / **DEV** PEOPLE CAN FLY

## OUTRIDERS

An expert shooter dev is bringing its know-how to PlayStation



If you've ever felt pangs of jealousy as the Xbox owner you know bragged about *Gears Of War*, this new shooter is sure to temper those feelings. Created by that series' Polish co-developer, People Can Fly, this is about as close to the famed Xbox dudebro shooter as you could hope to get on PlayStation 4 and PlayStation 5.

Earth is in flames. We've screwed that planet up. But have no fear: mankind's last hope for survival have set their sights on Enoch, an Earth-like paradise ripe for settling. After landing and establishing base camp we explore and chat. Comically, we're told "the internet will be up soon," as apparently being able to catch up with TikTok is a priority. Before we can properly meet everyone, however, our new nirvana reveals its ugly side. Black goo rises from the ground and poisons our fellow outriders — cowboys in oversized body armour — and an alien storm sweeps through the valley. Everyone and everything gets zapped into dust. Our only hope of survival is to crawl into a cryogenic pod and hope things will have improved when we awake... 31 years later.

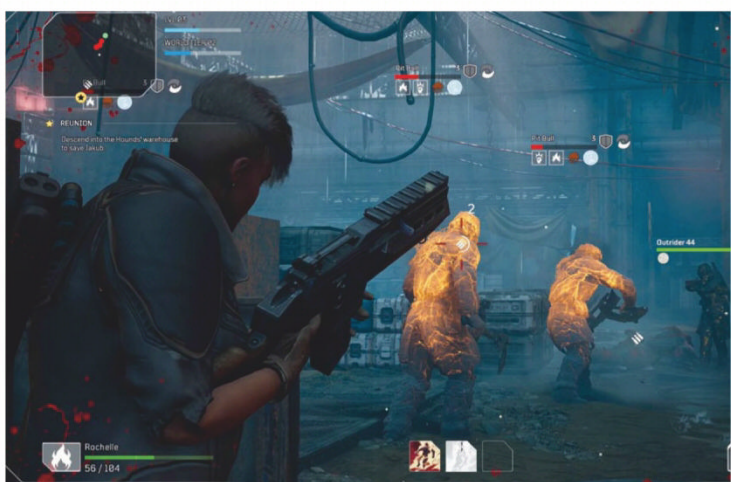
### MUD 'N' BLOOD

Stumbling from our pod, the lush green landscape of Enoch has been reduced to muddy trenches and the scars of war — ruined buildings and the dead litter the landscape. Colonists and their descendants battle one another for control of the planet. Some





# PREVIEW



**Left** The Pyromancer has an area affect attack that will turn groups of enemies to hot stone for a short period.

**Right** Rescuing the shopkeeper Eva results in some clumsy flirting, and your choice of special weapons as a reward.



Setting an enemy alight and then emptying a clip... overkill much?

## A class act

Three classes have been revealed. Here's how they play



**1** The Devastator is Outriders' tank class. Being able to shield yourself in stone comes in handy, but even better is the ability to teleport into enemies.



**2** A commando-like class, the Pyromancer offers a projectile attack that streams lava at enemies, and you can ignite one foe from a distance – very useful.



**3** The Trickster class is handy for single-player. Its energy sword attack refills your health meter, while being able to pause time is perfect for crowd control.



**4** Best played in three-person co-op, Outriders' three classes offer a decent mix of tactical options. A good team will have one of each class from the start.





**Above** Playing alone restricts your tactical choices and the AI feels less aggressive, but Outriders is still shaping into a solid shooter for lone wolves.

“IT’S HEAVY AND ROBUST WITH ENEMIES SITTING ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BULLET SPONGE GAUGE.”



**Above** Bosses have set attack patterns that can reveal weaknesses; you just need to get the timing spot on.



**Above** What’s a shooter-RPG without the option to collect loads of stat-buffed armour and weapons?



have been sent insane by the bizarre storms that still ravage the landscape. Amid the carnage ‘altered’ beings walk as gods – and our exposure to the destructive alien storm and subsequent sleep has turned us into one of these evolved humans.

In our hands-on this manifests as the ability to launch rivers of fire, freeze time, and cloak ourselves in a rock-like armoured skin. Evolved humans are split into classes – Trickster, Pyromancer, and Devastators – and we can earn new active and passive abilities using XP. (This is Outriders’ nod to being an RPG.) Though there’s a Mass Effect veneer to the styling and the option to engage in dialogue trees to discover character backstories, there are no alternate paths or narrative branches.

If Outriders’ roleplaying is light-touch, reduced to character creation and ability upgrades, its combat is far heavier. People Can Fly understands its strengths, and that’s shooting. Lots of shooting. Combat feels physical; it’s heavy and robust, with enemies sitting on the right side of the bullet sponge gauge. Rattling shots into an armoured foe sees them dance with each bullet that hits. They stumble and stagger like puppets on the strings of our machine-gun fire. It feels fantastic. Combined with our character’s altered skills, there’s a unique tactical juggling act at play as we set alight a group of enemies before peppering their vulnerable bodies with bullets.

In three-player co-op the shooting gets better. The enemy AI feels more aggressive, and a lack of teamwork can ensure a fight spirals out of control if you fail to defend your flanks or believe hiding behind cover will offer protection. (It won’t.) The enemy will find your weakness and make the most of it, and in this sense Outriders succeeds.

#### FACTRICK

##### 1. GET HARD

The game will feature 15 ‘World Difficulties’ to rank through. We played up to number five.

##### 2. MAX DAMAGE

There are eight primary abilities to unlock for each character class. There will be four classes at launch.

##### 3. GUNS ‘N’ MORE

We’re promised hundreds of guns to unlock or earn, including some weird alien technology to master.

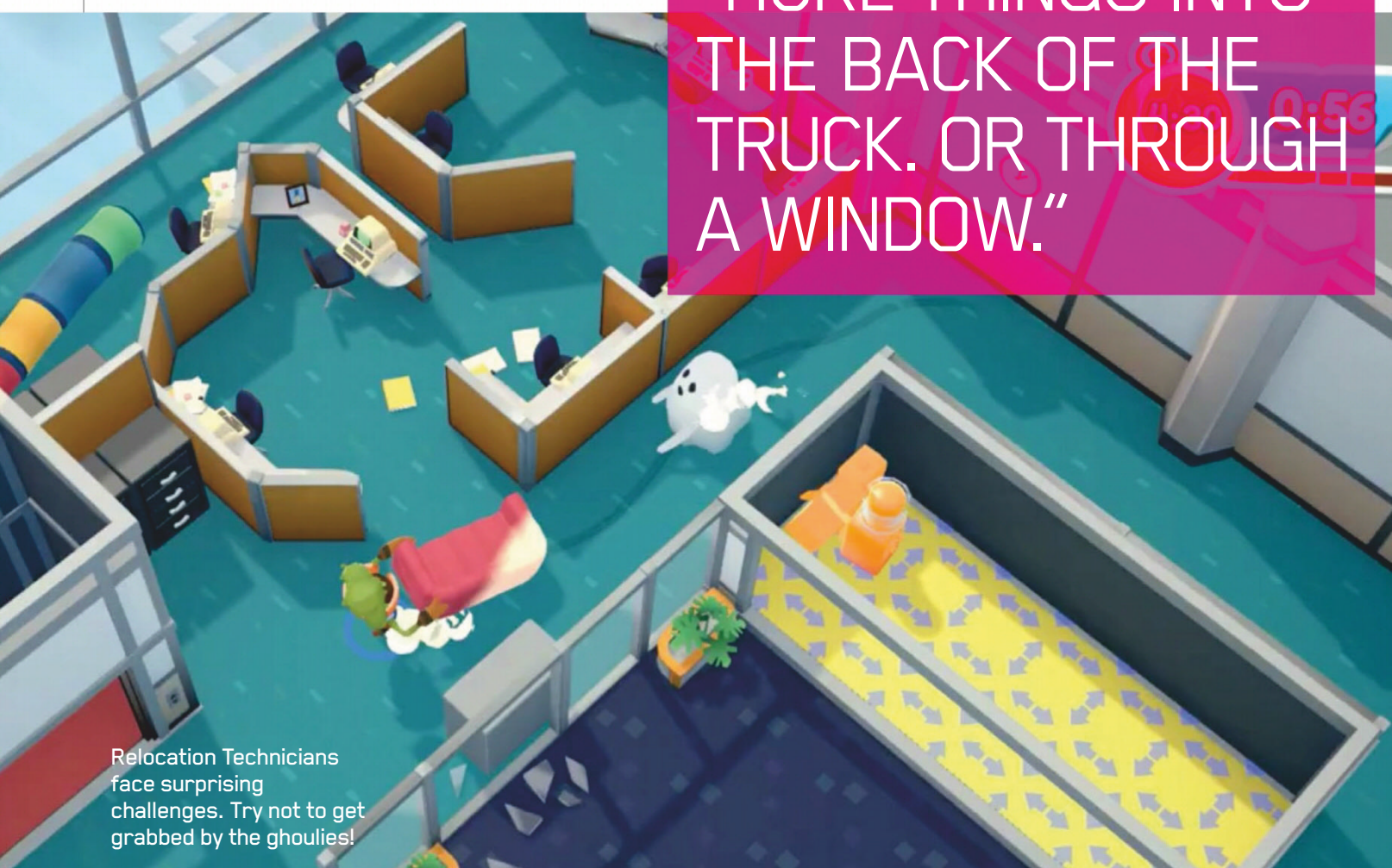
#### GUN QUEST

While the RPG side of the game feels limited in our early hands-on, the game changes with how we play. Each map is a central hub, consisting of your upgradeable truck and caravan of followers (which grows over the course of the game), linking into combat arenas. Hidden in this hub are side-missions, which offer tasty incentives such as new weapons, armour, and extra XP to develop your outrider. For example, we rescue Eva from a handsy merc, and after she reopens her shop and we flirt through some iffy dialogue, she offers a choice of rare gun-shaped rewards.

The end-of-stage boss in our hands-on is easier to defeat with two side-quests under our belts than without. The earned ‘rare’ weapons and clothing – stat-ranked helmets, boots, gloves, and armour – put an end to the electrically-charged altered enemy far more quickly than we can manage with our old kit.

While Outriders is shooting down the same RPG-influenced corridors as live service games like The Division and Destiny there will be no lootboxes. The entire game will be playable on day one – yes, we’re told its 40-hour story will be playable with no need to purchase additional content. We could bemoan the lack of serious roleplaying present in our demo, as the only way to affect this world is via the barrel of a gun. Yet when the combat is this enjoyable and open to abuse by three players blending abilities, classes, and weapon choices, we don’t think you’ll notice too often how restrictive the campaign could turn out to be. ■





Relocation Technicians face surprising challenges. Try not to get grabbed by the ghoulies!

**FORMAT** PS4 / **ETA** 28 APR / **PUB** TEAM17 / **DEV** SMG STUDIO, DEVM

## MOVING OUT

A party game sure to romp all the way home



Nothing gets the work done quicker than a Furniture Arrangement and Relocation Technician fretting about their job security; your precious belongings are irreplaceable but unfortunately in this economy, the same can not be said for Smooth Moves Inc's employees. All the same, you've got things you need moving and they're only too happy to help. We just hope you have buildings and contents insurance...

If you're a fan of Overcooked and Catastronauts (and somehow still have friends after all that), you're going to love this physics-based party game. While entirely playable solo, it loses something without a few extra helping hands to lovingly hurl things into the back of the truck. Or through a window.

### I LIKE TO MOVE IT, MOVE IT

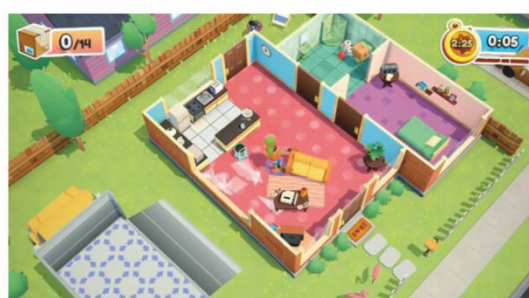
Time is the enemy of every Relocation Technician. On your own, hauling a sofa or a bed is a long, drawn-out process and these heavier items will make the minutes crawl by, snatching that gold medal away from you. But with another pair of hands you might just stand a snowball's chance.

With up to three other players, you'll be hefting goods marked down on your list out of homes all across the town of Packmore – which is apparently a hub of eccentric architects and, uh, lonely mediums? (All we're saying is, we're pretty sure neither ghosts nor possessed items of furniture are an occupational hazard for most removal people.)

That said, the haunted house isn't the place that really gives us the willies – it's the open plan office

with the dodgy lift. If you time things badly, the wilful elevator will snatch precious seconds from you as it cycles between floors. Another unexpected horror lurking in this eccentric workspace is the colourful, fabric play tunnel. Who is this intended for? Is this an office for ants? For dogs? Will this place set off our allergies!? All right team, let's hurry and get everything on the truck before we all dissolve into puffy-eyed, sneezing globs of snot.

Office dogs or no, Moving Out will be moving to PS4 in late April. Hopefully the launch won't cause either you or your fellow Relocation Technicians to lob a DualShock 4 (or anything else close to hand) at your screen... but perhaps you should hold off on recruiting any players not already battle-hardened by Catastronauts and Overcooked. ■



**Above** If there's no easy path back to the van, you're encouraged to make one.

on  
the  
box

judged only by  
their covers



### THE CURIOUS TALE OF THE STOLEN PETS

The only clue in this twisted mystery game is a trail of #ToeBeans. You'll be scrubbing through image feeds, social media profiles, and hopefully not the remains of Tiddles.

**FORMAT** PS VR **ETA** 28 FEB



### DEAD OR SCHOOL

Who wouldn't rather spend afternoons vanquishing zombies instead of equations? This unfolds as a touching visual novel about a mother trying to get her daughter to take her studies – and future – seriously.

**FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** 13 MAR



### RACE WITH RYAN

Who would've thought that a toddler would turn out to be such a back seat driver? This teaches you the basics but doesn't actually let you race. Instead, your sole input is the 'Can I have a go now?' button.

**FORMAT** PS4 **ETA** 28 FEB



Do you attack the player or their foot soldiers? The game straddles classic FPS and RTS genres.



"THE BLEND OF BLASTING AND RTS ELEMENTS FEELS UNIQUE."



**Above** There's a Twisted Metal quality to the game's weird and colourful Crew designs.

**FORMAT** PS4 / **ETA** 2020  
**PUB** PRIVATE DIVISION / **DEV** V1 INTERACTIVE

## DISINTEGRATION

Destined for success?

Considering this online sci-fi shooter was created by a former Bungie bigwig – Marcus Lehto – it's no great shock that *Disintegration* rocks a certain *Destiny 2* vibe. Spend a couple of rounds on the Low Town map in the quasi-bomb mode Retrieval, and the Guardian-aping parallels quickly become clear. This is a hectic blaster with not only serious Cayde-6 envy, but (happily) some real invention.

Sure, *Disintegration*'s bipedal bots may resemble *Destiny*'s perennial wisecracker. Yet peel away the familiar sci-fi aesthetic, and the inventiveness of V1 Interactive's part-FPS, part-squad-shooter is clear. After spending a few hours with the closed beta, there are signs of scrappy optimism for *Disintegration*. Are the production values of this essentially indie-produced rough diamond miles behind Bungie's MMO hybrid shooters? Of course. Get past the fugly visuals, though, and the game's airborne firefights and streamlined squad controls begin to shine.

When directing ground troops from your Gravcycle – essentially a hovercraft with *all* the firepower – as you control one of seven distinct Crews, *Disintegration*'s blend of first-person blasting and RTS management feels genuinely unique. If the final package can deliver both an engaging campaign and addictive multiplayer mosh pits, this down-and-dirty hybrid could yet find a committed audience. ■

### Hot squaddie

Use your Crew's troops to kill and thrill



**1** Prod the D-pad to direct your ground troops to precise locations you want them to occupy. By default, they'll follow you like murderous pups.



**2** In games of Retrieval where you must deliver energy cores, ensure your troops zigzag around. Give them straight routes and they're easy fodder.



**3** Use your Gravcycle's abilities to protect your guys whenever you can. The healing Nano Emitter is mega-useful when the bullets start flying.



All the different button combinations and the chaos on screen are lots of fun, though they may take time to get used to.

“PERSONA 5 SCRAMBLE HAS DYNASTY-WARRIORS-STYLE COMBAT.”

FORMAT PS4 / ETA TBC / PUB ATLUS / DEV P-STUDIO, OMEGA FORCE

## PERSONA 5 SCRAMBLE

Wake up, get up, get out there again



Six months after leaving Tokyo, Joker returns to spend the summer with the Phantom Thieves. They meet at Café Leblanc to plan a holiday. However, while the group enjoys a bit of well-deserved peace, the police begin investigating some dramatic changes of heart in a number of influential people.

Of course the peace is short-lived. While Joker and Ryuji are in Shibuya to buy supplies for the group's trip, they stumble on an event by popular entertainment personality Alice Hiragi. She lures the boys into her metaverse Palace, which is populated by crowds of Shadows.

This is where Persona 5 Scramble's new Dynasty-Warriors-style combat (known as 'musou' to fans) comes in. Large numbers of enemies are out to overwhelm you, and you have to alternate between quick attacks and specials (see 'You'll never see it coming,' right) for crowd control. If you've played Persona 5, you'll recognise some of the enemies in the faceless crowd as the shadows you've collected across the series and made into Persona for your own use.

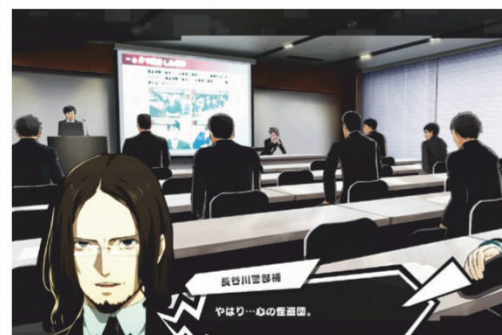
The links between Scramble and the Persona franchise don't end there. Dynasty Warriors developer Omega Force has included recognisable attacks from Persona 5 throughout. While hacking your way through the hordes may be enough to get you out of a tough spot, you also need to exploit the weaknesses of enemies using your weapons and Persona. Doing so

inflicts additional damage and grants a follow-up attack. You can add new Persona to your ranks, but our demo doesn't make it clear how — after we've exploited a pixie's weakness against ranged weapons in a tutorial battle, we can simply collect her.

### A NEW ADVENTURE

As a fully-fledged Persona 5 sequel (the first of its kind since Persona 2's Eternal Punishment in 2000), Scramble introduces you to several new main characters. Besides Alice, the demo briefly shows us Inspector Zenkichi Hasegawa, who has already been revealed as a playable character later in the game. Another important addition is Sophia, who joins the fight after Joker rescues her from a cube in the Shibuya metaverse.

All in all, our 90-minute hands-on reveals Scramble feels like a charming return to the world of Persona 5. Combat feels slightly simple and could do with more challenge and musou-style disarray, but as the demo covers the very beginning of the game, we know battles are sure to grow in complexity as soon as you're joined by more characters and Persona. We'll find out for sure our chaotic things get when Scramble releases later in the year over here in the UK. ■



**Above** The Phantom Thieves are back together at Café Leblanc to catch up and plan a camping trip over the summer holiday.

### FACTRICK

#### 1. NEW GROOVES

The rock remix of Last Surprise is only one of several new tracks you can look forward to.

#### 2. WARRIOR-LIKE

Scramble was intended to be a Dynasty Warriors spin-off. Work on it began during the development of P5.

#### 3. FUN TIMES

P-Studio promises a full Persona experience, playable even if you haven't finished the main game.





## You'll never see it coming

Some of Joker's devastating attacks



**1** The Phantom Thieves still have their guns – they're great for varying your attacks, and absolutely essential when you're facing flying enemies.



**2** Surrounded? You can call a Persona for an attack over a small area, and they're capable of pulverising most weak enemies on the spot.



**3** Move to a spot high above the field of action and then drop down with the press of a button. Joker can perform highly effective whirl and jump attacks.



**4** Showtime is back but different. Instead of two characters teaming up, when you fill the Showtime bar you can call a Persona to pull off another huge special.



**Left** As soon as Joker sets foot in Tokyo, events seem to repeat – he's called to the Velvet Room, where Lavenza warns him of a new evil.

**Above** It's not clear what Sophia is, or even if she is real at all, but she's strong, knows the metaverse well, and just wants to help.





# PREVIEW

Shooting Nemesis isn't going to kill him, though you can slow him down and ruin his good looks.





# “NEMESIS IS DESIGNED TO CHASE JILL RELENTLESSLY.”

**FORMAT** PS4 / **ETA** 3 APR  
**PUB** CAPCOM / **DEV** CAPCOM

## RESIDENT EVIL 3

Jill-in' like a villain

041



Would we like to switch to Aim Assisted mode? This embarrassing and frankly condescending question keeps cropping up as OPM repeatedly dies at the hands of its Nemesis. No, we would not, we do have some pride. Besides, it's not our aim that's the problem. It's Nemesis. He's big, he's a bully, and it's just not fair.

Twenty years ago, playing the original fixed-camera survival horror on our PS1, we had the same problem. We can distinctly remember screaming, “Oh, leave me alone!” at our fat cathode-ray-tube TV as the Pursuer cropped up yet again to ruin a perfectly nice bit of rummaging down the side of dumpsters for green herbs.

Nemesis is designed to chase Jill relentlessly. It's Resident Evil 3's standout feature. But as if the original game's Big Bad wasn't big and bad enough, the one in this reboot makes his ancestor seem kitten-like — and you can blame the Resident Evil 2 reboot for that, since that game's Tyrant set a new benchmark. Nemesis is way smarter than the Tyrant, moves nimbly for his size, has prehensile tendrils that ensnare you and, at one point, has a flamethrower. Yeah, this isn't going to be easy.

### JUST STOP IT

Zombie-infested Raccoon City has been reimagined and created in exacting detail on PS4, but remains recognisable to fans of the original, despite the more open feel and evidently bigger scale of the city. It's far from open world; areas are locked off or blocked





# PREVIEW



**Left** Never mind fatbergs – working for the Raccoon City sewage department in the late '90s was no joke.

**Right** Something's always on fire in Raccoon City. Cars, buildings, zombies – you name it, it's gonna burn.



See that sparking generator behind Nemesis? Shoot it to electrocute him!



## Vive la Resistance

We go hands on with the 4v1 asymmetrical multiplayer mode



**1** Playing as a Survivor? You get a choice of slightly annoying teenagers with different skillsets. Your team will really need to work together.



**2** The Mastermind player controls cameras to watch the Survivors. Their tools include different zombie types, traps, and an 'ultimate'. All have a cooldown.



**3** Survivors must successfully solve puzzles to exit three areas of progressive difficulty as the Mastermind gleefully works their evil to stop them.



**4** Ultimates include Mr X and G-Birkin tyrants, who the Mastermind controls directly so as to murderise the hapless teens in a more tactile kind of way.





**Above** Jill uses the subway system to get around Raccoon City, dodging zombies and buskers. Here she's headed home for a quick shower...

"THE FRESH LEVEL OF  
DETAIL IN THE NEW-  
OLD MONSTERS IS  
AMAZING; THE SEWERS  
ARE DISGUSTING."



**Above** The sewer-dwelling, amphibian Hunter Gammas are actually quite cute, until they open their mouths.



**Above** In case your untiring enemy, Nemesis, isn't scary enough, in one sequence he wields a great big flamethrower.



off by burning vehicles much like in the original, so again you progress through patient backtracking and finding paths through shops, restaurants, and apartments filled with nostalgic '90s detail. From a distance we spot the neon sign above the forecourt of the Stagla gas station, a long-remembered location in the original, though we can't yet reach it. We've no time for sightseeing anyway, Nemesis is back.

We're not completely defenceless — deal Nemesis enough damage and he will fall to one knee for a few moments, enough time to get away. A grenade, for example, will give him pause for thought. Sparking, knackered generators are *everywhere* — shoot one and Nemesis and any other monsters near it are stunned by an electrical explosion.

## DODGY BUSINESS

Jill also has a dodge move. This was your only way to get past the Pursuer in 1999, and it was *really* hard to pull off. For the reboot, dodging takes the form of a thankfully more forgiving Quick Step move, a shoulder-drop and shimmy out of the way of Nemesis' lunges. Time your reaction just right and you enter into a Perfect Dodge, where time slows a little as Jill rolls deftly forward past her enemy, giving you a small time advantage to get running again.

This is good, but frankly we'd quite like a pad button that makes Nemesis count to ten with his eyes covered, before squealing "Coming ready or not!" like an excited child who's got no idea that in that time you've legged it all the way down the street.

So we're cowering in a safe room with no health and no herbs, wondering how we're going to get through this, when Nemesis *comes in*. Oh, *come on!* Not even Mr X could enter safe rooms! Dodging past him and out into the street, we finally pull off *exactly* the right timed dodges, shoot the sparking generator at the *exact* right time, run the right way (easy to panic and run into a dead end), remember to have our shotgun fully loaded for the zombie that comes round the next corner, and then *finally* make it to safety. It's taken us a while to perfect the manoeuvre, but the feeling of achievement is exhilarating.

## IF LOOKS COULD KILL

Next we slog our way through sludgy sewers to face some rebooted Hunter Gammas. These frog-faced pseudo-dinos have long been considered 'cute' by some, but that doesn't stop Jill from emptying a couple of fire-rounds into their yawning maws. Again the fresh level of detail in the new-old monsters is amazing, while the sewers themselves are just disgusting. Especially when Jill has to walk under a waterfall of sewage which coats her bob with viscous slime. Capcom has again used photogrammetry to capture likenesses in characters and environments, and visually it's as impressive as the Resi 2 reboot.

Once more employing the RE Engine and over-the-shoulder view, this is a companion piece to that game in more ways than one. Both share the Raccoon City location, and the action in Resi 3 takes place before, during and after the events at the RPD. Capcom has confirmed there will be some shared locations and other details that eagle-eyed gamers will clock. Whether or not you played the Resi 2 reboot or the original Nemesis, though, this retelling of the iconic Jill and Nemesis story will smash it. ■

### FACTRICK

#### 1. OUR CAR-LOSS

Carlos, the friendly Umbrella merc from the original is playable — though he won't have his own campaign.

#### 2. SHARE PAIR

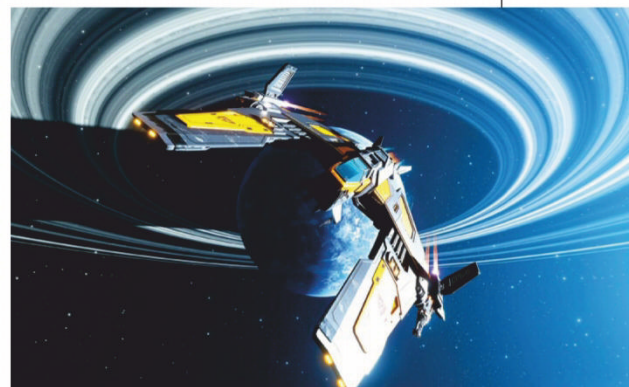
Resi 3's three-year development time overlaps with that of the Resi 2 reboot.

#### 3. CH-CH-CHANGES

In the original, Nemesis showed damage. Capcom has confirmed you'll see "changes" in him this time.



# PREVIEW



■ Your ship remains the star of the show but now you have even more options to make it really pop against the dark void of space.

"AN ALL-NEW  
MODULAR SHIP  
SYSTEM OFFERS  
SPECIALISATIONS."



It's hard not to come over all starry-eyed over this looker of a space-flight game. What a stunner!



**Above** Rockfish can take the roguelike elements out of Everspace, but that won't deter us from climbing back into the cockpit.







**FORMAT** PS4 / **ETA** 2021 / **PUB** ROCKFISH GAMES / **DEV** ROCKFISH GAMES

# EVERSPACE 2

There's always space for course correction



Rockfish's first foray into infinity and beyond debuted in 2016, boasting a steep difficulty curve sprinkled with frequent death. But the studio's second starbound adventure is ditching the roguelike elements in favour of something a wee bit more approachable. Surprisingly, this shift in gears was as fuelled by the series' existing player base as it was the developer itself.

By the studio's own account, the dev had always wanted to fulfil fans' requests for an open world Everspace. Rockfish only had the resources to go that route after the sequel's successful Kickstarter campaign, and the aim this time is to create a "more hand-crafted, persistent" experience. Rockfish also explains that the genre change complements the start of a new chapter in the hero's journey. The first game saw you die, die, and die again as your cloned protagonist searched for a cure for what ailed him. Now they're fighting fit, albeit without any possibility of starting over if they kick the bucket. Instead of learning through death like in the roguelike predecessor, you've got to learn through living. It's true there'll be a bigger focus on exploration this time round, but Everspace 2 will serve up a challenge, with high-risk-and-reward areas begging for a hot-shot pilot to delve into them.

## FACTRICK

### 1. AIM HIGH

Science fiction films like *Oblivion* and *Blade Runner*, plus games like *Destiny*, inspired the vehicle design.

### 2. SMALL & MIGHTY

The Hamburg-based game studio consists of 23 full-time employees, plus three contractors.

### 3. DREAM WORK

Rockfish Games, after having to start over as a studio twice, is self-funded and fully independent.

## SHIP SHAPE

But you know what they say – the more things change, the more they stay the same. While the visual direction is stellar in every

way, your ship remains the true star of the show. Everspace 2 presents even more options for sailing the skies, with an all-new modular ship system offering various specialisations and tiers to choose from... not all of them purely functional. You're not merely swapping in bigger, better guns or a cosier cockpit; randomised loot now offers new skins and colourways to ensure your spacecraft is the best-looking in the star system. The dev has always leant towards more vibrant colour schemes, and Rockfish tells us that the technical lead 3D artist picked *Guardians Of The Galaxy* as a reference for colour grading and lighting for the Everspace series. That's

definitely going to make for some flashy ship looks.

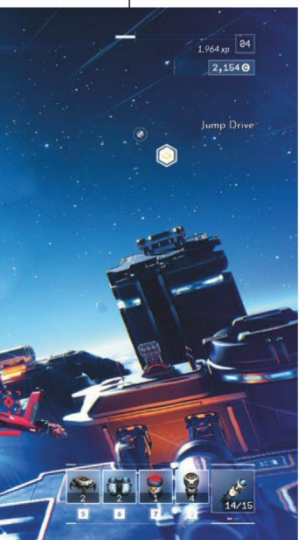
There's also plenty of new kit to aid your sojourn among the stars, such as the space grapple hook (you can tell it's nifty from the adjectival use of 'space'). The developer pitches it as a short-ranged tractor beam that you can use to, say, hurl energy cores into the sockets of powered-down gates or out into the void of space to provide a quick distraction while you flee from the authorities.

This equipment can be upgraded to become especially useful during the new planet surface missions. As you'd expect, greater gravity can make an already tricky mission that much more challenging – especially when it affects any loot your enemies drop. You'll have to be quick to scoop up dropped goodies before they burn up in the atmosphere, and an upgraded grapple or even smart fetch drones are just the tech for the job.

## STARRY-EYED SURPRISE

This focus on your in-game hardware doesn't mean the story takes a back seat. The studio wants its protagonist to have an intense emotional journey told through side-stories as well as the main campaign. Rockfish worked with Joshua Rubin, a story consultant who previously worked on *Assassin's Creed II* and *Destiny*, who was intrigued himself by the hero's naïve beginnings in the first game. We're told that over the last year of development Rubin has not only assisted with the game's narrative design, but has also been instrumental in helping the team embrace the lore laid out in the first Everspace. Here's hoping it's as gripping as Ezio's tale in *ACII*.

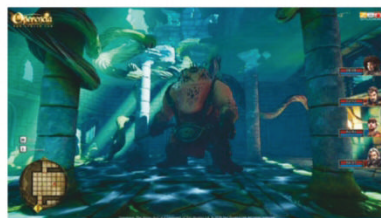
While fans will be relieved to learn that not everything old is out, we're eager to blast off and see where this sequel will take us next. ■





# PREVIEW ROUND-UP

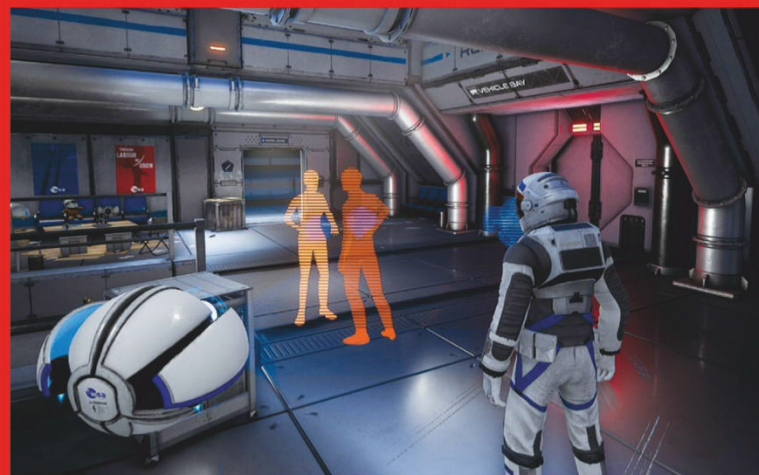
From darkness to demons, the ecosystem to everything else, this month is all about facing hard times head-on. Whether you've got a magnificent mech or just a sharp blade and your wits to rely on, you've got this.



## OPERENCIA: THE STOLEN SUN

**FORMAT** PS4 / **ETA** MAR  
**PUB** ZEN STUDIOS  
**DEV** ZEN STUDIOS

This first-person RPG borrows heavily from classic games in its genre, plus Central European folktales, and mixes in a dash of history for good measure. You journey through a land submerged in eternal night on a quest to rescue the abducted Sun King, Napkirály. You encounter real-life historical figures given a legendary makeover, alongside fantastical beasts. Exploring dungeons via a familiar-feeling tile-based movement system, and vanquishing monsters in turn-based fights, it all feels decidedly nostalgic. How's that for a bedtime story? ■



## DELIVER US THE MOON

**FORMAT** PS4 / **ETA** TBC / **PUB** WIRED PRODUCTIONS  
**DEV** KEOKEN INTERACTIVE

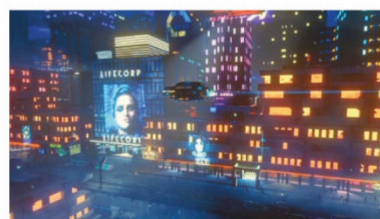
In a post-apocalyptic future, humans looked ever upwards as climate and energy crises affected Earth. They discovered a vast reserve of Helium-3 on the Moon and quickly made it their primary power source. Unfortunately, disaster struck and all contact between the Earth and the Moon was severed. Now, emerging from the darkness, you are sent to re-establish the energy supply and save humanity. In our hands-on demo, we did everything from listening to audio logs to launching a rocket. We're eager for this one to touch down.



## SAKURA WARS

**FORMAT** PS4 / **ETA** 28 APR  
**PUB** SEGA / **DEV** SEGA

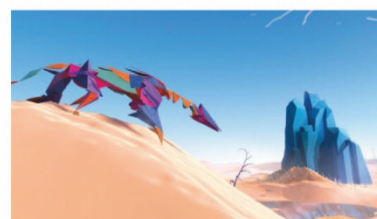
For the uninitiated, this JRPG has got it all: giant robots, cute girls, and – get this – cute girls piloting giant robots. What a twist. It's set in an steampunk version of Taisho-era Japan, and Tokyo is staring down a demon invasion. You are captain Seijuro Kamiyama, head of a combat division, and it's up to you to get your soldiers ready for the worst-case scenario. Featuring the series mainstay, the dynamic dialogue system (called LIPS – really), what you say matters on and off the battlefield. All we're saying is, you should choose your words wisely around anyone who knows how to pilot a giant robot. ■



## CLOUDPUNK

**FORMAT** PS4 / **ETA** TBC  
**PUB** MERGE GAMES  
**DEV** ION LANDS

Nivalis has a neon-drenched skyline that goes "down a hundred miles and up a thousand," and as Rania, the titular delivery company's newest driver, you're ducking and weaving between those skyscrapers in your company-issue hover car. You meet a cast that ranges from AI to android to human and back again in this neo-noir exploration game; Rania may have been hoping for an uneventful first shift but she soon discovers just how quickly things can change in this city full of stories. What's more, your decisions make some of those changes happen. Buckle up and enjoy the ride. ■



## PAPER BEAST

**FORMAT** PS VR / **ETA** TBC  
**PUB** PIXEL REEF  
**DEV** PIXEL REEF

You are an origami God in this inventive game's recently announced sandbox mode. Using PS Move controllers, you can experiment freely with weather effects, spawn plants or beasts, and directly reshape the contours of the land however you see fit.

This is all standalone and separate from the main narrative mode in this independent offering from Another World dev Eric Chahi. Both modes centre on an ecosystem that has blossomed out of long-forgotten data where the strange wildlife reacts and alters its behaviour in response to what you do. ■





# TIME TO STEP OFF THAT TREADMILL

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FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE

# FANTASY BECOMES

Oscar Taylor-Kent is on cloud nine and in seventh heaven as he takes a long-awaited journey back to Midgar in **Final Fantasy VII Remake**





FINAL FANTASY VII REMAKE

# FINALLY REALITY



049





twenty-three years on, our application to join AVALANCHE has finally been accepted. It's the ecoterrorist group trying to save its planet's energy from being sucked dry, and we've stepped into the ex-SOLDIER boots of Cloud, a superpowered swordsman who's been enhanced by that very same energy and now turned against the organisation he worked for, Shinra, the corporation that rules the steampunk-inspired city of Midgar with an ironclad grip.

Midgar is a marvel at a glance, but mired in its own issues. With a dense population, the upper class literally living above those who dwell in slums beneath the main city's plates, Shinra has to keep everyone in line. Not that Cloud is worried about that. He's just helping out AVALANCHE for the mercenary paycheck, or so he says.

## URBAN ASSAULT

Our extensive hands-on demo has us playing from the very beginning as the team carry out a bombing on one of the city's Mako reactors. Seamlessly moving from cutscene to action, this is an absolutely gorgeous remake that thankfully retains the visual stylings of the PS1 original. Where FFXV was often beautiful, too many times assets felt like they'd been plopped randomly onto the world. Here everything is immediately cohesive, Midgar

towering around you, beautiful in its neon hum and oppressive in its overbearing structures.

Hopping off a train alongside the other AVALANCHE members, Cloud immediately has to chop his way through guards using his impressively oversized sword, following his comrades through train ticket barriers, waiting as they cut through a fence to get into a warehouse, and then clearing rooms so the others can hack the computer consoles to get into the reactor itself. It feels like a real place. We recognise the geometry of the original game many times during our playthrough, but it's been completely refreshed. It's marvellous how the remake plays on our nostalgia while delivering so much new to the senses.

## BOMBER MAN

Once inside we're joined by Barret, AVALANCHE's gun-armed leader, and we fight our way past sentries to get to the reactor's core. In the original you could spec characters to have different skills, but ultimately

**“EVERY BOSS IS  
EXTRA-SPECIAL –  
TOUGH AND  
CINEMATIC.”**

they all handled the same in the turn-based ATB (Active Time Battle) system. Here, party members feel much more discrete, and have become more robust since the last time we went hands-on. Barret's gun ensures he can attack from a distance, getting the drop on mounted turrets on enemies that can hover out of the way. Simply holding down **Ⓢ** unloads a clip, with **ⓐ** letting him unleash a burst attack that charges over time.

As you might expect from his massive sword, Cloud is much better up close. Tapping **Ⓢ** has him use a single-target autocombo, while holding it down performs a group attack. It's a simple twist but it works, as busier fights can get chaotic. Using **ⓐ** switches him from Operator mode to Punisher mode,

slowing him down massively but allowing for much stronger attacks and counters.

Later on in our demo we're also given access to Tifa and Aerith's combat flavours. The former has a variety of close-quarters martial arts strikes, while the latter can use damage-dealing magic and support skills from a distance. As you damage enemies you build up their stagger, eventually filling a meter that will leave them vulnerable for a time, which is when you can deal them heavy damage.

## PARTY PEOPLE

With three party members in your team at a time there's plenty of room for tactics. In battle you can switch between them at will, or give them commands by holding down **L2** or **R2**. As your party land hits they build up ATB meter, which you can then spend on larger actions, such as using powerful abilities, magic, or items. In tougher encounters you need to consider what you use them for. Do you want Cloud to use a thrust attack

that deals heavy stagger damage, or play it safe and use a potion? That both your larger offensive and support options share a meter really means your choices can affect how harder fights will play out.

While there are plenty of Shinra goons to mow down, every boss we encounter is extra-special – tough and monumental.

Our first foe is the Scorpion Sentinel, which originally showed off the PS1 game's ATB system in all its glory by having periods when its tail laser would raise and you'd have to stop attacking for a bit or it'd strike back. Here the fight showcases Remake's new, more action-orientated, combat. You stagger it with careful use of magic; make sure you target its shield generator to make it vulnerable; hide behind cover to avoid its laser after it leaps around the arena; and strike its scuttling legs so it falls over and you can whale on it. Back on PS1, the leap to 3D allowed Final







1



2



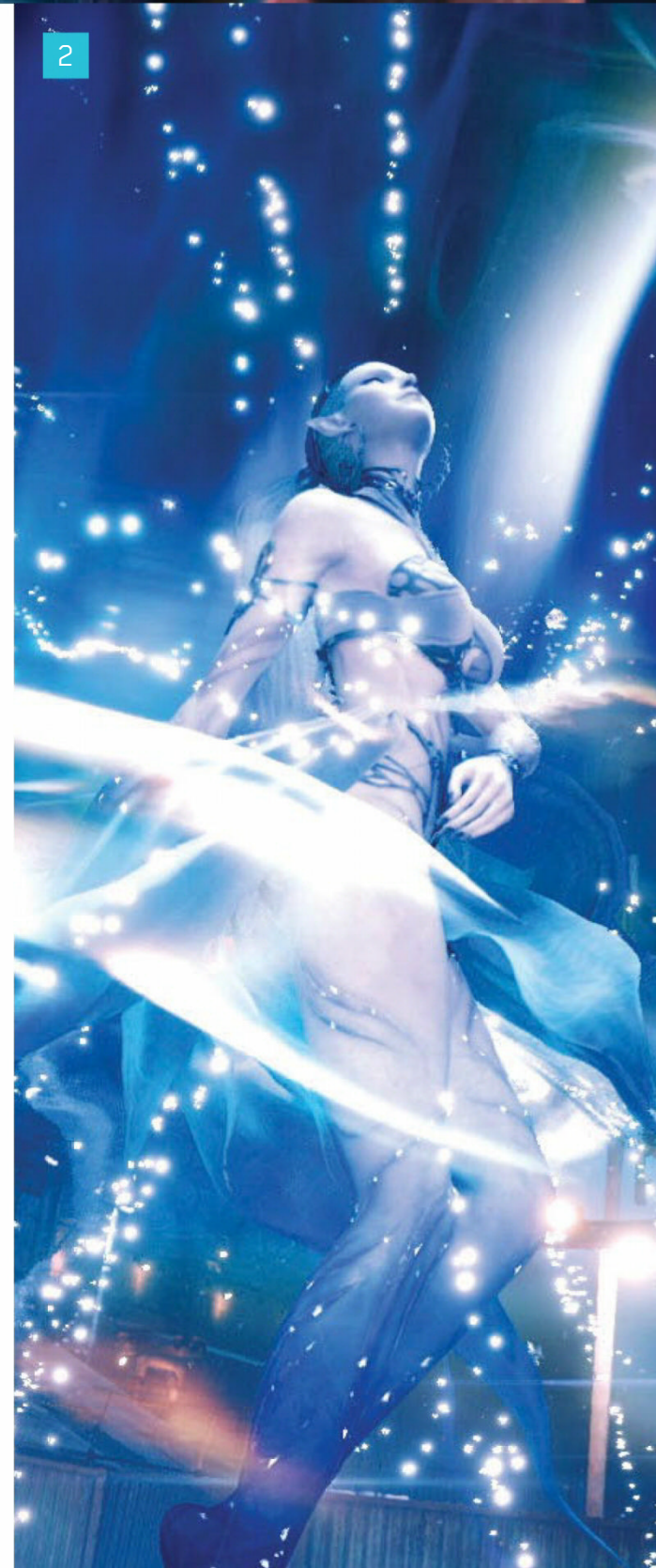
051



4

1 Not only do we get closer to our party members than ever before, but side characters like Jessie, Biggs, and Wedge have a greater presence. You really feel like a proper team. 2 Aerith hangs back with magic and support abilities, but can deal out flash damage too. 3 Taking on the Scorpion Sentinel is an epic, cinematic battle that tests our combat skills. We dodge stun attacks, disable barriers, and duck underneath rockets – this is one scorpion that packs a sting. 4 Something's up with Cloud's memories from the get-go, an early flashback showing us Remake's redesign of Cloud and Tifa's Nibelheim hometown.





1 We've only had a glimpse of Red XIII so far. He joins the party late in Midgar in the PS1 original; we hope we still get plenty of wolf love in Remake. 2 Shiva and Ifrit are both available as Summons. Call them down and they join the fray, where you can command them to use abilities. Before they leave, they unleash an Ultimate attack. 3 Every party member has unique skills that you'll need to co-ordinate to blaze through battles. Mashing attack will only get you so far, as big as Cloud's sword may be. 4 Midgar won't be open world, but new areas will open up, allowing the party to complete quests off the beaten path and explore deeper.





■ Fantasy VII to reach a new scale, pushing the boundaries of what could be done in JRPGs. In Remake, some of the very same fights reimagined are doing the same for a fresh generation.

## COMMAND AND CONQUER

In a later chapter we infiltrate a second Mako reactor. This plays out more or less how we remember the original, but then we must escape and are introduced to a section where we have to make our getaway through research rooms where parts to build Airbuster, the boss we'll be fighting against at the end, are being produced. Finding keycards throughout the level, we can actually sabotage Airbuster's construction, diverting parts we can then collect for our own benefit later.

While simple, this section shows how Remake will let you shape the challenge you're about to face. We can even make decisions on how to use each card, bringing the boss' movement abilities down a level, or reducing the number of missiles it can deploy. Even using several cards, the encounter nonetheless pushes us to the edge — Cloud, Tifa, and Barret struggle to fight back as it hovers around us on rickety catwalks in the midst of burning flames.

Staying on top of giving commands to allies can be a challenge, but it's one we quickly become accustomed to once we get used to tapping the triggers. Hitting ⊗ brings up a Command mode that slows time to a crawl, allowing us to think about our next input. There's even a Classic mode toggle in the menu that allows you to keep things entirely turn-based to take the pressure off, bringing the game closer to the PS1 original. But we love the dynamism of the combat once we get used to it.

The efficacy of the quick menus and the ability to use skill shortcuts by holding Ⓐ feels genuinely rewarding once we get into the

swing of it. In our final boss fight, deep in the sewers against the horned beast, Abzu, we get properly into the flow of the combat. Playing as Aerith, we hang back, pelting Abzu with spells, laying down support skills for Cloud and Tifa as we command them to use skills to crack the creature's horns and leave it open to attack, fishing out Limit Break skills and make use of Summons Shiva and Ifrit to back us up as the fight escalates.

## AFTER THE BLAST

So far so good. The new combat system is Square Enix's best yet, a joyful mix of Kingdom Hearts III and Final Fantasy XV. And Midgar is hauntingly beautiful. But you'd better get used to it, as Midgar is all you get in this game. Despite the name, this is just the first part of the Final Fantasy VII Remake project, focusing only on what

**“SQUARE ENIX LOOKS SET TO REDEFINE THE GENRE AGAIN.”**

was once the opening section to the massive JRPG. But don't fret, plenty here has been expanded on to turn what was once a five-hour experience (approximately) into one we've been told will have the runtime we'd expect from a mainline release.

Any doubts we had are laid to rest after that very first Mako reactor bombing. The explosion was a success, but it's much larger than AVALANCHE expected (you might even say *mysteriously* larger). Crawling from the wreckage, the team agree to meet up on the train back to base. Where in the original game you play through a couple of screens of comically low-poly NPCs running back and forth at this point, here you have to sneak through streets that feel properly devastated (because Shinra is naturally on high alert). Buildings have collapsed, a mother sobs because she has no home to go back to, and other citizens look at a collapsed

expressway in shock. There is so much more consequence here.

## SILVER-HAIRED FOX

This remake expands on the original in clever ways. From much earlier on, our spiky-haired hero is getting nasty headaches that turn his vision film-grainy. For some reason he can't stop thinking about a tall, silver-haired hunk. As Cloud clambers over rubble and rooftops, working his way through the devastation caused by the explosion, he encounters the man from his dreams. We won't spoil much, but Sephiroth hangs over the events much earlier on, his relationship with Cloud expanded upon. Even people who've never played the game are aware of the character, the devs tell us, so holding Sephiroth back as a tease no longer felt necessary.

Our first journey to Midgar was an iconic part of our PS1 experience,

but so much of what happened there did feel breezed past. Where once we saw a representation of the city filled in with our imaginations, now we feel like we're truly a part of it. That second chapter has stuck with us, giving us real city streets to explore

throughout a new version of the story that remains gripping, and in line with the rhythm of the original the devs want to stay true to. We've been definitively told the game won't be open world, but as you reach new areas it will open up for a moment, allowing you to undertake extra quests and exploration.

While our hands-on was limited to specific slices of the game, we're impressed with how much it's been expanded while retaining the feel of the original. Delving deeper into the streets of Midgar on Cloud's journey has a lot of promise, as do the extra challenges that await. While we're revisiting the plated city, there's much here that pushes JRPGs forwards. By remaking its classic game, which redefined what RPGs could be on PS1, Square Enix looks set to redefine that genre once again. There's plenty of Mako left in this bad boy yet. ■



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## THE OPM INTERVIEW

056



## Katamari and Wattam designer Keita Takahashi tells us how he makes such unique games

**K**eita Takahashi's gaming work has a certain strangeness that's extremely distinctive. It sees you rolling tiny objects into a ball to get bigger and bigger and then eventually create stars, and getting

toilets and telephones to join hands to kaboom together in colourful explosions. His games are some of the silliest you'll ever play, and some of the most introspective. So how does Takahashi do it? What better way to find out than to ask the man himself? He's even given us some artistic interpretations to illustrate his game-making journey. ➤

057





# THE OPM INTERVIEW

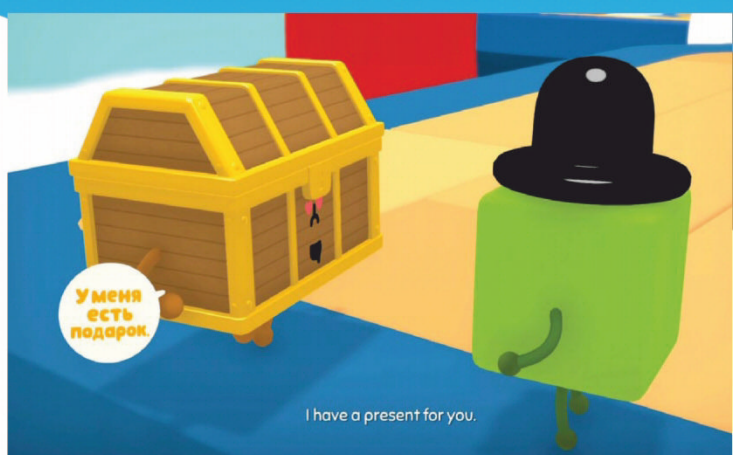


**OPM:** All your games have unique premises. How do you come up with a new idea?

**Keita Takahashi:** I think I can come up

with new ideas pretty easily. I can get new funny FPS ideas in a minute. But coming up with a better/great idea is just different and difficult. If I knew the

way to come up with better ideas, I think I would become a billionaire. I want to know how to come up with a new great idea too.



**Above** While the different objects in Wattam speak different languages, they communicate by playing together.



**Above** Holding hands is a key element in Wattam. Spinning in a circle can grow seeds into trees.

**“If I knew the way to come up with better ideas, I think I would become a billionaire.”**

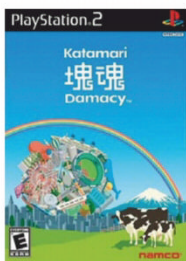






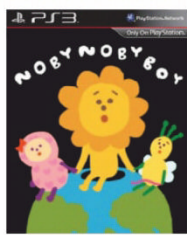
## The works

The games in Keita Takahashi's catalogue that you should know



### Katamari Damacy (2004) Director

Along with its 2005 sequel, We Love Katamari, this was all about the Prince's quest to repopulate space with stars on behalf of his quirky father, the King Of All Cosmos. You did this by rolling balls all over Japan, accumulating larger and larger items, until you go from forming a tiny one in a kitchen to rolling up entire houses.



### Noby Noby Boy (2009) Director, designer

Where Katamari was all about getting bigger, Noby Noby Boy was all about getting longer. The playable Boy could stretch his body to fantastic lengths, with the goal being to stretch as much as possible. It was a play on the Japanese word 'nobi' meaning 'stretch' and 'nobinobi' meaning 'carefree' – as you do plenty of both.



### Wattam (2019) Designer

In Wattam you play as the Mayor of nowhere, who gradually welcomes more and more friends – all of them anthropomorphised everyday objects – to the seasonally themed islands. Some of them speak different languages, but they connect through their actions, such as blowing themselves up with the Kaboom bomb the Mayor keeps under his bowler hat (which is all harmless fun).



**OPM:** Wattam is your first game on this generation of home consoles. Do you feel like there's more freedom to explore ideas as technology becomes more powerful?

**KT:** Of course more high spec machines would be good for me. Even Wattam, which looks so simple and cute graphics, but our engineers worked so hard to optimise it to keep 30fps. I know our optimisations were not enough to keep it

30fps at all situations, unfortunately. It's a kinda complicated system more than you and also we expected. So I would say I'm happy about more powerful and efficient technology, and we will be able to get stable and decent performance without extra works.

But also I know there are other things on the Earth which [are] called novels and manga. I know they can surprise or touching us so many times. And

surprisingly they are made by just letters and drawings, but no particle effects, no sound effects, and no interaction. That's just stories and pictures, which doesn't require any futuristic technologies...

Your question is "Do you feel like there's more freedom to explore ideas as the technology becomes more powerful?" My answer is maybe or maybe not, it depends on the game.



# THE OPM INTERVIEW

To say honestly,  
I just dreamed  
that wattam people  
were playing  
together.

**OPM:** How did the idea for Wattam come about?

**KT:** When I was living in Vancouver, Canada, I saw many different people there who came from other countries. Their native languages are not English but they get over their language barriers by using English as a common tool. That was very impressive for me.

On the other hand, we still have so many fights and conflicts all over the world, and our differences are making them. Different perspectives, thoughts, benefits, religions, races, cultures etc etc, even [though] we all live on the same planet. That's a very sad and silly thing. What if we all have the same language, skin colour, or perspective, maybe we will have less fights and conflicts than we have now. But also it would be a very boring world.

I have believed our differences give us more

wider/kind perspective and deeper/richer culture, but unfortunately our differences just keep making confusions and discriminations.

I am not a superhero, but for some reason I thought

I should try to make a videogame that can solve this problem with celebrating our differences, and go beyond our differences by having fun together. I knew this is a very abstract and

ambitious concept (so it took a long time to finish Wattam, haha), but I thought I had to make such a videogame now because the world has been a mess for a long time.



**Above** The cure for exam season is becoming one with the katamari.

“Differences give us more wider/kind perspective and deeper/richer culture.”



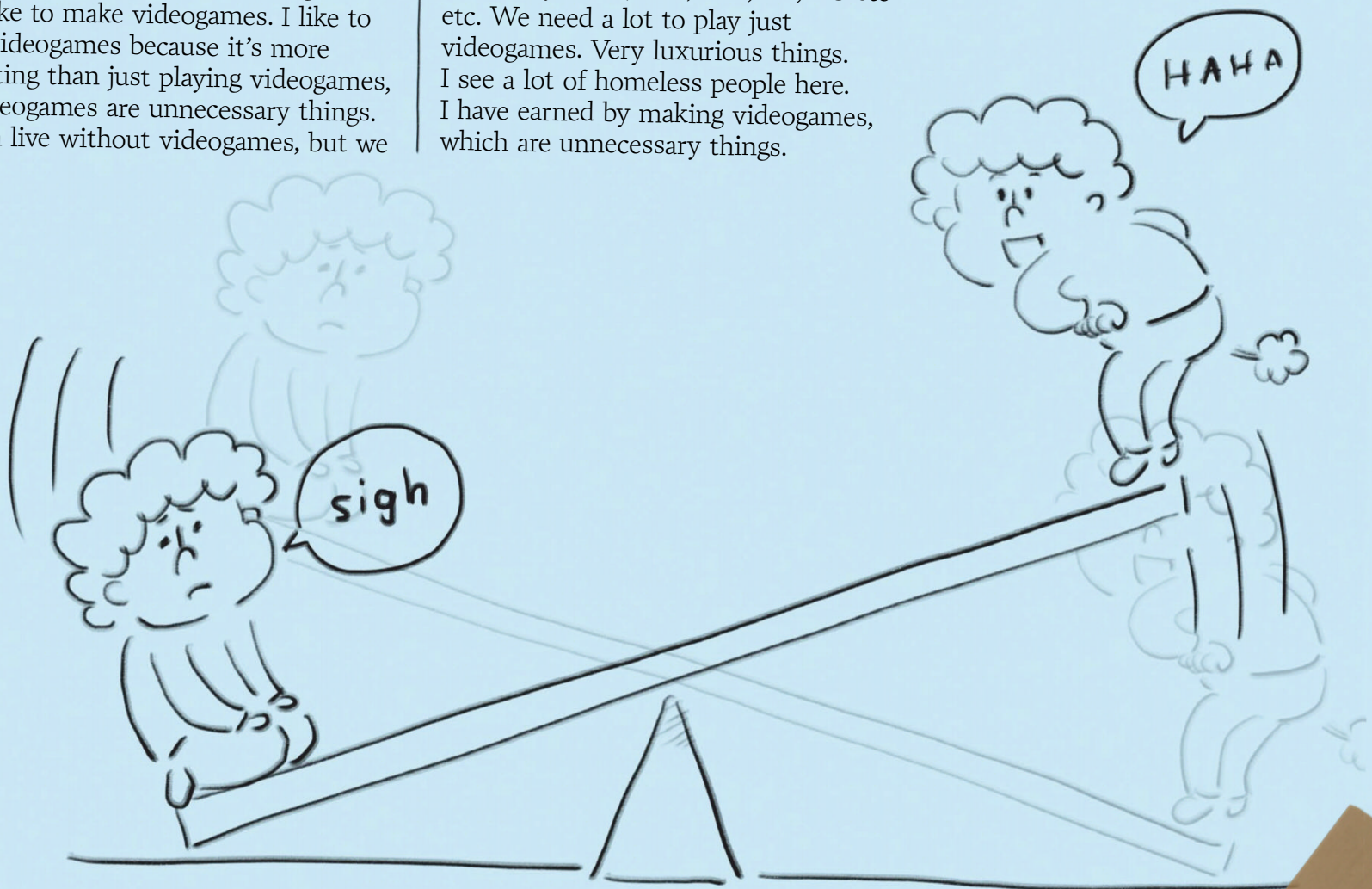


**OPM:** Your games often blend the line between introspection and being joyous, even silly, fun. Why are you drawn to this balance?

**KT:** Because my mind has so many contradictions. I don't play videogames but I like to make videogames. I like to make videogames because it's more interesting than just playing videogames, but videogames are unnecessary things. We can live without videogames, but we

can't live without medicine, food, water, electricity, sewerage, etc etc. Those are more important than videogames. To play videogames, we need to buy a console, PC or phone first, and still need electricity, walls, roof, sofa, TV, AC etc etc. We need a lot to play just videogames. Very luxurious things. I see a lot of homeless people here. I have earned by making videogames, which are unnecessary things.

But I have a family, and basically making videogames is fun. I know this is kinda an extreme thought, but I think those contradictions make my games have different faces.



**OPM:** Wattam manages to capture an essence of childhood play and wonder at the world. Do you think this is something smaller studio games are able to explore more easily?

**KT:** I think I know what you mean, but it doesn't matter if it's big or small. I know some small studios feel like Triple-A studios because the executives are ex-Triple-A. And they just do what they have done before at a big company. So I can't tell.



**OPM:** How do you feel when you read reviews of a game you've released?

**KT:** Just nervous. I have been trying to avoid reading any reviews, but I have read

some by accident. I totally understand all negative reviews because I know Wattam is far from a decent commercial product. The development process was

just tougher than you expect. I just feel so sorry when I saw tweets about Wattam's unstable performance or design issues.









Guilty Gear creator  
Daisuke Ishiwatari  
talks to Oscar Taylor-  
Kent about taking  
fighting games back  
to the dojo with **Strive**





If Sol Badguy's got balls, then Faust isn't afraid to whack them with his hefty baseball bat.



Faust can give his enemies truly discotastic big hair. To what end? Your guess is as good as ours.

**F**or fighting game fans, Arc System Works needs no introduction. Its core series, Guilty Gear and Blazblue (which started on PS1 and PS3 respectively), have dominated fighting game tournaments like EVO for years now. On top of that the studio's produced some impressive franchise-led efforts in the shapes of Persona 4 Arena, Dragon Ball FighterZ, and Granblue Fantasy Versus. Now with Guilty Gear Strive (the "iv" in the title is meant to denote the fourth true iteration of the series) the fighting game studio

is taking the genre right back to the drawing board.

"Over Guilty Gear's 20-year history, the focus was to make each update more exciting and impactful than the last," says Daisuke Ishiwatari, the series' creator and chief creative officer on Guilty Gear Strive. "We tried to tone it down somewhat with Guilty Gear Xrd, but it didn't address the

**"THE FIGHTING GAME GENRE [...] DEMANDS A HIGH LEVEL OF TECHNIQUE."**

main issue with the series — the gap in ability between veteran players and those new to the franchise."

Arc's games are known for being fast-paced and technical, with a high

skill ceiling, all bright lights and clashing colours that require twitchy reflexes to master. But over the years it's been working to make fighters friendlier by including more in-depth tutorials and new modes that assist with combos without taking away too much control.

"The fighting game genre is competitive by nature and demands a high level of technique and execution of players, so there should be a clear difference between strong players and

## GEAR SHIFT

The road to Guilty Gear Strive has been a long one...



**GUILTY GEAR (1998, PS1)**

One of the slickest, fastest fighters to be released on PS1, Guilty Gear introduced players to the relentless action that came to define the series.



**GUILTY GEAR X (2001, PS2)**

Heading to PS2 meant the game's pixel art could shine. Smoother animations, plus a new cancel system, made combat quicker.



**GUILTY GEAR X2 (2003, PS2)**

Building on X's groundwork, X2 included more special moves, expanded greatly on the story, and added the combo-breaking burst knockback mechanic.



**GUILTY GEAR XRD: SIGN (2014, PS3)**

After years of enhanced ports of X2, Xrd moved the visuals into 3D while revising the gameplay into one brand-new, ultra-fast system.



**GUILTY GEAR XRD: REV 2 (2017, PS4)**

With some tweaks (including a rebalanced cast), Xrd came to PS4 with all DLC fighters. It's one of the best-looking brawlers on the console.





Zoom-ins when using special moves reveal the extremely detailed character designs.

those just starting out,” says Ishiwatari on the difficulty of balancing the two sides of the spectrum. “The problem was that the ability gap between series veterans and beginners was still too large, even though Guilty Gear Xrd was intended to be a brand-new title. [One thing] we are doing now is taking a hard look at a number of things in order to establish a new baseline for long-time players and newcomers to start from.”

PUTTING ON A SHOW

With Strive, Guilty Gear is undergoing a big mechanical overhaul to address its complex nature. “The goal is not to simplify complex mechanics or make the game easier. To excel, players will still need to develop advanced skills and an in-depth understanding of the game,” says Ishiwatari. “Our games have the reputation of being hard to understand from the very beginning.” From the demo that’s been showcased

SOL BADGUY – AGGRESSIVE STRIKER

POWERFUL PRESSURING / TYPE BALANCE / EASE OF USE 4.5/5 / RANGE SPECIALITY SHORT



Something of a cynical, gruff loner, Sol has reasons for pushing others away. He’s a prototype ‘Gear’, a creature infused with magical energy and built for combat. He suppresses his true form in his role as a bounty hunter, only unleashing his devastating destructive ability when he has to.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Gunflame	↓↘→ + P
Gunflame (Feint)	↓↙← + P
Volcanic Viper	→↓↘ + S or HS (air okay)
Bandit Revolver	↓↘→ + K (air okay)
Bandit Bringer	↓↙← + K (air okay)
Wild Throw	→↓↘ + K (near opponent)
Ground Viper Night Raid Vortex	↓↙← + S (hold okay)
Fafnir	←↙↓↘→ + HS

OVERDRIVES

Tyrant Rave	→↘↓↙←→ + HS
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P – PUNCH K – KICK S – SLASH HS – HARD SLASH



Wildly swinging his hefty rectangular sword, the Junkyard Dog MK III, Sol can hit with strong short-range attacks in fast-paced rushes. The chunky weapon also enhances his fire magic, meaning he can end combos with slashes that ignite his enemies – both his devastating Volcanic Viper uppercut and knockback Gunflame are good for this.

at a few fighting game tournaments, it’s clear that while a lot of changes have been made, characters still have many of the moves you’ll be used to. Rather than becoming more basic, Strive is designed so it’s easier to understand what types of good plays you should make. It’s easier to follow. But the core system remains the same: you string together combos of

“IT’S EASIER TO FOLLOW, BUT THE CORE SYSTEM REMAINS THE SAME.”



When we were told Axl was in a chain gang this wasn’t what we had in mind.



# GUILTY GEAR STRIVE

## KY KISKE – ALL ROUNDER

EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES / TYPE BALANCE / EASE OF USE 5/5 / RANGE SPECIALITY MID

Sol's rival, Ky is a former commander of the Sacred Order Of Holy Knights, an elite force designed to combat Gears. Now he's the captain of the International Police Force. He is extremely devout, which can cause him inner turmoil as he wrestles with his morals... and those he must fight.

### SPECIAL ATTACKS

Stun Edge	↓↘→ + S
Stun Edge Charge Attack	↓↘→ + HS
Aerial Stun Edge	↓↘→ + S or HS in mid-air
Stun Dipper	↓↘→ + K
Special Attack (Flying Kick)	↓↘← + K
Vapor Thrust	→↓↘ + S or HS (air okay)
Dire Eclat	↓↘← + S

### OVERDRIVES

Ride The Lightning  
→↓↘↙↘→ + HS  
(air okay)

Sacred Edge  
↓↘→↓↘→ + P

P - PUNCH K - KICK S - SLASH HS - HARD SLASH

Wielding electricity, Ky can jump into the fray and use mid-reaching sword thrusts to stun his opponent. Stun Edge can frazzle enemies from a short distance, allowing him to close the gap and deliver more jolts with the sliding Stun Dipper or swing his sword in a wide arc above him with Vapor Thrust, hurling foes into the air as he adopts a messiah-like pose.



» punches, kicks, slashes, and hard slashes (it's a four-button fighter, so great on a standard controller). Those moves are in order of strength; hard slashes have more of a wind-up, and you can combo upwards through those moves. Timing is less important than in, say, Street Fighter — just mash out buttons up the scale, and like jamming on a scale on a guitar you'll get your moves out. Dust attacks on **R1** are launch moves, and ducking while you do it now gives you the option to sweep attack to knock your opponent off their feet. The combat's always been fairly simple to follow when you

break it down, but the way Strive is presented ensures it all clicks into place more quickly for new players.

Guilty Gear is well known for being gorgeous — like 2D animation come to life in three dimensions (while remaining on a 2D plane — the camera

**"I THINK THAT [...] PLAYERS OF ANY LEVEL WILL BE ABLE TO ENJOY THE GAME."**

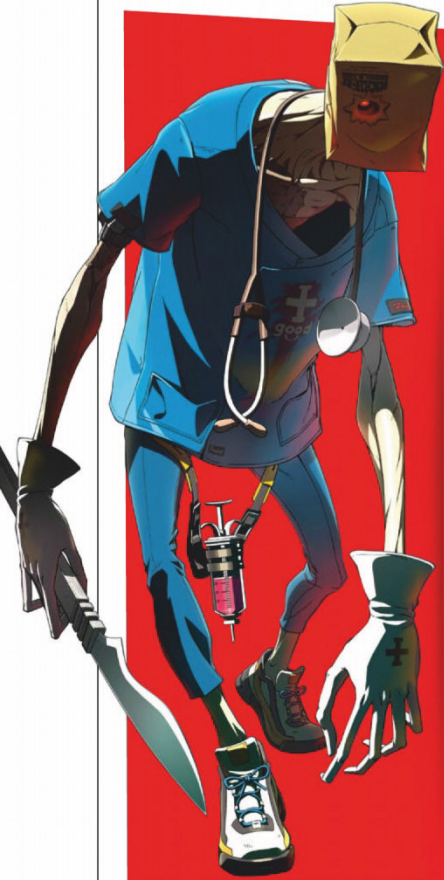
## FAUST – MYSTERIOUS DOCTOR

UNPREDICTABLE STRANGE MOVES

The medical genius Dr. Baldhead's grip on reality (quite literally) broke when a young patient of his died mysteriously. After donning a face-concealing paper bag, he now goes by the moniker of Faust. Sometimes a deadly killer, sometimes a healer, he seeks the truth behind the incident.



Faust's moves are all about misdirection and unpredictability, as he tangles up opponents in his confusing web of strikes. He'll grab you with a fishing line with Re-re-re Thrust, and then spin attack you in the air. Or he'll gobble you up to spit you out of the cosmos somewhere. He'll even grow out your hair into an afro, drop some strange pills, or become a scarecrow. If you don't know what's going on, then neither will your enemy.



pans around characters at key moments to reveal the depth). But with so many flashy effects and long combos new players could find it intimidating to grasp. "The major focus for this title is to make a game that even casual spectators can easily understand what is happening on screen," says Ishiwatari. "I think that if people can clearly grasp what needs to be done in order to win a round, players of any level will be able to enjoy the game even if the core mechanics appear difficult." That said, you still have to put in practice to be able to eke all you can from a character's moveset. "We are working on making it an entirely new experience for all players," says Ishiwatari. "However, we intend to make it such that players can still feel elements distinctive to Guilty Gear, such as



Potemkin only fights when he has to, but the story makes it clear he has his orders.





Axl's chains can reel in unwitting opponents like tasty fish.



Two-on-one isn't cheating if you use ninjutsu to create shadow clones of yourself.

freedom and the ability to express their individuality through the game."

### RISC VERSUS REWARD

These days, watching the game and being able to understand it isn't just important for the players. As eSports becomes bigger, developers have to consider spectators too. "We think that will be required for all fighting games moving forward. Some software has been developed to make watching matches more enjoyable on stream and it's essential that game content matches those efforts, which is something we've kept in mind while developing Guilty Gear Strive," says Ishiwatari. From that point, if a viewer can understand the flow of the game,

## MAY – RELENTLESS ATTACKER

PLAYFUL RUSH ATTACKS / TYPE POWER / EASE OF USE 5/5 / RANGE SPECIALITY MID



The second-in-command of the Jellyfish air pirates, May was orphaned at a young age and taken in by their leader. Her honest innocence means she can get on with everyone, including her marine-based animal friends, though she's strong enough to swing an anchor.

#### SPECIAL ATTACKS

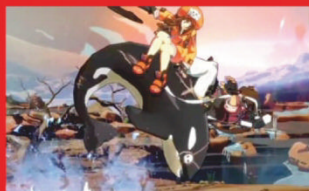
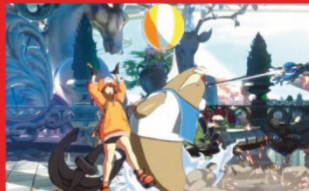
Mr. Dolphin Horizontal	← (hold) → + S or HS
Mr. Dolphin Vertical	↓ (hold) ↑ + S or HS
Overhead Kiss	→↓↘ + K near opponent
Special Attack (Ball)	↓↙← + P or K

#### OVERDRIVES

Great Yamada Attack	↓↘→↓↘→ + S
Overdrive (Anti-Air Attack)	→↘↓↙←→ + HS (air okay)

**P – PUNCH K – KICK S – SLASH HS – HARD SLASH**

When she's not swinging her massive anchor around to crush her foes, May's calling on her marine friends for help. Mr. Dolphin is a charge move that has her riding on the aptly named cetacean's back, a sea lion can throw beachballs to whack enemies, and she can even call on the killer whale Goshogawara and blue whale Yamada to flatten all before her.



they might be more encouraged to pick up a pad for themselves.

While Strive is aiming to be more approachable, that doesn't mean it's being pared down. If anything, it has some more tense back-and-forths than before, with tweaks to the system that

force you to focus on countering opponents with your offence rather than running scared. The new RISC system is one way players are pushed forward, with blocks gradually





The large lad Potemkin brings a gun to an anchor fight.



**"KNOCK YOUR OPPONENT BACK AND THE CAMERA FOLLOWS THE ACTION."**

## CHIPP ZANUFF – HIGH SPEED NINJA

SWIFT STRIKES / TYPE SPEED / EASE OF USE 3/5 / RANGE SPECIALITY SHORT/MID

Following the path of the ninja Chipp claims to be from Japan, but he's not, and can't even speak the language well. He's simple-minded and impatient (thanks to his speed), but kind-hearted, forming his own country from the desire to help out smaller communities who are overlooked by others.

### SPECIAL ATTACKS

Alpha Blade	↓↘→ + P or K (air okay)
Alpha Plus	P or K during Alpha Blade (air okay)
Beta Blade	→↓↘ + S (air okay)
Gamma Blade	↓↘→ + HS
Resshou	↓↘→ + S
Rokusai	↓↘→ + S during Resshou
Senshuu	↓↘→ + K during Resshou or Rokusai
Genrou Zan	→↓↘↙ + S
Shuriken	↓↙↙ + P in mid-air
Wall Run	Hold → while dashing into a wall's edge

### OVERDRIVES

Zansei Rouga	→↓↙↘↙↘ + HS (air okay)
Banki Messai	↓↘→↓↘→ + K

**P – PUNCH K – KICK S – SLASH HS – HARD SLASH**

Using a mixture of quick slices with his ninja blades and fast-paced ninjutsu, Chipp is all about speed. His Genrou Zan allows him to teleport behind foes for extra strikes, and his Resshou, Rokusai, Senshuu combo deals quick damage. Enhancing his speed is the ability to slow down his opponent, and create shadow clones for devastating finishers.



The anchor isn't the only thing to watch out for; May's regular punches are iron too.

» losing effectiveness the more hits you take, meaning you always have to be aware of potential openings.

### SWITCHING GEARS

The series' first foray into stage transitions is another way the team are trying to encourage more of that back-and-forth for all players. "In most fighting games, trapping your opponent at the edge of the screen gives you a huge advantage, and one of the most exciting parts of the match is for attacking players to come out with the best result in this moment," shares Ishiwatari. "However, I feel that there is a huge difference between getting a good





combo in and just endlessly trapping someone in the corner. In previous editions of Guilty Gear, there were times when the player on defence had no options. One of the goals for the new title is to break those kinds of deadlocks faster while preserving the concepts of superior execution and challenging gameplay.”

The stage transitions are part of the way Strive is evolving Guilty Gear visually too. Knock your opponent back and the camera zooms in, spins around, and follows the action. The series has gone from having some of the best pixel art around on PS1 and PS2 to 3D anime-in-motion style in Xrd. “[In Xrd] the focus was to recreate the feeling and visual impact of Japanese anime,” says Ishiwatari. “For Guilty Gear Strive, we’ve implemented new camera movements not present in the previous version. We’ve also added visual weight to all the characters so they

## AXL LOW – LONG-RANGE DUELLIST

DEADLY DISTANT STRIKES / TYPE TRICKY / EASE OF USE 3.5/5 / RANGE SPECIALITY LONG



Despite wielding a kusarigama – a classic Japanese weapon – Axl is actually a British punk... and comes from 1998. Somehow transported to the 22nd century, this quick-witted former gang leader must fight for a way to return home and be reunited with his beloved Megumi.

### SPECIAL ATTACKS

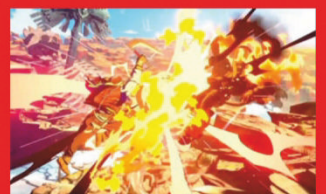
Sickle Flash	← (hold) → + S
Arcing Chain Strike	↑ during Sickle Flash
Spinning Chain Strike	↓ during Sickle Flash (hold okay)
Special Attack (Explosion)	S during Sickle Flash
Spindle Spinner	←↙↘→ + HS
Special Attack (Diversion)	↓↙↘ + HS (air okay)
Special Attack (Evasion)	↓↙↘ + S
Axl Bomber	→↘↙ + HS in mid-air

### OVERDRIVES

Sickle Storm	↓↘↙↘↙ + HS
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P – PUNCH K – KICK S – SLASH HS – HARD SLASH

Most of his moves revolve around using the chains of his double-sickle-ended kusarigama to grab opponents from a distance. His Sickle Flash can reach across most of the screen to strike, and from there you can end the move in different ways to mix it up. The Spindle Spinner chains enemies up completely, and can be hit mid-air with a fiery Axl Bomber explosion.



appear more substantial on the screen and expanded the backgrounds to allow the camera more freedom of movement.” There’s more of a sense of impact than the sometimes floaty last game had (though many of the characters still dash around at high speed). Pull off a good counter and the camera will zoom in to highlight the clash, while a special move will see it come close to a character, showing off all the detail in their faces.

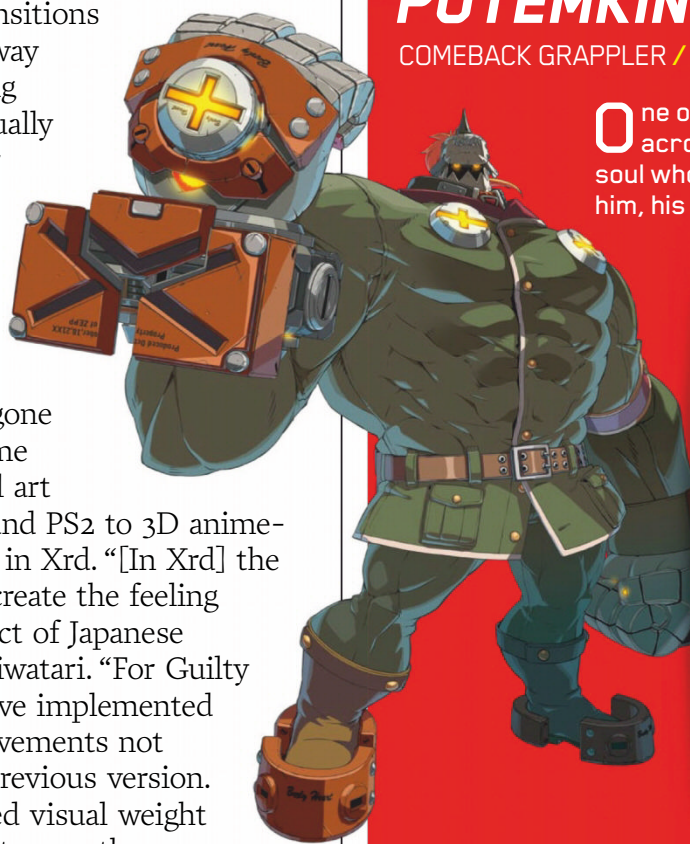
The rockin’ song that introduced the new game was Smell Of The Game (hear it for yourself at [bit.ly/opm-strive](https://bit.ly/opm-strive)). Heavy guitar sounds have always gone hand-in-hand with the

series. It’s just a part of its nature. That energy is now carrying through everything. “What we were aiming for by creating this song was to describe the wild atmosphere of the series,” says Ishiwatari, “[the] excitement of a beginning of a new world, and [to] set our mind not to lose the essential qualities of the game.” We look forward to seeing what the new Guilty Gear brings, and we’re sure other fighting games should be taking note. That’s nothing to feel guilty about. ■

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## POTEMKIN – MOVING FORTRESS

COMEBACK GRAPPLER / TYPE POWER / EASE OF USE 3.5/5 / RANGE SPECIALITY SHORT



One of the floating island country Zepp’s elite guards, Potemkin investigates threats across the world on its behalf. Despite his hulking frame, he’s actually a patient soul who dislikes fighting except for when it’s absolutely necessary. Unfortunately for him, his immensely destructive powers are often required in the line of duty.

### SPECIAL ATTACKS

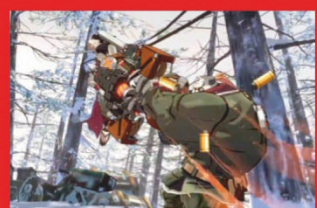
Potemkin Buster	→↘↙↘↙ + P near opponent
Heat Knuckle	→↘↙ + HS
Mega Fist (Forward)	↓↘↙ + P
Mega Fist (Backward)	↓↙↘ + P
Slide Head	↓↘↙ + S
Hammer Fall	← (hold) → + HS
Hammer Fall Break	P during Hammer Fall
F.D.B.	→↘↙↘↙ + S (hold okay)
Special Attack (Guard Crush)	↓↙↘ + HS

### OVERDRIVES

Heavenly Potemkin Buster	↓↘↙↘↙ + S
Giganter Kai	→↘↙↘↙ + HS (air okay)

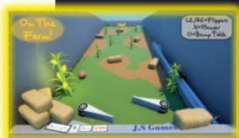
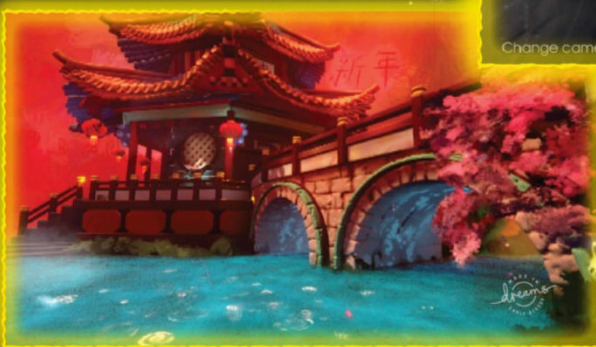
P – PUNCH K – KICK S – SLASH HS – HARD SLASH

Potemkin is so heavy he’s lacking in speed, but is able to destroy anything that gets too close. Many of his combos, such as the Potemkin Buster, end in grabs that crush foes, and his Giganter Kai is an energy attack that can stun foes so they can’t escape his slow-moving onslaught of metal pain.





## DREAMS



# Only in Dreams

Take a tour of Media Molecule's latest – your guide, Jess Kinghorn, picks out the **Dreams** landmarks you won't want to miss

**T**here's already a whole world of daydreams, nightmares, fantasies, and imaginings just waiting to be explored in Dreams, Media Molecule's part-game, part-game-maker. But all these creations from early access Dreamers aren't the only reason to get excited about the full release version – available right now.

Catching up with co-founder and technical director of Media Molecule Alex Evans, we ask the obvious questions about PS5. "I'm afraid that's 'no comment' – I tried commenting earlier and I got slapped," he jokes, and while Media Molecule is being

coy over the long-term goals of the platform, in the short-term there will be new updates to develop and add tools into the game-maker.

More definitively, we're told that PS VR support is "significantly developed," though a timeframe is yet to be set for its inclusion. You can already use the current DualShock 4's motion control functionality and the PlayStation Move controllers in Dreams.

A steady stream of content has flowed onto Dreams since April last year, but the big debut was Art's Dream. Launched on Valentines Day, it's a feature-length story in its own right, a genre-crossing tale featuring

a host of memorable characters and even a selection of musical numbers. It shows not only the potential of your own creations but that of Dreams as a platform. The developer has already shared a selection of shorter creations that are, like this new story, made entirely with the tools all Dreamers have access to.

Art's Dream deals primarily with every artist's nemesis – self-doubt. You tear down a wall of the stuff when you boot up the game for the first time, and we asked Alex Evans about the other ways Dreams tries to combat this.

"Getting the tutorials right was actually very difficult. We tried a few



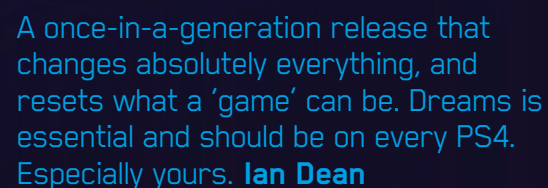


A robust suite of tutorials isn't all that's new to the full release. The aforementioned Dream Surfing has become a streamlined experience

However, perhaps the most valuable jumping-off point Media Molecule can offer would-be Dreamers is this insight from Alex Evans: “My two-word advice would be, like, ‘mess around.’” He elaborates, “I think a lot of people assume that game dev or writing or filmmaking – or whatever it is – is like this grand process and people sit in ivory towers [...] the



## WHAT WE SAID: VERDICT







## Ruckus – Just Another Natural Disaster

Creator: HeartFactory-KW

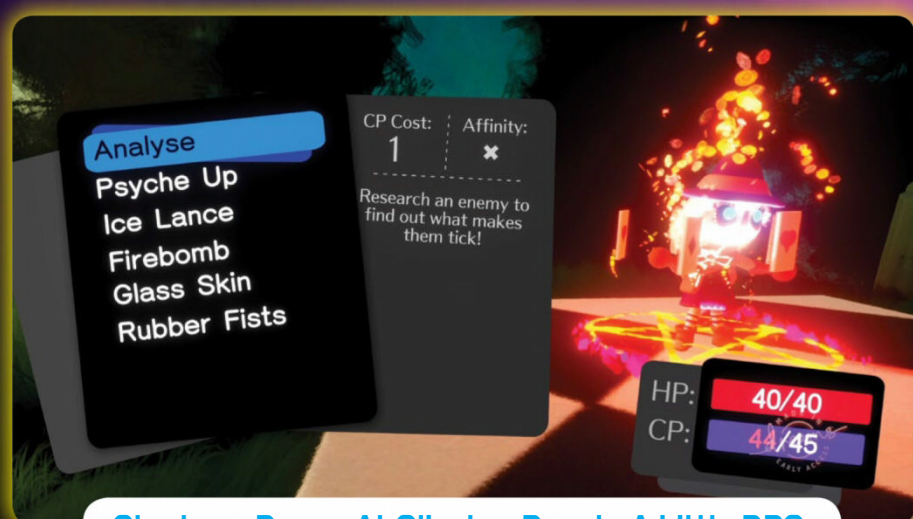
**L**et's kick things off properly. A live report from Princeps City broadcasts direct camera feed of the star of the show – a surprisingly cuddly looking kaiju – emerging from the ocean. Amid credits and button controls, a giant zero looms up front before nipping to the bottom-right corner, as if to say “Go get 'em, tiger.”

The rounded edges of Morishiro1935's creature design perfectly complements the lolling character movement you

so often see in Dreams. As you take your first lumbering steps towards Princeps City, it's impossible to not be endeared to this walking natural disaster. Gleefully, we scoop up a tanker with **A** and chomp down with **C**. As we approach the shore, we're fired up, so it's time to fire off with **B** – we may not be the king of the monsters but we've got his atomic breath. That's when the military marches in, though they may as well be conveyor-belt sushi.

As we climb towers and bunnyhop our way to a 4x score

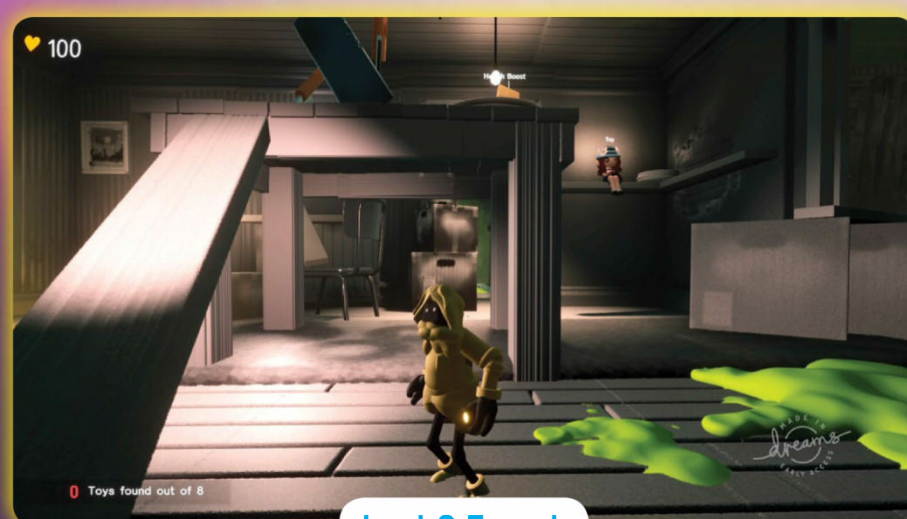
multiplier, we cut back to the newscaster with a breathless bulletin: a nuclear strike has been called in on Princeps City. The soundtrack ramps up to a dizzying tempo as we try to squeeze just a few thousand more points out of the surrounding rubble before the military does a better job of destroying the city than we could ever hope to and it's razed to the ground. After the inevitable, our kaiju takes a well-deserved nap, but not before seeing us off with a wave from one of the most charming Dreams we've seen yet.



## Shadows Dance At Olivetop Reach: A Little RPG

Creator: Mandelbo

**T**hey call it 'little' but a phenomenal amount of work has gone into this wonderfully witchy adventure. Renowned mage Penka Totts only wanted a little more room in her wardrobe but finds herself in a distinctly Narnia sort of situation. Uncovering Olivetop Reach's secrets, the risk of a random encounter is never far away, but you won't mind because it means you get to listen to that banging battle theme again. Fights are familiar turn-based affairs, but there are some fantastic visual flourishes here that are sure to make you want to pinch yourself.

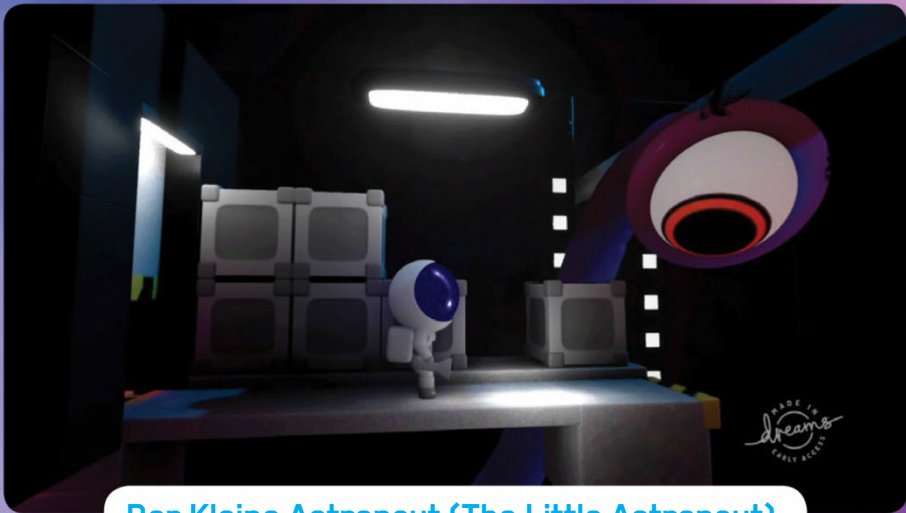


## Lost & Found

Creator: Scarybiscuit

**T**alk about a fixer-upper. Your playdate pals have been strewn throughout a run-down home improbably littered with hatchets, poisonous slime, and absolutely lethal bug spray. There's only one way out of this death trap and that's together – because the exit portal won't open until you've brought your toy team back together. We loved the multi-level layout and the reserved use of bright colours but, best of all, it's short and sweet. Now, if you'll excuse us, we're going to go and give our Deacon St John plush an extra-big hug.

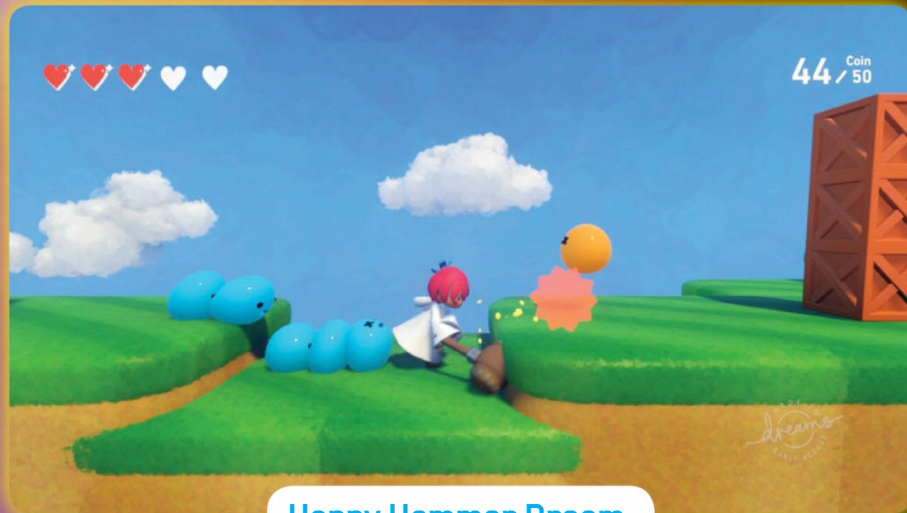




Der Kleine Astronaut (The Little Astronaut)

Creator: Pencilcase80

**T**he creator now has a work in progress that improves on almost everything you see here, but we're including this fiendishly difficult side-scroller as it's a blooming good show for a first project. After stopping short at a discarded space helmet, this test level hurls everything it's got at you, from spooky space aliens to finicky platforming that makes your low-gravity moon jump especially frustrating – and that's to say nothing of the yelp your little astronaut gives when he fails to make re-entry.



Happy Hammer Dream

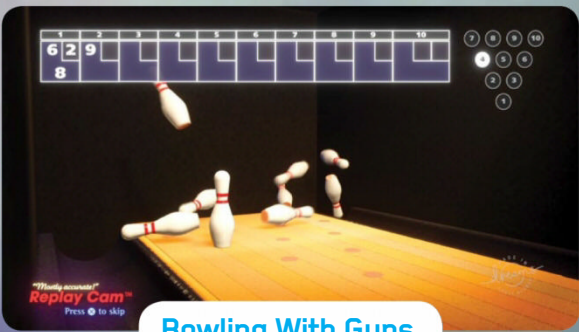
Creator: Totoidoppa

**H**ey, you – aren't you tired of being cute and nice all the time? Don't you just wanna go bludgeon waves of hapless slimes into submission? Well, this side-scrolling platformer will be your dream come true. Starting off simply enough, you'll be collecting kitty coins and hearts as you thump away, but each stage introduces enemies with new quirks to side-step – or, rather, problem nails to hammer away at. Stage five kicks the challenge up a notch and proves this is more than just a pretty face.

It's impossible not to be endeared to this walking natural disaster.



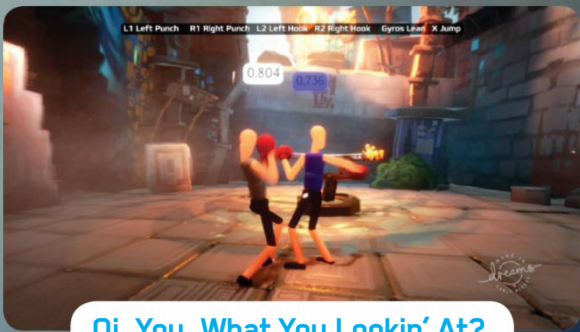
073



Bowling With Guns

Creator: Fyshokid

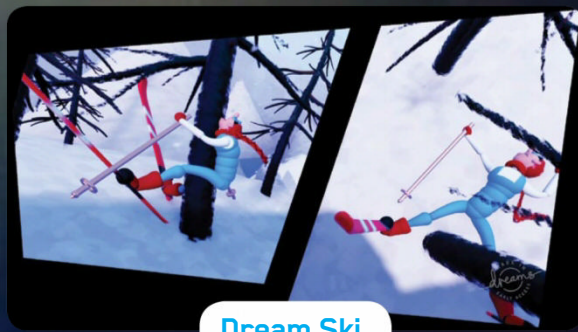
**T**his Dream does what it says on the... thought bubble? Rather than hurling your hefty hand cannon at the pins, you're taking aim and letting rip. The physics found in many Dreams is, er, particular, but it's put to excellent use as the pins are sent careening and skittering with every shot. Each blow only gets more satisfying on the instant replay, but beyond that, this is a fairly focused train of thought; if you're here for something more than gunning for that strike out, you're going to be disappointed.



Oi, You, What You Lookin' At?

Creator: SonicDeff

**S**omewhere between both challengers' flopping around, the fantastically floaty controls, and that endlessly catchy theme song, it's hard not to embrace this fighter's silliness. The creator has recently improved the single-player opponent's AI too, meaning that, in the face of all of our malarkey, at least someone is taking this deadly seriously.



Dream Ski

Creator: Pixel\_Gorilla

**Y**our pleasant solo holiday to the Alps (which we hear is simply lovely this time of year) is just about to become a nightmare. Oh, this winter wonderland looks innocent enough, but it's got a dark and splintery underbelly. You can only sort of steer with the D-pad and pray that you don't get overly familiar with a tree. But, that aside, there's nothing for it other than to ski for your life when the yeti busts onto the snowy scene.





## The Watergardens

Creator: HalfUp

**I**s this what dreams are made of? There's something magical about this project which sees you travelling by boat between a selection of diorama-like levels – and we're not just talking about the serious Ico vibes it's giving off.

Dreams is an excellent sketchpad for exploring ideas, but sometimes it's best to take what you've learnt from an unfinished design and move on to the next thing. As a result, there are a lot of half-made Dreams out there.

However, this pleasant puzzle platformer is complete, showing an impressive level of focus and, importantly, scope management.

You sail between five rocky islands, each one littered with steps, arches, and other features presenting a pleasingly to-the-point platforming experience. You pull levers for items, place quirky expanding blocks, and collect primary-coloured shapes tucked away just out of reach. Collect a shimmering blue key on the first island, for example, to unlock the padlock preventing you from

docking at the next, called The Citadel. The puzzles challenge your noodle just enough, and all the while there are chill beats drifting in on the ocean breeze, with plenty of scenery to soak in. Speaking of soak, we've yet to see water effects that look *this* inviting in any other project.

This little Dream is not only an excellent showcase of what it's possible to achieve visually, but also a genuinely inspiring effort if you're looking for motivation to create a game; it's definitely one you shouldn't sleep on.



## German Stuck In Your Controller – Replayable Choice Game

Creator: Kluthausen2000

**Y**ou may suspect that our German-speaking staff writer has an unfair advantage when it comes to playing through this mostly text- and sound-based branching narrative. However, this audio adventure makes the most of a multilingual audience – even if the English route does go off on a pretty goofy tangent that involves one of PlayStation's most memorable villains. We're including this one not just because playing it gave us big silly grins, but because it should inspire potential Dreamers who lack the confidence to create a visually-led project to try something different.



## The Ornithologist's Private Collection

Creator: Mattizzle1

**W**e really wish this one was longer. It's after dark, and all you want to do is escape the titular zoologist's agglomeration while making off with a few new prized possessions of your own. Featuring the sort of arcane puzzle logic you'll appreciate if you've played many classic horror games, plus unsettling music, this is a wonderfully creepy experience. It's got plenty of its own visual flair... make no bones about it! (The only thing more lethal than that pun is this Dream's jump scares.)

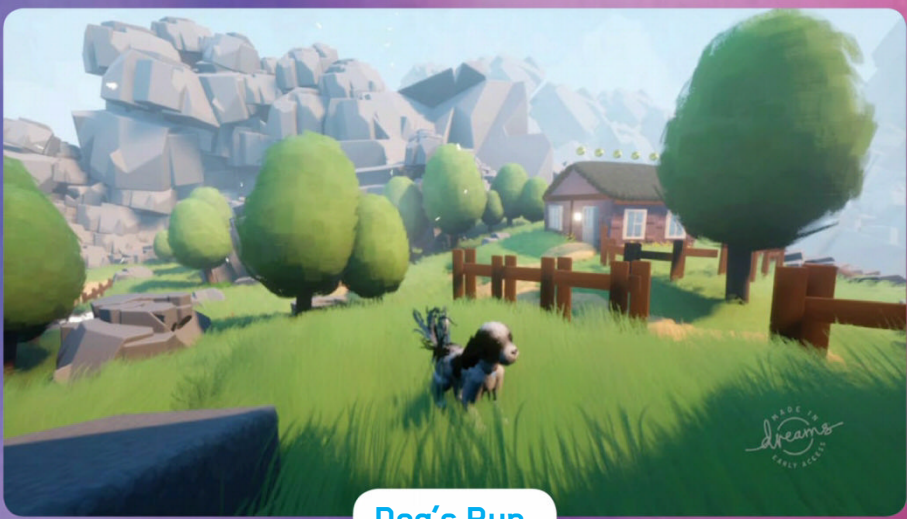




Trace Of Time

Creator: FeyzPS

**W**e love this moody, exploration-focused project. As a young, ethereal girl, you wake up in an overgrown scene that reminds us greatly of *Déraciné*'s dreamy atmosphere. And much like in that game, you're exploring a large house that is now disconcertingly quiet. You're searching for a necklace but soon uncover a much darker situation. We don't want to spoil too much but, like in the aforementioned PS VR game, there's a grave in the garden that raises far more questions than it answers...

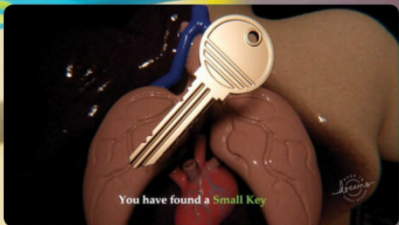
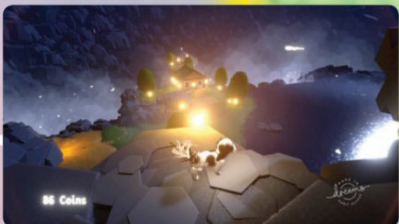
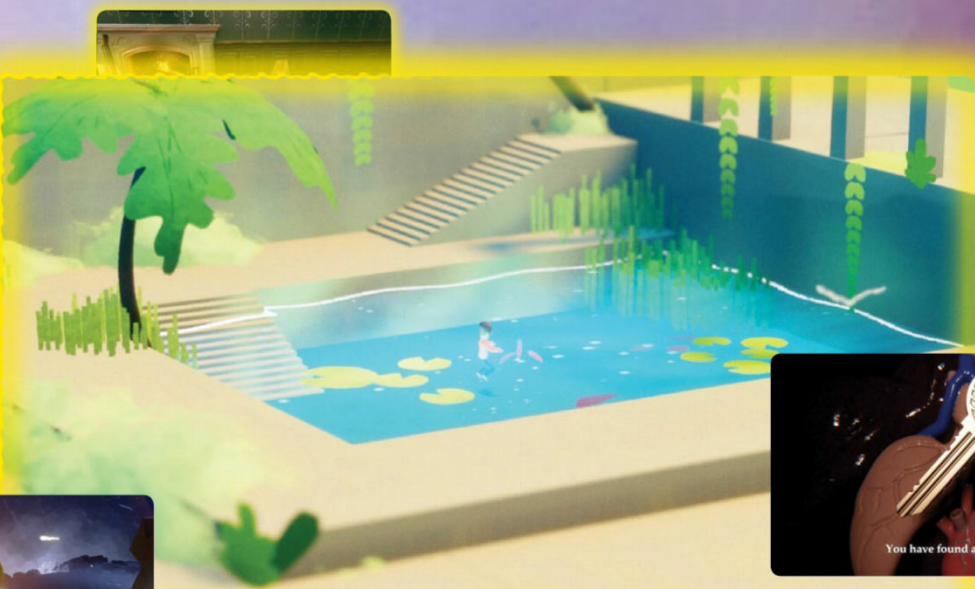


Dog's Run

Creator: Angelotje

**B**inkie is a good boy, and if you dive into this Dream you can be a good boy too. This is a classic-feeling 3D collectathon platformer that's sure to have you bounding into the next level in search of your missing bone before we can say "Walkies!" You collect coins as you go, and when you've sniffed out enough, you can spend them at Suzy's Sweet Summer Shop for power-ups and cute little accessories. Across its five levels, this one makes for a lovely stroll.

💡 This little Dream is an excellent showcase of what it's possible to achieve. 💡



PROJECT HILL: REDUX

Creator: acdramon

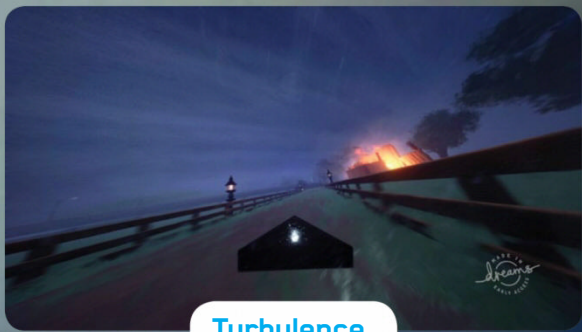
**T**his one wears its inspirations on its grubby sleeve. The rumour mill is grinding away on whispers about official sequels to the *Silent Hill* games, but until those are verified, we've got recreations of PT in unlikely places and a glut of surprisingly solid fan tributes. This project is an obvious homage and makes no apologies for it. The lack of combat here lets the suitably spooky environmental ascents and offbeat humour take centre stage.



Beech Pool

Creator: THE\_ARCHITECT

**W**hat a swanky joint! Enjoy the delicate clink of billiard balls in plush surroundings, complete with an open fire. There's an impressive attention to detail here, from the set dressing to the physics at play, and honestly we could get used to this life. This pool simulator presents a buttery-smooth experience, so enough reading, let's shoot.



Turbulence

Creator: Sanderbros

**H**ere's the pitch: extreme weather, a need for speed, and explosions. You've already loaded up this Dream, haven't you? If you need further convincing to play it, the city has been evacuated due to an incoming storm... but you forgot to turn off your cooker! Telling yourself that the weather can't possibly be *that* bad, you take off for home. While the controls are a little finicky, reaching top speed absolutely sells this Dream's set-pieces.





## The Grape Escape

Creator: PebblyJacks

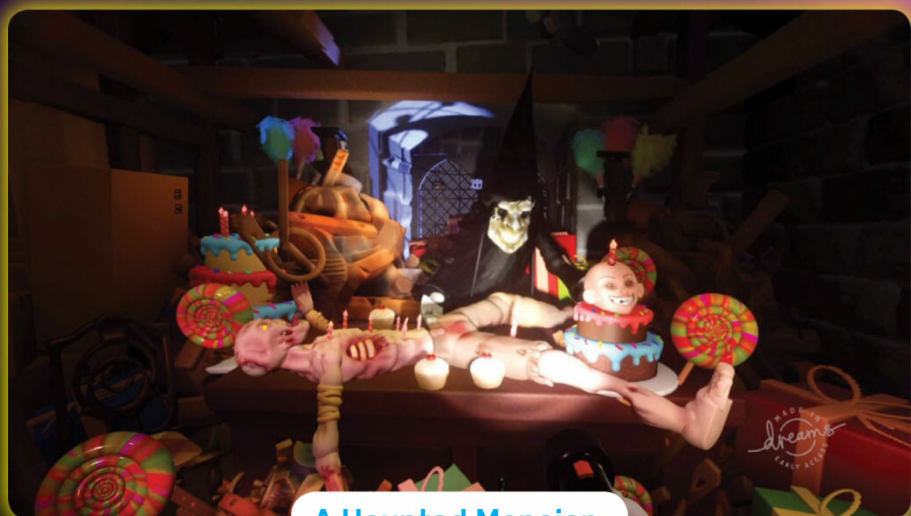
**Y**ou thought we were done with the terrible puns? You thought wrong. (Also, have you read this mag before?) Naturally this game's puntastic title reeled us in, but it was the very silly story of one long road home that kept us playing.

As a surprisingly leggy bunch of grapes, you decide to make a break from the confines of a well-stocked fruit bowl, leaping onto conveniently-placed tables and bookcases in your bid for fruity freedom.

When we jumped out of a window conveniently left open and started to navigate the foggy street outside, our playthrough began to gather quite the crowd of folks from our sister publications. Perhaps it was the absurd central visual joke, perhaps it was the pleasing wobble of each individual grape in our purple protagonist's character model, but, like so many Dreams we've shown here, this 3D platformer is a short experience that is at its best when shared.

One of our favourite things about it is the variety of

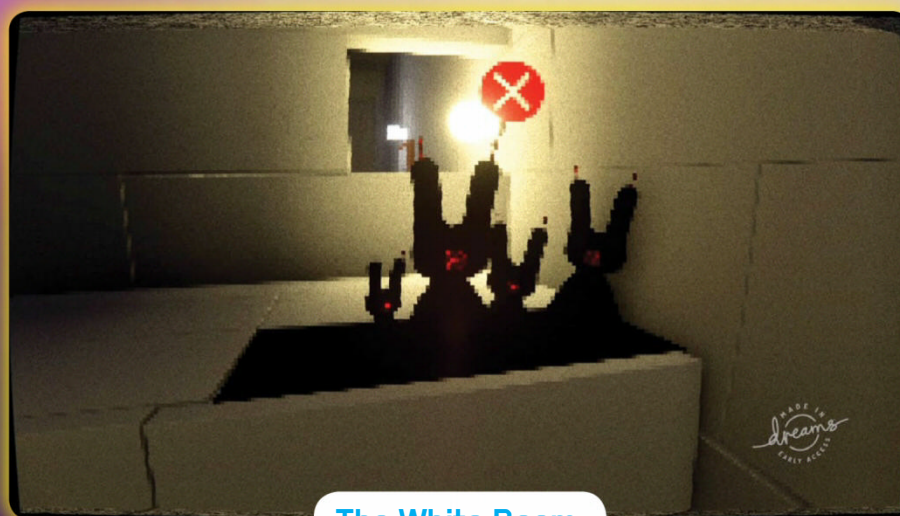
environments your grapey chum has to pass through, from urban noir to fantastically alien. After avoiding traffic and platforming between balconies on some rather gloomy-looking apartment buildings, you uncover an itty-bitty spaceship. Rather than reuniting with your berry good friends and family in a European vineyard, you're instead gunning for your home planet, a place as resplendently purple as you are. It's almost impossible to reach your destination without a big goofy grin on your face.



## A Haunted Mansion

Creator: MrSandwiches

**R**eaders beware, you're in for a scare. In this Dream the only thing that stands between you and your late grandmother's assets is the condition that you survive the night in her absurdly spacious former home. There's a spooky scene waiting behind every door – not to mention unsettling wailing behind the ones you can't open – revealing some creative arrangements we won't soon forget. It's sound that steals the show here and elevates the whole project's 'a Goosebumps sort of good time' charm. Don't forget to give Granny a kiss on your way out!

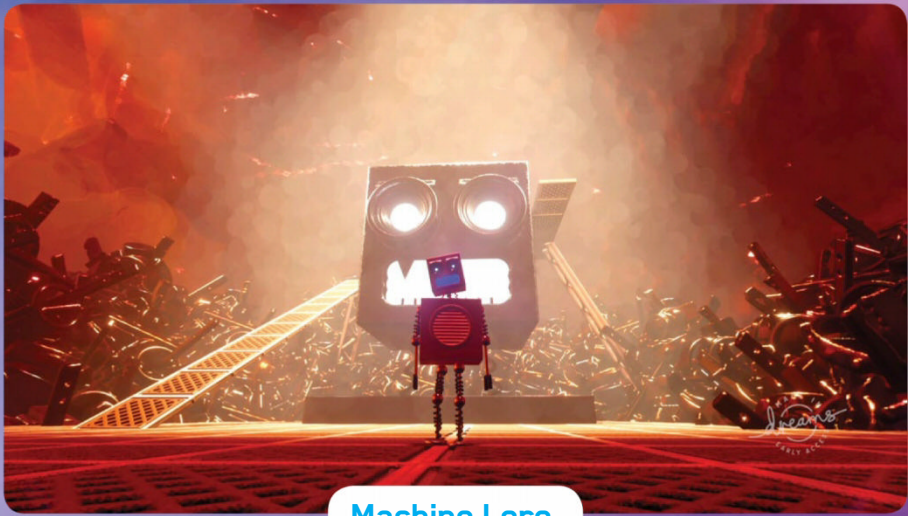


## The White Room

Creator: Nichtss

**T**his 'PS1 horror homage project' hits familiar beats with panache while possessing a personality that's all its own. It's an experience that feels familiar – there are crackly CRT monitor scan lines, a generally unnerving atmosphere, and even a period-appropriate console startup logo. But creator Nichtss clearly has more than a few bright ideas of their own to bring to the horror table. We were hooked from the opening, which placed us in that white room, and its take on your typical combination puzzle... though we like the one-hit-kill enemies a whole lot less.

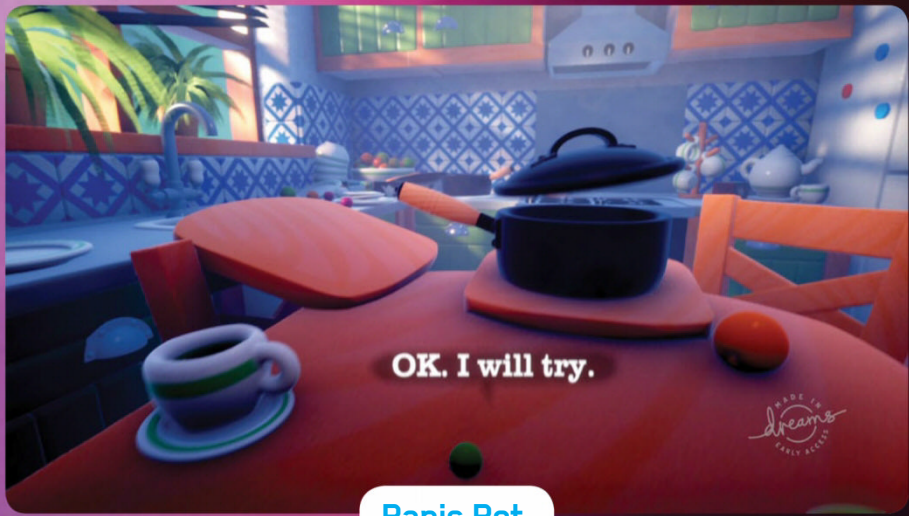




Machine Lore

Creator: Majoneskongen and Narvikguten

**W**hat's a poor, outmoded robot to do? Just ride the conveyor belt all the way to being decommissioned and the big scrapheap in the sky? Heck no! Within the first 30 seconds of this artsy platformer you're hacking the mainframe and busting out of the factory in search of something more, something better. The obstacles in your path are a little lacking but this Dream's sense of style is absolutely not. In fact, we'd trade the platforming elements for just a few more of its muted robo-tableaus.

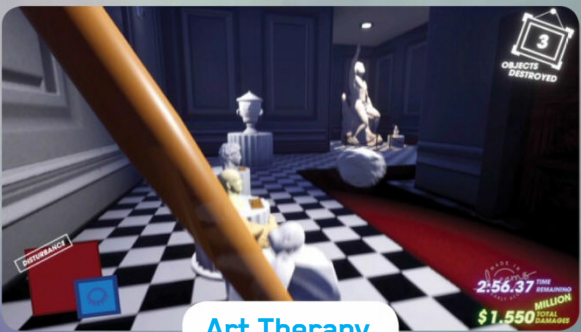
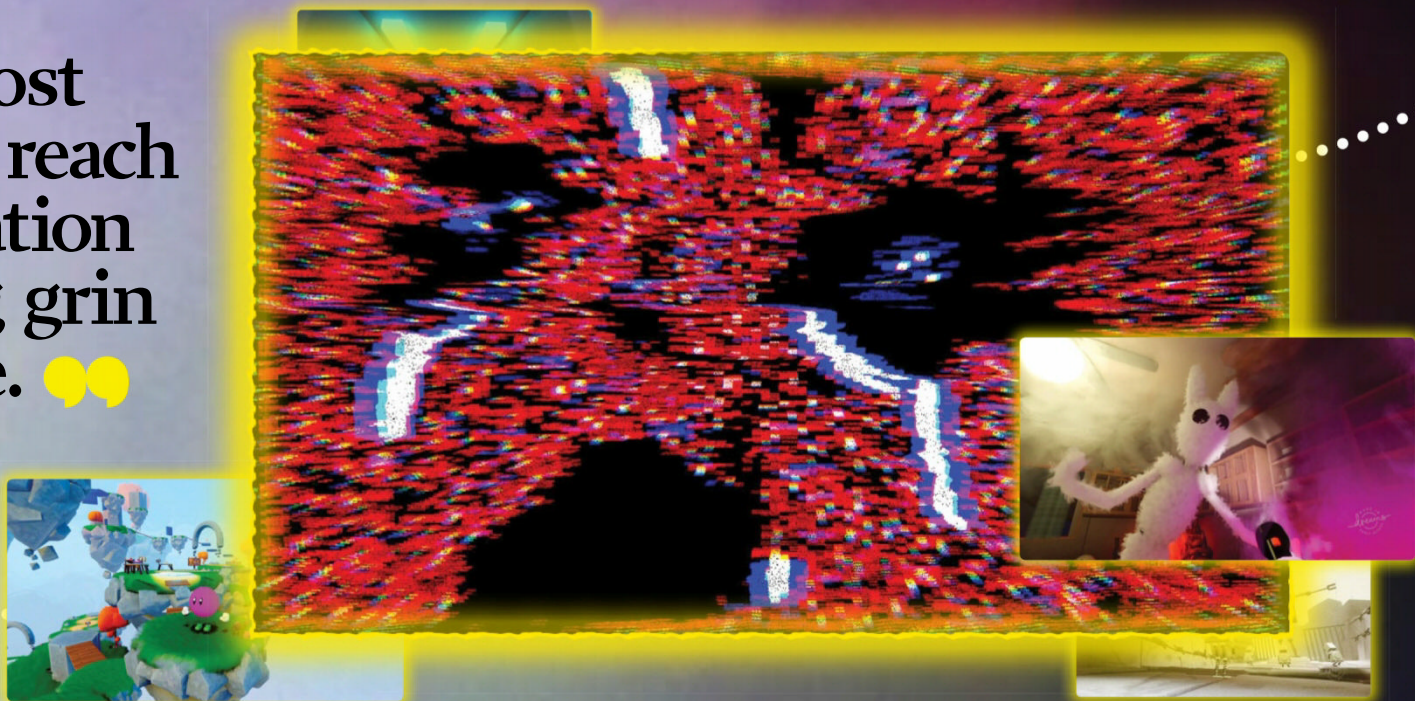


Panis Pot

Creator: Mm\_pfield

**W**ell, this is just lovely. Inspired by their wee bairn telling them a tall tale about a very determined pea, desperate to be burnt rather than 'eaten', that only a child's imagination could conjure, dear old Dad has brought their little one's vision to life. If the double act's narration fails to melt your heart, your ticker's tougher than ours. Short and oh-so-sweet.

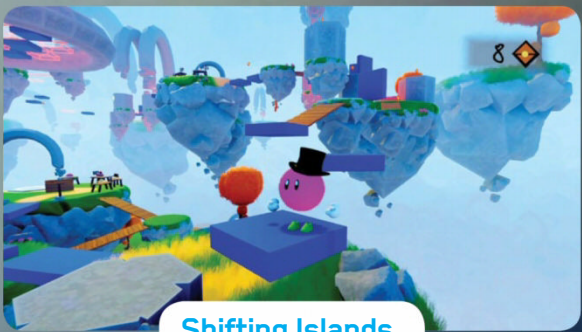
It's almost impossible to reach your destination without a big grin on your face.



Art Therapy

Creator: KeldBjones

**I**t's tough being a creative. Everywhere you look everyone seems to be doing much better than you, who have yet another crumpled-up letter of rejection. This project puts a comforting hand on your shoulder and not-so-gently says, "Blorp!\* 'em. Smash it all up, friend." As a recently rebuffed artiste, you pick up a bat and go to town at the local museum. You'll never be the next Michelangelo or da Vinci but that's okay – you've found your true talent.



Shifting Islands

Creator: SlurmMacKenzie

**T**his particular creator has a memorable selection of Dreams under their belt already, some of which have been honoured at the Impy awards. We particularly enjoyed this vertical 3D platformer, which requires well-planned jumps due to disappearing stages and features a ton of silly accessories to spend your collectibles on. It's not so much a difficulty curve here as a difficulty spiral.



Neonmancer

Creator: henryhopkinbrown

**T**hey really weren't kidding with that level description. With mazes for days, you are a blue figure who cannot escape this Dream's apparent time loop – or, indeed, your own permanently shocked expression. It's a short jaunt down varying interpretations of videogame corridors, and perhaps ends a little too quickly.



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TO PAGE 54



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## REVIEWS



### 90 DARKSIDERS GENESIS

One is fun but two's a real blast as War and Strife buddy up for battle.

## OPM SCORES

**GOLD  
AWARD**

PlayStation.  
Official Magazine - UK

### GOLD AWARD

Awarded to a game that's brilliantly executed on every level, combining significant innovation, near-flawless gameplay, great graphics and lasting appeal.

**EDITOR'S  
AWARD**

PlayStation.  
Official Magazine - UK

### EDITOR'S AWARD

Not at the very highest echelon, but this is a game that deserves recognition and special praise based on its ambition, innovation or other notable achievement.

### 10 INCREDIBLE

The kind of phenomenal experience rarely seen in a console generation.

### 9 OUTSTANDING

Unreservedly brilliant – this should be in every collection.

### 8 VERY GOOD

A truly excellent game, marred by just a few minor issues.

### 7 GOOD

A great concept unfulfilled or the familiar done well, but still well worth playing.

### 6 DECENT

Fun in parts, flawed in others, but more right than wrong.

### 5 AVERAGE

What you expect and little more, this is for devotees only.

### 4 BELOW AVERAGE

Any bright ideas are drowning in a sea of bugs or mediocrity.

### 3 POOR

A seriously flawed game with little merit on any level.

### 2 AWFUL

Disgraceful: the disc would be more beneficial as a coaster.

### 1 HORRIFIC

Own this and you'll be swiftly, justifiably, exiled from society.

## CONTENTS

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“EVERY CHARACTER HAS  
THEIR OWN ACTION, WHICH  
MAKES A MASSIVE DIFFERENCE  
TO THEIR FIGHTING STYLE.”





Meeting these eligible anime fighters is no fantasy – you'll be endeared quickly.

EASY BREEZY

@MrOscarTK





# GRANBLUE FANTASY: VERSUS

Going overboard with this airship of punch-up delights




**INFO**  
**FORMAT** PS4  
**ETA** 27 MARCH  
**PUB** MARVELOUS EUROPE  
**DEV** ARC SYSTEM WORKS

**A**re you one of the 25 million players of the mobile game Granblue Fantasy, or a fan of the anime adaptation? Then you'll love how Granblue Fantasy: Versus is steeped in nods and references for the devoted. But even if you're not, Versus is a terrifically fun fighter. No punches, whip-cracks, or spear thrusts have been pulled by veteran fighting game developer Arc System Works (the punching bag behind Guilty Gear, Dragon Ball FighterZ).

The fighting fundamentals are simple, though not lacking in depth. Every character has light, medium, and heavy attacks using their weapons with , , and  respectively – though their fighting styles ensure each feels unique. When striking, tapping the buttons again can give you an auto-combo up to three hits. On top of that, moves can be altered depending on distance, or if you're jumping or crouching. Every character also has their own action on  – things like parries, extra dashes, or even a health-boosting snack – which makes a massive difference to their fighting style.

## COOL OFF

One of the biggest mechanical twists is the way characters' specials (called Skills) work, and it's a stroke of genius. The only moves that use meter are the full-power Skybound and Super Skybound Arts. Every other skill – your Hadouken- or Dragon-Punch-type moves – has an individual cooldown displayed below your health. You can activate all four by tapping  on its own or with a directional input. But there's a lot of variation within that simple-sounding framework. You can







**Right** Whether you prefer using arrows to keep enemies away or throwing catboys at the problem, Granblue has you covered.



**Left** It's rare that we're able to enjoy a fighting game in co-op. 'Versus' indeed.

➤ modify every Skill by pressing either **△** or **○** at the same time to give it a stronger variation. For instance, Ladiva's Headbutt Of Love does more damage with **△**, but gains the ability for a follow-up strike with **○**. Using these more advanced moves means the cooldown will take longer. So you'd better make it count.

The way each move is displayed also means you can see what options your opponent has, so you know what to watch out for or when's the best time to strike back. All the Skill variations are laid out in the command lists, and are easy to execute alongside the auto-combo system. Pulling off a cool combo can be as simple as using Zeta's medium auto-combo, hitting **⊗** to mash her unique spear attacks, then throwing out a Skill with **RD**. All the skills have technical inputs too, more familiar quarter-circles or Shoryuken-stick motions, and give the benefit of things like shorter cooldowns or extra chip damage, so are worth adding to your repertoire. It's gran(d).

What's great about Versus is how simple inputs and technical inputs coexist, with no part

of the game design feeling compromised. The start of the story mode has a great tutorial that thoroughly explains things, and an exhaustive glossary lays out every move and fighting game term. Training mode has the works, from combo guides for every character to missions that challenge you to exploit opponent characters' weaknesses so you know how to best them in a fight. At every turn Versus gives you the tools to make sure your fighting dreams aren't part of that titular fantasy.

## TALE WIND

The anime-like visuals really come to life in RPG mode, which is where Versus brings something new to fighting games. It's an original story that has the skyfarer crew hopping from island to island trying to get to the bottom of why some people are having their memories altered. While the story is simple enough, it

provides an introduction to the charming characters, and is packed with glossary entries and detailed art revealing more about the world, plus playable side-quests that delve into the backgrounds of the fighters.

Each quest you undertake on each island plays like a fighting game version of something like Dragon's Crown or Streets Of Rage. Instead of always having your back to the edge of the screen you can turn at will, and have to take on mobs of enemies using all your skills. Along the way you restore the memories of other fighters by beating them, after which you can then play as them. As you fight you earn treasure – weapons that can be used to boost your attack (and can even be used to change the look of a characters' weapons), levelling up like in an action RPG.

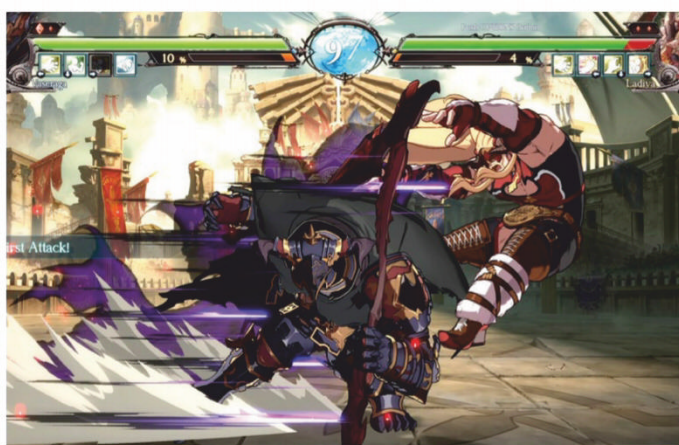
The larger boss fights are the stars of the show. These battles are ambitious, and each has unique mechanics.

**"FIGHTING BOSSES FEELS EPIC – BOTH MECHANICALLY AND NARRATIVELY SATISFYING."**

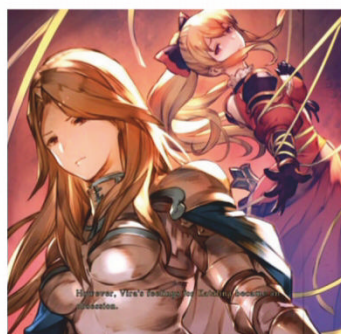
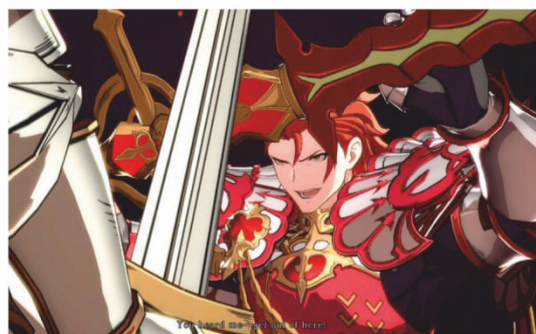




**Above** Skills bring a fresh take on fighting – special moves are a tap away.



**Right** Every move has wonderful flares of animation, and feels weighty.



**Above** Cutscenes and glossary entries help you delve into Granblue's world.

In one the boss sits in the middle of the screen and we have to deal with spawning mobs of enemies, building our Skybound Art to break through the Big Bad's shield and leave them vulnerable to damage, the music crescendoing as we do so. Another has us chasing them down as they fire laser beams at us, jumping through them to do damage. Rarely have bosses in a fighting game felt so epic – both mechanically and narratively satisfying.

## BLOWING UP

And notice that “us”? That's because RPG mode can be played entirely in co-op, either locally or online (or controlled by AI). It's great to have such a novel story mode in a fighting game. Plus, as you unlock each character, you get a sense of how they handle in versus mode. It's a brilliant introduction and a skyful of delights in its own right. Sometimes basic mob-based

fight can get a little repetitive, but those thunderclouds are small (though it would be great to see the mode expanded in future updates). A hard mode and Tower Of Babylon challenge mode provide some extra tests of skill in RPG mode for those who want to master it.

Versus is always technically playful, while being one of the most accessible fighting games for new players we've ever tried. (We'll have a complete review of the online aspect next issue, once more people are playing). Throw in the chunky co-op RPG story mode and the dev's commitment to supporting the game for a while to come, and the sky really is the limit.

## VERDICT

Tie-in games can be a shot in the dark, but it's only blue skies here. The mix of approachable-yet-deep mechanics and a strong co-op story make this a fight worth having. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**

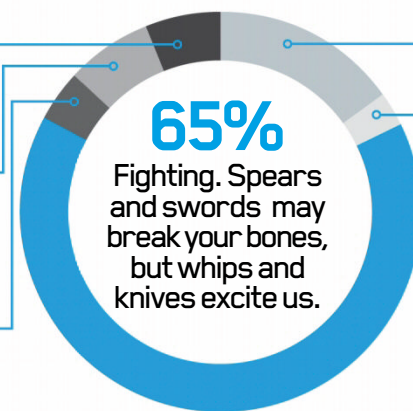
## THE OPM BREAKDOWN

### WHAT YOU DO IN... GRANBLUE FANTASY: VERSUS

**6%** Flicking through the art in the journal's glossary.

**7%** Grinding your teeth trying to pull off the tricky combos in mission mode.

**4%** Spending in-game earned tickets to earn new weapons.



**15%** Blasting through RPG mode with a friend, and getting the itch to jump back in.

**3%** Customising the cute emotes you can send in co-op play.

### STAT PACK

**11**

Skyfarers to fight as, plus one more who you can unlock in RPG mode. But that's not all...

**4**

Characters to come in the first DLC season pass, starting with Chaos Bringer and Narmaya.

**6**

Hours – the time it took us to complete the chunky RPG mode (we got properly hooked).

**4**

Skills that fighters have available in battle, triggered with the press of a button.

### FRIENDS & ENEMIES



Small but mighty, she's the captain of the Holy Knights.

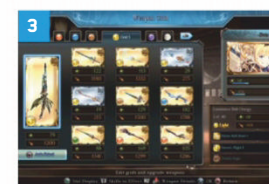
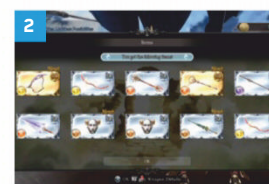
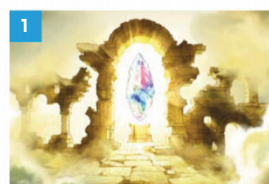


This scythe-wielding Draph is in the Primal Beast-hunting Society.



The catboy fighter, plus his bros Elsam and Tomoi, likes to just hang.

### HOW TO... LEVEL UP WITH WEAPONS



**1** Collect draw tickets by clearing missions, then exchange them for random weapons (in addition, some weapons can also be used as skins outside RPG mode). **2** As you might expect, the rarer the weapon you get, the better. Their ranks range from bronze (Rare), through silver (Super Rare) to gold (Super Super Rare). **3** Add the weapons you've won to your weapon grid and level them up to increase your ATK and HP. It really is that simple.

### IS IT BETTER THAN?



**YES**

CyberConnect2's efforts might be the best Naruto game, but it's not a patch on ArcSys' fighters.



**NO**

Its fluid story mode and online support are best-in-class. Could Versus' updates eventually match up?



**YES**

FighterZ story mode is much duller, and overall the game isn't quite as approachable for new players.







**INFO** FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW  
PUB SOMETIMES YOU DEV NOSKOV SERGEY



## 7TH SECTOR

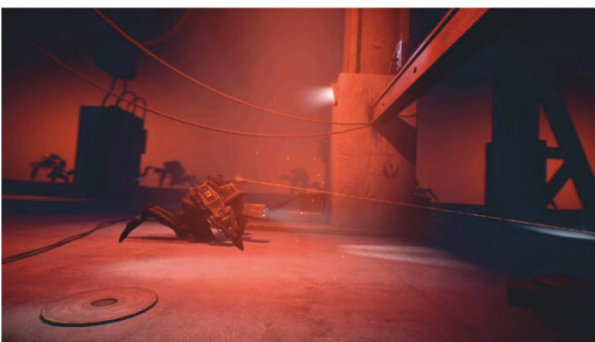
A spark of genius

Ever since Playdead's *Limbo* first crept onto the scene in 2010, many a 2D platformer has sought to capture a similarly bleak ambience and oppressive tone. Yes, games in which you guide a lowly figure through a bitterly harsh world have become their own subgenre, with *7th Sector* being the latest to arrive on PS4. And while it might depend quite a bit on some of the formula's familiar staples, its unique approach to puzzle-solving makes this a dark descent worth taking.

*7th Sector* begins, rather unexpectedly, with you controlling a simple spark. Following an eerily unsettling pan out from a distorted television, you guide the sentient electrical current from wire to wire, using  to boost and  to jump between cables.<sup>1</sup> From here you come across all manner of logical and technical puzzles, with most answers reliant on your observation of the background goings-on.

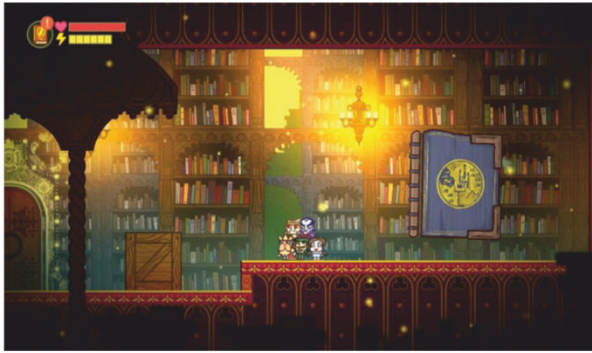
What could have been a relentless gauntlet of brain exercises is made more engrossing by the dank environments. You never know what awaits you after solving the latest puzzle. This is the perfect example of a game parsing out information about its world one detail at a time. It really motivates you to keep pushing forward.

Puzzles range from using your jolt to bump a radio-controlled car into objects to solving the simple maths sums featured on a terminal. These eventually crescendo into mechanics and obstacles that are much more narrative-driven, as you discover more about your ultimate purpose.<sup>2</sup> Short, revelatory, and deeply atmospheric, *7th Sector* is a smart puzzle-platformer with a mysterious edge. **Aaron Potter**



**FOOTNOTES** 1 You eventually jump into bigger machinery like sentries and ships. 2 *7th Sector* features four endings, which are dependant on certain actions you take on the brief journey.

**INFO** FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW  
PUB INTRAGAMES DEV DIGITAL TALES



## BOOKBOUND BRIGADE

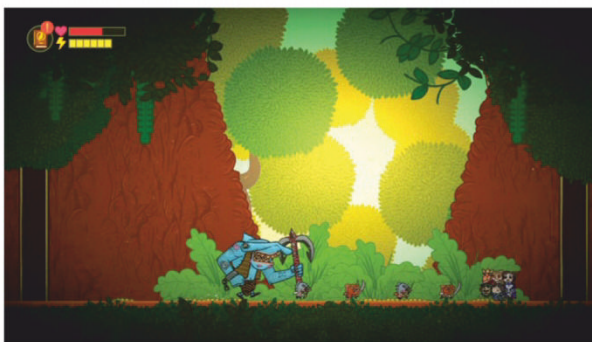
A pretty novel concept

There are millions of books in the world, and that means millions of characters. *Bookbound Brigade* sees you take control of some of literature's most famous personalities, including King Arthur, Dracula, and Queen Victoria. Your task is to journey through various interlinked literary landscapes in order to retrieve the precious, purloined Book Of Books<sup>1</sup> and, ultimately, restore balance to the Literary World.

Mechanically, *Bookbound Brigade* is a metroidvania with lots of puzzle-platforming and combat. Each member of your brigade has a unique ability,<sup>2</sup> and you have to utilise the whole team's talents in order to progress. You control all the characters simultaneously as one block, though you can vary their formation so they can reach high points, go through tunnels, and so on. Your brigade also fights as one, with every member slashing at enemies when you hit attack. Delightfully, having such big egos in close proximity results in a lot of quirky humour, with dialogue playing on the characters' famous tropes to great effect.

As your rag-tag band explores the Literary World, they collect Memory Pages, either from other literary and historical NPCs or from treasure chests. These reawaken memories in your brigade, and the more you collect, the better your brigade gets at fighting as they remember past battles and former glories. Unfortunately, completing what amounts to a series of Memory Page fetch quests can become tiresome.

Overall, though, *Bookbound Brigade* is an enjoyable, colourful and quirky game. A good read, but maybe not quite a page-turner. **Rebecca Stow**



**FOOTNOTES** 1 Charming, the Book Of Books is known by the characters as BOB for short. 2 For example, Dracula can swoosh his cape to give you a double jump ability.

**INFO** FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW  
PUB SEGA DEV TWO POINT STUDIOS



## TWO POINT HOSPITAL

The Doctor will see you now

The 20th anniversary of the *Sims* has brought back the itch that this hospital management game advises we scratch. Our sister publications have been enjoying this spiritual successor to *Theme Hospital* on their respective platforms for a while but this port is for the specialists, presenting the base game plus all DLC in one easy treatment plan.

As an enterprising hospital manager, you are presented with a hollow shell of a hospital. It's up to you to hire staff, build facilities, and maybe help some patients. Each soon-to-be-fine-establishment presents challenges that stand between you and that elusive three-star reputation.<sup>1</sup> You quickly find yourself in that classic management sim gameplay loop, and the revised user interface for PS4 presents little to snap you out of your happy place.

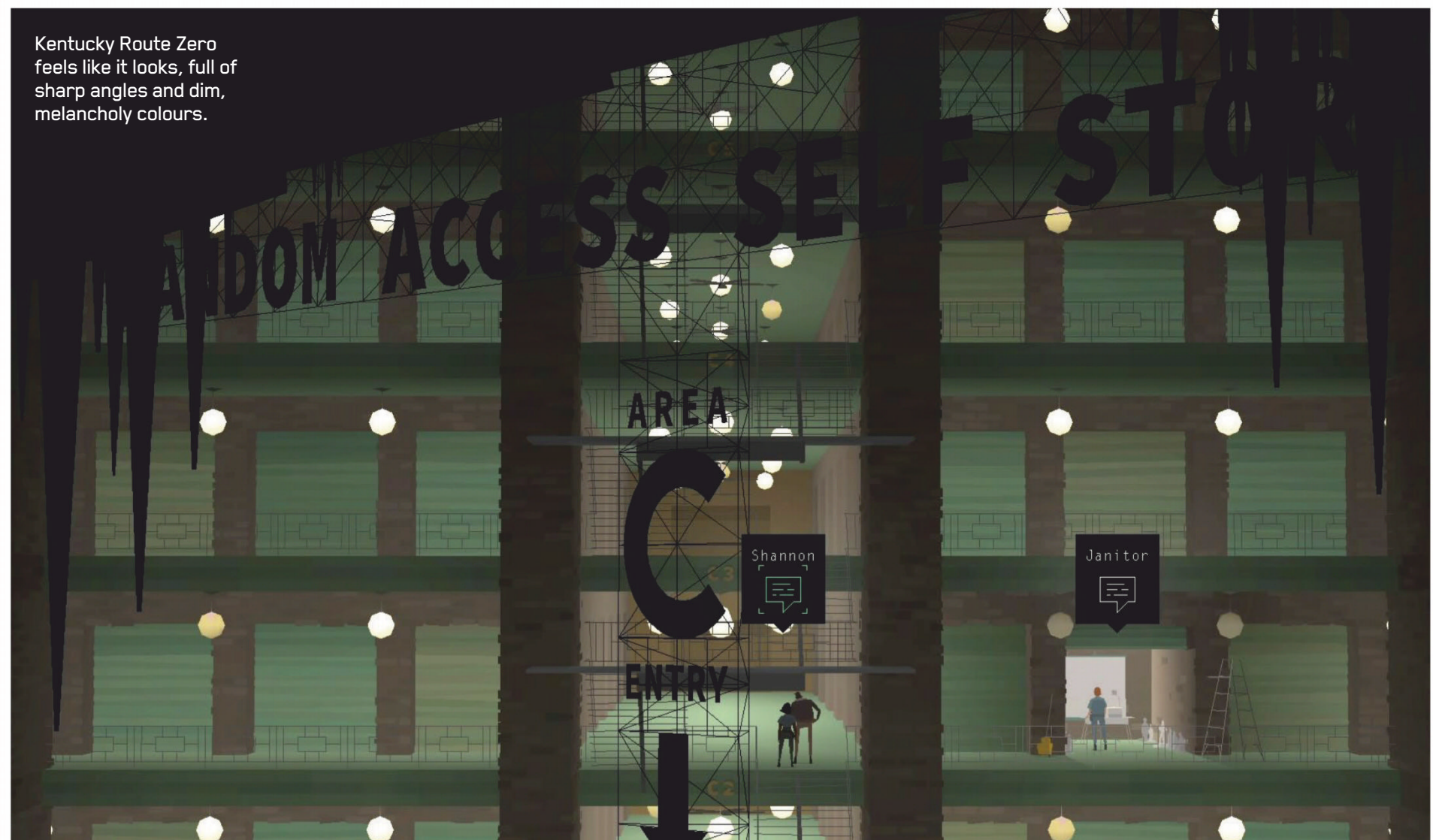
That allows humour to take centre stage. Illnesses bear no resemblance to real maladies, instead gunning for the pun to groan-worthy effect (*Misery Guts? Denim Genes?*). Running with that tone, potential hires present traits that could either prove a benefit or a brain ache to your institution. Unfortunately, despite details like 'dances like tomorrow is a real possibility,' 'Believes they saw, and had lunch with, a yeti,' 'Sleep gallops,' and 'sniffs own farts... and likes it,'<sup>2</sup> they'll get lost in the crowd. That is to say, between your staff and the by-the-numbers building options, there's little opportunity for the emergent story moments the genre is known for. Mind you, when there's an epidemic of Mock Stars swaggering through your halls, it's not such a bad crowd to get lost in. **Jess Kinghorn**



**FOOTNOTES** 1 If it's proving all a bit much, you can always go back to a previously cracked Krankenhaus for a change of pace. 2 As far as we can tell, we only made up one of those.



Kentucky Route Zero feels like it looks, full of sharp angles and dim, melancholy colours.



HARD TIMES SERVED

@yourkyotowife

# KENTUCKY ROUTE ZERO: TV EDITION

I should be so Kentucky



085



**INFO**  
 FORMAT PS4  
 ETA OUT NOW  
 PUB ANNAPURNA INTERACTIVE  
 DEV CARDBOARD COMPUTER

**W**ith the TV edition, Kentucky Route Zero, originally released on PC in instalments over seven years, makes its way to PS4 as a package with some quality-of-life enhancements. Through five chapters and as many interludes, you piece together stories past and present surrounding the mysterious Zero, a motorway leading to a world below the US state of Kentucky.

You begin the story as Conway, a truck driver out on a delivery for an antiques shop. What begins as a routine search for his destination steadily becomes the journey of several people, as Conway loses his way and is inundated with requests and issues leading to ever-increasing detours.

Ostensibly a point-and-click adventure, most of Kentucky Route Zero's interactivity is in its dialogue choices. Throughout the game you not only take control of Conway, but also his companions, such as Shannon, an electrician he meets in a mine, or Junebug and Johnny, a pair of android musicians, by choosing what they ask or respond with, or even who gets to speak at all. Sometimes characters switch mid-conversation. This flexibility leads to some standout scenes: in one you direct Conway via the interjections of several of his friends as he plays a hypertext adventure game; another sees you choosing the lyrics to a song during a performance. By chapter

IV there are so many different points of view available it's worth playing the section twice in order to find out what everyone is up to.

## HYPertext DRIFTER

KRZ experiments with text, but also with its stark, memorable visuals. The occasional traversal takes place on a map that is rarely more than a few white lines on black background, but each of your destinations is framed from striking camera angles. Visual techniques range from cutting a forest up in vertical slices to a cave that slowly unfolds before you as you walk through it. Contrasts between shadow and light and a sparse soundscape often result in a slightly unsettling atmosphere that draws you in just as much as the enigmas you encounter on the Zero.

At its core, however, the game brings people together through relatable subjects such as loss, economic downturn,

and the corporate greed that often goes with it. Instead of dipping into the corporate satire so frequent in games, KRZ focuses on the affected through beautiful, meandering prose, often held together by little more than anecdotes. The weird and magical, such as people living in a museum exhibit, or an office floor full of bears, feels normal here, not sinister in the way it does in – for example – Remedy's Control. For long stretches the very loose plot is as dark as the game's colour palette, but the fifth chapter is more colourful and ambitious in scope than its predecessors. It really feels like coming up after a long time underground.

## VERDICT

Crams philosophical discourse, art, architecture, and magical realism into the story of one drifter, resulting in a unique experience that will leave you thoughtful. **Malindy Hetfeld**



The monsters aren't your real problem – watch out for other people.



086

BAYOU PIGS

@jeremy\_peel

# HUNT: SHOWDOWN

Stealth shooting goes multiplayer in atmospheric fashion



**T**he voice booms through the floorboards beneath my feet. “I gotta fix my car. My car broke down.” It’s an American accent, but it doesn’t belong to Louisiana, and certainly not to the 1890s, where you find yourself in *Hunt: Showdown*. That means there are two players, at least, feet away – and they can hear me just as easily.

The groan of a bracket or creak of a lantern can mean death in the attic, an end so pathetic Agatha Christie never bothered to write a novel on the subject. It’s hard not to think about – I can still see the body of Barbara Bunzler through a nearby window, lying prone in the courtyard. We were colleagues, fellow hunters, and during our time together she didn’t speak a word to me. The first sound I heard coming out of her head was the crack of a bullet from a Winchester rifle.

Eventually, the killers slink off – assuming, perhaps, that Barbara was operating alone. A few minutes later I leave the house in the opposite direction, sticking to the swamps until I spot the orange glow of a horse-drawn carriage. Other hunters will take the bounty today, but in *Hunt*, survival is its own victory.

## DEAD FOREVER

Out in the bayou, permadeath doesn’t just mean no respawns, it means the loss of the



**INFO**  
FORMAT PS4  
ETA OUT NOW  
PUB KOCH MEDIA  
DEV CRYTEK

weapons and traits tied to your character. It means you have to start again with a new recruit in a different hat. So you either tread softly, taking opportunities where they emerge, or storm into the fray knowing a mistake could cost you everything.

It’s one of several quirks that make *Hunt* a strange relative of the competitive shooters it shares a console with. There are echoes of battle royale, sure, in the way you narrow down the field of play – searching settlements for clues until you pinpoint the location of a boss monster, the lair where players will clash over the spoils. But spiritually, it’s closer to *Modern Warfare’s* Gunfight than *Black Ops 4’s* Blackout, an intimate

game of close listening and intelligence gathering.

There isn’t a huge amount of intelligent life kicking about this highly fictionalised, demon-infested take on the historical Deep South. Crytek’s two enormous maps are populated by former locals – like the Hive, a rotting woman whose top half has popped open like a gone-off packet of Pringles, spraying bees everywhere. Or the Meathead, blind but for the huge slippery leeches that patrol its vicinity, screaming for dad once they sense a player.

## RADAR PING

Horrible though these mobs are (it’s best not to play during lunch, as a rule) they’re easily

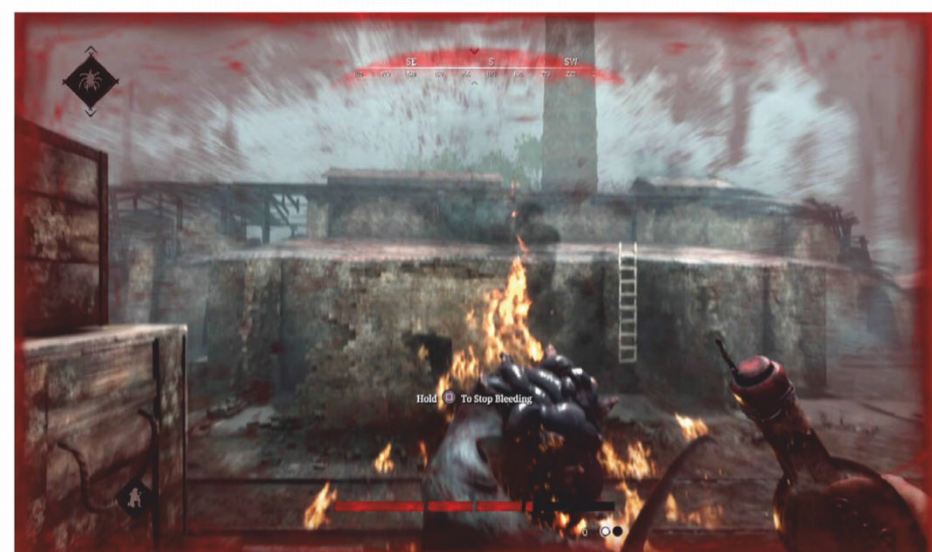
“HER TOP HALF HAS POPPED OPEN LIKE A GONE-OFF PACKET OF PRINGLES.”



**Right** There's a giant spider inside here. Dunno how it got through the door.



**Below** Hunt teaches you that nothing's truly dead until it's been on fire.



**Above left** Did anybody see a naked hunter run this way?

dealt with once you're familiar with their weaknesses. Their function isn't to kill hunters but to act as the map's alarm system. Some players enter alone, others work together in squads of two or three, but you'll rarely know exactly where they are or how many are left. Like the Meathead, you're listening out for fumbles in the dark, relying on the Hive's screams or the rumble of distant dynamite as a crude form of radar. What you do with that information is a matter of tactical taste: you could ambush a battle-beaten duo as they leave the lair of a boss spider, taking their hard-won bounty, or circumvent them entirely to investigate the whereabouts of a different boss in less-disputed territory.

While your goals are simple and unchanging, those delicious layers of complication — the conflicting desires of self-preservation and greed — ensure that no match or rival

is ever predictable. They turn Hunt into something distinct and unflatteringly human.

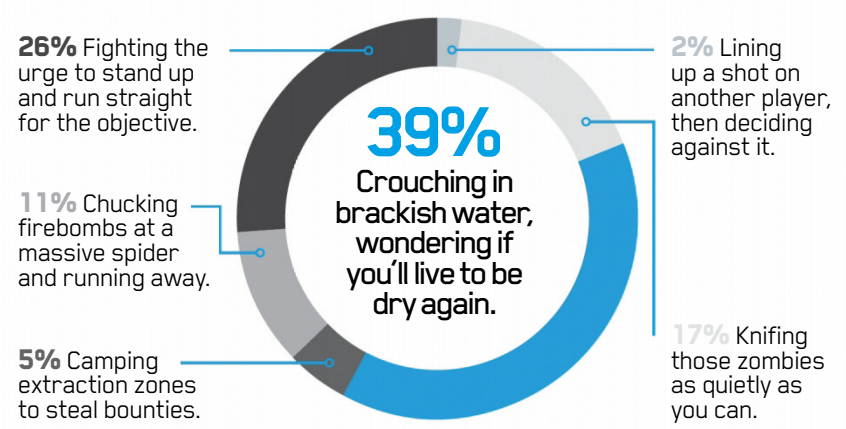
In places the game is simply too complicated. You'll spend a long time figuring out health bars, which vary in length and number according to which character you're playing, and sometimes can't be restored for reasons only Crytek understands. In other areas, though, it's oversimplified; the Quickplay option, which drops the monsters in favour of capture points, isn't nearly as engrossing as the main game. But stick to the main event and you'll find a uniquely-paced shooter worth holding off the Pringles for.

**VERDICT**

A return to form for Crytek that defies busy FPS norms. Like its 'orrible spiders, Hunt: Showdown is constantly shifting and very hard to put in a box. Get yourself online and join in the hunting fun. **Jeremy Peel**

## THE OPM BREAKDOWN

### WHAT YOU DO IN... HUNT: SHOWDOWN



### STAT PACK

10	5	1	12
Ranks for you to get to grips with the basics before Crytek unleashes permadeath.	Minutes is all you're given to find a way off the map once all bounties have been extracted.	Round in your shotgun before a lengthy reload. And you never know who the noise will attract.	Players sneaking around each other per map. Some will be solo; others will have teamed up.

### MULTIPLAYER

Few games are better played with strangers, but a lack of trust between hunters only contributes to the sense that you're doing dirty work. That's especially true if you're in a three-person party, since there are only two bounties per boss.

### HOW TO... GO UNDETECTED

- 1 You can muffle your footsteps by staying crouched and avoiding water.
- 2 Hellhounds will make a nasty racket if you stray close to their pound, alerting other hunters. But you can shut them up by shooting out the lantern above their heads, coating the monsters in flame. Probably happens all the time in the underworld.
- 3 Smart hunters will disconnect their headsets when other players draw close — voice chat is proximity-based, so you'll be giving a running commentary on your position.

### TROPHY CABINET

**BRONZE**

All you'll need to do is hide in a toilet. We've all had practice — it's the best way through the work day.

**SILVER**

The first step is to burn 50 chicken coops. The second is to live with yourself afterwards.

**GOLD**

Kill 100 other players with headshots. Given that you'll go entire matches without seeing a soul, it's a big ask.



Important dialogue choices are helpfully contextualised.



FJORD ESCORT

@KoeniginKatze



# DRAUGEN

A short ghost story you can't a-fjord to miss?



**INFO**  
 FORMAT PS4  
 ETA OUT NOW  
 PUB RED THREAD GAMES  
 DEV RED THREAD GAMES

**S**o many of the stories we enjoy today anticipate an audience that will pore over, dissect, and then place behind glass every detail, no matter how minute. With larger and larger media properties giving themselves over to the tidal wave of lore – to charting every dark corner of their universe – it sometimes feels like there's no space for the discomfort of the unknown.

The Dreamfall Chapters dev's latest follows an American in 1920s Norway as he rows to the isolated fishing village of Graavik in search of his sister, who's disappeared. Edward Harden is an upstanding young man with an appreciation for the natural, knowable world, and is accompanied by straight-talking 17-year-old Lissie. Why the apparently proper Edward would choose such a peculiar travelling companion (and why he neglects to mention her in his letter to his host in Graavik) is only one piece of the mystery.

## RAISING HEL

Pitched as a 'fjord noir' (though it also has notes of the gothic), you explore the bay, gather clues, and ponder whether you're playing a particularly

pretty walking sim or, actually, an audio drama. As you navigate Graavik, Edward and Lissie chatter about their latest discoveries. There's an engaging push and pull to their dynamic, but while seeing them bounce off each other is enjoyable, you feel like a third wheel at times. More often than not when you find the latest piece of the puzzle, you're left to stare at it as the two would-be detectives talk it out for minutes at a time. Despite that, it's hard to skip through their verbose chatter thanks to compelling performances from Nicholas Boulton and Skye Deva Bennett. They absolutely sell the central, complicated relationship, though there are instances of period-appropriate slang that work against their efforts and sap the tension from at least one confrontation.

Graavik itself starts out as anything but grey; a relatively small space that is lushly realised in its introduction, you still feel disoriented by it at times. The game surprises even as it's clearly drawing

from a limited bag of tricks. Edward's multilingualism helps to further lure you in.

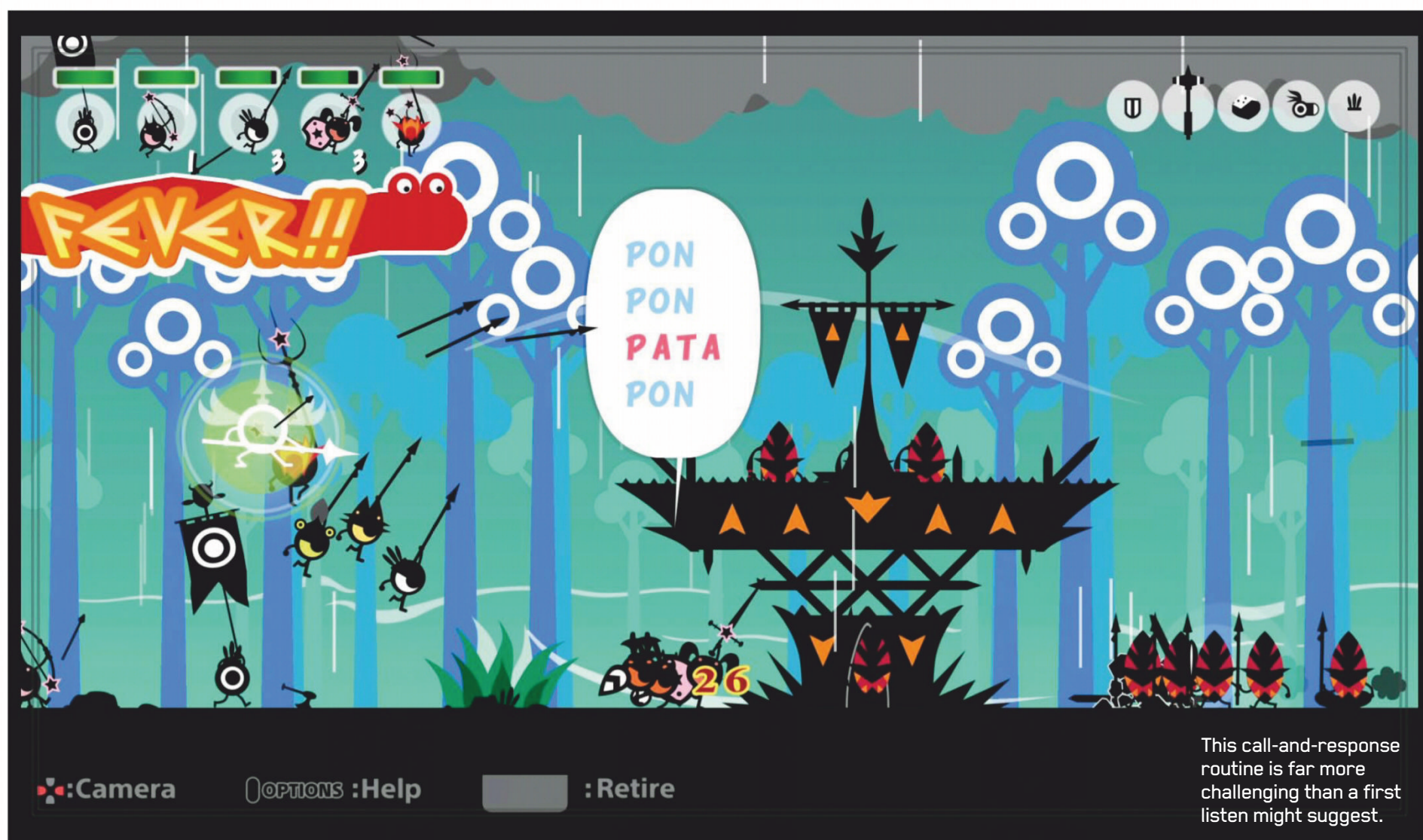
An air of melancholy hangs over Graavik as your protagonists' views of reality contradict each other, and you start to get breadcrumbs about what might really be going on. There are familiar beats in this story about a young man coming to a foreign locale to chase shadows from his past, but they are competently delivered right up until the final 'twist,' which is weighed down by heavy-handed exposition. Thankfully, what comes next allows for just a smidge more mystery – yes, it's formalised through mechanics and a dialogue choice, but it leaves us feeling like sometimes a little ambiguity can be more satisfying.

## VERDICT

A haunted walk through beautiful Norwegian countryside. Come for the mystery, stay for the chat, leave with more questions than you bargained for. **Jess Kinghorn**

"SURPRISES EVEN AS IT'S CLEARLY DRAWING FROM A LIMITED BAG OF TRICKS."





DRUM ROLE

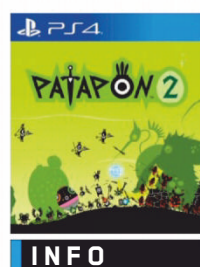
@KoeniginKatze

# PATAPON 2 REMASTERED

Get on the table for this absolute banger



089







INFO

FORMAT PS4  
ETA OUT NOW  
PUB SONY  
DEV PYRAMID, SONY  
JAPAN STUDIO

**T**he drums! Do you hear the drums, dear reader? No? We used to be like you – uninitiated and woefully unappreciative of the silence. Oh, we weren't completely naïve; we remember the bad old days of PSP and how the original release of this rhythm action game hooked us back in 2009. This remaster now serves as a rude reminder of just how deep its rhythm burrowed into our skull.

If you're experienced in banging the Patapon drum, this is the sequel you already know and love. Even the odd low-resolution cutscene made for PSP's tiny screen has made it into this version, but everything else has fared much better in the jump to modern consoles.

If you're new to the game, know this: the tiny, titular music-loving warriors are on a quest to find Earthend and uncover its secrets. But the seafaring adventure they embarked on at the end of the first game has ended in shipwreck and brought them into conflict with the Karmen tribe. As their patron deity, you guide your fighty followers with a funky drum beat; , , ,  will move your tiny blinking army forward but

you won't be going anywhere or doing much of anything if you're off-beat.

## BEAT IT

Early excursions' stage music is stripped-back and focused on helping you keep time. Every bum note is heralded by the cow bell of shame, though thankfully your Patapons will count you back in rather than allow their god to flounder in off-tempo hell. Perhaps you're already the funk daddy, rhythm master, but it takes us a while to pick the beat back up again. Your warriors dance with every matched beat and you'll find it impossible not to sway in time yourself. What's truly infectious, though, is your Patapons' response to the call of your drum beat – their chorus of "Pata, pata, pata, pon" still follows us long after we leave Patopolis.

Donning your headphones is an absolute must, especially as later soundscapes can get much busier. These audio arenas never get so dense that you'll lose your thread, and on

the whole the sound has been designed with at least one eye on the less rhythmically gifted.

To level up and evolve your warriors, you're encouraged to replay earlier stages. A number of these develop over time but a simplified weather system also helps to keep things interesting. Equippable 'Miracles' allow you to alter the weather yourself, but triggering this sea change is a surprisingly involved process for such a limited-time effect. One poorly timed button press means you have to restart the stage and, even more frustratingly, bosses invulnerable under clear skies definitely won't wait patiently as you struggle to get your rain dance right. You will get it eventually, but if you're anything like us, you'll be effing and jeffing in the rain.

## VERDICT

When you and Patapon 2 are on the same page of its rhythmic song book, this is a treat of a dance party. You won't be able to resist getting down to this sick beat. **Jess Kinghorn**

"A CHORUS OF 'PATA, PATA, PATA, PON' FOLLOWS US LONG AFTER LEAVING PATOPOLIS."



Strife and War are an excellent duo. The new gunslinger might be our favourite horseman yet.



"STRIFE'S CHEESY, SASSY ONE-LINERS SHINE NEXT TO WAR'S DEADPAN IRRITATION AT EVERYTHING."





IN THE BEGINNING

@MrOscarTK

# DARKSIDERS GENESIS

Meet a better duo than Adam and Eve – and let there be fight!



**INFO**  
FORMAT PS4  
ETA OUT NOW  
PUB THQ NORDIC  
DEV AIRSHIP  
SYNDICATE

**T**here's a reason this game is called Genesis. This dungeon crawler isn't just the earliest in the Darksiders timeline (someone tell THQ how time works), it is so by a massive margin. Set shortly after the Four Horsemen take up the task of upholding the balance of the universe on behalf of The Council, it takes place when the damage caused by Eden's fall is still fresh, and war rages between Heaven and Hell.

With paradise burning, humanity has been relocated to start anew. But The Council believes Lucifer still plots against the humans (who are integral to The Council's machinations). With Death and Fury elsewhere, it's up to War and Strife to team up, buddy-cop-style, and put a stop to the demons' plans. Starting out by taking the fight to Samael, whose fortress is under siege, they temporarily join forces to track down and destroy the mysterious superweapon that Lucifer is having constructed.

Genesis has the tone of an edgy '90s comic, but is able to wink at its own darkness. It never takes itself as seriously as something like Spawn. As it's a prequel, there's plenty here that builds on Darksiders lore for fans to latch onto, but the story is also light enough to ensure anyone less in the loop can still have fun. War and Strife are a classic comedy double act – Strife's cheesy, sassy one-liners shine next to War's deadpan irritation at everything happening (though they do share some closer moments on their journey).

## CREATURE COMFORTS

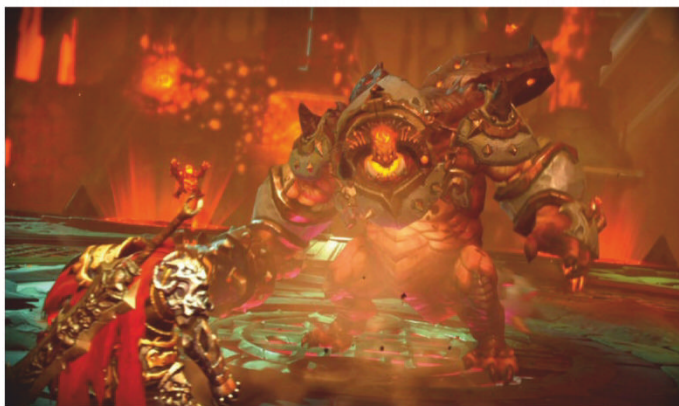
While in a lot of respects Genesis plays a bit like Diablo (and also has the whole angels and demons thing going on), a large injection of Darksiders' essence keeps it unique. You're not farming for loot, though there are plenty of collectables hidden around the isometrically-







**Right** Big demons just mean you get to use even bigger finishing moves on them.



**Left** Hell has never looked so good. Each level makes you want to explore.

presented levels. You can trade in souls and Boatman coins for upgrades to the horsemen's gear and movesets, discover new tools, and find Trickster keys that allow you to access to optional areas (often filled with their own loot).

Everything is plentiful, so you'll rarely have to grind. The most beneficial collectibles are the creature cores dropped by defeated enemies, which you can equip to give both horsemen passive buffs. All the enemies, even the bosses, can be finished off when their health is low enough by tapping **○**, which feels great to do. And the more cores you collect from a certain type of enemy, the more War or Strife's core will level up. Where you place them in the creature core grid can lead to additional buffs, and only some slots can house higher-level cores, so you have to put in a fair bit of thought if you really want to maximise certain horseman abilities.

### RIDE TOGETHER

You can play the entire game in two-player co-op or by yourself. Little tweaks to some puzzles

ensure it's completable either way. Alone or with a pal, it's important to make the best use of War and Strife's differing abilities. While their basic controls are the same, their specialisations are very different. War mostly handles in the way you might remember from the first Darksiders game, though thanks to the more dungeon-crawling nature of this outing he *feels* different. He's all about getting up close, mixing up light and heavy attacks, and performing long combos. Strife, the new horseman, is more of a long-range specialist, able to pump enemies with bullets from his dual-wielded pistols – and he can have two types of ammo equipped at once on **R1** and **R2**.

Later on, the brothers get differing tools to help out with traversal. For instance, War can use a Vorpall Blade boomerang to activate switches from a distance, while Strife can use Void Bombs to create portals

between two places to help to solve puzzles. Genesis might have a zoomed-out perspective, but it still feels very Darksiders.

### HELL OF A VIEW

But these levels are far from a succession of combat arenas. Excellent level design means not only do the areas you travel through all look visually distinct, from the fires of a forge to ice-capped mountains, and even Eden itself, they all feel differently designed too. Some are relatively open-ended, throwing you into a fairly large area and tasking you with activating three or so switches. Others are more linear, such as ones where you weave up forested mountainside ruins. Every one is a visual treat, especially when you reach a high point and can look down on the intricate level below you.

The camera is usually aware of the best parts of the level to show off, zooming in or out a bit as appropriate. You

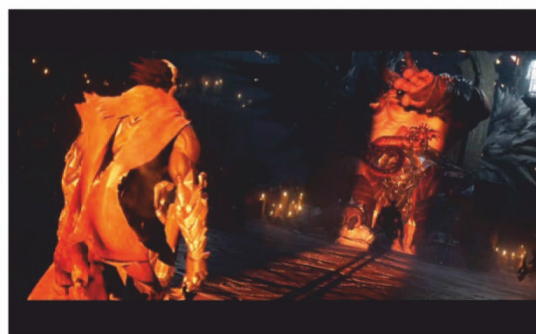
“YOU CAN PLAY THE ENTIRE GAME IN TWO-PLAYER CO-OP OR BY YOURSELF.”



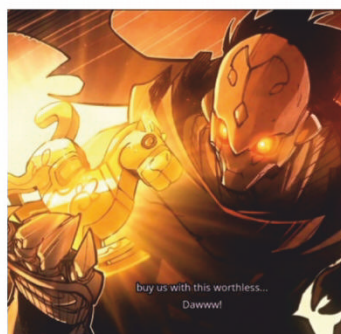


**Above** Strife's Anarchy form and War's Chaos form are, well, flamingly apocalyptic.

**Right** In certain areas you can use the triggers to mount your horse to move more quickly.



**Above** The opening is full CGI, and the comic-style cutscenes look fab in motion.



might be teleporting between completely different areas for each mission, but it feels like a richly cohesive world, and you always want to see what's next.

There are plenty of puzzles to figure out along the way. Some are more devious than others, and require you to make smart use of all sorts of switches and timer bombs in conjunction with the traversal tools your horsemen have available. You'll need to travel back to some missions after upgrading if you want to collect everything, which is a nice way to encourage replayability.

There's also a surprisingly large amount of platforming as you move through the areas. The isometric camera angle is something you have to get used to, but you will grasp it quite quickly, and only a few sections are frustrating and require extra precision. A lot of the platforming involves scaling ledges on walls or jumping between beams.

Some of the secrets are quite cleverly hidden, forcing you to look for little alcoves you might be able to jump to. The platforming really gives the environments depth as it adds verticality and areas of danger. This even translates into some really cool set-pieces, where you have to run from a foundry's molten lava or leg it across a crumbling bridge.

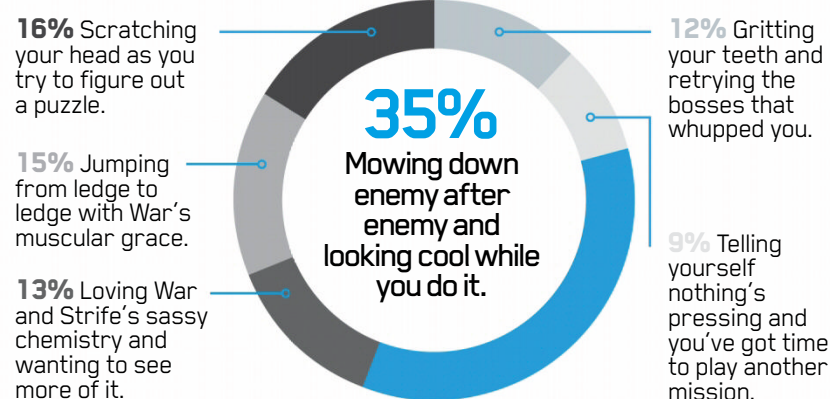
Genesis is not without its technical flaws. Go through areas too quickly and it'll hang while it loads. Sometimes you get stuck in a wall, or (worse) the camera does. But the issues didn't impact our time with the game much, and we still found ourselves wanting to replay missions repeatedly.

#### VERDICT

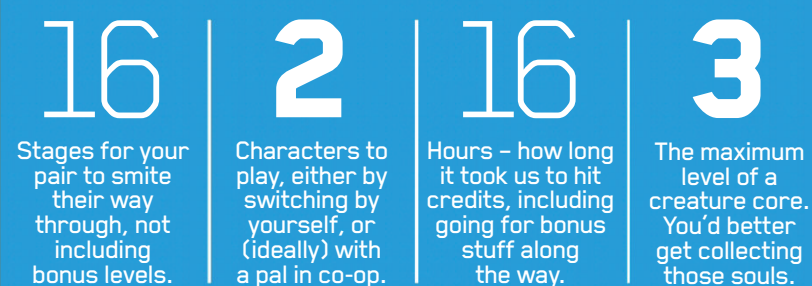
It's a terrifically fun game to throw on, whether you're playing alone or with a mate, and it proves that Darksiders still has plenty of stories to tell. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**

## THE OPM BREAKDOWN

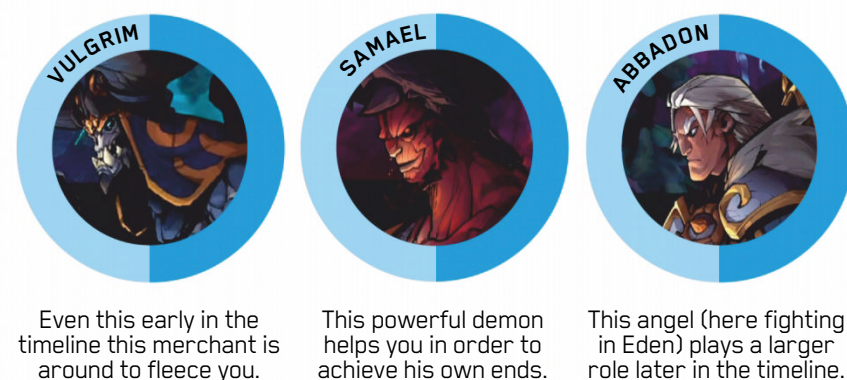
### WHAT YOU DO IN... DARKSIDERS GENESIS



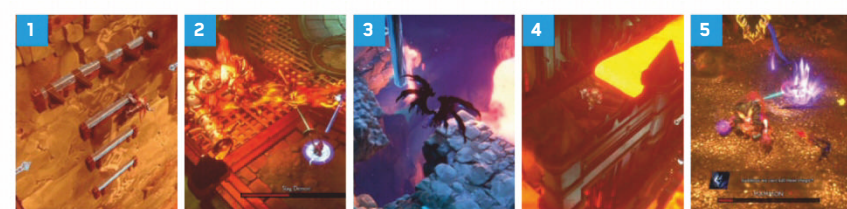
### STAT PACK



### FRIENDS & ENEMIES



### THE FIRST FIVE HOURS ...



**1** We're dropped into the middle of a siege of Samael's fortress, and have to cut through the army to scale the walls. **2** The demon Vulgrim has us breaking into a vault in the Slag Pit to recover an artefact for him. **3** An icy mountainside climb to reach the vault, which forges (literally) Hellish weaponry. **4** In the vault things get heated, and we have to run from molten metal. **5** Mammon: the first lesser demon we must slay.

### TROPHY CABINET







Most missions can be completed without much effort, or level-grinding to beat a Skeksis boss.

JUST THE JOB?

@lanDean4



# THE DARK CRYSTAL: AGE OF RESISTANCE TACTICS

The Hups and downs of a retro revival



## INFO

FORMAT PS4  
ETA OUT NOW  
PUB EN MASSE  
ENTERTAINMENT  
DEV BONUSXP

**H**aving waited 38 years for *The Dark Crystal* to return, it feels fitting that this recently-revived '80s film should head to PS4 by way of PS1's classic strategy roleplayer *Final Fantasy Tactics*. But does a double dose of nostalgia just mean twice the disappointment?

*Age Of Resistance Tactics* follows the story beats of the new Netflix show (a prequel to the movie), with your god-like hand guiding the childlike Gelflings to victory over the life-draining Skeksis across grid-based rounds of tactical skirmishing. Each mission rarely stretches past 15 minutes and battles breeze along effortlessly. The game's simplicity never leaves you scratching your head — all moves are accessed from a radial menu — but that directness also leads to a lack of depth.

As you plod through the story recognising key moments that had more charm and personality on Netflix, you can unlock and recruit new characters that fall into standard classes. Scout, Paladin, and Soldier, for example, dictate a character's movement and the kind of armour and weapons they can carry. Eventually you'll have over a dozen Gelfling and Fizzgig heroes. A store enables the purchase of new weapons and gear, but the menu structure is a slog.

The Job system — lifted, as so much of the game is, from *Final Fantasy Tactics* — offers some

interest. Jobs dictate the special attacks and passive abilities you can assign to characters under your command. The game's one interesting twist is the option to eventually mix and match Job classes: a heavy-hitting soldier can also heal and act as a makeshift support unit.

Some of the maps can change state as you play: in some cases strong gusts of wind blow units across the map; in others tidal waters rise and recede. In a turn-based battle this can lend a tension to otherwise stale missions. It's a glimpse of what *Age Of Resistance Tactics* could have been, if the ambition had stretched beyond a casual replication of *Final Fantasy Tactics*' ideas.

## JUST THE DEETS

As the game closely adheres to the story of the TV show, there's an assumption you will know the broader mythos of *The Dark Crystal*, the whys

and whatnots of this complex world. This leaves a void at the heart of the game, one that could have been filled with involved tactical twiddling, but again the game fails to offer more than a passing shot at imitating its source material.

The game lacks charm and finesse, too. Menus are clumsy and XP is earned per round rather than per action, which limits the challenge and reduces the appeal of grinding through missions you've already played.

Picking at the bones (but not the meat) of the Netflix series rather than the broader world of *The Dark Crystal*, *Age Of Resistance Tactics* feels small in scope and sadder still in execution.

## VERDICT

Too casual and limited to appeal to anyone but die-hard fans of *The Dark Crystal* and *Final Fantasy Tactics*, this tie-in lacks the depth and complexity of its retro references. **Ian Dean**





YES, AND...

@KoeniginKatze

# BLOODROOTS

Letting your fists do the talking and painting the town red



095



**INFO**  
 FORMAT PS4  
 ETA OUT NOW  
 PUB PAPER CULT  
 DEV PAPER CULT

**T**here's only one question you need to worry about with Mr Wolf and it isn't "What's the time?" Left for dead by his fellow Blood Beasts, your holophrastic hero is on a Western-style quest for revenge. Taking the form of a top down violence-'em-up, à la Hotline Miami, you'll die, die, and die again perfecting the best breakneck route through each stage.

A three-act structure filled with zany battle arenas stands between your big bad wolf and the answer to his most pressing question. Mr Wolf's former comrades don't care much for his single-mindedness or his refusal to stay dead, but they also don't let that stop them from villainously monologuing like there's no tomorrow. Thanks to brilliantly bananas character design and each boss' comically self-absorbed personality, you'll look forward to each showdown. However, the path to your next face-off is filled with more hapless goons than you can shake a carrot – or whatever else isn't nailed down – at.

Rather than overpopulating levels with enemies for a cheap shot at challenge (looking at you, God's Trigger), Bloodroots proves there's

no substitute for good design. What sets it apart, though, is how far it takes the improvised armoury angle. From garden warfare with root vegetables to a memorable fish-based takedown, combat is decidedly slapstick. Enemies, too, are more interesting than your stereotypical 'Put'em up' punks. Before long you'll be taking note of who gives chase, who keeps their distance, and how you can use every behavioural wrinkle to your deadly advantage. Weapons have no more than three uses in them and, at their best, levels have a delightful laying-down-the-track-for-the-runaway-train-you've-found-yourself-strapped-to-the-front-of-momentum. Even as the blood flows, the action has a wacky, cartoon violence feel.

## BEWAREWOLF

A number of blades alter your movement and put extra pep in your step, and each area grades how well you cut your path through it (you're given the option to retry immediately

for a better score). Mixing and matching weapons, figuring out how to kill two guards with the funky vase you just picked up, almost never gets old.

Checkpointing eases the pain of dying over and over, putting you back on track for that perfect run, and is mostly generous – even boss fights have mid-bust-up bookmarks. But we say 'mostly' as, if you die after killing the last enemy in an area but before moving on, you'll be sent back to the beginning of that stretch, and it's never not brutal. It's rare but every time it happens, it exposes the not-quite-there platforming; the fixed, zoomed-out perspective makes it tricky to judge some jumps and leads to our doom more than once. For a title so tightly designed elsewhere, it's an odd oversight.

## VERDICT

This violence-'em-up's improvised armoury delivers frenetic fights that makes you feel like your favourite action movie scrapper. A bloody great time. **Jess Kinghorn**

"WHAT SETS IT APART IS HOW FAR IT TAKES THE IMPROVISED ARMOURY ANGLE."





## INFO

FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW  
PUB SQUARE ENIX DEV SQUARE ENIX



## KINGDOM HEARTS III – RE:MIND

Underwhelming in key(blade) areas

For the most part in this extended DLC, you replay Kingdom Hearts III's endgame. In battles you now have the option of playing as Sora or one of the other Keyblade wielders, each of them with new specials and linked attacks. While battles stay the same, it's exciting to finally take control of old favourites such as Roxas and, at long last, even Kairi.<sup>1</sup> Some cutscenes have been extended, while others stay identical to the main game. You also get a chance to explore an enhanced version of Scala Ad Caelum, home to the Guardians of old, but the slightly longer visit amounts to another empty, linear level.

The best part of Re:Mind is the large group battle between the Guardians and the Heartless, complete with fresh character interactions and mighty finishers.

If you're looking for a challenge you may find it in the Limitcut episode, the second part of the DLC. This is basically a boss rush arena, where you battle The Thirteen again, but at a much higher difficulty. Only then does the Secret Episode unlock. This takes place after the events of the game and hints at what awaits Sora in the next instalment. New content is thus pretty sparse,<sup>2</sup> and the noteworthy addition to the story requires the dedication of grinding long enough in the main game to make it through the boss rush stage in one piece, by which point you will have fought the same battles three times. It's taking the Mickey somewhat.

Re:Mind could have been an additional world, or a new chapter to shorten the wait until the next game. Instead it's more of the same, often literally so. A missed opportunity. **Malindy Hetfeld**



**FOOTNOTES 1** Finally we can experience the game as our favourite support characters. **2** There is also Data Greeting mode, essentially a photo mode in which you can arrange characters.

## INFO

FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW  
PUB SEGA DEV RYU GA GOTOKU STUDIO



## THE YAKUZA REMASTERED COLLECTION

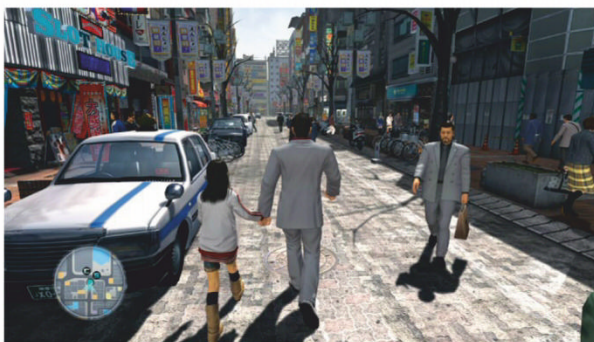
Touching up the back tattoo

The Yakuza series is undoubtedly unique, offering emotional crime stories that frequently go off the rails. Playing this collection you'll both shed tears for dead friends and watch a masked panty thief swing from rooftops.

It rounds out bad-boy-with-a-heart-of-gold Kazuma Kiryu's epic saga on PS4, finishing off the set with remastered versions of Yakuza 3, 4, and 5. While not full remakes like the Kiwami games before them, plenty has still been done to raise these up the PS4 crime family's ranks. Extra features have been added, cut content's been restored,<sup>1</sup> and they've been re-translated. The remastering of the ahead-of-their-time facial motion capture is still startling in places.

For the most part you're stomping around town as usual, getting involved in crunchy brawls where you deliver over-the-top justice by smashing bikes over antagonists' heads, doing flip kicks, or jamming daggers into people's stomachs (and somehow never killing them – all part of the deliberately overexaggerated charm). The action gets varied in the fourth and fifth entries as sections of the game have different protagonists with unique, though similar, fighting styles.<sup>2</sup>

At times the games' age is apparent – in some repetitive and annoying boss fights, or the way special moves shift you annoyingly away from where you initiated them in order for them to animate properly. Even so, they're still immensely playable. Yakuza is one of the few series that elicits genuine belly laughs while telling a gripping story. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**



**FOOTNOTES 1** There have also been some minor revisions and removals of content where the dev felt the jokes had aged less well. **2** And all have their own, often hilarious, side-missions too.

## INFO

FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW  
PUB RAW FURY DEV KRILLBITE STUDIO



## MOSAIC

We art sure this really works

Chances are that 'soul-crushing existence simulator' wouldn't be particularly high on your list of dream games. Yet here we are. As an anonymous work drone, your days start when you drag yourself out of bed and switch off your alarm, then brush your teeth – with optional tie and hair tidying before setting off to work.<sup>1</sup>

There's more to Mosaic than that, naturally. These elements are intentionally drab and slow-paced, as part of the game's drive to act as commentary on 21st-century life. At its most subtle, there are flashes of brilliance. If you try to turn to face a neighbour in the lift, they'll turn away from you; and by giving your character a mobile phone, there is – as in real life – always the temptation to fiddle with an app instead of doing something more important, or to instantly check your messages as soon as you get a notification.

Sadly, design subtlety is drowned out by the script, which prefers to hammer its Ideas And Themes directly into your face. Mosaic isn't subtle. It has a message and wants you to pile your plate at its all-you-can-eat buffet of meaningfulness.

It's not long before colour, sound, and surrealism are used to contrast with the mire of the daily grind; but they're not implemented well enough. Mosaic as a whole fails to escape the sense of monotony and obligation that it seeks to critique, to the point where the satirical app BlipBlop is more fun than anything else in the game.<sup>2</sup> On top of that, it doesn't actually have anything new or particularly meaningful to say. It's occasionally clever, and has great art design, but isn't nearly as smart as it thinks it is. **Luke Kemp**



**FOOTNOTES 1** To David Cage, this kind of thing is immersive; to Krillbite, it's intentionally uninteresting. **2** This is no exaggeration, despite the fact that BlipBlop only asks you to press X.



**INFO** FORMAT PS4 ETA OUT NOW  
PUB CAPCOM DEV CAPCOM



ULTRAMEGA OK

@Jim\_Crikey

## MEGA MAN ZERO/ZX LEGACY COLLECTION

These blasts from the past still pack a punch

**S**tronger than Superman, but not quite as strong as Ultraman (we assume), Mega Man isn't actually a single chap. It's more of a title, like James Bond. Therefore, four of the games in this six-title collection concern Zero from the Mega Man X series, while the other two introduce a new protagonist, male or female according to your choice.

Originally released on Nintendo handhelds, the art design has stood the test of time with only a minimum of (optional) polish. Even the first Zero game, despite being old enough to buy its own alcohol next month, looks great and crystal-clear. And that's just as well, because the series' notorious difficulty is in full effect here. This collection offers optional help such as regular save points and in-game tweaks for each game to make things easier (if you need it), but even with this modern-day assistance you'll need to be on your toes.

The Zero games are traditional Mega Man fare, which stand up extremely well in 2020. While the inability to duck or aim your Buster at an angle feels slightly odd today, it somehow smoothly melts into the retro charm afforded by the art, music, and slightly

silly dialogue. Jumping and movement are every bit as sharp and responsive as the levels demand.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT ZX

A Nintendo DS touchscreen is emulated for the ZX games, which means that there's no full-screen display option, though you soon get used to this. While ZX's reliance on open-world style gameplay results in confusion and frustration, killing the pace, the sequel, ZX Advent, learns from the mistakes of its predecessor, and is in fact probably the best game here. It even has (hilariously cheesy) voice acting and anime cutscenes.

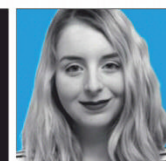
One constant across all six games in the bundle – and a staple of Mega Man games in general – is the boss fight experience. Bosses are unforgiving, and often frustrating at first. However, working out what to do and how to do it is part of the Mega Man joy, and each victory is fist-pump-tastic. It's great to see Capcom preserving its back catalogue, especially when the games are as good as this.

### VERDICT

A great collection of retro platform shooter action. If you're wondering what all the Mega Man fuss is about, this is a good place to start. **Luke Kemp**

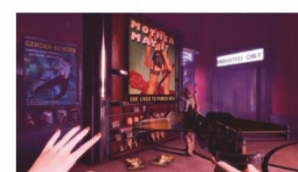


## LAST MONTH ON PS PLUS



@KoenigKatze

February is a month often centred on curling up with your dearest one, but maybe you'd rather be playing a game. Whatever you enjoy, last month's PS Plus presented not just two but three terrific titles to scratch whatever itch ailed you.



It's tricky to know where to start, what with being so spoilt for choice. How about

with the possible end of civilisation? **BIOSHOCK: THE COLLECTION** took the uninitiated and the Plasmid partaker alike on a tour from the watery depths of Rapture to the sky-high heights of Columbia. Between the inclusion of all three games and their single-player DLC add-ons, there was plenty here to make you go "Oh, Daddy!" You just had to watch out for his drill.



Next up, we had another 'big daddy' – gaming juggernaut **THE SIMS 4**.

Unfortunately, only the base game was included, and we got none of the add-on content (of which there is a *lot*). But the base game alone still provided plenty of wacky life sim shenanigans, and if you didn't quite have the Valentine's day you'd hoped for, at least here you could maybe imagine a better one. Either that or burn it all down – hey, we're not your boss, nor are we here to judge. Here's to 20 more years of romance, employment, and incendiary accidents with The Sims!

Moving swiftly on, PS VR heads had a total blast with last month's final title. **FIREWALL ZERO HOUR** was an excellent 4v4 tactical shooter entirely playable in virtual reality. With the latest season, Operation: Black Dawn, debuting alongside a new oil rig map earlier in the month, February was the time to take up arms if you hadn't already.

What a cracking month it was! We're looking forward to whatever old (or new) flames decide to show their faces throughout the year ahead.





# ELITE AUDIO— UNCONTESTED

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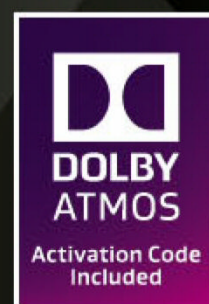
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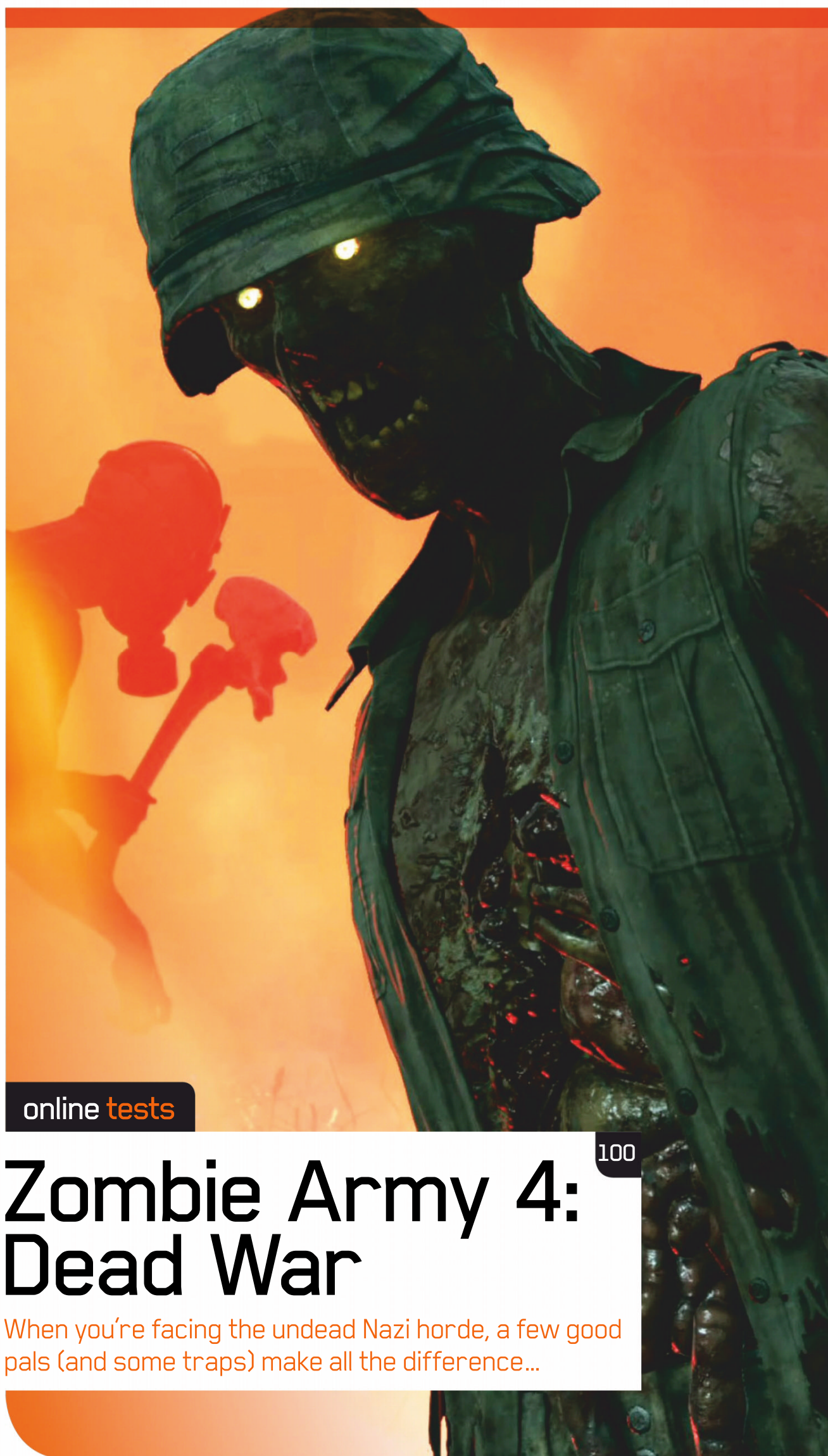


online

dlc & live games

movies

streaming



online tests

## Zombie Army 4: Dead War

100

When you're facing the undead Nazi horde, a few good pals (and some traps) make all the difference...



### this month



### on the store

**102** Metro Exodus – Sam's Story  
And what a tale it is, as you play the former US marine now trapped in a submerged Vladivostok. Will you make it home safely?



### on home

**104** Knives Out  
Rian Johnson plots a clockwork-precise murder mystery with a magnificently stellar cast.



### streaming now

**105** This month's hottest shows



# online tests

MULTIPLAYER MODES PUT  
THROUGH THEIR PACES  
BY OUR TEAM OF EXPERTS

## WHAT WE'RE PLAYING NOW



### ABSOLVER

Jess Kinghorn is  
donning the mask

For a game about getting into bust-ups with anyone breathing the same air as you, Absolver's multiplayer community is surprisingly helpful – save for that one weirdo who tried to lock me into an endless cycle of resurrection and

knocking me upside the head. Bosses become a breeze with two sets of fists. It's just a shame that certain important adversaries demand you fight them in a strange single-player netherverse where summoning a tag team is expressly forbidden. I'll exact my revenge on those last three bosses one day, just you wait...



### STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

It's a trap! And Oscar  
Taylor-Kent fell for it

I'm hooked on Ewok Hunt mode, playing one of a Stormtrooper platoon on Endor after losing the battle, awaiting evacuation while terrifying tiny bears hunt me down in the night,

using devastating traps. The critters don't seem quite as cuddly when they're launching themselves from trees, ready to slaughter you. As the evac ship lands we break formation and run for our lives. But with a flashbang I'm stunned, and my friend runs off as the Ewoks drag me into the darkness.



### EFOOTBALL PES 2020

Match Day makes  
Ian Dean's, erm, day

Welcome to my 200th article about how much I'm playing PES 2020. If you're a regular reader you'll have become accustomed to my very average ability at this

game, as well as the ambivalence of my cat to me throwing a fit as I lose, again, to a last-minute defensive mistake. Changing tack, I've been spending more time just playing Match Day mode. The teamwork approach feels less pressured, and I earn Scouts simply for playing – win, lose or draw. The down side? I now have a squad filled with Arsenal reserve players. That won't help my win rate.

## REVIEW

### INFO

FORMAT PS4  
PUB REBELLION  
DEV REBELLION  
REVIEW #172, 7/10

# Zombie Army 4: Dead War

A (head) shot of old-fashioned fun

Offline Rebellion's horde shooter is a lonesome but fun experience. Its crackling gunplay and relentlessly retro zombie arenas always raise a smile, even if getting to those moments can feel like tramping down well-trodden roads. Online everything changes for the better.

It helps that Zombie Army 4's four-player co-op matches connect without a hitch. The speedy matchup will have you shooting holes in the undead in under a minute. Once you're in, the game runs like clockwork. There's no buffering, slowdown, or dropout, ensuring every match runs smoothly.

What you actually do isn't any different online or off, but as we all know, everything is better with friends.

While you can play the entire story campaign online with pals or randoms, earning XP, levelling weapons, perks, and special attacks, it's Horde mode that will keep you coming back. The objective is simple: survive 15 rounds of zombie attacks. Each time the enemy gets a little tougher, a bit faster,

and then flamethrower- and buzzsaw-carrying heavy units add to the challenge.

The more you play, the more ad hoc tactics emerge – use a map's tunnels to funnel the throng, and teamwork is needed to takedown the bigger bads that head your way. As the game's based on Sniper Elite 4,

IT'S RARE FOR A HORDE MATCH TO END WITHOUT THE SATISFYING ZIP-PANG OF A LEVEL-UP NOISE.





## CULT YOU CAN

The first Season of content offers a new story campaign, Hell Cult, for solo or co-op play. There are also weapon bundles, character packs, and outfit bundles coming soon.



Taking on the hordes is more fun with a few buddies of your own.

you can also make use of mines and tripwires ahead of a wave beginning – prepping a stage successfully becomes oddly satisfying.

Keeping you in the game are countless rewards and ranks to level up. It's rare for a Horde match to end without the satisfying zip-pang of a level-up noise and a new gun mod or perk unlocking. There are no lootboxes, just rewards for a game played well.

Adding to the catnip sense of accomplishment-teasing are weekly events offering bespoke loadouts, rewards, and XP. And with new maps, weapons, and more planned for future DLC, *Zombie Army 4* feels like a game worth investing in online. That said, let's be clear, there's very little revolutionary hidden in here. *Zombie Army 4* is a good example of the horde shooter genre, nothing more – but sometimes that's all that you need.

## VERDICT

Even better online than off, *Zombie Army 4: Dead War* is a slick and rewarding horde shooter. It may not be particularly original, but it works so well you just won't care. **Ian Dean**



## AO Tennis 2

Deuces wild? The very opposite, sadly

## INFO

FORMAT PS4  
PUB BIGBEN INTERACTIVE  
DEV BIG ANT STUDIOS  
REVIEW #172, 7/10

Three minutes 50 seconds. No, that's not the length of your average AO2 online contest – that's the shortest time I've waited to find someone to play a 'quick match' against. Set up a custom match, in which you define the number of sets, venue, and so on, and that wait doubles, which is definitely more 'out' than 'ace'.

Once you do find someone to play against, the tennis is robust and punchy, much like in the single-player mode, but with no option for an online tournament – in a game named for the Australian Open! – there's limited scope or depth. Developer Big Ant Studios did a fine job of patching and expanding AO1 (there were a *lot* of patches), and it again has a fair way to go to make the sequel's net-play compelling.

## VERDICT

A likeable sports title offline that feels all-too-vanilla once you're faced with real human opponents – if, indeed, you can ever find any online. **Ben Wilson**



## Journey To The Savage Planet

Only best friends need apply

## INFO

FORMAT PS4  
PUB 505 GAMES  
DEV TYPHOON STUDIOS  
REVIEW #172, 7/10

This one's BYOF – Bring Your Own Friend – but when you do go exploring with a pal, the online works wonderfully well. The entire game can be played in co-op, and without the pair of you having to be tied at the hip. As long as you're in the same large area, you're free to splinter off and explore, sharing resources and upgrades as you go.

The only downside is that as the game's content is so specifically about finding new collectibles and hidden areas, if you're not exploring side by side you might find yourself feeling like you missed out on things. Still, there are few other co-op games that offer such a robust and complete adventure that can feel like a unique one with your friend. It should be top of the list for trying out.

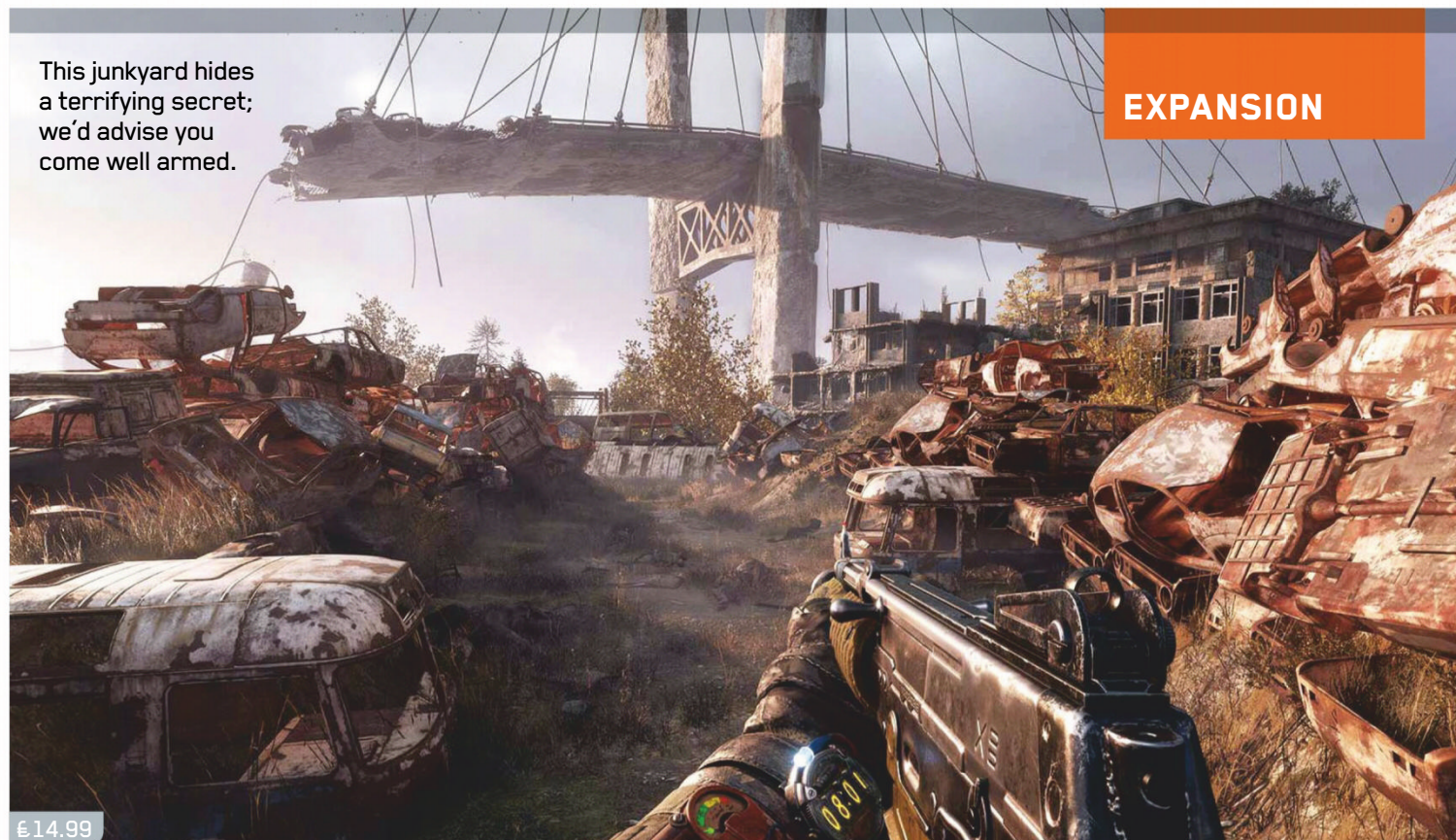
## VERDICT

If you go co-op, it's best to commit to seeing the game through with that player. *Savage Planet* is happy to accommodate you both. **Oscar Taylor-Kent**



# on the store

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## Metro Exodus – Sam's Story

4A Games takes us to its water world

After surviving the cold of Moscow and the heat of the Caspian desert, with Sam's Story Metro Exodus now explores the only remaining environmental theme: water. To escape Russia and get back to America, Sam (a former US marine stranded after the bombs fell) must overcome the tsunami-ravaged ruins of Vladivostok.

As DLC goes, there's a lot to do in this submerged city. Taking around eight hours to complete, it's comparable in size to the game's Caspian map, and plays like a condensed version of the main campaign – choices made during Sam's quest will affect how characters feel towards him, and ultimately Sam's ending. Will he eventually return home? And at what cost?

Crammed into watery Vladivostok are all the joys Metro's blended gameplay offers. With oddball characters fighting over a Honda dealership obliterated over 20 years earlier, tense time-limited runs through radioactive bunkers, and one of the series' best beast fights as a giant bat-like

creature gets a taste for Sam and goes full Terminator, this one won't give up.

Aside from an Aliens-inspired universal detector that makes every mission bleeping tense, Sam's Journey is more of the same. However, its theme and endgame shows Metro has life outside of Russia.

“CRAMMED INTO WATERY VLADIVOSTOK ARE ALL THE JOYS METRO'S BLENDED GAMEPLAY OFFERS.”

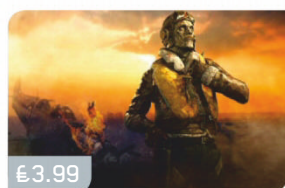
### ALSO ON PSN



£36.99

#### WORLD OF WARSHIPS: LEGENDS – AZUR LANE: DUNKERQUE

The anime girl personification of this warship becomes a warship again in World Of Warships (and breathe).



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#### ZOMBIE ARMY 4 – UNDEAD AIRMAN

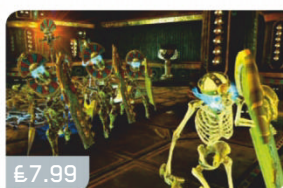
Tally-ho! Gentleman pilot Hector perished in an plane crash in the Alps but, mind still intact, he rises from the grave to do his duty in the war.



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#### ROCKSMITH 2014 – STEVIE WONDER SONG PACK

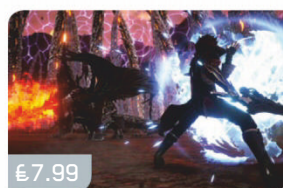
Plug in your guitar or bass to learn I Wish, Superstition, and Signed, Sealed, Delivered in this pack of Stevie Wonder classics.



£7.99

#### WARHAMMER: CHAOSBANE – TOMB KINGS

A new story arc provides plenty of reason to dive back into this terrifically fun Warhammer-flavoured Diabolo-like.



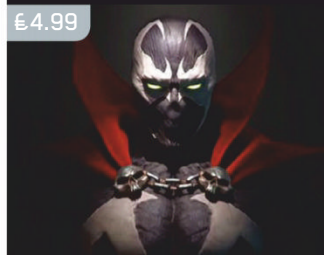
£7.99

#### CODE VEIN – HELLFIRE KNIGHT

Adding more bosses in a Depths area, plus weapons, Blood Veils, and costumes, this is a slight addition, but makes things a bit bloodier.

DLC

£4.99



#### MORTAL KOMBAT 11 – SPAWN

What violent and edgy superhero would be a better fit for an edgy and violent fighter? Keith David returns from the TV series to voice Todd McFarlane's breakout comic book character as he brings his own twist on hellish fatalities to the game.

£3.99



#### DEAD CELLS – BAD SEED

The fast-paced roguelite gets a burst of new life. This DLC adds two areas to the early game – The Dilapidated Arboretum and The Morass Of The Banished – to give you more options for runs, plus there's a fresh boss in the form of the fearsome Mama Tick. Talk about itchy.

£7.99



#### THE SIMS 4 – TINY LIVING STUFF PACK

Owning a home is an expensive impossibility these days. Even renting anywhere with any real space is hard. That's where this pack comes in, giving your Sims everything they need to put together charming, compact homes with fold-out beds and all-in-one storage.



## BACK TO EDEN

The eight-player Eden raid series continues to balance tough bosses with impressive narrative. Ryne continues on her quest, but could the appearance of a mysterious woman hinder the group?



## LIVE GAMES

UPDATE

# A Final Fantasy VII gem returns online

FFXIV's Echoes Of A Fallen Star throws back

**M**assive' is the only way you can really describe Final Fantasy XIV's updates. It's also the only way you can describe the Ruby Weapon, the new boss that's one of the stars of Version 5.2 – Echoes Of A Fallen Star.

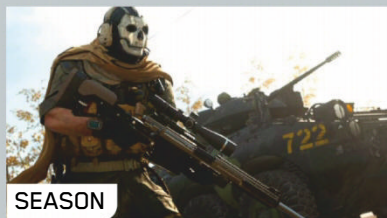
Long-time Final Fantasy fans will be more than familiar with the rock-hard gemstone monster, as the original version of it

appeared in Final Fantasy VII. With the remake of that game launching in April, it's great to see FFXIV's take on the creature included as part of the sweeping new story arc that sees the Garlean Empire renew its attack on Eorzea.

The update also brings plenty of additions to

Shadowbringers' The First, too. The Anamnesis Anyder dungeon takes the Scions deeper into the Tempest than before, revealing more about Amaurot. All-new weapon quests, raids, and chronicles round out a chunky update that ensures FFXIV remains one of PS4's most exciting MMOs.

**IT'S GREAT TO SEE FFXIV'S TAKE ON RUBY WEAPON AS PART OF THE NEW STORY ARC.**



SEASON

## CALL OF DUTY: MODERN WARFARE – SEASON 2

The latest COD might be a soft reboot, but its multiplayer still owes a lot to its past. Highlights of this season (complete with new 100-tier battle pass) are legendary operator Ghost and the Rust map (both from Modern Warfare 2). A new battle royale mode has been teased for later in the season.



UPDATE

## FALLOUT 76 – WASTELANDERS

It's no secret that this online take on Fallout was divisive when it released. This huge update tries to rectify that, adding things Bethesda told us the game didn't need at launch. With human NPCs, classic dialogue trees, a new main quest, and a revamped version of the original main quest, this is what Fallout 76 should have been at launch. But is it too little, too late?



CHARACTER

## APEX LEGENDS – REVENANT

The latest legend joining Respawn's fast-paced battle royale used to be a hitman, but was revived and mechanised by the organisation he worked for against his will. Now he's after blood. Thanks to his assassin training, he can crouch-walk extra fast, and leap for higher ledges. His Ultimate, Death Totem, allows you and allies to revive upon death when used.

## THE MONTH IN... EVENTS



@MrOscarTK

Love was in the air, and this time it wasn't just the scent of a freshly unwrapped PS4 game box. Valentine's Day events gave us the perfect excuse to paint our favourite games red alongside our Player 2s.



Guardians always operate better

together than they do solo, which is why the **Destiny 2** Crimson Days event was so much fun. Challenging duos to operate as one, it put us to the test for some fantastic rewards, including a matching pair of Sparrows and The Vow, a special bow and arrow that allows for headshots even Cupid would be proud of.



Meanwhile, in Eorzea, the **Final Fantasy**

**XIV** Valentine's Day event introduced some conflict this time around. Players had to get behind their favourite of three eligible Emissaries Of Love competing to take up the mantle of representing Eorzea's lovelorn on the special day. Showing who you supported by decking yourself out in their exclusive clothing affected the event on a server-by-server basis. While we could only pick one clothing set, we could then dye it to resemble the clothing for the other characters. Also up for grabs was a chocolate fountain for our homes. How romantic!



## BLU-RAYS



# Knives Out

Sharp modern-day murder mystery

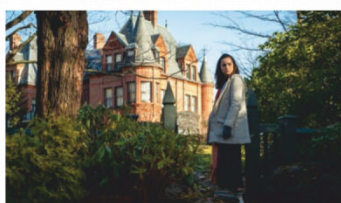
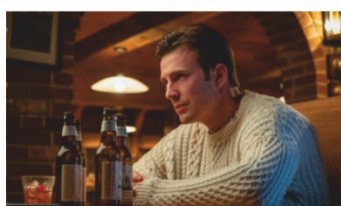
**W**ith the exception of Kenneth Branagh's star-studded adaptation of *Murder On The Orient Express* in 2017, the old-school whodunnit has all but disappeared from the big screen. That's why Rian Johnson's invigorating revival of the classic murder mystery comes as such a welcome surprise.

The Poirot of the piece is Daniel Craig's Benoit Blanc, a southern gentleman detective hired to investigate the grisly death of famous mystery writer Harlan Thrombey (Christopher Plummer). The seemingly open-and-shut case of suicide is complicated by the fact Thrombey's unscrupulous family all have their reasons for wanting him dead.

But the main character isn't Blanc. Rather, it's Marta (Ana de Armas), Thrombey's immigrant care worker. Slowly revealing itself to be an insightful and subversive piece of sociopolitical storytelling, *Knives Out* is as much about modern America as it is the

intellectual thrills of its twisty-turny script.

The joy of Johnson's clockwork-precise plotting should not be underestimated. *Knives Out* satisfies as both a classical whodunnit – complete with a colourful cast of characters, clues sitting in plain sight and twists you (probably) won't see coming – and as a thrilling reworking of a well-worn formula. Let's just say you won't be asking 'whodunnit?' much earlier than you might think. Also featuring a bonkers ensemble cast, including Captain America's Chris Evans and Halloween legend Jamie Lee Curtis, *Knives Out* is a killer night in. **Jordan Farley**



■ Daniel Craig and Ana de Armas also appear together in the next Bond film.

## COMING SOON



### THE GOOD LIAR 16 MAR

Double-, triple- and quadruple-crosses are the order of the day here, as Ian McKellen's career con artist targets Helen Mirren's wealthy widow.



### ANATOMY OF A MURDER 16 MAR

Classic drama starring James Stewart as a lawyer defending a man accused of murder. A perfect double bill with *Knives Out*.



### SUPERMAN: RED SON 16 MAR

Animated adaptation of the Mark Millar comic with an ingenious premise: what if Superman crash-landed in the Soviet Union as a baby?



### WWE ROYAL RUMBLE 2020 16 MAR

The latest WWE PPV event featured a so-so card, but the 30-man Royal Rumble did not disappoint, with the return of a WWE superstar.



### ATTACK ON TITAN S3 23 MAR

The third season of the phenomenally popular anime about a world overrun by people-eating giants is as bleak and shocking as ever.



### LE MANS '66 23 MAR

Gearheads and/or dads will love this true story of the Ford motor company's 1966 attempt to dethrone Ferrari at the Le Mans 24-hour race.



### LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT 23 MAR

The centrepiece of this Chinese romance is a 59-minute sequence shot in a single unbroken take.



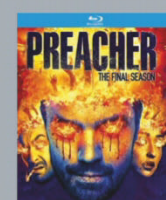
### 21 BRIDGES 30 MAR

Black Panther's Chadwick Boseman stars in this rote action thriller about a manhunt for a pair of cop killers on the island of Manhattan.



### FROZEN II 30 MAR

Be warned: the sequel to Disney's smash-hit winter animation features songs that will refuse to leave your brain before the heat death of the universe.



### PREACHER S4 6 APR

Fourth and final season of the un-PC comic book series about a Preacher with a divine power hunting down God. Also available to stream on Amazon Prime.



# Streaming **now**

## NOW AND INCOMING



### THE FALCON AND THE WINTER SOLDIER

FORMAT DISNEY+ PRICE £49.99 A YEAR

The first MCU series to hit Disney+ this autumn catches up with Sam Wilson and Bucky Barnes post-Endgame, as Sam embraces the mantle of Captain America and they reckon with the return of Civil War's Baron Zemo.

### WANDAVISION

FORMAT DISNEY+  
PRICE £49.99 A YEAR

Also set for a 2020 release, WandaVision sees Wanda Maximoff, aka Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olson) and Paul Bettany's Vision living in domestic bliss, inspired by classic American sitcoms. Only Vision died in Avengers: Infinity War, and Wanda has the power to alter reality around her...



### LOKI

FORMAT DISNEY+ PRICE £49.99 A YEAR

The final MCU Disney+ series currently in production (though there are more being written) is a Loki-centric spin-off. After taking off with the tesseract in Avengers: Endgame, Thor's bro will hop through history, pursued by the Time Variance Authority.



### STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS S7

FORMAT DISNEY+  
PRICE £49.99 A YEAR

Disney+ will also debut the long-awaited seventh and final season of The Clone Wars, which will finally wrap up the story of Anakin's fan-favourite Padawan Ahsoka Tano. Though set predominantly between Episodes II and III, this final season is rumoured to depict the events of Revenge Of The Sith from a different perspective.

A second season of The Mandalorian is already confirmed, and will debut in October.



FORMAT DISNEY+ PRICE £49.99 A YEAR

## The Mandalorian

There's a new bounty hunter in town

**W**e'll probably wait years for another Star Wars film, but the galaxy has a bright future on the small screen if The Mandalorian is any indication. The first live-action Star Wars series, and flagship show of new streaming service Disney+, it's good enough to make forking out for yet another subscription a no-brainer.

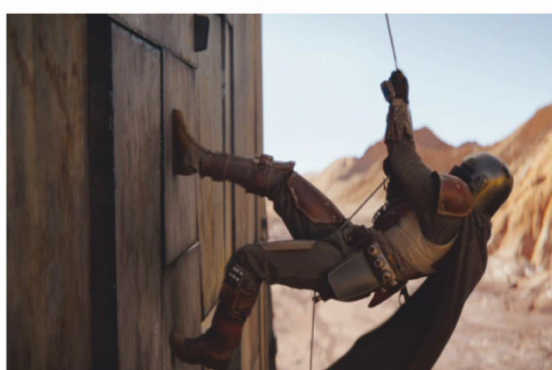
Pedro Pascal plays the eponymous bounty hunter. 'Mando' is as skilled as they come, and in high demand. But when an Imperial client hires him to track down a mysterious bounty it sets him on a very different path.

Set shortly after Return Of The Jedi, The Mandalorian isn't just closer to the original trilogy than the recent sequels chronologically, it's nearer tonally and visually as well. Episodes run anywhere from 50 minutes to a brisk 30, meaning they rarely outstay their welcome. And Lucasfilm hasn't skimped on the budget,

with cinema-quality effects and return trips to some iconic locations.

It's also no exaggeration to say that in The Child (known the internet over as 'Baby Yoda') The Mandalorian features the single greatest contribution to pop culture of the last 12 months – a character so cute their every move is destined for meme-dom.

If there's a problem it's that close ties to The Clone Wars and Rebels means anyone who hasn't seen those animated series may find certain moments pass them by. Regardless, this is well worth hunting down. **Jordan Farley**





R



## INFO

**PUB** EA  
**DEV** DICE  
**PRODUCTIONS**  
**RELEASED** 2008  
**GET IT NOW** £15.99,  
 PLAYSTATION STORE

## NEED TO KNOW

- 1 Rhianna Pratchett worked on Tomb Raider (2013).
- 2 The game spawned two mobile spin-offs and a comic.
- 3 Announced in 2016, the TV show has yet to materialise.

Faith's clothing matches the environment design: sleek, minimalist, memorable, and unlike any of the competition.



## Parkour life

Every month we celebrate the most important, innovative, or just plain great games from PlayStation's past. This month, it's time to stretch our virtual legs, take a run up, and enjoy the sunshine with some ferocious freerunning



# Mirror's Edge

While EA is painted as the bad guy of the industry at least once a year for some reason or other, including for playing it safe, let's not forget that it's been responsible for greenlighting some unique, memorable titles over nearly four decades. Games such as *Dead Space*, *Unravel*, *Titanfall*... and this. *Mirror's Edge* is a game we'll never forget for all the right reasons.

*Mirror's Edge* defied convention in several ways. The story concerns a city some time in the future, where everything is clean, peaceful, and comfortable – but all this luxury comes at the price of a brutal, totalitarian government. Your character, Faith, is a 'runner' who delivers info in person to avoid the ubiquitous communication monitoring. Dystopias were nothing new in games even in the noughties, but *this* dystopia was bright and shiny. Purposefully eschewing the browns and greys that were in vogue in videogames at the time (and arguably are even now), yours is a playground of pure whites, vibrant reds, and sharp blues that leap from the screen.

Although it uses a first-person perspective, this is no first-person

shooter. There are enemies, and there are guns, but those aren't ultimately the important bit. What you're *really* doing is clambering up, running along, sliding under, and bounding over pieces of that clean, crisp environment in as fast and stylish a manner as possible. Oddly, perhaps, the developer, Swedish studio DICE, was (and still is) best known for the *Battlefield* games. Released in the same year as titles such as *Far Cry 2*, *Fallout 3*, and *Resistance 2*, a game like this was a revelation.

To return to the guns, though: Faith can disarm enemies and then use their weapons against other opponents, but this is generally best used as a last resort. You only get whatever ammo is left in the gun, and larger weapons actually provide a significant disadvantage, severely limiting your all-important movement. Get your hands on a monster like the Heckler & Koch G36C assault rifle and Faith won't even be able to run. A 'no guns' run isn't just possible in this game, it's positively

“ A 'NO GUNS' RUN ISN'T JUST POSSIBLE, IT'S POSITIVELY ENCOURAGED. ”

encouraged. The odds are intentionally stacked against you, constantly pushing you to show your parkour prowess.

### LEAP OF FAITH

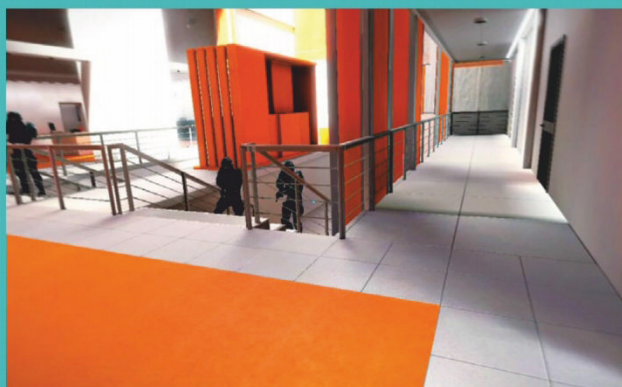
While wallruns and death-defying leaps are standard for getting from A to B, the game's true magic makes itself known during each of the many chase sequences. Even with the aid of the optional 'runner vision', which highlights the next preferred handhold or object to jump from in red, a flawless run is immensely satisfying. Hurling yourself over a fence to avoid a group of armed guards, bullets singing past as you leap from rooftop to rooftop, bouncing from one obstacle to the next as a helicopter starts to chase you, and then bursting through a door to safety – all done on the first attempt – remains a genuine thrill to this day.

To make the most of the joy of rapid movement through the staggered environments, *Mirror's Edge* also included time trials with online leaderboards (which still remain live at time of writing, though the top spots sadly appear to have been hacked). The controls are a little rough around the edges by today's standards, truth be told – especially when compared with the refined system in the PS4 sequel, *Mirror's Edge Catalyst* – but things never feel unfair.

There are no whispers of a new *Mirror's Edge*, but the time feels right for another, and we'd love to see it. *Dying Light* is the only game series that took up the first-person parkour mantle, and Faith should return to show the kids how it's done.



■ The style of the cinematics jars, but they're quality.



■ Don't get into a fight. Unlike you, they're armed!



■ No invisible limbs for you, with all that jumping.



# Name that game

Guess the four games, and their scores, from these review quotes

1 YOU WILL YELP, YOU WILL SCREAM, YOU WILL SHOUT VERY LOUD AND VERY RUDE WORDS.

2 IT IS A FUN SHOT OF ARCADE SILLINESS, A PULPY CELEBRATION OF CULT HORROR AND THE ART OF THE WELL-TIMED HEAD SHOT.

3 FROM ITS FANTASTIC, PIXELLATED PLUMAGE TO ITS TALON-TAPPING, HEARTWARMING STORY WE CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL THIS IS A CLASSIC WAITING IN THE WINGS.

4 A GAME FIT TO SPEND A NUCLEAR WINTER WITH - THE BOSTON WASTELAND IS ABSOLUTELY SATURATED WITH THINGS TO DO.

- ANSWERS
1. Resident Evil 2, issue #159, 9/10.
  2. Zombie Army 4: Dead War, issue #172, 7/10.
  3. Songbird Symphony, issue #166, 8/10.
  4. Fallout 4, issue #117, 8/10.



# OPM TIME MACHINE 5 YEARS AGO

Hello boys! Noctis and his bros graced the cover of **OPM #108** - an issue so packed with beefcake you could call it a burger



**Above** Few releases are as exciting as that of a mainline Final Fantasy, so of course we leapt at the chance to go hands-on with FFXV early. Wading into fights, chasing (and failing to catch) chocobos, and cooking for the chaps proved fantastic fun.

**Below left** Harmonix' production manager Daniel Sussman chatted with us about Rock Band 4.

**Below right** We were in the mood to shake a leg - nowadays Yakuza 0 would definitely make the list.



**Far left** "We don't see MGS becoming an annualised franchise," we said. As it was, it was the last mainline MGS.

**Left** We were fairly dismissive of the Batmobile - it's an addition to the series that still divides opinion. Are you a fan?



# DON'T MAKE ME PLAY! BIOSHOCK 2

Don't like it. Never tried it. Every month we force one of our team to play their most feared game

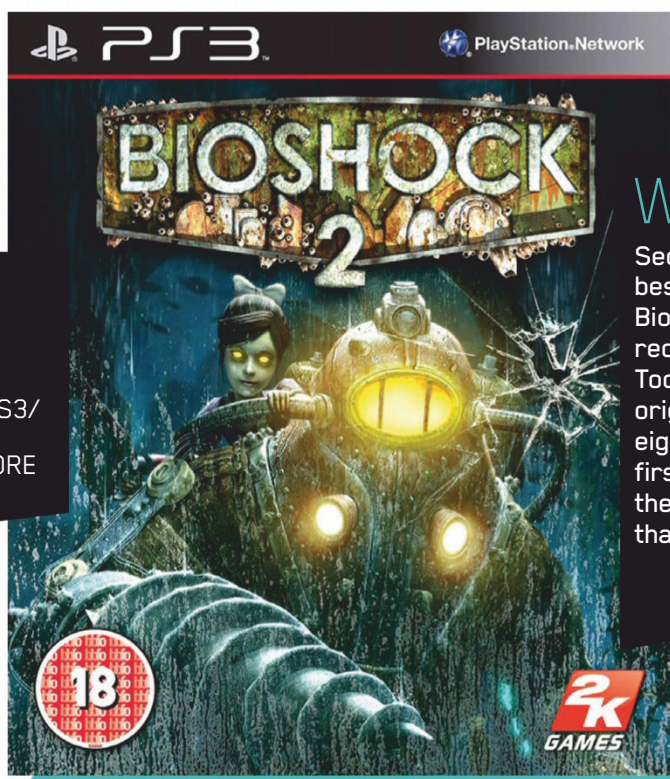


## WHO?

Ian Dean loves making choices. Chicken soup or tomato? Chicken, nailed it. Community versus the individual? Libertarianism or collectivist ideals? Erm, what?...

## INFO

**PUB** 2K GAMES  
**DEV** 2K MARIN  
**RELEASED** 2010, PS3/  
PS4 REMASTER  
**GET IT NOW** PS STORE  
£24.99, PS NOW



## WHAT?

Sequel to one of the best games ever made, BioShock 2 had a mixed reception on release. Too similar to the original? Perhaps. Set eight years after the first game, it treads the same corridors. Is that a bad thing?

The first couple of hours of BioShock 2 are overly familiar as I pound the corridors of Rapture and pummel the heads of Splicers as a Big Daddy. Yet it's far more refined than the first game. The familiar done better.

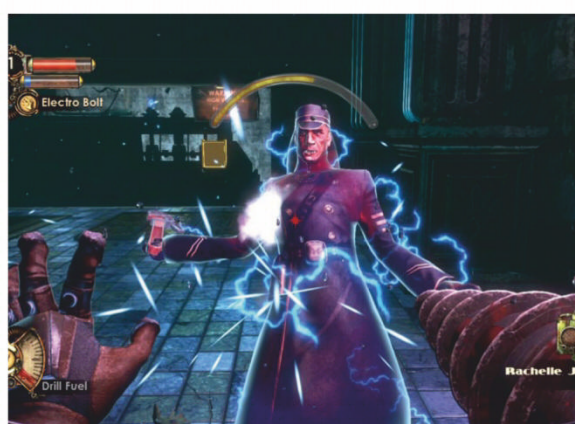
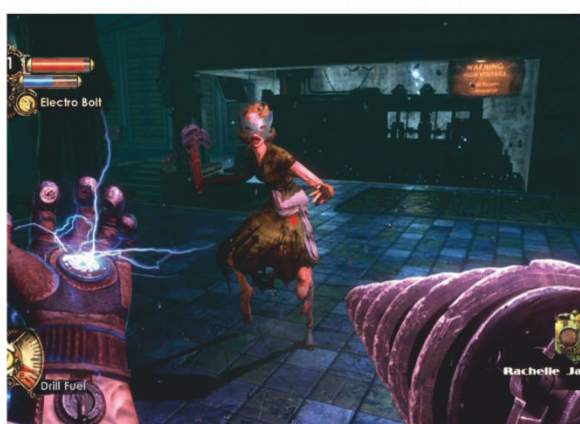
While the original BioShock ranks as one of my favourite games, its combat is clunky. It's an RPG dressed up as a shooter, after all. In this sequel combat is vastly improved. I'm turning goons to ice and smashing their statuesque frozen bodies to pieces with ease. It's a joy to juggle Plasmids and my wheel of weapons to find new combinations. The Pipemania hacking game is gone. In its place is a real time-test of skill, lending a new risk-and-reward tension to bringing gun turrets under my control.

This sequel's creepy too. The suggested horror of Gil Alexander's

## THAT DECISION TO FLUSH CTHULHU-ALEXANDER WILL HAVE REPERCUSSIONS.

fleshy, Cthulhu-like, ADAM-infused mutation is a sight I still can't shake off. Yeah, I chose to kill him. Did I do a bad thing? That's my choice. This sequel still plays with ideas of free will even if the continuous push forwards and reliance on combat can feel at odds with the freer nature and back-tracking of the original. And there's no revolutionary surprise ending as we had our first time around, but that decision to flush Cthulhu-Alexander like a dead goldfish will have repercussions, I'm sure of it.

Holding everything together is villainess Sofia Lamb. Her obsession with 'making the world your family', of collective thought trumping individual thinking, lands with more clarity than the original BioShock's theme of free will versus destiny. I am in control. I'm changing the outcome. I am an individual set against Lamb's plans for ADAM-fuelled world unity – one planet, one Family. It's an empowering game, even if technically we've all played in this pond before.



More of the same? Not quite. Give BioShock 2 a chance and it slowly reveals its own twists on Rapture. Choices, great combat, and one of the best villains in videogames: it's a game worth playing.



# THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO CURRENT-GEN'S GREATEST GAMES

## PS4 HALL OF FAME

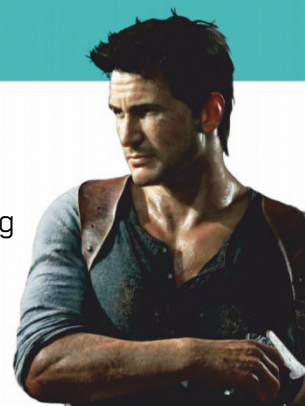


1



### UNCHARTED 4: A THIEF'S END

Nathan Drake's swan song is a daring evolution. It combines series-defining set-pieces, quietly devastating storytelling beats, and sprawling levels that make you feel like a real-life explorer. This franchise finale retains its signature charm, with the wisecracks flowing as fast as the bullets, while the new characters each justify their inclusion. With an astonishing attention to detail, it's Naughty Dog's best yet.



2



### RED DEAD REDEMPTION 2

There are a lot of open world games, but none that make you feel like you're a part of a world in quite the same way as Arthur Morgan's wild west adventure. Tremendously physical, an epic story, and some of the most satisfying headshots you'll ever find.

3



### GOD OF WAR

A departure in some ways but a resounding return in others, Kratos is back with a son *and* a ruddy big axe. Taking the legend from Greek to Norse mythology, this entry brings a lot to the table while improving on what was core to the earlier series' identity.

4



### DREAMS

Though it's still in early access and lacks PS VR support, this is still a feature-laden platform of artistic tools that enables you to create games, and resets what a console 'game' should be and do. Dreams should be installed on every PS4.

5



### THE WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION

The White Wolf's epic journey is an RPG experience like no other on PS4. It's been made even more spectacular with this gigantic pack stuffed with DLC, making it a must-have part of any gaming library.

6



### ASSASSIN'S CREED ODYSSEY

A beautiful open world where every Greek island tells a unique story. AC Odyssey is an epic in the truest sense, with lively writing, mythical beasts to battle, and a poignant Assassin's Creed story that lays the bed for all the lore to come. A brilliant spectacle.

7



### HORIZON ZERO DAWN

A staggeringly large world that condenses cracking combat, accessible systems, and uncut eye-candy into an action RPG that will please anyone. In Aloy, PlayStation might just have a new icon. Come for the robo-fights, stay for the exquisitely dense mythology.

8



### MARVEL'S SPIDER-MAN

Borrowing heavily from Rocksteady's Batman series, this delivers the heart and soul of Marvel's superhero. It ticks every box you could ask for: perfect web-swinging, a powerful story, a roster of classic villains, and all of New York to defend.

9



### GRAND THEFT AUTO V

Laughing in the face of other cross-gen ports, GTA V on PS4 is more than a mere HD remaster. Upped to a glorious 1080p, it weaves everything that made the PS3 original great, with new music, more dynamic weather, and a game-changing FPS mode.

10



### SEKIRO: SHADOWS DIE TWICE

FromSoftware's latest adventure repackages its unflinchingly difficult combat into a fantastical take on feudal Japan. More accessible than Bloodborne but layered with equally clever and subtle ideas, this is director Hidetaka Miyazaki's best yet.

11



### BLOODBORNE

With the finest third-person melee combat in gaming, drool-worthy art design and the most twisted monsters imaginable, this is a gorgeously gothic must-have. The Old Hunters expansion adds enough nightmare fuel to make a return to Yharnam essential.

12



### MONSTER HUNTER: WORLD

Presenting a vibrant open world, light on story but heavy on action, this is the most accessible entry in the series yet. Perfecting the feel-good grind through its complex systems and pitch-perfect multiplayer, it's a PS4 must-play.

13



### RESIDENT EVIL 2

Powered by the RE Engine, this remake is more than a classic game with a facelift. New Tyrant and zombie AI adds tension, and fresh areas not seen in the original PS1 classic update the core gameplay making this Resi 2 is a celebration of PS1 *and* PS4.

14



### HITMAN 2

Agent 47 sneaks his way into the ultimate PS4 stealth-'em-up. With a fantastic set of new maps, it also plays host to legacy content for all the missions in the first game, making it the new de facto Hitman hub. No stealth game is more satisfying.

15



### CONTROL

Running, gunning, flying, flinging – this one has it all. Satisfying gunplay plus a slew of telekinetic powers make a winning combination as you explore one of the most compelling settings on PS4 to date, the Oldest House. (New) weird and absolutely wonderful.



16



## DEVIL MAY CRY 5

Another classic PlayStation series returns to form on PS4. Slicing up demons and doing so stylishly has never felt better, especially when each of the three characters (Nero, Dante, and V) plays so uniquely. It looks stunning, and plays even better.

17



## RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD

Capcom's greatest series returns to terrifying form thanks to a trip to Louisiana to meet the Baker family, who stalk you around their mansion. While the second half of the game doesn't match the intensity of the first, this is still essential for any horror fan.

18



## TOWERFALL ASCENSION

You haven't lived until you've enjoyed a four-player free-for-all in this instant couchplay classic. The solo campaign is fine by itself, but almost nothing beats the arrow-grabbing, death-defying last-second kills of local multiplayer's mayhem.

19



## DISHONORED 2

The follow-up to a PS3 great, mixing a creative skillset with impressive level design to create a Kaldwin-winning immersive sim. From the shifting rooms of The Clockwork Mansion to learning to link your powers, there's so much scope for experimenting.

20



## THE LAST OF US REMASTERED

This modern masterpiece just gets stronger with age, like a full-bodied stilton. A brutal, emotionally honest take on the end of the world, Naughty Dog's stealth shooter is simply one of the best games ever, even if this PS4 port doesn't add much to it.

21



## PERSONA 5

Atlus' anime wonder dazzles thanks to its mix of friendship building, stylish dungeons, and speedy turn-based combat. Add a story oozing with darkness and taboo-busting confidence and you have the gold standard for JRPGs on PS4.

22



## METRO EXODUS

Larger but maintaining an emphasis on storytelling and experimentation, this sequel to Last Light pulls no punches. If you're looking for one of the best narrative-led shooters on PS4 this mix of FPS, horror, stealth, and survival shouldn't be ignored.

23



## DAYS GONE

A beautiful, epic story told at its own pace, Days Gone is a modern western played out across a society that's just crumbled. The challenge of the hordes and the emotional clout of the narrative manage to push above the cookie-cutter ideas.

24



## SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

Bluepoint completely overhauls the visuals of Team Ico's masterpiece but still manages to match the original step-for-step in its remake. New controls and a beautiful photo mode add to the package. Wander's tragic quest has never looked or played better.

25



## BATMAN: ARKHAM KNIGHT

Rocksteady sends the Bat out with a bang. A compelling, cathartic story adds new layers to the Dark Knight, while PS4 allows Gotham to blossom with a truly amazing engine. The stealth still sings, the fisticuffs are fab, and the Batmobile is brilliant.

# BUBBLING UNDER Alternative picks

We mine the library for gold. This month: hit Kickstarter games

PICK #1



## TOKYO DARK: REMEMBRANCE

Jess Kinghorn could murder a mystery

I'm all about impactful choices, and this visual-novel-meets-point-and-click-mystery makes an admirable effort to make your choices stick. Detective Ayami Ito is searching for her missing partner and you won't be able to save scum until a New Game Plus if you bungle the investigation. Visually and mechanically, this one's rough around the edges – but then aren't all your favourite videogame detectives?

PICK #2



## SHENMUE III

Oscar Taylor-Kent loves a stonemason

Some games find their audience via a Kickstarter, but is there another that so concretely *only* exists because of a crowdfunding campaign? And because Shenmue III was directly backed by fans of the original turn-of-the-millennium games, Suzuki was able to make it look prettier while retaining the very traditional gameplay. But the story's still not over. Could Shenmue IV be another Kickstarter success?

SHENMUE III WAS DIRECTLY BACKED BY FANS OF THE ORIGINAL GAMES.

PICK #3



## TOEJAM & EARL: BACK IN THE GROOVE

Ian Dean rewinds to the '90s

Neon shellsuits, Will Smith before scientology, and ToeJam & Earl... the '90s were all right. With original creator Greg Johnson on board, Back In The Groove is a time-capsule game that thinks it's still 1991 and doesn't care if the world has moved on. There's a freshness to this OG roguelike's simplicity that becomes addictive. It helps that the soundtrack is still banger.



A genuinely funny game is hard to find, and ToeJam & Earl: Back In The Groove goes the extra mile to make you smile.



# THE VIRTUAL REALITY HITS YOU HAVE TO PLAY

## PS VR HALL OF FAME



1



### TETRIS EFFECT

Tetris, yeah? It might be a great game, but it's easy to understand why you'd brush this off as just more Tetris at a glance. Yet Tetsuya Mizuguchi's trippy, transcendent take on the block-based puzzler is nothing short of a masterpiece. Sure, you can play it without PS VR, but in the virtual space it really becomes next level, transforming one of the tightest puzzle games ever made into an emotional ride.



2



### THE PERSISTENCE

This first-person horror roguelike offers perfectly sized chunks of survival bursts. It's everything you'd expect from a full PS4 release, but in PS VR it's filled with clever ideas, unique weapons, genuine jump scares, and fab looks – plus great couchplay.

3



### REZ INFINITE

Tetsuya Mizuguchi's vision becomes reality in PS VR. This psychedelic rhythm rail shooter has achieved its final form. Its crowning achievement? New level Area X; it's powerful enough to bring players to tears. Worthy of its name, this is a timeless title.

4



### THUMPER

Make no mistake: the brave chrome beetle gives Rez a run for its money. Hurling down a violently kaleidoscopic track, pounding notes and scraping round corners is exquisitely tough – and the manic magic is enhanced and perfected in PS VR.

5



### ASTRO BOT RESCUE MISSION

This pint-sized adventure packs charm in spades even if it isn't chock-full of challenge. Bringing the classic puzzle platformer formula bang up to date in PS VR, it won't take many levels before you're calling out, "Beam me up, Botty!"

6



### BLOOD & TRUTH

The truth? You can't handle the truth. But if you can, then you'll discover one of PS VR's best shooters, tied to the kind of slick cinematic narrative we're used to from Sony's non-VR releases. Blood & Truth is one of the most complete games for PS VR.

7



### KEEP TALKING AND NOBODY EXPLODES

Who knew bombs could bring people *together*? With one headsetted Defuser, and as many Experts as you can fit around a 23-page manual, no other VR game comes close for inclusive, endless multiplayer fun.

8



### STATIK

Saw meets Portal in this fantastic puzzler. It makes ingenious use of the DualShock 4 by giving every button a specific function. You'll need to use them all to free your hands from the strange box in which they're trapped. An intriguing concept done well.

9



### FIREWALL: ZERO HOUR

There's only one game mode, a cat-and-mouse assault to find and either destroy or protect a laptop, but when the shooting is this laser-focused, who could want more? A PS Aim controller is a must to get the most from PS VR's standout shooter.

10



### RESIDENT EVIL VII: BIOHAZARD

Can you can go eye-to-eye with the Bakers? Playing in VR raises the tension to almost unbearable levels and has gameplay benefits such as face-aiming, which makes shooting a *lot* easier. A brilliant example of how VR can improve already great games.

11



### DOOM VFR

A new take on a classic game, this proves first-person shooters can shine in VR. A mix of control choices, including the PS Aim controller, ensures Doom is as fast and fluid in VR as it's ever been. Every PS VR owner needs this in their collection.

12



### TO THE TOP

This creative platform-puzzler enables you to scamper, jump, and skate across its 35 sandbox worlds, with the aid of your PS Move controllers. It's as physically demanding as it is perplexing, and all the better for it. To The Top is a PS VR one-off.

13



### STAR TREK: BRIDGE CREW

Mixes the fanboy fantasy of nestling in the Captain's chair (or taking control of the helm, weapons, or engineering section) on a USS starship with the strongest co-op experience on PS VR. This is Star Trek's finest hour on PlayStation.

14



### EVERYBODY'S GOLF VR

Golf and virtual reality go together like ham and eggs or rhubarb and custard. In PS VR you swing and chip shots, lean over putts, and become immersed in the act of putting a ball in a small hole. It's near perfection, and one of PS VR's essentials.

15



### SPRINT VECTOR

A crazy mix of SSX racing and obstacle course hijinks, Sprint Vector makes use of the best control setup on PS VR to deliver a near perfect experience. A single-player Challenge mode and online races impress; only the poor single-player AI holds it back.



16



### BATMAN: ARKHAM VR

Not only is the training mission an unparalleled exercise in wish fulfilment (Wayne Manor! The Batcave! Batarangs!) but the defiantly sharp, if short, campaign is the epilogue to Arkham Knight we needed and deserved. Bats off to you, Rocksteady.

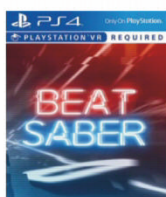
17



### THE ELDER SCROLLS V: SKYRIM VR

Though compromises have been made to texture detail and controls, you get all of The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim, including the expansions, inside PS VR. The scale and organic nature of the world at your feet overcomes any shortcomings.

18



### BEAT SABER

PS VR firmly on and PS Move controllers in hand, Beat Saber feels like the game both pieces of hardware were made for. In it you have to master songs and challenges by swiping your neon swords through the air, and dodging with your head.

19



### MOSS

Guide adorable mouse heroine Quill through a fantasy storybook world full of virtual puzzles, fights with insects, and perfectly pitched Disney influences. There's no need to say cheese, because you'll be smiling as you play, all day long.

20



### ACCOUNTING +

One of PlayStation's funniest games is a dark, twisted journey into the world of accounting. It's an Inception-like dive into increasingly bizarre and frequently hilarious scenarios that will scratch the itch of any Rick And Morty fan.

21



### FARPOINT

This sci-fi shooter is a brilliant showcase for the PS Aim controller, a versatile bit of kit that makes the satisfying range of weapons feel weighty and real. The game matches it, delivering a strong story and challenging co-op for great VR action.

22



### KNOCKOUT LEAGUE

Punching things is possibly the least creative use of the VR medium, but when it's used to create a classic arcade boxing sim that plays like a brutal puzzle puncher, it's irresistible. It's also good for you: it tracks your calorie count as you work up a sweat.

23



### APEX CONSTRUCT

This story-driven FPS demonstrates five-to-eight hour adventures can work in PS VR. Building its narrative organically through physically exploring the game's world while fending off mechanical creatures with a trusted bow and arrow is a delight. Ambitious.

24



### TRANSFERENCE

Come home to these ghosts in the machine. Traipsing through each family member's surreal vision of the apartment they share in first-person horror is a wonderfully dreadful experience. Trespassers will be thoroughly spooked.

25



### SUPERHOT VR

Time moves only when you move in this exceptional PS VR first-person shooter that manages to make you feel like you're playing through a slow-mo action movie. The free Superhot Forever update adds even more challenges. Make time for VR bullet time.

## PS Now for something completely different



Of PS Now's new additions, which includes Cities: Skylines and Lego Worlds, it's survival horror adventure The Evil Within from Resident Evil's original creator Shinji Mikami that caught my attention. It's a perfect PS Now release, an often overlooked cult classic...

When the creative mind behind Resident Evil returned with **The Evil Within** there was a buzz about this Resi-like horror adventure but it never gained the traction of Capcom's series. Added to PS Now this month it drew me in as I remembered how I chewed through its cheesy dialogue and unsettling atmosphere. Replaying it now, some of the game's faults can be overlooked. The redundant story and technical shortfalls fall away as I find myself just loving the spectacle of its Resi-meets-Silent Hill schlock horror. A genuine cult classic, on PS Now this is a welcome double-dipper.

Replaying The Evil Within had me yearning for more old-fashioned survival horror, and while the UK's PS Now roster lacks **Resident Evil 4** (available on the US service), it does

have **Resident Evil Code Veronica X**, another often-overlooked classic. Billed as the true sequel to Resident Evil 2, this is another Mikami masterpiece that shines on Sony's streaming service. It feels more modern than it should, as the series' pre-rendered scenery is replaced by 3D environments, albeit still with a defined camera view.

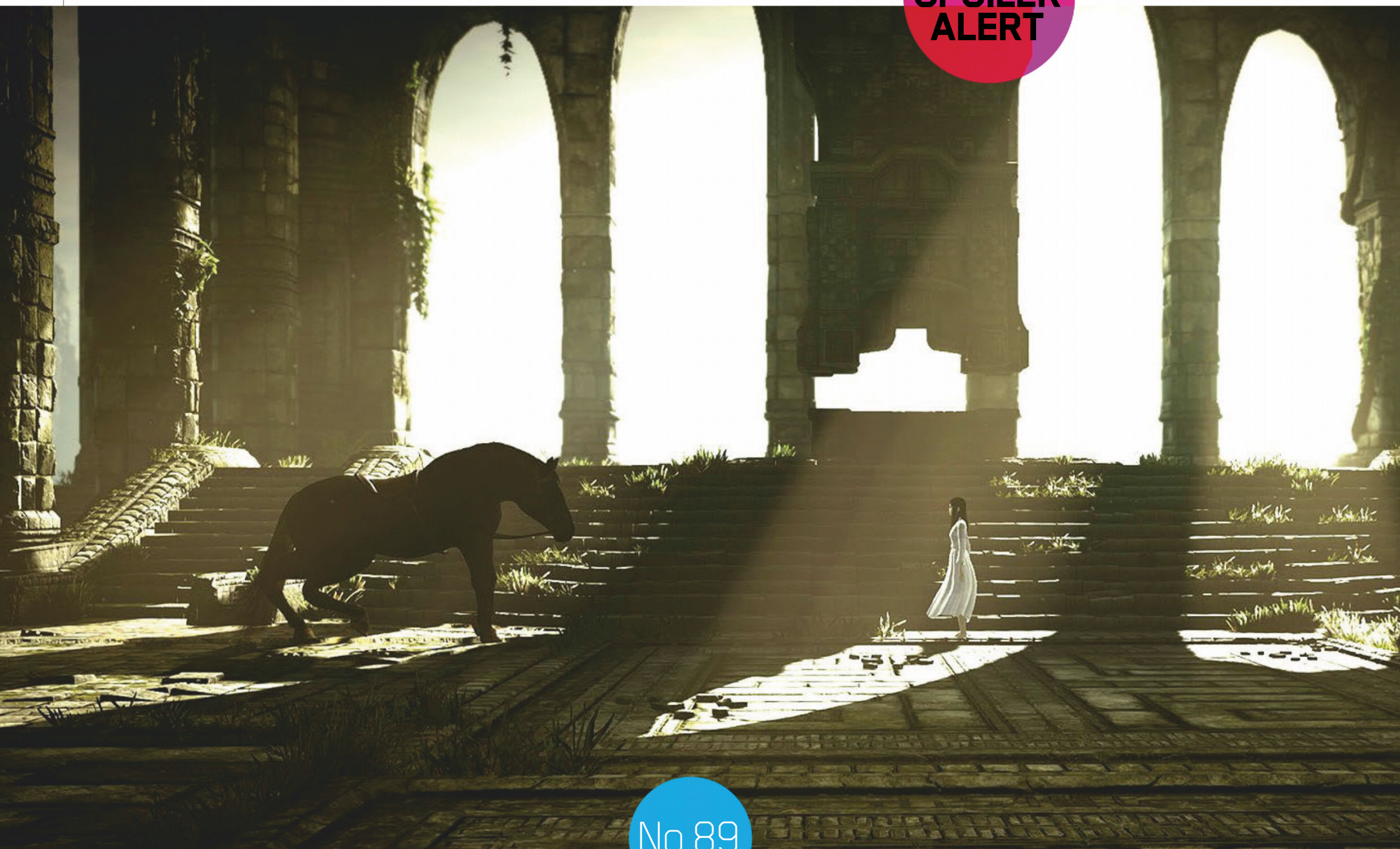
From here the only PS Now game to replay is **Dead Space 3**. Maligned at launch due to its microtransactions and co-op focus, hindsight reveals a solid horror shooter. While certainly not as composed as the original **Dead Space** (sadly not on PS Now) untethered from its money-hungry DLC this deserves a second chance. Thankfully PS Now is here to enable us to give it one.



■ Playing like Resident Evil 4 surgically attached to Silent Hill, Shinji Mikami's The Evil Within is a cult classic. On PS Now it's a must-play.



LOOK AWAY!  
**SPOILER  
ALERT**



No.89

# Loyal to the end

Shadow Of The Colossus' final emotional surprise

 **FORMAT** PS4 / **PUB** SONY / **DEV** BLUEPOINT GAMES / **RELEASED** 2018 / **SCORE** 9/10

Last  
Month

**Call Of Duty:  
WWII**  
Undercover  
with French  
Resistance  
leader  
Camille  
'Rousseau'  
Denis.

**H**ow could it have ended any other way? There's an uncomfortable melancholy to everything that happens in Shadow Of The Colossus, and with every Colossus we kill a little voice inside says 'You really shouldn't have done that.' Who's the real monster now as you put an end to bearded giant Barba and inch closer to the game's end credits and mysterious Mono's cure and awakening?

When every Colossus is dead and buried and Wander returns to the temple to see Mono come back to life, the vile acts he's performed

overtake him. He becomes an actual monster, a physical manifestation of the brutality of his actions over the previous eight hours and the deaths of so many elegantly designed creatures (which were simply minding their own business until you showed up).

Yet this stage of the ending isn't the real moment we remember, it's what comes next that hits the feels in all the right places: Wander struggling against the drag of his own deathly actions, unable to finally be with Mono, instead being sucked into a darkness of his own making. She awakens seemingly

unaware of Wander's actions, and at this moment our horse Agro, our loyal companion, hobbles onto the screen... she's alive! The sun frames Mono as Agro struggles mournfully towards her from the darkness. Mono reaches out a hand and accepts our presumed-deceased horse's friendship. Yes, we're blubbing like a Liverpool fan celebrating their team winning the league after 27 years of hurt.

Agro's last act is to lead Mono to where baby Wander has appeared; the three are finally together. We dry our eyes long enough to ask: what does the future hold? ■

Next  
Month

**Assassin's  
Creed  
Origins**  
Buried up to  
his head in  
the desert  
sands, how  
will Bayek  
escape?



NEXT  
MONTH

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7 April

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FFVII REMAKE  
COLLECTOR'S  
SUPPLEMENT

# ARE YOU READY TO RETURN TO SKYRIM?

The Elder Scrolls Online – Greymoor takes  
us back to Bethesda's fire and ice